



George Pickard, former President of FIRS Inline Hockey and current Chairman of USA Roller Sports Inline Hockey Committee, has through team interviews provided the following assessment of the 2009 year's American men's triumphal inline hockey campaigns:

XV FIRS MEN'S INLINE HOCKEY WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

The 2009 MEN'S TEAM USA has again successfully defended their International Federation of Roller Sports (FIRS) World Inline Hockey Championship in Varese, Italy, July 6 through 11, 2009. Eight new players formed the 13 man roster after a come-back win last year restored their title in Dusseldorf, Germany. Team USA was not afforded the favorite's designation this year, as one might expect of the defending champion, largely due to the complete absence of veteran stars that have carried the USA team through the past decade and a half since the organization by FIRS of world inline hockey. The strong national teams of the Czech Republic, Switzerland, Canada and France presented formidable obstacles for these young Americans to overcome. The Czech inline hockey team, as usual, was liberally sprinkled with ice hockey veterans recruited from their nucleus of hockey talent which radiates throughout the professional leagues of Europe and into the NHL of North America. The Swiss and Canadians teams consisted of veteran players who considered hockey victories their natural right and looked upon such accomplishments as mere fulfillment of their national heritage. All three of these teams have previously won FIRS World Inline Hockey Championships. And there was another serious contender, France, which has been twice runner-up at the World Championships and has the best pure inline roller hockey development program in Europe. These four national teams presented serious pitfalls along the path of a repeat victory for the young and internationally unseasoned American team. Their task was further intimidating by the fact that the retired veteran USA Men have previously won 11 of the prior 14 World Inline Hockey Championships, since the event was originated by FIRS in 1995.

The American team opened the preliminary round robin matches pitted against Great Britain, which they handled easily by a 7 to 0 victory. Their next day's game was against a talented Italian Team in their home arena, which the USA team overcame with another victory, 7 to 3. The following day's game against Switzerland, however, had an unhappy conclusion, finishing up 3 to 2 in favor of the Swiss. The only two goals scored by USA were by seasoned players Travis Fudge and Greg Thompson, in a bruising game that resulted in a collective 13 minor penalties being assessed among both rosters. The pool play ended with a loss for USA, but was not of serious consequence except for seeding into the forthcoming single elimination medal play.

USA men drew France for the Quarter-finals. The USA won a close 2 to 1 match with France, which is a common result at previous World Championships, since France closely matches the USA style in their skate speed and style of play. In this game the USA team's WC newbies produced all the scoring, saving the day with goals by John McGuinness and Joshua Laricchia. The Americans advanced to the Semi-finals to face the Czech Republic and experienced an unexpected easy victory 7 to 0, with McGuinness and Laricchia again scoring two goals each, and another newcomer Dustin Roux helping with a goal. Two team veterans Brandon Barnette and Thompson also contributed a goal apiece. TEAM USA advanced to the final for the Gold Medal and faced their perennial rival TEAM CANADA.

The losing teams from Semi-finals face each other in the finals of the World Championship for a Bronze Medal. This pitted the Czech Republic against Switzerland, which in terms of their recent USA experience would lead to the assumption that such a game is a foregone conclusion in favor of the Swiss. Switzerland beat USA in pool play 3 to 2 and USA handily whipped the Czechs 7 to 0. Wrong! The Czechs scored 4 unanswered goals in the first period before the Swiss woke up to the fact that they might just lose this game. Daniel Steiner scored a goal for the Swiss late in the first period, which was quickly answered with another from the Czech Republic, so the Czechs took a 5 to 1 lead into the locker room at half time. In the second period both team more or less traded goals, getting 3 each, thus making the final score Czechs 8 and the Swiss 5, with the World Championship Bronze Medal going to the Czech Republic. This sort of unpredictable game frequently results when neighboring sport teams go into competition wearing their country's colors and emblems and vie in international tournaments for local (European) bragging rights.

