



2009 UEFA EUROPEAN WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

MATCH PREVIEW



Italy



Sweden

Turku Stadium, Turku

Friday 28 August 2009 - 16.30CET (17.30 local time)

Group C - Matchday 2

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Group leaders playing it cool

Thomas Dennerby has said his Sweden team will start Friday's UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™ Group C game with Italy as if it were the tournament final, while in the Azzurre camp there is a determination to keep things in perspective following their 2-1 win over England. "We must not have our feet on the ground but under the ground," declared coach Pietro Ghedin.

Recent wins

The two teams have three points after Matchday 1 – Sweden having beaten Russia 3-0 – and both know that victory in Turku would book them a quarter-final place. Dennerby's proactive approach came in response to a suggestion that after beating Italy twice in qualifying and again in the 2008 Algarve Cup, his team will be confident of emerging triumphant again. "It's good for morale that we have that [recent record] but it's history," he said. "It starts tomorrow at 0-0 and we have to do the work in the 90 minutes. If we don't do that it's going to be tougher and tougher. We have to start tomorrow like it's the final."

High morale

Regardless of the head-to-head record, morale is high in the Swedish camp after the assured way they dispatched Russia in an opening fixture which has proved a burden in recent major tournaments. Deadly in front of goal and unyielding in defence, they have not conceded in their last nine games in the UEFA European Women's Championship, yet Dennerby believes they are set for a stiffer examination. "It's more difficult to defend against Italy [compared to Russia] because they have more options," he said. "Russia went for the long ball whereas Italy have several ways of attacking and in [Patrizia] Panico they have one of the best forwards in Europe."

'Normal to lose'

"There can be only one surprise tomorrow: if Italy win," countered Ghedin. "If we lose it's normal, if we draw it's OK – if we win it's a surprise." Above all, the Azzurre trainer has urged his charges to leave the field with their "heads held high". He said: "Then if we have won or lost it doesn't matter. We are also here to learn. We are low in the European rankings [seventh] while Sweden are second. Every year they raise their level, while we are improving slowly in small steps." The 56-year-old will wait until the morning to see if flu victim Pamela Conti can feature, having hopefully settled upon a tactical approach overnight. "Tactics? I don't know about tactics. Sometimes I have a dream and they come from there."

Tuttino sends warning to Sweden

Italy's spectacular match-winner against England, Alessia Tuttino, says the Azzurre will be taking the game to Sweden in their potential UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™ Group C decider on Friday.

Win enough

A win would guarantee progress to the quarter-finals and, added to their 2-1 defeat of England, would give Italy a guarantee of first place unless Russia defeat Hope Powell's side in the day's other game. Sweden have been tipped as the biggest threat to Germany's reign as champions, but Italy upset the odds against England and Tuttino intends to do so again.

Positive approach

"We will go on the pitch and try to play our own game, this is what we always do, we don't like to wait for our opponents to do something and try to stop them," said the 26-year-old ASD CF Bardolino Verona midfielder. "If we waited for Sweden, if we let them play, then we would surely concede a goal."

True colours

Tuttino, nonetheless, is hoping that Sweden do consider themselves favourites, not least having beaten Italy twice in qualifying. "It would be better for us if they underestimated us, it would be easier to play, and if we were to win then the result would seem even more extraordinary," she said. "What matters now is that we know we are here, that we are in good shape and that we can be competitive against every team."

Team effort

That could well happen, especially if Tuttino repeats her long-range, 82nd-minute strike against England which she was more than willing to play down. "My goal was just an incident," she said. "I want to say that the whole team played well and without my team-mates I surely wouldn't even have had the chance to score. We celebrated altogether and this means that the group won all together, it's not about individual players. Everybody is important, from the goalkeeper to the striker, from the players on the bench to Pamela Conti, who had flu and had to stay in her hotel room."

Seger spells out victory intent

It was only fitting that Caroline Seger should be the player to seal Sweden's opening win at UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2009™. After all, her surname means 'victory' in Swedish.

Power drive

The Linköpings FC midfielder looked equally comfortable robbing opponents of the ball as she did launching Sweden's attacks. One of those was finished off by Seger herself, smacking a powerful right-footer from outside the area and into the back of the Russian net to underline their dominance in a 3-0 victory.

Shooting practice

"I've worked hard on my shooting all year." the 24-year-old told uefa.com ahead of Sweden's second Group C match against Italy in Turku on Friday. "I have to thank my club coach [Magnus Wikman] who has made sure that I devote time to shooting practice."

Possession game

As those who watched her in action against Russia will confirm, the extra work is paying off. Seger had another attempt from long range that forced the Russian goalkeeper Elena Kochneva to go full stretch. It's also a result of a change of emphasis in Thomas Dennerby's team with the coach imploring his players to retain possession as much as possible.

On the ball

"Our attacks are much longer than they used to be in previous years," Seger continued. "For a central midfielder like me, I'm on the ball more, which is fun. I also get into shooting positions a lot more than before and I hope that means I will get to score more goals."

Tuttino tops

Interestingly enough, if there has been one long-range goal to rival Seger's so far in the tournament, it was that scored by Alessia Tuttino to give Italy a 2-1 win against England. "It was beautiful", said Seger about Tuttino's strike, "more beautiful than mine, because it was scored from further out as well." There's no danger however that tomorrow's game will develop into a shoot-out duel between the rival midfielders. "She's probably only ever seen one shot of mine, and I've only seen one of hers," Seger pointed out.

'Tough match'

They may have run out easy winners against Russia but the Scandinavians are under no illusions that a much more problematical 90 minutes awaits them against the Azzurre. "It'll be a tough match," said Seger. "They will probably retreat and not give us much space at the back. I don't think they enjoy a physical game, so we need to play as tough as we can."