



Netherlands midfielder Wesley Sneijder (L) volleys acrobatically to put the finishing touches on a lightning counter-attack to score the second goal in their Euro 2008 win over Italy at Berne on Monday.

## SWITZERLAND V TURKEY

## Co-hosts expect a battle

AFP, Basel

Switzerland star Tranquillo Barnetta is steering himself for a "hard-fought and aggressive" clash with Turkey as the two countries go head-to-head for the first time since their last match ended in a notorious brawl.

Wednesday's make-or-break group C clash at St-Jakob Park takes place against a backdrop of bitter memories of the 'battle of Istanbul' that erupted after Switzerland had edged out the Turks in a play-off to claim their place in the 2006 World Cup finals.

With both sides having lost their opening matches in the group, neither can afford another defeat here. But while anticipating a ferociously contested encounter, Barnetta believes the match will be played in the right spirit.

"Of course we haven't forgotten that match and what happened there, but this is a different game, even if it is a sort of final again."

A similar message was being sent out from the Turkish camp. "We have forgotten about what happened," said the Fenerbahce midfielder Ugur Boral. "We are going to play a group game against the host nation -- that's all."

The reality however is that both squads contain survivors of the melee that broke out at the end of

the second leg of the play-off, which saw players and officials on both sides laying into each other after the Swiss had clinched qualification on the away goals rule after having their 2-0 first leg advantage overturned by a 4-2 defeat in Turkey.

The ensuing FIFA investigation held Turkey primarily responsible for the post-match violence with three of their players and an assistant coach receiving bans while the national team was obliged to play six home matches outside the country.

The Swiss had one player and their physiotherapist suspended but there is a lingering sense of resentment in Turkey that their opponents got off lightly thanks to the influence of their compatriot, FA President Sepp Blatter.

Both teams still have the same coaches with Jakob 'Kobi' Kuhn in charge of the Euro 2008 co-hosts and Fatih Terim at the helm of Turkey.

Both coaches have been anxious to play down the inevitable "Istanbul II" pre-match hype. "For us it is just another game, one we have to win," said Fatih. "I want everything to run perfectly -- and peacefully."

The Turkish coach was fortunate to escape sanction in Istanbul for what appeared to be a highly provocative role in the

## Basten in dreamland

AFP, Berne

Marco van Basten believes Holland have earned the right to dream of glory at Euro 2008 after their 3-0 demolition of world champions Italy.

Holland's first win over the Italians in three decades and Italy's heaviest defeat in 25 years has left the Dutch in control of a 'group of death' that also includes France and Romania, whose turgid goalless draw could not have been further removed from the exhilarating encounter served up here on Monday evening.

For the Dutch coach, the manager of the victory was every bit as important as its unlikely scale.

"To beat the world champions playing football to the last minute -- it was for us a very nice game and also a historical game," he said. "We have never beaten Italy by three goals."

"If you think we were without players like Arjen Robben and Ryan Babel, the players reacted in a wonderful way. They fought like a team and if the spirit is like it was tonight, with all the quality we have, we can have nice dreams."

"Hopefully we can preserve the spirit we displayed on the pitch tonight and continue in the same vein against France and Romania," added van Basten.

"It only the very first step and we know very well that we are back to square one if we lose against France in our next match."

Despite a defeat which will put him under severe pressure, Italy coach Roberto Donadoni voiced confidence that his players could turn things around.

"The game started badly for us and ended up worse but it is already history," said van Basten's former teammate at AC Milan.

"We made mistakes and paid for



Dutch model Sylvie van der Vaart, the wife of midfielder Rafael, watches proceedings from the stands during their game against Italy at Berne on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Buffon left raging

INTERNET, undated

Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon believes the 3-0 capitulation to Holland in their Euro 2008 opener was the national side's worst display in his Azzurri career.

It was a nightmare occasion for the Juventus veteran who served as captain in place of injured skipper Fabio Cannavaro.

Roberto Donadoni's team are reigning world champions and were among the pre-tournament favourites - a status that will not have been helped after they were played off the park by the dominant Dutch.

"We apologise to our fans," he said. "We hope that we will react immediately and show our pride in our next game."

Against Holland we have played the worst game since I joined the national team 12 years ago."

Now the Italians face a very awkward route to qualification as they take on Romania and France, who fought out a goalless draw yesterday.

Italy know they must win against Romania to avoid an early exit before taking on Les Bleus in what could be do or die for both sides.

"Turkey play an attacking game which is good for us," said the Bayer Leverkusen midfielder.

"Portugal had a lot of space against them so we need to keep it tight at the back and be quick to attack when we win the ball. We need an absolute determination to score."

French promise improvement

INTERNET, undated

France midfielder Jeremy Toulalan has tipped his teammates to raise their performance levels against Holland after they drew a blank against Romania in their Euro 2008 Group C opener.

The French failed to break down a stubborn Romanian defence as a low-quality match ended in a 0-0 draw at the Letzigrund.

Romania were negative and were clearly intent on picking up a point, but Toulalan reckons it will be a different story against the more offensive-minded Dutch on Friday.

"It is sometimes easier to play against the bigger teams," said the Lyon midfielder, who impressed against Romania as a stand-in for injured skipper Patrick Vieira.

"If the Dutch come and play a little more and not like the Romanians, it will be better for us. We are ready for what is coming."

"We tried but it was a difficult match, especially with Romania not playing too much football."

Nicolas Anelka and Florent Malouda wasted the only decent chances France created as they struggled to find the guile required to break the deadlock against Romania.

