



Matches – 15 April 1970 – Celtic 2 Leeds United 1

European Cup semi final 2nd leg – Hampden Park – 136,505

Scorers: Bremner

Celtic: Williams, Hay, Gemmell, Murdoch, McNeill, Brogan, Johnstone, Connelly, Hughes, Auld, Lennox

Leeds United: Sprake (Harvey), Madeley, Cooper, Bremner, Charlton, Hunter, Lorimer (Bates), Clarke, Jones, Giles, Gray

When Leeds United travelled to Scotland to meet Celtic in the second leg of their European Cup semi final they faced an uphill battle, burdened by the disadvantage of a 1-0 defeat in the first game at Elland Road.



The crowd outside Hampden before the match

Manager Don Revie was defiant: “Celtic were the better side on the night but we are still not out of it. Anything can happen when we play the return game at Hampden Park.”

Even before the draw had been made for the semi final, Celtic had announced their decision to play the home leg at the massive national stadium in order to accommodate the huge crowd that was expected. Their own stadium had a 60,000 capacity, while Hampden could accommodate a crowd of 136,000 in those days. In 1937 it had housed 149,415 for a Scotland-England contest.

United had suffered a number of setbacks since the first leg ... on the night of the game Everton’s 2-0 defeat of West Bromwich formally condemned Leeds to runners up spot in the League ... the following night full-back Paul Reaney fractured a leg at West Ham, ruling him out of both United’s final month and England’s defence of the World Cup ... on 11 April Chelsea snatched a late equaliser to deny Leeds the FA Cup after a magnificent display on a mudbath at Wembley.

But those bitter disappointments only served to harden United’s remarkable resolve. Revie: “We are keener than ever to win the FA Cup and the European Cup now for Paul’s sake ... I would give a year’s wages to beat Celtic.” Rob Bagchi and Paul Rogerson: “The players waggishly challenged him to put the said sum in the players’ pool in the event of their success, a wager he cheerfully accepted.”

Reaney was the only absentee when Revie named his side; Norman Hunter had come through the Wembley final, his first game since March 18 because of an injured knee, with flying colours, and replaced Reaney as the only change in United's side from the first leg. His presence was expected to make all the difference at Hampden and afford Terry Cooper some much needed protection after the run around that Jimmy Johnstone had given him in the first leg.

The manager had been badly shaken by the way Celtic seized the whip hand at Elland Road and he characteristically emphasised the quality of the Scots in his pre-match briefing before the return match. A documentary film crew was allowed to capture the discussion for posterity and caught the manager lecturing his men in typical schoolmasterly fashion: "The danger man up front that we've got to see to at Hampden Park is little Jimmy Johnstone, who's a good little player and I feel that this lad's improved so much. He doesn't go into trouble all the time now. When he beats one man or two, then he lifts his head and has a look up and then knocks it off. He will never ever come at you when there's a man tucked in behind you, but whenever you're left by yourself, then he's prepared to have a go at you and he's very, very quick. So the thing we've got to do is get close enough to Jimmy Johnstone so that he doesn't start these twists and turns that start pulling players out of position. Every time he gets it then I want you, Norman, tucked in at the back at Hampden Park, behind Terry Cooper so he knocks it off square, then we can pick the people up with less ability."



Paul Reaney recovering from his broken leg

It was all too reminiscent of the 1967 Fairs Cup final against Dinamo Zagreb, when Revie had chosen to defend a lost cause rather than going on all out attack to recover a deficit.

In the sharpest of contrasts, Stein was overtly positive, emphasising United's nervousness. In the dressing room before the game, his advice was basic: "Revie's shitting himself, I've never seen that man as nervous in all my life. He's as white as a sheet. If he's like that, what do you think his players are like? They are there for the taking, believe you me."

Archie MacPherson: "Before the game started he singled out one of his players for a special word. John Hughes was taken aside and told, 'I know you were sick about missing the last final, but if you do well for me tonight and we reach the final, you'll definitely play.' Hughes was an inspired man that night." Hughes was in for Willie Wallace at centre-forward in the only Celtic change from the first leg, though captain Billy McNeill was struggling with an injured ankle.

Despite the contrasting approaches of the managers, United had triumphed against the odds before in Europe and there was every chance they could do so again. After all they were a single goal down and an early score would pile pressure on the Scots. Revie recognised as much when he said, "We have been told that no team who are a goal down at home in a European Cup semi final have ever reached the final of the tournament. But we won't let that worry us because we are history makers, we are record breakers. And if ever a record can go, then this one can."

