

Swiss dream alive and kicking

Impressive 5-2 win over Russia sets up semis showdown vs. U.S.

11-04-12



Swiss players

celebrate their quarter-finals win during the playing of the national anthem. (Photo by Andre Ringuette/HHOF-IIHF Images)

BURLINGTON—Switzerland kept its medal dreams alive with an impressive 5-2 win over Russia today in the first of two quarter-finals at the Gutterson Fieldhouse.

Stefanie Marty had two goals for the winners while goalie Florence Schelling stopped 24 of 26 shots, several of them golden opportunities.

The team now has the daunting task of facing the United States in the semi-finals, Friday night at the same venue.

"It's pretty surprising. I'm not going to lie. I can't believe we're going to the semi-finals, but it's an awesome feeling," Schelling enthused. "For me to play the U.S. for the first time in four years, in the U.S., is pretty exciting for me."

The win was not altogether a surprise, though. "We played them in a pre-camp game in Lake Placid," Phoebe Stanz said, "and we won 2-1 in overtime. We knew we would have a chance."

Russia opened the scoring on a harmless-looking play. Yevgenia Dyupina took a shot which Florence Schelling saved with her blocker, but the rebound came right to Tatyana Burina who smacked it in the open side.

Burina and Schelling faced each other down twice more in the period. First, Burina took a pass to Schelling's back side, but the goalie got her pad down to make a sensational save. A few minutes later Burina had a clean breakaway, but again Schelling held her ground and made a terrific save to keep the Swiss in the game.

"I'm pretty sure I had some key saves in the first period that helped get us back into the game," Schelling acknowledged.

The tide turned in the last half of the period when the Russians incurred four minor penalties in quick succession, resulting in three five-on-three situations for the Swiss, two of which were lengthy. It took a while, but finally an excellent pass from the point by Angela Frautschi to the back side of Anna Prugova's goal found Stefanie Marty. She redirected the puck in to tie the game.

The Swiss went ahead with only 25.6 seconds left in the opening period on a terrible gaffe by Prugova. She came out to play a puck in front of her net, flubbed the clearing attempt, and Phoebe Stanz was right there to put the puck into the empty net with her team short-handed. It was a fitting reward for Stanz, who was the best player on the ice in the period, generating speed on the offense and taking six of the team's 13 shots.

"It was a funny goal," Stanz said. "It was in slow motion because the puck was moving so slowly, but as I was going behind the net, I was saying to myself, 'please go in!' It was so amazing. She tried to clear the puck, but it went right on my blade and I just tried to shoot it at once."

Switzerland upped its lead to 3-1 early in the second on a fine play in the offensive end. Nicole Bullo had the puck behind the net and made a perfect pass to Julia Marty in the slot. Marty fired a quick snapshot passed a surprised Prugova, and the Swiss were now in clear control of the game.

Burina proved to be Schelling's nemesis again later in the second, though. The goal was created by a nice sequence of passes from Inna Dyubanok, behind the Russian net, to Iya Gavrilova at the blue line, and on to a streaking Burina. Burina went in on goal and drilled a backhand low to the far side to make it 3-2.

The Russians, however, continued to be undisciplined, and the Swiss capitalized, scoring another power-play goal midway through the period when Evelina Raselli banged a loose puck in to restore the two-goal cushion.

The Swiss added another goal at 17:21 to make it 5-2, again off the rush and the result of some fine passing. Stefanie Marty put the finishing touches on a nice play.

"We talked about this being revenge for last year," Schelling said. "We were up 3-0 and they beat us, 5-4. For us, we wanted to be focused and get revenge."

They got that revenge but now, in all probability, will be playing for bronze on Saturday, an opportunity the country experienced only once before--and Schelling was in goal for that game in Harbin, China, in 2008.

"Not expected, not at all," Schelling admitted of the team's medal chances before the tournament. "I think we lost that game, 4-1. That's pretty much all I remember."

True, but now Schelling will try to help the Swiss pull off a miracle on Friday, and if that doesn't work, she'll try to bring home Switzerland's first medal.

ANDREW PODNIEKS