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Bakalářská práce

**The game of Ice Hockey in the Czech Republic:
Analysis of Ice Hockey League in the Czech
Republic**

Karolína Šimůnková

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci zpracovala samostatně a použila jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

Plzeň, duben 2015

Na tomto místě bych chtěla poděkovat panu Aloku Kumarovi, M.A. za pomoc, rady a trpělivost při zpracování této bakalářské práce.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The author of this Bachelor's Thesis chose the ice hockey theme because she greatly enjoys and plays ice hockey herself. Ice hockey is very close to her. She has been playing for nearly 8 years, gaining big successes and is currently a member of the Pilsen student ice hockey team Akademici Plzen competing in the European University Hockey League (EUHL).

This introduction will describe what the game of ice hockey is and in the following part the author will present the goals and tasks of her thesis.

Ice hockey is one of the most popular team sports in the world. It is a very hard contact sport and is played on ice.

The name "hockey" is used in Canada, in the United States and in some European countries such as Sweden or Latvia. The name "ice hockey" is used in countries, where "hockey" could refer also to field hockey. Countries, where the term "hockey" can refer to these two types of sports, are for example South America, Asia, Africa and also some European countries such as Germany or the Netherlands.

The game of ice hockey is played by two teams on the ice. Each team usually consists of 18 players and 2 goalkeepers. These 18 players are divided into 3 lines, where 3 of them are forwards (left wing, center and right wing) and 2 of them are defensemen (right and left) in each line. So the game is played by 5 players with a goalkeeper on each side, who skate on the ice and try to score a goal against the opposing team with a hard rubber disc called puck. The goalkeeper is for the whole game in the goal and his job is to catch the puck and to make saves. A second goalkeeper is sitting on the bench and he is ready to substitute the first

one if he has some problem. The author thinks ice hockey is the most popular in the Northern America (Canada and northern part of United States). There is league called National Hockey League (NHL). This league is the highest achievement some hockey player can gain. The dream of every young ice hockey player in the world is to win the NHL championship trophy called the Stanley Cup. In author's opinion the second world popular league is Kontinental Hockey League (KHL). It is played mainly in Russia and includes also some Eastern Europeans countries.

In Canada this game is also considered as the official national winter sport. The formal governing body for ice hockey worldwide called The International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF). [1]

At the end of Introduction the author would like to present the goals and tasks of her thesis.

Theoretical part will be divided into four smaller parts.

The first one will be the get - to - know - you part. There will be a description of the game of ice hockey from different points of view. Before reading this thesis is very important to be knowledgeable in the game of ice hockey. The author will present history of the game, origin of the name "hockey", development, tactics, checking, periods and overtime, penalties, official ice hockey rules, equipment, women's ice hockey as well as leagues, championships and Olympic Games. In the second part the author will deal with the analysis of the ice hockey league in Czech Republic. She will describe the basic information, league format, past and current teams' overview, past champions of each league in Czech Republic from the highest to lowest one. In the third part she would like to present you something about salaries of Czech ice hockey players. She would like to mention approximate salaries of players and compare also salaries of top players and of the average players. The fourth part is

about comparison Czech Extraliga with other leagues from Europe. This topic is divided into two parts. The first one will present comparison by numbers and statistics and the second one will present comparison according to author's opinion.

A practical part of this thesis will include an interview with the head coach from one of the author's past team, Lukas Zdrha. He will answer the author's questions about Czech ice hockey league and its current situation.

2 ICE HOCKEY WORLDWIDE

2.1. History of the game of Ice Hockey

Ice hockey evolved from field hockey. These sports are very close to each other. Field hockey was played in Northern Europe for hundreds of years.

„Knattleikr“ was a similar game, which was played by the Vikings of Ireland for more than 1000 years. But most historians think that beginning of ice hockey was in 17th century in Holland. They think it because of its similarities to modern hockey.

The game called „kolven“ was played in England in the 1820s and the game called „bandy“ was played on frozen ponds with wooden ball and with sticks made from branches.

The name of ice hockey came from French word „hoquet“, meaning a bent stick. The place for playing ice hockey was used in curling in Scotland in the 18th century. There were around 30 players on each side and the goals were two frozen stones on both ends of the ice. On third March 1875, the first hockey games took place at the Victoria Rink in Montreal. Students from McGill University played there against

another, with nine players on each side. The team with captain James Creighton won 2-1.

The modern version of ice hockey has its origin in the rules outlines by James Creighton. These rules were published 1877 in Montreal Gazette. The teams that had nine players on each side were then reduced only to seven players. In the late 1880s, a hockey club showed a reduced number of players at the Montreal Winter Carnival. Everybody also agreed to play with seven players. The players also preferred smaller squads, including one goalkeeper, three forwards, two defencemen and one rover. This format was valid until 1922, when the rover was eliminated.

By 1893, ice hockey was expanded to the United States and one year later was opened the first indoor rink with artificial ice in North America, in Baltimore. This ice rink was used by students from John Hopkins University. By 1895, also women's ice hockey had gained popularity. Female students at two Canadian universities: University of Toronto and Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, played ice hockey. They played it wearing long skirts. In 1899, the first printed Canadian book of hockey, *Hockey: Canada's Royal Winter Game*, was written by Arthur Farrell and published by C. R. Corneil. By the early 1900s, hockey became common in some countries in Europe, including the United Kingdom. On May 2002 the sub – committee for The Society for International Hockey Research (SIHR) had a press conference where it was agreed that hockey has neither birthplace nor a birth date. For the first time hockey is considered a game at Victoria Skating Ice Rink on 3rd March 1875. It is the earliest specific game in specific place at a specific time and with some score between two identified hockey teams. [2]

Chronology

The author would like to tell you the most important historical facts about ice hockey according to her opinion. This list presents the most important events in history of the game of ice hockey.

17th century in Holland: A game on ice, very similar to ice hockey, is played. It is called “kolven” and it becomes very popular in the UK.

3rd March 1875 in Montreal: The first organized hockey game takes place at the Victoria Rink in Montreal. Students from McGill University play against each other and the team lead by James Creighton wins 2-1.

7th February 1876 in Montreal: The first use of the word “puck” is published by the Montreal Gazette.

22nd March 1893 in Montreal: The first official Stanley Cup game is played between Montreal Hockey Club and Ottawa Capitals. Montreal wins 3-1 and there are 5,000 fans.

December 1894 in Baltimore: The first indoor ice rink in North America with artificial ice is opened. It is used by students from John Hopkins University.

1895: Women’s ice hockey gains popularity at universities in Canada.

1899: The first printed Canadian book of hockey.

1900: First net used as a goal net to catch puck was fishing net.

31st January 1901 in Montreal: Dan Bain scores the first Stanley Cup winning goal scored in overtime. Winnipeg Victorias defeat the Montreal Shamrocks 2-1.

28th March 1922 in Toronto: The Toronto St. Patricks defeat the Vancouver Millionaires, 5-1, in the last professional game with seven players on each side.

1924 Chamonix, France: Winter Olympic Games where Canada winning the gold medal. Before 1924 was ice hockey as a part of Winter Olympic Games.

1927 Kingston: First using of face mask during the hockey game by Queen's University goalie Elizabeth Graham.

1936 Germany: UK wins the Olympic Gold Medal and Canada lost first international game.

30th April 1945 Canada: First nine players in Canadian Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto.

1961 Toronto: The Hockey Hall of Fame is opened for public.

March 1990 Ottawa: The first IIHF World Women's Ice Hockey Championship. Canada wins gold medal.

28th May 1995 Pittsburgh: Jaromir Jagr becomes the first European player to lead NHL in scoring. [3]

2.1.1. Name "Hockey"

It is not possible to state that word "hockey" has some clear origin. First reference from Ireland dated 1527. Word is next recorded in 1838 from W. Sussex. The word is probably related to Middle French "hoquet", which means shepherd's staff, crook. [4]

2.1.2 The game and its development

The center of the development of the contemporary ice hockey is considered Montreal because of the first organized indoor game at Victoria Skating Ice Rink on 1875. The game was played between some McGill University students. They were divided into two nine – player teams. The goal posts were eight feet apart and today the goals are only six feet wide.

In 1876 the first game was played in Montreal and it was conducted under rules of “Hokey Association”. This Hockey Association came from England and dealt with the organization of field hockey. In 1877 The Gazette published a list of rules, which was comprised of 7 rules based on rules of English Hockey Association. There were of course some differences. The only thing, which stayed the same, was the word “ball”. As the author said before, the first ice hockey team was founded in 1877 and it consisted of McGill University students. The hockey team called McGill University Hockey Club and it was followed by the team called Montreal Victorias, which was founded in 1881. Meanwhile, in 1880, the number of players was changed from nine to seven. The game became more and more popular. That is also the reason why the first “world championship” was organized. It was held during the annual Winter Carnival in Montreal in 1883. The team, which was consisted of McGill University students, won the “Carnival Cup”. In that time the game was one hour long and it was divided into thirty – minute long halves. The posts were also called different than nowadays. There were left and right wing, centre, rover, point, cover point and goalkeeper. Currently we have just left and right wing with centre as forwards and defencemen with goalkeeper. But this will be described in the following part of the thesis. In 1885 the Montreal City Hockey League was established.

