

THE OFFICIAL OLDHAM BEARS MATCHDAY MAGAZINE £1.50



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Photos courtesy of The Oldham Evening Chronicle
 Comments in this programme are not necessarily
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The Pavilion, Watersheddings, Oldham
 0161 624 4865 (3 lines) General Office
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 0891 44 00 70 Oldham Hotline
 0161 624 9615 Shop Line

RUGBY LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP WINNERS

1909-10, 1910-11, 1956-57 Runners Up
 1906-07, 1907-08, 1908-09, 1921-22, 1954-55

FIRST DIVISION CHAMPIONS

1904-05

LANCASHIRE LEAGUE CHAMPIONS

1897-98, 1900-01, 1907-08, 1909-10, 1921-22, 1956-57, 1957-58

RUGBY LEAGUE CHALLENGE CUP WINNERS

1899, 1925, 1927 Runners Up 1907, 1912, 1924, 1926

LANCASHIRE CUP WINNERS

1907, 1910, 1913, 1919, 1924, 1933, 1956, 1957, 1958 Runners Up
 1908, 1911, 1918, 1921, 1954, 1966, 1968, 1986, 1989

SECOND DIVISION CHAMPIONS

1963-64, 1981-82, 1987-88

Second Division Premiership Winners

1988, 1990 Runners Up 1992

Club Records

RECORD VICTORY

63-0 v Goole, March 18th 1899 (Challenge Cup Rd 1)
 67-6 v Liverpool City, April 4th 1959 (League)

RECORD SCORE

70-10 v Bramley, Feb 12th 1995 (Challenge Cup Rd4)
 67-6 v Liverpool City, 4th April 1959 (League)

RECORD ATTENDANCE

28,000 v Huddersfield, Feb 24th 1912

Individual Records

TRIES IN A SEASON

Reg Farrar 49 1921-22

TRIES IN A CAREER

Alan Davies 174 1950-1961

TRIES IN A MATCH

James Miller 7 v Barry, Oct 31st 1908

GOALS IN A SEASON

Bernard Ganley 200 1957-58

GOALS IN A CAREER

Bernard Ganley 1,358 1950-1961

GOALS IN A MATCH

Bernard Ganley 14 v Liverpool City, April 4th 1959

POINTS IN A SEASON

Bernard Ganley 412 1957-58

POINTS IN A CAREER

Bernard Ganley 2,761 1950-1961

POINTS IN A MATCH

Abe Johnson 30 v Widnes (12 goals 2 tries), April 9th 1928

MOST APPEARANCES

Joe Ferguson 628 Sept 1899 - April 1923

MOST CONSECUTIVE APPEARANCES

Joe Lawton 134 Sept 1897 - Nov 1902

ALL THE ABOVE RECORDS ARE RELEVANT
 TO OLDHAM FIRST CLASS FIXTURES ONLY

Statement

OUR big entrance into Super League at Boundary Park last Saturday didn't go according to plan, but we were encouraged by our second-half performance and by the attendance of almost 8,000.

A lot of people made the effort to turn out and support us in Super League and I feel sure they must have enjoyed the big build-up and the pre-match entertainment, culminating in the arrival of the sky divers and those rip-roaring fire-crackers as the teams came out, introduced individually by Mike Stephenson, better known as Stevo of Sky Sports.

These pre-match entertainment packages do not end, of course, just because the Sky cameras are not here today. At each home game throughout the summer there will be something to catch the imagination of fans in the couple of hours or so before kick-off.

Starting at today's game against Halifax there will be an Academy fixture as a curtain-raiser, followed by more fun and games, including our Bear, our new cheer-leader girls (a Watersheddings welcome to them) and youngsters from local junior sides doing their races in front of their mums and dads and a lot of interested spectators.

Ray Hill and David Hughes put in a lot of work to prepare the entertainment package at Boundary Park and I thought it all went off exceptionally well.

It was a pity our performance on the field didn't match up, but I remain convinced that we are a much better side than we looked on Saturday and I am sure we will prove it conclusively before the season is much older.

We were unfortunate to meet Wigan on a day when they had a few things to prove to a lot of people. By their own admission a few people were suggesting they were on the decline and they set out their stall, in the words of Sean Edwards, "to make a statement to the rest of the league". They are a fine side at any time. But when they are in the mood for vengeance, as they were on Saturday, they can

be awesome.

Edwards, Farrell and Connolly would grace any world side. We didn't do ourselves justice in the first half and that may have had something to do with the big occasion and all the hype.

The Wigan players have been used to it for years. After eight Challenge Cup finals on the trot, more big cup matches than one can care to remember and that epic World Club championship win over Brisbane Broncos in Australia, Boundary Park last Saturday would be just another game to them.

Perhaps the sense of occasion, and the importance of doing well, got to some of our lads, but we improved as the game went on and I am sure that we will eventually confound a lot of our critics, who wanted to write us off before we even started. Believe me, this is going to be a terrific summer season and I hope the fans who did us proud at Boundary Park will stay with us because we badly need that backing both on and off the field.

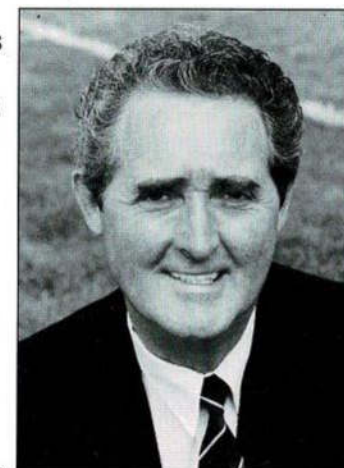
Until we can generate the sort of income Wigan get it is difficult to match them, but I was pleased with the

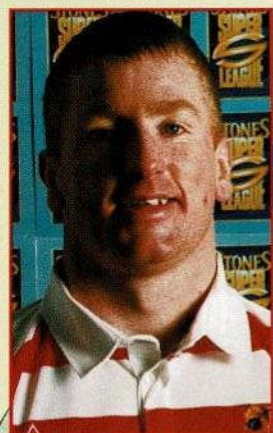
way we stuck at it in the second half, played some good rugby and scored three tries.

We now face Halifax today - and a sincere welcome to everyone from Thrum Hall - before taking on Paris St Germain in the Charlety Stadium on Monday. Anyone who saw how Paris beat Sheffield on TV last Friday night will know that we face two tough matches in the space of three days.

Hope to hear you loud and clear, not only today at Watersheddings but also in Paris on Monday. To those fans making the trip, have a good time and let's hope the long journey home is a happy one on the back of our first away win in Super League.

JIM QUINN





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YOUR **Points**

of view...



What do you think of this report! Did you enjoy the day? Should a news corporation paper be building the game up, not knocking it!

Simon Barnes sees a new competition follow a familiar rugby league script

The Times 1/4/96

Oldham rugby league team the artists formerly known as the Roughyeds (a dialect term for hard-men, harum-scarums and larrikins), have reinvented themselves in response to the challenges of the game in its new avatar as the Super League. They are now Oldham Bears.

What bear did they have in mind, I wonder? Sooty, perhaps? Yet they lacked Sooty's certainty of his own identity. On reflection it was apparent that their ursine role model was Paddington, who as all lovers of literature will recall, makes his first appearance wearing a luggage label on which are encribed the unforgettable words: "Please look after this bear."

Wigan looked after them, alright. They went to Boundary Park on Saturday night to instigate the new era of rugby league, and left after winning 56-16, and now for some thing completely the same the utter dominance of Wigan in the sport of rugby league.

How else could we tell that this was a thoroughly modern occasion a great move into the future, an example of sparkling marketing?

Simple there were cheerleaders. A macho nickname and cheerleaders, two snippets of paste-on Americana. Modern? It is the America of the Fifties, bobby soxers and rah rah bears. If this is the cutting edge of the sporting post modernism, then Grease is a biting satire on contemporary mores.

Yet cheerleaders are sine qua non of modern sporting life in this country. They are required not to cheer, but to deliver the message that the marketing department is really trying awfully hard.

Cheerleaders are an aspect of sporting America's ancient history. Yet, after the bear bit, yes, there was a man dressed up as a bear, and

the cheerleaders and the other bits of outdated Americana, there was, yes, rugby league. What we had was tripe and onions in a sesame seed bun garnished with to-may-to and thousand islands dressing. Good sport is not about buns and garnish. It is about meat, the "mad cow" disease of competition. Wigan showed all that. A pair of second half tries from Edwards said more about sport than a thousand pom-pom waving little girls or a million marketing men.

