

# CLASSIC MATCH



BAIRD

DAVISON

A WILLIAMS

BATTY

JONES

STRACHAN

WHITLOW

FAIRCLOUGH

BLAKE

STERLAND

DAY

## Leeds United 1 Newcastle United 0

Barclays League Division Two  
Saturday December 2, 1989, 3pm  
Elland Road **Attendance** 31,715  
**Goal** Baird (71)  
**Referee** A Gunn (Sussex)

**Newcastle United (4-4-2):** Burridge, Ranson, Stimson, Dillon, Scott, Kristensen, Gallacher (Fereday), Brock, Quinn, McGhee, O'Brien.

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



**A landmark victory?** This is a great time to be a Leeds fan, and today was one of those days that ticked every box; a hard-earned win against a promotion rival settled by a brilliant goal, and a crackling atmosphere that warmed the cockles on a dark, Dickensian winter's day.

**We certainly owed them one!** Yes, and that was personified by the way we performed. The 5-2 defeat on the opening day was a freak result, and our league position since then proves that. Nevertheless, we had a score to settle and every player smelt blood from the first minute onwards. Mickey Quinn, who scored four of his 19 goals this season in that one game, was completely snuffed out by the almost asphyxiating presence of Noel Blake and Chris Fairclough, while the rest of the team battled like terriers to gain supremacy.

**It wasn't pretty, was it?** Far from it, but when second meets third, aesthetics go out of the window. It is years since we won a crucial top-of-the-table clash like this, and

every one in the biggest Second Division crowd of the season will forgive Sgt Wilko his tactics. We had to win, and nobody cared how we did it. Batty, celebrating his 21st birthday, set about dominating midfield with a near psychopathic hunger, matched by Ian Baird up-front who took the brunt of their centre-backs' physical intimidation with a typical nonchalance. On a day that never got light and was surrounded by a freezing fog that bit your extremities, it was a time for heroes, and we had 11 of them.

**A game of few chances?** Yes, but a compelling contest that gripped the supercharged crowd nonetheless. It was largely a scrap in midfield, but Strachan still managed to show his class and leadership. He hit a first-half volley that flashed over the bar, and in the second half began to dictate play a little more.

**But not before Mervyn's wondersave?** The on-loan Chris Turner has deputised in the last two league games but "Merv The

↑ Gordon Strachan

↓ Noel Blake



**8 MAGIC NUMBER**  
Home wins in a row after putting the Geordies to sword!



Swerve" was back today, and stood largely inactive until midway through the second half. Following a corner, centre-back Kevin Dillon prodded a loose ball goalwards through a ruck of players and Elland Road held its breath. The ball actually seemed to go beyond Day, but in a flash he leapt to his left and somehow touched the ball round the post. A miraculous save, and worthy of the standing ovation it received.

**Particularly as "the" moment came shortly after:** Winning the midfield battle is all well and good, but gutsy occasions like this need a fitting finale, and in the 71st minute we got one. Strachan looped a perfect 50-yard ball into the path of a runaway steam train named Mel Sterland. Controlling the ball on his chest without breaking stride, Sterland imperiously galloped passed the left-back Stimson before dispatching a ballistic missile of a

cross into the box. In all honesty, it was a cross that the keeper should perhaps have dealt with, but John Burridge, was pathetically rooted to his line as if about to face the firing squad. The rampaging Baird threw his entire body full-length at the ball and headed it passed "Budgie" into the net. It was a flowing move of stunning simplicity and Elland Road erupted. The cold air mixed with the explosive energy release and it was almost T-shirt weather afterwards.

**How were the Leeds fans?** Breathless and buoyant. Although we still have Sheffield United to play twice, this win shows us we finally have the gumption to pull this off.

**Best Leeds player?** Special mention for Sterland, who after a first-half challenge with Mark McGhee was nursing suspected broken ribs for the rest of the game, and is set for a couple of nights in hospital. To imagine every breath was causing him acute discomfort puts his lung-bursting run to set up the goal into an astonishing context. But the chief architect of this win was Strachan, who used every bit of nous to control the game and instigate the telling conclusion.

**In a nutshell?** These are special days.

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