



Matches – 20 March 1967 – Leeds United 2 Sunderland 1

FA Cup Fifth Round second replay – Boothferry Park – 40,546

Scorers: Belfitt 11, Giles (pen) 87

Leeds United: Sprake, Reaney, Bell, Bremner, Charlton, Hunter, Lorimer, Belfitt, Greenhoff, Giles, Cooper

Sunderland: Montgomery, Irwin, Harvey, Todd, Kinnell, Baxter, Gauden, O'Hare, Martin, Herd, Mulhall



When Leeds United drew Sunderland in the fifth round of the FA Cup in March 1967, it represented just the latest chapter in a rivalry that was intense if not quite amounting to loathing. The relationship had degenerated from the moment the two raced head to head for promotion in 1963/64.



The clubs met in a double header over that Christmas period as first and second in the Division Two. The Black Cats took three of the four points on offer to bring the gap down to a point, ending United's 20 match unbeaten run in the process. The two games were hotly disputed, with the Roker clash being particularly animated, as reported by Eric Stanger in the Yorkshire Post: "I hope there are no more games

like that at Roker Park on Saturday. It was so full of spite and malice that it did no credit to the 22 players, the referee or the huge crowd of 56,046 ... Thirty-nine free kicks for fouls were given ... 11 against Sunderland in the first half, 10 against Leeds; five against Sunderland in the second half, 13 against Leeds. Two Sunderland players threw punches and got off scot free: so did a Leeds player who deliberately kicked at an opponent. As for the crowd it sickened me to hear them cheer when a stretcher was called for Storrie ... cheers which increased in volume as he was carried off 20 minutes from the end with damaged knee ligaments."

Relations grew even more fraught in the autumn of 1964 when Sunderland courted Don Revie and almost seduced him into filling the vacant manager's chair at Roker.

In the opening game of the 1965/66 season, Sunderland winger George Mulhall was contentiously dismissed in another bad tempered match.

The FA Cup pairing in 1967 augured ill.

Trouble was delivered in spades, but the fans also got a gripping battle between two well-matched teams with quarter neither asked for nor given.



Charlie Hurley protests as referee Bill Clements dismisses George Mulhall in August 1965

The game at Roker Park on 11 March was a nip and tuck affair, ending 1-1 with Jack Charlton taking just eight minutes to equalise Neil Martin's 22nd minute opener. The focal point was the performance of two in form goalkeepers, Gary Sprake and Jim Montgomery performing heroics, though a number of personal vendettas pervaded the contest.

The replay four days later at Elland Road brought another 1-1 draw, though most of the headlines were dominated by reports of a near disaster in the crowd. A record attendance of 57,892, coupled with a lack of time to make appropriate ticketing arrangements, contributed to pressure on the terraces and a collapsed crush barrier. The game was stopped for 17 minutes and 32 people were taken away in ambulances. Thankfully, there were no serious injuries.

Leeds had the best of the action after the restart but could not secure a result, and a second replay was required, with Hull's Boothferry Park ultimately determined as the venue after a dispute between the clubs. After the near disaster at Elland Road, the match was declared all ticket. The record attendance for the ground stood at 55,000 but the capacity had been reduced by seating improvements over recent times and eventually the crowd numbered just over 40,000.



The Yorkshire Evening Post of 16 March 1967 carries the news of the previous evening's near disaster at Elland Road

The drawn out failure to settle the tie brought complications for the Peacocks as they faced fixture congestion. David Lacey reported in the Guardian: "Leeds United are faced with the prospect of having to play five games in nine days as a result of Bologna's refusal to put back their Inter Cities Fairs Cup quarter final first leg match in Bologna on Wednesday. Leeds, who play Sunderland in the second replay of their FA Cup fifth round tie at Hull on Monday, had asked the Italians to agree to a postponement until April 5."

Eric Stanger reported Don Revie's contingency plans in the Yorkshire Post: "The worst that could happen would be another draw, since it could entail their playing two Cup-ties on Wednesday, one in England and the other in the Inter Cities Fairs Cup in Italy against Bologna. 'So,' said Mr Don Revie, the Leeds team manager, last night, 'I am taking with me to Hull 22 or 24 players just in case, and as yet I have not made up my mind on the exact composition of the party.'

"But if the worst should happen Mr Revie will retain his senior players at home and send off his reserves to Bologna. 'We certainly would not scratch,' said Mr Revie. 'Not after going all that way in the Fairs Cup, and you never know with our reserves. We might still have a chance in the second leg at Elland Road.'

"Even if tonight's replay at Boothferry Park is settled one way or the other, Leeds have a wearying time ahead. Unable to get hotel accommodation in Hull, they leave after the game for Bridlington and have to be up at 5am to catch an aircraft from Brough to Luton, where they will go on to Italy

by chartered flight. They are due to arrive at Forli, some 40 miles from Bologna, about 1.30pm.

“The journey back will be just as taxing for it means getting up at 4am for the return flight to England from Forli. One night’s rest and then off to Blackpool on Good Friday for Saturday’s League game, then home again for the other two Easter matches against Sheffield United away and at home. There will not be much time or opportunity to treat bumps and bruises.”

For once, United were able to field a team approaching something like full strength, though Mike O’Grady and Albert Johanneson were missing and Alan Peacock was still working his way back to full fitness. Leeds fielded the young twin spearhead of Rod Belfitt and Jimmy Greenhoff. They were also able to include Charlton, Hunter and Reaney in their defence after Don Revie withdrew them from the Football League squad to play the Scottish League.

