

'Storm' warning half step before dreams realised

First match of Champions League play-offs between BATE and Austrian Sturm ends in draw at Minsk stadium

By Yuri Bakerenko

In the first half of the game, BATE Borisov didn't perform to its usual standard, seeming to lack confidence and making several errors in its passes. There was even a missed goal during the 12th minute. In the second half, Belarus' seven-time champion considerably improved its play, restoring balance to the score. Dmitry Baga performed a perfect penalty kick leaving Marko Simić to head the ball into the net.

Dmitry Baga, certainly a hero of the game, afterwards noted, "We didn't get our bearings during the first half of the match, playing without focus; we lacked sharpness and aggression. Moreover, we missed a goal... However, after halftime, we managed to change the situation and played well, showing our true ability. We proved that we could play much better. As a result, we equalised the score and could have even scored another goal."

Of course, fans were dreaming of victory, but a draw is a fair result. The Austrians have proven that they aren't timid and conducted the game efficiently, focusing on quick attacks and reliable defence, adhering to their chosen strategy. Our Belarusians lacked inventiveness and seemed to feel some strange constraint during the first half. Maybe, this was because several key football players were absent: Renan Bressan, Igor Shitov, Dmitry Likhtarovich and Alexander Pavlov. BATE boasts a good team, but the loss of such high class players is always painful. Who knows what the



BATE fails to defeat Austrian Sturm, ending with a draw

result of the game might have been were they present.

BATE head coach Victor Goncharenko notes, "We pay for our mistakes in contemporary football. Those who make the fewest number of mistakes win. Our first mistake led to the first goal but I'm pleased at how we reacted in the second half of the game. The Austrians were more

orderly in defence, but our pressure on the rival's net finally resulted in a goal. Of course, we wanted the game to be more diverse but we lacked Pavlov and Bressan, who play a vital role in positional attacks. We now need to prepare for the match in Austria, which will be a serious test of our skills. I do believe in my team and see our chances as 50:50."

It seems that statistics are in BATE Borisov's favour. In the current qualification round of the Champions League, BATE has twice ended a pair of games in its favour during the return match: with Northern Irish Linfield and Lithuanian Ekranas. Additionally, BATE boasts two victories and five draws over its last seven meetings within the European arena.



Alexandra Gerasimenya after her gold swim

Tradition continues

By Ivan Yevseyev

Alexandra Gerasimenya wins medals of all values at 26th Summer Universiade in Chinese Shenzhen

Belarusian swimmer Alexandra Gerasimenya has followed her sensational World Championship 100m freestyle title with a gold over 50m freestyle distance in Shenzhen. She covered the distance in 24.66 seconds, just 0.46 seconds ahead of Ukraine's Darya Stepanyuk (who captured silver). Bronze went to Cate Campbell of Australia.

Moreover, Gerasimenya claimed

silver in the 50m backstroke, covering the distance in 27.93 seconds, just one hundredth of a second behind Jennifer Connolly of the USA. Her gold medal accompanies a Universiade record of 27.92 seconds. The Belarusian also captured bronze over the 100m backstroke distance.

The Belarusian delegation comprised 35 athletes across seven sports: artistic gymnastics (1 person), judo (5), track-and-field (12), swimming (4), fencing (3), tennis (4) and shooting (6).

The team comprised student-athletes from Belarus' ten higher educational establishments.

National team of the future

Belarusian basketball team fails to reach European Championship but vows revenge

By Artem Bestemianov

The Belarusian national basketball team has yielded to Sweden and lost its chance to reach the elite division of the European Championship. However, the tournament continues. Belarus defeated Albania in its away match and played brilliantly against Azerbaijan and Romania, but its victories were not sufficient to win through.

In the current (second) qualification round, Belarus saw a new line-up whose great performance would have taken them further last year. Their core obstacle has been the Swedish team, which comprised both tough veterans and energetic youngsters. Commenting on our guys' performance, head coach Andrey Krivonos states, "Each has their own strengths but lacks experience of higher level."

Nevertheless, our Belarusian players demonstrated some occasional outstanding performances during the European matches: nice combinations, technical skills and long, high throws. Their hard training may yet bring results. We shouldn't forget our defeat of Ukraine and battling for the prize of the King of Jordan. With determination, all things are possible.

"It's utterly impossible to create a strong team in just one month," comments Mr. Krivonos. "Only a strong national championship can build a formidable national squad."

From next season, the terms of qualification for the European Championship will be revised. The International Basketball Federation has decided to abolish the division system, creating more room for our team to reach the elite of European basketball.

Belarusian gambit at Baku Open

Belarusian chess player Sergey Zhigalko wins prestigious International Baku Open, hosted by Azerbaijani capital

The tournament brought together 73 chess players, with 24 being grand masters. Zhigalko earned seven points over nine rounds, pulling 0.5 points ahead of his closest opponents: Russian Dmitry Andreikin and Israeli Emil Sutovsky. The World Chess Cup, which begins on August 28th in Russian Khanty-Mansiysk, will be the next event for the leader of the Belarusian team.

Squad learns the name of new coach

Finland's Kari Heikkila to coach Belarusian hockey players for home World Championship

Over recent years, the national team has been coached by Glen Hanlon and Kurt Fraser but went to the Olympics in Vancouver with Mikhail Zakharov. At the last World Championship, Belarus' hockey squad struggled to remain with the elite under the guidance of Eduard Zankovets. After his dismissal, the Belarusian Hockey Federation sought a candidate to fill the honourable position: a three year contract with Kari Heikkila is the result. He'll train the team for the Olympics in Sochi and for the 2014 World Championship — to be hosted by Belarus.



Kari Heikkila

In 2004, Mr. Heikkila was the first Finnish coach in the Russian Championship, heading Lokomotiv Yaroslavl from 2004-2005, 2007-2008, 2008-2009 and 2009-2010. He spent last season with Metallurg Magnitogorsk, which reached the finals of the Gagarin Cup. He held unusual twice daily training sessions during the pre-season and is known for his tough discipline — due to which several players left the team.

"We're happy to have such a top level coach for our squad. Before signing the contract, we held detailed negotiations, which led to mutually beneficial co-operation," emphasises the Chairman of the Belarusian Hockey Federation, Yevgeny Vorsin.