

Wheel of fortune, or why Dinamo Minsk team has begun winning

Dinamo Minsk has won three CHL matches recently: an incredible result — especially as the teams defeated were Magnitka, Neftekhimik and Traktor. The squad's strategies are the same as in the times of former coach Alexander Andrievsky, so what's changed?

By Igor Leshin

Theory of probability

New coach Lars Haugen notes that, since a team cannot lose all time, especially if it's not bad, it's bound to do well eventually! All are equal in this respect and hockey is no exception (nor is the CHL). Success finally came to Dinamo after a run of six defeats, beginning with its victory over Metallurg Magnitogorsk. Mr. Haugen notes, "Our win over Magnitogorsk pulled us together, inspiring belief in our own strength."

Lars Haugen

Goalkeeper Lubomir Pokovič stressed in the post-match press conference that Haugen wasn't ideal in the matches against Neftekhimik and Traktor, but did much in the game against Metallurg. The team really appreciates Lars' efforts and support. Lubomir truly helped his team achieve the

first (under the new coach) and most important victory and admits that it was a turning point for the squad in terms of self-confidence.

Materukhin — Surov — Platt

It's well known that hockey players tend to play either well or badly — with failure occurring when things are not as they should be. Dinamo's Materukhin, Surov and Platt are all on good form, having enjoyed a good reputation in the past. At the moment, the Ukrainian, Slovak and Canadian (of Belarusian citizenship) are setting the pace; they may have realised that they need to 'save' the team now that Lars has been taken on, deciding that new tactics are necessary. As a result, they are now demonstrating top hockey, bringing nine points to the team (with Materukhin definitely standing out for his swiftness).



Dinamo Minsk confidently defeats Traktor Chelyabinsk

Emotions on the bench

"I have no idea what's changed. A short period of time has passed for miracles to happen! We're following our previous tactics; nothing has changed since my joining the team," admits Mr. Haugen. Dinamo's style of play continues as it has ever done, so Mr. Andrievsky cannot have been a bad coach. As a result, we can hardly lay the ac-

colade at Lubomir's door or at that of Lars. A shake-up usually occurs when hockey players seek to prove their abilities to a new coach of course. Meanwhile, Lubomir only recently joined the team, before the start of this season.

What is clear is that the new coach is more emotional and 'hands on' in his support of the team. Where Mr. Andrievsky would only

occasionally shout, usually just casting down his eyes at missed pucks, throughout his 28 matches as coach, Lars is much more animated. Despite his age — 53 — he looks ever ready to join his players on the ice and constantly rallies them. This may explain their new mood. Despondency has been replaced by inspiration, leading to a confident three victories in a row.

Darya Domracheva heading for medal until last shooting range, when bad weather calls end to race

The Belarusian biathlete had every chance of winning the World Cup stage event in Swedish Östersund, until Sunday's pursuit was cancelled, due to strong wind and snow

Dasha was sadly unsuccessful in Östersund, missing out on prizes in each of her events by a narrow margin. In the individual race, her speed enabled her to gain almost a minute over her closest rival; however, she'd better focus on shooting, trying to avoid faults and mistakes, which finally resulted in four misses on the shooting range.

Meanwhile, Dasha was simply unlucky in the sprint, as her main rival, Big Crystal Globe winner Tora Berger, started after the Belarusian, giving her the opportunity to top Dasha's time as necessary: she managed to catch up by two seconds.

In Sunday's pursuit, Fate chose to smile on the leader of the Belarusian national squad initially, before cruelly snatching away her chance of a prize. She started fourth, only a fraction behind the leaders: an ideal position for Domracheva. Sadly, circumstances beyond her control intervened, removing her chance of an Östersund medal. Gusts of wind and snow had already led to the individual race being cancelled but, strangely, the pursuit continued, despite fir trees being bent nearly double and flags being pulled from fans' hands in the stands. The shooting range flags were rendered horizontal, yet the pursuit carried on, to the consternation of many.

Despite such adversity, Domracheva showed her fighting spirit and heroism, shooting well considering the conditions and enduring only three penalty loops.

She led after the first standing shooting position, while rivals Flatland and Zaitseva clearly appeared uncomfortable, suffering not very successful shooting.

After two individual starts in the World Cup stage in Östersund, Darya Domracheva is ranked second overall, which bodes well in her fight for the Big Crystal Globe. Like the whole Belarusian national squad, Dasha is yet to win any prizes, having failed to shoot accurately enough in the individual race and lacking speed in the last stage of the sprint. However, her pursuit lead after three shooting ranges had fans jumping with excitement. Unfortunately, the judges eventually cancelled the race, because of the strong wind at the shooting ranges.

The second World Cup stage is to be hosted by Austrian Hochfilzen, from December 6th-8th.

Volleyballers continue winning on European arena



Minsk Stroitel defeats Baia-Mare, from Romania

By Yegor Glebov

On November 27th, four Belarusian volleyball clubs reached the European Challenge Cup second qualifying round

In the women's tourna-

ment, the Minchanka squad confidently defeated Austrian Innsbruck in their return match, in the 1/32 finals at Minsk's Sports Palace — with a score of 3:0 within just 67 minutes. In the first game, in Innsbruck, the Belarusians

beat their opponents with the same score. Now, in the 1/16 finals, Minchanka will twice meet Romanian Constanta, in December.

In the men's tournament, Minsk's Stroitel welcomed Romanian Baia-Mare to the capital's Sports Palace, achieving a 3:1 victory after 112 minutes. In the first 'away' game, Alexander Singaevsky's trainees beat the Romanian volleyballers with the same result. They will now face Dutch Zwolle in the 1/16 finals.

Grodno Kommunalnik has also reached the 1/16 finals, beating Dutch Dynamo (Apeldoorn) 3:0 in Lida, following their 3:1 win in the first match. They go on to meet Greek Ethnikos.

Playing 'away', against Greek Syros, Soligorsk Shakhlyor had an easy 3:0 victory, and beat their opponents 3:1 in their first match. Shakhlyor now faces two games against Dutch Doetinchem, to reach the 1/8 finals.