

game line-up

OLDHAM SQUAD	Played	CELTIC CRUSADERS
CHRIS BAINES		TONY DUGGAN
MATTY BROOKS		PAUL BALLARD
JASON BOULTS		ROB TOSHACK
GENO COSTIN		MARK DALLE CORT
JAMES COYLE		ANTHONY BLACKWOOD
ANDY CRABTREE		JOSH HANNAY
BYRON FORD		JACE VAN DIJK
ANDY GOREY		CHRIS BEASLEY
IAN HODSON		NEIL BUDWORTH
JOHN HOUGH		GARETH DEAN
DREW HOUSTON		NEALE WYATT
SIMEON HOYLE		DARREN MAPP
GARETH LANGLEY		DAMIEN QUINN
CRAIG LITTLER		AURELIEN COLOGNI
RICHARD MERVILL		PHIL CUSHION
LUCAS ONYANGO		JOSH CALE
NEIL RODEN		HYWEL DAVIES
IAN SINFIELD		
KRIS SMITH		
SAID TAMGHART		
TONY TONKS		
ALEX WILKINSON		
ADAM HUGHES		
ADAM ROBINSON		
ROB ROBERTS		
IAN GORDON		
GARETH MORTON		
WARREN STEVENS		

match officials

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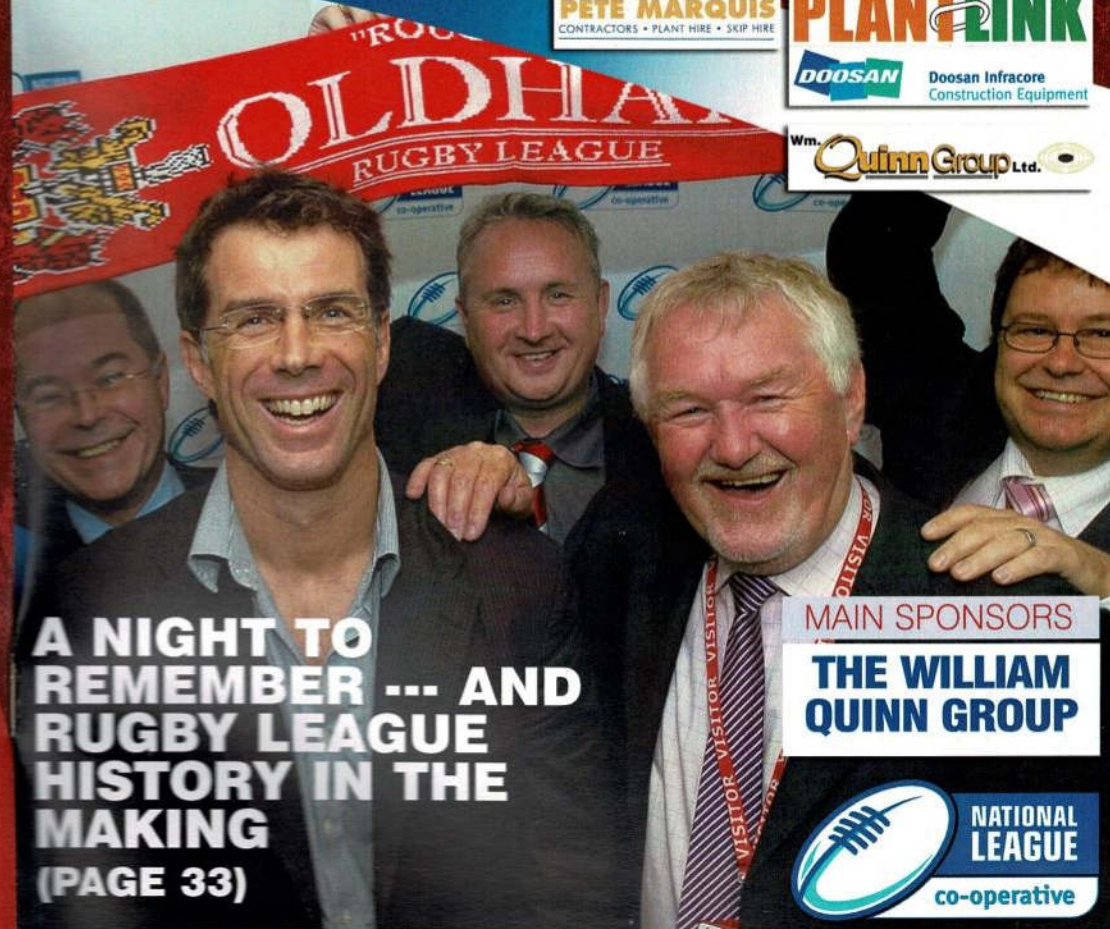


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**A NIGHT TO
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RUGBY LEAGUE
HISTORY IN THE
MAKING**
(PAGE 33)

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MOST APPEARANCES: John Hough, 228 - Jan 1998 - Sep 2006
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: Neil Roden 77 - 2000-2004; 2007-7
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 Buryan 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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Frank Stirrup 1950-62
Bernard Ganley 1950-61
Sid Little OBE 1951-59
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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
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boardroom **view**

with Chris Hamilton



Phew! The last few weeks have absolutely flown by even though they have been extremely stressful for everybody at the club.

From the inception of the idea of getting people in for free to this game through to this point where we are about to kick off there has been an enormous amount of work put in by a lot of people. We only learned of

the match being selected for broadcast by Sky sports on our way back from the Gateshead match and so much of what we wanted to do to make this event memorable was waiting for the date of the match to be fixed. So since then it has been a case of all hands to the pump as we hope to have everything in place to give you a night to remember!

All of this, of course, would not be possible if it were not for the fantastic support of the sponsors of, tonight's match, and, as detailed elsewhere in this programme, you will see that a lot of those companies are new to the game of rugby league. But I am sure after tonight they will all be lifelong fans!

You will all no doubt be aware of the innovative ways in which we have marketed this game, particularly with the world's biggest ever rugby league advert which has been on the side of the Civic Centre in Oldham since last weekend and we have made no secret of the fact that we are also hoping to set a new record tonight with the biggest ever National League Two crowd.

I have to pay my own personal thanks to Janet Yewdale, John McAndrew, Sean Mellor and Roger Halstead from our office who have worked tirelessly to organise everything after some fool, who shall remain nameless, came up with this idea in the first place!

Everything to date has gone to plan with us now in fourth place and having finally played one of our matches in hand and Celtic, in all probability being top of the league. It was a bold move to do something of this nature for a top of the table clash but all the more reason for people who have not been before or who maybe have not been for a while to come and take a look at the great rugby league on offer in National League Two.

Interest in the game has been good with the phones at the office ringing well after normal office hours - we know because we have been answering them!

We are also delighted to welcome Sky sports to Oldham RLFC for the first time and hope to see them back soon - wouldn't it be fantastic to have a similar match to what was produced in Bridgend in May?

Hopefully tonight will be the initiation process for a whole new band of Oldham rugby league fans and with another two home matches coming up in quick succession on the 5th and 9th September against Swinton and London Skolars respectively we have plenty to offer before the Play Offs.

Since our last home game we have completed our away programme for the normal league season with a further two wins against Gateshead and Hunslet and as we enter the final furlong we are handily placed to keep moving up the league.

We are all acutely aware, however, of the threat posed by tonight's opponents, Celtic Crusaders, who are the only full time team in the league and who know that if they win their remaining games will win promotion too - what bigger incentive could they ask for? They will also be out for revenge after we beat them at the Brewery Field earlier this year so we know we need to be at our best to get anything out of the game.

The one thing we have done this year though is play well against the top teams and hopefully we can cut out the errors and play some exciting rugby.

All in all it promises to be a great night and I sincerely hope that every one of you enjoys it and comes back for more!

Make sure you use your thunder stix and your voices to help cheer the lads on to a victory.

Enjoy the game!
Chris Hamilton

Chris

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deaks's coach approach

with Steve Deakin



TONIGHT promises to be one great occasion here at Boundary Park and I think it is a magnificent reflection on the quality of rugby league in co-operative NL2 that both clubs possess players who can set pulses racing and both teams are capable of locking horns and giving us a product of which we, as rugby league folk, can justifiably be proud.

Was it Phil Clarke, I think it was, who declared at the media conference to announce tonight's big event that the corresponding fixture down at Bridgend in May was one of the best games of rugby league he had seen all season?

In anticipation of a similarly intense and absorbing game tonight, I would like to welcome everyone to Boundary Park on this historic occasion which will hopefully see the Oldham club establish a new co-operative NL2 attendance record, thus beating the 3,441 at Brewery Field when we won there, 34-26, in early May.

A big welcome, particularly, to the Celtic Crusaders party and to their coach, John Dixon, who has been extremely helpful all season in his provision of tapes of matches and the many other little things in which coaches often contact each other for some assistance. John has always done his best to help, and I thank him personally for that.

I'm sure we can look forward to an exciting game against the team that would have been many people's choice as competition favourites at the start of the season.

