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West Ham United's Eight FA Youth Cup Finals

WEST HAM'S FA YOUTH CUP FINALS

CLASS OF 1957

Lost 2-8 on aggregate against Manchester United

It is a truth universally known that when West Ham's Youth teams make it to an FA Youth Cup final, the first team has a purple patch of success. This has been underwritten down the years and the rule is once again being proven as Kevin Keen's U18s take on Arsenal at the Emirates in this year's annual showcase for Youth players, while the first team seek to overcome Dutch side AZ Alkmaar in the Euro Conference Semi-Final.



Back row L-R: Roy Walker (Cap.), Clive Lewis, Joe Kirkup, Brian Goymer,, John Lyall and Youth Team manager, Bill Robinson

Front row: L-R: Charlie Rowlands, John Smith, George Fenn, John Cartwright and

A season which catches fire in April and May is the dream of most fans and the West Ham faithful still has a great deal to look forward to.

West Ham's first show of excellence in the FA Youth Cup came in both 1957 and 1959 when two final appearances brought a special feeling of promise to a Club which has always prided itself on developing young talent. Sadly, both finals ended in defeat. The first against the boys of Manchester United and the second against Blackburn Rovers.

Memories of '57 from...TERRY MCDONALD



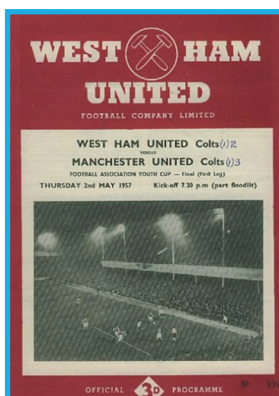
It was a very special time. My mum and dad were in the stands for the first leg at Upton Park. It was played on a Thursday and 15,000 turned up. We lost a good match 2-3 so we were still in it going into the second leg. I was 17 years of age playing at Old Trafford. They would have had a good few fans there, too. I thought I had a good game but they battered us 5-0. We've lost a few from that team: Clive Lewis, Georgie Fenn, John Smith and John Lyall are sadly no longer with us - all good men. I don't know what happened to our Captain, Roy Walker, but he was an educated man and a nice fella. I did my National Service shortly afterwards, only to be told by West Ham they were releasing me!

The defeat of young Bobby Moore's side of 1959 was particularly galling as a disputed goal in extra time of the second leg at Ewood Park cost the favourites their chance. Former West Ham striker, Mick Beesley, recalls the moment over 60 years on. "Bobby was incandescent with rage as the winning goal was clearly offside but inexplicably given by the referee."

The journey to those finals served as bookends to the first team's iconic promotion season of 1958, when the Hammers returned to the top flight after being in the wilderness for some 25 years.

In 1963 West Ham's Youth team once again made it to the final of the FA Youth Cup. This time against a Tommy Smith led Liverpool side who won the first leg at Anfield 3-1, and came to Upton Park as strong favourites.

The second leg is widely regarded as one of the best matches ever played at the old place as West Ham fell behind 2-5 on aggregate with only the second half remaining. Then, stepping up to the seemingly insurmountable challenge was Leigh-on-Sea born and bred, Martin Britt, who, with fire in his belly and a winning mentality danced down miracle street with four goals to secure a 6-5 aggregate win for the Hammers, ably led by Captain, John Charles, who lifted the beautiful silver trophy in front of the West Ham faithful.





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Ron Greenwood said it was the best game he'd ever seen in his life to that point, and it set a winning standard which was continued by the senior side when winning the FA Cup in 1964, European Cup Winners Cup in 1965 and World Cup in 1966. Young talent stimulating senior pros.

1975 saw West Ham's next appearance in the FA Youth Cup final, led by captain Tony Tuddenham. It was a team which included future first teamers, Paul Brush, Alan Curbishley, Alvin Martin and Geoff Pike. Sadly, an Ipswich Town side proved too strong and the Hammers went down 1-5 on aggregate. Nevertheless, the feel good factor brought to the Club by an exciting FA Youth Cup run had its part to play in lifting the Hammers to FA Cup victory over Fulham in 1975 and a European final the following year.