It seemed that the whole of Glasgow wanted to see the match. There was a crowd of 136,505 packed into Hampden, though there is some debate about the number who actually got into the stadium that night. It would have been no exaggeration to say that the stadium could have been filled twice over, as reported in the Yorkshire Post: “Leeds United supporters were besieged in Glasgow yesterday by Celtic fans wanting tickets for the match. The Glasgow supporters had read reports that Leeds had sent back half of their 10,000 ticket allowance. They were convinced that the Leeds crowds would be bringing more unwanted tickets with them. When the Leeds football special arrived at Glasgow Central it was welcomed by a crowd of Celtic supporters who outnumbered the Leeds fans two to one. Leeds supporters were surrounded by others with Celtic scarves, but a Yorkshire Post reporter saw very few tickets change hands.

“Outside Hampden Park touts were operating for several hours before the game, and our reporter paid £3 10s for a 12s ticket. The seller, who said he was a Manchester United supporter, had bought his tickets in London several days ago. ‘I paid over the odds so I’m asking more than the odds,’ he said. He would not give his name but said he had arrived in Glasgow on the overnight train from London and had been outside Hampden Park since 8am.”



Billy Bremner and Celtic's Billy McNeill shake hands before the start of the semi final second leg at Hampden

Tom Brogan from stateofthegame.co.uk: “At Parkhead on Monday April 13th, while a few hundred people watched Celtic Reserves beat Partick Thistle Reserves 4-1 inside, 4,000 fans queued up outside for 5,000 extra tickets for the big match. Leeds had failed to shift their allocation of 10,000 and had advised Celtic that they would send up to them the unsold tickets. The tickets were advertised as going on sale at 4 o'clock, but they failed to arrive and at 10pm a loudspeaker announced, ‘Leeds have let us down very badly’. The dejected fans took the news well and trudged home. Leeds claimed there had been a misunderstanding; they had still been selling tickets throughout the day. Secretary Keith Archer assured fans that, ‘Five thousand five hundred 12 shilling tickets are now on their way to Celtic.’ The tickets arrived at Celtic Assistant Manager Sean Fallon's house just after midnight. They went on sale at 7pm on the eve of the match.

“Leeds United, indeed no other side in Europe, had ever faced such a one-sided support as this one. With only 4,500 fans travelling up from Yorkshire, the support for Celtic was overwhelming. The attendance was a record for a European Cup match. It still stands to this day and is unlikely ever to be beaten.”

Both teams came into the game fresh (if that is the right word) from playing in domestic Cup finals. Celtic had been the victims of what the Daily Record dubbed “the biggest upset in a final since the war.” Aberdeen had thumped the Scottish champions 3-1.

Leeds had played out the first drawn FA Cup final since 1912, suffering a late equaliser against Chelsea, but had given one of their best performances of the season. Their display had restored much of the confidence that had been waning since they beat Manchester United in the semi final at the end of March. The Whites had won only one of the six games they had played since.

As the teams took the field that night at Hampden, the passionate singing resounded all around the massive stadium: “Cel-tic ... Cel-tic!” ... “You’ll Never Walk Alone”. It was spine tingling stuff on a night of high excitement.

Leeds kicked off and had the first sortie into enemy territory with Charlton thumping the ball deep into the Celtic half for Gray and Jones to combine and feed Bremner. The Scot had the time, space and presence of mind to try to get his men going with a searching through ball towards Celtic’s area, but it was swallowed up by the home defence and then the Scots took over. Ken Jones for the Daily Mirror: “Leeds nearly cracked in the early minutes of the match, when goalkeeper Gary Sprake made a series of errors, each of which could have led to Celtic scoring.”

The home men forced five corners in the opening eight minutes as they set the early pace and it was their midfield combination that provided the platform. Bobby Murdoch, George Connelly and Bertie Auld formed a controlled triangle that constantly out thought and out passed their opponents. That provided the opportunity for Jinky Johnstone to continue where he had left off at Elland Road, only now he could enjoy the constant support of young Davie Hay from right-back. Hunter provided some reassurance to Cooper, with Gray a shield in front, but it made little difference; Johnstone was even more of a menace than he had been in the first leg.



The Daily Mirror of 16 April 1970 features the previous evening's Euro clash between Celtic and Leeds

Tommy Gemmill: “It was so pointed a ‘doing’ wee Jimmy was giving them that we heard Norman Hunter, Leeds' infamous hard man, shouting blatantly to Cooper to chop him down, and Cooper shouting back at him to come and try it himself if he wanted. He did. They swapped positions, and Jimmy just did the same to him and ran him ragged.”