The Gold Medal Game between traditional hockey rivals Canada and USA, opened with a quick score by Canadian John Clewlow and another goal a minute later by Jordon Schulz. Behind 2 – 0, the USA rolled up its sleeves with a goal by Greg Thompson and the first of his three goal hat-trick by Chris Connole. Tied 2 – 2, Canada scored again later in the first period by a Dave Hammond goal which carried the two teams into their half time locker rooms with Canada ahead 3 – 2. In the second period, Canadian Clewlow scored again for the final Canada goal, followed by USA player Dustin Roux scoring unassisted and then Chris Connole produced the final two components of his hat-trick, putting the USA out in front to stay, and World Gold Medal victory 5 to 4 over Canada. Canada took the Silver Medal.

FIRS 2009 MEN WORLD CHAMPIONS – TEAM USA

#17 Brandon BARNETTE – St. Charles, MO; #97 Chris CONNOLE – Murrieta, CA; #39 Keith DiPRIMA – Goalie, Ronkonkoma, NY; #98 Travis FUDGE – Springfield, MO; #10 Eric KEENE – North Wales, PA; #13 Anthony KING – Boston, MA; #37 Joshua LARICCHIA – Huntington Beach, CA; #19 Daniel Marmorstein – Phoenix, AZ; #44 John McGuinness – Yaphank, NY; #25 Jonathan MOSENSON – Bethpage, NY; #36 Dustin ROUX – McMurray, PA; #91 Gregory THOMPSON – Bayport, NY; #30 Michael URBANO – Goalie, Huntington Beach, CA. COACH – Joe Noris – LaJolla, CA; MANAGER – Jon Roux – McMurray, PA; Trainer – Beth ROUX – McMurray, PA.

MEN'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL RESULTS:

- 1. USA – Gold**
- 2. CANADA – Silver**
- 3. CZECH REPUBLIC – Bronze**
- 4. Switzerland**
- 5. France**
- 6. Italy**
- 7. Spain**
- 8. Colombia**
- 9. Germany**
- 10. Belgium**
- 11. Great Britain**
- 12. Korea**
- 13. Australia**
- 14. Mexico**
- 15. Japan**
- 16. Venezuela.**

AN ADDITIONAL WORLD GAMES VICTORY FOR INLINE HOCKEY MAKES 2009 A BANNER YEAR FOR USA MEN AND THE USARS PROGRAM

The Eighth World Games was held in the Chinese Taipei city of Kaohsiung, which was the second time this quadrennial event was held in Asia since its 1981 launch at Santa Clara, California. The World Games is a huge multisport competition whose nearest comparison is to the Olympic Games. The World Games was founded by International Sports Federations that are recognized by the IOC, but which are outside the roster of sport disciplines that participate in the Olympic Games, either in whole or part. Originally began with 12 International Federations, of which Roller Sports is a founding member, the IWGA now consists of 32 International Sport Federations which encompass approximately 100 participating countries. Under the Patronage of the International Olympic Committee and the organizational umbrella of the General Assembly of International Sport Federations (GAISF), the IWGA recognizes the International Federation of Roller Sports (FIRS) as the controlling entity for fielding inline roller hockey teams in the World Games as well as







all other roller sport disciplines. Our sport of inline hockey was admitted in 2005, taking the place of ball and cane roller hockey, while the roller sports disciplines figure and speed skating have remained continuous participants in all World Games since its 1981 origin.

Quite naturally for an event as diverse and huge as the World Games, the entries (countries) eligible for participation in a given sport must prequalify, normally by their federation's previous year's world championships. This insures that only the best athletes are present to represent their sports and limits the size and duration of the Games to manageable numbers. In the case of inline hockey, our qualifying tournament was at the 2008 FIRS World Inline Hockey Championships in Dusseldorf, Germany. Only the top five placing teams at the World Championships, plus the national team from the host country, are eligible to compete in the 2009 World Games. The qualified national inline hockey teams all participated in Taiwan: United State of America, France, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Italy and host country Chinese Taipei.

