



Matches – 14 April 1971 – Liverpool 0 Leeds United 1

European Fairs Cup semi final first leg – Anfield – 52,877

Scorers: Bremner

Liverpool: Clemence, Lawler, Lindsay, Smith, Lloyd, Hughes, Callaghan (Graham), Evans (Thompson), Heighway, Toshack, Hall

Leeds United: Sprake, Reaney (Davey), Cooper, Bremner, Charlton, Hunter, Bates, Clarke, Jones, Giles, Madeley

There is a long and healthy tradition of respect and fierce rivalry linking Liverpool and Leeds United; it dates back to the days when Bill Shankly and Don Revie revived the fortunes of the two clubs and led them from the wilderness of Second Division football to the top of the European game.

Shankly took Liverpool to the Second Division title in 1962 and saw them add the League championship in 1964, the year that Leeds were crowned Division Two champions. The two clubs met at Wembley in the 1965 FA Cup final, won after extra time by the Merseysiders, and from that point on the pair were constantly vying for the game's honours.



Bill Shankly and Don Revie transformed two struggling clubs into world beaters

United confirmed their status as League champions with a goalless draw between the two at Anfield in April 1969; from that point the Reds had been in transition. Bill Shankly blooded a host of exciting youngsters, many of them snapped up for a pittance from the lower divisions: Ray Clemence, Alec Lindsay, Larry Lloyd, Emlyn Hughes, Steve Heighway, John Toshack, Alun Evans and Brian Hall had transformed the look of the first team as they replaced regulars like Tommy Lawrence, Geoff Strong, Gerry Byrne, Willie Stevenson, Gordon Milne, Ron Yeats, Roger Hunt and Ian St John.

By contrast, of the Leeds team that played in the 1965 Cup final, Sprake, Reaney, Bremner, Charlton, Hunter and Giles were still regular first teamers, and most of their newcomers had come through the youth ranks at Elland Road, though Allan Clarke and Mick Jones were big money

imports.

The two northern giants were drawn to meet each other at the semi final stage of the European Fairs Cup competition in 1971, guaranteeing England at least one berth in the final of the tournament, its final staging before reconstitution as the UEFA Cup the following season.

It was a mouth watering pairing and both Revie and Shankly declared their satisfaction with the draw. For both clubs, the Fairs Cup represented one part of a potential double: Leeds were racing neck and neck with Arsenal in their perennial pursuit of the League championship, while Liverpool would face those selfsame Gunners in the FA Cup final at Wembley.

Peter Lorimer was unavailable for selection after injuring a hamstring in the weekend's draw at Huddersfield, but Revie had the significant consolation of being able to recall skipper Billy Bremner for his first appearance since 23 February. For the Scot, the season had been one long injury nightmare.



The Guardian of 15 April 1971 carries its report of the previous evening's Fairs Cup semi final, together with a photo of Bremner's goal

Bremner had managed only 25 minutes' first team football in three months. He had struggled through the autumn with damaged knee ligaments, then suffered an ankle injury against Rotherham in early January before sustaining a hairline fracture in his left leg when making his comeback.

It was clearly a gamble to recall the Scot for such a vital match, but Revie would always select a barely fit Bremner ahead of many other players who were 100%; the captain was a totem for United and had a track record of snatching decisive goals in big games. As Don Warters wrote in the Evening Post, "Leeds have managed quite well without Bremner over the past months but there is no doubt that the Scot's presence is a psychological boost for the side."

In reaching the semi final stage, Leeds had strolled past Sarpsborg and Sparta Prague, though Dynamo Dresden (beaten on away goals) and Vitoria Setubal proved more durable. For their part, Liverpool had edged past Ferencvaros, before facing easier hurdles in Dinamo Bucharest, Hibernian and Bayern Munich. But for both teams, this was the acid test, a winners take all tussle that would test the victors to the limit.

United were considered marginal favourites, despite going into the game on a run of just one victory in five games. The challenge of a visit to Anfield for the first leg, however, was a stern one. When Leeds won 1-0 on Merseyside in December 1965 it was the club's first victory at the ground since 1932, while Paul Madeley's goal in the 1-1 draw in December 1970 was the first scored by a United player at Anfield in five years.

Bremner's first action of the night turned out well: he won the toss and decided to defend the Kop end in the first half, a tactical gamble designed to undermine any second half surge from the Reds.

Liverpool were undefeated at home all season and keen on maintaining that record; they enjoyed the better of the early moments.

Tom German in the Times: "At the start Leeds looked uncertain and Heighway and Hall, sharp and searching, led the quest for a quick breakthrough. Little more than an astute hook was yielded by Lloyd, which sailed only a foot or so wide, and a header by Heighway which Sprake was safely positioned to collect. Perhaps Leeds decided that Liverpool's fangs were less fearsome than they looked; at any rate, the Yorkshiremen began to move the ball around with growing confidence and Bremner found his sea legs, so to speak, and Cooper and Giles began to thread their way forward.

"Suddenly it was a real contest and Leeds were the ones who appeared the more likely to shape it. Madeley almost did as Giles and Bremner struck up that old understanding to open the way for Madeley whose shot was turned over the bar superbly by Clemence's upstretched arm."

Bremner had appeared in a friendly against Bradford 24 hours earlier in a bid to prove his fitness, and understandably he took a while to get going. But after he had found the pace of the game he made a decent contribution.

Despite Liverpool's early dominance, it was 17 minutes before they were able to create an opening, Evans failing to get his head to a fine centre from Ian Callaghan.

