

Chicharito hero again

Football

AFP, London

Javier Hernandez struck a last-gasp winner as holders Manchester United booked their place in the League Cup quarterfinals with a 3-2 victory over Wolves on Tuesday.

Hernandez -- who scored both goals in United's dramatic late victory over Stoke on Sunday -- rode to the Red Devils rescue one more after coming on as a substitute nine minutes from time at Old Trafford.

The 22-year-old striker looked threatening from the moment he was introduced before surging into the Wolves area, wrong footing his marker and rifling in a 90th minute winner.

The Mexican international's match-winning cameo came after United had twice taken the lead in the second half through Portuguese signing Bebe and Park Ji-Sung only for Wolves to level through George Elokobi and Kevin Foley.

United boss Sir Alex Ferguson lavished praise on Hernandez after a victory which keeps the English giants on course for a third successive League Cup.

"We tend to build up heroes very quickly here but the boy's justifying the praise at the moment," Ferguson said. "He's such a great professional, the kid."

"He's first in, last out at the training ground every day. His goalscoring is getting him a lot of credit and quite rightly. When he came on you just knew that if he got a chance he'd take it."

United's captain for the night Wes Brown said Hernandez -- nicknamed Chicharito (Little Pea) -- was rapidly emerging as a cult hero at Old Trafford.

"He's got a great attitude to the game. He's a player who wants to learn and score goals and is good at it," Brown told Sky Sports. "He tries his hardest and deserves his goal at the end. He's a new cult hero and I'm sure he can keep it going."

Team-mate Park Ji-sung added: "He's unbelievable. We saw he's a natural goalscorer - it's good to have 'Chicharito'."

In other fourth round matches Tuesday, Northampton's dreams of a place in the quarterfinals ended in a 3-1 defeat by Ipswich at Portman Road.

Northampton -- who had accounted for Liverpool in the previous round -- looked set to extend their giant-killing run when Liam Davis fired the Cobblers into the lead on 16 minutes.

But Roy Keane's side got back on level terms ten minutes later through Carlos Edwards and took the lead on the stroke of half-time through Damien Delaney before Tamas Priskin completed the scoring with a late header.

West Bromwich Albion booked their place in the last eight with a 4-1 victory at Leicester, two goals from Simon Cox and one each from Somen Tchoyi and Steven Reid emphasising the gulf in class between the two sides.

Leicester's sole effort came from a Nicky Shorey own goal shortly after half-time.

At the DW Stadium, Wigan boss Roberto Martinez saw the Latics ease into the last eight with a 2-0 victory over his previous employers Swansea.

Argentinian signing Mauro Boselli's first goal for Wigan set the Premier League side on the way to victory before Ben Watson sealed the victory in injury time with a penalty.

At St Andrews, Birmingham had veteran striker Kevin Phillips to thank as they squeezed through 4-3 on penalties against Brentford after the two sides finished deadlocked at 1-1 after extra time.

Phillips scrambled in an equaliser in the second minute of stoppage time to make it 1-1 and force extra-time after Sam Wood had given Brentford the lead midway through the second half.

Birmingham 1 (Phillips 90) Brentford 1 (Wood 68) (After extra-time; Birmingham win 4-3 on penalties)
Ipswich 3 (Edwards 26, Delaney 44, Priskin 88) Northampton 1 (Davis 16)
Leicester 1 (Shorey 53-og) West Brom 4 (Cox 21, 90, Tchoyi 62, Reid 79)
Man Utd 3 (Bebe 56, Park Ji-Sung 70, Hernandez 90) Wolves 2 (Elokobi 60, Foley 76)
Wigan 2 (Boselli 51, Watson 90)



Manchester United starlet Javier Hernandez (R) fires home the winning goal against Wolves in the dying seconds of their Carling cup encounter at Old Trafford on Tuesday.

Bookies tip Sneijder

Football

AFP, Paris

Despite the heartbreak of losing the World Cup final with the Netherlands, Wesley Sneijder is the bookmakers' favourite to walk away with the inaugural FIFA Ballon d'Or award.

The attacking midfielder was on the losing side in Johannesburg on July 11, when Spain defeated Holland 1-0 to claim their first ever World Cup title.

