

## A star is born as Arshavin shreds Dutch in Euro 2008

Andrei Arshavin was unable to collect his man-of-the-match award after being selected for the post-match doping control, but that was about the only thing that stopped him in Basle Saturday night.

The Dutch defence or midfield certainly could not handle him. Not only was Arshavin the inspiration for Russia in a memorable 3-1 extra-time defeat of the Netherlands, he demonstrated once again at Euro 2008 that a new star has arrived on the world football stage.

Arshavin earned the man-of-the-match award for the second straight game after missing Russia's opening two matches through suspension, before showing what the tournament had missed in the 2-0 win over Sweden just three days ago.

Arshavin made an erstwhile strong Dutch defence look a sorry state at times as he set up one goal and scored the last himself as Russia swept in the semi-finals.

By the end of the 120 minutes, the little playmaker looked unstoppable, and centre-back Andre Ooijer must have been pleased to hear the final whistle.

Russia's Dutch coach Guus Hiddink had only words of praise.

'We already saw in the Sweden game that although he did not have the same fitness because of his suspension he has tremendous skill.

'He is one of the boys who knows how to dribble and run into the zone of the defence where the defenders can run with him but not attack him.

'He is so nice to work with, this guy, because he is a natural winner.'

The 27-year-old, who likes to drift in from midfield to support the attack, had already been a stand-out figure for Zenit St. Petersburg this season on their run to the UEFA Cup title.

He began the quarter-final relatively quietly in a tentative opening spell from both sides, but his influence on the game became increasingly apparent the longer it wore on.

Dutch keeper Edwin van der Sar was forced to stretch in the 32nd minute when Arshavin took on Ooijer and jinked into a shooting position.

An audacious free-kick then flashed across goal and moments later he begun the move that led to Sergei Semak crossing for Roman Payluchenko to open the scoring in the 56th minute.

After Ruud van Nistelrooy had headed an 86th-minute equalizer, the Russians - and Arshavin in particular - took over and a series of chances were wasted before he set up substitute Dmitiri Torbinsky for a second goal in the 112th minute.

With the Dutch a spent force, he rounded off a memorable performance four minutes later by leaving Ooijer standing to smash in the third.

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