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SUNDAY 23rd SEPTEMBER 2007 • K.O. 3.00pm

ROUGHYEDS

V WORKINGTON TOWN

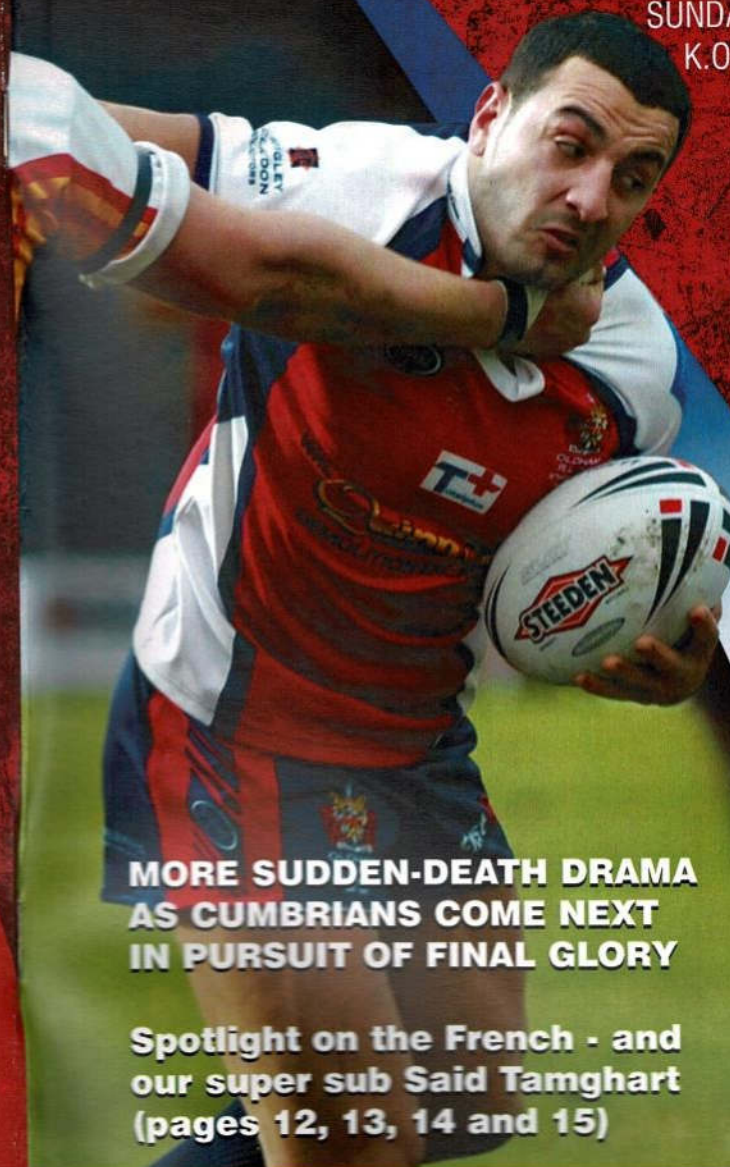
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(pages 12, 13, 14 and 15)



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CONTENTS

Oldham RLFC v Workington Town

FEATURES

- 4 **Boardroom View** with Chris Hamilton
- 6 **Deeks's Coach Approach** A look at the preparation for today's game
- 9 **Anniversary gala dinner**
- 10 **Cooke-ability**
- 12 **Player Profile** SAID TAMGHART
- 14 **Heritage Trust** with Brian Walker
- 17 **The Boys and their backers**
- 18 **Picture Parade**
- 20 **Roughyeds Roar** by Ian Wilson
- 23 **Chance to meet Ricky Hatton**
- 24 **Our Visitors - Workington Town**
- 25 **Those were the days**
- 27 **National League Talk**
- 29 **Keeping the dream alive**
- 31 **Journalistic license** by Matthew Chambers
- 33 **Player statistics**
- 34 **Fixtures and sponsors**
- 35 **Merchandise on offer**
- 36 **Today's Teams** View both of today's teams in full, plus match officials

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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-?

GOALS IN A CAREER: Pat Rich, 254 - 1999-2001

POINTS IN A CAREER: Pat Rich, 576 - 1999-2001

DROP GOALS IN A CAREER: Neil Roden, 18 - 2000-2003

TRIES IN MATCH: Mark Sibson v Wigan St. Judes, 4 - Feb 8th 2000 at Boundary Park
Mark Sibson v Queensbury, 4 - Jan 28th 2001 at Boundary Park
David Gibbons v Chorley Lynx, 4 - Jan 30th 2001 at Boundary Park
James Bunyan v Featherstone Rovers, 4 - Apr 12th 2004 at Boundary Park
GOALS IN A MATCH: Simon Svabic v Swinton Lions, 10 - Apr 6th 2003 at Boundary Park
POINTS IN A MATCH: Gareth Barber v Dewsbury Rams, 26 - Apr 2nd 2002 at Hurst Cross
(7 goals, 3 tries)

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

HIGHEST SCORE/WINNING MARGIN: v Yorks Wasps, 70-6 - Apr 1st 2001 at Huntington Stadium
v Queensbury (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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Bernard Ganley 1950-61

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John Etty 1954-59

Derek Turner 1955-59

Kevin Taylor 1962-77

Mike Elliott 1962-79

Bob Irving 1964-74

Martin Murphy 1966-82

Terry Flanagan 1979-89

Andy Goodway 1979-85 & 1993-94

We would like to express our thanks to the
Oldham Evening Chronicle, League Publications
Ltd, Phil Burdge and all concerned for the use
of photographs. (www.digisport.co.uk)

www.roughyeds.co.uk

boardroom **view**

with Chris Hamilton



More Please!

As the famous saying from Oliver goes we certainly want more of last Sunday's level of performance.

The team started last week's match as though they were playing for a world championship and before they knew it the game was over for Swinton. We had all said that the start of the Play Offs was the time when we must be totally focused and this is when performances have to go up a notch and given that our run-in had seen a dip in fluency everybody was aware that last Sunday was a big test.

The team responded and turned up with a determination that was hard to match and was amply demonstrated in huge quantities throughout the game with a real passion for defending in numbers that was refreshing to see.

Added to that were quality options going forward resulting in some great tries and all in all it was a top performance.

This knockout stage of the season 'however' means that it all counts for nothing if we do not "turn up" today and nobody knows that better than the players themselves who have worked hard again in training this week to make sure they are ready for the game.

Workington themselves arrive today on the back of a resounding win last week against York and that was some performance - probably York's biggest defeat of the season and at a time when York had been in good form so it was a fantastic effort from Town.

The one thing that the performances of both teams last week has done is to serve notice on each other of their respective intentions and although we have beaten Workington both home and away this season they, like Swinton, will arrive today with nothing to lose and everything to gain. We have to make sure that we make the most of home advantage again and try to emulate, if not improve on, last weeks performance.

One of the things that stood out from last week was the number of players who produced a level of performance that was similar - there was nobody who you could have said was an absolute certainty for Man of the Match such was the consistency across the board from one to seventeen and everybody raised the level of their game. That is the sign of a good team and hopefully we can keep that consistency for three more matches.

I am sure everyone will also agree that the crowd also played their part last week and i can assure you that it is appreciated by everybody at the club and please keep it up today.

Regardless of what happens today this will be our last home match of what has been an eventful season both on and off the field and one that has seen the club make tremendous strides. Rest assured we will be looking to maintain the momentum that has been gained over the last few months and a very big heartfelt thank you to all our supporters for your loyal and vociferous backing of the team. Lets hope that we can see you all for another two games after today.

Enjoy the game.

Chris

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deaks's coach approach

with Steve Deakin



THESE are my last programme notes of the season given that, irrespective of the outcome of the game today, this is our last home appearance in the 2007 season.

The victors today will be away next week against either Featherstone Rovers or Barrow Raiders for the right to play in the Grand Final at Headingley on October 7, so this is our last chance this year to take advantage of home soil and home territory.

The opportunity to play against an in-form Workington Town side today is the result of our outstanding team performance in the 36-6 defeat of Swinton Lions, which in many ways was our most comprehensive performance of the year.

I felt that in the first 30 minutes our attacking game was head and shoulders above anything we had produced previously.

And although we didn't quite hit the same heights in the second half we were, at the very least, extremely efficient in the way we went about our business.

