

**DAVID TOSSELL**



# **All Crazee & Now**

**ENGLISH FOOTBALL  
AND FOOTBALLERS**

**IN THE**

# **1970s**

**'I have read and reviewed thousands of sports books.  
About a dozen were worth reading twice.  
This, unquestionably, is one of them.'**

Rob Steen, author, *The Mavericks*

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## RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE

*DAVROS: Evil? No! No, I will not accept that. They are conditioned simply to survive. They can survive only by becoming the dominant species. When all other life forms are suppressed, when the Daleks are the supreme rulers of the universe, then you will have peace. Wars will end. They are the power not of evil, but of good.*

***Dr Who, 'Genesis of the Daleks' (Terry Nation,  
BBC TV, 1975)***

THEIR REIGN of terror began in 1963. By the beginning of the Seventies, they had become a force so feared, so ruthless that a place behind the sofa was considered the safest place from which to watch their exploits on Saturday evening television. Yet they had vulnerabilities that their creator had not been able to entirely eradicate. Too often, an extraordinary force managed to halt their relentless quest to become masters of their universe.

Leeds United were human after all.

Since announcing their intent by winning the Second Division title in 1963-64, Don Revie's team had seen too many finals lost, too many titles snatched from them in the manner of the Doctor discovering the secret code to the Daleks' destruction in the final episode. But no longer, it seemed. As the first months of the new

decade unfolded, Revie – football’s crippled, one-eyed Davros, evil mastermind behind the enemy of the galaxy – was poised to see Leeds destroy everything in their path to win the League Championship, European Cup and FA Cup. It was his creation whose presence would define the first half of the 1970s in English football.

Events that characterise our decades rarely fit conveniently within the artificial boundaries of the calendar. Political historians might argue, for example, that the 1960s effectively began in 1956, when the Suez Canal crisis marked the decline of Britain as a global force. But social and cultural commentators are just as likely to contend that the decade only found its personality with the rise of The Beatles and the arrival of the contraceptive pill in the United Kingdom several years later. In the United States, they’ll tell you that the transformation from Sixties idealism to Seventies cynicism was signalled by the resignation of Richard Nixon as president – in the wake of the Watergate scandal of 1972 – on the same 1974 weekend as the FA Charity Shield punch-up at Wembley.\*

On the playing fields of English professional football, it is easy to argue that 1968 was the year when decades began to shift; the true fault line between a time when teams won mostly through talent and instinct and an age where the most successful formula was professionalism and method. Of course, no one will ever argue that Alf Ramsey’s World Cup heroes of 1966 achieved their success with carefree football. But if you don’t dig too deeply, Geoff Hurst’s hat-trick, Kenneth Wolstenholme’s commentary and Nobby Stiles’s victory jig occupy the same place in popular memory as the club game’s most powerful images of the Sixties: Tottenham Hotspur

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\* Historian Dominic Sandbrook suggests in *Mad As Hell* that the weekend of Nixon’s departure signalled a shift in the decade in the US, much as the Don Revie departure from Leeds did in English football. It would be over-fanciful to go too far down the path of comparing Revie and Nixon, although their periods of hegemony did both span 1968-74 and both were famously suspicious to the point of paranoia, what with Nixon and his tapes and Revie and his dossiers on opponents. Both faced scandal within weeks of each other in 1972, Nixon with Watergate and Revie – although it would not be alleged for a few months – in supposedly attempting to bribe the Wolverhampton Wanderers players in a League title decider. Coincidentally, both men were depicted in movies (*Frost/Nixon* and *The Damned United*) in which their nemeses (David Frost and Brian Clough) were portrayed by Michael Sheen.

passing their way to the Double; George Best weaving spells at Old Trafford; Liverpool fans on the Kop serenading their title winners with Beatles songs. It was a decade given form by men such as Bobby Charlton, Jimmy Greaves, Denis Law and Ian St John, thrilling packed terraces and growing television audiences in matches that invariably seemed to finish 4-3.

The legacy of Ramsey's success, based on a team that placed functionality and formation before flair and flamboyance, was ready to quell the Corinthian spirit that still prevailed in the spring of 1968. Half of Manchester was revelling in the championship success of Joe Mercer and Malcolm Allison's City; the team of Francis Lee, Colin Bell and Mike Summerbee. Their triumph was clinched at Newcastle United on the final day of the campaign, 4-3 of course. A few weeks later, United beat Benfica 4-1 at Wembley to complete their emotional quest for the European Cup; a triumph for Matt Busby's steadfastness in recovering from his own serious injuries in the Munich air crash a decade earlier, and his insistence on leaving his team unencumbered by tactics.

But a force was emerging from south Yorkshire to cast the sport into the darker corners that Dr Who fans understood. Leeds, runners-up in League, FA Cup and Inter-Cities Fairs Cup since arriving in the top flight, had finally won a trophy, the 1968 League Cup. They were about to add a second, the Fairs Cup of 1968, whose final was played early the following season because of scheduling problems. By the end of 1968-69, the poster boys for pragmatism were League champions. The accumulation of silverware was personal vindication for Revie, whose methods made him one of the most divisive figures in the game. His supporters championed his principles of preparation, teamwork and team spirit. Detractors saw little beyond a combative, cynical edge that saw the likes of Billy Bremner and Johnny Giles dominating midfield with their dynamism and vision one moment, before raking studs down the opposition's leg the next.

The clash of cultures was captured in the 1969 release of Ken Loach's *Kes*, with Brian Glover's PE teacher imagining himself as Bobby Charlton in the film's famous games lesson scene. Charging

into the penalty area in his scarlet No.9 shirt, Glover throws himself to the ground, awards himself a penalty and barks at the poor protesting pupil accused of a foul, 'Who do you think you are? Bremner?'

Whether they were responsible for initiating a whole era of dubious virtue or merely a product of a new age of realism, Revie's Leeds were clearly the identifiable enemy of those who longed for the days of the WM formation and seven-goal thrillers. As Giles noted, 'We've been called a Machine,' although he added, 'We take that as a compliment to our teamwork.'<sup>6</sup>

As a player, Revie's reputation was that of a thoughtful stylist, named Footballer of the Year in 1954-55 and capped six times by England. When Manchester City beat Birmingham City to win the FA Cup in 1956 they did so by employing the 'Revie Plan', which had been the basis of their game for a couple of seasons and was, essentially, a version of the Hungarian tactic that utterly bamboozled England in their 6-3 hammering at Wembley three years earlier. Revie played the role of Nándor Hidegkuti, the Hungarian No.9 who left the England defenders wandering around in a daze by the simple tactic of dropping deep to initiate moves from midfield. This was considered most unsporting in an age when the centre-forward was expected to stand obligingly with his back to goal waiting for the centre-half to kick him whenever the ball was near.

