



IceTimes

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Tre Kronor rules

Team Sweden

wins it all in Cologne >



From the IIHF President

A big success

By René Fasel

Co-hosting an IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship can bring great benefits, but also great challenges. Thanks to hard work, mutual cooperation and a shared passion for ice hockey, Cologne and Paris delivered a fantastic World Championship in 2017.

It wasn't easy, Paris had not hosted a World Championship since 1951 and Cologne had never co-hosted a tournament before. But the organizing committee did great work to draw up interest in the tournament in both venues. Congratulations to the organizers and to Sweden on a big win!

France made a necessary partnership with Cologne for the 2017 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship to get world-class ice hockey back to the City of Lights. The vision of setting Paris as a secondary venue in a primary host city worked very well.

The fan support in Paris was something to behold. The numbers don't lie. France hosted 30

of the 64 games at the 2017 Worlds and attracted a total of 223,956 fans. This worked out to an average of 7,465 per game. Only twice in the last two decades has the second venue attracted more spectators.

There were great highlights, including France's first-ever defeat of Finland at a World Championship, and the sold-out crowd of 14,510 that watched France push Canada to the limit in a 3-2 loss. Definitely positives to build on for Les Bleues.

In Cologne, the carnival atmosphere inside and outside the arena was easy to see. This is a hockey town and the fans living in the city and visiting from abroad were phenomenal. The main venue registered 462,435 visitors. This represents an average of 13,601 spectators for each of the 34 games, which included ten sellouts.

On Saturday, 13 May 2017, 55,239 spectators saw the three games in Cologne. This has — apart from special events like the 2010 IIHF Worlds opening game at the Schalke football stadium — not been seen yet on one single game day at IIHF Ice Hockey World Championships in the modern era.

Cologne also registered the most visited noon game in the modern history of the IIHF Worlds with 17,936 spectators at the game Latvia vs.

USA. This shows how much the World Championship works to draw visitors to what is an annual festival of hockey.

In all, the 2017 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship registered the second-highest attendance in the tournament's history after 2015. The final official attendance number of the 2017 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship lies much higher than the 600,000 originally targeted by the organizing committee. A total of 686,391 spectators came to watch the 64 games in Cologne's LANXESS arena and the AccorHotels Arena in Paris.

I am proud that we have managed to continue the string of well-attended tournaments that we've had in recent years, and acknowledge the partnerships that have helped it happen. We have extended one of our longest-running partnerships with SKODA until 2021, which has been a great relationship built on trust and a mutual love of the game.

I would like to sincerely thank the Cologne and Paris organizers for their hard work, and also Infront Sports and Media and the various sponsors and suppliers for a great collaborative effort in delivering another successful World Championship.

Danke Köln, Merci Paris!



News and Notes

IIHF

The International Ice Hockey Federation, its marketing and media partner Infront Sports & Media and the IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship's Official Main Sponsor Skoda met to celebrate their 25th anniversary and to announce that the relationship will be extended another four years through 2021.

“We are proud of the 25-year anniversary because it is based on principles of trust, mutual respect and mutual benefit,” Skoda CEO Bernhard Maier said. “We are proud to be able to announce that our partnership will be prolonged for another four years covering 2018 to 2021. We will remain the main sponsor for the IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship.”

The Skoda partnership has become a visible and recognized part of the branding at World Championships. The two Skoda cars that sit on either side of an arena near the ice have become synonymous with the tournament experience.

“It was not easy to have two Skoda cars in the tribune,” IIHF President Rene Fasel recalls when the deal was struck in 1992. “We had big fights with the organizer because you lose some seats.

Today it is an identifiable part of the brand to see a Skoda car near the ice. I don't think there is another event where you have this exposure of a brand.”

Infront Sports & Media AG CEO Philipp Blatter also recognized the importance of his company's partnership with Skoda and the IIHF.

“For us it is very special to have partners who have been part of the Infront family for almost three decades. Our specialty is long-term partnerships. We need to deliver value. We are proud and honoured to be able to work together in making this happen.”

Lena Kuhlmann, Adjudicator from the Guinness World Records, was on hand to reward Skoda with an official Guinness Book of World Records title for the longest sponsorship of a sporting world championship. Skoda broke its own record from 2007 when, at the time, it was a 15-year relationship.



WORLD RANKING

Despite losing the final to Sweden, Canada remains first in the 2017 IIHF World Ranking thanks to the strong showing in the past three seasons.

[Click here for the 2017 IIHF World Ranking](#)

Canada stays first in the new IIHF World Ranking and is followed by Russia in second place.

New world champion Sweden moved up from fifth to third place after the gold-medal win in Cologne at the expense of Finland and the United States, who both dropped down one place.

The Czechs in sixth and Switzerland in seventh place remain in their positions after qualifying for but losing in the quarter-finals.

World Championship host Germany improved two spots after a strong campaign on home ice in Cologne and is now eighth – the best placing in six years.

Norway moved up two spots as well and is ninth while Belarus fell from ninth to tenth place and Slovakia even from eighth to 11th. Latvia, France, Denmark and Slovenia complete the top-15.

CHL

For the upcoming season the CHL has been reduced to 32 teams and the clubs have been selected only by sports criteria, meaning by their performance in their domestic league.

“In our fourth season we want to improve the markets and bring it to more countries. We also have a standing invitation to the KHL and hope that they will in the future accept it so we can see how good they are,” said CHL Chairman Anders Ternbom.

The Champions Hockey League with the new format will kick off on 24 August with six group-stage games for each team until 11 October. The best to teams of each group of four will advance to the playoffs starting with the 1/8-finals on 31 October and finishing with the final on 6 February 2018.

[Click to see the 2017/2018 CHL groups](#)



JAPAN

The Japanese Ice Hockey Federation named **Yuji Iwamoto** head coach of the Japanese men's national team. He is the first home-grown coach to lead the squad in two decades.

Born in 1962 in Tomakomai on the northern island of Hokkaido, Iwamoto played 604 games (239 goals, 263 assists) in 20 years in the Japanese Ice Hockey League and represented Japan in the IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship B-Pool in 1989, 1990 and 1994.