Spanish midfielders Xavi and Andres Iniesta are also strong contenders for the prestigious prize, but the presence of the Barcelona pair on the shortlist could split the pro-Spanish votes to Sneijder's advantage.

More significantly, the 26-year-old Dutchman enjoyed a glittering debut season at Inter Milan that culminated in an unprecedented treble of the Italian league title, the Coppa Italia (Italian Cup) and the European Champions League.

Sneijder leads the running for the award at 6-4 with British bookmakers William Hill, while Xavi is at 7/2 and Iniesta, who scored the extra-time winner in the World Cup final, is at 11/2.

The FIFA Ballon d'Or gala takes place in Zurich on January 10 and the ceremony will mark the marriage of FIFA's World Player of the Year prize and the Ballon d'Or, which has been awarded by France Football magazine since 1956.

In recent years the two awards have often gone to the same player and Barcelona forward Lionel Messi is the current holder of both trophies.

The prolific Argentine attacker failed to truly sparkle at the World Cup, as his country fell to Germany in the quarterfinals, but he is at 4/1 with William Hill after netting 45 goals in all competitions for Barcelona last season.

The shortlist for the FIFA Ballon d'Or is dominated by players who starred at the World Cup in South Africa and the award has traditionally been awarded to players who have excelled in the quadrennial showpiece.

Fabio Cannavaro doubled up in the Ballon d'Or and the FIFA World Player of the Year after captaining Italy to World Cup glory in 2006, four years after Ronaldo's feats with Brazil in 2002 were similarly rewarded.

David Villa, Spain's top scorer at the World Cup with five goals, is at 9/1 with William Hill, with Uruguay striker Diego Forlan, the player of the tournament, at 16/1 and Germany's Golden Boot winner Thomas Mueller at 33-1.

Seven Spanish players made the shortlist, with goalkeeper Iker Casillas, centre-back Carlos Puyol and midfielders Xabi Alonso and Cesc Fabregas joining Xavi, Iniesta and Villa among the 23 nominees.

Conspicuous by his absence, however, was Inter's Argentine striker Diego Milito, who scored 32 times last season -- including both goals in the 2-0 Champions League final victory over Bayern Munich -- but failed to make an impact at the World Cup.

High-profile failure at the World Cup was also responsible for the absence from the shortlist of any players from European heavyweights England, France and Italy.

Combining the voting criteria from the FIFA award and the Ballon d'Or, the winner of the new prize will be voted for by the captains and head coaches of the national teams as well as media representatives chosen by France Football.

January's ceremony will also see FIFA issue their first ever award for the World Coach of the Year.

Spain coach Vicente del Bosque leads the 10-man shortlist, but he is likely to face a strong challenge from Portuguese tactical maestro Jose Mourinho, who led Inter to the treble before joining Real Madrid in the summer.

In the women's FIFA World Player of the Year award, star Brazilian forward Marta is aiming to win an unprecedented fifth consecutive gong following her move to American outfit FC Gold Pride.

Stiles' 1966 WC medal sets WR

Football

AFP, London

A 1966 World Cup winner's medal owned by England football hero Nobby Stiles set a new world record after being sold at auction in Scotland on Wednesday.

Stiles' gold medal was snapped up for 188,200 pounds (297,000 dollars, 215,000 euros) by the player's former club Manchester United -- a world record figure for any football medal sold at auction.

United plan to put the object in the club's museum. United also paid 49,400 pounds for Stiles' winner's medal from the Red Devils' 1968 European Cup triumph over Benfica at Wembley, a spokeswoman from Convery Auctions told AFP.

The cap Stiles earned from the 1966 World Cup final, when hosts England beat West Germany 4-2 after extra time, went for 35,287 pounds.

Stiles, 68, told the BBC he was selling his memorabilia to help provide for his family.

"It was always my intention to leave the entire collection to my children," Stiles said. "But I have three sons -- how do you fairly divide up this sort of collection between them?"

"They have each selected some pieces they would like to keep for themselves."

The tough-tackling Stiles played 28 times for England between 1965 and 1970, scoring once.

Laser pointed at Ronaldo

Football

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid star Cristiano Ronaldo was targeted by a laser during the goalless King's Cup draw at third-tier side Murcia, in the latest in a string of similar incidents, Spanish media reported on Wednesday.

