



2009 UEFA EUROPEAN WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

MATCH PREVIEW



Ukraine



Denmark

Helsinki Football Stadium, Helsinki

Wednesday 26 August 2009 - 16.30CET (17.30 local time)

Group A - Matchday 2

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Optimism abounds as rivals rematched

Ukraine and Denmark are playing for their UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™ lives at the Helsinki Football Stadium on Wednesday, but both coaches believe their sides can bounce back from opening defeats.

Defeats

Two early goals condemned Ukraine to a 2-0 loss against fellow finals debutants the Netherlands while Denmark, despite a promising start, fell 1-0 to hosts Finland. If either side lose again on Wednesday, they must hope the team that beat them win the other Group A fixture later on at the Olympic Stadium, or their hopes will be dashed.

Positivity

Still, Ukraine coach Anatoliy Kutsev declared: "There is no panic. Obviously, we lost and there will be changes, but nothing huge." His Denmark counterpart, Kenneth Heiner-Møller, was equally upbeat, adding: "I am quite positive we will be a better team [than in our opening match]. Better as a unit, the substitutes, as well, and player by player. I think we have recovered well. We have seen some good things among the players and talked about the game, mostly the things we did well and can develop to do them better. "

Rustiness

Kutsev admitted there were some early nerves. "A debut is a debut, at least we have done it now," he said. "Our preparations were good, but we maybe didn't play enough friendlies or, maybe, we had nerves and lacked match fitness. We didn't really feel the rhythm of the game, it was a little bit unexpected for us. All these reasons led to the two big mistakes we made, the unnecessary goals we conceded. But we have put them behind us."

Danish skill

These nations were in the same qualifying group last year, meeting twice with both games finishing 1-0 home wins, giving Denmark first place, to be followed into the finals by play-off winners Ukraine. Kutsev said: "Denmark play football close to our own game. I like the improvisation they use, I like their skills."

Ukrainian talent

Heiner-Møller was similarly generous, saying: "Ukraine are a great team with gifted players in different positions and a lot of players who played in the UEFA Women's Cup final [for Russian side Zvezda-2005]. So we have our hands full, I'm sure."

Rethink

He does, however, believe Denmark will present their upcoming opponents a different sort of challenge compared to the games last year. "I hope we will surprise Ukraine," he said. "We have done some thinking, especially about the game we played over there. We had some injuries in Ukraine and, although they are a good team, they have weaknesses and I think we've found one or two we can use."

Opening loss drives Rasmussen

Denmark winger Johanna Rasmussen is not downbeat as they go into their second UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™ Group A game against Ukraine off the back of a 1-0 opening loss to hosts Finland. In fact, she thinks the defeat could prove a blessing in disguise.

Reverse

The 26-year-old was rampant on the left prong of Denmark's three-strong attack in the first half against Finland on Sunday, but they could not force a goal and Rasmussen's Umeå IK club-mate Maija Saari's free-kick won the game for the home nation on 49 minutes. Now Denmark take on a Ukraine team themselves looking to get off the mark after defeat by the Netherlands, and Rasmussen is optimistic.

'Not over'

"It is not over yet, not at all," she told uefa.com. "Three teams can go through from the group and, maybe, it will turn out to be a good thing that we lost. Everybody has to get together and work hard for the points. Hopefully, it will be a good thing that we lost and we'll be a lot more prepared for the next couple of games."

Familiar opponents

Ukraine are familiar opponents to Denmark, having been in their qualifying group, and Rasmussen played in both matches last year, each finishing as 1-0 home wins. "They are really hard to play against," she said. "They are really good on the counterattack, I was really impressed by how good they are. So we'll see, hopefully we can play the way we want to and take our chances, then we'll be fine."

Ideal role

Rasmussen, at least, showed on Sunday that she thrives in Denmark's 4-3-3 formation and the strategy is ideal for her. "I love playing out there," she said. "It's where I can give the best of myself, so I enjoy that. If it was changed I could deal with it, but I enjoy being able to outrun people, that's what I'm best at."

Club-mate's joy

However, they will hope to produce the goals that were lacking against Finland, when it was Rasmussen's Swedish league colleague Saari on target. "I said congratulations after the game, although I was a bit disappointed. I'll be happy for her in maybe seven or eight weeks!" Rasmussen said. "Of course I'm happy that if someone had to score, she did. She's really good at free-kicks, it wasn't out of nowhere."

Chorna upbeat for Ukraine

It took Ukraine midfielder Tetyana Chorna eleven years from her 1998 international debut to play at a major final tournament and although that first match was lost 2-0 to the Netherlands, she is confident they can bounce back against Denmark on Wednesday.

Second chance

Ukraine found themselves two down after nine minutes against their fellow UEFA European Women's Championship newcomers. Although Chorna's team got stronger as the game went on, that was how the Group A fixture finished.

'Good spirits'

Now they are taking on another side who suffered a Matchday 1 reverse, with Denmark losing 1-0 to hosts Finland, and Chorna is upbeat about the task. "We are in good spirits," the WFC Rossiyanka player said. "We are looking optimistically at the match. Denmark are a very strong team, but still we are in a good frame of mind."

'Back on track'

Coach Anatoliy Kutsev suggested only having played one international in 2009 had left Ukraine off the pace early on against the Netherlands, and Chorna agreed: "Yes, it was difficult because we didn't have enough games. But, as the coach said, we've played the first game now. I think we are back on track and the next match will be completely different to the opener."

Qualifying foes

Although, in Chorna's words, "everything is new" for Ukraine in their first final tournament, playing Denmark is far from a novelty as they were in the same qualifying group. Ukraine won 1-0 at home in June 2008, before the same scoreline in Denmark on 1 October edged Chorna's team into the play-offs, where they defeated Slovenia.

Familiarity

So, will the familiarity of their opponents play its part in the upcoming encounter? "There is no effect, but they are a team we know quite well," the 28-year-old said. "In those terms, it will be a little bit easier for us to play against them." She added: "Denmark are a good team, with good players. I'm sure it will be an interesting game. But, as to how exactly we will beat them, we will have to wait and see."