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V Leigh Centurions

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Will Cowell	2	Steve Madden
James Bunyan	3	Dan Potter
Pat Rich	4	Chris Percival
Nick Johnson	5	Damian Munro
Neil Roden	6	John Duffy
Ian Watson	7	Tommy Martyn
Steve Molloy	8	Simon Knox
Keith Brennan	9	Paul Rowley
Paul Southern	10	Heath Cruikshank
Lee Doran	11	Andy Isherwood
Dane Morgan	12	Oliver Wilkes
Phil Farrell	13	Ian Knott
SUBSTITUTES		
Simon Svabic	14	Paul Norman
Lee Marsh	15	David Larder
Martin McLoughlin	16	Danny Halliwell
Martin Elswood	17	Dave Alstead

Match Officials:

REFEREE: Colin Morris

TOUCH JUDGES: Gerry Hodgson, Darren Turtle

4TH OFFICIAL: Clive Walker

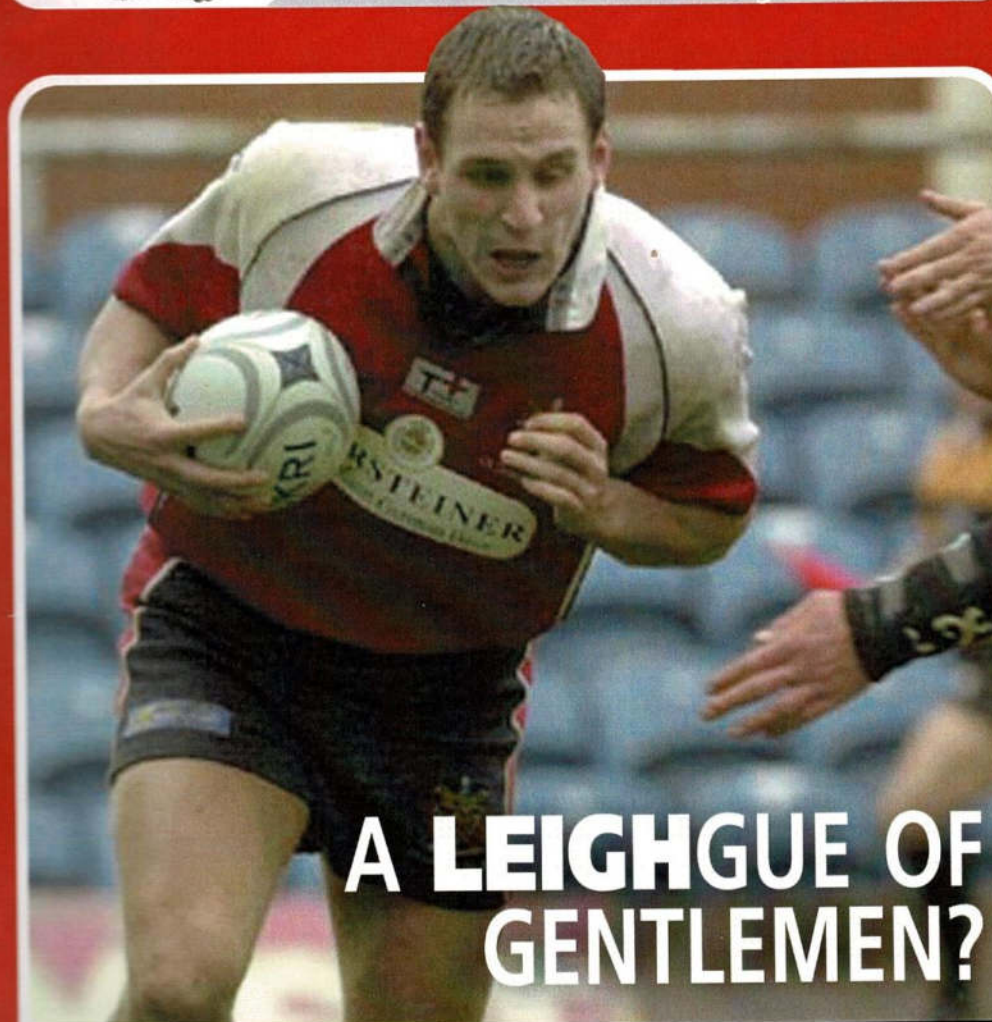
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The Roughyeds

LHF HEALTHPLAN NATIONAL LEAGUE 1
V Leigh Centurions



A LEIGHGUE OF GENTLEMEN?

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The Roughyeds
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Andy Proctor

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CLUB CAPTAIN

Phil Farrell

PHYSIOTHERAPISTS

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 Derek Turner 1955-59
 Bob Irving 1964-74
 Martin Murphy 1966-82
 Andy Goodway 1979-85 & 1993-94

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1998-2003

Trans-Penine Cup
 Finalists - 1998

Northern Ford Premiership
 Club of the Year - 2000
 Grand Finalists - 2001

MOST APPEARANCES: John Hough, 175 - Jan 1998 - September 2003
CONSECUTIVE APPEARANCES: Phil Farrell, 67 - *April 2nd 2000 - March 15th 2002
 *John Hough was on the team for every match February 1st 1999 - April 16th 2001 (82)

TRIES IN A SEASON: Mark Sibson, 23 - 1999-2000

GOALS IN A SEASON: Pat Rich, 146 - 2000-2001

POINTS IN A SEASON: Pat Rich, 320 - 2000-2001

DROP GOALS IN A SEASON: Neil Roden, 7 - 2001-2002

TRIES IN A CAREER: Mark Sibson, 60 - 1999-2002

GOALS IN A CAREER: Pat Rich, 254 - 1999-2001

POINTS IN A CAREER: Pat Rich, 576 - 1999-2001

DROP GOALS IN A CAREER: Neil Roden, 18 - 2000-2003

TRIES IN MATCH: Mark Sibson v Wigan St. Judes, 4 - Feb 8th 2000 at Boundary Park
 Mark Sibson v Queensbury, 4 - Jan 28th 2001 at Boundary Park
 David Gibbons v Chorley Lyons, 4 - Jan 30th 2001 at Boundary Park

GOALS IN A MATCH: Simon Svabic v Swinton Lions, 10 - Apr 6th 2003 at Boundary Park
POINTS IN A MATCH: Gareth Barber v Dewsbury Rams, 26 - Apr 2nd 2002 at Hurst Cross (7 goals, 3 tries)

DROP GOALS IN A MATCH: Neil Roden v Workington Town, 2 - Dec 17th 2000 at Derwent Park
 John Braddish v Hull KR, 2 - Dec 16th 2001 at New Craven Park

HIGHEST SCORE/WINNING MARGIN: v Yorks Wasps, 70-6 - Apr 1st 2001 at Huntington Stadium
 v Queensbury (am), 64-0 - Jan 28th 2001 RLCC 3rd Rnd at Boundary Park

IN THE CHAIRMAN'S OPINION

with **CHRIS HAMILTON**



"the ability of the players to get better and better each season is bewildering"

Last week's game was certainly eventful and I have to admit to having got caught up in all the emotion.

It was a game that I believe we did not deserve to lose and to play with 12 men for 55 minutes and still give ourselves the opportunity to win was a tremendous effort especially in the hot conditions.

One thing is for sure - I did not endear myself to the Doncaster fans by stating that we deserved to win the game in the after match speeches but as most of you will know by now if something has to be said then that is what will happen regardless of who it upsets.

As Chairman of the club I have a duty to stand up for the players when necessary and last week was one of those occasions when it seemed we could do no right.

Coming off the pitch the lads were bitterly disappointed and we again showed that this season we will have no problem scoring points but we need to improve our defence - with a man down for so long last week I don't think it would be right to question the tries we conceded although the team will no doubt be looking at ways we can do better.

Another big surprise was the crowd which at 835 was a major let down and at least half of that must have been Oldham fans who again got behind the team in very vocal fashion.

So we have again failed to qualify for the last eight of the Arriva Trains competition and that is a big disappointment to everyone at the club.

The plus point of course is that we can now use the cliché that it allows us to concentrate on the league!

In doing that we today welcome everyone connected with the Leigh club for what should be a fantastic game of rugby league.

