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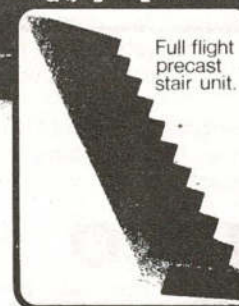
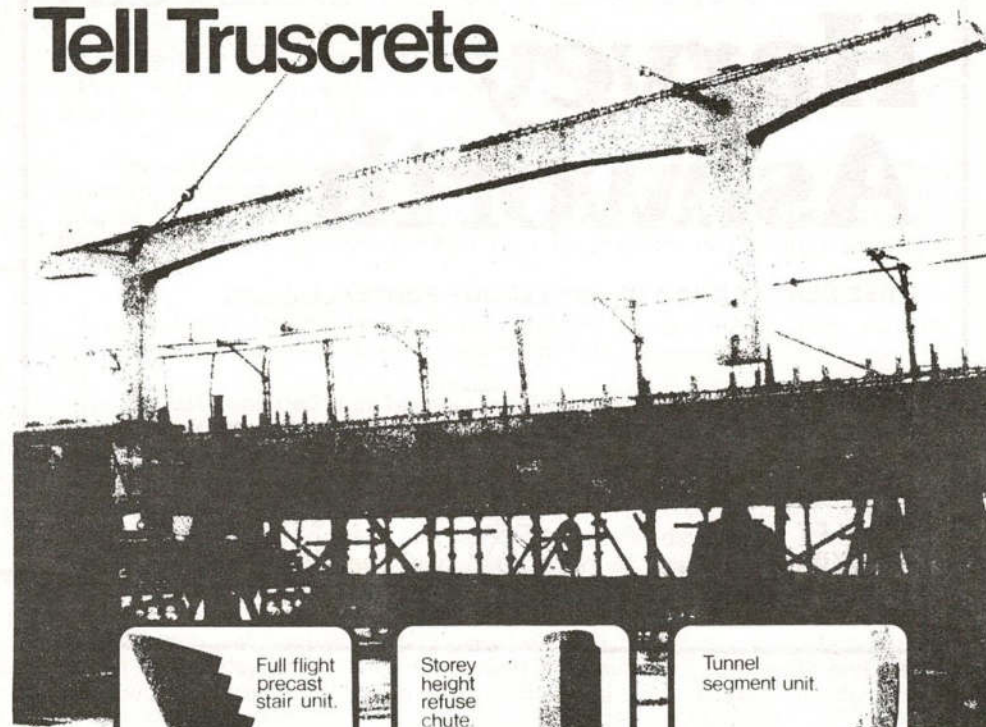
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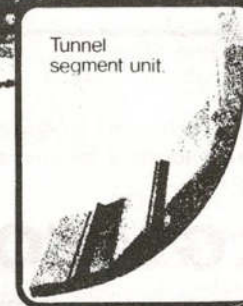
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OLDHAM OUTLOOK

May we take this opportunity of wishing you all a very happy and prosperous 1978 and link with that a hope that you spent an enjoyable holiday over the Christmas period.

Today we welcome to Watersheddings our old friends from the Athletic Grounds, our near neighbours Rochdale Hornets. There is always keen and intense rivalry in our derby battles and today's game is all the keener between the clubs as both are hell bent for a place in the First Division next season.

We are placed fourth with three away defeats so far and, as such, are out today to preserve our unbeaten home record this season.

We had all expected that Hornets would come here today with a 100 per cent Second Division record and that one record or the other would be bound to go.

However, the Hornets were on the wrong end of a shock home defeat by lowly Doncaster at the Athletic Grounds last Sunday which stopped the Hornets in their tracks just four games short of equalling Bradford Northern's record of 17 Division Two wins before suffering their first reverse.

This means, of course, that the Hornets will be all the more determined to win here today and avenge the defeat they suffered 12 months ago when they were winning at half-time but finished well beaten on the day.

The Hornets, of course, are almost certain to be playing Tony Wainwright in the centre and it is interesting to recall that he played a major role in the Oldham win on Boxing Day last year.

