

Another ascent to the pedestal

By Igor Grishin

Belarusian yachtswoman Tatiana Drozdovskaya wins silver at European Laser Radial Sailing Championship, in Hourtin, France

The first day of racing was less than successful for the Belarusian; fortunately, her results were dismissed. Ms. Drozdovskaya then improved her position, rising from the middle (46th) to second place and a silver medal. After ten races, she was just five points behind European champion Alicia Cebrian, of Spain.

Her European Championship silver is Tatiana's second great success this season, having won the World Cup Laser Radial class in Kiel, Germany, in late June. The European Championship in France was the last international event before the London Olympics this summer, where sailing events are being hosted by the town of Weymouth.

At the upcoming Games, Ms. Drozdovskaya, 34, will represent Belarus in the Laser Radial class: her fourth Olympics to date, after Sydney-2000, Athens-2004 and Beijing-2008. In 2007, she became world champion in Cascais, Portugal. She has won and received prizes at World Cup stages and has twice been the European Cup winner.

Successful deal leads to the very top

By Yegor Gromov

Victoria Azarenko, having reached the semi-finals of Wimbledon, is ranked singles first seed by the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) — after one month knocked from premiere place

American Serena Williams helped Victoria by beating Polish Agnieszka Radwanska in the Wimbledon final on July 7th. If Agnieszka had won the match, she would have become first seed for the first time in her career.

Victoria Azarenko currently leads, with 8,800 points, closely followed by Ms. Radwanska (8,530 points) — up from 3rd to 2nd place. Russian Maria Sharapova (8,370), who was knocked out of Wimbledon in the 1/8 final round, has fallen from 1st to 3rd place. Wimbledon winner Serena Williams (7,360) has climbed from 6th to 4th place.

Belarusian Olga Govortsova has risen from 95th to 83rd place in the singles while Anastasia Yekimova has fallen from 110th to 112th position. In the men's doubles, Belarusian Max Mirny and Canadian Daniel Nestor, despite being knocked out in the second round of Wimbledon, are ranked first for the 10th week in a row.

Basketballers win; now the game begins!

Belarusian women's national basketball team reaches European Championship finals

By Valentin Orlov

In the final Group A round of the qualification tournament, hosted by Poland, the girls faced Ukraine. They had already gained a place at another European tournament, being held in France within the next year, and were keen to join the EuroBasket elite in the finals of the championship.

Despite being tired, our squad retained its precision, if attacking more rarely. The powerful Ukrainians took several shots at the net, but repeatedly missed, including from the penalty line. Meanwhile, Anastasia Veremeenko scored time and again. Modestly, she remarks, "You shouldn't overestimate my merits. Everyone played their part, straining every sinew."

Of course, questions remain, whose answers cannot be found on the last day before departure to Paris. Our Belarusian girls have passed through the qualification round, but not without great strain, even though their rivals — from Hungary, Portugal, Ukraine and Israel — are not of the highest level. Had our squad been defeated by the Ukrainians, the final result of the group would have been quite different. Saying this, the girls have strengths as well as weaknesses, which have become more obvious following these recent matches.

New coach Rimantas Gri-



Belarusian basketball players' victorious match over Ukraine

gas has been thrown by the large number of injuries on the squad, lacking enough reserve players.

Meanwhile, the team is missing Yelena Levchenko, who continues her season with the female NBA.

We cannot also help but wonder how hours spent in airports will affect the girls' stamina, not to mention the organisational problems which have plagued our squad for several years now. Could these factors hamper our sporting ambitions? Naturally, we've withstood all difficulties so far and, despite tough challenges, our girls have reached the next stage; now, their goal is EuroBasket — of which Mr. Grigas must be thinking (although he claims not).

"It's been very interesting to work with the team and, importantly, this has given us time to allow injured players to recover. We are pinning our hopes on Yelena Levchenko, who will help us greatly in the future. Next season, our younger players will also gain maturity. Believe me, we'll be able to achieve much with time to improve our team play," asserts Mr. Grigas.

Evidently, not everyone was ready for the burdens and approaches used by Mr. Grigas. Of course, the loss of any core player can create a crisis so we cannot blame Mr. Grigas for failing to gather enough reserve players. His time has been limited and the choice sparse. Mr. Grigas has done what was needed to reach the next stage of the EuroBasket tournament and can now show us of what he is truly capable.

Gymnasts practise well for Olympic Games



National rhythmic gymnastics team in group exercises

Belarusian athletes take nine medals (three silver and six bronze) at World Rhythmic Gymnastics Cup final stage, hosted by Minsk's Sports Palace

The Belarusian capital brought together the world's top gymnasts, who will soon be fighting for medals at the London Olympics. Meanwhile, it seems likely that our squad will have every chance of claiming medals in the UK. The Belarusian team — comprising Marina Goncharova, Anastasia Ivankova, Ksenia Sankovich, Alina Tumilovich, Alexandra Narkevich and Natalia Leshchik — gained almost perfect results in the all-round and in the two most complex routines: the five

balls and that with two hoops plus three ribbons. Although the Russians celebrated ultimate victory, their advantage of just 0.225 points shows that anything is possible at the Olympics!

Our Belarusian girls performed in the individual exercises also, with Lyubov Cherkashina awarded bronze in the Olympic all-round. Melitina Stanyuta (still recovering from injury) came fifth yet managed to reach the finals in the separate exercises. She was third with the hoop and ribbon, beaten only by acknowledged Russian favourites: Olympic champion Yevgenia Kanayeva and Darya Dmitrieva. Ms. Cherkashina also took bronze in the ball and clubs exercise.

Dinamo promises spectacular football

By Vladimir Dmitriev

Dinamo Minsk's coach, Alexander Sednev, has been replaced by Oleg Protasov — an outstanding former Soviet football player. He is the 26th coach for the club in the last 12 years.

On July 8th, the Dynamo-Yuni Stadium saw Dinamo Minsk draw 1:1 with Grodno Neman. The club was ranked fourth in the country's championship but the leadership of the club wasn't satisfied, leading to the announcement of the Sednev's departure.

Protasov may be able to improve the situation, having seen significant success as a player and coach. As a member of the USSR national team, he was European vice-champion, claimed the European Silver Boot (as the second highest scorer playing in national championships of European countries) and was a record-breaker within the USSR championship for the number of goals scored in one season (35).

Mr. Protasov began his coaching career in Greece, heading Olympiakos in 2002 and helping the

club claim gold at the country's championship in 2003. He also took them to the Greece Cup finals in 2004. He then worked successfully in Romania, coaching Steaua from Bucharest. Under his guidance, the team won the country's national championship within four years (their first such claim to fame) and did well at the UEFA Cup group stage, defeating German Gerta, Italian Sampdoria and French Lens. In 2005, Mr. Protasov was named 'best coach' in Romania. Over the years, he has also coached Ukrainian Dnepr, Kuban Krasnodar, AEL Cyprus (2004-2005), Greece Iraklis (2009), Russian Rostov (2010-2011) and Kazakhstan Astana (2011-2012).

Musing on his plans for Dinamo, Mr. Protasov notes that he wants 'to develop football which will please people and gather full stadiums'. "Undoubtedly, results dominate but I also think we need to entertain fans," believes the coach. "Of course, opinions differ but I think that we should focus on more than the final score; we should play for our fans, displaying quick and combinational football."