Iwamoto started his career as a coach while still playing and was a player-coach for the last two seasons with Yuki-jirushi. He later had roles as assistant coach of the Japanese U20 and U18 national teams and was the head coach of the U20 national team for three years (2007-2010). In 2009 he led the team to Division II gold and a fifth-place finish in the Division I tournament the following year and 21st overall, at that time the best placement in six years for a Japanese U20 team.

He later moved to North America to work as an assistant coach in the junior league NAHL for the Motor City Metal Jackets and the Jamestown Ironmen before returning to Japan as head coach of the Nikko Ice Bucks in the Asia League for the past four seasons.

USA

Pat Kelleher, who has guided USA Hockey's efforts in development since 2008 and prior to that was recruited to launch what is today known as the United States Ice Rink Association, has been named executive director of USA Hockey.

Kelleher helped start a new department at USA Hockey in 2008 focused on increasing participation across the country, particularly at the entry level. In 2011, Kelleher was given additional responsibilities overseeing The USA Hockey Foundation. He also established a Trustee program to more actively engage high net-worth donors in supporting USA Hockey's mission, in addition to creating the "It Starts With A Stick" campaign to connect USA Hockey's membership to the Foundation's philanthropic mission through raising funds to provide 12,000 hockey sticks to new participants each year.

Prior to coming to USA Hockey, Kelleher helped launch Serving the American Rinks (STAR). Housed at USA Hockey's national headquarters in Colorado Springs, STAR (now called U.S. Ice Rink Association) is a non-profit membership organization focused on advancing the ice rink industry through world-class education and training programs.

Obituaries

ALEXANDER BODUNOV

Alexander Bodunov, a Soviet forward during the very pinnacle of international hockey success for CCCP, died on 11 May in Moscow at the age of 66.

Bodunov made a name for himself in game three of the 1972 Summit Series in Winnipeg, scoring the tying goal in the 4-4 game against Canada. He played league hockey with CSKA Moscow for three years and after the Summit Series moved to Krylia Sovetov for most of the rest of the decade. As well, he played for the Soviets at the 1973 and 1974 World Championship, winning gold each time.

He also played in the 1974 Summit series featuring the Soviets and stars from the World Hockey Association.

BILL WHITE

Bill White, a standout defenceman passed away on 21 May. From Toronto, Canada, White played in six straight NHL All-Star Games (1968-74), and played in 604 regular-season games.

In his third NHL year, he was traded to Chicago. It was there he played the rest of his career,

paired mostly with Pat Stapleton. Their reputations were such that when Team Canada was being formed for the 1972 Summit Series, they were both selected to the team. It was the defence that had the hardest time learning and adjusting to the Soviets' style of play, but in the end Canada prevailed and White forever considered this series the highlight of his career.

A neck injury forced White to retire in 1976 at age 36, and after his playing days he became a coach for the Blackhawks.

GORD CHRISTIAN

Gord Christian, one of three prominent hockey-playing brothers from Warroad, Minnesota, passed away on 9 June at the age of 89.

"Ginny" won a silver medal with the United States at the 1956 Olympics in Cortina d'Ampezzo, scoring five goals in six games. He also played for the U.S. at the 1955 and 1958 World Championships. The latter was significant because he played with Roger and Bill.

A proud Minnesotan, Gord Christian attended the University of North Dakota from 1947 to 1950, leading the team in scoring the first two years. Among his teammates was Ralph Engelstad, who had immense influence on the school's hockey program later in life.

Annual Congress

New formats, 2021, '22 WM host selected

By Martin Merk



The 2017 IIHF Annual Congress approved several changes in regulations including for the overtime and shootout procedure as of next season.

Based on the feedback of the participants, teams will in the future not change ends for the overtime period but use the same ends like in the third period to have a shorter skate from their end for a line change especially considering that a three-on-three overtime is challenging enough.

In round robin and preliminary-round games, a 3-on-3 overtime period of up to five minutes will be played following a three-minute intermission during which time the ice will be shovelled.

In playoff games and the bronze medal games, the same procedure applies but with the overtime period of up to ten minutes and 4-on-4 players.



The IIHF Annual Congress approved the adjustments of several regulations and named two World Championship hosts.

The gold medal game will continue to have an overtime period of up to 20 minutes if the game is tied but instead of a 5-on-5 overtime as until this season it will be a 4-on-4 overtime as of the 2017/2018 season following a 15-minute intermission including ice resurfacing. This to increase the likeliness of a goal being scored during overtime given that the gold medal is at stake.

Also the penalty-shot shootout procedure was amended. As of the 2017/2018 season the pro-

cedure will begin with five different shooters from each team followed by tie-breaking shots if the teams are tied after five rounds of shots. Until now it was three shooters in round robin and preliminary round games and five shooters in playoff and medal games.

This change was done to ensure that it requires more successful attempts to win a game making it more of a team effort and to increase the excitement for the audience.

2018 Tournaments assigned

The hosts for the 2018 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship program in five categories and at several levels have been assigned by the 2017 IIHF Annual Congress.

The best six nations outside of the men's top division will play the 2018 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship Division I Group A in the Hungarian capital of Budapest. The tier below, the 2018 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship Division I Group B, will be hosted in Lithuania's second-largest city of Kaunas.

27 tournaments have been assigned, including a few to applicants from new markets. For example the 2017 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 World Championship Division I Group B will be played in a 4,000-seat arena in Odessa. The "pearl of the Black Sea" was introduced to hockey only recently and the tournament should give another boost to the biggest coastal city of the country with one million inhabitants.

The events at the various levels went from cities like Asiago in Italy, Bled in Slovenia to hockey places outside of the traditional hockey countries such as Abu Dhabi, Cape Town, Erzurum, Mexico City and Queenstown. The program also includes two new countries joining with Kuwait and Turkmenistan.

