



Matches – 11 April 1970 – Leeds United 2 Chelsea 2

FA Cup final – Wembley – 100,000

Scorers: Charlton, Jones

Leeds United: Sprake, Madeley, Cooper, Bremner, Charlton, Hunter, Lorimer, Clarke, Jones, Giles, Gray

Chelsea: Bonetti, Webb, McCreadie, Hollins, Dempsey, Harris (Hinton), Baldwin, Houseman, Osgood, Hutchinson, Cooke

Leeds United's first two appearances in Wembley Cup finals were among the most dismal occasions in the illustrious history of the grand old stadium: in 1965 they played out a dour FA Cup match against Liverpool, going down 2-1 after extra time; three years later they snatched an early goal against Arsenal in the League Cup and then established a vicelike grip on the trophy via a grim battle of attrition.

Manager Don Revie was determined that his team would finally do themselves justice and give a worldwide TV audience a performance to remember when they reached the 1970 FA Cup final.

At the start of the season the manager promised that his men would espouse a new attacking philosophy. £165,000 record signing Allan Clarke had formed an excellent understanding with centre-forward Mick Jones and United were now much more precise in front of goal than in previous campaigns. At the same time, the accent on attack had rendered their impenetrable rearguard somewhat porous, so it was highly unlikely that the game would be a dull, defensive affair.



The Sunday Mirror of 12 April 1970 features the previous day's Cup final

United had enjoyed a wonderful campaign. Until the end of March, when Leeds finally saw off the challenge of Manchester United in the semi final, Revie's men had been in with a good shout of the 'impossible' treble of League, Cup and European Cup; but Everton had secured the championship and a defeat in the first leg of the Champions' Cup semi final at home would put on a good showing at Wembley, against old rivals Chelsea, if they were not to end a magnificent season empty handed.

Their preparations for Wembley were less than ideal with just one win in five games. During that period they lost right-back Paul Reaney with a fractured leg, while reliable centre-back Norman

Hunter had been out of action since 18 March. Versatile Paul Madeley was switched to cover for Reaney against Chelsea, which gave Revie the relatively simple equation of nominating the fit again Hunter in his Cup final selection. Apart from Reaney, United were at full strength, with midfielder Mick Bates getting the nod as substitute ahead of the young Welshman, Terry Yorath.



Dave Sexton and Don Revie lead out the two teams at Wembley

Leeds had beaten Chelsea 5-2 at Stamford Bridge in the League in January, and were widely tipped to see off the Londoners, who had their own injury problems with the late exclusion of midfielder Alan Hudson, on crutches and in plaster after suffering damaged ankle ligaments.

Revie's one cause for concern, leaving aside United's recent loss of form, was the condition of the once lush playing surface at Wembley. The Horse of the Year Show had been staged recently at the stadium and the pitch had been left in horrendous condition. A tent had been pitched in the centre of the playing surface and the jumping horses tore the grass to shreds, leaving behind something akin to a ploughed field.

C S Taverner, secretary of Enfield, who had beaten Dagenham 5-1 in the Amateur Cup final at the stadium on 4 April, complained: "We'd sooner have played on our own pitch. It was pretty grim; in fact, I have never seen it look so bad." Revie joked, "It will be like playing at home for us," in reference to the appalling state of United's own pitch at Elland Road, adding, "The quicker they get Wembley back to what it was when it was the greatest soccer spectacle of the season, the better."



Referee Eric Jennings, his linesmen and Billy Bremner looks on as Chelsea captain Ron Harris tosses off

Officials from Wembley Stadium countered, "We have no worries about it but we are putting out a statement to end speculation about the pitch. It has come in for a lot of hard comment but I think it will be all right ... Weatherwise we have been very unlucky this season. We have had rain and even snow just before most of the games at the stadium and it has been dug up and cut up during the games. Maintenance has been carried out on the pitch this year and certain parts of the turf have been replaced."

The confident words emanating from stadium officials were undermined days later when it was revealed that the pitch would be covered with tons of sand to soak up the water. 70 men had laboured all week to get the field into a playable state.