Sunderland had their own walking wounded, but Jim Baxter, George Kinnell, George Mulhall, John O’Hare and George Herd all recovered sufficiently to take their places.

Within a minute of the second replay kicking off, Sunderland came close to taking the lead when Martin headed narrowly wide. United rapidly assumed control though Belfitt missed two clear chances. Their pressure brought an early goal, taking them into the lead for the first time in the 221 minutes played so far in the tie.



Rod Belfitt slides in to give Leeds the lead at last against Sunderland

The Times: “Leeds needed a fortunate free kick to gain the lead. It came after 11 minutes when Irwin fouled Cooper. Giles’ free kick was punched out by Montgomery but the ball quickly bounced back. Martin’s

foot saved the situation, but his clearance only went to Lorimer, whose shot rebounded off the inside of the far post, and Belfitt was on hand to slide the ball home.”

The goal gave United the platform from which to take a stranglehold and for much of the game it seemed that the lead would be decisive, given Leeds’ capacity for protecting even the slimmest of advantages. They continued to threaten with swift counter attacks, nearly nicking a second goal on the half hour, but Lorimer’s header from a Cooper cross went narrowly wide.

The Wearsiders retaliated strongly in the second half and forced United back onto the defensive with some high tempo football, but couldn’t forge a decent opening.

With twelve minutes remaining, a rare mistake by Billy Bremner allowed Sunderland back into the game. He badly misjudged his header, which landed at the feet of right winger Allan Gauden, who half volleyed home on his left foot. Gary Sprake had the original shot covered but was deceived by a deflection and couldn’t stop it despite getting his hands to the ball.

The equaliser came as a bolt from the blue, but Leeds bounced back quickly.

With three minutes left, and the prospect of extra time looming, Leeds were awarded a questionable penalty by referee Ken Stokes when he ruled that Jimmy Greenhoff was brought down by Sunderland defender Cec Irwin, already booked for fouling Terry Cooper. Johnny Giles, who had been enjoying his habitual dominance in midfield, ignored all the mayhem around him and calmly stroked the ball past Montgomery into the corner of the net, with Gary Sprake at the other end of the pitch not daring to watch.

The Sunderland players were incensed and lost their cool badly as the game drifted away from them, with the final minutes bringing more controversy. A furious George Herd was dismissed for remonstrating about a foul on Terry Cooper. Seconds later, George Mulhall followed him, though only after prolonged argument. Ken Stokes, who had refereed the infamous 1964 clash between Leeds and Everton at Goodison, was forced to add more than five minutes of injury time as the police struggled to maintain order and keep people off the pitch. He was given an escort to the dressing room at the final whistle.

Billy Bremner: “As the ball went into the Sunderland net, some of their supporters went wild. They surged on to the pitch to vent their displeasure in no uncertain terms and one fellow, twirling a haversack round and round in the air, made straight for Willie Bell ... Behind him came three or four other gents, equally intent on forcing their attentions on Willie. Things were looking a bit grim, because I knew that Willie wouldn't be likely to take such treatment with a light jest and a smile. He'd be more likely to hammer back, if someone tried to stick a fist on his jaw.



The Guardian of 21 March 1967 features the previous evening's second replay win over Sunderland - the picture shows Mulhall clashing with Bremner and Charlton looking on

“Then, in the nick of time ... a copper materialised, as if from nowhere, and, for my money, he could have won his way into the Leeds Rugby League team, the way he brought down that fan with a flying tackle. It was perfectly timed ... The other fans who had invaded the pitch took quick stock of what had overtaken one of their number, and they were deterred. That copper, I feel certain, prevented a real free for all punch up, maybe involving players of both teams.”

The penalty decision was hotly disputed both at the time and afterwards, as Peter Lorimer recalled in his autobiography. “Don said out of the blue: ‘If anybody gets anywhere near the box, get down.’ Jimmy Greenhoff, who was quick when he was in full flight, set off on one of his jinking runs and was fully five yards outside the penalty area when he was brought down. By the time he had stumbled, fallen and rolled over a couple of times he was inside the box, and the referee, Ken Stokes, pointed to the spot so quickly that it was almost embarrassing ... This was at a time when there was a lot of talk about referees being got at. I am not saying that Stokes was, but the issue begged close examination. Firstly, why did Revie issue that ‘dive’ instruction and, secondly, why did Stokes award a penalty that so clearly was not? Lots of things were happening in football that

simply did not add up, and this was just another of those ... Mulhall is to this day quite irate about the situation. The Sunderland old boys are 100 per cent sure that this was not a straight game. As players, you never know ... I remember thinking in the dressing room after that game, 'That was a funny statement of Don's.' Maybe he thought that Ken had not so far given a penalty and might do so at the next debatable incident, maybe there were other factors."

It was an astonishing and adrenaline charged evening of football, sending the United party off in good heart for their Fairs Cup clash a couple of days later in Italy. They were no strangers to controversy and all the rancour was like water off a duck's back as they flew out for some days in the sun. This was a team whose steadfastness under pressure was assuming legendary proportions.



The Yorkshire Evening Post of 21 March 1967 carries the news of the previous evening's second replay win for Leeds at Hull with Giles scoring the winner from the spot