



Mocked by Belgium's Thibaut Courtois for being too small, England shot-stopper Jordan Pickford showed he can be as big as anyone in front of goal as his outstretched left hand denied Colombia's Carlos Bacca as England banished their World Cup penalty shootout demons. PHOTO: REUTERS

# England are 'Diernamite!'

AFP, London

"Just Diernamite!" screamed the Sun after Eric Dier ended England's penalty hoodoo in Russia, slotting home the decisive spot-kick to beat Colombia and qualify for the World Cup quarter-finals.

A bare-chested, grinning Dier was labelled the "Coolest Man in Moscow" by the Daily Mail, who added with a touch of hyperbole: "The explosion of relief must have been heard in space."

The Daily Mirror hailed: "Justice as Lions win do-or-Dier shootout" following the 4-3 win on spot-kicks in Moscow.

England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford earned rave reviews, with the Sun hailing the "Hand of Jord", harking back to Diego Maradona's "Hand of God" incident in 1986, when the Argentine put the ball into the net with his hand.

The paper revels in being able to at last print: "It's the headline we have waited a lifetime to write... England win on penalties (Yes really!)"

The Times announced drily: "Souvenir edition -- commemorating an England penalty shootout win."

Several former referees writing in the press said Wilmar Barrios should have been sent off rather than just booked for an apparent head butt on Jordan Henderson.

"Cheats did not prosper. They barged and butted our young Lions but we win battle of Moscow," said the Daily Mail.

The Mirror labelled them: "Snarling, cynical Colombians," while the Sun said: "Brute Force -- Kane 'n Co hold their own in street fight."

Looking ahead to Saturday's quarter-final with Sweden in Samara, the media do not appear to have heeded manager Gareth Southgate's claim that England have underestimated the Swedes for years.

"Sweden are like watching bad old England. There is... Nothing to Fear," trumpeted the Daily Mail.

The Sun believes the shine of beating Colombia will be well and truly taken off should they slip up against the Swedes.

"Fors is Strong... Swedes have no stars... Three Lions shouldn't make Emil of it," said the Sun, referring to goalscorer Emil Forsberg, whose strike earned a 1-0 win against Switzerland.

# Pickford gets the upper hand

AFP, Saint Petersburg

Mocked by Belgium's Thibaut Courtois for being too small for a top-class goalkeeper, Jordan Pickford stood tall when England needed a penalty shootout hero to end years of pain from the spot.

On just his seventh international appearance, Pickford became the first England stopper in 20 years to save a penalty at a major tournament.

With the sides tied at 3-3 in the shootout, the Everton keeper leapt to his right and got a strong left hand to Carlos Bacca's strike, putting the Three Lions on course to win a knockout game for the first time since 2006.

It was a sweet moment for Pickford, and for his manager Gareth Southgate, whose decision to back the 24-year-old despite his inexperience and leave 75-time capped Joe Hart out of his squad was vindicated.

"I don't care if I'm not the biggest keeper," said the 6 feet 1 inch (1.85 metre) tall Pickford. "I've got that power and agility to get around the goal. I'm very good at it."

Pickford deserved to have won the game a lot earlier on a tense night in Moscow.

As the game entered stoppage time he flew high to his left to turn Mateus Uribe's blistering long-range effort behind.

Pickford had barely got to his feet, though, when Yerry Mina's towering header from the resulting corner brought Colombia level with a crushing blow that more mentally fragile England sides of the past may not have recovered from.

"It was a top-class save. I'm surprised he could reach it given his height," Southgate said with a wry smile.

"He's really athletic around the goal, he is excellent and he executed the plan in the penalty shootout."

Pickford was one of just two first-team regulars not rotated by Southgate against Belgium for England's final group game last week and was criticised for his technique in failing to stop Adnan Januzaj's effort that sealed top spot in Group G for the Red Devils.

"The goalkeeper is 10 centimetres smaller

than me," Chelsea's giant goalkeeper Courtois told Belgian website Voetbal24. "I would have caught it. He was too busy throwing his legs in the air."

Courtois was not alone. Former Manchester United captain Gary Neville, who also formed part of the England coaching team at Euro 2016, described Pickford's attempt to stop Januzaj's strike as "a bit strange".

"I've been criticised for going with my top hand, but as long as you save it, that's all that counts," said Pickford after silencing his critics. "I might be young but I've got good mental strength and experience and I used that."

Southgate has suffered more than most from England's penalty torture in the past. Even after Tuesday's success, he admitted his miss in the

Euro 1996 semi-final on home soil against Germany will live with him forever.

But in refusing to dismiss penalties as a lottery like many of his predecessors, his attention to detail paid off.

On top of psychometric tests for his players and incessant practice on the training ground, he even made sure Pickford handed the ball to each of his teammates to ensure opposite number David Ospina could not play any mind games by delaying their lonely walk from the centre circle even by a few seconds.

England had already waited too long to win on penalties. Thanks to Pickford that curse is now broken and their best chance in a generation to end 52 years of hurt at the World Cup remains intact.

# Pekerman fuming

REUTERS, Moscow

Colombia's efforts to reach the World Cup quarter-finals for the second straight time were hampered by refereeing interruptions and constant calls from England's players for fouls in the South Americans' last 16 loss on penalties, said coach Jose Pekerman.

Pekerman said the England players were demanding fouls which in his opinion were not, complaining to American referee Mark Geiger and affecting the flow of Colombia's game.