Now the author would like to present the development of hockey in Europe. The roots of ice hockey in Europe come from England. In 1885 the Oxford University Ice Hockey Club was founded and played the first match against their rival from Cambridge University. The game was played in St. Moritz in Switzerland. Even this game was not documented, we know that match was won by the Oxford University team and score was 6-0. The first team rosters, statistics and photographs come from 1895. This rivalry was very famous and became the oldest one in history. In 1888 Lord Stanley of Preston, who was the Governor General of Canada, came to the Montreal Winter Carnival tournament and really fell in love with this game. In 1892 he came to know that there is no prize or cup for the best team in Canada and he bought a decorative bowl, which was used as a trophy. This trophy was later called the Stanley Cup. In 1893 the Stanley Cup was firstly awarded to the Montreal Hockey Club. Later it was awarded to the winner team of National Hockey League (NHL). The Ontario Hockey Association (OHA) was organized by Stanley's son Arthur and Stanley's daughter Isobel was the first women who ever played ice hockey. Later also their sons brought the game of ice hockey to Europe. So we can say that the Stanley Family was very important in ice hockey development and its history. By 1893 there were more and more teams who wanted to play ice hockey. The problem was that they were usually alone, although there were many leagues across the Canada. In 1900 the players used cricket pads because it was better for goalkeeper's legs and protected him better. Also they shot only a "scoop" shot, which is nowadays called a wrist shot. Goal nets in goals became more common and later also were substituted the point and cover posts by the left and right defensemen posts. The people who brought the game of ice hockey to Europe were Lord Stanley's five sons, and it happened in 1895. By the year 1903, a five – team league was founded in Europe and in 1910 there was the first European championship, which was won by Great Britain. In the 20th century this

European league became the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF). The game of ice hockey became also more and more popular for spectators. Current ice rinks were replaced by bigger and larger rinks. Many of the past indoor ice rinks were demolished. Also because of the wooden construction most of the ice rinks burnt. The most famous and first indoor ice rink Victoria's Rink in Montreal was demolished in 1925. The oldest indoor ice rink, which was built in 1910 in Boston and called Matthew's Arena, is still used until today. It has been changed many times in history and it is used today by Northeastern University for ice hockey and also for other sports. This arena was also home ice rink for the professional ice hockey team Boston Bruins, which plays in the National Hockey League (NHL). The first game of NHL was played there on 1st December 1924. The second oldest arena, which was built in 1968 and continuously operates in the NHL, is Madison Square Garden in New York City. [5]

Professional hockey

Before the author will tell you something about professional ice hockey, it is necessary to say that playing hockey on a professional level means not to be always at home ground and sometimes also a lot of travelling. Many players get better offers in foreign countries. Better offers mean that the player will get more money for playing. When the player is on a professional level, the priority for him/her is mainly the money. [6]

We could say that professional hockey has existed since the 20th century. The first league which employed professionals was the Western Pennsylvania Hockey League (WPHL) in 1902. Later, in 1904 the first fully professional league called the International Professional Hockey League (IPHL) was formed and it was connected also with teams from Michigan and Ontario. These two leagues, WPHL and IPHL, were the first ones, who began to pay money to players. In the following years, there

were more and more professional leagues in Canada, for example leagues in Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba. [7]

2.2. The game of ice hockey, main characteristics including the number of players and describing of the ice rink

The general characteristics of the game are the same everywhere and they are based on exact rules of the code of play, which means official ice hockey rules. IIHF and NHL cover the two most important codes. Both of the codes are originated from Canadian ice hockey rules dated to the early 20th century. [8]

As was mentioned in the beginning, the ice hockey is played on an ice hockey rink. Normally there are six players on each side, where one of them is a goalkeeper in the goal. The remaining 5 players skate up and down on the ice rink to score goals by shooting a hard vulcanized rubber disc, called a puck, into the opponent's goal. The puck is black color, 1 inch (25mm) thick, 3 inches (76mm) in diameter and weighs between 5, 5 till 6 ounces (156 till 170g). First pucks were made from wood and later they were substituted by rubber. The first round puck was used in the 1880s by the Victoria Hockey Club in Montreal. The opponent's goal is placed on opposite ends of the rink. [9]

Players may direct the puck with any part of their body. Players also cannot hold the puck in their hands and it is forbidden to use their hands to pass the puck to their teammates. Even in the defensive zone. It is also forbidden to kick the puck into the opponent's goal or score by throwing the puck with their hands.

The game of ice hockey is an "off - side" game. It means that passes in forward direction are allowed. But in the past, in 1930s, the ice hockey was an on - side game, which means that there were allowed only

passes in backward direction. With the arrival of these offside rules, the ice hockey became more of a team sport.

The author said before that nowadays ice hockey is played with five players on the ice, where three of them are forwards and two of them are defensemen. The forward positions are divided into a centre and two wingers, a left wing and a right wing. Three forwards and two defenders are often playing together in one line. Usually the same three forward and two defenders always play together. The defenders usually stay together as a pair for whole season because they have to understand each other very well. It is clear that one line cannot play a whole game, so usually after 30 seconds it comes a line change. It is also necessary to say that every team has also special lines for the shorthanded or power play. The changing of lines is possible whenever the players want. [10]

Now let's say something about the ice hockey rink. The rink has rectangular shape with rounded corners and surrounded by a wall, which is approximately 40 - 48 inches (1m) high. This wall is called "the boards". There are two sizes of ice hockey rinks. First one is used in North America and it is called "North American" and the second one is used everywhere all over the world and it is called "International". As author mentioned before, the first ice hockey rink was the Victoria Skating Rink in Montreal. The rink's size of surface was 204 feet (62m) x 80 feet (24m). The Northern American type of ice hockey rink is very similar. It is measured 200 feet (61m) x 85 feet (26m). This type follows the specifications of NHL played in North America. The distance from board to the nearest goal line is 11 feet (3, 4m). The International type of ice hockey rink follows the specifications of the IIHF. We could say that this type is very similar. The only thing which is different is that International type is much wider (100 feet - 30, 5m). The nearest goal line is situated 13 feet (4m). Till today also the attacking zone has expanded. The distance between the goal line and blue line is 64 feet (20m) in North

American type and 57 feet (17, 3m) in International type (see below appendix 1). [11]

2.2.1. Offensive and defensive tactics (checking)

Firstly it is very critical to say that it is important to know the tactics in every game in which you participate. Nowadays there are many sports or activities, where you need some tactic or you need simply to know how to achieve your goal or prevent the opponent from achieving theirs. Even a sport as simple as for example volleyball needs some certain tactics to make sure that the ball goes in the right direction and you can score some points. In ice hockey there are several different tactics, which are of course very different from each other. Some of these tactics are legal and they could be used in playing and some of them are forbidden at all. If the players use some forbidden tactic, they are always penalized. The author will deal only with the legal ones. [12]

One of the most important offensive tactic or strategy is called forecheck or forechecking. To forecheck means the act when you attack the opponents in their defensive zone. It is also an important part of the strategy where you shoot the puck into the opponent's offensive zone and then you skate after it. It is clear that every team uses a special and unique system of player's arrangement but we could say that there are three main ones: 2-1-2, 1-2-2 and 1-4. The most basic system, where two forwards attack and pressure the opponent's defensemen, the third forward stays high in the neutral zone and the two defensemen stay at the blue lines is 2-1-2. The system 1-2-2 is a bit different. There is only one forward, mostly centre, who attacks the defensemen and tries to make them pass on their left and right wing, which are covered by the centre's wings. Here also stay the centre's defensemen on the blue lines. The system 1-4 is the most defensive one, where only one player (centre or wing) try to attack the puck and the rest of players stand in a line by

their blue line. Another strategy is called left wing lock, which means that left wing is together with defensemen on the blue line and two forwards (centre and right wing) attack the opponent's defensemen. Of course there are more and more tactics, which are used in the game of ice hockey. Some others called cycling, pinching, saucer pass or decoy.

Checking belongs to the one of the most important defensive tactic. Checking means to attempt to remove the opponent from the play and take the puck from him/her. There are several types of checking, but the author will introduce you the three most important ones. The first one is called stick checking (using the stick to disruptive an opponent's stick), then we know sweep checking (using the stick in a sweeping movement to knock the puck away from an opponent) and poke checking (using a stick by poking the puck away, usually used before the physical contact). By these types, players may obtain possession of the puck. The neutral zone (in the middle of ice rink, between defending and attacking zone) is the best place for checking. There it is possible to prevent him/her from entering the offensive (attacking) zone. Checking is also possible through body checking. The players use it usually with their shoulder or hip. By body checking it is allowed to strike an opponent who has the puck or at least was the last one who was with the puck in contact. [13] [14]

2.2.2. Periods and overtime

A professional or mostly also the amateur ice hockey game is divided into three periods of twenty minutes each. The time is running only when the puck is played, that is called that players play "net" time. Only the children's leagues or some recreational leagues play also three periods long game but the difference is that every period is shorter. It could be around 15 minutes only.

It is a bit complicated when the game is tied, for example 3-3 after three periods. Then normally comes overtime, which is small 5 minutes

long period with sudden death format. It means, who scores first, wins. When the game is still tied after this overtime, then the penalty shootout decides the result of the game. Each team chooses 3 players for the shootout.

