

Olympics are undisputable trump card for winners

Professional sportsmen and women desire only to be the best; this is what motivates them to extremes of human endurance. They begin each tournament with a burning desire for victory

By Dmitry Komashko

Meanwhile, others are left to judge their achievements. The traditional end of year poll has been held, with fans, newspapers and websites casting their votes for the best athletes of 2010. The 'judges' in Belarus were unanimous in choosing freestyle skier Alexey Grishin and biathlete Darya Domracheva, although many were nominated, including all of the girls on the Belarusian national basketball squad (who came fourth at the World Championship for the first time).

Yelena Levchenko was an obvious leader, having reached the finals of the greatest world basketball event: the women's NBA. Victoria Azarenko was also a strong contender, having played at the Masters Tournament for the second year in a row. Sergey Martynov, 42, won the World Championship in the most competitive shooting event — using a small-calibre rifle. The list is too long to enumerate but we must mention biathlete Sergey Novikov and rowers Yekaterina Karsten and Denis Garazha.

The winners had the ad-



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Freestyle skier Alexey Grishin and biathlete Darya Domracheva named best sportsmen of 2010 in Belarus

vantage of having claimed Olympic medals. Domracheva's several wins at World Cup rounds deserve recognition, while Grishin's gold was unique!

First for the first time

Alexey Grishin has been many times praised by fans and specialists. Four years ago, in Salt Lake City, he

took an Olympic bronze. He topped various polls and promised to jump higher in future. Clearly, he kept his word.

Nine years ago, the same slope made Alexey Grishin world champion. In 2010, he climbed it again without his team mates (Big Crystal Globe winner Anton Kushnir and Olympic Nagano sil-

ver medallist Dmitry Dashchinsky were earlier knocked out). He snatched gold for the first time in the history of Belarusian Olympic winter sports.

"It's such an honour to be recognised by these polls," Alexey admits. "As they say, all good things come in threes, so I'll do my best to claim further success." This

season, Grishin is resting following a back injury; the Olympics have taken their toll on his fitness, so he is missing out on the World Cup round, hosted by Raubichi near Minsk, in February.

"I'm currently in the shadows, obliged to assert that I'll be back on form, without being able to prove the truth of my words," he

explains. "I'm not worried about taking a break, as I need this time to train for the Olympics in Sochi. I plan to become the first freestyle skier to win three Olympic medals..."

Brilliant Darya

Darya Domracheva has been named the world's top biathlete of the year at an official gala-ceremony, following her bright season. The leader of the Belarusian team and Olympic bronze holder beat Olga Zaitseva of Russia, Anastasia Kuzmina of Slovakia, Marie Laure Brunet of France and Magdalena Neuner of Germany to claim 'Biathlon Award'.

Emil Hegle Svendsen of Norway was given the honour among men, while Martin Fourcade was recognised as best 'newcomer' and Stephan Butie of France was given the title of best coach of the year.

Domracheva is again in the spotlight this season, winning various events, and is anticipating the World Championship, to be held in Russian Khanty-Mansiysk — the city where Darya took her first biathlon steps.

First success at high level

By Yuri Karpenko

Belarusian mountain skier Maria Shkanova wins International Ski Federation slalom competition

In Italian Bormio, Maria outstripped her nearest rival, Federica Sosio of Italy, by almost four points. In the giant slalom, the Belarusian athlete came third, behind Janine Wikky of Switzerland and Federica Sosio of Italy.

This was the first victory for a

Belarusian mountain skier at the tournament in Bormio, which is held at the beginning of each season, gathering athletes preparing for the European Cup starts. It is inspiring that Maria Shkanova stood out from the crowd of 90 athletes, representing famous mountain skiing countries such as Italy, Slovenia, Switzerland and other Alp states. This season, Shkanova is to perform in the European Cup rounds (besides FIS tournaments); in February, she'll go to Germany's Gar-

misch-Partenkirchen, for the World Championship.

The European Cup is the second most important event after the elite World Cup, requiring a long path of dedication and hard work. It gathers the most talented junior skiers and those striving to reach the core line-up of their squads, ready for the World Cup. Maria Shkanova's target is to win a place at the World Cup draw; meanwhile, she'll do her best to prove herself at the European Cup.

Sergey Rutenko among worthy sportsmen

By Dmitry Komashko

Winter is not only a time for traditional skiing and skating but for new sports — such as handball

Our team has created a real stir within European arenas and is expected to do well in early January, in Spain, taking part in a traditional tournament dedicated to Domingo Barcenas. Coached by Olympic champion Yuri Shevtsov, they'll join squads from Egypt and Montenegro. "The most pleasing



Sergey Rutenko always to the fore

thing is that we were not searching for our rivals; Spain has invited us," says Mr. Shevtsov. "This shows our strong position in world handball and indicates that we are gaining higher status."

Sergey Rutenko's appearance on the Belarusian national squad is the most interesting development. The most expensive handball player worldwide was asked to defend our Belarusian colours not long ago, although he still plays for Spanish Barcelona. Some time ago, Spain was interested in acquiring this unique player.



Belarusian track cyclists 'accustom' their fans to medals

Bronze track

By Dmitry Kolosov

Some years ago, only Natalia Tsylynskaya's name was associated with achievements on the cycling track. Now, a new generation has matured, ready to claim leading positions

The second World Cup round, held in Colombia's Cali, brought Belarus' racers two awards, although Tsylynskaya's successor, Olga Panarina, was absent.

Oksana Popko and Tatiana Sharakova struggled for medals, with Popko narrowly missing out

on success in the individual pursuit. However, she redeemed herself in the points race. Meanwhile, Sharakova showed her true ability in the Olympic omnium.

The all-round has emerged from a period of ever changing disciplines, with admitted leaders and serious competition now evident. Our Belarusian cyclists have left their mark and now have a tradition of bringing home medals. They are now set to show their full potential at the World Cup round in Beijing at the end of January. The World Championship in Dutch Apeldoorn is also close at hand.