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Summer 2005

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WELCOME FROM POWERGEN

Powergen welcomes you to the Atlantic Solutions Stadium for today's 4th Round Powergen Challenge Cup tie between Wakefield Wildcats and Hull. Round 4 sees the introduction of the Super League clubs, and with it some of the brightest stars in rugby league. As we continue on the road to Cardiff, the arrival of the Super League heavyweights is certain to provide explosive and exciting entertainment for all.

The National League teams playing this weekend will be looking to take the challenge to their Super League opponents, and no doubt fans and media alike will be monitoring whether amateur club Wath Brow Hornets can put in a giant killing performance against French side Toulouse.

Powergen is thrilled to continue supporting Rugby League across all levels of the game again this year, from professional level right down to grassroots. With community initiatives such as the Powergen Champion Schools Tournament involving over 25,000 active participants this year, we are proud to be playing a role in developing the sport's stars of the future. We look forward to building on the relationships strengthened in 2004 and hope that as many fans and players as possible benefit from Powergen's sponsorships throughout 2005.

I would like to express my thanks to those involved with organising the Powergen Challenge Cup matches that have taken place so far this season. Thanks are also extended to you, the fans, for your loyalty and passion to the sport and finally the media, for their continuing support.

With the climax of the Powergen Challenge Cup taking place at Cardiff's magnificent Millennium Stadium on Saturday 27 August, the Clubs in Round 4 have everything to play for in their quest to claim a Final spot.

Powergen wishes both teams the best of luck and I hope that everyone here today enjoys what promises to be an exciting game of rugby league.

Charlotte Meekham

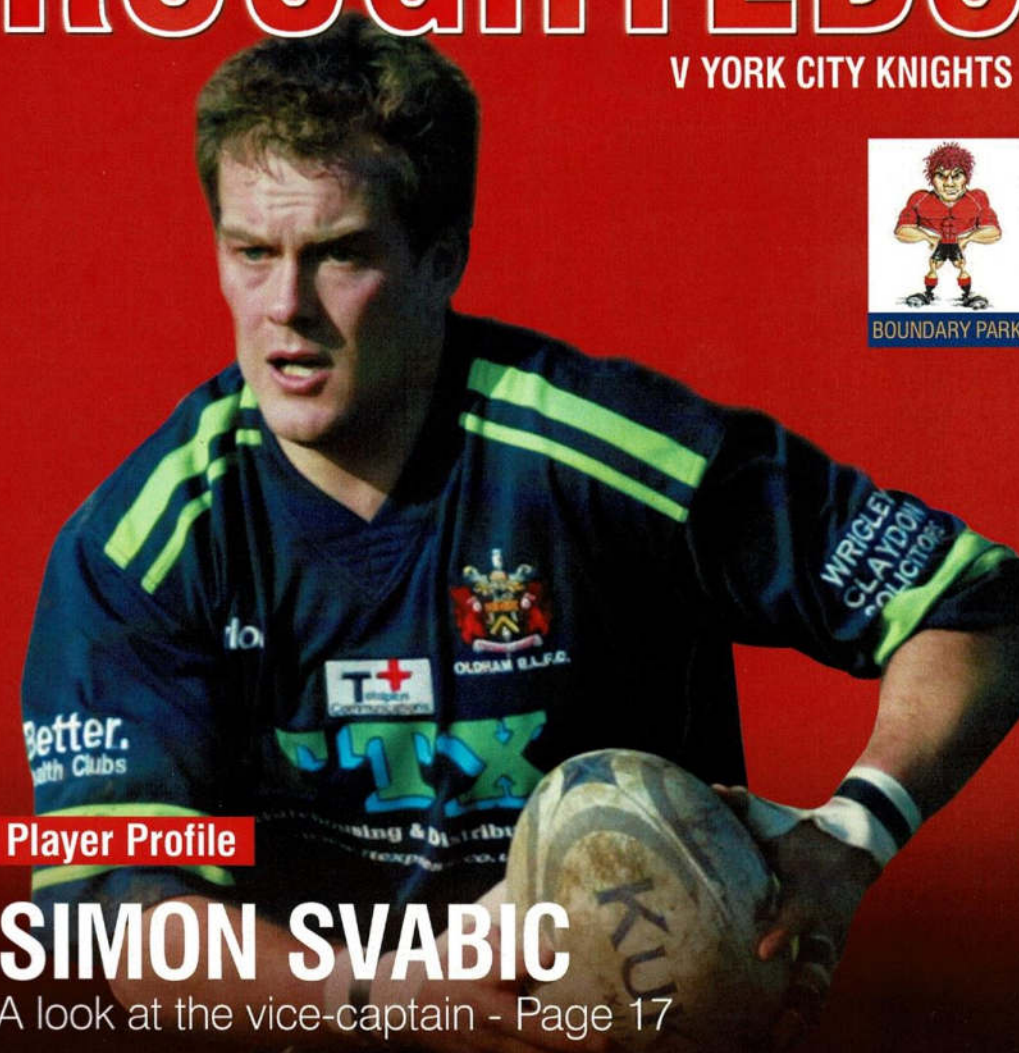
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Player Profile

SIMON SVABIC

A look at the vice-captain - Page 17

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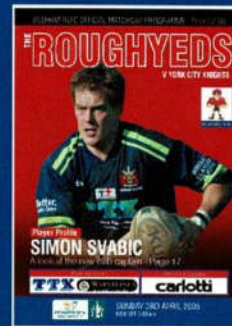
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ASSISTANT COACH Keith Brennan

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Frank Stirrup 1950-62

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John Etty 1954-56

Derek Turner 1955-59

Bob Irving 1964-74

Martin Murphy 1966-82

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,
Phil Burdge and all concerned for the use of
photographs.

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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. Jude's, 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 (amtl), 64-0 - Jan 28th 2001

RLCC 3rd Rnd at Boundary Park

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The Chairman's Thoughts

with CHRIS HAMILTON

The last week or so has certainly been a roller coaster ride in many respects for the club.

Whilst we are still trying to reach an agreement with the Crown departments regarding our outstanding debts to them things on the field could not have got much worse than they did against our locals rivals on Good Friday. If ever a day was inappropriately named it was that one!

