

THE CO-OPERATIVE CHAMPIONSHIPS FINALS DAY 2009

HALLIWELL JONES STADIUM, WARRINGTON. SUNDAY 4 OCTOBER

THE CO-OPERATIVE
CHAMPIONSHIP GRAND FINAL

**BARROW RAIDERS
V HALIFAX RLFC**

KICK OFF 5.30PM

THE CO-OPERATIVE
CHAMPIONSHIP ONE PLAY-OFF FINAL

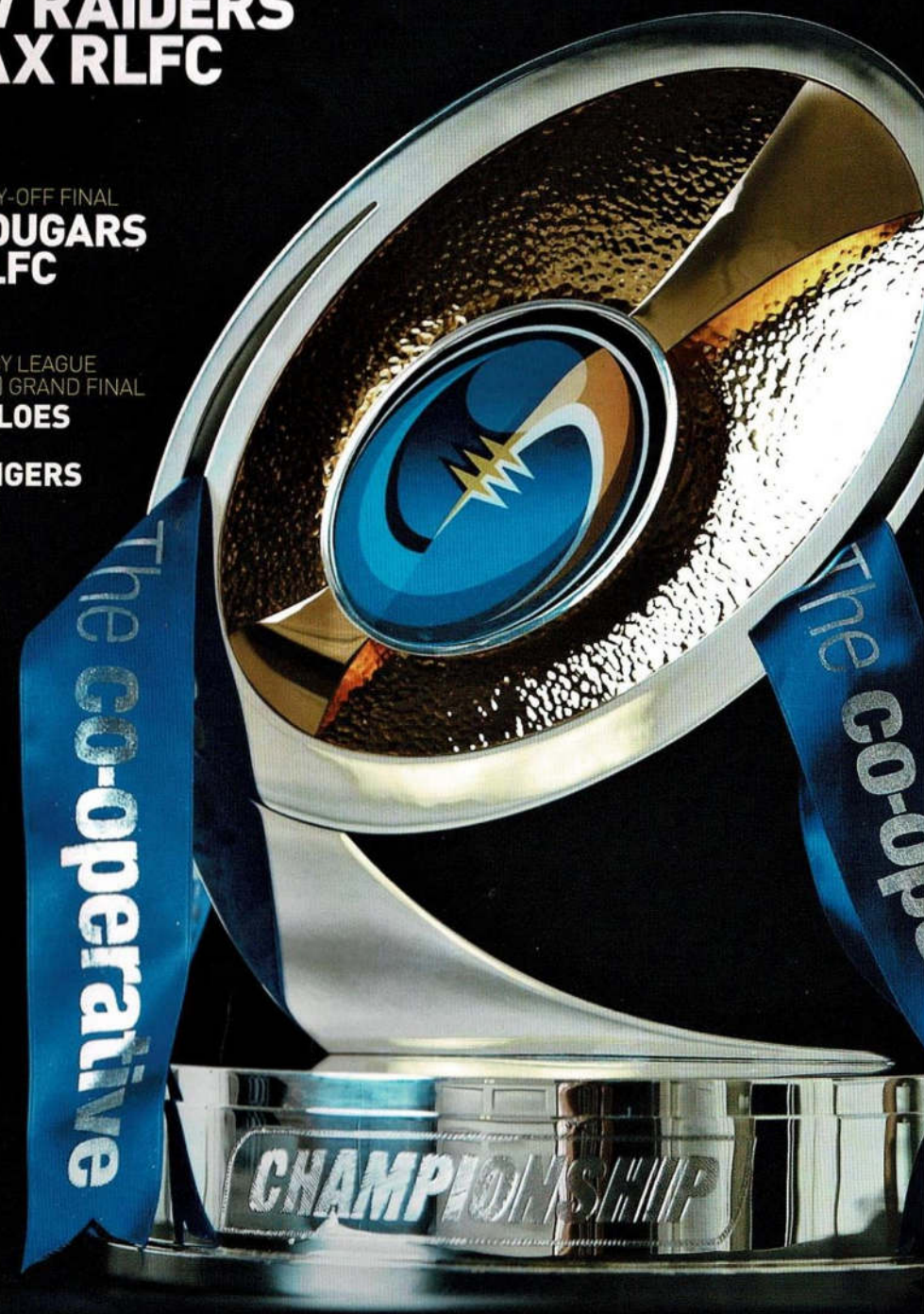
**KEIGHLEY COUGARS
V OLDHAM RLFC**

KICK OFF 3PM

THE CO-OPERATIVE RUGBY LEAGUE
CONFERENCE (NATIONAL) GRAND FINAL

**BRAMLEY BUFFALOES
V HUDDERSFIELD
UNDERBANK RANGERS**

KICK OFF 12.30PM



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and for the 2010 season



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WELCOME THE RFL

WELCOME

THE CO-OPERATIVE CHAMPIONSHIPS FINALS DAY 2009
THE HALLIWELL JONES STADIUM, WARRINGTON SUNDAY 4 OCTOBER 2009



“It gives me great pleasure to welcome everyone to The Halliwell Jones Stadium, Warrington, for The Co-operative Championships Finals Day.

With three games to look forward to we can expect some memorable action on a day which has become a major event in the Rugby League calendar.

The Co-operative Championships have enjoyed a wonderful season of firsts in 2009, a year which has seen the competitions successfully re-branded as well as the introduction of Toulouse Olympique into The Co-operative Championship One.

Indeed this year has been the most competitive and exciting ever with only seven points separating the top six teams in the final Co-operative Championship table and the race for top spot going right down to the last weekend. The intensity of the Co-operative Championship has been truly breathtaking with every match proving meaningful right up to the very last round of the competition.

This season's Co-operative Championship One competition has also provided superb entertainment and Dewsbury Rams must be congratulated on their remarkable achievement of winning all 18 of their league matches.

Another competition which continues to go from strength to strength is The Co-operative Rugby League Conference National and today we will see the climax of what has been a great summer for the 11-team division.

On behalf of the RFL I would like to thank title sponsors The Co-operative for their continued support and for the promotional work they do across all levels of the sport, for which we are very grateful.

A special thank you also to the competition's broadcast partners Sky Sports for their excellent coverage which continues to expose the Co-operative Championships to an ever increasing audience. More than 1 million people have watched coverage of The Co-operative Championships on Sky Sports this season and viewing figures for the televised Thursday night matches have increased by 17 per cent on 2008 which reflects the exceptional entertainment value of the competition this year.

To add further excitement to today's proceedings the prize-money on offer is the biggest ever with the winners of The Co-operative Championship Grand Final collecting £100,000 and the runners up receiving £30,000. The winners of The Co-operative Championship One Play-off Final will receive £20,000 while the runners up will get £10,000.

I would like to wish the six finalists the very best of luck today and I hope that all supporters present have a fantastic day. **”**

Richard Lewis
Chairman, RFL



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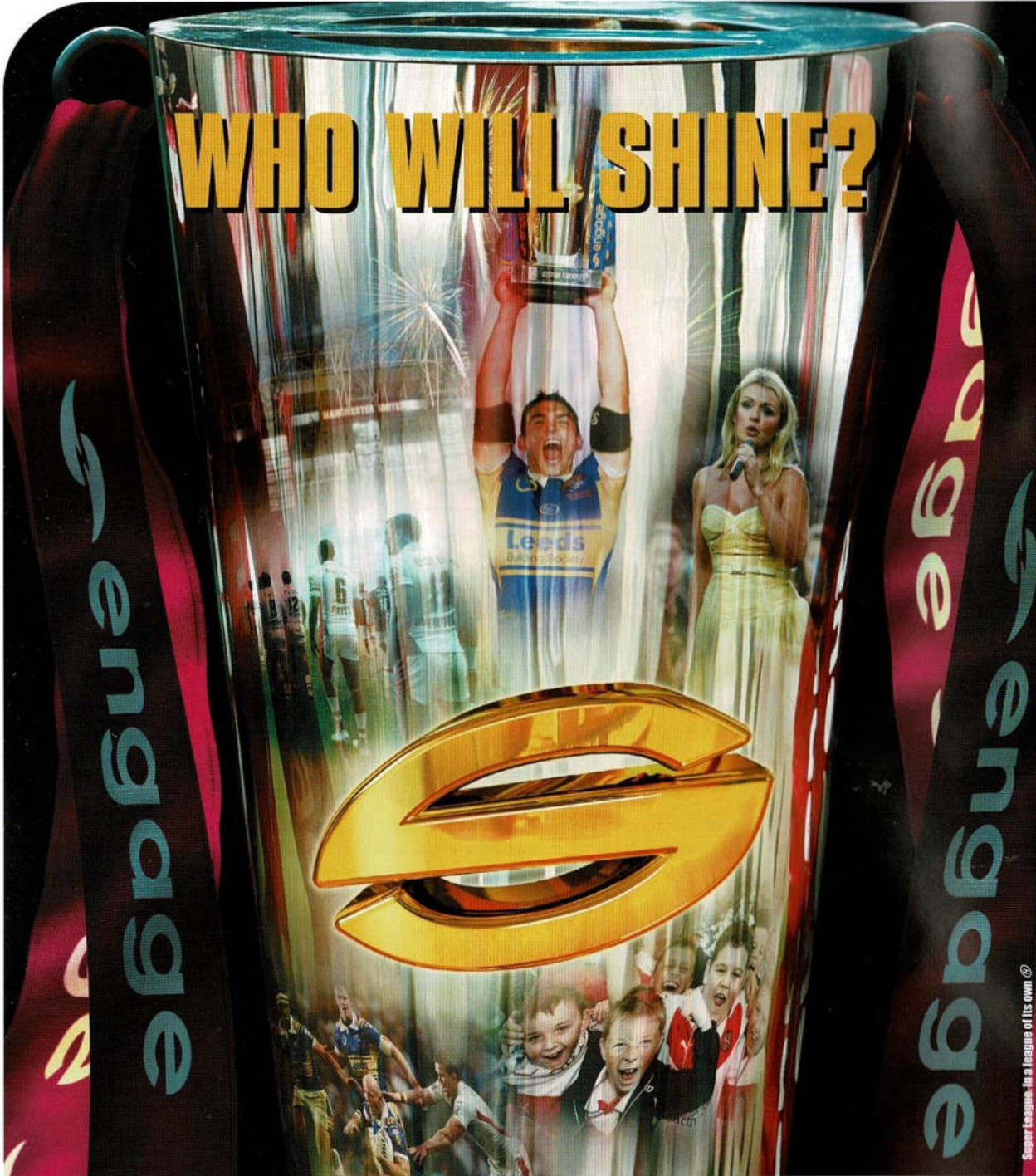
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WHO WILL SHINE?



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OFFICIAL NOTICES ANTI-RACISM POLICY

The RFL's 'Tackle It' policy states it will not tolerate racism of any kind and will take specific action against spectators who engage in racist chanting, abuse or intimidation. Rugby League is a great family sport and, with this in mind, action will also be taken against spectators who use foul and abusive language.

PLEASE KEEP OFF THE PITCH

The RFL requests that spectators do not venture onto the pitch during or after the game. Such action is against ground safety regulations and the RFL reserves the right to take any action against any person infringing these regulations.

MAN OF THE MATCH AWARDS

The Rugby League Writers' Association will select today's Man of the Match award for The Co-operative Championship Grand Final, and the winner will be presented with the Tom Bergin Trophy. The Co-operative Championship One Play-off Final Man of the Match will be awarded a commemorative trophy, while The Co-operative Rugby League Conference National Man of the Match will be awarded the David Oxley Trophy.

IN THE EVENT OF A DRAW

If, at the end of 80 minutes, the scores are tied, then the match will be decided on a 'Golden Point' basis with the winners being the first team to score. If that score is a try, then no conversion kick is necessary. In addition, any unused interchanges from normal time are carried over.



The RFL gratefully acknowledges the support of Sport England for many of the programmes currently being used to develop the sport's potential, both within its existing heartland and in wider areas. Sport England's ambition is to get 2m people doing more sport by 2012. It does this by investing in, advising and developing community sport; and by working with organisations such as the RFL to encourage more people to take part in both formal and informal sport. For more info visit: www.sportengland.org

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FOREWORD

THE CO-OPERATIVE CHAMPIONSHIPS FINALS DAY 2009



As we reach the end of our third season associated with Rugby League and as title sponsors of the newly formed Co-operative Championships, we are pleased to have been involved in what has been another thoroughly enjoyable Rugby League season.

“ This year we saw the launch of the newly titled Co-operative Championships. This, along with a new logo and a new identity has kept true to our forward thinking approach, driving the leagues forward into a new era, alongside our own rebrand.

We are proud to be part of a sport that is right at the heart of communities up and down the country and that mirrors the values of The Co-operative's family of businesses.

From the start of the season right up until the Grand Finals here today we have looked to build on the platform we have had in place over the previous two seasons. We have continued to support the clubs through our innovative membership scheme, strengthening our relationship with them and helping to bring our sport ever closer to the fans.

Via our proactive approach to our Rugby League sponsorship, and in addition to becoming an official RFL partner this season, we have been able to bring the trophy closer to fans than ever before, touring the country during the play-offs. In September we continued to innovate on behalf of the fans by creating a new Rugby League podcast that was available for all to download and keep up to date with all the action. In addition we also began our search this year for the rugby league 'Fan of the Year.' The response has been fantastic and great credit must go to all fans of Rugby League, not just the fan of the year, for their continuing support of the Co-operative Championships.

Running parallel to the new look leagues this year, we have continued to roll out the largest rebranding programme in the UK; further illustrating our commitment towards investment in the communities in which we operate.

The end of season finals look guaranteed to provide some fantastic Rugby League, and I would like to wish good luck to all the sides playing today. I am looking forward to a great day of sport and entertainment for all.”

Liz Matkin

Sponsorship Manager, The Co-operative Group

THE CO-OPERATIVE CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY-OFFS

The play-offs have been every bit as unpredictable as the regular season. Here's how they unfolded

QUALIFYING SEMI-FINAL

Thursday 17 September

BARROW RAIDERS 35

Tries Nixon 2, Ballard, Bracek, Catic
Goals Rooney 7 Drop-goal Rooney

HALIFAX RLFC 12

Tries Royston 2 Goals Patterson 2
Craven Park, Barrow. Attendance 1,931

They may have been Barrow's bogey team in the league this season, but when it came to the crunch and a place in the Co-operative Championship Grand Final was at stake, the Raiders beat Halifax in impressive style, to book their trip to Warrington.

Ill-discipline from the visitors gave Barrow their first breakthroughs, as a penalty from Jamie Rooney opened the scoring, and then another penalty offered the field position for Liam Harrison to find top scorer James Nixon out wide.

Neither side could make pressure pay for a while, but Rooney added a drop-goal to his impressive night with the boot, then Ballard crossed to put the Raiders 15-0 up at half-time. Halifax had their chances to reduce the arrears, but lacked the composure and handling to get on the score sheet until just after the hour Ben Black broke through to send Shad Royston between the posts for a six-pointer.

Rooney was still

bossing the game, however, and he restored a three-score lead when his run helped Ned Catic bag another converted try.

Nixon's run set up Bracek soon after to put the result beyond doubt, and after another Rooney penalty was converted the winger accepted Catic's pass for his second try of the game and 31st of the season.

Another late Royston try got the visitors into double figures but the Cumbrian fans were already celebrating by then. And after a performance like this they will feel confident of glory today.

Halifax, meanwhile, would have a second chance to make the Grand Final when they met the winners of the Elimination semi-final. An improved performance would surely be essential.

"AFTER A WIN LIKE THIS, THE CUMBRIAN FANS WILL FEEL CONFIDENT OF GLORY TODAY"



FINAL TABLE THE CO-OPERATIVE CHAMPIONSHIP

TEAM	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	Diff	Pts
BARROW	20	13	0	7	632	361	271	44
HALIFAX	20	13	0	7	714	476	238	43
SHEFFIELD	20	11	0	9	635	447	188	42
WIDNES	20	11	0	9	649	438	211	39
WHITEHAVEN	20	12	0	8	565	567	-2	39
FEATHERSTONE	20	12	0	8	619	524	95	37
GATESHEAD	20	9	2	9	610	657	-47	32
BATLEY	20	8	2	10	536	620	-84	32
LEIGH	20	9	0	11	426	572	-146	32
TOULOUSE	20	9	0	11	556	582	-26	30
DONCASTER	20	1	0	19	257	955	-698	-1

PLAY-OFFS THE CO-OPERATIVE CHAMPIONSHIP

ELIMINATION PLAY-OFF 1

Thursday 10 September, The Stobart Stadium Attendance 2,375

WIDNES 26

Tries Hartley 2, Grady, Thackeray, Webster,
Goals Hartley 3

WHITEHAVEN 21

Tries Jackson, Joe, Amor
Goals Rudd 4
Drop-goal Rudd

We could hardly have asked for a more thrilling contest to kick off this year's play-off series, as 2007 Grand Finalists and Northern Rail Cup winners Widnes were given an almighty shock by Whitehaven at the Stobart Stadium.

Tries from Leroy Joe then Rob Jackson and Kyle Amor gave them an 18-4 first half lead, and only a tight video ref call denied them a further score.

But Widnes hit back before half-time through Tim Hartley, and early second half pressure saw Hartley crossing again, then Anthony Thackeray's

solo try was converted to edge the Vikings in front.

Yet Haven weren't finished, and a penalty and drop-goal from Rudd restored their lead with nine minutes left.

Widnes chose to gamble, and it paid off as they regained possession from a short kick-off and worked the ball to James Webster for the match-winning try.



ELIMINATION PLAY-OFF SEMI-FINAL

Friday 18 September, The Stobart Stadium Attendance 3,296

WIDNES 24

Tries Dodd, Thackeray, Grady, Varkulis
Goals Smith 4

FEATHERSTONE 32

Tries Kain, Briggs, Pryce, Lee, Harris
Goals Harris 6

In a match of wildly swinging fortunes, 16 points from Iestyn Harris was to prove the difference and take Rovers to within 80 minutes of a Grand Final appearance.

