



Steve Millar



SHERINGHAM and Beckham celebrate

# Glory of the final chapter

**T**RAVEL anywhere in the world of soccer and you will pack into your grey matter memories that last a lifetime.

But here in this little backwater of Birmingham that time has almost forgotten we were privileged to see a fitting final piece of soccer history.

The last-ever FA Cup semi-final replay and the 49th at Villa Park.

None, though, would surely rank as a better closing chapter than this second meeting in four days between the undisputed heavyweights of English soccer.

They gave us everything. Sublime skill, unquestioned courage and enough pride in the shirt to make you feel great to be called a true Brit.

Hearts were lifted as high as the thousand red and white balloons released by Gunners fans at the first sight of their heroes.

Highbury provided £5,000 to furnish the faithful with them and 20,000 song sheets of their favourite anthems.

Good on you. That is the spirit. That's how memorable occasions like this should be celebrated.

*A night of live full-blooded entertainment that the couch potatoes could never comprehend.*

Banter abounded inside and out where Arsenal fans were sold monster double-burgers — naturally — while greasy-aproned vendors offered United's hungry hordes just the bun in a jokey reference to finishing empty-handed last season.

Then there was the sight of the giant Gooner in the front row whose shoulders were conveniently wide enough to accommodate the huge letters of 1998 LE DOUBLE.

But how about the shoulders belonging to United boss Alex Ferguson? No doubt he felt the knives hurtling their way to settle between his shoulder blades.

**W**HAT was he thinking of, said his accusers. Fancy resting (or even dropping) Dwight Yorke and Andy Cole?

How could he relegate Ryan Giggs to the bench? But, just like the red and white balloons, the moaners were full of hot air.

Ferguson had a game plan in mind and for once Arsene Wenger wouldn't have second-guessed his tactics in the shock selection of Teddy Sheringham and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer.

It takes a brave man to demote a 46-goal partnership. But that was another surprise to generate mouth-watering excitement.

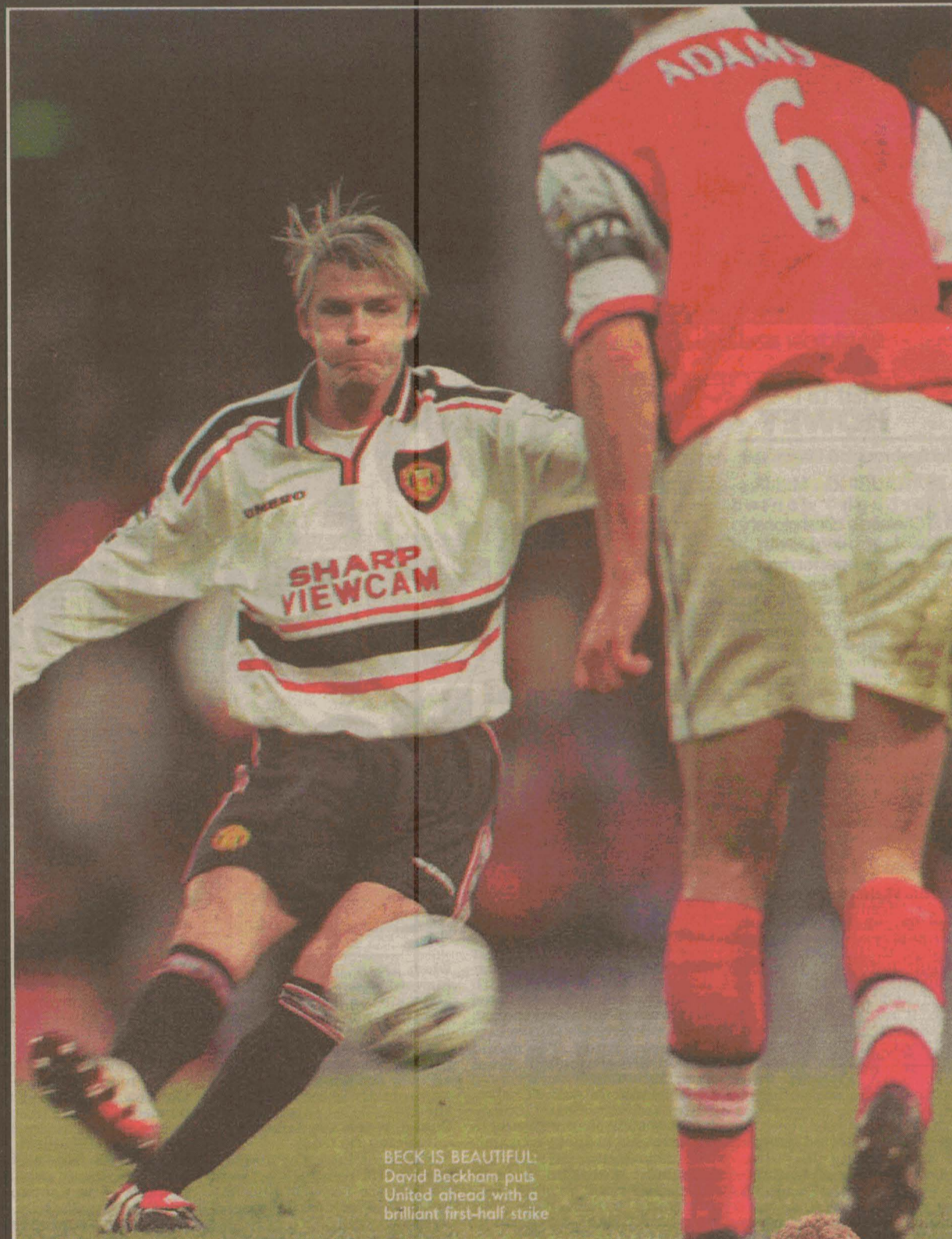
Two teams who deserved to be bracketed as the best in the country. And two managers who love to pit their considerable wit in the cut and thrust of soccer at its very highest level.

