



INTERNATIONAL
ICE HOCKEY
FEDERATION

Research on Europeans playing in North America

September 2006





Researched: three major groups

- All* Europeans in the NHL and the minor leagues (AHL) between 2000 and 2006 – **621** players
- All Europeans with a minimum of 400 NHL-games upon retirement – **93** players
- All Europeans drafted to the CHL 1997-2006 – **575** players





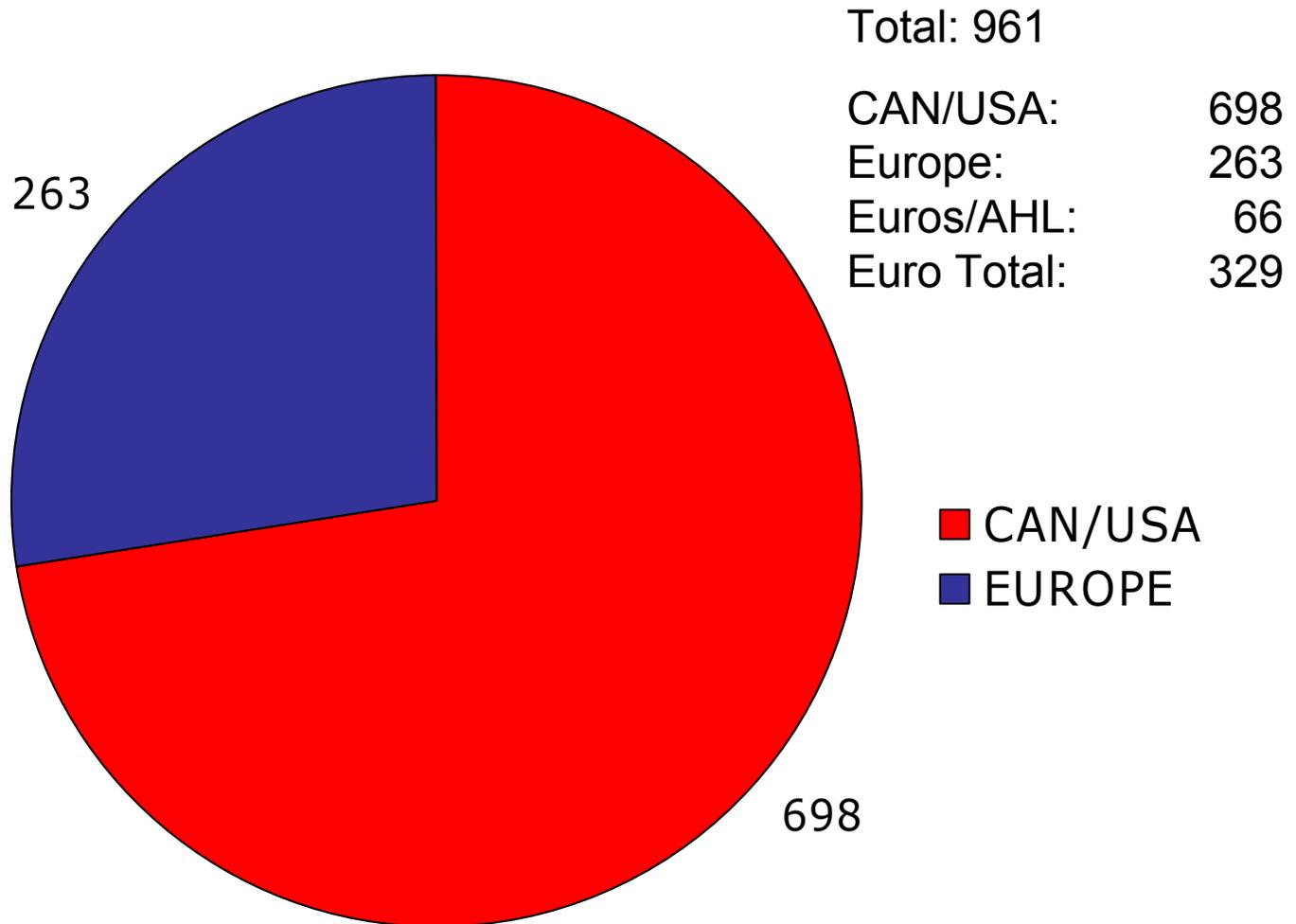
Parametres used in the research/study

- 5 – Superstar (trophy winner, All Star)
 - 4 – Star (First liner, impact player)
 - 3 – Solid performer (plays every game)
 - 2 – Marginal (frequent callup from minor league)
 - 1 – Non impact (stuck in the minor league)
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- We consider **400** games as a minimum number for an NHL-career.

