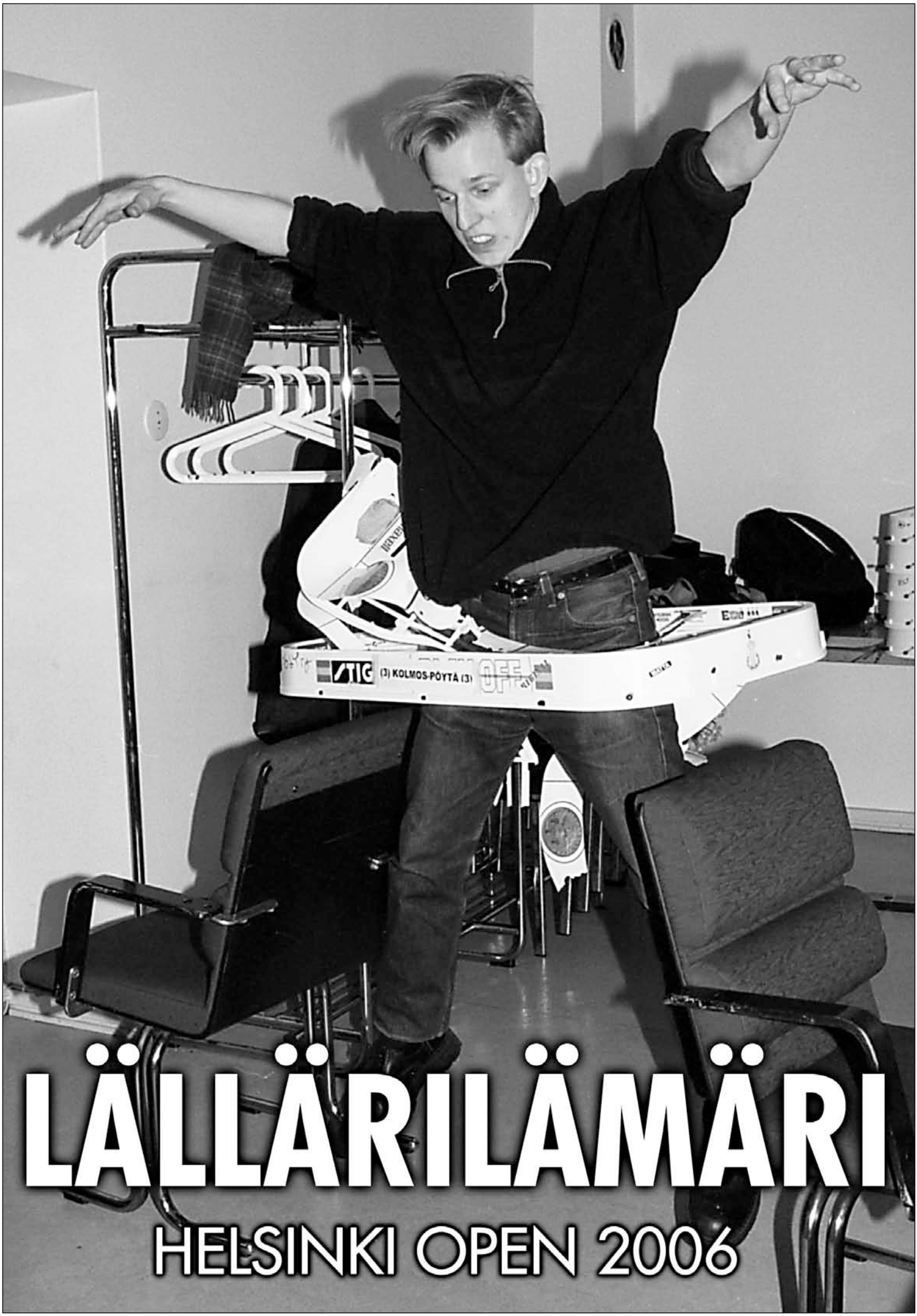

LÄLLÄRILÄMÄRI

HELSINKI OPEN 2006

Welcome to Helsinki Open 2006!

Congratulations, you are one of the over 116 players who make this tournament the biggest ever tablehockey event organized in Finland. In Finnish championships 2000 Ottawat Senaattorit got together 116 players fighting for medals. Jani Lappalainen won gold in open series then. Even the World championships held in Finland brought only 61 players (open series) to Helsinki.

From those days the sport has changed a lot. We have more players traveling to international events, thanks to late Euroleague and current World Tablehockey Tour. The becoming World championships also contribute to the rising number of entrants.

We have a lot of Finnish players in our tournament, but without all the international players coming to Helsinki we could not have achieved the status of biggest tournament. Thanks to all foreign players for making it to Helsinki! And also kiitos to Finnish players. If you would not come, there would be no tournament for the international players to participate in.

On behalf of organizers, the Academic Tablehockey Association (PÖLY), I wish you all good luck in the tournament. Let's make Helsinki Open 2006 a memorable experience to everyone. This can be accomplished best by remembering one thing: tablehockey is all about fun. Play hard, but remember sportsmanship. Remember to be a gentleman whether you win or lose.

I know it is hard to be happy, when you do not make the final group, or whatever your goal was. In Oslo Open 2006 I was zero (0!) points away from final groups. Sure, I was disappointed at the moment – and I still am, but just a little bit. But even so, I remember that tournament as a great memory. Everyone had fun, and after all, I played better than my World ranking position would suggest.

Someone might say that tablehockey is just a game... and I partially agree. This is not dead serious, but still it is not just a game. To me game of tablehockey means fun with friends, traveling and meeting new people from places where I have never been to.

Tablehockey is so much more than just a game!

Timo Toivonen
PÖLY

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ps. Someone might wonder what Lällärilämäri, the name of this magazine, means. Let me explain... Since Vesa Kontiainen made the first tablehockey magazine in Finland in 90s, there have been few others published as well.

From 2000–2003 there was a magazine called Spjass! (you all know that it means a certain center move). Then from 2004 onwards players from Oulu have published Harhasyöttö. It means a unique trick made by their local players. You pass nicely to your opponent, who then scores.

Lällärilämäri is also a trick on the board. Lälläri means someone who is a bit lame and does not have too much courage. Lämäri means slap shot, as in hockey. Lällärilämäri on the other hand is much harder to explain. Actually it is just about impossible to explain without revealing its secrets. We tell you this much: beware the organizers in wine-red t-shirts. Before you know they have scored a lällärilämäri to your net and you are picking up the puck for next face-off. Then you will know what a lällärilämäri is.

TIMO TOIVONEN

Historic moment. Finland has just beaten Sweden in World team championships in Riga 2005.

