

Spectacular tennis on capital's courts

Belarusian national team beats the Irish 4:1 in the first round of the Davis Cup

By Kirill Karin

Hundreds of fans chanting 'Belarus! Belarus!', magnificent rallies, intriguing duels between representatives of our country and their Irish counterparts. All of this was seen during the three day event, held at the Republican Olympic Tennis Training Centre between January 31st and February 2nd.

Belarusians could celebrate the victory on Saturday, when the score was 3:0 in the home team's favour, and the visitors, even with the best will in the world, lost the opportunity to win anything back. On the first day of the competition, Belarusian players, Dmitry Zhirmont and Dmitry Gerasimov easily beat their opponents in their singles matches, making the score 2:0. On Saturday, the doubles match between Max Mirnyi and Alexander Bury and James Cluskey and David O'Hare was really the most spectacular and memorable duel of the tournament.

The Irishmen were very serious about the game, only a victory would give visitors the chance to continue fighting in the next round of competitions. However,

their defeat put an end to these hopes. Did the guests have a chance for victory? Yes, they did. During the game, the Belarusian pair had to catch up more than once, winning back set points, and even match points. However, our tennis players pressed their opponents with powerful services, winning games practically with a shutout. The Irish did not concede, fighting their side well, against the Belarusian pairing that performed well on reception and, many times blocked the space near the net. It was a long and emotional struggle, with three of the five sets going to a tie-break. Nevertheless, by the end of the match, the guests could no longer sustain the pressure and lost the fifth set practically without a struggle. The final score, 6:7, 7:6, 5:7, 7:6, 6:2 guaranteed that the Belarusians would progress to the following round of the competition, a fitting match for Max Mirnyi, who was playing his 48th match for the national team in the Davis Cup. As the tennis player said at the post match press conference, he has never faced the question of whether or not to



Max Mirnyi and Alexander Bury in action

play in the Davis Cup, "...after all, performance for your country is more significant than personal success".

As it is known, Belarus' Victoria Azarenko, who was listed in Group 1 matches of the Davis Cup, has refused to play for the national team. According to Max

Mirnyi, he hopes that in Victoria's career "...there will come a right moment", and that she will again support the country in a Federation Cup. "We should accept her present choice, though all of us understand that her participation increases our chances of success," said the Belarusian tennis player.

Lokomotiv ice hockey team runs out of steam as Dinamo triumphs

The match between Dinamo Minsk and Lokomotiv Yaroslavl was important for both teams. Apart from their desire to please the crowds before the Olympic break, ex-Dinamo player, Jeff Platt's arrival, created a special atmosphere.

By Georgy Shablyuk

Recently, Dinamo Minsk has been unpredictable. After a series of after-match penalty shootouts, the team defeated Severstal Cherepovets (2:1) and then lost to Atlant (1:7). A couple of days later, Dinamo met SKA St. Petersburg. Despite their loss (2:3), the Belarusians played an exciting end-to-end game which was appreciated by the fans.

Lubomir Pokovic's Dinamo played its latest home match against Lokomotiv Yaroslavl. Our ex-player, Jeff Platt, has already played for Lokomotiv for a month. Happily, the Belarusians confidently won (3:1).

For over half of the match, no situations were created near the goals, and fans at the Minsk-Arena were seem-



Dinamo Minsk defeats Lokomotiv Yaroslavl hockey team

ingly bored. However, soon after the break, the hosts managed to score twice in quick succession, something

which happens rarely. The initial scorer was, Tomasz Surowy, followed up by Alexander Materukhin.

Trying on the Champion's belt

By Igor Leshin

Belarusian Thai boxer, Vitaly Gurkov, beats Thailand's Kem Sitsongpeenong to become the WBC world professional champion

The Belarusian and the Thai (who was the current holder of the Champion's title and the WBC Muay Thai belt) met in Milan in Italy as part of the Ring War tournament. The five-round fight lasted for almost two hours. In the first round, Gurkov made several mistakes, which professional Sitsongpeenong used to his advantage. However, sometime later, the Belarusian boxer broke the trend, eventually winning with a minor lead.

The two sportsmen have fought in the past as amateurs, rather than as professionals, as part of the 2012 World Thai Boxing Championship in St. Petersburg. Gurkov won then also. Our sportsman combines the skills of both Thai boxing and kick-boxing and has previously won several world events (primarily in Muay Thai) as an amateur. Gurkov began his professional career in 2001.

Expansion in the Olympic team

Belarus' national Olympic team add another athlete in cross-country skiing, Valentina Kaminskaya, in readiness for the Sochi Winter Olympics-2014

The International Ski Federation (FIS) has given Belarus an additional ticket for women's skiing, according to the application from the National Federation in this sport discipline. This is the second time of that the Belarusian Olympic Team has been augmented in recent times. On January 24th, we found out that the FIS had provided two additional female tickets for the Sochi games in freestyle (aerial skiing). These were given to Anna Guskova and Olga Kapustina.



This means that the Belarusian National Squad will now be taking 27 participants to the 22nd Winter Olympics in Sochi. Between them, they will cover five different disciplines:

Biathlon: Darya Domracheva, Nadezhda Skardino, Lyudmila Kalinichik, Anastasia Duborezova, Nadezhda Pisareva, Sergey Novikov, Yevgeny Abramenko, Yuri Lyadov, Vladimir Chepelin and Alexander Dorozhko.

Freestyle: Alexey Grishin, Dmitry Dashchinsky, Anton Kushnir, Denis Osipov, Alla Tsuper, Anna Guskova and Olga Kapustina. Cross-country skiing: Sergey Dolidovich, Alexander Lazutkin, Mikhail Semenov, Alexey Ivanov, Yelena Sannikova and Valentina Kaminskaya.

Mountain skiing: Yuri Danilochkin and Maria Shkanova.

Short track: Maxim Sergeev and Olga Talaeva.

Yekaterina Rudakova was registered as the reserve for the national skiing team of Belarus.

The Belarusian Olympic National Squad will also include coaches, medical and support staff, alongside journalists and officials.