It takes a minimum of 5 seasons to accumulate that number, usually 6 or 7 seasons. It was earlier an NHLPA minimum for fully receiving the Senior Player benefit pension plan.



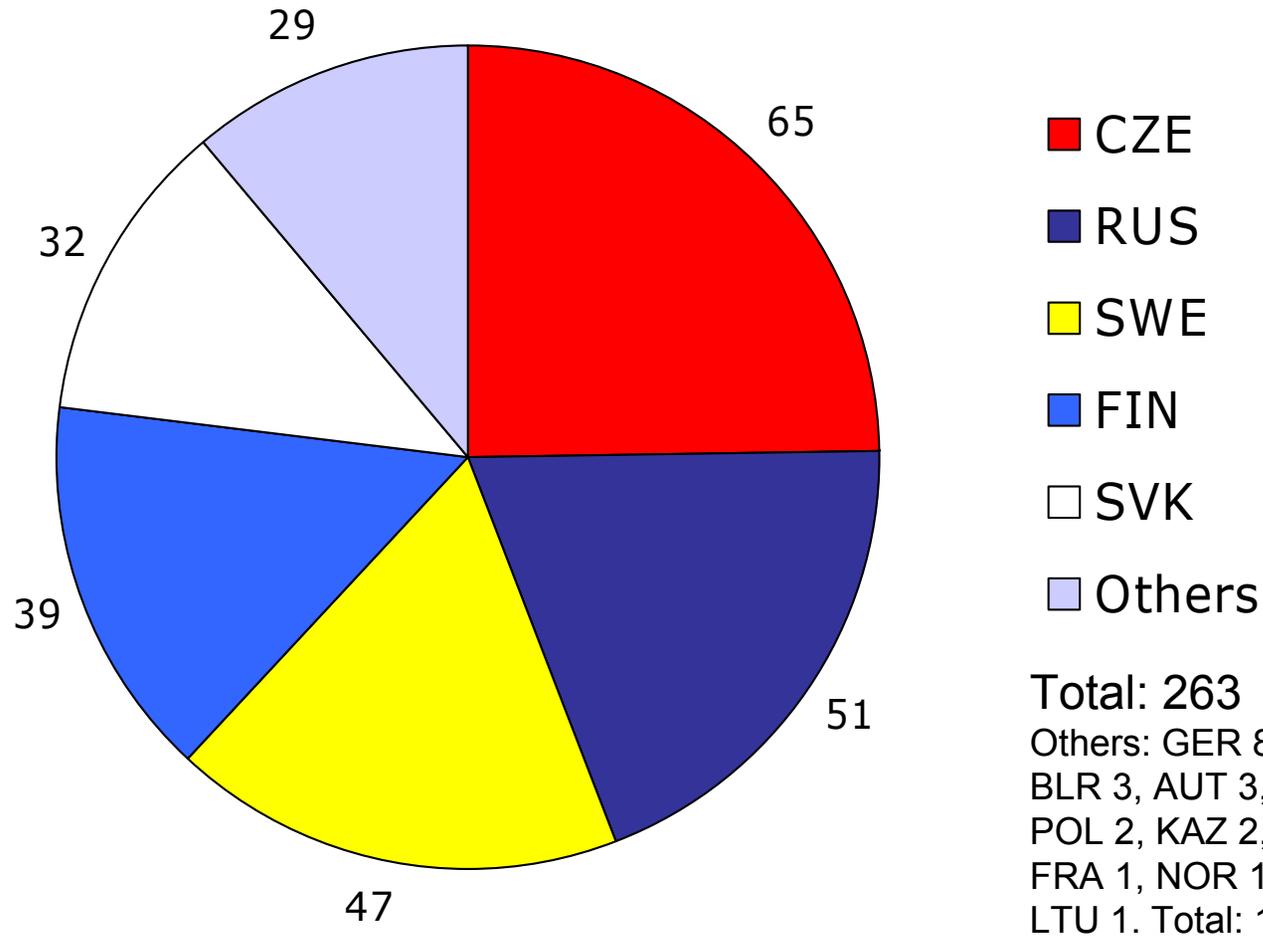
Share of Euros in the NHL in the last 5 years: stable at 70/30 = 260*-300 players/year





