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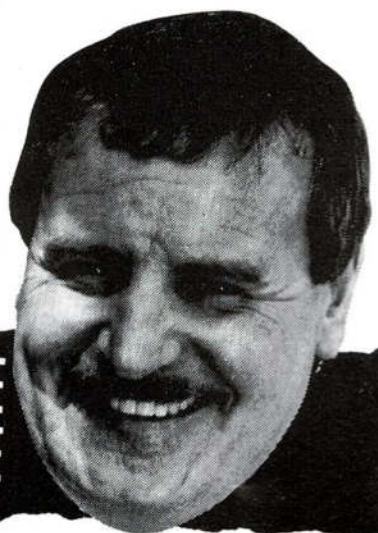
The Rugby Football League
SILK CUT CHALLENGE CUP



1991 SEMI-FINAL
OLDHAM v. WIGAN
BURNDEN PARK, BOLTON MARCH 23rd 3-00 p.m. £1.00

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MEMO

1991 SEMI-FINALISTS

All four 1991 Silk Cut Challenge Cup semi-finalists are from West of the Pennines for the third successive season. Yet this all-four feat has been achieved only once before in a Wembley era – back in 1930. Wigan and St. Helens have been involved each time. The clubs involved on the other occasions were:

1930: Wigan, St. Helens, Widnes, Barrow
1989: Wigan, St. Helens, Widnes, Warrington
1990: Wigan, St. Helens, Oldham, Warrington

Oldham could become the first team to be relegated and play at Wembley in the same season. Only two other clubs have been semi-finalists and relegated at the same time – Leigh 1974 and Keighley in 1976. Oldham are also aiming to reach Wembley for the first time after being beaten in five semi-finals, including last season.

Wigan have won a record 18 successive Challenge Cup ties in winning the Trophy for three successive seasons. The last team to beat them in the Cup were Oldham, 10-8 at Watersheddings in the first round of 1987.

1991 WEMBLEY TICKETS

Apart from the reserved allocation for the two finalists, the only tickets now available for the 1991 Silk Cut Challenge Cup Final on 27 April are the £50 Olympic Gallery seats. These offer a panoramic view with private entrance and facilities. Please forward order and remittance to: The Ticket Office, 180 Chapeltown Road, Leeds LS7 4HT or telephone 0532-629991 for Visa/Access bookings.

1991 SILK CUT PRIZES

This is the second season of Silk Cut's new £900,000 three-year sponsorship of Rugby League's most famous knock out competition, played under the Silk Cut banner since 1985. The 1991 Wembley victor will receive a record prize cheque for £32,000.

Of the 1990-91 sponsorship investment of £300,000, a total of £180,000 will be awarded in prize money with the remaining £120,000 being deposited in the League's Capital Development Fund for ground improvements. The complete 1991 Silk Cut Challenge Cup prize structure is:

Round	Per Team	Total
Preliminary	12 x 2,250	27,000
First	16 x 2,250	36,000
Second	8 x 3,500	28,000
Third	4 x 5,500	22,000
Semi-Finals	2 x 9,000	18,000
Runners-up	1 x 17,000	17,000
Winners	1 x 32,000	32,000

TOTAL PRIZE MONEY 180,000
CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT FUND 120,000

GRAND TOTAL £300,000

SILK CUT HEAD TO HEAD Previous Challenge Cup Meetings OLDHAM v. WIGAN

1902-03	(2)	Oldham.....4	v	Wigan.....0
1911-12	(2)	Oldham.....12	v	Wigan.....8
1914-15	(1)	Oldham.....5	v	Wigan.....10
1923-24	(F)	Wigan.....21	v	Oldham.....4 (at Rochdale)
1932-33	(2)	Wigan.....5	v	Oldham.....3
1935-36	(2)	Oldham.....4	v	Wigan.....15
1936-37	(1)	Oldham.....4	v	Wigan.....15
1943-44	* (1)	Oldham.....5	v	Wigan.....8
		Wigan.....25	v	Oldham.....3
1954-55	(1)	Oldham.....5	v	Wigan.....2
1957-58	(3)	Oldham.....0	v	Wigan.....8
1962-63	(3)	Oldham.....0	v	Wigan.....18
1969-70	(2)	Oldham.....4	v	Wigan.....17
1983-84	(2)	Wigan.....30	v	Oldham.....6
1986-87	(1)	Oldham.....10	v	Wigan.....8
1988-89	(3)	Oldham.....4	v	Wigan.....12

* Denotes two-legged tie

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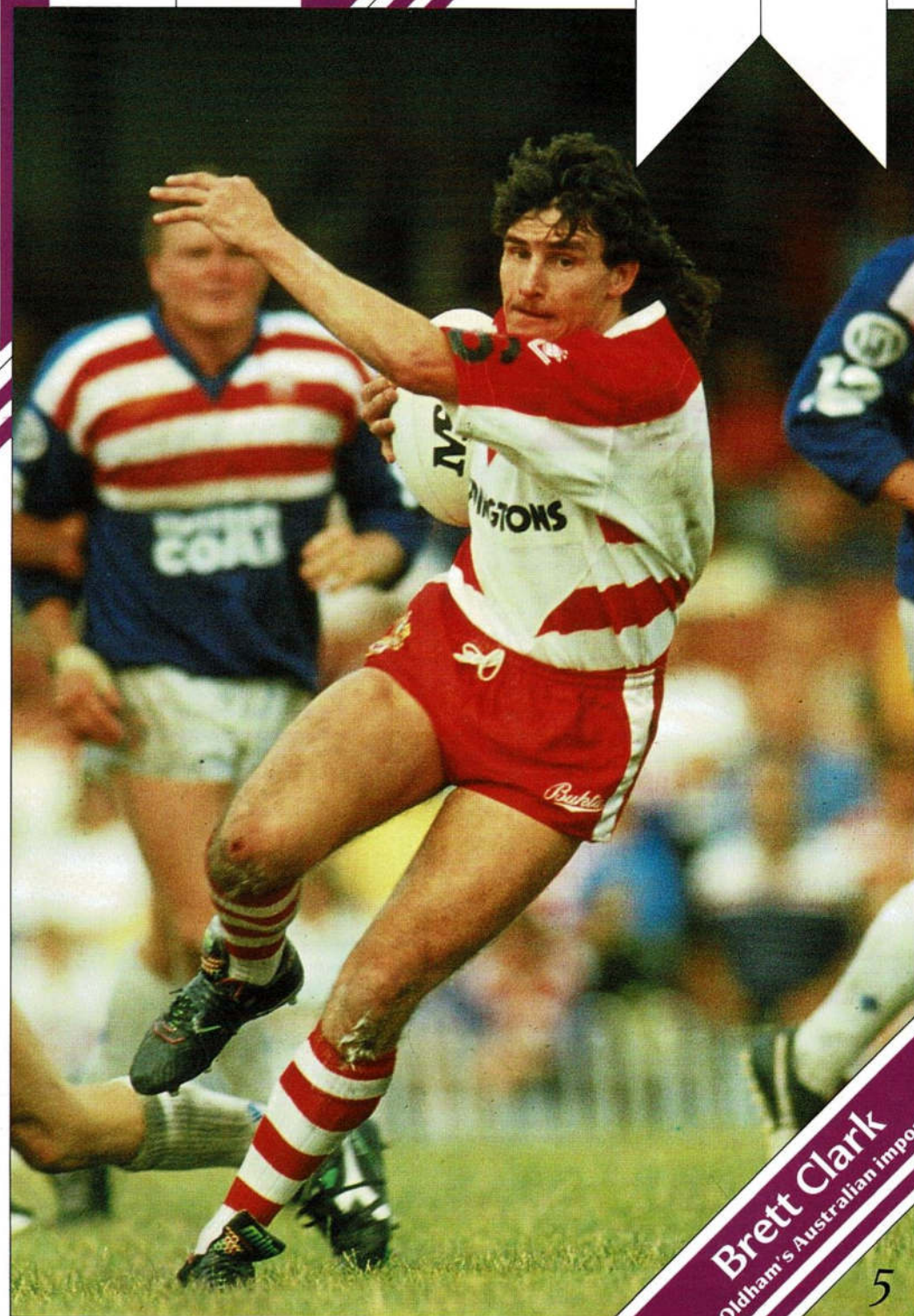
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The Rugby Football League*



Brett Clark
Oldham's Australian import

FORUM

Phil Larder, Britain's National Director of Coaching, has just returned from his latest spell assisting with the development of Rugby League in the Soviet Union. He has seen for himself the difficulties of living in the capital Moscow and taken a good look at the progress League had made since its introduction to the Soviet sports system a year ago. Today in the latest of the Big Match face-to-face interviews with Sunday Mirror columnist JOHN HUXLEY he brings his latest report from Russia.