However, sport being sport, and against all odds we produced an absolutely magnificent performance against Featherstone and were very unlucky to only take a point in our first league game of the season on Monday.

The preparation for that game could not have been worse and it got to the stage where I was seriously considering not answering the phone to Gary Mercer such was the stream of bad news that was forthcoming.

It all started with the unlucky Paul Norman breaking his wrist in the Rochdale game and then Danny Naryn pulling out with flu. Closely followed on from that was Mark Roberts being unwell. By the time Robbo rang Gary it was a case of "I don't care what's up you will have to travel" and I am sure Mark was left in no doubt!

Even so that left us with just 16 players and as it turned out Robbo was unable to play any part in the game meaning we had just two substitutes - James Kirkland and Andy Gorey!

It just goes to show what can be done in adversity and the performance that the team put in last Monday night was a credit to all concerned and

the only disappointment was that not more of you were able to see it.

Today, however we return to Powergen Challenge Cup action and an opportunity to progress into the fifth round and dream of a big money spinning tie - oh how that would be welcome!

York City Knights will hold the same dream and we must be on our guard. This will be our first game against the "new" York club and they have worked hard since being re-formed and are sure to bring a large and vocal following with them.

Whilst our off the field fight continues we will again be holding a bucket collection today and if you can spare any cash it will all help in the battle to keep Oldham RLFC alive. We will be asking for lots of help in a very short space of time and your support is vital to help keep us going. If at all possible please do whatever you can to help.

As always your support in the last two games has been fantastic please keep it loud today and help cheer the team on to a much needed win.

Enjoy the game

Christopher Hamilton

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From The Touchline

with Gary Mercer

Q&A

WITH GARY MERCER

17 asked:

How do you explain the complete change of attitude of the team from Friday to Monday and do you think it can continue?

Gary replied:

As I've said before it's all about confidence. We spoke as a team and I laid things on the line as I have mentioned in my column, but I also changed a few things in the build up to the game. As I have said before I have a responsibility in this as well. I believe those changes were helpful and as many of us know, adversity can actually help by encouraging us all to dig deep and be determined to come through despite everything that appears to be being thrown at you.

Yes it can continue, there is already more belief in the side. It's taken a long time to get it out of them but I believe it's now there. That is certainly not the end of things; in fact it's just the beginning. We still have a lot of work to do, especially on the defensive side. I can see a light at the end of the tunnel but there are much sterner tests ahead and there may still be the odd blip on the way but I am more confident now that we can succeed.

Old Man asked:

With the possibility of players coming back how can you possibly drop any of Monday's side?

Gary replied:

You always choose the best team for the occasion from the players available. At times that may mean that experience is more important than form and vice versa. That is always my decision and mine alone that's why I'm paid as the coach. But it's not just as simple as that, it's also about how I talk to my players and explain my decisions. They need to understand why they are playing or not playing and also to realise that non-involvement does not necessarily mean they have disappointed. All good players will be disappointed if they are not playing at the highest level but I would like to think that none of the Oldham players would feel they have been unfairly treated.

After the debacle against Rochdale there had to be a great improvement against Featherstone. After the Rochdale game I told the players I didn't want to see them until Monday afternoon and for them to contemplate on what they had or to be more accurate hadn't produced. I was very upset. We met together on Monday at 1.30pm as a group and decided that the League was a new campaign and demanded a new start. We had to put the past behind us. I told them I wanted them to look in the mirror and ask themselves the question what are you doing at Oldham? Do you want to play for the club with pride? If not just tell me and I'll release you as we don't want anybody playing for this club who isn't going to give their all for it.

By the time I was delivering these words, however, the injury situation had worsened. We had expected to be without Simon Svabic and Craig Farrimond but when Danny Nanyan rang in sick and we discovered Paul Norman had broken his wrist in the first tackle at Rochdale I realised we really were in trouble. This was compounded when Mark Roberts phoned to say he had a stomach bug and couldn't play. I'm afraid I had to tell him he had to come however he felt. I knew he could only sit on the bench but the psychological advantage we would have given to Featherstone by having only two on the bench had to be averted. As it was we were going to be forced to go into the game with just 16 players. Included in this 16 would be our two inexperienced youngsters Andy Gorey and James Kirkland and a sick Mark Roberts.

I have to say I was glad when they scored first. In recent games we have started well and then gone off and so I welcomed a change of scenario. We conceded two tries and then went on to score three of our own and put on 18 unopposed points in the first half. This was our best defensive display of the season and our kicking chase game was terrific. In the end we should have won the game and made some wrong decisions in the last ten minutes but overall I was proud of the lads.

The club should be all about youngsters and when we get through this difficult period at the club I will be looking to rebuild with youngsters and I am sure this will pay off as it certainly has with Andy and Jimmy who have taken their chances magnificently in the last few games.

Today's game is very important. York are a good side and this is a different Cup competition where anything can happen. It will be a hard game but a vital one to win as it could throw up a money-raising tie in the next round against one of the top sides in Super League and the Club could certainly do with such a financial injection.

So please get behind us today and hopefully we will improve again.

Gary

I would like to offer a big welcome to Mick Cook, the Directors, supporters and players of York City Knights.



James Kirkland

Rochdale Hornets

25/03/05

Played **40 mins**
Tackles **18**
Misses **0**
Hit Ups **3**
Metres gained **6**
Av metres gain **2.1m**



Simon Houghton

Featherstone

28/03/05

Played **80 mins**
Tackles **26**
Misses **2**
Hit Ups **8**
Metres made **30**
Av. metres gain **3.7**



Matty Turner

Featherstone

28/03/05

Played **80 mins**
Tackles **22**
Misses **2**
Hit Ups **5**
Metres made **27**
Av metres gain **5.4**
12 kicks / 8 positive.

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As Ian Sees It!

With no outcome known to our very sad financial plight as I write, and with matters on the field as low as they have been for many years, I don't see any benefit in another inquest-type piece at this stage. So perhaps I can be excused if I concentrate on this season's Challenge Cup instead!



I have previously expressed the view that the new timing of the cup competition represents one of the RFL's better decisions, and I certainly stick to that. All clubs are now well into their stride, and with 21 weeks to go to the final in Cardiff, the four rounds before then are fairly evenly spread through the coming months. This should ensure a quality build-up to what I am sure will be, still, a big day at the Millennium Stadium, even if it will be uniquely located at the end of August.

