

THE ROUGHYEDS

V SWINTON LIONS

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THE ROUGHYEDS

V SWINTON LIONS



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As Ian Sees It

A look at the start of the New
Season
Page 9

In The News

Oldham RLFC Predictions
Competition
Page 12

Special Feature

RICKY BIBEY

A look at the new club captain - Page 17



Northern Rail Cup
RUGBY LEAGUE

SUNDAY 6TH MARCH 2005
KICK OFF 3.00pm



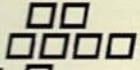
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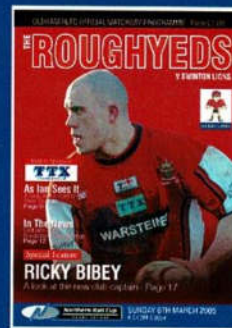


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Andy Goodway 1979-85 & 1993-94

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We would like to express our thanks to the Oldham
Evening Chronicle, League Publications Ltd,
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photographs.

6th **MARCH** 2005

- 4 **The Chairman's Thoughts** Looking at the issues of Cup games
- 6 **From The Touchline** Gary Mercer looks for leadership as a team
- 9 **As Ian Sees It** A look at the start of the season
- 10 **In Yer Face** With Geoff Cooke
- 11 **From The Pen Of** Michael Turner
- 12 **In The News**
- 14 **Walkerbouts** with Brian Walker
- 16 **Today's Opponents** Pen pics for Swinton Lions
- 17 **Team Profile** A profile of Ricky Bibey
- 21 **Player Sponsorship** A look at the current squad and their sponsors
- 22 **Roughyed Kids & Co** Events for all the family and today's mascot
- 25 **On This Day** Don Yates looks back to March 6th yesteryear
- 26 **£10,000 Super Draw** And the winner is...
- 30 **League Weekly** Up to date news from the League Weekly
- 33 **Club Cash**
- 37 **National League Talk** Summer rugby? By GARETH WALKER
- 38 **Fixtures & Sponsors**
- 40 **Today's Teams** View both of today's teams in full, plus match officials

Club Records - 1998-2004

Trans-Penine Cup
Finalists - 1998

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

MOST APPEARANCES: John Hough, 189 - Jan 1998 - September 2004
CONSECUTIVE APPEARANCES: Phil Farrel, 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: Nick Johnson, 25 - 2004

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 Lynx, 4 - Jan 30th 2001 at Boundary Park

James Bunyan v Featherstone Rovers, 4 - Apr 12th 2004 at Boundary Park

GOALS IN A MATCH: Simon Syabic 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

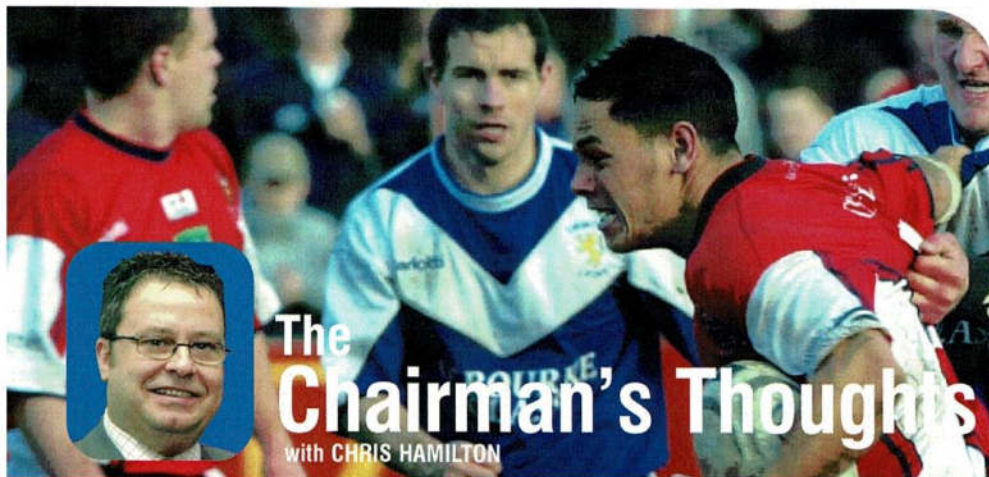
HIGHEST SCORE/WINNING MARGIN: v Yorks Wasps, 70-6 - Apr 1st 2001

at Huntington Stadium

v Queensbury (amt), 64-0 - Jan 28th 2001

RLCC 3rd Rnd at Boundary Park

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The Chairman's Thoughts

with CHRIS HAMILTON

Today's game takes on added significance given our poor showing last week against the same opponents.

There is no doubt that we underperformed but this is certainly not the time for total doom and gloom and everybody involved at the club knows how much work has gone in this week by everybody concerned to try to make sure that we do not get a repeat today or indeed again this season.

The massive turnaround in personnel from last year was always going to make things that bit harder this time around but every player signed on at the club is under no illusions about what we and they expect and in fairness to them there has been no attempt to hide which says something about their character.

What was perhaps most disappointing about last Sunday was the way we played after the first fifteen minutes when we looked in total control of the game. One thing is for sure it proved we can play well and I am confident in our ability to bounce back from that.

Most of you will already be aware by now of the Powergen Challenge Cup draw which sees us paired with Charlton Rovers who we beat in round four last time. The main difference this time around being that we will play away at Featherstone Rovers ground. There is no doubt that it will also be a tough game but the cup provides the chance of a dream for players, supporters and even Directors and can be a money spinner for clubs if granted a good draw so we need to make the most of the opportunity.

It is interesting to note just how many of the National League clubs have been drawn away this year and I am sure there will be an upset somewhere along the line although it is interesting to see that several of the

amateur clubs are struggling to find appropriate venues for a variety of reasons including our own two amateur teams Waterhead and St. Annes who have deemed the cost of playing at Boundary Park too expensive. What will happen in respect of those two ties will be interesting but I am aware that the RFL are facing similar ground "problems" with other clubs and it may well lead to a rethink as to what happens at the third round next year. Oldham have been supporters of the chance for amateur teams to play at home against professional opposition, which was suitably demonstrated by our hosts next Friday, Sharlston, when beating Dewsbury at Post Office Road last year in front of over 3000 people. It would be sad to see that chance taken away.

Back to today's game and I hope that you will get behind the lads and give them as much encouragement as possible and in return we can give you a win.

As ever thank you for your support and enjoy the game.

Chris Hamilton

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From The Touchline

with Gary Mercer

Q&A WITH GARY MERCER

As the questions for this week have already, in my opinion been answered in Gary's column I include some of the earlier questions and answers we have not yet published.

Ultimate Roughyed asked:

Gary please give us an insight into your style of leadership and how you intend to maximise the potential of the playing squad?

