



# 2009 UEFA EUROPEAN WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

## MATCH PREVIEW



England



Germany

Olympic Stadium, Helsinki

Thursday 10 September 2009 - 18.00CET (19.00 local time)

Matchday 6 - Final

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## Germany and England ready for 'classic'

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For four UEFA European Women's Championship finals in a row the story has been the same: a Germany victory. England are hoping to end that run when they aim for their first major title in Thursday's decider at the Olympic Stadium in Helsinki.

### Contrasting runs

Just as in 2001 and 2005, Germany have won every game of their campaign so far, despite scares in their knockout matches against Italy and Norway. England began the finals with a 2-1 loss to Italy and were heading for the exit at two down to Russia before recovering to win 3-2. A 1-1 draw with Sweden then took them through to the latter stages where they overcame Finland and the Netherlands in tense fixtures. It is England's first final since the inaugural edition of 1984, which they lost to Sweden, in contrast to six-time European champions and dual FIFA Women's World Cup winners Germany.

### England flair

In fact, England have not beaten Germany in 18 attempts but there were two 0-0 draws in China in 2007, including in the World Cup, the only game in that competition or this one that they have not won in a decade. Germany coach Silvia Neid hailed the attacking force England have become under Hope Powell, saying: "[Kelly] Smith and [Karen] Carney are outstanding and she has tall defenders opponents have to respect. [Eniola] Aluko is doing a lot of things right, [Katie] Chapman and [Fara] Williams in front of the defence have a very good passing game and a good eye. It's going to be a classic."

### Strong squad

Neid is without experienced centre-back Ariane Hingst due to a knee injury and in the semi-final opted for Saskia Bartusiak over Sonja Fuss as the replacement due to her aerial ability and understanding with Annike Krahn. The coach has used her squad to the full in Finland, most notably when substitutes Simone Laudehr, Céilia Okoyino da Mbabi and Fatmire Bajramaj all scored in the semi-final. "It's difficult for our opponents to cope with the different types of players in our team," Neid said

### Selection question

Powell could restore captain Faye White to central defence, wearing a mask over the cheekbone fractured against Finland, or keep faith in Lindsay Johnson, and may also start with Karen Carney on the wing having deployed 20-year-old Jess Clarke versus the Netherlands. Looking back at the goalless result two years ago, Powell said: "What we draw from that is a level of confidence. We have a level of confidence from the fact we are in this final. We understand we are the underdogs, but stats mean nothing until after the final whistle."

### Vulnerability

In the knockout games both Italy and Norway have given Germany scares and Powell suggests they may be more vulnerable than in the last World Cup. "They've conceded goals in this tournament, which they didn't do in 2007," Powell said. "They have frailties, as do every other team. We recognise they have strengths, and we also recognise they have weaknesses and those are the areas we will try to exploit."

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## Aluko outlines attacking intent

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Eniola Aluko, England's three-goal leading scorer at UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™, has vowed to attack Germany from the outset when she faces the holders in Thursday's decider at Helsinki's Olympic Stadium, telling uefa.com: "There's no point being cautious in a final."

### Entertainers

Caution is certainly not a word which can be associated with England's campaign in Finland thus far, Hope Powell's squad having contributed to two of the most memorable matches of the finals. First in the dramatic comeback to beat Russia 3-2, Aluko equalised, and little under a week later hosts Finland were dispatched by the same scoreline in the last eight thanks, largely, to her coolly-taken double.

### 'Attacking style'

Given the prize at stake, many a side could be forgiven for opting for a more pragmatic outlook yet Aluko, who plays professionally for Saint Louis Athletica in the United States, is promising no let-up in her team's approach. "We are going in to win the game, there's no point being cautious in a final," she said. "You have to have to go and win the game so it will be the same attacking style you've seen in our other games."

### Rare occurrence

The 22-year-old was an unused substitute when the teams drew in the 2007 FIFA Women's World Cup, the only time since 1999 that Germany have failed to win a match in that tournament or this one. "We got a lot of confidence from the 0-0 draw in the World Cup," added Aluko. "We are the only side in ten years to take points off Germany in a final tournament and you can only take confidence from that. I'm sure Germany will be wary of us."

### 'Great' feeling

Aluko will come face to face with her main rival for the adidas Golden Boot award, the four-goal top scorer in the final tournament, Inka Grings. "It's great to play against these players, to say I'm playing against Birgit Prinz and Inka Grings, players I've watched on TV," she added. "It's great at 22 to be part of this."

### Resounding effect

But then, Aluko and her squad-mates are now celebrated too. "When you look at the interviews on uefa.com, Italy said we are the best team here," Aluko said. "Germany have said they appreciate our fast-paced attacking style. People appreciate the development of this national team. It's nice to hear and we can only show that by winning tomorrow. When we win it will resound around the world of women's football and England will be recognised as one of the top teams in the world."

## Final step in Kulig's 'incredible' year

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When Kim Kulig went into the dressing room at half-time in their UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™ semi-final against Norway she had an unwelcome sense of déjà vu.

### No repeat

Germany were 1-0 down and the midfielder feared a repeat of the events in Tours a year ago when she was in the team, also titleholders, beaten on penalties by Norway in the last four of the UEFA European Women's Under-19 Championship. However, her concern was soon allayed as Germany quickly turned it around at the Helsinki Football Stadium to win 3-1 and set up a final in the nearby Olympic Stadium against England on Thursday.

### Relief

"I have to admit that I had to think about it and I didn't want to lose again to Norway," Kulig told uefa.com. "I am really satisfied that we were able to turn things around. We performed quite well in the second half and we deserved to win."

### Gifted England

There was no time to celebrate, though, as 24 hours earlier England had already booked their final place and Kulig knows she will have her hands full. "England are very attractive opponents," the 19-year-old Hamburger SV player said. "They have performed well throughout the tournament and I expect a really good final. They have a robust team, are strong in the tackle, but they've also got some technically gifted players, that's what makes them unpredictable. They also have some good substitutes, so I expect a difficult game. Kelly Smith is obviously the star, there's also the captain [Faye White] and [Karen] Carney is technically gifted and a pacy player, she runs a lot and is everywhere on the pitch."

### Quick rise

Kulig earned her first senior cap in February in a friendly against China and has quickly become a regular in the team, having been only four when current captain Birgit Prinz – then 17 – scored in the 1995 final. "The last six months has been incredible," Kulig said. "Sometimes I think about how quick everything happened, but right now I am just pleased to be part of the team."

### Ritual

Prior to the final she will follow a strict ritual as she aims to be part of Germany's fifth European final win in succession and seventh overall. "I always listen to the same R&B and house music songs before the game to push myself, I will again wear my red hair band and I always walk on to the pitch with my right foot first."