

game line-up

OLDHAM SQUAD	Played	HALIFAX SQUAD
ANDY BAILEY		DAMIAN GIBSON
GARETH BARBER		JAMES HALEY
MIKE CALLAN		ANDY KIRK
GED CORCORAN		ANTHONY BLACKWOOD
WAYNE CORCORAN		NICK JOHNSON
CRAIG DEAN		DEAN LAWFORD
ANDY GOREY		JOEL PENNY
DEAN GORTON		JASON BOULTS
DANNY GUEST		SIMEON HOYLE
ALAN HADCROFT		ANDY HOBSON
GARETH HAYES		DAVE LARDER
IAN HODSON		ANDY SPINK
CHRIS HOUGH		DALE HOLDSTOCK
JOHN HOUGH		DOMINIC BRAMBANI
JAMES KIRKLAND		RYAN MACDONALD
CHRIS MAYE		SCOTT LAW
DANNY NANYN		JODE SHERIFFE
CHRIS PERCIVAL		JOHNNY SIMPSON
MICK REDFORD		JOE HIRST
MARK ROBERTS		KEITH HECKENBERG
SIMON SVABIC		DAYNE NEIRINCKX
ALEX WILKINSON		
LEE WINGFIELD		

match officials

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4TH OFFICIAL: TBC

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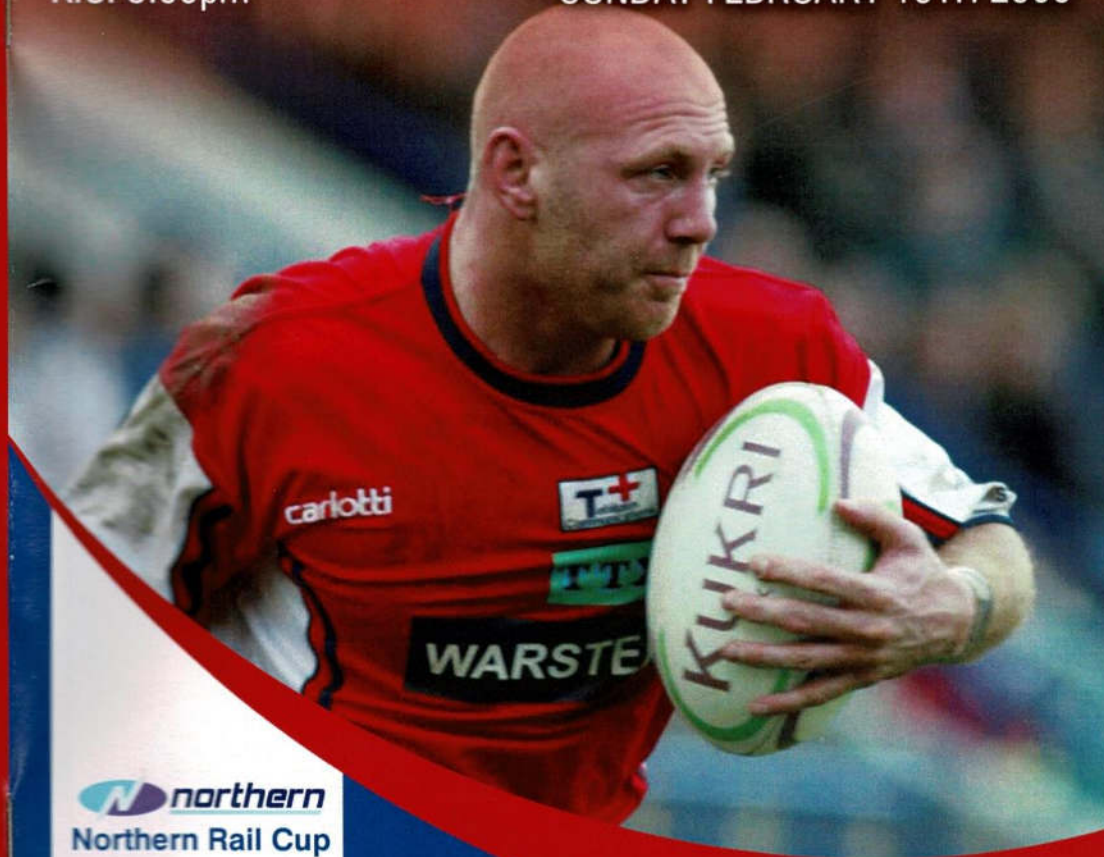
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V HALIFAX RLFC

K.O. 3.00pm

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 19TH 2006



northern
Northern Rail Cup

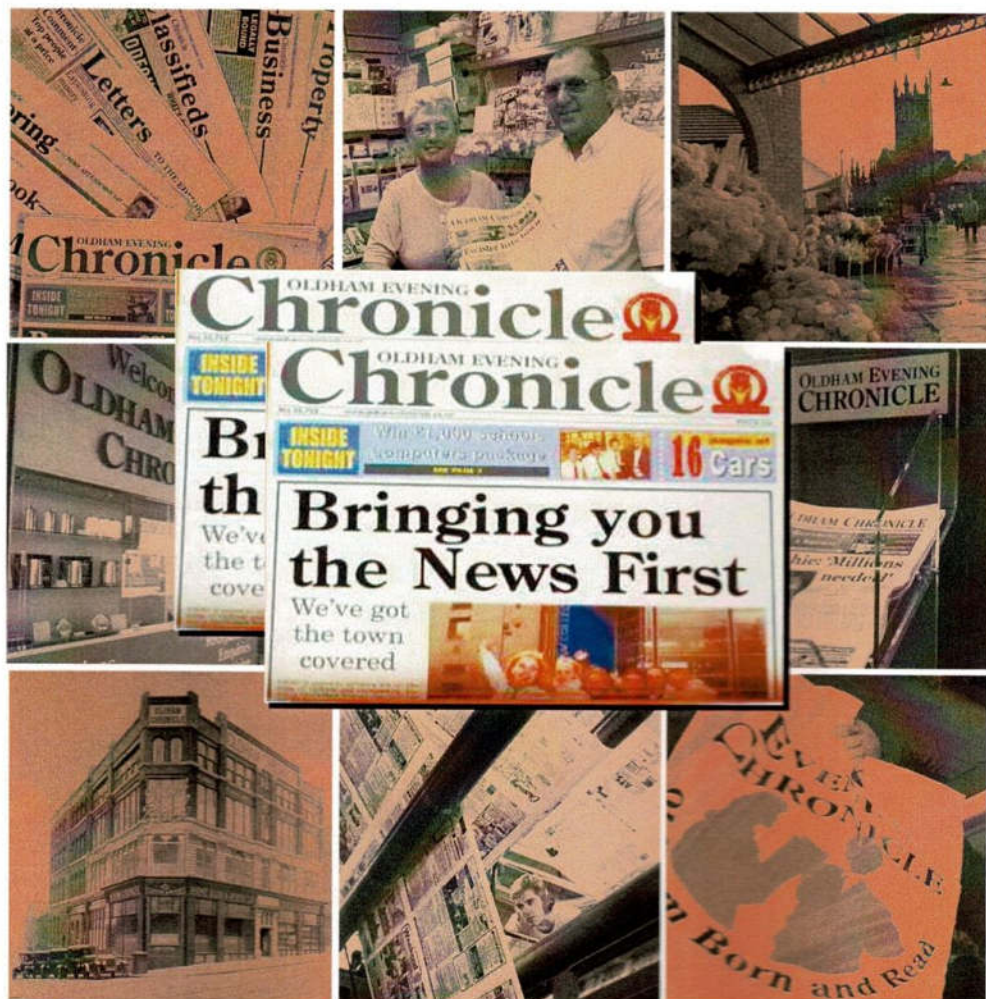
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player profile

alan hadcroft

Matthew Chambers looks at Oldham's new captain • p18



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Club Records - 1998-2005

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Finalists - 1998

Northern Ford Premiership
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MOST APPEARANCES: John Hough, 209 - Jan 1998 - September 2005

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

The views expressed in this matchday magazine do not necessarily reflect those
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Harry Ogden 1940-56

Alan Davies 1950-62

Frank Stirrup 1950-62

Bernard Ganley 1950-61

Sid Little OBE 1951-59

John Etty 1954-59

Derek Turner 1955-59

Kevin Taylor 1962-77

Mike Elliott 1962-79

Bob Irving 1964-74

Martin Murphy 1966-82

Terry Flanagan 1979-89

Andy Goodway 1979-85 & 1993-94

We would like to express our thanks to the
Oldham Evening Chronicle, League Publications
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in the chair

with Chris Hamilton

Welcome back to Boundary Park for the first "real" home game of the new season in this years Northern Rail Cup competition.

