2009 UEFA EUROPEAN WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

MATCH PREVIEW

Sweden **Norway**

Helsinki Football Stadium, Helsinki

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Matchday 4 - Quarter-finals

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Committed to the future of European football

Dennerby tipping Sweden to step it up

Having guided his squad into the quarter-finals of UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™ as Group C winners, Sweden coach Thomas Dennerby expects some of his experienced crop of players to really come into their own, starting against Norway in Helsinki on Friday.

Knockout stage
Two wins and a draw from three matches realised Dennerby's first objective of progressing from a section which featured Italy, England and Russia. With that accomplished, the 50-year-old is looking to the senior figures in his party to come to the fore now that the pressure of knockout football is upon them, and he has witnessed enough in training to know his charges will not leave him wanting.

Observation
"When we were in the group stage, we had plans to go through and for the most experienced players like Victoria [Sandell Svensson] and Lotta [Schelin], it is really starting now," said Dennerby, who took over after Norway defeated Sweden in the semi-final of UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2005™. "I got the feeling that when I took the training session today there was a good feeling among the players."

'New team'
While Sweden have won three of the last four friendlies between the countries, Norway hold the whip hand when the stakes have been at their highest, winning 3-2 in the 2005 semi-final and triumphing in the last eight of the 1999 FIFA Women's World Cup. Six players who were in Sweden's squad four years ago are present in Finland, yet the coach is averse to viewing this as a chance to exact revenge. "We are not looking as far back as the game four years ago," he said. "Maybe five or six players played in that game but it's a new Swedish team now and I don't think my players will think about it much."

Best needed
Norway progressed as one of the two best third-placed teams and following a year in which they have won only three of their matches, coach Bjarne Berntsen acknowledges his side will have to "play the best we have in the tournament if we are to have a chance of reaching the semi-final". Nevertheless, Berntsen – who will step down after the finals – is taking solace from the last meeting of the teams when, on 19 August, Norway inflicted Sweden's first loss of 2009.

Swedish fillip
"We needed that result much more than Sweden did and maybe that was reflected in how the game went – that we were at 100 per cent and they were at 90 to 95," said Berntsen of the 1-0 win. "They have had some good results this year and perhaps it was a wake-up call for them. They started very well in the first game [against Russia] but it was good for us because it showed we can compete with the best teams and it showed Sweden they have to work very hard to get results."

Sandell Svensson's final wish

As Sweden prepare to meet Norway in the quarter-finals of UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™, captain Victoria Sandell Svensson has her sights set on crowning her long and illustrious international career with a winners' medal.

Big 'miss'
Before the finals began, Sweden's most-capped player informed coach Thomas Dennerby of her desire to cease playing for the national team after the tournament. The Djurgårdens IF DFF forward certainly made her mark on the group stage, striking two goals in three group matches to take an early share of the lead in the race for the adidas Golden Boot award, and admits it will be a wrench to sever her ties with a team she first appeared for almost 13 years ago. "Of course I'll miss being part of this team," she told uefa.com. "It will take some adjusting to."

Final agony
Since making her international bow against on 9 October 1996 against Italy, Sandell Svensson has become one of Sweden's most revered players, increasing her tally of caps to 165 when she took to the field for the 1-1 Group C draw with England on Monday in which she equalised. Impressive as that maybe, the 32-year-old has, however, experienced her fair share of disappointment on the international stage, losing narrowly to Germany in both the finals of the 2001 UEFA European Women's Championship and the FIFA Women's World Cup two years later.

Celebrity status
"The best memory of my career is still the World Cup final in the USA and the worst memory is conceding a goal in extra time of that match," Sandell Svensson, a scorer of three goals in that tournament along with strike partner Hanna Ljungberg, said of the 2-1 defeat. Sweden's run to the final certainly captured the imagination of the public back home, with 3.8 million people – or 42 per cent of the population – tuning in for the country's first FIFA World Cup final since the men lost to Brazil in 1958. On returning to Sweden, Sandell Svensson, in particular, became a household name. "I was invited on to chat shows and featured in magazines and I decided to ride that wave for the sake of women's football," she recalled. "But by Christmas I felt so exhausted that I had to start saying no."

Quality throughout
Nevertheless, the game had found its niche in Swedish popular culture and when Dennerby's team kicked off their campaign in Finland against Russia on 25 August, it attracted the highest number of viewers for an opening game involving the women's team. Next up are Norway, the only country to defeat Sweden in 2009, but rather ominously for them and the rest of the remaining finalists, Sandell Svensson is predicting that the best is yet to come. "We feel secure," she added. "We haven't played our best football here yet and still we're unbeaten. I know we have another couple of gears to switch into and we have quality on the bench as well. That should work in our favour."

Herlovsen spurred on by Swedish memories

Norway striker Isabell Herlovsen cannot wait to line up against Sweden in the quarter-finals of UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™ on Friday and given her record against the Nordic nation she has every right to be excited.

Fond memories
Four years ago in England, seven days shy of her 17th birthday, Herlovsen scored the second goal in a 3-2 victory over Sweden which secured Norway a place in the final of the UEFA European Women's Championship. Last month she was at it again, this time striking the only goal of the game in Enkoping as Norway inflicted their neighbours' first loss of the year in what was both countries' final friendly before travelling to Finland.

Improvement sought
"Yes, they're a team I enjoy playing against," the Kolbotn IL player told uefa.com. "We played well in Enkoping and I hope we can do it again. Our attacking play has to be better but we have been very good defensively so far and I'm looking forward to playing against Sweden again."

Encouraging performance
The victory in Sweden on 19 August was a welcome fillip for Norway coach Bjarne Berntsen's squad who, until that point, had won just one of their previous six matches in 2009, the first of which was a 5-1 loss to Friday's opponents in a January friendly played in Spain. Sweden's form has been very different to say the least, but Herlovsen thinks there is little to separate the two teams. "We played very well last month, it was a very compact game," added Herlovsen, who lost her record as the youngest player to appear in a EURO final tournament when Ukraine's Oksana Yakovyshyn played against Netherlands in the opening game. "I don't think Sweden are that much better than we are but they do have some stars like Lotta Schelin and many others, so it will be a tough game."

Scoring feats
Herlovsen's effort against Sweden four years ago came a week after she had earned her country a 1-1 draw against France and, in doing so, became the youngest goalscorer in a EURO final tournament aged 16 years 351 days. Continuing her trend of rising to the big occasion, Herlovsen also struck the winner against host nation China in the last eight of the 2007 FIFA Women’s World Cup yet, although she welcomes them, personal plaudits are not so important to the German-born forward.

'Confident'
"It doesn't matter who scores, the important thing is to win and I hope we can do that tomorrow," she said. "We're in the quarter-finals and we are very happy with that but we have also been in the semi-finals [four years ago] so we hope to beat Sweden and I’m confident we can do that."