

## Grigas' team going to Europe

**Lithuanian coach Rimantas Grigas has replaced Anatoly Buyalsky as coach of the Belarusian national women's basketball team**

The search for a new head for the most successful Belarusian squad of recent years was launched by the Belarusian Basketball Federation in November 2011, when long-time coach Anatoly Buyalsky announced his departure.

The core achievements of the Belarusian women's basketball team are linked to Buyalsky's name: 2007 European Championship bronze, fourth place in the 2010 World Championship, and sixth place at the 2008 Olympics. However, after losing the 2011 European Championship, the Belarusian coach decided to resign.

After long discussions, the candidate from Lithuania (currently the assistant head coach of leading European women's basketball club UGMK Yekaterinburg) was chosen. The contracts with 49 year old Grigas will last till the end of the summer. Moreover, it was agreed that Grigas would lead the team to the EuroBasket-2013 finals in France if they successfully qualify (matches are to be played in June-July).

"I'm pleased to have the chance to head the Belarusian national women's basketball team. Coaching a national squad is an important project and I'm keen to help fulfil the ambitions of the players, the Federation, and fans. I'll do my best to answer their expectations," he asserts. Grigas will be assisted by Belarusian Andrey Vavlev.

# Earning Spanish gold

Alexandra Gerasimenya wins again! In Malaga, the Belarusian sportswoman won XIII CTO. DE ESPAÑA OPEN ABSOLUTO PRIMAVERA P50, in 50m freestyle swimming



Alexandra Gerasimenya doesn't conceal her joy from successful swim

By Dmitry Baranovsky

This is her favourite distance, in which she always does well. She took gold for the 100m freestyle at the 2011 World Championship and, in 2012, is expected to show the same success, at the Olympics.

Unsurprisingly, the first official start of the new Olympic season has been vital, with only her team mate -- Svetlana Khokhlova -- coming close to rivalling Gerasimenya in the 50m final -- finishing second. Like Alexandra, Svetlana is coached by famous Yelena Kli-

mov. Young Belarusian Oksana Demidova came fifth, while showing promise for the future.

Among the men, Belarus was represented in Spain by Pavel Sankovich, who finished sixth in the 50m backstroke.

"The results are 'a water test'

for sportsmen, after important inter-season preparation," notes the Belarusian national team's head coach, Igor Makeev. He adds, "I consider that the results show our high level of readiness and hope that our swimmers will bring us success at the Olympics!"



The game has failed

## Football again left without championship

Belarus' national mini-football team almost loses hope of playing at 2012 World Championship

A home match against Portugal has resulted in an awkward defeat of 1:7. Our rival also hopes to continue to the next stage of the tournament, so is sure to fight hard in the return match in Lisbon. It seems foolhardy to suppose

that our squad will find success; it may be more likely to reach the Moon by bicycle.

The head coach of the Belarusian national team, Valery Dosko, tells us frankly, "In European football, we occupy the place we deserve.

There are 1,200 pitches in Madrid, yet only 5-7 in Minsk — and no specialised training schools for youngsters. As a result, over the last five years, very few players of international level have appeared from Belarus."

## Azarenko ends her run



By Dmitry Baranovsky

**The world's top tennis player, Victoria Azarenko of Belarus, has suffered her first defeat of the season, being knocked out of the tournament in American Miami**

After victories at several large tournaments, Azarenko's winning series totalled 26 matches, allowing her to approach Steffi Graf's record. However, French Marion Bartoli (seeded seventh worldwide) has ended her stellar run.

In the ¼ finals in Miami (won twice previously by Azarenko — in 2009

and 2011) the first two sets were won 3:6, 3:6 by Bartoli. Vika also boasts 12 victorious WTA tournaments, including four this season: in Sydney, Melbourne (Australian Open), Doha and Indian Wells.

Meanwhile, Max Mirny is on good form. He is to play another Davis Cup with the Belarusian national team, on April 6th. At the same tournament in Miami, he reached the final, partnering Daniel Nestor of Canada, where they presented a serious threat to Leander Paes (India) and Radek Stepanek (Czech Republic). Unfortunately, after winning the first set the Belarusian and Canadian have failed to preserve their advantage and lost.

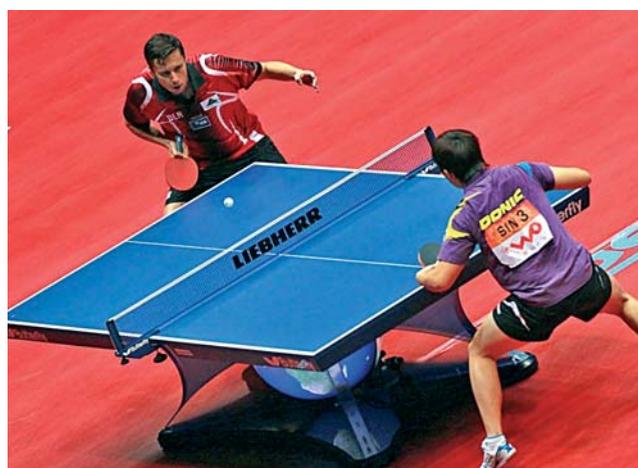
In previous years, Mirny, who lives in the USA, has won the Miami tournament four times: pairing Swiss Roger Federer (2003), Swedish Jonas Björkman (2005 and 2006) and Israeli Andy Ram (2009). Twice, he has reached the semi-finals — partnering Indian Mahesh Bhuopathi (2010) and Canadian Daniel Nestor (2011).

## No places at the tennis table

By Ivan Rafalsky

**Belarusian national table tennis teams left without medals at World Championship in German Dortmund**

The women were the first to be knocked out of the struggle. Tatiana Petkevich's trainees set off to Germany well remembering their bronze medals at a similar tournament in 2006. Unfortunately, they failed to repeat their success. In the final match of the group stage, which primarily determined our



Vladimir Samsonov did what he could

chances, our team lost to Hungary and were placed

only fifth in their group, enabling them to climb no

higher than 13th position.

The men advanced further. At the group stage, Vladimir Samsonov, Yevgeny Shchetinin and Pavel Platonov did rather well. After four victories and one defeat (losing to the Japanese in the first match (0:3) and then beating the Slovaks (3:0), Russians (3:1), Poles (3:0) and Croatians (3:1)) they came third, reaching the play-offs for the 1/4 final. They then lost to Singapore (1:3), which knocked them out, leaving them to fight for 9-12th place.