For league standings when the team wins in normal time, meaning three periods, it takes 3 points. If the team loses in normal time, it means no points of course. When the team wins in overtime or after penalty shootout, it takes 2 points. If the team loses in overtime or after penalty shootout, it takes 1 point for a tied game. [15]

2.2.3. Penalties and officials

The game of ice hockey has very strict rules. When the player does not play fair and with fouls, he/she is always penalized. This player, who breaks the rules, is sent to the place off the ice which is called the "penalty box". The player spends there a period of time. The team which is one player missing plays "short - handed" (4 players on the ice with goalkeeper or sometimes also 3 players only), while the opponent team play the "power play" (power play 5 players on 4 players or also on 3 players).

There are several types of penalties. Minor penalties are two minutes long, major penalties are five minutes long. It always depends on whether the victimized player has some bloody injury or not. If yes, the player is penalized with two more minutes or he could also get a penalty till the end of match.

A two - minute minor penalty can get player for, for example, "tripping", "elbowing", "roughing", "high sticking", "delay of the game", "hooking", "slashing", and so on. The special penalty is called "penalty shot". It is awarded to player who is breaking away fully alone across the ice rink, has a very good opportunity to score a goal and some player

fouls him/her. This penalty could be also awarded when some forward or defender catches the puck in the goal area and it is not possible to score, or when the players throw away the stick by defending, or also when the goalkeeper himself/herself gives away the goal from the right place and avoid to score. [16]

Every typical game of ice hockey consists of 4 officials on the ice. They know very well the ice hockey rules and they referee the game. Normally two of them are linesmen, who are responsible to look for the “offside”, “icing” and they do the faceoffs. Also they help in situations such as fighting or reporting to referees about some fouls and penalties. The other two officials called referees. They wear orange stripes on their arms so the players recognized them well. Their task is to call goals and decide about all other penalties. Other very important persons, which help off-ice are goal judges, time keepers and official scorers. In the past only the “three - man system” was used, which consisted only of one referee and two linesmen. Ice hockey is still developing and getting to be faster and faster and the game cannot be fairly judged only by one referee so they add one more. This is, according to the author’s experiences and pieces of knowledge, much better. [17]

2.3. Ice hockey official rules

With the ice hockey development all over the world there was a need for unification of the rules and sensible interpretation of them to improve the growth of the game.

As it was mentioned several times before, the sport of ice hockey is governed by many organizations but the most important ones are IIHF and NHL. These two organizations have their own rule books. The first one, the IIHF rule book, is used worldwide for all amateur and professional hockey leagues. The second one, the NHL’s rule book, is based on North American professional leagues, so it is mainly for them

only. Now the author would like to quote some of the rules, firstly from the IIHF and secondly from the NHL. [18]

IIHF

“SECTION 4 – SKATERS’ EQUIPMENT OVERVIEW:

Skaters’ equipment consists of sticks, skates, protective equipment, and uniforms. All protective equipment, except gloves, helmets, and skates must be worn entirely underneath the uniform. Equipment must conform to safety standards and be used only to protect skaters, not to enhance or improve playing ability or to cause injury to an opponent. Full equipment, including helmets, must be worn properly during the pre-game warmup.

RULE 29 – DANGEROUS EQUIPMENT

i. Illegal equipment, equipment that does not conform to IIHF standards, and equipment deemed unacceptable for play are all classified as dangerous equipment and players utilizing such equipment are subject to penalties as outlined in Rule 128.

ii. A referee may request the measuring of any piece of equipment at any time. If he rules that it does not conform to IIHF standards in the rules set out below, it will be considered dangerous equipment and be confiscated.

iii. A player who uses dangerous equipment will be ruled off the ice and his team will be issued a warning by the referee.

iv. Dangerous equipment includes wearing a visor in a way that may cause injury to an opponent, wearing non-approved equipment, using dangerous or illegal skates or stick, failing to wear equipment under the uniform (excepting gloves, helmet, and goaltender’s pads), and cutting the palm out of one or both gloves.”

“SECTION 7 – PLAYING RULES/PLAYER CHANGES OVERVIEW:

Players can be changed during a game in two ways: during a stoppage of play and during game action. In either case, specific rules apply as to how these changes may be carried out and under what circumstances they may not be carried out.

RULE 88 – PLAYER CHANGE DURING GAME ACTION

i. Player changes may occur at any time during game action provided that the changing players are within 1.5m (5') of the boards across the width of their players' bench, and the changing players are not involved in game action in any way.

ii. If an oncoming player leaves the 1.5m (5') zone and participates in game action before the departing player has at least one skate off the ice at the players' bench, the team will be assessed a penalty for too many men.

iii. If, during a player change during game action, a player coming onto the ice or coming off the ice plays the puck, makes contact with an opponent, or participates in game action while both the departing and entering players are on the ice within the 1.5m (5') zone, a penalty for too many men will be assessed.

iv. If player changes are made during game action and the changing players are within 1.5m (5') of the boards across the width of their players' bench, and the changing players are not involved in game action in any way, no penalty for too many men will be assessed.” [19]

NHL

“SECTION 1: PLAYING AREA

Rule 1:

1.1 Rink - National Hockey League games shall be played on an ice surface known as the “Rink” and must adhere to the dimensions and specifications prescribed by the League and these rules. No ice markings shall be permitted except those provided for under these rules unless express written permission has been obtained from the League. On-ice logos must not interfere with any official ice markings provided for the proper playing of the game.”

“SECTION 3: EQUIPMENT

Rule 13:

13.1 - Dimensions - The puck shall be made of vulcanized rubber, or other approved material, one inch (1") thick and three inches (3") in diameter and shall weigh between five and one-half ounces (5 1/2" oz.) and six ounces (6 oz.). All pucks used in competition must be approved by the League.” [20]

2.4. Ice hockey equipment

In every sport it is necessary to use some equipment and gear for play it and also every sport has its own specific types. Some pieces of equipment are suggested or recommended, on the other hand, some pieces are required. All sport equipment and gear is now very modern and especially ice hockey one. It is possible to choose from several ice hockey skates, sticks or protectors. Everyone can choose for him/her the best one.

One of the most important pieces of equipment and gear for ice hockey is of course the facemask, especially when you are a goalkeeper. The facemask protects the goalkeeper from striking his/her head and face with the puck or a stick. By the players, it is required to wear a facemask with cage till the age of 18 years. The cage is made from metal and it protects whole face. Afterwards players can have facemask only with short Plexiglas or without anything. It depends on them, but they have to wear the helmet at any age. It protects players from hitting their heads by falling down on the ice. The next very important parts of the equipment are called shoulder pads, elbow pads, mouth guard, protective gloves, shorts (known also as ice hockey pants), athletic cup (for males known as jock and for females known as a jill), shin pads, skates and neck protector. The neck protector is required also till the age of 18 years and then optionally.

The goalkeeper has a bit different equipment and of course he is much more protected than the common hockey player. As it was said before, he/she has a facemask. Every goalkeeper of any age has to wear it. Then he/she is protected by a neck guard with chest/arm protector, special goalkeeper pants, blocker and catcher (known also as catch glove) and of course the leg pads.

Finally the hockey player/goalkeeper needs a hockey stick. Stick of player and stick of goalkeeper are very different. Player's stick is all around very thin and goalkeeper's stick is thin only till the half of whole size and the other part around the goalkeeper's legs is much wider. It better helps to stop and deflect pucks. Nowadays all hockey players and goalkeepers can choose from wooden sticks and composite sticks. Here it is not possible to say, which one is the best one, because everybody likes something different. The only important thing is to choose the right size of stick for height and how much flex does the stick have. It means how flexible the hockey stick is and what the hardness of stick is. [21]

2.5 Women´s Ice Hockey

In the beginning it is necessary to say that women´s ice hockey has become in the last few years more and more popular. It is the fastest developing women´s sport in the world, which is still growing and developing. The number of players (participants) has increased by 350 percent in the last 10 years. For example, Canada has 86, 612 registered female players, which is nearly the same number like all registered players in the Czech Republic (110, 525 registered players). In the United States, there are 67, 230 registered female players, in Finland 5, 830, in Sweden 3434, in Czech Republic 2, 647 and in Switzerland 1091.

Despite the fact that there are not as many ice hockey leagues as there are for men, there are several leagues which exist. It is Canadian Women´s Hockey League, Western Women´s Hockey League, Mid - Atlantic Women´s Hockey League and there are also some European women´s leagues. Well known women´s hockey teams are university teams, national and Olympic teams and some amateur teams. Every year, except the Olympic years, there is held an IIHF World Women´s Ice Hockey Championship tournament. The main difference between men´s and women´s ice hockey is that women´s ice hockey is without body checking. After 1990 body checking was not allowed and it is now penalized by a minor or major penalty. The minor difference is that women have to wear a facemask with cage protector at all ages. [22]

2.6. Leagues and championships

2.6.1. International leagues

The most famous and the oldest still operating ice hockey league is called the NHL (National Hockey League). It is specific with the Stanley Cup trophy. In this league are clubs from the United States and Canada.

