

On the podium four times

By Kirill Pirogov

Lyubov Cherkashina grabs four medals during Rhythmic Gymnastics Grand Prix round

In the finals, held in French Thiais, Lyubov Cherkashina took silver, finishing behind 2008 Olympic champion, Russia's Yevgenia Kanayeva, for her exercise with the clubs. Bronze went to Cherkashina for her all-round Olympic programme, behind Russia's Kanayeva and Yana Lukonina. Cherkashina also closed the top three in her exercises with the ribbon and hoop.



Kanayeva was the absolute winner of the Grand Prix third round, winning the all-round and finals in all four exercises.

Steep turns of Tour of Basque Country

By Kirill Pirogov

Vasily Kirienko placed 10th in general standings of prestigious multi-day race

Before the final stage of the individual 24km separate start race, the Belarusian cyclist, racing for the Spanish squad Movistar, was positioned 12th. However, the closing round saw him move up to 10th place. The second round (163km) was the most successful for Vasily in the Tour of Basque Country, where he was placed first. In the last but one stage (177km) Kirienko finished 6th.

Another Belarusian cyclist, Konstantin Sivtsov, racing for American squad Highroad, is 22nd in the general standings. In total, 131 participants managed to reach the finish line of the multi-day race, of 157 who began. Spanish squad Movistar was named best in the team standings.

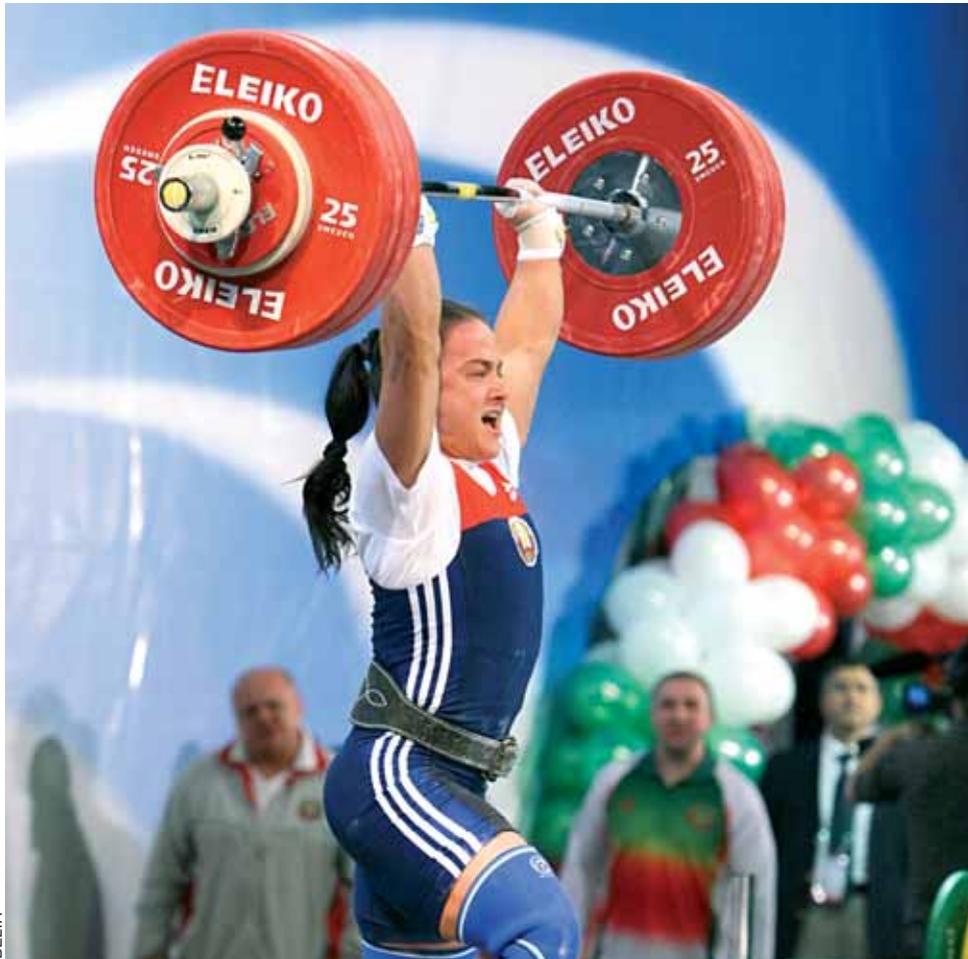
European platform queen

Anastasia Novikova of Belarus wins gold medal in double event (up to 58kg) at European Weightlifting Championship, held in Kazan

By Yuri Karpenko

The current European champion arrived in Tatarstan's capital ranked among the favourites; it seems there are no serious rivals remaining for her on the continent. The recent World Championship, held in Turkey in September, only proved the fact that this weight category is more 'familiar' for Asian athletes. In Antalya, Anastasia came second, losing to Chinese Deng Wei and defeating Jong Chun Mi of North Korea. Her nearest European rival — Yulia Kalina of Ukraine — came fifth after losing to Novikova by 13kg in the sum of the double event.

