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LEAGUE

Northern League  
Championship Match

OLDHAM 10  
v.

LEIGH 7

FRIDAY  
SUNDAY,  
24th MARCH,  
29th 1968

Kick-off 3.0 p.m.

OFFICIAL PROGRAMME

6<sup>D</sup>

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## OUR CUP OF WOE!

Yes! Our Cup story is over. It ended last Saturday afternoon shortly after 3.45 p.m. when Test referee Fred Lindop gave the visitors a disputed try which more or less was the beginning of the end of this tense struggle.

I think it is fair to say, that despite this setback, Leeds were the better side and deserved their entry into the Cup semi-finals. Despite the fact that the Headingley outfit deserved to win, luck was not on our side and on several occasions the bounce of the ball just did not come our way.

Still, we have had a reasonable Cup run, both the players and the club alike have gained financially from the competition and I am sure nothing would have pleased the Oldham Committee more than to pay out winning money again last Saturday.

Though this is not the first Sunday football to be played at Watersheddings, this afternoon's game against Leigh is the first League game to be held on a Sunday. A lot of people have spoken in favour of Sunday football and, of course, several people have raised points against games being played on the Sabbath.

What of the players? Regular Sunday football for them would mean a vast decrease in their social activities. It is part of a footballer's life to spend Saturday evening in a social atmosphere among friends. No doubt the players' wives would have something to say about it also.

However, today's fixture is being played on a Sunday for one reason, and for one reason alone, and that is . . . . Experiment. We shall just have to see how it goes.

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Today's weather will play a major part in how many people turn up. In a recent game against Rochdale at the Athletic Grounds on a Sunday the Hornets recorded their largest 'gate' of the season, 6,000 people paying just short of £1,000. Last Sunday, our today's visitors, Leigh, entertained Workington Town at Hilton Park on a bitterly cold day—they had an increase on their average Saturday afternoon 'gate'.

Leigh, one can say, were pioneers of the Sunday game and up to the present time have played four games on the Sabbath.

#### THE RETURN OF 'KING ALEX'?

It is a pleasure to have as our visitors today, our friends from Hilton Park, Leigh, and a warm welcome is extended to all their personnel and supporters.

Way back in August, the nineteenth to be exact, Leigh were at Watersheddings in the first round of the Lancashire Cup. On that occasion we beat the Leigh boys by 17 points to 11. This was Alex Murphy's first game for Leigh and what a difference he has made to the Hilton Park outfit since his arrival on the scene at their neat little ground.

Unfortunately, Alex has been hit by a virus which has affected his breathing and there is only an outside chance of him returning to the Leigh side this afternoon. It may be felt, however, that he would be better making his comeback through the "A" team, and if this is so, his reappearance in the Leigh colours could have been yesterday afternoon against our "A" team.

Alex is, without doubt, the 'King' of all scrum-halves and his absence in the No. 7 spot at Leigh has been more than noticeable.

Leigh's exit from the Rugby League Challenge Cup in the second round against Wigan was indeed a blow to the town, as everyone had a feeling it would be Leigh's year.

They were having success in the League and had also reached the final of the

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B.B.C.2 Floodlit Competition (only to lose to Castleford in the final). The Murphy illness was certainly untimely as it was not known until 24 hours before the kick-off against Wigan that the Leigh schemer-in-chief, captain-coach, would not be available.

An interesting point about this afternoon's game is the possible duel between recently transferred Tom Warburton against our own Wilf Briggs, who joined the Oldham club in a part player-exchange deal when Warburton signed for his home town club.

It could be, however, that Warburton will not be fit for the match as he sustained a hip injury in his side's 7-7 draw against Workington last Sunday and he missed Leigh's victory against Hull in midweek.

I am sure that everyone who attends today's match will hope that Warburton will be fit because—to repeat myself—his duel with Briggs should be interesting.

David Eskersley, a former Leigh Colts' player, has taken over the full-back role from Tom Graine. David is proving to be a valuable acquisition to the Leigh side.

The Leigh threequarters are perhaps the strongest part of their team at present. Rod Tickle and Joe Walsh are outside outstanding centres Gordon Lewis and Mike Collins.

