

game line-up

OLDHAM R.L.F.C

OLDHAM SQUAD	Played	HULL KR SQUAD
ANDY BAILEY		BEN COCKAYNE
GARETH BARBER		JON STEEL
MIKE CALLAN		DAMIEN COUTURIER
GED CORCORAN		JON GODDARD
WAYNE CORCORAN		BYRON FORD
CRAIG DEAN		SCOTT MURRELL
ANDY GOREY		JAMES WEBSTER
DEAN GORTON		MAKALI AIZUE
DANNY GUEST		BEN FISHER
ALAN HADCROFT		DAVID TANGATA-TOA
GARETH HAYES		IAIN MORRISON
IAN HODSON		MICHAEL SMITH
CHRIS HOUGH		TOMMY GALLAGHER
JOHN HOUGH		FRANCIS STEPHENSON
JAMES KIRKLAND		GARETH PRICE
CHRIS MAYE		LEROY RIVETT
DANNY NANYN		JAMES GARMSTON
CHRIS PERCIVAL		
MICK REDFORD		
MARK ROBERTS		
SIMON SVABIC		
ALEX WILKINSON		
LEE WINGFIELD		

HULL KINGSTON ROVERS

match officials

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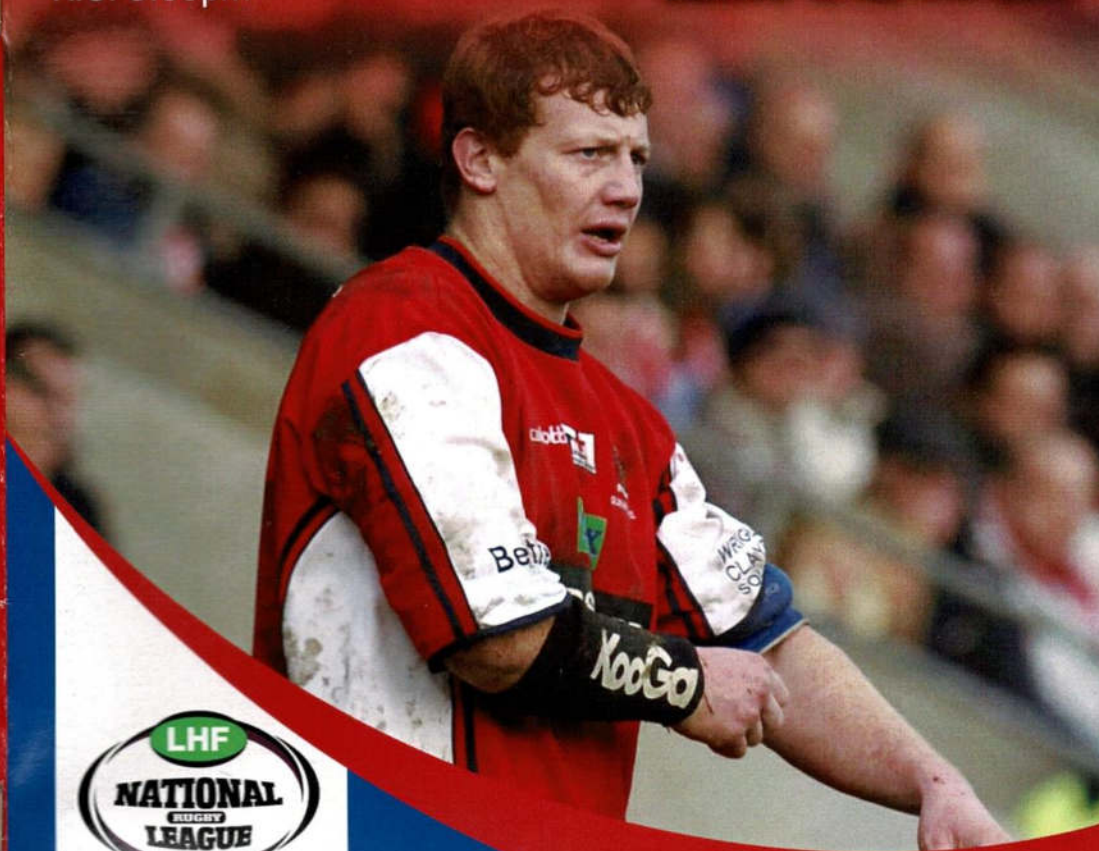
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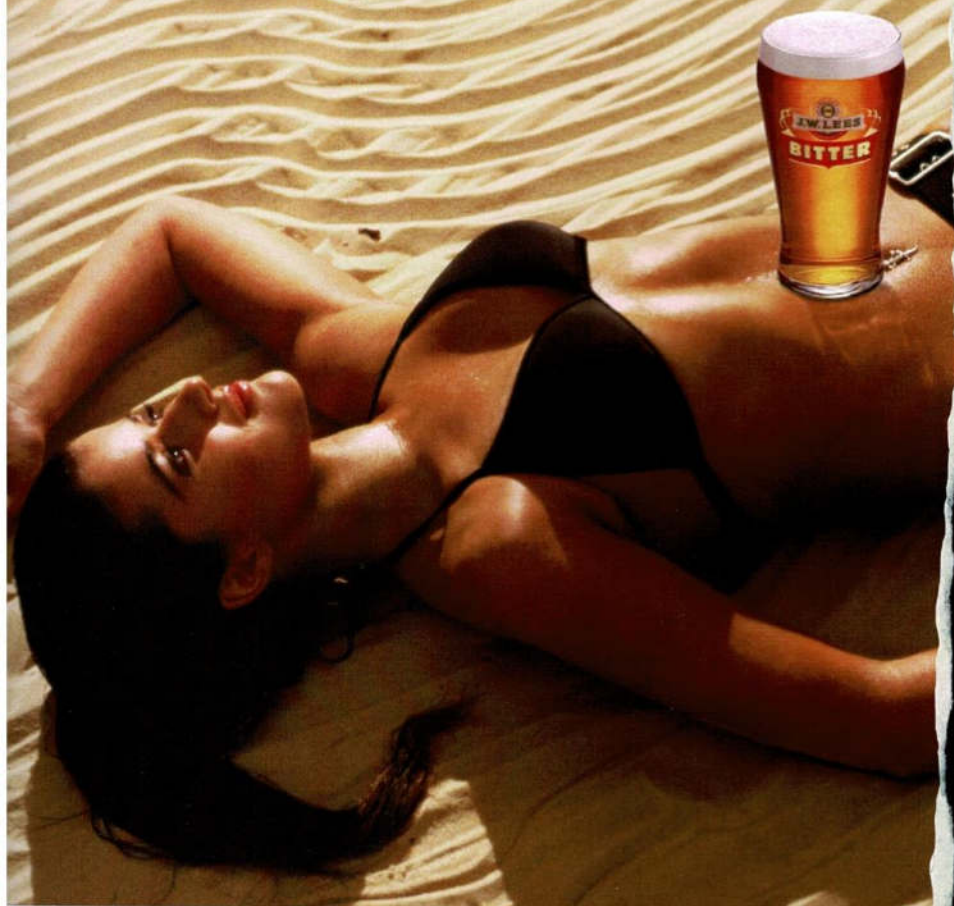
CHRIS DEAKIN
AND GUESTS

player profile

mick redford

Following in his families footsteps • p18

NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL A BEER BELLY.



JOHN WILLIE
TO HIS MATES
jwlees.co.uk

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Club Records - 1998-2005

Trans-Penine Cup

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 Syabic v Swinton Lions, 10 - Apr 6th 2003 at Boundary Park

POINTS IN A MATCH: Gareth Barber v Dewsbury Rams, 26 - Apr 2nd 2002 at Hurst Cross
(7 goals, 3 tries)

DROP GOALS IN A MATCH: Neil Roden v Workington Town, 2 - Dec 17th 2000 at Derwent Park
John Braddish v Hull KR, 2 - Dec 16th 2001 at New Craven Park

HIGHEST SCORE/WINNING MARGIN: v Yorks Wasps, 70-6 - Apr 1st 2001 at Huntington Stadium
v Queensbury (amt), 64-0 - Jan 28th 2001 RLCC 3rd Rnd at Boundary Park

The views expressed in this matchday magazine do not necessarily reflect those of the management and staff of Oldham RLFC (1997) Ltd.

