



# 2009 UEFA EUROPEAN WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

## MATCH PREVIEW



Finland



Denmark

Olympic Stadium, Helsinki

Sunday 23 August 2009 - 18.30CET (19.30 local time)

Group A - Matchday 1

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## Finland's big day arrives at last

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It has been nearly three years since Finland's last competitive game and as the hosts prepare to kick off UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™ Group A against Denmark at Helsinki's Olympic Stadium, coach Mikael Kåld declared: "I just can't wait for the referee to start the game."

### **Close encounters**

Denmark beat Finland 1-0 on 27 September 2006 to qualify for the following year's FIFA Women's World Cup, some revenge for the 2-1 loss the year before that took Kåld's side through to the UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2005™ semi-finals. Excused qualifying, they have been preparing this year with a series of friendlies but now, in front of a expected Finnish record crowd for a women's international of more than 20,000, this is for real.

### **'Tough game'**

"I think it will be a very tough game," said Kåld, who was forced to replace defender Heini Tiilikainen with the uncapped 18-year-old Maiju Hirvonen on Saturday due to a foot injury. "We know Denmark very well and how they will play. They have some very good players and are a strong, physical team so we have to be very tight. But the home crowd will give us a lot of energy, which is what the players need." He added: "We have good pace up front and Denmark's defence maybe isn't the fastest in the world."

### **Pressure**

He knows the pressure is much higher than four years ago. "Of course when we are at home, with all the spectators, the pressure is higher than 2005. Then the preparations were about five or six months, we didn't have much time to think about it. Now we have been thinking about this for two and a half years and we are putting pressure on ourselves because we know we can do it."

### **Denmark boost**

Meanwhile, Denmark coach Kenneth Heiner-Møller had a big boost on Saturday – his side is at last injury free, after problems with the likes of Lene Jensen, Johanna Rasmussen, Julie Rydahl Bukh and Cathrine Paaske Sørensen. "I'm happy to say that for the first time in two months we have 22 people training today," Heiner-Møller said. "That is quite exciting, one pitch, 22 players, I don't know how it will work!"

### **Pedersen thrill**

His captain Katrine Pedersen is playing in her seventh major finals and the defender still feels the thrill, even after winning 151 caps. "We know it will be a hard game, we have found that out the hard way," Pedersen said as she prepared to face opponents who have been such rivals to Denmark of late, despite her nation's historic dominance. "Even though it's my seventh tournament I'm just as excited as when I was younger. We have the statistics on our side but in the last few years we've had trouble with Finland."

## Finland fans will not faze Andersen

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At least 20,000 fans are expected in Helsinki's Olympic Stadium on Sunday when Denmark open their UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™ campaign against Finland, and though all but a few hundred will be supporting the hosts, Danish midfielder Camilla Sand Andersen feels her side are well-equipped to cope with the atmosphere.

### **China experience**

Two years ago, Denmark opened another final tournament against the home nation, facing China in front of more than 50,000 fans at the FIFA Women's World Cup. Andersen sat out that game but she appeared in the other two group matches against New Zealand and Brazil in front of similarly sized crowds, and the 23-year-old believes that what she and her colleagues learned in China will come in more than a little handy on Finnish soil.

### **Atmosphere**

"It was a great experience," the Fortuna Hjørring player recalled. "It was an atmosphere where you can't hear what you are saying to each other and I really liked that. It was really exciting. It was an experience and we can use it here too."

### **Steady preparations**

Denmark fell in the group stage in China, as indeed they did at UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2005™ following defeat by Finland, but their results since then have been impressive, leading Andersen to believe a series of intensive training camps have helped them improve. "We have been preparing and playing together for two years since the World Cup," she said. "I hope we are better prepared now and play better together. We haven't been in a rush at the last minute, like I felt we were a little at the World Cup. This time we have prepared over a period of two years and been together a lot, so it should be good."

### **Tactics**

As for the Group A encounter itself, Andersen is clear what Denmark have to do. "I think it's going to be about who can get their own play going," she said. "If we can play our own game, I think we'll win." As for the crowd, she added: "I think it is a motivating factor, that the atmosphere is so good, even though they will be against us. I'm looking forward to it."

## **Korpela's high hopes for Helsinki hosts**

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Tinja-Riikka Korpela is tipped to win the race to keep goal for hosts Finland at UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™ and cannot wait for Sunday's opening game with Denmark.

### **Record crowd**

Korpela started Finland's last two pre-finals friendlies against Sweden and Northern Ireland ahead of Minna Meriluoto and the 23-year-old is waiting for the nod for the first Group A fixture at the Olympic Stadium in Helsinki. She certainly cannot wait for the occasion, when at least 20,000 fans are expected, more than trebling the previous record for a home Finland women's international. "It is fantastic that so many people are coming to watch the game," Korpela told uefa.com. "The majority will support us and we have to take the benefit of that – and I trust we will."

### **Danish threat**

Denmark are tipped as Finland's strongest opponents in a group which also contains the Netherlands and Ukraine, and the FC Honka Espoo goalkeeper is well aware of what to expect. "Maiken With Pape is an excellent striker and we have to be on our toes with her," Korpela said. "We have watched some of Denmark's matches and will go through some aspects of their game. However, we are concentrating more on our own game."

### **Group rivals**

That said, she is not underestimating their two other rivals, both of whom are making their debut at this stage – just as Finland did in 2005 in England when they reached the semi-finals. "Nothing is won or lost in the Denmark game," Korpela said. "We will have two more tough tests in the shape of the Netherlands and Ukraine ahead. Now we are of course concentrating on the first game, but there will be more to come."

### **Ambition**

Four years ago, when the seniors were impressing in England, Korpela helped Finland's junior side to the 2005 UEFA European Women's Under-19 Championship semi-finals – having also been in the squad with Meriluoto the previous year on home soil – and is targeting a long run in this competition as well. "The idea is to be here for three weeks," she said, with an eye to the 10 September final. "It will be a long time, but we will not be thinking about football all the time. Between the games there will be something else organised. Besides, it is great to be at home in Finland. Everything is familiar and there will be no surprises."