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We warmly welcome Oldham Bears to Craven Park, a club that is third in the table but on equal points with Dewsbury and Keighley.

Oldham, after a spell of playing their games at Rochdale, have returned home and back playing their rugby at Boundary Park and that can only be a good move. They had 3,500 for their first game with neighbours Rochdale and 2,400 last week for the visit of Whitehaven. Oldham are a true Rugby League town like ourselves and have produced many star players over the years. We all remember that great goal kicking full back Bernard Gangley, top G.B. centre Alan Davies and top forward Peter Smethurst.

Another G.B. player was Barrow born Dave Parker, a fine loose forward, who gained two caps. And that great loose forward Derek Rocky Turner.

Former Workington winger Ike Southward also had a spell with Oldham in the 60's and he scored six tries at the Watersheddings in the 50-4 win over Walney Central in Round Two of the RL Cup in 1960.

Have you got a copy of this months Rugby League World (Open Rugby)? There is a special addition inserted in the edition MILLENNIUM MASTERS of the 20th Century. Harry Edgar, who edited Open Rugby since its conception has chosen 20 Icons of the 20th Century but states those left out could cause concern amongst followers of the game. See what you think - so many were not mentioned - but when you only choose 20 it is always going to be difficult. He has spread his 20 over many decades and I am biased when saying why is Willie Horne not included? It is good reading.

It gives a full round up of player's careers, men like Jim Sullivan, Lance Todd, Billy Boston, Tom Van Vollenhoven, Alex Murphy, etc.



Paddy.

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Views From the North

We are pleased to welcome unbeaten Oldham to Craven Park this afternoon. They seem to have recruited well in the closed season and former international Mike Ford and ex-Saints winger Joey Hayes are certainly catching the eye. Hayes scored two tries against Haven last week and capped this with a late try-saving tackle on former Carlisle and Barrow player Gary Ruddy which left the latter needing to be carried off the field. We will have to be at our best to contain them this afternoon.

I was delighted with our form at Workington last Sunday. Workington started like a house on fire with a massive hit from Joe Nadiole which, having dislodged the ball, led to a superb opening try for winger Leigh Smith. I needn't have worried. Our young pack soon got on top of the experienced Tau Liku, Joe Nadiole, Matt Sturm and Anthony Samuel creating acres of space for the Barrow backs Tane Manihera and Darren Holt resulting in tries by Atkinson (2), Magorian, Hutton, Charlton and Rawlinson. The latter try was a result of a clever piece of deception by Tane Manihera which seemed to send the whole of the Town side the wrong way leaving a gap as wide as the M62 for Rawlinson to stroll through. The try of the match came from Phil Atkinson after a clever chip through on half way from Tane Manihera. He looked to be well covered by the Town defence and with the Raiders support well covered from an outside pass, I thought the moment was lost. Not a bit of it! "Ackie" turned the full back inside out for a fine try converted by Darren Holt to seal the game as a contest and send us in for the half-time break at 28-6. Town stiffened up in the second half with Smith completing his hat-trick but they never really looked like troubling the Raiders who ended as 35-18 worthy winners.

Despite the misgivings of most of us at Barrow, the return to winter rugby is having a good effect on attendances so far

this season. Admittedly, the first three games included two Bank Holidays with a number of derby matches but the trend is massively up on last season and very welcome too. A more accurate comparison will come towards the end of the season when the "no-hoppers" start to emerge and the novelty value has worn off. Whilst strongly preferring the summer game myself, anything that increases the gates is good for the game and I'd be happy to make thermal socks and long-johns regular Sunday attire under the circumstances. It will also prove beneficial to the appearance of my garden! We are pleased to announce that former director Ken Holmes has rejoined the board as from last week bringing the board back up to full strength following the resignation of Alex Bradley due to pressure of work. We now need to aim at a stable board for as long as possible so that the benefits of experience are not periodically lost to the club.

One innovation the club is introducing over the next week or so is a Barrow Website on the Internet. Whilst this may leave some of our more mature supporters unmoved, it really is the communication of the future. All the Superleague clubs and most of the Football Association clubs have their own Website and we are determined not to be left behind. If any of our supporters would like to get involved in this please contact David Tucker via e-mail at dtucker@searchplus.co.uk.

