

Old foes embrace challenge



Photo: Matthew Manor / IHOE-IIHF Images

SEE YOU IN 2012: Finland team captain Mikko Koivu consoles Swedish defenceman Niclas Wallin following the 2011 IIHF World Championship final. Will these two teams collide again on home ice?

Bitter on-ice rivals to join forces for historic 2012/2013 World Championships



Co-hosting of an IIHF World Ice Hockey Championship – for the first time since 1930!

RENÉ FASEL EDITORIAL

But while a few things might have changed in 82 years, I am convinced that the 76th edition of the IIHF's marquee event will be a success.

■ ■ It's not a coincidence that it is Finland and Sweden assuming the role of co-hosts for the first time since Chamonix (France), Berlin (Germany) and Vienna (Austria) split the 1930 World Championship between themselves.

The Finns and the Swedes have organized 15 IIHF men's Worlds in total, dating back to 1949 when Stockholm hosted it for the first time, while Finland's hosting premiere was in 1965. This makes these northern European countries two of the most experienced hosts of the tournament which has shaped international ice hockey for more than 80 years.

■ ■ But our history shows that hosting does not by any means translate to on-ice success. On page 7 you can see that although the two countries have combined to win ten Worlds' gold medals, none were accomplished on home ice.

Sweden has managed five silver medals on the nine hosting opportunities as their best result, while Finland, in six tries, has not been able to reach the podium. But this is not a Nordic phenomenon. May we remind all hockey fans that since 1986 in Moscow, when the Soviet team stormed through the tournament without losing a point, no team has managed to win the gold medal at home.

The 2012 championship will be the 25th try to break what has become known as the home-ice disadvantage. The pressure is of course on Finland, who are the main hosts with the final stages of the championship being played in Helsinki and who are, of course, the reigning World Champions after their splendid performance one year ago in Bratislava.

When was the last time a reigning World Champion managed to defend their title at home? For that you have to go back 33 years and 30 championships, when the Soviet Union won in Moscow in 1979.

■ ■ With two years left to the 2014 Olympics in Sochi, this championship will also determine which nine teams will get an automatic entry to the XXIII Winter Games, and which consequently will have to qualify. On the women's side (read about the 14th World Women's on page 4), five teams will earn automatic entry.

As usual, this will be determined by the IIHF World Ranking positions which will be calculated immediately following the respective gold medal games, in Burlington, USA on April 14 and in Helsinki on May 20.

As shown on page 9, the men's Pre-Championship Ranking shows that there are only 50 ranking points separating 7th placed Switzerland and 10th placed Slovakia, with Germany (8th) and Norway (9th) in between. The fight for the ninth spot – which guarantees Sochi 2014 participation – could be furious.

■ ■ As most of the hockey family knows, the 2012 men's World Championship will be played under a new format, the first radical playing system change since 1998. Thanks to the 2 x 8 team system (as opposed to the previous 4 x 4) all preliminary round games, up until the playoffs, are known as far as who-is-playing-who, which of course is a substantial advantage. There will also be more hockey. The total number of games has been increased to 64 from 56.

I wish all hockey fans a great season finale.

René Fasel
IIHF President

Hockey Forum in Barcelona

Stakeholders to discuss future of European ice hockey

ZURICH – The IIHF will organize a Hockey Forum in Barcelona on June 12-14, 2012. The event aims to involve all stakeholders in an open discussion on the current challenges facing European ice hockey.

"We felt that it is time to organize this unique event with all parties who feel they have a stake in ice hockey," said IIHF President René Fasel. "We want to have an open discussion around some key issues, especially focused on Europe, and to find a common plan about how to go forward."



"The focus will be on finding a format for a competitively and commercially viable top European club competition, how to integrate that with existing national team competitions and how to have the IIHF, the national associations, the leagues and the clubs working together around this."

"Governance structure, current and for the future, will also be a key point, as well as cooperation with the NHL, the NHLPA and the Canadian (Junior) Hockey League," said René Fasel.

After a hearing with the top-8 European leagues at the end of February, the decision was taken to seize the momentum and plan a forum in the summer.

A detailed event schedule along with a list of key presenters, panelists and complete registration and accommodation information will be announced within the upcoming weeks.

First glimpse inside Olympic arena

SOCHI – Sochi 2014 will be the first time that Russia will host the Olympic Winter Games, and preparations are well underway to get this Black Sea port ready to welcome the world.

For the first time, the IIHF can publish photos of the arena's interior where the rink and tribunes can be clearly identified.

The first test events that have been announced for the arena will be the Eurohockey tour (December, 2012) and the IIHF Ice Hockey U18 World Championship (April, 2013).

Members of the IIHF Facility Committee, led by chairman and IIHF Vice President Kalervo Kummola, recently attended a meeting in Sochi that included a tour of the Olympic sites. Of particular interest was the Bolshoi Ice Dome, the main hockey venue for the Games.



"It was amazing," said IIHF Facility Committee secretary and IIHF Event Development Director Cornelia Ljungberg. "It was half-done, there's still work to do on the inside, but on the outside it looks quite ready and the plaza in front was impressive."



The 12,000-seat arena is scheduled to be completed in September. The design of the Bolshoi Ice Dome is based on the image of a frozen drop, and will be principally silver once complete. Following the Games, it will serve as a multi-purpose sports and entertainment centre.

Above: Inside the Bolshoi Ice Dome
Below: The IIHF Facility Committee outside the arena

"This was a very encouraging visit as we are very confident that not only will everything be ready for the Olympics, but the main hockey venue will be ready for hockey one year ahead of the Olympic tournament," said Kalervo Kummola.

55,000 workers have been employed on what's been labelled the world's biggest construction site. Russia has had to build all the stadiums and infrastructure from scratch in a seven-year, \$30 billion project, making Sochi 2014 the most expensive Winter Games in history.

"It's incredible how many people were working on the sites, even on Saturday and Sunday and also during nighttime," said Ljungberg.

The entire Olympic infrastructure is the most compact in the history of the event, with a mountain cluster for skiing and sliding events and a coastal cluster just 40 kilometres apart. The Bolshoi arena will be located in the coastal cluster, among other features such as the Olympic Park.

The Park will connect up all competition venues for ice hockey, skating, and curling, and also includes the Central Stadium, which will host the opening and closing ceremony and will also serve as a football arena for the 2018 FIFA World Cup. An upcoming F1 track that will run through the entire site is also in the works.

Argentina, Mexico programs meet in historical exchange



History was written in February when two Latin American national teams faced each other for the first time ever, as a team of Argentine selections travelled to Mexico for a development camp and games.

Mexico – the only nation from that region in the World Championship program – and Argentina hope to improve the level of hockey by developing together.

Argentina iced both a men's and women's national team. The South American country has been an IIHF member since 1998, but was mostly known for inline hockey. But an international-size outdoor rink opened in Ushuaia in 2010.

"The support we received from the Mexican Ice Hockey Federation is very important for us as we share the same language and it is more affordable to travel to Mexico than to Canada or the U.S.," said Belén Urbaneja, the General Secretary of the Argentine Ice Hockey and Inline Hockey Association.

The Mexican men claimed bragging rights, defeating their Argentine counterparts 5-1 and 10-1. Argentina had a 3-3 record on their tour, winning against a club team and the Mexican U18 national team.

Having a women's national team was not only a premiere for Argentina, but also for Mexico. The Argentines had a 3-1 record against club teams before the Mexicans assembled their best players. Argentina won the first game 1-0, but Mexico outplayed Argentina in the second game, 7-1.

Both nations hope that the camp was just the beginning of more Pan-American co-operation, as contacts were established to Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Ecuador.

"I'm very pleased with the experiences we exchanged with the Argentine teams," said Joaquin de la Garma, the President of the Mexican Ice Hockey Federation. "I hope that we can repeat this experience also with other South American countries."

NEWS & NOTES

IIHF: The Swiss Federal Court has ruled in favour of the IIHF in the case involving SC Bern, where the Swiss club was seeking damages pertaining to the cancellation of the Champions Hockey League in 2009. After the IIHF announced the cancellation of the league, SC Bern approached the Court of Arbitration in Sport (CAS), claiming damages for alleged breach of their rights to participate in the second edition of the Champions Hockey League. On March 8, the Federal Court announced that the appeal of the IIHF has been approved and that the CAS does not have jurisdiction to hear this case.

"It is the decision which we were hoping for," said René Fasel. "We are obviously satisfied, but by no means in any triumphal way. We never wanted this to end up in any court. We always felt that bodies within the sports family should be able to solve these issues by sitting down and discussing face to face."

Great Britain: Eamon Convery has stepped down as President of Ice Hockey UK. Mohammed Ashraff is currently stepping in as interim President until elections take place in November 2012.

