

USA Women: Another World Title!

Alas, the days of Mia Hamm and Julie "Loudy" Foudy and Brandi "Sports Bra" Chastain and Carla Overbeck (perhaps the most underrated player in the history of this sport!), are long gone.

And although Kristine Lilly is still there and playing at an incredibly high level, the United States Women's National Team is made up of new stars such as Abby Wambach and Shannon Boxx and Carli Lloyd.

There are many in the soccer world who think the current USA team may be the deepest in talent ever. That may be true. And we all will get a chance to see if that is true when the 21-player squad begin a quest for another World Cup title.

Indeed, the 2007 FIFA Women's World Cup kicks off on Monday, Sept. 10, with Germany taking on Argentina. The USA women begin the following day with a match against a tough North Korean squad. As cliché as it sounds, the women have come a long way since all 32 games from China will be broadcast on ESPN or ESPN2 with starting times of 5:00 am (ET) or 8:00 am (ET).

As with the men's tourney, the women, too, have a "Group of Death" and of course, the USA women are smack dab in the middle of it.

In addition to North Korea (Sept. 11, 5 am, ESPN2), the USA will match up against Sweden (Sept. 14, 5 am, ESPN) and Nigeria (Sept. 18, 8 am, ESPN). This is Group B.

The other groups are:

Group A -- Germany, England, Japan, Argentina

Group C -- Norway, Canada, Australia, Ghana

Group D -- Denmark, Brazil, China, New Zealand

The quarterfinals are set for Sept. 22 and Sept. 23. The winner of Group A takes on the Group B runnerup, while the winner of Group B plays the Group A runnerup on Sept. 22. Winner Group C vs. Group D runnerup and winner Group D vs. Group C runnerup, play on Sept. 23.

The semifinals are Wednesday, Sept. 26. The final is set for Sunday, Sept. 30, 8 am (ET) on ESPN2.

Here are my predictions:

GROUP PLAY

Group A -- Germany (1st), England (2nd)

Group B -- USA (1st), Sweden (2nd)

Group C -- Norway (1st), Canada (2nd)

Group D -- Denmark (1st), Brazil (2nd)

QUARTERFINALS

USA 4, England 0

Germany 2, Sweden 1

Norway 3, Brazil 2

Denmark 4, Canada 2

SEMIFINALS

USA 2, Germany 1

Norway 2, Denmark 0

FINALS

USA 2, Norway 0