USA SUCCESSFULLY DEFENDS 2005 WORLD GAMES TITLE BY A PERFECT WIN RECORD FOR 2009

At this year's World Games, because of the limitations of time, a round-robin tournament was selected for deciding the Champion, discarding the usual world championship format of pool play, and then followed by quarter-finals to finals in single elimination competition. The 2008 World Champion Team USA completed a perfect run through the round-robin games with a final confrontation against France, the 2008 World Championship Silver Medalist qualifier. Entering this game finale, the USA's victory record stood at 4 – 0, with France having a record of 3 – 0 – 1, both of which were the best records of the six national teams involved. The USA gained a lead of 2 – 0 over France late in the first period with goals scored by Greg Thompson and Joshua Laricchia. The USA opened the second period with two more goals by Chris Connole, adding to its lead and then a final score by Travis Fudge bringing the tally for USA to 5 – 0. In the last 7 seconds of the game, France avoided a shut out by a goal off the stick of Jimi Lefranc, producing a final tally of 5 – 1 in favor of the USA. The Americans thus secured a second World Games Gold Medal for USA inline hockey. France earned the Silver Medal.

The Czech Republic took the Bronze Medal with a 3-2 won/loss record, losing only to France and USA. Switzerland, the bronze medalist at the 2005 World Games, took fourth place with a 2 – 3 won/loss record, having lost to the Czechs in the opening game of this competition 5 -2. Italy with only a single victory, plus a tie with silver medal winner France, came in fifth and Chinese Taipei entering the World Games as the representative team for the host country, was without World Championship ranking and finished in 6th position in the World Games, without achieving game points.

Seed	Team Name	GP	PTS	W	L	D	GD	GF	GA	MIN	MAJ	PIM	W%
1	 USA	5	10	5	0	0	+16	25	9	18	0	00:00	100.0%
2	 France	5	7	3	1	1	+9	19	10	14	0	00:00	60.0%
3	 Czech Republic	5	6	3	2	0	+8	18	10	21	0	00:00	60.0%
4	 Switzerland	5	4	2	3	0	+7	23	16	11	0	00:00	40.0%
5	 Italy	5	3	1	3	1	-6	11	17	11	0	00:00	20.0%
6	 Chinese Taipei	5	0	0	5	0	-34	2	36	12	0	00:00	0.0%

2009 MEN'S WORLD GAMES INLINE HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIP RESULTS:

- 2. USA – Gold 2. FRANCE – Silver 3. CZECH REPUBLIC – Bronze
4. Switzerland 5. Italy 6. Chinese Taipei**

Within the course of two weeks the USA Men Inline Hockey team won two major tournaments against the best roller hockey players in the world. It was not an easy victory for this team, but it is an dual win that was initiated by the American team at the 2005 World Championships in Paris, France, going on to Duisburg, Germany for double win at the 2005 World Games. Can the USARS hope to make this an ongoing tradition for TEAM USA every 4 years hereafter?

WORLD GAMES 2009 – MEN’S INLINE HOCKEY CHAMPIONS – TEAM USA

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SALUTE TO WORLD TEAM SPONSORS:

In this difficult time during world economic recession, USA Roller Sports sought and received needed financial and material support from within the inline hockey industry in order to sustain its National Governing Body obligations relative to sending representative USA Teams to participate in FIRS World Championships, as well as the addition this year of the World Games in Taiwan. We are particularly proud to have gained the support of the following TEAM USA Benefactors:

FINANCIAL – Tour Hockey; CCM Hockey; Ace Jerseys; RinkRat; Internet Broadcasting; TDI Photo; Sports Pro and Southern Sports Supply.

HOCKEY EQUIPMENT – Tour Hockey; Reebok; Bauer; LaBeda; RinkRat and Ace Jerseys.

These companies have proven that they are true friends of our sport of inline hockey and we are pleased that our teams have rewarded their generosity with production of three 2009 Gold Medal World Championship performances for the Seniors and a World Bronze Medal for Juniors.