Finally, Phil and Boris are comrades

40 years after Summit Series: animosity gone, legacy remains

By Szymon Szemberg

MOSCOW – It took them four decades. But now the reconciliation process between Phil Esposito and Boris Mikhailov is officially over. The 40-year anniversary of the 1972 Summit Series in Moscow was one big love affair. And a memorable one.

Nobody realized it then. When Team Canada and the Soviet national team skated off the Luzhniki Arena ice on September 28, 1972, after the eighth and last game of the Summit Series there was no trophy, no medals and no official recognition of anything.

Today we know. It was eight games that changed the game forever. The Summit Series was the genesis of modern hockey and during the 26 amazing days in September 1972 it shattered many myths and set the stage for the next 25 years of the best rivalry that the international game has ever had.

The beautiful, bitter, enlightening, frightening, politically charged and breathtaking rivalry ended with the 1987 Canada Cup. Everything after that, it was only about hockey.

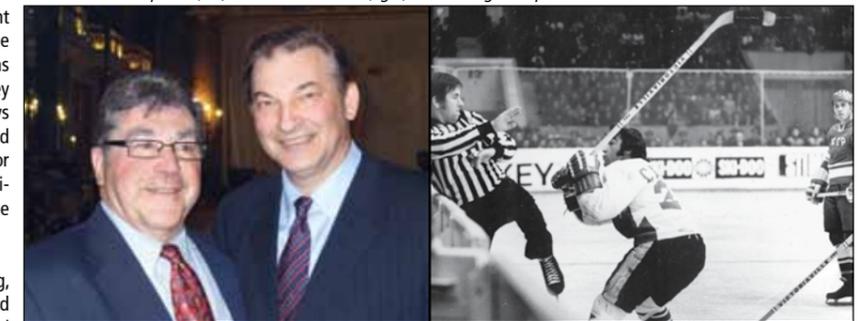
What was presumed to be a one-sided exhibition series, started on September 2 in Montreal with a shocker of the century; Soviet Union-Canada 7-3 and it ended 34 seconds after Paul Henderson had scored Canada's winning goal in Moscow 26 days later.

The games were the most fierce ever played as it was about so much more than just hockey. And the two major combatants were Canada's Phil Esposito and Boris Mikhailov of the Soviet team. During a talk with IIHF.com in Moscow 40 years later, Esposito's words conveyed the sense of hostility:

"I have never held a gun and I have never killed a person," said Esposito. "But in 1972 – and that scares me



Phil Esposito (left) and Boris Mikhailov (right) share a laugh at a press conference in Moscow.



Left: Former Canadian forward J.P. Parisé and Russian Federation President and former Soviet goaltender Vladislav Tretiak. Right: Parisé is best known in the series for threatening referee Josef Kompala with his stick in the final game.

to hell today – I was prepared to kill to win that series."

"The Stanley Cup is a reward for doing your job well. The 1972 series were about something which was so much

The IIHF Council has decided to honour both teams of the 1972 Summit Series with a new award which will be presented as part of the IIHF Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony in Helsinki on May 20. The award will officially recognize both 1972 Team Canada and Soviet Union as "Teams of Distinction" for creating several defining moments which now are part of hockey history and for the eight games which started the era of modern ice hockey. Vladislav Tretiak will receive the honour on behalf of the Soviet team, while Phil Esposito will be his Canadian counterpart.

bigger and meant so much more for an entire nation."

The three day festivities in Moscow at the end of February, where altogether 15 players from both 1972 teams participated, showed once again that time erodes bitterness. After the veterans were received by soon-to-be President Vladimir Putin at the Kremlin, Esposito and Mikhailov showed up at a press conference (with Phil wearing a Team Russia jacket!) at the GUM department store on Red Square. You'd think that they had been best friends forever.

But Esposito being Esposito, he had to remind his former Soviet antagonist about an injustice for which the period for prosecution must have expired:

"I told Boris as soon as I saw him: 'You are the only one who speared me in the groin and got away with it.' To which Mikhailov replied: 'Phil wasn't exactly an angel on the ice.'"

Mikhailov also reminisced also how quickly expectations changed within the Soviet camp after the first game in Montreal and the 7-3 score which shook the entire hockey world:

"Before the game, our team manager said that if we have to lose, we must do it with dignity. After the game he said that we can't lose the next one."

Pat Stapleton, one of Team Canada's most solid defencemen in the series: "The eight games raised the competitive level of each player. And we got a rude awakening in 1972. Before that, Canadians felt that they were the only ones who could play the game. But the Soviets showed that they had the proper training to play the game at the highest level."



Development Camp ramps up program for 2012

The International Ice Hockey Federation is pleased to announce the details for this season's Camp Program, which will be held at the Vierumäki Sport Institute in Vierumäki, Finland from 15-22 July, 2012.

For the first time, two camps will be held in the same place and at the same time. In the summer of 2012, the IIHF Women's Hockey Development Camp will be held in conjunction with the Women's U18 High Performance Camp.

Entering into the second phase of the road "To Sochi and Beyond" – the strategic plan for the improvement of women's hockey – the IIHF is expanding its efforts from addressing just the women's nations ranked 1-14 to encompassing the entire hockey world. The IIHF will now look at the women's hockey nations ranked lower than 14 while still continuing many of its programs for the top nations for the development and improvement of women's hockey towards and beyond the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi.



All the programs are led by selected IIHF Mentors and Instructors.

Each camp will operate its own schedule and programs, but use the expertise and experience present at both camps to create valuable crossover opportunities. The High Performance Camp will see athletes from the top nations invited, while the Development Camp will feature athletes from any eligible IIHF member nations wishing to participate.

Hockey Development Camp

This season's camp will be the fourth Women's Hockey Development Camp. This season players will be girls born in 1996 and 1997.

More than 250 participants from five continents representing 30 nations will be taking advantage of this unique development and educational event for players, coaches, instructors, managers, administrators and directors.

High Performance Camp

In its first season, the IIHF's Women's Hockey program focused its efforts on the nations ranked 1-14 in the IIHF Women's World Ranking. Programs included a Senior and U18 High Performance Camp, a Women's Coaching Symposium, the IIHF Athlete Ambassador and Coach Mentor Program (AMP), the IIHF 12 Nations Invitational Tournament Series, among others.

Now, entering the second season of these programs the 2012 U18 High Performance Camp will focus on player development both on and off the ice.

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Swedish troika eyes more hardware

Holmlöv, Martin, Rundqvist Tornado-ed in Europe, set to storm into Burlington

By Martin Merk and Henrik Manninen

The others joined her back to Europe after graduating at the University of Minnesota.

"Kim and I have visited St. Petersburg and Moscow," said Rundqvist. "Otherwise we watch KHL hockey, visit the bowling alley, eat out at times, go to the tanning salon and watch movies on the laptop."

Once Europe's leading women's hockey nation, the Swedish women's national team hasn't medalled in Women's World Championships and Olympics since astonishingly claiming the silver medals in Turin 2006 after ousting the U.S. from the Olympic semi-finals, and since winning world bronze one year later in Winnipeg.

Since then Finland has covered the spot of the top European team – four times in a row.

Three of Sweden's top players prepared for the 2012 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship in Burlington, Vermont, differently this year. They went to play a pro season in... Russia!

With two years to go until the Olympics on home ice, women's hockey is improving in Russia and more is being invested into the sport. And in the fierce rivalry between the two top teams Tornado Moscow Region and SKIF Nizhni Novgorod, not only local players are paid to focus on hockey, but the teams can also afford world-class imports.

Tornado from Dmitrov, a suburb 65 kilometres north of downtown Moscow, did so by signing – among others – three Swedish national players with goalkeeper Kim Martin and forwards Elin Holmlöv and Danijela Rundqvist.

"I am living my dream here," said Rundqvist after transferring from the CWHL's Burlington Barracudas from Ontario to Russia. "I am now able to live 100% as a hockey player and also be able to pay my rent and expenses and it feels great. The club is very professionally run and I am delighted to have been offered such an opportunity."



Above: Tornado Moscow's championship drive was helped by three Swedish imports. (left to right: Rundqvist, Martin, Holmlöv)

"What is very positive here is that we have time to focus on playing the game," said Holmlöv. "We have a very strong team with around ten national team players from Russia, the three of us playing for Sweden, Jana Kapustova from Slovakia, Melissa Jaques from Canada and a bunch of talented up-and-coming players, so we are developing during our practice sessions, which are very intense."

Ice practice in the morning followed by a gym session was the daily routine before the players had some free time.



