

BATE facing worthy rival

UEFA headquarters in French Nyon holds draw for early stages of Champions League and European Cup

Belarusian champion BATE Borisov is ready for the 2nd qualification round, with Victor Goncharenko's squad facing Northern Ireland's Linfield. The team is unknown to most Belarusian fans but is considered to be one of the world's top football clubs.

The 125 years old Belfast team has won more titles than Real or Milan, although most are only local awards. The Northern Ireland club has won its national championship 50 times and has captured the country's Cup 41 times. It has also won Northern Ireland's League Cup nine times. In all, it has 100 awards. Sadly, its international achievements are less outstanding. The squad has played 57 matches in the Champions League, winning six, ending 18 in a draw and losing 33. Of 20 matches in the European League, it has won three and drawn six.

BATE's matches against Linfield are to be hosted by Belfast on July 13th and by Borisov on July 19th.

As regards the Europa League draw, Minsk is to start the European Cup matches in the first round, facing Olympic Baku (luckily, not the one from Marseille). Two more Belarusian clubs — Shakhtyor and Gomel — will join later, with Shakhtyor playing from the second qualification stage against strong Ventspils Latvia. Gomel is to concentrate more on the local championship, entering the European Cup in the third round, for which the draw is yet to be held.

Extreme records

Belarusian weightlifter Vyacheslav Khoroneko sets new record in Minsk

Over two minutes, while doing the splits, Vyacheslav Khoroneko lifted a 24kg weight with his right hand 43 times. This surpassed his effort in September 2010, at the 15th International Guinness Book of Records Festival, held in Moscow, when the titleholder lifted the weight 41 times. This is his 131st record to date.

Vyacheslav aims to promote a healthy lifestyle, and sports in particular, having begun as an extreme weightlifter in 1991. In 2005, he endured two days without sleep or rest, lifting a barrel weighing 40kg 6,160 times, using both hands.

Looking to the Olympics

Belarusian football fans will long remember European Under-21 Championship, held in Denmark

By Yuri Karpenko

Our Belarusian squad has returned from the continental forum (in which it has participated twice before) with their best result to date. For the first time, the squad is through to the semi-finals, having taken bronze at this honourable event, earning them a ticket for the 2012 Summer Games in London. Only the Belarusian women's basketball squad rivals this achievement, having taken part in the 2008 Games.

The bronze medal and the longed-for Olympic place were largely due to Yegor Filipenko's 89th minute goal, in the match against the Czech Republic, since no more goals were scored. After the win, the BATE defenseman admitted that, taking into consideration their semi-final match against Spain, they had wanted to achieve a better result — reaching the main stage of the competition. Their success is incredible, as our Belarusian under-21 team was close to defeating the future Euro-



Belarusian squad halfback Pavel Nekhaichik fights for the ball

pean champions. However, Georgy Kondratiev's trainees failed to withstand their experienced rivals, who equalised the score and even

scored two more goals during extra time. Later, Spain went on to confidently knock out Switzerland in the finals, capturing their third under-

21 European Championship title.

"Our guys deserve praise for their achievement, having really given their best on

the field; they struggled hard and gave us some beautiful football," asserts head coach Georgy Kondratiev. BATE forward Maxim Skavysh also contributed to Belarus' success, with a precise goal against Iceland sending our team to the semi-final stage of the tournament.

"The secret of our success is team spirit, experienced coaching and, of course, luck! We should be focusing on the performance for our club right now but thoughts are flying ahead to the Olympics. I hope we'll perform not worse than at the European Championship," notes Maxim.

Only those born after 1989 will be able to attend the 2012 Olympics, according to the rules, so eleven of our European Championship heroes will miss out on the Games. Fortunately, Dragun, Filipenko, Nekhaichik and Sivakov — all key players — still have a chance to participate in the Olympics as the coach has the right to enter three players of any age on the team.

One step from the finals

Victoria Azarenko plays at Wimbledon for sixth time and reaches semi-finals for the first time

This is Wimbledon's second singles semi-finals featuring a Belarusian; in 2000, Vladimir Volchokov was among the final four, beaten by Pete Sampras. Eleven years later, Azarenko has reached the same stage.

Of course, Belarusians have won many top trophies already, with Max Mirny winning the mixed doubles with American Serena Williams in 1998. In 1996, Vladimir Volchokov claimed victory in the junior competition and, in 2004, Victoria Azarenko and Olga Govortsova took the



Victoria Azarenko

junior women's doubles gold. One year later, Victoria won in the same category partnering Ágnes Szávay of Hungary.

This time, Azarenko's rival in the semi-finals was Petra Kvitova of the Czech Republic — one year younger and

ranked eighth worldwide. She boasts four WTA Tour titles, and, previously, had boasted an equal number of wins and losses against Victoria. However, her recent two matches (including at Wimbledon last year) saw Petra win, defeating our sportswoman. This time, Kvitova easily won the first set — 6:1. However, the Belarusian kept her cool and reduced her errors to defeat her opponent in the second set — 6:3. It seemed that, after this success, Victoria might win the third set but Kvitova again seized the advantage and won the first three games. Azarenko was unable to catch up, leaving the score at 2:6.

Lost chance for basketballers



Yelena Levchenko stands out on playground

By Yuri Kovalev

Two days after Belarusian under-21 football team earns place at 2012 Games, national women's basketball team loses its chance to go to London

The main Olympic 'game' hope of our country has been dashed, as Anatoly Buyalsky's trainees have failed to go through to the 2012 Games. Despite a solid performance in recent times — winning European Championship bronze, fourth place at the World Championship and sixth place at the Beijing Games — the squad has lost to Lithuania (50:68) and Turkey (56:65) during vital matches at the European Championship's second

group stage. Players and fans were anticipating victory in Poland, especially after our girls' beautiful win over tournament favourite Russia (62:51). Lithuania and Turkey were seen as weaker rivals, so defeat was quite unexpected.

The lost games are yet to be scrutinised but poorly realised opportunities, inaccurate long throws and lost balls seem to blame. Moreover, the team was lacking an obvious leader to inspire and guide them. Sadly, a new line-up will be needed for the selective rounds for the 2016 Olympics, to be hosted by Rio de Janeiro. Spain — viewed as a favourite — also lost its chance to take part in the coming Olympics during the Poland matches.

Drifting steep turns



Drifting masters don't disappoint audiences

By Kirill Pirogov

Latvia's Kristaps Blušs wins international FXOpen Drift Belarus 2011

In the final race, the athlete from Riga beat Finland's Juha Rintanen, his BMW defeating his opponent's Nissan.

In the struggle for third place, Poland's Jakub Przygonski (Toyota) proved stronger than Malaysian Tengku Djan (Nissan). Even before the semi-finals, one of the event's favourites, Tengku Djan, had seriously damaged his Nissan, stopping him from posing a serious threat to Blušs.

His mechanics tried to save the situation but, after prolonged repairs, Djan decided to retire from the race, knowing that he could not show his full worth. As a result, he was placed fourth.

Belarus' strongest ever racer, Sergey Sak (Lexus), reached the top-16, where he lost to Jakub Przygonski. In all, 44 athletes took part, from a dozen of countries, with Belarus represented by six drivers. Only Sergey Sak managed to qualify for the drift racing event, hosted by Minsk-1 airport for the second time. Last year, Juha Rintanen took the title.