

Moo-ve over Canada, Russia is back on top



BACK-TO-BACK TITLES...COOL! A V.I.C. (Very Important Cow) was among the first to congratulate Russian coaches Igor Zakharkin and Vyacheslav Bykov on their back-to-back gold medal performance. After posing with thousands of fans, Cooly was thrilled when the successful duo agreed to pose with him after their triumph.

Bykov's boys take gold again and claim the top World Ranking spot



For 15 years, Russia simply couldn't win gold at the IIHF World Championship. Now they have two in a row. Is this a start of a new dynasty?

RENÉ FASEL EDITORIAL

■ ■ For the second year, Russia not only won the gold medal, but just like in Canada last year, they marched through the championship undefeated. But this one was not easy. All three playoff games, quarterfinal (Belarus), semi-final (USA) and final (Canada) were won by the odd goal.

This means in the battle of the men's hockey titans the score in gold medals is now: Russia 25 and Canada 24. Not only that; Russia has surpassed Canada in the IIHF World Ranking for the first time since it was introduced in 2004 and also for the first time Russia is No. 1.

I don't think that I will offend anyone when I say that it is a great thing for hockey that the classic rivalry - which just some years ago seemed to have vanished - is back. All sports on all levels, whether it's club or national team, thrive on rivalries. This one is electric and brings out the best from both teams.

■ ■ When this is written, it is 273 days left to the Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver. This is when the two giants will go at it again, accompanied primarily by the defending Olympic champion Sweden, the United States, Czechoslovakia, Finland and Slovakia.

■ ■ I know it's easy to get carried away when you think what will be in store for us in Vancouver. Some people have already said that this has the potential to be the gre-

atest hockey tournament ever, for both men and women. But I am not alone here. Just look at how the Olympics are overshadowing everything.

When the Vancouver Canucks goalie Robert Luongo is conceding seven goals in one playoff game, the experts are immediately speculating about the strength of Canada's goaltending in 2010. When Anaheim met Detroit in the second playoff round, the subplot was about which coach was most apt to lead the host team at the Olympics; Red Wings' Mike Babcock or the Ducks' Randy Carlyle.

■ ■ Back to Berne and Kloten; It was a very good World Championship. The total attendance number was 379,044 which was the fourth highest since the turn of the century and substantially more than Russia 2007, Latvia 2006, Austria 2005, Sweden 2002 and Russia 2000. The Swiss hosts showed perfect organization and Ilya Kovalchuk (the run-away MVP) showed why he is one of the best and most exciting players in the world right now.

In 2010, the German organizers will get a fantastic start as they will be able to count 75, 976 fans already on Day 1 when the hosts take on USA in the opener at the Veltins-Arena in Gelsenkirchen. It was announced almost immediately after the final game in Berne that Germany will face USA in that game. Very fitting. USA is the most successful IIHF member looking back to the 2008-2009 season, winning gold in men's and women's U18 and in the World Women's.

I would to thank all who have contributed to this splendid IIHF season.

René Fasel
IIHF President

Welcome to Minsk! 2014 Worlds goes to Belarus

■ Belarus became the latest country to earn the hosting rights for the IIHF World Championship after winning the bid for the 2014 edition with 75 votes. The application with the slogan "Welcome to the young hockey country" beat out those from Hungary (24 votes), Latvia (3), and Ukraine (3).

Belarus highlighted its bid with two new arenas located close together in the capital city of Minsk.

"Hosting this championship will not only boost the national economy, but also take Belarusian ice hockey to a whole new level," Chairman of the Belarusian Ice Hockey Association, Vladimir Naumov, said.

"This is the best day in the history of Belarusian hockey, maybe the best day in Belarus sports altogether," said Sergej Gontcharov, Belarus General Secretary.



MINSK OR BUST! The Belarus Bid Committee celebrates its 2014 hosting triumph.

The 15,000-seat Minsk Arena is in the final stage of construction and will open its doors in December 2009 for Dynamo Minsk. Construction of the 8,000-seat Arena Chizhovka (18 kilometres from the main venue) will start in July 2009. It's scheduled to open in December 2010. Belarus is the 18th country to stage an IIHF World Championship.



The Class of '09

The IIHF Hall of Fame inducted five new members on May 5th in a ceremony held in Bern, Switzerland. The class of 2009 included three players, one builder and one official. In the back row, the individuals inducted into the Player's Category were: (from L to R:) Jan Suchy from the Czech Republic, Rudi Hiti from Slovenia and Alexei Kasatonov of Russia. The Builder's Category member inducted was Walter L. Bush Jr. from the United States and rounding out the group was referee Laszlo Schell from Hungary. Not pictured with the group is Paul Loicq award winner Harald Griebel from Germany.

Photo: IIHF/IIHF/Matthew Manor

NEWS & NOTES FROM THE HOCKEY WORLD

■ **ROMANIA:** The Romanian Ice Hockey Association named a new General Secretary. Mr. Alexandru Nistor took over the post on March 1.

■ **SWITZERLAND:** At the IIHF Congress, it was determined that teams participating in the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver will have to name their men's rosters no later than December 31, 2009.

■ **SWITZERLAND:** At the end of the World Championship, the Swiss declared the championship a success for the organizing committee. Announced attendance was 379,044, ranking the event fifth in attendance since the turn of the century. The last two times that

the World Championship was held in Switzerland, the event drew fewer than 300,000 fans. In 1990, the Worlds attracted 250,309 and in 1998 the attendance figure was 220,641.

■ **NEW YORK:** Swedish and NHL star Markus Näslund announced his retirement at the age of 35. Best-known as the captain of the Vancouver Canucks, Näslund remains Vancouver's career points leader (756).

■ **TURKEY:** The former Chief Referee of the Turkish Ice Hockey Association, Sefik Sezer Seckin, passed away on April 24. Seckin got his start in officiating following an IIHF seminar that was held in the region.

■ **GERMANY:** The German 2010 Organizing Committee announced that Germany's opponent for the game in the Veltins Arena, with a projected attendance of more than 75,000 fans, will be the United States. The game will be the opener for the 2010 Worlds. In other 2010 news, the groups were finalized following the 2009 final, they are as follows:

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
Cologne	Mannheim	Mannheim	Cologne
Russia	Canada	Sweden	Finland
Belarus	Switzerland	Czech Rep.	USA
Slovakia	Latvia	Norway	Germany
Kazakhstan	Italy	France	Denmark

Canada is 'hockey country' in upcoming seasons

■ Canada will host four more World U20 Championships (2015, 2017, 2019, 2021) and three World Women's Championships (2013, 2016, 2020) in the upcoming seasons.



Canada has already been named the host of the World Juniors in 2010 (Regina, Saskatoon) and 2012 (Calgary, Edmonton). In addition, the nation will host the 2010 Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver.

A Hockey Canada proposal to host the seven additional IIHF World Championships was approved unanimously at the IIHF Annual Congress on May 9. The proposal includes a profit-sharing plan with Hockey Canada, the IIHF and the IIHF member countries that will help develop hockey around the World.

"This is a great day for hockey fans in Canada," said Bob Nicholson, Hockey Canada CEO/President. "The World U20 Championship rivals any other international sporting event to be hosted in Canada in terms of popularity and interest. The World Women's Championship has achieved great growth in Canada, while also playing a large role in growing the female game in Canada."

Hockey Canada will announce details of a bidding process for the host communities at a later date.

2010-2014 Major Rule Changes

■ The IIHF approved a handful of rule changes for the 2010-2014 Rule Book and new transfer regulations. The following changes were approved and will take effect after July 1, 2010:

- No line change allowed after a team ices the puck.
- After a penalty has been called, the ensuing faceoff will be in the defending zone of the penalized team.
- Face-offs can only be executed on the nine face-off spots. No 'imaginary' lines anymore.