They say that in these hard-bitten parts customers are locked inside the corner shops while they are served.

No-one would have objected if the orange-shirted minders had done the same at Villa Park and thrown away the key.

# UNITED SALUTE

## Hero Giggs seals Wembley place with



BECK IS BEAUTIFUL  
David Beckham puts United ahead with a brilliant first-half strike

# Solskjaer has £6m spur to leave Old Trafford

By STEVE MILLAR

OLE GUNNAR Solskjaer could be ready to quit Old Trafford in the summer as Tottenham prepare to test his loyalty with a £6million swoop.

Italians Torino will make a move and Everton, would also pay the asking price for Manchester United's Norwegian striker.

He has scored 16 goals

this season in only 15 starts but is still not guaranteed a regular place and has been on the bench 19 times.

Solskjaer does not want to quit United and still has five years left on his contract.

But he said: "Being on

the bench is what I dislike most. I think I haven't played enough, but if I start thinking about moving at this time it will just take away my concentration from what I am supposed to do.

"I have always said that after each season you have to sit down and think about your future."



TARGET: Solskjaer could be leaving

John DILLON  
Arsenal 1 Man Utd 2 (after extra time)

**S**O HOW do they follow this at Wembley? And if they're planning to, how do we get tickets?

Classic goals, a stirring comeback by Manchester United, a disallowed goal, a sending-off and a missed penalty turned this FA Cup semi-final replay into one of the most dramatic nights of the season.

And, at the end of it all, a suitably dramatic finish sorted out who will face Newcastle in the final next month, with United wizard Ryan Giggs waltzing through the Arsenal defence to score one of the goals of his life.

Earlier United's David Beckham and Arsenal's Dennis Bergkamp fired in superb strikes which sent an epic confrontation between the nation's two most powerful sides into extra-time at Villa Park.

Roy Keane's red card, a minute after a Nicolas Anelka goal was ruled out for offside, and Bergkamp's 90th minute penalty miss ensured there was a hot-blooded dose of controversy to crank things up even further.

United boss Alex Ferguson's decision to drop front pair Dwight Yorke and Andy Cole must have been a surprise for the players who'd hammered 47 goals between them.

Their replacements, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and Teddy Sheringham, were desperate to impress. Norwegian Solskjaer had proven he was straining at the leash with his record of 16 goals in 15 starts in this campaign.

There was a tense opening quarter-of-an-hour when two sides who'd played 120 minutes of goalless football on Sunday were naturally wary of each other.

