



TAMPERE Hockey Route

Tampere is known as the cradle of Finnish ice hockey. Its development into a hockey city happened for very practical reasons. Maintaining a skating rink cost quite a lot, and Yrjö Salminen, a factory owner from Tampere, calculated that ice hockey required a smaller playing area than bandy, and it would also be possible to provide lighting for the ice rink for evening use at a reasonable cost. During his study trips to Canada, he had become familiar with ice hockey, which was very popular with the locals there, and believed that the sport would also attract enthusiastic players in Finland. So enthusiastic that they would gladly pay the fee for using an ice rink. On Boxing Day in 1926, Salminen brought ice hockey sticks and pucks to the skating rink of the local Pyrintö club on the ice of Lake Pyhäjärvi, encouraging the boys there to try the new sport.

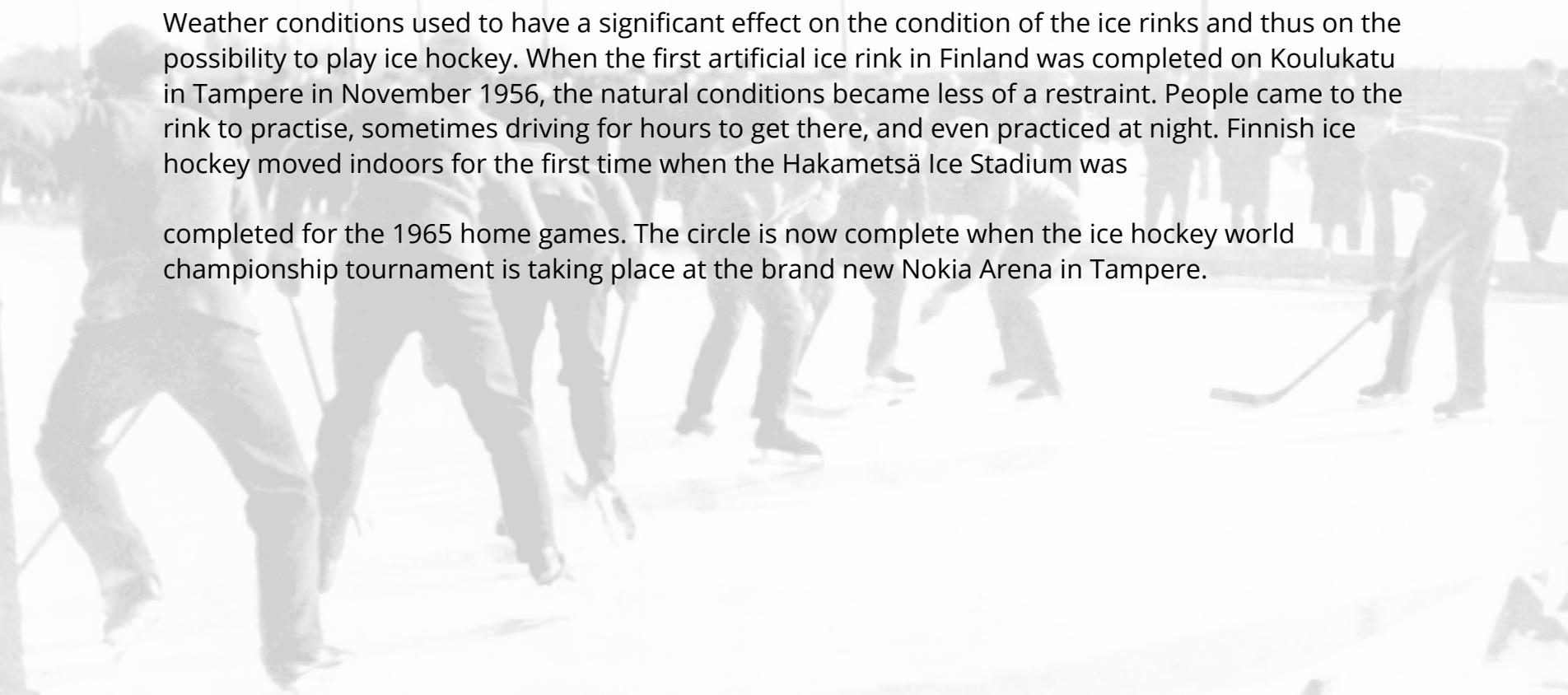
On 5 February 1928, the first ice hockey match between two Finnish clubs was played on Lake Pyhäjärvi ice. The match was between Tampereen Palloilijat and Helsingin Palloseura, and ended in a 1–3 victory for the visiting team. The same clubs met again on 26 February 1928 at the Töölö stadium in the first ever Finnish championship match, where the Tampere team got their revenge with a score of 0–1. Olli Alkio from Tampereen Palloilijat scored the only goal of the match and became the first scorer at Finnish championship level.

