

USA WOMEN SETTLE FOR BRONZE MEDAL
AT THE IX - WOMEN'S INLINE HOCKEY WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP
BEROUN, CZECH REPUBLIC - JULY 2 THRU 8, 2010

Reported by George Pickard and Charles Sgrillo for USA Roller Sports Inline Hockey

The first World Championship for women's inline hockey was created for multi-national participation at a USA hosted FIRS world championship held in Rochester, New York in the year 2002. This was originally scheduled to be an event restricted to the then eight year old FIRS men's inline hockey world championship. Rochester seemed to be the perfect place in which to initiate an expansion of the world championship invitation to include women for the first time to our international sport, inasmuch as the city of Rochester was the 1800s residence of Susan B. Anthony, who made this city the focal center for the early campaigns to foster American women's rights. Located in upstate New York, Rochester was then the center of the preliminary battles in the United States against slavery and for the first Governmental aid given to higher education for woman. The first Woman's Rights Convention was held in this city, the first demand made for suffrage, the first society formed for this purpose, and the first legislative efforts made to secure the civil and political rights of women.

When FIRS inline hockey leadership felt that time was rife for insertion of equal sport status for women in this youngest of FIRS roller sport disciplines, their proposals found willing supporters in Rochester, as civic leaders welcomed the opportunity to reinforce their city's historic commitment to promoting gender equity. The city of Rochester quickly agreed to double their financial contribution as host city so that the FIRS world championships could be extended to accommodate both men and women senior inline hockey events.

In 2002 the first female Team USA for inline hockey was assembled and competed against 5 other women's teams from around the world: Canada, Australia, Great Britain, Japan and Mexico. Our USA women emerged from this first women's competition with a World Championship Silver Medal, gold being taken by our northern neighbors in Canada. The next year in 2003 at Pisek, Czech Republic 10 women teams participated by the addition of France, Germany, Czech Republic and Singapore. The following year 2004, now in London, Ontario, 12 women teams contended, with the addition of Spain and New Zealand. Since its scanty beginning, USA women medaled in each world championship, taking home 4 gold medals, 3 silver and 2 bronze, as 9 such annual events grew in numbers and skill level of participants. A world-wide sport had been originated in America, which also resulted in development of greater interest here at home in women's inline hockey sport.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP 2010: In defense of their World Championship title, won last year in Italy, a trials for women was held in Spring of 2010, the following players were named TEAM USA and won the right to represent the United States of America in the Czech Republic: Goalies #27 Jetta Rackleff and #31 Michelle Vedder; #79 Allison Era, #44 Nicole Giannino, #3 Lisa Giovanelli - Captain, #87 Celeste Loyatho, #34 Kelly McCormack, #7 Jennifer Munhofen, #22 Charlotte Nicholson - Alt. Captain, #5 Courtney Orner, #9 Catherine Santo - Alt. Captain and #74 Chelsi Wells. COACH - Charles Sgrillo; TRAINER - Patrick Steidle. Players

Orner, Loyatho, and Giannino were first time additions to the team; goalie Michelle Vedder has been a regular on past world teams, but did not play last year in Italy. The competitive field, reduced this year due to poor world economics, consisted of: **Canada, China, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Slovakia, Spain and USA** - eight teams.

Before embarking for overseas on June 30th, Coach Sgrillo conducted a morning practice session in Philadelphia, their port of departure for the Czech Republic, so team mates could learn the international system and sync up their teamwork, because many American teams were sources for this all-star squad. There was to be no practice on July 1, so after arriving in Beroun, the team together toured the small town on foot, grabbed some dinner at a small restaurant and returned to the hotel for a quiet evening and got to bed early, hoping to reset their body clocks to Czech time upon awaking. After a 9:00 am scheduled practice session, the team seized their only opportunity to see the great city of Prague, a 40 minute train ride from Beroun. Upon return, after dinner and a chalk-talk about tomorrow's first Pool game, the team turned in early to further aid their time zone acclimation.

