



# 2009 UEFA EUROPEAN WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

## MATCH PREVIEW



England



Russia

Helsinki Football Stadium, Helsinki

Friday 28 August 2009 - 19.00CET (20.00 local time)

Group C - Matchday 2

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## England and Russia chase lifeline

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England and Russia will both be looking to get their wayward campaigns back on track at UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™ when the two sides meet for a high-stakes Group C game at Helsinki Football Stadium.

### **Lost ground**

On Tuesday, ten-player England lost 2-1 to Italy and Russia went down 3-0 against Sweden. That means if Sweden and Italy draw the earlier game on Friday, the loser between England and Russia would be out. Furthermore, if Sweden win England cannot afford to lose, ditto Russia should Italy prevail.

### **Seeking positives**

Manager Hope Powell is confident that her England players know what is expected from them. "We've got to look forward and learn from the first game – there were a lot of positives to take out of that," Powell said. "But now we have to really bounce back if we want to stay in the competition. They know that, it doesn't need me to tell them that."

### **No comfort**

Powell also made it clear that England will find it tough to repeat their 6-0 friendly defeat of Russia in a 2007 friendly. "They're a very, very different team, we know that," she said. "They've grown in confidence, certainly in stature, and I think 3-0 flattered Sweden if I'm honest ... We have to be prepared for a physical, tough contest." England will be without defender Casey Stoney after her 28th minute red card against Italy, while defender Anita Asante is a doubt after picking up knee and ankle injuries in that defeat, though Kelly Smith could start.

### **False start**

Russia, yet to win a match in seven finals fixtures, know they need to make a better start after conceding twice inside the first 15 minutes against Sweden. Coach Igor Shalimov, who has been working on both tactics and morale, is convinced that Russia will now be far tougher opponents for England than for Sweden.

### **More confident**

"The players are in good shape mentally," he said. "We've played one of the favourites for the tournament and the nervousness was clearly seen. Only three of our players [Tatiana Skotnikova, Elena Fomina and Natalia Barbashina] have played at a European finals before and that was eight years ago. The others haven't had the experience at this level, but we cannot say that Sweden outplayed us. Our team will now play more confidently and more calmly. I've tried to get it through to them – and I'm sure they realise it – that they can play, that they should be more confident and that they can play better." A key decision, which Shalimov has yet to make, is whether to give another chance to goalkeeper Elena Kochneva, who made her competitive debut against Sweden, or usual first-choice Elvira Todua.

## Williams lays in wait for Russia

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Midfielder Fara Williams says England are determined to bury the memory of their opening defeat by Italy and do what it takes against Russia and Sweden to reach the quarter-finals at UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™.

### Tough task

Reduced to ten players after only 28 minutes against Italy, England went on to be defeated 2-1 and leave themselves both a tough task to qualify from Group C and plenty at stake on Friday against Russia, who lost their opener 3-0 to Sweden. Hope Powell's side, who came into the tournament with high expectations, have spent the last few days in Finland not only coming to terms with the defeat and but also planning their escape route from the group.

### 'Great girls'

Looking back at Tuesday's game in Lahti, where she gave the already-depleted England the lead from the penalty spot only for things to go wrong in the second half, Williams said: "We were disappointed, of course. It was a game we wanted to win and it didn't happen for us. But we've regrouped and analysed the game, and we're ready. We're determined. We've got a great bunch of girls that want to win and have come here to get out the group. Scoring is good to do, but winning is more important. The goal I scored doesn't mean anything to me now, it was a result and we lost."

### Target unchanged

If anything, the 25-year-old Everton LFC midfielder saw a positive side to their early setback. "Losing the first game will probably give us that bit of grit that we needed," she said. "Our focus hasn't changed we still want to get out of the group, there's two more games and six points to play for."

### Smith switch

On a personal level, the arrival of injury-plagued Kelly Smith as a second-half substitute against the Azzurre was a particularly welcome one for Williams, who takes a more attacking position in her colleague's absence. "Kelly's been injured so I've had to take up a different role," Williams said. "It's probably not my favourite position, but we've got a squad that can take up different kinds of roles. Now we've got Kelly back and, hopefully, I can get back in my more favoured role."

## **Fomina sees Russian revival**

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Midfielder Elena Fomina does not expect Russia to repeat the mistakes which cost her side dearly against Sweden when Igor Shalimov's side face England in a crunch game on Matchday 2.

### **High tempo**

Russia opened their Group C campaign at UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™ with a 3-0 defeat by Thomas Dennerby's team, who effectively killed the game with two goals from Charlotte Rohlin and captain Victoria Sandell Svensson inside the first quarter of an hour. Russia reeled under the early pressure from a side tipped by Shalimov as a tournament favourite and it made for a torrid competitive debut for teenage goalkeeper Elena Kochneva. "Maybe the tempo was very high for us," said the 30-year-old, who also played at the finals in 2001. "Either way, it was a problem – we made a lot of mistakes and we got flustered in the first 15, 20 minutes." Looking ahead to what promises to be a tough contest at Helsinki Football Stadium, she added: "I hope that situation won't be repeated in our game against England."

### **Winning duels**

Individual errors aside, Fomina believes there are other lessons to be learned from the way Russia set out their stall against Sweden, who enjoyed most of the possession and rounded off the scoring with a superb late strike by Caroline Seger. "We didn't manage to organise things properly," said the ShVSM–Izmaylovo Moskva forward. "We had big gaps between the lines and maybe it was a bit of a mistake to play defensively, maybe we should have been more attacking. I don't think we lost many duels against Sweden."

### **Fighting spirit**

Despite the setback, the mood in the camp is upbeat as Russia prepare to face an England side on Thursday who lost 2-1 to Italy having been down to 10 players since the 28th minute. "The atmosphere in the team is good," Fomina said. "We talked about the mistakes, we discussed them and now we're ready and looking forward to the match. England have strong players, they're a very good team, but we are 100 per cent prepared for this game and we're hoping for the best. All our players have spirit for the fight ahead."