CLUB DIRECTORY

The Roughyeds
Oldham Rugby League
Football Club (1997) Limited

14 Waterloo Street
Oldham OL1 1SQ

Telephone: 0161 628 3677

Fax: 0161 627 5700

Club Shop: 0161 627 2141

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Christopher Hamilton

DIRECTORS

Christopher Hamilton

Sean Whitehead

HEAD COACH

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Fred Ashworth 1926-39

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Harry Ogden 1940-56

Alan Davies 1950-62

Frank Stirrup 1950-61

Bernard Ganley 1950-61

Sid Little OBE 1951-59

John Eddy 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
Ltd, Phil Burdge and all concerned for the use
of photographs. (www.digisport.co.uk)

www.roughyeds.co.uk



in the chair

with Chris Hamilton

As the saying goes "things can only get better". That is certainly true after last weekend when we gave what can be best described as a very poor performance against a team from a lower division who had hardly been setting the world alight with their early season performances.

We were behind the eight ball right from the word go and to add insult to injury (excuse the pun) we picked up several more serious injuries to what is already a stretched squad.

We have been trying for some time to add to the squad but at the present time a lot of clubs are suffering themselves with injuries and are obviously reluctant to let players go - even on loan and leave themselves short of cover. The forthcoming Easter period is only compounding the matter with all clubs facing two games in four days. The other thing at the moment is that nearly all the injuries we are picking up seem to be serious ones and as we stand at present we look like we have lost Danny Guest and Alan Hadcroft for the season.

Today however is the start of the National League One campaign and we start off on the same points as every other team in the division!

At this moment in time we have not lost a league game and although it is easy to say we must use this season start to put to one side what has, undoubtedly, been a poor start, and use today as a launch pad for better things to come this season.

It is easy when facing problems to buckle and hide and it is only those who have sufficient character inside who come out fighting and today I expect the seventeen men who pull on an Oldham shirt to come out fighting.

There are, and will continue to be, lots of people who would like to see the club suffering but we already have a track record of proving the doubters wrong and if we must do it again then so be it.

Nobody likes to see a performance like last week but the players have worked hard in training and we hope to see that reflected in a much improved performance today.

It certainly won't be easy facing a Hull KR side who have had the opposite sort of start to us in so much as they have been very consistent in their performances and results and there is no doubt that they will want to get their league campaign off to a good start.

There will be something like eleven coachloads of fans here today who will without doubt be very vocal in their support and we must react to that in a positive manner.

The Hull KR club have made their intentions clear for the season and we too must set a platform.

As ever your support can make a difference and we would ask you to please get behind the team in their efforts to provide you with a winning start.

Enjoy the game.

Chris

Chris Hamilton



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direct from the dug out

with Steve Deakin



I would like to extend a warm welcome to Hull K R today for this first league match of the season, and especially to welcome my close friend Justin Morgan.

It is ironic that we are to renew our rivalry that began in France where I was coach of U T C and Justin of Toulouse.

Our visitors today will undoubtedly be one of the favourites for the top spot this season but despite the disappointment of our performance at Barrow last week and with it the loss of revenue which could have provided replacement players, we shall make every endeavour to make life difficult for our opponents as we will do in every game we play this year.

Injuries once again mean we don't have everyone available and the likelihood is, even with a prevailing wind, that it will be two to three weeks before we start to get these players back. This however opens up the door for other players and gives them the opportunity to show what they can do.

I would like to assure everybody that all the players are working extremely hard and that in this particular area, certainly, there will be no team in this competition that does more than we do. In talking about injuries we wish speedy recoveries to Danny Guest and also to Alan Hadcroft who is busying himself in

assisting with the coaching of the players and still attends every coaching session. This is indicative of the quality of the people we have on our playing staff and I am sure that you will come to appreciate their efforts throughout this campaign

I certainly hope you enjoy the game today to the extent that you want to come back regularly and bring others with you and also that the team reflects your own hopes and ambitions for the club.

All the best,

Deaks

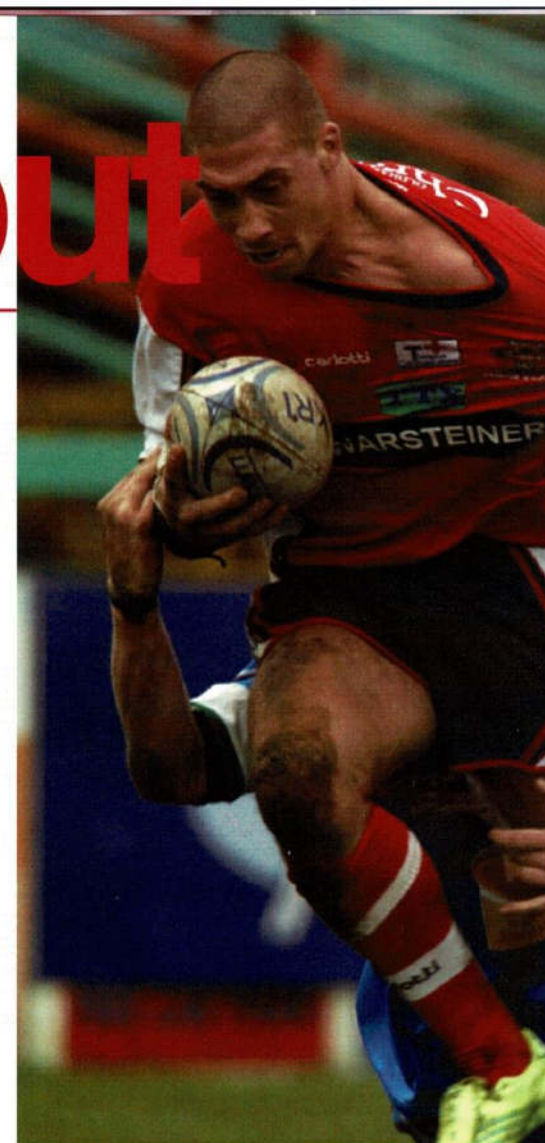


QUESTION & ANSWERS

with Steve Deakin

On this page in future programmes will be individual player stats from previous matches or letters to our coach with an answer from Steve. If you want to ask Steve 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 Steve can't answer it.



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roger and out

by ROGER HALSTEAD

ONE of our sport's greatest ambassadors -- and a true gentleman -- will almost certainly be here at Boundary Park today as part of the Hull Kingston Rovers' official party.

o the older Oldham supporters who can go back in time to the 1950s and 1960s.

But for the benefit of younger fans let me tell you a little bit about the grand old man of Craven Park, Colin Hutton, and the part he played, unwittingly perhaps, in the fortunes and, indeed, the misfortunes of Oldham Rugby League Club.

Fate decreed that Colin would twice be a central figure in two of Oldham's most memorable matches. First, let's deal with Oldham's good fortune. In 1957, when the Roughyeds last played in the championship final, Colin was Hull's full-back and it was his failure to convert a late try by Stan Cowan at a packed Odsal that enabled Oldham to lift the championship trophy by the narrowest of margins, 15-14.

In his excellent book, 'Oldham RLFC, the Complete History', Michael Turner wrote: "The conversion was not too difficult and was well within Hutton's capabilities. The crowd was hushed as the kick was taken, but it was the Oldham supporters who were left cheering as the ball sailed wide. Many people couldn't look as the unfortunate Hutton took that last kick at goal."

Seven years on, by which time Colin had hung up his boots, moved across the city to Rovers and taken up a career in coaching, he was in charge of the Robins when they met Oldham in that never-to-be-forgotten Challenge Cup semi-final series of 1964.

It was 5-5 at Headingley; 17-14 to Oldham at Swinton (abandoned after 11 minutes of extra time); and 12-2 to Rovers in the second replay at Huddersfield.

Colin would tell me years later: "I must be the only coach in the history of the game who was in charge of a side that was beaten in a semi-final yet still went on to Wembley."

His Odsal heartbreak turned to Fartown joy --- with Oldham involved on each occasion.

For the record the teams in that second replay lined up like this:

Oldham: Dyson; Sims, Donovan, Smethurst, Simms; Nestor, Pycroft; Bott, McIntyre, Wilson, Robinson, Whitehead, Major.

Hull KR: Kellett; Paul, Major, Elliott, Blackmore; Burwell, Bunting; Bath, Flanagan, Tyson, Palmer, Clark, Poole.

Colin went on to become a leading figure in the game as coach, administrator and Rugby League Council official --- and he was duly honoured at the annual dinner of the Rugby League Writers' Association at Headingley last November when he received the association's Order of Merit for services to the game. He was in good company, previous winners having included top administrators like David Howes, Maurice Oldroyd, David Oxley and Harry Jepson and leading players such as Roger Millward, Trevor Foster, Alex Murphy, Gary Schofield, Lee Crooks and Eric Ashton.