Revie commented, “If they are putting 100 tons of sand on Wembley then it is goodbye to good football ... That is over three times the weight of sand we have ever used at any one time at Elland Road, and our pitch has been bad enough in all conscience in its effects on football. A hundred tons will deaden all pace on the ball. It will be like playing on a beach. Possibly Wembley felt they had no choice with their turf being in such a bad state but to put sand down, but I have never known that quantity to be used. I am very sorry that this has had to happen to Wembley apart from it happening to our players, for there was no more lovely sight in football to me, as a manager or as a player, than the turf cut in stripes.”

Billy Bremner: “The pitch was in a terrible state. There was not a sign of the normally immaculate turf which everyone associates with Wembley. The pitch had been sanded – but you found yourself almost ankle deep in mud and sand, at times – and if Wembley’s once lush turf was stamina-sapping, I can tell you that the pitch on which we played destroyed the energy of the players, as the game wore on. The pitch didn’t run true – the ball came at you from awkward angles, bounced and bobbed about, as you tried to ply passes with precision.”



The definitive confrontation of the 1970 final - Eddie Gray faces up to David Webb

It was a horrible, holding, heavy pudding of a pitch. There was little standing water, but it resembled stodgy, thick porridge, devoid of life, bounce or pace. Mistakes would be inevitable.

United somehow managed to revive their flagging spirits and gave one of their best displays of the season. Their return to form was eased by the rest and recuperation that a number of the team were able to enjoy with the title race conceded. Norman Hunter had been the longest out of action at 24 days, but Cooper, Bremner, Charlton, Jones (all 10 days), Giles, Clarke and Sprake (all 9) had enjoyed at least a week off. Paradoxically it was a man who had enjoyed no rest, Eddie Gray, who gave the most impressive performance. The Scottish winger had scored two amazing goals a week earlier against Burnley, one a precision lob from 30 yards and the other after a master class in footwork and control that left a collection of hapless Burnley defenders in his wake, bewitched, bothered and bewildered.

Gray was in high spirits and about to play the game of his young life, weaving his light footed magic all across the gluepot of a pitch. But more of that later.

As Mick Jones kicked off, BBC commentator Kenneth Wolstenholme described the pitch as “rather like Goodwin Sands”, going on to note that “quick turns might be very dangerous manoeuvres this afternoon” and “the players are already sinking into this soft, sanded surface.”

The opening twenty minutes saw United establish control, as reported by Frank McGhee in the Sunday Mirror: “Leeds left no one in any doubt from the first minute that they meant to keep their promise to play attractively, aggressively, adventurously, no matter the risks. They were helped

initially by the unaccountable failure of Chelsea to try and post close-marking sentries on those two key midfield figures, Billy Bremner and Johnny Giles.”

The men in white were straight onto the attack, compressing play into the Chelsea half and exerting pressure. Whenever a Blues man had the ball, United players harried him instantly, denying time and space and pushing for an error.

From kick off the ball was turned back to Jack Charlton, who hoofed upfield. It fell to Eddie McCreadie at left-back and, with Jones and Allan Clarke closing in on him, the Scot turned out to his left and punted down the touchline. His clearance went straight to Paul Madeley, just inside the Chelsea half. Madeley promptly played it down the right channel for Clarke, but John Dempsey stretched out to claim the ball. His loose clearance went to Billy Bremner who fed on to Norman Hunter. He could have opened out play down the left where Leeds had men waiting, but chose instead to throw it long into the area in the general direction of Clarke - goalkeeper Peter Bonetti collected.



Jack Charlton shields the ball from Tommy Baldwin - the United defenders normally had the better of the opposition forwards

United should have made more of the chance but McCreadie and Dempsey had both been squeezed into mistakes by the pressure brought to bear and it was clear this tactic would serve Leeds well, spreading anxiety throughout the Chelsea rearguard.

Bonetti’s clearance ran loose after Giles got his head to the ball, allowing Chelsea to get some decent possession of their own. McCreadie knocked the ball inside to Dempsey and he fed it on to Charlie Cooke on the left flank. He dribbled his way down the wing before checking back and slipping the ball to John Hollins. The midfielder tried a through ball but it was intercepted by Hunter who calmly laid it off to Johnny Giles at his side.

