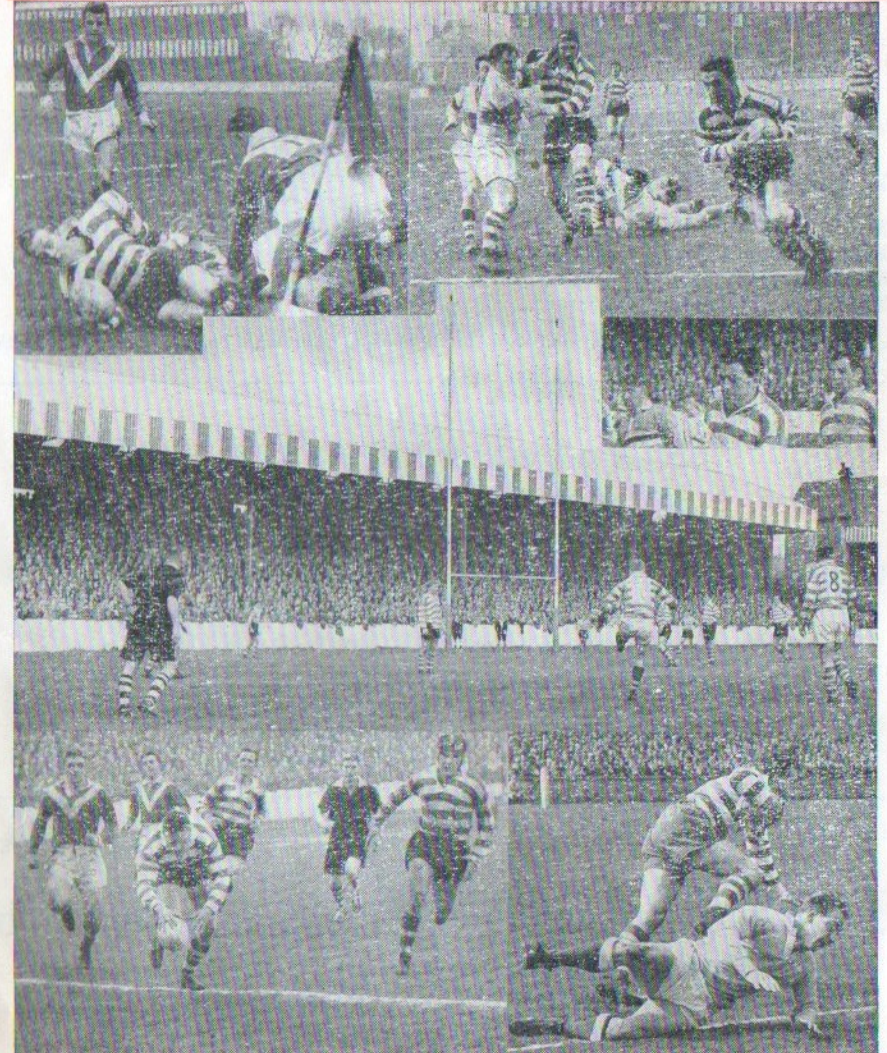


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No. 1—Tuesday, 21st August, 1962

Kick-off 6-30 p.m.

OLDHAM v. BARROW

WATERSHEDDINGS NEWS AND VIEWS

Once again we commence a season at Watersheddings, and on an optimistic note, but we realise that this season is one of great importance insomuch we are in the first division of the N.R.F.L., and a perusal of our fixture list will show that we meet what we may term the cream of the Rugby League. However, we have confidence in our players to give us a good show in this new venture, and with a little luck maybe we will be amongst the honours at the season's close. Our committee are very persistent on the open game being played, providing entertainment for the public, entertainment for which they pay and rightly, expect. Our first team players are among the highest paid in the game, and it is up to them to give that spirit and exhibition which the game allows. If you take something out of the game, you must be prepared to put something into it, otherwise there is only one end.

Happenings in the close season have been rather quiet with us, as indeed they have been throughout the Rugby League. Only two signing have been made in Trevor Simms from Rochdale Hornets, a player who we can expect great things from, and Arthur Rowe, the amateur shot-putt champion, although Arthur has never played Rugby League, we expect him to fill the bill eventually. He weighs 17st. and is fast with it. We wish him the best of luck.

The professional signing of Arthur Rowe created a sensation in the world of amateur athletics, and the news of this signing was flashed round the world. What an advertisement for the Club, and also the Rugby League, judging from the letters addressed to Arthur at the Club, he must have friends all over the world, so much foreign correspondence having been received.