There was even an Oldham connection when Colin received his trophy because it was the Arthur Brooks memorial trophy, put up by the Writers' in memory of the former Daily Mirror and Sunday Mirror rugby league man, who for many years lived in Saddleworth and worked on weekly newspapers in Tameside before moving up in the world.

Arthur became a legend in rugby league journalism and he was a pal and mentor of mine when I first started out on the Oldham Chronicle more than 40 years ago.

He gave me many a helping hand, so it was perhaps an appropriate twist of fate that on the night Arthur's trophy was presented to Colin (coach of Oldham's opponents when I covered my first match for the Chronicle in the '64 semi series) I received a special RLWA award to recognise four decades of rugby league work for the same paper.

During the course of those four decades I frequently had dealings with Colin, in his various capacities, as well as the Hull Daily Mail man on Rovers at that time, John Sexton.

Colin and I remained in rugby league; John went on to become one of the country's leading horse racing journalists and a £250,000 winner on a TV quiz show. Oh to follow in John's footsteps... yet I was proud and privileged to walk in Colin's on the night he and I had our special moments at the RLWA dinner.

This adopted son of Humberside is a great rugby league man. And the city of Hull --- on both sides of the river --- can be proud of him.

ROGER AND OUT.

with Ian Wilson

What an absolute farce that the game is not to be able to play its Challenge Cup Final this year at Wembley.



And there is, some may say for a change, no blame whatsoever to be attached to the RFL for this disgraceful state of affairs. I trust that there is significant compensation due from either the builders and/or the stadium authorities.

I must admit that I am personally now in something of a quandary as a result of the decision to take the final to Twickenham. I can certainly see the logic - that there are lots of people who have already booked their accommodation in the London area, in particular. I have never yet been to Twickenham, however, and have no desire, to be honest, to do so, since it means putting money into the hands of the English RU authorities. I admit to being an unreconstructed anti-RU dinosaur! I was extremely happy to go to both Murrayfield and Cardiff - indeed I would have been very happy personally for Cardiff to become the long-term home of the occasion - I wonder if this might now still be a possibility, given that Wembley has failed to meet its end of the deal for 2006?

That is another issue, however. I am left with my tickets for August 26, and a venue I don't wish to visit! What a dilemma!

To matters nearer home, we, of course, will not be going to the Challenge Cup

Final, wherever it is played. If nothing else, last week's hammering at Barrow, if he hadn't realized it before, will have shown Steve Deakin just how much has to be done if we are to have any chance of even being vaguely competitive in NL1. It was a thoroughly depressing afternoon for all connected with the club, with the serious injuries to add to the lack of skill on the pitch. I must admit, though, with my RL hat on, rather than my Roughyeds one, that it was good to see the Barrow side, consisting as it did very largely of committed local lads, play as well as they did - it is a proper rugby league town, and it would be great to see them progress over the next few years.

What was particularly concerning from the Oldham point of view, however, is that a number of long-time stalwart and loyal supporters who happened to be standing near me were talking about giving the up-coming games a miss - some even though they were season-ticket holders - as a result of our current performances and predicament. I do so hope that they changed their minds once the immediate disappointment was behind them. The chance of a financial lifeline in the form of a draw at Leeds, say, in the next round having been thrown away, it can only put us even further into the mire if the hard core of support, long-suffering as it has had to be, begins to fade away. Of course, that will only be prevented if we are able to see some signs of improvement on the field - but, as I fear I may have said earlier this season, that will require a degree of patience and fortitude which only Oldham supporters over the past few years [or do I mean decades?!!] have shown themselves capable of.

40/20VISION

in yer face

with Geoff Cooke

I ran into my old friend Iva Slateloose last Monday. He was telling me he'd just received a letter from the R.F.L. that very morning entitled Wembley 26.08.06 "BACK IN OUR HANDS", an invitation to apply for a hospitality package at this year's Challenge Cup Final.

Iva said that at last we've found something we can beat the Australians at, namely delivering a new stadium on time and to budget (as in Millennium Stadium, Cardiff). He thinks the best we can hope for from Multiplex is the chance to watch any one of twenty films now showing like you get at Cineworld, Ashton. After all that's what a Multiplex is, isn't it?

Iva said he'd also been collecting some journalistic bloopers: like Andy Lynch playing prop for Bradford. A legend in his own lynchtime perhaps? Similarly he noted that in a recent game Celtic Crusaders had defeated ST. ALBANS 76-0. Perhaps the lads from Hertfordshire should team up with the local Oldham Sunday League soccer side 'Big Shorts' since they are obviously built a bit on the large side!

Iva also noted an Oldham Chronicle gem: a recent editorial began "there's only one word to describe the new Oldham library-breathhtaking..." Except the front page banner headline read 'STUNNING'. So, more than one word to describe the library then?

Iva went on to tell me he'd been doing some research into dyslexia and had come across the following piece written by a sufferer: "I cdnuolt blieve that I clould aulactly uesdnatnrd what I was rdgieg. The phaonmneal pweor of the human mind aoccdnrig to a



rscheearch flleow at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deson't mtaer in what order the ltteers in a word are, the onlyiprmoatn thing is that the frist and lsat ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can still raed it wouthit a porbelm. This is bcuseae the human mind deos not raed evey ltteter by istlef, but the word as a wlohe. amzanig huh? Yaeh and I awlyas thought slpeling was ipmorantt!

Iva was also telling me about the White House. After numerous rounds of: "We don't know if Osama is still alive," Osama himself decided to send George Bush a letter in his own handwriting to let him know he was still in the game. Bush opened the letter and it appeared to contain a coded message:

370HSSV-0773H

Bush was baffled, so he mailed it to Condi Rice. Condi and her aides had no clue either so they sent it to the FBI. No-one could solve it so it went to the CIA, then to NSA. With no clue as to its meaning they eventually asked Britain's MI6 for help. MI6 cabled the White House; "Tell the President he's holding the message upside down."

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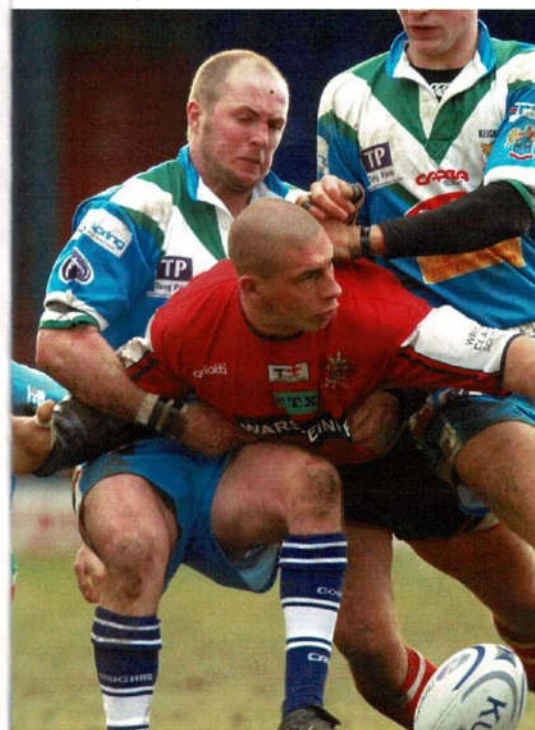
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club corner

with Nigel Marland

Well yet another disappointing fortnight all in all. The win at Keighley was certainly exciting but unfortunately there is little positive to take out of the disastrous defeat in the Challenge Cup at Barrow.

It was a very disappointing performance and reminded me somewhat of the defeat at Halifax earlier in the season. Both poor performances followed adversity and it would appear that heads are dropping when things are going badly.

There is no way we can discount our horrendous luck as far as injuries go, losing Mike Callan overnight in a car accident, Gareth Hayes after two minutes with a head injury followed by very serious injuries soon afterwards to Andy Bailey and Alan Hadcroft. On top of that Wayne Corcoran was suffering with a longstanding groin injury early on and stand in second row Alex Wilkinson received a head injury. The news as I write is that our captain Alan Hadcroft is out for the season, it will be at least two weeks and could be up to six for Andy Bailey and Wayne is having to have a scan on his groin. Allied to this of course Craig Dean's contract has run out and he is still undecided about his future and

certainly will not be available for the next month or so.

