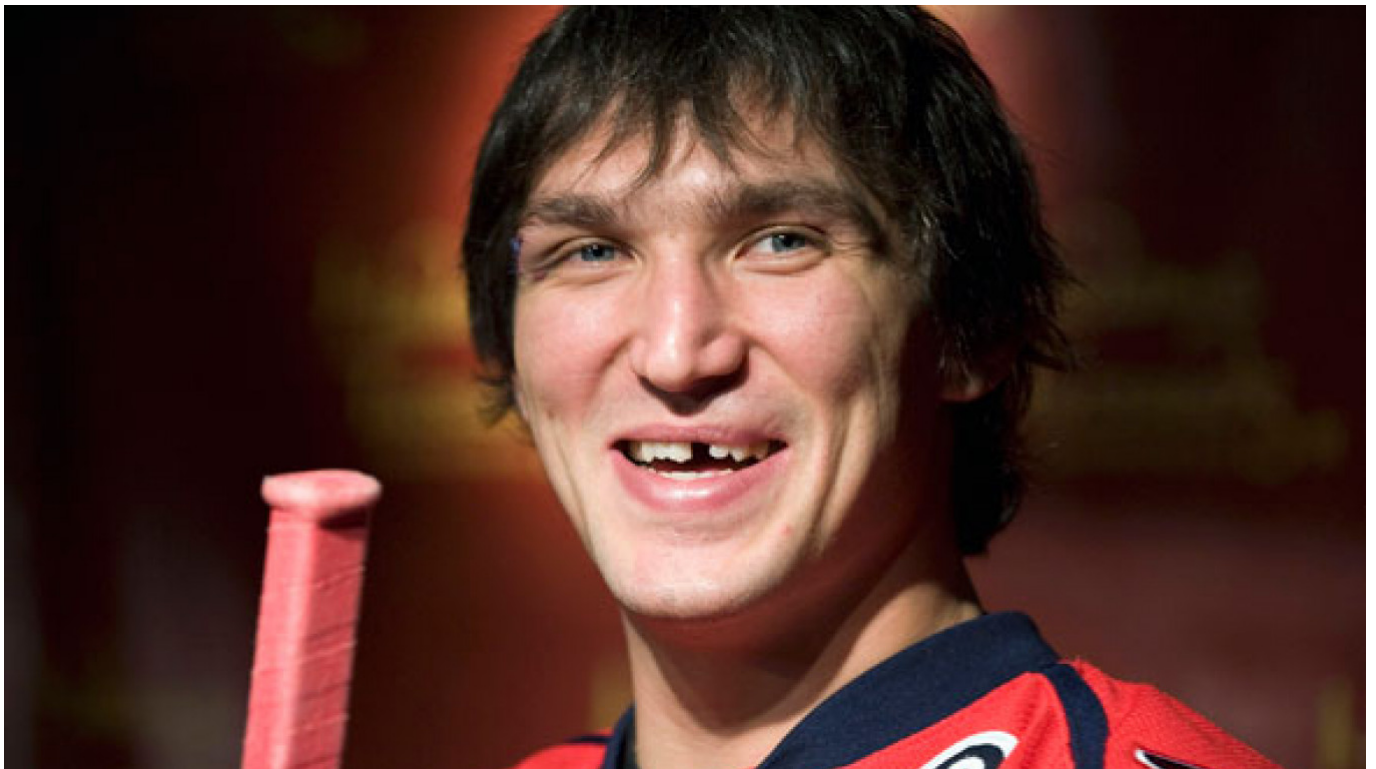


Ovechkin Seeks Team Russia Glory in Sochi

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Alex Ovechkin

For all the riches Alex Ovechkin has accumulated during a glittering ice hockey career, a gold medal and a coveted silver bowl remain firmly beyond the Russian sniper's grasp.

With a trophy case laden with individual honors, including three Hart trophies as the NHL's most valuable player, and a \$124 million contract with the Washington Capitals, Ovechkin would seem to have plenty to be pleased about.

For all his considerable personal accomplishments, wealth and good fortune, however, his Hall of Fame resume is incomplete, having yet to take his team or country to championship glory.

As the 28-year-old prepares to lead the Russian men's ice hockey team into battle at the Sochi Winter Games, Ovechkin understands better than most what an Olympic gold medal means

to his home and.

His mother, Tatyana Ovechkina, an ex-Soviet Russian basketball player, has two Olympic gold medals while Maria Kirilenko, his tennis-playing girlfriend, also knows her way to the podium, capturing a bronze at the 2012 London Summer Games.

Even Ovechkin's great rival, Pittsburgh Penguins and Canada captain Sidney Crosby, had ticked an Olympic gold and a Stanley Cup off his to-do list by the time he was 22.

"Of course, we talk about it," Ovechkin said. "She [Ovechkin's mother] has some memories but back then, it was two different countries.

"The U.S.S.R. and Russia are two different countries. It is different. It was communist back then."

Taken with the number-one overall pick in the 2004 NHL draft by the Capitals, Ovechkin has scored 50 or more goals in four of his eight seasons, and the four-time All-Star is almost certain to do so again this campaign.

But it is team goals, not personal ones, that matter now as Ovechkin continues to shape his hockey legacy.

Ovechkin will have many more chances to see his name engraved on Lord Stanley's famous mug but at 28 and entering his third Winter Games, the opportunity to reach the Olympic summit might never be better than it will be this time on home ice.

"It is totally different," shrugged Ovechkin, when asked which he thought would be a greater achievement an Olympic gold or Stanley Cup. "The Olympics are a short one. It's like 12 days.

"If you are going to win the Olympic gold medal you have to concentrate for just 12 days."

It is certain to be 12 insanely pressure-packed days for Ovechkin and his teammates as they attempt to reclaim the proud country's hockey honor.

Once international ice hockey's undisputed superpower, Russia's dominance faded following the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Winners of six-of-seven Olympic titles from the 1964 Innsbruck Games to Calgary in 1988, the last traces of Russia's hockey empire were seen at the 1992 Albertville Winter Games when a "Unified Team" of former Soviet republics took gold.

In the five Winter Olympics since, Russia has had to settle for one silver and a bronze while plunging to an embarrassing low in Vancouver where they slumped to a sixth-place finish.

The tremendous burden to bring down the curtain on the Sochi Games in glorious style by claiming hockey gold on the final day will be no different than the pressure Canada felt four years ago when Crosby scored the golden goal to lift the host nation to victory over the U.S.

The Canadian win touched off wild celebrations across the Great White North and no doubt a Russian gold medal would spark the same hoopla across all nine time zones from St.

Petersburg to Vladivostok.

"It is all about the gold," conceded Ovechkin. "We have a goal to win the gold medal and we are going to try to win it. I can't wait."

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