

NETHERLANDS V RUSSIA

Arshavin plots Dutch fall

AFP, Basel

Russian striker Andrei Arshavin has warned Marco van Basten's Holland to expect his side's attacking machine to hit top gear for Saturday's Euro 2008 quarterfinal here.

The 27-year-old forward was the man-of-the-match as Russia booked a last eight berth -- to set up a tantalising reunion between Russia's Dutch coach Guus Hiddink and his compatriots in what is in effect a rematch of the 1988 final between the Dutch and the then Soviet Union -- with a 2-0 win over Sweden in Innsbruck on Wednesday night to clinch second place in Group D behind Spain.

The Zenit St Petersburg star says his side squandered numerous chances against the Swedes -- just as they did in the 1-0 win against Greece -- and insists the Dutch could feel the full force of their goalscoring fire-power at St Jakob-Park on Saturday.

"I don't think we needed to score that many goals in the Swedish game," said Arshavin.

"We need to save them for the next games and I hope we will score a few against the Dutch."

Having sat out Russia's first two Euro 2008 matches through suspension, Arshavin showed what his side had been missing as he dominated Sweden.

He provided the movement which led to Roman Pavlyuchenko's 24th-minute opener and then turned goal-scorer himself on 50 minutes to set

up the meeting with van Basten's powerful Dutch team.

And for Russia's former Holland coach Guus Hiddink, Saturday's game promises to be a special occasion.

"Why not," replied Hiddink to a question regarding whether his side could beat the Dutch.

"The only thing that worries me is that the Dutch will have had five days more rest than us (as most of the first team missed the Romania clash)."

"That is not insignificant."

"It will be a special match for me. I know everybody there, the coach, the players."

"What really gives me pleasure is two footballing sides taking each other on. It will be a great match."

"It is a very special date for me," added the 61-year-old, who guided the Dutch to the 1998 World Cup semifinals where they lost to Brazil in a penalty shootout.

But Arshavin says Russia will have their work cut out against "the best side" at Euro 2008.

"If we didn't have to play the Netherlands, we would feel much better, because I think they are the best side here," he said.

"But fate has it that we have to play the strongest team in the tournament in the last eight."

"I hope we will be able to match them."

The Dutch, who have hammered both World Cup finalists Italy (3-0) and France (4-1), on the way to the quarterfinals have been setting the Euro 2008 agenda with some beautiful attacking football.

Van Basten believes his side can go on to emulate the squad he inspired to victory in the 1988 European Championships, scoring one of the greatest goals the championships or indeed any finals has ever witnessed in the final against the Soviets.

"The atmosphere is good. The players are working well together and having a good time," said the former AC Milan ace.

"If we continue playing like this I don't know where exactly we are going to end up but I hope it is going to take a long time," van Basten said.

Van Basten, who is stepping down after the tournament to take over at one of his former clubs Ajax, said the group matches had been a joy to behold but now they were getting to the business end of things where one mistake could be the end of the dream.

"We have made a great start. But Saturday is another match altogether and we have to start again from zero," said van Basten.

Another incentive for them to beat Russia will be as a mark of respect for defender Khalid Boulahrouz who has declared himself fit to play Saturday's game despite the death of his prematurely-born baby daughter during the week.

"I understand that it is really hard for Khalid and we will have to support him as best we can," said van Basten.

"Still, our focus has to be on Russia and that is what Khalid also wants."



Russian star Andrei Arshavin tries a trick during a training session in Leogang on Thursday ahead of their Saturday's Euro 2008 quarterfinal against the Netherlands.

Press slams defence

AFP, Lisbon

The Portuguese defence and goalkeeper Ricardo took a hammering from the domestic press on Friday following their 3-2 defeat by Germany in Thursday's Euro 2008 quarterfinal.

"The daily newspaper Publico was especially scathing about the lackadaisical marking which saw Miroslav Klose and Michael Ballack head home unopposed -- even if the latter slightly shoved Paolo Ferreira in the back."

