



Matches – 16 May 1973 – Leeds United 0 AC Milan 1

European Cup Winners Cup final – Kaftanzoglio Stadium, Thessaloniki – 40,154

Scorers: None

Leeds United: Harvey, Reaney, Cherry, Bates, Madeley, Hunter, Lorimer, Jordan, Jones, F Gray (McQueen), Yorath
AC Milan: Vecchi, Sabadini, Zignoli, Anquilletti, Turone, Rosato (Dolci), Sogliano, Benetti, Bigon, Rivera, Chiarugi

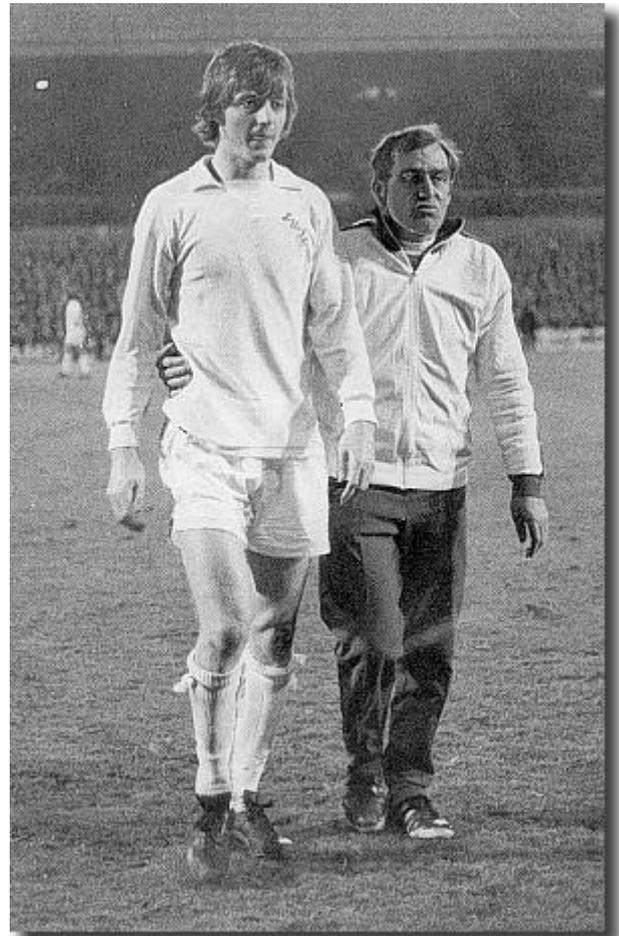
Peter Lorimer: “A thunderstorm rolled round the Salonika Stadium in Greece as we came out for the 1973 Cup Winners Cup final against AC Milan, and these were appropriate conditions for what has gone down in Leeds’ history as its most diabolical travesty. The majority of the 45,000 crowd was neutral and I wish that the same could have been said of the referee, a Greek named Christos Michas. I have already alluded to suspicious circumstances in the game as a whole, but suspicions were irrelevant in this particular game. It was wholly, indisputably and wretchedly bent...”

Rarely has any game been as notorious, as infamous and as controversial as this one, and inevitably Leeds United were on the wrong end of things.

The Yorkshiremen were up against the odds right from the start, with Billy Bremner and Allan Clarke unavailable due to indiscretions in earlier rounds. There were other absentees: Jack Charlton had retired, Terry Cooper had not played in more than a year, Roy Ellam was nursing a fractured elbow (though he wasn’t in Don Revie’s plans anyway) and Eddie Gray’s chronic thigh injury ruled him out. To cap it all, a couple of the days before the final it was confirmed that Johnny Giles would also be missing; he damaged his hamstring in Ireland’s defeat to the USSR in Moscow seven days prior to the game.

But perhaps an even greater issue was Don Revie’s apparent decision to become Everton manager after the final, pitching the club into a deep trough of depression. The way the rumour emerged was the most appalling case of bad timing.

When Giles confronted Revie about the story after flying in from Russia, the manager confessed the truth.



Les Cocker leads Allan Clarke off after his dismissal against Hajduk Split in the semi-finals – the dismissal left him suspended and out of the final against Milan

Giles: “We appreciated his honesty. We knew he wasn’t going to fob us off in that situation, and he didn’t. Don said that the only reason he hadn’t told us already was that he hadn’t wanted to upset the players before the game. He had planned to tell us afterwards. And, anyway, the deal with Everton wasn’t done yet.

“But the lads were devastated. They’d grown up at Leeds participating fully in the family atmosphere which Don had created, and which had formed such strong bonds of friendship and solidarity when the going got tough.”