History of Finnish tablehockey

Students started Finnish tablehockey, and now students organize Helsinki Open.

Finnish professional tablehockey has its roots in late 80s. In southwestern Finland the students of Åbo Akademi started to play competitively. Finnish team was already present in the first World championships held in Stockholm in 1989. Finland was third.

First national championship was played at Tavastia rock club in May 1990. It was played in cup format. Hall of famer Mats Lundberg was crowned the champion. In December Finnish team participated in European championships in Lund, Sweden.

Finnish championships were not played in 1991, since there were no one to organize the event. The Finnish Tablehockey Association was formed for the season 1991–1992. And that season Nicke Packalen was crowned the Finnish champion.

That year Finns participated also in European and World championships, which were held in Czechoslovakia. Henrik Rosenberg was 10th in EC and Erik Lindgren was 10th in WC. Guess which nation took the places 1–9 in both events?

World championships 1991 were supposed to be played in Finland, but that tournament was never played, since Finland had no association and there were no individuals to make the organizing effort.

In spring 1992 Päivi Muhojoki was crowned the first ladies Finnish champion. Victory came easily as she was the only participant. At the same event first team championship went to Lokomotiv Pasila (Seppo Kosonen, V-P Alakorva and Jukka Koukonen). Later that year the first international match between Finland and Sweden was organized.

Since those years Finnish national ranking season has consisted of 6–7 tournaments. One of them is Finnish championships. The national ranking is used to select the national team for World championships.

In 1997 Finland organized the World championships for the first and so far the only time. Jacob Lindahl won, and Janne Kokko became the first non-Swede to reach medals in open series.

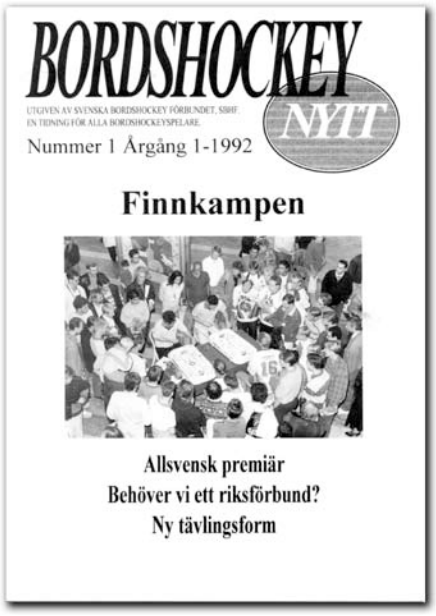
Sometime in 1997 or so Janne Ylönen opened the first website of FTHA. The site has since moved to www.poytajaakiekko.net and continues to bring new players to the game as they search for information about tablehockey on the web.

In the change of millenium Espoo hosted the biggest tournament so far. 116 participants played in Finnish championships. Since then player numbers have gone down in tournaments, but the level has gone up.

In 2003 Finland hosted the first ever Euroleague tournament. Kristian Iso-Tryykäri got the honors to win the first ever Helsinki Open. Now Finland hosts one of the World Tablehockey Tour Big Six tournaments.

World championships 2005 in Riga have been the most successful international event for Finland so far. Roni Nuttunen won junior series, and Piia Pulliainen won her third straight ladies championship. Something bigger was still on the way. Roni Nuttunen continued in his phenomenal form and got silver in open series. Ladies team got silver. In the men's team championships Finland did something that has been waited for long – they beat Sweden to win the World team championship!

Sources: Pöytäjääkiekko 1/97, Seppo Kosonen


BORDSHOCKEY NYTT

UTGIVEN AV SVENSKA BORDSHOCKEY FÖRBUNDET, SBHF.
EN TIDNING FÖR ALLA BORDSHOCKEYSPELARE.

Nummer 1 Årgång 1-1992

Finnkampen

Allsvensk premiär
Behöver vi ett riksförbund?
Ny tävlingsform

Bordshockey-Nytt reported that on September 12th to 13th 1992 the first Finnkampen was played in Stockholm. Sweden won 91 games, three games were tied. and Finland won two games. "This shows that Finland can take points and now and then win a match", Birger Hedström wrote back then.

Champion by accident

Roni Nuttunen hurt his knee – and started to play tablehockey.

Helsinki Open has been won the last two times by Finnish phenomenon Roni Nuttunen. Current junior world champion and open series silver medalist is 16 years old and has still many championship victories to come. His first Finnish championship came as early as 2002 in the kids series. Nuttunen is also the defending Finnish champion in open series and juniors.

Roni is currently living with his father and brother in his hometown of Raisio, which is located in southwestern Finland. Soon there will be small changes as his brother will head out to the Finnish Defense Forces and they will move from their house to a new place next year. Currently he is in 1st grade of senior high school (10th grade in Finnish school system) in Turku. Now and then he helps his father at a construction site.

In addition to tablehockey Nuttunen goes to gym on weekly basis. During weekends he hangs around with his friends, as any 16-year old would. So far Nuttunen has not been able to get his friends to start tablehockey.

Nuttunen answered few questions for Lällärilämäri before Helsinki Open 2006.

Roni Nuttunen was the captain of Finnish national team in World championsips in 2005 – at the age of 14. He was also Finland's best player.

Describe what kind of tablehockey player is Roni Nuttunen?

– He has a huge desire to win and is usually a bad loser. He has had fairly good nerves so far.

How did you start to play tablehockey?

– I hurt my knee badly in football six years ago, and I had to find out something else to do. My classmate told me that tablehockey is played as a competitive sport. I decided to try my skills in Raisio's local league. I got beaten badly. My interest grew as I saw my current teammates Mika Lindqvist, Janne Ollila and Janne Kantola pass the puck all around the table.

What is best in tablehockey?

– You can never be too good. It is a great feeling to play some physically indifferent game competitively. You always learn something new from other players and it is interesting to see that just about every player has a unique style.

Best tablehockey memory?

– It is the last World championships in Riga in 2005. The whole trip in general except the silver in open series.

And the worst?

– Fourth place in junior series in 2003 World championships in Zürich. Around that time I had no experience of bigger matches.

Toughest opponent to beat?

– Maybe Stefan Edwall, when he is in top shape and wants to play. His offence is on fire when he gets it going. It depends a lot on the day.

Three favorite moves?

– Spjass, nacka and hansen.

How do you practice?

– I used to practice alone on the average of an hour each day, and couple of times per week with other players. Now I train less alone. With my tablehockey friends I play twice a week for about three hours.

How did you prepare for Helsinki Open 2006?

– I have just rehearsed my skills at the table, so I would remember the basic stuff. Nothing special, few hours more than usually.

How do you prepare for tournaments in general?