The United States have in this league 23 teams and Canada has 7 teams. The next very famous hockey league called KHL. It is played in Eurasia and it is the successor of the Russian Super League and the Soviet League. As the time goes, the league expanded and consists of teams from Croatia, Czech Republic and Slovakia. Currently the number of teams is 28, coming from eight different countries. Next international league in Asia called Asia Hockey Ice Hockey, which includes teams from China, Japan and South Korea. This league is successor of Japan Ice Hockey League. [23]

2.6.2. League by countries in Europe [24]

Czech Republic	Czech Extraliga
Denmark	Metalligaen
Eurasia	Kontinental Hockey League (KHL)
Finland	Liiga
France	Ligue Magnus
Germany	Deutsche Eishockey Liga
Italy	Elite. A
Norway	GET - ligaen
Slovakia	Slovak Extraliga
Sweden	Swedish Hockey League
Switzerland	National League A
Ukraine	Professional Hockey League
United Kingdom	Elite Ice Hockey League

2.6.3. IIHF World Championships

For the national teams of all countries IIHF World Championships are organized every year. This championship is annual and official. It is not held only during years of the Olympic Games. There are many categories of men's and women's ice hockey, for example, the World

Championship, the Worlds Women's Championship, the World U20 Championship, the World U18 Championship, the World Women's U18 Championship and much more. The "U20" or "U18" mean categories limited with age "under 20 years old" or "under 18 years old". [25]

2.6.4. Ice Hockey at the Winter Olympic Games

Firstly ice hockey was played at the Summer Olympic Games in 1920. Then it was decided that this sport should be more likely included at the Winter Olympic Games. This sport moved there. In 1924 Olympic Games were held in Chamonix, France and since that time ice hockey is an official part of the Winter Olympic Games. [26]

3 Analysis of Czech Ice Hockey League in the Czech Republic

3.1. Czech ice hockey general overview

As was said at the beginning of author's thesis, in 1908, a federation called Ligue Internationale de Hockey sur Glace, was established in Paris, France. There were five countries that established this federation: Belgium, France, Great Britain, Switzerland and Bohemia (now called the Czech Republic). In the 20th century, the Bohemian men's ice hockey team became a very successful team. Czechoslovakia was later, in 1992, divided into Czech Republic and Slovakia. The Bohemian men's ice hockey came to an end, and in its place Czech and Slovak national men's hockey teams were established. The Czech Republic is a member of the "Big Six". This term is used for the six strongest men's hockey nations in the world. Besides the Czech Republic, this group also includes Canada, the United States, Russia, Sweden and Finland. In 1998 at the Olympic Games in Nagano (Japan) the Czech Republic won the gold medal and in 2006 at the Winter

Olympic Games in Torino (Italy) the Czechs won a bronze medal game by defeating Russia 3-0. Between the years 1999 – 2001 the Czech Republic National Team also won three gold medals in a row at the IIHF World Ice Hockey Championships. The next gold medal the Czechs won at the IIHF World Ice Hockey Championship in Austria, which was the only world championship, where all players from National Hockey League (NHL) participated because of the NHL lockout. The Czech Republic National Team had also two more very successful championships. The first was in 2006 in Latvia, where the Czechs won silver medal after falling to Sweden in the final, and second probably the biggest success in the last few years, was in 2010 in Germany, where the Czech National Team won the gold medal and became IIHF World Champions. Currently the men's team has the 5th – place IIHF ranking in the world and the women's team has a 14th – place ranking. In the Czech Republic many well – known ice hockey players were born, for example Dominik Hasek or Jaromir Jagr. [27]

3.2. Development of the Czech Ice Hockey League in the Czech Republic

Predecessor of the Czech Extraliga was the Czechoslovak First Ice Hockey League, which was established in 1936 in Czechoslovakia. It was founded, because people wanted some regular competition among the best ice hockey teams in the Czech and Slovak Republic. The beginnings of this league were quite difficult and there were several problems. The league was not playing a regular schedule in the beginning, as they planned and most of the games were played outside on natural ice rinks. The other problem was that the league season often did not come to an official end, with clearly decided winners. The format of league play was that the teams played only two times with each other team, one time at the home ice rink and the second time as visitors.

The first league was not certainly played earlier than in 1937. Since the very first beginning, the league had fulfilled a double role. In the country it has become the most authoritative sports competition, and at the same time offered entertainment to thousands of fans. The Czechoslovak league was stopped only during the Second World War. That is why the Bohemian - Moravian Hockey League and Slovak League was played in Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. We can say that in that time many new ice rinks were built and it has increased the number of ice hockey matches in league competition. The last official season was 1950/1960, when only two games were played by each team. The next seasons brought changes, especially in 1967/1968 when changed the number of officials was changed. Since that time there were three officials, two linesmen and one referee on the ice. The next changes came between years 1970 - 1982, when a play-off system was used for the first time (it was not used for a long time) and the overtime system with penalty shootout. It means that games could not end with a tied score.

From the beginning was common that in all leagues were some teams better than the others. Not every team had the same development. Only from time to time another team beside the best could be successful.

The most frequent champions were called LTC Prague (11 titles), Ruda hvezda (ZKL) Brno (11 titles), Dukla Jihlava (12 titles) and SONP Poldi Kladno (6 titles).

Between the First and Second World Wars, ice hockey in the country was spread in schools and at the same time the first school league was also established. Around 120 teams of secondary schools participated in the championship. The final match was very attractive and it was seen by more than 10,000 fans (students).

The most important event at this time was the Dissolution of Czechoslovakia on 1st January 1993. The federation was peacefully dissolved by parliament and separated into two independent countries: the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic.

Since the 1993/1994 season two new ice hockey leagues were established, Czech Extraliga and Slovak Extraliga. [28] [29]

3.3 Czech Extraliga

3.3.1. Basic information and league format

The Czech Extraliga is the current highest level of men's professional ice hockey in the Czech Republic. The director of Czech Extraliga is Josef Reznicek.

In the 2014/2015 season, a total of 52 qualification rounds were played from September till February. Following the qualification was a play - off. A preliminary round of play - off is played, for teams ranking 7th to 10th place. Other teams, ranked 1st to 6th place, go straight to the regular play - off. The preliminary round is played on the format of one team winning 3 games. Then, when the regular play - off begins, the 1st place team plays against the 8th place team, 2nd place team against the 7th place team, 3rd place team against the 6th place team and so on. The regular play - off is played on the format of 4 winning games. The four winning teams go to the semi - finals and then two winning teams of semi - finals go to the final series. The teams who were placed from 11th to 14th place play, after qualification round, play - out. These last four teams play together with each other for two times (6 rounds) and it counts earned points from the qualification round. Two teams, which end on the last two places, play with the best two teams from 1st Czech Ice Hockey League. It is played 4 - rounds games together with each other (in total 12

rounds). Teams, which are afterwards placed on first and second place, go for the next season to the Czech Extraliga. [30]

3.3.2. Past and current teams' overview

Note: Current teams are written in bold print. [31]

TEAM	SEASONS PLAYED
Brno	7
Ceske Budejovice	19
Havirov	4
Hradec Kralove	3
Chomutov	2
Jihlava	7
Jindrichuv Hradec	1
Karlovy Vary	18
Kladno	20
Liberec	13
Litvinov	22
Mlada Boleslav	5
Olomouc	5
Opava	3
Pardubice	22
Plzen	22
Slavia Praha	21
Sparta Praha	22
Trinec	20
Usti nad Labem	1
Vitkovice	22
Vsetin	13
Zlin	22

Znojmo	10
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3.3.3. Past champions [32]

SEASON	WINNER OF THE QUALIFICATION ROUND	WINNER OF THE LEAGUE	LOSING FINALIST
1993/94	HC Kladno	HC Olomouc	HC Pardubice
1994/95	HC Dadak Vsetin	HC Dadak Vsetin	AC ZPS Zlin
1995/96	HC Sparta Praha	HC Petra Vsetin	HC Chemopetrol Litvinov
1996/97	HC Petra Vsetin	HC Petra Vsetin	HC Vitkovice
1997/98	HC Petra Vsetin	HC Petra Vsetin	HC Zelezarny Trinec
1998/99	HC Slovnaft Vsetin	HC Slovnaft Vsetin	HC ZPS Barum Zlin
1999/00	HC Sparta Praha	HC Sparta Praha	HC Slovnaft Vsetin
2000/01	HC Slovnaft Vsetin	HC Slovnaft Vsetin	HC Sparta Praha
2001/02	HC Sparta Praha	HC Sparta Praha	HC Vitkovice
2002/03	HC Pojistovna Pardubice	HC Slavia Praha	HC Pojistovna Pardubice
2003/04	HC Moeller Pardubice	HC Hame Zlin	HC Slavia Praha
2004/05	HC Hame Zlin	HC Moeller	HC Hame Zlin

		Pardubice	
2005/06	HC Bili Tygri Liberec	HC Sparta Praha	HC Slavia Praha
2006/07	HC Bili Tygri Liberec	HC Sparta Praha	HC Moeller Pardubice
2007/08	HC Mountfield Ceske Budejovice	HC Slavia Praha	HC Energie Karlovy Vary
2008/09	HC Slavia Praha	HC Energie Karlovy Vary	HC Slavia Praha
2009/10	HC Plzen 1929	HC Eaton Pardubice	HC Vitkovice Steel
2010/11	HC Ocelari Trinec	HC Ocelari Trinec	HC Vitkovice Steel
2011/12	HC Sparta Praha	HC CSOB Pojistovna Pardubice	HC Kometa Brno
2012/13	PSG Zlin	HC Skoda Plzen	PSG Zlin
2013/14	HC Sparta Praha	PSG Zlin	HC Kometa Brno
2014/15	HC Ocelari Trinec	-	-

