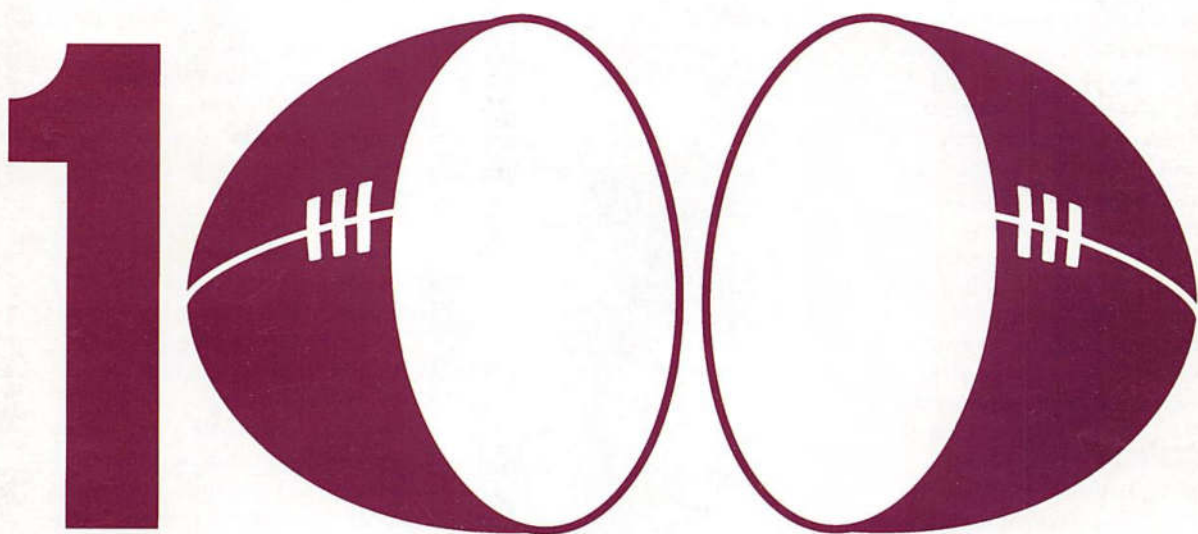




SILK CUT CHALLENGE CUP



CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF THE CHALLENGE CUP.

OLDHAM BEARS v BRADFORD BULLS
SILK CUT CHALLENGE QUARTER-FINAL
SUNDAY MARCH 9th 1997, KICK OFF 3.00pm
OFFICIAL PROGRAMME £1.50

A Message FROM THE CHAIRMAN

JIM QUINN

Bradford Bulls come to Boundary Park today in the quarter final of the Silk Challenge Cup, having established a reputation in 1996 as the biggest high-fliers in Super League.

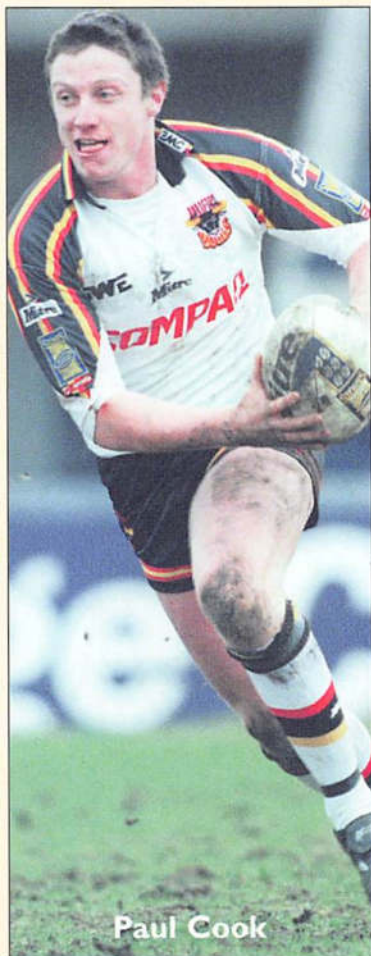
The impact of going to Wembley, and then taking part in one of the best finals for years, set up the Bulls for a glorious first summer of Super League in which they not only finished third behind St Helens and Wigan, but set the Odsal turnstiles clicking like they had not clicked for years.

Having tasted Wembley last year, I'm sure Bradford are keen to go back there again this time, but first they must remove Oldham Bears from the competition in today's clash at Boundary Park and I can assure everyone reading this programme today that the Bears are determined to give a good account of themselves in what could well be a Cup thriller!

I am of the firm opinion that the Bears have assembled a squad of players for 1997 which is as good as anything the club has had for many years.

I am equally sure that Andy Goodway and his players will surprise a few people who, before a ball is passed or kicked in earnest, already seem to have written us off as no hoppers in the Cup competition and relegation candidates in Super League.

Super League will take off superbly this summer and in today's Cup tie we will get a taste of things to come. I am sure that, whatever the result,



no one will leave this ground feeling they have not had value for money.

Fans of the losing side are bound to be disappointed. But stand by for a cracker, and then sit back and look forward to the rest of the summer, which will also bring to this ground teams from Australia such as North Queensland Cowboys and Adelaide Rams in the new World Club Championships. Chris Caisley, the Bradford Chairman, deserves to be congratulated for what he has

achieved, not only for Bradford Bulls, but also for Super League in his capacity as chairman of Rugby League Europe Ltd. We had a successful launch of Super League 97 in London on Monday. We are almost at the starting gate, but it's Silk Cut Challenge Cup time at Boundary Park this afternoon – and the winners will be only 80 minutes from Wembley. Let's get behind the Bears in full voice and make sure our players feel very much at home in Boundary Park.

Since our last home game, the defeat of Rochdale Hornets in round four, we have acquired the services of Dorothy Martin as Commercial Manager and Luke Goodwin as a half back, from Australia.

We wish both a long and happy stay with the club and much success in their different roles. Dorothy will be a leading figure in the commercial department, along with Abe Kerr and Jacquie Clayton, while Luke will be keen to fulfill his potential in his first visit to England.

Steve Gartland has gone to Rochdale Hornets, initially on a month's loan, and we wish him well at Spotland. He is no stranger to the Hornets and it was no surprise to see him taking his debut by storm in the game against Doncaster last Sunday.



LOOKING BACK

DON YATES

Later this year the Empire Stadium, Wembley will undergo a massive facelift. The Silk Cut Challenge Cup is likely to be staged at Twickenham, the Rah-rah's HQ. During the two years of reconstruction and when the annual pilgrimage to Wembley is resumed in the year 2000, only the twin towers will remain. The rest of the complex will be a brand spanking new national stadium. Oldham have yet to figure in the game's showpiece occasion as today they continue their 62nd Wembley campaign. Seven times the Bears have reached the penultimate stage and seven times they have suffered the heartbreak which is a semi-final defeat.

The closest Oldham have been to Wembley was in 1964 when they drew a replayed semi-final 17-14!!!

When the 1964 Cup campaign began Oldham were enjoying a successful run at the top of Division Two. It was a run which was to eventually end in promotion as Second Division Champions. However the Cup draw was none too kind to Oldham that season for they were pitted against First Division opposition at every stage.

Nevertheless, a stern defence allied to a tremendous team spirit saw them overcome Keighley away 11-4, Featherstone Rovers at home 9-7 and Hunslet away 7-5, before meeting Hull Kingston Rovers in the semi-final at Headingley. Rovers were favourites to win that tie if only

by virtue of their First Division status. Although Oldham gave their all, it looked as if their Wembley dreams were over as the match approached injury time with the Robins 5-3 in front. But then up popped hooker Len McIntyre with a dropped goal (worth two points in those days) and the match was drawn 5-5. The replay was fixed for Swinton's Station Road ground on the following Wednesday evening. A crowd of 27,209 attended that replay between two clubs who lined up as follows.



HULL K R: OLDHAM:

Cyril Kellett	Frank Dyson
Graham Paul	Geoff Sims
Terry Major	John Donovan
Dave Elliott	Peter Smethurst
Mike Blackmore	Trevor Simms
Alan Burwell	Vin Nestor
Arthur Bunting	Jack Pycroft
John Bath	Charlie Bott
Flash Flanagan	Len McIntyre
Brian Tyson	Ken Wilson
Len Clark	Geoff Robinson
Eric Palmer	Stuart Whitehead
Harry Pool	Harry Major

Once again Rovers showed their First Division pedigree and after an hour they led 14-7. Oldham looked out of it but Geoff Sims scored out wide, Frank Dyson converted and then added a penalty to force extra time with the scores locked at 14-14.

At that point Oldham had their tails up. They were all over Rovers and it was no surprise when Geoff Robinson plunged over. It seemed only a matter of time before Oldham extended their 17-14 lead such was the measure of their dominance. Then it happened. After 12 minutes of extra time the match was abandoned because of poor light. There were no floodlights at Swinton in those days so the official result was a draw - 17-14 in Oldham's favour!!

Rovers won the second replay 12-2 in a bitterly disappointing match at Huddersfield so another Wembley dream was shattered.

Could that dream be realised this year in Wembley's last big final before its major reconstruction? Only time will tell.





BEARS v e r s u s BULLS

ROGER HALSTEAD

Although Oldham have never been to Wembley, don't make the mistake of regarding the Bears as Silk Cut Challenge Cup rookies, or even worse, no-hopers.

The bookies don't fancy their chances of doing anything in Super League other than fighting a battle against relegation alongside Paris St Germain.

And they were written off as Silk Cut Challenge Cup hopefuls long before they were drawn with the Bulls, last year's beaten finalists, in today's quarter final tie at Boundary Park.

Glance at the Bears' Silk Cut Challenge Cup record over the past decade, however, and many a club would be happy to match what Oldham have achieved up to the semi final stage.

Wembley? No. But what about six quarter-final appearances in the past 11 years, or four semi-final clashes in 1986, 1990, 1991, and 1995?

The Bears today will be bidding to reach their fourth semi-final in eight years, having lost to Warrington 10-6 at Wigan in 1990, to Wigan 30-16 at Burnden Park in 1991 and to Wigan 48-20 at the McAlpine Stadium in 1995.

Along the way they have had some glorious Cup triumphs

... like the 6-1 victory over Bradford at Watersheddings on their run to the 1986 semi-final, the 10-8 defeat of Wigan in the Paddy Kirwen tie of 1987, the

Traditionally, the nearly men need fear no one until they reach the semi-final ... and there is plenty of big time Cup experience in the squad, from



Paul Atcheson is tackled by Carl Hall.
Oldham v Bradford, 10th September 1995

16-4 victory at Naughton Park when Widnes were still a force in 1990 and the 17-6 demolition job on Warrington at Wilderspool two years ago.

coach Andy Goodway downwards.

Goodway played for Wigan in four winning finals while his assistant Alan McCurrie, went

TALKING POINT



ANDY GOODWAY

there with Wakefield Trinity back in Belle Vue's good old days of David Toppliss and Co. Paul Atcheson (Wigan), Martin Crompton (Warrington), Gary Lord (Castleford) and Ian Gildart (Wigan) have all sampled the unique Wembley atmosphere with other clubs, so the Bears won't be lacking in big time Cup experience when they take the field today in front of a five figure Boundary Park crowd.

In recent years, the Bears and the Bulls, have met twice on the rocky road to Wembley. In a Watersheddings thriller in 1986, a drop goal looked to be enough to see Bradford through on a mud heap, until 16-year-old Glen Liddiard made a decisive break towards the Hutchins Stand and brother David was on his shoulder to finish off behind the posts. The teams didn't meet again until 1993 when, in the quarter final, Bradford blitzed their way to the last four with a 42-4 victory romp at Watersheddings. It was easy for the old Northern team on that occasion. It won't be easy today ... and that's something you CAN have a flutter on.

As the Silk Cut Challenge Cup is largely now a pre-season competition for the professional clubs, it is proving to be a leveller. All the clubs are short of match practice after a long hard off-season and some shock results were registered in the last round. Keighley Cougars convincingly beat Halifax Blue Sox and Wakefield Trinity gave us a good game.

The Bears' progress through the competition has been steady if not earth shattering. The results against Rochdale and Wakefield did provide some evidence of good things to come from a squad which is still to be strengthened. The depth of the squad is considerably greater than last year and the competition for places once the list of injuries subsides will ensure that no player is guaranteed a place without working hard. I feel that there is a lot of promise in the players at my disposal and a quarter final Silk Cut Challenge Cup quarter final against Bradford Bulls is an ideal test.

Bradford Bulls are a very talented side which will unquestionably provide us with our biggest test of the season so far. The match will be decided by ball control, with the side making the least errors likely to

go through to the semis. Hunger is a key factor also, with Bradford anxious to go one better than 1996 by winning the competition and Oldham wanting to lose the mantle of nearly men built up through several losing semi-finals in the 1990s. Whatever the result, rest assured that you will be treated to a fine afternoon's entertainment. Enjoy your day!



Jon Scales is tackled by Wally Gibson.

1997 SILK CUT CHALLENGE CUP

1997 SILK CUT PRIZES

This is the first season of Silk Cut's new £2.1 million three year Sponsorship of Rugby League's most famous knockout competition, played under the Silk Cut banner since 1985. The 1997 Wembley victors will receive a record prize cheque for £80,000.

A new competition for non Super League teams knocked out in the fourth round, the Silk Cut Plate, will be introduced this year. The complete 1997 Silk Cut Challenge Cup prize structure is:

SILK CUT CHALLENGE CUP

Third Round losers (1st & 2nd Div. Clubs).....	£3,500	Quarter-Final losers.....	£10,000
Third Round losers (Amateur Clubs).....	£1,000	Semi-Final losers.....	£15,000
Fourth Round losers.....	£4,000	Runners-up.....	£40,000
Fifth Round losers.....	£6,000	Winners.....	£80,000

SILK CUT PLATE

Runners-up.....	£30,000	Winners.....	£50,000
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PROJECTED PRIZE FUND.....£470,000

PROJECTED CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT FUND...£180,000

GRAND TOTAL.....£650,000

1997 SILK CUT AWARDS

Silk Cut Awards will again be presented to the adjudged Man of the Match in each tie from the first round onwards. In each case the winner will receive a commemorative medallion, plus a cheque for £150 (from the third round through to the quarter-finals). The Man of the Match at both semi-finals receives a cheque for £300 plus an engraved silver plated replica rugby ball. Silk Cut Awards will also be presented at Silk Cut Plate matches.

1997 SILK CUT TICKETS

Tickets for the all-seater 1997 Silk Cut Challenge Cup Final on Saturday 3rd May can be booked now priced £35, £30, £27, £22, £17 and £12 in the stadium, and £50 in the Olympic Gallery.

Please forward order and remittance, made payable to the Rugby Football League, to THE RUGBY FOOTBALL LEAGUE, RED HALL, RED HALL LANE, LEEDS LS17 8NB.

