

Belarusian footballers as yet without victories

Belarusian national team defeated for second time in FIFA World Cup qualification, losing this time to France

By Dmitry Baranovsky

The Belarusian squad arrived at Paris' Charles De Gaulle Airport directly from Tbilisi, having been beaten (0:1) in their first match in the 2014 FIFA World Cup qualification. They landed with mixed feelings, having suffered an unexpected defeat at the hands of Georgia and with a more serious rival ahead. However, the Belarusians beat the French in 2010, following an exact kick from Sergey Kislyak, causing a true sensation in European football. This time, the hero of the match was playing again, replacing injured Alexander Hleb. This time, Kislyak failed to repeat his success of two years ago; rather, other players were in the limelight.

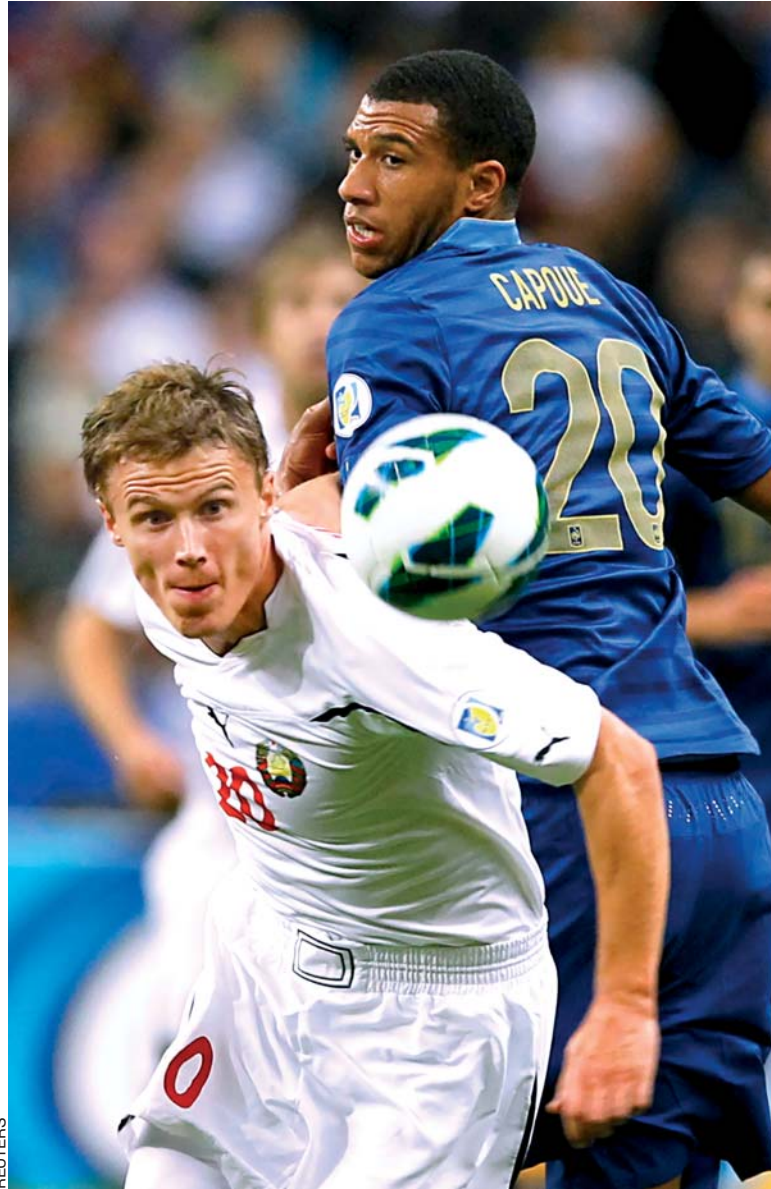
Brazilian Renan Bressan has rapidly become a leader within the squad, despite having acquired a Belarusian passport only recently. Great hopes are pinned on him but the BATE Borisov forward played like a shadow of his usual self when faced with the French defence. He was substituted after the first half by 'veteran' Alexander Kulchy. The latter attempted a goal after four minutes,

but without success. A minute later, Étienne Capoue took a pass from Franck Ribéry and sent it home, reducing the hopes of the Belarusian national squad. BATE failed to create much danger near Loris' goal, while the French again scored again 17 minutes later.

Nevertheless, Belarus eventually equalised, with Putilo taking a penalty kick at the end. Sadly, Kondratiev's players were unable to do more, missing a third goal before the final whistle.

"At the start of the second half, we had two good opportunities but, unfortunately, failed to realise them. We then immediately let in a goal from Capoue," mused Georgy Kondratiev, after the match. "Our players were concentrating hard, giving their all, but the individual talents of the French footballers guided the result of the match."

