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A welcome from Sir Rodney Walker, Chairman of the Rugby Football League

AFTER three years of Northern Ford Premiership Grand Finals, I think it is safe to say that another fine Rugby League tradition has been established.

Winning this prestigious match has become a major

target for many professional players, and it is a testimony to the backing of our sponsors, Northern Ford, that this fixture's profile has reached such a pre-eminent position in such a short space of time.

It is absolutely vital that the whole sport of Rugby League has something at which to aim each season, and the Premiership Grand Final encompasses so many of the sport's greatest attributes.

These include intense

competition among players and clubs, spectator and media interest, tradition and the possibility of promotion.

We are delighted as a sport that the Northern Ford Premiership Grand Final has so quickly found a place within



Rugby League's calendar of Principal Dates and I look forward to what promises to be perhaps the most competitive final so far.

Northern Ford have been outstanding sponsors for Rugby League and we are grateful for their support. Modern professional sport has developed through the backing, both financial and advisory, of sponsors. We have been lucky to enjoy Northern Ford's support of this competition during the last three years.

The Grand Final encompasses so many of the sport's greatest attributes



TIMETABLE OF EVENTS

1.00pm	Gates open
1.30pm	Little Leaguers kick off
2.00pm	Pre-match entertainment starts
2.23pm	Teams enter
2.25pm	Official presentation to teams
2.30pm	Kick-off
3.10pm	Half-time
3.20pm	Second half kicks off
4.00pm	Trophy presentation

IN THE EVENT OF A DRAW

If the scores are level at the end of 80 minutes, extra time of ten minutes each way will be played. Should the scores remain tied, the match will be decided by a 'Golden Point' period, which will continue until any kind of score is registered. If it's a try, there will not be a conversion attempt. The referee will toss a coin and the side who wins the toss will have the choice of ends and the losing team will kick off. The referee will signal the end of the game once a 'Golden Point' score is awarded.

FORD PREMIERSHIP AWARD

The Northern Ford Premiership Grand Final Man of the Match will be decided by members of the media attending today's fixture. The winner will receive £200 and a Northern Ford commemorative trophy. He will also be presented with the Tom Bergin Trophy by the Rugby League Writers' Association.

RFL ANTI-RACIST POLICY

The Rugby Football League fully supports the 'Let's Tackle Racism in Rugby League' campaign and welcomes all players and spectators irrespective of their ethnic or racial origins. Racism has no place in our game. Racist chants are totally unacceptable. Allow everyone to enjoy the game.

KEEP OFF THE PITCH

All spectators are reminded that entry on to the field of play, either during or following the completion of the match, is forbidden, and offenders will be ejected from the stadium. Notice is hereby given that the Rugby Football League reserves the right to take action against any unauthorised person entering the field of play.

SPECIAL COLLECTION

Today's collection is being taken up on behalf of Simon Tufts, the Featherstone Lions amateur club coach, who was seriously injured in an accident while on holiday.

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FORD LOOKS FORWARD TO NFP GRAND FINAL

Proud to be part of a winning partnership

FORD and Ford Dealers, currently in the third year of sponsoring the Northern Ford Premiership, are looking forward to a great game of rugby today as the two finalists battle it out to become this year's winners of the NFP Grand Final.

Stephen Russell, pictured right representing Ford Dealers, said: "We are delighted to be involved in the sponsorship. It has been a great season, with some very impressive rugby being played, particularly by the clubs who took part in this year's play-offs leading up to the Northern Ford Premiership Grand Final."

Commenting on the sponsorship of the tournament, Mark Jones, Ford Marketing Manager said: "We have built very strong and successful partnerships with both the Rugby League and the clubs over the last three years and are delighted with the progress we have made."

"The decision to sponsor the tournament was made over three years ago due to the family-orientated aspect of the sport. Ford felt this reflected its brand values and, geographically, we were able to back up our support and commitment to the game with a wealth of dealerships in the area."

"The game itself provides the ideal platform for us to instigate numerous initiatives in order to generate coverage



for Ford, Ford Dealers and the game itself. This is one of the benefits of sponsoring a local tournament - it allows us to get involved with all aspects of the game and ensure we fulfil our commitment to ensure its success."

Mark continued: "The Northern Ford Premiership sponsorship is now being recognised as one of the best examples of companies and sporting bodies working well together for mutual benefit."

"Our involvement with Yorkshire Television is an ideal example of this. Last year, Ford facilitated the making of 'Rugby League Raw'."

"This culminated in the live broadcast of the Grand Final on terrestrial TV, which reached an audience of more than one million viewers. We are extremely pleased Yorkshire Television will be broadcasting the Grand Final again this year."



WELCOME to today's Northern Ford Premiership Grand Final for what promises to be another tremendous Rugby League occasion. We have,

since the introduction of the Grand Final Play-off series, seen a steady rise in playing standards produced by players outside Super League, and today promises to further underline that progress.

I am doubly delighted, both as chairman of the Association of Premiership Clubs and of finalists Oldham, to deliver this address.

During the 2000-2001 season, the NFP has again delivered some great entertainment. And that augurs well for the future of not only this competition but also the sport of Rugby League. This is due in no small part to the support we have received from our sponsors, Northern Ford, and I thank them for their backing.

Last year's final between Dewsbury Rams and Leigh Centurions produced a record attendance at Gigg Lane, Bury, but I hope today's game will see that record figure extended still further.

Not only world it provide a great atmosphere at Spotland but it would further raise the profile of the fixture and competition.

All three previous Premiership finals have produced high-quality, nerve-wracking affairs, and we are particularly pleased to have again secured live coverage for Yorkshire, Granada, Border and Tyne-Tees television areas. I am also proud to have played a part in securing a deal with Channel Five that will see the game televised again on Tuesday, July 31.

