



IceTimes

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Wild start to 2020

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From the IIHF President

Ice hockey inspires

By René Fasel

Two months into the new ice hockey season, and what a season!

Starting the new year off with the World Junior Championship is a perfect way to get fans excited for international hockey. There really is never a boring moment in this tournament. These young men each year come to play and give their all on the ice. Congratulations to Team Canada on a resilient and inspiring performance in Ostrava.

We got an added bonus in the holiday season with the 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 Women's World Championship taking place in Bratislava, Slovakia. I didn't think that last year's performance by Canada in an overtime win against the United States could be topped, but sure enough this time it was Team USA scoring the golden goal and writing another amazing chapter in the history of this exciting tournament ([more on Page 16](#)). I can't wait to see what is in store for us at the 2020 Women's Worlds in Halifax and Truro, Canada.

Next on the schedule was a special event which has become a truly unique experience: The Winter Youth Olympic Games.

Taking place this year in the Swiss city of Lausanne, the Youth Olympics are a novel concept that allows international federations the freedom to experiment, innovate, and try new and exciting ways to showcase their sport to the world.

The IIHF introduced a **3-on-3 cross-ice format**, in addition to the 6-team **men's** and **women's** tournaments. The unique addition to the format was to make the teams not representative of one single country, but instead to create teams with players from multiple different nations.

The results were very encouraging. All of a sudden you have a player from Russia breaking on the net with a player from Mexico and another from Japan, or a player from New Zealand using sign language to communicate a play to a teammate from China. It was awe-inspiring to watch these teams not just come together in a short amount of time, but also to play exceptionally skillful and competitive hockey.

It was no small effort to run such an intricate and unprecedented tournament format in an Olympic stage. It would not have been possible without the help of: our MNAs who ran skills competitions to determine which players would

represent their country, the officials who came up with the format and tested it at the 2019 IIHF Hockey Development Camp; and the coaches who took time to bring together kids from dozens of different countries to play together.

As we approach the midway point of the season, we look forward to the 2020 IIHF Women's World Championship. With spots on the line to reach the 2022 Olympics in Beijing on the line, it will be a battle in Canada. Not long after we will be in Switzerland for the 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship. There we will welcome out latest class of inductees to the IIHF Hall of Fame, who you can read about on [Page 6](#).

Whether you are scoring a golden goal to win a World Junior Championship, joining a hall of ice hockey legends, or whether you are a boy from Hong Kong or a girl from Mexico who became their country's first athlete to win an Olympic medal through 3-on-3 ice hockey, ice hockey can inspire anyone.

On a more serious note, the IIHF is working closely with the Medical Committee as well as our member national associations that are hosting upcoming IIHF tournaments, in order to monitor the spread of the coronavirus. The IIHF will take all measures necessary to ensure the health and safety of players, fans, and everyone at IIHF events.



News and Notes

2020 IIHF ICE HOCKEY WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

The official mascot of the 2021 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship is Spiky the Hedgehog.

The organizers of the 2021 World Championship – which will be co-hosted by Minsk, Belarus and Riga, Latvia – selected the mascot in a contest held in both countries. More than 100 designs were submitted by both professional artists and hockey fans.

The submitted proposals were evaluated by the jury according to several parameters: graphics, correspondence to the theme, creativity, and compliance of the character with the traditions and culture of Belarus and Latvia. [READ MORE](#)



2020 IIHF COACHING SYMPOSIUM

The 2020 IIHF International Coaching Symposium will be organized in Zurich during the 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship by the IIHF, the Swiss Ice Hockey Federation and the 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship Organizing Committee.

The goal of the Symposium is to provide attending coaches an opportunity to:

- Network and share their views and experiences with other coaches
- Learn the different approaches being used by fellow coaches
- Listen to knowledgeable speakers sharing their insight and ideas on coaching issues
- View new, innovative products from selected exhibitors that are being used around the world to enhance player performance

The themes for this year’s symposium are hockey-specific but also topics on energy management, psychology and general performance.

DEADLINE FOR REGISTRATION: 30 APRIL 2020

2020 IIHF CHALLENGE CUP OF ASIA

Due to the coronavirus outbreak in China, the IIHF has decided to cancel four Challenge Cup

of Asia tournaments. After consultations with the participants and organizers of the respective IIHF tournaments as well as with the IIHF Medical Committee, the decision was made to cancel the following events at the scheduled dates:

- 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey U20 Challenge Cup of Asia, originally scheduled for 10-15 February 2020 in Bangkok, Thailand
- 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey U20 Challenge Cup of Asia Division I, originally scheduled for 10-15 February 2020 in Bangkok, Thailand
- 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey Women’s Challenge Cup of Asia, originally scheduled for 23-28 February 2020 in Manila, Philippines
- 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey Women’s Challenge Cup of Asia Division I, originally scheduled for 23-28 February 2020 in Manila, Philippines

At the time being the 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey Challenge Cup of Asia, currently scheduled to be hosted in Singapore from 27 April to 1 May 2020, is excluded from the above cancellations as the IIHF continues to monitor the situation.

2022 OLYMPIC WOMEN’S TOURNAMENT

The picture for Beijing 2022 will clear up this spring, as the automatically-qualified countries are confirmed for the women’s tournament. The

seedings for the teams will be based on the 2020 IIHF Women’s World Ranking, which will be updated after the conclusion of the 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey Women’s World Championships. The countries that will take part in the Qualification phase will also be confirmed.

This ranking will include the results of the IIHF Ice Hockey Women’s World Championship program between 2017 and 2020 as well as the 2018 Olympic Winter Games (and Qualification).

[CLICK HERE FOR THE CURRENT IIHF WORLD RANKINGS & EXPLANATION](#)

For four of the five events in the ranking, the points are already given and published in the [2020 IIHF WOMEN’S WORLD RANKING PRE-CHAMPIONSHIP REPORT](#) with only the points from the 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey Women’s World Championship program still to be added to get the final ranking.

This year the ranking matters more than ever, as it will determine which teams will earn an automatic qualification for Beijing 2022. For the first time the women’s ice hockey tournament will include ten teams, same as in the Women’s Worlds since last year. The top-6 countries of the 2020 IIHF Women’s World Ranking and China as the host will get direct entry. The last three spots will then be decided in the Olympic Qualification tournaments.

2021 IIHF WORLD JUNIORS

With the end of the 2020 IIHF World Junior Championship, the groups for the 2021 IIHF World Junior Championship in Edmonton and Red Deer, Canada have been determined.

For the 14th time the World Juniors will come to Canada. The 2021 World Juniors will be co-hosted at the recently constructed Rogers Place, and at the ENMAX Centrium in Red Deer.

GROUP A (in Edmonton)	2021 IIHF WORLD JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP CANADA Edmonton - Red Deer	GROUP B (in Red Deer)
Canada (1)		Russia (2)
Finland (4)		Sweden (3)
Switzerland (5)		USA (6)
Slovakia (8)		Czech Republic (7)
Germany (9)		Austria (10)

2024 YOUTH OLYMPIC GAMES

The 2024 Winter Youth Olympic Games were awarded to Korea, the first Asian country to host the Winter Youth Olympics.

The fourth edition of the Winter Youth Olympic Games (YOG) 2024 will be held in Gang-

won province in the cities of PyeongChang and Gangneung (Republic of Korea), home to the Olympic Winter Games 2018.



Gangwon 2024 draws upon the successful delivery of the Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018. The hosting of the Winter YOG leverages the significant investment that the Republic of Korea has made into developing winter sport in the country and throughout Asia.

The new Winter Youth Olympic Games host will benefit from many of the facilities used in PyeongChang 2018 as well as possible alternative venue options.

Competitions would take place in PyeongChang (mountain sports) and Gangneung (ice sports), similar to the Games concept in 2018 (pictured above, the ice hockey arena in Gangneung).

KUWAIT

Kuwait celebrated the opening of its new ice arena by hosting the 2020 Open Championship for Professional Arab Clubs. The new facility welcomed teams from Egypt, Lebanon, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to contest a round robin event with the host club, Kuwait Stars, as the new arena for the Kuwait Winter Games Club opened its doors.



Operated in Bayan, a residential district about 15 km from Kuwait City, the venue complements Kuwait's 40-year-old rink and is intended to be capable of hosting IIHF events in the future as well as providing a permanent home for Kuwait's national championship.

IIHF OFFICIATING

The International Ice Hockey Federation has made the game official assignments for the

2020 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship in Switzerland.

[CLICK HERE FOR THE FULL LIST OF ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE 2019/2020 SEASON](#)

The 32 on-ice officials from 12 different countries were selected from a long list and after careful observation of their performances in domestic play and international tournaments.

The crew in stripes in Zurich and Lausanne is a mix of experienced refs and fresh blood. Czech referee Antonin Jerabek has worked in seven World Championships (men's top division) including three gold medal games, followed by Russian referee Roman Gofman with six Worlds and two gold medal games. Among the more experienced referees is also a local one, Daniel Stricker from Switzerland, who will officiate his fourth World Championship and called the gold medal game in 2017.

Canada, Finland, Russia, Sweden and the United States are best represented with four on-ice official each at the Worlds.

The IIHF has also made the assignments for the 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship Division I Group A in Slovenia, and changed the 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship Division I Group B to the four-man system with additional referees assigned for Poland.

Obituaries

ALEXANDER SKVORTSOV



Alexander Skvortsov, a star with Soviet teams of the 1980s, died in Moscow on 4 February. He was 65 years old.

Skvortsov was a legend with Torpedo Gorky in the Soviet league, a team he played for from 1972 until 1989.

He first represented his country at the 1976 Canada Cup at age 22. Skvortsov played in his first World Championship in 1979 in Moscow, when the Soviets won all nine games en route to a gold medal. A year later, he played in the Lake Placid Olympics, winning silver.

He won gold twice more, at the 1981 and 1983 Worlds. He won a final medal at the World Championship in 1985, a bronze, in the last international event of his career. Skvortsov also helped the Soviets win gold at the 1984 Olympics in Sarajevo.

After retiring, Skvortsov turned his attention to coaching for several seasons, after which he became an executive with his hometown team Torpedo Nizhni Novgorod.

JUHA KAUTTO



Former international linesman Juha Kautto passed away on 10 February in Oulu after a sudden stroke.

Born on 2 October 1975, Kautto officiated 168 games in the top Finnish league as a linesman until 2007.

Kautto was also an international on-ice official. We worked at the 2003 and 2004 World Championship and got the call to officiate the gold medal game in 2004.

He also called games at the 2005 and 2006 World Junior Championship and was assigned for the gold medal game both times.

SOPHIE KRATZER



Sophie Kratzer, a long-time member of Germany's national women's team throughout the 2010s, passed away on 13 January after a hard-fought battle with cancer. She was just 30 years old.

