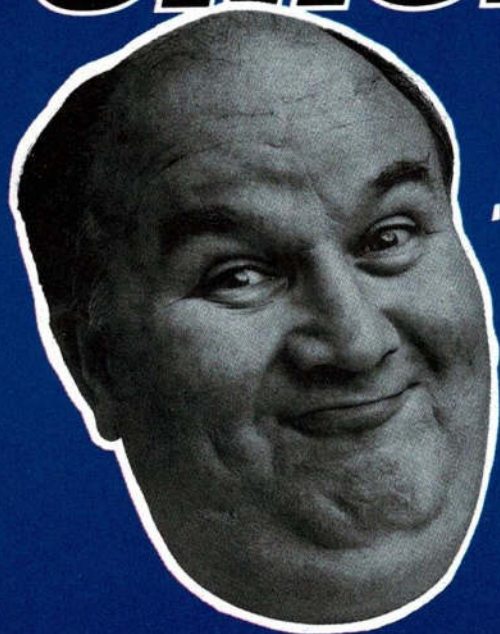


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The Rugby Football League

REGAL TROPHY

HIGHFIELD R.L.F.C.

v

OLDHAM R.L.F.C

REGAL TROPHY 2ND ROUND
SUNDAY 14th NOVEMBER, 1993

at
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EDITORIAL

It was the Regal Trophy which started it all five years ago. The players went on strike and against Wigan the club only fielded two professionals, one of whom was sent off, losing 92 points to 2. Since then it's been an uphill struggle to regain credibility. Throughout that period the club has set an example of financial probity which others declined to follow preferring to go out of business leaving huge unpaid debts and a nasty taste in the mouth.

The penalty paid by this club in the five years since has been incalculable and it is sad to see commentators such as Mike Sadler, writing in the League Express, suggesting that players carry no responsibility for the economic woes of rugby league. Sadler, speaking, so I understand (although I am ready to be corrected) from a position which involves no risk of financial loss on his part, suggests that players deserve every penny they can get and that clubs should go out and get the money or die.

And if the clubs die, who will pay the players? Why should anyone in their right mind risk halfapenny of their hard earned cash, provide a minute of their precious time, or pay to watch others perform, unless those performers are worth it. The cold hard statistics of rugby league attendances suggest less and less people are inclined to believe they are worth it.

Rugby league players must be one of the few working groups who have increased their earnings during the recession. In any other business the less customers you get the quicker you reduce costs. London Crusaders have already recognised this by cutting wages. Scarborough and Swinton failed to recognise it early enough. Widnes have recognised it belatedly. You cannot expect to be paid unless there is money in the kitty.

Ideally all professional clubs should have full time staff, including a commercial manager, but rugby league is far from the ideal world. It is - Wigan, Leeds and a few other clubs notwithstanding - still a game where people are compensated for broken time not one where the majority are full time players. Recent research suggests that greed was at the heart of the original break away from rugby union. Current evidence suggests that greed is throttling the life out of rugby league and no amount of gloss can cover it up.

Perhaps when the Mike Sadler's of this world have to bear the financial consequences of their opinions media comment might be worth listening to. But the the BBC doesn't have to compete or die, does it.

By Mike Peers

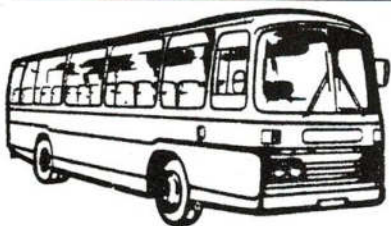
They say what can't speak can't lie but last Sunday's result didn't tell the truth about our performance against Doncaster. Anyone at the game knows that had we managed to convert pressure into points during the first half hour of the second half the game was ours for the taking.

All Doncaster's points came within six minutes: the problem was that they scored two tries in three two minute spells. I have to give credit to the lads for fighting back after our disastrous start but we lacked the ability our visitors showed in finishing moves off by scoring.

