

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

The defending Olympic and European champion, Anette Norberg of Sweden, made a brilliant come-around takeout to score four points and defeat Denmark 8-7 in the semifinal of the Le Gruyère European Curling Championships 2008.

The shot, made before a vocal crowd of home supporters, occurred in the ninth end with Denmark's Angelina Jensen holding a 6-4 lead. It followed a great hit and roll by Danish fourth-thrower Madeleine Dupont. Facing four Swedish counters, Dupont made her shot and Norberg initially indicated she would then draw for only two points to tie the game.

But the decision was made to go for the four, and the team leapt into the air as the shot was made and the crowd roared.

"This is incredible," said Swedish third Eva Lund.

"If you don't compare the competitions, because the Olympics are something very different, I would say this is one of the greatest moments of my life."

"Anette was really struggling in the beginning," explained Lund, who has also won seven previous European titles and three world championships with Norberg.

"But we gathered together and said we are here for her. We're not afraid to lose or to look bad here, we just wanted to support her."

The writing was on the wall for Denmark, which outplayed Sweden in the early going and held a 5-3 lead after six ends. But Sweden turned on the heat and Dupont was forced to draw against two stones buried in the four-foot rings on her last shot of the eighth end. Sweden continued

piling on the pressure early in that fateful ninth.

"We said let's go for it," said Lund. "It was time to take the game to them and put them under pressure."

The previous time Jensen met Norberg in a major competition was the 2007 Worlds in Aomori, Japan. Denmark won that game 9-8, in an unusual season which saw the Swedes finish out of the playoffs and Denmark score the silver medal.

With a final record of 7-4 Jensen and her teammates earned the Bronze medal.

Norberg will have to play each end like the end of the semifinal in Saturday's championship game against Switzerland's Mirjam Ott. Despite having lost to Norberg up to 10 times in the past five years -- including in the 2006 Olympic gold medal game -- Ott has defeated Norberg twice in the past three days and seems to be no longer intimidated by one of the strongest women's teams in curling history.

The match takes place at 14:00 GMT on SVT 24 Sweden and online at the Eurosport Player.

Preceding the women's final is the men's championship final between Norway's Thomas Ulsrud and Scotland's David Murdoch. The repeat of last year's Euro final in Fuessen, Germany gets underway at 10:00 GMT on SVT 24 and the Eurosport Player.

Both finals will be 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).