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Brian Batty of the Mail

Harry Poole has endured more than his fair share of disappointment in his career as a player and a coach but, at last, his enthusiasm is being rewarded.

The prospect of a Wembley trip for his club Castleford is now beckoning and Poole can claim to have played a large part in the revival at Wheldon Road.

The coach has to answer for his team's displays and their general attitude in the dressing room — and there is little wrong in either of those departments.

"We owe a lot to Harry Poole for the wonderful spirit and determination among the boys", says Castleford skipper Brian Lockwood.

Poole, former Great Britain loose forward, looks a tough guy even though he's greying at the temples and he's never been known to shirk a challenge.

He wasn't recognised by the international selectors until he was 30 and that was two years after he thought his career had been ended by a broken leg and displaced ankle bone.

But the doctors used a bolt in his ankle to help him win a 12-month fight back, crowned when he was called up to captain Britain against France in 1965.

He was appointed skipper of the 1966 tour party to Australia but again injury prevented him playing in a Test and he broke an arm 12 months later, ending his career at Leeds.

The outcome was a short trip down the road to Parkside to become Hunslet coach before joining Castleford two years ago.

"It was tough taking over at Castleford to start with for there were quite a lot of problems to live with", he recalls.

"Then we lost our first four matches this season and the fans were after my blood, but I thought I would stick it out until the end of the season.

"If I hadn't done so well then I would have packed it in and gone on the terraces to watch for I couldn't turn my back on this game.

"I find it a lot tougher as a coach than when I played. I never worried before a game but now I'll walk around town for an hour looking in every shop window to take my mind off the match.

"Normally I would smoke about six cigarettes at work but I can go through about 20 on a match day. It's agony at times but I wouldn't miss it for the world.

"There's nothing to touch a Rugby League game and I feel grateful to be part of a successful club."

Around the League with - DAVE PARKER

Poor old Martin Murphy, Oldham full-back; he has decided to part with his prosperous window cleaning business because the doctor has ruled him out of action for another six to eight weeks. Martin, who has a round in his native Leigh, fractured his wrist in the cup tie at Hull, and with not having a partner cannot clean his customers' panes.

York are interested in Castleford reserve forward Terry Biscombe, who could only make the substitutes' bench for an "A" team match at Keighley last week. They are unlikely to pay the Wheldon Road club the full £750 they are asking for his services.

St. Helens are carefully watching the career of Huyton's 24-year-old prop forward Bob Goulding, who is rated the best prospect at No. 8 for some time in Lancashire, and that takes in Rochdale Hornets' Eddie Brown, who is hoping to get away from the Athletic Grounds now that his fee has been cut from £7,000 to £5,000.

Whitehaven still owe Barrow £2,000 for craggy second row forward John "Spanky" McFarlane, transferred to the Cumberland club some 18 months ago for a £3,000 fee.

Stan Gittens, Swinton and former Batley full-back, who has played only 20 minutes' rugby in the past five months after dislocating a shoulder in October and then dislocating an ankle in November, has made a very good recovery and hopes to make an appearance with the Swinton "A" team this weekend.

Hull K.R. have welcomed back their controversial former international and county hooking star Peter Flannagan after his one month suspension from the club for failing to put in an appearance for training prior to the match with Bradford Northern in the second round of the Cup.

Bradford Northern are keeping their fingers crossed that Barry Seabourne will be fit to resume activities prior to April 7th, the date for their semi-final clash with Dewsbury.

Rochdale Hornets played a trialist centre in their team at Wakefield last weekend from the Rosslyn Park Club, London. He made quite an impressive first team debut after helping out the "A" team in previous weeks. He has played for his county 19 times.

Believe it or not but Salford's reserve players are on £15 for a win in the Lancashire Combination. Recent forward signing Barry Kear from Featherstone, who still travels through to the Weaste with Johnny Ward and Terry Rawshaw, proudly showed off his pay slip for an "A" team match with Wigan and a first team win over Widnes all in the space of four days, and he drew £42 after tax.

Blackpool Borough are breathing a sigh of relief after parting with backs Terry Cassidy and Tommy Warburton owing to their acute financial situation. To pay for after the match goodies and booze the directors each chip in a fiver at home matches.

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Warrington List of Honours

Founder members of the Rugby League in 1895.

Ground: Wilderspool.

Colours: White with blue and gold hoop.

Attendance record: 34,304, Lancashire Cup Final, Wigan v Leigh, 1949-50.