It is in the pack, however, where Hornets are strongest and it is perhaps significant that prop Tony Gourley played for Lancashire a few weeks ago, second-row man Wally Jones was a reserve for last Sunday's under-24 international in France and Alan Hodgkinson was a tourist Down Under last summer.

Add to that the skills and experience of Kel Coslett, the ball-playing and determination of Kevin Ashcroft and the pace and power of Tony Cooke and you have a well-balanced set of forwards which can test the best.

Coslett believes that his back-row of Cooke, Jones and Dave Hartley, the converted centre who has replaced Tony Halmshaw, is one of the best in both divisions so Oldham will clearly have it all to do if they are to keep that record intact today.

Whatever the result may we see a top-class game of Rugby League with the holiday crowd well and truly entertained.

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OUR VISITORS BY DON YATES

This afternoon Watersheddings is sure to house it's biggest gate of the season with the eagerly awaited visit from arch rivals Rochdale Hornets, the run away leaders of the Second Division who will be out to record their 13th league victory of the season against an Oldham side who will be equally determined to maintain their record of not losing a home game so far in this campaign. In establishing their lead at the top of the table Hornets have so far recorded double league victories over Huyton, Whitehaven, Batley, Halifax and Blackpool Borough and now seem certain of promotion as well as being strong candidates for the Second Division Championship.

Although Oldham's league record is not so impressive, they remain unbeaten in eight home matches which indicates that today's match will live up to its billing as a Christmas spectacular. Last season, Rochdale's Boxing Day visit to Watersheddings produced plenty of thrills and excitement and Hornets's first league defeat on this ground since September 1969 but Oldham's 14-6 success, achieved after they had trailed 6-0 at half-time, was reversed later in the season when Rochdale thrashed Oldham 29-6 at the Athletic Grounds thus recording their fifth victory over Oldham in the last six league meetings between these two clubs. There have been many memorable matches involving these clubs over the years and one which immediately springs to mind was Rochdale's epic 8-2 victory here in 1971 when they triumphed despite having two players sent off in the first half. Another rousing clash occurred in the spring of 1975 when Oldham drew 10-10 at Rochdale in the second round of the Challenge Cup and then won the replay 15-3 before a packed and emotional Watersheddings crowd.

One of Oldham's heroes in that cup-tie was centre Tony Wainwright who today will be lining up in the tremendously experienced Hornets squad which contains such well known names as winger David Jenkins, half-backs Warren Ayres and Jeff Heaton and forwards Alan Hodgkinson, Kel Coslett and Kevin Ashcroft. The acquisition of front-row forward Kevin Ashcroft from Leigh last September for £1,000 was one of manager Kel Coslett's shrewdest moves for Ashcroft's enthusiasm has spread throughout the entire Rochdale pack. He is a vastly experienced player who has been playing professionally since 1963 when he joined Dewsbury from Leigh juniors and since then he has enjoyed tremendous success with Rochdale, Leigh, Warrington, Leigh again and now during his second spell at the Athletic Grounds. It was during his first spell with Rochdale that Ashcroft gained his first representative honour, playing for Great Britain under-24 against France at Toulouse and he has since graduated to play several times for Lancashire, tour Australasia with Great Britain in 1974 and play in six test matches for Britain.

There is little doubt that Hornets have the edge over Oldham as far as experience is concerned and they certainly are the team in form but Oldham fear no-one at home and ground advantage is a tremendous help in matches as vitally important as today's. It is a game which could go either way and is full of exciting possibilities so let us sit back and enjoy what for many local rugby league enthusiasts is the highlight of the Christmas festivities.

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- 6 AYRES, W.
- 7 HEATON, G.
- 8 HODKINSON, A.
- 9 ASHCROFT, K.
- 10 COSLETT, K.
- 11 JONES, W.
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ANOTHER INCREASE IN RUGBY LEAGUE GATES

The Rugby Football League have once again been able to announce a tremendous and encouraging increase in attendances at domestic rugby league matches.