– For small tournaments, like Finnish rankings, I do not prepare just about at

TIMO TOIVONEN

Roni Nuttunen won everything at last World championships, except this matchup. Swedish Hans Österman was better than Nuttunen and won the open series.

First championship. Nuttunen won kids' Finnish cmapionship in 2002.

all. Before the World championships I play with my friends every day.

How does one become a good player?

– Playing and training a lot, also alone. If you learn to control your nerves, you are already far.

And what makes a good player to a great player?

– In addition to previous, tactics has to focus on own strengths, and offence and defence have to be really precise and accurate.

How could tablehockey be improved?

– More exact rules would be good at least. I am annoyed by players who bang the table and use loopholes in the rules. Also, possibly a neutral guy who would drop the puck in every face-off in playoffs would be needed.

Do you admire any players?

– There is no certain player. I admire all who can come from behind to win a game while staying cool.

Who do you enjoy most winning?

– Each victory is pleasant, but I enjoy winning my dad the most.

How do you compare Finnish players to the rest of the world?

– Finnish players play slower and more concentrated game compared to others. Finns like to score a lot of center moves.

Tell a tablehockey story.

– Last season in Moscow's tournament the schedule was delayed badly. Finals were not played until three to four in the night. After this there was also a banquet by the organizers. It was fun to see tired people celebrating in restaurant after they had played hundreds of tablehockey matches. We came back to the hotel around nine in the morning and did not remember that checkout time was already at twelve. We were still sleeping there after twelve, when non-English speaking Russians were yelling angrily "Go home, go home!" After a little argument we left the hotel.

You have been invited to Ukraine with Hans Österman. Can you tell us more about it?

– That's true. My contract is ready, but Österman's is still a bit incomplete. Our job is to go to Ukraine two to three times per year to apparently make tablehockey more popular over there.

Do you have ambitions in World Tablehockey Tour?

– Not really. One victory would be nice.

Who will win Helsinki Open 2006?

– I am not able to give any names, and cannot even guess. But I think some Finnish player will win in front of the home crowd!

And world championships 2007 in Moscow?

– Strong names are Edwall, Aleksey Zakharov, Daniel Wallén and Österman, who is the biggest favorite to win. A surprise winner could be found from Finland.

What will future bring to you?

– Future is still in the dark in both tablehockey and outside the sport. At least it is certain that I will still play for many years.

Is there something else you want to say to participants of Helsinki Open?

– With a good luck someone can get a point from me... just kidding!

Nuttunen hanging around the streets of Riga in 2005.

Wallén about Nuttunen:

– Intelligent. Charismatic. Friendly.

Zakharov about Nuttunen:

– Roni is the best of them all. He has strong defense and attack. It is really hard to play against him.

Caics about Nuttunen:

– Main point is one to one, he can win everyone in play-off.

Wallén's secret: Lose to win

Former World champion Daniel Wallén wants to win all big tournaments.

Daniel Wallén is the former World champion and one of the sports greatest players. Yet in first Helsinki Open he got the honor to be the first Swede ever to lose a playoffs final to a non-Swede, Finland's Kristian Iso-Tryykäri.

This year Wallén tries to correct that error. He has won pretty much everything, but sill wants to win all World Tablehockey Tour Big Six tournaments at some point of his carreer. Today is the chance for the 31-year old to become the champion of Helsinki.

Wallén is from Sundsvall, which used to be number one economic center in Sweden one hundred years ago. They exported timber all over the world. "Saw with saw, everywhere we saw" was a funny and describing expression of Sundsvall. Today they export tablehockey talent.

In 1888 there was a major fire in Sundsvall that destroyed almost the entire city, and hudred years later in 1988 Sundsvalls Bordshockeyklubb was founded by Wallén and Magnus Melander. Since 1991 they have organized Sundsvallsspelen, which is one of the oldest still running table hockey tournaments in the World. That means he has been in the sport for almost 20 years!

Since Wallén does not practice much anymore these days he has time to write hockey poems and collect coffee tables.

And to answer some of Lällärilämäri's questions.

Describe what kind of tablehockey player is Daniel Wallén?

– After loosing in Riga, Canada's Bernie Kunzler wrote me a mail with subject "You play with heart". I have saved this mail, because it makes me happy. If Jacob plays like Russian ice hockey players, I play like North Americans.

How did you start to play tablehockey?

– February 1988, by playing against former Swedish champion Lasse Henriksson at a super market. At that time, he was the greatest sports athlete I had seen. Team sports is only about marketing, table hockey is everything else.

What is best in tablehockey?

– Table sports are only individual sports where you score goals, as far as I know. Born in another country, I would be a tablefootball guy.

Best tablehockey memory?

– My spjass that gave me the World Cup title 2003 in final against Jacob Lindahl.

Daniel Wallén played in Oslo Open 2006 final, and lost to Hans Österman.

And the worst?

– Loosing World Cup final against Jacob Lindahl in 1995.

Toughest opponent to beat?

– Now? Jacob Lindahl, the way he beat me last January before clinching Las Vegas title.

Three favorite moves?

– I do not have favorite moves. It depends on what kind of momentum you have in your game. A simple goal can be beautiful, if you make it fast and precise and in right moment.

How do you practice?

– In fall 1994 I practiced with Jacob Lindahl, and before winning World Cup 2003 I practiced with Daniel Asplund twice. During season 96/97 I practiced alone – and missed World Cup in Finland 1997, but also improved my game a lot.

– Now on a good month I practice one hour every month. After two decades behind the rods, you already know the secrets.

How have you prepared for Helsinki Open?

– I finished as a runner-up in Oslo Open. Felt that my passion for winning titles was back.

– After winning SM and Moscow Cup in 2005 I clinched all three major titles and it was difficult to set up new targets. I have been a top ten player in the world in many years but it was a new challenge to be number one, and it put more pressure on me. But in Oslo I felt passion to win titles again. I want to win in Helsinki, Riga and Prague, because I have never done it.

How do you prepare for tournaments in general?

– Thinking. Last two years watching DVDs. Like Swedish table tennis legend Jan-Ove Waldner, I only watch games I have won.

How does one become a good tablehockey player?

– Play against the best players. If you are knocked-out in first round robin, do not play division C but watch the best players play each other. Try to figure why they choose different moves.

And what makes a good player to a great player?

– A desire to win made me a World champion. I like to be in the zone. Only playing table hockey and writing hockey poems can get me in the zone.

How big is your desire to win, and how do you react to losing?

– Losing is more important than winning in sports. If I had not lost one World Cup final, the feeling of winning another final eight years later would not have been so strong. Big heroes in popular culture, like Rambo and Karate Kid, always lose in the beginning and win in the end.