From a coaching aspect, however, it was the defensive aspect of our overall performance that pleased me most.

I thought our intensity, our technical and structural presentations and our enthusiasm to work with and for each other were so spot-on that they simply blew Swinton away.

Any momentum they looked like building we quickly took away from them and they had had so much tackling to do

early on that, round about the 25-minute stage, I thought they would find it very hard to get back into the game after we had taken the score away from them.

It is those qualities of intensity, enthusiasm and desire which we will need to maintain if we are going to get out of Co-operative NL2 this year.

A rather sad aspect of all this is that we no longer have the services of Gareth Morton, who brought to the club an enormous amount of experience and ability, albeit for a short period.

He is now heading for Italy to play in rugby union and I am sure that all you supporters, like I, will wish him all the best in his Italian adventure.

Play-off football is like cup-tie football. Emotions are different to those generated in league games and you have to control those emotions and use them to your advantage. I think we did that a little bit better than Swinton did and that also had a bearing on the outcome.

There were things we could have done better, of course, and we have been working on those this week because the one thing we know for certain is that Workington will be coming down here full of confidence and fully "up" for it after beating York City Knights handsomely at Derwent Park last Sunday.

I am sure Town, like ourselves, feel they can go a little bit further, but I have no intention at this stage of even attempting to look beyond the next hurdle.

All our focus must be on today's encounter against a very good Workington side and on what we might do to help us to negotiate that hurdle.

As a final footnote the players have asked me to convey to you in these last programme notes of the season their appreciation of all your efforts and backing through the year.

They have asked me to tell you that on our return to Boundary Park next season in whatever form -- NL1 or NL2 -- they hope to see you all back here again so that, collectively, we can continue to drive the club forward.

Enjoy today,

Deaks.

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GLITTERING CELEBRATION DINNER TO MARK ROUGHYEDS MILESTONE

BOXING LEGEND RICKY HATTON TOPS BILL ON A CHAMPAGNE NIGHT IN QE HALL by ROGER HALSTEAD

Well-known radio and TV sports presenter Jimmy Wagg will MC the Roughyeds' tenth anniversary gala dinner - the Ricky Hatton dinner - in the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Oldham on Friday night, September 28.

A glittering night will begin with a champagne reception at 6.30pm and the opportunity for people to have an autographed photograph taken with the 'Hit Man' himself. Dinner will be served at 7.15pm.

There will be big-screen footage of classic Roughyeds matches in the past decade, including the 2001 Northern Ford Premiership grand final against Widnes, and of highlights from Ricky's sensational career in the ring.

Leading up to the main event - Ricky's appearance as guest speaker - there will be an auction of sporting memorabilia, a raffle with quality prizes, and a performance by top-class comedian Bobby Bender.

It will be a night when the rough, tough and physically demanding sports of rugby league and boxing come together to provide an occasion not to be missed by Roughyeds supporters and fight fans alike.

Ricky Hatton is the local boy made good - a Manchester lad who has soared to the top of his chosen sport and has become a national hero without ever forgetting his roots.

A Manchester City fanatic and a hugely proud Mancunian, he is a sporting legend yet still the boy next door; an icon who can take 10,000 fans across the Atlantic to Las Vegas, yet one who

remains passionate about his football club, his city, his upbringing and his family ties.

Jimmy Wagg, himself a household name in Greater Manchester and a friend of the region's sporting celebrities thanks to his long association with the presentation of sport on Radio Manchester, is the ideal MC to present Ricky to us on what is sure to be a fantastic night in the history of Oldham RLFC (1997) Ltd.

Background music will be provided by a pianist on a baby grand piano and live closed-circuit TV will be in operation throughout the evening.

Roughyeds are hopeful of attracting a sell-out 400 diners and they are keen to welcome individual fans or groups of fans as well as the corporate business sector. The club is celebrating a decade of achievement and supporters have been with them all the way. Officials hope many of them will be there on the night, too.

"It promises to be a night we will never forget," said Roughyeds' chief executive Chris Hamilton.

If the Roughyeds beat Workington Town at Boundary Park today, of course, they will be only one game away from another Grand Final appearance, in their bid to win promotion from NL2, by the time the gala celebration dinner is staged.

Tickets for the dinner cost £450 plus vat for a corporate table of ten or £45-a-head for individual bookings. A photograph with Ricky Hatton, autographed, will cost £20. To book or for further information ring Janet at the Roughyeds office on 0161 628 3677.

SEE PAGE 23 FOR FULL-PAGE COLOUR ADVERT FOR THE BIG NIGHT.



A Roughyeds' Golf Day at Crompton and Royton, sponsored by Klockner Pentaplast Ltd of Wales, raised about £8,000 and provided a great day for the golfers. A team from Oldham Electrical won it, but everyone enjoyed the competition, especially at the 19th hole! Comedian Paddy Green also went down well at the evening presentations. Left to right: Andy Dunster, Ian Trow, Steve Oldham, Steve Rae, Darren Connor and Roughyeds' director Sean Whitehead.

with Geoff Cooke

cooke-ability!

With two league wins already against Workington Town Oldham can enter today's game with confidence though not complacency.

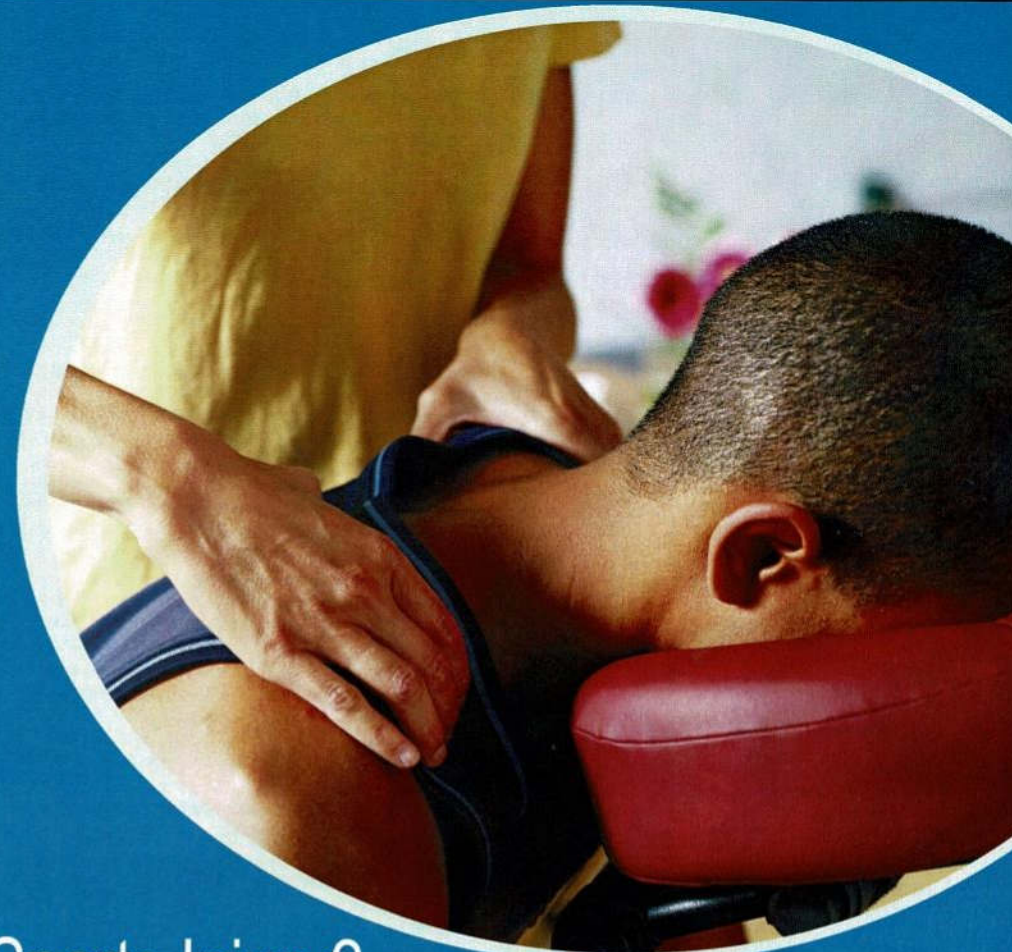
Play-off football is not the same as league fixtures and Workington's victory against York last week will have filled the team with confidence, particularly in view of the margin of victory. Our visitors will travel as underdogs, a position I expect they will relish. Their attitude will be that they have nothing to lose so let's give it our best shot. After all defeat puts an end to the season whereas a win lines up another payday and that could even be against great rivals Barrow. It is obvious therefore that Oldham will need to be on their mettle. Any reference to last week's sparkling defeat of Swinton Lions is irrelevant : good as that was what's gone is gone. Steve Deakin rightly pointed out that the margin between a good performance and an indifferent one can be perilously close. Nevertheless, a repeat of some of the key features of last week will stand Oldham in good stead. For example it was more than thirty minutes before Oldham conceded a penalty and, putting aside Richard Mervill failing to ground properly by a whisker, it was more than thirty minutes before Oldham made an unforced error. Those are the kind of statistics that win games. So, once again, one important element of Oldham's game has to be not to get drawn into a midfield war of attrition. Quite simply Oldham have the firepower in the back division to worry any opposition and with the kind of platform established by rampaging forwards like Tony Tonks, Richard Mervill and Said Tamghart there is no reason why the backs cannot put the icing on the cake. Here's to another scintillating clash like last week's and a showdown with either Featherstone or Barrow.