Terry Cooper: “Jimmy had everything you could wish for in a winger. He had such a low centre of gravity and it was so difficult to stop him. Unless you took him by unfair means it simply wasn't going to happen. Jimmy was a bit like George Best. That's the best compliment I can give him. But at Elland Road and Hampden, especially the game in Glasgow, I wasn't looking to pay him any compliments.

“I would love to have kicked Jinky, but I couldn't get near him! I still have nightmares. I reckon I had good anticipation, but I could do nothing to take the ball off Johnstone.”

Billy Bremner: “That was one of the greatest exhibitions I have ever seen. Jimmy had one of these games where he was unstoppable. He destroyed us on his own and I remember turning to Terry Cooper at half time at Hampden and saying to him there was no point in him going out for the second half.”

The torture started early on as Johnstone combined smartly with Hay down the right flank to win a free kick out of a desperately lunging Cooper when Hay prepared to play the ball through to the winger as he broke into the United area.

Murdoch played the ball short to Johnstone from the free kick but it came back to him as the winger was tackled. Murdoch hammered a long range drive which struck Gary Sprake's left hand post and was cleared by Jack Charlton. The centre-half angrily berated his keeper, who looked to have knocked his head.

Gray launched a breakaway and danced through the Celtic defence before running into trouble and allowing the Scots to clear their lines. A long ball was pumped far upfield for Hughes to chase but Hunter got the better of him and won the goal kick after playing the ball off the big striker.

Then, with Allan Clarke lying injured upfield after a clash with a Celtic man, Paul Madeley stormed away from the back and raced through the centre, beating two of the home defenders as he edged to the left and found Lorimer on the wing. He cut the ball back to Bremner, who fed it on with a swinging pass to Gray on the right wing but as he attempted to trick his marker the ball ran out for a throw in to Celtic.

That rare moment of respite preceded an unexpected breakthrough by United. With 14 minutes gone, some anxious Celtic defending led to Hunter picking up a loose ball some 40 yards out. He fed it on to Bremner in the right channel and he set off on a run direct at goal, steadying himself about 25 yards out for a strike. It was as if all the tensions, cares and woes of the previous month were erased in one fell swoop as the United captain exploded into action.



Celtic keeper Evan Williams is helpless as Billy Bremner lashes home his goal at Hampden

Bremner seemed to have only one thought in his mind as he launched himself extravagantly into possibly the finest shot of his life. The little Scot had scored many vital goals for United at key times, but it's doubtful whether he ever pulled off a cleaner strike. It was so powerful that he finished with both feet in the air as the ball arrowed unerringly to its target, cannoning into the net after crashing against the junction between post and bar. Goalkeeper Evan Williams could only stand transfixed in wonder at the strike of a lifetime.

Bremner later recalled how the crowd fell remarkably silent for a moment that seemed like an hour. He confessed to being disconcerted at the funereal atmosphere that hung over Hampden. It was only a brief moment, however, and the one time when his team could hear him urging them on. He said, "The crowd then began chanting: 'Celtic ... Celtic'. It was the type of noise that made many an Englishman freeze in internationals."

Leeds had got their equaliser and there was suddenly a new spring in their step with Bremner well up for the challenge and competing manfully in the middle of the field.

A long ball upfield looked like it would offer Allan Clarke an opportunity but he was penalised after being adjudged to have fouled his marker.

Shortly afterwards some neat Celtic interpassing, orchestrated by the impressive Auld, created an opening but Sprake came out to collect the lobbed through ball from the Celtic schemer.

Then Jones chased a ball down to the left corner only to be dispossessed by Frank Brogan before fouling the Scot.

For a while the contest teetered in the balance with first Leeds and then Celtic having a decent moment. United had gained their share of midfield control and were constantly seeking to spring forward with quick through balls, mainly emanating from Bremner. But Celtic enjoyed the bulk of the play and offered the greater threat through their readiness to commit men into attack.

Weight of numbers cranked up the pressure on Sprake's goal. Hughes drew a free kick on the right edge of the Leeds box and Auld's delivery speared across the area, being missed completely by a nervy rearguard, but McNeill sliced it wildly at the back post. United were awarded the free kick with the Celtic captain appealing that he had been impeded.

Hughes was having a fine game and a long ball forward gave him space but his shot from 18 yards was gathered confidently by Sprake as he dived to his right.