Kratzer had a distinguished career with her national team and in the women's Bundesliga with her club team ESC Planegg, winning seven national titles between 2003 and 2017,

including an unprecedented five in a row, 2010-15. Her team also captured the Elite Women's Hockey League in 2010 and the Elite Women's Hockey League Super Cup in 2012.

Kratzer started her international career at the Women's World Championship in 2009. She was part of several historic teams, namely the WW team of 2011 that won the Division I to earn promotion to the top pool, and another team that won the Division I in 2016. She also helped Germany qualify for the 2014 Olympics in Sochi.

In all, Kratzer played in 149 international games including three top-level events, starting with the 2013 Women's Worlds. She last played at an IIHF event in 2017, at the Women's World Championship in Plymouth, Michigan, when Germany had its best result ever at the WW, finishing fourth after stunning Russia, 2-1, in the quarter-finals and eventually playing in the bronze medal game.

Kratzer's influence on hockey in Germany extended beyond the women's game. In the 2016/2017 season she doubled up with her role on the ice while also working in marketing and communications for the Organizing Committee of the men's IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship in 2017 when it was co-hosted by Germany (Cologne) and France (Paris).

VILEN PROKOFIEV



Young Kazakh goalie Vilen Prokofiev sadly passed away at the age of 18 on 3rd February. The youngster, who twice represented his country in a World U18 Championship, was diagnosed with a rare form of bone cancer last year.

Prokofiev was born in Satpayev, Kazakhstan, and played his first hockey with Kazakhmys. He later joined the junior ranks of KHL organization Barys. He played with Snezhnye Barsy in the Junior Hockey League. In April 2019, he helped his country take silver in the U18 Division IA.

However, the following month he began to struggle with pain in his legs. This proved to be the first symptom of Ewing's Sarcoma.

Prokofiev continued to play: despite his on-going health problems. Once news of his condition was announced in November 2019, the wider hockey community rushed to support the youngster. A fund-raising campaign started and a charity auction raised thousands of dollars. Prokofiev's fight was supported by CSKA Moscow goalie Ilya Sorokin and Sergei Bobrovski of the Florida Panthers. Sadly, despite completing the first course of chemotherapy and undergoing an operation to remove the cancer, Prokofiev passed away on the morning of Monday, Feb. 3, 2020.

A new way to play

Youth Olympic 3-on-3 experiment a hit

By Adam Steiss

The first-ever 3-on-3 cross-ice ice hockey organized by the IIHF tournaments took place in January at the 2020 Winter Youth Olympic Games.

In Lausanne's Malley Arena, a capacity crowd watched as with Team Yellow Stars (women) and Team Green Leafs (men) winning gold medals that are both unique and unprecedented.

The tournaments were a highlight of the Games, both for the action on the ice that has exceeded expectations, and a tremendous level of inclusiveness that saw 43 IIHF member nations have at least one athlete taking part.

"It has been a smashing success," said IIHF President René Fasel, who watched the gold medal game from the stands with IOC President Thomas Bach and Athlete Role Models Florence Schelling and Mark Streit. "The quality of the play has been really good and shows a new dimension of ice hockey that I think is very appealing."



The setup for the Youth Olympic 3-on-3 format, with teams playing at each end and game officials/player benches at center ice.

It was certainly a tournament of firsts. Some countries have never before sent an athlete to any Winter Olympics in any sport, let alone for ice hockey.

One such player was Thawab Al-Subaey, a 15-year-old Qatari forward who made national headlines when he qualified through his NOC Skills competition, and became his country's first flag bearer at a winter Olympics Games.

"I like the 3-on-3 it's always shooting, shooting, shooting, I like the offence," said Al-Subaey.

Hong Kong forward Yam Yau won gold with Team Green Leafs, and in the process became his country's first medalist in any winter Olympic event.

"It's an honour," said Yau Yam, who can now lay claim to Hong Kong's first Winter Olympic

gold medal. "I never thought I was going to get a medal representing Hong Kong. There's only two Hong Kong players represented here."

Another history-maker was Luisa Wilson who was part of a Yellow Stars team that included players from Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Italy, and New Zealand among others. She played a big part in her team's gold medal run, becoming in the process the first Mexican to win a Winter Olympic medal.

"Ice hockey is not a common sport in Mexico, but if kids see that it's possible to go to the Olympics then this might open their eyes to hockey and try it out."

The 3-on-3 tournament was the IIHF's answer to a request from the International Olympic Committee to have a more diversified and inclusive Youth Olympics. The idea was then proposed by the IIHF for a new competition: a 3-on-3 mixed-nation format designed to have as many countries represented in an ice hockey event as possible, while giving players from developing ice hockey nations a chance to compete for a medal and take part in the Olympic Movement.

The positive feelings of the players were echoed by members of the National Olympic Committees, many that were seeing their athletes compete in Olympic ice hockey for the very first time.

Photos: Vedran Galijas / Justipictures.ch



The three gold medal-winning teams from the men's and women's Youth Olympic 3-on-3 cross ice tournaments.

“I think especially in a small nation in ice hockey like Australia it’s great to be on the Olympic stage,” said Nic Cicero of the Australian National Olympic Committee.

“I think the 3-on-3 tournament is fantastic, we’re seeing it now in cricket in Australia and tennis that they’re bringing smaller, more action-packed games rather than the regular sports. The product is a credit to the organizing committee and a credit to the IIHF, it was a fantastic product.”

“Great tournament, we really enjoyed the games,” said Bin Hong from the Chinese National Olympic Committee. “There was very good organization. I think this should absolutely be in future Youth Olympic Games.”

The planning of the concept for 3-on-3 cross-

ice began in the summer of 2017 at the IIHF Hockey Development Camp. It was initially planned as a demonstration sport, but after it was presented to the IOC there was enthusiastic support to make it a medal event.

“I think the biggest surprise was the quality of play that we’ve seen on the ice,” said Aku Nieminen, the Membership Development Manager for the IIHF and the tournament’s Event delegate for the Youth Olympics.

“We expected that each team will have big a skill-level difference within but to our surprise it was not the case. Even though we used a system to balance out skill-levels, one could hardly notice any difference. The players from the non-traditional hockey nations really showed some skills.”

In preparing for the 3-on-3, the IIHF recognized the need for the players to be competitively balanced, but also to be able to come together in a short time to compete at the YOG. The federation therefore selected coaches that have participated in the IIHF Hockey Development Camp, which is a camp that brings in over a hundred players from different countries for a week of ice hockey training and scrimmages.

With the team only being together for a week and playing nine games in that span, team-building became an even more important aspect of the competition.

“Before every game we had a set routine, the girls warmed up dancing to music and then played “name tag” where they needed to tag each other and say the other girl’s name,” said Kristen Wright from the women’s silver medalists Team Black. “that way they get to know each other and get over the language barrier while having fun.”

A successful team-building initiative, helped along by the coaches but also driven by the quality of the players, was a big driver for a successful 3-on-3 product on the ice. Time will tell whether we see more of this unique competition in the future.



2020 HOF class

New legends to join Hall of Fame

By Andrew Podnieks



The newest members to join the ranks of international ice hockey's greatest legends have been announced, as the IIHF has unveiled the Hall of Fame Class of 2020.

The members of the 2020 Induction Class will include five Players and one Builder, as well as the winners of the Richard "Bibi" Torriani Award and the Paul Loicq Award.

They will be honoured at a special induction ceremony in Zurich, Switzerland on 24 May, the final day of the 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship.

Builder Category Mong-Won Chung, Builder

It was one of the sporting highlights of the 2018 Olympic Winter Games, and it was one of the most powerful political moments in Olympic history. When Korea's women's hockey team arrived in PyeongChang, it featured players from

both the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) and the Republic of Korea (South Korea). This historic unification, as well as the very inclusion of the men's and women's hockey teams of Korea in the Olympics, could not have happened without the steadfast resolve of Mong-Won Chung.



Chung has been a hockey fan for 30 years or more, and back in 1994 he had the idea to start a hockey team. To that end, he financed a team called Mando Winia. Over the course of the next decade the team changed its name to the more familiar Anyang Halla.

Anyang can boast of having won five Asia league titles and more regular-season games all time than any other club. As well, Anyang has consistently provided the national team with more players than any other for important international events.

Chung helped start the Asia League in 2003, a pioneering effort involving teams from China, Japan, Korea and later from the Russian Far East. He became the vice-president of the Korean Ice Hockey Federation in 2010, and, not coincidentally, the national team had its greatest successes soon after, earning promotion to Division I-A in 2011.

Player Category Mathias Seger, Defenceman



In order to understand the importance Mathias Seger had to the national team it is important to provide some context. Seger played at the 1996 and 1997 World Junior Championship, alongside other soon-to-be well-known teammates such as fellow HOF inductee Mark Streit.

At the senior level, the team had fluctuated between A Pool and B Pool for years, and in 1997 it earned promotion to A Pool for the next year, a year in which Zurich and Basel hosted the World Championship. The hosts Swiss finished a very solid fourth after losing to the Czechs in the bronze-medal game, and have maintained their status in the top level ever since.

Seger would go on to set a record in IIHF play that might never be equaled. He played in a record 16 World Championships between 1998 and his retirement in 2014, missing only 2007 along the way. His 106 World Championship games is tied for 7th all time.

A defenceman, Seger was known for his play inside his own blue line, his sportsmanship, and his leadership in the dressing room. He achieved a rare hat trick of captaincies during

his career. He wore the "C" for the Swiss national team at the World Juniors in 1997, for the senior team at the World Championship four times (2010, 2011, 2013, 2014), and for the Olympic team in 2014 in Sochi.

But one thing Seger will never forget is the 2013 World Championship in Stockholm. The Swiss went through the eight-game round robin undefeated. That included seven wins in regulation and an eighth in overtime against Canada.

In the playoffs, they stunned the Czechs 2-1 in the quarter-finals and shut out the United States, 3-0, in the semis to advance to the gold-medal game against hosts Sweden, where their luck ran out. But they won silver, their best result since 1935 (and their only other silver in World Championship history).

Seger captained that team, just as he had the Olympic team a few months later. It was his fourth consecutive Olympics (2002, 2006, 2010).

On the national stage, Seger was no less impressive. He played in the NLA in Switzerland for 20 seasons, the first three with Rapperswil and the last 17 with ZSC Lions. In all, he won six national titles with Zurich, the last coming in his final season at age 38 in 2015-16.

Ryan Smyth, Forward

They called him “Captain Canada.” Ryan Smyth wore the “C” for his country at the World Championship more than any other player in tournament history. He played more World Championship games than any Canadian – 61 – and was captain for a record 39.



Smyth has the distinction of having won gold for Canada at five of the most prestigious international tournaments: the World Junior Championship (1995), World Championship (2003, 2004), Olympics (2002), World Cup (2004), and Spengler Cup (2012, as captain).

Smyth made his NHL debut with the Edmonton Oilers on January 22, 1995. It was the start of a career that saw him play more than 1,000 games with the Oilers in an NHL career that lasted 19 seasons with four teams. Smyth had eleven seasons scoring 20 or more goals and ten seasons of 50 or more points. The Oilers reached the Stanley Cup finals in 2006, falling to the Carolina Hurricanes 3-1 in game 7.

