

Rooney's shock u-turn

Football

AFP, London

Wayne Rooney performed a shock u-turn Friday by signing a new five-year contract with Manchester United just days after appearing to be on his way out of Old Trafford.

Rooney had rocked United on Wednesday by revealing that he wanted to leave the Premier League club because they no longer had enough ambition to compete for major honours.

However United reopened talks with Rooney's agent and announced on Friday that the player had made an astonishing u-turn and opted to commit his long-term future to the club.

A statement on the club's website said: "Wayne Rooney has agreed a new five-year contract to stay at Manchester United until at least June 2015.

"The agreement follows intensive discussions between the Club and the player's representatives and means that by the end of his contract Wayne will have been a Manchester United player for 11 years."

Rooney, who was reportedly demanding wages of around 150,000 pounds (235,664 dollars) a week after tax in the original contract negotiations, insisted he agreed the new deal because Sir Alex Ferguson had convinced him United remain committed to succeeding on the pitch.

"I am delighted to sign another deal at United," he said. "In the last couple of days, I have talked to the manager and the owners and they have convinced me this is where I belong."



WAYNE ROONEY

"I said on Wednesday the manager is a genius and it is his belief and support that have convinced me to stay.

"I'm signing a new deal in the absolute belief that the management, coaching staff, board and owners are totally committed to making sure United maintains its proud winning history - which is the reason I joined the Club in the first place."

United manager Ferguson had already revealed earlier in the week that contract talks with Rooney had broken down in August and it seemed cer-

tain the former Everton star would be sold.

Ferguson's comments about Rooney's failure to show respect for United seemed to signal a breakdown in their relationship, especially as it came after a war of words between the two over the United manager's decision to rest his star for three matches due to an ankle injury.

But Ferguson said Friday he was delighted with Rooney's decision: "It's been a difficult week, but the intensity of the coverage is what we expect at Manchester United."

"I said to the boy that the door is always open and I'm delighted Wayne has agreed to stay.

"Sometimes, when you're in a club, it can be hard to realise just how big it is and it takes something like the events of the last few days to make you understand.

"I think Wayne now understands what a great club Manchester United is."

Rooney had been increasingly linked with a move to arch local rivals Manchester City, prompting an angry reaction from fans.

One group protested at his house on Thursday and had to be moved on by police.

Rooney's decision to stay is sure to be greeted with relief by most United fans, but several of the club's players, including Patrice Evra, had already expressed frustration at the situation.

His form in recent months had been well below-par as well and it remains to be seen if he will be welcomed back in the dressing room.

However, Ferguson is confident Rooney can go on to become one of United's all-time greats.

"I'm pleased he has accepted the challenge to guide the younger players and establish himself as one of United's great players," he said.

Rooney has no doubts he can regain the trust of United's supporters and he added: "I'm sure the fans over the last week have felt let down by what they've read and seen. But my position was from concern over the future."

"The fans have been brilliant with me since I arrived and it's up to me through my performances to win them over again."

It's business as usual

AFP, Wellington

The Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) insisted it was "business as usual" Friday after FIFA suspended two of its top officials over an alleged World Cup vote-selling scandal.

The New Zealand-based confederation confirmed its president Reynald Temarii had stood aside after world football's governing body provisionally suspended him this week following an expose in a British newspaper.

OFC executive committee member Ahongalu Fusimalohi, the Tonga Football Association general secretary, was also temporarily barred from all footballing activities while FIFA's ethics committee investigates the allegations.

The OFC said it was prepared to fully cooperate with the FIFA probe and Temarii welcomed the opportunity to present his case to investigators.

"It is business as usual for OFC," it said in a statement.

The 11-nation confederation said Papua New Guinea's David Chung was standing in for Temarii.

The Sunday Times alleged it covertly filmed Temarii demanding three million New Zealand dollars (2.3 million US) to set up a sports academy in Auckland in return for his support.

Temarii, a Tahitian who once played for French club FC Nantes, has denied any wrongdoing.

Gazza in hot water

AFP, London

Troubled former England star Paul Gascoigne has been arrested on suspicion of drugs possession.

Gascoigne, 43, spent Thursday night in police custody on suspicion of possessing a class A substance at a house in Burradon, North Tyneside.

A Northumbria Police spokesman said: "At shortly after 5.30pm on Thursday, police attended a property in North Tyneside.

"A 43-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of possession of a class A drug. A second man, aged 43, was later arrested on suspicion of being concerned in the supply of drugs. Both men are still in custody and inquiries are ongoing."

Gascoigne's arrest came days after the ex-Newcastle, Tottenham, Lazio and Rangers midfielder was warned he faced jail after admitting drink driving at Newcastle Magistrates Court.