Finally and most importantly, we welcome our supporters this afternoon. The match is sponsored by Messrs Winning Line – trophy suppliers of Barrow and represented by Terry Irvine. The matchball is sponsored by Paul Russell of "Auto Image". Both of these concerns have helped us in the past. Thank you gentlemen. I hope you and your guests have a great day out and that we reward your support with a great Barrow performance.

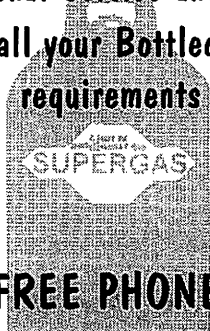
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BLAST FROM THE PAST *by Lee O'Brien*

A LOOK AT WHAT BARROW WERE DOING 5, 15 & 25 YEARS AGO

5 YEARS AGO,

Sunday January 15th 1995, BARROW BRAVES 34 BRAMLEY 20

Barrow recorded their first home win of the season by beating Bramley at Craven Park. The win moved Barrow two points clear of Runcorn at the bottom of Division Two. Young Stand-off Phil Atkinson was the star of the show, scoring a 80 metre try and booting 7 goals for a personal tally of 18 points. Other Barrow tries came from Whalley, Smith, Trainor and Ashcroft. The game was finely balanced at 20-20 when Atkinson sent in Ashcroft for a try which he converted and then scored that breakaway try. Bramley ended the game with 10 men as referee Steve Presley sin-binned 2 and sent off one.

Barrow: McKelleher, Smith (Jamie), Ashcroft, Robinson, Trainor, Atkinson, Smith (Jeff), Quayle (Hadley), Ruane, Craey, Hannah, Morow (Quayle), Whalley (Neale). Attendance: 636

15 YEARS AGO,

Sunday, January 19th, 1985, LEIGH P BARROW P

The game due to be played at Hilton Park was called off due to a frozen pitch. It was due to be Barrows last league match before the Challenge Cup Preliminary Round tie against Halifax at Craven Park. Barrow were lying in 4th from bottom in the First Division table.

BOTTOM SIX

	P	W	D	L	Pts.
Warrington	17	7	0	10	14
Halifax	15	6	0	9	12
Barrow	16	6	0	10	12
Leigh	18	5	0	13	10
Hunslet	18	3	1	14	7
Workington	16	1	0	15	2

25 YEARS AGO,

Friday, January 18th 1975, BARROW 10 OLDHAM 0

Barrow staked their biggest claim to promotion to the First Division by beating second placed Oldham more comfortably than the scoreline suggested. The win put Barrow into the top four. The game was won in a ten minute spell where Barrow scored 8 points. Warren Ayres was the star again as he had a hand in both tries. The first came when Ayres picked up a loose ball, fed prop Perry who passed to winger Clegg, who did well to twist in the tackle and feed centre Knight who in turn gave the ball to Davies to score. Ayres then ghosted past 3 tacklers before offloading to Phil Hogan who showed his strength by brushing off Tony Wainwright and Keith Ashcroft before diving in for the try. Tyrer converted and also added a second half penalty.

Barrow: Tyrer, Clegg, Knight, Harry Wood, O'Brien, Ayres, Jones, Murray, Crewdson, Perry, Davies, (Harrison), McLean, P. Hogan. Attendance: 1,703.



Man in form Phil Atkinson heading for the try line against Whitehaven.

On right former Barrow player Gary Ruddy.

Picture by Sheenah Alcock, Evening Mail

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OLDHAM Pen Pics

Craig Barker local lad who was with the Bears before signing for the Roughyeds when one club died and the other was born in 1997. A stand-off half with a neat pair of hands.

Keith Brennan a late entrant into the pro ranks. An extremely accomplished scrum-half who is expected to push player-coach Mike Ford all the way for the No. 7 jersey.

Mark Campbell one of 16 new boys brought to the club by Mike Ford. Formerly with Leeds Rhinos and Keighley Cougars, this hard working back-row forward is studying at Leeds University for a degree in chemical engineering.

Leo Casey needs no introduction to Roughyeds fans. A tough prop, who played with the former Oldham club, Featherstone Rovers, Swinton and Rochdale Hornets before signing for the Roughyeds for the 1999 season. Captained the side and, at the age of 32, became a firm favourite of the crowd. An Irish international, he was the first and only Oldham player to command a transfer fee of £100,000 when Peter Fox took him to Featherstone.

