The Rugby Union of Russia (RUR) has today announced a preliminary training squad of 50 players for Rugby World Cup (RWC) 2011 in New Zealand.

The squad, selected by the National Team Coaches, represents a historic moment for the Union and Rugby in Russia RWC 2011 will be the first time that Russia has participated at Rugby's showcase tournament.

The squad will meet for a national training camp in Sochi in July and each player will be intensely monitored before a smaller squad is selected to travel to England and Wales to play four preparation matches.

The squad will then return to Moscow to fine tune preparations before the final squad of 30 players selected to travel to New Zealand is announced on August 22. Russia will make its RWC 2011 debut against USA in New Plymouth on September 15.

Vyacheslav Kopiev, President of the Rugby Union of Russia said: "These players are creating history and they are honoured and proud to be doing so. They are representing Russia in our first ever participation in a Rugby World Cup. We wish them well in their training and have trust in each of them to strive to their maximum to gain selection to our Rugby World Cup Squad of 30."

National Teams Director Kingsley Jones and Head Coach Nikolay Nerush have committed themselves to ensuring the squad is made up of the very best players available to Russia with players coming from both the Russian domestic league and professional clubs in Europe.

The squad boasts a blend of experience and youthful talent. Age has been no barrier with Vyacheslav Grachev being the oldest player at 38 and Nikolay Zaporzhin being the youngest player at 19 years.

Kingsley Jones added: "We have carried out an International and Nationwide search to identify

this squad. Selection has been made afresh and the squad is full of potential with many players with talent Ready for this stage'.

A further boost has been given with the return of Sergey Sugrobov, Vladimir Botvinnikov and Dmitry Gerasimov, who have all committed to representing their country on the highest stage despite not playing for the national team for some time.

Within the squad there are fresh players with Vladimir Boltenkov, Alexey Shcherban, Anton Ryabov, Grigory Tsnobiladze, Rushan Yagudin, Mikhail Sidorov, Denis Antonov and Vladimir Kondrashov having played less 10 matches for the National team.

There is also exciting new talent in the squad. Denis Simplikevich and Nikolay Zaporzhin. Denis showed himself very well in the IRB Junior World Rugby Trophies 2010 and 2011, being one of the leading players and try scorers. Nikolay has quickly made his mark on the IRB Seven's World Series, scoring 10 tries during in 3 Stages. Neither player has yet been awarded a cap.

Head Coach Nikolay Nerush emphasized: "The Rugby Union of Russia has been working hard on its planning for New Zealand. I am delighted that we are currently producing performances that are showing the progress that has been made through the hard work of the players and the coaches."

Russian fans will be very attentively watching the names of Kirill Kulemin and Alexander Yanyushkin – stars of Russian Rugby who are both going through rehabilitation after injury. Their progress is reassuring and both are hopeful that they will be on the plane to New Zealand.

Perhaps one of the main stories of the Preliminary Squad announcement is the inclusion Adam Byrnes, an Australian by birth, currently playing Super Rugby for Melbourne Rebels and previously played for Leinster. Byrnes has Russian roots and is very excited with the opportunity to represent the Country of his forefathers.

Two players within the squad, Vasily Artemyev and Andrey Ostrikov , have recently joined the English Aviva Premiership with Northampton Saints and Sale Sharks respectively. Both players

are in their early rugby careers ,both born in Zelenograd, are determined to represent their Country with pride and show the supporters of Northampton Saints and Sale Sharks the talent that they and their National Team colleagues possess.

Vyacheslav Grachev, the oldest man in the Squad, is the only player who played in the USSR Championship. Two years ago he was suffered a bad injury playing in the French Championship. His rehabilitation has been a great success story not only to fully recover but also to gain selection to represent Russia again in 2011.

Vlad Korshunov, the Squad Captain, added: “The players are extremely proud and excited to be given this great opportunity. Rugby World Cup is the pinnacle for all Rugby players and we are committed to ensuring that not only will we arrive in New Zealand in peak condition, but that we will do Russia proud.

RWC NZ 2011 will unearth a lot of new stars, and we are intend that some of these will be Russian”.

