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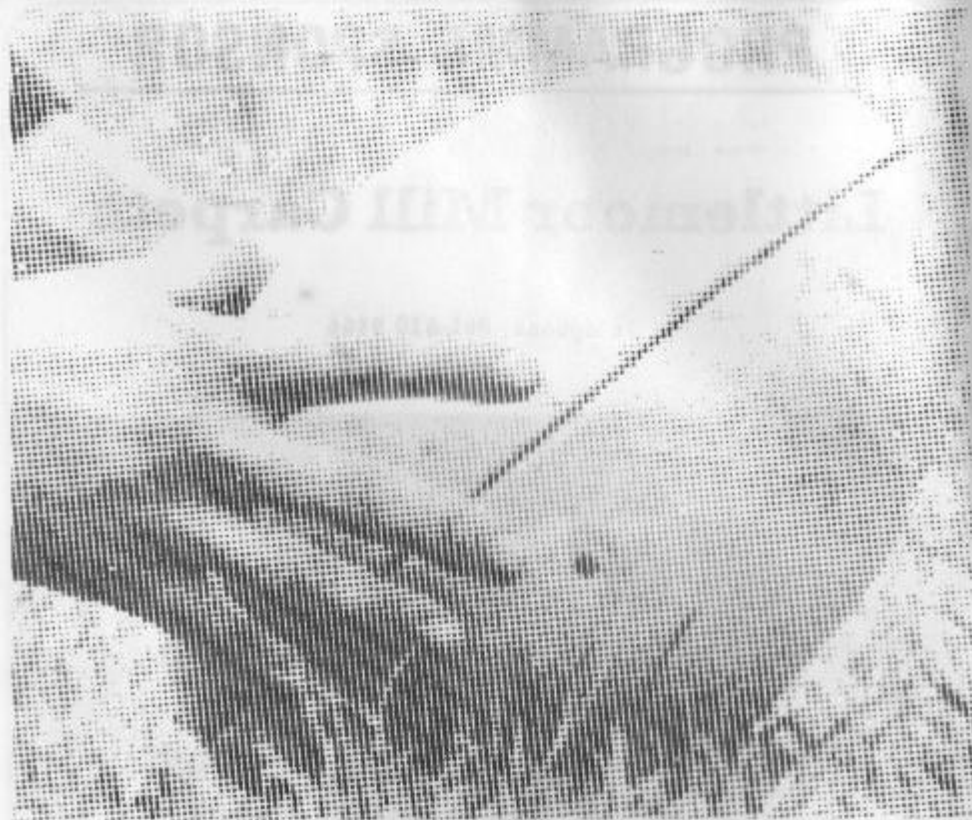
SUNDAY, 10th DECEMBER, 1978 Kick off 3.0 pm



10p

TODAY'S MATCH BALL
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A FRIEND DROPPING IN Manchester Evening News

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Lancashire Cup winners: 1907-08, 1910-11, 1913-14, 1919-20, 1924-25, 1933-34, 1956-57, 1957-58 and 1958-59.

Runners-up: 1908-09, 1911-12, 1918-19, 1921-22, 1954-55, 1966-67 and 1968-69.

Lancashire Championship winners: 1907-08, 1909-10, 1921-22, 1956-57 and 1957-58.

Runners-up: 1908-09, 1910-11, 1911-12, 1919-20, 1923-24 and 1954-55.

Lancashire Shield winners: 1975-76.

OLDHAM OUTLOOK

May we take this opportunity of welcoming to Watersheddings our latest signing, Bob Blackwood, the Workington and former St Helens, Widnes and Wigan player, whom we captured from the Cumbrian club just in time to make his debut in our last match against Blackpool two weeks ago.

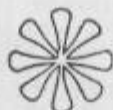
Unfortunately, Bob's first game in Oldham's red and white jersey did not coincide with a victory and we did, in fact, go down to our first home defeat of the season, a bitterly disappointing day which we must try and put to rights against Halifax in this afternoon's match.

Actually, we have a score to settle because the Thrum Hall men beat us 32-2 in Yorkshire on October 22 when our side was badly depleted before the start and cut up even further with injuries to Martin Murphy, Phil Larder and Fred Hall when the match was in progress.

Harvey Ashworth

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We shaped much better in the subsequent games against Batley and York, both at home, in which we picked up four valuable points only to go down at Whitehaven 12-7 and then lose at home 8-7 to Blackpool.

