



## Matches – 21 December 1968 – Leeds United 6 Burnley 1

First Division – Elland Road – 31,409

Scorers: Lorimer 2, Giles, Bremner, Jones, Gray

Leeds United: Sprake, Reaney, Madeley, Bremner, Charlton, Hunter, O'Grady, Lorimer, Jones, Giles, Gray

Burnley: Thomson, Smith, Latcham, Docherty, Wrigley, Blant, Thomas, Collins, Casper, Coates, Kindon

It is difficult to imagine today the seismic nature of the shock when Leeds United went down by five goals to one at Burnley in October 1968. Leeds NEVER conceded five goals ... period! In fact, in the 19 games played up to that point, United's iron clad defence had kept 10 clean sheets, including matches against Liverpool, table-topping Arsenal and mighty Ferencvaros (twice) in the Fairs Cup final. But there was no hint of a fluke about the result: Burnley had been on fire and took the Whites apart with some breathtaking football.

By the time of the return fixture at Elland Road the weekend before Christmas, normal service had been resumed ... Leeds were undefeated since Turf Moor and were hot on the heels of Liverpool in pursuit of the League title; Burnley were tenth, without a win since November 9, having shipped seven goals at Manchester City in the first week of December.

It took Leeds a while to get the result out of their system even though they managed to quickly stabilise things. A refocusing on defensive basics delivered three successive goalless draws in the League immediately after the debacle at Turf Moor, though the points they dropped cost them top spot. By now they were fully back on song, conceding just six goals in ten games, and a few days earlier they had beaten Hanover 5-1 in the Fairs Cup, their best result since January.

Goals had been a scarce commodity – United had not managed more than 2 in any game since August – due to an overly defensive approach. For the most part they worked to a rigid 4-5-1 formation, relying on Mick Jones as lone front runner. It made them exceedingly difficult to beat, but they struggled to convert possession and territorial superiority into goals.



The Yorkshire Evening Post of 23 December 1968 carries Terry Lofthouse's report of United's thrashing of Burnley 2 days previously - featuring pictures of Mick Jones in a painful clash and then scoring the fifth goal

The game with Hanover brought an emphatic end to the drought. Leeds hit peak form, as reported by Terry Lofthouse in the Yorkshire Evening Post: “Well, it’s happened – at last! Some team had to suffer a thrashing in Leeds United’s present mood, and it turned out to be the West Germans, Hanover. Not for a long time have the fans been treated to such a magnificent show, and Hanover’s coach, Zlatko Čajkovski, was rich in his praise after his side had been completely overrun. He paid this handsome tribute: ‘Leeds are the best English team I have ever seen, and it was a fair result on the run of play.’

“Don Revie, of course, was highly delighted. ‘My boys were brilliant. They played exactly to plan.’

“Indeed, United’s exciting football amply demonstrated that when a team are prepared to be uninhibited in their approach, the result can be devastating. Hanover were simply bewildered by the speed, the skill and the power of the Leeds play, coming from all angles as it did as United interchanged and



Mike O'Grady ends up in the net after scoring against Hanover

supported one another with remarkable dexterity. This was why the Germans could not cope. They were hammered, battered and crushed by the howitzer punches of United’s goal hungry raiders. The long striding Madeley ... the midfield culture of Bremner and Giles ... the deftness of Gray ... the sheer determination of Jones ... the shooting of O’Grady and Lorimer. These were some of the highlights. But not the most memorable. The honour unquestionably went to Hunter, whose 30-yard blockbuster of a shot flew into the far corner of the net with Podiasly grasping at fresh air. And it was Norman’s right foot. The one it is said he does not possess.”

United were unchanged for the visit of Burnley, Mike O’Grady, Eddie Gray and Paul Madeley having shaken off injuries, and went into the game determined to make their point. Burnley had eight men on duty who had played in the 5-1 victory. One of the changes had 18-year-old Michael Docherty, son of new Aston Villa manager Tommy, operating at right-half.

Dave Thomas, Ralph Coates, Frank Casper and Steve Kindon, who had dissected Leeds in October, were all present and correct. That day Burnley’s pace and power had been far more than an off colour United could handle. Don Revie was determined that this time would be different – professional pride was at stake and Burnley had to be put firmly in their place.