The home side got off to the perfect start with tries by Gavin Dodd and Anthony Thackeray both converted by Tim Hartley. But Featherstone seized on errors by the Vikings with both Andy Kain and Kyle Briggs touching down.

Harris converted both and added a penalty just before half time to nudge them ahead. After the interval, a 90-metre interception

try from Wayne Pryce and a short range effort from Jack Lee, both goaled by Harris, made it 26-12 and Rovers looked to be on their way. But the Vikings came storming back with converted tries from Shane Grady and Richard Varkulis. Yet Harris wasn't finished, and late on he converted his own try for a famous victory.



ELIMINATION PLAY-OFF 2

Friday 11 September, Don Valley Stadium Attendance 802

SHEFFIELD 8

Try Mills
Goals Woodcock 2

FEATHERSTONE 32

Tries Saxton, Haughey 2, Briggs, Lee, Spears
Goals Dickens, Harris 3

Sporting wisdom has it that some games are decided simply by which team wants it more.

It seemed that Rovers fitted into that category as they came storming out of the traps at their South Yorkshire

hosts, tackling ferociously and denying the Eagles any chance to take flight.

A first Featherstone try seemed inevitable, and once ahead through Briggs they kept the home side pinned in their own half and went three scores clear with a Spears try and Iestyn Harris's penalty. A melee then led to red cards



for Ryan Hepworth and Ian Hardman, and Harris made the most of the extra space early in the second half by kicking over the top for Dale to put Saxton over. Sheffield launched a mini-comeback with Mills's try and a spell of good pressure, but three well worked tries late on for the visitors sealed a fine victory.

FINAL ELIMINATOR

Thursday 24 September, The Shay, Halifax Attendance 2,556

HALIFAX 36

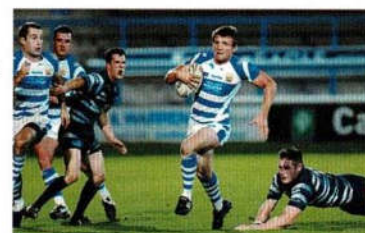
Tries Larder 2, Black, Beswick, Smith, Royston
Goals Paterson 6

FEATHERSTONE 30

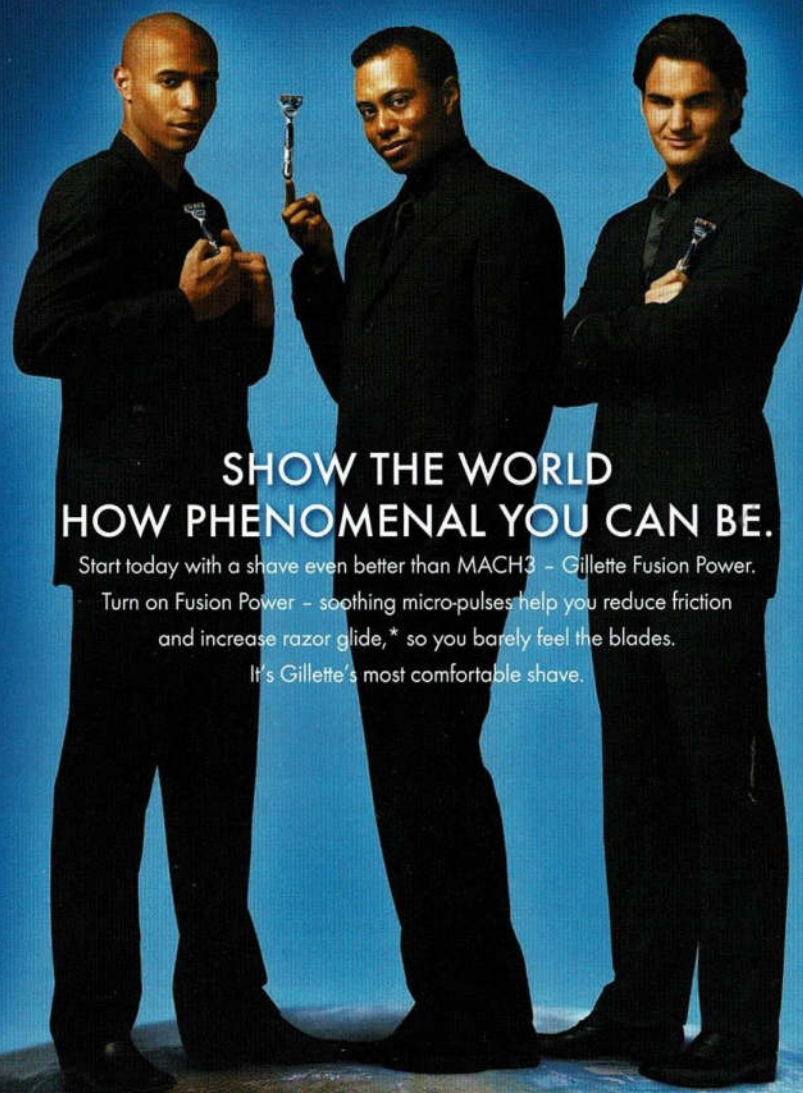
Tries Briggs, Hardman, Divority, Spears
Goals Harris 7

A riveting contest in which the lead changed hands five times hung in the balance until the final whistle.

The goalkicking was immaculate, with Lee Paterson converting each of Fax's six touchdowns and Iestyn Harris keeping Rovers in it with four conversions and three penalties. Featherstone raced into a 16-6 lead midway through the first half with tries from Kyle Briggs and Ian Hardman plus a couple of Harris penalties. Yet by half-time the home side were ahead, as touchdowns by Mick Govin,



Ben Black and Bob Beswick, added to an earlier score from Dave Larder. Rovers twice drew level through the boot of Harris and a try from Ross Divority despite Larder grabbing his second. When Paul Smith and Shad Royston crossed it looked all over for Rovers but a try by Tim Spears kept their hopes alive until time finally ran out.



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**“WE’VE
DONE WELL
SO FAR-
NOW WE
WANT
TO WIN
TROPHIES”**

Barrow's coach **Dave Clark** has
overseen a momentous year for
the club – and he's hoping for a
happy ending to the season today

Words Johnny Sharp

■ **What would it mean to the club and
to you to win today's Grand Final?**

It would be a fantastic achievement.
We've achieved a lot already in finishing
top of the league, and to reach a second
final of the year is testament to the
efforts the players and the chairman Des
Johnston have put into this club.

■ **What were your realistic
expectations when the season began?**

I don't think anyone at the club, or the
fans, knew quite what to expect this year
– we'd just got promoted so our first
priority was just to do as well as possible
at this higher level. Des Johnston came
along and put a lot of time and money
into the club and bought some good
players in, so now our ambitions are
growing all the time. What we've done
so far is fantastic but we now want to
take it to the next level and actually win
some silverware.

■ **It's been an unusual year for you –
Steve Deakin was appointed above you
in July, and then he parted company
with the club a few weeks later...**

Yes, Des brought some new players in
and Steve as well, and I think the club
needed that. I'm still learning as a coach
and I need to be mentored a bit to learn
a bit more about the technical side of the
game. I learned a lot from Steve and it's
improved me as a coach so I think it's
worked out well for the club and for me.

■ **This is an ambitious
club – will there
be more changes
next year?**

I'd hope there would
be a certain amount
of stability – these
players have got us
to where we are. That
said, the new coach

**“THE PLAYERS
HAVE ONE
OPPORTUNITY.
THE TRICK IS
TO PLAY OUR
NORMAL GAME”**

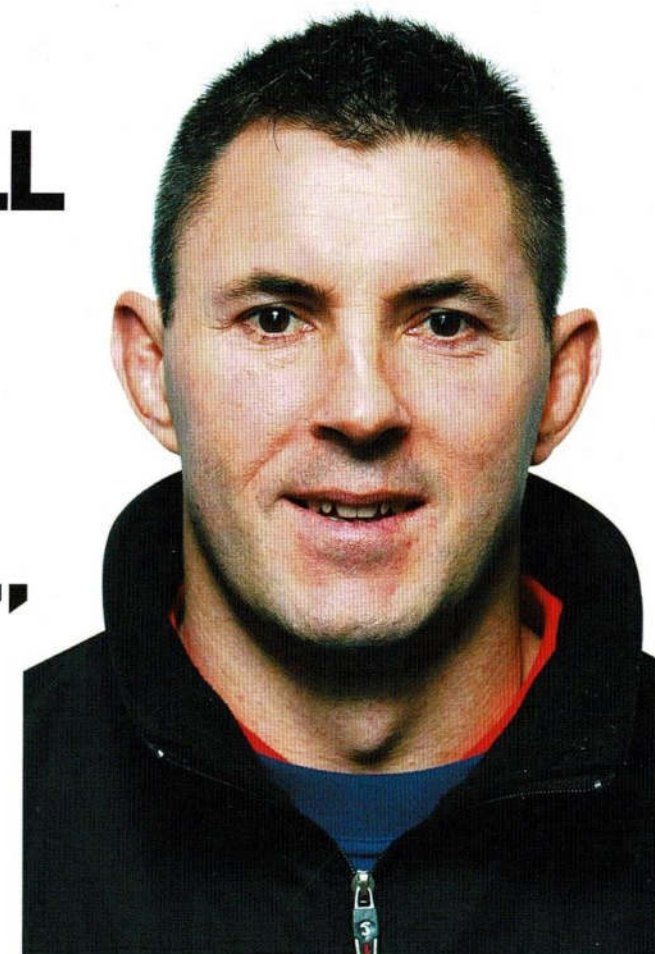
who comes in will want to do things
his way, and there's also the challenge
of other clubs being interested in our
players. Des is working hard to keep
them here and continue our progress.

■ **You have come into form at the right
time – is that a tough trick to pull off?**

In play-off football you see players go
the extra mile. But that can go for and
against you. They know they've got one
opportunity to perform. But the trick is
to play your normal game and not be too
psyched up for it.

■ **Will the experience of
playing in the Northern
Rail Cup Final help you?**

I think everyone learns a
lot from big games. I think
we know a few areas where
we'll do things differently,
and hopefully we'll go one
better this time. ■



Q&A

"WE'RE GOING TO DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO GET IT RIGHT THIS TIME"

Barrow's wing wonder **James Nixon** has had quite a year - 31 tries, a new baby, and now a second major final appearance. Can he make it even better today?

Words Johnny Sharp

■ **What does it mean to reach the Grand Final?**

It's a big achievement for any player to play in any sort of Grand Final. It's going to be a huge occasion for everyone.

■ **As a Barrow-born lad, have you noticed the increased interest in the Raiders recently?**

Yeah, the interest has definitely picked up over the last three seasons since Des (Johnston, chairman) has come in and brought high quality players to the club. This year everyone's talking about what we've achieved so far, topping the league and reaching the Northern Rail final. I think it was beyond anyone's expectations if we're honest.

■ **You've been with the club since you were a teenager - how have things changed in that time?**

I think this is my seventh season and the club has massively changed since then. In my first season we got promoted but we had a nightmare the year after. We struggled and went down again. But then Des came in and he's taken us in the right direction.

■ **Was it difficult dealing with the coming and going of Steve Deakin?**

Yeah definitely. Dave Clark had a brilliant start to the season - we won nine out

of 10 or something then we lost our momentum. The players should have held their hands up more - we have to take the blame ultimately, but as it was, Steve came in and got us back on track. I think Dave learned a lot from what Steve did even in the four weeks he was there, and since then we've been in really good form and we're now in the Grand Final.

■ **Will the experience of the Northern Rail Cup Final stand you in good stead?**

It can only be benefit for any player to know how it feels to lose a game like that! We're going to do everything we can to get it right this time.

■ **You must have been pleased to make the Championship All-star team...**

Yeah, especially considering it was in my first season in the Championship after a couple of seasons in the lower level. I



wasn't expecting to make it into any all-star team let alone score 31 tries.

■ **Did you have any bets on about yourself being top try scorer?**

No, but I wish I had now! I thought I'd be looking to get up around maybe 15-20 so to get 31 was unbelievable.

■ **You were recently set to take part in the 'Rugby League's fastest man' race - why did you have to pull out?**

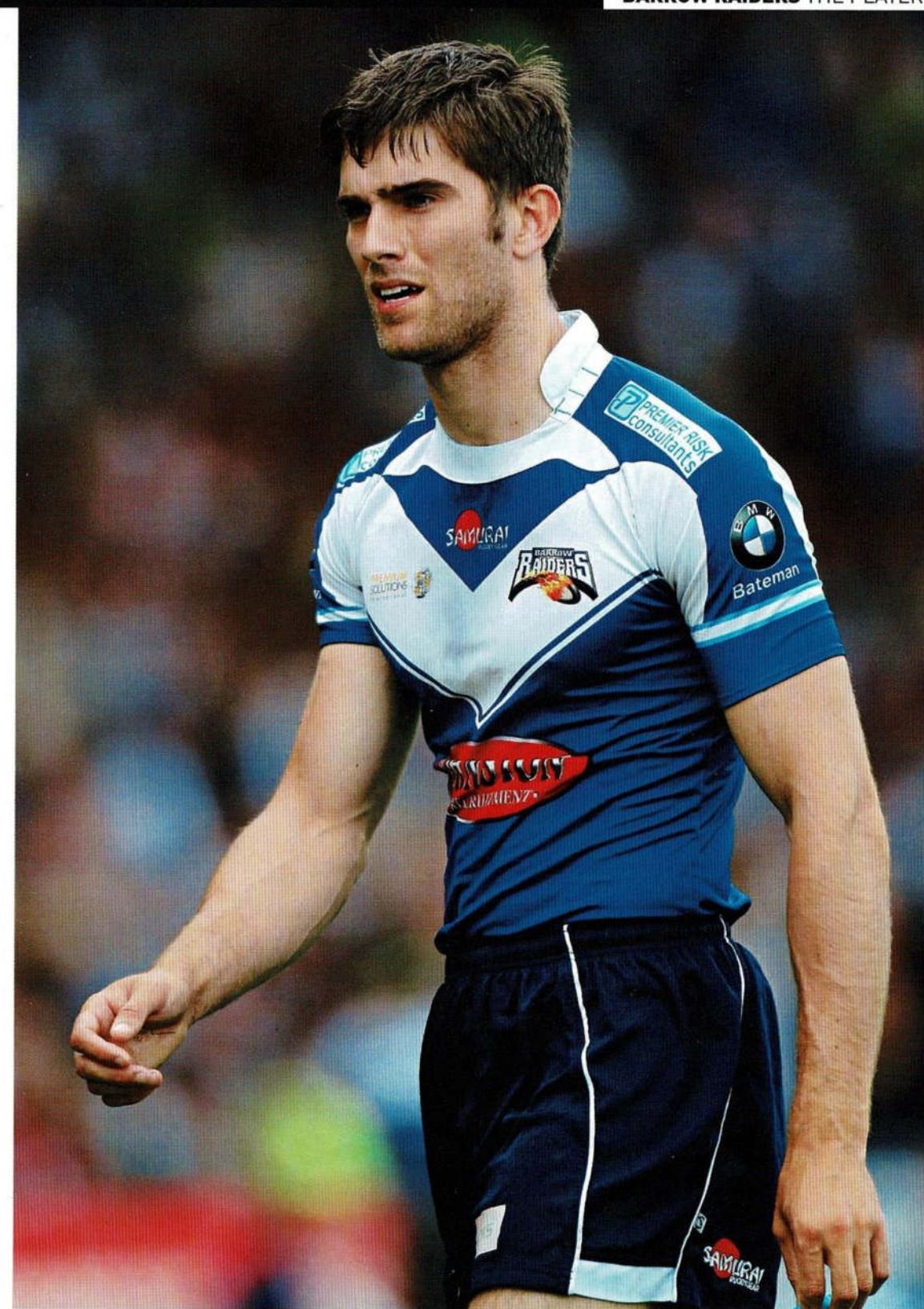
My son was born on the Tuesday before so I couldn't go - I wasn't going to miss that for anything!

■ **Fair enough, congratulations! The race winner won in 11.1 seconds, so do you think you could have matched that?**

It was over 90 metres, and I can do 100 in just under 12 so maybe it would have been close. I'd like to think I'd have been in contention though.

■ **Barrow have Super League ambitions - do you feel you could compete at that level?**

I'd like to think so. Every player wants to play at the peak of the game. I was given the opportunity with Harlequins last year but I turned them down. I'd love to play for my hometown team in probably the best league in the world. But there's a long way to go yet! ■



OPEN DAYS

Saturday 24 October &
Sunday 25 October 2009



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"IT'S A DREAM COME TRUE TO BE IN THIS FINAL"

Having felt the pressure after Halifax's up and down season, coach **Matt Calland** is now ready to enjoy the Grand Final



Words Johnny Sharp

■ **After an up and down season, you've come up trumps when it mattered - do you feel vindicated?**

We're over the moon to be in the final. And I feel as though a lead weight has been lifted off my shoulders. We hadn't been playing well but the enthusiasm and effort of the players saw us through.

■ **That was quite some semi-final match - how did you see it?**

Our execution and our shape wasn't always the best but we made up for it in other areas. We just turned it on at the right time. Featherstone were the better team in the first half but after that our defence was second to none.

■ **Does a win like this give you extra momentum for the final?**

It's a good platform, but there's still improvement to be made. We've had a

full week to enjoy the build up and now we can't wait for the final - it's a dream come true.

■ **Why do you think you faltered after such a good start this season?**

We played so well in the first part of the season, but after we lost to Featherstone - they came back from 18-0 down to win 22-20 at our place - a bit of doubt crept in. Also I think teams were gunning for us because we were the top team. If you're a little bit off in this league, it's so competitive that you'll get punished.

But one thing I love about this team is that they never give up, and they can score tries from nothing. And that ultimately helped us turn things around.

■ **You were on the losing side in two Challenge Cup Finals. Is this a chance to taste victory in a major final?**

Yes, and it is for the club too. I think it was 1990 when they were last in a big final. And I've told the players from experience - there's no worse feeling than losing a game like this. Get your hands on those winners' medals!

