

# Classic Match

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

**United are back!** Yes, and what a return this was. Although if every First Division game delivers this amount of drama and intrigue I'm not sure my ticker will see in the New Year. The same can be said for the respective managers, because there was some comical defending on show here.

**The game was not devoid of incident, then?** The 90 minutes flew by, to be honest, because this was a compelling contest with twists and turns aplenty. The media have their eye on Leeds after the ugly scenes in Bournemouth last May, and many sceptics had already dismissed Wilkinson's men as one-dimensional workhorses who would struggle to adapt to the top division, but we came out of this game with nothing but positives. After eight years away it was impossible to predict how we would fare, nobody was confident, but this game proved we are a worthy addition to the top flight and we can definitely compete with the best.

**How did the new signings do?** Lukic looked like he had never been away and made a string of fine saves towards the end, when Everton threw everything at us. McAllister has definitely added a touch of class to the midfield, but it was

## Everton 2 Leeds United 3

Barclays League Division One Saturday August 25, 1990, 3pm Goodison Park

Attendance 34,412 Goals Fairclough (6), Speed (41), Varadi (60), Nevin (68), Ebbrell (76) Referee KP Barratt (Coventry)

**Everton** (4-4-2) Southall, McDonald, Hinchcliffe, Keown, Watson, Milligan, Nevin, McCall (Sheedy), Sharp, Newell, Ebbrell.





Left: Gordon Strachan and Imre Varadi.

Above: Gary Speed.

Right: Chris Fairclough.

Below: Mel Sterland.

# 11 *Magic Number*

Heroes in Leeds colours.



difficult to judge Chris Whyte; defences weren't on top today. But he looks like he can form a decent partnership with Fairclough. It was, however, the more established players who took the plaudits today. In his first ever game at this level Batty looked so comfortable and Gary Speed also took the step-up in his stride. It was also great to see Glynn Snodin return at left-back. To be fair, you couldn't fault anyone.

**What about the goals, then?** If we had any nerves at all, and it didn't look like it, these were well and truly settled after just six minutes. Batty looped a high throw-in into the box, the Everton defence let it bounce and amid the confusion, Fairclough just nipped in bravely to head passed the flapping Southall. McDonald hammered a penalty wide of the post on 25 minutes after Fairclough had handballed and you felt it was going to be our day. Just before half-time a long punt from Lukic wasn't dealt with by Watson and so Varadi slid in for the ball with Southall and Keown. It broke loose to Gary Speed who toe-poked into an empty net. That meant we were 2-0 up at half-time, and for the Leeds fans it was party time in the baking heat.



**Big Neville, wasn't too happy, was he?** No, he submitted a transfer request in the summer, and clearly all is not well. During half-time he re-appeared a good five minutes early and just sat against the goal post in front of the Leeds fans looking decidedly non-chuffed.

**And it was about to get worse!** Exactly, on the hour a high ball into the box from Batty caused yet more confusion as Chapman and Speed challenged for the ball. It bounced up like a gift-wrapped party cake for Varadi, virtually on the goal-line, to hammer into the empty net. The 4,500 Leeds fans packed in behind the goal just couldn't believe what was happening. Having spent so much of the last decade dreaming about games at this level again, the reality was more like fiction.

**Everton finally had a say, though?** Correct. Once we went 3-0 up that was us done, and to be frank, for the last 30 minutes Everton battered us. Nevin scored with a neat near-post finish on 68 minutes and John Ebbrell stabbed home a loose ball from 15 yards through a forest of legs eight minutes later. After that, Sharp hit the bar with a looping header and Newell missed two glorious chances. In the end we just made it, deservedly, but it was mighty close.

**Best Leeds player?** We saw a team-full of solid, honest performances today. Strachan held it all together and Sterland also showed his experience, but as a true test of his credentials Batty surpassed all others. He was authoritative and composed, wise way beyond his years.

**In a nutshell?** Strap yourselves in, this is going to be one hell of a ride!