Gary replied:

1. Tough taskmaster
2. Never give in
3. Play for the badge.
4. I expect nothing less than 100% effort, and if the boys deliver it consistently, I will shake their hands week to week.

Halfback asked:

Gary please tell us you won't be chopping and changing the key positions such as half back, acting half and loose forward week after week. Last year we endured constant tinkering and then wondered why there was no consistency.

Gary replied:

Once I have established the 3 pivotal positions, they will be in place and only "form" can keep them there. I am not a fan of making changes to keep players happy; if they are playing well they hold their spots.

Bos Man asked:

Recently Oldham suffered more injuries at training than during games. This had a major impact on our performances. It appeared to be the result of full blooded contact training.....What is your policy in this regard?

Gary replied:

I am a big fan of train hard, play hard, my sessions are very physical, but I do monitor the players so injuries do not occur. Most importantly, fitness is a "major" in this game, and if you are both mentally and physically fit you ought not to get injured.

Before all the pleasantries I am sure that the

Ironically the first ten minutes went according to plan, we played as a unit and scored two good tries on both flanks. At that point we should have come together as a team and been determined to finish them off for good. Make no mistake this was achievable; mentally at this point we had them just where we needed them. But, as we all now know this wasn't to be, we relaxed and were sloppy and paid the penalty.

This is what we must work on this week- to be more clinical and put sides like that away whilst we had the advantage. If we had have done I have absolutely no doubt that we would easily have won the match with a 20 + advantage. I must work on the mental aspect of our play. In every game there will be tough patches and players must learn that this is when they must work the hardest and get through these periods without conceding points. Let's give Swinton their due they had a terrible start and yet got on top and then capitalised on the negative state we had got ourselves into, and believe me we were in a definite negative state and very, very disappointing.

As a coach I need to have leaders on the field and when I go to Monday night's training session this will be the first thing I will be asking for. Leadership is not just down to the captain it is impossible for one man to carry this responsibility it requires a joint effort and this is what I shall be seeking. Can I say that I fully understand and accept that the fans will be very upset and disappointed with performances like that last weekend and it is my job to turn the situation around.

The weather has not helped us, as I have been unable to get the players on grass for any length of time. Anyone could see we were disjointed and disorganised- this is because of a lack of teamwork on a park in training. This is no excuse, however, because although it didn't help this wasn't the major contributing factor to the performance; the be all and end all was a total lack of enthusiasm on the field and a lacklustre performance that was totally unacceptable. It is my job to change this attitude and you can rest assured there will be no lack of effort on my part in achieving this. The biggest positive, in my opinion, is that today we face those self same opponents. I have had 7 days to turn the situation around. We must learn to defend and have pride in our line.

As you will probably have read Andy Isherwood has been forced to retire with back problems. It is always sad when such a young and promising player has to give up the game he loves. But there is a life outside of rugby and with a young wife and family he must put them first. I wish him all the best for the future. I know the next question will be are we replacing him? I answer you with the statement I have used all season so far. We are always looking for quality players and if one comes along within our budget we will be interested and do all we can to secure their services.

Finally can I welcome Paul Kidd and his team to Boundary Park? They were a credit to him last weekend and they put on

Oldham fans will want some explanation from me as to the fiasco last weekend at Swinton

a barnstorming performance and must be looking forward to a successful league season. It goes without saying that I have every intention of putting a stop to their present 3 match undefeated run this afternoon.

I don't believe in any coaches column being all doom and gloom so can I end by saying that I thought Gareth Barber surpassed himself last weekend and showed the spirit on the field I am looking for from 16 others. He played the full 80 minutes, 30 in his new position of hooker and the other fifty at centre on both flanks and at all times showed his presence. His performance was credit to him and I hope other players will follow his lead. This was the kind of leadership I was talking about in the first paragraph.

A regular feature in my column will be to share the stats of leading players in previous matches and on the right you will see the stats of Danny Nanyin at Blackpool and Gareth Barber at Swinton.

Gary



Danny Nanyin

Blackpool

13.02.2005

Tackles	26
Carries	19
Average gain	4.5m
Missed Tackles	0
Total metres made	78



Gareth Barber

Swinton

27.02.2005

Tackles	25
Missed tackles	1
Positive kicks	4
Clean breaks	4
Total metres made	25m
Hit Ups	5

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And creditable defeats too for Salford (at Wigan), Keighley (v Hull K.R., by just one point) and, of course, Blackpool! The RFL authorities couldn't have asked for much more, and early prospects of another increase in competitiveness in each of the three divisions of the professional game cannot be anything but a positive.

The only negative, as far as I am concerned, was the sound of whining which came from Leigh. After the thrashing they received at the hands of Huddersfield, Darren Abram was already moaning about not getting a fair crack of the whip from the ref. - and this in just the first match of the season! Leigh really were awful, in all aspects of their play, not only their indiscipline. I suspect that they were lucky to get away with a mere 9-14 penalty count deficit, in fact - and this against a Huddersfield side who conceded far more penalties than any other side in Super League in 2004. If you recall our game here against Leigh last May, they were constantly niggling and sledging - successfully getting two of our players to retaliate and get sent off, but still losing the penalty count 5-10. But they will find that similar tactics against less naive Super League players will be much less successful. Unless the whole club changes its attitude, I can envisage lots of thrashings, a whole season of self-pitying whinges and well-deserved early relegation.

It is always interesting to follow the careers of former Oldham players after they have moved on, so I perused the teamsheets for the opening weekend of the season and found no fewer than 32 of our ex-players scattered around 15 sides. Half were playing for NL1 sides, with 6 at Rochdale, 5 at Batley and 3 at Whitehaven; 13 were with NL2 clubs, the most being 6 with Swinton; and 3 were in Super League - Paul Deacon, Shayne McMenemy and Barrie Mac. Quite a few got big write-ups in League Express for their performances, too - in particular Lee Marsh at Swinton, Francis Maloney for Dewsbury, Simon Knox at Barrow and Neil Roden and Martin McLoughlin at Batley.

It is always interesting to observe the reception which crowds give to former players when they return home. In contrast to soccer, where universal bile and hatred seems always to be the order of the day, very often in such situations in RL there are displays of genuine affection. Cleggy, for example, couldn't complain at the reception he received here when he returned with Keighley last year - and quite right too. I am not sure the same is likely to be the case for Swinton's returners today, but I shall be interested to see how we welcome Neil Roden and Martin McLoughlin when Batley come in August. Like Cleggy, they were both wholehearted triers whenever they turned out for us, which seems to me to be the crucial criterion - so I hope we give them what I might perhaps still be allowed to term a true Watersheddings welcome.