All smiles at Real

AFP, Madrid



It is all smiles at Real Madrid these days with Jose Mourinho's team topping the Spanish first division and their Champions League group after going the first ten games of the season unbeaten.

Real have plundered 10

last two league matches on their way to reaching the league summit and host Racing Santander at the Santiago Bernabeu on Saturday buoyed by an impressive 2-0 Champions League win over AC Milan on Tuesday.

Real are currently a point ahead of Villarreal, Barcelona and Valencia and the hard-to-please Madrid fans appear impressed by Mourinho's work, applauding the team off at the Bernabeu following Wednesday's 2-0 victory over AC Milan.

Champions Barcelona laboured to a 2-0 Champions League home win over FC Copenhagen on Wednesday and are in the unfamiliar position of chasing Real having led from the front for the past two seasons.

Barcelona are at bottom side Real Zaragoza on Saturday looking for a fourth successive away triumph against a team that have yet to win this season.

Barca have been dominating teams but failing to kill the opposition off and Spain World Cup star David Villa is having a hard time of it, netting just twice in the league this season.

following his 40-million-euro move from Valencia.

After facing former employer Valencia last Saturday, Villa comes up against another of his old clubs in Real Zaragoza, where he spent two successful seasons scoring 32 league goals in 73 games.

Valencia saw their unbeaten league start come to an end with a 2-1 loss at Barcelona last weekend and hope to get back to winning ways with victory at home to Real Mallorca on Saturday.

Valencia, who drew 1-1 with Rangers on Wednesday in the Champions League match, sit a point behind Real with an identical record to Barcelona.

Villarreal are above the duo on goal difference after a stellar start but have a testing home match against Atletico Madrid on Sunday.

Atletico are down in fifth, three points off the trio of second-placed teams, and will be out for revenge having lost home and away to Villarreal last season.

Uruguayan international defender Diego Godin will hope to force his way into the Atletico starting line-up against his old club Villarreal, who sold him for eight million euros in the summer.

In other matches, Sevilla host Athletic Bilbao on Sunday as both teams look to iron out their inconsistent form.

Sevilla are a point above Bilbao in seventh and unbeaten at home but need to turn draws into wins at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan.

Elsewhere, second from bottom Deportivo La Coruna travel to promoted Real Sociedad on Monday in search of their first win of the season.

FIXTURES	
Saturday	
Real Zaragoza v Barcelona (1500 GMT),	Real Madrid v Racing Santander (1700 GMT), Valencia v Real Mallorca (1900 GMT)
Sunday	
all 1400 GMT unless stated	
Espanyol v Levante, Osasuna v Malaga,	Almeria v Hercules, Getafe v Sporting Gijon, Sevilla v Athletic Bilbao (1600 GMT), Villarreal v Atletico Madrid (1800 GMT)
Monday	
Real Sociedad v Deportivo La	



Real Madrid star Cristiano Ronaldo (L) and defender Marcelo joke during a training session at sport city on Thursday on the eve of their Primera Liga clash against Racing Santander.

Fletcher warns rivals

AFP, London



Manchester United midfielder Darren Fletcher has warned his side's Premier League rivals that they won't be distracted by Wayne Rooney's desire to quit Old Trafford.

Rooney rocked United this week when he revealed he would not extend his stay at the club beyond the end of his current contract, which expires at the end of next season.

The 24-year-old claimed United's failure to guarantee the squad would be improved to ensure they can still compete for major honours was behind his decision to end contract talks.

Losing a player of Rooney's talent would be seen as a massive blow to United's hopes of remaining a competitive force in the Premier League.

But Scotland international Fletcher is confident his teammates will use Sunday's match at Stoke to show they can rise to the challenge of replacing their talismanic striker.

"High-profile players have left in the past but the club itself just keeps going,"

Fletcher said.

"If anything, it should galvanise the squad because we all need to come together. I am confident we can win trophies. We have a lot of exciting, young players who are getting better every day.

"Crucially, we also have a core of experience that has been through testing situations before and won plenty of things for Manchester United."

Even the Rooney saga won't keep Liverpool manager Roy Hodgson out of the spotlight if his struggling side fail to beat Blackburn at Anfield.

Hodgson's team, who have already suffered demoralising defeats against Northampton, Blackpool and local rivals Everton, will kick-off on Sunday glued to the bottom of the table if West Ham take a point from their fixture against Newcastle on Saturday.

It is an unpalatable prospect for a club more used to winning domestic and European honours and will only add to the pressure on the increasingly beleaguered Hodgson.

But Reds defender Jamie Carragher insists it is the players - and not their boss - who must take responsibility

for Liverpool's plight.

"The manager is the boss and we should be trying to impress him, not the other way around," he said.

"It is a little rocky patch we are going through at the moment but as long as the players, manager and supporters all stick together it won't be a problem."

