

OLDHAM RLFC

Official Matchday Magazine of Oldham Rugby League Football Club

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The Roughyeds



Whitehaven Warriors

at Boundary Park Sun 9th Jan 2000 Kick-off 3.00pm

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Up Front

.....With Christopher Hamilton



MAY I take this opportunity to wish everybody A Happy and Prosperous New Year. The team certainly got our new millennium off to a flying start at Swinton last Sunday, when they recorded what, to many people outside the club, was a shock victory. Following on from the win against Rochdale in the first game of the season the players have had some instant rewards for all the pre-season work they have put in.

What has been particularly pleasing has been that, by and large, you wouldn't have thought that the majority of these players were playing together for the first time. It is also obvious that the players are playing for each other and that will prove to be a vital ingredient as the season rolls on. As far as the support is concerned there is only one word to describe it so far - magnificent! Against Rochdale we had our biggest crowd ever of 3796 and at Swinton the number of Oldham fans present made the atmosphere like a home game.

Several of the players commented after the game about the support and although I have said this before I hope that you realise that you do make a difference, not only do you lift our players but you can also intimidate the opposition. I hope you keep up your support both in terms of numbers and volume and you can rest assured that the players will be doing their utmost to make sure you get behind them. Another pleasing aspect about the Swinton game was the professional debuts of Peter Ferris and Chris Naylor and it is a tribute to them that they both acquitted themselves well in what was a tough game.

Today we welcome all our guests from Whitehaven for what is sure to be another tough game on the back of a good win, and a clean sheet, against their local rivals, Workington, they are sure to be fired up but with your help I am sure the lads will give a good account of themselves and hopefully keep up our 100% record.

Best wishes,

Chris Hamilton

The Roughyeds *The Roughyeds*

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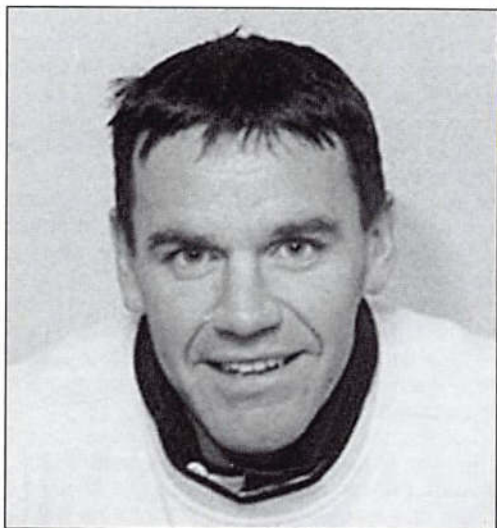
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FORD FOCUS

.....With Mike Ford



A HAPPY and prosperous New Year to everyone and a big welcome to our visitors today from Whitehaven.

I hope you all enjoyed the holiday period matches against Rochdale and Swinton. The closeness of the scores meant that both games provided good value and great entertainment for the spectators.

I felt that the team under-achieved against Rochdale, but there were a lot of nerves and a lot of tension on our return to Boundary Park and we were conscious of the high expectations of a bumper crowd. At the same time a lot of credit must go to Hornets for the quality of their football and their never-say-die spirit. I thought the Oldham players showed a lot of character and it is always pleasing to win even when the

team is not at its best.

The players were undoubtedly lifted by the fantastic vocal support against both Rochdale and Swinton. A noisy crowd can be worth a few points start at home and is undoubtedly a great help when playing away.

Against Swinton I felt we had made progress from the Rochdale game, controlling the game better to the degree that I thought the scoreline flattered the Lions.

As for today's visitors, we have no illusions that Whitehaven will be anything other than a very tough test, our hardest test to date in fact. Kevin Tamati is an outstanding coach and his side's hammering of Workington is proof of their worth. Although the Warriors lost at Barrow they played that game without any of their overseas players, so the side turning out today will be at full strength.

Finally I would like to pay tribute to the Oldham players for their professionalism. The whole squad sacrificed a lot over the festive period and no-one took a drink over the New Year. I am sure you appreciate their attitude.

Get behind the team and enjoy the game today.

Mike

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In Yer Face



ATTENDANCES at the holiday fixtures fully justified the decision of the NFP clubs to begin their season in December. Despite the weather - which was especially foul for Hull KR's clash with Featherstone on Boxing Day - all the clubs recorded attendances which were almost certainly higher than had the games been played later in the year. Oldham of course achieved a record attendance for the reborn Roughyeds and must now work hard to retain as much of that support as possible.

Obviously there is a long way to go before we can start crowing about a revitalised competition below Super League and the current format, if continued will not necessarily be the answer to our prayers, for sooner or later the weather will cause the postponement of fixtures and disruptions to the programme. This, however, is true of any time between the start of December and the end of April, and the advocates of 'summer' rugby have never been able to answer this problem effectively because the so called 'summer' season has always begun in winter!

Martin Sadler in League Express again touts the watching rugby 'in a t-shirt sipping a coke' myth. Well, coming up to Super League V the number of times I have watched my rugby in a t-shirt barely reaches double figures, especially with the vast number of evening kick-offs, when at certain times of the year the temperature plummetts between kick off and full time. Especially after the treatment of Wakefield and Hunslet it remains my view that the APC clubs have an absolute duty to maximise their own potential. Since it is plain that the Super League teams are interested only in their own well being, the 18 NFP sides must follow whatever course of action best suits their own interest. If that means a permanently different season to Super League or even separate

competitions only featuring NFP teams (i.e. a separate Challenge Cup) so be it. Since all Super League clubs will be franchise operations from 2001 the chances of the vast majority of NFP sides applying successfully looks slight. The example of Australia points up the obvious lesson that in the eyes of the new establishment tradition counts for nothing. Therefore let the APC motto be: SAUVE QUI PEUT!



THEIR numbers might not be great, but I really feel for the supporters of Bramley and Gateshead. In the first instance it has been a 25 year battle to keep going in the shadow of the mighty Leeds, but I still hold the view that departing Bramley itself was always going to be a mistake, Good Luck to those fighting to revive one of R.L.'s famous old names.

