

# GERMANY - FINLAND

## MATCH PREVIEW

### Örjans vall, Halmstad

#### Thursday 18 June 2009 - 18.15CET (18.15 local time)

#### Group B - Matchday 3



If confidence was any guide to football results then the journalists present at the press conferences ahead of this meeting may have been tempted to skip their previews and begin work on an ode to German brilliance. Yet as Finland demonstrated in their ultimately disappointing Group B opener against England, the favourites should take nothing for granted.

#### Winning mentality

The look on Germany coach Horst Hrubesch's face said it all – it was as if the question had been plucked from the murkiest depths of obscurity. "A draw?" he said. "I've not even considered a draw. We're here to win." Fuelled by an impressive showing in the goalless draw with Spain in their UEFA European Under-21 Championship opener, belief is as ever the watchword in the Germany ranks. "You never know how it's going to be before the first match," continued Hrubesch. "We started with confidence against Spain, created chances and the players really found themselves – I'm convinced we can beat Finland and step towards the semi-finals. We have a great blend of team players and individuals able to make the difference at the top level. We're going for the title."

#### Sadik lift

Few would deny they have a real chance. Yet as the music shops of Halmstad advertise the latest album of one of the town's favourite sons – Per Håkan Gessle of Roxette fame – Finland are out to prove there is more than one Party Crasher to contend with. "We will be gunning for all three points and will go on to the pitch with real belief," said Markku Kanerva, that conviction perhaps fuelled by the recovery of star striker Berat Sadik following an ankle problem. "We will have to play at least as well as we did against England, while also cutting out the mistakes that cost us so dear in the end," the 45-year-old continued. "Germany know how to use the ball – we have to make sure they don't get much of it. Germany like to play long balls over the defence – we will need to cut them out."

#### Almost there

Kanerva is toying with the idea of giving Germany's own back line a bit more to think about by drafting Teemu Pukki into the starting XI following the Sevilla FC forward's eye-catching cameo in the 2-1 defeat by England. He may have provided some clue as the 19-year-old was grouped with Sadik and the Hetemaj brothers – Finland's attacking fulcrum – in Wednesday training, all beaming following a concerted effort from the coaching staff "to get the smiles back on the players' faces" that involved crazy golf, tennis and a spa. "This morning," Kanerva added, "I'm happy to say they reappeared." There were no such problems for Hrubesch, and he is keen to keep it that way. "Finland have a lot of quality," said the 58-year-old, who is likely to bring in Marcel Schmelzer for injured left-back Sebastian Boenisch while a question mark hangs over Mesut Özil after he missed training with a back problem. "The main thing for me is to look at my team. We have one goal: to go through to the semi-finals, and will be almost there after the win tomorrow."



### Towering Sadik ready to rise again

No stranger to the Bundesliga, Finland striker Berat Sadik may laud the strength of rivals Germany but an impressive, if flawed, performance against England on their last visit to Örjans vall has brought a confidence which suggests the finals debutants cannot be discounted.

#### Inside track

The towering Sadik has something of an inside track on Finland's next Group B opponents following a season at DSC Arminia Bielefeld, the German side beating off stiff competition to capture the Macedonian-born youngster from FC Lahti. A return of no goals in 13 substitute appearances does not make the best reading, but his muscular showing in Monday's 2-1 loss to England intimated that an investment of €400,000 may yet prove shrewd business. "I play in one of the top leagues in Europe and have grown as a player since arriving there last summer, gaining experience of playing before big crowds in big stadiums," said the 22-year-old, swiftly turning attention back to the UEFA European Under-21 Championship. "I know the German players quite well after a season in the Bundesliga; they play at a high level and have real class throughout."

#### Ankle problem

Sadik picked up an ankle knock towards the end of the England defeat but, sporting a pair of luminous pink boots not indicative of a man hampered from diffidence, he came through eve-of-match training apparently unscathed. That will be some relief for Markku Kanerva and the forward – one of eleven Finnish players here in Sweden who already have senior international experience – sounded eerily like his coach as he summed up the challenge awaiting Finland on Thursday: "We can take a lot of heart from the England match and if we can cut out the mistakes that proved so costly, then we have a really good chance."

#### 'Home game'

Those mistakes were largely attributed to a defensive line feeling their way on to an unknown stage, but Tuomo Turunen believes it was merely an aberration for a side that conceded only nine goals in ten qualifying games. "I don't think we played well defensively as a team," said the centre-back. "We were guilty of making a few mistakes that ultimately let England in. We've played together for a few years, though, and know each other's games very well so we will be OK against Germany. And with Mesut Özil's speed and skill we have to be very careful." Should the Werder Bremen playmaker or one of his team-mates be lurking then Turunen is likely to get some warning from what is expected to be another big Finnish crowd. "Like a home game," said the 21-year-old. It is time, Finland feel, to capitalise on this home advantage.

### Beck lays Germany's winning foundations

With an impressive performance against "the best team in the tournament" under their belts, Germany right-back Andreas Beck says his team-mates are brimming with confidence as they gear up to take on Group B underdogs Finland.

#### 'Tournament team'

A mainstay of the Germany Under-21 ranks since his debut in March 2007, Beck is perhaps better placed than anyone to assess Horst Hrubesch's charges' current standing. And if the disappointment of failing to qualify two years ago for the Netherlands tournament marked the nadir, the TSG 1899 Hoffenheim defender is targeting an apogee in Malmö on 29 June. "I'm convinced about the quality of our team and we now have five matches to go, all like the eventual final," he told uefa.com. "We have a good team, good players and everyone is fit and healthy – we're very confident. Every tournament Germany manage to put together a tournament team, that's a real strength."

#### Success

Coach Hrubesch did just that last summer in the Czech Republic as he guided the nation to UEFA European Under-19 Championship success, a title that provides "a great background for us" according to Beck. He added: "Our first match was against what I think was the best team in the tournament, Spain, and it was a good match for us and so that's great for our morale. We didn't concede against what was a strong side and that's a positive. We want to act, not react though, both in defence and attack, and dictate the play."

#### 'We must be careful'

The experience of 22 caps at this level – not to mention another three for the senior national side – tell him it may not be so easy, however. "We saw the first half [of Finland against England]," said the Siberian-born 22-year-old. "Finland played well. They have some good players with real ability. They created some opportunities and can play fast, on the counterattack, or use long balls. We must be very careful."