

# CLASSIC MATCH



## Leeds United 0 Manchester United 1

Rumbelows Cup Semi-Final  
second leg

Sunday February 24,  
1991, 3pm Elland Road

Attendance 32,014

Goal Sharpe (90)

Referee Vic Callow (Solihull)

### Manchester United (4-4-2):

Sealey, Donaghy, Pallister,  
Blackmore, Sharp, Phelan,  
Webb (Martin), McClair,  
Robson, Ince, Hughes.



### Don't tell me, you feel like kicking the cat?!

I haven't got a cat, but yes, something like that. It's been far too long since we've been competing with Manchester United for top honours. The pain of losing big games is nothing new to Leeds fans, it's just the pain of losing to *them* that we haven't experienced for a while, and some fans present here today possibly never.

### This was a pretty dire spectacle, wasn't it?

Depends what floats your boat. There was an acidic, venomous atmosphere inside Elland Road and Leeds were competing head-to-head with Manchester United with barely a cigarette paper between them. So there were definitely positives and elements that sparked nostalgia... But football-wise it was like a particularly fractious version of the Eton Wall Game

– not pretty. Not only that, the image of Lee Sharpe dancing in that manner which seems to grate on the nerve endings, in front of his joyous fans in the Lowfields after his late winner, will stay with me for some time.

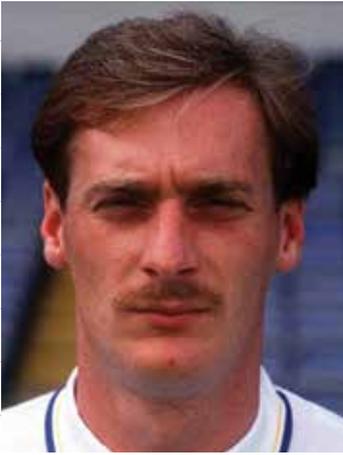
**A hostile atmosphere you say?** Elland Road was like a snake-pit with no let-up for 90 minutes. I'm not sure it helped the style of football we saw, but it certainly got the blood pumping. Off the field, of course, the petty row over away ticket allocations hindered diplomacy and the all-out war that we witnessed on the pitch was to be expected.

**A game of few chances, then?** Few chances, few creative passing moves, no space, no time on the ball, just a 90-minute scrap for possession, which we possibly shaded,

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# 4 TRAGIC NUMBER

Man U games this season  
with no wins

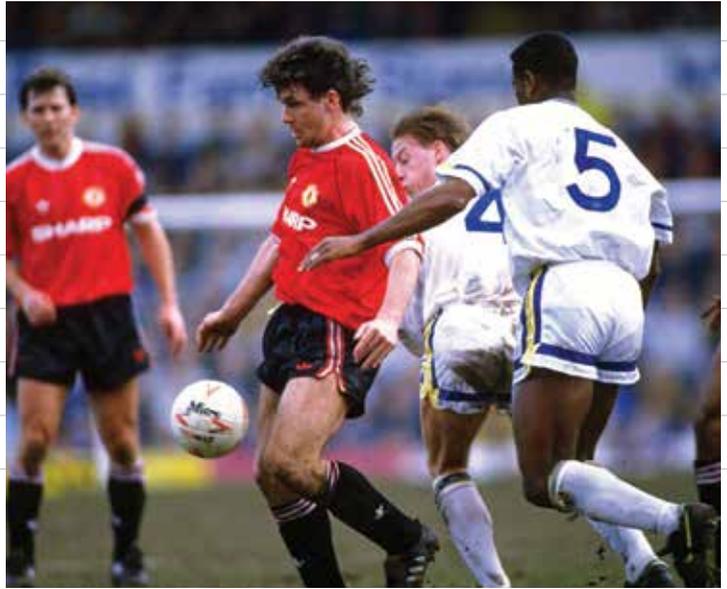


← Lee Chapman

↑ Peter Haddock

→ Mark Hughes and Chris Fairclough

↘ David Batty



but the likelihood of doing anything positive with it was slim. There were a couple of goalmouth scrambles but little in the way of clear-cut chances at either end. Essentially the ball was like a ticking time-bomb – to be disposed of as soon as possible. The first leg hadn't been much better, to be fair, but the 2-1 deficit we returned from Old Trafford with had set up this occasion perfectly, and beforehand you felt Leeds were capable of overturning the deficit. But in the end, Ferguson's gameplan to match us pound-for-pound in merely fighting for the ball seemed to work.

**Batty and Ince were like a pair of Bull Terriers weren't they?** Yes, it was a compelling sideshow for the non-purists. The ball was almost secondary and it was interesting to see how Batty matched up. He is being spoken of as having England potential and he showed his muscle and improved temperament here. Fortunately, we know through previous games that he has the skill as well.

**What about the Haddock injury?** No doubt many fans would like to blame Ince for it, but the truth is it was completely innocuous. The Elland Road pitch is threadbare at the moment, and even a Battle of

the Somme recreation would struggle for artistic merit on this surface. Haddock and Ince went up for an aerial challenge and upon landing "Fish" planted his foot in a divot and twisted his knee with the pressure of his whole body weight. It is still early days, but it doesn't look good and he

received a standing ovation when carried off on a stretcher because he has been brilliant for the last two seasons.

**Come on then, what about the goal?**

In some respects it didn't make any difference, because we had to score and time was ticking on without us looking remotely like doing so. However, with injury-time approaching a hopeful punt up field caught our defence square, and Sharpe ran on to it. He looked miles offside at the time but TV replays prove otherwise. Just! Sharpe latched onto the ball, rounded Lukic and from an acute angle drove a rasping finish into the top corner of the empty net. Cue: odorous celebrations, a hail of coins from the Lowfields and half the ground heading straight for the exits.

**How were the Leeds fans?** Bitter, irrational, consumed by hate and a sense of injustice.

**Best Leeds player?** Batty was immense and clearly cherished the challenge, but even he would have longed to pass a ball constructively.

**In a nutshell?** Football, but not as we know it.



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