It was bitterly disappointing to lose last Sunday's match to a waterlogged pitch but we know all about bad weather in this country and I only hope that by the time you are reading this we will have been able to replay the game on Wednesday. It was a real let down after having had such a long close season and like you everybody at the club was frustrated after building themselves up for the big kick off.

The postponement also had a knock on (no pun intended!) effect on our training schedule and myself and John Pendlebury were desperately trying to find alternative venues for the lads as the training pattern was disrupted with the game becoming mid-week and our usual venues not being available.

This merely demonstrates however our reasons for negotiating to lease Hope Playing Fields on behalf of the club as over the past few years the problem of suitable training venues has been a constant source of hassle. Negotiations with the Council have slowed down somewhat recently due to pressure of work on the Council Officers dealing with this matter but we are moving things on and hope to be able to make significant progress in the near future.

Moving on to the playing front I hope that this years Northern Rail Cup will see a change in fortunes for ourselves as we have underachieved by never qualifying from the Group Stages despite always giving the competition the respect it deserves and although we are again in a formidable group let's hope we can shock a few people and get to the Play Off stage.

Our opponents today, Halifax, will certainly provide a stern test and although they slightly disappointed with their league position they came on strong in the National League Play Offs and were not far off knocking Castleford out in the Semi-Final to underline what a strong squad they had.

Although they have seen numerous changes in personnel they have again

appeared to recruit well and I fully expect them to be at the top end of the division and performing well in the Northern Rail Cup.

There are a number of links between the clubs with players moving either way and in addition to Alan Hadcroft and Wayne Corcoran who were at the Shay last year, Ged Corcoran, Craig Dean and Chris Maye have also played for Halifax previously and John Pendlebury still has many friends over there from his spells both as a player and as Head Coach.

One of our other players, Chris Hough, also has a rather tenuous link with the Yorkshiremen in that Halifax is one of only three clubs in the whole of the rugby league that he has not played for!!!!!!

Following on from the success of our ticketing promotion for the Leeds Rhinos game we will be extending this for some other matches his season in conjunction with the Sport Development Unit at Oldham Council. We are aware of the problems that some of you encountered that night with what can best be described as unsociable behaviour from some of the children who took up the free ticket offer and we will work hard to make sure that we learn from that and ensure that future offers are not spoiled for the majority by the minority. I note that Oldham Athletic had similar problems at their recent game against Port Vale and it is a sad indictment on today's society that people do not know how to behave especially when they are getting something for nothing.

As we embark on another long season I hope you will join me in wishing John Pendlebury, Keith Brennan and all the playing staff every success this season. I have every confidence, as ever in them, and I hope you will show your support to the lads by being as vocal as you can every week.

Enjoy the game

Chris



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direct from the dug out

with John Pendlebury



Well the Friendlies are over as is all the pre season preparation and we now come down to what it's all about, performance on the field. I obviously expected, in this column, to comment on our first Northern Rail Cup game against Rochdale but the weather put paid to that – summer rugby eh! – Hopefully the game will have been played mid-week but too late for inclusion in this column.

Of the two Friendly fixtures I saw the Rochdale game as a unique experience to get to know the squad on the field and made 5 or 6 changes at the same time and therefore did not feel it fair to look at individual performances from this particular game because of this disruption. It was however a good experience for the players, especially those new to the club, as it told them just where they were in their preparations and what they had to do to get to peak fitness and performance. I very soon put this match to bed whilst welcoming the match practice it had given the players.

My philosophy for the Leeds game was completely different. I wanted to concentrate on the continuity of combinations, especially at half back and in the front row and as a result of that I thought we looked far more of a team and played a much better brand of football. This will be a continuing theme over the next 6 cup games where I hope to continue this process and give the players the opportunity to cement places in the team for themselves. One thing that I took out of the Leeds game was the players' appetite for contact in defence – this is vital for a successful rugby league team at any level. This meant that when we made errors and spilled the ball we did not allow this to result in points against because of excellent defensive work. It is my aim to further build up this intensity over the next few weeks.

You hear a lot of talk of coaches using the NR Cup games as a preparation for the season proper and perhaps not being as interested in the results as normal. This certainly is not my way of seeing things. To me the competition is just as important as any other

because an important part of rugby league is playing winning football. Otherwise confidence flags and players must be fully committed to the task in hand whatever the game. Obviously the team will hopefully build as they play more games but we will as always be looking seven days ahead to the next game and producing a team performance to do a particular job for that next game. If there is any complacency this cause a lot of trouble with lack of confidence and injuries. Having said all that I expect the team to build during these cup games and therefore improve as a unit so that, hopefully, come the start of the League season I'll have fully established the style and formation of the team I'm trying to implement.

Today we welcome Halifax and I'm sure you join with me in hoping the Directors, players and fans have a pleasant afternoon here at Boundary Park. I have fond memories of Halifax both as a player and a coach and would especially like to welcome Paul Dixon, the Football Director, and Mick Scott who are old playing colleagues of mine. Looking at their recruitment over the close season and their improved performances at the end of last season I expect them to be one of the top teams in what should be a very competitive league this season.

Please get behind the lads in this their first proper match at Boundary Park. It really does make a difference. Enjoy the game.

John



QUESTION & ANSWERS

with John Pendlebury

On this page in future programmes will be individual player stats from previous matches or letters to our coach with an answer from John. If you want to ask John a question either drop it in at the Waterloo St office, put it on the website or email to orlfcqanda@yahoo.co.uk.

Don't forget if you don't ask the question John can't answer it.



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with Ian Wilson

An awful lot has happened since my last programme words were penned late last August! This is true both at Oldham and in the game in general. Perhaps I may be allowed a brief look back.



The single most significant highlight was surely the Tri-Nations final victory by New Zealand. What a shot in the arm for the international game, and what a pleasure to see the Aussies humbled as they were. As it happened, I had been allocated to look after the Kiwi visitors a few days before the final, when they were guests at the Rugby Oldham launch/ Hall of Fame induction evening, and although they were quietly confident, I don't think in their wildest dreams they could have envisaged such a trouncing.

Mind you, it was a good job the tournament had such a good end, because it had been a bit depressing up until then. We had flattered to deceive in the convincing win over the Kiwis at Huddersfield, but were clearly no nearer coping with the Aussies at either Wigan or Hull. Still, at least there is now in place an international programme for the next few seasons - Tri-Nations down under this Autumn, tour by a NZ all-golds side the year after and then the World Cup early in 2008. We really must set the goal of winning the last of these, and hopefully make some re-arrangements to our domestic season - ideally fewer games in Super League in 2007, to make space for better preparation for the international side - in order to give us the maximum chance to achieve it. It should also be said that it is pathetic to see the prevarication about

the organisation of international RL which the Australian game is currently demonstrating.