The Gateshead decision meanwhile is beyond belief. All the new followers attracted to the game in the North East have been betrayed. And the attempt to brand the NFP as villains of the piece for not accepting Hull FC as a member club is disgraceful. The poignant letters penned by Thunder supporters in the R.L. press emphasise the potential of Super League in non traditional areas yet, at the same time, hint at the lack of trust to be placed in the administration of the game. I fear that for the future the only way to expand the game will be to encourage the mass deflection of R.U. clubs to a superior game. But then it has long been my opinion that if we are going to dangle financial carrots they should be dangled in the direction of Leicester, Northampton, Gloucester, Bristol, Bath, Saracens and Cardiff. Now there's something controversial for you to chew on!

ROGER ROGER

OLDHAM have made an impressive start to the new Northern Ford Premiership season with the defeat of Rochdale Hornets at Boundary Park and the win against Swinton Lions at Gigg Lane, Bury on the second day of the new millennium.

Hard work has started to pay off for Mike Ford and his players, but the club's new team boss is too experienced and too shrewd to get carried away by early season wins with 26 NFP games still to go.

"We start to focus on Whitehaven NOW" said Ford, within minutes of the Gigg Lane game ending last Sunday and it wasn't long afterwards that the results from around the NFP came through and we saw that Whitehaven had hammered local rivals Workington Town 42-0 at the Recreation Ground.

Early indications suggest that the NFP will be intensely competitive this year with as many as a dozen, maybe even more, teams contesting the battle for the top-eight play off places right through until the last round of league matches in July.

Ford is making no promises, merely demanding of his players that they give of their best at all times and remain competitive in 80 minutes of each game they play from now to the end of the season.

With four points in the bag already, however, he must be thinking of a top eight challenge as a realistic target and I do know that everyone at the club, from chairman and board right through to the dressing room, has been thrilled at the magnificent response of the fans in the two league games played so far.

To pull in a gate of 3,700 for the Rochdale game at Boundary Park was extremely encouraging....just as it was to see so many Roughyeds fans at Gigg Lane six days later.

Apparently, Tony Barrow knocked on the Oldham dressing room door to tell Ford that the kick off had been delayed for ten minutes because there were so many Oldham fans still outside the ground and queuing to get in.



A message like that was a great tonic to the Oldham team which left the tunnel eventually and, to a man, turned to applaud the 2,000 or so Oldham fans up in the main stand.

Another win kept the club's public relations wheel well oiled, to such an extent that officials will be expecting another big turn out of fans today for the first home game of the new year, the new century and the new Millennium.

At the Rochdale game, officials had to open the upper tiers of the Seton Stand at the Chadderton Road end of the ground because all available seats in the George Hill stand, the paddock and the lower section of the Seton stand were filling up rapidly as kick off approached.

At Gigg Lane six days later, officials there had to act similarly by opening up the popular side of the ground because the main stand was close to capacity by the time the teams took the field.

Advice to the fans who don't want to queue, miss the kick off or struggle to find a seat is to arrive in good time and soak up the atmosphere.

What a contrast to the end of last season when only 677 fans watched Lancashire Lynx beat the Roughyeds 52-26 at Spotland in the final 'home' game.

The transformation has been remarkable. Congratulations to all concerned.

Roger Halstead

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LIVING HISTORY

From the Pen of Michael Turner

RUGBY LEAGUE MILESTONES - a summary of important Events

1900 - 1906

THE TURN of the century saw the main Northern Union Championship still split into two county based competitions. The 1900-01 campaign ended with Oldham as Lancashire champions, when they just pipped the Swinton side by a single point to take the "Red Rose" title. However, the first major honour for the "Lions" came in 1900 when they defeated Salford in the Challenge Cup Final. Meanwhile in Yorkshire Bradford emerged as winners of the league in spite of having two league points deducted for a *breach of professional rules!* In the 1902-03 season the first experiment with two divisions occurred. Halifax won the title from runners up Salford with Swinton in third place. St Helens and Brighouse were relegated to be replaced by the promoted Keighley and Leeds.

The two division set up lasted for just three seasons after which the NU authorities decided to revert to a one league system. The new championships saw clubs from the same county play each other home and away and also arrange inter-county fixtures. This arrangement was far from satisfactory with the final table decided on a percentage basis, as not all clubs played the same number of matches. Indeed Leigh who finished as Champions played only 30 matches compared to the 38 played by Halifax and Warrington and 40 by Oldham.

By this time some of the original 22 "breakaway" clubs has disappeared from the league to be replaced by more familiar

names such as York, Hull KR and Bramley. The latter mentioned village team, from the outskirts of Leeds, had managed to coax the outstanding Cumbrian stand off half or centre, Jim Lomas to sign for them. However, it would not be long before "Jumbo Jimmy" had aroused much interest from the more "fashionable" clubs and he was duly enticed across the Pennines to play for Salford. This move resulted in the first ever £100 transfer fee.

The first Northern Union international match took place in 1904 when England went down by nine points to three against an Other Nationalities team at Wigan. This match was played under experimental 12-a-side rules.



Jim Lomas

IT IS HOPED TO CONTINUE THIS FEATURE IN THE PROGRAMME SHOWING PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE 'ROUGHYEDS OF YESTERYEAR'. IF ANYONE HAS ANY PHOTOS THAT THEY THINK WOULD BE OF INTEREST PLEASE CONTACT
BRIAN WALKER 01457 875084 OR MICHAEL TURNER 0161-620-6005

PROBING THE NFP

THE Christmas games not only provided good attendance levels but threw up some exciting matches and some surprise results. Although there are those who forecast a Cougar victory at the Hawks, the truth is that the NFP Champions started as favourites. But with scrum-half Chris Robinson on top form Keighley showed they will be a force to be reckoned with under coach Karl Harrison.

At Hilton Park, meanwhile, widely fancied Leigh Centurions came from behind to beat Widnes Vikings. Simon Baldwin was the stand out player on his return to his home town club, but failure to land a single goal cost the Vikings dear. A crowd of 4,468 was the best of the first round matches.

Another good crowd turned out at Hull KR for a 2-2 draw with Featherstone. Last season the Robins dropped only three home points - two to Dewsbury, one to Oldham - so Featherstone have come up with a good result already. No doubt both these sides will take some beating this year.

