

Youngsters desperately fighting for a place under the Sun

When half of the players of the national team debut at the World Cup and the squad is simultaneously opposed by a real hockey grand, which is the Czech squad, worrying thoughts evidently appear. The worst premonition in this case is that the team can get nervous, burn out and crumble; however, this didn't happen with Andrey Skabelka's team.

By Igor Grishin

Even in the first period of the current championship, the players' excitement was hardly felt. It was easier for the youngest team at the World Championship in Sweden, because the Czechs did not show anything extraordinary. The opponents played well with a puck and the game was held basically in our area, but there wasn't so much work for the Belarusian goalkeeper Belinsky, who debuted in the fight with such a formidable opponent. Belinsky had to work a little bit more than the Czech goalkeeper Saláka. If we ignore the time when the Czech national team had a great numerical superiority, it turns out that the Czech goalkeeper had even more work.

Belarus began in Stockholm with the defeat from the Czechs, but this

was a decent defeat. Meanwhile, something should be done with removals. There were too many of them for such a match and they happened mostly because of negligence. Nevertheless, Andrey Skabelka promised to talk to the team about this. In total, the current start reminded that of the last year, when the trainees of Kari Heikkilä fought with the Finns and lost, conceding only one goal.

Slovenian team was the second at this championship, and the Belarusian squad managed to take the revenge for the defeat in the Olympic qualification. The Belarusians again acted in defence while Slovenians tried to play in a mixed manner and looked sharper. David Rodman managed to distinguish himself first, attacking Vitaly Belinsky's gates from the crease. Then, the Belarusians had a two-minute numerical advantage



Belarus' Alexander Kitarov (R) challenges Czech Republic's Petr Vrana (L)

in a single player, but they used it unsuccessfully, just similar as their opponent did before. Then, the Slovenians did not use another chance, with Urbas failing to score. The Belarusians created something similar and Alexander Kitarov, who was led to an advantageous position by Alexander Kulakov, of course, had to score, but the puck hit the goalkeeper's shield.

Anyway, Slovenia distinguished first. After a multi-pass combination, breaking the defence of Belarusians, Razingar scored into the empty net. The team of Matjaž Kopitar was to win the period, but Ms. Fortune has its own quirks. Ilya Kaznadey scored into the Slovenian goalkeeper Kristan's net and equalled the score. At the last minute, the Belarusians could even go ahead, but the opponents were saved by a goalpost.

The Belarusian team won the second period. Razignar could make Slovenia the leader, but Belinsky did his best. He moved to a far goalpost and closed the corner. Then Alexander Kulakov won the fight behind the net and made a pass to Alexander Kitarov, who attacked the corner after a pause. Advantage in the score didn't add confidence to the guys and they spent nervously the rest part of period.

A break allowed to rest, but our gates were scored at the beginning of the third period. Fortunately, a minute later, the Slovenians were in the minority, and the Belarusians finally used their numerical advantage. Andrey Filichkin played successfully on finishing after Andrey Stas' pass.

The game remained exciting. At one of the moments, when Vitaly Be-

linsky could not help out the team, Roman Graborenko saved the situation, hitting with his hand the puck flying directly into the net. Nevertheless, they didn't manage to keep score of 3:2. Ilya Kaznadey became only the second removed player, but this could become fatal – as Sabolich scored from the best position.

After this score, the Belarusians finally woke up and seemed to remember who is above the class and whose players perform in KHL clubs. In the next shift, they literally swept away the opponent's defence. The second wave of attack to Kristan's gates resulted in Ugarov's scoring the goal.

In the remaining time, the Slovenian team coach replaced goalkeeper with a sixth field player, but the score did not change — 4:3 — in favour of the Belarusians team.