Share of Europeans in the NHL by nation

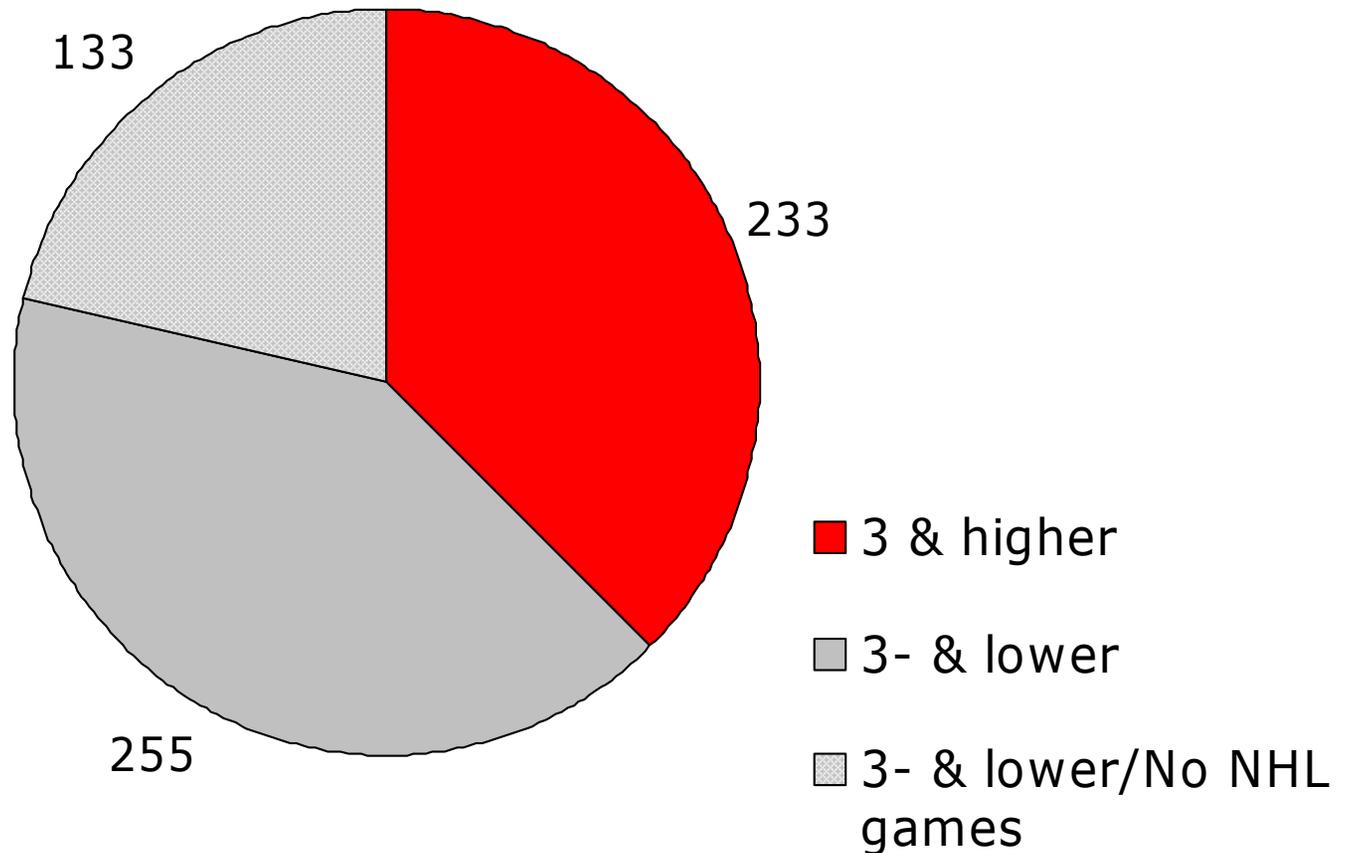
CZE 24.7% RUS 19.4% SWE 17.9% FIN 14.8% SVK 12.2%