But the atmosphere changed dramatically in the 17th minute when Beckham scored a goal that was both sweetly executed and spectacular — even by his flamboyant standards.

Sheringham's clever ability to read situations and play telling, short passes played an important part after Beckham created the initial opening. He pounced on a loose ball and then scurried forward 20 yards searching for opportunity.

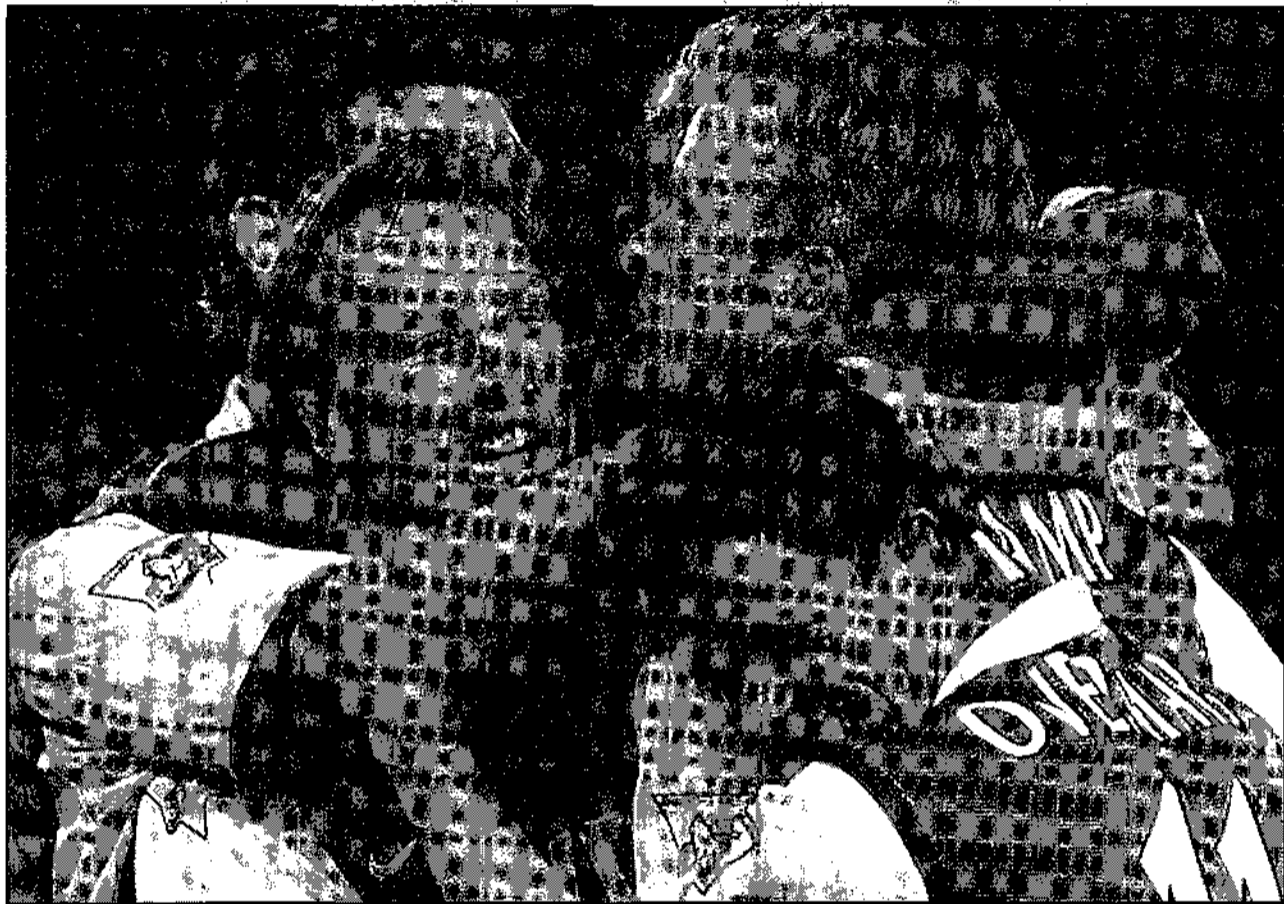
It came when he touched a short pass to Sheringham on his right and the former England striker shrewdly turned it back into Beckham's path.

