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RUGBY LEAGUE  
FOOTBALL  
Northern League  
Championship Match

OLDHAM 5  
v.  
WARRINGTON

MONDAY, 23  
8 1st APRIL  
1968  
Kick-off 7.30 p.m.

OFFICIAL PROGRAMME

6<sup>p</sup>



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## AT LAST — THE GAME IS ON

After so many postponements, it looks as if our fixture with Warrington will go on tonight. There have been several reasons why the match has not been played before. Mainly, bad weather has resulted in postponements.

The Wires may not be the same devastating force as they were in the days of Brian Bevan, Harry Bath and our coach, Gerry Helme (at this time they won many honours), but they have got into the top ten and hope with two points tonight to get a home match in the play-off.

There have been some sterling struggles between Oldham and Warrington teams in the past, and in quite a number of Cup games they have put paid to our chances. In 1921, when the Wires won the Lancashire Cup for the first time, at the Broughton Rangers old ground, they won by seven points to five. We had a chance to equalise but Reg Farrar missed a late goal kick.

Those were the days of Tranter, Jolley, Culiffe and Skelhorn. And about that time we had such players as Farrar, Knapman, Hall, etc. When Warrington won the Challenge Cup in 1954 it was a late interception by Brian Bevan (now back in his native Australia) which turned the game in Warrington's favour. In that Cup-tie there was only a short time left for play, and we are sure that had we won that match we would have appeared at Wembley for the first time.

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## INTERNATIONAL BACK

Warrington have on their books at the moment international Billy Aspinall (half-back, centre or winger) and Jack Melling, who was unlucky not to lead Lancashire in the vital match against Yorkshire. Parry Gordon is a tricky half-back, and Brian Glover, the centre, has played in several games for Lancashire. Tom Conroy played his early games for the Wires at Watersheddings. John Coupe, the right-winger, was obtained this season from Whitehaven, so he is well-known to our packman, McCourt.

In the Wires' forwards is Barry Briggs, brother of our half-back, Wilf. Other men who have been doing well for Warrington this season are Keith Ashcroft (late Bradford Northern), Brian Brady, and Peter Carrington, a young hooker who is taking the place of the suspended Dave Harrison. Ken Parr used to be with Rochdale Hornets, Ian Robson is an Australian who has signed this season on a short-term form, while Ray Clark is a local product, in fact, Warrington have made many captures from their amateur league. Everything points to a most interesting match, as Warrington usually play very well here.

## CUP SEMI-FINAL

Leeds, who beat us at Watersheddings, will be playing their Challenge Cup semi-final against Wigan at the Swinton ground next Saturday. There is a 47,000 crowd limit. Both teams will have a huge following, and there is every prospect of a grand game. It is not the first time that a team which has beaten Oldham in previous rounds has gone to Wembley and won the Cup.

It will be of interest to all R.L. followers to hear about suggestions to either brighten up the game or bring about changes which will be of benefit to everyone. The Barrow club are dissatisfied with the present way of match allocation and hope to induce clubs to vote for a new formula.

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This would mean that clubs would have more games, and it would not mean that certain teams would be very infrequent visitors to Craven Park or elsewhere. Fixture fixing in the R.L. is a difficult job. It is completed by Mr. Fallowfield, the R.L. secretary, and is a job full of pitfalls.

Where there are soccer teams in the area, Mr. Fallowfield has to avoid date clashing. It does not always work out that way, but the attempt has to be made. The Barrow club will bring their scheme before the notice of the annual meeting. One of the snags seems to be the number of games which clubs have to play. The R.L. Challenge Cup and the County Challenge Cup, plus the county and international fixtures take a good deal out of the players.

## DEVALUATION

Another suggestion is to devalue the drop goal. At one time drop goals were a rarity. But after the four tackle rule was introduced and the change in the penalty law, drop-goaling became part and parcel of almost every game. Now some people want the goal to value one point instead of two. Some people claim that it would be less confusing and easier to follow if the try equalled two points and the goal one. Well, we shall see, but with so many changes happening in R.L. since the war, it has taken quite a lot of study to keep up with the alterations. We don't think there is much wrong with the game at the moment.

## WHAT OUR READERS SAY Wembley is a Must

Receipts at last year's Wembley Challenge Cup final were a record. The takings topped those of the previous year, which were £50,500, and in May we are likely to hear that new figures have been set up.