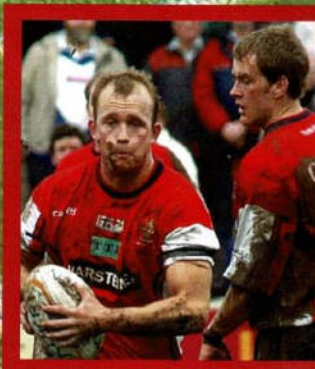
On the brighter side it looks as if Ged Corcoran could be back for today's game and with a bit of much needed luck Chris Campbell will have decided that his future lies at Oldham. Whatever the final outcome of all of this Steve will have a monumental task in

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fielding a competitive side today and getting the players into a positive state of mind, but if anybody can do it will be Steve Deakin. I have to say personally that I thought Jimmy Kirkland, Chris Percival and Ian Hodson gave their all against Barrow and deserve congratulations for not allowing circumstances to affect their own performances.

As you have probably read elsewhere we are continuing the Prediction League that was such good fun last year and raised valuable money for the club. Although the competition started with today's matches it is not too late to join. If you join before the Doncaster game deadline you will be given the average points scored by competitors for week 1 and if you join before April 25 which is the final closing date you will get the average points scored in weeks 1 to 3. This will mean that you are not fighting a losing battle from the start and still have a good chance of victory. Rules and prizes are similar to last year except that the final First Prize amount will not be decided until we know the final number of participants. Another change is that you can now enter results weekly as well as by half or full season, but this can only be done by e mail to orlfcpredictionleague20006@yahoo.co.uk. Whichever way you choose to play £20 should be paid in to the Club offices as a s a p. where you can pick up an application form and fixture list. These can also be downloaded from the website but monies

should still go to the club. Hopefully this will be even more successful than last year and I will use this column to frequently update fans with the state of play. Another £40,000 has just been paid to the Inland Revenue and with falling gates any extra cash is vital to the club so please join in and have a bit of fun at the same time as helping your club.

On the subject of the £40,000 I personally feel that Sean and Chris are receiving very little thanks and support, as they pay off the debt despite everything appearing to be going against the club both on and off the field. Despite all the promises they are the main players in a very small band fighting to save the club and they deserve our genuine thanks and support.

I personally hope our home fans give Jon Goddard a good welcome back here today as I feel he always gave his all for the club. At the same time I hope we shock everybody and put last week behind us for good and send Jon back home with losing pay.

Enjoy the game,

Nigel

AROUND & ABOUT

with The Heritage Trust



Mel Maninga

"In the early days of the Northern Union there was no greater attraction on the fixture list than a visit from one of the overseas touring teams. This, of course, meant the "Kangaroos" of Australia or the "Kiwis" of New Zealand.

In a future publication I hope to give a comprehensive account of all the Oldham games against our Antipodean rivals, but here I will just list the results with a brief résumé of the first encounters."

What is written above is an extract from Michael Turner's book OLDHAM RLFC, THE COMPLETE HISTORY published in 1997. Well! It has taken some time but that "comprehensive account" is finally on its way.

And, a comprehensive account it is too! Packed with fabulous action-shots and match reports, backed up by lots and lots of both interesting facts and photographs, this will be the most complete publication of any rugby league club side's battles against both Australian and New Zealand touring sides.

Most of the greats, from Messenger through to Meninga, played for either the Kangaroos or Kiwis at Watersheddings. Churchill, Gasnier, Clay, Muir, Mossop, Langlands, Wright, Todd, Smith, Tatana, Elias, O'Connor, the list is almost endless.

The match at Watersheddings was

more often than not one of the tour highlights; the visitors from the former colonies assured of a warm welcome, both on, and off, the field.

Many of the matches, until now, long forgotten, have been brought back to life. For instance Oldham twice played the Australians on two occasions on the same tour! During the 1921-22 tour the Roughyeds avenged a 6-15 defeat in November with a 15-5 victory in January. However, during the 1933-34 tour both matches played in September and January resulted in 30 points plus hidings for the Oldham men. (Yes! September to January, now that's what we call a tour).

Not that the Aussies or Kiwis always

had it all their own way. Both had to wait until their third attempt to register a win against the Roughyeds and I'm sure that many of our older supporters can still remember the great Oldham team of 1956 giving the Aussies a right walloping! And in more recent times, when an Australian victory against any British side became almost a formality, what about Oldham's mid-week match against the 1986 lot? David Topliss' led Roughyeds caused more than just one or two anxious moments for the undefeated Kangaroos! These games, more often than not, produced great drama, entertainment, fabulous scoring moves, power and passion with several dismissals thrown in for good measure.

Mind you, without the involvement of two Oldham players and one of the club's officials it is likely that rugby league tours would never have materialised and that the sport in both Australia and New Zealand would have been strangled at birth.

Whilst the book concentrates on each of the incoming 'rugby league' tours sandwiched between 1907 and 1986, it will also cover the match played against the 1888-89 New Zealand Native Football Team, easier remembered as the Maoris, who, in-turn, were the forerunners to the All-Blacks, the earliest ambassadors of the greatest rugby playing nation on earth. This first-ever rugby touring side played Oldham (then a union side) at the old Clarksfield ground, their 63rd match of a massive 108 game itinerary. Did they really play in bare feet?

Also included will be stories of various matches that Oldham played against other 'international' opposition; French club sides who visited Watersheddings, the infamous 'Battle of Carcassonne', Oldham's participation in the

1997 World Club Championships (both here and in Australia), and more recently matches against enterprising South Sydney and Manly representative sides.

Oldham RL Heritage Trust

A further note from the Heritage Trust who will be the publishers:

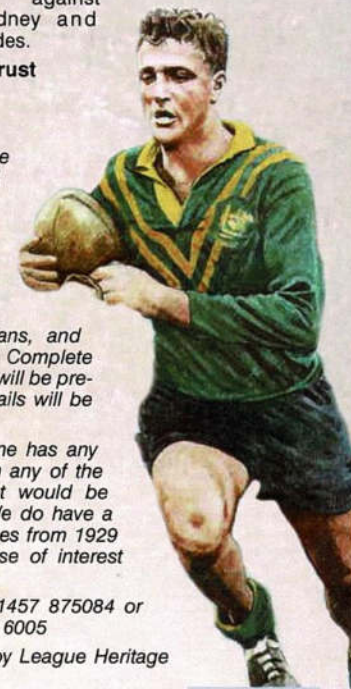
This exciting new book (which will be published in time for Christmas) is sure to be in great demand, especially by Oldham fans, and like Oldham RLFC, The Complete History and Roughyeds it will be pre-orderable. Obviously, details will be given in due course.

In the meantime, if anyone has any special memorabilia from any of the tours, the Heritage Trust would be glad to hear from you. We do have a copy of all the programmes from 1929 onwards but anything else of interest would be welcome.

Contact: Brian Walker: 01457 875084 or Michael Turner: 0161 620 6005

Or visit the Oldham Rugby League Heritage Trust website: -

www.owl-heritagetrust.org.uk



Reg Gasnier



Oldham vs New Zealand 1955

Paintings of Mel Maninga and Reg Gasnier by Stuart Smith and the painting of Oldham v NZ by Steve Bennett

visiting today

HULL KR

Ben Cockayne At the start of his full second season in the programme Cockayne is already making folk sit up and take notice. An attacking full-back with bags of pace he is also a more than useful goal-kicker and looks set for success in the game.

Damien Couturier Couturier is one of two players who came from Toulouse to Craven Park with new boss Justin Morgan. The French international has taken his time to settle in but now is comfortable with the squad. Probably the best of him is yet to come as the pitches dry out. And he is also a top-notch goal kicker.

Jon Goddard Labelled as an outstanding prospect from his very early days Goddard's arrival at Craven Park has seen the lad from Castleford and Oldham settle in well. With bags of pace he has the ability to find the try line and also to give his winger that vital extra bit of time which can mean the difference between a try and not scoring.

Scott Murrell Tipped by head coach Justin Morgan to be a stand-out player in National League One Scott Murrell is now beginning to show why he earned that accolade.

Quick, with good hands and an eye for the break, he is adding flair to the back division.

David Tangata-Toa A powerful unit who has an uncompromising style in the Robins front row. Is likely to be a huge hit for the Robins this season with ambitions of playing in the Super League in 2006.

James Garmston A former Embassy Longhill and Myton Warriors junior, James is highly rated by many at the club and will be looking to continue his successful start to 2005 with more appearances in the team.

Jimmy Walker A utility player, Walker can play in nearly all of the back positions and is equally at home in the back-row or at hooker. His versatility has certainly been utilised by the Robins where Walker has filled a number of key roles.

