

STEVEN SCRAGG



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The Chic Years of the UEFA Cup



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Chapter One

The Inter-Cities Fairs Cup and the Dawning of the UEFA Cup

BEFORE THE UEFA Cup came into existence, there was the Inter-Cities Fairs Cup. A peculiarity of a tournament, with an elaborate set of terms and conditions when it came to participation; a tournament that ran from 1955 to 1971, and one which was won with a trophy that wouldn't have looked out of place had it been presented to the snooker player Doug Mountjoy at the Preston Guild Hall in 1988, when he unexpectedly beat Stephen Hendry in the final of the UK Championship.

This oddity of silverware carried the name of the Noël Beard Trophy – Beard seemingly having little to do with football other than being a Swiss entrepreneur whose son branched out at one stage into the manufacture of silver trophies.

Stretching for a lifespan of 16 seasons, the eccentricities of the Fairs Cup meant it was only won 13 times, while during the 1968/69 season it was won twice.

The first playing of the Fairs Cup was an unwieldy business. Scheduled to be contested over a two-season span, between 1955 and 1957, it took an extra year to complete, despite only ten teams taking part. Games were scheduled to coincide with international trade fairs, acting as a unique added attraction.

Groundbreaking, the inaugural Fairs Cup campaign consisted of a first round of group games, which was never again repeated in the tournament. This experiment was launched a full 36 years prior to group stages being implemented in the 1991/92 European Cup – an adjustment that was a dry run for the following season’s rebrand to the Champions League.

With an original field which had consisted of 12 teams, only for the city representative collectives of Cologne and Vienna to hastily withdraw from the tournament before they were expected to kick a ball in anger, the first contesting of the Fairs Cup stretched from 4 June 1955 to 1 May 1958.

The tournament, which was the combined brainchild of Ernst Thommen, Sir Stanley Rous and Ottorino Barassi, was only initially open to teams from cities that hosted trade fairs. Thommen was vice-president of FIFA; Rous the secretary of the Football Association and FIFA president to be; and Barassi a founding father of FIFA, known for keeping the Jules Rimet trophy hidden under his bed during World War Two.

Under such criteria, league positioning held little in the way of sway when it came to qualification. Most participants were city representative collectives, drawing players from across multiple clubs and indeed ‘London’ played in the Fairs Cup’s opening game and reached the very first final, where they were heavily defeated over two legs by a Barcelona XI that was inhabited almost exclusively by Barcelona players. Despite the token input of one Español player, Barcelona, as a club, claim the 1958 Fairs Cup to be their first European honour. It is a claim that is recognised by FIFA.

Indeed, as a testament to just how long the first Fairs Cup took to complete, the second leg of both the semi-final and the final took place at the newly built Camp Nou while the Barcelona XI home group game had taken place at the *Blaugrana’s* previous home, the Camp de Les Corts.

There were exceptions to the city representative rule from the off, however. When Aston Villa refused to allow their players

to play for a combined city of Birmingham team, Birmingham City took up the tournament invite instead. It was a similar situation in Milan, with Internazionale competing – AC Milan understandably hoarding their own players to take part in the inaugural contesting of the 1955/56 European Cup instead.

Compact but rambling in nature, whereas the first Fairs Cup took three years to complete, the first European Cup was played out within one season. This meant that in technical terms the Fairs Cup was the footballing version of the Betamax, compared to the European Cup's VHS. Amid this, it goes largely unrecognised that the very first Fairs Cup game took place three months before the first European Cup game, yet by the time the first Fairs Cup was won, Real Madrid were a short few weeks away from winning their third European Cup.

Equipped with a more streamlined format for the 1958–60 playing of the Fairs Cup, when Barcelona defeated Birmingham City in the second final, they did so with the birth of the Cup Winners' Cup creeping ever closer. The Fairs Cup had to pull its socks up if it were to survive. From the 1960 final onward there would be a Fairs Cup Final every calendar year.

This came with a twist, however, as the 1960/61 and 1961/62 finals didn't take place until the following seasons had begun, with these decisive games being played out in September and October. The finals of 1966, 1967 and 1968 were also contested beyond the summer interlude. Leeds United prevailed in the 1968 final over the course of the August and September, while Newcastle United won the 1969 final in games played in May and June. Thus the 1968/69 season ended having contained two Fairs Cup finals.

