



THE SONS
OF

REVIE

LEEDS UNITED'S
DECADE OF DOMINANCE



ROCCO DEAN

FOREWORD BY PAUL REANEY

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Season 1964/65

*I remember Revie telling me, "The sky's the limit, we're going to be like Real Madrid."
Well, I did feel that was a bit ludicrous. Leeds weren't even the best team in West Yorkshire.'*

– Jim Storrie

Wednesday, 26 August 1964

Leeds United 4 Liverpool 2

First Division

Elland Road

36,005

A family holiday had clashed with the opening day of the season, but the disappointment of missing the game was far outweighed by the joy of reading about United's 2-1 victory at Villa Park. Thankfully I was home in time for Elland Road's First Division curtain raiser, and felt like a coiled spring. It wasn't the fact it was a First Division match that mattered to me, nor did it add to my excitement that the visitors would be the reigning champions, Liverpool; I just wanted to see Don Revie's aces again.

Revie, on the other hand, must have been excited to come up against his great friend, Bill Shankly, and to pit his team against the best so early in the season. Don had made no additions to his squad for the challenge of top-flight football, and still believed they could finish inside

the top four despite losing star striker Alan Peacock to long-term injury. 'Peachy', a former England international, had joined for a club-record £55,000 fee towards the back end of the promotion campaign, and his eight goals vindicated the investment within weeks, vital as they were in helping Leeds over the finishing line. In Peacock's absence, the responsibility of leading the line would fall to Jim Storrie. A 22-year-old Scottish part-timer when Leeds snapped him up in 1962, Storrie had stepped into John Charles's giant shoes and delivered the goals that the returning messiah had failed to score, and if he could replace the Gentle Giant, he could replace the Giant Peach. My friend lived next door to Storrie and used to play football with him on the street, and once took me into his house through an open window to sift through his scrapbooks. I suppose nowadays you'd call it 'breaking and entering', but my friend assured me Storrie wouldn't mind, and I'm sure he was right.

My matchday ritual began with a bus to town, then another bus to Elland Road. Cigarette smoke filled the air in and around the ground (a horrible smell in normal surroundings, yet beautiful at football thanks to the power of positive association), and after buying a programme I took my place in the Scratching Shed, a good 90 minutes before kick-off. As the crowd grew, so did the excitement, with my eyes transfixed on the Lowfields Road stand opposite the players' tunnel, waiting for them to raise their scarves; the first indication that the teams were about to emerge. My spine tingled in anticipation of seeing my heroes again, and it was a magical sight when they finally took to the pitch, a sensation elevated on the first home game of the season.

I loved the team Revie had assembled, and having mastered the Second Division so impressively I was excited to see the youngsters blossom in the First Division. Jackie Charlton, Willie Bell and Johnny Giles (himself only 23) were the more

experienced campaigners who could be relied upon week-in week-out, and leading them all was Bobby Collins who, despite standing only 5ft 3in tall, dominated every match he played, physically and mentally. He was the greatest player I'd ever seen. But my favourite player was South African winger Albert Johanneson, one of the first black players to grace the English game. His speed down the wing was mesmerising, and the barbaric racial abuse he received at away games made me love him even more, especially as he always seemed to take it in his stride.

Albert had scored in the opening-day victory at Aston Villa and I was delirious when he opened the scoring after just 16 minutes on this warm summer's evening at Elland Road, his shot deflecting into the net off Liverpool defender Ron Yeats. What a start! With Leeds missing Peacock it was only fair that Liverpool were missing a star striker too, but in the absence of Ian St John the Reds still had Roger Hunt, and the England international soon equalised to quieten the Elland Road crowd. Disappointingly, the ground was only two-thirds full when a capacity gate of 50,000 had been expected, but just before half-time the rafters were ringing again as Don Weston restored the home side's lead.

The Whites started the second half as they did the first; like greyhounds out of the traps. Bremner hammered home from a Johnny Giles pull-back, then returned the favour two minutes later by teeing up the Irishman to hammer home from a free kick. Suddenly Leeds were 4-1 up against the reigning champions and the crowd were in dreamland, gleefully chanting, 'WE WANT FIVE!' There was no fifth goal but certainly no flattery in the final score, a 4-2 victory that forced the rest of the country to sit up and take notice. Most pundits saw Leeds as also-rans at best – a team of thugs who would come unstuck against top-class opponents – but they had scored four goals against the previous season's tightest

defence, and when a third victory followed in the next match against Wolves, Don Revie's lofty expectations appeared entirely realistic. Come on, ye Whites!