He first played for Canada, at the 1995 World Juniors in Red Deer, Alberta. Canada boasted a perfect 7-0-0 record and won gold with relative ease.

Smyth played his first senior Worlds in 1999. Smyth was named to Canada’s 2002 Olympic team for Salt Lake, helping his country win gold for the first time in half a century. A year and a half later, he captained Canada to a World Championship gold, a victory he repeated a year later. Canada went for a third title in 2005, at the end of the NHL lockout season, but fell just short to the Czechs, 3-0, in the gold-medal game, settling for silver.

Smyth also played at the World Cup, helping Canada to victory on home ice in a thrilling final against Finland. He later played at the 2006 Olympics, and his final international event came in 2010 at the World Championship.

A fierce competitor, dedicated Canadian, and winner wherever he played, Smyth made the game better at all times when he was on the ice.

Mark Streit, Defenceman

Arguably the greatest Swiss player of all time, Mark Streit was the first true Swiss superstar in the NHL.



Starting in 1998, he played in ten straight World Championships, and along the way teams in North America took notice of this smooth-skating defenceman. He was drafted by Montreal

in 2004 near the very bottom, 264th overall. He was 27 years old at the time, one of the oldest draft choices in league history.

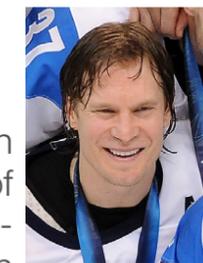
After Streit played one more year in Switzerland, the Canadiens convinced him to give the NHL a chance. He did, and for the next 12 years and nearly 800 games he never looked back.

But in the NHL, he was a force. In his first three seasons with Montreal (2005-08) he went from 11 points to 36 to 62. When he signed as a free agent with the Islanders, he went on to register 205 points in 318 games. At the start of his third season with the Islanders, though, Streit made history, becoming the first Swiss player to be named captain of an NHL team. He wore the “C” for two years before being traded to Philadelphia in the summer of 2013.

Streit’s play in Switzerland, combined with his play on the national team and his success in the NHL, made him a natural leader among Swiss players, a playing legend, as it were. As a result, he also captained the Alpine nation in nine of the 13 World Championships he played in and in three of his four Olympics appearances. He also played in two World Juniors at the start of his career, and near the end of it he played for his long-time national team coach Ralph Krueger once more, representing Team Europe at the 2016 World Cup.

A pioneer and giant among Swiss players, Streit made contributions to the game that have resonated evermore after his career. When he made his debut in 2005, he was the 10th Swiss player to make the NHL, but since then another 24 have followed him to make their own impact in the world’s best league.

Kimmo Timonen, Defenceman



By the time he had retired in the spring of 2015 at the age of 40, Finnish defenceman Kimmo Timonen had pretty much done it all. And yet, his greatest season was arguably his last, when he didn’t play at all for Finland and played a mere 16 regular-season games with his NHL team, the Chicago Blackhawks.

Prior to the start of that 2014-15 season, Timonen received shocking news from his doctor. He was diagnosed with blood clots in his right leg and both lungs. Not only was Timonen’s career almost certainly over, but his life off ice was going to change dramatically. The Philadelphia Flyers, the team for whom Timonen had been playing the previous seven seasons, traded him, thinking he would never play again.

But Timonen persevered, returned to play with the 'Hawks, and then helped the team win the Stanley Cup. Upon receiving the sacred trophy after a clinching, 2-0 win over Tampa Bay in game six, captain Jonathan Toews hoisted the Cup, then turned to Timonen, second in line, and handed him the trophy.

It was a miracle end to a remarkable comeback and a career that put him among the greatest defencemen of his era. Timonen had been playing for KalPa in the Finnish league when he was drafted a lowly 250th overall by Los Angeles in 1993. Soon after the 1998 Olympics, he was traded by the Kings to Nashville, an expansion team that was set to debut in 1998-99.

The Predators had had plenty of chances to scout Timonen. He played at three World Junior Championships (1993-95), the 1996 World Championships, and the Nagano Games.

He came to North America that fall and soon established himself as a rock on the Predators' blue line. He rose to the ranks of superstar with impressive speed. In all, Timonen played in 1,108 regular-season games with the Predators, Flyers, and Hawks, making it to the 2010 finals with the Flyers before losing to that same Chicago team he would celebrate with five years later.

In 2006, Timonen was named Nashville's captain, but after one season he was traded to the Flyers and signed a massive six-year contract extension that made him the highest-paid Finn in the league.

With Finlnad he left an incredible legacy. Timonen played at five Olympics, winning silver in 2006 and bronze in 1998 and 2014. He also played at seven World Championships (three silver), and the 2004 World Cup, in which Finland made it to the final.

A Stanley Cup champion in his final game, a five-time Olympian and multiple medallist at the World Championships, Kimmo Timonen is among the finest Finns to play either in the NHL or internationally.

Alexei Yashin, Forward

Sometimes you get when you expect, even when you expect a great deal. Such was the case with Alexei Yashin, who was not a late bloomer, did not play in a domestic league for years, and was not a surprising superstar.

Indeed, Ottawa drafted him second overall in 1992, and a year later, after playing for Dynamo Moscow and leading the national junior team to



gold at the World Juniors, he came to the NHL at age 19 and immediately established himself as one of the best young players in the game.

Yashin had it all. He was big and tough to knock off the puck. He was a smooth skater with a great shot, and he elevated his game when the situation demanded it. In his rookie season he had 30 goals and 79 points, making him a Calder Trophy finalist for the 1993-94 season. Five years later, he was named the Senators' team captain and had a spectacular season that included career bests for goals (44) and points (94).

But Yashin was joining a new team in the league, and that meant little playoff success for several years. This allowed him to play for his country internationally, notably nine World Championships (gold in 1993, bronze in 2005), three Olympics (silver in 1998, bronze in 2002), and two World Cups (1996, 2004).

In 2001, at the NHL's Entry Draft, the Senators made a big splash by trading Yashin to the New York Islanders for defenceman Zdeno Chara, Bill Muckalt, and the second selection overall at the draft, which they used to pick Jason Spezza. It was a great deal for Ottawa, but the Islanders also got a star centre who could carry the team's offensive load.

Islanders GM Mike Milbury promptly signed Yashin to a massive ten-year contract, and in 2005 Yashin was named team captain, joining a small list of players to wear the "C" for two teams in the NHL. It was a responsibility with which he was comfortable. Yashin was also captain of Russia at three World Championships (1996, 1999, 2001) as well as the 2004 World Cup. It's no wonder they called him "Captain Russia" back home.

A lack of playoff success, however, spelled the end of his time on the Island, and Yashin returned home to play in the domestic league for five years before retiring.

Paul Loicq Award Zoltan Kovacs



The Paul Loicq Award honours those who have made outstanding contributions to international hockey. As part of the 2020 Hall of Fame Induction Class, the IIHF has selected longtime Hungary Ice Hockey Federation General Secretary Zoltan Kovacs as the recipient of the 2020 Paul Loicq Award.

Zoltan Kovacs has dedicated his life to Hungarian hockey, and that in turn has made the IIHF family stronger and healthier and has

developed players across Europe through a strengthened Hungarian program.

Like many successful ice hockey execs, Kovacs began his career as a player. His first major international event was the European Junior Championship in 1979 and again in 1980, when he also played in the B Pool of the World Juniors. This was also the start of his playing career in the domestic league, with FTC (Ferencvarosi Torna Club) in Budapest, which lasted the decade 1980-90. His dedication was such that even while he was a player on the senior team he was coaching juniors.

Kovacz coached the FTC juniors starting in 1987 and became the coach of the national U16 team as well, a position he held until 2000. But Kovacs could see a life in hockey beyond the boards. He spent four years (1988-92) earning a Master's degree at the College of Sport Education in Budapest after which he earned a degree in economics from Corvinus University.

Soon after, Kovacs started a career with the IIHF. He worked first as a secretary starting in 1994, and four years later he became the General Secretary, a position he held for some 19 transformational years.

As General Secretary for the IIHF, Kovacs worked tirelessly to develop hockey at home. He understood that the word "develop" was easy to say but much more difficult to achieve, but he dreamed of getting at least one arena in every major community in Hungary. His aim was always to produce talent at the lower levels that would lead to success at the U18 and U20, and ultimately provide the framework for consistent performance at the top.

Kovacs once said, "We can climb the mountain, but it is hard to stay there." Indeed, his ultimate goal has been to make it to the top pool, stay there, and then host a World Championship, something Hungary has never done.

In 2017, Kovacs moved up to vice-president of hockey operations of the IIHF, but his goals and determination have remained the same. Hungary made it to the top pool of the World Championships in 2009 and 2016, promising signs that his goal is within reach. And if Hungary does ever host a World Championship, it will be at least in part thanks to Kovacs.

**Richard "Bibi" Torriani Award
Ron Berteling, Forward**

The Richard "Bibi" Torriani Award is a special award for internatio-



nal hockey, recognizing players who competed outside the top ice hockey nations but nevertheless made a huge impact for the sport in their countries. For the 2020 Torriani Award, The IIHF honours Dutch star Ron Berteling.

In the last 70 years the Netherlands has played in only one Olympics (1980) and one top-level World Championship (1981), and Ron Berteling played on both teams. And the only reason the team played in those events was because it earned promotion for 1980 and '81 by finishing first at the 1979 Worlds (Pool B) in Romania, in large part thanks to Berteling.

Berteling was born into a sports family and was skating by the time he was seven. Although he played tennis and football, it was hockey that he grew to love the most. His career started in 1974 at age 19, and lasted 25 years in the top domestic league, first with the Amsterdam Tigers and later with Rotterdam Pandas.

Internationally, he first played for the "Oranje" at the 1978 World Championships C Pool, and a year later, when he was just 21, he helped the team earn promotion to the Olympics and subsequent World Championships.

The Dutch were demoted after 1981, but during that tournament Berteling scored two

goals, one against the United States and another against East Germany. In the lower Pools, he averaged more than a point a game, and in the domestic leagues he was one of the top scorers of all time. Equally impressive, he was also one of the least penalized players, a man respected by teammates and opponents alike for his competitive play but first and foremost his sportsmanship.

They called Berteling "Mister Ice Hockey" in the Netherlands, and for good reason. From 1983 to 1993, he captained the Dutch at the World Championships (B and C Pool) all nine times, and his 213 total games played internationally makes him the all-time Dutch leader in this category. In all, he played in 14 World Championships (one A Pool, nine B Pool, four C Pool).

Even before he had retired he made history by being the first hockey player in his country to be knighted, receiving the Order of Orange-Nassau in 1994.

After retiring, Berteling turned to coaching and has led the Amstel Tigers/Amsterdam G's franchise for many years, winning the national championship five times. He has also been heavily involved in the national team and in developing youth hockey throughout the country.