Footballer Alexander Hleb becomes ambassador

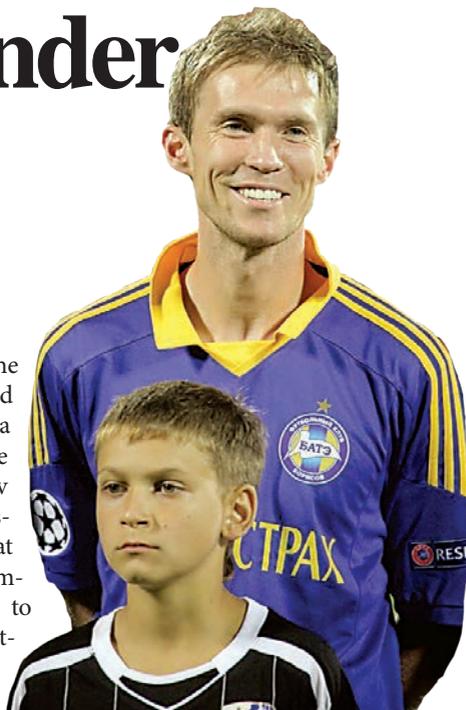
By Yegor Glebov

Young Belarusian footballers have entered the Danone Nations Cup qualification with the aim of reaching the finals. This year, Alexander Hleb, a famous midfielder with BATE Borisov, becomes ambassador of the Belarusian Danone Nations Cup qualification.

Alexander Hleb, who has celebrated his 32nd birthday on May 1st, is a true legend for would-be football stars. He took up football when he was six in Minsk's Dinamo School, reached big successes and joined German Stuttgart (a club of the Bundesliga) when he was 19 years old. Then he had such outstanding teams in his career as London Arsenal and Spanish Barcelona. When he was playing for the latter the Spanish club became a winner of the

Champions League. Now, he has returned to his homeland and continues to perform as a member of Belarus' nine-time champion — BATE Borisov — where he started his professional career. Hleb noted that the Danone Nations Cup competitions enable youngsters to show their mettle while meeting best junior teams from all over the world. "The most important is to set a goal and achieve it, without turning off the road," notes Hleb.

The Danone Nations Cup was founded in 2000 and is held for 14th time. Over these years, the competitions brought together over 20 million young football players from all over the globe. As is traditional, each country selects an ambassador of the tournament. In 2011, the then head coach of the Belarusian na-



Alexander Hleb

tional football team, Bernd Stange of Germany, was an ambassador of Belarus while, in 2012, Vitaly Rodionov, a forward of the BATE and the national team of Belarus, took on this role. In other countries Zinedine Zidane (France), Deco (Portugal), Andrés Iniesta (Spain) and other stars of the world football took on the roles of ambassadors of the tournament in various years.

Melitina Stanyuta tops the ranking

By Igor Leshin

Leader of Belarusian national rhythmic gymnastics team Melitina Stanyuta tops FIG World Ranking list in the most prestigious Olympic discipline — individual all-around

Melitina has claimed the first line in the international individual all-around list following her successful performance at the 2013 FIG Rhythmic Gymnastics World Cup in Italian Pesaro. The Belarusian clinched gold in the discipline, the same as she did at the third FIG World Cup in Romanian Bucharest, in April. The Belarusian athlete boasts 100 points at the moment. She took 30 points in the individual all-around at the third and fourth FIG World Cups each, alongside 25 points during the first stage of the competitions hosted by Estonian Tartu, where she finished second. Melitina Stanyuta added 15 points during the second FIG World Cup in Portuguese Lisbon, where she was ranked fourth. In the inter-

national rating list the Belarusian grace outstrips (by 37 points) Anna Rizatdinova of Ukraine (who boasts 63 points) and Marina Durunda of Azerbaijan (52 points).

Melitina Stanyuta, who hasn't missed a single World Cup event, also leads the world ratings in separate exercises: 77 points (hoop), 90 points (ball), 107.5 points (clubs), and 112.5 points (ribbons).

According to the press service of the Sports and Tourism Ministry, Minsk's Sports Palace is set to host one of the FIG World Cup stages, BelSwissBank, from May 16th-19th.

The competitions will involve over 190 athletes from 28 countries: Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Brazil, Venezuela, Vietnam, Greece, Egypt, Israel, Spain, Kazakhstan, China, Korea, Cuba, Latvia, Malaysia, Moldova, Poland, Russia, the USA, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Finland, France, the Czech Republic, Estonia and Japan. The competitions will be held in group exercises and in individual all-round events.