The occasion was not really about the ringing in of the new, nor even about the distinctly useful, novelty of judgement by television replay. The first try of the night was, historians, the first to be confirmed by television. Offiah touched down and after replay officials decided that Quinnell had not, after all knocked on, he had his score.

The real drama of the occasion was Wigan's search for a new certainty after their shattering Challenge Cup defeat. On Good Friday, they have a rather more searching task when they play St. Helens, fancied by many as inaugural Super League champions. It needs no garnish to make that encounter look appetising.

The point is not the new dawn, it is that rugby league is and has always been, whatever time of year you play it a bloody good game. Or product as we are supposed to call it these days. Exit Wigan pursued but not terribly closely, by a bear.

Scorers: Oldham Bears: Tries: Abram, Myler, Maloney

Goals: Maloney (2)

Wigan: Tries: Connolly (3), Radlinski (2), Offiah (2), Edwards (2), Paul, Hall, Goals: Farrell (6).

Oldham Bears: P. Atcheson, A. Leuila, P. Topping, D. Abram (sub A. Patmore, 30 min), R. Myler, F. Maloney, M. Crompton, I. Sherratt, J. Clarke, J. Temu (sub I. Gildart 59), G. Lord (sub H. Hill 30), J. Faimalo, D. Bradbury (sub M. Munro 22).

Wigan: K. Radlinski, J. Robinson, V. Tuigamala (sub R. Smythe 51), G. Connolly, M. Offiah, H. Paul (sub A. Johnson 65), S. Edwards, N. Cowie, M. Hall, T. O'Connor (sub K. Skerrett 27), S. Quinnell (sub S. Houghton 27) M. Cassidy, A. Farrell.

Referee: D Campbell

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Oldham

SCOTT RANSON

Autograph

ANDY Goodway

Talks...



Don't write us off as Super League no hopers... that's my message to all those people who will want to read too much into our heavy defeat by Wigan at Boundary Park last Saturday. If some scribes and punters think we will be holding up the rest come the end of the season, on the strength of what happened last weekend, that's up to them. They are entitled to their point of view. But I know, and I am sure the players know, that we can perform to a much higher standard than we attained at Boundary Park. The truth of the matter is that we didn't play well. I am not going to get involved in such things as the decisions of the 'second referee' and the TV replay. It has been introduced to make things more efficient, but difficult decisions will always go against one side or the other whoever makes them. My only complaints about last Saturday concern the way Oldham Bears played... or didn't play, if you like. Wigan played very well indeed, especially in the first half, but we played poorly and got what we deserved, although I am sure we will bounce back. We never got going right from the kick off. We missed a

certain try, conceded penalties and made handling errors, whereas Wigan set out their stall to dominate us from the word go. It was always going to be difficult, but we let ourselves down in certain areas. We seemed to freeze on the big occasion, although I must say there were some good individual displays, led by Paul Atcheson and Martin Crompton. Atcheson was outstanding. Crompton tried hard and there was a lot of hard work done in the forwards by men like Joe Faimalo and Ian Sherratt. Individually, our performances were not bad at all, but collectively there is still a lot of work to do. You can take it from me that that work will be done. One thing that we won't do is panic. That achieves nothing. In team meetings leading up to last week's big kick off we promised ourselves we would make a conscious effort to stay calm and retain our self belief if things started to go wrong for us early on. To panic would be counter productive. To remain calm, while acknowledging what went wrong at Boundary Park and working hard to put it right is the way forward. That's our plan and we stick with it.

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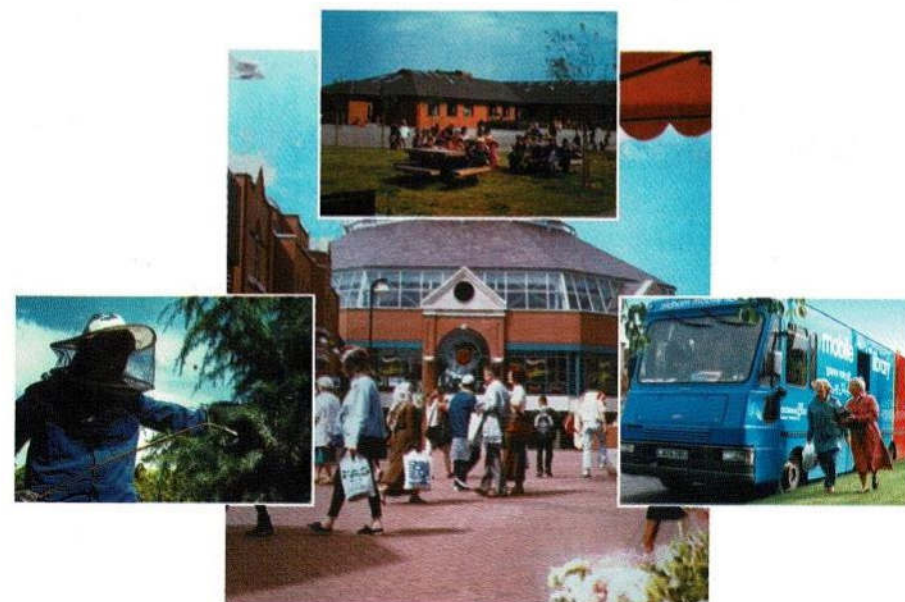
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Bears



Happy Easter and a big hello to all you Bear fans. A special welcome to our nearest Yorkshire visitors Halifax.

I have had to write these notes in a sad mood after our defeat by Wigan, but... let's put that behind us and look forward to our first Super League victory today against the 'blue sox' (I wonder where that name came from??) Have you been or sent mum & dad along to the shop in Town Square to get your Junior Bears membership form? The sooner we get them back, we can start to put all those new plans & ideas into action. 'Act now' I hope you all enjoyed the pre-match entertainment as much as I did.

Looking forward, we play Paris on Monday in our first away fixture, to all those of you who are travelling have a safe journey, I'm not sure whether or not they will allow a Bear in, so if you see me give me a wave.

Let's hear those cheers again this afternoon loud & clear 'Come on you Bears' & look out Paris here we come!!

Buster Bear

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Don Yates Looks Back To A Match From Yesteryear

Rugby League's bright new era began with last week's Super League spectacular over in Paris and it is set to continue here today with the visit of Halifax. As founder members of the Rugby Football League, both Oldham and Halifax have enjoyed a number of triumphs but both sets of fans will agree that further success for both clubs is long overdue.

Oldham's last major trophy success was way back in 1958 when they won the Lancashire Cup. Halifax do not have to go so far back but their Challenge Cup victory of 1987 must seem a lifetime away to their demanding followers. Halifax began that memorable cup campaign with a visit to Fulham and a 38-10 victory. Round two saw Halifax beat Hunslet 29-10 at Thrum Hall and when Hull Kingston Rovers visited Halifax in the quarter-finals the result was another comfortable victory, this time by a margin of 35-7. Widnes were favourites to beat Halifax in the semi-finals but not all semi-finals go to plan and the Chemics were eliminated 12-8.

Halifax's opponents at Wembley were St. Helens who disposed of Swinton (home) 18-16, Dewsbury away 48-12, Oldham away 24-14, Whitehaven home 41-12 and Leigh 14-8 in a tough semi-final at Wigan.

Wembley was its usual colourful occasion on Cup Final day as a crowd of 91,267 assembled to watch the following two teams do battle:

Halifax: Graham Eadie; Scott Wilson, Colin Whitfield, Grant Rix, Wilf George; Chris Anderson, Gary Stephens; Ben Beevers, Seamus McCallion, Keith Neller, Paul Dixon, Mick Scott & John Pendlebury.

Substitutes - Brian Juliff & Neil James.

St. Helens: Phil Viewers; Barry Ledger, Paul Loughlin, Mark Elia, Kevin McCormack; Brett Clark, Neil Holding; Tony Burke, Graham Liptrot, John Fieldhouse, Andy Platt, Roy Haggarty & Chris Arkwright.

Substitutes - Paul Round & Paul Forber.

This final turned out to be a tremendous advertisement for our game. It was full of incident and produced a nailbiting finish which included two late disallowed touchdowns by St. Helens centre Mark Elia which would have taken the trophy to Knowsley Road. Halifax won the trophy by virtue of a superb first half performance which saw them turn round 12-2 in front. Tries by Wilf George and Seamus McCallion, both converted by Colin Whitfield, put them firmly in the driving seat. Paul Loughlin had landed a penalty for Saints and when he converted Mark Elia's try early in the second-half, Saints were back in it at 12-8. Lance Todd Trophy winner Graham Eadie interrupted a superb defensive display to score a try on 51 minutes and Whitfield's conversion left the score at 18-8. Paul Loughlin then reduced the deficit to six points with a try which he failed to convert but fifteen minutes from time John Pendlebury had the good sense to drop a vital goal which increased the Halifax lead to a decisive seven points. Four minutes later Paul Round stretched over for the try which, with Loughlin's conversion, set up a pulsating closing 11 minutes in which Halifax just managed to hang on and register a thrilling 19-18 victory.