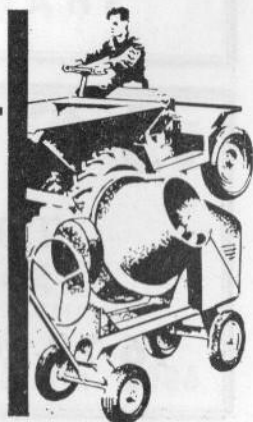
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- 10—FLETCHER, G.
- 11—McCOURT, C.
- 12—IRVING, R.
- 13—HUGHES, A.

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  - 7—GORDON
  - 8—ASHCROFT
  - 9—CARRINGTON
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Rugby League followers must appreciate that the South is now conscious that there is another rugby game apart from the Union code. Therefore, the demand for tickets for the final increases and the folk in the South, even the R.U. minded people, make annual applications.

All stand tickets for the final were disposed of many months ago, and I'm told that there are already applications in for reservations for the 1969 final! This will astound a lot of folk who think that the game is dying out.

I think that the demand for tickets will in time exceed the supply and I don't mean just for seats. I am expecting more Southern people to make a regular trip to this mighty Middlesex venue. If R.L. could get a real hold in the South, then Northern folk would have a real job in getting a final ticket.

The indications are that Cup final tickets will become almost as precious as those for a Soccer final. There are now about ten amateur teams operating in the South, most of them in the London area.

If the Southern Amateur League should get more members, then it is only natural that the players will be keen to see their "big brothers" in action on what is one of the game's chief showpieces.

The admission fees have risen in the last season or so, and I'm expecting that all the 30 professional clubs will show about £5,000 from the Cup pool. This is quite a windfall to those clubs who operate on a shoestring and whose attendances have fallen below the previous season.

I'm also told from an official angle that besides the increase in admission fees, the B.B.C. are paying more for the T.V. and radio rights.

It has to be remembered that the Wembley authorities take quite a cut from the R.L. gate. But let us face up to the fact that the Northern League just could not house the same number of people that Wembley can accommodate.

We saw the first 100,000 gate for the first time in a Northern venue—at Odsal, Bradford, in 1954. That was a day when many people did not see the game. Wembley has come to stay in the sporting calendar, but I'm afraid that the way things are going, the sporting touts are going to have a ball at the expense of the week in, week out enthusiasts. It's unfair, but what can one do about it?

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## More "Sevens" Among Junior Players

Examining the sporting columns of one of the nation's more serious daily newspapers this week, I noted with more than passing interest comprehensive details about seven-a-side tournaments organised for junior and senior Rugby Union players. The number of teams taking part in such competitions must run into thousands and the tourneys are becoming so popular that I understand there may be some restriction in the near future.

Apparently, Rugby Union sevens are held throughout the year, but the majority of them take place as a wind-up for the season.

Why cannot R.L. do something on these lines? If Lancashire Schools R.U. teams can take part in ever-increasing numbers, isn't this a threat to the amateur organisation which has the R.L. blessing?

I know that in certain parts of South-West Lancashire schools have dropped Soccer and taken up R.L. Now the tendency is to play R.U. So here again R.L. is on the losing end. Let me give you another example. A R.U. club wishing to build up its membership offered young rugby players (under 16, of course) a chance to take part in a fixture and at the same time made it possible for them to receive equipment for the day's match.

The response was so great that the club has enough players for three matches. Now, instead of one colts' team, they have three, and most of the players were recruited from Rugby League playing schools.

I'm reminded by a schoolmaster that in most of the Grammar Schools and also the Public Schools there are sportsmasters whose duty it is to make arrangements for R.U. and other fixtures, while the Secondary Modern School teacher has to spend most of his own spare time in the interests of sport-loving youngsters.

If R.L. had two or three full-time coaches looking after the interests of the schoolboys the whole movement would be stronger. This is no reflection on the men who fought hard for the English Schools R.L. to gain recognition.

ONLOOKER.

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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'poned
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 2-2b	Feb. 3 (S)	Hunslet (RL Cup Rd 1)	Away	W 9-4
.. 16 (S)	Rochdale H.	Home	W 13-12	.. 14 (W)	Batley	Home	
.. 23 (S)	Whitehaven	Away	W 24-12	.. 17 (S)	Widnes	Home	
.. 30 (S)	Wigan	Home	L 13-17	.. 24 (S)	(2)		
Oct. 3 (Tu)	Hull K.R.	Home	L 7-9	Mar. 1 (F)	Rochdale H.	Away	
.. 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	
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'poned				
.. 16 (S)	St. Helens	Away	L 2-10				
.. 26 (Tu)	Swinton	Away	L 18-22				

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