

JONATHAN AGNEW



This weekend signals the end of an era when Sir Alex Ferguson leads his Manchester United team onto the pitch for the 1500th and final time. It is a shame that the venue will be West Bromwich Albion's ground at The Hawthorns rather than Old Trafford – in fact this is the only minor blemish on an otherwise impeccable exit by the man who, I suspect, might

be rather surprised by the genuine warmth in the many tributes that have been paid to him since he announced his retirement last week.

But what of David Moyes, the man who has been chosen to replace the irreplaceable? How will he feel as he walks past the towering nine-foot high bronze statue of Ferguson that was unveiled six months ago, and reports for duty? More to the point, perhaps, is how will he feel passing that statue if his early matches in charge next season do not go well? Moyes will quite literally be living in Ferguson's shadow.

I am sure Moyes will have received lots of advice from friends and well-wishers, and the wise words I received from my fellow commentator Henry Blofeld when I stepped into the *Test Match Special* box for the first time all those years ago are definitely relevant. Finding myself surrounded by legendary broadcasters and household names, Blofeld stressed the importance of being oneself. 'You must not try to copy anyone', he said.

'Moyes will literally be living in his shadow'

As Moyes considers the challenges that lie ahead, he will also remind himself of how lucky he is – there is not a football manager out there who would not leap at the opportunity that Manchester United presents. He is inheriting a team at the very top of its game, but one that has not won the Champions League since 2008, making success in Europe in his first season the easiest way for Moyes to break free and to make his own mark. It is very significant that Moyes was hand-picked by Ferguson himself. He could not have received a greater endorsement, both personally, but also publicly, because in effect Ferguson has told Manchester United's supporters that Moyes is his man and his worthy successor.

Meanwhile, regular readers of this column might wonder if my highly coveted interview with Fergie now has a better chance of becoming a reality this summer!

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Ones to watch

CRICKET First Investec Test England v New Zealand at Lord's

16-20 May
The first of a two test series against New Zealand.

FOOTBALL West Bromwich Albion v Manchester United

19 May
The end of an era. Sir Alex Ferguson leads out Manchester United for the last time.

RUGBY Heineken Cup Final Clermont Auvergne v Toulon

18 May
Both sides are hungry to win in their first HC final appearance.



WAVE GOODBYE Ferguson leads his team for one last game



KICKING FORM Can Wilkinson help produce a win for Toulon?