The Pool Play games began on the afternoon of July 3 with Canada taking easy measure of Finland by a 7 to 2 victory. France and Spain tied without either team scoring. The others coasted including the USA versus Slovakia (new team to the world championship), with USA shutting them out 8 - 0 in the last game of the night starting at 7:30. The following Sunday afternoon USA women faced Spain and won 5 - 1. The ensuing other 3 games were handled without stress by to the top seeds France, Czechs and Canada. The final Pool day created greater excitement. The Finns outscored newcomer China's women by 12 to 1. However, first timer Slovakia players played Spain to a draw, 2 - 2. The drama increased when in the next game the Canadian women lived up to form by beating the host country Czech team 3 to 2. Canada scored first 12 minutes into the game and again approximately 3 minutes later on a power play goal by Kathy Devereaux. Katerina Flachsova scored less than a minute later for the Czechs, giving Canada a one goal lead going into the half-time locker room. Halfway through the second period, the Czechs' Petra Zelenkkova tied the score at 2 all. With five minutes remaining, Canadian Montana Merante put her team ahead once more and Canada held off the Czechs for a 3 - 2 win. Team USA wacked France 6 - 0, concluding Pool Play. Canada and the USA were the only teams to remain undefeated, and who would then guess that these two perennial rivals were not destined to meet here at the 2010 world championships.

The Quarter-Finals began as single elimination competition on Tuesday July 6th with USA defeating China 6 - 1. France defeated Finland 4 to 1. The Czech team beat Spain 5 to 1 and Canada socked Slovakia 6 to 0. No sweat, no surprises.

The United States women faced the Czech team in the Semi-Final. The Czechs scored 34 seconds into the first period on a power play goal with Alena Polenska scoring the first of her four goals in this game. Simona Studentova scored a second goal for the Czechs just as the first period was ending, allowing the Czechs to take a 2 - 0 lead into the locker room. More than 18 minutes of scoreless goal tending occurred during the interim for Michelle Vedder, but no cigar. As they had been doing throughout the championship, the two USA goalies were equally sharing cage duties, so Jetta Rackleff took over the nets for the second half. Another power play goal by Polenska was also scored in the first minute of this half from a penalty the USA incurred in the

last seconds of the first half. Score 3 - 0 favoring the Czechs. The tide looked like it might turn with two successive goals by USA's Charlotte Nicholson, the first one being on a power play, bringing the score to a more respectable 3 - 2 deficit. These two goals by USA either antagonized or remotivated Alena Polenska, for she quickly followed up with a Hat-Trick goal and then three minutes later scored a 4th game goal, to bring the lead for the Czechs to 5 to 2. A controversial goal for the USA was recorded by the goal judge but disallowed by the referee, which would have put the game within reach and perhaps fired up the USA team if allowed. A sixth Czech goal was scored at 39:27 into an open net, bring the final score to 6 to 2 in favor of the Czechs. Thus Team USA drops out of Gold or Silver Medal contention and will play off for the Championship Bronze Medal.

The Semi-Final Game between Canada and France was a cardiac thriller. Each team had its own Hat-Trick-Heroine that dueled to the death. France jumped out to a lead with three unanswered goals, bang-bang-bang by #24 Sandrine Rangeon in the first period. Merci! Canadian player Sasha Nanji responded by her first goal with a minute and three seconds remaining in the first period. Rest and reconstruction of a game plan for Canada ensued during the half time break. Joy and congratulations reigned in the French locker room. In the second period Sasha resumed her Canadian scoring by sending a power play goal into the French net at 26:13. Teammate Christina Sorbara interrupted Sasha's march with her own power play goal for Canada, tying the score at 3 all at 31:56 of the game. This turn of affairs must have enraged Sandrine Rangeon, who quickly drove home her fourth goal for France, putting them once again in the lead. How should a maple-leaf heroine respond? Why score another goal, that's what! Canadian ninja Nanji drove home a hat-trick tying goal at 37:48 in the game. No further scoring plunged the contest into sudden death overtime, where the impasse might be starkly resolved. Canadian Jackie Jarrell provided this coup de grace to France with her shot its net that was administered at 3 minutes, 29 seconds into overtime. Canada wins 4 to 3; France is crushed. Sacre Bleu! How will this to be viewed in Montreal, as victory or defeat?

