

Man United-4, Club Brugge-0

ROONEY FIRES UNITED



Bruges

Wayne Rooney ended a 10-game scoring drought in style with a hat-trick as Manchester United overpowered Club Brugge 4-0 on Wednesday to qualify for the Champions League group phase. Rooney had symbolised his side's recent goal-scoring problems, which have seen them score only twice in three

Premier League games, but he produced three assured finishes and Ander Herrera added another to return United to the tournament after a first season of absence in 19 years.

Louis van Gaal's side won the play-off 7-1 on aggregate, following last week's 3-1 victory in Manchester, and will discover the identities of their three group-stage opponents in Thursday's draw in Monaco.

"I am very happy because it was our aim last year to participate in the Champions League and we did it tonight," said Van Gaal, who also saw substitute Javier Hernandez miss a late penalty.

"Wayne has a very strong mentality and with his level, he always shall come back."

It was Rooney's first hat-trick since a treble against Bolton Wanderers in September 2011 and his first in Europe since his dazzling debut hat-trick for United against Fenerbahce as an 18-year-old in September 2004.

"To be honest, if I didn't have a strong character, that (the criticism) might have affected me," Rooney told BT Sport.

"I wasn't worried. It is early days and when the chances came, I took them."

Van Gaal had warned his players to expect a hostile reception and there were baffled faces before kick-off at Jan Breydel Stadium when the visiting fans were subjected to a blast of 'You'll

Never Walk Alone', the anthem that Club Brugge happen to share with United's bitter rivals Liverpool.

Van Gaal made two changes to his starting XI, bringing in Herrera and Michael Carrick, and the former looked less than comfortable in a midfield holding role, playing several careless passes and receiving a booking for an impetuous foul on Victor Vazquez.

'Difference in quality'

The hosts created the first chance, Luke Shaw blocking Tom De Sutter's volley, but it was United who drew first blood as Memphis Depay reprised his role of tormentor from the first leg, when he had scored twice and created an injury-time goal for Marouane Fellaini.

Drifting infield from the left flank, the Dutch winger danced past three opponents before slipping a pass through to Rooney, who adjusted his feet sharply and poked the ball over the advancing Sinan Bolat.

It was his first goal in a United shirt since April 4.

The game already looked up for Club Brugge's injury-ravaged squad and in the moments before half-time they squandered a sequence of increasingly presentable chances.

De Sutter saw a shot parried by Sergio Romero, Davy De fauw hooked a volley across goal and wide from a Vazquez corner and Abdoulay Diaby was then sent clean through, only for Romero to save at his feet. (AFP)

Manchester United's Wayne Rooney controls the ball next to Club Brugge's Claudemir