At Derwent Park Workington Town went down, as expected, to Swinton Lions. A young home side is in for a long, hard season and may not win many games as the Club builds for the future. Swinton's first choice team looks stronger this year, Mike Gregory having added the experience of Paul Loughlin to his side. The irrepressible Ian Watson at scrum-half makes the team tick.

A sizeable crowd at Batley saw Dewsbury Rams' halfbacks Richard Agar and Barry Eaton orchestrate an expected win against the Bulldogs. And in doing so the Rams proved you don't have to play down the slope in the second-half to win at Mount Pleasant.

Last season Doncaster didn't manage a single away win, but the Dragons broke their duck first time out this time at, of all places, York Wasps. A tough side to crack in the last two years the Wasps may just be in for a hard season given the Dragons' seven try romp.

At Craven Park an adverse penalty count of 13-4 hampered the efforts of today's visitors Whitehaven who went down 31-4 to Barrow. And at Boundary Park Rochdale's lack of discipline (penalty count 14-4 to Oldham) cost them equally dear, four tries to three not being enough to give them victory thanks to five goals from Mark Sibson for the Roughyeds.

Finally in Round One the hastily assembled Sheffield Eagles pulled off a remarkable victory against Lancashire Lynx.

In the New Year matches Doncaster's emphatic win 42-8 against Batley before their best crowd for five years (1,768) took them to the top of the table.

Today's visitors Whitehaven walloped their local rivals Workington by 42-0 before 1,548, a warning to Oldham not to be complacent today.

Widnes recorded the day's best gate of 3,837 despite the lack of travelling fans from Lancashire Lynx. The scoreline of 64-8 speaks volumes about the relative chances of the two teams this season.

Keighley officials will be delighted with an attendance of 2,450 and with two wins out of two. Their 32-13 victory over York was revenge for a home defeat against the same opponents last year (8-10).

Leigh's massive travelling support swelled the gate at Spotland to 2,112 and the visiting fans went away happy with a 42-14 win.

Dewsbury came out on top in a hard fought encounter with Hull KR. A 14-2 win before 2,119 was inspired by their tough tackling pack and inventive half-backs.

Featherstone overcame Barrow (35-14) before 1,908.

And finally Oldham scored a fine win, 23-18, against a big Swinton team thanks to some excellent defence and the skills of half backs Mike Ford and David Gibbons. A crowd of 2,567 delighted Swinton officials and Chairman Malcolm White was most gracious in acknowledging Oldham's superiority on the day.

In Town Today



...WHITEHAVEN WARRIORS

A KEVIN TAMATI coached team is always a tough nut to crack. Last season Oldham met the Warriors only once in the League going down 24-32 in a hard fought game at Spotland. However the Roughyeds did make a trip to Cumbria losing in the Challenge Cup to a team inspired by now departed scrum half Leroy Joe.

Last term Whitehaven finished 8th with 16 wins from their 28 fixtures. As might be expected their home form was more impressive than away, 11 of their victories being recorded at the Recreation Ground. A Boxing Day defeat at Barrow opens their season this time but rest assured that Oldham will have their hands full this afternoon.

The Whitehaven line up today will probably feature DAVID SEEDS at fullback. Normally a centre Seeds was last season's top try scorer with 16. Signed from Kells Seeds toured Australia with BARLA in 1993 and played for Cumbria against Australia in 1994.

Rival for the No. 1 spot is WESLEY WILSON an under 18 BARLA representative signed in 1997 from Wath Brow Hornets.

The threequarters will feature NEIL FRAZER and GARRY RUDDY on the wings. Frazer signed from Seaton in February 1998 and scored 8 tries last season. Ruddy, meanwhile, is a new signing from Barrow and formerly played with Carlisle. He will be looking to kick start his career after a lean spell at Craven Park.

In the centres ex Oldham Bear HOWARD HILL will play alongside Seeds or ANDREW NELSON. After departing Oldham Hill had a season each at Hull KR and Swinton but returns to his native Cumbria where he will be looking to recapture his Super League form.

At half back the experienced WAYNE KITCHIN will take the scrum half spot. A 1989 BARLA tourist Kitchin left Kells for

Workington before signing for the Warriors in 1997. A lively play-maker he will need to be watched. His stand off partner is the well respected KEVIN HETHERINGTON. A BARLA youth international Hetherington played with Seaton and Aspatia RU before signing for Whitehaven in 1996. A shrewd tactician who also landed 66 goals last season.

The front row sees the return of much travelled COLIN ARMSTRONG. At 6'2" and 16st 7lbs. Armstrong leads from the front and has given sterling service to Carlisle, Hull KR and Workington as well as his current side.

Hooker AARON LESTER is a Kiwi who featured with Auckland Warriors and has New Zealand junior international honours. Signed for Whitehaven by Stan Martin in 1996.

DAVID FATIALOFA will turn out at No. 10. Another junior Kiwi who came to Whitehaven in 1996, the bustling Fatialofa has played both in his native land and in France.

Second row CRAIG CHAMBERS is in his seventh season at the Recreation Ground having signed from Kells, as did his partner GRAEME MORTON. Both stand over 6' and provide some hard tackling and running.

19 year old ALAN BONE played for Whitehaven's Academy side and enters his second season as an established first teamer. Another six footer he is a product of the prolific Kells amateur club.

Others likely to feature today include MARK WALLACE newly signed from Workington; ROBERT PURDHAM a young stand off who played in Egremont's National Conference winning team; MARK COX a rough, tough prop from Wath Brow and an Academy International; MATT LYNCH a centre with six years experience at Carlisle; MARK WALLACE, another new recruit from Workington returning to the Recreation Ground, and CRAIG WALSH and LEE KIDDIE both backs once appearing with - you guessed it - Kells.

Walkerbouts

With Brian Walker

WORLD CUP WINNERS

RATHER extraordinarily on the three occasions that Great Britain won the World Cup in 1954, 1960 and 1972 the RL failed to present individual winners medals. This was put to rights recently when all surviving members of the three squads were invited to attend a presentation hosted by the League. Oldham's own Alan Davies and Bob Irving were members of the 60 and 72 squads respectively.