It was a magnificent performance from both teams and one which we hope to see repeated over again as the Super League action moves on into the summer months.

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TODAY'S Big

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On this day....

Don Yates recalls this day in history.

It was on this day in 1994 that one of Rugby League's legends, top Australian forward Artie Beetson, rejoined the Sydney Eastern Suburbs club as recruitment officer. Beetson had previously played for and coached the Roosters who are now known as Sydney City. As a player, Beetson was regarded as being one of Australia's finest front-row forwards. He played in 29 internationals, four World Championships and toured Europe with the 1973 Kangaroos. *

Another of the game's legends, utility back Gus Risman had a successful evening on Wednesday, 5th April 1933. That day he turned out in the centre for Salford who entertained Bramley at the Willows. The Red Devils won 74-3 and Risman clocked up 32 points from 13 goals and a brace of tries.

It was on this day in 1988 that Mark Aston, the record breaking Sheffield Eagles half-back, returned to Owlerton after spending a month on loan at Bramley. Aston was eventually transferred permanently to Featherstone but he is now back with the Eagles and at the start of this campaign had scored a career

total of 1,428 points for Sheffield, a club record.

On Sunday, 5th April 1959 Great Britain met France in Grenoble. There were no Halifax players in the British line-up but three of the team were from Oldham second-row forward Charlie Winslade and the right flank of winger Ike Southward and centre Alan Davies. Britain had put fifty points past France the previous month but in this match they were unable to cope with a whirlwind start by the French who led 19-0 at half-time. France held on to win 24-15, their hero being Gilbert Benausse the Lezignan stand-off who scored two tries and three goals.

It was exactly twelve months ago today that the Rugby League Council met at Headingley, Leeds. Top of the agenda was a proposal to switch to summer rugby but it was during this meeting that Maurice Lindsay was involved in telephone conversation with News International. It was later revealed that arrangements were made for talks involving Rugby League's Board of Directors and News International and these talks eventually led to the formation of the European Super League.

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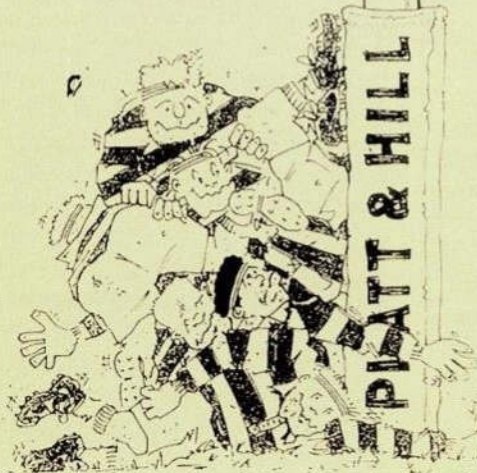


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BEARS Question

Time...

with Andrew Patmore



FULL NAME: MATTHEW JAMES MUNRO
DATE OF BIRTH: 5/2/71
BIRTHPLACE: MUDGEES NSW AUSTRALIA
HEIGHT: 178cm 5'10"
WEIGHT: 92kg 146lb
NICKNAME AT CLUB:
OCCUPATION: Professional R.L. Player, Land Economist
Registered Valuer.
HOME: 10 Roundhill Way, Waterhead, Oldham or Parramatta, Sydney, AUST.
CAR: Nissan Bluebird SSS
MARRIED: Girlfriend Michelle
CHILDREN: N/A
FAMILY: Father Jim, Mother Sue, Sisters Katrina & Melissa.
WHAT WAS YOUR AMBITION AS A CHILD? To football at the best level in the world at Parramatta.
WHO WAS YOUR BOYHOOD HERO? No-one in particular, but possibly the Parramatta backline including Sterling, Kenny, Elta, Grothe, Taylor & Ray Price.
WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR BIGGEST THRILL IN RUGBY? Playing for Australian Schoolboys & Parramatta 1st Grade debut.
WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT IN RUGBY? Minor Premiers by 5pts in U21's at Parramatta & being beaten in 2 semi-finals to miss the grand final.
WHICH PRESENT DAY PLAYER DO YOU ADMIRE MOST? Ricky Stuart. Complete game. As close to Peter Sterling as you will see.
WHO IS THE GREATEST PLAYER THERE HAS BEEN? Peter Sterling
WHAT IS THE BEST PART OF YOUR JOB? Being part of the club and the people you meet.
WHO IS THE TOUGHEST OPPONENT YOU HAVE FACED? Canberra with their great players and Mal Meninga in full flight.
IF YOU WON THE LOTTERY, WHAT IS THE FIRST THING THAT YOU WOULD BUY? Spread out my port folio so that I can spend time with my family & friends whenever I desire without having to work.
WHAT IS YOUR BEST QUALITY? Friendly
WHAT IS YOUR WORST QUALITY? Impatience & tendency to snap.
APART FROM YOUR OWN CLUB, WHICH IS YOUR FAVOURITE GROUND? Parramatta Stadium
WHICH IS YOUR LEAST FAVOURITE GROUND? Kogarah Oval
WHAT OTHER SPORTS AND HOBBIES DO YOU HAVE? Motocross, shooting, cricket, golf

& computers.
WHAT IS YOUR IDEAL EVENING OUT? Winning the game Sunday, celebrating with the team & having my girl there to share it.
WHAT IS THE MOST DANGEROUS THING YOU HAVE DONE? Bungee Jump. Scared the hell out of me.
WHAT DANGEROUS THING WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO ATTEMPT? Race motocross professionally.
WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST PHOBIA? Getting bitten by a snake, eaten by a shark or a crocodile, & being injured.
WHAT IS YOUR MOST PRIZED POSSESSION? 1996 Honda Cr 250 RS & my Players Player trophy from Balmain.
WHICH FAMOUS PERSON WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO MEET? Elle McPherson
WHICH WORLD FIGURE DO YOU MOST ADMIRE? Nelson Mandela
AWAY FROM RUGBY, WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR BEST SPORTING ACHIEVEMENT? Playing representative cricket & show jumping at Royal Easter show in Sydney.
WHAT IS THE FUNNIEST MOMENT YOU HAVE SEEN ON A RUGBY PITCH? Don McKinnon taking a leak in a State of Origin game on National T.V. beamed to millions.
DO YOU HAVE AN UNUSUAL FOOD THAT IMPROVES YOUR GAME? Grapes
WHAT IS THE ODDEST PIECE OF TRAINING THAT YOU HAVE DONE? Paintball Army games to build organisation in a team.
IS THERE A DREAM YOU WOULD LIKE TO HAVE ACHIEVED IN A SPORT OTHER THAN RUGBY? Play test cricket for Australia with Dennis Lillee & Jeff Thomson opening the bowling against the West Indies.
FAVOURITE TV PROGRAMME: X-Files & Married with Children
FAVOURITE TV STAR: Al Bundy
FAVOURITE FILM: Tombstone
FAVOURITE FILM STAR: Clint Eastwood
FAVOURITE SOAP OPERA: Home & Away
FAVOURITE SOAP CHARACTER: Matt in Home & Away. He is also trying to get out of trouble.
FAVOURITE CITY: Sydney or Gold Coast Australia.
FAVOURITE POP STAR: Bono from U2
FAVOURITE SINGLE: Gangsta's Paradise by Coolio
FAVOURITE LP: Jimmy Barnes & Cold Chisel
FAVOURITE FOOD: Prime Beef Steak on BBQ
FAVOURITE DRINK: Victoria Bitter & Bourbon

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TREATMENT ROOM NEWS

The match against Wigan left us with a few bumps and bruises, and a stitch or two, but nothing that will be long standing. Dave Bradbury was a bit the worse for wear after a clash with Inga, and was still a bit groggy after the game, but Monday morning Brads was his usual chirpy self. Francis Maloney and Martin Crompton both needed stitches in head wounds but happily both were able to finish the match. Darren Abram was in some discomfort

due to picking up a tendon injury in the foot, but hopefully will have recovered in time for today. The luckless Mike Neal was in the wars during the 'A' team game at Wigan, going over on an ankle, however it is not as bad as first feared and should be back in action soon. Chris McKinney is causing some concern with a groin problem which is not responding to treatment, so it looks like a visit to a specialist for Chris and maybe a scan to determine the extent of the problem.
J. Watkins

BEAR

Facts...

