

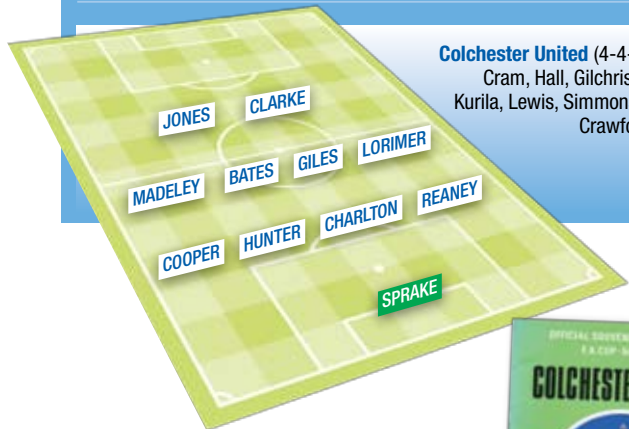
Classic Match

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

Colchester United 3 Leeds United 2

FA Cup Fifth Round Saturday February 13, 1971, 3pm Layer Road

Attendance 16,000 **Goals** Crawford (18), Crawford (25), Simmons (55), Hunter (60), Giles (73) **Referee** D Lydon (Birmingham)



Colchester United (4-4-2) Smith, Cram, Hall, Gilchrist, Garvey, Kurila, Lewis, Simmons, Mahon, Crawford, Gibbs

This was a bad dream, right? I wish it was, I really do. But this was vivid, this was real, this was as bad as the FA Cup can possibly get. You might want to hide yourself in the coal bunker for a few weeks because the headlines are going to be painful. And until someone else leading the First Division is slain by a team lower-placed than Colchester you will have to put up with endless replays of this. Rather than the gift that keeps on giving, this is the defeat that will keep on defeating. This one will run and run, believe me.

Great... did anyone see this coming? I have a feeling Revie did because it is well known that his unease and discomfort can be transmitted to the players, and there can be no other excuse for the hesitant and nervous display we saw today against an ageing Fourth Division side, affectionately known as "Grandad's Army".

What about the conditions and our injuries? That doesn't wash with me. We've come through worse than this unscathed and victorious. Yes, the pitch was patchy and narrow, yes, there was an unsettling, blustery wind throughout, and yes we were missing Bremner and Gray through injury and fielded Allan Clarke despite him having a temperature of 105 the night before. But none of that should be a sufficient leveler to produce the horror show we saw here.



73
Tragic Number

League places separating the two sides

So how did it get so bad, then? Elementary mistakes coupled with seasoned internationals unprepared for the occasion. It was all set up for the purists as having classic FA Cup giant-killing potential; a heaving Layer Road, benches and temporary seats lining the pitch, kids scaling trees outside the ground. But surely we should be professional enough to deal with that? I'm quite sure our downfall was a mental thing, we seemed completely unprepared for Colchester's physical approach, and to be fair they never let us play. Our full-backs were run all over the place and our midfield never got a grip, it was awful. But rather than match them with muscle, as we are famous for doing, we tried to pass through them and quite simply, it didn't work.



Ray Crawford about to score Colchester's second goal.

We were 3-0 down – that's unforgivable! Yeah, a catalogue of basic errors, I'm afraid. Firstly, on 18 minutes, a free-kick from the left touchline was misjudged by Sprake, and as three defenders stood motionless Ray Crawford rose to head in at the back post. Seven minutes later a deep cross from the right wasn't dealt with by Reaney, and as he lay on the ground with Crawford, it was the 35-year-old twice-capped ex-England international who reacted first to prod the ball apologetically into the empty net. Finally, on 55 minutes an aimless punt forward split our defence and Simmons simply brushed off Reaney and headed past a dithering Sprake.

Sounds bad, but we made a game of it? As Colchester's relentless harrying finally gave way to tired limbs, Leeds began to get their game together. Hunter headed one in from a corner with a full 30 minutes left. Giles finished well left-footed to make it 3-2 in the 77th minute and finally the miss-match everyone expected was taking shape, but it was too late. Smith pulled off a great last minute save from Jones, and that was it. Brace yourself and run for cover.

A nation rejoices... Exactly, it was like VE Day, and that's what makes this worse. Everyone got what they wanted and we made it so easy for them. It's fine talking about the romance of the FA Cup, but when you are on the flip-side of a giant-killing as monumental as this, there is no perfume and roses, no idyllic strolls through sweeping wheat fields, just mud, dejection and whites-of-their-eyes hysterics from thousands of marauding kids who have probably never been to a game in their lives before. They have literally never seen anything like it.

How were the Leeds fans? Making a hasty exit.

Best Leeds player? As the only member of the back five not to make a calamitous error, and because he scored a goal, I'll give it to Hunter.



Follow Jon on Twitter
[@jonhowe1971](#)

In a nutshell? Embarrassing.