'Leeds took a lot of people by surprise in those early weeks and it was all down to Don, who had this ability to send you out feeling ten feet tall. He was constantly talking about Leeds becoming the new Real Madrid and never let us forget the standards he wanted to reach.'

– Alan Peacock

Wednesday, 16 September 1964

Leeds United 3 Blackpool 0

First Division

Elland Road

35,973

Just a week after the thrilling victory over Liverpool, Shankly's champions gained revenge by beating my heroes at Anfield, and when that was followed by a 4-0 defeat at Blackpool it brought Leeds crashing down to earth. In the next game, Leicester City raced into a two-goal lead at Elland Road and it seemed like the honeymoon period for the First Division newcomers was well and truly over. With no substitutes in this day and age, in times of panic Don Revie would switch Jack Charlton from defence to attack, and when he did so on this occasion I looked at my watch to see how long remained. It was 4.10pm – still 30 minutes remaining – and Big Jack's aerial presence combined with a never-say-die fighting spirit produced one of the greatest comebacks ever seen at the stadium. When I next looked at my watch it was 4.40pm, and three late goals had snatched a stunning 3-2 victory to get Leeds back on track.

Then came the return fixture against Blackpool, just nine days after that calamitous Monday night at Bloomfield Road. The 4-0 humbling had been orchestrated by the mercurial Alan Ball, a prodigious 19-year-old midfielder who was highly coveted by Don Revie. The newspapers were continually filled with stories that Leeds were on the brink of signing the soon-to-be England legend for a record fee, a player Revie saw as the long-term replacement for Bobby Collins. Therefore, it was somewhat ironic that Collins would be the star of the show on a foggy night at Elland Road.

Collins would turn 34 later in the season, and had played 500 times for Celtic and Everton, yet his performances for Leeds had arguably been the best of his illustrious career. Bobby's trademark was his 'banana kick', a free kick from outside the box that he was able to bend brilliantly round the defensive wall, and the Elland Road faithful enthusiastically chanted 'BANANA! BANANA! BANANA!' every time there was a free kick within shooting distance. When a glorious banana kick bulged the back of the Kop net for Leeds to take a 1-0 lead I went wild with the rest of the crowd. Within minutes Collins repeated the trick to put the Whites 2-0 up, and before half-time the crossbar cruelly denied him a magnificent hat trick of banana free kicks!

Having failed miserably in his task of man-marking Alan Ball out of the game at Bloomfield Road, Norman Hunter rounded off an evening of sweet revenge by scoring the third goal himself, but my abiding memory of the match was not the brilliant goals, nor the brilliant result that took Leeds up to second in the table. It was the thick fog that encompassed the pitch and enabled Bobby Collins to cap his man-of-the-match display with the most outrageous piece of football 'chutzpah' I have ever seen. Collins audaciously took a free kick by dribbling the ball forward instead of passing to a colleague, with the referee and linesmen none the wiser in the fog!

Over the next few weeks Leeds struggled to find consistency, but of far greater concern was the speculation that Don Revie would be leaving Elland Road for bottom-of-the-table Sunderland. Despite their early season struggles, the Wearsiders were a club with fanatical support and lots of potential, and Don had captained them in his playing days, yet I still couldn't believe the Revie Revolution would end so abruptly, when it was all going so well. Thus, it felt like a dagger to the heart when I read his words in the newspaper confirming that he'd applied for the Sunderland job, though any subsequent anger was not directed at our beloved manager, it was firmly directed at the board. Chairman Harry Reynolds was The Don's biggest supporter in the boardroom and had been keen to sign off the extended five-year contract Revie had requested after promotion, but the other board members were digging their heels in and refusing to second the notion. What on earth were they thinking?

