

= 1956 FA Cup Final =

The 1956 FA Cup Final was the final match of the 1955 ? 56 staging of English football 's primary cup competition , the Football Association Challenge Cup , better known as the FA Cup . The showpiece event was contested between Manchester City and Birmingham City at Wembley Stadium in London on Saturday 5 May 1956 . Two @-@ time winners Manchester City were appearing in their sixth final , whereas Birmingham City were seeking to win the competition for the first time , having lost their only previous final in 1931 .

Each club needed to win five matches to reach the final . Manchester City 's victories were close affairs , each settled by the odd goal , and they needed a replay to defeat fifth @-@ round opponents Liverpool . Birmingham City made more comfortable progress : they scored eighteen goals while conceding only two , and won each match at the first attempt despite being drawn to play on their opponents ' ground in every round . They became the first team to reach an FA Cup final without playing at home .

Birmingham City entered the match as favourites , in a contest billed as a contrast of styles . Watched by a crowd of 100 @,@ 000 and a television audience of five million , Manchester City took an early lead through Joe Hayes , but Noel Kinsey equalised midway through the first half . Second half goals from Jack Dyson and Bobby Johnstone gave Manchester City a 3 ? 1 victory . The match is best remembered for the heroics of Manchester City goalkeeper , Bert Trautmann , who continued playing despite breaking a bone in his neck in a collision with Birmingham City 's Peter Murphy .

= = Route to the final = =

= = = Manchester City = = =

As both Birmingham City and Manchester City were First Division clubs , they entered the competition in the third round . Manchester City 's cup run started with a home tie against Blackpool . The visitors took the lead after only 10 seconds (their fastest goal ever) , but midway through the match , fog enveloped Maine Road . The match was abandoned during the second half , immediately after City had scored an equalising goal , and replayed the following Wednesday ; City won 2 ? 1 . In the fourth round Manchester City faced Southend United at Roots Hall . The Essex club 's ground had only opened five months previously , and was suffering from drainage problems . Torrential rainfall meant that in the week before the match a trench was dug across the pitch , and sand added . Though Southend were a Third Division team , their familiarity with the uneven pitch meant the match was closely contested . Southend pressured the Manchester City goal , requiring Bert Trautmann to make several saves , but Joe Hayes scored the only goal of the game on a City counter @-@ attack to earn a fifth @-@ round tie against Liverpool .

In the fifth @-@ round match , the teams saw out a 0 ? 0 draw at Maine Road , and the match was replayed at Anfield . Goals from Jack Dyson and Bobby Johnstone gave Manchester City a 2 ? 1 lead , but the game finished in controversial circumstances when the referee blew his whistle for full time as Liverpool 's Billy Liddell was bearing down on goal . Liddell put the ball in the net , but unbeknown to him the goal did not count as the match was already over . In the quarter final Manchester City again played opposition from Liverpool , facing Everton at Maine Road . Trailing 1 ? 0 at half @-@ time after a Jimmy Harris goal , City overcame the deficit in the second half with goals from Hayes and Johnstone . Further controversy followed in the semi @-@ final against Tottenham Hotspur , when in the final minutes of the match , with the score at 1 ? 0 to Manchester City , Tottenham were denied a penalty after goalkeeper Trautmann grabbed forward George Robb 's leg . No further goalscoring opportunities occurred , and City hung on for the victory .

= = = Birmingham City = = =

Manager Arthur Turner called on his team to match their Third Division opponents Torquay United for fighting spirit and to produce a " 90 @-@ minute performance " . The players complied ; leading 4 ? 0 at half @-@ time , they finished as comfortable 7 ? 1 winners . In the fourth round , Leyton Orient , who had beaten Birmingham at the same stage four years earlier , posed more of a potential problem . In reality the win was equally comfortable : Eddy Brown added two goals to his hat @-@ trick at Torquay . A tight local derby game followed on a snow @-@ covered frozen pitch at The Hawthorns . In the first half , goalkeeper Gil Merrick and his defence did well to keep West Bromwich Albion out ; Trevor Smith had to clear an Ronnie Allen header from under the crossbar . In the second half , Birmingham wasted several chances before a one @-@ two with Brown allowed Peter Murphy to score from the edge of the penalty area .