NOTE: The three above rules will be in effect as of July 1, 2009, in time for the 2010 Olympics.

- If there is a penalty shot, the fouled player must take the shot. Currently, any player can take the shot.

□ When there is a delayed penalty called against a shorthanded team and a goal is scored during the delayed penalty, the first penalty is terminated, but the delayed penalty is assessed.

□ A match-penalty (with an ensuing one-game suspension) can be assessed to a team official on the bench.

□ If a player loses his helmet during action, he must go to the bench. Currently, the player can readjust the helmet and continue playing.

■ In light of last season's transfer disputes, the IIHF has rewritten its International Transfer Regulations to enforce sanctions against players, associations and clubs that violate the transfer regulations.

The new rules carry a catalogue of sanctions towards players, associations and clubs that allow players to play within their system without an approved International Transfer Card (ITC).

For a breach of contract, there is an automatic four month suspension and a maximum of six months.

If a player goes to a league/team without an ITC it will result in fines of up to 150,000 for Member National Associations, a ban on international transfers for up to 24 months for clubs and a suspension of the player for up to three years.

Chicago blows into Europe

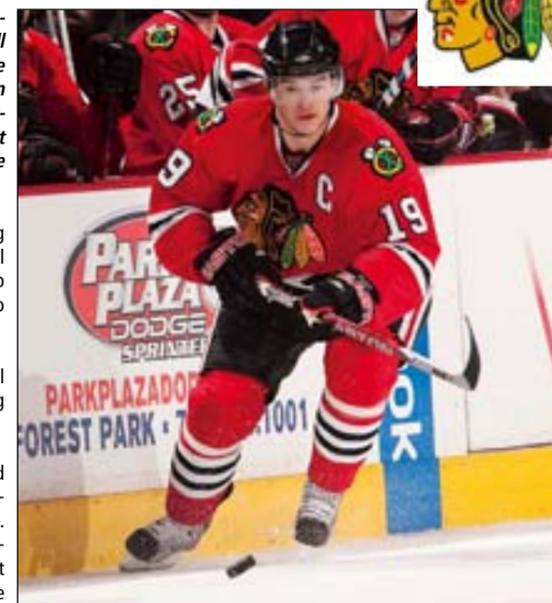


□ The IIHF, NHL, and NHLPA announced that the Chicago Blackhawks will be the NHL representative in the second Victoria Cup to be played on September 29, 2009, at the 11,000-seat Hallenstadion in Zurich against the ZSC Lions, champions of the Champions Hockey League.

■ Zurich defeated Russia's Metallurg Magnitogorsk, 5-0, to win the inaugural CHL title, becoming the European club champion and thus earning the right to play for the Victoria Cup.

The New York Rangers won the inaugural Victoria Cup last October, defeating Metallurg Magnitogorsk, 4-3, in Bern.

■ The Chicago Blackhawks established an NHL club record this season by attracting an average of 21,783 fans per game. This makes Chicago not only the best drawing hockey club in North America, but also in the world. The Blackhawks were playing to 106% capacity.



SWEET HOME, CHICAGO: Jonathan Toews is just one of the many international stars that will open his season in Switzerland at the Victoria Cup.

"We are extremely pleased to accept the NHL's selection of the Chicago Blackhawks as the challenger for the second edition of the Victoria Cup," said René Fasel. "Their fantastic attendance figures prove that the Blackhawks are one of the most recognizable and popular clubs in hockey. Chicago has always maintained strong and committed support among European hockey fans."

"Our dream is to have the Stanley Cup champions play in the Victoria Cup," Fasel said. "I know this is difficult because the winner isn't known until June, and we have too much to organize to wait until then to announce the NHL team. However, I hope Chicago wins the Cup this year," he finished with a smile, referring to the Hawks' excellent playoff run.

"Chicago is an Original Six team with tremendous history," added Ken Yaffe, NHL Senior Vice-President. "We hope the Victoria Cup continues to be an event which sees the best of the NHL play the best club team in Europe."

■ This will be the NHL club's first visit to Europe since 1992, but it will mark the first time that Chicago – founded in 1926 – will play against a European club in Europe. The two games Chicago played in London, England 17 years ago were exhibitions against NHL rival Montreal.

The Blackhawks' tour of Europe will continue after the Victoria Cup when they travel to Helsinki to play the Florida Panthers on October 3 and 4.

CHICAGO RESULTS VS. EUROPEAN TEAMS (in Chicago)

Jan. 7, 1976	Chicago vs. Krylya Sovietov Moscow (URS)	2-4
Dec. 31, 1977	Chicago vs. Poldi Kladno (TCH)	4-6
Jan. 4, 1989	Chicago vs. Dinamo Riga (URS)	4-1
Jan. 7, 1990	Chicago vs. CSKA Moscow (URS)	4-6
Jan. 1, 1991	Chicago vs. CSKA Moscow (URS)	2-4

CHICAGO VS. NHL TEAMS IN EUROPE

Sep. 12, 1992 London (GBR)	Montreal Canadiens vs. Chicago	3-2
Sep. 13, 1992 London (GBR)	Montreal Canadiens vs. Chicago	4-5 OT

"The Chicago Blackhawks are a team with a rich history, a vibrant present and a bright future," said NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman. "They are outstanding representatives of our league and an ideal choice for this event. The Victoria Cup will mark the fourth consecutive decade in which the Blackhawks have faced international competition."

■ It is the first time that Zurich (founded in 1930) will play against an NHL club. The Victoria Cup will also feature an exhibition game at the Hallenstadion, when the Blackhawks will play current Swiss champion, HC Davos on September 28.

"The players of the NHL believe strongly in international competition," NHLPA executive director Paul Kelly said. "They want to play in the Olympics and the Victoria Cup is also great for the development of hockey in Europe."

■ The second edition of the Victoria Cup follows on the heels of the successful inaugural event which saw Ryan Callahan of the New York Rangers score the winning goal in the final minute against Metallurg. It was a dramatic game played at a high level of speed and skill.

"This year's Victoria Cup game between the Chicago Blackhawks and the ZSC Lions will provide great exposure to our players and the NHL game," Kelly continued.

■ Chicago has two European goaltenders; Russia's Nikolai Khabibulin and France's Cristobal Huet. Sweden's Samuel Pahlsson was acquired by the 'Hawks in March.

"Having the Victoria Cup in Switzerland two years in a row is very special," said Craig Thompson, CEO of Ovation Sports, the marketing agency of the Victoria Cup. "This event is a great way to start the new season of the CHL."

■ The Victoria Cup was introduced by the IIHF during its 100 Year Anniversary to encourage competition between NHL and European club teams. The annually awarded trophy was named to recognize the Victoria Skating Rink in Montreal, the place where the first organized hockey game was played.

Where in the world are teams headed in 2010?

■ The majority of the 2009-2010 IIHF events were allocated at the Annual Congress in Switzerland. For the first time ever, only countries participating in the lower division events were allowed to vote on the hosting rights for the given event.

Several nations will host more than one IIHF championship. Estonia leads the pack with three championships hosted in the northern nation. Poland, Turkey and the Netherlands are each hosting two championships in the upcoming season.

