

THE ROUGHYEDS

V ROCHDALE HORNETS

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HORNETS**

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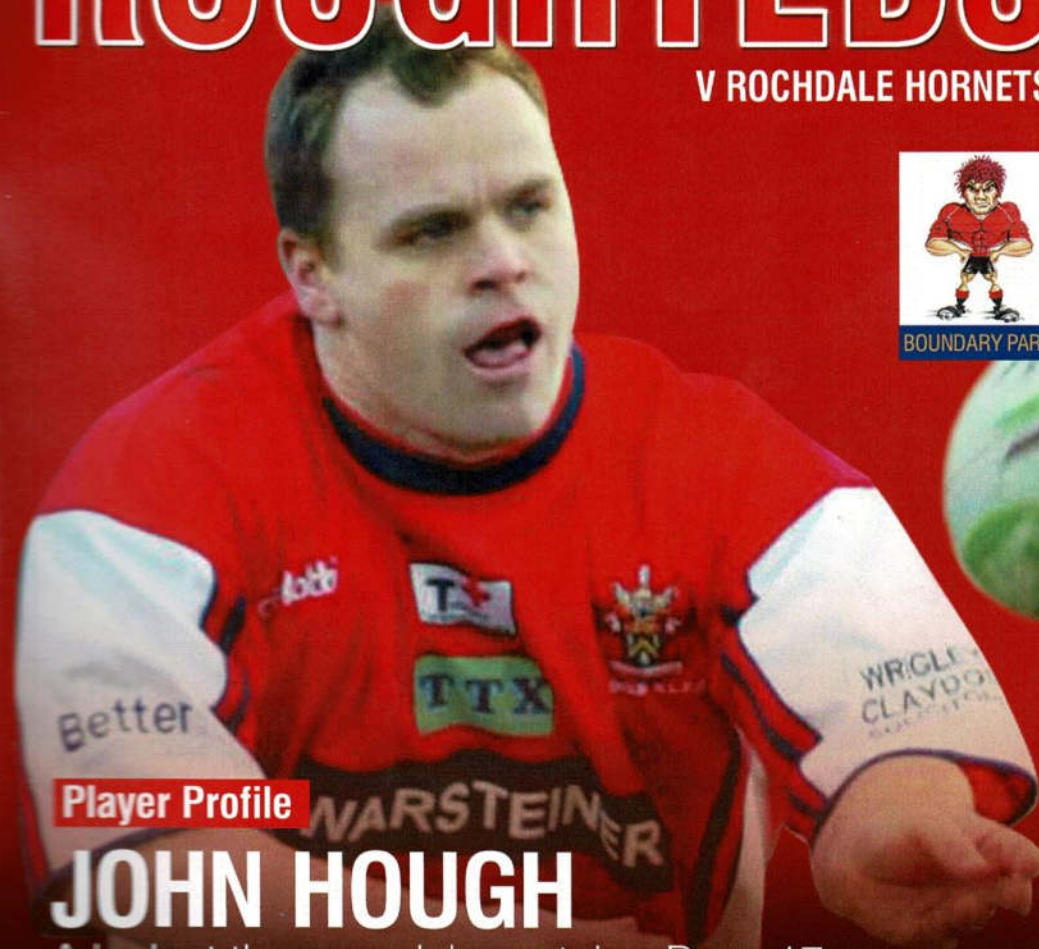
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THE ROUGHYEDS

V ROCHDALE HORNETS



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Player Profile

JOHN HOUGH

A look at the new club captain - Page 17

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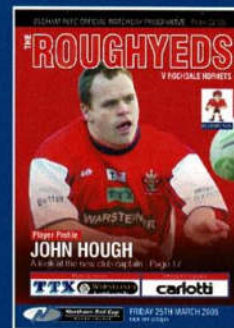
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DIRECTORS Christopher Hamilton
Sean Whitehead

HEAD COACH Gary Mercer

ASSISTANT COACH Keith Brennan

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TIMEKEEPER David Lord

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

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Oldham RLFC (1997) Ltd.

We would like to express our thanks to the Oldham
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Phil Burdge and all concerned for the use of
photographs.

25th **MARCH** 2005

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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 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 (amt), 64-0 - Jan 28th 2001
RLCC 3rd Rnd at Boundary Park

www.roughyeds.co.uk



The Chairman's Thoughts

with CHRIS HAMILTON

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

The saying "never a dull moment" was never more appropriately coined than in connection with Oldham Rugby League Club

The events of the last week or so in relation to our debt with The Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise have been traumatic to say the least.

Our ground problems since we formed the club in 1997 have left us in the present position where the Crown departments are not prepared to give us more time to pay and we are now desperately trying to reach an agreement with them to enable the club to enter into a Creditors Voluntary Arrangement (CVA). As this is written there is no such agreement but we are working hard to ensure that a satisfactory conclusion is reached for all concerned.

It is perhaps a sign of the times that in sporting terms our debts of approximately £180,000 are being talked about as relatively low. Nevertheless the problem will not go away and we are hoping that today will see the people of Oldham coming out in force to show their support for the club and for professional rugby league in the town. The game may well have more significance than simply who wins the two points on offer today because whilst that is important equally so is the number of you who are here to witness it. We know we have a loyal band of support but it is now time that those who profess to be rugby supporters must show they care for the benefit of all concerned.

It is important that people realise that the situation is serious and we do not want to lose the club but we need a concerted effort by everybody to turn it around.

On behalf of myself and Sean Whitehead can I offer our thanks for all the support we have been given since the news first broke last week. That in itself has made a difference to us and we have been grateful for the messages and words of encouragement.

There is also a growing number of supporters who appear willing to help raise money for the club and indeed today volunteers are out in force with a bucket collection.