United responded instantly, with Clarke putting the ball past Clemence, though the effort was chalked off for offside.

Goalkeeper Sprake injured his back early in the game and was handicapped considerably thereafter, but he defied his pain to show good form, making fine saves from Lawler, Lindsay and Highway as battle was joined in earnest.

Leeds, though, rose to meet the challenge and after 25 minutes were unlucky not to take the lead. Bremner got possession after a long drive from Giles and fed Madeley. Clemence did well to save his shot.

It was nip and tuck from then on, with United playing mostly on the break, but they looked solid and steady at the back with the rearguard in fine form. There was still no goal and not much sign of a breakthrough by the time the game reached the break.

It looked like Shankly had given the Liverpool players a real flea in the ear during the interval for they went at Leeds with renewed vigour after the resumption. Alun Evans fluffed the chance of the night when Toshack's quick centre left him unmarked five yards from goal. Incredibly, he could only find the upright as the opportunity went begging.

Leeds were more calculating with their openings. After 67 minutes it was they who opened the



The programme from the tie at Anfield

scoring. Bremner, who had played in an advanced role throughout the contest, drew a foul wide on the right and was waiting in the area when Giles fired the free kick into the area. It bypassed all the Liverpool men and sailed invitingly toward Bremner, who leapt to nod it home with a flick of his red head, hushing the passionate home crowd.

Bremner's joyous colleagues raced to congratulate their restored leader. Barry Foster in the Yorkshire Post: "The feelings of the whole Leeds side were epitomised by Charlton who ran 30 yards with his hands waving joyfully in the air to pick up and congratulate his captain."

It was the 100th goal scored by Leeds in the campaign and, fittingly enough, it came in United's 50th Fairs Cup-tie; that landmark had been reached in just five seasons' worth of competition, an astonishing tribute to their consistency in the tournament.



Billy Bremner sends a marvellous flying header into the Liverpool net to settle a stirring encounter

The goal was the signal for Liverpool to throw themselves into all out attack. They brought on Graham and Thompson for Callaghan and Evans, peppering up their forward line, and penned United back in their area. Sprake preserved the lead with a wonderful save after seventy minutes from Toshack. Then Hunter cleared a Lloyd shot off his goal line.

Liverpool continued to press for an equaliser and might well have manufactured it if they had been cooler in front of goal.

Heighway put Hughes through but he got the ball tangled up between his feet and Sprake combined with Jack Charlton to snuff out the danger.

Eric Todd in the Guardian: "Leeds surely could not have survived if it had not been for their superb defence. Cooper was outstanding; if Charlton is finished, as some people imagine he is, then I can only hope that I am half as effective when my own time comes to retire, and Sprake, too, gave an adequate answer to his critics who consider him to have left the top flight of goalkeepers.

"Madeley was the best Leeds forward, but he had little competition, so committed to defence were his colleagues. Jones, who had not scored since Swindon Town were beaten at Elland Road in the fourth round of the FA Challenge Cup, had another abortive evening, against Lloyd, and Clarke and Giles also suffered against a defence which lacked nothing of United's resolution. But who needed an attack with a defence such as this?

"Liverpool certainly were unlucky to find Leeds in such a frame of mind. They harassed, they foraged and they plotted as only they can, and against a lesser side they must have had some reward. Toshack and Lindsay in particular had reason to stare at Sprake in frank disbelief when he thwarted them, and when Sprake did falter for the only time, Evans should have done better than

drive the ball against a post.

“Lindsay gets better every time I see him. Not only in defence did he reveal his tremendous talents, but as a marksman he showed his colleagues a thing or two. Smith as always was a tireless driving force, but I doubt whether any team could have beaten Leeds by conventional methods last night.”

Don Warters in the Yorkshire Evening Post: “Victory came at a time when people were beginning to doubt whether Revie’s men had the resilience and character to last out what has been another exhausting season. Few people at Anfield gave United a chance before the game and Liverpool supporters are among the most knowledgeable in the game.

“A better way to hit back at the doubters than a win at Anfield is difficult to imagine. Leeds are always at their best when the chips are down and a draw last night would have satisfied manager Don Revie.

“There was little doubt in my mind that United, in spite of Liverpool’s hustle and bustle up front, deserved their victory. They had the edge on Bill Shankly’s jumping wonders which made them the first team to win at Anfield in 12 months, ending a 30 match unbeaten home sequence.

“It was Leeds at their commanding best with every man playing his part. In defence, Hunter, Charlton and Cooper were towering figures and Sprake, injured early on and hampered for the rest of the game with back trouble, brought off several splendid games, the best coming in the 70th minute to a header from Toshack.

“Giles, Madeley and Bates worked hard in midfield for United and up front Clarke, Jones and Bremner never stopped trying.”

It was a triumph for Revie and his men: the gamble of recalling Bremner paid handsome dividends and despite not being at his best and lacking in match fitness, his presence was enough to inspire his colleagues to one of their classic away performances. It took him 20 minutes to come to terms with the pace of the game but then he grew more and more influential. In the final verdict it was as if he had never been away.

United denied their old rivals the victory they needed so badly before a crowd of almost 53,000 fanatical fans, but, as Bill Shankly grumbled afterwards, “If you miss chances like we did you do not deserve to win.”

Leeds were not yet through to the final, and would be hard pressed to preserve their advantage in the second leg at Elland Road. Nevertheless, they had taken a massive step towards a third Fairs Cup final and in the process given themselves a massive confidence boost for their League run in.



It's a glorious feeling for Billy Bremner and Jack Charlton after the skipper's goal at Anfield