VS WIDNES VIKINGS

SUNDAY 2ND FEBRUARY | KICK-OFF 3PM

BETFRED CHAMPIONSHIP

ROUGHYED REVIEW

2020 PROGRAMME NO.1
£3.00



OLDHAM RLFC

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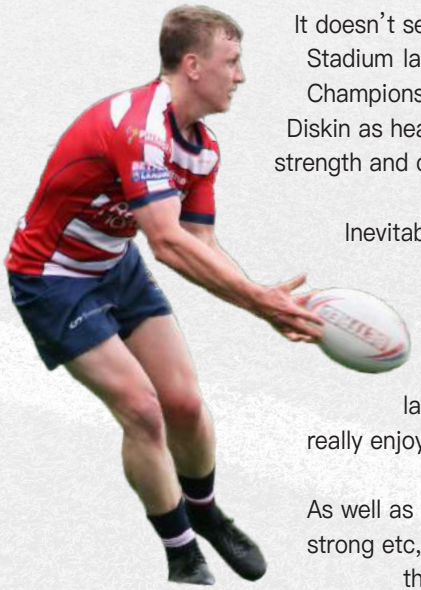
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YOUR CAPTAIN CALLING...



It doesn't seem long since that fabulous day at the Vestacare Stadium last October when we clinched promotion to the Betfred Championship. A lot has happened since, not least the arrival of Matt Diskin as head coach, Brendan Sheridan as his assistant, Tim Abeyie as strength and conditioning coach and Chris Melling as physio.

Inevitably, it was a very different pre-season to what we had become accustomed to in recent years, mainly because of all the coaching-staff changes.

It was a fresh approach with new ideas and I think the lads have certainly benefited from it. On a personal note I am really enjoying what the new staff are bringing to the club.

As well as the conditioning side of pre-season training, getting fit and strong etc, Tuesday and Thursday nights and Saturday mornings over the past three months have been very skill-based.

GARETH OWEN

We've been trying to improve how we play with ball in hand and, to be honest, I think we have shown signs of improvement in that regard during our pre-season programme.

Up at Barrow we looked pretty slick with ball in hand, especially in the first 25 minutes.

We let ourselves down in the disappointing Law Cup loss at Rochdale where we didn't put into practice what we had been doing on training nights.

Last week, against Saints, we dominated field position in the first 20 minutes but our skill on the ball was slightly off and the ball kept going to ground. After that, we sorted ourselves out and we looked good when throwing the ball about --- a really enjoyable way of playing.

We've now come to the real thing; the start of a Betfred Championship season that's going to be both exciting and extremely demanding.

We need to put both sides of our game together -- combining good, expansive rugby with strong and tough defence -- and if we can manage to do that I reckon we might shock a few people in this hugely competitive division.

Whatever happens stick with us, enjoy your rugby and be assured that the lads wearing the Oldham shirt appreciate your backing and loyalty more than you will ever imagine.
GAZ.

Chat With The Chairman
CHRIS HAMILTON

Hello and welcome back to Bower Fold.

How good does it sound to be saying that . . . it means we are back in the Betfred Championship.

Our last competitive match was, of course, the Promotion Final against Newcastle – a tough match if ever there was one and not good for my nerves, nor yours no doubt!

We certainly demonstrated the mentality of this club; we are usually an underdog but we have qualities that teams with more talent and more money would love to have; namely guts, an abundance of determination and a never–say–die attitude. Those attributes will serve us in good stead this season and I firmly believe they will help us to pick up points.

The only down side to our promotion, with no disrespect to our hosts, Stalybridge Celtic, is that we have again had to move out of Oldham, which is very ironic given that it has happened on the back of success for the club.

So, for the time being at least, we are here and looking forward to hopefully making this ground a place where opponents do not want to come.

We are very aware of all the challenges we face this season and, to some degree, they have already started with the injuries we have picked up including those to Jode Sheriffe, who needs an operation after a clash of knees in training, and to Cameron Leeming, who is out for six weeks after breaking a finger at work. Goodness knows what it will be like when the real action starts on the pitch!

It is also hard for the second promoted team in terms of recruiting.

We went to the player pool later than anybody else and players were reluctant to commit until they knew what division we would be in.