Q: How did you enjoy this latest trip?

A: For a change I stayed with the family of a player in a Moscow suburb and it was an eye-opening experience for a westerner. He lives in a small five-bedroomed flat with his wife and two small children, his parents and brothers. Food shortages are worse than in 1945 and the women have to queue for hours for even the most basic things like bread and milk. Everything is rationed.

Q: What progress have they made?

A: When I was last over there in Russia I left them a fitness programme to follow and they have obviously worked very hard because they have made leaps and bounds in that department. They are full-time professional sportsmen and the results of the tests I made this time were impressive in comparison with the British Under-21 team.

We have a discipline known as the VO2 maximum bleep test which is based on short sprints and seven out of the 32 players I ran through it were faster than Alan Tait, the best in the British Test squad. Twelve of them were faster over a 15 metre sprint than the Great

Britain under-21 squad. 13 of them faster over 40 metres and one player was faster than Martin Offiah over that same 40 metres. Whether he would be on a rugby pitch or not remains to be seen!

Q: Where in the Soviet Union did you work?

A: We were based at the national sports centre in Alushta. It was really the base for the Olympic style wrestling team and four Olympic gold medallists were working alongside us during the whole of my stay. The whole affair is very spartan by European standards. Although there were problems with food when we arrived it was very acceptable although surprisingly high in fat content considering we were dealing with professional sportsmen.

The Soviets are very keen on both League and American Football because they are professional sports which they can develop beyond the orders of their own country... and earn money. For example, a Soviet player who played with an average British Second Division club could earn enough to buy his own flat and some domestic appliances for his home.

Q: What is the current state of the game in Russia?

A: The eight-team professional league is up and running. The playing standard is just as high as you would imagine for people who have been playing for just a year. Moscow Magicians and Tiraspol are the two best sides while Moscow Spartak are emerging very quickly as the third best side.

I was working with their national squad but we were hampered by the fact that seven of their best players were not available. Three of them were away playing in France, two were having trials for the American Football team and two were injured. And the men who came into the squad were not as experienced, which did not help us make a proper assessment. Nevertheless I believe that if the Russians were to play Papua New Guinea now they would give them a good run for their money.



FORUM

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Q: Are the Soviet players taking League seriously?

A: Before I arrived in the country they had been taking part in practice sessions on hard-packed snow. Can you imagine playing full tackle Rugby League in such conditions. They are so keen to learn. Clearly to make progress they must recruit more top class players and the obvious place to start is with the Rugby Union players just as we did in the old days before our own junior game was in place.

At the moment League players are paid more than Union players but an extra 100 roubles a month isn't going to bring that kind of player to League and we need another incentive. I believe that incentive is sitting here in Britain. If we could offer them places with some of our clubs just for a year it would be not only a sporting challenge but the chance to make economic progress in their own lives. That's something that League can offer them while Union cannot. It is something we must take seriously if League is to make real progress in the Soviet Union.

Q: How are the clubs developing?

A: They are taking their League competition seriously. I watched a game between the top two sides Magicians and Tiraspol, who had four forwards over six foot four inches tall. Tiraspol had never beaten Magicians and they were always trying to play open, expansive football. We changed their tactics so that the

big forwards contained their game in the middle of the pitch and it worked. They won their first match against the Moscow side.

The Magicians coach, the former Soviet Rugby Union national coach, asked me before I left what he needed to do to make sure that Tiraspol did not beat them again. I told him that some of his players were too old and others disappeared when the going got tough. By the time I got back this time he had sold some of his original players and had recruited two players from the Soviet Rugby Union international squad and two more from the American Football squad. It had the effect of weakening them for the moment while the new players are taught the basics of the game but it also helped spread the game because the displaced players had moved on to Spartak which, in turn had brought their standards up.

Q: What of the future in the Soviet Union?

A: While standards of play are still comparatively low, we have to keep in mind all the time that they have been playing for just a year, but they are moving in the right direction.

They have three full-time Rugby League development officers in Moscow – which is three times as many as in London or Leeds – and after a year they have 10 comprehensive schools in Moscow playing Rugby League, more than an English city like Leeds. These are exciting times in Russian League.

The BIG names in Rugby League



JONATHAN DAVIES

The column with a kick!

PLUS

JOHN HUXLEY



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SUNDAY Mirror

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PRELIMINARY ROUND

Carlisle	8	Workington T.	9
Hensingham	7	Dewsbury	24
Leigh East	12	Bradford N.	24
Salford	44	Cutsyke	4
Sheffield E.	19	Hull	6
Warrington	22	Huddersfield	4

FIRST ROUND

Barrow	13	Hunslet	8
Bradford N.	50	Leigh	4
(at Bradford City FC)			
Bramley	6	Oldham	38
Castleford	4	Wigan	28
Doncaster	4	Widnes	30
Halifax	46	Fulham	6
Keighley	36	Runcorn H.	4
Leeds	40	Dewsbury	20
Nottingham C.	10	Whitehaven	26
Rochdale H.	14	Chorley	10
Ryedale-York	1	Warrington	8
Salford	36	Batley	14
Sheffield E.	19	Featherstone R.	12
Swinton	8	St. Helens	18
(at Manchester City)			
Wakefield T.	18	Trafford B.	7
Workington T.	18	Hull K.R.	12

SECOND ROUND

Barrow	4	Widnes	28
Bradford N.	5	Leeds	0
Halifax	46	Whitehaven	12
Keighley	10	Warrington	42
Rochdale H.	4	Wigan	72
St. Helens	16	Wakefield T.	2
Sheffield E.	16	Salford	19
Workington T.	15	Oldham	20

THIRD ROUND

Halifax	16	St. Helens	24
Oldham	40	Salford	3
Warrington	14	Widnes	26
Wigan	32	Bradford N.	2

SILK CUT AWARD

Steve Wear (Workington T.)
Simon Knox (Hensingham)
Steve Grimshaw (Leigh East)
Tex Evans (Salford)
Mark Aston (Sheffield E.)
Kevin Ellis (Warrington)

Pat Trainor (Barrow)
Ian Wilkinson (Bradford N.)

John Fieldhouse (Oldham)
Shaun Edwards (Wigan)
Tony Miller (Widnes)
Roy Southernwood (Halifax)
Jeff Butterfield (Keighley)
Steve Molloy (Leeds)
Steve Maguire (Whitehaven)
Bob Eccles (Chorley)
Tawera Nikau (Ryedale-York)
Sonny Whakarau (Batley)
Anthony Farrell (Sheffield E.)
Phil Viewers (St. Helens)

Nigel Bell (Wakefield T.)
Colin Armstrong (Workington T.)

David Hulme (Widnes)
John Pendlebury (Bradford N.)
Peter Bell (Halifax)
Des Drummond (Warrington)
Ellery Hanley (Widnes)
Ged Bryne (Wakefield T.)
Andy Burgess (Salford)
Dean Wilson (Workington T.)

Jonathan Griffiths (St. Helens)
Mike Ford (Oldham)
Esene Faimalo (Widnes)
Andy Gregory (Wigan)

1991 SILK CUT CHALLENGE CUP

RESULTS



The Stones Bitter Premiership Finals Sunday 12th May 1991

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a fabulous day out as four teams battle to reserve their places on the winners' podium.

Seats cost £15, £12 and £10 (standing tickets are not pre-bookable). And it's all taking place on Sunday 12th May at Old Trafford.

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PROFILE

IAN PROCTOR meets
KELVIN SKERRETT

A year ago, big Kelvin Skerrett was wrestling with his conscience about whether to stay with Bradford Northern or accept the riches - and stronger guarantee of major honours - that were on offer from Wigan. "I'm no pot-hunter," said Skerrett, "but the fact that Wigan are permanently in the honours race obviously swayed my decision. Every player wants something to look back on, when his time is done. I joined Wigan to better myself as a player, so that I could press for further international honours. In the long run, I'm sure I'll emerge as a more consistent player."