After two matches, the Belarusian national team no points, taking fifth place in its group. Only the two best teams from the group will go to Brazil (the winner plus the squad ranked second — through play-off matches). An even more difficult match, against Spain, lies ahead for Belarus.



Etienne Capoue (R) fights for the ball with Vitaly Rodionov

Jumping through hoops yet victory remains out of reach

By Ivan Rafalsky

Path to elite through lower divisions is accomplishable yet difficult

The path is certainly long, with many obstacles, as the Belarusian national basketball squad are well aware. They've repeatedly 'attacked' final tournaments at World and European championships without success. Happily, this year, changes to regulations in selecting qualifying teams gave more of a chance to underdogs such as Belarus.

Sadly, defeat by the Czech Republic and Turkey (after being equally matched for most of the game) and our unsurprising loss to favourite Italy have left our squad in the wilderness. A second chance may not appear any time soon, as the next European qualification round is two years ahead; by then, Yegor Meshcheryakov will be 38 while Alexey Lashkevich, Denis Korshuk, Nikolay Alexeev and Georgy Kondrusevich will be 36; even Pavel Ul'ianko and Alexander Kudryavtsev will be over 30. Younger players are needed to replace them but many questions remain.

The current line-up includes leading roles for young Alexander Pustogvar and Artem Parakhovsky,



During Belarus-Turkey match

as well as Alexey Trostinetsky (who hasn't been on form lately) but there are no players below the age of 30. Nikita Meshcheryakov, Valery Gandlin, Vitaly Lyutysh, Alexey Patsevich and other upcoming players are only in reserve at present.

National squad head coach An-

drey Krivonos has to shape the new national squad from these players. In this respect, Tsmoki club may be very appropriate. The presentation of the new image, line-up and title of the club has recently taken place in the Belarusian capital. The latter has performed in the EuroChallenge and the VTB United League in previous seasons. Alongside experienced American 'centre player' John Edwards (four years in the NBA) the squad features five players from the national team, in addition to youngsters from the club's second squad who play with the first team every now and then. Potential does exist but realising this may be difficult.

Mr. Krivonos tells us, "We've probably demonstrated the best we can at present. We clearly lack something... perhaps experience and patience. We're in too much of a hurry. This time, we boasted a solid squad but had problems in some positions, which prevented the team from fully revealing its potential. We have almost two years ahead to prepare now, so can compile a training schedule. We're planning a schedule of training camps to find tomorrow's basketballers and are searching for substitutes. I can't yet say more."

Good start in European cups

By Egor Glebov

Minsk Dynamo handballers reach group stage of Champions League for second time

Our Belarusian handball clubs have played successfully during the first stage of European events. National champion Minsk Dynamo beat Turkish Beşiktaş from Istanbul, reaching the group stage of the main continental tournament — the Champions League.

Sergey Bebesheko's squad will participate in the main round of the Champions League for the second time to date, having qualified two years ago and finishing in fifth place. In group D of the Champions League, Minsk will play with Spanish Barcelona. The captain of the national team of Belarus, Sergey Rutenko, usually plays for the Spanish team. They will also meet Croatian Zagreb, Swiss Schaffhausen, Hungarian Pick and German Berlin. Dynamo will enjoy its first match on September 30th, in Berlin.

National Championship runner-up Brest HC (named after Meshkov) is in the European Club Competition for the tenth time. In the first qualifying round of the EHF Cup, Brest played PlenetWin365 from Italy twice. The Brest squad beat the team from the city of Conversano by forty balls. In the second qualifying round of the EHF Cup, BGK will play Croatian Nexes, from Našice.

Victoria Azarenko:

'There's no reason to reproach myself'



Victoria Azarenko (L) and Serena Williams pose with their trophies

By Igor Grishin

Victoria Azarenko is proving magnanimous in defeat, praising opponent Serena Williams for her play in the final of the US Open. She admits, "Serena deserves this success, proving again that she is a real champion. I gave my all but it wasn't enough. There's no reason for me to reproach myself as Serena played brilliantly. I think she's the best tennis player in the world, having raised the sport to a new level."

Despite defeat, Victoria remains the world number one seed, with 10,265 points. Russian Maria Sharapova has 8,435 points, in second place, while Polish Agnieszka Radwanska is third with 8,295 points. The US Open-2012 winner, American Serena Williams, has 7,900 points.

A good performance in New York has pushed Belarusian Olga Govortsova, who reached the third round, to move from 67th to 55th place in the world ratings, with 1,102 points.