The green laser was pointed at the 25-year-old's face at the Nueva Condomina stadium on Tuesday night during the 72nd minute of the match just as he was lining up to take a free-kick, sports daily Marca reported.

The newspaper published pictures of the Portuguese international taken during the match that showed a green glow from the laser on his forehead as well as on his cheek.

The guilty fan was able to avoid being caught by stadium officials, the newspaper said.

Ronaldo has been targeted by lasers at other stadiums in the past as well, including Barcelona's Nou Camp, Marseille's Stade Velodrome and Lyon's Stade Gerland.

In March 2008, European football's governing body UEFA fined Lyon 5,000 Swiss francs (3,675 euros) after the French club's supporters used a laser on Ronaldo during a Champions League clash with Manchester United, his club at the time.

Television pictures showed Ronaldo being targeted by a green light both before and during the first knockout round tie at Lyon on February 20.

Bayern KO Werder

Football

AFP, Munich

Bastian Schweinsteiger has said German Cup holders Bayern Munich are delighted to be safely into the third round after they came from behind to inflict a 2-1 defeat on rivals Werder Bremen.

In a re-match of last season's German Cup final, Schweinsteiger scored the winner in the 75th-minute at Munich's Allianz Arena on Tuesday and the Germany star said his side were delighted to come through the second-round tie.

Ex-Bayern striker Claudio Pizarro put Bremen ahead with an early goal before Schweinsteiger equalised after veteran French defender Mickael Silvestre failed to move out with the rest of his defenders and put him onside.

Werder dominated the second-half but Pizarro had a header cleared off the line and Marko Arnautovic's freekick hit the post.

Schweinsteiger then netted the winner with a superb shot from 20 metres to give Bayern a welcome boost as their poor early season league form sees them 12 points behind surprise leaders Mainz.

Owen defends players

Football

AFP, London

Manchester United striker Michael Owen has come out in defence of his fellow professionals saying that not all of them are overpaid, arrogant and with over-sized egos.

His comments follow another round of negative headlines regarding the behaviour of some high earners in the Premier League stemming from Wayne Rooney's massive new contract at Old Trafford.

This came against the backdrop of the government's recent spending review, with footballers becoming an easy target for critics, with some quick to brand them as being out of touch with the rest of society.

Owen insists that such sweeping generalisations are unfair on many professionals.

"People like to judge footballers as a whole, but I think that's pretty unfair," Owen told BBC Radio 5 Live.

"Everyone's different. I've met some footballers that are absolutely fantastic people, are always visiting sick kids, they do things for charities, but they don't ask for any press coverage."

"They just go about it because they want to do it. Some don't, but that's not to say they're bad people."

"I think it's dangerous if you generalise and say 'all footballers are this, all footballers are that'."

"We're all individuals, we all do our different things, and the common thing is we all go out on a Saturday afternoon and play on the football pitch."

"But apart from that every footballer's different."

Manchester United boss Sir Alex Ferguson has revealed that both he and the rest of the squad received an apology from Rooney for his recent comments regarding the club's direction, and Owen feels the 25-year-old was right to do so.

"A lot has been made out of it but half of it is just to fill papers because of the size of the club and the stature of the player," he said.

"Cutting out all the rubbish, the main thing is that he's signed."

"It's better having Wayne Rooney in your squad than not, so we're all happy in that way."

Hanover to name street after Enke

Football

AFP, Berlin

With the anniversary of his death set to be remembered on November 10, the Lower Saxony city of Hanover want to name a street after former Germany star Robert Enke who committed suicide last year.

Enke, 32, threw himself under a commuter train after suffering from bouts of depression and his death shocked football-mad Germany as the goalkeeper had been set to travel to the World Cup in South Africa this June.

The city of Hanover plans to name a street after him near Hanover 96's AWD-Arena in memory of the Bundesliga club's former captain.

"We are in talks," Hanover 96 boss Martin Kind told SID, an AFP subsidiary.

The relevant city authorities are consulting with Enke's widow Teresa on the implementation of the plans and the naming of the street is expected to take place next year.