United went all out for an early goal and got the start they wanted, with Peter Lorimer opening the scoring after just 90 seconds. Billy Bremner fed Mike O’Grady out on the right and the winger hared down the touchline. He reached the byline before pulling back the cross and Jones rose to meet it. His header was blocked but ran out to Lorimer at the back post. Without a moment’s hesitation, the Scot fired it unerringly into the net.

Any faint hopes that Burnley might have had of living with United effectively vanished with that simple, lightning break. United had set their minds on the annihilation of the visitors and they were up and running.

It was all Leeds in the opening quarter as Burnley were pushed deeper and deeper into their own half. Goalkeeper Harry Thomson had to be alert soon after to save another Lorimer piledriver.

All season long, the Leeds defenders had been ever ready to throw their considerable weight into the fray up front. For much of the first half they spent their time firmly on the offensive, with full-backs Paul Reaney and Paul Madeley regularly overlapping, Jack Charlton a constant threat at dead ball situations and even Norman Hunter pressing forward as the opportunities arose. Gray, O'Grady and Lorimer were constant adjuncts to Jones as Giles and Bremner secured a midfield stronghold. There was little that Burnley could do to stem the tide with United in such dominant form.

After 24 minutes, the Yorkshire siege bore further fruit. A long range shot from Giles seemed to spell no danger, but the goalkeeper spilled it. Lorimer was on the loose ball in a trice to slide it home for 2-0, despite the attempts of Thomson to atone for his error with a charge.

The Scot had managed a brace against Hanover and another pair on 7 December against Sheffield Wednesday, demonstrating that he had put a somewhat barren autumn well behind him. He had been on the transfer list since the end of November, dissatisfied with a lack of first team football. Don Revie had opted to use Paul Madeley in a defensive midfield role for many games, leaving Lorimer the odd man out, though his return to goalscoring form made it a difficult choice.



Peter Lorimer slides in to score his second goal against Burnley from close range

When Terry Lofthouse asked Revie about the situation after the game, he was told: "It's still up to him, the situation has not altered."

Lofthouse went on: "The Scot asked for a move a few weeks ago because he wanted regular first team football and United, who cannot give him that assurance, intimated they would consider an exchange deal. But no club has come for Lorimer. Yet the player is having second thoughts so I understand, and I expect him to see Mr Revie before long to ask to come off the list. Lorimer felt that a change of club might give him a change of luck, too, for he had a lean scoring spell up to this month. Now, with Paul Madeley having dropped back to left-back to replace injured Terry Cooper, Lorimer has regained his appetite for scoring goals."

There were hints that the Scot would be used in a player exchange deal for Nottingham Forest's Joe Baker, Peter Cormack of Hibernian or Colin Suggett (Sunderland). Nothing materialised, though

Lorimer remained on the list until the very latter stages of the season.

Under normal circumstances, securing a two-goal lead would have tempted United to shut up shop. However, on this occasion, there was no question of that and they continued to go for the jugular.

By the 36<sup>th</sup> minute, they had added two further goals. First Giles crashed home a fearsome volley, and then Jones showed that he was much more than a goalscorer by centring perfectly for Bremner to head home. Burnley, who had not been in the game to any great extent, seemed suitably shell shocked.

Kindon should have pulled a goal back before the break after a rare error from Hunter left him an opportunity, but, as if disbelieving his luck, he shot wide. Coates then had two chances but fired both over the bar and United were quickly back on top, punishing the Lancastrians for their impudence. Jones, who had been without a goal since 9 October, looked like breaking the run as he beat two men to shoot, but keeper Thomson managed to prevent a goal at the last moment.

United went in at half time well satisfied with their work.

Richard Ulyatt in the Yorkshire Post: “Burnley withstood the tempest for nearly 25 minutes, but then Lorimer, Bremner and Giles scored with what seemed to be viciously fierce shots as though to say: ‘Take that, take that, take that; don’t dare score five against us again.’”



Mick Jones goes in where it hurts against Burnley

“By the end of an excitingly one sided first half the score was 4-0 and the points settled. There was a certain degree of nonchalance in Leeds’ play after the interval, just sufficient to give Burnley the opportunity of scoring a goal through Coates and indicating that under normal circumstances they were a promising side, likely to become first rate with experience.

“But whenever Leeds decided that it was time to crack the whip, either a goal was scored or Thomson, with adroit goalkeeping, prevented one.”

