



# Classic Match

In the spirit of *LLL* magazine, Jon Howe takes a retro look at some of our most memorable moments.

**This was a game we had to win, wasn't it?** We still hold a slender lead at the top, but Arsenal have now won nine games on the trot and have a game in hand. So yes, we needed to win this today, but the fact is we lost the game to the most farcical refereeing decision you are ever likely to see, and I am struggling to come to terms with it all at the moment.

**I heard we were never at the races?** True, the pressure of Arsenal breathing down our necks looks like it's beginning to tell. Frankly we never settled. We were hurried, anxious, wasteful, harassed and – to say the least – irritated. Credit where it's due, lowly West Brom never let us play, but given that they were without an away win in 18 months defeat was unthinkable.

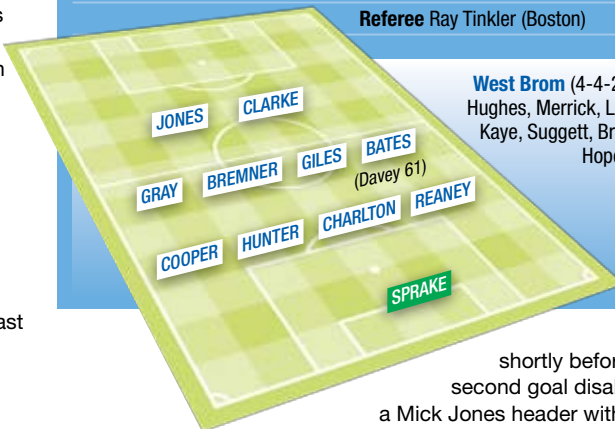
**What about the ref, then?** Prior to his pivotal intervention we were 1-0 down through a slick move finished by Tony Brown. Tinkler was having a bit of a nightmare already, in truth... He had denied us a penalty in the first half, and

## Leeds United 1 West Bromwich Albion 2

Football League Division One Saturday April 17, 1971, 3pm Elland Road

Attendance 36,812 Goals Brown (16), Astle (69), Clarke (88)

Referee Ray Tinkler (Boston)



**West Brom** (4-4-2) Cumbes, Hughes, Merrick, Lovett, Wile, Kaye, Suggett, Brown, Astle, Hope, Hartford.

Above: **The melee that followed Albion's second goal.**

Facing: **Goalkeeper Gary Sprake and forward Mick Jones.**

shortly before Albion's second goal disallowed a Mick Jones header with a very questionable offside decision. It's fair to say the players and crowd were already disgruntled by his performance, but that general mood can be described as "skipping merrily through a field full of daisies" compared to the collective fury experienced on 69 minutes.



**This sounds massive, hit me with it!** Time was ticking on and we had to throw caution to the wind. The defence was pushing up, and when Hunter played a loose ball across to Charlton it was intercepted by Brown, who, although inside his own half, was now clean through on goal. The significant factor being that ahead of him was Colin Suggett in acres of space, like a rabbit caught in the headlights, and the only man in our half apart from Sprake. So, the linesman flagged and everybody stopped – including, momentarily, the man with the ball.

**Okay. Free-kick. So what's the problem?** Mr Tinkler, referring to a rule book he must have written himself, waved play on. Brown, apologetically ran on unopposed, drew a confused and half-hearted Sprake out of his goal, then squared the ball to the on-rushing Jeff Astle, who also looked suspiciously offside, to tap into the net. The Leeds players were stood near the halfway line waiting for the goal to be disallowed, but



## 2 Tragic Number

Goals conceded, points lost, offside incidents leading to the winning goal.



as the truth began to register that the goal was considered a legitimate one, Elland Road exploded with wrath.

**Stupid question, but how were the Leeds fans?** There followed an extremely bizarre pitch invasion as a handful of spectators ran on to confront Tinkler. We are told that hooliganism is a growing concern with young supporters in the 1970s, but these weren't hooligans, these were respectable, suited gentlemen of a mature age. This was pure rage at a sporting injustice, not hooliganism. To compound the Monty Python-esque nature of proceedings Revie walked on clutching a picnic blanket under his arm to restore order, before skulking off looking skyward in vain hope of an explanation to it all.

**Sounds like it turned ugly?** It was over very quickly and the rapid response from the police meant the referee was safe. This crowd reaction will probably cost us, but Tinkler's action has cost us far more. It was truly inexplicable, and even Albion's manager, Alan Ashman, admitted it was blatantly offside, but then it would be folly for him or anyone to suggest otherwise. Sniffer hooked in a late consolation but we were too shell-shocked to chase an equaliser with any gusto.

**Best Leeds player?** We were poor all round, but give it to Reaney for managing to get within five yards of Astle with an epic sprint from the halfway line.



**In a nutshell?** Why do these things happen to us?

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