In the sixth round , Birmingham faced Arsenal on a muddy pitch . In order to relieve the tension on the way to important matches , manager Turner used to encourage the players to sing . Scotsman Alex Govan 's contribution , Harry Lauder 's rousing " Keep right on to the end of the road " , was adopted by his team @-@ mates . As the team coach approached Highbury with the windows wound down , the fans joined in , continuing their rendition during the game . After first @-@ half goals from Gordon Astall and Murphy , Birmingham went 3 ? 0 up through Brown with twenty minutes left . Two minutes later , Arsenal scored from 30 yards (27 m) , Birmingham were unsettled , and Merrick needed to make a fine save from Vic Groves to prevent a second Arsenal goal . Turner felt the motivation from such a powerful song played a significant part in the day 's victory .

Semi @-@ final opponents Sunderland found Birmingham without " hard @-@ man " left @-@ half Roy Warhurst , who had injured a thigh against Arsenal , but in Jack Badham they had an effective replacement . The club 's official history describes this as " probably the finest team performance against top class opposition ever produced " by a Birmingham team . They attacked from the kick @-@ off and nullified Sunderland 's pressure and the threat of Len Shackleton . Noel Kinsey scored early and the second goal came from a passing move down the left side finished by Astall . As Sunderland threw everyone forward , which left them open at the back , Brown picked up a long through ball and lobbed the goalkeeper . Astall said afterwards that he was surprised they had not scored five , and Brown wrote in his newspaper column :

Now Sunderland found out how hard it is to score against this terrific defence of ours . Not for nothing have we scored 18 goals against two (both of them freaks) conceded in five ties all away from home . What can I say to do justice to that brilliant goalkeeper Gil Merrick , to wonderful young Trevor Smith and to the matchless Jeff Hall and Ken Green ? Once again they mixed the old cement and constructed that brilliant wall of a defence . Sunderland would have needed to call in a firm of demolition contractors to destroy it .

Birmingham City thus reached the final without playing a single tie at home , a feat which had never previously been accomplished .

= = Build @-@ up = =

The 1956 final was the second time that Birmingham had reached the showpiece match , having lost 2 ? 1 to West Bromwich Albion in 1931 . Manchester City were appearing in the final for the sixth time , and for the second consecutive year . They had won the cup twice previously (in 1904 and 1934) , and had been beaten in the final three times (in 1926 , 1933 and 1955) . Though Birmingham had less pedigree in the competition , the press viewed them as favourites . The Daily Telegraph contrasted Birmingham 's " dazzling Cup run " with the manner in which Manchester City " scraped through " , describing the Midlands as " firm favourites " . Interviews with players were typically bullish in tone . Manchester City 's Bobby Johnstone opined that " Even an unbiased fan must regard Manchester City with favour " , whereas Birmingham 's Len Boyd gauged opinion quite differently : " They say Birmingham City are the hottest Cup favourites since Wolves crashed to Portsmouth in 1939 " .

During the 1950s the FA Cup final was the only football match to be televised nationally , resulting in heightened media attention for the players and clubs involved . The Players ' Union successfully requested an additional £ 5 per man for appearing in a televised match , the first time such

appearance money had been paid . Birmingham 's players signed an exclusive contract with the BBC committing them to appear only on BBC programmes in the weeks leading up to the final , though their post @-@ match celebration would be covered live by the regional commercial station ATV . The match itself attracted a television audience of five million , a high figure for the period .

Each club received 15 @,@ 000 tickets for the final from the Football Association . Birmingham distributed their share by ballot among those supporters who had followed the team in the earlier rounds of the competition ; 22 @,@ 000 had attended the semi @-@ final , so many thousands were left disappointed . Of the remaining tickets , 4 @,@ 640 were allocated to the FA , 40 @,@ 640 to County Associations , 20 @,@ 090 to Football League clubs , 2 @,@ 550 to FA members and 2 @,@ 080 to the FA Council and stadium authorities . An enquiry into the black market held following the previous year 's Cup Final meant ticket touts kept a lower profile than usual . However , in the week leading up to the game , the cheapest standing tickets , originally sold for 3s 6d , were changing hands in Birmingham for twenty times face value , or 35 % of a manual worker 's weekly earnings .

Manchester City spent the week preceding the final at a training camp in Eastbourne . Two days before the final Bert Trautmann , who had originally arrived in England as a prisoner of war , was named Footballer of the Year . Eight players who had played in the previous year 's final were selected in the starting line @-@ up . Press speculation in the run @-@ up to the match pondered which of Don Revie and Bobby Johnstone would be selected , as Johnstone had been suffering from a calf problem . Bill Leivers was also an injury doubt due to a twisted ankle , and Billy Spurdle had a boil on his left arm lanced on the eve of the final . Consequently , the Manchester City line @-@ up was not named until the morning of the match . Leivers was passed fit after having two pain @-@ killing injections , but contrary to press expectations Spurdle missed out . This meant both Revie and Johnstone appeared in the line @-@ up , Johnstone switching to outside right .

