

Yekaterina Karsten wins World Cup stage

Twice Olympic champion and six-time world champion claims victory at 3rd stage of World Rowing Cup, held in Munich, Germany

In the final heats of the women's single sculls, the Belarusian covered 2,000m in 7 minutes 52.74 seconds, ahead of New Zealander Emma Twigg by over 3.5 seconds, who took second place. Donata Vistartaite (Lithuania) came third. Ms. Karsten found herself in second place after the first half of the distance but took the lead at 1,500m, then began pulling ahead of her competitors. She also took first place in the preliminary and semi-final heats.

Another World Cup stage medal in Munich went to the Belarusian four scull (Vadim Lyalin, Denis Migal, Stanislav Shcherbachenya and Alexander Kozubovsky), who took bronze in the 2,000m (6 minutes 13.76 seconds).

Yekaterina Karsten took fifth place overall at the World Cup, participating in one of three stages. The men's four scull claimed bronze in two of three stages (14 points) to take third place overall. Only Great Britain (22 points) and Australia (14 points) were ahead.

Yekaterina Karsten and the men four scull will represent Belarus at the coming Olympic Games 2012 in London. Other Belarusian teams didn't manage to get there.

Girls able to stand up for themselves

Belarus' national women's basketball team enters European Championship qualifying tournament by defeating Hungary at Sports Palace in Minsk and the Portuguese in away match

By Dmitry Baranovsky

The initial matches have been interesting on several fronts. Naturally, one mistake can lead to defeat and relegation to the 'basement' of European basketball. Moreover, new coach Lithuanian Rimantas Grigas, who has replaced Anatoly Buyalsky, is using new tactics with the squad. Despite having seen them in action in friendly matches, play in a serious tournament brings new impressions. Nevertheless, there is much yet to be seen. The defeat of Hungary was pleasing — it being a strong rival; its head coach, Stefan Svitek, may soon head Turkish Fenerbahçe SK. However, Hungarian leader Zsófia Fegyvernek was absent through injury. We could

argue that our team was lacking Yelena Levchenko, but it is arguable whether it was a fair 'exchange of queens'.

Mr. Grigas' strategy of 'siege' worked well, with strong defence necessary in both matches. The coach has been working hard for the past month to ensure the Belarusian squad a successful start. Happily, the girls managed to win despite faults and failures (by the third quarter of the Hungarian match, the score was a distressing 2:12).

Yekaterina Snytnina, Alexandra Tarasova and Anastasia Veremeenko ensured the necessary score but the team remains unjudged by Mr. Grigas. Speaking at a press conference, he looked neither thoughtful nor disappointed,



Belarusian team player Anastasia Veremeenko with the ball

saying, "The result was very important for us. We focused on defence, so the score is modest, but this has no real significance. Vityally, we won — even with a mini-

mum gap. We passed the test."

Our girls are returning from Portugal in good spirits, which we hope will remain throughout the European qualification round.



Battling Slovakian squad at Minsk-Arena

Handballers reach World Championship

By Valentin Orlov

Belarus' national handball team has reached the World Championship finals, following Yuri Shevtsov's squad twice defeating Slovakia

Even during the first match, in Slovakia, the team was looking better than ever before, demonstrating good tactics, determination and character. The players had moments where they seemed to take possession of the ball as if by 'magic'. Rutenko scored nine points in the match but this is only a small part of the Barcelona player's contribution to the victory of the Belarusian

team. Sergey joined the squad less than a week before the Slovak game, following simplified training and missing friendly games beforehand. However, his precise play and accurate serves were worthy of envy.

Before the second match against the Slovaks, the head coach of the Belarusian squad told a press conference, cautiously, "This result is very good but the play-offs consist of 120 minutes. We still have to play 60 more minutes to earn victory." The success of the return match has now proven the team's true ability. Slovakia won the return match by a tiny gap; however, Belarus is through to the World Championship.

Victoria Azarenko:

'Undoubtedly, the Olympic Games are the season's major tournament'

World #2 seed Victoria Azarenko of Belarus believes that the forthcoming Olympic Games in London will be the major tournament of the season. Speaking to journalists after her master class for young athletes (at the Republican Tennis Olympic Training Centre in Minsk) she noted, "I'm always thinking about the Olympic Games; undoubtedly, they'll be the major event of the season. However, I have Wimbledon ahead, so must concentrate on this," notes Victoria, adding that she'll be training in Minsk.

"In recent times, I've been trying to distract myself from tennis. I spent a week visiting various cities, going to the countryside and running along the avenue. Did people recognise me? I was running so quickly that they didn't have time to do so. The vital thing is that I've finally managed to sleep enough and have renewed my strength," she explains.

She admits that Wimbledon can hardly be viewed as a rehearsal for the Games, despite both tourna-



Victoria doesn't scrimp on autographs for young tennis players

ments being held on grass courts. "Yes, Wimbledon is probably the closest tournament to the Olympics but they are different competitions, with different moods and motivations. Moreover, Wimbledon lasts a fortnight and the Olympic event only one week," she stresses. She views her singles performance at the Olympic Games as a priority, although she also 'wants to achieve success' in partnering Max Mirny.

She is taking her loss of first

seed ranking magnanimously, adding, "I may be now ranked second worldwide but have the chance to become first again, which will only give me additional motivation to work hard."

Maria Sharapova knocked Azarenko from first position after the French Open, earning 9,490 points (against Azarenko's 8,800). The Belarusian tennis player was ranked first worldwide for 19 weeks — from January 30th.