3.3.4. Success rate of teams according to medal placement [33]

TITLES	TEAM	1. PLACE	2. PLACE	3. PLACE
6	Vsetin	6	1	-
4	Sparta Praha	4	1	6

3	Pardubice	3	3	1
2	Zlin	2	4	1
2	Slavia Praha	2	3	2
1	Trinec	1	1	1
1	Karlovy Vary	1	1	-
1	Pizen	1	-	2
1	Olomouc	1	-	-
0	Vitkovice	-	4	2
0	Brno	-	2	-
0	Litvinov	-	1	-
0	Ceske Budejovice	-	-	2
0	Liberec	-	-	2
0	Znojmo	-	-	1
0	Kladno	-	-	1

3.3.5. The most achieved points in the qualification round [34]

SEASON	TEAM	ACHIEVED POINTS
2002/03	HC Pojistovna Pardubice	111
2013/14	HC Sparta Praha	110
2003/04	HC Moeller Pardubice	108
2011/12	HC Sparta Praha	107
2014/15	HC Ocelari Trinec	107

3.3.6. Average attendance in the qualification round [35]

SEASON	NUMBER OF VISITORS
2003/04	4, 209
2004/05	4, 999

2005/06	4, 332
2006/07	4, 384
2007/08	4, 784
2008/09	4, 902
2009/10	5, 240
2010/11	4, 935
2011/12	4, 824
2012/13	5, 167
2013/14	4, 948

3.3.7. Trophies and awards

In the Czech Ice Hockey League there are many trophies and awards. The author will mention here all of them and begin with the team trophies and then the individual awards.

T. G. Masaryk Cup

It has been awarded since the 1999/2000 season to the team winning the Czech Extraliga. This trophy is awarded by the Czech Ice Hockey Association.

Cup of the director of Czech Ice Hockey Association

It is also a team trophy, which is awarded to the winning team of the qualification round. This trophy does not have a long tradition; it was first presented in the 2009/2010 season.

Award for The best hockey player of the whole season

This is an individual player award sponsored by BPA Sport Marketing and it is awarded to the best hockey player of the season by the BP. Fans decide to whom this award should be delivered by voting on the internet, and the player receiving the most votes wins the competition.

Vaclav Pacina Award

This award is for the best hockey player during the play - offs, awarded by daily newspapers Mlada Fronta DNES. It bears the name of long - time sport journalist Vaclav Pacina, who died in 2006.

Best player of the game Award

This award is given to a player, who in each season most of times was the best player of the games. We could say that this award is quite young too, because it was first offered in the 2009/2010 season. The official website of Czech ice hockey www.hokej.cz is the sponsor and presenter of this award.

Most valuable player of the Czech Extraliga Award

This award will be gained by a player, who gets the most points in one season. This award is sponsored and awarded by Česká Televize and Tipsport. Milan Nový was the player who set the record while playing for team Poldi Kladno in 1976/1977 season, by gaining 89 points (59 goals and 30 assists). This record has not yet to be broken. In Czech Extraliga, since 1993, there was a record set up by the player from HC Ocelari Trinec Martin Ruzicka. He gained 83 points (40 goals and 43 assists) in the 2012/2013 season.

Top Scorer of the Czech Extraliga Award

This award is annually presented to the player who shoots the most goals in the season. The award is sponsored and given by newspapers Deník Sport. Martin Ruzicka from HC Ocelari Trinec with 40 goals from 2012/2013 season is the record holder.

Best defender of the Czech Extraliga Award

This award is for the best defender of the whole season. The award is sponsored and given by Deník Blesk.

Best goalkeeper of the Czech Extraliga Award

We could say that this award is the oldest in the history of Czech and Czechoslovakian ice hockey. It was first given in the Czechoslovak First Ice Hockey League. It is sponsored and awarded by Deník Právo.

Best coach of the Czech Extraliga Award

This is for the best coach of whole season. It is sponsored and presented by Lidové noviny.

Best rookie of the Czech Extraliga Award

This is awarded to the best player, who was in their very first season in Czech Extraliga. It is sponsored and awarded by Česká Televize since the beginning of Czech Extraliga in 1993/1994 season and its predecessor was a similar award, used in the Czechoslovak First Ice Hockey League. So we could say that it has a quite long tradition.

Fair - play of the Czech Extraliga Award

This award is for the player, who was recognized for the most fair - play in the whole season. It is sponsored and delivered by Česká tisková kancelář. [36]

3.4. First Czech Ice Hockey League

3.4.1. Basic information and league format

The first Czech Ice Hockey League is the second highest league in the Czech Republic. It was formed in the same year as Czech Extraliga in 1993 and it is also a professional league.

In the 2014/2015 season 14 participants were part of this league. In regular season qualification rounds, all teams play each other, two at their home ice rinks and two as visitors, making 52 rounds in the season.

Afterwards the best 6 teams go directly to play - off quarterfinals. Teams, who end their qualification round on 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th place, will play a preliminary round of play - offs. It is played on the first to gain three winning games. Quarterfinals and semifinals are played on a four winning games series. The two winning teams of the First Czech League will play together with the two last teams of Czech Extraliga. This part is played only between these four teams. All teams play with each other two times at their home rinks and two times as visitors. Last team of this First Czech League goes down directly to the Second Czech League. [37]

3.4.2. Past and current teams overview

Note: Current teams are written in bold print. [38]

TEAM	SEASONS PLAYED
Vsetin	1
Slavia Praha	1
Kometa Brno	14
Opava	9
Usti nad Labem	18
Trinec	2
Havirov	15
Prostejov	14
Havlickuv Brod	15
Sokolov	4
Beroun	21
Hodonin	2
Prerov	5
Tabor	4
Jindrichuv Hradec	7
Hradec Kralove	13

Pisek	14
Karlovy Vary	2
Kralupy nad Vltavou	4
Liberec	7
Karvina	1
Znojmo	4
Trebic	18
Chomutov	16
Olomouc	13
Rosice	4
Kadan	17
Jihlava	15
Melnik	1
Sumperk	9
Hvezda Brno	3
Kladno	2
Mlada Boleslav	8
Zdar nad Sazavou	1
Ceske Budejovice	3
Poruba Ostrava	5
Vrchlabi	4
Most	6
Chrudim	3
Benatky nad Jizerou	7
Litomerice	5

3.4.3. Past Champions [39]

SEASON	WINNER OF THE LEAGUE	PROMOTION TO THE CZECH EXTRALIGA
1993/1994	HC Zbrojovka Vsetin, HC Slavia Praha	Yes, both teams.
1994/1995	HC Kometa Brno, TZ Trinec	Yes, both teams.
1995/1996	HC Prerov, HC Opava	Only the team HC Opava.
1996/1997	HC Becherovka Karlovy Vary, HK Kralupy nad Vltavou	No, any team.
1997/1998	HC Znojemsti Orli	No.
1998/1999	HC Znojemsti Orli	Yes.
1999/2000	HC Dukla Jihlava	No.
2000/2001	KLH Chomutov	No.
2001/2002	HC Bili Tygri Liberec	Yes.
2002/2003	HC Vagnerplast Kladno	Yes.
2003/2004	HC Dukla Jihlava	Yes.
2004/2005	HC Ceske Budejovice	Yes.
2005/2006	HC Slovan Ustecti Lvi	No.
2006/2007	HC Slovan Ustecti Lvi	Yes.
2007/2008	BK Mlada Boleslav	Yes.
2008/2009	HC Slovan Ustecti	No.

	Lvi	
2009/2010	KLH Chomutov	No.
2010/2011	HC Slovan Ustecti Lvi	No.
2011/2012	Pirati Chomutov	Yes.
2012/2013	BK Mlada Boleslav, HC Olomouc	No, any team.
2013/2014	BK Mlada Boleslav, HC Olomouc	Yes, both teams.
2014/2015	Pirati Chomutov, HC Motor Ceske Budejovice	-

3.5. Second Czech Ice Hockey League

This league is the third highest league in the Czech Republic and it is also the last one, where you can find professional players. They are playing here together with some amateurs, who are playing it just for fun and they are good enough for this level. That is the reason, why this league is called semiprofessional. [40]

3.5.1. League format

Since the season 2009/2010 the league format was changed and the league was divided into three groups. It was very comfortable for players to play league in three groups. It did not require a lot of travelling and overall it was better organized. Although, everything went fine, the league format was still changed again with the season 2014/2015 and it is topical till today. The league has now two groups. First is called Group East and second is called Group West. The winners of both groups play against each other for the promotion to the First Czech Ice Hockey

League. On the other hand, the last teams go down to their relevant Regional Czech Ice Hockey Leagues. [41]

3.5.2. Winners of the league and teams, which moved to the First Czech Ice Hockey League

Note: Teams, which moved to the First Czech Ice Hockey League, are written in bold print. [42]

