

## Another chance for Marek Sykora

Czech expert to head Dinamo Minsk next season

The head coach of the hockey club from Minsk is to continue working with the team, having an acting contract with Dinamo Minsk for next season. However, some of the team's coaches may not be kept on and a few players have left the club: defenseman Tomas Mojzis, forward Petr Sykora and goalkeeper Robert Esche.



M. Sykora leads the game

This season, Dinamo Minsk is in the play-offs of the Continental Hockey League for the first time. In the initial round, Dinamo faced a CHL leader — Lokomotiv Yaroslavl, losing over a tough seven-match duel. Now, the Dinamo players are undergoing through medical examinations and tests before starting their training for the World Championship. The heads of the club will continue discussing the line-up on the main squad.

## On top form

European Nations Table Tennis League sees Belarusian men's team defeat Swedish squad

Belarus has managed to finish the premier-division on top form. In the closing match of A Group, at Minsk's Tennis Palace, Alexander Petkevich's trainees defeated Sweden 3:0. In the opening match, the Belarusian team leader, Vladimir Samsonov, easily beat Andreas Törnkvist while, in the second match, Vitaly Nekhvedovich defeated Harald Andersson. Finally, Yevgeny Shchetinin smashed Fabian Akerström in a very intense match. Sadly, these victories over one of the group's leaders brought only moral satisfaction, since Belarus had already lost its chance to reach the semi-finals. Germany and Sweden are through from the group.

In turn, the women's squad is to continue through to the semi-finals of the European Nations League challenge-division (ranked second in importance). They came first in B Group and are now due to face Russia in a semi-final match on March 29th (away) and on April 19th (at home). Teams from Poland and the Czech Republic are to battle for the other place in the finals.

# Aiming for future victories

At the 31st European Indoor Athletics Championship, held in Paris, Belarus' Andrey Kravchenko comes first all-round

By Yuri Karpenko

The prestigious tournament was hosted by top French sports complex Paris-Bercy, which seats almost 18,000. A special record was set, with 630 athletes from almost 50 European countries gathered at the stadium. Belarus sent 19 athletes to compete, accompanied by head coach Anatoly Baduev. He notes that our core team comprised young and promising athletes, with experience of European and world junior events. Our leading athletes were absent, as they are currently in training for the 2012 Olympics in London.

The younger generation of our track and field squad was motivated to

do well, being keen to join the core line-up and, obviously, gain a place at the Olympics. All-round athlete Andrey Kravchenko, 25, was a favourite and met expectations; he earned 6,282 points over seven events to take gold (60m sprint, long jump, shot-put, high jump, 60m steeplechase, pole vault and 1,000m race). Silver went to Nadir El Fassi of France while Czech Roman Šebrle took bronze. Before the final event, the 1,000m, Andrey was already ahead by a considerable amount, so his gold was a foregone conclusion. He also set a national record in the heptathlon and is the first Belarusian to win the European Indoor Athletics Championship.



In Paris, Andrey Kravchenko (C) earns first gold at top tournament

This was Andrey's fifth medal at a top tournament, having claimed silver at the 2008 Summer Olympics and at the 2008 Winter World Championship. He also took bronze at the 2007 Winter European Championship and at the 2010 Summer Euro-

pean Championship. Sadly, Kravchenko's gold was the only medal brought home from Paris by Belarus, although seven members of our team reached the finals. Alina Talay was placed fifth in the final 60m steeplechase and set two personal records during the event.

The top eight athletes included Veronika Shutkova and Anastasia Mironchik-Ivanova (long jump), Sergey Platonov (3,000m) and Dmitry Detsuk (triple jump) as well as Anastasia Shvedova (pole vault). The latter even broke her previous national record.

## First award claimed at World Championship

By Kirill Karin

Darya Domracheva wins silver at Biathlon World Championship mass start

The Belarusian athlete took 36 minutes and 53.3 seconds to cover the 12.5km track, with four shooting intervals. She missed just three targets and was 4.8 seconds behind Magdalena Neuner of Germany (four penalties), who won the World Championship title. The event in Russian Khanty-Mansiysk

has given Darya her first personal medal at a World Championship.

The beginning of the race was less than successful for the leader of the Belarusian team, as Domracheva initially fell and broke her ski poles. As a result, after her first shoot, she was left in 29th position, among 30, with two penalties. However, she gradually improved her situation and led during the final circle, avoiding penalties at the third and fourth shooting intervals.



Darya Domracheva during the mass start

Domracheva, exhausted by her unsuccessful start, was eventually outpaced by Neuner, but held on to second position. Tora Berger of Norway came third, while Belarusian Nadezhda Skardino (who previously came fourth in her in-

dividual race) finished 17th.

On the closing day of the championship, the Belarusian biathletes were close to success in a 4x6km relay race but finally finished fourth — behind Germany, Ukraine and France.

## Favourites hold on to their status

By Kirill Pirogov

Belarusian men's national tennis team play Davis Cup match, in Euro-Africa Zone Group II

The Belarusian squad faced Bulgaria on Minsk's courts, captained by Alexander Shvets. Veteran Max Mirny, 33, is seeded sixth worldwide and partners Canadian Daniel Nestor in his doubles matches. He was accompanied by Vladimir Ignatik, Sergey Betov and Alexander Bury.

Bulgaria was missing core player Grigor Dimitrov, leaving less experienced men to defend its colours: Dimitar Kutrovsky, Todor Enev, Valentin Dimov and Dimitar Kuzmanov were captained by Ognyan Iliev.

It was no surprise that Alexander Shvets' squad won four out of their five matches, being viewed by the coach as the clear favourites. It is hoped that they might return to Euro-Africa Zone Group I. Pre-match expectations were fulfilled, with the hosts winning 4:1. The match was quite complicated, with Vladimir Ignatik single handedly winning two matches.

In the second round of the Euro-Africa Zone event, Belarus will meet Hungary (which has defeated Cyprus), from July 8th-10th, playing on a clay court.

## Medals scatter across fighting mats

By Yuri Kovalev

41st International Grand Prix Freestyle Wrestling Tournament, honouring triple Olympic champion Alexander Medved, gathers athletes from 18 countries in Minsk

The host team lacked its optimal line-up (with famous Rizvan Gadzhiev, Murad Gaydarov, Ruslan Shekhov and Ivan Yankovsky absent due to injury) yet managed to win nine medals: four gold, three silver and two bronze. This allowed our men's team to outstrip such traditionally formidable rivals as Kazakhstan, Russia and the USA.

Belarus' Vladislav Andreev (under 55kg), Ali Shabanov (55kg), Omargadzi Magomedov (84kg)



Omargadzi Magomedov (R) is unrivalled in his category

and Alexey Shemarov each claimed gold.

The tournament was certainly good experience for the squad, in preparation for the 2011 European Championship, which begins on March 29th in German Dortmund.

It proved a resounding success. "Last year, there was a six week break between the tournament in Minsk and the European Championship, allowing us to present our main athletes. This time, we decided to save our core wrestlers for

the big event, since their capabilities are already well known to us. Our main target was to discover who our reserve wrestlers should be," explains head coach Sergey Kitaev. "In all honesty, I wasn't expecting such good results but I'm delighted that our trainees have exceeded our expectations. They'll be useful at European and world events in future."

The tournament honouring Alexander Medved, the best freestyle wrestler of the last century, began in Minsk in 1970 and gained Grand Prix status in 1994, awarded by the International Wrestling Federation. To date, it has gathered athletes from 55 countries, with a record number of participating countries (47) attending for the 30th tournament, in 2000.