André Ringuette / HHOF-IIHF Images

To Minsk and Riga for 2021

After a tight race between two strong applicants the Annual Congress allocated the 2021 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship to the joint bid of Minsk, Belarus, and Riga, Latvia. The bid won by a very tight margin against the Finnish bid with the cities of Tampere and Helsinki.

Belarus and Latvia decided a few months ago to join together for the bid with the slogan “Passion. No Borders”. Minsk is the Belarusian capital, with almost two million inhabitants and 3.4 million in the region. For 2021 the 15,086-seat Minsk Arena, with two practice rinks on site, would be used as the primary venue.

“We learned a lot from organizing the 2006 World Championship in Riga and the 2014 World Championship in Minsk and with that experience can make things even better in 2021,”

said Belarusian Ice Hockey Association General Secretary Yaraslau Zauharodni.

Riga, Latvia’s capital, is just a one-hour flight away. Latvia is renowned for its passionate fans travelling to World Championships all around the world, and the country hopes to recreate the great atmosphere of 2006 when the 10,300-seat Arena Riga was opened to host the Worlds. A new practice arena will be built next to it.

New LHF President Aigars Kalvitis remembers the 2006 Worlds in Riga well. At that time he was the Prime Minister.

“Hockey is loved so much in our country and we are thankful that our Belarusians friends invited us. In Cologne we had at least 7,000 to 8,000 Latvian fans who supported the team. We hope with this championship we will develop hockey in the region,” he said.

Finland gets 2022 Worlds

Finland with its bid for Tampere and Helsinki confirmed that it would be ready to host the event also in 2022. After consulting other top-division teams whether there would be potential applicants to run for 2022 against Finland, it was decided to propose having the 2022 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship in Tampere and Helsinki, which was unanimously approved by the 2017 IIHF Annual Congress.

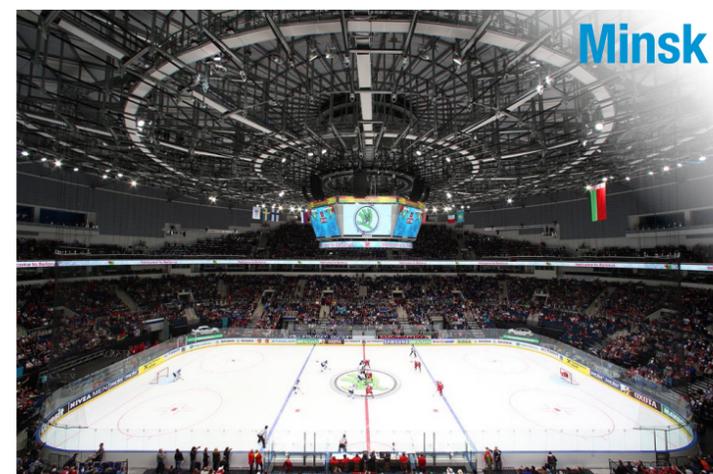
“Representing Finland, especially as a captain, it was the biggest honour for me to play twice at home in front of our fans. It was an overwhelming feeling when the whole country is behind you,” said Saku Koivu said when presenting Finland’s 2021 bid. “Hockey is a big part of the Finnish way of life and I can guarantee you that the fans will create a great atmosphere not only for the Finnish games but for the whole tourna-

ment. We may not be big talkers, but when we do it, we do it well.”

A new arena in Tampere would serve as the main venue, backed up by the Hartwall Arena in Helsinki.

“It’s a brand-new, world-class ice hockey arena with the best possible circumstances and experience,” Finnish Ice Hockey Association President Harri Nummela told the delegates. “Finland is one of the safest and most stable countries in the world. We can offer a great atmosphere to participate for the greatest sport on earth.”

Tampere, the main venue, is one of the largest cities in Finland with a population of 225,000 in the city and almost a million within a 100-km radius. The new 13,500-seat Tampere Arena is scheduled to open in 2020 as the most modern multi-purpose arena in Northern Europe.



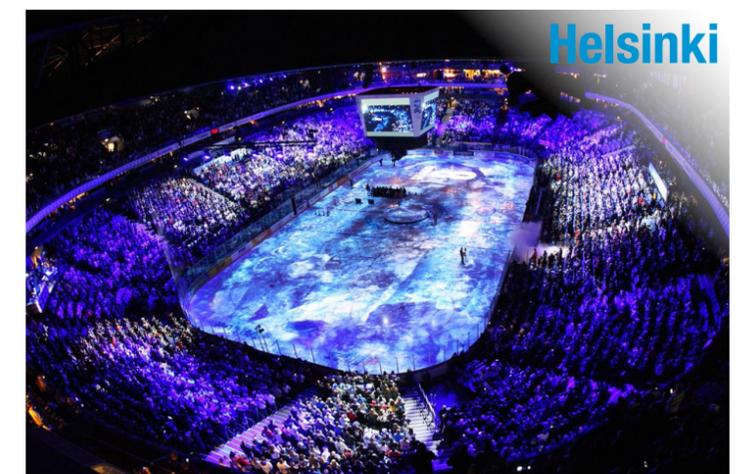
Minsk



Riga



Tampere



Helsinki

Eight added to Hall

Legendary class joins IIHF Fall of Fame

By John Sanful



The International Ice Hockey Federation inducted its 2017 Hall of Fame class in a ceremony held at the German Sport and Olympic Museum in Cologne.

The event, hosted by international hockey broadcaster Gord Miller, inducted eight members whose contributions to the sport have helped transform the game as they have served as hockey ambassadors for their respective countries.

Saku Koivu won eight medals on the international stage, including leading Finland to its first ever World Championship gold in 1995. Koivu would play for the Montreal Canadiens and, later, the Anaheim Ducks. He would become the first European captain of the Canadiens. Koivu is also known for his courage off the ice. He battled Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma that kept him out for almost an entire season, including the 2002 Olympics.



From left: Tony Hand, Joe Sakic, Uwe Krupp, Teemu Selanne, Patrick Franchetierre, Dieter Kalt, and Saku Koivu.

