

Double victory for Yunost

Minsk-Arena hosts super-finals of second most significant European hockey tournament, with 14,500 fans in attendance — record for a Continental Cup match



Yunost Minsk beats Austrian Red Bull in tough and dramatic ice battle

By Yuri Karpenko

Yunost Minsk, Red Bull Austria, Sønderjyske Denmark and Rouen France fought for the prestigious Continental Cup. Last year, the Cup was fought for in French Grenoble, with Mikhail Zakharov's trainees also participating. However, in the first match, our guys lost to Red Bull, who eventually won. This year, the teams were viewed as the tournament's favourites. They met again to fight for the title, with reigning champions from Salzburg defeated by Yunost Minsk, making it the first team within the post-Soviet space to

win the Continental Cup twice.

Belarus saw a tougher climb to the top than Austria, struggling to beat Sønderjyske Denmark and Rouen France. The team managed to overcome Denmark 2:1 while France led the score twice before being defeated 4:2. Meanwhile, the Austrians — coached by Pierre Pagé — smashed these two teams with greater ease.

The final match at Minsk-Arena gathered an incredible 14,500 fans — record for a Continental Cup match. The Belarusians' determination and fighting spirit helped them score three times by the end of the

first half but Yunost fans nervously witnessed Austria narrow the gap as the game progressed. The match failed to go into overtime and the Belarusians won 4:3, giving them revenge for last year's defeat. Mikhail Zakharov's trainees are now through to the most prestigious tournament in Europe: the Champions' League (being revived in 2012 at the request of the International Hockey Federation).

Bronze went to Sønderjyske, which beat Rouen in the final match. Yunost goalkeeper Mika Oksa, Sønderjyske defenseman Dustin Van Ballegooie and Red Bull

striker Ryan Duncan were named best players.

"We haven't just won the Continental Cup, gaining entry to the Champions' League; we've delighted our fans and the whole country," smiled Yunost striker Konstantin Zakharov at the post-tournament press conference. "It was more difficult for us to defeat Denmark on the first day of the tournament than it was to beat Austria. It's essential to start with a win. Moreover, our team felt the burden of winning a 'home match'. However, we coped with our excitement and have made hockey history."

Another title for Tatiana Drozdovskaya

By Yuri Kovalev

Belarusian yachtswoman shows bright result at Sailing Regatta in Croatian Hvar

The Laser-Radial yacht racing event, held in Croatia, was the last round of the European Cup. Winning this regatta, the Belarusian athlete captured the main trophy for the overall standings. Denmark's Louise Christensen came second, followed by Swiss Nigina Roemer. Impressively, 250 athletes gathered for the event, despite tough weather conditions, with almost no wind. In some classes, events were cut to a minimum.

Tatiana Drozdovskaya is Belarus' top Laser-Radial class yachtswoman and a multi-time national champion. She has won many World Cup rounds and has taken part in several World and European Championship finals. In 1997, she took gold at the World Championship and participated in the Olympics in 2000, 2004 and 2008.

Worthy position in global ranking

Belarusian team reaches record 37th position in International Football Federation's latest rankings

The Belarusian team has achieved its highest ranking to date, having moved up one place since December 2010. In fact, the squad has played no matches recently. Rather, it has improved its position due to its closest ranking neighbours losing points.

Belarus currently has 660 points, ahead of Cameroon (which lost 20 points). It now ranks 23rd among 53 European teams, while being 3rd in the CIS, behind Russia and Ukraine. The global rankings have seen little change, as few matches are played in January.

Spain tops the table, followed by Holland and Germany.

Hochrindl's speedy racing

Belarusian alpine skier Maria Shkanova wins two Super-G rounds

Shkanova, 21, finished first in two races at the international tournament in Austrian Hochrindl. She completed the first round in one minute 1.84 seconds, while beating her rivals in the second race with a time of one minute 1.9 seconds.

Last year, Maria debuted at the Olympic Games in Canadian Vancouver and performed at the World Championship in 2009.



Tennis stars participate in charity match in Melbourne

Charity match organised by world tennis stars

By Kirill Pirogov

Melbourne has hosted an unusual tennis match to raise money to help the victims of the Queensland floods in Australia

Among the participants of the match was Victoria Azarenko of Belarus, who played as part of the 'green' team, alongside Kim Clijsters, Vera Zvonareva, Ra-

fael Nadal, Andy Roddick, Andy Murray and Patrick Rafter.

Their rivals were the 'gold' team, comprising Caroline Wozniacki, Justine Henin, Samantha Stosur, Ana Ivanovic, Roger Federer, Lleyton Hewitt and Novak Djokovic.

The money raised from the charity match, held on the eve of the Australian Open Tennis Championship, exceeded \$1.5m.

Leading once more

By Kirill Karin

Anton Kushnir of Belarus wins third round of FIS Freestyle Ski World Cup in Canadian Mont Gabriel

It's no secret that this freestyle jumper enjoys great popularity in Canada. Neither frost nor snowfall deterred the 2,000+ visitors in attendance at the World Cup event in Mont Gabriel. Winning in this small city is now a tradition for Anton Kushnir — one of the leaders of the Belarusian national team. He knows the peculiarities of Mont Gabriel's hills perfectly.

Kushnir's only rival for first place was Guangpu Qi of China. However, Anton again proved his status as world leader. His early, less successful, debut during the Asian rounds may be explained by him being on less than optimal form at the beginning of the season. Having brilliantly performed his famous jumps in Mont Gabriel, the Belarusian became unbeatable. Meanwhile, the Chinese athlete made several mistakes.



Anton Kushnir

Pleasingly, the 'gold' success of the Crystal Globe owner was supported by a silver medal from Belarusian Alla Tsuper. Her major opponents were also from China, performing complex programmes. Fortunately, her jumps were near perfect, leaving her in second place behind Xu Mengtao.

The Chinese have now almost 'invaded' the premier positions in the World Cup overall standings. Only Anton Kushnir (currently placed third) rivals this Asian armada.