

# Belarusian volleyball players to play at European Championship

Belarusian men's volleyball team through to European Championship finals

By Valentin Orlov

The squad, headed by famous Russian coach Victor Sidelnikov, has earned four victories across six matches in the qualification round, securing itself first place in the next group, which comprises Turkey, the UK and Portugal.

Initially, the task seemed rather daunting, as all the opponents had experience of top tournaments and the British had recently taken part in the Olympic Games. Moreover, after an early three match wins, the Belarusian squad's leading players were suffering from injuries in the first match of the second round and, therefore, had to hope for a lucky outcome in the meeting of their rivals.

Mr. Sidelnikov stresses that the success is the result of much training. "I've achieved the result I was aiming for on becoming head of the national squad. You need a target and, after the last the European Championship, held in spring 2010, we set a task for my trainees. Gradually, we are achieving it. I knew that we're able to do this. Meanwhile, 2013 European Championship quali-



Exciting moments from the match

fication is already history from which we should make the nec-

essary conclusions for the future. Our team will have to maintain

the bar, raised to a new level, and prove not accidental character of

our success," notes Mr. Sidelnikov. According to him, the task is quite within our powers taking into account previous experience.

"It's too early to speak about plans; we first need to learn the results of the draw and to assess our rivals," he adds.

At present, alongside Belarus and national teams of Poland and Denmark — the hosts of the tournament — the place in the European Championship finals was secured by squads from the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, France, Serbia, Italy, Russia, Slovakia and Bulgaria. The remaining three entrants will become known next May when the winners of Croatia-Slovenia, Greece-Belgium and Turkey-Latvia will be determined.

After the third round of the qualification our girls can join men on the European arena. In the second round of the qualifying tournament, hosted by Baku, Belarusians came second in Group C and the national team will face Slovakia in the play-offs for the right to perform at the European Championship.

## Brilliant chances given to future champions

Minsk's Olympic Reserve Centre (named after three time Olympic champion Alexander Medved) solemnly opens at 35 Kalinovsky Street — where Vilnius Cinema was previously situated



Alexander Medved at launch of wrestling centre

By Igor Grishin

The opening coincided with the 75th birthday of the famous Belarusian wrestler, Alexander Medved, as noted by Minsk City Executive Committee Chairman Nikolai Ladutko. The launch of the complex pays tribute to Alexander Medved's contribution to Belarusian sport. As the Chairman of the Belarusian Wrestling Federation, Yuri Chizh, noted, the new sports facility will greatly inspire the development of

Belarusian wrestling. "Avoiding a repetition of the mistakes of the 2012 London Olympics is vital," he said; during the Games, Belarusian wrestlers lost five fights for bronze.

Mr. Medved personally thanked all those present, saying, "This sports facility is unique for our city, allowing us to host competitions and training at all levels. I hope future champions will be nurtured here." The sportsman solemnly received the key to the door and, afterwards, the ribbon

was cut — as is traditional.

Mr. Chizh stressed that training of young wrestlers will begin in about a month's time. He dispelled rumours that Belarus' national team is to train at the venue, explaining, "They won't train here, as we are designing another House of Wrestling in Minsk, which will become the major base for the national team. Rather, youngsters are to train at this facility."

"The school is yet to open," explained Mr. Medved, adding, "We're now seeking coaches and children."

The facility has several gyms for training, in addition to two rooms with floor mats where young sportsmen can demonstrate their mastery. Shower rooms, cloakrooms, a sauna and a café ensure comfort while the Hall of Wrestling Glory is sure to inspire all who view it. It features the original awards of the most famous Belarusian wrestlers: Olympic champions Oleg Karavayev, Kamandar Madzhidov and Alexander Medved. It also showcases two unusual sculptures: one of two fighting wrestlers and the other of a bear standing at the top of a podium, wearing three Olympic medals.

## Belarusian NHL players continue season in Russia



One of the world's best goalkeepers, Pekka Rinne, joins Dinamo

**Lock-out paralysation of world's largest hockey league has favourable effect on Kontinental Hockey League**

Being temporarily unemployed, some top ice hockey stars have decided to keep fit and earn money by joining KHL teams, significantly intensifying the intrigue on the Russian ice. Several Belarusian hockey players who usually play with NHL clubs have taken such a decision. Even before the official announcement of the lock-out, Dinamo Minsk was named as their likely destination. Their assistance would certainly prove helpful to the club, which has begun the new season frustratingly. However, none of the NHL players have actually chosen to join Dinamo.

Andrey Kostitsyn, the older of the two brothers, was the first to make his move, joining Chelyabinsk Traktor; the forward may even stay

after the lock-out finishes, since his Nashville team decided to end his contract this summer, making him a free agent. There was originally talk of him going to Moscow club CSKA, as Toronto forward Mikhail Grabovsky has done.

Unlike Kostitsyn, Grabovsky's decision has caused quite a stir, as he announced that he'd only consider Minsk Yunost if he chose a Belarusian squad (his former team as a junior). However, the team is currently only playing in the Supreme Hockey League, which is below Mikhail Grabovsky's level. He has announced his eagerness to help his new club win the major KHL trophy: the Gagarin Cup.

Sergey Kostitsyn's negotiations with Salavat Yulaev Ufa are likely to prove successful, so fans may soon also see him at forthcoming matches.