During the month of November, the 56 matches attracted 197,821 spectators, giving an average attendance of 3,533 which compares very favourably with the 2,533 average of two years ago.

The upward swing in attendance figures has been most notable, though, in the lucrative John Player Competition with almost 20,000 more people watching this seasons £30,000 tournament than watched last year. So far 134,229 spectators have attended John Player Cup-ties and another bumper gate is sure to attend at Knowsley Road, St. Helens on Saturday, 28th January, 1978 when Warrington face Widnes in the final.

Commenting on the increased attendance Figures, Rugby League Secretary David Oxley remarked, "Everyone in the game can continue to draw enthusiasm from this steady increase, which indicates that we are at present keeping last season's added support and still attracting more newcomers. The task in hand is to maintain this steady upswing and establish Rugby League as one of the country's few growth sports."

MAN IN THE MIDDLE

Today's important and potentially explosive match will be refereed by Billy Thompson, the 1977 Trumanns Steel Referee of the Year who is generally regarded as the World's No 1 official. Forty-four-years old Mr. Thompson is a vastly experienced referee who has been refereeing since 1963 and is in his 10 th season as a Grade One official. He has officiated at numerous important matches including 15 major cup finals and 16 full internationals including matches in the World Championships in England in 1970, France in 1975 and Australasia last summer when he reached the high spot of his career by refereeing the World Championship Final. He is a married man with three daughters who lives at Linthwaite, Huddersfield where he works as an engineer with David Brown tractors Mr. Thompson refereed that memorable Oldham-Homets clash on Boxing Day 1971 when he sent off Alan Hodgkinson and Peter Clarke but despite these dismissals Rochdale went on to win a classic match 8-2.

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With the Amateurs ALAN BURKE

With Christmas time being especially joyful for youngsters, today's article concentrates mainly on the various youth leagues and youth teams in and around Oldham.

Most of the recent publicity concerning the Oldham Amateur Rugby League has been about the successful Saddleworth Under 18s side, but it is not surprising that the team are one of the country's top youth sides when you consider that they are the only Under 18s team in Oldham and therefore attract all the top players of the town. However, there are now several Under 16s sides playing in Oldham, which should mean that in a few years Saddleworth may have a number of challengers for the honour of being the top youth team in the area. The Saddleworth club have themselves a very promising Under 16s outfit, who in fact last Sunday won through to the Final of the Pennine Under 16s Cup, with a 13-3 home victory over Bramley Supporters.

There is in fact a very strong possibility of an all-Oldham Under 16s Final, as in the other semi-final, which was also played last Sunday, St. Anne's fought out a 13-all draw at home to Hunslet Juniors, in a terrific match which was in the balance up until the final whistle. The semi-final replay will take place in Leeds sometime in the New Year.

Both Saddleworth Rangers and St. Anne's also have Under 16 'A' teams, who compete in the Rochdale Under 16s League, which was formed just at the start of the present season, and which is mainly designed to encourage youngsters to take up Rugby League by playing the matches on a friendly basis. At the moment there are 6 teams in the Rochdale League, which also includes sides representing Waterhead and Fitton Hill. Officials of both of these clubs will be hoping that the players who are at present in there Under 16s teams will progress from there to form Under 18s teams, and then move into their open-age sides.

Another local side is Shaw & Crompton, which was formed only 3 seasons ago, but which now has teams at three different youth age groups. The club was formed when boys who played for the New Barn Junior School team at Shaw found that the senior schools they were moving to did not play Rugby League, and therefore David Clegg, a teacher at New Barn, decided to start the Shaw & Crompton club. The club is very well organised and supported, and in fact has its own supporters club as well as holding regular social evenings at New Barn School. Already this season several events have taken place, with Albert and Stan Fearnley being present at one, together with the Challenge Cup, which Stan helped Leeds win last season, and Steve Nash being in attendance at another.

At the present time, all the 6 clubs in the Rochdale League are fairly evenly matched, Todmorden being the other entrants, with each team having won and lost several matches, and with no one side being far better than the rest.

