



Classic Match

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

This was a pretty horrible day, wasn't it? Correct, quite apart from the result, we had driving wind and rain and pockets of violence throughout the afternoon, inside and outside the ground. This was another example, as if we needed one, that the Jimmy Armfield version of Leeds United is a very different beast to Revie's. Today was our 10th FA Cup semi tie since our promotion in 1964 and I doubt we have played as poorly in any of them. It's very worrying that we can't perform in a game of this magnitude – we used to lap these occasions up. So, all in all, quite depressing.

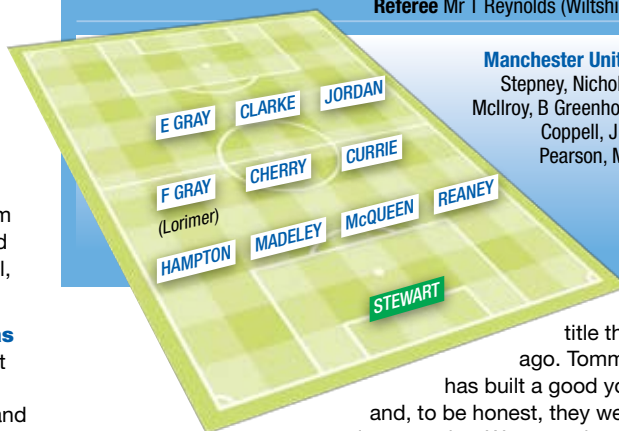
It would be Manchester United as well, wouldn't it? That does make it worse, yes. Including replays this was our sixth FA Cup semi against them, and today was not only their first win, but was also the first time they had scored. But they are not the shambolic mess that got relegated when we won the

Leeds United 1 Manchester United 2

FA Cup Semi-Final Saturday April 23, 1977, 3pm Hillsborough, Sheffield

Attendance 55,000 Goals Greenhoff (7), Coppell (15), Clarke pen (70)

Referee Mr T Reynolds (Wiltshire)



Manchester United (4-4-2)

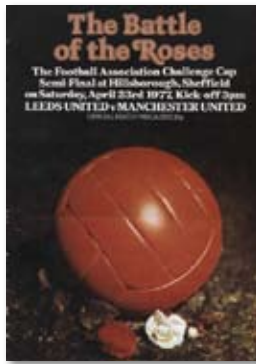
Stepney, Nicholl, Houston, McIlroy, B Greenhoff, Buchan, Coppell, J Greenhoff, Pearson, Macari, Hill.

title three years ago. Tommy Docherty has built a good young side and, to be honest, they were worthy winners today. We were sloppy in possession and their pacy wide men, Steve Coppell and Gordon Hill, caused Paul Reaney and Peter Hampton all sorts

of problems. Their midfield had more zip about it, too – Macari and McLroy smothered us and used the ball better. Tony Currie showed flashes of quality and Eddie Gray worked tirelessly, but in general we never got a foothold in the game.

A poor start didn't help? That's what undid us. On seven minutes Coppell won a corner which Hill swung in from the right, Houston headed it into the six-yard box where Frank Gray made a hash of clearing, and it fell invitingly for former Leeds man Jimmy Greenhoff who lashed it into the roof of the net. We were still reeling from that when, eight minutes later, Hill found space on the left. His shot was deflected again by the luckless Frank Gray and the ball sat up perfectly for Coppell to rifle home from 20 yards. David Stewart was motionless for both goals, absolutely nothing he could do.

How did we respond? Pretty well. I feared the worst because it looked like we had no energy, but shortly after the second goal Eddie Gray played in Allan Clarke and he was one-on-one with Stepney. It was a classic scenario we had seen countless times before and most Leeds fans were already celebrating, but unbelievably Sniffer dragged his shot wide of the post. Everyone was devastated. It was like watching Jack Nicklaus miss a putt from



Left: Action from Hillsborough showing Tony Currie taking on Sammy McLroy, with the packed Leppings Lane terrace in the background.

This page: Peter Hampton (top), Frank Gray (left) and Allan Clarke (below).



two feet. This just doesn't happen. We thought we were back in the game at a crucial juncture but no, we still had a mountain to climb.

Second half? Without creating much, Man United controlled the game. They barely had a single player over five-foot-ten and they just looked like a team of bluebottles buzzing all over us – with us as the lumbering giant in the middle hopelessly failing to swat them. We had the wind with us in the first half when we attacked the Hillsborough Kop end, and without that assistance in the second half, we predictably struggled.

We did score, though? Yes, Jimmy Nicholl hacked down Joe Jordan for a penalty and Sniffer squeezed it in past Stepney with 20 minutes left. Somehow, though, you never felt we were going to equalise. Eddie had a couple of hopeful shots from 20 yards but neither troubled the keeper, and basically, our Wembley dream disappeared with a whimper.

How were the Leeds fans?

Squashed like sardines into the Leppings Lane terrace and exposed to the biting wind and rain all day. Not fun. The reds fans had the huge Kop but there must have been a few Leeds fans scattered about because trouble seemed to erupt in there almost every 10 minutes.

Best Leeds player? Once again Tony Currie showed his class and why he has become the lynchpin of this Leeds side. We just need to find the balance to operate effectively around him.

In a nutshell? Not good enough.



Seasons without a trophy

Follow Jon on Twitter @jonhowe1971