Alas, sadly, Bob died last year but Alan obviously attended.

Interesting, now, to look at a photo taken of the 60 squad prior to the World Cup Final and again 39 years later!

Both Alan Davies and Bob Irving, are of course members of the Oldham Hall of Fame which is on display in the Clayton Arms.



GREAT BRITAIN SQUAD 1960

Back row: W. Fallowfield, B. McTigue, B. Shaw, D. Turner, A. Davies, E. Fraser, W. Boston, J. Wilkinson, J. Challinor,
Second row: M. Sullivan, J. Whiteley, E. Ashton, T. Harris, A. Murphy
Kneeling: J. Shaw, A. Rhodes, R. Greenough, F. Myler, V. Karalius.



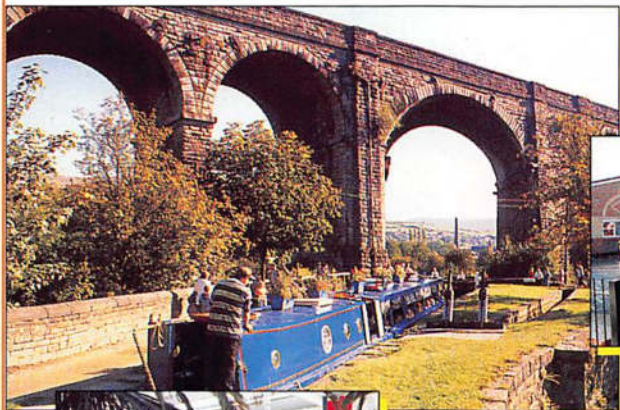
Back row: Billy Boston, Alan Challinor (son of Jim Challinor), Alan Davies, John Whiteley, Bryan Shaw, Tommy Harris, Alex Murphy, Vince Karalius

Front row: John Shaw, Bobby Greenough, Eric Ashton, Austin Rhodes, Sponsors Representative, Mick Sullivan

Note: Brian McTigue, Jim Challinor and Jack Wilkinson are now deceased and Derek Turner, Frank Myler and Eric Fraser were not present

1999 Photograph: Courtesy of Rugby League Express

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The Council is committed to continuing to serve the local community and in helping Oldham maintain its significant status in the North West Region.

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An interview by Dave Roberts with Tom O'Reilly

First of all, Tom, tell me about your Rugby League background.

I started very late at thirteen years of age. Then I played for Redcliffe (Brisbane) and then spent two years at Goldcoast Chargers. I then moved to England and played for Bramley under Mike Ford to whom I had been recommended as a stand off. But Bramley were urgently needing a loose forward at the time so that is the position I played in and Mike was very happy with me. I have also played international football for Papua New Guinea several times. I arrived here as you know at the end of 1999 and I am expecting to do well.

We have had a good start to the season but where we do need to improve is we need to concentrate more on playing for the full 80 minutes and not 60. We also need to stop giving away soft tries. We are working on everything, Mike is very professional and his training is hard work but I am used to it as we train twice a day down under. But

the cold weather makes it harder over here.

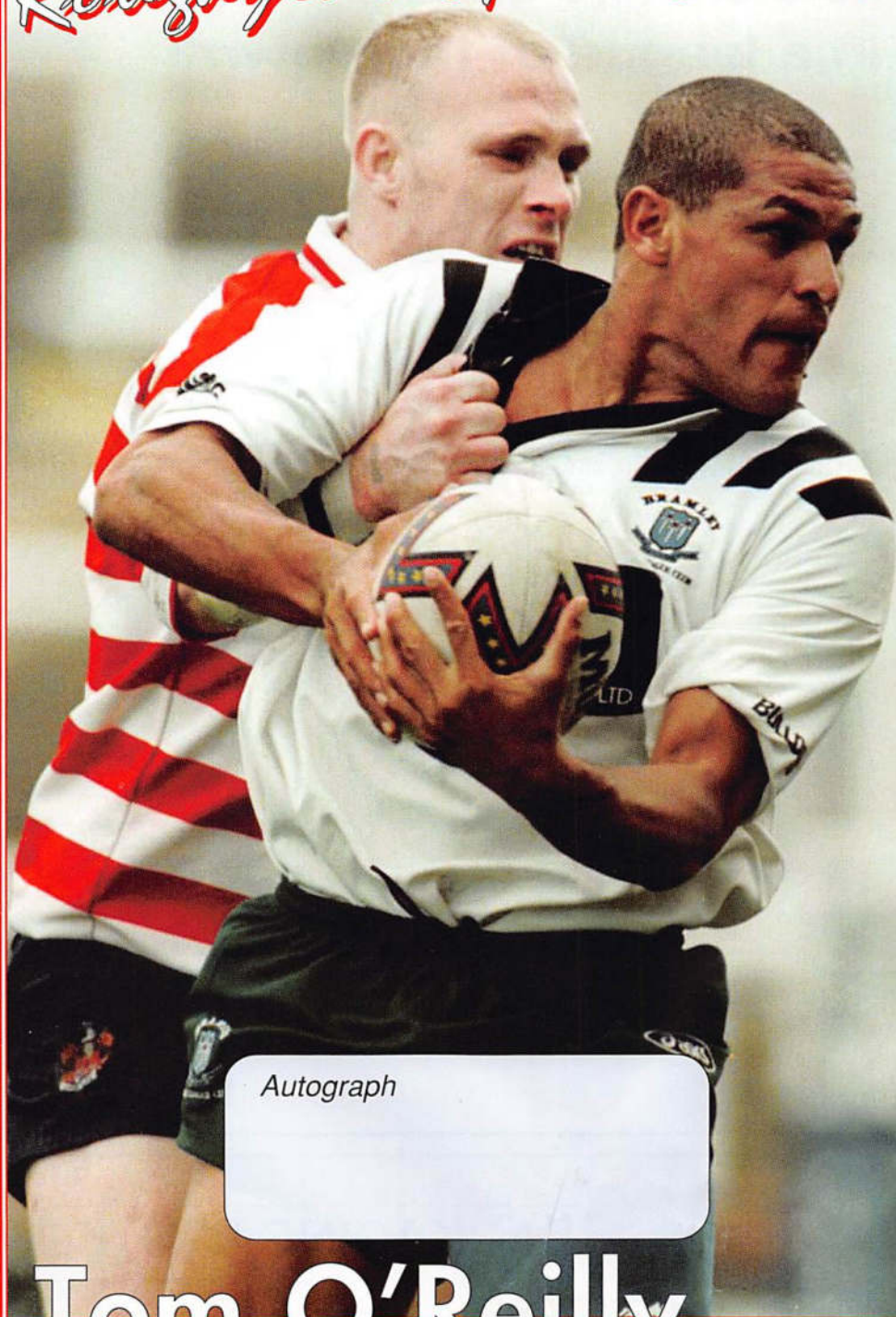
What can we aim for this season?