By the time you read this the Super League play-off games this week will have been completed. That doesn't stop me making a fool of myself by forecasting the outcome. Despite a splendid win against St. Helens I can't see Wigan beating Bradford Bulls and although I reckon Huddersfield will go close at Hull logic tells me to stick with the home side. Have a good laugh if I'm wrong.

At N.L.1 level I would expect Castleford to beat Widnes and qualify for the final. After four defeats already against Whitehaven and a shaky win over Sheffield last week I doubt if Halifax will progress further but with an Oldham coaching team of Martin Hall and Matt Calland in charge I hope I'm wrong.

And the N.L.2 games?

I'm with the bookies : Featherstone and Oldham to win.



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**POPULAR FRENCHMAN HAS
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IF you happen to stumble across Said Tamghart and Steve Deakin deep in conversation the chances are they'll be discussing rugby league. Fancy a spot of eavesdropping? Don't bother -- not unless you can understand fluent French.

Deaks, the Oldham team boss, has spoken the language for years. As a former coach of Cannes, UTC and then Catalans Dragons -- and once named French coach of the year -- one supposes he would have to at least know the difference between 'oui' and 'non'.

However, you only have to hear him chatting away with Said to appreciate that he knows rather more than that.

And it's fair to say that Said's relationship with Deaks from their days together in Perpignan was the biggest single factor in the French forward's arrival in Oldham with his wife Laurence and eight-year-old son, Idris, on a cold winter's day in January as Roughyeds prepared for life in Co-operative NL2.

Downtown Oldham -- or Chadderton, to be more precise -- in winter is a world away from the south of France and those idyllic little towns like Carpentras, Avignon and Lezignan where Said grew up with his five brothers and five sisters and where he first handled a rugby ball at the age of seven.

Despite the culture shock, he has settled easily in Oldham and although the change has been anything but easy for Laurence and their little son -- a baby girl is expected in November -- the Tamgharts would be more than happy to settle in this area for the mid-term future if the Roughyeds were to offer him a deal for 2008.

To say he picked up the English language merely by talking to the many Aussies and Kiwis who settle in the south of France to play League, Said speaks it remarkably well -- so much so that, when interviewing him for this article, I could understand him far easier than he could follow what I was saying!

"It's good in Oldham," he said. "I adapt quickly to change and, in any event, it's easy for me because I can speak English and I am out each day training and playing and meeting lots of people.

"It is a lot harder for my wife. She doesn't speak English and she is at home alone a lot and that makes it difficult.

"Idris went to school at St Thomas's, Werneth, for a time, but he is schooling at home right now because, depending on what the future holds for me here in rugby once this season is over, we may be moving house to somewhere like Shaw or Lees. We will have to wait and see."

Said's story is an interesting one. Aged 27 now, he was

by ROGER HALSTEAD

one of six Tamghart boys who joined their local Carpentras club while still wet behind the ears and two of them, Said and the eldest brother, Amar, went on to play for France at full Test level.

But it wasn't all plain sailing. No rugby of either code was played in schools, and he felt the game outside school was so poorly organised that he turned his back on it at the age of 14 and only returned four years later because the sport for the 18s and overs was slightly better structured.

During his four years out he turned to gymnastics and boxing for his recreational exercise, but within four months of returning to the Carpentras club he was in the first team with his feet on the first rung of the ladder to a Test appearance.

His hometown club's relegation to division two a couple of years later prompted his move to Avignon, some 20 miles away, but he wasn't there long before he returned to Carpentras and then ultimately moved away to Perpignan to sign for UTC and, for the first time, to become a professional.

He was already at that club when Deaks arrived as coach and, in Said's own words: "Taught me how to play."

He was to play for France juniors, aged 19; for the under-21s v New Zealand; and for the full Test side against the touring Australians when he was thrown in at prop in Toulouse against a fully-blown Kangaroos outfit that paraded all their world-class stars.

"They were all there," recalled Said, "... Lockyer, Fitzgibbon, Bowen and many others. We lost 32-52, but with ten minutes to go we trailed only 30-34 and then they scored three converted tries in three minutes to make the score look different.

"Playing in that match has to be the highlight of my career so far, but I owe a lot to Deaks who taught me a lot more at UTC than I learned under Patrick Entat at Carpentras and Avignon."

It was while playing for Deaks at UTC -- the club that eventually became Catalans Dragons -- that Said enjoyed another big occasion in the Challenge Cup of 2004. In a third-round tie on Humberstone, Said played at centre opposite Hull KR's Matt Calland and helped the Frenchmen to a shock 23-22 win.

Casey Mayberry, another Oldhamer, was one of the subs for a Rovers side which was under the charge of Mal Reilly as director of rugby with Martin Hall as coach.

A drop goal by Julien Rinaldi split the teams, produced one of the shocks of the round and earned Deaks's men a fourth-round tie at Castleford, where they put up another good show before going down 32-20.

That cup run provided another lasting memory for Said, who left UTC the year before they became Catalans Dragons. He tried his hand at rugby union, but found it "boring, and not for me."

He added -- and you know what he means when you've seen him play for Oldham: "When I come off the rugby field at the end of a game I want to feel sore and tired. But at rugby union I could have played four games in one day! I

didn't like it."

He did like playing for Deaks. He kept in touch with his mentor and a little less than a year ago, by which time he wanted to try his hand in England and Deaks found himself back in Oldham and available for another coaching job, the wheels were set in motion which led to mentor and pupil linking up once again, this time at the Roughyeds.

Said: "I had wanted to play in England for a long time, because the game here is much better, and when I spoke to Deaks he said he was going to be coach at Oldham and if I was going anywhere in England he would like me to come to Oldham.

"I did, and I'm glad I did. I have enjoyed my stay and I have enjoyed my rugby. I was impressed by the standard of NL2. Teams like Oldham, Featherstone, Barrow and Celtic are better than anything in the French championship, which is the top level at home.

"As you know, I have played mostly for Oldham as a substitute. Deaks likes me coming off the bench and that is okay by me because it provides the team with a second cutting edge, if you know what I mean.

"While I am sitting on the bench I am not resting -- I am looking at the opposition defence and looking at which player I will run at when I get on the field. It is analysis -- I analyse so that I have a plan when I go on the field."

Despite his kamikaze style of play, Said has not missed many Oldham games through injury, just a handful because of an ankle sprain and a fractured eye socket, both received in matches against Swinton and both suffered within a couple of minutes of him taking the field off the bench.

He says he feels equally at home at prop or second-row, enjoying the hard work at prop and the extra space from second-row.

And what of the future? "The immediate task is to beat Workington," he said, "and then take it from there.

"We know that if we lose, the season is over and none of us wants the season to end just yet, so we know what we have to do. We played well against Swinton, but we have to try to up the level each time we go out.

"My favourite all-time player is Matty Bowen, the Australian full-back. He played for Australia and I played against him. He is fast, strong, powerful and if he makes a break you can forget him, he will race away to the try line and nobody will catch him.