In the absence of Tom Warburton and Alex Murphy at half-back, Leigh have relied on Terry Entwistle and John Lowe. Entwistle is a great club player and can be relied on at any time to fill any of the back positions. Lowe, late last season, played a number of trials with the Oldham "A" team.

Leigh have certainly had their troubles in the forwards. Mick Murphy, following a dispute with the club, was transfer-listed at £4,500 but it is likely that Murphy will play this afternoon.

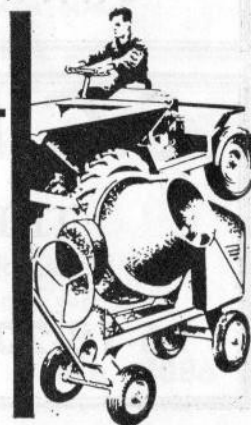
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Red & White Jerseys  
Blue Shorts

- 1—CURRY, B. *GA*
- 2—ELLIOTT, M. *TT*
- 3—McCORMACK, J.
- 4—BUCKLEY, T.
- 5—MURPHY, M.
- 6—BRIGGS, W.
- 7—CANNING, T.
- 8—WILSON, K.
- 9—TAYLOR, K.
- 10—SMITH, C.
- 11—FLETCHER, G.
- 12—McCOURT, C.
- 13—HUGHES, A. *\**

Substitutes:

- 14—*DAVIES*
- 15—*DICKMAN*

Referee

G. PHILPOTT  
(Leeds)

*\* = man of match*

THE

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LEIGH *M*

Cherry & White Jerseys  
White Shorts

- 1—ECKERSLEY, D.
- 2—TICKLE, R.
- 3—LEWIS, G.
- 4—ENTWISTLE, T. *T*
- 5—WALSH, J.
- 6—WARBURTON, T.
- 7—LOWE, J.
- 8—CHISNALL, D.
- 9—ASHCROFT, K.
- 10—HIGGS, D.
- 11—WELDING, R.
- 12—~~MURPHY, M.~~ *MASON*
- 13—GILFEDDER, L. *GA*

Substitutes:

- 14—GRAINEY, T.
- 15—FIDDLER, J.

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Leigh have a lively hooker in Kevin Ashcroft. Kevin, apart from getting his fair share of the ball, always is a live-wire in the loose. It would not surprise me if Ashcroft was in the 'possibles' list for the forthcoming World series in Australia.

Other forwards who are prominent in Leigh's side are Chisnall, Fiddler, McVay, Major and Gilfedder, although it is unlikely that the two latter players will have recovered from injuries in time to play today.

#### INJURIES AND SICKNESS

The injury to centre John Donovan was indeed a blow to our Cup hopes and now that we are out of the Cup, it may be that John will leave his return to football until next season. On the other hand, we may see John having a run with the "A" team before the season draws to a close.

Alan Ogden's return to football is also in the offing and Alan should be making his comeback at the start of next season. Incidentally, our heartiest congratulations are offered to Alan and his wife on their wedding yesterday.

Moving from the playing casualties, we find our Vice-President, Sandy Campbell, down with an attack of bronchitis. We wish Mr. Campbell a speedy recovery.

Also down at present with bronchitis is "Little Jimmy" as he is best known. Jim is, of course, famous at Watersheddings for his dashes along the touchline in his efforts to retrieve the ball at first-team games.

It may be that Jimmy will be a couple of weeks before he returns to his post. We wish him a speedy recovery also.

#### ST. MARY'S FINE FEAT

I think everyone will be interested to learn of the fine feat by St. Mary's under-19 team in Oldham.

Last Saturday they extended their unbeaten run to 93 games, yes, it is 93 games ago since St. Mary's were last defeated.

They are again in the Lancashire Cup final (they won it last year for the first time) and they play Ditton, Widnes. It may be that this final will be played as a curtain-raiser to the Leeds v Wigan Cup semi-final at Swinton.

The best of luck, lads . . . keep up the good work.

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#### WEMBLEY DRAW

Does anyone want to win a couple of stand seats for Wembley together with a handsome cash prize? If so, then buy your Grand Wembley Draw ticket today.

The draw for the teams to take place in the Social Club on Wednesday, 27th March, at 7.30 p.m.

Each team that played in the first round proper will be put into a hat and then a number will be drawn out with each team.