2000-2006 Group of 621 Europeans

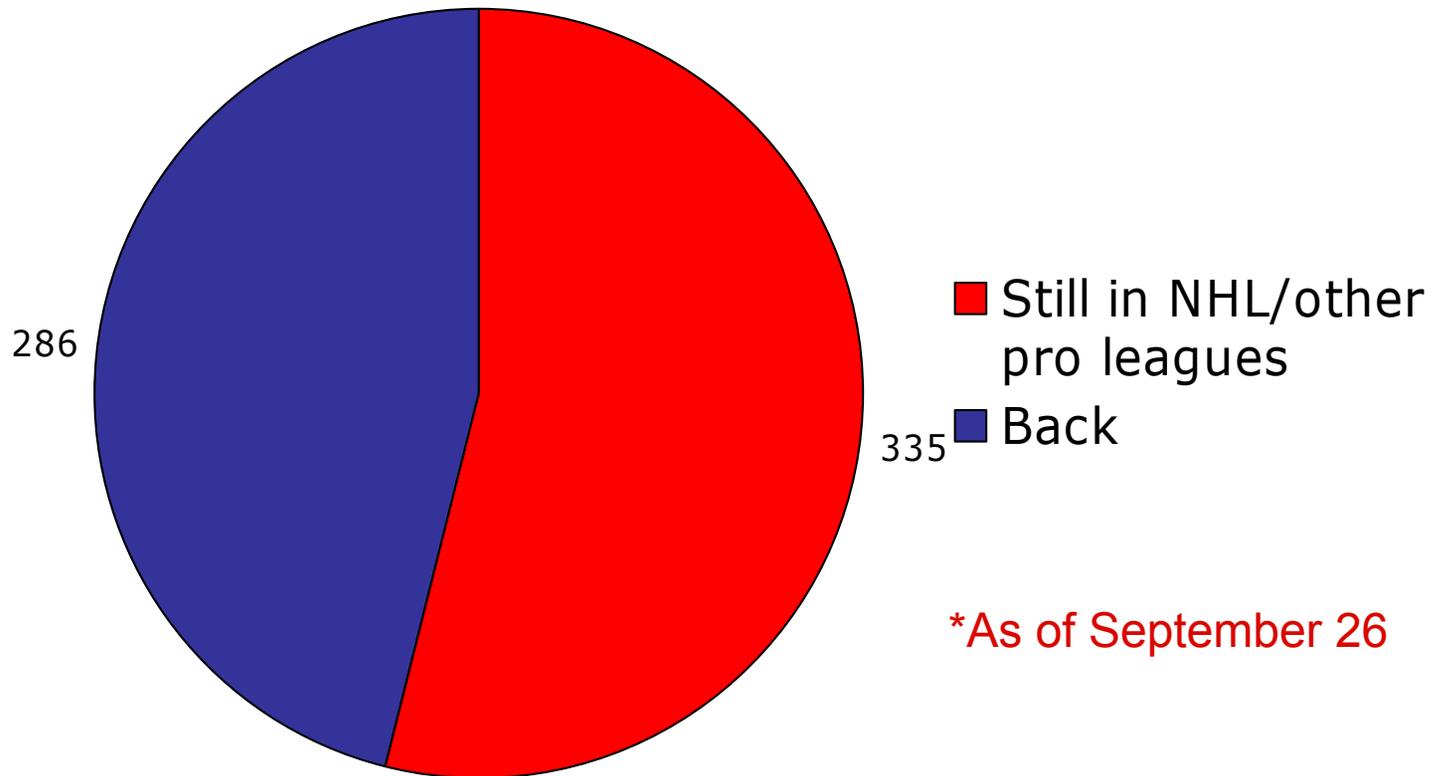
388 (62.5%) are non-impact, marginal or below average (1, 2 & 3-)





2000-2006 Group of 621 Europeans

286 (46.1%) have returned* without having reached 400 games



*As of September 26



2000-2006 Group of 621 Europeans

Broken down into three sub-groups according to pattern

■ Experienced Group – 1.

Players with a significant number of years in their top European league before going overseas, limited (100- games) or no minor league play. 173 players.

■ Minor league Group – 2.

Players with extended stay in the minor league (100+ games) often after a short career in their top European league. 242 players.

■ CHL Group – 3.

