General

The forthcoming FIFA Women’s World Cup will be staged in China PR, which had already been chosen as the host nation for the 2003 competition but had to withdraw at the eleventh hour in favour of the USA on account of the SARS epidemic. China PR is now hosting the competition for the second time since the inaugural event in 1991.

In all, 22 different teams have qualified for the final competition since 1991, most of them from Europe and Asia – a fact that reflects which countries hold supremacy in women’s football: UEFA (8), AFC (6), CONCACAF (3), CAF and CONMEBOL (2 each) and OFC (1).

The most experienced teams on this stage are Brazil, China PR, Germany, Japan, Nigeria, Norway, Sweden and the USA, all of whom have qualified for all five final competitions.

Matches

In 1991 and 1995, the FIFA Women’s World Cup embraced 12 teams (26 matches), before the number of participants was increased to 16 (32 matches) in 1999.

A total of 116 finals matches have been contested to date.

The USA have played the most matches (24), closely followed by Germany and Norway (22 each). Germany, Norway and the USA are the tournament’s most successful teams: two-time world champions USA can testify to 20 wins, 2 draws and 2 losses, with a goal ratio of 73-18. Similarly impressive, Norway have recorded 16 wins, 1 draw and 5 losses, conceding 25 goals while scoring 63 while Germany can boast 15 wins, 2 draws and 5 losses, with a goal ratio of 63-27.

Goals

With 107 goals (3.34 per game), the 2003 FIFA Women’s World Cup in the USA saw fewer balls hit the back of the net than ever before. The 1999 World Cup still holds the record for the highest goal average per game (3.84). In China PR 1991 and Sweden 1995 the average was only marginally lower at 3.81 goals per match!

Michelle Akers (USA) is untouchable at the top of the goal scoring ranks with 10 World Cup goals in one tournament (1991). Tied in second place are Heidi Mohr (GER, 1991), Sissi (BRA, 1999), Sun Wen (CHN, 1999) and Birgit Prinz (GER, 2003) with 7 goals each. Michelle Akers (USA) also heads the list of top goal scorers overall. The American fired home 12 goals between 1991 and 1999. Sun Wen (CHN, 1991-2003) and Bettina Wiegmann (GER, 1991-2003) claim joint second with 11 apiece.

Ten footballers from seven different countries have scored hat tricks in the four editions of the FIFA Women’s World Cup. Leader of the pack once more, Michelle Akers (USA) chalked up five of USA’s seven goals when the States met Chinese Taipei in 1991 (USA-TPE 7-0). It was Carolina Morace (ITA), however, who completed the first ever Women’s World Cup hat trick, scoring her three goals as Chinese Taipei succumbed to another convincing defeat (5-0). Also in China PR in 1991, Carin Jennings (USA) scored thrice against the mighty Germans (GER-USA 2-5), and in 1995 Norway’s Kristin Sandberg and her compatriot, Ann Kristin Aarones, joined the hat trick headliners: Sandberg against Nigeria (NOR-NGA 8-0) and Aarones against Canada (NOR-CAN 7-0). In the 1999 finals, Brazilians Pretinha and Sissi both bagged three during their 7-1 victory over Mexico. In USA 1999, Sun Wen (CHN) celebrated a triple success in China’s 7-0 defeat of Ghana, and Inka Grings (GER) scored her hat trick when Germany beat Mexico 6-0. Last but not least, Mio Otani (JPN) also scored thrice against Argentina (JPN-ARG 6-0) in the 2003 finals.

HISTORY: In a historical overview of goals scored in the FIFA Women’s World Cup, five giants of women’s football head the bill: in pole position are the USA on 73 goals (averaging 3.0 goals per match), ahead of Norway on 63 (2.9), Germany on 63 (2.9), China PR on 43 (2.2) and Sweden on 41 (2.1).

