Manchester United defender Jonny Evans claimed today that he was attacked on the dancefloor at the team's Christmas party, by the boyfriend of a woman who accused him of rape.

Evans told friends that he had only danced with the 26-year-old alleged victim, believed to be a glamour model, leading her boyfriend to attack him in a fit of rage.

It is understood the boyfriend then made a call to police, alleging the rape had taken place. The footballer's friends believe the call was made out of revenge.

The allegation, at 4.15am on Monday, quickly broke up the seedy party, in which women had complained they were being treated like "cattle at a meat market".

A close friend of the 19-year-old footballer said: "The girl was dancing with Jonny and her boyfriend was angry about this and approached him to have words.

"There was some sort of scuffle and the girl and her fella, who were both really drunk, then got thrown out of the hotel.

"She was barred from the hotel and never got back in so there is no way they could have been alone in a room. Let alone that Jonny could have assaulted her.

"Jonny is a really sweet bloke. There is no way he would have raped the girl. He's just not like that. He is totally decent."

His mother Dawn, speaking from the family home in Sale, said: "It is an extremely stressful time for all of us. We have been advised not to comment."

Following reports of drunken debauchery at the party, Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson banned players from further festive parties.

Evans, 19, was held in police custody for 15 hours, during which time he was questioned over the alleged rape.
Today the full extent of the night’s sordid entertainment, which prompted a furious training-ground outburst by Ferguson, can be revealed.

During the marathon 15-hour drinking session some of the party’s 100 invited female guests - wives and girlfriends were not on the invite list - told how they were treated like “cattle at a meat market”.

The night’s sordid events culminated in the arrest of 19-year-old Evans after a 4.15am call to police was made by a 26-year-old from the Manchester hotel alleging she had been raped. After 15 hours in custody he was released by officers, who will now turn their attention to the accuser, scrutinising her background and quizzing her in an attempt to verify her story.

Yesterday, in the aftermath of the party, the mood was sombre as the shamed players arrived at training to face the wrath of Ferguson.

A cavalcade of Bentleys and top-of-the-range 4X4s began to sweep through the security gates of Manchester United’s training complex at Carrington.

The pampered princelings of the first-team squad were back at work and, surely, about to face the verbal roasting of their lives.

Manager Sir Alex Ferguson's way of expressing extreme displeasure is known in the game as the "hairdryer treatment".

The heat of his fury would probably have stripped paint from the dressing-room wall.

Whether or not the rape allegation against one of his footballers has any substance, the club has been embarrassed by the general behaviour of its players during 15 hours of debauchery which masqueraded as a Christmas party.

No doubt some of these professional athletes would have only the bleariest of recollections of the sleazy events on Monday evening and Tuesday morning.

But there are plenty of other witnesses to attest to their lechery, their "cattle-market groping", boozing and fighting.

Female guests were reduced to tears by the lascivious behaviour of some and the "out-of-control" atmosphere which culminated in the rape accusation.

Because of previous form, Sir Alex had expressed reservations about the event when it was mooted to him by senior players.

Eventually, however, he gave his approval, albeit reluctantly. Clearly, his acquiescence was a dreadful mistake.

The players left their WAGs at home, instead handpicking 100 other so-called "gorgeous" young women from the model agencies and boutiques of Manchester, to join them in their revels.

Events began to unfold at 1.30pm on Monday, when some 35 United players arrived in the team coach at Linen restaurant in the Manchester235 casino complex.

Boutique hotel in Great St John Street Hotel, Manchester, where the attack is alleged to have taken place

It had been hired for their Christmas lunch. Dress was designer casual, which meant jeans and trainers.

All the star names were there - Rooney, Ryan Giggs, Rio Ferdinand and the club captain and reported party organiser Gary Neville - all save for the Portuguese winger Cristiano Ronaldo, who was away in
Zurich attending a FIFA awards ceremony.

Given his own arrest following a false rape accusation two years ago, Ronaldo now probably views his absence with considerable relief.

Not all the lunchers were established stars. Several among them were teenage hopefuls risen from the junior sides and looking to make the first-team squad.

Players such as the Irishman Evans and the locally-born full back Danny Simpson, aged 20.

Their wages do not compare with the superstars' but it is big money by any other standards; certainly many times more than their contemporaries outside football.

Evans is thought to be on £8,000 a week. And they play for the most famous club in the world. It is an intoxicating combination.

Lunched on the £19.50-a-head set meal of salmon followed by roast turkey with apricot and pistachio stuffing and completed with a dessert of baked white cheesecake, washed down with vodka and champagne.

So far, so restrained. But the atmosphere became markedly more giddy with the arrival of the post-prandial entertainment - two transvestite cabaret artistes and five burlesque dancers clad in little more than feather boas.

Afterwards the players departed for the Old Grapes pub, which is part-owned by the Coronation Street actress Liz Dawn.

This part of the proceedings has become something of an institution for United Christmas parties.

As usual the players drank heavily and sang songs from the Old Trafford terraces before being entertained by a male singer.

Their behaviour at this stage was said to have been boisterous, although nothing worse than can be seen at many office Christmas parties. They left the Grapes at 9.30pm and one group, including Ferdinand, Rooney, England defender Wes Brown, the teenage Brazilian Anderson, the Irish international John O'Shea and Simpson, took a people carrier to the Long Legs lap-dancing club in the city's Chinatown.

