



2009 UEFA EUROPEAN WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

MATCH PREVIEW



Ukraine



Netherlands

Turku Stadium, Turku

Sunday 23 August 2009 - 13.45CET (14.45 local time)

Group A - Matchday 1

Contents

Debutants steeled for finals kick-off	2
Mazurenko declares Ukraine intent	3
Koster ready for tournament spotlight	4



Committed to the future of European football

Debutants steeled for finals kick-off

They are about to take their first steps in the finals of a major tournament but neither the Netherlands nor Ukraine are revealing any trace of nerves as they prepare to launch UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™ at Turku Stadium.

Confident

The Dutch, in particular, ooze a quiet confidence, with coach Vera Pauw expressing surprise that her squad of big-stage newcomers are showing no signs of pressure with Group A about to unfold on Finnish soil. "We had a little bit of fear that the players would be nervous, but that's not the case at all," said the highly-respected trainer, who guided her charges to a play-off victory over Spain to take their place in the 12-team showpiece. "In fact, it's surprising just how relaxed the players are. But the way we have structured the training, the players do not need to be nervous. They just need to focus and concentrate on tomorrow's game."

Desire

In a similar vein, Ukraine coach Anatoliy Kutsev believes his players' sense of excitement at making their tournament bow will help them overcome any nerves. "We have been aiming for this for a long time and all of them have the desire to prove that we have not come here by accident," he said. Their defensive record suggests they will provide solid opposition too, having conceded just three goals in their ten qualifying ties, including two games against Slovenia in the play-offs.

Cautious approach

"Ukraine like to sit back and get a lot of players behind the ball," Pauw added. "In that way they are completely different to Denmark, who are themselves completely different to Finland. The statistic does not worry us but it does show that they will be very difficult to score against. The first game is crucial because we are very much aware that if you win one and draw one then you are practically through to the next round. We cannot leave anything behind – we have to take everything out of the game."

'Unbelievable' progress

Both coaches expect the tournament to showcase the increasing skill levels of the women's game. "The extension to 12 teams has been crucial," Pauw explained. "It has given us something to go for and it's unbelievable what has happened to us over the past four years, especially the last six months. We would not have had this development if we did not have 12 teams here." Kutsev added: "Five or seven years ago we had romantic football but nowadays the women are getting closer [to the standards] of men's football. There are no weak teams here but only a few of them can pretend to be at Germany's level."

Mazurenko declares Ukraine intent

As her side prepares for the opening match of UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™ against the Netherlands at Turku stadium, Ukraine captain Olena Mazurenko said her team have come to Finland to show what they can do and to get some good results at the finals.

Tournament debuts

Both countries will be making their debuts at a UEFA Women's European Championship and both came through play-off matches to book their places at the tournament. Mazurenko is a true leader for Ukraine, for whom she is not only captain but also the assistant coach, and is relishing the chance to get started. "It's really good to be at such a tournament", said the 39-year-old. "Of course, we are a bit nervous now. However, none of us came here to rest and have fun. We'll try to show ourselves in a good light and achieve something."

Tough task

Ukraine also face Denmark and Finland in Group A and Anatoliy Kutsev's side know it is going to be tough. However, Mazurenko believes her team could cause an upset at the finals. "We'll try our best to show our skills," said the 1. FC Nürnberg defender. "The first match will be the key. It's a huge game in psychological terms. The atmosphere in the team is really calm right now, there's no pressure at all. We are all ready to do battle tomorrow."

Success beckons

Valentyna Kotyk, Ukraine's 31-year-old midfielder, recognises the strength of their opponents but she too shares the confidence of her team-mates that this side is ready to achieve something. "We are expecting success," Kotyk said. "There are no weak teams in the finals, all teams are pretty equal. But there's no pressure on our squad. We are very happy to be here. We made it to Finland thanks to our coach and the atmosphere inside the team. The players' desire and hunger for success were just huge."

Koster ready for tournament spotlight

Daphne Koster, the heartbeat of the Netherlands team, is relishing the chance to finally compete at the very highest level after having followed too many major tournaments on television.

Dutch debutants

The Dutch are not only making their debut at UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™ in Finland but also have the privilege of taking part in the first game of the tournament, in Group A, against Ukraine at Turku Stadium on Sunday. Koster cannot wait for the show to begin, saying: "We want to start and it is fantastic that we are playing in the first game. We are more excited than nervous but we are aware that it is only one of three games in the group phase of the tournament."

Only goal

All things looked possible for Vera Pauw's team when they opened the scoring in their first qualifying match against Germany. They went on to lose that match 5-1 – though they at least had the distinction of scoring the only goal conceded by the Germans in the qualifying campaign. The Netherlands rallied after the defeat and managed to finish second in their group before celebrating a play-off victory over Spain. It put them on the big stage for the first time, much to the delight of the Dutch captain.

Being there

"Of course, watching games in the finals on Eurosport is not a good feeling," said the 28-year-old central defender. "It is better to be there yourself and I'm proud that people will be able to see me on television. All the countries here are top countries and there are many top players. I know that because I have seen them for myself on television, but I wouldn't like to mention any one player above another."

Match focus

As for Sunday's opener, Koster made light of the weight of expectations for her country's debut at the finals. "There is not so much pressure [because it's a first game] but you do need pressure to do your best and to focus on your game," she said. The Dutch will certainly have to be on their guard in the face of the threat from Daria Apanaschenko, who scored six goals in qualifying for Ukraine. "It's not a matter just for the defence but for the whole team," Koster said. "You defend as a team."