Jason Clegg a product of Littleborough RL Club, this heavyweight prop turned pro for Bradford Bulls and had a stint with Batley before signing for the Roughyeds. Earned selected for the West of Pennines side against the East side coached by Mike Ford. Received an approach from France, but chose to re-sign for Oldham for the year 2000.

Peter Ferris toured Australia with BARLA under 19s and represented BARLA under-23s, but then left the sport to concentrate on his career in computers, only returning at the age of 25 when Mike Ford spotted him playing at centre for Dukinfield RU Club.

Kevin Fitzpatrick a full-back who made his name with Saddleworth Rangers and turned pro for Oldham at the age of 20. Recently celebrated his 21st while studying for a degree in journalism and the media. Hopes to make the headlines as well as write them.

Mike Ford a scrum-half who has been making the right sort of headlines all his sporting life. Played for Wigan at Wembley when only 19. Also starred for Leigh, Oldham, Castleford, Warrington, Wakefield and South Queensland Crushers. Toured Down Under with Great Britain in 1988. Coached Bramley to mid-table respectability in 1999 before landing the Oldham job.

Anthony Gibbons one half of the twin combination which played for Leeds Rhinos and Bramley before joining Oldham at the start of the 2000 season. A utility back, 23 year old Anthony is earmarked to play right-centre.

David Gibbons the other twin. Like brother Anthony, David turned pro with Leeds Rhinos as a 17 year-old to follow in the footsteps of their uncle, Neil Hague. Both became household names at Headingley and played more than 20 senior games, including several in the first Super League season of 1996. Formerly captain of Bramley, David will be a key figure for the Roughyeds at stand-off half.

Joey Hayes a young winger who has crammed a lot into his respectively short spell as a pro. Made his name with St. Helens for whom he played in a Regal Trophy final and a Super League premiership final to earn a place on the Great Britain tour squad which went to New Zealand, Fiji and Papua New Guinea in 1996. Suffered a setback with a serious knee injury, but fought back to play 11 Super League games with Salford Reds in 1999.

John Hough will go down in local RL history as the first player to sign for the new Oldham club when it was launched in the autumn of 1997. Has had two cracking seasons in 1998 and 1999, when he took the club's player-of-the-year award.

Kevin Mannion another Wiganer, 22 year old Kevin is a ball-playing loose-forward, who made his senior debut with Rochdale Hornets when only 16. Starred for the Hornets Academy and Alliance sides, but then concentrated on his studies at Lancaster University. Played for England and GB Students, for whom he toured Australia and played in France.

Joe McNicholas played his first senior game in the Bears last match at Leeds. Broke his leg for the Roughyeds in the new club's first league game at Workington and missed the rest of the 1998 season. A pacey winger.

Tom O'Reilly an international for Papua New Guinea, 25 year old Tom in an Aussie with an Irish passport. Can play stand-off or loose-forward equally well, but will be earmarked by Ford for the No. 13 jersey.

Andy Proctor named captain of the club by Ford for the 2000 season. This former Saddleworth, Wakefield Trinity, Oldham and Bramley prop-forward, now aged 30, won a man-of-steel award while with Trinity.

Pat Rich another of the younger signings, 21 year old Pat is a native of the North-East. Played regular senior rugby for Keighley in 1999, while studying for a law degree at Leeds. Also represented England Students, for whom he played in the centre in the World Cup final at Hull. Can play centre or back-row forward.

Wes Rogers a strong second-row forward, Wes has joined his home town club after stints with Widnes and Swinton. A hot property as a teenager, he was signed by Widnes by Doug Laughton.

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Premiership

Express

with MARTYN SADLER



Rugby League Express editor MARTYN SADLER considers which players have made a big impact so far in the new NFP season.

We have only had three rounds of the Northern Ford Premiership season, but already we've seen thrilling matches, superb skills, and heartstopping controversy.

And from now on it can only get better!

Dewsbury Rams sit at the top of the table with three straight wins. I saw them win a hard fought opening game of the season against Batley Bulldogs at Mount Pleasant with a superb gamebreaking try by young winger Alex Godfrey. The impressive thing about the Rams' performances this season, though, is their defence. In three games they have conceded just one try, and last Sunday they easily swept away the challenge of Featherstone Rovers with a 38-2 victory at the Lionheart Stadium.