"It seems like I've come full circle coming back to Germany and being honoured for my career," Koivu said, reflecting that he made his senior men's debut with the Finnish national team at the 1993 World Championship in Germany.

Angela Ruggiero was a world-class defence-man and competitor for Team USA. Her con-

tributions in hockey continue to this day as she continues to break down barriers. She earned four Women's World Championship gold medals and gold at the 1998 Olympics. Ruggiero could not make the event when her father Bill passed away suddenly but her brother Billy was on hand to accept the honour and pay tribute to his sister.

Dieter Kalt was a star player in the 1960s in the Austrian league and has been the face of Austrian hockey for half a century. He represented Austria at the 1962 World Championships in Colorado Springs and in every major IIHF event from 1962-1972.

After retirement, Kalt was a referee and coach and then President of the Austrian Ice Hockey Federation from 1996-2016.

"This is an honour and I accept this for all that we have done for the development of our federation. We organized world championships and Olympic qualification games. We did this because we had big support from the IIHF, president, council, and delegates."

Joe Sakic had an illustrious career with the Quebec Nordiques and then the Colorado Avalanche when the team moved to the United States. He captained the Avalanche for 17 years making him one of the longest serving captains in NHL history. Sakic is also the NHL's all-time leader in playoff overtime goals. Winning World Championship and Olympic gold, along with the Stanley Cup, Sakic is a member of the prestigious triple gold club.

"It was always very humbling playing for your country," Sakic said. "To be able to play in the World Championships, Olympics, World Cup,

Matt Zamboni / HHOF-IIHF Images



there is nothing like it. I am very fortunate for my teammates. I've had the good fortune to play with some of the best to play the game and learn from them."

The Richard "Bibi" Torriani award was presented to Tony Hand, the greatest player in Great Britain's modern hockey history. The Edmonton Oilers selected Hand 252nd overall in the 1986 draft, the first British player ever taken. When Hand attended training camp, Edmonton general manager Glen Sather announced that the Scottish Wayne Gretzky would try out for the team, which some might have led to think that a player who trained and played in Great Britain would be a curiosity.

"Turns out he was more than just a curiosity; he was a terrific player there and everywhere he played," Miller said. "It is fair to say that very few players were better longer than Tony Hand."

Hailing from Edinburgh, Scotland, Hand played professional hockey in the BHL as a 14-year-old and finally in the English Premier Ice Hockey League at the age of 47.

The Paul Loicq award was presented Patrick Francheterre. Francheterre has been involved with French hockey for the better part of half a century. As a pivotal builder of French hockey, Francheterre has overseen the development of the sport and his country's ascension into the top division of the World Championships.

Teemu Selanne said today's honour means so much because as a boy, his hope was to play in the top league in Finland and, maybe if things went well, the national team.

The NHL was not a thought at the time. Selanne, known as the Finnish Flash, scored 684 goals in 21 NHL seasons and won the Stanley Cup in 2007 and silver medals at the World Championships in 1999 and Olympics in 2006.

"It has been an honour to put this jersey on," Selanne said pointing to the legendary Finland blue. "You can't describe this feeling of what it means to put this jersey on and play for your own country. I am so very thankful."

Finally, Cologne's own Uwe Krupp gave an emotional presentation about receiving this honour in his hometown. First noticed by Scotty Bowman, Krupp was drafted by the Buffalo Sabres and would go on to an NHL career that spanned 14 seasons with honours that included being the first German to score a Cup-winning goal and the first German player to win the Stanley Cup.

"I am privileged and fortunate to know so many people who were able to take this awkward kid from Cologne, Germany, the first German to come to North America to help him on his way and help him learn to play hockey in the best league in the world."

He spoke fondly of Franz Reindl and how he was an important person in his career and the next step in his career that has included coaching the German junior and senior teams.

[Click here to view the complete 2017 IIHF Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony.](#)



IceTimes June 2017



Swedes triumph in Cologne

Ten things we learned from the 2017 IIHF World Championship

By Lucas Aykroyd



The 2017 IIHF World Championship showed off tons of speed and skill, but also taught important truths about the state of international hockey.

Here are 10 takeaways.

1) Sweden loves late additions

In 2013, the Sedin twins joined the national team after the Vancouver Canucks got eliminated from the NHL playoffs, and they led Sweden to home-ice gold in Stockholm. This year, coach Rikard Gronborg had a similar windfall when superstars Nicklas Backstrom of the Washington Capitals and Henrik Lundqvist of the New York Rangers signed on late.

Backstrom shone with seven points in five games, scoring the 2-1 shootout winner versus Canada in the final. Lundqvist's 1.31 GAA and 94.5 save percentage were tops among goalies who played five or more games. For some teams, late roster additions are disruptive, but not for Sweden.

2) Nylander is Swedish for "all-star"

Clearly, the Nylander family has amazing hockey genes. When William Nylander earned



The World Championship finale between Canada and Sweden went down to the wire, with the Swedes emerging victorious.

World Championship MVP honors and an all-star team berth with 14 points this year, the swift 21-year-old Swede was following in his father's footsteps.

Michael Nylander was named Best Forward and an all-star when Tre Kronor took silver in 1997. And interestingly, William's younger brother, 19-year-old Alexander, cracked the World Junior all-star team this year. This family saga is just starting.

3) Right now, Canada rules Russia

When Canada scored four third-period goals in a 4-2 semi-final win over Russia in Cologne, it continued a recent pattern. Since 2015, Canada has dominated the rivalry between the traditional hockey superpowers.

The Canadians thumped Russia 6-1 in the 2015 World Championship final and won gold again in Moscow in 2016. Canada also elimi-

nated the Russians with a 5-3 semi-final victory at the 2016 World Cup of Hockey. It's been declining returns for Russian coach Oleg Znarok, who last captured gold at the 2014 Worlds. He could use a 2018 Olympic gold to up his international stock – preferably with a big win over Canada.

4) Veteran blood would help America

To be clear, the United States is on the rise hockey-wise. More than 25 percent of NHLers are American, and the U.S. has played for a medal at three of the last five Worlds. However, gold remains elusive for its youthful Worlds teams.