We are now in a situation where it is absolutely vital that we beat Halifax today if we are to retain hopes of picking up the pieces again and finishing in the top four promotion zone.

If past records are any guide we can now afford to lose only two, possibly three at the most, of the 15 remaining Second Division matches if we are to go up to the First Division.

That is a tall order and we definitely need to hit a long winning run if our target is to be achieved.

Our pack has undoubtedly been strengthened by the signing of Blackwood, at 29 a very experienced forward who should soon settle down into the scheme of things at Watersheddings and add pace, strength and experience to our forwards.

He is a Cumbrian who learned his early rugby as a centre or winger for Whitehaven RU club and turned pro for St Helens in 1968.

Four years later he moved to Widnes, where he came under the influence of coach Vince Karalius and settled down as a sturdy, hard-tackling back-row forward.

From Naughton Park he moved to Wigan in 1975, again teaming up with Karalius, and then in January of last year he transferred to Workington where he has done a very good job indeed and was highly regarded by the Town coach, Sol Roper.

Indeed, the only reason Bob was available was that he could not get a job in Cumbria and therefore unable to fulfil plans to move up there permanently.

We recognise, of course, that Blackwood alone cannot put our team up to strength and we will be making strong endeavours in the next few weeks to sign more players.

All we would ask for is a little patience because in the current market it is extremely difficult to get the sort of deal we want for players who are going to improve the quality of our staff.

Incidentally, please note that our next home game is on Boxing Day, December 26, against Swinton with a kick-off at 11 a.m.

We would also like to congratulate two of our players, Martin Murphy and John Blair, whose wives have provided additions to their families in the last few days.

Martin's wife has had a girl and John's wife a boy and on behalf of the players, staff and supporters we would like to offer our sincere congratulations.

May we also wish you all a very happy and prosperous Christmas.

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OUR VISITORS

BY DON YATES

After the disastrous home defeat to Blackpool Borough 14 days ago Oldham slipped down to ninth place in the Second Division table and they now face a most difficult task if they are to climb the table and secure one of the four promotion places. This afternoon's visitors are Halifax who last season finished bottom of the table but who have improved almost beyond recognition this term.

They lie at present in sixth position in the Championship table having won five and drawn one of their 10 Second Division matches, their victories coming in home games against Whitehaven, New Hunslet, Bramley and Oldham, who crashed to a disappointing 32-2 defeat when they visited Thrum Hall last October, plus a 15-0 away win at Doncaster and an 11-11 draw at Huyton.

One of the reasons for the Halifax revival this season has been the form of skipper and stand-off Mike Blacker, one of four former Bradford Northern backs included in the Thrum Hall line-up, Thirty-years old Blacker is a product of the Birkby CYC amateur outfit who gained a great deal of experience with Northern, winning Yorkshire County honours and appearing at Wembley in 1973 as well as being a member of the Bradford team which won the John Player Trophy in season 1974-75. Goal-kicking full-back Jimmy Birts is only 21 years old and a bright future seems assured for this talented youngster who cost Halifax £1,500 when he moved from Odsal last February. The other two ex-Bradford members of the Halifax back division are Derek Howard and Graham Garrod who form the right flank. Twenty-two-yr old centre Garrod is a former England schools player who turned professional with Northern in April 1974, switching to Halifax during the summer when strong running winger Derek Howard also moved to Thrum Hall, Howard began his professional career with Leeds and had been with Bradford for only 18 months before switching to Halifax with great success.

Howard scored a couple of tries last October when Halifax defeated Oldham for the first time since January 1971, although it must be noted that Oldham had beaten Halifax only three times during that seven year sequence. They were 29-7 home winners in February 1971 but did not meet Halifax again until last season when Halifax, experiencing their worst ever season, lost 19-5 at Watersheddings and by 24-3 over at Thrum Hall.

Halifax travel to Watersheddings today then, determined to continue their promotion challenge with a second victory over Oldham which would certainly avenge Oldham's double victory over the Thrum Hallers last season.

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BRIAN BATTY

It seems impossible these days to keep the worlds of Rugby League and Union apart for long.

Over the last few weeks there has been speculation in one quarter and another that one day the two codes will finish up playing virtually the same game.

Now we have two further theories from the Union Side this season that partly support these beliefs.

A former top Rugby Union player was recently reflecting on the Chris Ralston incident in which the forward needed 32 stitches in a head wound following the club game against Llanelli.

It was suggested that Union has to stop the practice of raking for the ball when bootstuds can do untold damage.