■ **This is clearly a club with ambition - how close do you think you are to having the team and squad you want?**

We've got a really strong side now, we've ticked a box for a Super League licence, the new stand is happening at the stadium, we just need to get more fans in. Hopefully being in a big final will keep the crowds growing. ■

"IT'S A HUGE WEIGHT OFF MY SHOULDERS"

Q&A

"WE'RE AFTER PAYBACK - IT'S GOING TO BE INTENSE"

Halifax's Australian half-back **Ben Black** has been a pivotal figure in their season once again. Reaching today's final is one goal achieved. The second is to win it.

Words: Johnny Sharp

■ **That was a pretty thrilling semi-final against Featherstone. Have you recovered yet?**

Yeah, just about! You could tell it was a semi-final game – 100 times faster, really exciting stuff, and the fact it's sudden death and you have this one chance means you're really going for it. But that's what you live for – to play in the most intense games like that.

■ **So what does this mean for you to reach this final?**

It's a dream come true – I've only been in one Grand Final before and it's great to be in one with Halifax because it's become my second home. I love this club and they've looked after me really well. It's been great for the club and the fans really deserve it.

■ **You lost to Barrow a couple of weeks ago – how will you turn round that advantage?**

I think a Grand Final is a different ball game. When I look back on this season we played them a few times and it was always close. But they were different games



– they fully deserved to beat us at their place in the qualifier, but we'll be so up for this one and we're after payback. It's going to be another intense one.

■ **Is there an advantage of not having the extra week off?**

Yeah it can work both ways. The game last week kept us in shape and I think it's kept our thoughts together if we'd had a few days off to do our own thing we might have taken our minds off it, this has kept our fitness up. But they'll be so up for it too, especially having just missed out in the Northern Rail Cup.

■ **It's been a good season – has there been a renewed interest in the town?**

Yeah, just to see the amount of people wearing Halifax shirts in town is just phenomenal. Everyone's so proud and I think they've sold a record amount of shirts. We haven't been in a final for 19 years or something. This morning I went for a walk and everyone was cheering – there's a buzz about the place.

■ **How has Matt Calland been for you as a coach? An arm-round-the-shoulder type or a fierce task master?**

He's been a bit of both. We've had our ups and downs but he's really pulled us together in the last couple of weeks. He gets a lot of flak when we lose but he's taken us to a Grand Final – you can't argue with that. He's an awesome coach, very smart and it's showing now.

■ **You've had interest from other clubs in recent years – have you had difficult choices to make?**

No, it's always flattering but I think I'll finish my career here. The club is like a second family for me now, and I've got a lot of good friends round here. I came to England a few years ago and it's good to travel and be able to do what you love doing at the same time. Also, I have a new girlfriend over here and she's helped me out a lot, so I really couldn't be happier at the moment.

■ **Do people at the club often talk about Halifax's Super League ambitions?**

Yeah it's always in the back of our minds, but your first priority is to be part of big games like this. We had two goals this season – the first was to reach the Grand final and the second was to win it. The fact that it's given us an extra chance to get into Super League is a bonus. ■



ONES TO WATCH BARROW

Barrow's tough, experienced forward **Ned Catic** spotlights five of his team-mates who he hopes will make an impact in today's Co-operative Championship Grand Final



“It's been a great year for us as a club, and I'm enjoying my footy up here. It's a great town, and the fans are 100 per cent behind us. They know their Rugby League and get out there in numbers to support us.

You're only as good as your last game but I've been satisfied with the way I've been playing. At 31 I'm still making my fair share of breaks and scoring my fair share of tries so I'm pretty happy about that. I was gutted having missed the Northern Rail Cup Final, we were without a few players that day and Widnes punished us, so it's great for me to have a chance to put that right by winning this final.”



GARY BROADBENT
FULL-BACK

“Gary's as safe as houses at the back - not much gets past him. He makes his tackles and doesn't make any mistakes. His attack has improved tenfold recently and that's probably been his main asset over the last couple of months. He's probably our most improved player which just goes to show that at 32 you can still improve your game.”



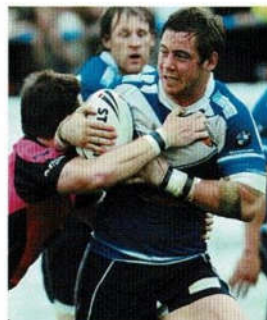
JAMIE ROONEY
STAND-OFF

“He's got all the attributes. Jamie's got a great kicking game, he takes the line on and can pass. I played with him when I was at Wakefield and knew the calibre of player he was and talked to Des (Johnston, chairman) about bringing him over. We'd needed that bit of spark at the time and he brought that.”



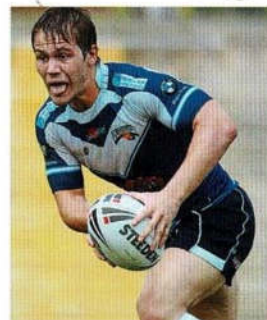
ZEB LUISI
LOOSE FORWARD

“A really good strike weapon for us, especially in attack. A lot comes off the back of what Zeb does, he plays like a third pivot for us. He's got great feet, neat passing and he is another player with all the attributes. We'll be expecting a lot from him in this game, only because we know how good he is.”



ANDY BRACEK
PROP

“He's another of our squad who has Super League experience and he's playing some great footy at the moment. Andy's doing a lot of hard work for the team and taking a lot of hit ups which grind down the opposition, but he's also got good feet for a front rower and is really important up front for us.”



ANDY ELLIS
HOOKER

“He's always crucial for us in that he controls things around the ruck. Andy's got a great running game, a really neat passing game and he can show and go like the best of them. We rely on him, he's the main man for us in the forwards, so if he has a good game then chances are the whole team will.”

ONES TO WATCH HALIFAX



BEN BLACK
SCRUM-HALF

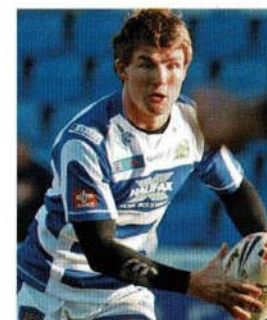
“One of those players who can make something out of nothing. He's got great speed off the mark, and an eye for a gap, as he demonstrated against Featherstone. He's elusive too, and gets his fair share of tries. This is his second stint with us after going back to Australia for a while, and he's been a real asset to the team.”

Halifax's all action skipper **Sean Penkywicz** gives us his verdict on the season, and introduces some of his team-mates who could prove key performers for them today.



“This year's gone OK for me personally, although like all the lads it was frustrating to have the team on fire at the beginning of the year and then we had a real dip in the last month or two of the season. You can't play at

the same level all the time, and it was a shame the dip in form came at the end and cost us top spot. A few players didn't perform so well and it had an effect, but we've managed to turn it around and get to the Final, so I'm made up about that. But we feel back to our best now and we feel we can kick on from beating Featherstone. Although Barrow are obviously a very strong side, I think we've got a really good chance of winning the Grand Final.”



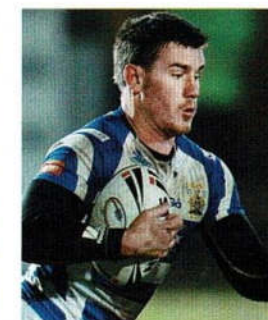
MARK GLEESON
HOOKER

“There's no-one better at taking the line on and taking advantage of any gaps at the play the ball. He's also very strong in defence and tackles very well for a small guy. As a person he's a good lad but sometimes you think he's not all there! He's a bit absent minded, but when it comes to rugby he's spot on.”



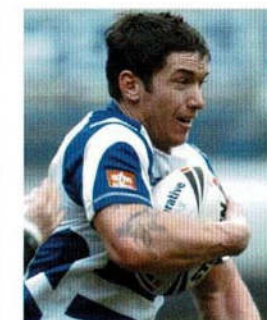
SAID TAMGHART
PROP

“A tough nut - the man for the big hits. You give him the ball and he does the business. He never takes a backwards step and the same is true of his defence - he doesn't do anything by halves. “He's a funny bloke, but being French he's got terrible dress sense - everything's got to be tight, even his jeans.”



SHAD ROYSTON
CENTRE/FULL-BACK

“A great man to have as last line of defence, and his try scoring has also been phenomenal - he's got nearly 30 this season. His positional play is great too - he's always there backing up. Not many can catch high balls like him, either. Off the field, he's a top bloke - a laid-back Aussie who will do anything for you.”



LEE PATERSON
UTILITY BACK

“Usually plays as centre or on the wing and he can be relied upon to just get it forward. He's also good under the high ball in defence. His kicking is a real asset though - when you score a try he can knock them over from anywhere. Off the field, though, he's a pretty boy - always takes longest in the shower!”

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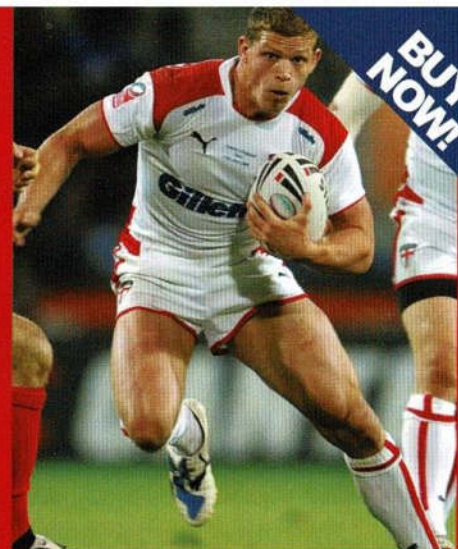
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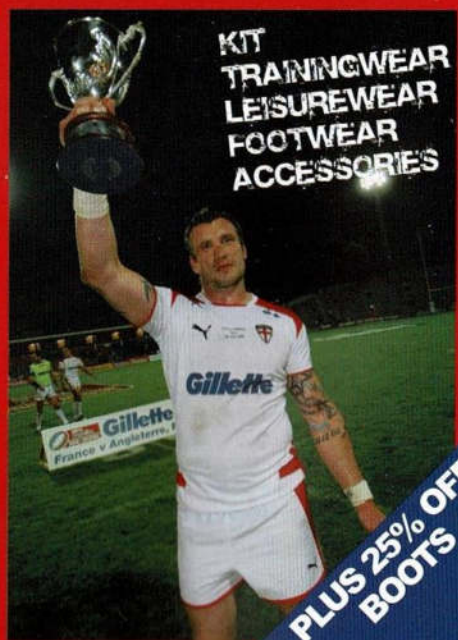
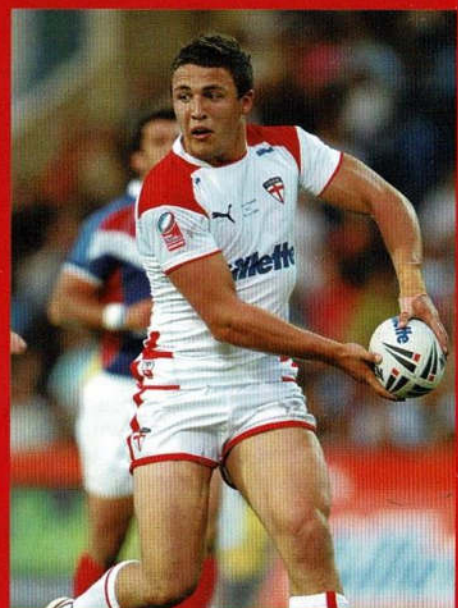
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THE RESULTS HOW THEY GOT THERE

ROAD TO THE FINAL

Today's two finalists have battled it out at the top of The Co-operative Championship all year. Here's how they sealed their passage to Warrington



BARROW RAIDERS



DATE	OPPOSITION	SCORE
14 MARCH	DONCASTER (H)	34-14
22 MARCH	GATESHEAD THUNDER (A)	38-14
28 MARCH	HALIFAX RLFC (H)	24-26
10 APRIL	WHITEHAVEN (H)	18-12
13 APRIL	LEIGH CENTURIONS (A)	25-16
25 APRIL	BATLEY BULLDOGS (H)	52-0
1 MAY	WIDNES VIKINGS (A)	27-6
16 MAY	TOULOUSE OLYMPIQUE (A)	14-22
24 MAY	FEATHERSTONE ROVERS (H)	44-12
30 MAY	SHEFFIELD EAGLES (H)	26-18
14 JUNE	HALIFAX RLFC (A)	30-24
28 JUNE	BATLEY BULLDOGS (A)	46-16
2 JULY	TOULOUSE OLYMPIQUE (H)	30-22
16 JULY	WHITEHAVEN (A)	28-4
25 JULY	LEIGH CENTURIONS (H)	74-6
9 AUGUST	DONCASTER (A)	64-0
13 AUGUST	WIDNES VIKINGS (H)	38-16
23 AUGUST	FEATHERSTONE ROVERS (A)	46-28
31 AUGUST	GATESHEAD THUNDER (H)	12-16
3 SEPTEMBER	SHEFFIELD EAGLES (A)	22-29

QUALIFYING SEMI-FINAL

17 SEPTEMBER	HALIFAX RLFC (H)	35-12
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HALIFAX RLFC



DATE	OPPOSITION	SCORE
19 MARCH	WIDNES VIKINGS (H)	24-14
28 MARCH	BARROW RAIDERS (A)	26-24
9 APRIL	BATLEY BULLDOGS (H)	72-0
13 APRIL	WHITEHAVEN (A)	24-18
19 APRIL	DONCASTER (H)	44-12
26 APRIL	GATESHEAD THUNDER (H)	72-28
30 APRIL	FEATHERSTONE ROVERS (A)	39-26
17 MAY	SHEFFIELD EAGLES (H)	26-40
21 MAY	DONCASTER (A)	36-4
14 JUNE	BARROW RAIDERS (H)	30-24
28 JUNE	GATESHEAD THUNDER (A)	28-34
3 JULY	LEIGH CENTURIONS (H)	48-16
18 JULY	TOULOUSE OLYMPIQUE (A)	54-16
24 JULY	FEATHERSTONE ROVERS (H)	20-22
31 JULY	WIDNES VIKINGS (A)	16-42
9 AUGUST	WHITEHAVEN (H)	42-50
13 AUGUST	SHEFFIELD EAGLES (A)	24-38
20 AUGUST	BATLEY BULLDOGS (A)	28-32
31 AUGUST	LEIGH CENTURIONS (A)	27-18
5 SEPTEMBER	TOULOUSE OLYMPIQUE (H)	34-18

QUALIFYING SEMI-FINAL

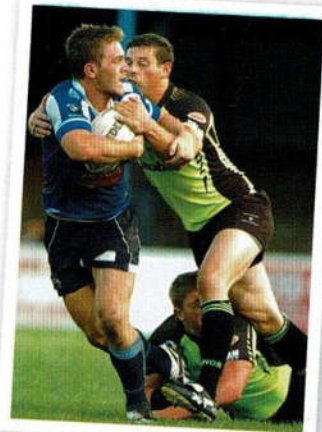
17 SEPTEMBER	BARROW RAIDERS (A)	12-35
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FINAL ELIMINATOR

24 SEPTEMBER	FEATHERSTONE ROVERS (H)	36-30
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THE CO-OPERATIVE CHAMPIONSHIP REVIEW OF THE SEASON

The newly rebranded Championship delivered the most fiercely competitive season ever, with half a dozen sides battling for supremacy. We enjoyed every second of it



MARCH/APRIL

The inaugural year of the Co-operative Championship made it very clear that the newly re-branded competition had a new and improved intensity about it. Ironically, though, the first game was anything but an even contest. New boys Toulouse endured a 70-0 baptism of fire at the Stobart Stadium. Yet it was a timely reminder of the standard expected, and one which they clearly took notice of.

The surprise package of the campaign were newly promoted Barrow, who won six of their first seven games, defeated only by Halifax, who were shaping up as the pacesetters with a 100 per cent record. Fax ended April in front of the Sky Sports cameras with a defeat of Iestyn Harris's Featherstone who had also won five from six.

Despite being among the pre-season favourites for the title, Widnes Vikings were rebuilding in the wake of Paul Cullen's introduction as coach at the start of the season. Losses to Halifax and

Leigh left them playing catch-up with the front-runners.

Meanwhile, Toulouse showed that they had learned from their mistakes, and soon they were the ones dishing out hidings, against Batley, Leigh and Doncaster in successive weeks.

The other two promoted sides, Gateshead and Doncaster, only managed a single win during the opening weeks, and the same went for Batley and Sheffield. But crucially, the Eagles gained bonus points in each of their defeats due to losses of less than 12 points.