The Irishman also brought with him gossip to the effect that Milan had got to the referee. Peter Lorimer: “Johnny Giles was not playing due to being injured so was doing some work for either television or radio. It meant he went along to the press conference and, afterwards, he headed straight for our hotel where he told us, ‘The word is we can’t win this game’. We all wondered what he meant and he said the referee is supposedly in Milan’s pocket. We didn’t believe it - until the game started and it became all too clear he was right.”



The Milan side that faced United - Back: Bigon, Rivera, Turone, Rosato, Vecchi, Benetti. Front: Sabadini, Chiarugi, Zignoli, Anquilletti, Sogliano

Rob Bagchi and Paul Rogerson in *The Unforgiven*: “The Italian game has ever been tainted by the stench of corruption, and that May evening in Salonika was certainly not the first or last time that doubt has been cast on a Serie A club’s success. In that very same year, 1973, an honest Portuguese referee, Francisco Marques Lobo, thwarted an attempt to bribe him to bend Derby County’s European Cup semi-final in favour of Juventus. It inspired Brian Glanville and Keith Botsford’s forensic examination of Italian clubs’ corruption of European referees, *The Golden Fix*.”

For a game that was billed as United’s last under his management, Don Revie knew much would depend on the contribution of the young reserves who would be asked to deputise for seasoned internationals. The squad that flew out to Greece read as follows: Harvey, Sprake, Reaney, Cherry, Yorath, Madeley, Hunter, McQueen, Lorimer, Jordan, Jones, Giles, Bates, F Gray, Galvin, Mann.

Revie: “Giles’ injury is the final straw... These things seem to happen to us. The youngsters can rise to the occasion. Remember the 2-0 victory in Valencia in 1967. You put younger players in and hope they will come good. We did it against Valencia and won, we can do it again. We had four or five youngsters in then and they had run so hard in the match that they could not walk up the two flights of stairs at our hotel. But we had won. I hope we can repeat that performance.”

The extraordinary line-up selected by Revie included Yorath, Jordan, Bates and Gray and was captained by Paul Reaney for the evening. One piece of good news was that Norman Hunter would be fit to play after recovering from a back injury sustained in Jack Charlton’s testimonial which had kept him out of England’s Home International clash with Northern Ireland.

Milan were rated clear favourites for the game, and at the time seemed destined to capture the Serie A title. Their 3-1 defeat of Bologna on 9 May left them a point clear of Juventus and Lazio with each team having a game left to play though their challengers were closing in: at the beginning of March they had been seven points ahead of Juve and two to the good over promoted Lazio.

Insidefutbol.com: “On 22nd April, Lazio beat Milan in the Stadio Olimpico in Rome, but within the match there was a mystery: the Rossoneri were losing 2-1 when Luciano Chiarugi, just minutes from full-time, bagged an equaliser. However, the referee Concetto Lo Bello, ruled out the goal for offside. Slow motion footage shown on the RAI TV show Domenica Sportivo later that same night showed without doubt that the goal should clearly have stood. In the following years rumours circulated that Lo Bello had, before the match, entered Lazio’s dressing room and commented: ‘Come on guys! We have to beat them today.’ The Sicilian official did not have the greatest of sympathy for Milan and he especially disliked Gianni Rivera.

“With that victory, Lazio joined Milan at the top of Serie A, and Juventus, who had won the same day against Lanerossi Vicenza, positioned themselves just two points behind the duo. From that moment onwards confusion reigned. And when the final match day rolled around, the table read: Milan 44 points, Lazio 43 points, Juventus 43 points.

“The Wednesday before the final day of the season Milan were in action in the final of the 1973 Cup Winners Cup... Milan’s board asked the Italian Federation for a postponement, but the FIGC replied that all the matches had to be played on the same day and at the same time; as a result the San Siro side headed to Verona with some concern. Lazio meanwhile were travelling to Naples, while Juventus visited the capital to face Roma.

“In Verona, Milan looked tired and downhearted straight from the kick off, and when the referee



Greek referee Christos Michas tosses the coin at the start of the game with Paul Reaney and Gianni Rivera

blew his whistle to signal the end of the first half the Rossoneri were 3-1 down. Elsewhere, Lazio were drawing with Napoli and Juventus down 1-0 to Roma. A play off between Lazio and Milan seemed a distinct possibility, but Cestmyr Vycpalek's men appeared to be without a chance.

“For the second half, Verona continued their destruction of Milan, with the match ending 5-3 for the Scaligeri. Lazio also lost out in the dying minutes. But in Rome the unpredictable happened. The Bianconeri equalised through Brazilian Jose Altafini with only eight minutes left to play. Now, tails up, Juventus kept pushing and found the back of the net again with three minutes left. Midfielder Antonello Cuccreddu's strike sent the Bianconeri faithful into delirium.

