

U.S. and Russia Reveal Competing Sochi Hockey Jerseys

By [The Moscow Times](#)

August 28, 2013



U.S. players in their new uniforms. **Susan Walsh**

ARLINGTON, Virginia — The U.S. men's Olympic hockey team had more than the weight of expectation on its shoulders Tuesday as the squad unveiled the high-tech jerseys with hidden extras that players will wear on the ice at the Sochi Winter Games next year.

Crafted by U.S. sporting-goods giant Nike from recycled polyester — about 17 shredded plastic bottles' worth per jersey — the tops add a hint of green to the patriotic red, white and blue of U.S. sports teams, but the jersey's environmental friendliness isn't the only unseen detail of the shirts.

An abbreviated version of the last rousing line of the first verse of the U.S. national anthem "The Star-Spangled Banner" — "Land of the free, home of the brave" — is inscribed in white capital letters inside the neckline of the jerseys, while stars on the shoulders and bold striping recall the American flag.

The jersey could be seen as an answer to the bright-red Russian Olympic hockey jersey introduced to the public Monday in Moscow.

Like the American jersey, Russia's has symbols of national pride and athletic greatness woven into its fabric.

The brilliant red jersey prominently features a golden coat of arms and the word "Russia," written in Cyrillic, on the chest — symbolizing national pride, the Russian Ice Hockey Federation wrote on its website.

"White, blue and red stripes on the top of the sleeves pay tribute to the Russian flag. Four gold stars on each shoulder recall the eight Olympic gold medals" that Russia has won at Olympic Games, including when it was part of the Soviet Union, the federation said.



Alexander Zemlianichenko / AP

Members of Russia's national teams Alexandra Kapustina and Alexander Ovechkin displaying the new uniforms.

The U.S. jersey celebrates far fewer Olympic victories but does feature the years that the U.S. won both of its men's hockey gold medals — 1960 and 1980 — on the right sleeve. Both those Winter Olympic Games were held in the U.S., and at both, the American men's hockey team beat the squad from the Soviet Union.

At next year's games in the Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi, the strong Russian team will have the home-rink advantage, but the U.S. team is also seen as a top contender for the gold medal.

"We are looking at a group that has largely been together and succeeded as a young group in 2010, being one goal away in Vancouver from winning a gold medal," Dan Bylsma, the coach of the U.S. Olympic hockey team, told reporters at an event in Arlington, Virginia on Tuesday to show off the new Team USA Hockey jersey.

At the 2010 Winter Games in Vancouver, U.S. hockey was said to be in transition, and even the general manager of the Olympic team said it had little chance of winning a medal. The hockey team went on to defy expectations and win a silver medal, skating all the way to the final, which it lost in a nail-biting and, for Americans, tear-jerking penalty shootout to the home team, Canada.

Bylsma expressed optimism about the team's chances in 2014 but also cautioned Americans not to get their hopes up too high.

"We're going to foreign soil, we're going overseas... a place where we haven't really done well in Olympic Games," he said.

"I don't want to say we're going over there as an underdog, but we're going over there with something to prove about USA hockey."

That said, Bylsma has rich pickings for the team, with any one of the goaltenders selected to train with Team USA capable of winning "every game for you," he said.

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