

game line-up

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OLDHAM SQUAD	Played	DEWSBURY RAMS SQUAD
PAUL ASHTON		RYAN GLYNN
CHRIS BAINES		IAN PREECE
JASON BOULTS		LEE CLOSE
GENO COSTIN		ANDREW BOSTOCK
ANDY CRABTREE		CHRIS HALL
ANDY GOREY		DANNY MAUN
ALAN HADCROFT		KANE EPATI
JOHN HOUGH		FRANCIS MALONEY
DREW HOUSTON		DEAN LAWFORD
SIMEON HOYLE		ANDY HOBSON
GARETH LANGLEY		LUKE HAIGH
CRAIG LITTLER		DOMINIC MALONEY
RICHARD MERVILL		KEVIN CROUTHERS
PAUL O'CONNOR		ALEX BRETHERTON
MARK OGDEN		JOSH WEEDON
STUART OLDHAM		LIAM FINN
NEIL RODEN		ROB KELLY
WES ROGERS		MARTIN ROBINSON
IAN SINFIELD		DAVID BATES
KRIS SMITH		KEEGAN HIRST
MICHAEL STOUT		BRYN POWELL
SAID TAMGHART		JOHN OAKES
ALEX WILKINSON		ANDY SPINK
LEE WINGFIELD		DANNY RATCLIFFE
		JASON SOUTHWELL
		ANDY TILLOTSON

DEWSBURY RAMS

match officials

REFEREE: Mr M Dawber **TOUCH JUDGES:** C Waywell, A T Smith
4TH OFFICIAL: K Povah

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SUNDAY, 18TH MARCH, 2007

K.O. 3.00pm

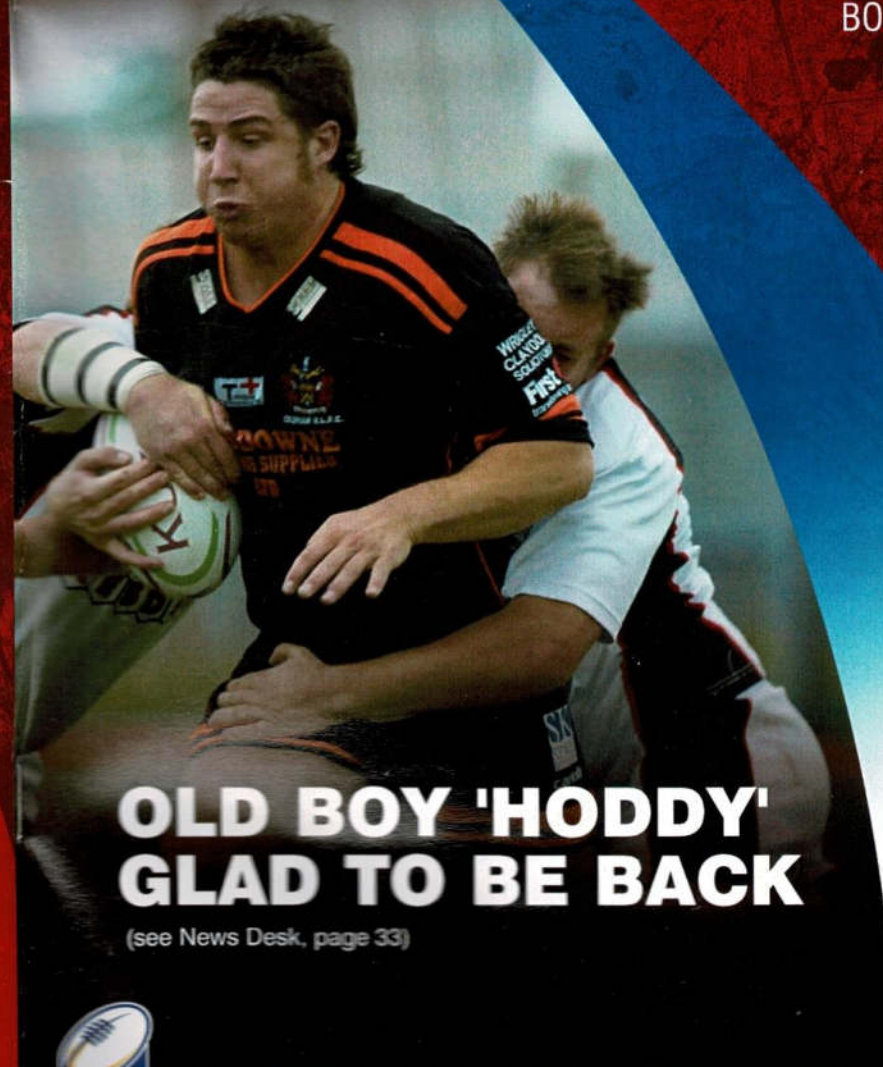
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Trans-Penine Cup
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MOST APPEARANCES: John Hough, 209 - Jan 1998 - September 2005

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. Jude's, 4 - Feb 8th 2000 at Boundary Park

Mark Sibson v Queensbury, 4 - Jan 28th 2001 at Boundary Park

David Gibbons v Chorley Lynx, 4 - Jan 30th 2001 at Boundary Park

James Bunyan v Featherstone Rovers, 4 - Apr 12th 2004 at Boundary Park

GOALS IN A MATCH: Simon Svabic v Swinton Lions, 10 - Apr 6th 2003 at Boundary Park

POINTS IN A MATCH: Gareth Barber v Dewsbury Rams, 26 - Apr 2nd 2002 at Hurst Cross

(7 goals, 3 tries)

DROP GOALS IN A MATCH: Neil Roden v Workington Town, 2 - Dec 17th 2000 at Derwent Park

John Braddish v Hull KR, 2 - Dec 16th 2001 at New Craven Park

HIGHEST SCORE/WINNING MARGIN: v Yorks Wasps, 70-6 - Apr 1st 2001 at Huntington Stadium

v Queensbury (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.

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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)

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in the chair

with Chris Hamilton



Welcome back to Boundary Park to what is our first home match in a month.

Our displays since then have been markedly better but the irony of sport was shown up last week when we put in what was probably our worst display of the season in terms of ball control against East Hull and yet came away with our first win in

nearly a year.

With the pressure off in one respect having now "won a game" I am sure the players will be more relaxed and able to kick on from what, despite results, has been a solid start to the season.

Our three games so far against Rochdale (twice) and Dewsbury have shown that we can compete with teams from National League One and today will hopefully prove that once again.

Our opponents today, Dewsbury, have gone on something of a winning spree since they beat us having since defeated local rivals Batley before producing the result of the Carnegie Challenge Cup third round by knocking out Leigh.

Having been through financial problems of their own in the recent past, their promotion last season from Division Two was a reward for all the hard work that has gone on to bring the club back.

With probable qualification for the knock out stage of the Northern Rail Cup the season has started well for the Rams.

We know that we need to win our last two games in the group stage to give ourselves a chance of progressing but after putting up a gutsy performance at Dewsbury we know that if we play to our ability we can get the first of those wins today.

It won't be easy against what I think is one of, if not the, biggest sides we have ever played against but the commitment of the squad cannot be questioned and today will give us the opportunity to show people what we are capable of over the next few months.

Our own Carnegie Challenge cup draw gives us the

chance for further progression. An away draw at Keighley is not everybody's idea of a great draw but if we show the same level of determination in defence as we have in the last few weeks and can sharpen our attack a bit we are capable of going there and winning and nobody at the club would expect any less.

We are wary of what can happen if things are not done right as happened at Barrow last year but that in itself should be a warning and part of good preparation rather than anything to frighten us.

Another trip to Rugby League headquarters this week with Paul O Connor brought another "no further action" decision and with that in mind I have decided to hire out my services to fans and clubs alike - please contact the office for details of rates etc!

Finally we are hoping to have details of the Easter(not!) fixtures sorted out soon. The Hunslet match which should have been Easter Monday will now be Wednesday 22 August (prior to Challenge Cup weekend so it will be postponed again if we are in the final!) and we are awaiting a decision from the RFL regarding the Featherstone match. We apologise for the inconvenience but unfortunately it can't be helped.

The Featherstone match should have been a good crowd puller played on Good Friday but although we sent Oldham Athletic's fixtures to the RFL prior to the fixture schedule being produced they are faced with an impossible situation trying to accommodate all of clubs requests regarding when pitches are available etc.

Thanks for your support for the team over the last few weeks, especially at Rochdale when we turned it into a home game. And as ever please get behind the lads as they try to get that win for you today.

Enjoy the game

Chris

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deek's coach approach

with Steve Deakin



WHILE the win at East Hull wasn't one of our better performances this season we progressed to the next round of the Carnegie Challenge Cup by scoring five tries to one and thus avoided a slip on the proverbial banana skin. It was the win we so badly needed and I hope it will perhaps change the prevailing mentality not only within the club but throughout the town.

It hasn't taken long for injuries to start to bite. We are not alone in this, of course, but we travelled to Humberside last Saturday with our only fit 17 and, to be perfectly honest, Craig Littler would not have been involved had there been another body to fill in.

In the event I started with Said Tamghart in the centre and Craig on the bench, but he had to go on and I would like to place on record how well he did in the circumstances.

Seven players were ruled out by injury, namely Stuart Oldham, Geno Costin, Richard Mervill, Alan Hadcroft, Andy Gorey, John Hough and Lee Wingfield.

Richard, Alan, John and Lee are sidelined for a while longer yet, and at the time of writing it remained to be seen whether Stuart, Geno and Andy had a realistic chance of perhaps returning to action in today's game.

Ian Hodson will be back with us soon, of course, and I am really looking forward to getting Ian back.

He is a proven footballer and among the many qualities he displayed during a difficult 2006 season was the character to perform to the best of his ability for the team and the club no matter how tough the going got and no matter in what position he was asked to play.

I used him quite a lot at stand-off and although it wasn't his favourite spot there was never the slightest hint of a sulk or a moan from Ian. He was more than happy to do what he was paid to do --- to get on with the job to the best of his ability.

He always knuckled down to the job in hand and you knew you would never get less than 100 per cent from him.

He didn't sign a new deal at the end of last season because he knew he was going to be too heavily committed at work, but he is ready to give it a go again now and we are delighted to welcome him back on board.

This time round I will be better placed to throw him into the ring with the other guys who are pushing for places also in the positions which Ian considers to be his rightful place --- the back-row of the pack.

I have no doubt that once his fitness levels are up to the required standard he will do a job --- and do it well.

All the boys are working hard and, in the main, performances overall have reflected our objective which is to achieve steady and consistent progress in the build-up to the start of the NL2 campaign, which is getting nearer by the day.

