



# 2009 UEFA EUROPEAN WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

## MATCH PREVIEW



Norway



France

Helsinki Football Stadium, Helsinki

Sunday 30 August 2009 - 15.00CET (16.00 local time)

Group B - Matchday 3

### Contents

Draw enough for France and Norway .....	2
Soubeyrand urges France to dig deep .....	3
Déjà vu for Norway's Stensland .....	4



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## Draw enough for France and Norway

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France face Norway at Helsinki Football Stadium on Sunday with both sides needing only a draw in their final Group B game of UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™ to reach the quarter-finals.

### Quarter-finals beckon

Both sides have three points after Matchday 2, but France's superior goal difference mean only a defeat can prevent Bruno Bini's charges from finishing as group runners-up behind six-times champions Germany and meeting Netherlands on Thursday in Tampere. The first draw of the tournament would also send Norway through as one of the best two third-placed teams. The contest promises to be finely balanced, with both sides having lost by four-goal margins to Germany, although France at least managed to score in their 5-1 defeat. Les Bleues occupy second place in the group after coming from behind for a 3-1 victory over an Iceland side that Bjarne Berntsen's team could only beat 1-0.

### French challenge

France's position before their final game of the section has clearly come as no surprise to their coach. "We always knew that below Germany, we would be in a three-way championship with Iceland and Norway — and everything has gone pretty well as expected, though we've a few regrets about the number of goals we conceded against Germany," Bini said. France have been without midfielder Corine Franco and forward Candie Herbert since both sustained head injuries in the first-half against Iceland, though they are expected to be on the bench on Sunday. His orders to the side will be nothing if not straightforward. "We won't be making any calculations, we'll just be going out there to win," he said. "Norway are a quality side, they've been European, World and Olympic champions. But we'll be focused on our team and what we want to do."

### Tough start

Looking back, Berntsen understandably has a few regrets about his team's start to their campaign, with the UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2005™ runners-up conceding three morale-sapping goals from the 90th minute onwards against Germany. "After quite a tough start, in the last four minutes, the players were really well-prepared for the second game," he said. "We knew in advance it would be a tough, physical game against Iceland, while the other match in our group showed the quality of the German team against France. I think this will be a tight game. Our aim for sure is to go for three points."

### Individual skills

Achieving that will mean keeping a close watch on France's potential matchwinners, of whom there are several. Berntsen's captain Ingvild Stenslund has already pinpointed her Olympique Lyonnais club-mates Louisa Nécib and Élodie Thomis as major threats and the warning was not lost on the coach. "I think France played very well against Iceland after a poor start and showed their qualities," Berntsen added. "I think they will be a real danger because of the individual skill of their players."

## **Soubeyrand urges France to dig deep**

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Captain Sandrine Soubeyrand insists France will do "everything possible" to rebound from a 5-1 defeat by Germany and reach the quarter-finals by avoiding a loss to Norway in their Group B final match on Sunday.

### **Off course**

Les Bleues were heading in the right direction at UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™ after a Matchday 1 comeback victory over Iceland, only to have their chances of reaching the last eight jeopardized by losing to the holders. Already above Bjarne Berntsen's team on goal difference, the pressure is now on France to secure the draw they need to progress and Soubeyrand has urged her team-mates to dig deep and do just that.

### **Errors punished**

"The Germany result did not reflect our performance," the FCF Juvisy midfielder said. "They were just very efficient, they capitalised on every mistake we made but we can't be too upset because they did the same to Norway in the first match; they exploit every little mistake. However, we also know we could have scored another goal against them. OK, it wouldn't have affected the result much, but, psychologically, it would have helped."

### **Past meeting**

The sides met in similar circumstances at UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2005™, though the roles were reversed, with Norway requiring a point and France needing a victory to reach the knockout phase. Les Bleues took a first-half lead, but a 66th-minute equaliser by Isabell Herlovsen sent them crashing out of the tournament and for Soubeyrand, who played that day, it still serves as a stark warning.

### **'High hopes'**

"We know from past experience we have a difficult task against Norway," she said. "But we still have high hopes. The match starts 0-0 and we know we simply cannot lose. From the start, we knew this section would be difficult. Norway and Germany both played the final of EURO 2005 but we will find motivation within ourselves. We will do everything possible to ensure we get the result we need, put all our strength into it and try to show all our qualities."

## Déjà vu for Norway's Stensland

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Olympique Lyonnais midfielder Ingvild Stensland could be forgiven a sense of déjà vu when she lines up against France in Norway's final Group B game at UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™ on Sunday.

### **Familiar faces**

Almost half the France team who started their opening game against Iceland play their club football alongside the 28-year-old Norway captain, who helped Lyon reach the UEFA Women's Cup semi-finals last season. However, the smiles and handshakes before the match will be swiftly consigned to history when the whistle blows at the Helsinki Football Stadium, as Bjarne Berntsen's side chase a place in the quarter-finals.

### **French sparkle**

"I'm looking forward to playing against my team-mates from Lyon, but when the game starts I won't focus on them; I'll focus on Norway and our goals for the game," Stensland said. France were convincing winners in their 3-1 comeback victory against Iceland, though they paid a high price with first-half head injuries to midfielder Corine Franco and striker Candie Herbert, neither of whom have played since. There were even some bright moments from Bruno Bini's team during a punishing 5-1 defeat by Germany, who had earlier routed the Norwegians 4-0.

### **Tight game**

"I know it's going to be tough because France have very good individuals," Stensland predicted. "They have good offensive players in Louisa Nécib and Élodie Thomis. I know them from my club team, so I'll watch them." Though qualification for the last eight is clearly Norway's objective, Stensland is also looking for a performance her side can be proud of when she returns to club duty next month. "I will show them that we in Norway can play good football as well," said the silver medallist from UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2005™. "We've worked hard as a team, we've got three points and we have good self-confidence. We are well-prepared and looking forward to the game."

### **Women advance**

Sunday's match aside, Stensland has been impressed by the quality of the football played so far in Finland, a testament in her view to the development of the women's game in Europe in recent years. Like many, she sees Russia, whose teenagers in 2005 won the UEFA European Women's Under-19 Championship and whose seniors took a 2-0 lead against England on Friday before losing 3-2, as one example of that progress. "I think the quality is very good now," she said. "Before, there were maybe four or five good teams in Europe and now there are 12 very good teams. And there have been some unexpected results. Italy beat England, Russia were very good [against England], so it's exciting. And it's good for women's soccer."