Ian Wilson

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In Yer Face!

with GEOFF COOKE

Amid all the euphoria of record attendances and superb end of season play-off games and internationals am I the only person to ask why we could not fill the City of Manchester Stadium for the first G.B. v. Australia Tri-Nations Test?

Despite the positives I do seem to remember a full house 80,000 plus crowd at Wembley in 1994. Still some way to go then.

And amid all the hard sell for the return of Blackpool as a desirable venue - rugby league by the seaside, ideal for a weekend away etc. - I find that Oldham's game against the Panthers will be staged in Preston. So that's my weekend away gone then! And are Blackpool people supposed to develop a regular habit of watching the new club when some of it's early fixtures are transferred out of town? We know all about that here in Oldham and the response is certainly not positive.

And another potential gripe (which in fact turned out to my advantage). The inefficiency of the R.F.L. and Ticket-master meant I couldn't get tickets for the Eland Road Tri-Nations Grand Final despite the respective websites saying tickets were available. As it happens thanks a lot, you saved me about £100 for the two of us. Instead we suffered at home like thousands more.

And talking of suffering, the game against Swinton at Park Lane last Sunday was a disaster. The only good thing is that today brings an early opportunity to set the record straight. But make no mistake Swinton are a well organized side with plenty of ability and the Roughyeds

will have their hands full. A big contingent of ex-Oldham players will be looking to rub our noses in it. Here's to instant retribution instead.

Yet another little whinge. Can anyone tell me why promotion to Super League and to N.L.1 are decided differently? It amuses me that the apparent N.L.2 play-off was won by an N.L.1 team. And just how many times do Halifax have to beat York to stay in N.L.1? Meanwhile a clearly inadequate Barrow are pre-season favourites to go straight back down.

However, all that said, the 2005 season has got off to a great start. In Super League Wakefield had two terrific results before the wheels came off at London last week. And seeing Bradford Bulls next to the bottom of the league - and that by only one point scoring difference - was wonderful. Pity Wigan couldn't hang on to a lead to keep them there.

Meanwhile, in the Northern Rail Cup there have been some real 'surprises'. Swinton have turned over Rochdale and Oldham from a higher division to bring some much needed cheer to Lions' fans. Similarly, lower division Dewsbury beat higher division Batley while Gateshead and Workington overturned N.L.1 Barrow. And in the big local derby Workington not only defeated Super League pretenders Whitehaven but did it by a big margin in front of over 3000 spectators.

The cause of these upsets has much to do with the quality of recruitment and coaching but many pundits are pointing out that the salary cap regulations are beginning to bite resulting in a more even spread of talent and a levelling up of standards such that results are less and less predictable. Apart from bringing cheer to the Bookies that can only be good news for the fans who at long last can go to a match uncertain of the outcome and guaranteed real excitement. That also means not underestimating the likes of Blackpool who showed at Boundary Park they are a team to be reckoned with. Long may it continue.



For this season the format for this page will be to take a look at players who have represented both Oldham and the opposition of the day.

from the pen of
MICHAEL TURNER

Lions and Roughyeds and Bears ... Oh My!

I'm sure that elsewhere in this programme there will be much made of the ex-Roughyeds presence in the current Swinton squad. So I will look back into the mists of time and recall some of the more notable players who have represented both clubs.

Back at the end of the 1920's prop or second row forward, Harry Entwistle joined the Roughyeds after being part of the Swinton four cup winning squad of 1925-26. He played 91 matches for Oldham between 1929 and 1933. Moving on to 1949 and in January of that year Oldham made a fine capture from the Lions when they acquired wingman Joe Warham. Joe topped the Oldham try scoring charts in 49/50, 50/51 and 51/52, when he registered his best haul of 25 touchdowns. He went on to coach at Rochdale and served for many years as a director at Leeds.

There is no doubt that Peter Smethurst was one of the most popular players ever to pull on the red and white hooped shirt of Oldham. Always giving 100% effort, his trade mark cheeky grin when emerging from the most robust of tackles used to both delight and infuriate the supporters depending upon their allegiance. When he

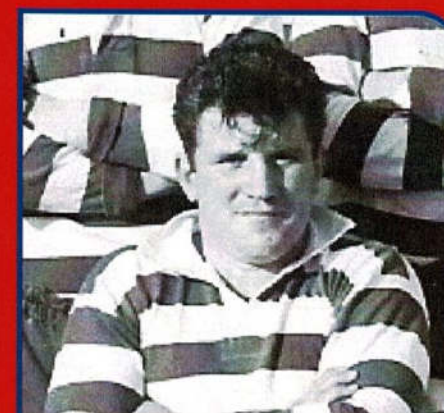
signed from the Lions in September 1961 it was as a second row forward. However, he also proved to be a very effective centre particularly when partnering the fleet footed Trevor Simms in the mid 1960s. Peter played 190 games for the Roughyeds which yielded him 39 tries and two goals.

Another major capture was that of winger or full back Derek Whitehead in 1968. A talented player and a fine goalkicker, Derek played just one year with the club before the "cash-strapped" Roughyeds were forced to sell him on to Warrington.

In more recent years supporters of both clubs will probably remember Dave Nicholson, Alan Taylor and Green Vigo from the 1980s and from the era of the "Bears"; Scott Ranson and Paul Topping.



Joe Warham



Peter Smethurst

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In The News

As I have a feeling there will be several mentions of last weekend's match I don't intend to replicate this other than to say don't worry too much I am sure there are better things to come.



Let's get all the bad news out of the way straight away and can I on behalf of all our fans wish Andy Isherwood all the best. I think he showed us in pre season what he was capable of but unfortunately his career has been cut drastically short. We wish him and his young family all the very best for the future.

Next can I pass on the thanks of our Chairman, Christopher Hamilton and his partner Gillian for the generosity of supporters at last week's game against Swinton? The bucket collection for BREAKTHROUGH BREAST CANCER raised £285. Thanks also go to the Directors and staff at Swinton for deciding to hold the collection for Oldham RLFC's Charity.

OLDHAM RLFC PREDICTION COMPETITION LHF HEATTHPLAN NATIONAL LEAGUE 1

This is a brand new prediction league exclusive to all fans and friends of the Roughyeds.

All entries must be in by Thursday March 24 in conjunction with the start of the season.

Details should be enclosed in this programme along with application forms.

If there is sufficient interest the prizes will be well worth winning (see enclosed leaflet).

Entry will be £20 and the League season will be split into two. The first set of selections will be for rounds 1 to 9 and the second half for rounds 10 to 18. This will

enable you to take into account the form teams after the first 9 games.