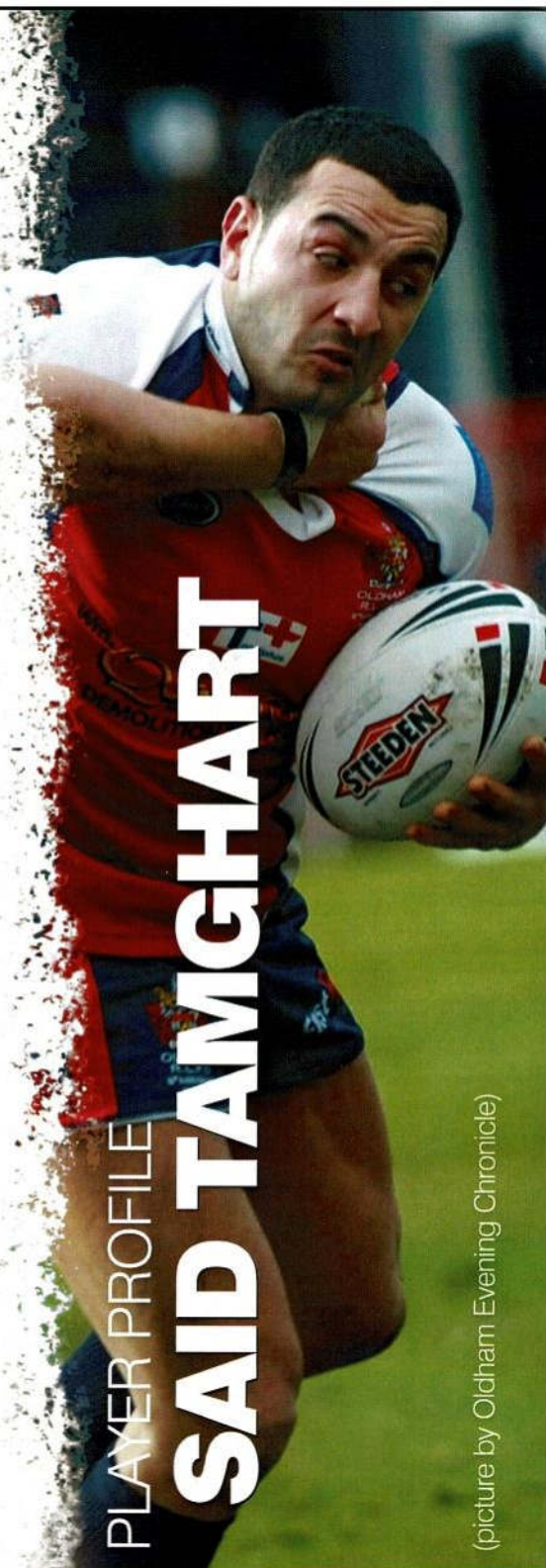
"I draw inspiration from players like that. My dream is to play in Super League. I would just like the opportunity to try. If I didn't make it, fine. But I would have tested myself, and I would have been happy then to have had a go."

His youngest brother Malik, who is 20, plays rugby union in France and Said is sure he has the talent and the drive to make it in England. Another Tamghart for Oldham?

"Maybe," offered Said, "but I'm not sure what's happening with me yet. I'll be speaking with (board members) Chris (Hamilton) and Bill (Quinn) about next year and if the club wants to keep me I'll be happy to stay."

The popular Frenchman has given excellent service this year and has played a significant role in what the team has achieved.

Bien fait, monsieur, et merci beaucoup.



AROUND & ABOUT

By Brian Walker

with The Heritage Trust

COCK-A-DOODLE NOT TOO DANDY!

The supporters of the French national side, hosts of the 2007 Rugby Union World Cup, got a rude awakening when the Pumas lowered the Tricolor in the tournament's opening fixture. There will be thousands upon thousands of Frenchmen who won't be able to blame their red eyes on the garlic and onions should the improbable happen and the Irish guillotine France's chances this weekend. But, some older members of a tight-knit little rugby community nestled in the foothills of the Pyrenees will be only too pleased to wave two fingers. Much has been said about the beautiful sport's big event but here and there one or two journalists have reminded us about a questionable history of the Federation Francaise de Rugby – a recent excellent article by John Lichfield printed in the Independent being a case in point.

SO, WHAT WENT ON?

Rugby Union was introduced to France by English expatriates in the 1870's. Its stronghold has always been in the south of the country particularly the land of Basques and Catalans to the south west.

In 1931 the national rugby union side which played the sport with both flair and brutality - and having 'beaten' England in Paris - were kicked-out of international sport by the International Rugby Board for violent play along with its governing body the Francaise Federation De Rugby for also failing to control a number of its clubs which allegedly were making illegal payments to players within a 'strictly' amateur code.

Taking advantage of the kick in union's proverbs, one Jean Galia (previously

suspended by the federation), a union forward and boxer became a prime mover in both introducing and establishing semi-professional rugby league into France. In the late summer of 1934, in order to promote publicity for this fledgling venture Galia - under the Villeneuve club banner - undertook a short tour of Lancashire & Yorkshire during which they played Oldham at Watersheddings - losing by the narrowest of margins.

It paid off with the Rugby Football League making a big effort to establish *le-rugby-a-X111* in the Republic and in early 1935 a triangular tournament was set up to be contested by England, Wales and France with two of the matches to be played in Paris and Bordeaux. Oldham forward Lewis Rees played for Wales against France in the match in Bordeaux which the French won 18-11 and after forcing a draw against England shared the inaugural series. The tournament continued to be played each season until the outbreak of the Second World War with France winning the trophy during season 1938-39.

The 1934-35 season opened in France with 14 clubs playing semi-professional rugby league. By the end of 1938 there were over 190 sides playing the sport plus a number of the countries big union clubs had switched codes. And it was growing fast.

In the years running up to the Second World War it seemed certain that league would become the dominant code in France. In 1930 the French Rugby Union had almost 800 members but by 1939 this had fallen to around 470.

Then, it seems, came one of the most treacherous acts in the history of sport. By the middle of 1940

the Germans had both invaded and conquered France and the Nazi supporting Franco - German Vichi regime had been installed to rule those parts of France and its colonies unoccupied by Germany. It would appear that just weeks after its formation one of its Ministers, Jean Ybarnegaray came under pressure from senior officials of the Federation Francaise de Rugby - resulting in an announcement that the fate of rugby league was clear. Its life was over and it would be expunged from French sport.

Four months later, in December 1940, the head of the Vichi government, Marshal Phillippe Petain signed a decree ordering rugby league to merge with rugby union - assuring that league could be played at amateur level. But, it was a never to be kept promise. The 13 man code was dead in the water with its assets seized, and evidently, in many cases, given to union clubs. This was seen as part of a wider tactic by the Vichi - to end professionalism in French sport - but stronger bodies such as football, boxing and cycling never did conform.

Rugby League in France is still waiting for an apology and has never been compensated.

After the war the sport tried valiantly to reinvent itself with characters such as former Resistance leader Paul Barrier to the fore. Again the RFL helped out and the triangular international tournament was reintroduced bolstered by a number of promotional tours to the country. During season 1945 -46 Oldham's forwards Tommy Rostron and Doug Phillips played for England and Wales respectively and both the Roughyeds' centres Ernie Large and Norman Harris played for a British RL X111 against Racing Club De Paris (in Paris) with Harris scoring a try in the 36-19 British victory.

French clubs were urged to make the trip here and on the Easter Monday of 1950 a combined

Bordeaux and Villeneuve side played against Oldham. Tours down-under were made by France in 1951, 1955 and 1960 and the country hosted the World Cup in 1954.

Whilst it never again reached the heights that it had achieved pre-war, and there have been more than just one or two games between our two countries which can only at best be described as running brawls (causing the future of Anglo-French internationals to be questioned), league clung on and survived. Those efforts eventually being rewarded with Catalan Dragons winning a place in the 2007 Challenge Cup final at the new Wembley Stadium.

So, a toast then to Jean Galia and all those who've played a part in keeping this great game of our alive and kicking on the Continent.

Mind you, there will be more than just a few Oldham supporters who just might wish it hadn't when ten years ago defeat by a French club side in Paris signalled the beginning of the end for one of the most famous rugby league clubs in the world!

Should you wish to know more of what happened to rugby league in France during the time of the Vichi government read 'The Forbidden Game' written by Mike Rylance.

Former chief rugby correspondent for prestigious French sport's daily *L'Equipe*, Henri Garcia in 1961 wrote an account of French rugby league - *Champagne Rugby* which has recently been translated now being available in English. ISBN 9781903659342 available from any good book shop at £12.95.