Goal and points record: 165 goals, 14 tries, 372 points. Harry Bath, 1952-53.

Tries record: 66. Brian Bevan, 1952-53, 1954-55.

Record win: 78-3 v St. Helens, 1908-09.

Record defeat: 14-68 v Hunslett, 1927-28.

League Champions: 1947-48, 1953-54, 1954-55.

Runners-up: 1925-26, 1934-35, 1936-37, 1948-49, 1950-51, 1960-61.

Challenge Cup winners: 1904-05, 1906-07, 1949-50, 1953-54.

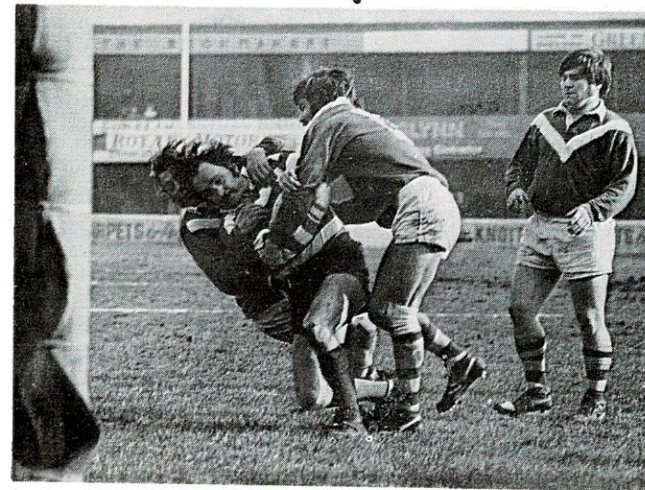
Runners-up: 1900-01, 1903-04, 1912-13, 1927-28, 1932-33, 1935-36.

Lancashire Cup winners: 1921-22, 1929-30, 1932-33, 1937-38, 1959-60, 1965-66.

Runners-up: 1906-07, 1948-49, 1950-51, 1967-68.

Lancashire League winners: 1937-38, 1947-48, 1948-49, 1950-51, 1953-54, 1954-55, 1955-56, 1967-68.

Runners-up: 1921-22, 1934-35, 1940-41, 1951-52, 1964-65.





Spotlight on Chris O'Brien

Chris O'Brien has come up the hard way. One of a family of eight, seven boys and one girl, Chris was born 22 years ago in Newtown, not far from the heart of Cardiff's dockland area.

At school, in the land where rugby is a legend, he was a scrum-half, but quit the game after two years to concentrate on a sport in which he made for himself in those early days — cross-country running.

He represented his school, Cardiff Schools, and then Cardiff Youths in the long-distance running events, but during the loneliness of the long-distance runner he still dreamt of the day when he might gain fame in rugby football.

On leaving school, Chris went back to the 15-a-side code with Fairwater R.U.F.C., a junior club on the outskirts of Cardiff.

He still fancied his chances behind the pack as a scrum-half, but because they needed a winger more than a half-back, and because he had a fair turn of speed, Chris was groomed as a wingman.

He progressed steadily and twice had trials with the famous Cardiff club before getting an invitation to have a trial with Abertillery.

Before the big day dawned, however, he saw Oldham's advertisement for promising material in the South Wales newspapers.

"I jumped at the chance to make a new life and a new profession in the paid game, and couldn't get my letter off quickly enough", says Chris, now settled happily in his home on Sholver with his wife Angela and his two-year-old daughter, Julie Ann.

Yet, as happens with many youngsters, it was only a sporting quirk of fate which saw him settle for the oval ball game in preference to boxing.

"As a teenager I used to do a lot of amateur boxing, and I could take care of myself fairly well", he reflects. "I liked rugby, too, of course, but one night I didn't feel like going along to the gym, and my interest in boxing gradually waned as my love of rugby began to develop into something more than just a Saturday runabout."

Now, having established a place on Oldham's left wing, life is looking a little rosier for Chris and his family.

But it hasn't always been that way. As he battled to settle in Oldham, with all the problems involved in uprooting a young family from home and finding a job in a new part of the country, he had the added burden of a family tragedy when one of his brothers was lost at sea.

But back to the beginning . . . and his first appearance at Watersheddings in a pre-season trial before the commencement of last season.

O'Brien did sufficiently well in that trial to convince Oldham that he was worth bringing back north again to play a series of games in the "A" team.

At the completion of those trials, Oldham decided they had seen enough of the Welshman to sign him up "as a player for the future: one with potential".