Anton banned from driving

Football

AFP, London

Sunderland defender Anton Ferdinand was banned from driving for six months on Wednesday after being convicted of using a mobile phone while at the wheel of his car in July.

The 25-year-old -- brother of England captain Rio Ferdinand -- spoke only to confirm his name and address during a brief hearing before Newcastle magistrates.

Ferdinand was banned because he already had 12 points on his licence from a previous offence. The footballer was also fined 1,000 pounds and ordered to pay 85 pounds court costs.



Real Madrid superstar Cristiano Ronaldo reacts during their Copa del Rey tie against Real Murcia at the Condomina Stadium on Tuesday. Ronaldo was targeted by a laser during the goalless draw.

Jose happy despite draw

Football

AFP, Madrid

Spanish giants Real Madrid avoided a repeat of the humiliating Kings Cup loss to Alcorcon last season on Tuesday but were still held to a 0-0 draw by Third Division Real Murcia in their Last 32 first leg match.

Real coach Jose Mourinho had threatened his players with crucifixion should they suffer a similar 4-0 first leg defeat - which their 1-0 second leg victory proved insufficient to see them progress - but they rarely threatened to come away with a win either.

"I am happy with the team," said Mourinho. "It played enthusiastically and wanted to win."

"My criticism is directed at those who don't work hard enough and this is not the case here."

"I am happy with them even if the result is not satisfying because we always want to win."

French international striker Karim Benzema failed to impress in a match which the well-informed sports daily Marca had said would be his last chance to prove to Mourinho that he was worth keeping.

Benzema, who has failed to shine at Real since his multi-million euros move from Lyon last year, was eventually replaced just after the hour mark by his principal rival for the striker's role, Gonzalo Higuain.

Real - who last won this trophy in 1993 - saw their best chance go begging in the 31st minute when Esteban Granero's left-footed shot hit the bar.

Real's bitter rivals Barcelona came away with a 2-0 victory at Ceuta, a Spanish enclave in northern Morocco.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 "— De-Lovely"

4 Scatters seeds

8 Oxen's burden

12 Grazing area

13 Noble gas

14 Five-star review

15 Joey, e.g.

17 Finished

18 Space

19 Poisonous plant

21 Patsies

24 Atl. state

25 Maui

26 Second person

28 Opera's Dame Nellie

32 Grecian vessels

34 Use a crowbar

36 Timbuktu's country

37 Hard-wood tree with small nuts

39 Retriever type, for short

41 A Bobbsey twin

42 Listener

44 Impor-tance

46 Loot

50 Wilde-beest

51 Rodgers collaborator

52 Finger with milky juice

55 Advan-tage

57 Vicinity

58 Festive

59 Garden intruder

60 "Cheers" order

61 Away from

62 Present

22 Present

23 Bribe

27 Web address

29 Tongue

30 Just so-so

31 "— She Sweet"

33 Having an aroma

35 Deviate off course

38 Pos-sessed

40 Mendi-cant

43 Curative center

45 Hostel

46 "That's a relief!"

47 Stow cargo

48 Craving

49 Excep-tional

53 Born

54 Author Fleming

55 Caustic solution

DOWN

1 Sort

2 Afternoon

3 Blood-red

4 Quick and lively

5 "— the ramparts

6 Lumber

7 Hairnet

8 Dilemma

9 Volcanic outflow

10 It takes the cake

Solution time: 25 mins.

U P S S O C K E L S E
T A U T H A T M E E K
N I L N E R O S O N A
H A Z E L O N E
S T E T D E B T S
I M P L O R E S S L O E
N I L N E R O S O N A
D R U M I M P L I C I T
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S E A U S U R P
I M P L E M E N T R O G
F E T A B L A H G A G
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51				52	53				54	55
56					57				58	
59					60					61

CRYPTOQUIP

C J P B W G W O U K G J N K S V B

S V K N W U C M I W A W C T X N W U

X U Y W O N Z T W O V Y W A J K N I Z K K A W T :

" K X N Z T U X M O J P S N I A J Y W "

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF SOMEONE ACCUSES MY DOG OF LEAVING ITS HAIR ALL OVER THE FURNITURE, I'LL CRY "YOU SHED IT!"

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: C equals B