Below is a list of where the various championships will be played in the Olympic year:

MENS:

Top Division:	Germany (Cologne, Mannheim)
Division I, Group A:	Netherlands (Tilburg)
Division I, Group B:	Slovenia (Ljubljana)
Division II, Group A:	Mexico (Mexico City)
Division II, Group B:	Estonia (Tallinn)
Division III, Group A:	Greece (Athens)
Division III, Group B:	Armenia (Yerevan)

U20s:

Top Division:	Canada (Saskatoon, Regina)
Division I, Group A:	France (Briançon)
Division I, Group B:	Poland (TBA)
Division II, Group A:	Hungary (TBA)
Division II, Group B:	Estonia (Narva)
Division III:	Turkey (Istanbul)

U18s:

Top Division:	Belarus (Minsk)
Division I, Group A:	Denmark (TBA)
Division I, Group B:	Poland (TBA)
Division II, Group A:	Estonia (Tallinn)
Division II, Group B:	Netherlands (TBA)
Division III, Group A:	Turkey (Erzurum)
Division III, Group B:	TBA

WOMENS U18s:

Top Division:	USA (Chicago)
Division I:	Slovakia (TBA)

2011 WOMENS

(There are no World Women's Championships in an Olympic year, the hosts listed are for the 2011 season)

Top Division:	TBA
Division I:	China (TBA)
Division II:	France (TBA)
Division III:	TBA
Division IV:	TBA
Division V:	TBA

No newcomers to Triple Gold Club

■ For the first time since 2003, following the World Championship there were no new names added to the IIHF's Triple Gold Club, which recognizes players that have won the Stanley Cup, Olympic Gold and World Championship Gold.

None of the Russians on the gold-medal winning team completed the trio, meaning that the only way that there will be a 2009 entry to join hockey's exclusive company is after the Stanley Cup Champion is known. The last additions were Swedes Niklas Kronwall, Henrik Zetterberg and Mikael Samuelsson in 2008.

iceTimes is published bi-monthly.

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Make it a double - Russia gets second straight gold

By Jenny Wiedeke

The 2009 IIHF World Championship season is in the books and it was the same fairy tale ending for Russia, which won its second straight gold medal against Canada. After a 15-year absence from the top of the standings, the back-to-back gold emphatically put Russia back on the hockey map and announced to the World that the sleeping Bear is out of hibernation. But beyond Russia, there were other stories that evolved during the 56-game event. Here's a look back at how the 2009 World Championship unfolded:

TWICE IS NICE:

Just like the old days, Canada and Russia were the teams to beat at the World Championship. TV commentators called the gold-medal meeting the 'dream final'. There was no doubt that the last game featured the top two teams at the 2009 event. The pair rolled through their preliminary and qualification round groups, coming out in first place in Kloten and Bern. The duo continued to parallel each other in the playoff round, surviving close quarterfinals and semi-finals and coming into the gold medal game with a combined 14 regulation wins. The dream final lived up to its hype: Russia took a 2-1 lead in the second period and held off the Canadian offense for its second crown.

ILYA DOES IT ALL

What was the key to the Russian win? If you watched a shift and noticed #71 you answered a big part of that question. Ilya Kovalchuk was the spark behind the Russian offense. The forward finished as the second-leading scorer at the championship with five goals and nine assists and was named the Directorate's Top Forward and the Tournament MVP. Only one other Russian, Alexander Radulov, finished in the Top 10 in tournament scoring.

THE SILVER CURSE

In Kloten, those who watched Canada thought they were untouchable as the team looked nearly flawless, giving up only one shootout loss against Finland in a game that had no impact in the standings. In fact, at one point a reporter asked, 'are you ready to get to Bern for a little more competition?' Perhaps he should have knocked on wood while asking the question, as Canada lost its second gold medal to the Russians - the nation's third silver since 2005.

BERN IS BETTER

Canada wasn't just the cream of the crop to come from the group in Kloten, they were pretty much the entire crop. The Kloten teams arrived in Bern and were promptly sent home - Belarus and Finland lost one-goal quarterfinals, while the Czechs were sent packing in a two-goal loss. Once in Bern, even Canada didn't look as strong as they had while in the friendly confines of Kloten, limping to a 4-2 win against Latvia in the quarterfinal and surviving another two-goal win against the Swedes in the semis before conceding the gold medal to Russia.

GOING THE DISTANCE

There was no shortage of action in the preliminary and qualification rounds as 13 games went into overtime or a shootout. But once the playoff round started, everything was settled in regulation. It was the first World Championship since 2002 that did not have a game in the playoff round go to at least overtime. In general, the results from the games in Switzerland were some of the closest ever with 23 games settled by only one goal.

BACK TO BRONZE

The bronze medal game was a bit of a comeback for Sweden and the U.S. The Swedes had lost their last three bids for bronze (2005, 2007, 2008) and finally earned the consolation prize with the 4-2 win against the Americans. While the bronze medal loss was a bitter pill for the U.S., it was still the nation's first appearance in a World Championship medal game



Photos: IIHF/HHOF IMAGES

HANDS UP! Russia and Sweden celebrate their medal triumphs at the 2009 World Championship. Above the Russians mob their net after the final second ticks off the clock in the gold medal game, while to the right Sweden goaltender Stefan Liv awaits the mob in front of his net.



since winning bronze in 2004 and was only third medal game appearance for the Americans since the turn of the century.

PROUD AS A PEACOCK

Three nations opened the World's eyes by finishing in the middle of the pack. France, which barely avoided relegation last year, finished in 12th place thanks to a strong preliminary round performance that included a one-goal loss against Switzerland on opening day and a one

goal win against Germany. Meanwhile, Latvia and Belarus both earned quarterfinal berths, ousting traditional top-eight finishers Switzerland and Slovakia. Could it be the Top-eight will have a permanent changing of the guard? Stay tuned for 2010.

SLOVAK STRUGGLES

There's only so much room at the top, which Slovakia has learned the hard way the last two seasons. After an all-time low 13th-place finish in 2008, the

Slovaks followed up with a tepid 10th-place ending this year. The back-to-back low finishes are the nation's worst since it joined the top pool in 1996.

HOME ICE CURSE

When people talk of the home ice curse, it is in terms of gold medals. With the World Championship in Switzerland, the home ice curse took on another form as the steady nation wobbled at this year's Worlds. The perennial quarterfinalist didn't make it to the top eight, which might not have drawn headlines had the championship been on foreign soil. After getting ousted, there was a mini-revolt as Swiss media wanted a change. But in a press conference, the Swiss Association stood by their national team program and will keep things the same going into Vancouver.



RED ALERT! Is home ice support worth weathering the home ice curse? The Swiss fans seem to think so.

2009: A season full of repeats

■ The 2009 World Championship season had eerily similar results to last year's top events as there was only one top-level event that crowned a new winner. Event by event, here's the back-to-back winners:

Men's: The Russians are getting back to their dominant form of the 1960s after winning their second consecutive gold medal against Canada. Are seven more titles on the way like the 1963-1971 streak?

Women's: The United States women earned their first-ever, back-to-back title and claimed the top spot in the Women's World Ranking. Their gold medal opponent last season was also Canada.

U20's: Canada's one and only 2009 gold medal at a top level World Championship came thankfully at its crowned jewel event, the World Juniors. The Canadians won their fifth-straight title and beat Sweden for the second consecutive time in the golden game.

Women's U18's: It was again a USA-Canada final and, again, it was the Americans coming out on top of the junior women's hockey world against their North American rival.

U18's: The U.S. was the only non-repeat gold medalist of the season.

The cream of the crop...