Also undefeated are Keighley Cougars and Oldham. The Cougars lost their chief executive Abi Ekoku last week to the Bradford Bulls, but Karl Harrison, in his rookie coaching year, has already imbued some of that old Cougar spirit among his players that will make them hard to beat this season. Today's home game against Hull Kingston Rovers, who ended the Dragons' unbeaten run last Sunday 8-4 at Craven Park, will be a real test for the Cougars, and is possibly the NFP game of the day.

They won't agree with that at the other Craven Park, however, where Barrow take on the other unbeaten side Oldham. Under Mike Ford's astute coaching the Oldham club has had a start to the season it could only have dreamed of a couple of years ago, when new Chairman Chris Hamilton had just formed a new club out of the ashes of the liquidated Oldham Bears. Oldham have shown tremendous character to win each of their games by margins of five, three and four respectively, showing that they have the mental strength to win the close games. That could be a vital quality at the end of the season.

Meanwhile, which players have made the biggest impact on the competition at this early stage of the season? Those fans who read League Express every Monday will know that our reporter nominates a Game Star for every game. So far, in 27 matches played, three players have been nominated twice: the Dragons' Latham Tawhai, Swinton's Ian Watson, and Rochdale's new Australian signing Dane Dorahy, the son of the former Wigan and Halifax coach John Dorahy.

All three players are scrum-halves, and their nominations tell us how important that key position is in the modern game.

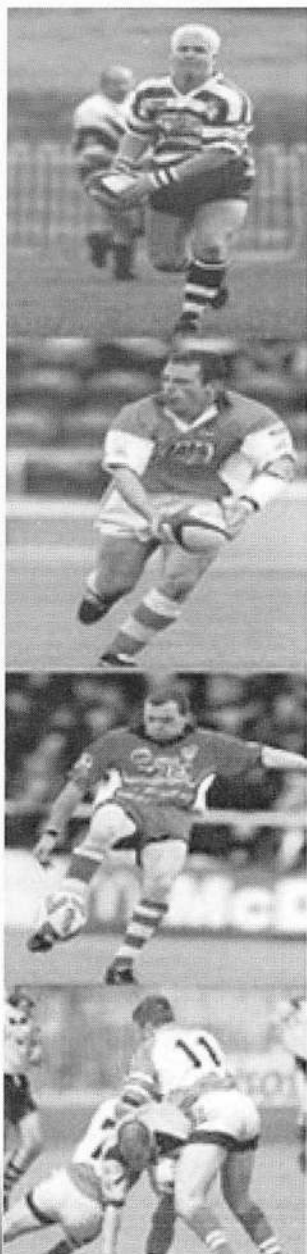
The other noticeable feature about this year's competition is how many former Super League players are already making an impact in the NFP, raising standards ever higher. David Hulme, last year the oldest player in Super League, and this year, I assume, the oldest in the Northern Ford Premiership, won the Widnes Vikings Game Star award last Sunday against Hunslet Hawks. And we have seen Leigh's Simon Baldwin and Craig Dean, Mike Ford and Joey Hayes of Oldham, and Martin Wood of Keighley Cougars also with Super League experience winning nominations.

But there are plenty of younger players who have come through the ranks who are also winning nominations. Darren Holt of Barrow, Dan Potter of Dewsbury and Jamie Rooney of Featherstone have already won a Game Star award each, and they will surely be players to watch all season. It's a truly compelling competition!

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- 4 Jamie Smith _____
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- 6 Tane Manihera _____
- 7 Darren Holt _____
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- 9 Dave Clark _____
- 10 Chris Whiteley _____
- 11 Stuart Rhodes _____
- 12 Geoff Luxon _____
- 13 Gareth Pratt _____
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N.B. Only one £100 prize will be paid on the Saturday. There will be no prize for the first 4 or 3 numbers on this day.