“Rocco and his players were desperate with many tears shed in the dressing room in Verona. The team, invited days before to Domenica Sportiva to celebrate their expected Scudetto della Stella, looked depressed and humiliated; the Rossoneri would have to wait another six years to win their tenth title and add a special yellow star to their shirts.”

That despair was all to come for the Italians as they prepared confidently for the game against Leeds.

The assessment of Syd Owen and Maurice Lindley after watching Milan was that they were “a top class side” with experienced Italian international Gianni Rivera, World Footballer of the Year and European Cup winner in 1969, their star man. Revie acknowledged Rivera's class, but added, “Let them worry about us. I think we are a much better side now going forward than sitting back.”

Norman Fox in the *Times*: “Leeds United assume the unaccustomed role of underdogs here tomorrow... After their defeat by Sunderland at Wembley, they must challenge the formidable Italians with a weakened team and in the knowledge that Don Revie, their manager, may well be leaving them to manage Everton.

“Mr Revie confirmed yesterday that he had been offered the post at Everton, and although he would not admit that he is ready to leave Leeds, indications are that he will not



refuse a lucrative offer. Mr Revie is understandably less forthcoming than Nereo Rocco, who manages AC Milan, though Greek newspapers here interpret the English manager's temporary reserve as rudeness.

The Guardian of 16 May 1973, the day of the Cup Winners Cup final, reports on the speculation about Don Revie's departure from Elland Road

“Mr Revie has a lot on his mind. He is without Bremner and Clarke, who are suspended from this match; Giles is almost certainly unavailable because of a hamstring injury received last Sunday when playing for the Republic of Ireland; and Eddie Gray is also unfit.

“When cornered, Mr Revie will not deny that a draw would help relieve the situation and embarrass

the Italians, who are involved in their domestic championship, holding a one point lead over Juventus and Lazio. Bremner and Clarke could be available for a replay; indeed, they are booked on flights to arrive here on Thursday for a theoretical second match on Friday.

“With his available players, Mr Revie is confronted with the problem of choosing a team to contain the Italians rather than control them. Presumably, he will need to employ one player – predictably, Yorath – as a full time guard over the brilliant Rivera; and he must consider where to play Madeley. Hunter has recovered from his back injury, and that is comforting.

“When AC Milan trained at the beautiful, newly-renovated stadium here this morning they seemed relaxed, confident and at home in the warm sunshine. Their problems are far less complicated than those of Leeds. Their regular goalkeeper, Cudicini, has been out of the team since September with kidney trouble. Vecchi, the substitute goalkeeper, is not completely fit, but is expected to play. Prati fractured a leg a fortnight ago, but the clever Chiarugi will link up with Bigon to accept the ball providing of Rivera and Benetti.

“If Leeds should choose to defend after perhaps scoring an early goal, of if they are serious about playing for a draw, they will be vulnerable to AC’s speciality, the counter attack. Recently Leeds have shown a lack of patience when things go wrong, and AC are a considerably more subtle and experienced side than Hajduk Split, who frustrated Leeds at Elland Road in the semi-final round, or, of course, Sunderland. In AC’s semi-final second leg match with Sparta Prague, they fielded five reserves and won 1-0, so saving themselves for an important League game. Also, they have the inspiring prospect of becoming the first team to have won twice the two senior European competitions.

“With three of the local Greek clubs run by British managers, Les Shannon, Wilf McGuinness and Jack Mansell, Leeds hope for good support. AC will have the larger following, having brought 2,500 supporters, but the ground will be far from full because it holds 50,000 and only 20,000 tickets had been sold today. On a green, true pitch this should have been a Greek classic in football terms, but now there is doubt, which is especially disappointing locally because this final was to have been a showpiece in a country where rioting spectators and players and abandoned matches are endangering the future of football.

“The result will depend on whether AC’s motivation in a competition that has always meant less on the Continent than in Britain and their preoccupation with home affairs will hold them back sufficiently for depleted Leeds to take advantage. Either way, Anglo Italian football relations require a composed, successful final.”

Now that comment was surely tempting Fate...

The pre-game ceremony was intended to appeal to the locals, with the two teams led out by representatives in Greek national dress parading the Union Jack and the Italian Tricolore. The



Experienced Italian international Gianni Rivera was generally considered as Milan’s most outstanding talent – the playmaker had won the European Cup and been voted World Player of the year in 1969

players trooped out side by side, carrying a huge Greek national flag stretched out between them. But that was as far as the bonhomie extended.

