

# LIONS IN THE WILDERNESS

England's Decade of Decline



Clive Hetherington and Joe Hetherington

FOREWORD BY MALCOLM MACDONALD

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## A World Away

THE 1970 FA Cup Final, one of the most memorable in the rich history of the competition, was an important precursor to the World Cup from an England perspective. The domestic showpiece was brought forward to April from its traditional May date to assist in England's preparations for that summer.

Deadly rivals Chelsea and Leeds United slugged it out in an epic, brutal and bruising battle which required a replay – the first in an FA Cup Final since 1912 – and extra time on both occasions, making for four hours of cramp-inducing action. Sir Alf Ramsey had plenty invested in the struggle as no fewer than six of the squad he took to Mexico – the Leeds quartet of Terry Cooper, Jack Charlton, Norman Hunter and Allan Clarke, plus Chelsea's Peter Bonetti and Peter Osgood – figured in both games, as did United pair Paul Madeley and Mick Jones, and John Hollins of the Blues, who had all either been in the England manager's thoughts or were on the periphery of his plans.

Wembley's normally pristine playing surface had been reduced to near-quicksand, but it was testimony to the skill, fitness and endeavour of the two sides that the national stadium still put on a classic final as Chelsea came from behind twice to force a 2-2 draw after goals by Charlton

and Jones had given Leeds a whiff of victory. The replay at Old Trafford, 18 days later, was watched by a television audience of 28 million, only bettered by that which tuned in for the World Cup Final four years earlier, and proved to be an even more physical game than the first. In one of several ugly clashes on the night, Charlton launched himself into Osgood, who was left prostrate next to the touchline, in a furious response to the striker's challenge from behind. That exchange epitomised the enmity between the teams. It also featured two players who were destined to put their differences aside and join forces not too long after this bone-jarring tussle, which took place on the penultimate day of April. Jones scored again for Leeds, but Osgood replied late in the game to take it to the extra half hour, during which defender David Webb netted the winner.

The calendar year for England had begun with two friendlies featuring Nottingham Forest forward Ian Storey-Moore's one appearance in a 0-0 Wembley draw against the Netherlands and Osgood's baptism in a 3-1 win in Belgium – Alan Ball scoring in the 27th minute and on the hour in a frantic three-goal, five-minute phase which started with World Cup Final hat-trick hero Geoff Hurst's effort before Jean Dockx pulled one back in the 58th minute.

Then came the British Home Championship, England drawing 1-1 with Wales at Cardiff City's Ninian Park where, with the exception of Emlyn Hughes at left-back instead of Cooper, Ramsey named the side that would start against Brazil that summer. Against Wales, Francis Lee had to level inside the last 20 minutes after midfielder Dick Krzywicki had scored his first and only goal in his country's colours shortly before half-time. Next, Northern Ireland were beaten 3-1 at Wembley, with Martin Peters heading in Bobby Charlton's right-wing corner after only five minutes. Charlton's Manchester United colleague George Best, however, came up

with a familiar stroke of genius, bamboozling Bobby Moore and beating Gordon Banks sublimely at his near post with a precise finish five minutes into the second half. Hurst headed home with the aid of a huge deflection after 56 minutes and Charlton slid in to score from a Hughes centre that keeper Pat Jennings could only help across the face of goal nine minutes from time. Manchester United's Brian Kidd and Burnley's Ralph Coates debuted for England. A dour goalless draw against Scotland followed at Hampden Park, leaving England with a superior record to the rest. But the title at that time was purely decided on points and three sides finished with four, meaning England had to share the championship with Wales and the Scots.

Ramsey headed for the World Cup with a 28-man squad, having also named 12 'reserves'. Leeds right-back Paul Reaney had been in the provisional 28 and expected to make the final group of 22, but was ruled out after suffering a broken leg in a game at West Ham near the end of the season. Ramsey had turned to Reaney's colleague, Madeley, who could play anywhere across the back four but was a surprise omission in the first place from the pool of 40 players. In anticipation of being idle that summer, however, Madeley had already made family arrangements and declined Ramsey's invitation. It was an echo of Everton centre-back Brian Labone's decision to stick with marriage plans in the summer of 1966 rather than be part of what proved to be England's greatest achievement. Many feel he would have lined up in the final against West Germany, instead of Jack Charlton. Labone, though, was certainly on board for Mexico.

Madeley's opt-out meant Arsenal left-back Bob McNab, who was among the reserves, was given the nod to join the squad for warm-up games in Colombia and Ecuador, which were tailored to the need to acclimatise to the conditions at altitude in Mexico. But when Ramsey made his final selection,

trimming his party to the requisite 22 following those two matches, McNab was one of the six players discarded. The others were Peter Shilton – many had tipped the Leicester goalkeeper to make the squad – midfielder Coates, striker Kidd and his Manchester United team-mate, utility man David Sadler, plus Liverpool winger Peter Thompson, who had to endure the cruellest cut for a third consecutive World Cup after missing out on Chile in 1962 and in 1966. ‘Most unfortunate,’ Ramsey said of Thompson’s omission, ‘but one cannot get sentimental.’