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1st Team Statistics 1999/2000 Season

<i>Player's Name</i>	<i>App's</i>	<i>(Sub's)</i>	<i>Tries</i>	<i>Goals</i>	<i>D.G.'s</i>	<i>Points</i>
ATKINSON, Phil	3		4			16
CHARLTON, Gary		2	1			4
CLARK, Dave	3					
GARDNER, Paul		1				
HOLT, Darren	3			11	2	24
HUTTON, Glen	3		2			8
JACKSON, Steve	1	1				
LUXON, Geoff	3					
MAGORIAN, Stewart	2	1	1			4
MANIHERA, Tane	2		1			4
MARSHALL, Jamie	2	1	1			4
MASSEY, Chris		2				
PRATT, Gareth	3					
RAWLINSON, Ian		3	2			8
RHODES, Stuart	2					
SALMON, Paul	3					
SMITH, Jamie	3		1			4
WHITEHEAD, Mike	3		1			4
WHITELEY, Chris	2					
WHITTER, Damien	1	1				



Hannah Pearce with Dave Clark

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2000 *PREVIEW 2*

A look around the Northern Ford Premiership

KEIGHLEY COUGARS

A new management team are at Cougar Park. Karl Harrison will be hoping that his Super League experience will help the Cougars to a play off place. The squad has been strengthened by the signings of Ian Hughes from Sheffield and powerful Irish International Richard Smith from Hull KR. With the majority of last year's squad still present the Cougars should be in with a real shout this time round.

LANCASHIRE LYNX

After the success of 1998, the Lynx struggled last year mainly due to injuries hitting their small squad. It looks like the same story this year as coach Steve Hampson has had to cope with the departure of several star players including P.J. Solomon, Doc Murray, Steve Gee and Neil Parsley. The Lynx will need all of their coaches experience in the game to make an impact this year.

LEIGH CENTURIONS

After last year's successful campaign it is no surprise that there haven't been many changes at Hilton Park. Signings include Simon Baldwin and Paul Anderson from Sheffield and Saints centre Alan Cross. Leigh were only one win away from the top of the table last year and will be looking to repeat that success.

OLDHAM

The Roughyeds are back at Boundary Park and they have installed local boy Mike Ford as their coach. Ex Saints winger Joey Hayes is the major signing and with the coach still being able to control things in the middle of the park, Oldham should cause a few upsets along the course of the season. They have already gathered in one trophy this year, the A.J. Law Cup by beating neighbours Rochdale 30-18.

ROCHDALE HORNETS

The Hornets are hoping that the new Australian coach Steve Linnane can have the same impact this year as Leigh's Australian coach Ian Millward had last term. The Hornets will be trying to throw off the tag and under achievers and with a large influx of players including full-back Lee Maher and former Salford utility man Scott Martin they could be the leagues dark horses although the pre-season defeat to Oldham will have given them something to think about.

SWINTON LIONS

With Mike Gregory having put his players through a tough pre-season, hopes are high this year that the Lions could make a big push for the play-off places. Ex GB player Paul Loughlin and ex Saints forward Ian Pickavance are the major signings and with no notable departures things are looking good at Gigg Lane



Mike Whitehead No. 8 being congratulated on his 21st minute try against Whitehaven. Picture by Sheenah Alcock, Evening Mail

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BARROW RAIDERS RLFC 1999/2000
NORTHERN FORD PREMIERSHIP

DECEMBER 1999 F - A

26 Whitehaven Warriors H 31-4

JANUARY 2000

3 Featherstone Rovers A 14-35

9 Workington Town A 35-18

16 Oldham H

23 Leigh Centurions A

30 Silk Cut C.C. 3rd Round H

FEBRUARY 2000

6 Lancashire Lynx H

13 Silk Cut C.C. 4th Round

20 Widnes Vikings A

27 Silk Cut C.C. 5th Round

MARCH 2000

5 Rochdale Hornets H

12 Swinton Lions A

12 Silk Cut C.C. Quarter Finals

19 Sheffield H

26 Hunslet Hawks H

26 Silk Cut C.C. Semi Finals

APRIL 2000

2 Trans Pennine Cup Final

2 York A

9 Batley Bulldogs H

16 Keighley Cougars A

21 Whitehaven Warriors A

24 Featherstone Rovers H

29 Silk Cut C.C. FINAL

MAY 2000

1 Hull Kingston Rovers H

7 Doncaster Dragons A

*10 Dewsbury Rams H

14 Workington Town H

21 Oldham A

*26 Leigh Centurions H

29 Lancashire Lynx A

JUNE 2000

4 Widnes Vikings H

11 Dewsbury Rams A

18 Swinton Lions H

25 Sheffield A

JULY 2000

2 Hull Kingston Rovers A

*Home games kick-off at 3 p.m.
except those marked
with an * which kick-off at 7.30 p.m.*

Today's Mascot:



IAN IRVINE

Aged 10 years. Plays rugby for Barrow Island under 10's also captain's his school side at Abbotsmead Junior School.

