

Azarenko nearly conquers Istanbul

Belarusian tennis player brilliantly finishes most successful season of her career

After winning a tournament in Luxembourg, Victoria Azarenko has failed to repeat her success at the final tournament in Istanbul, which brought together the eight strongest tennis players worldwide.

The victory in Luxembourg was Victoria's third this season. At the last tournament in Marbella, in April, Ms. Azarenko celebrated victory but has only once since then reached a finals match: in May in Madrid. Her win in Luxembourg pushed her into the WTA finals in Istanbul, where she continued her successful performance. During

the group stage, she confidently defeated Australia's Samantha Stosur and China's Li Na (6:2, 6:2 in both).

Later, Victoria had to face Russian Maria Sharapova. However, having lost two matches, Sharapova decided to retire early from the tournament, allowing France's Marion Bartoli to take her place in Istanbul and guaranteeing Azarenko a place in the semi-finals. The Belarusian tennis player also easily defeated Sharapova's fellow countrywoman, Vera Zvonareva, while fighting for a place in the fi-



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Victoria Azarenko lacked a little bit luck to win at the WTA final tournament

nals, where she met Petra Kvitova — a 'discovery' of the past season.

In the finals, Azarenko and Kvitova battled for the Grand Slam title and a prize of over \$1.5m, as well as the status of second seed worldwide. After almost two and a half hours of

spectacular play, the 2011 tennis vice queen title was awarded to 21 year old Petra Kvitova. For Azarenko, reaching the finals of this tournament is the greatest achievement of her career to date. At a press conference after the final match with Zvonareva,

Victoria was constantly asked about Amélie Mauresmo. Until 2005, the French player also had some problems with Grand Slam tournaments. Her victory at the final tournament was a 'forerunner' of triumph at the Australian Open and Wimbledon.

BATE footballers repeat excellent performance



BATE football players pleased with another victory

BATE footballers have taken the national championship title for the eighth time, after their match of the 29th round. They defeated Torpedo-BelAZ Zhodino

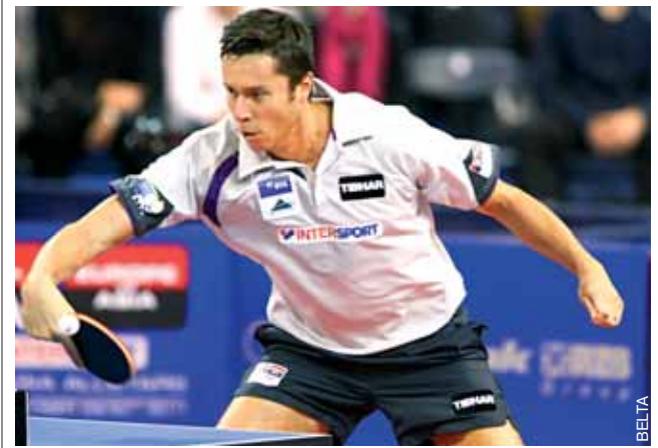
Victor Goncharenko's trainees had 61 points four rounds before the finals of the 21st Belarusian football championship, creating an unbridgeable gap. Before BATE, no other team has won the national championship title so often.

Dinamo Minsk boasts seven titles and, incidentally, assisted BATE's victory by defeating their main opponent — Shakhtyor Soligorsk at home. This deprived the Soligorsk team of the smallest chance of beating BATE. Gomel was placed third after drawing against Neiman — 2:2, also losing their chance of reaching the finals.

In the Champions League, BATE faces Milan (Italy) on November 1st, at Dynamo Stadium in Minsk.

Asia again defeats Europe

European squad loses to Asian team in 2011 Euro-Asia All Stars Series, held at Minsk's Sports Palace



Even Vladimir Samsonov failed to help European squad

By Dmitry Komarov

Being equally matched on the first day of the event, the European team's Vladimir Samsonov and Alexey Smirnov battled Gao Ning, Xu Xin and Tang Peng as worthy rivals. However, on the second day of the competition, the squad suffered an overwhelming defeat by Asia — 7:3 (the fifth by the Asian team since the tournament began).

"European table tennis is currently experiencing a crisis," notes the head coach of the European team, the tournament's director, Alexander Petkevich, while commenting on the forced substitutions of Timo Boll and Werner Schlager. "This crisis has lasted for a decade already. Samsonov is 35, Smirnov is 34, Schlager is 37 and Maze is over 30. However, they continue to outplay younger men. The club system is to blame. Experienced athletes are hold-

ing onto every opportunity to earn money, hampering youngsters from revealing their true potential." Despite the 'one country — one player' rule, the Asian team comprised four Chinese members, although they performed under different flags. Summing up the results of Minsk's forum, the President of the European Table Tennis Federation, Stefano Bozi, noted that he views the matches as an opportunity to enhance the popularity of table tennis in Europe and its level of play.

The best player of the European team was Alexey Smirnov (Russia) while Xu Xin of China was recognised best on the Asian team. The prize fund at the Minsk event was 85,000 Euros, with the winning team awarded two thirds of the sum. The next European stage between the East and the West is to take place in Paris, with the Asian stage being hosted by Beijing, as is traditional.

Road to finals in Thailand

Belarus' mini football rivals determined for main qualifying rounds of 2012 FIFA Futsal World Cup

The team from Turkey is the last participant of the 6th qualifying group. From December 14th-18th, Valery Dosko's trainees will play in the Czech Republic against their hosts, as well as the Turkish and Dutch. The two best teams from each of seven qualifying groups in the major round will go through to the play-offs. Matches to qualify for representing Europe at the World Championships will take place in March and April 2012, with the finals featuring 24 national teams. These are scheduled for November 2012 in Thailand.

Women's handball team loses but retains Olympic dream

Belarusian women's handball team played two qualification matches for 2012 European Championship

In Frankfurt-am-Oder, Belarus (coached since August by Leonid Brazinsky) lost to the local squad 19:27. They had the chance to redeem themselves at Mogilev's Olympiets Sports Complex, facing Hungary, but lost 25:28. Mr. Brazinsky retains hopes for the future though, saying, "I've decided to change not only our team strategy but our approach to



Belarusian women's handball team needs to win

women's handball overall. We need to liaise more with other clubs, creating a group of coaches who can take joint decisions and correct our mistakes."

More qualification matches are scheduled for March, when our squad will

play two matches against Azerbaijan. They are also looking on towards the Olympics, where the girls' chances look brighter than those of the Belarusian men's team. Mr. Brazinsky tells us, "We have a better chance but must plan carefully."