

Alexandra Gerasimenya:

'I did not imagine I could swim that fast'

Belarusian swimming achieves new heights

By Dmitry Komarov

Throughout the history of independent Belarus, perhaps only a dozen of similar successes have been seen: Yulia Nesterenko's Olympic gold and the bright victories of Yekaterina Karsten and Natalia Tsilinskaya. Their spectacular finishes changed the face of sport.

Alexandra Gerasimenya's flew to the FINA World Championship in Shanghai as a strong sportswoman, yet had no expectations of a medal, despite victories at European championships. The Chinese event was on a different level and she had been the last to qualify for the final in the 100m freestyle. She was given the eighth lane, as if set

apart from the main action. Moreover, the 50m backstroke is her traditional favourite.

"When I touched the board, it took me some time to realise what was happening," Alexandra recalls. "Either from tiredness or surprise, I looked at the panel and thought I was the eighth to finish. When I understood, I can't say I experienced a burst of joy, as my emotions are difficult to describe, as I still haven't really accepted my gold medal. Perhaps, after passions cool, I'll sit with my family and discuss the reality."

Amazingly, Dane Jeanette Ottesen also claimed gold for her equal 53.45 second finish — even the computer couldn't decide

between the two swimmers.

"It's been a long path to this victory," Gerasimenya notes. "I've been performing at international level since I was a junior, with many ups and downs. Some may have already written me off. Even I did not imagine I could swim that fast!"

According to Gerasimenya's coach — Yelena Klimova — she could yet improve on her 53.45 second time. Even at the World University Games in China, she is expecting more from her. However, Alexandra is now viewed as a contender for an Olympic medal, with less than a year until the Games in London. It may seem short, but this is enough time to train, ready to surprise the world again.



Alexandra welcomed home with enthusiasm

Partnership is better

Belarusian tennis player Victoria Azarenko partners Russian Maria Kirilenko to win Bank of the West Classic-2011 in Stanford (California, USA)

During the final match, Maria and Victoria (seeded second) faced first seeds Liezel Huber and Lisa Raymond, of the USA, taking just over an hour to smash their rivals with a sensational 6:1, 6:3.

The tournament title is the third for Kirilenko and Azarenko in the WTA Tour. Earlier this year, the girls celebrated victory at a super-tournament in the Spanish capital; last season, they won a similar competition in Cincinnati.

"Last year, I was here first in the singles; now, I've been in the doubles. We've had a wonderful week and I'd happily partner Maria again," asserts Victoria. Unfortunately, the singles tournament was not so successful for her.

Victory at the Bank of the West Classic-2011 has brought Kirilenko and Azarenko prize money of \$35,500 and 470 points in their WTA doubles rating.

BATE travelling in right direction



BATE demonstrates its advantage in match against Lithuanian Ekranas

By Yuri Bakerenko

Borisov football club qualifies for Champions League play-offs, with group round of the tournament almost within reach for second time to date

Reaching the group round will allow BATE to challenge the most reputable European clubs. Just one obstacle stands in the way of the players and time will show whether they'll succeed. Fans would assert that the squad is more than

ready, boasting good pre-season training and a favourable set of transfers. Experts note that, this year, BATE has its strongest line-up to date; unarguably, Northern Irish Linfield and Lithuanian Ekranas appeared as inexperienced newcomers next to the Belarusian veterans. Nevertheless, several moments made fans nervous. During the return game against Lithuania, the Borisov team had a smaller number of footballers, and their 2:1 lead was threatened. If Ekranas had managed a draw, BATE would

have lost its place in the Champions League for the next year (taking into account the no-score draw of the away match). BATE really needed to beat its rivals to ensure its place.

Luckily, even with an incomplete team, our footballers kept control, luring their guests into their territory and then attacking at close range. The strategy worked well towards the end of the match, with the help of Mikhail Gordeichuk, who scored BATE's 100th European tournament goal. "Looking at both match-

es overall, our victory is in no doubt. Despite having lost one player at the end of the first period, we managed to avoid any dangerous moments near our net and quickly counter-attacked, using one opportunity in particular. I believe we deserve our place in the second round," asserts the head coach of the Borisov team, Victor Goncharenko.

BATE fullback Yegor Filipenko was hot on the trail after the return match. He tells us, "Our guests' standards were most dangerous. We were forewarned but still incurred penalties near our nets. The Lithuanians only benefitted once from this and would only have been able to defeat us had we dropped down to seven players."

In the European arena, BATE has won six games in a row. We hope this chain of success gains more links. At the start of the Champions League play-off round, BATE Borisov is to play Austrian Sturm — following the results of a draw hosted by Swiss Nyon. Belarus' champion will play its first match at home, in Borisov.

Last season, Sturm became Austria's football champion, for the first time after a 12 year break.

Allure not for everyone

Ratomka hosts show jumping stage of the World Cup

The 2-star class event gathered the best masters of this prestigious and intriguing equestrian sport at the Republican Olympic Equestrian and Breeding Centre in Ratomka, near Minsk. Victory went to Lithuanian rider Benas Gutkauskas and his horse Lascar. Russian sports-woman Natalia Simonia performed a perfect programme on Gardemarin and Solan, taking second and third places. The best Belarusian rider during the World Cup round was Vasil Ivanov, on Alex, who was ranked sixth.

At the Nations Cup, which took place simultaneously, the Belarusian team came second, proving the words of the team coach regarding the great future prospects of this young squad. "Our sportsmen are not likely to qualify for the future Olympic Games in London," stresses the state equestrian coach, Natalia Yuranova. "However, in five years' time, we might see them in Rio de Janeiro. I believe they could be not just participants but candidates for the highest prizes."

Nadezhda Ostapchuk dreams of Olympics

Belarusian shot-putter keen to win track and field equivalent to tennis Grand Slam tournament

Nadezhda Ostapchuk can certainly record this season as a success. She has won several medals previously, with her achievements covered by major newspapers. However, this time, she is among the major newsmakers for global track and field.

Stockholm hosted the 11th stage of the Brilliant League, with the shot putt competition organised, incredibly, on the central city square, gathering crowds of fans. The spirit of a true sporting holiday reigned, with the Swedes creating a fun atmosphere.

Naturally, the competition was tough, with Ostapchuk and her main rival of recent seasons, Valerie Adams of New Zealand, taking the lead. Sadly, the Beijing Olympic champion won, leaving Ostapchuk in second place. However, her Stockholm silver does not deprive the Belarusian of her hope for a repeat of last year's result; in 2010, Nadezhda was acknowledged the best shot-putter, being awarded a \$40,000 prize and a diamond from one of Switzerland's oldest jewellers.