To me it all sounds like a bit of fun that will be reported on regularly in this column in the programme. I shall not only be mentioning the leaders but also those at the bottom who are not doing so well. In fact I am trying to get the organisers to include a booby prize (How about a season ticket for Hornets next year!??)

Please support this new venture and if you have any other ideas don't hesitate to let us know.

NM

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match day program

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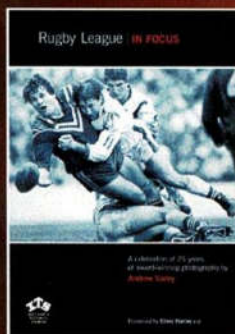


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I've selected one from the quirky drawer capturing former Oldham and Great Britain forward and latest addition to the Roughyeds backroom staff, David Hobbs, along with current Bradford Bulls and Great Britain coach, Brian Noble holding aloft Miss Rugby League prior to the 1984 tour.

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ISBN 09545333-1-3

Give it to Kelly!



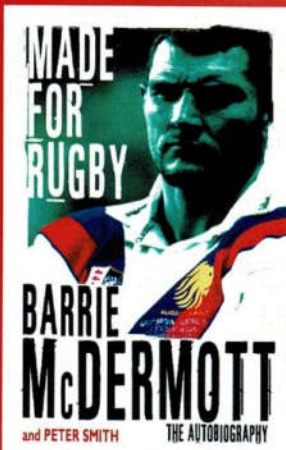
A Rugby League Saga

John D. Vose
Foreword by John Etty

Give it to Kelly! Is a novel about Bramfield Rovers a mythical Lancashire rugby league team back in the 1930s. Dole queues, pawnbrokers' shops and a rugby league club struggling to survive. The third rugby league novel from the pen of John Vose, with the foreword written by former Oldham wingman John Etty who says "rugby league is not only the finest game; it is a way of life. In this book the author has captured the mood and character of the sport in a difficult period of history."

This 154 page illustrated novel is normally £8.95 but available (inc pp) direct from London Publications at a special price for programme readers of £5. Send a cheque made out to London Publications at P.O. Box 10441, London E14 0SB.

ISBN 1-903659-11-6



Launched for the 2004 Christmas market to mark his benefit season it raced up the best-selling sports book charts. And rightly so. This biography, **Made for Rugby**, the subject of which must be every media mans dream, has been put together so excellently by Yorkshire Evening Post journalist Peter Smith. The dust-cover best sums it up----- 'Notorious is a word the media have so often used when talking about Oldham born rugby league forward Barrie McDermott, seen as an hard-man who has had more punch-ups than hot dinners, appeared before rugby league disciplinary committees more than a dozen times, missed at least 40 matches through

suspension, been the subject of a diplomatic incident between Great Britain and Australia, hit the headlines for a run-in with the police and was locked-up for playing rugby in France when he should have been appearing in court in England. All these stories-and more-are true. But they aren't the whole truth--'

I've heard nothing but good reports from many Oldhamers who have already bought the book so if you haven't read a copy get one before it goes out of print!!

£17.99 from Ottakars or W.H. Smiths.

ISBN 0-283-07376-4

TODAY'S OPPONENTS

Swinton Lions

Warren Ayres halfback/hooker - Played Super League for Salford, also turned out for Oldham and Rochdale. Played at hooker during Peter Cannon's enforced absence at the end of last season.

Marlon Billy winger - Former fans favourite here but moved on after two years in 2000. Went on to match Rochdale's tries in a match record and last year topped Doncaster's try scoring chart. Turned down other offers to come back to Swinton.

Mick Coates Stand Off - Came on loan from Leigh early last season and became an influential playmaker as the season progressed. After an impressive year the club offered him a contract for 2005.

Andrew Crabtree hooker - 21 years old who has played with both Wigan's and Warrington's Academy. Toured Australia with the Great Britain Academy and was a winner with Wigan in 2003 of the Senior Academy Grand Final.

Wayne English Full Back - Highly rated, excels on both attack and defence. Came through the Academy under John Prince, and is now the club's longest serving player. Player of the year for the past two seasons.

Lee Gardner prop forward - Played with Danny Heaton in Warrington's Academy. Signed for Swinton towards the end of last season, scored his first try for the club in the win over the Skolars.

Neil Hayden half back - Local lad, had a spell with Swinton under Tony Humphries, has also played at Salford and Widnes. Enjoyed a run at the end of last season due to Paul Ashton's back injury.

Danny Heaton prop/second row - Signed from Warrington. Became an instant hit with the supporters with his no-nonsense running. Unfortunately missed the majority of last season through injury but is now back and straight into the starting line-up.

Ian Hodson back row - Made his mark for Chorley in NL2 two years ago. A consistent performer throughout the whole of last season and a mainstay in the pack. Played his amateur rugby for Leigh Miners.

Chris Irwin wing/fullback - Signed from Rochdale, also had spells with Leigh and Oldham. Local lad, who lives in Swinton, played his Amateur rugby for Eccles. Had a long run on the left wing last season but currently being kept out by Marlon Billy.

Phil Joseph hooker/loose forward - Played in the majority of Huddersfield Super League games last year. Signed for Swinton for the chance of more first team Rugby. Already looking a class act in victories over NL1 clubs Rochdale and Oldham.

Dave Llewellyn centre - ex Salford academy, enjoyed a good run at right centre in the second half of last season. A shoulder injury is keeping him out action at the beginning of this season.

Lee Marsh loose forward - Started his career with Salford before moving on to Oldham. Already proving an excellent signing for the Lions, took the man of the match award on his debut in the win over Rochdale.

Chris Maye centre - Signed for Swinton from St Helens. Had a spell on loan at Halifax where he played Super League. Chris has plenty of pace which he used to great effect last season where he finished top try scorer. Also an Irish international.

Stuart Oldham winger - Took the place of long-serving winger Jason Roach, but already won the fans over with a seventy metre try in the pre-season friendly at the Willows, leaving his Super League rival chasing shadows.

Safraz Patel Half Back/Hooker - Impressed at the end of the 2003 season during a loan spell. Made the majority of his appearances last season coming on as an impact player from the bench. Always gives one hundred percent. Previous spells at Leigh and Chorley.

Lee Patterson full back/centre - Always noticed by the Swinton fans in their matches with Chorley over the passed couple of years and they were pleased to see him come to Swinton when the future of Chorley was uncertain. Played most of his Rugby at full-back but is playing right centre due to the injury of Dave Llewellyn.

Wes Rogers prop forward - In his second spell with the club. Signed for Swinton from Widnes then went on to further spells with Oldham and Rochdale. Had a spell on loan with the Lions during 2003, then signed on for 2004.

Rob Russell centre/second row - Now in his fifth season with the Lions. Utility player who can play in most positions on the park. Missed the first half of last season with an ankle injury, but has some noteworthy performances since his comeback.

