

24 OLDHAM Team Check ROCHDALE 12

Robinson	MICK BURKE	1	OLSON VAAFUSU	Sawyer T
Foy	TOM NADIOLE	2	PHIL CARTWRIGHT	
	GARRY WARNECKE	3	ERIC HUGHES	Garrity
Hawthorne	KEVIN MEADOWS	4	DAVID WOOD	Vaafusu
	BRYAN MCCARTHY	5	MARK CAUSEY	
Warneke	PETER WALSH	6	BRIAN GARRITY	Hughes
	STEVE PETERS	7	AARON SAWYER	Fairhurst
	NEIL CLAWSON	8	SCOTT BARROW	
	IAN SANDERSON	9	ANDY RUANE	26
	HUGH WADDELL	10	NEIL COWIE	
Bardsley	PAUL ROUND	11	TERRY MELLOR	Idie
	TERRY FLANAGAN	12	GRAHAM IDLE	Williams
Morrison	MAL GRAHAM	13	DEAN WILLIAMS	Sanderson
Flanagan	CHRIS MYLER	14	ALAN FAIRHURST	
	MICK BARDSLEY	15	MARK SANDERSON	Houra

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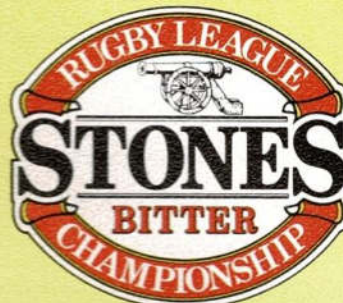
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Record Receipts: £30,388.70 v Wigan,
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Record Transfer Fee Paid: £65,000 to
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Record Try Scorer: Reg Farrar, 49 tries,
1921-22 season

Record Goal Scorer: Bernard Ganley, 224 goals,
1957-58 season

Record Point Scorer: Bernard Ganley, 28 points
v Liverpool City, April, 1959

First Game: 21st October, 1876 v Stalybridge

Highest number of points scored:
Bernard Ganley, 2,881

Most Appearances: Joe Ferguson, 685

Most Tries: Pre 1900, Jack Hirst, 233.
Since 1900, Alan Davies, 182

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

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

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

Runners-up: 1908-09, 1911-12, 1918-19, 1921-22,
1954-55, 1966-67, 1968-69, 1986-87

Lancashire Championship Winners: 1907-08,
1909-10, 1921-22, 1956-57, 1957-58

Runners-up: 1908-09, 1910-11, 1911-12, 1919-20,
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PLAYERS PROFILE

IAN SANDERSON



PLAYER PROFILE NO.6

Full Name:	Ian Sanderson
Nick Name:	Sandy
Birthdate:	12.1.65
Birthplace:	Leigh
Marital Status:	Single
Occupation:	Textile Student
Car:	Renault 14TL
Fav.TV Show:	Moonlighting/ Max-headroom
Fav.Film:	Terminator/Bev Hills Cops
Fav.Music:	Luther Van Dross
Fav.food/drink:	Fish, chicken/ lager
Fav.reading:	Factual books
Hobbies:	No time
Fav.other sports:	Boxing
Likes about game:	Pay Day
Dislikes about game:	Flan's 'Stoney'
Superstitions:	Put on kit in order
Fav.position:	Hooker/stand- off/full back
Fav.Ground:	Wigan
Best Moment:	Debut try (v Salford)
Worst Moment:	Losing to Cas in semi-final and Lancs v NZ - postponed
Hardest player to tackle:	Noel Cleal (Mick Morgan if he owes you money)
Hardest tackler:	Mick Morgan (if you owe him money)
Fav.all-time player:	John Woods/ Steve Norton

CAREER WITH OLDHAM

Date signed on:	September, 1983
Debut:	v Salford (h) Div One 26.12.83
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Goals:	0
Drop goals:	0
Total points:	44