SEASON	WINNERS
1993/1994	IHC Pisek , HC ZVVZ Milevsko
1994/1995	HC Slavia Becherovka Karlovy Vary , HC Liberec , SK Horacka Slavia Trebic, HC Precheza Prerov
1995/1996	HC Pribram, HC ZVVZ Milevsko, SK Horacka Slavia Trebic, SK Karvina
1996/1997	SK Horacka Slavia Trebic , HC Znojmo
1997/1998	SK Kadan , HC Sumperk
1998/1999	HC Slovan Usti nad Labem, HC Sumperk
1999/2000	HC Slovan Usti nad Labem , HC Ytong Brno
2000/2001	HC Banik Most, BK Mlada Boleslav, HK Novy Jicin
2001/2002	HC Banik Most, BK Mlada Boleslav , HC Orlova
2002/2003	HC Banik Most, HC Benatky nad Jizerou, HC Olomouc
2003/2004	HC Banik Most, KLH Vajgar

	Jindrichuv Hradec, HC Sareza Ostrava
2004/2005	KLH Vajgar Jindrichuv Hradec , HC Rebel Havlickuv Brod, HC Prostejov
2005/2006	IHC Pisek, HC Rebel Havlickuv Brod , VSK Technika Brno
2006/2007	HC Banik Most, HC Vrchlabi, HC Sumperk
2007/2008	HC Benatky nad Jizerou, HC Chrudim , VSK Technika Brno
2008/2009	HC ZVVZ Milevsko, HC Tabor, Hokej Sumperk 2003
2009/2010	HC Stadion Litomerice, IHC Pisek , HC Bobri Valasske Mezirici
2010/2011	HC Banik Most, KLH Vajgar Jindrichuv Hradec, Salith Sumperk
2011/2012	HC Klasterec nad Ohri, SHK Hodonin, HC AZ Havirov 2010
2012/2013	HC Tabor, VSK Technika Brno, HC AZ Havirov 2010
2013/2014	HC Banik Sokolov, SC Kolin, LHK Jestrabi Prostejov
2014/2015	HC Banik Sokolov, HC Zubr Prerov

3.6. Regional Ice Hockey Championships in the Czech Republic

3.6.1. Basic information

The regional Ice Hockey Championships were established in 1954 and they are divided into two parts. First part is Regional Leagues, which is considered as the fourth highest level of men's ice hockey and second part is Regional Competitions, known as the fifth highest level. These two levels of ice hockey are fully amateur. It means that players are not under contracts, they do not get any money for participating in a game and usually play for fun when they have free time. The author would say that it is good for some older players, who could play in the past on some good levels and now they want to play hockey simply for fun. Also it could be for players, who started to play ice hockey, when they were older and they are not good enough to play some leagues. [43]

3.6.2. League format

Firstly, it is very important to say that every region in the Czech Republic has its own Regional Leagues and Competitions therefore it is harder to describe it. The author will present some short information about each Regional League and Competition and its participants. Moving to the Second Czech Ice Hockey League it is allowed only for winners of teams, which play the Regional League, not Competition. All winners of Regional Leagues play together with each other and only the best can move on to the Second Czech Ice Hockey League.

Also it should be mentioned that the main difference between "League" and "Competition". As was said before, teams from the league can move to the Second Czech Ice Hockey League. The "League" could be considered as more professional teams. Likewise every team has still

some set of rules, which have to be obeyed. Usually they have around two or three practices a week and they work together as one team with a coach. On the other hand, the team in “Competition” is free. Usually they have no coach and no practices and one game a week is for them like a meeting and having fun on the ice. We could say that players from Regional Competition treat hockey as their hobby.

Prague Championships

Here we can find only Regional League teams, Regional Competition teams are not here. The league has 10 participants, for example: HC Hvezda Praha (Winner of the league in the season 2013/2014), HC Lomnice nad Popelkou, HC Letci Letnany.

Central Bohemian Championships

Here it is already divided into Regional League and Regional Competition. There are 33 teams all together. Teams from the Regional League are for example: HC Kralupy nad Vltavou (Winner of the league in the season 2013/2014), HC Junior Melnik, HC Jesenice and teams from the Regional Competition are for example: HC Zabonosy, SK Srsni Kutna Hora, HC Zlonice.

Hradec Kralove Regional Championships

Here it is also divided into Regional League and Regional Competition, where is totally 14 teams. The best ones from the League and Competition are for example: Stadion Novy Bydzov, HC Nachod, HC Tambor Dvur Kralove nad Labem, TJ Sokol Semechnice, HC Baroni Opocno, HC Jaromer “B”.

Pardubice Regional Championships

In this Regional Championship only Regional League is played. It consists of 12 teams. The best ones are for example: HC Svetla nad Sazavou, HC Lvi Chotebor, HC Slovan Moravska Trebova.

Liberec Regional Championships

In this Region only Regional League is played. There are only 5 teams and considered as the best ones are HC Ceska Lipa and HC Lomnice nad Popelkou.

Karlovy Vary Regional Championships

There are 10 teams divided into Regional League and Regional Competition. The best team from the Regional League is HC Farmari Trstenice and the best team from the Regional Competition is IHT Brimstones Cheb.

Plzen Regional Championships

This Region has the biggest number of competing teams - 51 and it is clear that here is League and Competition. In League there are 10 teams, the best one is HC Rebel Mesto Nejdek, which is also the winner of this season (2014/2015). With Competition it is complicated because of the big number of participants. The Competition is divided into four groups - A (11 teams), B (11 teams), C (10 teams) and D (9 teams), where group A is the best one and group D is the worst one.

South Bohemian Regional Championships

Here only League is played and there are 12 competing teams with each other. As the best ones we could mention here for example: HC David Servis Ceske Budejovice, HC Strakonice and IHC Pisek.

Vysocina Regional Competitions

In this area only Regional Competition participates. There are 7 competing teams (HC Lokomotiva Brno, TJ Namest nad Oslavou, HHK Velke Mezirici "B" and so on).

South Moravian and Zlín Regional Championships

Here Regional League is played, consisting of 13 participants. As the best ones we could mention for example: HC Unicov, HHK Velke Mezirici, HC Spartak Velka Bites.

Moravian - Silesian Regional Championships

Here also only the League is played, which consist of 7 teams. Some of them are for example: HC Koprivnice, HC Studenka, HK Krnov, and other.

In all these leagues it is certainly not possible to articulate exact league format which could be the same for all participating teams. Usually, the league format is dependent on the number of participants. As one could see, each league is very different from each other. But the basic things mainly stay the same. All teams play together. Each team play at the home ice rink and then as visitors, so it means that each team play two times with each other. A three points system is used for scoring and ranking. The winner gets 3 points, and the team that lost obviously gets 0 points and for a tie game each team earns 1 point. When it comes to the tie game, there is no overtime. There is only the penalty shootout. The winning team after penalty shootout gets only 2 points. After the qualification round comes the play - off. The winner of the play - off and also whole league will play with other winning teams from other leagues the qualification for the Second Czech Ice Hockey League. The teams, which end at the last places usually stay in the same league for the next season. There is no movement to a lower league. In the Regional Competitions each team usually plays from two to four games with each team. The winning team cannot move on to the higher league and the last

team cannot go down to the lowest one. The exception is in the Hradec Králové Regional Championships, where the winning team can move on from the Regional Competition to the Regional League. [44]

4 Salaries of the ice hockey players in the Czech Leagues

Especially in the Czech Republic it is very hard to find out the real amount of salaries of some athletes, so we could say that it is not public. It is really not possible to find out. One could do thousands of interviews, but really nobody wants to talk about it. That is also the reason, why all amounts of salaries will be here very approximate.

In other countries in Europe or in most famous league in the world - NHL is common that other people, not only teammates, know players' salaries. It is hard to say why it is like this in the Czech Republic. For example, Czech basketball players have in their contracts that they cannot speak publically about the money which they get.

Also it is necessary to mention that all good hockey players, who were born in the Czech Republic, as soon as possible look for the professional residency in foreign countries with better pay. They need to be well paid because ice hockey is their only job. They could, in the foreign countries, earn much more money than in the Czech Republic. Ice hockey is there mostly better paid.

We start to deal with salaries in general. If you would be an excellent ice hockey player, like one in a million, you will be member of the national team, have some participations in national team and you will be a man (because woman can never earn huge money in ice hockey) you can earn around 900, 000 Crowns. [45]

Salaries of the ice hockey players in the domestic competition in general [46]

ICE HOCKEY PLAYER LEVEL	AVERAGE SALARY PER MONTH
a player in the Czech Extraliga, who is considered to be a “star”	290, 000 - 330, 000 Crowns
a player in the Czech Extraliga, who is also the member of the Czech National Team	200, 000 - 260, 000 Crowns
an average player in the Czech Extraliga	100, 000 - 130, 000 Crowns
an average player in the First Czech Ice Hockey League	20, 000 - 40, 000 Crowns

Examples of the ice hockey players in the domestic competition (Czech Extraliga) [47]

NAME	TEAM	AVERAGE SALARY PER MONTH
Vladimir Sicak	HC Sparta Praha	400, 000 Crowns
Karel Pilar	HC Sparta Praha	400, 000 Crowns
Pavel Brendl	HC CSOB Pojistovna Pardubice	400, 000 Crowns
Martin Ruzicka	HC Ocelari Trinec	300, 000 Crowns
Radek Bonk	HC Ocelari Trinec	300, 000 Crowns

The author would like to mention here also some other interesting information about salaries of Czech ice hockey players, which are not competing in the Czech Extraliga, but they were born in the Czech Republic.