Birmingham also had doubts over their selection . Captain Len Boyd had for some time been suffering from a debilitating back problem , and relied on injections to keep him playing . He missed five of the last seven games of the season , but was passed fit on the Wednesday before the game . Fellow wing half Roy Warhurst had injured his thigh in the sixth @-@ round match and played no further part in the season , while Badham , who damaged an ankle three weeks before the final , travelled on the Thursday with the rest of the team to their base in Twyford , Berkshire . Jeff Hall was struggling with a virus . When manager Turner announced his team on the eve of the match , Boyd took Warhurst 's position at left @-@ half , Badham , who had proved an able deputy in the semi @-@ final , was omitted , and the inexperienced 22 @-@ year @-@ old Johnny Newman came in on the right .

British Railways laid on 38 special trains to take some 19 @,@ 000 supporters to London , the first of which arrived at St Pancras station from Manchester shortly after 3 a.m. For the first time , the official programmes were on sale from early morning in an attempt to thwart sellers of unofficial versions . The Birmingham Mail set up a temporary press in a Wembley car park to produce a special edition of their Saturday sports paper , the Sports Argus , on blue paper rather than the usual pink . As the teams prepared in the dressing rooms , the crowd was led in communal singing , including songs with resonance for each of the two teams , " She 's a lassie from Lancashire " and " Keep right on to the end of the road " , and the hymn " Abide with Me " , traditionally sung before every FA Cup final . As the teams emerged from the tunnel , Manchester City captain Roy Paul seized one last opportunity to stir emotion within the players by stopping , raising his fist and shouting " If we don 't fucking win , you 'll get some of this " .

= = Match = =

= = = Summary = = =

Both teams employed the formation typical of the era : two full @-@ backs , a centre @-@ half , two wing @-@ halves , two outside @-@ forwards , two inside @-@ forwards and a centre @-@

forward . However , their tactical approaches differed . Birmingham , described by The Times as using " iron determination , powerful tackling and open direct methods " , employed the traditional English approach of getting the ball to the outside @-@ forwards as quickly as possible , whereas Manchester City adopted tactics inspired by the Hungarian team which had soundly beaten England at Wembley three years before . The system involved using Don Revie in a deeper position than a traditional centre @-@ forward in order to draw a defender out of position , and was therefore known as the " Revie Plan " . As both teams ' first @-@ choice colours were blue , each team wore their change strip to prevent confusion . Manchester City therefore wore maroon , and Birmingham City wore white .

Birmingham won the toss and Manchester City kicked off . The Birmingham goal came under pressure almost immediately . Within a minute a far post cross from Roy Clarke narrowly eluded Hayes . Two corners followed , the second resulting in a shot by Roy Paul . The next attack , in the third minute , resulted in the opening goal . Revie began the move , exchanging passes with Clarke , and back @-@ heeling for the unmarked Hayes to sweep the ball past Gil Merrick to put Manchester City ahead . Birmingham 's confidence was shaken , resulting in a series of Manchester City corners and a chance for Hayes , but they fought back to equalise in the 15th minute . Astall slipped the ball to Brown , who helped it forward . It rebounded off a Manchester City defender into the path of Welsh international inside ? forward Noel Kinsey , who fired home via Trautmann 's far post . For the remainder of the first half Birmingham had most of the play , exerting pressure on Manchester City full @-@ back Leivers , but were unable to make a breakthrough . Though Birmingham put the ball in the net twice , Brown was adjudged to be offside on both occasions . With Warhurst missing and Boyd out of position and not fully fit , Birmingham 's strength and balance was disrupted , leaving them particularly vulnerable to Manchester City 's unconventional style .

During the half @-@ time interval , a row erupted between the Birmingham manager and some of his players about their fitness ; in the Manchester City dressing room , a heated exchange took place between Barnes and Revie . Barnes had played defensively in the first half to counter the threat of Peter Murphy , but Revie urged him to play further forward . Meanwhile , manager Les McDowall exhorted his players to keep possession and make their opponents chase the ball .

The period immediately after half ? time saw few chances , but then , after just over an hour 's play , Manchester City regained their stride and suddenly went two goals ahead . A throw @-@ in to Revie led to interplay on the right wing involving Barnes , Dyson , and Johnstone , resulting in a through @-@ ball which put Dyson clear of the defence to score . Two minutes later , Trautmann collected the ball at the end of a Birmingham attack and kicked the ball long to Dyson , over the heads of the retreating Birmingham players . Dyson flicked the ball on to Bobby Johnstone , who scored Manchester City 's third , becoming the first player ever to score in consecutive Wembley finals in the process .