It was fair to say that Ramsey had been spoilt for choice, though the way he arrived at his final squad was strangely haphazard for a manager with a reputation for being fastidious. That said, the squad he took to Mexico is widely regarded as the best in England’s history, boasting greater strength in depth than that which he had assembled four years earlier. If mulling over his squad had been Ramsey’s preoccupation, on 18 May he suddenly had a more pressing concern that was to prove an enormous distraction and mark the most worrying time of his tenure as England manager. Moore, such a dignified figure at the previous tournament, became embroiled in an embarrassing episode in the build-up to the Mexican fiesta.

England had flown to Bogotá to take on Colombia, but shortly after their arrival, a browsing Moore was accused by a shop assistant, Clara Padilla, of stealing a bracelet worth around £600 from the Fuego Verde (Green Fire) jewellery store at the Hotel Tequendama, where England were staying. Police appeared on the scene and, after questioning Moore and Bobby Charlton, who had visited the shop with him but was not under suspicion, they seemed satisfied there had been no wrongdoing.

Moore maintained his innocence and the matter appeared to have been dropped as he played in England’s 4-0 beating

of Colombia. Peters scored two characteristic headers in the second and 39th minutes, drifting into space at both posts, before Bobby Charlton rifled in a rising right-footed drive ten minutes into the second half and the outstanding Ball nodded in Cooper's cross in the 84th minute with the assistance of goalkeeper Otoniel Quintana's fumble. The game formed part of a double-header for England, who before the main event at the same venue also fielded a side in an unofficial match against Colombia. It was, to all intents and purposes, a B international, and Jeff Astle scored the only goal of the game. Ramsey was content with what he had seen. He said, 'I was very pleased with both matches. No players complained about the altitude.'

Then came the visit to Ecuador, where England won 2-0. The game in Quito was almost played at walking pace at times in the rarefied atmosphere, but Lee gave England a fifth-minute lead when he latched on to full-back Keith Newton's right-wing ball. Hurst had a half-chance to add to the score, but Banks was called on to rescue his side, denying Patricio Penaherrera in a one-on-one after Ball had gifted possession to the attacker. It was late in the game before England settled the outcome. Kidd, who came off the bench 20 minutes from time to replace Lee, grabbed what was to be the only goal of his international career on his second and final appearance. Within seven minutes of entering the fray, he flung himself to head in at the far post from a right-sided centre by Peters after Hurst had looked to glance the ball on.

Meanwhile, back in Colombia and unbeknown to the England party, the finger of suspicion had lingered in Moore's direction. En route to Mexico, the travel schedule necessitated a return to Bogotá on 25 May. It was then that what became known as the 'Bogotá Bracelet' incident erupted into a major diplomatic row.



On their return to the Hotel Tequendama, where they were to kill time awaiting their connecting flight, Ramsey attempted to keep his players entertained by arranging a showing of a western movie. Moore's treatment by the Colombian authorities had become almost akin to something out of the Wild West. When England arrived back at the airport in Bogotá, he was told he had to report to a police station to complete what was assumed to be the formality of confirming the statement he had made over the alleged theft of the mysterious bracelet. Yet had it not been for the careful diplomacy of the British *charge d'affaires*, Keith Morris, police would have arrested Moore in a conspicuous manner at the airport. As it was, a bemused Moore ended up being detained and placed under house arrest. It was agreed that he would be taken to the residence of the Colombian Football Federation president, Alfonso Senior Quevedo, with police officers assigned to guard the England captain. Even Harold Wilson intervened and faced accusations of trying to win votes ahead of the general election – for all the good it did him given the eventual outcome at the polls.

There were claims that Moore had been framed in a plot to undermine England's World Cup campaign. Indeed, the local chief of police suggested it was an elaborate setup. Any case against Moore fell apart when Padilla's account of what happened was debunked during a showy re-enactment in the jewellery shop. After being held for three days, Moore was finally released – only five days before England were due to begin their defence of the World Cup against Romania in Guadalajara. Ramsey and the rest of the squad had already flown to Mexico and before Moore linked up with them again he had an overnight stop in Mexico City where Jimmy Greaves, a competitor in the World Cup Car Rally, paid his West Ham team-mate a surprise visit to lift his spirits with a drink or two. Moore's international career would already

be over when, more than five years later, word came from the Foreign Office that the Colombians had declared the Bogotá case closed. In 2003, just over a decade after his death, it emerged in papers released by the Public Record Office that the British Embassy had been informed in the weeks following the allegations against Moore that police in Bogotá had identified the suspected culprit, who had no links whatsoever with the England party.

