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The cover of the Blackpool Panthers 2005 Official Programme features a collage of players in action. At the top, the word "PANTHERS" is written in large, stylized letters with a player's face integrated into the letter 'A'. Below this, "Official Programme" is written in a bold, sans-serif font. The year "2005" is prominently displayed in a large, stylized font. A circular badge in the top right corner indicates the price "£2". The background is a fiery orange and yellow. In the bottom left corner, there is a circular logo for "BLACKPOOL PANTHERS RLFC" featuring a black panther head. In the bottom right corner, a white box contains the text "Blackpool Panthers v Oldham", "Sun 20th March • 3pm • Preston Grasshoppers Stadium • NRC", and the website "http://www.blackpoolpanthersrlfc.com/".

PANTHERS
Official Programme
2005
£2

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Welcome

It is my pleasure to welcome Oldham to Lightfoot Green and I sincerely hope that their players, officials and supporters enjoy their time with us. Preston Grasshoppers have been absolutely magnificent in helping the Panthers and cannot do enough for us and I would like to re-iterate the board's thanks to them for again accommodating us with Bloomfield Road unavailable.

The departure of Mark Lee dominated many of the headlines recently. It was a management issue between Mark and me. I was not prepared to put money into the club and back a coach that I didn't believe would win the division- simple as that- and the board backed my decision unanimously.

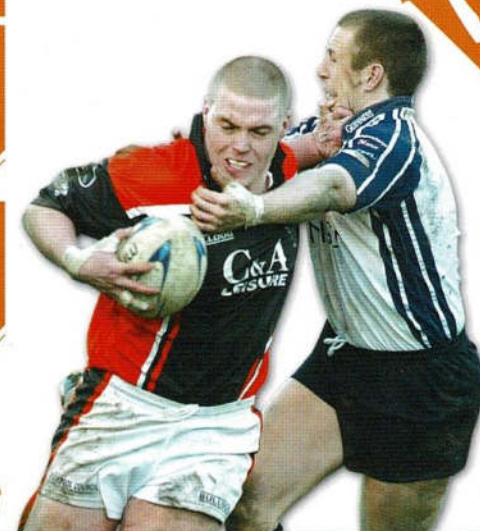
We have now brought an old head in to get things back on track. Kevin Ashcroft is someone I have known for many years and his man management skills are second to none. He has looked at the team and knows what is needed to improve matters. It could well be that he fetches several players in and releases some of our squad. I have every confidence in Kevin and feel sure we will see signs of improvement this afternoon. He has full control over playing matters.

The LHF Healthplan NL2 season starts on Easter Monday against Keighley Cougars here at Preston Grasshoppers and I am confident that by the time of the kick-off for that game we will have a team in place with the ability to go forward and make an impact this season.

Kevin has been called a dinosaur in some quarters but that is a nickname he relishes. He has never shirked a challenge in over 40 years in Rugby League and he isn't going to start now. Neither am I- I am not hiding and if anyone wishes to approach me over any matter they can do so- no problem. Enjoy the game.

Dave Rowland

Dave Rowland
Director of Rugby



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From the Dressing Room

Comments about the teams progress



Head Coach

Mark Lee

There is no hiding place. Toulouse were far superior to us last week. But the previous day I saw Leigh East and Leigh Miners play one another in the National Conference and I reckon I could have picked a composite side from those two that would have beaten Toulouse. That places the result in perspective.

I was delighted to be offered the chance to coach Blackpool Panthers and it is a challenge I relish. Last week was very difficult but in the past few days I have had the opportunity to get to know the players and work on things at training. I'd never seen the team play before and only had two training sessions prior to the cup-tie.

It's a hard job for sure and a challenge. But people now need to

stand up and be counted. I learned a lot of lessons last Sunday - it was the worst tackling display I have seen in 42 years in the game. The players will have to do it my way from now on. We started again at training on Tuesday and we'll take it from there. I have never shirked a challenge and I am confident that I can turn it around. But we have to get moving because the league campaign starts in a fortnight's time. Enjoy the game.



Community Officer

Glen Godbee

At times like this we have to pull together. The result against Toulouse was very disappointing but there were several contributing factors and the sooner the players rediscover their best form the better.

We have a lot of players in the squad that have played the game at a high level and it is up to us to set the lead at this time.

We have been unlucky with injuries but recent weeks have shown that the squad lacks depth and hopefully under the new set-up everyone will get the opportunity to show what they can do. It is certainly possible that there will be changes to the squad over the next week or so, especially with the league campaign starting soon. It is certainly possible that the

ambitions of some players may be different to others' and we need to get everyone on the same wavelength. The club has ambitions and whether the aim is to get promotion in one or two years the issue is the same- we need to make this year a positive one.

It was great to get back on the pitch last Sunday after injury and I'd like to thank all the fans for their support. To the fans the message is simple - we need you more than ever at this time. Enjoy the game.



Panthers Squad 2005

http://www.blackpoolpanthersrflc.com/



Head Coach

Mark Lee

D.O.B: 27th March 1968
Former Club: Chorley Lynx
In his second season as a senior coach after making a big impression last year.



Stand-Off

Liam Bretherton

D.O.B: 20th June 1979
Former Club: Leigh Centurions
Played for Ireland in the 2000 World Cup.



Prop

John Hill

D.O.B: 7th October 1981
Former Club: Chorley Lynx
A tough as teak prop with Super League experience with Warrington.



Halfback
Captain

Willie Swann

D.O.B: 25th February 1974
Former Club: Leigh Centurions
A former Junior Kiwi who also played for Samoa in the 2000 World Cup.