With only three games to go, including tonight's, I would like to think that Oldham have acquitted themselves well this year and that, at the very least, they have competed on level terms with every other club in the division.

In fact, but for a few lapses of concentration and a fairly lengthy injury list I think we would have been higher up the division that the fourth position we currently occupy.

Coming into tonight's game we are on the back of six wins in a row -- and over the course of the last few outings a full squad has been utilised in an effort to make sure that everyone is match fit and injury free going into the play-offs.

To help in this respect, the board has fulfilled its promise to sign players of proven quality if and when they became available and, currently, I am sure the fans are being excited by the go-forward of Warren Stevens; by the class goalkicking and creative quality of Gareth Morton; and by the outstanding

finishing of Byron Ford.

As these players were added to what was already a solid squad we should provide tough opposition for anybody in this division at this late stage of the season.

A virus laid me low and prevented me going to Hunslet last week, but I have seen the tape and discussed the match with Alan Hadcroft and John Hough and we certainly showed up well in the second half when there were plenty of eye-catching individual performances as well as a good, all-round team effort.

It has been a long time since Oldham Rugby League Club had several thousand fans cheering on a successful side.

I sincerely hope that tonight's spectators will get behind the team like never before and that they will come back to Boundary Park for the remaining two regular season games against Swinton Lions next Wednesday evening, September 5, and against London Skolars four days later on Sunday, September 9.

Only then will we and the other clubs in the upper reaches of the division know what the play-offs have in store or who will go up automatically as champions. It promises to be a fantastic finish to what has been a really competitive division from the start way back in early April.

Every team in the division has competed strongly and, make no mistake, with Crusaders tonight, followed by Swinton Lions and then London Skolars -- even though all three games are here -- we face an extremely testing run-in over the last lap.

It goes without saying that you, the fans, can make a big difference, especially here at Boundary Park, and as we enter the business end of what has been a long and testing campaign the boys will appreciate your vocal backing more than at any other time over the past six or seven months.

On and off the field there is a buzz around the club right now and I am sure that everything that has gone on over the last couple of weeks in terms of marketing and promoting this big game will not have gone unnoticed.

The intention of everyone at the club is to lift Roughyeds back into co-operative NL1 and, from there, to build towards the ultimate objective -- a place in Super League.

All that, though, is for the future. Let it not detract from our task tonight and whatever lies ahead in the next three or four weeks.

These are exciting times. The fans who have been with us all season deserve our thanks and appreciation, which we endeavour to show at the end of every match. To those who might be here tonight for the first time for a long time, we hope you savour what we can offer as a team and as a club and that you come back to join us in our united efforts to take this club upwards and onwards.

It promises to be some ride in the next few weeks. Stick with us -- and enjoy not only this game, but the others as well.

Deaks.



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FOCUS ON THE OLDHAM SERVICE AREA

(all you need to know about local rugby league at grass-roots level)



TOUGH SEASON FOR THE UNDER-15S, BUT MORAN, OWEN AND FITZPATRICK SELECTED FOR REGIONAL CAMP

Congratulations are in order for three members of the Oldham Service Area town team under-15s who earned selection for the regional camp at Rossall School, Fleetwood --- a stepping stone in the RFL's structured youth development programme.

It was a tough season for the under-15s, but Andy Fitzpatrick, Danny Moran and Gareth Owen did more than enough to win their trip to Fleetwood, as did many other local youngsters at the different age levels we have featured in earlier editions of our match-day magazine.

The under-15s squad for the inter-town Service Area programme of matches comprised of the following players:

Wayne Blakeley, Danny Bowler, Niall Bradley, Aaron Brown, Andy Fitzpatrick, Matthew Fogarty, Dane Gray, Philip Joy, Steven Kiss, Alex Leach, Tom Lees, Connor Martin, Tom McMullen, Danny Moran, Gareth Morgan, Gareth Owen, Scott Owen, Luke Wrigley, Kaden Connolly-Green.

Results were as follows: Oldham 4, Kirklees 40 (no report available); Oldham 0, Wigan/Leigh 66; Oldham 32, Lancashire 32; Oldham 18, Copeland (Whitehaven) 44; Oldham 0, Halton (Widnes) 44.

OLDHAM 0 HALTON (WIDNES) 44

Up against a strong Halton side, Oldham stuck bravely to their task, but injuries to key players early in the game didn't help. Clearly, however, there was still much work to be done.

OLDHAM 18, COPELAND (WHITEHAVEN) 44

A whirlwind start by Copeland saw the Cumbrian boys race into an 18-0 lead inside the first quarter of an hour. The character of the Oldham team then surfaced, however, and the local boys reduced the deficit to 24-18 with two tries by Gareth Owen and one each by Steven Kiss and Alex Leach, one goaled by Aaron Brown.

Mistakes ultimately cost Oldham dearly, however, and with far too much defending to do they couldn't prevent Copeland scoring more tries to finish comfortable winners. This was a much better performance by a gutsy Oldham team which dominated various stages of the game.

OLDHAM 32 LANCASHIRE 32

Following on from the previous game this was another much-improved performance, in which Oldham scored some superb tries, six in total.

Danny Moran (2), Aaron Brown, Gareth Owen, Matthew Fogarty and Philip Joy all touched down with goals coming from Scott Owen (3) and one by Fogarty.

The game turned in the last 15 minutes when Oldham were 28-14 ahead. From an Oldham scrum on their 20, a quick ball released Fogarty, who was recalled for a forward pass with the line in sight.

From this Lancashire hit back with three converted tries to take the lead only for Joy to score in the corner late on to provide Oldham with the draw they undoubtedly deserved.

OLDHAM 0 WIGAN/LEIGH 66

Oldham were on the wrong end of a 12-try beating, but this was partly due to the fact that the side had only 14 players on duty due to injury. Despite the result, Danny Moran, Andy Fitzpatrick and Gareth Owen caught the eye.

OTHER SERVICE AREA ITEMS:

** THE under-18s town team squad will be formed by early September to play in a tournament on Saturday, October 6 against other Service Area teams. From those games a North-West representative under-18s squad will be chosen to play against other regional teams and those games will be used to select a Great Britain team. Watch this space in subsequent Roughyeds match-day magazines.

**SKILLS session will be held as follows: Saturday, September 15, for under-13s, 14s, 15s; Saturday, October 13, for under 13s, 14s, 15s; Saturday, November 10, for under-13s, 14s, 15s; Saturday, December 15, for under-12s.

**IT is important that Service Area coaches attend Coaches Meetings every two months. The next one will be at Counthill School on Monday, October 15, from 7pm to 9pm. Coaches can get involved with Service Area teams and development camps at local, regional or national levels. Information is provided about seminars, lectures and courses concerning coaching techniques and new ideas.

(READ THIS PAGE IN FUTURE MATCH-DAY MAGAZINES FOR SERVICE AREA NEWS AND UPDATES)

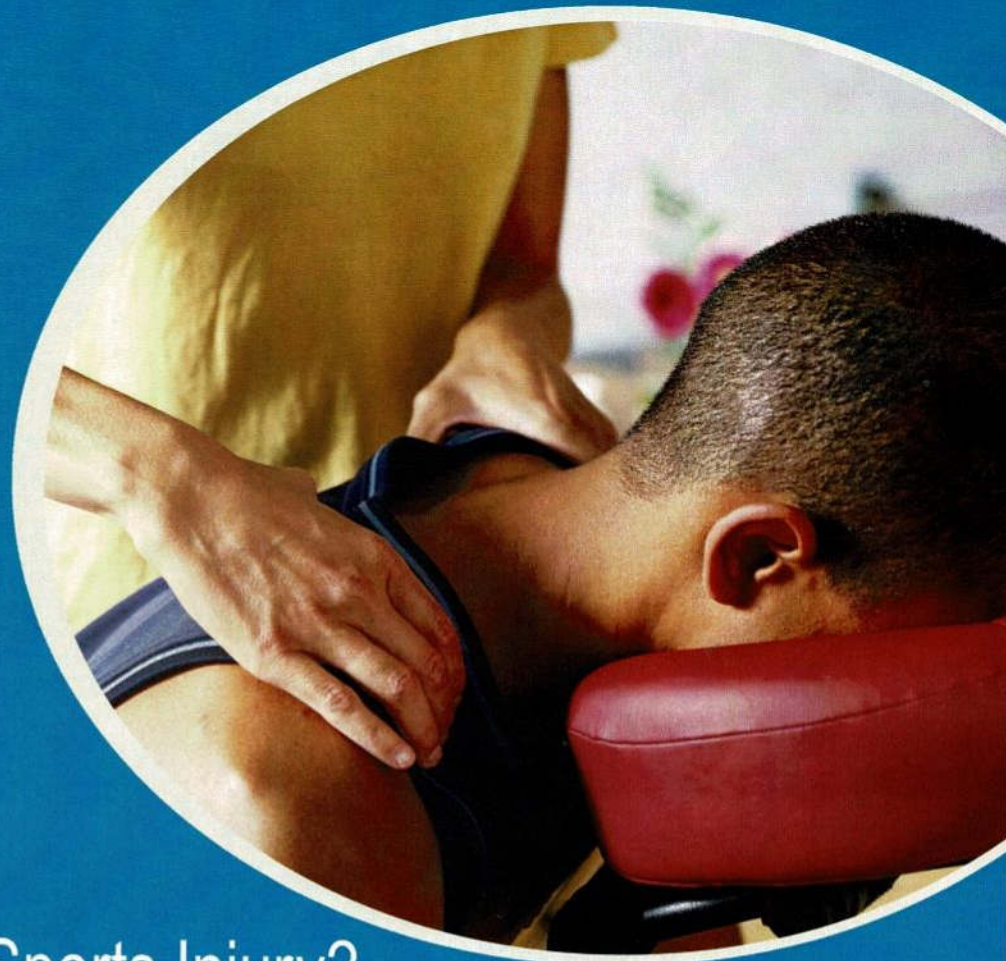
with Geoff Cooke

cooke-ability!