On the home front, I thought the Finals Day of the National Leagues was again a fantastic day out. Batley's win over Dewsbury was the star game. And although it was in some ways disappointing to see Whitehaven miss out at the last gasp again, it was probably best that Cas should go back into Super League. Let us hope that the experience will push the Cumbrians to get together to plan for a side in Super League from 2008, with the 3-year guarantee which is proposed from then. The 2005 Super League had its regular superb final night at Old Trafford, too, and I personally enjoyed the Bradford charge to overcome St. Helens and Leeds. With London making the finals, Hull playing impressively to beat Warrington - apparently Andrew Johns was like a kid throwing out his dummy after that game! - and Terry Newton at last getting the sort of suspension he has deserved for several years, there was a great deal to enjoy in the run-up to the Final, too!

What about Oldham? I personally was pleased to see Gary Mercer go. Although he certainly had difficulties to contend with, the organisation of the team in the first half of the season was poor, and there were far too many occasions when we played below potential, even given the problems, for him to deserve another season, I felt. Indeed, the final two performances, at home to Batley and at Halifax, were so poor that I found it difficult to believe anyone was arguing that we wanted Mercer back. Certainly, I am much happier to see someone as steeped in traditional English rugby league as is John Pendlebury at the helm, I must say.

40/20VISION

in yer face

with Geoff Cooke

As ever much has happened since the end of last season. The most tragic event was the untimely death of St. John Ellis, the Doncaster Coach, a popular and charismatic man who will be sorely missed.

On the international front the New Zealanders thrilled us by not only defeating the Australians in the Tri-Nations Final but completely outplaying them. Thereafter we've had the usual round of out of season booze fuelled bust-ups down under, with players as distinguished as Craig Gower under threat of having their contracts terminated.

Meanwhile, domestically, Leeds prop Danny Ward was summarily dismissed from Headingley only to fetch up at Castleford. Lesson learned one hopes.

Then there's Wigan Coach Ian Millward who doesn't like being out of the limelight continuing His spat with St. Helens. What is it with some people's egos?

Next Chris Caisley, architect of success at Bradford Bulls, and a popular hate figure outside Odsal, departs the scene, no doubt with a certain well earned smug satisfaction. Who can we throw brickbats at now? And in the meantime Bulls Coach Brian Noble, heavily criticized over his transfer activity, with more 'good' players apparently departing than arriving, proves once again that his judgement is spot on by waltzing off with the World Club Championship for the third time in five years. With Stuart Fielden in awesome form The Bulls laid down an early season marker for the domestic season to come. I wonder how those Bradford fans calling for Noble's head a few weeks into the 2005 season feel now? No doubt they're in denial: not me guv!

Super League 2006 welcomes Catalan Dragons after extraordinarily dispensing with the services of Steve Deakin for incompatibility with the players (or should

that be with David Waite, Stacey Jones and Nathan Hindmarsh)? Joining them will be Harlequins R.L. who have the revolutionary plan of kicking off at 3.00 p.m. on Saturdays. What goes round comes round, eh?

In N.L.1 Widnes enjoy the label of favourites but the division looks exceptionally competitive and I don't see anyone having an easy passage. Will full-time status be a decisive advantage with Widnes, Leigh and Hull K.R. all falling into this category? Don't count on it as Whitehaven, Halifax, Rochdale, Doncaster and Oldham will all have plenty to say about it. What I want to know is where is the money coming from?

N.L.2 welcomes a new outfit in Celtic Crusaders operating out of Bridgend. Will this latest Welsh venture be any more successful than previous efforts? The omens look good but only time will tell.

However, amongst all the above changes and developments one thing above all has exercised my mind this last close season and that is the saga of the Lopag brothers. Left without a team to play for when their junior club Deighton folded the boys signed for King Cross. Under their Service Area and anti-'super-league' rules the West Riding Youth League refused their registrations. Despite their grandfather battling to get their registrations accepted the boys were kept out of the game they love for over a year, playing Rugby Union in the meantime. Eventually officials at B.A.R.L.A. and Chairman Spen Allison in particular ruled that the brothers should be registered to play. But if you thought that was the end of the matter you'd be wrong. First up King Cross - not a club I remember monopolising junior honours over the last decade - had to pay a fine of £10 every time the boys played. When B.A.R.L.A. ruled this out of order West Riding officials called off King Cross games and awarded their opponents victories by 18-0. Now 16, Richard Lopag has been signed by Huddersfield Giants but brother Peter is left in limbo. I cannot remember a more disgraceful episode. Never mind the 'rules is rules' argument, if officers of a junior league are not there to facilitate the playing of the sport by rugby mad youngsters what exactly are they there for? The whole lot should be ashamed of themselves, should be drummed out of office and never be allowed near an official position again.

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club corner

with Nigel Marland

Well I don't know about anyone else but Sundays are a complete let down without Rugby League. I have been counting down the weeks to the commencement of this season's matches.

My disappointment last Sunday was out of all proportion and I am told I had a "real cob" on all day. This was made worse the next day when I realised it had been rearranged for Wednesday as that is the one-day I can't make. All this coupled with the fact that I missed both "friendlies" as I was soaking up the sun in Lanzarote means that I am desperate for my first Rugby League fix of the season.

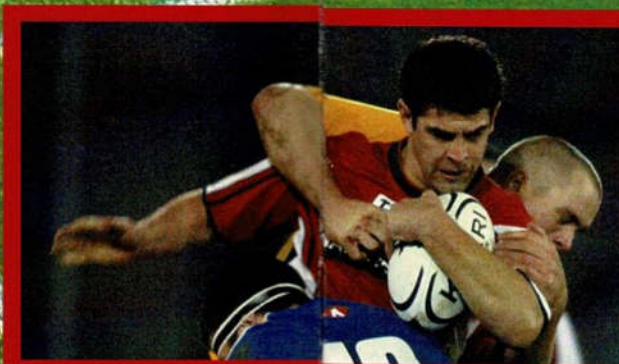
I don't think I've ever been so unsure as to how we will do this season as I have yet to see the lads play and we have so many new faces that I also know little about. What has come through loud and clear I think is that this season we have a squad of players who want to pay for Oldham and that in my mind is paramount to any team's success. Coupled with this it is a very young squad with some experienced faces scattered amongst them, which also, in my opinion, bodes well for the future. I also get the feeling that new coach, John Pendlebury, has used local knowledge in picking up many new members of the squad.

Once again we have a very competitive league and I feel our Northern Rail fixtures are our

toughest yet. Everybody seems to think that the honours this season will be between Widnes, Leigh and Hull KR with Halifax maybe also having a squeak. Certainly they have all recruited strongly and Leigh, Widnes and Hull KR are full time. But surely you can't discount Whitehaven after their performances in the last two seasons and Rochdale Doncaster and ourselves are surely pressing for a top six place. There isn't going to be an easy game and once again injuries will play a vital part in the final positions.

On this point surely it's time we had a bit of luck on the injury front, as we have been very unlucky over the past three seasons. Not only have we picked up a lot of injuries but also many of them have been serious and kept a player out for a fair proportion of the season. It has also seemed to happen to players who were just hitting their peak form. So fingers crossed for a change of fortune in this area.