Boundary Park March 30th Oldham v Wigan Live on Sky, that was our first match in the Super League.

I don't need to tell you I was glad to get that over with. I would like to hear from you fans what you thought of the show.

Apart from the result, (I thought Wigan were awesome), everything went quite well. There was a lot of detail went into organising the whole event. And Sky took over total control at 5.30pm

I arrived at Boundary Park at 9.00am and had several meetings with the Sky team to make sure everything ran smoothly. There were one or two hairy moments but all in all I thought it went quite well. I would like to mention "Buster the Bear" and thank him for keeping all our fans entertained (he was a knock out) so good infact that we are taking him to Paris.

I hope they don't put him in quarantine or he'll miss the game Ha Ha.

And by the way didn't our cheerleaders look fantastic they are going to be great fun this season and I am looking forward to seeing them here at Watersheddings

Are you going to Paris?

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Remember we are not changing our kit so go now and purchase yours.

GMR'S Malcolm

Lord...

Here we go again!

Take That have split up, Highfield have changed their name yet again, Rugby League Clubs are playing against Rugby Union Clubs, mad cows disease is the main talking point in the news (and may already have started to materialise at ...) The rain is bouncing off my office window and summer rugby is finally upon us.

No more the icicles slithering from your nose at Watersheddings, no more the biting winds of the Bradford Riviera known as Odsal, after match phone ins will be a pleasure, even when they turn the lights out on you and Kevin

Ashcroft will be sat there in his shirt sleeves instead of his thermals and sheepskin jacket.

I know that I will miss

huddling up to Kevin as we both struggle to keep warm trying not to let the shivers in our voices transfer to the air waves, I know also that I will miss the hot coffee and rum served during the half time break at Wilderspool, and I will definitely miss skating across the river caves of Central Park on a cold frosty winter's night, but, we all have to make sacrifices.

Joking apart, the game has taken a lot of stick lately and, although we are a long way from perfect, I am still going to say to these critics be positive! We really did not have any options and I for one still get a great buzz at the start of every season.

Let's start the season by congratulating Paris on an opening victory over the Eagles of Sheffield, let's wish the St. Helens and Bradford Bulls the best of luck at Wembley and, on a personal note, let's hope that the likes of Joe Lydon, Ian Bleasdale and Gary Sanderson all have great testimonials.

Finally enjoy your season's whoever you support, it does not matter who you support as long as you support someone.

Malcolm Lord
BBC GMR

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GRAHAM Beales

"A" Team



WIGAN 32 OLDHAM 36

Our first match of the season at Central Park was always going to be tough, but this game had everything it was a thriller. For the first ten minutes Wigan applied all the pressure and came up with the first score, gradually we started to make inroads into the Wigan defence, but we pushed the ball and came up with error after error which saw Wigan capitalise on their score, at this time Wigan were looking very confident, but we regrouped and took the game to Wigan. Good yards were made by Davidson and Richards with Gartland and Deacon prompting well saw Mike Neal score for Deacon to add the extra points. Oldham started to look rampant tearing into the Wigan side, but again we dropped vital balls and missed three more scoring chances, then saw Wigan counter attack and scored just before half time to go in 16-6. Oldham came out with sleeves rolled up the game went from end to end. Then after good work from Richards and Norman Gartland scored under the posts, Deacon added the goal. Wigan came back strong but Oldham weathered the storm and came up with a try by Burns and goaled by Deacon, Wigan were looking rattled at this point but Oldham came back down field with Cowan making good yards with Belle and Ranson in support, Gartland created space for Crooks to score and Deacon goaled. Wigan started to play catch up football and came down the field to score and add the goal, from the kick off Wigan again put Oldham under pressure, and were forced to defend as the referee gave Wigan two consecutive penalties which saw Wigan score again, but the Oldham players responded well and Wally Gibson went round the centre to go under the posts for Deacon to goal, then Wigan came up field and scored, Gartland rounded the game off with his second try and Deacon's sixth goal of the match to give Oldham this deserved victory over a very good Wigan side.

G.Beale

OLDHAM BEARS ALLIANCE CHAMPIONSHIP FIXTURES SEASON 1996

Thursday	28/3/96	Wigan	Away	32-36
Thursday	4/4/96	Halifax	Away	7.30
Thursday	11/4/96	Leeds	Away	7.30
Thursday	18/4/96	CASTLEFORD	HOME	7.30
Thursday	2/5/96	ST. HELENS	HOME	7.30
Thursday	9/5/96	Bradford	Away	7.30
Thursday	16/5/96	SALFORD	HOME	7.30
Thursday	23/5/96	HULL	HOME	7.30
Thursday	6/6/96	Warrington	Away	7.30
Thursday	13/6/96	WIGAN	HOME	7.30
Thursday	20/6/96	HALIFAX	HOME	7.30
Friday	28/6/96	Hull K.R.	Away	7.30
Thursday	4/7/96	LEEDS	HOME	7.30
Thursday	11/7/96	Castleford	Away	7.30
Thursday	18/7/96	St. Helens	Away	7.30
Thursday	25/7/96	BRADFORD	HOME	7.30
Thursday	1/8/96	Hull	Away	8.00
Thursday	15/8/96	WARRINGTON	HOME	7.30
Friday	23/8/96	Salford	Away	8.00
Thursday	29/8/96	HULL K.R.	HOME	7.30

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warning by Oldham's
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SEE PAGE 15



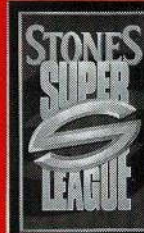
ITALIAN EXPERT DEFENDS CASE OF MOTHER AT 58
THE Italian doctor who claims to have
successfully given fertility treatment to
an infertile woman has been defended by an expert.

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... and Read'

NEWS From

R.L.H.Q.



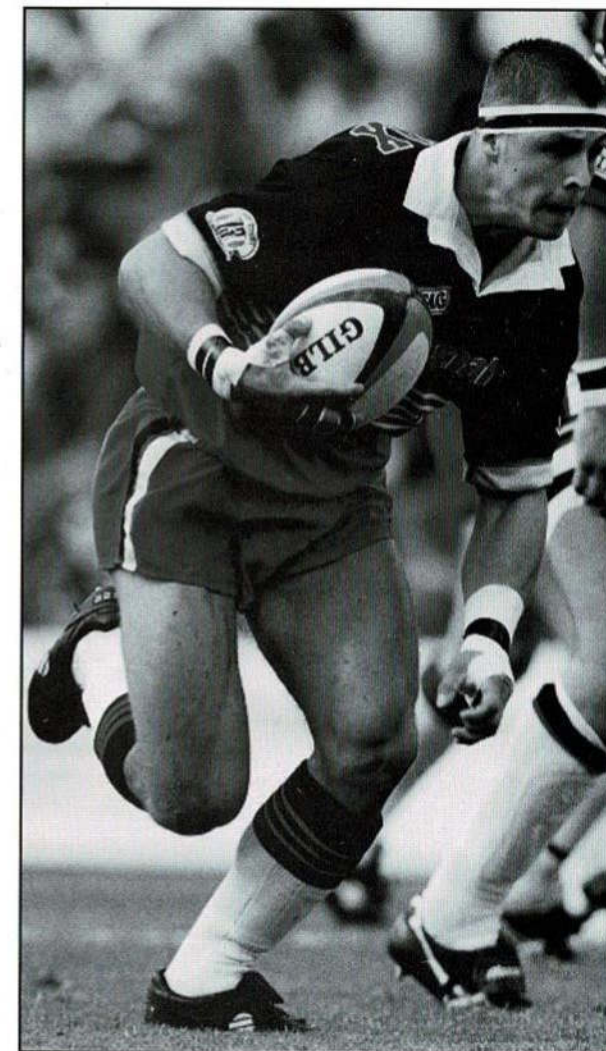
The Stones European Super League kicked off with the best average attendance for an opening weekend to a season since the one division set-up was scrapped 23 years ago.

A total of 54,059 watched the six matches, producing an average attendance of 9,009 and so beat the record average of 8,440 when seven Division One matches totalled 59,082 in 1989.

The crowd of 17,873 who watched the inaugural Stones Super League match between Paris St Germain and Sheffield Eagles on Friday evening was the biggest open day crowd since before 1973.

OLDHAM BEARS V HALIFAX BLUE SOX

Hooker Paul Rowley was the two-try star of Halifax's 21-4 defeat of Oldham at Watersheddings last August, allowing the Yorkshire side to claim their third consecutive win on the ground and a sixth success in seven visits to Oldham over the past decade. Oldham only managed to interrupt that sequence with a 14-3 Second Division victory in October 1989, when Paul Lord and John Fairbank were the home try scorers. The Bears managed a 12-4 win over Halifax at Thrum Hall in January with Paul Crook scoring a debut try.