Skerrett, after serving his apprenticeship with Hunslet and developing into Test-class material alongside Fairbank, Hobbs, Noble and the rest at Odsal, was a sensation in the British side which defeated New Zealand in the 1989 British Coal series. He also toured with the Lions last summer but, plagued by

problems with his right knee, was forced to fly to Sydney for an arthroscope, missing the first leg of the trip.

Returning home, he finally decided to sign a three-year Wigan contract. Initially, the move across the Pennines seemed ill-fated and Skerrett was a pale shadow of the man who was such a towering figure for Bradford. The Champions lost to Widnes in the CIS Insurance Charity Shield and again in the Lancashire Cup, while league form was unusually erratic. Then, the extent of Skerrett's problem was diagnosed - he was suffering from asthma.

It came as a stunning blow to hear that and for a while I wondered whether I had any sort of playing career left. When that thought was dismissed it all came as a bit of a relief. At least my problems had been pinpointed. But it was a particularly unhappy time for me, having just joined the League Champions and needing a good start to consolidate my place in an all-international pack. With the Ashes series on the horizon, too, you could say that I was pretty depressed about the whole situation.

"The opening weeks are always a difficult settling-in period at a new club and it was frustrating knowing that I was playing below-par because of the illness. The Wigan fans didn't know at first that I was having problems with my breathing, but, thankfully, the specialists sorted the problem. The fans were patient with me, too. I only missed three first-team matches, so my recovery rate was fairly speedy, but I subbed a couple of times and had to knuckle down to establish a place in the front-row. It was sickening to miss out on the Great Britain-Australia clashes, especially at Wembley."

Skerrett was no stranger to success with Bradford Northern as they won two Yorkshire Cup Finals in three seasons and his farewell appearance was at Old Trafford in their disappointing Stones Bitter Premiership Final defeat by Widnes.

"After we'd beaten Northern in the quarter-final, I felt a twinge of sympathy for the likes of Brian Noble and Karl Fairbank, who've been trying to reach Wembley for several years. Both are young enough to make it yet, but I can understand their frustrations.

"Considering the fact that Wigan have been to Wembley three years in succession, the will-to-win is incredible. The players are hungrier than ever to return and the prospect of a showdown with Widnes is something that stirs everyone - not that anyone is dismissing Oldham lightly. Our form has picked up significantly since the start of the Wembley trail began - it's almost as if someone has turned up the switch. The display in the snow at Castleford was awesome and Rochdale were annihilated at Spotland. Northern made it tough for 40 minutes, but Wigan's strengths are all over the field and the result was never really in doubt. I came in for a bit of physical punishment, but that was to be expected, and it was good to avenge the Regal Trophy defeat.

"John Monie has altered my style of play from the way I was used at Bradford. There, David Hobbs had me operating as a wide runner but John wants me doing my job down the middle. It suits me. I'm here to do a job for the benefit of the team. There's a lot of pressure playing for Wigan. Success is expected and the standards are very high. And there is real competition for places, which keeps you on your toes. Having versatile forwards like Andy Platt and Andy Goodway around keeps everyone honest."



PROFILE



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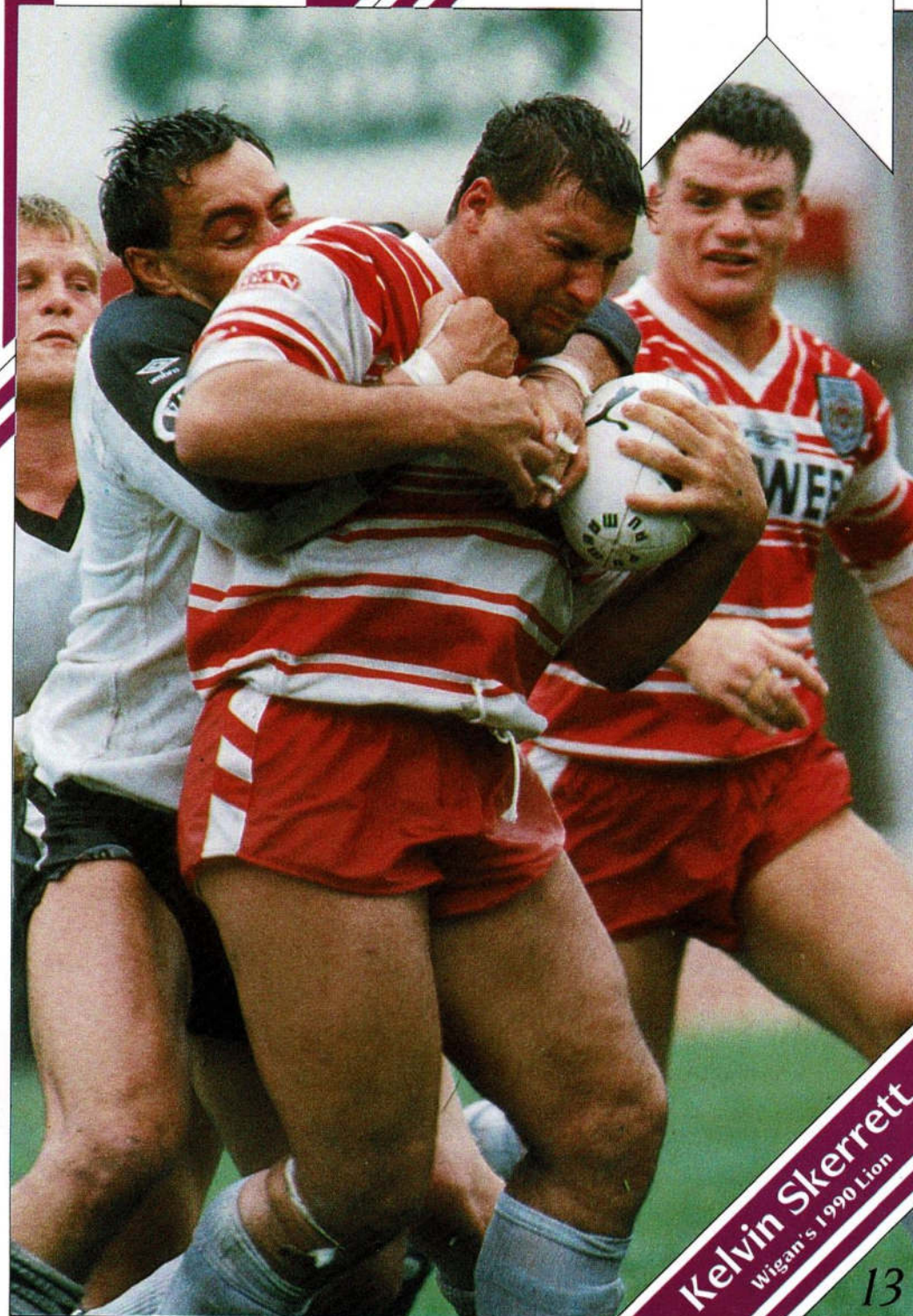
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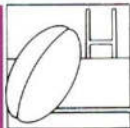
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Kelvin Skerrett
Wigan's 1990 Lion



OLDHAM

Oldham visit Burnden Park for the first time this afternoon determined to end the longest winning Challenge Cup sequence in history and to reach their first Wembley Final. The daunting prospect of facing a Wigan side on the verge of a history-making fourth successive Wembley appearance does not worry John Fieldhouse's battling side. Oldham were the last team to defeat Wigan in the Silk Cut Challenge Cup, by 10-8 at the first round stage in 1987. Last season, it was the Roughyeds who ended Wigan's four-year Lancashire Cup monopoly with a 19-18 Watersheddings victory.

Oldham are appearing at the Challenge Cup semi-final stage for a second successive season, seeking to break their 'duck' in a sixth post-Wembley semi-final. Each of their five semi-final defeats were close affairs, the Roughyeds losing to Widnes (4-7 in 1934), Hull (9-12 in 1960), Hull K.R. (2-12 in a second replay in 1964), Castleford (7-18 in 1986) and, 12 months

ago by 6-10 to Warrington.

Much of the credit for the current revival goes to stand-in player-coach Fieldhouse, who succeeded Tony Barrow in mid-January. Not only has the former Great Britain prop guided them to Cup victories over Bramley, Workington Town and Salford, but he helped to arrest a long, losing league sequence. Stones Bitter Championship survival remains his major priority. After marking their return to the premier level with a memorable opening day defeat of Leeds and winning four of their first seven league matches, the Roughyeds found the going tough. Eight defeats in nine league matches – plus an embarrassing Regal Trophy defeat at Batley – effectively cost Barrow his job.