Shapeshifting structurally, the Fairs Cup constantly struggled to find a comfortable pattern. City representative XIs eventually vanished from the tournament beyond the 1962/63 season, while even the one city, one team rule was temporarily jettisoned for a couple of seasons, before being reintroduced once again. The requirement to be based in a city at all was also

dropped. On top of these alterations, the 1964 and 1965 finals were then played as one-off games, with the two-legged final being shelved, only to be revived once more in 1966.

It was only over the course of the last three seasons of the Fairs Cup that it fell into a closer sync with the pattern that the UEFA Cup would take on. While in England, their representatives were decided in a continually scattergun manner, across the continent the teams finishing in league placings directly below the domestic champions became the automatic qualifiers, apart from those instances when more than one team from any one city finished in the eligible positions.

Yet, as a mark of the outlandishness still at play in England, when Newcastle qualified for, and went on to win, the 1968/69 Fairs Cup, they did so from a tenth-placed First Division finish, some five positions behind Everton, who were barred from taking part due to third-placed Liverpool qualifying ahead of them. While league consistency went unrewarded in some circumstances, others prospered thanks to geographical good fortune.

For the first few seasons of the UEFA Cup, English football continued to adhere to the Fairs Cup's one city, one club rule, despite no such rule being transferred from the old tournament to the new. Arsenal twice missed out on UEFA Cup qualification in those early days – firstly, for the 1972/73 season, after Tottenham Hotspur usurped them as holders, and then in 1973/74, despite finishing First Division runners-up the previous season. Tottenham again took London's space, having won the 1973 League Cup Final.

This one city, one club issue continued in English football until things came to a head at the end of the 1974/75 season, when UEFA warned the Football Association and the Football League that they were running the risk of having their quotient of UEFA Cup berths lowered. Again, it was Everton who were set to miss out, until European football's governing body intervened.

Arguably viewed with initial suspicion, by the time the UEFA Cup was born, the more condescending football observers branded it the 'Runner-Up Cup'. English teams prospered throughout this period of handover, however. By the time of the Fairs Cup discontinuation, the end came when First Division clubs dominated, with the last four being won by English teams. This was, however, what could be classed as the third segment of a three-epoch tournament.

With the Fairs Cup arguably being the personal fiefdom of Barcelona in the formative years of the tournament, other LaLiga clubs sat up and took notice.

Valencia prevailed in 1962, against Barcelona, retaining it the following year, before losing out in another all-LaLiga final in 1964 to Real Zaragoza. Zaragoza in turn lost the 1966 final to Barcelona. The only thing to punctuate this Spanish monopoly was AS Roma with their win in 1961, a success which perplexingly still stands to this day as *I Giallorossi's* only major European honour.

Between these periods of dominance from Spain and England that compellingly bookended the 16-year history of the Fairs Cup, there was a rise from the east. Dinamo Zagreb, beaten by Valencia in the 1963 final, went one better in 1967 against Don Revie's Leeds United. Two years beforehand, it was the evocative Ferencváros who were claiming Hungary's one and only major European trophy, when they defeated Juventus in Turin, in the second of the two one-off Fairs Cup finals.

Leeds' 1967 defeat to Zagreb, however, acted as a pivot, a turning point for English teams in the Fairs Cup. The latter years of the tournament were a far cry from the oddity and confusion of the London representative team which had contested the 1958 final.

In 1958, when London travelled to Barcelona for the second leg of the final after a 2-2 draw at Stamford Bridge, they did so with seven changes to their line-up and a different manager to the one who had led them in the first leg. Jimmy Greaves,

for instance, had played and scored in the first game but was unavailable for the return encounter as he was required by Chelsea to play in the FA Youth Cup Final second leg instead. Greaves was effectively on the losing side in two cup finals on the same day.

Following in London's footsteps, Birmingham City subsequently lost the finals of 1960 and 1961, thus ending English interest in the Fairs Cup Final until Leeds lost out to Zagreb six years later.

1968 proved to be a watershed year for Revie and Leeds after a spate of near misses when it came to their attempts to chase major honours. They not only lifted the Fairs Cup that year, but the League Cup too. Yet, attendances remained uninspiring at Elland Road for Fairs Cup games, the stadium barely half full, for both the home legs of the semi-final against Dundee, and the final against Ferencváros. In comparison, when Leeds headed to Budapest for the second leg of the final, it was a game played in front of 76,000 spectators.

Just under nine months later, the tournament was embraced more enthusiastically 83 miles further north, at Newcastle United's St James' Park; 60,000 eager souls clicked through the turnstiles to witness the first leg of the 1969 final, the Magpies' first major cup final for 14 years.