The saga ended on the 45th anniversary of the founding of Leeds United, the day Tottenham Hotspur visited Elland Road. Jimmy Greaves was at the peak of his powers, a wonderful player with silky skills and an incredible eye for goal, and the Leeds fans applauded when he hammered an unstoppable long-range shot into the net in front of me. It was a privilege to see this legend score such a magnificent goal, and United prevailing 3-1 made the goal even sweeter! But everything was overshadowed by the saga surrounding Revie's future, with the crowd chanting at the directors' box throughout the match, 'WE WANT DON!'

Despite the resounding victory over one of the giants of the English game, I'd gone to bed feeling like the world was about to end, but come the morning I was cock-a-hoop. A board meeting had been held after the match and Revie had been granted his new five-year contract, with a pay rise to boot. Only now could I bask in the glory of the previous day's

fantastic performance. The Don was staying, and his words confirmed what I always knew, 'Last night I was prepared to join Sunderland, but at the bottom of my heart I did not want to go.' God bless you, Don!

'We never went into games thinking we would lose. Whether that was down to Don Revie or the players, I don't know, but we were supremely confident. We never allowed ourselves to feel inferior for the simple reason that we didn't think we were.' – Norman Hunter

Saturday, 7 November 1964

Everton 0 Leeds United 1

First Division

Goodison Park

43,605

As autumn turned to winter Leeds picked up a head of steam. The Peacocks won all their league fixtures in October and were on the coattails of leaders Manchester United – five points behind with a game in hand – when heading to Goodison Park to face Everton. The champions of 1963 had fallen off the pace after two straight defeats and sat in eighth position, so they were desperate for a win against Leeds and knew they would be in for a real battle, in more ways than one.

During their record-breaking promotion from the Second Division, Leeds' roughhousing of opponents had been highlighted by the press, and prior to the start of the First Division season the Football Association inexplicably weighed in with their own condemnation of the Whites' tactics, rubber-stamping their reputation. This infuriated me. Leeds were a hard team but you had to be hard to get out of the Second Division, and as Don Revie rightly pointed out, only one of his

players had been suspended during the promotion campaign and his team hadn't received a single sending off.

I was convinced the FA's inflammatory nonsense had led our First Division opponents into a warfare mentality when facing Revie's boys. Leeds weren't dirtier than the rest; the rest were just dirtier against Leeds! A 2-0 defeat at Chelsea had been a case in point, an especially bruising encounter that was the catalyst for a feud that still rages to this day, and gave the mainstream London press a first-hand experience of 'Dirty Leeds', and they made damn sure the nickname stuck. But the battle at Stamford Bridge would soon be forgotten, overshadowed by what the media described as a 'spine-chilling' afternoon at Goodison Park.

I may only have been 13, but I'd been travelling to away games either on my own or with a school friend since becoming a regular at Elland Road. I loved away matches, with the football enhanced by the excitement of visiting new towns and grounds. I was equally excited about revisiting places I'd already been because it made me feel like an experienced traveller, inflating my self-esteem. Plus, the mystery was replaced by expectation, and my memories helped my imagination to create glorious scenarios with crystal clear clarity. I would either travel on one of the official buses from Elland Road or the much rowdier 'Football Special' train, and the train journey to Liverpool was the rowdiest yet. The carriages were absolutely rammed and the supporters sang and laughed all the way, with extra zest in the atmosphere in anticipation of a huge game. Every toilet roll was stolen, ready to be hurled on to the pitch to add to the fanfare of the matchday experience.

The atmosphere at Goodison Park was more intense than any I'd experienced, and within seconds of kick-off the whole ground was baying for blood as Billy Bremner committed the first foul of the game. The Everton players responded,

scything down Jack Charlton before Johnny Giles flew in for a 50-50 challenge and planted his studs into the Everton full-back's chest. With the crowd going potty, the victim of Giles's 'tackle' got up and threw a punch at the Irishman, leading to a sending off that resulted in the atmosphere completely boiling over. I'd never known such uproar on the terraces and couldn't believe what I was witnessing, but I was absolutely loving it! And there were only four minutes on the clock! I wondered what on earth the home fans would do if Leeds actually scored, and ten minutes later I found out when a long free kick was headed into the net by Willie Bell. As expected, the Evertonians went crazier than the celebrating Leeds fans!