However a photographer was spotted outside and discretion got the better of the players' curiosity.

They drove off again after only one of them - O'Shea - had briefly entered the club.

The main event was still to come.

And perhaps the alcohol, the burlesque dancers and strippers had gone to the heads of at least some of the players.

Eight hours into the bacchanal, those 100 gorgeous girls now awaited them at a boutique hotel which had been hired for the night at a reported cost of £25,000 including bar tab. And there was not a WAG in sight.

The Great John Street hotel is a £395-a-night converted Victorian schoolhouse in the Castlefield area of the city centre.

Rooney was among the first in the party room, where he approached an undercover reporter and her friend.
When told that they had met at university, he reportedly observed: "I bet you two were naughty together at uni ... Did you do threesomes? You know, two girls and a lad?"

This passes for smooth seduction in Rooney's book, apparently.

One witness said: "Some of the foreign players like Frenchman Patrice Evra and the Chinese striker Dong Fangzhuo left early, but most of the English lads were in their element, downing drink after drink and vying to chat up the prettiest girls.

"Rooney was one of the worst, but pretty much all the younger players were at it, although despite the fact that Rio Ferdinand was the one who arranged the girls being there, he was relatively well-behaved. "They were buying all the most expensive drinks, endless glasses of champagne and shots of sambuca."

By now the Manchester and North Cheshire grapevine was buzzing.

Of course, it would be wrong to suggest that all the female guests were there with the sole purpose of chastely passing the time.

As one witness put it: "There were a lot of the girls simply trying to bag a footballer for the night. It was all very sleazy."

But while there was a sizeable contingent of wannabe WAGs, not every girl present wanted to be "bagged".

And as the evening wore on and vast quantities of pink champagne were downed the mood became decidedly less pleasant.

At 2am Danny Simpson was reportedly involved in a fight on the dance floor with another male guest and had to be dragged away by security staff.

Some of the men present were also said to be getting more aggressive in their approaches to female guests. Witnesses claimed one tearful woman said that she had been repeatedly harassed for sex by a player.

"It was horrible," she said. "The guy had been pestering me and my friends for ages trying to get us up to a bedroom. I kept telling him No but he just wouldn't take it.

"He was really drunk as were the rest of them. Then he just grabbed me and started to drag me away from the main area towards the toilets." A security guard again intervened and released the girl, who said: "I was so relieved. I was in tears. The players were treating girls like pieces of meat."

Another girl concurred: "It was like a horrendous cattle market," she said. "I like the United players but they were out of control.

"They were treating girls like pieces of meat. We got special invites but if we ever get asked again there is no way we would go."

Another woman was seen sobbing: "I can't believe it. Someone forced themselves on me. I want him chucked out."

Whether this was the woman who made the rape claim is still unclear.

It is understood that the alleged victim - believed to be a glamour model from the South of England - had arrived at the party with her boyfriend.
It was he who had urged her to call the police when told of the alleged incident, which was said to have happened around 4am, as the party was dispersing.

A partygoer said: "The girl who made the rape allegations seems to have latched on to Jonny Evans over the course of the evening, and, as a young lad, he was obviously enjoying being with her."

Today it was also reported that a friend of the girl who alleged she had been raped was headbutted by a United player. A witness said an Asian man had gone to comfort the weeping accuser before confronting one of the team members on the dancefloor.

After a verbal exchange the man was headbutted and collapsed to the floor.

Evans, already a Northern Ireland international, is a bright young man with nine A-grade GCSEs.

He lives with his father Thomas, himself a former professional footballer, and mother Dawn in a £350,000 detached house in Sale, Cheshire.

The family moved there from Belfast two years ago along with Evans's younger brother Corry, 17, a current member of the club academy.

After making great strides initially at United, his progress has slowed and he has made only a handful of first-team appearances in unimportant games.

The rape allegation has come at an already difficult time. There has even been talk of him being sold in next month's transfer window.

On Tuesday morning, only two hours after the accusation was made, Evans flew out on a pre-arranged trip to view property in Monaco.

He returned voluntarily after being informed of the allegation by his agent, was arrested on suspicion of rape and kept in the cells overnight at Grey Mare Lane police station in Manchester.

He was questioned in the presence of the club's solicitor Maurice Watkins and released on bail at about 2pm yesterday.

It remains to be seen whether the police will pursue the allegation. But damage has been done already.

A source close to the club said: "Although some people were worried about the fall-out from the party, everyone is astonished that Jonny Evans has been accused in this way.

"He's regarded as shy and well-behaved, and it may be that he's allowed himself to be taken advantage of in a way the older players wouldn't have been.

"His parents are absolutely distraught about it - they have no doubt he's innocent, and he's now got the stigma of being accused of rape.

"As far as Jonny is concerned he has done nothing wrong but he will co-operate with police the best he can. All he wants to do is clear his name of any wrongdoing."

As United's players drove into training to face Ferguson, they flaunted the trappings of their great wealth. But money does not buy good sense, manners or maturity.

Sir Alex awaited them. And that at least should have been a sobering thought.