

### 3. 12. 2008 ÖRNSKÖLDSVIK, Sweden - by George Karrys



Le Gruyère European Curling Championships 2008 mark the beginning of the "last chance" for European curlers to qualify for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games.

And for the first time, a record number of games are available on Eurosport in High-Definition broadcast quality and also online - at a discount - through Eurosport Player, the all-sport channel's web TV service.

51 teams from 29 countries - 29 men's squads and 22 women's teams - will compete in two divisions, A and B, at the Swedbank Arena from December 6-13.

In addition to gold, silver and bronze-medal honours, the A division rewards the top eight men's and women's finishers with a berth in the World Curling Championships in March and April 2009. The B division awards the top men's and women's team the chance to challenge the eighth-place A finishers for the final world berth, plus a berth in the A pool of the 2009 championship in Aberdeen, Scotland.

Points awarded at the Worlds qualify their nations for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. The upcoming Worlds - the women's in Gangneung, Korea and the men's in Moncton, Canada - will mark the conclusion of a three-year qualifying race to determine the final 10 men's and women's nations at Vancouver.

"The Le Gruyère European Curling Championships 2008 are a key stepping stone towards Olympic qualification," said Les Harrison, World Curling Federation (WCF) President.

"Our best wishes and thanks go to the European Curling Federation and the Örnköldsvik host committee for all their hard work."

Last year in Fuessen, Germany, Scotland's David Murdoch and Sweden's Anette Norberg both added to previous Le Gruyère European Championship titles. Murdoch defeated Norway's Thomas Ulsrud in the men's final and Norberg upended Scotland's Kelly Wood to take the women's crown.

All four teams will return to defend their podium finishes in Örnköldsvik, as will Denmark's Johnny Frederiksen, who won bronze last year but now has former coach Ulrik Schmidt at skip position, and Swiss women's powerhouse Mirjam Ott, who finished fourth in 2007.

Other A division women's teams are Denmark, skipped by 2006 world silver medallist Angelina Jensen; Germany's much-decorated veteran Andrea Schoepp; the surprise Euro 2006 gold and silver medallists, Liudmila Privivkova of Russia and Italy's Diana Gaspari; England's Kristi Balfour; Katerina Urbanova of the Czech Republic and Shari Leibbrandt-Demmon of the Netherlands.

Also challenging Scotland on the men's side will be Germany's Andy Kapp; France's Thomas Dufour; Ireland's John Kenny; Stefan Karnusian of Switzerland; Henrik Edlund of host Sweden; Jiri Snitil of the Czech Republic and newcomers Spain, skipped by Antonio de Mollinedo.

In partnership with the pan-European multilingual sports TV channel Eurosport and Curlingkanalen.se, the World Curling Federation will provide curling fans with a record number of hours of coverage, beginning on December 6 and ending with the men's and women's championship finals on December 13.

10 matches will be televised in High-Definition, and live webstreamed game coverage of 24 total matches, including the men's and women's A division semifinals and finals, will be available on

the new Eurosport Player for a discounted price via access code.

Eurosport Player can be found at: [player.eurosport.com](http://player.eurosport.com) and the access code for each country can be found in a separate news release, and also on the WCF website at: [www.worldcurling.org](http://www.worldcurling.org)

The World Curling Federation will also provide daily coverage updates from Le Gruyère European Curling Championships 2008 to working sport media in text, still image and video-highlight formats.

In addition to video highlight footage, World Curling Television (WCTV) can provide the live game coverage feed to interested broadcasters. See contact information for Joanna Kelly.

For more information including team lineups, please visit the Le Gruyère European Curling Championships 2008 website at: [www.ecc2008.se](http://www.ecc2008.se)

For live scoring of the event (available in Swedish) please visit: [www.cuponline.nu](http://www.cuponline.nu)

To view draw-by-draw reports, photos and other curling information, please visit the World Curling Federation website at: [www.worldcurling.org](http://www.worldcurling.org)