Michael Turner's new book to be published this autumn gives accounts of those matches against the French sides played at Watersheddings. Should you wish to reserve a copy please fill in the form and return it or alternatively simply ring 0161 620 6005.

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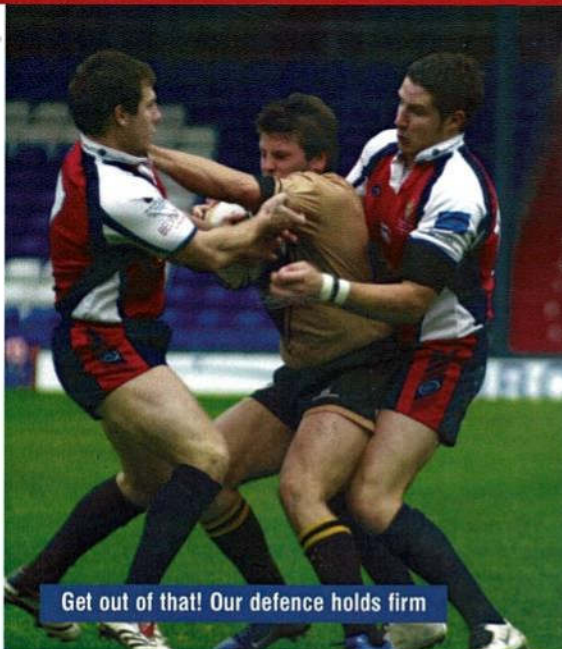
LION TAMERS!

IT was generally agreed . . . our performance in beating Swinton Lions 36-6 in the Co-operative NL2 elimination play-off last Sunday here at Boundary Park was one of our best, if not THE best, of the season.

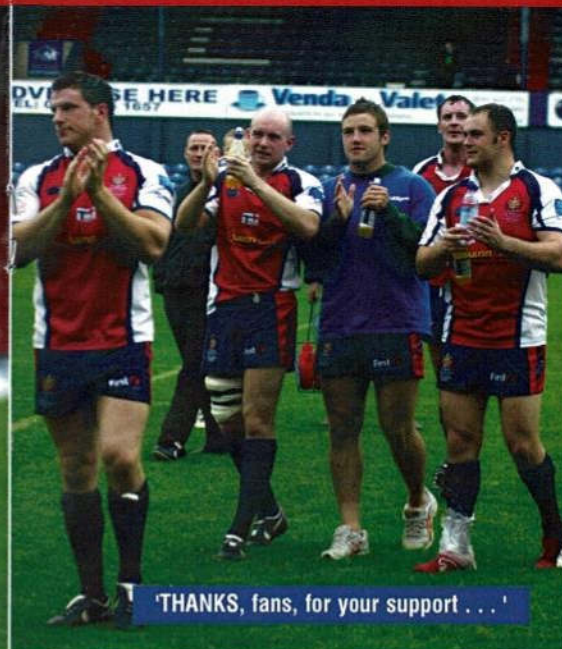
We were off to a flier with three tries in the first 12 minutes by Adam Hughes, Byron Ford and Lucas Onyango and, in truth, we never looked back as we booked our place in today's elimination semi-final against Workington Town.

Town also had a great win, 42-4 against York City Knights, so they will be going into today's clash with just as much confidence and optimism as we are.

Once again it's a sudden-death tie that has all the ingredients to be another thriller.



Get out of that! Our defence holds firm



'THANKS, fans, for your support . . .'



'... AND well done, you Roughyeds'



BYRON Ford in full flight, speeding past Wayne English.



ANOTHER for Lucas as he flies in at the corner

with Ian Wilson

roughyeds'

roar!

One of the most interesting aspects of the 2007 season has been the attendances.

People have argued that the season has been more competitive than ever before, particularly in Super League, in terms of more fixtures than previously having genuinely uncertain outcomes. Has this been reflected in increased attendances?

For many years, I reckoned that the overall average crowd for RL in England was around 55,000 most weekends. There were exceptions, of course - especially at Bank Holidays - but that was a reasonable average ball-park match-day figure for many league seasons. How do the 2007 figures compare?

The official Super League attendance figures for 2007 show that, for the first time, there has been an average crowd of over 10,000 at each match. So that makes just over 60,000 on average each weekend at Super League alone. I haven't yet seen equivalent figures for the National League clubs, but they seem to average something around 15,000 - which is a somewhat less auspicious figure, given that there are 11 fixtures. Overall, though, that gives more than 75,000 per league weekend watching professional RL.

There is therefore little doubt that the positive spin which emanates from Red Hall about the popularity of the game does have a valid basis in fact. And that is great news, from every point of view - attracting sponsors, negotiating TV deals, and, by no means least, for the people who actually pay their hard-earned cash to watch live games. It is always a better experience to be a part of a thriving set-up than one which is evidently in decline. Long may it continue to thrive, too. (However, if I may return

to a personal, sadly apparently failed, hobby-horse, I wonder if the upward trend will be sustained once we move into the wonderful world of franchises, and no automatic promotion / relegation. If, as I strongly fear, it is not, then the proponents of the franchise system will have a great deal to answer for.)

In the light of this positive attendance story for RL overall, what are we to make of our "crowd" of 1120 at Boundary Park last Sunday? This was for a play-off game, which would determine whether or not the club would continue its bid to gain promotion. And it also happened to be a local derby, against a side which had been very competitive against us four times already this season. Where were the 3,000 + who came v Celtic, for example, as well as the rest who are armchair supporters / critics only. You couldn't ask for much better entertainment on the field than that which the players served up during the first half in particular last week, surely?

Even more, what about the 669 who watched today's visitors thrash York on the same afternoon? The mind boggles to think that both we and Workington were members of Super League when it began in 1996. There is absolutely no criticism of the people who actually did attend either game, of course. But it must be heart-breaking for those who put in so much time and energy to keep the game going in such former strongholds of the game at semi-pro level to see their efforts so poorly rewarded by the vast majority of the people of their towns. Do the towns really deserve a decent-quality rugby league team, one has to ask? Sadly, one sometimes wonders.

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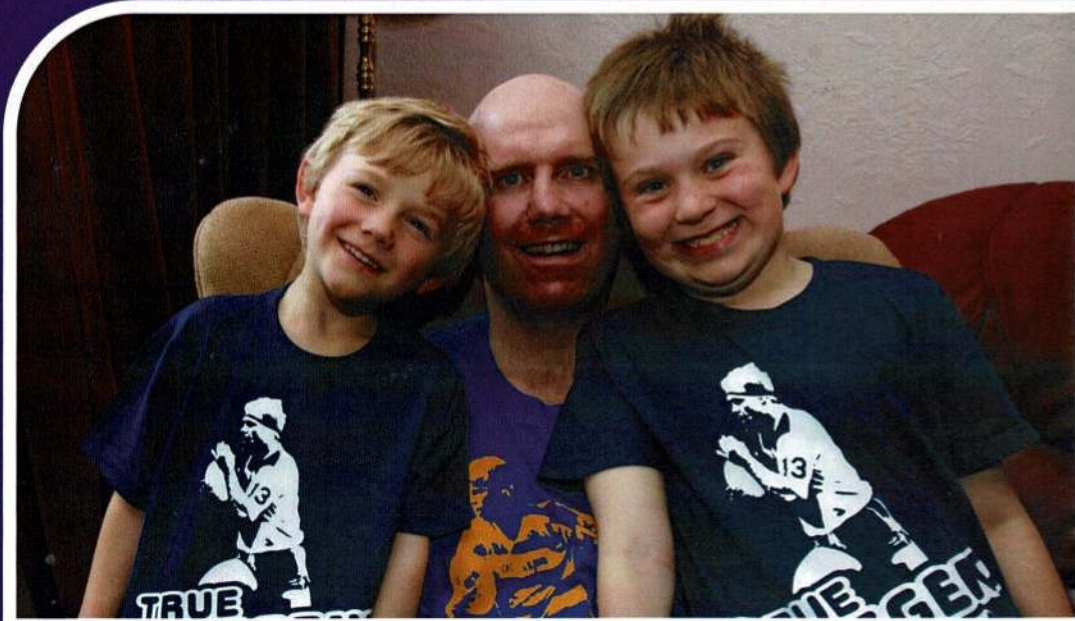
When Leeds Met launched the Carnegie Great Student Run 2007, leading the way was former Widnes, Wigan and GB star Joe Lydon. Joe declared his intention to run the 5km race to raise money for the Mike Gregory Trust Fund. Mike is one of rugby league's most popular, respected and courageous stars who captained Warrington and his country with such distinction.

