

Ranking falls one more position

By Kirill Pirogov

International Hockey Federation releases new national team ratings following results of World Championship in Slovakia

Belarus has dropped to last but one place, being in 11th position. It occupied 8th place after the 2009 World Championship, falling to 9th position after the 2010 Vancouver Games. Following the 2010 World Championship in Germany, it was ranked 10th, with another one-point drop taking place recently.

Belarus is 105 points behind Slovakia and 40 points ahead of Latvia. Despite coming fourth at this year's championship, Russia remains in top position. The winning team of Finland is now ranked 2nd, while silver medalist Sweden is 3rd. Canada, in turn, has dropped two positions to occupy 4th place.

The new ratings define sub-groups for the 2012 World Championship — held simultaneously in Sweden's Stockholm and Finland's Helsinki, under a new format. Belarus will play its preliminary round in Helsinki, against Finland, Canada, the USA, Switzerland, Slovakia, France and Kazakhstan. Another group of teams is to meet in Stockholm, comprising Russia, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Germany, Norway, Latvia, Denmark and Italy. Each is to play just one round (previously, four quarters of 4 teams competed). As a result, all teams will play seven matches initially, with the top four squads (from each group) reaching the play-offs.

More tickets to London

Belarusian athletes earn eleven licenses to Summer Olympics 2012

Based on the results of the World Table Tennis Championship, held in Rotterdam, Vladimir Samsonov and Victoria Pavlovich have earned places at the London 2012 Games. Representatives of four sports — marksmanship, track and field, table tennis and swimming — now have places at the Olympics.



Samsonov to play in London

For marksmanship, Sergey Martynov will be representing our country (small calibre rifle event, from 50m) as will Victoria Chaika (pneumatic pistol, 10m) and Konstantin Lukashik (pneumatic pistol, 10m). The qualifications are not personalised however. In swimming, Alexandra Gerasimenya and Svetlana Khokhlova have licenses. Meanwhile, for track and field events, four athletes have qualified: Olga Salevich, Anastasia Starovoitova, Marina Domantsevich and Stepan Rogovtsov (marathon running).

Rivalling fencing legends

Belarusian saber fencers placed second in team event of World Cup round held in Madrid

By Yuri Karpenko

The achievement is even more significant in view of the competition in Madrid being an Olympic qualification stage, launched at the end of April. The standard at the tournament was extremely high, but our Belarusian athletes stood their ground to take silver in the team event, sacrificing their own personal events. Team leader Dmitry Lapkes was placed 12th individually, while Alexander Buikevich and Valery Priemko finished in the sixth dozen. The adage that 'worse in individual better in the group event' proved true.

Our squad began by beating Canada 45:21, then, in the quarter-finals, knocked out Romania, with a score of 45:42. They then crushed formidable Russia, whose Alexey Yakimenko won



Belarusian sportsmen aren't lost in company of stronger fencing teams in Madrid

the individual event; the final score was a staggering 45:36.

Alas, Germany, who caused a sensation at the competition, was too strong for Belarus, with our

exhausted fencers yielding 39:45. Bronze went to Italy, which defeated Russia.

Belarus is now placed fifth in the International Fencing Fed-

eration's rankings. The London Olympics will see the top eight teams taking part: the top four seeded plus the best from each of the four continental zones.

Mirny's next generation

By Yuri Kovalev

Max Mirny Sport Centre, located in Minsk suburb of Malinovka and paid for by famed Belarusian tennis player, officially launched, having been open to visitors since spring

The site is far more than just a tennis complex. Besides indoor courts (three out of five are standard plus two mini courts for children aged 5-7) it offers halls for dancing, fitness, aerobics and yoga. Moreover, the centre boasts a beauty salon and a medical centre with the most modern equipment.

"The idea of building such a sport centre came after our team's bright wins in the Davis Cup," explains Max Mirny. "The initiative found support and the first visitors arrived on 1st March. Financing was my responsibility but it wasn't money that drove me to set up the centre; there are much faster and more profitable ways to make money. Tennis is part of my life, so I want to stay in this world even after retiring from professional sport. Saying that, I'd like the centre to pay for itself; depending on its success, we have further plans. Initially, we aim to build open courts (we are working on the site already)

and mini golf courses."

"Already, the fitness centre is very busy; the halls are never empty and events can be overcrowded. We have tennis classes for adults and children. Since January, we've had about 400 children aged 5-10 training. Our objective is preliminary preparation: our centre practices a unique training programme for children, popular in many leading tennis states. Children aged 5-10 play on mini courts with shorter rackets and softer balls. From next year, world ranking children's tennis events will be hosted on such mini-sized courts," adds Max.

Another title for Sergey Rutenko

By Kirill Karin

Leader of Barcelona and Belarusian national handball team becomes Spanish champion for fourth time

In the last but one round of the elite Spanish League, Barcelona snatched a win from Logroño in an away match, securing first place ahead of time. Sergey Rutenko scored four goals, bringing him to a total of 119 goals across 29 matches during this championship.

Rutenko, 29, has now won four titles — the previous three while



It's not easy for defence to restrain Sergey Rutenko

playing for Barcelona's main rival: Ciudad Real. Sergey transferred to Barcelona in 2009, for a record price of over 1m Euros — making him the most expensive handball player in the world.

Rutenko previously played for Arkatron Minsk, moving to the Slovenian team of Gorenje in 2000. He transferred to Slovenia's Celje in 2001, staying until 2005, when

he moved to Ciudad Real of Spain. He then joined Barcelona in 2009. He also played for the Slovenian national team from 2004 to 2007.

Meanwhile, the Belarusian national women's handball team goalkeeper, Yelena Abramovich, has been playing for Hungarian Budapest's FTC squad. Her team won the Cup of Cups after defeating Spanish Alicante in the final.

New heights

Belarusian halfback wins Poland's Football Championship, playing for Wisla Krakow

Winning at home over Cracovia, Wisla snatched the national championship title three rounds before the finals — for the 13th time in their history. The captain of the Belarusian national junior football team, Mikhail Sivakov, tells us, "It's been a long time since I've felt like this: perhaps since winning the championship with BATE. However, they don't have the tradition of players swinging coaches on their hands."

Sivakov scored perhaps one of the most beautiful goals in the Polish Championship, when Wisla was playing Lechia Gdansk. At the end of the match, the opponent had a corner pass which was stolen by Mikhail in an attempt at counterattack. Seeing that the rival goalkeeper had stepped forward, the Belarusian kicked the ball from 50m and sent it exactly into the net, behind the goalkeeper, earning his team victory.

Again without Alexander Hleb

Belarusian national football team halfback to miss qualification matches of 2012 European Championship due to injury

Next month, Minsk's Dynamo Stadium will host matches against France and Luxembourg (3rd and 7th June respectively). Sadly, Alexander Hleb will be absent, due to a knee injury. He has been playing for English team Birmingham, sustaining the injury during the penultimate Premier League match against Fulham. He has been operated upon in London, with rehabilitation requiring two months.