I had just started to write that a feature of the game today which I don't like is how every tackle seems to become an excuse for a wrestling match.

When, lo and behold, Peter Rowe's column from Australia in League Weekly contains news that half the clubs in Australia now employ wrestling coaches. Now don't get me wrong, at one time I was a great wrestling fan but that was in the days of Bert Royal, Les Kellest and Masambula not the crackpots of today's WWE. The cause of this plague in modern R.L. is obvious: it's to slow down the play the ball in order to get the defensive line set. But there are obvious dangers in wrestling a tackled player on the ground who has the handicap of the ball in one hand and the possibility of more than one defender to contend with. The potential for serious injury is there. And from a spectator point of view a quick play the ball is far more likely to create breaks and open play than a slow one. And the basic cause of all this unnecessary writhing about is the ten metre rule. That distance is just too much to cover to enable players to get back in position after every tackle. And the other drawback of ten metres is that it emphasises power in the 'collision' (as coaching jargon has it) at the expense of skill with the ball. Yes, I'm afraid we oldies liked to see a Vince Karalius, Johnny Whiteley, Harry Pinner or Terry Flanagan, geniuses with a ball in hand rather than the crash, bang, wallop of the one man drive, four rotating props game of today. That isn't to belittle the talent and dedication of the modern day player, in fact I'm in awe of their ability. But that doesn't stop me from regretting the lost skills of previous generations.

Let no-one be in any doubt that the achievement of Catalans Dragons in reaching the Carnegie Challenge Cup Final is worthy of the highest praise. A club in only its second season in Super League had no right to expect to reach such dizzy heights so quickly. That it did is testament to the foundations laid (Steve Deakin had no little part in that, please note), the quality of recruitment and the coaching. Having seen the Dragons several times on T.V. I don't think they get any favours from English referees (and they certainly didn't get any from the T.V. scheduling of their games prior to Wembley). And, of course they suffer from the inevitable moans of those British spectators who would have our game forever confined to four northern counties. Well, Wembley week proved two things: firstly that if you want maximum media exposure international interest is paramount, stimulating interest in both France and Spain as well as Britain and, secondly, that one big game on terrestrial T.V. is worth ten on Sky for publicity value. Sorry to say that in a match programme for a game being covered by Sky because we all know the excellence of Sky's coverage has revolutionised the broadcasting of our game. But for audience reach the figures speak for themselves. Nevertheless, grateful thanks to Sky for choosing to cover tonight's match. The first Oldham/Celtic Crusaders fixture was a classic. I hope they are rewarded with an equally compelling game tonight.



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halstead's choice

by ROGER HALSTEAD

ANDY Crabtree was 'hooked' on rugby league from the first time his dad took him down to the local amateur club . . . and when you learn that it was that great academy of the sport's skills and sciences that is Wigan St Pat's you begin to know why.

Has any amateur club in Lancashire, Yorkshire or Cumbria produced as many rugby league players as Pat's?

Legends of the game, like Joe Lydon, Andy Gregory and many more, have never forgotten their roots at Clarrington Park.

And literally hundreds of well-turned-out, well qualified journeymen professionals have rolled off the Pat's conveyor belt of talent, owing much to the club, its prowess in producing good players and its band of dedicated coaches and youth section assistants.

Among those on the current Roughyeds staff who have come through the system at Pat's are Chris Baines, James Coyle, Neil Roden and Andy Crabtree, whose dad, John, coaches the Pat's open-age second team and is almost part of the furniture at the club.

"He's been involved down there as long as I can remember," said Andy. "I guess that, being born in Wigan with a dad so steeped in the game as that, it was only natural that I would be taken down to St Pat's at a very early age. I think I was six or seven, certainly no older than seven.

"At that time Standish Eagles was like a St Pat's nursery club for the very young lads, but then they combined into one club anyway, so I played a little bit with the Eagles and then I was at Pat's, where I stayed until I signed for Wigan. My dad is still there. I think he'll be there for ever."

Another Roughyed dad who can lay claim to be a St Pat's stalwart is Jack Roden, Neil's father. Jack doubles up as chief scout for the Warriors and few know more than Jack about the youth game in and around Wigan over the past decade or so.

"Andy Crabtree? He was an absolutely outstanding prospect as a kid," recalled Jack. "But you don't need to ask me, just look at his record and his CV. Even now, a few years on, I think he would have been playing in Super League had he possessed just a little bit more pace to give him that extra zip out of dummy half.

"He's a great footballer, he provides a good service from acting half, he has good hands and he hits hard in defence. Jimmy Reader at Warrington (club scout) thought the world of him when he was a kid, but he was always going to go to Wigan. He went on two tours Down Under and he always got good reports from his performances on the other side of the world.

"As I say, modern-day coaches like their hookers to fly out of dummy half and make ground and I'm sure Andy would be playing at the top level now if he were just that little bit more explosive around the play-the-ball."

Andy worked his way through the age grades at St Pat's alongside half a team of peers who would go on to become professionals, among them Mark Roberts (ex-Roughyeds, now at Halifax), Shaun Briscoe (Hull FC), Jon Whittle (Featherstone), Dean Gaskell (Widnes), Sean O'Loughlin (Wigan) and the late and highly talented Billy Jo Edwards (younger brother of Shaun), who was so tragically killed in a car crash.

If the young and precocious Crabtree wasn't playing at club level, he was hooking for his school teams, first at Sacred Heart Primary in Wigan's Beech Hill suburb and later at a secondary school whose name was, and

RECORD-BREAKER ANDY GREW UP IN RL AS CAPTAIN COURAGEOUS

Tour-hero Crabtree led England Boys and Wigan Academy --- a young man born to wear No 9

still is, synonymous with the very highest level of schoolboy rugby league achievement, St John Fisher. It would be nice to know how many Wigan boys owe success in rugby league to St John Fisher in school hours and to St Pat's in leisure time.

No matter. Andy Crabtree was certainly one of them -- a rising star at St Pat's and, as hooker, a key figure in a St John Fisher school team that had the astonishing record of going through five school years without a single defeat. Billy Jo Edwards was captain and scrum-half, Andy Crabtree was hooker and Sean O'Loughlin, now skipper of Wigan Warriors, was loose-forward.

"We were English Schools' champions five years on the trot at the different age groups," recalled Andy this week, "and on the strength of never suffering one defeat in those five years we got into the Guinness Book of Records. It was a big achievement, really."

You bet it was. And it was to go even better for the boy who, unusually, began his rugby life in the position he still plays many years later --- No 9.

In a cross-code schoolboy rugby league challenge match, Andy and his pals at St John Fisher were invited to go head-to-head with the English Schools' rugby union champions from London. The Wigan lads said they would take them on at rugby union --- and they whipped 'em at that code, too.

These were heady days for young Crabtree who, at the age of 16, won all the usual town and county honours before earning selection as captain of an England Schoolboys' squad that included the likes of Alex Wilkinson, Sean O'Loughlin, Shaun Briscoe, Danny McGuire, Chev Walker, Billy Jo Edwards and Gareth Morton, who has just joined Roughyeds on loan from Hull KR.

The same year he toured Australia with Great Britain and Ireland Schoolboys which "fared pretty well" (his words) in the southern hemisphere and had the distinction of beating the Queensland state side.

His hometown Wigan Warriors had long been watching the progress of Crabtree, who would build on the experience of captaining England Schoolboys by accepting an invitation to captain the Wigan Warriors Academy side --- a key role in his development, which he commanded for two years.

Back to Jack Roden. "I think that, more than anything, underlined the regard in which he was held by everyone at Wigan."

Selection for the England Academy side to tour New Zealand and Australia was considered by many as a formality and he lived up to his billing by taking the man-of-the-match award in a memorable win against the young Kiwis in Wellington.

On returning home he found himself, like many young men, at life's crossroads with decisions to be made relative to the future and to where he stood in terms of

placing his chosen sport in a list of priorities, balanced against study and the need to look beyond rugby league for a living.

He had successfully completed GCSE and 'A' level studies and was to begin university life in Salford, studying Business Information Systems --- a discipline that was to stand him in good stead in future career moves, including his present position, working in St Helens for the Royal Bank of Scotland, dealing with mortgages.