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 1983 BREWEX BRONZE MEDAL. Slalom D draught lager.
 1983 BREWEX CHALLENGE CUP WINNERS. Voted best international bottled lager.
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 1983 B.B.I. AWARDS GOLD MEDAL. Slalom Lager – First in Class for bottled lager.
 1983 B.B.I. AWARDS SILVER MEDAL. Slalom D – for bottled lager.
 1983 B.B.I. AWARDS DIPLOMA OF EXCELLENCE. Slalom International Strong Lager – for bottled lager.
 1983 B.B.I. AWARDS DIPLOMA OF EXCELLENCE. Slalom D – for bottled lager.
 1983 B.B.I. AWARDS DIPLOMA OF EXCELLENCE. Slalom Lager – for packaging and bottle dress.
 1984 MONDE SELECTION MADRID. Gold Medal with Palm Leaves and Certificate.
 Slalom International – for bottled lager.
 1984 MONDE SELECTION MADRID. Gold Medal and Certificate.
 Slalom D – for bottled lager.
 1984 MONDE SELECTION MADRID. Gold Medal and Certificate.
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- 1986 B.B.I. AWARDS GOLD MEDAL – Theakston Best Bitter – for bottled beer.
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Oldham	11	6	0	0	197	78	3	0	2	90	58	18
Runcorn	11	6	0	0	161	80	3	0	2	60	49	18
Wakefield	10	5	0	0	210	50	3	1	1	92	58	17
Featherstone	13	5	0	1	181	81	3	1	3	134	111	17
Workington	11	4	0	1	76	41	4	0	2	82	92	16
Springfield	11	3	0	1	70	59	4	0	3	125	112	14
Keighley	14	6	0	2	166	93	1	0	5	59	149	14
Rochdale	13	6	0	2	109	68	0	0	5	41	149	12
Mansfield	13	3	1	2	80	99	2	0	5	120	152	11
Doncaster	15	3	1	3	130	121	1	1	6	107	144	10
Batley	12	2	1	3	81	94	2	0	4	72	83	9
York	12	2	0	3	91	96	2	1	4	96	145	9
Carlisle	11	3	1	1	89	71	1	0	5	61	140	9
Whitehaven	11	4	0	2	87	67	0	0	5	61	99	8
Huddersfield	13	4	0	4	149	141	0	0	5	40	95	8
Fulham	13	3	0	3	95	79	1	0	6	96	196	8
Dewsbury	12	2	0	4	78	85	1	0	5	88	144	6
Bramley	13	2	0	4	104	138	1	0	6	89	209	6

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MAL'S MESSAGE

(A few words from Oldham's player-coach)

I am told that in recent years at Oldham there has been a tendency for team performances to slip at this time of year as a result of ice-age weather and its damaging effect on training.

We do not intend that to happen this year. We are constantly looking for alternative facilities for indoor training and you can rest assured that, whatever the weather, we will be training Monday, Wednesday and Friday and retaining our fitness and our training schedules.

There is going to be a big scrap for promotion places over the second half of the season and if we have anything like a good run in the Challenge Cup we can expect a backlog of fixtures in the Second Division.

We are already behind as a result of our progress in the John Player and from here on in every single league game will be of terrific importance in the club's future.

We will need our fitness, stamina, ball skills and organisation...and no amount of bad weather is going to damage us this year.

MAL GRAHAM



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'WATERSHEDDINGS SCENE'

(News and views from inside the club)

CHALLENGE CUP DRAW

The first round of the Challenge Cup Draw will be away to either Warrington or Huddersfield.

JOHN PLAYER TROPHY SEMI-FINAL

OUR magnificent run in the John Player Trophy came to an end at Central Park last Saturday when we were pipped 18-8 by St.Helens in a tie that was always closer than the score suggests.

Oldham's contribution to the semi-final was reflected in the comments of the press, a selection of which are reproduced here:

Alan Thomas (Sunday Express): Saints were given a torrid time. Oldham refused to be overawed by the opposition or the occasion. With Waddell, man of the match, setting a tremendous example with powerful breaks and well-timed passes, Oldham were always prepared to carry the battle to Saints.

John Robinson (Sunday People): The scoreline does no justice to the magnificent fighting qualities of Second Division Oldham. Nor does it reflect how close Saints went to losing a semi-final for the sixth time.

Alan Gaskell (News of the World): What a fight gallant Second Division Oldham made of it. It was fitting that the man of the match award should go to Oldham's giant prop Hugh Waddell, who rocked Saints time and again with his barnstorming runs.

John Huxley (Sunday Mirror): Oldham held the lead for six minutes in the second half and looked the better side for long periods.

