

MOURINHO'S £15M REWARD FOR FAILURE

(and don't forget the Special One's £500,000 hotel bill!)

By Arthur Martin and Jake Hurford

WITH his track record of success – and a love of publicity and Armani suits – he seemed tailor made for the biggest job in British football.

Jose Mourinho had, after all, even called himself The Special One long before being appointed the Manchester United manager.

But the Portuguese manager's love affair with English football appeared over yesterday after he was unceremoniously sacked by the Old Trafford club. All that remained was his trademark smile – perhaps because he is in line for a payout of about £15million.

Mourinho, who earned £12million a year, lived in the Riverside Suite at the five-star Lowry Hotel for his 895 days in Manchester at a cost of about £537,000, or £600 a night.

The hotel is popular choice for visiting pop stars including Rita Ora, Robbie Williams and Justin Bieber.

During his ill-fated spell in the city, Mourinho's wife Matilde, daughter Matilde and son Jose Mario Jr chose to remain in their rented London townhouse in Belgravia, where a maid and a security guard look after them. The 55-year-old manager may now return to his home in the Portuguese city of Setubal amid widespread speculation that he will not coach a British club again.

Mourinho was summoned to a crisis meeting at Manchester United's training ground at 9am yesterday when executive vice chairman Ed Woodward gave him his marching orders.

He emerged three hours later, having shaved, and checked out of his luxurious hotel before heading to London.

The move saw United's share price on the New York Stock Exchange soar by about 5 per cent in the first two hours of trading, adding \$150million (about £119million) to the club's overall value.

The manager appeared relaxed and even lowered the window of his Jaguar F-PACE to shake hands with one of the regular Manchester paparazzi and said: 'Thanks guys, good luck.' Asked how he was holding up, Mourinho replied: 'OK, my friend,' as he posed for photographers.

The decision to sack him was made on Monday evening after he had presided over the club's worst start to a season for 28 years. The club issued a terse statement in which it said Mourinho 'has left the club with immediate effect'.

It thanked him for his work at Manchester United and wished him success in the future – but offered him no



Out: Jose Mourinho after his sacking yesterday

praise for his successes, albeit modest. By the time of his departure most of the players had already turned on him.

The players reacted to a recent poll showing that 90 per cent of them wanted the manager to leave by asking each other: 'Who are the 10 per cent that want him to stay?'

During his turbulent two-and-a-half years at the club, Mourinho brought in 11 players at a combined cost of around £400million.

Among those was Frenchman Paul Pogba who was

'Gamble that has backfired'

bought for £89million in August 2016, then a world record fee for a footballer. At the time Mourinho admitted that the deal was further proof football had gone 'crazy'.

Their relationship turned sour within months and yesterday Pogba, 25, appeared to mock Mourinho's downfall on his Instagram account.

It is a spectacular fall from grace for one of the most mercurial, and controversial, managers in the modern game.

He became widely known as The Special One when he arrived in the UK in June 2004 after Russian oligarch Roman

Abramovich signed him to manage Chelsea for three years. During his first press conference, Mourinho said: 'Please don't call me arrogant, but I'm European champion and I think I'm a special one.'

He brought swagger and style to the world of football management by wearing a tailored suit and Armani overcoat on the touchline. Previously, managers had tended to wear either knackered track-suits or shapeless overcoats.

Mourinho also brought success and trophies to the clubs he managed. Controversy was never far away, however.

As he neared the end of his second spell at Chelsea, team doctor Eva Carneiro claimed Mourinho shouted the Portuguese phrase 'filha da puta', which means 'daughter of a whore', as she ran on to the pitch against his wishes to treat an injured player.

Dr Carneiro, who claimed constructive dismissal against Chelsea, also reached a discrimination settlement against Mourinho. It was an expensive defeat for the club – she rejected £1.2million to settle.

Months later he left Chelsea by 'mutual consent' and United gambled that he might bring long-term success and stability back to England's most successful club. It was a gamble that spectacularly backfired – at a very heavy cost.