Tornado also overcame the biggest hurdle and defeated the Swiss 2-1 thanks to Slovak forward Jana Kapustova's game winner in the third period.

It was the third time in four years the trophy went to Russia. And for the Swedish trio going east also meant a chance to win the European club title.

In mid-March they added the Russian title to their CVs before joining the Swedish national team for its Women's World Championship preparation. Now all focus is on winning a medal. For Holmlöv, Martin and Rundqvist, this means overcoming their new friends from Russia, archrival Finland, and challenging the favourites from North America.

Women's World Championship Preview

All systems go for Burlington 2012

With the 2012 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship set to take place in Burlington, Vermont, the three time defending champions Team USA will get to battle for a fourth straight gold medal on home ice.



One thing is for sure, the task facing the European squads is daunting. Virtual locks for the world championship include Meghan Agosta for Canada, who set a women's league record in the CWHL with 41 goals and 80 points in just 27 games and was named the league's most valuable player. Aside from Agosta, veterans such as Hayley Wickenheiser, Gillian Apps and Tessa Bonhomme will be lacing up the skates for the maple leaf at the world championship.

But as with every top level world women's championship, the same question still comes up: will this be the year a European women's team finally breaks the streak of North American dominance of this event?

Aside from Canada and the US, the next top teams would be Finland, Russia, and Sweden. The Finns seemed best placed to steal a game away from the North Americans, coming close in tight games against the Canadians in Zurich and Winterthur last year.

The strength of the team begins in the net with goaltender Noora Räty, who posted a 1.97 GAA and a 95.71 save percentage through five games in last year's tournament. But Finland, like other teams from Europe, must be able to put pucks in the net in order to win, and so far haven't been able to match the firepower of the Canadian and American forwards. In the last world championship, seven of the top ten points leaders were from North America.

But Canada is tired of silver at this tournament, having dropped three straight World Championship finals to the USA. "We've had a few silver medals at the world championships the last number of years and it's been disappointing," said forward Jayna Hefford. "As you know when you play for Canada and you play hockey, gold is what's expected from the players as well as the rest of the country."

As for Team USA, the team is ready to show off its skill in its own backyard, for the first time since the 2001 world championship in Minneapolis. They will have the opportunity early on to remind the Canadians who is on top of the women's hockey ranking. The two teams face each other in their very first game of the championship. (AS)

Czechs flying to Ottawa in 2013

First senior team to qualify for top division

VENTSPILS – In an evenly matched contest at the 2012 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship Division I Group A in Latvia, it was the last-seeded Czech team that won gold and earned promotion to the 2013 World Women's in Ottawa.

It will be the first time ever for a Czech team to appear in the Top Division of that category. The Czechs were promoted to the Division I Group A only one year ago, which means that they went up two tiers within just two years.

About half of the Czech players had experience from the U18 Women's World Championship where the country has been playing in the Top Division for five years, including a bronze-medal win. Now they can harvest the fruits in the senior category.

"It's amazing. We just came up from one level below," forward Lucie Povolova said. "We wanted

to win, but we didn't expect to get to the highest division that fast."

The team recovered from an opening-day loss against Japan and won the remaining four games in a tournament where four teams still had the chance to win the gold on the last day. But the Czechs succeeded after taking over first place on the fourth day of the event – ahead of Norway and Japan.

"I'm really looking forward to going to Ottawa," said Radka Lhotska, who was selected best goalkeeper of the tournament. "It was our dream and now it comes true." (MM)



The Czech ladies will compete in the top division next year.

Hockey week in India

Challenge Cup of Asia forges new territory

DEHRADUN – International hockey made its debut on the Indian sub-continent in March when the 2012 Challenge Cup of Asia took place in Dehradun, a city of 580,000 inhabitants roughly 230 kilometres north of New Delhi.



Rather known for field hockey, ice hockey is believed to have started in India in the '80s when soldiers in the colder Himalaya regions used field hockey sticks and tins as a puck to play the game. National championships often take place at a demanding altitude at outdoor rinks that can often fill with up to 4,000 fans.

In 2010 ice hockey took another step in India when the first indoor ice rink opened in Dehradun, the capital city of the state of Uttarakhand in north India.

Two year later it found itself hosting the Challenge Cup of Asia, a men's tournament designed to give a showcase event for Asian nations that don't participate in the



It's not the first place you think of when you hear "ice" or "hockey" - but the United Arab Emirates is coming along in developing players and facilities. Above: Captain Juma Al Dhaheeri lifts the Challenge Cup, the UAE's second.

IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship program or that play at Division III level in the program.

The tournament was a resounding success for the Ice Hockey Association of India. Spectators were able to witness India win its first ever international ice hockey

game with a 5-1 victory over Macau, and score a team-record five goals in the process. The victory came after Macau had beaten Indian earlier in the tournament.

"We were so close in the last game that I knew we could pull through," said US-born head coach Adam Sherlip following the game. "I'm incredibly happy and very proud of the team."

With a shutout performance from goaltender Khaled Al Suwaidi, the United Arab Emirates defeated Thailand 3-0 in the final game to claim the gold. The victory gives the UAE its second gold medal in the tournament. The shutout also gave Al Suwaidi a perfect 0.00 goals-against record through four games.

At the youth level, the 2012 IIHF U20 Challenge Cup of Asia goes on in Seoul, Korea, on 26-30 May 2012, while the U18 Challenge Cup took place in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, in early April.



Team India captain Tundup Naimgal carries India's flag onto the ice in the opening ceremony.



Above: Chinese Taipei versus Malaysia. Below: the arena in Dehradun



Coach Adam Sherlip hugs team manager Gyal Wangyal after India's first international victory.



Prior to the men's tournament, the 2012 IIHF Women's Challenge Cup of Asia took place in Qiqihar, China in February. The Japanese women's national team defended its title after defeating host China 3-1 in the gold medal game between the two Far East rivals. It has been the first time a visiting team won the Women's Challenge Cup of Asia. China won the event in Shanghai in 2010 and Japan succeeded in Nikko one year later when they defeated the Chinese on home ice with the same result, 3-1, in the gold medal game.

2012 IIHF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

Granlund leading the charge for Finns in Helsinki

20 year old's airhook one of the biggest moments of 2011 tournament, what will he do for an encore?

By Risto Pakarinen



ICE HOCKEY WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP FINLAND & SWEDEN Helsinki - Stockholm

Carpe Diem. Of all the skills that Mikael Granlund has, and of all the gifts he has, the ability to be in the moment, to live in the now, may just be his biggest, and the most important one.

As a kid that's why he was able to hone his stickhandling skills for hours on end. That's what's helped him keep his feet on the ground during the media frenzy around him the last few years, and that's why it's easy to believe him when he says that he hasn't thought about playing in front of his home fans at the World Championship in May.

After all, Mikael Granlund says that when he's in the zone, he doesn't even remember his last shift, and doesn't hear what the crowd's yelling, or what the other players are saying to him on the ice.

At that moment, the rest of the world becomes a simple backdrop of his life. That may also be when Granlund is at his happiest. Out on the ice, playing the game he loves, away from reporters, cameras, and microphones.

■ But with the World Championship on home ice just weeks away, the spotlight is turning increasingly on the kid who scored That Goal in the semifinal against Russia in last year's tournament, who's won one Finnish title, and is going after his second, and who, in a word, is the future of Finnish hockey.



"I don't think I'll try scoring a goal like that anytime soon," -Granlund

When asked, Granlund dismissed any ideas of a home-ice curse, and doesn't consider Finland's home tournament record anything to worry about. Finland's finished seventh, fourth, fifth, fifth, fifth, and fifth in the six previous tournaments it has hosted.

"I think the home ice curse is just superstition. So many teams have a good chance to win the World Championship, even the home team," he said.

■ While Granlund is great at seizing the moment, he has laid out a career plan which has included playing in the Finnish league for two seasons after the Minnesota Wild picked him ninth in the 2010 NHL draft.

"It was important for me to stay here and develop

further as a player, I didn't think I was ready to take the step two years ago. At least I'm more ready now," said Granlund who finished 28th in the league scoring in 2010 as a rookie, despite missing 15 games. He was 28th last season, despite missing 21 games, and sixth this season – despite missing 15 games.

When he joined IFK three years ago, he was a small, but hugely talented, 17-year-old forward. Now, he's matured both physically and mentally.

"In that age, some of the maturing takes place naturally, but my skating's a lot better than it was three years ago, I'm stronger, and probably make more mature and better decisions on the ice. I'm a completely different player now, even if I did fine in the beginning, too," he said.

"Naturally, I want to be as strong and fast as possible, but I'll never be the strongest or fastest player on the ice, so I will have to compensate that with something," he added.