Born in Middlesbrough, the son of a frequently unemployed joiner, Revie had been brought up with an acute understanding of the power of money. Quite where his famously superstitious nature came from was a mystery, but one of his first acts upon being appointed Leeds player-manager in March 1961 was to shed the traditional blue and yellow strip, in which they'd never won a major honour, in favour of the imposing all-white of perennial European Cup winners Real Madrid. He also felt it would make it easier for players to find each other on the field. He later eliminated the figure of an owl from the club crest because he thought birds were unlucky. He declared his intention of turning a struggling Second Division club, based in a city that cared more about rugby league, into one of the best in Europe. You could hear the scoffs from Budapest to the Bernabéu.



‘As a kid I remember how repressed the place was,’ said Paul Madeley, an Elland Road lifer. ‘It was awful.’<sup>7</sup> The atmosphere pervading the club was one of self-pity. Players who were sick of losing were looking for exit routes and training had long since become a chore. ‘I was at [Revie] every day,’ said Bremner, ‘pleading, demanding, trying to convince him that it would be good for him and the club if he were to let me go back to Scotland.’<sup>8</sup>

Confidence had disappeared and relegation to the Third Division was a stark possibility. Discipline needed to be instilled, yet at the same time Revie insisted to club chairman Harry Reynolds that the players should be treated like champions, with new equipment, first-class travel and five-star accommodation. Numerous men would echo Jack Charlton’s memory that Revie would ‘bend over backwards to do anything to help the players’.<sup>9</sup> That included flowers to wives if they were sick and birthday cards to children. Bremner recalled Revie as ‘a stickler for minor detail’, explaining that ‘the cleaners’ birthdays were never forgotten, letters from fans were always answered – and, above all, he never criticised his players in public’.<sup>10</sup>

On one occasion, Revie told his charges, ‘If you have financial problems, gambling problems, family problems or problems with your wife, come to see me. I don’t want you worrying.’<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, he ensured that his backroom staff got a weekend off on rotation every seven weeks, and even took care of the club’s two laundry ladies, whom he nicknamed Omo and Daz after popular brands of washing powder. He would often tell them they had a pound each way riding on a horse and, if it came in, would return later that day with their winnings. ‘People will walk through walls for a boss like,’ said Fred Street, who heard such stories when he worked under Revie as England’s physiotherapist. ‘Call it psychology or whatever, but the great managers in sport or the military have it instinctively. He expected everyone to contribute fully and he also rewarded equally.’<sup>12</sup>

Revie wanted his team to be populated by men of character who understood ‘that it was not sufficient merely to become champions; of equal importance ... was to behave like champions, off as well as on the field’.<sup>13</sup> That message was drummed into prospective Leeds players

before they even signed. Promising schoolboys were presented with a glossy brochure designed to ‘help you decide’ whether to sign for the club. ‘Obviously I am looking for boys with natural football ability, but it takes much more than this to make a first-class professional player,’ began Revie’s message. ‘It takes, in addition, courage, loyalty, discipline and readiness to learn.’ He went on to give examples of each of those traits. ‘Show us that you have the other qualities and my staff and I myself will give everything in time, trouble, teaching and encouragement to get you to the top,’ he concluded.<sup>14</sup>

By bringing through players from the club’s youth system, Revie ensured an unquestioning loyalty to his views and to team-mates. Such methods would come to include the oft-derided practice of spending Friday nights before home games at the Craiglands Hotel in Ilkley, where he could occupy his players with games of carpet bowls and bingo rather than worrying about whether they were up to no good. It meant that, several years after finding that he was surplus to Revie’s requirements, forward Jimmy Greenhoff was able to say, ‘I went there at 15 and grew up with Sprake, Reaney, Hunter and the rest. I’ve never known people work for each other the way they did.’<sup>15</sup>

Revie owned up to some sleepless nights at the start of his reign, lying awake or getting up to make cups of tea and even promising wife Elsie he’d resign before the job killed him. But having survived the board’s desire to give Bremner his wish and sell him for £25,000, a move that could have irrevocably changed the course of English football, he stuck around to build a team that, if it did not always reflect his grace as a player, epitomised the uncompromising, ruthless and thorough way in which he tackled the job of manager. As men like Norman Hunter and Paul Reaney progressed to the first team, Bremner was joined in midfield by Bobby Collins, a fierce competitor recruited from Everton in 1962, and Giles, signed the following year from Manchester United.

According to Bremner, Revie did not clutter his players’ minds with tactics. ‘He was probably one of the first to pioneer the idea of studying the opposition and being prepared for their tactics and individual skills, but he certainly did not tell us to play like robots

and he didn't send anyone out to kick the opposition either. Don barely gave us any strong instructions at all. He knew he had a young intelligent side who could find their way.<sup>16</sup>

Revie's approach brought Leeds the Second Division title in 1963-64. The following year they almost pulled off the League and FA Cup double, losing the championship to Manchester United on goal average and being beaten in extra-time by Liverpool at Wembley. Yet their accusers said they were prepared to strive for success at any price, resorting to the underhand tricks usually associated with teams of Latin origin, by whom English fans were used to being enthralled and appalled in equal measure. Even Giles, an artist with the ball at his feet, could quickly turn assassin. 'There was a new professionalism and a new approach in the game,' he said. 'It became more violent in the Sixties right through to the mid-Seventies.'<sup>17</sup> Charlton, who said that Giles 'used to do some awful things to players', even confronted him in the dressing-room one day. 'It was us he was putting at risk. John caused us a lot of hassle at Elland Road over the years.'<sup>18</sup>

Hunter conceded that 'we turned games into tough, physical games where we probably didn't have to',<sup>19</sup> while Eddie Gray, one of the era's artists, admitted that 'some of our tackling in those days made me cringe' and found himself thinking, 'How are they being allowed to get away with this?'<sup>20</sup> Even Bremner remembered, 'People must have thought we were wild animals.'<sup>21</sup>