In our Arriva Cup meetings Leigh certainly showed us the way home particularly in the meeting at Boundary Park and I am sure they will be ready for everything we manage to throw at them today. The LHF Healthplan National League One has already shown that it is again going to be a very intense competition and prescriptions of calming drugs have again reached epidemic proportions amongst Chairmen and Coaches alike.

There is one thing for sure the ability of the players to get better and better each season is bewildering and I take my hat off to them in being able to work full time and then train virtually every day before playing at the weekend.

It is to be hoped that with a new sponsor on board, for which we are very grateful, and some TV coverage again we can start to get these athletes some of the accolades they deserve because everything good in this game is far from restricted to Super League only.

Today I must also make mention of our Match Sponsors the Oldham Chronicle who are celebrating their 150th Anniversary. They are here as part of their various events this week and how appropriate that the man who wrote the rugby league report in their first ever paper is still writing them today - well done Roger Halstead!

Your support the last few weeks has increased in volume with each game we have played and the people who sing and shout every week must be delighted that more of you are following their lead!

We have played some terrific rugby over the last few weeks and hopefully things will continue on the up. With that in mind please cheer the team on today in what will definitely be a very hard game.

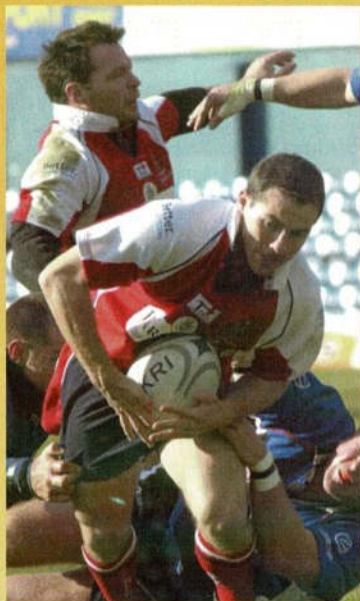
Enjoy the game
Christopher

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 express our thanks to the Oldham Evening Chronicle, League Publications Ltd, Phil Burdge and all concerned for the use of photographs.

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COACHLINES

with STEVE MOLLOY

Welcome to Boundary Park on this bank holiday weekend to what we hope will be a bumper crowd for two of the form teams of the competition. Leigh have set the Arriva Trains Cup alight with some pulsating rugby which unfortunately we were on the back end of, but the less said about that the better. Today is certainly another benchmark to show what progress we have made since that first weekend in March.

With our Arriva commitments over after last week's play off, it makes today's game even more important as a measure of a good side is how well they bounce back from a disappointment.

A very big thank you to all of you who made the effort to follow us to Doncaster. It certainly didn't go unnoticed how vocal you were and how

" Today is certainly another benchmark to show what progress we have made "

much support you showed the guys after Martin's sending off. Having watched the incident several times it is evident there was no malice in the challenge and I hope that with this and Martin's excellent disciplinary record that that will be the end of it.

It has been a pleasure to welcome Phil Farrell back into the fold after a lengthy absence and it is a mark of the player to see how easily he has fitted back into the team. It would also be remiss of me not to congratulate Lee Doran for the way he has conducted himself as a player and a leader in Phil and John Hough's enforced absences. I'm sure the experience can have only been good for him.

Recently, for the first time this season I've had the pleasure of having selection problems of the other kind - who to leave out. This can only be good for the squad, but spare a thought for poor Gavin Johnson who after missing the majority of the Arriva Train games with an accident in training where he damaged his ankle ligaments, forced his way back into the 17 and then breaks his lower leg in another training ground accident. How unlucky can a guy be? Let's all hope he makes a speedy recovery.

Enjoy the game,
Steve



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IN THE CAPTAIN'S CORNER

with PHIL FARRELL

Since the last home match we have had two really hard away games against Halifax and Doncaster, both in my opinion producing good performances. On a personal note in the game against Halifax it was a relief to get back on the meadow and play a game of rugby league again. In my entire career I've never been out of the game long with injury so this was all a new experience. I was surprised how unfazed I was before the game but it was good to get that first tackle in and realise that my shoulder was coping O.K

And what a professional performance it was. Let's not forget we were away from home against one of the teams talked up as favourites. I thought our defence was the best it has been all season and we managed to maintain it for the full 80 minutes for the first time as well. What a great following there was from Oldham as well. When we ran out it was as if it was a home game and you really don't know how much that helps.

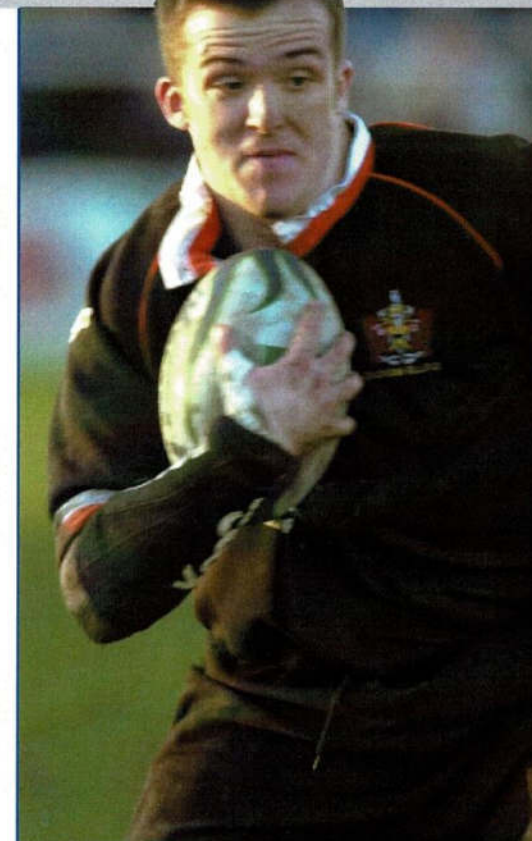
At Doncaster we were all disappointed with the result but not with the performance. Many teams' heads would have dropped after "Macca" (Martin McLoughlin) was sent off but it just inspired us to give that bit extra. "Macca" isn't a dirty player. His record speaks for itself, not only has he never been sent off before, but never even been sin binned and how many props can say that. After seeing the incident on video I don't think there was anything malicious.

Again your support was superb, especially after "Macca's" red card, it really did help us all and I really believe that if we had had another 5 minutes we would have won. Paul Southern is certainly having no luck, not only is he playing through the pain barrier every week with his groin injury but broke a finger in his hand in the first few minutes of the Doncaster game. He managed to last over 60 minutes of the game, which shows the commitment, and determination he has. He is determined to carry on playing with both injuries for the next two vital games as well. I thought it was rather cruel of one of the guys who said if he was a racehorse they would have put him down.

Editors note: Faz seems to have had a difficulty this week coming up with any more embarrassing stories about his team mates (That's a change) so I thought I'd give my twopennorth. You must have all seen the advert for Vauxhall people carriers on the tele., where the two young lads are talking about their parents and families as if they were adults. A great advert, but just look at the lad who has the final line, "Who's not been to the toilet?" If that's not Faz as a kid I'll start to support Hornets.

Today should be a great game and we are all up for it, please continue with your superb support.

Faz



"I thought our
defence was
the best it has
been all season"

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in yer face

WITH GEOFF COONE

It may seem unwise to refer to betting odds given the current scandal surrounding certain players at St. Helens but I was more than a little surprised that William Hill's were offering 40/1 against Oldham winning National League one. According to Hill's only Rochdale and Keighley are likely to finish below Oldham. Don't make me laugh! I know bookies rarely get their calculations wrong and I am not normally a betting man but at these odds (although they may have shortened a bit since the Roughyeds' victories over Featherstone and Halifax) the team is well worth a punt. £10 invested at 40/1 is a nice little earner. On what I've seen so far Leigh may be justified favourites for the title but Oldham have run into good form since the debacle in February and are beginning to look a pretty good side. The team is well balanced with clever halfbacks, pace in the three quarters, ground makers in the pack and line busters in the back three.

Today's game will give us a good idea of the progress the team has made but significantly improved defence and the timely return of inspirational skipper Phil Farrell have given the side an altogether more formidable look. To me Oldham have more strength in depth this season and are more likely to stay the course than last year. All the more pity, therefore that the team exited the Arriva Trains Cup at Doncaster last week because here was a game we could and should have won. Martin McLaughlin's sending off was crucial and is inexplicable when a Doncaster player is placed on report for an equally bad offence. I have said before that the 'on report' system is badly flawed. If a player referred to the disciplinary committee is subsequently found guilty of an offence and suspended then that club's next opponents get the benefit of playing a weakened team and not the side that was originally offended against. That can't be right.