The Mike Gregory Trust Fund was formed by friends and supporters from the rugby league community who knew

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

It is Mike and his family's intention that the trust's funds will be used to cover his ongoing medical expenses and help raise awareness about the effects of Borreliosis/Lymes Disease.

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FORBER MAN OF THE MOMENT AS CUMBRIANS GO TO TOWN WITH LATE-SEASON PUSH

BY NIGEL MARLAND

Our visitors today, Workington, who pay a return visit to Boundary Park today in the elimination play-offs, only a few weeks after being here for the N.L.2 league game, have every reason to be pleased to have made the play-offs.

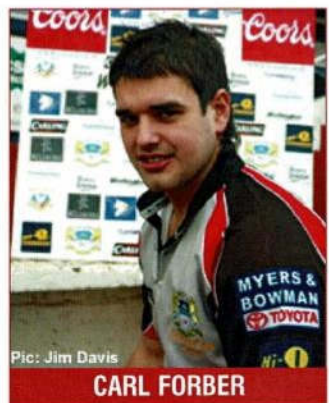
Like last week's visitors, Swinton, they have not had the easiest of seasons. First of all their Coach, Ged Stokes was released for misconduct, being replaced, on a temporary basis for this season by Les Ashe and Craig Barker. On top of that they suffered the serious injury to Liam Campbell and the sad departure of their captain Andrew Beattie. On top of that in their last game of the regular season they were to quote Barker, "down to the bare bones with only 18 fit players." Town were also rocked by the news that skipper Jamie Beaumont could be out for the rest of the season. Beaumont informed the coaches of a recurrence to a groin injury and there is a possibility that he won't take any further part this season. They will also have their fingers crossed that Taani Lavulavu and Shaun Lunt didn't pick up suspensions at last Tuesday's disciplinary hearing.

Despite all of this Town have remained up beat and before last week's demolition of York, with only 12 players on the park for much of the game, the temporary coaches have remained confident. This confidence was bolstered by their near win against high flying Featherstone in the penultimate game in the league proper. Despite watching them go down 36-26 at Swinton, Craig Barker insists his Workington side can win the Grand Final. And it's one of his legendary predecessors who is providing the coach with inspiration. "I don't see why we can't do it," declared Barker "I have been watching some old videos of Town from the Peter Walsh era and I've looked at how they managed to go through to the finals and we're in a similar position ourselves now so there's no reason we can't do it. We want to do something, we've come this far and hopefully the lads are going to push on and get us



through to that final." Barker also reflected warmly on a hectic campaign in which he and fellow joint coach Les Ashe took the reigns temporarily but stayed in charge throughout. "At first we were running on adrenalin it's been a huge learning curve for me but I've really enjoyed it and hopefully one day I'll go on to be a head coach somewhere."

Rumours in the local press are that Dave Rotherham whose contract, with neighbours Whitehaven has not been renewed, and has a house in the area, is being considered for the



Pic: Jim Davis

CARL FORBER

job next season. At the present time, however, that's all they are - rumours. In reality it is some of Town's younger players who are hitting the headlines. I mentioned Adam Sidlow and Martin Keaveney, in my notes for the last Workington programme. Workington, like Oldham, have benefited

from loan deals from clubs in higher divisions and these two lads from Widnes continue to do the business. But the name on everybody's lips at the present time is Carl Forber who was signed from Leigh at the start of the season and has become Town's point scoring machine. Recently he got himself into the rugby history books for equalling Dean Marwood's long-standing most goals per game record with 13 goals and three tries as Workington Town hammered hapless Blackpool Panthers 86-6 at Derwent Park recently. Last week against York he had a faultless 9 out of nine goal kicks that helped them to a comfortable win.

This outstanding half back was partnered by another promising young scrum half, Roughyeds James Coyle in the 2001 North West Counties under 16 tour to Fiji, New Zealand and Australia. Roughyeds media mogul Roger Halstead remembers it well as he was an official on that tour. "I remember them both well," said Roger, "there were many talented youngsters on the tour some of whom are well known to Roughyeds fans and rugby league supporters in general." On the tour were the likes of Adam Sharples, Wayne Corcoran and Gareth Hayes, who have Oldham connections, and James Roby, Ian Hardman and Harrison Hanson who are now starring in Super League.

So it's all to play for today in what Roughyeds fans hope will be Ashe and Barker's final game in charge of Town but Town fans will be eager to see their temporary coaches in charge for two more games this season.

THOSE WERE THE DAYS ON TOUR DOWN UNDER

THEY will probably look back at it now and have a chuckle, but six years ago Oldham scrum-half James Coyle and Workington stand-off Carl Forber - key midfield men in today's Boundary Park clash - were together on a North-West Counties Youth tour of Fiji, Auckland and Australia.

With them as part of the managerial team, in his role as media officer, was our own ROGER HALSTEAD and a glance back at his records from that tour provides fascinating reading on the day Coyle and Forber go head to head in a crucial battle of the halves.

Pre-tour profiles indicated they had little in common. Coyle gave his hobbies as golf and cycling; Forber as rugby, computers and music. Coyle's favourite player was Andrew Johns; Forber's was Laurie Daley.

Most annoying thing? Losing at rugby, said Coyle; moaning parents, offered Forber. From nine such questions, they agreed only once. In each case, their favourite male artist was Robbie Williams.

OH, AND ONE OTHER THING THEY SHARED IN ABUNDANCE - TALENT: THE KID FROM WIGAN (COYLE) AND THE BOY FROM ST HELENS (FORBER) COULD BOTH PLAY A BIT.

Forber finished with most goals on tour, 21 - seven more than second-placed Ian Hardman, now of St Helens and Hull KR fame.

Coyle was named as one of two 'players of the tour'; he winning the award for the unbeaten under-15s squad and Ryan Collins of Oldham receiving similar for his performances in the under-16s group.

Halstead wrote in his end-of-tour appraisal: "James Coyle and Ryan Collins were influential half-backs, Coyle as stand-off and captain of the under-15s and Collins as scrum-half of the under-16s."

In the main Coyle was stand-off and James Roby (heard of him?) was scrum-half in the

Six years on and Coyle, Forber hold key roles in sudden-death clash.

under-15s side, while Forber and Collins were the regular half-backs for the under-16s.

Extracts from some of Halstead's match reports are as follows:

Fiji under-16s 12, NWC 14 (Lautoka, July 9): Stand-off Forber kicked three crucial goals and, in a sound, all-round display, supplied the final, defence-splitting passes for David Allen and Paul Prescott to cross for second-half tries.

Marist Brothers 18, NWC 32 (Auckland, July 11): The younger members of the squad gave a performance that was rich in the quality of its running rugby. Coyle, who scored a great try and had a hand in several others, was an outstanding man of the match. Cairns 8, NWC 34 (Cairns, July 14): Much of the credit for the team's expansive style went to Coyle, voted man of the match in both Auckland and Cairns by opposition officials. James Roby also worked hard at scrum-half. Townsville 20, NWC 20 (Townsville, July 17): Even ice-cool Coyle lost it this time (he

was sin-binned for taking a quick tap off the wrong mark), but his spell in the cooler couldn't prevent him walking off with the man-of-the-match award for the third consecutive time.

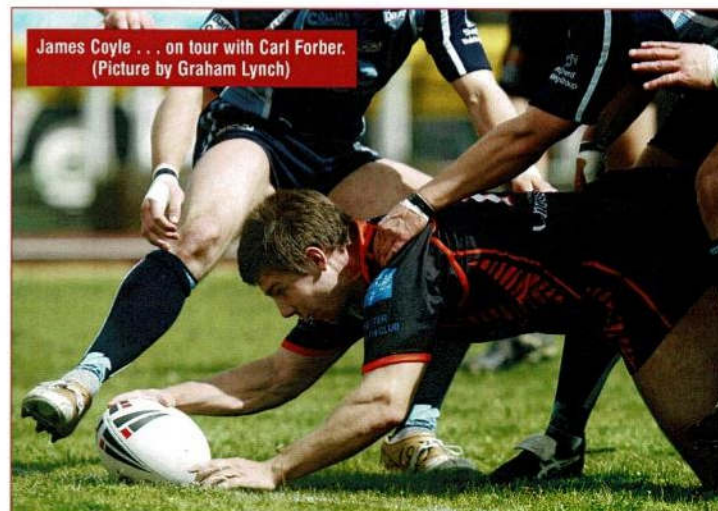
Gold Coast 4, NWC 32 (Burleigh Heads, July 25): Forber, who had his best game of the tour so far, kicked six goals (and scored a try) for a personal tally of 16 points.