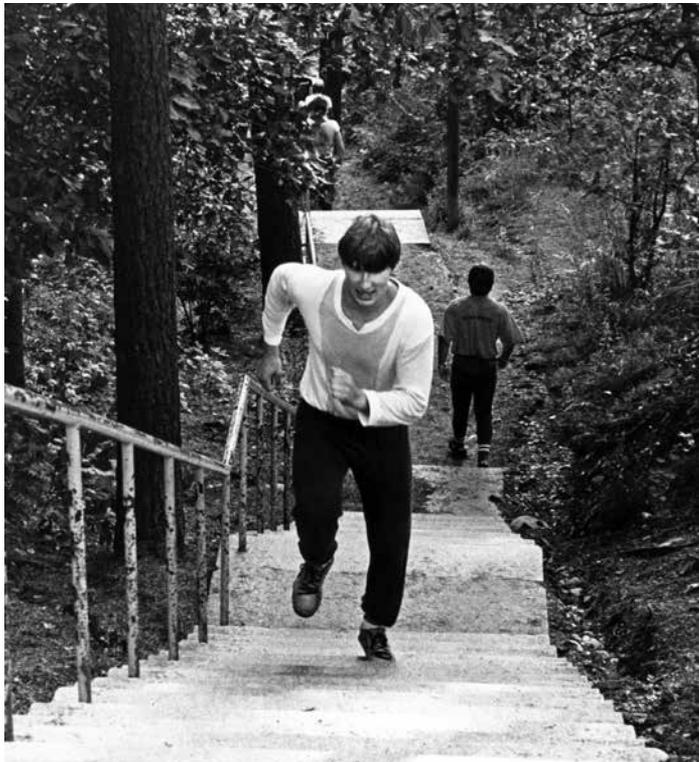
Ice hockey became more popular and established during the post-war decades. During the period 1928–1975, the Tampere clubs Ilves, Tappara/TBK and KOOVEE won more than half of the Finnish championship titles. In the spring of 1951, Ilves were the first team to lift the Canada Cup, which was donated by Finnish Canadians to the Finnish ice hockey champions as a challenge trophy. All medals went to Tampere clubs in 1960, 1962 and 1964. The SM-liiga league, founded in 1975, has seen a more even distribution of medals between the various regions in Finland, but Tampere teams have still won the most titles.

Tampere also values the history of the sport. The first ice hockey museum in Europe was established in Tampere in 1979, in the Hakametsä Ice Stadium, to record, preserve and present Finnish ice hockey history and to honour the most outstanding individuals involved in the sport. Since 2001, the museum has been housed in the Vapriikki Museum Centre.

Weather conditions used to have a significant effect on the condition of the ice rinks and thus on the possibility to play ice hockey. When the first artificial ice rink in Finland was completed on Koulukatu in Tampere in November 1956, the natural conditions became less of a restraint. People came to the rink to practise, sometimes driving for hours to get there, and even practiced at night. Finnish ice hockey moved indoors for the first time when the Hakametsä Ice Stadium was

completed for the 1965 home games. The circle is now complete when the ice hockey world championship tournament is taking place at the brand new Nokia Arena in Tampere.





Ville Sirén trains in the Pyynikki stairs in 1982.



The clubs Tampereen Palloilijat and Viipurin Reipas meet in a semifinal match on the ice of Lake Pyhäjärvi in February 1928.



Ilves juniors "A" team play in the Eteläpuisto ice rink in 1942.