The game continued to resemble group combat, but I was no longer loving it when the home fans began throwing coins, lighters, anything they could get their hands on, at the Leeds players. I was incensed and appalled, and a little bit scared. How long until they turned their attention to the travelling supporters? The situation came to a head after half an hour, ironically following a collision that looked entirely accidental. Bell and an Everton player crashed into each other when competing for a high ball and were both left flat-out on the pitch in need of treatment. More coins rained down on the pitch, one hitting the Leeds trainer, Les Cocker, as he attended to the injured Bell, and when another struck the referee he took unprecedented action and ordered the players off the pitch.

I had no idea what was happening. I presumed the match had been abandoned but no fans were leaving the ground. A few minutes later a message over the tannoy system advised us that the game would restart in five minutes. What a relief! With a goal and a man advantage Leeds had two vital points in the palm of their hands. It was the first time in Football League history that such a stoppage had taken place, but it failed to quell the fury of fans and when the players re-emerged

to a pitch littered with debris, they too seemed to take no heed of the referee's warnings. Still the tackles were flying in venomously, but with Bobby Collins marshalling the midfield Leeds were able to maintain control of the match.

Collins had been discarded by Everton, deemed over the hill, but here he was three years later, revelling in Goodison's notoriously hostile atmosphere and dictating the play to ensure Leeds made their extra man count. He sprayed passes left and right, never losing possession, and marauded all over the pitch, playing the role of two men even if he looked half the size of one. When the final whistle blew United had eked out a brilliant 1-0 victory, and while both teams were subsequently lambasted in the press, for once it didn't bother me. Even I could see that criticism was deserved on this occasion, and, more importantly, I was now convinced that Revie's young team could challenge for the title.

'My philosophy was always to give as good as I got. It was certainly tasty at times because no quarter was given or expected. It took courage and guts to deal with, not to mention a fair amount of skill. The game was for hard men and we were up to the task.' – Bobby Collins

Saturday, 5 December 1964
Manchester United 0 Leeds United 1
First Division
Old Trafford
53,374

Like Bill Shankly, Matt Busby was as much a friend as a rival to Don Revie, and a trip to Old Trafford to face his swashbuckling Manchester United side provided the acid test for the young pretenders of Elland Road. The Red Devils were top of the

league, undefeated in 15 games with 13 wins, and their 'Holy Trinity' of Denis Law, Bobby Charlton (Big Jack's little brother) and George Best was arguably the most fearsome trio in the history of British football. It was no wonder they were hot favourites to land their first league title since the Munich air disaster all but wiped out the incredible Busby Babes.

I headed over to Manchester with a reported 10,000 other Leeds fans, intrigued to witness the largest crowd in English football and unsure how Don's young team would cope with the occasion and the class of opposition. With Leeds-born 19-year-old Rod Johnson up front (fresh from scoring the winning goal on his debut the previous week) and 20-year-old Terry Cooper replacing Albert Johanneson on the left wing, the Peacocks had six homegrown youngsters in the starting 11. It was disappointing whenever Albert wasn't on the team sheet but I was really excited to see Cooper in action. He had been impressing on the wing for the youth team and reserves, but more than his potential ability, I was enchanted by the story of him randomly turning up at Leeds' Fullerton Park training ground with his boots and asking for a trial, getting it, passing it, and becoming part of the first-team squad. It was fairytale stuff for a daydreamer like me.

I stood near the halfway line and when the match kicked off the atmosphere was like nothing I had ever experienced. Mist had descended over the ground which added an almost eerie edge, and a haunting, incredible noise swirled around the roof from the huge stand opposite me; I'm not sure I've heard anything like it since. How on earth could Leeds cope with this? It soon became clear that the selection of Cooper over Albert was tactical, with his defensive capabilities as important down the left as Johnny Giles's protection of young Paul Reaney down the right, who was tasked with handling an 18-year-old winger who was already being lauded as the best in Europe, George Best. These tactical selections helped,

but they were not the key to Leeds' success. Don had realised that the best way to stop the Holy Trinity was to stop them getting the ball, and centred his game plan around stifling the supply line at source. It worked a treat. After a fast start the home side were tamed and the visitors grew in confidence. By half-time I had nothing to fear, especially with Gary Sprake having one of those days where everything stuck to his hands and nothing could be stuck in his net.