It would be 1981 when West Ham would once again lift the FA Youth Cup. Everald Laronde led the young Hammers to a thrilling 2-1 aggregate victory over rivals Tottenham Hotspur. Along with Ev, four other Hammers played first team football for West Ham from that side; Paul Allen, Bobby Barnes, Keith McPherson and Alan Dickens.

The senior side had already won the FA Cup in the previous year (along with a 17 year old Paul Allen) and would go on to reach the League Cup final before the youngsters had their own moment of glory in May 1981. A club thriving from a feel good factor at both levels.

It would be 15 years before West Ham would reach the FA Youth Cup final again, sadly losing to Michael Owen's Liverpool. Nevertheless, three years later in 1999 the coveted silver trophy would once again be held aloft. This time Izzy Iriekpen would be the victorious Captain. The first team would win the Intertoto Cup in the same year.

And so to 2023 and the fine achievement of Kevin Keen's team who are on the cusp of West Ham's fourth FA Youth Cup victory. The format is different in that the final will be a one match shoot out at Arsenal's Emirates stadium. We'll leave the final word with a man who has been on the thrill ride to FA Youth Cup success in both 1981 and 1999 - Tony Carr:

"A big congratulations to Kevin Keen and his coaching team for winning the Southern Section of the Premier Youth League and reaching the final of the FA Youth Cup. I wish them all the very best in the game against Arsenal."

CLASS OF 1959

Lost 1-2 on aggregate against Blackburn Rovers



Back row L-R Eddie Bovington, Geoff Hurst, Jack Burkett, Frank Caskey, Harry Cripps and Bobby Moore (Capt.).

Front row L-R: Derek Woodley, Andy Smillie, Mike Beesley, John Cartwright and Tony Scott.

Memories of '59 from...JOHN CARTWRIGHT



I played in both the 1957 and 1959 FA Youth Cup Finals. In 1957 Manchester United were a stronger team than us. They were much more physical. I actually scored in the first leg against Manchester United. I remember it well - some 66 years on! - I collected the ball half way into the Manchester United half, played a one two before slotting it home in the corner.

I believe we were a better side than Blackburn Rovers and should have won the 1959 final.

Memories of '59 from...EDDIE BOVINGTON

I remember we beat Arsenal in both legs of the semi-final that year. 1-0 in both matches. We had a very good side but Blackburn stuck at it and won the day. They had Fred Pickering, and Keith Newton in their side, both of whom went on to play for England. We had Geoff Hurst and Bobby Moore in our side and we know what they did. There were a lot of very good players in that final.



Memories of '59 from...MIKE BEESLEY

It was 1-1 from the first leg at Upton Park and we were playing on a bog of a pitch up at Ewood Park. I should have scored in a one on one and we also missed a penalty. The overriding memory for me was seeing Bobby Moore lose his cool. Blackburn scored the winner in extra time but we all thought it was offside, especially Bobby who remonstrated with the referee. I'd never seen him so angry.





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CLASS OF 1963

Won 6-5 on aggregate against Liverpool



Back row L-R Terry Needham, Martin Britt, Dennis Burnett, Colin Mackleworth, Bill Kitchener, Peter Bennett and Bobby Howe. Front row L-R: Harry Redknapp, Trevor Dawkins, John Charles (Capt.), John Sissons and John Dryden.

CLASS OF 1975

Lost 1-5 on aggregate against Ipswich Town



Back row L-R: Chris Smith, Terry Hurlock, Derek Fraser, Alvin Martin, David Danson, Tony Tuddenham (Capt.), Pat Creasey and Lou Murphy. Front row L-R: John Domfe, Peter Robinson, Paul Brush, Alan Curbishley, Geoff Pike and Malcolm Hill.