The Irishman set United moving again, feeding play wide to a deep-lying Eddie Gray, whose long ball reached Jones. The striker controlled it and slipped it back to Giles, on to Bremner and then on in turn to long striding Madeley on the right. He allowed Peter Lorimer to take it off him and come infield before finding Bremner. The United captain threw the ball forward for Giles to get his head to it. His nod on was meant for Jones but was headed away from near the penalty spot by David Webb.

Jones thought Gray was further forward than he was, and he allowed Dempsey to collect the loose ball and hoof it up the wing. Terry Cooper reached the clearance and touched on to Bremner before being clattered by a lunging tackle from Ian Hutchinson. Bremner found Gray on the touchline, and he came inside before throwing in a centre. It flicked off the onrushing Hollins but looped on for Lorimer to collect and knock back to Bremner. Again it was passed short to Giles who found Gray. Webb ended the move with a tackle and sent play out wide left in the direction of Cooke.

The long ball gave Madeley a chance and he intercepted, beat off the challenge of Cooke and freed Lorimer down the right channel. He needed no further bidding and hared towards the box before sending in a power drive. It was heading for the top corner but Bonetti somehow got his clawing fingers to it and turned the shot over the bar.

Gray's corner went sailing out to the back of the area and Bonetti came out fearlessly to claim it at full stretch.

Nevertheless, Leeds had settled the better of the two teams by a substantial degree. They were really in the mood and controlling midfield with the partnership of Bremner and Giles outstanding, Lorimer and Gray prominent on the wings and Madeley and Cooper always ready to pour forward.

The most obvious difference between the two sides was the relative time and space that the two defences enjoyed. Leeds men were calm and unflurried, controlling the ball and playing it out accurately to their team mates; in contrast the Chelsea back four were in a constant state of panic, rushed into anxious clearances by the close attention and harrying of their opponents. The Leeds midfield men were thoughtful and controlled with their distribution and through balls, piercing the areas where the Londoners were most vulnerable. The United forwards kept Leeds defending right from the front line. It was a winning and very effective tactical plan.

Chelsea did have their moments up front, and showed that they possessed plenty of strong attacking potential of their own.

When Bonetti threw the ball out to Cooke on the left flank, they broke quickly, with Cooke feeding on and the ball going wide of Hunter for Houseman to chase. He took it on and looped a cross to the six-yard line where Madeley had to go diving full length to head behind with his nose six inches off the turf.

He was under severe pressure from Baldwin and did superbly to get to the ball.



Jones and Lorimer celebrate with Charlton after the centre-half's header opens the scoring at Wembley

United successfully cleared from the corner and broke away with Giles' long ball to Jones on the left flank. He had Lorimer with him and after making ground touched the ball off to the Scot, who chipped the ball inside and over a Chelsea man to Gray. The ball was fed back to Giles who curled it on to the advancing Lorimer. He cut inside but lost his footing as he played the through ball to the edge of the area. Webb blocked it away and Chelsea worked the ball clear.

A Chelsea man nodded the clearance down to Houseman who fed Osgood in the centre circle. He opened play out to the right with a pass to the overlapping Hollins. A huge punted ball across the Leeds box was intended for Cooke. It looked at first to have been overhit but held up on the clinging surface and in the end it was lucky that Sprake was alert to the danger.

The keeper's throw out fell to Chelsea and Osgood was allowed to come forward through acres of space. Hunter advanced to meet him as he closed on the area and the Chelsea man was forced to play the ball out to Baldwin on the right touchline. He checked back under pressure from Cooper and fed Cooke who chipped towards the six-yard line. Hutchinson dived into a header but it ran wide, relieving the pressure.

With 20 minutes gone, Leeds came storming forward again. Jones, Gray and Giles combined to work the ball forward and find Clarke near the area. He laid it back to Lorimer on the left and over

came a looping high centre beyond the back post. Dempsey was on hand to put the ball out for a corner with Jones waiting to collect.