"German effectiveness and passive Portuguese defending, were the two factors for Portugal's elimination," wrote Publico.

"It's the end of a dream," was how Record saw it.

"The decisive German goal was virtually a mirror image of the one that cost us the title in 2004 (they lost 1-0 as hosts to Greece, through a header by Angelos Charisteas). Ricardo ill advisedly came out of his goal."

"Ricardo lets the dream evaporate", recounted 'Jornal de Noticias' in capital letters just to make the goalkeeper, who would probably have not played in the tournament if Quim had not suffered an injury prior to their first match, feel better.

Sports daily 'Bola's' front page regretted the "sad destiny" for Portugal, which saw some good performances but once again their campaign "rests on a moral victory", but also found the reasons for the defeat "left a bitter taste": "defending like that, it was impossible for Portugal to go far."

The photos showed the players' reactions as the final whistle blew, but the analysis by one of their journalists was to the point: the passivity and the loss of concentration of the Portuguese defenders made life 'easy' for the Germans, who knew how to play "in a cold and calculating fashion".

Swedish referee Peter Fröjdelft doesn't escape censure either -- photos of Ballack pushing Ferreira are all over the papers -- as Record blames him for "a massive mistake" for not seeing Ballack's shove on the Portuguese defender.

New coach will be named in mid-July

AFP, Neuchâtel

The successor to Luiz Felipe Scolari as Portugal coach will be named by mid-July the president of the Portuguese Football Federation announced on Friday.

Gilberto Madail said all the potential candidates would be discussed next week, but admitted it wouldn't be easy given the narrow time frame.

"All the possible successors will be discussed next week," said Madail.

"It is not an easy task because we have to find a replacement for Luiz Felipe Scolari by mid-July."

Madail stressed that the successful candidate had to be a fluent Portuguese speaker.

"It is important to learn to speak Portuguese so he can communicate with the players," said Madail.

"The coach must be a proven winner, and to be ambitious."

"And above all else, he must have the respect of the players whilst his target will be to qualify the team for the 2010 World Cup finals."

One of the potential targets is thought to be Carlos Queiroz, assistant to Sir Alex Ferguson at Manchester United, though, he did have one unsuccessful spell at Real Madrid.

Carlo confident of victory

AFP, Rome

AC Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti has told La Gazzetta dello Sport he does not envisage Italy missing suspended World Cup winning midfielder duo Andrea Pirlo and Gennaro Gattuso in their Euro 2008 quarterfinal against Spain.

The pair both picked up second yellow cards in the Azzurri's 2-0 win over France, but their coach at club level feels that Roberto Donadoni's squad are more than adequately equipped to compensate for their absence.

"Unfortunately we (AC Milan) have never found a replacement for Pirlo, but in the national team there's many good players and Donadoni has an embarrassment of riches between Mauro Camoranesi, Alberto Aquilani and Simone Perrotta."

"I would say he (Aquilani) is ready. I see in him a good technical quality, but he is less powerful and dynamic."

Ancelotti, who was in the line-up alongside Donadoni when Italy beat Spain 1-0 in the Euro '88 quarterfinals, has been impressed

by Luis Aragones' team, but remains confident of another Italy victory.

"Spain are a team that likes to touch the ball and plays slowly, then quickly increase their pace. We have to attack their weak spot, on the right side of defence where Joan Capdevilla plays."

"Italy will win though because they are a more aggressive and complete side."

TODAY'S MATCH			
Teams	Time	Venue	
Netherlands v Russia	12:45pm (Sunday)	Basel	

The Milan coach has a good pedigree against Spain in international competitions and was assistant coach to Arrigo Sacchi when Italy made it past Spain in the quarterfinals of the 1994 World Cup.

Now he feels that Italy are starting to find their stride again and believes his new signing at the San Siro, Gianluca Zambrotta has been the pick of the team.

He also hopes that striker Antonio Cassano can keep demonstrating his newfound maturity in the starting line-up.

"After France we turned the corner and now we don't need to fear anyone."

