

Twin hat trick

Women's tournament features three pairs of twins



The Marty, Lamoureux and Benz twins with the Canada Hockey Place in the background. Photo: Martin Merk

VANCOUVER – If you were already impressed to see twins playing for Sweden with the Sedins, you should take a look at the Olympic women's ice hockey tournament. A record three pairs of twin sisters have appeared in the event – two for Switzerland, one for Team USA.

And all of them have reason to be happy, as their teams have improved compared to the Turin Olympics four years ago.

The Lamoureux twins are appearing in their first Olympics, and the 20-year-olds have been doing great.

Their surname has a French derivation, and literally means “the lover”. And they seem to love the Vancouver Olympics.

While Team USA was hardly challenged before the much-anticipated gold medal game against Canada, Monique Lamoureux collected 10 (4+6) points and her sister Jocelyne 6 (2+4) points.

“We've been looking forward to the Olympic final for many years,” Jocelyne Lamoureux said. “I remember watching the 1998 gold medal game, and we worked hard so we could get to a gold medal game too.”

The twins are part of a huge hockey family from Grand Forks, North Dakota. “Our dad played college hockey and we have four older brothers who all play, so hockey is the main sport in our family,” Monique Lamoureux said. The sisters both play and study in their hometown in the University of North Dakota.

Playing with her sister is something she doesn't want to miss out on, although they're not

always on the same line.

“We’ve always been together and it’s special to play here with her. We know each other so well, we have a better sense of where each of us will be,” Monique Lamoureux said. “We do so much together. We’re in all the same classes and we grew up playing on the same team in any sport we played.”

Having different hairstyles helps to distinguish the young ladies from each other, although even coaches have mistaken one for the other.

Today, only one colour is on the minds of the blondes: gold, against Canada, in Canada.

“Everybody expected this game – it will come down to little things. We know we have to play well for 60 minutes,” Jocelyne Lamoureux said. “It’s just a matter of getting pucks to the net.”

In the country from which the other four twin sisters hail, women’s hockey looks quite different. While there are 85,309 women playing hockey in Canada and 59,506 in the United States, there are just 735 registered players in Switzerland.

The 21-year-old Marty sisters, who played in the 2006 Olympics as the first twins in international women’s hockey, decided to go a different route: North America. Defenceman Julia Marty plays for Northeastern University, while forward Stefanie Marty suits up for Syracuse University.

The twins had their breakthrough this year. Stefanie Marty even made history. With nine goals at the Olympics, she’s scored more goals in one tournament than any other previous player, and is currently tied for the record with Canada’s Meghan Agosta, who could take over the lead in the gold medal game.

“Before the Olympics, I hadn’t thought that I’d score that many goals,” Stefanie Marty admitted. “But you have always to give your best and when it ends like that, it’s great, of course. I think my two-and-a-half years in the U.S. helped my development. There are more players, more teams. The leagues are more balanced, and the skill and speed is different.”

The Swiss finished in fifth place after a 2-1 shootout victory against Russia, and maintained their place in the new IIHF World Ranking.

“It was our goal to reach the Top 6, so we’re happy with what we’ve achieved,” Julia Marty said. “It’s nice to play with my sister here. I’d like to play more often with her, as we’ve played together our whole lives.”

Like the Lamoureux twins, one can hardly tell the difference between the Marty twins as a stranger. “People who have known us for a long time have no problems with it,” Julia Marty said. “It also works well with our teammates, but sometimes coaches have more problems.”

The third pair of twins at the tournament are not identical, but fraternal twins. And they’re also from a hockey family. Their father grew up close to the ice rink of the Kloten Flyers. “Our brother began to play hockey and then we began too,” Sara Benz said. “But as I’m on defence and Laura is a forward, it’s not so important whether we play in the same unit or not.”

The Benz twins are among the youngest players on the Swiss roster. While the 17-year-olds

are enjoying international women's hockey at its best in Vancouver, their everyday hockey life looks quite differently.

Back in Switzerland with EHC Winterthur, they will play in front of a handful of spectators instead of thousands. And they will play in the second age category of boys' junior hockey.

"There are not so many women's teams, and it may take more time and money to make women's hockey more popular in Switzerland," said Laura Benz. "The level in the boys' league is higher than in the women's league. It's faster. You have less time and have to pass quicker, especially because the boys are checking."

Bodychecks, or the lack thereof, constitute one of the main differences between women's and men's hockey, but for Laura Benz it makes no difference. "I can't keep up with their bodychecks anyway, so there's not much opportunity to check, and thus the adjustment to women's hockey is not so difficult," she said.

For the Swiss team, the tournament is over. The players will catch their flight back home today, while the Olympic women's ice hockey tournament concludes with the medal games at Canada Hockey Place.

Finland and Sweden play for bronze at 11:00. The gold medal game featuring Canada-USA starts at 15:30.

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