Can I say that you, the fans, have been outstandingly supportive. You were great again at East Hull last weekend -- not a single negative voice and in a crowd as small as that both myself and the boys would have picked it up had there been one.

It was really good backing; the sort the players need and respond to. And I can promise you they certainly do respond to vocal support. They are human, and that's human nature.

Chris (Hamilton) and I travelled over to Leeds on Monday evening for the fourth-round draw of the Carnegie Challenge Cup. As you know we got Keighley away. From a coach's point of view that match is two or three weeks down the track and there are far more pressing matters to attend to first, like the task of taking on today a Dewsbury Rams side fresh from its cup win last week against Leigh Centurions.

Cup draws can be a distraction because, by their very nature, they are looking ahead and any coach will tell you that he has to make sure he keeps his squad focussed on the immediate job in hand.

I'll start to think about Keighley when we've got Dewsbury Rams and Swinton Lions out of the way, but at this stage suffice to say the cup tie is an opportunity for us to go to a club which is in a similar situation to ourselves.

It will certainly give us a good idea of where we are up to in terms of preparing for the battles that lie ahead in NL2.

Right, that's enough said about the cup tie for the time being. First things first. I'm sure those fans who travelled to Dewsbury three weeks ago will be eagerly anticipating another good game today against Andy Kelly's boys, who won promotion automatically from NL2 last year after finishing top of the pile.

Like us, they have a big season to look forward to in National League rugby. We meet them today in our cross-group match in the Northern Rail, having been beaten 32-22 in a tight game at the Tetley's Stadium on February 25.

Enjoy the game,
Deaks.

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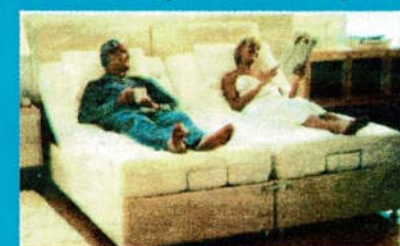
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Tony offers his thanks

Lifelong Roughyeds fan Tony Bostock, who lives in Shevington, Wigan, has written to the editor of our match-day magazine to raise public awareness of, as he puts it, "how the Oldham club responds so positively and so willingly when asked to help the wider community."

Oldham-born Tony, a retired school teacher, moved to Wigan 35 years ago but to this day he rarely misses an Oldham game and although most of his friends are Warriors fans many of them are in our Club Cash lottery thanks to Tony's powers of persuasion.

"I've been threaten'd a few times with the Standish stocks because I don't support Wigan," he says, "but I know that, deep down, my friends admire my loyalty to Oldham."

Tony turned to Roughyeds for help when he and his friends were holding a rock concert at Orrell St James to raise money to send a little boy with leukaemia on a Disney trip. It was one of several similar events organised by Tony for the grandson of one of his neighbours, five-year-old Connor Tennant.

Connor is currently in remission and is in the middle of three years of intense chemotherapy, but he is a positive little chap who spreads joy and happiness among all those who know him.

With Dave Johnson as his compere, Tony, Dave and other friends have raised more than £5,500 to take the family on a Disney holiday.

Tony takes up the story. "On behalf of the Roughyeds, Chris (Hamilton) kindly donated an Oldham shirt for auction. He and the staff could not have been more helpful and more supportive of what we were doing.

"The Roughyeds jersey was bought for £50 by a good friend and Wigan RL fanatic Chris Leyland. Chris played for St Pat's about 25 years ago and he was approached to sign for Oldham, Swinton and Blackpool Borough. I have known him for 20 years and he has always followed the fortunes of the Oldham club.

"The compere, Dave, introduced the shirt at the auction as having been donated by a proud and resilient club who have fought back from adversity to pay off crippling debts and have attracted fantastic sponsorship thanks to hard work and dedication. The Wiganers cheered.

"Incidentally, Phil Farrell was at the function. He spoke affectionately of Oldham and of his admiration for Deaks and he even bought 'Oldham' for a quid on a name card.

"I will send Chris (Hamilton) a personal letter of thanks, but I felt the club's good works in this kind of thing, which usually go unnoticed, should be brought to public attention. Thanks again, Roughyeds."



Our pictures show Connor (on right) with his brother Aaron and Chris Leyland proudly displaying the Roughyeds jersey he bought for £50.

with Geoff Cooke

cooke-ability!

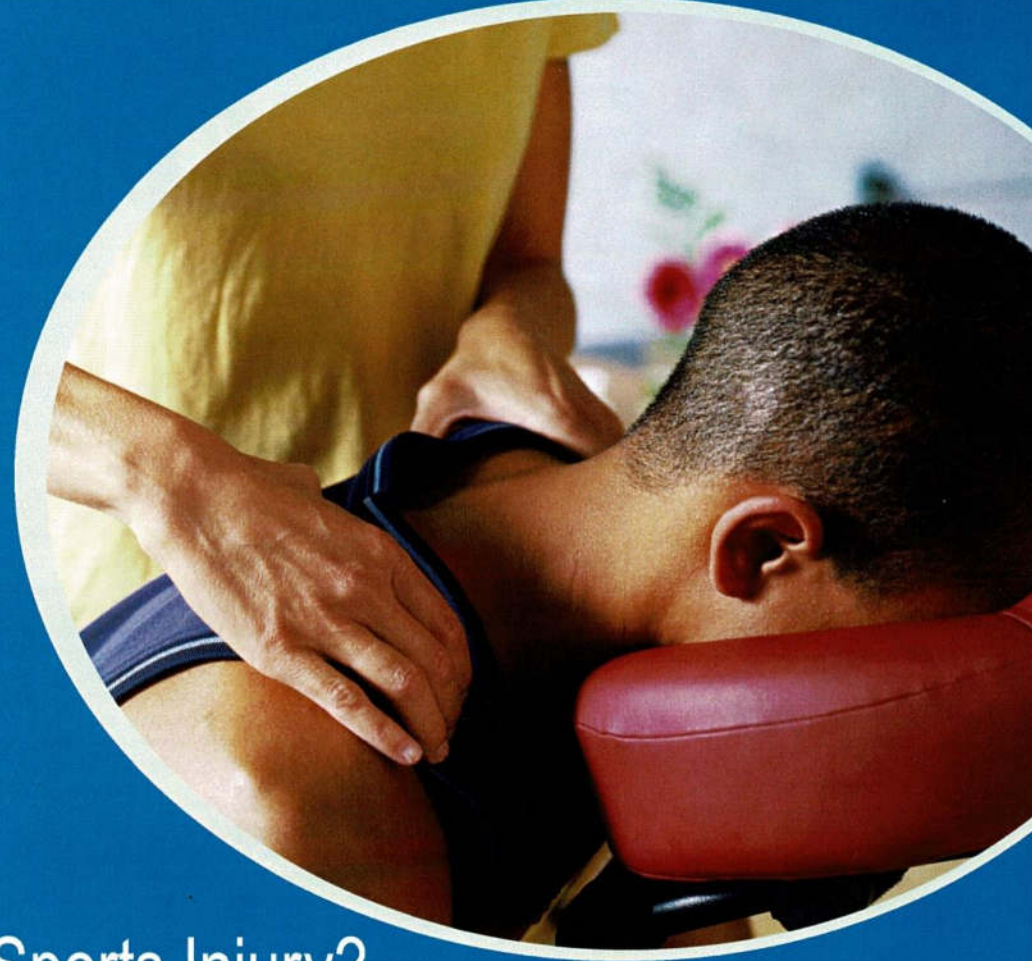
Anyone expecting an upset in last week's Carnegie Challenge Cup fixtures will have been mightily disappointed.

One or two results, however, did catch the eye: Dewsbury enjoyed a fine win against Leigh (a result always welcome here at Boundary Park) and Whitehaven saw off Doncaster, another welcome outcome. I was pleased that Pia defeated Blackpool but thought that Toulouse could have done better against York. Otherwise results went as one might expect with all the N.L.1 and N.L.2 clubs hoping for a big payday against Super League opposition. The lucky ones were Hunslet at home to Hull, Gateshead to Salford, Widnes to Wigan (wouldn't you just know it?) and London Skolars to Wakefield. The big winners, however, were Batley drawn at St. Helens and Workington at Leeds. How Oldham would relish either of those draws! As it is there is yet another hurdle to overcome at Keighley before the chance of a draw against Super League opposition. Just about sums up Oldham's luck.

After five rounds of Super League the league table makes interesting reading. Wakefield and Hull K.R. on top with eight points alongside Bradford is very gratifying. Whether these two can sustain the effort over a full season remains to be seen particularly as ground conditions change and/or injuries begin to bite. For the moment, however, it looks like the salary cap is having the desired effect in levelling out the competition, although watching St. Helens defeat Brisbane Broncos in the World Club Challenge and then demolish Warrington in the league, I suspect the current champions will take some beating.

Meanwhile, as the Northern Rail Cup enters the later stages of the group competition what pointers are there for the league season to come? Results suggest that Castleford are rightly seen as favourites to win N.L.1 with Widnes probably the main challengers. But the other full time teams, Leigh and Doncaster, do not look any stronger than part time Whitehaven and, possibly, Halifax who have been racking up the points against admittedly weak opposition.

In N.L.2 Celtic Crusaders and Featherstone have confirmed the pre-season opinion of their abilities, while both Swinton and Hunslet have demonstrated good form. York and Barrow also look decent, which confirms that Oldham need to find their form as quickly as possible. Encouraging outings against Dewsbury and Rochdale suggest the Roughyeds may have turned a corner in terms of being competitive. The challenge now is to turn that into results - starting with today!



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halstead's choice

The boy from Paradise who has settled in . . . Sowerby Bridge!

IF Drew Houston's thoughts turn to home on his current European adventure it's hardly surprising given that he comes from one of the most beautiful spots on the southern New South Wales coast and that younger brother Chris is currently pushing for recognition in the NRL with St George Illawarra.

Drew, one of three young Australians here with the Roughyeds this season, is based in Sowerby Bridge, where he works as a plumber.