I can say we should be at least in the top eight but I would like to think we can go all the way to the final., We have plenty of good players here and Cleggy in particular has impressed me so far. If we are going to do well we will need to beat sides like Leigh, Hunslet, Widnes and Doncaster. It should be a good competitive season and I am happy to be playing NFP football and as I said would like to have a great season.

Like all players from down under I expect you would like to moan about England's weather.

Yes it was freezing against Rochdale: I could not feel my feet, I could live without your weather, but to be honest I like it here. The fans so far have been great. I hope they can keep the noise up all season because it may just lift the team. But going back to the weather when I say it is a different world here I mean it.

Roughyeds Spotlight



Autograph

Tom O'Reilly

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BEING a devoted traveller, your good friend Iva is an avid reader of notices. Here are a few you might like:-

In a Tokyo hotel:

Is forbidden to steal hotel towels please. If you are not a person to do such things is please not to read notis.

In a Bucharest hotel lobby:

The lift is being fixed for the next day. During that time we regret that you will be unbearable.

In a Leipzig hotel elevator:

Do not enter the lift backwards, and only when lit up.

In a Belgrade hotel elevator:

To move the cabin, push button for wishing floor. If the cabin should enter more person each one should press a number wishing floor. Driving is then going alphabetically by national order.

In a Paris hotel elevator:

Please leave your values at the front desk.

In a hotel in Athens:

Visitors are expected to complain at the office between the hours of 9 and 11 am daily.

In a Yugoslavian hotel:

The flattening of underwear with pleasure is the job of the chambermaid.

In a Japanese hotel:

You are invited to take advantage of the chambermaid.

In the lobby of a Moscow hotel across from a Russian Orthodox monastery:

You are welcome to visit the cemetery where famous Russian and Society composers, artists and writers are buried daily except Thursday.

In a hotel in an Austrian ski resort:

Not perambulate the corridors in the hours of repose in the boots of ascension.

On the menu of a Swiss restaurant:

Our wines leave you nothing to hope for.

On the menu of a Polish hotel:

Salad a firm's own make, limpid red beet soup with cheesy dumplings in the form of a finger, roasted duck let loose, beef rashers beaten up in the country people's fashion.

Outside a Hong Kong tailor shop:

Ladies may have a fit upstairs.

In a Bangkok dry cleaners:

Drop your trousers here for best results.

Outside a Paris dress shop:

Dresses for street walking.

In a Rhodes tailor shop:

Order your summer suit. Because is big rush we will execute customers in strict rotation.

A sign in Germany's Black Forest:

It is strictly forbidden on our Black Forest camping site that people of different sex, for instance men and women, live

together in one tent unless they are married with each other for that purpose.

In a Zurich hotel:

Because of the impropriety of entertaining guests of the opposite sex in the bedroom, it is suggested that the lobby be used for this purpose.

An Advertisement by a Hong Kong dentist:

Teeth extracted by the latest Methodists.

In a Rome Laundry:

Ladies, leave your clothes here and spend the afternoon having a good time.

In a Czechoslovakian tourist agency:

Take one of our horse driven city tours - we guarantee no miscarriages.

Advertisement for donkey rides, in Thailand:

Would like to ride on your own ass?

In a Swiss mountain inn:

Special today - no ice cream.

In a Bangkok temple:

It is forbidden to enter a woman even a foreigner if dressed as a man.

In a Tokyo bar:

Special cocktails for the ladies with nuts.

In a Copenhagen airline ticket office:

We take your bags and send them in all directions.

On the door of a Moscow hotel room:

If this is your first visit to the USSR, you are welcome to it.

In a Norwegian cocktail lounge:

Ladies are requested not to have children in the bar.

In a Budapest zoo:

Please do not feed the animals. If you have any suitable food, give it to the guard on duty.

In the office of a Roman doctor:

Specialist in women and other diseases.

In an Acapulco hotel:

The manger has personally passed all the water served here.

In a Tokyo shop:

Our Nylons cost more than common, but you'll find they are the best in the long run.

From a Japanese information booklet about using a hotel air conditioner:

Cooler and Heates: If you want just condition of warm in our room, please control yourself.

From a brochure of a car rental firm in Tokyo:

When a passenger of foot heave in sight, tootle the horn trumpet him melodiously at first, but if he still obstacles your passage then tootle him with vigour.

Two signs from a Majorcan shop entrance:

English well talking. Here speeching American.

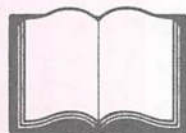
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Amateur Album



WATERHEAD ARLFC

'The place of attainable Dreams'

WATERHEAD'S promotion from the NW Counties League into the illustrious National Conference League has been the stimulus that had seen a club that has lived in the shadows of its near neighbours Saddleworth and St. Anne's over the past years, grow in strength both on and off the field so that it is now seen as a club with a big heart and a burning desire and will to succeed.

The strength of any successful amateur rugby league side has to be based on a thriving youth policy. At Waterhead there lies a top class junior development program backed up by a superb team of coaches that nurture the rugby skills of players from 5 years old to 18 years old. On any Saturday morning children and youths can be seen plying their trades in Waterhead Park, with anything up to 200 boys and girls being encouraged to play the game we all love **RUGBY LEAGUE**.

A successful youth policy not only keeps a conveyor belt of talent rolling into the open age sides, it also ensures that local children can realise their dreams, and are able to fine tune their rugby skills under the guidance of a first rate coaching team.