NO ONE who witnessed his audacious egotism will ever forget the day Jose Mourinho swaggered into a packed press conference and introduced himself to the British sporting public.

'Please don't call me arrogant, but I am a European champion and I am a Special One,' he declared, with a messianic glint in his eyes, on being unveiled as the manager of Chelsea in 2004.

For many years, Mourinho lived up to such absurd self-generated hype, winning trophy after trophy, while also winning admiration for his wit and charm – and melting the hearts of female fans with his Hollywood looks and stylish clothes.

During recent years, however, as his mercurial coaching ability has deserted him and he has taken to blaming everyone but himself for his failings, from his own players to referees, the football world has grown heartily sick of the churlish, ranting Mourinho.

So when this, now very ordinary, manager was fired by Manchester United yesterday after just two and a half years in charge, there were no mournful violins on the banks of the River Irwell.

For many fans, his sacking was a cause for celebration. For the reign of King Jose has seen Old Trafford, the stadium dubbed the Theatre of Dreams in homage to the feats of Bobby Charlton, George Best, Eric Cantona and their ilk, become a pit of despair.

How typical of the often amoral, moneybags world of top flight football that in recompense for failure, Mourinho will pocket a reported £15million redundancy cheque. No wonder he was smirking as he was driven away from the club's training ground for the last time in a friend's Jaguar.

How, then, did it come to this? Why did Mourinho, who had swaggered into the hot seat at this football institution with a characteristic boast ('giant clubs are for the best managers and I feel I'm ready for it') sink so low that he might have been frogmarched out of town by disillusioned supporters had he not been fired?

No doubt his managerial shortcomings will be dissected ad infinitum on sports pages across the world.

Apart from his own inability to handle failure, there were the cataclysmic clashes of ego with his star players, such as French World Cup winner Paul Pogba, who cost United an obscene £89million, yet sat on the substitutes' bench where he was dumped humiliated by his manager, and watched sullenly as the team was thumped by long-time rivals Liverpool on Sunday.

Moribund, out-dated and unimaginative tactics have also seen Mourinho left behind, at the age of 55, by more forward-looking managers. The surliness of his pitch-side behaviour became a default position. It contrasted embarrassingly with the exuberance of managers such as Liverpool's perpetually smiling German, Jurgen Klopp.

Yet according to seasoned Mourinho-watchers, there was another reason for his detached and frequently tortured-looking demeanour.

Like most traditionally great footballing cities, Manchester has always prided itself on the links between the players and the club.

The legendary Sir Matt Busby lived in a red-brick house in the suburb of Chorlton-cum-Hardy; Sir Alex Ferguson played in his local pub's quiz in Wilmslow, and dined in neighbourhood restaurants.

Yet Mourinho remained aloof, refusing to live among the workaday Mancunians who paid his eye-watering £12million a year salary.

His bosses, it is said, repeatedly attempted to persuade him to buy or rent a home in the Cheshire commuter-belt. Yet throughout his time in Manchester, he stayed isolated in a penthouse suite, in the five-star Lowry Hotel. He rarely ventured out and became ever more reclusive, dining on room-service and takeaways.

After matches on Saturdays, he would leave Manchester as quickly as he could to catch the train to London, where his wife Matilde, and their two children (his 22-year-old daughter is a fashion graduate, and his 18-year-old son was recently rejected by Fulham, where he had hoped to become a goalkeeper) still reside in a Belgravia home.

A devout, Catholic family man, it was said that he did not wish to uproot them yet again – his wanderlust and quest for soccer immortality having taken him from Portugal to London (twice), Milan and Madrid.

His concern for his family's welfare was reinforced after an horrific experience a few years ago when a burglar tried to break into their London home while Mourinho watched the European Championships final on TV.

Alternatively, it may be that Mour-



By David Jones

inho, a restless man, forever looking for a new challenge – and with it a bigger salary package – never envisaged staying more than a few years in Manchester.

Perhaps, deep down, for all his outward bravado, he recognised the impossibility of building an all-conquering dynasty to compare with that of Ferguson's 26-year spell as manager.

