

ROONEY

bids adieu



London

England's record goalscorer Wayne Rooney announced yesterday he is retiring from international football with immediate effect after manager Gareth Southgate tried to recall him to the squad.

The 31-year-old -- scorer of 53 goals in 119 appearances for his country -- told Southgate of his decision during a phone conversation on Tuesday.

Southgate had phoned Rooney -- who had lost both the captaincy and eventually his place in the squad under Jose Mourinho at Manchester United last season -- to congratulate him on his early season performances for new club Everton. Rooney has looked rejuvenated and happy -- scoring in both their Premier League matches so far -- since he re-signed for the club that nurtured his talent as a teenager before he left for United.

"It was great that Gareth Southgate called me this week to tell me he wanted me back in the England squad for the upcoming matches. I really appreciated that," said Rooney in a statement sent to Press Association Sport.

"Having already thought long and hard, I told Gareth that I had now decided to retire for good from international football.

"It is a really tough decision and one I have discussed with my family, my manager at Everton (Ronald Koeman) and those closest to me.

"Playing for England has always been special to me. Every time I was selected as a player or captain was a real privilege and I thank everyone who helped me.

But I believe now is the time to bow out."

Rooney said his sole purpose now in football is to ensure

Everton win trophies. He had alluded to his priorities in a post-match interview on Sky Sports after he matched Alan Shearer in scoring 200 Premier League goals.

"Leaving Manchester United was a tough call but I know I made the right decision in coming home to Everton," said Rooney.

"One of my very few regrets is not to have been part of a successful England tournament side," said Rooney, whose four goals in Euro 2004 propelled England to the quarter-finals before their hopes were extinguished when he broke a bone against Portugal.

"Hopefully the exciting players Gareth is bringing through can take that ambition further and I hope everyone will get behind the team.

"One day the dream will come true and I look forward to being there as a fan -- or in any capacity."(AFP)



Wayne Rooney