With only really one shock result in the last round - Wath Brow's win over Dewsbury - the final 32 is made up of all 22 Super League and NL1 clubs, 6 from NL2, 3 from France plus the sole amateur representative. The draw came out quite well-balanced, I thought. Three Super League sides will definitely be eliminated, but although one seems very likely to be Warrington, I certainly wouldn't rule out Wakefield and Huddersfield, both at home, running Hull and Saints respectively very close, if not actually going through. All the other 6 remaining Super League sides should win, I suppose, though Bobbie Goulding in particular would no doubt expect his side to give Salford a good run for their money.

So that is 9 premier sides likely to be through to Round 5, but what about the other 7? There certainly seems every chance of all 3 French sides making it, drawn at home as they are. Wouldn't it be good to see UTC (Perpignan next year) beating Hull KR and then getting another home draw, against a lesser Super League

side, in the next round? As for the other 4 games, how about Doncaster, Cas, Barrow and Oldham(!) to go through?

What of the longer term? Since 1994, incredibly, only twice have clubs from outside the 'big four' made it to the final - Sheffield's amazing victory in '98, and London's loss to Leeds the year after. It would be marvellous if at least one side outside the Bradford, Leeds, St.Helens, Wigan virtual monopoly made it to Cardiff this year - and even better if there were two! Isn't it incredible now, looking back, to see Barrow v Workington as the final 50 years ago, or Hunslet as finalists in 1965, or indeed Featherstone four times at Wembley between 1967 and 1983, three times as winners.

Is there any chance, realistically, this year? I would say a definite yes. It depends to some extent on the draw, obviously. But how about a little bet on at least one of Huddersfield, Hull, London and Salford being at Cardiff at the end of August this year? What a filip for the game that would be!

Ian Wilson

PS I have just returned from Featherstone. What a fantastic effort! A degree of optimism at last!

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In Yer Face!

with GEOFF COOKE

If the reports emanating from Leigh are correct some people need to get a life. Retiring Commercial Director Derek Beaumont claims his brother was beaten up in the toilets at the JJB Stadium.

Meanwhile, Director of Rugby Steve Blakeley also stood down after he had to remove his children from the Director's Box because of obscene language aimed at him and the rest of the Leigh Board. There has long been evidence of an unsavoury element at Leigh but it has usually been visiting fans and Directors on the receiving end. Now that Leigh are struggling in Super League their own Directors are the target.

No-one likes to turn away good money but low-lives who can carry out such verbal and physical attacks need to be weeded out and banned for life. Anyone outside Leigh could see that the club were up against it because after winning the N.L.1 Grand Final they simply did not have the time to recruit and prepare properly for their move up. May I respectfully suggest that the N.L.1 and Super League seasons should not run concurrently? Out of contract players are already snapped up before the N.L.1 Grand Final winners are known so the promoted side is feeding off scraps. If UTC Perpignan need two years to prepare, a couple of extra months for England's N.L.1 Champions is hardly too much to ask.

"I am certainly not going to focus on the official but

some of the penalties he gave in the first half had me baffled, to say the least."....." A couple of penalties he came up with had me scratching my head and I am going to have to ask what they were for.

"It is how Nazi Germany started." (BRIAN NOBLE)

So, this is not focussing on the referee, eh? Isn't Mr. Noble going just a wee bit over the top? I would really appreciate it if Coaches could show a sense of proportion. Just what sort of impression does Brian Noble think his inappropriate Nazi Germany reference creates?

I went to the Shay on Easter Monday and saw an absolute thriller in which Hull K.R. beat Halifax 11-10. Both teams tackled like demons and ran themselves to a standstill. On this evidence both sides will be incredibly difficult to beat and the low number of tries in no way detracted from the spectacle. Anyone who thinks Castleford will walk away with the LHF Healthplan National League One needs to think again. With these two and Rochdale showing genuine class the league will be more open and competitive than many think. And the lesson for Oldham is that unless they start to defend as though their very lives depend upon it they're not going to feature in the play-offs.

I'm not entirely enamoured of contract arrangements with Australian players as revealed by the -apparently- spurious contract St. Helens are said to have offered Sonny Bill Williams. The publication of said contract seemed to indicate that paying money into offshore accounts was a "normal" practice. The money can then be wired to Australian bank accounts in Singapore while players are en route back to Australia. Being in international air space means they are exempt from either U.K. or Australian tax. I'm sure the Inland Revenue will want to close this loophole and so they should. If I'm paying tax I don't see why well paid Australians can't as well.



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In The News

Well the League programme is finally underway and wasn't Gareth Walker's article in our Rochdale programme prophetic? For those of you who didn't read it he made the point that coaches would be severely stretched over the Easter period in putting out teams with all the injuries.



That was certainly the case for Gary Mercer who only had 15 fit players and was forced to field only three substitutes, one of whom was too ill to take part. It really is difficult to see a way forward as many clubs rely on these Easter fixtures for much needed revenue.

A lot of people wanted to know why we had to wear the Featherstone away kit on Easter Monday. We, as always check with the RFL as to colour clashes if we are unsure of a club's new kit. We were informed we would be fine wearing our new Blue and Green away kit. However on arriving at Post Office Road, referee Colin Morris said the colours were too similar. Now why Featherstone didn't wear their away kit, which was mainly white, thus allowing us to wear our own, I have no idea. As the sponsors are the same on Featherstone's home and away kits surely this wouldn't have been a problem. It did however cause the laugh of the night for as we ran out first we were announced as Featherstone Rovers and got the applause of the home fans.

As I write there is still no more news on the financial front and we urge all supporters to support everything the club is doing to raise money, from attending games to partaking in the lottery and Golden Gamble and visiting the Social Club whenever possible. There's always somebody in who will talk rugby with you. The winner of the Northern Rail Predictions League was Craig Halstead, Roger's son. Well done Craig, how is it you haven't joined the main one - frightened of the competition now the real pressure's on? Seriously, if you still haven't joined it's not too late. For the first few weeks we will allow late entries and give these people the average points score for each week they missed so they still have a real chance of winning. E.g. last week the average score was 11. To enter contact Ashley on 6283677 or enter by e-mail on the web site www.roughyeds.co.uk.