Paul Madeley wore the No 5 shirt, though he was deployed in midfield alongside Mick Bates and Frank Gray; Terry Yorath, wearing 11, partnered Norman Hunter at the heart of defence. Joe Jordan and Mick Jones formed the United spearhead, with Peter Lorimer offering a deeper threat from the right flank.

Jordan and Jones kicked the game off, feeding the ball back to Bates and thence out wide to Lorimer – we were away...



Gianni Rivera and Paul Reaney lead out the two sides at the start

Leeds had virtually all of the first couple of minutes to themselves, pressing well up into Italian territory and looking unperturbed by recent events and absent friends.

They had the first chance; Reaney's cushioned header rendered a high ball into the Leeds area harmless and allowed Yorath to work his way forward steadily, unhampered by any Italian challenges. A one two with the overlapping Reaney enabled him to push on to the edge of the Milan area. Having successfully accomplished all the hard work, his eagerness got the better of him as an opportunity beckoned, and a speculative left foot shot soared away to the left, offering greater peril to the corner flag than Vecchi's goal.

One thing Yorath's impetuosity revealed was that the keeper's fitness issues were still with him, as he relied on Turone to take the goal kick that followed. It failed to clear the halfway line, hinting that this handicap might afford United some territorial luxuries as time went on.

When a deep-lying Lorimer speared a forward ball to Bates, referee Michas never even batted an eyelid as the midfielder was bundled to the ground; the incident may have given United a glimpse of the injustice that was to follow. If not, they had a more blatant indication when Bigon threatened in the seconds that followed.

The Italian striker ran at the United defence, but Madeley calmly shepherded him away, shoulder to shoulder, choosing his moment to slip the ball artfully away from him and emerge with possession, ready to start an advance. He stood, hands on hips in astonishment as the referee signalled for a free kick to Milan, two yards outside the Leeds box.

BBC commentator Barry Davies emphasised the point: "Well, that's the second decision, one after the other, first the free kick not given and then the one given, both of them going against Leeds." How prophetic was that simple statement!

The free kick was plumb centre of goal and Harvey organised his defensive wall as Rivera and Chiarugi, a £300,000 buy from Fiorentina at the start of the season, prepared their ploy. Lorimer, Yorath, Bates and Jordan blocked the path to goal on the left, with the goalkeeper struggling to see through them what was going on as he covered the other side of his charge.

Rivera was directing operations, but Chiarugi looked to be favourite to take responsibility, measuring out a long run up. His drive seemed wayward, low and lacking power, but it caught a deflection off Madeley and flicked past Harvey, in off his post, a sickening moment; a fraction over three minutes gone and Milan were ahead.



Barry Davies spoke of Chiarugi

“acknowledging the roars of the crowd”, but all you could here was whistling and jeering, with the bulk of the neutrals in the crowd clearly not impressed by events.

Luciano Chiarugi lashes in a free kick to give Milan the lead inside three minutes

There was understandably a queasy feeling in the stomachs of United players as they lined up to restart, and for some minutes Milan were in the ascendancy, building forward momentum with their careful short passing game, in Davies’ words, “really dictating things”. Men in white resembled panic-stricken rabbits caught by the glare of the headlights as they scampered feverishly around trying to get a tackle in against smooth possession football.

A ball into the middle was met by the head of the unmarked Sogliano, but his effort slipped just past Harvey’s right hand post. Davies: “Paul Reaney’s got a lot to do to lift this Leeds team at the moment. It’s always easy to say that one goal counts for a lot, but in Leeds’ present situation it does count for an awful lot.”

The Italians’ forward momentum gave way to their natural caution and they surrendered the initiative, allowing United to mount a spell of sustained attack.

After a cross to the back post by Bates was cleared away, Lorimer held the ball up well and cleverly fashioned space with some good control before firing in an effort on goal. It missed its target, but it was the clearest opening thus far for Leeds and stiffened their resolve.

Milan’s goal kicks were continuing to fall short because of Vecchi’s incapacity and this provided some kind of platform for United, making it difficult for the Italians to get out of their own half. Leeds were only too happy to feed on such lapses and Jordan’s enthusiasm for the fray was proving a rallying point. The Scottish striker was giving a sterling display and he worked hard to regain possession after one careless ball forward seemed to be drifting out for a goal kick.

His young compatriot, Frank Gray, found the game passing him by to an extent, but Lorimer, Bates and Madeley were exerting a grip on the midfield; it was clear that Milan would give United free rein on the flanks, preferring to offer a compact set of barriers down the centre.

