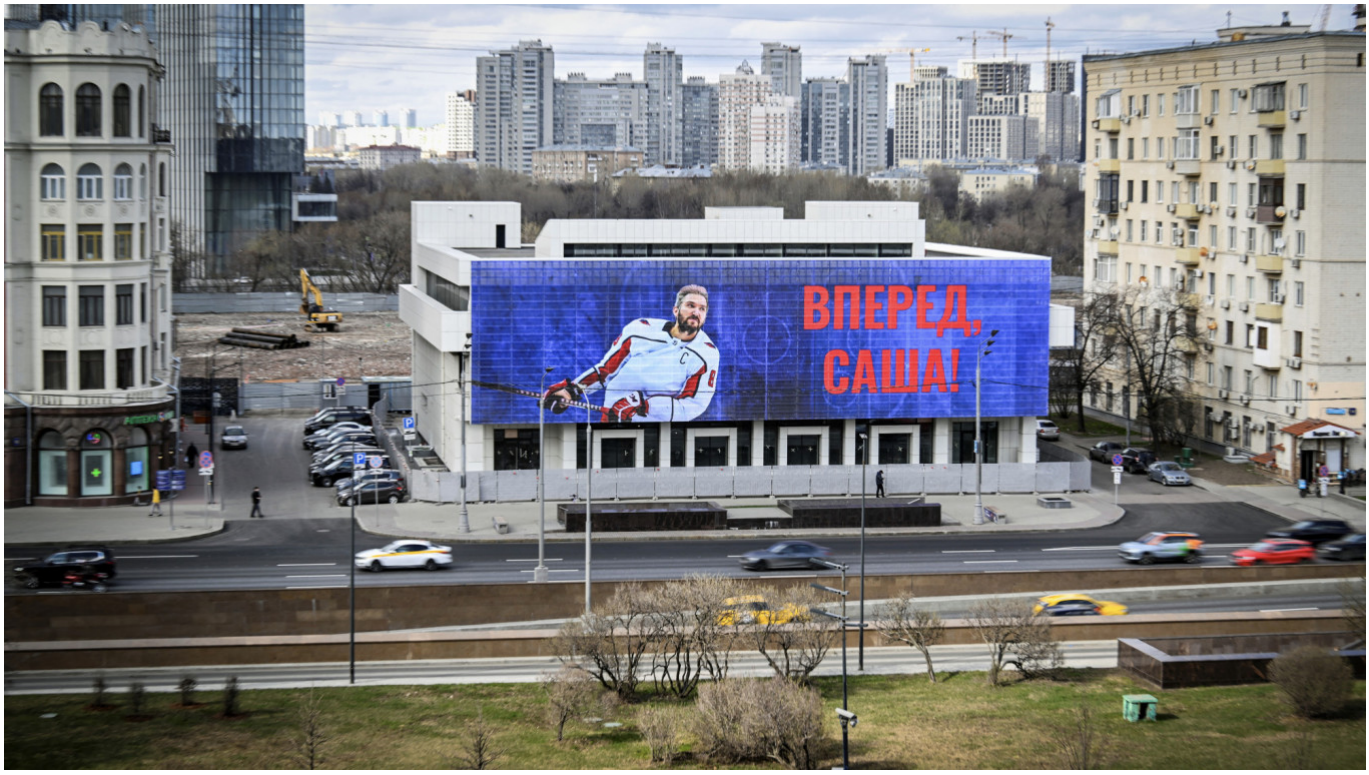
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Ovechkin Scores 895th Goal to Clinch All-Time NHL Record

By AFP

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A poster in Russia celebrating Alex Ovechkin, reading "Go ahead, Alex." **Alexander NEMENOV / AFP**

Alex Ovechkin scored his 895th NHL career goal on Sunday, etching his name into ice hockey history by finally passing the previous all-time record he shared with Wayne Gretzky.

Washington Capitals ace Ovechkin — who had tied Gretzky's 26-year-old mark with two goals on Friday — scored on a power play early in the second period of Sunday's clash at the New York Islanders.

The 39-year-old Russian icon smashed in a long-range shot with 12:34 remaining in the second period to spark wild celebrations at the UBS Arena.

An overjoyed Ovechkin dived along the ice in delight after his momentous strike, before being mobbed by team-mates as a packed arena rose in a standing ovation to the Russian's achievement.

Ice hockey's "Great One" Gretzky was in attendance along with National Hockey League commissioner Gary Bettman to witness Ovechkin's history-making strike, which was greeted by deafening chants of "Ovi, Ovi".

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Ovechkin meanwhile celebrated with his mother, wife and children, who came on to the ice as play was halted to mark the occasion.

"What a day," Ovechkin said in an address to the stadium after play was stopped.

"Like I always say, it's a team sport and without my boys, the whole organization, the fans, the trainers, I would never stand here. I would never have passed 'The Great One'," he added.

"So fellas, thank you very much, I love you so much...And the last thing — to all of you fans around the world, in Russia, we did it boys."

Gretzky meanwhile also spoke in tribute.

"They say records are made to be broken, but I'm not sure who's going to get more goals than that," the Canadian told the crowd.

Bettman meanwhile saluted Ovechkin's professionalism and impact on ice hockey.

"We have all just witnessed history," Bettman said, acknowledging that many thought Gretzky's record could not be beaten.

"But Alex, you did it. You have been amazing. You have been the consummate player representing the NHL extraordinarily on and off the ice. Thank you for all you have given the game."

Ovechkin's 895th goal marked the final act of a pursuit that had gradually become more plausible over the years given the Russian's relentless scoring.

Gretzky himself had once tipped Ovechkin to beat his record, saying in a 2016 interview it was within reach for the Russian if he could stay fit.

"The first 500 are the easy ones — it's the next 500 when you're getting a little bit older and your body is a little bit more worn down — the travel and the physical part of the game catches up to you," Gretzky said.

Ovechkin entered the 2024-2025 season 42 goals shy of breaking Gretzky's record, and rattled in 15 goals in his first 18 games before suffering a broken fibula in November that forced a 16-game absence.

Nevertheless Ovechkin picked up where he left off, scoring goals relentlessly before finally catching up to Gretzky on Friday and passing the Canadian on Sunday.

"What a moment for hockey, what a moment for myself," a relieved Ovechkin said on Sunday. "Finally no-one's gonna ask me about 'when you're gonna do it'. It's over right now."

Ovechkin's achievement meanwhile was praised by the Russian Olympic Committee, who were among the first to congratulate the player.

"The absolute record now belongs to our hockey player ... there's no reason to doubt that (Ovechkin) will raise the bar even higher, as he has a full year of contract with the Capitals ahead of him," the committee said. "We congratulate Alexander and wish him health and further success! Onward!"

Meanwhile Russian President Vladimir Putin's economic envoy Kirill Dmitriev said Ovechkin's achievement could unite Russia and the United States.

"A true unification of nations has taken place in recent weeks: while Americans were cheering for a Russian hockey player, Russians were cheering for the American Washington Capitals," Dmitriev wrote on Telegram.

"This is what sport should be: a tool that can bring people together, even across an ocean

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