Jones and Lorimer combined well to promise a fifth goal early in the second half, but the move came to nothing and Burnley started to rally. They moved threateningly on several occasions and Sprake had to save from Casper. Then Thomas twice went close. They got the reward for their effort when Coates took a pass from Thomas and chipped a clever goal over Sprake from all of 25 yards.

If the response hinted at any genuine danger of a revival, Burnley got little chance to build on their breakthrough. As if sensing that they had taken their collective feet off the accelerator, if only by

the merest fraction, United were quickly back at them, like worrying terriers – Lorimer twice went close, first with his head and then with a typical long range effort; Jones was felled in the box by the keeper, but the referee waved all appeals away.

United did earn a free kick when O’Grady was fouled on the edge of the box, but the chance came to nothing. Eventually, though, Leeds did get a fifth goal. Jones broke his long scoreless run by converting a relatively simple chance.

It was a real relief for the former Sheffield United striker, as he recalled later: “Everything clicked when we played the return fixture against Burnley. I was particularly pleased because I hadn’t scored for a couple of months and managed to grab a goal. Scoring is all about confidence and that game was the start of a tremendous run for me.”

Don Revie: “I don’t care if Mick fails to score again this season ... he does his fair share of creating the openings for others. He is one of the most unselfish players I have seen, always willing to take the knocks and wait to let someone else through. There is not a better clubman in the game.”

With two minutes remaining, Gray completed the scoring to round off the perfect revenge, with the 6-1 final tally proving that anything that Burnley could do, Leeds could do better.



Terry Lofthouse reports on United's 6-1 thrashing of Burnley for the Yorkshire Evening Post

It seemed a matter of professional pride that the wrongs of October should be righted and the callow young things from East Lancashire put firmly in their place. United certainly achieved that particular aim.

As Richard Ulyatt wrote afterwards, “I have never seen a team so efficiently and comprehensively beaten by skill, plus determination, plus run of the ball. Players’ pride was satisfied, spectators gave their gladiators the thumbs up and Thomson, the busiest man on the field, showed his appreciation of a notable performance by joining in the clapping as Leeds trooped off the field.

“Burnley were not equipped to contain Leeds in this mood. Giles and Bremner opened out play with telling passes of varied ranges but consistent accuracy. O’Grady recaptured the brilliant form he showed at Huddersfield ten years ago with added discipline in use of ball. Madeley, running from full-back, moved in with forceful, ice cool purpose and Jones by making two goals, one of them with deft feint of feet and body, showed that goalscoring is not essentially the most important part of a centre-forward’s job.

“A more experienced half-back line than Burnley’s would possibly have made greater impact in the

middle of the field. One of lesser pride and promise would have given up the ghost at half time. Burnley did not, but instead demonstrated that in a year or two Thomas on the right wing, Kindon on the left, 18-year-old Docherty, a chip off the old block as he tried to take the ball off Giles and assist the referee, will probably hand out similar treatment to some other unfortunate club.

“Leeds United have never given their supporters so handsome a present: 11 goals in four days. What a team!”

Tom Holley in the Yorkshire Post: “After this magnificent display, who can doubt that Leeds are still capable of brilliant attacking football? In a terrific first half blitz, they took Burnley by the scruff of the neck to hand out a real spanking.”

Terry Lofthouse: “Even through this barrage of strength in which Madeley’s determined running from the back was again a feature, Jones saw his luck remain bad ... Nevertheless, the work put in by Jones off the ball and his intelligent use of it brought Bremner the fourth goal, a header from a perfect centre ... and there was Burnley just about down for the count. O’Grady, despite being the only forward not to score – Jones eventually got that elusive first goal since October 9 and Gray also scored – maintained his high standard on the wing. His constant moving inside and to the other flank in a switch with Gray bothered the Burnley rearguard. Wrigley, their centre-half, did not know whom to mark, so well did United interchange.

“Not since their visit to Ipswich in August have United hit three goals in a League game and their 4-1 win over QPR in the same month, was their previous best.

“This was United in brilliant attacking form – Sprake will be catching the Hong Kong flu if he is not careful – and it provided a thrilling pre-Christmas feast for the fans.”

The ghosts of Turf Moor fully laid to rest, Leeds could press on with their seemingly unstoppable pursuit of the League title – the win kept them within three points of pace setters Liverpool. 9 victories in their next 10 League games saw them catch and then overtake the Reds, putting a clear 6 points between the two sides. The hammering of Burnley had a pivotal impact in a memorable campaign, a clear turning point.