1. PYYNIKKI STAIRS

The stairs on the southern slope of the Pyynikki ridge that ascend to the observation tower at the top are a challenge that can show you what you are made of. These concrete steps have improved the fitness of athletes from various local clubs for decades, but they attracted particular attention when coach Rauno Korpi trained the players of the Finnish champion team Tappara there in the summers of the 1980s. The stairs have 126 steps.

2. LAKE PYHÄJÄRVI NATURAL ICE

Ice hockey was first played in Tampere on an ice rink in front of Joselininniemi point. A local leather manufacturer, Yrjö Salmi-nen, brought equipment for ice hockey, a new sport, from his travels in Canada. On Boxing Day 1926, at 10 a.m., he threw the equipment onto the ice and the young athletes from the clubs Tampereen Pyrintö and Tampereen Palloilijat tried it out. On 5 February 1928, the first ice hockey match between Finnish teams was played in the same place between Tampereen Palloilijat (TaPa) and Helsingin Palloseura (HPS).

3. KOULUKATU ICE RINK

The first artificial ice rink in Finland opened in Koulukatu in the Kaakinmaa district of Tampere in November 1956. There had been a playing field known as the Mariankatu field on the same plot of land previously, and it used to be frozen over by the Ilves club in wintertime from 1934. The rink with high boards was completed in Koulukatu in December 1945 on the site of the current ice rink. The surplus cooling capacity from the nearby Pyynikki brewery made it possible to maintain the artificial ice rink cost-efficiently. The opening ceremony featured a quick tournament between the Tampere teams playing in the championship series, i.e., Ilves, TK-V and Tappara. When an indoor ice stadium was completed in Hakametsä, the main league teams from Tampere moved their activities there.

4. ETELÄPUISTO ICE RINK

In January 1941, the City of Tampere opened a new ice hockey rink in the Southern Park, Eteläpuisto in Finnish. People did not care it was wartime and equipment was hard to come by, the new rink created a hockey boom in Tampere. There were originally no stands for spectators and the rink had low boards, which posed a hazard for players and spectators alike. The wooden stands built later proved to be lacking in capacity, as there was great enthusiasm for ice hockey among the people of Tampere. In the winter of 1971, the Ilves women's team also started training in the Eteläpuisto ice rink.

Photo: Kristian Numminen



Finland Hockey Hall of Fame

Photo: Veikko Lintinen



Flags outside Hakametsä Ice Stadium during the 1965 World Championships..

5. FINLAND HOCKEY HALL OF FAME

The exhibition at Finland Hockey Hall of Fame displays the story of ice hockey in Finland from its beginnings to the present day. On display are all the World Championship trophies won by the Finland national team and Finland's most coveted challenge trophy, the Canada Cup. The greatest Finnish ice hockey legends adorn the walls of the Hockey Hall of Fame. To crown the experience, you can test your own goaltending and shooting skills in simulators. Finland Hockey Hall of Fame is located in the Vapriikki Museum Centre.

