

iceTimes



Granlund's goal immortalized, pgs. 4-7

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Thank you Slovakia, see you in Finland!



Photo: Matthew Manor / IHOIF-Images

THE BLUE WAVE: Finland, seen here in celebration following their 6-1 gold medal victory over neighbours Sweden, will be defending their championship on home ice next year. The Swedes will co-host.

16-year wait finally over, but now the home pressure is on



The first time a Finnish team didn't include any of the 1995 gold medal heroes, they became World Champions again. The Changing of the Guard – and a 16-year wait – was finally over.

RENÉ FASEL EDITORIAL

■ ■ The last player from the historic 1995 team – the first Finnish men's IHF World Champion – to step down from Team Suomi was defenceman Petteri Nummelin who ended his international career in Germany 2010 with his 15th IHF World Championship.

With the Changing of the Guard complete, Finland could finally end 16 years of frustration which included six gold medal game losses in major championships. Although the general perception in the hockey world is that Finland "always" loses the important games against archrival Sweden, the fact remains: the two times Finland has become World Champion, Tre Kronor were defeated on both occasions.

■ ■ Although 16 years sounds, and is, a lot, other countries have been waiting longer for a golden repeat. Canada went without a gold medal between 1961 and 1994 (33 years), Czechoslovakia's historic win in Prague 1972 ended a winless streak of 23 years, while Sweden's surprising 1987 victory came 25 years after the mythological gold in Colorado Springs in 1962.

The longest waiting record among the seven nations who have been men's IHF World Champions belongs to the United States, who last won gold in 1933 (not counting Olympics).

These historic flashbacks remind us that winning does not come easy. What is definitely not easy in our flagship event, is winning at home. With the 75th IHF World Championship in Slovakia

in the books, we have to go back to Moscow 1986 to find a team (Soviet Union) that won gold on home ice.

So the pressure is on the newly crowned World Champions as they will be hosting the 2012 tournament, followed by Sweden in 2013. Will the home-ice curse end in any of the two championships?

■ ■ A team that hasn't had to wait as long for a repeat is the United States women's team. Since ending Canada's eight-in-a-row unbeaten streak in 2005, the U.S. have won four out of the last five World Women's and now three in a row. The latest win came after a thrilling overtime victory over Canada in Zurich, just a couple of days before the men's championship started in Slovakia. And just like Finland's men, the newly crowned women's champions will get the opportunity to defend their title at home in 2012.

They say that the season following an Olympic year can be somewhat of a "hangover". I cannot disagree more. Our post-Vancouver season started with the World Juniors in Buffalo and it was a magnificent success. The men's U18 in Germany in April were perhaps the best "World Juniors Light" so far in the event's 13-year history. These were followed then with the great events in Zurich and in Bratislava/Kosice.

With this I would like to thank the organizers of all 27 IHF World Championship events for an excellent job in 2010-2011. You all deserve a summer of rest and relaxation. And wouldn't you know, in 2012 we already start the positioning for seeding for the 2014 Olympics in Sochi.

René Fasel
IHF President

IIHF CONGRESS RECAP

Russia's 2016 bid boosted by visit from PM Putin

■ The 2016 IIHF World Championship will be held in Russia's two biggest cities, Moscow and St. Petersburg, from April 29 to May 15. No vote was needed at the annual congress in Bratislava as the other candidates, Denmark and Ukraine, withdrew their bids, making the approval a mere formality.

Russia's bid was bolstered with a surprise visit by Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, who after the ensuing press-conference was presented with a Russian national team jersey No. 16 by IIHF President René Fasel.

■ Russia and the Soviet Union have hosted the IIHF World Championship six times – five times in Moscow and once in St. Petersburg. The 2016 IIHF World Championship will be the first

IIHF event hosted in two Russian regions. The arenas are well-known to hockey fans. Moscow's 13,577-seat arena Sports Palace Megasport will be the main venue and offers an additional practice sheet. The arena was built in view of the 2007 IIHF World Championship and then called Khodynka Arena.

■ The games in St. Petersburg will be played at the 12,300-seat Ice Palace, originally built for the 2000 IIHF World Championship.

Denmark (Copenhagen & Herning) announced to bid for 2017 instead. Latvia (Riga) announced that they will bid for 2017 as well.



Vladimir Putin received a Russian jersey from IIHF President René Fasel.

Photo: Matthew Manor / IIHF-IIHF Images

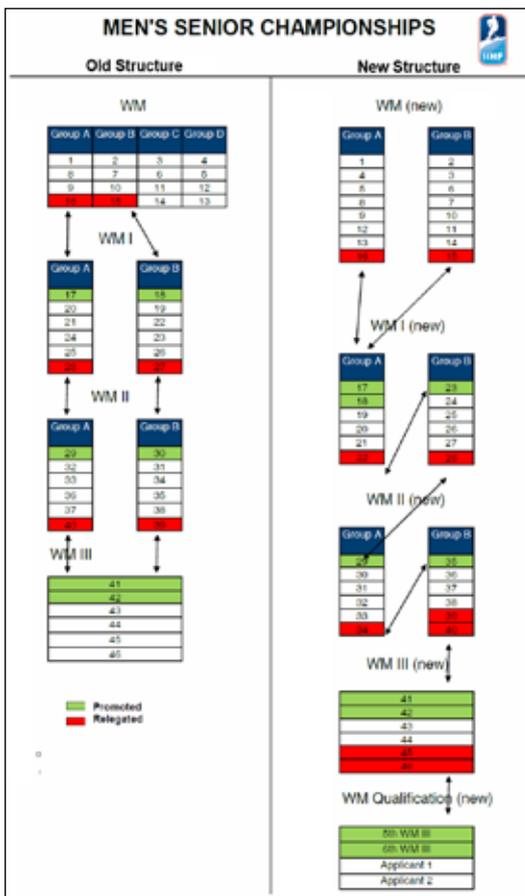
Changes in World Championship structure

■ The Extra-Ordinary Congress unanimously approved the first major format change in the structure of the IIHF World Championship program since its last reform in 2000. It affects all events in all categories of the Division I level and down to Division III.

From the season 2011-2012, the events in all categories will be structured vertically, which means that the Division I groups A and B will be two separate tiers, same as the Division II groups A and B and eventual Division III groups.

Previously, the 12 teams of each division played in the same tier divided into two equally strong groups.

■ The best six teams of any division will be seeded into Group A and the following six teams in Group B. This in order to



increase parity and the number of competitive games.

In the men's category, the best two teams from the Division I Group A will be promoted to the Top Division. The last-placed team of next year's Division I Group A event will move down to Group B, while the best Group B team will promote up to Group A.

Accordingly, the best Division II Group A team in next year's event will be promoted to the Division I Group B and the last-placed team of that group (see illustration with the example of the men's category).

■ Another major change is that only one team (earlier two) will be relegated from the Top Division of the U20 and U18 categories and only one team will be promoted to the Top Division.

■ **AUSTRIA:** Christian Yngve will coach the Austrian women's national team next season. He will replace Miroslav Berek in this position. The 47-year-old signed a two-year contract and will lead Austria through two World Women's Championships as well as the Olympic qualification events in 2012-2013. He was Sweden's first coach when the IIHF World Women's Championship was introduced in 1990. In his last event he led the women's national team to its first ever medal in a world tourney at the 2002 Olympic Winter Games.