Waterhead's current successes have come as no surprise to those closely connected with the club. The first team is riding high in the promotion stakes in Division Two of the National Conference League, and enjoying a historic run in the Silk Cut Challenge Cup, while the 2nd team is also pushing for promotion from Division 6 in the NW Counties League. Both of these sides have a host of talent that has evolved from the youth program, with some of these players having played rugby in the park since their early primary school days.

The prosperity of Waterhead ARLFC has come at a time when many of the amateur rugby league teams in Oldham are under severe pressure due to a lack of open age players in the town. This is a problem that has to be addressed sooner rather than later. The way forward for rugby league in general is through the youth policy of the country, for if we don't encourage our youngsters to pick up a rugby ball at an early age, what hope does our great game have of succeeding?

The Waterhead Club is lucky in that department. A strong youth development program has seen the club thrive in recent years, and this

has been backed up superbly by a succession of positive results by the open age teams. Add to this the many professional players that have evolved through the ranks at the club and you can see the basis on which success is built...youth rugby league.

Waterhead however, cannot and will not be able to afford to stand still while others progress. With their forward looking committee, a membership of nearly 700, a social factor that is positively booming at present, and ambitious plans for a new £1 million clubhouse to be housed in the Park, Waterhead ARLFC plan to become one of the major forces in British Amateur Rugby League.

Geoff Owen

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FIXTURES 2000

JANUARY

8th	Whitehaven Warriors	A 2.30
15th	BARROW B.R.	H 2.30
22nd	Workington Town	A 2.30
27th	Rochdale Hornets	A 7.30

FEBRUARY

3rd	FEATHERSTONE ROVERS	H 7.30
10th	HUNSLET HAWKS	H 7.30
17th	LEIGH CENTURIONS	H 7.30
26th	Batley Bulldogs	A 2.30

MARCH

2nd	KEIGHLEY COUGARS	H 7.30
8th	Widnes Vikings	A 7.30
23rd	ROCHDALE HORNETS	H 7.30
30th	Featherstone Rovers	A 7.30

APRIL

5th	Hunslet Hawks	A 7.30
13th	BATLEY BULLDOGS	H 7.30

MAY

3rd	Keighley Cougars	A 7.30
13th	WHITEHAVEN W.	H 2.30
20th	Barrow B. R.	A 2.30
27th	WORKINGTON TOWN	H 2.30
31st	Leigh Centurions	A 7.30

JUNE

15th	WIDNES VIKINGS	H 7.30
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JULY

1st	TOP FIVE PLAY OFF	
22nd	GRAND FINAL PLAY OFF FINAL	

AN INTERVIEW WITH GRAHAM STARKEY

YOU, like the supporters of Rochdale, Huddersfield, Swinton and others will not be watching today's game at the ground of your team's traditional home. A move to a new stadium may not be a bad thing; what concerns me is what brought it about. Generally the need to sell was brought about by crippling debts as a result of bad economic management by weak directors. But were they just weak or were they trying to respond to the fans' (and often their own) now insatiable demands for success by hoping to buy such success? In the wake of individual contracts and Lindsay's introduction of full time players, wages and player power have got totally out of control. Please don't talk to me of 'salary caps'; they had that when I played – we were all on the same wage – but every now and again a star player was in dispute for a while and then it mysteriously cleared up!

What rankles me is the propaganda machine now in place to keep telling us that this is all for the good of the game and will lead to expansion. Here are some facts from the weekend of 14/15 August 1999. Australia Mk. 2 (Gateshead) versus Australia Mk 1 (London Broncos); gate, 2631. This was a match in which the two teams were in with a chance of a top 5 play-off place. Meanwhile look at these figures, from places where not too subtle attempts have been made to strangle the game, or in Super League parlance, create mergers – Wakefield v Huddersfield 3200; Salford v Sheffield 3307; and best of all at Widnes, not even in Super League, 3649.

There is an old saying, "You can take a horse to water . . . etc." The converse of that is also true – "You can take water to the horse but you cannot make it drink". I am not being defeatist; just realistic. We will never be as big as Rugby Union, either nationally or globally. Recognise the fact and work from there. An excellent comparison is bowls. Crown Green bowls virtually mirrors Rugby League, being predominantly a game played in Lancashire and Yorkshire. Many flat green bowlers will admit that aspects of it – for spectators and speed of play – are better than their own version. Yet flat green bowls is played throughout the rest of the UK and the world. Try spreading Crown Green bowls.

There are good lessons to be learned from the last few years. Certainly the marketing has improved – without doubt the standard of fitness and the skill of the players has. Expansion is taking place, some of it sensibly, as evidenced by the success of the National Conference, and there is no doubt that the impetus of Super League has helped.

However the game is being used (with the blackmail of the handout money) by the Murdoch empire for its own ends. The attraction of sticking

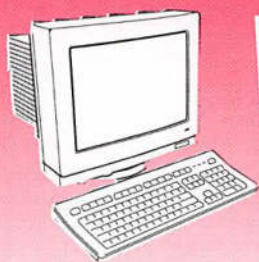
a team in Dublin. Edinburgh, New York and Timbucktoo is that it may tempt the locals to watch it on Sky TV. Never forget that Murdoch ONLY came into this game because he wanted the Australian TV rights. Honestly, it was nothing to do with his great concern for the welfare of the game in Whitehaven and Batley.

Of course the extra exposure on television is welcome but our game is such an attractive game to watch that we should be going on TV on our terms not the TV company's. They want us. Remember, it's the girl who plays hard to get who usually wins the fella.

One has to ask (and really one is not allowed to ask questions these days), is there a long term hidden agenda? Force enough clubs out of Super League by the new criteria and reduce it to say, eight clubs. This would release over a hundred players, who together with some more Australians would be available to create teams to stick on the map wherever it takes Sky's fancy. It is also human nature and understandable that those who have become allied to the Murdoch empire like the kudos of being associated with it and like to feel that they are really in the big time.