The Ukrainian sports-woman wasn't at the Kazan event and nor was Marieta Gotfryd of Poland. Russians Marina Shainova and Svetlana Tsurakeva have shifted to a heavier category, leaving Novikova only facing highly experienced Romela Begaj of Albania as a true rival. Begaj won silver a year ago in Minsk. In April 2010, Novikova astonished many in the Belarusian capital by



Anastasia Novikova becomes European champion for the third time in her career

setting a European record of 238kg in total. Anastasia was greatly anticipated on the platform in Kazan, with

her coaches announcing her good form beforehand.

Novikova decided everything in her first attempts,

both in the jerk and in the snatch. None of her rivals came even close. Anastasia only struggled with the

barbell, with one failure, during her third attempt in the jerk. It can be difficult to enter the platform three times in a row without a break, while the absence of worthy rivals also influences motivation.

However, the Belarusian athlete outstripped her closest rival by 25kg, even in such a moderate situation. Anastasia's results were 100kg in the jerk and 125kg in the snatch, leaving her just 13kg behind her European record in Minsk.

The season's major event — the World Championship — still lies ahead. Naturally, the Belarusian intends to do her best. She has many times taken silver but wishes to rid herself of the prefix of 'vice-champion'.

Another Belarusian athlete also performed in the same category — last year's European junior champion, Natalia Kolos. She boasts perfect potential, yet lacks experience and steady nerves. However, sixth position among adults is a worthy result and a good stepping off point for future success.

New sports for Olympic programme

2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi gains enriched programme, with five new sports added

The International Olympics Committee has decided to debut synchronised figure skating, a mixed biathlon relay race, women's ski trampoline jumps, a sleigh relay race and half pipe freestyle ski jumping. The Black Sea region event could also see downhill and freestyle snowboarding added, alongside a team

mountain ski event; another sitting of the Committee is planned. In three years' time, Sochi will be presenting a record number of sets of medals: 92.

Women's trampoline jumping had been anticipated to join the Olympic programme before the 2010 Winter Games in Vancouver, as equal rights organisations in Canada had asked the IOC to make the sport gender-equal. IOC Head Jacques Rogge

decided against the idea but the campaigners appealed to the Higher Court of Canada to gain equal access to the event. They failed to find any assistance there but, some time later, the IOC had to admit the justness of women's right to compete in this sport.

Belarus may struggle for medals in the mixed biathlon relay race, although it has been organised as part of the World Championship seven times. Our

Belarusian skiing marksmen did best at the 2008 World Championship in Swedish Östersund, when our Belarusian quartet — Lyudmila Kalinchik, Darya Domracheva, Rustam Valiullin and Sergey Novikov — sensationally earned silver. However, at the recent World Championship in Russian Khanty-Mansiysk, the Belarusian team came a disappointing tenth. Of course, there is still much time to improve.

Martynov increases gold medal stock

By Yuri Kovalev

Twice world champion wins small-calibre rifle event (prone position) at World Cup round in South Korean Changwon

In the qualification round for his favourite event, Sergey Martynov set a two point gap between himself and his nearest rival, the USA's Eric Uptagrafft. This is his 21st award since 1989 (from world

championships, World Cup finals and World Cup rounds — 45 events in total). It is no wonder that the official website of the International Shooting Union names Martynov, 43, as one of the most successful rifle marksmen. His triumph in Changwon keeps Martynov in the top position worldwide.

Konstantin Lukashik, 35, was also a big success. In small-calibre hand gun



Martynov is the successful marksmen in the world

shooting, he was placed 5th. The 1992 Games gold medallist needed just 0.8 points to earn another ticket to the Olympics. Fortunately, in shooting with a pneumatic rifle, his 9th position was enough to qualify him for the 2012 London Games; most final-

ists have already had their quotas. This will be his sixth Games. Of course, licenses to the Olympics are not personalised. To date, the Belarusian national Olympic squad boasts three tickets to London: Sergey Martynov and Victoria Chaika have the other two.

Silver success

Pro Tour tournament in Almeria, Spain, is last trial before World Championship in Holland

As expected, Belarus' Vladimir Samsonov — seeded second — was a favourite to win the Spanish Open Table Tennis Championship. However, the competition was tough. At the very start, Samsonov defeated Japan's Takakiwa Taku and Yoshida Kaii, alongside Spanish Machado Carlos, while snatching victory in the quarter-finals from 34th seed Kim Jung Hoon of Korea. The fate of the latter match was settled in the seventh set, where Samsonov proved stronger. In the semi-finals, Vladimir crushed Li Ahmet of Turkey.

Samsonov battled Oh Sang Eun of Korea, both lightning fast, for the title. Having lost the first set, Samsonov led in the second, but failed to realise the advantage. As a result, his opponent equalised the score to 15:15, then created a two point gap. Though the next set was won by the Belarusian, the Asian player celebrated victory.

Among the women, Victoria Pavlovich, Yelena Dubkova and Alexandra Privalova reached the qualification round but were knocked out in the first round.