Arguably the most intriguing clash of the weekend comes at Eastlands, where Manchester City will keep the pressure on leaders Chelsea by beating an Arsenal team desperate to show they deserve to be considered as genuine title contenders.

City have made an impressive start to the season and are just two points behind Chelsea, but third-placed Arsenal would leapfrog

FIXTURES	
(1400GMT unless stated):	
Saturday	
Birmingham v Blackpool, Chelsea v Wolves, Sunderland v Aston Villa,	Tottenham v Everton (1145GMT), West Brom v Fulham, West Ham v Newcastle (1630GMT), Wigan v Bolton
Sunday	
Liverpool v Blackburn, Man City v Arsenal (1500GMT), Stoke v Man Utd	

Roberto Mancini's side with a win on Sunday.

Arsenal manager Arsenal Wenger has received a welcome injury boost ahead of the clash after French right-back Bacary Sagna was cleared to play following a thigh injury.

Sagna's return was well-timed as Wenger will be without Thomas Vermaelen for longer than expected after the defender was ruled out for another three weeks.

"I see a real opportunity to have great achievements this season - we have the spirit, talent, hunger and desire," Wenger said.

"I do not say there are no weaknesses - we are conscious of that - but we work very hard."

Chelsea can increase the pressure on their title rivals if they defeat Wolves at Stamford Bridge on Saturday.

Carlo Ancelotti's side will be clear favourites but Wolves boss Mick McCarthy is determined to take the game to the Blues.

"We've got a chance - it's 11 versus 11," McCarthy said. "Nobody gives us a chance so why don't we just turn up and have a go at them?"

"They can be pretty awesome when they get going, so we've got to go there and be ready for it, which we will be."

Lazio on a roll

AFP, Rome



Lazio host Cagliari this weekend looking to maintain a stunning start to the season that has left them leading Milan neighbours Inter and AC by two points.

The Rome club have five wins and just one defeat from seven games, but Sunday's clash against the Sardinians is a must-win fixture if they are to maintain hopes of finishing among the Champions League places in May.

Lazio's urgency for a win is all the more pressing as both Milan clubs face theoretically more difficult opponents, Inter hosting Sampdoria on Sunday and Milan travelling to Napoli for the game of the weekend on Monday.

Milan were totally outplayed by Champions League group opponents Real Madrid in midweek and coach Massimiliano Allegri will be looking for an immediate reaction.

The rumour is that he will give Ronaldinho a break, the Brazilian apparently tired after his early season exertions.

That could mean Allegri adopting a more conservative formation or playing his other Brazilians, Pato and Robinho, either side of Zlatan Ibrahimovic.

Many experts in Italy believe Ghana midfielder Kevin-Prince Boateng will likely be promoted to the starting line-up to bring a bit of steel to the team.

Allegri said his players played as if it was a friendly on Tuesday night at the Bernabeu and Boateng brings a combativeness polished in the English Premier League with Tottenham and then Portsmouth.

Champions Inter also have a tricky clash at home to Sampdoria, although they have the advantage of having had one more day's rest than their opponents, who played in the Europa League on Thursday night.

Inter also boast the most prolific striker in the country

at the moment in Cameroon captain Samuel Eto'o.

He notched two more goals in Wednesday's 4-3 Champions League victory against Spurs to take his tally to the season to 14 goals in 12 games in all competitions.

Eto'o is benefiting from an injury to Diego Milito that has seen coach Rafael Benitez play him in a central striking role rather than on the flanks, and the result has been an avalanche of goals.

But the Cameroonian shied away from suggestions he's the best player in Serie A.

"That's an exaggeration. It's true that I like playing closer to the goal, that's where I've always played," he said.

"I'm feeling good and it's important to be happy."

FIXTURES	
Saturday	
Fiorentina v Bari	
Sunday	
Parma v AS Roma, Bologna v Juventus,	Chievo v Cesena, Genoa v Catania, Lazio v Cagliari, Lecce v Brescia, Udinese v Palermo, Inter Milan v Sampdoria
Monday	

However, he insisted that last season's role on the left wing, where then coach Jose Mourinho played him, has helped him develop as a player.

"I will never stop thanking Mourinho, he's unique, he made me discover a different position," he said.

"I never imagined that I could play there. He made me more complete and this gives me more security."

"Last year I won a lot and I also feel positive this season."

In other games, fifth-placed Juventus will attempt to continue their climb towards the business end of the table as they travel to Bologna.

AS Roma will try to bounce back from their shock 3-1 home defeat to FC Basel in the Champions League on Tuesday as they play away to Parma.

Roma are still maintaining their media boycott as they try to turn around a disastrous start to the season that saw them sitting in the bottom three before last weekend's defeat of Genoa.

