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State Express Challenge Cup

1st Round

OLDHAM v ACE AMATEURS

SUNDAY, 25th FEBRUARY, 1979 Kick off 3.0 pm

28 at Salford

PROGRAMME SPONSOR

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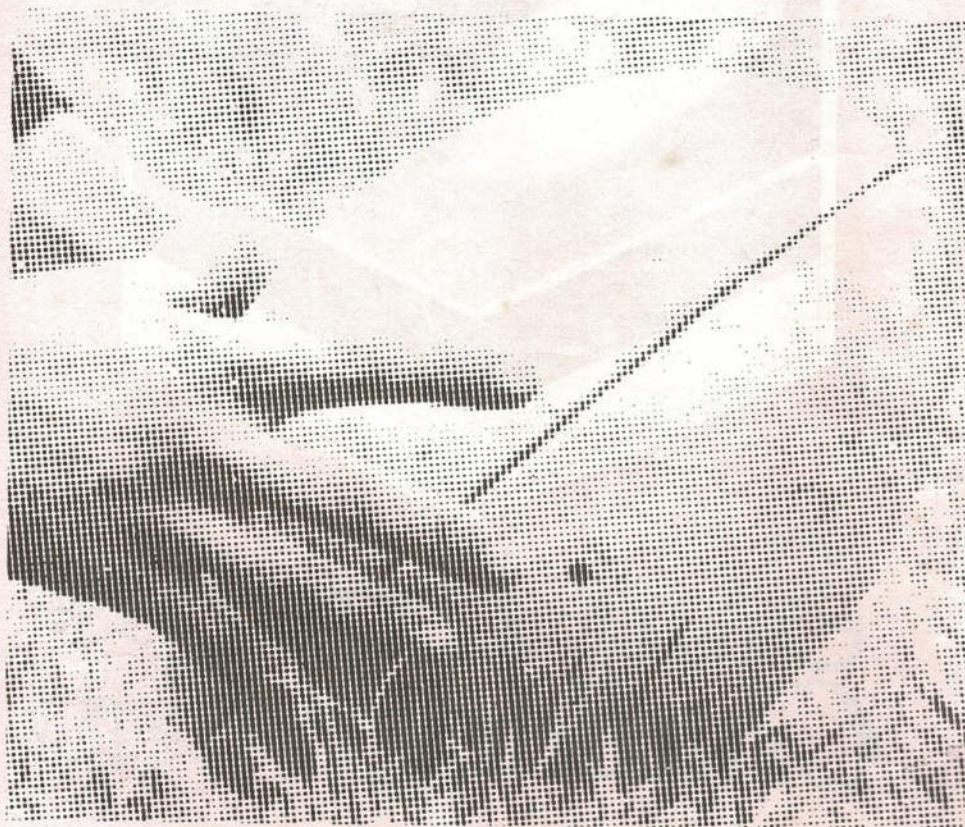


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A FRIEND DROPPING IN Manchester Evening News

OLDHAM RUGBY LEAGUE FOOTBALL CLUB THE PAVILION, WATERSHEDDINGS, OLDHAM

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Assistant Coach R. WELDING
Physiotherapist: J. CROSSLEY
Assistant Physiotherapist: J. WATKINS
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Groundsman: F. BROOKES

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Rugby League Challenge Cup winners: 1898-99, 1924-25, 1926-27.

Runners-up: 1906-07, 1911-12, 1923-24 and 1925-26.

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

Thank heavens we're back in business! We will certainly not forget the disastrous winter of 1978-9 which turned back the clock 16 years to the big freeze of 1962-3 when, with one exception, we had no matches from early December to the beginning of March.

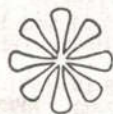
There is no substitute for playing but, at least, we have been very busy off the field and behind the scenes during the long lay-off. Many changes have taken place since our last match here on Boxing Day and there has been much activity which has enabled us to "keep the pot boiling" during those long, rugby-starved weeks.

Shortly after Christmas, coach Dave Cox left us for business and family reasons and we engaged as manager Graham Starkey, who you will remember as our coach during the 1970-71, 1971-72 and 1972-73 seasons.

Harvey Ashworth

(PRESIDENT OLDHAM RUGBY LEAGUE FOOTBALL CLUB)

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Graham aged 40 and a Rochdale school teacher, has previously coached Rochdale Hornets, Huddersfield, Oldham and Wigan and his last appointment was as fitness specialist for Bradford Northern, who won the Premiership while he was there.

We extend a warm welcome back to Watersheddings for Graham, who will work with a backroom "team" including "A" team boss Bob Welding, youth coach Brian Gartland and a first-team player-coach who has yet to be appointed.