In 2017, after a stellar round-robin, the Americans had a disappointing 2-0 quarter-final loss to Finland. The U.S. brought some top-drawer NHLers like Johnny Gaudreau and Jack Eichel, but also had the tournament's youngest roster (average age 23). If the U.S. hopes to capture its first Worlds gold since 1933, it'll need more help from its older stars. Canada, for instance, has made three straight finals with captains Sidney Crosby (27 in 2015), Corey Perry (31 in 2016), and Claude Giroux (29 in 2017).

5) It's not how you start, it's how you finish

Latvian fans rejoiced after their team opened with three straight Group A wins over Denmark

Andre Ringuette / HHOF-IIHF Images

(3-0), Slovakia (3-1), and Italy (2-1) under new coach Bob Hartley.

However, Hartley, who won the 2001 Stanley Cup with Colorado, couldn't keep that pace up. After the Latvians lost three straight to Sweden, the U.S., and Russia, they needed a win over host Germany to make the quarter-finals. Instead, a heart-breaking 4-3 shootout loss left Latvia in 10th place. It shows why top teams always emphasize "getting better every game."

6) Goalies aren't Finland's biggest plus

Not long ago, Finland's international successes were often tied to Vezina Trophy-winning goalies like Miikka Kiprusoff and Tuukka Rask, who earned Olympic bronze in 2010 and 2014 respectively. But if you look past Pekka Rinne, the 2014 Worlds MVP who took Nashville to this year's Stanley Cup final, Finland is relying more on its hot young forwards, as its goalie factory has slowed down.

Last year, MVP Patrik Laine and Mikael Granlund stole the spotlight en route to silver, and this year Sebastian Aho and Mikko Rantanen were the best players for the fourth-place Finns. But goalies Harri Sateri (2.26 GAA, 91.5 save percentage) and Joonas Korpisalo (3.82 GAA, 85.8 save percentage) didn't distinguish themselves.

7) High expectations can hurt you

The Belarusians entered these Worlds ninth in the IIHF World Ranking, and they had high hopes of making the quarter-finals again, as they surprisingly did in both 2014 and 2015. But instead, they lost five consecutive games, getting hammered 6-1 by the Czechs and 6-0 by Canada along the way. With sub-par effort and execution in all three zones, they finished 13th, saving their skins with wins over Slovenia and Norway.

Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenko lambasted the team afterwards in an official statement, dubbing it "spineless." As Belarus rebuilds its program prior to co-hosting the 2021 Worlds with Latvia, it will be interesting to see what if any changes come to the program come as the country tries to aim higher.

8) Don't doubt Danes in shootouts

Denmark, which will host the Worlds for the first time ever in 2018, isn't a true hockey powerhouse despite staying in the elite division each year since 2003. But the Danes do excel at shootouts. A record-setting nine shootouts took place at this tournament, and Denmark's all-time record improved to 6-1 when captain Morten Green got the winner in a 4-3 victory over Slovakia. Will this special skill set spark

the Danes to their third quarter-final berth ever (2010, 2016) next year? Stay tuned.

9) Czechs, Slovaks are sliding

In the Cold War era, Czechoslovakia was the Soviet Union's biggest Worlds rival, and in the early 2000's, the Czech Republic and Slovakia were perennial medal threats. But neither the Czechs nor Slovaks have medaled since 2012. The declining quality of their domestic leagues and their difficulties with funding and player development have been well-documented.

Coming seventh this year was the worst Czech result since 2013, and Slovakia's 14th-place finish was its poorest since entering the elite division in 1996. Some young stars offer hope, but especially for Slovakia, it'll be a long road back.

10) Our 2017 hosts are hockey countries

Germany (eighth place) and France (ninth place) both performed very respectably on home ice. Yet the rapturous reception of the fans exceeded all expectations. The total attendance of 686,391 was the second-highest in history after the Czech Republic's mark of 741,690 in 2015. With a hearty "Danke!" and "Merci!", we look forward to the growth of hockey in both Germany and France and future IIHF tournaments to come to these nations.



Video Highlights:

2017 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship



Click here to view all the game highlights from the 2017 World Championship

Directorate Best Forward, All-Star



Artemi Panarin, F, Russia

9 GP, 4 G, 13 A, 17 P, +4
Panarin was all over the score sheet for Russia throughout the tournament, averaging nearly two points per game and helping to lead Russia to a bronze medal win over Finland.

Directorate Best Defenceman, All-Star



Dennis Seidenberg, D, Germany

8 GP, 1 G, 7 A, 8 P, +1
Seidenberg opened 2017 with a great campaign with Team Europe at the World Cup of Hockey. He finished with a fantastic performance for Team Germany, the only defenceman to place in the Top-10 in scoring.

Directorate Best Goalkeeper, All-Star



Andrei Vasilevsky, G, Russia

9 GP, 1.72 GAA, 93.56 SVS%, 3 SO
Vasilevsky steadied Russia's defence in the preliminary round. Aside from a third period collapse against Canada in the semi-finals the young netminder had a career tournament, posting three shutout performances.

Korea makes leap

Join Austria in top division

By Martin Merk



For the first time in history Korea will play in the top division of the World Championship after placing second in the 2017 Division I Group A.

It will be the first time that an Asian team will play in the top division since Japan between 1998 and 2004 when the Asian qualifier had a spot. Korea overtook Japan as the top-ranked Asian nation for the first time in 2016.

Korea finishes the 2017 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship Division I Group A in second and the World Championship program this year in 18th place overall. The previous best placing was 21st in 2013 and 2016.

It was a heart-breaking final. Korea needed to beat tournament host Ukraine for promotion. The game went to shootout where Michael Swift and Sanghoon Shin scored for Korea.

“You want to come in and win every game. We



Korea celebrating with the silver trophy and medals after beating Ukraine to earn promotion to the World Championship.

played five games. We started the tournament 3-0; then Austria set us back. It was pretty tough today,” said Michael Swift, who was credited with the game-winning goal after opening the shootout with a marker.