Said Andy: "I had an extremely busy two or three years, captaining England Schoolboys, captaining Wigan Academy, going on two tours to the southern hemisphere and all this time working hard to get my GCSE passes and then my 'A' levels.

"I was about to start out at Salford University so I thought it was time to have a change of direction in rugby, too. Wigan had strong links at that time with Orrell RU Club, so I went playing for Orrell for one year. It was the one time in my life when I didn't play hooker. At union, I played scrum-half."

He enjoyed the 15-a-side code, but he missed his rugby league and he was to return to the sport with Warrington Academy, where he spent one season before seeking first-team football with Swinton Lions in the National League.

After two years in the Lions' den he was ready to move on again and Oldham knocked on the door of his Golborne home at just the right time.

He has never regretted the move. "Things are very professional here at Oldham," he said, "and we are having a good season. There is healthy competition right through the squad and everyone is fighting for his place. That's a good thing, especially at this time of year when we are getting down to the nitty-gritty."

"The professional bit comes in handy, too. For instance, it makes a real difference when we have overnight stops before long away games, like we did only last week when we went up to Gateshead."

"We hope to finish high enough up the division to get some advantages in the play-offs and with that in mind tonight's game against Celtic Crusaders is going to be a very important one. We had a great win down there. Nobody fancied us to win, except ourselves."

Andy Crabtree and Simeon Hoyle have more or less shared the hooking job all season and just how much the specialist task has been shared equally is seen in the respective match statistics of the two hookers --- up to an including the Gateshead game on August 19, Crabtree had one try in 21 appearances, Hoyle one try in 22.

"As I say, there is a lot of competition, and that's how it should be," said Andy. "I don't think anybody at the club would want it any other way."

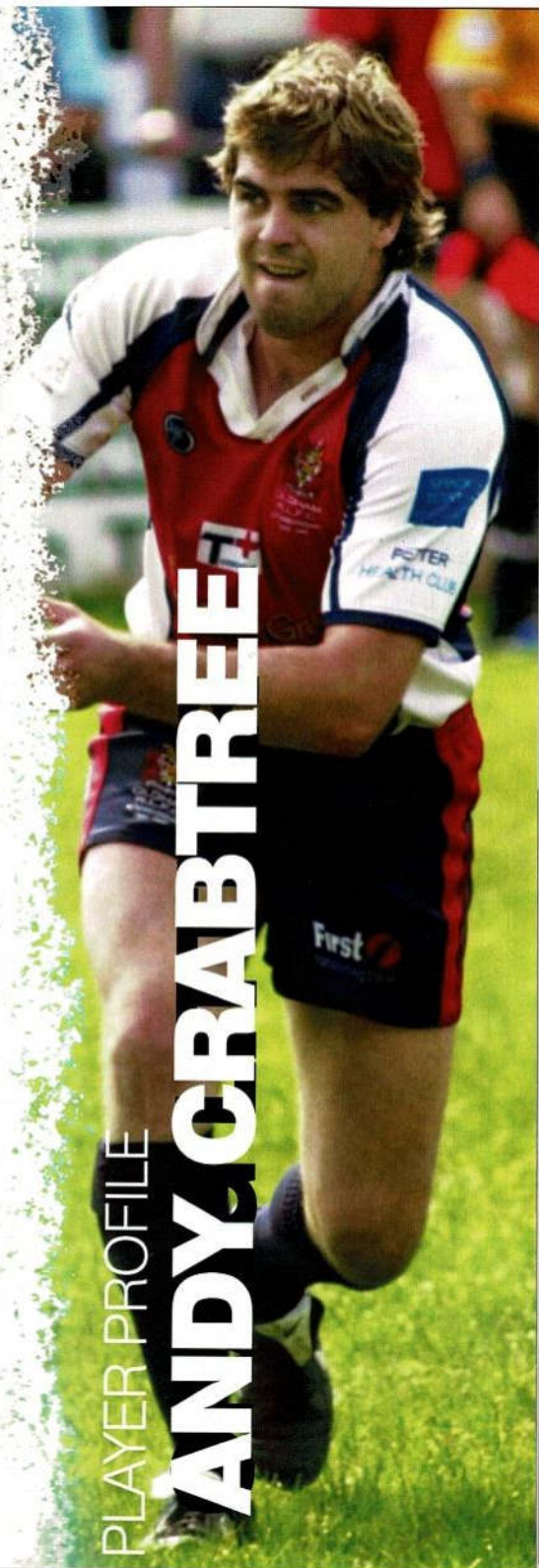
Aged 24, he has a sister, Andrea, and he lives in Golborne, not too far off the East Lancs Road, with his girl friend Caroline. Family? Ever the joker, he quipped: "We do a lot of baby sitting for others . . . oh, and we have a rabbit. Does that count?"

Even comedians have their serious side, though, and Andy was no exception when I asked him whether he still had any ambitions in rugby league. Thoughtful for a moment, he replied: "Yes, I do --- to play at as high a level as I am able. I've had three seasons in NL2 -- two with Swinton, one with Oldham -- and I would like to be tested now in NL1: hopefully with Oldham next season."

"That's still a long way off, however. All we can do as individual players, and as a squad, is take things one game at a time and see where it takes us. Hopefully, that will be where we want to go."

And where will that be? "Everyone at the club has had promotion as our goal from day one when we started pre-season training last November. Nothing has changed that. Next season we want to be in NL1."

"That's what we have been striving for all season and now we have to go out and make it happen."



AROUND & ABOUT

with The Heritage Trust by Brian Walker

NEW OLDHAM BOOK!

Remember giving the 1986 Aussies the fright of their lives up the hill at Wathesheddings? The 'Unbeatables' had been playing as though on another planet until a David Topliss led Oldham brought them back down to earth.

And, of course, those older supporters amongst us (me included) still relish the memory of Derek Turner & Co smashing to bits the mean green and gold machine of 1956.

Up in the top tier of the main stand this evening will be sitting Joe Collins and John Blair both keen as mustard Roughyeds supporters. Joe, played for Oldham against the 1967 Kangaroos whilst John turned out in a trio of matches against touring sides - the '71 Kiwis and both the '73 and '75 (here for the World Championships) Aussies.

Of the 1975 match, Aussie, Graeme Langlands - one of the best backs in the world and who had sat out the match in the stand - said "Oldham came back superbly to trim the lead and until the Raudonikis try, I believed they might snatch a draw. We murdered St Helens and Salford and without doubt Oldham are by far the best and toughest club side we have encountered". Of the same match John Blair said "This was another tough encounter. I was up against Tom Raudonikis and found him to be a very strong and powerful player. When Johnny Patterson put Martin Murphy clear for his try Graham Eadie came in and cleaned him out just as he passed the ball. This caused a bit of a mêlée as they used to say!"

It's the centenary celebration this year of first ever 'rugby league' tour to these shores - that of the 1907 New Zealanders who became known as the All Golds. They won the test series but still lost against a powerful Oldham side. The Kiwis are here in October and will play a celebration test Northern Union vs. All Golds (or otherwise known as the Gillette Fusion Centenary International) at the Halliwell Jones Stadium, Warrington on the 20th of October.

The ideal time then for the Heritage Trust to publish Michael Turner's new book which tells the story of each and every touring side that's played against the Roughyeds (and much more) - starting off with the game against the All Golds and running beyond the match against the Aussies in 1986 to take in the World Club Championship matches in 1997 and more recent ly visits of enterprising South Sydney and Manly representative sides.

Michael's first book Oldham RLFC, The Complete History was a best seller and is still the club's bible. More recently, the 'sold out' signs went up on Roughyeds The Story just a week after it hit the bookshelves. Don't be disappointed this time. Simply, fill in the box published here to reserve a

copy. Don't send any money. We'll let you know where and when the book will be available. If your address is outside the Oldham district don't worry we'll arrange delivery.

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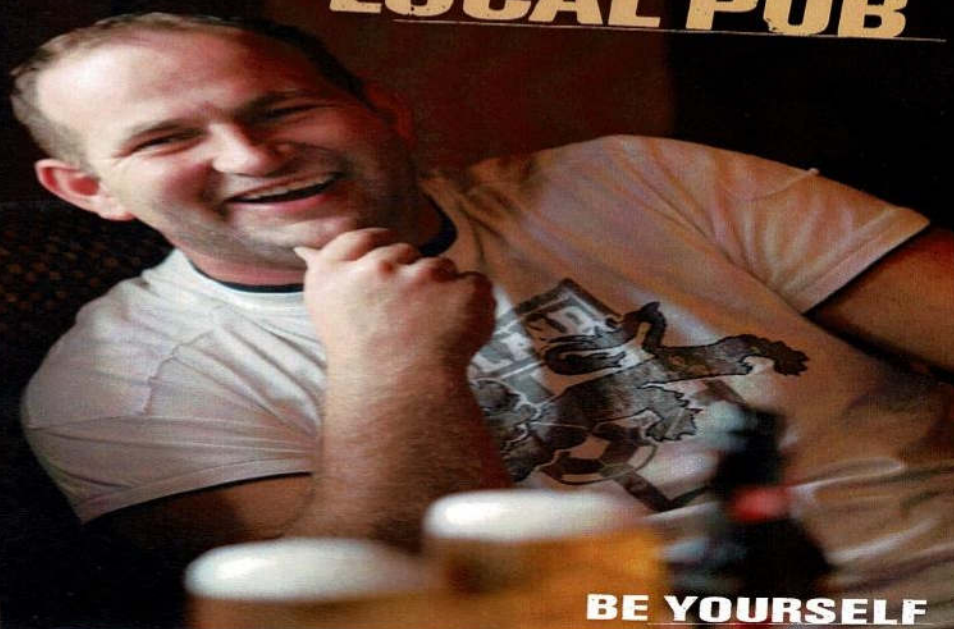
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COMMUNITY CHALLENGE



Sean Mellor, our Community Development Manager, keeps you up to date

RUGBY FUN AND FITNESS ON OLDHAM EDGE.

