

Climbing up football rankings

Belarus national team placed 40th by FIFA

Bernd Stange's trainees have played two qualification matches for Euro-2012 since the last rankings were announced in May. Belarus drew against France (1:1) and defeated Luxembourg (2:0) — jumping 13 places and earning 636 points.

Belarus' rivals for Euro-2012 qualification are France (15th — with 920 points), Bosnia and Herzegovina (39th — with 642), Romania (53rd — with 571), Albania (59th — with 524) and Luxembourg (128th — with 213 points).

Of the former USSR countries, Belarus yields only to Russia — placed 17th. The top five world leaders are Spain, Holland, Germany, England and Brazil — of the June rankings' 207 national squads.

More chances for medals

Programme of 2014 Olympics, to be held in Sochi, expanded with addition of three new disciplines — one promising for Belarus

The International Olympic Committee has approved freestyle slopestyle, snowboarding slopestyle and slalom snowboarding to join the Olympic sporting list. As emphasised by IOC President Jacques Rogge, slopestyle (where snowboarders and skiers perform aerobatic tricks as they travel downhill) has acquired enormous popularity over recent years.

Belarus traditionally does well in ski aerobatics, so could enrich its medals crop at the coming Olympics, although none of Belarus' leading freestyle jumpers — Dmitry Dashchinsky, Alexey Grishin and Anton Kushnir — have ever performed in this discipline. However, the strong training basis of the Belarusian freestyle jumping school and high grade skills of our jumping skiers could enable one (or all) to qualify in slopestyle. They have three years ahead.

The IOC is considering adding a team tournament in mountain skiing to the Olympic programme but the final decision is yet to be taken.

Silver from Ankara

European Boxing Championship, hosted by Turkey, sees Magomed Nurudinov capture silver

In the semi-finals, Nurudinov faced France's Adriani Vastine, who had not performed brightly at top level events before. More experienced Magomed showed his higher class, easily defeating the French boxer, but saw less success in the finals. United Kingdom champion Fred Evans began with immediate and sustained attack, winning 10:5 after two rounds — to the regret of Belarusian fans. As a result, Evans won the second Euro-2011 gold for Wales. Just several minutes beforehand, Andrew Selby of Wales became the country's first continental champion.

Happy number seven

Czech Brno sees draw for Men's World Handball Championship

By Yuri Karpenko

Belarus is in Group 7, with Romania and Luxembourg. It is yet to be seen whether number seven will turn out to be lucky for Yuri Shevtsov and his trainees.

The finals of the World Championship are to be held in January 2013. For Belarus to participate, it needs to go through the initial stage and the play-off round, to be held next June. The previous qualification round was a complete failure for the Belarusian squad, as they lost in the first round of their first official tournament, to Cyprus and Switzerland, making it their last! However, fate has been kind to the Belarusian players, giving them the chance to show improvement in a match against Switzerland on the way to Euro-2012. The team managed to defeat their rival but still failed to reach the European forum finals.

The qualification rounds for the World Championship are to be held under a new format, hosted not just



Belarusian handball team forward Boris Pukhovskiy attacks

by one city over three days (as has been traditional) but across several locations from November to January. Following the draw, a calendar of the dates has been approved,

based on the results of teams' seeding. The strongest are to play a home match with their nearest rival (e.g. Romania with Belarus).

Just last year, Belarus beat Ro-

mania in two friendly matches in Brest but lost in Karpaty Trophy in their away match. However, it was a 'purely' Belarusian team, with no foreign players.

From Detroit Red Wings to Lokomotiv Yaroslavl



Ruslan Salei known for many hockey records

Belarusian national hockey team defenseman Ruslan Salei to play next season in Continental Hockey League

Russian club Lokomotiv, from Yaroslavl, has confirmed its one-year contract with the Belarusian player. Ruslan Salei, 36, spent last year with

the NHL's Detroit Red Wings, on a \$1.1m contract for one year, starting in summer 2010. He earned ten points across 75 matches in the regular 2010/11 championship, plus scored one goal across 11 matches in the play-off stage. Salei has previously played with Anaheim, Florida

and Colorado — 917 NHL matches, scoring 204 points.

Currently, Ruslan leads among Belarusians for playing the largest number of matches in the NHL (the world's strongest hockey league). He is also a record-setter among his countrymen for the number of Stanley Cup matches. Salei has participated in three Olympics and six world championships, playing for the Belarusian national squad (elite division). In 2003 and 2004, he was named best Belarusian ice hockey player.

At the end of this season, it was informed that Salei was leaving Detroit, as the heads of the club expressed no plans for any extension of his contract. According to the media, Salei wanted to stay in the NHL with a club located not far from California, to stay close to his family. Anaheim was considered a favourite but, in the end, Lokomotiv 'won' the new-comer.

Nadezhda Ostapchuk leads world season

By Yuri Kovalev

Zhukovsky, Russia, hosts Znamensky Brothers Athletics Memorial Tournament (IAAF World Challenge round)

Belarus' Nadezhda Ostapchuk won the shot-putt, showing the best result of the season in the world: of her two attempts, one reached 20.94m, topping the world record.

"Being a leader imposes certain obligations," she smiled, after the tournament. "I'm expected to produce high results. After 15 years in sports, I'm no longer threatened by this challenge. However, my rivals are also highly motivated as a result. My hard work is bearing fruit and, honestly, my success has arrived even earlier than my coach and I anticipated. This year, my training began later, due to an injury; however, this may have actually given me a relaxed state of mind that has borne results."

Two other Belarusians took part in the long jump: Anastasia Mironchik-Ivanova came third while Veronika Shutkova was placed fourth. Anis Ananenko also came fourth, in the 800m sprint.

Meanwhile, in French Sotteville, Belarusians captured four medals. Pavel Krivitsky won the hammer-throwing and Yuri Shayunov came second. Two medals went to our 800m female runners: Marina Arzamasova finished second while Svetlana Usovich claimed bronze.

Highest summit of her career

By Kirill Karin

Victoria Azarenko climbs to fourth position in world tennis rankings

The top Belarusian tennis player, previously placed fifth, has moved up a step following her Wimbledon semi-finals. Showing the brightest result of her career, Victoria earned 6,465 points. First place still belongs to Denmark's Caroline Wozniacki (9,915) followed by Belgian Kim Clijsters.

Vera Zvonoreva of Russia holds third position. Wimbledon winner Czech Petra Kvitova has flown from 8th to 7th position while finalist Maria Sharapova of Russia is up from 6th to 5th. The WTA top hundred also includes Belarus' Anastasia Yekimova (93rd place) and Olga Govortsova (96th).

Among the men, Serbian Novak Djokovic is seeded first, having defeated Spanish Rafael Nadal in the Wimbledon finals — the previous world leader.



Victoria Azarenko