MAY/JUNE

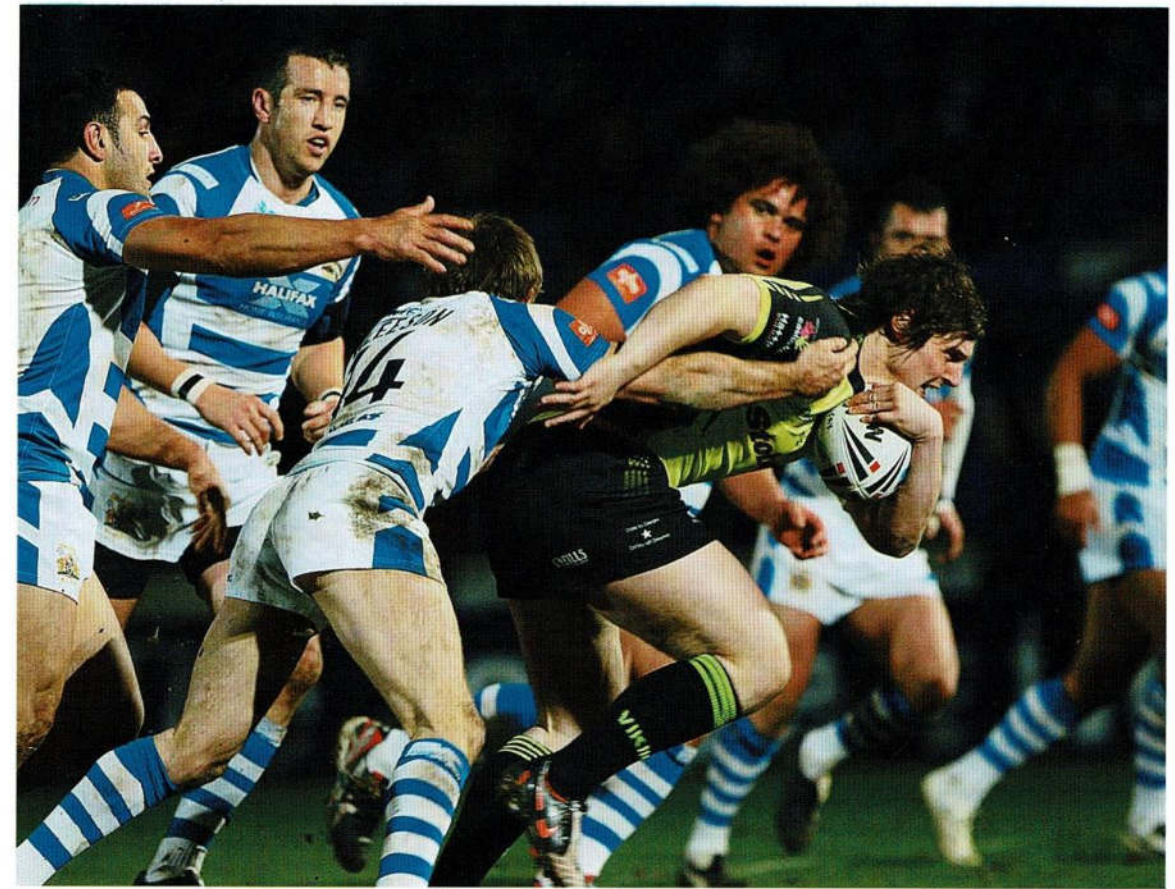
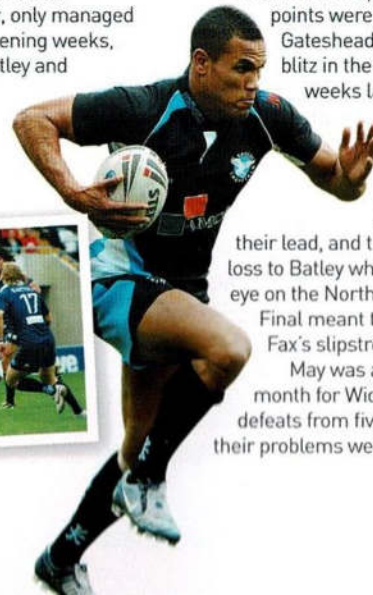
Halifax's winning streak had to end sooner or later, and it may have been no coincidence that their first defeat came a week after they had taken Castleford to extra time in the Carnegie Challenge Cup. Sheffield won at The Shay to hand

Barrow the top spot, and more points were dropped after Gateshead's first-half try blitz in the North East a few weeks later. However,

a win over Barrow inbetween those two lapses restored

their lead, and the Cumbrians' loss to Batley while they had one eye on the Northern Rail Cup Final meant they stayed in Fax's slipstream.

May was a miserable month for Widnes, with four defeats from five games, but their problems were nothing



compared to those of Doncaster, still with only one win all season, and with financial difficulties meaning administration and a points deduction.

Heading in the other direction, meanwhile, were Toulouse, who had gone on a run of seven wins in eight games, and Sheffield, who beat the Frenchmen as well as Halifax and Whitehaven to make up for their poor early season form.

Leigh also received a boost, as their old coach and former St Helens boss Ian Millward announced he would be rejoining them next year. For now, though, they faced a relegation battle.

JULY/AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

Five straight defeats during the closing weeks of the season put paid to Halifax's once formidable looking charge at the top of the table, but they weren't the only big names to falter late on.

Widnes suffered a hangover at

Gateshead after their Northern Rail Cup win in July, and then fell to a Jamie Rooney-inspired Barrow in their penultimate game to dash any hopes of topping the table.

Creeping up behind them almost unnoticed were Sheffield, who were unspectacular but highly effective in winning 10 of their last 13 games to eventually seal third place in the table.

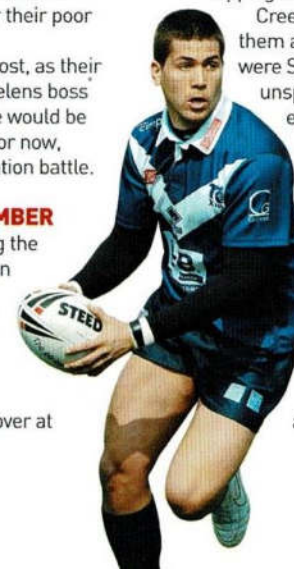
But it was Barrow who ended the season on top. After losing to Whitehaven in the Cumbrian derby at the beginning of July (with Haven and their fans all in pink in aid of a cancer charity -

"FIVE STRAIGHT WINS SECURED THE TOP SPOT FOR BARROW"

see picture, left), five straight wins saw them home, despite defeats in their final two games and the shock dismissal of coach Steve Deakin in August.

An even tighter battle was taking place to sort out relegation issues. Doncaster were long gone, but with a fading Toulouse exempt from relegation during their first year in the competition, there were three teams level on points going into the final games. Gateshead's 56-0 win at Doncaster guaranteed their safety, and Leigh excelled in a 47-14 home win over Whitehaven. At 14-0 down at half-time against Featherstone, it looked as if Batley would be the fall guys in this story. However, they fought back to win 30-26 and leave Leigh and their fans heartbroken.

Now for the play-offs. Could our delicate hearts stand any more excitement? Oh go on then. ■



CREAM OF THE CROP

The Co-operative Championship All-Star team makes for one formidable line-up



League Weekly recently picked 13 players as their Championship All-Star team. Here's why...

1 Miles Greenwood
HALIFAX
This attacking young full-back has come on in leaps and bounds this season, and was key to his side's impressive season.

2 James Nixon
BARROW RAIDERS
The Raiders' chief try-scoring weapon is a homegrown talent, and his speed and elusiveness out wide remain difficult for any side to deal with.

3 Menzie Yere
SHEFFIELD EAGLES
This member of Papua New Guinea's World Cup squad has been a pacey, powerful threat for Sheffield this year.

4 Liam Harrison
BARROW RAIDERS
Another dynamic young utility back who has galvanised the Raiders side this season, often linking up effectively with James Nixon for important tries.

5 Jermaine McGilvray
BATLEY BULLDOGS
On loan from Huddersfield, this darting winger has continually been a darting threat out wide in a relatively under-achieving Batley side.

6 Brendon Lindsay
SHEFFIELD EAGLES
The veteran Australian stand-off has found another new lease of life, his experience and skill helping make the Eagles one of 2009's surprise packages.

7 Andy Kain
FEATHERSTONE ROVERS
The half-back has blossomed next to old stager Iestyn Harris, pulling his side's strings in style.

8 Kyle Amor
WHITEHAVEN
A prop who has been a revelation as part of one of the Championship's most formidable front rows

9 Andy Ellis
BARROW RAIDERS
The Hull-born hooker has been a constant inspiration in a changing Barrow line-up.

10 Karl Edmondson
WHITEHAVEN
The Kiwi policeman has been Haven's strong arm of the law in his final season.

11. Michael Knowles
GATESHEAD THUNDER
A former Castleford youngster whose ability to play in the halves and the pack, and kick goals, reflects his natural footballing ability.

12 Richard Fletcher
WIDNES VIKINGS
This former Castleford and Whitehaven back rower has been a late bloomer at 28, but his tough tackling has been indispensable for Widnes.

13 Zeb Luisi
BARROW RAIDERS
Since signing from Doncaster the former Harlequin has helped Barrow establish a blend of youth and experience. He has also switched from full-back to loose forward with aplomb.

THE CO-OPERATIVE CHAMPIONSHIP ONE ALL-STAR TEAM

The newly rebranded Co-operative Championship One was dominated by Dewsbury Rams. Their coach tells his story below, and we also profile the All-Star team

INVINCIBLE RAMS

Dewsbury coach **Warren Jowitt** on the Rams' incredible unbeaten season

"We're very proud of what we achieved this year. It was a huge team effort from everyone at the club working together.

"I put a lot of time and effort in and so have the lads, training three or four times a week when they're only part-time players. "In 1997, when I was at Bradford, we went 20 games undefeated and won the league. That was down to hard work, and a great team spirit, which we've also got at Dewsbury. I see this team at Dewsbury in a similar mould in how they work together and enjoy each other's company.

"Getting that 100 per cent record was never really a consideration. It was one game at a time. I thought it would be nice but they were my own personal thoughts and nobody knew that. I knew it was going to be a big ask because there are some quality teams in Championship One.

"There was only one game where I panicked. When we played Rochdale away I said to my assistant: 'We've lost this.' Thankfully we got a last minute penalty and snatched a win.

"After we beat Keighley to win the title there was a massive anti-climax. We played exceptionally well to get it wrapped up but then my job was to try to keep the lads going. "In the final games we had a big dip in form but we still came out with two good results. Then we had to go to Blackpool on the last day and they were in form. That gave us a challenge, and we blew them off the park. A great end to a fantastic year."



1 Jonny Leather
BLACKPOOL PANTHERS
A try-scoring, goal-kicking full-back who helped his side make the play-offs.

2 Bryn Powell
DEWSBURY RAMS
Long-serving Welsh international who has had one of his best seasons to date on the wing.

3 Kane Epati
DEWSBURY RAMS
Try-happy Samoan centre who has gone from strength to strength since recovering from injury last year.

4 Casey Mayberry
ROCHDALE HORNETS
Strong, speedy centre who can make, score and save tries with equal skill.

5 Gavin Duffy
KEIGHLEY COUGARS
Talented homegrown utility back who is a formidable defender as well as a pacey attacker.

6 Pat Walker
DEWSBURY RAMS
Versatile ball-player who has been a reliable goal kicker whether in the halves, backs or forwards for the Rams.

7 Liam Finn
DEWSBURY RAMS
The brains of the team, directing them from half-back and hooker, and scoring a few tries too.

8 Mark Applegarth
YORK CITY KNIGHTS
A fearless front rower whose leadership helped York to a highly impressive third-placed finish this season.

9 Richard Chapman
HUNSLET HAWKS
His distribution and direction helped Hunslet punch above their weight this season and make the play-offs.

10 Scott Law
KEIGHLEY COUGARS
A key performer all season for the Cougars and invariably the go-to guy when hard yards need to be made up the middle of the park.

11 Andy Bostock
DEWSBURY RAMS
Energetic back rower with the power and pace to also make him Dewsbury's top try-scorer this season.

12 Chris Baines
OLDHAM
Tireless pack operator for the Roughyeds who can be relied upon to get the team's engines roaring even when the chips are down.

13 Adam Hayes
DEWSBURY RAMS
Classy former Huddersfield loose forward who can be relied upon to bust a tackle as well as he can offload from one.

ANALYSIS

Barrie McDermott, the former Leeds and Great Britain prop who is now an analyst for Sky Sports, assesses Barrow and Halifax



OVERVIEW

"The last time Barrow were in a final I think they'll feel they let themselves down. They are a better side than they showed in the Northern Rail Cup Final. They'll have learned from the experience of going onto the big stage and not delivering. Their early season form was very good but I think the defeats to Wigan in the Challenge Cup and Widnes in the Northern Rail Cup certainly took something out of them. Halifax, meanwhile, have recovered their form just at the right time, so I can't see this game as being as one-sided as the Qualifying Semi-final at Craven Park."

UP FRONT

"Halifax use a variety of front rowers and they're not what you'd call stereotypes. There's **David Wrench**, an honest performer whose work ethic and work

rate is outstanding. **Neil Cherryholme** is making a real name for himself in this division and when those two get tired the very exciting **Said Tamghart** and **Frank Watene** come on. The Halifax pack can adapt to anything.

"Barrow have a very experienced front row pairing in **Brett McDermott** and **Rob Roberts**. **Ned Catic** is also one of the best back rowers in the division on his day and I expect him to make up for missing out on the Northern Rail Cup Final.

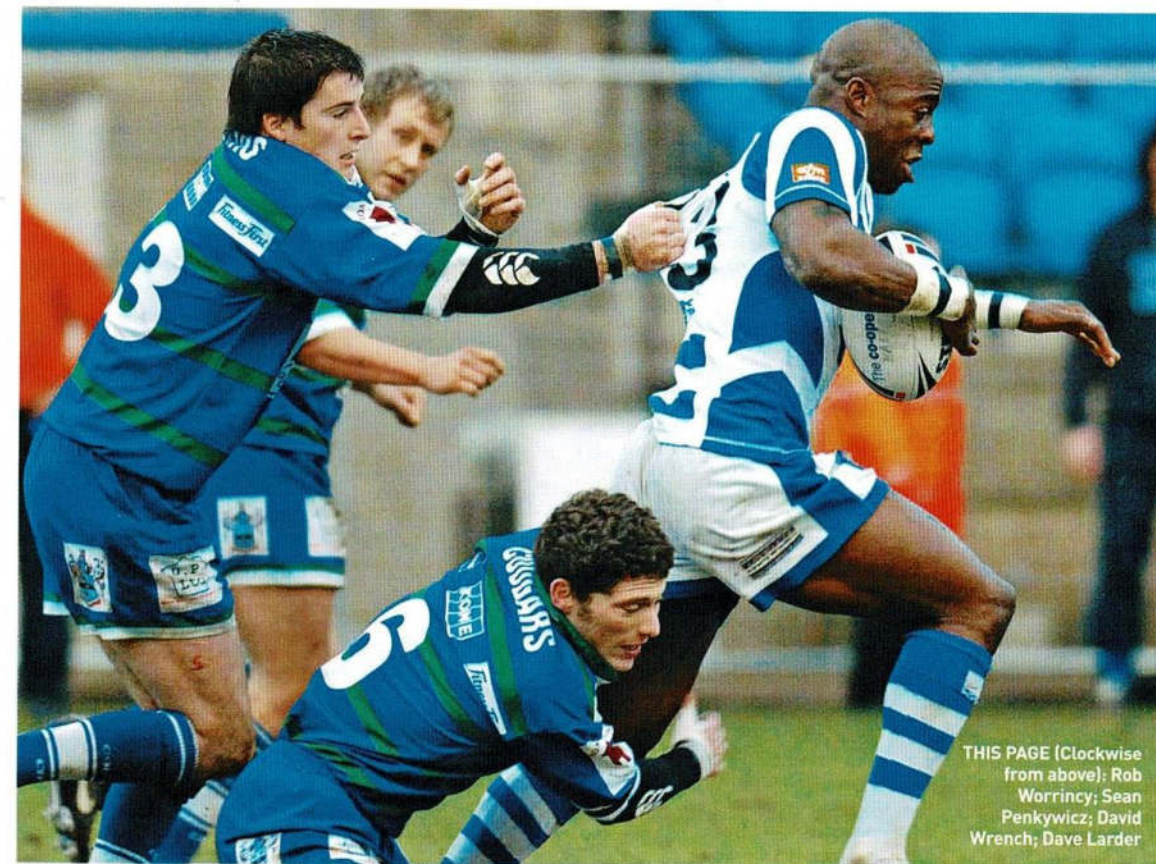
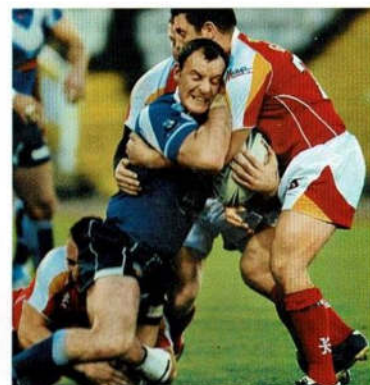
"I think the key contest will be at hooker. Barrow's **Andy Ellis** is an outstanding player and his battle with **Sean Penkywicz** will be crucial. They both need their

big forwards to be dominant and allow them quick play the balls because both have the speed and guile to disrupt any defensive pattern."

BACKS AND WIDE MEN

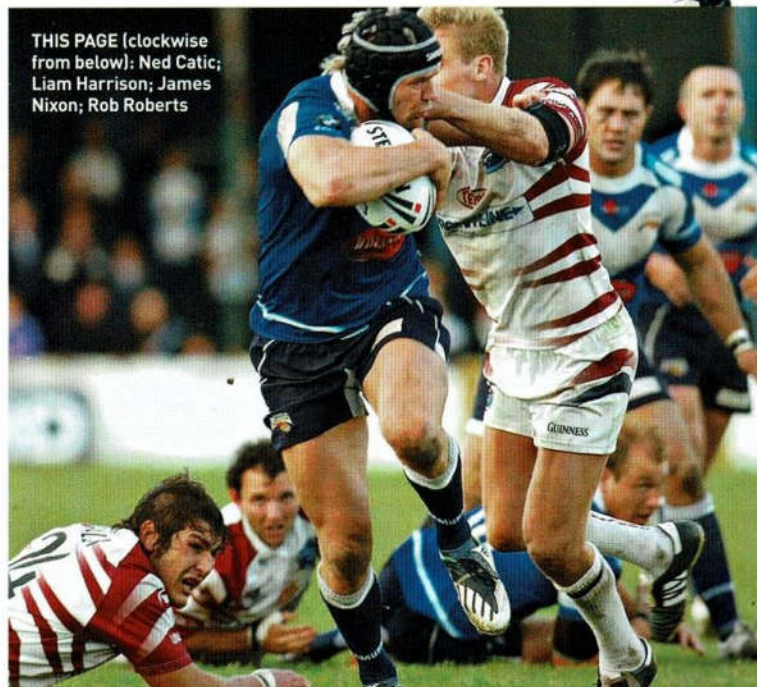
"Barrow are a threat all over the pitch. In **Gary Broadbent**, they have another player with a vast amount of experience who's always in the right place at the right time. The kicking game of **Ben Black** will test him but I think he's got the experience to cope with that.

"**Liam Harrison** is a big strong centre and he's a constant threat when he's got the ball. He's sound in defence and his speed and try-scoring is complemented by the service



THIS PAGE (Clockwise from above): Rob Worrincy; Sean Penkywicz; David Wrench; Dave Larder

THIS PAGE (clockwise from below): Ned Catic; Liam Harrison; James Nixon; Rob Roberts



"THERE ARE SO MANY QUICK PLAYERS ON BOTH TEAMS"

he gives to **James Nixon** on the wing, so Barrow's left edge is a real threat.