How could tablehockey be improved?

– Money and Margolis. Only good tournaments can attract young players. Sweden invented modern table hockey, but we also almost killed it. Making tablehockey international has changed everything. Our sport should not attract goofys but talents. Or at least talented goofys.

– More players attending the stage of playoffs. At least 32 players in World Cup and

TIMO TOIVONEN

Wallén's greatest moment. He has just beaten Jacob Lindahl in World championship 2003 final in Zürich.

WTHT which attract one hundred players or more. Organizers should be able to make better drama of playoffs. 25 years after first Swedish masters, playoffs are like anarchy. Watch snooker on Eurosport and try to copy it.

Do you admire any players?

– Jacob Lindahl. And Alexandra Belavina.

Who do you enjoy most winning?

– Finn Fries.

How do you compare Swedish tablehockey to the rest of the world?

– In Moscow Swedish national team will consist of players 30 years and older, and players from Finland, Russia, Czech Republic and Latvia between 15 and 20.

Tell a tablehockey story.

– Jacob Lindal scored twelwe consceutive goals against Junior Gelinas in Hubbard Hall final 1998 at Benej table. That was probably the biggest sports moment ever, in any sport. Two Europeans made similar impact on USA history, Columbus and Jacob Lindahl.

One of Helsinki Open's organizers, Ismo Aulaskari, is described in Finnish player gallery as "Daniel Wallén's nightmare". What do you have to say on that?

– I have never beaten this guy. In Oslo I was close, but someone put plexiglass in opposite way giving Ismo an opportunity to win on a good center move. But sooner or later, I will beat Ismo, my bogey player!

Do you have amibtions in the World Tablehockey Tour?

– Be one of three Swedes reaching Moscow.

Who will win Helsinki Open 2006?

– Everybody is dreaming of a final between Aleksey Zakharov and Roni Nuttunen, but me, Stefan Edwall and Thomas Petersson will give them troubles.

Swedish Peter Stensmyr on Benej Pro table in Vancouver. Game is about three times the size of a Stiga Playoff – and the puck is smaller. Talk about control!

And World championships?

– If Jacob Lindahl will achieve a Wild Card to Moscow, the 10th World Cup will be the greatest tournament ever. If Jacob will face Hans, Alexey, Roni or me, the final will be spectacular.

What will future bring to you?

– In eight years I will be veteran. I never thought that when I was 13 playing my first Swedish masters.

Is there something else you would like to say to the participants of Helsinki Open?

– Have fun, and watch out for Ilke Alke Alkis (note: Iikka Ala-Aho) and his brothers from Oulu.

Nuttunen about Wallén:

– Mentally one of the world's best players. Simple game style, where he minimizes risks. Lot's of experience and good defense, which has to derive from the time when he practiced with Jacob Lindahl.

Zakharov about Wallén:

– Wallen is harsh, he wants to win. It is hard to play in attack against him. But he can be easily defended too. Very experienced.

Caics about Wallén:

– Very experienced player with good defense and attack.

From Russia with talent

Aleksey Zakharov has already won this year's toughest tournament.

Defending Swedish champion comes from Russia. That is right! 19-year old Aleksey Zakharow from Moscow won the Swedish championships this January. He became the first non-Swede ever to win a major tournament on Swedish soil.

Swedish championships holds the title of most prestigious and toughest national championship. Some have considered it even harder to win than World championships.

Along the way to victory in Sweden, Zakharov beat his big challengers of today's Helsinki Open in playoffs. Roni Nuttunen, Edgars Caics and in the final Stefan Edwall had to realize the skills of this young Russian. He beat also Hans Österman 4–0.

Last summer Zakharov also became the European champion. Now he still misses the big one: open series World championship. He will try to do that next summer in Moscow, where he grew up, in front of local support. And yes, he already has one World championship. In Zürich 2003 he won the junior series by beating his own brother in the final.

Outside tablehockey Zakharov studies in university and tries to find ways to meet with his girlfriend, even it is hard as she lives 1 100 kilometers away in Odessa in Ukraine. So no wonder Zakharov came to Helsinki this weekend... Finnish capital is only 900 kilometers from Moscow.

Lällärilämäri interviewed Zakharov before the tournament.

Describe what kind of a tablehockey player is Aleksey Zakharov?

– My defense is not really great; sometimes I win only because of attack. Sometimes I must be cleverer in match, and now I am trying to do that.

How did you start playing tablehockey?

– I started playing tablehockey 2001. When we were children, we loved this game very much and our father offered us to play it professionally.

What is best in tablehockey and why do you play?

– Because it is interesting for me. And it is necessary to have a hobby.

Best tablehockey memory?

– European championship in Skalica.

And worst memory?

– World championship 2005 and Moscow Cup 2006. (note: In World championshis he finished 11th after losing to Daniel Wallén in round of 16, in Moscow he was 9th after losing to eventual winner Michal Hvižd in round of 16).

Who do you consider the hardest opponent to beat?

– Daniel Wallén

Three favorite moves?

– I do not have favorite moves. I like to make my opponent play as hard as he can.

How do you practice?

– I train tablehockey two hours per day. When I train, I try to make my technique really excellent and I repeat different combinations many times.

How do you prepare for Helsinki Open?

– When I am preparing for the tournament, I watch different DVDs, train a lot. I want to win in Helsinki.

How does one become a good tablehockey player?

– You need to believe in your strength, have enough ambitions. You must not be afraid of your opponents.

How could tablehockey be improved?

– We need to have referees in playoffs. And I would like more players play tablehockey, for having more strong opponents.

Is there some player that you admire?

– Jacob Lindahl and Roni Nuttunen.

Which player do you enjoy most winning?

– Nuttunen.

How do you compare Russian tablehockey to the rest of the world?

– Our tablehockey made great progress in everything around it. But Russian players are not growing up as fast as we wanted. It grew up a lot some years ago. And now is much harder.

Tell a tablehockey story.

– It was match between Ivan Zakharov and Sergey Kuznetsov. Kuznetsov made strong shot and the puck was going back to his goals. He wanted to take the goalkeeper to that corner, but he stood between his fingers and the puck very slowly went to his goal.

Your brother is also a great player. What does it mean to you to have a brother playing tablehockey?

– My brother helps me very much when I play in playoffs. He can tell me something I did not know before. But it is hard to play with him, because you realize that you will beat your own brother.

Do you have ambitions in World Tablehockey Tour?

– I do not want to win WTHT, I want to win in Helsinki, Sweden and Moscow. But if I will win the Tour, it will be really good..

TIMO TOIVONEN

Aleksey Zakharov (left) won junior World championship against his brother Ivan in Zürich 2003.