Paul Rowley - A brace of tries for the Blue Sox



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WELCOME **Halifax Blue Sox** to

Watersheddings

PAUL ROWLEY - Hooker

Something of a rarity at the club due to staunch teetotalism but it doesn't seem to affect his game. Followed Steve Samms from Leigh in November 1994 where he had been one of the youngest captains in the league. Has since gained under 21 international honours and is rated one of the top prospects of the game.

PAUL ANDERSON - Prop

Rediscovered his best form at the end of last term following a nightmare absence through prolonged illness. "Balon" signed from Leeds in August 1993 where he had won under 2 recognition.

PAUL MORIARTY - Second Row

Giant Welsh forward who has won international honours at both codes. Signed from Widnes in July 1994 and had dispelled a reputation of being injury prone subsequently. Started his career at Swansea RU.

MICHAEL JACKSON - Second Row

GB international who came from Wakefield in July 1993. Tourist in 1992 he has been known to do his fair share of male modelling. Strong runner.

SIMON BALDWIN - Loose Forward

Another product of the Leigh club "Sid" has played for England before his twentieth birthday. Very much the strong silent type, who hates swimming.

CRAIG DEAN - Scrum Half

Another Leigh lad who came to Thrum Hall direct from amateur football and skipped a period at Hilton Park. Signed in June 1993 and since gained Academy international honours. Can also play at fullback and stand off. Hobbies include quizzes.

CHRIS CHESTER - Stand Off

Made a meteoric rise to prominence less than three months after signing from youth football in the Wakefield area. Now a first teamer on merit. Called up for the train on squad for this years Academy tour.

WAYNE JACKSON - Prop

Previously with Hull KR and Doncaster rugged prop Wayne came to Thrum Hall in May 1995. Co driver with Wayne Parker on countless trips from Hull.

MARK PERRETT - Second Row

Product of the Ovenden amateur club who has GB under 21 and full Welsh caps. If he could pass a bandit like he can pass a ball he'd be a lot richer.

ASA AMONE - Second Row

Play anywhere Asa plays for his country at fullback, came to England and tackles anything that moves in the forwards. Signed in August 1996 from NSW country football.

PAUL HIGHTON - Second Row

Another youngster coming through who has just signed a new contract in his third year with the club. Originally from Oldham side Waterhead.

DAMION MUNRO - Winger

Signed from Waterhead after a phenomenal try scoring spell in the Academy and Alliance teams. Another youth international who has an average of virtually a try a game at first grade.

CARL BRIGGS - Stand Off

Renowned drop goal expert who was recruited from Sheffield Eagles in June last year. Excellent kicking game. Has been known to socialise in the Castleford area and shell a few peas.

CARL GELLESPIE - Second Row

Was recommended by the police whilst playing as a centre with Old Crossleyans RL but has bulked up well and made the switch to the pack with no little success. "Fishcake" is another who is now full time.

ABI EKOKU - Winger

Came to rugby with London from athletics where he had achieved international recognition as a discus thrower. Moved to Halifax last summer and now lives in a stately home near Todmorden. Big crowd favourite.

ROY SOUTHERNWOOD - Hooker

Longest serving player with the club about to start his seventh season. Played for England schoolboys and GB under 21s before making an instant success of the switch to hooker. Now an immense influence on the Alliance team which he captains "Jocky" or "Julio" would be a first team regular at most clubs but is still hanging on for benefit season after coming from home club Castleford in August 1990.

CRAIG RIKI - Full Back

Another all round sportsman having played county cricket for Northants but signed in August 1995 from Cleckheaton RU. Very steady and improving all the time. Great grandad was an All Black and grandad played at Thrum Hall so the pedigree is certainly there.



MIKE UMAGA



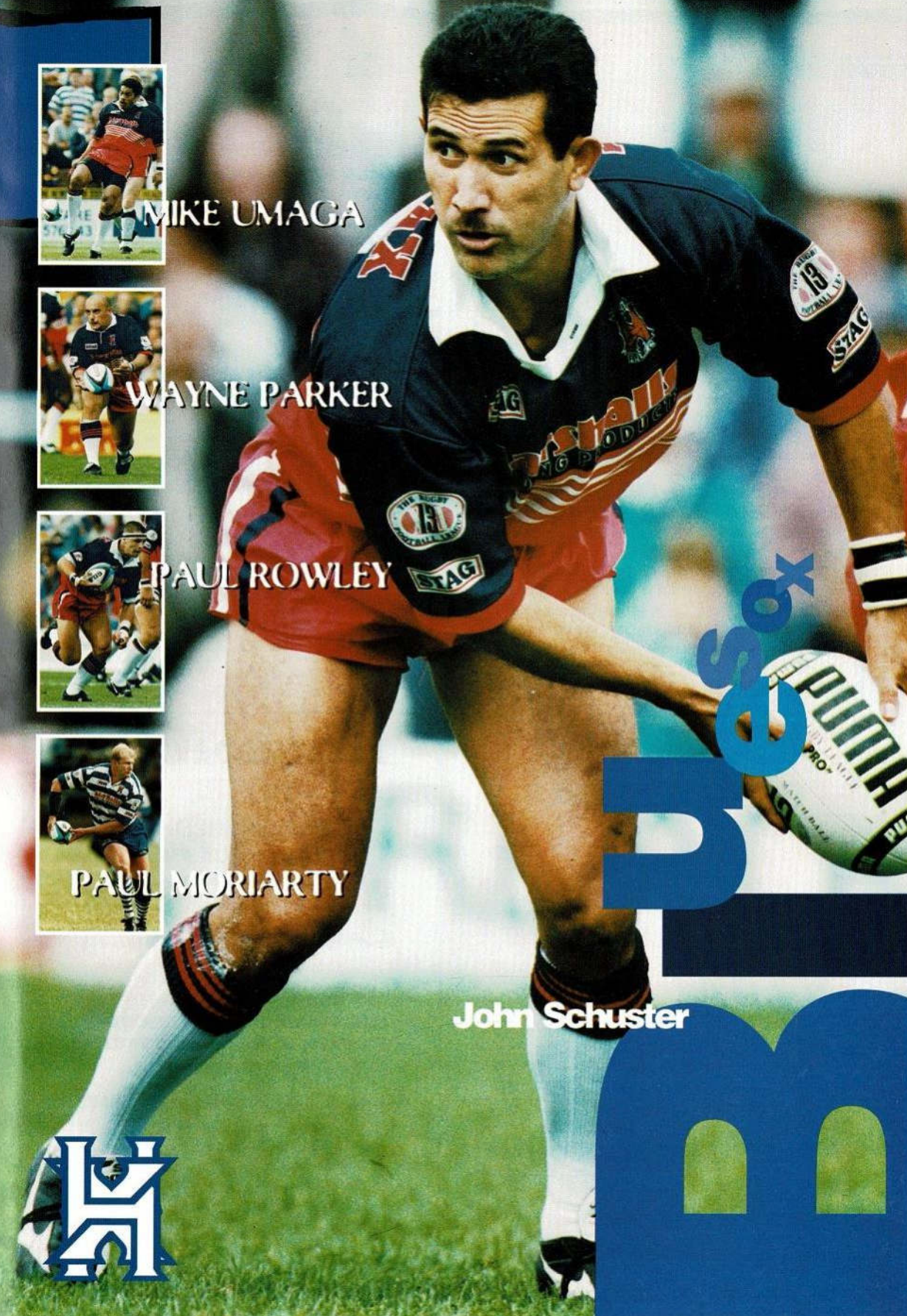
WAYNE PARKER



PAUL ROWLEY



PAUL MORIARTY



John Schuster



Academy...



Paul Deacon, our young Academy player, played in the A Team last Thursday and had a great game in our 36 points to 32 victory away to Wigan A. It is always nice to see young players making their way up the pecking order but it leaves us with a place to fill again in the Academy side. But after all it is our job to find good young talent to keep the A team boys on their toes, and bring the average age of the side down. I am sure there are going to be one or two more young ones pushing for a place. Two such lads are Neil Melling who was substitute against Wigan and also stand off Craig Barker. I also would like to welcome into our coaching staff Nicky Kiss who along with my son Shaun is now taking over the reins on the coaching side. All the Oldham public will remember Nicky as the one who got away, but he did Oldham and himself no harm with the service he gave Wigan, getting himself a well earned testimonial and an assortment of winners medals along the way.