Chris Hamilton

This season has been the hardest I have ever known for recruitment, a situation compounded by the introduction of a full Reserve competition in Super League.

As a result clubs have not only kept hold of players they might otherwise have been prepared to release but they have also have taken players from the player pool that traditionally was a feeding ground for Championship and League One Clubs.

However, despite all of this there is no panic. I speak daily about it with Matt and we are both of the opinion that players will become available to us over the next few weeks.

We are now at 23 players and we hope to add at least a couple more, which we will certainly need for a competition as relentless as the Championship.

There are lots of positives at the club and if we aren't positive at the start of the season then there is no point being here!

We have new and old sponsors on board and we are looking forward to working with them all. We really appreciate their support. As always we have capacity for more! Driving and increasing our off–field revenue is one of the ways in which a club like ours can get to compete with some of the bigger hitters in the division.

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There have been massive changes around the place since the end of last season and we all wish Matt, his backroom staff, and all the new players the best of luck as we welcome them to the club.

Even the existing players have had a lot of change, not only in personnel but also in respect of the training and the style of play we have introduced to them.

We have shown in pre season, albeit in glimpses, that the brand of rugby the coaching staff want to play will be exciting and will cause teams problems. We will all enjoy that over the next few months as timing and execution get better.

We welcome today Widnes Vikings, who have also had substantial changes including going from full to part time.

Nevertheless, they have quality in the side and they will be expecting to be up at the top of the table come the end of the season.

It is important to get the message across to everybody that, traditionally, teams coming up from League One struggle with the adjustment to the non–stop toughness of the Championship.

While not being negative, we have to be realistic. We are not going to be winning every week. We will have some tough days on the pitch and, more than ever, the players need you to be right behind them. Your support is vital and we need you in numbers.

Keep the faith and you won't be disappointed.
Off field we have also been busy planning our community match–day activities which were both popular and successful last season. We are hoping to make it another season of growth in that respect with an untapped market in Tameside, for which we have several exciting initiatives planned.

The support you give to the team is always appreciated and we hope to see you in even larger numbers this year. Be even louder – on days like this you will need to be.

Enjoy the game as we try to kick off the season with a bang!

Christopher Hamilton
Chairman
Oldham Rugby League Football Club

ALL PRIM AND PROPER AND READY TO GO . . .

Betfred Championship here we come! Promoted Oldham's 2020 Betfred Championship squad lines up for this official pre-season squad picture, taken with the Betfred League 1 Promotion Trophy that Roughyeds won last year.

Back row (left to right): Brendan Sheridan (asst.coach), Lewis Charnock, Liam Bent, Cameron Leeming, Ed Smith, Daniel Igbinedion, Daniel Bamber (match statistician).

Middle: Aidrian Tierney (kit), Nigel Costello (kit), Danny Langtree, Ben Davies, Jack Spencer, Danny Bridge, Phil Joy, John Hutchings, Kyran Johnson, Jode Sheriffe, Chris Melling (physiotherapist), Tim Abeyie (conditioner).

Front: Matty Wilkinson, Adam Brook, David Hewitt, Gareth Owen (captain), Christopher Hamilton (club chairman), Matt Diskin (head coach), Dan Abram, Harry Aaronson, Declan Kay, James Worthington, INSET –– Matthew Fletcher.



DISKIN'S DIARY

A peep behind the scenes with head coach Matt Diskin.

It was good to meet a lot of you in the social club the other night and I know the staff and the lads also welcomed the opportunity to get to know you.

That's the beauty of what we are trying to build at the club –– an open, transparent and speak–easy playing side of the club in which we'll all be as honest and open with supporters as we are among ourselves.

We had a lot of very interesting questions to answer, but one of the most pertinent came from Gerald Brierley of Oldham Community Radio, who asked me what I thought about the squad's discipline, given that Lewis Charnock was sin–binned at Barrow and young James Worthington also got a yellow card against Saints.

With both lads sitting on the platform, Gerald seemed a bit awkward in asking the question.

He had no need to be. It was a good question and one I was happy to answer like this.

Iplayed rugby league long enough to know that we are playing a contact sport which is full of red–bloodied males, but at the same time we need to improve our discipline to make sure we concede onlya minimum of penalties.

