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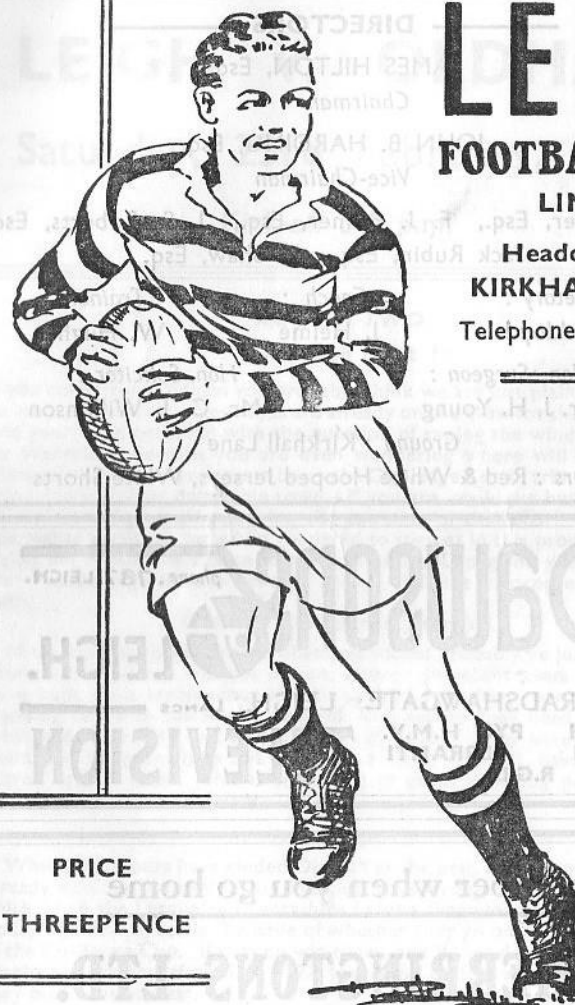
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2nd Round — RUGBY LEAGUE CHALLENGE CUP

LEIGH v. OLDHAM

Saturday, 23rd February, 1957

Kick-off 3-0 p.m.

ROUND TWO

Can Leigh do it ?

If you come from Oldham you probably think we are just plain stupid even to ask that question. Your eyes are already on the draw for the next round and your mind occupied with the question of raising the wind for the trip to Wembley. Perhaps you are even wondering where will be the best place to stand when your team bears the Challenge Cup in triumph through the streets of your delectable town. If you are, could we humbly remind you of an old saying concerning the counting of chickens ? We do this somewhat nervously for when we dared to suggest in this programme that Leigh might stand a chance in the Lancashire Cup game your eyebrows were raised high in astonishment at our childlike innocence and simple faith.

Oldham Confidence Justified

Mind you if we came from Oldham we should probably be just as cockily confident. And not without reason, either. In recent years the visitors have built up a tremendous reputation and have been one of the outstanding teams in the Rugby League. This season they head the League table and have only lost four of their 28 games. They have scored 601 points and conceded only 254. Only St. Helens, with 241, have less points scored against them. This is significant of great attacking power and a well-nigh impregnable defence.

Four Cups ?

Whereas honours have eluded Oldham in the past, this season they have already won the Lancashire Cup and must have strong claims to be in at the finish when the League and Lancashire League championships are decided. Today's game will settle the issue of whether they go on to the next stage of the Challenge Cup. If they do win today, and if they do go on to win the trophy for the first time since 1927, there will be few who will deny that they merit the success.

No Defeatism Here

Much as the odds favour Oldham and much as many Leigh supporters must feel that gallantry alone will not overcome the Oldham machine, we in the Leigh camp are not wearing premature mourning. We know that Leigh will have to be on top form to win, that they will need all the luck that

is going and that it will be up to every man not only to give of his best but to produce eighty minutes of concentrated effort. There must be no lapses. Victory will be sweet, defeat can be glorious.

Previous Encounters

Oldham have already beaten Leigh twice this season. At Watersheddings Leigh returned pointless from a League game, and lost 18-9 here at Kirkhall Lane in the semi-final of the Lancashire Cup competition. Last season, too, Oldham won both League games.

