

# Tennis going from strength to strength

Belarusian national team defeats Bosnia and Herzegovina in second round of Davis Cup's Europe/Africa Group II

By Dmitry Baranovsky

As predicted by many specialists, the match at Minsk's Palace of Tennis was challenging, with Bosnia and Herzegovina being viewed as the favourites (being ranked higher in the Davis Cup). Significantly, the foremost players on each team differed widely in their world rankings: Vladimir Ignatik is seeded 275th while Bosnian Amer Delić is 210th (ranked 60th in the past). Additionally, two months ago, the Bosnians defeated the strong Turkish squad, while Belarus could only boast a win over the rather average Moldovan team.

During the Minsk matches, the first seeds on each team struggled to claim victory, while Bela-

rusian team second seed Dmitry Zhirmont, 23, managed to defeat Amer Delić. The doubles were confidently won by Max Mirny and Alexander Bury, who quashed their opponents over two tie-breaks. However, the final day was the most interesting, as Ignatik and Delić battled on almost equal footing. In the first set, with the score at 1:6, Vladimir Ignatik managed to claw his way back after a tie-break, to win the set. The third set saw Delić break Ignatik's serve, but the latter quickly spurred himself into action, finishing the game in his favour.

Ignatik's dynamic play has opened the path to the next round for Belarusian team, where they'll face the Polish team for Europe/Africa Group I. Needless



Tennis players Max Mirny and Alexander Bury

to say, the matches will be a true challenge; the leader of the rival squad, Łukasz Kubot, is ranked

51st worldwide, while Fyrstenberg and Matkowski are among the top doubles pairs worldwide.

## Grabovsky's third hundred

By Dmitry Komashko

**Mikhail Grabovsky (28) — a forward with Belarus' national team and Toronto club — earns his 200th point in NHL regular matches and 50th point of the season**

The match between Toronto and Philadelphia, in which Grabovsky's club suffered a slashing defeat of 1:7, saw Mikhail score the only goal for the Canadian team. It was his 317th match in the NHL regular championships. To date, he has scored 85 goals and made 115 passes resulting in goals, earning him 50 (23+27) points across 72 matches this season.

Grabovsky is the third highest scoring Belarusian in the NHL, behind Nashville forward Andrey Kostitsyn (27) who takes the lead with 218 points, and Belarusian hockey legend, defender Ruslan Saley (who tragically died in an air crash near Yaroslavl, together with the Lokomotiv team). Saley earned 204 points across 917 matches, playing for Anaheim, Florida, Colorado and Detroit.

Fourth place is occupied by Vladimir Tsyplakov, followed by the younger Kostitsyn brother, Sergey, 25, who also plays for Nashville.

## Finishing season with two wins

**Women's top Belarusian biathlete takes part in Russian Open Championship, hosted by Tyumen, capturing sprint and pursuit gold medals**

Domracheva — the holder of two small crystal globes from the last Cup season — left Norwegian Synnøve Solemdal without a chance in the sprint, finishing almost half a minute

ahead. Russia's Anastasia Zagoruiko came third, behind Domracheva by 43 seconds.

The pursuit was more dramatic, as Domracheva missed four targets at the last shooting range, enduring seven penalty laps. She still managed to ski ahead of Russian Valentina Nazarova by 14 seconds. Domracheva also took part in the traditional Champions'

Race at Moscow's Luzhniki Stadium, alongside the other strongest biathletes of last season. She tells us, "I visited Moscow a year ago, performing at the first competition in Olimpiyskiy. At that time, it was a debut race for sportsmen and organisers but everything was perfect. This time, the event was held on a larger scale. I'm convinced that all participants and fans enjoyed it greatly."

## Cyclists fail to surprise Melbourne



Major testing planned for Minsk-Arena cycle track

**Belarusian cyclists take part in Track Cycling World Championship — held in Australian Melbourne**

The proximity of the Olympics has been significant, with many leading cyclists deciding not to take part. Among them was Belarus' top sprint athlete Olga Panarina, who chose to prepare for the forthcoming Games

instead. Last year, the Belarusian team captured two golds and one silver but, this time, had to be content with mere participation — lacking their leading star. Former world champion Alexander Lisovsky finished 18th in the scratch, while the Belarusian trio of Tatiana Sharakova, Oksana Popko and Alena Dylko covered 3km in 3 minutes and 22.509 seconds in the

team pursuit race — setting a new Belarusian record. However, their achievement failed to place them higher than 6th place overall. The UK team set a world record of 3 minutes and 15.72 seconds, becoming champions. The point race was difficult for Tatiana Sharakova, despite taking her first world championship gold in this discipline last year, and leading in Melbourne after the third intermediary round. However, she ended by being placed 9th.

The remaining events brought no joy to Belarusian athletes as well, with Tatiana Sharakova finishing 13th in the omnium and Maria Logvinova coming 21st in the time trial.

On the eve of the Melbourne event, a traditional presentation of the next tournament took place. Minsk is to welcome the globe's top cyclists next year, with our squad intent on proving their true worth on Minsk-Arena track, following failure in Australia.

## Unlimited possibilities

**Belarusian team plans to capture 19 medals at 2012 Paralympics**

The state coach for disabled sports, Leonid Matseralnik, notes that the results shown by our sportsmen at international competitions lead us to hope for a superb outcome at the forthcoming Games. "If nothing untoward occurs, we can reasonably expect 19 medals," he admits, recalling the 13 medals claimed at the 2008 Paralympics in Beijing.

At present, the Belarusian team boasts 11 places, with a total of 32-33 expected. This time, the Belarusian team is to compete in the judo event, with coaches hoping to see good results. The Head of the Belarusian delegation to London's Paralympics, the First Deputy Minister for Sports and Tourism, Grigory Kosyachenko, assures us that the country boasts the necessary conditions to train handicapped athletes well. They are provided with a nutritious diet plan, medicine, new tandem bicycles, boats and wheelchairs for fencers (all made to individual order).

A preliminary list of the participants is to be submitted to the organising committee by April 20th, including around 70 sportsmen. Changes are possible if anyone suffers from injury, illness or other unexpected circumstances.

## Rowers to gather in Zaslavl

**In 2016, Belarus to host World Rowing Junior Championships**

At the meeting in Rio de Janeiro, the Board Meeting of the International Canoe Federation (ICF) awarded Belarus the right to host the World Rowing U23 Junior Championships. The rowing canal in Zaslavl is the chosen venue for the future championships. "The material base is 80 percent ready," notes Belarus' Deputy Minister for Sports and Tourism, Sergey Nered. "We'll eliminate all drawbacks over the coming four years."

The victories of Belarusian athletes have already made rowing one of the most popular sports in the country, with around 8,000 people being involved in rowing in Belarus. Belarusian rowers aren't content to stop at the World Junior Championships. Next year, the Belarusian Canoe Association will again make an application to host the World Cup round in 2015 in Zaslavl, using the same venue.

## Failed to win medals

**Belarusians ranked fourth in team event at World Junior Fencing Championships, held in Moscow**

In the match for bronze, the Belarusian national team lost to Russia — 39:45. On their way to fourth place, the Belarusian fencers defeated Venezuela — 45:35, South Korea — 45:44 and the USA — 45:35, yet lost to the Hungarians in the semi-finals — 33:45. The Hungarians have taken gold after beating Germany — 45:37.