I must also mention Oldham Athletic for their gesture in allowing us to play rent free this afternoon and on behalf of everybody at Oldham Rugby League Club can I offer our sincere thanks.

That gesture is hopefully only the start of what needs to be a concerted fund raising effort and can I ask any of you that have ideas to help to please contact the club.

Finally, more than ever, the team needs your support and this afternoon, hopefully with a big crowd behind us, we can be as vocal as ever and cheer the team on to victory.

Thanks for your support

Chris Hamilton

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From The Touchline

with Gary Mercer

Q&A

WITH GARY MERCER

Ultimate Roughyed asked:

Given the retirement of Andy Isherwood are there plans to strengthen the team in the near future?

Gary replied:

Certainly - we are always looking for new players and I am now short and tight in both the pack and the three-quarters because of the injury situation. I am willing to bring in gifted kids and any experienced guys when and if they become available.

Loyal Supporter asked:

When you arrived at the club you gave a speech to the fans where you said your players had to have pride in playing for Oldham. Against Rochdale this clearly wasn't the case. How are you going to rectify this?

Gary replied:

Well at present I can't drop anyone as we don't have replacements, but deep down I am certain this is a matter of lack of confidence as opposed to lack of pride. And confidence boils down to to work on the training park to tighten up our defence. There is no doubt that confidence in Rugby League comes from good defence and whilst that is not present neither will be the confidence.

We are being beaten in the mind at present and I must work on that with the whole squad of players. If we improve mentally this will show itself in an improvement in the football we play.

17 asked:

Are you disappointed with the players you brought in?

Gary replied:

A difficult question and the answer is yes - I am disappointed in the fact that those players haven't gelled as yet. I expected them to do this quicker. But to be honest that is down to me. I brought them together and I must get the best out of them. It may mean I have to bring in more players to strengthen the ship and if that is the case - so be it. The players know that their form has to be held and at the end of the day they will be moved on if they are not performing.

A warm welcome to Bobbie and the Rochdale

Directors and players to Boundary Park today.

We've already had two visits to the Hornets and they're already two up so as you can all guess we are eager to win one back. Rochdale are a very good side this season, Bobbie has recruited well and I reckon they will be a stern test for anybody in our league this season.

That includes us today, especially with our long term injuries. At present Munro is out for two weeks, Elsworth six weeks, Farimond, Barber and Sharples three and Glassie touch and go for today. Because of this we had to bring Jon Goddard in a week early and Keith Brennan out of retirement last week. His experience can only help the side - whether this is temporary or longer term will be dependant on our recruitment in the next few weeks.

The financial situation is very unfortunate but out of our control and we mustn't let it affect us on the field other than to drive us even more. The situation is in the capable hands of Chris and Sean. They can be confident that the boys and coaching staff will attempt to achieve things on the field as they do the same off the field. The lads need your support and the reception they received after the Blackpool game really helped. I am certain with the support of the fans the club can steer itself into calmer waters.

In the stats I have included the comparison between the Charlston and Rochdale games shows how important individual efforts are to the overall performance of the team.

Enjoy the game,

Gary



Simon Houghton

Charlston

11/03/05

4 tries
80 min playing time
18 tackles
1 miss
13 carries
60m total gain
4.4m average gain



Paul Norman

Charlston

11/03/05

49 mins playing time
21 tackles
1 miss
15 carries
35m total gain
3.1m average gain



Martin Ellswood

Rochdale Hornets

16/03/05

80 min playing time
24 tackles
2 misses
2 carries

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This time, the rumour is that Div. 1 sides are being offered £1/2m. each if they accept no promotion (for 5 years?). It is no surprise, though, since it is not just non-establishment clubs like Worcester, Rotherham or Leeds who are in danger of relegation this season, but Northampton and, whisper it, Harlequins!

Of course, the argument is familiar. How can top clubs plan long-term if they have the threat of relegation hanging over them? No wonder clubs go for short-term fixes of expensive foreign players to stave off finishing in the dreaded bottom place, at the expense of developing young local talent. And how can you expect long-term investment in facilities and youth development when the possibility exists of relegation to a much lower-key, part-time level of the game?

There is a great deal of truth in all of this, and exactly the same arguments apply in Rugby League. They have been put forward before, of course, and no doubt will be again, especially as this season develops, with two teams to be relegated from Super League to accommodate both Perpignan and the NL1 Grand final winners, assuming they qualify on the other relevant criteria. Comparisons with the NRL in Australia and with American Football in the USA will again be made - they both attract very good attendances, with no relegation and promotion, so why not here too, whether in RL or in English RU?

The issue seems to me to be one of fundamental sporting philosophy. What is professional sport about? It is certainly a branch of the entertainment industry, and that line of argument may well support the no relegation / franchises case. But it is surely more than that. To be a "supporter" of a club in a professional sport involves more than a desire to be entertained. For example, when our game at Rochdale was

As Ian Sees It!

I see that English RU is again rife with rumours about promotion and relegation. A couple of years ago, there seems little doubt that top clubs provided "financial inducements" to Rotherham not to push their case for promotion, to save one of their number from relegation from their premiership league. They set up an inquiry, in fact, but managed to sweep the whole sorry mess under the carpet.

postponed, I went to watch Widnes v Bradford - and very entertaining it was too. But that does not mean that I would choose to go to watch Widnes again on a day when Oldham had a game, even if the "entertainment" on offer might objectively be regarded as greater at the Halton stadium.

Having an involvement - as a player, an administrator or a supporter - with a club has a "dream" element to it. Sport, like life, has a meritocratic aspect. If you remove the opportunity of any club gaining access, through its own efforts, to the top level of its game, you remove an integral part of what sport is, or should be, about.