JACK BOWDEN - CHIEF SCOUT

We are pleased to officially confirm the appointment as chief scout of Jack Bowden, the club's former vice-chairman and long-serving committee man. Jack is a life member of Lancashire County and a past president. He has enormous contacts in the game and his knowledge of rugby and players is well known.

We are well covered on the local scene through the direct involvement of Eric Fitzsimons and Iain MacCorquodale, but Jack will be building up a network of scouts and tipsters through the country. We wish him well in his new position.

TREVOR CROSTON

It is with great pleasure that we can report the signing of the Wigan St. Pat's and Great Britain youth back-row forward Trevor Croston. Trevor comes to the club with a good reputation. He has played for Lancashire at under-17 and under-19 and he took Britain's man of the match award in the Youth Test against the Junior Kiwis earlier this season. Welcome Trevor, and best wishes for a long and happy stay at Oldham.

FLASHBACK DO YOU REMEMBER

A regular feature in which we delve into the photographic files of the Oldham Evening Chronicle.



May 9, 1982. Young skipper Terry Flanagan holds aloft the Second Division Rose Bowl after the final game of the season against Workington. Will history be repeated in April, 1988?



22.11.81...Martin Murphy heads for the corner in an 11-5 Second Division victory over Halifax during the title-winning campaign.

FACE IN THE CROWD



JACK DEARDEN
— our man on the terraces

The Oldham club's progress to the headline-hitting late stages of the John Player Special Trophy was a great pre-Christmas boost for the club. The quarter-final victory at Warrington was a tribute to all involved at Watersheddings including the fans, whose backing this season has been magnificent.

It was also pleasing for the management, directors and coaching staff to see some reward for their efforts. How the players seem to relish the challenge of playing against the top clubs - a liking which should stand us in good stead when the Silk Cut Challenge Cup starts soon.

A mention, too, for Saddleworth Rangers who put up a superb show to reach the semi-finals of the Lancashire Cup, only to lose at Leigh Niners after leading 16-0 at one stage. I'm sure all the Rangers players will have benefited from the experience and it should stand them in good stead for future challenges.

Still on the subject of local talent, St. Anne's have no fewer than seven players in the Lancashire under-19 squad, so let's hope they can follow the town's great tradition of supplying many youngsters to the professional clubs. Examples include Mark Roberts (Warrington), Mike Ford and John Henderson (Leigh), Darren Bloor (Salford), Gary Ainsworth (Swinton), Nicky Kiss and Richard Russell (Wigan). There are many others too numerous to mention and, hopefully, players of this standard in the future will be encouraged to remain in the town and help to re-establish Oldham as one of Rugby League's top clubs.

Finally, some good news on the TV front for League fans following the decision of Granada to screen 'Scrumdown', a new match-of-the-day type programme on Sunday evening. Even though we haven't got prime viewing time, it's good to see a new Rugby League programme and I think it will prove very popular even though it is being shown at 11.30 pm. I also hear that Channel 4 is due to screen the film 'The First Kangaroos' on Boxing Day so by the time these notes are read some of us will have been able to see Dennis Waterman as English hero Albert Goldthorpe.

JACK DEARDEN

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CORKY'S COMMENTS ...

(Iain MacCorquodale on the local scene)

The column this week is devoted to the Greater Manchester Youth League and spotlights, in particular, the flourishing Royton Tigers club which will be providing a curtain-raiser in the near future with their talented under-nine side.

Reformed in 1986-7, the league has gone from strength to strength under the leadership of secretary Tony Finan and chairman Stephen Bithell and the committee has achieved a success story that is the envy of all youth and junior leagues in BARLA.

This season the league has over 40 teams playing at under-11,13,15 and 16 and it also caters for under-9s in friendlies and cup competitions for under-17s in conjunction with the North West Counties League.

The league has a mix of clubs with established open-age sides, plus clubs which just run junior teams. The league is proud of its development and is constantly striving to expand further. Playing standards are improving and in a series of regional fixtures at Barrow the league's representative sides performed admirably despite losing.

The league has agreed to a request from development officer Neil Wood to introduce mini-rugby for its under-9s next season. This will hopefully encourage more teams to start at under 9, as less players are needed, and mini-rugby teaches boys correct skills at an early age, as proved in Australia. This progressive move, if successful and copied elsewhere, could have a massive impact in improving standards and the league is to be congratulated for its willingness to take up this initiative.