The clubs first met in the cup competition as long ago as 1899 when, at Broughton, Oldham beat Leigh 16-2 in the semi-final. In 1914 Leigh lost at home by 9 points to nil, and in 1925 Oldham went on to win the Cup after beating Leigh in the first round. In 1926 Leigh turned the tables by winning at home in the first round. There was no further cup meeting between the clubs until 1955 when Leigh were the victors in a second round game.

Oldham Stars

Most teams have one or two players who stand out above the rest, but in the case of Oldham one is tempted to apply the term "all-star". If that is too fulsome praise there is little doubt that the all-round quality of the Oldham side is above average. Our records of Oldham scoring are incomplete, but we know that Etty is a prolific try-scorer and that he was the architect of victory over Workington. Cracknell, Pitchford, Ayres, Turner, Keith, Little Stirrup, Davies and, of course, goal-kicking Ganley; these are some of the players who make Oldham such a powerful side. Then there is still Nestor and Daley to call upon. Rogers and Vines are out of action, but good reserves and adaptability make their absence regretted but not vital. Several of the Oldham side, ironically enough, come from the Leigh district.

Leigh No Mugs

Leigh supporters who have persisted in reading so far will probably be wondering whether the writer is, in fact, an Oldham supporter who has managed to sabotage the programme. Let us try to redress the balance, then, by proclaiming that Leigh are not without favour. (We just don't want to give our secrets away!) Seriously though, the recent displays of the Leigh side have been of a sufficiently high standard to inspire confidence in their ability to give a good account of themselves this afternoon.

Into Battle

Here we are then, with Oldham the favourites and the promise of a ding-dong struggle. That the ground should be full goes without saying. Many thousands will have made the trip from Oldham and they will be loud in support of their side. Let the welkin ring for Leigh. Let the cheers break free from the grip of your pessimism. Make the windows rattle in Bongs, Bent and Bickershaw.

HOSPITAL COMMENTARY

Today's commentary will be provided by:—

B. Brogden, 33 Beech Walk, Leigh.

A Savage, 22 Market Street, Leigh.

J. Monks, Deans Close, Beech Walk, Leigh.

SACKCLOTH AND ASHES

In the last issue of this programme, that for the Barrow match, we urged you not to forget a floodlight fixture with Widges and gave the date as last Wednesday. The match is, of course, next week and we apologise most humbly for any inconvenience we may have caused. We can only put it down to a temporary lapse from rational behaviour resulting from a dream in which we saw Peter Foster carrying the Challenge Cup to a reception in Leigh Town Hall.

INQUEST

Tongues were wagging merrily after last Saturday's game against Barrow. They were busy finding whipping boys for the narrow defeat. The chief complaint seemed to be against players who had left gaps through which Castle and the other Barrow scorers had romped at will. Apparently the Leigh defence was as full of holes as a colander.

After four victories in a row defeat was bound to be unpalatable, especially as it was suffered in the game's dying moments. However, a little cool reflection should surely have convinced the critics that their strictures were founded more on disappointment than on common sense.

Barrow Had Advantages

Leigh lost by only two points. They lost to a bigger side. They lost to a team that had internationals in Grundy and Jackson. They fell to a side that had Willie Horne who, despite that shocking attempt to drop a goal from under the bar, is still a mighty schemer. And don't forget that Leigh lost to a side that has been either first or second in the League table since the season got under way.

No Disgrace

There was no disgrace in Leigh's last-minute defeat. If they had held out for another four minutes the grumbles would not have been carping. They would have been praising Leigh's efforts. Certainly there were defensive gaps at times, and Barrow profited by them. What the critics don't seem to realise is that these gaps are more often than not created by the attacking side, the side in possession. Professionals just don't go to sleep on the job.

Not Consistent

Let Kindon receive the ball on the touch-line and beat three or four men to touch down behind the posts—the critics applaud his brilliance, and rightly so. He is clever because he uses his natural abilities and acquired skill to create openings. Now let Castle or Rea or any other opponent do the same thing, and what happens? The centres are castigated. They couldn't stop a pig in an entry. The critics are not consistent or they are so blinkered that they only see one side.