Makali Aizue Makali Aizue signed a one-year contract in May 2003 and has since become a big favourite with the fans thanks to his blockbusting displays either from the bench or when included in the starting line-up. Can play in several positions and is a dual international for Papua New Guinea having played both League and Rugby Union for his country.

Michael Smith Michael is renowned for his sheer aggression and power, is a superb off loader in the tackle and brings real quality, experience and competition to an already formidable forward pack. And this year there is a renewed enthusiasm about his game.

Paul Parker Paul can play anywhere across the three-quarter line but played the majority of his rugby for Rovers in the centres. Paul adds pace and strength along with excellent defensive and attacking abilities to the Rovers three-quarter line.

Andy Ellis Andy Ellis joined the Robins Academy side towards the end of the 2002 season and signed a professional contract with the Robins in February 2003. He is a former Robins Academy Player of the Year.

Very fast from dummy half and a smooth passer of the ball. Good support player who has an excellent try scoring record and one of the brightest young talents at the club.

Ben Fisher A capture from Division One rivals Halifax, Fisher is a sound hooker with bags of go-forward and an eye for a break. Was on the shopping list of several Super League clubs, including Bradford Bulls before he decided to switch to Craven Park.

Byron Ford Ford can play in the three-quarter line or at fullback and has already shown the fans his electrifying pace and handling and in the last two matches has scored nine tries.

Dwayne Barker Barker, who's versatility can see him slot into a host of positions in the backs as well as at loose forward has already gained Super League experience with spells on-loan at

Hull and London in the last two seasons and has collected a host of honours in Academy rugby.

James Webster Webster's attitude in training and performance on the pitch has already been recognised by the club who have made the 25-year-old their captain and they hope he can continue to unlock opposition defences this year.

Jason Netherton A tough-tackling, strong-running player who has all the correct attributes to be a top-class second-rower and will be a key figure in the Robins pack.

Jon Steel Steel, a Scotland Rugby Union international, is an extremely pacey winger who started his stint at Rovers by scoring five tries against London Skolars. Steel will be looking to continue that form and help contribute to the team's success and achieve the ambition for both parties of playing in Super League.

Leroy Rivett Assured of a place in the history books by being the first player to score four tries in a Challenge Cup Final at Wembley, Rivett is a sound player on both attack and defence. Stronger than he might look he will always drop back to help the forwards and can be relied upon to make a telling break or two. And as one of the senior players his experience is useful when the going gets tough.

Gareth Morton Morton's kicking ability plus his versatility in being able to play virtually anywhere in the back division as well in the back-row has made him a more than useful member of the squad.

Francis Stephenson Experience in bucket loads was what Rovers got when they signed Stephenson. Francis is the son of former Wakefield legend The son of former Dewsbury and Wakefield legend Nigel Stephenson, Francis had a glittering junior career and then after joining he scored the match winning try in the 1998 NFP Grand Final, a try that ultimately took Wakefield into Super League.

Iain Morrison The Scottish international jumped at the chance to join Rovers when his career was

put on hold at Huddersfield Giants. The second-row man might not be the biggest guy on the field but his heart is up there with the best. A player who likes to defend, Iain is still capable of making telling breaks and a lot of opponents would tell you that he tackles well above his weight.

Philip Joseph Another former Huddersfield Giants man who moved on. In Phil's case it was to Swinton Lions where his all-action shows earned him the title of LHF National League Two player of the year. Hampered in pre-season with an ankle injury Phil is now settling back in to the routine of being a full-time player and his mixture of power and enthusiasm are beginning to show through.

Gareth Price As an opponent Gareth always let the opposition know he was around - that was certainly the case when he was playing against Rovers. A Welsh international, Price was brought in by head coach Justin Morgan to bring some added impact to his side's go forward.

Tommy Gallagher Back with Rovers on his second stint is back-row man Tommy Gallagher. The man from Dewsbury first came to Craven Park from Leeds Rhinos where he had made first team appearances. But from Yorkshire he headed off to Toulouse, and like Damien Couturier followed his boss Justin Morgan when the Aussie took over the coaching job with the Robins. Mobile and a good ball handler Gallagher is a good all-round player.

Desi Williams After two seasons with Wigan in which his career path was blocked by the likes of Brian Carney and Brett Dallas, Desi decided on a move to Yorkshire to get more first team football. Pacy and elusive with the ball in hand Desi is quick enough to test most defences and hopes to establish himself as a regular member of the first team squad this season. Like Iain Morrison he is a Londoner.

journalistic license

by Matthew Chambers

THE doom-mongers of this town can spread their gloomy message as much as they like.

But try as they might, this fact simply cannot be denied: despite the full-time status of Leigh, Widnes and today's opponents Hull KR, Roughyeds currently sit joint top of the LHF Healthplan National League One table.

With all the turbulence that has affected the club in recent months - coaches in and out of the hotseat, a list of injuries as long as your arm and, most recently, car crashes (and car-crash performances) - who would have banked on that?

But in all seriousness, the season proper starts today, as NL1's ten clubs all aim to get off to a flyer.

While it's probably better to save the record-breaking cup run for the first Wembley final next year, Oldham really didn't perform well in Cumbria last week.

It was a strange match up at Craven Park, as early injuries to key men seemed to knock the life out of Oldham. Heads went down, players visibly wilted through mental and physical fatigue, bad decisions were made, and Paul Crarey's young side took full advantage with some slick rugby of their own.

Things went from very bad, to even worse, and in double-quick time.

Thankfully, Raiders kept things respectable by not scoring in the final quarter, but a 40-8 defeat to lower-division opponents was disastrous by any standard.

Following the game the Barrow press men wore the same bemused grins as those who are a few yards short of

a 40-20, not quite comprehending what had happened.

But, typically and to his credit, Steve Deakin wasn't downcast at the end of the game and emphasised the need for the lads to get back stuck in to training.

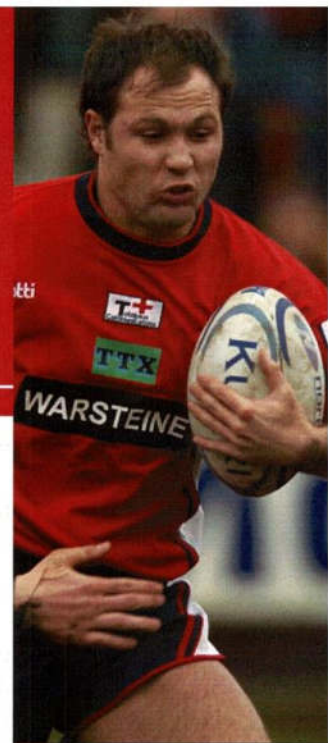
Deakin knows that today's LHF Healthplan National League One opener is a fresh start, giving the players a chance to prove to the home supporters that they can live with one of the classiest sides this division has to offer.

It is an opportunity, rather than an experience to be endured, and hopefully the squad take that attitude out onto the pitch.

On a different note, it's great to hear that so many Robins fans have made the trek across the M62 to Boundary Park. Having lived in Hull for four years I know all about the city's cocoa smells, 'interesting' nights out on Bev Road, ferry runs across to Holland and, not least, the passion for rugby league at every level of the sport.

It's interesting to note that Rovers coach Justin Morgan not only has a talented, full-time squad at his disposal, but also that his club operates within a forward-thinking, PR-focused city which has done a terrific job of re-establishing itself and de-bunking the old myths and clichés in recent years.

Matthew



halstead's choice

by Roger Halstead

MICK Redford comes from good rugby league stock. His grandad, Bill, used to be one of my boyhood heroes --- a blond winger with Rochdale Hornets, whom I can still recall vividly racing down the touchline at the Athletic Grounds --- and his uncle, Tony Redford, rewrote the sport's record books when he signed for Salford at the then tender age of 16.

"His record didn't last long, and kids these days sign much younger than that, but when Tony signed for Salford he hit the headlines because he was the youngest ever," recalled Mick when I talked to the Oldham player this week.

With a family background like that it was always odds-on that Mick, now 24, would find his way into rugby league as a boy --- or that, if he didn't, he would be dragged shouting and screaming to his first training stint at that well-known academy of rugby league skills and sciences, Leigh East.