Royton Tigers can undoubtedly be regarded as one of the success stories of the current upturn in junior and youth rugby. Formed in October, 1986 by Stephen Bithell and his wife Marilyn, the club is one of the most progressive in Oldham, catering for boys from 6 to 16 and fielding four teams each week.

Success is not measured by winning trophies but by making Rugby League a game in which the whole family can take part. Sisters and mums join in at training sessions as well as supporting the teams on match days. Opponents can be assured of a warm welcome at the Duke of Edinburgh in Royton after the match, as landlord Tom Clare is the club president. The club has no formal committee, preferring to have meetings for all parents to have a say.

The club's success shows there is a wealth of talent in Oldham which, correctly coached and encouraged to seek enjoyment first and foremost, will provide the Oldham senior club with an endless supply of players and spectators for years to come.

Steve Deakin, the St. Anne's coach, reports that 11 local lads have been selected for the Lancashire squads: Graham Robinson (open age), Gary Flanagan, Jason Bloor, Paul Kay, Glen Galbraith, Martin Ogden, Ian Charnock, Mick Welden (under-19), Martin Kay, Andrew Sherrat, Chris Tessier (under-17).

Says Steve :With Saddleworth going out in a closely-fought semi-final to eventual Lancashire Cup winners Leigh Miners and Oldham schools proudly flying the flag, the Oldham public have every right to feel proud not only of the professional team, but of all aspects of Rugby League in the town.

"Long may this success continue and here's hoping that Iain MacCorquodale's dreams of an Oldham team playing at Wembley with Oldham lads comes true."

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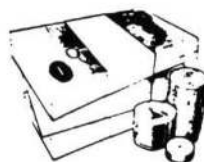
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THE BOSS TALKING...

(A personal view by Oldham coach Eric Fitzsimons)

A warm welcome to everyone from Rochdale Hornets. I will always hold the club warmly in my thoughts as they gave me my first opportunity to coach the game. Hornets have struggled, like many clubs, to keep their heads above water. Let's hope the sale of the ground, accompanied by some astute spending, helps to win them long-term success. I believe that the game is helped locally when both clubs are doing well.



The semi-final against St. Helens has pre-occupied the club, the town, spectators and players for the last three weeks and it has had its effect on league fixtures against Doncaster and Barrow. It is now vital that the team gets back to ground zero and puts all cup thoughts out of their minds.

I cannot emphasise enough to everyone connected with the club that our main priority must be promotion. Let's concentrate very hard on each league fixture and not allow any more distractions. We have no sooner finished our involvement with the John Player than the draw is made for the Challenge Cup. The players are undergoing a serious test of character and an assessment of their ability to mentally blank off distractions and focus on what should be bread and butter - the league.

From a coach's point of view what I need above all else now is serious competition for places to keep players on their toes. Injuries have created situationsa in some positions where no cover is available. We cannot afford apathy. Life is difficult enough without us beating ourselves!

Some encouraging news on the playing front. Ian Sherratt is approaching match fitness and Ian Bates appears to have shaken off his shoulder injury. Colin Hawkyard gets his pot off any time and should be available within the next couple of weeks or so if he can get strength and mobility back in his hand. Steve Patterson has pleased us with his 'A' team form, and playing at No.6, he has given Paul Lord some serious competition. Leo Casey recovered quickly from what he thought was a torn muscle and he is working hard to re-establish himself as a first team contender, which has to be how he sees himself. Tony Copeland has also recovered from a rib cartilage injury.

A personal tribute to Ossie Rowe, our conditioner. Not only has he got Jim Knox and Ray Hill pumping iron on Mondays and Wednesdays, he has played a large part in our progress this season through his care and attention to detail. The martial arts discipline has been brought to bear in the weights room and the results are clearly evident.

Incidentally, how many of you can manage 600 sit-ups in a single session? Nick Burke did just that. At the same time Neil Clawson did a 45-minute training programme in 25 minutes and Paddy Kirwan completed three full circuits with his pot on!

Welcome to Oldham, Trevor Croston. I hope you have a long and successful career with us. Get down to work in the 'A' team and let me see you ready when I call on you for first team duty.

Finally, to all our fans a big THANK-YOU for your terrific support. We really appreciate it. Best wishes to you all for the New Year. Let's keep on the winning path and finish the second half of the season in style.