Prop/Second Row

Mike Callan

D.O.B: 8th August 1983
Former Club: Leigh Centurions
Gained Super League experience with Warrington in 2002.



Halfback/Hooker
Loose Forward

Chris Hough

D.O.B: 30th August 1981
Former Club: Doncaster
One of Panthers' first signings after a top season with the Dragons.



Winger

Eric Andrews

D.O.B: 11th February 1982
Former Club: Chorley Lynx
A prolific scoring winger, Eric scored in 15 consecutive games in 2003.



Back Row Forward

Jon Chamberlain

D.O.B: 1st June 1982
Former Club: Chorley Lynx
A GB Students international, he played against Australia Students in Dec 2004.



Centre

Jake Johnstone

D.O.B: 6th December 1977
Former Club: Chorley Lynx
A Cumbrian by birth who emerged as a first-team regular with London Skolars in 2003.



Winger/Fullback

Danny Arnold

D.O.B: 15th April 1977
Former Club: Chorley Lynx
A vastly experienced player with over 100 career tries.



Halfback

Martin Gambles

D.O.B: 8th March 1980
Former Club: Chorley Lynx
A talented, attacking halfback and a consistent try-scorer.



Prop/Second Row

Gareth Jones

D.O.B: 14th October 1982
Former Club: Chorley Lynx
A former Wigan junior, expected to make a big impression this year.



Back Row Forward

Danny Barton

D.O.B: 7th September 1983
Former Club: Chorley Lynx
Looking to build on the big impression he made in 2004.



Centre/Halfback

Glen Godbee

D.O.B: 1st June 1976
Former Club: Mullumbimby (Australia)
Led Mullumbimby to their first grand final win for 44 years in NSW Group 1 in 2004.



Centre/Winger

Eddie Kilgannon

D.O.B: 4th December 1977
Former Club: Chorley Lynx
A regular in the Lynx ranks in each of the last three seasons.



Back Row Forward

Matthew Leigh

D.O.B: 24th February 1978
Former Club: Barrow Raiders
A key member of Raiders' NL2 championship-winning side in 2004.



Winger

Steve Ormesher

D.O.B: 5th April 1978
Former Club: Chorley Lynx
A former St Helens junior who also tasted rugby union with Orrell.



Hooker

David Rowland

D.O.B: 18th September 1982
Former Club: Leigh Harriers ARL
A former Leigh, Salford and Warrington Academy hooker.



Back Row Forward

James Lomax

D.O.B: 20th October 1981
Former Club: Chorley Lynx
Recruited by Lynx from Oldham last season.



Prop

Ian Parry

D.O.B: 2nd April 1981
Former Club: Chorley Lynx
Named as one of the props in the NL2 All Stars in 2004.



Three-Quarter

Gary Rourke

D.O.B: 9th May 1983
Former Club: Leigh Centurions
A former Wigan St Patricks junior, who made first grade debut in 2004.



Prop/Back
Row Forward

Gus Martin

D.O.B: 13th February 1979
Former Club: Wynnum-Manly (Queensland)
Panthers' 2nd Aus signing, previously played alongside Glen Godbee for Mullumbimby.



Utility

Chris Ramsdale

D.O.B: 25th April 1982
Former Club: Chorley Lynx
"Mr Versatile", most of his performances have been in the hooking role.



Prop

Lee Rowley

D.O.B: 3rd February 1983
Former Club: Chorley Lynx
Has continued to play for Leigh East in the National Conference during the winter.



Halfback/Hooker

Liam McGovern

D.O.B: 6th October 1984
Former Club: Rochdale Hornets
An outstanding junior player who toured Australia with GB Youth side in 2001.



Centre/Second Row

Mick Redford

D.O.B: 24th June 1981
Former Club: Chorley Lynx
Signed from the Leigh East ARL ranks, plays the game with a smile on his face.



Winger/Fullback

Paul Salmon

D.O.B: 6th March 1981
Former Club: Barrow Raiders
Made his Ireland debut at 18 in 1999 and has represented England Under-21s.



Prop

Steve Molloy

D.O.B: 11th March 1969
Former Club: Oldham
Represented Great Britain, England and GB Under-21s during an illustrious career.



Hooker
Utility Forward

Martin Roden

D.O.B: 26th December 1979
Former Club: Chorley Lynx
Another former member of the successful Wigan Alliance side of the late 1990s.



Back Row Forward

Gary Smith

D.O.B: 11th January 1981
Former Club: Chorley Lynx
Made an impressive professional bow with Lynx in 2004.

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Mike Latham Speaks

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Former Great Britain international Kevin Ashcroft's appointment as team manager at the Panthers certainly created plenty of talking points for BBC Radio Lancashire listeners.

BBC Radio Broadcaster

Kevin played around 600 senior games in a distinguished playing career with Dewsbury, Rochdale, Leigh, Warrington and Salford and won Challenge Cup medals in 1971 and 1974. He has coached Leigh, Salford and Warrington and was a member of the Great Britain World Cup squads of 1968 and 1970 and toured down under in 1974.

Ashcroft's last senior coaching role saw him lead Leigh to promotion to the old first division in 1991/92. In that year Leigh had a player-chairman in Tony Cottrell and Ashcroft worked miracles to recruit a number of players from the amateur game to augment his squad and rebuild a club that had gone desperately close to being out of business.

Speaking on the station, Ashcroft said: "I was approached late on Thursday about the job and after listening to some commentators on the game I thought it was about time someone brought some normality back into Rugby League.