DIRECTORATE AWARDS:
Goaltender: Andrei Mezin (BLR)
Defenseman: Shea Weber (CAN)
Forward: Ilya Kovalchuk (RUS)
MVP: Ily Kovalchuk (RUS)



MEDIA ALL-STAR AWARDS:
Goalie: Andrei Mezin (BLR)
Defensemen: Shea Weber (CAN), Kenny Jonsson (SWE)
Forwards: Ilya Kovalchuk (RUS),
 Martin St. Louis (CAN), Steve Stamkos (CAN)

HUNGARY FOR SUCCESS:

Sure, they finished in 16th place and didn't earn a single win during the course of the World Championship, but people couldn't help but support the underdog Hungarian national team. From classy goaltender Levente Szuper, to its festive fan block that sang the national anthem after every game to the team, the Hungarians left their mark on the top division that will not soon be forgotten. Here's hoping it won't be another 70 years before they grace the top stage again.

THE PERFECT STORM:

For years, when reading the fine print of any championship schedule, it basically says that the following season's host nation cannot be relegated. It was normally a laughable footnote, until the German demise in Bern. A combination of bad luck and poor performance doomed the Germans to the relegation round where it was made clear that that the four-team round was now a three-horse race. Much to the dismay of the other relegation teams, Germany didn't improve in the lower round and officially finished in 15th place - which under normal circumstances would have sent them to division I. Instead, the unlucky loser in the scenario was 14th-ranked Austria, which was shipped to Division I. Denmark finished in 13th place and will return next year.

2008-2009 SEASON IN REVIEW

Ice Times lets the pictures do all the talking in a look back at the exciting and hisotry making 2008-2009 season. Join us in looking back the top moments from the season and see if you remember all the events.



OCTOBER 1 - IN A NEW YORK MINUTE: The NHL's New York Rangers became the first-ever winners of the Victoria Cup after Ryan Callahan scored with 20 seconds left in regulation against Metallurg Magnitogorsk's Andrei Mezin.



JANUARY 5 - THE GOLDEN LINING: Canada's U20 team continues to be the vision of stability, winning its fifth-straight gold at the World Junior Championship. The Canadians beat Sweden for the second straight season in the golden game. Another feather in the Canadian cap was the new attendance record set at the U20 Championship by flawless host city, Ottawa.



APRIL 12 - U-S-A, U-S-A: The American women doubled up on their World Women's titles, winning their second straight against North American rival, Canada. The two nations have faced off in every IIHF World Women's final since the inception of the championship in 1990.



JANUARY 18 - MIGHTY MARTIN: MHC Martin might have lost their last game at the Continental Cup, but they still took home the title and the famous, big, silver plate.



FEBRUARY 8 - VANCOUVER OR BUST: Three men's teams punched their tickets to the 2010 Olympics during the Final Qualification weekend. Norway, Germany and Latvia earned the berth to the world's biggest sporting stage.

OCTOBER NOVEMBER DECEMBER JANUARY FEBRUARY MARCH APRIL



OCTOBER 8 - STARTING ON THE RIGHT FOOT: The Champions Hockey League had two opening weekends. The first was the Qualification tournament, which Switzerland's Bem won on September 13 (above). Then came the real opening game between Finland's Kärpät Oulu and Germany's Eisbaren Berlin on October 8.



JANUARY 10 - SEEING STARS... AND STRIPES: The American junior women remained the only nation to win the World Women's U18 gold medal after once again beating Canada in the final game.



FEBRUARY 1 - SKIFING ALONG HAPPILY: SKIF Nizhny Novgorod became a first-time winner of the European Women's Champion's Cup, knocking. It was the first time that a team outside of Sweden claimed the crown.



JANUARY 28 - ONE STEP AHEAD: Switzerland's ZSC Zurich Lions became the darlings of the inaugural Champions Hockey League after earning a berth in the final series against Russia's Metallurg Magnitogorsk. Few gave the team from the small Alpine nation a chance against the Russian giants, but the team continued to surprise the critics and silenced all doubters with a 5-0 drubbing of Metallurg in the final game to win the first-ever CHL title.

APRIL 17 - BACK IN THE BIG TIME: Two nations are ready for the 2009-2010 season to begin. Italy and Kazakhstan won the men's Division I Championships and will join the elite group next May in Germany at the World Championship.



NOVEMBER 9 - CINDERELLA: Slovakia's women's team showed that there is still plenty of room for Miracles on Ice after earning a berth in the 2010 Olympics as the lowest seeded team in Olympic history.



APRIL 19 - HOME ICE IS NICE: The American U18 team won the nation's third gold medal at a top event in 2009. This one was particularly sweet for the Americans as the medal was won on home ice.

2008-2009 SEASON IN REVIEW

Rounding out the 2008-2009 season is a look back at the men's World Championship in Switzerland...



SINGING THE PRAISES: The IIHF Trophy is serenaded by the Russian national team while they sing along to their national anthem at the 2009 World Championship closing ceremony.



RED, WHITE & BLUE: USA goaltender Robert Esche displays his stars and stripes, but it was ultimately his other red, white and blue comrades that led to USA's demise. The Americans were ousted in the semi-finals by Russia, where Esche plays in the regular season with St. Petersburg.

OVERWEIGHT LUGGAGE: Ilya Kovalchuk took home some extra items in his baggage after winning the MVP trophy (right). He was also the keeper of the cup in the Russian locker room.



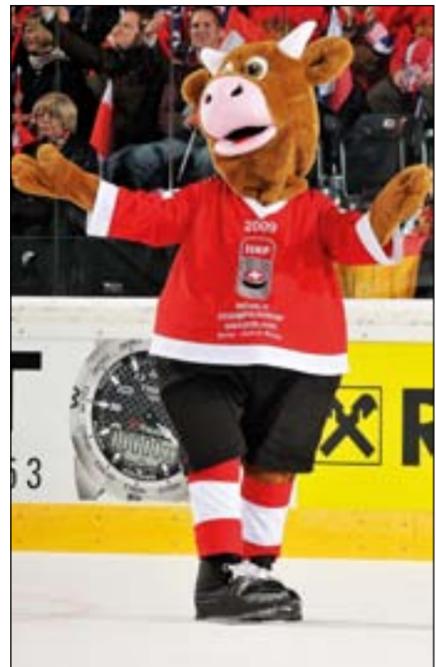
BIRDS OF A FEATHER FLOCK TOGETHER: It looked like rush hour in the offensive zone as three French players got tangled up.



CALGARY, WE HAVE A PROBLEM: Two silvers in two years – most countries would be thrilled, but then again, most don't have to go home to Canada.



SATISFYING THE FANS' HUNGER: The Hungarian national team had unparalleled fan support in Kloten. After a 9-0 loss against Canada, the Hungarian fans stayed and cheered for their team for 30 minutes after the players left the ice, prompting the team to return and salute their thousands of faithful followers.



NUMBER ONE IN OUR HEARTS: No matter which team fans cheered for, they all rallied around Cooly, the official mascot, that stole the show in Switzerland.