6. NOKIA ARENA

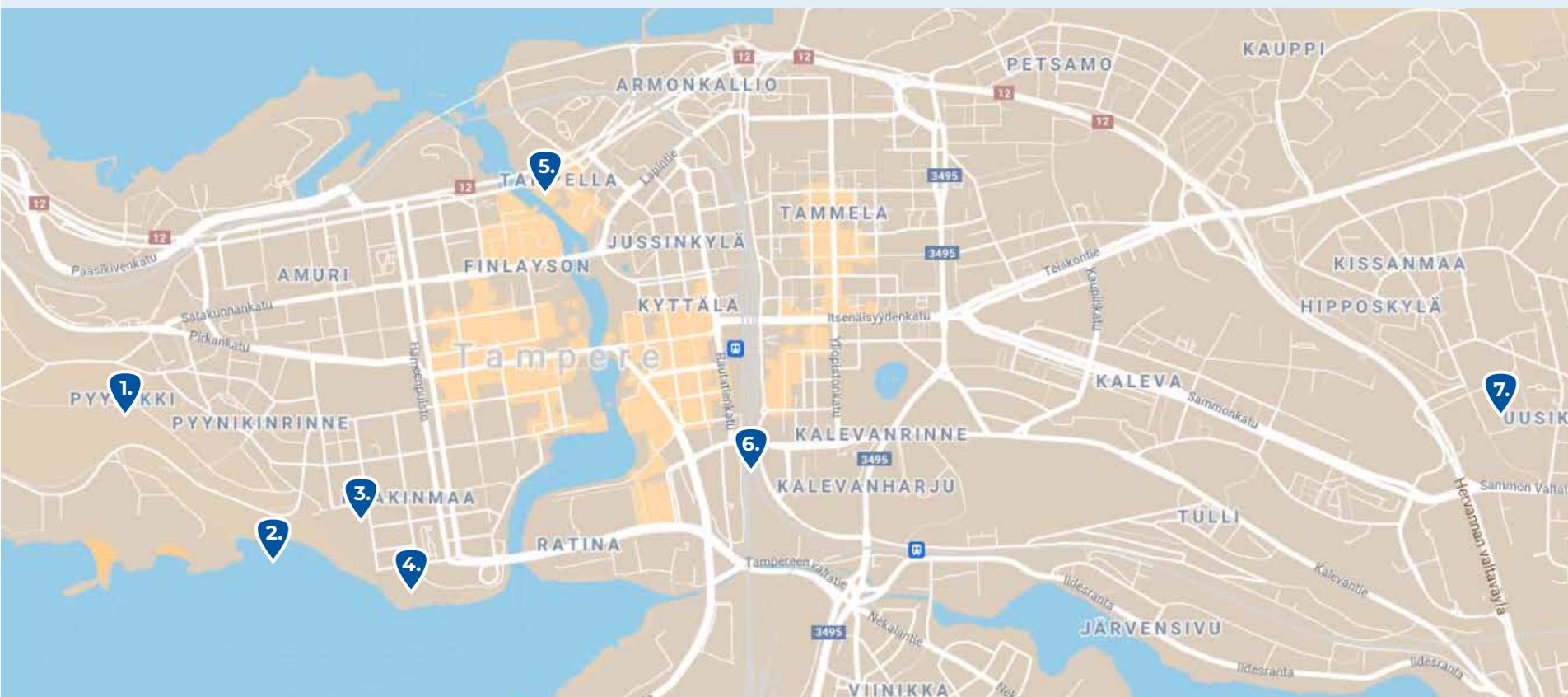
In Tampere, ice hockey entered a new era when the Tampere Deck Arena, known as Nokia Arena after its main sponsor, designed by American architect Daniel Libeskind, was completed in December 2021. It serves as the main venue for the 2022 World Championships. Tampere legends Lasse Oksanen, Risto Jalo, Jukka Tammi, Timo Susi, Janne Ojanen and Timo Jutila got to test the ice in the new arena. League teams Tappara and Ilves played their first match in the Nokia Arena on 3 December 2021. In addition to ice hockey matches, the arena is also used for other sport and entertainment events and concerts by top artists.

7. HAKAMETSÄ ICE STADIUM

A condition for the 1965 Ice Hockey World Championships in Finland was that an indoor ice stadium be built for the tournament. When Helsinki took their time thinking about it, the people of Tampere took the lead, and the first indoor ice stadium in Finland was opened on 29 January 1965 in Hakametsä. Training rinks were also built on the site in 1974 and 1995. Over the decades, this stadium, designed by architect Jaakko Tähtinen, became a real shrine to Finnish ice hockey. Eleven Finnish ice hockey championships were won there and it was the venue for the 1982, 1991, 1997 and 2003 men's world championship tournaments and the 1992 women's world championship tournament. The last main league match was played here between Tappara and HPK on 27 November 2021. The Hakametsä Ice Stadium will be preserved as part of a new sports campus being built around it.

Tampere Hockey Route (from west to east)

1. PYYNIKKI STAIRS
2. LAKE PYHÄJÄRVI NATURAL ICE
3. KOULUKATU ICE RINK
4. ETELÄPUISTO ICE RINK
5. FINLAND HOCKEY HALL OF FAME
6. NOKIA ARENA
7. HAKAMETSÄ ICE STADIUM



Text and photos: Mika Vehmas/Finland Hockey Hall of Fame

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