While their entry into the tournament had been gained in peculiar mid-table circumstances, Newcastle more than made up for that with a sparkling run to glory, which took them past an array of dangerous and successful opponents.

European champions to be, Feyenoord, were dispatched in the first round, swept aside in the first leg, 4-0, on an evening when the Rotterdam club fielded eight members of the team that would beat Celtic, in Milan, in the 1970 European Cup Final. This was a game that was won just 24 hours after Leeds had departed the Hungarian capital with the trophy, having held Ferencváros to the goalless draw that was enough for them to win the 1968 final.

More significant victims would fall by the wayside to Newcastle. Sporting CP, winners of the 1964 Cup Winners' Cup, were beaten next, followed by previous Fairs Cup winner and once beaten finalist, Zaragoza. The Zaragoza games had the added peculiarity that the first leg, at La Romareda, took place on New Year's Day, 1969.

Newcastle came away from Aragon with a 3-2 defeat, a 2-1 second-leg victory seeing them through on the away-goals rule, in an oddity of a system where penalty shoot-outs were still a few years away, leaving games that were tied, where both legs ended with identical scorelines, at the mercy of being decided by the toss of a coin with no replays being implemented.

It made for a strange series of events for its English participants when it came to the 1968/69 Fairs Cup. While Newcastle benefited from the away-goals rule, Leeds progressed beyond Napoli in the second round thanks to the toss of a coin, while Liverpool and Chelsea exited the tournament on the call of heads or tails against Athletic Club and DWS of Amsterdam respectively.

Continuing the eccentric theme, Hamburger SV then withdrew from their projected quarter-final against the Turkish club Göztepe A.Ş, fearing a fixture backlog domestically and potential repercussions should they not have returned from İzmir in time to fulfil a Bundesliga fixture, against Bayern Munich – a lost opportunity of European glory for HSV, given that they had reached the final of the Cup Winners' Cup the previous season.

As for Newcastle, they bludgeoned their way past Vitória de Setúbal in the quarter-finals, running up a healthy first-leg lead, before hanging on grimly to it during the second leg in Portugal.

This set up a 'Battle of Britain' semi-final against a Rangers team that had been unfortunate to lose the 1967 Cup Winners' Cup Final. After a goalless draw at Ibrox Park, Newcastle came through strongly in the second half of the second leg, back at St James' Park. This was an underestimated masterpiece of a result

for a Newcastle side that had never played competitive European football prior to this campaign.

By comparison, Rangers had two Cup Winners' Cup finals and a European Cup semi-final under their belt. The Scottish side were by far the more experienced team when it came to European competition, going on to gain their own European success three years later.

Awaiting Newcastle in the final were Újpesti Dózsa of Hungary – the team that had ended Leeds' defence of the trophy in the quarter-finals. Just as was the case for the outgoing holders, in winning the 1968 final Newcastle would have to emerge from Budapest jubilant if they were to win the 1969 Fairs Cup Final. A 6-2 aggregate scoreline serves to shield how hard they were made to work, for what is still to this day their last major honour.

Kept at bay in the first leg by a determined and skilful Újpesti side, a side that would go on to dominate Hungarian domestic club football throughout the 1970s, it took Newcastle over an hour to break the deadlock at St James' Park. What followed Bobby Moncur's opener was a 20-minute span where the home team's sheer force of will managed to breach the Újpesti goal line on two more occasions, firstly by Moncur again, and then by Jim Scott.

With Newcastle's manager, Joe Harvey, feeling that one hand was on the trophy, it was with a rude awakening that they went in at half-time in Budapest 2-0 down on the night. Ferenc Bene and János Göröcs had brought Újpesti to within a goal of Newcastle, on aggregate, during a blizzard of magical first-half football at the Megyeri úti Stadion.

As swiftly as Újpesti had drawn themselves back into contention, however, they let their chance of glory slip away at the start of the second half, when Moncur scored again. Moncur would score only three league goals throughout the entire 12 years of his time at Newcastle, yet here he was, scorer of three goals over the course of the two legs of the 1969 Fairs

Cup Final – as heroic a captain’s contribution as there possibly could be.

Moncur’s goal halted Újpesti’s momentum with a near immediate effect. Four minutes later, Newcastle’s era-defying Danish international midfielder, Preben Arentoft, had levelled the scores on the night, with a wonderfully volleyed effort. To rub salt into Újpesti’s wounds, the 19-year-old Alan Foggon then snatched a third for Newcastle, within minutes of his introduction as a substitute, forcing his own rebound off the crossbar over the line.