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Turning now to open-age affairs, and it has been announced by the Pennine League that the Pennine Cup Final for 1978 will take place here at Watersheddings towards the end of the season. A date has not yet been finalised for the match, but the Pennine League are hoping to fix a set date for the Final with the game always taking place on that date, following the example of the Oldham League, whose Standard Cup Final is of course always played on Good Friday morning, and which annually attracts the largest attendance for any amateur game in the country.

Oldham Schools PHIL LARDER

OLDHAM SCHOOLS RUGBY LEAGUE. UNDER 16

ENGLISH SCHOOLS CUP. QUARTER FINAL

DEWSBURY 3 OLDHAM 16

An outstanding result against a very big, well organised and previously undefeated Dewsbury team. Oldham had to overcome a big psychological disadvantage as Dewsbury are the only team to have defeated them this year.

For some reason the game was played on a small, muddy sloping pitch. Conditions not really suitable to Oldham's open style of football.

Oldham won the toss and elected to play down hill and immediately put Dewsbury under tremendous pressure. It was obvious that the Oldham team were determined on victory, the forwards ran hard and the entire team tackled well. After fifteen minutes they started giving the ball to the backs and Dewsbury's limitations were exposed. Peter Rankin scored a fine try on the left wing following fine work by Joe Warburton and Paul Stott. Stott converted the try from the touch line (5-0).

From the restart Oldham again attacked, the ball was swept quickly to the right where Mark Derbyshire finished very strongly for a very fine individual try. (8-0).

At this stage Oldham were all over Dewsbury with Chris Deakin and Damien Chadwick completely dictating tackles.

The second half began with Dewsbury, now playing down hill, winning the first five scrums and placing tremendous pressure on the Oldham team. Only hard tackling by all the team restricted Dewsbury to one solitary unconverted try. (8-3).

Oldham at this time showed their character. Fine breaks by Tony Kavach and Martin Gratton carried play into the Dewsbury 25, and immediately Deakin and Chadwick created half a gap for Des Foy who took this opportunity with determination to score between the posts. Stott converted. (13-3).

From the next scrum Oldham moved the ball via Chadderton to Derbyshire who created a fine try for Stott. The score of 16-3 was the final one.

Oldham now qualify to play Hull at Watersheddings on February 11th. Hull, thought to be the strongest under 16 team for many a year are currently undefeated and beat Wigan 7-3 in their quarter final.