Even a sin-binning would give the current opponents some advantage if only for ten minutes. These days teams find it extremely difficult to hold out for ten minutes when a man short and even when they do the extra energy expended can have a telling effect late in the game. Much better, therefore, a system whereby retribution is immediate. After all there is no reason why an offence should not go 'on report' as well as incurring a sin-binning. And, finally, regarding last week's game it surely cannot be right that Oldham get the same referee for the fifth time this season already. It always surprises me when officials

don't recognise which team is setting out to goad their opponents. As an example, when Doncaster kicked off straight into touch at the commencement of last week's match P.J. Solomon goaded Lee Doran quite unnecessarily. A good official might have picked up on this immediately and by nipping it in the bud have saved himself more serious trouble later. That said no referee ever punched a player (to the best of my knowledge, that is) and player's must take responsibility for their own actions in the heat of battle because any inclination to 'blow up' will be ruthlessly exploited by professional opposition.

So the Powergen Challenge Cup Final is to be a contest between old rivals St. Helens and Wigan. Saints' achievement in reaching this final despite facing Super League opposition in every round is remarkable and will, no doubt, make them favourites to lift the trophy. It is a pity, therefore, that their achievement should be overshadowed by the aforementioned betting scandal. It was noticeable how media sources which can barely scrape a mention or a column inch of our game were quickly on the bandwagon of condemnation with massive spreads of the latest news. If only the quality of play could generate such interest! However, in among all the schemozzle St. Helens did themselves no favours by banning the Daily Mail the originators of the story (subsequently rescinded). It is never wise to 'shoot the messenger'. After all, the original sin lies closer to home. Here's hoping that the long term (no pun intended) results are not too damaging and that two full strength sides turn out at the Millennium Stadium for what promises to be an enthralling match.



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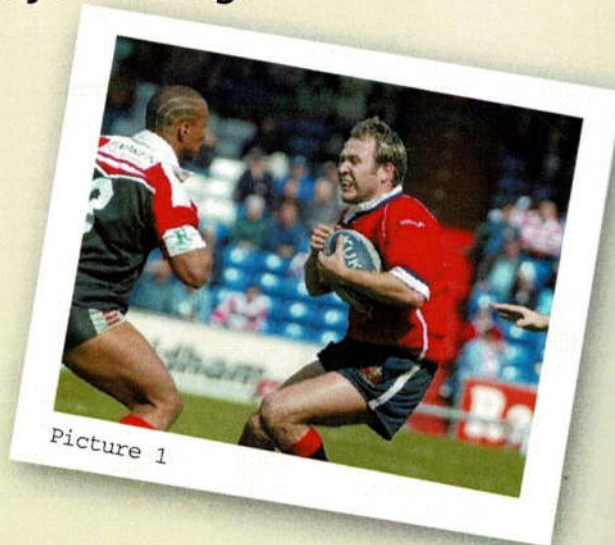
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FROM THE PEN OF

MICHAEL TURNER

"Roughyeds v Leigh"

Photo 1. Our first photograph shows action from the last year's league match played here at Boundary Park on May 25th 2003. Gareth Barber is about to be "met" by Dale Cardoza. Oldham won the match (12 – 10) before a crowd of 1,691 courtesy of a Gavin Dodd try and four goals from Simon Svabic.



Picture 1

Photo 2. For our second image we go back to 1964 and a "Western Region" match (the Arriva Trains Cup of its day) played at Watersheddings on March 28th. The action shows John Donovan and Geoff Sims in pursuit of the Leigh scrum half Entwistle. The Roughyeds won by twelve points to nil with the aforementioned Sims and Donovan each scoring a try supplemented by three goals from Frank Dyson. The attendance was 6,899.



Picture 2

AS IAN SEES IT

with IAN WILSON

What on earth is going on at St Helens? They began the season in superb form, their performances in the cup and the early rounds of Super League thoroughly vindicating coach Ian Millward's comments about the high quality of their pre-season preparations. Attendances were up, too, demonstrating how much the steeped-in-RL local fans were appreciating the quality of the fare being served up for them, both at Knowsley Road and on away grounds.

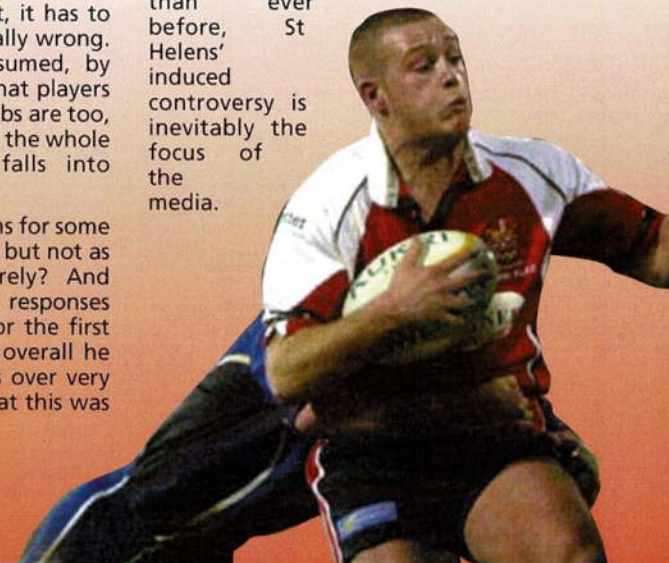
Then, suddenly, we get the farcical team selection for the Easter Monday game at Odsal, the embarrassing post-match press conference with Millward that followed, and then accusations of players betting on their team losing making national media headlines.

Of course, this is not the first occasion, nor will it be the last, when a club puts out a weaker side than it has to, for what it considers to be some strategic reason. However, in a professional sport, it has to be stressed that it is fundamentally wrong. Unless it can be justifiably assumed, by other clubs and by supporters, that players are trying their best, and that clubs are too, to win each game they play, then the whole *raison d'être* of the sport falls into disrepute.

No doubt there were valid reasons for some individuals not to play at Odsal – but not as many as Millward de-selected, surely? And his rather pathetic attitude and responses in the press conference – not for the first time, it has to be said, though overall he seems a good bloke, and comes over very well – suggests fairly strongly that this was indeed the case.

With regard to betting, then I think everyone would agree that, for the sake of a sport's integrity, again, it is completely unacceptable. Betting means money, with the chance of big winners and big losers, and so the possibility of dishonesty and corruption is an inevitable knock-on effect. I am not for one minute suggesting that such evils are involved in this particular case; merely that the attempt to avoid them must mean the complete outlawing of any aspect of the activity by players and officials, which, of course, we do, as a game.

Ultimately, one wonders about the overall management of the club. Did the board approve the Odsal team selection? If so, they are not fit to run a club; if not, exactly who is in charge there? But it is all very sad for the game overall. At a time when we should all be celebrating the quality on the field, and more competitive leagues than ever before, St Helens' induced controversy is inevitably the focus of the media.



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40 NOT OUT!

Nigel Marland and Brian Walker have for this issue combined the **IN THE NEWS** and **WALKERBOUT** pages to celebrate a journalistic milestone.

Every Oldham supporter who was there will most likely remember those three extraordinary Challenge Cup matches against Hull KR as though they were played just a season or two ago. Though one man, this afternoon sat in his usual seat in the press box, will have more reason than most to scratch his head and ask where those 40 years have gone.

On Monday the 20th April 1964, Roger Halstead, hair now greyer, wider 'round the middle, still licking the stub of his pencil and having only just scrapped the Morris Minor that all those years ago joined the traffic jam that stretched from Standedge to Fartown was, on that spring

afternoon, a pup reporter on a mission.

This now doyen of rugby league scribes, was then about to make his Chronicle debut reporting on the second of those two semi final replays, having taken over from Ken Ashton, who in turn, had just departed Union St for Fleet St.

"**OLDHAM WON'T MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE AGAIN**", followed by "**FADE-OUT FOILS A GLORIOUS REPLAY RALLY**" were Ashton's swansongs; "**DYSON'S INJURY KEPT SECRET**" was to be Roger's first teatime headline, disguising the disappointment to come for thousands of Oldhamers. (See page 14).



