

# Season of revelations

2010 season proves most successful for Belarusian national teams and clubs in recent years

By Yuri Karpenko

At the beginning of the year, the Belarusian mini football team reached the finals of the European Championship for the first time, while our women's squad came third in the qualification round for the 2011 World Championship, following such grands of European women's football as Norway and Holland. Meanwhile, it was the first time that three Belarusian squads reached the Europa League qualifying play-offs: Dynamo Minsk, Dnepr Mogilev and BATE Borisov. Moreover, BATE went through to the group stage and to the knockout round of the tournament — for the first time in their history. Our team also did brilliantly in the qualification round for the Junior European Championship, reaching the finals after defeating Italy. This was the third time that our junior team has gone through to play among Europe's top eight, with Georgy Kondratiev's trainees having every chance of making junior football history in Belarus; if they reach the semi-finals in Denmark, they could end up playing at the summer 2012 Olympics.

The main national football team of Belarus is showing promising results in preparation for the 2012 European Championship, earning 8 points over 4 matches and letting through not a single goal. The head coach of our squad, Bernd Stange, believes that, despite a successful start, it's too early to comment on the team's achievements. He believes the main struggle lies ahead. The German expert notes that Belarus is not yet a football leader



Footballers from national team have played this season with good spirits

and has some way to go to reach those heights, needing proper organisation and infrastructure. Commenting on last season's performance, his main joy has been our away victory over world-recognised France (1:0). However, he was hugely disappointed by our home draw against Romania — 0:0. The result in Minsk irritated him even more than our away draw against Luxembourg. Victory in Paris inspired fans and experts alike to anticipate Belarus' triumph at home against Romania. Still, the Belarusian squad is still

in with a chance of reaching the finals of the European Championship.

Belarus is to open a new football season with a match against Kazakhstan, to be hosted by Antalya, Turkey, on February 9th. According to Bernd Stange, Kazakhstan is not viewed as the strongest opponent for our national team but was the only choice. Matches against Poland in Portugal or Algeria in London were suggested but rejected. BATE Borisov, which sends core players to the national squad, is to have a play-off

match as part of the Europa League on February 16th, so its head coach Victor Goncharenko has requested a training session in Turkey and match against Kazakhstan, enabling to gather the strongest line-up.

Stange notes that, on February 8th, the junior team of Belarus will play against Russia, helping it to prepare for the final tournament of the 2011 European Championship. Its coaches will be able to watch these future pretenders to the national team in action.

## Mirny on form again

By Yuri Kovalev

### Belarusian tennis player ends year with doubles event final

The event, hosted by the British capital, gathered the world's top eight pairs. In the finals, Max Mirny and Indian Mahesh Bhupathi lost to Canadian Daniel Nestor and Serbian Nenad Zimonjic — 6:7, 4:6. Mirny's second final in a row at the ATP doubles was his last with Bhupathi as, next season, he will be partnering Daniel Nestor.

In 2009, Mirny played a decisive match with Israel's Andy Ram, against brothers Bob and Mike Bryans of the USA, who proved stronger. The fifth championship of his career has ended with the Canadian-Serbian pair's win. Mirny made his debut among the world's top eight pairs in 2003. He participated in finals tournaments in 2005-2006 and in 2009 but victory in 2006 was his best achievement, partnering Jonas Björkman of Sweden.

After the tournament in London, Max has moved up one step in the ATP doubles rankings, to reach seventh seed; his partner, Mahesh Bhupathi, remains sixth. This is the highest for Max since September 10th, 2007.

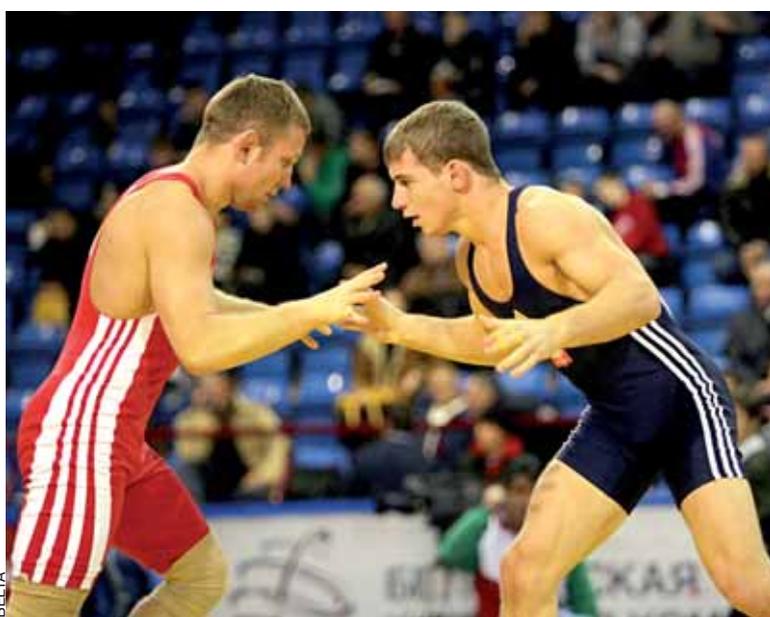
This year, he won the doubles event at the Masters Tournament in Paris and has reached the finals of tournaments five times.