HE WHO LAUGHS LAST, LAUGHS LONGEST: The Latvians learned that the World Championship is a marathon not a sprint. Latvia may have upset Sweden 3-2 in the preliminary round, but the Swedes took home the bronze medal, while Latvia finished in seventh place.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

IIHF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS		
MEN'S		
IIHF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP 2010	GERMANY, Cologne & Mannheim	07-23.05.10
2011	SLOVAKIA, Bratislava & Kosice	30.04-15.05.11
2012	FINLAND and SWEDEN	04-20.05.12
2013	SWEDEN and FINLAND	TBA
2014	BELARUS	TBA
IIHF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISION I, Group A		
2010	NETHERLANDS, Tilburg	19.4.-25.4.2010
IIHF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISION I, Group B		
2010	SLOVENIA, Ljubljana	24.4.- 30.4.2010
IIHF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISION II, Group A		
2010	MEXICO, Mexico City	11.4.- 17.4.2010
IIHF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISION II, Group B		
2010	ESTONIA, Tallinn	10.4.-17.4.2010
IIHF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISION III, Group A		
2010	GREECE, Athens	April 2010, TBD
IIHF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISION III, Group B		
2010	ARMENIA, Yerevan	15.4.- 18.4.2010
WOMEN'S:		
IIHF WORLD WOMEN CHAMPIONSHIP		
2011	APPLICANTS: TBA	TBA
2012	USA	TBA
IIHF WORLD WOMEN CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISION I		
2011	APPLICANTS: CHINA, Beijing	2.4.- 10.4.2011
IIHF WORLD WOMEN CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISION II		
2011	APPLICANTS: FRANCE, Cannes or Bordeaux	Apr. 2011
IIHF WORLD WOMEN CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISION III		
2011	APPLICANTS TBA	TBA
IIHF WORLD WOMEN CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISION IV		
2011	APPLICANTS TBA	TBA
IIHF WORLD WOMEN CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISION V		
2011	APPLICANTS TBA	TBA
IIHF WORLD U18 WOMEN CHAMPIONSHIP		
2010	USA, Chicago	22.3.-28.3.2010
IIHF WORLD U18 WOMEN CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISION I		
2010	SLOVAKIA	April 2010, TBD
UNDER 20:		
IIHF WORLD U20 CHAMPIONSHIP		
2010	CANADA, Saskatoon, Regina	26.12.09-05.01.10
2011	USA, Buffalo, Niagara	26.12.10-05.01.11
2012	CANADA, Calgary, Edmonton	TBA
2013	APPLICANTS: RUS, SWE	TBA
2014	APPLICANTS: CAN	TBA
2015	APPLICANTS: USA	TBA
IIHF WORLD U20 CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISION I, Group A		
2010	FRANCE, TBA	14.12.- 20.12.2009
IIHF WORLD U20 CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISION I, Group B		
2010	POLAND, TBA	14.12.- 20.12.2009
IIHF WORLD U20 CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISION II, Group A		
2010	HUNGARY, TBA	13.12.- 19.12.2009
IIHF WORLD U20 CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISION II, Group B		
2010	ESTONIA, Narva	12.12.-18.12.2009
IIHF WORLD U20 CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISION III		
2010	TURKEY, Istanbul	04.01.-10.01.2010
UNDER 18:		
IIHF WORLD U18 CHAMPIONSHIP		
2010	Minsk, BLR	TBA
IIHF WORLD U18 CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISION I, Group A		
2010	DENMARK, TBA	TBA
IIHF WORLD U18 CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISION I, Group B		
2010	POLAND, TBA	21.3.- 27.3.2010
IIHF WORLD U18 CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISION II, Group A		
2010	ESTONIA, Tallinn	13.3.-19.3.2010

IIHF WORLD U18 CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISION II, Group B 2010	NETHERLANDS or UKRAINE	TBA
IIHF WORLD U18 CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISION III, Group A 2010	TURKEY, Erzurum	9.3.- 13.3.2010
IIHF WORLD U18 CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISION III, Group B 2010	APPLICANTS: TBA	TBA
OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES		
2010	CANADA, Vancouver	12-28.02.10
INLINE HOCKEY WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP		
IIHF IN-LINE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP		
2009	GERMANY, Ingolstadt	6.6.-14.6.2009
2010	SWEDEN, Karlstad	28.6.- 4.7.2010
IIHF IN-LINE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFICATION		
2010	TBA	TBA
IIHF CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP EVENTS (CHL not included)		
2009-2010 IIHF EUROPEAN WOMEN CHAMPIONS CUP (EWCC)		
First Round:	TBA	TBA
Second Round:	TBA	TBA
Final Round:	TBA	TBA
2009-2010 IIHF CONTINENTAL CUP		
First Round:	TBA	25.-27.09.09
Second Round:	TBA	23.-25.10.09
Third Round:	TBA	27.-29.11.09
Final Round:	TBA	TBA
NATIONAL TEAM BREAKS		
2009/2010 SEASON:		
1st International Break		Aug. 31 - Sept. 6, 2009
2nd International Break		Nov.2 - 8, 2009
3rd International Break		Dec. 14 - 20, 2009
4th International Break-		Feb. 8 -14, 2010
2010/2011 Season:		
1st International Break		Aug. 30 - Sept. 5, 2010
2nd International Break		Nov. 8 - 14, 2010
3rd International Break		Dec. 13 - 19, 2010
4th International Break		February 7 - 13, 2011
2011/2012 Season:		
1st International Break		Aug- 29 - Sept- 4, 2011
2nd International Break		Nov- 7 - 13, 2011
3rd International Break		Dec. 12 - 18, 2011
4th International Break		Feb. 6 - 12, 2012
OTHER INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENTS		
WINTER UNIVERSIADE		
2011	TURKEY, Erzurum	27.01-06.02.11
EUROPEAN YOUTH OLYMPIC WINTER FESTIVAL		
2011	CZECH REPUBLIC, Liberec	12-19.02.11
CONGRESSES		
IIHF SEMI-ANNUAL CONGRESS		
2009	TUNISIA, Tunis	17.-19.09.2009
2010	SLOVENIA, Portoroz	16.9.- 18.9.2010
2011	TURKEY, Istanbul	TBA
IIHF ANNUAL CONGRESS		
2010	GERMANY, Cologne	20.5.- 23.5.2010
2011	SLOVAKIA, Bratislava	12.5.- 14.5.2011
IIHF GENERAL CONGRESS		
2012	JAPAN, Tokyo	June 2012, TBA



Hungary will play in Division I next season, but had a great ride at the top level.

Russia is new king of IIHF World Ranking

■ The close of this year's men's and women's World Championships also brought new leaders to both IIHF World Rankings. Russia climbed its way from seventh-

place back when the World Ranking was started in 2004 and is now the king with 3200 points, 40 more than Canada, which slipped to second place.

2009 MENS WORLD RANKING

Rank	Country	Points	08 rank	move
1	Russia	3200	2	+1
2	Canada	3160	1	-1
3	Sweden	3095	3	0
4	Finland	3050	4	0
5	United States	2915	6	+1
6	Czech Republic	2915	5	-1
7	Switzerland	2725	7	0
8	Belarus	2660	9	+1
9	Slovakia	2635	8	-1
10	Latvia	2610	11	+1
11	Norway	2545	12	+1
12	Germany	2460	10	-2
13	Denmark	2445	13	0
14	France	2325	18	+4
15	Italy	2290	14	-1
16	Austria	2285	16	0
17	Slovenia	2190	15	-2
18	Kazakhstan	2165	19	+1
19	Ukraine	2135	17	-2
20	Hungary	2130	20	0
21	Japan	1965	22	+1
22	Poland	1940	21	-1
23	Lithuania	1810	23	0
24	Netherlands	1755	24	0
25	Great Britain	1695	29	+4
26	Croatia	1675	26	0
27	Estonia	1635	25	-2
28	Romania	1605	27	-1
29	China	1410	28	-1
30	Korea	1395	31	+1
31	Australia	1385	33	+2
32	Serbia	1365	30	-2
33	Belgium	1255	34	+1
34	Spain	1165	36	+2
35	Bulgaria	1160	32	-3
36	Israel	1070	35	-1
37	Iceland	1030	38	+1
38	Mexico	1025	37	-1
39	New Zealand	850	39	0
40	South Africa	790	42	+2
41	Turkey	750	41	0
42	Ireland	720	40	-2
43	DPR Korea	705	44	+1
44	Luxembourg	700	43	-1
45	Mongolia	515	45	0
46	Greece	440	46	0
47	Bosnia and Herz.	150	47	0
48	Armenia	70	48	0

■ On the women's side, the United States finds itself on top of the World Ranking for the first time in history after earning its second consecutive gold medal against Canada. Much like the Russian men, the American women's lead is slim with 30 points separating the top and second spots.

