

# FOOTBALL'S LOST DECADE

Contrary to what Sky might have you believe, football existed before 1992. In fact the 1980s saw cultural and political change that shaped the modern game. But while football wasn't cool, some of us still loved it. **JON HOWE** looks back with nostalgia at the decade that football forgot...

## A game you might have forgotten

January 4, 1985

Leeds United 0 Everton 2 (FA Cup Third Round)

**Imagine a time when Leeds United had slipped off the radar of the national media and when attention on television, even a 20-second blink-and-you-miss-it clip on *Calendar*, was by no means guaranteed.**

It goes some way to explaining the peculiarity of watching your modest and inexperienced team, live on television, on a Friday night against the mighty Everton. The concept of being able to watch this, the first ever live transmission of a game from Elland Road, was hard to comprehend; exposure of unprecedented nature and a quite surreal experience.

John Sheridan



Everton fielded a full-strength side with their established stars such as Peter Reid, Andy Gray and Trevor Steven expected to cut a swathe through Eddie Gray's callow and wide-eyed charges. In the event, it was a routine 2-0 victory for the Toffees – who would go on to lose the final to Manchester United that year, but win the league.

For the Leeds public the game was a further confusion to an identity crisis that posed the difficult questions “Where was the club?” and “What does it want to be?”

Leeds missed the experience of Andy Ritchie up front and David Harvey in goal, and while youngster Tommy Wright toiled ably and goalkeeper Phil Hughes was largely under-utilised, Leeds rarely threatened after a bright opening failed to breach the Everton goal. In the first minute a John Sheridan free-kick had Neville Southall at full stretch, but the Welsh international had a trouble-free night after that.

Although the tie was far from the walkover many expected, Leeds didn't possess the guile to penetrate the solid unit that Howard Kendall had created, although it took a controversial moment to prove decisive.

Under pressure from forward Graeme Sharp, Leeds defender

Andy Linighan was harshly adjudged to have handled the ball as he attempted to clear. Sharp dispatched the penalty in the 39th minute, but the game was in the balance, in theory at least, until the 86th minute when winger Kevin Sheedy bundled in the second. Leeds had performed respectably but the gulf between the two clubs was there for all to see.





## Anyone remember... **Phil Hughes?**

**Ask most Leeds fans about Phil Hughes and they will recall that he played in this Everton game, but little else.**

In truth, that just about covers it, as seven career appearances for the club doesn't offer much else to write home about. Three clean sheets in those handful of moments in the spotlight, however, demonstrate that Hughes was an able goalkeeper, but as with many of the youngsters at the club he became a victim of the times, and the need for more experience among the flourishing youth.

Hughes was on the books of Manchester United as a junior, but made his Leeds debut in the 1983/84 season when veteran keeper David Harvey was injured. He deputised again the following season with a run of five games, but when Harvey left the club in February 1985, Eddie Gray felt the composed maturity of Mervyn Day was better suited to the pressurised position.

Hughes left for Bury in June 1985 and went on to receive full international honours with Northern Ireland. He also returned to Leeds United in the early 1990s when Eddie Gray appointed him as a goalkeeping coach in the Academy set-up, where he was employed for 15 years.

## Nothing happened in the 1980s, apart from... **Shirt sponsorship**

**Remember when football shirts were sacrosanct and unblemished by commercial necessity?**

Liverpool were the first British club to flout their historic colours when Hitachi appeared on their shirts in 1979. Southampton soon followed suit with Rank Xerox and Arsenal and Manchester United caught up when they signed with JVC and Sharp respectively.

The giant electrical goods manufacturers from the Far East were taking over British life and British football. By 1981 even Leeds United were in on the act, although they somehow misread the memo when they took the riches of Pudsey-based electrical contractors RF Winder (below).

Amid the sponsorship frenzy the BBC maintained a fiercely traditional aversion to commercial activity, and insisted for the screening of the FA Cup tie against Everton that Leeds' W GK sponsors' logo had to be ever-so-slightly smaller than normal. But soon enough, with the smell of money in everybody's nostrils, sponsorship was in your face and pretty much everywhere.

