

Grabovski opens score

By Igor Grishin

Belarusian Toronto forward Mikhail Grabovski delivers puck and makes goal pass in victorious away match against Pittsburgh, opening his personal score in the newly opened NHL Championship

The NHL reopened on January 19th, after the lock-out ended. Mikhail Grabovski had failed to score in his two previous matches, leading the coaching staff to shuffle players. American James van Riemsdyk, 23, took the place of Canadian Clarke MacArthur and joined the Belarusian hockey player and Russian Nikolay Kulemin. Van Riemsdyk moved from Philadelphia to Toronto last summer, creating a successful trio and taking part in three goals so far. Grabovski struck gold in the 46th minute, with a shot from the right faceoff spot, and earned an assistant point during another attack in the 27th minute.

Meanwhile, Nashville Belarusian forward Sergey Kostitsyn, has earned 2 (0+2) points in his first three NHL matches (with '+1' plus-minus statistics).

Youngsters improve their mastery

Belarusian skier Yury Astapenko comes 28th in 15km race at Junior World Ski Championships in Czech Republic

Belarusian skier Yury Astapenko has finished 28th in the 15km Junior Freestyle Individual and U23 World Ski Championships, hosted by Czech Liberec. His result is the best for junior age Belarusians in the two races so far.

Alongside Astapenko, three more Belarusian skiers took part in the men's 15km freestyle for under 23s: Pavel Maruga came 55th, Alexander Voronov finished 58th and Mikhail Tsygankov was 74th. Russian Sergey Ustyugov won the event, with a time of 35 minutes and 44.1 seconds. In total, the competition brought together 83 athletes.

Women in the U23 category skied 10km freestyle but the top 30 failed to include any Belarusians. Maria Nedyukhina came 34th, Marina Ryzhankova finished 46th and Tatiana Koleda was 48th — among 49 entrants. Ilona Mikhailova failed to reach the finish. Victory was celebrated by Ragnhild Haga, from Norway, in 27 minutes and 50.4 seconds.



Victoria Azarenko, 23, defeats Chinese Li Na, 30, in the final match at Rod Laver Arena court in Melbourne

Victoria Azarenko remains at top of world rankings

By Dmitry Baranovsky

Chinese Li Na, 30, faced Ms. Azarenko in the finals of the Open Tennis Championship, hosted by Australia's Rod Laver Arena. Despite the Belarusian being viewed as the favourite, having defeated Serena Williams, the match

proved extremely dramatic.

Li Na initially took the initiative, winning the first set 6:4. The second set lasted nearly an hour and saw Azarenko reassert herself. In the third, a real fight ensued, with Li Na leading 3:1 early on. After having endured ankle problems in the second set,

she took a misstep and fell badly, hitting her head on the court's surface. However, after a short break, she returned, showing strength of nerve and character. Li Na played well but eventually conceded victory to Ms. Azarenko — 6:3.

Victoria's delight was evi-

dent and she announced, "I'm happy, although the match was long and complicated. Li Na gave me a great game. I'm very pleased that, after all that happened to me in this tournament, I managed to play my best, concentrating on the tennis. I like to fight."

Victoria is celebrating

her 15th title and retains her number one seed ranking, as well as \$2.5m in prize money. By winning in Australia, she has shown that she is a true leader in women's tennis. Victoria is the eighth tennis player to defend her title at the Australian Open and has no plans to retire!

World Handball Tournament gives some food for thought



Belarusian handballers have beaten only Saudi Arabian team

By Kirill Pirogov

Belarus' national handball team finishes 15th in World Handball Championship 1/8 final, hosted by Spain, losing to Croatia — one of the tournament's favourites

Croatia, the recent Olympic bronze medallist, proved a formidable opponent, while the Spaniards finished second in their sub-group. The Belarusian squad

had little chance of success, but performed well.

In 1995, the Belarusian national handball team took part in the World Men's Handball Championship finals for the first time, coming 9th (although the match system was different at that time). The result was considered to be a failure, especially as those who performed under the guidance of newly appointed coach Spartak Mironovich had experience of the EuroCup and the Olympics.

The defeat by Germany in the 1/8 finals left our team failing to qualify for the Olympic Games in Atlanta.

The Belarusian team reached this stage for the second time this year, 18 years later, despite their young age. Spartak Mironovich, who still heads the team, cannot conceal his optimism, saying, "We still have a rather young national squad so 16th place at the World Championship is rather pleasing. The match against the Croatians has raised some questions regarding our style of play but we hope to reach the top ten at the next tournament or, even, reach the Olympics. We don't have too many players but if we work well, we may find the task achievable."

The current head of the team, Yuri Shevtsov, agrees with his colleague, telling us, "The championship has shown us how we stand in the world hierarchy and where our weaknesses lie, so we can plan our next step. We'll continue and will eventually be beating our rivals. This task will be solved simultaneously with another: qualifying for the European Championship. In late March, we'll have another training camp before meeting the Romanians."



MAZ-SPORTavto team is pleased with participation in Rally Dakar-2013

No easy Dakars

By Igor Leshin

Belarusian MAZ-SPORTavto team returns home with two racing crews in truck class having successfully finished Dakar-2013

The first crew, comprising Alexander Vasilevsky, Valery Kozlovsky and Anton Zaporoshchenko, took 21st place overall while the second, driven by Sergey Vyazovich, navigated by Pavel Garanin and including mechanic Dmitry Zaporoshchenko, came 27th of 60 cars reaching the finish.

Commenting on the results of the race, the captain of the MAZ-SPORTavto team, Valery Kozlovsky, notes that the fear of the unknown was less this year. "The team didn't experience any major problems although we sometimes lacked experience at certain stages. We did well in the desert but found the mountain roads more difficult; nevertheless, we did our best. Before we enter Dakar-2014, we know which areas to work upon. Preparations for the third race have already begun, modifying the trucks for better performance."