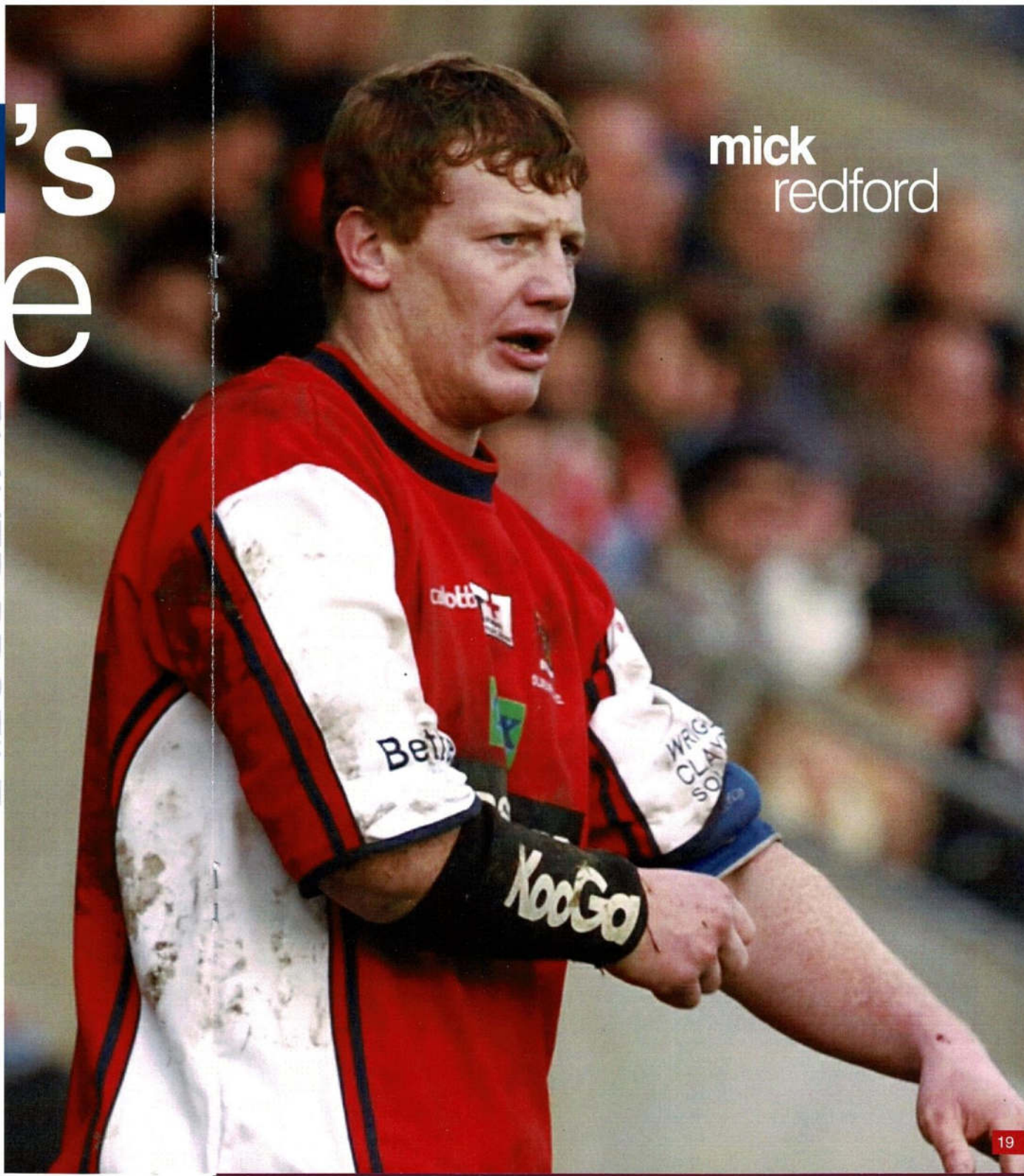
Yes, the Roughyeds' Redford is a Leigh lad. And anyone who knows anything about this game knows that, in every generation, more Leigh lads seem to turn pro than don't. Per head of population there can't be another town of its size in the world that has produced, and is still producing, as many players.

When I was a boy I used to spend a bit of time with friends in the Plank Lane area of the town --- a rugby league hotbed if ever there was one. At that time, Hilton Park was Kirkhall Lane (Coliseum? Perish the thought!) and it was full of legends --- Jimmy Ledgard, Trevor Allen, Rex Mossop, Bill Kindon, to name but a few.

Thirty miles away, in my native Rochdale, the Hornets had an Aussie manager in Cec Fifield, a clutch of young players from Sydney (older readers may recall Wally Eilean, Geoff 'Babe' Kelly, Ron and Reg Stamford and Tommy Duffy)

mick
redford

PLAYER PROFILE



mick redford

Continued...

and a host of Leigh lads, including the aforementioned Bill Redford. More than 50 years on, Bill would be as proud as punch to know that his grandson Mick was playing for Oldham. "I started at Leigh East when I was about nine," recalled Mick, "and my grandad was my biggest fan. He used to watch me in every game. I'm told that when he played with Rochdale he was known as 'the blond bombshell'. He used to be able to run a bit."

In those days wingers would hug the touchline a lot more than they do today and the way the game was played we were often treated to one-on-one contests between the winger and the opposing full-back.

Like all good wingers in the 1950s Bill Redford could dance a bit -- sidestep, change of pace, swerve. Two generations on, Mick would never claim to be the greatest-ever exponent of any of his grandad's silky skills, but it may come as a surprise to a lot of Oldham fans to learn that he has spent more time in the backs than he has in the pack.

In his early days at Leigh East he was a full-back. Eventually, he moved up to centre and it was as a centre that he had a season in the academy team at Warrington after first being selected to go to France with the BARLA Great Britain under-18s. In the same squad was another member of the current Roughyeds side, Ian Hodson.

Things didn't work out for him at Warrington, but such was his love of the game and his desire to go as far in it as he could that he went back to Leigh East and rolled up his sleeves.

A couple of years later, when he was 21, he got the break he wanted when Darren Abram, then building a side at Chorley, phoned him and asked him to go along to Victory Park.

"I was still playing centre," said Mick, "and I played out there in the backs right through my first season with Chorley."

"As I got a bit bigger Darren moved me to second-row. People are now starting to think of me as a prop, but if the truth were known my favourite spot these days is in the back-row."

"Having said that, you play where you are put. I am just happy to drag any number over my head, just as long as I am in the team and playing rugby. You can't afford to be choosy."

When Chorley folded, a lot of the players from there signed for Blackpool -- Mick Redford among them. He was at Bloomfield Road for only one season, however, and he doesn't exactly look back on that chapter of his rugby league story as one that makes



good reading.

"There were a lot of issues, a lot of politics and a few things happened which I didn't like," he said. "It was a pity because I had a lot of good friends there, but it was soon time to move on and I was thrilled to bits when Oldham came in for me."

"It was my chance to move up a division, to play at a higher level than I had ever played before and to go to a club that had a great tradition."

"John Pendlebury put in the call to me and things moved on from there. To be honest, I snapped their hands off --- it was a great move for me and I can say that I am really enjoying it here."

"Training under Steve (Deakin) is a lot more intense. We will be having five sessions this week -- four nights plus Saturday morning -- and we appreciate that as individuals and as a squad we will reap the benefits. Steve means business. And so do the players."

"There was no excuse for the way we played in the cup at Barrow last Sunday. Barrow were up for it. We didn't turn up: we were not at the races. We couldn't blame our performance on injuries."

"We have to bounce back against KR. It's a tough ask, but we are buzzing."

"We suffered the embarrassment on Monday night of watching the video rerun of the Barrow game. We went through it closely and that kick-started our preparations for the opening LHF Healthplan National League One game today."

"As I say 'Deaks' means business --- and it is now up to the players to put things right."

Grandad Bill would be the first to agree with that.

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on this day

Don Yates looks back to April 9th yesteryear

Way back in 1928 Oldham were a real power in the game and any team which visited the town knew that they were in for a severe examination.

On Easter Monday 9th April 1928 Widnes visited Watersheddings where they crashed to what, at the time, was their biggest ever defeat. Oldham won by 60 points to five with winger Abe Johnson scoring half of the Roughyeds points with two tries and a dozen goals. No player in the history of the club has scored more points in any one match. The other ten Oldham tries that afternoon were scored by centres Sid Rix (3) and Edgar Thomas (2), stand-off Jack Oster (2), scrum-half George Hesketh, second-rower Bob Sloman and winger Albert Brough.

Saturday 9th April 1960 was a disappointing day for everyone connected with the Oldham club. That day the Roughyeds met Hull in the semi-final of the Challenge Cup at Station Road, Swinton. Oldham were firm favourites to win but the team were well below par and fumbled their way to a 12-9 defeat. Hull scored two converted tries midway through the first half to go 10-nil in front before winger Vin Nestor scored the solitary Oldham try. Despite being 12-3 behind at half-time, Oldham still had enough opportunities to win the match after the interval. They failed to take those opportunities and all they had to show for their second half efforts were three penalties from the unfortunate Bernard Ganley who was sent off two minutes from time following an incident with the Hull prop Mick Scott.