Ian Sinfield second row/utility forward - Signed for the Lions from Keighley, played a big part for Keighley in their promotion winning side two years ago. One of Swinton's most consistent performers last season winning the Johnny Stopford Memorial Man of Steel trophy.

Phil Southern prop - Played Super League with Salford and also while on-loan at St. Helens. Moved on to Rochdale, then Oldham before coming back to his roots at Swinton. Played his amateur Rugby with Folly Lane.

Hugh Thorpe Centre/Wing - Ex Student international, began at Swinton in the centres, but moved to the wing in 2003. Now in his fourth season with the Lions with over fifty appearance under his belt.

Steve Warburton centre - Made a handful of appearances last season but work commitments are keeping him out for the first couple of months of the new season. Previously with Woolston, has also played for the Warrington Academy.

Ian Watson scrum half - Former Swinton ball boy who previously had a spell with the club when at Gigg Lane. Excellent playmaker during spells at a host of North West clubs. The current Welsh international signed a two year deal after leaving Oldham in the close season.

Rob Whittaker prop/second row - Highly rated amateur played most of his amateur rugby for Scotland Rangers and Milnrow. Played for Chorley Lynx under Greame West. Another player utilised by Paul Kidd to come off the bench and use his strong running to overpower tired defences.

Player Profile

RICKY BIBEY

FIRST up in a new series on Roughyeds players in 2005 is a look at newly-appointed club captain Ricky Bibey.

There was probably no one more surprised than Ricky when coach Gary Mercer invited him to wear the captain's arm band.

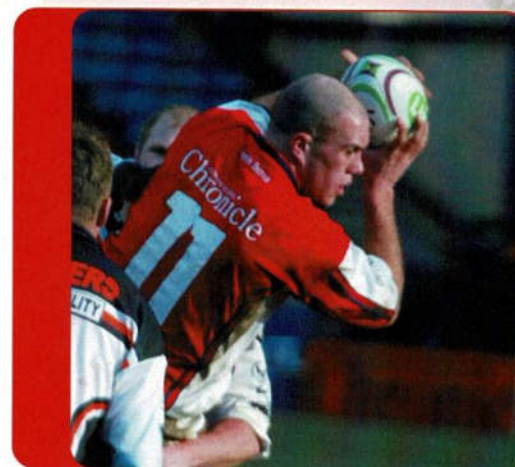
Not since he was a schoolboy of 15 or 16 has the former Wigan and St Helens prop had the responsibilities of leadership.

And as he is still only 23 and is one of the club's latest recruits, it's a fair bet that the possibilities of his being named team captain were the last thing on his mind when Gary said he wanted a chat with him.

"To be honest, I was a bit surprised," said Ricky, "but at the same time I was very honoured. It is good to know that Gary has such a lot of faith in me. I think he also knows I will be doing my best to justify that faith."

Leigh-born Ricky signed for Wigan when he was 14 and worked his way through the junior and senior academy ranks and on into the Super League squad.

Cont over...



Player Profile **RICKY BIBEY**

“Ricky is known for his aggressive way of playing, but that won't hinder his ability to captain the side.”



Cont...

Eventually, he went out on loan to Leigh, for whom he played in a Northern Ford Premiership grand final against Salford City Reds at Widnes.

St Helens subsequently signed him on a permanent basis after a Rugby League tribunal ruled that they had to pay Wigan a £20,000 compensation fee.

Lots of players down the years have played for each of these deadly and derby rivals – Wigan and Saints – but few can emulate Bibey's achievement in picking up a Challenge Cup final winners' medal for each club... at the expense of the other!

He was in the Wigan team which beat Saints up at Murrayfield when Kris Radlinski won the Lance Todd Trophy as man of the match after being declared fit to play only minutes before kick-off.

And he was a substitute for Saints down in South Wales at the Millennium Stadium when the men from Knowsley Road got their own back with a convincing victory against the old enemy from the JJB.

All told Bibey played in more than 50 Super League games so, although he is still only 23, he comes to Boundary Park with considerable experience at the highest level of the domestic game.

That experience was one of the factors that helped to convince Gary that, in Bibey, he had a man to lead the Roughyeds from the front.

"I am sure he will thrive on the responsibility," said the Roughyeds boss. "He is a good player and he will lead by example."

"He showed me he was a leader when he got stuck into Blackpool in the second half of our first Northern Rail Cup game and played a big part in our coming back from 20-4 down at half-time to win 22-20."

"He is a big man who plays as though he means it, and I like that attitude in any player, but particularly in a front-row forward."

It might be stretching a point, or going into top-spin, to talk of Oldham's new leader as "Million Dollar Bibey" (shades of the Oscars and Clint Eastwood), but this correspondent is sure you will get the drift.

Ricky plays in a no-nonsense, matter-of-fact style that has sometimes got him into bother, but he insists that he always tries to play within the rules.

Fans who were here at Boundary Park last month when we played Blackpool Panthers on day one of the Northern Rail Cup competition won't easily forget Bibey's huge tackle on former Oldham player-coach Steve Molloy just after half-time.

It was a tackle which, in Mercer's view, changed the tide of the game... and if there was one defining moment when the Oldham boss knew whom he would invite to be captain that was it.

Added Mercer: "Ricky is known for his aggressive way of playing, but that won't hinder his ability to captain the side. It should have the opposite affect, in fact, with the other Oldham forwards responding to his leadership and, collectively, putting some "grunt" into the Roughyeds pack."