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Ramsey welcomed Moore back into the fold when he arrived in Guadalajara and any fears about his fitness and preparedness to lead England into the game with Romania were soon allayed. England began the group stage with a 1-0 win, courtesy of Hurst's composed, close-range finish in the 65th minute, when he neatly gave his man the slip at the back post and fired in following Ball's right-flank cross and Lee's flick-on. It was a less-than-convincing victory, but one achieved in the face of provocation from physical opponents. Romania's arch hatchet man was Mihai Mocanu, whose brutish tackling forced off Newton and literally left an impression on Lee. Tommy Wright, who came on for stricken Everton team-mate Newton, also suffered Mocanu's excessive attentions, but survived for what was fully expected to be the toughest test of the tournament – a meeting with Brazil and the great Pelé leading a cast of stars like Jairzinho, Rivelino and Tostão.

From day one in Mexico, England had faced hostility from many in the host nation. It was said that steaks imported on England's behalf for the tournament were impounded by Mexican officials, the story being that they represented a risk due to the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in UK cattle in 1967. Frozen fish was approved by the authorities, but was hardly an acceptable substitute for the prime cuts. On the eve

of the Brazil game, the Hilton Hotel in Guadalajara, where England were staying, was besieged. Car horns blared and the noise was maintained into the early hours. The sense, of course, was that the locals were doing their utmost to disrupt England's preparations for a match that was to assume legendary status in the annals of football.

Back home, colour television – still something of a novelty at the time – brought an extra element of magic to the occasion, with the gleaming gold shirts of Brazil and brilliant white of England radiating in the scorching heat. In the match itself, which was accompanied by a classic commentary from David Coleman on the BBC, England started positively, keeping possession and probing the frailties of Brazil keeper Félix.

But Brazil's ability to suddenly find another gear was illustrated when captain Carlos Alberto played a long ball inside Cooper. The Leeds defender was no slouch, but neither was Jairzinho who sped outside him and raced to centre from the byline. The ball was high to the back post where Pelé was hanging in the air. He screamed 'gol!' as he connected with a downward header, but had reckoned without the agility and reflexes of Banks, who performed what was hailed as 'The Save of the Century' after switching his attention swiftly from the near post to the far to fling himself down and scoop the ball over the angle of upright and bar.

It was a miraculous stop and an ever-modest Banks, who was at the peak of his powers in 1970, recalled one of football's most memorable moments when he spoke to *FourFourTwo* magazine in 2016. He said, 'It was just instinct. You can't anticipate a header because your body weight would be all wrong, but in training beforehand I had Bobby Charlton hitting shots into the ground because the pitches were rock hard in Mexico. That helped me predict the bounce, but I honestly thought it had gone in. I looked around and said to

myself, “Banksie, you lucky t\*\*\*.” It was not the only save that Banks had to make to thwart Brazil, but it was by far the best.

In a game that was a lot more physical than most remember, Lee was the target for a show of Brazilian aggression after a challenge on Félix. The Manchester City man brought a save from the keeper with a diving header on the end of Wright’s centre and when the ball looked to be breaking free, Lee attempted a follow-up, but only succeeded in kicking the grounded Félix as he gathered. Lee was immediately confronted by furious opponents and when Bobby Charlton tried a little diplomacy, he received a sharp shove from Carlos Alberto. Retribution was not long in coming as a forward run by Lee ended abruptly with Carlos Alberto’s cynical body-check.

Yet this particular duel in the sun will always be characterised by its iconic moments and it also produced one of the greatest tackles of all time in the second half, when the immaculate Moore stopped Jairzinho in his tracks just inside England’s penalty area. The timing was evidence of the captain’s superb reading of the game.

It was Jairzinho, however, who undid England on the hour. Tostão used his forearm to fend off Ball – the type of challenge that would not evade scrutiny in the modern game – and was then fortunate again to nutmeg Moore before turning to pull the ball across. The centre fell at the feet of Pelé, who trapped the ball and it laid off on the right of the 18-yard box for Jairzinho to ram home past Banks. It was the solitary goal of an heroic struggle. England toiled to draw level, centre-forward Astle, who had come on as a substitute for Lee, missing a great chance to equalise when he shot wide with the goal at his mercy following the gift of a miskick in the Brazil defence. As England resorted to pumping long balls and crosses up to the West Bromwich Albion target man to exploit the uncertainty in the air of the suspect Félix all

they could, Astle's knock-back found Ball whose shot glanced off the bar. An abiding post-match image is that of Moore and Pelé, face to face in a near-embrace as they swap shirts in a demonstration of warmth and mutual admiration. To England's credit, it was the only time a brilliant Brazil – regarded by many as the greatest team ever – scored fewer than three goals in any game during the tournament. Their 4-1 victory against Italy in the final in Mexico City's Estadio Azteca would confirm them as worthy world champions.