## Hosts leave main prize at home

By Kirill Karin

### Belarusian athletes placed first at 17th International Greco-Roman Wrestling Tournament, dedicated to the memory of Olympic champion Oleg Karavayev

Belarusian Greco-Roman wrestlers traditionally win more prizes than some of our other fighting athletes; so far, they have 10 Olympic medals to their credit. The first medal was captured by Oleg Karavayev, about 50 years ago. This year, the Minsk event was held under the guidance of the International Amateur Wrestling Federation for the first time and proved bright, dynamic and spectacular. Every athlete appeared on the mat several times and, being a team tournament, it attracted such honourable participants as Russia, the USA, France, Ukraine, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Poland and Lithuania. Belarus, as host, entered two teams:



Mikhail Semenov (L) — one of the tournament's winners

the first featured our top wrestlers while the second comprised core reservists.

The teams battled in two groups, with the Belarusian squad easily defeating Kazakhstan, Poland, Lithuania and France, to lead. Meanwhile, Georgia beat Russia, Ukraine, the USA and the younger Belarusian squad in the other group. After two final matches, our Belarusian wrestlers were obviously facing a serious threat to claiming the gold. Elbek Tozhiyev (weight category under 55kg) and Maxim Kazharsky (60kg) lost their matches.

In the weight category under 66kg, Belarus was represented by Beijing 2008 Olympic bronze-holder Mikhail Semenov. In a tough fight, he eventually managed to defeat

2010 World Cup bronze medallist Anton Mamageshvili. All three following matches were also won: by Alim Selimov (84kg), Timofey Deinichenko (96kg) and Iosif Chugoshvili (120kg). The opponent of Alexander Kikinev (74kg) decided not to fight, due to injury, allowing the Belarusian squad to celebrate a 5:2 win.

As pointed out by the Chairman of the Belarusian Wrestling Federation, Yuri Chizh, the tournament has been a dress-rehearsal for the World Cup, to be held in Minsk in February 2011. "We're doing our best to organise all our tournaments in an efficient way, to prepare our athletes for the Olympics in London in 2012. We've had an excellent chance to gauge ourselves before the home World Cup," notes Mr. Chizh.

## Minsk-Arena complex to welcome finalists

### Traditional Christmas Hockey Tournament for the prize of the President of Belarus scheduled for early January 2011

The 7th tournament will bring together amateur teams from Austria, Germany, Russia, Slovakia, Ukraine, Finland, Switzerland and Belarus, with participants divided into two groups at the initial stage.

The first will include the Belarusian President's team, as well as squads from Austria, Germany and Finland. The second group will comprise teams from Slovakia, Switzerland, Ukraine and Russia. After the single-round group stage is over, participants will compete for medals, with Minsk-Arena hosting the finals and the match for third place.

## Champions League for Dynamo: more victories achieved?

### Match against Swiss Schaffhausen ends Dynamo Minsk's series of home matches in handball Champions League

Victory over the Swiss club would have pushed Dynamo closer to Denmark's Aalborg, placed fourth in the group; sadly, they were defeated 31:32, blowing their chance of continuing in the Champions League. The host team proved weaker early in the match, although Dynamo managed to equalise; however, they finally succumbed to the pressure, suffering their fourth defeat. Sergey Bebesko's trainees have lost against Valladolid (Spain), Chekhov's Bears (Russia), and Aalborg, only beating Hungarian Pick.

In their next match, Dynamo Minsk has lost against Pick in Hungary. All their remaining away matches



Dynamo Minsk in action

are to be held in 2011. The best four teams are to continue through to the next round of the Champions League.