"**Jamie Rooney** could still play at Super League level, he's very smart with the ball, got a good kicking game, and makes good decisions. If he gets in the right field position he's also got the pace to score.

"For Halifax, **Shad Royston** is an underrated player in my view. His kick returns are as good as anything in the league and he can often get on the end of offloads. He combines very well with **Paul Smith**, who sticks out on the right wing for Halifax.

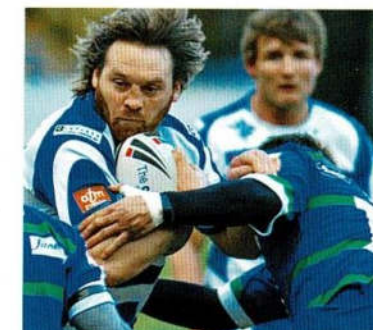
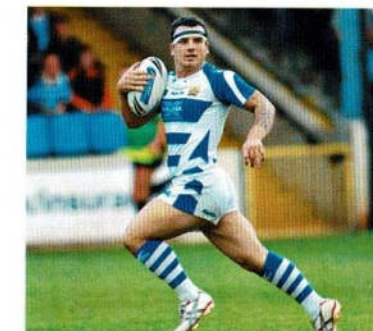


"**Mark 'the rubber ball' Roberts** enjoys running into people more than he does running round them. He and **Dave Larder** commit defenders and set up a lot of things for their team-mates.

"I mentioned **Ben Black** earlier - he's a maverick, an instinctive player with pace to burn, and another quick, strong try threat for them is winger **Rob Worrincy** - there are potential try scorers all over."

SUMMARY

"I think the teams are well-matched but the first thing that jumps out at you is the amount of quick players in both teams - they have the pace to score a hatful. In the semi-final, Barrow's goal-line defence and their attitude was excellent. If they turn up with that attitude it will be their day but Halifax have an ability to score from anywhere. So I think that we're going to see plenty of tries, but it will be the defences that will decide the outcome."



THE CO-OPERATIVE CHAMPIONSHIP ONE

PLAY-OFFS

The battle for promotion to the Championship was full-blooded from the first kick, as Keighley, York, Oldham, Hunslet, Blackpool and Swinton competed for the prize

QUALIFYING SEMI-FINAL

Sunday 20 September, Cougar Park, Keighley. Attendance 1,501

KEIGHLEY 32

Tries Duffy, Williams 2, Rayner, Presley, Jones
Goals Jones 4

YORK 18

Tries Hesketh, Ratcliffe, Wildbore
Goals Wildbore 2, Mitchell

Keighley booked their place in The Co-operative Championship One Play-off final with a convincing win over a York side who battled hard in the first half but found themselves overwhelmed in the second.

When the Cougars raced into a 10-0 lead courtesy of tries by Gavin Duffy and Daley Williams with Danny Jones adding a conversion, it seemed ominous for the visitors. But York hit back, prop Sean Hesketh and Danny Ratcliffe touching down and Loz Wildbore converting both to give them the lead.

However by the interval Keighley were back in control. Williams crossed for his second try after good work by Jon Presley and then George Rayner seized on a grubber kick from Will Cartledge to touchdown. The conversion by Jones put them 20-12 ahead and they were back in the driving seat.

The Cougars went on to dominate the second half, exerting pressure which eventually caused the visitors' defence to buckle, as Jon Presley crossed and then Jones slotted over two penalties.

Skipper Danny Jones completed the Cougars scoring, converting his own fine individual effort. That brought his points tally to 225 for the season, and he became the only player in the professional ranks to score in all his club's league and cup matches this season.

There was no way back for York, and a late six-pointer from Wildbore was scant consolation for their efforts. Although Keighley coach Barry Eaton was delighted with the victory he remained calm.

"We're one game away from promotion," he said, "but we've got a lot of work to do. We've got to produce a performance at Warrington."



FINAL TABLE THE CO-OPERATIVE CHAMPIONSHIP 1

TEAM	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	Diff	Pts
DEWSBURY	18	18	0	0	760	223	537	54
KEIGHLEY	18	13	0	5	539	415	124	42
YORK	18	12	0	6	589	360	229	40
OLDHAM	18	10	1	7	618	449	169	35
BLACKPOOL	18	9	1	8	532	456	76	33
HUNSLET	18	10	0	8	472	411	61	33
SWINTON	18	8	0	10	513	516	-3	27
ROCHDALE *	18	6	0	12	500	557	-57	15
WORKINGTON	18	2	0	16	281	700	-419	11
LONDON SKOLARS	18	1	0	17	210	927	-717	5

* DEDUCTED NINE POINTS FOR GOING INTO ADMINISTRATION

"DANNY JONES BECAME THE ONLY PROFESSIONAL PLAYER TO HAVE SCORED IN ALL HIS CLUB'S LEAGUE AND CUP MATCHES"

ELIMINATION PLAY-OFF 1

Sunday 13 September, Boundary Park. Attendance 745

OLDHAM 31

Tries Onyango, St Hilaire, O'Connor, Coyle, Joseph
Goals Baines 5
Drop-goal Roden

SWINTON 26

Tries Bamford, Saywell 2, Hawkyard
Goals Sneyd 3 Holroyd 2

Oldham won their opening play-off game the hard way - coming from behind against a spirited Swinton side.

Lucas Onyango opened the scoring for them with a classic winger's try, before Darren Bamford and Richard Hawkyard gave Swinton the lead, then Marcus St Hilaire levelled on 22 minutes. Both sides wasted chances before Carl Sneyd's penalty gave Swinton a half-time lead.

Oldham then stepped up a gear, however, and a penalty plus converted tries from Coyle and O'Connor gave

them a 12-point lead. An interception try from Andy Saywell reignited Swinton's hopes, though, and even Neil Roden's drop-goal couldn't kill them off as Saywell once more dived over and Holroyd converted. However, they knocked on from the restart and Phil Joseph powered home for the decisive score.



ELIMINATION PLAY-OFF SEMI-FINAL

Sunday 20 September, Boundary Park, Oldham. Attendance 801

OLDHAM 54

Tries Baines 4, Roden 2, O'Connor, Ashe, Coyle
Goals Baines 9

HUNSLET 30

Tries Reittie 2, McHugh, Brown, Mark, Weedon
Goals Young, Robinson, McHugh

Chris Baines scored four tries and landed nine goals as Oldham steam-rolled their way to a Final Eliminator. His 34-point haul equalled the club record as the Roughyeds gained revenge over a Hunslet side who had beaten them just a fortnight earlier.

Baines opened the scoring with a penalty and then went on to claim a first half hat-trick. Further touchdowns from Martin Roden and Paul O'Connor plus three conversions gave Oldham a 28-10 lead at half time.

Tries by Wayne



ELIMINATION PLAY-OFF 2

Sunday 13 September, Woodlands Memorial Ground. Attendance 543

BLACKPOOL 18

Tries Woodcock 2 Hodson
Goals Forber 3

HUNSLET 21

Tries Brown, McHugh, Young
Goals McHugh 2, Robinson 2
Drop-goal Weedon

A fifth win in six games was sealed as Hunslet clinched the spoils late on at Blackpool, after being behind for most of the game.

The home side took a 10-0 lead after tries from Ian Hodson and Tom Woodcock, but their visitors kept battling and two converted tries, replied to by another Woodcock touchdown and a Forber penalty, meant they were four points down at half-time.

The second period was even more nip and tuck. Scott Watson sent Wayne McHugh over to level the scores, then

a penalty apiece meant it was still anyone's game as they entered the final five minutes of the match.

However Josh Weedon held his nerve to land a drop-goal for Hunslet, and by the time his team stretched further ahead with a last-gasp penalty, the hooter had already sounded, and Hunslet could prepare to face Oldham.



FINAL ELIMINATOR

Sunday 27 September, Huntington Stadium, York. Attendance 1,164

YORK 14

Tries Wildbore 2, Oakes
Goals Wildbore

OLDHAM 44

Tries Ashe 2, Heaton, Baines, Reilly, Goulden, Coyle, Onyango
Goals Baines 6

Third-placed York were blown away by a rampant Oldham in a devastating first 16 minutes.

Tries from Ben Heaton, Chris Baines, Tommy Goulden and Thomas Coyle, three of them converted by Baines, put the visitors 22-0 up with barely quarter of an hour gone.

A Baines penalty extended their lead to 24-0, and Loz Wildbore's unconverted touchdown proved to be the Knights' only first half score.

When Paul Reilly broke through for Oldham for a six-pointer a few minutes into the second period, they were

all set for Warrington.

John Oakes's reply offered a glimmer of hope for York, but dreams of a miracle vanished when Matt Ashe went over. Two more tries from Lucas Onyango and a second for Matt Ashe completed an impressive rout, despite Wildbore's late try taking York's score into respectable double figures.

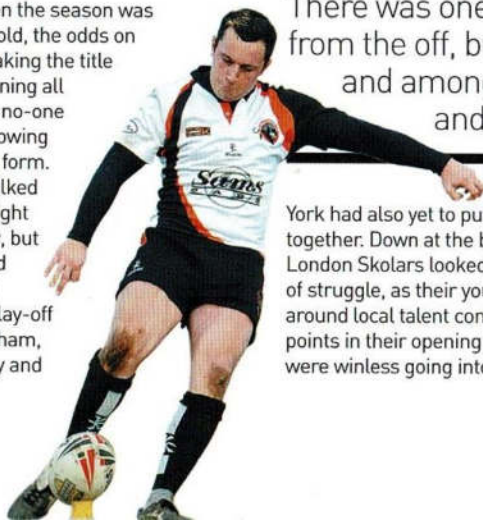




MARCH/APRIL

When Dewsbury look back on a season where they became only the second team in Rugby League history to win every game in a domestic season, they might have cause to recall week two. Losing 31-30 to Rochdale Hornets with only a minute left, they showed the never-say-die spirit that so often epitomises champions, scored a drop goal to level the scores, then after a short kick off from the opposition led to a penalty, won it with Pat Walker's kick from his own half.

Even when the season was only weeks old, the odds on Dewsbury taking the title were shortening all the time, as no-one else was showing outstanding form. Swinton chalked up four straight wins initially, but then shipped 54 points at last year's play-off finalists Oldham, and Keighley and



THE CO-OPERATIVE CHAMPIONSHIP ONE REVIEW OF THE SEASON

There was one team who dominated this competition from the off, but Dewsbury certainly had their scares, and among the chasing pack there were twists and turns aplenty as the season unfolded

York had also yet to put a good run together. Down at the bottom, though, London Skolars looked set for a season of struggle, as their young team centred around local talent conceded over 200 points in their opening three games and were winless going into May.

MAY/JUNE

If any confirmation was needed as to Dewsbury's continuing dominance, they provided it with wins over Swinton, Blackpool, Keighley and York, but the latter at least fought back from 22-8 down to within a converted try

of the leaders, to suggest they had it in them to be play-off contenders. Another comeback helped them beat Oldham and leapfrog the Lancastrians into second place at the end of June. Keighley were also in good form despite a drubbing from Dewsbury, but Swinton were still proving unpredictable, losing four straight and then winning three, ending June in fifth place.

At the bottom, London Skolars finally scraped a win, at the expense of Workington who hadn't won since the opening day, while Rochdale showed they could still punch above their weight - Leroy Rivett was among the notable names contributing to a victory over York. Alas, they remained bottom thanks to a nine point deduction for going into administration before the start of the season.

JULY/AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

As the business end of the season loomed, there seemed no sign of the Dewsbury juggernaut

grinding to a halt. The only question was whether they could go the entire season unbeaten, and the team that came closest to spoiling that record was once again Rochdale, who led 24-22 at half-time, before the Rams stepped up a gear to win 40-24.

The champions elect beat Blackpool in the final match to seal the record - no easy task, since the Panthers' win in the Northern Rail Nines was a reflection of their strong form, which saw them rise to fifth and secure a home play-off spot.

After a wobble in which they went down disappointingly at home to Hunslet and away to Blackpool, York won their last four games to clinch third spot, but they couldn't overhaul Keighley, who cemented second place by winning six of their last eight, their only defeats coming

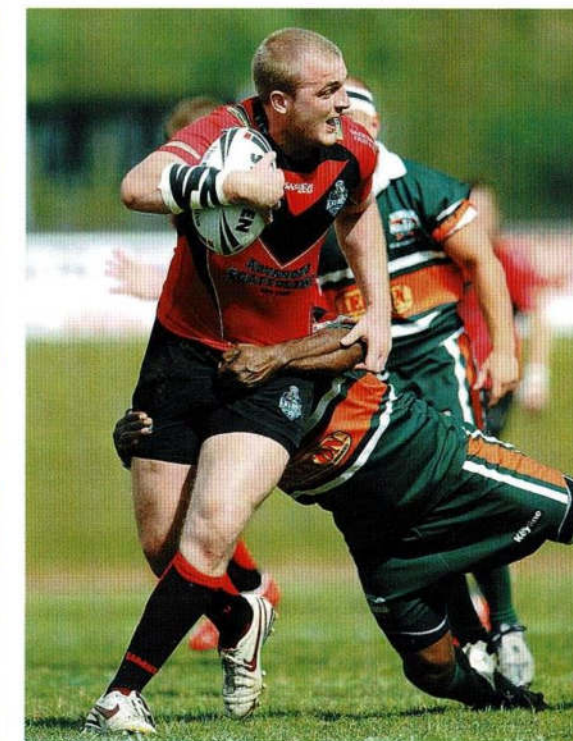
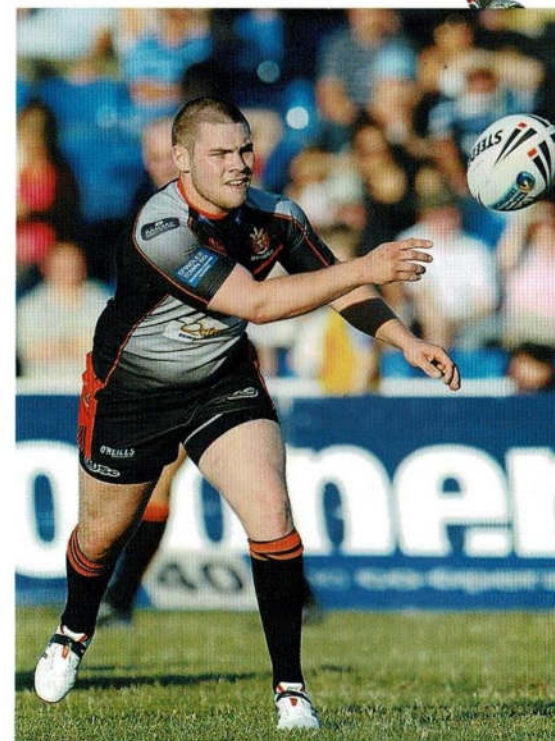


"COULD THE RAMS GO THE WHOLE SEASON UNBEATEN?"

at the hands of the champions.

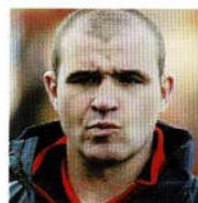
Oldham just held on to fourth place despite only two wins from their last seven, and Hunslet's final day win over them narrowly failed to lift them above Blackpool in mid-table. Despite their good start to the season, a solitary win in their last seven meant Swinton only limped into the play-off places. At the

bottom, meanwhile, Rochdale's three straight wins in July gave them some kind of respectability but Workington could only record one more win all season, against bottom club London Skolars. The Londoners did pick up a couple of bonus points as their defeats became much narrower during the latter part of the season, and they led Oldham for 75 minutes at Boundary Park before succumbing to three late tries. Could that be a good sign for their prospects next season? ■



ONES TO WATCH KEIGHLEY

Keighley coach **Barry Eaton** points out some of the players from his team who might make the difference in this afternoon's Co-operative Championship One Play-off Final



“Games like this are all about peaking on the day and I think we've come into the final in good form. We've had a very consistent year, and any team who gets to final has the right to feel confident about their chances.

“It's not always ideal having the breaks in the season for the Northern Rail Cup but on the other hand it has enabled players to freshen up between fixtures. If we had played 26 or 27 games week in, week out we would potentially be feeling the effects. We have shown we are consistently a capable side, and prepare well and do the simple things well we'll come close to winning the final.

And if we do win? Well many of our players could certainly play at a higher level, and deserve the chance. But they have to show it today.”



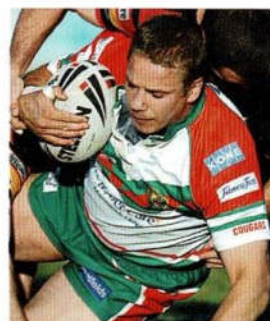
**SCOTT LAW
PROP**

He's had a fantastic year - a place in the All Star team and he also got my coach's award for the player of the year. He's an aggressive, very tough tackling prop but he's got great ball skills too - a good pair of hands and a great offload too. He makes regular tackle busts and promotes the ball through offloads so he's always a threat.”



**GAVIN DUFFY
WING**

“He's come through the junior ranks and done really well. It's been a good year for Gavin because he missed the last half of the season last year through injury after having a good run. He's been equally consistent this year and seems to get better the more he plays.”



**DAN POTTER
CENTRE**

“A massively experienced player who's done the business at Super League level, and his knowledge will be invaluable on an occasion like this. When nerves build up before the game the younger players will look to him and he also leads by example on the park.”



**GEORGE RAYNER
FULL-BACK**

“A fantastic asset, his positional play is great, defensively he's really secure under the high ball or attacking kicks, and when he comes into the line or returns kicks he's a great threat. He's got great pace and footwork so he's always a real handful for any opposition.”



**JON PRESLEY
STAND-OFF**

Our two halfbacks really complement each other. Jon and Danny Jones have good kicking games, great understanding and I wouldn't swap them for any half-back pairing in the league this year. Jon is also our top try scorer this year, and Danny gets over regularly too.”

