

Belarus-Germany — 5:2!

The pulse of the game still continues to beat in our ears with its hammer of victory

This is a convincing and wonderful victory, which has opened the potential of our national team from a new side while confirming to all the sceptics that Glen Hanlon is our man and that his methods really work. This is a victory that forced us to believe that not everything is gloomy in our hockey, even taking into account the pile of problems, and that Belarus may even be among the best hockey nations of the world, if a decent level of professionalism and hard work is ensured.

Five delivered pucks and two missed pucks resulted in an intense and dramatic victory. The game against the national squad of Germany initially promised many nervous minutes both to players and fans of the Belarusian team, and it truly met expectations.

Going two goals down, even before the middle of the first period, put Glen Hanlon's trainees in a very difficult situation. However, they managed to brilliantly find a way out from it. The first puck was won back by the hosts before the break, with Andrey Stepanov scoring the goal. However, it was Alexey Ugarov who scored an even more vital goal.

Then Mikhail Grabovski's double followed. And Geoff Platt's goal was the last; he has finally opened the scoring of his own delivered pucks at this championship after many attempts. Regaining their senses after the starting confusion, the hosts of the ice left no doubts about the result of the current meeting.

Glen Hanlon, head coach of the Belarusian team, said at an after-match press conference, "I would primarily like to wish good luck to the Germans in the remaining matches. This young team has a great future. As head

Now words needed for game

It was not so difficult to predict the Belarusian team's mood after its match against Finland. The struggle was equal and intense but the result was sad: two missed pucks and a final loss. It's hard to speak after such a match and, accordingly, the words of those who've found the strength to sum up the results are truly valuable.

Andrey Stepanov enjoyed a wonderful chance to save the match, by equalising at the end of the third period. However, his shot hit the bar.

"What can I say? It's offensive to lose such matches. We led the game, but missed illogically. We could have won but lost as a result. We lacked the realisation of the moment and even had bad luck. We created plenty of possibilities but failed to realise any. It's impossible to win without scoring."

Your team failed to score much today. Is this Finland's merit or your failure?

The Finns usually play closely to one

another, leaving little space for scoring. Overall, they limit the freedom of action and wisely occupy positions. These are true Finns: experienced rivals. We should never forget this.

Did you know the result of the Latvia-USA (4:3) match before the game? Did the Latvians' performance put you on alert?

Of course, we knew that they had won. However, we try not to pay attention to other teams' performances. We pursue our own goals — aiming to win and paying no attention to our rivals.

Did you set your minds on winning?

Definitely! We always do this. Beginning a match without motivation is not the best way to start. Sadly, our penalties were silly and the last probably broke our remaining chance win. However, we cannot now change what happened.

Kevin Lalande was probably among the brightest players of the match. The Belarusian team's debutant came on the rink unexpectedly for many. Until then, he had not played a game. However, it's



VITALY GIL

Mikhail Grabovski (on the left) — star of the match

coaches of the national teams, we always hope that all our strongest players will arrive, but many failed to do this in Pet's squad. Meanwhile, we have players able to decide the result of the match, and today they have demonstrated this. We were two pucks behind yet played greatly. We have Kostitsyn, Kalyuzhny and Grabovski who have proven that they are top level players."

Grabovski explained the failure in the first period was due to tiredness. How would you explain?

I believe that we were more rested during the match against the Finns, and if Mikhail says this while being on the ice then this is really so.

What forced the replacement of Koval?

As you know, Vitaly has missed the last match because of health problems. We spoke to him, and he said that he was able to play but he doesn't feel 100percent well himself.

Alexey Kalyuzhny: 'I had to speak more severely'

Alexey, how is your mood after the match?

The mood... We'll be happy for half an hour and then will start preparing for the next match.

We've missed two goals after individual mistakes. How would you comment on this?

