

Azarenko continues victorious tradition

During the Australian Open Championship — the first tournament of the Grand Slam series, held in Melbourne — the Belarusian tennis player easily passed the first round, becoming a major contender for victory.

The final match in Sydney was rather dramatic, with Victoria facing a real challenge in her opponent, Chinese Li Na. This year, the Chinese player (who was defeated by Azarenko in the final in Istanbul) was battling for her reputation. A year ago, she celebrated a victory in Sydney while Azarenko had to leave the tournament after its quarter-finals (losing to Kim Clijsters). Moreover, Li Na defeated Victoria in the fourth round of the Australian Open Championship (but later lost to Clijsters as well).

Undoubtedly, the recent finals were full of intrigue. Anticipating this, Azarenko didn't try to conceal her joy at facing the Chinese player. "Over the last two years, she's done well in Australia. We've always had interesting matches, so I'm looking forward to meeting her in the final. This is a good opportunity to try my strength," she noted.

While Li Na was trying to discover Azarenko's weaknesses, Victoria managed to win the first set within half an hour (6:2). However, her rival quickly turned the situation on its head, winning the second set 6:1. The third was full of thrills, as Azarenko served pow-



Victoria Azarenko wins tennis tournament in Sydney

erful aces. Delicate rallying was replaced by mistakes and high emotions. After much torment, the Belarusian proved luckier, breaking Li Na's serve unexpectedly (when the score was 4:3). She then managed to turn the match to her benefit.

The tournament in Melbourne also saw success for Azarenko, as she easily beat Heather Watson of the UK (seeded 106th) — 6:1, 6:0. In previous years, Azarenko's best result at the Australian Open

Championship has been to reach the quarter-finals: in 2010. In the doubles, she has reached the finals twice.

Alongside Victoria Azarenko, two more Belarusian tennis players are in the Australian Open Championship. Unfortunately, 62nd seed Anastasia Yekimova, who reached the third round in Melbourne in 2007, lost to Italian Romina Oprandi in the first match of the first round — 4:6, 1:6. Meanwhile, Olga Govortsova, who

has never reached further than the first round in Melbourne, continues after defeating Austrian Patricia Mayr-Achleitner — 6:2, 6:4.

Max Mirny is the only Belarusian man taking part, having recently triumphed in the doubles in Brisbane — partnering Canadian Daniel Nestor. He will try to surpass his achievement of 2007, when (with Jonas Björkman) he reached the semi-finals of the Australian Slam. Last year, Mirny lost only in the semi-finals.

Golden water

Natalia Berdnikova, 29, from Novopolotsk, has been acknowledged as the world's best water skier by the International Waterski and Wakeboard Federation

Recently, the organisation finished its poll to define the top sportsmen of 2011. Last season, Natalia became a world champion for the third time, also setting her third world record.

Mirny starts with victory

Belarusian tennis player Max Mirny has begun the new season brilliantly, winning Australia's Brisbane Cup doubles with his partner, Canadian Daniel Nestor

In the final match, the Belarusian-Canadian duo (seeded first) confidently defeated second seeded duo Philipp Petzschner (Germany) and Jürgen Melzer (Austria) in two sets — 6:1, 6:2.



The victory is Mirny's fifth with Nestor. They won in Memphis and London, in addition to the French Open in 2011 and ATP World Tour Masters 1000. Sharing his impressions, Nestor — who boasts 75 titles to date — notes that the Brisbane final was 'probably one of the best matches we've played together.'

Playing worthily at home

Belarusian national men's handball team reaches 2013 World Championship play-off round

Belarusians have beaten their main opponent in the 7th qualification group — Romania — 28:23 (15:12). This gave them revenge for their defeat in Bucharest — 22:25.

Minsk's crowded Palace of Sports saw Yuri Shevtsov's trainees begin the match by attacking hard. However, Romania stood strong, pushing Belarus into three 2-minute penalty dismissals within the first ten minutes. The hot tempered match cooled a little as Belarus found its way, launching a more calculated campaign.

The world's most expensive handball player, the leader of the Belarusian squad, Sergey Rutenko, enjoyed a brilliant match, as did Kazimir Kotlinsky.



Team leader Sergey Rutenko

Maxim Baranov made a good substitute for Rutenko-junior on the right flank. The second half brought the most fruitful results: with Belarus up by six points by the 36th minute and nine by the 41st minute. By the end of the match, Romania was finding efficient ways to combat the tricks of Rutenko and his team mates but our goal-keepers prevented them from scoring more than 23 points in all, producing a final score of 27:23.

The final results of the 7th qualification group are as follows: Belarus — 6 points (difference of goals 120-99), Romania — 6 (109-92), Luxembourg — 0 (93-131). So, Belarus is ranked first on points difference, earning the right to go through to the world tournament's play-offs.

Chasing snowy Cup

Darya Domracheva continues battling for major prize in World Biathlon Cup — the Big Crystal Globe

In German Oberhof, despite harsh weather, the Belarusian again claimed a medal, coming second in the 7.5km sprint, finishing just behind her major rival — German Magdalena Neuner.

The Belarusian has performed well during the fifth Cup round, coming fifth in the 15km individual race, and keeping her place among the leaders overall — despite having twice as many misses as her major opponents.

After the individual race, Domracheva was just 40 points behind

Neuner — a margin which can be removed within a single round. After leaving Nové Město, Neuner's advantage over Domracheva rose to 53 points, although the German made an error in the pursuit race, shooting at the targets of the race winner, Tora Berger. Olga Zaitseva of Russia is close behind Domracheva, by just ten points.

It seems that these most talented athletes, joined by Finnish Kaisa Mäkäräinen and Norwegian Tora Berger, will keep us on tenterhooks until the very end of the season.



Darya Domracheva aims for Cup title

Dakar rally: MAZ bears losses

Of the two Belarusian MAZ trucks participating in the famous Dakar rally, only one is still en route to Peru's capital of Lima (after the seventh round of the race)



The second crew had to retire 30km before the finish line, as the truck flipped over in the dunes of the Atacama Desert. Alexander Polishchuk, Pavel Garanin and Dmitry Zaporoshchenko were able to climb safely from the cabin.

The other Belarusian crew — driven by Alexander Vasilevsky — attempted to help, but a helicopter was needed to do the job, arriving almost 24 hours later. The vehicle has had to be retired from the race, but Belarus remains in 36th place and will continue the race, having had a day's rest. Interestingly, just 36 of 71 crews finished the seventh stage of the rally — which is the most complicated.