Visa and Access credit card bookings can be made by telephoning on the Ticket Hotline on 0113-232 9444 between 9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

1997 SILK CUT DRAWS

The draw for the first round will be made live on GMR at 7.10pm on Tuesday 3rd December. The draws for the second and third rounds will be made live on BBC Radio Leeds on Monday 30th December and Monday 13th January respectively. The fourth round draw for the Silk Cut Challenge Cup will be made live on BBC Radio Five Live at approximately 5.15pm on Monday 27th January 1997. The draw ceremonies for the fifth round, quarter-finals and semi-finals will be made live on BBC Look North, North West Tonight and BBC Radio Five Live at 6.55pm on the following dates:

Fifth Round.....	Monday 10th February
Quarter-Finals.....	Monday 24th February
Semi-Finals.....	Monday 10th March

Draws for the Silk Cut Plate will be made at 7.35am on BBC Radio Leeds on the following dates:

First Round.....	Monday 10th February
Second Round.....	Monday 17th February
Semi-Finals.....	Monday 24th February

SUPER LEAGUE 97



Last Monday saw the launch of Super League 97 – Gary Baker looks back on a game that developed in the north, has undergone many changes, and is now an international sport watched by millions

Eddie Waring, love him or loathe him, one of Rugby League's more colourful characters, was synonymous with the expansion of Rugby League through the decades from an insular game only watched by people in the north to a sport now viewed by millions on BBC1. His desire was to tell the world about the sport, laying the foundations to develop it for the future.

That is why he would have probably approved of the way the game has gone as we head towards the millennium.

It has taken years of struggle for Rugby League to get where it is today, but the investment of millions of pounds and a change of attitude

towards it has swept away the image problem which, for so long, confined it to the north of England.

Super League 97 was officially launched this week not in Leeds, Wigan, Manchester or Hull but in London, where Sheffield Eagles pointed the way forward to take the game into the 21st century. Now, backed by millionaires like Paul Thompson, David Whelan, Richard Branson and Rupert Murdoch together with Sky TV, Rugby League is poised for the greatest era in its history. Even the Cinderellas of Rugby League – the Bramleys, Rochdales, Workingtons and Swintons of this world – have woken up to the way the game has changed. It contains all the fluency of Premier League Football, the combativeness of Rugby Union, the family entertainment of American Football, and is one of the top viewing spectacles in sporting entertainment.

For instance, on and off the field, fans anticipate a major Super League clash with the excitement that is associated with Premiership Football.

And, in a closely-fought season, the crowds which flocked to the final match between St Helens and Wigan last year plus the hype which surrounded the championship decider was greater than that which accompanied many a Rugby League Cup Final at Wembley. Introducing peripherals like bright new kits, attaching nicknames to clubs and pre-match entertainment, cheerleaders and fanfares all add to the excitement. By doing that, the crowd get behind their teams and the atmosphere at matches becomes electric.

The real change, however, has been in the professional attitude of the men who take the field. Some of the greatest names throughout the world have lined-up in Super League.

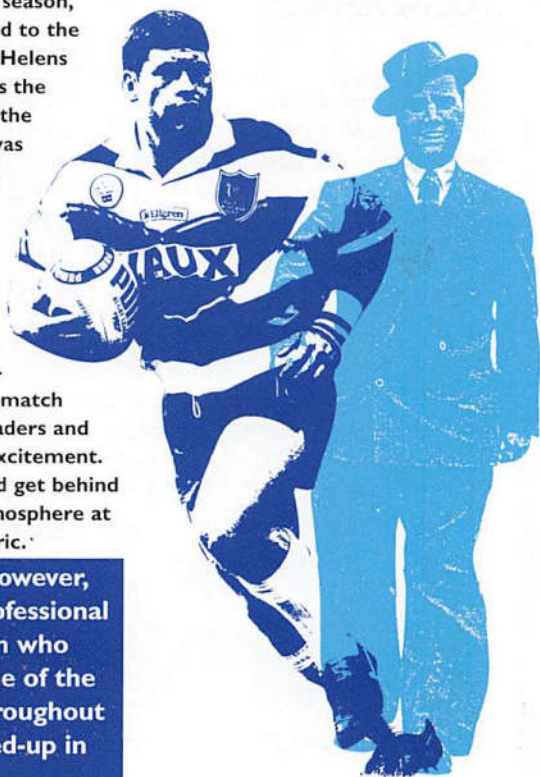
And, as the money from the likes of 44-year-old Barnsley-based Thompson and Virgin entrepreneur Branson seep further into the sport, even more of the world's stars will be attracted to Britain.

But it is not just on these shores where League must blossom into the next century. Just as it was in Eddie Waring's days, where the game was restricted to northern England, now the sport must not just be about our own Super League.

After all, it would be nothing unless we had the chance to beat the Aussies every so often.

There can be no stopping Rugby League as it hurtles headlong towards the millennium now that the seeds have been sown. Only reaping the harvest from those seeds matters.

Super League 97 is a far cry from a wet Tuesday night of Floodlit Rugby League highlights on BBC2 between Hull and Dewsbury in the 1970s. Losing is not an option for the sport anymore. Winning the worldwide battle to make Super League the premier sport of the 21st century is the only goal that matters.





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le coq sportif

MEET THE BEARS ... MEET THE BE



Darren Abram

DARREN ABRAM

Prolific try scoring centre. A former Thatto Heath junior (St Helens) who won BARLA international honours before turning professional with Warrington in 1985. Had a spell on loan with Swinton before moving to Chorley Borough and then Rochdale Hornets. Oldham signed him in February 1993.

MATT MUNRO

Short but mobile second row forward with a terrific workrate. Has also turned out at hooker. An Australian who joined Oldham at the beginning of the 1996 campaign from Sydney Tigers.

CHRIS MCKINNEY

Outstanding young forward who can play either hooker, second row or loose forward. Signed from the Hensingham junior club (Whitehaven) in August 1994. Toured New Zealand with the British academy squad last October.

PAUL TOPPING

Utility player who is equally effective

whether at centre, stand-off or loose forward. Terrific defender. Topping is a former Wigan St Patricks junior who turned professional with Swinton in 1985. He had a spell on loan with Mansfield before joining Leigh in 1990 and then transferring to Oldham in September 1993. Prior to turning professional, Topping toured Australia with the British Schoolboy squad in 1984 but surprisingly his only representative honour since has been one appearance for Lancashire in 1991.

IAN GILDART

Hard working forward. A former Wigan Colt who turned professional at Central Park in 1986. After eight years with Wigan moved on to Wakefield Trinity in 1994. Moved back over the Pennines to Oldham for £45,000 in August 1995. Represented Great Britain at under 21 level during his Central Park Days.

PAUL ATCHESON

Outstanding attacking full back and Oldham's top try scorer last season. A former Blackbrook junior (St Helens) who turned professional with Widnes in 1990. Moved to Wigan and then joined Oldham in June 1995 for £50,000. Has represented Great Britain at academy and under 21 level and has been a member of the Welsh team in the various international competitions during the past three years.

PAUL DEACON

Talented young half back who joined Oldham from Hindley juniors (Wigan) in July 1995.

MARTIN CROMPTON

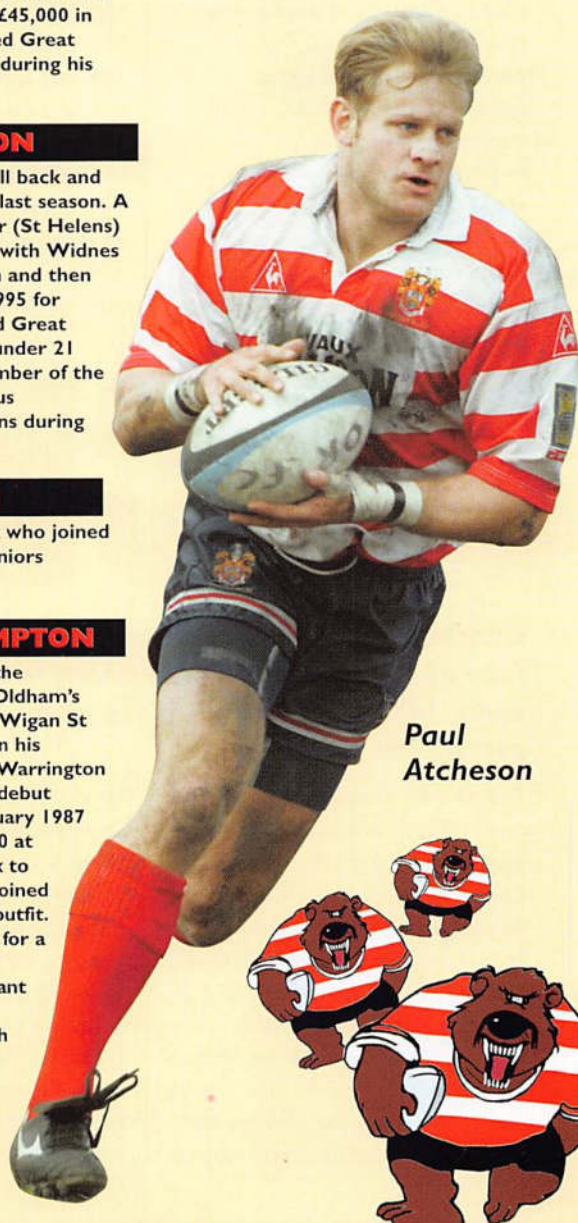
Scrum half, captain and the orchestrator of most of Oldham's attacking play. A former Wigan St Patricks junior who began his professional career with Warrington in 1986. Made his senior debut against Bradford in February 1987 when Northern lost 31-10 at Wilderspool. Moved back to Wigan in 1992 when he joined the senior Central Park outfit. Oldham snapped him up for a bargain £35,000 fee in September 1993. A brilliant tactical kicker who has been a regular in the Irish team during the past couple of years and who played for Great Britain in the World Nines earlier this year.

RON MYLER

Versatile back equally at home whether at full back or on the wing. A former Widnes St Marys junior who turned professional with Warrington in 1989. Had a spell on loan at Salford in 1995 but returned to Warrington before transferring to Oldham in July 1995 for £50,000.

DAVID BRADBURY

Utility forward who gives 100% in every match. Oldham signed him from Leigh Miners in August 1991. Has toured Down Under with both the BARLA and the senior British Lions.



Paul Atcheson

A

n inescapable conclusion of their early elimination from the Silk Cut Challenge Cup for a second year, is

that all is not as it was at Wigan RLFC.

Following the earthquake at St Helens, the aftershocks first accounted for the coach Graeme West, then Vai'aiga Tuigamala surprised no-one with his move back to Rugby Union at Newcastle and the seismic activity continued into the Wigan boardroom with a more unexpected departure, that of John Martin, the precursor to the biggest upheaval, the sale of Central Park to Tesco.

In withdrawing his sizeable stake in the club, Martin, a director for four years, said he could no longer stand by and watch a great club drain away.

be challenging in the Super League and World Club Championship this summer, except the world has changed and Wigan needs to change with it.

Brave decisions were taken in the eighties to transform a destitute club to a beacon of sporting excellence.

Realistically, Wigan can no longer be run by a board as if it were some hobby.

Stragglers are still evident as the game is dragged kicking and screaming into a world of new opportunities and market forces. Wigan has caught the financial cold that struck down Widnes after years of unchecked spending. Rugby Union has gone blindly down the same path, frittering money as if it was out of fashion, except there are enough sugar daddies with sufficient commitments at several leading



Richard Branson, high profile businessman, has acquired 15 per cent of London Broncos

mend mentality. With the exception of those clubs which

CCHCHACHAN

Christopher Irvine, The Times Rugby League Correspondent looks at the changing face of Rugby League Champions not living up to expectations, vast investments in clubs, better promotion of the game and areas where the spectators are not getting the facilities

The shared sense of an empire crumbling is not one that the game can rejoice in. Wigan's Challenge Cup defeat at Salford last year was like the fall of a repressive tyrant; at St Helens last month, they resembled Attila the Hun-ted.

Obituaries written about Wigan have been torn up before. There are too many good players still at Central Park for them not to

Union clubs to suggest the storm can be weathered better than in League.

In terms of chief executives and financial controllers at Super League clubs, which were deemed so important in the Framing the Future document, the game is better equipped professionally. Attitudes, however, still need to shift a long way from the make-do-and-

have moved into rented accommodation, most grounds remain spectator unfriendly. No amount of happy, smiling pom-pom girls and loud rock music can hide very obvious defects. Decent food is still at a premium so is a seat, and anyone happening upon the urine tidal wave which threatened a few weeks ago to wash away the brick toilets at

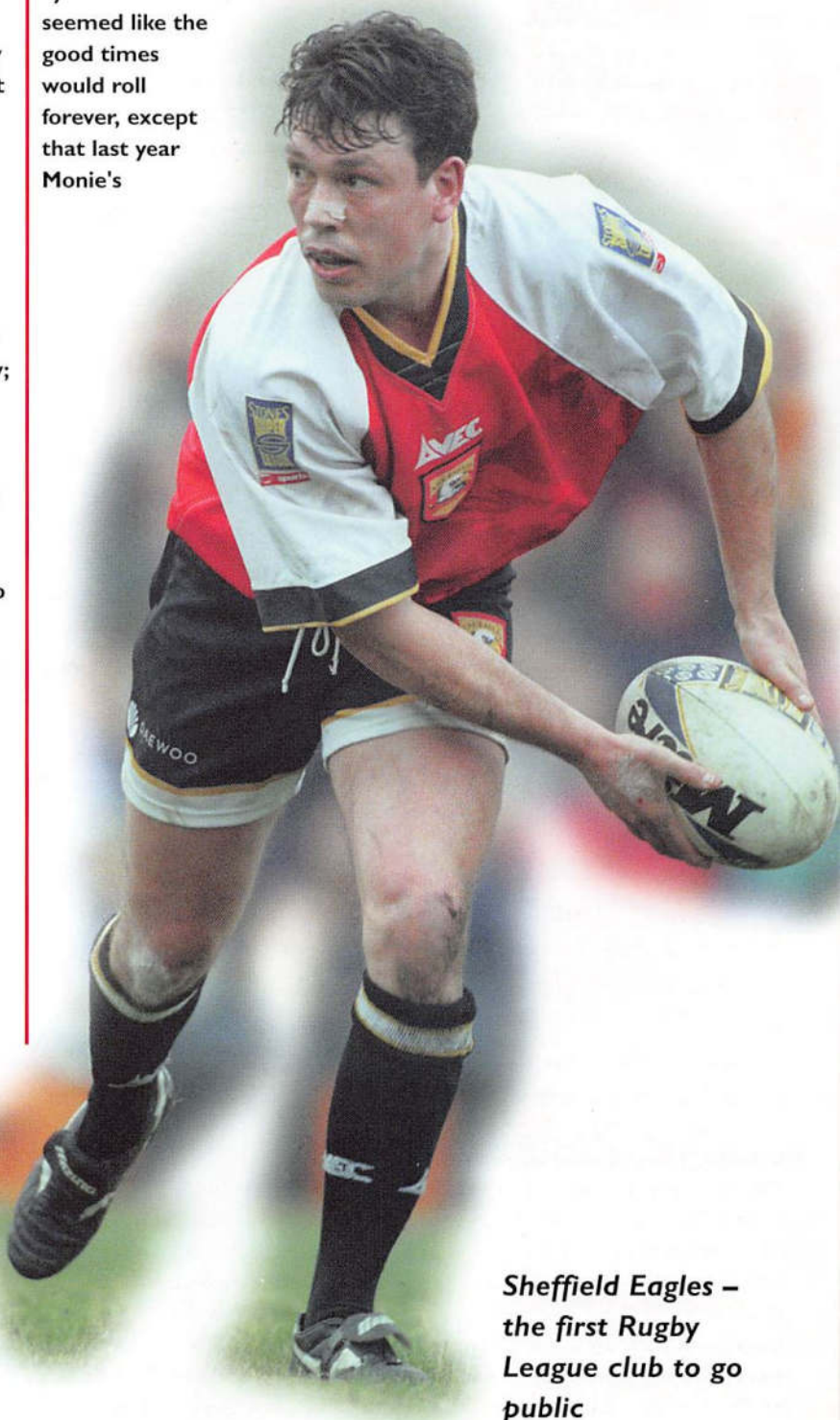
one ground (and good riddance!) would ensure they only entered the ground again in galoshes. Not that Richard Branson could see anything but good in buying a 15 per cent stake in London Broncos. Events this week confirmed a new spirit of enterprise in the sport, with H & C Saatchi appointed by Rugby League (Europe) to help market Super League and the planned flotation of Sheffield Eagles on the Stock Exchange by the multi-millionaire electronics entrepreneur, Paul Thompson. The process is of turning an oil tanker proportion, but things are gradually changing. Oldham held a press conference recently; Castleford managed the unthinkable and sent out a media release. Small beer, yes, but clubs are slowly catching on to the equation of publicity + marketing = income. And, right now, League needs to get its sums right.