Oldham Roughyeds and the PCT Health Improvement Team have joined forces to help local children "get active". Following a survey in St Mary's area, many local youngsters expressed an interest in Rugby League. As a result, a number of prospective future sports stars are enjoying sessions, described as "Rugby Fun and Fitness", each Monday and Thursday on Oldham Edge.

I have been involved in supervising the hour-long periods of activity myself and have been delighted with the response. (I have also managed-just to suppress my natural tendencies to behave like Brian Glover in "Kes". Incidentally, that role in the film was actually modelled on a young Steve Deakin and that is why we have kept the Roughyeds' Coaching Supremo away from the "Edge") The numbers of kids has been very encouraging and several of the participants have not missed a session. The overall emphasis has been on fun and the group, who cover a wide range of age, size and ability, have really enjoyed the rugby-related games. All the children have shown a lot of enthusiasm and already improved enormously. It is hoped that several of them will continue their pursuit of Rugby League by

playing at any one of our town's excellent local Junior Clubs.

As if their current passion for the sport was not enough, all the participants and their families will be attending tonight's Co-Operative National League game between the Roughyeds and Celtic Crusaders. I hope they enjoy the experience.



The sessions have been more successful since the coach suppressed his 'Brian Glover' tendencies



These activity sessions on Oldham Edge will hopefully lead to some of the youngsters joining one of our excellent local amateur clubs.



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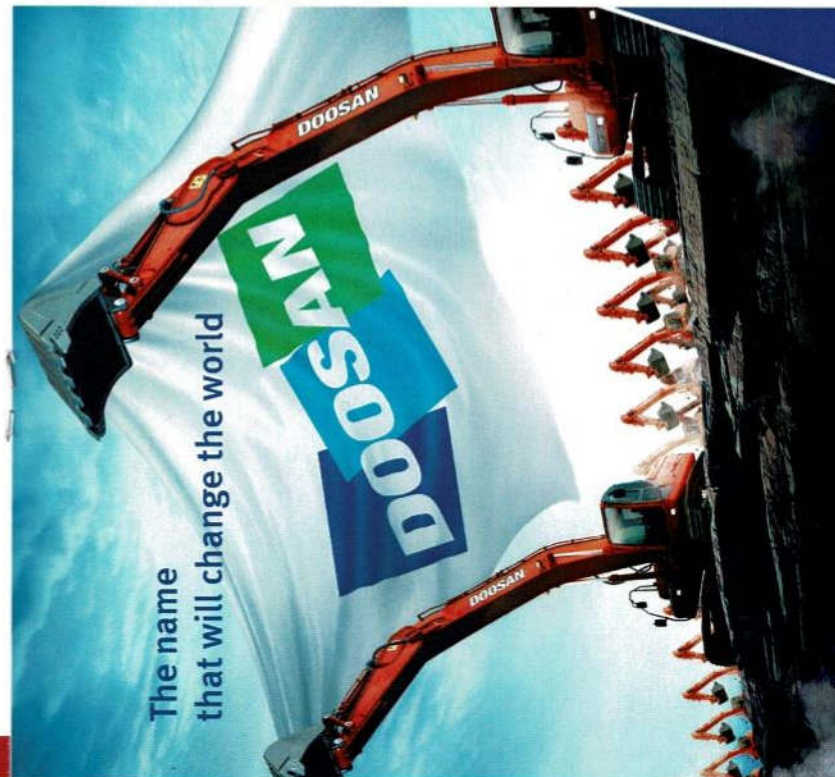


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with Ian Wilson

roughyeds'

roar!

Since this is having to be written before the Wembley occasion, and with something of a natural break in the league fixtures, I thought it was time for a bit of star-gazing. Who is going to make it into the play-off series which will shortly be upon us?

In Super League, as indeed in the other competitions too, there are a few crucial fixtures coming up, which will have a big say in determining the final league positions. At the top, the main issue still open is likely to be whether Saints or Leeds finish first and so get the advantage of a home draw in the game to decide who goes straight to Old Trafford. Each has one difficult away game - Leeds at Bradford and Saints at Wigan - as well as two home ties to finish their league fixtures. I will go, just, for Leeds to finish with the League Leaders trophy, and then to go straight to the Grand Final.

As for the other places in the play-offs in Super League, Bradford must be favourites to earn a final eliminator for the chance to get to Old Trafford, with third place virtually assured to them, and so the opportunity to play two play-off games at home - though they do have a particularly tricky fixture still to come, away to Hull. The competition for places 4 to 6, though, is still wide open, with 6 sides having very realistic chances. My best guess is that the three sides currently in the play-off places - Hull, Warrington and, for the first time, Huddersfield will be the ones to make it. However, I doubt that any of them have the quality to win at Odsal to get much further.

What about the fight to join Super League next season? In spite of all Whitehaven's continuing brave efforts, there will surely be two more games to come between Cas and Widnes - one at Cas as the league winners, and then one final battle at Headingley in the Grand Final of NL1. Underachievers of the season? Surely, Leigh, in fifth place. And huge credit to both Dewsbury and Sheffield, who are fighting for sixth place and the privilege of a play-off dart at Whitehaven! I must admit, too, to a little bit of sadness to see Hornets on their way down to NL2 - where hopefully we will not be playing them in 2008!

Why not? Obviously, because I think we will emerge from a thrilling NL2 play-off series as Grand Final winners! I don't, in fact, think we will lose another game this season - but I am afraid we will have to go all the way to make it, with no second chances, and it will all be a huge test of nerves as much as anything else. I expect us to finish in fourth place on points difference to Barrow - how expensive now look those mid-season slip-ups! And that would mean that we would have to win home games against probably Hunslet and Workington, before going up to Barrow to qualify to meet Celtic again at Headingley. See you there!!

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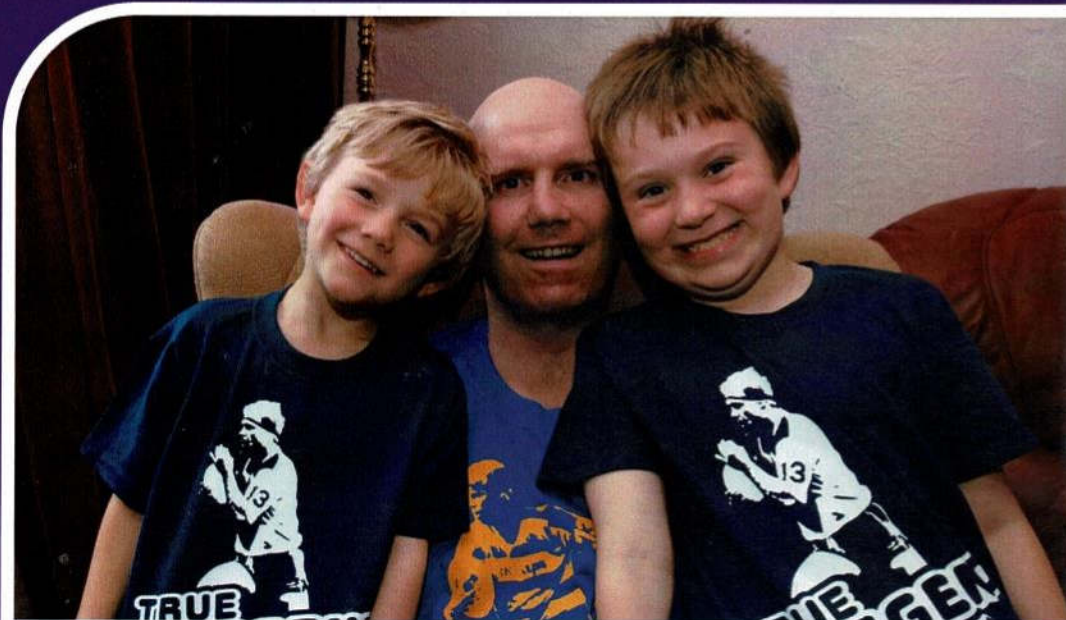
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of Mike's battle against Motor Neurone Disease and felt compelled to do something to help.