Ipswich 0, NWC 18 (Burleigh Heads, July 25): Coyle's try just before the break provided one of the highlights, the ball passing through several pairs of hands at speed before the stand-off stepped through the last remnants of cover to score by the posts.

Forty-two boys toured and 17 games in three countries were crammed into less than four weeks, producing an overall record of played 17, won 10, drawn two, lost five. The unbeaten under-15s, captained by Coyle, played eight, won seven and drew one to create a little bit of NWC tour history.

Six years on and Coyle and Forber are back on the same rugby field, but this time on opposing sides.

Over to you boys - and thanks for the memories!



James Coyle... on tour with Carl Forber. (Picture by Graham Lynch)

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NATIONAL LEAGUE TALK

with GARETH WALKER of RUGBY LEAGUER & LEAGUE EXPRESS



A welcome voice of support

SUPPORTERS of National League rugby should welcome the words of Leeds chief executive Gary Hetherington in last week's 'Rugby Leaguer & League Express'.

Hetherington suggested that Super League clubs should give some financial support to those outside the top flight when they agree a new television contract to run from the 2009 season.

Currently, National League clubs only receive a relatively small amount of money from central funding, as charted in this column before.

Each year they receive £15,000 of unconditional money, £12,500 of which comes from the Super League pot.

In addition to that, this year and next, they get an additional £25,000 which has to go towards a community or commercial position, and it's a job that cannot be given to a player.

The money is provided jointly by the RFL and the National Sports Foundation, and initially at least, is for this season and 2008.

Clubs must meet certain criteria to qualify for this funding, which is paid quarterly.

Hetherington, though, would like to see Super League clubs pass more money down to strengthen the game at National League level.

"Of course the temptation for the clubs and for the RFL will be to go with 14 clubs in 2009, and to share all the money out between them," Hetherington said.

"I think that would be a bad decision, however.

We need to invest and build up those competitions below Super League so that they will also be able to earn significant broadcast deals to fund themselves ultimately."

Hetherington suggested that if the deal is for £14million a year, £12million should be shared between 12 Super League clubs and the remaining £2 million passed down.

Hetherington was only using the figures as a hypothetical example, but his thinking should be welcomed by people in the National Leagues that believe top flight officials only have eyes for their own plights.

York City Knights are just one club who have recently highlighted the need for more central funding if the game at this level is to progress.

Any addition financial support would be welcomed by National League clubs, even - I suspect - if there were terms and conditions about how it had to be spent.

Helping clubs out with off-field and community activities would be invaluable, and a portion should also be dedicated to promoting themselves in their local areas, something which some clubs patently struggle with.

But just the fact that Hetherington is thinking outside his own club's needs should be applauded.

More of the same from his peers might just lead to some significant long-term benefits for the entire game - which is what all of us should be striving for.

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AS this is our last game at Boundary Park this season - and consequently this is our last match-day magazine - everyone at the Roughyeds would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your support throughout the 2007 season.

Financial support comes in a variety of various ways - through the turnstiles on match days, through season ticket sales, through backing for our two main lotteries, Club Cash and Five Alive, through sponsorship, through support for special efforts and events, through Golden Gamble, through use of our social club, through use of match-day hospitality suites, via raffles and auctions and from donations from the Support Group and others.

But there's another form of support, too - moral support which manifests itself in vocal backing on match days and in the actions of those genuine supporters who try to fly the flag for Roughyeds whenever the opportunity presents itself.

Those opportunities are many. It's surprising what a good word can do to a neighbour, workmate, friend, relative or even to a stranger whom you sit next to on a bus or in a train.

To all of you who have supported the club this year, there is a big THANK-YOU from Bill, Chris and Sean at boardroom level, from all the staff, from the coaches and players. Your

support is invaluable and is very much appreciated at the club.

No matter what happens on the field in the next two or three weeks, and whether we will be in NL1 or in NL2 next year, it is frightening how time flies and how quickly the close season will pass by.

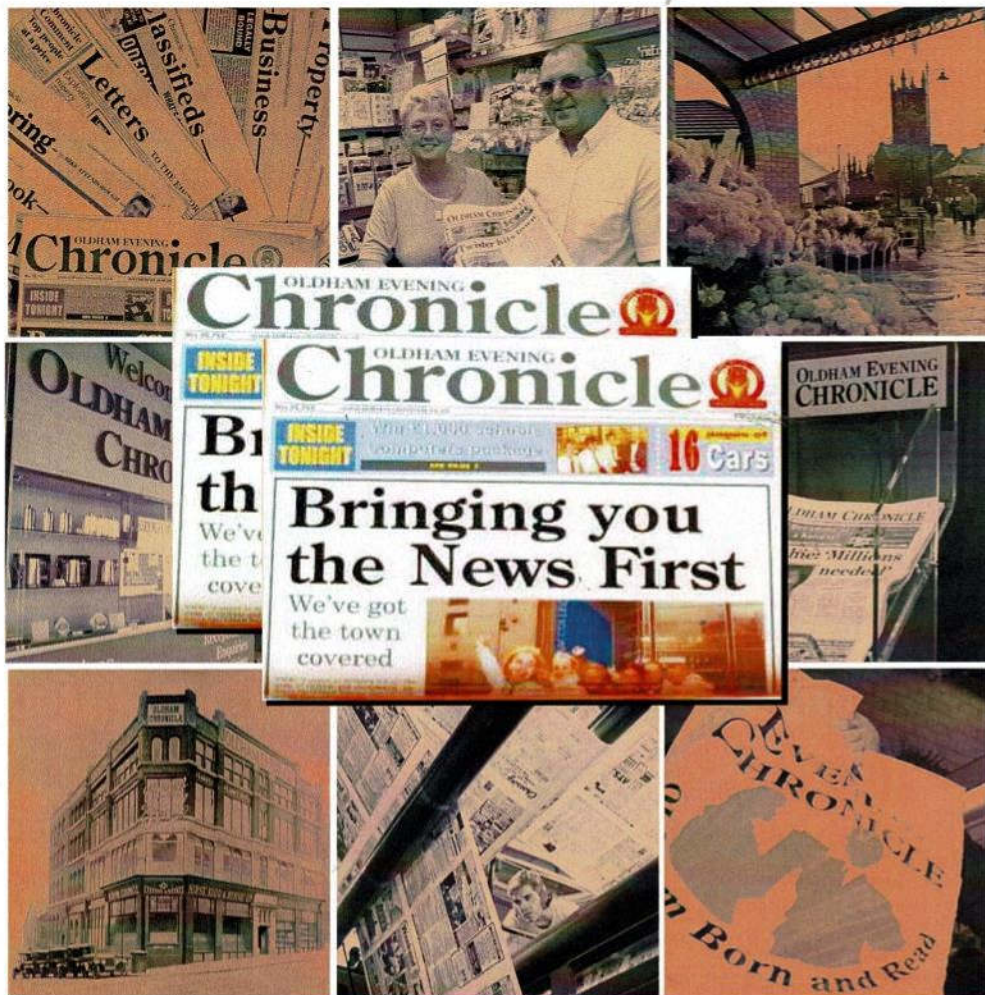
Keep in touch with us via the club's official website at www.roughyeds.co.uk or via the local press and radio outlets and please do your best to support any events or initiatives we may announce over the course of the next three or four months while the players are having a break.

For those in the lotteries, of course, nothing changes. Club Cash and Five Alive are sources of vital income during the close season when there are no matches, and we trust we can rely on your backing in this way. If you are not in one or other of the lotteries perhaps you might consider it.

If you are, maybe you could encourage somebody else to join. We are trying hard to build up our fan base again and it is a fact that one of the most successful ways is to seek the help and assistance of the faithful. It won't happen overnight, but if we all pull in the same direction it WILL happen, that's for sure.

LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU ALL AGAIN NEXT SEASON . . . PERHAPS WITH A FRIEND?

