

## Impartial judges

**Final Four decisive matches for Belarus Men's Handball Cup, held in Brest, to be judged by Danish**

On May 5th, Claus Gramm Pedersen will join Henrik Mortensen in refereeing the first semi-final match between HC Meshkov Brest and Dinamo-Minsk. They'll also preside over the final match for the trophy on May 6th. The second semi-final match (between SKA and Gomel) and the match for third place will be refereed by Belarusian Sergey Repkin and Andrey Gusko.

## Dolidovich becomes first for sixth time

**Belarusian skier Sergey Dolidovich wins Murmansk Ski Marathon for sixth time**

The competitions have been organised in Murmansk during the *Festival of the North* which is unofficially called the Polar Olympiad. Another Belarusian — Alexey Ivanov — has come second. In total, 1,500 athletes have taken part in the 50m freestyle race. Meanwhile, previously, Dolidovich has earned another gold medal at the *Festival of the North* — in the 10km race while Belarusian Yekaterina Rudakova has won the 5km distance.

## Medved's station near the Thames

**On the eve of Olympic Games, London Underground's 361 stations receive 'second name' relating to Olympic champions**

The names of four Belarusians have been used: you can catch a train at Vitaly Shcherbo station and alight at Olga Korbut. Meanwhile, each line boasts its own Olympic discipline. Yekaterina Karsten is honoured on the rowing line while that named after Alexander Medved will be located at Thames River Quay. Mr. Medved jokes that he may set up a stool on the platform to sign autographs.

## Training still needed

**Belarus' national mini-football team fails to reach World Championship finals**

In the return match of the play-offs, in Lisbon, Valery Dosko's trainees lost to Portugal 1:4. The only goal for Belarus was scored by Oleg Gorbenko. In the first match, which took place on March 26th at Minsk-Arena, the Portuguese were also stronger, winning 7:1.

In another match, on April 10th, the Spanish defeated the Slovaks in a home match — 8:0 (following the result of the first match being 4:0). The national teams of Spain, Portugal, Ukraine, Serbia and Russia are now through to the World Championship finals.



Belarus' national hockey team lost twice to Sweden in a series of after-match penalty shoot-outs during EuroChallenge tournaments

# Hockey players from main team defeated by Swedish but remain optimistic

Belarus' national team continues training for World Championship, attending EuroChallenge major tournament, featuring national squads of Belarus, Austria, Sweden and Finland

By Dmitry Baranovsky

The Belarusian national hockey team, under the guidance of new coach Kari Heikkilä, opened the EuroChallenge with two matches against Austria. However, Sweden presented the most serious challenge — being silver medallists of the last World Championship (and eight-time winners). However, in 2002,

the Belarusian national team sensationally beat Sweden's Tre Kronor at the Olympic Games in Salt Lake City. This time, the Scandinavians claimed victory in both matches.

The first match at Minsk-Arena saw the Belarusians keep their lead until the last five minutes, losing only in after-match shootouts. The second game saw Belarus equalising, but the match went into over-

time and a series of shootouts, which their rivals won. Nevertheless, the head coach of the Belarusian national team remains quite optimistic.

"Of the four recent matches, it was only after the second game against Austria that I felt I needed to look at mistakes," explains Mr. Heikkilä. "We met to thoroughly scrutinise our errors and discussed

everything. To improve, the subtlest details are important. When we better master the system, we'll play faster automatically, reacting by reflex."

Fans may be able to see the first results of the squad's improved system this coming weekend. In Tampere, the team is to play its last matches of the EuroChallenge — against the Finnish team.



## Poirée considers terms

**Raphaël Poirée could become new head coach of national men's biathlon team**

The famous French athlete has recently been negotiating with the leadership of the Belarusian Biathlon Federation in Minsk, aiming to reach mutual understanding. The head coach of the Belarusian national women's biathlon team, Adrian Tsybulsky, notes that it's too early to comment, telling us, "Negotiations are ongoing, as we need to

discuss some terms, which will take time. Finances are not everything, as Raphaël is rather wealthy already, so money isn't his top priority."

The eight-time world champion, who recently coached the junior team of Norway and one of the world's leading biathletes, Tarjei Bø, has been suggested to head the Belarusian squad (replacing Yuri Albers) during the season. However, he refused then, asking for time to consider.

## Victoria Azarenko remains on top

**Victoria Azarenko tops WTA rating again, with 8,980 points**

Azarenko became the world's top tennis player on January 30th, after winning the Australian Open — a Grand Slam tournament. Accordingly, she's been topping the global ratings for over ten weeks. Second place is occupied by Russia's Maria Sharapova (7,930) and the third belongs to Czech Petra Kvitová (7,095). Poland's Agnieszka Radwanska is fourth (6,710) and fifth place is occupied by Australia's Samantha Stosur (5,825).

Another two Belarusians are among the top 100: Olga Govortsova is ranked 83rd (789) and Anastasia Yekimova is 89th (744).



Victoria Azarenko