■ **BELARUS:** Underperformance at the recent World Championship caused a series of coaching changes, including Belarus coach Eduard Zankovets, who resigned last month following the team's 14th place finish and near-relegation.

■ **CANADA:** Michael Bruni was elected chair of the board by acclamation at Hockey Canada's Annual General Meeting on May 28, taking over from Ken Corbett, who concluded a term of over two years as chair of Hockey Canada's board of directors. Hockey Canada has also announced that Don Hay of the WHL's Vancouver Giants will coach the Canadian national junior team at the 2012 IIHF World U20 Championship.

■ **GERMANY:** Jakob Kölliker was named new national team coach of Germany. He succeeds Uwe Krupp, who left after five years to become a head coach and sport director with Kölner Haie. Kölliker was coaching the Swiss U20 national team for 11 years and he was an assistant coach for the men's national team for 15 years.

■ **ISRAEL:** The Ice Hockey Federation of Israel has announced the election of Konstantin Batchikov as the Federation President. Sergei Matin was chosen as General Manager and Lihu Ichilov will serve as General Secretary.

■ **LATVIA:** The Latvian Hockey Federation released the entire team staff of the men's national team after Latvia's 13th-place finish at the 2011 IIHF World Championship where they escaped relegation only in the last game. Head coach Olegs Znaroks, assistant coaches Harijs Vitolins and Leonids Beresnevs, and general manager Sandis Ozolins were relieved from their duties.

■ **RUSSIA:** The Russian Hockey Federation announced the release of national team head coach Vyacheslav Bykov and assistant coach Igor Zakharkin. A new coaching staff will be named later. The announcement followed the end of the 2011 World Championship, where Russia finished fourth after losing the semi-final against Finland 3-0 and the bronze medal game to the Czech Republic 7-4.

■ **SLOVAKIA:** The Slovak Ice Hockey Federation announced that Glen Hanlon will not return as the national team head coach, after the host Slovak team won just two games and finished out of the playoff round in the 2011 World Championship.

■ **SWEDEN:** Jörgen Lindgren leaves the position as General Secretary of the Swedish Ice Hockey Association to become the CEO of the Swedish Hockey League. Lindgren will replace Peter Gudmundson as head of the league.

■ **IIHF:** The number of Europeans in the NHL is the lowest in ten years. In the 2010-11 season, 223 Europeans (22.8%) played in the NHL, down from 300 in 2004 (30%). Sweden topped the list of most Euros with 63.

Notice for women's hockey project

The IIHF will be undertaking the largest women's hockey development project in its history with the introduction of the Athlete Mentorship Program (see pg. 11)

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An IIHF study of all men's championship results (senior, U20, U18) showed that between 49 and 68 per cent of the games ended with a goal difference of five or more goals in the 2010-2011 season. The majority of these uncompetitive games were played against nations not completely fulfilling the minimum participation standards.

In the women's senior category, where the program has already been structured vertically, the equivalent number of lopsided games was only 30 per cent. The situation on the men's side was urging for a change which the congress, in consequence, approved. (MM)



Photo: Jukka Rautio / IIHF-IIHF Images

2011 HONOREES: The IIHF Hall of Fame inducted six new members on May 15 at a ceremony in Bratislava, Slovakia. From left to right: Alena Weismann and Blaka Modra accepted the honour on behalf of their late father Bohumil Modry, and Jana Alexander received the award in honour of her father Ladislav Trojak. Sweden's Tord Lundström was on hand to accept his induction, while Doru Tureanu, who was unable to attend due to illness, was represented by Romanian Ice Hockey Federation president Barna Tanczos. Former USA women's hockey player and Olympic gold medalist Karen Bye, Paul Loicq award winner Yuri Korolev, and former Finland player and coach Kalevi Numminen were honoured as well.

Kyrgyzstan becomes 70th IIHF member

Hockey interest increasing following Asian Winter Games success

■ The Annual Congress in Bratislava granted Kyrgyzstan membership in the International Ice Hockey Federation as the 70th member nation. Kyrgyzstan was welcomed unanimously as an associate member. Congress also changed Argentina's member status from affiliate to associate.

Kyrgyzstan, a Central Asian country of about five million inhabitants, became independent in 1991 following the break-up of the Soviet Union.

The Ice Hockey Federation of the Kyrgyz Republic lists 218 registered players from six clubs in as many cities. There are three ice arenas in the capital of Bishkek – one with an international size ice sheet (60 x 30 metres) and 900 seats – and additional natural ice rinks throughout the mountainous country.

Gornyak Ak-Tuz became Kyrgyzstan's new champion in March after defeating 2010 champs Khan Tengri Bishkek 15-2 in the gold medal game. It was the third time a national championship was conducted in Kyrgyzstan.

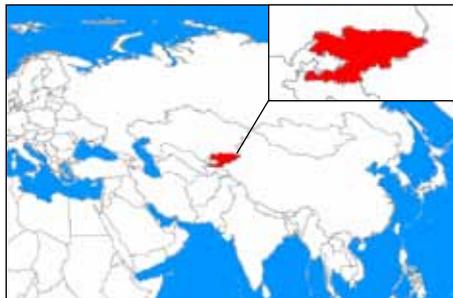
One youth club, Ilbirs Bishkek, has taken part in the championship of neighbouring Kazakhstan since 2010.

■ Ice hockey was introduced in Kyrgyzstan in the Soviet era when kids saw idols like Kharlamov, Mikhailov, and Tretyak on television, but it started to become an organized sport in the mid-2000s.

Kyrgyzstan had its international debut in the recent Asian Winter Games in Astana, Kazakhstan, where it won the second-tier event (Premier Division) with a 6-0 record, finishing sixth overall in men's ice hockey at the event.

"After the success at the Asian Winter Games, the interest in ice hockey has increased in Kyrgyzstan," said Anvar Omorkanov, the federation's president who was also one

of the players on the national team. "We believe that we will raise this wonderful, dynamic sport in Kyrgyzstan to a new level. We need to educate a new generation of hockey players and our priorities are to develop youth hockey, the national championship, construct ice rinks and establish a professional club."



KYRGYZSTAN FACTS
 Population: 5,587,443
 Area: 199,951 sq km
 Location: Central Asia, west of China, south of Kazakhstan
 Capital City: Bishkek



Photo: IIHF

An outdoor game in the mountainous landscape of Kyrgyzstan.

Olympic format and qualification approved

Big change in women's seeding

■ The Congress approved the format of the Olympic ice hockey tournaments of the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, Russia, and the qualification structure.



For the men's event the format stays the same. The best nine teams of the 2012 IIHF Men's World Ranking (determined after the 2012 IIHF World Championship) will be qualified directly. The remaining candidates will have to go through a qualification tournament.

The 12 Olympic teams will be seeded into three four-team groups. The eight teams with the best records advance to the quarter-finals.

■ For the Olympic women's ice hockey tournament a major change was approved.

The tournament will include eight teams as in 2010 (Russia plus five automatically qualified nations according to the 2012 IIHF Women's World Ranking and two qualifiers), but Group A in Sochi will consist of teams ranked 1-4 while Group B will be comprised of teams ranked 5-8. (In Vancouver, the two groups were seeded equally).

Quarter-finals: 3A-2B & 4A-1B, semi-finals: 1A vs. winner 4A/1B, 2A vs. winner 3A/2B.

The Final Olympic Qualification for the men's and women's events will be played 7-10 February 2013, the Olympic Pre-Qualification 8-11 November 2012.

