



Matches – 22 September 1971 – Barcelona 2 Leeds United 1

Fairs Cup Trophy play off – Nou Camp – 45,000

Scorers: Jordan

Barcelona: Sadurni, Rife, Eladio, Torres, Gallego, Costas, Rexach, Carlos, Duenas, Marcial, Asensi (Fuste)

Leeds United: Sprake, Reaney, Davey, Bremner, Charlton, Hunter, Lorimer, Jordan, Belfitt, Giles, Galvin



The display at the Nou Camp devoted to the Fairs Cup play off between Barcelona and Leeds

By 1971, Leeds United were freely acknowledged as competitors supreme in the European Fairs Cup tournament: in five attempts to win the stylish silver trophy, they were successful twice, runners up on one occasion and beaten semi finalists in their first campaign. Of their 53 Fairs Cup-ties, United won 28 and lost 8, with a goals ratio of 92-40. On only nine occasions did they concede more than one goal in a game, registering 23 clean sheets. Impressive stats indeed: in short, they had perfected the secret of playing the two-legged European game, keeping things tight for the most part, but breaking incisively to score at vital points in big games.

One lost count of the number of occasions on which United had triumphed against the odds, when they had emerged successfully from seemingly impossible conditions: in 1965, when ten men survived in Turin after the loss of Bobby Collins with a badly broken leg; the chaotic Elland Road clash with Valencia in 1966 before United won 2-0 in Spain; the repeat performance in Valencia in February 1967; the historic goalless draw in the Nep Stadium against Ferencvaros when United captured the trophy for the first time in 1968; the memorable fightback a month later from a 2-0 deficit at home to Standard Liege to win 3-2; the victory at Anfield against Liverpool in April 1971; and the two-legged stalemate against Juventus when United won the trophy for the second time at the beginning of June.

It was only fitting, therefore, that, when UEFA decided to stage a play off to decide who would retain the trophy perpetually following its replacement by the UEFA Cup, United should be one of the participants. Their opponents were the first winners, Barcelona, who had an even better record in the tournament, though their glory days were a distant memory. The Spaniards were the first winners of the trophy in 1958 (after a tournament that lasted three years), retained the trophy after a two-year campaign in 1960 and regained it in 1966. They were also beaten finalists in 1962.

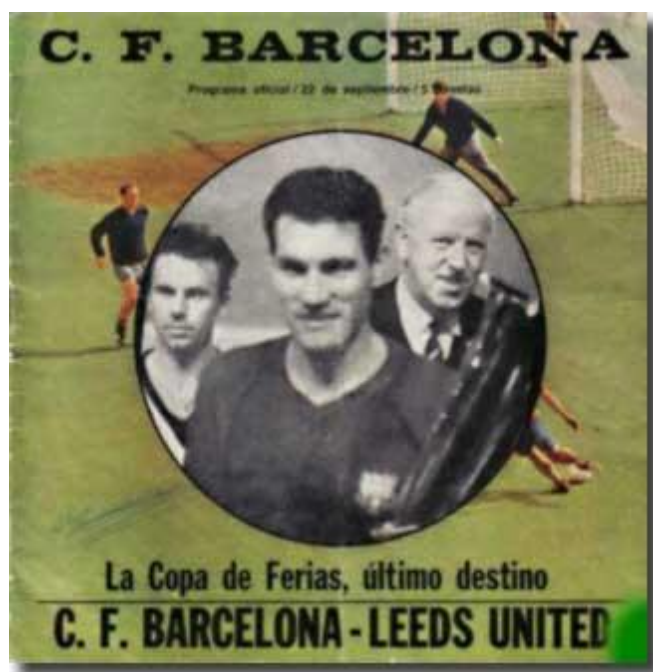
Arrangements were made for the two teams to face each other in Barcelona's Nou Camp on 22 September 1971 on a winner takes all basis.

Don Revie was justifiably proud of his club's record in the competition, saying, "We really want to win this cup. It would give us a permanent memento of our many years in Europe. We have had to produce something against the odds many times before in Europe and I am hoping we can do it again."

Having watched Barcelona in action while on holiday in Spain, Revie conceded the difficulty of United's task, describing Barca as "a great side". His view was endorsed by assistant manager Maurice Lindley, who watched them beat Ireland's Distillery 3-1 in the Cup Winners Cup a week before the game.

For all Revie's playing up of the status of the match, it was not a priority for him. It came at an inconvenient time for Leeds, between the two legs of the UEFA Cup-tie against Lierse and was one of ten fixtures in September. However, financial incentives increased its attraction for a club still reeling from the loss of income brought about by the closure of Elland Road. Tony Hill: "There was also the matter of United receiving thirty per cent of the gate receipts for the match, which was part of a festival to celebrate the opening of a multi-sports centre in the Catalan city."

Revie was also stressed by a worrying injury list and confirmed that he would have to select from a pool missing Allan Clarke, Paul Madeley, Terry Yorath, Terry Cooper, Mick Jones, Eddie Gray and Mick Bates.