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Appearances & Scorers

SEASON 1987-88
(to date - 17 possible)

	APPS (inc.Subs)	T	G	DG	PTS
Atkinson K.	7	1	27	-	58
Irving R.	9	1	-	-	4
Hawkyard C.	12	2	-	-	8
Meadows K.	17	4	-	-	16
Edwards J.	6	-	1	-	2
Peters S.	10	-	-	-	-
Kirwan P.	9	2	-	-	8
Sherratt I.	4	1	-	-	4
Sanderson I.	16	4	-	-	16
Waddell H.	16	4	-	-	16
Worrall M.	6	2	2	-	12
Graham M.	17	4	-	-	16
Flanagan T.	16	3	-	-	12
Round P.	17	13	-	-	52
Sherman P.	3	-	-	-	-
Copeland T.	3	-	-	-	-
Morrison T.	2	-	-	-	-
Bardsley M.	6	-	-	-	-
Marsden R.	1	-	-	-	-
Burke M.	12	4	3	1	23
Walsh P.	12	6	34	-	92
Bates I.	3	1	-	-	4
Clawson N.	12	1	-	-	4
McCarthy B.	11	9	-	-	36
Foy D.	7	3	-	-	12
Robinson S.	7	1	-	-	4
Nadiola T.	3	-	-	-	-
Warnecke G.	6	3	-	-	12
Myler C.	3	-	-	-	-
Hall M.	2	2	-	-	8

OLDHAM RLFC FIXTURES & RESULTS 1987-88

Opponents At

F A 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

Aug 30	Whitburn	3, 22	20	-6	Atkinson	Irving	Heavy	McCarthy	Edwards	Peters	Kennell	Sherratt	Sanderson	Widdell	Round 10	Griffin	Farman	Sherratt	Round
Sep 2	Kegworth	3, 24	32	-3	Atkinson	Irving	Heavy	McCarthy	Edwards	Peters	Kennell	Sherratt	Sanderson	Widdell	Round 11	Griffin	Farman	Sherratt	Round
Sep 13	Warrington	55/4	8	-42	Atkinson	Irving	Heavy	McCarthy	Edwards	Peters	Kennell	Sherratt	Sanderson	Widdell	Round 12	Griffin	Farman	Sherratt	Round
Sep 20	Springfield	31/4	22	-20	Atkinson	Irving	Heavy	McCarthy	Edwards	Peters	Kennell	Sherratt	Sanderson	Widdell	Round 13	Griffin	Farman	Sherratt	Round
Oct 27	Doncaster	20/60	16	-20	Burke	Irving	Heavy	McCarthy	Edwards	Peters	Kennell	Sherratt	Sanderson	Widdell	Round 14	Griffin	Farman	Sherratt	Round
Oct 11	Sheffield	3, 29	40	-4	Burke	Irving	Heavy	McCarthy	Edwards	Peters	Kennell	Sherratt	Sanderson	Widdell	Round 15	Griffin	Farman	Sherratt	Round
Oct 18	Carlisle	3, 29	40	-4	Burke	Irving	Heavy	McCarthy	Edwards	Peters	Kennell	Sherratt	Sanderson	Widdell	Round 16	Griffin	Farman	Sherratt	Round
Oct 25	Barnley	30/5	36	-10	Burke	Irving	Heavy	McCarthy	Edwards	Peters	Kennell	Sherratt	Sanderson	Widdell	Round 17	Griffin	Farman	Sherratt	Round
Nov 8	F.U.L.M.M.	31/9	36	-8	Burke	Irving	Heavy	McCarthy	Edwards	Peters	Kennell	Sherratt	Sanderson	Widdell	Round 18	Griffin	Farman	Sherratt	Round
Nov 15	Bradford	48/6	22	-6	Burke	Irving	Heavy	McCarthy	Edwards	Peters	Kennell	Sherratt	Sanderson	Widdell	Round 19	Griffin	Farman	Sherratt	Round
Nov 22	Barnley	28/8	44	-0	Burke	Irving	Heavy	McCarthy	Edwards	Peters	Kennell	Sherratt	Sanderson	Widdell	Round 20	Griffin	Farman	Sherratt	Round
Nov 29	Warrington	50/4	14	-10	Burke	Irving	Heavy	McCarthy	Edwards	Peters	Kennell	Sherratt	Sanderson	Widdell	Round 21	Griffin	Farman	Sherratt	Round
Dec 6	Doncaster	3, 51	17	-16	Burke	Irving	Heavy	McCarthy	Edwards	Peters	Kennell	Sherratt	Sanderson	Widdell	Round 22	Griffin	Farman	Sherratt	Round
Dec 13	Barnley	1, 50	14	-16	Burke	Irving	Heavy	McCarthy	Edwards	Peters	Kennell	Sherratt	Sanderson	Widdell	Round 23	Griffin	Farman	Sherratt	Round
Dec 19	St Helens	2, 31	8	-12	Burke	Irving	Heavy	McCarthy	Edwards	Peters	Kennell	Sherratt	Sanderson	Widdell	Round 24	Griffin	Farman	Sherratt	Round
Dec 26	Rochdale																		
Jan 3	Springfield																		
Jan 10	Whitburn																		
Jan 17	Warrington																		
Jan 24	Warrington																		
Jan 31	Challenge Cup																		
Feb 14	Challenge Cup																		
Feb 21	Featherstone																		
Feb 28	Featherstone																		
Mar 6	Warrington																		
Mar 13	Warrington																		
Mar 20	Warrington																		
Mar 27	Sheffield																		
Apr 1	Rochdale																		
Apr 4	Runcorn																		
Apr 10	Warrington																		
Apr 17	Carlisle																		



