The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

N.Y. Firefighters Score a Moscow 'Miracle on Ice'

By Lukas I. Alpert

April 27, 2012



A team of New York firefighters battling with the Emergency Services Ministry squad on Friday in a rematch in Moscow of a game Russia won last year. **Vladimir Filonov**

It may not have been as momentous a victory as the legendary "Miracle on Ice," but for a group of New York City firefighters it was just as satisfying.

After losing to Russia's Emergency Situations Ministry team in New York last year, the FDNY hockey team exacted sweet revenge in a rematch in Moscow on Friday, acing a hard-fought 6-5 win in a shootout.

"It was tough," said Lieutenant Shawn Mullin, the New York team's goalie. "They are really great hockey players."

The intercontinental rivalry began last year when the Russian team traveled to New York for an exhibition match in honor of the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11 attack that raised

money for a charity for the families of firefighters killed that day.

"We were very grateful for that invitation, and we were so pleased to extend our welcome in return," said Soviet-era hockey star Alexander Yakushev, who was involved in putting the game together. "Hopefully this can become an annual event."

Many of the New York firefighters — none of whom had been to Russia before — said the trip was the thrill of a lifetime, even if the win was not quite as earth-shattering as the famed "Miracle on Ice" upset victory by the United States over the Soviet Union in the 1980 Winter Olympics.

"Everyone has just been great, absolutely great," said 30-year-old firefighter Brian White. "The food has been interesting — a lot of fish, maybe a bit too much vodka."

"Guys keep joking about how tough our job is, 'Oh, you get to go to Moscow and play hockey' — it's hard to complain," he said.

Friday's game was the first of three, with an exhibition match to follow on Saturday involving several retired stars from the National Hockey League and the Soviet era, such as Ron Duguay, Mark Janssens, Yuri Lyapkin and Viktor Shalimov.

On Sunday, a third match will be held between the New York firefighters and the Grad Hockey Club, whose rink at the Lefortovo City shopping mall is hosting the games.

Dubbed the "Battles on Ice," the tournament was put together by the Russian-American Foundation in New York under the auspices of the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission forged by Presidents Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev.

"We wanted to celebrate the risks all firefighters take. There are shared bonds between firefighters and emergency personnel in all countries," said the foundation's vice president Rina Kirshner. "It's a very good way to bring our countries together."

While in Moscow, the New York team has been given the grand tour — visiting the Russian fire academy, being feted at a reception Thursday at the U.S. ambassador's Spaso House residence and hitting all the key tourist sights.

"Since we got off the plane [Tuesday], we haven't stopped," the team's general manager Bill Kammerer said. "They are trying to wear us out."

When asked how it felt to be cultural ambassadors, Mullin, the FDNY's goalie, said the team — who all sported jerseys bearing the FDNY motto, "The Bravest" — were just here to represent their department and have a good time.

"I don't know about all that. It's a friendly game," Mullin said. "Really, it's just hockey."

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/04/27/ny-firefighters-score-a-moscow-miracle-on-ice-a14443