Canada gets the gold

What we learned from the 2020 World Juniors

By Lucas Aykroyd



From superior skills to spectacular attendance, the 2020 IIHF World Junior Championship in the Czech Republic brought the goods.

Canada still delivers in the clutch

Akil Thomas is far from rivaling Paul Henderson or Mario Lemieux in Canadian hockey history. However, the 20-year-old OHL star, who runs his own clothing line, shares one thing with those IIHF Hall of Famers: he's scored late winner against Russia in dramatic fashion.

The Canadians rallied from a 3-1 deficit in the gold medal game. Thomas busted past the Russian defence to roof a backhander over goalie Amir Miftakhov with 3:58 left for a 4-3 victory. In the round-robin, Canada had suffered its worst loss ever to Russia (6-0). So it was an incredible turnaround for coach Dale Hunter's team, and a vintage World Junior performance for the Canadians.

It's so hard to repeat as champs

Will we ever see a World Junior nation win consecutive titles again? Amazingly, even though only five countries – Canada, the U.S., Russia, Sweden, and Finland – are perennial conten-



The 2020 IIHF World Junior Championship brought speed, skills, and thrills to hockey fans in the Czech Republic.

ders, none has repeated since Canada's last five-peat (2005-09).

Despite strong performances from forwards Patrik Puistola and Kristian Tanus and goalie Justus Annunen, the Finns couldn't defend their 2019 gold medal from Vancouver. It wasn't altogether surprising. They were outplayed in the opening 3-2 OT loss to Sweden and couldn't bury their chances in a 5-2 defeat against Switzerland. When coach Raimo Helminen's boys fell 5-0 to Canada in the semi-final, they clearly

weren't mentally prepared, allowing three goals in the first four minutes.

Never discount a Bragin team

When Valeri Bragin first graced Russia's World Junior bench as an assistant coach, he had superstars Alexander Ovechkin and Yevgeni Malkin on the 2005 silver-medal squad. The 63-year-old lacked generational talents on this year's second-place team, but did garner his seventh medal in eight stints as head coach.

Led by captain Grigori Denisenko (3+6=9), the Russians didn't fold after early defeats versus the host Czechs (4-3) or the U.S. (3-1). Bragin instills a never-say-die spirit, famously evident in the 2011 gold medal run in Buffalo. That reemerged in the 5-4 semi-final win over Sweden, where Russia came back from 1-0 and 4-3 deficits before Ivan Morozov won it in sudden-death. With better luck and discipline, the Russians could have downed Canada in the final too.

Sweden leaves you wanting more

The lack of gold medals would be easier to swallow if Sweden didn't bring a great team to this tournament annually. Samuel Fagemo led the scoring derby (8+5=13) and Nils Hoglander was third (5+6=11) with highlight-reel puckhandling, including a lacrosse goal on Finland. Coach Tomas Monten had the most NHL-ready defence with stars like Rasmus Sandin and Viktor Soderstrom.

However, the Juniorkronorna, whose preliminary-round winning streak record hit 52 games, stumbled in the semi-final and settled for bronze. 2018 Canadian World Junior coach Dominique Ducharme's blunt assessment – "They have ways to lose when things get tougher" – still has not been debunked. Swedish fans, who have only celebrated World Junior gold in 1981 and 2012, should not have to wait until 2043.

Andrea Cardin / IIHF-Images



The Czech Republic played respectably on home ice.

Czechs keep teasing with potential

Ostrava fans rejoiced after the opening upset versus Russia. But ultimately, the Czech medal drought dating back to 2005's bronze continued.

They didn't get consistent virtuoso goaltending from starter Lukas Dostal this year (4.03 GAA, 87.7 save percentage). Captain Libor Zabransky scored a team-high four goals, but the big WHL blueliner did a job that Jan Jenik and Jacob Lauko would normally have handled. Injuries to those forwards contributed to the host team finishing seventh. What can you say but "better luck next year"?



Switzerland is a difficult matchup for teams at the U20s.

Team play is everything for Swiss

The Swiss didn't capture their first medal since 1998's bronze, but showed they don't need a Nico Hischier or Roman Josi to be dangerous. Except for a 5-2 round-robin loss to Sweden, coach Thierry Paterlini's squad stayed in every game until the end. They finished a respectable fifth after coming fourth last year, the same pattern as in 2010 and 2011.

Ralph Krueger's NHL return with Buffalo might not have gone as planned, but the title of the former Swiss senior national team coach's 2002 motivational book still epitomizes the World Junior team's approach: "Teamlife."



Germany hung in and competed in a tough Group B.

Germany's got game

Before the deciding relegation game against Kazakhstan, German captain Moritz Seider virtually guaranteed victory. Picked sixth overall by Detroit in 2019, the workhorse blueliner backed up his words in a 6-0 rout.

The Germans supplemented their traditional grit with high-end skill from the likes of top scorer Dominik Bokk (6+2=8). For 2021, they legitimately aspire to avoid relegation again. Their last sustained top-division run was 2013-15.

Slovakia needs a reset

Nifty forward Maxim Cajkovic, a Tampa Bay prospect, was the only NHL draftee on coach



Attendance throughout the tournament was strong.

Robert Petrovicky's roster. Cajkovic regularly vented his displeasure with Slovakia's inability to learn from its defensive mistakes. Slovakia beat underdog Kazakhstan 3-1 and then got blown out four times. Even with a thin talent pool, that's unacceptable for a country that achieved bronze in 2015.

Ostrava and Trinec love hockey

Fans in the two 2020 host cities deserve their own standing ovation.

The total attendance of 173,474 made this the second most-attended World Juniors in Europe after Helsinki 2016 (216,225). Expect the excitement to hit new heights in Edmonton and Red Deer next year.

Video Highlights: 2020 IIHF World Junior Championship



Click here to view all the game highlights from the 2020 IIHF World Junior Championship

All-Star Team

Joel Hofer, G, CAN

Alexander Romanov, D, RUS
Rasmus Sandin, D, SWE

Samuel Fagemo, F, SWE
Barrett Hayton, F, CAN
Alexis Lafreniere, F, CAN

Directorate Best Forward, All-Star, MVP



Alexis Lafreniere, Canada

7GP, 6G, 6A, 10P, +3

Coming in as the top-rated prospect for the 2020 NHL Draft, Lafreniere solidified his bid to be the next No. 1 draft pick. Outside of a mid-tournament injury that caused him to miss two games, Lafreniere was dominant at the World Juniors, showcasing exceptional strength and skill the way to an MVP performance.

Directorate Best Defenceman, All-Star



Rasmus Sandin, Sweden

7GP, 3G, 7A, 10P, +12

The 19-year-old Toronto Maple Leafs defenceman placed fifth in scoring on the way to helping Tre Kronor win a bronze medal. Throughout the tournament Sandin showed why he was a top draft pick in 2018, controlling the Swedish attack and creating scoring opportunities from the back end.

Directorate Best Goalkeeper, All-Star



Joel Hofer, Canada

5GP, 5W, 1.60GAA, 93.92SVS%, 1SO

Hofer came on in relief during Canada's second preliminary round game against Russia and didn't look back. He was instrumental in Canada's gold medal run in the playoffs, allowing just four goals in three games including a shutout of Finland in the semis.

Women's U18s thrill

USA takes gold in final for the ages

By Chapin Landvogt



The U.S. and Canada tested their mettle in the women's U18 final in Bratislava, with Team USA a 4-3 overtime winner in front of a packed crowd at O2 Arena.

Following a thrilling back-and forth battle in the extra frame, U.S. captain Maggie Nicholson was in the middle of a turnover that saw the puck punched away from Canadian captain Kendall Cooper.

Nicholson raced towards the Canadian net with her teammate Zanon following her close behind. Faking to the backhand as if she intended deke out Gascon on her own, she then dished a subtle backhand pass to Zanon, who needed to do little more than tuck the biscuit into a wide-open net.

For the fifth time in the last six years, and the eighth time in tournament history, the USA was the gold medal winner.



The 2020 U18 trophy was a team effort for the Americans, who took gold without a player placing in the top 5 in scoring.

"This is the best feeling ever," said Vetter. "Especially after what happened to us last year (when Canada took gold). We just came back and we wanted to get this one so badly. And we did. We're just so happy about this."

The celebrations found no real end for the Americans, who sang the national anthem at the top of their lungs, arm in arm, and then grabbed the tournament's cup as if it were Lord Stanley's itself.

Nicholson summarized: "We've preached about sticking together and playing as a team. The entire time, we've had faith in each other and have

believed 'we can do it'. We put faith in our training, going all the way back to April, and we trusted in our work. I think that really showed in this game, especially because we were relentless. That's one of the team values we focus on the most. I don't think there was a better way we could have won this game."

In the bronze medal game, Kristina Glukhareva scored a hat trick and Ann Alpatova stopped 25 of 26 shots as Russian rolled out a 6-1 victory over Finland.

For Russia, this is their third medal in this tournament, all bronze, and their first since 2017. But if

anything, this tournament certainly showed that the program has its eyes set on competing with the USA and Canada in the not so distant future. Still, it marked the first time in three years that a Nordic nation didn't medal at this event – one that just seems to be getting more and more competitive.

Although they were playing on home ice, Team Slovakia dropped all three of its preliminary round games, including an overtime heartbreaker to the Swiss.

Sweden finished in fourth place, followed by the Czech Republic and Switzerland. The Czechs were not able to make an impact in the playoffs despite winning Group B, falling 3-1 to Finland in the quarter-final round.

While Finland has been the leading women's hockey country in Europe for many years, it's Russia in the U18 Women's Worlds who has been closest to the North American rivals recently (-1 this year and -2 or better the two years before) and historically (-4.2 in average) followed by Sweden (-1.5 last year), Finland (-3 this year) and the Czechs (-2 in 2018).

Russia also accounted for the only win of a European team against a North American country in WW18 history, two years ago on home ice in Dmitrov, 3-2 against Canada.

Robert Hradil / IIHF Images

Video Highlights: 2020 IIHF U18 Women's World Championship



Click here to see highlights from the 2020 IIHF U18 Women's World Championship gold medal game

All-Star Team

Anna Alpatova, G, SUI

Sanni Rantala, D, FIN
Kendall Cooper, D, CAN

Eden Lacey, F, USA
Laura Zimmermann, F, SUI
Jenna Buglioni, F, CAN

Directorate Best
Forward, All-Star, MVP



Kristi Shashkina, Russia

6GP, 4G, 4A, 8P, +6
Shashkina was the offensive motor for the Russian in the preliminary round, scoring key goals in big wins against Finland and Sweden and the tying score that pushed Canada to overtime in the opening game. She also became the first Russian player to lead the women's U18s in scoring.