Charlton strode forward purposefully and took up his station on Bonetti's line. Gray's curling corner dropped perfectly toward the six-yard box. Bonetti came out for it but misjudged the flight and both Clarke and Charlton got up in front of him. The centre-half rose highest of all and nodded the ball goalwards. His header dropped gently and both Harris and McCreadie were on hand to clear. Harris looked to be best placed and was swinging into his kick when he checked, thinking McCreadie had matters in hand. The ball kept low as it bounced and McCreadie swung wildly over the top of it as it skidded on weakly and dribbled just over the line. Harris and Osgood both appealed for a foul on Bonetti, who stood hands on hips in disappointment.

There was no doubt in the mind of referee Eric Jennings and he went running back to halfway, signalling the goal, a poor one from Chelsea's perspective, owing much to the treacherous surface.

Leeds continued to press with Gray coming more and more into the game, posing Webb no end of problems. The Scot lost possession when he had his first opportunity, early in the contest, but since then had been in complete command of the ball, which was seemingly glued to his toes. He tricked, bobbed and weaved and each time he faced up to Webb seemed to have the beating of him, leaving him on his back on several occasions as he danced past.

Frank McGhee in the Sunday Mirror: "In such a great game it is tempting to duck individual issues and praise them all, but one man has to be singled out for Leeds – their young Scottish outside-left Eddie Gray. His mastery over the lumbering, cumbersome David Webb became his team's most potent weapon."

With such penetrative advances coming from the left and Lorimer an omnipresent lurking presence on the right, United constantly threatened to add to their score. They were making light work of the grim surface and seemed to have a sixth sense regarding the run of the ball.

Lorimer sent one huge lob out to Gray on the touchline about 35 yards out – he had a clear run in on Webb, who back pedalled away from him, until he felt enough was enough and jumped into the tackle. Gray checked outside him into space and readied for a cross. Webb managed to recover and lunged in for another challenge, but Gray this time smoothly danced inside. He tried a shot but it flew well over the top. Nevertheless, the moment was symbolic of the psychological hold that Gray had established over Webb.

After 38 minutes, Hutchinson, socks already rolled down to his ankles, got the ball at midfield and found Hollins out on the left. He came inside and supplied Cooke on the wing. As United men came out to challenge, Cooke checked back and passed inside to Hollins. The midfielder clipped a ball forward to the back post about eight yards from Sprake's goal. Hutchinson rose to nod the ball out to Osgood who fired in a shot. The ball beat Sprake and went through Charlton's legs, but the



Eddie Gray hurdles this lunging tackle by Webb to make himself space

deflection slowed the ball up, and the centre-half was able to turn and clear with Baldwin challenging.

It had been a close thing but it looked like United would reach the break with their lead intact. They even hinted at increasing their advantage when a hopeful ball up the right channel was intercepted by Harris. He had plenty of time to find Bonetti, but the ball was weak and wide and nearly too slow as Jones came striding across. Bonetti managed to clutch it on the byline right in the corner of his area.

In the 41st minute, a Chelsea clearance fell to Osgood on the edge of the centre circle. Charlton came lunging through his man to get at the ball and was penalised. The free kick found McCreadie who chipped forward hopefully towards the D. Hutchinson went up with Lorimer and the ball fell loose to Houseman 25 yards out. As Bremner came in to challenge, Houseman swung speculatively with his left foot.



It's the image that will haunt Gary Sprake forever - Houseman's long range effort squirms under the keeper's body to bring Chelsea level

It was by no means a fierce effort but ran low through the crowded area to Sprake's left. The keeper saw it well enough and was down in good time, but in one of the most infamous moments of his career, he allowed it to squirm under his body and slip over the line for an undeserved equaliser. He held his head in despair as he lay there, realising the enormity of his error.

Sprake: "I was at fault for their equaliser as I should have saved Houseman's shot. I dived to my left and the ball landed and instead of bouncing into my body as it would have normally it skidded under me and into the goal. Although I should have done better and can't make excuses, the pitch was terrible ... It was a disappointing mistake in a big match and I have to hold my hand up and say I should have saved it."

Minutes later Bremner's loose crossfield ball was intercepted by Houseman on Chelsea's left. He fed Osgood, who tried a one-two at the edge of the Leeds box, but the ball swung out to Cooke on the left. Madeley reacted instantly to control it and launch a break with a long striding forward run. Madeley touched on to Gray in the centre circle. The winger could have given to either Giles or Clarke but instead ran on and on through the yawning space in front of him. Finally he was faced with Webb, who threw himself into the tackle. But as on so many other occasions, Gray simply dodged sideways, took another stride and crashed in a shot that an advancing Bonetti did well to tip over the bar.