"I have fond memories about playing at the old Blackpool Borough in the past and sincerely hope the new Panthers club will be successful. It is great to have a club in Blackpool back in the game. "I aim to encourage individual skills

and if players make a mistake trying to show their talents they won't have me to worry about. I want a side that plays with flair and skill rather than one-man rugby."

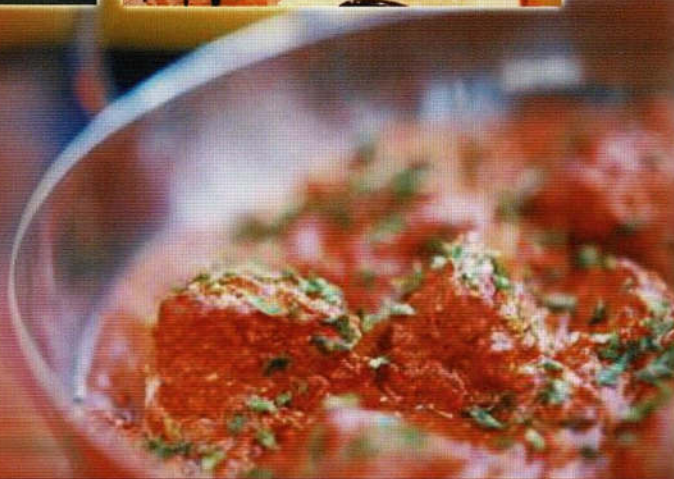
Leigh-based Ashcroft laughs off jibes about his age. "If people want to call me a dinosaur that's up to them," he says. "But remember dinosaurs ruled the world for millions of years. And dinosaurs like me used to beat the Aussies and when's the last time we did that in a test series- 1970. I rest my case.

"There are so many kids with talent between the ages of 16-18 who are turned into robots by the time they are 21. I want my players to play the game with enjoyment and with a smile on their faces. When we won the Challenge Cup with Leigh in 1971 the players would have died for one another, the team spirit was that strong. We were all like brothers.

"If you get beaten but have given 100 percent you won't get a single spectator criticising you. Rugby League is a simple game no matter how hard some people try to complicate things. Name me one thing that's complicated about Rugby League. I want my team to entertain the paying spectator- that's my simple philosophy."

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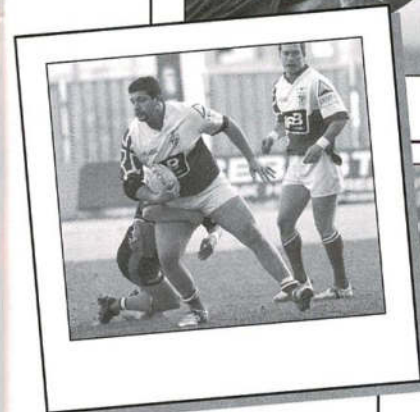
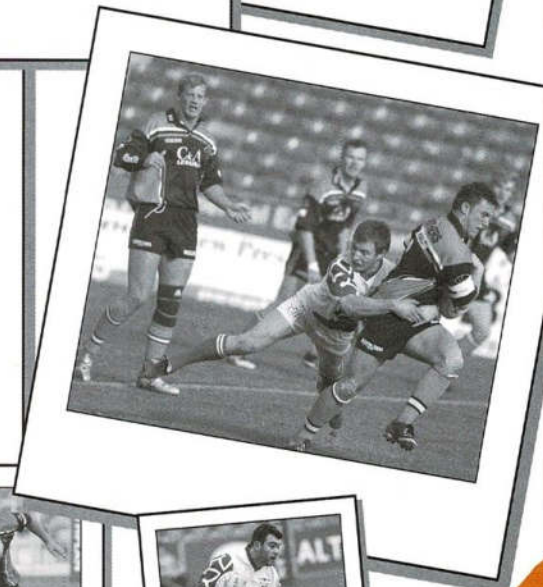
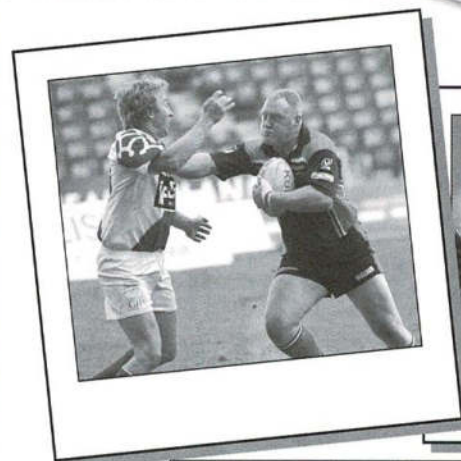
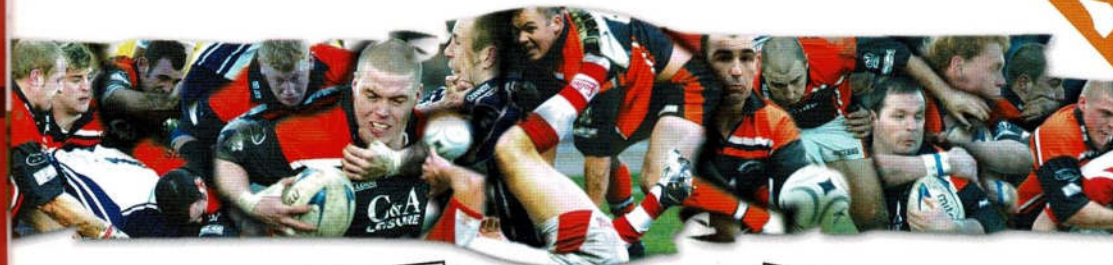
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National League Talk

With Gareth Walker



□ □
National
League clubs
are often
accused of not
doing enough
to promote
themselves
and their
matches - but
is that always
the case?