Oldham's line-up today seems likely to show five changes in personnel from that beaten by Warrington at Wigan 12 months ago. The only change in the backs is the inclusion of Australian centre Tony Anderson, with John Henderson moving to the wing in place of Paul Lord.

Up front, the release of prop Leo Casey to Featherstone, for a record £100,000 fee, has allowed former St. Helens man Austin Donegan the chance to claim the number eight jersey, in the injury-enforced absence of ex-Leigh and Widnes man Derek Pyke, while hooker Andy Ruane has shifted Richard Russell back to loose-forward. In the second-row, Paul Round and Charlie McAllister have displaced Keith Newton and Shaun Allen.

Full-back Duncan Platt was a member of the Widnes side which defeated St. Helens in the 1988 Premiership Final. Platt kicked 126 goals for Oldham in 1989-90, his most consistent season to date and his three Cup quarter-final goals against Salford took this season's tally to 72.

Winger Richard Irving was an influential member of the promotion-winning squad. The

ex-Moldgreen winger scored 17 tries, including one in the 1989 Lancashire Cup Final and Oldham's solitary Cup semi-final effort against Warrington. He scored two tries in the 40-3 quarter-final defeat of Salford a fortnight ago, and one in the first round Cup win at McLaren Field. Ex-Leigh centre Henderson is hoping today's semi-final will be third time lucky, having been a loser with Leigh in 1987 and last year against Warrington. He recovered from an early-season injury to score 17 tries last term, and was a Cup scorer in the quarter-final defeat of Salford.

Tony Anderson broke an ankle on his Oldham debut, at Workington last season and is now showing the Watersheddings fans why Tony Barrow felt he was worth £70,000. Anderson, one of the first wave of Aussies to come to England, was a try-scorer in Halifax's 1988 Wembley defeat by Wigan.

Another player back in the fold, under Fieldhouse, is 1984 Lion Des Foy. The three-cap utility back emigrated to Newcastle in Australia last year, but returned to the Watersheddings to reclaim his centre place and scored a first round try at Bramley.

If Oldham are going to cause a major upset this afternoon, halves Brett Clark and Michael Ford will have to play key roles to play opposite Wigan's Great Britain duo. Both have Wembley experience, Clark with St. Helens in 1987 and Ford two years previously in Wigan's magnificent 28-24 defeat of Hull. Clark,



OLDHAM

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formerly with Wests in Australia, has thrilled the Oldham fans for the past two seasons, totalling 17 touchdowns in the promotion-winning campaign and scoring his 10th of this season in the Cup defeat of Salford. Ford is a mainstay, having a point to prove opposite his 1988 Lions tour colleague Andy Gregory. The former Under-21 international was forced to make way for record-signing Gregory at Wigan in 1987 and moved to Leigh before joining hometown Oldham.

Donegan arrived from St. Helens in the close-season and has been an ever-present since Fieldhouse took the reins from Barrow. Ruane has reclaimed the hooking role and scored two Cup tries in the win at Bramley. The former Widnes and Rochdale man is also adept at dropping vital goals.

Wigan-born Fieldhouse, formerly with Warrington, Widnes and St. Helens, appeared at

Wembley in St. Helens' 1987 defeat by Halifax. The holder of seven Test caps, from the 1985-86 era, and voted Britain's Man of the Series in their 1985 duels with New Zealand, he claims to be playing as well as at any time in his career. Former St. Helens and Great Britain Under-21 back-rower Paul Round became something of a utility man at Watersheddings two years ago, but is back in his old second-row position. His strong-running style brought him his 14th try of the season against Salford, and he was a try-scorer, as a substitute, in the beaten Saints' Wembley side of 1987.

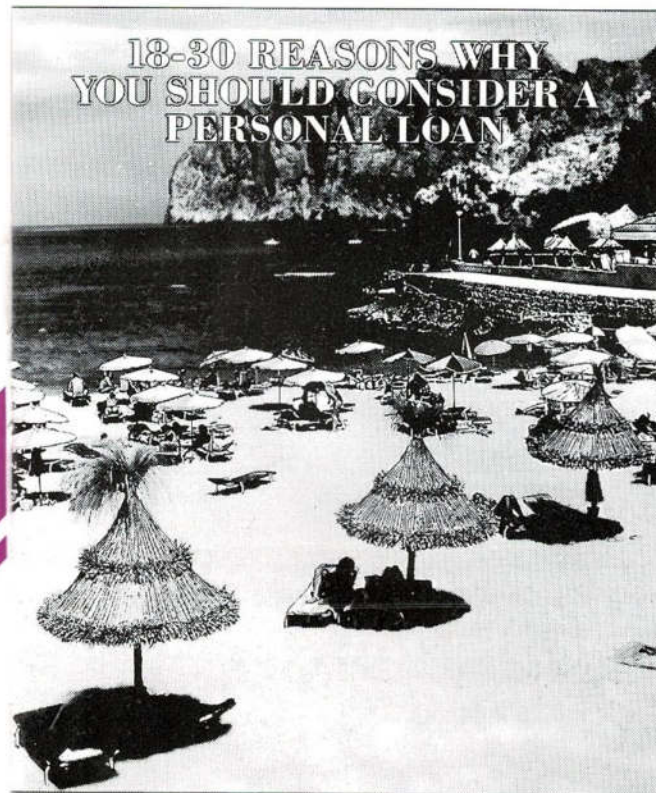
New Zealander Charlie McAllister remains one of the most popular players to play for Oldham. Having scored eight tries and 16 goals last term, he has made a successful transition from centre to second row. Play-anywhere former Wigan star Russell has starred at hooker and loose-forward after being an

outstanding utility back during his formative years at Central Park, gaining Great Britain Colts and Under-21 honours.

One of three contenders for the 1990 Stones Bitter Second Division Player of the Year award, which he won whilst with Runcorn Highfield in 1987, was dynamic Australian loose forward John Cogger. He scored 24 tries last season but the former Wests man has spent much of 1990-91 on the bench.

Injuries were one of the key factors in Oldham's long autumn spell without league success and Fieldhouse may be spoilt for choice for this semi-final. Under-21 international prodigy Tommy Martyn; blockbusting ex-Leeds winger Norman Francis; former Warrington and Great Britain centre Ronnie Duane; versatile Keith Atkinson and Shaun Allen were all absent for that crushing victory over Salford.

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LOW TAR As defined by H.M. Government
**STOPPING SMOKING REDUCES THE RISK
 OF SERIOUS DISEASES**

Health Departments' Chief Medical Officers

LINE-UP

Oldham

Blue and White jerseys
 Coach: **JOHN FIELDHOUSE**

DUNCAN PLATT

RICHARD IRVING
JOHN HENDERSON
TONY ANDERSON
PAUL LORD

BRETT CLARK
MIKE FORD, Capt.

JOHN FIELDHOUSE
ANDY RUANE
AUSTIN DONEGAN
PAUL ROUND
CHARLIE McALLISTER
RICHARD RUSSELL

RONNIE DUANE
KEITH NEWTON

Wigan

Cherry and White jerseys
 Coach: **JOHN MONIE**

STEVE HAMPSON

JOE LYDON
KEVIN IRO
DEAN BELL
FRANO BOTICA

SHAUN EDWARDS
ANDY GREGORY

KELVIN SKERRETT
MARTIN DERMOTT
IAN LUCAS
DENIS BETTS
ANDY PLATT
ELLERY HANLEY, Capt.

DAVID MYERS
PHIL CLARKE

SILK CUT AWARD
 This afternoon's
 Silk Cut Award winner,
 judged by the Press, will
 receive £250 and an
 inscribed memento.

Referee: **J.E. SMITH**, Halifax
 Touch Judges:

B. HOPE, Wakefield (red flag) **D. H. MITCHELL**, Leeds (yellow flag)

LINE-UP

HISTORY

Rugby League historian **ROBERT GATE** reviews the semi-final stage of the world famous Rugby League Challenge Cup.

Statistics do not include the current 1990-91 semi-finals.