TOP 5 the highest - paid Czech players [48]

NAME	PLAYED LEAGUE	AVERAGE SALARY PER MONTH
Patrik Elias	NHL	5, 694, 000 Crowns
David Krejci	NHL	4, 983, 000 Crowns
Ales Hemsky	NHL	4, 745, 000 Crowns
Tomas Plekanec	NHL	4, 745, 000 Crowns
Martin Havlat	NHL	4, 745, 000 Crowns

5 Comparison Czech Extraliga with another leagues from Europe

Here, the author of this thesis would like to compare eight European TOP leagues from many points of view, for example the most scored goals, league leaders, difference between best and worst team and much more. [49]

1. KHL - mainly Russian but it also includes some teams from Finland, Croatia, Slovakia, Kazakhstan, Latvia and Belarus
2. Swedish Hockey League - Sweden
3. Liiga - Finland
4. Deutsche Eishockey Liga - Germany
5. National League A - Switzerland
6. Erste Bank Eishockey Liga (EBEL) - Austria, Slovenia, Italy, Hungary, Czech Republic
7. Czech Extraliga - Czech Republic
8. Slovak Extraliga - Slovakia

5.1. Numbers and statistics

Note: The tables will mention the best team (first one), placement of the Czech Extraliga or Czech team and the last one (third one) will be the worse team from the 8 competitors. [50]

Goals per game [51]

EBEL	6, 15 goals per game
Czech Extraliga	5, 39 goals per game
Swedish Hockey League	5, 06 goals per game

Teams with most goals scored per game [52]

SKA St. Petersburg - KHL	3, 90 goals per game
Pardubice - Czech Extraliga	3, 32 goals per game
HV 71 - Swedish Hockey League	3, 03 goals per game

Teams with most goals against per game [53]

Nitra - Slovak Extraliga	3, 71 goals per game
Mlada Boleslav - Czech Extraliga	3, 35 goals per game
Timrå - Swedish Hockey League	2, 97 goals per game

Teams with fewest goals scored per game [54]

Metallurg Novokuznetsk - KHL	1, 80 goals per game
Zlin - Czech Extraliga	2, 10 goals per game
Banska Bystrica - Slovak Extraliga	2, 26 goals per game

Teams with fewest goals against per game [55]

KalPa - Liiga	1, 84 goals per game
Sparta Praha - Czech Extraliga	2, 10 goals per game
Medvescak Zagreb, EBEL	2,64 goals per game

League leaders - % of points won [56]

Linz - EBEL	80, 4%
Mountfield - Czech Extraliga	65, 5%
Skellefteå - Swedish Hockey League	61, 3%

Last placed teams - % of points won [57]

Timrå - Swedish Hockey League	36, 7%
Mlada Boleslav - Czech Extraliga	32, 3%
Automobilist - KHL	22, 2%

Difference between best and worst team [58]

KHL	49, 8%
Czech Extraliga	33, 3%
Swedish Hockey League	24, 6%

Spectators per game [59]

Swedish Hockey League	6355
Czech Extraliga	4617
Slovak Extraliga	2506

Teams with most spectators per game [60]

Bern - National League A	15 750
Pardubice - Czech Extraliga	8415

Slovan Bratislava - Slovak Extraliga	5698
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Teams with fewest spectators per game [61]

Mountfield - Slovak Extraliga	1397
Kladno - Czech Extraliga	2719
Timrå - Swedish Hockey League	4636

Penalty minutes per game [62]

EBEL	39, 5
Czech Extraliga	30, 2
Swedish Hockey League	20, 8

Teams with most penalty minutes per game [63]

Vityaz - KHL	31, 06
Mlada Boleslav - Czech Extraliga	19, 74
Färjestad - Swedish Hockey League	15, 57

Teams with fewest penalty minutes per game [64]

Luleå - Swedish Hockey League	5, 94
Kladno - Czech Extraliga	10, 52
SAPA Fehervar - EBEL	12, 36

% of games that go to overtime [65]

Swedish Hockey League	27, 9%
Czech Extraliga	23%
Slovak Extraliga	13, 8%

Number of players used per team [66]

National League A	31, 4
Czech Extraliga	30, 9
DEL	24, 4

5.2. Comparison according to author's opinion and experiences

Now the author would like to describe the league from another point of view and not only by the numbers and statistics.

The last season (2013/2014) the author had a chance to see an ice hockey game of Deutsche Eishockey Liga (DEL) between Augsburger Panther and Hamburg Freezers. Firstly, it is necessary to say that it was a huge difference. The main difference is the style of the game. Of course, all leagues in Europe are different in style, because European ice hockey has still the same exact rules and format with number of players, etc. Czech hockey is played more with combinations of passes, mostly with some exacting strategy. There are also not so many body checks and hockey is more technical and not so fast. On the other side, the hockey in DEL is the exact opposite and, according to the author's opinion, more attractive for fans. Overall the whole game is fast with many body checks. The strategy of the game is not so complicated and when players are in attacking zone, they shoot the puck from every position and that makes this type of hockey more attractive for spectators. The most important fact, which has an influence on it, is that in German ice hockey teams there are many players from Canada and the United States. Hockey players from these two countries are taught from their childhood to play a different style. Comparing this, with the players who were born and started to play in the Czech Republic, one can really see how different it is. So we could say that the main difference between Czech and other European leagues is in the nationality of the players and

the number of these players in one team. It is enough to have one or two players in the team and game style of the team becomes different. The other reason why these players play more in leagues, such as German or Swiss, is that they are better paid there and as was mentioned before, in professional men's hockey money is the first priority. Maybe there are also better services for players, such as salaries bonuses, accommodation, new equipment and much more, but the author cannot judge this fact.

6 PRACTICAL PART

Before anything else the author would like to briefly introduce you the coach, with who is made the interview. His name is Lukas Zdrha and he is 25 years old. He is Bohemian university in Pilsen graduate and now he continues his studies at Charles University. Currently he is the coach of team SHC Klatovy, which is competing in the Second Czech Ice Hockey League. Lukas was also playing ice hockey himself when he was a child. When he was 15 years old, he injured his groins and that is one of the reasons why he decided to stop his carrier and try to be a coach. The author has been playing under him two seasons and she can present about him only positive things. He is a very special type of coach, because he pays attention to all players. He is interested in forwards, defenders as well as goalkeepers. He listens to all of players' problems and it does not matter if the problems deal with hockey or with some personal things. For him, the well – being of the players on the team is just as important. He and the author of this thesis became great friends together and that is the reason why this coach was chosen for the interview.

The questions for the interview were chosen so that were as best as possible related to the topic. The author asked in the interview about

coach's ambition in his ice hockey carrier, what he would change in the actual situation of Czech ice hockey, his opinion on strengths and weaknesses in Czech ice hockey, what he thinks about level and quality of Czech ice hockey and his comparison with European leagues, what he knows about players salaries and also his opinion on possible success of Czech ice hockey national team at forthcoming IIHF World Championship in the Czech Republic. Overall the interview consists of 6 questions.

Q1: You are a coach of team in the Second Czech Ice Hockey League. How are your ambitions in Czech ice hockey?

LZ: My ambition is to focus on myself and reach the highest level of coaching which I am able to reach.

Q2: If given the opportunity, what would you change in the actual Czech ice hockey (changes for improvement)?

LZ: It would deal with youth hockey. The coaches of youth hockey should be better educated and their treatment with youth should be controlled from Czech Ice Hockey Association.

Q3: Where are, in your opinion, the strengths and weaknesses in Czech ice hockey?

LZ: If we would talk about the players themselves, there are still some creative ones and this is very important for team and league. Czech players are able to make a maximum effort and win the game with flawless observance of tactics. On the other side, if we would talk about weaknesses, I see them in moral effort in practice process and also in psychological resistance. This is the reason why Czech players much fewer break through in European leagues and primarily in overseas National Hockey League. I am persuaded that this problem begins with the upbringing. There are so many young players who have their own

way already “prepared” from parents. The players run into the first hard psychological situation and suddenly they do not know how to handle it.

Q4: What do you think about level and quality of competition in the Czech ice hockey league? Could you compare it with other European leagues (Swedish, German or Swiss)?

LZ: Czech Extraliga keeps up still very high. Recently all European leagues are in the performance very comparable. It is caused by finances. The quality, for example, of Swiss league still grows because of the buying off players from foreign countries.

Q5: What is your knowledge in regards to the salaries of Czech players or coaches? If yes, could you tell me, please, what do you think about them? Are some players overpaid?

LZ: I do not know anything about particular numbers so I cannot state my opinion here.

Q6: Do you think that Czech ice hockey national team can be successful at forthcoming IIHF World Championship in the Czech Republic?

LZ: Success at the IIHF World Championship is influenced by many factors. It is always important which players create the team. It depends how many players play in that time Stanley Cup Play - Offs so which players from National Hockey League cannot participate in tournament. In view of the fact that the tournament takes place in the Czech Republic, I think many players will do their best to come. Our team could be very strong. This tournament is very specific one and it is really very hard and complicated to guess the result of Czech national team, however I would categorize our national team between the favorites.