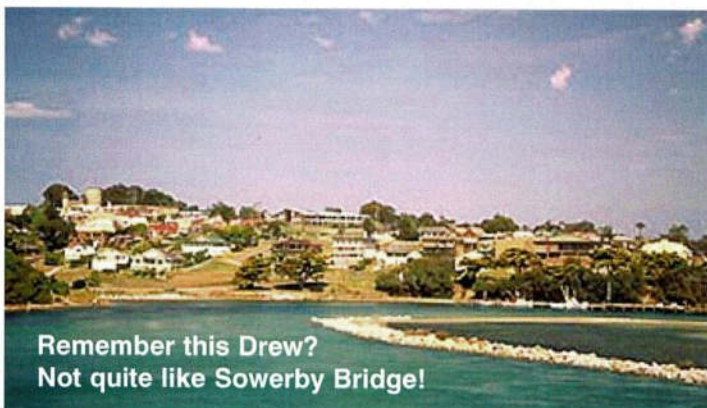
And mending leaks within sight of the Tower of Spite on a wet and windy day in an English winter is a world away from his home town of Narooma, a tourist trap with a delightful year-round climate on the Pacific's Eurobodalla Nature Coast.

The town's publicity department describes Narooma and nearby Wagonga Inlet as "our hidden paradise".

Coastal views from the Whale Motor Inn's Blue Cod Restaurant, serving modern Aussie cuisine, fresh seafood and local oysters daily, are described as "breathtaking".

You can charter a boat for game fishing from the town's wharf, go estuary fishing in tranquil Wagonga, surf on the Pacific beaches, go on bush walks or play golf on a spectacular course with nine holes on the cliff tops and the back nine in a forest.

This is Narooma, population 10,000, paradise on earth, home for the Houston boys and the place where they first learned how to fish, surf, swim and catch and kick a rugby ball. And, as I say, a world away from Sowerby Bridge and the murky waters of the Calder.



"It's four hours drive south of Sydney -- a small seaside town where Chris and I grew up," said Drew. "It's further south than Illawarra as well, more or less on a level with Canberra."

At the age of 22, Chris is Drew's junior by two years. The first of the Houston boys, Drew, arrived on January 21, 1983, but in his early formative years he was more interested in soccer and Aussie Rules than in rugby league.

He didn't start playing league until he was 14 when his mates at school persuaded him to join them at the local club, Narooma Devils.

He and Chris were always close as brothers and Drew describes as "one of my proudest moments in rugby" the time he played in the same St George side as his brother, Chris in the front-row and Drew in the back three.

Said Drew: "It was the first of two games I had for St George Illawarra's first division side --- one step down from the NRL --- and to play in the same side as Chris at that level was something I'll always remember. It was special."

A couple of days before I talked to Drew, his kid brother had made his debut in the front-row for the St George Illawarra NRL side in a pre-season trial against the Canterbury Bulldogs. The below-strength Dragons, hit by five late

withdrawals including that of Test centre Mark Gasnier, were beaten 26-16 in Wollongong.

"Chris will be pushing hard for a first-grade spot this year," said Drew, "and I'll be closely monitoring his progress. We both owe a lot to our dad, Wayne, and mum, Sharan. They have always been there for us and have always encouraged us in whatever we wanted to do."

Drew played stand-off while working his way up through the various grades at his local club, Narooma, but by the time the first-

grade side won the local competition in 2000 the 17-year-old Drew was playing centre.

It wasn't long before Melbourne Storm let it be known they had been tipped off about the potential of the country boy from the New South Wales south coast and Drew was duly invited to join the Storm feeder club up in Queensland. Off he went, still only 19. And if you think it's like an Oldham boy joining a scholarship scheme at Wigan or Bradford think again --- this move meant Drew leaving home and relocating hundreds and hundreds of miles north up in Brisbane.

Playing for Norths, he was in the same team as half-back Marty Turner, who was later to make a big impact with the Roughyeds in 2005.

Drew was with Norths in seasons 2003 and 2004 before moving back to New South Wales in order to complete his plumbing apprenticeship. It was there that he signed for Dapto Canaries, spending 2005 and 2006 with that club and, in 2006, helping the Canaries to win the Illawarra competition.

Operating at back-row or centre he made such a good impression that he was chosen to play for the Illawarra district representative side and he also played two matches, by invitation, for the St George Illawarra Dragons first division team --- one step down, as stated previously, from the NRL squad.

Said Drew: "Highlights were winning the 2006 Grand Final with Dapto and playing for the St George team with my brother.

"Richard Merrill was at Dapto with me. And once we had won the Grand Final I was keen for a change, for a new challenge if you like. England appealed to me (with an opportunity perhaps to take a look at Europe eventually) and it helped with Richard coming home, too. We knew Simeon Hoyle --- Richard from their Keighley days and me because Simeon had also played in our comp --- and after speaking to Simeon we got in touch with Steve Deakin.

"One thing led to another. We met up with Deaks in Cronulla and it all happened pretty quickly. I'm glad it did, too, because I'm enjoying life here and I'm enjoying the rugby as well.

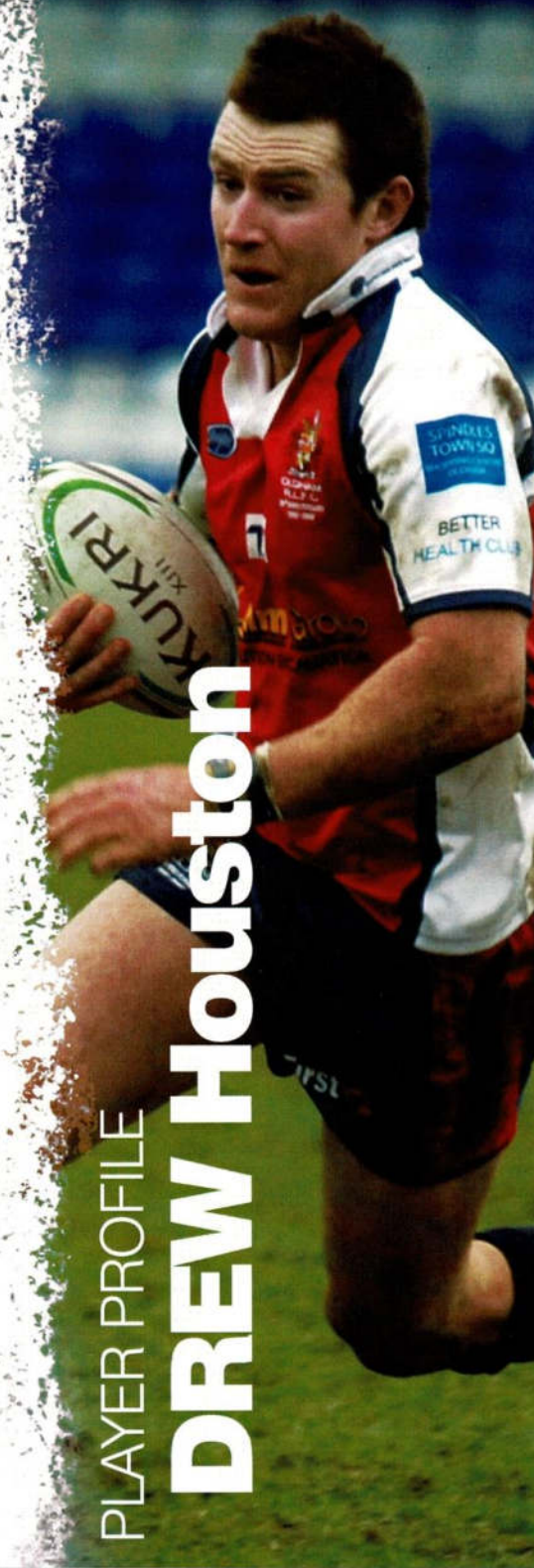
"The standard is pretty good: life at the Roughyeds is very professional; and I'm more than happy with it.

"A win is overdue. We've been close a few times, but we'll get there and hopefully we'll be up and running real well when the serious stuff starts in NL2.

"I'm often asked whether I prefer back-row or centre. Back-row is the answer. But I usually seem to end up playing centre. I'm happy there as well. I just like playing rugby.

"I'm definitely going to be away from Australia for a few years but, from the rugby point of view, I'm not sure what I'm going to be doing after this season. Only time and circumstances will dictate whether I'll still be playing in 2008 or whether I'll be off on a working holiday across Europe. We'll have to wait and see how things work out."

From what we have seen so far most Roughyeds fans will be hoping the boy from Narooma will be happy to settle in Oldham --- or even Sowerby Bridge.



AROUND & ABOUT

with The Heritage Trust

Almost certainly the best selling rugby league book of 2006 was Vertical Edition's **Biting Back – The Mike Gregory Story**. A joint effort from Mike himself, his wife Erica, Steve Manning and Dave Hadfield. Readers snaked outside northwest bookshops waiting for their copy to be signed. **Biting Back** was one of the books previously featured in these columns and proof once again that leaguers will dig deep to support well-written or well-presented material. Below is a selection of books and DVD's that have hit the shops since the last **Around & About** roundup:

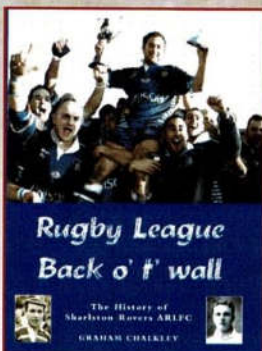


professional league club, has struggled to build support. Following a historic and controversial partnership with one of the bastions of the union code **A Pastel Revolution** explores why multi-millionaire chairman Ian Lenagan has made it his mission to turn Harlequins RL into one of the major forces in the British game. If all goes well it will be a massive relief for those supporters who have followed the club through thick and thin – from identity to identity – throughout those 27 years.

It's 27 years ago since Fulham clobbered Wigan 24-5 in front of a 9,500 Craven Cottage crowd, Oldham schoolteacher Iain McCorquodale kicking four goals for the London side. 15,000 turned out later that season for a key home game against Wakefield Trinity, but ever since, the capital's leading

ISBN: 1903659-29-9 184 pages £12-95

Order from all good bookshops or direct from London Publications Ltd, PO Box 10441, London E14 8WR for £12-95 inc postage. Credit card orders via www.llpshop.co.uk

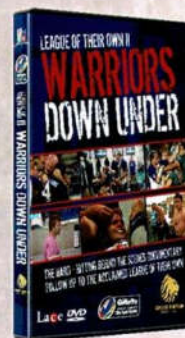


out 46-14 winners. They had seen off the former pit-village side 24-4 in the 2003 competition but sandwiched in between Sharlston had shocked the rugby league world by defeating Dewsbury Rams 30-28. **Rugby League Back o' t' wall** written by Graham Chalkley is the story of a mining village with a proud rugby tradition stretching back 125 years and which had produced some of the sport's most famous players---the Fox brothers, Jonty Parkin, Herbert Goodfellow (an England and Yorkshire scrum-half who played for Oldham in the early 50's), Tommy Smales, Carl Dooler, Joe Mullaney etc. There's a foreword from Neil Fox MBE and a preface from Oldham's former international forward David Hobbs. Back o't'wall? The name of the ground of an amateur club that has seen off more than one professional outfit down the years!