For he is said to have harboured insecurity since his ambitions to be a great player in his own right were thwarted when he was just 19 years old.

Then there is his domestic life. Inevitably, given that he has been living 200 miles away from Matilde since the summer of 2016 and his status as a sex symbol, there have been numerous, although unfounded whispers about the state of his marriage.

Mourinho and Matilde, or Tami as he calls her, have been married for almost 30 years, and he never tires of expressing his adoration for her. They recently had one another's names, and those of their children, tattooed on their wrists.

'My wife trusts me, my wife knows me, she has been with me since I was 17 and she was 15,' he said recently, harking back to their days as college sweethearts in the Lisbon suburb of Setubal, where their families dined at the same restaurant.

WORKAHOLIC who has few, if any hobbies apart from keeping in shape, drinking vintage wine, fine dining and spending his evenings watching football videos, Mourinho becomes similarly passionate when discussing the joys of family life.

'I love to go to the supermarket, to do the shopping and go with my kids to do the things they like to do, to go to a movie and help with the homework,' he has said. 'I love to be normal.'

There is no doubting his familial pride and devotion.

Indeed, when his 53-year-old wife was seriously ill and underwent surgery in a hospital in Portugal two years ago, he hired a private jet to be at her side.

When he stepped up to collect a prestigious GQ Men of the Year award, his daughter (though he looked askance at her skimpy dress) was on his arm. His son, it's been reported, is being groomed as a football coach.

All that said, there is one past episode that Mourinho never mentions. In 2007, a boutique owner named Elsa Sousa told the Mail on Sunday of the lengthy affair they allegedly conducted when he was managing his first club, in the small Portuguese town of Leiria, and living away from his family.

She claimed they lived together so openly that she was mistaken for his wife, and that he promised to leave Matilde for her, but reneged on his promise for fear of losing his children.

In an amusing aside, she also claimed he had a craving for chocolate biscuits, saying he'd munch them to celebrate a victory and even kept them beside his bed. For his part, Mourinho has never sought to deny her story. Gossips went

Living away from his wife and family, the rumours swirled... but ego was his undoing



Above: With daughter and, left, the whole Mourinho family

into overdrive again in February, when a red-top tabloid reported that he had 'struck up a friendship' with a 36-year-old 'bubbly, attractive, super-fit' policewoman.

However, she responded by saying it was all a smear invented by someone with a vendetta against her, adding: 'I'd tell you the whole story but you probably won't be interested because there is no sex involved.'

In a typically forthright TV interview Mourinho had already described his goldfish-bowl exist-

ence at the Lowry Hotel as 'a disaster' because he was followed whenever he left his sixth-floor suite, and stories such as this can hardly have helped matters.

It might explain why, in recent months, he has barely left the hotel except on work-related business, preferring to spend his eve-

nings with a cabal of mainly Portuguese backroom staff, among them his 'technical scout' and close friend Ricardo Formosinho, who drove him away from the club's training ground for the final time yesterday.

In recent weeks, the word among Manchester's football fraternity

was that he had come to loathe his life in the city, and longed to escape. So is this last we shall see of Mourinho?

Certainly it is difficult to see him managing another British club again. For despite winning three Premier League titles (an achievement he petulantly signalled in October by brandishing three fingers at the fans), there appears no place for his dictatorial managerial style in the modern game, where the whims of pampered players with powerful agents hold sway. Nor does he any longer seem

capable of commanding the loyalty and respect required to build a group of talented individuals into a team who will sweat blood for him.

Perhaps that owes something to his inherent arrogance and sense of entitlement.

But whatever truth, the irresistibly charming and handsome young man who arrived here 14 years ago has not only lost his job, he has succeeded in turning almost everyone who follows football against him.

Back then, it must be admitted, he really was quite special. Today, as he prepares to bank his colossal redundancy check for leaving the once-mighty United as a team of also-rans, he seems decidedly average.

Manchester United in turmoil

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