2003 : The first Golden Boot Award

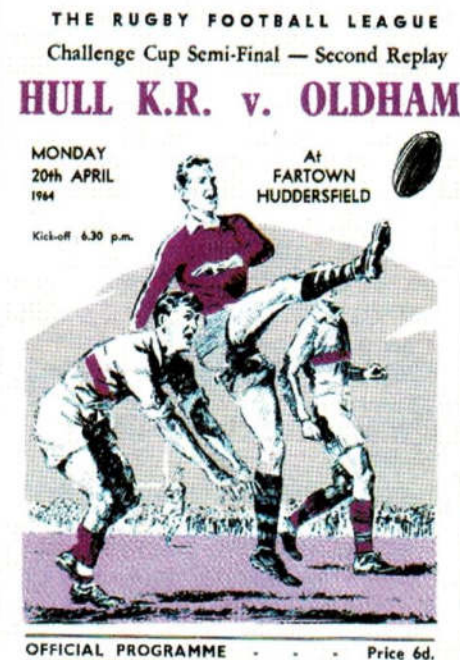
Now, 40 years on and another 40 Challenge Cup defeats later, I suspect that if Roger did scratch the side of his head, one of the questions he would ask would be why oh why a famous old club like ours seems destined never to grace the Twin Towers?

Nevertheless, like with the rest of the faithful, hope springs eternal and the adrenalin will have been quietly pumping at most of the 1,500 or so Oldham first team matches that he has covered since

Oldham RLFC and its supporters, unlike those at some clubs, have, down the years, been lucky to have been able to enjoy an excellent standard of local press coverage and it's fair to say that most copies of the Chronicle are still read back page first. When Roger was last year presented with the inaugural Oldham Supporters Club's Golden Boot trophy awarded to the person judged to have contributed most to the progression of rugby league in the town I know that he was just a little bit embarrassed. He needn't have been. If the same trophy had been in existence over those 40 years he would have won it more than just the once.

So Roger, on behalf of Oldham fans everywhere congratulations on being 40 not out. It's just a shame that during those years we didn't win a major trophy or three.

See overleaf for that first Roger Halstead match report.



Roger Halstead cuts his teeth



25 Years on...

Roger's SILVER ANNIVERSARY

DYSON'S INJURY KEPT SECRET

OLDHAM 1-0-2, HULL KR 3-2-12



FRANK DYSON, the man whose ambition of steering Oldham to Wembley was shattered by pace and craft in front of thousands of his home town fans, hobbled painfully through three-quarters of this game with a suspected broken toe - and none of the Oldham lads knew until Dyson took off his boot at the end! It was the best kept secret of the whole fantastic tie. Only a handful of officials knew of the Oldham full back's injury and they decided to say nothing.

Club physiotherapist Dennis Wright told me afterwards: "Frank was obviously in pain. But we decided it would be better to keep the news from the other lads, and none of them knew about it until after the match."

The injury happened midway through the first half, when Dyson suddenly felt a searing pain in the big toe of his right foot. "I don't know how it happened but it was sore - very sore," said Frank afterwards.

Dyson is to have the toe X-rayed today but, more than anyone, knows that Oldham

have no excuse for a defeat, which can be summed up in one word - class.

For virtually the first time in the mammoth tie, Rovers turned on the football. Not the individual brilliance of out half Alan Burwell as in the Swinton game, but an all round team display of

by ROGER HALSTEAD

support work and strong running, which left Oldham groggy in the second half.

Many Rovers fans thought skipper Harry Poole had boomed when he won the toss and elected to play against the wind. Poole's gamble proved a master stroke, however, and in the second half, with the wind behind them, the Robins hurled back Oldham's attacks with a simplicity which had to be seen to be believed.

Poole, of course, had facts to support his theory that the wind would prove decisive in the second half. He knew Oldham were expected to get on top as the game wore on - as at Swinton - and he knew the big boot of Len Clark could drive them back.

Things did not quite work out like that, because Oldham never showed the second half fight nor the pack power that was expected from them. But on the odd couple of occasions they did venture into Rovers' territory in a bid to wipe out the deficit, Clark was there to kick Rovers back into the attack.

CHANCES
But Oldham can only blame themselves for falling at the vital cup hurdle.

Len McIntyre outhooked international Flash Flanagan 13-10 and the conditions were so much in Oldham's favour that Rovers made no secret of their pre-match annoyance at the seven-a-side competition held at Fartown on Sunday.

More than that, Oldham had their first half chances and, in my book, they should have turned round with at least a two try lead.

Watersheddings fans are still scratching their heads in amazement at Geoff Robinson's inside kick when he had the Rovers' defence spreadeagled and Geoff Sims charging up the wing in



Frank Dyson tackles Hull KR's winger Graham Paul.



Harry Major and Len McIntyre stop a Rovers attack.

support with an almost clear run to the line.
They were staggered too, when Charlie Bott held on only minutes before with Peter Smethurst and Trevor Simms flanking out on his left.

But the chances went begging - and against a team of terrier like tacklers like Rovers, chances like that have to be taken.
GONE was the backing up of the Oldham pack, which has swamped even the strongest of opposition in the cup run this term.

GONE were the lightning breaks of Stuart Whitehead and Geoff Robinson.

GONE too, was the immaculate cover, for which Oldham had become known throughout the league.

And Rovers, held all the trump cards in attack, with Burwell and Bunting turning in a tremendous display of fleet footed running. It was from one typical Burwell break that Mike Blackmore was sent racing down the wing within minutes of the restart.

Dyson pulled off a bone-shattering tackle five yards from the line - but the writing was on the wall from that moment on.

LESSONS

Rovers, it seemed, had learned the lessons of Headingley and Swinton. The ball was going to be flung about in such a manner that the Oldham defence cracked in the 45th minute, when Tyson handed on to Flanagan for the hooker to send BUNTING wriggling through a narrow gap between Dyson and McIntyre for the first try.

KELLET tucked on the goal and Oldham had their backs to the wall. For 25 minutes they held out, but with a series of dropped passes and knock ons from the Oldham men, Rovers were able to storm into an almost continuous attack.

In the 70th minute, the match was sealed. Clark drove Oldham back with another raking kick, and from the scrum, the ball was fanned out quickly to Elliott, via the bouncing Burwell, for the centre to come inside and send BLACKMORE over although partially halted.

KELLET again goal - and that was that. But the best team won.

The man I felt sorry for in the Oldham line up was Vin Nestor, the out half with the tremendous task of putting the skids under Burwell. Nestor was out to repeat the job he did at Headingley and, to a certain extent, he did button up Burwell in the first half.

But a knock soon after the interval, which gave Nestor concussion, ended the Oldham man's stout defence, and, after struggling along in the middle for much of the half, Nestor went on the wing in the late stages, with John Donovan and Geoff Sims moving inside.

Nothing went right, either, for Jackie Pycroft, but the main thorn in Oldham's side was the fact that the pack, expected to win the day, was beaten by the superb running and backing up of the Rovers' six.

HOW THE POINTS CAME

27 - Kellett goal 2-0

38 - Dyson goal 2-2

Half Time: 2 - 2

45 - Bunting try, Kellett goal 7-3

70 - Blackmore try, Kellett goal 12-2

OLDHAM: Dyson; Sims, Donovan, Smethurst, Simms, Nestor, Pycroft; Bott, McIntyre, Wilson, Whitehead, Robinson, Major.

HULL KR: Kellett, Paul, Major, Elliott, Blackmore; Burwell, Bunting, Tyson, Flanagan, Drake, Palmer, Clark, Poole.

Referee: Mr M Coates (Leeds)

Attendance: 33,003. Receipts £6,216

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1899 to 1923

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Alan Davies

1950 to 1961

Of all the big-name players who graced Watersheddings in the "Fabulous Fifties", Alan Davies was king. One of the greatest centres the sport has ever produced, Davies was the complete rugby league player



John Hough

1998 to present

John, a local lad, made Oldham RL history on December 2, 1997, when he became the new Roughyeds club's first signing. With 180 appearances, he is now contracted for 2004 and looking forward to his 7th season as a Roughyed



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TODAY'S OPPONENTS LEIGH CENTURIONS

Neil Turley. Most probably Leigh's most lethal attacking weapon. Despite carrying niggling injuries all season Neil returned with another strong haul of tries to add to the points scored with the boot. Has made the no1 shirt his own in 3 seasons at Leigh. Can also fill in at number 6.