So it was that on a wet, muggy November day in 1971 Chris, his wife and baby daughter left their home in Cardiff for the hardships of industrial Lancashire . . . and there were plenty of those as the O'Briens settled into their new life.

Chris has made no secret of the fact that, at various times, both he and his wife have suffered from homesickness, and only two months ago he sought a chat with coach Graham Starkey about his future because the O'Briens felt his progress was hardly sufficient to compensate for their worries at home.

Angela, for instance, left a good job behind in Cardiff, but could not get work here because there were no relatives close at hand to look after baby Julie Ann.

But in sport a matter of weeks can change a situation completely, and that's just what's happened with the case of Chris.

After a series of good "A" team games, he was taken along to Hull as a reserve for the second round Challenge Cup tie, and got his big chance when it was decided not to risk Norman Hodgkinson because of injury.

Because of Chris's inexperience, the versatile Tommy Davies got the left-wing spot, but when Martin Murphy was injured, and Davies moved to full-back, Chris took his big chance with both hands, scoring a splendid try from half-way, similar to that which he scored against Barrow ten days ago.

He kept the left-wing spot for the next match at Widnes, but then stepped down again as Hodgkinson came back at Castleford in the third round.

But the Barrow match saw O'Brien back in the picture, and as his confidence develops with more first-team football he is clearly going to provide a strong challenge for a regular spot on Oldham's flank.

"At last, we're settling in well now", said Chris last week, and all Oldham fans will be glad to hear that.





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OLDHAM 11

- 1—DAVIES T
- 2—ELLIOTT M. *try*
- 3—LARDER P. *4 goals*
- 4—WAINWRIGHT T.
- 5—O'BRIEN C.
- 6—HILL C.
- 7—McCONE M.
- 8—WILSON K.
- 9—TAYLOR K.
- 10—FOSTER F.
- 11—IRVING R.
- 12—HALL F.
- 13—FARRELL J.

- 14—DALEY A.
- 15—ASHCROFT K.

Referee
W. H. THOMPSON
(Huddersfield)



WARRINGTON 12

- 1—WHITEHEAD D.
- 2—~~NOONAN D.~~ *try* *CURLING*
- 3—~~REYNOLDS F.~~ *NOONAN*
- 4—PICKUP B.
- 5—GRANT J. *try*
- 6—MURPHY A. *2 goals*
- 7—GORDON P.
- 8—CHISNALL D.
- 9—ASHCROFT K. *goal*
- 10—BRADY B.
- 11—WANBON B.
- 12—GASKELL J.
- 13—BRIGGS B.

- 14—PHILBIN M.
or *CURLING D.*
- 15—WRIGHT G.

Touch Judges
J. Casey (St. Helens) Red
B. Baker (Wigan) Orange

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OUR VISITORS . . .

WARRINGTON

One of the problems facing league leaders Warrington is who to leave out of their side, so strong is their current first team squad. This problem is no more evident than it is in the full-back position where Derek Whitehead has recently been forced onto the wing by the challenge of Kevin Hindley. Whitehead began his professional rugby career with his native Swinton before moving to Oldham in September 1968. In his first season at Watersheddings he landed 115 goals to become a firm favourite with the crowd, and many supporters expressed regret when he moved to Wilderspool for £4,500. In 1970-71 Whitehead made his Great Britain debut when he played in both French tests and again last season he represented Britain against the successful Kiwi tourists. This season he has been an important member of Warrington's team and he looks certain to kick more than the 110 goals he landed last season for his tally has already reached the 107 mark.

Whitehead, however, has a strong rival for the full-back position in 20-year-old Kevin Hindley, a player Warrington snapped up from Wigan R.U.F.C. He too is a useful goal-kicker as was shown in the 55-17 defeat of Barrow when he landed 11 goals.

With former Oldham player Whitehead leading Warrington's goal-kicking lists another former Oldham player, Wilf Briggs, heads their try-scoring charts with 19, and he has also landed 11 goals. Although a native of Warrington, Briggs first came to notice whilst playing with Leigh and it was in February 1968 that he moved to Oldham as part of the deal which took Tommy Warburton to Hilton Park. The following season, 1968-69, he scored 26 tries for Oldham, but then he faded from the Watersheddings scene and it came as no great surprise when, in October 1971, he moved to Warrington for £1,250. Briggs' best performance this season came in his side's 31-20 home League victory over Hull when he crossed for three tries as well as landing four goals.