There were a couple of other reasons for Granlund to bide his time in Finland, instead of Minnesota.

"I also wanted to graduate from high school, and fulfill the military service before leaving for the NHL," he added.

Now he can focus on his play. His military service is complete, and he's going to graduate from high school this spring. There will be no loose ends in Finland – after the May tournament.

■ Granlund loves to play. He says he's played "pretty much everything that involves a ball". It was his father who first bought the boys - his younger brother Markus is also his IFK teammate - the sticks, and the nets to the yard. And that, not genes, was the gift their parents gave them, according to Granlund.

"People always talk about natural born talents, and I'm sure genes do play a role, maybe somebody has better coordination or something, but to me it all comes down to repetitions. All good players have played a lot since



DID HE JUST DO THAT?: The goal of the year was scored against Russia in the semi-final. A few days after the tournament, Finland had already incorporated the above picture into a postage stamp.

they were children," he said.

"For kids, playing hockey isn't practicing, it's just having fun. I was lucky, too, that I had a lot of friends to play with in the neighbourhood," he added.

■ But now, playing hockey is no longer just fun and games. Thousands of IFK fans, and millions of Finns look to Granlund to provide some magic this spring. In Minnesota, the Wild are looking forward to getting Granlund into the fold, even if he hasn't signed with the club yet.

"I've wanted to play in the NHL ever since I was a kid, but I don't want to plan next season now," he said.

If and when he does play in the NHL next season, he's not worried about how he's going to do.

"In my first season in Helsinki, I didn't think I'd end up playing in the first line. It was the same with the Worlds last season; I didn't expect much, but it turned out well. I find that often when I just go out and play, things will turn out fine," he said.

■ Scoring the most memorable goal in Finnish hockey history this century, one that was made into a stamp just weeks after the tournament certainly is "fine".

It was a textbook example of a player being in the zone,

not thinking, just doing what he does best. It was also a great example of why Granlund has always been able to elevate his game when he's gone to the next level, even if doubters have called him too small, or too slow.

First he won a puck battle against Dmitri Kalinin in the corner, then skated around Dmitri Kulikov, scooped up the puck onto his blade and then lifted it over Konstantin Barulin's shoulder from behind the net, to give Finland a 1-0 lead in the game (that Finland ended up winning 3-0).

"It was just one goal. Sometimes that goes in, other times not. It was an important goal, for sure, but how I scored it wasn't important to me, and I don't think it mattered to the other players, either," said Granlund.

"If a player just practises that move for a week, he can do it, it's not that hard. Any player can do that if they just dare to try it," he added.

But that's the point. Not many do dare to try it.

"Having said that, I'd be hard-pressed to try something like that again, too, considering the commotion it caused. I don't think I'll try scoring a goal like that anytime soon," he said.

Then again, on the ice, when he's in the moment, he doesn't think about stamps or the President's reception or medals.

He just plays.

Photo: CTK / Kamaryt Michal

For Sweden and Finland, home is no advantage

Despite plenty of success for Sweden and Finland, it is not achieved on home ice. Sweden has never won gold at home, Finns have never medalled within their "friendly" confines.

1949 Stockholm, SWE

Home team comes fourth in the first IIHF World Championship held in Sweden. Tre Kronor misses out a gold medal by losing 3-0 on last day to eventual champion Czechoslovakia.

cider as Viktor Tikhonov is still fuming after 1980 Olympic loss in Lake Placid. Despite this humiliation, Sweden still gets the silver.

1982 Helsinki, Tampere, FIN

Again a disappointment for Finland as results show that the Lions are not yet ready to really challenge the biggies, 9-2 loss to Gretzky's Canada, 8-1 to champs Soviets, 3-0 to Czechs; Finns in fifth.

1989 Stockholm, SWE

First Worlds at the Globe Arena but the hosts miss out the podium, despite a great team that includes Börje Salming. Swedes are winless in medal round, end up fourth. Soviets win sixth straight gold in Stockholm.

1991 Turku, Helsinki, Tampere, FIN

Finns have a great team – on paper; Kurri, Selänne, Christian Ruutu, Esa Keskinen, Timo Jutila & others. On ice; fails to make medal round after losing to US in decider. Ended up in fifth place.

1995 Stockholm, Södertälje, SWE

Eighth time in Stockholm and finally gold? Yes, for Finland! Koivu line demolishes Tre Kronor 4-1 in final, Finns rub it in by celebrating gold in downtown Stockholm whilst stealing the official event song.

1997 Helsinki, Tampere, Turku, FIN

Many returnees from the '95 golden team, huge hoopla – and another anticlimax. Fifth place – again – is not what Finns were hoping for. Canada beats Sweden in a classic best-of-three final.



Mats Sundin celebrates Per-Johan Axelsson's 6-5 goal in the 2003 quarter-final when Sweden rallied from a 5-1 deficit.

1954 Stockholm, SWE

The Swedes only get only bronze despite being the only team which takes a point from eventual champion Soviet Union. Losing early to Canada 8-0 spoiled a good run.

1963 Stockholm, SWE

Sweden beats the Soviet Union 2-1 in a classic encounter and they need only a tie in the last game vs. Czechoslovakia. Tre Kronor lose 3-2 and have to settle for silver. Soviets champs.

1965 Tampere, FIN

High hopes for Suomi in first Worlds at home, but they only manage to beat one team, Norway, 4-1 and finish 7th out of 8 countries. Consolation: 2-2 tie against Sweden. Soviets win again.

1969 Stockholm, SWE

Soviets, Sweden and Czechoslovakia end up with identical records, 8-0-2 with the three teams beating each other. CCCP boys win on goal difference, Swedes take silver.

1970 Stockholm, SWE

The same medal order as the year before and despite beating the Soviets and rookie goalie Vladislav Tretiak in yet another classic (4-2), the Big Red Machine wins 8th straight gold.

1974 Helsinki, FIN

Only six teams take part in a round-robin and Finland in fourth, despite defeating Czech 5-4 on the last day. The record is a respectable 4-2-4 and only point behind bronze Sweden.

1981 Gothenburg, Stockholm, SWE

Swedes are ripped apart by Soviets 13-1 in de-



Ville Peltonen (right) scores in the 1995 gold medal game in Stockholm, en route to a 4-1 win and Finland's first ever gold.

2002 Gothenburg, Karlstad, Jönköping, SWE

For the first time Stockholm is not hosting any games. Trick backfires as Sweden loses semi-final to eventual champs Slovakia in a shoot-out. Tre Kronor wins bronze game vs. Finns.

2003 Helsinki, Tampere, Turku, FIN

Whatever you do – don't mention the score. Finland cruises to a 5-1 lead vs. Sweden in QF and the rest is a Finnish national trauma. Finns are fifth at home - again. Canada wins. (SZ)

Sweden home placings: 4-3-2-2-2-2-4-2-3

Finland home placings: 7-4-5-5-5-5

Photo: Jukka Rautio / HHOF-IIHF Images

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP PLAYER PROFILES

Not so Fasth-but Viktorious



Photo: Matthew Manor / IHOFF-IHF Images



■ It's safe to say that no player who has been on an IIHF World Championship All Star Team – let alone having won the MVP honours – has such an unusual background as Swedish goal-keeper Viktor Fasth.

When Fasth led Sweden to the silver medal in Bratislava in 2011, he was 28. Nothing strange with that, except for the fact it was his first season as a major league player and also his first season with the Swedish national team.

Consider this; in an era when an 18-year old player, his parents and agent can be in despair if the kid isn't drafted by an NHL club in the first round, Viktor Fasth was playing fourth-tier hockey in Sweden at the age of 20 and in a third-tier league until he was 25.

He was a light year from the Elitserien pro-league, let alone the Swedish national team or the NHL. At 25, Fasth was signed by Växjö in the Allsvenskan (one level below the Elitserien) in 2007. At that time he still held a part-time job as an assistant in a school.

In his third season with Växjö, he led the club to the qualification round to earn promotion to the Elitserien. Underdog Växjö almost made it, losing the deciding game to AIK Stockholm who, realizing they didn't want to play against Viktor Fasth again, signed him prior to the 2010/2011 season.

So here he was, in the Swedish top league at the age of 28 when he finally could call hockey a full-time job. But why stop there? Fasth's rookie year in the Elitserien was nothing less than spectacular.

He posted a 2.04 GAA for the struggling AIK which barely made the post-season, but in the playoffs his numbers were 1.81 GAA and 94.2 save percentage when 8th placed AIK upset regular season winner HV71 in four straight games in the first round.

