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JULY 2, 2025

IIHF FINALIZES AGREEMENT WITH NHL AND NHLPA FOR THE OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES 2026

Zurich, Switzerland – July 2, 2025 – The International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) today hosted key representatives from the National Hockey League (NHL) and the National Hockey League Players' Association (NHLPA) in presence of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) at its headquarters in Zurich, culminating in the finalization of a landmark agreement confirming the participation of NHL players in the 2026 Winter Olympic Games in Milan. This agreement, which has also opened the door for participation of NHL players in the 2030 Winter Olympic Games in French Alps, officially marks the return of NHL players to the Olympic stage for the first time since the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, Russia — a long-anticipated comeback that fans around the world have been eagerly awaiting.

Throughout the negotiation process, all partners worked tirelessly to ensure the agreement would be aligned with the shared strategic goals of all parties involved.

"This is a tremendous day for international ice hockey and for fans across the globe," said IIHF President **Luc Tardif**. "At the initiative of the IIHF, we have worked collaboratively with NHL and NHLPA in close collaboration with the IOC and Milano Cortina Organizing Committee to make this a reality. Bringing the best players in the world back to the Olympic Games in 2026 is a major step forward for our sport."

"We are pleased to confirm that NHL players will be participating in the 2026 Olympic Games," said **Gary Bettman**, Commissioner of the NHL. "Olympic participation will showcase the skill and talent of NHL players on an international stage. We are proud to collaborate with the IIHF, NHLPA, and IOC to bring the best hockey players in the world to the Olympics and make this happen in a way that benefits the game globally."

"Best-on-best international tournaments like the Olympics provide the opportunity to create extraordinary moments for our players and fans alike," said **Marty Walsh**, Executive Director, NHLPA. "The return to the Olympics marks a monumental moment for hockey and we thank our partners – the NHL, IOC and IIHF – for this collaborative process. The skill and passion on display in Milano-Cortina will build off the excitement of the 4 Nations Face-Off and continue our game's global growth."

IOC president **Kirsty Coventry** said: "The IOC welcomes the agreement between the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF), the National Hockey League (NHL), and the National Hockey League Players' Association (NHLPA). This agreement will lead to the participation of all the best Ice Hockey players of the world in the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026 and the Olympic Winter Games 2030. All the parties who were involved in coming to this agreement should be commended for this excellent result."

The IIHF also [recently published](#) an in-depth article highlighting the exciting developments of Milano Cortina 2026 which underscores the federation's full commitment to staging a world class tournament in February 2026. All 12 participating ice hockey federations have also announced the initial six players proposed to their preliminary rosters for the upcoming men's ice hockey tournament.

With this agreement, the IIHF, NHL, and the NHLPA have not only reaffirmed their commitment to the global growth of ice hockey but have also opened the door to what promises to be one of the most competitive and thrilling Olympic tournaments in recent memory. Preparations now shift into high gear to ensure that the Olympic ice hockey competition in Milano Cortina 2026 will captivate fans and inspire a new generation of players around the world.

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