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Ice hockey mascot: dream job for a designer

"For a former athlete, designing the mascot for the ice hockey world championships was a dream job. I got to take a peek behind the scenes at the tournament organization as well as give a little extra boost to the ice hockey fever through the mascot. With the stamp added to that equation, I really have nothing to complain about," Rovio Entertainment's Lead Artist Toni Kysenius says, obviously excited by it all.

The starting point of Toni Kysenius's work was the central character, the bird. "The challenge of the project was to create a bird that would have the optimal size and form for all the positions on the ice. HockeyBird's character consists of an energetic presence, adequate physical size and a strictly focused facial expression."

The belly of the bird resembles a playoff beard. The tail, which could also be interpreted as a hockey player's typically longish hair, is probably the most easily recognized feature of the bird. The helmet was a natural addition to the character to make the connection to ice hockey obvious and to add a proper tournament look," Kysenius says, describing his creation.

According to Kysenius, designing hands and feet for the bird was a challenge, as Angry Birds typically have none. "The final look of the bird is a working compromise. The look wasn't finalized until the physical mascot costume was ready."

Scalable bird works well in everything from posters to stamps

Toni Kysenius produced nearly a dozen different HockeyBird illustrations to be used in various contexts. All the versions can be technically modified and are therefore easy to use for many different products and tournament materials, including stamps.

For the implementation of the stamp, Mr. Kysenius also wants to thank his co-worker **Olga Budanova** at Rovio, whose soft touch shows in the stamp illustration.

Designing a stamp was the second coolest thing on Toni Kysenius's scale. "The coolest thing ever would still be to appear in a coffee commercial, saying the line 'You just know when you've got it right,'" Kysenius says grinning.

Kysenius admits that he got a tad nervous when he looked at earlier stamps. "Many of the fabulous stamps were designed by people I know from the University of Art and Design. I have admired their work for years."

With the HockeyBird stamp, Toni Kysenius had the opportunity to utilize printing technologies that he is rarely able to use in his other work. "What's best about stamps is the incredibly detailed technical process and the use of special printing effects."