The rookie veteran was so good that new national team coach Per Mårts could not keep Fasth away from the Tre Kronor squad for the 2011 Worlds. After starter Erik Ersberg lost Sweden's opener to Norway, the coach turned to Fasth, who never looked back. In his first four World Championship games, he posted three shut-outs. Fasth was not only the best goalie, but the best player of the championship – until the least 20 minutes of the final against Finland.

With all the votes already in – Fasth was named 2011 Worlds MVP, Best Goaltender and All Star – Fasth finally had a serious setback in his career. With the score 1-1 after two, Finland scored five unanswered goals in the last stanza for their second ever IIHF World Championship gold.

Swiss scoring sensation



Photo: Matthew Manor / IHOFF-IHF Images



■ Damien Brunner will likely be on the radar of any NHL scout going to Helsinki, thanks to a historic performance in the Swiss national league this year.

In his fourth season with Zug, he won the scoring title of the National League A as the first homegrown player in 30 years, notching 60 points in 45 games to run away with the title.

The late-bloomer hasn't been well-known internationally until recently. A product of the Klotten Flyers, the Swiss forward has never been called up to play in an U20 or U18 World Championship. He had his debut in the highest league at 20 years of age, but was transferred to EV Zug in a trade of fourth-liners.

It was a move that changed his career. Zug coach Doug Shedden believed in his new player and motivated him.

"I got more ice time and our coach was a big mentor for me," Brunner said. "He always spurred me on, told me I can become even better. It's nice as a player if your coach has such high expectations."

Between him and Guido Lindemann, the last Swiss scoring leader in 1982, were names as illustrious as Slava Bykov, Andrei Khomutov, Ron Wilson, Oleg Petrov, Petteri Nummelin, Randy Robitaille or Brunner's current teammate Glen Metropolit.

"The scoring title means much to me," the 26-year-old said. "It's also about developing offensive qualities [in Swiss hockey]. We must be honest, we lack of quality. We did a step into the right direction. It's not only me or Julien Sprunger [who was second in scoring]. There are also other upcoming players."

"That's the way we have to go. We need to have players who want to achieve more so we can become stronger internationally and compete for a medal."

Several Swiss forwards have played a couple of games in the NHL, most recently prospects Nino Niederreiter (NY Islanders) and Sven Bärtschi (Calgary), but no Swiss other than goalkeepers and defencemen have had their breakthrough.

Brunner is another candidate for becoming the first Swiss offensive star in the NHL as he plans to cross the pond for next season.

"I think I've reached a point at which I'm ready to think about going to the NHL and find out whether I have potential enough to play in the NHL," Brunner said. "I don't know all the teams that have showed interested [towards my agent], but I want to find a team that trusts in me."

Ageless Nedved may return



Photo: IOC Archives



■ When speaking about unusual careers, few match those of Petr Nedved. The Czechoslovak became Canadian, led his new country to an Olympic final at 23 and may play his first IIHF World Championship at the age of 40, this time for the Czech Republic.

Petr Nedved defected from communist Czechoslovakia at the age of 18 and joined the WHL Seattle Thunderbirds for the 1989-1990 season. His 145 points in 71 games impressed everyone. He was drafted 2nd overall by the Vancouver Canucks in the 1990 draft and signed with the NHL club shortly afterwards.

Wanting to play international hockey, Nedved applied for a Canadian citizenship and got it in time for the 1994 Olympics in Lillehammer where Canada iced a gritty but pretty anonymous team. The team had really only two players of high international caliber; Nedved and a 19-year old future star, Paul Kariya.

But the team upset all rivals and made it to the Olympic final game against Peter Forsberg's Tre Kronor. Every hockey fan remembers Forsberg's incredibly daring gold medal-winning move on goaltender Corey Hirsch in the shootout, but few recall Petr Nedved's key role. In the shootout, Nedved gave Canada a 1-0 lead and Kariya made it 2-0. The Swedes eventually tied it two after Forsberg converted his first chance.

In the second shootout round, Nedved could have given Canada the gold after Hirsch's save on Magnus Svensson. Nedved went to his backhand, had goaltender Tommy Salo down, Canada's first Olympic gold medal in 44 years virtually around his neck, but couldn't put it in, as the picture above shows. That he had a very good tournament statistically was of little consolation.

He reclaimed his Czech citizenship after the Olympics and played his first games for his reconstructed country in the 1996 World Cup of Hockey. But both Nedved (only one point) and the Czechs (eliminated from playoffs by Germany) had a very poor showing.

Sixteen years later, after playing the five last seasons in the Czech Extraliga, Petr Nedved is still in the mix and some say that he hasn't been this good for ten years. Not only did he register 61 points (24+37) in 49 games while captaining Bili Tygri Liberec, but when given the chance to play for the national team (for the first time since 1996!) in the Sweden Games in February against top European opposition, he scored five goals in six games.

At press time, the Czech team for the 2012 IIHF World Ice Hockey Championship had not been selected, but Nedved certainly made a case for himself in the Extraliga playoffs. Well into the semifinals, the 40-year old was third in play-off scoring with six goals and five assists in eight game.

Will this be enough to make Petr Nedved an IIHF World Championship rookie?

Olympic spots at stake in Helsinki, Burlington

As if home pressure not enough, Finns top pre-event ranking

Since the IIHF World Ranking was introduced in 2004, Finland has never been so high (1) and Canada so low (5) on the men's side. In the women's ranking, USA enjoys a 20-point lead over Canada.

The 2012 Pre-Championship Ranking grows in importance this season as it will determine which teams – both on men's and women's side – will earn automatic entry to the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia.

Heading into the 2012 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship in Helsinki and Stockholm (May 4-20), there has been a few historical developments in the men's ranking. Defending World Champion Finland is No. 1, but only a mere five points ahead of Sweden and 20 points ahead of Russia.

■ Finland has never enjoyed such high position since the introduction of the system in 2004. Canada, conversely, the No. 1 rank in 2004, 2005 and 2008, is down to position five. This is due to the country finishing 7th and 5th in the last two World Championships.

At the same time as Canada's strong showings from 2007 (gold), 2008 (silver) are out of the four-year cycle calculation, while the value of the 2009 silver medal is down to 25 percent of its original value of 1200 points. The Olympic gold medal from Vancouver 2010 is now only worth 50 percent = 600 points.

The charts to the right are already pre-calculated so you can very easily gauge the 2012 World Ranking, which will be official after the gold medal game. So, for example: If Russia wins the gold in Helsinki on May 20, you simply add the winner's 1200 ranking points (see "Points available") to Russia's current pre-Championship ranking points of 2225, for a total of 3425.

As the top positions are important from a seeding, prestige and PR perspective, this year it's all about coming no lower than ninth in the men's ranking and no lower than sixth in the women's.

The top nine men's teams and the top six women's teams in the final 2012 IIHF World Ranking will earn automatic entry to Sochi 2014. The teams that don't make the cut will have to go through a qualification process starting in the fall of 2012 and ending with the Final Olympic Qualifications in February 2013.

■ On the men's side, "The Run for Ninth" could be a close one. There are only 50 ranking points separating 7th-placed Switzerland and 10th-placed Slovakia, with Germany (8th) and Norway (9th) in between. This basically means that Slovakia needs to have a better championship than Norway – and a significantly better one than Germany – to pass those countries in the World Ranking.

From the perspective of Olympic qualifications, positions 10, 11 and 12 are also vital as these teams will have the right to organize the final Olympic Qualification tournaments on home ice. So watch out for Latvia doing everything to improve on their 13th position, as they are only five ranking points behind Denmark and 20 behind Belarus.

■ The Olympic race on the women's side is not as dramatic. Russia's 110-point lead over Slovakia is practically irrelevant as far as a race is concerned – Russia is guaranteed a spot in the Olympic tournament as the host.