Dave Alstead. Another ex Warrington player. Dave has a solid start to his Leigh career but lost a little when he started a new job. Played full back and on the wing for Leigh, strong under the kick added to a good turn of pace and sound defence. Will be looking to start more games this year.

Mark McCulley. Mark McCulley followed Darren Abram out of Leigh and now he has followed him back. Mark lacks natural pace but makes up for it with a brilliant step and great offloading in the tackle. Is also an accomplished goal kicker.

Damian Munro. Leigh picked up Damian after he was released by Widnes, and made an immediate impact on the Leigh fans. One of the fastest players around in the NL. A great eye for the interception as well.

Dale Cardoza. Dale has made an outstanding start to his Leigh career. One of the most explosive 3/4 around when his head is switched on. Does have a tendency to get involved with the niggling side, but definitely a player you want on your side and not the opposition side. Bit strong and very fast Dale will again be a major player for Leigh in 2004.

Danny Halliwell. Danny joined his hometown team after spells with Halifax and a loan spell at Warrington. A good turn of speed and a great rugby brain. Will be a stand out player in the NL.

Dan Potter. Destroyed Leigh last season while at Oldham on loan from Widnes. Can play 2nd row or Centre. Will be looking to grab the shirt left by Alan Hadcroft's departure.

Chris Percival. Another signing from Widnes. Chris is another back with pace to burn and brings valuable SL experience to the Leigh side.

Tommy Martyn. Joined his hometown team late last season after a highly successful spell with Saint Helens. One of the greats of the game. Won numerous awards and titles at Saints and will be hoping that winning mentality rubs off at Leigh. Also assisting with the coaching.

John Duffy. John is in his second spell at Leigh after spending 6 months with the Chorley Lynx. Had a highly influential season last year and has certainly cemented the scrum half role. Inventive with the ball in hands John has vastly improved his kicking game as well. Was recognised with a call up to the Scotland squad. Has had previous spells at Warrington and Salford.

Steve Madden. Steve joins Leigh after failing to break through at Saints. A speedy centre Steve showed immense talent at Warrington until a broken leg ruled him out. Will be looking to get his career back on track.

Heath Cruickshank. Heath is back at Leigh after being forced to leave Leigh when the NL quota was cut. Heath has bulked up since at Leigh and has moved from the 2nd row to the front row. A great tackler and strong runner.

Richard Marshall. Another local lad who is coming to play for his hometown team. Has played for Huddersfield and London in SL. Prop/2nd row.

Simon Knox. Now in his 2nd spell after a hugely disappointing 1st spell. Simon was in outstanding form for Swinton last season and nearly beat Leigh on his own in the Arriva Trains Cup. Was a member of Widnes's grand final winning team as well.

Paul Norman. Has recovered well from surgery on his knee. Takes the ball in hard and is a strong tackler. What he lacks in size he more than makes up in heart. A real crowd favourite at Hilton Park.

Oli Wilkes. Oli joins Leigh after impressing for Keighley last season. A young and enthusiastic 2nd Rower. Tackles well above his weight. Another Scottish international at Leigh.

Ian Knott. Ian steps down a division to join Leigh after highly successful spells with Warrington and Wakefield. An accomplished 2nd rower or loose forward, Ian was a regular try scorer in SL along with a dependable kicker. Will be looking to replace Adam Bristow in the no13 shirt.

Paul Rowley. Outstanding last season and Leigh fans will be expecting more of the same this year. Paul ended last season after copping a ban which meant he missed the Grand Final against Salford. He will be looking to put one over on his ex club Halifax this year.

Dave McConnell. Dave left Saints last season for Chorley where he spent a few months before being snapped up by London. A dependable player who can slot in at loose forward or Hooker.

Anthony Blackwood. Ant never got a look in at Leigh last season and was loaned out to Chorley. Played a few highly impressive games for Leigh the year before. Plays in the 2nd Row but can also fill in at centre.

Adam Bibey. Adam is of course brother to Ricky who was at Leigh last year. But is rated as a far better prospect. Massive for a young lad will be looking to break into the 1st team this season as his only 1st team experience was 18th man at Hull Kr.



PLAYER PROFILE

MARTIN ELSWOOD

MARTIN Elsworth fulfilled an ambition last November when he signed a one-year contract to play for the club that he and his family have supported all their lives.

Indeed, his businessman father Frank is a club sponsor who backs, among other things, the Roughyeds Kids and when Martin signed on the dotted line for his hometown club he told the Oldham Evening Chronicle: "My Dad was more made up than I was."

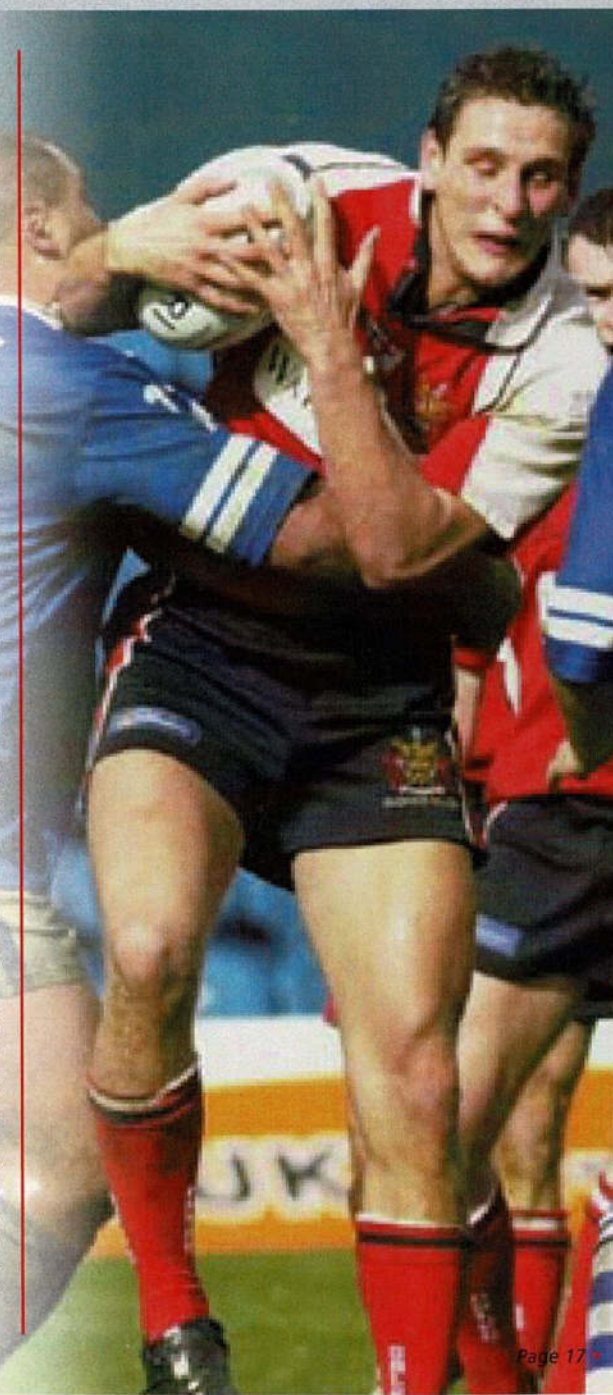
At the age of 20 and relatively inexperienced in terms of first-team rugby, Martin has ambitions of going into Super League with the Roughyeds.

He has made a good start, too, to his Oldham career, having played in 12 of the Roughyeds 16 matches in all competitions so far this season. He has only made the starting line-up twice, but ten appearances from the bench have indicated clearly that he is held in some regard by player-coach Steve Molloy.

Like Nick Johnson, Elsworth is a local lad who has come "home" from a Super League club. Johnson came from Bradford Bulls, Elsworth from Huddersfield Giants where he had spent three years in the Giants youth set-up and where he played regularly in the alliance (before it was scrapped) and the academy sides.

Once on schoolboy forms as a centre-back with Oldham Athletic, he lives in Shaw and is no stranger to Boundary Park and its surroundings. He can handle a rugby ball, but he can also kick a soccer ball, as he is always willing to demonstrate whenever a round ball finds its way on to a Roughyeds training paddock, be it at Manor Park or Grange.

