

# Winding down in New York

BY DEAN CAPARAZ  
in Chula Vista, Calif.

**T**he chance to play in the WUSA, even if just for one year, rejuvenated the careers of New York's Norwegians.

Gro Espeseth and Ann Kristin Aarones, who made a habit of frustrating the United States for much of the past decade, were part of the Norway team that knocked the United States out of Sweden '95.

But when fellow Norwegians Dagny Mellgren (Boston), Hege Riise (Carolina) and Bente Nordby (Carolina) left WUSA preseason training to play in this year's Algarve Cup, Espeseth and Aarones stayed behind. Both 28-year-olds, who met on Norway's under-16 national team in 1989, are retired from national team duty.

They're excited to play professional ball.

"There are many new things to think about, and we're living in a different country, but we're having great fun so far," Aarones said during the Power's spring training at the ARCO Olympic Training Center outside San Diego.

Aarones quit the national team after Norway's fourth-place finish at USA '99 because, she said, she was tired after a 10-year international career, "and that was enough."

The 5-foot-9 striker watched from a hotel room as Espeseth and Norway defeated the United States for the gold medal at Sydney 2000.

Talk with their New York teammates — including U.S. Olympians Tiffeny Milbrett, Christie Pearce and Sara Whalen — occasionally drifts to the Olympic final.

"Tiffeny said to me one day that she hasn't overcome [the Olympic loss] yet," Espeseth said. "We won the game, but sometimes it has to be us. And we were lucky. I know that."

**CLUB OVER COUNTRY.** Espeseth and Aarones might need a little luck to win a WUSA championship before they return home. A lingering knee problem will likely force Espeseth to retire from the game after one year here, and Aarones wants to see what happens this season



before committing to a long stay.

Espeseth missed the '99 Women's World Cup after tearing her ACL and suffering cartilage damage in her left knee while practicing with her Norwegian club, Trondheims-Orn. The 5-6 defender recovered in time to rejoin the national team one month before the start of the 2000 Olym-

pics.

The cartilage injury still bothers her. The doctor who performed her knee surgery advised her to quit playing or choose between the national team and the WUSA.

"He said I would have too much trouble later in my life if I don't quit now," Espeseth said. "But



TONY QUINN/SOCCERPIXUSA



TODD WARSHAW/ALLSPORT

Gro Espeseth's crunching tackles and Ann Kristin Aarones' goals used to be headaches for the United States. Now, New York will benefit from those talents, for at least one season.

At left: Ann Kristin Aarones (right) hopes to head the New York Power over its WUSA competition, including Carla Overbeck's Carolina Courage. Inset: Injuries will limit Gro Espeseth to one season in America.

I decided to play here for one more year, because I couldn't say no to this."

**SO FAR, SO GOOD.** New York coach Pat Farmer has been satisfied with his Norwegians during preseason. Neither is completely healthy. Espeseth has her sore knee and Aarones has suffered from flu-like symptoms.

Farmer sees good things ahead for his veteran players.

"You've got the captain of the gold-medal team — that ain't bad for leadership," he said. "And Anke [Aarones] is going to come along as her fitness improves and become more of a dynamic force then. I still think they can both play."

(Dean Caparaz is an associate editor at Soccer America.)