Early in the second half, a sweeping Leeds move culminated in Bremner splitting the Manchester United defence, and although Cooper's blistering effort was saved, Bobby Collins was on hand to tuck in the rebound, earning Leeds a vital lead. Collins had been exceptional in the first half, clearly the best player on a pitch of superstars, and there was no more deserving man to get the goal. But would it be the winning goal?

Manchester United's belief had been drained by the supreme organisation of the Leeds defence, but with ten minutes remaining they were offered a bizarre lifeline. The mist that had been hovering throughout the match suddenly turned into thick fog, and the referee subsequently led the players off the pitch, swarmed by angry white shirts. I couldn't believe what was happening; we were so close to a famous and vital win, surely the final minutes would have to be played out? If not, would Leeds be awarded victory? Amid the confusion on the terraces some Leeds fans presumed the game had been abandoned and left the ground in fits of anger at the injustice of it all, but after a ten-minute break the players did re-emerge to the relief of the rest of the travelling supporters, and the fury of the home fans whose get-out-of-jail card had disappeared with the fog (I later learned that a passing steam train had caused the temporary stoppage).

In the final seconds of the match a brilliant clearance denied Rod Johnson a goal to follow his debut strike the

previous week, but Revie's young team saw out a victory that eclipsed the Liverpool result as the best in the club's history. There could no longer be any doubt about it – Leeds United were a force to be reckoned with, and with Manchester United's air of invincibility now lifted it was game-on in the title race.

'Everton had been a defining moment for us physically, but this was the game that made us realise we could compete with the best the country had to offer.' – Gary Sprake

Saturday, 23 January 1965

Leeds United 2 Chelsea 2

First Division

Elland Road

47,109

Leeds United were absolutely flying. Since losing to Chelsea at Stamford Bridge they had only lost one of their 18 league fixtures and replaced Manchester United at the top of the First Division. Chelsea were motoring on nicely themselves, resulting in an enthralling three-horse title race, and the Blues arrived at Elland Road knowing victory would leapfrog them into first place.

As brilliantly as Leeds were doing, I still rued the continued absence of Alan Peacock, who hadn't kicked a ball all season. I loved Peachy, the tremendous power in his headers captivated me, and I couldn't help wondering how the table would look if Revie had his England international striker leading the line. Jim Storrrie had done an admirable job, with 12 league goals to his name already, but for all his gusto he lacked some guile, and none of his strike partners had truly impressed. Youngsters Rodney Johnson and Rod Belfitt were workhorses who weren't, or weren't yet, good enough for

a title-chasing team, nor was Ian Lawson, and I was always surprised that Revie afforded them so many opportunities. Don Weston though, he was as fast as lightning, I loved him! But even he was struggling to find consistency against top-class opposition.

For the visit of Chelsea, Don drafted in another local youngster to fill the void alongside Storrie. Jimmy Greenhoff was an exciting 18-year-old who'd already shown fantastic ability in the few appearances he had made over the past two seasons. His debut came at the tender age of 16, but it was during his first appearance of the following season that I fell in love with him, when he deputised for the suspended Bremner in a vital clash at Middlesbrough and was brilliant. The crowning moment was seeing this blond-haired teenager collect the ball in the middle of a bog of a pitch and set off upfield with wind and rain lashing in his face, weaving through one, two, three, four, five, six, seven red shirts. I can't remember what came of it (nothing, obviously), but it was the best dribble I'd ever seen and for that alone he'd have been my first name on the team sheet thereafter. Hence my disappointment that Greenhoff had only managed four appearances in the First Division, but today he was given his big chance, in the biggest match of the season.

I was bouncing with excitement as the teams emerged in front of a packed-out Elland Road, and the 47,000 spectators were treated to a classic match. Snow had been shovelled from the pitch the previous day, then covered in straw by local volunteers overnight, whose work was rewarded with complimentary fish and chips and a passed pitch inspection on the morning of the match, although they must have wondered why they'd bothered when Chelsea scored from the first attack, George Graham converting with ease after Terry Venables had hit the post. Leeds responded to the nightmare start superbly, forcing Chelsea goalie Peter Bonetti into numerous

saves before Storrie managed to beat him with a firm header following great work by Bremner. The Elland Road crowd were roaring again and 'LEEDS! LEEDS! LEEDS!' bellowed around the ground, but just after half-time a clever dummy by Graham enabled Chelsea's number nine, Barry Bridges, to restore the visitors' lead. The life had been sucked out of the crowd again, but not for long.

