

No medals, but place at World Championship

Belarus' national basketball team is to perform at World Championship. This has become clear after Belarusians confidently beat Czech players in the struggle for the fifth place. Nevertheless, the finished continental tournament left many questions both towards the squad itself and the demonstrated results.

By Dmitry Baranovsky

Rimantas Grigas' trainees were going to France to be awarded with medals. They didn't speak about this openly but the girls' ambitions were clear even without any explanations. This tournament was the last chance for many to enter the medals podium. For the sake of this opportunity, representatives of the generation who earned bronze medals at similar European tournament in 2007 (for the first time in the history of Belarusian sport) decided to wait little with finishing of their sporting careers. The backgrounds for repeating their success were not only hypothetical.

Unlike most rivals, who undertook the 'rejuvenation' of the lineup after the London Olympiad, the Belarusian squad started the European Championship only with slight

corrections in the roster. Alexandra Tarasova, who spent the whole previous European tournament in the reserve, has managed to turn into the squad's major ball handler. Moreover, Alla Muravskaya, Olga Isteletsova and Zhanna Gorodetskaya were added to the national team and these can be hardly named the younger generation of players. Of course, all these posed questions for the future yet significantly increased Belarusian girls' chances at present moment. Certainly, competing against the national teams of France and Spain — the leaders — were above their strength, although our girls looked well in the match against the French. Nevertheless, they had to tenaciously cling to the third place but failed...

Summing up the results of the tournament, many are likely to reproach Rimantas Grigas for the match

against Lithuania. After ensuring the place in the second round (during the first two meetings), the coach gave a day-off to the leaders of the team, sending younger generation almost for the whole match. Although they played self-sacrificially but failed to win and it turned later that this meeting was earth-shaking...

Yelena Levchenko complained for the difficulty to join the rhythm after a long break after the national team of Belarus suffered an unexpected defeat in the most important match against the national squad of Serbia during the second round. Anyway, the girls have managed to get into play-offs by beating their rivals from the UK, yet made their life extremely difficult in the quarter-finals. The Turkish national squad, which de facto left Belarusians without medals, actually only used the difficulties that Belarusians cre-



Despite tough struggle, Belarusians lose to Turkish national team

ated themselves on their way to the knock-out round.

Nevertheless, the Belarusian girls have coped with the minimum task. The squad will come to the World Championship, so is obliged to thoroughly learn the 'French' lesson. After the end of the tournament Mr. Grigas spoke that all problems of the Belarusian team lie in psychology. Teamwork and common mood for

victory, as well as some corrections in attack, will enable Belarusian girls to fight for medals, even against the background of the world leaders. The issue is that it's far more complicated to find a psychological balance in an ambitious female national squad than to 'take into pieces' the forthcoming opponents. We'd like to believe that they will succeed in solving this task.

Azarenko slips on Wimbledon grass

2013 England Open Tennis Championship enters history as one of the most unpredictable tournaments

By Dmitry Baranovsky

Seven of the worlds' top tennis players have been knocked out in the first round of Wimbledon, with Victoria Azarenko of Belarus among them. Spain's Rafael Nadal has never been comfortable on grass and is joined by such stars as Roger Federer, Maria Sharapova, Caroline Wozniacki, Jelena Janković, Anna Ivanova Lleyton Hewitt and Jo-Wilfried Tsonga in being knocked out.

Ms. Azarenko beat Portugal's Maria João Köhler (6:1, 6:2) despite injuring her right knee. However, the world #2 decided to drop out rather than risk further damage to her knee, conceding the next match to Italian Flavia Pennetta. Not only does Victoria lose her chance to win the tournament, for which she was considered a favourite, but will lose her second seed ranking to Russian Maria Sharapova.

No other Belarusian tennis players are continuing to the second round of Wimbledon this year, since Olga Govortsova lost to



Slippery Wimbledon's courts

Romanian Simona Halep in three sets in the first round.

We could see better luck in the doubles, with Max Mirnyi partnered by Romanian Horia Tecau. The pair have beaten Austrian-German Philipp Oswald and Dominik Meffert in the first round and Max's experience should stand him in good stead.

Glen Hanlon:

'I'd like to return the public's sense of respect and pride in the national team'

By Yegor Glebov

New head coach of Belarusian national squad Glen Hanlon shares his opinions on his return to Minsk and recalls his previous work in the country

In autumn 2009, you were scandalously dismissed from Dynamo Minsk, having helped them achieve good results. Did you take it as a personal insult?

No, as I'm aware that the decisions made in hockey aren't always in your favour. I prefer to think about the good times rather than the bad.

Belarusians speculated on why you were dismissed, saying that you'd asked for a million Dollars fee. Can you comment?

I've returned because I like Belarus and Belarusians and I believe that, in 2005, several hard-working people began a mission which went uncompleted. With the help of Belarusian coaches, fans and players, something wonderful will happen, to the credit of the whole country. I've returned for money and have signed a contract for more than a year to show that my intentions are long-



Glen Hanlon

term. I'm here to work with coaches and managers and to return respect to Belarusian hockey.

Belarusian hockey players have a goal: to reach the top four at the World Championship in Minsk. What are our chances (considering that we only reached 14th place recently)?

Our goal is to play forcefully and with strategy. Work is needed and I am responsible for our success. My task is to bring all the elements together at a higher level, so that the whole country can be

proud of the squad after the championship.

How do you plan to achieve that?

My plan is to see as many players in action as possible. I'd like to meet all the players and coaches of Belarusian squads. It's important that everyone understands that we need to move fast, playing like lions rather than lambs. Much work and concentration will be needed and we shouldn't waste a single day. Play is improving globally, and we need to keep pace. I can help the players and team in this.