GES

It is about making the most of the opportunity the Super League deal has presented League, as Bradford Bulls showed in doubling their crowds in Super League last year. Leeds were not the only club slow to react to summer rugby, but a new owner at Headingley and a more dynamic management has put a welcome emphasis on community and grassroots development. The seeds of the

future are being sown. At the height of their powers in the early nineties, John Monie, then Wigan's coach, said the one certainty in sport was that no side can keep on winning – "sooner or later, the cycle turns." It seemed like the good times would roll forever, except that last year Monie's

prophecy began to be realised. Mortality set in. Nonetheless, for all the dramas, who would safely bet on Wigan not coming good on the pitch in the coming months? It is off it that Wigan must worry about.



Sheffield Eagles – the first Rugby League club to go public



Martin Crompton

FRANCIS MALONEY

Powerful stand off and accurate positional kicker. A product of the St John Fisher junior club (Dewsbury) who turned professional with Leeds in 1990. Moved to Featherstone Rovers in 1992 and won Great Britain under 21 recognition whilst at Post Office Road. Transferred to Warrington in 1994 but did not settle at Wilderspool and so he moved on to Oldham in July 1995 for £50,000. Took over the goal kicking duties at Oldham and has been the Bears' top point scorer during the past two seasons.

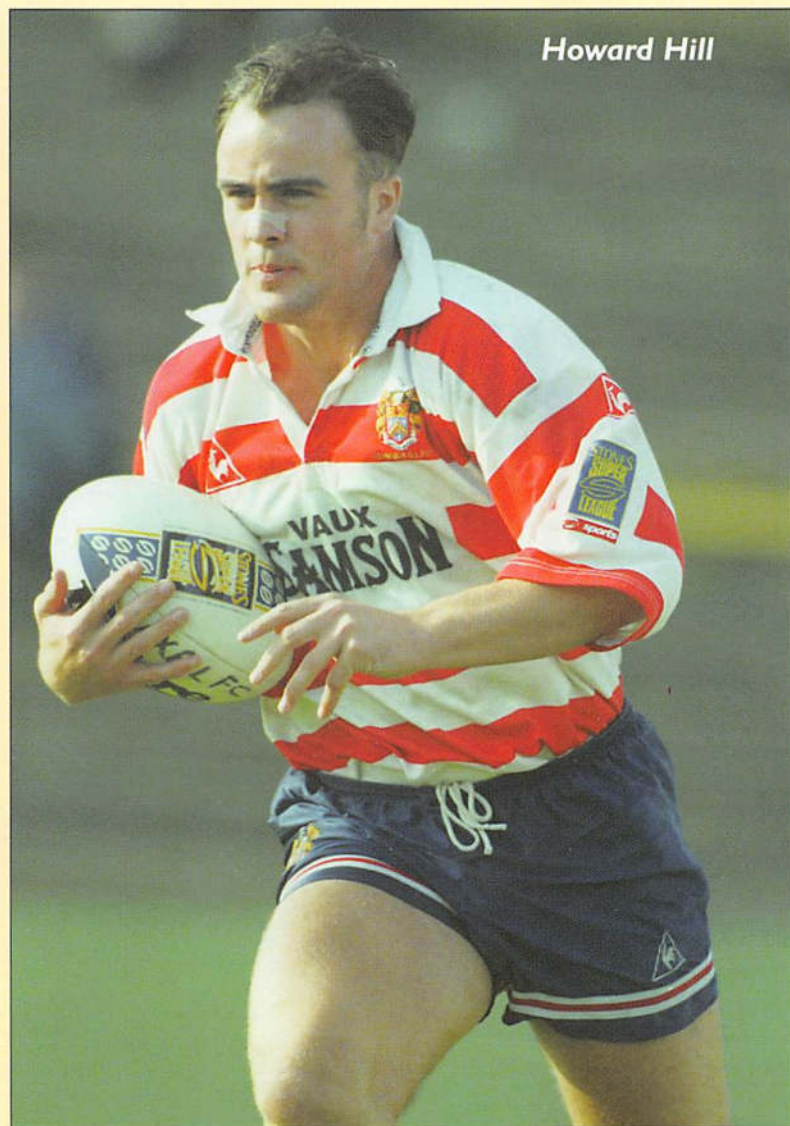
GARY LORD

Experienced professional. A former Stanley Rangers (Castleford) junior who joined the senior Castleford club in 1984. He appeared at full back for

Castleford at Wembley in 1986 but has since developed into a hard working second row forward. Lord was transferred to Leeds in 1988 and then on to Halifax in 1991 before joining Oldham in July 1994 for £35,000.

JOE FAIMALO

Hard working second row forward who was an everpresent during the 1996 Super League season. A product of the Eastern Suburbs club in New Zealand, Faimalo had brief spells with Workington Town, Oldham and then Swinton during the 1991-92 season without impressing. He returned home and enjoyed success with Hawkes Bay which prompted him to return to Oldham in September 1994. His determination and stamina since then have made him one of the mainstays of the Roughyed pack.



Howard Hill

SCOTT RANSON

Fast and elusive winger. A former Thatto Heath junior (St Helens) who turned professional with Swinton in 1987. Developed into a dangerous attacker whilst with the Lions. Joined Oldham in February 1992 and has continued his prolific scoring feats with the Bears.

HOWARD HILL

Talented young back row forward who has also turned out in the centre position. Joined Oldham in July 1994 from the Hensingham junior club of Whitehaven after securing BARLA international honours. Hill was included in the Great Britain under 21 squad for the match against France in January 1996 which was unfortunately cancelled. Should eventually gain senior representative recognition.

IAN PROCTOR INTERVIEWS



Eight teams are still dreaming of a 1997 Wembley appearance and Sky Television's Ian Proctor has been out and about canvassing the opinions of some of the players who could realise those aspirations



FRANCIS CUMMINS

When Leeds went into last season's Silk Cut Challenge Cup semi-final against Bradford Bulls at the McAlpine Stadium, teenage international Francis Cummins might have been forgiven for thinking that a trip to Wembley was an annual occurrence. One of the more agreeable perks of his job.

Cummins, who had become Wembley's youngest cup finalist (and try-scorer) in Leeds' 1994 defeat by Wigan, had managed to keep pace with Shaun Edwards - the man who previously held the youngest finalist tag. His two years as a pro' had brought two Wembley finals ahead of his 19th birthday, but whereas Edwards managed a winners medal on his second visit, Leeds suffered consecutive defeats.

A nightmare opening quarter cost Leeds any hopes of semi-final victory against Bradford and they were blown away by a side which included three-try winger Jon Scales, who was making Leeds pay for discarding him the previous season. Despite a typically brilliant solo try from Cummins, Leeds were comprehensively defeated 28-6 ... it was a game which proved to be a foretaste of what lay ahead in the first-ever summer season. The nightmare continued throughout the summer months, for Leeds, and, beset by financial woes which caused the break-up of a team which ran all-conquering

Wigan close in three competitions the previous year, they endured the club's worst season in living memory.

"When I think back to **that 1994 Wembley final**", says Cummins, "it seems such a long time ago. It's not yet three years, but the whole playing staff has changed.

"What do I remember about that first final? The build-up to the game was unbelievable with such a lot of attention being focussed on me because I was breaking Shaun Edwards' record as the youngest finalist. The game itself was a disappointment, but at least I had the consolation of scoring a long-distance try in the dying minutes - it seemed a long way to run, I can tell you!

"There's only Gary Mercer, Graham Holroyd and myself left from the side beaten by Wigan in that final. You simply can't afford to lose that quality and that much talent and expect to remain competitive in Super League.

"It's a remarkable turn-over in player personnel and it shouldn't have been too much of a surprise when we lost last year's semi-final to Bradford. Having already lost Ellery Hanley, James Lowes and Garry Schofield, it was a body blow to go into that game without Craig Innes, too, because he'd been a big influence on our win at Warrington in an earlier round.

"There are some tremendous young players at Headingley but they were asked to plug the gaps far too quickly and it proved a daunting challenge in 1996. Front-rowers Neil Harmon and Harvey Howard moved on, to leave the pack more depleted than ever and sudd!

only Graham Holroyd and me found ourselves two of the more experienced members of the side, having been the kids of those Wembley line-ups.

"When we came into the Leeds side, we were fortunate to be surrounded by great players and that made our entry so much easier. We had Ellery running things and Garry Schofield telling us where to go. It was so much harder for the lads who were thrown in at the deep end last year."

Things are different, now, though, and Headingley is a happy, vibrant place again. There is expectancy in the air. Dean Bell is, at last, being allowed to do the coaching job he came to do and

there are a host of world-class players on the pay-roll again!

The Rhinos have not been idle in the close-season, with their fabulous gymnasium being utilised to the full. "There's a happy atmosphere in the dressing-room", says Francis, "and, while we've certainly had our share of luck with the cup draws, I think we're capable of troubling any of the other teams in the semi-finals. Not that we're taking anything for granted against Featherstone.

"David Ward will want to make it a happy return to Headingley and there are so many former Leeds players in their ranks that it's bound to be a tough encounter. But we've begun the season well, not just with the big cup wins over Dewsbury and Whitehaven but hitting the heights in our pre-season victory at St Helens. That lifted everyone, because it was a well-merited win in a competitive fixture.

"On a personal level, I feel fitter and stronger than ever after a heavy weights programme under Rudi Meir and Damien McGrath. I've put on the best part of a stone since last season and weight more than 14 stone. Now, it's just a question of regaining match fitness and I'm glad that the season kicks off properly next week, because playing at fortnightly intervals, because of the cup rounds, is extremely tough.

"Playing on the wing has never bothered me, especially when I had Craig Innes on the inside, but I prefer being closer to the action at centre myself. And in Dean Bell I have one of the world's finest to learn from.

"Last year he was working with his hands tied. This time he has much more talent to work with, not just with our host of new signings, but also in the fact that the younger players are a year older and certainly a lot wiser for the experience of having been thrown in at the deep end in 1996.

"I haven't had much time to think about making a return to Wembley, but it's a ground you never tire of visiting as a player. It would be marvellous to return there and win with Leeds. I'm proud to have earned my place in the record books, but I'd gladly swap it for a winners medal!"

The form player of the season so far? Undoubtedly it is Featherstone's block-busting centre Darren Hughes. He can do no wrong at the moment.

The former Great Britain Academy international has scored eight tries in just three appearances for Rovers in 1997, including a hat-trick in the Silk Cut Challenge Cup third round win against amateurs Moldgreen and a magnificent four-try against promoted Hull KR at Post Office Road last Sunday.

And if ever a man had a point to prove in Sunday's quarter-final clash against Leeds, it is Hughes. He began his career with Leeds, after being signed from the Redhill amateur club in Castleford, but never got a first team chance under Doug Laughton.

He also wants to show the Rhinos' new team manager Gary Hetherington what he missed out on when Sheffield failed to sign him after a six-match loan spell with the Eagles in the 1995-96 Centenary season.

A converted second row forward, the 22-year-old is starting to show his true potential for one of the First Division's promotion favourites although he concedes that their attitude has to improve if they are to be in contention for a place in Super League.

"It's got to be every player's ambition to play in Super League, nowadays", he says, "and I'm no different. My aim is to help Featherstone get there and if I'm playing well other clubs will be keeping tabs on me, too."

"I think we probably under-estimated Hull KR, last Sunday, because they were clearly the better side and deserved to win. We've got to do better than that because home form will be crucial for any side with promotion hopes."

"It's going to be completely different, this week, with all the pressure on Leeds. No one gives us a prayer, but we're looking to make amends for last week's display. And with so many ex-Leeds players in our ranks, we'll not be lacking in any incentive."

Hughes is one of a host of former Headingley men now plying his trade at Post Office Road. With former Leeds legend David Ward as coach, Rovers may include as many as nine ex-Leoiners, in the shape of Roy Powell, Richard Gunn (background), Colin Maskell, Paddy Handley, Lee Maher, Paul Gladhill, Eddie Rombo, Steve Molloy and Hughes. That amounts to a lot of motivation to win the cup tie.

"We'll be all fired up", says Darren, "but we're going there to play with our heads."

You can't win cup ties on emotion alone.

"Steve Molloy is almost certainly a non-starter and that's a body blow, because there's no better prop in the game. We'll also miss the direction and inspiration Deryck Fox gives the side if he's ruled out but Paddy Handley has plenty of ability. "Dean Bell's Leeds side is not, just yet, as forceful as the one we lost to in the semi final at Elland Road in 1995. Then with

Hanley, Schofield, Iro, Fallon, and Innes in their ranks, they had match winners all over the park. I don't see that in the present side.

"I'll probably be up against Richie Blackmore, if he's fit to make his Leeds debut, and that's something I'm looking forward to. It's always good to pit yourself against the best and the big Kiwi is just that."

Defeat in that 95 semi final was one of the worst moments in Hughes' career but his form in 1997 has shown that he is capable of kicking on to greater things. As a former Academy international who played alongside Andy Farrell and Mark Hilton, he certainly has the right pedigree to make it to the summit.