He took up rugby as a 15-year-old with Royton Tigers after being released by Athletic. Within a year he had won town team and regional schoolboy honours at rugby and a Huddersfield scout had taken him to the McAlpine where he played regularly in the junior and under-21 senior academy teams.



MARTIN ELSWOOD CONT...

A former head boy at North Chadderton School, which has produced a few rugby league professionals in the past few years, he was offered a new pay-as-you-play deal by the Super League club, but he decided it was time to make a major career decision and strive for the chance of first-team rugby even if it meant leaving the Giants behind and starting afresh in the National League.

He hopes it will be a case of one step backwards leading to two steps forward -- with Oldham.

He said: "If I was going to play in the National League I didn't want to play anywhere other than Oldham. I have supported the club all my life.

"I actually asked Huddersfield to ring Steve Molloy on my behalf to see if there were any openings with the Roughyeds and I was delighted when he got in touch.

"My contract talks took five minutes flat. Chris Hamilton and Steve really sold the club to me. They are ambitious. They are aiming for Super

League and so am I. If we were to get there together it would be a dream come true."

Elswood, who works in the family business, has strung together eight consecutive appearances for the first team and is regarded as an important part of the first-team squad.

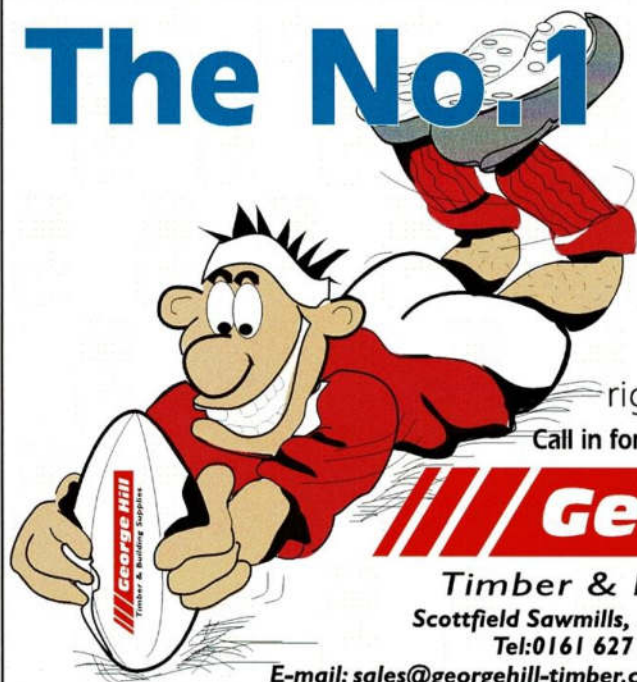
Apart from 18-year-old prop Adam Sharples, who makes only infrequent first-team appearances at this embryonic stage of his career, Elswood is the "baby" of the first-team squad.

He is younger than Nick Johnson and Lee Marsh by a few months, but his 21st birthday isn't far off --- and that will be another reason to celebrate for Martin, whose long-term fiancée presented him with a baby daughter only last week.

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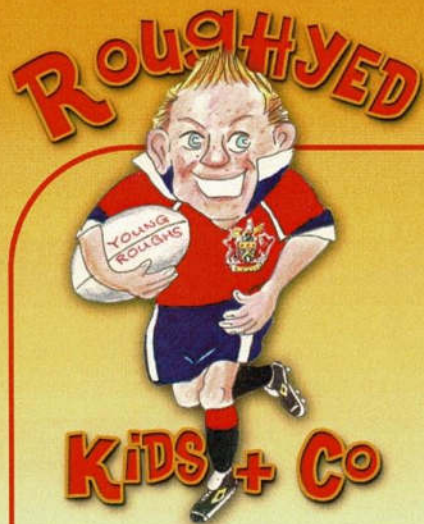
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Hi KIDS

What a team! Any of you who went to Halifax couldn't fail to be impressed, the lads are doing great and because of this we are getting more "Kids" joining up, so tell your friends that if they want a great afternoon out, come down to Oldham Rugby.

Now that Faz is back in action, Carole and I would like to say a big thank you to Lee Doran for looking after our mascots while he was acting captain.

We can't praise Lee enough for the effort he made with the "Kids" and would like him to know it was much appreciated. Thanks again Lee.

Today's mascot will be a surprise to us as they will be the lucky winner of the Oldham Chronicle competition, so unfortunately we have no details for you.

However, thanks to our mascots who represented us at the away games on the Easter Weekend.

Five-year-old Lewis Tibbs cheered us to a great win at Rochdale on Good Friday, and our representative at Halifax was Phoebe Felix, who is no stranger to centre pitch as she also dances with the Roughyettes.

Thanks once again to our sponsors Saddleshworth Sports, F R Elwood Ltd, The Oldham Advertiser, Cartridge World Oldham, Warburtons Bakery & ASDA Chadderton.

Good Luck to Steve & the "Lads"

See you soon

Janet & Carole

TODAYS MASCOTS



OLDHAM RUGBY SUPPORT GROUP

The league season has really started off superbly, the lads, having worked really hard at every aspect of the game, have produced some excellent results. We hope that this rich vein of form continues today and with such fine team spirit there is no reason why this should not be the case.

Speaking of team spirit, the example set by the lads is something, which should be replicated in off the field activities. It is so important for fans to show their support for the club in as many ways as possible so that everyone is working in one direction-for the success of Oldham Rugby Club.

Please support events put on at the Social Club. For example the monthly Quiz Nights are also social occasions where you can meet and chat with other fans as well as testing your knowledge in a light hearted evening out. Give it a TRY.

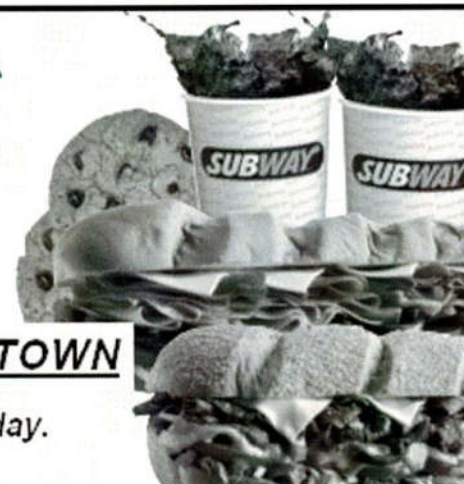
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ON THIS DAY

DON YATES LOOKS BACK TO MAY 2ND YESTERYEAR

Ninety-six years ago, in 1908, Oldham had a superb team which ended the league campaign on top of the table. They lost only two league matches all season, beat the New Zealand touring team, and won both the Lancashire League and Lancashire Cup. They lost at Hunslet in the Challenge Cup but had an opportunity to avenge that defeat when they met the Yorkshiremen again in the Championship Final. That final was staged on Saturday 2nd May at Weaste, Salford and attracted a crowd of 14,000. Hunslet stand-off Albert Goldthorpe was the star of that final. His try and two goals gave Hunslet a 7-4 interval lead. Oldham came back in the second half when second-row forward Jim Wright scored the try which enabled the Roughyeds to draw 7-7. Earlier scrum-half Tom White had landed two goals for Oldham. Seven days later Hunslet won the replay 12-2, becoming the first club to win every trophy available to them in the one season.

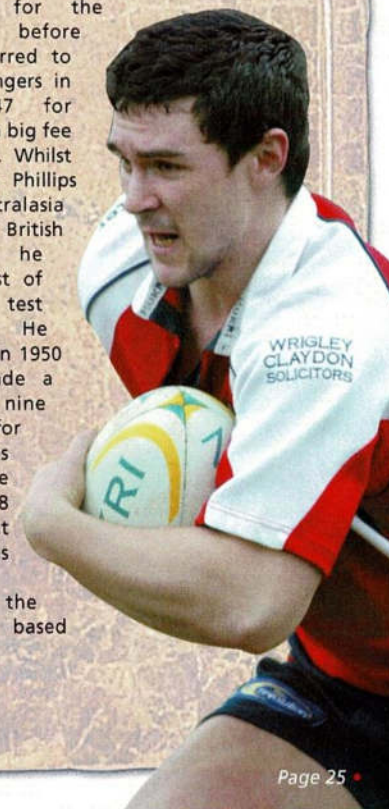
Later this month Counthill School will be playing in the Powergen Schools Cup Final on the eve of the Challenge Cup Final at Cardiff. What a great pity it is that these lads will not be appearing at Wembley as others have in the Cup Final curtain raiser. On Saturday 2nd May 1987 Leeds schoolboys beat Warrington 10-0 at Wembley. Former Oldham players David and Anthony Gibbons played for Leeds that day and Danny Arnold turned out for Warrington. Twelve years ago, on Saturday 2nd May 1992, Oldham beat Batley & Dewsbury schoolboys 22-6 on the sacred turf. Gareth Barber played in that match alongside several other lads who have since gone on to play open age rugby at various levels of the game. James Campbell, Daz Nixon, Ryan Grumbridge, Rhys Orris, Chris Hough and Kevin Sinfield were also included in the Oldham team that day.

