

## The Premiership

# MAGPIES SNATCH SILVERWARE IN EPIC OLD TRAFFORD FINALE

Man Utd.....3 Newcastle Utd.....4

By Josh Jones

Yesterday lunchtime, four teams battled for the title of Premier League Champions in the closest race for years. Manchester United and the unlikely Newcastle were drawn for the top spot on eighty-nine points with the Red Devils leading on goal difference by a mere four strikes. One point behind sat Arsenal and Liverpool, also level on points. Arsene Wengers men were favourites to steal Man Utd's crown, with a relatively simple game against relegated Sunderland whereas Liverpool faced the unpredictable West Ham at Upton Park. However, all eyes were focused upon the absolutely crucial match between Man Utd and Newcastle, bitter rivals during the nineties with common neck-to-neck battling for the championship. A win for either team would ensure the title.

As three o'clock approached on a sunny Manchester afternoon, Magpies' manager Bobby Robson presented a traditional attacking 4-4-2 formation putting forward his strongest team. With a striking partnership of Alan Shearer and pacey Welshman Craig Bellamy, they have proved to be a nightmare for defences all around the country. Manchester United opted for the similar tactics with highest league goalscorer Ruud Van Nistelrooy and ex-Magpie Andy Cole starting. Robson and Ferguson, close friends through their long careers as football managers, enjoyed a pre-match chat, shielding the bitter rivalry between the two clubs.

### AWARDS

Before the game begun, van Nistelrooy deservedly received the prestigious Golden Boot Award, after a stunning 42 goals throughout the season. However, most cheers and appreciation came from the presentation of Bobby Robson's knighthood, certifying his amazing football achievements spanning over 50 years.

When David Elleray eventually started the match the majority of play was equal, each team denying the other any space to create an attack resulting in much midfield play. Both managers were up to the touchline hurling orders after ten minutes, their voices drowned in the overwhelming roar of the stadium. Robson's new signing Jermaine Jenas added a degree of flair of Newcastle's play although a noticeable change of tactics became clear when Dyer moved up to a centrally attacking position in midfield, rapidly resulting in the first goal. The internationally sought Englishman weaved between Scholes and Neville before threading a perfectly positioned pass into Shearers path. The ex-England skipper took a single touch before driving the ball past Barthez into the roof of the net. The ten thousand Newcastle fans erupted in roaring delight from the west-wing of the stadium. Robson and Ferguson remained silent rightfully appreciating the sixty-four minutes remaining.



Newcastle Defender Andy O'Brien shields the ball from Manchester United's Andy Cole

### RETALIATION

Manchester United expectedly retaliated with force and just four minutes later Juan Sebastian Veron's penetrative run into the Newcastle box was ended by a poor tackle from Sylvain Distin. The referee pointed to the penalty spot and Van Nistelrooy sent Given the wrong way to level the scores.

Before the interval, Newcastle pressured Man Utd,

Attendance, 86,024

Man United (2) **3** v Newcastle United (1) **4**

Van Nistelrooy (P) 30"	Shearer 26"
Keane 45", 80"	Bellamy 49"
	Bernard 65"
	Dyer 90"

Continued from Page 79

with Solano hitting the underside of the crossbar after a stunning run. In a dramatic change of fortune the ball bounced out to Beckham in plenty of space. United countered swiftly and an inch-perfect cross from Giggs allowed Roy Keane to head the ball past the outstretched Given, on the blow of the half-time whistle.

The atmosphere in the stadium was immense, the numerically superior Manchester fans applauding their team. The second-half spawned another four goals as both teams headed for glory. The unchanged Newcastle side were quick to get back into the game, netting in the 49<sup>th</sup> minute. The opportunity sprung from another Dyer through ball, this time finding Bellamy. Laurent Blanc's excellent defending to push the Welshman wide wasn't enough as he slotted home from a tight angle, catching Barthez in the wrong position.

### DOMINANCE

The Newcastle side, clearly influenced by the team-talk, continued to pressurise Sir Alex Ferguson's Champions, forcing a string of excellent saves from Barthez. Another goal looked increasingly likely and was created in the sixty-fifth minute. Oliver Bernard caught the keeper off-guard and thundered the ball from 30-yards. In his attempt to make a successful dive, the Frenchman strained a muscle in his neck. Substitute keeper, Roy Carroll replaced him, in the knowledge of a one-goal deficit. A Magpies victory soon became debateable as Manchester United began to take control of the game. Ole Gunnar Solskjaer should have scored in the 74<sup>th</sup> minute but rolled the ball past Given and the post. The devastation of the miss affected his performance until the final whistle. The rest of the team did not give up hope however, and their persistence paid off with ten minutes remaining. Keane played a well-executed one-two with Scholes and side-footed the ball beyond Given to once again level the scores, now at 3-3.

Appreciating Arsenal's current destruction of Sunderland, each team knew they must get a

goal. The most tense moment of the match arrived on eighty-eight minutes when the Reds gained free-kick inches outside Newcastle's box. Naturally, Beckham stepped up. The ball was struck with a vicious swerve. The ball seemed to move in slow motion and the crowd fell to an unbearable silence as all eyes fixated on the ball. Given through himself across the face of the goalmouth in time to fingertip the ball wide of the target. The save was almost unbelievable and applause came from all over the stadium. Newcastle countered immediately. The ball quickly moved from defence up to Acuna and then to the ever-reliable feet of Dyer. He nutmegged Gary Neville and touched the ball into the path of his strong right foot, executing a twenty-yard pile driver, which glided past Carroll. The goal came exactly upon the ninetieth minute, setting up an exceptionally tense finish for Newcastle. Nothing happened during the two minutes of stoppage time and the whistle blew before a dominant eruption of delight from the West-end of the stadium. Newcastle had claimed their first piece of silverware since 1955.

### CHAMPIONS

Alan Shearer led the team up to the podium to collect the FA Barclaycard Premiership Trophy from Charles who produced a wry smile. The three-year Newcastle captain lifted the cup high to another deafening roar. Kieron Dyer was appropriately named Man of the Match and Givens excellent save minutes from time was punched upon the main screen repetitively. Eventually, the Magpies unpredictable route to the Premier League had been rewarding. It all started in 1990, when they were struggling in the second division. They were taken over by Kevin Keegan, remarkably transforming the team into a very able force. Keegan's efforts however, were not rewarded as Manchester United constantly snatched the cup away. Keegan quit in 1998, after a dispute with bosses, and after unsuccessful reigns of Kenny Dalglish and Ruud Gullit, Bobby Robson arrived. Despite his sixty-nine years of age,

Robson again changed Newcastle into a very capable team. His effort providing Newcastle the FA Barclaycard Trophy.

### Match Statistics

	Newcastle	Man Utd
<b>Total Shots</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>On Target</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Free Kicks</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Corner Kicks</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Fouls</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Yellow Cards</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Red Cards</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Newcastle: Given, Distin, Dabizas, Acuna, Bernard, Dyer, Robert, Solano, Jenas, Bellamy, Shearer (Subs not used)  
Manchester Utd: Barthez (Sub: Carroll 65), G Neville, P Neville, Blanc, Silvestre, Giggs, Beckham, Veron, Scholes, Van Nistelrooy, Cole