Bronze Medal Game

The first Pool game between France and USA ended with a win by USA with the result of 6 - 0 for Team USA. The game started cautiously, with Courtney Orner receiving a pass from Charlotte Nicholson in the 5th minute of the game and shooting to the top right corner of the goal cage, she scored the first goal of the game. There was no further success by either side during the first period. Score for the first period was 1 - 0 in favor of USA. In the second half the Americans continued to dominate play possession. The French cage was penetrated by Catherine Santo at 23:09 of the period. With one minute left in the game, Kelly McCormack took a pass from Chelsi Wells and scored the third goal for USA, confirming a USA Bronze Medal. The USA Women took the 2010 World Championship Bronze Medal with a 3 -0 victory over France.

At game end, the captain of Team France, Marion Dalzotto, graciously said "The United States has a very tough team. We had hoped to beat them, but failed. This tournament was a great experience for us. We very much enjoyed this week. I played at five championships and this one was absolutely perfect – the organization, the conditions, simply everything."

Women's Gold/Silver Medal Game

The Czech Republic lost to Canada in the Round Robin 3 - 2, but were not intimidated in the finals. The Czech Women, hunting for their second Gold Medal, put out of their minds the successful history of Canada in past world championships and the outcome of the earlier game in this competition. The Czech team won their first Gold in at the Düsseldorf World Championships two years ago and would not be denied at home. The key player in this game was # 98 Katerina Mrazova who scored two goals in the first period which proved to be the margin of victory, as well as adding an assist for the final Czech goal by #24 Andrea Fialova.

A frenetic audience, the largest of the tournament, greeted both teams when taking the floor before the game, encouraging teams to show their best performance. There was no scoring during the first half of the opening period. The Czech team was fired up right from the beginning and Kendra Fisher, the Canadian goalie held them off with a spectacular performance in the crease. In the 11th minute, Mrazova made two great moves on the Canadian goal and with a backhand shot beat Fisher for her first goal. Four minutes later Mrazova again produced another Czech goal, beating Fisher on a breakaway while the Czech team was shorthanded. Fifteen seconds later, #11 Jackie Jarrell got Canada its only goal, taking the teams into the half time locker room with the score Czech 2 - Canada 1.

At the start of 2nd half, the Czech players kept up the pressure on the Canadian goal. In the 30th minute Czech player #24 Andrea Fialova scored on the rebound of a shot taken by Mrazova and the Czechs regained their two-goal edge. Team Canada pulled their goalie to create additional scoring opportunities, but to no avail. The game ended in favor of the Czech Republic 3 - 1, bringing the Czech women team its second Gold Medal in the past three World Inline Hockey Championships.

2010 AT FIRS WORLD INLINE ROLLER HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIP BEROUN, CZECH REPUBLIC - WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP PLACEMENT

Gold Medal – Czech Republic

Silver Medal – Canada

Bronze Medal – United States of America

4. France, 5. Spain, 6. Slovakia, 7. Finland, 8. China

SELECTED PLAYER COMMENTS:

Chelsi Wells: "This year was my second time playing in the World Championships, this time in the Czech Republic. What a beautiful place. The rink was of great quality and I really enjoyed playing there. While the heat was almost unbearable, the entire adventure was one for the books.

Despite our one loss in the semi finals to the eventual Czech champion, no one on Team USA hung their heads. We played an amazing bronze medal game and came away with third place. I felt the team this year had a very unique bond both on and off the rink. Our coach Charlie Sgrillo is amazing and the reason our team was so close. He had a great way of pulling us all together. He was awesome to be around and to hang out with, but when it came game time, he was totally focused. Thanks Chal! I would like to make it known how much I appreciate being given such amazing opportunities. Both championships were experiences of a lifetime."