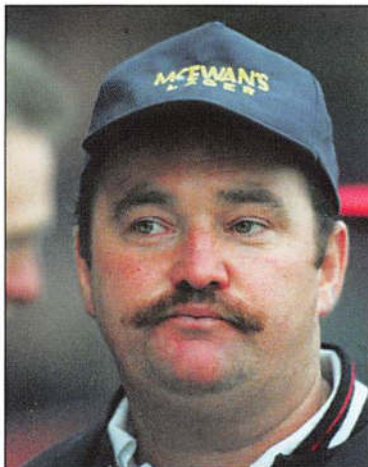
"I came through the Academy and Alliance ranks at Leeds", he says, "but I always had the impression that my first-team chance would never come. Alliance coach Gary Stephens was a great source of encouragement but I had to move to Featherstone to get a first-team chance and I made my debut for Steve Martin's newly-promoted side in a memorable home defeat of Wigan in 1993."

"After a few problems at Featherstone, I went on loan to Sheffield but it didn't work out there, either. Last summer was my best for the club and I reached double figures in the try-scoring stakes after being ever-present in all 21 league and cup matches."

"David Ward took me to one side, in the close-season, and gave me a good heart-to-heart talk. He told me the areas in which I could improve and spelled out just what he wanted from me. The fact that I'm going into the club for afternoon training sessions has also helped and I'm feeling fitter than ever."

The result is there for all to see and another of those tackle-breaking displays against his former club just might alert the Super League spies ... and help Rovers atone for last week's disappointment while avenging that Elland Road setback of two years ago.

St Helens coach Shaun McRae saw his team scale the heights on a number of occasions, during 1996, as they completed the club's first Championship/Challenge Cup double in thirty years. But their epic fourth-round Cup defeat of Wigan, a month ago, proved to be the sweetest victory he has ever been involved with during a lifetime in rugby league. Down to twelve men for the full second-half, after the dismissal of skipper Bobbie Goulding, St Helens illustrated just how much they have developed under McRae's



command. It was classic backs-to-the-wall stuff, refusing to buckle against seemingly impossible odds, and they battled heroically for a 26-12 victory which will live long in the memory.

The Knowsley Road faithful will treasure that performance, and more importantly the result, for ever. After all, it had been twenty years since they had knocked the 'old enemy' off the Wembley trail and there had been plenty of heartache in the interim period.

Yet, as far as the ultra-professional McRae is concerned, the game is already consigned to the history books. The battle ahead is always more important than the one just gone for this combative Australian.

"I was extremely proud of our effort to get that win against Wigan", smiles McRae, "and if I could bottle that performance and get the same commitment every week, then St Helens would never lose a match. But the unique attraction of sport is that nothing is predictable and we have to aim for that kind of performance on a weekly basis. "Beating a great team like Wigan, in those circumstances, taught everyone at St Helens a few important lessons. It would have been the easiest thing in the world, at half-time, for the players to have sat back and allowed Bobbie's dismissal to be an excuse for defeat. "But, by rolling up their sleeves and displaying awesome commitment, they showed that nothing is cut-and-dried in

this game, even when you're a man short. It was particularly impressive, given the fact that Bobbie is our captain, goalkicker and focal point of the team. "They say that some good comes out of every situation and Bobbie's decision to come off the transfer list and stay with St Helens, immediately after the game, was just that. A further bonus was the impressive form of debutant Lee Briers, his deputy, in the fifth-round defeat of Hull. He's a young player I've got every confidence in."

McRae savoured the unique atmosphere of Wembley in his debut season in England. Indeed, the classic 40-32 Wembley defeat of Bradford was only his tenth game in charge of St Helens, having won four straight Challenge Cup ties in his opening four matches. After guiding Saints to their first Cup triumph since 1976, he is keen to take the club to back-to-back triumphs, and having been brought up in Australia, where the season is geared solely towards the end-of-season play-offs, McRae quickly discovered the Challenge Cup to be a welcome diversion from the weekly grind of league football.

"Wembley is a fantastic occasion for everyone involved", enthuses McRae, "and we dearly want to give our supporters another weekend in London on May 3. But no one's thinking that far ahead just yet."

"While the Super League and World Club Championship matches are vitally important in 1997, we have always placed huge emphasis on doing well in the only competition which leads to an appearance at Wembley."

A second successive tie against First Division opposition has led many to believe that Saints are well on their way to retaining the Cup for the first time in their history. Such thinking would not be allowed within the corridors of power at Knowsley Road.

McRae says: "I don't think people can say we've been lucky in the draw, after all the only tie that is harder than Wigan at home is Wigan away. I don't like to single out clubs, but Leeds have had three ties against non-Super League clubs, this time, and Bradford had a similar ride last year."

"Nothing can be taken for granted and we'll be treating Keighley Cougars with the utmost respect when we visit them in the quarter-final. Any side that wins in Cup football at Workington and Halifax has to be useful and I have a high regard for Daryl Powell and his assistant Simon Irving. They have a lot of playing experience to draw upon."

"Keighley seems a place that is full of enthusiasm for rugby league and there's clearly a great spirit within the club. We know it won't be easy on the cramped Cougar Park pitch."

No one in the game had a more unenviable task, at the start of the 1997 season, than rookie Keighley player-coach Daryl Powell.

The whole world seemed to be caving in on the Cougars as their loyal and enthusiastic fans fought to keep the club afloat at the turn of the year. But those worries will be forgotten as the inhabitants of Keighley are intoxicated by the heady twin brew of 'Cougarmania' and cup fever.

Now, they are dreaming of their first Wembley visit in sixty years after a sensational and richly-deserved 21-8 fifth-round defeat of a Halifax side containing the likes of Schuster, Harrison, Moana, Skerrett and Pearson.

Taking charge of the beleaguered Cougars only a matter of weeks after making his third Lions tour, the 33-cap Great Britain international has overseen two gutsy away victories at Derwent Park and that famous 'derby' victory over Halifax. As he proudly points out, Keighley have managed three-out-of-three against sides in Super League last year.

An automatic choice for his country since 1990, it is surprising to realise that Powell will be breaking new personal ground, when he leads Keighley into the fray against the double-winners. It will be his first quarter-final appearance in the game's premier knockout tournament - and it is an occasion that is long overdue for one of the finest players of his era.

"We never had much luck in the Challenge Cup whilst I was with Sheffield", he recalls, "so this will be an extra special occasion for me. But the main thing is for the Keighley players to concentrate on their own game and not worry about the opposition. All the pressure is on them and we have nothing to lose."

"I'm delighted with our start to the season, because it's never easy to win at Workington, let alone twice in a month, and, while they weren't the prettiest games of football, it showed that we have the ability to dig deep and grind out a result. That's vital if we're to entertain serious hopes of promotion to the Super League."

Powell, the most complete all-rounder outside of Super League, could be forgiven for feeling cheated at missing out on the top flight. But, as ever, he remains philosophical and simply gets on with his hectic dual role, in the wake of the departure of Phil Larder, ironically to the Sheffield club where he spent a decade.

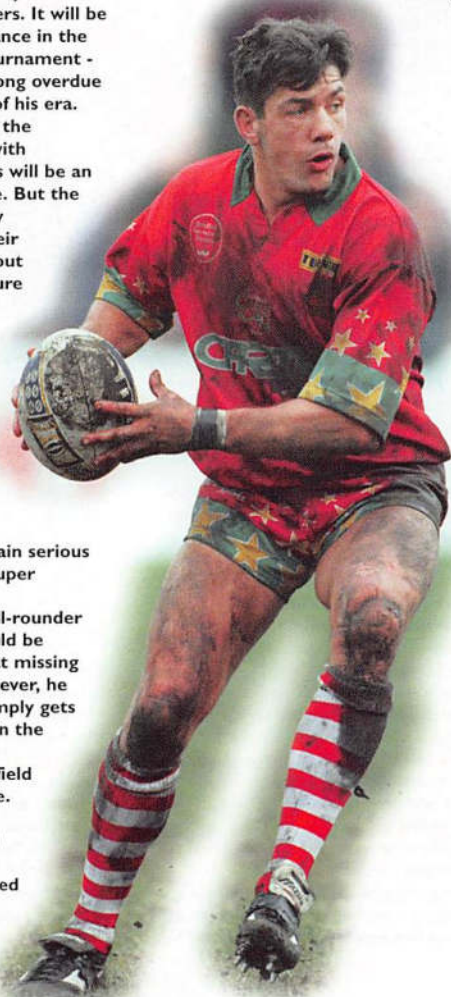
"Possibly this coaching role came a wee bit earlier than I anticipated", he says, "but it was something I always wanted to do and now I'm back to something like my best on

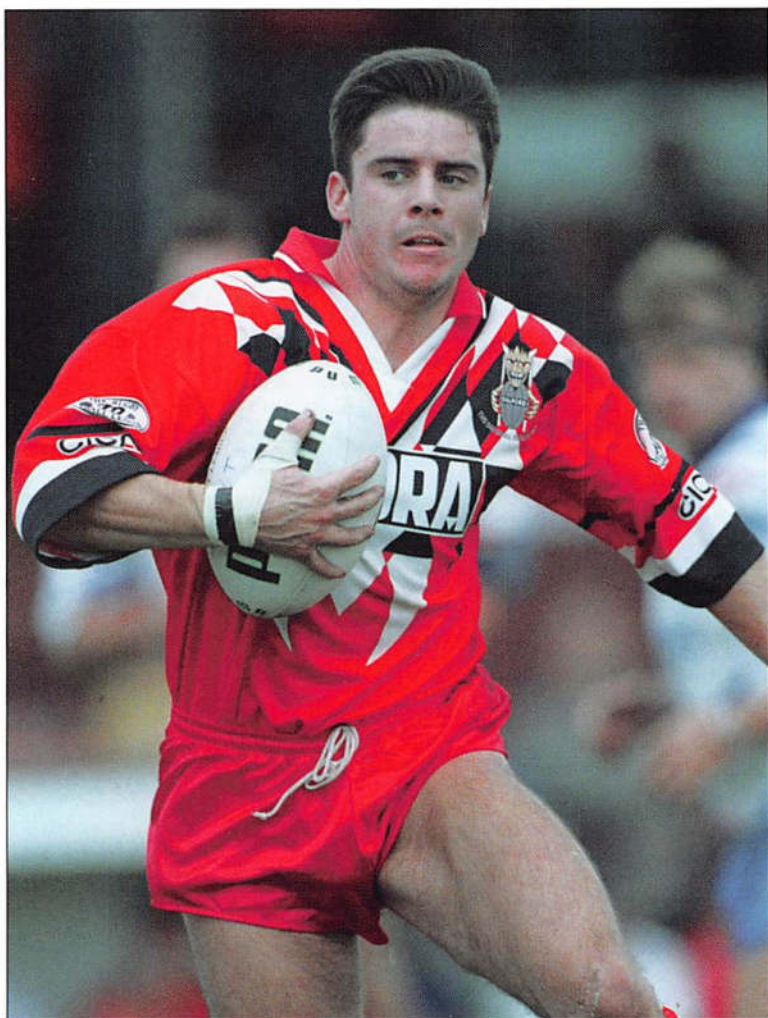
the field of play, I'm enjoying it even though the hours are much longer

"To be honest, there aren't enough hours in the day," but, since the release of Nick Pinkney and Martin Wood, we've been able to bring in some experience to complement the youngsters, a great team spirit has evolved very quickly (it always does when you're winning) and we're going to give everything in our quest to take the Cougars to their first semi-final since 1976...when they were denied a Wembley visit, losing 4-5, by St Helens.

"Saints may be lacking the suspended Bobbie Goulding, but they're a great all-round team as their successes in 1996 proved. Beating Wigan despite having only 12 men for the whole of the second-half underlined their strength of character, as well as their ability."

"I know all about the depth of quality at Knowsley Road having toured with eight of their players during the winter. It won't be easy, but with the capacity crowd behind us, we'll give it our best shot on what should be a memorable afternoon."





It is Tuesday morning in Challenge Cup quarter-final week and Salford coach Andy Gregory is wrestling with the dilemma of whether to pitch prolific points-scoring stand-off Steve Blakeley into the fray for his first appearance in almost six months...or hold fire.

He will probably defer a decision until as late as possible. It is an age-old problem, one which has cost many a club their place along the Wembley trail as they unwisely gambled on the fitness of a recovering star player. But, then, inspirational players often come into their own in the highly-charged atmosphere of cup-tie football.

Few people know the ins-and-outs of the road to the twin towers better than Gregory, a winner on seven occasions with Widnes and Wigan. And yet, as a uniquely gifted match-winner, Gregory, the first man to win the Lance Todd Trophy twice at Wembley, is more aware than most of the need for an unorthodox talent on such close-fought occasions.

The long recuperation period following a close-season hernia operation just might influence Gregory's final decision on

whether to risk the man who amassed more than 250 points for his promotion-winning team last season. Even if Blakeley is pronounced fit to play, both coach and player know that match fitness is something else altogether.

Blakeley has been an absolute revelation since joining the Reds from Wigan in 1992, scoring almost 1000 points in under five seasons. No wonder, Blakeley, Gregory and everyone else at Salford might be tempted into taking a chance. With four subs available, it is no longer the risk it once was, but dare the coach risk the long-term future of his leading points-scorer when he needs Blakeley's talent for battles further down the track.

"I know it'll be tough if I play", said Blakeley in midweek, "but I'm prepared to go through the pain barrier if I can influence the result in our favour.

With all the new signings at the club it would be almost like playing in a different team. My last match was against Keighley in the Premiership Final at Old Trafford in September.

"This has really got me down because it's almost six months since I underwent the

surgeon's knife. I've been reduced to less than light training for much of that period and, during a month-long holiday with friends in Australia, I could only manage very light work.

"The coach has been a great help and encouragement to me, possibly because he struggled with a similar injury during his time at Wigan. He understands what I'm going through and I've appreciated the way he's allowed me to come back at my own pace."

Capped by England last summer, scoring an impressive debut try in the rout of France at Gateshead, Blakeley came within an ace of making the British Lions tour party to the Southern Hemisphere last winter. He was originally included in the stand-by squad but confesses that he would have been unable to do himself justice had he made the trip.

"I was struggling towards the end of last season", he recalls, "and it was affecting both my goalkicking and general play. But hopefully, I'll be back to full fitness, shortly, for a season which offers so much for the Salford players and supporters.

"A year ago, having won the First Division title in the abbreviated 1995-96 season, we were faced with the prospect of doing it all again. But the spur of getting into Super League concentrated the minds of all the players and we showed true consistency to earn the promotion.

"The prospect of playing against Adelaide Rams and North Queensland Cowboys in June is another big incentive, really underlining just how important it was for us to win promotion last year. We did the hard work last year only to fall from grace in the subsequent round. After rising to the occasion and ending Wigan's 43-match unbeaten run in the competition, we succumbed to St Helens on our own pitch in the quarter-final.

"To our credit, we put that defeat behind us and lost just twice in clinching the Division One title. Then, we had the thrill of appearing at Old Trafford against Keighley Cougars. Winning that final was special; getting to Wembley would be an even bigger thrill."

Blakeley is no stranger to Wembley. As a reserve at Wigan, he made the trip on a couple of occasions with the club's lower-grade players, but it was his yearning to be involved in the big occasions which made him decide to leave Central Park. He felt that he would never get his chance.