A man missed out in a passing movement, a sudden switch of direction or change of pace, intensive backing up by forwards content to draw the opposition, these are only a few of the moves that create gaps and overlaps to confound even the best of defences. Barrow operated these moves more often than Leigh did and reaped the reward.

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- 6—TOOHEY
- 7—FALLON
- 8—ROBINSON
- 9—TABERN
- 10—OWEN
- 11—HURT
- 12—MARTYN
- 13—FOSTER

OLDHAM

- 1—GANLEY
- 2—CRACKNELL
- 3—AYRES
- 4—DAVIES
- 5—ETTY
- 6—STIRRUP/DALY
- 7—PITCHFORD
- 8—JACKSON
- 9—KEITH
- 10—TOMLINSON
- 11—LITTLE
- 12—WINSLADE
- 13—TURNER

Referee : M. COATES (Pudsey)

Touch Judges :

S. J. Heesom (Warrington)

F. E. Hanson (Castleford)

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Defence Was Praiseworthy

None of the Barrow tries came from glaring defensive errors. Those who are gap conscious might do well to reflect on the way in which the Leigh line stood up to a terrible battering from Messrs. Barton, Woosey, Goodwin and Grundy. Did they bother to count the tackles made by Reakes and Atherton. And where were Barrow's tries scored? Under the posts? No—in the corners where Joe Ball could not convert them. That doesn't tally with this moaning about gaps in the middle. If Leigh had lost by 20 points there might have been some justification for it.

Barrow A Better Side

Let us not blink the fact—Barrow were the better team, even though Leigh appeared to be rocking them at one stage. Leigh lost because many of their attacking moves broke down through lack of support, because somebody failed to take an unexpected pass, or because the move wasn't good enough or executed well enough to create a gap or overlap.

It was a hard game played on a pitch that must have wearied both sides by its gluey quality. That Barrow snatched victory was disappointing, but it was also proof that the Furness side is a formidable one and well worthy of its challenging position in the League.

FOR THE RECORD

Leigh have now played 26 League games divided equally between home and away fixtures. 13 games have been won, 12 lost and 1 drawn. Only 4 away wins have been registered while only 3 games have been lost at Kirkhall Lane.

In all, 31 games have given 16 victories, 14 defeats and 1 draw.

Of the 483 points scored in League games 290 were obtained in home fixtures. The points came from 93 tries, 50 penalty goals and 52 conversions. League opponents have scored 75 tries, 32 penalty goals and 44 conversions, a total of 377 points.

In all 31 games Leigh have scored 577 points from 111 tries and 122 goals against 83 tries and 85 goals 419 points, by opponents.

Foster still leads the appearances with 29 out of a possible 31, Fallon having 28 and Holden 27. Counting only the 29 League and cup games the appearances are as follows :—

Foster (28), Fallon (27), Holden, Kindon (25), Martyn, Owen (23), Gibson (22), Tabern, Ledgard (20), Hurt, Robinson (19), Atherton (16), Toohey (14), Crook, Hosking (12), McFarlane, Dickens (8), Hutson, E. (7), Hutson, W., Eckersley (6), Barton (5), Murphy, Kitchen, Rigby (4), Reakes, Chadwick, Davies (3), Baxter, Freeman, O'Brien (2), Bright, Kay, Rhodes, Morgan, Clarke (1).

Goals have been scored as follows :—

	League	Cup	Others	Total
Ledgard	71	8	1	80
Hosking	31	4	7	42

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Tries have been scored as follows :—

	League	Cup	Others	Total
Kindon	23	2	2	27
Holden	10	2	—	12
Fallon	9	1	—	10
Martyn	8	2	—	10
Gibson	6	1	—	7
Hutson, E.	5	1	—	6
Kitchen	1	—	4	5
Atherton	3	—	1	4
Hutson, W.	4	—	—	4
McFarlane	4	—	—	4
Hurt	3	—	—	3
Crook	2	—	1	3
Chadwick	2	—	—	2
Hosking	2	—	—	2
Owen	2	—	—	2
Reakes	2	—	—	2
Tabern	2	—	—	2
Toohey	2	—	—	2
Eckersley	1	—	—	1
Foster	1	—	—	1
Robinson	1	—	—	1
Murphy	—	—	1	1

WELCOME STRANGER

There will be hundreds here today who have been attracted by the nature of the occasion. Perhaps they include some of the 'Lost Legion', the ones who used to be regular spectators here. We bid them welcome, wish them an enjoyable afternoon's sport and hope that we shall see them more often at Kirkhall Lane.