7 CONCLUSION

Firstly it is very necessary to say what the objective of this bachelor thesis was. For this thesis, it was very important to find the right sources. The author has to say that she worked more with internet sources because in the books are not as accurate as far as actual information statistics goes. All foreordained goals and tasks of this thesis were fulfilled.

In the first part of this thesis author described ice hockey worldwide. It dealt with history of the game, origin of the name "hockey", development, tactics, checking, periods and overtime, penalties, official ice hockey rules, equipment, women's ice hockey and as well as leagues, Olympic Games and championships worldwide. This part should introduce you the game of ice hockey from different points of view.

In the second part the author presented the analysis of the ice hockey league in the Czech Republic. There were presented some basic information about Czech ice hockey league, development of Czech ice hockey league and partition of Czech league. There is, of course, information of each league in Czech Republic from the highest to lowest one. The most of all information were stated in the chapter where the Czech Extraliga is. There you can read about basic information, league format, past and current teams' overview, past champions, trophies and awards and much more.

In the third part the author dealt with the topic Salaries of the ice hockey players in the Czech Republic. She described there some approximate salaries and compared salaries of top players and average players. There are also mentioned TOP 5 the highest - paid Czech players and the league in which they earned the money.

The fourth part is about comparison Czech Extraliga with other leagues from Europe. This topic was divided into two parts. The first one presented comparison by numbers and statistics and the second one presented comparison according to author's opinion and experiences.

Last part of this bachelor thesis is practical part. For this topic was really necessary to do it. As a practical part the author chose to do an interview with one of her past coach. Name of the coach is Lukas Zdrha. He answered questions related to Czech ice hockey league and its current situation.

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10 ABSTRACT

The topic of this bachelor thesis is called The game of Ice Hockey in the Czech Republic: Analysis of Ice Hockey League in the Czech Republic.

The thesis deals with the description of the game of ice hockey worldwide but most of it is devoted to ice hockey league in the Czech Republic and its analysis from different points of view, which was also the task and goal of this bachelor thesis.

The theoretical part of this thesis is divided into four smaller parts. The first one is get - to - know - you part. Before reading this thesis, according to author's opinion, is very important to know some basic information about the game of ice hockey. Here are presented for example the history and development of the game, the description of the ice rink, the official ice hockey rules, equipment and much more. The second part of this thesis is analysis of Czech ice hockey. It is described from different points of view including some statistical tables. The third part deals with salaries of Czech ice hockey players and coaches and the fourth with comparison Czech Extraliga with other European leagues.

The practical part of this bachelor thesis includes an interview with the head coach from one of the author's past team, Lukas Zdrha. He answers author's questions about Czech ice hockey league and its current situation.

11 RESUMÉ

Téma této bakalářské práce se nazývá Lední hokej v České Republice: analýza české hokejové ligy.

Tato práce je jak o hokeji celosvětově, tak také o české hokejové lize. Ovšem největší část práce je věnována právě české hokejové lize a její analýze z mnoha různých úhlů pohledu, což bylo také cílem této práce.

Autor rozdělil práci na dvě části, na teoretickou a na praktickou. Teoretická část se dělí na další čtyři menší části. První z nich je víceméně část, která Vás s hokejem seznámí. Je zde uvedeno například něco o historii a rozvoji ledního hokeje, popisu ledové plochy, oficiálních hokejových pravidlech, o vybavení a o mnoho dalším. Ve druhé části této práce se autor zaměřuje už na samotnou analýzu české hokejové ligy. Je popsána z mnoha různých úhlů pohledu a zahrnuje také statistické tabulky. Třetí část této práce se zabývá platy českých hokejových hráčů a v poslední, čtvrté, části je uvedeno porovnání české hokejové ligy s ostatními evropskými ligami.

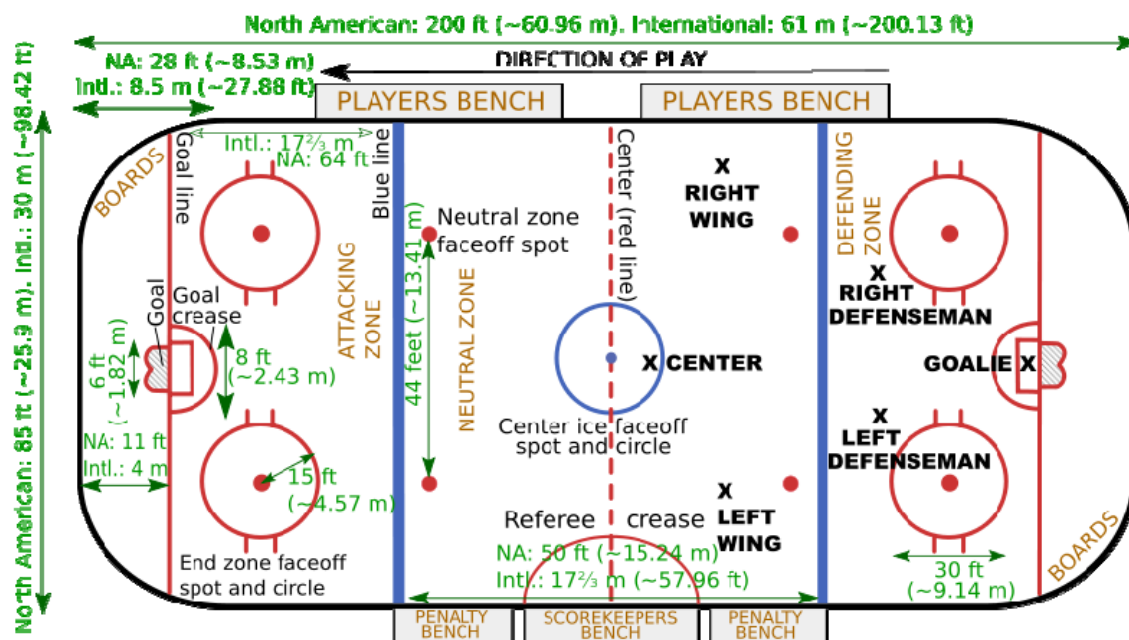
Praktická část této práce zahrnuje rozhovor s jedním z bývalých hokejových trenérů autora, Lukášem Zdrhou. Odpovídá zde na otázky týkající se české hokejové ligy a její aktuální situace.

12 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Picture

Appendix 2 - Questionnaire

Appendix 1



Picture 1: Detailed description of an ice hockey rink

Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia [online]. [cit. 2015-04-17]. Dostupné z: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ice_hockey_rink

Appendix 2

Rozhovor s hokejovým trenérem Lukášem Zdrhou.

Jsi trenérem druholigového týmu. Jaké jsou Tvé ambice jako hokejového trenéra?

Mým cílem je jít si svojí cestou a dosáhnout v trénování maximální úrovně, které jsem já sám schopný.

Pokud bys mohl, co bys změnil v aktuálním českém hokeji? Jsou tím myšleny změny ke zlepšení.

Jednoznačně by se týkaly mládeže. Šlo by hlavně o kvalitnější vzdělávání trenérů mládežnických kategorií a jejich následná systémová kontrola ze svazu.

Kde se podle Tebe nachází v českém hokeji jeho slabé a silné stránky?

Co se týče samotných hráčů, stále máme velmi kreativní typy, což je velice důležité. V krizových situacích dokážeme vyvinout maximální úsilí a vyhrát zápas bezchybným dodržováním taktiky. Slabé stránky však vidím v morálním úsilí v tréninkovém procesu a rovněž v psychické odolnosti, proto se v zahraničí a především v zámořské NHL prosazuje stále méně českých hráčů. Jsem přesvědčený, že problém začíná už od výchovy a je tu až moc mladých hráčů, kteří mají cestičku zametenou od rodičů a když v dospělosti narazí na první těžkou situaci, neumí si s ní po psychické stránce poradit.

Co si myslíš o úrovni a kvalitě české hokejové ligy? Mohl bys ji porovnat s jinými evropskými ligami, např. švédskými, německými nebo švýcarskými?

Česká Extraliga si stále drží svou velmi vysokou úroveň, ale v poslední době se evropské ligy výkonnostně vyrovnávají. Je jasné, že je to zapříčiněné především finanční stránkou, proto například kvalita švýcarské ligy šplhá, díky nákupům kvalitních hráčů ze zahraničí, hodně nahoru.

Víš něco o platech českých hráčů a trenérů? Pokud ano, co si o nich myslíš? Jsou podle Tebe někteří hráči přeplaceni?

O konkrétních číslech nic nevím, takže nemohu říct názor, zda jsou někteří hráči přeplaceni či nikoliv.

Myslíš si, že by český národní tým mohl pomýšlet na úspěch na nadcházejícím mistrovství světa?

Úspěch na MS je zapříčiněn vždy mnoha faktory. Důležité vždy je, jaký tým se dá dohromady. Záleží na tom, kdo vypadne z probíhající finále play - off Stanley Cupu a kolik je omluvenek. Jelikož jde ale o domácí MS, předpokládám, že omluvenek bude minimálně a náš tým by měl být velmi silný. Důležité je také načasování formy na vyřazovací boje. MS je velmi specifický turnaj, takže odhadovat něco dopředu je komplikované. Každopádně bych český tým zařadil mezi úzkou skupinu kandidátů na vítěze.