"I've enjoyed Zambrotta's performances a lot, apart from his mistake against Romania. He has seemed energised and in form. Cassano is a great player if he main-

tains his discipline. Until now he has played his part."

The 49-year-old feels that Holland remains the favourite for the title, but the East European teams have surprised him so far.

"I have enjoyed Holland the most because no-one expected them to play to so high a level. I was struck by Croatia's development, but then Russia made a strong impression against Sweden."

Barzagli to train in a fortnight

AFP, Vienna

Italian defender Andrea Barzagli underwent a successful operation on his left knee here on Friday, the head doctor of Euro 2008 announced.

The 27-year-old VfL Wolfsburg defender -- capped 23 times -- had injured his knee in training on Thursday as the world champions prepared for Sunday's quarterfinal with Spain, ending his hopes of playing any further part in the tournament.

"The operation took 30 minutes and was a resounding success," Dr Gablertol AFP.

"Andrea Barzagli should be able to resume training in a fortnight," added Dr Gablertol, who combined with Italian team surgeon Andrea Ferretti on the operation, just as he had done with World Cup winning captain Fabio Cannavaro prior to the tournament.

Barzagli, a former Palermo captain and a member of the 2006 World Cup winning squad, played in the opening 3-0 defeat by Holland but hasn't played since.

With his withdrawal the Italians are down to the bare bones for centre halves with youngster Giorgio Chiellini, Alessandro Gamberini -- called up in place of Cannavaro -- and Marco Materazzi, who lost his place after the opening-game mauling by Holland.

Against the Spanish Chiellini, 23, is likely to be paired with the 35-year-old Christian Panucci, as was the case in the draw against Romania and the win over France.

Germans rejoice last four place

AFP, Berlin

Germans prepared to celebrate into the night on Thursday after their football team beat fancied Portugal to reach the semifinals of Euro 2008.

From reserved Hamburg in the north to classy Munich in the south via bohemian Berlin fans took to the streets sounding their klaxons and setting off firecrackers following an exciting 3-2 win by Die Mannschaft, which has won the title three times in the past.

In Berlin a group of flag-waving youngsters several hundred strong, their faces painted black, red and gold and chanting "Deutschland, Deutschland," raced through the capital's main boulevards while an AFP correspondent reported frenzied celebrations on the central Potsdamerplatz square.

Many Germans, thousands of whom have hung national flags from their window sills, had been worried they might find the stylish Portuguese a bridge too far after they had managed a bare minimum 1-0 win over neighbours Austria in their final group game.

But led by the combative Michael Ballack and Bastian Schweinsteiger the Germans pulled off a deserved win.

Now, fans who espied a new dawn in a run to the World Cup semifinals in Germany two years ago are hoping they can go all the way and win their first trophy in 12 years.

In Berlin and numerous other towns the Turkish flag is also hanging from windows given Germany's sizeable Turkish community.

If the Turks can see off Croatia in their quarterfinal on Friday they will meet the Germans in the semis on June 25 in Basel, Switzerland.

'Criticism inspired us'

AFP, Basel

Germany captain Michael Ballack said his side used the criticism levelled at them after their shock group stage defeat by Croatia to knock Portugal out of Euro 2008 with a 3-2 victory.

The 31-year-old Chelsea midfielder scored Germany's third goal to sink Portugal on Thursday after Bayern midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger and striker Miroslav Klose had scored first-half goals.

The Germans only made the last eight as Group B runners up behind Croatia thanks to an uninspiring 1-0 win over Austria on Monday, but they turned in a five-star performance against a substandard Portugal, who showed none of the sparkling form which impressed in Group A.

And Ballack insists his side are

now back to their best ahead of next Wednesday's semifinal here at Basel's St Jakob-Park stadium against the winner of Friday's Croatia-Turkey quarterfinal in Vienna.

"After the Croatia game, we had a small low," said Ballack, who headed home Schweinsteiger's free-kick for Germany's third goal.

"We were not happy about the performance against Croatia, or the criticism we had to take."

"The team were outstanding against Austria, even though the pressure was immense."