After making just eight sub appearances in two years, Blakeley became an absolute steal when Salford prised him away from Wigan for a paltry £28,000. He has never had any regrets about joining Salford, proving the shrewdest signing of the Kevin Tamati era at the Willows.



New look Warrington take the Wilderspool field seeking a first Silk Cut Challenge Cup semi-final appearance for seven years. And their hopes of victory against newly-promoted Salford could rest with as many as ten players from the South Sea islands.

Kiwis have had a particularly strong affinity with Wembley since the early-80s, when the Hull trio of Gary Kemble, Dane O'Hara and James Leuluai blazed a trail which was followed by the likes of Gary Prohm, Graeme West, Kevin Tamati, Mark Broadhurst, Fred Ah Kuoi and Kurt Sorensen.

Wigan's eight-in-a-row Cup-winning sides all included New Zealand talent, in the shape of Dean Bell, Frano Botica, the Iro brothers, Adrian Sheldford, Sam Panapa, Henry Paul and Va'aiga Tuigamala. And who will ever forget the three-try contribution of 20 year-old Robbie Paul in the losing Bradford side of 1996? New Zealanders invariably respond to the lure of the Challenge Cup, then, and the Warrington management duo of John Dorahy, a Wembley winning coach with Wigan three years ago, and Alex Murphy, who probably regards Wembley as his second home after going there eight times during an illustrious career, have been more than happy to recruit almost exclusively from Auckland during the longest close-season on record.

Warrington strengthened their squad by signing three players from the Warriors during the off-season. All of them have something to prove after finding it hard to cement a place in John Monie's first-grade side last summer and while Tony Tatupu's signature was the most publicised and sought-after, Nigel Vagana is regarded as a top-notch signing, too, by Dorahy and he has not disappointed in his first two appearances.

Utility back Vagana, highly-rated back-rower or centre Tatupu and front-rower Dallas Mead (injured in a pre-season game) have arrived to bolster a squad which was plainly too thin to sustain a brave bid for a top-four Super League placing last year. This trio suffered their own heartache, in September, when losing out with the Warriors, against the Cronulla Sharks, in Australia's reserve-grade Grand Final.

Yet another Kiwi, former NZ and Tongan World Cup international George Mann, was hastily signed by Warrington when he was deemed surplus to Leeds' requirements. Having appeared in Wembley finals for St Helens and Leeds, the hard-running Mann will be hoping to complete a rare hat-trick in 1997, although he has yet to make his debut after a calf strain kept him out of their home Cup wins over Barrow and Sheffield.

The new acquisitions have joined their more established compatriots Kelly Sheldford, Willie Swann, Toa Kohe-Love and Richard Henare, plus the Tongans Mateaki Mafi and Salesi Finau, and they

are bringing out the best in each other. Swann has been in sensational form in the opening two cup-ties, Henare came off the bench to score four tries in the heavy defeat of hapless Barrow, Sheldford appears more settled than for some time and Kohe-Love is an exciting talent just waiting to explode.

One or two cynics have queried Warrington's commitment to the production of homegrown talent but the Wilderspool rightly club refute any such allegations. **Few clubs can match their record of developing players** through from Academy level.

Warrington's commitment to youth development has never been less than total, as a production line which has yielded the likes of Iestyn Harris, Paul Sculthorpe, Lee Penny, Mark Hilton, Chris Rudd, Gary Chambers, Michael Wainwright, Ian Knott and Jonathan Roper testifies. Each of those players have earned international honours at one level or another.

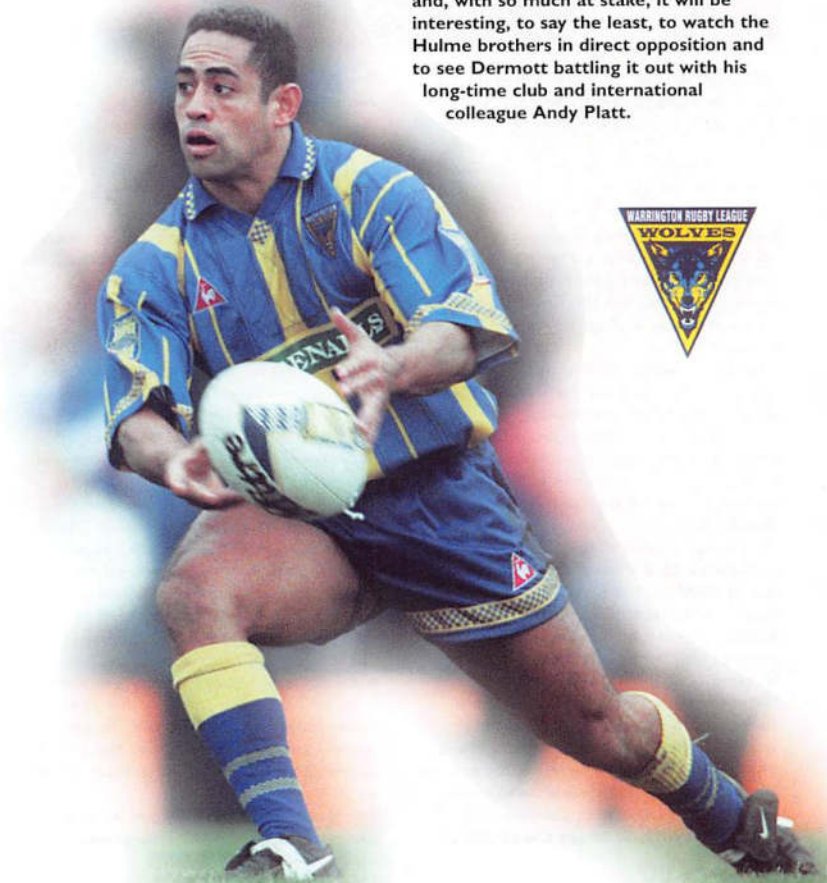
The mercurial Harris, who has been at the centre of transfer negotiations between Warrington and St Helens for months, and Sculthorpe, an outstanding tourist with the Lions in New Zealand last winter, at just 19, are two of the finest talents in the British game.

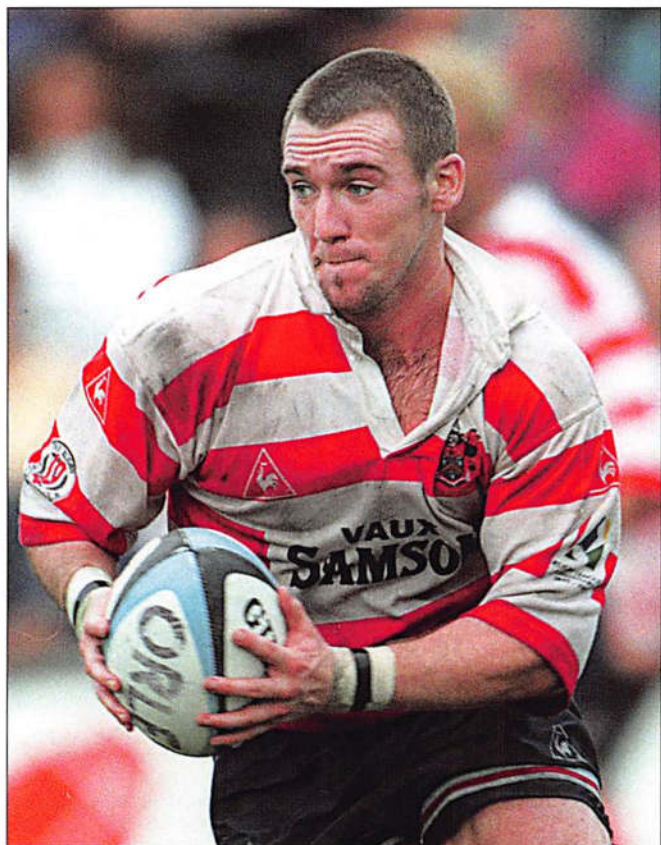
Long-serving Mark Forster (the only survivor from Warrington's last Wembley appearance in 1990) and Paul Cullen (a 17-year veteran at Wilderspool) both came through the ranks at the start of the 80s, while Warrington are expecting big things from such as Carl Roden and Warren Stevens, both of whom featured in the home wins over Braves of Barrow and the Eagles of Sheffield, Chris Holden and Paul Wingfield.

Former Wigan and Great Britain hooker Martin Dermott, having been deposed by Martin Hall's consistency after a decade at Central Park, was more than happy to sign for Dorahy, his former coach at Wigan, and Murphy, who showed faith in his ability at the outset of his career when selecting him for Lancashire back in 1987.

His impressive Wolves debut, featuring a try and a rare drop-goal in the 31-18 fifth-round home win over Sheffield, illustrated his determination to regain the form which earned him 11 caps and Lions tour selections in 1990 and 1992. Dermott already possesses five Challenge Cup winners medals and he will probably have a big say in determining whether he can add a sixth, with Warrington, in 1997.

The forward battle with beefed-up Salford seems certain to hold the key to who goes through to the semi-final stage and, with so much at stake, it will be interesting, to say the least, to watch the Hulme brothers in direct opposition and to see Dermott battling it out with his long-time club and international colleague Andy Platt.





Oldham may be the 'unfashionables' of the Super League, in many eyes, but the Bears aim to put a few more noses out of joint in the 1997 season. Starting with their Silk Cut Challenge Cup quarter final against Bradford.

There is renewed enthusiasm for the battle ahead, in Andy Goodway's camp, after a hard-working close-season, and inspirational stand-off Francis Maloney is hoping they can use the Challenge Cup to rid themselves of their unwanted image for ever.

"Everyone keeps putting us down and wringing us off", says the former GB Under-21 star, "but that only makes us more determined to confound the critics. Getting to Wembley would put us on the map, once and for all, and we're looking forward to the chance of meeting Bradford."

"Let's face it, everyone has already written us off against the Bulls, after their win at London, but I honestly believe that if we can overcome Bradford then we'll go on to create history by taking Oldham to Wembley for the first time in their history."

"And they'll write us off at their peril. Andy Goodway's a very shrewd coach who knows all about cup football. He doesn't shout and bawl too much, but the players know what he wants and he plans his tactics to suit the opposition. Andy has a few ideas on how to get the better of

Bradford, after watching their win against the Broncos.

"It doesn't take a genius to realise that James Lowes is an important cog for them and, of course, Robbie Paul is a magical player who can destroy any team on his day. He did that when we met in Super League at Odsal towards the end of last season and he has to be watched, this time."

"The players are well aware of what it would mean to the Oldham public if we finally reached Wembley and that chance of becoming heroes forever really does act as a spur. Bradford represents a big test, but we've been quite impressive in cup football against Rochdale and Wakefield, although we only played well in patches at Belle Vue."

"We like to silence the critics and the way everyone has predicted that Oldham will be relegated from Super League has only made us more determined to prove them wrong. Against the Bulls we have to be switched on from the kick-off and concentrate for the full 80 minutes."

"Last season gave us a lot of confidence and with my old Leeds colleague Vince Fawcett in the side and Aussies Brett Goldspink and Luke Goodwin being added to the squad, we're ready for the Super League kick off at my old club Leeds, next week."

The goalkicking Maloney has been one of the eye catchers as the Bears have

battled through to their sixth Challenge Cup quarter final in nine seasons. In addition to kicking nine goals in the successes over Hornets and Trinity, he has weighed in with three impressive tries – but the one thing that concerns him is Oldham's move from Watersheddings to Boundary Park.

"I know everyone seems pleased to be leaving Watersheddings behind", he says, "but we're still training there and I always felt that the ground intimidated a lot of sides. They didn't like coming there and we loved that 'edge' it gave us."

"We have to try and make Boundary Park a place that opposing teams dread visiting and we can only do that by winning matches. It should attract a big crowd for a game which is, probably, the major quarter final tie on Sunday, and the atmosphere will be good."

"It's a big blow for us to be without Jason Temu, who hard-hitting tackling put a lot of teams on the back foot last year, but we still have plenty of strong tacklers in our line-up. On attack, both Martin Crompton and myself know that we have to be on form to give us a chance."

Maloney's standing as one of the Super League game breakers is something he has striven long and hard for. Now, he and Crompton are recognised as the men who make the Bears tick.

The son of prolific points-scoring ex-Hyull and Rochdale centre, John Maloney, he was tipped for stardom when he and Gareth Stephens formed a brilliant half-back pairing in Leeds' Alliance team at the start of the 90s. Both have endured nomadic careers, since, but for Maloney it has all worked out, now that he has a coach in Goodway who believes in his ability.

"I had to move from Leeds to get a chance at first-team level", he says, "and the transfer to Featherstone gave me what I was after. I had a good season as Rovers climbed out of the old Second Division in 1992-93 and Under-21 honours followed after I moved on to Warrington. 'I'd fallen out with Featherstone coach Steve Martin and so a move to Wilderspool seemed a good option at the time. Again, it didn't work out but signing for Oldham was the best thing I've done in my career and I feel settled at the club."

With two of his former teams meeting head-to-head in a quarter final at Headingley and Warrington entertaining Salford there is every chance of a reunion with some of his former colleagues in the semi-finals. But, firstly, Oldham and Francis Maloney have a major job to do – they have to confound a few more of the critics who have already written them off against the rampaging Bulls of Bradford.

There were many impressive performers in the Bradford team which accounted for London Broncos with relative ease, at the Stoop last month, but the Silk Cut award winner was never in doubt. James Lowes stood head and shoulders above every player on the field, as he steered the Bulls to victory, and he made the selection an easy one for the press. He was also a man with a mission, one of three Bradford players to miss last year's final with Saints because he was cup-tied.

Wembley Stadium has become familiar territory for the Bradford hooker in recent years. And the 27 year-old has every intention of continuing the habit, in two months time, when he hopes to be personally involved in his fourth consecutive Silk Cut Challenge Cup Final. This time, he agrees, it is about time he left the famous stadium as a winner.

It has been a slow, steady rise to prominence for the self-effacing Lowes, whose boyish smile and modest demeanour belies the fierce determination he takes into every confrontation. From his early days as a pro' footballer, when he was a half-back/loose-forward at Hunslet, he was always destined to go a lot further.

A move across the city to Leeds brought a switch of roles and, as a hooker, Lowes became one of the best in the business. Strong, durable and industrious in defence, he can be inspirational on the offensive, as London found to their cost, and there were a lot of disappointed Leeds people when he swapped Headingley for Odsal at the start of 1996. Many regard him as Brian Smith's best signing for the Bulls.

He was a member of a Leeds team which suffered Cup semi-final heartache when they were flogged by Widnes in 1993, before appearing in back-to-back Wembley finals against Wigan. And, in those days, there was only one winner when Wigan played knockout foot ball. "The Wembley final is an occasion all players dream about", he says, "and I regard my two appearances as major career highlights. I hate losing and Wembley is the worst place of all to get beaten, but the week-long build-up to the game and the whole atmosphere which surrounds the occasion makes it very special for the players. "In 94, Leeds produced a furious fightback just after half-time, with Garry Schofield and Jim Fallon scoring tries to put us right back in the contest after Martin Offiah had scored a spectacular long-distance first-half try, but it ended in defeat.