This season sees the 94th anniversary of Rugby League's premier competition, the Challenge Cup. The first Cup winners were Batley's Gallant Youths back in 1897 at Headingley, their victims being St. Helens.

Since the competition began 178 semi-final ties have been played, nineteen of which have required replays. Only one semi-final, however, has gone to two replays — Hull K.R. v Oldham in 1964.

No fewer than 31 clubs have reached the semi-finals. Prior to the 1991 semi-finals Wigan (31) had made most appearances. Their closest challengers are Leeds 28, Warrington 25, Halifax 21, Hull, St. Helens and Widnes 19 each, and Wakefield Trinity 18. Of the present League clubs Bramley have waited longest for a semi-final spot having competed since 1897 without success. Relative newcomers Carlisle, Chorley, Doncaster, Fulham, Mansfield and Sheffield have yet to reach the last four.

Excluding the semi-finals of 1941-45, which were contested on a home and away basis, all Challenge Cup semi-finals have been staged on neutral grounds with Headingley, Station Road, Central Park, Odsal Stadium and Fartown proving the most frequently used venues. The following 22 grounds have hosted semi-finals or replays.

	Semi-finals	Replays	Draws
Station Road, Swinton	28	2	5
Headingley, Leeds	27	2	4
Central Park, Wigan	22	3	2
Odsal Stadium, Bradford	19	0	2
Fartown, Huddersfield	18	5	1
Belle Vue, Wakefield	9	1	0
Wheater's Field, Broughton	8	1	2
Athletic Grounds, Rochdale	6	1	1
Thrum Hall, Halifax	6	0	0
The Willows, Salford	5	1	0
Elland Road, Leeds	4	2	1
Watersheddings, Oldham	4	0	0
Wilderspool, Warrington	4	0	1
Belle Vue, Manchester	1	0	0
Burnden Park, Bolton	1	0	0
The Cliff, Broughton	1	0	1
Park Avenue, Bradford	1	0	0
Parkside, Hunslet	1	0	0
Knowsley Road, St. Helens	1	0	0
Maine Road, Manchester	1	0	0
Mather Lane, Leigh	0	2	0
Old Trafford, Manchester	1	0	0

HIGHEST SCORES IN SEMI-FINALS AT NEUTRAL VENUES

1913	Huddersfield	35	Wakefield T.	2
	At Halifax			
1988	Wigan	34	Salford	4
	At Bolton			
1924	Wigan	30	Barrow	5
	At Salford			
1933	Huddersfield	30	Leeds	8
	At Wakefield			

Note — Dewsbury beat Oldham 43-5 in 1943 and Bradford Northern beat Keighley 35-3 in 1945 but both these games were second leg home fixtures.



HISTORY

18

HIGHEST SCORE BY A LOSING TEAM

1985	Castleford	16	Hull	22
	At Headingley (Replay)			

Note — Oldham led Hull K.R. 17-14 in a replayed semi-final at Swinton in 1964 but the match was abandoned 12 minutes into extra time. Oldham lost the second replay.

HIGHEST AGGREGATE (48 points)

1986	Hull K.R.	24	Leeds	24
	At Elland Road			

HIGHEST RECEIPTS

1990	£177,161	St. Helens v Wigan
	At Old Trafford.	

SCORELESS SEMI-FINALS

1903	Salford v Oldham
	At Wheater's Field, Broughton.
1923	Barrow v Leeds At The Cliff, Broughton.
1937	Keighley v Wakefield Trinity At Headingley.
1968	Huddersfield v Wakefield Trinity At Odsal.
1988	Halifax v Hull At Headingley

HIGHEST ATTENDANCE

69,898	1950	Leeds v Warrington At Odsal.
--------	------	------------------------------

LOWEST ATTENDANCE

5,500	1897	Batley v Warrington At Fartown.
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LARGEST AGGREGATE ATTENDANCES

In 1964 the aggregate attendance for the semi-finals was 139,106 but exceptional circumstances prevailed as for the only time both games (Castleford v Widnes and Hull K.R. v Oldham) required replays. In fact there were five games in that series of semi-finals as Rovers and Oldham needed a second replay.

1939 saw the largest aggregate for semi-finals (excluding replays) when 104,453 saw Halifax v Leeds at Odsal (64,453) and Salford v Wigan at Rochdale (40,000). The latter match was marred by tragedy, two fatalities occurring as a stand collapsed.

MOST CONSECUTIVE SEMI-FINALS

5	Huddersfield	1913, 1914, 1915, 1920, 1921
		(No competition 1916-19)
5	Leeds	1939, 1941, 1942, 1943, 1944
		(No competition (1940)
4	Oldham	1924-27
4	Huddersfield	1933-36
4	Halifax	1938-42 (No competition 1940)
4	Bradford N.	1947-50
4	St. Helens	1976-79
4	Widnes	1979-82

The following is a complete record of the clubs who have participated in the semi-finals of the Rugby League Challenge Cup 1897-1990.

	App.	Won	Lost	% Success	Most recent
Barrow	12	5	7	41.6%	1967
Batley	6	3	3	50.0%	1911
Bradford/Bradford N.	14	8	6	57.1%	1983
Broughton Rangers*	5	2	3	40.0%	1914
Castleford*	1	—	1	00.0%	1901
Castleford	11	4	7	36.4%	1986
Dewsbury	9	3	6	33.3%	1974
Featherstone Rovers	12	5	7	41.6%	1983
Halifax	21	12	9	57.1%	1988
Huddersfield	16	8	8	50.0%	1971
Hull	19	12	7	63.2%	1988
Hull K.R.	11	6	5	54.5%	1986
Hunslet	10	4	6	40.0%	1965
Keighley	5	1	4	20.0%	1976
Leeds	28	14	14	50.0%	1986
Leeds Parish Church*	1	—	1	00.0%	1900
Leigh	9	2	7	22.2%	1987
Oldham	17	7	10	41.2%	1990
Rochdale Hornets	7	1	6	14.3%	1958
St. Helens	19	12	7	63.2%	1990
St. Helens Recs*	1	—	1	00.0%	1929
Salford	13	7	6	53.8%	1988
Swinton	9	5	4	55.5%	1965
Wakefield Trinity	18	8	10	44.4%	1979
Warrington	25	13	12	52.0%	1990
Whitehaven	1	—	1	00.0%	1957
Widnes	19	12	7	63.2%	1989
Wigan	31	20	11	64.5%	1990
Wigan Highfield	1	—	1	00.0%	1926
Workington Town	3	3	—	100.0%	1958
York	2	1	1	50.0%	1984