Nichole Giannino: "I am a 16 year old high school Junior from Long Island, New York who has played hockey since age 9. The 2010 World Inline Games in Beroun, Czech Republic has been one of the most amazing experiences in my life so far. I was honored to be the youngest member to represent our great country . Upon arriving in Philadelphia to meet up with my new teammates I was a little nervous knowing that I was a rookie and would be playing with some of the best players from all over the world. Team USA is made up of the most outstanding players in the USA. After a couple practices in Philadelphia to work on our playbook, we set off to the Czech Republic and I already was comfortable with my team. They made me feel welcome.

I couldn't help but wonder if I would get any playing time, being the new kid on the block. Coach Charlie Sgrillo cleared that up right away when he started me in the first game. It has been said that a coach can make or break your hockey experience, Coach Sgrillo made it for us. He is so supportive of the girls on our team, that we all played, laughed and enjoyed this experience as a team. I scored the first 2 goals of the game in the game against France. Winning the Bronze Medal was great but the highlight of TEAM USA was the friends I made, not only with my teammates, but with the players from Spain and China, some I still talk to. It is so cool knowing that people half way around the world and I have a common bond in the love of the game of hockey."

Celeste Loyatho: "It was an incredible trip. I was surrounded by wonderful people and very talented players. There was nothing but smiles and laughter! This being my first year, the returning players and veterans made me feel like a part of the team right off the bat. I was disappointed with our loss to the Czechs because I felt like we were the more talented team. However it just makes me more motivated to keep working hard, make the team again next year, and come back better than we were to get that gold!"

Lisa Giovanelli: "The town of Beroun did a great job hosting the championships. Something that we've never had before was someone from the town that was with our team all the time to help us out with things like sightseeing, transportation, translating, finding restaurants for us, helping with things around the rink. As for the hockey this year, it was a little disappointing that we had a limited number of teams on the women's side but it was nice to add some new countries with China and Slovakia. Both teams competed well for this being their first championships. China was very friendly and we had a fun time talking with them and learning new words. We once again had a bunch of new faces join our team and also had some older players come back after taking a few years off, so it was a nice mix of older and younger girls."

"Our chemistry on and off the floor was great! Everyone got along really well and we always had a good time together. And our new coach, Chal, was awesome! He connected with everyone on the team and knows the game extremely well. We are very fortunate to have him

join our program. We knew our toughest game was going to be the semi-final game with the Czechs. The tournament being in the Czech Republic, we knew that they would have a strong team and they would be hungry to win on their own ground. They were a physically strong team and they capitalized on every opportunity they got. It was a tough loss for us, but we rebounded well and played a good game against France to win the Bronze medal. Michelle Vedder, our veteran goalie, played an amazing game against France in that final game, making some huge saves to preserve a shutout. "

Michelle Vedder: "The most cohesive team I have ever been on. We won and lost as a team. Coach Charlie respected each one of us like his own daughter."

Allison Era: "I had a really good experience in the Czech Republic this year. It was crazy playing with some girls who I have only played against, but we had a skilled team and I think we could have gone all the way if we would have had a few more practices! It was nice seeing new teams at the Worlds that have never competed before such as Slovakia, who actually did pretty well for their first year. I hope that these teams continue to play and compete every year. The Czechs were easily the toughest team for us. They came out strong and I don't think we were expecting that. This is my third year on the team and I have experienced a lot of really neat things that I never would have had the opportunity to if I hadn't made the team."

Coach Charles (Chalie) Sgrillo: "**Some final thoughts** - Michele Vedder and Jetta Rackleff gave us great goal tending from the first game. Because of the heat, Michele and Jetta were splitting the games. It is really great to have two outstanding goaltenders who both supported the other. It is sad to lose only one game in the tournament and end up with just a Bronze Medal, but our team pulled together and were determined that they would not let that opportunity pass. We watched the 2010 Championship game as a team. The Czechs and Canadians are two great teams, but I could tell that the girls really thought that being out there was the reason they really came to play. We came with some very young players and the future looks bright for Team USA. I feel that you have to learn what it is to lose before you can become a true winner."