Of course, this involves downsides. We know that here at Oldham probably better than anyone else. So do Workington and Halifax, who have had their own struggles since relegation from Super League. But I would argue that this is a price you have to pay for the benefits. "Doing a Wimbledon" is an essential element of the dream, and of the culture of sport in the UK. What about the benefits to the RL community in Doncaster (remember "Sunday, Bloody Sunday"!) of their year in the top division. And what about Wakefield last year and this.

No, we should BEGIN our discussions with the principle of promotion and relegation accepted, throughout the game. We should then manage the consequences as well as we possibly can. This needs to be both in terms of helping promoted sides to prepare, and in cushioning relegated sides from the worst consequences of their demotion. But the dream must be kept alive.

Ian Wilson

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In Yer Face!

with GEOFF COOKE

May I first of all congratulate everyone at Waterhead on their terrific performance against Sheffield Eagles? Both on and off the pitch everything went superbly. Well done to all concerned.

Incidentally, walking round the Castleton ground reminded me that it has two quite different climates. On the Main Stand side it was bitter cold Winter while on the opposite side it was almost Spring. Guess where I stood!

I don't know what's gone on at Blackpool Panthers but I find the decision to replace a good young Coach in Mark Lee with a 60 year old Kevin Ashcroft whose last coaching appointment was 14 years ago quite bizarre. What next? The return of Peter Fox to Bradford (to be rebranded Northern, of course) or of Doug Laughton to Leeds (henceforth to be known as Loiners)? Or maybe Alex Murphy could return to Leigh? Oh, sorry they've done that already!

My ear to the ground informs me that the Inland Revenue were so peeved at being shafted over the London Broncos liquidation/re-formation that they started looking closely at other R.L. clubs. My understanding is that seven clubs have been targetted. Oldham are obviously one and I have the name of one other for certain. So, if by the time you are reading this no other names have come to light it won't be long before others face the same problems as the Roughyeds. I'll bet none of the Super League clubs who kept London Broncos up and running anticipated just where their generosity would lead.

It goes against the grain for an Oldhamer to congratulate Rochdale Hornets but their record 120 points score against Illingworth deserves recognition. In that match Lee Birdseye kicked a record 18 goals. Just to show how quickly fate can turn fortune on its head Birdseye couldn't land one against Oldham last week and Hornets got through three kickers in their romp against Oldham. Thank God they had an off day or Oldham, too, could have posted an unwanted record.

All that said, Hornets won't be romping away this afternoon. Although Oldham's resources are spread a bit thin at present because of injuries, the Roughyeds will want to set the record straight. Fewer mistakes, fewer penalties and a greater share of possession can soon change the complexion of a game. Expect Oldham to be much more competitive this time round.

While soccer pundits are in a crisis over the abuse and intimidation of referees by players and managers, rugby league would do well to look at the undermining of authority by its Laurel and Hardy Sky T.V. commentators. Personally I have Sky Sports for Rugby League and cricket, rarely watching prima donna soccer. However I recently switched over to Gardener's World after Eddie and Stevo had spent all of five minutes castigating Ian Smith for awarding a knock-on. What gets me is that for 105 years what happened was clearly a knock-on. It's only recent "interpretations" that have opened up debate about what constitutes a knock-on (or a forward pass for that matter). Then last Saturday when our best referee by a mile, Karl Kirkpatrick (how could he not get a Tri-Nations match?), penalised David Solomona for interference after a try had been scored he was heavily criticised. Why? Kirkpatrick actually set an example that could be followed in other games. Please can we lay off our referees on T.V.? Because if we don't we'll have the crisis they have in soccer. And when no-one is willing to referee the amateurs, juniors and schoolboys who is going to explain to them why they can't have a game? It sure as hell won't be Eddie Hemmings and Mike Stephenson!



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In The News

As I write we still don't know the result of the meeting, so I will leave all talk of schemes to support the club until we know the outcome, but can I say the response and ideas from fans, especially on the website has been terrific.



I am holding the Chairman's report as long as possible and hopefully Chris' column will give you the most up to date news.

One way you can help right from the start is to join the Prediction League for the new League season starting on Easter Monday. Packs will be available at Reception at today's game so go along and give your £20 and have some great fun and support the club. All the players and coaching staff have joined as have all contributors to this programme. I intend to print a "celeb." league in the programme every game to let you all know how well or badly the "experts" are doing.



The players are doing a great job in the community and are visiting all Primary schools in a brilliant anti bullying campaign. More about this in future programmes, today I include a photograph of Nick Johnson and Red Ed at St Edwards School Lees where they presented a trike to Lois Twigg who suffers from Cerebral Palsy on behalf of the students who had run functions with the help of gifts from ORLFC to raise money for the trike.

Finally due to errors in the 2004 Oldham stats that appeared in the Gillette RL Yearbook, the following appearances need amending from those published in the match programme v Blackpool Panthers on 13 February.

McLoughlin 13 (17),
Molloy 18 (6),
Morgan 30,
Nanyn (1),
Rich 12 (2),
Roberts (4),
Roden 17 (5),
Roper 9,
Sharples (7),
Southern 20 (2),
Svabic 9 (11),
Watson 29.

Keeping everything crossed,
Nigel



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Walkerbouts

With Brian Walker

Recently the Oldham RL Heritage Trust has been successful in tracking down and bringing back to town three more important medals awarded to famous Oldham players from the past:

Harry Varley was one of the most famous players ever to represent the club. In the early 1880's Oldham, then still playing rugby union was one of the strongest and best-supported teams in the country. Varley, an England international half-back, was signed from the Liversedge club and proved to be the link needed to help the Roughyeds become Lancashire Club Champions in 1894. Following the breakaway from the English RU in 1895 Oldham, coached by Varley, became the first Lancashire side to lift the Challenge Cup when they beat Hunslet in the final of 1899. The gold medal was struck by the players in recognition of Varley's services.

