

Trophies scatter

This year's Freestyle Ski FIS Aerials Europa Cup is exceptionally long

The first awards were shuffled in Finland in early December, with the most recent bestowed in Russia. The Cup envisaged ten rounds, although one was cancelled (in Switzerland) due to bad weather. The opening rounds in Scandinavia were the most representative, with many European athletes training for the season at Finland's famous Ruka resort. Naturally, the European Cup is seen as a warm-up for the World Cup.

Among the men, Anton Kushnir of Belarus won two rounds, with several younger athletes having performed at various stages and some host team's elite skiers joining them.

Despite expectations, the closing competition in Polyarnye Zori, Russia, did not see the world's top athletes in attendance. Belarus' Alexandra Romanovskaya took the lead in both rounds, with a quite complicated programme. This enabled her to outstrip her country mate Anna Guskova, who was obliged to drop out through injury. Maxim Bulosh of Belarus claimed the main men's trophy. During the event in Russia, Pavel Krotov and Ilya Burov were viewed as the favourites for a local win but Bulosh confidently performed his programme, obliging the Russian duo to take silver and bronze. He also topped the overall standings.

Ending season on victorious note

Darya Domracheva wins Small Crystal Globe in mass start of biathlon season

By Yuri Karpenko

The Belarusian athlete has won the Biathlon World Cup mass start in Norwegian Holmenkollen, covering the 12.5km track in just 36 minutes and 13 seconds, with four shooting intervals, missing three targets. Anna Bogaliy-Titovets has claimed silver, with bronze going to Olga Zaitseva, both from Russia. Darya entered the second circle from second position, behind Bogaliy-Titovets by more than eight seconds, but eventually closed the gap to create an impressive lead on her opponents. Belarusian Nadezhda Skardino finished 20th among 30 participants.

Her win gives Domracheva

236 points towards the Small Crystal Globe, putting her ahead of Magdalena Neuner of Germany (228 points) and Tora Berger of Norway (206). Nadezhda Skardino (59 points) is 28th so far, while Lyudmila Kalinchik is 33rd (35 points) among 50 sportswomen.

To date, the Small Crystal Globe has twice been claimed by Belarus' triple world champion Svetlana Paramygina (in 1993 and 1994) and by the Belarusian men's relay team (in 2003). In 1994, the Big Crystal Globe was won by Paramygina, who topped the World Cup standings at the end of the season.

The current victory in the mass start is Domracheva's first of the season, although the 24 year old



Victorious finish by Darya Domracheva at Holmenkollen track

boasts a total of three gold medals, six silver and ten bronze. She claimed three medals at the World Cup final stage, in Holmenkollen. In the sprint in Austrian Hochfilzen, in the pursuit in Norwegian Holmenkollen, and in the mass start at the Biathlon World Championship, in Khanty-Mansiysk, she claimed silver. Domracheva has also won bronze six times: in the sprint in

Swedish Östersund and Norwegian Holmenkollen, in the mass start in Italian Antholz-Anterselva and in American Fort Kent, and in the pursuit in Austrian Hochfilzen and in American Presque Isle.

Kaisa Makarainen of Finland has won the Big Crystal Globe of this season, topping the women's standings with 1,005 points. As last year, Domracheva is placed sixth.



Mikhail Grabovskiy celebrates another success

New heights of Mikhail Grabovskiy

By Kirill Pirogov

Belarusian forward playing for Toronto sets seasonal record among Belarusians performing in regular championships of National Hockey League

Mikhail Grabovskiy has scored two striking points in a victorious home NHL match against Buffalo, during which he was named the third star of the match. In total, he earned 53 points (27 goals + 26 resultful passes) across 68 matches. This repeats the season record of NHL Belarusian player Andrey Kostitsyn, set in 2008 by the Montréal forward; he scored one goal less but made one more resultful pass (26 goals + 27 passes).

However, Kostitsyn earned his points across 78 matches: ten more than Grabovskiy.

Consequently, Grabovskiy's achievement is considered to be a new record. Having scored 27 goals, Grabovskiy now holds the shooting seasonal record among Belarusians: Andrey Kostitsyn scored 26 goals during the 2007/08 regular season.

Among Belarusians who have played in the strongest world hockey championship, Belarusian national ice hockey team coach Vladimir Tsyplakov also set a record, during the 1997/8 season. With the Los Angeles Kings, in the regular championship, he claimed 52 (18+34) points across 73 matches.

Summer Olympic Games' hopes

By Yuri Kovalev

500 days before the 2012 Olympics, Belarusian athletes boast two tickets to London

Based on the results of 2010, marksman Sergey Martynov, a world champion, and world championship bronze medallist Victoria Chaika have places at the 2012 Olympics.

As pointed out by the First Vice-President of the National Olympic Com-

mittee, Igor Zaichkov, at a press conference held in Minsk, the system of qualification for the Olympics is complicated. It has several stages, with terms, conditions and quotas. The main 'selection' lies ahead, with Belarus competing this year to send athletes in marksmanship, weightlifting, freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling, calisthenics, rowing, canoeing and kayaking, and boxing. In some events, depending on their place at

the World Championship, athletes may qualify directly for the Olympics. In others, additional tournaments will be held. Our Olympic team line-up will be finalised by July 2012.

According to the Sports and Tourism Minister, Oleg Kachan, 275 Belarusian athletes across 31 sports (at least 115 out of 302 disciplines) are training for the 30th Olympics, to be held from July 27th to August 12th in London. To compare, in 2008,

the Beijing Games saw Belarusian athletes participating in 112 disciplines across 26 sports (37 percent of the Olympic programme). Belarusian taekwondo and football players plan to reach the 2012 London Olympics — new events since the last Games. Our regular national rowing slalom team and beach volleyball squad are also preparing for qualification.

Our Belarusian athletes' target is 25 medals.

Return of big game

By Kirill Karin

Belarusian national handball team defeats Switzerland twice, aiming to qualify for 2012 European Championship

For almost four years, Belarusian handball demonstrated nothing to compare with beating the Swiss team twice. Symbolically, the last time that our handball fans celebrated victory over the same squad, it was when we beat Switzerland in the play-offs for the 2008 European Championship finals. It was the first and last time of this century. The present achievement may have less significance, but is still a considerable landmark.

At the beginning of March, the Belarusian team



Match between Belarusian and Swiss teams

beat Switzerland in an away match, scoring 34:31. At Minsk's Palace of Sports, Yuri Shevtsov's trainees also proved stronger, winning 26:24. Sergey Rutenko was the best shooter on the Belarusian team, scoring eight goals.

The squads were equally matched, with only three points dividing them at any time. The second half of the match, however, settled the winner, with the hosts turning luck to their side. Experienced Belarusian goalkeeper Kazimir Kotlin-

sky saved several attempts at goal by the opposition and was deservedly named player of the match, alongside Swiss goalkeeper Pascal Stauber.

The win over formidable Switzerland shows Belarus with a high level of performance once more. The core Belarusian line-up is playing confidently, with promising younger reserves waiting behind.

Qualification matches for the continental tournament are to continue over the summer. Belarus will welcome Denmark in June and will finish the qualification round by playing an away match against Russia. The European finals will see the top two teams from each group battling for supremacy.