



2009 UEFA EUROPEAN WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

MATCH PREVIEW



Germany



Norway

Helsinki Football Stadium, Helsinki

Monday 7 September 2009 - 18.00CET (19.00 local time)

Matchday 5 - Semi-finals

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Committed to the future of European football

Berntsen grateful for second chance

Norway coach Bjarne Berntsen admits to being surprised that his team find themselves on the cusp of the UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™ final having opened their campaign by losing 4-0 to the country they meet in the last four, Germany.

Late strikes

Berntsen, who led Norway to the 2005 final against Germany in his first year in charge but will step aside for Eli Landsem after the tournament, watched his side concede on three occasions at the death on Matchday 1, having so nearly equalised in the 89th minute. A fortnight on, his charges have a chance to right the wrongs of that day in Tampere when they tackle the holders at the Helsinki Football Stadium.

'Looking forward'

"Maybe it's a bit surprising that after our opening game we are still here but we're very much looking forward to the game and for sure we hope to be better opponents for Germany than we were in the first match," said Berntsen, whose squad has since watched a re-run of their opening encounter. "Hopefully we have learned a lot. Even though it was only 1-0 until the 90th minute, in parts of the game we were totally outplayed and it was only through good defending and our very good goalkeeper [Ingrid Hjelmseth] that it was close until the end."

Keeping quiet

Teenage striker Cecilie Pedersen, a late substitute that day, added to her winner against Iceland in the group stage with Norway's third goal in the 3-1 quarter-final defeat of Sweden, three minutes after coming on. Berntsen, however, would not be drawn on whether the 18-year-old will start, merely saying "you will see tomorrow". His opposite number, Silvia Neid, was just as noncommittal when asked who will replace injured centre-back Ariane Hingst, out of the finals with a knee injury sustained against Italy in the quarter-finals. "We've already reached a decision but I want to tell the players first," she said. "There might be some other players coming in but I'm not going to reveal anything."

Versatility

Hingst's injury will prompt Neid to reshuffle a backline which has remained largely unchanged so far, providing the coach with her first real quandary of the finals. Neid, however, is unconcerned, saying: "I selected my players because of their flexibility and every player knows what they have to do. They know each other very well."

'Disciplined'

Neid has demanded more aggression than was on display against Italy and has warned her players about the importance of the first goal. "If Norway score first it will be very difficult because they will drop back," she added. "Sweden tried everything to score in the second half but only managed one goal against a disciplined defence."

Hingst injury leaves Krahn unworried

Germany centre-back Annike Krahn has quelled suggestions that she will feel the pressure of not playing alongside her experienced defensive partner Ariane Hingst when she lines up against Norway in the semi-finals of UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™.

Setback

Hingst, capped 165 times and part of their last three European triumphs, will miss the rest of the tournament with a left knee injury sustained in the quarter-final victory against Italy on Friday and will undergo surgery once she arrives back in Germany after the competition. Krahn was in relaxed mood ahead of the match at the Helsinki Football Stadium, though, spending the morning playing cards with her team-mates before showing few signs of nerves when she spoke to the massed media.

Not nervous

"The tension will only grow the closer the game gets," said the FCR 2001 Duisburg player. The loss of Hingst, who partnered Krahn in the 2007 FIFA Women's World Cup victory in China and to 2008 Olympic bronze, means more responsibility on the 24-year-old's shoulders and a different-looking German backline.

Angerer praise

"I am not worried, my task hasn't changed, but of course it makes a difference if you lose such an experienced player," she explained. There is another reason why Krahn thinks that the loss of Hingst will not play into Norway's hands. "Nadine Angerer is a world-class goalkeeper and it's good to know that if you make a mistake there is somebody behind you keeping focused until the very last minute," added Krahn, alluding to Angerer's late save against Italy in the quarter-finals when Germany were almost taken to extra time.

'Different team'

When Silvia Neid's side defeated Norway 4-0 in their Group B opener two weeks ago in Tampere, the Germany defence were largely untroubled. However, following their opponents' unexpected 3-1 quarter-final defeat of Sweden, Krahn is preparing for a confidence-fuelled Norway. "We as defenders should also expect a different Norwegian team," she said, before suggesting Bjarne Berntsen's charges will not alter their approach too dramatically. "They won't change their playing style. They will try to be successful again with long balls but they will be better this time in controlling the ball."

Peter confident

Full-back Babett Peter is also confident that Germany can cope without Hingst, saying: "It's going to be different without her but we've spent a long time preparing for the tournament and all the players know how to play with each other. That's why I don't think we are going to have any problems."

Hjelmseth not afraid of Germany

A relaxed Ingrid Hjelmseth says Norway will "just go out there and have fun" against champions Germany in the last four of UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™, such is the expectancy that the holders will reach a fifth consecutive final.

Frightening statistics

Germany have been predictably ruthless in Finland, breezing through the group stage – which began with a 4-0 defeat of Norway – before stretching their unbeaten record in the tournament to 45 matches with a 2-1 quarter-final win against Italy on Friday. The last 33 of those have been victories and few would bet against the six-time champions registering another one when they meet Bjarne Berntsen's team at the Helsinki Football Stadium on Monday.

'No pressure'

Norway, however, have created a few headlines of their own, winning 3-1 against a Sweden side which started the quarter-final as firm favourites, and goalkeeper Hjelmseth is quite at home with the idea of being the underdog. "Like against Sweden, we'll be under no pressure," she told uefa.com. "Everyone was expecting Sweden to win and the same will happen on Monday. Everyone is expecting Germany to win the game and reach the final so we can just go out there and have fun. If we win it will be just fantastic for us."

'Very grateful'

These finals have represented a breakthrough for the Stabæk FK No1, who did not make an appearance during qualifying and was an unused substitute throughout Norway's run to the final four years ago. Having been Bente Nordby's long-time understudy until the stalwart's 2008 international retirement, Hjelmseth was then Erika Skarbø's deputy until the latter underwent wrist surgery in January, allowing the engineer her chance to impress. "It has been really fun, of course it's better to play than to sit on the bench so I'm very grateful and it's nice that we're going so well," added the 29-year-old. "I think I've had four good games. Maybe the one against Germany was the best and hopefully I can do it again."

'Unlucky' situation

Her form so far has certainly impressed her coach. "She's had a tremendous tournament and convinced everybody that she's a great goalkeeper, as we knew before," said Berntsen. "She's been very unlucky the last few seasons because first Bente Nordby and then Erika Skarbø, two great goalkeepers, have been in front of her. Ingrid has shown there is a lot of quality goalkeepers in Norway."