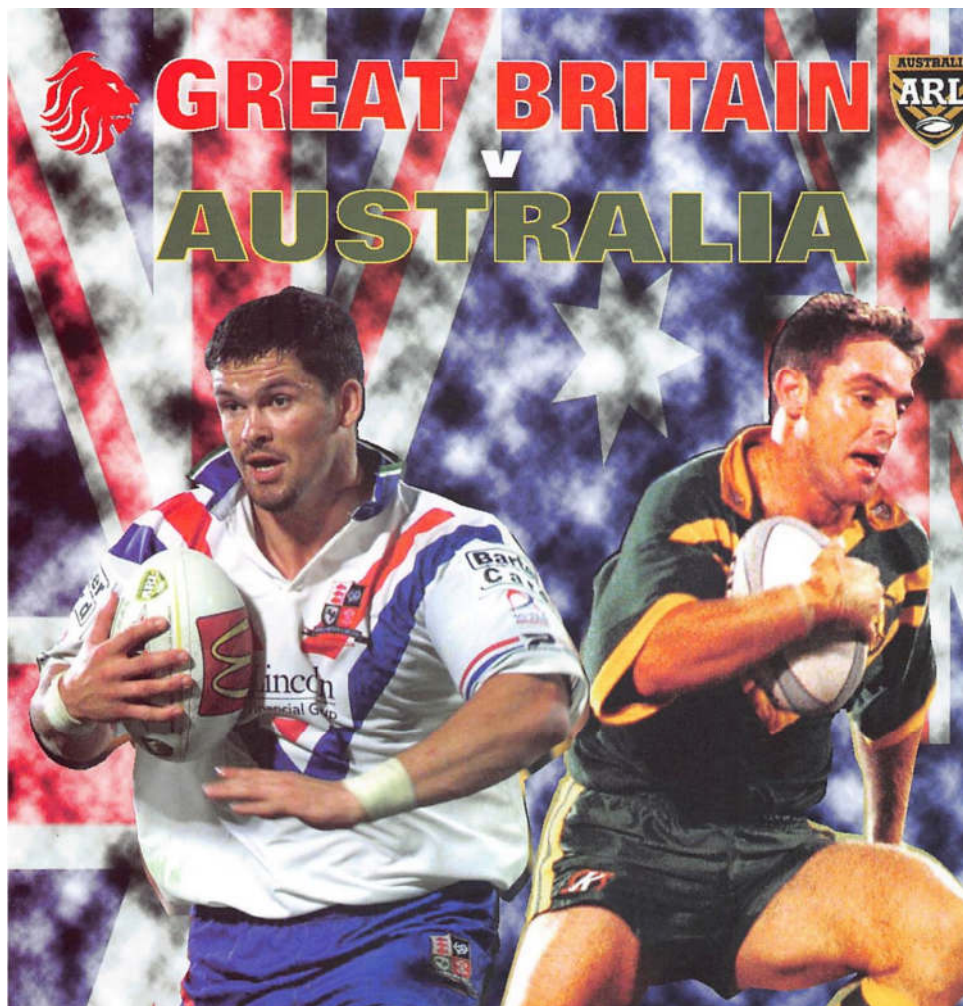
This latest deal represents yet another step forward, not only for the NFP, but the whole game of Rugby League because this will be the first time an entire match will have been broadcast nationally on commercial terrestrial television.

I am pleased to recognise another tremendous play-off competition that has culminated in Oldham and Widnes Vikings reaching today's final. With so many games producing twists and turns along the way, it has been a great advertisement for the sport.

On a more general note, may I congratulate all the clubs in the NFP for their efforts this season as well as recognise the crucial role that you, the paying spectators, play within our sport. Thank you for the continued support and I just hope that you will all enjoy the game.

Christopher Hamilton, Chairman, Association of Premiership Clubs





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Finals were just Grand




Great NFP Grand Finals of previous seasons are recalled by **TIM BUTCHER** of TotalRL.com

THE two great clubs that will do battle today for the ultimate prize have a hard act to follow. The Northern Ford Premiership Grand Final has an unerring habit of producing all that is best about sport - passion, drama, skill, bravery and an unquenchable commitment to the cause.

The Grand Final is the type of event that confirms my faith in Rugby League as the greatest of sports. Having been fortunate enough to be present at all three finals so far, I never want to miss one.

The first, in 1998, was billed as a night to remember... and it was just that. Wakefield Trinity edged their arch rivals Featherstone Rovers 24-22 at the McAlpine Stadium.

A heart-stopping 80 minutes of football was only decided four minutes from time by a Francis Stephenson try, which was coolly converted by Garen

separate two passionate sides. This time round, Richard Agar produced the field goal for Dewsbury as they held off the Leigh Centurions by 13-12.

Such is the determination to come out on top on these occasions, no more than two points has ever separated NFP Grand Finalists.

But who will win today? I wouldn't be daft enough to try and predict it.

The old adage that you have to lose a Grand Final to win one - which Dewsbury proved in 1999 and 2000 - is certainly of no use to us today, with both sides taking part in their first final. On the evidence of both side's comebacks in the Major semi-finals, we can be sure there will be no surrender from either team.

I'm just sure they will do us proud in showcasing all that is good about Rugby League.

NFP GRAND FINALS
1998: Wakefield Trinity 24 Featherstone Rovers 22
1999: Hunslet Hawks 12 Dewsbury Rams 11
2000: Dewsbury Rams 13 Leigh Centurions 12

EVERY ONE'S A WINNER... cup joy for Wakefield Trinity, top left, Hunslet Hawks, above, and Dewsbury Rams, left, after their thrilling Grand Final victories



Northern Ford

Premiership REVIEW

2000-2001

It's Leigh's league and woe for the Wasps after a thrilling season of high drama and big changes

THE third season of the Northern Ford Premiership has seen standards rise to a new high level. Here, **GARETH WALKER** takes you back over the 2000-2001 highlights step by step and club by club.

LEIGH CENTURIONS finished the regular Northern Ford Premiership season nine points ahead of their nearest rivals after a stunning campaign under coach Paul Terzis.

With Neil Turley, Simon Svabic and Simon Baldwin prominent on their long list of key contributors, the Centurions were undefeated at Hilton Park in the league campaign and scored well over 1,000 points.

WIDNES VIKINGS secured second place on the final day of the season, having made great strides in the aftermath of Neil Kelly replacing David Hulme as coach midway through the campaign.

After making a number of impressive signings, the Vikings lost just one league game with Kelly in charge, and had key performers in Martin Crompton, Phil Cantillon and Simon Knox.

ROCHDALE HORNETS were undoubtedly the competition's biggest improvers. Under rookie coach Martin Hall, they progressed from 13th place in 2000 to third in 2001, despite Hall taking over the reigns just three weeks before the start of the season. Marlon Billy was a

prolific try-scorer, while captain Brendan O'Meara and prop Danny Sculthorpe also made the All Stars Team.

Hornets were only separated from fourth-placed **OLDHAM** by points difference, after the Roughyeds lost at Hull KR in the final league game of the season. But, overall, it was another outstanding year for Mike Ford and the Roughyeds, who came undefeated through a spell of seven games in 21 days in April and May.

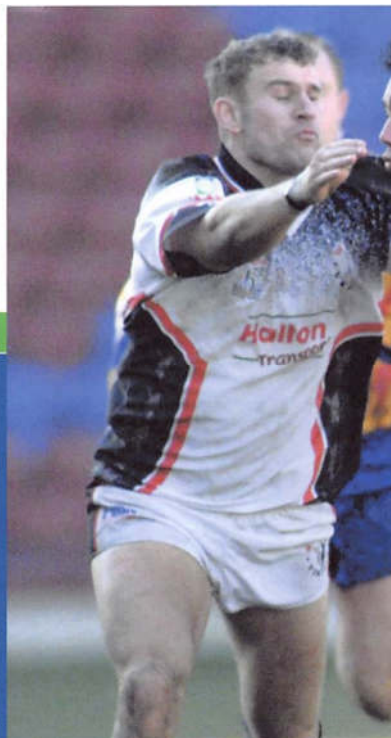
In fifth place for the third consecutive year were **FEATHERSTONE ROVERS**, who looked a good bet for the top four before losing a handful of crucial games in the second half of the season.

Last year's champions **DEWSBURY RAMS** suffered from a mid-season exodus to Widnes that saw coach Kelly and several important players depart. They never really recovered, although they did string together an impressive run of results late in the league campaign.