Self and team discipline is one of the things we are working on, alongside a whole raft of other things which are designed to give us the best possible chance of doing as well as can reasonably be expected over the next few months.

In my view, and I've spent three years in the Betfred Championship coaching Batley Bulldogs, the Championship is the toughest and most competitive of the three competitions.

We'll be competing against some full–time teams and some who have budgets which are many times over bigger than ours. Having said that, any team can beat any other.

There will be some upsets and we might cause some as well as being on the wrong side of upsets. In other words anything can happen in this most fascinating and unpredictable of competitions.

One thing I am absolutely sure about is this: We won't survive in this Championship on five drives and a kick. We've got to play good rugby, get the ball wide, score points and defend well when we haven't got the ball.

A lot was made after the Saints game of our six tries and the sort of expansive rugby that earned them, but one of the big things for me was how well we defended againsta young, fit, fast, hugely talented outfit that moved the ball around rapidly.



Our man on the mic . . . head coach Matt Diskin

With one or two exceptions it was a faster game than anything I saw in three seasons at Batley, yet our D on the edges was generally very good in coping with an attack that was much faster than anything Barrow and Rochdale threw at us.

I have a lot of confidence in the 22 players we have in the squad at the time of writing. We have some real quality there.

As some fans pointed out the other night, we are short on numbers and it isn't easy trying to recruit players of the right calibre and the right price at this time of the year.

You can rest assured, though, that we won't leave any stone un–turned in our bid to sign the right players. The search is going on all the time and if things work in our favour we should have maybe two more players to add to the squad in the very near future.

In the meantime myself and the great support staff that surrounds me –– Brendan Sheridan, Tim Abeyie, Chris Melling and Dan Bamber –– will make sure our boys are given the best possible preparation for what lies ahead.

Given that we are part–timers who are in two evenings a week and Saturday mornings, my players will get most of the things Super League players get and won't be far behind them in terms of match preparation.

If you enjoy the match –– I'm sure you will ––– try to bring a mate with you when we are next at Bower Fold, either in the Challenge Cup in three weeks or for the visit of Bradford Bulls on March 1.

Matt Diskin

STATISTICS

BETFRED LEAGUE 1 FINAL TABLE

	P	W	L	D	PF	PA	PD	PTS
Whitehaven RLFC	20	15	3	2	582	283	299	32
Oldham RLFC	20	15	5	0	655	341	314	30
Newcastle Thunder	20	14	5	1	741	364	377	29
Doncaster RLFC	20	12	8	0	564	309	255	24
Hunslet RLFC	20	12	8	0	596	379	217	24
Workington Town	20	10	9	1	592	478	114	21
North Wales Crusaders	20	9	11	0	489	501	-12	18
London Skolars	20	7	12	1	440	542	-102	15
Coventry Bears	20	4	16	0	365	829	-464	8
* Keighley Cougars	20	8	11	1	447	576	-129	5
West Wales Raiders	20	1	19	0	222	1091	-869	2

*denotes 12-point deduction for transfer of club membership

OLDHAM RLFC PLAYER STATS 2019

Squad No.	Player	Total App.	Sub	Tries	Goals	DGs	Points
1	Kyran Johnson	15	0	7	0	0	28
2	Aaron Jones-Bishop	6	0	3	0	0	12
3	Zack McComb	24	0	16	0	0	64
4	Jack Holmes	16	0	6	0	0	24
5	Richie Hawkyard	22	0	12	0	0	48
6	Paul Crook	13	0	6	67	0	158
7	Dave Hewitt	23	0	7	51	1	131
8	Phil Joy	21	0	5	0	0	20
9	Gareth Owen	25	1	5	0	0	20
10	Scott Law	26	6	2	0	0	8
11	Ben Calland	9	2	0	0	0	0
12	Emmerson Whittel	24	15	4	0	0	16
13	Jack Spencer	23	11	1	0	0	4
14	Ed Smith	3	3	0	0	0	0
15	Adam Brook	11	0	3	12	0	36
16	Danny Langtree	18	0	18	0	0	72
17	Cameron Leeming	10	0	5	0	0	20