Party like it's

By Risto Pakarinen

HELSINKI – It was like a high school reunion gone wild. Or like going to see a remake of a favourite movie and still loving it, with the new cast and all.

An estimated 100,000 people gathered in downtown Helsinki to welcome the 2011 World Champions home, just like in 1995, and to celebrate Finland's win over Sweden, just like in 1995. Even if none of the players on the team were the same – the first time Finland's World Championship team didn't include any of the 1995 world champions – some of the artists and the MC were the same.



Mikael Granlund's goal against Russia was so remarkable that Finland has put it on a postage stamp.

With the IIHF World Championship Cup shining in the sun, the players were introduced to the crowd, and defenceman Anssi Salmela invited President Tarja Halonen to a dance. Then she presented the team with the Key-Flag, a symbol of a job well done, and a product of high-quality, issued by the Association for Finnish Work, an expert organization that promotes the success of Finnish companies and entrepreneurship.



A five-goal deluge in the third period put Sweden away for good.

Photo: Jukka Rautio / IIHF-IIHF Images

And then they all sang "Den Glider In", the 1995 Stockholm tournament's official tournament song that the Finns hijacked to be their own after the first World Championship.

In the 16 years between the gold medals, Finland had been close, having played in the final four times, but came up short each time. The nation was hungry for a new gold,

especially since Finland had just three medals in the last nine tournaments, and none in Jukka Jalonen's first two as head coach. Of course, the Olympic bronze helped a little.

In a tournament in which big nations stumbled along the way, Team Finland wasn't completely immune to trouble. Against Latvia, Russia, and Germany, they had to take the longest route, the shootout, to get the points, which turned their game against Slovakia into a must-win game. They won it 2-1.

For once, the Finns had the bounces go their way. Not only when they got to meet Norway in the quarter-final, but also in their must-win game against Slovakia. And their game against Germany when Tuomo Ruutu tied the game with less than six minutes remaining in the regulation time with a shot that hit the side of the net, bounced up, hit Dennis Endras's pants and went in.

"Sometimes when you get scored on, the bench goes all quiet and energy disappears, but for us, it was the opposite. We got louder and gave each other energy. And when we had the lead, we kept on playing our game," said Tuomo Ruutu.



Photo: CTK / Kärnämyr Michal

The World Championship trophy will stay in Finland, until next year when the 2012 tournament will be hosted by

With no margin for error, preparation becomes key in a tournament such as this.

This time Finland had done their homework. The coaching staff was prepared for any eventuality, to the point that when Russia scored two goals in the span of 11 seconds in the teams' first game in the tournament, they didn't hesitate to pull goaltender Petri Vehanen just 4:37 into the game.

After the game, Jalonen said that he had told Vehanen in advance that he would get pulled, if the team didn't give him support so that he wouldn't have to waste any energy before the quarter-final, their next game.



Photo: Matthew Manor / IIHF-IIHF Images

60 minutes and six goals later, the celebrations could finally begin.

Vehanen responded, and got scored on only twice in Finland's three playoff games.

But the preparation extended beyond line changes and scouting of opponents. Jalonen invited players to his first camp seven weeks before the tournament. All in all, seven players made the journey from the first camp, via exhibition games, to the World Championship, and to the stage on the Helsinki Market Square, across the street from the Presidential Palace.

One of them was Jarkko Immonen, the tournament's leading scorer with nine goals and 12 points in nine games. "The camp gave him a chance to get into an even better shape, and gain some confidence. He hadn't been as good as we had expected in the games during the season, but in this tournament, he was amazing," said Jalonen.

CHAMPIONSHIP RECAP

1995



Photo: Jukka Rautio / IHHOF-IHF Images

the Finns and Swedes, with the gold medal game to be played in Helsinki.

Immonen played on a line with his Ak Bars Kazan teammate Janne Pesonen, and Mikael Granlund.

Yes, Mikael Granlund. The young man with the move.

"They clicked. Immonen is a pure goal scorer, as we all know, and Granlund is a playmaker. Anybody with a high-quality shot will surely score a lot of goals playing with Granlund, regardless of the league," Jalonen said.

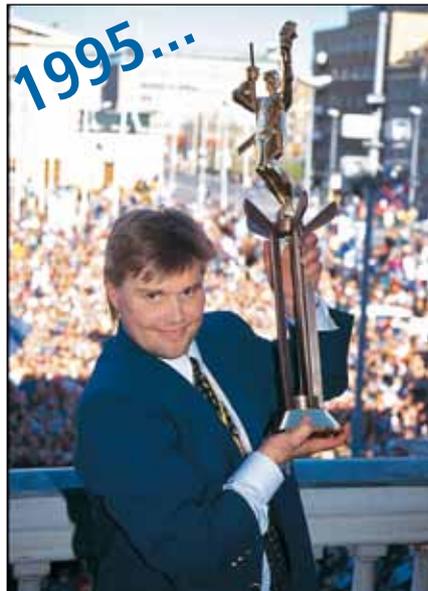
This time, too, Finland had what all champion teams need: depth. Behind Immonen and Granlund, second in team scoring with nine points in nine games, Finland had team captain Mikko Koivu (eight points) and Ruutu (six goals in nine games).

Jalonen also used four defensive pairings throughout the tournament, to make sure that his defencemen had the energy to battle with the top players all the way to the end.

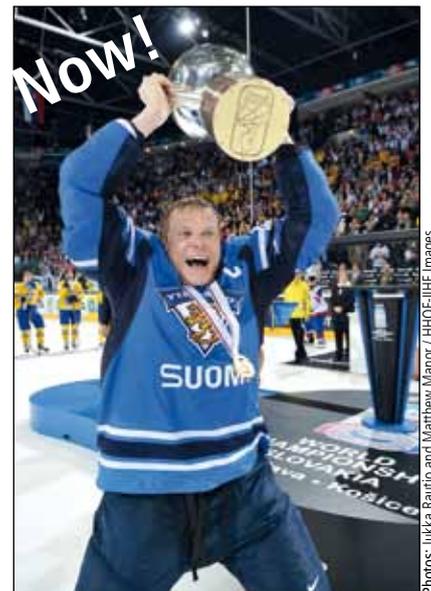
And of course, the team was the biggest star of the team.

"I felt that we were a tight group and we did everything together as a team, on the ice and off it. This team is full of fantastic guys," said Ruutu.

"I was 12 years old when Finland won its first World Championship, and I remember how they played "Den Glider In" at school the next day. It's quite a journey to get from there to here," he said, while cradling the championship trophy under his arm.



Finland captain Timo Jutila (left) helped bring Finland the Cup in 1995, 16 years later captain Mikko Koivu (right) has brought it back.



Photos: Jukka Rautio and Matthew Manor / IHHOF-IHF Images



From left: Mika Pyörälä, Lasse Kukkonen, Tuomo Ruutu, Sami Lepistö, Mikko Koivu, and the rest arrived at the celebration in style.

Photo: Jukka Rautio / IHHOF-IHF Images



President Tarja Halonen and 100,000 Finns came out to greet the team in Helsinki. Thousands more followed the Cup's tour around Finland.