We have 26 entries so far and as I promised I shall use this column to praise and shame. Already it is proving that real knowledge of the game and it's history mean nothing as Roger Halstead is next to the bottom with 6 points only kept out of the relegation spot by our Commercial Manager Sam Hague who is on 4 points. Historian and Heritage man Brian Walker isn't doing much better lying in 21st place with 8 points. Kit man Paul Hulbert is also in the lower half of the league on 10. Doing a little better is Chairman, Christopher Hamilton in joint 4th place on 15 points with timekeeper David Lord. But at this early stage, proving that skill has nothing to do with it, the out and out leader is, none other than, your programme editor with 28 points. Yes that's me! I have to admit I only got points for our opening game because I was afraid to predict an Oldham loss in case Chris looked at the entries.

As we stand the top 3 are:-

1 Nigel Marland 28;

2 J Davies 17;

3 B Larrad 16

and the bottom 3:-

24 A M Kivlin 6;

25 Roger Halstead 6

26 Sam Hague 4.

But it's very early days yet so keep buying a programme and check how things are going and don't forget IT'S STILL NOT TOO LATE TO JOIN.

Nigel

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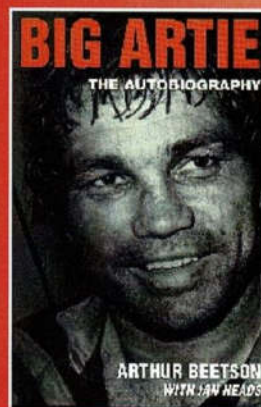
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Book reviews

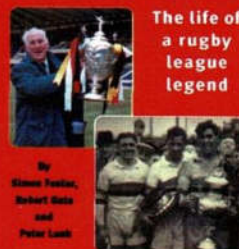


Big Artie. Arthur Beetson was the first Aborigine to captain Australia at any major sport. The Queenslander, the greatest Australian rugby player of his era, was an inspiration behind the State of Origin competition. This is the autobiography of a man sent off 12 times in big matches, who regularly clashed with coaches and officials, was linked to the mysterious death of a former team-mate, and who suffered both personal and business setbacks. The book is a vivid memoir of a time when rugby league was arguably at its most brutal and you had to be tough to survive. No player was tougher than Big Artie.

Written with the help of Australian rugby league author Ian Heads this 360 page paperback is available from Ottakars in the Spindles Centre, Oldham, Sportspages, St Anne's' Sq., Manchester, or direct from London League Publications, PO Box 10441, London E14 8WR. The price is £14.99 (postage free) and cheques should be made out to London League Publications Ltd.

ISBN 0-7333-1299-3.

TREVOR FOSTER

The life of
a rugby
league
legendBy
Simon Foster,
Robert Gate
and
Peter Lush

Foreword by Brian Noble

Trevor Foster. The life of rugby legend Trevor Foster, Newport rugby union, Bradford Northern, Wales, Great Britain, tourist, coach, club director and still going strong at 90 as the Bulls official time-keeper! Rugby author Robert Gate says of Foster "Here is a man who has been honoured by the Pope, the Queen, the Rugby Football League, the Welsh Sports Hall of Fame and the University of Bradford. He has acted the part of Jesus Christ, captained Wales and scored decisive tries in two Challenge Cup finals. He is revered and loved in sporting spheres, in charitable spheres, in educational spheres, in the sphere of community affairs, his achievements and memories of him will live on long after he has left the scene. If there was any real justice the Queen would confer a knighthood or earldom on him, never mind an MBE."

Written and compiled jointly by Simon Foster, Robert Gate and Peter Lush, and released just this week, the book tracks Foster's illustrious career from his boyhood days in the Welsh port of Newport, through to the north of England, where he still lives. Along the way it talks about his lifelong friendship with fellow Newport schoolboy and later former Oldham star Alex Givvons, an association that lasted over 70 years, and the trials and tribulations of the 1946 tour and the back-row partnership he formed with Oldham's Welsh player Doug Phillips.

This well illustrated 184 page hardback is available from Waterstones and Sportspages at £14.95. Again it is also available by post direct from London Publications at the same price (inc. postage and see above for details).

ISBN 1-903659-18-3

TODAY'S OPPONENTS

York City Knights

Matt Blaymire - Full-back/wing
Played for the Knights in their inaugural season before heading overseas, where he played for Coogee Dolphins in Sydney, helping them to Grand Final success. Matt has now returned to the UK and is looking to repeat the success he had in Australia with the Knights.

Peter Fox - Wing
On a season-long loan from Leeds Rhinos, Peter scored a hat trick against them in the pre-season friendly! Outstanding try scorer but is equally capable of producing try-saving tackles and looks very comfortable under the high ball.

Ian Kirke - Centre / second row
The tallest member of the squad at 6'5". Made his Knights' debut in the pre-season friendly against Hull after recovering from a broken hand sustained playing for the Great Britain Students in November.

Chris Levy - Scrum half / stand-off / loose forward
Ex-Penrith and Wests Tigers player with NRL experience who produced a man of the match performance in his first game for the Knights. Teaches Maths and PE at a York secondary school when he's not playing RL.

Jonny Liddell - Utility
An ex-Leeds Rhinos Academy player who was an off-season capture for the Knights from Hunslet. A true utility player, he is just as comfortable at fullback as he is at stand-off, hooker or loose forward. A local lad, he will team up with his cousin, Peter Fox, this season.

Craig McDowell - Loose forward / second row
Signed from the relegated Keighley Cougars. An ex-Bradford Bulls youngster, he starred for Cumbria against the ANZAC team last year.

Lee Paterson - Second row / loose forward
Produced an eye-catching display at loose forward against Leeds Rhinos, with his vision and support play. Rejoins his old Keighley teammate Craig McDowell at the Knights.

Dan Potter - Centre
A key member of Leigh Centurions promotion-winning squad last season but chose to join his hometown club for 2004. Previously gained Super League experience with Widnes, he reads the game well combining excellent attacking options with crunching defence.

Chris Ross - Utility back
A superb support player who scored a try on his debut for the club and also proved to be a more-than useful goal kicker. Joined the Knights from Hunslet, having previously played for Doncaster.

