

CLASSIC MATCH



Aston Villa 1 Leeds United 4

Barclays League Division One
Sunday November 24, 1991, 3pm
Villa Park Attendance 23,713
Goals Wallace (40), Sterland (46),
Chapman (56), Yorke (67), Chapman (89)
Referee AN Buksh (London)

Aston Villa (4-4-2): Sealey, Kubicki,
Staunton, Teale, McGrath, Richardson,
Daley, Regis, Atkinson, Blake (Cowans),
Yorke.

In the spirit
of LLL
magazine,
JON HOWE
takes a retro
look at some
of our most
memorable
moments.

How good was this? As wins go this was up there with the very best. Not just a vital three points to plant us back on top of the table, but this was executed in supremely comprehensive fashion, against a team that had won its five previous fixtures. Perhaps most significantly, it was live on telly for the nation to watch. Our lofty status may have fooled future opponents into thinking we were a flash in the pan, but after watching this exhibition we will have a psychological edge over anyone.

We were brilliant, weren't we? Days like this don't come around too often. Sometimes big wins carry an element of fortune, like playing against 10 men, some lucky goals or favourable refereeing decisions. But this was a pure, undiluted hammering. The scoreline didn't flatter us one bit. In fact, we should have maybe doubled it, such was the strutting ease with which we carved Villa open.

A tactical masterstroke from the Sergeant? Yes, robbed of the injured Gary Speed, Wilko

re-shuffled his pack and employed Chris Fairclough to man-mark Villa's danger-man, the jet-heeled Tony Daley. John McClelland seamlessly slotted in at centre-half, but it was Fairclough with an assertive and domineering display who helped Leeds win the midfield battle. The marauding trio of Strachan, McAllister and Batty showed a telepathic interchangeability and the extra space also allowed full-backs Dorigo and Sterland special licence to bomb forward, and they hardly need a formal invite for that.

The first half? In truth it was pretty scrappy on a patched-up pitch. But Leeds gradually got on top and found space and time to play. On 40 minutes a short throw-in was whipped in by Sterland forcing Sealey to half-save Chapman's glancing header at the near post... However, Wallace poked the ball over the line and denied what would ultimately have been a Chapman hat-trick.

A glorious second half, though? No other word for it. A minute after the break

MAGIC NUMBER

Third game in a row that Chapman has scored two against Villa.





Strachan's corner was flicked on by Whyte at the near post and, with Villa motionless, Sterland steamed in with impeccable timing to bury a header. Ten minutes later it was game over; a short corner routine ended with McAllister backheeling the ball to Strachan on the by-line – although he seemed to take an age to tee up Chapman, who was stood alone in the six-yard box like a man with BO at the bus stop. With Villa defenders keeping a safe distance, Chapman neatly tucked Strachan's centre into the unguarded net and sparked wild celebrations. McAllister then hit a rasping free-kick inches over the bar, and Chapman nearly finished off another flowing move with a finish that Sealey this time saved. Paul McGrath was also lucky to stay on the pitch after clipping Wallace's heels when the striker was clean through, as rampant Leeds went for the jugular in chilling fashion.



But... On 67 minutes Dalian Atkinson charged through on our goal. His shot was parried by Lukic with Yorke following up to tap it over the line. Though if Leeds expected Villa to finally impose themselves on the game, it never happened. We just carried on where we left off, with willful attacking abandon.

And what an end to the game?

Probably one of my top 10 Leeds goals. It wasn't spectacular or technically brilliant, but there is something about a pin-point centre and a diving header that sends flutters to my stomach, like a fumbling teenager's first love. Strachan fed the overlapping Sterland on the counter-attack, with Leeds showing astonishing appetite for a team 3-1 up in the 90th minute. Villa were tracking back with all the gusto of a three-legged dog, but it was Chapman who leapt full length

and met Sterland's cross perfectly like Superman's ungainly brother, and made the roof of the net bulge. Over and out.

How were the Leeds fans? Enjoying every minute and gaining confidence just like the players. Any doubters who felt we weren't Championship-winning material will have been silenced by this.

Best Leeds player? So many great performances, but Sterland seemed to have a hand in everything today.

In a nutshell? Almost cruel.

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🕒 Clockwise (from top left)... Lee Chapman, Gordon Strachan, Rod Wallace, Tony Dorigo and Mel Sterland.

