

CLASSIC MATCH



In the spirit of LLL magazine, JON HOWE takes a retro look at some of our most memorable moments.

Oh dear, the FA won't like this! You get the feeling the authorities would have warmly welcomed our usual timid surrender in this competition a few rounds ago. The security paranoia that surrounds every Leeds away game was again in evidence. It was another Sunday, high noon, all-ticket encounter, and today we came up with the goods to upset the establishment again.

Better than QPR? It was more significant, of course, in that we are now in the semi-finals for the first time in 10 years, but it was nowhere near the same rousing occasion that shook Elland Road last month. This was a typical cup tie on a dry, bumpy pitch, played out in near gale force winds which resulted in a premium on silky, expansive football.

Decent atmosphere? Yes. Wigan have only been a professional Football League club for nine years, so there is no rivalry between the clubs. Whether it was the Rugby League history, the fact that the Leeds United bandwagon was in town, or simply because this was the biggest day in little Wigan's history, I don't know, but there was a buoyant crowd which, in truth, Leeds navigated well and eventually silenced.

With a re-shuffled line-up, too? Yes, Mark Aizlewood and Bobby McDonald remain cup-tied, and we were further hampered by suspensions to both goalscorers from that epic win in the last round; Brendan Ormsby and Ian Baird. That said, we put in a professional performance and our quality held up in the end.

Wigan Athletic 0 Leeds United 2

FA Cup Sixth Round
Sunday March 15, 1987,
12noon – Springfield Park

Attendance 12,479

Goals Stiles (58), Adams (74)
Referee B Hill (Kettering)

Wigan Athletic (4-4-2):

Tunks, Hamilton, Knowles,
Hilditch, Cribley, Beesley,
Lowe, Thompson, Campbell,
Jewell (Butler), Griffiths.

It wasn't plain sailing, though, was it?

Far from it. The only thing sailing was the ball, on the high winds circling around the tight and frankly decrepit stadium. Wigan had the benefit of the gales in the first half and hemmed Leeds in. Mervyn Day made some fine saves as the Third Division team pressed in the early stages. He had to improvise with his legs to sweep clear Ian Griffiths' snapshot and he also clawed away a Chris Thompson effort. In rare breakouts, Andy Ritchie had a glancing header touched clear by Keeper Tunks, and Sheridan's solo run ended with a curling effort just over. But in reality, Leeds were just hoping to survive until half-time, after which they would get the advantage of the elements.

And they certainly did take advantage...

On their biggest stage Wigan will perhaps feel hard done by, but they seemed overawed by the occasion and snatched at chances. In the second half Day's long goal-kicks were carried by the wind and unsettled them, hence we began to exert some pressure. Although it was still goalless when veteran ex-Bradford striker Bobby Campbell headed against the foot of a Leeds post.

Unlikely goalscorers? Yes, it was one of those untidy but strangely absorbing encounters where you would settle for anyone making the difference, and few people would have predicted today's heroes. A Sheridan corner was partially cleared and Rennie played the ball back



↑ Mervyn Day gathers safely in front of the Leeds supporters at Springfield Park.

MAGIC NUMBER

Win in first ever game against Wigan!



to Stiles on the edge of the “D”. He connected neatly, and with a side-foot curled the ball passed the despairing fingertips of Tunks’ and inside the keeper’s far post.

The second even better? Indeed. Stiles’ goal had knocked the stuffing out of Wigan and we looked comfortable, but as we approached the last 15 minutes left-back Mickey Adams seized on a loose ball in midfield. He rounded two defenders in a dazzling run that found him approaching the penalty area with gusto. His

eyes must have lit up, and seizing his moment he swung his “wrong” foot at the ball and watched it sail, wind-assisted, magnificently into the top corner. It was a goal to grace any game, but certainly the bedraggled affair we had witnessed today.

How were the Leeds fans? Jubilant, but hemmed in tightly in the shallow terrace behind the left-hand goal, with police and riot dogs lined up on the grass banks to their rear. Thousands more watched live on big screens in the Town Hall and Queen’s

Hall back in Leeds, as big-time cup fever returns to our troubled club.

Best Leeds player? The whole team were heroes, but Mervyn Day kept us in it.

In a nutshell? Can Bremner lead us to glory again?

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