At the time of writing we have still yet to play our first game of the season against Rochdale Academy. This is always a very hard game and we are still waiting for our first win against them. Let's hope it is this Monday. If there are any of our supporters who would like to help with sponsorship for our Academy side. I would like to hear from you on 0161 624 4865.

Brian Gartland.

OLDHAM BEARS JJB SPORTS ACADEMY FIXTURES SEASON 1996

Day	Date	Team	H/A	Kick-Off
Monday	1/4/96	ROCHDALE	H	7.30pm
Friday	5/4/96	HULL K.R.	H	1.00pm CR
Monday	8/4/96	Batley	A	3.30pm
Saturday	13/4/96	SALFORD REDS	H	4.00pm CR
	20/4/96	BLANK WEEKEND		
	29/4/96	JJB SPORTS ACADEMY CHALLENGE CUP FIRST ROUND		
Sunday	5/5/96	Widnes	A	1.00pm CR
Monday	13/5/96	HUDDERSFIELD	H	7.30pm
Sunday	19/5/96	Sheffield Eagles	A	4.00pm CR
Sunday	26/5/96	KEIGHLEY COUG.	H	1.00pm CR
Monday	3/6/96	SWINTON	H	7.30pm
Sunday	9/6/96	DEWSBURY	H	4.00pm CR
Sunday	16/6/96	Rochdale H.	A	2.00pm CR
Sunday	23/6/96	Hull K.R.	A	4.30pm CR
Monday	1/7/96	BATLEY	H	7.30pm
Sunday	7/7/96	Salford Reds	A	4.00pm CR
	15/7/96	BLANK WEEKEND		
Monday	22/7/96	WIDNES	H	7.30pm
Monday	29/7/96	Huddersfield	A	7.30pm
Sunday	4/8/96	Keighley Coug.	A	4.00pm CR
Sunday	11/8/96	Swinton	A @ Rochdale Borough	3.30pm
Sunday	18/8/96	Dewsbury	A	3.00pm CR
Tuesday	27/8/96	SHEFFIELD	H	7.30pm

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From Calais A16 motorway, follow signs for Paris and turn onto A26 motorway. Pass signs for Arras and turn right onto A1 to Paris. Turn left onto ring road and take turn off for Porte de Gentilly - Avenue Pierre de Coubertin. Turn right into Boulevard Kellerman and stadium is on right.

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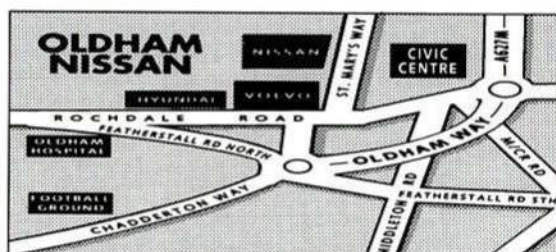
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WHAT'S New

Today Don

NATIONAL CONFERENCE LEAGUE

Local side St. Anne's continue to impress in the First Division of the National Conference. They have been at or close to the top of the League all season and are favourites to gain promotion into the Premier Division along with Beverley. The only other realistic candidates for promotion are Thornhill and Eastmoor. Tomorrow afternoon Saints are at home to Eastmoor in what is obviously a vital encounter. Kick off at Higginshaw Road is 2.30pm and your support would be most welcome by the green and golds. Apart from that we think you may be surprised by the high standard of play on display by these quality amateur stars.

SPORTING GAFFE

Aston Villa's recent Wembley success reminded me of a comment made one afternoon by David Coleman

commentating on a Villa match... 'Both the Villa scorers, Withe and Mortimer, were born in Liverpool, as was their manager Ron Saunders who was born in Birkenhead.'

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

Comes from Victoria Wood who once said,
'Jogging is for people who are not intelligent enough to watch breakfast TV.'

HAPPY BIRTHDAY BOYS

Our Wally Gibson celebrates his 29th birthday today and two of our visitors have enjoyed birthdays this week, Wayne Parker was 29 last Tuesday and Mark Preston 29 the following day. Today is also the birthday of one of England's sporting legends, Tom Finney the Preston North End and England soccer player who is 74.

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Thoughts from the Terraces...

What a cracking first round of Super League results. There wouldn't have been many betting on a Paris-London double, I suspect. I thought that the Paris performance was superb, both in their defence commitment and in the heart and fitness they showed in the last quarter of the game. Speaking to someone who was there, too, it was apparently a fantastic atmosphere with a crowd of nearly 18,000 absolutely loving what was the first experience of the 13-a-side game for many of them. Roll on Monday! And London's surprise win at Halifax sets up the prospect of real challenges from the game's new outposts. European Super League indeed!

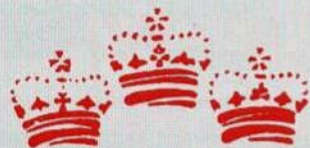
At a more familiar if mundane level, perhaps the wins for Bradford, Warrington (over a Leeds club which seems to have real problems) and Saints were not surprising. But the margin of Workington's defeat, at home, although it confirms their tag as relegation favourites, is a bit depressing. I feel. A Super League surely should contain a strong Cumbrian Club. I wonder if merger talks might re-emerge?

In the lower divisions, Leigh and Swindon will both be very disappointed to begin with defeats, although Ray Ashton's Bramley and York will be delighted to have wins under their belts. Rochdale were at least competitive at Featherstone, but Salford were apparently very lucky to get away from the McAlpine Stadium with an injury-time win. The score which raised alarm bells, though, was Hull K.R.'s 70 points in South Wales. I fear that another

half hearted effort to launch a professional side in the valleys will set the prospect of a genuine Super League club in the principality back years.

What of our Boundary Park experience? Good facilities, good atmosphere, shame about the score! I thought Maurice Lindsay's snide comment about our pre-match entertainment was a bit unnecessary. But Wigan were clearly determined to prove that they were still top dogs, and we copped for it on the chin. Our two Easter games will show whether the effect is going to be long-lasting, or if we really think in terms of a mid-table position.

There are two things that I found particularly disappointing on Saturday - apart from the embarrassing attempt to introduce the players as if coming out of Noah's Ark. One was the lack of Wigan spectators. They seem to be increasingly content to watch their side on TV these days - which is very sad. More serious, though is the use made of the video replay screen. Most people in the ground felt that Quinell knocked on before Offiah's first Wigan 'try', and I suspect Mr Campbell would have disallowed it if he hadn't had the screen facility available to him - as he would probably also have disallowed Francis Maloney's. The fourth official then got it wrong - and when you learn it was ex-referee Stephen Haigh, you may not be surprised at that! Then, on Sunday, the in-goal touch judge allowed a try that a video replay facility would almost certainly have chalked off. Greg McCallum clearly has some serious thinking to do.



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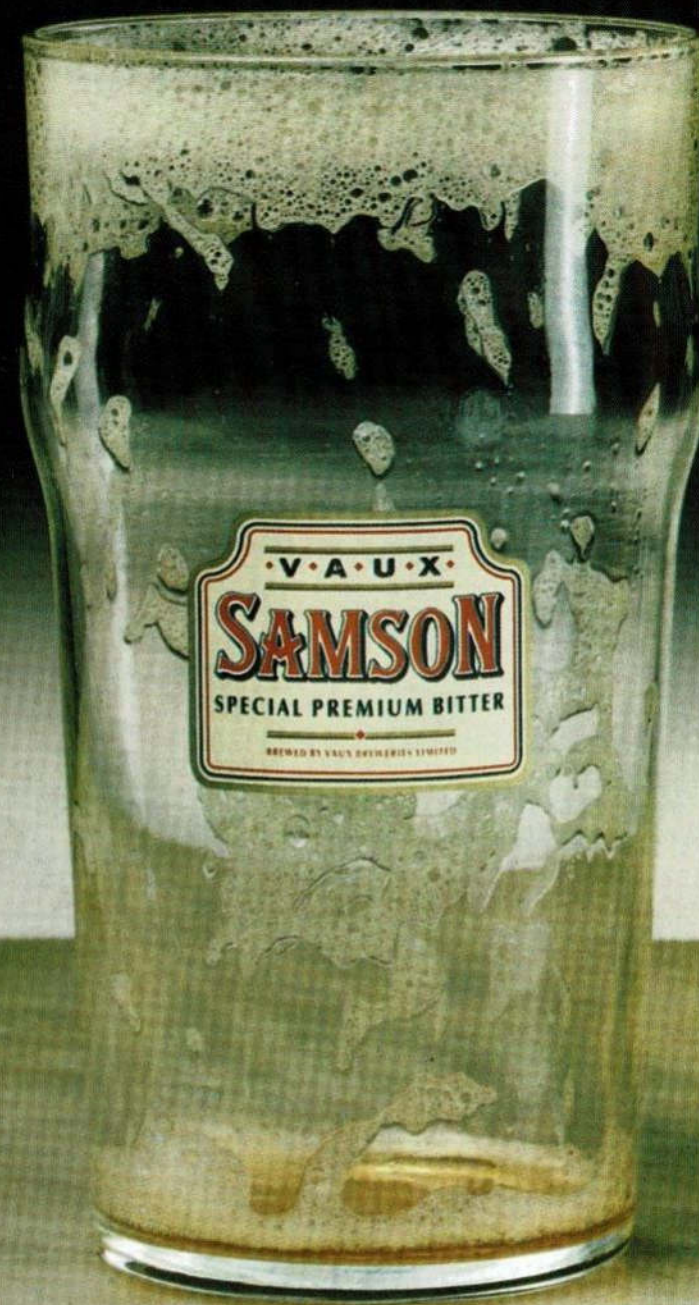
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Record