Photo: Jukka Rautio / IHHOF-IHF Images

						THE IIHF DIRECTORATE AWARDS: Best Goalie: Viktor Fasth (SWE) Best Defenceman: Alex Pietrangelo (CAN) Best Forward: Jaromir Jagr (CZE)	 2011 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SLOVAKIA Bratislava • Košice
MEDIA ALL STAR TEAM: Goal: Viktor Fasth (SWE) Defenceman: David Petrasek (SWE), Marek Zidlicky (CZE) Forward: Patrik Berglund (SWE), Jarkko Immonen (FIN), Jaromir Jagr (CZE) MVP: Viktor Fasth (SWE)							

Ten lessons from Slovakia

No more fears for Finns, Norway and Germany rising, que

By Lucas Aykroyd

So what did it all mean? Now that there's been some time to digest the results from the 2011 IIHF World Championship, longtime correspondent Lucas Aykroyd, veteran of 12 World championships, offers 10 lessons we can take away from what was a highly memorable tournament in Slovakia.

1 Finland has overcome its fears

It wasn't just that the Finns captured their first world title in 16 years and second of all time. It was the way they did it.

Coach Jukka Jalonen's boys crushed archrival Sweden 6-1 at Bratislava's Orange Arena on May 15. And they didn't get bogged down by a history of failures against Tre Kronor: from the 2003 World Championship quarter-final in Helsinki where they allowed Sweden to rally from a 5-1 deficit and win 6-5, or the heartbreaking 3-2 loss at the 2006 Olympic final in Italy.

Instead, the Finns set records, becoming the first nation ever to score five goals in one period in a gold medal game, and the first to total six since Canada back in 1930. Throughout the tournament, the tone was set with the gritty leadership of veterans like Tuomo Ruutu and Mikko Koivu, who shone as Finland won three games by shootout en route to the final. But the flashy heroics of 19-year-old Mikael Granlund, who scored a "lacrosse goal" in the semi-final win over Russia, also heralded a bright future for the Nordic nation no longer synonymous with silver.



Photo: Jukka Rautio / IIHF-Images

PROGRESS: Norway upset Sweden and finished in sixth place, three spots up from Germany 2010.

2 Czechs can still ride veterans

When the Czech Republic failed to win a medal from 2007 to 2009, many assumed this hockey power had already seen its best days. But not so fast.

In Bratislava, the Czechs medalled for the second straight year. In 2010, they used just four NHLers but won gold; this time, nine players from the world's top league showed up to help claim bronze. Even though few players under age 25 made a noteworthy contribution – Michal Frolik of the Chicago Blackhawks and Jakub Voracek of the Columbus Jackets had their moments – it's clear the Czechs are still a force when they get their veterans on the same page. Apart from their 5-2 semi-final loss to Sweden, they arguably played the strongest overall tournament of any team this year.

3 Jagr remains an ageless wonder

One great benefit of Jaromir Jagr's three-year stint with the KHL's Avangard Omsk has been seeing him perform at the Worlds each spring. At 39, the legendary IIHF Triple Gold Club member was deservedly named a tournament all-star after posting nine points in nine games, including a quarter-final hat trick against the Ameri



Photo: Jukka Rautio / IIHF-Images

Jagr accepting the bronze medal.



Photo: Matthew Manor / IIHF-Images

GERMANS STEPPING UP: Germany began the tournament strong with a 2-0 shutout of Russia.

cans. Jagr may not have the speed of his Pittsburgh heyday, but his smarts and strengths are clearly intact. It's a pleasure to watch him play.

4 Canada can't just rely on youth

Hockey Canada president Bob Nicholson hit the nail on the head when he described Canada's failure to medal at the Worlds for the second straight year as "totally unacceptable."

The Hockey Canada braintrust made it clear before the tournament started that the goal was to win gold, not simply to use Slovakia 2011 as "training wheels for young stars" or an audition for the 2014 Olympics, which is a popular misconception in Canada. While it was great to see the likes of John Tavares and Jordan Eberle stepping up for the second year in a row, the fact is that the Canadians need better participation from Olympians and veteran stars if they're to stop sliding down the IIHF World Rankings. The motherland of hockey currently sits in fourth place.

5 Bykov wore out his magic

2011 marked the first time that Russia has not medalled under head coach Vyacheslav Bykov, as his inconsistent squad settled for fourth place. He paid the price by being released from his duties on May 26. Was it right to give the starting job to goalie Yevgeni Nabokov, who has never quite recaptured his mojo since getting pounded by Canada in the Olympic quarter-final? What's wrong with super-gunner Alexander Ovechkin, who recorded zero points in five games in Bratislava and was a liability defensively? Will this hockey superpower bring up enough young talent – not just up front, but on defence and in goal – to revitalize its fortunes at the next two Worlds leading into Sochi 2014? So many questions remain.

6 Better come ready to play

Most years, the Russians kick off this tournament by walloping some lesser opponent. But this year, a relentless, Uwe Krupp-coached German team humbled Russia 2-0 in Game One. And how about the Swedes? Sure, they've been the most consistent World Championship team since the IIHF introduced the playoff system in 1992, winning four golds, seven silvers, and six bronzes. But they weren't quite ready to play in their opener versus Norway, falling 5-4 in a shootout.

These results continued a trend from last year, when underdog host Germany edged the Americans 2-1 and Denmark beat Finland 4-1. It demonstrates the parity in modern international hockey: you can't take anyone for granted anymore.

7 Slovak hockey needs new blood

After Slovakia's closing 4-1 victory over Denmark, the ovation that the host country's fans gave captain Pavol Demitra in his final national team game was emotional and powerful. But the Slovaks' 10th-place finish also marked the end of an era in a darker sense.

With Marian Hossa, Marian Gaborik, and Jaroslav Halak in the lineup, the Slovaks had almost all their big contemporary star forwards. Even old favourites like Miroslav Satan and Jozef Stempel, who played on Slovakia's lone golden team from 2002, were on board.

CHAMPIONSHIP RECAP

Slovakia 2011

Questions for Russians, Swiss

But the names weren't enough. Ladislav Nagy led the team with three goals and five points, and coach Glen Hanlon was let go days after the tournament. Talent development in Slovakia has largely dried up since the start of the new millennium, and a renewed commitment to building facilities, making hockey accessible to young athletes, and keeping talent at home is a must if the glory days are ever to return.

8 Norway, Germany on the rise

Norway and Germany, finishing ahead of the United States and Slovakia? Ten years ago, it would have been hard to envision such results. But it goes to show what hard work, good coaching, and mutual familiarity among players can produce. The Norwegians improved on their ninth-place finish from last year, while Germany impressed despite falling to seventh place from fourth a year ago. These teams aren't just fluking out.



Fans gave Pavol Demitra an emotional sendoff.

Photo: Matthew Manor / IHHF-IHF Images

9 Switzerland, Belarus slipping behind

Two second-tier nations that may be looking for answers are Switzerland and Belarus. For a while, it looked like they were the most likely candidates to expand the "Big Seven" cluster of top hockey nations. But now, Switzerland has missed the quarter-finals two out of the last three years. Belarus, slated to host the 2014 IIHF World Championship, narrowly escaped relegation with a 14th-place finish, and coach Eduard Zankovets stepped down on May 19. Will these programs restore their forward momentum next year in Finland and Sweden?

10 Little guys can get it done

Since the last NHL lockout, diminutive dazzlers like Chicago's Patrick Kane and Tampa Bay's Martin St. Louis have had extra room to shine with tighter rule enforcement. The same trend was visible at the 2011 Worlds. If it wasn't Finland's Mikael Granlund working his playmaking magic from the half-wall, it was the Czech Republic's Roman Cervenka dippy-doodling through opposing defencemen or Norway's Mathis Olimb racking up assists. The big ice surface continues to suit smaller skilled forwards. It's nice to know more players will carry on the tradition of Saku Koivu and Daniel Briere.