Jordan's control of the ball earned him a free kick on the left edge of the Milan area, which Sogliano prevented from being taken quickly. With the Italians anticipating a high ball into the area, Bates fed it deep to Lorimer. His high chip to the goal area caught Milan napping and Hunter rose



Milan keeper William Vecchi gathers a United shot as Lorimer and Yorath look to follow in

unchallenged to get in a close range header, but it had little power and Vecchi was on hand to gather.

In the twelfth minute, from a 30-yard free kick earned by Jordan's battling, Lorimer lashed in a power drive which Vecchi needed a couple of attempts to collect. Cherry sought to capitalise on the loose ball and the incident sparked chaos in the Milan goal area with defenders kicking and pushing the Leeds man. He had done little wrong, but had annoyed his opponents, who meted out their own form of justice en masse and protested so vigorously that Anquiletti was cautioned.

With United able to attack at will, the ball was worked out to Lorimer on the right and though his cross was cleared it was only to Bates, whose instant left foot volley passed inches wide of Vecchi's left hand upright.

Back came United, but they were the victims of more skulduggery in the next few minutes when first Jordan and then Jones sought a breakthrough. Jones tried a couple of times to wriggle into a shot and Turone ruthlessly clipped his feet from under him to deny the best opportunity in what seemed a cast iron penalty. But Michas disagreed and waved play on...

The incident provoked even greater unrest than before in a crowd that was turning angrily against both Milan and the referee; the stadium was alive with booing and jeering as realisation dawned that the local official was determined not to accord the British side anything resembling fair treatment.

Frustration was also fuelled in the United ranks and Yorath took matters into his own hands, hacking down Chiarugi, who reacted angrily. But the man cautioned was Lorimer for protesting too strongly about the assault on Jones.

The pattern of the game was clear: Milan relied on sporadic bursts and success for United hinged on them being able to hold their patience long enough to manufacture a worthwhile opportunity. They had to resist an understandable urge to hurl the kitchen sink at their opponents.

A need for circumspection remained for the Italians were adept at the counter attack and in one incident they gave clear evidence of this; when United overcommitted men to one assault, Rivera launched a quick response which ended with Chiarugi getting in a shot from ten yards which Harvey had to be alert to collect down low at his side.

Such moments were becoming increasingly rare as Leeds continued to press; Yorath's ball to Jordan gave the Scot the opportunity to wriggle free of his marker, but he skewed his shot wide and the lurking Lorimer was too deep to make anything of it.

Then a Bates-Reaney combination saw the midfielder chipping in an inviting ball for Jordan to leap into an incisive header, but the keeper managed to turn it round the post. United worked a short corner to give Lorimer a shooting chance which Vecchi again denied.

Milan extracted themselves from all out defence to create one opportunity and full-back Sabadini had enough composure to create space to try a twenty-yard curler; its bend was too little and too late to seriously threaten, but it was a reminder of the Italians' latent threat.



Paul Reaney in action against Luciano Chiarugi

Back United came, Gray's blocked shot falling to Jones, whose strike was turned wide for another corner. Lorimer's flag kick dropped under Vecchi's crossbar, and ached for a Jack Charlton intervention, but the keeper was strong enough to get it away from danger. Bates and Yorath cleverly combined from the throw out on the right and the ball was worked back into the centre for Madeley to try a 25-yard shot which cleared the bar.

The pattern continued, with Gray's shot from wide on the left flashing across the face of goal and beyond Vecchi's left hand post. Barry Davies was all too insightful when he commented: "Leeds, looking for that little something different, that variation which could open up this Italian defence, the problem that many sides before them have had."

Lorimer offered exactly that when he nutmegged Zignoli out on United's right but his cross was cleared and another opportunity had gone. In first half injury time, Bates played Reaney in on the overlap and Jordan reached the centre to the back post, but couldn't get the necessary direction with his header and the half finished with untidy overcrowding of Vecchi's area but little in the way of clear openings.

The break came with Milan sitting on their one-goal advantage, but after the restart they were earliest to show in attack, but Bigon's final header did not trouble David Harvey and it was quickly back into the old routine.

There was a lengthy wait before Lorimer could take a free kick from the right when the crowd

refused to return the ball. From the eventual dead ball move, Bates slipped as he sought to create a shooting opportunity and another opening was gone.

Minutes later, a slip by Cherry at left-back was nearly suicidal, inviting Bigon to carry the ball inside and get in his shot, but Harvey's reflex save was enough to deny him.

At the other end, Jordan's powerful thrust brought a threat down the right. But Jones was tightly marked in the area and Leeds wisely chose not to try a speculative ball. It seemed that Don Revie might have counselled his men against wasting their possession for they bided their time even though the move ended in an Italian throw.

