

Time to take first place

Tatiana Drozdovskaya of Belarus tops ISAF Laser Radial rankings for first time in history of national yachting

The Belarusian athlete holds 878 points in the rating list, published monthly by the International Sailing Federation (ISAF). In March, Ms. Drozdovskaya was second, with 860 points, but climbed to the top after winning the Europe Cup in Italian Malcesine, Lake Garda, and being placed sixth in the World Cup in Spanish Palma.

Krystal Weir of Australia holds second place (742 points) while World Cup winner (in Palma) British Alison Young is third (737 points). In total, 444 sportswomen are ranked.

Tatiana Drozdovskaya is Belarus' leading Laser Radial yachtswoman, coached by Sergey Morozov. She is a many-time world champion and a World Cup winner, while having been a finalist in the World and European championships many times. In 2000, she became an international master of sports and, in 2007, secured the World Championship title. Tatiana has represented Belarus in four Olympic Games: in 2000, 2004, 2008 and 2012. She was 23rd at the 2008 Beijing Olympics and 15th at the 2012 Olympic Games, in London.

Young athletes standing out

Belarusian team's two awards (1 gold, 1 silver) leave it in fifth place in medal standings at European Weightlifting Championships, held in Tirana, Albania

Many leading athletes were absent from the event in Albania, including Belarusian Andrey Aryamnov, Andrey Rybakov and Anastasia Novikova, alongside Olympics-2012 bronze medallists Marina Shkermankova and Irina Kulesha. Moreover, experienced Belarusian weightlifter Anna Botyushko (up to 63kg) had to drop out with an injured elbow in the first round. It seemed that the team could be left without medals, but the young athletes on the squad rallied, showing us their mettle.

Belarusian Yelena Chichkan (up to 58kg), 19, took European gold after lifting 213kg in the double-event (95kg in the burst + 118kg in the push-off). Ms. Chichkan also claimed gold in both these individual exercises. Meanwhile, Dina Sazanovets (up to 69kg) took silver in the double-event, lifting 252kg (112kg in the burst + 140kg in the push-off). Ms. Sazanovets also won medals in each of these exercises individually: gold for the burst and silver for the push-off.

Four other Belarusians failed to claim medals in the double. Alexander Makarenko (up to 94kg) took third place in the push-off individual, lifting 200kg. Following the results of the double, he was in fourth place, having lifted 366kg (166kg + 200kg).

In the men's competition, Oleg Khugaev (up to 85kg) was fourth in the burst (165kg) but failed to cope with the start weight of 193kg, being disqualified from the double. Oleg Loban (105kg) took 7th place, lifting 380kg (170kg + 210kg) in the double.

SKA club sets sights on Europe

Minsk SKA handball players win Baltic League for the first time

By Igor Grishin

In the final match, hosted by Riihimäki, Finland, Spartak Mironovich's team confidently defeated the hosts of the Final Four, Riihimäki, with a score of 32:26 (15:15). Fighting for third place, Estonian Põlva beat fellow Estonian team Kehra, 30:23 (17:9).

In the semi-finals, held the day before, the Minsk team defeated Kehra — 42:24, and the Finns defeated Põlva with a score of 28:25. The leader of Minsk SKA, Boris Pukhovskiy, was named best player in the Final Four and best shooter at the final stages, with 23 goals (12 in the semifinals and 11 in the final). The top scorer across the whole

Baltic League 2012/2013 season is Ardo Puna (Põlva), with 127 goals.

The Minsk squad will continue the European season in the semifinals of the Challenge Cup, on April 20th, facing Norwegian Runar for an away match. On April 28th, their rivals will come to Minsk's Palace of Sports for the return game.

In addition, the team will continue battling in the national championship, where they occupy first place at present: 29 points across 17 games. Second place is occupied by Dynamo Minsk with 27 points (16 games) and BHC (named after Meshkov) is in third position with 24 points (16).



