

Football clubs study their European Cup rivals

UEFA Headquarters hosts draw for Champions League and Europa League

By Dmitry Baranovsky

Belarus is to be represented by four squads within the tournaments, with BATE Borisov defending the honour of Belarusian football in the Champions League. In previous years, the team has reached the group stage of Europe's major tournament, facing mighty Barcelona and Milan, so special hopes are pinned on the squad. The Borisov footballers will begin in the second qualifying round, playing against Vardar from Skopje.

The Macedonian club are surely not the most serious rivals but will present some challenge, having already beaten Moscow CSKA. The team has played rather erratically of late but, returning to the elite division of their country's championship after one year's absence, Vardar is now champion and, certainly, a 'dark horse'. Undoubtedly, BATE should have the upper hand but no one, even the Macedonians, can forecast what may happen.

Borisov may waver, having so much pressure placed on them by fans, who will be hoping for a quick and easy victory. Few will remember the efforts taken by the team to defeat modest Linfield from



Borisov BATE footballers (in yellow) have good experience of playing in the Champions League

Northern Ireland last year. "When Vardar were selected, I recollected our successful game against Macedonia three years ago," notes Victor Goncharenko, BATE Borisov's head coach. "I think our rival will show discipline, organisation and character. However, the Macedo-

nian Championship finished in late May, so they may not be as cohesive as they were."

Europe's second most important tournament — the Europa League — will see Belarus represented by three teams: Shakhtyor and Naftan will begin in the

second round, where we cannot predict their success. Soligorsk's Shakhtyor will face Austrian Rid — not the most outstanding team, but Austrian football is at a higher level than in Belarus, hinting for an uneasy ride. In recent years, Shakhtyor has been experiencing

a certain 'complex' at European Cup events. They do well at home, then crumble when faced with European rivals. "In my opinion, the game against Rid isn't the worst case scenario," muses head coach Vladimir Zhuravel. "We could have faced even more challenging opponents. Austria is Austria; it seems to me that they play on strength rather than strategy."

Naftan faces a much more imposing rival: Belgrade's Crvena Zvezda. Sadly, the Belarus Cup champion, from Novopolotsk, has long-term financial difficulties, with 17 Naftan players threatening to leave the club unless their salaries are paid in full (a backlog of unpaid wages exists). In fact, a few years ago, the team almost managed to beat venerable Belgian Ghent.

Gomel will be starting earlier, in the first qualifying round of the Europa League. Accordingly, its rival is the easiest to defeat: Vikingur from the Faroe Islands (ranked near the bottom in European football). Vikingur has reached the European Cup ten times and been knocked out badly every year. Moreover, in over twenty recent matches, they have only scored nine goals, while letting in 66.



Vladimir Samsonov will perform at London Olympics

This year's European Championship proves readiness for Olympiad

By Igor Grishin

Belarusian table tennis masters claim mixed pairs prize at European Championship, hosted by Romanian Buzău

Pavel Platonov and Alexandra Privalova are bringing home bronze, having lost a stubborn struggle against Romanian Andrei Filimon and Elizabeta Samara (3:4). The Romanian pair went on to win the continental tournament, beating Turk-

ish Bora Vang and Melek Hu (4:0) in the final.

Belarusian Alexander Kuchuk and Victoria Pavlovich failed to reach the play-offs of the European Championship from Group A. However, Alexandra Privalova and Victoria Pavlovich are now headed to the London Olympic Games (the 30th to be held), so the event was good preparation for them. They'll be joined by the leader of the Belarusian team, Vladimir Samsonov.

NOC to report further on mixed pair

By Vladimir Dmitriev

Victoria Azarenko, Max Mirny and Alexander Bury are to represent Belarus at the Olympics in London, having entered the final list of players — as published by the International Tennis Federation

Victoria Azarenko is among the women participating in the singles, while Max Mirny and Alexander

Bury are to play in the men's doubles. In all, 64 tennis players are to compete in the men's singles, with the same number in the women's event; 32 couples will feature in the men's and 32 — in women's doubles. Moreover, 16 more couples will fight for medals in the mixed event; 12 will qualify from their world mixed rankings while four more couples will be selected by the International Tennis Federation.

The National Olympic Committees (NOC) will decide those taking part in the mixed doubles by July 31st. The NOC of Belarus plans to announce Max Mirny and Victoria Azarenko for the event. Interestingly, tennis mixed doubles were last included in the Olympics in 1924. Altogether, tennis players from 45 countries will play at the London Olympics this year.

Swords with silver shimmer

By Valentin Orlov

Sabre fencers Dmitry Lapkes, Valery Priemko, Alexander Buikevich and Alexey Romanovich take team silver at Fencing World Cup in Chicago

In the final, the Belarusian team, which is soon to represent Belarus at the London Olympics, lost to Romania (26:45). However, they had defeated rivals from South Korea (45:31) and Russia (45:33) on the way up. The French took bronze, beating Russia (45:39).

In the individual men's competition, Dmitry Lapkes was placed highest among the Belarusian sabre fencers, finishing in 6th place. Valery Priemko also reached the finals, ending 7th. At the recent European Championship, hosted by Legnano, Italy, Alexander Buikevich claimed bronze, but had to be content with



Alexander Buikevich didn't let his team down

26th place this time, Alexey Romanovich came 50th while Alexey Likhachevsky finished 56th — out of 111 sportsmen.

In the women's competition, Be-

larusian Olga Kiseleva ended in 57th place in the individual tournament (out of 87 participants). The Belarusian women's team was absent on this occasion.