Squad No.2	Player	Total App.	Sub	Tries	Goals	DGs	Points
18	Ben Davies	13	13	1	0	0	4
19	Jamie Greenwood	11	11	1	0	0	4
20	Matty Wilkinson	20	18	10	0	0	40
21	Lee Kershaw	7	0	5	0	0	20
22	Danny Grimshaw	2	0	0	0	0	0
23	Luke Nelmes	1	1	0	0	0	0
24	Liam Bent	24	2	5	0	0	20
25	Danny Bridge	16	0	6	0	0	24
26	Anthony Bowman	9	0	5	0	0	20
27	Harry Maders	10	0	7	0	0	28
29	Titus Gwaze	14	11	1	0	0	4
30	Frazer Morris	2	2	0	0	0	0
31	Harry Aaronson	9	0	4	0	0	16
32	Nick Gregson	2	1	0	0	0	0
33	Jimmy Beckett	6	6	1	0	0	4
34	Declan Kay	5	0	1	0	0	4
36	Luke Hooley	1	0	0	0	0	0

FIXTURES

Date	TIme	Opponants	Venue	Score	Results	Attn.
February						
Sunday 2	3:00pm	Widnes Vikings	Home	-	-	-
Saturday 8	6:00pm	Toulouse	Away	-	-	-
Sunday 16	6:15pm	Whitehaven	Away	-	-	-
Sunday 23	3:00pm	Challenge Cup 4		-	-	-
March						
Sunday 1	3:00pm	Bradford Bulls	Home	-	-	-
Sunday 8	3:00pm	Dewsbury Rams	Home	-	-	-
Sunday 15	3:00pm	Challenge Cup 5		-	-	-
Saturday 21	3:00pm	Leigh Centurions	Away	-	-	-
Sunday 29	3:00pm	York City Knights	Home	-	-	-
April						
Sunday 5	3:00pm	Challenge Cup 6		-	-	-
G Friday 10	3:00pm	Swinton Lions	Home	-	-	-
Wed 15	7:45pm	Sheffield Eagles	Away	-	-	-
Sunday 19	3:00pm	Batley Bulldogs	Away	-	-	-
Sunday 26	3:00pm	Halifax	Home	-	-	-
May						
Sunday 3	3:00pm	Featherstone Rovers	Away	-	-	-
Sunday 10	3:00pm	Chall. Cup QT Finals		-	-	-
Sunday 17	3:00pm	London Broncos	Away	-	-	-
Sunday 24	3:00pm	York Ciy Knights	Away	-	-	-
Sunday 31	1:00pm	Swinton Lions	Summer Bash	-	-	-
June						
Sunday 7	3:00pm	Chall. Cup Semis	Double Header	-	-	-
Sunday 14	3:00pm	Leigh Centurions	Home	-	-	-
Sunday 21	3:00pm	Sheffield Eagles	Home	-	-	-
Sunday 28	3:00pm	Bradford Bulls	Away	-	-	-
July						
Sunday 5	3:00pm	Featherstone Rovers	Home	-	-	-
Sunday 12	3:00pm	Batley Bulldogs	Home	-	-	-
Saturday 18	Noon	1895 Cup Final	Wembley	-	-	-
Saturday 18	3:00pm	Chall. Cup Final	Wembley	-	-	-
Friday 24	8:00pm	Halifax	Away	-	-	-
August						
Sunday 2	3:00pm	Swinton Lions	Away	-	-	-
Sunday 9	3:00pm	Whitehaven	Home	-	-	-
Sunday 16	3:00pm	Dewsbury Rams	Away	-	-	-
Sunday 23	3:00pm	Toulouse	Home	-	-	-
Sunday 30	3:00pm	Windes Vikings	Away	-	-	-
September						
Sunday 6	3:00pm	London Broncos	Home	-	-	-

PLAYER FOCUS: GARETH OWEN

Q: Tell us about your day job?

A: I'm an HGV driver and have been for four years. I passed my HGV qualification at the fourth attempt and I can only just see above the steering wheel so give me a wide berth!

Q: What was the worst thing you ever did at school?

A: I launched a snowball that hit the French teacher on the head. Apart from that, I was a good lad.

Q: If you won the lottery what would you buy first?

A: I would buy Oldham RLFC. Tell Chris to get me a ticket right away!

Q: Which sports star do you most admire and why?

A: Rory McIlroy. He has the best lifestyle ever.

Q: Tell me how you think your teammates would describe you?