Today's visitors also have that ability - ability shown by local players wearing Oldham's colours. The finishing power of Scott Ranson and Darren Abram in the backs, the experience of ex-Saints hooker Paul Groves, Andy Goodway (four times Regal Trophy winner with Wigan) and Aussie Bob Lidner in the pack, not to mention the proven handling and kicking skills of half backs Paul Topping and Steve Kerry.

Oldham have already shown they are a quality outfit capable of holding their own in the first division. In the Regal Trophy, they have twice reached the semi-finals, although it is four years since they progressed beyond the second round. Highfield has had its best showing in the competition for nine years and it's in the nature of cup football that in a one-off situation anything can happen. Exactly what will be seen during eighty minutes this afternoon.

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TONY PEMBERTON

Tony Pemberton admits to having a sense of humour. "You need a sense of humour to be a hooker," Highfield's Oldham based number nine said casually, "having to put your arms round two big fellows dozens of times in an afternoon."

Not that that's all the fiery ex Blackpool man does for his money on a Sunday. A frequent leader in the tackle count chart he refers to his contribution to team work in a dismissive manner. "I can't do anything else," he says, "I've always been a defensive number nine rather than the attacking variety you see in Martin Dermott."

Unlike Dermott, Pemberton has no ambitions to reach the top of the tree in rugby league. "It's enjoyable but it's not the most important thing in life. It's family first." Family means not only Christine and their two children, six year old Kayliegh and Jack, aged two, but the avid support of his parents. "My mother is the one who likes watching me play but as she doesn't drive my dad has to watch as well. I'm not sure he would, given the choice."

Although only 23 - "honest!" he protests, 'Pemby' has been playing rugby league for a decade, starting with Fitton Hill and moving on to Blackpool under Mike Peers who was instrumental in bringing him to Highfield earlier this year. "I joined on loan towards the end of last season and was impressed by the team spirit and commitment shown in the battle against relegation to the Conference. Unlike Blackpool when Highfield made an agreement with me they stuck to it so when I became a free agent in the summer I had no hesitation in joining permanently. My only disappointment is that we haven't been able to get one or two more players in key positions. I'm certain that if we can the club is capable of finishing in mid-table."

That confidence is based on his own belief in the quality of his team mates. "Ian Potter's quiet but you always know he's there and I get on alright with Brownie - when he plays." Owing to Brown's erratic form that hasn't been as much as expected this season but Pemberton was deliberate in his observations. "I can't say too much about him, he's bigger than me, I might not get a lift home and walking back to Oldham from St. Helens would test even my sense of humour," he said smiling.

TODAYS TEAMS

Highfield R.L.F.C.

CHRIS JOHNSON

MIKE DENNING

STEVE FLANNERY

DAVE WOOD

SHAUN BARROW

TIM BROWN

WILLIE JOHNSON

IAN POTTER

TONY PEMBERTON

GARY FORBER

SCOTT MUDGE

TRENT JORDAN

SHAUN DOLAN

MIKE CARR

DAVID BARNES

1
Full Back

2
Right Wing

3
Right Centre

4
Left Centre

5
Left Wing

6
Stand Off

7
Scrum Half

8
Field Prop

9
Hooker

10
Blind Prop

11
2nd Row

12
2nd Row

13
Loose Forward

14
Sub

15
Sub

OLDHAM R.L.F.C.

WALLY GIBSON

SCOTT RANSON

SHAUN IRWIN

DARREN ABRAM

DAVID JONES

PAUL TOPPING

STEVE KERRY

IAN SHERRATT

PAUL GROVES

MARK MEADOWS

MARK KUITI

ANDY GOODWAY

BOB LIDNER

IAN GREEN

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* STAR WRITER *

ANDREW EVANS

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING POLITICALLY CORRECT

The advocates of p.c. - political correctness - cannot face the bald (sorry, follically challenged) truth that facts are very stubborn things. The politically sophisticated have never allowed mere facts to interfere with their opinion and those who have power very rarely consider the opinions of those for whom power is just an aspiration.

That was the case when Bill Fallowfield ruled rugby league with a rod of iron and has become enshrined since Maurice Lindsay became the very well paid Chief Executive at Chapeltown Road. Politics is not part of the game amongst the rugby league hierarchy, politics is the game.