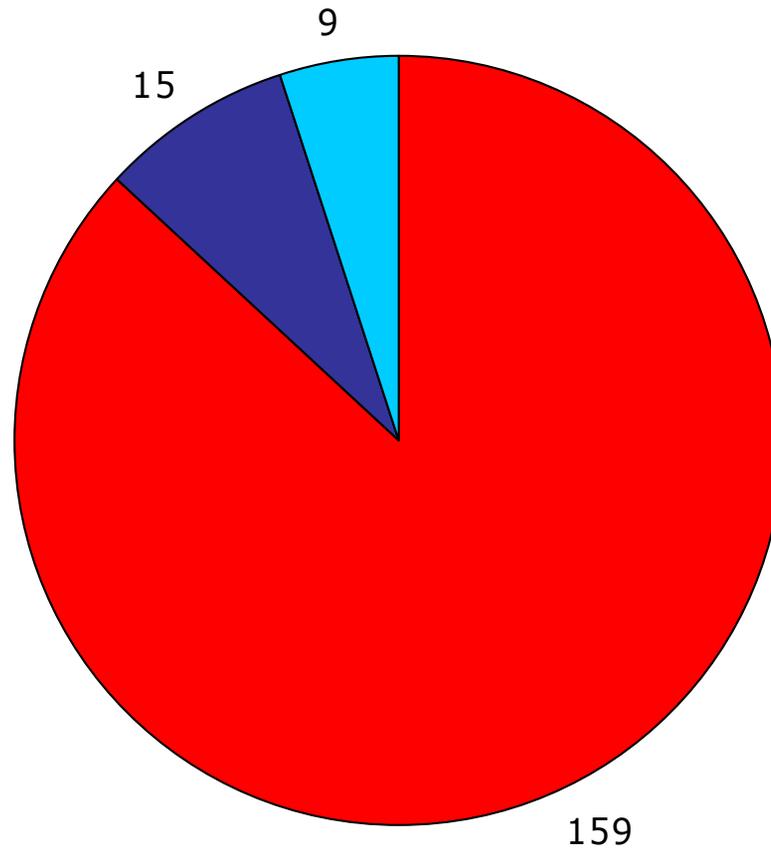
Players with virtually no experience from their top European league, followed by at least one season in the CHL, prior to signing a pro-contract. 183 players.

■ Remaining Group, players not fitting any pattern: 23



CHL Group - 3 183 players (at least 1 season in CHL)