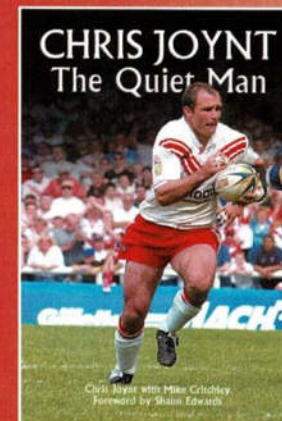


Sam Irvin is second from left in the middle row of this photo of the 1905 England RU team

Eagle-eyed Oldham supporters spotted the 1924 Lancashire Cup winners medal awarded to **Ernest Knapman** when it was up for auction on E-bay. The Trust immediately struck an off-line deal with the Wigan based vendor. Knapman, a Great Britain international and a member of the 1924 tour party, was a fine defensive fullback who played 269 matches for the club between 1921 and 1927 and was a member of the Oldham side that dominated the Challenge Cup during this period, playing in the first three of the teams four consecutive final appearances.



Book reviews

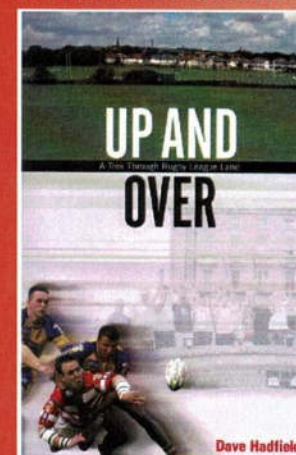


Chris Joynt, The Quiet Man is only just hitting the bookshops. Claimed to be the most successful player in Super League, the former Oldham forward who earned Great Britain U21 honours whilst with the Roughyeds, went on to lead St Helens to Challenge Cup Final, Grand Final and World Club Championship victories whilst enjoying an international career which earned him 25 caps. Written in a down-to-earth style, it tracks the highs-and-lows of Joynt's career whilst at Watersheddings, Knowsley Rd and down under with

Newcastle Knights. A good no punches pulled read it is sure to be a favourite with rugby league fans everywhere.

Chris will be making a personal appearance at the Oldham Evening Chronicle to sign copies of his book at mid-day and onwards on Wednesday the 30th of March. Don't worry if you can't make it, personal signed copies can be ordered and collected later.

The 208-page book is in hardback format priced at £16-99. ISBN 1-904091-11-3.



During the summer before last, Dave Hadfield, rugby league writer for The Independent, completed a 200-mile 'Mersey to Humber' walk, taking him through the heartlands of the game he loves so much. Along the way he met many people involved at all levels of the sport, whose enthusiasm made it so durable – as well as a few miserable gits for balance. In his book **Up and Over** he observes the way rugby league fits into the history and sociology of towns like Castleford and Oldham and the local passions it engenders.

possible to climb a steep footpath at the side of Greenfield station and look down on the pitch far below. It is, I would submit, the best view of a rugby league ground anywhere in the world."

"-----I remember going to Watersheddings to watch a match against New Zealand on a day it was cracking the flags in Bolton, people were sunbathing in Bury, still in their shirt sleeved in Rochdale, but Watersheddings was frozen solid."

Wonderful stuff. 190 easy to read pages for just £9-99. ISBN 1-84018-818-9. Available from stock at Sportspages in St Anne's Sq., Manchester or from any W.H. Smith or Ottakars' branch (although you may need to order from these).

TODAY'S OPPONENTS

Rochdale Hornets

DAVID ALSTEAD (Utility Back) : Played Super League for Warrington Wolves between 2000 and 2003. Moved on to Leigh Centurions where he became a regular member of the team in 2003. Played a prominent part in Hornets successful survival campaign scoring a total of 16 points.

CHRIS CAMPBELL (Wing) : One of Bobbie Goulding's first signings in preparation for the 2004 season. Had previous stints at Whitehaven and Oldham. He scored a total of 12 tries in the 2004 season making him the clubs leading try scorer.

MARK McCULLY (Centre) : Joined Hornets in June on loan from Leigh and stayed for the remainder of the season. Made a total of 13 appearances for Hornets in 2004 scoring 3 tries. Mark is also a very useful goal kicker.

KRIS RATCLIFFE (Forward) : Came to Hornets early in 2004 from the student Amateur Rugby League Network and made a huge contribution especially in the Arriva Cup competition. Made a total of 6 full appearances and 6 as substitute in 2004 scoring 2 tries.

DAVID CUNLIFFE (Centre / Loose Forward) : Joined Hornets in April 2004 from Liverpool St Helens Rugby Union side. Made a total of 18 appearances scoring 4 tries.

JOHN BRADDISH (Stand Off) : John had a great season with Hornets in 2004 finally realising the potential that got him into St Helens Super League squad in 2002. Came to Hornets via Chorley and Oldham. Made a total of 23 full appearances plus 2 as substitute and contributed 3 tries and 26 goals along the way.

LEE BIRDSEYE (Half Back) : Lee joined Hornets via the Widnes Amateur set up after spending the early part of his career in the successful Widnes Vikings Alliance team. Lee played at both Stand Off and Scrum Half making a total of 18 full appearances with a further five as substitute scoring 8 tries and 67 goals making him the Clubs leading points scorer in 2004.

RADNEY BOWKER (Stand Off) : The close season signing that most Hornets fans would have hoped for after his highly successful loan spell of 2003 under former coach Martin Hall. Radney had also made it clear that it was his preference to re join the Club that he had many fond memories of from his previous spell. His trademark mid field breaks will again be anticipated on his return to the Club.

