



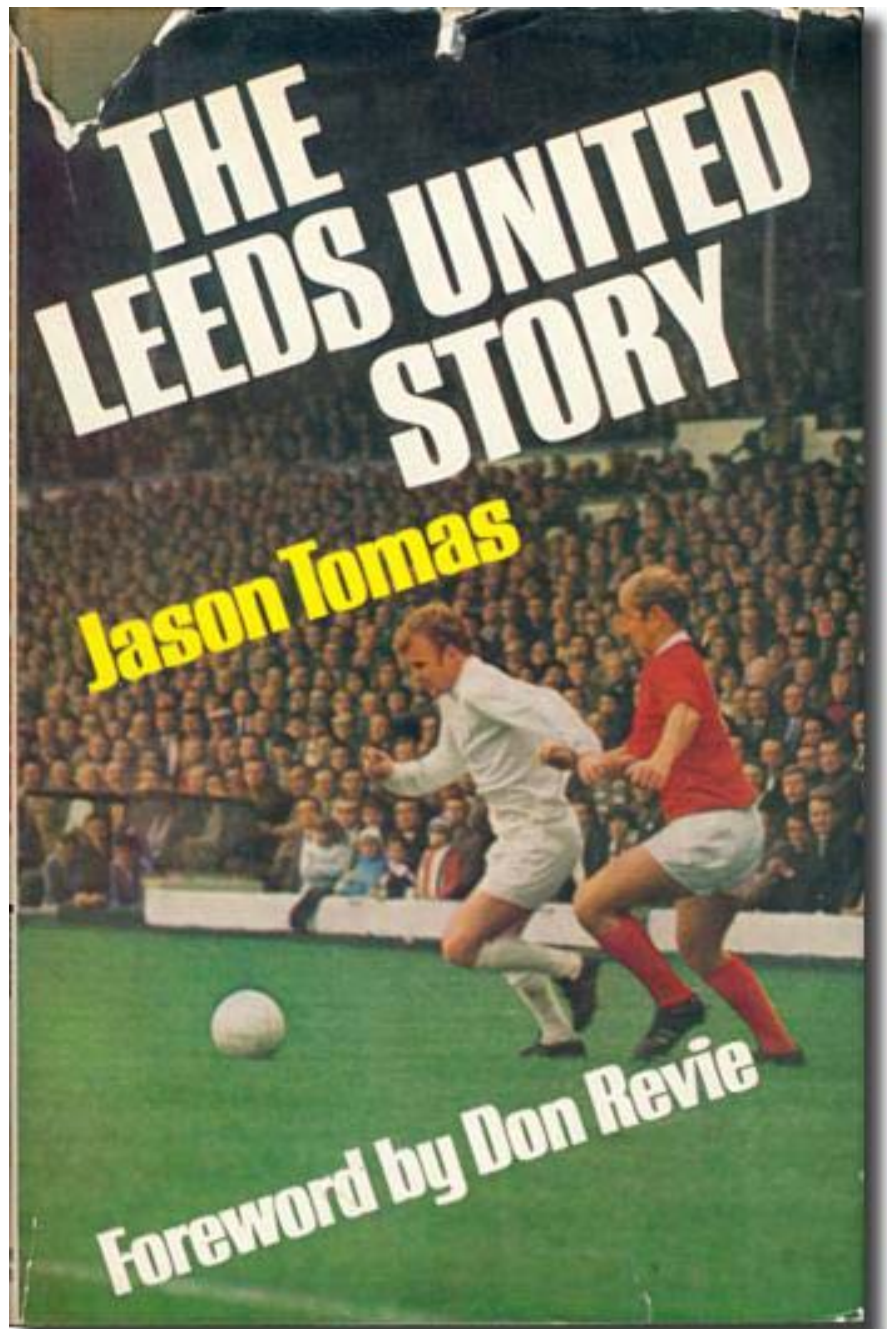
Books - The Leeds United Story (1971)

Jason Tomas - Arthur Barker - ISBN 0-213-00498-4

Jason Tomas is a well known football writer, whose most famous work is probably *WHITE HEAT The Leeds United Dream Team*, although he has written many other biographies, including ones on Alan Shearer, Malcolm Macdonald and Alan Hansen, as well as *Beckham and Ferguson - Divided They Stand*, a well informed take on the fractured relationship.

He published *The Leeds United Story* in 1971, and it covers their history from around 1960 to the end of the 1971 season when the Whites lost out to Arsenal in the League, but gained the consolation of being the final winners of the Fairs Cup.

It's a fascinating and authoritative read, with many quotes from key figures from the period, including Don Revie, Harry Reynolds, Bobby Collins, Jim Storr, Johnny Giles, Peter Lorimer, Jack Charlton and Billy Bremner, and has some wonderful photos from a momentous period in the club's history. Tomas takes an objective and critical stance of his subject matter, although he is clearly extremely knowledgeable and thorough about his subject matter. His is a sympathetic account, which somehow never manages to descend into cloying melodrama but skilfully captures the mood and atmosphere of



a historic period in the development of English football.

Among the more fascinating sections of the book are a loving recreation of some of Revie's renowned dossiers and the recounting of the infamous Everton-Leeds riot in 1964 when the referee had to take the players off to cool off while the fans hurled rubbish onto the pitch.

This is a fairly typical extract from the book, from Tomas' retelling of the 1967-68 season:

"Leeds' strategy of having Charlton standing on the opposing goal-line for free kicks and corners had rankled with numerous rival managers and players throughout the season, for it was widely interpreted as yet another Leeds move to go beyond the laws of the game - without being penalized by the referee. Certainly, Leeds' ability to drop the ball on to Charlton's head from any distance or angle made it almost impossible at times for referees to decide whether his inevitable collision with the goalkeeper was accidental or premeditated.

Charlton said at the time:

"These protests are preposterous - there's nothing in the rules that says I can't stand there, and I certainly don't do so to foul the goalkeeper or anyone else. It is a great advantage for Leeds to use me in this way. It takes the weight off other forwards, if I can commit defenders to mark me. The fact that I can jump allows balls to drop into positions where defenders don't want them to drop! I have scored a few goals, but not many compared with what have been scored by people around me. I get tremendous satisfaction about making a goal for someone else. Our goal-line plan has brought me a lot of abuse from opposing supporters, but I quite like to hear it. If they ignore you, you're not doing anything. If they get on to you, they're afraid.

"This was not the only facet of Leeds game that made them the team the fans loved to hate. Indeed in February Leeds' blatant time-wasting tactics against West Ham at Elland Road brought boos from even their own supporters! West Ham, for so long English soccer's Beau Brummells, were incensed at Leeds' disregard for the spirit of the game, and some of their stars launched a scathing attack on Leeds in the Press. Leeds, 2-1 ahead, closed up the game fifteen minutes from the end by keeping the ball near the corner flags, tempting West Ham to lunge in and push it behind the line for a throw-in or goal kick!"

It all feels a little like another world these days, but Tomas' book is one of the better ones about this period in Leeds' history, told with enough insight, objectivity and detail to keep football fans of all colours fascinated for hours.

"During the early 1960s, Leeds United were languishing near the foot of the Second Division and attendances were so low that their ground was, in the words of one of the club's players, like a 'Ghost Town' on match days.

"Today (1971), United are rated among the top clubs in the world, having dominated the English soccer scene for seven years, and established a new level of professionalism at the same time.

"The Leeds United story is, indeed, an epic of tragedy transformed into triumph, and in this book Jason Tomas pinpoints the factors which have made the Yorkshire club's revival possible. It is a contemporary story, one that does not dwell on the club's county history but spotlights their revival from the early sixties."