* Defunct clubs Now Runcorn Highfield

● All statistics are exclusive of 1991 semi-finals

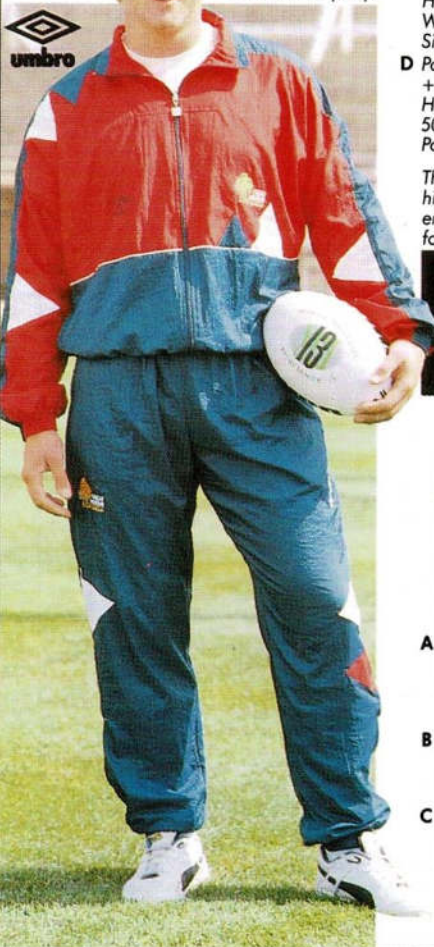
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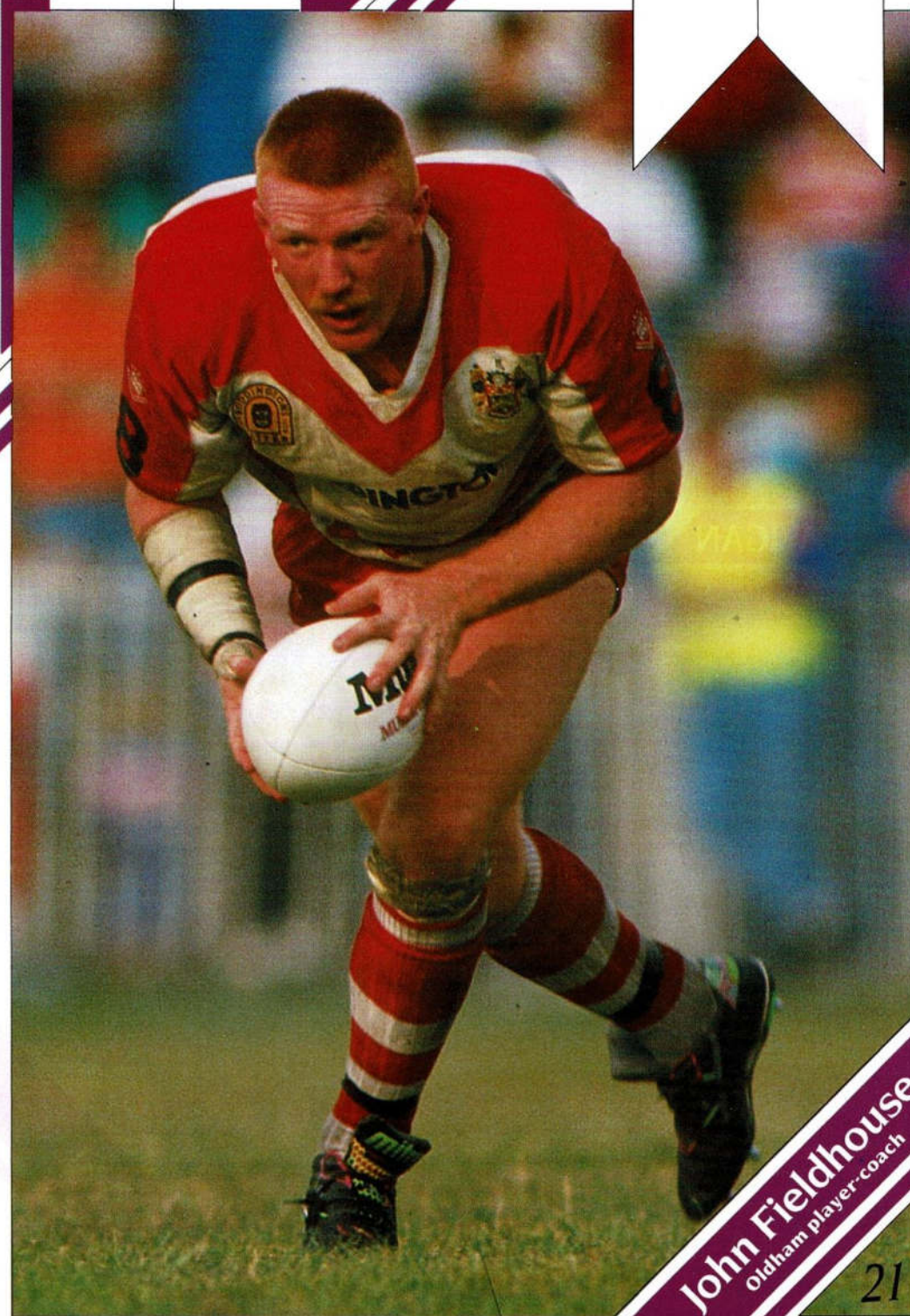
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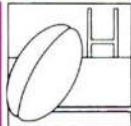
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John Fieldhouse
Oldham player-coach



WIGAN

Silk Cut Challenge Cup record-breakers Wigan will create further history this afternoon if they defeat Oldham and qualify for an unprecedented fourth successive Wembley Final. They have already shattered a host of records by extending a four-year winning Silk Cut sequence to 18 matches. Their last defeat in the competition was an 8-10 first-round reverse at... Oldham, in 1987!

Wigan, appearing in a record 23rd post-Wembley semi-final, seek to qualify for a record 17th Wembley final and could seal a record Challenge Cup win beneath the twin towers on 27 April. This afternoon they start favourites to continue a run of seven semi-final victories stretching back to 1970. The last time Wigan were denied at this stage was in 1968, when Leeds outplayed them - 25-4 at Swinton. Wigan have, yet again, saved their finest form of the season for the road to Wembley. A flawless 28-4 first-round Wheldon Road elimination of Castleford was

followed by a 12-try, 72-4 slaughter of Rochdale Hornets and a contemptuous quarter-final victory over a Bradford side which had won the previous three meetings between the sides. Australian coach John Monie, in his second season at the Wigan helm, has matched the achievements of predecessor, Graham Lowe. The man who steered Parramatta to their last Premiership in 1986, has continued the run of success which is demanded at Britain's most famous club.

Skipper Ellery Hanley recently scored the 300th try and 25th hat-trick of a brilliant career, now within striking distance of becoming the first player to score 200 tries at First Division level and moving into second place as Britain's most-capped international. His awesome performances for Great Britain in the British Coal Test series against Australia captivated the nation and proved that he was back to his best after the worries of a serious pelvic injury.

It was an injury-hit Wigan team which began the season, uncharacteristically, with a Swansea defeat at the hands of Widnes in the CIS Insurance Charity Shield, with the Chemics repeating the dose in the Greenalls Lancashire Cup. Wigan's two-year stranglehold on the Regal Trophy was also broken, by Bradford, with a 12-6 quarter-final victory at Wigan. Yet Wigan remain on course for chasing an historic second successive Championship-Challenge Cup double.

Great Britain have leaned heavily on Wigan players this season - as they have throughout Mal Reilly's four-year reign as coach - and four of the team were Wembley heroes of that epic First British Coal Test victory against Australia. Platt was added to the side for the valiant effort at Old Trafford and Lucas won his first cap against France.

New faces in the Wigan camp this season include former All Black RU star Franc Botica, whose goalkicking accuracy has added a new dimension to the side; rugged Kelvin Skerrett; and Under-21 international winger David Myers, now settled after brief stints with Widnes and Warrington.

Steve Hampson has rediscovered some of his finest form at full back, excelling in the Test win over Australia at Wembley. After missing a succession of Wembley Finals in 1984, 1985 and 1988, he will look to repeat last season's semi-final try against St Helens, at Old Trafford, to secure his personal Wembley hat-trick.

On the flanks, Myers looks a useful acquisition, scoring two of his 11 tries in the home defeat of Oldham, leaving last season's leading try scorer, Mark Preston, as the odd man out in the face of competition from utility man Botica and Joe Lydon. Botica amassed 60 points as Wigan advanced through the first three rounds of the Silk Cut Challenge Cup, including a 28-point contribution to the slaughter of Rochdale. Lydon has been plagued by injuries this season, missing out on a second consecutive Ashes series. He landed four goals in Wigan's 20-14 semi-final defeat of St Helens a year ago and few will forget his contribution to major matches of the past decade.

Kiwi internationals Dean Bell and Kevin Iro are automatic choices for the centre berths and



WIGAN

22

both scored their 10th try of the season in the Cup win over Bradford. Iro's was a stunning 75-yard effort, reminiscent of the power running which has brought him two tries in each of Wigan's Wembley victories of the past three years.

The Great Britain international trio of Shaun Edwards, Andy Gregory and Bobby Goulding are, again, vying for the half back berths. Goulding, the precocious 1990 Lions tourist, seems likely to be odd man out. Edwards, the only survivor from Wigan's beaten 1984 Wembley side, is also the only player to have appeared in each of Wigan's 18 consecutive Silk Cut Challenge Cup victories and scored tries in their 1988 and 1989 semi-final victories, revelling in the Burnden Park mud against Salford three years ago. Gregory may have opted to retire from international football, but he remains the foremost scrum-half in

the British game and is on course for a record-equalling seventh Wembley Cup Final appearance, having set a new record with his fifth winner's medal and second Lance Todd trophy-winning performance last year.

Up front, Skerrett, a record signing from Bradford having toured Down Under, suffered asthmatic problems early in his Central Park career, but was back to his best against his former club. 1990 Lions tourist Ian Lucas made a Great Britain Test debut in Perpignan last January. Versatile ex-St Helens forward Andy Platt missed some early-season games with a knee problem but produced a typically high workrate for Great Britain while taking his Test appearances to 15 against Australia and France this season.