Johnstone created more panic with a series of twists and turns down the right channel before slipping the ball to the overlapping Hay who sent in a fierce shot. Celtic's appeal for hands was echoed thunderously by the partisan home crowd but the referee waved away the claims.

After 35 minutes, smart footwork by Connelly allowed him to keep possession under pressure in midfield. He turned into space before chipping forward for Lennox to dart through the middle and flick the ball past the onrushing Sprake at the penalty spot. It looked all ends up a goal but Madeley had got back to hook it off the line just by his left hand post. It was the narrowest of escapes.

It was now all Celtic with the ball coming back repeatedly at the United defence. Johnstone was a livewire and constantly probed for an opening, enjoying strong support from Murdoch and Hay, while Connelly made some excellent contributions in the middle. Gemmell now became a threat from full-back with his forays down the left, but most of his breaks resulted either in the ball running dead or falling to a Leeds man.



John Hughes gets in front of Jack Charlton to nod home for Celtic at Hampden

The greatest threat came from Johnstone's wing and when he was freed after 39 minutes by a long ball into the right corner he tricked Cooper but was blatantly hacked down by Bremner. From the resultant free kick, Auld's cross reached Gemmell at the back post. He fired it back across the goal line, but Cooper blocked it out and Sprake dived onto the loose ball.

Clarke was booked for a nasty follow through on Hay after the defender had lofted the ball upfield from the touchline. Clarke's challenge left the Scot sprawling outside the playing arena, but he was quickly up and on with the game. His attitude was typical of the home men, who were taking some

rough treatment from frustrated Leeds players in great spirit.

But Auld could be as nasty as any of the hard men in United's ranks, and after 42 minutes Jones was carried off with a deep gash on his right shin. For a time there were fears he would not return. Bremner: "It was a terrible, terrible tackle on Mick Jones by wee Bertie Auld that did it. His leg was in a terrible state at half time. Well, I chased Bertie a few times that night. He knew I was after him. But no chance. He was too fly."



United players show their despair after Hughes' goal

Jock Stein had warned Auld that the game would be fiercely competitive, and the Scottish schemer was determined not to hold back from any confrontation, saying later, "The Big Man was right. They didn't really think we could play and when we started to move the ball around they got very rough. I had a tussle with a big

centre called Jones who thought he could kick and get away with it. He didn't. I gave as good as I got. At half time he came up to me and said, 'Hunter's going to sort you out.' Norman Hunter was a hard man for them. In my view he did more damage off the ball than on it. He just tried to terrify you. I think they were surprised at how we stood up to them. I think when you had the Big Man's presence about you, you fought your corner."

As the first period drew to a close, Hughes broke down the left and Bremner was happy to concede the corner. Auld flashed it to the near post but it was blocked out by a combination of Sprake and Hunter. The two men crashed into each other in the process and required attention. There was no time to take the second flag kick with the referee signalling for half time.

Mick Jones was restored to action at the start of the second half, but the next ten minutes were nightmarish for him and his colleagues.

After 47 minutes Johnstone fed Auld down the right and the ball was fired on for Hay to chase Hunter all the way down to the byline. The defender had little choice but to concede the corner. The ball was played short to Auld and his drilled waist high cross was met in the middle by Hughes diving ahead of Charlton to nod home inside the far post and bring Celtic level on the night.



Les Cocker tends to Gary Sprake before the keeper is stretchered off

Johnny Giles: "It was an elementary error by the Leeds defence . . . surely it can only have been due to mental fatigue? It came as a result of a short corner on the right between Jimmy Johnstone and Bertie Auld and the boob Leeds made was that only one defender – Cooper - came out to confront these players. There should have been two, for if that had been the case, Johnstone and Auld would probably not have been able to get the ball across for John Hughes to score."

It was a killer blow, but there was worse to come.

Only minutes more had elapsed when Auld played a ball inside the right-back for Hughes to chase down hard. Hunter was neck and neck with him but checked as he saw Sprake coming out to collect as the ball reached the line. But Hughes wasn't prepared to give way and crashed recklessly into the keeper as he dived bravely to gather. It was a terrible collision but Hughes displayed little sympathy as he turned and ran back into position, glancing back just once at Sprake as he received treatment for a severe knee injury. It was all in vain.



David Harvey is beaten and Paul Madeley can only watch as this strike from Celtic's Bobby Murdoch (out of picture) enters the net to give the Scots a 3-1 aggregate lead

Gary Sprake: "I knew that I was out of the game, as I lay on the ground. For one horrible moment, as the pain seared through my leg, I thought that it had been broken, and I had visions of joining Paul Reaney in hospital. But then I realised that my leg was still intact, although I knew that the injury was too bad for me to hope to carry on playing. I don't blame John Hughes – it was one of those things that happen in a game, when two players are intent on getting the ball. I had to take the risk, as I went down to collect the ball – I could see Hughes boring in, out of the corner of my eye, but I knew that he would get the ball if I didn't chance it."