“The next 12 months that are coming up will be something very special for Korean ice hockey.”

Austria back in the dance

After two years in the Division I Austria will be promoted to the 2018 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship.

“I thought it was a really good game tonight. We started off the game very well. We got a 3-0



lead after the first period. We take it as it is and are happy to move to the top division,” Austrian captain Thomas Raffl said after a 11-0 blanking of Poland in the final game.

For Austria it was an important win after a bad year 2016, when for the first time since 1991 the Austrians did not earn promotion when playing at Division I level. A few months later Austria underperformed at the Final Olympic Qualification in Riga and missed a spot at the 2018 Olympic Winter Games.

The results also led to changes in the coaching position. Roger Bader took over and ended his first IIHF tournament as Austria’s men’s national team head coach with gold. Kazakhstan defeated Hungary 3-1 in its final game, helping the team to move past Poland and win bronze. Poland finished fourth, followed by Hungary and Ukraine.

League roundup

Club results from around the world


AUSTRIA – The Vienna Capitals became the new champion of the EBEL by defeating Klagenfurt 4-0 in the finals. Vienna won the title after going undefeated throughout the entire playoffs.



This is the team's first national title since the 2004/05 season. The fashion in which the Capitals garnered this championship, winning every single one of their 12 playoff games, hasn't been seen in quite some time, topping the already impressive 12 wins in 13 games achieved by Red Bull Salzburg in the 2014/15 season.


BELARUS – Neman Grodno powered to its sixth Belarusian championship after sweeping Yunost Minsk in the President's Cup final.

Neman forward Pavel Boyarchuk finished with 11 post-season goals and 16 points, topping the scoring charts. Neman goes forward to next season's Champions Hockey League, returning to the tournament it contested in 2015/16 while Yunost Minsk as regular-season champion can look to repeat its Continental Cup victories in 2007 and 2011 when entering the European stage.

A 6-2 victory on home ice wrapped up a flawless post-season for Sergei Pushkov's men as the team completed its playoff series against Lida, Gomel and Yunost without dropping a single game.


CZECH REPUBLIC – Kometa Brno went 12-2 in the playoffs, including a four-game sweep of defending champion Bili Tygri Liberec in the finals, to win its first title in more than half a century.

After years of mediocrity, the team was relegated from the Czech Extraliga in 1996, and then fell to the third tier of Czech hockey in 2000. The team returned one level up in



2003 and was finally back in the top league in 2009, after a 13-year absence.

Since its return to the Extraliga, Kometa has got its fans' hopes up a few times. In 2012, it went to the final from the no. 8 seed in the regular season, falling in six games to Pardubice in the finals. In 2014 it was back in the finals, this time falling to PSG Zlin in five. But the third time was the charm in 2017.


FINLAND – For the second time in a row, Tappara Tampere got to celebrate winning the Finnish championship when they beat KalPa Kuopio 3-1 in Game 6 of the final.

It was the club's 17th Finnish title, most in history, and tenth since 1975 with the current league format, tied with TPS Turku.



Tappara has made it to the final in five consecutive years now, having lost the first three finals, before winning in 2016 and defending the title this season.

And while Tappara has been the one constant in the Finnish hockey season finale in recent years, the opponent has been different in four of the five finals. Karpat and Tappara played in two straight finals in 2014 and 2015, with the Oulu team winning both.


FRANCE – For the second time in three years the Gap Rapaces won the French Ligue Magnus. Three straight wins against last year's champions Rouen Dragons were the key to a 4-2 series victory and a place among the top-5 most successful French hockey teams in history.



Marcel Engelbrecht / GEPA pictures

Gap forward Anthony Rech was voted the playoff MVP after already having won the same title for the regular season. In the playoffs he scored 11 goals and 20 points in just 14 games.

Located in the south-eastern part of France, neighbouring the Alps, Gap counts less than 50,000 inhabitants but its hockey team is working miracles carrying only the eighth-largest budget in the league (€1,3 million).


GERMANY – With Game 5 serving as the match ball for EHC Red Bull Munich, the Bavarians convincingly took their second DEL championship in a row with a 4-0 victory over renewed opponent Grizzlies Wolfsburg.

Munich once again secured the championship



for itself, this time right in its own backyard in front of 6,142 spectators thanks to a 4-0 score. With this shutout, the team took the series four games to one.

For a Munich-based hockey team in Germany's top pro circuit, it's the fifth title after MTV won in 1922, Munich Hedos in 1994, and the Munich Barons in 2000.


HUNGARY – For the first time in league history there is a club that has won three titles and also won three championships in a row: DVTK Jegesmedvek.

The defending champions won the opening game in overtime and were on a 9-game finals winning streak when MAC Budapest shut them out 3-0 in the second game of the series. Game three and four were both 4-3



Roberta Strazabosco

victories for DVTK, game five as expected was not a cakewalk as the two time defending champions came from behind to win 2-1 and to become the first team in MOL League history to “threepeat”.


ITALY – Thanks to a 3-1 Game 5 victory for Ritten Sport, the first full season of the Alps Hockey League has concluded and the team from the Bolzano region of Italy can proudly call itself the league's historic initial champion.

The league was founded this season and includes the best club teams from Austria, Italy and Slovenia not competing in EBEL, the top Austrian-based cross-border league.

The all-Italian final pitted Ritten against Asiago. For Ritten's “Buam” (“boys” in the local German



Reiji Nagayama

dialect), it was a fitting conclusion to a season that saw them finish first in the 30-game preliminary phase, the 10-game master round and also in the official Italian championship. The team then walked through the AlpsHL playoffs defeating Neumarkt 3-0 and Cortina 3-1.


KOREA – Anyang Halla has defended its Asia League title after beating Morskie Lvy Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk 3-0 in the best-of-five final. It's the third championship for the Korean team and it's only the second time a club has won back-to-back championships in the Asia League. The nine-team league included four club teams from Japan, three from Korea, one from China and one from the Russian island of Sakhalin.