Surely we cannot conclude this first column without giving a massive vote of thanks to our two Directors who against all the odds have managed, during the close season, with little



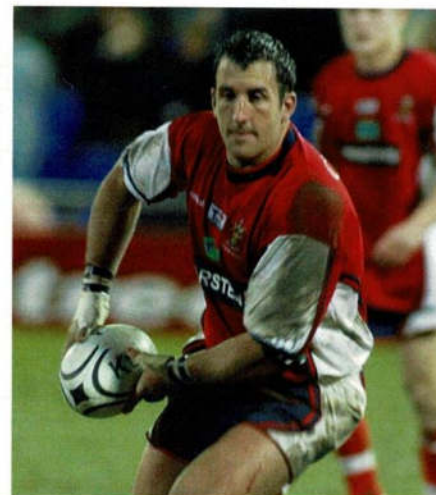
money coming in, to meet all the payments to the Inland Revenue despite disappointing support for many Club 180 ventures which has resulted in it not contributing nearly as much to the club's coffers as was hoped, and managed to bring together a decent squad of players. Fans must realise it is down to Sean and Chris digging deep into their own pockets that have kept the club alive so far. What also must be realised is that we are not out of the mire yet, there are still further payments to be made and the club must also pay its present bills as well. If you have helped in the past thank you but cheques can still be made out to Club 180 which will go to pay off the debt. To those who have yet to contribute it is not too late. Let's hope the attendance against

Leeds is a sign of things to come and better attendances will also help the financial situation.

I hope to run another Prediction League for the League season proper as this was a lot of fun last year and raised a fair amount for the club. Hopefully we will have even more take up this season. Further details in future programmes, Oldham Chronicle and the website.

Let's hope for a great game and a good crowd, speak to you again next week,

Nigel



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AROUND & ABOUT

with The Heritage Trust

DID WAR HERO PLAY FOR RANGERS?

Just before Christmas the Oldham Evening Chronicle ran the headline **"Did war hero play for Rangers?"** I thought it meant local amateur side Saddleworth Rangers but it turned out to be Broughton Rangers, a Salford pro-side which were founder members of the of the Rugby League and who played at the same level as the Roughyeds until the mid-fifties.



Healey St Adults. Thomas Steele is third from right on the back row of players.

During the 30's they became Manchester's one-and-only professional rugby league club (Swinton playing in the city of Salford) when they moved into Belle Vue Speedway Stadium, later changing their name to Belle Vue Rangers. The war hero the Chronicle referred to was (ironically) Saddleworth born Thomas Steele, who, during the First World War, won the Victoria Cross, the world's most coveted honour awarded for bravery.

The man who prompted the Chronicle to ask the

question was Tom Mather (father of ex Great Britain threequarter Barrie-Jon Mather). Late last year Tom published a book *Missing in Action* which tells the story behind the death - as a direct result of serving in the forces - of 13 rugby league players, two of which are former Oldham forwards William Nanson and William Jardine. Another was John Harrison, a speedy winger who played for the Hull club and who was a surprise omission from the 1914 tour to Australia and New Zealand - which itself was

curtailed due to the outbreak of the First World War. Harrison was killed during the Battle of Arras in 1917, his Victoria Cross widely believed to be the only one ever awarded to a rugby league player.

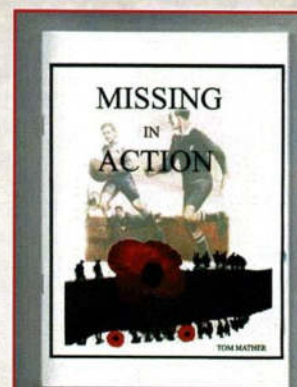
The answer to the Chronicle's question is yes, Thomas Steele did play for Broughton Rangers and also for the then crack Oldham amateur side Healey Street Adults. So, does that make Steele the second known rugby league player to win the Victoria Cross or was he a Victoria Cross winner who then played rugby league?

20 year-old Steele, born in Springhead in 1891 - which was then part of Saddleworth in the West Riding of Yorkshire - had had enough of being a bobbin winder in the cotton industry and decided instead on a military career. Being of parents of Scottish descent he enlisted with the Seaforth Highlanders and was almost immediately dispatched to serve in India.

Following the outbreak of the First World War, Steele, now a sergeant, fought against the Turks in Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq), an inhospitable land that was part of the ramshackle Turkish Empire.

Under the command of the legendary General Townsend the 6th Indian Division was given the task of securing the British owned Mesopotamian oil fields. In what has been described as one of the most mismanaged and ham-fisted campaigns of the war Townsend's Anglo-Indian army, having secured a string of easy victories, and in order to secure a major propaganda coup, were ordered to capture Baghdad. The strength of the Turks was underestimated and Townsend's army came under siege in the town of Kut-al-Amera. Two Indian divisions were dispatched from Egypt, Steele amongst them. They made three unsuccessful attempts to break-out Townsend's stricken army, culminating in the order to surrender the town, resulting in 13,000 British and Indian men falling into Turkish hands.

It was some 10 months later that Steele won his VC. Whilst attempting to re-take Kut-al-Amera he rallied troops who were wavering, kept a machine gun in action until relief arrived, and later led his troops forward resulting in him receiving serious injuries.



Missing in Action is available from: Tom Mather, 20, Chandler's Rest, Lythan, FY8 5AL at £8-95 inc postage.

The British re-entered the town.

He returned to Springhead in 1919 and in the early 20's played rugby league in the three-quarters for Healey St Adults, a long forgotten Oldham amateur team that just before and immediately after the war dominated the local scene, including appearing in several Standard Cup finals. Thanks to the Rugby League's player registration records, the investigative work of rugby league author Graham Morris, it's been proven that he also played in both Broughton Rangers' first and second teams in 1922. Did he ever attract the eye of the Oldham club, one wonders? Who knows? If you take as an example the 1920-21 season Oldham finished top of the league, Broughton were in the bottom half, the Roughyeds were due to start a

run that would see them appear in four consecutive Challenge Cup finals and had a top-drawer back-line. A good number of quality amateur players were at that time forced to take the pro-ticket out-of-town.

Whilst it's been possible to prove that Thomas Steele played rugby league after the war it's been impossible to pinpoint if he played before it started. So, it can't be said that Steele was a rugby league player who won the Victoria Cross but it can certainly be said that here was a VC winner who played rugby league.

An article surrounding Steele recently appeared in RL Weekly resulting in a third rugby league VC winner being thrown up; Thomas Bryan who played for the Castleford club back in 1905 prior to them entering the league.

Brian Walker

Information. The Victoria Cross was instituted by the royal warrant of Queen Victoria towards the end of the Crimean War in 1856. It could not be awarded posthumously until 1907 when Edward VII revised the warrant. 1,354 medals have been awarded. Two Oldhamers, John Hogan and Walter Mills along with Ernest Sykes of Mossley and Joel Halliwell of Middleton have also been awarded the Victoria Cross. Another, George Stringer who was born in Newton Heath died in Oldham.

(Thanks for background information from Saddleworth Historical Society and Mick Harrop).

visiting today

Halifax RLFC



on this day

Don Yates looks back to February 19th yesteryear

Halifax visit Boundary Park this afternoon exactly forty years after Oldham made the reverse journey, visiting the old Thrum Hall ground on Saturday 19th February 1966.

In those days Halifax had a powerful team, they were reigning League Champions, and the Roughyeds gave a good account of themselves before slipping to a 17-11 defeat. The home side scored three tries through centre Colin Dixon, prop Ken Roberts and winger David Jones. Full-back Ronnie James added four goals. Oldham scored only one try, prop Charlie Bott claiming the touchdown, but were kept in the game by the goal kicking of full-back John Winton, who landed three, and scrum-half Tommy Canning.

Last week Oldham began their Northern Rail Cup campaign with a trip to Rochdale where they came up against their former player Darren Abram, now head coach at Spotland. It was thirteen years ago, on Friday 19th February 1993, that Oldham signed the free-scoring centre three-quarter. He was actually signed from Rochdale Hornets and went on to make 127 appearances for the Roughyeds during the following four years. Abram scored 64 tries and eleven goals for Oldham before moving on to Lancashire Lynx in December 1997.