ONES TO WATCH OLDHAM

Oldham coach **Tony Benson** introduces some of the stand-out performers who have helped his side to reach today's Co-operative Championship One Play-off final

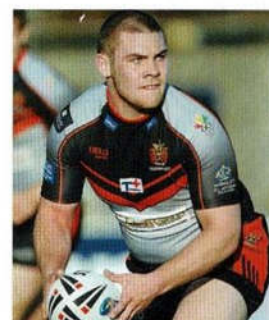


“We're confident going into the Final after a good performance at York. We've proved the worth of our system to ourselves and also proved the doubters wrong. A lot of people thought we couldn't make it this far after the upheaval that's gone on this season with changes of personnel and injuries. It's a testament to what a good bunch of boys we have here - they've had a lot to put up with and have come through it even stronger. We had barely enough players for a full squad of 18 at one point and just recently we lost another couple of players to injury, but we've risen to the challenge magnificently. No-one expected us to be here so in that sense there's no pressure. But I have every confidence that we'll do ourselves proud again today.”



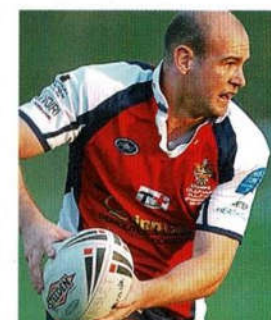
**TOMMY GOULDEN
SECOND ROW**

“Our club captain, who leads by example. He's a very strong runner, very skilful with the ball in his hand and a very aggressive tackler. He's just a born leader and can always be relied upon to get us going forward. He does his fair share of talking on the pitch too, and he's such a competitor that he inspires the rest of the team.”



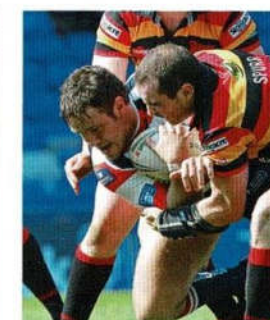
**THOMAS COYLE
SCRUM-HALF**

“A young player who is a really good defender in the halves and can play well at the line with a very good short passing game. His kicking game's good too, but it's his awareness of what's going on that is his best asset. You can't teach that. He's got an old head on young shoulders.”



**NEIL RODEN
STAND-OFF**

“Another half-back who came through the Wigan Academy system, like Tommy Coyle, and his experience is really valuable. He uses the ball so well, he's a good defender and has great pass selection. It's those decisions with ball in hand that often make the difference for us, and he can kick with the best of them.”



**CHRIS BAINES
SECOND ROW**

“Chris has been in fantastic form in the back row recently. He made the All-Star team and scored 34 points when we played Hunslet. We tend to use our back rowers like centres, and he runs impeccable lines and times them really well. He's also very courageous - not scared to run between defenders.”



**LUCAS ONYANGO
WING**

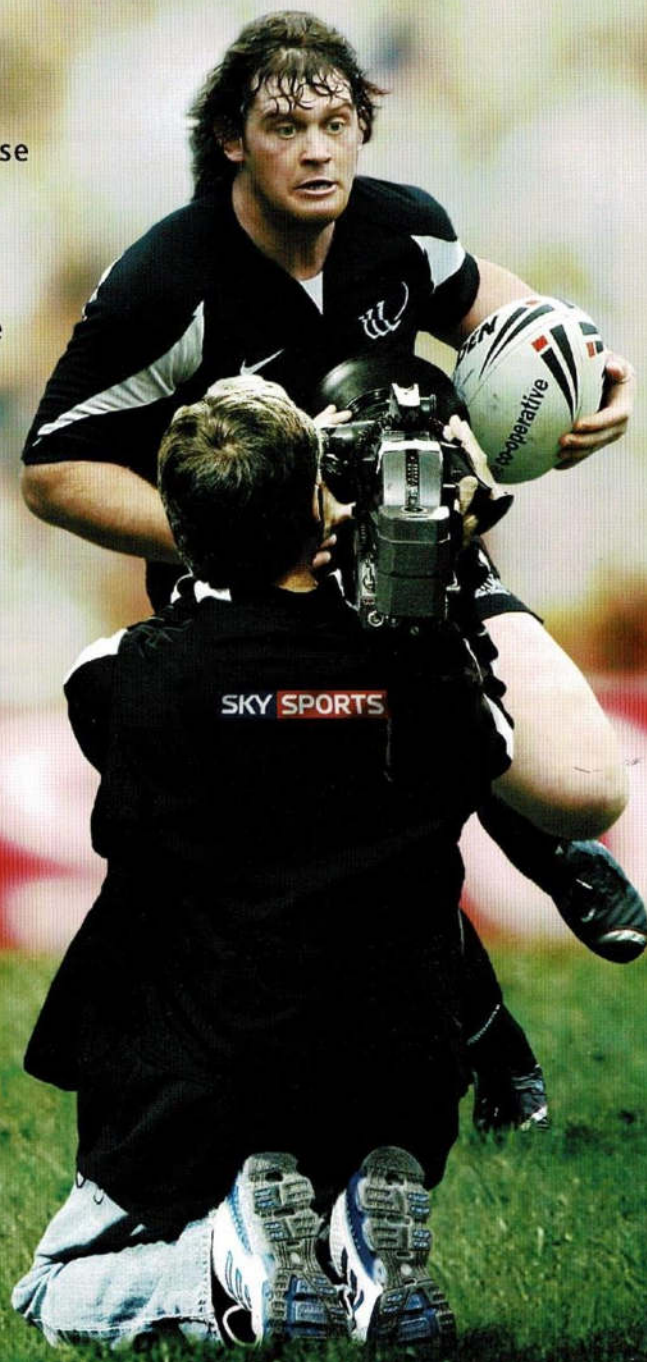
“A Kenyan and a real crowd favourite. Lucas scores in most games for us, and as well as being a really good athlete, he's also strong mentally, and physically very tough. He's a fun lad to have around and quite a character in the dressing room, but when it comes to playing, he's highly professional.”

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THE CO-OPERATIVE CHAMPIONSHIP ONE PLAY-OFF FINAL

PREVIEW

This is Oldham's third successive Play-off final, writes **Gareth Walker**. Yet Keighley still start as favourites

THE Co-operative Championship One Play-off final brings together two sides that have taken very different three-year routes to this afternoon's clash.

Keighley Cougars have been steadily building under their popular coach Barry Eaton, while for Oldham, this represents a third successive shot at promotion via the Play-off Final.

The Roughyeds have experienced successive heartbreaks against Featherstone Rovers and Doncaster, and will be hoping that their long-held dream of returning to the second tier of the professional game finally reaches fruition today. Oldham have consistently been among the division's biggest spenders over the last three years, but while they had another significant recruitment drive for this season, their campaign has been hit by difficulties.

Coach Tony Benson had to deal with the transfer deadline day departure of four of his first choice team to Barrow Raiders, having already lost captain Rob Roberts, who followed coach Steve

Deakin to Cumbria.

With considerable uncertainty also surrounding Oldham's ownership throughout the year, Kiwi Benson has not had an easy ride; something that was last week acknowledged by the club's chief executive and current RFL President Chris Hamilton.

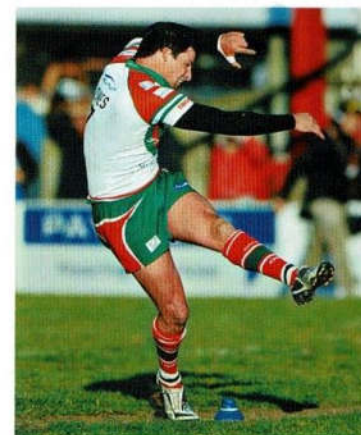
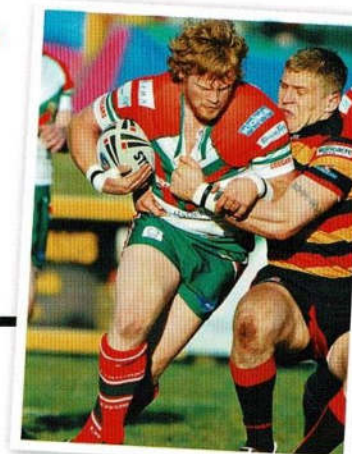
Their appearance in today's Play-off final was not as expected as in recent years, with Benson's team having to win three successive play-off games, culminating at York on Sunday. But they have hit form when it matters – and none more so than second rower **Chris Baines**, who has racked up an incredible 60 points over the last three games.

Linking up with the half-back pairing of **Neil Roden** and **Thomas Coyle**, he is sure to be a major threat for the Roughyeds. Oldham face a Keighley side that has taken the easier route to the final after finishing an impressive second in The Co-operative Championship One behind champions

"OLDHAM HAVE HIT FORM WHEN IT MATTERS"

Dewsbury. This is Eaton's fourth season at the club, and he and his directors, having taken the sensible view of building a team over a long period of time, have reaped the rewards this season with the majority of the team familiar with each other and the methods of their coach. In **Jon Presley** they have a player nominated for the Championship One Player of the Year award and he is half of another fine half-back partnership with **Danny Jones**. Busting prop **Scott Law** and elusive winger **Gavin Duffy** made the All-Stars team and will be ones to watch this afternoon.

The Cougars will start as marginal favourites this afternoon, and have beaten their opponents twice already this season in the league. But previous clashes will count for little today – whoever copes best with the pressure of the occasion, with promotion being at stake, is likely to emerge victorious.



Clockwise from this picture: Oldham celebrate; Danny Jones; Chris Baines; Scott Law

THE CO-OPERATIVE RUGBY LEAGUE CONFERENCE (NATIONAL)

REVIEW OF THE SEASON

Bramley Buffaloes were leading the way once again from early on this year, but there were new contenders taking their place among an evenly matched chasing pack

APRIL/MAY

From the very first game of this season it became clear that the old order might be shaken up a little. Newcomers Nottingham Outlaws beat 2007 Champions Featherstone Lions in a 46-44 thriller in West Yorkshire in week one, then went down 38-20 to perennial table-toppers Bramley Buffaloes, but that proved to be the only defeat in their opening nine games. Another team from outside Rugby League's traditional heartlands, Hemel Stags, were also going well, with six wins from eight and only narrow defeats to Bramley and Huddersfield. The Buffaloes had a 100% record, but their fellow contenders for the top spot from last season - Warrington Wizards and Featherstone - were underachieving. However, we were soon to find the season was yet young.

JUNE/JULY

Bramley dropped their first points in a draw at Featherstone, but they put that behind them with a 56-4 spanking of Warrington. The Wizards, however, responded by winning five on the trot, including a narrow defeat of Huddersfield Underbank Rangers, who had risen to second spot after continuing their strong form, including a 30-28 win over Bramley. That was the Buffaloes' second defeat in three games after going down 30-22 to Nottingham. Hemel's form was wobbling, too, with defeat to a youthful Dewsbury Celtic (with an average age of only 19!), and Liverpool

Buccaneers were also looking out of the play-off picture after only two wins since the end of May.

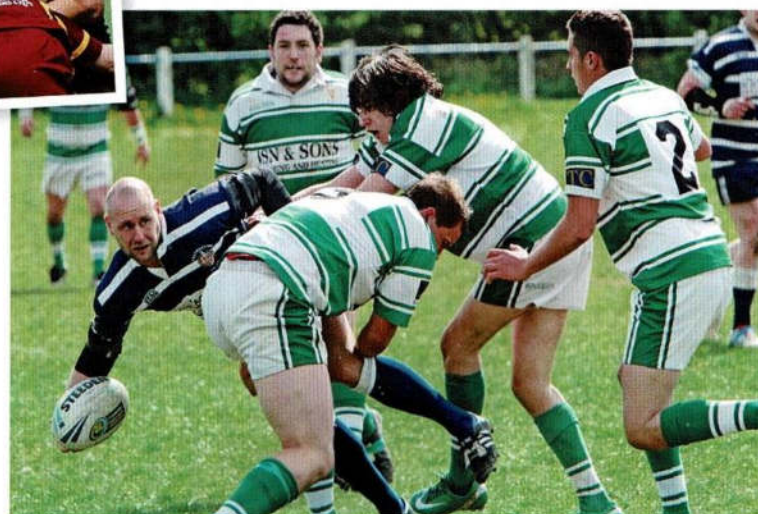
At the bottom, meanwhile, Carlisle took confidence in the midst of a tough debut season, and climbed to eighth due to their double over East Lancs Lions.

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

As the final few weeks of the season dawned, Bramley looked all but nailed on to top the pile at the end of the season, and indeed they clinched it with two weeks remaining. But the five places beneath them were more difficult to predict. Nottingham's great start to the season was offset by the loss of talismanic skipper Paul Calland to injury and a couple of promising

young players to the likes of Doncaster and Harlequins - a testament to their achievements thus far. A 50-0 whitewash at the hands of Huddersfield Underbank came as a shock, though, and defeat to Hemel two weeks later helped the Hertfordshire boys climb ahead of them in the table. Thankfully Calland returned and his side rediscovered their form to win their games in hand and reclaim fourth spot and a home tie in the play-offs. Featherstone's win over Huddersfield closed the gap between those two to a couple of points, but they went down to Bramley the following weekend, meaning they would finish third behind a Huddersfield side who had achieved their highest ever placing.

All told, it had been by far the most closely contested Conference National season to date, and the play-offs surely had more thrills in store.



THE CO-OPERATIVE CONFERENCE (NATIONAL)

PLAY-OFFS

Five fiercely contested games led us to today's Final

ELIMINATION PLAY-OFF 1

NOTTINGHAM OUTLAWS 24 HEMEL STAGS 22

Nottingham staged a remarkable comeback to snatch victory in a sensational tie.

The Stags raced into a 16-0 lead and looked set to stroll it, but Nottingham slowly worked their way back into the game. Simon Perry's converted try made it 16-6 at the break and the determined Outlaws reduced the deficit to two points soon after. Keiran Dixon hit back for the visitors with an interception try, but Dan Reeds then touched down for Nottingham and with five minutes remaining, Outlaws' winger Will Thomas went over for the match-winner.

ELIMINATION PLAY-OFF 2

FEATHERSTONE LIONS 40 WARRINGTON WIZARDS 34

This terrific contest was quite simply a try-fest. It began with the Lions racing into a 12-0 lead only for the visitors to roar back to lead 18-12.

However, Lions scrum-half Adam Thaler danced through and a penalty gave his side a 20-18 lead at the interval. Further tries were exchanged before Featherstone's Mark Kear crossed and Huby converted his own try to make it 36-24. The 12 point gap proved too wide, and despite a late try from Warrington's Jono Smith the Lions held on for the win.

QUALIFYING SEMI FINAL

BRAMLEY BUFFALOES 30 HUDDERSFIELD U'BANK 24

Bramley snatched a dramatic late victory to book their fifth successive Grand Final appearance.

The Buffaloes began brightly, but Rangers matched their two

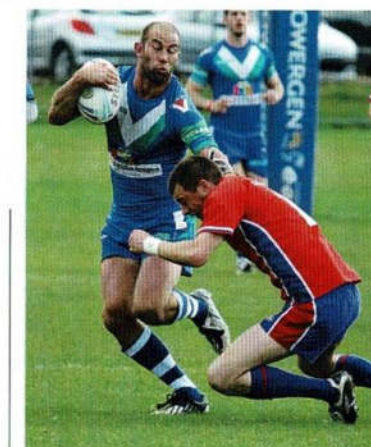
tries, and Tom Senior's six-pointer put the visitors in front at the break. Graham Harrison and John Elliker then crossed for the Buffaloes to put them 10 points in front. But Lee St Hilaire cut the deficit to four points and with 12 minutes left Darren Hawkyard plunged over to level it. A penalty from Thorley then gave them a sniff of victory but in a sensational finale Paul Drake equalised with one of his own. He then charged down a Rangers drop goal attempt, regathered the ball, and sprinted half the length of the field for the match-winning try.

ELIMINATION SEMI FINAL

FEATHERSTONE LIONS 24 NOTTINGHAM OUTLAWS 32

Nottingham Outlaws produced one of the greatest wins in the club's history to take them within 80 minutes of a Grand Final appearance in their debut season in Conference National.

Against the run of play the Lions opened the scoring with a try from Byron Cooper but the Outlaws took the lead when Jez Cox touched down and then converted his own try. Cox was again on target to convert a spectacular Harry Mostyn touchdown then Martin Edwards crossed to stretch the Outlaws lead to 16-4. When Paul Calland added another, the game seemed to be drifting



away from the Lions but two quick tries from Ian Jackson and Steve Lawrie, both goaled by Danny Huby brought them back into the contest. Early in the second half Huby reduced the deficit further with two penalties but in the final quarter Nottingham took control. A try by Will Thomas stretched their lead and they sealed victory when Harry Mostyn grabbed his second touchdown despite a late Aide Mulcahy try for the Lions.

FINAL ELIMINATOR

HUDDERSFIELD UNDERBANK 44 NOTTINGHAM OUTLAWS 10

After a magnificent season for both these sides, the East Midlands' enduring ability to upset the odds deserted them at the last.

An inspired 40-20 gave the home side field position to plough over for a 6-0 lead, but the Outlaws soon replied through a Will Thomas try out wide.

However, after Underbank got a favourable bounce to allow them in behind the posts, Nottingham seemed to lose confidence, and two more converted tries made it 22-4 to Underbank at half-time.

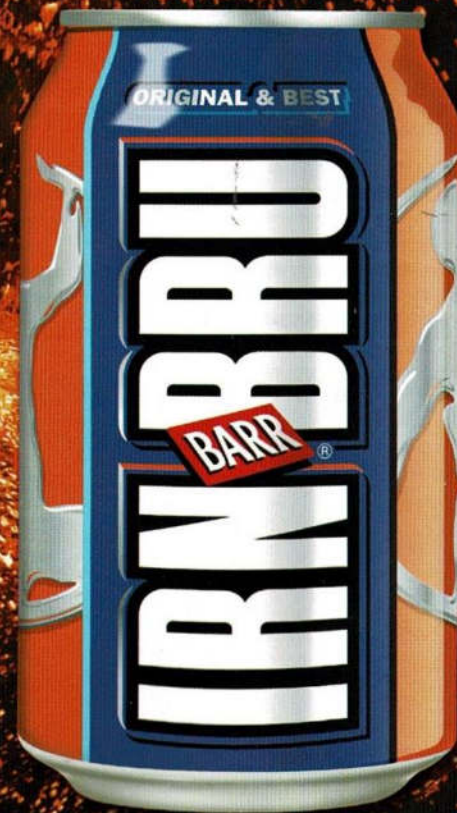
The home side now had the bit between their teeth, and concerted attacking pressure led to two tries in five minutes which made it 34-4.