The first puck was delivered after a ricochet, and it's difficult to say anything in this situation. As far as the second is concerned, we've lost players. I wouldn't say that this is peculiar for us, but this was like a wake-up call — some kind of cold shower for the whole team. It's good that we've managed to realise the majority and scored before the break. After the second puck, delivered by Alexey Ugarov, everything was back under our control.

What happened in the locker room after the first period?

I had to speak to the players slightly more severely.

The match against Germany was expected to be difficult. Could you imagine to which degree?

If you would ask me whether I remember my last easy match I wouldn't find an answer. How can a game be easy here, at the World Championship?

Mikhail Grabovski: 'We haven't defeated the Latvians for a long time but it's necessary to change the statistics'

In the match against the national squad of Germany, Grabovski distinguished himself twice and shared his opinion on the finished and the next matches after the final signal.

What were you thinking after the second German goal?

It was very unpleasant.

What enabled you to make a comeback after being down 0:2 in the first period?

Probably, dedication and discipline. Hockey is a game where one can't be relaxed, but not everyone remembers about this. We relaxed for a while, lost concentration and gave away two goals. Then we gathered our strength and everything stood at its place. The players understood that one can't make such mistakes and we began to act more cautious.

Is this Belarusian character merely beautiful words or is it really something special?

I don't know whether it's special but it definitely exists. Being a pupil of the Yunost School, I'm well aware of this. We've won many games under the guidance of Mikhail Zakharov directly due to our Belarusian character. As far as our Canadian coach, Glen Hanlon is concerned; you know everything well for yourself. He has also taught us much. Meanwhile, we still have many things to work on.



ALEXANDER STADUB

Finns imposed rugged defence in game

wrong to blame him for the missed goal. In the second half, the goalie saved the Belarusians: after losing his hockey stick and orientation, after a tough collision with Leo Komarov, he caught the puck with his hands. Kevin stopped in the mix-zone but it's a true challenge for him to find proper words.

When did you learn that you'd defend goals?

This happened after our morning training. As a result, I had no time to strongly worry or feel pleased with an opportunity to demonstrate my abilities.

Was this decision a surprise for you? You failed to participate during

the first matches.

My coach told me to be ready any time.

There is also no need to throw stones at Vladimir Denisov. Our defender spent more time on the rink than anyone else. His confident action truly contributed to the hosts' chances to eventually win — which stands high of course.

The Finns always look a strong team. Which squad — against which you have already played — looks the strongest to you?

I have no answer. Each team plays differently, and all demonstrate a high level. No simple matches exist.

Lubomír Pokovič: 'I support Belarus and Slovakia'

By Yegor Glebov

Fans' sympathies for the head coach of Dinamo Minsk, Lubomír Pokovič, are distributed equitably between the national teams of Belarus and Slovakia at the World Championship. The Slovak trainer of the Belarusian club KHL told about that after one of the tournament matches.



Lubomír Pokovič watches the matches of all the teams with interest. In his opinion, in the World Championship there is no strongly notable dominance of the European or North American hockey schools. "It is difficult to say who is ahead, because we do not have such a difference as we did 20-30 years ago. For example, the Russians play perfectly. On the other hand, the USA team, as it seems, also plays well, but conceded to the same Russians. Canada began badly, but then its hockey players improved. In general, there is no ability to decide which continental school is stronger or weaker," the trainer is sure.

Lubomír Pokovič said that he follows the hockey players of Dinamo Minsk in national teams of Belarus and Norway, and also the club's Slovak recruit, Ivan Švarný, however he did not begin to estimate the actions of any of them, having noted that now they are under direction of the trainers of their national teams who set their own tasks before the players.

The Dinamo instructor especially noted that the Ice Hockey World Championship is held in Minsk at a high organisational level. Lubomír Pokovič noted the compactness of the carrying out of the championship, calling it one of main advantages of the tournament. According to him, a big plus for the experts is that they have time to move from Minsk-Arena to Chizhovka-Arena, in order to personally observe the day and evening battles of various teams and participants from beginning to end.