Oldham's former Great Britain forward Simon Haughton made sure that Sharlston Rovers wouldn't repeat the previous season's giant - killing act when he scored a first half hat-trick in the 3rd round of the 2005 Challenge Cup. The Roughyeds, playing on Yorkshire soil, ran

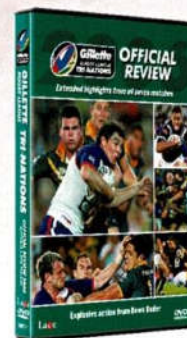
ISBN: 1903659-28-0. 232 pages £12-95

Order from all good bookshops or direct from London Publications Ltd, PO Box 10441, London E14 8WR for £12-95 inc. postage. Credit card orders via www.llpshop.co.uk



Lace International have release two DVD's. **Warriors Down Under** - the hard-hitting follow-up to the acclaimed League of Their Own - is an exhilarating behind the scenes story of the Lions' 2006 Tri-Nations series. The film crew, given access to all areas (and I mean all), provide a powerful insight into the make up of today's rugby international players -

arguably the toughest sportsmen on the planet. Bruised and battered on the pitch and hounded by a hostile media off it, the Lions astounded their critics to beat the Aussies on a glorious night in Sydney. This excellent DVD is worth the money for their extraordinary coverage of that match alone! Superb footage.



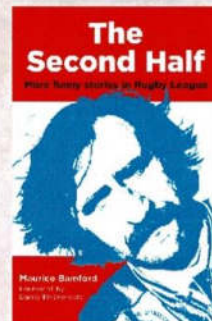
The second of the two is **Official Review 2006**, which provides extended highlights from all seven Tri-Nation matches. The most compelling and controversial of the Tri-Nations series so far it culminates in one of the greatest games of rugby league ever seen when the Kangaroos dethrone New Zealand in a pulsating final. Sean Long quits the tour---

Grannygate--- that Willie Mason knockout blow --- this is the story of a tough but always enthralling tournament--- rugby league's hardest and most competitive international series.

Warriors Down Under runs for 140 minutes and **Official Review 2006** for 150 minutes. Copies obtainable via www.amazon.co.uk

This book isn't available until early May but is well worth the wait. In the follow up to his first successful book of humorous anecdotes *Play with a Smile*, former Great Britain coach Maurice Bamford has

penned a new series of funny stories from the world of rugby league in **The Second Half**.



Encapsulating the grit and toughness combined with the down to earth humour that has existed in the game from its earliest days, the book features many famous players, and a number not so famous, but all sharing the trait of being characters who could laugh at themselves in the hardest game in the world. Players such as

Jim Mills, Barrie McDermott and Sean Edwards plus sporting personalities of the likes of journalist Keith Macklin and former Workington chairman Tom Mitchell. All contribute to the humour with tales such as *A Prop in Love*, *Can You Trust the Referee?* *Never Mind the Hooter* and *The Fearless Russian Bear*. Stories portraying quirks of the sport that are certain to make you smile.

ISBN: 978-1-904091-21-9 208 Pages £10-99

Order from all good bookshops or direct from Vertical Editions www.verticaleditions.com



Oldham RUFC 100 Years 1904/5 - 2004/5

The book is published almost a year after it ought to have gone to print, the delay caused by the death of the club's former player and president Vic Mackrell.

His daughter Sophie says of her father: "My Dad loved two

things in life above all else; rugby union and me--- in that order! In the last few years of his life collecting information and stories for the book became his major passion. He was irritatingly adamant that every detail of the club's history should be included for posterity. He put his heart and soul into it and this reflects his pride in ORUFC. He treasured his memories of playing, being instrumental in building the current ground and being involved with the club for almost 40 years. It is people such as Dad who keep clubs like Oldham vibrant and thriving and the book is testament to all of those people, past and present".

(cont. on next page)

Around & About cont...

After Vic's death it was left to club stalwarts Ian White and brothers Mark and Paul Hegginsbotham to complete the book. And an excellent job they've made of it too! Ian - who is the club's current president and treasurer - and who has produced the narrative, said: "Vic had amassed stacks of information - research is always the key - the writing was the easy part".

Illustrated throughout, this book is a must for anyone who cares about the evolution of rugby in Oldham.

Available from the Manor Park clubhouse for £15 or via Ian White (07868 734544 at £15 plus pp).



(I remember 10 years ago, when the new club O R L F C (1997) Ltd organised a formation celebration dinner at the QE Hall there was a fabulous turnout of over 400 paying guests. Vic Mackrell, on behalf of ORUFC, was

the very first to book a table).

Duggie Greenall, Tom van Vollenhoven, Alex Murphy and Vinty Karalius are all names that could be included in a star-spangled 50's football St Helens outfit which would, more often than not, ensure the Watersheddings turnstiles were closed at least half an hour before kick-off. Saints are proud of a heritage that revolves around playing fast flowing, entertaining rugby league and have never been afraid to break the bank in bringing in crowd pleasing players from each corner of the rugby playing world --- Mick Sullivan, Tommy Bishop, Frank Myler, Kel Coslett, Mal Meninga, Paul Newlove, Sean Long and Oldham born Paul Sculthorpe readily spring to mind. **St Helens RLFC 100 Greats** written on behalf of the Saints Heritage Society is Alex Service selection --- and an interesting one it is too.

ISBN: 978-07524-4079-8 128 pages £12-99

Available to order from all good bookshops or direct from Tempus Publishing via website www.tempus-publishing.com

Duggie Greenall

A Rugby League Saint



Denis Whittle

The very first name that I penned in when reviewing St Helens 100 Greats was threequarter Duggie Greenall. By sheer coincidence Denis Whittle's new book **Duggie Greenall - A Rugby League Saint** has hit the bookshelves almost simultaneously.

A saint Duggie certainly wasn't! I remember one after - the - match

altercation on the Watersheddings pavilion steps between a badly bruised Oldham centre Alan Davies and his opposite number. Davies, never short of a word or two, muttered through a thick lip something in the order of "your --- day today Duggie, but your on your last ---legs and I'm on the way up!" I think Alan came quite close to a second pasting. Greenall was one of the toughest threequarters to play the game.

In his foreword Ray French comments "many youngsters of the period looked to American comics for their heroes. Batman, Superman, the Lone Ranger and even Wonder Woman provided all the thrills for just three pence. But for those of us living in the shadows of Knowsley Rd there was only one hero who could be relied on to topple the 'baddie' and snatch triumph from despair. And that was Saints' inspirational centre Duggie Greenall, whose daring deeds could be seen live on Saturday afternoon from the 'Boy's Pen' for the same cost of three pence. A childhood idol loved and revered for the ferocity of his tackling and courage in taking on any adversary, whatever his size". Depends on who you supported Ray!! Well written Denis.

ISBN: 190-3659-272 122 pages £12-95.

Available to order through all good bookshops or direct from London Publications Ltd, PO Box 10441, London, E14 8WR at £12-95 inc postage. For credit card orders visit www.lshop.co.uk

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the bootroom

THE MEN WHO CARRY ROUGHYEDS' HOPES AND AMBITIONS INTO 2007.

ASHTON, Paul (half-back): Son of former Watersheddings scrum-half star Ray Ashton, Paul is fulfilling a lifetime's ambition to play for his hometown club. Though born in Widnes, he was only a few months old when his parents moved to Oldham where his father carved out a career that earned him GB tour honours in 1984 during 212 club appearances which reaped him 72 tries.

Aged 27, Paul learned his trade at Saddleworth before playing for Halifax, Rochdale, Keighley and Swinton. He was in the Cougars side, with his new Roughyeds team mates Simeon Hoyle and Richard Mervill, that won promotion to NL1 in 2003.

He got his big chance at Oldham in 2006, initially on a week-to-week basis, and did enough to earn a full contract for 2007. Will be challenging for both half-back spots as he feels equally comfortable with both No 6 or No 7 on his back.

BAINES, Chris (back-row): A young forward who also did enough for coach Steve Deakin last year, while on loan from Warrington, to win a contract for 2007. He proved to be a good, hard-working forward in his first season with the Roughyeds and the experience he gained will serve him and the club well in NL2.

He was in his third season of under-21s rugby at Warrington when he first got the chance to move on loan to Roughyeds. He had three separate and continuous one-month loan spells and when the Wolves said they would release him he had no hesitation in grabbing the chance to commit himself to Oldham for the remainder of 2006 and then 2007.

A product of Chorley Panthers, where he played until he was 13, and then Wigan St Pats, he toured New Zealand with Great Britain Young Lions in 2003, also representing his country at youth level against Australia and France.

BOULTS, Jason (prop): One of many new boys in the Roughyeds squad for 2007, 23-year-old Jason arrived on the recommendation of two of his former Halifax team mates, Jamie Bloem and Alan Hadcroft.

Alan, already established here as one of coach Steve Deakin's senior men, wasted no time in tipping off the boss when he learned from Bloem that Boult was ready to leave The Shay to take up a new challenge.

At 16 stone and 6ft 2in, Jason can play his weight in the front-row, as he proved in his two seasons at Fax where he was an ever-present with 30 appearances in 2005 and then added 27 more in 2006 — statistics which show he is as durable as he is consistent.

Started off at Siddal under-16s, spent four years as a young pro with Bradford Bulls and signed for Halifax in November, 2004.

COSTIN, Geno (prop or back-row): A non-quota Aussie, 22-year-old Geno is in England for the first time and hoping to make an impact in NL2. Former Halifax stand-off Carl Briggs, lined up originally to become Gateshead Thunder's new coach, planned to take Geno to the North-East with him. When that move broke down, Briggs pointed Geno in Oldham's direction, much to the delight of coach Steve Deakin.

Geno first established himself in the Queensland Cup competition with Wynnum-Manly, alongside another Roughyeds recruit Mark Ogdan, but last year played in the same comp for Logan Souths. Has long had a yearning to embark on an adventure to England and now that opportunity knocks he intend to make the most of it. Arrived in Oldham with his mate Mark Ogdan on Boxing Day — just in time for his first training session on freezing Oldham Edge two days later.

CRABTREE, Andy (hooker): One of half a dozen players signed by Roughyeds from Swinton Lions for 2007, Andy is eager to fulfil the early promise that earned him not only a spot on the books of Wigan Warriors but also a place in a talented Great Britain academy side that boasted several players who have gone on to big things at the highest level.