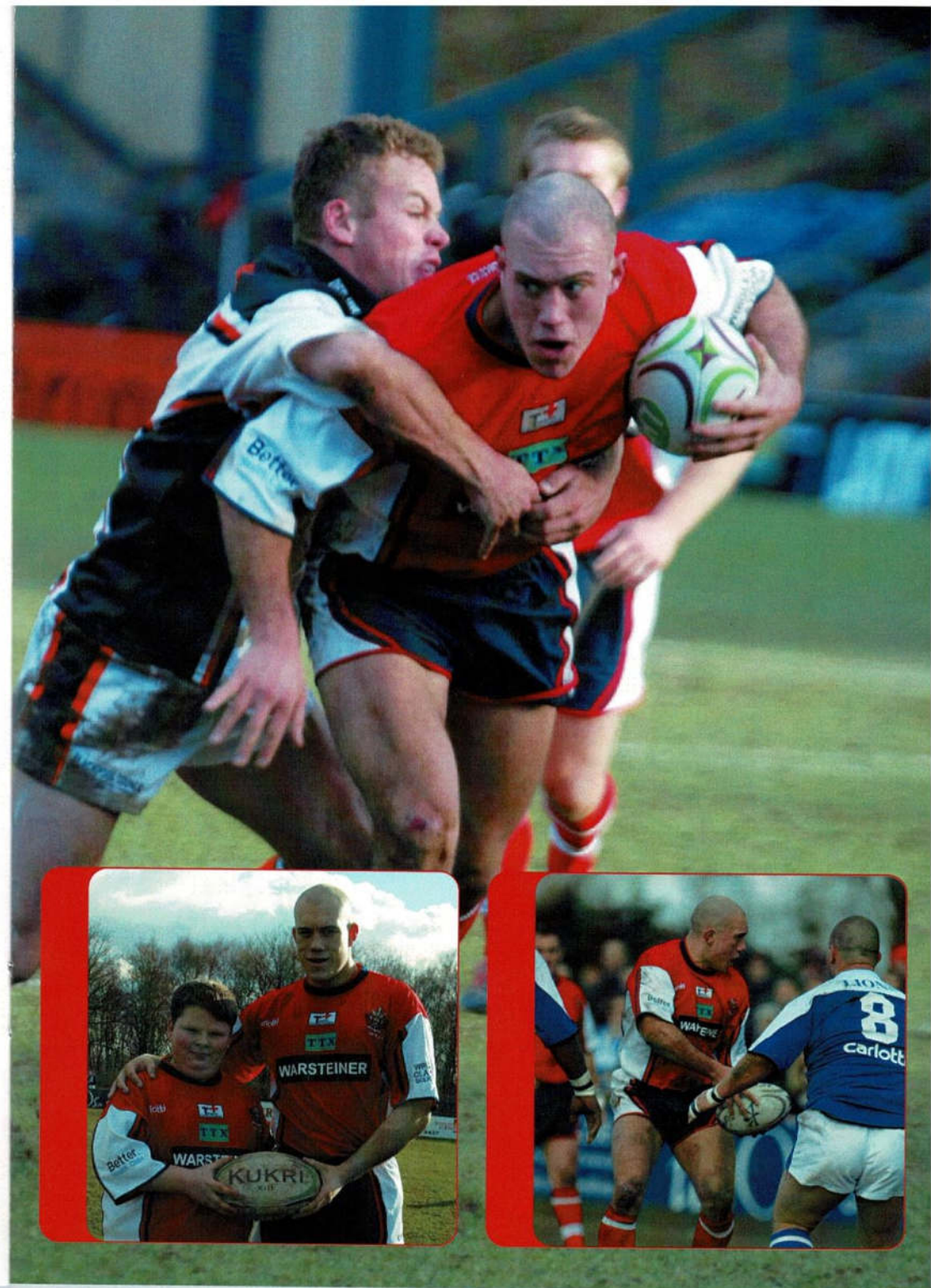
His appointment will take older fans back across the years.

In similar circumstances the then Great Britain coach Maurice Bamford made a certain Andy Goodway captain of his country.

Many eyebrows were raised at the time (the young Goodway had a reputation as a practical joker and perhaps something of a Jack-the-lad), yet the young Yorkshireman made a success of the job and went on to become, in later life, the coach of Great Britain.

It's surprising what some people can do if only they are given the opportunity.

Over to you, Ricky Bibey!



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In the meantime anyone interested in meeting the players is welcome to come back to the social club. After every home game Gary will nominate a player to take part in a question & answer session so if you want to know a little more about your favourite players, please do come along & enjoy a great afternoon, we will also be asking that week's player to do our mascot draw.

Our mascots for this week are seven year old Jack Brocklehurst and Samantha Illing who is fifteen, neither has been a mascot before so we wish them well and hope they have a great day.

Many thanks to all those people who have sponsored the "Roughyed Kids" this season, some names you will recognise but we have also had some new ones come on board, so a great big thank you to:

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As always good luck to Gary and the Lads.

See you all soon,
Janet and Carole



Jack Brocklehurst
Age: 7



Samantha Illing
Age: 15

TODAYS MASCOTS

OLDHAM RUGBY SUPPORT GROUP

This is our first opportunity to welcome all the coaching and playing staff to the start of the new season.

A very special, warm welcome to our overseas players who have certainly arrived at the right time to see some snow, but have probably, by now, seen quite enough.

The many new faces present a fresh approach this season and we look forward to what lies ahead. We wish Gary and all the lads the very best of luck in what will be a highly competitive season but one which will present plenty of excitement and interest.

Please support our next
QUIZ NIGHT AT OLDHAM RL SOCIAL CLUB
15 March – 8.30pm

RED ED wants a new head and one of his ideas is to have a section of this page devoted to our dear mascot with ideas for raising money. He also wonders if any company would be interested in sponsoring this page all season and all this sponsorship money will go towards RED ED'S NEW HEAD. Contact Nigel at the club.

Hi KIDS

Nice to see so many of you out at the Swinton ground last week, don't forget if you see us say hello.

In the next week of so we will be letting you know what we have planned for this season so keep your eyes peeled.

On this day

Don Yates looks back to March 6th yesteryear



Twenty-two years ago, on Sunday 6th March 1983, Swinton defeated Blackpool Borough 24-3 and Oldham beat Leigh at Watersheddings by ten points to seven. All the following days newspaper headlines, however, centred around the bitter test match between Great Britain and France at the Boulevard, Hull which included several nasty brawls.

The match was shown live on BBC Television with the then Minister of Sport, Neil MacFarlane, present as a shocked observer of the disgraceful scenes. Oldham had two players included in the British line-up that afternoon, prop Andy Goodway and loose-forward Terry Flanagan. Neither of the Oldham contingent was regarded as instigators or played major parts in any of the ugly incidents. Britain won 17-5 with tries from Ronnie Duane (Warrington), Andy Gregory (Widnes) and Peter Smith (Featherstone Rovers). Bradford Northern's Keith Mumby landed four goals. Terry Flanagan was heavily involved in the move which led to the try by Peter Smith and Andy Goodway gave his usual hard working 80 minute performance.

Five years later, on Sunday 6th March 1988, Great Britain and France met in Aussillon at under-21 level. Each member of the British team was inside the age limit although France played a few older players and had six full test representatives in their line-up. The match was close, entertaining and ended in dramatic fashion. With five minutes to go the teams were level at 12-12 before scrum-half Wayne Parker (Hull Kingston Rovers) seemed to have snatched victory for the Lions with a dropped goal. A minute from time, however, French substitute Freddy Bourrel (Limoux) landed a 40-yard touchline penalty which gave France victory by 14 points to thirteen. Swinton's talented inside back, Frank Cassidy, was a substitute for Great Britain although he only played in the closing ten minutes of that match. Cassidy was certainly missed by his Swinton colleagues that afternoon. They visited Castleford and were beaten 76-16. With no-one involved in the international, Oldham were able to call upon a full squad and had no difficulty in beating Workington Town 38-10.