Reporter for Rugby Leaguer & League Express

Certainly, some clubs outside the top flight are making a concerted effort to push themselves into the local community and beyond.

York City Knights have been a shining example of that ever since relaunching professional Rugby League in the Minster City. The latest example of this has been the publication of a full colour, glossy brochure charting the Knight, on and off field successes of recent months. It's no coincidence that they are a past National League Community Club of the Year.

The Knights are not on their own. Castleford Tigers, and also Halifax before them, are striving to maintain the PR standards they set themselves as a Super League club. Fax, the Tigers and Knights are among the few clubs that send out team news to the media on a weekly basis - a simple but effective way of earning publicity.

Other clubs are trying hard as well, with more than half a dozen sending press releases out to the national media on a fairly regular basis.

Special mention must also be made for Blackpool Panthers - whose work in promoting their club ahead of their first game was unrivalled outside Super League, and included detailed information on every player

and photographs of the entire squad. The Panthers also send out weekly news and injury information.

It's not an expensive or particularly time-consuming exercise, but one that can be effective.

And it certainly shouldn't be restricted simply to team news - if a club is working hard in the local community, as so many of them are, then why shouldn't they shout that from the roof-tops in the press?

But there is undoubtedly work to be done. It is a fact that Rugby Football League officials have briefed National League clubs on how to improve their PR and self-promotion. Inevitably, some clubs took that advice on board - others didn't.

Crowds outside Super League are hardly booming at present so every little, simple thing that can aid clubs must be a good thing.

Establishing strong links with the local press is crucial - that is where clubs' main source of publicity will be and presents the best opportunity to attract new supporters through the turnstiles.

Hopefully, clubs will continue to make strides. It could be crucial to the future of clubs at this level of the professional game.

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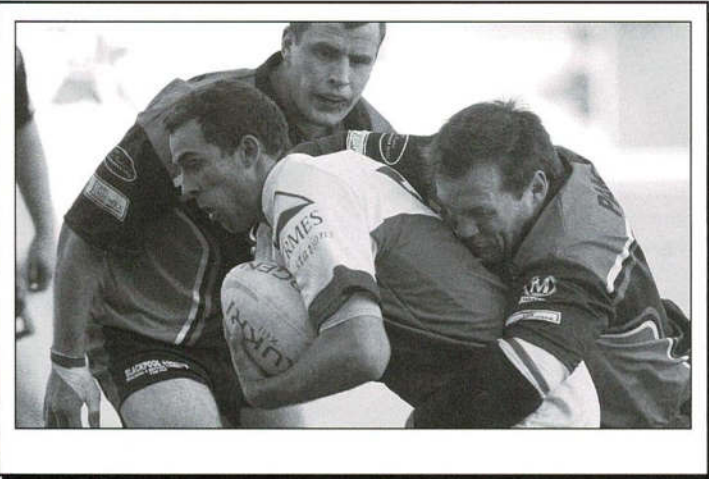
Panthers Previous Games

Mike Latham reports on Blackpool Panthers v Toulouse Olympique



□ □ Panthers bowed out of the Powergen Challenge Cup to an impressive Toulouse side at Bloomfield Road as the visitors, second in the French Elite Competition, completed an effective cross-Channel raid with a devastating second half performance.

Powergen Challenge Cup: Panthers 18 Toulouse Olympique 58



Olympique finished with a tally of ten tries, four of them scored by their razor-sharp winger Cedric Olieu who ironically was only a late selection in Justin Morgan's side.

Toulouse were one of three French sides to progress with UTC and Pia also defeating NL2 sides. Morgan, an Australian with an impressive playing pedigree in the NRL, has assembled a side with four Australians in key positions and young English forward Tommy Gallagher to augment his talented French players.

Morgan was delighted with the performance of Gallagher, who has made a big impression since moving to France. The former Leeds player had a prodigious work-rate and capped a fine display with one of his side's ten tries to delight a large number of watching friends and family.

The Australian quartet in the Toulouse ranks all made important contributions. Halfbacks Dave

Mulhall and James Wynne combined superbly in a series of sweeping attacks, fullback Sam Murphy was secure and joined the line well while loose-forward Trent Robinson impressed with his work-rate and invention.

But there were several noteworthy contributions from the French players with raw-boned second row Sebastien Raguin and workaholic hooker Cedric Gay both hugely enjoying their trip to the English seaside.

"Blackpool started really well and I knew we were in for a match," Morgan said. "But in that fifteen minutes after half-time we really put the pedal down. We went into the game with a good professional attitude and that was reflected in the performance. "Olieu had a fantastic game for us. He has been in and out of the side but he really grabbed his opportunities. But I thought Gallagher stood above everyone else and he has been a great signing for us. The senior guys showed their class and we are



GAME INFO

Blackpool: Bretherton; Arnold, Johnstone, Godbee, Andrews; McGovern, Hough; Molloy, Roden, Parry, Redford, Smith, Swann. Subs: Gambles, Hill, Barton, Leigh.

Toulouse: Murphy; Cousseau, Couturier, C Estebanez, Olieu; Mulhall, Wynne; Amigas, Gay, Gallagher, Delpoux, Raguin, Robinson. Subs: Viala, F Estebanez, Frayssinet, Prizzon.

