

CLASSIC MATCH

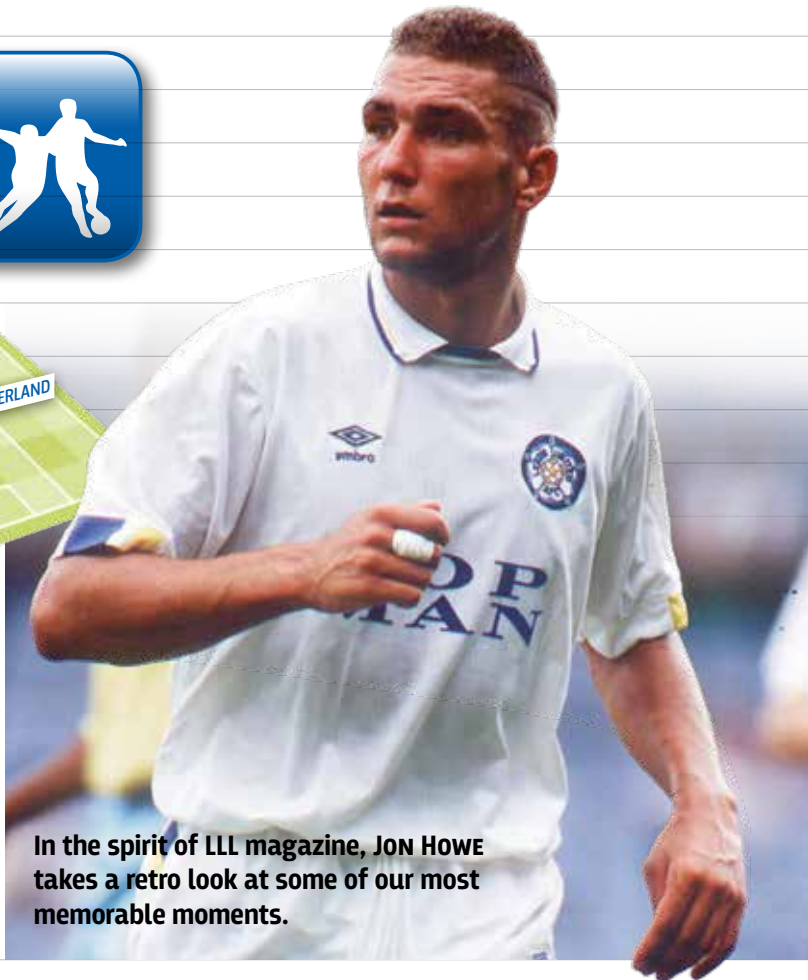


DAVISON (Varadi) CHAPMAN
SPEED KAMARA JONES (Batty) STRACHAN
BEGLIN HADDOCK FAIRCLOUGH STERLAND
DAY

Leeds United 2 Leicester City 1

Barclays League Division Two
Saturday April 28, 1990, 3pm
Elland Road **Attendance** 32,597
Goals Sterland (13), McAllister (62),
Strachan (84)
Referee D Allison (Lancaster)

Leicester (4-4-2): Hodge, Mauchlen,
Paris, Ramsey, Walsh, James, Reid,
North (Oldfield), Kelly, McAllister,
Wright (Mills).



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

How are you feeling right at this minute?

I'm a wreck, an absolute wreck. I've been through the ringer quite a few times with Leeds United, but nothing compares to the gut-wrenching anxiety and the idyllic utopia that I've encountered today. Right from one end of the scale to the other within 90 minutes, with a fair few interludes of not-quite-knowing-what-to-feel thrown in for good measure.

Not a straightforward victory, then? It's still just three points at the end of the day, and priceless points at that, but the manner in which we achieved them will never be forgotten; drama of indescribable tension.

But we're not promoted... yet? A certain Mr V Jones would have us believe otherwise. He appeared in the West Stand after the game as thousands of fans spilled onto the pitch, and word spread quicker than Strachan's left-foot winner that we had done it. It was a chaotic melee of confusion, disbelief and misinformation, as the consensus soon agreed that Vinnie

had failed to take account of Newcastle's late winner at West Ham. For a few minutes we knew what it was like to celebrate promotion back to the Promised Land on the pitch at Elland Road. However, back in the real world, we will just have to try and do it again next week at Bournemouth.

We started well, though? Like a train, as is standard under Sgt Wilko. The atmosphere was as highly-charged as you will ever encounter anywhere in the world, and you felt there was just no way we wouldn't win. Bobby Davison was back in the starting line-up and he should have scored in the first few minutes when he headed a point-blank effort from Jim Beglin's cross straight at the keeper. But soon enough we were ahead. A counter-attack somehow found Mel Sterland in acres of space on the right. He thundered into the penalty area like Godzilla on the warpath and dispatched an unstoppable low drive into the far corner. The evaporation of nervous tension was palpable.

Plain sailing from then on? It should have

18 MAGIC NUMBER

Strachan's 18th and most important goal of the season.





been, but we never do things the easy way. A second goal would have resulted in a comfortable victory, but the memories of Tuesday's late capitulation to Barnsley and too many recent draws were still fresh, and sure enough we paid the price for a succession of missed chances.

That McAllister looks decent, doesn't he? He was the only semblance of quality that Leicester possessed, but his 62nd minute equaliser in-off the post was like a shot to the heart, albeit a painfully inevitable one. Grown men were weeping and nobody could quite believe we were about to make a royal dog's dinner of it again. McAllister had another fierce 30-yard strike parried away by Mervyn Day minutes later, and the thought of actually losing this game was becoming acutely real, and just didn't bear thinking about.

Wee Gordon Strachan, we salute you! The warm afternoon had sapped the energy from everyone in the ground. The game had become a disorderly sideshow as the crowd mulled over the various permutations of not actually winning this game. There was a befuddled hum about the ground; a mixture of panic, disillusion and sheer exhaustion. Some had written off the whole campaign as Sterland delivered a long throw into the box in the 84th minute. An impromptu game of pinball ensued as McAllister hacked

the ball clear straight into Strachan's face. Speed chested the loose ball down and it fell neatly into the captain's path. With his gaunt face portraying the last dying embers of strength in his weary body, Strachan swung his wrong foot at the inviting ball and watched it sail implausibly passed Hodge into the top corner. Perfection! Hello world, we are Leeds, and we have turned on the lights.

How were the Leeds fans? As future groundstaff sweep the terraces clean, I'm sure they will still come across pockets of fans embroiled in a mad,

all-consuming embrace, rolling about on the floor. This was a moment you don't want to end, and why should it?

Best Leeds player? How could I not give that to Strachan?

In a nutshell? Boom time!

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🕒 Clockwise (from top left)... Vinnie Jones, Mervyn Day, Mel Sterland and Gordon Strachan.