For Canada, the back-to-back silver medal finishes at both top events has taken its toll in the nation's World Ranking domination. Canada is the only nation to hold the top spot in both men's and women's, but without a strong showing in Vancouver 2010, that bragging right is in danger of becoming a mere historical footnote as other nations start to surge ahead.

■ Other big movers and shakers in 2009: The French men, who made the Qualification Round at World Championship and moved up four places and Great Britain, which had a similar four-point jump. The biggest loser among the top nations was Germany, which slipped two spots after a rough 15th-place finish in Bern.

2009 WOMENS WORLD RANKING

Rank	Country	Points	08 rank	move
1	United States	2960	2	+1
2	Canada	2930	1	-1
3	Finland	2785	3	0
4	Sweden	2745	4	0
5	Switzerland	2630	5	0
6	Russia	2610	6	0
7	China	2485	8	+1
8	Kazakhstan	2475	10	+2
9	Japan	2465	9	0
10	Germany	2420	7	-3
11	Norway	2195	14	+3
12	Czech Republic	2180	12	0
13	France	2170	11	-2
14	Latvia	2135	13	-1
15	Slovakia	2040	17	+2
16	Italy	1980	15	-1
17	Austria	1875	19	+2
18	PRK Korea	1775	20	+2
19	Denmark	1760	18	-1
20	Great Britain	1645	23	+3
21	Netherlands	1645	21	0
22	Slovenia	1075	16	-6
23	Australia	890	22	-1
24	Belgium	810	24	0
25	Croatia	785	30	+5
26	Hungary	785	25	-1
27	Korea	760	26	-1
28	New Zealand	690	27	-1
29	Iceland	685	31	+2
30	Romania	685	29	-1
31	South Africa	675	28	-3
32	Estonia	650	32	0
33	Turkey	600	33	0



Ak Bars Kazan of Russia's KHL League

Club Champions From A to Z

With the conclusion of the 2009 season also comes the hard-earned IIHF Honor Roll List of Club Champions from around the globe. Look below to see if your favorite team is among the elite global company:

- ASIAN LEAGUE: Nippon Paper Cranes
- AUSTRIA: Klagenfurter AC
- BELARUS: Yunost Minsk
- BELGIUM: HYC Herentals
- BRAZIL: Hipica de Campinas
- BULGARIA: Slavia Sofia
- CROATIA: Medvescak Zagreb
- CZECH REPUBLIC: Karlovy Vary
- DENMARK: Sonderjyske Vojens
- ESTONIA: Tallinn Stars
- FINLAND: JYP Jyväskylä
- FRANCE: Grenoble
- GERMANY: Eisbären Berlin
- GREAT BRITAIN: Sheffield Steelers
- HUNGARY: Alba Volan
- ICELAND: Skautafelag Reykjavikur
- INDIA: Ladakh Scouts
- ISRAEL: HC Hertzliya
- ITALY: Bolzano Foxes
- JAPAN: Seibu Prince Rabbits
- KAZAKHSTAN: Barys Astana
- LATVIA: Liepajas Metalurgs
- LITHUANIA: Energija Elektrenai
- NETHERLANDS: HYS The Hague
- NORWAY: Valerenga Oslo
- POLAND: Cracovia Krakow
- ROMANIA: SC Miercurea Ciuc
- RUSSIA: Ak Bars Kazan
- SERBIA: Partizan Belgrade
- SLOVAKIA: HC Kosice
- SLOVENIA: Acroni Jesenice
- SPAIN: FC Barcelona
- SWEDEN: Färjestad Karlstad
- SWITZERLAND: HC Davos
- TURKEY: Polis Akademisi
- UKRAINE: Sokil Kyiv
- UNITED STATES (college): Boston University



Yunost Minsk of Belarus

RESULTS SUMMARY

IIHF World Championship

Berne & Kloten SWITZERLAND April 24 - May 10

Preliminary Round - Group A

Belarus - Canada	1-6	(0-2, 0-0, 1-4)
Slovakia - Hungary	4-3	(1-0, 2-1, 1-2)
Slovakia - Belarus	1-2	(0-0, 0-2, 1-0) PS
Canada - Hungary	9-0	(4-0, 2-0, 3-0)
Hungary - Belarus	1-3	(0-1, 1-0, 0-2)
Canada - Slovakia	7-3	(3-0, 3-1, 1-2)

Canada	3	3	0	0	0	22-4	9
Belarus	3	1	1	0	1	6-8	5
Slovakia	3	1	0	1	1	8-12	4
Hungary	3	0	0	0	3	4-16	0

Preliminary Round - Group B

Germany - Russia	0-5	(0-3, 0-0, 0-2)
Switzerland - France	1-0	(1-0, 0-0, 0-0)
Switzerland - Germany	3-2	(1-1, 1-1, 0-0) OT
Russia - France	7-2	(5-1, 1-1, 1-0)
Russia - Switzerland	4-2	(1-2, 1-0, 2-0)
France - Germany	2-1	(2-1, 0-0, 0-0)

Russia	3	3	0	0	0	16-4	9
Switzerland	3	1	1	0	1	6-6	5
France	3	1	0	0	2	4-9	3
Germany	3	0	0	1	2	3-10	1

Preliminary Round - Group C

United States - Latvia	4-2	(1-1, 2-1, 1-0)
Sweden - Austria	7-1	(3-0, 0-1, 4-0)
United States - Austria	6-1	(1-0, 1-1, 4-0)
Latvia - Sweden	3-2	(0-1, 2-0, 0-1) PS
Austria - Latvia	0-2	(0-1, 0-0, 0-1)
Sweden - United States	6-5	(0-1, 2-2, 3-2) OT

United States	3	2	0	1	0	15-9	7
Sweden	3	1	1	1	0	15-9	6
Latvia	3	1	0	1	1	8-12	5
Austria	3	0	0	0	3	2-15	0

Preliminary Round - Group D

Norway - Finland	0-5	(0-3, 0-1, 0-1)
Czech Republic - Denmark	5-0	(1-0, 3-0, 1-0)
Czech Republic - Norway	5-2	(3-0, 1-2, 1-0)
Finland - Denmark	5-1	(1-1, 2-0, 2-0)
Denmark - Norway	4-5	(2-2, 1-1, 1-1) OT
Finland - Czech Republic	4-3	(1-2, 2-1, 1-0)

Finland	3	3	0	0	0	14-1	9
Czech Republic	3	2	0	0	1	13-6	6
Norway	3	0	1	0	2	7-14	2
Denmark	3	0	0	1	2	5-15	1

Qualifying Round - Group E

Switzerland - France	1-0	(1-0, 0-0, 0-0)
United States - Latvia	4-2	(1-1, 2-1, 1-0)
Russia - France	7-2	(5-1, 1-1, 1-0)
Latvia - Sweden	3-2	(0-1, 2-0, 0-1) PS
Russia - Switzerland	4-2	(1-2, 1-0, 2-0)
Sweden - United States	6-5	(0-1, 2-2, 3-2) OT
Russia - Sweden	6-5	(2-2, 1-1, 2-2) OT
Switzerland - Latvia	1-2	(0-1, 0-0, 1-0) PS
United States - France	6-2	(2-0, 3-2, 1-0)
France - Latvia	1-7	(0-1, 0-2, 1-4)
Russia - United States	4-1	(3-1, 1-0, 0-0)
Switzerland - Sweden	1-4	(0-1, 0-1, 1-2)
Latvia - Russia	1-6	(0-1, 1-3, 0-2)
Sweden - France	6-3	(3-0, 2-3, 1-0)
United States - Switzerland	3-4	(0-1, 3-1, 0-1) OT