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WITH THE SUPPORTERS CLUB

Welcome today to all the supporters from Rochdale. We haven't met for quite a while so let's hope we all enjoy ourselves today - fans from both clubs - and have the festive season reward of watching a good, clean game in the best traditions of Rugby League football.

Our canteens around the ground are open for refreshment. We can't promise turkey and Christmas pud! But no doubt you've had enough of that already.

May we remind our fans that match videos are now available at £10 to buy and £1.50 to hire, and that people wishing to travel with us to away games should book their seats at all times on 665-1832 or 627-0235.

Thanks are due to Mrs. Rogers of Top Street, Mr. Gane and Vic Smith of Constantine Street, all of whom have made kind donations to the prize fund for the Junior Reds draw.

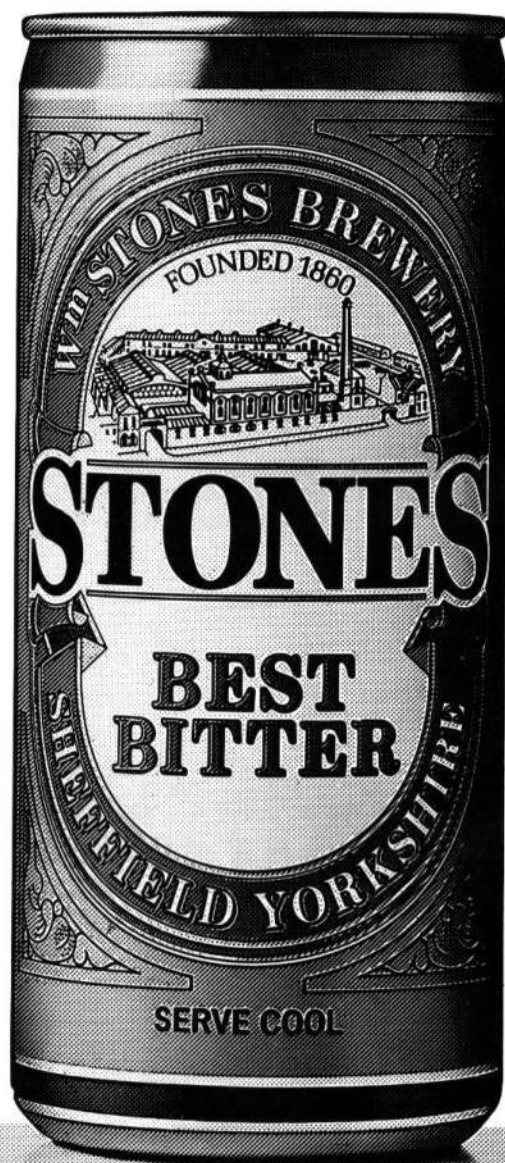
Finally, the committee wishes the compliments of the season to the players, who put up such a terrific show in the John Player semi-final, the directors and all the supporters.