Controversial, ugly games were strewn throughout the fixture list. If, over the years, Leeds and their followers felt they were frequently hard done to by referees, then perhaps it was because match officials found it impossible to approach games without preconceptions and previous convictions in mind. As Clive Thomas, one of the decade's most prominent referees, said, 'Innocuous? I suppose that nothing to do with Don Revie's Yorkshire team could be thus described.'<sup>22</sup> Their football was based on the philosophy of not losing; Revie's priorities being a solid, technically correct defence and a willingness to embrace the physical aspects of the game. There was also a shameless use of tactics that were attaching negative connotations to the word 'professionalism': time-wasting, intimidation of referees, crafty digs

at opponents. 'The Bremners would be doing little things off the ball, the niggly things, and I found Allan Clarke similar,' said Thomas. 'Giles was also one of the players I watched very carefully.'<sup>23</sup>

Revie was not so much guilty of heresy against the gospel of carefree football, more accurately he was one of the first managers to recognise the game's harsh new reality. But, said many, Leeds took it too far. 'It wasn't just being stronger and stopping the other team, it was cynical,' remembered Malcolm Allison. 'There was no need for it. They were the best team in England, a great side, but greedy, greedy. That was the nub of it. A lot of what they did was pre-meditated.'<sup>24</sup>

League runners-up again, to Liverpool, in 1965-66 and beaten in the semi-finals of the Fairs Cup, they came close in two more competitions the following season, beaten by Dynamo Zagreb in their first European final and in the FA Cup semi-finals by Chelsea. The critics loved it. That Leeds, for all their professionalism, could not administer the final blow to their opponents was a sign that their methods were flawed, like the Daleks' inability to go upstairs. Good would ultimately prevail over evil; the natural order maintained.

The 1967-68 campaign saw a fourth-place finish in the League and an FA Cup semi-final defeat. But it was also the season of the great breakthrough, the capture of the Football League Cup and Fairs Cup. Inevitably, the first of those triumphs was wrapped in bitterness.

For a long while, Leeds' tactics at corners had angered opponents. Pursuing a plan hatched with brother Bobby and Jimmy Greaves at an England training session, Jack Charlton had begun positioning himself on the goal line. At almost 6ft 2in, but with hitched-up shorts over long legs making him appear even taller, the England defender was accused of standing on goalkeepers' feet, obstructing, shoving and generally making a bloody nuisance of himself. 'When he stands on the goal line he is there to try and score,' insisted Revie. 'There is nothing in the rules against it.'

Jim Finney, one of the most experienced referees of the time, took to standing off the field outside the goal posts so that he could look through the side netting in order to keep an eye on Charlton. Arsenal's Bob Wilson and his fellow goalkeepers had to be prepared for all kinds

of abuse, physical and verbal – even from those who were viewed as the relative innocents in the team. ‘I always remember Paul Madeley saying things about my wife or family. They would try anything. Leeds had a defining part in my growth as a goalie because they had those corner-kick tactics at the time I started in the first team.’<sup>25</sup>

Wilson was on standby for Arsenal against Leeds in the League Cup Final, missing out when Jim Furnell recovered from injury. Ironically, the only goal came via a first-half Terry Cooper volley from 10 yards while Furnell was looking up from his knees after encountering Charlton at the near post. Half a century later, Furnell was still insisting, ‘He was all over me. It should have been a foul.’<sup>26</sup> Arsenal’s frustration with opponents happy to sit on their lead boiled over in the second half when skipper Frank McLintock charged into goalkeeper Gary Sprake to spark a full-scale brawl.

‘This League Cup Final will make history only as a game so bad it was little short of scandalous,’ wrote Desmond Hackett in the *Daily Express*, while *Charles Buchan’s Football Monthly* bracketed the game with the latest Scotland–England contest under the headline: ‘Shabby and Squalid – What have we come to?’ and accused Leeds and Arsenal of a ‘complete and cynical disregard for the £90,000 paid by real football supporters’. Football League secretary Alan Hardaker would recall, ‘If somebody had taken the ball from the pitch, the players of Arsenal and Leeds would have been the last to notice.’<sup>27</sup>

Leeds could not have cared less about such comments. So aware had they been of the importance of the match that Revie decided to stage an impromptu sports quiz in the dressing-room half an hour before kick-off to distract them from their nerves. ‘You had to start somewhere,’ said Hunter. ‘You got the League Cup medal in your pocket and after that you were thinking “what’s next?”’<sup>28</sup>

Arsenal took away a lesson that would hold them in good stead in the coming years. ‘Leeds at that time were dominating and bullying people,’ said striker John Radford. ‘Losing to them in the League Cup was a good game for us in some ways because from then on we started to get a little bit like that ourselves and we were probably the first side to stand up to them.’<sup>29</sup>

It was only a matter of months before more silverware arrived at Elland Road, courtesy of a Mick Jones goal in the home leg against Hungary's Ferencvaros in the final of the Fairs Cup, a tie delayed until August. In the second leg, in front of 76,000, a typically staunch rearguard action in the absence of Giles and Gray secured a goalless draw. No one in Budapest was laughing at Leeds now.

They finished the 1968-69 season as they had started it, by winning a trophy. This time, it was the most treasured of all domestic honours, the League Championship. Revie's men finished with a record 67 points, six ahead of Liverpool, at whose ground they clinched the title on an evening of high emotion. Having secured a 0-0 draw to make the title safe, several Leeds players were moved to tears by the rousing chorus of 'Champions, Champions' that rolled off the Kop. That Liverpool (24 goals conceded), Leeds (26) and Arsenal (27) had all bettered Huddersfield Town's 44-year record for the best defence in a 42-game First Division season was proof that the 1970s had arrived a year early. And before long Tommy Docherty, manager of Aston Villa at the time, would warn, 'Too many teams are copying Leeds. Unfortunately, there is a tendency to produce rather dull games. We are supposed to be providing entertainment for the cash customer.'<sup>30</sup>

## THE STYLE COUNCIL

*LEWIS: Machines are gonna fail. And the system's gonna fail.*

***Deliverance* (James Dickey and John Boorman;  
Warner Bros., 1972)**

The 1968-69 season saw attendances in English football dip for the first time since the 1966 World Cup sent its revitalising shot through the game. Articles addressing the decline frequently presented somewhat simplistic headlines along the theme of, 'We Want Goals.' The issue was somewhat more nuanced than that. In his book, *Football and the English*, author David Russell noted a lack of direct correlation between goals and attendance, citing as a prime example the 1960-61 season, when crowds in the First Division suffered their

biggest drop since the Second World War, even though the 1,724 goals represented the highest total since 1931-32.<sup>†</sup> Yet football, in the eyes of many, required a redeemer or two. Dr Who might have been too busy saving the universe, but two teams in blue, from opposite ends of the country, emerged in early 1970 to take on Revie's white forces of destruction.