Another player Oldham will have to watch this evening is slightly built flyer Dennis Curling who turned professional last August from his home town Aberavon R.U.F.C. On the other wing will probably be John Hart, whilst equally at home whether at centre or on the wing is Derek Noonan.

Probably Warrington's hardest running back is Frank Reynolds, the Swansea born 26-year-old who joined the Wire in July 1971 from Llanelli R.U.F.C. Last week Warrington strengthened their half-backs when they paid out £1,500 to Swinton for Mike Philbin. Philbin, who was Swinton's substitute in this season's Lancashire Cup Final, was formerly with Blackbrook Juniors before joining the Lions.

This half-back signing has started rumours concerning the retirement of Alec Murphy, the 34-year-old Warrington player-coach who, without doubt, is still the rugby league's biggest personality. Murphy joined St. Helens from the local junior league way back in 1955 and three years later he toured Australia when he made the first of his 29 Test appearances for Great Britain. In 1958 he was a member of the British team which scored a 50-15 victory over the French and in this game he cantered over for four tries (Bernard Ganley kicked ten goals that afternoon). After winning every medal available, Murphy joined Leigh in June 1967 and in five seasons he lifted them into a lofty league placing as well as winning the Challenge Cup, the Lancashire Cup and the Floodlit Cup trophies. In May 1971 Murphy was again on the move when Warrington paid £5,000 for his services, and again he began to lift his club from the doldrums. Oldham supporters will be hoping to see a last glimpse of Murphy this evening, for although in the twilight of a most amazing career he still commands respect and all critics agree, without exception, that he has been the greatest half-back of all time.

The regular scrum-half for several seasons at Warrington has been evergreen Parry Gordon who was signed from Wigan R.U.F.C. He has represented both Lancashire and England Under-24 and in 1968-69 he scored 22 tries.

Although the Warrington backs are a formidable combination, it is up front in the pack where Warrington's main strength lies. At hooker is Kevin Ashcroft, who is having a great season, having landed three goals and scored 13 tries. A native of Newton-le-Willows, Ashcroft's first league club was Dewsbury, and from there he moved to Leigh via Rochdale Hornets. He has represented Great Britain on several occasions including the World Cup Competitions of 1968 and 1970 and he also has represented Lancashire. Last July he was transferred to Warrington for £7,000 and he has continued to give full-blooded, wholehearted displays whilst in the Warrington jersey.

As cover for the vital hooking spot Warrington have former England amateur George Herd who turned professional in July 1971 from United Glassblowers. At prop forward is the experienced Brian Brady who worked his way up through the Warrington Colts side before turning professional in 1963 and he has since represented Lancashire. Barry Briggs has recently returned to Warrington after a spell playing in the Sydney leagues. He arrived back in England last November but he was unable to make the first team until January when he played in that bitter 7-4 first round Cup victory at Halifax.

One of the fastest props in the game is Dave Chisnall, the former Parr junior who signed for Leigh in 1968. After first representing Lancashire, Chisnall was selected for the highly successful 1970 Tour when he played in one Test Match against Australia. On returning from that trip he found himself in the British World Cup squad, although he only played in the match against New Zealand. At the beginning of last season Chisnall moved to Warrington for a hefty £6,500 fee and although his only representative honour since has been one game for Lancashire, he has continued to get a star rating amongst the Wilderspool faithfuls.

Another great favourite down Warrington way is the great second row forward Brian Gregory who this season won his first representative honours when he was chosen to play in both Lancashire's County Championship games. He was signed from the Wigan Junior League and this season has already crossed for 14 tries.

Leading the Welsh contingent in the Warrington pack is 23-year-old Clive Jones who joined Warrington from Aberavon R.U.F.C. last August. One month after signing Jones, Warrington returned to the same South Wales club for the dashing Mike Nicholas, who is quickly becoming the discovery of the season.

The fourth former Aberavon R.U.F.C. player on the Warrington register is Bobby Wanbon who, after representing both Glamorgan and Wales at Rugby Union, turned professional with St. Helens in January 1968. The following season he represented Wales at Rugby League and in 1969-70 he played in all four Welsh matches against the English and French. It was in September 1971 that Wanbon was transferred to Warrington and his high work rate makes him the backbone of the Warrington pack.

As can be seen Warrington have real strength in depth throughout their first team squad and tonight Oldham will have to pull something special out of the bag if they are to knock Warrington out of their determined strides for the League Leader's Trophy.

