

# Classic Match

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

**Phew... "crucial win" is a bit of an understatement, isn't it?** Just a bit, yes. This is a massive, massive result. Having seen a 10-point lead whittled down to three in a four game spell of two draws and two defeats, we couldn't afford another slip here. Suddenly we were doubting our promotion credentials, and Sheffield United were in a prime position to take advantage of our fraying nerves, but when it came to the crunch, this was a mammoth performance.

**Not as comfortable as the scoreline suggests, though?** Not really, no. It was 1-0 until the 74th minute and while Mervyn Day had little to do, the game was always on a knife-edge, and we are emotionally scarred by an ability to foul-up the most promising of situations, so nobody was comfortable. Add to that the fact that two of our goals were shrouded in controversy, and 4-0 shows a sheen that masks the real story.

**Controversy?** Yes, Wilko reverted to a tactic that wasn't so effective in the 2-2 draw at Bramall Lane on Boxing Day, by putting a striker on goalkeeper Simon Tracey to rattle him, and effect his kicking in order to minimise the aerial threat of the marauding Brian Deane. It worked a treat today, because Deane was ineffective and Tracey completely lost the plot in the second half.

**We'll get to that, what about the first goal?** There was nervous tension everywhere, but amid a crackling atmosphere Leeds started like a runaway train, and a second goalmouth scramble lead to the first goal on 18 minutes. Speed rose athletically to head a ball through to Strachan who tried to round Tracey, the ball fell to Kamara whose shot was blocked on the line by a sliding Stancliffe. Strachan was perfectly positioned to gather the rebound and passed the ball coolly into the corner for the opener. The

## Leeds United 4 Sheffield United 0

Barclays League Division Two Monday April 16, 1990, 3pm Elland Road

Attendance 32,727 Goals Strachan 18, pen 82, Chapman 74, Speed 89

Referee Mr A Gunn (Sussex)



**Sheffield United (4-4-2)**  
Tracey, Hill, Barnes, Booker, Stancliffe, Morris, Webster, Gannon (Wood), Whitehurst (Agana), Deane, Bryson.





# 1 *Magic Number*

Still top after first win in five games



Facing page: **Two-goal Gordon Strachan.**

Left: **John McClelland.**

Above: **Bobby Davison.**

Below: **Lee Chapman.**



ground erupted, and the Elland Road atmosphere went off the scale.

**A tight second half after that?** Yes, it was scrappy with few chances and without being under pressure you knew we needed a second goal. Tracey hit Lee Chapman's back with a goal-kick that went for a throw-in, and from that Speed attacked down the left and whipped in a peach of a cross. Chapman, the ball and Sheffield United's slim hopes went crashing into the net, and the pressure release around the ground was unmistakable. Eight minutes later, Bobby Davison was hauled down by the infuriated Tracey, who had clearly lost all semblance of common sense after Davison charged down his clearance. Though, to be fair, I think Davison obstructed him by moving in front of the kick. Strachan chipped in a nonchalant penalty to compound the Blades' misery.

**And the fourth?** By far the best goal of the day and a fitting crown for a 4-0 victory. Kamara emerged from yet another crunching tackle with the ball and arced a pass down the line to free up youngster Gary Speed. He collected the ball on the halfway line and arrowed in on goal with the hapless Blades defenders in futile pursuit. Speed drew Tracey and from the edge of the box slid a pinpoint left-footed shot into the bottom corner of the net. This kid is quality, we sensed it before, but that goal sealed it, in more ways than one.

### **How were the Leeds fans?**

Rightly ecstatic and mightily relieved; they played a part in the victory by maintaining the intensity of the game. The minor pitch invasion at the final whistle demonstrated the natural buoyancy this result has provided. The game wasn't pretty, but it was an exhausting effort and tactical mastery by Wilkinson. You can't help but feel this is a significant psychological barrier we have overcome, and hopefully it will be plain sailing from here on in!

**Best Leeds player?** The midfield four were immense, their energy was unrelenting and won us the game. Kamara was outstanding, but for his goal and his public transformation in 90 minutes from a boy into a man, I'll give it to Gary Speed.

**In a nutshell?** One foot back in the big time.

Follow Jon on Twitter @jonhowe1971