The visit of Leeds to Goodison Park two months into the 1969-70 campaign proved portentous. Everton went into that game on the back of only a single loss in their 18 League matches, while Leeds were riding a 34-game unbeaten streak dating back to their championship season. It was Leeds who succumbed, Everton's 3-2 win marking them down as serious title contenders after threatening for a couple of seasons.

Manager Harry Catterick had been steadily rebuilding the team with which he'd won the First Division in 1963 and FA Cup in 1966. At the heart of his new side was a midfield trio that would become revered by Goodison Park fans as 'The Holy Trinity' and provided, in the eyes of the neutrals, an elegant antidote to Leeds. Colin Harvey, a local boy who came through Everton's youth system, had been joined by two important signings. Alan Ball, at 21 the youngest member of England's 1966 World Cup-winning team, had moved from Blackpool for a British record £110,000 in the days after his man-of-the-match performance in the final against West Germany. Howard Kendall, who also made his name at Wembley as the FA Cup's youngest finalist when he played for Preston North End against West Ham at the age of 17 in 1964, had followed later in that 1966-67 season.

Catterick, a grumpy old-school type who retained a suspicion of the media that Revie would have recognised, had a greater eye for talent than flair for coaching. He let his midfield trio figure out their own approach, sitting back to witness the sublime results. According to Kendall, 'Our brand of football was about retaining possession, passing quickly and incisively, and moving into space. It was largely intuitive, perfected over endless, joyous games of five-a-side.'<sup>31</sup> Ball was the fulcrum, a one-touch genius capable of 20 goals per season

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<sup>†</sup> At the time of writing, no season of top-flight football has produced more goals since then.

from his advanced position; Kendall the tackler and runner on the right; Harvey the skilled schemer on the left. On the back of their collective contribution, Everton were FA Cup runners-up in 1968, top scorers in the First Division a year later, and were now poised to sweep the title from Revie's grasp.

'All three were great individuals,' said winger Jimmy Husband, 'but the balance was brilliant. Howard had no pace at all but was a great passer over long distances and a good tackler. Alan was everywhere; good, neat control and a great engine. He scored goals as well. Colin was a beautiful little neat player, hard to get the ball off. Give him a really hard pass and it was under control in a flash and he could turn quickly. Put the three of them together and you had a great combination.'<sup>32</sup>

Yet it said a lot for the quality throughout the Everton team in 1969-70 that they survived the absence, for several weeks each, of Harvey with an eye problem and Ball because of suspension. 'We had a goalkeeper and ten players who were good on the ball,' said centre-forward Joe Royle. 'Alan Ball used to say before games, "If you want to play, we'll play you; if you want to run us, we'll run you; and if you want to try to bully us, we will take it and bully you back." Whatever way you wanted to play that side we could handle it.'<sup>33</sup>

Six consecutive victories in March put Everton in an unassailable position in the table. 'I don't want a team of ballerinas,' Catterick had said, 'but I want a side which plays football above all else and that is what present Everton sides are trying to do. Unfortunately, the cloggers of the game will do their best to destroy this kind of play.' By the time Everton were in possession of the championship trophy, Catterick could boast, 'It has often been said that the end justifies the means – in other words it does not matter how you win as long as you win. But as far as I am concerned the way Everton achieve victory IS important.'<sup>34</sup>

Once Goodison Park had been identified as the probable destination of the title, Revie admitted defeat by sending out teams of understudies as Leeds attempted to fit varied commitments into a season squeezed by the forthcoming World Cup. He had resolved



two things as the defence of their League title began. Firstly, the dual knockout targets of European Cup and FA Cup – the latter still the most glamorous of England’s club prizes – were to be prioritised. And, to be fair to the man whose name became a byword for cynicism, he had also told his players that they were now free to express themselves a little more.

Revie had always been acutely aware of his team’s image. When a game at Nottingham Forest during their title-winning campaign was abandoned because the main stand caught fire, Revie remarked to the *Yorkshire Evening Post*, ‘At least no one is blaming us for the disaster, like they blame us for most things.’ To his disappointment, the mud of the 1960s continue to stick to the white Leeds kits – literally, too, in this era of pitches ankle deep in sludge – and few observers had softened their attitude by the time a new decade was marked by the lowering of the official age of adulthood from 21 to 18 and the end of the half-crown coin.‡

The naming of Revie as recipient of an OBE in the New Year’s Honours List spoke of his achievements in the game, but it was performances such as the one his team gave at Stamford Bridge on the second weekend of the decade that offered more compelling evidence of his team’s unappreciated qualities. Despite an opportunistic piece of finishing by Clarke, a record £166,000 signing from Leicester City, Leeds fell 2-1 behind to Chelsea. Yet in a scintillating second-half performance, captured by *Match of the Day* cameras, they tore one of the country’s finest teams to shreds, albeit one with a somewhat hapless reserve, Tommy Hughes, in goal instead of Peter Bonetti. Cooper finished a flowing move with an unexpected right-foot finish; Giles clipped in a penalty; Peter Lorimer added a fourth; and Jones was on hand at the far post to complete a 5-2 win. It was a statement game by Revie’s team, had anyone been inclined to listen.

According to Bremner, ‘I think the reputation we got of being hard and ruthless was earned for that first four or five years.’<sup>35</sup> But he also stressed that ‘from ’69 to ’74 we [were] let off the leash a little’

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‡ Worth two shillings and sixpence (two and a half pence once decimalisation was introduced the following year).

and claimed, 'We played some of the best football the country has seen for a long long time.'<sup>36</sup>

As for Chelsea, they were waiting in the FA Cup Final by the time Leeds had taken three games to get past Manchester United in the semis. The marathon contest featured only a goal by Bremner, the new Footballer of the Year, and exacerbated an already critical fixture situation. In an exhausting period from 21 March to 4 April – the Saturday before the FA Cup Final – Leeds played eight games in 15 days. This included the second and third instalments of the United epic and a 1-0 defeat at Elland Road in the first leg of their European semi-final against Scottish champions Celtic. On that same night, Everton were clinching the title by beating West Bromwich Albion. Within 24 hours, Leeds were back in action at West Ham. Madness.

