

## Juniors in Russia getting recognition after WJC triumph

Written by Alessandro Seren Rosso

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One of the KHL and RSL plagues has been the overlooking of some of the non-veteran players. After all, most of the players who left Russia for the CHL in recent years actually left because they had no reasonable alternative.

Alexander Burmistrov, for example, played only one pro game in Russia. The same for Evgeny Grachev. Andrei Loktionov had a chance to skate in five games and even managed an assist. Unfortunately for the young players, not all of them are Vladimir Tarasenko or Evgeny Kuznetsov, who can count on quality minutes in the KHL.

But after the recent WJC triumph, things are actually changing a little bit. Established players like Tarasenko, Kuznetsov and Dmitry Orlov continue playing big roles in their respective KHL teams, but other young players are getting more and more chances.

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One of the players who might fall in this category is Artemy Panarin. The hero of the gold medal game (he netted goals twice in the third period) is actually benefitting from a bigger role since his return from Buffalo. And with a bigger role comes better production.

For example Panarin recently scored the game-winning shootout goal in a game against SKA St. Petersburg. If it wasn't for the gold medal game, most likely he wouldn't get a chance in the shootout.

Another forward who benefitted from his gold medal was large-framed Anton Burdasov. The Traktor Chelyabinsk wing (he's Evgeny Kuznetsov's teammate) is getting more minutes now and recently he was able to score his first KHL goal. It's interesting to note that popular Russian coach Valery Belousov ices a line made up of prospects with Burdasov, Kuznetsov and Flyers' draftee Andrei Popov.

But if we want to talk about some unsung heroes, we might need to travel to Ufa. The Capital of the Bashkortostan Republic, a hockey hot-bed which is gonna host the 2013 WJC, is seeing a new, young, interesting player coming up in the ranks with some solid play. Alexander Pankov, 19, scored four goals in his first 11 games in the KHL so far.

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Solid numbers for a rookie, especially if we keep on thinking that the KHL is a relatively low-scoring league. And Pankov is showing that he can play pro hockey. While this is surely not enough to get drafted, this is however a definite indication that it's still possible to prove you can achieve good results even if you're a youngsters.

With this being said, one can get to any desired conclusion. But one thing is certain: the Motherland is still producing her share of talent.