United quickly regained possession and some neat and intelligent footwork by Lorimer saw him clear two defenders in fine style. He could not resist the opportunity, fizzing in a power dive, but it flew beyond the far post and out for a goal kick. Nevertheless, it had been an incisive movement and Lorimer was clearly a danger for the Italians.



Cherry looks on forlornly as his slip allows Albertino Bigon to attack the United goal, but David Harvey saved his effort

A slack ball crossfield from Yorath as he sought to come out of deep defence provided an unexpected opportunity for Chiarugi. The No 11 fastened onto it eagerly and his powerful drive was only just wide of its target, though the Italian claimed a corner.

After 52 minutes, Gordon McQueen replaced the tiring Gray. The big centre-half's first contribution was to rise powerfully at the back post to get onto Hunter's towering free kick from the left touch. His header was on target and Vecchi did well to turn it aside at the foot of his post for a corner. McQueen slapped his thigh in disappointment.

Lorimer's lofted corner was aimed again at McQueen, but he could not get to it as he climbed all over his marker and Milan were able to bring the ball out from the back, though Hunter rudely interrupted their advance at halfway at the expense of a throw. The Italians used the break in play to make their own change, with Dolci replacing Rosato.

Madeley intercepted a through ball deep in defence and came storming onto the offensive. His forward ball to Jones brought a free kick after a foul on the centre-forward.

Lorimer lined up the dead ball thirty yards from goal as Yorath and Jones insinuated themselves in the Milan wall at some risk to their physical safety. On the blind side of the referee, one of the Italians appeared to strike Yorath for the Welshman collapsed in a heap clutching his face. Michas did nothing but motion insistently for Yorath to get up and allow play to resume. After a considerable delay, Lorimer flashed the kick straight into Vecchi's arms.

Down the other end, Yorath and Jordan combined to break up a Milan attack and Jordan was coming away nicely with the ball when Sabadini hacked him to the ground. The incident provoked furious scenes with Hunter and Yorath remonstrating fiercely with the Italian as Jordan rose slowly

to his feet. The linesman had to intervene to prevent things turning ugly and the referee eventually cautioned Sabadini.

Hunter sent United down the other end, and there was more Italian heat for Cherry when he harried the goalkeeper as he sought to collect Lorimer's looping cross. Defenders protested furiously to the officials but no names were taken in the incident and the game was restarted with a free kick by Vecchi.

With the arrival of McQueen, Yorath had supplemented midfield and was injecting some urgency into affairs, but it was McQueen himself who brought the next thrust, racing effortlessly past an Italian forward and storming down the right touchline to win a corner.

Jordan and Yorath went up for Lorimer's kick and looked to be impeded, but the referee gave the free kick to Milan.

Protesting defenders stood threateningly over Jordan as he sought to rise from his sitting position only to have his name taken.

As Yorath came forward after one Milan attack he sold Bates short with a casual backheel, but Madeley cleaned up the danger and fed McQueen who set off on another forward thrust. He passed to Reaney, whose centre in from the right clearly struck Benetti on the arm. There were furious penalty claims from Leeds players, but nothing doing as Michas looked the other way once more and awarded a corner.



Italian defenders protest after an aerial challenge from Joe Jordan - the United striker was booked

Jones was barged to the turf as he sought to reach Lorimer's lofted flag kick, but United no longer expected the referee to recognise such offences and played on only to see Yorath's subsequent up and under allowing Milan to ease the pressure.

When the ball came sailing back through and beyond the Italian defence towards goal, Jordan strove manfully to get to it, but Vecchi was too quick and brave and was first there.

After another goalmouth melee following a corner, Lorimer's chipped effort narrowly cleared the crossbar as Vecchi's goal continued to enjoy a charmed life.

A few minutes later, the crowd were appealing in unison as Jones was harassed unfairly in the Italian box, but once more a corner was the only reward.

Milan and Vecchi were demonstrating amazing resilience under the intense pressure, but holes were

appearing in the Leeds half and through one of them Chiarugi stormed to send in a thirty-yard strike which Harvey had to dive smartly to turn low round his left hand post.

Don Revie attempted to bring on Chris Galvin for Hunter, who had been left limping and scarred by some fierce Milan challenges. United's club doctor, Ian Adams, later said that the marks on the defender's legs were the worst he had ever seen. Sadly for Galvin, he never got into the action. With a minute of the game remaining, Hunter came bursting forward once more and was slyly kicked from behind by Rivera. It was the straw that broke the camel's back; an incandescent Hunter furiously chased back to punch the Italian and was then kicked high on the thigh in retaliation by Sogliano. After a furious scene during which officials from both clubs poured onto the pitch, the referee dismissed both Hunter and Sogliano and showed Yorath a yellow card for dissent.