KRAUS BROTHERS

Aleksey Zakharov (left) beat Hans Österman games 4–0 on his way to win Swedish championship in January 2006.

Who will win Helsinki Open and why?

– There will be too many players who can win the title, so I don't know. Who will be better prepared than others, will win.

Will he win also World championships in Moscow?

– Yes, he can. But it is too much time before World championships and everything can change.

Is there something else you want to say to participants of Helsinki Open?

– Play as beautiful as you can.

Nuttunen about Zakharov:

– Russia's big talent. A lot is expected from him, so a lot of pressure is directed to him. When he is relaxed, he can beat anyone.

Wallén about Zakharov:

– Jacob Lindahl with better center moves, but worse defense.

Caics about Zakharov:

–The best player last season in the world. He is very precise, but not so good in defense.

In 2005 Aleksey Zakharov became first foreign winner of Finnish cup. He beat Magnus Ahlberg in the final. At the team competition Russian All-Stars won gold.

Reaching for the top

If Edgars Caics plays always like its 0–0, how can he win World Tour?

Latvian Edgars Caics aims to be the best player in World Table Hockey Tour this season. Last season the 17 year old Latvian finished on second place behind Stefan Edwall. Today they will face each other in Helsinki Open.

Current juniors' European champion Caics lives in capital Riga, where he has also grown up in a family of five. Just as a warning: he has a brother, so soon there might be two Caicses to beat in final groups. Besides playing tablehockey, Caics concentrates on studying, partying and playing various sports.

This year's Helsinki Open will be Caics' first visit to Finnish tournaments. So far only foreigner to win in Finland has been legendary Swede Jacob Lindahl.

Even though Caics does not believe he will win Helsinki Open 2006, Lällärilämäri decided to ask few questions from the up-and-rising Latvian star.

Edgars Caics (center) won juniors European championship. Second was Lukáš Turoň (right) and third Michal Hvižd both from Czech Republic.

Describe what kind of tablehockey player is Edgars Caics?

– He has a good one to one, and also he is rather calm while playing and with a good character. He does not worry if he loses in a game with for example 1–4, he still plays like the score was 0–0.

Why did you start playing table hockey, and when?

– It happened five years ago in October of 2001. I wanted to try something new, because I had already tried to play basketball, football, table tennis, orienteering, floorball, etc.

What is best in table hockey?

– I like the atmosphere of the tournaments and I enjoy the game, I got positive emotions from it!

Best tablehockey memory?

– Becoming European champion in Skalica. (note: Caics won the junior series against Lukás Turon, and was third in open series losing the semifinal to Lukás Turon.)

And worst memory?

– My very bad play in World championships in Riga.

Toughest opponent to beat?

– Konsta Jukka

Three favorite moves?

– One to one, moves from left wing and right one as well.

How do you practice?

– Now I train together with Atis Silis and Arturs Vercins, because we all live next to each other. Sometimes I play alone, too.

– If there is no big tournament at the end of the week, then I do not train at all. But if there is going to be a tournament at the end of the week, then I usually train 2–3 times per week, in Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. When I train it is about for two hours.

How do you prepare for Helsinki Open?

– We are going to make tournaments for those who are going to Helsinki, I think twice that week. And we have got holidays, so I think we will train a lot. :-) So I think that I will be able to show a good game.

How do you prepare for tournaments in general?

– If is big tournament than I train 2–3 times a week before the tournament.

How does one become a good player?

– First of all he or she has to come to tournaments a lot, and train at home a lot too. Get a table at home, and somebody to play with.

What makes a good player to a great player?

– Mind, because a lot of players can do those moves as well as a World champion, but you have to do it at the right time, Master of the Mind is Master of the Game. And of course you have got experience.

How could tablehockey be improved?

– Attitude, because you know that tablehockey is gentlemen sport, but the prizes in tournaments are growing and everyone wants to win so much that unfair game can be seen.

Do you admire any player?

– I admire how precise are Stefan Edwall and Aleksey Zakharov, also Lukas Turon.

FROM EDGARS CAICS

Caics likes to go out and party.

MIROSLAV HUBACEK, SR.

Victory! Edgars Caics is the current juniors' European champion.

Which player do you enjoy most winning?

– Hans Österman. Why? Because he is a world champion.

What should be improved in the sport of tablehockey in general?

– It could be put into the Olympic game program. :-)

Tell a tablehockey story.

– Once while training with Atis Silis we hit the puck out through the open window.

Do you have ambitions in the World Tablehockey Tour?

– Of course I have. If I had not, I would not come to Helsinki. I want to become number 1 in World Tablehockey Tour, but I would be satisfied with a place among 10 best of WTHT.

Who will win Helsinki Open 2006?

– There are a lot of strong players, but I think that this time number one will be Aleksey Zakharov.

– He is calm while playing, and at that time he can show the best game, while others can be nervous.

Will he win also World championships 2007 in Moscow?

– No. This time the pressure will be too much for him, because he is playing at home and everyone will wait for his victory. I know how it is, because I played in Riga in World championships 2005. The winner will be... someone from Latvia! :)

What does future bring for you in the sport and outside tablehockey?

– I hope a normal life, job, family and hope that I will have an opportunity to play tablehockey as well.

How do you compare Latvian tablehockey to the rest of the world?

– Actually, I do not see a great difference between Latvian and world's tablehockey progress. It is like one to other. Only in Latvia there are more young people – juniors than adults.

You lost to Atis Silis in Latvian league two weeks ago. Do you still consider yourself as the best Latvian player?

– If he will win me in bigger competitions (playoffs) than the Latvia's tournaments, then I will start to think about it.

Is there anything else you would like to say for the participants of Helsinki Open?

– Of course I wish everyone a good luck and let the best one wins!

– And I would like to invite everyone to Riga Open on the 2nd of December.

– Web page can be found at http://www.galdahokejs.lv/ro/. Special invitation to Roni Nuttunen! ;)

Nuttunen about Caics:

– Most promising player of Latvia. He is still young, so he will surely improve mentally to win more games. Edgars is also the favorite of Latvian audience, which gives him confidence.

Wallén about Caics:

– Attitude. Strange position with his feet while playing.

Zakharov about Caics:

– Caics is very fast, not clever. As he is not very clever player, it is possible to beat him.

TIMO TOIVONEN

Pontus Eriksson in action at Oslo Open. Curent World Tablehockey Tour leader finished there on third place.

Pontus tours the world

Swedish players hold the top ten positions of the World Tour, so far.