That was the last action of a half that United had totally dominated.

Chelsea were obviously given instructions at the break to make their physical presence felt: in the opening minutes there were some fierce challenges on Jones, twice from Dempsey, and then McCreadie launched into the United centre-forward.

Leeds retained their poise and continued to play football. They held the ball patiently on the right as

they waited for an opportunity to emerge. Jones, Lorimer, Madeley, Clarke and Giles all figured in the move before Madeley slanted the ball across the face of the box to find Gray. He came inside Webb to find space on the edge of the area and fire in a right-footed shot that curved into Bonetti's midriff.

Chelsea came close to a goal after 53 minutes when they sustained a period of heavy pressure in and around the Leeds area. Baldwin held the ball up well at midfield despite pressure from Giles and Clarke, before Hollins, Houseman and Osgood set up Hutchinson on the right. The Leeds defence had been sucked in towards the ball and Hutchinson muscled his way outside Cooper and down the right channel towards the six-yard box.

Sprake came out to block the first effort at the forward's feet, but Hutchinson turned away to send a pass to Baldwin at the far side of the penalty area. He swung wildly and kicked air, but Houseman picked up the ball and made his way into the area past the challenges of Bremner and Cooper to find Hutchinson again. The striker bulldozed his way into a shot but Sprake blocked it, not once but twice. Osgood struck the loose ball goalwards only for Hunter to clear from underneath the bar. The ball reached the six-yard line where Gray trapped it, moved it wide and carried calmly away before being brought down by Hutchinson on the edge of the area.

Frank McGhee: "From that point I have seldom seen any team assume as total command of opponents from the same division as Leeds did. My notes uncover seven separate occasions when Leeds were in a scoring position before Chelsea had another breakaway chance."

Jones won the ball in the air at halfway and nodded down for Giles. He passed to Gray on the left and the ball was speared down the line to Clarke who could not control it, but rushed Harris into a hasty clearance. It was plucked out of the air by Gray who danced toward a confrontation with Webb. He came inside and held the defender off before sliding it to Giles in the middle, some 30 yards out. The Irishman stood the ball up into the right hand corner of the area for Lorimer to nod down across the 6-yard line. Jones hooked in an instant but weak shot which Bonetti smothered as Bremner raced in.



Gary Sprake repays some of the debt for his earlier mistake for a brave point blank save from Ian Hutchinson



Allan Clarke twists into a header against Chelsea - the ball hit the upright but Mick Jones crashed home the rebound

Shortly afterwards, Clarke was unmarked in the goal area when a cross from Jones came over, but he could only head weakly down for Bonetti to gather.

United did have one tricky moment when Houseman lobbed the ball diagonally forward into the area. Baldwin and Hunter both got under the flight and Charlton, standing behind them, allowed the ball to roll on towards the line before Sprake got down behind him to save.

A throw in from McCreadie allowed Leeds to recover possession and carve out another opportunity. Bremner tangled ferociously with Harris, but Clarke came away to find Lorimer. Chelsea cleared the Scot's cross but it fell to Giles 30 yards out. He fed it to Gray who came inside to hammer in a shot that struck the bar with Bonetti beaten. The ball soared out of the area, such was the power of Gray's effort.



Peter Bonetti can do nothing to prevent Mick Jones scoring the goal that put Leeds 2-1 ahead

Gray then danced inside Webb once more to feed Bremner, but the Scot's lob into the middle was claimed easily by Bonetti at the top of his leap.

Finally, as the game reached its 83rd minute, United got the second goal that they deserved. After holding possession for a while in midfield, Giles rolled the ball inside to Bremner. The Scot looked up to see what was on and waited, edging his way forward. Giles had continued his run to the byline and finally Bremner chipped an inch perfect ball inside the full-back to the Irishman. His cross fell invitingly for Clarke to twist like a snake into a diving header before Harris could react. It was a wonderful effort, beating Bonetti all ends up, but struck the foot of the post and ran out to the right. Lorimer and a defender both missed the ball but Jones was in the right spot to fire it left-footed back across the keeper and into the net off the back post.