There was still time for Lorimer to be wickedly sent to the turf in the area as he went past his man, once more worthy of nothing more than a corner to the mind of Michas, but there was to be no final reprieve and Vecchi punched away the cross as United desperately piled everyone into the area.

The moment had gone and seconds later the whistle was blown to choruses of jeering from the disappointed crowd.

"No advertisement for football," was Barry Davies' concise conclusion as Gianni Rivera led his team over to collect the trophy.

United players were given a standing ovation as they trooped up sadly for their losers' medals. They took a well-deserved lap of honour after this most dishonourable of matches.



Riccardo Sogliano slyly pulls Norman Hunter's shirt from behind - it was one of many indignities suffered by United on the night and in the end the England defender could bear it no more

Don Revie: "We outplayed them in every department of the game. If someone says we deserved three penalties, that would be the understatement of the year."

Mick Jones: "I played against one of the hardest players I've ever faced... From the first minute their centre-back elbowed me, punched me in the back, spat in my face; he even tried to gouge my eyes; it was unbelievable. He was giving me a real hard time, but the referee did nothing.

"As we were walking off at half time, I was not happy. Playing in Europe was different, I loved the challenge, but I was getting nowhere. Norman asked me what the problem was. I told him this fellow was giving me a nightmare game, but I couldn't do anything with him. Norman told me to bring him down his end. Early in the second half this Italian went for a fifty-fifty with Norman, not

a good idea! Norman thundered in with a powerful challenge and looked at me, put his thumbs up in the air – ‘Alright, pal!’

“I had a better second half but for most of the game they had eight defending at all times, which in the end proved too much. That said, the decisions that went against us were scandalous. We never stood a chance, the refereeing was appalling, and the worst I’d ever experienced. The reception we received from the Greek supporters was incredible, but it didn’t take away the disappointment we felt afterwards in the dressing room.”

Norman Fox in the *Times*: “Leeds United, the underdogs in tonight’s European Cup Winners Cup final, lost but a great proportion of the 40,000 crowd here refused to accept AC Milan as heroes.

While Milan paraded their trophy, Leeds did a lap of honour that received by far the greater ovation. This was entirely deserved and a fair commentary on the match itself.

“Half an hour after the game, the Greek crowds were still outside the ground, soaking wet but chanting, ‘Leeds, Leeds, Ole, Ole,’ because it was Leeds who inspired the real football of the final, attacking from the moment they lost the game in only the third minute. By the end the crowd lost patience with the Italians and even with their own Greek referee.



Jordan and Cherry apply the pressure in the Milan area but it all came to nothing

“Reduced in strength through suspensions and injuries, and uncertain of the future because of the talk of the imminent departure of their manager, Don Revie, to Everton, Leeds were not in their physical or mental prime. Even at full strength they would have expected to find Milan, currently the top Italian team, a severe threat, especially as defeat by Sunderland in the FA Cup final had begun to prompt questions about the declining efficiency of this Leeds team, who have dictated the character of English football for so long. Even depleted as they were, they were fine ambassadors here this evening.

“Rosato and the Italian goalkeeper, Vecchi, managed to organise the Milan defence well enough to stave off the constant Leeds pressure, and this tactic was, of course, typically Italian in character although not as placidly planned as they would have liked. For Leeds everything became a matter of needing extra inches to reach headers, extra yards of pace to outwit the packed Milan defence, and the time to attain that one stroke of fortune that would have given them the goal that could have meant a replay on Friday.”

Paul Wilcox in the *Guardian*: “The adulation to which Leeds were treated – leaving the stadium by roads lined by cheering Greeks who have given the players their hearts and their sympathy after a

brave but unrewarding display – must have softened the blow a little. ‘You won, you won,’ chanted the crowd, slapping on the back everyone speaking English and offering commiserations. For Milan, a different sort of reception was reserved and the buses carrying the Italians back to their hotel were spat at and stoned.

“But even allowing for Milan’s tactics, which left more than something to be desired, Leeds were deprived of the trophy by a man called Christos Michas, who is supposed to be one of Greece’s best officials, but who surely gave one of the worst displays of refereeing ever seen, Michas was banned for three months last year by the Greek FA after a League match between Aris of Salonika and Panathinaikos of Athens.

“How could UEFA award such a showpiece game to such a man – and especially so soon after his reinstatement? If UEFA are to stage the finals of their competitions in countries where the standard of playing and refereeing is of an inferior quality to most European nations, then they must be more thorough in making their appointments.”

It was later revealed that Michas had arrived on the same plane as the Milan players. He was investigated by the Greek FA amid allegations that he had accepted bribes and was banned for life by UEFA, though they refused to overturn the result of the game.