A: Probably a moaner, snapper and has a short temper.



Me, Amy and nephews



Me and Mum



Waterhead mates

Lewis, Adam and me. . .





Happy days with family and friends



Q: What is your biggest professional achievement to date?

A: My 38 Super League games for Salford. I loved every second.

Q: What is your biggest professional disappointment to date?

A: Leaving Salford and Super League –– and then losing a Grand Final with Oldham when Hunslet beat us with a golden–point drop goal.

Q: Outside your day job and rugby, what do you do most?

A: I play golf off 8 and in winter I walk the dog, spend time with Amy and play FIFA on the PlayStation.

Q: What's the best thing about being in the Oldham squad?

A: Being part of a great group of lads who look out for each other.

Q: What would be your dream role in life?

A: To be a millionaire with no responsibilities, living in a villa in America and watching loads of NRL, which fascinates me.

The Start Of A New Series In Which We Talk To Some Of Our Top Players Of The Recent Past.



On the beach near Perth, West Australia. 'Houghie' with his wife Sharon and children Billy and Phoebe. Two older boys, Ellis and Joe, are away, doing their own thing.

No 1: John Hough

Hooker, coach and Roughyeds legend.

Q: When were you at Oldham RLFC and where are you now?

A: I was the re–formed club's first signing in late 1997 and I had a testimonial in 2008/9 so I did ten years. My family and I are now near Perth, West Australia.

Q: What was your most memorable game and why?

A: Three as a player and one as a coach spring to mind. The re–formed club's first–ever game was a Law Cup win at Rochdale, a special day for the club and I was privileged to be part of it. Then there was the 2001 NFP Grand Final. We lost to Widnes but to have come so far – 80 minutes from Super League –– in such a short space of time was pretty special. Beating Rochdale in dramatic fashion in the semi–final was good too ! As a coach I'll never forget the 2010 Reserve Grade Grand Final when, within three years of creating a reserve team from scratch, we beat Widnes on a great day at Whitebank. Some moved on, others like Phil Joy and Danny Langtree, are now senior members of the current first team.

Q: Which sports star do you most admire and why?

A: Sir Steve Redgrave –– five gold medals in Olympic rowing, one of the toughest sports there is.

Q: How would your Oldham team mates have described you?

A: Reliable, I hope. I played a lot of matches and had a few bumps, broken bits and stitches etc but I was lucky in terms of escaping serious injury.

Q: What did you like most about being in the Oldham squad?

A: Being part of a team. The dressing room is a special place to be on game day and that's why I wanted to go into coaching when my playing days were over.

Q: What is your biggest professional disappointment to date?

A: I don't have one. I was pretty lucky. Always disappointing to lose, but losing games, like winning games, is the nature of sport.

(Continued overleaf)



JOHN HOUGH in his Oldham days.
Picture by Oldham RL Heritage Trust.

(Continued from previous page)

Q: What is your biggest professional achievement to date?

A: Playing with Warrington Wolves in the first two seasons of Super League and now coaching Western Australia State senior men's team, which will be competing in June in the Combined Affiliated States Comp against Victoria, South Australia and Northern Territory up in Darwin.

Q: What prompted your move to Australia?

A: In 2012 I got a job opportunity in Perth. We had never been to Australia so it was a big leap of faith. Eight years on, we are now Citizens.

Q: What is your current day job?

A: I work in Perth in the telecoms industry, building Telstra's 5G mobile network across the country. In rugby, I've been coaching at North Beach RLFC for the past two years, winning two Minor Premierships and reaching consecutive Grand Finals as well as coaching the State team.

Q: What would be your dream role in life?

A: To see the creation of an NRL team in Perth and then to be working for that team.

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THE 2020 SQUAD



DAN ABRAM
(FULL-BACK)

One of several new signings, son of former Oldham centre Darren. Aged 24, DOB 11/11/95. Previously played at St Helens, Barrow, Whitehaven, Rochdale. Can also play half-back and hooker.



DECLAN KAY
(WING)

On loan from Rochdale in last five games of 2019, including Promotion Final win against Newcastle Thunder. Now on contract. Aged 23, DOB 24/11/96. Wigan-born, he started at Warrington Wolves.