"It was much worse, in '95, because we were never in the hunt. There was a tiny crumb of comfort, for me, when I scored a late try, but we were bitterly disappointed to lose so heavily after taking Wigan so close the previous year. Lowes made up for lost time in the

Super League, remaining ever-present for Bradford and becoming one of the most consistent players in the competition. Brian Smith and Matthew Elliott gave him a new self-belief and his new-found confidence makes him one of the key figures for the Bulls. Smith may have departed for Parramatta, but Lowes has every confidence in Elliott's ability to take Bradford that further step towards glory.

"Matthew Elliott took us for about 80% of our training sessions last year", says Lowes, "so we're more than comfortable working with him at the helm. Assistants Michael Potter and Brian Noble both have a vast knowledge of the game and the new additions to the playing squad should make us that much stronger. "I felt myself becoming a better all-round player as the 1996 season progressed and **it's all down to**

confidence. Even so, it was a great thrill to be drafted into the Lions party to PNG, Fiji and New Zealand. "The tour ended in disappointment for some of us, and I was unable to win a place in the Test teams, but it was a tremendous honour for me to skipper the midweek Lions team. I'm proud to have done that and I've not given up hope of eventually getting a Test call-up."

His form in the defeat of the Broncos showed that, refreshed from a month-long break taken on the orders of the Bradford coaching staff, Lowes is aching for the season to swing properly into action. The big Super League kick-off against Warrington, on March 14, looms large on his calendar, but, firstly, he has an important date at Boundary Park on

Sunday.

"I know Andy Goodway well because he was at Leeds when I first arrived at Headingley", says Lowes, "and he'll have the Oldham players raring to go for this quarter-final. Everyone knows that the Bears have never been to Wembley and that's bound to be a massive incentive for their players - a chance to become real heroes in their own town.

"But we're happy to be facing Oldham at Boundary Park and it will be my first appearance at the soccer ground. It always seemed to be cold and miserable at Watersheddings.

"Our performance at the Stoop hinted at what we're capable of this year but there's plenty of improvement to come from the Bulls, believe me. And we may have to show improved form against Oldham because we don't expect it to be anything other than a very hard cup-tie.



Quiz answers

1. Two
2. Kevin Iro
3. Jon Scales
4. Eric Ashton
5. Keighley's Simon Irving (17)
6. Harold Wilson in 1966
7. Gleadhill, Irwin, Hughes, and Bargate of Featherstone Rovers
8. Warrington Wolves
9. Wigan in 1995
10. Joe Lydon





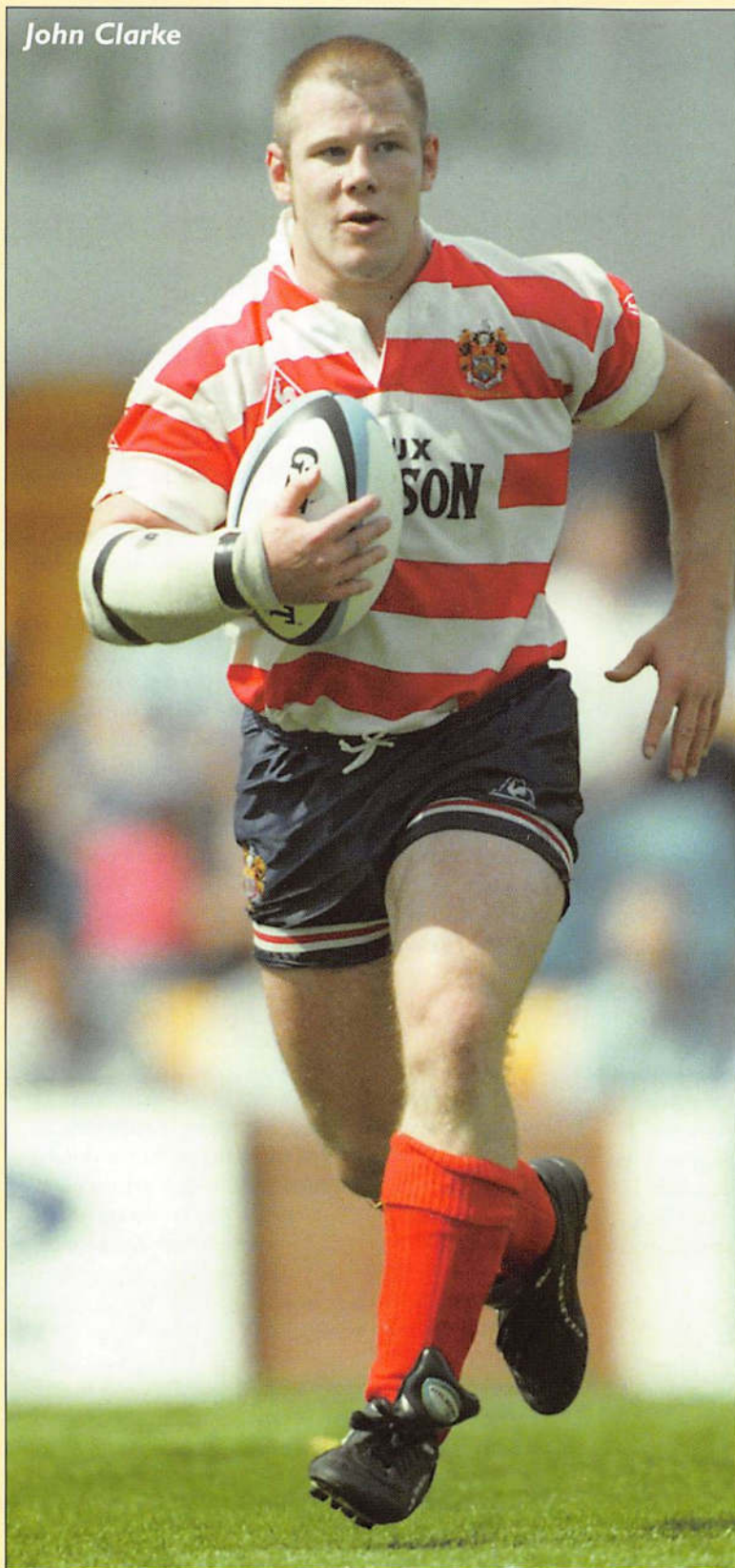
Caught

Ball watching!



MEET THE BEARS ... MEET THE BE

John Clarke



JOHN CLARKE

Hooker. A former East Leeds junior who turned professional with Oldham in May 1993. Clarke toured Australia with the BARLA under 18s in 1993 and further honours came his way when he represented Great Britain under 21s against the 1994 Kangaroos.

VINCE FAWCETT

Big powerful threequarter who played for Middleton juniors (Leeds) before turning professional with Leeds in 1987. Then had spells with Workington Town and Parramatta before joining Oldham last December for £28,000.

PAUL DAVIDSON

Hard working prop or second row forward. A product of the Hensingham junior club (Whitehaven) who turned professional with Widnes in 1990. Joined Oldham in July 1994 for £17,000. Has a fine turn of speed which he uses to good effect.

AFI LEUILA

Tough tackling centre or winger. He was signed in September 1995 from the Counties-Manakau club of New Zealand. Leuila has enjoyed spells with St Helens in 1994 and with North Queensland Cowboys the following year. He has played Rugby Union for Tonga.

BRETT GOLDSPINK

Giant prop who joined Oldham last November from Perth Western Reds. Goldspink previously played for South Sydney, Illawarra and Canberra.



CHALLENGE CUP

by Raymond Fletcher,
Co-author Rothmans Rugby League Yearbook

SEMI FINAL PROGRESS

KEIGHLEY COUGARS v ST HELENS

Keighley Cougars are aiming for their first semi final appearance since they lost 5-4 to St Helens at Fartown, Huddersfield, in 1976. Cup holders Saints are looking for a third semi final in four years.

LEEDS RHINOS v FEATHERSTONE ROVERS

Leeds Rhinos have their sights on a fifth successive semi final appearance. They beat Featherstone 39-22 two years ago in Rovers' last semi final appearance.

OLDHAM BEARS v BRADFORD BULLS

The last of Oldham Bears' seven semi finals was in 1995 but they have yet to go on to Wembley.

Bradford Bulls were last year's beaten finalists.

WARRINGTON WOLVES v SALFORD REDS

Warrington Wolves' last semi final appearance was in 1990 when they went on to Wembley, while Salford Reds have not reached the last four since 1988.

OUTSIDERS HOPEFUL



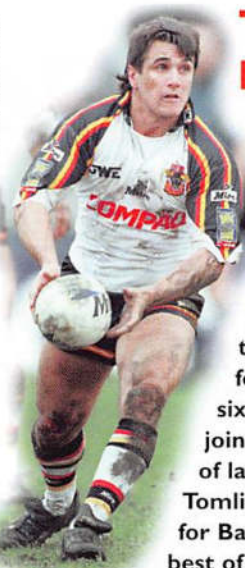
Keighley Cougars and Featherstone Rovers are both aiming to create Cup history by becoming the first club from outside the top league to reach Wembley. In fact, on only five occasions has a club from the lower divisions

reached the semi finals. Widnes were the last, with the First Division side losing to eventual cup winners and Super League champions St Helens a year ago.

Clubs from the old Second Division to reach the semi finals were Oldham (1964 and 1990), York (1983) and Halifax (1980).



Glen Tomlinson



TOMLINSON NEARS CENTURY

Bradford Bulls scrum half Glen Tomlinson needs only three tries for a career century of touchdowns. The

Australian totalled 91 tries in 143 appearances for Batley and has added six in 21 matches since joining Bradford for the start of last season.

Tomlinson scored six hat-tricks for Batley, including a match best of four, and had his best season in 1994-95 when he finished

with 26.

Opportunities have been restricted at Bradford where the majority of his appearances have been as substitute but he showed he still retains the scoring touch with a superb try in the fifth round defeat of London Broncos.

NEWLOVE CENTRE FORCE

Paul Newlove's extraordinary try-scoring rate continues with four tries, including a hat-trick, in St Helens' two Cup-ties this season. Since joining the Saints from Bradford Bulls in a world record £500,000 deal the Test centre has failed to touchdown in only seven of 34 appearances for a total of 43 tries. Newlove holds the record for most tries in a season by a centre with 52 in 1992-93 when he was with Featherstone Rovers. With a career total of 254 he is now well on the way to becoming only the fourth centre to score over 300 tries after Neil Fox, Eric Ashton and Jim Lomas.



ORDS

CUP CHAOS

Fifty years ago Britain was in the grip of one of its worst winters. It meant a massive backlog of fixtures with Leeds and Wakefield Trinity meeting in the semi final for their sixth match in 16 days. Leeds won 21-0 before losing 8-4 to Bradford



Bert Cook: played six matches in 16 days prior to Leeds' 1947 Wembley appearance

Northern in the final. They then went on to play another seven matches in 25 days before the season ended in June – the first season of summer rugby?

Cup Quiz

1. How many goals did Don Fox score before his infamous miss in the 1968 final?
2. Which Wigan player scored two tries in three successive Cup finals from 1988?
3. Who scored a hat-trick for Bradford Bulls in last year's semi final?
4. Who is the only man to have been captain, coach and chairman at Wembley?
5. Who has kicked most goals in this year's Silk Cut Challenge Cup?
6. Who was the last Prime Minister to present the Cup at Wembley?
7. Add the surnames to this fifth round threequarter line: Paul, Shaun, Darren, Lee.
8. Which of this year's sixth round clubs has been favoured with three home draws?
9. Who were the last club to beat St Helens in the Cup?
10. Which Lance Todd Trophy winner played in the first schoolboys match at Wembley?

(Answers on James Lowes interview page)

1997 SILK CUT CHALLENGE CUP-QUARTER FINALS

HEAD TO HEAD - PREVIOUS CHALLENGE CUP MEETINGS

KEIGHLEY COUGARS v ST HELENS

1914-15 (3)	Keighley	2 v St Helens	3
1928-29 (2)	St Helens	26 v Keighley	5
1930-31 (1)	St Helens	26 v Keighley	4
1931-32 (1)	Keighley	12 v St Helens	6
1946-47 (1)*	St Helens	17 v Keighley	7
	Keighley	8 v St Helens	5
1954-55 (2)	Keighley	2 v St Helens	3
1957-58 (2)	Keighley	4 v St Helens	19
1973-74 (1)	St Helens	27 v Keighley	5
1975-76 (SF)	St Helens	5 v Keighley	4

(at Fartown, Huddersfield)

LEEDS RHINOS v FEATHERSTONE ROVERS

1929-30 (1)	Leeds	27 v Featherstone R.	5
1943-44 (1)*	Leeds	12 v Featherstone R.	9
	Featherstone R.	2 v Leeds	7
1966-67 (SF)	Featherstone R.	16 v Leeds	8
	(At Fartown, Huddersfield)		
1975-76 (3)	Featherstone R.	33 v Leeds	7
1977-78 (SF)	Leeds	14 v Featherstone R.	9
	(At Bradford)		
1994-95 (SF)	Leeds	39 v Featherstone R.	22
	(At Elland Road, Leeds)		

