

Hockey players fail to reach Olympiad

Belarus' national hockey team won't be playing at the Olympic Games in Sochi, having lost unexpectedly to Slovenia at the qualification tournament hosted by Danish Vojens

By Dmitry Baranovsky

The Slovenians weren't considered favourites, as their leader, Anže Kopitar, was absent, having joined Los Angeles after the end of the NHL lockout. The Danish hosts seemed a more formidable rival, whom Belarus anticipated locking horns with. Meanwhile, the Ukrainians appeared to be outsiders in our group.

Problems began for coach Andrey Skabelka's team even before the tournament commenced, as Chelyabinsk Traktor forward Andrey Kostitsyn — a true leader in the squad — was dismissed for missing training. Goalkeeper Andrey Mezin was also couldn't help his team, but the coach stresses that these were not the root cause of our loss. Sadly, the results are irreversible.

In the first match against the Slovenians, Razingar's penalty shot, exact shot by Rodman and Mikhailev's disallowed puck resulted in Slovenians' becoming leaders, followed by the Danes. "We need to win our remaining matches," mused Mr. Skabelka. "The Slovenians are likely to make a false step and we'll be able to correct the situation."

Belarus won its remaining

matches in the qualification round, beating Ukraine (6:0) and Denmark. However, the Slovenians turned everything on its head, defeating the Danes and taking the Sochi ticket. Belarus' victories over Ukraine and Denmark counted for nothing.

Belarus won its last match less confidently than was expected. Stepanov scored the decisive puck at the beginning of the third pe-

riod, after which our Danish hosts had plenty of opportunities to score. Only the confident actions of goalkeeper Vitaly Kovalev helped the team hold its victorious score. Sadly, this won't influence the tournament standings or our Olympic prospects. We can only hope that our squad will be able to use its 'spare' time efficiently, in preparation for the IIHF World Championships, hosted by Minsk in 2014.



Alexei Ugarov tries to outrun the Danish players Rasmus Nielsen (left)

Already in 1/8 finals

By Igor Leshin

Dinamo Minsk handballers achieve fifth victory at Champions League Group Stage

In the 8th tournament game in Group D, the Minskers defeated Croatian Zagreb in an away match — 23:25 (14:10). The latter team includes six bronze prize winners from the recent World Championship in Spain, but failed to live up to their promise before the crowd of 9,000.

Dinamo, which has already ensured a ticket into the 1/8 finals, saw Pavel Atman score six goals, as did Sergey Onufrienko; Denis Rutenko scored five, Dmitry Niku-

lenkov four, Maxim Babichev three and Ivan Brovko one.

In the first round of the competition, Sergey Bebesheko's squad welcomed the Croatians to Minsk's Sports Palace in October 2012. The result was a 27 all draw. Moreover, the Belarusian squad defeated Swiss Schaffhausen — 33:23 (at home) and 33:28 (away), Hungarian Puck — 29:24 (at home) and German Berlin — 31:41 (at home). The team also suffered two defeats: from Berlin — 25:29 and Spanish Barcelona — 24:25.

Dinamo Minsk handballers have two games still to play: Puck in an away match on February 16th and Barcelona at home on February 21st. The leader of the Belarusian

national team, Sergey Rutenko, is to play against Belarus with a team comprising many players from the national squad of Spain, which recently won the World Championship.

At present, the tournament standings in Group D are as follows: Barcelona — 14 points across seven matches, Dinamo — 11 points in 8 matches, Berlin — 10 points from seven games, Schaffhausen 4 points in eight matches, Puck — 4 points across eight matches and Croatian Zagreb — 3 points from eight games.

The four best teams from each of four preliminary groups will enter the Champions League playoffs.



There are no Belarussian biathletes among prizewinners yet

Humble beginnings

By Igor Grishin

Biathlon World Championships start well for host country, with Czech team taking bronze, behind Norway and France

The Belarusian team, represented by Nadezhda Skardino, Darya Domracheva, Yevgeny Abramenko and Sergey Novikov, took 11th place among 27 teams in the mixed relay. At the first stage, Nadezhda Skardino missing one target shooting prone, and the leader of the Belarusian squad, Darya Domracheva, missed three times from a standing position. Yevgeny Abramenko hit every target while Sergey Novikov, who took the final leg, missed once while shooting prone.

In the individual races, Ms. Domracheva made five misses in the sprint, finishing outside the top 40, who receive points for the World Cup. This was Darya's worst of the season and left her in a poor position (43rd) for the pursuit race. Despite having the fastest speed on the track and only 4 misses (1+1+1+1), she climbed just 18

positions, finishing 25th. Nadezhda Skardino did best among the Belarusian biathletes in the pursuit, finishing in 15th place.

The head coach of the Belarusian women's team, Klaus Siebert, tells us, "During the sprint, at the shooting range, the situation was not easy; the wind was blowing in different directions and Darya, coming to the line, looking at the distant flags for guidance rather than those close by. As a result, her correction after her first mirror was also false and produced just two hits."

Nadezhda Skardino performed very well in terms of shooting, being in great shape.

After three disciplines in the overall standings of the World Cup, Darya Domracheva, with 538 points, retains second place behind the leader in the fight for the Big Crystal Globe: Norwegian Tora Berger (775 points). Close behind are Ukrainian Olena Pidgrushna (531), Miriam Gössner from Germany (529), Kaisa Mäkäräinen from Finland (528) and German Andrea Henkel (518).

Long-awaited and needed victory

By Yegor Glebov

After 13 defeats in a row in VTB Single League, Tsmoki Minsk basketballers achieve first victory

Andrey Krivonos' trainees achieved their first victory on February 10th, defeating Lithuanian Neptūnas from Klaipėda at Minsk-Arena — 93:71 (24:17, 24:19, 20:18, 25:17). American legatory Tierre Brown, 33, who is new to the team, was the best shooter on the Minsk squad, earning 23 points.

Despite this success, the squad remain in 10th place in Group B,

which is led by Žalgiris Kaunas, with 13 victories over 14 matches; CSKA Moscow has 11 victories from 13 games.

In the next round, Belarus' champions will face CSKA in an away match and will finish the group stage with three home games: VEF Riga on February 28th, Žalgiris on March 10th and Czech Nymburk on March 24th.

Samara's Krylya Sovetov leads Group A jointly with St. Petersburg Spartak, Khimki and Kazan-based UNIX: all have achieved ten victories.

After finishing the group tournaments, the two best teams from



Ater Majok attacks rivals' basket

each group will go through to the 1/4 finals; the clubs ranked 3-6th will play in the 1/8 finals.