After four tournaments Swedish Pontus Eriksson leads the World Tablehockey Tour. He has been to three tournaments and won one. Eriksson was the lone European player in Canada Challenge last weekend and clinched an easy victory over North Americans. In both Oslo Open and Öresund Cup Eriksson was third.

His lead is threatened today in Helsinki Open. If Stefan Edwall or Thomas Petersson play on their level they will fight from the top spot by themselves. If Daniel Wallén makes it to the final also he will go past Eriksson.

So are the Swedes so good? Not quite. The fact is that season has just started and only few players have more than one (if any) tournaments played. Wait until Swedish masters in February and things should look a lot different, with more than likely less than ten Swedes in the lead. And remember, being in top ten means that you get a place to the World championships.

Here are brief reports from the first four tournaments.

Sources: ithf.info, tournament sites

Stiga U.S. Open

Kenny Dubois from USA won the starting tournament of WTHT season. Stiga U.S. Open victory went for third time to Massachusetts with Dubois.

In final he beat Canadian Bernie Kunzler, who has won earlier this year Vancouver's King of Table Hockey tournament. Third place went to Rob Chargo, who took Kunzler to seventh game. Jim Rzonca, who organizes Las Vegas' tournament was fourth.

Dubois was in a phenomenal form as he won the final straight in four games, and lost only one game in the whole tournament.

Kenny Dubois is one of the few North Americans to visit World championships. In Riga 2005 he finished 49th.

Öresund Cup

Just like 2005 Hans Österman of BHK Mollan Rouge, won Öresund Cup. This year it was for the first time ever played in the Danish capital, Copenhagen. Österman defeated his club rival Finn Fries in the final (4–1).

Thomas Peterson, probably the fastest player in the world, almost beat Österman in the semifinal, forcing the reigning champion to a tight seventh match. Together with Pontus Eriksson, Petersson ended up as bronze medalist. Jonas Bergstrom and Kalle Bindekrans, both former Swedish junior champions, made strong comebacks.

53 players from 8 countries participated in the 23rd edition of Öresund Cup, the biggest tournament ever played in Denmark.

Oslo Open

Hans Österman was the best player, as 101 players from 10 countries took part in the 11th edition of Oslo Open, the first WTHT Big Six tournament this season.

Last two World champions met in the final – Hans Österman beat Daniel Wallén in six games (5–2, 1–2, 3–1, 1–3, 3–2, 1–0). Third place was shared by Lars Fridell and Pontus Eriksson, who was beaten by Wallén in semifinal after sudden death in the 7th match. The winning goal was scored on a new move – named Mupp (whatever that is, even it seemed from lookin far like boot (saapas)).

Interestingly this was the first time in WTHT that a player wins two consecutive tournaments, even the first time a player wins two tournaments in one season.

Hans Österman has shown that he is in a top form this season. Beware challengers! Better start practicing for Moscow.

Canada Challenge

Canada's event on the Tour was played last weekend. The only European Pontus Eriksson showed North Americans the level of the game on the old continent. He won the tournament with only two losses and came home $500 richer (who counts the travel expenses?).

Eriksson was a real ambassador for the sport. Pascal Thériaul, organizer of Canada Challenge, described Pontus as sooooo good and very gentleman guy.

The biggest surprise of the tournament was performed by Bossio brothers Carlo and Gino, who beat Hugues Dery and Bernie Kunzler. Bossios' have their history on a Coleco game, but are progressing very fast on Stiga. They bring a lot of speed to the game as Coleco is a very fast tablehockey model. And what Carlo had to say after the event?

– Well, I am off to practice now!!!! Yes you read right, I am going to practice some plays I witnessed!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

He was probably referring to Pontus quite a bit, but let's not forget silver medalist Junior Gelinas and bronze medalist Kenny Dubois, who are the two most talented players in North America.

PAUL RUIZ / TABLEHOCKEYPRO.COM

Kenny Dubois won the Stiga U.S. Open. That tournament opened the World Tablehockey Tour season.

Hans Österman has a perfect record. He has won both tournaments where he has played in WTHT this season.

PASCAL THÉRIAULT

Pontus Eriksson (left) beat Junior Gelinas in Canada Challenge's final in five games.

World Tablehockey Tour standings after four tournaments

# Player	NAT	US	ÖC	OO	CC	Total
1. Pontus Eriksson	SWE	-	63	130	75	268
2. Hans Osterman	SWE	-	75	150	-	225
3. Thomas Petersson	SWE	-	65	118	-	183
4. Stefan Edwall	SWE	-	54	120	-	174
5. Henrik Brodin	SWE	-	58	102	-	160
6. Petter Bengtsson	SWE	-	52	104	-	156
7. Jonas Bergstrom	SWE	-	60	88	-	148
8. David Nordstrom	SWE	-	34	110	-	144
9. Rickard Sjostedt	SWE	-	38	106	-	144
10. Daniel Wallen	SWE	-	-	140	-	140
11. Kenny Dubois	USA	75	-	-	65	140
12. Peter Ostlund	SWE	-	39	92	-	131
13. Lars Fridell	SWE	-	-	125	-	125
14. Bernie Kunzler	CAN	70	-	-	53	123
15. Martin Arenlind	SWE	-	49	68	-	117
16. K. Iso-Tryykari	FIN	-	-	116	-	116
17. M. Hubacek ml.	CZE	-	-	114	-	114
18. Herman Steen	SWE	-	41	70	-	111
19. David Andersson	SWE	-	48	63	-	111
20. Robert Hakansson	SWE	-	-	108	-	108
21. Bjorn Soderstrom	SWE	-	43	62	-	105
22. Michal Hvizd	CZE	-	-	100	-	100
23. Stanislav Kraus	CZE	-	-	98	-	98
24. Oyvind Hansen	NOR	-	-	96	-	96
25. Edgars Saulitis	LAT	-	-	90	-	90