ROB BALL (Prop) : Had a solid 2004 for Hornets with his experience gained playing at Wigan and Leigh proving vital. Made a total of 18 full appearances in 2003 and a further three as substitute scoring 1 try along the way.

SAM BUTTERWORTH (Utility Back) : Sam made a really successful transition to the professional game when he made the move from Rochdale Mayfield in January 2004. He made a total of 11 full appearances in 2004 with a further 13 as a substitute scoring 8 tries and 1 goal.

ANDREW GORSKI (Second Row) : Andrew was Hornets 2004 player of the year an award he richly deserved as he was a model professional and a well respected Captain taking over that role from Paul Anderson. No one at the Club made more appearances than Andy in 2004 he made 27 full appearances scoring 11 tries with his wide running becoming a feature of his play.

PHIL FARRELL (Loose Forward) : Joined the Club from local rivals Oldham in October 2004 after a string of impressive performances against Hornets prompted Bobbie Goulding to make a move for him. He is the Brother of Great Britain and Wigan Captain Andrew Farrell.

LEE DORAN (Second Row) : Joined Hornets at the same team as Phil Farrell in an excellent double swoop by Bobbie Goulding on local rivals Oldham. He is a current full international with Ireland and played in the recent European Nations Championship.

GARETH PRICE (Prop) : As usual his performances were excellent in 2004 with his block busting style of running again making him a firm fans favorite just had they had done in his previous two seasons. He made 16 full appearances in 2004 scoring 6 vital tries usually scattering the opposition in all directions along the way.

LEE HANSEN (Prop) : Lee Hansen was the Veteran of Hornets 2004 squad but what a vital contribution he would go onto make. He was a model of professionalism and his solid uncompromising play made him a fans favorite. In total he made 10 full appearances with a further 12 as a substitute.

TOMMY HODGKINSON (Prop) : Another master stroke pulled by Bobbie Goulding when he enticed Tommy back into the Pro game from Amateur Club Thatto Heath. He was consistently Hornets top yardage maker in many games and his defensive qualities were always evident. Made a total of 11 full appearances with a further 11 as substitute in 2004.

ANDREW LEATHEM (Prop) : A past Challenge cup final winner with St Helens Andy hopes to be fully fit for the start of the 2005 season after having an intensive pre season program. He made a total of 12 full appearances with a further 4 as a substitute.

DAVID NEWTON (Forward) : Joined Hornets in March from Neighbors Oldham, on the recommendation of former Hornets favorite Neil Flanagan, and quickly became a regular member of the first team squad. Made a total of 7 full appearances and 11 as substitute scoring 2 tries in the process.

DARREN ROBINSON (HOOKER) : Darren re joined the club in April for his second spell and quickly reminded the fans of just what he is capable of. It did not take him long to start scoring his hall mark tries from the dummy half position finishing the season with a total of 9 tries. He made a total of 13 full appearances in the 2004 season with a further 2 as a substitute.

RICHARD VARKULIS (CENTRE) : Bobbie Goulding will probably regard this as his biggest signing since talking the coaching reigns in 2003. Richard signed for the club in November 2004 from Super League outfit Warrington Wolves. Whilst at Hornets last season Richard made 9 full appearances and scored 5 tries in two separate loan spells.

Phil Cantillon (Hooker) : Another signing that has given Hornets squad for 2005 a massive boost. Phil brings his vast Super League experience to the Club having made nearly 50 appearances for both Leeds and Widnes. Goulding is extremely confident that Cantillon's electrifying runs from dummy half will quickly make him a firm fans favorite.

DAVID Mc CONNELL (Hooker / Back Row) : One of the unsung hero's of Leigh's 2004 Grand Final winning team and another player who joins Hornets 2005 squad who is of the highest quality. Dave made a big contribution to Leigh's success in 2004 making 12 full appearances with a further 15 as substitute scoring 4 tries.

Player Profile by Roger Halstead

JOHN HOUGH

TAKE a bow, John Hough! New club coach Gary Mercer has appointed him club captain for 2005 and no one can be more deserving of such recognition.

Its more than seven years, 200 first team games and enough ups and downs to keep a fairground ride going for a full summer, since Houghie became the new Roughyeds' club's first signing in December, 1997.

Little did he know then, at the age of 21, that he would spend most of his rugby league career with his hometown club and stick with the Roughyeds until it was time to hang up his boots.

That was his intention when he signed a new three-year contract last autumn and nothing has happened to change his plans to call it a day at the end of the 2007 season with a well-deserved ten-year testimonial.

In the days of old, when players signed on and virtually signed away their sporting lives, ten-year benefits were two a penny.

In most cases players had little choice but to see out their ten years, after which clubs would try to recoup a transfer fee for them before it was too late and their careers moved into the twilight zone.

The retain-and-transfer system was heavily loaded in favour of clubs.

All that turned full circle with the arrival of Super League, full-time professionalism, players' agents, social changes, the influence of European courts and the Bosman regulations.

In the modern game players don't "sign for life" - they usually sign, especially in the National Leagues, for no more than one season. And in the past two or three years there has been a tendency throughout the sport for players to lead a nomadic existence, hopping from club to club

Cont over...



JOHN HOUGH

“He was merely a boy when Warrington scouts spotted him playing for Waterhead some five years earlier”



Cont...

(usually to the highest bidder) as the years go by.

Players now have choice . . . and Houghie has definitely bucked the trend by choosing to play out his career with the club that resurrected it at the end of 1997.

He was merely a boy when Warrington scouts spotted him playing for Waterhead some five years earlier. The Wires, as they were then known, were extremely active in the Oldham area at that time.

Like Iestyn Harris, Ian Knott and Paul Sculthorpe -- and no doubt others whose names escape me right now -- Houghie left the junior game in Oldham to sign on the dotted line to play at Wilderspool.