In keeping with the eccentric path Newcastle had taken to Fairs Cup glory in 1969, the second leg of the final is notable for Újpesti’s striped goalposts. It adds to the mesmeric nature of the footage of what is, after all, the last occasion Newcastle lifted a major trophy. Even the commentator on duty for the BBC was the retrospectively lesser-heard Alan Weeks, rather than the more familiar tones of Kenneth Wolstenholme or David Coleman.

Their qualification for the 1968/69 Fairs Cup might have been an oddity, but Newcastle’s success is one of the finest by an English team in any European club competition. Yet, it remains largely obscured behind the strangely hypnotic name of Újpesti Dózsa and the eventual birth of the UEFA Cup.

Unwittingly, with only two seasons of the tournament remaining, the Fairs Cup continued its gradual metamorphosis. In the summer of 1969 there was an alteration of name, from the Inter-Cities Fairs Cup to the European Fairs Cup. This change was announced on the eve of the second leg of the 1969 final, and it was accompanied by the draw for the first round of the 1969/70 edition.

Despite this, that old ad hoc nature of the Fairs Cup persevered, even to the point that, with little over 24 hours to go until the second leg of the 1970 final, the Fairs Cup committee still hadn’t decided if the away-goals rule would be in operation or not while, once again, the English had made heavy weather

out of identifying the teams that would represent the First Division. For the 1969/70 playing of the tournament, Everton, Chelsea and Tottenham all missed out, despite finishing the previous season in third, fifth and sixth positions respectively. Southampton were instead invited, having finished seventh.

Beyond the lack of decisiveness of the Fairs Cup committee, the 1969/70 season was arguably its best yet. They even managed to factor in the early ending of the European domestic seasons, due to the late-May start of the 1970 World Cup.

Arsenal made it three successive winning English teams, ending a 17-year trophy drought in the process and soothing the pain of losing the previous year's League Cup Final to Third Division Swindon Town. Lifting the Fairs Cup would also act as the springboard to Bertie Mee's side going on to complete the league and cup double the following season.

Their domestic woes of 1969/70 were impressively brushed aside, to the extent that Arsenal even defeated the Ajax of Rinus Michels and Johan Cruyff in the semi-finals. It was an evening of surprise and wonderment at Highbury when they accumulated a 3-0 lead to take to Amsterdam.

This was of course an Ajax side that would return to London a year later, to win their first European Cup, at Wembley, the opening part in a hat-trick of successes, yet they had also contested the 1969 European Cup Final, which they had lost to AC Milan. In an ocean of general Highbury mediocrity, this convincing Arsenal victory over Ajax was both majestic and shocking.

It also acted as the precursor to a sobering series of nights that Cruyff experienced in England in the UEFA Cup. He would go on to draw at Anfield in Barcelona colours in the 1976 semi-final second leg, a result that saw Liverpool through to the final. Cruyff went on to suffer a 3-0 loss at Portman Road against Ipswich Town in the third round in 1977/78, although this was overturned in a second-leg penalty shoot-out. He then played through the pain barrier to put Barcelona into a 2-0 lead

at Villa Park in the first leg of the very next round, only to see his team-mates throw it all away for a 2-2 draw after he was withdrawn late on.

Even in his one solitary season as a Feyenoord player at the end of his career, a season in which he helped Ajax's bitter rivals to a domestic league and cup double, Cruyff shared a team with an emerging Ruud Gullit which was defeated at White Hart Lane, as part of Tottenham's winning run.

One heavyweight overcome in the last four by Arsenal, Internazionale had been the team expected to emerge from the other tie, after they had departed Brussels with a 1-0 win against Anderlecht from the first leg of their semi-final.

At the San Siro, however, Anderlecht had stunned their hosts in the second leg, returning to Belgium with a 2-0 victory and a place in the final. From a heavily presumed Ajax vs Inter clash, the 1970 Fairs Cup Final was instead an encounter between Arsenal and Anderlecht.

Only a week split the second leg of the semi-finals and the first leg of the final. Arsenal found themselves faced with a wall of sound from the stands of the Émile Versé Stadium, the venue that would be renamed as the Constant Vanden Stock Stadium some 13 years later. On the pitch, they were faced with beautifully skilled and balanced opponents.

A footballing lesson was served to Arsenal and they were lucky to restrict Anderlecht to a 3-1 win. The home side had two compelling penalty appeals waved away, before the prolific Belgian international, Johannes Devrindt, scored the opening goal of the first leg, while the dangerous Jan Mulder netted the next two. Mulder would later go on to play for Ajax, before becoming a journalist, broadcaster and actor.