World ranking on 26th of October 2006

#	Player	NAT	#	Player	NAT
1.	Hans Osterman	SWE	32.	Atis Silis	LAT
2.	Daniel Wallen	SWE	33.	Dmitriy Petrov	RUS
3.	Finn Fries	SWE	34.	Pavel Plesak	CZE
4.	Alexey Zaharov	RUS	35.	Leos Hvizd ml.	CZE
5.	Roni Nuttunen	FIN	36.	Markus Laakso	FIN
6.	Stefan Edwall	SWE	37.	Tore Lie	NOR
7.	P. Bengtsson	SWE	38.	J. Lappalainen	FIN
8.	Pontus Eriksson	SWE	39.	Anssi Jarvinen	FIN
9.	Peter Ostlund	SWE	40.	J. Gustafsson	SWE
10.	Lars Fridell	SWE	41.	Ahti Lampi	FIN
11.	Edgars Caics	LAT	42.	Erno Lantiainen	FIN
12.	Michal Hvizd	CZE	43.	Oyvind Hansen	NOR
13.	K. Iso-Tryykari	FIN	44.	Alexey Shastov	RUS
14.	T. Petersson	SWE	45.	A. Rymarenko	RUS
15.	Ivan Zaharov	RUS	46.	D. Remmem	NOR
16.	Henrik Brodin	SWE	47.	A. Miloradov	RUS
17.	Lukas Turon	CZE	48.	Lars-E Svensson	SWE
18.	Yanis Galuzo	RUS	49.	Petr Tmej	CZE
19.	Konsta Jukka	FIN	50.	Janne Ollila	FIN
20.	Jan Suchy	CZE	51.	Joakim Lundin	SWE
21.	M. Hubacek ml.	CZE	52.	Janne Kokko	FIN
22.	Alexey Titov	RUS	53.	Magnus Ahlberg	FIN
23.	M. Kaariainen	FIN	54.	Yuriy Ivanov	RUS
24.	D. Nordstrom	SWE	55.	Jakub Sladek	CZE
25.	M. Andersson	SWE	56.	Arto Kasma	FIN
26.	Andreas Aman	SWE	57.	Janne Kantola	FIN
27.	Rickard Sjostedt	SWE	58.	Martin Brodin	SWE
28.	Jan Dryak	CZE	59.	David Smid	CZE
29.	Stanislav Kraus	CZE	60.	K. Zezerov	RUS
30.	A. Gladkoboro.	RUS			
31.	H. Andersson	SWE	Source: ithf.info		

Top-5 of travel mistakes

Congratulations to everyone who made it to Helsinki, it is not always easy.

On the long travels to tournaments, Finnish tablehockey legend Seppo Kosonen tells his stories from the old and modern days of tablehockey.

To honor these legends we compiled a list of the best of travel mistakes made by Finnish players. We shall call it Kosonen's list, since he has told us most of these stories.

1. Ottawat Senaattorit won the World team championships in 1996 in Plzen. The next year the guys were supposed to return to Czech Republic to defend their title. Everything was arranged. Miku Lindberg flew from London and the other players from Helsinki to Prague.

As they got themselves somehow to Plzen, they headed to Pavel Plesak's home. And rang the doorbell, and waited... Suddenly, somewhere from the third floor window, a confused Plesak looks down, sees the Senaattorit players and says: "There is no tournament."

Championships had been cancelled, but Ottawat Senaattorit had not read their e-mails in the last two weeks before the games.

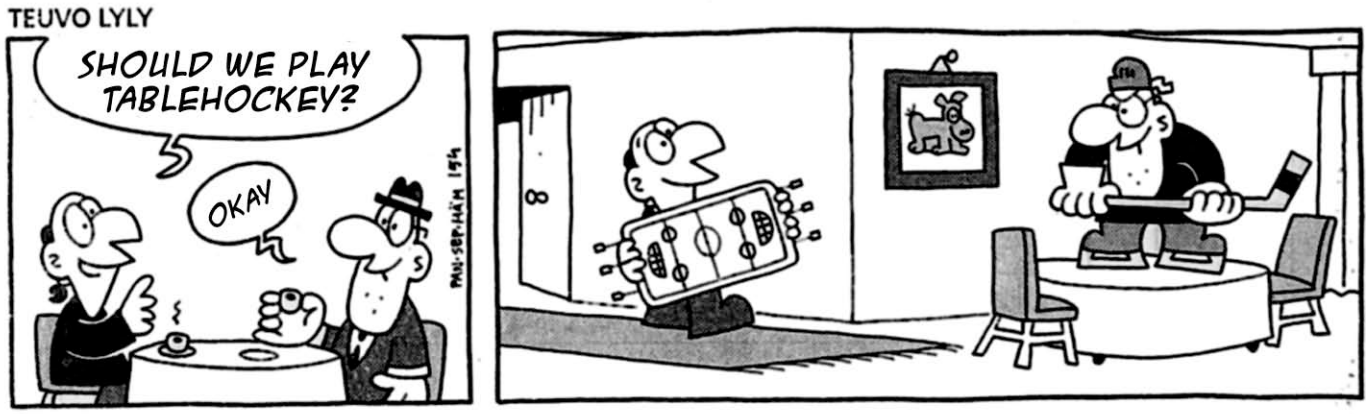
2. Sampsa Räsänen of Solano Sporting was going to Finland's northernmost tournament in Oulu. He was supposed to board the train from Pasila (next station north from Helsinki). He looked at the station's display, went to the track and boarded the train... the southbound train. Somewhere along the 2 km or so from Pasila to downtown Helsinki he realized what had happened. He had looked at the arrivals schedule.

No tournament for him either.

3. Kristian Iso-Tryykäri was studying in Sweden, when Swedish masters 2004 were played in Jönköping. He took a train from Uppsala to south. As he arrived, he called Jani Lappalainen about the location of the hotel. Directions were as easy as they come, but he still could not find the hotel. So he asked again from some Swede, probably in Swedish as he had been in country for a ▶

C'mon, we are serious!

Tablehockey is a serious sport, or is it? This is how it is seen in cartoons.



HELSINGIN SANOMAT, AUGUST 1995

PÖYTÄLÄTKÄ-LEHTI 2/97

KALEVA, YEARS AGO

Swedish city names can be tricky.

while and the language was good. But unfortunately for Kristian, he had not picked up too much of Swedish geography.

As told, he was supposed to take a train to Jönköping, but... there are way too many -köpings in Sweden. He was in Norrköping! Luckily he made it to the tournament venue on the next morning; 15 minutes before the games began.

4. Seppo Kosonen works at the VR (Finnish National Railways), so you would think he knows the railway network of Finland. At least Jussi Tiainen and Kari Järmälä thought so, as they followed Seppo to the train. They were heading for Lappeenranta tournament in eastern Finland, but the train was going somewhere else. As they realized it, the right train had already left, too. Would Seppo miss his first tournament in Finland? No way. It was Seppo's luck that the locomotive of the train going to Lappeenranta broke down almost already after leaving Helsinki. Because the repairs took an hour, the trio was able to change trains at Riihimäki and made it to the tournament.

5. Erno Lantianen played in Swedish masters in 2005, where the Finnish delegation went by boat from Turku. Nuttunen had lost to Wallén, and we were already back in Finland waiting for the train... nope actually we were in the boat terminal waiting for Erno, who had not shown up yet that morning. And he did not show up, since he had fallen asleep in the corridor and headed on the boat back towards Sweden.