Referee: K Kirkpatrick (Warrington); Half-time: 12-18; Attendance: 410; Scorers. Blackpool- Tries: Andrews, Hill, Godbee. Goals: Johnstone 3. Toulouse- Tries: Gay 2, Raguin, Gallagher, Olieu 4, Wynne, F Estabanez. Goals: Couturier 4, Murphy 5.

looking forward to competing in the next round of the competition." Panthers were in contention at the break, when they trailed only 12-18, but they were outclassed in the second half, conceding seven tries with just a Glen Godbee effort in reply.

Godbee, returning after a shoulder injury, sparked a promising opening with a classy assist for Eric Andrews' third-minute try. But Gay's support play earned him an equalising try and Toulouse moved clear with tries by Raguin and Gallagher, only to be penned back by John Hill's determined effort.

But Olieu scored two tries in a three-minute spell immediately after the re-start and though Panthers clawed back to 18-30 on the hour-mark when Godbee touched down Liam McGovern's clever kick, any hopes of a home revival soon disappeared.

Mulhall kicked through for Toulouse captain Wynne to put his

side back in command before Olieu went in for his hat-trick. Fabrice Estebanez, Gay and Olieu added further tries in the last five minutes of a game that couldn't finish quickly enough for the Panthers. Liam Bretherton added to the woes after suffering a shoulder injury in the first half.





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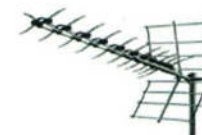
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Fixtures 2005

FEBRUARY

Sun 6th
St Helens Home 3.00 (Friendly)

Sun 13th
Oldham Away 3.00
Northern Rail Cup

Fri 18th
Swinton Lions Home 3.00
Northern Rail Cup

Sun 27th
Rochdale Hornets Home at
Preston Grasshoppers RUFC
3.00 Northern Rail Cup

MARCH

Sun 6th
Rochdale Hornets Away 3.00
Northern Rail Cup

Sun 13th
Toulouse Olympique Home 3.00
Powergen Challenge Cup

Sun 20th
Oldham (Preston Grasshoppers)
3.00 Northern Rail Cup

Good Friday 25th
Swinton Lions Away 3.00
Northern Rail Cup

Easter Monday 28th
LHF Healthplan Keighley Cougars
Home 3.00 at
Preston Grasshoppers RUFC

APRIL

Sun 3rd
Powergen Challenge Cup
Fourth Round

Fri 8th
Sheffield Eagles Away 8.00

Sun 17th
London Skolars Home 3.00

Sat 23rd
Gateshead Thunder Away 3.00

MAY

Sun 1st
Northern Rail Cup Play-offs

Sun 8th
Powergen Challenge Cup
Fifth Round

Sun 15th
Swinton Lions Away 3.00

Sun 22nd
Workington Town Home 3.00
To be re-arranged

Sun 29th
Northern Rail Cup
Quarter Finals

JUNE

Sat 4th
York City Knights Away 5.30

Sun 12th
Hunslet Hawks Away 3.00

Sun 19th
Northern Rail Cup Semi Finals

Sun 26th
Dewsbury Rams Away 3.00 or
Powergen Challenge Cup
Quarter Finals

JULY

Sun 3rd
Sheffield Eagles Home 3.00

Sun 10th
Keighley Cougars Away 3.00

Sun 17th
Northern Rail Cup Final

Sun 24th
Swinton Lions Home 3.00

Sun 31st
Gateshead Thunder Home 3.00
or Powergen Challenge Cup
Semi Finals

AUGUST

Sun 7th
York City Knights Home 3.00

Sun 14th
Hunslet Hawks Home 3.00

Sun 21st
Workington Town Away 3.00

Sat 27th
Powergen Challenge Cup Final

SEPTEMBER

Sun 4th
Dewsbury Rams Home 3.00

Sat 10th
London Skolars Away 3.00

Sun 18th
LHF Healthplan NL2 Play-offs

Sun 25th
LHF Healthplan NL2 Play-offs

OCTOBER

Sun 2nd
LHF Healthplan NL2 Play-offs

Sat 8th
LHF Healthplan NL2 Final

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News & Views



Panthers Supporters Club

CONTACT POINTS

Blackpool:
Mike Leeming
01253 752893

Chorley/Preston:
Christine Iddon
07980 812 243

Supporters news
written by Alan
Postlewaite
Chairman Blackpool
Panthers Supporters
Club (Chorley
Branch)

The sacking of Mark Lee as coach and the appointment of Kevin Ashcroft as team manager was an unexpected turn of events, especially considering the strong support he appeared to be getting from the Board and his increasing involvement with the local media.

