

One more step towards world elite

Belarusian women's tennis team crushes Estonia in play-off round of Federation Cup — 5:0 — reaching World Group II for the first time

By Yuri Karpenko

At the before-match press conference, the captain of the Belarusian squad, Sergey Teterin, noted that his trainees would only be content with victory. He also emphasised that the overall success of the match against Estonia would depend on each player's efforts. Initially, the result of this tournament seemed a foregone conclusion, among experts and fans, as the difference in each team's level of skill (and ranking) was too great. Without Estonian leader Kaia Kanepi (seeded 16th) the smallest hopes of the Estonian fans vanished. Even Estonian team captain Andrey Luzgin, while noting that his girls were in good spirits, admitted that their main target was to keep themselves in play as long as possible. Alas, they barely managed a flicker of dynamism, even at the very beginning.

The leader of the Belarusian women's team, Victoria Azarenko, recently triumphed at the WTA tournament; for the first time in her career, she is seeded fifth worldwide. She opened the tournament against Estonia by playing 15 year old Anett Kontaveit, easily defeating her. However, all the players on the Belarusian team showed their worth: Olga Govortsova, Darya Kustova and Tatiana Puchek. Not one single set was lost.

Summing up the match results, Sergey Teterin could not hide his delight, saying, "Despite the difference in standard, they did not lose concentration and kept their advantage. Our team is aiming to reach a new level, proving its capabilities among the elite of world tennis."

Belarus is now ranked 13th worldwide following its victory over Estonia. Slovenia is now also in World Group II — after crush-



Victoria Azarenko demonstrates attack skills in tennis

ing Canada 3:2, while Switzerland has defeated Sweden 4:1. One more member of World Group II will be defined after the Japan-Argentina match, to be held in July. Next season, the national teams of Spain,

Germany, Serbia and Ukraine will also perform in this group. The draw will settle the next opponent for the Belarusian national women's tennis team, with matches scheduled for February 2012.

Award deserved for special merits

Head coach of Belarusian track and field team Anatoly Baduev awarded 'Golden Mark'

The awards ceremony took place at a sitting of the European Athletics Association, held in London. Anatoly Baduev, 58, is the first Belarusian to be awarded this outstanding honour: the high-

est award of the European Athletics. It recognises long term investment into athletics development in Europe and the successful realisation of projects launched by the European Athletics.

The head coach of the Belarusian track and field squad is also Deputy Head of the Belarusian Athletics Federation;

in 1991, he was named the top European track and field coach. Under Mr. Baduev's guidance, the Belarusian national team won seven medals at the 2008 Beijing Games (1 gold, 3 silver and 3 bronze). He also coached runner Tatiana Ledovskaya — 1988 Seoul Olympic gold medalist (4x400m relay) and twice

1991 world champion (400m steeplechase and 4x400m relay). She set a world record in the 4x400m relay and was the 1990 European champion in the 400m steeplechase.

The European Athletics elected (the fourth time) Swiss Hansjörg Wirz to be its President for the next four years.

Medals scatter

By Kirill Pirogov

Another 'bag' of medals is brought home by Belarusian calisthenics team from World Cup round

A Belarusian leader, Lyubov Cherkashina, saw success in Kalamata, Greece, claiming three medals: gold for her programme with the hoop (beating Russia's Darya Dmitrieva and her country mate Darya Kondakova) and two bronze medals in the all-round and her exercise with the ribbon. In the ball and clubs, she was placed fourth.

In the group exercise, the Belarusian squad came second in the all-round, behind Bulgaria. Israel was left to take third place.



Cherkashina's performance

Our Belarusian athletes' results are extremely important since, at the end of May, Minsk is to host the Rhythmic Gymnastics European Championship. The honourable event will be held at the largest sports complex in Belarus, Minsk-Arena.

By Yuri Kovalev

As preparation for World Championship, Belarusian hockey team plays two final matches at home

Belarusian fans attended the first match between the national squads of Denmark and Belarus with mixed feelings, as the European Hockey Challenge event was darkened by memories of the terrorist explosion in Minsk on April 11th. Players on both teams removed their handbands and honoured the memory of the victims with a minute's silence. The day before the match, the Belarusian Hockey Federation announced that proceeds from the Belarus-Denmark match would be donated to



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those who have been affected by the blast, via the charity which has been set up.

The third match period was decisive, with Denmark equal on points but with a

slight territorial and psychological advantage of the Belarusian players. They pushed Belarus to make mistakes, with the score of 3:3 leading to overtime.

Denmark finally won on penalties.

Who knows what the head coach of the Belarusian team, Eduard Zankovets, said to his players after the match but their victorious mood at the return match, held in Soligorsk, spoke for itself. In the very first seconds, our players targeted Denmark's goal. As expected, the Belarusian squad soon managed five goals, leading throughout to finish with an impressive 7:1.

Before the world forum, Belarus has two more sparing matches: away against Switzerland and Germany. The World Championship is to start in Slovakia, with Belarus facing Canada, Switzerland and France in the preliminary round.

Belarusian Anastasia Prokopenko returns after giving birth, making bright entrance

At her first international start — the second round of the 2011 modern pentathlon World Cup in Italian Sassari — Prokopenko captured silver. As usual, the last exercise was her best. Her earlier favourite cross running has been replaced by the 'combination' — running

Footballers confirming high class

By Kirill Pirogov

Belarusian footballers become world champions in visually challenged event for fifth time

During the preliminary round, hosted by Turkish Antalya, our squad defeated Japan 20:0, Turkey 20:2, France 5:1, and England 6:1. In the semi-finals, they beat Spain 5:1 and, in the finals, crushed Ukraine 5:1. Belarus' Andrey Knayazev was named best striker of the championship.

Following the event, the head coach of the Belarusian squad, Anatoly Usenko, could not hide his emotions, saying, "Our guys were excellent. They are in very high spirits. Few teams can boast of being five time world champion. We are especially happy to avenge our defeat by Ukraine, which went to penalty last time. In August, Belarusian football celebrates its 100th anniversary. We want to make it a bright event and bring more joy to all football fans."

The Belarusian national mini football team for the visually challenged was formed in 1997 and has been successful at world and European events. It has won world events in 1998, 2002, 2004, 2007 and 2011; in 2008, it took silver. At European championships, Belarus has been unequalled in 2001, 2007 and 2009. In 1999, Belarus was second and in 1997 came third.

Two contrasting matches

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Gold went to twice World Cup champion, Lithuania's Donata Rimšaité, who also took silver at the 2010 European and world championships. In Italy, it was her first event with the Russian team.