

# Are Cristiano Ronaldo and Ralf Rangnick heading for an inevitable divorce?



- After missing out on the Manchester derby, the Portuguese star answered his critics in savage manner against Tottenham. But it seems all is not well between player and coach as United face Atletico Madrid in the Champions League

Nobody answers their critics quite as savagely as Cristiano Ronaldo.

His brilliant hat-trick against Tottenham at the weekend came in the wake of rising criticism in recent weeks.

Does Ronaldo forgive his coach, Ralf Rangnick, for having lost confidence in him?

The Portuguese did not play the Manchester derby and left for his country on a trip that surprised many people.

Not only did he not play the derby against Manchester City the previous week — official reason: Injury — but he was not even at the Etihad Stadium to support his teammates, having taken an unexpected trip to Portugal.

Something strange is happening with the CR7, who did not give any kind of answer or explanation for his absence from the derby.

Since replacing Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, Rangnick does not seem to have the smoothest of relationships with the 37-year-old Ronaldo.

But to not make the bench in the derby, if rumors he was not injured are true, would suggest something more serious is going on between the coach and a player who is characterized by his relentless ambition.

Rangnick recalled him against Tottenham and out of pure frustration, it would seem, Ronaldo showed his value to the team. The epic hat-trick, his first at Old Trafford in 24 years, showed the Portuguese star at his mesmerizing best.

While Ronaldo's confidence in his own abilities remains unshakeable, perhaps he was proving something to himself in that angry performance against Tottenham as much as he was proving his coach and critics wrong.

Ronaldo always wants to play. His voracity to win, his competitive spirit and desire to break records is what drives him, even in bad times.

Perhaps there is hint of the issue between him and Rangnick. Cristiano seems to exist in a plane of his own, or at least he demands to, regardless of the trials of the team.

Clearly there is something that is not going well in the relationship between the manager and the player. It's a divorce that's been brewing for months; two personalities that collided from the start.

What was surprising from the Manchester derby incident was that in his absence, Ronaldo was not playing the role of team leader that he has always fulfilled in a difficult period for his teammates. It's not what we're used to from a footballer who looks to make history in every game he plays in. It surprised me and showed a lack of motivation we do not usually associate with the great CR7.

Perhaps at another time, with another coach, he wouldn't have missed the opportunity to play in such a huge fixture.

The problems between Rangnick and Cristiano behind the scenes in my opinion would not have been resolved with the hat-trick he scored against Antonio Conte's team. For someone who have achieved miracles in his career, Cristiano most likely feels betrayed that his coach does not 100 percent trust in him.

Have the coach and player already made their minds up about each other?

Ronaldo wanted to leave Juventus after a three-season cycle in which he failed to win the Champions League, to continue winning with his old club. It hasn't worked out quite as he expected.

The Manchester United team are now fifth in the Premier League table, a point behind Arsenal who have three games in hand in the race for fourth place and that final Champions League spot.

They were also disappointingly knocked out of the FA Cup on penalties against Middlesbrough at Old Trafford.

But then there's the Champions League, a competition Ronaldo, as he has shown through his career, has been sensational in.

On Tuesday night at Old Trafford, Ronaldo and United take on Atletico Madrid in the round of 16 return leg clash having drawn 1-1 in the Spanish capital in the first leg.

It is a match in which any brewing tension between Rangnick and Ronaldo cannot be allowed to develop into a full-blown divorce.

How the German coach approaches Manchester United's most important match of the season so far will be intriguing, but in my opinion, whatever happens next, the split between Cristiano Ronaldo and Ralf Rangnick seems inevitable.

Rangnick will not be the team's manager next season, but it remains to be seen how much power he will wield in the role of technical director.

And will Ronaldo stay on at Old Trafford for another season?

One thing is for sure, he is not the type of player who will stand for being disrespected. As he showed against Tottenham.

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