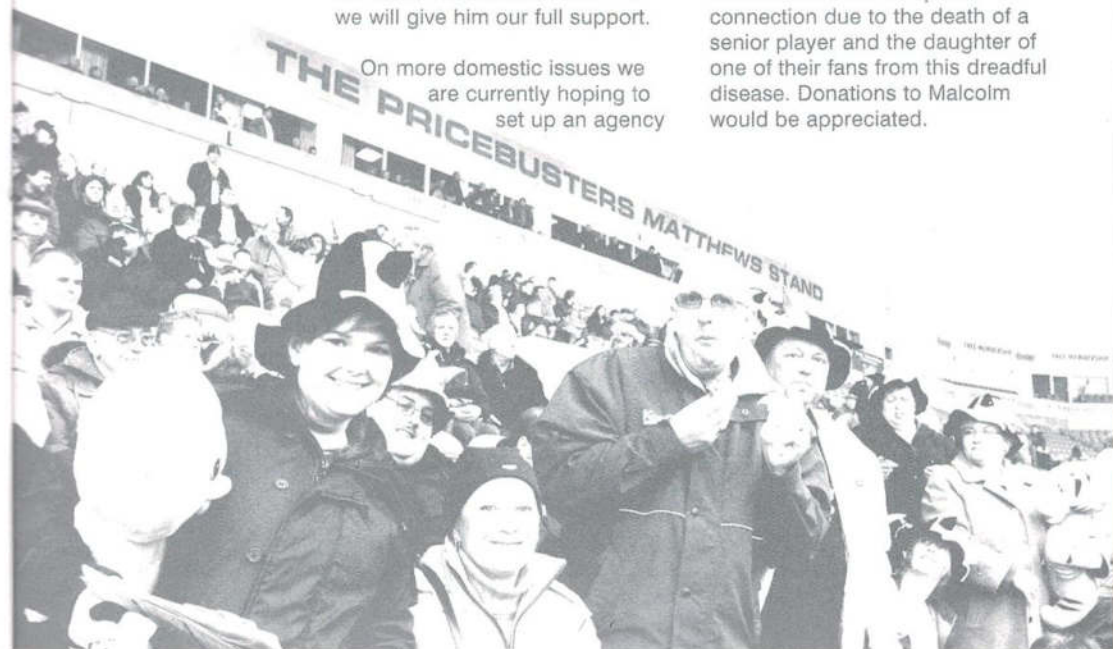
From an objective point of view one can say that judging on our performances so far this season we are unlikely to improve on last year's cup results. Therefore the people who have invested heavily in the club are entitled to take whatever action they deem to be necessary in order to protect their investments and secure the future of the club.

Whatever the final outcome is I would like to thank Mark on behalf of the supporters for his efforts with the Lynx and Panthers, and at the same time assure Kevin that we will give him our full support.

On more domestic issues we are currently hoping to set up an agency

in connection with the Panthers Golden Bond Draw, and it is our intention to use any commission to subsidise our travel costs which have obviously increased this season due to the necessity to provide coaches to Blackpool for home games.

Prior to our match with Swinton on Good Friday Malcolm Hodgkinson will join members of Swinton's Supporters Club on a sponsored walk from Station Road to their current ground in aid of leukaemia research, a charity with which Swinton fans have a special connection due to the death of a senior player and the daughter of one of their fans from this dreadful disease. Donations to Malcolm would be appreciated.



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Blackpool Panthers State

Appearances and Scorers 2005



Appearances

NAME	APP	SUB	TRIES	GLS	DG	PTS
Andrews, Eric	5	0	3	0	0	12
Arnold, Danny	4	0	1	0	0	4
Barton, Danny	3	2	1	0	0	4
Bretherton, Liam	5	0	2	2	0	12
Callan, Mike	0	2	0	0	0	0
Chamberlain, Jon	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gambles, Martin	1	3	1	0	0	4
Godbee, Glen	2	0	3	0	0	12
Hill, John	3	1	1	0	0	4
Hough, Chris	4	1	0	0	0	0
Johnstone, Jake	4	0	3	12	0	36
Jones, Gareth	0	3	0	0	0	0
Kilgannon, Eddie	0	0	0	0	0	0
Leigh, Matthew	2	2	0	0	0	0
Lomax, James	0	0	0	0	0	0
Martin, Gus	1	1	0	0	0	0
McGovern, Liam	5	0	0	0	0	0
Molloy, Steve	2	2	0	0	0	0
Ormesher, Steve	1	0	0	0	0	0
Parry, Ian	5	0	1	0	0	4
Ramsdale, Chris	0	2	0	0	0	0
Redford, Mick	5	0	1	0	0	4
Roden, Martin	3	0	0	0	0	0
Rowland, David	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rourke, Gary	1	1	0	0	0	0
Rowley, Lee	0	0	0	0	0	0
Salmon, Paul	0	0	0	0	0	0
Smith, Gary	5	0	2	0	0	8
Swann, Willie	3	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS:	65	20	19	14	0	104

1st team competitive games only; friendlies excluded

Match Table

OPPONENTS	DATE	VENUE	RES	ATT
Oldham Away	13.02.05	A	20-22	852
Swinton Lions	20.02.05	H	24-34	512
Rochdale Hornets	27.02.05	H	26-36	220
Rochdale Hornets	06.03.05	A	16-62	731
Toulouse Olympique	13.03.05	H	18-58	410
Oldham				
Swinton Lions				
Keighley Cougars				
Challenge Cup 4th Round				
Sheffield Eagles				
London Skolars				
Gateshead Thunder				
NRC Play-offs				
Challenge Cup 5th				
Swinton Lions				
Workington Town				
NRC Quarter Finals				
York City Knights				
Hunslet Hawks				
NRC Semi Finals				
Dewsbury Rams				
Sheffield Eagles				
Keighley Cougars				
NRC Final				
Swinton Lions				
Gateshead Thunder				
York City Knights				
Hunslet Hawks				
Workington Town				
Challenge Cup Final				
Dewsbury Rams				
London Skolars				
LHF NL2 Play-offs				
LHF NL2 Play-offs				
LHF NL2 Play-offs				
LHF NL2 Final				

Captain: Molloy 1, Hough 1, Swann 3
Goal-kickers: Bretherton 2/ 3; McGovern 0/ 1; Hough 0/1; Johnstone 12/16
Played 5, Lost 5, For 104, Against 212

