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LE GRUYÈRE
European Curling Championships
2011 MOSCOW Russian Federation
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PREVIEW LE GRUYERE EUROPEAN CURLING CHAMPIONSHIPS 2011 MOSCOW, RUSSIA

The Russian Federation will host one of the major international curling championship events for the first time when play in the 2011 Le Gruyère European Curling Championships gets underway on Saturday 3 December in Moscow's mammoth Megasport Arena.

This will be the 37th edition of these Championships since the inaugural event in Megève, France in 1975. In both the men's and women's events, ten national teams will compete in the A Group while a further ten women's teams and sixteen men's teams will compete in the B Group.

In the Men's A Group



... championship, 2010 European Champions Norway, skipped by Thomas Ulsrud, return to defend the title they won twelve months ago in Champéry, Switzerland. In last year's final,

Ulsrud's team, who are also Olympic silver medallists, beat Denmark's Rasmus Stjerne, and Stjerne's squad return this year, hoping to go one better.

Sweden will be represented by Niklas Edin who won the European title in 2009 and the bronze medal at the Men's Worlds earlier this year. Scotland's David Murdoch is the only other men's skip to have won this event, a feat he achieved three times, in 2003, 2007 and 2008, but this year he leads a new team that is still building experience at this level.

John Jahr returns to skip the German team after winning his last European title in 1985. The Czech Republic will be led by Jiri Snítíl and France will be represented by Thomas Dufour's team. Switzerland is building afresh, with a team led by Sven Michel making its debut at this level.

Latvia and Italy qualified from the B Group last year and both skips – Italy's Joel Retornaz and Latvia's Ritvars Gulbis – will be hoping to consolidate their nations' A Group status which determines qualification for the next World Curling Championships.

In the Women's A Group Championship, three members of last year's victorious team will represent Sweden, with Margaretha Sigfridsson taking over as skip from Stina Viktorsson, who has retired from competitive curling.

To win last year, Sweden beat Scotland's Eve Muirhead in the final, and Muirhead returns again this year, this time with a younger team, three of whom were involved in Muirhead's successful run that saw her pick up a record four world junior gold medals.

Former champion Andrea Schöpp represents Germany again. This is the 25th appearance for Schöpp at this event, stretching the appearance record she already holds. Several other teams are led by experienced skips. These are Denmark's Lene Nielsen, who raised the hopes of the home crowd with a fourth place finish at last season's Capital One Women's World Championship; Italy's Diana Gaspari; Norway's Linn Githmark; and Switzerland's Binia Feltscher. Both the Czech Republic, skipped by Linda Klímová, and Latvia, skipped by Ineta Mača, are fielding new teams in this event.

Anna Sidorova skips the Russian squad – Liudmila Privivkova, Margarita Fomina and Ekaterina Galkena – who were in the team that took the European title in 2006, in Basel, Switzerland, the only Russian success so far in these Championships. They will enjoy strong home support as they attempt to repeat that feat.

The Russian men are competing in the B Group. Because of its huge capacity, the B Group games will also be played at Megasport.

The sixteen men's teams are: Austria, Belgium, Belarus, Croatia, England, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, Spain and Wales.

The ten women's teams are: Austria, England, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Poland, Slovakia, Spain and Wales.

Both groups will open with round-robin play and, after tie-breakers on Thursday 8 December if needed, play playoffs, semi-finals and promotion challenge games (including a challenge from the top B Group teams as they try to qualify for this season's world championships). Medal games take place on Friday 9 and Saturday 10 December.

Extensive televised coverage of the Le Gruyère European Curling Championships 2011 can be seen by viewers in Europe on Eurosport. Additional live and on demand coverage will be available via the internet on the Eurosport Player. **(if you are interested in the TV- and web-coverage** look [HERE](#)).

Results can be found [HERE](#) as well as further information on the event homepage: ww.ecc2011.ru

For **teams** and **players** (as of November 30, 2011) look [HERE](#)

- 8 teams from the Women's A Group at the ECC 2011 will qualify for the Ford World Women's Curling Championship 2012 in Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada. (17-25 March 2012)
Teams already qualified for this event: Canada (as host) USA, China and Korea.

- 7 teams from the Men's A Group at the ECC 2011 will qualify for the World Men's Curling Championship 2012 in Basel, Switzerland. (31 March-8 April 2012). Teams already qualified for this event: Switzerland (as host) Canada, China and New Zealand.