Straight after the Chelsea goal came the signal from the bench and Jack Charlton trotted up front, with Greenhoff moving to the right wing, Giles going central, and Billy Bremner covering for Big Jack at the back. Moments later, Bremner hit a crisp pass out of defence towards Greenhoff on the touchline, and the teenager hit an astonishing first-time cross from deep, straight on to the head of Charlton, who headed it into the net. I was bowled over, and screamed 'What a cross!' rather than the usual, 'What a goal!' How did Greenhoff even think to not control the ball? How could he possess such brash confidence to pull off such a stunt?

There was to be no winning goal but the result favoured Leeds, leaving them a point clear of Chelsea and two ahead of Manchester United, though their rivals each had a game in hand. Tommy Docherty's Blues had shown that they too were a top team who had the mettle to win the title, but that was just noise to me; all I could think about after the match was the remarkable equalising goal. The only downside was the knowledge that my attempts to recreate Greenhoff's cross in the playground would be futile.

I'll tell you something about Jack – he was great to play with. We used to like it when someone got him annoyed. If someone managed that there was not a better centre-half in the game than Jack.' – Norman Hunter

Saturday, 27 March 1965
Manchester United 0 Leeds United 0
FA Cup semi-final
Hillsborough, Sheffield
65,000

Confidence in the Leeds camp was sky high as we approached the last month of the season. It was now 20 games since the last defeat, and amid that run came FA Cup victories over Southport, Everton, Shrewsbury Town and Crystal Palace, as United booked their first appearance in a semi-final. Their opponents would be title rivals Manchester United, with table-topping Chelsea facing champions Liverpool in the other semi. Only one point separated the three sides chasing a historic 'double' (Manchester and Chelsea were actually chasing trebles, including the Fairs Cup and League Cup respectively) but Revie now had Alan Peacock back in the team and firing on all cylinders, notching five goals in six games as Leeds headed into the semi-final on the back of two stonking wins, 5-1 against Burnley and 4-1 against Everton.

With the club treading new ground in two competitions it seemed like every week was the biggest match in its history, and with a place in the FA Cup Final up for grabs – a competition in its pomp – this was the biggest of them all by a distance. While revelling in the thrill of the chase I still couldn't believe that Leeds would actually win either of the races – the team was so young, and Manchester United were so renowned – yet despite my lack of belief I was still consumed by hope. Going to a big semi-final was exciting enough for a 13-year-old boy, but the prospect of going to Wembley, to see Leeds United playing in the FA Cup Final, was mind-blowing! My feelings of hope were mixed with fear because even if I didn't expect to reach the final, now that we were so close I knew the pain of missing out would be soul-destroying.

Perhaps the players felt the same way, and not just the Leeds players. In front of the biggest crowd I'd ever been a part of – 65,000 at Sheffield Wednesday's Hillsborough stadium – the match was a riveting occasion but a war of attrition, a bloodbath in a mudbath, with little by way of goalmouth action. Billy Bremner lit the spark early doors by chopping down Bobby Charlton, but retribution was never far away and my blood was boiling at the sight of blood streaming from Billy's nose after yet another meaty blow was landed on the little Scotsman. The players seemed to be more preoccupied with kicking lumps out of each other than the ball into the goal, and Albert Johanneson and George Best, the two wingers who should have lit up such an occasion, were reduced to limping spectators after crunching tackles by Stiles and Bremner respectively.

On the hour things finally boiled over when Denis Law smashed into Jack Charlton and Big Jack responded as he knew how. Punches were thrown and all hell broke loose, with players from both teams steaming in while Bremner and Pat Crerand had their own one-on-one combat. Law's shirt was ripped to ribbons for the rest of the match but he was the only person reprimanded by a weak referee, and although the adrenaline was pumping, I couldn't help thinking it was a shame that this special occasion had descended into such an ugly battle.

Ultimately the players had toiled to no avail and the biggest game of my life ended goalless. The teams would do it all again in four days' time.

'Whenever I played against our kid, my mother always used to say to me, "Take care of the little one." Some hope!' – Jack Charlton