



Manchester United striker Wayne Rooney (C) celebrates his all-important goal against Chelsea during their Champions League quarterfinal at Stamford Bridge on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Rooney banishes Bridge hoodoo

AFP, London

Wayne Rooney scored the only goal as Manchester United put one foot in the semifinals of the Champions League here Wednesday with a 1-0 victory over Chelsea.

Rooney -- who has been at the centre of a furore over his foul-mouthed tirade at a television camera last weekend -- shrugged off his troubles to fire United ahead on 24 minutes.

But the match ended in deep controversy after Chelsea were denied a clear penalty when Patrice Evra brought down Ramires in the penalty area deep into injury time.

The victory was United's first over Chelsea at Stamford Bridge since 2002 and left Sir Alex Ferguson's side firm favourites to progress from the quarter-finals ahead of next Tuesday's second leg at Old Trafford.

But the defeat has left Chelsea with a daunting task if they are to

achieve their dream of winning the only piece of silverware that has eluded since Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich's 2003 takeover of the club.

Only twice before in the Champions League knockout rounds has a team recovered from losing a first leg match at home to advance to the next round.

A scrappy first half saw both sides struggled to establish dominance early on, 50-million-pound signing Fernando Torres testing United keeper Edwin van der Sar with a low shot after only seven minutes.

Chelsea's early pressure almost resulted in a goal on 19 minutes when clever play released Didier Drogba inside the penalty area.

The Ivorian striker's shot was firm but van der Sar was equal to the challenge, tipping over for a corner.

United meanwhile appeared happy to soak up the pressure and look for openings on the break, and on 24 minutes they took the lead with their first meaningful foray into Chelsea territory.

Michael Carrick swung a pass out to the right flank and the evergreen Ryan Giggs, 37, roared up on the left flank to beat Jose Bosingwa on the outside before cutting back to Rooney, whose low shot went in off the post.

The goal stunned Chelsea and for much of the remainder of the half they looked out of sorts against an increasingly composed United.

Torres gave United a brief scare on 35 minutes when he raced into the area and tumbled over under pressure from Vidic, but Spanish referee Alberto Undiano was unimpressed with half-hearted appeals for a penalty.

Moments later United boss Ferguson was off his bench in protest after young striker Javier Hernandez was flattened by a high boot from Chelsea fullback Yuri Zhirkov, who was booked for the challenge.

Yet as half-time neared Chelsea began to trouble United, and should have levelled when a cross from Drogba came back off the post and fell to Frank Lampard, whose close-

range shot was cleared off the line by Evra.

Chelsea enjoyed the better chances of the second half, Ramires heading wide on 50 minutes after good work by Drogba down the right.

An overhead kick from Drogba went wide on 57 minutes, but United rarely looked in difficulty despite Chelsea's territorial dominance.

A fractious encounter saw referee Undiano brandish his yellow card with regularity, Ramires and Essien both getting booked.

Chelsea thought they had equalised on 74 minutes when Torres guided a fine header to the back post but van der Sar pulled off a wonderful save to preserve United's lead.

As injury time wound down Chelsea had loud appeals for a penalty waved away after Evra brought down Ramires, but Undiano was unimpressed.

To add insult to injury, Torres was then booked for diving after going over too easily in the penalty area.

# Ancelotti slams ref

AFP, London



Chelsea manager Carlo Ancelotti lashed out at Spanish referee Alberto Undiano after his side were denied a certain penalty against Manchester United here Wednesday.

Chelsea's players were left fuming after Undiano waved away appeals for a spot-kick when United defender Patrice Evra clattered into the Blues Brazilian midfielder Ramires deep into injury time.

Television replays showed Evra had taken out Ramires without touching the ball but instead of a penalty that might have levelled the Champions League quarterfinal first leg at 1-1, Chelsea were beaten 1-0.

Ancelotti could not hide his disgust afterwards, accusing Undiano of lacking the "courage" to award a penalty in the final seconds of the match.

