

Confirming high status

By Igor Leshin

Belarusian water skiers do well at international competitions in Dnepropetrovsk

Belarus' male water skiers left their rivals standing in Dnepropetrovsk, taking all the medals for themselves. Ilya Labkovich earned two gold medals and two silver while Alexander Isaev claimed two gold and two bronze. Artem Morozov came second and third (twice) while Stepan Shpak finished second.

Meanwhile, Anna Streltsova claimed gold in all her exercises and Alexandra Danishevskaya took bronze three times, finishing second in the all-round.

Vladimir climbs medals podium once again

Belarusian Vladimir Samsonov wins Men's Table Tennis World Cup bronze

In the match for third place, hosted by British Liverpool, the Belarusian athlete defeated Chinese Xu Xin after a tough struggle, 4:2. Samsonov also beat Portugal's Marcos Freitas — 4:2, British Liam Pitchford — 4:0 and Chuan Chi-yuan (Chinese Taipei) — 4:3. Vladimir was only defeated by Germany's Timo Boll — 2:4. The latter took silver after losing to Ma Lin from China — 0:4.

Vanessa Kolodinskaya: 'I need to work harder'

Belarusian athlete Vanessa Kolodinskaya claims gold at FILA Women's Freestyle Wrestling World Championships, hosted by Canadian Strathcona County

On her way to the championship title, Vanessa (under 48kg) beat American Clarissa Chunhun (2012 Olympic bronze), Tatyana Amanzhol-Bakatyuk from Kazakhstan, Li Xiaomei from China and Japanese Eri Tosaka — 0:2, 1:0, 3:2.

"I still don't believe it; I'm so happy. It was somewhat unexpected to see such a result," noted Vanessa, sharing her impressions on returning to Belarus. "I'm delighted with this after the London Olympics. Now, I'll train even harder, as my rivals will be more serious in future on meeting me. I must work harder."

Alongside Vanessa Kolodinskaya, two more Belarusian athletes also claimed medals at the World Championship in Canada. Zalina Sidakova (under 59kg) won silver while bronze went to Vasilisa Marzalyuk (under 72kg).

In the under 51kg category, Alina Ryzhkova was placed 10th. Irina Shevtsova-Tsyркеvich came 15th in the under 67kg category while Nadezhda Mikhalkova finished 14th in the under 55kg category.

Borisov BATE team defeats football giants

BATE continues its sensational parade in Champions League, beating Bayern Munich — the favourite of Group F — after defeating French Lille



Minsk Dynamo Stadium match causes sensation in UEFA Champions League

By Dmitry Komashko

Before the launch of the Champions League group round, Belarus' champion seemed far from a favourite, faced with Bayern, Lille and Valencia. However, the team has surpassed all expectations; after its first two matches, the Borisov team is in a well-deserved first place in Group F!

Of course, the line-up of Bayern Munich looked far more impressive and the Germans hit the bar twice (taking advantage of their rivals' mistakes). However, Borisov didn't waste any time either, realising that Bayern was a formidable opponent which wouldn't give up until it had claimed victory. Brilliant play from BATE goalkeeper Andrey Gorbuinov prevented Bayern from scoring too many goals at Dynamo Stadium in Minsk. Meanwhile, BATE's forceful attack skills were completely un-

expected for the German national team goalkeeper, Manuel Neuer.

Alexander Pavlov opened the score during the 23rd minute, using a counterattack by Borisov, with a powerful kick. Finding itself in the unusual position of having to catch up (before arriving in Minsk, the German squad had a run of nine wins) Bayern reinforced its pressure. Nevertheless, BATE still led 1:0 by halftime. Moreover, it managed to skilfully suppress attacks and even organised some rather dangerous counterattacks. One brought a second goal, 12 minutes before the second half ended. Other opportunities presented themselves earlier, with Alexander Hleb showing himself to be a true leader, setting up goals for his teammates; however, Edgar Olekhovich's attempt was repelled by goalkeeper Neuer while Vitaly Rodionov and Alexander Pavlov managed to miss the net. Sooner or later,

these attempts were destined to bring a result — as happened during the 78th minute, when Rodionov and Olekhovich's work paid off.

This caused Bayern (the unanimous favourite of the group) to panic, rushing to redeem themselves. Franck Ribéry managed to find the net in the first minute of extra time but German fans were soon disappointed, as BATE's Renan Bressan scored, leaving the final score at 3:1. "To beat Bayern, everything needed to come together," noted BATE head coach Victor Goncharenko after the match. "Fortunately, this happened; my trainees kept their heads calmly. Moreover, we were well aware of Bayern's weaknesses, using these to our advantage."

It's too early to speak of BATE undoubtedly reaching the Champions League play-offs, since they must next face Spanish Valencia.

The latter will surely learn from Bayern's experience and will be ready for the Belarusian champion. If BATE is to continue in Europe's major club tournament it must defeat its opponents, as BATE halfback Alexander Hleb admits; a great challenge lies ahead. He believes that Bayern is still the favourite of the group, noting, "Yes, we've won but the Munich players dominated, attacking repeatedly and taking possession of the ball for most of the match. It just happens that, in football, this doesn't always lead to victory. I don't think that the name of BATE will strike fear in all our rivals as a result of the match. They'll just be studying our game more thoroughly. We'll prepare for the match against Valencia in the same way as we did for our last rivals. We'll try to do our best and will move from game to game, assessing our achievements and making plans for the future."

Victoria Azarenko wins tournament in Beijing

By Igor Grishin

World number one seed Victoria Azarenko again confirms her high status, confidently beating Russian Maria Sharapova in China Open finals — 6:3, 6:1

The match between Belarusian Victoria Azarenko and Maria Sharapova of Russia may go down in the annals of world tennis, as did those of Chris Evert and Martina Navrátilová many years ago. Of course, today's athletes still have some way to go before they achieve 80 personal meetings but Victoria and Maria are already on the right path — as proven by their entrance to the finals of one of the largest WTA tournaments. \$4,828,000 of prize money was at



Emotions after victory

stake in Beijing, which saw their 11th meeting.

Of the ten previous matches, Victoria has won six but both

sportswomen were clearly on form at the Beijing tournament, and have been playing well all season. Their form this year has been phenomenal, with Azarenko celebrating 61 victories and 8 defeats before last Sunday match (to Sharapova's 56 and 9 respectively). Their number of titles is very similar, with Victoria boasting four major prizes (Sydney, Melbourne, Doha and Indian Wells); Maria has three (Stuttgart, Rome and Paris). Before the finals, they had conceded not a single set to their opponents, losing only in the 41st match (Azarenko — 21 and Sharapova — 20).

Curiously, since 2009, neither has won more than one title in the Premier Mandatory series during any given season

(competitions with a prize fund of over \$4m). In Beijing, Azarenko broke this run, having also won the tournament in Indian Wells. Her manner seemed easy, while Maria's tennis was a little strained throughout. She made 39 unforced errors, while Azarenko had just 14. Sharapova will undoubtedly seek retribution in future.

The second set was a true battle, with the seventh point of the final game lasting over seven minutes. However, Victoria proved stronger in spirit and more skilful. Since last Monday, the world number one has celebrated her 33rd week topping the WTA ratings. This places her 11th in the history of tennis in terms of time spent as number one seed.