Russia remains atop ranking

Champion Finland improves to second place

Russia remains first in the 2011 IIHF World Ranking, but Finland follows just 20 points behind after winning the 2011 Worlds.

The Finns move up from fourth to second place. Sweden remains third with as many points as Finland, but Finland is ahead because the result of the most recent tournament serves as a tie-breaker in the World Ranking.

Olympic champion Canada drops down from second to fourth place after being ousted in the World Championship quarter-finals two years in a row.

The Czech Republic stays in fifth place despite winning the bronze medal in Bratislava.

The United States remain in sixth and Switzerland in seventh position in the 2011 IIHF World Ranking.

Germany and Norway – the two surprising quarter-finalists at this year's World Championship – move up. Germany gains one place and is now eighth while Norway moves up two spots and follows in ninth place.

This area is the borderline for a bye to the 2014 Olympic Winter Games. The top nine teams of the IIHF World Ranking in one year, after the 2012 IIHF World Championship, will be qualified automatically for the Olympics in Sochi, Russia. Teams ranked tenth and lower in one year will have to battle for the remaining three spots in the 12-team Olympic men's ice hockey tournament through qualification events.

Slovakia fell two spots after finishing in a disappointing tenth place on home ice in Bratislava and is now tenth in the World Ranking as well. Belarus drops down one spot and is eleventh, followed by Latvia, Denmark, France and Austria.

The IIHF World Ranking includes 48 of the IIHF's 70 member nations that have participated in the IIHF World Championship Program in the last four years. It is based on the performances of the men's national teams in the last four IIHF World Championships (2008-2011) and the last Olympic Winter Games (2010) with higher value placed on the more recent tournaments. (MM)

Men's World Ranking



Rank	Country	Points	+/-
1	Russia	3650	0
2	Finland	3630	2
3	Sweden	3630	0
4	Canada	3595	-2
5	Czech Republic	3570	0
6	United States	3340	0
7	Switzerland	3240	0
8	Germany	3190	1
9	Norway	3175	2
10	Slovakia	3130	-2
11	Belarus	3025	-1
12	Latvia	2985	0
13	Denmark	2965	0
14	France	2765	1
15	Austria	2730	-1
16	Kazakhstan	2615	1
17	Italy	2605	-1
18	Slovenia	2565	1
19	Ukraine	2495	-1
20	Hungary	2460	0
21	Great Britain	2250	2
22	Japan	2245	-1
23	Poland	2215	-1
24	Lithuania	2125	0
25	Netherlands	2080	0
26	Estonia	1940	1
27	Croatia	1890	-1
28	Romania	1800	0
29	Spain	1785	1
30	Serbia	1755	-1
31	Korea	1605	2
32	Bulgaria	1405	-1
33	Mexico	1385	-1
34	Australia	1350	0
35	Belgium	1180	1
36	Iceland	1125	2
37	Turkey	1110	-2
38	New Zealand	1065	2
39	China	1060	-2
40	Israel	885	-1
41	Ireland	785	0
42	South Africa	740	0
43	Luxembourg	650	1
44	Greece	640	1
45	DPR Korea	485	-2
46	Mongolia	315	0
47	United Arab Emirates	165	0
48	Bosnia and Herzegovina	50	0

■ IIHF.com has broken the 250,000 visits-per-day barrier during the IIHF World Championship. The new record set in Slovakia 2011 is 258,147, an increase of 11.7% compared to Germany 2010. This number is the average in visits per day during the event which peaked on the semi-final day with almost 350,000 visits. The top five visiting countries were: Russia, United States, Finland, Canada, and Slovakia, followed by Germany, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Sweden and, somewhat surprisingly, Great Britain.

The stage is set: groups announced for 2012 championship

■ The two groups for the 2012 IIHF World Championship in Helsinki, Finland and Stockholm, Sweden (May 4-20, 2012) have been announced by the IIHF.

phase of the tournament. The best four teams in each group qualify for the quarter-finals which will be played intra-group.

It will be the first time in modern history that the men's IIHF World Championship will be co-hosted by two countries. Each team will play seven games in the round-robin

Helsinki	Stockholm
Finland	Russia
Canada	Sweden
USA	Czech Republic
Switzerland	Germany
Slovakia	Norway
Belarus	Latvia
France	Denmark
Kazakhstan	Italy



The top-seed team in each group plays the fourth-place team in the same group, and the teams finishing second and third play against each other. Winners of the quarter-finals will play the semi-final against a team in the other group. All semi-finals, and medal games will be played at the Hartwall Arena in Helsinki.

Schedule on www.iihfworlds2012.com

Undisputed champions

U.S. win gold again; top World Ranking



By Andrew Podnieks

The Olympic loss in Vancouver is all but forgotten. The United States confirmed its IIHF World Women's Championship supremacy by winning its third consecutive gold medal, while also overtaking Canada in the World Ranking as the undisputed No. 1.

Ever since breaking Canada's streak of eight consecutive women's titles with the historic win in Sweden in 2005, the American women have dominated the World Championship. Wins in 2005, 2008 and 2009 were followed up by yet another golden performance in 2011, this time thanks to Hilary Knight's championship winning goal at 7:48 of the 4-on-4 extra period in the gold-medal game giving the U.S. a 3-2 win over eternal rival Canada.

The win further cements the pattern of the United States being the World Championship dominant team in the last six years (losing the WW only in 2007), while Canada has been collecting Olympic gold medals, winning the last three (2002, 2006, 2010).

Finland re-confirmed its position as the No. 3 power in women's hockey by claiming the country's 12th bronze medal since 1990 (including Olympics and World Women's Championship). But this time it wasn't achieved against its most frequent bronze medal game partner, Sweden. The Finns faced stellar opposition from a surprising Russian team and needed an overtime goal from veteran Karoliina Rantamäki to win the game 3-2.

It was Rantamäki's finest moment in her 14th major women's event since debuting at the women's worlds in 1997. The 33-year-old forward has also played in all four Olympics with women's participation. It was Russia's best performance since winning bronze in 2001.



Finland's girls were all smiles after winning the bronze medal.

The 13th IIHF World Women's Championship was also a success for Switzerland, although it had reasons to be a little disappointed with the sixth-place finish. The Swiss scored the first major upset on day two of the event by



The U.S. team piles onto Hilary Knight moments after she scored the golden goal.

defeating Finland 2-1 on Stefanie Marty's overtime goal, and they were virtually in the semi-finals when enjoying a 3-0 third-period lead against Russia on April 22.



Team Russia played a thrilling game against Team Switzerland.

But in what was described as "perhaps the finest European women's hockey game ever played", Russia scored four late goals before Marty equalized with 43 seconds left only to see Tatyana Burina win it for Russia 2:58 into overtime. All that in front of an impressive and vocal crowd of 4,123 fans at Zurich's famous Hallenstadion.

Switzerland played another strong game against Sweden in the fifth-place game, coming back from a 2-0 deficit only to lose after a 14-shot shootout. The championship drew 28,437 fans, the second best number for a World Women's held in Europe, only about 500 fans less than the total two years ago in Hämeenlinna, Finland.

Slovakia's goalie Zuzana Tomcikova was named the championship's Most Valuable Player. She almost single-handedly kept her team in the top division with her sensational play throughout the tournament. Kazakhstan was relegated to Division I and will be replaced by Germany for the 14th IIHF World Women's Championship next year in Burlington, Vermont, USA (7-14 April, 2012).