Of course, if you draw Leeds, Wigan, Wakefield or Huddersfield, then you are set for a handsome cash prize and also have tickets to watch the final.

All other teams drawn will also receive a prize. Tickets are 1/- each and can be purchased today.

#### RUGBY QUEEN DANCE

The Oldham Supporters' Club have organised a Rugby Queen Dance, which will be held in the Social Club, Watersheddings, on Thursday, March 28th, 1968.

Dancing will be from 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. to Jeff Warne and his band. Tickets, which are 2/6 each, can be purchased from any member of the Supporters' Club Committee. Proceeds from the dance will go towards the Supporters' Club new canteen.

A new Rugby Queen will be selected by a panel of judges during the evening.

Entry forms are still being accepted for the competition. These can be obtained from the Social Club Manager or from the Supporters' Club Secretary, Mr. A. Craig, 18 Gordon Avenue, Oldham.

#### PRE-WEMBLEY DANCE

The Ealing, Greenford, Hillingdon and Peckham Amateur Rugby League clubs in London have again organised a pre-Cup final dance. Last year's dance was a tremendous success and this year they hope it will be even better.

The dance will be held at The Railway Hotel, Greenford, Middlesex, on Friday evening, May 10th, from 8 p.m. to midnight.

The tickets are 12/6 each, including refreshments, and the bar will be open throughout the dance period.

It is hoped that a number of sporting personalities will be in attendance.

The hotel is situated just a few yards from the Greenford Tube Station.

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## FIXTURES 1967-8

1967				1968			
Date	Opponents	Venue	Result	Date	Opponents	Venue	Result
Aug. 15	(Tu) Liverpool City	Home L	12-13	Dec. 30	(S) Barrow	Home W	15-10
" 19	(S) Leigh (Lancs Cup - 1)	Home W	17-11	Jan. 1	(M) Workington Town	Away L	5-10
" 23	(W) Bradford Northern	Away L	10-28	" 6	(S) Batley	Away W	22-7
" 26	(S) Hull	Away L	20-29	" 13	(S) Wigan	Away P'oned	
Sept. 2	(S) Whitehaven	Home W	34-14	" 20	(S) St. Helens	Home L	14-26
" 4	(M) Blackpool Borough	Away L	19-15	" 22	(M) Wigan	Away L	3-39
" 7	(Th) Swinton (Lancs C - 2)	Away L	8-11	" 27	(S) Barrow	Away L	13-14
" 9	(S) Warrington	Away L	2-26	Feb. 3	(S) Hunslet (RL Cup Rd 1)	Away W	9-4
" 16	(S) Rochdale H.	Home W	13-12	" 14	(W) Batley	Home W	19-3
" 23	(S) Whitehaven	Away W	24-12	" 17	(S) Widnes	Home W	19-12
" 30	(S) Wigan	Home L	13-17	" 24	(S) (2)	Home W	13-10
Oct. 3	(Tu) Hull K.R.	Home L	7-9	Mar. 1	(F) Rochdale H.	Away W	13-10
" 14	(S) Bradford Northern	Home L	14-25	" 9	(S) Workington Town	Home L	5-36
" 20	(F) Salford	Away L	6-12	" 16	(S) Leeds (RL Cup Rd 3)	Home L	0-13
" 28	(S) Blackpool Boro'	Home W	13-4	" 24	(Su) Leigh	Home W	10-7
Nov. 4	(S) Leigh	Away L	2-29	Apr. 12	(F) Swinton	Home	
" 11	(S) Australia	Home L	8-18	" 15	(M) Hull K.R.	Away	
" 13	(M) Salford	Home L	0-4				
" 17	(F) Widnes	Away L	14-33				
" 25	(S) Hull	Home W	31-7				
Dec. 2	(S) Liverpool City	Away W	13-0				
" 8	(F) Warrington	Home P'oned					
" 16	(S) St. Helens	Away L	2-10				
" 26	(Tu) Swinton	Away L	18-22				

## NEXT MATCH AT WATERSHEDDINGS

FIRST TEAM

FRIDAY, 12th APRIL, 1968

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OLDHAM v SWINTON



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## GRAND WEMBLEY DRAW, 1968

Rugby League Challenge Cup

The above Draw will be made in the New Social Club on Wednesday, 27th March at 7-30 p.m.