With 17 minutes remaining , a Birmingham chance arose when Murphy outpaced Dave Ewing . Goalkeeper Trautmann dived at the feet of Murphy to win the ball , but in the collision Murphy 's right knee hit Trautmann 's neck with a forceful blow . Trautmann was knocked unconscious , and the referee stopped play immediately . Trainer Laurie Barnett rushed onto the pitch , and treatment continued for several minutes . No substitutes were permitted , so Manchester City would have to see out the game with ten men if Trautmann was unable to continue . Captain Roy Paul felt certain that Trautmann was not fit to complete the match , and wished to put Roy Little in goal instead . However , Trautmann , dazed and unsteady on his feet , insisted upon keeping his goal . He played out the remaining minutes in great pain , with the Manchester City defenders attempting to clear the ball well upfield or into the stand whenever it came near . Trautmann was called upon to make two further saves to deny Brown and Murphy , the second causing him to recoil in agony due to a collision with Ewing , which required the trainer to revive him .

No further goals were scored , and the referee blew for full time with the final score 3 ? 1 to Manchester City . As the players left the field , the crowd sang a chorus of " For he 's a jolly good fellow " in tribute to Trautmann 's bravery . Roy Paul led his team up the steps to the royal box to receive Manchester City 's third FA Cup . Trautmann 's neck continued to cause him pain , and

Prince Philip commented on its crooked state as he gave Trautmann his winner 's medal . Three days later , an examination revealed that Trautmann had broken a bone in his neck .

= = = Details = = =

= = Post @-@ match = =

Trautmann attended the evening 's post @-@ match banquet (where Alma Cogan sang to the players) despite being unable to move his head , and went to bed expecting his injury to heal with rest . As the pain did not recede , the following day he went to St George 's Hospital , where he was told he merely had a crick in his neck which would go away . Three days later , he got a second opinion from a doctor at Manchester Royal Infirmary . An X @-@ ray revealed he had dislocated five vertebrae in his neck , the second of which was cracked in two . The third vertebra had wedged against the second , preventing further damage which could have cost Trautmann his life .

When Manchester City 's train from London reached Manchester , the team were greeted by cameras from Granada TV and an open @-@ top bus . They embarked on a journey from London Road station to the town hall in Albert Square , taking a route along some of Manchester 's main shopping streets . The size and spirit of the crowds led the Manchester Evening Chronicle to make comparisons with VE Day . The boisterousness of the crowds in Albert Square meant the Lord Mayor struggled to make his speech heard above chants of " We want Bert " . After the civic reception at the Town Hall and a banquet at a Piccadilly restaurant , the team returned to the open @-@ top bus and headed to Belle Vue Pleasure Gardens , near the club 's former home of Hyde Road in east Manchester , where the Chronicle held a function .

An estimated 10 @,@ 000 people met the Birmingham City party on their return to Snow Hill station . The players , in the first of a convoy of four coaches , waved to the assembled crowds through the open sun @-@ roof as they proceeded to the Council House , where the Lord Mayor welcomed them on behalf of the city . Len Boyd addressed the crowds from the balcony before the coaches continued through the city centre and back to St Andrew 's , Birmingham City 's home ground . The following Wednesday , a dinner was held to honour the club 's achievements . Guests included the 84 @-@ year @-@ old Billy Walton , who had joined the club in 1888 , six members of Birmingham 's 1931 cup final team , and a trade delegation from the Soviet city of Sverdlovsk .

Though the thousands gathered outside the Council House roared " No ! " when Boyd said the team felt they had let the supporters down , there were recriminations concerning Birmingham 's performance and team selection . The local press suggested that attempts to combat " Wembley nerves " had resulted in an " over @-@ casual approach to the game " . The row at half @-@ time had done little for second @-@ half morale , but speaking fifty years later , Gil Merrick placed the blame less on Boyd 's questionable fitness than on a failure to discuss how to stop Revie . Alex Govan , convinced that " if Roy Warhurst had been fit then there would only have been one winner " , blamed " bad team selection " , saying that even without Warhurst he firmly believed " that if Badham had been in we would have won that game . He would never have given Don Revie the room to run the match . " Warhurst himself thought the selection of Newman " meant the team had to adapt its style and in the end we used different tactics to those that had been successful all season " .