It was on this day in 1989, Sunday 19th February, that Oldham entertained Hull in a First Division match at Watersheddings. Oldham won a close encounter 9-7 with a try from hooker Andy Ruane, two goals from full-back Duncan Platt and a dropped goal from stand-off Chris O'Sullivan. Making his debut for the Roughyeds in that match was loose-forward John Cogger who had been signed from Runcorn Highfield the previous Monday for £12,000. Although not big in stature, Cogger was immense in every other sense and his influence on the team was exceptional. An Australian who played first grade with the Western Suburbs club in Sydney, Cogger made 62 appearances for Oldham during his two years at Watersheddings and scored 31 tries.

Way back on Saturday 19th February 1998 Swinton visited Watersheddings for a match in the Lancashire Senior Competition. Oldham won that competition and, in so doing, lost only two matches. One was against Swinton the previous October so the Roughyeds were seeking revenge when the Lions came to Oldham, who, at that time, played in the Clarksfield district of town. The Roughyeds won 16-2 with tries from winger Tom Martin, centre Ike Taylor, stand-off Joe Lawton and forward Bob Edwards together with a couple of goals from centre Sam Lees. That defeat was the heaviest suffered by Swinton since they had joined the professional code two years previously. They did not suffer a heavier defeat for another couple of years, until losing again in Oldham, this time by 17-2.

The first overseas touring team to visit Britain were the New Zealand 'All Golds' of season 1907-08. At the conclusion of that tour several players were targeted by English clubs. Two of the better players who turned professional were Lance Todd, who joined Wigan, and George Smith, who signed for Oldham. It was on Wednesday 19th February 1908 that the pair made their debuts against each other before a crowd of 25,000 at Central Park. Oldham won that match 7-3 with Smith on the right wing opposing Todd who occupied the Wigan left wing berth. Both enjoyed considerable success in the British game. Smith made 173 appearances for the Roughyeds and scored 100 tries and five goals. He was a member of Oldham teams that won the League Championship twice as well as the Lancashire Cup. Both have perpetual trophies named after them. The G.W.Smith Medal is awarded to the man-of-the-series in each Great Britain v. New Zealand test series and the Lance Todd Trophy is awarded to the man-of-the-match in the Challenge Cup Final.



chamber's choice

by Matthew Chambers

IN a squad full of fresh young players, many of whom are yet to cut their teeth in the professional game, it wasn't much of a surprise when coach John Pendlebury named wise old head Alan Hadcroft as the man to lead Oldham forward this season.

With experience galore at National League One level, having spent seven years at Leigh and two at Halifax either side of a brief spell in Australia with Wests, the new Roughyeds captain knows exactly what is needed at this level.

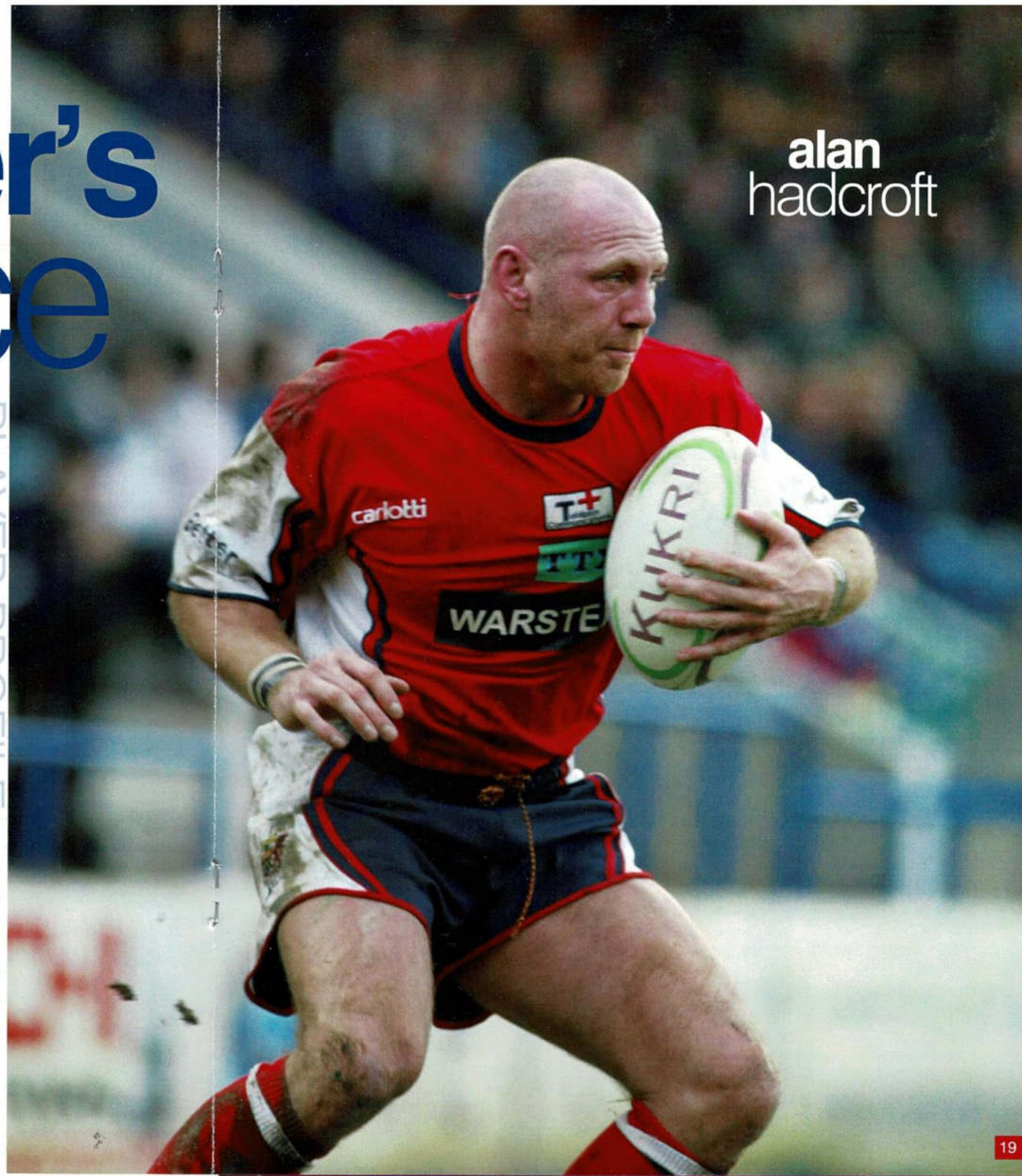
Pendlebury, an ex-Halifax coach himself, has spoken about the centre "leading by example" – and if that comes to fruition, supporters can expect to see plenty of hard-working, tough-tackling, dynamic Roughyeds performances this season.

Hadcroft, 28, who signed a one-year deal back in November year despite interest from Rochdale, Batley and Whitehaven, takes over in the role of captain from Gareth Barber amid strong competition for the role from the likes of Barber himself, club captain John Hough and last year's vice-captain Simon Svabic.

Pendlebury, though, preferred to opt for the Leigh-born man in order to bring a fresh impetus to a new-look team.

alan
hadcroft

PLAYER PROFILE





alan hadcroft

Continued...

his outlook, which I consider to be important too.

"He's also a player who, like Chris Percival and Andy Bailey, has experienced winning rugby at this level, having played for Leigh in a Grand Final."

With Gary Mercer having used three captains last year, Svabic and Ricky Bibey being the other two, Pendlebury opted to wipe the slate clean and start again – an understandable, move considering that 13 of the 23-strong squad didn't pull on a Roughyeds shirt last season.

It could have been a different story for the centre, who made 17 appearances for today's opponents in 2005, helping his side to the National League One Final Eliminator play-offs under the guidance of Anthony Farrell.