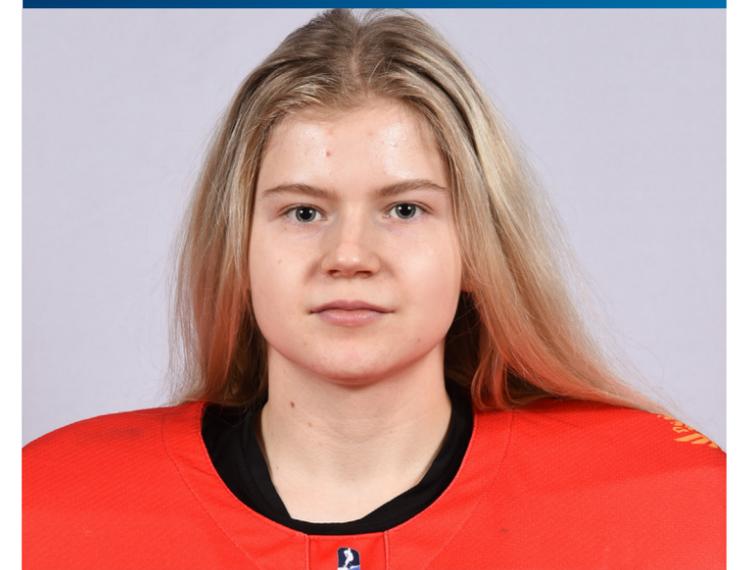
Directorate Best
Defenceman,



Nelli Laitinen, Finland

6GP, 3G, 1A, 4P, -4
Together with her teammate Sanni Rantala, Laitinen could be the latest addition to an esteemed line of award-winning Finnish international blueliners. Both combined to score 5 goals and 6 assists for 11 points in the tournament, an impressive output for two defencemen.

Directorate Best
Goalkeeper, All-Star



Anna Alpatova, Russia

4GP, 1.48GAA, 94.59SVS%, 1 SO
Russia's bronze medal victory would not have been possible without Alpatova. In the finale against Finland, the Dmitrov native played a near-perfect game, allowing one goal on 26 shots and shutting out the Finns through two periods.

Frolunda gets four

Swedish club remains king of Europe

By Derek O'Brien



For the fourth time in five years, the club hockey champion of Europe is Frolunda Gothenburg, following a 3-1 victory over Mountfield Hradec Kralove.

All the scoring came in the first period, with all three Frolunda goals coming in a span of 2:52 late in the period. Max Frieberg scored the game winner to secure the CHL trophy for the Indians.

There was no scoring the rest of the way as Frolunda did an excellent job of limiting the chances against. Shots on goal in the game were 29-18 in Frolunda's favour.

"They really came out hard in the first 10 minutes, which was expected, but once we settled in and started cycling, that's kind of where we exploited their defensive game," said Ryan Lasch, the CHL's all-time leader with 91 points, who after the game was named Frolunda's best player in the final, and also awarded the



Frolunda Gothenburg has now won four Champions Hockey League trophies since the league's inception in 2014/15.

top scorer and MVP awards for the season.

"We've built a good culture here that's all about the team and winning."

The teams followed different paths to the final. Frolunda came from behind each round, losing the first games to Farjestad Karlstad, EHC Biel-Bienne and Lulea Hockey before coming back to win on aggregate in the return games. Mountfield did it on stingy defence, conceding only three goals total in six games – one each

to Adler Mannheim, EV Zug and Djurgarden Stockholm over 120 minutes.

In contrast to Frolunda, which was appearing in its fifth final in six years, this marked Mountfield's debut in a European title contest and the first CHL final to be played in the Czech Republic.

"We beat some fantastic teams from Switzerland, Germany and Sweden. It's difficult to evaluate, but of course this is a great suc-

cess," said Mountfield defenceman Petr Zarmorsky. "I think we have advanced the club a bit further and it can be a stepping stone to further success. If someone had told me before the season that we were going to the final, I wouldn't have believed it. It's a long journey and you have to beat some quality opponents. We wanted more, but we have nothing to be ashamed of."

Frolunda has now won four of the six CHL titles since the competition was re-started in 2014/15. Other winners have been Lulea, who beat Frolunda in that initial season, and Finnish club JYP Jyvaskyla, who became the first and so far only non-Swedish team to win in 2017/18.

In addition to gaining its fifth CHL title, Frolunda also earns a seventh straight berth in the competition for the 2020/21 season. Previously, Danish club SonderjyskE Vojens became the first team to qualify by winning the IIHF Continental Cup on home ice last month.

"It never gets old to win," said team captain Joel Lundqvist, who has been with Frolunda throughout its CHL dominance. "That's why I keep playing – to be part of an amazing team like this and to win titles. It's an amazing feeling and you never get tired of that."

Michael Erichsen / Bildbyran / Cop 89

SonderjyskE wins

Continental Cup trophy goes to Denmark

By Martin Merk



Danish small-town club SonderjyskE Vojens wrote history by becoming the first club from Denmark to win an IIHF-sanctioned European club competition.

In front of 4,107 fans on home ice at Fros Arena, SonderjyskE made it three wins in three games after beating Cracovia Krakow 3-1.

The win also gives SonderjyskE Vojens a ticket to the Champions Hockey League for the 2020/2021 season.

“It’s an unbelievable experience. We’re so proud of this weekend and finally in the history book. We’re the first team from Denmark to win this, so we’re very proud. We always believed it. It was our goal [to win the Continental Cup] and we finally made it,” said Daniel Nielsen, who scored two of the three goals. “We were so pumped. We were ready to go. I had a lucky bounce on the second goal but I take it.”



The SonderjyskE players and staff celebrate the historic Continental Cup win, the first Cup trophy for a Danish hockey club.

The start was important in this game. SonderjyskE Vojens had to go to overtime the night before while Cracovia Krakow was destined to finish in last place no matter what result even though the players were determined not to finish with another loss.

The Danes started well and in the 4th minute occupied the Cracovia zone for a while and with several shots. Eventually the puck went in when Frederik Bjerrum’s shot from

the right boards was deflected by Sharp.

“It’s nice to get to a good start in a game like this. That’s huge. It’s an unreal feeling [to win the Continental Cup]. We beat some pretty good hockey clubs this weekend in all three games. I’m proud of the team. We were underdogs but we all believed and it happened,” said team captain MacGregor Sharp.

Goaltender Nicolaj Henriksen helped his team in this situation and was close to a shut-out with a 28-save performance.

“It was pretty easy for me. They didn’t have a lot of big chances. Big shout out to the defence,” Henriksen said. “It is kind of a dream come true. Not every day do you get the chance to win a European cup, it’s just amazing!”

SonderjyskE came out with energy from the dressing room again when the second period started. Cracovia had trouble getting the puck out of the zone against an aggressively fore-checking Danish line. Daniel Hansen got the puck at the end boards after hitting Cracovia defenceman Marek Pac and Daniel Nielsen converted it to increase the lead to 2-0.

History repeated in the third period when the puck went in after already 50 seconds. While playing 4-on-4 Daniel Nielsen coming from the right found a small gap between Kopriva’s pad and the goal post to make it a three-goal cushion for SonderjyskE.

With SonderjyskE’s first European club trophy Denmark became the 12th country after Slovakia, Switzerland, Finland, Russia, Belarus, Austria, France, Ukraine, Norway, Great Britain and Kazakhstan to have a Continental Cup winner.

One step closer

Olympic Pre-Qualification wraps up

Twelve teams remain in contention for three qualification spots in the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games, following the conclusion of the Pre-Qualification phase.

GROUP G: Slovenia's Olympic dream alive

Slovenia came back from a one-goal deficit to beat Japan 6-2 and earn a berth in the Final Olympic Qualification.

The game was tighter than the score indicates as it was 1-1 after 40 minutes. Japan played strong defensively in the first period and created a few but good scoring chances to earn a 1-0 first-period lead but the Slovenes dominated the rest of the game and took the lead in the third period. Slovenia outshot Japan 38-13.

Now Slovenes will hope to win the Final Qualification and make it to the Olympic Winter Games for the third consecutive time. Until then Slovenia will host the 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship Division I Group A on home ice at Hala Tivoli in downtown Ljubljana. That makes it two chances this year to qualify for a top-level event.



From left: Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia will play in the Final Olympic Qualification, with three Olympic spots on the line.

GROUP H: Poland snatches dramatic victory

Poland pulled off a shock in Nur-Sultan, downing Kazakhstan in the Olympic Qualification Group H finale. Moreover, Tomek Valtonen's team did it the hard way, blowing a 2-0 lead before responding in the third period to win the game and advance to the final qualifying round.

Polish goalie John Murray was the star of the show, making 51 saves to deny Kazakhstan a place in the next stage. Kazakhstan went

down early when Bartosz Ciura gave Poland a 1-0 lead. Martin Przygodzki doubled Poland's advantage early in the second period, but two goals from Dustin Boyd tied things up.

Poland regained the lead early in the final period when Maciej Urbanowicz found the net. Kazakhstan were unable to muster a response in the closing minutes, as Poland secured the 3-2 win to top the group and reach the final round of Beijing 2022 qualification.

GROUP J: Hungary spoils GBR party

Hungary weathered a storm inside and outside Motorpoint Arena in Nottingham, defeating Great Britain 4-1 to secure a place in the Final Olympic Qualification. Both the Brits and Hungarians were seeded #1 and #2 respectively coming into Group J, and made it through the first two games without a loss. The atmosphere inside Nottingham's Motorpoint Arena was electric, with fans for both teams shrugging off the rains and high winds from Storm Ciara to pack the stands.

But it was Miklos Rajna who would be the star in net with a 47-plus save performance, while Csanad Erdely score the game winner.

Final Olympic Qualification Groups

The group winners of the Olympic Pre-Qualification Round 3 advance to the Final Olympic Qualification (27-30 August 2020) where they will be seeded in the three groups according to the 2019 IIHF Men's World Ranking:

- Group D:** Slovakia, Belarus, Austria, Poland
host: Slovakia (city TBA)
- Group E:** Latvia, France, Italy, Hungary.
host: Riga, Latvia
- Group F:** Norway, Denmark, Korea, Slovenia
host: Norway (city TBA).

Gold for Russia

U16s finish atop Youth Olympic podium

By Martin Merk

After silver in 2012 and bronze in 2016, in the 3rd Winter Youth Olympic Games Russia has now successfully completed its set of medals.

The Russian U16 men's national team swept through the tournament in Lausanne 2020 and could also not be stopped by their hardest opponent USA in the gold medal game.

They came into the final after running a 10-1 demolition job on Finland in the semis. While the Russians may have faced more adversity than in previous games, they had most of the game under control from an early goal to begin with until celebrating the title following a 4-0 victory against the American rivals in a sold-out Vaudoise Arena.

The Red Machine never breaks. The Russian saying has not always proven to be true but it certainly did for their talented class of 2004 at these Youth Olympics in Lausanne. The Russian offence was humming at the YOG, paced by Matvei Michkov's tournament-leading 9



Top U16 prospect Matvei Michkov scored two goals against the United States to lead Russia to gold at the Youth Olympics.

goals and 5 assists. His linemates Ivan Miroschnichenko and Ilya Kvochko are #2 and #3 in tournament scoring, and combined the three have produced an incredible 37 points in four games.