Team Slovakia's Tomcikova: MVP

Back to where it all began: 2013 goes to Ottawa
Ottawa will host the 2013 IIHF World Women's Championship. Canada's capital city last hosted the inaugural IIHF World Women's Championship in 1990. The 2013 IIHF World Women's Championship will take place at Scotiabank Place – home of the NHL's Ottawa Senators – and the Nepean Sportsplex in April 2013, with more details to be announced at later dates.

Women's World Ranking



Rank	Country	Points	+/-
1	United States	2970	1
2	Canada	2930	-1
3	Finland	2800	0
4	Sweden	2700	0
5	Russia	2670	1
6	Switzerland	2620	-1
7	Kazakhstan	2475	1
8	Slovakia	2470	2
9	China	2385	-2
10	Germany	2355	1
11	Japan	2320	-2
12	Norway	2280	0
13	Latvia	2170	2
14	Czech Republic	2155	-1
15	Austria	2130	1
16	France	2105	-2
17	Italy	1950	0
18	Great Britain	1940	0
19	Slovenia	1385	0
20	Croatia	1375	0
21	Denmark	1370	1
22	Netherlands	1265	1
23	Bulgaria	1000	1
24	Australia	880	1
25	Hungary	835	2
26	Belgium	780	0
27	New Zealand	740	3
28	Korea	730	0
29	Iceland	705	0
30	Romania	675	1
31	South Africa	645	1
32	DPR Korea	595	-11
33	Turkey	560	1
34	Poland	500	new
35	Spain	480	new
36	Ireland	420	new
37	Estonia	130	-4

THE IIHF DIRECTORATE AWARDS:

Best Goalie: Noora Rätty (FIN)

Best Defenceman: Meaghan Mikkelson (CAN)

Best Forward: Monique Lamoureux-Kolls (USA)

MEDIA ALL STAR TEAM:

Goal: Zuzana Tomcikova (SVK)

Defence: Meaghan Mikkelson (CAN), Caitlin Cahow (USA)

Forward: Hilary Knight (USA), Hayley Wickenheiser (CAN), Michelle Karvinen (FIN)

World U18 Championship: Stars and Stripes earn the triple

U.S. junior hockey program snags third straight gold medal in exciting U18 tournament

By Adam Steiss

Junior hockey development in the United States continues to produce great results on the international stage, as Team USA won its third straight gold medal with a 4-3 overtime victory over Sweden at the 2011 IIHF World U18 Championship.

With their combination of size, speed, and grit, the Americans went undefeated through the preliminary round. It was a coming out party for young players such as JT Miller and Reid Boucher, who led the USA in scoring and played with a tenacity that rubbed off on the rest of the team.

Things got a bit tougher for the U.S. in the medal round. In the semi-final game against Canada, the Americans built up a 4-1 lead in the third period, only to see Canada get a goal, then pull its goalie twice in the final three minutes and score both times to tie the game. An overtime goal from U.S. forward Tyler Biggs sent the Americans to the gold medal game against Sweden, where they found themselves down 3-1 to the Swedes heading into the final frame. A goal by Connor Murphy and another by Boucher with just under

two minutes left kept them alive, and in overtime Murphy fired a blast that went off the crossbar and in, giving the Americans their sixth U18 gold medal and a disappointed Sweden its second straight silver.



U.S. forward Dan Carlson kisses the cup after winning gold.

Photo: Matthew Mumaghan / IIHF-IIHF Images

Russians dominate scoring table

As usual, Team Russia boasted a number of great offensive talents. The tournament's top three scorers were Russian, including top forward Nikita Kucherov — with 21 points in seven games — followed by Mikhail Grigorenko and Nail Yakupov. In all, the trio combined for 52 points, with

Kucherov's 21 eclipsing the previous scoring record set in 2009 by Finland's Toni Rajala.

Russia led all teams in scoring, and their six-goal output in the bronze medal game gave them the victory over the Canadians, who went home without a medal for the third year in a row.

Germany impressive on home ice

Blessed with a workman like attitude and overwhelming support from the hometown fans in Crimmitschau, Team Germany avoided the relegation round and rode to a surprise sixth place finish.

Opening the tournament with a 4-1 win over Switzerland, the Germans very nearly posted a huge upset against Russia, falling 5-4 in a shootout. A 4-0 shutout of the Slovaks sent Germany into the playoff round and a date against Canada in the quarter-final. In a wild and thrilling match, Germany stayed toe-to-toe with the Canadians, but fell just short 4-3. Though they missed a chance for a medal, the German team can take heart in the fact that their national program continues to show progress.

Hong Kong wins in Asia

By Martin Merk

■ ■ Hong Kong won the fourth IIHF Challenge Cup of Asia that took place in Kuwait City. The island becomes the third winner after Chinese Taipei (2008, 2010) and the United Arab Emirates (2009). The Challenge Cup was created for countries that do not participate in the men's category of the World Championship program.



Six teams took part in the round-robin event with 15 games this year.

Hong Kong had a tough opening schedule, having to mount a pair comebacks to win against the top-two seeded teams United Arab Emirates (5-4) and Thailand (7-5).

Those two wins paved the way for victory as India (15-0), Macau (13-0) and Kuwait (6-1) provided little resistance to Hong Kong's path to gold.



Team Hong Kong poses with the Kuwaiti organizers after winning the gold medal.

Photo: Majdy El Dakrouy

The United Arab Emirates secured the silver thanks to a 6-3 win against eventual bronze medalist Thailand on the last day. Host Kuwait finished in fourth place ahead of Macau and India.

■ Asia has seen lots of international ice hockey this year. Back in November Japan won the Women's Challenge Cup of Asia after a 3-1 win in the gold medal game against China on home ice in Nikko. Korea finished third. Earlier this year 17 teams took part in 41 ice hockey matches at the 2011 Asian Winter Games in Kazakhstan. The host nation won both the men's event in Astana and the women's tournament in Almaty.

In May Japan defended the title in the 2nd IIHF University Challenge Cup of Asia that was held in Changchun, China. Same as one year before the Japanese edged Korea in the gold medal game. Korea gave away an early 2-0 lead as Japan won the game 3-2. China defeated Chinese Taipei 8-0 in the bronze medal game.

Division I: Italy, Kazakhs move up

By Martin Merk

■ ■ After just one year in Division I the men's national teams from Italy and Kazakhstan made it back to the Top Division. Kazakhstan will travel to Helsinki for the 2012 IIHF World Championship while Italy will play at the other venue in Stockholm.

■ For a long time it didn't look promising for Italy in the Division I Group A. The results against underdogs Spain (2-0) and the Netherlands (3-2) in the first two games raised lots of doubts.

Host Hungary on the other hand was an offensive force in its first three games going into the deciding game against Italy, where the 8,723 fans at the Laszlo Papp Sportarena were treated to a great match.

North American-born forwards Michael Souza and Giulio Scandella made it 3-1 after the first period. After Balazs Ladanyi had cut the lead in the first period, the Hungarians came back. Goals from Ladislav Sikorcin and Martin Vas sent the game to overtime, but a hooking penalty with 45 seconds left in regulation time would prove costly.

With an extra skater Italy immediately put pressure on the Hungarian net until a long-range shot from Italy defenceman Armin Helfer went in off the crossbar in the top-right corner, leaving the Hungarians to settle for silver while Korea won its first ever Division I bronze.