WEDNESDAY 27th FEBRUARY
FLOODLIGHT MATCH v. WIDNES

FIXTURES and RESULTS 1956-57

1956	First Team	F	A	1956	'A' Team	F	A
Aug. 11	Widnes (C.C.)	A	5 10	Aug. 11	Widnes (C.C.)	H	20 0
18	York ...	A	5 10	18	Oldham...	H	23 16
20	Keighley (7-0)	H	21 11	25	Swinton ...	A	5 10
25	Swinton ...	H	7 10	Sept. 1	Lancs. Cnty Shield		
29	Oldham (7-0)	A	0 20	8			
Sept. 1	Lancs. Cup			15	Warrington (F)	A	8 17
8	Bramley ...	A	12 8	22	Wigan (F) ...	H	16 18
15	Hunslet ...	H	40 17	29			
22	Wakefield T.	A	18 37	Oct. 6	Blackpool B.	H	51 0
29	Bramley ...	H	34 5	13	Wigan ...	A	8 21
Oct. 6	Blackpool B.	A	43 14	20	Rochdale H.	H	20 2
13	Wigan ...	H	11 17	27	Liverpool C.	A	16 11
20	Rochdale H.	A	13 18	Nov. 3	St. Helens ...	A	...
27	Liverpool C.	H	20 11	10			
Nov. 3	Wakefield T.	H	28 17	17	Workington T.	H	61 2
10				24	Rochdale (F)	A	...
17	Workington T.	A	10 15	Dec. 1	Whitehaven	A	...
24	Halifax ...	H	30 5	8			
Dec. 1	Whitehaven	H	21 10	15	Oldham (F) ...	A	14 6
8	Keighley ...	A	17 23	22	Widnes ...	A	...
15				25			
22	Widnes ...	H	...	26	Warrington ...	H	...
25	St. Helens ...	H	7 7	29	Salford ...	H	...
26	Warrington ...	A	...	1957			
29	Salford ...	A	8 32	Jan. 1	St. Helens ...	H	...
1957				5	Salford ...	A	...
Jan. 1	St. Helens ...	A	14 18	12	Barrow ...	H	...
5	Salford ...	H	22 8	19	Blackpool B.	A	...
12	Barrow ...	A	11 12	26	Swinton ...	H	...
19	Blackpool B.	H	43 9	Feb. 2			
26	Swinton ...	A	24 21	9	Warrington (F)	H	...
Feb. 2	Halifax ...	A	18 8	16	Barrow ...	A	...
9	R.L. Cup 1st Rd.	17 11		23	Wigan (F) ...	A	...
16	Barrow ...	H	13 15	9	Wigan ...	H	...
23	R.L. Cup 2nd Rd.	...		16	Workington T.	A	...
Mar. 2	Rochdale H.	H	...	23	Liverpool C.	H	...
9	Wigan ...	A	...	30	Widnes ...	H	...
16	Workington T.	H	...	April 6	Oldham...	A	...
23	Liverpool C.	A	...	13	Oldham (F)	H	...
April 6	Oldham...	H	...	19	Whitehaven	H	...
13	Hunslet ...	A	...	20			
19	Whitehaven	A	...	22	Warrington	A	...
20	York ...	H	...	(F)—Friendly			
22	Warrington	H	...				

Kick-off Times. Sat. Aug. 18th to Frid. Nov. 16th, 3 p.m. ; Sat. Nov. 17th to Frid. Jan. 18th, 2-30 p.m. ; Sat. Jan. 19th to end of Season, 3 p.m.



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