Sprake was stretchered off the pitch with David Harvey coming on to replace him. The first thing that the sub keeper did was to loft the free kick downfield but within another couple of minutes the Scots were on the offensive once more. The ball reached Johnstone in acres of space down the right flank. He cut inside as he drew level with the penalty area and laid it square for Bobby Murdoch, coming up at pace, to send a low shot under Harvey's dive and into the net to give Celtic a 3-1 aggregate lead.

That was in the 53rd minute and in those first eight minutes of the second period, United's Euro hopes had evaporated. Celtic could take their foot off the accelerator and Leeds would have to go on all out attack, dispensing with any thoughts of containment.

That combination made for an interesting final 30 minutes.

Hughes found space on the right, but sliced wide in his over eagerness, while Charlton had thrown caution to the wind and was storming upfield at every opportunity.

Clarke got on the end of a long punt forward to beat his man in the area and nod the ball down for Giles on the 6-yard line, but the whistle had already gone for a foul against the Leeds striker.

Then Johnstone rushed a weak free kick from deep in his own half to give possession away, but

Leeds could make nothing of it.

Auld broke back down the left to reach the Leeds byline and Bremner was forced to give away a free kick. Auld took the kick himself but blazed it wastefully over Harvey's crossbar.

Then good combination work from Clarke and Jones gave Giles the opportunity to play Jones in down the right channel. Williams blocked the striker's shot but the whistle had already gone for offside.

As the seconds ticked relentlessly by, United's play became frenetic. Celtic maintained a more considered pace, picking their moments to launch rapier like forward thrusts. They always seemed to have a spare man ready to receive the ball, with Auld playing the archetypal midfield general role, choosing the time to launch the cutting through ball.



Celtic players on a lap of honour after the game

Leeds brought
Bates on for

Lorimer after 71 minutes and thrust Bremner up front as a supplementary striker as they had done so often before in times of adversity, but this time it was to little avail.

As the game entered its final sixty seconds, Bremner fastened on to a neat pass by Gray on the edge of the Celtic box and turned and shot, but Williams collected the ball and hoofed it downfield.

The ball reached Hughes on the left. He left Hunter in his wake at the touchline, cut inside and rounded Harvey only to see Madeley block his goal bound effort.

That was the last action of an enthralling and draining evening's football. The combatants exchanged jerseys and Celtic took off on a celebratory lap of honour as the United players trooped off disconsolately to the dressing room, their European Cup challenge in tatters.

Auld described the evening as "incredibly emotional. We seemed to grow by the minute after they had taken the lead and to prove, home and away, that we were better than a much-vaunted Leeds was a lovely feeling."

Don Revie: "We lost our chance at Leeds. When we scored I thought we could do something, but Celtic are a very, very good side. I sincerely hope they win the European Cup again."

The Daily Telegraph: “They may have only one world-class individual player, Jimmy Johnstone, in what is essentially a team. But what an individual! What a team!”

Norman Hunter: “I played in a lot of European games for Leeds United. That Celtic side was probably the best I played against.”

Jock Stein played tribute to skipper Billy McNeill, who had enjoyed a dominant evening: “I don’t know how he managed to get fit in time. On Tuesday night it did not look as though he would be able to play. He played on one leg in this game, the other ankle was strapped and he will not be able to play on Saturday.”

Albert Barham in the Guardian: “How one can feel sorry for Leeds. The challenge of 60 matches this season has been too great, and after living for the past month on a razor’s edge of hope, they have failed to win two of the three major honours they sought. It has all been too much for them.

“Celtic were superior in every phase of the game. The midfield was theirs to dominate and exploit, and Giles and Bremner had to give best to Auld and Connelly. But the man of the match for Celtic once again was the tiny, but wily, Johnstone. Jones and Clarke, although they ran and harried, gained no reward from McNeill or Brogan, or from Gemmell and the most promising Hay.”

There was to be no happy ending for Celtic. They were defeated 2-1 in the final in the San Siro by Feyenoord. So much effort had gone into vanquishing Leeds that they struggled to hit peak form in an anti climactic conclusion to their season despite taking the lead.



Jock Stein celebrates after Celtic defeat Leeds at Hampden