This afternoon's match is the 144th meeting between the Roughyeds and Halifax. Of the previous 143 clashes, Oldham have won 72, the Thrum Hallers have won 64 and seven matches have ended all square. As far as league matches are concerned, these teams have met on 130 occasions. Oldham's fine win at Thrum Hall last January was their 67th success whilst Halifax have 59 league wins to their credit and four matches have been drawn.

Oldham's biggest home win over Halifax came way back in season 1923-24 when they romped home by 33 points to nil. Halifax, on the other hand, have won at Watersheddings by a 20 point margin on two occasions. In 1978-79 they won 25-5 and in 1994-95 they won 40-20. That 1978-79 season must have been something of a disaster for Oldham who also suffered their worse away defeat against Halifax that term. They lost that match 32-2. The previous season, 1977-78, Oldham pulled off their biggest win at Thrum Hall when they defeated Halifax 24-3.

Oldham-Halifax results during the past ten seasons. All these matches were league encounters.

1986-87	Oldham 18 Halifax 20
	Halifax 20 Oldham 14
1987-88	did not meet
1988-89	Oldham 12 Halifax 14
	Halifax 0 Oldham 12
1989-90	Oldham 14 Halifax 3
	Halifax 22 Oldham 12
1990-91	did not meet

1991-92	did not meet
1992-93	did not meet
1993-94	Oldham 11 Halifax 28
	Halifax 26 Oldham 12
1994-95	Oldham 20 Halifax 40
	Halifax 34 Oldham 8
1995-96	Oldham 4 Halifax 21
	Halifax 4 Oldham 12

RESULT OF HALIFAX'S LAST VISIT TO WATERSHEDDINGS

Friday, 1st September 1995

Stones Bitter Centenary Championship

OLDHAM 4 HALIFAX 21

Half-time 0-15 Attendance 2,938

Oldham try scorer: Darren Abram

Halifax try scorers: Paul Rowley (2) & Paul Moriarty

Goals: John Schuster (4) Drop Goal: Carl Briggs

Oldham: Wally Gibson; Adrian Belle, Paul Atcheson, Darren Abram, Mike Neal; Francis Maloney, Martin Crompton; Ian Sherratt, John Clarke, Ian Gildart, Gary Lord, Joe Faimalo & Howard Hill.

Substitutes - Paul Topping, Craig Richards, Steve Gartland & Chris Parr.

Halifax: Mike Umaga; John Bentley, John Schuster, Simon Baldwin, Mark Preston; Grant Anderson, Carl Briggs; Karl Harrison, Paul Rowley, Wayne Jackson, Paul Moriarty, Michael Jackson & Gary Divorty.

Substitutes - Abi Ekoku, Roy Southernwood, John Fieldhouse & Carl Gillespie.

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Rd	Date	Team	Venue	Time	Score	Att	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.	18.	19.	20.	21.	22.	23.	24.	25.
1	Sat 30 March	WIGAN	H BSKYB	6.00pm	16-56	7,709	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●										
2	Fri 5 April	HALIFAX	H	3.00pm																											
3	Mon 8 April	Paris	A	3.00pm																											
4	Sat 13 April	LEEDS	H BSKYB	6.00pm																											
5	Sat 20 April	Castleford	A	6.00pm																											
	Sat 27 April	SILK CUT CHALLENGE	CUP FINAL																												
6	Sun 5 May	St Helens	A	3.00pm																											
7	Fri 10 May	BRADFORD BULLS	H	7.30pm																											
8	Sun 19 May	Sheffield Eagles	A	6.00pm																											
9	Sun 26 May	WORKINGTON	H	3.00pm																											
10	Sun 2 June	London Broncos	A	6.00pm																											
11	Sun 9 June	WARRINGTON	H	6.00pm																											
12	Sun 16 June	Wigan	A	6.30pm																											
13	Sun 23 June	Halifax	A	6.00pm																											
14	Sun 30 June	PARIS	H	6.00pm																											
15	Sun 7 July	Leeds	A	3.00pm																											
16	Sun 14 July	CASTLEFORD	H	6.00pm																											
17	Sun 21 July	ST HELENS	H	6.00pm																											
18	Sun 28 July	Bradford Bulls	A	6.00pm																											
19	Sun 4 Aug	Workington	A	3.00pm																											
20	Sun 11 Aug	LONDON BRONCOS	H	6.00pm																											
21	Fri 16 Aug	Warrington	A	7.30pm																											
22	Sun 25 Aug	SHEFFIELD EAGLES	H	6.00pm																											

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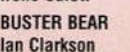
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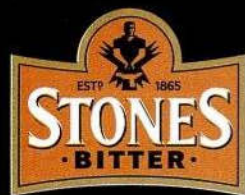
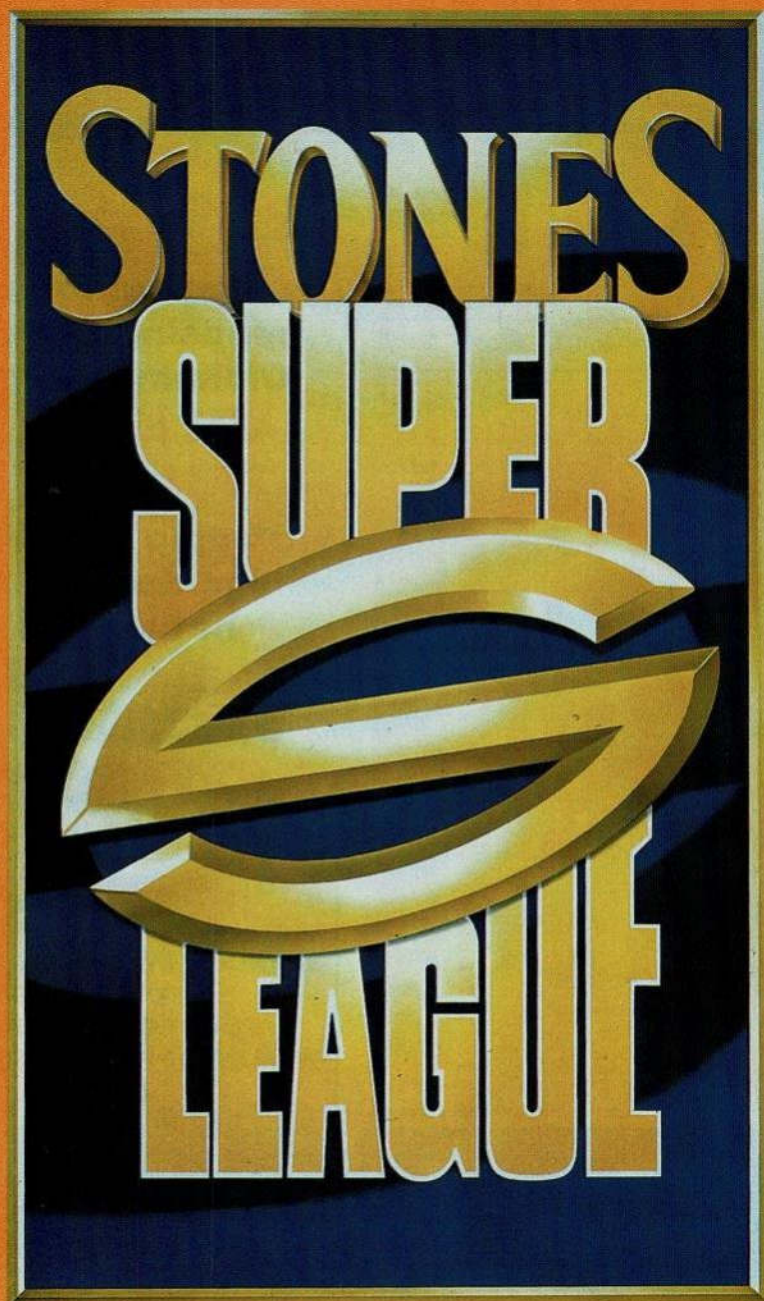


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THE ACTION KICKS OFF



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NEWS From

Down Under...