Neil Thorman - Hooker / stand-off
Another Great Britain Students representative. Can split the defence out of dummy half with his eye for a gap. Together with his brother Paul, he makes the journey from Newcastle to York and Leeds for training three times a week.

Paul Thorman - Half-back
Joined younger brother Neil in moving from Gateshead Thunder to the Knights. Equally at home at stand-off or scrum-half, he possesses excellent vision and organisation on the pitch and is a prolific goal-kicker.

Austin Buchanan - Wing
Voted NL2 Young Player of the Year last season, the flying winger was also named in the NL2 Team of the Year. His blistering pace has made him a prolific long-range try scorer but he's equally deadly from a few yards out.

Mark Cain - Utility
Holds the club record for most tries scored in a match, having come off the bench to score 5 during last season's play off against Workington. This local lad can play in pretty much any position and he's been asked to play in most of them!

Darren Callaghan - Centre / second row
Having played a number of different positions in the past, he now plays mainly at second row or centre. Aggressive in attack, not much gets past him in defence either.

James Elston - Hooker
A revelation last year, despite making most of his appearances off the bench. Brilliant from acting halfback, with an excellent dummy pass and step and an ever-improving kicking game.

Craig Forsyth - Prop
A York legend! A powerhouse prop with an excellent offload who is aggressive in defence and takes some stopping in attack.

Lee Jackson - Hooker
Another legend. Lee has won just about everything there is to win in the game and still possesses the organisation and vision needed to stifle an opposition attack or split a defence.

Mick Ramsden - Second row
It's hard to say who was the more delighted when Mick scored a try last season - him or the fans! York born and bred, he is a true fan's favourite and coach's dream, never giving less than 100% on the pitch or in training.

Scott Rhodes - Half-back
The talented stand-off overcame a shoulder injury sustained mid-season to be named in the 2004 NL2 Team of the Year. Recently resumed training following an off-season operation on his shoulder but is unlikely to feature for the Knights until the start of their NL2 campaign.

John Smith - Second row / prop
Equally at home at prop or second row, he made the transition from the amateur to the professional game last season look easy. Never takes a backwards step, he will do the hard yards and tackle all day.

Yusuf Sozi - Prop
The sort of player who is very difficult to stop when he's charging up the pitch! At just 23, he's still very young for a prop but already has good go-forward and strong defence.

Chris Spurr - Centre
Joined the Knights mid-way through last season from Batley and proved to be an excellent defensive centre. Currently recovering from a broken ankle sustained while playing for Great Britain Students in November.

Adam Sullivan - Prop
The Knights fought off several NL1 clubs to re-sign this powerful young prop, who originally joined the club from Hull KR last July. Sully was an instant hit with fans and is a real handful for the opposition.

Player Profile by Roger Halstead

SIMON SVABIC

YOU could argue that when Simon Svabic signed for the Roughyeds on November 28, 2002 he had actually returned "home" --- a different club, yes, but same town and same trek up the East Lincs to Oldham from his home in Ashton-in-Makerfield.

You see, a lot of present-day Roughyeds fans might not know that when he was just a strip of a lad of 15 Simon was invited to the old Watersheddings ground by the late Brian Gartland.

Brian, in his day one of the best and shrewdest of club scouts in the North of England, could claim to have been largely responsible for signing, on behalf of Oldham Bears, some of the brightest young prospects in Lancashire and Yorkshire.

He didn't snare them all. Tony Barrow, then coach, introduced to the old Oldham club a couple of kids who were to become household names in the sport --- Chris Joynt and Tommy Martyn.

Denis McHugh, a prominent figure in Wigan Schools' Rugby League, gave us baby-faced Paul Deacon -- and my old pal George Burgess unearthed in Yorkshire a certain Richard Pachniuk.

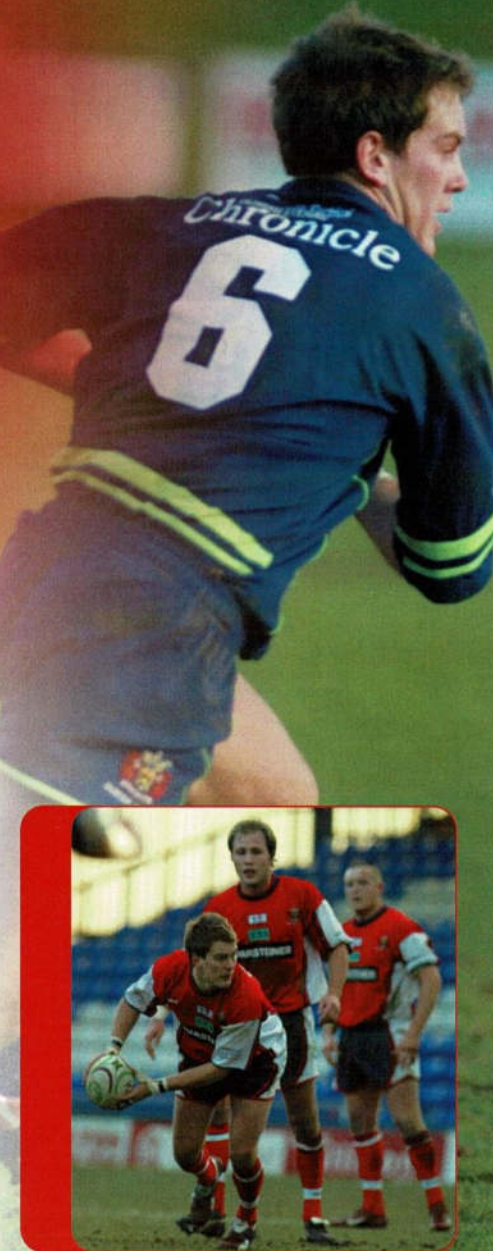
But over the years nobody pointed more whizkids in Oldham's direction than Brian, who died a few years ago and whose wife, Maureen, is still a keen Roughyeds supporter, although elder son Sean is on the coaching staff at Rochdale.

Brian was the man largely responsible for giving Oldham the likes of Terry Flanagan, Paddy Kirwan, Des Foy and, from further afield, Ray Ashton, Andy Goodway, Mick Worrall and Alan Platt.