Having signed a contract for one year with the option of an additional 12 months, Hadcroft was joining a club that had made significant moves for the player in both the previous two seasons.

"He has a lot of experience at this level, and we see him as a ready-made replacement for Jon Goddard," explained Roughyeds chairman Chris Hamilton. "We tried to sign him before he left Leigh for Halifax and we wanted him again

"Alan leads by example, which is one of the main credentials I was looking for," Pendlebury explained. "He's very positive in

last year but he chose to take up a second-year option at The Shay.

"Now, we've got him at the third time of asking." Hadcroft runs a business with another ex-Halifax man, full-back Craig Dean, and played alongside fellow winter signing Wayne Corcoran at The Shay last season.

However, his decision to return over to this side of the Pennines was influenced largely by the Oldham chairman.

Mr Hamilton knows the player well. In 2002 Hadcroft, who was named as Leigh's player of the season that year, played in a National League representative team which took on New Zealand 'A' at Hilton Park – under the managerial guidance of the Oldham chairman.

The experience seems to have had a lasting, positive impact, at least as far as Oldham are concerned.

"I've got to know Chris well over the past few years and I've got a lot of time for him," said Hadcroft.

"I didn't sign for Oldham when they talked to me previously because I was younger, there was more money in the game and I was chasing it. This time I'm older and a bit wiser and I have not gone for the money." Which, for a club as cash-strapped as Oldham, is music to the ears.

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journalistic license

by Matthew Chambers

WHILE the adverse weather conditions of the past week meant that Oldham had to wait a little longer than expected to get the season started, there was enough rugby league action away from Spotland to satisfy even the most action-starved fan.

Super League XI kicked off in real style, putting to bed the disappointingly one-sided World Club Challenge of the previous week.

Wakefield took world champions (or, more accurately, World Club Challenge winners) Bradford all the way with a gutsy display at Belle Vue, Leeds squeezed past a Huddersfield side bolstered by the presence of rugby league legend Robbie Paul, and Salford caused something of a stir by turning over highly-fancied Warrington at the Halliwell Jones Stadium.

And of course, Les Catalans Dragons spectacularly defeated the (once) mighty Wigan, thanks in no small part to the wizardry of Kiwi Stacey Jones.

It's a season that promises much, where nothing can be safely taken for granted.

That applies equally to National League One. The bookies have Roughyeds marked down as prime relegation fodder this season.

At least, that's what is indicated by the 66-1 odds to win the Northern Rail Cup that favours the likes of Celtic Crusaders and Workington over John Pendlebury's men.

But given that the season is still in its embryonic stage, there's nothing wrong with breathing in that wind of optimism now sweeping across the channel from its origins in the south of France.

Many of the new boys in the Roughyeds squad looked impressive in pre-season. The Corcoran brothers, Ged and Wayne, stand out with their willingness to battle away effectively in a variety of positions; Lee Wingfield looks like a powerful runner in the second row, as does Andy Bailey; and Craig Dean, out of the game for three of years, looked like he'd never been away with a nonchalant performance at full-back against Leeds.

Add to that the experience and power of the returning Danny Guest, the try-scoring power of Chris Percival and the know-how of new captain Alan Hadcroft, who has played at this level all his career, and it's not difficult to make a case for Oldham at the very least avoiding relegation, despite the decimation of last year's squad in the winter.

Barrie McDermott, who opted against joining Pendlebury's quiet revolution in favour of Widnes, has gone a couple of steps further by predicting a Vikings v Roughyeds Grand Final (albeit with tongue at least half-inserted into cheek).

Then again, after the events of last weekend, who knows? If Oldham's enthusiastic young squad don't make it there, it won't be for lack of trying.

Matthew



the bootroom

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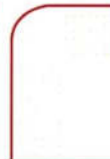
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Hi Kids

Welcome to all this year's Roughyed Kids, both old and new for what we hope will be a great season.

Firstly Carole and myself would like to apologise to all the "Kids" who were mascots last year. Unfortunately due to an error on the part of our match day photographs sponsor we have been unable to provide photographs for last year's mascots. We are still working on this and hope that we will still have them at some point. To those of you who are being patient, thank you. To others who have taken offence please remember that sometimes things are totally out of your control and, if you have any queries as to what is happening, we are only a phone call away.

Today's mascot is Alfie Baldwin. Alfie is 4 years old and goes to Thorpe Primary School; his favourite player is Gareth Barber.

Once again a big thank you to F R Elsworth Ltd for their sponsorship.

Good Luck to John and the lads,

See you soon,

Carole & Janet

SUPPORT GROUP NEWS

'Well done to all involved on the speedy and progressive manner in which the new squad of players has been assembled. There is a renewed confidence that there is a blend of some experience, a lot of youthful enthusiasm and a collective desire to play for Oldham under John Pendlebury. Good luck to you all.

QUIZ NIGHT - 21ST FEBRUARY

8.30pm IN THE SOCIAL CLUB LOUNGE organised.

Thanks to the generosity of a regular group of club enthusiasts who supported our quiz evenings during 2005, we raised £730 for the club funds. That, along with all other fund raising activities has been valuable income. Please continue to give all the support you can as the battle is not yet over.

Sheila

Today's Mascot

Alfie Baldwin

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Favourite player:

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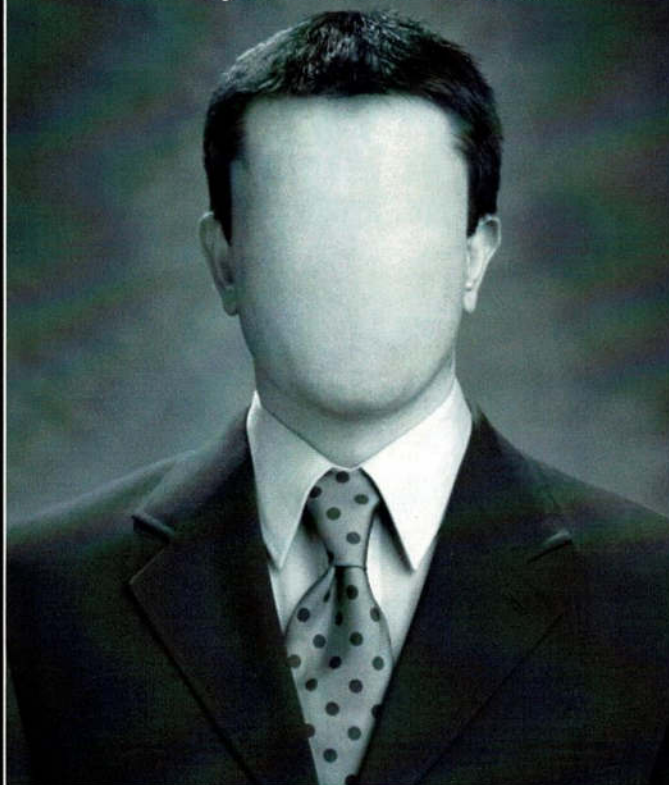


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oldham rfc squad 2006

Andy Bailey Born: 15.10.82

Previous clubs: Featherstone, Hull FC, Castleford Tigers.

Second-row forward signed from Castleford in the close season. Former Featherstone youngster who was brought to Hull FC by Shaun McRae at the age of 21, playing 10 Super League games for the Arle Birds. Currently studying a law degree at Bradford University.

Gareth Barber Born: 15.12.80

Previous clubs: Warrington Wolves.

Local lad who grew up playing alongside Leeds and Great Britain loose forward Kevin Sinfield, primarily a stand-off, but can fill in anywhere on the back line and also played regularly at hooker in 2005.