Anyang Halla finished the post season undefeated after beating the Tohoku Freeblades 2-0, 6-2, and 4-1 in the semi-finals where Sakhalin eliminated the Nikko Ice Bucks also in three games. Once dominated by North American imports, the top-five scorers of Anyang were Koreans.

 **LATVIA** – HK Kurbads from the town of Ogre clicked into gear when it mattered the most to win their first Latvian championship trophy.

Losing out in three consecutive Latvian championship playoff finals series between 2014 to 2016, perennial silver medallists HK Kurbads looked destined to once again head down that same well-trodden path of disappointment in 2017.

Trailing 0-3 in games in the best-of-seven final series against Mogo Riga, this crop of HK Kurbads players proved however to be made of much sterner stuff that their predecessors as they staged a remarkable fightback to claim four straight victories to prevail 4-3 in the championship series.

 **NETHERLANDS** – The Flyers Heerenveen completed a 3-1 final series win over HYS The Hague and with that captured the triple.

Not only did the team win the 2016-17 BeNeLiga season, the top league of the Netherlands and Belgium. The team also claimed the Dutch national and Dutch Cup trophies on the way to the season finale.

A former powerhouse in the Netherlands,

Heerenveen won seven straight league titles between 1977 and 1983. When the win streak was broken, it lasted over three decades before the team from the north of country could celebrate a championship again.

 **NORWAY** – The Stavanger Oilers dynasty continues as the oiltown's aptly-named Oilers won their sixth consecutive Norwegian championship, beating Frisk Asker Tigers 5-2 in Game 6 of the best-of-seven final.

The two games they dropped to the Tigers were also the only games they lost in the post-season, having swept Stjernen and Sparta Warriors in the quarter-finals and the semi-finals, respectively.

The Oilers domination was complete as they

also won the regular season title. Pretty good for a team that played its first official game in 2001, in the Norwegian II division.

 **POLAND** – Since 2006, Cracovia Krakow and GKS Tychy have duelled for the Polish Hockey League title six times. For the sixth time Cracovia comes out on top leaving their rivals empty handed.

Less than a minute into overtime of game seven, Petr Sinagl was left all alone on centre ice receiving a pass from Damian Kapica. The Czech veteran sniper made no mistake and found a hole between the legs of Tychy netminder Stefan Zigardy with many fans still finding their way back to their seats; 2-1.

By retaining the Polish title, Cracovia now has 12 titles.



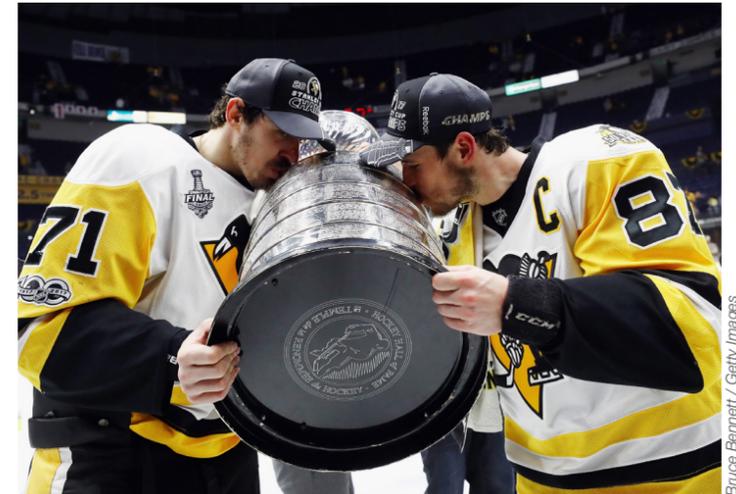
Alexei Kudenko / RIA Novosti



Vedri Gajigas



Gabriela Ganzova



Bruce Bennett / Getty Images

 RUSSIA – SKA St. Petersburg is this season's Gagarin Cup champion after wrapping up the KHL's showcase series with a 5-3 victory in Game 5 at Metallurg Magnitogorsk.

The Army Men powered through post season, dropping just two games in four rounds of playoff action to regain the crown it won for the first time in 2015. While SKA became the fourth team to claim a second Gagarin Cup crown, head coach Oleg Znarok and his assistant Harijs Vitolins won the trophy for the third time – a KHL record.

 SWITZERLAND – SC Bern won its 15th Swiss championship in Game 6 of the final series on the road against EV Zug and becomes the first Swiss team since the ZSC Lions Zurich (2000-2001) to win back-to-

back championships in the National League A. It was a perfect season for the club with the biggest revenue in the league and the highest attendance in Europe. Each playoff home game was sold out with 17,031 fans and the fans had a lot to celebrate this season.

 SLOVAKIA – HC '05 Banská Bystrica is the new champion of Slovakia. Banská Bystrica participated in the Extraliga final for the third time in a row, but only this time they finished on top.

After the regular season they clinched first place and entered the playoffs as top-seeded team. Banská Bystrica needed one more win against KH Nitra to become the champion and crushed their opponent 6-2 in the deciding games to clinch the championship.

 SWEDEN – The Swedish hockey league season got a fairy-tale ending when HV71 Jonkoping's Simon Onerud tapped in Martin Thornberg's assist in the first overtime period of Game 7 on home ice in Jonkoping to win the game against Brynas Gavle 2-1.

Onerud wore the C when Thornberg was sidelined in games five and six, having blocked a shot with his protective cup and undergoing surgery. In the end, it was the 34-year-old second generation HV71 player, who also won the title with HV71 in 2004, 2008, and 2010, that was the difference in Game 7.

He forced his way to the net in the first overtime period and sent a perfect backhand pass to Onerud who tapped the puck in, giving his team the championship.

 USA – In a dramatic conclusion to the 2017 Stanley Cup final, the Pittsburgh Penguins blanked the Nashville Predators 2-0 in Game Six at Bridgestone Arena to earn their second straight championship.