Revie had already voiced concerns about the demands on his players. When he was warned by club doctors that some of them urgently needed a rest, he'd decided that with the title as good as gone he would field a half-strength team in a defeat to Southampton and then a complete reserve unit at Derby County, where they lost 4-1. While football fans of a certain vintage are able even now to reel off a Leeds first eleven made up entirely of internationals, it is doubtful that too many could recall a line-up at the Baseball Ground that read: David Harvey, Nigel Davey, Paul Peterson, Jimmy Lumsden, David Kennedy, Terry Yorath, Chris Galvin, Mick Bates, Rod Belfitt, Terry Hibbitt, Albert Johanneson. 'What is the point of employing the services of a fully qualified medical officer if you don't take his advice?' Revie asked. 'Our doctor declared that the players concerned were thoroughly tired, mentally and physically, and if they carried on there was no knowing what damage might be caused.'

The manager best qualified to comment on such issues was Revie's rival at Arsenal, Bertie Mee, who had been a leading physiotherapist in the outside world before going into football. 'We are now asking for many of our players to commit themselves to upwards of 60 games a season,' he would tell a sportswriters' lunch in 1972. 'I believe that from the physical aspect we are operating at a maximum ... in terms of wear and tear and what we can ask the body to do.'

The martinets at the head of the Football League were having none of it. Prompted by the moaning of Bert Head, manager of Southampton's relegation rivals Crystal Palace, they fined Leeds £5,000. League president Len Shipman even added a veiled threat. 'The League can, after all, forbid clubs to take part in European competitions if they cannot fulfil commitments at home.' The episode highlighted Revie's strained relationship with the League. Hardaker called him 'a pain in the neck' and accused him of being 'obsessively concerned about injuries, international calls, the choice of referees, switching fixtures'. He added, 'Unless he could control everything, he seemed to feel the dice were being deliberately loaded against Leeds.' Hardaker claimed Revie could have avoided this pile-up of matches by accepting 'convenient early dates'.<sup>37§</sup>

Revie's worst fears were realised at West Ham, where Leeds were playing their fifth game in eight days. There was no firm evidence that fatigue played a role, but when right-back Reaney went down early in the second half he knew immediately that his leg was broken. A member of Sir Alf Ramsey's provisional 28-man World Cup squad<sup>¶</sup> and hopeful of two major finals, Reaney lamented, 'Everything was there, but now it has gone.' If the same was not to be said of his club's season, then FA Cup Final victory on the unusually early date of 11 April looked like a game they had to win.

Nothing could have been more symbolic of what lay ahead in the 1970s. A match between two teams with philosophies as contrasting as their kits.

This was a decade in which the dominant on-field narrative was conflict over the way in which the game should be played. The 1970 FA Cup Final embodied the debate perfectly. Chelsea versus Leeds

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§ According to Hardaker, Leeds were not only team to seek to manipulate the fixture list when it suited them. He described Arsenal attempting to get a 1973 game against Sheffield United postponed as late as 11am on the day of the match because of illness and injury. When permission was refused, they miraculously managed to field an unchanged side.

¶ Team-mate Paul Madeley turned down the chance to replace Reaney, citing his belief that he would end up not playing and therefore did not wish to travel after such a gruelling season. Arsenal's Bob McNab was chosen instead, failing to make the cut when the final squad of 22 was confirmed.

United. Flair against formula. Southern style versus northern grit. Maestros against the machine.

If Leeds personified the new pragmatism, then there was no team better than Chelsea to represent the romantics who still believed in the free-spirited nature of bygone years. With their billowing hair, long sideburns and discotheque-ready fashion, the Chelsea men might have looked more modern than Revie's neatly-styled bingo players, for whom long hair and moustaches were prohibited, but in football terms they were the throwbacks; Leeds the modernisers.

Leeds had scored 84 goals on their way to second place in the table; a total that might have acted as a battering ram against the prejudices of their critics. Chelsea scored only 70 in finishing one place lower, yet the manner of their progress to Wembley proved that image was more powerful than statistics, striking a greater chord with the capital-based media whose views went nationwide and shaped so much opinion. The northern backlash to that portrayal was expressed by the character of Terry Collier in *Whatever Happened to the Likely Lads?* 'I hate Chelsea,' he declared in a 1973 episode. 'They stand for everything I hate in football with all their showbiz supporters. They come out looking more like the Young Generation\*\* than a football team.'<sup>38</sup>

Even their kit had a certain élan, with its flashy white stripe down the side of blue shorts. And when they had to change from white to yellow socks to avoid a clash, so the stripe and the shirt numbers changed colour too; everything coordinated. 'It was so modern,' former Chelsea forward Alan Birchenall recalled. 'I'd come from Sheffield United, where the fucking shirts were this thick. Great big fucking things. Horrible nylon shorts and nylon socks. I get to Chelsea and the first thing I thought when I put the kit on, fucking hell, I felt like an Italian ... and the players liked to look the bollocks off the pitch.'<sup>39</sup>

Having scored three goals in each of their victories in the third and fourth rounds, against Birmingham and over Burnley in a replay,

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\*\* The troupe of young men and women who were the BBC's in-house dancers on many light entertainment shows in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

it was from the fifth round onwards that Chelsea really sparkled. They went south of the river to beat Crystal Palace 4-1 with a burst of second-half scoring. The quarter-final draw threw up another London derby at Queens Park Rangers, where they won 4-2 with a performance that defied the heavy surface. David Webb, a tough defender with a face that looked like it had been slammed with a dustbin lid, swept in a half-volley and Peter Osgood helped himself to a hat-trick. The victory felt a touch sweeter for the goal-scorers because they had been the only players not to pass an FA coaching course a few weeks earlier when QPR goalkeeper Mick Kelly had been one of the supervisors. Who needed to do things by the instruction manual anyway?