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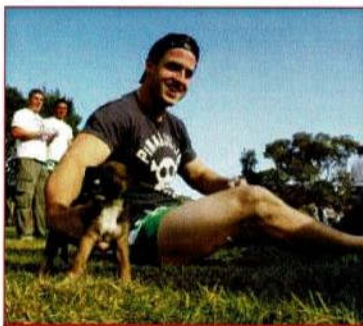
CRUSADERS SET TO PARADE THEIR 'GORILLA'

by NIGEL MARLAND

Aussie star Hannay boosts Celtic promotion bid

We welcome fellow promotion chasers Celtic Crusaders to Boundary Park today in the hope that the game will be as exciting as the one in Bridgend earlier in the season. We also hope the result will be the same as well. Celtic have been in the news recently by capturing Australian centre Josh Hannay, who has signed a contract to the end of the 2008 season.

The former Queensland Cowboy, 27-year-old Hannay, had been playing for Sydney-based Cronulla League side GyMEA Gorillas since being released by Cronulla Sharks earlier this year. It has been quite a year for the talented out half Hannay, who was playing State of Origin rugby as recently as last season. He was surprisingly dropped recently by Cronulla Sharks and demoted to GyMEA Gorillas who play their rugby in local parks.



Time to relax for the former NQ Cowboy

The signing is seen as one of the biggest coups in N L 2 history.

Crusaders' coach John Dixon said: "We're really pleased to have secured Josh's services. He is a quality player and I've known him since he was a 15-year-old prospect in Queensland. We were fortunate he was being paid out by Cronulla, had a few mates here, and decided to join us. He will bring enthusiasm and lots of experience to the club."

Chief executive David

Thomson said: "Signing Josh is very much a coup for the Crusaders. Bringing in players of his calibre underlines just how far we have come as a club in our short history. It did take a little time to complete the signing but we are very pleased that Josh is now with us and training with the squad."

Hannay made his Crusaders debut against Keighley at the Brewery Field two Saturdays ago and it is expected he will be in the line up tonight.



Josh Hannay in action



The Oldham club has teamed up with the RFL to offer one lucky person an opportunity to be part of Rugby League history.

This autumn Great Britain will play for the final time on home soil before the team switches to playing as England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland in time for next year's World Cup in Australia. As a result the three match Gillette Fusion Test Series against New Zealand will be a historic occasion.

The third of the three Tests will be staged at Wigan's JJB Stadium on Saturday, November 10. That is why the Oldham club, together with the RFL, is looking for a school child aged eight to 10 years to be one of the team mascots and walk out alongside the players of Great Britain and New Zealand just before the big match kicks off.

This superb prize also includes three tickets for each winner, one for the mascot and two for their parents or guardian.

As you would expect tickets for the final Great Britain games on home soil are in huge demand and can be purchased from the RFL Box Office on 0871 226 1313 or by visiting www.rugbyleagueticke.co.uk. Tickets prices start from just £15.

To be in with a chance of being a mascot simply answer the following question.

What is the Great Britain team's nickname?

1. The Panthers
2. The Tigers
3. The Lions

The child who answers correctly will be selected at random to be the mascot winners.

Send your completed entries to GB Mascot Comp, Oldham Rugby League Club, Lansdowne Road, Chadderton, Oldham OL9 9EF;

entries in by September 20, 2007.

Terms and conditions

- Neither the RFL nor the Oldham club can enter into correspondence about this competition
- The decision of the Oldham club is final.
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with GARETH WALKER of RUGBY LEAGUER & LEAGUE EXPRESS



What does the future hold?

DOES anybody know what the Rugby Football League's plan for National League rugby is after 2009?

Certainly the officials of clubs in NL1 and NL2 don't seem to.

While the plans for Super League clubs under the proposed franchise/licence system are relatively clear cut - although even then we don't know how many teams will be included - the professional game outside of that elite appears to have an uncertain future.

Clubs are still unsure about when the final decision on the structure of the game from 2009 will be made, with some suggesting it could be as late as midway through next season.

More than that, officials don't even know who will make that final decision - whether it will be a vote at the Rugby League Council, or if the RFL's board of directors will decide.

Whatever side of the franchise debate you stand on, that cannot be good for the vast majority of clubs in the game.

In this month's Rugby League World, a number of senior National League figures have their say on the current situation.

There are still very strong views on whether Rugby League should retain promotion and relegation on an annual basis.

But to move away from that for a minute, it is the general uncertainty that concerns club officials

as much as anything.

Oldham chief executive Chris Hamilton, who is personally against scrapping promotion and relegation, summed those feelings up.

"If clubs actually knew what will be happening to the teams that don't get in, then there may be more universal support for it (the licence system)," Hamilton said.

Halifax coach Martin Hall has slammed the uncertainty.

"No-one is sure if it will get voted in, or even how the National Leagues will work," Hall said.

"I find that ludicrous and ridiculous. How can you run a business when you don't know what's happening from one season to the next?

"In any business - and that's what we are, a business - there has to be some planning.

"We still don't know what is happening for the 2009 season, and might not do until next year. How can anybody plan for the next two seasons?

"It's just poor planning, for everybody. Next season is going to be difficult for everybody to know what's what."

Various other senior figures have their say in the September edition of Rugby League World, with the feature also including the argument on whether or not the licence system will work for National League rugby.

One thing is for sure - some big decisions need to be made, and quickly, for the good of Rugby League at all levels, but especially in NL1 and NL2.

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Oldham RLFC, Dr Kershaw's, the RFL Benevolent Fund and the 11 companies who have sponsored this evening's big event were all represented at the media launch, held at the United Co-operative headquarters at Sandbrook Park, Rochdale. Picture by Oldham Evening Chronicle.

THANKS A MILLION TO OUR SPONSORS

Oldham Rugby League Football Club (1997) Ltd wishes to place on public record its sincere thanks and appreciation to the 11 companies from across the North-West who have made this unique and historic rugby league event possible.

Without their support and backing the club would not have been able to organise what should be a night to remember for everyone present and for thousands more across the country thanks to live television coverage by Sky Sports.

Bill Quinn (club chairman) and Chris Hamilton (chief executive) thanked each of the sponsors publicly at the media launch, held at the Rochdale headquarters of United Co-operative, but they wish to show their appreciation again this evening on behalf of everyone present at what should prove to be one of the most memorable rugby league occasions seen in Oldham for many years.

Several of the companies involved are new to rugby league sponsorship --- as, indeed, was our chairman's own Wm. Quinn Group Ltd, when that company came on board early this year. It was, therefore, with the benefit of personal experience that Bill addressed the sponsors at the launch and commented: "I hope you get the bug for rugby league ... just like I did!"

It is with great pleasure that we present to you our sponsors and their representatives as follows:

****Mr Philip Jones** (secretary of the United Region of the Co-operative Group), Sandbrook Park, Rochdale OL11 1RY.

****Mr Darren Thompson**, Commercial Safety Consultants, 5th floor, Emerson Business Centre, St James's House, Pendleton Way, Pendleton, Manchester M6 5FW.

****Mr Aiden McGeary**, Blue Machinery (Central) Ltd, Appleton Thorn Trading Estate, Appleton, Warrington, WA4 4SN.

****Mr Chris Proctor**, Plantlink, Sandwash Close, Rainford Industrial Estate, Rainford, Merseyside WA11 8LY.

****Mr William Lees Jones**, J W Lees and Co (Brewers) Ltd, Greengate Brewery, Middleton Junction, Manchester M24 2AX (represented at the launch by Mr John Smithers).

****Mr Peter Marquis**, P Marquis Contractors, Briars Farm, Lea Lane, Lea, Preston PR4 0RN (represented at the launch by Carol Clarkson).

****Mr Jim Wynn**, UK and Ireland Insurance Services Ltd, Old Lloyds Chambers, 139, Manchester Road, Broadheath, Altrincham WA14 5HY (represented by John Kirwan and Tim Sweeney).