There was a ray of light for Arsenal, however, as they snatched a goal with eight minutes left to play. The 18-year-old Ray Kennedy powered in a header, having only been on the pitch for five minutes. It was just the second goal of his professional career.

Kennedy, having thrown Arsenal a lifeline, watched on from the sidelines six days later, as Anderlecht struggled with a Highbury pitch that resembled a mudflat. As the visitors stuck to the purity of their approach to football, they were undone by a combination of the inspired goalkeeping of Bob Wilson and a central defensive weakness to an aerial ball.

This isn't to say that Arsenal relied solely upon an agricultural path to glory. Their build-up play was compact and neat, they passed and moved as they probed for their openings. The first goal was a fine strike from outside the penalty area by Eddie Kelly, a goal that came midway through the first half and electrified the atmosphere at the famous old stadium.

Made to wait until 15 minutes from time to level the aggregate score, it was that aerial weakness which Arsenal capitalised upon to swipe the Fairs Cup from Anderlecht's loosening grip. At the back post, John Radford got his head on the end of a perfectly flighted cross from Bob McNab to make it 2-0 on the night.

It took just 90 further seconds for the outcome to be settled. Again, an aerial approach was to torment Anderlecht. This time a high cross-field ball from Charlie George caught the Belgians on the chin, which was collected by Jon Sammels, who charged into the Anderlecht penalty area to drill it beyond the reach of Jean-Marie Trappeniers and into his bottom right-hand corner.

As Arsenal made the most of their Fairs Cup springboard, going on to dominate English domestic football in 1970/71, it was Leeds who reclaimed the trophy, in turn becoming the last winners of the Fairs Cup. This time, it was a shot at European glory that was embraced in West Yorkshire much more enthusiastically than it had been three years earlier.

Maybe it was with a sense of regret over their partial indifference to winning the tournament in 1968, especially having then watched Newcastle and Arsenal lift the Fairs Cup within effusive circumstances for the following two years, that

Leeds' 1971 success drew more spectators to Elland Road for the home leg of the final than had been the case against Ferencváros.

There were several extenuating reasons for this upturn in interest, other than simply a greater regard for the tournament, however. What would have undoubtedly facilitated this was that the home leg came second this time around and that Leeds had set themselves up for the return game nicely, having gained a 2-2 draw in Turin during the replayed first leg, after it had initially been abandoned early in the second half, 48 hours beforehand. When question marks were raised over the potential for the rearranged game to be washed out too, Leeds' opponents made the bold gesture of agreeing that, if this were to happen, then they would allow both legs of the final to take place at Elland Road the following week.

Juventus being the opposition will have also piqued local interest in Leeds, as will the Football Association's refusal to allow the BBC to broadcast the game live, or even in the form of highlights, decreeing that, with them showing the European Cup Final the night before, there was more than enough televised football scheduled for that week.

Added to this, Leeds had narrowly overcome Liverpool in a high-profile, all-English semi-final, thus throwing a bright spotlight on the run of Revie's team before the final had come into view upon the horizon.

Leeds edging their way into the final, at Liverpool's expense, deprived football history of the sensory overload that would have been offered by Bill Shankly's team playing the home leg of the final at either Goodison Park or Old Trafford – both of which were mooted possibilities, due to Anfield being out of action, as construction of their new Main Stand gained pace to ensure it was operational for the beginning of the 1971/72 season.

Ultimately, it was to be Leeds that kept the late English charge on the Fairs Cup going. A 1-1 draw in the second leg meant that they took it on the away-goals rule. Leeds then went on to face Barcelona, at the Camp Nou, in a play-off for the right

to the permanent possession of the Noël Beard Trophy. An out-of-form Barcelona beat an understrength Leeds, 2-1.

And so, the Fairs Cup ended, after a protracted two-year period of baton-passing from the Fairs Cup committee to UEFA. A tournament which, based on its initial conceptual idea, should have been shelved long before it was, yet a tournament that by the time it was discontinued had laid the groundwork and evolved into the pattern that the UEFA Cup would be born with.

As for the men behind the creation of the Fairs Cup, Thommen was outlived by his tournament and Barassi died a short few months after the Barcelona vs Leeds play-off game. Meanwhile, Rous would remain in his role as FIFA president for another three years, until he was overthrown by his former protégé, João Havelange. He eventually passed away in July 1986 at the age of 91, some 15 years after time had been called on the Fairs Cup.