

## Medals from Sofia

**Belarusian track and field athletes perform well at European Cup Winter Throwing event in Bulgaria's capital**

Our athletes have brought home three gold medals, one silver and one bronze. Belarus was represented by 14 athletes in Sofia: the women took part in the team event while the men participated in the individual exercises. The hammer throwing was the most spectacular, with Hungarian Krisztián Pars' 79.84m attempt proving the second best of the world season, placed him first in Sofia. The European Championship bronze medallist sent the hammer over 79m five times. Yuri Shayunov of Belarus managed to outstrip Ukraine's Oleksiy Sokirskiy by over 0.5m, despite tough weather conditions, to grab silver. Among the juniors, hammer thrower Sergey Kolo-moets was ahead of Norway's Eivind Henriksen, who led after four rounds. Sergey's throw of 72.94m was just over half a metre ahead of the Scandinavian. In the women's shot-putt, Alena Kopets beat France's Jessica Cérival by 19cm in her first throw. She claimed gold although only two of her other five attempts brought the necessary result. Belarus' Sergey Bakhar was 4cm behind Ukraine's Dmitry Savitsky in the shot-putt until the very end, when he finally snatched an extra 2cm to claim first place. Meanwhile discus thrower Anastasia Kashanova took silver for Belarus.



Tatiana Sharakova leaves her rivals no chance for championship title

## Quick seconds at Apeldoorn

**Belarusian racers win two gold and one silver medal at Track Cycling World Championship**

By Yuri Karpenko

In Dutch Apeldoorn, Olga Panarina took gold for the first time in her career, in the 500m time-trial. The competition included a number of top cyclists, but lacked the gold and silver medallists from last year's event: Australian Anna Meares and Lithuanian Simona Krupeckaite. In addition, several other strong sports-women were absent. The event was a fully-fledged 'rehearsal' for the London Olympics (rather than the 2012 Championship). Next season will see

the cyclists training to achieve perfect form for the Olympics. Meanwhile, in Apeldoorn, the athletes had their last chance to compare their own performance with that of their strongest rivals. Sadly, the time-trial lost its Olympic status after the Beijing Games, leading to many leading racers sacrificing it to save their energy for the sprint and keirin events. In turn, Panarina decided to take part and enjoyed success. The chance of becoming world champion seemed more important than saving energy. She raced confidently, showing the best time,

ahead of French Sandy Clair and German Miriam Welte.

The second Belarusian gold went to Tatiana Sharakova. In the 25km points race (100 legs with ten intermediary finishes), she claimed 30 points: 20 for breaking away from her rivals by a leg and ten for two victories during intermediary finishes (five for each). Silver went to Czech Jarmila Macháčová and bronze was captured by Italian Giorgia Bronzini. For Tatiana, the championship gold was the first of her career. In distinction from the time-trial (where



Victorious finish by Olga Panarina

speed over two legs counts), the points race is 'track chess'. In the 100 leg marathon, which is divided into ten segments, strategic thinking is required alongside physical prowess. The Belarusian outstripped her rivals by a leg, putting herself well ahead; over just five legs, she had created a half track lead. As a result, Sharakova won the World Championship title and is on the way to showing herself a favourite for the Olympic omnium and team pursuit races.

On the final day of the competition, Olga Panarina

took silver in the keirin (8 legs of 250m each). At the finish, she was behind the winner by half a wheel; Anna Meares took gold — her third gold medal of the present championship. Bronze went to Clara Sánchez of France. The omnium (six disciplines) saw Tatiana Sharakova taking fifth position.

In all, 18 sets of medals were awarded at the championship, with Australia leading the medal ranking, followed by France and Belarus. Sportsmen from 16 countries claimed medals, with 41 states sending their athletes overall.

## Outstripping world leaders

By Kirill Karin

**Belarusian sabre fencers continue to collect trophies, capturing bronze at World Cup round in Padua and repeating their success in Moscow**

The leader of the Belarusian team, Dmitry Lapkes, was taking part in the prestigious Moscow Sabre tournament for the 15th time in a row. In 2002, he won bronze and, in 2007, was placed second. "This event is always very challenging; it gathers top athletes of world ranking," commented the captain of the Belarusian national sabre squad just beforehand.

In the personal event at the Moscow World Cup round, Alexander Buykevich came close to claiming a medal; sadly, in the quarter-finals, formidable Russian Alexey Yakimenko, ardently supported by local fans, snatched bronze from the Belarusian fencer.

In the team event, our



Alexander Buykevich

Belarusians were also beaten by Russia; a narrow gap (45-40) allowed them to take bronze, smashing the elite team of Italy. Veterans Lapkes and Buykevich were aided by young and promising Alexey Likhachevsky, who won two matches.

## Minsk-Arena breaks record again

**Dinamo Minsk ranked third among most visited hockey clubs in Europe**

According to the International Ice Hockey Federation's official website, average attendance at the Belarusian squad's home matches during the CHL's regular season championship totalled 10,538: the best result among CHL clubs. Moreover, our Minsk players held five matches at Bobruisk-Arena, seating just

7,000 spectators, rather than at Minsk-Arena.

Remarkably, after the previous season, Dinamo Minsk was placed 61st in Europe for fan attendance; however, after moving to Minsk-Arena in the winter of 2010, seating 15,000, fan attendance greatly increased. This season, Minsk-Arena has broken its record of attendance at CHL matches four times; the figure now stands at 16,039 (at the

second home match in the Gagarin Cup playoff series, between Dinamo Minsk and Lokomotiv Yaroslavl, on February 27th).

Just two European teams are ahead of the Minsk team in popularity. The most attended club is Swiss champion Bern, with an average of 15,856 fans per match. It has led this nomination for a dozen years. Second place is occupied by Eisbären Berlin

of Germany, with an average of 13,946 fans.

Minsk-Arena is the largest indoor ice stadium within the CHL, uniting clubs from Russia, Belarus, Latvia and Kazakhstan. In Europe, only a few cities have ice palaces surpassing Minsk-Arena in capacity: Cologne Arena in Germany (18,000), PostFinance Arena in Swiss Bern (16,789) and the O2 Arena in Czech Prague (17,360).

## Unexpected success for Pantera

By Yuri Kovalev

**Belarus' only professional women's ice hockey team, Pantera, wins Latvian Open Women's Championship**

The Belarusian hockey players made their debut at the event, yet confidently won 16 matches, promptly earning the champion's title. Behind them were Latvia's Laima, Zemgale and Saga squads, and Estonian Sputnik. Pantera's plans for next season are yet to be outlined but they intend to play in the men's amateur Minsk League; so far, they boast 14 victories.



Pantera hockey players deservedly claim Cup of Winners

"I believe that our performance in the Latvian Open Championship is worthy of the highest recognition, since

it is our first season; such achievements speak for themselves. Our target in Latvia was to reach the top three, al-

though we had no idea of the level of the other teams at the tournament. During the competition, our target shifted towards the main prize," smiles head coach Vasily Pankov.

He notes that the Belarusian women's squad's long-term goal is the World Championship, for which they need to raise the number of players on the team. Mr. Pankov explains, "Some local players have time to mature and some foreign players will probably be granted Belarusian citizenship." As expected, next season's Pantera's line-up won't see any considerable changes.