****Mr Julian Mills**, Malrod Ltd, Glebe Mill, Library Street, Westhoughton, Bolton BL5 3AU.

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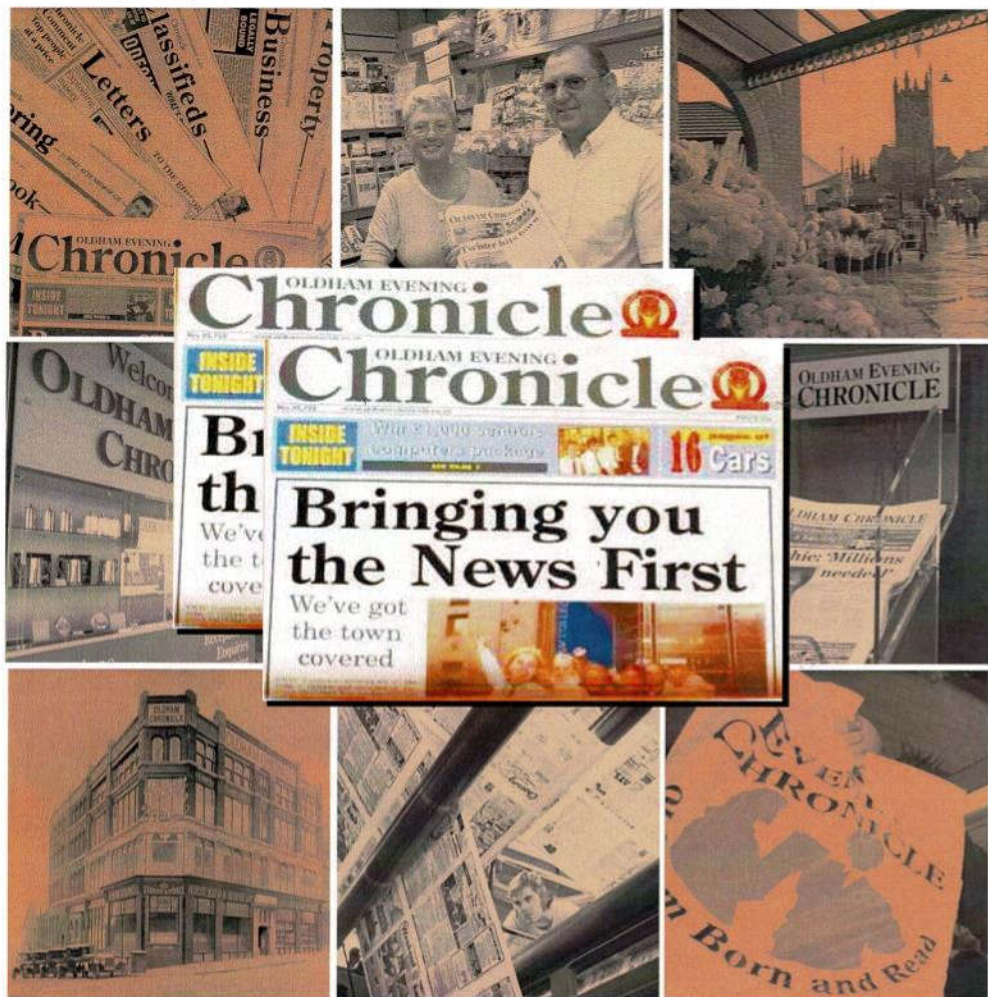
Mr Jones, representing co-operative and himself a keen supporter of rugby league, said the sport and the co-operative had similar values, built around family and community. He said co-operative was delighted so far with its sponsorship of the National Leagues.

"National League clubs are at the heart of the community," he added, "and the co-operative movement is also at the heart of the community. We wish Oldham every possible success with this venture and we would like to start off the fund-raising for the two charities by presenting a cheque for £500."

Replying on behalf of the club, Mr Hamilton thanked co-operative and each of the other companies for their support and said every effort would be made to maximise marketing opportunities for the game.

He said the club was delighted to have the backing of the 11 companies, who would underwrite the costs of the match and enable the club to make the unique offer of free admission with a £1 donation to the two charities.

The target was to create a new record attendance for co-operative NL2, set when 3,441 fans watched the corresponding game in Bridgend in May.



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journalistic license

by Matthew Chambers

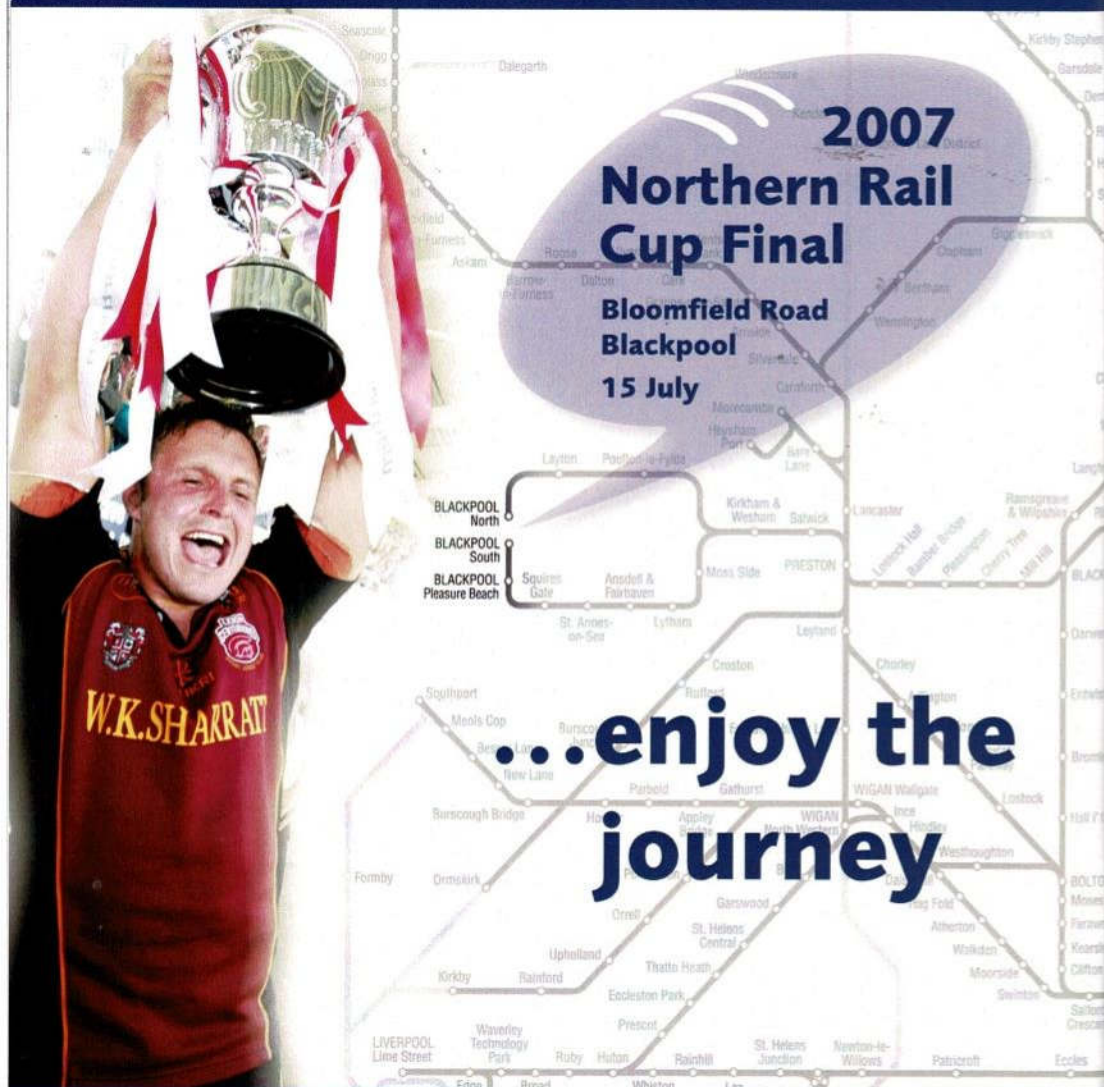
WITH both clubs playing out tonight's fascinating clash focusing on gaining promotion to National League One, this is a match of singular importance both on and off the field.

Of course, much publicity has rightly centred around the fact that, by way of a £1 charity donation on the turnstiles, entrance is free. Roughyeds officials have worked hard behind the scenes recently to both secure the backing of local business and to generate a buzz within the rugby league community. Hopefully, by the time you read this, Boundary Park will be full of both lapsed and new Oldham fans, with a healthy sprinkling of other club shirts around the place. The bold initiative certainly merits a healthy turn-out. And, with Sky Sports providing live coverage of a promotion match-up which will resonate throughout the division, the action on the pitch promises to live up to its billing. Most who saw the reverse fixture down at Bridgend agreed that it was one of the most thrilling games of rugby league they have seen all season. Even casual viewers cycling through the Sky Sports channels on that Friday evening in May can't help but have been drawn in by the high quality of play and Oldham's stirring comeback, turning a 26-16 deficit into a 34-26 triumph. Though many bemoan the moving of fixtures to accommodate live coverage, rugby league at this level needs all the positive exposure it can get.

The last appearance Celtic Crusaders made on television away from home saw John Dixon's side overcome title rivals Featherstone Rovers with some ease. Some of the tries scored by the Welsh side that night certainly made a few neutral fans in my local pub sit up and take notice, while the general play — marshalled by Jace van Dijk — was of a very high level. Oldham will have to be right at the top of their game to take the three points tonight. But, with players like Byron Ford on the books until the end of the season — what a performance he put in at Hunslet, for those who weren't there — not to mention the other high-calibre captures made of late by coach Steve Deakin, the Roughyeds are certainly a stronger outfit than that which last took to the field to face the Crusaders. This is about as tough a game to call as you can get. It isn't quite make-or-break, as whatever the result, the team that loses this evening will at least get the chance to make amends through the play-offs. But, with the Crusaders chasing the title and Oldham looking at climbing into third spot, few will be thinking much beyond tonight's 80 minutes. Enjoy.