JAMES WORTHINGTON
(CENTRE)

New boy from Wigan Warriors. Aged 20, DOB 21/5/99. Played loan games at Workington, Rochdale and Toulouse in 2018 and 2019. Super League debut for Wigan, aged 18.



CAMERON LEEMING
(CENTRE)

Played ten games at the end of last season (nine wins) after signing from Dewsbury Rams. Aged 24, DOB 3/7/95. Previously played for Hunslet, Keighley Cougars and Dewsbury Rams.



KYRAN JOHNSON
(WING)

Starting his third year at Oldham on a two-year deal. Came from Featherstone Rovers. Also happy to play full-back. Aged 25, DOB 23/3/94. Scored 12 tries in 31 Oldham games to date.



LEWIS CHARNOCK
(STAND-OFF)

The only new signing on a two-year deal. Ex-England Academy. Aged 25, DOB 2/9/94. Started at St Helens, then Bradford on loan, then Barrow. Worked with Matt Diskin at Bradford.



DAVE HEWITT
(SCRUM-HALF)

Another ex-Saints boy. Aged 24, DOB 4/11/95. In 95 Oldham games, he's scored 34 tries, 83 goals, 2 drop goals, 304 points. Much will depend on how he and Charnock gell at half-back.



PHIL JOY
(PROP)

Local lad Phil has been at his home-town club for nearly a decade, first a star of the reserves and then a first-team regular since 2012. Aged 28, DOB 4/9/91. Twenty-seven tries in 154 games.



GARETH OWEN
(HOOKER)

Another local, first with Waterhead then Salford where he played in 38 Super League games. Starting his fourth season as Oldham captain. Aged 27, DOB 3/7/92. Fifteen tries in 131 games.



JACK SPENCER
(PROP)

Joined Oldham in 2016 when his dad Lee was assistant boss. Previously played at Salford, Halifax, Barrow and in France and Australia, Aged 29, DOB 21/12/90. Ninety-three Oldham games.



DANNY LANGTREE
(BACK-ROW)

Top forward try-scorer in League 1 in 2019. Despite short spell with Hull, he's played in more Oldham games (166) than anyone else in the squad. Aged 28, DOB 8/2/91. Top try scorer.



DANNY BRIDGE
(BACK-ROW)

Irish-capped. Starting a third season with his home-town club. Younger brother of former GB man Chris Bridge. Aged 27, DOB 4/1/93. Previously at Rochdale, then a spell in Queensland.



LIAM BENT
(LOOSE-FORWARD)

Tackling machine. Regularly records more than 50 tackles in a game. Wigan-born, but signed from Salford 66 games ago. One of the fittest players at the club. Aged 22, DOB 11/10/97.



MATTY WILKINSON
(HOOKER)

Usually on the bench as Gaz Owen's replacement. Quick and elusive, he's scored 21 tries in 54 games from dummy-half. Aged 23, DOB 13/6/96. Came from Salford via North Wales and Halifax.



BEN DAVIES
(PROP)

Aged 30, DOB 2/11/89, Ben has been around the block with several clubs in a long career. Came to Oldham from Whitehaven in 2017. Currently battling to overcome a painful back injury.



JODE SHERIFFE
(PROP)

Another new signing with bags of experience. Recruited from Dewsbury to replace Scott Law, who has retired. Aged 33, DOB 4/7/86. Jode has also played for Halifax, Bradford, Keighley.



ED SMITH
(UTILITY)

Primarily a forward – prop or second-row -- he did a good job at centre in the warm-up against St Helens. Aged 27, DOB 12/11/92, this former York captain signed late last season after knee surgery.



ADAM BROOK
(HALF-BACK)

On loan from Halifax last year, but now on contract. Will be competing with Hewitt and Charnock for a pivotal spot. Aged 25, DOB 29/9/94. Three tries, 12 goals in 11 games last year.



JOHN HUTCHINGS
(UTILITY)

Played on scholarship at Wigan Warriors from 14 to 16, then St Helens under-19s for three seasons. Aged 20, another new signing. Can play in the forwards or in the backs.



HARRY AARONSON
(WING)

Scored four tries in nine loan games from Swinton last year, but is now on contract. A former Saddleworth player, he had two spells at Swinton Lions and one at Keighley Cougars.