International rugby league came to Oldham on Friday 6th March 1992. That evening

Watersheddings staged a match between BARLA Great Britain and the French 'B' team. The Oldham St. Ann's scrum-half Mick Swift skippered the BARLA team and he had two other local players alongside him, second-row forwards John Fleming and Steve Maudsley, both of Saddleworth Rangers. A powerful French team proved much too strong and fast for the British amateurs. France led by 30 points to four at half-time and went on to win 52-16.

On the same evening, Friday 6th March 1992, the Great Britain under-21 team met France at Halifax. Oldham had one player in the under-21 squad, second-rower Chris Joynt who went on to enjoy a highly successful international career with St. Helens. The under-21s fared much better than the amateurs. They ran in eleven tries to win 56-2 with Chris Joynt claiming one of the touchdowns. One wondered if the French had sent the wrong team to Halifax and vice versa.

With the postponed match at Rochdale yet to be played, Oldham will be anxious to get today's fixture over and done with on schedule. It is hoped, therefore, that we avoid the weather which the whole country suffered on Saturday 6th March 1909. That day blizzards caused the postponement of all but six fixtures with the biggest casualty being the Wales versus Australia match at Ebbw Vale. With the tourists already booked on a boat home, there was no time to rearrange this lucrative fixture and so it was cancelled. Oldham's home match against St. Helens did go ahead but it was abandoned after 65 minutes. Oldham were leading 13-0 at the time and, with Saints not fancying another freezing trip to bleak Watersheddings, the result was allowed to stand. Swinton entertained Salford and, no doubt, wished that their fixture had been postponed too after their arch rivals had won 11-6.

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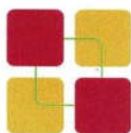
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£10,000 SUPER DRAW

A couple of Fridays ago we held the draw for the £10000 ANNUAL BONUS and what a good night it turned out to be especially for the winner, Julie Mason of Lees.

The Big Screen in the social club was set rolling at 7.30 pm and the many thousands of names were rolling for all to see until the button was pushed at 10.00pm sharp. Before that there was superb entertainment and the fans were treated to an appearance from all the players who came to the club after training. Probably the favourite on the night was man mountain Dana Wilson who had just arrived in the country. He looked very cold and uncomfortable but I am sure by now is revelling in the snow he confessed to never having seen. The Cook Islanders were hoping to stay for the draw but they had been at a rugby camp at Counthill all day (hardly the warmest place in the world) and then to training so by 9.30 they were ready for something to eat so Gary took them off for a well earned meal.



Just before 10.00pm the lights were dimmed and suitable dramatic music played as Keith Brennan our Assistant Coach came down to press the magic button. The lights flashed and one name appeared in the centre of the screen JULIE MASON of Dowry St, Lees. It was soon ascertained that she wasn't in the Club and so her full address was sought and Chris Hamilton, myself and Chris' young son, Luke

jumped into the stretch limo that had been kindly donated by Lady Jayne Limos of Shaw and off we set for Lees. No problems finding it this year as opposed to last year and we could see the lights were on in the house. This is always a very nervous time for if you can't find the winner the whole evening is a bit of a damp squib.

Chris approached the door, rung the bell and finally a gentleman appeared; subsequently we were to discover Julie's husband Stuart. By this time the stretch limo had brought half the population of Lees to their doorsteps and the sight of Chris and Luke at the door, me taking flash photos, and half his neighbours at their doors was almost more than he could take. When asked if Julie Mason was in he said "No, Why what has she done?" We need to see her we said, but Stuart informed us she was at Mecca Bingo. No problem we thought, and informed him that his wife had won £10,000 and we wanted to present her with it at the Social Club. "Jump in the car Stuart and we'll pick her up on the way to the Club."

"I can't," he insisted "I have a 9 year old daughter, Lauren, asleep in bed upstairs."

Stuart was sent up to awaken his daughter and shove a coat over her 'jamas and then led out



into the limo. This was no doubt the highlight of Laurens day as throughout the journey she told us this was the perfect vehicle for a wedding or a funeral as it was well big enough to fit the coffin and the mourners in. We arrived at Mecca and found it locked and bolted.



After a lot of banging a startled member of staff arrived convinced the place was being raided and finally let us in. I went to see the manager



and Chris hid Stuart and Lauren in the foyer. I was informed Bingo was over and Julie was playing the slot machines. I went up to her asked her her name and straight away took her photograph. At this point she was definitely worried and asked me what all this was about. I told her

she had better come to the foyer for a bit of privacy. The poor woman was really panicking now and thought there might have been an accident concerning her daughter. In the foyer Chris, who informed her of her win, approached her. To say she was in shock is an understatement and when Stuart and Lauren jumped out to meet her the surprise was completed. We finally managed to convince her it wasn't a wind-up and got her into the limo, but not before she had returned to the slot machines to collect 8-pound coins she had left on the machine.



Champagne corks popped in the limo on the way down to the Social Club where they were met by the press and photographers. Finally we got them into the lounge to the applause of the members who had been there all night and were presented with their giant £10000 cheque. After a few more drinks the limo arrived to take them back home after what had undoubtedly been quite a night for the Masons. Here's to next year.

NM



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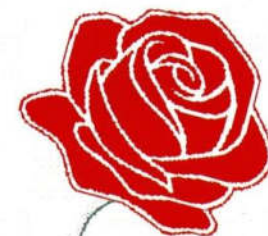
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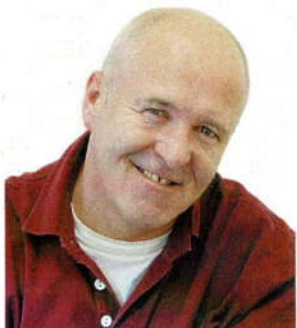
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Rugby Talk

Danny Lockwood

Publisher, League Weekly

IN LEAGUE Weekly we ask match reporters to grade players out of 10. A 7 is pretty good, a 6 average, a 5 probably means you weren't on the winning side, a 9 says you can pull any cheerleader in the bar and a magnificent 10 out of 10 usually means Maurice Bamford was covering the game (sorry Mo - he enjoys his rugby, our Maurice!)

But if a bloke who thinks he's had a good outing and sees himself down for a '5' feels lousy, let me tell you it's no worse than the poor scribe who has to mark it. Put yourself in the journalist's position. As much fun as you might think the job is, it can be a nightmare. You have to commit to virtually instant memory every move of the game, who was involved in it, where it started ... all on the off chance that five seconds later the greatest try in the history of rugby league has been scored. Usually it isn't. But if it is, don't expect the hack next to you, who was paying attention, to give you the benefit of his account (though usually he will).