The programme from the Nou Camp clash

His travelling party included untested reserves Jimmy Mann (18), Sean O'Neill (19) and John Saunders (21); David Harvey, John Faulkner, Chris Galvin, Nigel Davey, Rod Belfitt and Joe

Jordan were also in the party. The recognised first teamers who travelled were Gary Sprake, Paul Reaney, Billy Bremner, Jack Charlton, Norman Hunter, Peter Lorimer and Johnny Giles.

Revie commented, “It could have been a real classic if we had had our full side out,” implicitly conceding the game before it had even kicked off.

There were fears that the occasion would be ruined by the weather; when United flew into Barcelona it was under overcast skies that recalled memories of the washout they had faced when meeting Juventus in Turin the previous May. There had been serious flooding in many parts of the city but mercifully the rain held off on the night of the game. The atmosphere was warm and clammy as the match commenced.

Davey, Jordan, Belfitt and Galvin were all in the starting line up, which was nevertheless a competitive selection, and United were clearly up for the battle. Neither team held back in the opening exchanges and Hungarian referee Istvan Zsolt, who had officiated in two World Cup final series, had a challenging time.

Barry Foster: “Feeling crept into the game as early as the seventh minute when the referee had words with both Marcial and Giles, and 15 minutes later he had both the inside-forwards together again for a lecture. This time the captains were also spoken to by the referee but within three minutes there was more rough play when Bremner was brought down in midfield by Gallego. The

referee had more words for the full-back and Leeds did well to keep their heads although Davey was spoken to after a heavy tackle on Rife ... Several times the referee called players together after rough exchanges. Leeds players kept their heads well and withstood some over zealous play by the Spaniards.”



Billy Bremner moves to congratulate Joe Jordan after his equaliser against Barcelona

While Barcelona had the best of the early moments, United came more into the contest as the game neared half time, though neither team troubled the scorers.

Five minutes after the restart, however, the home side took the lead. The move was sparked by

Marcial on the left, feeding Teofilio Duenas. Two United defenders might have intercepted the pass, but the centre-forward, whom many considered the Spaniards' best performer, took the ball smoothly and crashed a shot against the bar. It bounced down over the line but Duenas swept away any doubt and controversy by following up to slam it into the back of the net.

Leeds fashioned an immediate riposte, equalising within two minutes. The referee awarded them a free kick 25 yards out and Peter Lorimer thundered in a fearsome effort from the dead ball. Like many before him facing the Scot's power, goalkeeper Salvador Sadurni could not gather the shot and 19-year-old Joe Jordan, making his first start for United, moved in quickly to despatch the loose ball.

That setback drove Barca on to greater efforts and they gradually turned up the pressure, threatening on several occasions to grab a second.

Undeterred, United showed there was still something in their attacking locker when they broke out dangerously, and Johnny Giles was unlucky when his crafty lob only found the top of the side netting.

It was only a temporary reprieve; after Barcelona brought on Fuste for Asensi to pep up their attack in the 80th minute, they had to wait only three minutes to regain their advantage.

Duenas was again the scorer. He was perfectly placed to collect a defence-splitting pass down the right and he was the epitome of cool confidence as he hammered the ball past Gary Sprake.

Two minutes later he came close to completing his hat trick; he beat Sprake with a fearsome drive from the edge of the area but Paul Reaney was perfectly placed to head the ball off the goal line.

That was the final action of the contest and United had to give best to the home side at the close. They had put on a gallant show if they were not quite at their best, and they earned the respect of the Spanish press for their never-say-die attitude.

The Guardian: "It says much for Leeds' reserve strength that they were able to match Barcelona in initiative and tenacity for long periods, but as the match went on, the Spaniards gained a measure of control through their experience. Leeds failed to find another opening in spite of several attacks in which Jordan and Lorimer proved themselves equal to Sprake as the outstanding members of the side."

When the United party landed back in West Yorkshire there was some worrying news. They had to leave their names and addresses with customs officials at Leeds and Bradford Airport because they had been to a region where cases of cholera were still known to occur; they were told to contact their doctors if they felt ill. Happily none of the players or officials suffered any after effects but there were reported to be some cases of infection among returning United supporters.



Peter Lorimer lets fly in Barcelona

Reflecting on their years of European competition, Don Revie said that it had provided his side with a great deal of valuable experience and had given Leeds a deep insight into the tactics of the game in many parts of Europe. It had helped the players to develop as footballers and been of great assistance financially, providing the money needed for the necessary

development of the Elland Road ground.

Revie was delighted with the performance at the Nou Camp and was quick to point out that he had paid fees for only two of the side that lost against Barcelona, Giles and Jordan.

According to Barry Foster in the Yorkshire Post, “Mr Revie said he had mentioned the fact that his side would be playing four matches in eight days to a Barcelona official who had told him, ‘You are crazy. Our players would not do that.’ The official had said that Barcelona are involved in only about 40 matches each season, including their European commitments, and he was astonished when Mr Revie said Leeds had played something like 60 matches each season for the past six years.

“The Spaniards, Mr Revie was told, switch their Sunday League matches to Saturday before European ties, and he believed it might be a good idea if English clubs moved their games from Saturday to Friday night before European cup-ties. ‘It might be worth mentioning to the Football League,’ said Mr Revie.”