159 players (86.9%) are graded 3- and lower



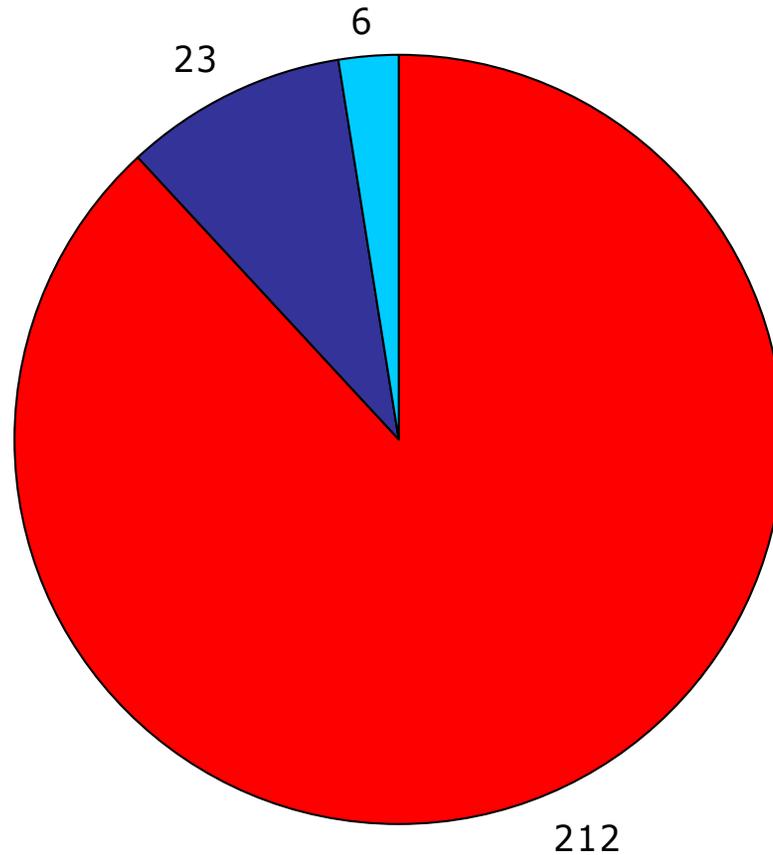
- 3- & lower
- 3
- 3+ & higher

Average grade: **1.66**



Minor League Group - 2 242 players

213 players (88.0%) are graded 3- and lower



- 3- & lower
- 3
- 3+ & higher

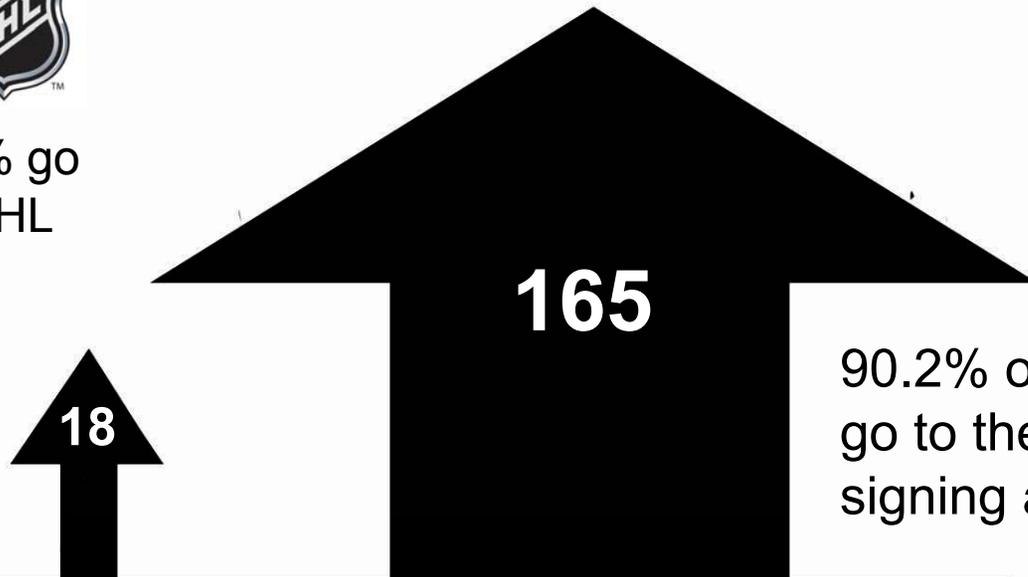
Average grade: **1.76**



Average
grade: **1.44**



9.8% go
to NHL



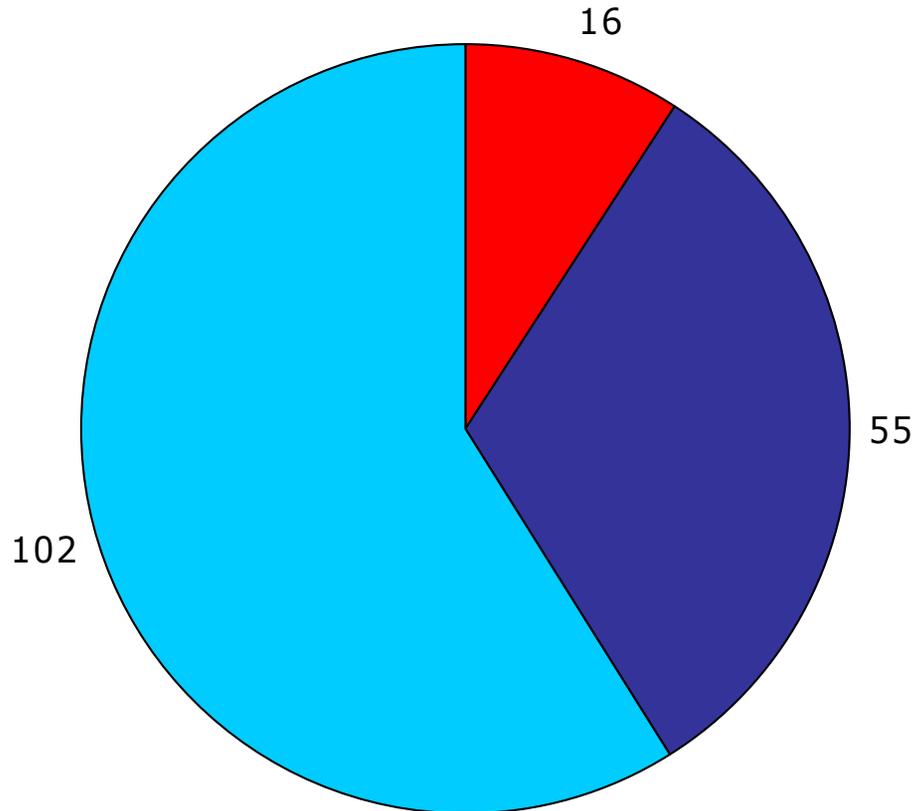
CHL Group 183 players





Experienced Group - 1 173 players

157 players (90.8%) are graded 3 and higher



- 3- & lower
- 3
- 3+ & higher

**Average
grade: 3.47**



Experienced Group - 1

More average key figures that show the resounding superiority of this group:

■ 4.2 years in a top European league
... before signing with an NHL club.

■ 534.6 NHL games*

Several of the players in this group are in the early stages of their careers and their naturally low number of games brings this figure down.

■ 95.5% of their North American games are NHL-games
= minimal time in the minor league.

■ Out of 117 players (out of 621) who are 3+, 4, 5 no less than 102 (87.2%) are in this group.



Retired Group – 93 players

Players with a minimum of 400 NHL games upon retirement

- 72 players out of the 93 (77.4%) either didn't play one minor league game or spent less than 10 games in the minor league.
- Only four players out of the 93 recorded games in the CHL.

Retired Group – 93 players

Players with a minimum of 400 NHL games upon retirement – the pre-NHL pattern:

- Four-five year's experience in Europe before signing with an NHL club.
- National team experience during this period.