He was young, lightning fast and deadly dangerous from dummy half whenever the smallest chink appeared in opponents' marker defence.

More than once he came back to Oldham with the Wires to haunt his hometown club up at Watersheddings. I recall one memorable night match under the 'Sheddings lights -- a cup tie, I think -- when the boy Hough ran Oldham ragged from dummy half and scored at least one try, if not two, at the Hutchins end.

Fate often plays a hand in sport, as it does in life generally, and the arrival of Super League, full time professionalism, and John's decision to pursue a career outside rugby coincided with the demise of Oldham Bears and the arrival of a new part-time club, Oldham Roughyeds.

So it came to pass that Houghie created a little niche for himself in local rugby folklore as the first player to sign for the Roughyeds. He was No 1 then and in terms of length of service, loyalty to the club and most number of games played, he is still No 1

seven and a quarter years later.

He has given, and is still giving, yeoman service to the Roughyeds and at the age of 28 he is a superb professional

and role model for any youngster to emulate.

His 200th appearance for the club was recorded in the recent Powergen Challenge Cup third-round win against Sharlston Rovers at Post Office Road - it's a record of service that is unlikely to be repeated in these days of one-year deals.

"It's amazing how quickly the time has flown by," said Houghie.

"I can still remember the first game on New Year's Day, 1998 at Rochdale. What a game that was! Then we had the 2001 grand final against Widnes. Everything has gone so quickly, but just because I'm 28 with 200 games clocked up I don't want people thinking I'm finished . . . I'm targeting 250 games now."

Houghie said he was honoured and privileged to be asked by Gary Mercer to be club captain. The leadership of the playing staff could not have gone to a more worthy recipient, given that Houghie will turn his hand to any task asked of him.

It was typical of him that, when the club needed a coach at short notice to look after the academy side following Mick Worrall's departure last year, Houghie volunteered to step into the breach.

One day, when the time has come for him to pull his head out of the scrum for the last time, he thinks he might like to go into coaching.

If he does he'll do well . . . you can wager a Roughyeds jersey to an old scrum cap on it.

ROGER HALSTEAD.



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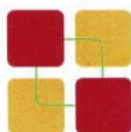
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On this day

Don Yates looks back to March 25th yesteryear



Rochdale Hornets supporters visiting Boundary Park this afternoon will not be happy to be reminded that their team has not won a major trophy since 1922. Hornets won the Challenge Cup that season and en route to that success they met Oldham at the quarter-final stage of the competition.

That tie was staged at the old Athletic Grounds on Saturday 25th March 1922 and aroused great interest in the town. As a result a crowd of 26,664 attended that match. Hornets won 5-2 with the only try of the afternoon being scored by winger Joe Corsi who later appeared in three Challenge Cup Finals for the Roughyeds. A feature of the tie was a tremendous long-range penalty landed by the Rochdale scrum-half Ernie Jones. The kick was taken from five yards inside his own half, a truly magnificent effort. Oldham's goal was landed by full-back Ernie Knapman. Hornets then went on to lift the trophy, beating Hull 10-9 in the final.

It is 78 years since Oldham last won the Challenge Cup. Since then the Roughyeds have appeared in nine semi-finals, all of which have ended in disappointing defeat. Oldham's last semi-final appearance was on Saturday 25th March 1995 when they met Wigan at the McAlpine Stadium, Huddersfield. Wigan were the top team in the country at that time and were expected to win comfortably. Midway through the first half the Roughyeds trailed by only 6-4 but three tries in eight disastrous minutes ended Oldham's challenge and Wigan went on to win by 48 points to twenty. The four Oldham tries were scored by winger Adie Belle (2), prop Ian Sherratt and substitute David Bradbury. Stand-off Wilson Marsh landed two second half conversions. At hooker for Wigan that afternoon was the former Oldham and Rochdale Hornets player Martin Hall who also enjoyed a successful spell as coach to the Hornets.

Next Monday the National League One campaign begins with Oldham facing a difficult trip to Featherstone. The Roughyeds were at Post Office Road exactly four years ago, on Sunday 25th March 2001. They made a poor start to the match, conceding a try in the first minute, and the match, as a contest, was over before they eventually scored a try, a late consolation effort from substitute Gavin Dodd. Centre Pat Rich landed two goals in the 22-8 defeat.

The 1972-73 campaign was a successful one as far as Hornets were concerned. Their most satisfying victory of that season, apart, that is, from beating Oldham both home and away, came on Sunday 25th March 1973 when Wigan visited the Athletic Grounds. Hornets won that match 22-8 with tries from scrum-half Peter Gartland, uncle of the current assistant coach Shaun, centre Stuart Whitehead and wingers Norman Brelsford and John Kucuve. Prop Bill Holliday landed five goals.

Saturday 25th March 2000 was a significant date in the careers of former Oldham players Geoff Munro and Ray Ashton. On that day 39-years old Ashton and 46-years old Munro made their debuts for Watersheddings Wanderers in a Pennine League, fourth division match at home to Lindley Swifts 'A'. The afternoon began well for the two veterans as the Wanderers went 8-0 in front. Unfortunately the visitors spoiled the special day of the two former Watersheddings favourites by recovering to win 28-20.

ROUGHYED KIDS + CO

Our mascots for this week are six year old Kelsey Francies and Ryan Francies who is thirteen; neither has been a mascot before so we wish them well and hope that they have a great day. Hopefully they will bring us double the luck today. Kelsey attends Hawthorn First School whilst her brother is a pupil at Hurst High School. Their favourite players are Danny Nanyin and Tere Glassie.