BRIEFS

Michael Bird, our Welsh winger signed in July, 1961 is on a month's trial with Warrington. Michael is on the transfer list at a fee of £2,000.

Terry Ogden has been allowed to have a month's trial with Salford. He is also on the transfer list, at £500.

Rochdale Hornets have been given permission to approach John Edwards, who is on the transfer list at £500.

John Rae, who damaged his left shoulder in a practice match, will be out of the teams for at least another three weeks. This shoulder was damaged at the latter end of last season.

Frank Pitchford has been elected captain of the first team and Peter Smethurst is vice-captain.

Frank Pitchford completed 10 year's service with the club on August 12th last, and permission has been asked from the Rugby League to give Frank a testimonial, on behalf of the club. Further particulars will be published at a later date.

OUR VISITORS

Today sees the opening of the Western League Championship at Watersheddings, and we have welcome visitors in Barrow, who are members of division two of the N.R.F.L. A little explanation of what the Western League is, would be appropriate at this stage, i.e. The Western League consists of all the Lancashire Clubs and including the two Cumberland Clubs, Whitehaven and Workington. All the clubs do not play one another, but play four clubs, according to formula, therefore eight matches are scheduled to be played. At the conclusion of the eight games, the top four clubs play off, the first club playing the fourth and the second club playing the third, to be played on the grounds of the first and second clubs. The successful teams play off the final on a neutral ground and are declared champions.

Then commences the first division of the N.R.F.L., on October 6th, and the Club finishing at the top of the league are declared champions, there will be no play off for division one.

Next Match at Watersheddings—

OLDHAM v. LEIGH

Saturday, 25th August, 1962—Kick-off 3 p.m.

WILL THE TWO DIVISIONS SCHEME WORK ?

In May last there was a parting of the ways as far as the Northern Rugby League's old form was concerned. But because the Rugby League game will always be difficult to understand, especially to the not so converted sportsman, tip top clubs will still be slamming the tiny ones. But instead of for eight months of the season, it will now be for only a matter of ten weeks, when we hear or read about big scores.

—(writes CYRIL BRIGGS)

The levelling-up process will, to all intents and purposes, happen with the two-divisional scheme. Even if there is no more spectacular stuff than last season, spectators are promised keener encounters, and human nature being what it is, there is bound to be a bigger demand for season tickets! On one hand the supporter will, or is promised, more for his money with the elimination of "chopping blocks" from the competition in division one, and clubs need not include their sales from "seasons" in the percentage paid to the league pool.

NO FIRST FOUR

The two divisional scheme will eliminate one feature of the R.L. season. For weeks before the end of the season—and it has happened many times—there will not be the same need for paper and pencil to work out what teams may squeeze into the top four. That excitement, more like the old silent film serials, goes, with the new method of the league championship.

Say what you will about the "top four" idea, but it has its points. Let me take your memories to the scene at Rochdale, where Warrington, by losing surprisingly in an extended season, allowed Leeds to take fourth place by a decimal point. I doubt very much whether a handful of Leeds supporters were present that sunny afternoon in 1947 at the Athletic Grounds, when Warrington hammered the Hornets line, but failed to get the winning points. And imagine the shock when the telephonist in an evening newspaper office in Leeds heard the final score.

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- 3—HOLDEN, K.
- 4—PRICE, M. J.
- 5—SIMMS, T.
- 6—NOON, J.
- 7—PITCHFORD, F.
- 8—ROBINSON, G.
- 9—McINTYRE, L.
- 10—GODDARD, P.
- 11—BOTT, C.
- 12—PARKER, D.
- 13—SMETHURST, P.

Referee :

Mr. B. HALL
of Wakefield

BARROW

(Royal Blue Jerseys)

- 1—DAWES
- 2—BURGESS
- 3—REA
- 4—SKEELS
- 5—ROPER
- 6—FALLON
- 7—BLACK
- 8—CAMPBELL
- 9—REDHEAD
- 10—DUCIE
- 11—DUFTY
- 12—GRIFFIN
- 13—WILSON, D.

Touch Judges :

Mr. N. Woods, Salford (Crimson)
Mr. W. E Higginson, Warrington (Yell)

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It meant some quick arithmetic by the hard-working sports sub-editors to explain why Leeds would be playing Wigan in the play off. Such was the glorious uncertainty of the first four tournament. Such was the complexity of our championship system.