Prizes are as follows :-

Cup Winners—£50 and two £2 Seat Tickets for the Final

Runners-up—£25 and two £2 Seat Tickets for the Final.

Losing Semi-Finalists—£10 and two £1 Seat Tickets for the Final

All Other Teams—£1 and one 5/- Ticket each.

All members are reminded that counterfoils and monies with all unsold tickets, should be returned to the Pools Office, The Pavilion, Watersheddings, as soon as possible, or to any Club Official.

Thank you.

F. J. DISKIN, Promoter

## THANKS

to Leigh Football Club's Directors and Players for agreeing to play here on our first Sunday experiment; and to the Leigh Secretary, Mr. T. Hourigan, and the Oldham Chronicle writer, Mr. R. Halstead, for their contributions to this programme.

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## OLDHAM FOOTBALL CLUB

(Rugby League)

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pp

## *Oldham's First Sunday League Game*

★

# OLDHAM v. LEIGH



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At Watersheddings - Kick-off 3 p.m.

SUNDAY, 24th MARCH, 1968

Admission by Souvenir Programme

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## BY T. HOURIGAN, ESQ.

(Secretary/Manager, Leigh Football Club)

---

Most Rugby League Clubs, and also many Soccer Clubs and County Cricket Clubs have had great difficulty during the past few years in making ends meet — in fact most of these Clubs are owing money to the banks.

Splendid efforts have been made in running Pools, and Supporters Clubs' ventures to help to keep the game alive.

Attendances and revenue has dropped seriously, and if the game is to survive new ideas will have to be applied, in an attempt to get the fans back on the terraces.

Why have gates fallen? Some think the game is not as attractive as formerly, whilst some believe it is due to the changes in the rules. But most Club officials are convinced the real reason for the dwindling attendances is the fact that Rugby League matches are televised live on Saturday afternoons. This, together with International Rugby Union matches and Horse Racing on T.V. is keeping many of our supporters from coming to our game on Saturday afternoons.

To counter this situation, many Clubs have installed Floodlights to enable them to play matches in the evenings in midweek. This has not been an overwhelming success, because Floodlight matches are usually staged in the very worst of weather during the winter months.

It is also a fact that on Saturday afternoons a number of our old supporters are using their cars, to join their wives in shopping in town centres and markets.

My own Club was one of the first to suggest we try a match on a Sunday afternoon, when the difficulties referred to above do not exist. We were the first Club to arrange a Senior match on a Sunday, and with another Club, the first to play on Sunday. We played Dewsbury in December last and Blackpool and Workington this month, on a Sunday afternoon. We also played at Dewsbury on a Sunday, and they were well satisfied with the attendance.

I congratulate the Oldham Club on their enterprise in trying the experiment of Sunday Football, and hope the public of Oldham and District will help to make the experiment a big success.

## BY ROGER HALSTEAD

(Oldham Chronicle Reporter)

---

Like every other club which has experimented with Sunday football, Oldham will be closely scrutinising the attendance figures after today's game—the first Sunday fixture at Watersheddings.

It is always difficult to assess crowd potential or otherwise on the strength of just one match. If Oldham really wanted to test public reaction, they would have to experiment with a series of Sunday games.

But at least, there are early indications from other clubs to show that Sunday could be a useful ally in the fight against drifting Saturday afternoon attendances.

My own view is that, while Sunday games bring a multitude of problems, they should at least be given a chance.

That appears to be Oldham's view, too, and as far as next season is concerned, I suppose a lot will depend on the crowd figures today.

Generally, players are not keen on having their normal weekend routine shattered by the switch from Saturday and, rightly I feel, they expect extra remuneration for giving up their Sunday afternoon.

As far as Oldham's players are concerned today, they will receive a bonus dependent on the size of the crowd over a certain minimum—a fool-proof plan.

It is also another major reason why the attendance will have to be bigger than average. If the players find they have nothing extra in the wage packet, they may feel inclined to be against further experiments in the future.

With no interest left in either the Challenge Cup or the top-16, fans may feel there is little to play for in the remaining four games this season.

On the contrary, Oldham are anxious to pick up as many points as possible from Leigh, Warrington and Swinton to boost their position in the Lancashire League so as to stand a better chance of attractive Yorkshire fixtures next season.