Brazil had begun with a win over Czechoslovakia by an identical result, and Ramsey rang the changes for England's final group game against the same opposition. England also had a new look with an all-sky-blue third-choice strip. World Cup winner Jack Charlton made his only appearance of the tournament – and his last in an England shirt – in place of Labone at the heart of defence alongside Moore, while Astle and Allan Clarke, on his debut, stood in for Lee and Hurst as Ramsey rested and nursed men after the stamina-sapping exchanges with Brazil. Three minutes into the second half, a foul on Colin Bell presented Clarke with the opportunity to slam home a penalty. Bell had a goal disallowed for offside and Ball's stinging strike hit the bar before England suffered a scare. Karol Dobiaš let fly and the shot seemed to swerve in the thin air and deceive Banks, who fumbled it on to the bar before recovering his composure. Bobby Charlton admitted, 'It was a bad game for us. There was so much tension about qualifying that we could not hit a thing right. The Czechs probably played better than us because they could have a crack without worrying.'

Ramsey came up with what was then a novel explanation for England's disappointing display. On a hot, sunny day at Southampton in 1996, Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson famously made his side change from grey shirts to dark blue and white at half-time as they headed for a 3-1

defeat, and 26 years earlier, Ramsey had a similar issue. He conceded he had 'made a mistake' with his choice of a 'pale blue' strip for his side, adding, 'In the sunlight, it was often impossible for our players to distinguish our shirts from the white of the Czechs.'

But there was no quick change of kit for England and Clarke's spot kick was enough for the win and a quarter-final date with destiny against West Germany. Banks was the best possible insurance policy England had, but there was no indemnity against illness and when 'Montezuma's Revenge' – as tummy trouble is known to those who visit Mexico – forced him out of the game, Bonetti had to step in, and the Germans perhaps sensed vengeance of their own.

As it was almost four years earlier, when England had led 2-1 before West Germany's late equaliser, extra time was required. But whereas in winning the most important game of their lives England had managed to grow in strength and belief in the additional half an hour after Ramsey's 'you've won the cup once, now go and win it again' pep talk, in Mexico (sides from northern Europe were not helped by midday kick-offs to suit television schedules) they visibly wilted in the searing temperature. It was still difficult to comprehend after Ramsey's boys had cruised into a 2-0 lead through Alan Mullery's forceful near-post finish after half an hour and Peters's untidy far-post effort five minutes into the second period, both stemming from crosses by hardworking right-back Newton. Many blamed Ramsey's decision to substitute Bobby Charlton, Bell taking his place. There was no doubt that the switch released Franz Beckenbauer to wield much more influence on the game, though he had already pulled a goal back in the 68th minute moments before Charlton was controversially withdrawn in what was his 106th and last international appearance, bettering the record of former England captain Billy Wright.

Beckenbauer's shot flew underneath Bonetti who, to be fair, then made a vital save to deny Gerd Müller. But in the 82nd minute, Bonetti was left stranded by a flukey Uwe Seeler back header that looped over the keeper's head and into the far corner of the net. Extra time arrived, West Germany coach Helmut Schön introduced Jürgen Grabowski, and a whole new threat emerged as the winger began to torment tiring left-back Cooper. The fatal blow was dealt in the 108th minute and it came from Grabowski's right-wing centre. Hannes Löhner headed the ball back across goal and Müller – aka *Der Bomber* – volleyed home from close range past a totally exposed Bonetti. Like Charlton, the Chelsea keeper would never play for England again.

The heartbreaking result prompted some to prematurely suggest that Ramsey's days as manager were numbered. His prickly relationship with sections of the press and media fed into that debate and he protested bitterly that he was accused of rudeness and yet had to endure microphones being thrust at his face with irritating regularity. In reality, Ramsey's future was never really up for discussion at that stage, but the winds of change among the playing ranks were blowing by the time England returned to action in a 3-1 friendly win against East Germany at Wembley in November in their final outing of 1970.

Ramsey handed Shilton a debut as Banks was given a well-earned breather. In East Germany's first visit to Wembley and one of only four all-time encounters with England, Lee struck in the 12th minute, racing on to Hurst's flick-on and rounding keeper Jürgen Croy to score. Peters made it 2-0 after 20 minutes with a deflected shot from the edge of the 18-yard box, but the visitors surprised England seven minutes later when Eberhard Vogel hit a venomous, long-range effort that left Shilton well beaten. England's two-goal cushion was restored, however, in the 63rd minute

when Lee played in Clarke, who lofted the ball over Croy to complete the scoring.

A year that had proved traumatic for the footballing nation had ended on a winning note, but in truth, England's problems were only just beginning.