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Fixtures 1977-8

Date	Opponents	Ground	Date	Opponents	Ground
1977			1977		
Aug. 7—(Sun.)	Rochdale (3-00) A	5-14	Aug. 20—(Sat.)	Widnes (L.S. 3-00) H	15-7
21—(Sun.)	Wigan (L.C. 3-00) A	5-49	26—(Fri.)	Widnes (L.S. 7-30) A	8-22
28—(Sun.)	L.C. 2		Sept. 3—(Sat.)	Warrington (3-00) H	
Sept. 4—(Sun.)	Keighley (3-15) A	5-15	10—(Sat.)	Barrow (2-30) A	
11—(Sun.)	Barrow (3-30) H	23-7	17—(Sat.)	Widnes (3-00) H	
18—(Sun.)	Blackpool (3-00) A	28-2	30—(Fri.)	Salford (7-30) A	
25—(Sun.)	Huyton (3-30) H	19-13	Oct. 8—(Sat.)	Swinton (3-00) A	
Oct. 2—(Sun.)	Doncaster (3-00) A	18-7	16—(Sun.)	Workington H	
9—(Sun.)	Swinton (3-30) H	19-10	28—(Fri.)	St. Helens (7-30) A	
16—(Sun.)	Huyton (2-30) A	20-7	Nov. 12—(Sat.)	Leigh (3-00) H	
30—(Sun.)	Player's No. 6 (1) BarrowH	16-8	19—(Sat.)	Rochdale (3-00) A	
30—(Sun.)	Whitehaven (3-30) H	17-13	26—(Sat.)	Swinton (3-00) H	
Nov. 6—(Sun.)	Player's No. 6 (2) Salford	10-29	Dec. 3—(Sat.)	Barrow (3-00) H	
13—(Sun.)	Leigh (3-30) A	3-24	9—(Fri.)	Warrington (7-30) A	
20—(Sun.)	Halifax (3-30) H		17—(Sat.)	Wigan (3-00) A	
27—(Sun.)	Swinton (3-00) A		1978		
Dec. 4—(Sun.)	Barrow (2-30) A		Jan. 7—(Sat.)	St. Helens (3-00) H	
11—(Sun.)	Batley (3-30) H		14—(Sat.)	Workington (2-30) A	
18—(Sun.)			20—(Fri.)	Widnes (7-30) A	
26—(Mon.)	Rochdale (3-00) H		28—(Sat.)	Leigh (3-00) A	
1978			Feb. 4—(Sat.)	Wigan (3-00) H	
Jan. 2—(Sun.)	Huddersfield (3-00) A		Mar. 11—(Sat.)	Salford (3-00) H	
8—(Sun.)	York (2-30) A		Apr. 15—(Sat.)	Rochdale (3-00) H	
15—(Sun.)	Keighley (3-30) H				
22—(Sun.)					
29—(Sun.)	Leigh (3-30) H				
Feb. 5—(Sun.)	Batley (3-00) A				
12—(Sun.)	Challenge Cup 1				
19—(Sun.)	York (3-30) H				
26—(Sun.)	Challenge Cup 2				
Mar. 5—(Sun.)					
12—(Sun.)					
19—(Sun.)	Blackpool (3-30) H				
24—(Fri.)	Rochdale (3-00) A				
27—(Mon.)	Huddersfield (3-00) H				
Apr. 2—(Sun.)	Doncaster (3-30) H				
9—(Sun.)	Whitehaven (3-00) A				
16—(Sun.)	Halifax (3-30) A				

'A' TEAM FIXTURES 1977/78

Date	Opponents	Ground
1977		
Aug. 20—(Sat.)	Widnes (L.S. 3-00) H	15-7
26—(Fri.)	Widnes (L.S. 7-30) A	8-22
Sept. 3—(Sat.)	Warrington (3-00) H	
10—(Sat.)	Barrow (2-30) A	
17—(Sat.)	Widnes (3-00) H	
30—(Fri.)	Salford (7-30) A	
Oct. 8—(Sat.)	Swinton (3-00) A	
16—(Sun.)	Workington H	
28—(Fri.)	St. Helens (7-30) A	
Nov. 12—(Sat.)	Leigh (3-00) H	
19—(Sat.)	Rochdale (3-00) A	
26—(Sat.)	Swinton (3-00) H	
Dec. 3—(Sat.)	Barrow (3-00) H	
9—(Fri.)	Warrington (7-30) A	
17—(Sat.)	Wigan (3-00) A	
1978		
Jan. 7—(Sat.)	St. Helens (3-00) H	
14—(Sat.)	Workington (2-30) A	
20—(Fri.)	Widnes (7-30) A	
28—(Sat.)	Leigh (3-00) A	
Feb. 4—(Sat.)	Wigan (3-00) H	
Mar. 11—(Sat.)	Salford (3-00) H	
Apr. 15—(Sat.)	Rochdale (3-00) H	

CUP ROUNDS

Forshaw's Lancs Cup Final:
Saturday, 29th October
Player's No. 6—Round 3: 19/20th November
1st Semi-Final: 26th November
2nd Semi-Final: 3rd December
BBC 2 Floodlight Final: 13/20th December
Player's No. 6 Final: 28th January, 1978
RLCC 3rd Round: 11/12th March
1st Semi-Final: 1st April; 2nd Semi-Final: 8th April
Premiership—Round 1: 23rd April
Semi-Final 1st Leg: 29/30th April
Semi-Final 2nd Leg: 7th May. Final 20th May
RLCC FINAL: 13th May.