The three fastest goals in the history of the competition were scored within the first two minutes of the match. In 1991, Swede Lena Videkull slotted home the first goal within the first minute of her team’s 8-0 victory over Japan. In 1999 another Swede, Kristin Bengtsson, and Nigeria’s Nkiru Okosieme both opened the scoring for their respective teams within the first two minutes.
The two highest-scoring matches to date both witnessed a total of eight goals: in China 1991, Sweden beat Japan 8-0, and in Sweden 1995, Norway defeated Nigeria by the same margin. In USA 1999, there were three games in which eight goals were scored, all of which ended 7-1 (BRA vs MEX, NOR vs CAN and USA vs NGA), and in USA 2003 there were also two games in which eight goals were scored and which, again, both ended 7-1 (NOR vs KOR and GER vs RUS).

**Players, coaches, referees, spectators**

The youngest player to have participated in the finals was Nigerian Ifeanyichukwu Chiejine, at just 16 years of age (1999), while at the opposite end of the age spectrum, Anne Smith was 40 years old when she represented New Zealand in the 1991 FIFA Women’s World Cup. At 35, Swede Pia Sundhage became the tournament’s oldest goal scorer when she slotted the ball into the back of the net in 1995, while in 2003 Canadian Kara Lang, just shy of her 17th birthday, became the youngest goal scorer in the history of the FIFA Women’s World Cup. Nine players from five different teams (three from USA; two each from Nigeria and Norway and one each from China PR and Germany) have taken part in every FIFA Women’s World Cup to date.

Six coaches have ushered their teams to two editions of this tournament: Gero Bisanz (Germany), Keld Gantzhorn (Denmark), Even Pellerud (Norway) and Tamotsu Suzuki (Japan) in 1991 and 1995, Ma Yuanan (China PR) and Tony DiCicco (USA) in 1995 and 1999 and Yury Bystritskiy (Russia), Marika Domanski Lyfors (Sweden) and Tina Theune-Meyer (Germany) in 1999 and 2003. Pellerud, DiCicco and Theune-Meyer won the title (with Norway, USA and Germany respectively). Even Pellerud became the first coach to take a second team to the final competition (Canada, 2003).

With 1,194,215 spectators in total and an average of 37,319 per game, the 1999 FIFA Women’s World Cup USA holds the records for the highest crowd numbers in the history of the tournament, drawing a parallel with the 1994 FIFA World Cup USA™, which likewise remains untouchable in terms of spectator numbers!

The highest match attendance ever was recorded at the 1999 final when hosts USA secured themselves the world championship title, beating China PR on penalties in front of a throng of 90,185 football fans.

**Finals**

UEFA has sent five representatives to the FIFA Women’s World Cup final: 1991 with Norway (vs USA), in 1995 when Norway faced Germany, and in 2003 when Germany met Sweden. The USA have reached the final twice (1991 vs Norway and 1999 vs China PR, Asia’s sole finalist to date), winning both times. USA are also the only host country to have won the competition.

Birgit Prinz celebrated Germany’s qualification for the final in 1995, a few months before her 18th birthday. Michelle Akers won the Women’s World Cup final in 1999 at 33½ years of age, while her team mate Mia Hamm was only 19 when USA claimed the title in 1991.

The highest goal scorer has taken the FIFA Women’s World Cup home on three occasions: in 1991 Michelle Akers (USA) scored ten goals, in 2003 Birgit Prinz (GER) scored seven and in 1995 Ann Kristin Aarones (NOR) scored six.

FIFA Women’s World Cup final matches have seen a comparative dearth of goals so far – with an average of 2 goals per match, they provide fewer goals than fans have come to expect from other World Cup climaxes:

- 1991 NOR vs USA 1-2
- 1995 GER vs NOR 0-2
- 1999 USA vs CHN 0-0
- 2003 GER vs SWE 2-1

Until now the final has always been officiated by a European referee: Vadim Zhuk from Belarus led the 1991 final, followed four years later by Ingrid Jonsson from Sweden, in 1999 by her Swiss colleague Nicole Petignat, and in 2003 by Romanian Cristina Ionescu.