In the 1963-64 season Oldham won the Second Division Championship, ending the campaign nine points clear of second placed Leigh. On Saturday 2nd May 1964 the Roughyeds met Whitehaven up at Watersheddings less than 24 hours after losing at St. Helens in the Eastern Division Championship play-off. Oldham made only one change from the team which played Saints but they bounced back from their cup defeat to hammer the Cumbrians 41-5. Vin Nestor (3), Trevor Simms (2), Harry Major,

Stuart Whitehead, John Donovan and Peter Smethurst scored tries for the Roughyeds that afternoon and coach Frank Dyson landed seven goals.

Oldham also had a busy schedule three years ago when they played seven matches in twenty-one days. The middle match of that punishing programme fell on Wednesday 2nd May when Oldham met Swinton at Gigg Lane. Scrum-half Neil Roden was in stunning form for the Roughyeds that evening. He dropped a first half goal and scored the sixth Oldham try late in the match. Earlier Kevin Mannion (2), Joe McNicholas, Gavin Dodd and Pat Rich had scored tries with Rich also kicking four goals in Oldham's 33-10 win.

Sadly it was on this day four years ago, Tuesday 2nd May 2000, that the former Oldham second-row forward Doug Phillips died aged 80 years. Phillips joined Oldham from Swansea RUFC in late 1944 and made 18 appearances for the Roughyeds before being transferred to Belle Vue Rangers in January 1947 for £1,000, quite a big fee in those days. Whilst with Oldham, Phillips toured Australasia with the 1946 British Lions where he made the first of his four test appearances. He toured again in 1950 and also made a total of nine appearances for Wales. Phillips captained Belle Vue in 1948 and also spent three years as player-coach with the Manchester based club.



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CLUB NEWS



The Roughyettes, Oldham RLFC's talented dance troupe raised more than £600 for the club when they held a sponsored walk from Boundary Park to Spotland on the 9 April, where they then entertained the crowd at half time. Some of the money will go

toward equipment and clothing for the girls who entertain the home crowds so well in all weathers. They are certainly at their strongest for many years and deserve the great vocal support they get from the crowd.

Has anyone got a spare programme for Good Friday 2000 if so please contact club 6283677

TEXT YOUR MAN OF THE MATCH

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or mom leigh 7 (For Leigh fans)

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The service will be used on an ongoing basis for further competitions and debates. Oldham RLFC will benefit financially from every text. Text costs £1.50 each.

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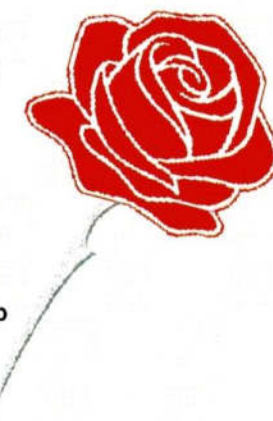
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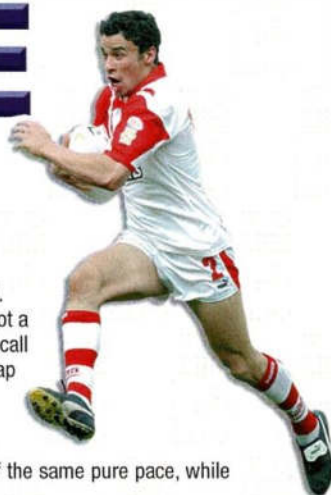
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LEAGUE WEEKLY

Danny Lockwood, publisher



**Ade Gardner
- flying tonight!**

SUDDENLY flyers are back in fashion. No, not flares, flyers. As in 'go-faster stripes'. Vroom-vroom. Wingers with gas in the tank and both feet on the accelerator. We got a glimpse of a genuine grass-burner last season in the County of Origin game (if I recall correctly) when young Leeds speedster Mark Calderwood took a quick 20-metre tap and zipped up the park to the posts like Carl Lewis in spikes being chased by a bunch of builders in wellies. It was a great sight. I don't know if Calderwood was making 'fast car' noises with his lips as he sped away – but it looked like he was having that much fun. At St Helens Ade Gardner was giving occasional glimpses of the same pure pace, while Brian Carney was having the runningest time of his life.

After a year or more of seeing utilitarian players on the Gt Britain flanks (stand-off/centre Leon Pryce, half back Karl Pratt and back-rower Lee Gilmour to mention just three), it looked like we were finally going to get some real wide boys at representative level. Ironically Calderwood's form took a dip after he failed to make David Waite's midsummer GB train-on squad, and he suffered a crisis in confidence towards the end of the year, but he remains a gem of a talent and is being carefully rehabilitated by coach Tony Smith. We'll see fireworks from Calderwood again. Gardner was presumably judged too young for last year's test series as an equally wet-behind-the-ears Richard Horne was preferred for the left wing berth – an experience he won't forget in a hurry and won't ever want to repeat.

Cue season 2004 and we are seeing a true renaissance in the glamour positions – half backs and wingers. If Brett Dallas didn't start it with his Powergen semi-final hat-trick – including two long range blasts – then he certainly reminded us that there's no finer sight than a pure, old fashioned foot-race to the line. Remember Martin Offiah burning off one Leeds defender after another at Wembley – one of the great tries of all time – or even the long-range effort of 16-year-old Francis Cummins on the same hallowed turf?

But while Danny McGuire and Richard Horne and Jamie Rooney and Sean Long thrill us with their midfield magic, there remains for me one image that stands out above all others from recent weeks – that of Ade Gardner on Sunday in the second Powergen Challenge Cup semi-final. Dallas, with his physique, would have found it difficult to use power to bump off the first tacklers as Gardner did against the Giants. What followed had the hairs on the back of my neck standing up. The winger accelerated into open space and found full-back Paul Reilly closing down the space between them. Gardner hadn't time to 'stand up' the Huddersfield man for a classic step, so he just downshifted and blasted off with an Offiah-like body swerve, high-stepping away from the clutches of the last man and kicking dust in the faces of the desperate cover-defenders. Beautiful.

With the typical impetuosity of youth, Gardner was saved only by the video ref from blowing one of the greatest tries of his career. His flamboyant overarm grounding was a knock on for my old fashioned money, which believes that 'downward pressure' means more than a fleeting fingernail for one-zillionth of a second. A former teammate of mine, Richard Tsimba, scored one of the greatest tries the 15-man code has ever seen, for Zimbabwe in the 1987 World Cup. Richard capped his sensational high-speed, stepping and swerving run, with a swan dive Greg Louganis would have cooed at – and promptly blew out his shoulder. A year to reflect on the folly of his showmanship. Thankfully Gardner was spared any such penance for his theatrics, and we were treated to a mouth-watering taste of how a true wingman can set fire to a match.

So many things in the modern game can be taught and coached. You don't have to be good at rugby to be a good rugby player these days. But the ability to beat a man with speed and guile is still a gift from the rugby gods. And they seem to have showered their favours on a few Brits this year, bless 'em.

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NATIONAL LEAGUE TALK

with GARETH WALKER of RUGBY LEAGUER & LEAGUE EXPRESS



TIME FOR A RETHINK

THE draw for the Arriva Trains Cup quarter-finals will see Hull Kingston Rovers take on Doncaster for a fourth time already this season, with at least another meeting scheduled for NL1. Is it time to look at the format of the National Leagues' Cup competition?