A tidy footballer with good hands and a rugby brain, the youngster has the attributes to play loose-forward as well as hooker, but it is with No 9 on his back that he has accomplished most of his achievements so far. He can also kick goals.

GOREY, Andy (winger): A scrum-half in his Royton Tigers days, local lad Andy became a good full-back in the former Roughyeds academy side. He was under contract on the break-up of the academy side, but he pledged to fight for a place in the first team rather than go elsewhere.

In 2006 he became a fans' favourite with gutsy performances, capped off with a couple of length-of-the-field tries. Diminutive, but pacy, he established himself as a regular on the wing, making more than 20 appearances and taking his try tally into double figures to finish the season as the club's top try scorer.

HADCROFT, Alan (centre): Robust, and renowned for solid defence and strong running, 29-year-old Alan is also vastly experienced. He signed from Halifax for the 2006 season, but his campaign was marred by a series of shoulder injuries. He was the first player, not already on a longer contract, to sign for 2007, but then he dislocated his shoulder again in the final match of the season at Whitehaven.

While on the injured list earlier in the campaign, he served the club well as coach Steve Deakin's No 2, a position he may take up again if it is decided his playing days are over.

HODSON, Ian (back-row forward): First arrived at Roughyeds on loan from Swinton midway through the 2005 season. Played in 15 games that season, mainly second-row, and signed permanently for 2006 when he was one of the squad's best and most consistent performers in a difficult campaign.

Scored two tries in 23 appearances last season and showed his versatility by turning out at prop, second-row, loose and even stand-off.

He initially rejected the chance of a new deal for 2007 due to work commitments, but re-signed in early March after turning out occasionally for Tyldesley RU Club. Expected this season to be used mainly in his recognised spot — back-row.

HOUGH, John (hooker): Cut 'Houghie' in two and you will find 'Roughyeds' running right through him. He was the first player to sign for the 'new' Roughyeds club when it was formed by Chris Hamilton and his fellow directors in the autumn of 1997, following the demise of Oldham Bears.

Currently two seasons into a three-year contract, 29-year-old Oldham-born John will have completed ten years with the club at the end of the 2007 season and will thus qualify for a testimonial.

A product of the Waterhead club, he signed for Warrington Wolves while still a boy, but he carved himself a niche in the history of the new Oldham club when he signed as a free agent on December 2, 1997.

It was the beginning of a long-term relationship in which John has played more than 230 games for the Roughyeds — most of them at hooker.

HOUSTON, Drew (second-row or centre): One of the two overseas quota men for 2007, 23-year-old Drew comes highly recommended by another new Roughyeds recruit, Simeon Hoyle.

Hoyle played in Australia in 2005 and liked what he saw of the Dapto pair, Houston and a former Keighley colleague Richard Mervill. Houston, once

a youngster linked with Melbourne Storm, had two seasons with a Storm feeder club, Norths in the Queensland Cup, before heading south for Dapto, champions of the Illawarra competition.

Drew comes to Oldham with a reputation as a good line runner and a big hitter on the edges of the rucks in defence.

He helped Dapto to the championship of the Illawarra competition last year and he also earned selection in the competition's representative side.

HOYLE, Simeon (hooker): Formerly with Keighley Cougars and Halifax, hooker Simeon was one of the first of the new boys to be signed up by Roughyeds for 2007. He is a hooker of the old school — a tough and industrious operator in defence while having enough know-how to make things happen from dummy half.

It was while he was at Keighley that, in 2003, he helped the Cougars to win promotion to NL1 from a third-place finish in the league. Sheffield, Chorley and Keighley finished neck and neck on 26 points, with Cougars third on points difference.

However, with Hoyle at hooker, Paul Ashton at stand-off and Richard Mervill on the bench, Cougars won through to the final, beating Sheffield 13-11 at Widnes with Hoyle winning the League Express man-of-the-match award.

He later headed Down Under for a spell before returning to Halifax, from where he opted to sign for the Roughyeds.

O'CONNOR, Paul (full-back): Had three games for Roughyeds while on loan from Widnes Vikings last season and made such an impression on coach Steve Deakin that the boss didn't hesitate to go for him again when he learned he might be available. His signing takes into account that he will miss June, July and August due to a pre-arranged trip to Australia and New Zealand.

A former Ireland and Great Britain international at Students' level, 22-year-old Paul spent two seasons with Widnes, his hometown club, operating mainly in the under-21s at full-back or on the wing.

He played his early rugby at Widnes Tigers and Widnes St Maries and later, while at university in Liverpool, he earned his Students' international honours, highlighted by his appearance for GF Students against Australia in 2004.

Pacy, and with an eye for a gap, Paul enjoyed his spell with Roughyeds last year and he went back to the Vikings only because he wanted "one last go" at bidding to get into the Widnes first team.

He should be fit and ready for anything the rugby league world throws at him, given that away from his chosen sport he is a consultant for a company specialising in promoting and advising on health and lifestyle.

LANGLEY, Gareth (winger): Pacy, and a good finisher, Gaz Langley comes to the Roughyeds after five years in one of the most professional learning and development schools in rugby league — the youth and academy set-up at St Helens.

Born in the well-known rugby league district of Parr, near St Helens, 22-year-old Gareth didn't take up the sport with Blackbrook until he was 15. By the time he was 16 he was playing for Salford under-18s, having been headhunted by the then Salford academy coach Steve McCormack.

He wasn't on contract and it didn't take long for hometown St Helens to take him to Knowsley Road.

He was the Saints senior academy player of the year in 2005 and runner up to player of the year in 2006, a season in which he made his Super League debut in a young Saints side that took on Catalans Dragons in Perpignan.

LITTLER, Craig (centre): How appropriate that Littler comes next Langley in alphabetical order... for that's exactly how they have lined up, as centre and wing partners, in the Saints academy teams of the past four years. A year younger than 'Gaz', at 21, Craig was offered the chance to have another year at Knowsley Road, but he opted to sign for Roughyeds instead — and one of the reasons was that he could continue his partnership with Langley.

They are said to have built up a good partnership and a good understanding of each other's style of play — and Roughyeds boss Steve Deakin hopes they will put that understanding to good use in NL2.

A scorer of tries, as well as a try provider, Littler also played in France at Super League level for the Saints in the 2006 campaign.

He didn't rush into putting pen to paper for Oldham but, having sought advice from various quarters, he took the view that there was much to be gained from playing in NL2 under an experienced boss like Deaks.

MERVILL, Richard (prop): Formerly with Halifax and then Keighley, Richard comes to the Roughyeds for 2007 from Australia — a similar route to that taken by his former Cougars team mate, Simeon Hoyle.

Mervill played in the 2003 Keighley side that won promotion to NL1, alongside hooker Hoyle and stand-off Paul Ashton, and later jetted off Down Under, where he has been playing for Dapto in the Illawarra competition.

Hoyle, who had also played out there, alerted Roughyeds to the availability of both Mervill and his Dapto team mate Drew Houston and it was thanks largely to Hoyle that Oldham got their names on contracts.

Said to have a high work rate and a good offload, Mervill has experience of the game in both hemispheres and, with Wes Rogers and Jason Boult, he will provide much of the Roughyeds' go-forward from the front-row.

OGDEN, Mark (stand-off): A 23-year-old from Queensland, Mark also occupies a spot on the Roughyeds overseas quota. An accomplished play-maker, he is said to have the ability to guide the side around the park from outside-half.

He was in the Brisbane Broncos development squad as a teenager and in 2000, aged 17, he represented Queensland Schoolboys. Like his mate, Geno Costin, he represented Wynnum-Manly at various levels, building a reputation as a reliable goalkicker and a clever half-back in the modern mould.

As he worked his way up the Wynnum ladder, he picked up several awards as player of the year and leading points scorer, but last year he transferred to Logan Souths.

He has never previously been outside Queensland, so his move to Oldham is an adventure in every sense of the word.

OLDHAM, Stuart (winger): Formerly with St Helens and Swinton, Stuart has good pace and also has experience of the full-back position. While at Saints, he impressed the then academy coach Dave Rotherham, who spoke highly of him to Oldham boss Steve Deakin. He lives at Eccles and played his first serious rugby with Sedgley Park RU club before moving up the ladder in union with Liverpool St Helens.

From there, he was spotted by Saints and it was from Knowsley Road that he moved on to Swinton two years ago.

He comes with a reputation for producing excellent speed on the break with a good kick return — qualities that Oldham will need in NL2 if they are to challenge for promotion at the first time of asking.

RODEN, Neil (half-back): Neil has rejoined Roughyeds from Leigh after leaving the club initially to go to Batley in 2004. In his first stint with Oldham, after joining from Wigan Academy, he amassed 290 points (68 tries and 18 drop goals) in 142 appearances over four and a half seasons.

No other player in the nine-year history of the 'new' Roughyeds club has totalled more tries than Roden, whose 68 pushed Mark Sibson (61) into second place.

Neil also has the distinction of having played for the Roughyeds in the 2001 Grand Ginal against Widnes at Spotland.

A competent and highly-skilled half-back, whether at No 6 or No 7, he shows all the know-how required for these two highly-specialised positions.

ROGERS, Wes (prop): At the age of 29 — and appointed as club captain for 2007 — Wes brings experience, a cool head and stability to Oldham's front-row. Oldham-born, he first played for the Roughyeds in the club's early days, but he returns, from Swinton, as a much more experienced and matured front-row forward, who is delighted to be coming back for a second chance with his hometown club.

On leaving the Roughyeds last time, he spent three years with Rochdale, followed by three more seasons with Swinton, and he is one of six ex-Lions who will be wearing Roughyeds colours in 2007, the others being Kris Smith, Stuart Oldham, Michael Stout, Andy Crabtree, and Ian Sinfield.

SINFIELD, Ian (back-row): Another vastly experienced forward who is returning to his hometown club. The brother of Leeds Rhinos captain, Kevin Sinfield, Ian played in the first ever Roughyeds game at Rochdale on New Year's Day, 1998. He had come initially on loan from Salford, but soon afterwards he was signed on a permanent basis, with Roughyeds paying out an undisclosed fee for his services.

'Sinny' had four seasons at Oldham, making more than 70 appearances, before moving to Rochdale, then to Keighley, and on to Swinton. While at Keighley he played in the NL2 Grand Final alongside Simeon Hoyle, Paul Ashton and Richard Mervill.

He was club captain for much of his time at Swinton Lions, for whom he appeared in his second NL2 Grand Final against Sheffield Eagles last October.