Beckham supplied the gloss, scoring with a beautifully-struck, curling, drive which veered beyond the reach of David Seaman's dive into the left-hand corner of the net.

Arsenal's proud defensive record was busted after exactly 11 hours. And

# RYAN MIGHTY

## stunning strike to see off Gunners



GUN-DERFUL: Arsenal celebrate after Dennis Bergkamp's deflected goal put Arsene Wenger's men back in it. **PHOTOS: BRADLEY ORMESHER and KENT GAVIN**

Sheringham, restricted this season by injury, had aimed the taunts of Arsenal's fans straight back at them.

Rightly, such a goal ignited the contest and within four minutes Bergkamp had forced a fine diving save from Schmeichel.

United looked hungrier, though and Sheringham justified his presence again in the 23rd minute when he turned in an awkward low shot off a cross from Jesper Blomqvist, who started in place of Giggs.

Two minutes later Sheringham was a threat again when he climbed in the box to glance wide a header from Beckham's left-wing free-kick.

United's rapid-fire attacking was proving more successful than the Gunners' attempts to Anelka and slip searching balls behind the back four.

Bergkamp, his potency shackled in the first match at the weekend, came up again against an immovable force from his own native Holland in the shape of Jaap Stam. When Bergkamp looked to escape in the 20th minute, the burly Stam actually chased and caught him up before robbing him of the ball.

Six minutes later when he halted him again, it earned Stam a booking. But from dangerous position, Emmanuel Petit's free kick dropped easily into Schmeichel's arms. It wasn't until the 40th minute that they really threatened again when Petit — back from suspension

— charged into the right-hand of the box and forced Schmeichel to rush out for a brave block save.

Two minutes later Anelka surged into the box on the opposite flank only to fire his shot into the side-netting.

All the while, the temperature had been slowly rising along with the intensity of the competition.

Referee David Elleray booked Stam, Keane, Beckham and Arsenal's Martin Keown in a 10-minute spell midway through the first-half. But it was more a sign of the passion of the contest rather than of dirty intent.

And at half-time United were ahead both on the scoreboard and in terms of desire and smartness on the ball.

The feeling there was something not quite right about the Gunners grew in the early stages of the second-half.

It looked unfortunate when a simple midfield pass from Patrick Vieira went wayward and into touch. When a Nigel Winterburn throw-in and then a similar cross-field ball from Petit went astray and into no-man's

land as well, their frustration grew. Petit hammered the ground in despair with his be-gloved fists when he was deftly robbed by a sliding tackle from Nicky Butt in the 56th minute. That was a symbol of how Arsenal's desperate effort to find a way back in was being resolutely thwarted.

United's frustration was of a different kind. Solskjaer somehow shot wide in the 54th minute after an excellent inter-change between Sheringham and Keane had carved a golden opening for him. Then Blomqvist had a direct, low shot on the run bundled clear off Seaman's arms after another incisive pass from Sheringham opened things up in the 59th minute.

Blomqvist was replaced by Giggs a couple of minutes later when Arsenal also sent Overmars for Fredrik Ljungberg. That was just after Anelka, also be-gloved, clumsily lifted a close-range effort high above the bar after a great cross from Parlour sent him surging into space in the box. Who

else but the mighty Stam should come to the rescue with a text-book tackle when Arsenal next threatened from Tony Adams surprise charge at goal in the 64th minute.

The threat became reality as Bergkamp clawed Arsenal back into the game in the 69th minute and cranked up the excitement yet another notch.

The Dutchman doesn't need asking twice when such chances present themselves and 25 yards out he aimed in a difficult low shot.

Unhappily for Stam, it was deflected in off his leg past Schmeichel's despairing dive. It signalled a spell of mayhem because four minutes later United had sweet revenge for the Keane goal controversy, specially disallowed on Sunday. Anelka's effort was ruled out for offside when he'd pounced after Schmeichel fumbled a Bergkamp shot.