The way the competition is structured at the moment meant that this kind of thing was always going to happen. Clubs from the same division playing in the same ATC group automatically play each other four times a season - for example Oldham and Leigh.

There is then the possibility of them drawing each other in the Challenge Cup, ATC knock-out stages and the NL1 play-offs. In theory, two teams could meet seven times in one season.

It appears to be one reason for restructuring the ATC for next year.

There are other obvious problems with the current set-up.

Kicking the year off with the ATC lessens the impact of the league season launch, and crowds have suffered because of that.

And by the end of the ATC group stages, most qualification issues have been dealt with, making the Good Friday games largely meaningless and uninspiring.

The Easter holidays should be a time of bumper attendances for clubs at this level - but many clubs missed out because of the nature of their fixtures.

Also, clubs' momentum for the new season can be quelled by playing in a group where they struggle - take Chorley for example. Instead of a positive start to the new campaign under a promising coach, they took a fair few hammerings against NL1 sides.

So what could be done to rectify the situation?

Having a Cup competition purely for clubs at this level is vital - it gives them a trophy to aim for, and as we will no doubt see in the knock-out stages of the ATC, interest would rise significantly.

So why not have a straight knock-out competition, mixed into the National League seasons?

Clubs from NL3 could be introduced in the early rounds to give the competition a genuine national feel, and aid them in their own development.

The clubs themselves have one main problem with that - the lack of enough guaranteed home fixtures.

To counter that, why not play everyone in the league three times each, giving 27 league fixtures? A number of National League coaches have suggested that measure already.

It's not ideal, but Super League has a system where some clubs play others three times to make up their required fixtures.

There would be more high quality, balanced games taking place, with the added incentive of a knock-out cup.

The ATC hasn't attracted the crowds clubs would like, and competitive, meaningful league games would have a better chance.

It would also allow the season to start with a bang. Super League benefited massively from a big kick-off this year, with record crowds flocking to the games. Can you imagine them kicking off with a secondary competition?

Perhaps it's time for an ATC re-think.

Rugby Leaguer & League Express we will be publishing a midweek edition to cover the Easter Bank Holiday action. Our Easter Special will be on sale on Thursday 15 April, and will report on all the action from Easter Monday and Tuesday. It will, as usual, cost just £1. Make sure you order your copy, so you won't miss any of the Easter action.

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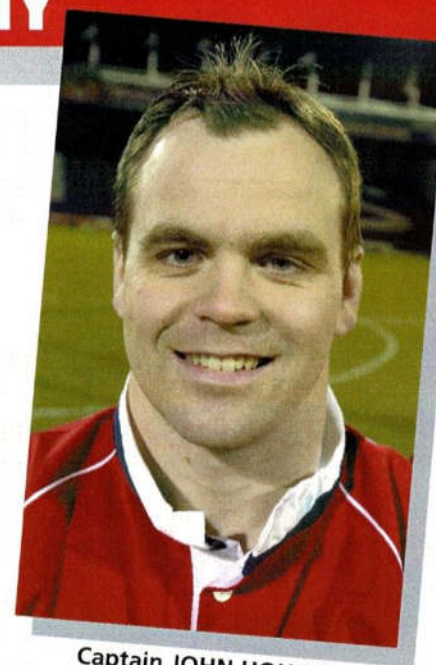
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SENIOR ACADEMY

John Hough The Roughyeds' popular vice captain and the club's longest serving player has taken over the role of Senior Academy coach on a temporary basis following the resignation of Shaun Gartland. John is presently out with an injured knee and although he still has a few years in him as a player sees this as vital coaching experience, which will serve him well in the future.

The team had a good start to the season with a convincing 32 - 18 victory over Doncaster but found a very big and experienced Huddersfield side just too good for them and lost 50 - 24 at Manor Park last Saturday. The permanent post of Senior Academy Coach has been advertised and it is hoped



Captain JOHN HOUGH
(Acting Senior Academy Coach)

that the person will be in post in the next two weeks.

ORLFC ACADEMY FIXTURES 2004

17.04.04	Doncaster Dragons	H	12.30 pm	W	32-18
24.04.04	Huddersfield Giants	H	12.30 pm	L	24-50
01.05.04	Leigh Centurions	A	2.30 pm		
08.05.04	Dewsbury Rams	H	2.30 pm		
20.05.04	Huddersfield Giants	A	7.30 pm		
27.05.04	Featherstone Rovers	A	7.30 pm		
02.06.04	Keighley Cougars	A	7.30 pm		
12.06.04	Leigh Centurions	H	2.30 pm		
16.06.04	Doncaster Dragons	A	7.30 pm		
26.06.04	Salford City Reds	H	2.30 pm		
03.07.04	Featherstone Rovers	H	2.30 pm		
08.07.04	Dewsbury Rams	A	7.30 pm		
29.07.04	Salford City Reds	A	7.30 pm		
14.08.04	Keighley Cougars	H	2.30 pm		

Fixtures

DATE	OPPONENTS	CUP	VENUE	K. O.	RESULT	W/L	ATT
01/02/04	Chorley Lynx	AT Cup	Home	15.00	64-14	W	1096
06/02/04	Castleford Panthers	Powergen CC	Home	19.30	16-8	W	1003
15/02/04	Leigh Centurions	AT Cup	Away	15.00	51-32	L	2316
22/02/04	Swinton Lions	AT Cup	Away	15.00	18-30	W	783
29/02/04	Sharlston Rovers	Powergen CC	Home	19.45	24-4	W	1301
07/03/04	Leigh Centurions	AT Cup	Home	15.00	10-54	L	1805
14/03/04	Warrington Wolves	Powergen CC	Home	15.00	10-44	L	2859
21/03/04	Chorley Lynx	AT Cup	Away	15.00	10-40	W	370
28/03/04	Powergen CC	Powergen CC					
	Quarter Finals	CC					
28/03/04	Rochdale Hornets	AT Cup	Home	18.00	56-12	W	1214
04/04/04	Swinton Lions	AT Cup	Home	15.00	42-15	W	983
09/04/04	Rochdale Hornets	AT Cup	Away	15.00	12-48	W	1305
12/04/04	Featherstone Rovers	NL 1	Home	15.00	50-24	W	1320
18/04/04	Powergen CC	Powergen CC					
	Semi Final 1	CC					
18/04/04	Halifax	NL1	Away	15.00	6-25	W	1807
25/04/04	Powergen CC	Powergen CC					
	CC Semi Final 2	CC					
25/04/04	Doncaster	AT Cup	Away	15.00	32-28	L	835
02/05/04	Leigh Centurions	NL 1	Home	15.00			
09/05/04	Hull Kingston Rovers	NL1	Away	15.00			
15/05/04	Powergen CC Final	Powergen CC					
23/05/04	Rochdale Hornets	NL 1	Home	15.00			
30/05/04	Batley Bulldogs	NL 1	Home	15.00			
06/06/04	AT Cup Quarter Finals	AT Cup					
13/06/04	Keighley Cougars	NL1	Away	15.00			
20/06/04	Whitehaven	NL 1	Home	15.00			
27/06/04	AT Cup Semi Finals	AT Cup					
04/07/04	Doncaster Dragons	NL1	Away	15.00			
11/07/04	Halifax	NL 1	Home	15.00			
18/07/04	At Cup Final	AT Cup					
25/07/04	Leigh Centurions	NL1	Away	15.00			
01/08/04	Hull Kingston Rovers	NL 1	Home	15.00			
08/08/04	Rochdale Hornets	NL1	Away	15.00			
15/08/04	Batley Bulldogs	NL1	Away	15.00			
22/08/04	Keighley Cougars	NL 1	Home	15.00			
29/08/04	Whitehaven	NL1	Away	15.00			
05/09/04	Featherstone Rovers	NL1	Away	15.00			
12/09/04	Doncaster Dragons	NL 1	Home	15.00			
19/09/04	NL 1 & 2 Play-offs	NL1					
26/09/04	NL 1 & 2 Play-offs	NL1					
03/10/04	NL 1 & 2 Play-offs	NL1					
10/10/04	NL 1 & 2 Grand Finals	NL1					
17/10/04	NL 1 & 2 Prom/Releg. Play-offs	NL1					

Key

AT Cup – Arriva Trains Cup

Powergen CC – Powergen Challenge Cup

NL1 – National League Division 1

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