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journalistic license

by Matthew Chambers

WHAT an opening half-hour the Roughyeds produced last week.

As Steve Deakin said in the Chronicle this week, the noise produced by both sets of fans as the teams ran out was startling - but there was no doubt which side appeared the more inspired.

There have been plenty of occasions this year in which Oldham have produced excellent rugby - most notably in the latter part of the win at Celtic Crusaders and the gut-wrenching loss at Featherstone - but in my book, last week's efforts set a new high mark.

The returning Adam Hughes lit the blue touch paper. Lining up alongside Lucas Onyango once again, in a centre-wing partnership has produced a total of 16 tries in nine games this year, it didn't take long to catch fire.

Only 52 seconds elapsed between the referee's first toot on the whistle and the sight of Hughes touching down to a huge cheer from the Roughyeds support.

Then there was Byron Ford's brilliant length-of-field effort for the second - what a player he would be to keep hold of for next season, whatever division Oldham find themselves in - and Onyango's tricky footwork which took him around three defenders on the left for the third was also hugely impressive.

By the time Geno Costin and the inspirational Rob Roberts had both crossed, the game was as good as over and the challenge was too stay solid in defence. Which, in fairness, the Roughyeds managed to do.

But while praise rightly came the way of Deakin's side for the way they went about their business, it is also understandable for fans to feel a little cautious ahead of today's game.

Oldham certainly have it within their abilities to go all the way to the Grand Final, but there is a real danger of looking at the challenge which lies one step ahead, rather than immediately in front.

Workington are certainly no mugs, as they showed in wiping the floor with York last week in a 42-4 win that surprised many. That was achieved even despite the fact they were a man down from the 28th minute after Shaun Lunt's dismissal.

* APPARENTLY, Leon Pryce is the latest player to have a bag full of cash waved in his face to encourage a sidestep to rugby union.

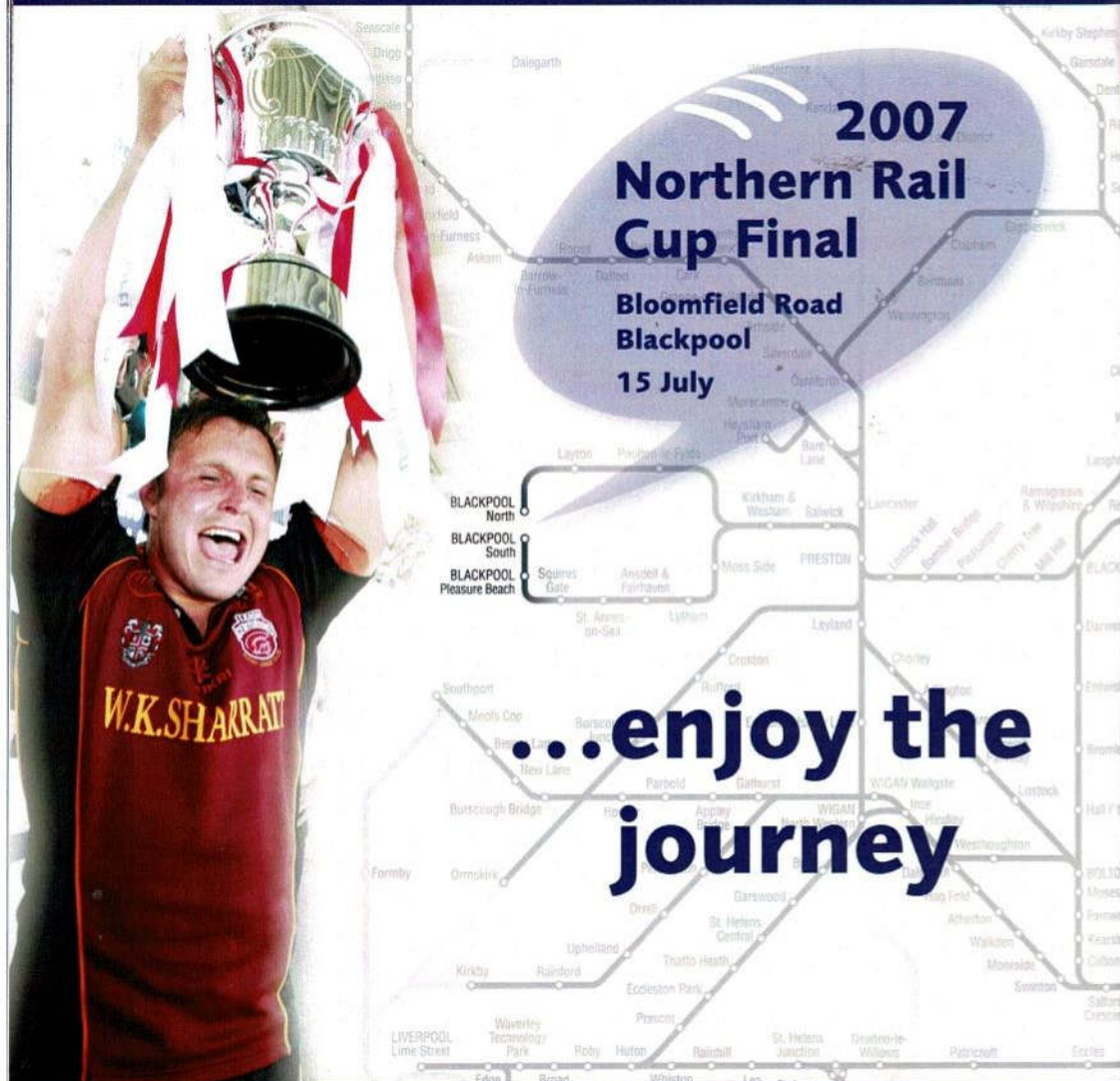
Should he make the switch, and bearing in mind the way that former league star Andy Farrell has been treated by some of the leading lights in the union community, Pryce will need those big shoulders of his to cope with the criticism that will inevitably come his way should he not set the world alight immediately.

This is a lad who can give it out as well as take it - witness the 'Blackpool or Bondi?' farrago in Australia last year.

But even the Aussies are pussycats compared to some of the anti-league commentators in the 15-a-side game...

Matthew

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players

statistics

[up to and including September 16th]

NAME	PLAYED	TRIES	GOALS	POINTS
P Ashton	11	3	27	66
C Baines	22	2		8
J Boults	25			
M Brooks	14	1		4
G Costin	22	7		28
J Coyle	11	4		16
A Crabtree	24	1		4
B Ford	7	12		48
I Gordon	5			
A Gorey	10	2		8
I Hodson	20	5		20
J Hough	2			
D Houston	25	6		24
S Hoyle	25	2		8
A Hughes	13	16	9	82
G Langley	27	10	27	94
C Littler	24	6		24
R Mervill	28	3		12
G Morton	7	4	29	74
P O'Connor	14	4		16
M Ogden	5	1	10	24
S Oldham	1			
L Onyango	20	17		68
R Roberts	9	5	1dg	21
A Robinson	10	3		12
N Roden	31	10	2dg	42
W Rogers	10			
L Sanderson	8	1	20	44
I Sinfield	21	2		8
K Smith	10	5		20
W Stevens	5		20	
M Stout	4	1		4
S Tamghart	26	4		16
T Tonks	17	3		12
A Wilkinson	27	12		48
L Wingfield	4	1		4

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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	18-32	L	4,327
05/09/07	Swinton Lions	NL2	Home	7.45pm	30-22	W	950
09/09/07	London Skolars	NL2	Home	3.00pm	28-26	W	918

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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Allow everyone to enjoy the game.

THE FINAL TABLE

TEAM	P	W	D	L	F	A	BP	PTS
Celtic Crusaders	22	19	0	3	918	345	3	60
Featherstone	22	18	0	4	819	366	2	56
Barrow	22	17	0	5	769	387	4	55
Oldham	22	16	0	6	661	420	5	53
Workington	22	12	0	10	655	515	7	43
York	22	10	0	12	488	470	6	36
Swinton	22	11	0	11	605	649	6	33
Hunslet	22	8	0	14	368	591	7	31
London Skolars	22	8	1	13	448	610	4	30
Keighley	22	6	1	15	407	692	4	24
Gateshead	22	6	0	16	381	822	3	21
Blackpool	22	0	0	22	332	984	6	6

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				Cushions	£5.00