The Outlaws' Simon Morton hit back, but two late tries from Huddersfield's Ritchie Hawkyard took his personal tally to four, and sent the Holmfirth side to the Grand Final in style.

FINAL TABLE CONFERENCE (NATIONAL)

TEAM	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	Diff	Pts
BRAMLEY	20	17	1	2	833	332	501	55
HUDDERSFIELD	20	15	1	4	722	330	392	50
FEATHERSTONE	20	13	2	5	795	414	381	46
NOTTINGHAM	20	15	0	5	746	474	272	45
HEMEL STAGS	20	13	0	7	776	415	361	44
WARRINGTON	20	12	0	8	714	599	115	38
LIVERPOOL	20	8	0	12	602	593	9	31
DEWSBURY	20	5	0	15	417	774	-357	18
CARLISLE	20	5	0	15	411	983	-572	16
EAST LANCs	20	3	0	17	356	895	-539	11
GATESHEAD	20	2	0	18	294	857	-563	8

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ONES TO WATCH

BRAMLEY BUFFALOES

Chosen by coach **Mark Butterill**



“We’ve been here before – we’ve lost the last two finals and our goal now is to learn from our mistakes and make sure we go one better. We had a bit of a lull earlier in the

season, but we’ve been lucky enough to have a decent sized squad so we have been able to rest players to keep everyone fresh going into the business end of season. But we’re certainly not lacking in confidence – we feel well prepared for the final and hopefully that will help us get the result.”

PAUL DRAKE STAND-OFF

“Paul (pictured below) has been with us for a while even though he’s only 26. He’s pivotal for us, the captain of the side who is involved in everything from goal kicking to directing us around the park and starting attacking moves. And he’s a great leader on the park as you would expect.”

JOHN ELLIKER SECOND ROW

“A really robust player who can be relied upon to cause chaos in opposition’s defensive lines out wide. He also pops up with a few tries. He gives us that X-factor, because no-one knows what he’s going to do next! He’s small for a forward, stocky but he’s quick and strong. He’s a fans’ favourite for all those reasons.”

JON NICHOLLS LOOSE FORWARD

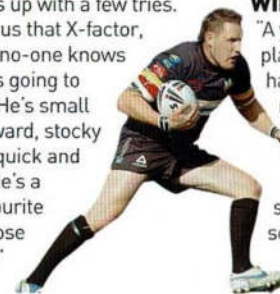
“My assistant coach, who originally came from the Leeds Met University side. He’s key in everything we do, and players look to him to direct them on the pitch.”

MATT BOOTH CENTRE

“He’s a kid who’s come from Sale Rugby Union and he’s taken to League like a duck to water. He plays at centre but he can play full-back, scrum-half or stand-off and also kick goals.”

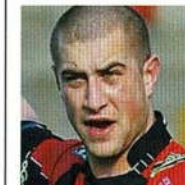
CRAIG GREEN WING

“A young lad who can play anywhere – he has played in the back row too and he’s been fantastic for us this year. He’s got into the starting side on merit, scored a lot of tries and always gives his all.”



HUDDERSFIELD UNDERBANK

Chosen by player/coach **Richard Knight**



“Just finishing second has been a massive achievement for us. It’s the highest we’ve ever finished and we also went unbeaten at home. This is our first Grand Final too. That’s

down to the commitment of the players – the lads have enjoyed training and we’ve had up to 29 people in the squad, ready to put their hands up. We’re not the biggest side but we’ve got some good talent and we work hard, and that has served us very well.”

TOM SENIOR LOOSE FORWARD

“Our captain, who is Underbank through and through – he’s played for the club since he was a kid. He’s like a bulldog – not so big but he’s a thick set lad and he runs good lines. He’s also quick onto the ball and can put a hell of a shot on you.”

CHRIS THORLEY STAND-OFF

“A young Australian who came through Canberra’s academy and he’s come over for this year. He’s got a good kicking game, a fair pass on him, he’s quick and he enjoys taking the line on.”

DAVE VALENTINE PROP

“The grandson of the original Dave Valentine who played for Great Britain. He’s probably about 10 stone wet through but runs with the weight of two men, plays 80 minutes and chases all day long. He energises the side.”

SHAUN MITCHELL CENTRE

“Our top try scorer (pictured below) who runs really good lines and is always on the look out for interceptions. If he gets his nose through he normally finishes off between the sticks.”

WILL MIDGLEY WING

“Not a really big lad but they can’t get hold of him. He goes all day long, always beats his first man and he’s a really valuable man to have in the side.”

LEE ST HILAIRE CENTRE

“Brother of Marcus St Hilaire, he’s a big tough kid with a really strong hand-off which I for one wouldn’t like to get on the other side of. And he’s another quick one among our backs”



PETER'S

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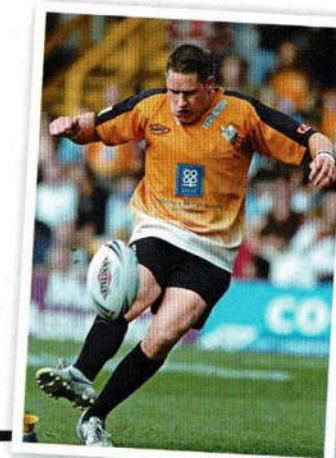
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THE CO-OPERATIVE RUGBY LEAGUE CONFERENCE (NATIONAL)

GRAND FINAL PREVIEW

If their epic matches earlier this season are anything to go by, today's Final could be a thriller, writes **Phil Caplan**



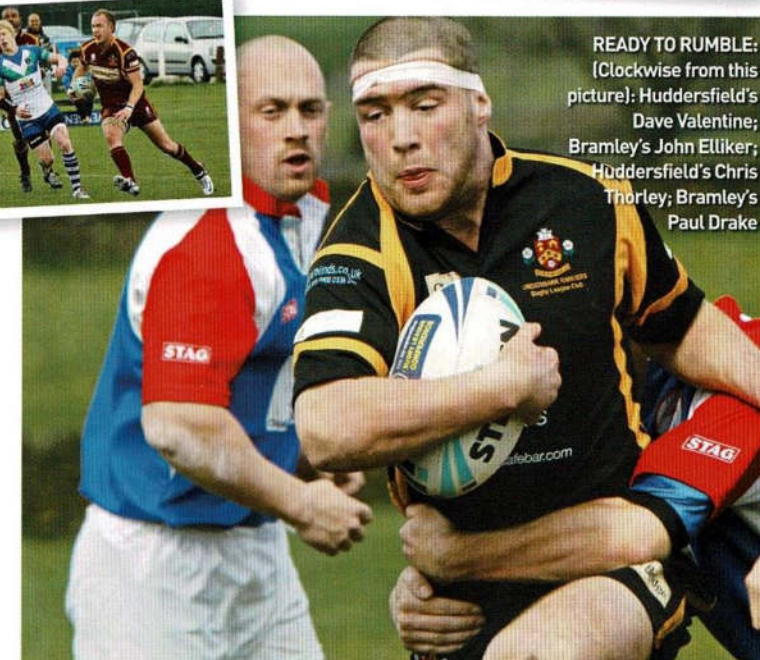
There could not be more of a contrast between the two sides contesting the Co-Operative Conference National crown, which for the second time in three years, is a West Yorkshire derby.

League leaders Bramley Buffaloes, charged up by RLCN Coach of the Year Mark Butterill, are in their fifth consecutive Grand Final and will be desperately looking to pick up the title having missed out to Celtic Crusaders Colts and Featherstone Lions in the past two seasons. Opposing them, Huddersfield Underbank Rangers have celebrated their 125th anniversary in the best possible way by qualifying for their first ever Grand Final.

Rangers, who have nurtured some of the code's most famous names at their picturesque Holmfirth ground, including Harold Wagstaff, Paul Dixon and Eorl Crabtree, hold the distinction of being the oldest amateur club in Rugby League.

The sides have met in three very close games this season. Buffaloes full-back **Shaun Flynn** became the first player at the re-formed community club to notch 100 appearances when his penalty won the first encounter 20-18 back in May, then Huddersfield got their revenge in July with prolific winger **Richard Aka's** try sealing a similarly dramatic 30-28 victory.

Another tight contest was witnessed in the Qualifying Semi-final two weeks ago when Bramley's talismanic stand-off **Paul Drake**, a nominee for this year's



READY TO RUMBLE:
(Clockwise from this picture): Huddersfield's Dave Valentine; Bramley's John Elliker; Huddersfield's Chris Thorley; Bramley's Paul Drake

RLCN Player of the Year, slotted over a late equalising penalty then charged down an attempted drop-goal, before regathering and outpacing the defence for the match-winning try.

All the evidence points to a similarly close encounter at The Halliwell Jones Stadium, with a key battle zone set to take place in the back row of the scrum. Rangers' second rower **Darren Hawkyard** was in sensational form last week in the Final Eliminator, crossing for four tries to dispose of the challenge from Nottingham Outlaws while **Gary Keegan** and **Tom Senior** have again

had immensely consistent seasons. Up against them, Bramley's tearaway **John Elliker** has proved to be a real handful and **Simon Speight** has been in tremendous form of late. The experience of skipper and scrum-half **Jon Nicholls** along with hooker **Graham Harrison** and veteran prop **Danny O'Connor** will be key to Bramley's aspirations, while Huddersfield's outstanding centre **Shaun Mitchell** notched his 21st try of the campaign last week. **Chris Thorley** is a talented half-back and **Neil Barrett** was in tremendous form with the boot. His kicking duel with Drake, who claimed 14 points when the Buffaloes last lifted the title in 2006, could be crucial.



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THE FRONTLINE FAIR PLAY INDEX

The Co-operative Championship's fairest team is Halifax RLFC - and that's official. But they were pushed all the way to the final week by Widnes and Doncaster.

Halifax RLFC are officially the most disciplined club in The Co-operative Championship in 2009, finishing top of the Frontline Fair Play Index after 20 rounds of league matches.

They receive the Frontline Bathrooms Trophy and £5,000 worth of Frontline Bathrooms products.

Frontline Bathrooms, a leading supplier to the UK bathrooms industry, are an Official Partner of the RFL. The Featherstone-based company launched their sponsorship of the Index in 2007 and this year extended their association with the RFL to the end of the 2011 campaign.

The points for the Frontline Fair Play Index are calculated using the following formula:

1pt Technical penalty

3pts Sin-bin

4pts Sending-off sufficient

5pts per match ban

(NB: Super League formula also includes 2pts for foul play penalties)

Halifax clinched the Frontline Fair Play title on the last weekend of the Championship league programme, ahead of last year's winners Widnes Vikings and relegated Doncaster.

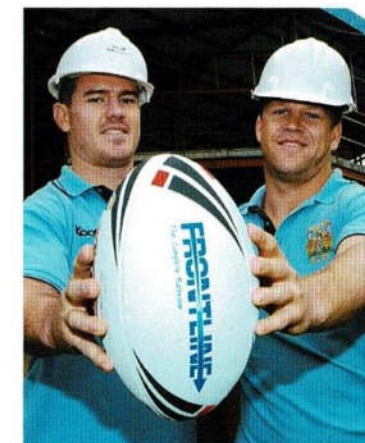
Halifax (whose players Shad Royston and Ben Black are pictured in front of The Shay's new stand, right) had the second lowest tally of penalties conceded and had only one player dismissed this season.

Head Coach Matt Calland commented: "The club are proud to receive Frontline silverware for achieving disciplinary best practice on the field."

Five of the 11 clubs in The Co-operative Championship actually achieved a clean record with no-one sent off. They were: Widnes Vikings, Batley Bulldogs, Toulouse Olympique, Featherstone Rovers and Leigh Centurions. Congratulations to them.

However, relegated Leigh finished at the foot of the table with the most penalties and sin-bins conceded.

Hull FC made it a 2009 Yorkshire



double success by winning Super League's Frontline Bathrooms Trophy and £5,000 worth of products with a record total of points.

The famous Frontline Bathrooms catalogue is now available at bathroom showrooms throughout the UK or online at www.frontlinebathrooms.co.uk

The Frontline Fair Play Index tables after the final round of the engage Super League and The Co-operative Championship. The table was updated after each round of games and is the RFL's official disciplinary barometer.

engage SUPER LEAGUE		FRONTLINE CHAMPIONSHIP		FAIR PLAY INDEX		Stats are correct after round 27 of engage Super League on 13/09/2009	
Team	Technical Pens (x1pt)	Misconduct Pens (x2pts)	Sin Bins (x3pts)	Sending off sufficient (x4pts)	Match Bans (x5pts)	Fair Play Total	
1 Hull	112	28	1	0	3	186	
2 St Helens	125	38	1	0	1	209	
3 Hull K R	122	37	2	0	2	212	
4 Harlequins RL	133	28	1	2	5	225	
5 Bradford	170	25	2	0	0	226	
6* Huddersfield	157	35	4	0	0	239	
6* Warrington	127	41	0	0	6	239	
8 Celtic Crusaders	153	40	3	0	0	242	
9 Wigan	125	50	5	0	2	250	
10 Castleford	172	34	3	0	1	254	
11 Leeds	148	45	5	0	2	263	
12* Salford	178	44	3	0	2	285	
12* Wakefield	174	45	4	1	1	285	
14 Catalans Dragons	171	45	3	0	4	290	

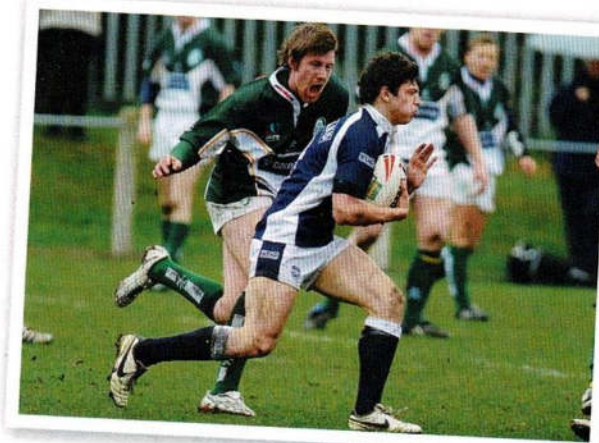
The Frontline Fair Play Index is calculated using a weighted formula powered by statistical data collected by PA Sport

The co-operative CHAMPIONSHIP		FRONTLINE CHAMPIONSHIP		FAIR PLAY INDEX		Stats updated after all rounds completed of The Co-operative Championship on 06/09/2009	
Team	Pens Conceded (x1pt)	Sin Bins (x3pts)	Sending off sufficient (x4pts)	Match Bans (x5pts)	Fair Play Total		
1 ▲ Halifax	140	1	1	0	147		
2 ▲ Widnes	154	1	0	0	157		
3 ▼ Doncaster	137	6	1	0	159		
4* ▲ Batley	156	3	0	0	165		
4* ▼ Sheffield	151	3	0	1	165		
6 Barrow	152	3	0	2	171		
7 ▼ Toulouse	164	3	0	0	173		
8 ▼ Featherstone	168	2	0	0	174		
9 Whitehaven	176	3	1	0	189		
10 Gateshead	177	5	0	1	197		
11 Leigh	178	7	0	0	199		

The Frontline Fair Play Index is calculated using a weighted formula powered by statistical data collected by PA Sport

EUROPE EXPECTS

Championship players are set to star in the rugbyleague.com European Cup



A number of the Co-operative Championships' finest will be looking forward to playing in this autumn's Rugby League internationals – and we're not just talking about the Toulouse players who are hoping to be part of the French squad for the Gillette Four Nations.

The other major international tournament happening in October is promising to be every bit as exciting, and bigger than ever, while also featuring a number of players from The Co-operative Championships.

The rugbyleague.com European Cup will feature six of the sport's emerging nations – Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Serbia, Lebanon and Italy – who will compete in six countries over a four week period, beginning on Saturday October 17. The tournament culminates in a Finals Day at Brewery Field, Bridgend, on Sunday November 8.

In another boost to the competition's profile, three games from the tournament, including the final, will be broadcast live on Sky Sports.

Scotland's train-on squad includes Barrow's try-happy winger **James Nixon**, and debut selections for Sheffield's **Brendon Lindsay** and **Mitchell Stringer** take the Eagles' contingent to four. Gateshead also boast four representatives, including veteran **Andrew Henderson**, while the Widnes trio of **John Duffy**, **Lee Paterson** and **Iain Morrison** return after making history in last year's World Cup squad.

Among those hoping to add to their Welsh caps will be the Halifax's **Sean Penkywicz** and **Mark Roberts**, and they're likely to be playing alongside a couple of their opponents

from today's Co-operative Championship

Final, in the shape of Barrow's **Rob Roberts** and **Andy Bracek**. Oldham's **Phil Joseph** is also in the squad.

Dewsbury's **Liam Finn** was among the scorers in Ireland's memorable 34-16 win over Samoa in last year's World Cup, and he's once again part of the Wolfhounds set up this autumn. He won't be the only Co-operative Championship One player with international ambitions either, as two of the Oldham squad for today's game – **Wayne Kerr** and **Marcus St Hilaire** – are also named. Barrow and Halifax are represented too, with the Raiders' **Liam Harrison**, **Dave Allen** and **James Coyle** also getting the nod, along with Fax's veteran campaigner **Bob Beswick** (pictured below).

Lebanon's side is packed with young Australian-based talent alongside big names like Wests Tigers' **Robbie Farah**, but Italy and Serbia both have Championships talent in their ranks.

Gateshead's **Paul Franze** has represented European Shield winners and Cup dark horses Italy in the past, and will offer valuable NRL

and international experience, while Keighley Cougar fans will remember **Marco Ferrazzano** from his stint at the club.