Chelsea stayed in the capital to face Watford in the semi-final on a White Hart Lane pitch whose sandy surface matched the amber shirts of their Second Division opposition. Putting aside the geographical convenience, it was surprising that the FA would place a showcase game at a ground then infamous for its terrible playing surface. When Tottenham went out in the fourth round after a replay at Crystal Palace, *Goal* wrote, 'Spurs' talented if erratic players still swear that it was the mud bank playing pitch that cost them their place in the FA Cup sun. Perhaps the time is near when the Football League will have to finance research into artificial surfaces.' After Webb's close-range finish was cancelled out, Chelsea strolled through the second half with four goals, including two typically neat finishes by Peter Houseman.

Chelsea and Leeds had recent history. The foundations of the team now led by Dave Sexton had been laid by Tommy Docherty, who turned them from a Second Division club earlier in the Sixties into a vibrant side capable of challenging for the title. 'Docherty's Diamonds', as the media named them, reached the FA Cup Final of 1967 by beating Leeds 1-0 in the semi-finals. Revie's men were convinced they were robbed of a late equaliser when Lorimer laced a free-kick into the top corner, only for referee Ken Burns to indicate he had not given permission for the game to restart. In this current season, Chelsea had also knocked Leeds out of the League Cup.

The son of an East End boxer, Sexton was a quiet, shy man with a love of jazz and magic tricks. He was destined for coaching once he joined West Ham United and became part of a group, led by team-mate Malcolm Allison, who would spend afternoons after training dissecting the game in a local café. It was Sexton who helped Docherty create his young, exciting Chelsea team before he left for a short spell as Orient manager and ended up, via Fulham, as Arsenal coach under Mee. His reputation was enhanced by his popularity with the Highbury players. ‘Dave Sexton was a revelation,’ said ex-Arsenal midfielder Jon Sammels. ‘We would play a game on Saturday and he’d go over to Italy on Sunday to watch training sessions and games, and he’d bring back ideas. Doggies, a series of sprints, was one. We were down in Sussex before a cup game, staying in Hove, and seven o’clock in the morning he’d have us doing these doggies along the sea front. You didn’t want a fried breakfast by the time you got back to the hotel.’<sup>40</sup>

The difference in his character from the outgoing, frequently outrageous, Docherty was reflected in the way in which he set about the job at Stamford Bridge. While Docherty tended towards headline-catching deals, like buying Millwall goalkeeper Alex Stepney when he already had Bonetti, Sexton built shrewdly, signing Webb from Southampton and John Dempsey from Fulham for £60,000 each to provide defensive stability. With the foundation of a disciplined back four, Chelsea became a well-drilled unit in addition to retaining the expression and artistry nurtured by Docherty. And no team containing Ron ‘Chopper’ Harris, the man from Hackney with an iron framework and the on-field personality of a nightclub bouncer, could be accused of being unafraid to mix it when the need arose.

Houseman, one of the less flamboyant members of the team and one of the few to refuse to allow his sideburns to creep down the side of his face,<sup>††</sup> said that Sexton’s arrival had turned a group of individuals into a team. But for all the organisation, Chelsea were above all identified by the blend of brilliance of three men. The leader

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†† On the official Chelsea team picture for 1973-74, Houseman’s are the only ears visible among the 20 players.

of the pack was Osgood, a Windsor boy who had recovered from a broken leg in 1966 to lead the line as a multi-dimensional centre-forward. A converted wing-half, it is a sign of how good he had been before his injury that, for all he would go on to achieve, his output was a notch down from the level he had been expected to attain. 'His greatest asset was his supreme confidence,' according to Alan Hudson, who named his black poodle after his colleague. 'He didn't give a monkey's who he was playing against.'<sup>41</sup>

The focal point of much of Chelsea's attacking play was Charlie Cooke, the artistically inclined Scotland international who'd identified Stamford Bridge as his destination of choice even before Docherty signed him from Dundee. 'I didn't want to play for Manchester United or anybody like that,' he said. 'Chelsea were the team at the time. I knew the reputation they had as a young up-and-coming side – a busy team with young, quick boys; a team for the future.'<sup>42</sup>

A lover of literature who was sometimes accused of letting his mind wander during games, his promise had found form under Sexton and alongside Osgood. So much so that the duo, typically, were highlighted early in 1970 by Jimmy Hill, the game's foremost media pundit, in yet another article lamenting the flair missing from the English game. 'There is a distinct lack of glamour and personalities in British football,' Hill said. 'Sure enough, Manchester United have George Best, Chelsea have Peter Osgood and Charlie Cooke, Queens Park Rangers have Rodney Marsh and now Arsenal have Peter Marinello,<sup>‡‡</sup> but there aren't many others that will guarantee an extra 10,000 on the gate.'<sup>43</sup>

Chelsea's FA Cup run brought another player into that conversation. The suave midfield play of Hudson was the revelation of his club's campaign. A former youth-team captain who had been raised close to Chelsea's ground as a Fulham fan, he had been offered

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‡‡ Signed from Hibernian from £100,000 just before Christmas, the frail, long-haired winger who worked on a building site to help add extra muscle was already being hailed as London's George Best even before he made the mistake of marking his Arsenal debut at Old Trafford with a clever individual goal. Bombarded by publicity and commercial opportunities, it was inevitable that he would never live up to expectations and was soon deposed in the Gunners team by the dependable, hard-working George Armstrong.

a professional contract just before his 17th birthday, despite knee problems that had kept him off the field and led to him piling on so much weight that Birchenall one day challenged his presence in the dressing-room, unaware he was a player. Fully fit, Hudson helped keep Birchenall out of the line-up and had Sexton purring during his first season in the team. ‘He is a positive player and a fine organiser in midfield,’ said his boss. ‘He creates chances for other people with his running and intelligent use of the ball. He is quick to seize an opportunity.’<sup>44</sup>

Sir Alf Ramsey had shown up at Selhurst Park for the FA Cup fifth-round tie, by common consent to look at Osgood. But it was Hudson who was thrust to the forefront of his consciousness. ITV commentator Brian Moore noted in his report of that game in *The Times* that Hudson ‘battled the length of the field, showing the resilience of one of his age and the guile of someone very much his senior’.

An energetic force, Hudson preferred to prompt with crisp, short passes rather than banging the ball on long diagonals. ‘Sometimes Tony Currie’s passes were fantastic,’ he said of the Sheffield United midfielder, as he explained his methods. ‘But by the time they got there they weren’t always as dangerous as the little ones.’<sup>45</sup> And he was a dream for team-mates; animated and available, creative and dynamic in possession, eager to do his share of tackling. He had a swagger of cockiness – socks rolled around his ankles – that infected those around him.