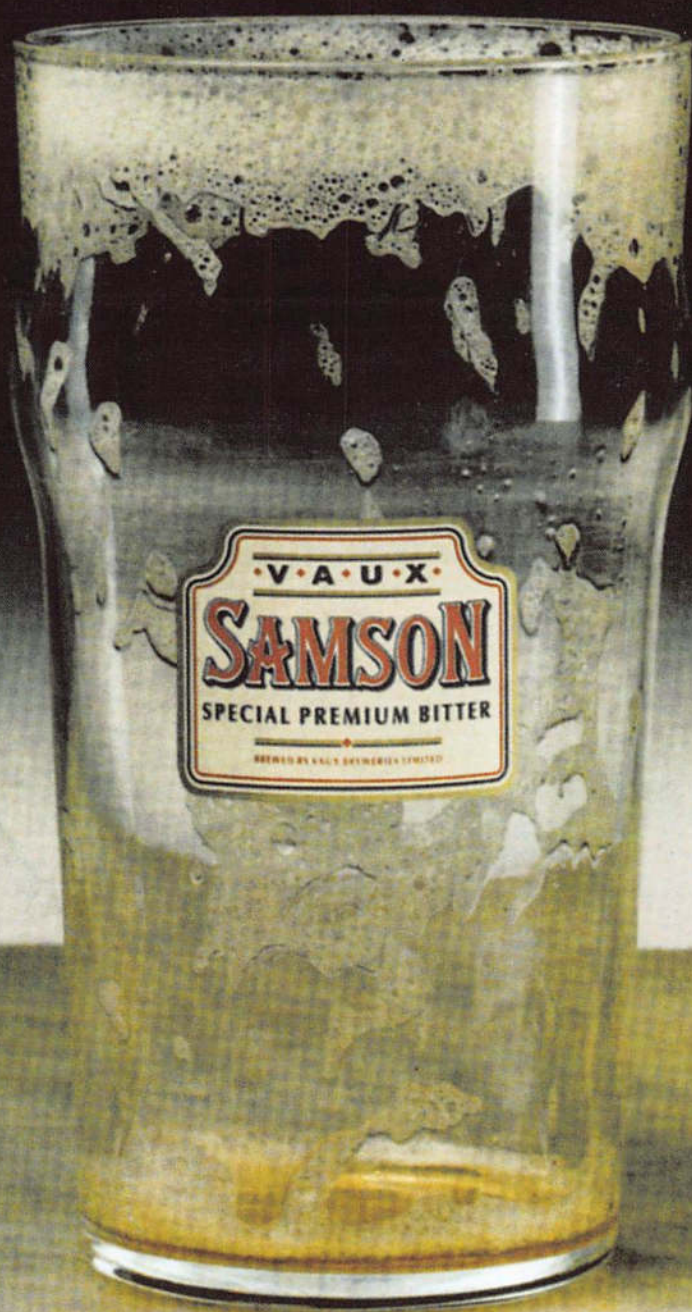
OLDHAM BEARS v BRADFORD BULLS

1896-97 (1)	Bradford	7 v Oldham	3
1898-99 (3)	Bradford	3 v Oldham	23
1902-03 (3)	Bradford	0 v Oldham	2
1904-05 (3)	Oldham	0 v Bradford	0
Replay	Bradford	8 v Oldham	2
	(At Valley Parade, Bradford)		
1919-20 (1)	Bradford N.	2 v Oldham	0
Replay	Oldham	28 v Bradford N.	3
1938-39 (2)	Bradford N.	2 v Oldham	0
1947-48 (3)	Bradford N.	30 v Oldham	0
1949-50 (1)*	Oldham	5 v Bradford N.	16
	Bradford N.	6 v Oldham	8
1967-68 (2)	Bradford N.	7 v Oldham	7
Replay	Oldham	12 v Bradford N.	2
1985-86 (3)	Oldham	6 v Bradford N.	1
1992-93 (3)	Oldham	4 v Bradford N.	42

WARRINGTON WOLVES v SALFORD REDS

1912-13	(3)	Salford	4 v Warrington	7
1914-15	(2)	Warrington	2 v Salford	11
1935-36	(SF)	Warrington	7 v Salford	2
		(At Wigan)		
1936-37	(1)	Salford	4 v Warrington	10
1950-51	(3)	Salford	4 v Warrington	8
1964-65	(2)	Warrington	16 v Salford	2
1968-69	(SF)	Salford	15 v Warrington	8
		(At Wigan)		
1970-71	(2)	Salford	20 v Warrington	9

*Two legged Cup-ties

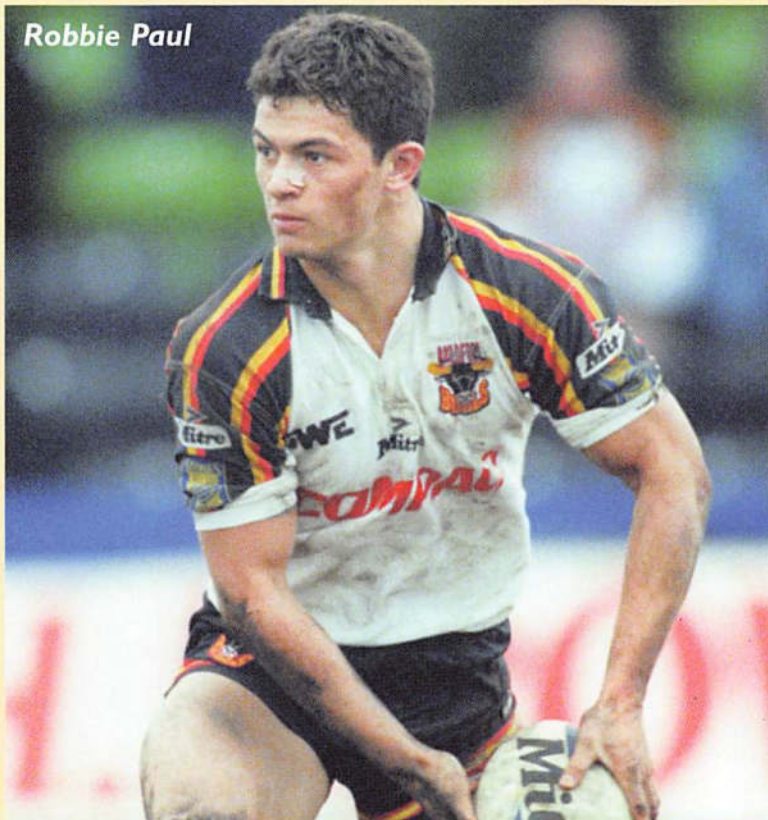


TRY AGAIN!

VAUX SAMSON - ITS STRENGTH IS ITS TASTE

MEET THE BULLS ... MEET THE

Robbie Paul



1 Robbie PAUL

Position: Half back

The 1997 Bulls club captain is a cult hero with the club's escalating fan club. During the close season he enhanced his skills when he formed a midfield rugby union triangle with fellow league star Gary Connolly and former England captain Will Carling here at the Stoop. Robbie made his Harlequins debut in the Anglo-Welsh Cup victory over Swansea last October. He was voted Super League Player of the Year in 1996 as he led the Bulls to third position in the league table. His 23 touchdowns for the Bulls in 1996 included a glorious Wembley hat trick, helping the Kiwi to a £91,000 prize and the Lance Todd trophy man of the match award. He also became the youngest Wembley captain of all time. Robbie Paul joined Bradford in 1994 following a successful tour of Australia with the Junior Kiwis (he represented the Junior Kiwis at three different age groups) - making a two try Bradford debut against Wakefield Trinity. Younger brother of Henry Paul (Wigan and New Zealand).

2 Glen TOMLINSON

Position: Scrum half

Australian born scrum half who finished the first Super League campaign with

five tries from 19 outings with the Bulls. Joined Bradford from neighbour's Batley in 1996 after a successful five year stint with the Gallant Youths where he scored 91 tries in 143 games. He topped the club's try scoring list on three separate seasons and in 1994 was runner up for the Stones Bitter Second Division Player of the Year award. Was once courted by both Featherstone and Widnes but opted to remain with the Mount Pleasant club until his move into Super League with the Bulls. Made the move to English rugby in 1991 from the Australian club Caboolture.

3 Graeme BRADLEY

Position: Centre, Stand off or Back row forward

The Bull's senior professional - an inspirational leader who can operate in a variety of positions. Recruited for Bradford by former head coach Brian Smith - both had been together with leading Australian club St George. Bradley made his Bradford debut from the substitutes bench at Sheffield in January 1996. His fourteen tries in his first full campaign at Odsal was a distinct improvement on his previous career move to England - he scored just four tries in 33 outings for the Castleford Tigers. He has twice been on losing sides in Challenge Cup Finals (in

1996 with Bradford; in 1992 with Castleford) and likewise in the 1993 Sydney Grand Final where he appeared for the beaten St. George side. He was also a member of the Penrith Panthers World Club Championship side beaten 21-4 by Wigan in 1991 encounter at Anfield after missing out of the Grand Final earlier. In 1988 he scored a try for the Presidents XIII in Canberra against the Lions.

5 Jon SCALES

Position: Winger

The 1996 campaign was by far the most successful for the former rugby union winger. His strength and direct running style helped Scales to 18 touchdowns - none more valuable than the three he scored in March in the semi-final of the Silk Cut Challenge Cup against former club Leeds. He arrived at Odsal the previous August after a two year stint with arch rivals Leeds - where he scored just one try in 14 appearances. Previously he had been with the North East club rugby union club Newcastle Gosforth.

6 Danny PEACOCK

Position: Centre or Full back

The exciting Bulls close season capture - an experienced Australian middle back who spent 1996 Down Under with the South Queensland Crushers. Earlier his career included spells with the Gold Coast where in 1995 he scored a club record 14 tries which included the club's first ever hat trick. On leaving the Seagulls Peacock had become the top try scorer - with 28 tries for the Gold Coast. Earlier he had played for Western Suburbs. Danny scored two tries on his Bradford debut in the fourth round victory over Hunslet at Elland Road.

7 Paul COOK

Position: Winger or Full back

Paul Cook is a free scoring full back or winger who is an exceptional goal kicker on his day. He was a surprise signing when joining Bradford from Leeds in a deal which took centre Carl Hall in the opposite direction. Only weeks earlier he had made his England debut against Fiji in the Centenary World Cup. He scored 264 points in a 34 match career with the Huddersfield club. More importantly for Bradford fans he kicked four goals in the Bulls' 1996 semi final victory over Leeds at Huddersfield. At Leeds he came within two goals of the club match scoring record when he kicked 11 against Halifax in the Loiners biggest league victory of the 1995-96 season. Scored two tries on his Leeds debut as a seventeen year old.

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Brian Smith hasn't taken long to put the spring back into the step of legendary Aussie side Parramatta. Smith, who transformed the Bradford Bulls into Super League's major success story in a little over 14 months, is already being hailed as a Messiah after returning to Sydney last October. The diminutive, no-nonsense Smith steered Parramatta to success in the Sydney Sevens – the Eels' first piece of silverware since they won the Grand Final under John Monie in 1986. It may not be the most important trophy up for grabs but it will do for starters as Smith tackles the massive job of bringing the glory days back to

club on the cards for New Zealand. Super League bosses will probably hold the whip hand in negotiations and some of the smaller Sydney clubs may have to merge or die. But that shouldn't include Parramatta with its large spectator base and highly-developed youth structure. Smith has always said that sanity would prevail and the two sides would eventually come together. He supported many of Super League's initiatives. And with the ARL's biggest backer Kerry Packer now having won the rights to screen Super League games in his Channel Nine TV station, the walls



BRIAN SMITH & BRADFORD & PARRAMATTA

By Martin Richards
Daily Mirror

the club where Brett Kenny, Peter Sterling and Ray Price used to reign supreme.

"We're only taking baby steps at the moment but it's nice to get back into the winning habit," said Smith. "I welcome the great expectations from the fans and the pressure that goes with it.

"This is a big club with a lot of supporters and was a challenge I couldn't refuse when Parramatta approached me last year."

Smith's tough approach was epitomised soon after the Sevens win when he left out Troy Campbell – who had just been voted man of the tournament – from a subsequent trial match.

He will build his side around a wealth of class and experience in the shape of ex-Canterbury stars Jim Dymock, Dean Pay and Jarrod McCracken.

And Smith will re-start his Australian Rugby League career amid signs that the bitter war with Super League is rapidly heading towards compromise. The ARL will only have 12 clubs this year with the breakaway Super League forming a 10-club competition.

But there's already talk of a "Superbowl" play-off between the Super League's top club and the ARL's Grand Final winners as a forerunner to a unified competition in 1998.

Smith will be anxious that the horse trading for an enlarged 14 or 16 club Super League will include a place for Parramatta rather than the Eels going into a second tier competition.

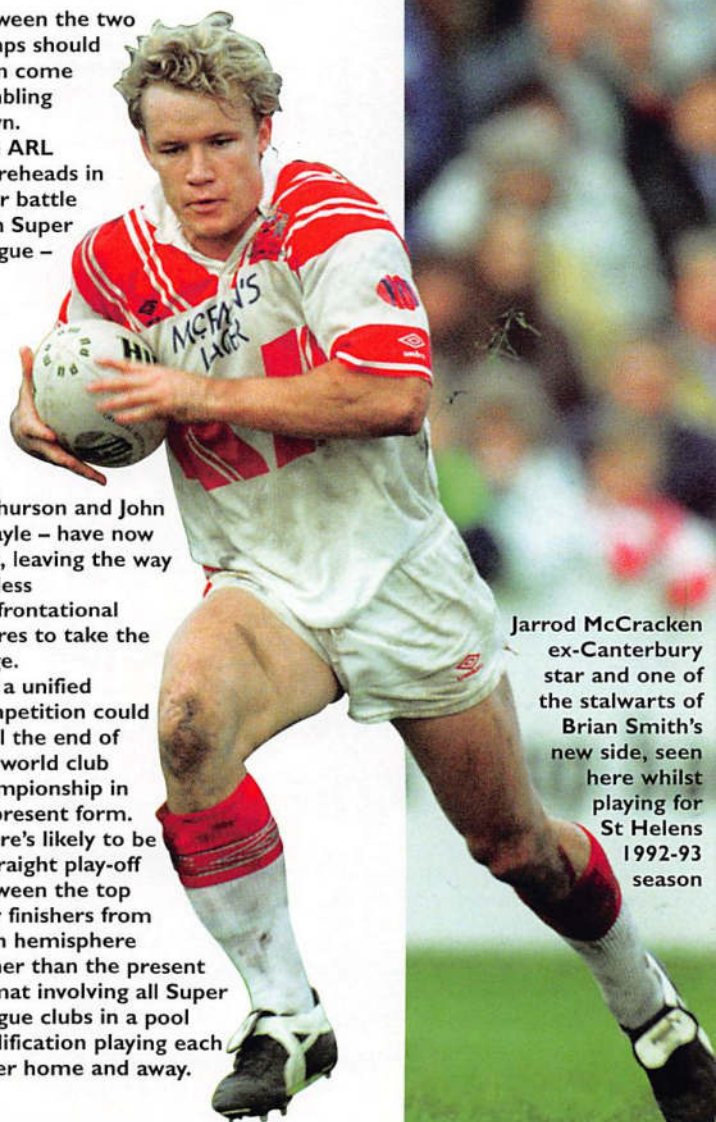
ARL giants Manly and the Sydney City Roosters look to be guaranteed a place in any unified line-up with one of Smith's former clubs St George rumoured to be relocating to Melbourne and a second

between the two camps should soon come tumbling down.

The ARL figureheads in their battle with Super League –

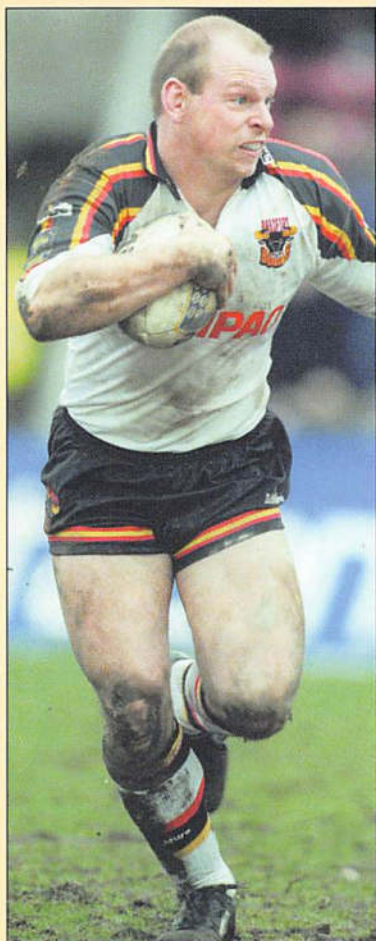
Ken Arthurson and John Quayle – have now quit, leaving the way for less confrontational figures to take the stage.

