

ROONEY: IT'S OVER MANAGER BREAKS



PERFORMANCE

The tears welled in Roo had desecrated

CUT OUT ERRORS OR WE WILL PAY



▲ **BLUNDER** Van Der Sar's mistake against West Brom

Man Utd v Bursaspor, tonight, 7.45pm

By **DAVID McDONNELL**
SIR ALEX FERGUSON admitted Manchester United deserved to be criticised after their sloppy start to the season. Wayne Rooney's future may dominate the agenda at Old Trafford, but United face Bursaspor in the Champions League tonight, with Ferguson calling on his players to raise their game.

seasons so far but fortunately it's happening early on in the season.

"We can ill-afford any mistakes at any time, because when Manchester United play games, the expectations are such that we have to win.

"We don't have a problem with that. Losing a game is always a challenge at this club.

"It doesn't matter when it comes but the key is responding in the right way."

Edwin Van der Sar was one of United's major culprits - last Saturday, spilling a simple catch to allow West Brom to equalise.

But Fergie said: "The defensive errors, while costly, don't worry me so much because those kind of inexplicable errors can and do happen.

"You know Edwin is not going to make that kind of mistake again in a hurry.

"What does concern me is the way we slipped into the comfort zone after taking a two-goal lead, with some incredibly good football."

United defender John O'Shea said: "It's hard to explain why you see the quality of player we've got and the record we've had, but it's something we have to address."

Saturday's 2-2 draw with West Brom was the sixth time United have been held this season, with Fergie demanding an immediate improvement - starting tonight.

The spectre of Rooney, injured yesterday in training, will loom large over the Theatre of Dreams, but Fergie does not want his players distracted by the saga of their star player's future.

"We have to stand up and accept the criticism and say we aren't happy with it (conceding so many goals)," said Ferguson.

"With the players, experience and ability we have in the back four - it shouldn't be happening. Conceding so many goals has an impact, a conscious part comes into it.

"The players think 'we're going to have to face the gaffer and explain it again' because it is inexplicable.

"It's been one of those

GROUP C TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	2	1	0	1	0	4	3
Rangers	2	1	1	0	0	4	4
Valencia	2	1	0	1	1	3	3
Bursaspor	2	0	2	0	5	0	0

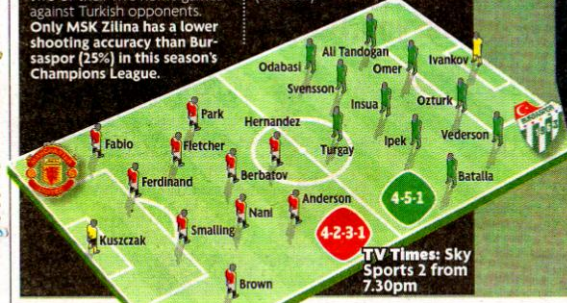
LOWDOWN ON THE BIG CLASH

Man Utd have won only four of their 10 matches against Turkish opposition and lost three of the last five.

United have won two and lost two of their five home games against Turkish opponents.

Only MSK Zilina has a lower shooting accuracy than Bursaspor (25%) in this season's Champions League.

United have won 19 and lost just one of their last 27 Champions League matches at home. That came against Turkish opposition (Besiktas).



TV Times: Sky Sports 2 from 7.30pm

GET ME OUT OF HERE
Rooney trains with team-mates... as Sir Alex looks away



Oliver

HE spoke like a father who had been betrayed by his favourite son.

"The boy," he kept calling him. An old man still in mourning for a dear and cherished gift that had been lost.

A man who found himself caught between vengeance and grief.

For the first time in his public life, Sir Alex Ferguson did not bother to try to cloak his hurt in a fit of anger or a burst of resentment.

Instead, the Manchester United manager made it clear that the pain he feels at what he views as the treachery of Wayne Rooney runs deep.

His vulnerability, his utter bemusement at how and why this had happened, filled the hushed room at Old Trafford and turned it into one of the most compelling pieces of football theatre that we have ever seen.

By the end of it, he had buried Rooney by painting him in vivid colours as the villain of the piece, the vandal who had daubed graffiti on the altar.

It was the performance even of Ferguson's life, a masterclass of a speech that reached out to United supporters by invoking the club's history and its traditions, a stirring call to arms in what feels like a gathering crisis.

To achieve that, though, Ferguson

knew he could not spare himself. And so suddenly, this man who has always hated even hinting at internal conflict at his club, was speaking about his best player as if he had desecrated everything Manchester United stood for.

Suddenly, he was sitting before us, fighting to uphold his honour and the honour of the football club whose modern value system is his creation.

It was easy to think of him as he sat on that dais, flanked by John O'Shea and the United press officer Karen Shotbolt as an old man holding his arms out wide, trying to halt the tide.

He had lost Cristiano Ronaldo and Carlos Tevez but Ferguson did not even try to hide the fact that he never thought he would lose Rooney.

If there was one tiny corner of innocence left in Ferguson after all these years of staying at the top in a hard, hard game, his demeanour yesterday said that it had vanished when Rooney told him he wanted to leave.

There was a catch in his voice as he spoke. Tears welled in his eyes.

It was as if he had invested more in Rooney than the rest.

As if Rooney was his last great hope, the brightest light in the autumn of Ferguson's career, the man who would

It was as if Rooney was the last great hope in the autumn of Fergie's career

SPORTS PSYCHOLOGIST'S VIEW..

Fergie seems helpless.. he is baffled and bemused by this
says Mental Performance Coach **ANDY BARTON**



WE were shown a different side to Sir Alex Ferguson. By presenting the facts as he sees them, Sir Alex regained a bit of control over Wayne Rooney, even if he can't force him to stay at Manchester United.

But his body language projected how helpless he seems in the face of player power. He looked baffled and a word he used himself - bemused.

The calm way he delivered his statement attracted sympathy. This

was not the usual feisty Fergie. It was almost as if the press conference was a chess game and his way of speaking to Rooney, who may have been watching at home.

He was putting the ball in Rooney's court. Some of his words sought to absolve him from blame.

He spoke of there being no bust-up and that United were a club who looked after their players when they had problems. He also invoked United's

"romance" and "tradition", a message to Rooney he may not find those qualities elsewhere.

Fergie also spoke of how he felt let down and the message was he'd been a father figure to Rooney.

By doing that, he was baring his soul in a way we've not seen before.

That will have cleared the air, which is a good thing. This was Rooney's decision, not his.

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Interview: **SIMON BIRD**