In the 'new criteria' that are being worked out there is one criterion which seems to have been forgotten. Rugby League should not be there for someone's ego trip or as a rich man's toy. It belongs to the people who week in, week out, produce the players and support the clubs, whether in the traditional heartland or elsewhere. As long as we keep building our house on finance, where the ability to buy the most expensive players is the route to success, there will continually be one or two clubs running out of money. Super League clubs beware; no matter how many clubs you 'cull' the league by, there will always be one at the bottom of the league – it could be you.

Finally two questions keep screaming away inside my head: WHY are we trying to close some clubs by mergers, and WHY do we need to build beautiful 20,000 all-seater stadia? I want you to keep asking yourself the same questions and listen to the answers Super League people are giving. Then ask yourself if the answers make sense. There isn't a scrap of evidence that we can fill them and therefore need them. No club will go bankrupt the moment it starts cutting its coat to suit its cloth. The biggest drain on finances are wages, so it means cutting wages. If, initially, we lose the odd star to the other code, so be it (but they are learning some painful lessons already). All we need to remember is that ours is the greater of the two codes, not only to watch but also to play. Kids brought up on Rugby League will not very often want to switch codes. You don't need to bribe them!



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With Simon Winnard

DESPITE the shortsighted and shambolic way that our game continues to be governed by the powers that be, I applaud the NFP for standing firm by it's members and embracing the Rugby League community outside the elite. Many still involved with Super League have fears about the NFP's back to basics approach and the ever increasing distance between the game's two competitions. However, the NFP had no choice but to take drastic action. With future News Corporation funding cut off and Super League fast becoming a closed shop, do we simply stand by and watch our numbers dwindle whilst the few prosper?

The introduction of the top eight play off, a reduction in the overseas quota and a plethora of English coaches are all positive moves. An equal spread of the remaining News Corporation funding (with the exception of Sheffield Eagles) will result in more of a financial level playing field and a better spread of players across the league. We also have an impending television deal and have earmarked the Bramley funding for marketing and development. Indeed, all these measure look to add value and interest to our competition - steps in the right direction.

The most significant change is the partial move back to a winter season and the early indicators are good. Crowds over the festive period have been impressive, particularly when compared to the corresponding fixtures last season. Can this alone be relied upon to give a positive indication of a move in the right direction? The jury is still out of course. A season starting over the festive period with hopes regenerated and local rivalries resumed will always produce interest - but can this be sustained? I believe it will. In fact, I feel that a switch back to a full winter season in the near future is inevitable.

The amended gate of 3,796 for our first game against Rochdale was fantastic. Not only was this a record for the newly formed Roughyeds, but also surpassed many of the former clubs attendances whilst in Super League. It was both heartening and exciting to see so many old faces which have been sadly missing in the last few years.

Those fans who turned up were treated to a cracker, poised on a knife edge and in the end victory went the Roughyeds way. Rochdale will feel slightly unlucky and particularly their scrum half Dane Dorahy who was simply superb. What a marvellous tackle on Mark Sibson to stop him scoring in the corner; he's a player destined to go onto bigger and better things. It was an edgy and nervous looking performance by the Roughyeds that day. Nevertheless they showed plenty of character, resolve and tenacity, particularly in defence to gain a valuable two points.

We then visited Gigg Lane to take on the Swinton Lions and who could have predicted the fantastic travelling support? The Swinton officials were taken completely by surprise, having to delay the kick off and then open another stand to accommodate the Roughyeds faithful. It filled me with pride, as did the performance on the pitch. Mike Gregory has assembled a big and experienced side this season and there are not many teams who will turn them over at Gigg Lane....but we did. In fact the score doesn't really reflect how well Mike Ford and his team performed. Oldham, by far the better attacking side throughout, suffered a 15 minute lapse in concentration late in the second half to ensure a tense finish....do we ever win any other way?

Let's hope today is the exception that proves the rule as we try and make it three out of three.



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Club Call

MAY I wish all our sponsors and supporters a Happy New Year. It certainly has been one for the Roughyeds! The two games over the festive period have been very entertaining and I don't think anybody could complain about value for money!!!

THE SATURDAY YANKEE

Although the season has just started, our lottery 'The Saturday Yankee' runs for 52 weeks of the year. At the beginning of December Kath McKenzie, from Heyside, won £2,250 on the Yankee having paid just a £1 stake!! The lottery is a key fund-raiser for the Club and anybody wishing to join should contact me at the Club on **0161 628 3677**. We are also always interested in recruiting agents who can spare a couple of hours a week to help the Club. Agents receive commission; discount in the Club Shop and other benefits. Again, please contact me at the Club for further details.

GOLDEN GAMBLE HALF-TIME DRAW

Whilst we are on the subject of fund-raising, can I bring to your attention our half-time draw 'The Golden Gamble'. Tickets are only £1 and the lucky winner receives 50% of the proceeds the draw makes on the day.

Due to the fact that we do not have our own facilities on match days the 'Golden Gamble' is another major form of income . . . so please help the Club . . . and you never know you just might help yourself!!

CLUB SHOP

It has been great to see all our supporters showing their Club colours with pride this season. The new home replica shirts should be with us soon as will the new away kit. *Our kit manufacturer says the away kit looks 'awesome'!!*

We are always looking for inspiration for the shop and you may have seen something an opposing fan was wearing, or had in their car, so if you have any ideas for merchandise we could sell in the shop, please write to me.

Enjoy the game and Roar on the Roughyeds!

Scott

JUNIOR ROUGHYEDS

Hi to all the Junior Roughyeds.

A warm Oldham welcome to the Junior supporters of Whitehaven Warriors.



The Oldham Mascot for today is **Jessica Rafferty**. Jessica is 11 years old and her favourite player is Leo Casey.

This is Jessica's first time as the Mascot and she is looking forward to another Oldham win.

A mascot draw was held to select the Mascots for the first five matches:

The Mascot for the Barrow Border

Raiders match is Carl Clare.

For the Workington Town home match on 23rd January the mascot is Kim Broadbent.

Patrick Harwood was selected to be mascot for the Silk Cut Challenge Cup home match on the 30th January.



The Mascot for the Swinton Lions match was **Sean Casey**. Sean is 6 years old and his brothers **Callum** and **Connor** joined him as Mascots.