■ Kazakhstan managed to overcome some tough opposition and go undefeated in the Division I Group B. Great Britain finished with the silver medal, Ukraine won bronze.



Italy returns to the IIHF World Championship after a year in Division I.

Photo: Andreas Wirth



Kazakhstan also won promotion to the top division.

Photo: Pavlo Kubanov

While the last game against host Ukraine was the most anticipated match in Kyiv, Great Britain proved to be a tougher challenge than in the past few years. The Brits defeated Ukraine 5-3 in the opening game, and they were even leading against Kazakhstan before the Kazakhs turned it to a 2-1 victory.

While Estonia and Lithuania could hardly keep up with the top three teams, Poland also challenged Kazakhstan until the last minute, but the Kazakhs kept their clean record with an empty netter for the 4-2 score.

On the last day only Ukraine could take away first place with a win in regulation time, and, indeed, the home squad was leading 2-1 after goals from Yuri Navarenko and Yuri Tymchenko after the second intermission.

But Andrei Gavrilin's game-tying goal with 7:38 remaining in the third period brought Kazakhstan at least one point — and the gold. Fyodor Polishuk's added the icing on the cake with his overtime goal.

"If you win something, it's always special, especially with your national team," said Kazakh forward Konstantin Pushkaryov. "It's twice as good."

Sweet emotions: IIHF championships in pictures



Team Italy shortly after winning a trip to the 2012 World Championship.

Photo: Andreas Wirth



The Aussies celebrate their U18 Div. III championship.

Photo: Chung, Feng Jung



Women's Div. I: Germany's Andrea Lanz works past China's Haijing Huang.

Photo: Rainer Gmäch



Against Finland, the Russian women fell just short of a medal.

Photo: Jana Chytilova / HHOF-IIHF Images



Men's U18 Div. IB: Denmark's Nicolai Meyer walks in and scores against Belarus.

Photo: Gregor Kojncic



Pure joy surrounds the Finnish women's team after winning the bronze medal.

Photo: Andre Ringuette / HHOF-IIHF Images



The opening ceremony of the 2011 Challenge Cup of Asia featured a performance by local Kuwaiti drummers.

Photo: Majidy El Dakrouy



The U.S. U18 team gathered together in the dressing room to reflect on their third consecutive gold.

Photo: Matthew Murnaghan / HHOF-IIHF Images



The Israeli men's team poses on the ice after winning the Div. III Championship.

Photo: South African Ice Hockey Association



When a technical glitch prevented the anthem from being played, the New Zealand women's Division IV team simply sang it aloud.

Photo: Elvar Palsson

The IIHF would like to thank its official Partners:
and supplier pool members:



14 countries involved in historic IIHF women's development program

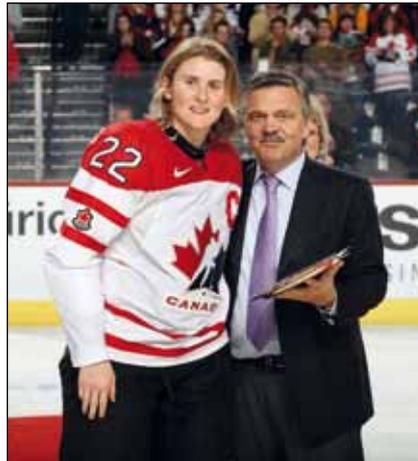
July 1, 2011 will mark the start of the most comprehensive IIHF women's hockey development initiative so far. Mentors and ambassadors from the top four countries will assist women's programs in nine other countries during two and a half years.

The IIHF Ambassador and Mentor Program (AMP) will create partnerships between some of the world's best women's hockey coaches and athletes and countries who are striving to become part of the world's elite.

■ The ambassadors and mentors come from the top four world ranked teams – USA, Canada, Finland and Sweden. The nine nations who will participate in this program are China, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Kazakhstan, Norway, Russia, Slovakia and Switzerland. Each of these countries will be assigned two Coach Mentors and two Athlete Ambassadors to build a relationship throughout the term of the program (which includes seniors and under-18).

For example; Former Canadian Olympic coach Shannon Miller will be a mentor for Russia, ex-NHL player Doug Lidster will be assisting the Czech Republic, while Finnish star Emma Laaksonen-Terho will be an ambassador for Kazakhstan.

During the program term (from July 1, 2011 till the end of January 2014) there will be communication every 2-3 weeks between the coach mentors & ambassadors and the coaches of both the senior and under-18 national programs.



Hayley Wickenheiser: will be a key figure within the program.

Photo: Andre Ringuette / HHOF-IIHF Images

"The best way to become successful is to have the opportunity to learn from someone who has already been successful," said Tanya Foley, the IIHF's Women's Program Manager and the one responsible for the launch of AMP.

"By assigning the same team of mentors and ambassadors to a country for a period of 2.5 years, the teams that will qualify for Sochi will have a resource that no team entering an Olympic Games has previously had," said Foley. "We

believe this will help teams be prepared for Olympic-level competition in a very positive way."

■ Language skills, previous positive relationships, and the specific needs of a country were factors in determining assignments. It was also mandated that still-active athletes and coaches were not assigned to a country their own national team would be playing against in the 2012 World Women's Championship.

By focusing on the top 14-ranked teams, it is the intention of the IIHF to provide the greatest boost to the nations with the best chances to qualify for Sochi 2014.

"While we do not believe that an equal balance will be seen by 2014, the AMP will be one of the most effective initiatives in bringing the nations as far as possible by that early date," said Foley.

Once the program is running smoothly, the IIHF will look at ways to expand into other nations who wish to improve or build their women's program. Later it will also be possible for the next group of countries to mentor IIHF members below them on the world ranking and to share their knowledge that they will be gaining through the initial stage of AMP.



For more information, go to IIHF.com/AMP

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

IIHF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

2012 IIHF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

Venues: Helsinki (Finland) & Stockholm (Sweden)
Dates: 4-20 May 2012

2012 IIHF World Championship Division I Group A

Venue: Ljubljana, Slovenia
Dates: 15-21 April 2012

2012 IIHF World Championship Division I Group B

Venue: Krynica, Poland
Dates: 15-21 April 2012

2012 IIHF World Championship Division II Group A

Venue: Reykjavik, Iceland
Dates: 12-18 April 2012

2012 IIHF World Championship Division II Group B

Venue: Sofia, Bulgaria
Dates: 2-8 April 2012

2012 IIHF World Championship Division III

Venue: Erzurum, Turkey
Dates: 15-21 April 2012

UNDER 20:

2012 IIHF World U20 Championship
Venue: Calgary & Edmonton, Canada
Dates: 26 December 2011 – 5 January 2012

2012 IIHF World U20 Championship Division I Group A

Venue: Germany (city TBA)
Dates: 11-17 December 2011

2012 IIHF World U20 Championship Division I Group B

Venue: Tychy, Poland
Dates: 12-18 December 2011

2012 IIHF World U20 Championship Division II Group A

Venue: Donetsk, Ukraine
Dates: 12-18 December 2011

2012 IIHF World U20 Championship Division II Group B

Venue: Tallinn, Estonia
Dates: 10-16 December 2011

2012 IIHF World U20 Championship Division III

Venue: Dunedin, New Zealand
Dates: 29 December 2011 – 4 January 2012

UNDER 18:

