

Nadezhda Skardino on podium among prize winners

Belarusian biathlete takes second place in pursuit race at World Cup stage in Antholz biathlon

By Yuri Pinchuk

The Belarusian biathlete ran the distance of 10 kilometres with four firing lines without misses, with a time of 31 minutes and 6 seconds. First place went to Andrea Henkel of Germany, who was also faultless on the shooting ground, with 31 minutes and 4 seconds, while the third place was taken by Tora Berger of Norway,

who lagged behind the winner by 6.6 seconds. Skardino's result shows that new talented 'starts' are arising in the Belarusian biathlon event. It is especially important in advance of the winter Olympic Games in Sochi.

The leader of the Belarusian national team, Darya Domracheva, was leading the pursuit race after two firing lines in the lying position, but she received four

penalty loops, in the standing position and, as a result, was only 5th in the total rating, coming in 30.7 seconds behind the winner.

Two days earlier, participating in the women's sprint race (7.5 kilometres with two firing lines), Darya shot much better and achieved 3rd place, making it the fifth appearance of the Belarusian biathlete in the top three of the World Cup stages of this season.



Nadezhda Skardino pleased with her achievement

250 point landmark

By Igor Grishin

Belarusian forward, for NHL Washington Capitals club, Mikhail Grabovski, continues to 'stamp' personal records in the world's strongest league

By making a decisive pass in another match against St. Hose Sharks, Grabovski reached a landmark 250 points, earned in the regular championship in line with the 'goal+pass' system. He can now boast 106 delivered pucks and 144 assists. In order to reach this figure, the Belarusian players have had to play 411 NHL matches.

Since the beginning of the 2013/14 season, he's taken part in 44 matches for the Washington Capitals, earning himself 33 points

(12+21). After 46 matches, Washington Capitals (with 52 points) are now in the play-off zone, ranked second in the Metropolitan Division and fifth in the NHL Eastern Conference.

During this current season, Grabovski has set several personal records in his oversea career. According to the 'goal+pass' system, he has become the best goal scorer among all the Belarusian hockey players who have ever played in the world's strongest league. He also boasts the best result in the number of delivered pucks. His nearest rival, Andrey Kostitsyn, who has been playing for Chelyabinsk Traktor (KHL) for the second season in a row, has earned 222 (103+119) points so far in his NHL matches.

Hleb goes to Turkey



Alexander Hleb

32-year-old Belarusian halfback will continue career in Turkish club Konyaspor

One day Konyaspor slumps out of the Turkish top division, another day it comes back again. The highest position that the city of Konya took in the top flight was 7th place, in 2006. This season, Hleb's team is in 13th position among 18 clubs after 17 matches.

In general if during last season Hleb was disappointed that he with BATE had not managed to reach the League of champions, so in 2014 he has to think about preservation of residence permit in Turkish top division. But, as we understand, Alexander did not have any choice.

"We hope that Hleb will add class and bring experience into our team," say residents of Konyaspor.

Alexander is happy with his choice. In particular, he is pleased with the popularity of football in Turkey and the attention of the fans. They certainly are pinning their hopes on the Belarusian. They see Hleb as the leader, the organiser of the teams attack.

Alexander has signed very careful contract. He will belong to the new club for 6 months, until the end of the championship, and then, if both parties are happy, the agreement will be prolonged for a year.

These days, Alexander trains with the club in Antalya. The first test will be serious for him. On 25th January Konyaspor will visit the current leaders of the Turkish Süper Lig, Fenerbahçe S.K.

Konyaspor have another player whose football destiny is similar to Hleb's. The 33-year-old Greek, Theofanis Gekas, was the best goal-scorer in the Bundesliga in 2007, where he played for VfL Bochum, but he did not become a European star. As a result, as his career draws to an end, he has appeared in Konyaspor to prove that he is still in good shape. Hleb and Gekas will probably help each other to prolong their life in European football, and we wish it for both of them.

The game, where not only the results are vital

By defeating the national team of Montenegro, the Belarusian handball team qualified for the major stage of the European Championship. After their debut defeat by the Polish national squad, Yuri Shevtsov's trainees have almost lost their chance for the play-offs. However, even the appearance of our team among such prominent rivals can be considered a success for the whole of Belarusian handball.



Captain of the Belarusian national team, Sergey Rutenko, attacking

By Dmitry Komashko

The current European Championship is the moment of truth for the Belarusian national handball team. Last year's appearance of Belarusian players at the world tournament, 18 years after the successful debut of our country at the top level, (under the guidance of legendary coach, Spartak Mironovich) was perceived by many as a successful turn of events. For Yuri Shevtsov's team, the European Championship has become an opportunity to prove their ability, doing this in the most efficient and honorary manner — by showing their results on the scoreboard.

At first, that score hasn't pleased the fans so far, with Belarusians losing the starting match of the tournament against one of the leaders of world handball, the Croatian team. That defeat could have been explained by the difference in the level of squads and the absence of the leader of the Belarusian national team, the world's

most expensive handball player and mid-fielder of Spanish team, Barcelona, Sergey Rutenko. In the next match of the group stage Rutenko did play against the Swedes, but the result of that meeting wasn't too optimistic either — 22:30. The reasons for what has happened can be easily seen by looking at the statistics. Over the first two matches, the Belarusian squad made 96 shots, with only 44 of these being resultative. The current leaders have the hit ratio at about 60 percent, Sweden — 63 percent, Denmark and Spain — 65 percent and France — 66 percent... The performance of the goal keepers doesn't inspire optimism either, with Vitaly Cherepenko being the best among the Belarusians so far, but he had hardly saved 25 percent of the balls.

Anyway, this was enough. Of course, Vitaly Cherepenko's reliability became not the only factor of the heroic (without exaggeration) victory over Montenegrins. Our handballers have managed to scratch the necessary

'+6' points after two defeats, which testifies to the level of readiness of the Belarusians and their psychological reserves. At the right time, our players recollected their courage and did what thousands of their fans were expecting from them. Unfortunately, they failed to preserve this 'combat state' during a long time.

Probably, the match against the national squad of Poland has become one of the most dramatic and tense matches of the current European Championship. Several dozen seconds before the final whistle, pleasant (for Belarusians) figures still were shining on the scoreboard at the sports complex in Aarhus. Soon Polish players evened up scores. Nevertheless, even the draw left some illusory hopes. However, Dmitry Kamyshik's adventurous shot has spoilt everything. Several seconds before the end of the match, a young player of the Belarusian team decided to finish the attack — not inaccessible for the Polish team. In the return attack, the rival cold-bloodedly reached the minimum victory with the score of 31:30, thus depriving Belarusians of their hopes for continuation of the European campaign.

Nevertheless, assessing the results of the Belarusians' performance in Denmark, it's important to talk about the European Championship. The cream of the world handball is concentrated on the grounds of the Old World, so there are no easy rivals at the European Championships. The head coach of the Belarusian national handball team, Yuri Shevtsov, was speaking about this on the eve of their departure to Denmark, noting that just the appearance of the Belarusians among the European giants alone was worth its weight in gold.