After watching Hudson again, eclipsing Marsh and helping to take apart QPR, Ramsey named him in his preliminary squad of 40 for the Mexico World Cup, saying, ‘Hudson looks like being one of the great players of the future. There is no limit to what he can achieve.’

Hudson’s partnership with Osgood appeared destined to help his upward trajectory. ‘I could always anticipate [Osgood’s] runs, sense his presence,’ he explained. ‘At times it was as if we were telepathic.’<sup>46</sup> In turn, Osgood described his young team-mate as ‘one of the greatest players I ever played with ... even at 17, incredible skills, great brain, great stamina.’<sup>47</sup>



Yet Hudson would not be gracing the mud and sand of Wembley in April 1970, nor the sun-hardened Mexican fields that summer. Less than two weeks before the Cup final, he tore ankle ligaments at West Bromwich Albion, a victim of ‘the biggest hole you’ve seen’. He even saw a faith healer in hope of being fit for Wembley. ‘I felt like a kid who had gone to bed on Christmas Eve and seen all the toys wrapped up and then woke up in the morning and they had been taken away,’ he recalled.<sup>48</sup> Cortisone injections would become a constant companion throughout his career. After a transfer to Stoke City, manager Tony Waddington would order the pitch to be watered before a game to keep it soft enough to reduce the stress on Hudson’s ankle. It was 1975 before he made his debut for England.

### WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE

*Hate. No other word to describe it. They hated us and we hated them. Whenever we played, the two sets of supporters had pitched battles, home and away. On the pitch, oh dearie me. I’ve still got the scars. There was no love whatsoever.*

**Chelsea striker Ian Hutchinson<sup>49</sup>**

There was little doubt in which direction public sentiment was flowing as the first FA Cup Final of the 1970s arrived. Chelsea, with their sense of adventure and whiff of romance, gave the impression of approaching the game in the untroubled manner with which most people wished they could approach life. ‘We made everyone believe in us,’ said Hudson.<sup>50</sup>

‘We were flamboyant, we were happy-go-lucky,’ said Osgood. ‘[Leeds] were a machine, if you like. I think that’s basically where they fell down. Over a period of 42 games they were the best. There’s no doubt about that. When it came to the one-off we were so much better than them because we went out to enjoy ourselves, but they stuck to the same rigid plan.’<sup>51</sup>

The Wembley match programme asked 18 leading national newspaper football writers to pick their winners. The vast majority

tipped Chelsea, citing their flair and an ability to lift their game on the day. Those siding with Leeds did so because of professionalism and organisation.

The artisan talents of Tommy Baldwin were hardly a like-for-like replacement for Hudson, but the playing surface that greeted the teams was no inducement to skilful football. More suited to the cars that would set off from the stadium a week later in the *Daily Mirror*-sponsored London to Mexico World Cup Rally,<sup>§§</sup> the Wembley pitch had been a source of embarrassment for more than a year. The narrative that would extend over the ensuing decades whenever anyone referenced the poor state of the field around this time was ‘they staged the Horse of the Year show there the week before’. In fact, it was another of the major British show-jumping festivals, the Royal International Horse Show, that was held at the stadium in the summers of 1968 and 1969. Yet even though no horse’s hoof had been on the field for nine months before Chelsea and Leeds, the damage had been done. Tom Kneeshaw, an area manager of En-Tout Cas, the pitch providers, explained that large amounts of water had to be used to make new grass grow, before ‘scorching sun’ caused the top to grow too quickly, ‘without the roots growing down’. It meant that the horses simply ripped the surface away from immature roots. ‘As soon as horses are set on a pitch,’ said Peter Ursell, described as a drainage and football-pitch expert, ‘without the turves having time to settle, you are asking for trouble.’<sup>52</sup>

Preparation of the surface for the League Cup Final between Manchester City and West Bromwich Albion, a month before the FA Cup Final, had been particularly fraught. Having cleared away the snow that fell the day before the game, the ground-staff put down a layer of straw to protect the surface. No sooner had that been cleared, than it snowed again. Once that had been shifted, down went the sand. It was a swamp.

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§§ Jimmy Greaves, recently transferred from Tottenham to West Ham United, was co-driver of one of the Ford Escorts in the field and would help his partner Tony Fall to a creditable sixth place.

At nine years old, the 1970 FA Cup Final was the first football match I had ever seen on colour television, as my dad and I went to a work colleague's house to watch it on his new set. The red tracksuit tops of Chelsea contrasted exotically with the light blue of Leeds, but the Wembley pitch offered only an occasional suggestion of green. More than 100 tonnes of sand had been applied to a playing surface that *The Times* described on the morning of the match as a 'dark stew'. The few breaks from the dull light brown before our eyes were the distinctive squares where replacement turves had clearly been the only option since the League Cup Final. Within minutes of kick-off, it was obvious that the surface was not up to the task, players leaving tracks like footsteps on the beach and the ball requiring a right old thump if anyone intended it to travel across the ground to a team-mate.

There had been a clear warning sign when Sprake attempted to bounce the ball on the red carpet as he lined up for the pre-match ceremonials and saw it die at his feet. Sure enough, when Charlton pulled away from under the Chelsea crossbar to meet Gray's corner after 20 minutes, his soft downward header flopped under the swinging boots of Harris and Eddie McCreadie and rolled barely a foot beyond the line. Five minutes before half-time, Houseman fired a first-time shot from outside the box and Sprake, diving to his left, allowed it to burrow under his body for an equaliser. It was a horrible mistake – the kind that made the berating of the goalkeeper by Charlton a regular sight – but on a better surface the ball might at least have bounced up and smacked Sprake in the face.

It was hardly a surprise that the Man of the Match would be a winger, Gray making the most of some semblance of grass close to the touchlines to torment Chelsea right-back Webb. He had demonstrated the kind of form he was in a week earlier in a home win against Burnley. Benefitting from the good fortune of the television cameras' presence, a nation was left breathless by his two stunning goals. The first-half effort, a nonchalant 30-yard chip over the goalkeeper, was special enough, but it was nothing compared to what he produced in the second half. There seemed little danger when he collected a loose ball on the byline, his back to goal ten yards from the left corner flag.