Mike Callan Born: 8.8.83

Previous clubs: Warrington Wolves, Leigh, Blackpool.

Joined Blackpool in National League Two last year but was released mid-season due to financial difficulties at the club. Man-of-the-match in the game against Oldham in the group stages of the Northern Rail Cup last year.

Ged Corcoran Born: 28.3.83

Previous clubs: Halifax, Limoux, Dewsbury. Grafting forward and a full Irish international, reared at Halifax alongside brother Wayne. Moved across the channel after a contractual dispute but returned last year to help the Rams to the National League Two Grand Final.

Wayne Corcoran Born: 10.7.85

Previous clubs: Halifax.

Irish international forward who made his Super League debut aged 18. Two shoulder operations have hampered his progress since, but has talent and could shine if given a run in the side.

Craig Dean Born: 20.10.76

Previous clubs: Halifax, Leigh, Swinton, Chorley. Experienced player who can operate at full-back as well as in the half-backs. Runs a business with team-mate Alan Haddock, and will be hoping to earn a contract stretching beyond the Northern Rail Cup.

Andy Gorey Born: 31.10.85

Young, enthusiastic full-back who made eight appearances on the wing last year and will be hoping to establish himself this time around. Former Royton Tigers youngster.

Dean Gorton Born: 16.1.84

Previous clubs: Salford.

Back-row forward signed by then Salford academy boss Steve McCormack. Never played in Super League, though he was the club's under-21s player of the year in 2004. Can also play in the three-quarters.

Danny Guest Born: 20.4.77

Previous clubs: Oldham Bears, Keighley, Chorley.

Huge 18-stone prop who made the return to Oldham after retiring at the end of the 2003 season following a serious knee ligament injury. Now in his fourth spell with the club.

Alan Haddock Born: 31.3.77

Previous clubs: Leigh, Halifax.

Robust centre known for his solid defence and strong running. Haddock is seen as a ready-made replacement for Jon Goddard. Toured New Zealand with a BARLA youth squad when he was 17.

Gareth Hayes Born: 15.6.85

Previous clubs: Salford.

Big Leigh-born prop who worked with John Pendlebury at Leigh under-18s. Went on the NW Counties under-16s Oceanic tour along with current team-mate Wayne Corcoran.

Ian Hodson Born: 23.10.81

Previous clubs: Leigh, Chorley, Swinton.

A plumber by trade, Hodson Hodson played for BARLA's Great Britain under-18s side in France before turning pro for Leigh, aged 18. Signed initially on loan from Swinton in April 2005, Hodson is an 80-minute player who is happy in the back row and at loose forward.

Chris Hough Born: 30.8.81

Previous clubs: Rochdale, Doncaster, Swinton, Blackpool.

Oldham-born scrum-half or stand-off who formed an excellent partnership with Marty Turner last season. Cousin of Roughyeds stalwart John.

John Hough Born: 14.4.76

Previous clubs: Warrington.

First player to commit himself to the new club when it was reformed in 1997. The hooker's contract runs until 2007, which will allow him to complete 10 years with the club. Can also play at loose forward and is adept at acting half-back.

James Kirkland Born: 17.7.85

Previous clubs: Wigan.

A product of the Oldham Academy, and a young hooker who should go far in the game. A former Waterhead junior and Wigan Warriors student, Kirkland is a tough tackler and excellent acting half-back.

Chris Maye Born: 28.2.84

Previous clubs: Wigan, St Helens, Halifax, Swinton.

Gained Super League experience through a loan spell at Halifax. Was Swinton's top try-scorer in 2004 and he earned himself a spot in the National League division two dream team.

Danny Nanyin Born: 8.10.84

Injury brought a premature halt to the young Wigan-born prop's impressive start to the 2005 season, but the brother of last year's top National League One points scorer Mick Nanyin managed to pick up where he left off.

Chris Percival Born: 25.12.1979

Previous clubs: Widnes, Leigh.

Played for Oldham in the last three games of the 2003 season before signing a two-year deal with Leigh. The centre or wing missed all last season with a broken leg, after scoring 20 tries in 20 games in 2004, six of them against Oldham. After 14 months out, will be looking to recapture his old form.

Mick Redford Born: 24.6.81

Previous clubs: Chorley, Blackpool.

Originally from the Leigh East amateur club, Redford can play second row, prop or centre. A wholehearted, crowd-pleasing figure at Blackpool, Leigh-born Redford has played around 100 professional games.

Mark Roberts Born: 9.11.82

Previous clubs: Wigan, Warrington.

Joined Oldham initially on loan from Warrington at the back end of the 2004 season. Initially used at centre, where he displays a turn of pace, Roberts also has sufficient upper-body strength to enhance the back row of the pack. Had an injury-plagued season in 2005.

Simon Svabic Born: 18.1.80

Previous clubs: Oldham Bears, Salford, Leigh. Goalkicking, playmaking half-back who earned Great Britain Academy honours while at Salford. Had a big impact at loose forward last season, and spent time skipping the side.

Alex Wilkinson Born: 9.10.82

Previous clubs: Bradford, London Broncos, Hull FC.

Locally-born 22-year-old centre, who has played nearly 40 Super League games. Played junior rugby with Royton Tigers before signing for Bradford Bulls. After a loan spell at Hull he was offered a two-year contract with the Arle Birds, but chose to go part-time with his home-town club to complete his degree in sports science.

Lee Wingfield Born: 9.6.81

Second row, signed from amateur club Leigh East, gave up the game in his early teens but returned aged 18 and soon established himself in the first team at East, playing alongside Oldham boss John Pendlebury's brother Gary. As one of BARLA's top back-row forwards, Wingfield has earned four overseas trips — two to Moscow, one to France and one to Australia.



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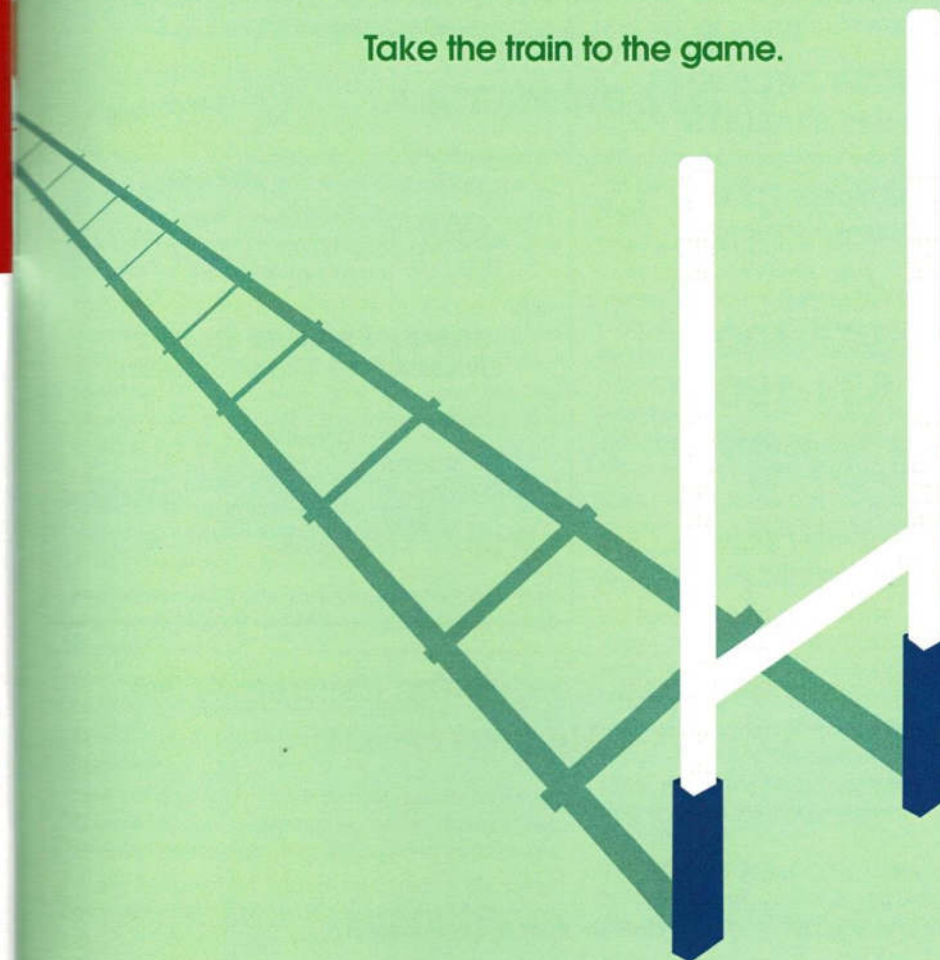
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last season's statistics