DUAL WORLD CHAMPIONS - TEAM USA MEN, THEIR IMPRESSIONS AND EXPRESSIONS

JOE NORIS – LaJolla, California USA TEAM COACH: “This year’s World Championship and World Games presented some serious challenges for the team. With a good number of our most seasoned veterans not returning this year, my approach to the team was very different in some ways.”

“One thing that was the same was my interest in instilling a "team" concept. I let everyone on the team know that no one may put themselves above the team and expect to play. We needed to play as a team and not worry about personal scoring or what the outcome of a game would be. I regularly let the players know to just take it shift by shift and do the right things. This takes a lot of pressure off the players and helps them to better focus. When players begin to count their own stats, or are not passing to a player because they didn't themselves get a pass, the whole team concept breaks down and playing effectiveness can go fast down hill. Most of the drills I used in practice were the same. They are drills to keep the players and the puck moving which also helps everyone get a feel for each other on the rink. Most of these players do not play together on a regular basis and everyone needed to get a feel for the other players as everyone has his own style.”

“For our defensive concepts, we used man-to-man, zone, and a combination of both. When asked when we should switch from one to the other, I left the decision up to the players on the floor with players adapting to changes as necessary. I believed this confused the opposition’s offense. It is always a great challenge to figure out who to play at what position and with which partners. With a lot of new players and only 4 or 5 practices available for such arrangements, this was a particularly tough task. For the most part my judgment seemed to work out successfully, judging from the results, but knowing the players as I now do, I would have tried a few different combinations.”

“Last year I communicated a great deal through our three veterans who were my captain and two assistants. This year I talked more directly to the players, one-on-one. It was a much younger and inexperienced team and I felt it necessary to build confidence and take away some of the pressure. I did not name a captain. I wanted to let the leadership role emerge and it did with Greg Thompson. He didn't need a "C" on his jersey. He became the leader not only in the locker room, but also by his ability to rise to challenges at the most critical times on the skating surface. Canada was working us. They came out flying and were making us look like we were standing still as they went to an early 2-0 lead. I called a team time out to rally the troops and Greg added his own encouragement. Shortly after that Greg scored on one of the nicest goals I have ever seen. Not only did it put us on the scoreboard but also let the Canadians know that the USA was there to play, and we did. All in all it was a very enjoyable couple of tournaments. The high level of this year's two competitions, Men's World Championships and World Games, was most intense, with lots of very close games. Our players acted in a very professional way, both on and off the rink. I feel very proud to be part of their accomplishments, as they were true sportsmen in every sense.”

GREG THOMPSON – Bayport, NY – Defense (W. C. & W. G.): “This was my fifth year on the squad. I have been a part of some great World Championship teams and I learned a lot about the game from past teammates and coaches. This year we were an underdog team which definitely helped us maximize our fire power and heart. Sure, we had a great bunch of players, but a lot of our success as a team this summer had much to do with playing smart and through the off-floor preparations. We emerged winners because every single player played a great role and listened to what coach Noris had to say. Our players are all-stars on their club rosters, but we all realized that we all had to come together and realized that we all couldn't always be out on the rink. This summer we played great “team” defense and our goaltending was truly outstanding. A team can not win a World Championship without these two key elements. Our penalty kill was spectacular when you match our effort against the scoring talent of the high caliber teams we faced this summer at the World Championships and the World Games. It was particularly hard to stop them on the power play.”

“The World Games event was as remarkable as the World Championships. I was fortunate to play four years ago at the previous World Games in Germany, but the Taipei World Games this year was by far the best event. The city of Kaohsiung really had everything down to a tee. The city treated this event like it was the Olympic Games. The people there were so generous and the venues were packed out for the events. We were fortunate that inline hockey games were scheduled so that teams were there for the closing athlete's party and the firework display was astonishing. The people of Kaohsiung greeted us with great respect. The closing ceremony sent chills through everyone's body. Inside the stadium during closing ceremonies, there were 50,000 or more spectators our inline hockey teams marched onto the field with all of the sports teams that took part in the World Games. The show put on by the city put on was definitely one for the record books. I was much honored to be part of this biggest event in roller hockey history!”