With a drag back almost too fast for the eye, he beat one man, swerved around another and found himself just inside the corner of the penalty area. He might have shot; instead he dummied his way inside one man, checked back past another, scraped the ball back towards him to beat one more diving defender and then poked a right-foot shot past keeper Peter Mellor from eight yards. Ten seconds from start to finish. No wonder it has been set to music on YouTube.

At Wembley, Gray's performance contained everything but a goal, although he slapped the ball against the bar when he cut inside to shoot late in the game. 'There can be no doubt who the Man of the Match is,' said ITV's Brian Moore. He was right, even though there was plenty of football still to play. Mick Jones restored the Leeds advantage with six minutes remaining and Ian Hutchinson equalised with a header. With Revie wearing his lucky suit and Sexton his talisman jacket with one missing button, it was perhaps inevitable that neither man would lose. Extra-time failed to prevent the first drawn FA Cup Final since 1912, and the demands of the Home Internationals meant it was not until Wednesday, 29 April that the teams reconvened at Old Trafford.

As a club-match record audience of 29 million took advantage of a choice of live viewing on BBC or ITV, Chelsea and Leeds contrived 120 minutes of pulsating, breathless pandemonium that ended with the FA Cup heading to Stamford Bridge for the first time.

Similar to the 'Horse of the Year show' recollection, something of an urban myth has grown up around the match in the ensuing half-century. Yes, it was fiercely contested and some of the challenges were not for the squeamish. Yet it has become categorised as a pitiless, clogging contest in which most players were lucky to remain on the field. The image has been reinforced by clips served up over the years of Charlton and Osgood and Hutchinson and Bremner in the kind of confrontations that would bring instant dismissal in later years. In fact, when Michael Oliver, one of the Premier League's top referees, was asked to reassess the match on its 50th anniversary, he concluded that he would have issued 11 red cards. It was an exercise, however, that served to illustrate the different interpretation and application of the laws in the modern era more than the brutality of the match.

Far more instructive is an attempt to view the game through the lens of the laws as practised at the time. Certainly, Stourbridge referee Eric Jennings, in his last professional match, was guilty of turning a blind eye too often, with only Hutchinson booked for intervening in Bremner's tussle with Osgood by shoving the Leeds captain to the ground. In *The Times*, Geoffrey Green described Jennings as 'a referee who would have a short life in Latin America'. But even applying the standards of the day, there were maybe only four others who could consider themselves fortunate not to be cautioned: Harris, for a knee-high assault on Cooper; Charlton, Osgood and Bremner for flare-ups. Cooke, usually on the receiving end, committed a series of cynical fouls to derail Leeds attacks – acts that in the 21st century would each be worthy of a yellow card and be justified as 'taking one for the team'. But no one at the time suggested he had got away with anything.

More accurate than the 'Battle of Old Trafford' handle perpetuated over time is Green's description in *The Times*. 'From the earliest stages, bush fires of anger flickered across the field – briefly, it is true, before they died,' he wrote, although adding that 'all the time there was a cauldron simmering just beneath the surface'.

What you really have, if you watch the full 120 minutes, is a match that offers a perfect snapshot of football of its time. The action began at a blistering pace, barely subsiding over the next two hours; no backward steps taken all night. And all set against an assault of noise that only standing terraces could generate. Viewers were sent to bed with ears ringing as though they'd been at a Black Sabbath concert.

As was so often the case in the era, it was hard to understand how another trophy had eluded Revie's men. Aided by an easier playing surface than at Wembley, Leeds dominated the replay with incisive and inventive play; sweeping attacks executed at pace. There was no better example than the goal with which they took a 35th-minute lead, Clarke starting off the move by turning inside Webb in his own half and surging forward, leaving three Chelsea men floundering on the floor. He pushed the ball forward to Jones, who burst between Hollins and Dempsey to flash a shot beyond Bonetti's right hand and into the netting halfway up. It was a stunningly executed goal.

Of course, there were typical moments of Leeds cynicism. Giles, while showing his usual luxuriant passing, was not slow to bring down an opponent threatening to break into attack. Jones was accused of recklessness in a challenge that left Bonetti limping on a bandaged left knee, an incident Charlton felt his team failed to fully capitalise upon. 'He is a friend of mine is Peter, but we ought to have whacked him again,' he argued. 'Not dirty like but got stuck into him. It might sound cruel, but that is what professional football is all about, being ruthless.'<sup>53</sup>

Yet, for all the elements of the good (Chelsea) versus evil (Leeds) story arc, it was not quite so straightforward. Chelsea seemed intent on ensuring that Leeds were unable to dominate the game and went to considerable lengths to do so, as evidenced by Cooke's frequency of offence. In the off-the-ball scuffles that have gained so much traction down the years, Chelsea shared equal billing with their opponents.

Harris's switch to right-back was an understandable move designed to spare Webb another ordeal after what he would call 'the worst day's work I ever did in my whole football career'.<sup>54</sup> Admitting he lacked the quickness to play full-back, he said, 'I take about 40 yards to get into my stride.'<sup>55</sup> Gray avoided Harris by drifting towards the middle, from where he was still able to pose problems, and that allowed Cooper to exploit the vacated space and display the full range of his attacking threat down the left. Even Hunter found himself foraging down that flank on occasion.

Chelsea's equaliser, against the run of play with only 12 minutes remaining, was characteristic of their more aesthetic side; Cooke's exquisitely clipped diagonal delivery into the box being met by Osgood at full flight, diving in front of his own fans in the Stretford End to head past goalkeeper David Harvey, who had replaced the injured Sprake. Osgood would describe the moment as 'an out-of-body experience', in which he could see the faces of individual fans behind the goal as he launched himself.<sup>56</sup> Even then, it was Leeds who looked likely to take the lead for the fourth time in the tie and it needed the sight of Hunter suffering from cramp in extra-time to bring the Chelsea fans among the 62,000 crowd back to full voice,

## RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE

sensing that the final match of a marathon season was about to bring Leeds to their knees. The winning goal, late in the first period of extra-time, went in off the side of Webb's face after a Hutchinson long throw. That it failed to match the narrative of Chelsea as saviours of flowing football mattered not a jot to their fans, or to history.

Revie blamed a lack of post-match organisation for his players leaving the arena without bothering to collect their losers' medals. Instead, cameras in the tunnel captured them stumbling back towards the dressing-room, the vacant stares and language of their stooped bodies speaking of shell shock. There was little sympathy from the masses. No one ever cried for the Daleks, either.