The entire Leeds party went wild in celebration, convinced that Chelsea would never fight back from such a late hammer blow.

They were wrong. With four minutes remaining, Chelsea won a free kick on the left touch when Charlton tangled with Osgood. The ball ran back to Sprake and he tried to punt it into the crowd to waste time. But he sliced it and it went straight to Harris who ran forward with it, took the free kick and slipped it inside to Hollins. His clipped cross to the front post was met perfectly by Hutchinson diving to nod home.

Johnny Giles: "I have no need to check my facts in describing how the goal was scored, for I must have analysed it in my own mind 1001 times ... It is difficult to find the reason why this goal was scored. Some blame Charlton for allowing Hutchinson to get in front of him. Don Revie blames seven London policemen!

"When Jones scored, the Boss leapt off his seat near the touchline and tried to move nearer the pitch to tell Bremner: 'Make sure the lads close up the game now, and do not lose their concentration.'

Unfortunately, those bobbies barred his way, and the message didn't get through. All this has some significance, as Bremner admitted afterwards: 'I was so excited that we were in front that I couldn't think straight.'

“My own view, however, is that Chelsea's second goal can be attributed to Sprake's failure to prevent them taking their free kick quickly. Gary tried to kick the ball into the stands, but didn't connect properly and it went straight to Hollins, of all people! So Chelsea were able to get the ball into our penalty area before we had a chance to reassemble.”

Gary Sprake was vehement in denying that the blame lay with him, a theory also echoed by Peter Lorimer and Norman Hunter, denouncing the accusations as “a load of rubbish. With a few minutes to go the referee gave a controversial free kick to Chelsea wide out and the ball was passed to me. As the referee had already blown for a free kick, instead of picking it up I kicked it out of play to waste a bit of time. Instead of keeping their minds on the game some of the outfield players were still arguing with the ref when Chelsea took the free kick quickly and crossed it to Hutchinson, who was unmarked to head their second equaliser. I am quite prepared to take my share of blame when I make a mistake, but it annoys me when I see others try to pass their errors on to me. If the outfield players and especially the defenders concentrated on their game and marked their men instead of arguing with the ref they could have prevented a quick free kick and cleared the danger.”



Don Revie gives his team talk before the start of extra time

Wherever the blame lay, it was a devastating blow, and United were in despair.

Normal time was almost up when a ball ran out to Dempsey on the edge of Leeds area after an aerial challenge between Hunter and Hutchinson. Sprake arched backwards to turn the defender's powerful drive over the bar.

Incredibly there was time for another close shave at the other end. Jones did his best in the closing seconds to set himself up for a shot in the Chelsea area, but there was no room. The ball came out to Gray just outside the box. He curled a cross to the back of the area. Lorimer nodded it down and Clarke adjusted his feet perfectly to get into position and whip into a wonderful volley that crashed against Bonetti's bar and away.

This was clearly not to be United's day.

The cloying pitch had sapped the energy of the players and the extra 30 minutes rarely promised a breakthrough. In the fifth minute of the first period, Gray laid on a chance for Giles, but the Irishman's volley was scrambled off the line by Webb. In the closing seconds Sprake pulled off an amazing reflex save from a shot by Houseman which was on its way in. But that was it.

The game over, players went out together on a joint lap of honour after the first drawn final since 1912. It was a travesty of justice but one had to admire the Londoners' refusal to lie down.

Don Revie: "We should have won it. I have never seen the lads play better. I don't know where they keep getting the energy from."

Frank McGhee in the Sunday Mirror: "Leeds won everything except what they wanted most – the trophy itself ... Leeds go into their replay with the considerable consolation of knowing that surely no team can ever play as well again as they did without winning clearly. No team can surely ever again dominate as much of two hours' football with so little luck – the only ingredient that was missing from a Leeds display of all the skills and strength that make football the greatest game in the world. And this was one of its finest examples."



Johnny Giles and Billy Bremner join Chelsea players on a lap of honour after the Wembley final

It had been the most magnificent of finals, quite the most exciting for years, and, as Revie said quietly in the dressing room at the end, "just think what sort of game it would have been on a pitch!"