

Van Persie rewards Oranje faith

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Robin van Persie came into UEFA EURO 2008^{™} having not played since the end of April due to a thigh injury. If there were any doubts about his fitness, though, they were removed with a sparkling performance in the Netherlands' 2-0 defeat of Romania.

Star performance

Van Persie, who scored as a substitute in the 4-1 win against France on Thursday, was part of a much changed lineup in Berne. With the Oranje having already clinched first place in Group C and a quarter-final against either Russia or Sweden on Saturday, coach Marco van Basten had the opportunity to rest some of his first-choice XI. Arjen Robben, Klaas-Jan Huntelaar and Van Persie are not bad reserves to bring in, however, and the Arsenal FC attacker in particular shone with forceful runs, incisive passes and, towards the end, the goal that clinched a 2-0 win. For himself, it sealed the Carlsberg Man of the Match award, selected by the UEFA Technical Team.

Coach's praise

The Netherlands coach had broken his rule of not bringing injured players to tournaments in selecting Van Persie, and expressed delight that his faith had paid off. "I am very happy for him," Van Basten said. "He had a long and difficult time without playing and he was completely fit when the tournament started. Now he has finally played 90 minutes. He didn't start easily but worked hard and after all his hard work, he was rewarded with a nice goal. In the end everybody was happy."

'Great job'

One of the UEFA Technical Team that picked Van Persie was former Hungary coach György Mezey, and he was full of praise for the 24-year-old. "He did a very great job because as a second striker he selected good balls, had good distribution and, if needed, he went to the main striker position," Mezey said: "He showed very nice control for the goal, a great shot, so no question about it, he was man of the match."(uefa.com)