Some 15 years later came another batch... and at the head of the queue was Simon Svabic. If Deacon was the baby face, Svabic was the altar boy: both looked far too boyish, too well-groomed and too well-mannered and polite to be entering the rough, tough, uncompromising world of professional rugby league.

Watersheddings in those days was like a conveyor belt of young hopefuls and their fathers. On one memorable winter's night a young kid and his father emerged from "upstairs" and passed me on the steps on their way out.

Cont over...



Player Profile **SIMON SVABIC**

“His career had turned full circle and Simon, now in his third season with the Roughyeds, is vice-captain”



Cont...

"And who might that be?" I asked. "You won't know him," I was told. "He comes from Wigan. He won't be signing because we believe Wigan have him stitched up. You might know his Dad. The kid's called Shaun . . . Shaun Edwards."

Some came and went, some stayed. Simon Svabic stayed. And these many years later I can still see him sitting in the bowels of the old pavilion, with his father Peter by his side, waiting for Brian to take him upstairs to meet the board and to sign his life away as a rugby league pro.

In the event, his was no life stretch. Two years after joining Oldham, and rapidly making a name for himself in the 'A' team, Simon and all the other contracted players at that time were summoned to a meeting and told the Bears were going into voluntary liquidation.

The young Svabic, barely 17, found himself at rugby league's crossroads. But he wasn't undecided which way to go for long. Salford, then coached by Andy Gregory, wanted him at The Willows.

Like Brian Gartland before him, Gregory thought the world of the Lancashire lad with the unusual surname and such was Greg's regard for him that Simon was still 17 when he made his Salford debut at outside-half in a televised match against Leeds.

Over the next two seasons he became a regular first-team stand-off. He was Gregory's boy. Life was sweet for young Simon, but when Greg departed and John Harvey succeeded the former Great Britain No 7, Simon found himself more and more on the outside looking in.

A move was inevitable, and so it was that he found himself heading for Leigh where he spent two seasons under Aussie boss Paul Terzis.

Oldham came next. His career had turned full circle and Simon, now in his third season with the Roughyeds, is vice-captain and one of the squad's elder statesmen.

In his first season here, 2003, he played in all 32 matches, scoring 82 goals, two drop goals and five tries for a points haul of 186.

On April 6 that year, in a 68-14 win against Swinton at Boundary Park, he kicked ten goals --- still a Roughyeds record for most number of goals kicked by an individual player in one game.

In 2004 he missed the last nine games through injury, but still finished with 25 goals and two tries in 22 appearances.

This year, as vice-captain, he played in the first ten games of the season before damaging a knee against Rochdale on Good Friday in the Roughyeds last home game.

He will be back soon --- and he is confident the Roughyeds will surprise one or two people with their performances over the season in LHF Healthplan National League division one.

Said Simon: "Gary (Mercer) is a fine coach, the best I've played under. He is very enthusiastic, and he expects everybody else to be the same. He does a lot of one-on-one stuff and he is very approachable

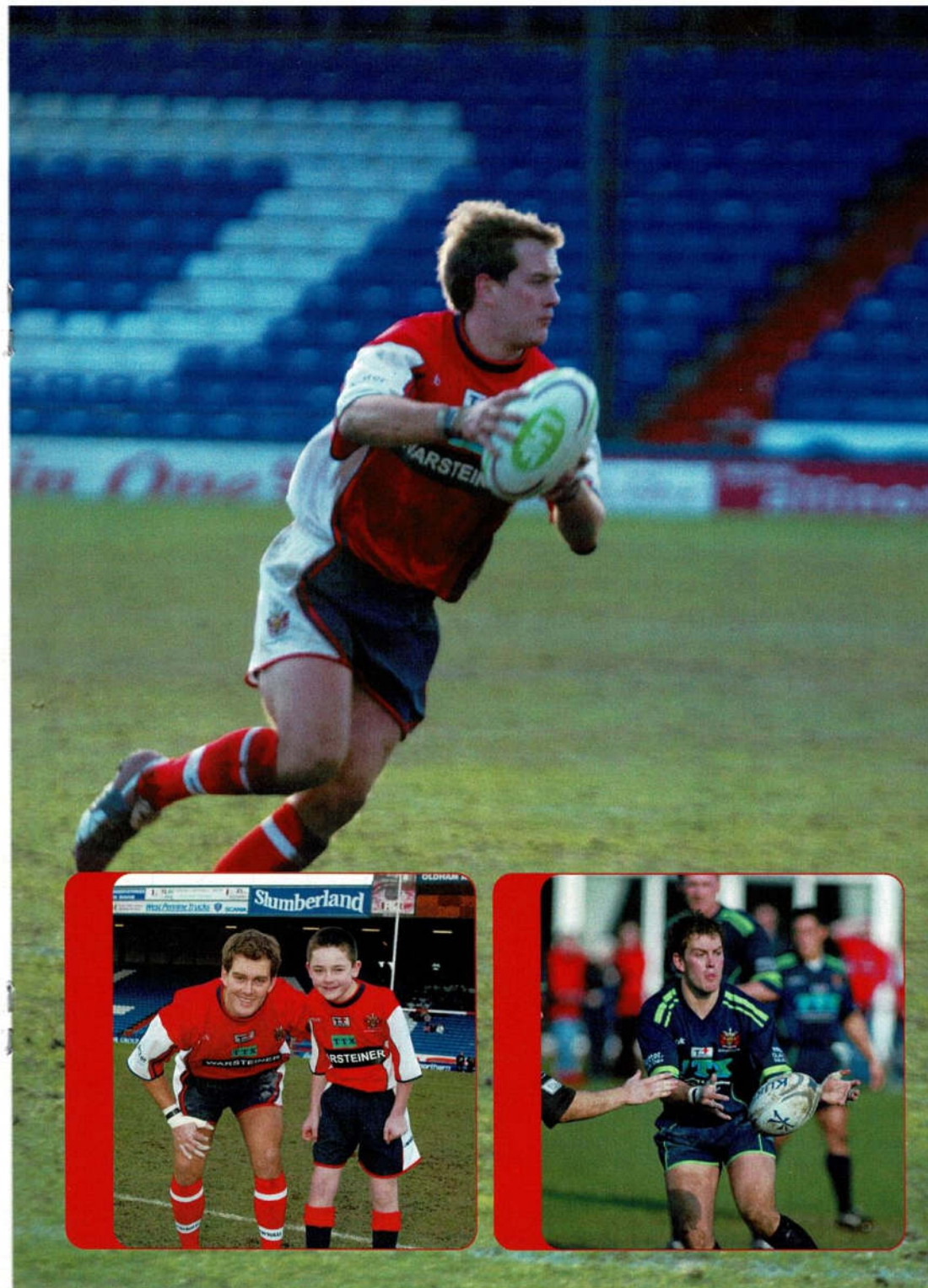
"I know we haven't started as well as we would have liked in the Northern Rail Cup, but whether we like to admit it or not, Rochdale are a very good side.