Russia	5	4	1	0	0	27-11	14
Sweden	5	2	1	2	0	23-18	10
United States	5	2	0	2	1	19-18	8
Latvia	5	1	2	0	2	15-14	7
Switzerland	5	1	1	1	2	9-13	6
France	5	0	0	0	5	8-27	0

Qualifying Round - Group F

Belarus - Canada	1-6	(0-2, 0-0, 1-4)
Norway - Finland	0-5	(0-3, 0-1, 0-1)
Slovakia - Belarus	1-2	(0-0, 0-2, 1-0) PS
Czech Republic - Norway	5-2	(3-0, 1-2, 1-0)
Canada - Slovakia	7-3	(3-0, 3-1, 1-2)
Finland - Czech Republic	4-3	(1-2, 2-1, 1-0)
Belarus - Norway	3-2	(0-1, 1-1, 1-0) OT
Canada - Czech Republic	5-1	(3-0, 0-0, 2-1)
Finland - Slovakia	2-1	(1-0, 0-1, 0-0) OT
Czech Republic - Slovakia	8-0	(4-0, 4-0, 0-0)
Finland - Belarus	1-2	(0-1, 1-0, 0-0) PS
Norway - Canada	1-5	(1-3, 0-2, 0-0)
Belarus - Czech Republic	0-3	(0-0, 0-2, 0-1)
Slovakia - Norway	3-2	(2-0, 0-1, 0-1) OT
Canada - Finland	3-4	(1-2, 1-1, 1-0) PS

Canada	5	4	0	1	0	26-10	13
Finland	5	2	2	1	0	16-9	11
Czech Republic	5	3	0	0	2	20-11	9
Belarus	5	0	3	0	2	8-13	6
Slovakia	5	0	1	2	2	8-21	4
Norway	5	0	0	2	3	7-21	2

Relegation Round - Group G

Germany - Denmark	1-3	(1-1, 0-0, 0-2)
Austria - Hungary	6-0	(1-0, 3-0, 2-0)
Germany - Austria	0-1	(0-0, 0-1, 0-0)
Hungary - Denmark	1-5	(1-0, 0-2, 0-3)
Hungary - Germany	1-2	(1-1, 0-1, 0-0)
Denmark - Austria	5-2	(1-2, 1-0, 3-0)

Denmark	3	3	0	0	0	13-4	9
Austria	3	2	0	0	1	9-5	6
Germany	3	1	0	0	2	3-5	3
Hungary	3	0	0	0	3	2-13	0

Austria & Hungary are relegated to 2010 World Championship, Division I
 Note: Germany cannot be relegated as host of the 2010 World Championship

Playoff Round

Russia - Belarus	4-3	(0-0, 3-3, 1-0)	QF
Finland - United States	2-3	(0-0, 2-3, 0-0)	QF
Canada - Latvia	4-2	(0-0, 3-1, 1-1)	QF
Sweden - Czech Republic	3-1	(0-0, 2-0, 1-1)	QF
Russia - United States	3-2	(0-0, 2-2, 1-0)	SF
Canada - Sweden	3-1	(1-0, 2-0, 0-1)	SF
Sweden - United States	4-2	(0-0, 2-1, 2-1)	B
Russia - Canada	2-1	(1-1, 1-0, 0-0)	G

Final Ranking

1. Russia	9. Switzerland
2. Canada	10. Slovakia
3. Sweden	11. Norway
4. United States	12. France
5. Finland	13. Denmark
6. Czech Republic	14. Austria
7. Latvia	15. Germany
8. Belarus	16. Hungary

Tournament Directorate Awards

Best Goalkeeper:	Andrei Mezin - Belarus
Best Defensesman:	Shea Weber - Canada
Best Forward:	Ilya Kovalchuk - Russia
MVP:	Ilya Kovalchuk - Russia

Europeans in NHL down

■ Despite the fact that there was a slight increase in the number of European players in the NHL this past season, the percentage dropped for the seventh straight year. Some 243 Europeans played at least one game during the 2008-09 regular season, up by one from last year's 242 and way down from the all-time high of 300 in 2003-04.

There were, however, 974 players in the league this past season, making European representation just 24.9 percent, down from 25.7 last year and well down from 2001-02 when 30.3 percent of NHLers came from Europe.

The Czechs continue to lead the way with 57 players in the league, and Sweden is right behind with 54. Finland ranks third with 42 and Russia fourth with 36. Slovakia has 18 players in the NHL. Ironically, the number of Russians increased from 32 in 2007-08 despite the fact that last year was the start of the new KHL, a league that hoped to lure many of its own players home.

■ These top five nations represent 85 percent of European talent, but 12 other nations were also represented in the league: Germany (8), Switzerland (6), Belarus (4), Denmark (4), Latvia (4), Austria (3), Ukraine (2), France (1), Kazakhstan (1), Lithuania (1), Norway (1), Slovenia (1).

Tampa Bay leads the way with 15 Europeans, followed by Detroit (14), Washington (13), Columbus (12), Toronto (11), Florida (10) Montreal (10), and Phoenix (10). At the low end, Anaheim and Calgary had three Europeans each.

The decline of representation is not surprising because the majority of players who get to the NHL make it through the Entry Draft. A decline in Euros drafted has occurred also since 2001. That year 142 of 289 players selected (49.1 percent) were European. That number has progressively declined, and in 2008 only 45 of 211 (21.3 percent) came from Europe.

The rookie numbers for '08-'09 reflect all of the above trends as well. There were 168 players who skated in the NHL for the first time this past season. Canada led the way with 83 of that number, and the United States was second with 42.

■ Of the 10 European countries to develop a rookie this year Sweden was top with 10 players, Finland had 9. Rounding out the numbers were Czech Republic (7), Russia (6), Denmark (2), Latvia (2), Slovakia (2), Switzerland (2), Austria (1), Germany (1). In all, 42 of 168 (25 percent) first-timers came from Europe.

Of course, if the NHL has 168 rookies coming in it also has about the same number of players moving out. In fact, 173 players who appeared in 2007-08 did not play in 2008-09. So, where did they go? Well, 28 either retired or did not play (injury, lack of club interest, etc.), and the majority (57) played the season in the AHL, some players hoping to make it back to the big tent; others knowing this would be where they'd be playing most of their career.

■ As for the European leagues, departing NHL players had two preferences—the KHL and Switzerland. Some 36 players from the NHL in '07-'08 were in the Russian league last year, but what is unusual is that only eight of that number were Russians "coming home" to their new league. The rest were imports from around the hockey world (i.e., North America and Europe). Switzerland attracted 16 players, and most of the remainder went to Sweden, Finland, and Germany.

Paul Kelly - The most important man you've never heard of

By Lucas Aykroyd & Andrew Podnieks

■ ■ **Meet Paul Kelly, a man that defines 'behind the scenes.'** As the executive director of the NHLPA, nearly every mover and shaker in hockey would like to steal five minutes of his time, yet he remains anonymous to the average fan and tends to stay out of the spotlight. Recently, he addressed the IIHF Congress during the World Championship and also sat down to answer a few questions from Ice Times.

□ How do you see hockey growing?