Preliminary Training Squad of Russian National Team for RWC 2011

Backs (22)

Name

Surname

Date of birth

Club

Vasily

Artemyev

24.07.1987

Northampton Saints

England

Mikhail

Babaev

19.01.1986

VVA-Podmoskovye

Moscow Region

Andrey

Bykanov

25.05.1980

Slava-ShVSM

Moscow

Igor

Galinovskiy

08.11.1985

Krasniy Yar

Krasnoyarsk

Dmitry

Gerasimov

16.04.1988

Enisey-STM

Krasnoyarsk

Igor

Klyuchnikov

07.01.1983

VVA-Podmoskovye

Moscow Region

Vladimir

Kondrashov

03.08.1985

Slava-ShVSM

Moscow

Alexey

Korobeynikov

13.11.1978

Enisey-STM

Krasnoyarsk

Yury

Kushnarev

06.06.1985

VVA-Podmoskovye

Moscow Region

Andrey

Kuzin

29.10.1978

VVA-Podmoskovye

Moscow Region

Alexey

Makovetskiy

27.03.1983

Krasniy Yar

Krasnoyarsk

Vladimir

Ostroushko

30.09.1986

Enisey-STM

Krasnoyarsk

Konstantin

Rachkov

08.10.1978

Stade Phoceen

France

Anton

Ryabov

04.04.1989

Krasniy Yar

Krasnoyarsk

Alexander

Shakirov

20.01.1981

VVA-Podmoskovye

Moscow Region

Alexey

Shcherban

17.11.1990

Enisey-STM

Krasnoyarsk

Denis

Simplikevich

11.03.1991

Enisey-STM

Krasnoyarsk

Sergey

Sugrobov

15.02.1983

Slava-ShVSM

Moscow

Sergey

Trishin

12.12.1984

VVA-Podmoskovye

Moscow Region

Rushan

Yagudin

29.03.1987

Krasniy Yar

Krasnoyarsk

Alexander

Yanyushkin

30.10.1982

VVA-Podmoskovye

Moscow Region

Nikolay

Zaporzhin

29.12.1991

VVA-Podmoskovye

Moscow Region

Forwards (28)

Denis

Antonov

17.10.1986

Slava-ShVSM

Moscow

Vladimir

Boltenkov

05.06.1986

Imperiya

Penza

Vladimir

Botvinnikov

30.06.1984

Enisey-STM

Krasnoyarsk

Adam

Byrnes

29.07.1981

Melbourne Rebels

Australia

Alexey

Chernyshev

27.07.1984

Slava-ShVSM

Moscow

Artem

Fatakhov

08.09.1979

VVA-Podmoskovye

Moscow Region

Andrey

Garbuzov

07.08.1983

Krasniy Yar

Krasnoyarsk

Viatcheslav

Grachev

22.04.1973

Bizanos

France

Victor

Gresev

31.03.1986

VVA-Podmoskovye

Moscow Region

Alexander

Khrokin

10.07.1976

VVA-Podmoskovye

Moscow Region

Vladislav

Korshunov

13.03.1983

VVA-Podmoskovye

Moscow Region

Kirill

Kulemin

13.10.1980

Castres

France

Kirill

Kushnarev

20.04.1982

VVA-Podmoskovye

Moscow Region

Karlo

Maglakelidze

05.02.1978

Imperiya

Penza

Evgeny

Matveev

15.04.1984

VVA-Podmoskovye

Moscow Region

Nikita

Medkov

17.11.1986

Enisey-STM

Krasnoyarsk

Andrey

Ostrikov

02.07.1987

Sale Sharks

England

Alexey

Panasenko

13.01.1983

VVA-Podmoskovye

Moscow Region

Sergey

Popov

07.09.1982

Slava-ShVSM

Moscow

Ivan

Prishchepenko

26.05.1982

Krasniy Yar

Krasnoyarsk

Evgeny

Pronenko

06.06.1984

Enisey-STM

Krasnoyarsk

Mikhail

Sidorov

19.11.1986

Slava-ShVSM

Moscow

Andrey

Temnov

01.01.1983

Enisey-STM

Krasnoyarsk

Alexey

Travkin

02.08.1977

VVA-Podmoskovye

Moscow Region

Valery

Tsnobiladze

03.11.1980

Novokuznetsk

Novokuznetsk

Grigory

Tsnobiladze

02.01.1983

Novokuznetsk

Novokuznetsk

Alexey

Volkov

14.06.1986

VVA-Podmoskovye

Moscow Region

Alexander

Voytov

07.12.1981

VVA-Podmoskovye

Moscow Region