

Dumped Russian Olympic Hockey Coach Returns to Domestic League

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The coach who presided over Russia's hockey flop at last month's Sochi Olympics has rejoined his old team in the domestic Kontinental Hockey League, Ak Bars Kazan, the team said in a statement.

Zinetula Bilyaletdinov, 58, immediately shouldered the blame for Russia's 3-1 quarterfinal defeat to eventual bronze medalist Finland, which prolonged the country's painful post-Soviet hockey gold drought.

Bilyaletdinov rose to prominence by guiding Ak Bars to the first two KHL championship titles in 2009 and 2010 as head coach. A statement published Thursday on the Ak Bars website said he returns as the club's vice president and general manager.

Despite the Sochi humiliation, Bilyaletdinov had sought reappointment, but did not have his contract renewed at an executive committee meeting of the Russian Hockey Federation

on Wednesday.

Dynamo Moscow coach Oleg Znarok is in negotiations to succeed Bilyaletdinov as national team coach after taking Dynamo to back-to-back Gagarin Cup titles. If confirmed in the post, Znarok's first duty will be to prepare the team for the world championships running May 9-23 in Minsk, the capital of neighboring Belarus.

Ak Bars made the playoffs after finishing third in the Eastern Conference this season and faces Sibir Novosibirsk in the first round starting Saturday.

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