Memories of '63 from four goal hero...MARTIN BRITT

We were all obviously disappointed at being 3-1 down after the first leg at Anfield. It was both pleasing and exciting to see such a good crowd before the home leg, but we then went 2-1 down at half time, making it 5-2 down on aggregate. When we came out for the second half, it was obvious that no one was going to give up, all the players responded immediately, helped tremendously by the support from the crowd. We just attacked and threw balls and players forward and luckily managed to claw back the deficit. The winning goal was scored about 10 minutes from the end and it seemed like an eternity to me before the referee blew his whistle. This will always be a special game in my memory because of scoring the four goals, all headers, and the tremendous atmosphere inside the Boleyn Ground.



I hope the lads do well in the final against Arsenal!

Memories of '63 from...JOHN DRYDEN



I wish to congratulate all the players involved in reaching the final of the FA Youth Cup, of which they can be duly proud. I would love to see them now win the final. They possess all the skills, ability and determination necessary. This is an experience they will remember for the rest of their lives and will enhance and develop their future careers. Our team from 1963 still keep in touch. Best wishes for the final!

Memories of '75 from...ALAN CURBISHLEY

Our Youth Cup Final was a unique one as the first team were also in the FA Cup Final against Fulham. All the South East Counties sides were littered with players that went on to play for their first teams. Us and Ipswich can vouch for that. Teams like Chelsea had Ray Wilkins, John Sparrow, Steve Wicks, Ray Lewington and Tommy Langley and yet we still beat them in the South East Counties Final! To be honest, Ipswich were the better side over the two legs and deserved to win comfortably. We didn't show up which was a massive disappointment to us and our coach, Ronnie Boyce. At least the



first team got revenge by beating Ipswich Town in the FA Cup semi-final! My best memory was the size of the crowds in both matches, well over 20,000 at both Upton Park and Portman Road.





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CLASS OF 1981

Won 2-1 on aggregate against Tottenham Hotspur



Memories of '81 from...Captain, EVERALD LARONDE

The FA Youth Cup is the pinnacle of Academy football. It is the trophy every Club would like to win to showcase the talent that has made it through the ranks.

Winning the FA Youth Cup meant as much to me as making my first team debut against Coventry City in 1982.

I wish Kevin and the lads all the very best in the final.



Back row L-R Robert Wall, Mark Schiavi, Adrian Keith, Everaldo Laronde (Capt), Chris Ampofo, Steve Milton, Warren Donald, Front row L-R: Johnny Vaughan, Alan Dickens, Keith McPherson, Paul Allen, Glenn Burvill and Bobby Barnes

Memories of '81 from...CHRIS AMPOFO

Playing for West Ham and winning the FA Youth Cup in 1981 was something I will treasure forever. We all knew each other from playing against each other for our boroughs like Brent and Newham as well our counties, Middlesex and Essex. Pretty much everyone was from London so it really meant something to us to play in claret and blue, especially at the Boleyn ground. The team was full of characters and we could play. We were all mates. Tony Carr was our main coach and we had a culture where we all worked hard and demanded high standards from each other.



The joy of winning!

Memories of '81 from...WAYNE READER

Winning the FA Youth Cup is just that little bit more special than the other cup we won at West Ham - and we won a few!

I was pleased it was Spurs in the final because Tony Parks was my lucky keeper - I don't think I ever failed to score against him! Luckily my goal in the final came early in the first leg because it helped to settle us. We went on to dominate Spurs that night, winning 2-0.

We also had John Lyall, Ronnie Boyce and Mick McGiven coaching us. In those days the youth players trained with the first team. Can you imagine training with Billy Bonds, Trevor Brooking and Alan Devonshire? It was amazing. It was great fun with lots of laughs but when it came to the football we were serious about it. Playing the West Ham way and winning was important.