SMITH, Kris (back-row or centre): Another vastly experienced player, this 29-year-old has been on the books of four Super League clubs, namely Leeds, Salford, London and Halifax. He has also played in France with Pia and Carpentras and it was while he was briefly at Carpentras that he was a club mate of the Roughyeds' new French signing, Said Tamghart.

He is a big man of 6ft 4in and 15 and a half stones and he has had brief experience of Super League with both London and Halifax. A product of the Eccles amateur club, he was snapped up by Leeds Rhinos while still a teenager.

He then moved to Salford where a knee injury hampered his progress. His French excursion followed before he returned to England to play with London and Halifax before enjoying a four-year stint with Swinton.

He showed his versatility with Swinton last season when he played 14 times in the second-row, five at loose-forward and once at stand-off, coming into prominence with outstanding displays in the second-row as the Lions beat Featherstone Rovers and Celtic Crusaders, both away, to earn their Grand Final appearance against Sheffield.

STOUT, Michael (second-row or centre): Another Roughyeds signing from Swinton, Michael has a good turn of speed for a forward and likes to use it

while breaking wide out — a quality that also enables him to do a stint in the centre.

This Warrington-born school teacher played in the academy squads of both Warrington Wolves and Widnes Vikings before joining Swinton Lions a year ago. In his one season with the Lions he made 19 appearances and scored seven tries. He played four times at centre, once on the wing, four times in the second row, once at loose-forward and nine times as a substitute.

Swinton wanted to keep hold of him and made him an offer for 2007, but he chose instead to sign a one-year deal with the Roughyeds.

Like many other players brought to the Roughyeds this season by Steve Deakin, he will be regarded as a versatile player who can offer much to the squad and to the team in a variety of positions.

TAMGHART, Said (utility): The description 'utility' perhaps fails to do justice to this French international, who has represented his country at every level, including fully-fledged Test matches against Australia and New Zealand. He played prop against the Aussies and second-row against the Kiwis, but both he and coach Steve Deakin have confirmed that he can operate equally well at loose-forward and also in the backs at centre or wing.

On his way up the ladder to full French international honours, he played for Carpentras, Avignon and UTC (better known now as Perpignan-based Catalans Dragons) and it was while he was at UTC that he came under the wing of Deaks, who holds him in the highest regard.

He reached the pinnacle of his career two years ago when he played against Australia and New Zealand, but he has long had an ambition to play in England and he didn't hesitate to take the opportunity when Deaks invited him to come to Oldham.

WILKINSON, Alex (centre, wing): Oldham-born Alex played his early rugby with Royton Tigers and toured with GB schoolboys to Australia in 1999 and with England academy to New Zealand and Australia in 2001. Super League giants Bradford Bulls snapped him up on and, while at Odsal, he had a loan spell with London Broncos, where he played six times in Super League. He then moved on loan to Huddersfield, where he added another 13 Super League games to his tally.

He played a similar number while on loan to Hull FC, who offered him a two-year contract. However, Alex wanted to complete his degree and with part-time rugby the only option he chose his hometown club.

Injuries dealt him some cruel blows in 2006, but Roughyeds didn't hesitate to offer him another deal for 2007 and he will be hoping the New Year brings new luck.

WINGFIELD, Lee (second-row): This 24-year-old second-row forward, signed last year from amateurs Leigh East, can also operate equally well at centre. He won many honours in the amateur game and played on numerous occasions for Great Britain. He played against France and Russia in Russia in 2003 and kept his place for international appearances against France at Carcassonne and then for the return game at Whitehaven.

Perhaps the pinnacle of his achievements in the amateur game came in 2004 when he toured Australia with GB amateurs and played in every game. He signed a contract to cover 2006 and 2007 and he proved to be one of Oldham's top performers in the early part of the 2006 season until first a ban and then an injury at work kept him out of the side. Although he prefers to play in three pack, he has also operated well in the threequarters.



with Ian Wilson

roughyeds' roar!

GOOD REASONS FOR OPTIMISM AS OVERSEAS BOYS SETTLE IN

We still haven't beaten a professional team in a competitive game since March 26 last year ; that was a 4-point thrashing of Keighley! However, there surely is no-one connected with the club who is not massively more confident and positive about prospects than at any time during 2006. And that was before the cup victory at East Hull!

It is interesting to consider why this relative optimism should exist, given our results against Hornets, Swinton and Dewsbury so far this season. Facts don't lie, they say, and there is no doubt that we have lost all four games, albeit having three points against our name in the Northern Rail Group 4 mini-league table as a result of the slightly bizarre new points system they have introduced this year. But maybe the for and against - 54 to 100 - gives a clue. Whereas last season we were shipping an

average of 46 points per game, in all fixtures, this year we are already down to 25 - and that is probably more than our generally impressive defensive efforts deserve, I think those of you who have seen all four games would agree.

For example it includes the disputed try awarded to the excellent Dave McConnell during the Rochdale match at Spotland. I would submit that most people in the ground - -- supporters of both sides -- regarded Said Tamghart, the Oldham forward, as having been tackled when McConnell decided he might as well take the ball off him and stroll over the line to touch down.

The try was awarded and it completely changed the complexion of a match which Oldham had been deservedly bossing up to that point.

No doubt, though, the decision, whatever it cost us in the short run, will have added to Said's learning curve, which must already have been extremely steep! He can only benefit, though, from the experiences he has been going through, and I am sure will emerge - hopefully in time for the start of the league campaign - as one of the most effective and committed overseas players who have graced the club over the years. Messrs. Costin, Houston and Ogden, too, all seem to me to have the potential to be major contributors to a successful year, once we have got the initial trials and tribulations out of the way. That is another reason why there are generally positive vibes around, I think. We haven't always had good early impressions of our overseas recruits, to say the least! But this year's Deakin-recruited crop seem to have fitted well into the environment of a tightly-knit squad, and to have

bought in to the philosophy, as well as having decent ability at the level we are at.

This is not to downplay the contribution already made by some of the English-born players in the squad, I should add, either. And the coach remains worthy of our wholehearted support, too - which is a remarkable thing to say in the context of the results achieved so far. It just goes to show that results are not everything! To observe Mr. Deakin offering his outstretched hand as they left the Spotland pitch to Mr. Kirkpatrick and his touch-judge brought nothing to mind more than Kipling's famous "-- treat triumph and disaster both the same " poem ; and the coach's ability to do that will surely soon be reflected in a period of thoroughly-deserved success on the field too.

HULL KR's EARLY SUCCESS REFLECTS WELL ON NATIONAL LEAGUES

What a remarkable first five rounds of Super League we have seen. If we take Saints, Hull, Leeds, Bradford, Warrington and Wigan as the big six - probably favourites before the season began to finish in the play-off places, and certainly the six with the biggest home attendances - then of 16 matches so far between one of these and the other six, no fewer than 6 have been won by the underdogs , with one draw. Further, in 3 of these games the top side has been at home. Even accepting that it is still early days, the league table really does suggest that we have something much closer to a genuinely competitive league than there has been since well before the days of Wigan's dominance. We currently have Hull KR

and Wakefield in the top 3, and entirely on merit at this stage!

Personally, I feel that Hull KR should take pride of place so far. If ever there was a case being made for the retention of the possibility of promotion to Super League, surely this is it. The argument from the closed shop brigade that a promoted side cannot compete has been notable for its absence over the last month or so. And this is because Hull KR have done it right - a quality coach, a long-term plan, and stability of playing staff. For them to have already defeated Leeds and Wigan is a fantastic reflection on the improving standard of the National Leagues as well as on Justin

Morgan and on the current Hull KR players ; it is particularly good to see solid NL1 players like Jon Goddard and David Tangata-Toa coping so well in Super League. How many more could make it, if there weren't so many average-quality non-GB players taking up places in Super League squads?

Of course, there are also inevitably disappointments alongside the good news. One must be the form of Hull, without Cooke to guide them around the field as well as to come up with defence-splitting passes. Another was the performance of Warrington against Saints last weekend. Paul Cullen just doesn't seem

able yet to get a side to play to the top of its ability on the big occasion ; any unforced mistakes when you are playing a genuinely-focused St. Helens side inevitably means a thrashing, and that is what they got!

The interesting question, supposing the two pre-season favourites were to maintain decent form, is who will be in serious relegation trouble as 2007 progresses. Even at this stage, Huddersfield are a bit cut off at the foot of the table, but this maybe a slightly false situation, since they have happened to suffer four narrow defeats to top sides. Maybe Salford are the ones with real worries? Watch this space!

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carnegie challenge cup

by ROGER HALSTEAD

ROUGHYEDS will be preparing for a tough and intense battle when they go to Cougar Park on Sunday, April 1 to take on Keighley Cougars in the fourth round of the Carnegie Challenge Cup.

Cougars, whose player-coach is veteran play-maker Barry Eaton, will fancy their chances of making the last 16 in the most famous of all rugby league knock-out competitions, especially with home advantage.

But Oldham will believe also that they are more than capable of heading into Bronte Country and coming home with the cup scalp of their fellow NL2 club.

The tie will be home from home for several people in the Roughyeds camp, Steve Deakin having coached at Cougar Park and Simeon Hoyle, Richard Mervill, Ian Sinfield and Paul Ashton all having played for Cougars in the past.

"We are happy with Keighley away . . . it could certainly have been a lot worse," said Roughyeds chairman Chris Hamilton as he and coach Steve Deakin returned to Oldham on Monday night after attending the draw at the Leeds Metropolitan University's Carnegie sports college site.

He added: "While bearing in mind that we came unstuck in a similar sort of tie at Barrow last year, we will certainly be looking to win the one at Keighley. However, we know we have to be ready for a tough game because we are sure that Cougars will fancy their chances as well."

The tie won't be a money spinner in itself, but prize money increases round on round and both clubs will see it as a stepping stone to a possible clash with a heavily supported Super League club in round five.

While Roughyeds were winning 26-10 at East Hull in the third round last weekend, Keighley were knocking out Thornhill Trojans of Dewsbury 34-6 at Cougar Park. Before yesterday's games East Hull were fifth in the National Conference premier division and Trojans were tenth, three points behind but having played a game more.

Hooker James Feather was Keighley's star man as the Cougars

ran in seven tries to prevent the sort of upset that enabled Thornhill to win at Workington last year.

Oldhamer Michael Fogerty has been on the Cougars' long-term injury list, but the former Waterhead centre should be ready to play again soon and be well in the running for a place in the cup tie team against his hometown club.

Stand-off Adam Mitchell, who broke a leg in a pre-season friendly last January, might also be back in the frame by the time the tie comes round.

In the Oldham camp, Ian Hodson was signed in time to be included on the Roughyeds cup register so by then he might be in the running for inclusion in the cup side, although he has not yet started training here.