It's important to press into other geographic areas. We'd like to see the sport grow more in the Far East, China, unusual places like Australia, Israel, maybe South America, the non-traditional places. We'd like to help promote growth. It will be difficult and will take a long time, but if we make appearances, televise games, we can gain a foothold. There are a number of tensions we have to get through, but the IIHF can take a leadership role. René Fasel has done an effective job doing that, and he has to keep doing that. I think the Olympics are a big part of that. There is no bigger event to expose our sport to non-traditional countries. In the United States following the Miracle on Ice in 1980, there was a spurt in hockey, and we hope Vancouver will do the same.

So if the players want to go to Sochi, how do you get the NHL on board?

Between now and Sochi, our Collective Bargaining Agreement comes to an end, and another one has to be put in place, so there will be a window of opportunity to negotiate terms, and one of the items will clearly be the Olympics, and not just Sochi, but beyond. Maybe the new CBA won't have provision to go to the Olympics, or, more likely, we will convince the NHL that this is the way to go and it will be written into the CBA. I've spoken to many owners and general managers who want to go to the Olympics. But there are people, for very legitimate reasons, who say that to take a break in a critical part of the NHL season for two weeks is not good business. That said, the Olympics are such an important vehicle to promote the game and the sport that it shouldn't be a substantial issue to overcome.

Is there something we can learn from soccer where the World Cup isn't viewed as competition to pro leagues but something that is complementary?

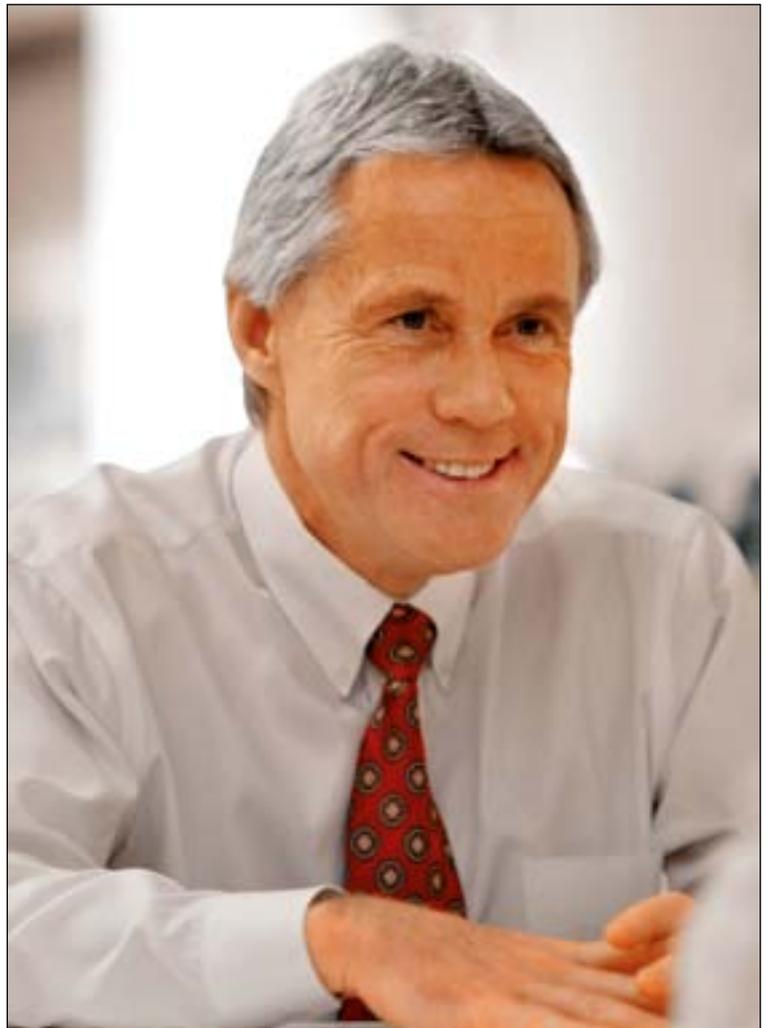
We strongly support the regular, periodic playing of a World Cup of Hockey. Somehow we need to blend the three big events, the Olympics, the World Championship, the World Cup, and do it in a way that is good for hockey. You can over-saturate the market. I think holding the World Championship in an Olympic year is probably too much. It makes more sense if we hold it every two years and not overlap with the Olympics. I'd like to see it so that every year there is one major event. I'm a proponent of breaking the NHL season every year for two weeks, every February. One year we should do the Olympics, one year we should do something special for hockey, hold a worldwide youth tournament, a hockey summit, then the World Cup, maybe in Europe one year and North America the next. That said, the NHL doesn't share my view right now. Everybody's got to give a little for the greater good.

One of the issues we're seeing become more important is insurance because player contracts are so large now. What are your views about handling this?

That is a difficult issue. We don't support putting restraints on contracts. We believe there should be maximum flexibility by NHL general managers to sign guys to long-term contracts. If you have Alexander Ovechkin, you want him to be part of your team for as long as you can. He has single-handedly grown the sport in Washington and the eastern United States. So, if the Capitals want to sign him to a long-term deal, God bless them. That said, I know insurance companies won't insure past a certain number of years, six years, and when you get contracts that run into tens of millions of dollars, I understand that is a daunting financial problem. We somehow have to figure out a way to pool our resources so we can come at it from a position of strength and self-insure.

There are always some players in the NHL who are eligible for the World U20s, but clubs won't release them. Is there interest among the players to include a clause in the next CBA to allow these players to go if they so desire?

I tracked that closely this year because I knew a lot of the young players who were playing for NHL teams had played successfully in the World Juniors. I can tell you that once



WICKED SMART: NHLPA Executive Director Paul Kelly has picked up the pieces after the NHL lockout. The Boston native, and lawyer, has proven to be well versed on both international and league issues and recently attended the World Championship in Switzerland.

those guys cross that threshold and are playing for the Toronto Maple Leafs or whatever, that their focus is playing for their NHL team. I don't think they would have liked to be pulled out of that environment and gone to the World Juniors for three weeks.

One thing that the IIHF wants, and that you aren't in favour of, is extending the two-year period for signing drafted European players to four years. Why are you opposed to this?

We believe that players should be treated equally, regardless of what country they're from. We don't see a reason why Russian and European players should be treated differently than North American players and be exposed to a larger signing window. I have heard the argument that players from some European countries are believed to mature later than their North American counterparts. I don't know if that is accurate or not. We're for fairness across the board. Getting the signing window to two years was the product of long, detailed negotiations. It's fully supported by our membership.

If a NHLer signs with a KHL club, for instance, are you happy for the player? Or is the PA only intended for active NHL players under contract?

We represent players, so any time a player can end up in a situation that's good for him and his family, we're happy for him. If Jaromir Jagr, at the end of his career, is able to get a contract that pays him handsomely to play hockey in the KHL, we're fine with that. I don't think there are a large number of NHLers who would consider playing in the KHL. I think it would be difficult for many guys from the U.S. or Canada to play in any other city than Moscow or St. Petersburg. Yes, there'll be three or four or five guys every year, and that's fine. We wish them well. I understand Richard Zednik, who played for Florida last year, has committed to the KHL. He's opened up a spot for another young guy to come in and take his NHL role.

What about the Victoria Cup? How do you see this event evolving?

We hope it stays as it is. The NHLPA strongly supports the CHL. We think it's good for hockey. I know the NHL strongly supports it as well. My understanding is that the NHL had a chance to show its financial support to the CHL. We're not in a position as a union to do that, but if we can show support to the CHL and European hockey by having one of our NHL teams participate in the Victoria Cup, then that's something we'll do. Finding one of our stronger, high-profile teams, like the Rangers last year or the Blackhawks this year, to represent the NHL is a good balance. It makes for exciting hockey.