"We prepared ourselves well for the tournament at our base in Novogorsk. That's what helped us to perform so well. We had very good discipline, we just had one penalty. We played most of the time at equal strength or on the power play. That's one reason," said head coach Vladimir Filatov.

The pairing was the dream final after the previous

games and one with Olympic history. Both Russia and the United States have won all games, most of them by clearly outscoring their opponents especially thanks to the first lines and the scoring talent of players like Russia's Matvei Michkov, who came in followed by linemates Ivan Miroschnichenko and Ilya Kvochko in scoring, and Team USA's Isaac Howard, who came in on par with Michkov in goals at the tournament. The Russians were first in putting expectations into hard facts. With Frank Nazar in the penalty box for interference, Michkov beat goaltender Dylan Silverstein with a hard shot through the five-hole to open the scoring at 1:59.

The Russians allowed the United States few

scoring opportunities in the first period and had the game firmly under control.

With 33 seconds left before the first intermission they went up 2-0. A shot from captain Miroschnichenko went past Silverstein's pad and Michkov was there to push it over the line. "It's hard to describe my feelings. It was very cool. It's the most important medal for players of our age. We played as a very disciplined team and managed to win. The teams were equally strong but we were disciplined and had more luck today," said Michkov, who was the scoring leader with 9 goals and 5 assists.

Asked about this, he said: "It's because of my linemates, my team and people supporting me so I can play hockey. I will present my medal to my parents when I'm back because thanks to them I'm here."

"I think the Russians just opportunized on their chances and we didn't as well. Their offensive game is obviously amazing," said Team USA captain Jimmy Snuggerud, who despite losing the last game looks at the positives.

"It's one of the best times I've ever had, just meeting these new kids and playing with them, becoming a brotherhood and playing against the best kids in the world, it was super fun."

Japan is golden!

Major milestone for women's youth hockey

By Adam Steiss

Japan's women's ice hockey team has made history, becoming the country's first team to claim a gold medal in an Olympic ice hockey competition.

The Japanese defeated Sweden 4-1 at the Lausanne 2020 Youth Olympic Games. Rio Noro had the game winner as the Japanese overcame an early deficit to score four unanswered to claim gold.

"Our feeling to win, to continue to the end, that was the difference," said an elated Noro after the game.

"The medal is a gift for the fans and the coaches who have supported us for a long time to play ice hockey," said goaltender Yuzuyu Fujii. "I will go to my family and my coaches and hang the gold medal around their necks."

Sweden and Japan came into the game as the undisputed top two teams of the women's tournament, winning their groups and going unbeaten in the process.



Neither Japan's men's or women's teams had ever won gold in an top division IIHF World Championship or Olympic Games.

For Sweden, the task was to neutralize the potent line combination of Makoto Ito, Minami Kamada, and Hina Shimomukai, which has accounted for 11 goals in three games, and get pucks on net against Fujii.

Penalty trouble dogged the Japanese through the first period, keeping the team off-balance and unable to get their offence going. Sweden broke the deadlock with just under a minute to go in the first period when captain Nicole Hall scored unassisted, coming into the zone and creating some space in the high slot area with a great individual effort before putting the puck in the net from the backhand.

"I was just asking the team 'Is this the style that we planned?'," said head coach Arto Sieppi to his team at intermission. "They decided then that they would skate more, battle more, try to stay focused and come back to the back shift after shift. I think the girls did a tremendously good job."

Japan responded early in the second frame after killing off a penalty. Sweden was unable to clear the puck which came to Makoto Ito in front of the net, who turned and fired an off-balance shot at the net. Ebba Svensson Traff gave the rebound and Shimomukai was there to clean up and tie the game at 1-1.

The goal galvanized the Japanese attack and put pressure on the Swedes, who were nevertheless able to use their size advantage to keep Japan off balance and avoid the go-ahead goal in the second period. Nevertheless, Sweden went into the 3rd period needing to generate more offence after failing to register a single shot on net in the frame.

But sometimes it's not the size of the dog in the fight, but the size of the fight in the dog. The turning point came thanks to fantastic board work by forward Nagomi Muramaki, as the diminutive forward was able to keep the puck away from two big Swedish defenders behind the Swedish goal line. Her teammate Riri Noro came in to help out and managed to kick the puck in front to her twin sister Rio Noro in front of the net for the go-ahead score.

Then three minutes later Japan put the game on ice, with a feed from Shimomukai down low to Ito, who calmly made a pro-style deke on Svensson Traff and roofed it blocker-side. Shimomukai added an empty netter and a minute later the team from the Land of the Rising Sun mobbed their goalie to celebrate a truly unprecedented achievement for the country.

Having finished atop the podium under the Olympic Rings, Japan's golden moment has arrived.

Vedran Galijas / Justpictures.ch

Japan gets the gold

Dominant display for junior team in Vilnius

By Henrik Manninen



Japan's skill and lightning speed lit up Lithuania's capital, the team raced through the U20 World Championship Division II Group A with an unblemished record.

In front of a full house of 2,387 at the Pramogų Arena, Japan defeated hosts Lithuania 5-2 during the final game of the tournament to secure the gold medals and promotion to Division I Group B.

Japan's first line led the way against Lithuania, with centreman Teruto Nakajima flanked by forwards Yu Sato and Chikara Hanzawa notching three points each. Nakajima was also the tournament's top scorer with 5+8 in five games while Hanzawa - voted Best Forward of the tournament - followed closely on 7+5.

Earlier in the U20 Division IIA, Japan had opened their promotion campaign by beating Great Britain 6-3 before blanking both Romania and Spain 8-0 and then scoring double



Japan came in as tournament favourites and didn't disappoint, rolling through the competition to return to Division I.

Evandas Semiotas

digits against Serbia in a 10-2 win. Being in a class of their own in Vilnius, Japan found the back of the net on 37 occasions while conceding only seven in five games.

Netminder Eiki Sato was selected as the Best Goaltender of the tournament, aided by solid defending that saw Japan go through a spell of 134:23 minutes without conceding a goal.

Heading into their Sunday night showdown against hosts Lithuania, Japan needed a single point to finish top. Lithuania, on the other

hand, required a regular-time win to leapfrog Great Britain and Japan and get their hands on the gold medals.

But it would be the Japanese team that would secure a 5-2 victory in the final game to win gold and promotion. Ryoto Takeya had the game winner in the first period as the team jumped out to an early lead and held on to win on hostile ground in Vilnius.

"We played well during the first and second period. Then in the third they came back, but

we took a time-out and once again talked about what we needed to do," said Japan's Hanzawa as he singled out the key-component in Japan's recipe for success in Vilnius. "All our guys play for the team. We are not selfish, but always playing for each other as a hard working team."

Half of the current crop of players skating to gold in Lithuania will be eligible for Japan at the 2021 IIHF Ice Hockey U20 World Championship Division I Group B.

Meanwhile nine out of 22 will be available to play for them during the 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 World Championship Division I Group A playing in Spisska Nova Ves, Slovakia between 13-19 April this year as Japanese hockey aims for a place at the Olympic Winter Games in 2026 and 2030.

Behind the runaway winners, Great Britain improved on last year's third spot by finishing with the silver medals, despite the omission of Arizona Coyotes draft pick Liam Kirk.

Following their two defeats against Great Britain and Japan, hosts Lithuania had to settle for bronze, while newly promoted Serbia, who could have gotten something out of four out of their five games in Vilnius, finished winless to return straight back to Division IIB.

Korean juniors win

Perfect record earns promotion

By Andy Potts



Offence wins games, defence wins championships. Korea's juniors showed that they have absorbed that lesson with a perfect record on home ice in Gangneung.

In a high-scoring tournament, the Koreans managed a solid 20 goals – but allowed just six to freeze out the opposition and win all five at the Gangneung Hockey Centre, host venue at the 2018 Olympic Winter Games.

Not surprisingly, goalie Hyung Chan Kim was a key figure. He stopped 94.17% of the shots he faced for a GAA of 1.07. His shutout in the 1-0 win over China was pivotal: had that game gone the other way, the gold medals may well have gone with it. But Kim kept the Chinese at bay, and Minwan Kang's goal midway through the second period was enough to secure the verdict.

Kim, 19, is one of the youngsters benefitting from opportunities to play outside of Korea. Af-



Soohan Kim

Korea returns to Division I Group A a year after relegation following home-ice win at the Gangneung Olympic venue.

ter beginning the season on the books at Anyang Halla, a leading Korean team in the Asia League, he has since taken up an opportunity to play in the Czech Republic with Hvezda Prague in the fourth tier.

Another player with experience in Central Europe is defenceman Minjae Lee. He had two seasons in Slovakia with MHK Dubnica and was named an alternate captain for this, his first tournament at U20 level. The 19-year-old has also made four appearances for the Korean men's national team. In Gangneung he was the pick

of the blue liners: 6 (2+4) points and a +10 rating – the best in the tournament – from his five appearances.

Not only did Lee impress in defence, he also produced a crucial goal in Monday's victory over Croatia. Although Korea ultimately finished six points clear of the pack with a 100% record, it still had a job to do in Monday's final game against Croatia. Defeat would have given the visitor top spot and denied the host nation an instant return to Division IIA after relegation a year ago.

The early stages went according to plan, with Jinhyuk Mun's fourth-minute goal putting Korea in front. But Croatia would not be shaken off so easily. The score was still 1-0 at the second intermission, and Sven Paulovic tied the scores at the start of the third. The teams traded two more goals before Lee potted the game-winner on 52:13. It was a little bit special as well: the defenceman collected the puck from his own goalie and set off down the ice. Evading two opponents in the left-hand channel, he moved inside and fired off a wrister from between the hashmarks to spark huge celebrations from his team-mates. A late effort from Hyosuk Kim sealed a 4-2 victory as Korea claimed gold on home ice.

The Netherlands and Croatia scored more than 30 goals in their five games, and both were bolstered by big wins against Israel. The Dutch won 16-1 and went on to take silver; Croatia had a 13-0 verdict and supplied the two leading scorers in the tournament. Dominic Canic was nominated top forward after posting 16 (4+12) points from five games; Leo Selitaj wasn't far behind with 14 (6+8). China, too, overwhelmed the Israelis on its way to a bronze medal.

At the bottom, Israel finished dead last after allowing 50 goals in its five games. Belgium came fifth by virtue of its 4-1 victory over the Israelis.

Iceland takes DIII

Promoted after wild tournament in Sofia

By Ivan Tchechankov



For the second time in the history of the IIHF Ice Hockey U20 World Championship program Iceland won a tournament in the Division III.

The Arctic island country defeated Australia 4-1 in the gold medal game at the Winter Palace in Sofia.

Eight countries, divided in two round-robin groups, participated in the event. The semi-finals and the placement games were held during the weekend in the Bulgarian capital.