"Against Portugal, we showed how well we can play and we are now at the level we need to be."

And Germany defender Philipp Lahm says the belief in the German camp is so strong they can go all the way to the final in Vienna on June 29.

"Belief is everything," said the Bayern Munich star.

"Otherwise nothing is possible. We played with so much courage."

"We won against Portugal and now we are in the semifinal, that has all been done with team spirit."

Attacking midfielder Lukas Podolski said the team wanted to win for Germany coach Joachim Loew, who was banned from the sidelines after being sent off against Austria for arguing with the fourth official.

Podolski brushed off a calf injury he suffered against Austria to supply the pin-point accurate cross which Schweinsteiger converted to kick-start the victory.

"We had to accept UEFA's decision and play with or without the coach, but we wanted to win for him," said Podolski, who has scored three times so far.

"It doesn't matter now who we get in the semifinal, we will be ready."



Germany captain Michael Ballack celebrates after their Euro 2008 quarterfinal victory over Portugal at the St. Jakob Park Stadium in Basel on Thursday.

Scolari bemoans mistakes

AFP, Basel

Luiz Felipe Scolari claimed a major blunder by referee Peter Fröjdelft could have cost Portugal their chance of a place in the last four at Euro 2008.

Chelsea-bound Scolari's reign as Portugal coach came to an end with a 3-2 quarterfinal defeat by Germany, whose third goal was headed in by Michael Ballack after he had shoved Paulo Ferreira in the back.

That gave the Germans a 3-1 lead when Portugal were pressing for an equaliser and Scolari said the Swedish official should have spotted the foul, although he admitted that his side had also made errors in their defending of the set-pieces which led to two of the three goals they conceded.

"We thought Germany would be first in the group and as first in our group we would not face them until the semis," Scolari said.

"Germany came second and we had to face a team with quality, especially on free-kicks which

decided the game."

"What went wrong? The dead ball situations for one, and there were other things that did not go correctly. We had designated certain players to mark Ballack and others but the players changed who they were marking on the free-kicks and Germany made the most of that."

On the controversial third goal, Scolari said: "I do not want to say that the TV screens show Ballack clearly pushed our player. Unfortunately the referee did not see it and we stopped."

"I do not know if it would have changed the match. We could have lost by 2-1 but when we are pressing the opponent and we concede a third goal we have to start all over again, our opponents grow in stature."

"I can't guarantee it would have changed anything but it is a foul it has to be given by the referee."

Scolari's complaint was shrugged off by Germany's assistant coach, Hansi Flick, who directed operations from the dug-

out in the absence of suspended coach Joachim Loew.

"I think we do not have to think about that any more. We won 3-2 and the match is over. Whether or not it was a foul does not matter to me now."

Flick went on to pay tribute to man-of-the-match Bastian Schweinsteiger, who came back from suspension after being red-carded in the group stage defeat by Croatia to score the opening goal then make the other two.

"He promised to come up with a great performance and he lived up to that," said Flick, who described the win as a victory for meticulous German planning.

With Loew confined to the stands, nothing had been left to chance, he said.

"We had planned everything down to the last detail and in the end we executed the plan relatively easily."

"We fought from the first to the last minute and we can be proud and happy. Germany is a real tour-

nament team and can be very focused when it comes to the crunch."

Despite his frustration with the way his side defended, Scolari accepted responsibility for his squad's exit from the tournament.

"I am responsible for choosing the players and the tactics so the main person responsible for Portugal not being in the last four is the coach."

"It makes me very sad because we were good enough to be in the last four. We made some mistakes of attention but in general what the players did satisfied me and I am proud of having worked with them."

Scolari also wistfully dismissed a suggestion that the announcement of his departure for Chelsea may have influenced Portugal's fate.

"If I had not announced we would have lost anyway. We lost because we did not do things right or with more quality. It has nothing to do with that."



German fans cheer as they watch their national team's Euro 2008 quarterfinal match against Portugal during a public viewing session in Berlin on Thursday.