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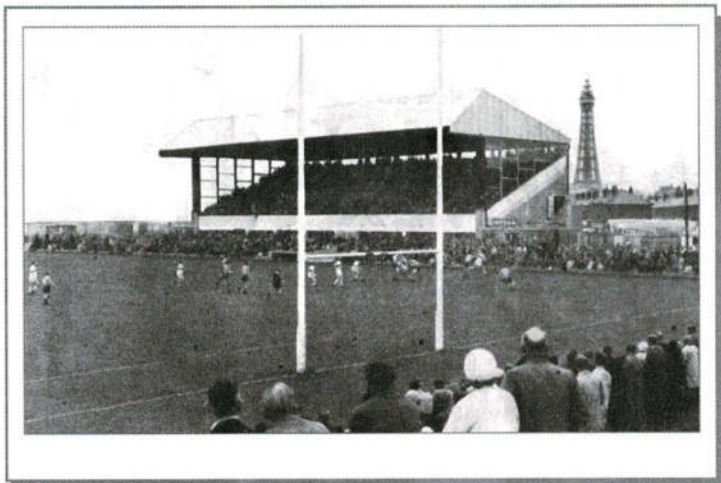
History of RL in Blackpool

Blackpool Borough Rugby Football Club



Written by Mike Latham

Brash, breezy and entertaining - the seaside resort of Blackpool could have been made for Rugby League. The town's link with the sport goes back to the early days of the Northern Union and has been revived with the formation of Blackpool Panthers for 2005.



The first Blackpool club folded after playing one season in 1898/99. Their ground was at Raikes Hall Gardens, an entertainment complex that included a theatre and boating lake. That was it until Blackpool Borough's application to join the RL was accepted in time for the 1954/55 season.

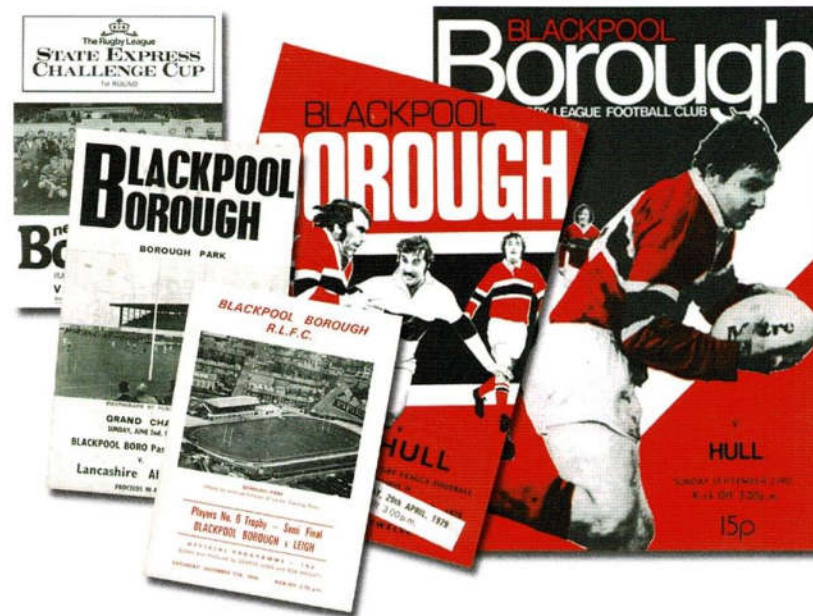
Borough's first home was at the South Shore Greyhound Stadium on St Annes Road. In 1955 Borough were invited to host the New Zealanders and switched the game to Bloomfield Road when a crowd of 12,015 saw a thrilling 24-24 draw. Bloomfield Road was also used after Borough reached the quarter-finals of the Challenge Cup in March 1957 when 20,946 saw Leigh run out 24-13 victors.

Borough Park was opened on 31 August 1963 when Borough defeated Salford 36-16 before a crowd of 5,000. After years of struggle, the club's fortunes briefly revived in dramatic fashion in the 1976/77 season after Jim Crellin was recruited as the latest in a long

line of coaches. Borough earned a famous run through the Player's No.6 Trophy rounds, on their way to the club's first ever appearance in a final. They gave a fine account of themselves before losing 25-15 to Castleford at The Willows. There was another glorious, if brief, era for Borough when, under the direction of Albert Fearnley and Bak Diabira, they enjoyed a promotion season in 1978/79 and they enjoyed their brief flirtation with the top flight.

After the tragic Valley Parade fire of May 1985 stringent new ground safety measures were introduced and with no grant aid forthcoming, Borough's days at Borough Park were over. Their final first-team game at Borough Park was on 4 January 1987 when they lost 5-8 to Whitehaven before a crowd of 386. Borough staged their final seven remaining home games of that season at Bloomfield Road before relocating to Wigan.

After one season as Springfield Borough, playing at the home of



Borough played at Altrincham for three seasons, before re-locating back to Blackpool under a new title of Blackpool Gladiators in 1992, ground-sharing with Blackpool Mechanics FC in Common Edge Road.

Wigan Athletic AFC, the club was renamed Chorley Borough and played at Victory Park, Chorley. A further boardroom split occurred during the season over a decision to relocate to Altrincham for the following season. Five directors resigned and formed a new Chorley club which eventually became Chorley Lynx. In 2004 Lynx played their final season and have been replaced by Blackpool Panthers for 2005.

Borough played at Altrincham for three seasons, before re-locating back to Blackpool under a new title of Blackpool Gladiators in 1992, ground-sharing with Blackpool Mechanics FC in Common Edge Road but Blackpool's league status was lost in 1993 and they folded at the end of 1997.