DANIEL IGBINEDION
(FORWARD)

A Londoner, he came north to sign for Castleford Tigers, but joined Oldham in December after playing more than 50 games for Dewsbury Rams in the last three seasons. Aged 25, DOB 26/1/95.



MATTHEW FLETCHER
(FORWARD)

Stalybridge-born, 19-year-old. Reared at Waterhead, then Bradford Bulls Academy, then at clubs in Queensland. Signed a two-year deal and impressed on debut against Saints.

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WIDNES VIKINGS

Round One of the Betfred Championship 2020 brings Widnes Vikings to Bower Fold for what should present newly promoted Oldham with a stern test of their Championship readiness.

Relegated from Super League in 2018, Widnes found themselves burdened with a 12 point deduction for the 2019 season after entering a period of administration.

The club found itself embroiled in the bottom-of-the-table relegation battle but a return of 14 wins from 27 league games saw the Vikings climb away from danger and end the year on 16 points and an 11th placed finish.

2020 brings a new head coach in the shape of Australian Tim Sheens. A former head coach of the Australian national side, he was the man in charge of Canberra Raiders when they claimed their first NSWRL premiership in 1989.

As Australian premiers, Sheens brought the Canberra side to England where they competed in the 1989 World Club Challenge against none other than his new charges, Widnes, the 1988—89 RFL champions.

The match was played on Wednesday, October 4 at Old Trafford, Manchester in front of a crowd of over 30,000. Canberra, led by Mal Meninga, faced a Widnes side containing legendary names such as Jonathan Davies, Alan Tait, Martin Offiah and Kurt Sorensen.

Widnes went on to win the game 30–18 and claim the first official world title.

For the interest of Oldham fans, the Canberra No.6 was Chris O'Sullivan who'd played 22 games for Oldham in the 1988–89 season. In the Widnes side, Derek Pyke played at No.10. The prop was to transfer to Oldham for £50,000 but his Roughyeds career was cut short by a knee injury after only five games.

Of further note, Widnes hosted Oldham in a Challenge Cup quarter-final at Naughton Park on February 24 1990. Oldham shocked the newly crowned World Champions by winning 16–4 to set up that infamous semi-final against Warrington at Central Park, Wigan.

The current Widnes side has now returned to part-time status but there are high hopes for a successful Championship season. The signing of half-back Matty Smith from Catalan Dragons has signalled Widnes's intentions for this year and he joins a squad bolstered by the likes of hooker Logan Tomkins, signed from Salford.

The last time today's two sides met in a competitive game, Oldham hosted Widnes at today's Bower Fold venue in round four of the Challenge Cup. The visitors came out comfortable 54–14 winners in front of 1247 spectators.

The cup-tie was played in a great spirit and prompted Oldham fan Peter Macauley to pen a letter published in League Express under the headline 'Widnes fans are the best'. Peter was complimentary about the travelling Widnes supporters, saying:

"Throughout the game, not only did they give wholehearted support to their own side but they applauded generously whenever Oldham strung together a move or threatened their line.

This culminated in the biggest cheer of the afternoon from the Widnes contingent when Oldham crossed for their first try on 57 minutes."

Lets hope today's entertainment elicits a similar response from both sets of fans and no matter what the result, we all have the opportunity of relishing the launch of another rugby league season.

Writes Dave Naylor.

THREE TO WATCH

MACGRAFF LEULUAI



Wakefield-born MacGraff followed in the footsteps of his father (James), uncle (Kylie) and brother (Thomas) to play in England. Playing his junior rugby with Auckland Sea Lions, Sydney Roosters and Newcastle Knights the Second Row was capped at Under-16 level for New Zealand before making his senior bow with Leigh. He moved to Widnes in 2011 where a successful year saw him selected for the Championship All Star team.

Restricted to 11 appearances in his debut Super League season of 2012, MacGraff has since become a top flight regular with his committed hard-working performances. He passed 100 career appearances in 2014 before passing the same milestone for Widnes in 2015. 'Graff' has chalked up over 200 career appearances, the majority of which have come with the Vikings, despite a persistent back injury in 2017.

JACK OWENS



Widnes born Jack progressed through the Vikings Academy to make his senior debut in a Challenge Cup victory against Siddal in 2011, picking up the 'Man of the Match' award in his second appearance for the club. In 2010 Jack became the only player selected for the England Academy squad not attached to a Super League club, going on to make his international debut on his 17th birthday against France.