Politically minded people, whether correct or not, rarely tolerate dissent. There's no point being a leader if you cannot lead. Just ask those who gladly poisoned themselves when ordered to do so by the Reverend Jim Jones in Guiana. Those who died in Waco earlier this year were very clearly led by a strong personality - as well as their own inability to dissent.

The game of rugby league is in danger of becoming the vehicle for political correctness. Clubs are instructed to 'talk the game up'. No-one wants to hear negative protestations such as "Where's the money coming from?", "Are players overpaid?" and "Is it morally defensible for a club to run up debts then go into liquidation?"

Come on, now, let's praise Malcolm Reilly for being a great coach because he's created a team capable of beating New Zealand and, even possibly, the Australians. And when that great day happens, even if these are more than the 36,131 who watched the Wembley Test gathered to witness the occasion, let's proclaim Great Britain champions of the World.

Never mind that there are only two countries in that World, Great Britain and Australia, that can play the game with any quality. Forget the fact that neither New Zealand nor France can compete effectively enough to create decent semi-finals at World Cup level. Let's all be politically correct and imagine rugby league is the best game in the World, so good in fact that less and less people are watching it.

Political correctness is the vehicle for woolly thinking and personal vanity. What is needed is a breath of fresh air that can only come about by a revolution in the running of the game. The game has lived beyond its means for years. Pandering to the interests of the bigger clubs it has spent money it does not have in pursuit of objectives it cannot fulfill. If those in whose hands the destiny of rugby league lies do not recognise they have killed the goose that laid the golden eggs they should do the decent thing and resign, whether it's politically correct or not to do so.

Andrew Evans is a political analyst.

ROUND-UP

* The Rugby League's Board of Directors was due to consider reports on the game's playing and financial future this week. The one on finances will be by Roy Waudby, who has just returned from a fact finding mission in Australia. No indication was given about who financed the trip.

* Joe Lydon will replace John Monie in the BBC TV commentary team now for the former Wigan coach has returned to New Zealand. Joe, who is a graphic artist, beat Leigh coach Steve Simms and former Huddersfield assistant coach Terry Flanagan for the job, which was not publicly advertised.

* Hemel Hempstead remain at the top of the Conference League after beating Nottingham City 22 points to 14. Hemel now have a five point lead over Wigan St. Pat's, Woolston and Chorley in the Premier Division. In the battle of the former League clubs Blackpool and Chorley honours were shared at 24 points each. In the light of Hemel's defeat by Ryedale-York in the Regal Trophy the question of whether they are capable of holding their own in division two is one which will need to be addressed before long.

* Oulton's victory over Millom moved them two points clear of Heworth in division one, while Balckbrook's defeat of Eastmoor enabled Redhill to take over the top spot in division two on points difference.

AUGUST				ATT.
29	Rochdale Hornets	A	8-64	1,013
SEPTEMBER				
5	Dewsbury	H	8-62	504
12	Barrow	A	22-44	1,003
19	Ryedale York	H	10-24	311
26	Bramley	A	16-13	424
OCTOBER				
3	Carlisle	H	19-27	363
10	Batley	A	16-58	548
17	London Crusaders	A	6-62	648
24	Huddersfield	A	20-60	2,010
31	Ellenboro' (RT r1)	H	30-22	219
NOVEMBER				
7	Doncaster	H	14-34	289
14	Oldham (RT r2)	H	-	-
21	Whitehaven	A	-	-
28	Keighley Cougars	A	-	-
DECEMBER				
5	Hunslet	H	-	-
12	Workington Town	A	-	-
19	Rochdale Hornets	H	-	-
JANUARY				
2	Swinton	H	-	-
9	Dewsbury	A	-	-
16	Silk Cut Challenge Cup R3	-	-	-
23	Barrow	H	-	-
30	Silk Cut Challenge Cup R4	-	-	-
FEBRUARY				
6	Ryedale York	A	-	-
13	Silk Cut Challenge Cup R5	-	-	-
20	Bramley	H	-	-
27	Carlisle	A	-	-
MARCH				
6	Batley	H	-	-
13	Huddersfield	H	-	-
20	Doncaster	A	-	-
27	Whitehaven	H	-	-
APRIL				
1	London Crusaders	H	-	-
4	Swinton	A	-	-
10	Workington Town	H	-	-
17	Hunslet	A	-	-
24	Keighley Cougars	H	-	-

