

## Bright start to the season for NHL player

By Yegor Glebov

**Belarus' only representative in the planet's strongest hockey league, Mikhail Grabovski, has made his first hat-trick in his overseas career during his first official match for Washington Capitals**

In the first match of the season, the Belarusian hockey-player's club faced the Chicago Blackhawks, the current holders of the Stanley Cup, and lost 4:6 in this away match. The Washington Capitals went down by one goal, but then the Russian, Alexander Ovechkin, assisted by Grabovski restored the balance. The Belarusian went on to score three times himself, bringing the scores to 2:2, 3:3 and 4:3 in favour of his team. However, mistakes in defence cancelled out the successes made during their attacks. After



Mikhail Grabovski

Grabovski's final goal, Chicago Blackhawks went on to score three more times, not missing a single attempt on goal.

Mikhail Grabovski played for 17 minutes and 13 seconds, earning himself 4 (3+1) points, with four shots on target during this time. He played alongside Canadians Troy Brouwer and Brooks Laich, (1st forward line-up) and, when the Capitals had a chance to realise their numerical advantage, assisted Russia's, Alexander Ovechkin and Nicklas Bäckström from Sweden.

# Minsk 'dragons' spread their powerful wings

Minsk Tsmoki starts the new season in the VTB United League. It's their fourth year in a row for the country's major basketball club which is trying to make a name for itself in one of Europe's strongest club championships. In the past, this has truly shown to be a challenge.

By Dmitry Baranovsky

Each year, due to selection and problems related to preparation, the Minsk club only begins demonstrating a sufficient level of quality basketball by mid-season. As a result, no more than a couple of victories were ever common. However, this year, the team's heads believe that things will be different.

Changes have been made at the top, during mid-season, Lithuanian specialist, Donaldas Kairys, was appointed the team's head coach, while its former leader, Andrey Krivonos, who guided our guys since the team's formation in 2006, moved to the post of second coach. It's yet too early to say whether this change is efficient but no doubt, the team's performance will change.

According to Mr. Kairys, his players are truly capable, "In the mid-season, our club did a great job to pick-up players, and I think we've succeeded in creating a team able to demonstrate bright and efficient basketball. I hope we won't disappoint our fans."

This time, the Minsk's action on the transfer market looks far more reasonable and efficient. One of the most impressive pieces of news came on the eve of Tsmoki's trip to Riga, where the

team played its first match against local VEF. One of Belarus' most promising players, and brother of the renowned Yegor Meshcheryakov, Nikita Meshcheryakov, signed a contract. In recent years, he has played for American leagues, and spent last season with the Italian team from Triesta. He certainly has the chance to improve Tsmoki's performance. An invitation to Vitaly Lyutyich, from Bereza, is another strong move for the team. He spent three seasons in the Lithuanian Championships and, during a recent qualification tournament for the European Championship, he made quite a stir on court. The player is eager to show his best sporting capabilities in the VTB United League.

However, the team lost a key player, Alexander Kudryavtsev, who has moved to Turkey and also Alexander Pustogvar. In addition, the second block of players consists of many young athletes who will, most probably, stay as reserves this season. However, both Denis Korshuk and Alexey Lashkevich are in good shape now and a lot of hope is pinned on Lyutyich. At the official presentation, Alexander Kul, the former central player and present Director of Tsmoki's Sporting Marketing Centre, talked as equals with



Minsk Tsmoki's promise to show attractive and effective basketball in the new season

the overseas signings. Mr. Kul relies on the new lineup, saying, "Without fear of jinxing it, I could assert that our guys would perform successfully the coming season. The club has managed to accumulate money to invite high level players."

Live match broadcasts — to be arranged by the Belarus 5 Sports TV Channel — would definitely please fans. Moreover, the club would receive its mascot, to be presented on October 14th, during the first home match.

## Big leaders testing each other

By Dmitry Komashko

**HC Dinamo Minsk and HC Meshkov Brest hold first head-to-head match of the national championship**

The confrontation of the two clubs has long become a hallmark of Belarusian handball, and with the growth of ambition of the teams on the European circuit, their personal meetings are attracting more and more attention from the fans.

The Minsk team started successfully in the Group Stage of the Champions League, defeating the Macedonian team, Vardar, at home. The Brest players do not hide their championship ambitions in the Balkan SEHA League, and both clubs declare their wish for a championship title. Therefore, it is not surprising that it was really hot on the parquet of



HC Dinamo Minsk and HC Meshkov Brest are main rivals

Brest's Victoria Sports Centre right up to the last minute. HC Dinamo were the deserved winners. The wards of the Croatian trainer, Boris Denič, who took over the role of head coach from Sergey Bebesheko, looked better, more reliable and more accurate

than their rivals. However, the defeat for Brest, even from their main rivals, was not a catastrophe at all. With the introduction of a play-off stage in the Championship of Belarus, Alexander Meshkov, the main patron of Brest club, thus created a 'safety

zone' for the team. A single head-to-head meeting during the season does not decide anything now. Of course, if the Brest players lost all their matches to Dinamo, they would have to make some serious changes. The important thing for the Brest team is not to drop to fourth place and thereby meet with Dinamo who are already in the semi-final. Right now, both leaders are concentrated on the Balkan SEHA League and Champions League.

The next tests in the European arena were not long in coming. On Sunday, the Brest club continued with a match in the Balkan Championship against the leaders of the tournament, the Croatian team Zagreb, whilst on October 10th Dinamo will play against Swiss team, Wacker Thun, in the Minsk Sports Palace.

## Confident of victory in the final

**Belarusian Max Mirnyi and Romanian Horia Tecau win the China Open Tennis event in Beijing**

In the final match of the doubles event, the Belarusian-Romanian pair easily defeated Italians Fabio Fognini and Andreas Seppi, 6:4, 6:2.

To reach the final of the Beijing tournament, Mirnyi and Tecau achieved a straight sets two victory over the international pairing of Julien Benneteau (France) and Nenad Zimonjic (Serbia), beating them 6:3, 6:4, and Colin Fleming and Jonathan Marray, the UK doubles pair, 6:4, 7:6 (7:3). In the semi-final Max Mirnyi and Horia Tecau were supposed to meet Novak Djokovic (Serbia) and Stanislas Wawrinka (Switzerland), however the Swiss tennis player pulled out from the tournament.