Matthew

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SUPPORTING DR KERSHAW'S AND THE RFL BENEVOLENT FUND

DR Kershaw's Hospice and the Rugby League Benevolent Fund have publicly expressed their gratitude to the Roughyeds for coming up with the unique scheme which will raise money for the two charities via the attendance at tonight's game.

The hospice requires at least £1.2million a year to do its work and to provide patients with first-class care and attention.

The RFL Benevolent Fund provides financial assistance to players at all levels of the sport who are seriously injured, invariably young men, many with mortgages and families to support.

At the media conference which launched the Roughyeds' unique scheme, the hospice was represented by Mr Brian Hurst and the RFL Benevolent Fund by Phil Clarke, the former Wigan and GB international and now a popular and well-known pundit on Sky Sports.

Mr Hurst outlined the financial demands made on Dr Kershaw's and described the Roughyeds' initiative as "absolutely fantastic".

He added: "I've never heard of anything like this before. And I would like to say to whoever thought of it: 'Brilliant'. I hope everyone has a fantastic time. Brilliant."

Phil Clarke gave one or two brief examples of the assistance provided to seriously injured players by the Benevolent Fund. He said the Oldham club's initiative was "a great idea" and added: "You know, the greatest thing in life is to make a difference to somebody else and that's what Oldham are doing in this instance."

"I'm sure it will be a great success. I went to the corresponding game between Oldham and Crusaders in South Wales in May and I have to say it was one of the best games of rugby league I've seen all season."

Chief executive Chris Hamilton, speaking on behalf of the club, said the two charities had been carefully chosen because both were close to the hearts of thousands of Oldham people and both were fully deserving of maximum support to help them in the work they do on behalf of sick or injured people.

In the days following the media launch the club was invited to look at the new facilities at Dr Kershaw's and Mr Hamilton happened to be there when a group of volunteers were busily preparing more than 5,000 letters about tonight's game which were going out to the Hospice's supporters.

A dozen people provided willing hands and the operation took three hours to prepare the envelopes and another two hours to frank them.

The Hospice has to raise £1,200,000 independently each year to run and maintain its highly specialised levels of care, while a massive programme of extensions and refurbishment over the last five years has been carried out at an overall cost of £2.2million,



How we broke the news of the big event. Left to right: Phil Jones (Co-operative Group), Phil Clarke (RFL Benevolent Fund), Bill Quinn (Oldham RLFC chairman), Brian Hurst (Dr Kershaw's), Chris Hamilton (Oldham RLFC chief executive). Picture by Oldham Evening Chronicle.

more than £1.7million of which has been raised by the Hospice and its supporters.

Phase three of the development, completed recently, includes a new physiotherapy unit, kitchens and washing-up areas, two new Chapels of Rest, a car park extension, increased security in the form of electric gates and new office storage facilities.

This phase cost in the region of £750,000, but thanks to a substantial legacy the Hospice had to raise no more than £280,000 --- this, though, on top of the annual running costs of £1.2million.

Said Mr Hurst: "With this in mind we are grateful for all funds received which allow us to continue and develop our specialised services. The support and kindness of local people and businesses is very much appreciated by all patients and staff."

To find out more about Dr Kershaw's ring the Appeals Office on 0161 624 9984 or visit the website at www.drkershawshospice.org.uk

The Rugby League Benevolent Fund aims to support players whose lives are affected by serious injuries sustained while playing the game.

It is administered by a committee of trustees, chaired by former Huddersfield Giants director Tim Adams and also including former Great Britain captain and now Sky Sports summariser Phil Clarke; David Hinchcliffe, recently retired MP and previously secretary of the Rugby League All Party Parliamentary Group; Leeds Rhinos chief executive Gary Hetherington; the RFL's Chief Operating Officer, Nigel Wood; and Nick Shaw, a trustee partner with Addleshaw Goddard.

Said Phil Clarke: "We believe the RFL Benevolent Fund can perform an important role within the sport."

"Although serious life-changing injuries are rare in Rugby League, it is critically important that any players who are affected receive the best support possible."

"The family and community spirit which exists within Rugby League will greatly assist the growth and development of the fund over the coming seasons and supporters attending the sport's major events can take satisfaction from the fact that they are contributing directly to this important initiative."

Donations to the fund can be made by cheques payable to the Rugby League Benevolent Fund forwarded to the RFL headquarters at Red Hall, Leeds LS17 8NB.

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	8-32	L	622
25/03/07	Swinton Lions	NRC	Away	3.00pm	42-18	W	555
01/04/07	Keighley Cougars	CCC4	Away	3.00pm	26-16	W	1039
04/04/07	Featherstone Rovers	NL2	Home	7.45pm	12-23	L	1,162
09/04/07	Hunslet Hawks	NL2	Away	3.30pm	NEW DATE BELOW		
15/04/07	Blackpool Panthers	NL2	Away	3.00pm	40-20	W	501
29/04/07	Keighley Cougars	NL2	Home	3.00pm	32-20	W	847
04/05/07	Celtic Crusaders	NL2	Away	7.35pm	34-26	W	3441
13/05/07	Harlequins	CCC5	Home	12.30pm	6-66	L	559
20/05/07	Barrow Raiders	NL2	Home	3.00pm	50-18	W	848
26/05/07	London Skolars	NL2	Away	3.00pm	34-6	W	636
03/06/07	Workington Town	NL2	Away	3.00pm	27-18	W	1,231
10/06/07	York City Knights	NL2	Home	3.00pm	21-10	W	1,024
17/06/07	Featherstone Rovers	NL2	Away	3.00pm	18-24	L	1,587
24/06/07	Keighley Cougars	NL2	Away	3.00pm	18-26	L	969
01/07/07	Gateshead Thunder	NL2	Home	3.00pm	36-12	W	847
08/07/07	Swinton Lions	NL2	Away	3.00pm	10-17	L	956
15/07/07	Barrow Raiders	NL2	Away	3.00pm	34-26	L	1,348
22/07/07	Hunslet Hawks	NL2	Home	3.00pm	52-22	W	1,024
29/07/07	York City Knights	NL2	Away	3.00pm	15-14	W	1,064
05/08/07	Blackpool Panthers	NL2	Home	3.00pm	46-12	W	858
12/08/07	Workington Town	NL2	Home	3.00pm	44-18	W	1,034
19/08/07	Gateshead Thunder	NL2	Away	3.00pm	28-14	W	407
22/08/07	Hunslet Hawks	NL2	Away	7.30pm	42-6	W	587
30/08/07	Celtic Crusaders	NL2	Home	7.35pm			
05/09/07	Swinton Lions	NL2	Home	7.45pm			
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

LAST OF THE NEW BOYS READY FOR FINAL PUSH

THE Roughyeds' sometimes-hectic recruitment activity over the past couple of months came to an end for this season with the recent captures --- a few days before the deadline --- of Hull KR pair Byron Ford and Gareth Morton and much-travelled prop Warren Stevens.

Coming so soon after Rob 'Two Bobs' Roberts, James Coyle and Ian Gordon threw their hats into the Roughyeds ring, these latest signings once again underlined the board's burning ambition to take the club upwards and onwards, writes ROGER HALSTEAD.

Ford and Morton are here on loan, while Stevens has signed a short-term deal to the end of the season.

The big prop, formerly with Warrington, Whitehaven and Leigh, had agreed to play for Andy Gregory's Blackpool on a match-to-match basis to ease himself back into the game, but Roughyeds boss Steve Deakin was keen to bring him here in the knowledge that once he had got himself match fit he would, alongside 'Two Bobs', provide invaluable experience to a young set of Oldham forwards.

At Hunslet the other night Stevens made his first start in an Oldham jersey, toiling somewhat early on -- like the rest of the side -- but returning for another stab at it in the second half and producing his best performance so far.

Ford and Morton, meanwhile, have made an immediate impact, Ford scoring five tries in three Oldham outings to date, while Morton has chipped in with two tries and 13 goals in the same number of appearances.

Watched by his fellow Cook Island international and former Oldham forward Tere Glassie, Byron sparked Roughyeds into action with a length-of-the-field dash that led directly to Gareth's opening try of the game.

But it was when he was switched to full-back late on that he turned on the real razzle-dazzle to twice weave his way through a mesmerised Hunslet defence for a couple of classy, crowd-pleasing touchdowns.

Morton, meanwhile, was kicking goals from all distances and angles --- seven out of seven to be precise, to follow his four from five at Gateshead where he smacked a conversion attempt off the right-hand touchline against an upright in his one and only failure.

"Promotion is the No 1 goal for us," said Ford, "and, hopefully, we can make it all the way to the Grand Final at Headingley."

With proven try scorers like Ford, Adam Hughes and Lucas Onyango around, and a goalkicker of Morton's class to turn four into six, the Roughyeds must be in with a shout.

Oldham RLFC fully support the Let's tackle Racism in Rugby League campaign and welcomes all players and spectators irrespective of their ethnic or racial origins. Racism has no place in our game and racist chants are totally unacceptable.

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				Cushions	£5.00