There was uproar again in the 73rd minute when Keane was sent off for upending Overmars and went was shown a red card for his second bookable offence. With practically the last kick before the match went into extra-time Bergkamp missed a penalty. His weakly struck spot-kick saved by Schmeichel after Phil Neville had fouled Parlour. Then came that unforgettable Giggs strike, with the winger racing past four defenders before firing high past Seaman from an

JUST FOR KICKS: Patrick Vieira and Nicky Butt tangle

### ARSENAL v MAN UTD FA CUP SEMI-FINAL: HOW THEY RATED

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| <p><b>SEAMAN 6</b><br/>Slow going to his right on the Beckham goal, the veteran Gunners keeper came back to make a stunning save late on.</p> <p><b>DIXON 6</b><br/>Had a busy evening dealing with the pace and trickery of a lively Blomqvist and gave a shaky performance a the back.</p> <p><b>ADAMS 7</b><br/>Adams rolled back the years and produced a searing run to rekindle Arsenal's hopes in the second half but couldn't finish it off.</p> <p><b>KEOWN 7</b><br/>Was the linchpin at the back. He battled hard to keep the Gunners dream alive but had his hands full with Solskjaer.</p> <p><b>WINTERBURN 7</b><br/>Looked steady and unruffled and provided plenty of options despite not having the use of Overmars until late in the second half.</p> <p><b>PARLOUR 7</b><br/>Did his best to kick start Arsenal's fight back on the right but couldn't quite find the telling ball to unlock United's defence.</p> <p><b>VIEIRA 7</b><br/>Missed a fine chance but kept plenty in the tank for extra time. Provided some deft touches and kept Arsenal in the hunt.</p> <p><b>LJUNGBERG 6</b><br/>Failed to make an impression upon United in the first sixty minutes. Wenger was eventually forced to replace him.</p> <p><b>PETIT 7</b><br/>Slow start on his return, the Frenchman made inroads into United's defence but couldn't provide the finish Arsenal required.</p> <p><b>ANELKA 6</b><br/>Got into good positions and caused United some problems, his disallowed second half goal broke the Gunners hearts.</p> <p><b>BERGKAMP 8</b><br/>Levelled the scores after battling through a maze of United's defenders. But missed penalty that would have sealed it on 90 minutes.</p> | <p><b>SCHMEICHEL 9</b><br/>Brilliant penalty save kept United in the game. The giant Dane looked in complete control throughout the match.</p> <p><b>G. NEVILLE 7</b><br/>Kept Arsenal in check and is returning to the kind-of form United expect of him after a couple of scratchy performances.</p> <p><b>STAM 7</b><br/>The giant defender was a rock at the back and was unlucky to be carded on the half hour. Otherwise a good game.</p> <p><b>JOHNSON 7</b><br/>Was involved in some promising midfield work. Worked quietly and effectively and created good positions for United.</p> <p><b>P. NEVILLE 6</b><br/>Made some spritely attacking runs on the left but his crossing too often lacked finesse. Brought Parlour down for Arsenal penalty.</p> <p><b>BECKHAM 8</b><br/>Scorching strike to put United into the lead. Kept the Gunners busy. He was full of ideas and a thorn in their side all night.</p> <p><b>BUTT 7</b><br/>Showed his vision with some lovely through balls and came out in the second half determined to make an impression.</p> <p><b>KEANE 5</b><br/>The battling United skipper marshalled his troops with passion but was over exuberant in the tackle and paid the ultimate price.</p> <p><b>BLOMQVIST 7</b><br/>Sharp and effective and battled hard all night. He caused panic down the flank and real problems for a troubled Dixon.</p> <p><b>SOLSKJAER 7</b><br/>Found plenty of space in the Arsenal box and linked well with Sheringham. Looked hungry for the win and played his part well.</p> <p><b>SHERINGHAM 7</b><br/>Lacking in match practice but a wealth of experience. Showed great vision to set up Beckham with a lovely touch.</p> |
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**MATCH STATS**

CORNERS	8
SHOTS ON TARGET	3
SHOTS OFF TARGET	6
YELLOW CARDS	2
RED CARDS	1

**SUBSTITUTES**

Overmars for Ljungberg (61) : Giggs for Blomqvist (61)  
 Kanu for Parlour (104) : Scholes for Sheringham (74)  
 Bould for Petit (118) : Yorke for Solskjaer (90)

**REFEREE: DAVID ELLERAY 8**