

Chess queen from Minsk

Belarusian Anastasia Zezyulkina, 15, wins World Chess Championship for under 16s, beating 99 others

At Porto Carras, Greece, the Belarusian won almost every match, only beaten by Dutch Lisa Schut, seeded second, in a gruelling six-hour struggle. Anastasia's main rival, Meri Arabidze of Georgia, lost the final match, pushing Zezyulkina to the top of the tournament table.

It's the first time that a Belarusian has won the World Championship in this age category but Anastasia's success has been building since early this year. Her gold at the European Championship was a revelation to her opponents and experts. She then won the Belarusian Women's Chess Tournament. She is now ranked first among the top 100 under 16s, having won numerous events over the past months.

On November 25th, Zezyulkina will be joining the junior men at a Chess Olympics in Turkey.

Azarenko holds firm in world ratings

Doha tournament closes season, finalising leading tennis players' world rankings

Kim Clijsters of Belgium took gold in Doha, while Caroline Wozniacki of Denmark tops the world rankings. Sadly, Victoria Azarenko failed to continue beyond the group stage this year. After beaten by Russian Vera Zvonareva early on, Victoria needed a win over Kim Clijsters to reach the play-offs.



Victoria Azarenko in action

However, the three set match quickly revealed Kim's superiority. Azarenko's defeat of Jelena Jankovic of Serbia was unable to change anything, despite the Belarusian winning easily over two sets.

As a result, Azarenko remains in tenth place (with 4,235 points) having won in Stanford and Moscow this year. In the finals match in Stanford, Victoria defeated Maria Sharapova and, in the decisive match of the Kremlin Cup, she beat Russia's Maria Kirilenko. Moreover, this season, Azarenko was just one step away from two more titles. In the finals of a tournament in Dubai, she lost to Venus Williams and, in the UK's Eastbourne, she lost the final to Russia's Yekaterina Makarova.

Victoria now closes the WTA ranking's top ten players, which are led by Caroline Wozniacki (8,035 points), Vera Zvonareva (6,785) and Kim Clijsters (6,635). Another Belarusian — Olga Govortsova — has reached the top hundred tennis players, holding 73rd place, with 848 points.

Footballers' actions speak louder than any words

BATE Borisov crushes Sheriff Moldova 3:1 in fourth match of Europa League group stage, gaining place in play-offs ahead of time

By Yuri Karpenko

Belarus' champion has confirmed its ambitions plans — announced late this summer — to reach the next round of the 2010/2011 Europa League. BATE has played four matches in Group E without losing, gaining ten points and dropping no lower than second place.

The match between the Belarusian and Moldovan champions at Minsk's Dynamo stadium was tough, as it was two weeks ago in Tiraspol. There, the Borisov team won 1:0, with central defenseman Sergey Sosnovsky showing his mettle early in the match. In Minsk, the Belarusian club also dominated at the start, with Vitaly Rodionov scoring a quick goal. The guests then became more aggressive, threatening Sergey Veremko's net several times.

Eventually, Sheriff's Russian legionary, Alexander Yerokhin, equalised the score. After halftime, Tiraspol seized the initiative, creating some dangerous moments for the Belarusians, though failing to actually score. Meanwhile, BATE used every chance to counter-attack. Alexander Pavlov scored in the 70th minute and, five minutes later, Renan Bressan aimed his penalty kick well, bringing the score to 3:1.

With Dynamo Kiev's win over Alkmaar (2:0) in the parallel match,



BATE Borisov's Alexander Yurevich (L) fights Sheriff Tiraspol's Vladimir Volkov for the ball

the Minsk success has guaranteed the Borisov squad a ticket to the 1/16 finals (ahead of the two matches yet to be played before the group stage finishes). BATE head coach Victor Goncharenko is usually calm and clear-headed but, at the after match press conference, showed his excitement, saying, "It's difficult to assess what a great job we've done. We're thankful to

our fans; they stayed in the stands after the final whistle, applauding for a long time. I hope TV viewers also admired our play. I'm so grateful to the squad for their amazing desire to win and advance through the tournament. With such experienced players as Alexander Yurevich and Dmitry Likhtarovich, we can take on the world. As regards the match itself, we managed to cope

with our rivals' strength while taking advantage of their weaknesses."

At the next match of the group stage, held on December 2nd, BATE is to play Kiev at home, while Dutch AZ is to play an away match against Moldova. On the final day, December 15th, the Borisov team will go to Holland, while Kiev will host a match between Dynamo and Sheriff.

Three medals from Berlin

Eighth round of Grand Prix sees success for calisthenics grace Lyubov Cherkashina

In the exercise with the hoop, Lyubov was placed second behind Russian Yevgenia Kanaeva. Cher-

kashina also took bronze for her programme with the skipping rope and ribbon and came fourth in the all-round (four exercises) and in the exercise with the ball.

Another Belarusian, Anna Ry-

abtseva, was placed tenth in the all-round. 2008 Olympic champion Yevgenia Kanaeva was the overall winner of the Berlin Grand Prix round, finishing first in the all-round and in the separate exercises.

Still searching for their path

By Yuri Kovalev

Belarusian men's handball team suffers poor start in 2012 European Championship qualification round

In the opening match in Olsberg, at the Gigantium Arena, watched by four thousand spectators, Yuri Shevtsov's squad lost to the Danes (the favourites of the seventh qualification group). The final score was 33:41.

Boris Pukhovskiy (Dynamo Minsk) was the best striker on the Belarusian squad (scoring nine times), followed by the most expensive handball player in the world, Sergey Rutenko (playing for Belarus), who scored four times. Interestingly, this was the first match where Sergey was playing officially with his younger brother, Denis.

The last time that Belarus played equally against Denmark was in 1994. Unfortunately, our team now lags behind in experience, strength and skill. Few can repel the sharp attacks of the Dan-



Belarusians attack Russian squad's net

ish squad, which usually result in goals. Belarus failed to pose any real threat to this formidable squad and looked exhausted by the final whistle. The head coach of the Belarusian national men's handball team scolded them after the match, lamenting, "You failed to find your own style of play!"

Our coach was hardly hap-

pier at the Victoria Brest Sports Complex, where they were beaten 39:32 by Russia. The score was less shameful but the team needs to finish first or second in its group to reach the finals of the 2012 European Championship. With few points, we have little hope of achieving this goal. Play will continue in March 2011.

Stepping to new heights

Belarusian Artem Damkovsky wins M-1 Challenge XXI mixed combat championship

In St. Petersburg, Artem Damkovsky fought for the lightweight (under 70kg) title, facing M-1 Selection 2010 Western European champion Mairbek 'Beckan' Taisumov, representing Belgium. The fate of the belt and champion's ring was settled when Taisumov suffered a technical knockout at Artem's hands, during the third minute of the third round (of a potential five, each lasting five minutes).

The M-1 Challenge XXI is the main European title. However, Damkovsky views this as just another step on his path of success. The event gathers top fighters from Europe, Asia and America, each keen to become the best in the world. Artem has one more obstacle to overcome before claiming this grand title. His win in St. Petersburg opens his path to the finals. Early next year, Artem is to face whoever wins the M-1 Global world champion match between Asia and America.

Damkovsky is now the M-1 Challenge XXI champion of Eastern Europe. He became Belarusian champion in hand-to-hand combat in 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 and was named Belarusian pankration champion in 2008 and 2009, as well as the silver holder of the Unifight World Championship in 2006.