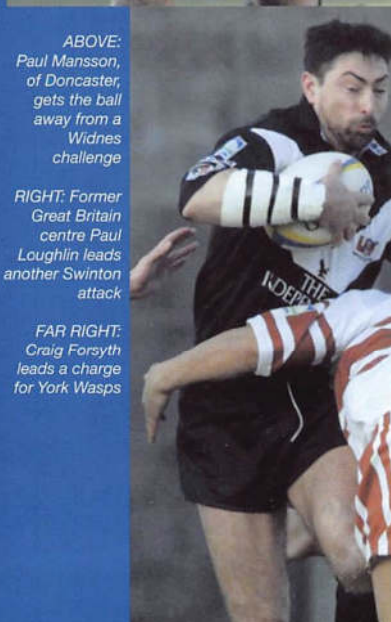
HULL KR finished as strongly as anyone, with seven wins from their last eight games, and will look forward to next season with great relish after a season of improvement under another coach who took over at short notice, Gary Wilkinson.

KEIGHLEY COUGARS enjoyed, and suffered, a rollercoaster of a season. They began by challenging for the Minor Premiership, lost almost their entire first team squad, then recovered with a group of young, enthusiastic players who guided them into a play-off place.

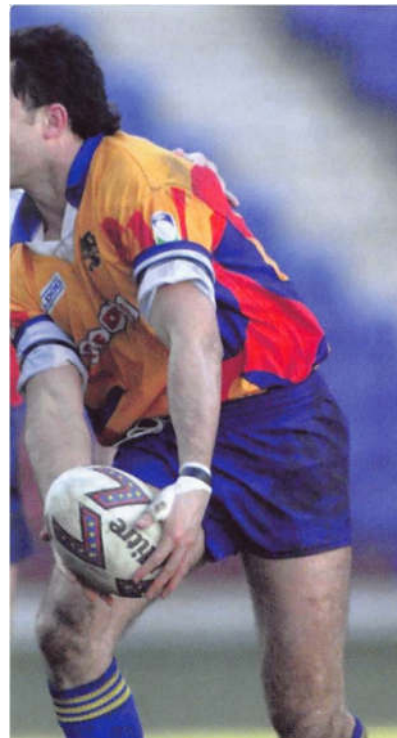
The two West Cumbrian neighbours, **WORKINGTON TOWN** and **WHITEHAVEN** both narrowly missed out on a top-eight spot, but both have



ABOVE: Paul Mansson, of Doncaster, gets the ball away from a Widnes challenge



FAR RIGHT: Craig Forsyth leads a charge for York Wasps



TOP: Chris Charles, a powerful performer for Hull KR through the campaign. **BELOW:** Barry Eaton, of Dewsbury, about to pass



player-defections halfway through the year, which severely dented their play-off aspirations. Even then, they recovered to become the first side to defeat Leigh. But a desperately disappointing end to the season confined them to 12th place.

BATLEY BULLDOGS had three coaches during the season, but appear to be developing some stability now under their latest boss, Paul Storey. Performances late in the campaign suggest an upturn in fortunes at Mount Pleasant.

BARROW BORDER RAIDERS will soon welcome Cameron Bell as their new coach after Paul Charlton paid the price for some disappointing results and the lack of a top-eight challenge.

SWINTON LIONS and **HUNSLET HAWKS** both turned to youth after being forced to release high-profile players for financial reasons.

Their principle reasons to be cheerful centre around their talented young stars, notably the Lions' Mick Nanyin



tremendous reason for optimism after progression in 2001.

Town were only denied by Hull KR's last-day win, while Whitehaven had to struggle throughout with a horrific list of injuries but still made significant strides under Paul Cullen.

SHEFFIELD EAGLES continued their own development since reforming, but their inconsistency meant they were always struggling to make up ground on the leading eight.

However, the Eagles were rewarded for off-field activities with their selection as NFP Club of the Year.

DONCASTER DRAGONS were another side hit by mass

and Craig Ibbotson of the Hawks. **GATESHEAD THUNDER**'s first season in the NFP was a largely disappointing affair, but a couple of wins towards the end of the season will have given them real hope for next year, and they achieved their main objective in surviving.

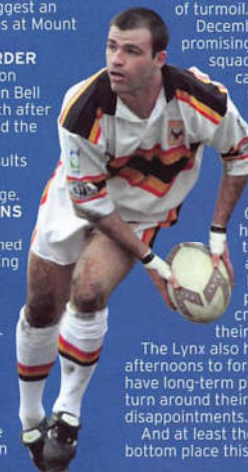
The competition's bottom two was again made up of **YORK WASPS** and **CHORLEY LYNX**, with the Wasps this time round collecting the unwanted wooden spoon after a year of turmoil.

December saw a promising-looking squad starting the campaign for the Wasps, but many of their players soon left amid a financial crisis.

Coach Lee Crooks even had to pull on the boots to avoid the club being given a potentially crippling fine at their lowest point.

The Lynx also had a few afternoons to forget, but they have long-term plans in place to turn around their recent disappointments.

And at least they avoided bottom place this time.



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Stats



NORTHERN FORD PREMIERSHIP

	P	W	D	L	For	Agst	Diff	PTS
Leigh Centurions	28	26	0	2	1139	321	818	52
Widnes Vikings	28	21	1	6	961	377	584	43
Rochdale Hornets	28	21	0	7	865	433	432	42
Oldham	28	21	0	7	780	416	364	42
Featherstone Rovers	28	17	2	9	825	401	424	36
Dewsbury Rams	28	18	0	10	801	438	363	36
Hull KR	28	16	2	10	555	450	105	34
Keighley Cougars	28	16	1	11	810	498	312	33
Workington Town	28	16	0	12	681	568	113	32
Whitehaven	28	15	1	12	608	419	189	31
Sheffield Eagles	28	14	0	14	637	543	94	28
Doncaster Dragons	28	14	0	14	622	532	90	28
Batley Bulldogs	28	13	0	15	452	618	-166	26
Barrow Border Raiders	28	12	1	15	631	685	-54	25
Swinton Lions	28	10	0	18	538	711	-173	20
Hunslet Hawks	28	6	1	21	380	959	-579	13
Gateshead Thunder	28	2	0	26	346	990	-644	4
Chorley Lynx	28	2	0	26	395	1361	-966	4
York Wasps	28	1	1	26	193	1499	-1306	3



ON THE RUN: Jim Carlton, of Gateshead

NFP TOP-SCORERS

TRIES (play-off figure in brackets, included in total)

1	Neil Turley	Leigh	52 (2)
2	Phil Cantillon	Widnes	43 (1)
3	Graeme Lewthwaite	Workington	30
4	Marlon Billy	Rochdale	26 (1)
5	Adrian Flynn	Dewsbury	23
6	Jamie Stokes	Featherstone	21
7	Matt Bramald	Featherstone	20
	Damian Munro	Widnes	20
9	Danny Seal	Featherstone	19*
10	Paul Mansson	Doncaster	18

* includes 16 scored for Keighley

GOALS (play-off figure in brackets, included in total)

1	Simon Svabic	Leigh	140(8)
2	Pat Rich	Oldham	123(3)
3	Danny Wood	Rochdale	119(6)
4	Jamie Rooney	Featherstone	118 (5)
5	Barry Eaton	Dewsbury	100 (1)
6	Richard Goddard	Sheffield	93
7	Darren Holt	Barrow	84
8	Chris Charles	Hull KR	68 (4)
9	Mick Nanyn	Swinton	67
10	Tane Manihera	Workington	66
	Martin Wood	Keighley	66

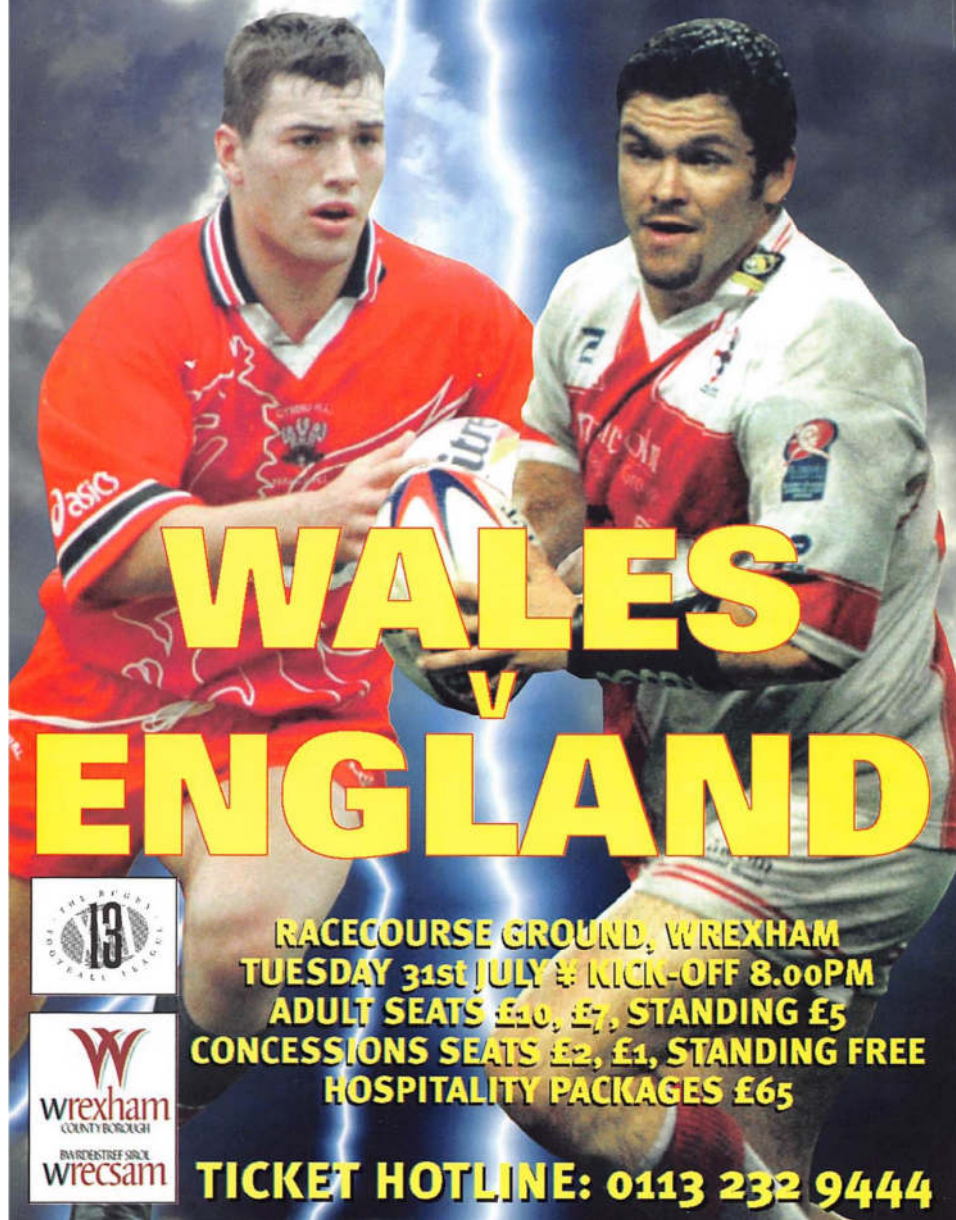


PASS MASTER: Glen Tomlinson, of Batley

POINTS (play-off figure in brackets, included in total)

			T	G	FG	PTS
1	Simon Svabic	Leigh	8	140	3	315 (16)
2	Jamie Rooney	Featherstone	14	118	9	301 (18)
3	Danny Wood	Rochdale	13	119	0	290 (16)
4	Pat Rich	Oldham	6	123	0	270 (6)
5	Barry Eaton	Dewsbury	10	100	4	244 (6)
6	Richard Goddard	Sheffield	14	93	1	243
7	Neil Turley	Leigh	52	12	0	232 (8)
8	Darren Holt	Barrow	7	84	5	201
9	Mick Nanyn	Swinton	13	67	0	186
10	Phil Cantillon	Widnes	43	0	0	172 (4)
	Ian Watson	Widnes	0	62	2	126

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FEELING GRAND... Widnes stars Paul Atcheson and Steve Gee celebrate reaching the final, while, right, Oldham chairman Chris Hamilton hugs skipper Leo Casey after their semi-final triumph



The comeback kings

THE NFP finals series has once again provided a stunning end to the season. The play-offs got off to a remarkable start when fourth-placed Oldham recorded a shock 15-14 win at Minor Premiers Leigh Centurions.

Keith Brennan's field goal proved to be the difference between the two sides, although the Roughyeds' player-coach Mike Ford turned back the clock with an outstanding display from scrum-half.

In the other Preliminary Semi-final, Widnes Vikings defeated Rochdale Hornets 34-24 in a thrilling game at the Auto Quest.

In the Elimination Semi-Finals, the challenges of Keighley Cougars and Dewsbury Rams were ended with defeats from Featherstone Rovers and Hull Kingston Rovers.

But the progress of both sets

of Rovers was halted in the second weekend.

Featherstone went down bravely 26-10 at Leigh, while the Robins pushed Rochdale all the way before losing 21-14 at Spotland.

The Grand Final venue was then the scene for the most remarkable comeback of the season in the Major Semi-finals.

Oldham - with Ford again playing a pivotal part - managed to overhaul an 18-point deficit with just 12 minutes remaining against Rochdale.

Hornets looked to be on their way to the competition's showcase event when they led 32-14 after 67 minutes, before Ford and John Hough instigated an unbelievable revival.

Meanwhile, at Hilton Park, the Vikings were coming from behind themselves to defeat Leigh on their own ground.

Widnes were behind 12-4 at the

“
Oldham staged a remarkable revival...
”

interval, but with wingers Chris Percival and Damian Munro grabbing two tries apiece, they ran out 26-18 winners.

That meant that for the first time since the play-offs were introduced four years ago, the Minor Premiers will not participate in the Grand Final.

WEEKEND ONE PRELIMINARY SEMI-FINALS

Leigh Centurions 14 Oldham 15
 Widnes Vikings 34 Rochdale Hornets 24

ELIMINATION SEMI-FINALS

Featherstone Rovers 28 Keighley Cougars 24
 Dewsbury Rams 6 Hull Kingston Rovers 19

WEEKEND TWO MINOR SEMI-FINALS

Leigh Centurions 26 Featherstone Rovers 10
 Rochdale Hornets 21 Hull Kingston Rovers 14

WEEKEND THREE MAJOR SEMI-FINALS

Leigh Centurions 18 Widnes Vikings 26
 Rochdale Hornets 32 Oldham 39

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All the staff and elected members at Halton Borough Council wish Neil and the Widnes Vikings every success in today's final.



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**NORTHERN FORD PREMIERSHIP
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CRUNCH GAME: Neil Turley (left), of Leigh Centurions, comes face-to-face with Dewsbury Rams forward Andy Fisher

Turley's the prize guy

CENTURIONS sensation Neil Turley was rewarded for the most memorable of seasons by collecting the top three individual prizes at the glittering Northern Ford Premiership Awards ceremony at Widnes last Tuesday.

Turley's unbelievable campaign in Leigh's number one shirt saw him deservedly receive the NFP Player and Young Player of the Year awards, as well as the coveted Players' Player of the Year at the prestigious Celebration Dinner.

After moving to Hilton Park from Wigan, Turley started the season with conservative targets of a handful of first team appearances for the Centurions.

But after a whirlwind opening, he blossomed into the star of

the competition. Among his remarkable list of achievements was his selection for Lancashire in the inaugural Origin game (the only NFP player chosen), a new Leigh record for tries in a season and the all-time record for tries in a season by a fullback.

Also nominated in the Player of the Year category were Widnes hooker Phil Cantillon and Rochdale Hornets' young prop Danny Sculthorpe.

Turley beat off competition from Swinton's Mick Nannyn and Phil Farrell of Oldham for the Young Player prize.

Neil's coach Paul Terzis made it a clean sweep of individual awards for Leigh by picking up the NFP Coach of the Year.

Terzis's side finished nine points ahead of their nearest

rivals in the NFP table, and were also the only side from the Premiership to knock a Super League side out of the Challenge Cup when they defeated Salford in front of a live television audience in February.

Terzis had stiff competition for the award from Rochdale Hornets' rookie coach Martin Hall and Oldham's Mike Ford.

The continued development of Sheffield Eagles, both on and off the field, since re-forming in 1999 was rewarded with the Club of the Year award.

And young whistle-blower Richard Silverwood was named Referee of the Year after a commendable season that saw his performances earn him promotion to the top flight.

Neil set a new Leigh record for tries and the all-time record for tries in a season by a fullback



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1 NEIL TURLEY

A season littered with achievements and records for Leigh fullback Neil Turley saw him finish as the competition's top try-scorer and walk away with all the NFP's major individual awards.

2 MARLON BILLY

Scored more tries during the 2000-2001 season than he had in his entire career before. A bustling, all-action style makes Marlon (above right) a firm favourite with the Rochdale Hornets' fans.

3 BRENDAN O'MEARA

Australian Brendan O'Meara was a tower of strength and consistency in the left centre for Hornets, and captained the Rochdale side to a remarkable turnaround in their fortunes.

4 MICK NANYN

Strong in possession and an accomplished goal-kicker, Mick Nanyin of Swinton emerged as one of the game's rising young stars despite playing in a side in the lower reaches of the Northern Ford Premiership.

5 GRAEME LEWTHWAITE

Workington's Graeme Lewthwaite showed pace and power to notch up 33 tries in all competitions for Town. He was among the competition's most potent attacking runners.

6 SIMON SVABIC

Finished the season as the competition's top point-scorer, thanks mainly to his excellent goal-kicking. Simon was also a highly creative influence for the Centurions with ball in hand.

7 JAMIE ROONEY

The young Rover (below right) continued to mature into a quality halfback during 2001, combining his wide-ranging kicking game with distribution skills.

8 DANNY SCULTHORPE

Nominated for NFP Player of the Year award after continuing his progression in Hornets' front row. Danny's ball-handling skills laid on numerous tries for his teammates.

9 PHIL CANTILLON

The Widnes hooker would have been the Player of the Year in almost any other season. He broke the all-time record for tries in a season by a forward, due to a combination of high work-rate around the rucks and intelligent support play.

10 SIMON KNOX

With his tremendous attacking spirit and valuable experience, Simon played a huge part in the Widnes Vikings' success during 2000-2001.

11 PHIL FARRELL

An ever-present for Oldham Roughyeds and among the most consistent players in the NF. Phil also gained a nomination for the Young NFP Player of the Year award.

12 SIMON BALDWIN

Centurions star Simon was one of the most destructive wide runners in the competition and regularly saved his best performances for big occasions.

13 RICHARD GODDARD

Led the predominantly young Sheffield side with distinction from the centre of the field. Richard was a controlling influence throughout the year for the Eagles.



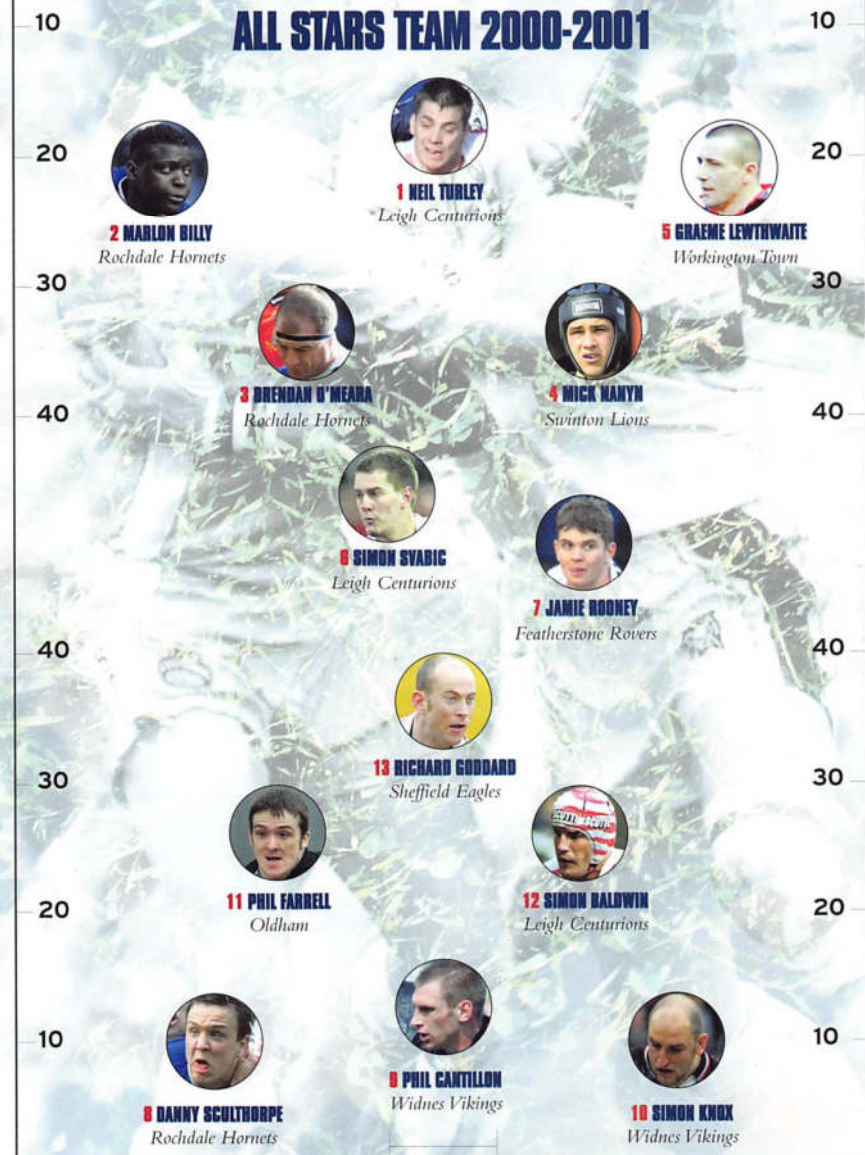
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FROM YOUR MATE
JOHN WILLIE**



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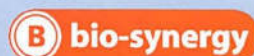
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OLDHAM are a club who have come back from the dead. Re-formed after the demise of former Super League club Oldham Bears four years ago, the Roughyeds have fought their way back to Rugby League glory with both a new back-room staff and set of players. Now you can meet the men who are bidding for success.

MIKE FORD

Player-coach

A wealth of experience from his time with Wigan, Leigh, Castleford and Warrington, after starting his playing career with hometown club Oldham. Still a shrewd halfback, he played key roles in Oldham's two semi-final wins against Leigh and Rochdale.

Now at the end of his second season with the club after coaching Bramley for a year, he is regarded as one of the brightest young coaches in the game and was nominated for the NFP Coach of the Year.

He is assisted by **John Henderson**, a prolific try-scorer in his playing days who worked alongside Ford at Bramley.

MARK SIBSON

Fullback

Former Great Britain Student International, who burst onto the scene under Ford at Bramley. Spent time on loan with Super League side Huddersfield before joining the Roughyeds with Ford in 1999. Elusive and pacy runner from fullback who is capable of breaking the line from any position.

JOEY HAYES

Wing

A firm favourite with Oldham fans since joining from Salford. Started his career by winning the Super League title with St Helens in 1996 and gaining selection for Great Britain, but a succession of injuries halted his progress. Now fully recovered, his lightning pace makes him a constant danger.

ANTHONY GIBBONS

Centre

Former Leeds, Keighley and Bramley player with a good step off either foot. A proven try-scorer who is also one of the best defensive centres in the Northern Ford Premiership. Rarely lets the side down.

PAT RICH

Centre

Another former Student International, who started out with Keighley Cougars. One of the best goal-kickers in the game, he kicked nine goals from nine attempts in Oldham's stunning Major Semi-final defeat of Rochdale Hornets.

JOE McNICHOLAS

Wing

Has been with Oldham since their days as the Bears in Super League, he has the distinction of being the last player to score a try at Watersheddings. Quick and good on his feet; he can come up with crucial tries, as he showed in the Major Semi-final against Rochdale.



DAVID GIBBONS

Stand-off

Twin brother of Anthony, he too played at Keighley, Bramley and Leeds. A pacy player with vision, he is also an aggressive defender with a good kicking game with the ability to punish sides with a 40-20.



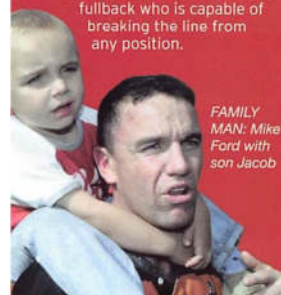
BROTHERS IN ARMS: Above, wounded David Gibbons and, above right, his brother Anthony Gibbons sets up a new attack for Oldham

NEIL RODEN

Stand-off/Scrum-half

A product of Wigan's Academy set-up, he joined the club last year and has grown in stature since. A scrum-half or stand-off with good hands and a sound kicking game.

DATE	FIXTURE	RESULT
3/12/00	Barrow (a)	W16-28
17/12/00	Workington (a)	W6-22
24/12/00	Rochdale (a)	W6-10
1/1/01	Widnes (h)	W20-12
14/1/01	Leigh (h)	L18-44
30/1/01	Chorley (h)	W56-2
18/2/01	Gateshead (h)	W52-6
11/3/01	Dewsbury (a)	L18-13
14/3/01	Whitehaven (h)	L8-19
18/3/01	Sheffield (h)	W24-16
25/3/01	Featherstone (a)	L22-8
28/3/01	Hunslet (h)	W58-4
1/4/01	York (a)	W6-70
8/4/01	Batley (h)	W26-8
13/4/01	Rochdale (h)	L10-38
16/4/01	Widnes (a)	L34-16
22/4/01	Batley (a)	W8-9
25/4/01	Doncaster (h)	W23-4
29/4/01	Keighley (h)	W38-4
2/5/01	Swinton (a)	W10-33
6/5/01	Barrow (h)	W36-10
9/5/01	Swinton (h)	W22-20
13/5/01	Chorley (a)	W10-60
20/5/01	Workington (h)	W24-18
3/6/01	Gateshead (a)	W20-50
17/6/01	Whitehaven (a)	W15-16
24/6/01	Keighley (a)	W16-26
1/7/01	Hull KR (a)	L24-4
8/7/01	Leigh (a) (RSE)	W14-15
22/7/01	Rochdale (a) (M&SF)	W32-39



FAMILY MAN: Mike Ford with son Jacob



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GARETH BARBER

Stand-off
Young stand-off born in Oldham and signed in the summer from Warrington. A player with huge potential, he has already played a number of first team games.

GAVIN DODD

Fullback
Young fullback or winger and ex-student international. A very elusive runner with great pace.

DARYL LACEY

Utility
Young winger or fullback signed in the summer from Wigan. Has plenty of pace and clever distribution, also filled in at hooker earlier in the season.

JASON CLEGG

Prop
Massive prop with deceptive agility. Has the ability to take his side forward with one of his typical charges and quick play-the-balls, he has regularly been used by Ford off the bench.

KEITH BRENNAN

Scrum-half/hooker
Has overcome serious injury to

become a regular in Oldham's first team. A prodigious worker in both attack and defence, he appears to have found his natural position at hooker. A frequent try-scorer who can also pop over vital field goals.

JOHN HOUGH

Hooker
The club's first ever signing after it re-formed, the Oldham-born hooker was the club's Player of the Season last year. Formerly with Warrington, Hough is very quick out of dummy-half. A regular try-scorer, he made a terrific impact off the bench against Rochdale last weekend.

ANDY PROCTER

Prop
Oldham's club captain and a prop with a tremendous workrate. Another former Student International. Played alongside Ford at Bramley after time at Wakefield

TOP: Oldham prop forward Jason Clegg prepares for a tackle by Rochdale's Andy Ireland in last Sunday's Major semi final

BELOW: Leo Casey holds off the opposition

LEO CASEY

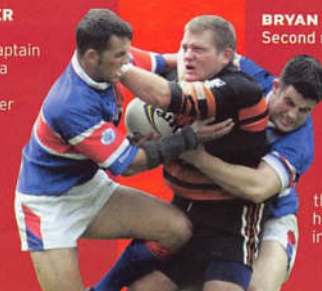
Prop
Now reaching the veteran age, the Irish international prop has a wealth of experience. Leads his side from the front and has the ability to off-load in the tackle, his previous clubs include Featherstone and Rochdale.

DANNY GUEST

Prop
Huge young prop formerly with Keighley Cougars and Chorley. Another player to be used primarily off the bench by Ford, he provides the side with a physical presence up front.

BRYAN HENARE

Second row
Big powerful second-rower currently on loan from Super League Champions St Helens. Scored two vital late tries last weekend to help his new club into their first Grand Final, he has a high workrate in attack and defence.





PHIL FARRELL

Second row who joined the club from Wigan. Brother of England captain Andrew, he was nominated for NFP Young Player of the Year award and was selected for the All-Stars team. Hardworking and has a great pair of hands.

PAUL NORTON

Prop/Second row
Signed in the off-season from

Chorley, "Knocker" is a very strong, consistent defender equally at home at either prop or second row.

IAN SINFIELD

Second row/Loose forward
Oldham-born brother of Leeds Rhinos' Kevin who can play loose forward or second row. An all-action, aggressive defender who can punish sides with his wide-running.

KEVIN MANNION

Loose forward
Another on of the Roughyeds'



CHEERS: Joei Hayes and Phil Farrell celebrate the semi-final win.

former Student internationals, Mannion is a loose forward with good hands. Wigan-born, he made his senior debut for Rochdale Hornets at 16.

CHRIS FARRELL

Second row/Loose forward
Twin brother of Phil and another summer signing from Wigan. Loose forward with great vision to go with his pace and power.

LEE DORAN

Prop
Teenage prop starring with the club's Alliance team as well as making a few first team appearances. Big prospect.

	APPS	TRIES	GOALS	FG	PTS
Danny Arnold	9(1)	0	0	0	0
Gerrell Barber	2(3)	0	0	0	0
Warren Barrow	5	0	0	0	0
Keith Brennan	15(1)	0	0	0	0
Leo Casey	17(2)	0	0	0	0
Jason Clegg	19(10)	0	0	0	0
Dean Crofts	5	0	0	0	0
Gavin Dodd	11(3)	0	0	0	0
Lee Doran	16	0	0	0	0
Chris Farrell	6(8)	0	0	0	0
Phil Farrell	30	0	0	0	0
Mike Ford	6(9)	0	0	0	0
Anthony Gibbons	25	0	0	0	0
David Gibbons	25(1)	0	0	0	0
Danny Guest	1(2)	0	0	0	0
Joei Hayes	9	0	0	0	0
Bryan Henare	9(1)	0	0	0	0
John Hough	18(5)	0	0	0	0
Gavin Johnson	1	0	0	0	0
Darryl Lacey	19(4)	0	0	0	0
Kevin Mannion	15(8)	0	0	0	0
Shayne McMenamy	1	0	0	0	0
Joe Nicholas	13	0	0	0	0
Paul Norton	23(4)	0	0	0	0
Andy Procter	9(9)	0	0	0	0
Pat Rich	30	0	0	0	0
Neil Roden	30	0	0	0	0
Mark Sizem	15(7)	0	0	0	0
Ian Sinfield	15(7)	0	0	0	0

VIKINGS FINAL CHARGE

WIDNES VIKINGS set their sights on what winning the Grand Final could do for their long-term ambitions at the start of the season. But all that looked beyond their reach until the arrival of new coach Neil Kelly mid-season and then they charged up the table. Meet the men from the Auto Quest who are back in Rugby League's big time.

NEIL KELLY

Coach

After a playing career with Dewsbury, Wakefield and Featherstone, Kelly started his coaching career with Dewsbury Rams in February 1996, where he went on to win the NFP Coach of the Year twice. Kelly guided Dewsbury to the Minor Premiership in 1999 and 2000, as well as the last two NFP Grand Finals, including last year's one-point win against Leigh. He was assistant coach with Wales during the 2000 World Cup, and recently took over as head coach from Clive Griffiths. Appointed as Widnes boss mid-way through the current season, he is assisted by **John Foran**, a former Widnes player who was on the coaching staff at Salford Reds.

PAUL ATCHESON

Fullback

A Super League Grand Final winner with St Helens in 1999, capped three times for Great Britain, Atcheson started his career at Widnes before moving on to Wigan and then Oldham Bears. A sound defensive fullback who is outstanding under the high ball, he also gives the Vikings an extra attacking option with his strong, direct running.

DAMIAN MUNRO

Wing/Fullback

In his fourth season with the club, and Vikings' second-top try-scorer behind Phil Cantillon. Scored two vital tries in the Major Semi-final win against Leigh last Sunday.

CHRIS PERCIVAL

Wing/centre

Established first team regular having been with the club at both the Academy and Alliance level. Very direct attacker with plenty of speed and the ability to score crucial tries.

PHIL COUSSONS

Wing

Joined Vikings from Swinton Lions during the close season, having played in the top flight for Salford. Also had a spell with Rochdale Hornets, he is a strong forceful winger, elusive with good speed and a good try-scoring instinct.

MARK FORSTER

Wing

Joined Vikings during the close season after almost 20 years with Warrington. Ireland

International who still has the ability to score tries from anywhere on the field. An injury against France will probably rule him out today.

LIAM JONES

Wing

Signed from Wigan after successful trials with the Alliance in 1999. An excellent goal-kicker with plenty of pace.

JASON DEMETRIOU

Centre

Australian recruited during the close season from Rochdale Hornets having started his professional career in England with Lancashire Lynx. A strong carrier of the ball capable of shrugging defenders off, he also possesses pace and ball-handling skills.

ANDREW CRAIG

Centre

Played with Super League Halifax Blue Sox for two seasons. Started his career with Wigan before signing for Swinton and joining Widnes in June this year. Strong running centre, capable of scoring tries from anywhere, he is also defensively sound.

CRAIG WESTON

Centre

Signed from Doncaster in May this year to strengthen the back division, having had Super League experience with Huddersfield between 1997 and 1999. Weston is a strong attacking player who is also very sound in defence, and has proved to be a great asset. Accomplished goal kicker.

RICHARD AGAR

Stand-off

Followed coach Kelly from



HANDING IT OUT: Widnes Vikings loose forward Tommy Hodgkinson who took the Man of the Match award in the semi-final against Leigh Centurions.

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Dewsbury to the Vikings in late March 2001. After a spell with Rochdale Hornets he joined Dewsbury in 1996. Clever player with good handling skills, Agar is one of the game's best tactical kickers, a renowned exponent of the 40-20.

MARTIN CROMPTON

Scrum-half
Signed from Salford in late December 2000, having enjoyed a superb career at the top level with Warrington, Wigan and Oldham. Very astute player with good organisational and distribution skills.

IAN WATSON

Scrum-half
Goal-kicking half back signed from Swinton Lions at the end of last season. A regular international with Wales, he had an excellent game in the World Cup Semi-final against Australia. Clever distributor with good in-field kicking game.

SIMON KNOX

Prop
Cumbrian-born forward named in the NFP All-Stars team after a season of great consistency. A member of Bradford Bulls' Super League winning side of 1997, he is a tremendous go-forward player.

STEPHEN HOLGATE

Prop
Started his career at Workington Town before moving to Wigan, where he played in their Super League Grand Final-winning side of 1998. A determined runner, steady in defence.

MATTHEW LONG

Prop
Signed from Dewsbury late March 2001 along with Richard Agar. Matthew signed for Hull Sharks in 1995 before moving to the Rams in 1998. A strong, powerful forward with the ability to punch holes in any defence, Long is a giant, and a danger close to the line.

STEVE ARGENT

Prop
A product of Vikings' Academy and Alliance

teams. Promising forward with plenty of experience. Loan spell at Chorley Lynx this season.

MIKE HILL

Prop/Second row
Widnes-born forward. Player's player who is sound in both attack and defence, and has been important this season.

PHIL CANTILLON

Hooker
Has enjoyed a superb season, having broken Ellery Hanley's record for tries in a season by a forward. Nominated for NFP Player of the Year award for the second consecutive season, a brilliant support player with pace to exploit the rucks.

SEAN RICHARDSON

Second row
Second spell with the Vikings, having played there during the 1997 and 1998 seasons. The only player to have figured in all the NFP Grand Finals to date, Richardson is a big fast second row with the ability to break down the toughest defence. Played under Neil Kelly at Dewsbury, and won Grand Finals with Wakefield (1998) and Rams (2000).



27

	APP(S)	TRIES	GOALS	FG	PTS
Richard Agar	12(3)	2	13	3	37
Steve Argent	1(5)	2	0	0	12
Paul Atcheson	13	3	0	0	12
Lee Birdseye	1	0	0	0	0
Phil Cantillon	30	43	0	0	172
Paul Cook	3(1)	1	1	0	6
Phil Coussons	21(2)	15	0	0	60
Andy Craig	2(3)	7	0	0	28
Martin Crompton	22(3)	8	0	0	32
Kevin Crouthers	3(1)	1	0	0	4
Jason Demetriou	26(3)	14	0	0	56
Joe Faimalo	11(14)	1	0	0	4
Mark Flanagan	1	0	0	0	0
Chris Foran	(2)	0	0	0	0
Mark Forster	13(2)	3	0	0	12
Steve Gee	19(7)	6	0	0	24
Gareth Haggerty	1	0	0	0	0
Karl Hammond	6(2)	2	5	1	19
Mike Hill	1(9)	1	0	0	4
Tommy Hodgkinson	29	4	0	0	16
Stephen Holgate	21(3)	0	0	0	0
David Mulme	(1)	0	0	0	0
Liam Jones	7(1)	2	13	0	34
Eddie Kilgannon	1	0	0	0	0
Simon Knox	26(2)	7	0	1	29
Matthew Long	2(15)	9	0	0	36
Scott Martin	3	2	0	0	8
Chris McKinney	8(15)	4	0	0	16
David Mills	(1)	0	0	0	0
Damian Munro	26(4)	22	0	0	88
Chris Percival	25(2)	13	0	0	52
Stewart Rhodes	8(6)	0	0	0	0
Sean Richardson	15	6	0	0	24
Alan Shea	1(1)	0	0	0	0
Ian Watson	20(3)	0	62	2	126
Craig Weston	10(1)	7	43	0	114

DATE	FIXTURE	RESULT
3/12/00	Whitehaven (h)	W22-14
10/12/00	Rochdale (a)	W14-24
26/12/00	Leigh (h)	L20-25
1/1/01	Oldham (a)	L20-12
7/1/01	Workington (h)	W26-16
25/1/01	Swinton (h)	W16-8
4/2/01	Barrow (a)	D6-6
18/2/01	York (h)	W90-6
25/2/01	Chorley (a)	W14-48
7/3/01	Gateshead (a)	W18-30
11/3/01	Sheffield (a)	L26-17
18/3/01	Doncaster (h)	L10-18
25/3/01	Keighley (h)	L19-22
1/4/01	Hunslet (h)	W64-4
7/4/01	Dewsbury (a)	W12-13
13/4/01	Leigh (a)	L26-22
16/4/01	Oldham (h)	W34-16
22/4/01	Hull KR (h)	W28-0
6/5/01	Whitehaven (a)	W14-16
9/5/01	Gateshead (h)	W72-4
13/5/01	Rochdale (h)	W44-18
20/5/01	Featherstone (h)	W25-22
27/5/01	Workington (a)	W6-25
3/6/01	Swinton (a)	W0-62
6/6/01	Batley (a)	W15-36
10/6/01	Chorley (h)	W72-18
24/6/01	York (a)	W11-66
1/7/01	Hunslet (a)	W4-42
8/7/01	Rochdale (h) (PSF)	W34-24
22/7/01	Leigh (a) (MasF)	W18-26

HAPPY DAYS:
coach Neil Kelly
celebrates a semi
final win with
scrum half Martin
Crompton

'GOOD LUCK' MESSAGE FOR OLDHAM ROUGHYEDS

Oldham Council wishes Oldham Rugby League Football Club every success in the forthcoming Northern Ford Premiership Grand Final.

The Council would like to thank the Chairman, Board of Directors, Manager, players, staff and everyone involved with the club for their continuing efforts to promote Oldham as a vibrant, exciting modern town.

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TRAVELLING
MAN: Widnes' mid-season signing Sean Richardson, who won Grand Finals with Dewsbury Rams and Wakefield Trinity.



29

JOE FAIMALO

Second row

Experienced second-rower who has played in top flight with Oldham Bears and Salford. New Zealander who is very strong in both attack and defence, he has been used primarily off the bench.

STEVE GEE

Second row

Signed from Lancashire Lynx in 1999, having impressed in their promotion-winning season of 1998. A strong, pacy runner capable of breaking the line. Always gives 100 per cent.

CHRIS MCKINNEY

Second row

Another Cumbrian-born player who joined Vikings during the close season from Rochdale Hornets having played in Super League with Oldham Bears. Tough player in both defence and attack, scored winning try against Leigh last weekend.

TOMMY HODGKINSON

Loose forward

Previous spells with St Helens and Bradford, he joined Vikings from Lancashire Lynx. A strong, fearless player who likes to take the Vikings forward from the front. Very good defensively and a tireless worker.

IT'S CHILD'S PLAY

TODAY'S curtain-raiser consists of a Mini-League exhibition by teams from the west of the Pennines.

Mini-League is the game of Rugby League in its cut-down form specially designed to make the basic skills of the game more learnable for very young children.

The numbers on each team are reduced to nine, which means that individual children get more chances to practice their skills - they get the ball more, they get the opportunity to pass more, make more

tackles, run with the ball and become used to playing in a team environment. The ball is much smaller - a size three; and the pitch is in scale with the age and size of the kids, roughly half a full-size Rugby League pitch.

There are other rule differences designed to develop League skills in juniors.

The result is a game that is much more fun for all children and Mini-League is now mandatory for all teams at under-9s age group in Great Britain & Ireland.

TODAY'S LITTLE LEAGUERS

Littleborough
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Leigh
red

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**WIDNESVIKINGS**

- 1 PAUL ATCHESON
- 2 DAMIAN MUNRO
- 3 CRAIG WESTON
- 4 JASON DEMETRIOU
- 5 CHRIS PERCIVAL
- 6 RICHARD AGAR
- 7 MARTIN CROMPTON
- 8 SIMON KNOX
- 9 PHIL CANTILLON
- 10 STEPHEN HOLGATE
- 11 STEVE GEE
- 12 SEAN RICHARDSON
- 13 TOMMY HODGKINSON

SCRUMS

1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24

PENALTIES

1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24

Subs from
14 ANDY CRAIG
15 CHRIS McKINNEY
16 JOE FAIMALO
17 MATTHEW LONG
18 IAN WATSON



OLDHAM

- 1 MARK SIBSON
- 2 JOEY HAYES
- 3 ANTHONY GIBBONS
- 4 PAT RICH
- 5 JOE McNICHOLAS
- 6 NEIL RODEN
- 7 MIKE FORD
- 8 LEO CASEY
- 9 KEITH BRENNAN
- 10 PAUL NORTON
- 11 PHIL FARRELL
- 12 BRYAN HENARE
- 13 KEVIN MANNION
- Subs
- 14 DAVID GIBBONS
- 15 JASON CLEGG
- 16 JOHN HOUGH
- 17 DANNY GUEST

SCRUMS

PENALTIES

Progressive score

[illegible][illegible]