

Van Nistelrooy set to return

Manchester United striker Ruud van Nistelrooy may make his comeback after an Achilles tendon injury in the FA Cup fifth round tie at Everton on Saturday.

He has been out of action for nearly three months and had targeted a return in the Champions League tie with AC Milan on 23 February. But Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson hinted he may be back early. He said: "There is a chance he could be involved at Everton but we'll just have to see how he comes through training." The 28-year-old has been training in Holland and Ferguson said: "Ruud comes back on Tuesday and we need to assess how far on he is. "The training he has been doing in Holland has been perfect and I am very satisfied with it." Even without Van Nistelrooy, United made it 13 wins in 15 league games with a 2-0 derby victory at Manchester City on Sunday. But they will be boosted by the return of the Dutch international, who is the club's top scorer this season with 12 goals. He has not played since aggravating the injury in the 3-0 win against West Brom on 27 November. Ferguson was unhappy with Van Nistelrooy for not revealing he was carrying an injury. United have also been hit by injuries to both Alan Smith and Louis Saha during Van Nistelrooy's absence, meaning Wayne Rooney has sometimes had to play in a lone role up front. The teenager has responded with six goals in nine games, including the first goal against City on Sunday.