

## Ice hockey: sharks and polar bears chasing the puck / Young players from 17 countries - 15th World Tournament in Zell am See

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Although many of them can hardly see what is beyond the boards yet, they play ice hockey like their grown-up idols. Power play, short-hander or body-check: the little ones do their very best when the referee has at last released the puck. Once a year the 'Europa-Sportregion Zell am See-Kaprun' becomes the Mecca of young ice hockey aces. Young players from all over the world come to Zell ice stadium in droves then to show their sporting prowess on ice skates and with the puck and stick. Starting on Good Friday, the renowned World Tournament, which took place for the 15th time this year, is the hour of promising young talents from all around the world.

The teams play in three different age groups - minis, boys, and students. The youngest among the more than 1,200 participants are just eleven years old. They arrive accompanied by about 1,000 coaches, leaders, parents, and fans. But these are not the only dimensions that are really professional: 144 matches have to be played during the ten days of the event. The World Tournament in Zell is Europe's biggest ice hockey tournament for up-and-coming teams.

The timetable of the tournament leaves little room for sightseeing in the picturesque countryside or for the large range of leisure activities that the region has on offer, but the young players are much more focused on the longed-for tournament win, anyway. 48 teams from 17 countries, from Sweden to Canada and from Latvia to Hungary, were fighting for the title this year. A glance at the past shows that the participants in this tournament are really special young players: NHL stars like the Austrians Thomas Pöck (New York Rangers) and Thomas Vanek, employed by the Buffalo Sabres, or Anze Kopitar, the 19-year-old wunderkind from Slovenia, are among those who were discovered by talent scouts during previous World Tournaments in Zell am See.

'As in the years before, more than 140 different teams wanted to take part. That shows how popular the event is with the friends of ice hockey all over the world', says Peter Buchmayr, one of the organizers of the World Tournament. 'Many other promoters have tried to copy the tournament, but have failed miserably.' For Buchmayr, it is the region, above all, that makes the difference. 'The teams come to Zell am See-Kaprun and there really is not much that they need to take care of.' Their bed and board are seen to by the organizers. The perfect infrastructure of one of the most popular holiday regions in the Alps makes that easily possible. Under the circumstances, the 'Canadian Explorers', 'Team Kärnten' and the 'SC Bern' did not have much difficulty achieving their top performances: they secured the tournament wins in their respective age groups, leaving such famous competitors as the 'Silver Sharks' from Moscow, the 'Calgary Crowfoot Canadians' or the local heroes of EK Zell

am See, alias the 'Polar Bears', far behind.

You can find more information on the World Tournament XV at [www.hockey-world.org](http://www.hockey-world.org) on the Internet.

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General Information:

With 13,500 beds and two million overnight stays per year, the 'Europa-Sportregion Zell am See - Kaprun' is one of the most important tourism centres in Austria. In winter as in summer, guests find all kinds of leisure activities to choose from. For ski fans there are 130 kilometres of finest pistes in thick powder snow. In the summer months Zell am See and Kaprun captivate with ideal conditions for more than 40 different kinds of sports - from hiking and golfing, cycling and all water sports to extreme sports like canyoning and, last not least, summer skiing on the glacier of Kitzsteinhorn. In recent years the region has also hosted many races of the Mountain Bike World.

[You can find this press release here](#)