



2009 UEFA EUROPEAN WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

MATCH PREVIEW



Sweden



England

Turku Stadium, Turku

Monday 31 August 2009 - 18.00CET (19.00 local time)

Group C - Matchday 3

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Committed to the future of European football

England promise to push Sweden

A draw and possibly even a one-goal defeat against Sweden in Turku would be enough for England to qualify for the quarter-finals of UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™ but manager Hope Powell says they are going for the win and she believes they can do it.

Surprise results

Sweden have defeated Russia 3-0 and Italy 2-0 to ensure progress and one more point would give them first place in Group C. England, beaten 2-1 by Italy before their thrilling 3-2 comeback win against Russia, could pip Sweden with another victory, but a point would make sure of progress, as at last one of the two best third-placed teams, and a one-goal loss would only end their campaign if Russia were to beat Italy by that margin with the Azzurre scoring three more than England in their game.

Powell promise

"We have enough about us to compete against any team," Powell said. "This tournament has proved that any team can beat any other and we should be no different. Sweden have not conceded a goal so they are obviously strong in defence and their forward line is experienced but we are really only focusing on ourselves. The last two games have been very tough but we are still here. We showed a lot of character and resolve with ten players against Italy when we had most of the game and then to come back against Russia says a lot about us."

Only victory

However, history is against England in Turku as in 19 meetings with Sweden they have lost 12 and one just once, the second leg of final of the inaugural UEFA tournament in 1984 in which Powell played, and even that ended in a penalty shoot-out defeat. Among those reverses was a 1-0 loss that ended hosts England's 2005 European campaign in their last group game but Powell insisted: "We know Sweden are among the favourites to win the trophy but we have progressed in recent years and hopefully we can bring our best play to the fore."

Long run

Powell is expected to restore Casey Stoney at left-back following her red card in the first game while Sweden defender Sara Larsson may be missing again with a hamstring strain. Winning the group will mean avoiding Germany in the quarter-finals but Sweden coach Thomas Dennerby said his team have another motivation. "We are just [including qualifiers] without losing," he said. "I'm expecting a tough match, a fast-paced match. I've been impressed by England, mostly their attacking play. Their defending has not been at the level we have seen before but we know it will be hard."

Schelin warns of England rebound

Lotta Schelin has warned her Sweden team-mates that England might just be about to deliver their best performance at UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™. If they do, Sweden's hopes of sparing themselves a quarter-final pairing with Germany, could be in peril.

Draw sufficient

Sweden are assured of their passage from Group C but still need another point to make sure of top spot and a last-eight tie against a third-placed team, whereas the pool runners-up will meet Germany. Not that Sweden will settle for a draw. "We always want to win so we don't really care about anything else," Schelin said. "And we haven't given too much thought to avoiding Germany, it's this game that counts right now."

Tricky games

While Sweden have beaten Russia 3-0 and Italy 2-0, England lost 2-1 to the Azzurre and were then forced to retrieve a 2-0 deficit against Igor Shalimov's side before winning 3-2. "We always thought England would be the toughest opponent in the group and nothing has changed," added Schelin. "We have good feelings after the first two games and maybe England don't but you never know with England. They might have needed some games to get going and maybe they will be at their best against us."

Immediate chance

Schelin was delighted to open her account for the tournament against Italy, scoring after eight minutes having seen a golden chance come and go in the opening seconds. "The first chance came so quickly that it took me by surprise but I didn't worry when it didn't go in. I thought it was going to be my day and that's how it turned out," she said. "We can raise our level and that's the good part. At the same time we knew, against Russia and Italy, that having gone two goals up that it would probably be enough because we are strong at closing down the game."

None conceded

That is an understatement. The evidence suggests that one goal is enough for Sweden to win a game because Thomas Dennerby's side do not concede goals. Not one in eight qualifying ties and none to date in Finland.

Landström's wish

It may be that centre-back Sara Larsson's hamstring strain leaves her sidelined again but in attack Jessica Landström is over her shoulder injury and challenging to start. "Physically I'm as fit as I can be," said Landström. "I've done a lot of running even though I haven't taken part in match-like exercises until now and I hope to get some play against England."

Scott says England are ready to fight

Defender Alex Scott says England might be going into their crucial UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™ Group C encounter with Sweden as underdogs but added that their fighting qualities mean they should not be underestimated.

Good heart

England have had it tough at the finals so far, losing a player to a red card in a 2-1 defeat by Italy in the first game and then finding themselves 2-0 down against Russia. They stormed back to win that fixture 3-2, though, and it has put them in good heart for the fixture with already-qualified Sweden in Turku.

'Hard game'

"We showed in patches against Russia the football that everyone was saying we could play before the tournament started," said Scott. "Now we have to step up to the challenge again. It will be another hard game and another fight."

'Wonder goal'

"It took a wonder goal from Italy to beat us when we were down to ten players and then against Russia we showed our character to come back. It showed we have something about us. We improved from the first to the second game and now hopefully we can take it to another level. It's about all of us performing to the level we know we can reach."

Only victory

Such has been Sweden's dominance in head-to-head contests that 24-year-old Scott was not even born when England achieved their one and only victory in 19 fixtures, the second leg of the final of the inaugural UEFA Competition for National Representative Women Teams in May 1984. Even then there was a bitter taste in English mouths – for manager Hope Powell as well because she played in that game – as, with the aggregate scores tied at 1-1, Sweden prevailed 4-3 on penalties. More recently, Scott played when England lost 1-0 to Sweden at this stage four years ago to go out of the finals on home soil.

'Underdogs'

"We are probably going into the game as underdogs but we are getting closer and closer and this is another challenge for us," said Scott, who plays alongside Kelly Smith for Boston Breakers in the United States. "We just want the game to come now." The permutations in the group are endless and England could find themselves in first place or last depending on the result of the Russia v Italy game. What is assured is that a win or draw puts England through.