The old ground at Watersheddings staged many memorable matches including a Championship Final and a Challenge Cup Final. It also staged four Challenge Cup semi-finals, the first of which was played on Saturday 9th April 1898. A crowd of 15,000 was in attendance to see Batley take on Salford. In those days there were strict rules about professionalism. All

players were expected to work on the days leading up to a match in order to qualify for 'broken time' payment. Salford flouted those rules and took their players off to Southport for four days of match preparation. In the end it did them little good because Batley won 5-0 with a try from forward Jack Rodgers and a goal from centre Wattie Davies.

It was on Saturday 9th April 1910 that Wales entertained England at the North Dean ground, Ebbw Vale. There were two Oldham players included in the English team, scrum-half Tom White and prop-forward Bert 'Slosher' Avery. Both were West Countrymen who enjoyed long and successful careers with Oldham, their only club. White made 224 appearances and Avery played 289 times for the Roughyeds between 1905 and 1914. That afternoon in South Wales will not go down as the most memorable in their careers because Wales ended up as comfortable winners by 39 points to eighteen.

Sadly, it was on this day three years ago, Wednesday 9th April 2003, that the death occurred in Springhill Hospice, Rochdale of Dennis Wright. He was 73 years of age. Wright was a former professional footballer with both Oldham Athletic and Glasgow Rangers. When his playing days were over he turned to physiotherapy and was the physio at Watersheddings for fourteen years between 1961 and 1975. He then joined Salford for eight years and ended his working life with a six-year stint at Wigan. Such was Wright's expertise in his chosen field that he was also physio to the Great Britain team. He was a vital member of the World Cup winning squad in France in 1972 and, in 1977, he became the first physio to accompany a British Lions squad to Australasia.

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Roughyed

Kids & Co

Hi Kids

First of all we would like to thank Paul Gibson who is looking after our mascots for us over the next three matches, while myself and Janet are away on holiday in sunny Florida visiting Mickey and Friends.

Our mascot for today is Lucy Jackson who is 6 years old. She attends Hey with Zion Primary School and her favourite player is Chris Hough. Her hobbies are watching Rugby and she enjoys training with under 8's Waterhead.

Good luck to the lads for today's game. You need to shout extra loud to make up for us being away.

See you all when we get back,

Carole and Janet

Today's Mascot

Lucy Jackson

Age:

6-year-old

School:

Hey with Zion Primary School

Favourite player:

Chris Hough

Hobbies:

Watching Rugby and training with under 8's Waterhead

SUPPORT GROUP NEWS

Everyone involved with the Club was very down following last weekend's disaster at Barrow and, at the time there seemed no reason for optimism. On reflection however, the situation is just another test of the resolve of our Club.

Only the same weekend, our 2 Directors had managed to pay off another major chunk of the Club's debt in their continued effort to keep us alive. Lesser men would have given up long ago, but they are proud men, and have set a lead for everyone else to follow. Well done to them.

Come on, Roughyeds!! *Sheila*

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Watersheddings BY KEVIN LEE born and bred

Watersheddings born and bred, now exiled in Somerset, Roughyeds fan Kevin is the season-ticket holder who never gets to a match. But there's no doubting his passion for what he describes (if his wife isn't around) as the greatest love of his life. Here he looks back with fondness on the spiritual home of Oldham RLFC.

I attended my first game at Watersheddings in the Spring of 1955. I don't remember a thing about it, probably because I was only 15 months old!

It wasn't far for my dad to carry me, as the house where I was born was no more than a hefty Bernard Ganley goal kick from the Hutchins Stand... well, maybe two kicks.

So when people say Oldham RL and Watersheddings are in the blood, I suppose that's what they mean.

And when fate deals you such a hand you have to live with it, no matter how many times you wished you had been born in Wigan or Leeds or St Helens or anywhere else where you might have found the success you craved for your team.

So when the Roughyeds migrated south to the Tropic of Westwood (Ice-Station Zebra - ha! Sheddings stalwarts will tell you THAT was where it was really cold) and the old ground was sold and flattened, a large chunk of me died as well.

That place was the centrepiece of my early life. Me and my mates played rugby in Waterhead Park, dreaming of the day we would grace the pitch a few yards away behind those locked, bright red doors.

I went to Watersheddings infants and junior school; met my first girl friend on the Popular Side, scoreboard end (she thought Tommy Canning was brilliant, but nobody's perfect); shifted snow-covered straw off the pitch on numerous Saturday mornings; had a trial for the town team on the training pitch and even used the changing rooms under the old pavilion; watched training sessions every Tuesday and Thursday and collected the autographs of the players as they got off the mini-bus from west Lancashire; even walked past the back of the Hutchins Stand twice a day to and from Counthill School.

The centre of my universe? You bet. In fact, the centre and all four corners of it.

There are so many memories (younger readers switch off now -- if you haven't already done so) and here are just a few that older speccies may remember.

- THE second-round cup tie against Featherstone in the nearly year of 1964 when hooker Len McIntyre scored the winning try at the Penny Rush end right in front of me. Yes, ME. Nobody else was there, as far as I was concerned. Just me and Len.

- THE last match of the season, at home to Doncaster. It was a midweek game on a lovely spring evening, and so very, very vital. This was our game in hand on Blackpool Borough, I think, and we had to win to leapfrog Borough and finish next to bottom of the league rather than rock bottom. We did win, 8-6 or 8-7, and there was a joyous pitch invasion at the final whistle. Pride was intact, if in tatters.

- BRIAN Bevan being hit on his by-then very bald head with a snowball when he played one of his last games for Blackpool Borough.

- LEAVING home one Saturday lunchtime to buy a programme for that day's televised match (three hours before kick-off!) and giving my dad the shock of his life ten minutes later by appearing on Grandstand with Eddie Waring, who was doing a live preview.

- NUMEROUS Good Fridays, watching the Standard Cup Final in the morning, then Oldham v Swinton in the afternoon. Twice in a day! Watersheddings Heaven.

- BEATING the 'invincible' Bradford Northern 12-2 in a cup replay after an improbable 7-7 draw at Odsal. Some young kid called Bobby Irving scored two tries that night and the atmosphere was unbelievable. A real Sheddings occasion.

- VINCE Nestor's testimonial game. Some Oldham legends trooped on at half-time for a goalkicking competition and we kids were allowed to stand on the pitch - ON THE PITCH! -- behind the sticks at the Big End to kick the balls back.

Now get this -- I CAUGHT a kick from Bernard Ganley, yes, THE Bernard Ganley. The thought flashed through my mind that if I nipped over that old gate in front of the scoreboard and scarpers down the long back behind Herbert Street, they'd never find me 'cos I was on home ground. Oh, yes, the glory of it. Then I tamely kicked the ball back, gaining at least 20 yards.

- AFTER a couple of years as a junior reporter at the Chron, I was allowed to cover a match live for the Green Final (the old Saturday sports edition). Ecstasy! Tears of joy and fear. Wildest dreams fulfilled as two parts of my life became one. Okay, so it was only an 'A' team game, watched by me and 38 others. But it was mine, all mine. The report I phoned over was probably six times longer than Roger Halstead's from the first team's away match. I talked about Mick McCone weaving his magic, blah, blah, blah. I think they used about four paragraphs.

- AND finally, Martin Murphy against Australia, circa 1973. Some Aussie flier (can't recall the name) set off down the Popular Side touchline towards Hutchins, an overlapped Murph having slipped trying to stop the final pass. The Little Maestro gave this Aussie ten yards start yet still, to the biggest cheer of the night, turned and crashed him into touch ten yards out. Mind you, he couldn't stop the ten tries the tourists did score in a 44-10 hammering.

Ah... happy days!