Serbia are coached by Whitehaven's **Ged Stokes** and include the Cumbrians' recruit **Soni Radovanovic**, as well as Blackpool's **Simon Svabic**.

"All the games in the competition are vitally important," said Kevin Rudd, RLEF Executive and

Development Officer, "so the level of intensity is expected to be extremely high."

The competition will determine the seedings for future international competitions such as qualification for the 2013 World Cup, then next year's European Cup will also include France, and the eventual winners will qualify for the 2011 Four Nations alongside England, Australia and New Zealand.

Tickets for the rugbyleague.com European Cup Finals Day on Sunday November 8 at Brewery Field, Bridgend are now available by calling the RFL ticket office on 0844 856 1113 or visiting www.rugbyleaguetickets.co.uk

rugbyleague.com European Cup fixtures

Round 1

17/10/09, Padova
ITALY v SCOTLAND KO 15.00
18/10/09, Tullamore RUFC
IRELAND v SERBIA KO 14.30

Round 2

24/10/09, Olympic Stadium, Tripoli, Lebanon
LEBANON v ITALY KO 20.00
25/10/09, FK Smedervo Stadium
SERBIA v WALES KO 14.00

Round 3

1/11/09, Hillhead Jordanhill RUFC
SCOTLAND v LEBANON KO 15.00
1/11/09, Pontypridd RUFC
WALES v IRELAND KO 17.00

FINALS DAY

8/11/09, Brewery Field, Bridgend
3RD v 3RD KO 11.00
2ND v 2ND KO 13.30
1ST v 1ST KO 16.00



4 NATIONS

SEE THE SUPER POWERS OF INTERNATIONAL RUGBY LEAGUE CLASH THIS OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER



Friday 23rd October, KO 8.00pm
ENGLAND v FRANCE
KEEPMOAT STADIUM, DONCASTER

Saturday 31st October, KO 2.30pm
ENGLAND v AUSTRALIA
DW STADIUM, WIGAN

Saturday 24th October, KO 8.00pm
AUSTRALIA v NEW ZEALAND
THE STOOP, LONDON

Saturday 7th November, KO 6.00pm
ENGLAND v NEW ZEALAND
GALPHARM STADIUM, HUDDERSFIELD

Saturday 14th November, KO 7.30pm

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OLD WOLVES, NEW TRICKS

Warrington's Adrian Morley, Mickey Higham and Matt King are among many players improving their knowledge of the game by taking a UKCC Level 2 coaching course

Fresh from their success in the Carnegie Challenge Cup Final at Wembley, several Warrington Wolves stars have been busy honing a different set of skills.

The players – including Adrian Morley, Mickey Higham and Matt King – were at Wilderspool Stadium for a UKCC Level 2 coaching course as they set out on the coaching pathway.

Morley – who has ambitions to go into coaching once his glittering playing career comes to end – was surprised with how much the course had to offer.

"It's quite demanding actually – there's a lot more to it than you think," admitted the England star. "But I've played Rugby League all my working life and I feel like I've acquired some good knowledge of the game. I'd like to give some of that knowledge back."

"THERE'S MORE TO IT THAN YOU THINK - YOU GET A REAL KICK OUT OF COACHING PEOPLE"



The UKCC Level 2 course covers all aspects of the coaching role and allows participants to coach at all levels of the game, from children through to open age. And you don't have to be a top player like Morley to make the most of it.

"It's our standard course that prepares people for whatever environment they're in," said RFL Talent and Coach Manager Dave Johnson. "A lot of it's based around the How To Coach skills, which introduces people to the coaching process and all the things that help to make an effective delivery. They touch on psychology, physiology; there'll be some tactical and technical things in there as well; but it's really

about how they deliver on the field.

"Normally it's a four-day course. Coaches come in for a weekend, then go away to develop themselves and work on what they've learnt, then they come in for another day, go away and practise some more, then come in for assistance at the end.

The course has certainly left an impression on Morley.

"It's really enjoyable," he said. "I get a kick out of coaching people and that's why I'd like to do it after I finish playing. I'd encourage anyone to give it a go." ■
To learn more about Rugby League coaching e-mail coaching@rfl.co.uk or visit www.therfl.co.uk/coaching



STREET CREDIBILITY

At half-time in the Co-operative Championship Final, Alan Halsall, aka *Coronation Street's* Tyrone Dobbs, will present the Co-operative's 'Fan Of The Year' award

When it comes to fierce competition, you don't get much more keenly contested than The Co-operative Championships.

But the search for The Co-operative's Fan Of The Year certainly came close, with so many deserving cases up for nomination. Today one supporter will be presented with that award by today's guest of honour, Alan Halsall, the actor who plays Tyrone Dobbs in *Coronation Street*.

This season The Co-operative has been challenging Rugby League fans across the country to nominate the sport's most fanatical followers.

Alan Halsall commented: "I am so pleased to be presenting the award. I look forward to meeting them. From what I've seen, there are so many people who could potentially win Fan of the Year – the fans are so dedicated."

The Fan of the Year is judged on successful candidates' contributions to the sport through ways that mirror the values of



Rugby League. The Fan of the Year will have demonstrated the community spirit that binds the sport, as well as devotion to the game above and beyond club allegiance away from a match day scenario. An expert panel of judges has considered nominees on a range of criteria including: match day attendance, club memorabilia, community support,

away match travel and whether they have introduced new people to the sport.

Liz Matkin, The Co-operative Group's Sponsorship manager, remarked: "It has been really tough to pick the overall winner – but I'm sure when the result is announced everyone will agree that they are fully deserving of this unique award."

Main picture: Doncaster fans celebrate last year. Inset: Alan Halsall

SPREADING THE BENEFITS

The Co-operative Rugby League Membership Scheme has been a great success

Last year, The Co-operative announced an innovative membership scheme which gave fans the chance to raise money for their club by earning points when shopping at a range of Co-operative outlets.

Since then, thousands of fans have had their Co-operative dividend paid into their chosen club's community trust. Members of The Co-operative receive a share of profits based on the points they earn when they trade

at the Group's businesses, which include: The Co-operative Food, Travel, Pharmacy and Funeralcare, The Co-operative Bank, The Co-operative Insurance, Sunwin Motors and online purchases at www.co-operative.coop.

1.8 million Co-operative members received a Share Of The Profits payment this year, and most chose to share their dividend with community groups. Find out more information at www.co-operative.coop



Salford's Robbie Paul helps launch the scheme last year

The co-operative

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CHAMPIONSHIPS

NEWS TAG RUGBY LEAGUE

TAGGING ALONG

Rugby League's supporters' groups are using their trips to away games to play Tag Rugby League in their very own competition

Rugby League has long been known as a game where fans of all sides socialise together, and they're now playing together regularly too as Tag Rugby League snowballs in popularity.

The Tag Merit League was set up by fans and they now play each other regularly, with fixtures arranged around away trips to games in the engage Super League and The Co-operative Championships.

Ten teams from across the country play in a league and they were yesterday due to play their own Grand Final at York's Huntington Stadium.

York Crusaders topped the table this year and were joined yesterday by a number of community sides, as well as teams of supporters from Co-operative Championships sides Dewsbury, Halifax, Featherstone, Leigh and Rochdale, and engage Super League clubs such as

Leeds Rhinos, Hull FC, Wakefield and Celtic Crusaders.

The great thing about Tag Rugby League is that people can play the game regardless of size, age, or indeed gender, as men and women often play on the same sides. Because there is no full contact, and tackles are made by pulling tags around players' waists, no-one needs to worry about getting flattened!

"More and more supporters' tag teams are forming all the time," says the RFL's League For All officer Tom Allen. "People are really taking to it because it's basically Rugby League without the tackles. It's open to anyone, from seasoned pros to people who've never even picked up a rugby ball. It's a mixed sport too, it's a great social sport, it's fun, fast, and a great way to keep fit."

The sport also replicates the professional game more realistically than you might imagine.

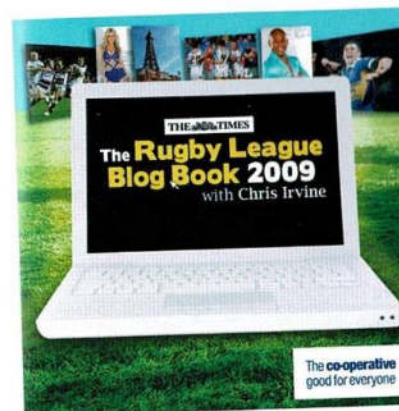


"A lot of teams are now using tag in training," says Tom, "because it involves many of the same skills and tactics as the conventional form of the game. The difference is, you don't have to take the hits or make the tackles." To find out more about Tag Rugby League visit www.rfl.co.uk/community or contact tom.allen@rfl.co.uk

Not pulling your leg: Tag is increasingly popular as a non-contact form of Rugby League

THE WRITE STUFF

The Co-operative is sponsoring Chris Irvine's new book



Many of you will have read Chris Irvine's highly entertaining blogs in *The Times*, and The Co-operative is proud to announce that they are sponsoring *The Rugby League Blog Book 2009*.

The book is published by YFP Publishing in October, and will chart another season of Rugby League action through the eyes of Chris Irvine, *The Times*' Rugby League Correspondent, and readers' comments of his blog.

Irvine's second edition promises to be just as funny, frivolous and provocative as he follows the season all the way to Old Trafford. Contributions include England captain Jamie Peacock and The Co-operative Good for Everyone ambassador, Jon Wilkin.

The book can be purchased at £9.99, saving you £2 on the RRP, by visiting: <http://www.yfppublishing.com/RLBlog2009/RLBlog09.htm>

THE CO-OPERATIVE CHAMPIONSHIP ONE



KEIGHLEY COUGARS

RYAN BENJAFIELD	Prop
CRAIG BROWN	Prop
WILL CARTLEDGE	Second row
GAVIN DUFFY	Wing
JAMES FEATHER	Hooker
SAM GARDNER	Wing
JAMES HAYTHORNTHWAITE	Hooker
CARL HUGHES	Loose forward
DANNY JONES	Scrum-half
SCOTT LAW	Prop
LEE MAPALS	Wing
GREG NICHOLSON	Second row
DAN POTTER	Centre
JON PRESLEY	Stand-off
OLLIE PURSGLOVE	Centre/2nd row
BRENDON RAWLINS	Prop
GEORGE RAYNER	Full-back
BEN SAGAR	Prop
ANDY SHICKELL	Prop
RYAN SMITH	Wing
WAYNE SUTCLIFFE	Second row
DALEY WILLIAMS	Centre
JAMAIN WRAY	Hooker
BARRY EATON	Head coach



OLDHAM RLFC

MATTY ASHE	Half-back
CHRIS BAINES	Second row
THOMAS COYLE	Half-back
TOMMY GOULDEN	Second row
LEE GREENWOOD	Wing
BEN HEATON	Full-back
JAMIE I'ANSON	Prop
PHIL JOSEPH	Utility forward
WAYNE KERR	Prop
CRAIG LAWTON	Loose forward
CRAIG LITTLER	Centre
LUKE MENZIES	Prop
PAUL O'CONNOR	Wing
LUCAS ONYANGO	Wing
NEIL RODEN	Stand-off
MARTIN RODEN	Hooker
PAUL REILLY	Full-back
BEN SERU	Wing
MARCUS ST HILAIRE	Centre
GARY SYKES	Hooker
TONY BENSON	Head coach

THE CO-OPERATIVE RUGBY LEAGUE CONFERENCE (NATIONAL)



BRAMLEY BUFFALOES

MATTHEW BOOTH	Centre
DANIEL CASTON	Centre
PAUL DRAKE	Stand-off/Centre
JOHN ELLIKER	Loose forward
SHAUN FLYNN	Full-back
CHRIS GARDNER	Prop
STEVEN GILL	Second row
CRAIG GREEN	Wing
GRAHAM HARRISON	Hooker
RICHARD HULME	Hooker
DANIEL LAVERY	Prop
RICHARD LEESE	Prop
ADRIAN MANLEY	Wing
ANDY MCGANN	Wing
MATT MULHOLLAND	Centre
JON NICHOLLS	Scrum-half
DANNY O'CONNOR	Second row
SCOTT PENDLEBURY	Half-back
JIM SHUTTLEWORTH	Utility
SIMON SPEIGHT	Second row
ANDY WALTER	Prop
ANTONY WARD	Second row
ROBIN WILKES	Second row
ALEX WHITE	Prop
MARK BUTTERILL	Head coach



HUDDERSFIELD UNDERBANK RANGERS

RICHARD AKA	Wing
NEIL BARRETT	Half-back
NICK BELLAS	Wing
ANDY BOOTHROYD	Hooker
SIMON BURKINSHAW	Centre
ARRAN CRABTREE	Centre
RICHARD FLOOKS	Wing
DARREN HAWKYARD	Back row
RITCHIE HAWKYARD	Centre
SAM HOUSLEY	Prop
GRAHAM HYLAND	Back row
GARY KEEGAN	Back row
RICHARD KNIGHT	Half back
RICHARD LOFTHOUSE	Prop
WILL MIDGLEY	Wing
SHAUN MITCHELL	Centre
JAMIE O'BRIEN	Back row
LEE ST HILAIRE	Centre
TOM SENIOR	Back row
CHRIS THORLEY	Full-back
DAVE VALENTINE	Prop
NAPOLEONI VINAKA	Prop
JOE WORTHINGTON	Hooker
RICHARD KNIGHT	Player/coach

TODAY'S OFFICIALS

CHARLIE HALLORAN	Referee
CHARLIE NEILSON	Touch judge
PAUL STOCKMAN	Touch judge
TOM CRASHLEY	Reserve referee
SIMON BARRIE	Reserve touch judge



THE CO-OPERATIVE CHAMPIONSHIP GRAND FINAL



BARROW RAIDERS

MIKE BACKHOUSE	Wing
ANDREAS BAUER	Centre
NICK BEACH	Wing/Full-back
ANDY BRACEK	Prop/Second row
GARY BROADBENT	Full-back
JAMIE BUTLER	Prop
LIAM CAMPBELL	Scrum-half
BRETT CARTER	Full-back
NED CATIC	Second row/Prop
ANDREW ELLIS	Hooker
LIAM FINCH	Stand-off
LIAM HARRISON	Centre
DARREN HOLT	Utility
SCOTT KAIGHAN	Half-back
CHRIS LARKIN	Wing/Centre
ZEB LUISI	Utility
BRETT MCDERMOTT	Prop
RUAIRI MCGOFF	Prop
JOE MCKENNA	Second row
JAMES NIXON	Wing
PAUL NOONE	Second row
MARTIN OSTLER	Second row
ROB ROBERTS	Prop
JAMIE ROONEY	Stand-off
CHRIS YOUNG	Second row

DAVE CLARK	Head coach
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HALIFAX RLFC

STEPHEN BANNISTER	Second row
BEN BLACK	Scrum-half
KYLE BRIGGS	Stand-off
BOB BESWICK	Loose forward
ANDY BOWMAN	Loose forward
ANTHONY BOWMAN	Stand-off
NEIL CHERRYHOLME	Prop
MARK GLEESON	Hooker
JON GODDARD	Centre
MICK GOVIN	Half-back/hooker
MILES GREENWOOD	Full-back
JAMES HALEY	Centre/wing
MATT JAMES	Forward
DAVID LARDER	Second row
DOMINIC MALONEY	Prop
LEE PATERSON	Centre/wing
SEAN PENKYWICZ	Hooker/half-back
MARK ROBERTS	Back row/centre
SHAD ROYSTON	Utility
PAUL SMITH	Back row
SAID TAMGHART	Prop
FRANK WATENE	Prop
DANA WILSON	Prop
ROB WORRINCY	Wing
DAVID WRENCH	Prop

MATT CALLAND	Head coach
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TODAY'S OFFICIALS

PHIL BENTHAM	Referee
PETER BROOKE	Touch judge
DAVE GRIFFITHS	Touch judge
JAMIE LEAHY	Reserve referee
PAUL STOCKMAN	Reserve touch judge
IAN SMITH	Video referee
IAN OLLERTON	Match commissioner



A DAY TO REMEMBER

If this year's Finals Day is anything like last year's, we are in for a treat

The Co-operative Finals Day is a feast of Rugby League, and this year's finals will have to go some to match the excitement and nerve-shredding drama that lit up last year's big day.

The action began with The Co-operative Rugby League Conference (National) Grand Final between Bramley Buffaloes and Celtic Crusaders Colts. Bramley were making their fourth successive Grand Final appearance, but the Welsh youngsters upset the odds as 26-4 winners.

The Co-operative National League Two Play-off Final was a closer affair: Oldham dominated the first half and led 6-2 at half-time, but Doncaster, with strings pulled by young half-backs Luke Gale and Kyle Briggs, hit back after the break to win 18-10 and seal Doncaster's first ever trophy in any competition.

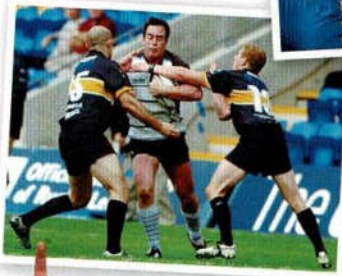
The interest wasn't just happening on the pitch, either. Doncaster coach Ellery Hanley announced his resignation before the game, and before the Co-operative National League One Grand Final, a spectacular Red Devils display team parachuted in to deliver the match ball onto the pitch.

The Co-operative National League One final between Salford City Reds and Celtic Crusaders was more dramatic still, though. Crusaders came back from 10-0 down to lead 18-16 going into the final minute of the game when they conceded a penalty. John Wilshire sent it sailing between the sticks from long range to force extra time, and from there Salford ran away with it with three further tries to win 36-18. Exhilarating stuff.

Let's have more of that today, please.



Top to bottom: Salford celebrate; The Red devils fly in; Oldham battle with Doncaster; Celtic Crusaders Colts face Bramley



The winning feeling: Celtic Crusaders Colts (left); Salford (centre); and Doncaster



"THE INTRIGUE WASN'T JUST HAPPENING ON THE PITCH"



The co-operative

From community projects to a share of the profits, renewable energy to Fairtrade products, we believe that when the benefits are passed around, it's **good for everyone**