The draw ceremony, which was broadcast on BBC Radio Five Live, broke with tradition in that the balls representing each club were not numbered. Instead, each club had a ball bearing its name and, by using a Perspex device, officials ensured that everyone present could see the teams being drawn from the container.

Fourth-round draw (weekend of March 31, April 1): Pia v Harlequins; Keighley v OLDHAM; Catalans v Featherstone; Bradford v Castleford; Dewsbury v Sheffield; Whitehaven v Halifax; Widnes v Wigan; Swinton v Barrow; Leeds v Workington; London Skolars v Wakefield; St Helens v Batley; Rochdale Hornets v Celtic Crusaders; Huddersfield v York City Knights; Warrington v Hull KR; Gateshead v Salford; Hunslet v Hull.

Round five will be played on the weekend of May 13 with the quarter-finals on the second weekend in June and the semi-finals on the last weekend in July.

The showpiece final is due to be played on August 25 at the new Wembley after an eight-year absence.

SUPPORT GROUP NEWS

Last Sunday's win against East Hull will, with a bit of luck, have quietened the rugby league media. They had anticipated a Carnegie Challenge Cup upset in pursuit of their quest to perpetuate the story of record losses.

Let's hope we are soon (hopefully today) in a position to negate the ridicule once and for all with a good win over professional opposition and give ourselves the confidence to go forward as a club.

Our very good wishes go to Nigel Marland and Doreen Woodward, both very committed and hard-working volunteers involved with our club, who are both suffering from serious health problems at present.

We wish them both full and speedy recoveries. Perhaps a few wins will cheer them up -
 -- SHEILA.

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Well, you can do the choosing, and even if we're losing,

It's a real big deal just to know how you feel,

And to stand with your head held high,

And, whatever the score, it's never a bore,

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Grant, March, 2007.

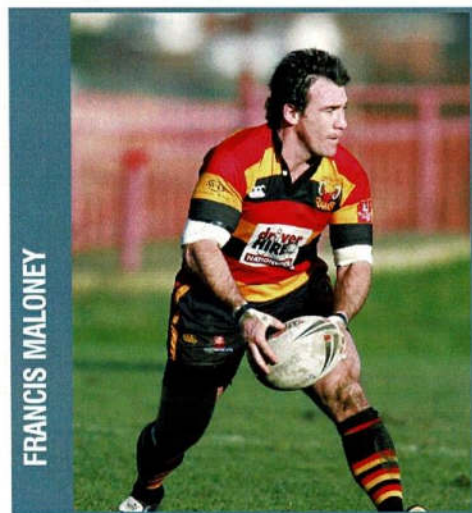
DEWSBURY HOPING FOR A RAM RAID

Roger Halstead looks at Kelly's Heroes

THE Rams of 2007, facing life in NL1 after winning automatic promotion last year, will be relying heavily on two experienced craftsmen in veteran half-backs Francis Maloney and Dean Lawford.

They form a twin pivotal role and as elder statesmen of the game they will be central figures on and off the field in anything Dewsbury aspire to achieve in both the Northern Rail Cup and in the tough NL1 programme to follow.

Maloney is no stranger to Boundary Park, having played 65 games for Oldham -- 39 of them in Super League -- in the old club's seasons of 1996 and 1997. In that time he kicked 153 goals and three drop goals and scored 21 tries to amass 393 points.



FRANCIS MALONEY

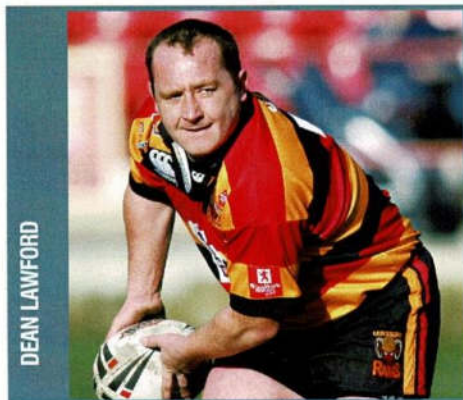
At the age of 33, he is still a key man for his NL1 club after piling up 166 Super League games with Castleford, Salford, Wakefield and Oldham and notching 517 Super League points from 63 tries, 130 goals (91 of them for Oldham) and five drop goals.

And he is still accumulating points, having rattled

up 186 in the Rams' NL2 championship-winning season last year from six tries, 80 goals and two drop goals.

The first of those tries gave him a career century and his aim now is to score 100 goals in a season. Lawford, the other 'old head' and midfield pivot, will soon celebrate his 30th birthday and he will be able to look back on a career that has taken him around the rugby league circuit at all levels. He has played for no fewer than five clubs in Super League --- Sheffield, Huddersfield, Leeds, Halifax and Widnes -- as well as one or two, like Halifax, Batley and Dewsbury (twice), at a lower strata.

Like Franny, his fellow schemer-in-chief, Dean has been around the block and it says much for his



DEAN LAWFORD

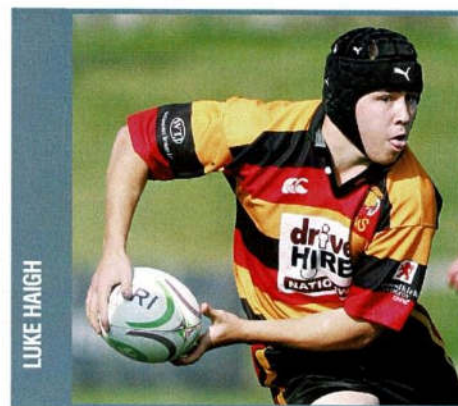
standing in the game that Rams boss Andy Kelly -- last year's NL2 coach of the year -- acquired his services to take some of the pressure off Maloney in what is sure to be a red-hot NL1 competition.

Hooker Richard Chapman, who had nine years at Featherstone, is another golden oldie in the Rams

squad, but the Tetley's Stadium is also home to a clutch of youngsters from local amateur clubs who have come through the academy system and who look to have bright futures ahead of them.

None more so than our TOP GUN --- 19-year-old hooker Luke Haigh, who built himself a huge reputation locally with Thornhill Trojans and is now making rapid progress with the Rams. He was in the Trojans team that beat Workington in the Challenge Cup last year and then played Catalans Dragons away.

He joined Rams late on last season, quickly made a big impact at academy level and is now pushing for a regular first-team spot.



LUKE HAIGH

Choice of SHOOTING STAR goes to full-back Ian Preece. This 21-year-old represented Yorkshire at every age from eight to 16 and is known as the 'crash-test dummy' for his tough and fearless tackling.

For ONE TO WATCH look no further than Aussie loose-forward Josh Weedon, a clever No 13 or half-back who has arrived at Dewsbury via Featherstone

and Doncaster. Weedon scored one try and set up the game-clincher for Haigh when we played at the Tetley Stadium three weeks ago.

BEST OF THE REST?

Back-row forward Kevin Crouthers, who has played for several Super League clubs; winger Kane Epati, the pacy Cook Islander formerly with Hull KR and Doncaster; half-back Liam Finn, once of Wakefield and Featherstone; prop Andy Hobson, ex Widnes and Halifax; young prop Dominic Maloney, believed to have a big future in the game.

Others to watch out for include rock-solid former Batley Bulldogs centre Danny Maun; winger Bryn Powell (top try scorer last year with 19); utility forward Andy Spink, who is back with Rams after two seasons with Halifax; former Warrington and Castleford man David Bates; promising centre Andy Bostock; winger Lee Close; and second-rower Alex Bretherton.

Bretherton, who was on the BARLA open-age tour of Australia in 2004, is a local lad who appeared in every game in 2006.

Another local in whom the Rams have high hopes is utility forward Martin Robinson, who learned his trade with Dewsbury Moor, impressed in the academy last year and is now making his mark at first-team level.

Also in the 'up and coming' bracket you can include 19-year-old full-back Tom Collieran, utility back Ryan Glynn, another 19-year-old in back-rower Rob Kelly, young prop Keegan Hirst, 18-year-old centre John Oakes, 20-year-old forward Jason Southwell, Danny Ratcliffe, Andy Tillotson and Joe Waters.

These, then, are the 2007 Kelly's Heroes, who will be here at Boundary Park today for what should be a fascinating tussle.

PICTURES KINDLY PROVIDED BY GARY COYLE OF BATLEY

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CRUNCH TIME!

WITH just two rounds of Northern Rail Cup group matches remaining, this weekend will go a long way to deciding which clubs progress.

The top two teams in each group go through, along with the leading side from the NL3-based Group Seven, and the three best third-placed teams.

Moving through each pool, there is still much to be decided.

In Group One, Castleford Tigers have already qualified, but there remains a scramble behind them, where all three other teams can progress in theory.

In reality, for the automatic spot it's probably between Featherstone Rovers and Doncaster Lakers, who meet at the Keepmoat Stadium today in a fascinating clash.

Halifax are through in Group Two, and York City Knights look set to join them.

But Keighley Cougars could still join the party if they beat the Knights at home this afternoon, taking the issue down to the final weekend of the initial stages.

Dewsbury Rams can seal their progression from Group Three by winning at Oldham, while Batley's slim chances of qualifying rely on them winning at surprise package Hunslet.

The Hawks have beaten both the Bulldogs and the Rams already, and even if they don't

make the knock-out stages, they have already set themselves up for a successful 2007.

Defeating Swinton at home will ensure that Rochdale Hornets move safely through as pool winners, while Oldham will be hoping to record their first win over professional opposition in over 12 months, with remaining matches against Dewsbury and the Lions.

Whitehaven and Barrow's tussle for top spot in Group Five could be decided by their Friday night showdown at Craven Park, which should be a superb tussle.

Below them, Workington Town and Blackpool Panthers will be looking to hit a winning run before the league campaign begins.

Finally, in Group Six Widnes Vikings should seal their qualification by beating improving London Skolars, but Leigh Centurions' pathway is not so assured.

They travel to Celtic Crusaders knowing that defeat could see them exit a competition that they won last season.

That would be the biggest shock of all from an intriguing few weeks' action in the Northern Rail Cup.

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Ray Broadbent
Iain Taylor
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(Phil Costin)
Hans Bateson
John Kettleton

WE welcome two new Five Alive members today ---
long-standing fan Hans Bateson of Oldham and a new
Roughyeds supporter, John Kettleton of Whitworth.

If they are half as lucky as Roy Wood in picking up
winnings on the Five Alive lottery they will be celebrating
their decision to join. Roy, who lives in Royton only a few
hundred yards from Boundary Park, won second prize
of two hospitality-suite places in the January draw and
then followed up in February by landing the top monthly
prize of £500.