This is where League came into the argument and it was claimed that Union could do a lot worse than copy our system on the play-the-ball.

This will seem ironic to many in League for it is a feature which has provoked unlimited criticism and controversy since it was introduced.

But the Union view was that it was a safer and fairer way to re-start play after the ball had gone to ground or the player being tackled.

RUGBY LEAGUE REVIEW 1978-79

The third edition of the popular Alka-Seltzer Rugby League Review is now available. The 50-page glossy publication is packed with news, reviews, and photographs. As well as a look back to last season, the Review includes a special feature by Rugby League Secretary David Oxley, and a photographic focus on the unforgettable 1978 Wembley Final. There is also a chance for junior fans to enter the Subbuteo Rugby League Competition with ten Rugby League games to be won.

Priced only 60p plus 30p p. & p. the Rugby League Review is now available.

RUGBY LEAGUE PROMOTIONS.

The Public Relations Department at Rugby League Headquarters now has more than 20 individual items for sale. Great Britain replica jerseys, leisure wear, publications, and traditional promotional items, are all available, and the new price list is now available.

All the above items available from:- The Public Relations Department, The Rugby Football League, 180, Chapeltown Road, LEEDS LS7 4HT. Please send a stamped addressed envelope.

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- 11 Fred HALL
- 12 Alan FORSTER
- 13 Bob BLACKWOOD
- 14 Jim ARNOLD
- 15 Kevin FLANAGHAN

Referee:

J. ENTWISTLE (Whitley Bay)

HALIFAX

- 1 Jim BIRTS
- 2 Derek HOWARD
- 3 Graham GARROD
- 4 Dave CHOLMONDELEY
- 5 Paul ENDICOTT
- 6 Mick BLACKER
- 7 Terry LANGTON
- 8 Terry DEWHURST
- 9 Dean RAISTRICK
- 10 Alan WOOD
- 11 Dave CALLON
- 12 John MARTIN
- 13 Dave BUSEFIELD
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Touch Judges:

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J. CLARKE (Blackpool)

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MAN IN THE MIDDLE

This afternoon's important league game is refereed by 31-years old John Entwistle from Whitley Bay who has been refereeing since 1969 and who was promoted to Grade Two status in July 1975. He is interested in all sports especially squash and cricket and he also enjoys boating and music. He is single and works as an insurance supervisor for the Automobile Association.

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With the Amateurs ALAN BURKE

The first spell of bad weather this winter severely hit the Amateur Rugby League scene last weekend, with every match throughout the Pennine League area having to be postponed. Included with these games which had to be called off were the two remaining Oldham Standard Cup quarter-final encounters, Ferranti v Waterhead and St. Anne's v Salem Hornets, together with Oldham's home tie against Huddersfield in the 1st Round of the BARLA Inter-League Youth Shield.

It is hoped that the Youth game will now be taking place this afternoon, with the winners progressing through to the quarter-finals and an away tie against Leeds next Sunday. If Oldham's Under-18s are successful this afternoon, then the game against Leeds will be a repeat of their 1st Round clash of last season which ended in victory for the Yorkshire boys by 19 points to 10. However, this time the Oldham players must be very confident of progressing through to the semi-finals.

The postponement of the two outstanding Standard Cup matches means that Mayfield and Shaw still don't know who will be joining them in the last 4, although it is hoped that the draw for the semi-finals of the competition will be made 'live' on B.B.C. Radio Manchester's "BARLA Midweek" programme on Wednesday, 20th December (7.15 p.m.)

Following a recent meeting, Oldham Passenger Transport have formed a rugby section with the hope of forming an amateur team in the near future. However, the team may have to play in a midweek league, but would like to hear from anyone who might be able to help them. Anyone interested should contact secretary Phil Bradbury, for whom messages can be left at 624-3495.

Ferranti have recently solved the problem that all amateur teams have during the winter, that of trying to do their training in the dark, by erecting floodlights at the side of their Bower Lane ground at Hollinwood. At present the lights shine on about half of their pitch, but it is hoped that more may soon be installed so as to cover the whole of the ground.

This Friday, at the Boulevard, Hull, National Dock Labour Board take on local rivals Ace Amateurs in the BARLA Yorkshire Cup Final, the winners of which will be the White Rose amateur representatives in the Rugby League Challenge Cup later in the season. Leigh Miners are to be the other amateur team after defeating Crosfields in the BARLA Lancashire-Cumbria Cup Final.



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