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*



TODAYS MASCOTS

**Kelsey
Francies**

Age: 6

Favourite Player:
Danny Nanyin

**Ryan
Francies**

Age: 13

Favourite Player:
Tere Glassie

OLDHAM RUGBY SUPPORT GROUP

These are difficult times for OUR club and whilst we must not lose sight of the reality of the situation we have got to remain POSITIVE. We need to work together and give all the support necessary to help overcome the crisis.

On the playing front, we have not started the season in line with expectations, but we need to remember that we have many new faces and it was always going to take time for such a new squad to gel in all aspects of their game. However, there is plenty of talent there, and surely it will not be long before we see more consistent performances.

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

First of all we would like to wish you all a Happy Easter. We hope that those of you who came to the Easter party last Friday had a good time. We also hope you all enjoy the rest of your Easter holidays.

OLDHAM RUGBY LEAGUE SOCIAL CLUB

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Last Weeks Photos

All photos by Phil Burdge / Digisport. For copies of these and other Roughyed pictures see www.digisport.net or email orders@digisport.net or telephone 07974 174422



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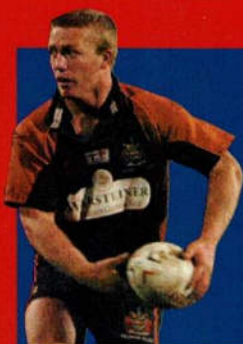
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For this season the format for this page will be to take a look at players who have represented both Oldham and the opposition of the day.

from the pen of MICHAEL TURNER

There has probably been more traffic of players between Oldham and near neighbours Rochdale than any other club in the Roughyeds history.

Here are four from differing decades:-

Norman Harris from the 1940s

Trevor Simms from the 1960s

Aidie Belle from the 1990s

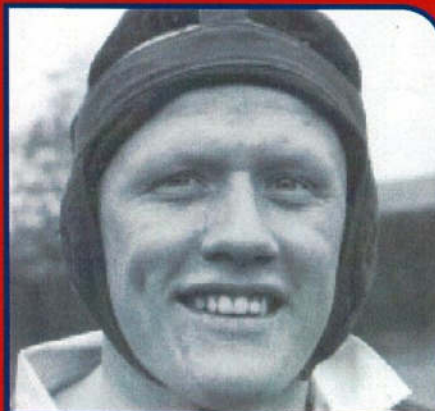
And bringing things right up to date John Braddish from the 2000s.



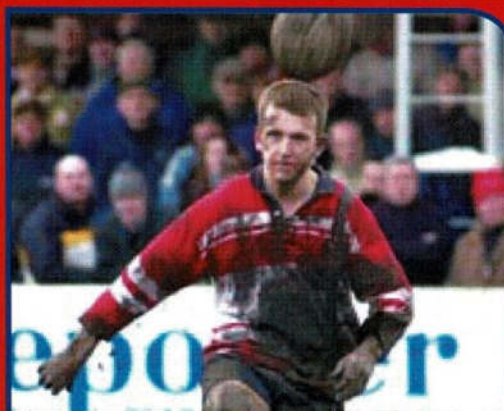
Aidie Belle



Norman Harris



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How many players can you name who played in the Roughyeds' first team between the years of 1960 and 2004 and AFTERWARDS played for Hornets in their first team?

Answers to Nigel Marland c/o Oldham RLFC, 14, Waterloo St, Oldham OL1 1SQ or e-mail nigel.marland@ntlworld.com.

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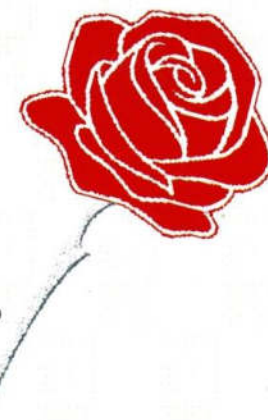
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Rugby Talk

Danny Lockwood
Publisher, *League Weekly*

I HAVEN'T yet seen last weekend's attack by Manly Sea Eagles winger John Hopoate which earned him a 17 week ban. Apparently it was a real 'beaut' to borrow an antipodean expression, and well worth every day of enforced breather he's going to take. There must be a logic behind why the judiciary came to the conclusion that 17 weeks was appropriate. Why not 16, or 18, or, if we're really talking about deterrents, why not a flat 12 months? Heck, why not push the boat out (as opposed to the cheekbone in) and double it?

You get numbnuts who pop a few pills so they look pumped when they do some drunken y-fronts karaoke in front of a mirror at 2am (because you can't tell me it makes them any better at rugby league). If that's worth two years, surely running 30 yards to elbow someone viciously in the face has to be in the same ball park – if not prison cell.

There does appear to be a certain consistency between northern and southern judiciaries, judging by the ban Doncaster winger Craig Miles received for a similar incident with Dean Lawford last year. It's good that we're singing off the same songsheet. But quite what songsheet, script, Enid Blyton story - or Brothers Grimm fairytale – the video panel were looking at in adjudicating over the recent Martin Aspinwall 'trip', the good Lord and JRR Tolkien only knows.

There are times when our all-powerful committees, operating as they do behind closed doors (or from beneath concrete bunkers for all I know) really don't do either themselves or the game much of a service. What wasn't "conclusive"? Maybe the video was cream-crackered. Was the tv aerial plugged in? Accepted, Super League particularly has got to the point where a player really has to do a 'Hopoate' to get an early bath. The 'on report' cop-out really is just that, because as we all know, an entire game is 'on report' these days. Any incident at all can be referred, pretty much by anyone with a telephone and the number for Red Hall.

Wigan, of all clubs, can do with all the able-bodied men they can muster at the moment. Entire regiments returned from the Normandy landings with lower casualty figures than Denis Betts' beleaguered battalion. But to say that the video evidence regarding Aspinwall's flying hack on Jon Wells was "inconclusive" really is to invite widespread merriment, if not derision. Conspiracy theorists (and we do have one or two) who propagate the idea that there's "one rule for the haves, one for the have-nots" gained some real credibility there.