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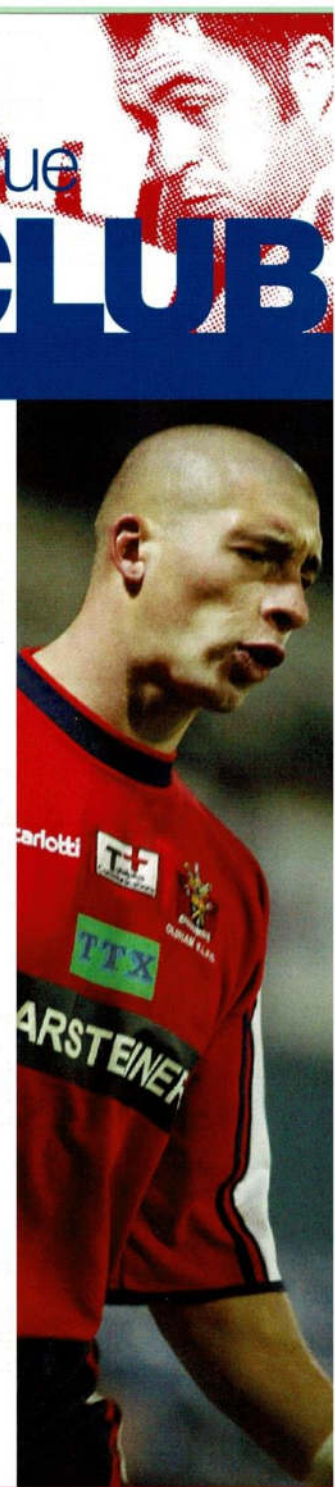
Games night snooker - every Thursday

Bingo - Friday, Saturdays and Sundays

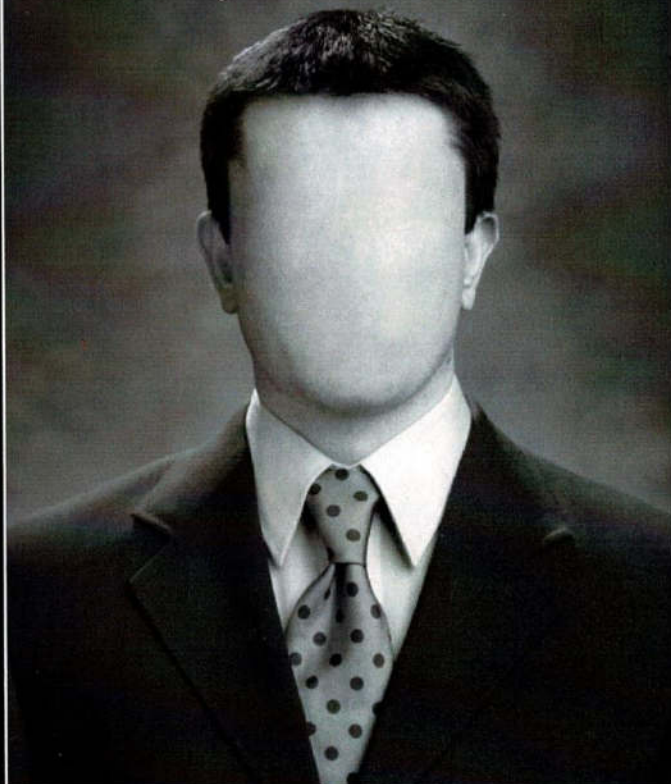
Live entertainment - see notice board

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All enquires to THE CLUB STEWARD on 0161 627 2128



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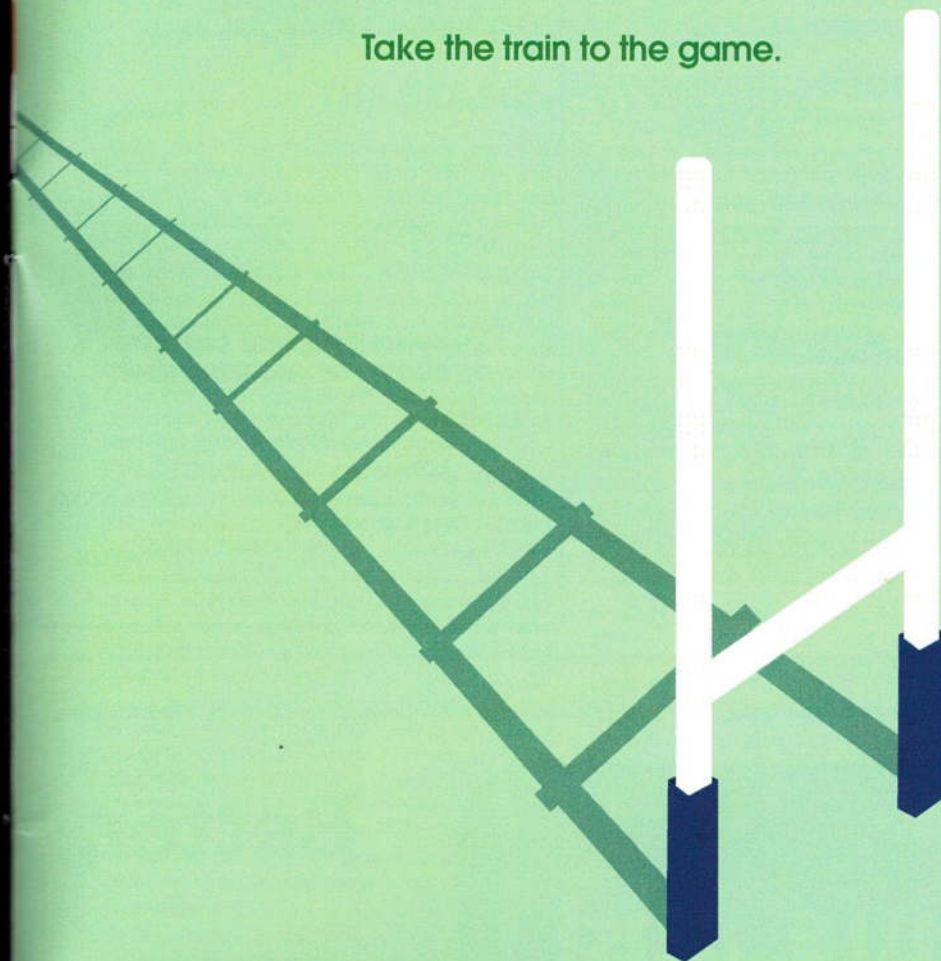
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with GARETH WALKER of RUGBY LEAGUER & LEAGUE EXPRESS



THE SEASON STARTS HERE!

AFTER an intriguing Northern Rail Cup campaign, this weekend marks the start of the LHF Healthplan league seasons, with the hopes and aspirations of 22 teams on the line. So who will be the runners and riders in 2006?

The bookmakers have made Leigh Centurions the favourites for National League One, based largely on two eye-catching NRC wins over rivals Widnes Vikings. But the Vikings sent out a clear statement of intent with their outstanding Powergen Challenge Cup win over Super League Castleford last weekend. Both teams should be challenging for the minor premiership.

As should Hull Kingston Rovers, whose extensive close season recruitment campaign has led many to believe that this could finally be their year. But can they hit top form when it matters most?

Some observers seem to have overlooked the chances of Whitehaven, but a formidable home record and an ambitious new coach in Dave Rotherham should see them mount a tilt at a third consecutive Grand Final.

Those four clubs are widely expected to be the strongest, though there will undoubtedly be a scramble below them. Rochdale Hornets are so far unbeaten under Darren Abram and have started impressively, while Halifax have struggled a little, hindered by a host of injuries to key players.

Doncaster Lakers appear to be hitting form now under new boss Tony Miller, and could also be top six contenders.

At the bottom, most are expecting Oldham, Batley Bulldogs and York City Knights to be involved in a scrap to avoid the bottom two places, which this year result in automatic

relegation. But on the same hand, each will feel they can mount a push for the play-offs.

In NL2, Dewsbury Rams are the clear favourites with the bookies having gone agonisingly close to promotion last year. Their billing looks well placed? Andy Kelly's side will be the team to beat.

But there will be a host of teams bidding to usurp them. Swinton Lions have produced some excellent performances to date; while relegated Featherstone Rovers have made some considerable strides since a stuttering start to the NRC.

Two teams tipped to go well, Sheffield Eagles and Workington Town, have both dropped off a little in recent weeks but certainly should not be ruled out, and neither should an experienced Hunslet Hawks team.

Keighley Cougars and Barrow Raiders have both shown already that they shouldn't be underestimated by anyone, despite having limited budgets.

Gateshead Thunder have yet to scale the heights of last season but are still capable, while Blackpool Panthers and London Skolars will be looking to progress from disappointing campaigns in 2005.

And what can we expect of Welsh newcomers Celtic Crusaders? The bookies have them at second favourites for the title, but their real prospects will not become apparent until a few weeks into the league season.

It all adds up to a fascinating few months ahead.

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Powergen CC – Powergen Challenge Cup
NL1 – National League Division 1