COMPLEXITIES

The championship of first and second divisions will be easier to understand, a point which should encourage newcomers to the code. The less complexities in R.L. the better for everyone. Mind you, the first four tournament was quite a money spinner for the clubs taking part, the league, the club staging the final, and pleased those players' wives who had an eye on some new furnishings for the home.

To some extent, the supporters of smaller clubs are going to miss the visits of top rate clubs from the "other counties". But there will be less foregone conclusions and less "cricket scores". What is needed for the lower division is loyalty. Supporters can expect much keener games, better matches in keeping with the words, but will the standard of play be sufficient to please the treasurers of the less fashionable clubs?

A follower of the Dewsbury or Batley clubs for instance, might say after a few weeks witnessing second division stuff, "its Headingley, Huddersfield or Wakefield for me from now on". The same kind of remark may come from the Leigh fan who foresakes Hilton Park for Central Park or Wilderspool. But that is a chance the league must take.

THE PROMISED LAND

But there is no guarantee that first division rugby will be pleasing to the eye. If what we saw in certain late season cup ties is any criterion, then second division teams may pull in the spectators because of more even play and less negative stuff. It is a season where the promised land for R.L. may be as far off as ever.

And yet, with so many Tourists away or looking forward to a period of recuperation, the smaller clubs could be causing surprises in the regional championships. There's a lot of conjecture about this momentous season in R.L. It can be another shot in the arm for the game, like the time when the entertainment tax got lost in the annual Budget. Alternatively, one or two people who voted for the splitting of the league into equal parts could be yearning for the day when the split could be healed.

Falling gates in division two could be bolstered up from increased up from increased takings for the league pools, that's if the league one games become as attractive as the title promises. If the next few seasons see some forward step, even if it's very slight, then I see no reason for continuance of the idea.

There must not be any more Cardiffs, Pontypridds, Newcastle or failures in London. The game cannot afford to lose even a Belle Vue or a St. Helens Rec. But what a thousand pities these names of the past were not in operation when there was two sections of the league. Personally, I think that R.L. can more than hold its own in the face of terrific pressure from Soccer.

Attendances will tell whether the legislators have been right or wrong. But the overall gate figures of last season were better than those of 1960-61.

The new idea will work, but there's a lot of responsibility on the shoulders of every official, player and supporter. In these days of social improvement even in the dressing room, the player should accept the challenge to a greater degree than we who pay one way or another to keep the game from the Official Receiver's Office.

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OUR PLAYING STAFF AND THEIR WEIGHTS

Our players reported for training on Thursday, 12th July, and after the usual handshakes and "where have you been", the first operation is on the scales, and here are their weights at the first weigh-in upon reporting :-

Player	st. lbs.	Player	st. lbs.
Bott, C.	16 0	Petley, J.	14 0
Crowther, G.	12 4	Pitchford, F.	11 0
Goddard, P.	15 1	Pycroft, J.	10 4
Gerrard, T.	10 7	Parker, D.	13 12
Gaskell, D.	10 2	Price, M.	13 0
Holden, K.	14 0	Robinson, G.	16 4
Howard, G.	12 5	Rae, J.	13 10
Jones, A.	11 6	Robinson, K.	13 0
Johnson, K.	14 10	Raines, V.	13 0
Johns, J.	14 6	Sims, G.	11 10
Kellet, A.	13 4	Simms, T.	11 8
Kenny, V.	12 4	Smethurst, P.	16 7
Lord, B.	13 11	Warburton, G.	14 4
McIntyre, L.	14 0	Wynn, J.	13 4
Mills, P.	15 5	Wood, G.	11 10
Mitchell, R.	14 9	Whitehead, S.	14 4
Nestor, V.	11 10	Edwards, J.	13 0
Noon, J.	13 8	Lloyd, K.	15 1
Parker, T.	13 8	Mumberson, A.	15 8
Patterson, W.	10 7	Parker, P.	12 10
Payne, W.	17 0	Morgan, L.	16 0

It is amazing with a lay-off how some players put on weight and with others their weight remains static, and it is equally amazing what weight some players lose after a few matches. After a few matches we will once again publish the up-to-date weight of the players, for comparison.

Even referees have to get down to fighting weight, and as a matter of interest, the referee in our trial match, R. L. Thomas Jnr., lost 9 lbs in weight during the game.

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