

Morgan's missed penalty raises Elland Road survival hopes

06/07

LEEDS UNITED 1

(Cresswell 50)

LUTON 0

By **Patrick Collins**

THE ROAR exploded with the force of a thunderclap; a booming eruption of joy and relief which shook the rust and the dust from the Elland Road stands. A poor side had overcome an even poorer side in a match which was dire beyond description. But nobody cared.

Although Leeds remain at the bottom of Championship pile, although they still have one foot in what is effectively Division Three, they can scent the possibility of improbable survival following a victory which was precious beyond price.

The fact that victory was achieved by virtue of a mundanely missed penalty was entirely in keeping with the tenor of the day. Leeds had been clinging to Richard Cresswell's 50th-minute goal as if it were a lifebelt.

It was then that Radostin Kishishev, on loan from Charlton and desperate to impress, brought down Leon Barnett in the area, and Dean Morgan walked up to take the kick.

With more than 27,000 people yelling optimistic distraction, and the goalkeeper Casper Ankergrén jiggling and jinking on his line, young Morgan, overcome by the moment, struck the kick feebly at the keeper's legs.

It is possible, just possible, that the miss could have settled the immediate future of both football clubs.

In truth, Leeds had just about deserved their reprieve. They had made and missed most of the chances, forced most of the pace and played most of what little football was attempted. In the first half, they had struck the bar three times, each chance donated by the remarkable indulgence of the Luton defenders.

The Leeds goal had been just such an instance, with Cresswell collecting a ball in the box, turning without challenge and striking a shot which was marginally too good for Marlon Beresford in the Luton goal.

The roar which greeted that goal was also notable, evoking memories of David O'Leary's vibrant young side and those clamorous European nights which now are more than half-a-dozen years past.

Luton had ample chances to overhaul Leeds, as they belatedly realised the sheer ineptitude of their opposition. But most of those chances fell to poor Barnett, and he missed them on a routine basis.

Since this is Leeds, much of the action had been taking place far from the field. The latest extra-curricular drama once again involved Ken Bates's programme notes, those choleric scribbles which tell you much more about Chairman Ken than you really wanted to know.

Once again, his target was the former director Melvyn Levi, who has some £1.5 million invested in the club through his family firm, but has made an enemy of Bates.

In a recent programme eruption, Bates called him 'an enemy within', and added: 'This unpleasant, dishonourable man will not succeed... he makes demands which are little short of blackmail... perhaps you would like to ask him to justify his behaviour, which is damaging Leeds prospects of advancement... Mr Levi lives at...'

Astonishingly, some might say wickedly, he then published Levi's address, whereupon Levi marched off to the Chapletown Police Station, claiming that he was 'living in fear'.

The police installed specialist security equipment at his home, lest Levi be attacked by furious fans. Bates said:

Leeds roar at last but is it all too late for the Wise guys?



THE RISE AND FALL OF A ONCE-PROUD CLUB

PREMIER LEADERS... (January 6, 2002)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
LEEDS	21	11	8	2	33	17	41
Man Utd	21	12	3	6	51	31	39
Arsenal	20	11	6	3	41	24	39
Newcastle	21	12	3	6	39	28	39
Liverpool	20	11	5	4	30	20	38
Chelsea	21	8	9	4	33	20	33

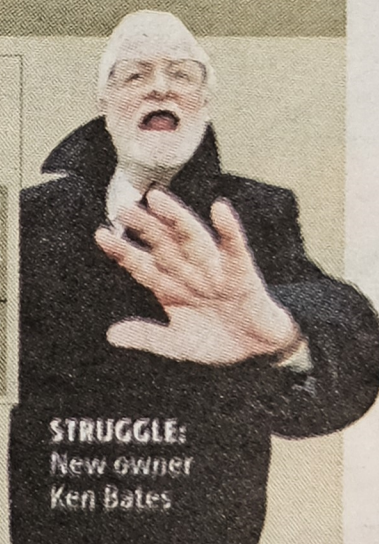
Leeds reached the Champions League semi-finals in 2001 under David O'Leary (right) and went top of the Premiership...



...ROCK BOTTOM (March 11, 2007)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hull	37	10	8	19	39	55	38
Barnsley	37	11	5	21	40	63	38
QPR	36	9	9	18	41	57	36
Luton	37	9	9	19	46	63	36
Southend	37	8	11	18	38	58	35
LEEDS	37	10	4	23	37	63	34

...but five years later, they are on the brink of dropping into English football's third tier for the first time



days. We recalled the words of the assistant manager Gus Poyet a day or two earlier: 'If we can keep things quiet and normal between now and the end of the season, it would be nice,' he said. His naivete was strangely endearing.

No sooner had he spoken, than Andrew Carter, the leader of Leeds City Council announced that the possible redevelopment of Elland Road is at risk because they could not discover who owns the ground.

It was sold a year ago to a company based in the British Virgin Islands. Mr Carter remarked: 'I don't deal with people I don't know about, and neither should the city.'

Yet the ownership of that company must remain a mystery. As Bates himself admitted, in his programme notes, of course: 'The straight answer is that neither I, nor anybody else at Leeds United knows who it is.'

Then there was the continuing controversy surrounding the Leeds captain Kevin Nicholls. He, you may recall, was

'Levi is lucky I didn't put in his telephone number as well.'

Yesterday, he came close to doing just that in the course of another fatuous diatribe against Levi, who had secured an interim injunction against the publication of the programme until its con-

tents could be inspected. A judge agreed that the programme might be printed, but Leeds later decided to erase a two-line paragraph which was apparently deemed especially offensive.

And so the long-suffering Leeds Press

officers were allotted the task of scratching their felt tips through some 8,500 programmes.

The fact that the original words remained perfectly visible when held up to the light might be considered par for the course at Elland Road these