Debra Rafferty

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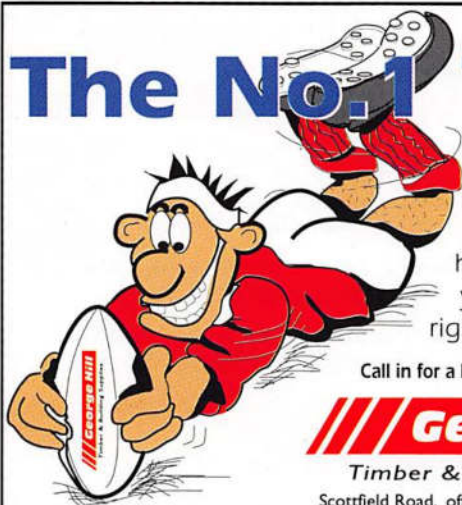
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'THE DON'



YOU CAN always tell when Christmas has passed. The television advertisements change from cuddly toys and do-it-yourself tools to exotic holidays and expensive motor cars. Nothing changes as the years pass by except perhaps that, nowadays, these commercials carry the product's website inviting you to visit [www dot comm slash dot uk dot comm](http://www.dotcommslashdotukdotcomm). How I managed to live fifty odd years without all that is a mystery. The only super highway I know is the stretch of Broadway from Failsworth to Boundary Park and the only slashes in my life occur during the after match celebrations. Being a pensioner I am unable to afford an expensive car but, with time on my hands, I must take notice of the holiday offers, especially if there is one for the Lake District. I manage to get up there at least twice a year although my destinations are usually Workington or Whitehaven instead of Keswick or Conistown Water.

Several players have made the trip between Oldham and the Lakes on a more permanent basis. More than one player has left Oldham to play for Whitehaven including a lesser known Lancashire amateur hooker, Wilf Frost, and Phil Larder, later to become Great Britain coach. Any number of tough Cumbrian forwards have moved in the opposite direction. Two who immediately spring to mind are Charlie McCourt and Billy McCracken, but the player whose transfer caused the biggest stir was Geoff Robinson. He moved for a transfer fee in excess of £9,000 at the time the biggest ever transfer fee for a forward. Robinson must have been the unluckiest player to ever play in a Challenge Cup-tie for he twice 'won' cup semi-finals and yet ended up on the losing side both times! In 1957 he was loose-forward in the Whitehaven side which lost 10-9 to Leeds. It was Robinson who made the Whitehaven try, breaking through and slipping the ball to winger Ron McMenemy who put the Cumbrians 9-8 in front. A late dropped goal, worth two points in those days, snatched victory away from Whitehaven amidst an abundance of controversy.

Seven years later it was Robinson who scored the extra time try which put Oldham 17-14 in front in that heart breaking semi-final

against Hull KR. Moments later the tie was abandoned and we were back where we started, a million miles away from Wembley.

Last February Whitehaven knocked Oldham off the Challenge Cup trail (18-2) when these clubs met for the first ever time in that competition. There have been many league clashes between the two, however, with one of the most remarkable occurring during Whitehaven's disastrous First Division campaign of season 1983-84. 'Haven won only three matches that season. They finished bottom of the table, four points adrift of Salford, and were relegated eighteen points away from safety. Barrow knocked them out of the Lancashire Cup, Widnes won 36-0 at Whitehaven in the John Player Trophy and they lost at home to Fulham in the Challenge Cup. Seven days after that Fulham defeat Oldham travelled up to the Recreation Ground to face a team who, at that point, had played 23 matches and lost 23 matches. The Roughyeds were having a reasonable season. They had defeated Leeds, St. Helens and Wigan in Division One and looked certain to add Whitehaven to that list. Included in the team which travelled up to the Lakes were centres Mick Parrish and Des Foy, scrum-half Paddy Kirwan, props Wally Jones and Mick Morgan, second-rower Mick Worrall and loose-forward Terry Flanagan, the backbone of a team who would surely prove too strong for the bottom club. What went wrong that day for Oldham is anybody's guess. New Zealand coach Graham Lowe was on holiday in the Lakes and had helped with the coaching in the build up to the match. That would do them no harm. Press speculation indicated that Whitehaven back-row forward Milton Huddart was the subject of a transfer bid by Oldham. That was denied by both clubs but Huddart was certainly fired up by all the talk and he scored a hat-trick of tries as the Cumbrians wiped the floor with Oldham to win 42-8.

That result reminds us that, in rugby league, no match is a foregone conclusion, especially when meeting opponents with the grit and determination of our Cumbrian visitors.

Don Yates

Fixtures

Date Opponent Result Att

DECEMBER F-A

12 ROCHDALE H (LAW CUP) W 30-18

27 ROCHDALE HORNETS W 23-20

JANUARY

2 Swinton Lions W 23-18

9 WHITEHAVEN WARRIORS H 3.00

16 Barrow B.R. A 3.00

23 WORKINGTON TOWN H 3.00

30 Silk Cut Challenge Cup (Rnd 3)

FEBRUARY

6 Doncaster Dragons A 3.00

13 Silk Cut Challenge Cup (Rnd 4)

20 Leigh Centurions A 3.00

27 Silk Cut Challenge Cup (Rnd 5)

MARCH

5 LANCASHIRE LYNX H 3.00

12 Widnes Vikings A 3.00

19 DEWSBURY RAMS H 3.00

26 Featherstone Rovers A 3.30

APRIL

2 Sheffield Eagles A 3.15

9 HUNSLET HAWKS H 3.00

16 Batley Bulldogs A 3.00

21 Rochdale Hornets A 7.30

24 SWINTON LIONS H 3.00

MAY

1 YORK WASPS H 3.00

7 Hull Kingston Rovers A 3.00

10 KEIGHLEY COUGARS H 7.30

14 Whitehaven Warriors A 3.00

21 BARROW B.R. H 3.00

26 Workington Town A 7.30

29 DONCASTER DRAGONS H 3.00

JUNE

4 LEIGH CENTURIONS H 3.00

11 Lancashire Lynx A 3.00

18 WIDNES VIKINGS H 3.00

25 Dewsbury Rams A 3.00

JULY

2 FEATHERSTONE ROVERS H 3.00

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