



# 2009 UEFA EUROPEAN WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

## MATCH PREVIEW



Iceland



Norway

Lahti Stadium, Lahti

Thursday 27 August 2009 - 19.00CET (20.00 local time)

Group B - Matchday 2

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## Nordic rivals united in their approach

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Iceland coach Sigi Eyrjólsson and his Norway counterpart Bjarne Berntsen have vowed not to compromise their normal playing style when the teams meet for their second match of UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™ despite knowing defeat could spell elimination from the competition.

### Early setbacks

Both lost on Matchday 1 – Iceland 3-1 to France, while Norway were beaten 4-0 by Germany – and any repeat in Lahti on Thursday, coupled with a certain outcome in the other Group B game, could mean an early trip home. With head-to-head results serving as the first tie-breaker in the group stage, those setbacks mean that defeat for Iceland, combined with a victory for Germany against France, would ensure the debutants finish fourth in the section. Likewise, a loss for Norway, allied with a French triumph, would leave Berntsen's charges unable to climb off bottom spot.

### No change

Eyrjólsson, who at 35 is the youngest coach at the finals, told uefa.com: "We look at the match as a very important one of course. We need to win to proceed in the competition so we will do everything we can, but that's how we approach every game and we'll do the same against Germany [on Matchday 3]."

### Concentration

Berntsen echoed the thoughts of his opposite number, saying: "It's a normal game and we know we have a fight on our hands. We are not thinking about what might happen if we lose, we are just concentrating on how we will play in order to have the best chance of beating Iceland."

### Historic nation

Iceland's only victory against their Nordic rivals in six meetings came in March when they registered a 3-1 win in the annual Algarve Cup. While acknowledging that the triumph showed they can overcome their opponents "on a good day", Eyrjólsson is aware his team start as underdogs. "We know Norway are a very good team and when we played them in March it was a tough game," he said of the UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2005™ runners-up. "They have a lot of history in women's football so everything needs to really click together for us to be able to beat such a strong team."

### 'Enormous improvements'

Berntsen described that setback as "a wake-up call" and has warned his players to be on their guard, particularly against Margrét Lára Vidarsdóttir, the 12-goal top scorer in qualifying. "The game in March was the first time since 2004 that we had played them and they have made enormous improvements in their game since, especially in attack. They are more dangerous than before."

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## Home help raises Iceland spirits

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Ólína Vidarsdóttir has thanked the Iceland fans for their support following the 3-1 defeat by France on their maiden appearance in the final tournament of a UEFA European Women's Championship, saying "even though we lost we are still their girls".

### Home backing

The Group B encounter in Tampere on Monday was the first time that the national team, either male or female, had competed in the latter stages of a senior competition. While the start to UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™ was not one players and supporters alike would have dreamt of, Vidarsdóttir has been overwhelmed by the reaction back home and would dearly love to repay her compatriots' faith by taking three points off Norway.

### 'Good vibes'

"Everybody has been very supportive," the KIF Örebro DFF defender told uefa.com. "In Iceland we all stick together anyway and we are getting good vibes from back home – even though we lost we are still their girls and they're 100 per cent behind us. It means a lot to us."

### 'Exciting' game

Vidarsdóttir's coach, Siggi Eyjólfsson, admitted that such was the disappointment at full time against France that "half the team were crying on the pitch after the match". Vidarsdóttir and her team-mates have, however, quickly moved on and the 26-year-old is relishing the chance to play the two-time winners and 2005 runners-up. "We have gone over the game against France, seen what we did wrong and fixed it," she said. "We will focus on the next game and it's obviously an exciting one against Norway, so it's not very hard to get pumped up for."

### Progress

Win or lose at Lahti Stadium, simply reaching Finland has been an achievement in itself for Eyjólfsson's squad, helping also to fuel the development of women's football in Iceland. "It means a lot to be here, especially for the women's game and the younger players," continued Vidarsdóttir, who made six appearances in qualifying. "There's a lot more interest in women's football now in Iceland and there's a lot more quality in the training of younger players, something which can only come from increased interest in the national team and our success lately."

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## Determined Wiik gunning for Iceland

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Five months on from a 3-1 defeat in the Algarve Cup, Norway striker Melissa Wiik has warned Iceland they can "expect something else" when the teams meet in their second Group B match of UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™.

### Friendly encounter

The setback in Portugal was the first time Bjarne Berntsen's team had lost to their Nordic rivals in six previous meetings and came at a time when the squad was in a period of transition after several players had retired from international football, once qualification for Finland had been secured. Wiik, however, is adamant her team will be a much tougher proposition for Iceland on Thursday and dismisses suggestions that the 4 March loss could give their opponents a psychological advantage.

### 'New team'

"I don't think it will have an effect because we had quite a new team at the beginning of the year and now we have been playing together a lot since March and we are a much better team," the Stabæk FK forward told uefa.com. "Iceland can expect something else from what they encountered in the Algarve Cup."

### Opening losses

Wiik echoed the thoughts of her team-mate, Trine Rønning, that Norway will have to get to grips with Iceland's physical approach if they are to kick-start their campaign following the 4-0 loss to Germany on Monday. Iceland also suffered a setback in what was their first match in a senior final tournament, losing 3-1 to France, and Wiik cites Norway's vast experience of playing on the big stage as something which could be key in Lahti.

### Pacy side

"Iceland is a small country and most of the squad are home-based so I think they are very close to each other, have a good relationship and fight for each other," said the 24-year-old. "They are a fast side and are strong so we have to be patient but it is routine for many of our players to play in championships like this."

### Possible omen

Norway finished runners-up to Germany at UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2005™ after opening their campaign with a defeat by the same opposition. Four years on, Wiik – who did not feature in the squad in England – is not ruling out a similar course of events. "It could happen exactly the same [way] and quite often when you play that good it's not easy because Germany will have to maintain the same standard of performance every game. It is easier for us to come from being down."