2012 IIHF World U18 Championship

Venue: Switzerland (TBC)
Dates: 12-22 April 2012 (TBC)

2012 IIHF World U18 Championship Division I Group A

Venue: Piestany, Slovakia
Dates: 11-17 April 2012

2012 IIHF World U18 Championship Division I Group B

Venue: Hungary (city TBA)
Dates: 11-17 April 2012

2012 IIHF World U18 Championship Division II Group A

Venue: Heerenveen, Netherlands
Dates: 31 March – 6 April 2012

2012 IIHF World U18 Championship Division II Group B

Venue: Novi Sad, Serbia
Dates: 17-23 March 2012

2012 IIHF World U18 Championship Division III Group A

Venue: Sofia, Bulgaria
Dates: 12-18 March 2012

2012 IIHF World U18 Championship Division III Group B

Venue: Erzurum, Turkey
Dates: 11-17 March 2012

WOMEN'S:

2012 IIHF World Women's Championship

Venue: Burlington (Vermont), USA
Dates: 7-14 April 2012 (TBC)

2012 IIHF World Women's Championship Division I Group A

Venue and Dates TBA

2012 IIHF World Women's Championship Division I Group B

Venue: Great Britain (city TBA)
Dates: TBA

2012 IIHF World Women's Championship Division II Group A

Venue: Slovenia (city TBA)
Dates: 25-31 March 2012

2012 IIHF World Women's Championship Division IIB

Venue: Seoul, Korea
Dates: 10-16 March 2012

2012 IIHF World Women's Championship Div. IIB Qual.

Venue: Spain (city TBA)
Dates: TBA

WOMEN'S UNDER 18:

2012 IIHF World Women's U18 Championship

Venue: Czech Republic (city TBA)
Dates: TBA

2012 IIHF World Women's U18 Championship Division I

Venue and Dates TBA

2012 IIHF World Women's U18 Championship Div. I Qual.

Venue and Dates TBA

IIHF INLINE HOCKEY WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

IIHF INLINE HOCKEY WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

2011 IIHF InLine Hockey World Championship
Venue: Pardubice, Czech Republic
Dates: 19-25 June 2011

2012 IIHF InLine Hockey World Championship

Venue: Ingolstadt, Germany
Dates: 1-7 June 2012

YOUTH OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES

2012 YOUTH OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES

Venue: Innsbruck and Seefeld, Austria
Dates: 12 - 22 January 2012

CONGRESSES

IIHF SEMI-ANNUAL CONGRESS

Venue: Istanbul, Turkey
Dates: 22- 24 September 2011



For updates and groups, visit to IIHF.com/2012

The first and only Finnish goldsmith

Jalonen: "It's something that will stay in the history books"

By Risto Pakarinen

Jukka Jalonen was The One, after all.

In Finland, head coach Jukka Jalonen has been hailed as a pioneer for years, thanks to the speedy hockey his club teams played, and the way he always seemed to get the most out of his players. Then something went wrong – Jalonen took over as head coach after the 2008 tournament in which he was Doug Shedden's assistant and his two first Worlds ended in a quarter-final loss – or did it?

Swedish Curt Lindström was the head coach in 1995 when Finland won its first world championship so you're now the first Finnish head coach to take his team to the gold. Did you realize that?

It's nice to be the first Finn, because it's something that'll stay in the history books, but Finland has been in the final many times before, and could have won it. It just goes to show how close the teams are at the top level. This time everything went our way.

Still, it was your team that went all the way.

The bulk of the work has been done at the clubs, and in the national team in the past. We had several players on the team who really wanted to win this time. History played a big part in our success.

Did you change anything in the way you prepared the team for this tournament, compared to your first two World Championships?

Well, we also had a great Olympic tournament there in which we did win a bronze medal, so I think we've had three pretty good tournaments in a row. We lost in a penalty shootout to the Czechs in 2010, but we played good hockey.

Everybody gets better with experience, so I'm sure that I, personally, learned how to live in the moment and how to make better decisions during the game. We also fine tuned our system a little.

What kind of system changes did you make and why?

We put a little more emphasis on defence and managed to get to the level where we were playing at our best. We played with eight defencemen throughout the tournament



The gold medal marked the culmination of a fantastic coaching career for Finland's Jukka Jalonen.

to make sure our players had the energy to battle with the top forwards of the world. We also made sure the communication and the interaction with the players was good.

The top teams are really close. Anybody can beat anybody any given day, it seems.

What kind of a role does chance play in a tournament like the World Championship?

Luck surely plays a part in a team's success, or, to put it in another way, to win anything, a team can't be unlucky. For example, in the gold medal game against Sweden, they had a power play in the second period, and [Patrik Berglund] deflected a shot so the puck hit the post. What if he had got it a few centimetres more to the right so it had gone in off the post? Maybe we could have turned it around, but it would have been a lot more difficult.

We were patient, we believed in ourselves – but we also got the bounces when we needed them.

Right after the final game, you told the media that one of the reasons for Jarkko Immonen's strong tournament – he was the leading scorer – was the fact that he had been on the pre-tournament training camp for weeks, and had got in a great shape. He wasn't the only one. How important was that camp?

I think we had seven or eight players who reported to the camp when we opened it, seven weeks before the tournament, and made the team. We also had over ten, or more than half the team, who joined us the week after, and were

together for about six weeks, and in hindsight, that was very important.

I don't think I realized it then, but it was important that the guys got to become a real team, and that they really knew our system, and could lead by example. Another thing that helped was that since the last weeks of the season are often just games, our camp gave the players a chance to get back into a great physical shape.

Finland had waited for the gold for 16 years, and there are many pessimistic voices preaching the end of Finnish hockey, basically. How do you see the future?

I've seen a lot of junior games, and I see a great future. We have Mikael Granlund, Sami Vatanen, Jani Lajunen had his breakthrough, Teemu Pulkkinen is very close, and behind them, we have Mikael's brother Markus, and several skilled players born in 1993, 1994, and 1995. Those players, together with a system that can be the best of the world, makes me an optimist.

What went through your mind when you saw Mikael Granlund score his lacrosse-style goal in the semifinal against Russia?

My mind went blank. My jaw just dropped and I probably slipped out a cussword, just out of disbelief. I saw that it was a goal right away, but when I saw the replay on the jumbotron, I saw how he stole the puck in the corner, and went around that other defenceman, and that



A soaking wet, happy Jalonen celebrates with his players in the dressing room.

I had missed. That whole sequence was a fantastic performance.

Finland is now number 2 in the IIHF ranking. How about that?

To me, that is proof that we've done things right in the past as well. That we're behind just Russia when you consider the last five major tournaments is a great achievement. It's fantastic.

The trophy is now on tour around the country, at the players' home towns. You'll get it in June, weeks after the win. Do you think there will still be a big crowd?

[Laughs]. We'll see. But, that's not important. Those who show up will surely be there one hundred percent.

Jukka Jalonen Fact File

Born: November 2, 1962 in Riihimäki, Finland
Coach, clubs: Ilves Tampere (1992-95), Lukko Rauma (1996-97), HC Alleghe, ITA (1998-99), Newcastle, GBR (1999-01), HPK Hämeenlinna 2001-07.
Coach, national team: Finland (assistant coach) 2007-08, Head coach: 2009-
 Won Finnish championship with HPK 2006
 Olympic Bronze with Finland 2010
 IIHF World Championship Gold with Finland 2011



For the full story, go to IIHF.com/Jalonen