READER'S WRITE

GOOD REFEREEING

Dear Sir,

May I echo the sentiments of your correspondent who praised Greg McCallum's refereeing. The calm way he dealt with Sonny Nickle epitomised his style. Quiet and authoritative.

Derek Dudley, St. Helens

ED: Agreed, Derek. A pity the disciplinary committee took such a lenient view of Nickle's elbow in the face when similar offences in the lower divisions are more harshly treated.

FRENCH DEFENCE

Dear Sir,

I must protest at the underhand campaign by some sections of the media to get rid of Ray French from the BBC commentary team. Ray's far more knowledgeable than these media critics.

David Brown, St. Helens

ED: Perhaps if he took some elocution lessons in Kiwi pronunciation he might be more acceptable to the critics.

INFORMATION PLEASE

Dear Sir,

I am disappointed not to read more about Highfield's visitors in your otherwise excellent programme. In Ellenborough's case we knew very little about them, other than their names.

Jeff Travis, Warrington

ED: Neither did we! There's insufficient time to go chasing information if people are not interested enough in providing it in the first place.

If you have any information, views or general queries about Highfield or The state of the game as a whole please contact:

PHIL THOMAS

439 Clock Face Road, St. Helens WA9 4QL.

IN TOUCH

LEADING TRY SCORERS

1	Greg Austin	Keighley	17
2	St. John Ellis	Castleford	15
3	Mark Johnson	London	14
4	Mark Riley	London	13
	Ian Thomas	Huddersfield	13
6	Nick Pinkney	Keighley	12
7	Leigh Deakin	Ryedale-York	10
	Jason Green	Rochdale	10
	Mark Conway	Dewsbury	10
10	John Wasyliw	Keighley	9
	Paul Newlove	Bradford N.	9
	Carl Hall	Doncaster	9
	Stuart Cocker	Workington T.	9

LEADING POINTS SCORER

Mark Conway	Dewsbury	140
(50 Goals, 10 Tries)		

LEADING GOAL SCORERS: Inc Drop Goals

1	Frano Botica	Wigan	51
2	Deryck Fox	Bradford	50
	John Gallagher	London	50
4	Mark Conway	Dewsbury	47
	Jonathon Davies	Warrington	47
6	Wayne Kitchen	Workington	43
7	Robert Turner	Doncaster	42
	Graham Sullivan	Ryedale York	42
9	John Wasyliw	Keighley	41
10	Lee Crooks	Castleford	36

SEQUENCE RECORDS

Paul Bishop has scored in 43 consecutive matches while Mark Johnson (London Crusaders) has touched down in six successive matches. Huddersfield remain the only unbeaten club in both divisions this season.



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Round 1 (10 Conference & 4 other)	£1,000	—
Round 2 (16 losers)	£2,650	(£2,600)
Round 3 (8 losers)	£4,000	(£3,775)
Quarter-Finals (4 losers)	£6,225	(£6,000)
Semi-Finals (2 losers)	£9,750	(£9,500)
Runner-Up	£18,500	(£18,000)
Winner	£35,000	(£34,000)

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FINAL	—	£250 plus Regal Trophy Commemorative Tantalus with 2 Cut Glass Decanters

ROUND BY ROUND MATCH DATES

First	—	Sunday, 31 October 1993
Second	—	Weekend of 13/14 November 1993
Third	—	Weekend of 11/12 December 1993
Quarter-Finals	—	Weekend of 18/19 December 1993
First Semi-Final	—	Saturday, 1 January 1994
Second Semi-Final	—	Saturday, 8 January 1994
FINAL	—	Saturday, 22 January 1994

Only the Final will be played at a neutral venue.