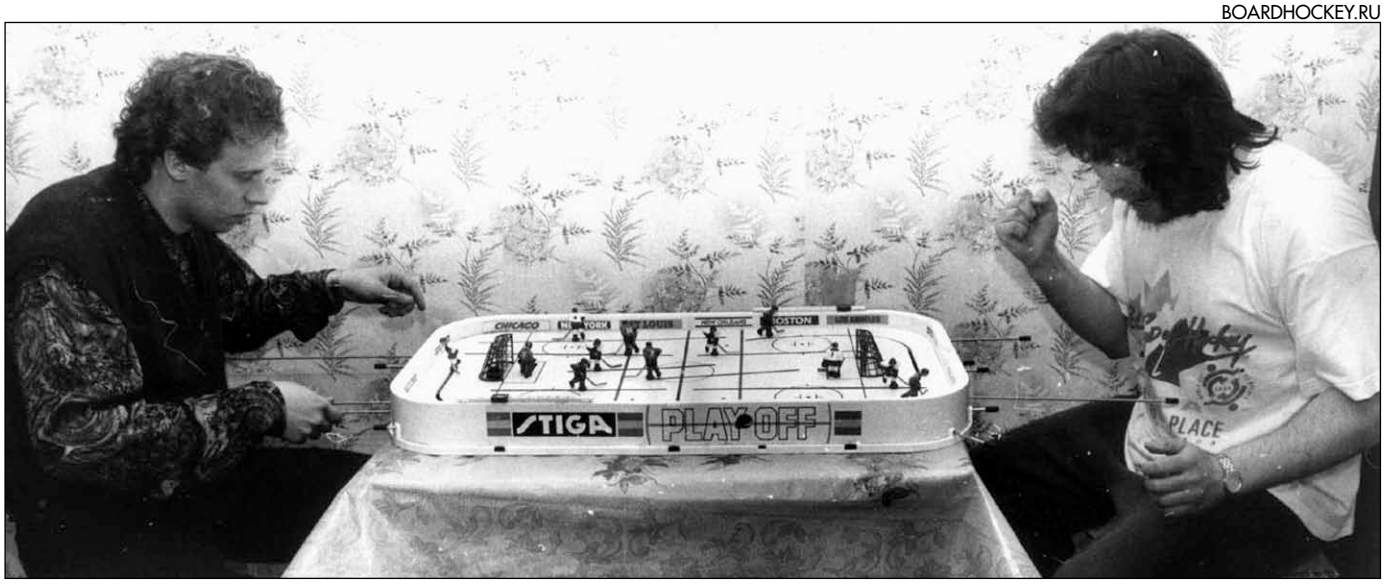
He made it back from there a bit later...

+. Ilkka Lehtinen will get an honorary mention, since his mistake happened in World Championships 2001.

Before the tournament Lehtinen slept a bit too long at the hotel. When he arrived to the venue an hour late, he had already lost 9 games 0–90. While he took breath for five minutes he lost to Hans Österman 0–2. After that he went 14–0–0 with a goal difference of 111–22. Despite spectacular play, he still missed the final groups by one point. On the way he beat Carmelo D'Imprima 17–0, and the Italian thought about a protest.

Disappointed Lehtinen was 42nd.

BOARDHOCKEY.RU



The first Stiga in Russia, 1995 – according to Boardhockey.ru. The sport has gone quite far in Russia from those days.

From this to World championships

Russia will host the World championships in June 2007.

According to Russian Table Hockey Federation's photo gallery the game in the above image is "The First Stiga" of Russia. It is dated 1995. Since then the nation has come far in tablehockey.

Their federation's President Mikhail Margolis (player on the right in the photo) was a happy man in Riga 2005. He was presented with VM Trophy, which lists the hosts of all tablehockey World championships so far. In 2007 it is time for Russia and Moscow.

Tenth World championships are played from June 8th to 10th 2007. Each country can send eight players to open series and three players to juniors, ladies and veterans series. On top of that current World champions in each category will get a place in the series. Also team competitions for open and ladies series are played. Host nation can send few extra players.

As a new rule International Tablehockey Federation gives ten additional entries to World championships for best players of International Tablehockey Tour. Their places will not count in national quotas. This applies only for open series.

Total prize money for World championships is $15,000.

More information can be found on tournament website at: http://worldcup07.boardhockey.ru/eng/

Mikhail Margolis presents VM Trophy, which is given at the end of World championships to the host nation of next tournament.

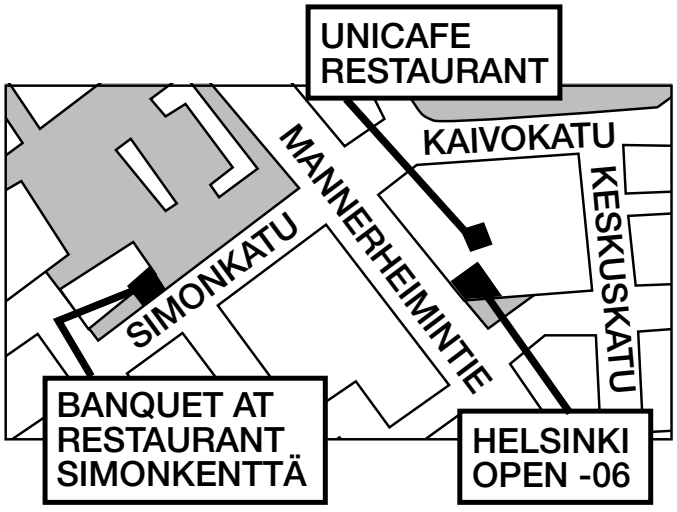
Buy the limited edition Helsinki Open t-shirt!

T-shirt costs 10 euros (or special support price 15 euros).

Time	Event
8:00	Doors open
8:30	Entry time ends for junior series
8:30	Entry time ends for veteran series
9:00	Junior series starts
9:00	Veteran series starts
9:30	Entry time ends for open series
10:00	Junior series round robin ends
10:00	Veteran series round robin ends
10:30	Open series starts
13:00	Open series round robin ends
14:00	Open series final group and division groups start
16:30	Open series final group and division groups end
16:45	Entry time for ladies series ends
17:00	Open series playoffs begin with round of 16
17:00	Veteran series playoffs begin
17:00	Junior series playoffs begin
18:00	Open series quarterfinals begin
18:30	Ladies series begins at latest (series will start as soon as there is no ladies playing in other series)
19:00	Open series semifinals begin
19:30	Ladies series playoffs begin (optionally earlier)
20:00	Open series finals
21:00	Prize ceremony
21:15	Tournament is over
22:00	Banquet

Schedule subject for changes.

AVOID THIS AT ALL COSTS!



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