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DIRECT FROM THE BOARD

(A regular feature in which a member of the board will take you behind the scenes)

THIS WEEK - GREG PACHE



Hi, folks! It's my turn again to say a few words. By the time you read these notes you will have had your Christmas pud and be looking forward to a good game of rugby against our friends and neighbours from Rochdale Hornets.

If you read the Oldham Chronicle you will be well aware of our intentions for the future of the club, not only to secure its survival but to ensure a successful future. We are now nearer than ever to completing our share issue, but legalities have caused delays in the club's conversion to a PLC, although we hope to be offering the issue by March.

Thanks are due to Slumberland for their shirt sponsorship and to the people who worked into the early hours to complete the sewing in time.

We have had a successful few months and we now look forward to 1988. Happy New Year!

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Here Come Hornets !

Rochdale Hornets, our friends from the other side of Summit Hill, come to Watersheddings today for the first time since both clubs were last in the Second Division in season 1981-2.

We don't have many derby clashes these days, a far cry from yesteryear when we always used to meet in the traditional pre-season Law Cup game and then played home-and-away league games in a one-division set-up.

Since two divisions came in the clubs have found themselves in different sections, oftener than not, and what's more we have usually been kept apart in the various cup competitions.

Five seasons ago, the last time we met, we won 17-5 at Watersheddings and 23-5 at the Athletic Grounds six days later on our way to the Second Division championship.

The match at Rochdale was postponed on Boxing Day and ultimately played on April 15, less than a week after we had won here on Good Friday.

There is every reason to believe that the Hornets will come here today fired up to put one over on the old enemy. What terrific games there have been between the clubs in the past. One's memory slips back easily to the days of the 50s team at Oldham and their battles with Ted Cahill, Norman Short, Johnnie Fishwick etc.

Even before that, Rochdale had a clutch of Aussies during the days when Cec Fifield was manager and he brought over players like Reg and Ron Stamford, Wally Ellean, 'Babe' Kelly and several others.

These days, the Hornets can also boast players from Down Under, including scrum-half Aaron Sawyer, skipper and back-row forward Gerry Byron, both Aussies, and a New Zealander in front-row forward Scott Barrow.

Our coach Eric Fitzsimons, of course, was boss at the Athletic Grounds last year, so he should have first-hand knowledge of what they can do even though there have been several new recruits in a side now handled by former Widnes and Great Britain centre Eric Hughes.

The Ruane brothers, Dennis and Andy, are doing well in the Hornets side at present and the best-known names are Hughes himself, in the centre, record buy Brian Garrity at stand-off - bought from Runcorn for £20,000 - and the experienced Alan Fairhurst, who competes with Sawyer for the No. 7 jersey.

In the pack, one can look out for local lad Dave Brown on the open side of the front-row and possibly Sean Hoare at No.10. Some years ago, Hoare move to Fulham for a £30,000 fee but he is now back at the Athletic Grounds on loan and is ready to step up to senior duty after a string of impressive displays in the 'A' team.

Whether skipper Byron plays will depend on his fitness - he has been out for several weeks with Achilles tendon trouble - but the Hornets will nevertheless boast a mobile back-row, possibly featuring former Wakefield Trinity star Dean Williams in the second-row and Mark Sanderson, brother of Oldham's Ian, at loose-forward.

The Sanderson boys have never played against each other in a competitive match before - one of several interesting tit-bits in what should be a terrific holiday derby.

FOLLOW THE 'A' TEAM

The 'A' team has had a frustrating time in recent weeks. They won well at Doncaster 20-8, but the next two games were both postponed, through no fault of our own.

At Doncaster, Ian Sherratt returned to action after his long lay-off in fine style, and there were pleasing displays from Bob Marsden, Leo Casey, Keith Atkinson, Richard Irving and half-backs Steve Patterson and Jeff Edwards.

After turning round level at 8-8, Oldham took command and finished with three tries by Patterson, Edwards and a trialist. Sadly, the next game against Barrow was called off by Barrow because they could not raise a team - notwithstanding the fact that we went up there earlier in the season with eight or nine trialists - and then the match at Dewsbury was postponed due to a waterlogged pitch.

Our new youth signing, Trevor Croston, was due to make his debut at Crown Platt, but he will now have to wait a little longer.