"It was clear. Everyone knows that it was clear," Ancelotti said. "The problem is that sometimes it is not easy to give the penalty in the last minute of a game. You need to have personality, courage and so on."

"And not always the referees in general have these kind of skills."

Ancelotti admitted he had confronted Undiano as the referee left the pitch.

"I said that was a penalty and he needed to whistle," he said. "No answer."

Ancelotti urged his team to put aside their grievances and focus on turning around a 1-0 first leg defeat in next Tuesday's return fixture at Old Trafford.

History is stacked against Ancelotti's men: only twice before in the history of the Champions League has a team that lost a first leg at home gone on to win a tie outright.

# Rooney ban upheld

AFP, London

Manchester United star Wayne Rooney has been banned for two matches following his expletive-laden tirade at a television camera, the FA confirmed Thursday.

Rooney will now miss United's upcoming Premier League clash with Fulham as well as their FA Cup semifinal clash with Manchester City on April 16 after an appeal by the club was rejected.

Rooney had surprisingly been charged with using abusive language after he swore into a camera following his hattrick in the 4-2 win over West Ham at Upton Park last Saturday.

The charge carried a mandatory two-match suspension but United had appealed to have the ban cut to one match at a hearing on Wednesday.

"Rooney had admitted a charge for the use of offensive, insulting and/or abusive language, but claimed that the automatic penalty of two games was clearly excessive," an FA statement said.

"The commission did not accept the claim and Rooney will begin the standard two match suspension with immediate effect."

News of the ban came after Rooney scored the winning goal in Manchester United's 1-0 victory over Chelsea in the Champions League quarter-finals at Stamford Bridge on Wednesday.

Rooney said in a statement he was "gutted" at the outcome.

"I am gutted to miss two matches, one of which is an FA Cup semifinal at Wembley," Rooney said.

## SPORTS POLL

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# Another Barca signature show

AFP, Barcelona

Barcelona took a major step towards the Champions League semifinals with a commanding 5-1 win over Shakhtar Donetsk as clinical finishing proved the difference between the sides.

Andres Iniesta gave Barca a lead right from the start but Shakhtar spurned a number of good chances to draw level before Dani Alves and Gerard Pique extended the lead.

Yaroslav Rakitskiy pulled a goal back for the Ukrainians but Seydou Keita immediately responded for the home side and then Xavi Hernandez gave the Catalan side a resounding win.

There were no real surprises in the Barcelona starting line-up with Pedro Rodriguez only fit enough for the bench and so Iniesta was pushed into attack with Keita providing a more defensive feel in midfield.

At the back as in the 1-0 victory over Villarreal at the weekend, Sergio Busquets started alongside Gerard Pique with Carles Puyol injured.

For Shakhtar, Dmytro Chygrynskiy missed the chance through injury of a return to the Nou Camp and show the home fans what he can really do after an ill-fated

season where he failed to justify his big money move.

Ahead of the game Barca coach Pep Guardiola warned against complacency as Shakhtar are a team which has improved season upon season. They have added to a solid base with a forward line of quality attacking Brazilians.

The last time the teams met in the 2009 UEFA Super Cup it took Barcelona until the 115th minute to score the only goal of the game but thanks to a lucky deflection they were ahead Wednesday after just two minutes with Iniesta calmly slotting past the keeper.

Experienced Shakhtar coach Mircea Lucescu has always been an exponent of attacking football and in an action packed opening spell they showed they had a forward line to hurt Barca.

In particular it was the pace of Luiz Adriano that was causing a danger and he had several excellent opportunities but his composure let him down.

He failed to take the ball in his stride after being put through and then after a delightful pass from Douglas Costa he prodded wide of the post.

While Leo Messi was a constant threat playing through the middle, Shakhtar were

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Barcelona wingback Daniel Alves (L) is at full stretch to score the second goal against Shakhtar Donetsk during their Champions League quarterfinal at Nou Camp on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP