



TEAMS

OLDHAM SWINTON

Coach: Steve MOLLOY

Coach: Peter Roe



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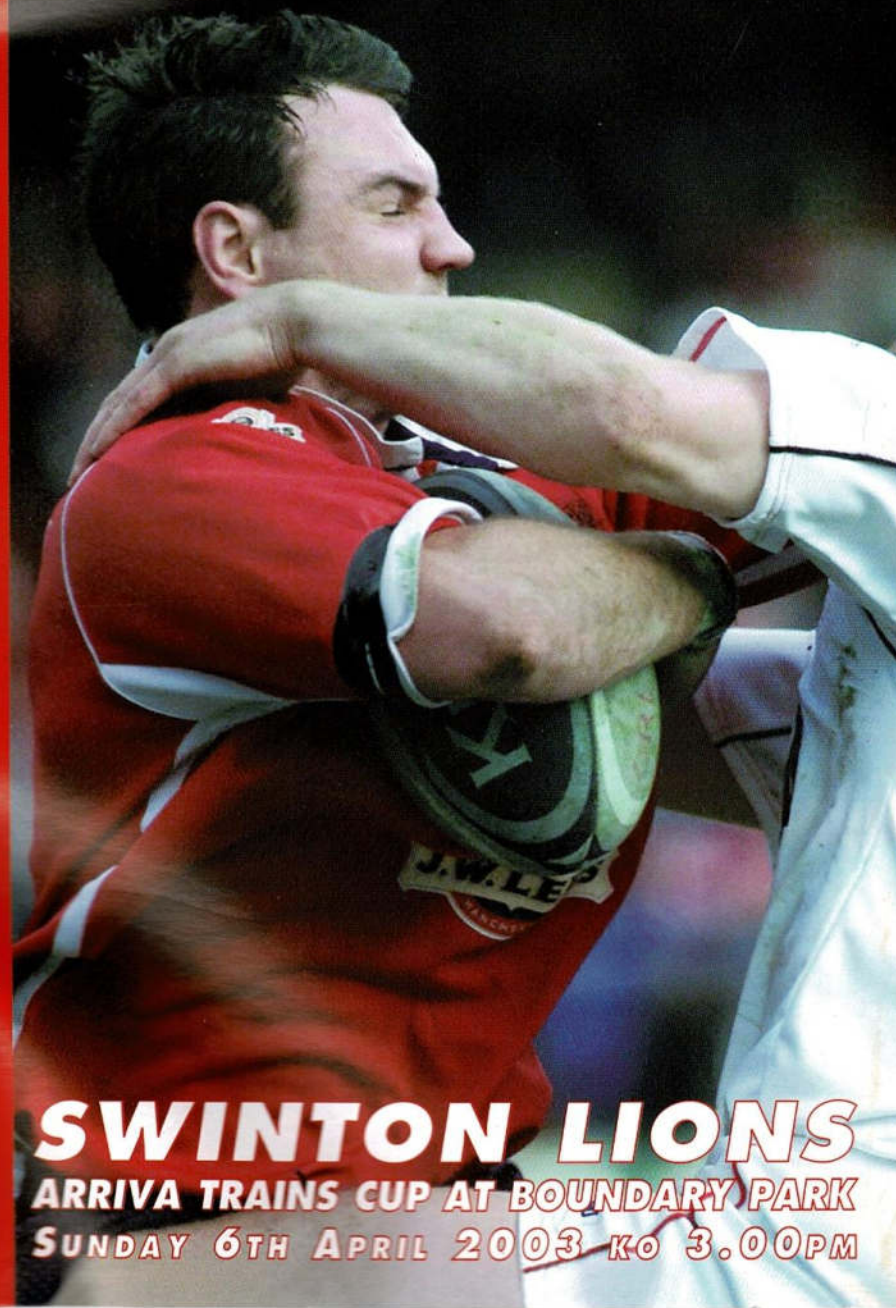
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The Roughyeds



SWINTON LIONS

ARRIVA TRAINS CUP AT BOUNDARY PARK

SUNDAY 6TH APRIL 2003 KO 3.00PM

- | | | |
|----------------|----|-----------------|
| Gavin DODD | 1 | Wayne ENGLISH |
| Chris IRWIN | 2 | Jason ROACH |
| Iain MARSH | 3 | Rob RUSSELL |
| Jon GODDARD | 4 | Phil HASSAN |
| Chris CAMPBELL | 5 | Lee HUDSON |
| Simon SVABIC | 6 | Grant BITHEL |
| Neil RODEN | 7 | Chris HOUGH |
| Steve MOLLOY | 8 | Andy LEATHAM |
| John HOUGH | 9 | Rob BARRACLOUGH |
| Paul NORTON | 10 | Simon KNOX |
| Lee DORAN | 11 | Phil CUSHION |
| Ryan STAZICKER | 12 | Dave ELLISON |
| Chris MORLEY | 13 | Peter CANNON |
| Keith BRENNAN | 14 | Hugh THORPE |
| Dane MORGAN | 15 | Chris ROE |
| Danny GUEST | 16 | Craig WINGFIELD |
| Paul ANDERSON | 17 | Kris SMITH |

TODAY'S OFFICIALS

REFEREE: S. ADDY
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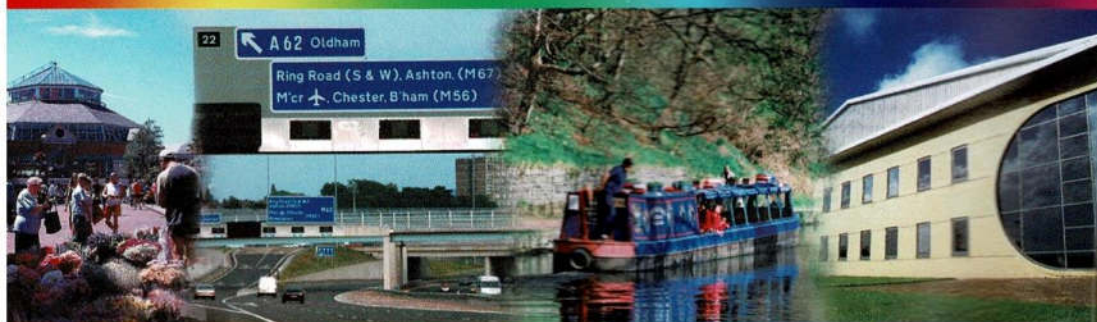
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Andy Goodway 1979-85 & 1993-94

IN THE HOT SEAT

Christopher Hamilton

LAST weeks win at Barrow could hopefully be a key moment in the season.

After 3 defeats on the trot it was important that we won the game and despite playing for 30 of the 80 minutes with 12 men the team reacted positively on both occasions and in fairness you would not have known that we were a man down.



The sending off of John Hough with the score at 14-10 in our favour could have tipped the game in Barrows favour. However, the rest of the team showed great character and determination in actually stepping up their level of performance from that point.

For me the team demonstrated that it has the necessary qualities to be successful this season and I sincerely hope that the players gain self confidence and belief from that performance and use it as a launch pad for the rest of the season.

As far as today's game is concerned Swinton Lions have proved to be very difficult opponents in all the Arriva Trains games they have played and their 'second division' tag is something of a red herring. I commented after we beat them at Moor Lane a few weeks ago that if they could steer clear of injuries they would be a force to be reckoned with and without doubt we will be in for a real fight today.

The advantages of a big squad have been there for all to see over the last couple of weeks as we have had a number of key players missing and our club doctor is currently working virtually full time to keep up with things!

A big thank you to everyone who made the trip up to Barrow last week your support is vital and does make a difference.

Enjoy the game,

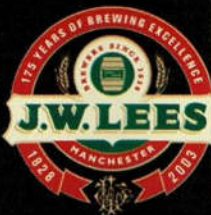
Chris

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS MATCHDAY MAGAZINE DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THOSE OF THE MANAGEMENT AND STAFF OF OLDHAM RLFC (1997) LTD.

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE OLDHAM EVENING CHRONICLE & RUGBY LEAGUE EXPRESS FOR THE USE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

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Molloy's Message



WELCOME TO Peter Roe and the rest of the players and spectators from Swinton RLFC. It may have come as a surprise to a lot of people how competitive a side Swinton have become in such a short space of time, but it was no surprise to me. Peter has a wealth of experience and has recruited very well. So much so that they beat our archrivals, Rochdale Hornets last weekend, something we have yet to do in a competitive match.

I'm sure Swinton will be up there at the end of the season and looking for a speedy return to NFP 1.

March was a very difficult month for the players, coaches and probably the spectators, playing, on paper, probably three of the sides who the pundits seem to think will be there or thereabouts. It was also a frustrating month. Obviously, against Salford a better side beat us on the day but Leigh and Rochdale were games we could and should have won.

A lot of us had to take a long hard look at ourselves and we decided we were going to up our intensity and professionalism and I am sure that small glimpses of that showed in the performance against Barrow. Especially as we played almost half the game with 12 men after Jon Goddard was sin binned in the first half and John Hough dismissed early in the second half. It is often adversity like that that can spark off a "backs-against-the wall" scenario that is necessary to come through these tough, hard fought games.

One win doesn't make us a good side, just as those losses didn't make us a bad side. I just hope we can up the consistency and that the improvement continues.

Enjoy the game.

Steve

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IN TOWN Today - Swinton



Andy Leatham - Prop Forward
Signed for Swinton 2002, played for Leigh the season before, previously with St. Helens for six years, big strong and fast forward.

Jason Johnson - Loose Forward/
Stand off

Jason is another 2002 signing and also played for Leigh in their 2001 campaign, after signing from St. Helens, excellent ball player.

Hugh Thorpe - Centre
Hugh played for the English Students on the tour of Russia in 2001. Big and powerful centre.

Craig Wingfield - Second Row
Signed from Leigh last year, excellent prop forward second row and a good goal kicker.

Ade Mead - Wing
Ade signed from Oldham in 2001. He was a regular player in the first team squad. Quick and elusive.

Rob Barraclough - Hooker
Signed from Warrington in 2000, won player of the year in 2002, very strong tackler, pocket battleship.



Phil Cushion

Phil Cushion - Prop/Second Row
Played for John Princes' Academy side as centre, worked his way into the first team and has matured into a strong running prop. Regular first team player for the last 4 years.

Rob Gallagher - Stand off
Signed from Wigan St. Pats 2001, shows maturity above his years, came to fruition at the end of last season.

Lee Hudson - Winger
Signed from Rochdale, pacy runner, regular squad member last season.

Andy Chatham - Utility player
Former Swinton player, played for Huddersfield, Leigh and Widnes. Experienced threequarter.

Chris Hough - Half back hooker
Ex Oldham and Batley, enthusiastic player and also a proficient goal kicker.

Wayne English - Full back
Former Rochdale player, although not big a promising young player.

Simon Knox - Prop Forward
Club captain, player with lots of experience, played at Wembley with Bradford, enjoyed spells at Carlisle, Widnes, Salford and Leigh.

Chris Roe - 2nd Row or prop
18 years of age, joined from Featherstone, where he played Super League Academy, promising young player.

Peter Cannon - Loose forward
Peter signed from Crossfield ARLFC in April 2001. He won BARLA First Division Player of the Year.

David Gibbons - Half back
Signed from Crossfield along with Peter Cannon. Quick and elusive.

David Ellison - Second row - centre
Released from Wigan, played a spell at Leigh East. Phil Vickers brought him to Swinton, regular first team player last season, will prove himself this season.

Danny Turner - Second row
Released from Wigan, a promising young player with good prospects.

Mike Whiteside - Prop forward
Played for Leigh East, regular first team player last season, will prove himself this year.

Kris Tassall - Centre
Played Super League for Salford City Reds and last season at Wakefield Wildcats. A fast running centre, great signing for Swinton.

Phil Hassan - Centre
Signed for Swinton from rugby union, another player with Super League experience, and great speed.

A Potted History of Swinton by Don Yates



Swinton were formed in 1866 and joined the Northern union in 1896. It did not take long for Swinton to lift their first piece of silverware. Their Challenge Cup success in 1900 came at the expense of their deadly rivals Salford, beaten 16-8 at Fallowfield in the final. Skipper of the Swinton team in those days was centre Jim Valentine, a legend in the early history of the Lions and, incidentally, the first player to score a try at Watersheddings. He scored almost 300 tries for Swinton although many of those touchdowns came during Swintons rugby union days.

Valentine had retired by the time Swinton won their next major honour, the Lancashire Cup in 1925. That victory marked the beginning of the most successful era in the history of the club. During the ten seasons between 1925 and 1935 Swinton were Lancashire Champions on four occasions, won the Lancashire Cup three times, the Challenge Cup twice and were League Champions four times. During that era Swinton signed second-row forward Martin Hodgson from the Egremont RUFC. He went on to become Swintons most decorated player, winning 16 test caps, and between 1926 and 1942 scored over 2,000 points for the club. In March 1929 he became the first point scorer at Swintons Station Road test venue when

he landed a penalty goal against Wigan.

For many years Hodgsons scoring feats looked as if they would never be eclipsed but in 1954 the Lions signed a diminutive full-back or half-back from Kirkholt juniors after Rochdale Hornets had decided that the player was too small for the professional game. That player was Ken Gowers who went on to play in 642 matches during a professional career which lasted until 1973. He scored 2,315 points from 1,075 goals and 55 tries. Gowers was a member of the Swinton squad who were crowned Lancashire Champions in 1961 and won the League Championship in both 1963 and 1964. He also played for Swinton in 1969 when they defeated Leigh 11-2 in the final of the Lancashire Cup.

Since then Swintons only successes have been in Second Division competition. They were Second Division Champions in 1985 and then became the first winners of the Second Division Premiership Trophy in 1987. That 1987 Premiership campaign was a personal triumph for Oldham born Gary Ainsworth, currently a player-coach in the Conference League with Saddleworth Rangers. Swinton met Bramley in the Premiership quarter-finals with Ainsworth grabbing a brace of tries in Swintons 59-14 victory. Gary was also outstanding when Whitehaven were beaten 12-6 in the semi-finals but he saved his best display for the final against champions Hunslet at Old Trafford. As a hooker, Garys main job was to win possession. He not only won the scrums 11-4 but also made a significant contribution in the build up to four of Swintons five tries and he scored the fifth himself. Hunslet were beaten 27-10 and, apart from a winners medal, Ainsworth was rewarded by becoming a clear winner of the first Tom Bergin Trophy as man-of-the-match.

From The Pen Of

.....Michael Turner



Of Roughyeds And ... Lions

TODAY we extend a warm welcome to the players, officials and supporters of Swinton

For over 125 years the Roughyeds and the Lions have been doing battle on the rugby field. Oldham first played our visitors in December 1877, some eighteen years prior to the formation of the Northern Union. Swinton were the first team to oppose Oldham at Watersheddings in 1889 and also formed the opposition when the curtain came down on the old stadium in January 1997. Throw in two Challenge Cup finals between the clubs in the 1920s and you will realise that there is plenty of history surrounding an Oldham v Swinton fixture.

In January 1901 over 21,000 spectators packed Watersheddings to watch the Lions record a seven points to five victory, only for the match to have to be replayed after supporters were deemed to have encroached on to the playing area. The replay a month later saw the sides play out a draw three

points each.

The two clubs contested the 1910 Lancashire Cup final at Broughton where a tight encounter was decided by a towering Joe Ferguson drop goal from half way to give Oldham the narrowest of victories by four points to three.

Those two Challenge Cup finals produced a victory for each side. In 1926 the Lions triumphed by nine points to three at Rochdale with the Roughyeds taking revenge with a 26 - 7 win twelve months later at Wigan. The latter of those games being the first ever Rugby League match to be broadcast on the radio, whilst the Swinton victory in 1926 completed their most successful ever season that saw them win all four major trophies up for competition at that time.

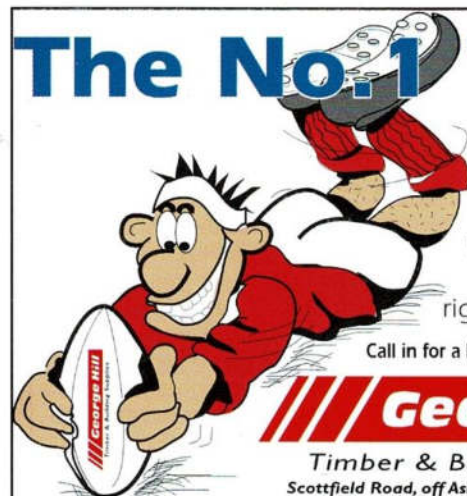
Between then and now both clubs have enjoyed championship success, Oldham in the 1950s and Swinton in the 1960s but the clubs have never faced each other in a major final or semi-final since the roaring twenties. Nevertheless

there have been some great encounters with the games usually played out over the Christmas or Easter period when the holiday crowds would flock to Station Road or Watersheddings to cheer on their favourites. Just a few weeks ago another close match between these two old rivals ended with a victory for Oldham by 24 - 16. For the benefit of the game as a whole let us hope for a long continuation of the same.



Oldham scrum half Frank Pitchford gets a pass away despite the attentions of Swinton loose forward Albert Blan. Action from the match at Station Road on April 20th 1962 - result: Swinton 2 Oldham 2.

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Back On The Terraces

..... With Simon Winnard

SO the outspoken former Lions' captain Garry Schofield has called for a ban on all Australian players and coaches in the Super League. This he did whilst tipping a series whitewash by the Kangaroos in this year's Ashes series. Schofield, well known for his sweeping views following his retirement from playing, put out a desperate plea on behalf of the English game in a recent issue of the Australian magazine 'Rugby League Week'.

'Throw the Aussies out and don't let them come over,' the former Test skipper offered as a solution when asked how he believed the Lions could become more competitive.

'Mike Gregory did a great job coaching the English Academy to win over the Australian Schoolboys last year, and we've got some good youngsters coming through. But they're not given a chance to play in first grade because we have 33 year old Australians in their way.'

I'm quite sure that Mr Schofield is not an admirer of the defensive qualities that the antipodeans bring to our game – but then again why would he be. Not many of them put a whole defensive line at risk by rushing out looking for the glory of an interception try of course. Whilst the author echoes the former Hull and Leeds halfback's sentiments, there is perhaps an argument that the serious problem that he's citing is actually diminished by his rhetoric.

However, he has saved slightly more face than esteemed Wigan Chairman, Maurice Lyndsay. Quite how he can have the audacity to now be asking for Super League to reduce its overseas quota down to two is quite frankly beyond me. Undoubtedly his beloved Wigan have been one of the worst offenders over the years under his stewardship and this I attribute to their ultimate decline as the game's leading force. His club have faltered from one antipodean to the next to fill their halfback positions – and at some cost.

It is perhaps ironic that the wages paid to these ageing stars has occurred at the same time as the club breaching the salary cap. However, unlike the Canterbury Bulldogs in the NRL, the Lancashire club have survived relatively unscathed. It is only now of course that they have been forced to trim the wage bill and field a substantially younger team, somewhat lacking in the experience that the likes of good imports like Furner undoubtedly bring. So the timing of Maurice's call to reduce the quota comes as little surprise – it's just a shame that he couldn't have

seen the light a little earlier.

Throughout Super League we are seeing other clubs following down that same route, albeit for more practical financial reasons. Our game is sadly littered with many examples of poor management of top flight clubs, this despite having the benefit of massive television funding – the ill conceived Hull-Gateshead merger and the former Oldham Bears club to name but two. It would now appear that the harsh financial realities are shaping our game for yet another cyclical era with the emphasis shifting towards investment in our own talent and the exclusion of our visitors from afar. Have we not been here before? Surely there can be a healthy balance between youth and experience as well as imports and promising British players.

Indeed, the likes of Wakefield and Halifax have entered this season with young squads with plenty of home grown talent – many of whom operate in key positions. Troubled Halifax look to have finally travelled down a familiar route in order to get over the worse of their financial difficulties. After surviving a buy-out by Bridgend Rugby Union club which would have resulted in the club being 'relocated' to South Wales, the worst seems to be over at the Shay.

In a recent article in League Express, Stephen Pearson, the former Mayor of Calderdale, who is one of the key players behind the radical reorganisation of the club that was announced last week, revealed that Halifax will go into a Company Voluntary Arrangement (CVA) immediately, with a view to having agreed a repayment programme with its creditors before the end of the Super League season. A confident Pearson told a press conference, 'One thing Rugby League should be taking note of is that our average age, when we played London, was 21 and a quarter.'

A few questions remain unanswered such as, If we see a Super League club go into administration, will that club be automatically relegated as a result? If not, will good young squads be enough to stop the West Yorkshire outfit's freefall out of the top flight or halt Wigan's fall from grace? As ever, there are interesting times ahead for our game. One thing is for sure is that the honeymoon period for over the hill players looking for a final pay day appears to be coming to an end and it can't come quick enough for the author.

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Iwa Slateloose



EDDIE: Well, Stevo Bradford get us underway with a deep kick to the Leeds try line.

STEVO: I'm afraid the referee's got it wrong again, Eddie. Bradford won the toss so Leeds should have kicked off.

EDDIE: I think you'll find Bradford elected to kick off, Stevo, rather than choosing which way to play.

STEVO: Can they do that? I don't know why they're always changing the rules as if the referee hasn't got enough to deal with.

ONE MINUTE IN AND A LEEDS FORWARD IS VICTIM OF A HIGH SHOT

EDDIE: Whoa! it's warming up out there between these two old rivals.

STEVO: I don't know what a player's got to do to be sent off these days. The replay shows he was clearly caught under the chin.

EDDIE: The referee says it was instinctive rather than malicious. And the players did get straight up to play the ball.

STEVO: I don't care Eddie. He's going to put the incident on report. It's a cop out. It'll go to the discipline committee and they'll slap his wrist and let him off as usual. All this calling players by their first names and trying to be their pal: it's ruining the game.

PHIL CLARKE: Not like in your day, eh Stevo? Players used to belt each other coming down the tunnel, but once on the field no-one ever committed a foul for fear of Billy Thomson sorting them out. I believe six matches (or even six years) was the usual punishment, then?

STEVO: That's right, Clarke one of our lads got SINE DIE for feeding the scrum!

LEEDS SCORE A TRY BUT IT'S REFERRED

TO THE VIDEO REFEREE

EDDIE: That's a great try off a superb kick but the referee just wants to check for offside and the grounding.

STEVO: It's N.O. T.R.Y. for me. If you look at it you'll see the wingman is a thousandth of a millimetre in front of the kicker, so he's got to be off.

EDDIE: Well, he's gone past that and is looking at the grounding, so he must be satisfied they were on.

STEVO: I don't know how he can say that: his bootlace was obviously in front. Anyway, if you watch the grounding he's lost control so it's definitely N.O. T.R.Y.

BIG SCREEN VERDICT COMES UP: TRY

STEVO: I can only say he's got that wrong - AGAIN. These video referees baffle me: I don't know what they think they're doing sat there not agreeing with me. I can referee this game from the commentary box. In fact Stuart Cummings should sack the lot and I'll run the game from up here.

HALF TIME APPROACHES AND THE HOOTER GOES

STEVO: The timekeeper's got that wrong: there's still two minutes to play I should know I've got one of these Tissot watches for being commentator of the century. And have you seen? The referee and touch judges have gone down the wrong tunnel. Can't they get anything right?

EDDIE: A thrilling game, finely balanced and all to play for in the second half with Leeds leading by 12 points to 10.

SEAN McRAE: That's right Eddie. It's been a magnificent 40 minutes of no holds barred rugby with some big hits in defence and some sparkling attacking play.

STEVO: This coffee's cold.

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now."

"You're jokin," she laughed, "the real Coliseum in Rome's better preserved than Hilton Park!"

"Pompeii's better preserved than Hilton Park and that's a complete ruin. It had better facilities too - they had state provided premises for certain sports!"

"D'ye know why he wore them gloves?" Shaz asked. "Not really," I said, "But he was signed to give some 'presence' to the backs, so perhaps it's so he won't mark anybody if he hits them." "Oh no", she said, "He wouldn't do that, I'm sure."

D'ye know Paul Anderson from the Coliseum?" I said. "What?" Shaz said, a bit puzzled. "Is he an actor?" "No, not Oldham Coliseum, it's what they call Hilton Park

"You think the best of everybody, don't you Shaz? You could make Chris Hamilton seem like Mother Theresa, you're so kind hearted. (That's double the price for my season ticket next season now!)"

I told her then that his girl friend's Tommy Martyn's sister. "Oooh Tommy Martyn!" she said, "now I could believe he were an actor from the Coliseum. If anybody just shoved him o'er he'd lie there as though he were dead." "Hey that'll be why he used to wear them gloves I bet," I joked. "Tommy'll have told him he'd better treat his sister with velvet gloves."

But Shaz took it seriously; you could see her thinkin'. "That'd be a funny sensation," she said, eventually, "but wouldn't you think he'd have taken 'em off to play rugby?. Somebody must have told him though 'cos he doesn't wear 'em any more."

Love & Kisses,
Tracey



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Profile of . . . Paul Anderson

Paul Anderson



PAUL ANDERSON joined Oldham from Leigh in November 2002 - one of four Roughyeds signed for this season's campaign to come from Hilton Park - or should that be The Coliseum?

Aged 25, 'Ando' previously played for St Helens and Sheffield Eagles.

Leigh boss Ian Millward converted him from back-row forward to centre. A close friend of Oldham hooker Anthony Murray.

His long-term girl friend and partner is Tommy Martyn's sister Samantha.

These Leigh lads form a closely knit community! 'Ando' has played centre in ten of Oldham's eleven games so far this season scoring three tries. His only 'miss' was last week's match at Barrow.

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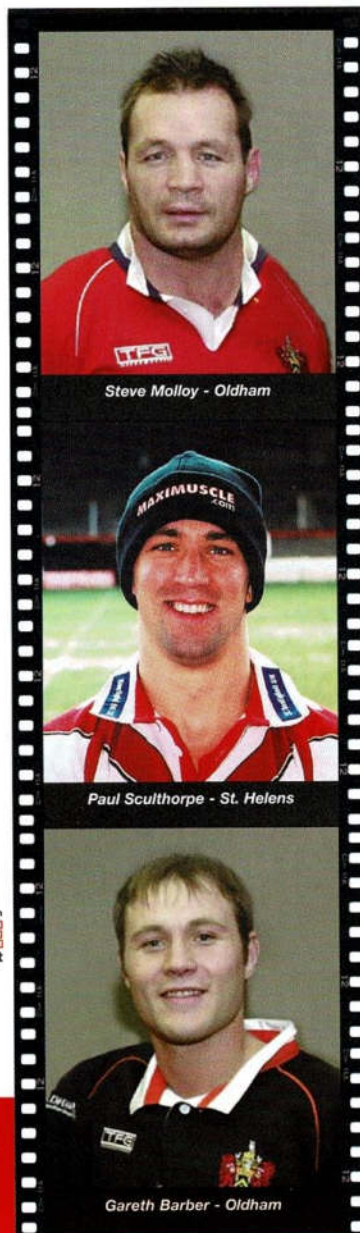
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Does the kit fit?

Paul Anderson



ANDO. Gets up at 9 am and breakfasts on toast, later in the morning he has a jacket potato and plain pasta, definitely none of the Lee Doran tuna specials ("they stink just like him" - ha ha).

Travelling to away games he sits next to anybody who will put up with him. He likes to talk about world affairs and other important matters, which he finds interesting but others tend to be bored with. On the question of the now discarded gloves he admitted he was just a slave to fashion.

He's not generally superstitious but he does make a habit of taking the dog for a walk prior to settling off for the day's games. When at Leigh, during the course of the week, the coach Paul Terzis would give his coaching advice at the evening coaching session and on the afternoon of the match just pop his head round the changing room door and say "Enjoy", that was the only word he spoke. He doesn't know if that is an example of the best or worst coaching advice ever given but he certainly found it different.

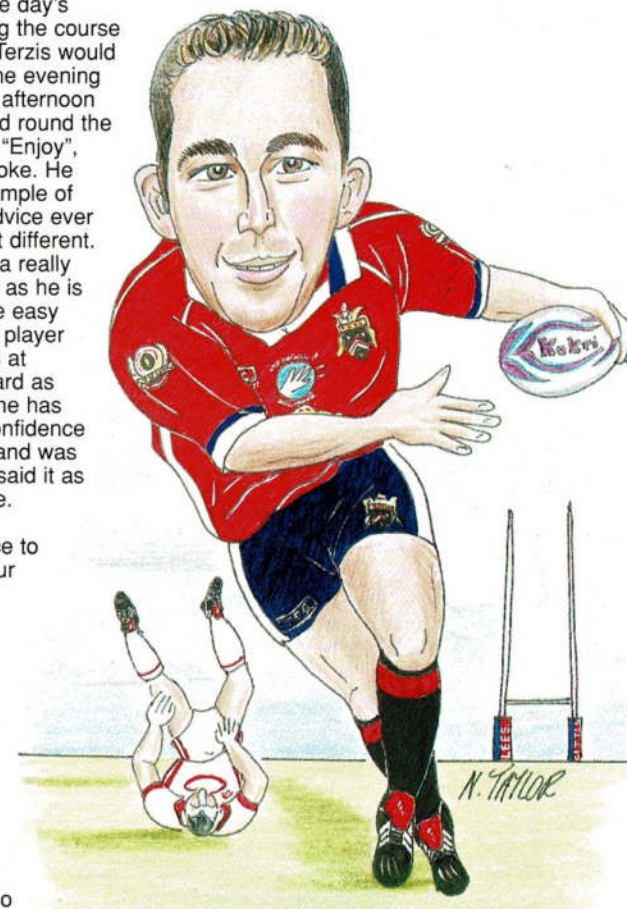
He thinks Molly is doing a really great job as coach especially as he is new to the role and it can't be easy with the dual responsibility of player coach, especially as he plays at prop. He considers Ian Millward as the most inspirational coach he has played for. He just instilled confidence and self-belief in his players and was very straightforward. He just said it as it was - direct but constructive.

Best/Worst Changing Room
Best - Boundary Park (It's nice to be able to have a bath on your own)
Worst - Salford (You keep banging your head on the ceiling)
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Best - Knowsley Rd
Worst - Hurst Cross (in the mud)
Best/Worst Food
Best Barrow (Don't normally eat after a game but when it's actually Pizza Hut pizza how can you refuse).
Worst - that very local club, no

names mentioned, who keep providing that meat and potato mess.

As to look a likes when the players were watching a comedian, Joey Blower, he told him he looked like Eric Cantona, but he's not saying who he said Molly looked liked. Molly's just walked in the office and said it was actually a FAT ERIC CANTONA. Ando has also been told he looks like Dean Martin. Joke. Mitch says Ando's the worst teller of a joke he's ever heard. Funeral Director Ronald Supp. Sign on front of Funeral Parlour - PEOPLE BURIED - R. SUPP.

Mitch



Best wishes to Oldham Rugby League this season.

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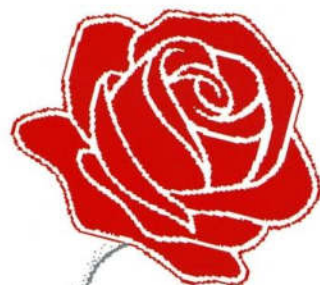
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Words of Wilson

... by Ian Wilson

WHAT a cracking weekend last weekend was for the credibility of Super League. It wasn't just the wins for Huddersfield at home to Saints, and for London at Wigan, and Wakefield at Cas, but also Widnes only losing to Bradford on goal kicks, and Halifax giving Leeds a good run for their money. There was only Warrington who let the side of the underdogs down, and even then, they only lost by 13 points, to Hull.

The attendance figures were not so good, it has to be said – but perhaps they should only be looked at over two consecutive rounds, to get an accurate assessment. Most unusually, only Wigan of the 'big five' were at home, and we all know how fickle their 'supporters' are (not to mention what some of them still think of Mr Whelan's JJB Stadium). And on top of that it was Mothers' Day.

With some cracking fixtures coming up, as well as the Easter programme and two very attractive Challenge Cup semi finals, you really get the feeling that the game is on a high at least at the top club level. Wouldn't it be great, too, to see RFL taking advantage of the current chaos in Welsh Rugby Union by announcing firm expansion plans in the principality, to follow on the forthcoming Conference structure there?

It is interesting to link the signs of greater Super League competitiveness with the current debates on salary caps and overseas quotas. I heard the great Mr Lindsey last week supporting a reduction of the overseas quota to two players per club, and after almost choking on the bare-faced cheek of the man, who was most responsible for the

huge recent growth of Aussie influence, and for out-of-line growth in players' salaries, I had to admit that his arguments had a lot to be said for them.

What attracts spectators in large numbers, and persuades them to keep coming? Ideally, there are surely three components needed – good quality rugby league, with players being seen to give of their best, and a degree of uncertainty over the outcome. (Of course, off field factors have some relevance too – price, facilities, access, atmosphere, etc. But I really think the above three, which relate to the entertainment provided on the field, are the most important ones.)

Did Brett Kenny contribute to attracting and keeping extra supporters? Or Peter Sterling? Or Jason Smith, today? In each case, surely, the answer is yes – because they added/add to the quality of what is on offer. So did Jonathan Davies, or Martin Offiah, from rugby union, for the same reason. It would be utter folly to bring in rules, whether on overseas quotas or salary caps, which prevent clubs from making such signings.

On the other hand, it is criminal to see hard-earned money flowing out of the game into the pockets of journeymen or has-been Aussies, when it could much more usefully be channelled into club and player development, including within the amateur game, in the UK.

So sensible quotas and sensible salary caps, I say – and onwards and upwards for the whole UK game.

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End of the line . . .

Express

By GARETH WALKER of RUGBY LEAGUER & LEAGUE EXPRESS

THE Arriva Trains' Cup is nearing the end of its Group Stage journey, and now seems a perfect time to take a look at the how successful the newly-scheduled competition has been so far.

The Cup certainly got off to a flying start, with bumper crowds turning up to watch some exciting clashes between the National League clubs. The opening weekend alone saw three crowds of over 3,000.

The action on the field was excellent too in those early stages, with notable clashes including Leigh and Salford's draw at Hilton Park, Hull KR's narrow win at York and Keighley Cougars' home win over Doncaster.

And the competition continued at a steady pace over the ensuing weeks, as the 20 teams involved jostled for places in the quarter-finals.

Several of those teams are still jostling, with only Whitehaven and Salford mathematically certain of progression at the time of writing.

Predictably, some interest has been lost at the clubs who have struggled, particularly in the stands, where crowds have dropped off. But that was always going to happen, and is extremely difficult to avoid.

An aspect of the competition that may need scrutiny ahead of next season is the cross-group fixtures that have been artificially created. They are when a team plays a side from a different group, to take the number of fixtures up to ten per club.

One of the main problems has been that the cross-group games are always between a team from National League One and NL2 – creating potentially one-sided games that are hardly attractive to supporters.

It hasn't been the case in every instance – Keighley beat Doncaster in their cross-group game, and Sheffield defeated Batley. And Chorley will have welcomed their clashes against Leigh after making

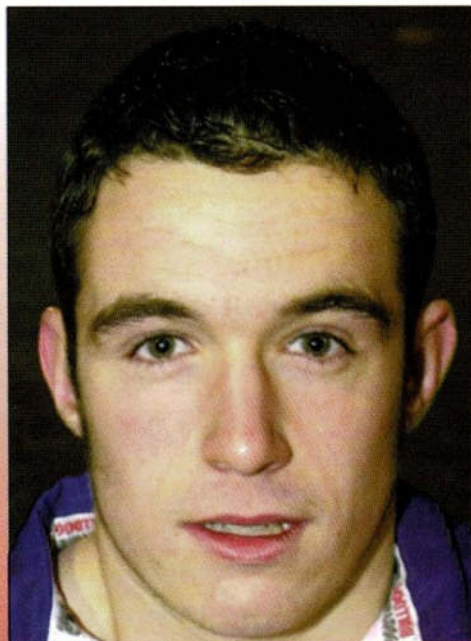
four long trips in the North Group.

But there has been a large number of heavy defeats too, and the decision to make full-time Salford City Reds take on struggling Gateshead Thunder was ludicrous. As a result, Thunder conceded almost 200 points inside five days and saw a record low 172 turn up to their home clash.

The extra fixtures also seem to take the competition past its public interest levels – eight games per team should have been enough, and by now most supporters are ready for the start of the National Leagues.

It's an issue that needs addressing when the powers that be sit down and decide where to take the competition next year.

But there should still be plenty of exciting clashes to look forward to in these last two weekends of action – the players very rarely let us down in the entertainment stakes do they? Enjoy today's game.



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Man of the Match v Barrow**

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CLUB CALL

CLUB CASH

Dear Members,

Well the big news, I'm sure you're all aware of is that the Jackpot Accumulator of £750 was won on Week 15 by Mrs R. Carroll, a regular at the Albion Inn. Today on the pitch, at half time, we will be doing the Club Cash Agents Draw. What's an Agents Draw I hear you saying? Well it's a new incentive to all our Agents/Collectors, the men and women who by collecting your money ensure the success of the lottery. They will be entered in the draw every month and the lucky winner will receive a shopping voucher from Sainsburys. We are very grateful for their generous support of our lottery and this is just another thank you to the people who help to support the club.

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Malcolm Brogan, Oldham	£100	B1347
C. Woodward, Middleton	£10	B8750
D. L. Simrock, Oldham	£10	B9510
D. Sneyo, Shaw	£10	B9627
Winnie Grady, Sun Inn	£10	C7263
M. Divener, Oldham	£10	B7309

Jackpot Accumulator

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No Winner -

Next Week . . . £100

Lottery Winners Week 17

J. Mayer, Church Inn	£300	C5844
Mrs Dawson, Oldham	£100	B2569
M. Horton, Chadderton	£10	C5093
Vanessa Haslam, Oldham	£10	B1712
Lisa Grady, Sun Inn	£10	A4793
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Jackpot Accumulator

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In Yer Face

A RECENT article in the Observer was reflecting on the popularity of sport in the years after the Second World War and, across a range of sports, commented on the large and enthusiastic crowds. Rugby League got the following mention:-

"When Warrington and Halifax replayed the 1954 Challenge Cup final, the queue of cars stretched back over the Pennines as fans descended on Bradford's Odsal stadium. Even though Laurel and Hardy were playing at the Alhambra Theatre just down the road, the crowd at Odsal was 102,569, a world record for Rugby League - and yes, is possibly a record for the number of flat caps gathered in one place."

They just have to do it don't they? Somewhere along the line there's always a cheap jibe about our game - and this is an article which went on to mention greyhound racing. No wonder Rugby League writers are always taking offence! After all, just because you're paranoid doesn't mean to say they're not out to get you!

At this stage of the season both Super League and the Arriva Trains' Cup are providing some close results and, indeed, some surprises. This has to be good for the game and hopefully will encourage spectators to turn out in greater numbers in anticipation of many more close contests.

Last weekend Huddersfield, Wakefield and London all secured excellent victories while Widnes and Halifax ran Bradford and Leeds close. One would like to think that these results will be the forerunners of many more evenly balanced contests, but of course some clubs have paper thin squads and injuries can bite deep later in the season.

In the Arriva Trains' Cup and the Challenge Cup there have been outstanding results for Hunslet, Chorley and Swinton. In addition York City Knights look to be building a more than useful squad and whatever the outcome of the current competition this all bodes well for the start of National Leagues One and Two at Easter. Both divisions are shaping up to be ultra competitive, although there has to be concern about the problems at Gateshead and, to a lesser degree, about the strength of squad at London Skolars.

Although Workington and Sheffield have not yet done themselves justice, both clubs are capable of overcoming temporary setbacks. Similarly, neither Oldham nor Batley in the higher division have yet to hit their best form but both sides have sufficient quality to provide stiff opposition and secure more than their fair share of victories. So, stand by for what could be the best year yet for competitive action since the introduction of summer rugby in 1995-96.

As ever with Rugby League there are plenty of issues to provoke controversy. At senior level the issue of Under 21 football has left Oldham - and others - in a less than satisfactory situation because there are too few teams outside Super League willing or able to run sides. No wonder Leigh Centurions opted out to play at a different level but, as ever, decisions are being made on the hoof rather than being properly planned and implemented.

Meanwhile, it distresses me to read week by week in League Express - and locally in the Oldham Chronicle - about ongoing disputes in the running of junior football. It should be the objective of everyone involved with youngsters to provide as many as possible with the opportunity to play the game in the best conditions available. All too often one gets the impression that some individuals are more concerned to stop youngsters participating in our great sport than to facilitate opportunities for them. Yes, there have to be rules governing the administration of the sport, but at the same time there needs to be an exercise of that rare commodity - common sense. I hope the unification of the game at all levels will bring this quality to bear. On past evidence however, don't hold your breath, because there are those who wallow in the prestige of their positions and are totally inflexible in their opinions. In the past too many young players have left the sport in their teenage years because there comes a time when they can see for themselves what is going on. Every youngster who drops out is a condemnation of our failure to nurture their talent or interest. It has to stop.

ON THIS DAY

... with Don Yates

APRIL
6



DURING the 1927-28 season Swinton swept all before them, winning the Lancashire Championship, the Lancashire Cup, the Challenge Cup and the League Championship. They lost only six of 47 matches that season but one of those defeats occurred on Good Friday, 6th April

when Oldham visited Station Road and inflicted upon the Lions their only home defeat of the season. A crowd of 20,000 saw Swinton score twice as many tries as the Roughyeds but it was Oldham who triumphed, 9-8. Winger Chris Brockbank

scored a couple of tries for Swinton but second-row forward Bert Morris could land only one goal. Centre Sid Rix scored the Oldham try and his wing partner Abe Johnson kicked the three goals which brought victory to the Roughyeds.

Swinton also won the Championship during the previous season, 1926-27, so, not surprisingly, they had several players who gained international recognition. On Wednesday 6th April 1927, England beat Wales 11-8 at the Cliff, Broughton. Swinton had three players involved in that match, one winger, Chris Brockbank played for England and another winger, Frank Evans, played for Wales. Billo Rees was the third Swinton player, he was scrum-half for Wales.

Another Welsh international who played for Swinton was prop-forward Owen Phillips. On Sunday 6th April 1952 he was included in the Welsh pack for a match against France in Bordeaux. A couple of Oldham forwards were also included in the Welsh pack that day. They were second-row



Abe Johnson

forward Charlie Winslade and loose-forward Bryn Goldswain. Unfortunately Wales lost all four of their internationals that season although the defeat in France was much closer than the 20 points to twelve scoreline would suggest. Each nation scored two tries but legendary full-back Puig-Aubert landed seven goals for France whilst Wales could muster only three, one of those landed by Goldswain.

On Saturday 6th April 1996 France registered another victory, and a shock one at that, when their schoolboys defeated England schoolboys 28-22 at Bagneres-de-Bigorre. It was the first French victory at this level for 14 years. A member of the English schools squad during that trip to France was Gareth Barber, now with the Roughyeds, whilst three other local members of the English squad were Ian Ure, Danny Sculthorpe and Kevin Sinfield.

On Wednesday 6th April 1949 a crowd of 12,000 was attracted to Borough Park, Workington for the opening County Championship match of the season, Cumberland v. Yorkshire. All three counties had defeated Australia earlier in the season so the Championship was wide open. It was Cumberland who eventually came out on top, beating Yorkshire 14-0 and then going on to clinch the title. Oldham stand-off Ken Ward made his one and only county appearance for Yorkshire in that match whilst on the wing for Yorkshire was a player who later became a big favourite here in Oldham, Batleys John Etty.

Twenty-eight years ago, on Sunday 6th April 1975, second-row forward Steve Herbert made a sensational debut for Oldham. He scored two tries as Oldham defeated Barrow 21-19 at Watersheddings. Herbert had been signed from Leigh junior rugby and went on to make 139 appearances for the Roughyeds, scoring 27 tries and seven goals during the following six years. He was then transferred to Barrow who, no doubt, remembered his devastating introduction into senior rugby.

STATS AND FACTS

APPEARANCES & SCORERS SEASON 2003

PLAYER	APP	SUB	TRIES	GOALS	D/G	PTS
Gavin Dodd	9	0	6	0	0	24
Iain Marsh	8	1	1	0	0	4
Jon Goddard	7	0	3	0	0	12
Paul Anderson	8	1	3	0	0	12
Joe McNicholas	5	1	1	0	0	4
Simon Svabic	5	5	0	22	0	44
Neil Roden	8	0	1	0	2	6
Steve Molloy	8	1	0	0	0	0
John Hough	6	2	2	0	0	8
Martin McLoughlin	4	4	0	0	0	0
Lee Doran	10	0	3	0	0	12
Chris Morley	6	3	1	0	0	4
Phil Farrell	7	0	4	0	0	16
Gareth Barber	5	4	4	13	0	42
Gavin Johnson	0	1	0	0	0	0
Ryan Stazicker	7	2	2	0	0	8
Danny Guest	1	2	0	0	0	0
Chris Campbell	4	0	2	0	0	8
Anthony Murray	4	1	1	0	0	4
Chris Irwin	6	0	3	0	0	12
Will Cowell	3	0	0	0	0	0
Darren Shaw	2	3	0	0	0	0
Keith Brennan	2	4	1	0	0	4
Dane Morgan	3	1	1	0	0	4
Adam Sharples	0	1	0	0	0	0
Jason Clegg	0	2	0	0	0	0
Paul Norton	2	1	0	0	0	0

ARRIVA TRAINS NATIONAL LEAGUE CUP - WEST

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Diff	PTS
Salford City Reds	7	6	1	0	410	76	334	13
Leigh Centurions	8	6	1	1	241	150	91	13
Rochdale Hornets	8	4	1	3	226	197	29	9
Oldham	8	3	1	4	188	214	-26	7
Swinton Lions	7	1	0	6	84	252	-168	2



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28	ROCHDALE HORNETS	LAW C W	28-22 2,141
JANUARY 2003			
19	LEIGH CENTURIANS	NL C L	14-22 3,070
26	EAST HULL	CC R3 W	32-6 1,270
FEBRUARY			
02	ROCHDALE HORNETS	NL C D	22-22 2,050
09	LONDON BRONCOS	CC R4 L	12-42 1,014
23	SWINTON LIONS	NL C W	24-16 923
MARCH			
02	BARROW RAIDERS	NL C W	50-11 1,280
09	SALFORD CITY REDS	NL C L	4-62 2,839
16	LEIGH CENTURIANS	NL C L	26-31 1,945
CC QF			
23	ROCHDALE HORNETS	NL C L	25-34 1,314
30	BARROW RAIDERS	NL C W	23-16 781
APRIL			
06	SWINTON LIONS	NL C H	
13	SALFORD CITY REDS	NL C A	
CC SF			
17	ROCHDALE HORNETS	NL 1 H	
21	DONCASTER DRAGONS	NL 1 A	P
26		CC FINAL	
MAY			
04	DEWSBURY RAMS	NL 1 H	
11	SALFORD CITY REDS	NL 1 A	
18		NL C QF	
25	LEIGH CENTURIANS	NL 1 H	
JUNE			
01	HULL KINGSTON ROVERS	NL 1 A	
08		NL C SF	
15	WHITEHAVEN	NL 1 H	
22	BATLEY BULLDOGS	NL 1 A	
29	ROCHDALE HORNETS	NL 1 A	
JULY			
06		NL C FINAL	
13	FEATHERSTONE R.	NL 1 H	
20	DONCASTER DRAGONS	NL 1 H	
27	DEWSBURY RAMS	NL 1 A	
AUGUST			
03	SALFORD CITY REDS	NL 1 H	
10	LEIGH CENTURIANS	NL 1 A	
17	HULL KR	NL 1 H	
24	WHITEHAVEN	NL 1 A	
31	BATLEY BULLDOGS	NL 1 H	
07	FEATHERSTONE R.	NL 1 A	

OLDHAM RLFC FULLY SUPPORT 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 AND RACIST CHANTS ARE TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE. ALLOW EVERYONE TO ENJOY THE GAME.

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Guests For The Day
VBF BLINDS OF CHADDERTON
(633 0001)

Monday Roughyheds Round-Up Roger Halstead Match
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Score on Monday Roughyheds Round-Up
Match Reports Team News Score on
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Team News S
Roger Halstead . .
Monday Roug
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Round-Up Roger Halstead Match Re
.. Score on Monday Roughyheds Round
.. Match Reports Team News Score on Monday



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.. Match Reports Team News Score on Monday