The most difficult game for Iceland was in the first day of the tournament against the hosts. Miroslav Vasilev scored the first goal in the 9th minute, but Hakon Magnusson tied in the end of the period. Then Solvi Atlason and Kari Arnarsson tallied two goals in the second and Iceland had a 3-1 lead. In the start of the third period Vasilev netted on a man advantage for Bulgaria. 3:50 minutes before the end of regulation time



The Icelandic players celebrate with the trophy after beating Australia for gold at the 2020 U20 World Championship Division III.

there was another penalty against Iceland and the opposing team took a time-out, but couldn't score on the power play. Then with 79 seconds left the goalie Ivan Stoynov went to the bench for an extra attacker and the efforts for the equalizer were realized for the delight of the home crowd. Kaloyan Vachkov, who plays for Nassjo in Sweden's U20 Division 1, scored with just 18 seconds left on the clock.

Ridong on adrenaline, the Bulgarians were quite opportunistic and went for the win in regulation,

but lost the puck and Iceland scored on a counter-attack just one second before the buzzer after an individual surge by Unnar Runarsson.

"This game was entertainment for the spectators. We were lucky but the guys were working very hard and were ready to use their luck. It goes that way, sometimes the team has luck, other times - not at all. Because, if we had lost this first game, maybe the tournament could have evolved differently," explained Iceland's head coach Vladimir Kolek.

His team continued with wins against Mexico (5-2) and New Zealand (10-1) to finish first in Group A. In the other group Australia went through undefeated: 6-1 over South Africa, 5-0 versus Chinese Taipei and 3-2 against Turkey.

In the big final Heidar Johannsson scored for Iceland at 18:08, but in the beginning of the second period there was a call for too many players against the team and Australia had a chance to tie the game. Instead Orongan scored a shorthanded goal to make it 2-0.

Orongan had another goal on a power play later in the period and 17 seconds into the third Heidar Kristveigarson made it 4-0. Jack Ransome had the only goal for Australia in the game three minutes later and the team with the kangaroo on the jersey finished second for second year in a row.

For second straight year Turkey won the bronze medals in this division after beating Mexico 4-2, which was relegated from Division II Group B in 2019.

Iceland will be back to the U20's Division II Group B for the first time since 2015. The last time this small country won a tournament in the U20 age group was in 2012.

Bonchuk Andonov

Home ice heroes

Germany U18 women beat Japan to gold

By Andy Potts



Germany won promotion back to the top division in IIHF Ice Hockey U18 Women's World Championship thanks to a tense 2-1 victory over Japan in Fussen.

Throughout the tournament, the Germans and the Japanese were a class apart from the rest. The two nations went into their final showdown with four wins apiece and had allowed just one goal each. The only difference between them was that Germany had needed overtime to defeat third-placed Hungary, while Japan had won all its games in regulation.

For German head coach Franziska Busch, a veteran of Olympic and World Championship play for her country, it was also a chance to set a record straight.

“We were the last German team that wasn’t playing in the top division,” Busch said after the game. “We wanted to put that right and take the next step up. That was the goal for this tour-



Germany will return to the top division of the U18 Women's World Championship after being relegated last year.

ament. We knew that Japan would be a very strong team and we played almost a perfect game at the perfect time.”

Given the quality of defence on display from both teams in this tournament, it was no surprise that fans in Fussen saw a low-scoring affair. In the first period, chances were at a premium as both teams diligently went about their defensive duties. The game opened up a little in the second, but it wasn’t until early in the third that we saw goals at last.

The Germans grabbed the lead on the power play, defenceman Lisa Heinz opening the scoring at 5:43 of the third period. Exactly 60 seconds later, Japan tied it up through Sakura Kitamura. Among the assists on those markers were Nina Christof and Yumeka Wajima, who both moved to six points and would lead the tournament in scoring.

Late in the third, another German power play proved decisive. Ronja Hark, impressive throughout the tournament, held off the atten-

tions of an opposing player as they grappled for the puck between the hashmarks. Hark, a 16-year-old who plays her club hockey in Memmingen, managed to wriggle into space and shoot home the winning goal. The German PP brought nine goals in total during the competition, at a conversion rate of 32.16% – a devastating weapon that proved decisive in this crucial game.

There was still drama to come as the host had to kill two penalties in the closing stages. Indeed, the final 100 seconds saw Germany face down a 6-on-4 situation against a team that ran a 25% conversion rate on its own PP during the week. But the Japanese were unable to seriously test Sofie Disl in the German net.

Disl won the nomination for the top goalie of the tournament, stopping 96.97% of the shots she faced across four games for a GAA of 0.51, including a 32-save performance to deny Japan. Hark finished with three goals from the blue line and was picked as the leading defenceman, while Wajima’s five goals and one assist earned her the best forward prize.

Hungary defeated Italy in overtime to take the bronze, while Denmark’s last hope of escaping relegation was extinguished in a 0-2 loss against fourth-placed France.

Norway girls step up

Promoted after wild tournament in Sofia

By Andy Potts



Norway pipped Austria to top spot in the 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 Women's World Championship Division I Group B thanks to a tight 2-1 victory on the final morning in Katowice.

The Austrians had the edge going into the final and boasted a goalie in stellar form. Selma Luggin, a 17-year-old who plays her club hockey with the Sabres Vienna, allowed just one goal in the first four games of the tournament. But Norway scored on her twice to claim a 2-1 verdict, joining Austria on 11 points and sneaking into first place by virtue of that head-to-head victory.

Luggin finished the tournament with hugely impressive stats: she stopped 97.3% of the 111 shots she faced and had a GAA of just 0.6.

But it wasn't enough to get her team the trophy. Silje Gunderson twice found a way past Luggin to give Norway enough to win, while Kaja Ekle



The Norwegian players celebrate their gold medal win and a promotion to next year's Group A women's U18 tournament.

made 26 saves. Austria's goal came from Lena Daubock; she and Gunderson led the tournament scoring charts with the Norwegian finishing with 7 (3+4) points to her Austrian rival's 6 (5+1).

Gunderson opened the scoring against Austria in the 24th minute, advancing down the left channel before ripping a wrister past Luggin. She got her second on 46 minutes after Eirin Stendhal chased down a lost cause behind the Austrian net. Mari Pederson fed the puck back

to the point where Gunderson was waiting to unleash a thunderous slap shot that whistled over Luggin's shoulder and into the net. Daubock pulled one back for Austria, getting away from two Norwegian defencemen before beating Ekle to give her team hope of saving the game, but it wasn't enough to deny Norway.

Promotion sees Norway return to Division IA, from which it was relegated in 2018. It's a return to the second tier of U18 Women's World Championship play, a level Norway held from its

first season in 2008/09 until that demotion two seasons ago. Austria narrowly missed out on an immediate return to the Division IA following its relegation last year.

The relegation question would be decided in the last game of the tournament. Host nation Poland needed to defeat Great Britain in regulation time to claw back a three-point deficit in the standings and preserve its position.

The Brits had their chances but struggled to find a way past Helena Grzybowska in the Polish net. And two goals in the second period from Wiktoria Sikorska gave the home team a lead that it would not relinquish. Vanessa Patla and Iga Schramm added two more goals just 12 seconds apart to wrap up a convincing victory. GB paid the price for a lack of firepower and went down after scoring just five goals in five games.

Third place in the group went to China, a point behind the leaders. With the country preparing to ice a team at the 2022 Olympic Winter Games in Beijing, this was encouraging news for a national program looking to build depth behind the players gaining experience at KRS Vanke Rays in the Russian Women's Hockey League. China won four of its five games here, including an overtime win against the Norwegians. A 4-2 success against Korea on Wednesday secured the bronze.

Michal Chwieciuk

Taipei U18s thrill

Women's team makes history

By Andy Potts



Chinese Taipei topped the pile in the 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 Women's World Championship Division II Group A after winning all three of its games with a one-goal margin.

A coast-to-coast effort five minutes from the end of the game saw Hsuan Wang seal a 4-3 victory over Australia to clinch first place.

After a third-place finish one year ago, the win will lead Chinese Taipei to a Division I tournament for the first time in ice hockey history in any category of the World Championship program. Most players came from clubs in Taipei City, the biggest city on the island of Taiwan.

Going into the final day, three of the four competing teams had a chance of taking gold. Chinese Taipei was in pole position, two points clear of the pack on five points. However, an Australian victory in regulation would have moved the girls from Down Under up to



Chinese Taipei dominated the scoring charts and went through the tournament with an unblemished record to win gold.

the top of the table. The Aussies would then have been hoping for a favour from Kazakhstan, the only nation unable to qualify, in the evening game against the Dutch host. In the event of an Australian win, the Netherlands could also have qualified with a regulation-time triumph over Kazakhstan.

However, Chinese Taipei was out to simplify the equation by finishing with a victory over Australia. It gained an early lead thanks to Pei-Han Yeh. Despite having the better of the play,

though, An-Chung Yin's team struggled to see off a determined opponent. Australia didn't create a huge number of chances – it trailed 18-46 on the shot count – but had a knack of producing goals when it needed them. Late in the first period, Phoebe Roberts made it 1-1 with some good work in the right-hand circle before squeezing her shot through Hsiang-Yun Hsu's pads.

In the middle frame, Chinese Taipei regained the lead on a goal from Yun-Chu Huang, but

Australia's Taylor Robitaille tied it up a couple of minutes later. Then Roberts potted her second of the game to give Australia the lead at the start of the third period. Chinese Taipei was now in danger of losing its grip on gold.

Enter En-Ni Chang, the tournament's leading scorer. She brought the puck from blue line to blue line before sliding it to the centre where the unmarked Su-Tin Tang rifled home from between the hash marks with 10 minutes left to play. And Chinese Taipei confirmed the win five minutes later when Wang collected the puck behind her own goal line and set off down the ice. The 16-year-old got past defenceman Matilda Pethrick and roofed the puck to claim an impressive game-winner.

Chang finished as the leading scorer for the tournament with 5 (3+2) points. Chinese Taipei dominated the scoring charts, with two more players, Huang and Hsuan Wang tied for second place with 4 (2+2). They were joined by Kazakhstan's Munira Sayakhatkyzy. Emma Fondse of the Netherlands was the leading goaltender, stopping 95.59% of the shots she faced for a GAA of 1.00 across her three games.

The Netherlands finished with a 4-1 victory over Kazakhstan to secure second place, followed by the Australians and Kazakhs.

Lex Eckhardt

Spain makes magic

U18 team wins inaugural tournament

By Lucas Aykroyd



Spain scored three first-period goals in just 3:19 and never looked back, defeating Turkey 7-0 to win the gold medal at the 2020 IIHF U18 Women's World Championship Division II Group B.

It was a slice of history in Mexico City on Sunday.

The 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 Women's World Championship Division II Group B is the newest addition to the IIHF calendar. The inaugural four-team tournament, featuring a round-robin and playoff stage, took place at the Santa Fe Ice Rink in the Centro Santa Fe shopping mall.

