

MIDFIELDERS

25. Antonio Valencia

Born Lago Agrio, Ecuador **Age** 28
Appearances 113(35) **Goals** 17

It was a hard act to follow when he swept the board at United's end of season awards in 2011/12, and Valencia would be the first to admit he didn't quite hit those same heights last season. The challenge for the coming campaign is to tap into the muscular thrust of his wing play that – when fully tuned up – scares the wits out of left-backs and delivers chances aplenty for the strike force. He's got all the weapons in his locker, now it's about having the confidence to deploy them – take 'em on Tony!

19

Tony's goal against West Ham in April made him our 19th different scorer of last term, a club record. Rio extended that to 20 v Swansea



MEN
ON A
MISSION

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8. Anderson

Born Porto Alegre, Brazil **Age** 25
Appearances 124(48) **Goals** 9

At his best, he's a game changer – a bustling, busy presence who can command the midfield and with plenty of culture in that Brazilian left boot to find a defence-splitting pass or threaten the goal from distance. We all know his time at United has been punctuated by a series of frustrating injuries – no more frustratingly so than last season, when he turned the game against QPR at OT on its head with a brilliant cameo performance, only to succumb to a hamstring strain after scoring against Reading in the very next game. He looks fit now and given an uninterrupted season, Ando could be a key component of the midfield mix in 2013/14.

26

Ando's games tally last term was 10 more than 2011/12 (16), but short of his best, 38, in 2007/08 and 2008/09 – can this be his year?



11. Ryan Giggs

Born Cardiff, Wales **Age** 39
Appearances 788(154) **Goals** 168

Still here? The Methuselah of the modern game continues his journey from the land that football forgot – Ye Olde First Division – embarking on his 24th season in the English top flight. More important than the sheer longevity, United's new player-coach has still got the nous and talent to deliver match-winning displays at the top level. Last season he was sparingly used in the early months, but ended up in undroppable form after the new year as he passed his 1,000th senior game. Could this be his last season in Red? If it is, don't miss it, but we don't recommend betting your mortgage on his retirement in May, either...

183

Ryan's 942 Red outings put him an astonishing 183 clear of Sir Bobby Charlton at the head of United's appearance charts



34

Michael made 34 league starts in 2012/13 (his first time over 30 for United), underlining his importance in the Reds' engine room



16. Michael Carrick

Born Wallsend, England **Age** 32
Appearances 276(44) **Goals** 21

The lynchpin of the midfield effort in the title-winning campaign. Carrick was voted Players' Player of the Year at United's end of season dinner – a fitting reward and recognition for the sometimes unheralded and unfussy work he does in controlling the central spaces from back to front. He had a rolling cast of partners in 2012/13 – and there's every chance he may have another playmate by the time the transfer window shuts – but his mature, elegant presence will be a constant again at the heart of the Reds' midfield this season, and his eye for a killer pass as highly valued as ever by those playing ahead of him.

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17. Nani

**Born Praia, Cape Verde Age 26
Appearances 168(47) Goals 40**

Injuries limited Nani's involvement in 2012/13, but given a better run of luck this term he'll continue to be a potent threat to opposition defences. He remains a twinkling talent on either wing, capable of mind-bending moments of skill and boasting a ferocious shot. He is a veritable match-winner too. With a new season comes a chance to stake his claim as one of the team's key men, to establish himself as a regular starter under the new coaching regime at the centre of United's new era.

41

Despite a persistent hamstring problem last term, Nani still managed six assists, making it 41 in all competitions in the last three seasons

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18. Ashley Young

**Born Stevenage, England Age 28
Appearances 45(11) Goals 8**

Ashley's first term at United was full of promise as he intertwined seamlessly with the Reds' other attacking talents, but last season was undermined by injuries and Young didn't fully regain the flow of his first effort in a United shirt. Yet those talents are still vivid enough for us to know the level he can reach: instant change of pace or direction to flummox defenders and an eye for a killer cross and the top corner of the net, from open play or set-pieces. Consistency will be key in 2013/14 amid a host of attacking talents. If he starts as he did in 2011, and maintains it, he's a useful weapon.

8

All eight of Ashley's Reds goals came in 2012/13 and he will be eager to add to that tally as the new term gets going

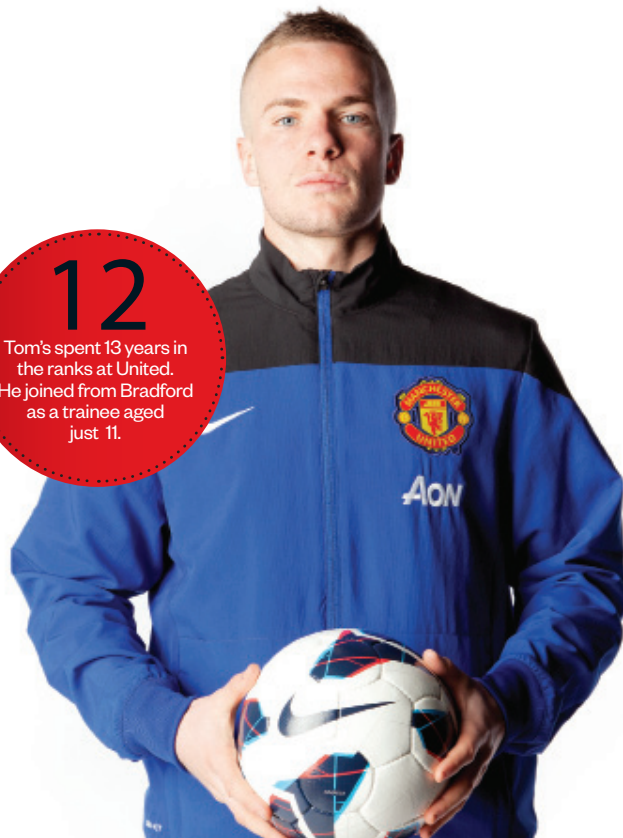
23. Tom Cleverley

**Born Basingstoke, England Age 24
Appearances 38(10) Goals 4**

An established England international these days, Cleverley has the all-round game to thrive on the big stage. He'll have learned much from a long run alongside Michael Carrick last term, an arrangement he'll be extremely keen to extend under the new management team. In that respect, pre-season has been a key time for Cleverley as much as anyone else in the squad. He always had to punch above his weight in the age groups to get where he is. Now that a role as a senior figure in central midfield is hovering into view, Tom will redouble his efforts to make that spot his own. He knows no other way.

12

Tom's spent 13 years in the ranks at United. He joined from Bradford as a trainee aged just 11.



2

Zaha has already earned two senior England caps - twice as a sub - against Sweden, and Scotland at Wembley

29. Wilfried Zaha

**Born Abidjan, Ivory Coast Age 20
Appearances 1 Goals 0**

An exciting prospect, who impressed at Crystal Palace (notably in a Carling Cup win at OT in 2011), Wilf brings abundant pace and trickery to the right wing. Having made a good impression in a United shirt on tour and having continued to notch international experience, he'll be itching to make his mark in competitive action.