Ade treble fires City

AFP, Paris



to secure a 3-1 win over Lech Poznan and give his club an excellent chance of qualifying from Europe League Group A.

Spoilt for choice City boss Roberto Mancini brought in David Silva and Shaun Wright-Phillips and benched Carlos Tevez and James Milner with French veteran Patrick Vieira replacing Gareth Barry - but it was Adebayor who bagged the plaudits as he plundered a fine hat-trick - his club's first ever in Europe.

Emmanuel Adebayor, making a rare start for moneybags Manchester City, scored his first goals of the season on Thursday

to secure a 3-1 win over Lech Poznan and give his club an excellent chance of qualifying from Europe League Group A.

Poorn marking then saw the former Arsenal man elude his marker to power home the second with a header on 25 minutes.

Poznan came in to the match having lost three league games on the bounce to plunge into the bottom four with only eight points from as many games.

But spurred on by 5,000 visiting fans they made a game of it after the break and Joel

Poznan had held Juventus to a 3-3 draw in their opening group match, and Slawomir Peszko came close to giving the Poles a shock early lead.

But good work by Adam Johnson and then Vieira set up Adebayor to draw first blood in the 13th minute, the Togolese forward spinning round and then firing a low shot beyond Poznan goalkeeper Jasmin Buric.

Liverpool, currently joint bottom of the Premier League and also having to make do with Europa League fare this term after failing to bag their annual Champions League berth, retained their two-point lead in Group K with two home games to come after a gutsy goalless draw at Napoli in Italy.

With Steven Gerrard and Fernando Torres rested and not even brought to Italy, young guns Jonjo Shelvey, Jay Sparring and Martin Kelly were given the chance to impress at the San Paolo stadium and acquitted themselves well, adding to the optimism sparked by new US ownership of the club.

The build up to the game was dominated by violence as a band of Napoli thugs prowled the city the night before the game randomly attacking Liverpool fans, resulting in five people being injured.

FC Utrecht of the Netherlands joined Napoli on three points after a 1-1 home draw with Steaua Bucharest.

Other highlights of Thursday's action saw two-time European champions Porto make it three wins in three games as they triumphed 3-1 at Turkey's Besiktas - despite having two men sent off.

Falcao hit the opener and Hulk added the others before Bobo netted a consolation.

Paris St Germain have disappointed on the European stage since a 1996 Cup Winners Cup win - although Manchester City's sole European triumph in that now

RESULTS

Manchester City (ENG) 3 (Adebayor 13, 25, 73) Lech Poznan (POL) 1 (Tshibamba 50)

Red Bull Salzburg (AUT) 1 (Svento 36) Juventus (ITA) 1 (Krsacic 48)

Atletico Madrid (ESP) 3 (Godin 18, Aguiero 66, Diego Costa 78) Rosenborg (NOR) 0

Sporting Lisbon (POR) 5 (Diego Salomao 6, Liedson 13, 27, Maniche 37, Postiga 60) Ghent (BEL) 1 (Wils 16)

Villarreal (ESP) 1 (Marco Ruben 38) PAOK Salonika (GRE) 0

Palermo (ITA) 0 CSKA Moscow (RUS) 3 (Dombia 34, 59, Necid 82)

Zenit Saint Petersburg (RUS) 2 (Bukharov 25, Danny 68) Hajduk Split (CRO) 0

VfB Stuttgart (GER) 1 (Marica 29) Getafe (ESP) 0

Debrecen (HUN) 1 (Mijalinoski 35) PSV Eindhoven (NED) 2 (Engelaar 40, Reis 66)

Borussia Dortmund 1 (Sahin 50-pen) Paris Saint Germain 1 (Chantome 87) FC Karpaty Lviv (UKR) 0 FC Sevilla (ESP) 1 (Kanoute 34)

Napoli (ITA) 0 Liverpool (ENG) 0

defunct competition was fully 26 years earlier.

But the French outfit are going well in Group J where they remain unbeaten following Clement Chantome's late equaliser against former European champions Borussia Dortmund of Germany.

Nuri Sahin had netted for the Germans from the penalty spot early in the second half.

Spain's Sevilla, two-time winners of the UEFA Cup - forerunner of the Europa League - are a point behind PSG after Frederic Kanoute headed the only goal at Karpaty Lviv.

Zenit St Petersburg, the 2008 UEFA Cup winners, are six points clear at the top of Group G after beating Croatia's Hajduk Split with Alexander Bukharov and Danny on target while Anderlecht beat AEF Athens.



Manchester City striker Emmanuel Adebayor (L) celebrates his hat-trick goal with teammate Dedryck Boyata during their Europa League encounter against Poznan at the City of Manchester Stadium on Thursday.