Even if Warrington were to taste defeat this evening they would still remain favourites to top the league for they have lost only two league games all season and they have won 20 of the remaining 21. Their two defeats were suffered at the hands of St. Helens (15-11, away) and a shock 17-5 home defeat by Rochdale Hornets. The drawn match was against Leigh 6-6, but there have been creditable away wins at Rochdale 26-10, Whitehaven 12-11 and Swinton 17-14, whilst at home there have been spectacular victories against Whitehaven 58-9, Barrow 55-17 and Huyton 44-5.

In Cup football Warrington have rather disappointed their huge following who have expected at least one of the knock-out trophies finishing up at Wilderspool. In the Lancashire Cup a late try saw St. Helens through by 18-16 in the first round at Wilderspool whilst in the first hurdle of the Floodlit Cup Widnes drew 18-18 at Wilderspool before finishing Warrington off 14-11 in the replay. The John Player Trophy brought an even bigger disappointment to Warrington for they lost at Huddersfield 23-15. Warrington had a little longer run in the Challenge Cup with a first round win at Halifax (7-4) and a revenge 20-8 defeat of Widnes. However, in the quarter-finals Featherstone Rovers were able to win at Wilderspool a little more easily than the 18-14 scoreline suggests, so with a determined effort tonight we could witness the third league defeat of the season for our illustrious guests.

Parry Gordon who was signed from Wigan R.U.F.C. He has represented both Lancashire and England Under-24 and in 1968-69 he scored 22 tries.

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DEWSBURY 17 OLDHAM "B" 6

Oldham visited Dewsbury intent on doing a double but found a vastly different Yorkshire side than that which they defeated last week. Both sides played excellent rugby but Dewsbury took their chances better to score three tries. With a little more luck Oldham could have had the game won in the first ten minutes when Deakin, Glover and Elson went close, but the Yorkist tackling was superb.

The first try came to Dewsbury when their stand-off and captain cut past Royales to send their heavyweight forwards battering at the Oldham line. Oldham panicked and in the confusion Dewsbury went over for a converted try. This try was against the run of play, as was the second. A speculative kick bounced back towards the advancing Dewsbury ranks for them to collect and score an easy try.

Whitmore, who was being marked tightly, kicked two penalty goals.

Oldham hit back hard in the second half with strong runs from Tasker and Glover, but when Byram was injured and had to retire Dewsbury got on top. Tremendous cover tackling by Buckley saved the day. Whitmore, Glover and Chiverall combined well to put Connel away. Whitmore kicked another goal and Oldham were in striking distance.

Despite a great tackle by young full-back Anglin on his debut, Dewsbury wrapped it up with another converted try to win a very exciting game.

Summer Programme for Pools Agents

During the close season it is planned to have three get-togethers for Pools Agents. These will serve the purpose of keeping in touch whilst there is no rugby. No definite plans have been made as to dates and form, but you can be sure we shall endeavour to make them entertaining and enjoyable.

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1972		F.	A.
Aug.	19—Huddersfield	A	25—7
	23—Whitehaven	H	30—13
	26—Workington T.	H	19—5
	28—York	A	32—8
Sept.	1—Salford. Lancs. Cup	A	17—41
	10—Hull	H	27—2
	17—Huyton	A	25—13
	23—Play. No. 6 1st R.	A	10—17
	29—Wigan	A	12—9
Oct.	3—Salford (Fl. Cup)	H	12—8
	7—St. Helens	H	12—2
	14—Workington T.	A	10—17
	22—Widnes	H	17—18
Nov.	4—Huddersfield	H	7—7
	7—Castleford F.C.	H	9—7
	12—Huyton	H	22—0
	17—Hull	A	17—14
	25—Wigan	H	11—6
Dec.	1—St. Helens	A	10—24
	5—Leigh F.Cup. Semi		8—10
	10—Salford	H	12—14
	17—Dewsbury	A	16—12
	24—Leigh	H	24—4
	26—Rochdale H.	A	14—16
	31—Warrington	A	10—20
1973			
Jan.	6—Whitehaven	A	0—9
	14—York	H	
	19—Barrow	A	
	27—Barrow Ch. Cup 1st Rd.	H	
Feb.	4—Leigh	A	
	11—Blackpool B.	H	
	17—Chal. Cup 2nd Rd.		
	25—Widnes	A	
Mar.	4—Warrington	H	
	11—Barrow	H	
	18—Blackpool B.	A	
Apr.	1—Dewsbury	H	
	8—Swinton	H	
	21—Swinton	A	
	23—Rochdale	H	

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