Brian has a splendid record as coach of the Saddleworth and North-West Counties youth teams and we are delighted that he will be joining the staff soon to help build and develop a colts team here.

More immediately, we recognise the urgent need for team strengthening and the priority is for pack leader and a player-coach, who, ideally, would occupy one of the inside back positions.

Our name has been linked with many players in the past few weeks but we have been unable to complete our set-up because the players we had in mind were either unavailable just yet or not prepared to move just yet.

In this sort of venture patience is not only a virtue, it is absolutely essential. We must not and will not go for anyone whom we are not certain is right for the job, for the sake of being impatient.

We did, of course, complete a couple of signings just before the cup deadline and we welcome to the fold the vastly - experienced Jim Fiddler, an £8,000 buy from Leigh, and 21-year-old local lad Tony Newell, who was on Bradford Northern's books.

Both players have long pedigrees -- Fiddler as a goalkicker, ace field kicker and experienced prop with Leigh twice, Salford twice, Bramley and clubs in France and Australia and Newell as a former Lancashire Youth star at League and Union and a Great Britain colts international.

Behind the scenes a tremendous amount of work is going on in modernising the pavilion, as a result of the committee's successful application to the Sports Council for a grant not far short of £28,000.

We also plan two more "signings" shortly in a bid to ensure that the set-up is right all along the line -- a full-time kit man and a full-time advertising man to "sell" the club and deal with sponsorship and all forms of advertising.

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ACE AMATEURS

Courtesy Oldham Evening Chronicle

A Talented trio of top England amateur internationals will spearhead the bid by Hull amateurs Ace to cause a big Rugby League Challenge Cup shock at Watersheddings.

They don't come any more talented in the amateur game than in the shape of Ace second-row man Bobby Colgrave, centre Dennis Oaten and strapping winger Steve Critchenson.

Colgrave, the club's player-coach, was captain of the BARLA team which made a history-making tour of Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea, last summer.

Oaten, a key member division, was the tour vice-captain and is an established England international.

Critchenson, a winger with the build and power of a back-row forward, was the third Ace man on tour -- and he topped the try-scoring list while overseas.

Indeed, Colgrave is something of a pin-up boy in the tough world of amateur RL on Humberside -- the hardest breeding ground in the north.

At one time he was a young soccer player on Hull City's books. Now, he is the brains in the Ace pack and is remembered as BARLA'S first player of the year; an award that earned him the distinction of having his portrait painted, and ultimately hung in club houses throughout the north, by a rugby-loving Bury artist.

But Ace, formerly known as British Oil and Cake Mills, are no three-man out-fit.

Winger John Letby, who scored one of the two tries that sunk Dockers in Saturday's Yorkshire Cup final, has had trials at York, centre Nobby Oliver is an ex-pro with Hull, and sub back Geoff Kealty is a former England international.

While it would be dangerous to devalue the contribution of the pack, there is little doubt that the Ace strength lies in the backs.

Halves Dave Robson and John Robson work well together and the ball is moved out to winger Critchenson as often as possible. Little wonder. He is six ft. two in. and 13 st. -- and he knows where the line is.

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State Express Challenge Cup

The Rugby League Challenge Cup is to be a major feature of the State Express Challenge scheme in a £220,000 three-year deal.

Prize money for the 1979 competition will total £55,500, the richest purse for any Rugby League competition in the world.

State Express of London is the first company to sponsor the illustrious 82-year-old competition, which will be further boosted by the issuing of a series of State Express Challenges.

Rugby League Secretary-General, David Oxley, said "In our search for a sponsor for Rugby League's most prestigious competition we were looking for a company who would honour and respect the traditions and very special character of the Challenge Cup.

"We are confident that the participation of State Express in the Challenge Cup can only enhance the competition. It is surely a happy event that the first sponsorship marks the 50th anniversary of the brave and progressive decision to take the Challenge Cup Final to Wembley Stadium.

"It is the combination of progressive thinking and respect for tradition which makes this one of the most outstanding sponsorships in the world of sport."

"The staging of the State Express Challenges will add an extra dimension to the appeal of the competition, for which the ultimate prize will always be the lifting of the Challenge Cup at Wembley."

Chairman of the State Express Challenge Committee, Geoffrey Reeve, said "In 1978 over £170,000 was awarded to sport through the State Express Challenge. This form of sponsorship plus Challenge element represents a broadening of the base of the State Express Challenge - the intention this year being to reward British success in sport at both national and grass root level.

This is the first challenge to be issued in 1979 and we are delighted with the prospect of participating in Rugby League."

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- 9 Roger O'MAHONEY
- 10 Fred HALL
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- 14
- 15

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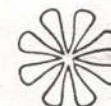
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