Aussie fans vote with their feet

Fans in Australia are asking what the future holds for Rugby League. The Super League clubs returned to the fold for the weekend's games. But few fans bothered to turn up to watch.

Last year all but one of Auckland's home games drew crowds of more than 20,000. On Sunday only around 14,000 bothered to turn up to see the Warriors. Up in Townsville there were several sell outs last year, with nine of the eleven home games topping 20,000. On Saturday night there were just 16,186 to watch the Cowboys take on a side many believe could win this year's Premiership, the Sydney City Roosters. It was the smallest crowd ever to watch the North Queensland side. And so it went on. In the Rugby League heartland of Sydney there were six games and the biggest crowd was the 9,722 who turned up on Saturday night to see the traditional local derby between Cronulla and St. George, which in good times would have been expected to draw almost twice that many. Yesterday the five games attracted a total of just over 30,000 an average of 6,000. And fans ringing talkback radio suggested a couple of the crowds were artificially inflated by well meaning club officials wishing to save embarrassment about revealing the true figures.

Oceania Cup

The Oceania Cup tournament, featuring Tonga, Western Samoa, the Cook Islands, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and teams from New Zealand and Australia, has been postponed from its scheduled date in May and early June this year. The tournament has been put on ice until the outcome of the Australian Super League appeal against Justice James Burchett's Federal court decision, due to be heard on May 23rd, is known. Some observers are suggesting that there may now be doubt about the proposed tour of Europe by an Oceania representative squad this autumn. "Given the delicate situation in Australia it was considered inappropriate to stage the Oceania tournament before the judicial process was completed," said NZRL Executive Director Mike Knowles. NZRL Chairman Graham Carden insists that the tournament will go ahead later this year, however, and claims that the legal reverse for Super League in Australia will have no bearing on Rugby League in the rest of the world. Carden recently described the Australian situation as "a reverse in one country, which could not hide the fact that Super League was reality throughout the rest of the world. "We have a full international programme set in concrete until 1999, on which the Australian situation has no bearing," Carden added.

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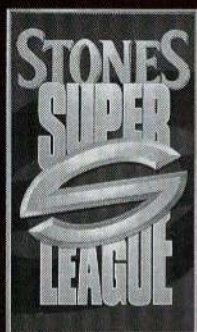
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AN EXCITING NEW CHALLENGE



With the advent of the Stones Super League, no longer will the sport be confined to the Northern region of England. Complete with Europe's top 12 teams, the sport promises to offer a summer packed full of competition and hard-hitting action.

The game now has a bright future and together we have an opportunity to place it where it belongs - on a world stage.

As for the season ahead, teams have no doubt been rigorously training to win the prestigious title of the inaugural champions and this summer will surely prove to be more competitive than any previously known in the history of the game.



Maurice Lindsay, Chief Executive of the Rugby Football League and Jonathan Nye, Head of Sponsorship at Bass Brewers, toast the new Stones Super League sponsorship.

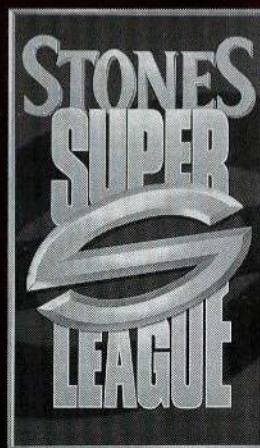


Ready for action - Stars of the Stones Super League at the official launch.

attracting new supporters to the game and it is our belief that once they have discovered the game they will remain hooked for life.



With the kick off to the season, Stones is sure that a new era in sport is being witnessed and with the help of supporters and clubs alike Rugby League will be rocketed in to the 21st Century.



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STANDARD CUP FINAL

Those supporters unable to follow the Bears to Paris this weekend would be well advised to return to Watersheddings on Sunday morning for the Standard Cup Final between Higginshaw and Saddleworth Rangers. It promises to be a tremendous match between two of the leading clubs in the North West. Higginshaw have carried all before them this season. They are favourites to lift the First Division Championship of the North West Counties League and fancy their chances against the superstars of the National Conference League after beating other Conference outfit, St. Annes, en route to Sunday's final.

Rangers will be making a record 25th appearance in the Standard Cup Final against a Higginshaw team who have lifted this trophy a record 13 times. Should Saddleworth win on Sunday then they would equal that Higginshaw record and also avenge four defeats which they have suffered at the hands of Higginshaw in previous finals. Those four defeats came in 1932 by 16-0, in 1952 by 10-9, in 1953 by 5-0 and in 1960 by 16-11. Rangers did beat Higginshaw in one final, the 1934 final going their way 5-4. As can be seen, all bar that 1932 final have been close fought affairs and Sunday's match should be just as tight and certainly one not to be missed.

Results in this season's competition are as follows:

Round One

Hollinwood 18 Heyside Eagles 16

Hopwood Middleton 14 Waterhead 24

Shaw 4 Salem Hornets 35

St. Annes 16 Higginshaw 26

Quarter-finals

Saddleworth Rangers 60 Watersheddings Wanderers 8

Salem Hornets 34 Hollinwood 10

Seddon Atkinson 12 Higginshaw 36

Waterhead 24 Tameside Borough 4

Semi-finals, both staged at Hollinwood

Higginshaw 14 Salem Hornets 8

Saddleworth Rangers 44 Waterhead 22

Final on Easter Sunday at Watersheddings kick-off 11am

Welcome to Development News. Although the season has had a short break Development has been in a very busy period with the Renault Cup ties taking place which due to the bad weather a lot of teams were running behind schedule but now we are slowly getting back on track. Some teams are already through to the semi-finals and 2 teams are ready to play the final. There have been some excellent matches especially at Junior level with teams who hadn't played before but are now enjoying their first taste of Rugby League. I must pay tribute to Neil Wood who has taken over the students R.L. body that was vacated by Bev Risman and left his post of Oldham Rugby League Development Officer to me to run. Neil has done a tremendous amount of work in Oldham and laid firm foundations to be built on for the future. I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Oldham public for all the hard work he put into this job because I can tell you there is more to it than you think. Well done Neil and hope you are as successful in your new post. Congratulations are in order for St Edwards U/11s team who have reached the Lancashire Cup Final for the second year in succession and also our U/16s Town team who have reached the final of the English Schools Cup Final which will be played on 10th April at Watersheddings 7.30pm versus Hull Schoolboys.

Brian Gartland



Some Bears fans may disagree, judging by their howls of anguish at Boundary Park last Saturday, but I am fully in support of the giant screen, the instant replay and the involvement of the 'second referee' or the 'third umpire' as they would say in cricket.

As luck would have it, we saw the best of the new system in the televised Paris versus Sheffield Eagles game from the Charley Stadium in the French capital on Friday night. Referee Stuart Cummings called for assistance on several occasions and each time the action replay showed clearly, and without any doubt whatsoever, what the verdict should be. The use of modern technology ensured that each of those decisions in the Charley stadium was the right one. Now, the fuss at Boundary Park had nothing at all to do with the rights and wrongs of "big brother's private eye". It arose purely and simply because the decisions on Martin Offiah's first try first try for Wigan and Francis Maloney's try for Oldham were still difficult to call even when studied on the action replay. Stephen Haigh, the man making the decisions, had a task which I, for one, wouldn't have fancied. But the point is he didn't have to make a split second judgement, as match referee David Campbell would have had to do, and he did have the benefit of camera assistance even if, in these two cases, it was still unclear what actually happened.

After watching the replay many times over I concluded that Haigh was correct in awarding the Maloney try. It wasn't a double movement, as I understand it. His own momentum carried him over. As for the Offiah try, I am still not sure, after numerous viewings, whether Scott Quinnett knocked on or not. What I do know is that:

(a). The big screen gave the paying public a chance to make up their own mind and...

(b). The match referee wasn't pushed into making a decision on which he was unsure.

No legislation in the world can cater for the occasions when there is still an element of doubt even with the assistance of the action replay. But by using the camera and the 'second referee' the League will reduce the number of wrong decisions and increase the percentage of correct calls.

The right verdict won't always be crystal clear... but it will more often than not.

By Roger Halstead of the Oldham Evening Chronicle.

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