But a unified competition could spell the end of the world club championship in its present form. There's likely to be a straight play-off between the top four finishers from each hemisphere rather than the present format involving all Super League clubs in a pool qualification playing each other home and away.



Jarrod McCracken
ex-Canterbury
star and one of
the stalwarts of
Brian Smith's
new side, seen
here whilst
playing for
St Helens
1992-93
season

MEET THE BULLS ... MEET THE BULLS



10 Nathan GRAHAM

Position: Full back

Nathan Graham will be looking for an upturn in his fortunes with the Bradford Bulls in 1997. Unfortunately he will be remembered for a Wembley nightmare performance against St. Helens in the 1996 Silk Cut Challenge Cup final. He joined Bradford from Dewsbury in 1995 after scoring just short of 500 points in a 192 match career for the Crown Flatt side. He kicked a goal on his Dewsbury debut in the final match of 1988-89 season against current Super League rivals Sheffield Eagles.

11 Jeremy DONOUGH

Position: Second row

Giant Australian forward who won the hearts of the Odsal faithful with his dramatic performance in the Silk Cut Challenge Cup Semi-final victory over Leeds in 1996. Made his Bradford debut alongside fellow Aussie Graeme Bradley in the Centenary season encounter at Sheffield. Now back to full fitness for the 1997 campaign his Australian career included spells with St George and South Sydney.

12 Paul MEDLEY

Position: Second row.

Now in the veteran stage of his career and in the new role as "Super Sub" for the Bulls. He can also lay claim to the tag "Mr Versatile", his career has included spells in the hooking and centre roles - the latter thanks to his speed and ability to break the tackle. That elusive quality has helped Medley accumulate well over a century of tries in a career which started at Headingley with the Leeds club and included a season with Halifax. He gained three Great Britain caps in 1987-88 scoring tries against Papua New Guinea in Wigan and Port Moresby.

13 Sonny NICKLE

Position: Second row

Sonny joined Bradford as part of the 1995 world record "Paul Newlove" deal and marked his Bulls debut with a 23rd minute try in the 14-10 Centenary season victory over Oldham. He was in his fifth season with St Helens when news came of his move to Bradford. During his 118 match career with the Saints Nickle gained international recognition with selection for Great Britain on six occasions - five of which came with promotion from the substitutes bench. He missed the highlights of the 1992 Lions tour after sustaining injury on his test debut against Papua New Guinea. His career started with Hunslet, making the short move from the Parkside junior club, and includes a 59 match spell at Sheffield where he scored 22 tries for the Eagles.

15 Gary CHRISTIE

Position: Winger

A former player of the oldham club where he scored 18 times in 34 outings for the club. try scoring has always been an enjoyable occasion for the winger who is framed for his celebratory somersaults. In his first season with Bradford he bagged eleven touchdowns and even tough recent efforts have been more modest he has exceeded his try tally at Belle Vue where he could only cross the try line four times in 29 appearances for Wakefield. Christie's career started with Widnes Tigers and he turned professional with Oldham in 1991.

16 Warren JOWITT

Position: Second row

Warren Jowitt made history by becoming Hunslet's first professional signing from it's own Academy ranks. The talented back rower is one for the future at Bradford but can call on plenty of experience in the lower divisions of the professional game after playing 28 games for the South Leeds club. A

former junior with Stanley rangers he joined Hunslet in 1993 and made the move to the Bulls 23 months later.

18 Simon KNOX

Position: Back row forward

A 1996 Silk Cut Challenge Cup final outing at loose forward has been the highlight of the Cumbrian's career. A try scorer in each of the cup victories over Leigh, Wakefield and Leeds on the way to that Wembley appearance confirmed the talent he had shown with Carlisle. Knox scored 40 times in 116 outings with Border raiders, a club the former Hensingham junior joined in December 1991. He has now been at Bradford since November 1995.

19 Michael HOGUE

Position: Prop forward

The last of the Odsal foreign legion; Michael had been playing in Australia and made first grade in 1995 for the North Queensland Cowboys.

20 Matt CALLAND

Position: Centre

Made a successful switch to top grade rugby with the Bulls and was a prolific try scorer at the start of the Super League campaign with six tries in the first four rounds. His career was earlier spoilt by sending off and the subsequent disciplinary verdicts; that now seems to be behind the former Featherstone and



LS ... MEET THE BULLS ... MEET TH



Rochdale three-quarter who scored 57 tries in just over 100 outings in the lower divisions.

22 Brian McDERMOTT

Position: Prop forward

The 1996 Great Britain Lions tour was the "coming of age" for Brian McDermott with his first test cap in October against Fiji. A former Royal Marine boxing champion - who also had a pro fight in the 1995 close-season before making his mark as an ever present for the Bulls in 1996. Earlier he had played his amateur rugby at the Wakefield based Eastmoor club and is the younger brother of the well travelled former back row forward Paul McDermott.

23 Bernard DWYER

Position: Utility forward

Richly deserved his test call for the final of the three 1996 tests in New Zealand. That came just months before his 30th birthday and after over 250 outings for St Helens and Bradford. Now a valuable utility forward who made his first senior appearance for the Knowsley Road club in the 1884-85 season. His nine tries for the Bulls in 1996 was only bettered by his ten touchdowns in 93-4, however his best points tally (68) came the previous season thanks to 26 goals and four tries.

24 Paul LOUGHLIN

Position: Centre

A match points record holder with former club St Helens where he scored over 2,000 points in just under 300

games for the Lancashire club. In his first full season with the Bulls he added another 54 points to his points tally after scoring 14 in the Bradford colours in the Centenary season. A Great Britain international with 15 caps gained between 1988 and 1992. He toured on two occasions, in 1988 and in 1992. Earlier he had gained honours with the Gt. Britain Under-21's and with Lancashire.

25 James LOWES

Position: Hooker

The turning point of James Lowes career was a Yorkshire Cup tie between Leeds and Hunslet. A fine performance for Hunslet culminated with the then half back moving to Headingley and switching to the hooking role. Now rated as one of the best in the business he was a member of Phil Larder's 1996 Great Britain tour squad and captained the "midweek" side. Lowes finished the 1996 campaign with five tries in as many games to record his best ever seasonal try tally with eleven touchdowns. A regular if not prolific try scorer he also kicked 18 goals for Hunslet in their 1991-92 campaign.

26 Steve McNAMARA

Position: Loose forward

One of only a dozen players to score over 200 points in the 1996 summer season and one of the players who had to withdraw from the Lions trip after sustaining a hand injury. Has already represented Great Britain during his time at Hull where, in his last full campaign with the Airlie Birds, he

kicked 100 goals to finish in fourth position in the game's point scoring charts.

27 Tahi REIHANA

Position: prop or Second row

Signed from Australian Super League club Western Reds in November 1996. The Kiwi born forward made only three starts for the fledgling Perth based club after earlier playing in NSW country leagues.

28 Stuart SPRUCE

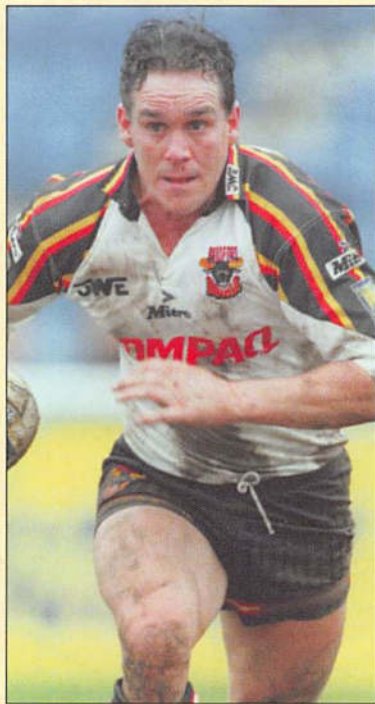
Position: Full back

Returned from the Lion's Autumn 1996 tour with his career enhanced after a number of spectacular test match performances - including two tremendous try saving tackles in the second and third encounters against the Kiwis. Spruce moved to the Bulls the previous May from Widnes and immediately made an impact in the Super League with eight tries in his first seven outings.

Abi EKOKU

Position: Winger

Joined the Bulls for the 1997 season. Brother of the Wimbledon soccer star Efan Ekoku the strong running winger spent the 1996-97 close season in South East London with the Blackheath union club. Abi scored a respectable 15 tries in 27 outings for London - his first professional club - and bagged a further nine touchdowns in 29 appearances for Halifax.



OLDHAM BEARS v

SUNDAY MARCH 9th

Today's Officials

Referee:

S. Cummings

Reserve Referee:

P. W. Lee

Touch Judges:

K. Leyland & D. Blood

In Goal Touch Judges:

P. Brooks & D Mairs

OLDHAM BEARS

	Team	T	G	DG
1	Paul Atcheson	☐	☐	☐
2	Scott Ranson	☐	☐	☐
3	Darren Abram	☐	☐	☐
5	Rob Myler	☐	☐	☐
6	Francis Maloney	☐	☐	☐
7	Martin Crompton	☐	☐	☐
8	Ian Gildart	☐	☐	☐
9	John Clarke	☐	☐	☐
11	Gary Lord	☐	☐	☐
12	Joe Faimalo	☐	☐	☐
13	David Bradbury	☐	☐	☐
14	Matt Munro	☐	☐	☐
15	Paul Davidson	☐	☐	☐
20	Afi Leuila	☐	☐	☐
22	Vince Fawcett	☐	☐	☐
23	Brett Goldspink	☐	☐	☐
26	Luke Goodwin	☐	☐	☐



BRADFORD BULLS

97 KICK-OFF 3.00pm

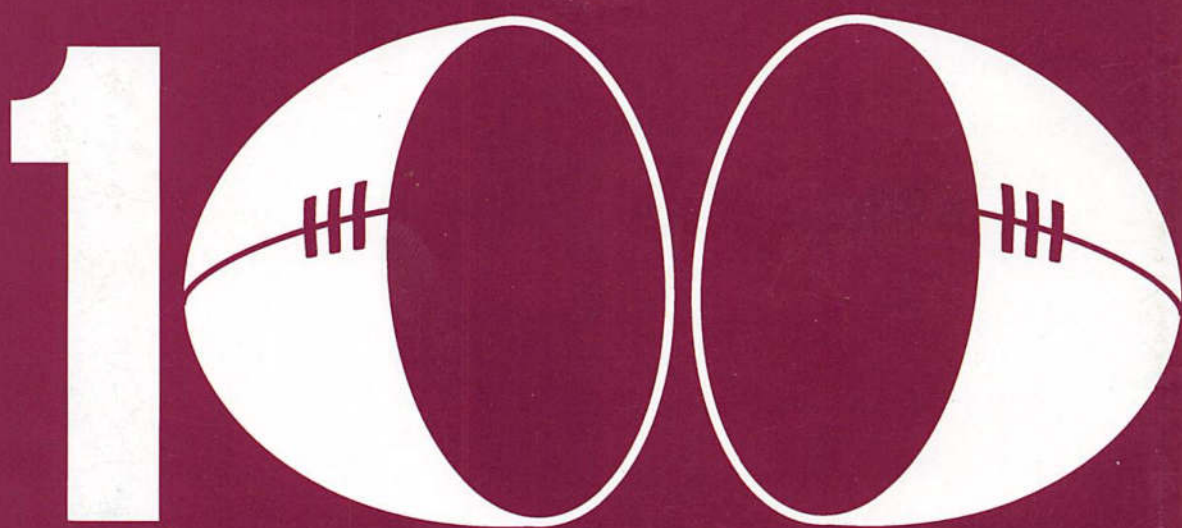


BRADFORD BULLS

		Team	T	G	DG
1	Robbie Paul	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	Glen Tomlinson	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	Graeme Bradley	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	Jon Scales	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	Danny Peacock	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	Paul Cook	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	Nathan Graham	☐	☐	☐	☐
11	Jeremy Donougher	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	Paul Medley	☐	☐	☐	☐
13	Sonny Nickle	☐	☐	☐	☐
16	Warren Jowitt	☐	☐	☐	☐
20	Matt Calland	☐	☐	☐	☐
22	Brian McDermott	☐	☐	☐	☐
23	Bernard Dwyer	☐	☐	☐	☐
24	Paul Loughlin	☐	☐	☐	☐
25	James Lowes	☐	☐	☐	☐
26	Steve McNamara	☐	☐	☐	☐
27	Tahi Reihana	☐	☐	☐	☐
28	Stuart Spruce	☐	☐	☐	☐



100

The number '100' is rendered in a large, white, sans-serif font against a dark red background. The two zeros are stylized to resemble American footballs, with white laces visible on the left and right sides of each zero.

OLDHAM ATHLETIC A.F.C. LTD.



Mr J.T. Cale, Secretary, Oldham Athletic A.F.C. Ltd.
Boundary Park, Oldham OL1 2PA

WHERE APPROPRIATE, THIS TICKET IS FOR THE SEAT STATED ONLY.
PLEASE TAKE UP YOUR POSITION AT LEAST 45 MINUTES PRIOR TO KICK-OFF



LATICS CLUBCALL
0891 121142

RETAIN THIS PORTION OF TICKET
FOR FUTURE APPLICATIONS

LATICS TICKET NEWS
0891 121582

GREEN STAND
CHADDERTON ROAD END

SILK CUT CHALLENGE CUP
QUARTER FINALS

OLDHAM BEARS V BRADFORD BULLS
SUNDAY 9TH MARCH 1997
KICK OFF 3 PM

TURNSTILE

10, 11, 12

BLOCK

GREEN

ROW

SEAT

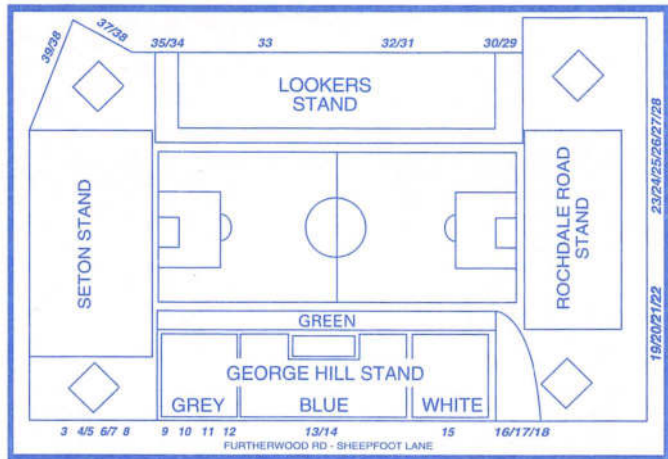
UN.RESV.

PRICE

11.00

11.00

5.00



The Management reserves the right to provide alternative seats to those specified on the ticket.

This ticket is issued subject to the Rules and Regulations of The Football Association and the Nationwide League and is valid for the date shown on the face hereof or for any other date to which the match may be transferred, but the price of this ticket will not be returned to the holder in any circumstances if the Match has to be abandoned.

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