

## Losing in the finals

By Kirill Karin

### Shakhtyor Soligorsk footballers placed second in Commonwealth Cup 2011

On the way to the finals of the tournament, held in St. Petersburg, Vladimir Zhuravel's trainees played three matches in the preliminary round, defeating Turkmenistan's Balkan 2:1 and Estonian Flora 6:0. They drew against St. Petersburg's Zenit's junior team 1:1 and, in the quarter-finals, beat Dynamo Kiev's reserve squad 2:1. In the semi-finals, Shakhtyor saw the same score against Latvian Skonto.

The finals saw the Belarusian team facing Inter, from Azerbaijan. Even extra-time failed to settle a winner, although the Baku players (who were mostly experienced legionaries) controlled the field more actively. As a result, there was a shoot off from 11m, with Inter claiming a 6:5 lead; the Belarusian team lost by just one point. Inter kept its nerve to bring home the 19th Commonwealth Cup.

Shakhtyor's silver, awarded by FIFA President Joseph Blatter, is no mean feat and has been an unexpected bonus for the squad and their coach. In 2007, Shakhtyor took part in the Commonwealth Cup but failed to reach the second stage.

Shakhtyor's Alexander Alu-mona, who claimed five goals, was named the second best striker of the tournament in St. Petersburg.

# Place on medals podium becomes a good tradition

National team of Belarus performs better at sixth round of Biathlon World Cup, in Italian Antholz, than in German Ruhpolding — winning two medals

By Yuri Karpenko

So far this season, the women have performed best. Sadly, in German Ruhpolding, there were no medals for any Belarusian team member, for the first time in its history. However, the squad redeemed itself in Italy, with team leader Darya Domracheva showing her talent in the 12.5km mass start, winning bronze. It was her best race in Antholz. She was the only one of 30 sportswomen to make no errors in her shooting. After her final piece of marksmanship, she led. However, over the last kilometre, she was outpaced by her rivals, leaving her 5.8 seconds behind winner Tora Berger, of Norway.

In the relay, the Belarusian team (comprising Nadezhda Skardino, Darya Domracheva, Nadezhda Pisareva and Lyudmila Kalinchik) finished fourth. They could easily have won a medal, being stronger than most of the remaining 19 quartets. Nevertheless, fourth place is their second best result this season, having taken bronze during the fourth round in German Oberhof.



Biathlete Darya Domracheva climbs medals podium for fourth time this season

The Belarusian men's team has shown no significant victories so far, with fans keenly anticipating a

turnaround. March will see them attend the World Championship in Russian Khanty-Mansiisk, fol-

lowing the Lake Placid round and another in Fort Kent, scheduled for February.

## Master class and matches

By Yuri Kovalev

### Young Chinese hockey players play friendly matches with Belarusian peers

China's famous Beijing Hokay Iceloong Club, founded in 2005, has sent 10 and 11 year olds to play against pupils from Minsk's Yunost school. The Chinese club

was one of the first to be set up in Beijing to train youngsters and takes an active part in national and international tournaments. The squad has played extensively abroad, including in the USA, Canada and Korea. Last season, it was ranked first in the Beijing Junior Hockey League and performed successfully at several

major international tournaments.

The Chinese youngsters, who have been playing hockey for 3-4 years, joined the Yunost school pupils for training before enjoying a friendly match. They also received a master class in Raubichi from Mikhail Vasiliev, a Belarusian junior team coach. Another match took place in Bobruisk, where the Chinese hockey players faced those from the hockey section of the local junior sports school.

The Chinese delegation was headed by the Chairman of the Beijing Hokay Iceloong Centre's Board, Zhang Yuan. He is one of the founders of China's first private ice sports centre and a member of the organisational committee of the Asia Ice Hockey League. Zhang Yuan also heads the Chinese national hockey team at the Asian Winter Games. In August 2008, during the Beijing Olympics, a friendly match took place between the team of the President of Belarus and Chinese hockey amateurs, who were captained by Zhang Yuan.



Friendly match between young Chinese and their Minsk peers

## With view to London victories

### 275 Belarusian athletes in 31 sports bidding for 30th Summer Olympics, scheduled for 2012

In total, 130 athletes are competing for 1-8 places in the main start. National teams hope to perform in 115 of the 302 Olympic disciplines (in Beijing-2008, we were represented in 112 disci-

plines, covering 26 sports). Taekwondo and football squads are expected to debut at the Olympics.

In 2010, 50 pretenders for the London event won medals in 16 sports at world and European championships. In Olympic disciplines, competing at world championships, Belarusians were among the top eight 24 times.

2011 will define the major pretenders for the Olympics in weight lifting; canoe and kayak rowing; academic rowing; marksmanship; Greek, Roman and freestyle wrestling; rhythmic gymnastics; and boxing. The first to grab places are Sergey Martynov and Victoria Chaika, in marksmanship.

## Double success at Lake Placid

Belarusian freestyle jumpers continue to gather awards at World Cup rounds

By Kirill Pirogov

Another round of the World Cup has been held at Lake Placid, in the USA, bringing double success to our athletes. This repeats the success seen at the recent competition in Canadian Mont Gabriel. This time, Alla Tsuper and Anton Kushnir took silver and bronze respectively, with Maxim Gustik placed sixth.

The women's gold went to American born Ashley Caldwell, 17, from Lake Placid, who was the revelation of the tournament. She knocked out her main competitor, Alla Tsuper of Belarus, who had created a wide gap after her first jump. Ashley's second attempt, which she admits was the 'best of her life', secured her win. The Belarusian jumper did not lose her high spirits however; she is in excellent physical shape for the World Championship.

The men largely failed to produce sensational results, with China's Guangpu Qi leading as expected. Nevertheless, Belarus' Anton Kushnir second jump showed his willingness to take



Kushnir's successful jump

risks. His jump boasted complicated and beautiful elements, including a triple somersault with five turns. The American commentator was left speechless, able only to gasp: "Unbelievable!" Sadly, Anton did not land smoothly, depriving him of a more valuable medal.