SKA player Boris Pukhovskiy on the attack

Victoria Azarenko speaks about tennis and herself

Ms. Azarenko's success is always in the news but she rarely speaks to journalists herself, except to make brief official comments. However, while recovering from her recent injury, in Minsk, she happily gave us an interview which lasted over an hour.



Press-conference with Victoria Azarenko

By Dmitry Komashko

Victoria, before your injury, you enjoyed an impressive run of 15 consecutive victories. Despite this, you've lost your place as number one seed. Does this upset you?

My rating is not the most important thing for me; it's just a pleasant bonus. Victories in matches and tournaments are much more important, especially those in the Grand Slam. By the way, I won't be absent long, as I'm due to return for a tournament in Madrid; I'm not worried that it'll be difficult to regain my lost position.

Does friendship exist in professional sport?

None of the other tennis players are my best friend. We are in competition but I am friendly with many of the girls. Ma-

sha Kirilenko, Yelena Vesnina and a few others sometimes go to the cinema with me, or we have dinner or just hang out.

You're so much in the public eye, being discussed and judged. Does this bother you?

I've never thought of myself as a sports celebrity and I firmly believe that it's important to stay 'human'. When people approach me in a shop or on the street, telling me that they support me, asking me a question or requesting a photo with me, I never brush them aside. On the other hand, of course, there are limitations. For example, I have to be careful how I present myself on social networks, as I'm a role model to many people. I don't wish to appear stupid or badly behaved.

Your participation in the Federation Cup caused much discussion. Will you take part again?

I don't like it when people try to intimate that I'm motivated only by money rather than by a desire to represent my country. Believe me, I always remember who I am and which country I represent. I've won two Olympic medals, which was a first for our nation in tennis. Thanks to my victories, lots of people have learnt about our country. As for the Federation Cup, last year, I refused to participate in agreement with other leading tennis players; we were protesting at the International Federation having changed its rules without the agreement of athletes. I intend to always play for the national team; whatever anyone may say about me, I'm a patriot. It's disrespectful for others to try to make me out to be something I'm not.

How do you view the Belarusian team's prospects?

It's hard to say, because I don't really know the Belarusian players' abilities, apart from those of Olga Govortsova. I just don't see them, and it's hard to judge on one or two matches. Tatiana Puchek was great but I know we lack new young players. On the other hand, I know that Ms. Govortsova can play at the highest level; potentially, our team could do well, even winning the Cup.

You once held a show match with Caroline Wozniacki, in Minsk, and promised to bring other famous players to our capital...

I planned to organise a match last year but failed to find support, which surprised and disappointed me. I still plan to promote tennis in Belarus, using matches to support my Dreaming Heart Foundation Charity Fund, which aims to make sick children's dreams come true.

Defeat as revenge

By Yegor Glebov

In Bobruisk, Belarusian national team defeats world vice-champion, Slovakia, in second match of European Ice Hockey Challenge, taking revenge for their defeat in first match

After the first match, in Zhlobin, won by the Slovaks (3:0), the Belarusian line-up changed. Vitaly Belinsky replaced Dmitry Milchakov as goalkeeper while defender Oleg Misyl stood down and Artem Kisly and Artem Demkov played in attack instead of Mikhail Stefanovich and Sergey Drozd.

Meanwhile, Slovakia swapped out Michael Vandas and goalkeeper Rastislav Stana, bringing in Jaroslav Janus. The infusion of fresh strength was justified, with Belarus' Artem Kisly making two goals passes and Artem Demkov scoring. Teammate Vyacheslav Andryushchenko also scored twice. The second match against Slovakia saw the Belarusian squad acting more confidently in attack, passing effectively and taking advantage of their number superiority three times.

Andrey Skabelka's team now faces two matches against Latvia, on April 19th-20th, in Riga, within the EuroChallenge. The Belarusian team will also be playing in the Slovakia International Tournament Cup (April 25th-26th in Bratislava). On May 1st, the squad will then fly to the World Championship, in Sweden.