We were successful and won the South East Counties Cup as well as the Southern Junior Floodlit Cup. But the FA Youth Cup was the one we all wanted. We had a great run on the way to the final. I remember scoring away at Swansea who hadn't been beaten all season. We beat Millwall at the Den and another highlight was beating Manchester City 4 - 0 at Upton Park in the Semi-Final.

In those days, the final was played over two legs. We slaughtered Spurs at home, winning 2-0. Wayne Reader scored the first with a glancing header and Mark Schiavi the second. The return leg at White Hart Lane was much closer but we pretty much controlled the game which was great considering the likes of Terry Gibson went on to play for Manchester United. On the night we lost 1-0 but won the tie 2-1 on aggregate. It was a great occasion, with a crowd of about 15,000. It is also great that most of the team went on to be successful. Some in football, but others in business away from the game. I think that win gave us all belief. There was a special team spirit in the group which still exists today.

I am so happy the current Under 18s team is having a great season. They are so lucky to have Kevin Keen coaching them. Kevin is one of the nicest people you could meet. His knowledge and experience is top class. It is no coincidence that the younger teams have improved with the likes of Kevin and Steve Potts working with them. I hope they work for each other and go on and win it. Whatever the result, the life lessons they will be learning at West Ham will set them up to achieve either in football, business or other careers. I wish them the best of luck. It is something that I hope they will treasure for many years.



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CLASS OF 1996

Lost 1-4 on aggregate against Liverpool



Memories of '96 from goalkeeper...NEIL FINN

My FA Youth Cup memories are a little blurry. It was a long time ago but I certainly remember the final versus Liverpool. The coach trips, the hotels and getting treated like a first team player, that was very special!

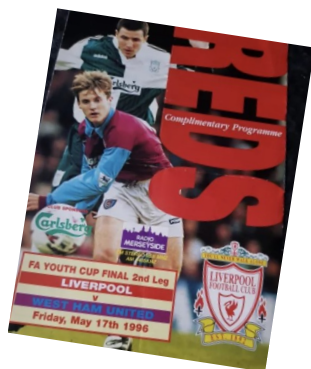
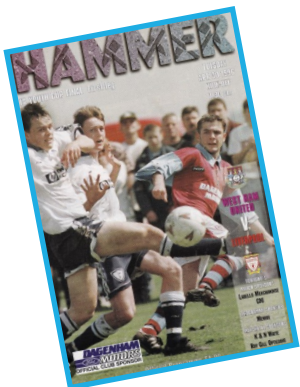
The first leg was played at Upton Park and three stands were open and fully packed. There must have been 15,000 fans there that night.

We lost 2-1, but played well and we went into the second leg very confident.

The game at Anfield once again saw three main stands packed. The Kop was singing "You'll Never Walk Alone" which was pretty special and quite an amazing spectacle to witness.

Unfortunately we lost 2-0 with Michael Owen running the show along with Jamie Carragher.

We won the league that year, beating Spurs on the final day of the season at Chadwell Heath...so a good season all round!!



CLASS OF 1999

Won 9-0 on aggregate against Coventry City



Joe Cole, Michael Carrick, Adam Newton and Richard Garcia would graduate to the first team after FA Youth Cup success

Memories of '99 from...BERTIE BRAYLEY

I remember the final as having a great atmosphere. We knew the crowd was going to be big once we were told kick off was delayed by 15 minutes. Even from the dressing room we could hear the turnstiles constantly clicking in the old West Stand.

Once the match eventually kicked off, I scored after three minutes. It was in front of a packed Bobby Moore Stand. Adam Newton headed a good ball into the box and I managed to get across Callum Davenport to flick the ball over Chris Kirkland into the corner of the net. The roar from the crowd is something I will never forget. The crowds were still pouring into the East Stand. A very special night indeed.

CLASS OF 2023

FA Youth Cup Final against Arsenal at The Emirates

GOOD LUCK TO LYALL BOY, KEVIN KEEN AND HIS

U18s!

