

Spanish team shows how to play real football

Every football fan knows the famed Spaniards, who now threaten to dethrone the Brazilians from their supreme reign. The favourites at every match, they were the ultimate opponent for Belarus at Minsk's Dynamo Stadium, which hosted the World Championship selection round game.

By Vladimir Dmitriev

Belarus finds itself in the same group as the Spanish, although with a greatly different agenda. While Spain leads and expects nothing less than to reach the final round, Belarus wishes only to hold its head high and is grateful for the honour of taking part in the prestigious tournament. It is a bright page in the history of the national squad.

The stadium has never before welcomed such giants, so it was unsurprising that every seat was

taken, despite the cold October evening. Although everyone hoped for a miracle, the Spanish national team's talent, strategy and skill are such to inspire envy in any squad on the planet. Its players grace the clubs of legendary Barcelona, Manchester United and Real.

The head coach of the Belarusian national team, Georgy Kondratiev, hoped that his players would put up some fight but the Spanish had already scored twice by halftime. Goalkeeper Alexander Veremko was no match for Jordi Alba and Pedro Rodríguez; two



Belarusian national football team meets Spanish — the current European and world champions

more goals were scored in the second half, leaving Mr. Kondratiev only to note that today's Spanish squad is the best he has ever met in his life, so it was no surprise that

his team only managed a few moments near their rival's net.

Of course, the defeat by the Spanish won't dampen the Belarusians' spirits; the Spaniards' win

(three points) in Minsk was inevitable. Meanwhile, following defeat in Tbilisi, the Belarusian squad set a goal to take revenge on Georgia a few days later.

Confident step towards high-class group is made

Belarusian women's national curling team reaches European Championship Group B

In early October, Turkey hosted the 2012 European Mixed Curling Championship Group C matches: a selection round to Group B. Among the women, Belarus, Turkey, Holland, Croatia, Slovenia and Romania competed for places; the men's teams were from Turkey, Belarus, Croatia, Iceland, Romania,

Luxembourg and Slovenia.

The women's national team comprised Yekaterina Kirillova, Alina Pavlyuchik, Syuzanna Ivashina and Natalia Sverzhinskaya, who defeated the hosts in the finals, despite being 1:5 down at one point. They managed to rally, snatching victory in additional time to take gold. They are now the first women's team to receive a place in Group B.

Victoria again proves her status of winner

By Igor Grishin

World number one Victoria Azarenko of Belarus wins international tournament in Austrian Linz (with prize fund of \$200,000)

In the final, Victoria beat German Julia Görges (seeded 19th worldwide) — 6:3, 6:4. The match lasted an hour and 17 minutes, with the Belarusian leading 5:0 in the second set. However, she allowed her opponent to revive the intrigue, bringing the gap to just 5:4 before finally defeating her rival.

This was the fifth meeting between Azarenko and Görges; Victoria had won four matches and lost one, having beaten the German in 2011 at tournaments in Madrid and Luxembourg and in 2012 at Indian



Victoria Azarenko does her best

Wells. Görges beat Victoria in 2011, in Stuttgart.

Victoria is now due to take part in the final tournament of the year in Turkish Istanbul, from October 23rd-28th, at which the top eight female tennis players on the planet will gather, alongside the top eight doubles teams.

Tsmoki spreads its wings

Basketball returns to Belarus, with VTB United League at Minsk-Arena in October (following two year tradition)

By Dmitry Baranovsky

The tournament is unique and ambitiously expands its geography with each year. This season, it features two dozen clubs from the CIS, Baltic and European states, while the winner will ensure itself a ticket to Europe's major club tournament: the Euroleague.

The level of play is very high, with participation becoming more prestigious. Belarus' champion has been among the top squads for three years, although Minsk-2006 club has been disappointed in its performance. It is now changing its name, line-up and image, being known as Tsmoki-Minsk and with a desire to reach the play-offs.

Headed by Andrey Krivonos, it kicked off with a much anticipated match against Enisey Krasnoyarsk. Last season, the team was the only one the Minskians managed to beat so they hoped to claim victory. However, only several members from last year's line-up are at Andrey Krivonos' disposal, so the coach has had to start almost from scratch. The core of the team comprises basketballers from the national squad — which recently took part in the European Championship (under the guidance of Mr. Krivonos). Denis Korshuk, Pavel Ulyianko and Alexander Pustogvar have joined the



Tsmoki-Minsk during the match against Enisey Krasnoyarsk

squad, in addition to several legionaries. Experienced players, such as John Edwards (three seasons in the NHL), are joining recent graduates of American universities who are keen to begin their career with European clubs.

The 'cocktail' is promising but the coach is yet to inspire true team work; Tsmoki lost to Enisey, who took a huge 20 point lead by the first break. The Minskians looked better on their return to the court, creating a few spectacular moments, but failed to make up for lost time.

After the match, Mr. Krivonos noted that the championship's start had turned out to be unexpected, not only for fans. However, he stressed, "The team has around 70-80 percent new players, so it's difficult for them

to play coherently straight away; the newcomers need to be introduced into the team system. This was one of the factors making the first half of the game frustrating. Players lacked understanding and nobody tends to demonstrate extraordinary play on joining a new team. Meanwhile, our rivals had Jason Rich, who easily outmanoeuvred us; he claimed 27 points and we were unable to restrain him. However, we have a promising team; we'll work from its strengths and vary our line-up..."

A few days later, the Minsk Dragons (as the new name is translated) faced Nizhny Novgorod with similar disappointment. Mr. Krivonos continues to assert that it will take time for the team to find its feet.