CHRIS CONNOLE – Murrieta, California – Defense (W. C. & W. G.): “This was the best experience of my life. The competition was much stronger than I had expected. That was great because I love playing top notch hockey and a little added pressure of being on team USA made it much more fun. I was extremely impressed with our captain Greg Thompson. He is a true leader on and off the rink. His game speaks for itself. Not to mention my line mate, Josh Laricchia, who made me look good in every game. I also have to salute our great goal tending. In actual fact, I was impressed by the talent of all the guys we had on our team. They all contributed and did whatever it took in every game.”

“I was asked what I thought about the over all caliber of the other teams and players. The other teams were all good in there own ways. The Swiss were extremely strong defensively and had a great goalie. The Czechs

had numerous NHL players and some players from the Russian Elite League, so what else need to be said about them? Then there were the French, who were hands down the fastest team in both competitions. It was even harder to play against them, because they practice diving more then they do hockey, so we were in the box most of the game. We were successful as a team because everyone showed up to play as a team and to do what it took to win a game. That's what makes a champion hockey team."

ANTHONY KING – Boston, Massachusetts – Defense (W. C.): "As an athlete you become very goal oriented, which you set for the present and for the future. One of my long term goals was to play for team USA and win a gold medal. I was fortunate enough to do that in my first three years of playing inline hockey. What an honor it was to play for my country that I love so very much. As an ice hockey player I faced the usual obstacles in learning this game. But being on Team USA inline and playing with this fine bunch of guys, made me understand how simple the game of inline hockey can be if you play it as a team. This experience has allowed me to look beyond this present victory and want more. There is no better feeling than achieving goals you set in life for yourself."

"The teammate that impressed me the most had to be our goalie Mike Urbano. As our starting goaltender going out to Italy, he did not begin the tournament between the pipes, nor did he play against the powerhouse Switzerland. Knowing that Urbs knew how much pressure there was going to be on him going into the medals rounds. We relied on his ability to play as well as he could and he lived up to it. That is extremely tough for any athlete to do. The teams that impressed me the most were the Czech, because of their talent and sportsmanship even after losing to us 7-1. I also admired the determination of Team Canada because of their willingness to play hard right down to the end.

There were two very important things that contributed to our success in Italy, first of all from the very beginning we worked together as a team, both on and off the rink, and secondly no player put himself above the team."

PETE MESSINA – Elk Grove Village, Illinois (World Games) – Forward:

"This was definitely my best experience playing inline hockey. We were treated like royalty in Taiwan, like celebrities walking around town. The country obviously went to great lengths making all the athletes feel special. For me, playing in the arena in front of thousands of fans was really a memorable experience. The Chinese did not seem to have a favorite team because they cheered anytime a goal was scored, which was very neat. It was also nice to check out some of the other sporting events and venues around town."

"The closing ceremonies were by far the most unique happening of the trip. Walking into a stadium with about 50,000 + fans screaming was an experience of a lifetime! We were all walking around a football sized field, with our gold medals around our neck, basking in the glory of being a Gold medalist in our "Olympics". Even afterwards, outside of the stadium, there was thousands of people waiting and cheering for the athletes. It was extremely special for us because we were Gold medalists. Every one wanted to take pictures of us and have us sign autographs for them".

"For me, there was not any one player who stood out on our team. We worked together as a unit in every game in order to win. Even though we had a newer, younger team, we all got along well both on and off the rink which I think was a leading factor to our game success. None of us wanted to lose, we all wanted to win so we could come back home and tell our friends and families about wining a gold medal in such a prestigious sporting environment! The ability for me to take part in such a huge event was truly something special. There's no better feeling than wearing a USA jersey every year, but to basically win an Olympic type Gold medal was an unbelievable experience. I take pride in our team, our sport and our country as well. Hopefully I will have a chance to represent our country in the next World Games in Columbia."