You might have to keep a scrum count, penalty count, look for a man of the match for both sides - hard enough, as we'll see - consider the wider implication of the results on the club/coach/national economic outlook and still work out exactly what the heck you're going to write into the bargain. Within five seconds of the final whistle.

And then the bloke down at League Weekly wants you to give a measured, qualitative judgment of how that third sub contributed to a 64-2 defeat. Or not. Oh - and you've never played a game of rugby league in your life.

Easy, innit?

So to the correspondent who decried Michael Korkidas getting a 6 in our letters page (I'd have given him an 8, true) can I just say that it is an entirely subjective and totally fallible system. It's for fun. No, I do not believe Brian Noble picks his half-back combo for either Bradford or Gt Britain based on our match ratings (I'm convinced the players hold out their fists in a circle and play 'one-potato-two-potato' for it).

But a harder job still is getting a 'man of the match' out of a press box for a televised game, as Dave Hadfield does for Sky in their games. The poll is taken 10 or 15 minutes before the end, as you might expect. The press men couldn't give it to Bradford's Jamie Peacock in that thriller at the JJB, even though he was already head and shoulders the best man on the park - Wigan were up by three scores. General Custer might have fought a blinder at Little Big Horn, but when he was down to his last three bullets you had to say Sitting Bull would be the hombre going home with a Tissot sun dial.

When those press lads voted, Peacock looked like he needed a compass to show his lads the way to the try line, not a new watch. But then again it's a funny old game...

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NATIONAL LEAGUE TALK

with GARETH WALKER of RUGBY LEAGUER & LEAGUE EXPRESS



SUMMER RUGBY?

RUGBY League supporters could be quite entitled to ask – what has happened to summer rugby?

The bitter cold, rain, snow and sleet of the opening weekends of this season have been a throw back to the days of pre-1996.

And already, it has led to people within the game questioning the wisdom of starting the campaign in early February.

There has been plenty of doubts aired in the top flight, where Super League clubs are used to providing pre-match entertainment based around warmer climes. On Leigh Centurions' opening night in Super League against Huddersfield, for example, they were unable to showcase their new dancing team because of the icy and windy conditions.

Crowds have undoubtedly been affected across the board. But it is at the lower level where the icy pinch may be felt the most.

Leading the objections to such an early has been Gateshead chairman Bill Midgley, who saw Thunder's early clash with Workington postponed due to the weather.

Thunder have suffered postponements since rejoining the League fold in 2000 due to the early start of the season, and Midgley pulled no punches.

"The season starts a month too early," he told Rugby Leaguer & League Express.

"To begin in the second week of February, the worst month of the winter is ridiculous, and the administrators are out of touch with reality.

"Our gate will be halved for the rescheduled midweek fixture against Workington, which will cost us a couple of thousand pounds.

"It's time for a rethink, and we'll seek the support of the other 19 National League clubs so that we can move forward with a proposal to start in March and finish a month later than scheduled.

"Rugby League is supposed to be a summer sport, yet we begin in the depths of winter when conditions for training, playing and watching are far from ideal – it's a nonsense."

It's also an issue that will be further debated in coming months. It might take a postponed television match to hurry officials – but there are already plenty of questions being asked about the wisdom of kicking the campaign off in early February.

A full report of today's game will appear in the 'Rugby Leaguer & League Express' on Monday.

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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.

Fixtures 2005

DATE	OPPONENTS	CUP	VENUE	K. O.	RESULT	W/L	ATT
09/01/05	Rochdale Hornets	Law Cup	Away	15.00	24-8	L	1,404
21/01/05	Leeds Rhinos	Testimonial	Away	20.00	22-10	L	5,196
30/01/05	Halifax	Friendly	Away	15.00	34-12	L	1,443
13/02/05	Blackpool Panthers	NT Cup	Home	15.00	22-20	W	1,446
20/02/05	Rochdale Hornets	NT Cup	Away	15.00	Postponed		
27/02/05	Swinton Lions	NT Cup	Away	15.00	46-14	L	1,101
06/03/05	Swinton Lions	NT Cup	Home	15.00			
13/03/05	Powergen Cup 3rd Rd	Powergen CC	TBA	TBA			
20/03/05	Blackpool Panthers	NT Cup	Away	15.00			
25/03/05	Rochdale Hornets	NT Cup	Home	15.00			
28/03/05	Featherstone Rovers	NL1	Away	19.30			
03/04/05	Powergen Cup 4th Rd	Powergen CC	TBA	TBA			
10/04/05	Doncaster Dragons	NL1	Home	15.00			
17/04/05	Castleford Tigers	NL1	Home	15.00			
24/04/05	Hull K R	NL1	Away	15.00			
01/05/05	Northern Rail Cup Play Offs	NT Cup	TBA	TBA			
08/05/05	Powergen Cup 5th Rd	Powergen CC	TBA	TBA			
15/05/05	Whitehaven Warriors	NL1	Home	15.00			
29/05/05	Northern Rail Cup	NT Cup	TBA	TBA			
22/05/05	Batley Bulldogs Quarter Finals	NL1	Away	15.00			
05/06/05	Rochdale Hornets	NL1	Home	15.00			
12/06/05	Barrow Raiders	NL1	Away	15.00			
19/06/05	Northern Rail Cup Semi Finals	NT Cup	TBA	TBA			
26/06/05	Halifax	NL1	Home	15.00			
26/06/05	Powergen Cup Quarter Finals	Powergen CC	TBA	TBA			
03/07/05	Featherstone Rovers	NL1	Home	15.00			
10/07/05	Doncaster Dragons	NL1	Away	15.00			
17/07/05	Northern Rail Cup Final	NT Cup	TBA	TBA			
24/07/05	Castleford Tigers	NL1	Away	15.30			
31/07/05	Hull K R	NL1	Home	15.00			
07/08/05	Whitehaven Warriors	NL1	Away	15.00			
14/08/05	Rochdale Hornets	NL1	Away	15.00			
21/08/05	Batley Bulldogs	NL1	Home	15.00			
04/09/05	Barrow Raiders	NL1	Home	15.00			
11/09/05	Halifax	NL1	Away	15.00			
18/09/05	Play Offs	NL1	TBA	TBA			
25/09/05	Play Offs	NL1	TBA	TBA			
02/10/05	Play Offs	NL1	TBA	TBA			
08/10/05	Grand Final	NL1	TBA	TBA			

Key

NT Cup - Northern Trains Cup

Powergen CC - Powergen Challenge Cup

NL1 - National League Division 1

You won't want to put it down.



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