

13. 12. 2008 ÖRNSKÖLDSVIK, Sweden - by George Karrys



Picture: by Hakan Sundström

Scotland's David Murdoch made a remarkable comeback to repeat as men's gold medallist of the Le Gruyère European Curling Championships 2008.

Murdoch, a full-time, state-funded curling athlete from Lockerbie made a stellar double-takeout to tie the game in the final end, then watched as Ulsrud's last shot in the extra-end slipped two inches too far for a wild 7-6 Scottish victory.

"Dunno if we ever thought we'd be winning that," said the 30-year-old former cattle farmer.

"We always had belief but that was a really hard first five ends. From that point on it was really going to be a grind. We thought 'hang in there, hang in there' and we managed to give them some stingers at the end."

Norway started fast with last rock advantage, taking two points in the first and adding a steal in the second for a 3-0 lead. The Norwegians nursed a 6-4 lead heading into the final end, and seemed pleased with Ulsrud's last draw shot, counting two. After lengthy discussion Murdoch reared back and fired, and just kissed the second Norwegina stone slightly upwards to count a

deuce and tie the match.

In the extra-end, the Norwegians ignored the shift in momentum and lead Havard Vad Petterson made two perfect splits, setting up what should have been a routine end. But Ulsrud's first rock picked some debris and spun off line, giving the Scots the chance to force a draw on Ulsrud's last stone.

"I thought the whole team played really well, and it was a great game," said the personable Ulsrud, 37.

"We were all over them from the start. That just goes to prove it, that it's never really over."

Last year in Fuessen, Germany, Ulsrud lost the title match 5-3 to the same Scottish team minus third Ewan Macdonald, who was recovering from knee surgery.

Unlike athletes in other sports, the Scots and Norwegians shared the same dressing room after the match.

"My question for the Scots is how long are they going to keep curling," Ulsrud joked. "We need them to quit. I'm not going to get any closer than that to winning a Europeans without actually winning it, that's for sure."

Scotland, Norway and the other top eight teams in the Euro A-Division qualified for the 2009 Ford World Men's Curling Championships at Moncton, Canada April 4-12. The championship will celebrate 50 years of world men's championship curling dating back to the days of the Scotch Cup, the initial series between Scotland versus Canada founded in 1959.

Murdoch and teammates MacDonald (Aberdeen), Peter Smith (Perth) and Euan Byers (Lockerbie) are carving a remarkable legacy in the sport. Murdoch and Byers have won three gold medals, two silvers and a bronze in three Europeans, and also won the world (in 2006) and

world junior crowns. Smith has won 17 medals including seven gold in his career, and MacDonald has won eight international medals, including four gold.

Torger Nergard and the youthful front-end of Christoffer Svae and Vad Petersson make up Ulsrud's Norwegian team.

The women's final features Switzerland's Mirjam Ott against Sweden's much-decorated Anette Norberg, the 2006 Olympic champion. Both men's and women's finals will broadcast from 22:00 GMT on High-Definition Eurosport TV.

The Eurosport Player is offering special "curling discounts" for selected European countries. Visit the World Curling Federation website (at www.worldcurling.org) and the event website (at www.ecc2008.se) for the list of countries and the special access code.

In addition, the full selection of 24 Eurosport Player curling games from ECC 08 will remain available for archived viewing for one week following the event, ending December 20.

Live scoring can be viewed at www.cuponline.nu

Game feeds and highlight packages are also available for broadcasters from World Curling Television (WCTV).