- Minimal minor league experience and no CHL games after coming to North America.
- **RESULT: IMMEDIATE IMPACT IN THE NHL**





CHL Draft 1997-2002 – 339 (394) Europeans

- Out of the 339 players who went on to play in the CHL, 269 (79.4) have not played one NHL game
- Out of the 269 with no NHL game, 262 have returned to Europe, many already retired, or in lower leagues, or in recreational hockey
- Out of the 70 ($339 - 269 = 70$) Europeans who play or have played in the NHL, 18 are graded 3 and better or projected to be graded 3 and better, with a reasonable chance to play 400.
- This makes 18 players out of 339 (5.3%) with having played or having a reasonable chance to play 400 NHL games.
- Out of the remaining 52 ($70 - 18 = 52$) players who have played in the NHL, 46 are graded 1 or 2 and 26 have already returned to Europe.



Conclusion

From the research of the group of 621 modern players and the retired group of 93 players:

- The numbers do not support the prevailing theories that a European player needs “adjustment” in the minors league or “learning the North American game” in the CHL in order to become a successful NHL-player.
- If a player has the by us outlined pre-NHL career pattern, he doesn't need more adjustment than the one he goes through during the training camp and the early stages of the NHL-season.



Conclusion II

Why more than 60 percent of the signed Europeans are in the lesser categories 3-, 2, 1

- The NHL signs too many European players who are **not** of NHL caliber.
- If of **NHL-caliber**, too many Europeans are signed too early without being **NHL-ready**.