In March 2009, Richard Corbett, Labour MEP for Yorkshire and the Humber, launched a campaign in the hope of reversing the result. He set up an online petition to pressurise UEFA into a new investigation. Corbett wrote to all the surviving members of the United team asking them to sign the online petition, along with the 12,200 others who did so.

He said: “The match has always stuck in my mind as one that ended with a grossly unjust result, due largely to the dubious refereeing performance of Christos Michas, whose performance was so poor he was banned from officiating a European game again. There has long been cause to suspect Michas was bribed and the match ‘fixed’. Match fixing and bribery in sport is clearly unacceptable at any level. If football in Europe is to retain its integrity UEFA must show its commitment to fair play and reverse the results where there is evidence matches have been fixed.

“If there is evidence that the 1973 Cup Winners Cup final was fixed then the result should be reversed and Leeds United awarded the trophy.”

Peter Lorimer: “Thirty six years is a long time, and people might argue that such matters are now irrelevant or better left in the past, but the 1-0 defeat that AC Milan inflicted on a Leeds United



It says 'FA Cup final 1973', but this was the No 12 shirt worn for the game by Gordon McQueen, which he exchanged at the end with Albertino Bigon

team of which I was part was and is a disgrace.

“Have people forgotten about it? Not in Salonika they haven’t. The referee that night, Christos Michas, was from that neck of the woods and I’m not joking when I say that the locals are still ashamed of his biased performance. As I recall, it was a total embarrassment.

“A few years ago, when Kevin Blackwell was manager of Leeds, I went back there with the playing squad and I spent the whole time listening to people apologising to me about the fact that Michas robbed us of a major trophy. Richard Corbett, like me, believes he may have been bribed by the Italians and I commend him for taking his fight to UEFA in an attempt to overturn the result.

“Even before the match kicked off, all of the Leeds players were aware of doubts about the referee... All the talk among the journalists there was about the fact that someone who desperately wanted Milan to win had got to the referee.

“On the night, we got nothing from Michas – absolutely nothing. The only consolation was hearing Milan being booed as they attempted to do a lap of the pitch with the trophy after the final whistle. The stadium was packed with locals from Salonika and they were going ballistic, chanting aggressively in Greek. When I asked an interpreter what they were saying, he told me that they were shouting ‘shame’ at the referee.



MEP Richard Corbett sought to overturn the result of the game in 2009, but UEFA refused to re-open the investigation

“The average man in the street – especially if he’s not a Leeds fan – might not care about any of this. It’s done, it’s dusted, so why start an argument about it? From the point of view of the players who were involved, it would be very nice to have a European Cup Winners Cup trophy on our CVs, and I still believe that Milan should have been thrown out of the competition that year.

“In a way, memories like that make me shake my head, not least because of all the recent attention on Brian Clough and his 44 days at Leeds. Clough thought we were cheats to a man – an attitude that was reiterated strongly by The Damned United – but, as a squad, we were actually on the receiving end of some of the worst examples of cheating you will see. The European Cup final in 1975 was another time when dire refereeing cost us dear.

“But beyond that, this is about fair play. When Olympic athletes are found to have broken the rules, they are stripped of their medals. No ifs, no buts. The same, in my opinion, should have happened

to Milan. With hindsight, I don't know why we didn't make more of a fuss and attempt to change the result at the time, and perhaps back then we'd have had more chance of being more successful.

“But the fact remains that the Italians do not deserve to have that trinket on their record.”

Corbett travelled to Geneva to deliver his petition. He met Peter Limancher, UEFA's head of legal affairs and compliance, and revealed, “They told me they were staggered at the response to the petition, particularly as it dates back to a game so long ago.

“I and others were amazed that so many signed it in a short space of time. But UEFA have told me that the only way the matter could be resolved would be for it to go to court and that the courts would shoot it down, not least because UEFA cannot re-investigate cases dating back more than 10 years. Put simply, their hands are tied by the courts. In light of what I have been told it appears, sadly, as though there is little or nothing we can do.”

Corbett cited as precedent for an inquiry a case in 1984 when Nottingham Forest won the first leg of a European tie 2-0 at home only to lose 3-0 in Belgium, with a controversial goal ruled out. Anderlecht later admitted paying Spanish official Emilio Guruceta Muro over 20,000 Euro as a 'loan' and were banned from European competition for a year.



Milan players Turone, Sogliano, Anquilletti and Chiarugi joyously parade the trophy at the end but United will never accept that their success was anything other than a travesty of justice

Whatever UEFA's views on the matter, the game in Thessaloniki has gone down in United folklore as one of infamous legend, the sort of night whence the club's 'Against the World' mentality emanated...