COMMERCIAL CORNER

(Development Office topics with Ray Hill)

Here's hoping you all had a happy Christmas. Now let's raise our glasses for a Happy New Year...for the team, the club, and the game of Rugby League, not forgetting my two hard-working girls in the office, Susan Angrave and Karen Scott, without whose help the commercial department would not be nearly so successful.

Just recently, Susan and Karen have had to do a lot of apologising to supporters for our lack of stock in the souvenir shop during the run-up to Christmas. I would like to add my apologies to disappointed customers and point out that it was due to matters entirely beyond our control. You can rest assured that we are doing everything possible to get in as much stock as possible as quickly as possible.

On the sponsorship front, Monty's and Vaux Beers have sponsored new track suits for the team in a deal spanning the rest of this season and next season. They were worn for the first time at the John Player semi-final when director Greg Pache also negotiated another deal with Slumberland for jersey sponsorship.

Replica track suits will be available to the public at Midas Sports in the not-too-distant-future and hopefully, you will find that we will have a lot more stock in our souvenir shop over the next few weeks in the run-up to the first round of the Silk Cut Challenge Cup when we hope to see our fans bedecked in as much red and white as possible.

Finally, in addition to the staging of the normal Lifeline Draw at half-time today, we will also hold a special Lifeline draw for a £500 Neilson holiday voucher. That's a terrific prize for some lucky Lifeline member at a time when people are starting to think about holidays next summer. Join Lifeline now. There's good money to be won - and you are helping the club as well.

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PRESS BOX CHATTER



(Roger Halstead, Oldham Evening Chronicle)

The Oldham club can look forward with great optimism to 1988. Only six months ago the club's future was in the balance. Few would have predicted that before the turn of the year the team would have appeared in a John Player Trophy semi-final after demolishing First Division giants like Bradford Northern and Warrington en route.

Success like that doesn't just happen. It has to be worked for. A tremendous amount of hard graft has gone on at Watersheddings in the past few months, both behind the scenes at administrative level and on the training pitch.

A lot more has still to be done. The club is trying to lay down roots for long-term success while simultaneously putting a team on the field to do the town proud in the short term.

The directors inherited massive problems last summer, but they have done a splendid job in difficult circumstances. The same goes for the coaching staff. Well done, everyone...and here's to 1988.

ROGER HALSTEAD



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MATCH REPORTS

Oldham v Doncaster

A late drop by Mick Burke proved the difference between the sides as Oldham beat Doncaster 17-16 at Watersheddings. Our great win at Warrington in the John Player Trophy in the previous match seemed to put the players' minds on other things and Doncaster came close to snatching a shock 'double', having beaten us at Tattersfield in September.

In the end Oldham were indebted to that Burke 'drop' and two tries by hooker Martin Hall, playing in his first game of the season.

Barrow v Oldham

Martin Hall kept a senior place at Barrow - but at scrum half. With Steve Peters, Paddy Kirwan, Ian Bates and Steve Patterson on the casualty list, we had a No. 7 problem, and Martin came to the rescue as a result of his versatility. Unfortunately, we slipped to our second league defeat by 18-14, although the game was there for the taking in the last 20 minutes when we attacked constantly.

Another case, maybe of John Player-itis. For the record Des Foy and Gary Warnecke scored tries and Peter Walsh kicked three goals.

Oldham v St. Helens (John Player semi-final at Wigan)

Our lads lost a semi-final - but won a lot of friends. Saints had the fright of their lives before they won 18-8 thanks to two late tries by Roy Haggerty and Shane Cooper. The tie was anybody's until Cooper's score three minutes from time, which produced a scoreline that did not reflect the balance of play.

We trailed 6-4 at half-time, Bryan McCarthy having scored our try, and then went in front when Gary Warnecke having scored our try, and then went in front when Gary Warnecke dived over following a Steve Peters chip ahead on the last tackle.

Saints hit back to go 12-8 in front but with the tie balanced on a knife edge, the Oldham players felt sure Tom Nadiola won a perfectly legal touchdown after a Peter Walsh 'Bomb'. The referee had to make a decision and it went against us. On such decisions cup ties are won and lost, but full credit to the players for a terrific performance, crowned when Hugh Waddell took the man of the match award. Well done, Hughie!

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