"Injury kept me out of the opening league game at Featherstone last Monday evening, but didn't the boys do well. It was a fantastic effort to get a point with a 20-20 draw when, effectively, we had only two subs and as many injured men as you would find in an episode of Casualty.

"Those of us who watched the match found it very frustrating because we were itching to get out on to Post Office Road and give the lads a lift.

"They hung in there to produce an inspirational performance which should stand us in good stead for the rest of the season."

ROGER HALSTEAD.



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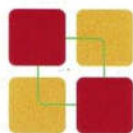
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On this day

Don Yates looks back to April 3rd yesteryear



This afternoon Oldham meet York City Knights in the Challenge Cup exactly 62 years after meeting the current Challenge Cup holders, St.Helens, in the same competition.

It was on Saturday 3rd April 1943 that the Roughyeds travelled to Knowsley Road for the second leg of a Challenge Cup, quarter-final tie holding a narrow lead from the first leg. It was an evenly balanced tie but Oldham took it by the scruff of the neck and won at St.Helens by 20 points to five. Prop Emlyn Watkins, centre Billy Stott, stand-off Frank Lees and second-row forward Alan Laird scored tries for Oldham with full-back Tommy Rees adding four goals. Oldham's 37-17 aggregate victory carried them through to a semi-final date with Dewsbury who beat the Roughyeds convincingly before going on to defeat Leeds narrowly in the final.

On Saturday 3rd April 1999 a very strong English schoolboy team defeated France 52-8 at Central Park, Wigan. Included in the English squad that afternoon were current Super League stars Richard Mathers, Chev Walker, Danny McQuire and Rob Burrows of Leeds, Wigan's Sean O'Loughlin and Shaun Briscoe, the Hull full-back. England ran in ten tries that afternoon with the top try scorer being winger Alex Wilkinson who crossed for a hattrick. The former Royton Tigers junior, then a pupil at North Chadderton School, was on the books of Bradford at the time and later had a spell at Hull before joining his home town club.

Tuesday 3rd April 1972 was a memorable date in the history of the York club. That evening Barrow visited Clarence Street for a league match which was of little significance. If Barrow decided not to attach too much importance to the match, then that certainly was not the case with York. They ran in 14 tries to register what was then a club record 60-0 victory. Centre Danny Sheehan, who later coached the club, claimed five of the tries with the other touchdowns coming from wingers Rich Horner and Clive Hill, who each scored three tries, prop Colin

Forsyth, who began his career with Oldham, full-back Dick Wallace and centre John Maloney who also landed nine goals. That club record victory lasted for almost 18 years, until 1990 when York won at Keighley by 70 points to eight.

Although today's tie has been eagerly awaited and should produce a close and exciting match, supporters of both clubs will acknowledge that neither club will go on and actually win the trophy. Modern rules have encouraged speed and power to the detriment of skill and, as a result, the game has become more predictable. Next August's final looks set to be contested by two of the four big clubs, Bradford, Leeds, St.Helens and Wigan. No other club has appeared in any of the past five finals and at least one of these clubs has appeared in each of the past eighteen finals. Since the Super League play-off was introduced seven years ago, only the 'big four' have appeared in the Grand Final. Sheffield caused a major shock in 1998 and in 1971 unfancied Leigh, with Alec Murphy at the helm, went on to shock the nation by lifting the trophy. It was on Saturday 3rd April 1971 that Leigh met Huddersfield at Central Park, Wigan in the Challenge Cup semi-final. It was a tense affair, some would say boring, with defences well on top. No tries were scored but Leigh reached their Wembley dream with a 10-4 victory. Goals from winger Stuart Ferguson (3), hooker Kevin Ashcroft and prop Jimmy Fiddler got Leigh into the final where they pulled off arguably their greatest triumph by beating odds-on favourites Leeds.

ROUGHYED KIDS + Co

A big thank-you to them and their parents for making sure we have a representative at every game.

Steven Gibson (Swinton Lions), Kieran Bowers (Rochdale Hornets), Niles Dixon (Sharlston Rovers), Rebekah Berry (Blackpool) and Ryan Dowd (Featherstone) you were all brilliant.

As today is a cup match we have four mascots on centre pitch, Joseph and Frankie Jennings and Heidi and Millie Elsworth.

Their favourite player is of course Martin Elsworth who is uncle to Joseph & Frankie and Dad to Heidi & Millie, have a great day kids.

There is still time to join the "Roughyed Kids" and take advantage of all the benefits we have on offer, anyone interested can contact ORLFC on 628 3677 and they will put you in touch with Carole or myself.

Hi KIDS

This week we would like to mention our mascots who have represented us at the away games recently they did a terrific job.

Once again a big thank you to all our sponsors who now appear under our new heading.

As always good luck to Gary and the Lads.

See you soon

Carole and Janet

TODAYS MASCOTS

**Joseph
Jennings**

**Frankie
Jennings**

**Heidi
Elsworth**

**Millie
Elsworth**

OLDHAM RUGBY SUPPORT GROUP

In the present crisis all enthusiasts are looking at fresh initiatives for giving both moral and financial support to the club. However, this is all the more reason for supporting an existing activity that raises funds for the club - our monthly QUIZ NIGHT.

All the regulars at the evening enjoy a pleasant and relaxed social evening which gives the opportunity for a chat as well as raising money. Even if you don't wish to take part in the quiz we usually have a raffle and every pound spent at the bar is also much needed income for the club - please come along and give it a go.

NEXT QUIZ - TUESDAY 12 APRIL 8.30 pm AT THE SOCIAL CLUB.

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.

