



## The 'flag in the sand' moment Amorim got wrong at Manchester United

This is the worst season in Red Devils' history - and much of it comes down to one major mistake.

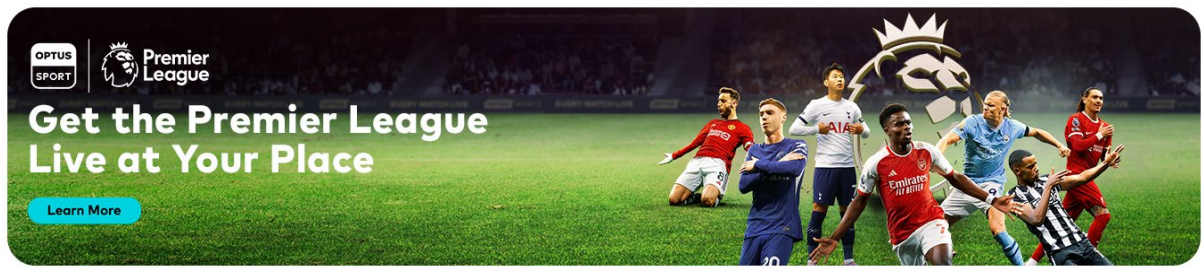
By Kristy Williams  
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Ruben Amorim immediately planted his 'flag in the sand' upon joining Manchester United - but that decision has been proven 'wrong' after the once-proud club lost the Europa League final and finished 15th in the league.

The 13-time Premier League champions somehow finished their diabolically poor season with a 2-0 win over Aston Villa at home, though the match was marred a refereeing controversy that saw the away team miss the Champions League places.

It was too little, too late for United fans though, with the club not only putting in a poor display to lose the Europa final to Spurs just days earlier but also ending up with their worst-ever finish in the Premier League era.

Amorim was installed in place of the axed Erik ten Hag in November, but unfortunately things haven't gone much better since - and many suggest a lot of that comes down to Amorim's determination to have rigid adherence to his 3-4-3 formation.



It's a formation featuring a back three, two wing-backs and two forwards sitting just behind a striker - and one that requires really specific skillsets in a number of those positions.

That specific 3-4-3 formation has worked in other European leagues (namely at Bayer Leverkusen under Xabi Alonso), but the increased physicality in England makes it extremely difficult to rampage continuously down a flank.

Particularly given United doesn't really have the desired skillset or out-and-out quality to succeed as wing-backs in the first place, with Patrick Dorgu, Noussair Mazroui and Amad Diallo unsuited - though some would suggest that is no fault of their own.

Speaking on [The Weekend Wrap](#) on Optus Sport, former Premier League star Don Hutchison said Amorim made a mistake in insisting on his preferred formation regardless of results or personnel.

"It's been an awful season, and Amorim has his part to play in that," the ex-Liverpool midfielder in a scathing assessment of life under the Portuguese manager.

"I feel that when he's put his flag in the sand that this is how he is going to play, even though he hasn't got the players to play his system - and I think that's wrong.

"Some of the players can't play the system he wants, so why would you accept losing a lot of games along the way for the greater good, because I can't see the greater good.

"When he took over, they were four points away from a Champions League spot, before today they were 27 points away."

Making life even worse for United fans is the fact next season does not promise to get much better.

Losing the Europa League final - and thus not securing a Champions League spot - is estimated to have cost the club at least AU\$200 million in revenue, a number made even more significant by the fact United co-owner Sir Jim Ratcliffe is on a cutting spree of finances.

Over 200 jobs were reportedly axed in the days following that losing final, and despite being in desperate need of players, Amorim might not have the funds to add players that even fit his system.

One positive, however, from the missed revenue is the fact United will have less games and travel to content with, so they can focus on improving in the league.

Hutchinson urged United to take inspiration from Serie A side Napoli, who won the league title this season over Juventus after finishing 10th last season and missing out on European football.

"They are going to need a massive summer of players out and players in," he said.

"Garnacho has been linked with Napoli, Christian Eriksen and players like that will move on ... but without any European football at all it will be very interesting to see what funds he's got and what players he can bring in.

"If you look at Napoli under Antonio Conte, no European football and they've went on to win the league.

"I'm not suggesting Man United can win the league, but maybe one year completely out of it (European football), might allow them to reset."

Former England striker Darren Bent said he thinks there is still a few years of pain left for United fans.

When asked how close United were to returning to their Champions League glory of yesteryear,

"They are a million miles away," Bent said of United returning to the European stage.

"Ruben Amorim said, 'We have to hurt first before we get any better', but I think they're going to need to go another season not where they are 15th, but maybe top 10 and then baby steps from there."

And never mind not having much money in the transfer kitty, the major problem is the fact the best players in the world no longer want to go to United, with Old Trafford no longer a desirable location to play at.

"They haven't got better, and I can't think of any players that have improved," he said.

"But then without Champions League football, how do you attract Champions League players, that's the grind they're on because of their own inept performances."