

# The Shinano Mainichi Shimbun

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## 1998 Nagano Olympic Winter Games Day 16

### Czechs win first-ever ice hockey gold, 1-0 over Russia



Russia Czech'ed

The Czech Republic ended 30 years of Olympic disappointment and frustration Sunday, winning its first-ever ice hockey gold medal with a 1-0 triumph over traditional rival Russia at the Big Hat ice arena.

Defenseman Petr Svoboda scored at 8:08 of the third period and then combined with the other Czech defenders to shut down Russia's high-powered offense as the Czech Republic also won its first gold medal of the 18th Olympic Winter Games in Nagano.

Svoboda's goal came off a face-off in the middle of the third period as the left-handed defender drilled a slap shot off the glove of Russian goalie Mikhail Shtalenkov into the upper left-hand corner of the net.

Czech goaltender Dominik Hasek, who has been credited with carrying the Czech team almost single-handedly into the final, stopped 20 shots, but was largely unchallenged in the last two periods as the defense kept the Russians in disarray.

The victory is particularly sweet for the Czechs since they had been given little chance in the first Olympic ice hockey tournament featuring the stars of North America's National Hockey League (NHL).

Before facing Russia for the goal, the Czechs soundly defeated the United States 4-1 in the quarterfinals and then edging gold-medal favorite Canada in a dramatic 2-1 shoot-out.

Before Nagano, the Czech Republic has won the 1995 world championship title in Vienna, but as Czechoslovakia had to settle for four Olympic silver medals -- all at the hands of the mighty Soviet Union.

Czechoslovakia also won sets of bronze medals in 1964 and 1992.

The Soviet Union, mostly manned by Russian players, won eight gold medals from 1956 along with a silver in 1980 and a bronze in 1960.

Playing as Russia for the first time four years ago in Lillehammer, the heir to the great Soviet teams of the past finished fourth after a 4-0 loss to Finland in the bronze medal game.

On Saturday, Finland had won its second straight bronze medal with a 3-2 victory over Canada. (Kyodo News)

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