"I couldn't quite believe it -- how lucky can you get," said
72-year-old Roy, who has been watching Oldham since
his grandfather first took him to Watersheddings as a
toddler.

He becomes the fourth subscriber to Five Alive to win
the £500, following Jeffrey Bates of Shaw, Keith Mullaney
of H Mullaney and Son (Skip Hire) Ltd of Mossley and
Mark Harrington of Mark Antony Kitchens.

A season-ticket holder, Roy spent all his working life with
Oldham Brewery, taking early retirement as transport
manager. And he was present at the second of our all-

inclusive Five Alive lunches in the social club when
former Castleford, Oldham, Doncaster, Huddersfield
and Halifax star Jamie Bloem, the guest speaker, pulled
out his lucky number, FA028.

Jamie provided Five Alive members with a fascinating
insight into his upbringing in South Africa, his arrival as a
teenager in England and his career, with its ups and
downs, as one of Super League's best-known fullbacks
and goalkickers.

His delivery was excellent, his story was extremely
interesting and he gave a polished and professional talk
which went down a treat with Five Alive members, men
and ladies alike.

Jamie, who runs his own landscaping business in
Halifax and employs our prop Jason Bouls, is working
on his autobiography which will be published later in the
year. It will be some read!

Gareth Owen won second prize in the latest draw and
Frank Taylor won third prize.

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journalistic license

by Matthew Chambers

The latest man to be linked with a move to the dark side is Chris Ashton, Wigan's promising young full-back.

The 19-year-old is believed to be destined for Northampton, while rumours are also re-circulating that Bradford's Lesley Vainikolo is to join up with former Bulls team mate Karl Pryce at Gloucester.

Whenever these stories arise of union types sticking their snout in league's talent trough, panic tends to ensue.

Instead of viewing such manoeuvres as being inevitable — ambitious players in both codes will always be on the look-out for new challenges — some on the league side of the fence prefer to don their hard hats and declare war, just as their union counterparts did in the past.

Meanwhile, at grass roots level league continues to thrive, even on previously infertile ground such as London where the Harlequins RL club and London Skolars continue their excellent work in the local community.

Audience figures for televised games are still terrific and attendances at the top level show that the game is more popular than ever.

And recently revitalised clubs such as Wakefield and Hull KR are showing what is possible when hard work and ambition collide.

Rugby league has its problems — most notably the hideously disorganised international game — and doesn't get the coverage it merits in the national media in comparison to the other lot.

But if players want to leave for the bright lights of Twickenham, there have always been plenty

ready and willing to fill their boots. Long may that continue.

* YOU shouldn't count your chickens before they're hatched, as Aesop wrote a fair few years ago.

Following the draw for the Challenge Cup fourth round, it is hard not to mentally place Oldham in the last 16, with a juicy tie against some Super League team or other next up.

In one of five all-National League ties, the Roughyeds travel to fellow NL2 side Keighley in a couple of weeks' time to play for a spot in the fifth round.

But if this season has illustrated anything so far, it's that the wily old cat Aesop was onto something.

Having begun concentrating on what they were having for tea in the evening rather than putting in a solid second half stint against Swinton recently, the Roughyeds came unstuck in a game they should have cruised.

Similarly, the performance against East Hull — on a massive pitch which was tailor made for showcasing their superior skills — was far from top drawer.

Against the Cougars, Oldham will have to be as 'up for it' as they were for the two Rochdale encounters. And, indeed, the Dewsbury game at the Tetley's Stadium.

Otherwise, that big pay-day at the JJB Stadium will have to wait for another year.

Matthew

Destination Blackpool

news desk

by Roger Halstead

2007 Northern Rail Cup Final

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PAUL O'Connor, the Roughyeds' full-back, was free to play in today's Northern Rail Cup game against Dewsbury Rams here at Boundary Park after pleading not guilty at Tuesday evening's RFL disciplinary committee to punching Rochdale's Phil Hasty in the recent game at Spotland.

The Oldham player was dismissed midway through the second half by referee Karl Kirkpatrick on the intervention of a touch judge, who reported that O'Connor played the ball after being tackled by Hasty and then ran after the Hornets man and punched him on the head.

The response from O'Connor, and the Oldham club, was that he pushed Hasty, but did not strike him.

Supported at the hearing by his club chairman, Chris Hamilton, O'Connor pleaded guilty to misconduct but not guilty to punching, and after studying video offence the disciplinary panel concluded there should be no further action taken against the Oldham player.

Rochdale's film of the match, on DVD, did not show the incident, but Mr Hamilton had taken the precaution of being armed with the Roughyeds' video of the game which clearly supported Oldham's submission that O'Connor pushed, rather than punched, his opponent.

Oldham have now had two players sent off so far this season and in each case the panel has decided against imposing a suspension. In the earlier case, Said Tamghart was dismissed against Swinton for a high tackle, but the hearing accepted Oldham's submission that the challenge was accidental.

In another game, at Dewsbury, the Frenchman was penalised and put on report for allegedly using his elbow when being tackled, but the RFL disciplinarians looked at the incident and said there was no case to answer.

IAN Hodson will soon be challenging for a place in the Roughyeds' back-row after agreeing a deal to re-sign for the club.

The 25-year-old former Swinton Lions forward, who will start training with Steve Deakin's squad in the coming week, was here in 2005 and 2006, but he couldn't sign on again at the end of last season because of extreme pressure of work.

Club and player shook hands on the understanding that Hodson's association with Roughyeds was not necessarily finished for ever, and so it came to be when Steve Deakin made contact with him again a couple of weeks ago.

'Hoddy' had been 'doing an Andy Farrell' -- playing inside centre at rugby union (for Tyldesley) -- but he was delighted to sign a one-year deal to start up again with Roughyeds.

'I've had a good, long break and now I can't wait to get back,' he said. 'I've missed it a lot -- not just the rugby, but the camaraderie and everything about being part of a team and part of a squad.'

'I signed just in time to get on the cup register, but I will probably need to get my fitness levels up to scratch first although I have been training.'

Hodson played in 23 of the Roughyeds' 28 games last season -- after signing the previous year initially on loan -- but he is more likely to be used this year as a back-row forward rather than an outside-half, the position he occupied many times in 2006.



Paul O'Connor.

THE away game against Hunslet Hawks, which was originally due to be played on Easter Monday, April 9, will now take place at the South Leeds Stadium on Wednesday evening, August 22, with a 7.30pm kick off.

The stadium is not available to Hawks during April and the Yorkshire club was unable to do a fixture switch because that would have meant Roughyeds going to Leeds on July 22 and the ground over there is not available on that date either.

The new date is the Wednesday evening before the Carnegie Challenge Cup final at Wembley on Saturday, August 25. There are no league fixtures that weekend which takes a lot of the pressure off having to play a midweek match.

It is now looking almost certain that Roughyeds won't have a game during the Easter period. Boundary Park is not available on Good Friday to stage the scheduled Featherstone game because Latics are at home the next day and the rental agreement prevents a rugby match taking place 48 hours before a Latics match.

Wednesday, April 4, was a possibility, but Rovers rejected that on the grounds that they are involved in the Carnegie Challenge Cup the previous Sunday.

THE club's sincere condolences go to the family of the late Norman Harris, who died after a short illness in the Royal Oldham Hospital. He was 89.

Norman, a proud Welshman, was an Oldham centre for four seasons in the late 1940s and his partnership with winger Ernie Large was not only prolific in terms of try-scoring, but was one of the prominent features of the Oldham team in those far off post-war days at Watersheddings.

A Welsh international, Norman came north from the Valleys at the age of 29 with his wife Marian and small son Paul and he was to live and work in Oldham for 60 years, heading a rugby dynasty in which Paul became a leading amateur locally and Paul's son Iestyn became a dual international at both League and Union.

Norman's funeral service at Oldham Crematorium was very much a Welsh occasion, attended by many from the local rugby league community, including a fellow Welshman who played in the same Oldham team, Les Anthony.

2007 fixtures

DATE	OPPONENTS	CUP	VENUE	K. O.	RESULT	W/L	ATT
31/01/07	Warrington Wolves	Friendly	Home	7.45pm	42-6	W	789
11/02/07	Rochdale Hornets	NRC	Home	3.00pm	8-24	L	1,145
18/02/07	Swinton Lions	NRC	Home	3.00pm	18-28	L	1,017
25/02/07	Dewsbury Rams	NRC	Away	3.00pm	22-32	L	819
04/03/07	Rochdale Hornets	NRC	Away	3.00pm	6-16	L	816
10/03/07	East Hull	CCC 3	Away	2.00pm	26-10	W	214
18/03/07	Dewsbury Rams	NRC	Home	3.00pm			
25/03/07	Swinton Lions	NRC	Away	3.00pm			
01/04/07	Keighley Cougars	CCC4	Away	3.00pm			
06/04/07	Featherstone Rovers				NEW DATE PENDING		
09/04/07	Hunslet Hawks	NL2	Away	3.30pm	NEW DATE BELOW		
15/04/07	Blackpool Panthers	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
22/04/07	NRC quarter finals						
29/04/07	Keighley Cougars	NL2	Home	3.00pm			
04/05/07	Celtic Crusaders	NL2	Away	7.35pm			
13/05/07	Swinton Lions	NL2	Home	3.00pm			
20/05/07	Barrow Raiders	NL2	Home	3.00pm			
26/05/07	London Skolars	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
03/06/07	Workington Town	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
10/06/07	York City Knights	NL2	Home*	3.00pm			
17/06/07	Featherstone Rovers	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
24/06/07	Keighley Cougars	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
01/07/07	Gateshead Thunder	NL2	Home*	3.00pm			
08/07/07	Swinton Lions	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
15/07/07	Barrow Raiders	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
22/07/07	Hunslet Hawks	NL2	Home	3.00pm			
29/07/07	York City Knights	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
05/08/07	Blackpool Panthers	NL2	Home	3.00pm			
12/08/07	Workington Town	NL2	Home	3.00pm			
19/08/07	Gateshead Thunder	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
22/08/07	Hunslet Hawks	NL2	Away	7.30pm			
02/09/07	Celtic Crusaders	NL2	Home	3.00pm			
09/09/07	London Skolars	NL2	Home	3.00pm			

Play offs will take place on Sundays, September 16, 23 and 30 with the Grand Final on Sunday 7th October.
Home* venue to be arranged.

Key

NRC – Northern Rail Cup
NL2 – National League Division 2
CCC – Carnegie Challenge Cup

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