Men's Ranking				Women's Ranking			
Rank	Country	Points	Points available	Rank	Country	Points	Points available
1	Finland	2245	TOP DIVISION	1	USA	1780	TOP DIVISION
2	Sweden	2240	1 1200	2	Canada	1760	1 1200
3	Russia	2225	2 1160	3	Finland	1680	2 1160
4	Czech Republic	2210	3 1120	4	Sweden	1620	3 1120
5	Canada	2195	4 1100	5	Russia	1610	4 1100
6	USA	2045	5 1060	6	Switzerland	1565	5 1060
7	Switzerland	1990	6 1040	7	Slovakia	1500	6 1040
8	Germany	1985	7 1020	8	Kazakhstan	1490	7 1020
9	Norway	1960	8 1000	9	China	1415	8 1000
10	Slovakia	1940	9 960	10	Germany	1410	9 960
11	Belarus	1845	10 940	11	Norway	1380	10 940
12	Denmark	1830	11 920	12	Japan	1365	11 920
13	Latvia	1825	12 900	13	Latvia	1315	12 900
14	France	1700	13 880	14	Austria	1285	13 880
15	Austria	1685	14 860	15	Czech Republic	1285	14 860
16	Kazakhstan	1620	15 840	16	France	1255	15 840
17	Italy	1600	16 820	17	Italy	1175	16 820
18	Slovenia	1575	17 800	18	Great Britain	1175	17 800
19	Ukraine	1535	18 780	19	Slovenia	865	18 780
20	Hungary	1505	19 760	20	Croatia	860	19 760
21	Great Britain	1390	20 740	21	Denmark	785	20 740
22	Japan	1365	21 720	22	Netherlands	720	21 720
23	Poland	1360	22 700	23	Bulgaria	705	22 700
24	Lithuania	1305	23 680	24	Australia	525	23 680
25	Netherlands	1285	24 660	25	Hungary	510	24 660
26	Estonia	1200	25 640	26	Belgium	465	25 640
27	Croatia	1145	26 620	27	New Zealand	450	26 620
28	Spain	1125	27 600	28	Korea	435	27 600
29	Romania	1105	28 580	29	Iceland	420	28 580
30	Serbia	1085	29 560	30	Romania	405	29 560
31	Korea	985	30 540	31	South Africa	390	30 540
32	Bulgaria	870	31 520	32	Poland	375	31 520
33	Mexico	850	32 500	33	Spain	360	32 500
34	Australia	805	33 480	34	Turkey	330	33 480
35	Belgium	695	34 460	35	Ireland	315	34 460
36	Turkey	695	35 440	36	DPR Korea	200	35 440
37	Iceland	685	36 420				
38	New Zealand	665	37 400				
39	China	620	38 380				
40	Israel	515	39 360				
41	Ireland	475	40 340				
42	South Africa	440	41 320				
43	Greece	385	42 300				
44	Luxembourg	385	43 280				
45	DPR Korea	240	44 260				
46	Mongolia	155	45 240				
47	UAE	110	46 220				

So barring earth-shattering results at the World Women's in Burlington, USA (April 7-14), the six teams going directly to Sochi are USA, Canada, Finland, Sweden, Russia, and Switzerland, while the others will compete for the two remaining Olympic spots via qualifications.



Team Finland's 2011 gold medal rocketed them to the top of the rankings for the first time in history. Could they do it again?



Photo: Matthew Manor / IHOFF-IHF Images

Minsk, Berlin catching up to SC Bern

Swiss still most watched Euro club for 10th straight season

ZURICH – Swiss club SC Bern was the most-attended European hockey team for the tenth consecutive time in the 2011/2012 regular season, which saw a record number of seven clubs reach the 10,000 mark.

The average attendance at the arena that hosted the 2009 IIHF World Championship went down from 15,856 to 15,779, but SC Bern defended its position with a comfortable margin. The Swiss club has a higher attendance average than nine NHL franchises this season.

Dynamo Minsk from Belarus claimed second place for the first time, averaging 14,193 spectators. In 2008 the team from the Belarusian capital joined the Russian Kontinental Hockey League. Dynamo Minsk went from 61st to third place last year following the opening of the 15,000-seat Minsk Arena and overtook Germany's Eisbären Berlin for second place.

Eisbären was third with 14,073 fans ahead of league rival Kölner Haie (10,494) and Sweden's Frölunda Gothenburg (10,482), which improved one spot from last season.

The newest team in the "10,000 club" is SKA St. Petersburg. With an average of 10,126 spectators SKA became the first Russian club ever to average a five-digit attendance.

Other notable facts:

□ Lokomotiv Yaroslavl averaged 8,961 fans in Russia's second-tier league, where the club played part of the season following the tragic air-plane crash last September that wiped out the entire team. The number helped "Loko" to stay in the ranking as 11th. Another second-tier team in the top-50 were the Malmö Redhawks (33rd). The city in southern Sweden will host the 2014 IIHF World Junior Championship and has been attempting to get back to the Elitserien since being relegated in 2007.

□ Salavat Yulayev Ufa sold out every KHL game with 7,950 fans with a little more than nine months to go before the 2013 IIHF World Juniors in the city. The only other club to sell out all games came also from Russia. Amur Khabarovsk from the Far East had 7,100 in each and every home match.

□ Also the home teams of the 2012 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship venues did well. Jokerit Helsinki improved to ninth place with 9,173 fans while Djurgården Stockholm averaged 7,723 fans and came

17th. The team played three games in the Ericsson Globe and the others in Hovet, the ancient arena from 1955 across the square.

□ Croatian club Medvescak Zagreb continues to impress with its attendance figures. The club that plays in the Austrian EBEL league improved its position (12th) and attendance (8,835) to break last year's record. Impressive for a country with only 437 registered ice hockey players. Thanks to its success the club is being courted by the Russian KHL.

□ Slovan Bratislava was the club that gained the most places in the ranking, improving from 114th to 36th. The club from the Slovak capital averaged 5,907 fans after moving back to their rink. The arena was torn down and reconstructed prior to the 2011 IIHF World Championship. With this number Slovan was also ranked two spots above arch-rival HC Kosice. Another big jump was done by the Växjö Lakers (112th to 49th) that played in the Swedish top league for the first time.

□ There are even two third-tier clubs in the top-100, both from two German cities that used to play in the DEL until recently. The Kassel Huskies had to restart with their amateur team in the fourth tier after bankruptcy in 2010, but went up to Germany's third tier, Oberliga, and averaged 4,293 fans in the regular season. Putting it in perspective: That's more than the three KHL teams in Moscow average. Another team from the Hesse state, the Frankfurt Lions, were re-launched as Löwen Frankfurt and played in the same Oberliga division, averaging 4,056 fans.

League Attendance
While the top spot is occupied by a Swiss club for the tenth straight time, the Swedish Elitserien claimed back the title of the league with the highest average attendance.

The attendance of the Elitserien clubs rose from 6,160 to 6,385 (+3.65%) while it went down by one to 6,305 in Switzerland's National League A.

Leagues also swapped places below the top two. Germany's DEL surpassed the Russian KHL and is now third with 6,060 fans (+5.28%) while the Russian league averaged 5,891 fans (+1.83%).

The Finnish SM-liiga improved to fifth place with 5,103 fans (+5.59%) overtaking the Czech Extraliga that averaged 4,824 spectators (-2.27%).



Photo: Daniel Wenger / Photopress

An encouraging fact is that the numbers increased in ten of the 13 best-attended leagues in Europe (Sweden, Germany, Russia, Finland, Austria, Slovakia, Great Britain, Norway, France, Belarus) while the numbers were virtually unchanged in Switzerland and Denmark, and dropped only in the Czech Extraliga.

The best attended club team in the world are again the Chicago Blackhawks with 21,525 fans, followed by the Montreal Canadiens with 21,273. The AHL's Hershey Bears are the best-attended minor-league team with

SC Bern's PostFinance Arena (above) hosts a packed house as usual. At press time, Bern is set to face Zurich for the first time ever in the Swiss National League championship final.