His Super League debut came against Bradford Bulls in 2012 before moving to the wing in 2013, making 20 appearances and finishing the season as top points scorer with 166 points. Further top-flight experience came with St Helens, moving on to Sheffield and Leigh before his return to Widnes. Aiming to take the Vikings back to Super League Jack names the 12-man victory against Warrington as his career highlight.

JAY CHAPELHOW



Another Widnes born player, Jay, along with twin brother Ted, joined the Vikings after playing his junior rugby with West Bank Bears and representing the North West Under 15 side. Having signed his first professional contract the former Heath Technology College student set his short term goal as earning a new deal, while longer term he aims to claim the '8' or '10' shirt on a regular basis for the first team.

Recognised for his strong work ethic and desire to succeed Jay acknowledged the help of the Academy coaches as he joined the senior squad in 2015, making his senior bow against Leigh in the 'Super 8's having also turned out for Whitehaven. 2016 saw Super League and Challenge Cup debuts for the Vikings while further progress sees Jay start the 2020 season with over 60 Viking appearances under his belt. Away from rugby 'Twinny' — known as 'B1' on the training pitch — has represented Cheshire at Tennis and follows Liverpool FC.

OLDHAM RLFC

Dan **ABRAM**	01 |	Rugby Oldham Supporters' Trust
Declan **KAY**	02 |	Rob Long
James **WORTHINGTON**	03 |	Oldham RL Heritage Trust
Cameron **LEEMING**	04 |	Sponsorship available 07904 898177
Kyran **JOHNSON**	05 |	Mick Harrop
Lewis **CHARNOCK**	06 |	Anne Kearns
Dave **HEWITT**	07 |	David and Val Webster
Phil **JOY**	08 |	Past Players' Association
Gareth **OWEN**	09 |	Sponsorship available 07904 898177
Jack **SPENCER**	10 |	Graeme Lee
Danny **LANGTREE**	11 |	Sponsorship available 07904 898177
Danny **BRIDGE**	12 |	Pam Taylor and LTS
Liam **BENT**	13 |	WN1
Matty **WILKINSON**	14 |	John and Lynda McAndrew
Ben **DAVIES**	15 |	Sponsorship available 07904 898177
Jode **SHERIFFE**	16 |	John and Lynda McAndrew
Ed **SMITH**	17 |	Sponsorship available 07904 898177
Adam **BROOK**	18 |	Sponsorship available 07904 898177
John **HUTCHINGS**	19 |	ECS Leisure
Harry **AARONSON**	20 |	Sponsorship available 07904 898177
Matthew **FLETCHER**	28 |	Sponsorship available 07904 898177
Daniel **IGBINEDION**	30 |	Sponsorship available 07904 898177
Matt **DISKIN**	**HEAD COACH** |	Sponsorship available 07904 898177
Brendan **SHERIDAN**	**ASST.COACH** |	Sponsorship available 07904 898177
Tim **ABEYIE**	**CONDITIONER** |	Sponsorship available 07904 898177

WIDNES VIKINGS

Jack **OWENS**	01
Jack **JOHNSON**	02
Jake **SPEDDING**	03
Lloyd **ROBY**	04
Deon **CROSS**	05
Danny **CRAVEN**	06
Joe **LYONS**	07
Jay **CHAPELHOW**	08
Logan **TOMKINS**	09
Ted **CHAPELHOW**	10
Shane **GRADY**	11
Sam **WILDE**	12
MacGraff **LEULUAI**	13
Pat **MORAN**	14
Kenny **BAKER**	15
Owen **FARNWORTH**	16
Matty **SMITH**	17
Owen **BUCKLEY**	18
Connor **DWYER**	19
Jayden **HATTON**	21
Liam **COOPER**	22
Lewis **ELSE**	23
Calum **O'NEIL**	24
Joe **EDGE**	25
Tim **SHEENSE**	COACH

REFEREE: J. SMITH

TOUCH JUDGE 1: J. MCMULEN

TOUCH JUDGE 2: D. ARNOLD

RESERVE REF: O. MADDOCK

MATCH COMM: K. LEYLAND

TIMEKEEPER: A. MILLS