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Why not join in the fun on Sunday before the game and catch the free bus to the ground and back to the social club to meet the players, have some food and enjoy the karaoke.

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NATIONAL LEAGUE TALK

with GARETH WALKER of RUGBY LEAGUER & LEAGUE EXPRESS



A SHOCKING EASTER!

EASTER Monday provided a wealth of Rugby League shocks - can the Fourth Round of the Powergen Challenge Cup follow suit?

There were some major surprises over the Easter weekend, particularly in Super League. Who would have bet on Wakefield winning at Leeds, Leigh notching their first victory of the season against London, and even patched up Wigan defeating Hull?

Outside the top flight, Oldham finally kick-started their season with a credible draw at Featherstone, and Swinton recorded an excellent win at York City Knights.

Whether those shock results will be repeated this weekend is debatable.

Major upsets have been a rarity in recent years - the only example of a Super League team being toppled by a National League side being when Hunslet Hawks stunned Huddersfield Giants at the beginning of 2003.

That day, tries from Dan Briggs, Bryn Powell and Jonlee Lockwood spurred the Hawks onto a remarkable 18-14 win - though the result perhaps worked in the Giants' favour in the long-term, as they went on to enjoy a successful return to the top flight that year.

The full-time/part-time divide between Super League and the National Leagues has made it

so much harder for the teams at the lower level to produce shocks, though it is not impossible.

Leigh Centurions, buoyant from their superb win over London, will know they will have to be on their game at Batley this afternoon.

Wigan will have to come down from the major high of Easter wins against St Helens and Hull to ensure they dispose of Whitehaven, one of the best sides outside the elite.

Bradford won't have it all their way at Featherstone, and Salford will be wary of free-scoring Rochdale.

But it's still so difficult to see any of those Super League sides slipping up this afternoon.

Maybe the shocks will lie elsewhere.

Halifax will be keen to bounce back from defeat against Hull KR and topple the highly-fancied Castleford, while Workington and York will fancy their chances at Doncaster and Oldham respectively.

There are plenty of mouth-watering ties to look forward to. And for those of us who still believe in the magic of the Challenge Cup, wouldn't it be great to see at least one of those major shocks this afternoon?

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

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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

Over the years players who have seen service with both Oldham and York have been few and far between.

However, they do include in their number, one of the most famous Rugby League players of the early "Northern Union" era. That of course was half back or centre, James Lomas. Cumbrian born, Jim captained the first ever touring team to Australia and New Zealand in 1910. He was then a Salford player but signed for the Roughyeds soon after the tour before moving over to York.

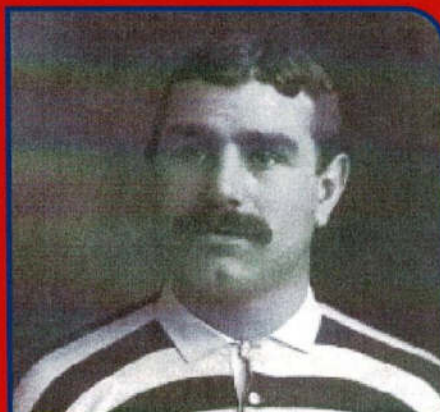
In the 1920s full back Lawrence Higgins played 45 matches for Oldham mostly as understudy to Ernie Knapman and Tommy Rees. He later joined Halifax and then went on to the Minster city.

Wingman, Albert Taylor was a useful acquisition for the Roughyeds from York. He played 150 matches for Oldham in the mid 1930s scoring 65

tries and 25 goals. He later went back over the Pennines to give further service to his old club.

In the mid 1970s, Brian Hughes was a popular prop forward in the Oldham ranks. He played just over 100 games for Oldham. In 1984 he skippered the York side that almost reached the challenge cup final, losing narrowly to Wigan in the semi-final.

Not surprisingly rugby league's most travelled player Geoff Clarkson spent time at both clubs, as did his contemporaries Billy Harris, Terry Ramshaw and Mick Morgan.



James Lomas



Terry Ramshaw in action for Oldham in 1975

Adamsons

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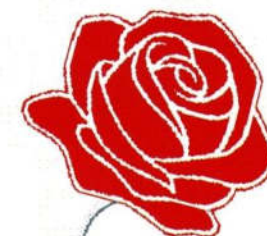
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OLDHAM RLFC PLAYER STATS 2005

Oldham match stats up to and including March 28

NAME	APPEARANCES	TRIES	GOALS	POINTS
J. GODDARD	4	2	-	8
W. COWELL	6	3	-	12
D. MUNRO	4	2	-	8
A. WILKINSON	7	3	-	12
N. JOHNSON	8	2	-	8
S. SVABIC	7	1	3 (+ 1 d-g)	11
M. TURNER	8	2	22	52
P. NORMAN	7	1	-	4
G. BARBER	5	2	-	8
D. NANYN	6	-	-	-
R. BIBEY	6	-	-	-
T. GLASSIE	6	1	-	4
C. MATAORA	8	1	-	4
C. FARRIMOND	4	-	-	-
G. DODD	8	6	-	24
M. ELSWOOD	5	2	-	8
J. KIRKLAND	5	-	-	-
J. HOUGH	7	-	-	-
J. WILSON	7	1	-	4
S. HAUGHTON	7	5	-	20
M. ROBERTS	5	2	-	8
A. GOREY	2	2	-	8
K. BRENNAN	2	-	-	-

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campaign and welcomes all players and spectators irrespective of
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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	Sharlston Rovers	Powergen CC 3rd Rd	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	10-54	L	1,544
28/03/05	Featherstone Rovers	NL1	Away	19.30	20-20	D	1,463
03/04/05	York City Knights	Powergen CC 4th Rd	Home	15.00			
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

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Tere Glassie		Darren Callaghan
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Danny Nanyn		Jimmy Liddell
Will Cowell		Lee Jackson
James Kirkland		Lee Paterson
Mark Roberts		Mark Cain
Dana Wilson		Tom Buckenham
Keith Brennan		

Match Officials:

REFEREE: G Hewer
TOUCH JUDGES: P W Grundhill, G Wallace
IN GOAL JUDGES: S Marshall, P Wroe

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SUNDAY 3RD APRIL 2005
KICK OFF 3.00pm



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