Attendance average for European clubs

Pos.	2010-2011 #	Club	Country	Average	% of capacity
1.	(1.)	SC Bern	SUI	15,779	92.11%
2.	(3.)	Dynamo Minsk	BLR	14,193	94.08%
3.	(2.)	Eisbären Berlin	GER	14,073	99.11%
4.	(4.)	Kölner Haie	GER	10,494	56.72%
5.	(6.)	Frölunda Gothenburg	SWE	10,482	87.03%
6.	(11.)	SKA St. Petersburg	RUS	10,126	81.01%
7.	(5.)	Adler Mannheim	GER	10,018	73.66%
8.	(20.)	Hamburg Freezers	GER	9,221	72.02%
9.	(10.)	Jokerit Helsinki	FIN	9,173	67.13%
10.	(7.)	Avangard Omsk	RUS	9,143	88.61%
11.	(8.)	Lokomotiv Yaroslavl	RUS-2	8,961	98.80%
12.	(13.)	Medvescak Zagreb	CRO	8,835	96.50%
13.	(9.)	HC Pardubice	CZE	8,380	82.21%
14.	(26.)	HIFK Helsinki	FIN	8,284	102.02%
15.	(12.)	Salavat Yulayev Ufa	RUS	7,950	100.00%
16.	(15.)	Dinamo Riga	LAT	7,733	75.08%
17.	(16.)	Djurgården Stockholm	SWE	7,723	95.42%
18.	(14.)	ZSC Lions Zurich	SUI	7,625	71.26%
19.	(18.)	Traktor Chelyabinsk	RUS	7,337	97.83%
20.	(22.)	HV71 Jönköping	SWE	7,232	103.31%
21.	(19.)	Amur Khabarovsk	RUS	7,100	
22.	(27.)	Met. Magnitogorsk	RUS	7,035	
23.	(17.)	Kometa Brno	CZE	6,960	
24.	(26.)	Linköpings HC	SWE	6,903	
25.	(21.)	Genève-Servette	SUI	6,769	
26.	(25.)	Fribourg-Gottéron	SUI	6,636	
27.	(23.)	Färjestad Karlstad	SWE	6,589	
28.	(32.)	Atlant Mytishi	RUS	6,278	
29.	(45.)	Sparta Prague	CZE	6,273	
30.	(29.)	EV Zug	SUI	6,265	
31.	(35.)	Brynäs Gävle	SWE	6,265	
32.	(30.)	MODO Örnsköldsvik	SWE	6,119	
33.	(64.)	Malmö Redhawks	SWE-2	6,072	
34.	(34.)	Kloten Flyers	SUI	6,041	
35.	(28.)	Sibir Novosibirsk	RUS	5,918	
36.	(114.)	Slovan Bratislava	SVK	5,907	
37.	(37.)	Kärpät Oulu	FIN	5,821	
38.	(33.)	HC Kosice	SVK	5,678	
39.	(31.)	HC Plzen	CZE	5,584	
40.	(40.)	TPS Turku	FIN	5,534	
41.	(52.)	Torpedo N. Novgorod	RUS	5,481	
42.	(36.)	AIK Stockholm	SWE	5,450	
43.	(51.)	Tappara Tampere	FIN	5,358	
44.	(41.)	SCL Tigers Langnau	SUI	5,290	
45.	(44.)	DEG Metro Stars	GER	5,225	
46.	(42.)	Ilves Tampere	FIN	5,208	
47.	(43.)	Luleå HF	SWE	5,154	
48.	(39.)	Bili Tygri Liberec	CZE	5,140	
49.	(112.)	Växjö Lakers	SWE	5,099	
50.	(50.)	Skellefteå AIK	SWE	5,078	

League attendance average

Pos	League	Attendance
1.	Sweden - Elitserien	6,385
2.	Switzerland - National League A	6,305
3.	Germany - Deutsche Eishockey Liga	6,060
4.	Russia - Kontinental Hockey League	5,891
5.	Finland - SM-liiga	5,103
6.	Czech Republic - Extraliga	4,824
7.	Austria - EBEL	3,606
8.	Slovakia - Extraliga	2,687
9.	Great Britain - Elite Ice Hockey League	2,028
10.	Norway - Get Ligaen	1,462
11.	France - Ligue Magnus	1,391
12.	Denmark - AL-Bank Liga	1,301
13.	Belarus - Extraliga	1,111
14.	Asia League (CHN/KOR/JPN)	1,024
15.	Italy - Serie A	987

9,780 spectators per game while the QMJHL's Quebec Remparts are by far the best-attended junior team, averaging 10,525 fans.



IIHF RESULTS SUMMARY



Photo: Bonchuk Andronov

IIHF Ice Hockey U18 World Championship Division III Group A - Sofia, Bulgaria

Mexico - Belgium	2 - 5	(1-1, 0-0, 1-4)
South Africa - Chinese Taipei	0 - 11	(0-6, 0-2, 0-3)
New Zealand - Bulgaria	5 - 2	(1-0, 1-1, 3-1)
Belgium - Chinese Taipei	9 - 1	(1-0, 5-0, 3-1)
New Zealand - Mexico	3 - 2	(0-1, 2-1, 1-0)
Bulgaria - South Africa	13 - 1	(6-0, 5-0, 2-1)
New Zealand - South Africa	18 - 0	(6-0, 6-0, 6-0)
Mexico - Chinese Taipei	7 - 2	(5-0, 0-1, 2-1)
Belgium - Bulgaria	9 - 5	(2-3, 3-2, 4-0)
Chinese Taipei - New Zealand	1 - 4	(0-1, 1-3, 0-0)
South Africa - Belgium	1 - 17	(0-5, 1-4, 0-8)
Bulgaria - Mexico	1 - 4	(0-1, 1-2, 0-1)
Mexico - South Africa	9 - 4	(1-1, 5-1, 3-2)
Chinese Taipei - Bulgaria	4 - 6	(0-1, 2-3, 2-2)
Belgium - New Zealand	8 - 3	(2-1, 5-0, 1-2)
Belgium	5 5 0 0 0	48 : 12 15
New Zealand	5 4 0 0 1	33 : 13 12
Mexico	5 3 0 0 2	24 : 15 9
Bulgaria	5 2 0 0 3	27 : 23 6
Chinese Taipei	5 1 0 0 4	19 : 26 3
South Africa	5 0 0 0 5	6 : 68 0

Belgium is promoted to 2013 Division IIB championship. South Africa, Chinese Taipei relegated to 2013 U18 Qualification.

IIHF Ice Hockey U18 World Championship Division II Group B - Novi Sad, Serbia

Estonia - Australia	7 - 4	(0-1, 2-1, 5-2)
China - Spain	4 - 9	(0-3, 1-1, 3-5)
Iceland - Serbia	4 - 5	(1-0, 1-1, 2-4)
Estonia - China	7 - 6 OT	(3-1, 1-2, 2-3, 1-0)
Australia - Iceland	0 - 5	(0-0, 0-4, 0-1)
Spain - Serbia	4 - 3	(1-0, 2-0, 1-3)
Spain - Australia	2 - 1 OT	(0-0, 0-0, 1-1, 1-0)
Estonia - Iceland	7 - 3	(2-0, 4-2, 1-1)
China - Serbia	1 - 6	(0-2, 1-3, 0-1)
Iceland - Spain	5 - 4	(1-1, 3-2, 1-1)
Australia - China	2 - 0	(0-0, 1-0, 1-0)
Serbia - Estonia	2 - 6	(1-1, 0-4, 1-1)
China - Iceland	7 - 6 OT	(1-2, 2-2, 3-2, 1-0)
Spain - Estonia	2 - 5	(1-0, 0-0, 1-5)
Serbia - Australia	6 - 1	(2-0, 2-0, 2-1)
Estonia	5 4 1 0 0	32 : 17 14
Serbia	5 3 0 0 2	22 : 16 9
Spain	5 2 1 0 2	21 : 18 8
Iceland	5 2 0 1 2	23 : 23 7
Australia	5 1 0 1 3	8 : 20 4
China	5 0 1 1 3	18 : 30 3

Estonia is promoted to 2013 Division IIA championship. China is relegated to 2013 Division IIIA championship.

IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship Division I Group A - Ventspils, Latvia

Austria - Norway	2 - 7	(1-2, 0-4, 1-1)
Czech Republic - Japan	3 - 4	(1-4, 2-0, 0-0)
Latvia - Kazakhstan	3 - 2 PS	(1-0, 1-2, 0-0, 0-0, 1-0)
Norway - Czech Republic	1 - 2	(0-0, 1-1, 0-1)
Kazakhstan - Austria	2 - 6	(1-2, 1-2, 0-2)
Japan - Latvia	1 - 2	(0-0, 1-2, 0-0)
Japan - Austria	3 - 1	(2-0, 0-1, 1-0)
Kazakhstan - Norway	1 - 2 OT	(0-0, 1-0, 0-1, 0-1)
Czech Republic - Latvia	5 - 0	(1-0, 1-0, 3-0)
Kazakhstan - Czech Republic	2 - 3	(0-1, 1-1, 1-1)
Norway - Japan	4 - 2	(2-2, 0-0, 2-0)
Latvia - Austria	0 - 6	(0-1, 0-2, 0-3)
Japan - Kazakhstan	5 - 0	(0-0, 2-0, 3-0)
Norway - Latvia	6 - 0	(2-0, 1-0, 3-0)
Austria - Czech Republic	1 - 6	(0-2, 0-2, 1-2)
Czech Republic	5 4 0 0 1	19 : 8 12
Norway	5 3 1 0 1	20 : 7 11
Japan	5 3 0 0 2	15 : 10 9
Austria	5 2 0 0 3	16 : 18 6
Latvia	5 1 1 0 3	5 : 20 5
Kazakhstan	5 0 0 2 3	7 : 19 2

Czech Republic is promoted to 2013 Women's World Championship. Kazakhstan relegated to 2013 Division IB championship.

IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship Division II Group B - Seoul, Korea

Iceland - Belgium	2 - 1	(0-0, 1-1, 1-0)
Spain - Poland	3 - 4	(0-2, 3-0, 0-2)
Korea - South Africa	10 - 2	(3-0, 4-1, 3-1)
Belgium - Poland	0 - 7	(0-2, 0-3, 0-2)
South Africa - Spain	0 - 12	(0-1, 0-4, 0-7)
Korea - Iceland	2 - 1 PS	(0-0, 1-1, 0-0, 0-0, 0-0)
Belgium - South Africa	6 - 0	(2-0, 0-0, 4-0)
Iceland - Poland	2 - 7	(0-1, 2-1, 0-5)
Korea - Spain	1 - 3	(0-0, 0-1, 1-2)
South Africa - Iceland	2 - 6	(1-2, 0-0, 1-4)
Spain - Belgium	1 - 0	(0-0, 0-0, 1-0)
Poland - Korea	2 - 1 OT	(0-0, 0-0, 1-1, 1-0)
Iceland - Spain	0 - 3	(0-0, 0-2, 0-1)
Poland - South Africa	18 - 0	(5-0, 7-0, 6-0)
Belgium - Korea	0 - 2	(0-0, 0-1, 0-1)
Poland	5 4 1 0 0	38 : 6 14
Spain	5 4 0 0 1	22 : 5 12
Korea	5 2 1 1 1	16 : 8 9
Iceland	5 2 0 1 2	11 : 15 7
Belgium	5 1 0 0 4	7 : 12 3
South Africa	5 0 0 0 5	4 : 52 0

Poland is promoted to 2013 Division IIA championship.



Photo: KHA

IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship Division II Group A - Maribor, Slovenia

Australia - Hungary	0 - 3	(0-1, 0-1, 0-1)
Croatia - New Zealand	1 - 4	(0-1, 1-3, 0-0)
DPR Korea	3 - 1	(1-1, 2-0, 0-0)
Australia - Croatia	3 - 0	(1-0, 0-0, 2-0)
Hungary - DPR Korea	4 - 5	(3-1, 1-2, 0-2)
New Zealand - Slovenia	4 - 3	(1-0, 2-1, 1-2)
DPR Korea - Croatia	11 - 1	(3-1, 3-0, 5-0)
Australia - New Zealand	7 - 2	(3-2, 2-0, 2-0)
Hungary - Slovenia	8 - 0	(4-0, 1-0, 3-0)
New Zealand - DPR Korea	1 - 7	(0-2, 1-3, 0-2)
Croatia - Hungary	0 - 6	(0-3, 0-1, 0-2)
Slovenia - Australia	0 - 1	(0-1, 0-0, 0-0)
Hungary - New Zealand	5 - 1	(1-0, 3-0, 1-1)
DPR Korea - Australia	7 - 0	(4-0, 0-0, 3-0)
Slovenia - Croatia	3 - 2 PS	(1-1, 0-0, 1-1, 0-0, 1-0)
DPR Korea	5 5 0 0 0	33 : 7 15
Hungary	5 4 0 0 1	26 : 6 12
Australia	5 3 0 0 2	11 : 12 9
New Zealand	5 2 0 0 3	12 : 23 6
Slovenia	5 0 1 0 4	7 : 18 2
Croatia	5 0 0 1 4	4 : 27 1

DPR Korea is promoted to 2013 Division IB championship. Croatia relegated to 2013 Division IIB.



Photo: Denis Zenik

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



European Women's Champions Cup Final Round - Hämeenlinna, Finland

ESC Planegg - HPK Hämeenlinna	2 - 3	(2-0, 0-1, 0-2)
ZSC Zurich - Tornado Moscow	1 - 2	(1-1, 0-0, 0-1)
Tornado Moscow - ESC Planegg	9 - 1	(3-0, 5-0, 1-1)
HPK Hämeenlinna - ZSC Zurich	2 - 6	(1-3, 1-2, 0-1)
ZSC Zurich - ESC Planegg	3 - 2	(0-1, 1-0, 2-1)
HPK Hämeenlinna - Tornado Moscow	1 - 5	(0-0, 1-2, 0-3)
Tornado Moscow	3 3 0 0 0	16 : 3 9
ZSC Lions Zurich	3 2 0 0 1	10 : 6 6
HPK Hämeenlinna	3 1 0 0 2	6 : 13 3
ESC Planegg	3 0 0 0 3	5 : 15 0



Photo: IHA

Challenge Cup of Asia Dehradun, India

UA Emirates - Thailand	4 - 3	(1-2, 1-0, 2-1)
India - Macau	3 - 5	(1-0, 2-2, 0-3)
Chinese Taipei - Kuwait	2 - 12	(2-5, 0-4, 0-3)
Macau - Malaysia	1 - 8	(0-1, 1-5, 0-2)
Kuwait - UA Emirates	0 - 6	

From Olympian to organizer

Tuula's competitive spirit becomes an asset in key championship role

By Szymon Szemberg

■ ■ Finnish goaltender and Olympic medalist Tuula Puputti has gone from stopping pucks to setting up the 76th IIHF World Ice Hockey Championship.

As the start of the Championship approaches, she is thoroughly enjoying her new role. "As a former player you have a pretty good idea of what teams need to feel that they are well taken care of," says Puputti.

In her official role as Service Coordinator, Tuula Puputti does a lot. The former Finnish national team player, one of the top goaltenders of the first era of women's international ice hockey, coordinates issues between the Finnish Organizing Committee and the IIHF, assists the event's Finnish general secretary Mika Sulin and the competition director Jarmo Jalarvo, deals with team hotels and preparations, travel planning, as well as the volunteer program (recruiting and training) and the coaching symposium.

■ As a former goaltender she is used to handle things being thrown her way. Puputti won three IIHF World Women's bronze medals between 1997 and 2001 and played in the first two Olympics with women's hockey participation, 1998 in Nagano (bronze) and 2002 in Salt Lake City (4th). In 2001, she also backstopped the University of Minnesota at Duluth to the national collegiate championship.

"A career as a player at the international level helps you when you one day find yourself in an office," says Puputti. "You know that you must perform to the best of your ability in every situation. Understanding the competitive setting, the mentality and tournament mode of the players and coaches becomes easier if you have been on the other side."

■ Ice Times asked Puputti a few questions in the lead up to the championship.

There is huge interest for the championship in Finland. Is there additional pressure on the organizing committee due to the fact that Finland is the reigning world champion and the expectations are enormous?

"We who organize the event have a commitment to create the best possible conditions for all participants and all fans regardless of where they are coming from. So purely from the OC's perspective we don't think like that. But as a Finn, you of course get caught up the excitement and you want the team to succeed. But this is secondary."



Photo: Szymon Szemberg



Photo: Gerry Thomas

Tuula Puputti (Top Picture, above in net) knows a thing or two about pressure situations, which will serve her well come championship time.

This is the first World Championship in modern times which is co-hosted by two countries. How has the experience been?

"I must say that I feel very privileged to be part of this event just because of this reason," says Puputti. "To be able to not only work with the IIHF, but also with so many great people on the Swedish side brings even more joy to this job."

Are you confident that come May 4 everything will be ready for teams and fans?

"Yes, it will. I am very confident."

■ In Puputti's current job few things can go wrong as a result of coincidence or bad luck – as opposed to sports. Puputti had to quit her career at 25 after the Salt Lake City Olympics because of a bad back and an ailing hip.

"In the end I played on pain killers and I had to have a hip surgery. The doctor told me that if I don't want to have another surgery, I'd better quit."

Puputti was one the very best goaltenders in the world around the turn of the millennium. In the Nagano Olympics 1998, she played second most minutes of all goalies and had the third best goals against average (1.55), helping Finland winning the historic bronze.

■ Four years later in Salt Lake City, as she was already preparing her retirement, Puputti and her teammates were on their way to stage what would have been the first major upset in women's hockey. Finland was leading the semi-final against Canada 3-2 after two periods.

Puputti was playing her game of her life, as Canada had a 40-13 shot-on-goal advantage after two periods and she had made 38 saves. Now, take this very good piece of advice if you happen to meet Puputti in Helsinki between May 4 and 20 – don't ask questions about the third period.

On the other hand, she may not even remember. Tuula Puputti has left all this behind and her focus is entirely on making sure that all things are in place for the opening faceoff of the 2012 IIHF World Ice Hockey Championship.



Tuula Puputti Fact File

- ❑ Born: 5 November 1977 in Kuopio, Finland
- ❑ Clubs: KalPa, JYP Jyväskylä, Jyväskylän Hockey Cats, University of Minnesota, Duluth
- ❑ Olympic Bronze Medal in Nagano 1998, fourth place in Salt Lake City 2002.
- ❑ IIHF World Championship Bronze 1997, 1999, 2000, NCAA Championship 2001, 2002.
- ❑ European Championship gold medal 1993, 1995
- ❑ Currently Service Coordinator for the WM2012 Organizing Committee