Other hobbies are moto x riding and football.

Favourite player Darren Holt.

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v

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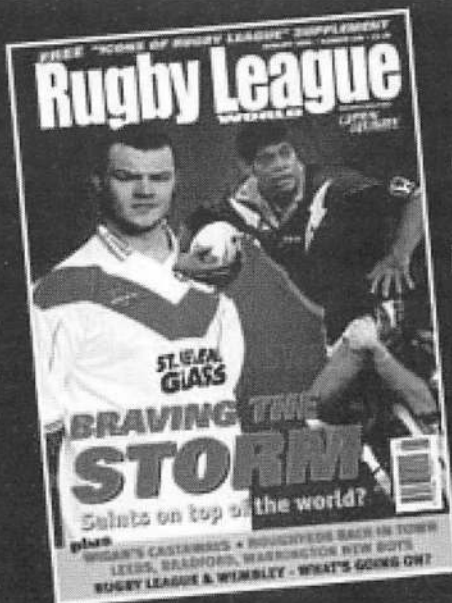
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NEXT HOME GAME
SILK CUT CHALLENGE CUP
3rd Round

**BARROW
RAIDERS**

v

FEATHERSTONE LIONS

SUNDAY, 30th JANUARY

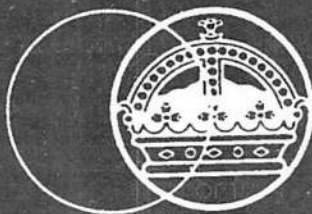
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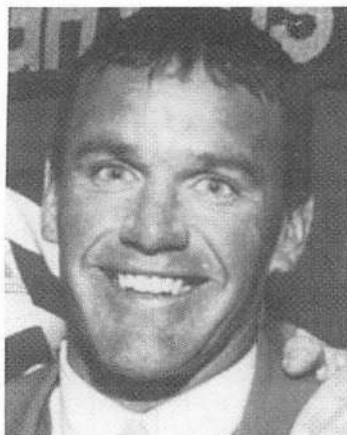
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DEALERS

MIKE FORD

Oldhams newly appointed player Coach Mike Ford returns to his home town Club and into the hot seat. Mike has had a chequered career that has seen him parade his talents in both Northern and Southern Hemispheres. He Toured New Zealand in 1983 with the BARLA Youth team before signing for Wigan who beat off the challenge of Bradford and Leigh. He had four good years at Central Park picking up a Challenge Cup winners medal partnering the great Brett Kenny in that famous 1985 final in which Wigan beat Hull 28-24. He also picked up winners medals in the Lancashire Cup (2), John Players Trophy (2) and a Championship medal.



Wigan then signed that little general Andy Gregory with Mike moving onto Leigh where he spent nine months Touring Down Under in 1988. He then went to Oldham for 3 years and then on to Castleford for three years in which he played against Wigan in the 1991-92 Cup final picking up a runners-up medal.

Then Mike went Down Under joining a newly formed club South Queenslands Crushers before coming home to Warrington, onto Wakefield and back to Castleford.

Last season he spread his wings going into coaching with Bramley before receiving the call to come home to Oldham.

And it's so far so good with three wins from three, although neighbours Whitehaven gave them a scare at Boundary Park last week.

Mike said he has a great deal of respect for Barrow who after leading last year at Bramley finally went down. "We got off the hook that day" he added.

Mike is happy to return to his home town club "It is a rugby town, there is new optimism at the club and if we put in the commitment then the people of Oldham will come along and watch.

Mike Ford is one of the new breed of young English Coaches. I hope he prospers well for the future along with other Englishmen. The time will and should come when many of our Super-League clubs appoint their own Countrymen - I'm sure most will have learned enough from their Australian counter-parts.

Paddy McAteer

LEADING SCORERS

SIMON VERBICKAS of Widnes Vikings is the leading goals and points scorer after three rounds of the Northern Ford Premiership. The winger has kicked 15 goals and scored three tries for a total of 42 points.

Mark Sibson is second in the points chart with 30 after totalling two tries and 11 goals in his first three matches for Oldham following his move from Bramley.

Three players share the tryscoring lead with four touchdowns - Phil Atkinson (Barrow Raiders), Neil Frazer (Whitehaven Warriors) and Damian Munro (Widnes Vikings).

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