Another 1990 Lions tourist, hooker Martin Dermott, is restored to the Wigan front-row, having lost out to Goulding early

in the season. Dermott made his Test debut against New Zealand last June. Denis Betts has emerged as Great Britain's outstanding find of the past 12 months, starring on the 1990 Lions tour to PNG and New Zealand, appearing in 11 consecutive Tests, excelling in the Ashes series against Australia.

Ex-Oldham forward Andy Goodway has missed eight matches since the turn of the year after breaking an arm against Leeds in December. It was his sensational last-gasp Old Trafford try which broke the 14-14 deadlock against St Helens in the semi-final 12 months ago.

Virtually any other club would have found a regular place for 1990 Lions tourist and Great Britain Under-21 skipper Phil Clarke; up-and-coming Under-21 international Mike Forshaw; tackling machine Ian Gildart; and Ged Stazicker.



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SHARP

TOP OF THE LEAGUE



PROFILE

John Fieldhouse, Oldham's young player-coach, is well aware of the importance of today's Silk Cut cup tie. "Supporters have told me that they'll die happy if Oldham finally reach Wembley. The club have had some great sides down the years, but this one can create history by becoming the first to appear at Wembley. "I'll make no bones about it, the semi-final draw was the worst we could have got. Saints can always blow hot and cold and we defeated Widnes in last year's quarter-final at Naughton Park. But Wigan, in my opinion, are probably the finest, most professional side in the world. And, as a Wiganer, myself, I have nothing but admiration for them. "I've been around the scene in a playing career with Warrington, Widnes, Saints and Oldham, but it will always be a source of regret that I never played for my hometown team. They're very special to me and I have some close friends in their ranks – but I'll be giving everything to deny them that historic fourth successive Wembley visit."

Fieldhouse has always been one of those old-head-on-young-shoulders type of players. A leader by example, his coaching career commenced in his native Wigan, 12 years ago. At the tender age of 16, he was asked by Wigan St. Cuthberts open-age side for advice on fitness and the fresh-faced St. Patricks prodigy was only too happy to oblige.

"I've always intended to go into coaching", said the former Great Britain prop, who already has his level one and level two certificates. "It's just come along a little earlier than anticipated. But I aim to grasp the opportunity with both hands and definitely want this Oldham job. My first target was to restore team spirit at Water-sheddings and I believed that the only way to do that was to get the players enjoying what they were doing in training and on the park. Most winning sides are happy sides, and the smiles which have returned in recent weeks have coincided with our improved form. Avoiding relegation is still the major objective, but the Cup run has been a more than welcome diversion. It has also restored confidence because the second-round win at Workington and that runaway 40-3 quarter-final defeat of Salford have given the players a new belief in themselves."

Fieldhouse believes he is playing more consistently than at any time in his career. Better, even, than when he took the Man of the Series award for his part in that memorable, shared 1985 series against Mark Graham's Kiwis. And he wants it known that, at 28, he has not given up hope of wearing the red, white and blue again in the future. "Like the Oldham club in general, I've suffered more than my share of injuries, but my fitness and form has delighted me in recent weeks. Prop forward is definitely my best position these days and I still believe that I could do a job for the Lions on tour in 1992."

"Playing for Great Britain was the undoubted highlight of my career and I'd love to do so again. I've had a taste of Wembley, albeit a losing final, and success in the Lancashire Cup and John Player Trophy, but representing my country was something else. It's the absolute pinnacle."

There can be few busier people in Rugby League than Fieldhouse. A joiner by trade, he manages to combine his daily duties with overseeing things at Water-sheddings and looking after his Warrington-based family. He admits that he would have to consider going full-time if Oldham offered the coaching role on a permanent basis at the end of the season.

"One of the things I'm particularly proud of, in my short time in charge, is the way the younger Slalom Lager Alliance players have responded. I told them that there would be opportunities for them and I've tried to be as good as my word. We have included some of them as travelling reserves, just for the experience and, significantly, the Alliance team have soared up the table since January. It's all about competition for places. When someone's breathing down your neck it's bound to make you play even better."

I thought we were desperately unlucky against Warrington, 12 months ago", said Fieldhouse who played in the 1987 Final for St. Helens against Halifax.

"We can't ask for any more than every player giving of his best. If that's not good enough, then at least we can hold our heads high."



PROFILE

IN-TOUCH

SILK CUT SEMI

Des Foy is the only Oldham player in Saturday's team who was in the side when Wigan were last beaten in a Silk Cut Challenge Cup tie – back in the first round of 1987.

Since then Wigan have won a record 18 Challenge Cup ties as they seek to become the first club to appear at Wembley in four successive seasons, having won the Silk Cut Challenge Cup for a record three years in a row.

● Shaun Edwards is the only player to have appeared in all 18 Cup ties and was also in the side that lost to Oldham, along with Steve Hampson, Joe Lydon, Ellery Hanley, Dean Bell, Andy Gregory, Martin Dermott and Andy Goodway of the present squad.

● After beating Wigan 10-8 in 1987, Oldham lost 24-14 at home to St. Helens in the next round. Oldham were then relegated while Wigan went on to win the Stones Bitter Championship – the same could happen this season.

● Although Oldham have never been to Wembley they hold the record for most successive final appearances of four, completed just two years before the stadium staged its first final in 1929.

● Since then Oldham have appeared in five semi-finals and lost them all, including last season. In contrast, Wigan are aiming to extend their Wembley records of 16 finals and 10 victories. Wigan also hold the record

for most appearances in all Challenge Cup finals with 20 including a record 11 wins.

● Oldham last won the Cup in 1927 when they beat Swinton – at Wigan.

● Wigan scrum half Andy Gregory holds the record of being on the winning side five times at Wembley – with Widnes in 1981 and 1984, then Wigan in the last three. He was also on the Widnes side that drew with Hull in 1982 so has never lost at Wembley in six final appearances.

● The highest score and widest margin in a semi-final is Huddersfield's 35-2 defeat of Wakefield Trinity at Halifax in 1913 (not including war time two-legged finals).

● Castleford scored the most points by losing semi-finalists when they lost 22-16 to Hull in the 1985 replay at Leeds.

TOP TEN TRY SCORERS

1. Martin Offiah (Widnes)	43
2. Greg Austin (Halifax)	35
3. Ellery Hanley (Wigan)	23
4. Jonathan Davies (Widnes)	22
5. Les Quirk (St. Helens)	21
Anthony Sullivan (Hull K.R.)	21
Graham Steadman (Castleford)	21
Adrian Hadley (Salford)	21
Garry Schofield (Leeds)	21
10. Martin Wood (Halifax)	20

The 1990-91 top try scorer will receive £25 a try from Stones Bitter.

TOP TEN GOAL SCORERS

1. Steve Kerry (Salford)	136
2. Paul Eastwood (Hull)	94
3. Alan Platt (Halifax)	86
4. Frano Botica (Wigan)	85
5. Graham Sullivan (Ryedale-York)	83



IN-TOUCH

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6. Simon Irving (Leeds)	82
Paul Loughlin (St. Helens)	82
8. Tim Lumb (Hunslet)	81
9. Jonathan Davies (Widnes)	77
Duncan Platt (Oldham)	77

The 1990-91 top goal scorer will receive £5 a goal from Stones Bitter.

TOP FIVE POINT SCORERS

	Tries	Goals	Drop	Points
1. Steve Kerry (Salford)	16	131	5	331
2. Jonathan Davies (Widnes)	22	77	0	242
3. Paul Eastwood (Hull)	12	94	0	236
4. Frano Botica (Wigan)	15	85	0	230
5. G. Sullivan (Ryedale-York)	12	80	3	211

TRY SCORING RUN

Paul Round has been a try scorer in six successive matches for Oldham. The second row forward's sequence is as follows:

1-1-1-1-2-1

POINT SCORING RUN

Steve Kerry's point scoring run ended at 31

matches as Salford lost 7-0 at Workington Town on Sunday. The half back was the last player with a chance of scoring in every match this season.

Graham Sullivan of Ryedale-York now has the longest scoring sequence covering 24 matches.

WINNING RUN

Wigan have the longest winning run of nine matches, covering six Stones Bitter Championship and three Silk Cut Challenge Cup ties.

LOSING RUN

Hull KR and Keighley have the longest losing run of six matches.