Pittsburgh captain Sidney Crosby received his second consecutive Conn Smythe Trophy as playoff MVP, enhancing his reputation as the greatest forward of his era. The ultra-competitive 29-year-old from Cole Harbour, Nova Scotia elevated his game in the final and finished with 27 points, including a playoff-leading 19 assists.

Pittsburgh also became the first NHL team to earn back-to-back titles in the salary cap era. The last team with consecutive Cups was Detroit in 1997 and 1998.

Gallery



Swedish goaltender and new World Champion Henrik Lundqvist gets tackled by tournament MVP William Nylander after the shootout win over Canada.



Russia's Nikita Kucherov scores a third period goal during the bronze medal game.



Captain Laurent Meunier (centre) finished his international career on home ice in Paris.

Andre Ringuette / HHOF-IIHF Images

Andre Ringuette / HHOF-IIHF Images

Matt Zamboni / HHOF-IIHF Images



Florian Hardy makes a fantastic paddle save during France's historic 5-1 win over Finland at the World Championship.



Slovakia's Libor Hudacek celebrates with fans after scoring a goal during the preliminary round at the World Championship.



Team Sweden's Joel Lundqvist with a scoring chance against Italy's Frederic Cloutier at the World Championship.

Matt Zamborini / HHOF-IIHF Images

Andre Ringueite / HHOF-IIHF Images

Andre Ringueite / HHOF-IIHF Images



German players and fans celebrate after a 4-3 shoot-out win over Latvia that gave the team a playoff berth on home ice at the World Championship.



Tournament Most Valuable Player William Nylander with a scoring chance against Russia.



France drew in a record number of spectators to the AccorHotels Arena venue in Paris.

Andre Ringuette / HHOF-IIHF Images

Matt Zamboni / HHOF-IIHF Images

Guiding the Champs

Rikard Gronborg reflects on Worlds gold

By Andrew Podnieks

Rikard Gronborg went to the U.S. in 1989 in search of an education. Nearly 30 years later, the first-time World Championship head coach won gold. Here's his journey.

Why did you leave Sweden in 1989 to attend St. Cloud University in Minnesota?

NCAA gave me the chance to play high-level hockey and pursue an education. And for me growing up in Sweden, it was an opportunity to experience another culture.

Yet your playing career was short and you quickly got into coaching. How did that happen?

I played in the senior league in Sweden when I was 17, so by the time I retired as a player I was 25 and had been playing a lot of hockey. I went back to St. Cloud to see some old



Matt Zambonin / HHOF-IIHF Images

Rikard Gronborg has taken on the coaching mantle from Par Marts and delivered a gold medal in his first season.

teammates, and the coach asked me to help out at practice. Push some pucks, that sort of thing. And that's how I got the bug. I had no intention of becoming a coach, but I enjoyed it.

What drew you so easily to coaching?

I studied mass communication and then management technology. I liked the idea of

working in a group environment in a leadership role. I applied a lot of what I studied to coaching. They're very closely related. You have to work as a team. You have to motivate people.

I talked to a lot of other coaches in different sports, trying to get something from everyone. The thing about coaching is there's no right way or wrong way. You can succeed

with a team one day and fail with the exact same team the next day. You never know what will happen.

You also coached high school in the U.S. and were also an assistant coach to a women's soccer [football] team. Was there a purpose or goal behind this randomness?

I like challenges. It doesn't matter what team or what country or situation. You take what you get and work with a team to figure out how to succeed. You share the success, but you also sometimes have to share the agony.

And just like that you returned to Sweden to continue to coach. Why?

I was off the map with the federation for a while, so I thought by 2010 it was a good time to come back and do presentations. I wound up with a good opportunity to work with the junior teams, the U18, the U20, and the senior team as well.

I liked the direction the program was taking. In the early 2000s the juniors weren't doing very well, but there was a new generation of players and a new start, so it was exciting to be part of that.

When I got the chance to work full-time with the juniors, it was tough. I had to convince my wife to move to Sweden. She's American and I had spent much of my adult life in the U.S.

A big word in the Gronborg world of coaching is structure. What does that mean exactly?

The players and staff have to work together, lean on each other. You start to coach when the team isn't playing well. Winning is easy, but the team needs a structure in adversity, so the lows aren't so low or a not-great day is still an okay day. It's about managing expectations.

After several years working as an assistant to Par Marts, you were named head coach last year. Was that a dream all along?

As I said earlier, I like challenges. I like to figure out how to put everything together to allow for success.

I wasn't looking to become head coach, but when the opportunity came to be the head coach of the national team, I was ready. It was a new challenge, especially now because the margin between winning and losing is so small.

You won gold in Cologne last month, but it wasn't a perfect team. You lost the first

game, to Russia, and later another game to the U.S. How did you keep the goal for gold on track?

The World Championship is a long tournament, so you can't expect to win every game. We played well against Russia but lost in a shootout. We lost to the U.S., but I thought we were the better team. I felt we had to work on a few things but we were always headed in the right direction.

And then in the final game, the difference went in your favour.

After the gold-medal game I talked to Jon Cooper and we marvelled at how close the two teams were. We won in a shootout, but scoring chances, shots, everything was so close. In these games you need your high-quality players to make high-quality plays. And adding Lundqvist to our defence gave us all the more credibility.

PyeongChang is up next, maybe without NHLers. How do you prepare for that?

The federation has a good relationship with our players all over the world. If we don't use NHL players, we have many world-class players in the KHL and the Swedish league. It will be a new challenge, but the process will be the same.

Given your vast U.S. experience, do you look to the NHL as a final frontier in your career?

I call myself a hybrid coach. I spent my childhood in Sweden but have been in the United States most of my adult life, so I have a mixture of influences.

I'm a curious person. Right now, I'm the national team coach of Sweden, but if there were ever an opportunity to coach in the NHL, I'd be interested. It would be another challenge.



Fact File:



**Rikard Gronborg
SWEDEN,**

- Born: 8 June, 1968 in Huddinge, Sweden
- Coached Sweden's U18 and U20 national teams
- Won gold as assistant coach at 2013 IIHF World Championship
- Coached Sweden at 2016 World Cup of Hockey



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