

Season opens well

By Kirill Pirogov

Yekaterina Karsten wins Rowing World Cup round

In this first stage of the World Cup season, held in Munich, those from Germany and Great Britain vied for supremacy, yet our Belarusian women rowers also captured two medals at the Olympic Rowing Centre.

Gold was grabbed by famous Yekaterina Karsten, in the women's singles. In the finals, the prima of Belarusian academic rowing hid behind the younger generation: Ann-Katrin Thiele from Germany — who was desperate to win at home, Chinese Xiuyun Zhang and Czech Jitka Antosova. By mid-race, Thiele led dynamically but Karsten caught up to third place within 500m of the finish line. From there, Yekaterina began her favourite 'finish tour'; Thiele attempted to hold on but in vain. Karsten finished two seconds ahead — quite significant in rowing terms. Xiuyun Zhang took bronze.

The second medal went to Belarusian duo Tatiana Kukhta and Yulia Bichik, who took bronze in the final tough battle. British team leader Katherine Grainger is the main bidder for gold in all world events at present and again claimed victory, with partner Melanie Wilson. The fight for silver went to the USA's Kathleen Bertko and Sarah Trowbridge, with our pair finishing third.

Best at water acrobatics

New water skiing world record for Belarusian Alexey Zhernosek approved by judges

Alexey demonstrated his ultimate programme back on April 30th, 2011 at a US tournament, breaking the previous world record of multi world champion Nicolas Le Forestier of France, by 170 points. The Frenchman's record had lasted five years.

However, in water skiing, it's never enough to simply earn a record sum of points; the sum must be recognised by a panel of judges who assess video footage of the programme. The impartial committee failed to find fault in Zhernosek's figures, with his result of 12,570 points recognised as a new world record. Curiously, in



Zhernosek climbs the podium

May, at another tournament, Zhernosek managed to again exceed Le Forestier's previous record, earning 12,420 points. He has truly shown himself to be a 'trendsetter' in water acrobatics.

The top world records in water skiing belong to Belarusian athletes, with Natalia Berdnikova setting a record of 9,690 points for women.

Four points gained over France proves good result

Belarusian football team continues struggle towards European Championship finals

By Yuri Karpenko

Squads are now competing for entry into the 2012 European Championship finals continent-wide. Much water has flowed under the bridge since the Belarusian team made its sensational win early in the tournament; in Paris they defeated the undisputed favourite of D Group — 1:0. The situation has now drastically changed, with Laurent Blanc's team winning all four matches over the past nine months and confidently topping the tournament rankings. Belarus has earned just five points over the same number of matches.

The titled guests were eager to take revenge for their offensive defeat at Stade de France and came to Minsk with their optimal line-up — stars Karim Benzema, Franck Ribéry, Samir Nasri, Patrice Evra and Eric Abidal among them. Meanwhile, the Belarusian squad was missing over half of its most experienced footballers — including distinguished Alexander Hleb, Vitaly Kutuzov, Alexander Kulchy and Sergey Kornilenko. Head coach Stange instructed his players to fight seriously, with the hope of performing a miracle and pleasing fans at the Dynamo Stadium. His French colleague also foresaw a tough match and primarily focused on his defence.

In fact, the two teams appeared pretty equally matched, with a logical draw as the result. In the middle of the first half, the rivals exchanged goals, though the be-



Belarus and France equally matched in skill and force

ginning of the match was wary. Initially, the French took a territorial advantage but failed to pose a real threat. Later, the initiative passed to the Belarusians, with Igor Shitov in defence being the first to disturb goalkeeper Hugo Lloris. He sent the ball into the corner and, after Timofey Kalachev's penalty shot, Eric Abidal fought against Maxim Bordachev, scoring an own goal! However, Belarus could not enjoy its success for long. Soon, Bacary Sagna and Karim Benzema were helping Florent Malouda to score from the centre of the penalty box

and Sergey Veremko failed to save the shot.

The first half ended to French advantage. Blanc's team possessed the ball several times, creating some unsafe situations. However, Benzema failed to make a precise kick and, after Ribéry's appearance from behind the penalty box, the ball passed near the bar. The Belarusians counter-attacked, though creating no near-goals.

At the beginning of the second half, the situation levelled off, with Belarus managing to push their rival farther from its goal. They

made several dangerous attacks but the French defence repelled them easily. After an hour, the guests began to attack more decisively and, not long before the final whistle, Stange sent Sergey Kislyak onto the field. During the September match, the halfback had played well; sadly, he failed to save the situation this time.

The point earned by Belarus during the match helps them remain in second place in D Group, continuing on in their struggle for a place at the European Championship finals.

To the fore at Giro d'Italia

By Kirill Karin

Four belarusian athletes prove a success at one of most prestigious multi-day cycling races

The triumphant win went to Spanish Alberto Contador for the second time, whose advantage was obvious long before the finish. The thrown was occupied, with only the nearest seats to be shuffled.

The race was a bright event for our Belarusian cyclists. Konstantin Sivtsov (High Road captain for the first time) reached the top ten in the general classification — a record for Belarusian cyclists. However, his path was not smooth. He came second after the first mountains but then dropped out of the top ten until his determination in the closing rounds, coupled with his sporting skills and



Vasily Kirienko breaks away

strength, returned him there.

Vasily Kirienko, cycling for Movistar team, captured the brightest victory for Belarus in the last but one Giro round, finishing a full four minutes ahead of his nearest rival. His persistence during the hardest 15th round saved him from falling below 25th position: his best personal achievement in the general standings. His efforts caused a sensation.

Kirienko's team mate, Bronislav Samoïlov, is yet to show himself ready for multi-day races, his mountaineering capabilities being episodic. More stability could push him not only into week-long races but into Grand Tours.

Alexander Kuchinsky was less

outstanding in Italy. During the flat and hilly stages, he was fit only to defend the captain of his team, Katyusha, from the wind and other undesirable circumstances. Only once did he have the chance to break away from the rest but, again, only for the sake of the squad.

Meanwhile, the Belarusian national team has climbed up from 23rd to 17th position in the world rankings — as released by the International Cycling Union. After success in the Giro d'Italia, Belarus has 66 points, rising six places. Those in the final top 20, based on the results of 2011, will be able to send a maximum of five cyclists to the 2012 London Olympics.

General rehearsal before European Championship

Belarusian national basketball players placed second at international tournament in Lithuania

In the closing and decisive match of the event, held in Druskininkai, Anatoly Buyalsky's trainees lost to Lithuania 69:76. Marina Kress scored the most points for the Belarusian squad, while Anastasia Veremeenko earned one point less: 16 and 15 respectively. Beforehand, Belarus defeated Ukraine — 61:45, and Finland — 48:45.

The Lithuanian team captured gold, enjoying three wins across three matches, followed by Belarus and Ukraine. Finland finished fourth, having lost all its matches. Marina Kress was admitted into the symbolic team of the tournament.

The event was a qualifying round for the European Championship, to be held from June 18th-3rd July, in Poland.