For the defence, Aspinwall could have got off on a technicality. Could you really call it a trip, when there was a very fair argument that he was actually attempting a Bruce Lee throat chop? Or that perhaps Aspinwall spotted a famous Parisian theatre producer in the opposite stand and was trying to show him his best Moulin Rouge high-kick? I've got it ... it was actually a derivation of that famous old tackling style, the 'Cumberland throw'. In this form, the 'Cumberland' element of using leg as pivot for arms and body was simply removed. Let's call it a 'Greater Manchester throw' shall we? Or, as we prefer in traditional rugby league parts of West Yorkshire – a trip.

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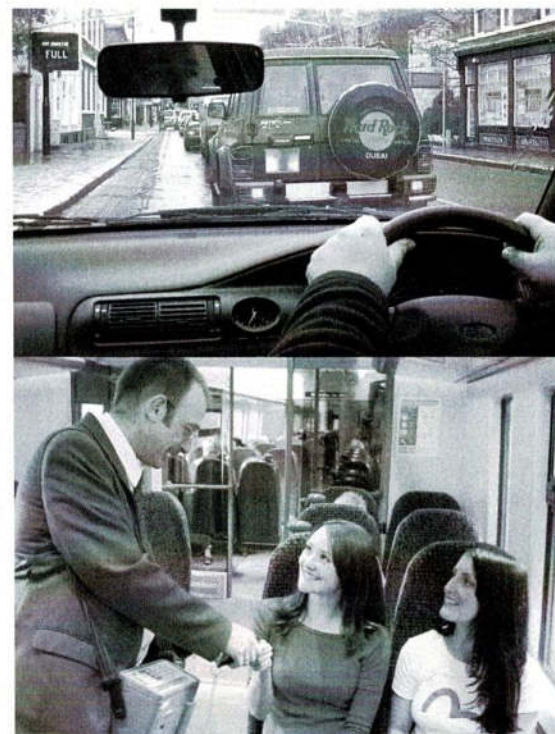
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We'll be taking the Powergen Skills Zone all over the country so everyone can have the chance to get rugby crazy!

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Positive Energy

NATIONAL LEAGUE TALK

with GARETH WALKER of RUGBY LEAGUER & LEAGUE EXPRESS



TESTING TIME FOR PLAYERS

THE culmination of the Northern Rail Cup and the launch of the league campaign - the Easter weekend should provide a feast of exciting action.

But it's not quite as straight forward as that.

Two games in four days over the holiday period present a huge challenge for coaches and players at this level, especially when the matches hold such importance.

For several clubs, their final NRC game on Good Friday can hold the key to whether or not they qualify for the knock-out stages of the competition.

And every single team in the National Leagues will be keen to get off to a positive start when the LHF-sponsored leagues get underway just four days later.

So where will clubs' priorities lie? This isn't Super League, where a squad of 25 full-time players can be rotated to an extent.

And with a host of clubs suffering serious injury problems at present, resources will be dramatically stretched over the weekend.

For example, Barrow Raiders were down to just 14 fit players last week after a horror start to the season. York City Knights went into last week's clash with Castleford with 12 players on the treatment table, while Featherstone

Rovers have lost several of their best players to long-term injuries.

One coach saw the situation arising early in the season, knowing his side had a huge derby match on Good Friday, closely followed by a crucial league opener on Easter Monday.

He voiced his concerns at the time, but was given a slap on the wrists by authorities.

The fact is, that coaches will have to prioritise, and may decide to rest players on Good Friday.

As is always the case at this level of the game, however, it is not a straight-forward argument against playing back-to-back matches.

Clubs in the National Leagues need the significant income generated over the Easter period - there are some massive matches set to take place on Good Friday. The revenue earned in some of those games will set clubs up for months.

And the players will no doubt rise to the occasion, as they always do.

It will be tough going for them and their coaches - but don't expect too many to be moaning about it.

The best match reports from all today's Powergen Challenge Cup Third Round in Monday's Rugby Leaguer & League Express

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(BOTH TO BE FOUND ON THE TOMMYFIELD MARKET)

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
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	30-37	L	1,116
13/03/05	Sharston Rovers	Powergen CC	Away	19.30	14-46	W	852
16/03/05	Rochdale Hornets	NT Cup	Away	19.30	68-26	L	1,161
20/03/05	Blackpool Panthers	NT Cup	Away	15.00	16-35	W	250
25/03/05	Rochdale Hornets	NT Cup	Home	15.30			
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.



It's all about Oldham

SAVE OLDHAM ROUGHYEDS!



Oldham Rugby League Football Club needs **YOUR** help to survive.

The club is an integral part of Oldham's past, present and future and we as a community cannot afford to let our professional rugby club disappear. ORLFC has a massive part to play in the continued regeneration of our borough-more children are playing Rugby League in our schools and at amateur clubs than ever before. Our town has always been steeped in Rugby League Heritage and has always been a breeding ground for some of the best talents in RL.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

There are a number of ways you can help support our club. Join the Roughyeds lottery, join the prediction league, visit the Roughyeds shop and buy our merchandise, have a drink in the Roughyeds Social Club, get your business involved in sponsorship.

Most importantly, attend our games and spread the word!

Every little helps!

**PLEASE DO NOT ALLOW ORLFC BECOME CONSIGNED TO
OLDHAM'S HISTORY.**

**PLEASE DO ALL YOU CAN TO SAVE OUR CLUB SO THAT OUR
FUTURE GENERATIONS CAN CARRY ON SUPPORTING THE
ROUGHYEDS AND BE PROUD OF OUR TOWN-OLDHAM.**

Contact Ash or Sam at the office on 0161 628 3677