With Zinedine Zidane now retired, the pressure is on Franck Ribery to take up the playmaker mantle but the Bayern Munich star had an off-day.

Karim Benzema, the young Lyon striker who has been tipped for big things, also failed to shine, leaving Romania coach Victor Piturca to question the depth of reserves in the France squad.

"Maybe France are no longer at the same level as they have been in the past - we could see that here," he said.

"They still have very good players who are experienced, but a couple of them are a little old now."

"Maybe they are tired of playing all these finals and maybe they are being nice and giving somebody else a chance to win something."

## Media scorn Azzurri

REUTERS, Milan

who still believes it after a fall like that?

Like many others, La Repubblica newspaper criticised the team's lineup and the holes in the defence. It also said the team is indecisive, letting Netherlands take the initiative.

"We can argue about the match

**TODAY'S MATCHES**

Teams	Time	Venue
Czech Rep v Portugal	10:00pm	Geneva
Switzerland v Turkey	12:45am (Thursday)	Basel

One of its columnists joked about the meaning behind the perpetually sad look on coach Roberto Donadoni's face. "Maybe it is because he sees things ahead of time."

"Holland did not have much more. But they were humble and they were a team."

## CZECH REPUBLIC V PORTUGAL

## Teams seek to progress

AFP, Geneva

and will be doing his homework.

"We'll be confident (against the Czech Republic) but not too confident," said Scolari.

"We'll watch videos of the Czechs -- they play in a different way to Turkey, let's see if we can keep it up and keep playing this beautiful football as that way we'll go through to the second round."

"We are halfway on the road to qualifying. If we get six points we should qualify, so 50 per cent after one match is excellent. It gives us some breathing space."

But Portugal's Manchester United 23-year-old star Cristiano Ronaldo, who took over the captaincy, was keeping his feet on the ground after the knock-out phase.

"If we continue like this we can go far at this Euro, but we have to stay calm, we haven't won anything yet."

The Czechs veteran coach Karel Bruckner insisted standards must be raised ahead of Portugal as his side looked a bit bereft of creative ideas and sorely missed the injured

playmaker and captain Tomas Rosicky.

He said: "We have to analyse our last game, because we weren't faultless and there are things to work on."

"Our next game will also be very difficult."

Bruckner brought Sverkos off the bench as their lone forward against the Swiss in place of towering Nuremberg striker Jan Koller and the move paid off with Sverkos hitting the winner.

"I don't believe I can replace a player like Jan Koller, maybe no one can," Sverkos said of Koller who will retire from the national side after the finals.

"If we stick to the current system, it's very important for the team that Jan plays."

"He works very hard for us, especially closing down defenders. He's a unique player in terms of bringing the ball down and playing it on the ground. I believe there is no player like him, not in our team, not in any team. He's unique."



Portugal midfielder Deco passes the ball as his teammates carry out a CV session in the background during training at Neuchatel on Monday.

## 'Goal was not offside'

AFP, Berne

Ruud van Nistelrooy's opener in Holland's 3-0 demolition of Italy here on Monday was not offside, the chairman of Austria's refereeing commission Gerhard Kapl insisted after the game.

According to Kapl the Dutch striker was played onside by Italian defender Christian Panucci, who had been injured moments earlier and who was behind the goalline as Van Nistelrooy fired home.

Kapl told Austrian news agency APA that, contrary to Italian protests, the decision by Swedish referee Peter Frøjfeld to award the goal was "100 per cent correct, without any doubt."

Kapl added that article 11.4.1. of the refereeing code stipulated that an opposing player cannot be offside when one of the last two defenders has left the field of play," as in the case of Panucci.

He explained the rule was precisely designed to prevent a team trying to provoke an offside deliberately in such circumstances as materialised in Monday's match.

## C'Ron the most handsome

AFP, Vienna

Portuguese star Cristiano Ronaldo is the hottest player at this year's European football championship and not just because of his dribbling skills, according to a Europe-wide women's survey.

The Manchester United striker was voted most beautiful player of the tournament, in a poll of 12,000 women carried out by electronics company LG.

French forward Thierry Henry came in second, ahead of injured Italian skipper Fabio Cannavaro and Freddie Ljungberg of Sweden who drew for third place.

Talent and his Latin good looks won Ronaldo the title, according to the survey.

His biggest fans were apparently Italian, German and Swedish women.

## Dutch press go wild

INTERNET, undated

Dutch newspapers ran out of superlatives on Tuesday to describe their team's convincing 3-0 victory over the highly fancied Italian team in their Euro 2008 opener. "A dream start" to the European championships was a widespread view after Sunday's memorable match in Berne, Switzerland.

Close to 7 million had viewed the triumph on television in pubs and at homes throughout this country of 16.4 million, according to initial statistics.

"This is the way to grab a European title," sports paper AD Sportwereld Pro trumpeted, predicting great things to come from Marco van Basten's orange-shirted squad.

The daily Trouw trumpeted: "Oranje demolishes the world champions."

De Volkskrant was at a loss for words in its own language, reaching instead for Italian. "Oranje Bellissimo," was emblazoned in huge letters across the broadsheet's front page.

"The team, so often criticized for average play, gave its best display in almost four years under Van Basten," it said, recalling the glory days of Dutch football of the 1970s, when the team took second place in the 1974 World Cup.

Players like Wesley Sneijder and Rafael van der Vaart had shown "drive, irrepressible energy, insight and, above all, technical skills," it said.