In the gold medal game, unbeaten Spain left no doubt in the first period, outshooting Turkey 18-2.

This wasn't an entirely surprising scenario, given that the undefeated Spanish girls



With a 7-0 win over Turkey, Spain's U18 women triumphed in the gold medal game of the U18 Women's World Championship.

had hammered Turkey 9-0 in their earlier round-robin meeting.

For the Spanish federation, led by IIHF Life Member Frank Gonzalez, it's an important step forward for their U18 women's program. Spain is home to fewer than 230 female players in total. The Spanish U18 women made their IIHF debut just three years ago when the Basque city of San Sebastian hosted a Division I Group B qualification tournament.

The silver medal also represents a confidence-builder for the Turks. They've made progress since being outscored 21-0 at last year's Division I Group B qualification tournament in Spain.

In the bronze medal game, the host Mexicans gave their supporters something to cheer about, marching to a 6-3 win over New Zealand. There was lots of leadership on display, as Mexican captain Samantha Nevarez and New Zealand captain Beth

Scott scored two goals apiece. Mexico's Luisa Vinals had a goal and three assists as the game's leading points-getter.

Between the pipes, the biggest story of the tournament was New Zealand's Lilly Forbes.

Even though the Kiwis finished last with five consecutive losses, the 16-year-old Canterbury Devillettes netminder stood on her head with a whopping 217 stops on 234 shots for a 92.7 save percentage. She was named Best Goalie.

Forbes dazzled with 81 saves in a 6-1 round-robin loss to Spain. She nearly pulled off a significant upset with 67 saves in a 2-1 semi-final loss in overtime to Spain.

It was all about perseverance and dedication for everyone on coach Angelique Mawson's team, which competed short-staffed in multiple games due to illness.

Spain earned promotion to the 2021 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 Women's World Championship Division II Group A. All the participants in Mexico City can be proud of their role in growing the women's game worldwide.

Ulises Gutierrez

Gallery



The Czech Republic's Lukas Parik reaches back with his glove to make the save against Team USA at the 2020 IIHF World Junior Championship.



Finland's Joonas Oden scores top corner in the quarter-final round against Team USA.



Team Canada celebrating in the dressing room after the World Junior gold medal game.

Matt Zambonin / IIHF-IIHF Images

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Andrea Cardin / IIHF-IIHF Images



Steve Kingsman / HHOF-IIHF Images

USA's Kiara Zanon scores the golden goal against Canada in the IIHF U18 Women's World Championship gold medal game.



Matt Zamborin / HHOF-IIHF Images

Switzerland's Hollenstein Luca makes a save on Slovakia's Kristian Kovacik as his mask comes off at the World Juniors.



Chris Tanouye / HHOF-IIHF Images

Slovakia's Barbora Kapicakova tries to stop the puck from crossing the goal line at the U18 Women's World Championship



Many nations represented on the Team Green Leafs bench during intermission of the 3-on-3 cross-ice Youth Olympic Games men's tournament.



Emilia Kyrkkoe makes a save against Nora Hundsnes Pollestad at the women's 3-on-3.



3-On-3 teammates Thawab Al-Subaey of Qatar and Fermin Javier from Mexico.

Global Girls' Game

Around the world in 37 girls' games

By Martin Merk



For the fifth time the IIHF and its members organized the Global Girls' Game at 37 venues in 37 countries on all habited continents.

In each game one team represented Team Blue, and the other Team White before handing the puck to the next venue.

The blue team succeeded with a combined score of 127-111 but more important than the score was to share the fun on the ice with over 1,000 female players around the world and promote the game for more girls and women to join the coolest sport on earth.

The games were played at different times depending on the situation and with the different time zones it was around 36 hours of hockey almost non-stop.

CLICK HERE FOR GAME REPORTS FROM EACH VENUE



The Global Girls' Game is a worldwide initiative where international federations host games in succession around the world.

Michael Erichsen / Bildbyran / Cop-89

Bad Sachsa in the central Harz mountains in Germany made the start on Saturday morning at 8:00 local time when 20 young girls came together for a female youth hockey game – including a signed game jersey of the German under-18 women's team waiting for the winner.

Around the same time (but already late after-

noon local time) 34 girls played an under-12 game in Kushiro on the Japan's northern island of Hokkaido with Hina Fukuyama scoring five goals for Team White.

While the games were still on, Agidel Ufa, one of the top teams in Russia's Women's Hockey League, organized a master class for young players before playing an exhibi-

tion game with mixed teams consisting of Agidel's pros and local amateur team Ros-somakhi (or Wolverine in English). After three games it was a 16-13 lead for Team White but the lead would move over to Team Blue when it continued in several European countries.

Another Asian venue was Petaling Jaya next to the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur where 26 juniors and eight senior players had a tight game as part of the global initiative. Poland, Finland and Sweden were the next venues in Europe where a truly international game took place in Jelgava. The game in the Latvian city involved teams from Lithuania and Estonia and ended with a tight 2-1 win for the Lithuanian women representing Team Blue.

33 young girls came together in northern Serbia for a 2-2 tie in Novi Sad before the Czech Republic hosted 50 girls from 6 to 12 years from across the country as part of the Global Girls' Game in Ceska Lipa. For some it was the first game at a full-size rink.

The next games included countries like Norway, Estonia, the Netherlands, Slovakia and Latvia but also smaller programs. Bosnia & Herzegovina joined the Global Girls' Game with 20 players in Sarajevo and Luxembourg, which launched women's hockey



44 female players took part in a game in southern Spain.



Argentina's Global Girl Game was held in Buenos Aires.



Iceland's First Lady, Eliza Reid opened the GGG in Reykjavik.



Malaysia had a record number of player in Petaling Jaya.

in last year's Global Girls' Game, was back with 22 players taking part at the match-up in Kockelscheuer.

Saturday ended further west. 32 top prospects were invited to Sheffield for the Global Girls' Game in Great Britain while Hockey Canada convened 40 under-15 players from all provinces and territories.

It was a weekend of activities focusing on empowerment and team-building in St. John's, Newfoundland, and then of course the session as part of the Global Girls' Game. At the end of the day Anaheim hosted two girls' teams from California as well as a panel discussion on women's hockey.

Australia kicked off Sunday's games in Melbourne followed by Cape Town in South Africa before the puck was dropped northwards in Southern Europe with many female players on the ice in Granada (Spain), Istanbul (Turkey) and Miercurea Ciuc (Romania).

Iceland hosted a game with 38 players from the age of 5 to 30 in Reykjavik with the country's First Lady, Canada-born Eliza Reid, performing the ceremonial puck drop.

Then it was time for the games in Sursee (Switzerland) and Zagreb (Croatia) where altogether 47 players took part in different women's hockey initiatives.

Garges-les-Gonesse hosted the event in France while Brovary saw the Ukrainian women's national team play an internal game in preparation for the 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship Division II Group B in Iceland.

In Buenos Aires the girls escaped the summer sun for some fun on ice and to bring Team White three goals closer. It was one of two events in Latin America with Mexico also hosting an event in San Jeronimo.

Another one in Brazil had to be cancelled because the new national ice sports venue was still in its final stages of construction but may see some small-ice hockey in the future. Due to the storm in Western Europe

during the weekend, also a game in Belgium was cancelled.

That doesn't mean there were no firsts. The Global Girls' Game continued in Kuwait City and in Graz, Austria before ending in Skopje on Sunday evening in what became the first girls' hockey game in North Macedonia.

The first attempt on Saturday had to be cancelled due to the weather conditions since the only rink is outdoor.

But things eventually worked out for a cross-ice game on Sunday evening as part of the "Never2Late4Hockey" program that is run with schools in Skopje and drew interest from future female and male players alike.

Coming up

2020 IIHF Women's World Championship
 CANADA, Halifax & Truro 31.03-10.04.2020

2019 IIHF Women's World Championship
Division I Group A
 FRANCE, Angers 12.-18.04.2020

2020 IIHF Women's World Championship
Division I, Group B
 POLAND, Katowice 28.03-03.04.2020

2020 IIHF Women's World Championship
Division II, Group A
 SPAIN, Jaca 29.03-04.04.2020

[Click here for 2019/20 IIHF tournament list](#)

2020 IIHF Women's World Championship
Division II, Group B
 ICELAND, Akureyri 23-29.02.2020

2020 IIHF World Championship
Division IV
 KYRGYZSTAN, Bishkek 03.-05.03.2020

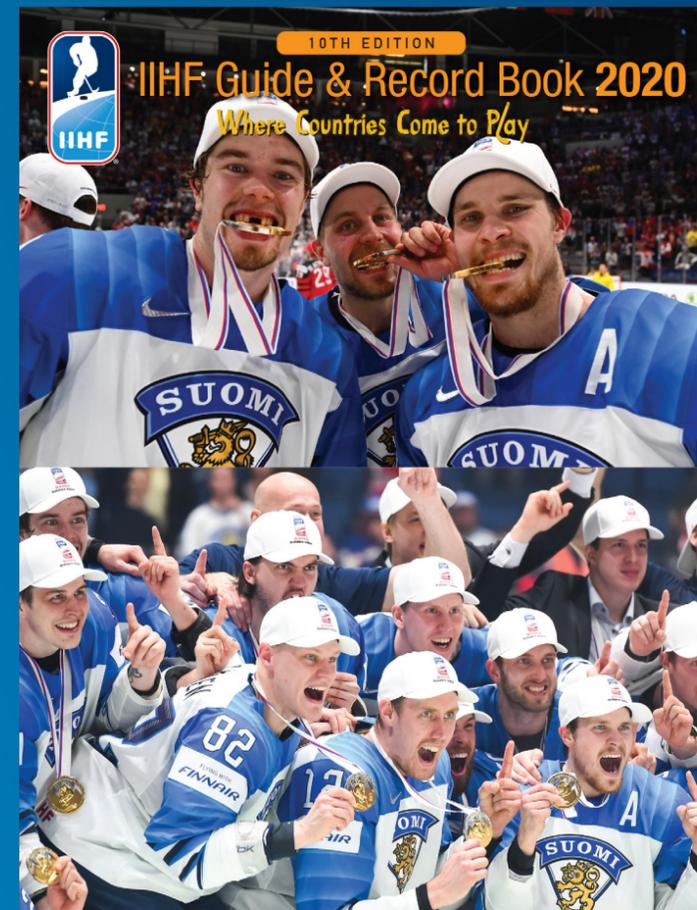
2020 IIHF U18 World Championship
Division II, Group A
 ESTONIA, Tallinn 22.-28.03.2020

2020 IIHF U18 World Championship
Division II, Group B
 BULGARIA, Sofia 23.-29.03.2020

2020 IIHF U18 World Championship
Division III, Group A
 TURKEY, Istanbul 16.-22.03.2020

2020 IIHF U18 World Championship
Division III, Group A
 LUXEMBOURG, Kockelscheuer 24.3-04.04.2020

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