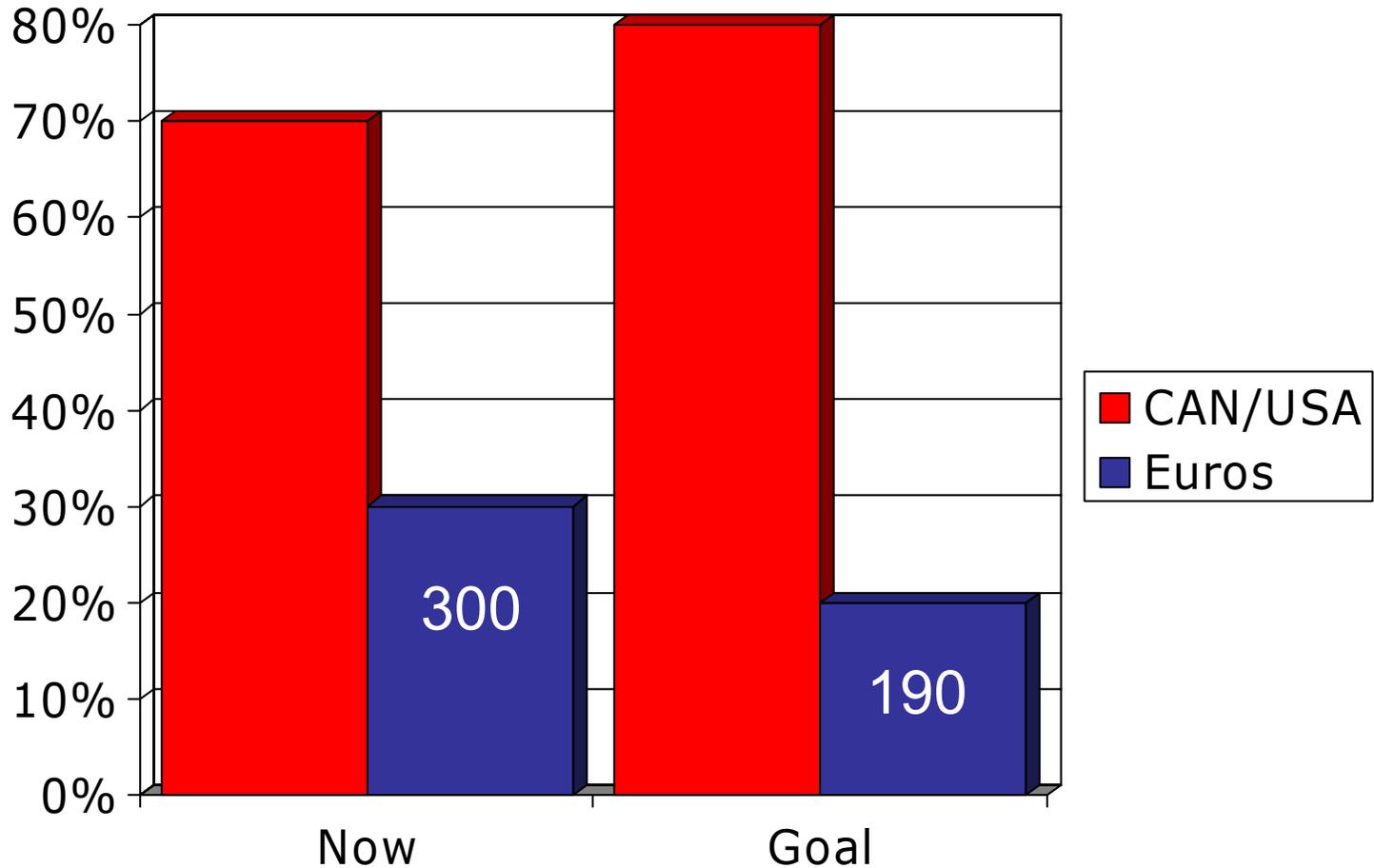
Conclusion III

Quoting player agent Don Baizley (34 years' experience of representing European players)

- There is no question that significantly more NHL success has been achieved by those of my clients who delayed coming to North America until they were "NHL-ready"
- Rules of thumb:
 1. Has he played regularly for at least one full season in a European top league?
 2. Has he played and been a contributor for the senior national team, particularly at the World Championship level?



GOAL: To cut down share of Euros in NHL to 80/20 = 190 players





USA and CAN players can fill the void

USA/CAN:

1.005.339 reg. players – **16.200*** rinks
62 players/rink

EURO TOP 5:

300.091 reg. players – **1.091** rinks
275 players/rink

* Including outdoor rinks. USA/CAN have almost 5,000 indoor rinks combined.



Potential comes from USA Hockey

Players from the USA are joining the NHL at a faster rate than any other nation:



2002-03: **21** US-developed newcomers (**8** Czechs)

2003-04: **32** US-developed newcomers (**9** Czechs)

2004-05: No NHL-season

2005-06: **50** US-developed newcomers (**11** Czechs)



Everyone is a beneficiary of 80/20 ratio

- European leagues – higher quality ensures continuing talent growth, both for leagues and national teams
- USA/CAN – larger player pools in the NHL are beneficial to the national team programs for Olympics and IIHF World Championships
- NHL – maintaining high quality of competition in European leagues ensures continuous flow of high quality players (3+, 4, 5) to the NHL.



■ “The goal must be to keep the development streams strong on both sides of the Atlantic by keeping the young players in their own federations and leagues **until** they are ready for NHL play.”

Murray Costello



Thank you!

INTERNATIONAL ICE HOCKEY FEDERATION

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