MILESTONES

Andy Mason of Wakefield needs one try for a career total of 100.

Ellery Hanley of Wigan needs two tries for a Division One career total of 200.

Paul Eastwood of Hull needs three tries for a career century of touchdowns.

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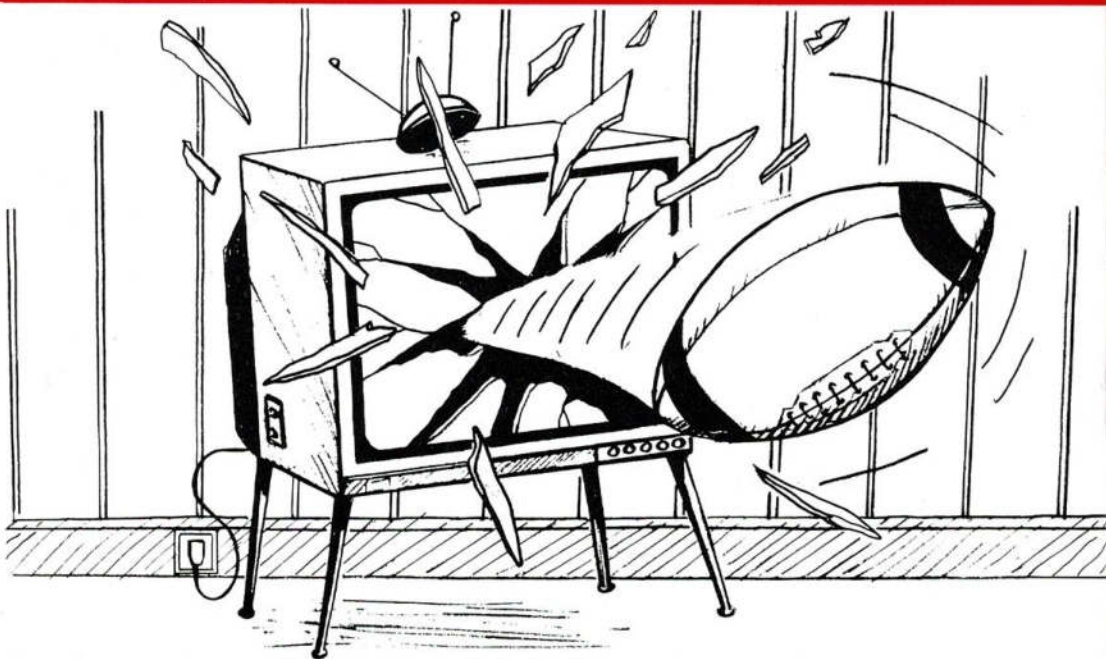
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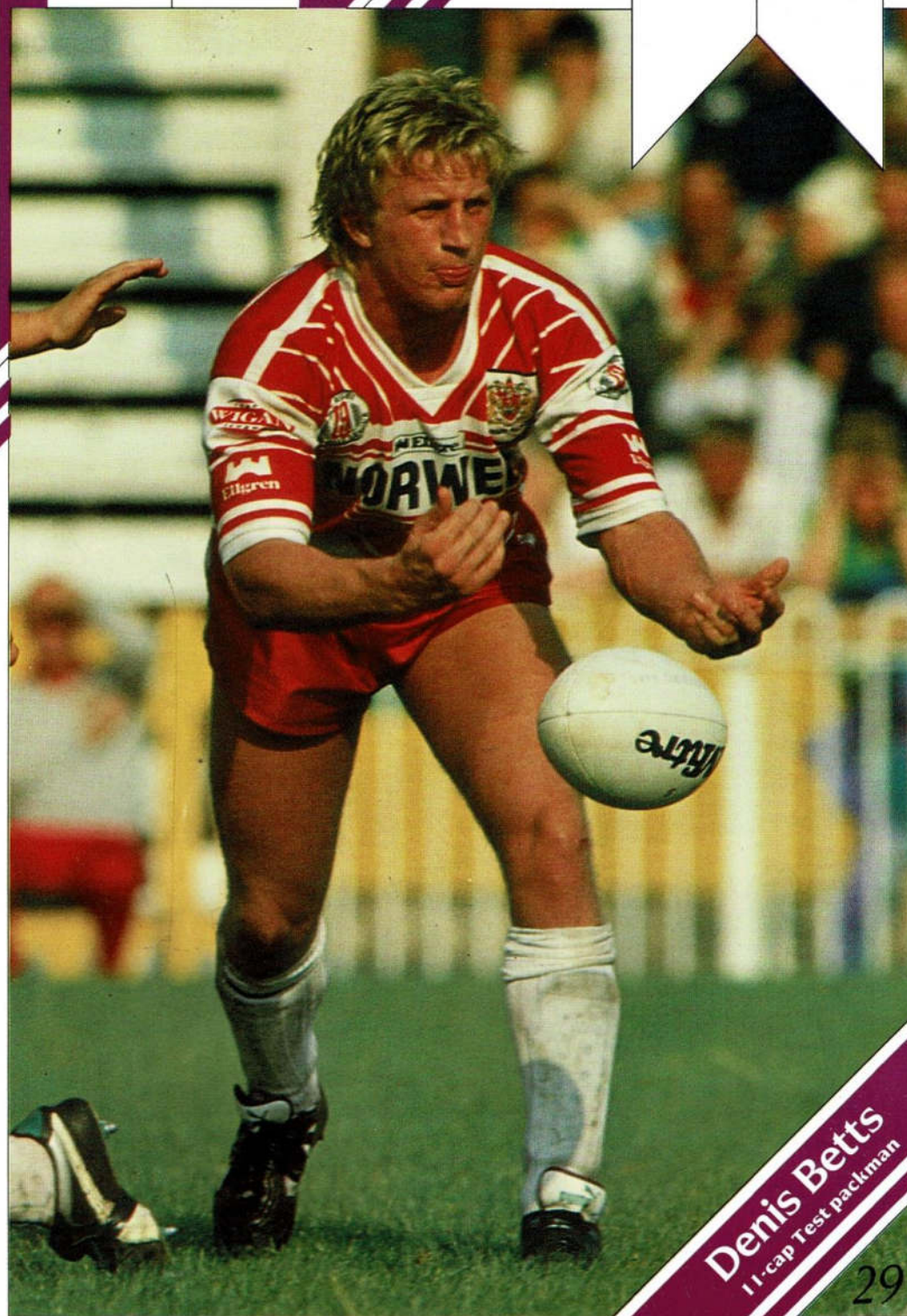
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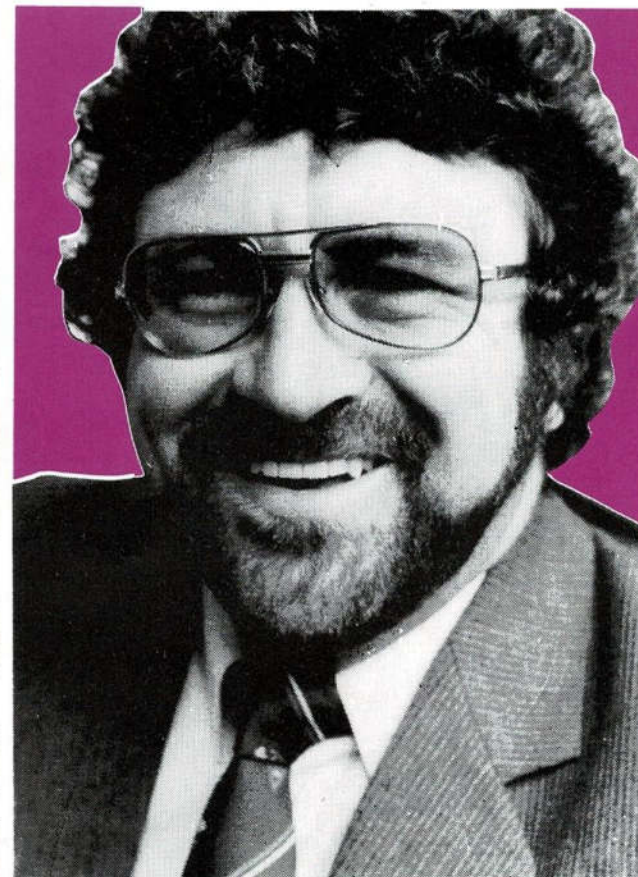


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