Oldham match stats for the 2005 season

NAME	PLAYED	TRIES	GOALS	POINTS
J.Goddard	19	7	0	28
W.Cowell	10	4	0	16
D.Munro	17	12	0	48
A.Wilkinson	22	5	0	20
N.Johnson	25	12	0	48
S.Svabic	23	9	10[+ 2 d-g]	58
M.Turner	23	8	84[+ 1 d-g]	201
P.Norman	14	2	0	8
G.Barber	22	8	1	33
D.Nanyn	10	0	0	0
R.Bibey	21	0	0	0
T.Glassie	23	6	0	24
C.Mataora	24	3	0	12
C.Farrimond	4	0	0	0
G.Dodd	26	17	0	68
M.Elswood	13	2	0	8
J.Kirkland	15	0	0	0
J.Hough	20	1	0	4
D.Wilson	22	3	0	12
S.Haughton	14	7	0	28
M.Roberts	13	2	0	8
A.Gorey	7	3	0	12
K.Brennan	2	0	0	0
I.Hodson	15	1	0	4
D.Tootill	2	0	0	0
R.Mills	8	1	0	4
C.Hough	13	3	4[+ 1 d-g]	21
A.Sharples	9	0	0	0
A.Sands	2	0	0	0

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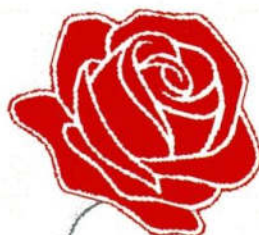
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NATIONAL LEAGUE TALK

with GARETH WALKER of RUGBY LEAGUER & LEAGUE EXPRESS



A STEAMING START!

THE Northern Rail Cup defied a miserable weekend on the weather front to kick off in promising style.

A host of bumper crowds watched some tense tussles, as most teams were forced to battle against the wind and rain for their opening fixtures.

That was no more relevant than at Widnes, where almost 4,000 saw the competition favourites grind out a tough 18-10 win over NL2 side Swinton Lions.

Vastly experienced prop Terry O'Connor led the Vikings from the front in a game that was still locked at 0-0 at half-time.

There was a similarly low scoring contest in West Cumbria, where Whitehaven battled past local rivals Workington to win 10-0 at the Recreation Ground in front of an attendance of 4,010.

And almost 3,000 saw York City Knights begin their season at a higher level with a 2-32 home loss to Hull Kingston Rovers.

The Knights' chances of victory were hampered severely by the fifth minute dismissal of former Robins prop Jamie Bovill, who was red carded for a high tackle.

Two of the most head turning results came at Gateshead and Featherstone, where Barrow and Sheffield respectively recorded impressive away wins.

A preciously young Barrow side started life under new coach Paul Creary with a superb win 47-24 win at the Thunderdome, while the Eagles' more

experienced charges also made it a dream beginning for Gary Wilkinson by winning 38-18 at their NL2 rivals.

There was also a great debut for Welsh newcomers Celtic Crusaders. Local winger Paul Morgan was among the top performers in a 50-10 win at Hemel Hempstead. In the same group, London Skolars earned a hard-fought opening victory at St Albans Centurions.

Elsewhere, Dewsbury Rams prevailed in the Heavy Woollen derby against Batley, with two Francis Maloney tries helping them to a 25-18 win.

Leigh started life back in the National Leagues with a 36-6 triumph at Blackpool on Friday night, while two tries from Craig Lawton helped the newly titled Doncaster Lakers to a 44-26 win against Hunslet.

Halifax beat Keighley 38-10 with winger James Haley scoring twice in his 50th consecutive appearance, while the Rochdale versus Oldham game was postponed and due to be played in midweek.

The second round of fixtures throws up some equally intriguing clashes. The biggest clash is undoubtedly at Leigh, where the Centurions host Widnes in a match that will give the first indication of their respective strengths.

London Skolars host Celtic Crusaders, while Batley Bulldogs take on Doncaster and Oldham face Halifax. The scene looks set for some more terrific matches.

* A team-by-team preview of the Northern Rail Cup can be found in the February edition of Rugby League World, out now

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2006 fixtures

DATE	OPPONENTS	CUP	VENUE	K. O.	RESULT	W/L	ATT
22/1/06	Rochdale Hornets	Law Cup	A	14:00	42-8	L	1,114
27/1/06	Leeds Rhino's	Friendly	H	20:00	16-8	W	3,191
15/2/06	Rochdale Hornets	NR Cup	A	19:45	18-16	L	920
19/2/06	Halifax RLFC	NR Cup	H	15:00			
26/2/06	Keighley Cougars	NR Cup	H	15:00			
5/3/06	Halifax RLFC	NR Cup	A	3:00			
12/3/06		POWERGEN CC 3RD RD					
19/3/06	Rochdale Hornets	NR Cup	H	15:00			
26/3/06	Keighley Cougars	NR Cup	A	15:00			
2/4/06		POWERGEN CC 4TH RD					
9/4/06	Hull Kingston Rovers	NL1	H	15:00			
14/4/06	Rochdale Hornets	NL1	A	15:00			
17/4/06	Doncaster Lakers	NL1	H	15:00			
30/4/06	Leigh Centurions	NL1	A	15:00			
14/5/06	Whitehaven	NL1	H	15:00			
21/5/06		POWERGEN CC 5TH RD					
28/5/06	Hull Kingston Rovers	NL1	A	15:00			
4/6/06	Halifax RLFC	NL1	A	15:00			
		POWERGEN CHALLENGE CUP QUARTER FINALS	POWERGEN CC				
11/6/06	York City Knights	NL1	H	15:00			
25/6/06	York City Knights	NL1	A	15:00			
2/7/06	Rochdale Hornets	NL1	H	15:00			
9/7/06	Widnes Vikings	NL1	A	15:00			
21/7/06	Batley Bulldogs	NL1	H	19:45			
30/7/06	Doncaster Lakers	NL1	A	15:00			
		POWERGEN CHALLENGE CUP SEMI FINALS	POWERGEN CC				
6/8/06	Halifax RLFC	NL1	H	15:00			
13/8/06	Batley Bulldogs	NL1	A	15:00			
20/8/06	Widnes Vikings	NL1	H	15:00			
26/8/06		POWERGEN CHALLENGE CUP FINALS	POWERGEN CC				
3/9/06	Leigh Centurions	NL1	H	15:00			
10/9/06	Whitehaven	NL1	A	15:00			
17/9/06	LHF Healthplan Play Offs						
24/9/06	LHF Healthplan Play Offs						
1/10/06	LHF Healthplan Play Offs						
8/10/06	LHF Healthplan Grand Final & Play Off Final						

Key

NR Cup - Northern Rail Cup
Powergen CC - Powergen Challenge Cup
NL1 - National League Division 1

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Positive Energy

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.