"There were many situations, as expected, and everybody knew the match would be like this and I think we have to try to defend football," the Argentine coach said.

"We have to do something to protect football when certain situations arise. It is uncomfortable to play this match with such refereeing decisions."

"When there are so many fouls that just cannot happen. We have to find ways to avoid that."

Pekerman said England's players were constantly attempting to force decisions.

"A player fakes a foul, they are trying to get the referee to book another player," he said. "There is a lot of confusion with this type of play. All those situations are determining situations."



James Rodriguez could only watch from the sidelines and shed a tear or two. PHOTO: COLLECTED

# Colombia fans mourn

REUTERS, Bogota

The piercing sound of horns and cheers of Colombia's football fans fell silent after their World Cup dreams were shattered in a nail-biting last-16 loss on penalties to England on Tuesday.

The teams faced a shootout after Colombia's Yerry Mina scored one of his signature headed goals in stoppage time to cancel out England captain Harry Kane's 57th minute penalty and the score was still level at 1-1 after extra time.

England have a traditionally poor record with penalties - they were the team's undoing at the 1990, 1998 and 2006 World Cup, as well as the 1996, 2004 and 2012 European Championship. But coach Gareth Southgate's team prevailed 4-3.

England will face Sweden in the quarter-finals. The game was rowdy, earning players a flurry of yellow cards, and Colombia vociferously protested the call that led to Kane's goal, the England forward grappling with Carlos Sanchez before the Colombian pushed him to the ground.

The Andean nation's capital, Bogota, came to a standstill as people tuned in to watch the "Cafeteros", with electrifying roars and loud gasps surging throughout the city each time either team came close to scoring.

Giant screens showed the match in many cities around the nation of nearly 50 million people and in downtown Bogota, where suited lawyers, policemen and street vendors cheered and then commiserated in front of a screen set amid the gray concrete streets, as office workers watched from the windows above.

"It was a good game - sad that we couldn't get through, but I'm proud of the team's effort," said 47-year-old shoe shiner Mauricio Sanchez, who spent much of the game standing atop his box of supplies, the better to see the screen.

Colombia's stand-out player from the tournament will be Mina, whose headers earned him the nickname "Mina de Oro" or gold mine, after they carried Colombia to victories against Senegal and Poland in the group stage.

Mina's performance earned accolades from spectators despite the team's loss, while midfielder Mateus Uribe, who fluffed the first of Colombia's two missed penalties, earned sympathy.

"The best player was Mina," said lawyer Adriana Palma, 33. "I'm really sad for Uribe."

At a screening in an English-themed bar in northern Bogota, British expatriates and tourists celebrated England's victory.

"It was a good match, but (I'm) always disappointed when the game goes to penalties - it doesn't show the true potential of the team," said Emma Kinsey, 32, a yoga instructor from Lincoln who lives in Bogota.

Last week's game against Senegal saw Colombia's key forward James Rodriguez forced off due to a swelling in his right calf. He had to miss Tuesday's match, watching from the sidelines.

Colombia have lost to England at the World Cup before. At France '98 the teams met in a group match and England won 2-0, thanks to goals by Darren Anderton and David Beckham, to advance to the last 16 where they lost to Argentina -- on penalties.



Londoners wildly celebrated England's nerve-wracking win in the penalty shootout against Colombia in the round of 16 on Tuesday. PHOTO: REUTERS

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# Zuniga retires

AFP, Bogota

Juan Camilo Zuniga, the player who ended Brazilian superstar Neymar's World Cup participation four years ago, announced his retirement on Wednesday.

The 32-year-old Colombian wing-back was involved in a collision with Neymar in a quarter-final match at the Brazilian World Cup in 2014 that resulted in the forward suffering a broken vertebrae.

Neymar's World Cup was over and without their talisman Brazil suffered the humiliation of losing 7-1 to eventual champions Germany in the semi-finals.

After himself suffering two injury-plagued years, an emotional Zuniga said: "Today I'm thinking about my future, my family. I'm stepping aside so that tomorrow, when I want to run around in the park with my children, I'll be able to do so."

# Monumental robbery, says Maradona

REUTERS, Nizhny Novgorod

Argentine great Diego Maradona said England perpetrated a "monumental robbery" in their World Cup victory over Colombia and accused referee Mark Geiger of not being up to such a game.

Maradona, notorious in England for his famous 'Hand of God' goal at the 1986 tournament, said the American official should have penalised Harry Kane rather than give a penalty for a foul by Colombia's Carlos Sanchez during Tuesday's knockout match.



"Today I saw a monumental robbery on the pitch... a fatal mistake for a whole country," he said of the incident that put England 1-0 ahead in the second half.

"Here's a gentleman who decides, a referee who, if you Google him, shouldn't be given a match of this magnitude... Geiger, an American, what a coincidence," Maradona added on his nightly World Cup show for Venezuela-based Telesur broadcaster.

TV images showed Maradona wildly celebrating Colombia's late equaliser that took Tuesday's Round of 16 match to 1-1 and extra time. But he was despondent when England won a penalty shootout, taking them into a quarter-final against Sweden.

The ever-controversial former World Cup winner also pointed the finger at Pierluigi Collina, head of FIFA's referee committee, for allowing Geiger's designation.

"I'm just sorry for the whole Colombian people," Maradona said. "I cheered Colombia's goal as if I had headed it myself."