Despite the demise of Gladiators, Rugby League continued to have a foothold in the resort through the efforts of the well established amateur clubs Blackpool Scorpions and Blackpool Stanley, who both play in the North West Counties

League. There was an additional boost when Blackpool Sea Eagles formed in 2002 to play in the fast expanding Summer Conference. With the Blackpool Supporters' Club continuing to prosper there was an infrastructure in place for the much acclaimed return of the professional game to the town for 2005.



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Today's Opposing Side

Oldham



Oldham



Panthers V Oldham by Mike Latham

Oldham fans will remember Lightfoot Green from their side's two visits to play Lancashire Lynx in 1998. The Roughyeds attracted a crowd of 1,351 for a thrilling 18-18 draw in May of that year and there was a turn-out of 733 two months later for a game that Lynx won 32-16.

Gary Mercer is the Oldham coach- a Kiwi legend after a long and illustrious playing career and now in his third coaching job after serving Halifax and Castleford. Mercer has a large number of new players in his squad this year after the close season departures of established favourites such as Lee Doran, Phil Farrell, Jon Roper, Ian Watson, Neil Roden, Paul Southern, Lee Marsh and Iain Marsh.

A trio of former Leigh players headed Mercer's preseason recruits with winger Damian Munro, prop Paul Norman and second row Andrew Isherwood all signing. Mark Roberts joined from Warrington and Alex Wilkinson came to his hometown club after stints with Bradford and Hull. Marty Turner was signed from Melbourne Storm to fill a key play-making role and a couple of Cook Islanders came on board- Jonathan Wilson and Tere Glassie together with New Zealander Carlos Mataoro.

But the most eye-catching of Oldham's signings was probably Simon Haughton, the former Wigan and Great Britain star who had been playing rugby union with Orrell. One of the game's most devastating wide runners, second row Haughton is looking to resurrect his League career after his stint in the 15-a-side game. Prop Ricky Bibey was another notable player to join Oldham after spells with Wigan and St Helens.

After beating Sharlston in the Powergen Challenge Cup last Friday, the Roughyeds were in midweek action against Rochdale Hornets in the Northern Rail Cup- a tough run of fixtures for Mercer's injury hit squad,

especially with the start of the LHF Heathplan NL1 campaign only a fortnight away. Teenagers James Kirkland and Andy Gorey have been drafted into the squad recently as Mercer was down to his last seventeen players for the visit to Sharlston when he was without the injured Bibey, Adam Sharples, Jon Goddard and Craig Farrimond. Goddard was one of the stand-out players for Oldham in 2004, winning golden reviews for his displays in the fullback jersey.

Last season, under Steve Molloy, Oldham finished fourth in NL1 and lost to Featherstone in the play-offs. Nick Johnson was their top try scorer with 25 with Gavin Dodd, who scored a memorable match-winning solo try against Panthers in the opening competitive game of the season, notching an impressive tally of 15. Johnson, formerly with Bradford Bulls, is a devastating finisher and Oldham fans were delighted when he re-signed for the Roughyeds this season. Hooker John Hough recently made his 200th Oldham appearance- a fine effort.

Oldham visited Bloomfield Road last season, losing 20-44 to Batley in a NL1 fixture switched from Boundary Park. The game attracted a crowd of 1,541. Many Oldham fans will be disappointed not to have a repeat journey to the seaside this year but we hope that they find consolation in the excellent social facilities and ambience of Lightfoot Green, especially if the weather is kind.

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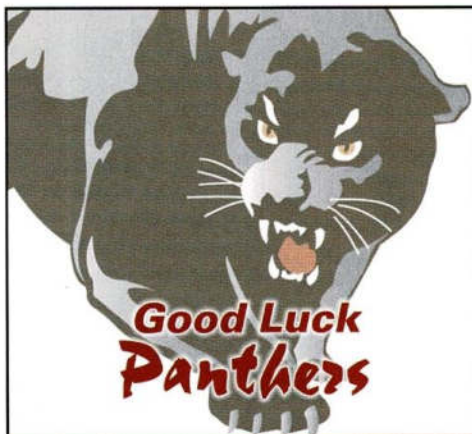
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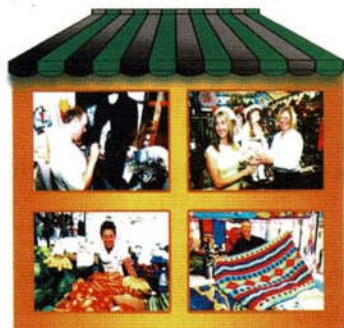
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BLACKPOOL PANTHERS

TEAM MEMBER

- 1 Liam Bretherton
- 2 Danny Arnold
- 3 Jake Johnstone
- 4 Glen Godbee
- 5 Eric Andrews
- 6 Liam McGovern
- 7 Chris Hough
- 8 Steve Molloy
- 9 Martin Roden
- 10 Ian Parry
- 11 Mick Redford
- 12 Gary Smith
- 13 Willie Swann (Cap)
- 14 Martin Gambles
- 15 Danny Barton
- 16 John Hill
- 17 Matty Leigh

Tonight's Officials

Referee:
J Leahy

Touch Judges:
P Smith G Towey
P Taberner

OLDHAM

TEAM MEMBER

- 1 Gavin Dodd
- 2 Will Cowell
- 3 Damian Munro
- 4 Gareth Barber
- 5 Nick Johnson
- 6 Simon Svabic
- 7 Marty Turner
- 8 Paul Norman
- 9 John Hough
- 10 Jonathan Wilson
- 11 Simon Haughton
- 12 Martin Elwood
- 13 Mark Roberts
- 14 Carlos Mataora
- 15 Tere Glassie
- 16 James Kirkland
- 17 Andy Gorey

Team Sheet



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