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OLDHAM OUTLOOK

We intend to start a Colts team next season. A lot of work has still to be done to guide the plan off the drawing board and into practice, as it were, but we are sure we will be aiming in the right direction by re-forming the sort of youth team which we had some years ago.

It was abandoned, you may remember, largely because of the lack of players within the age group. But we now feel we are in a position to act once more along these lines although many decisions have still to be made concerning the running of the Colts side.

There is more to this than meets the eye. Training for instance, has to be organised so that it does not affect the first and "A" team sessions which are normally held on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Should the colts turn up on the same nights? Could we accommodate them properly if they did? Or would it be more advantageous to them to come on different nights when they would have the exclusive use of our facilities?

All these questions will be answered shortly but first of all we have to appoint a man to take charge of the Colts team and we hope to be in a position to make an announcement in the not-too-distant future.

One thing we can say with a certain amount of reliability is that the coach will be a local man. We feel it is essential that a man looking after an Oldham Colts team should do so from within the town and that will be very, very high on our list of priorities.

We feel there is a tremendous amount of untapped talent in the Oldham area and that the supply will increase year by year as the game picks up both in the schools and among the amateur clubs at both local and national levels.

Our future lies here and we feel that the re-formation of a Watersheddings colts side will be the first step towards ensuring that, that future is a bright one.

As you may be aware, each committee man at Oldham now has specific duties to perform and the man with a special interest in this venture is Mr. Jack Bowden.

Today we welcome Doncaster to Watersheddings for what is our penultimate home game of the season and the last on a Sunday.

Our one other remaining home match is against York which will take place a week on Wednesday evening, April 12th with a 7.30 pm. kick-off.

Next Sunday we make the long trek to Whitehaven, followed by the home game against York on the Wednesday and then we finish off at Halifax the following Sunday.

Though our promotion chances are now very slim we are mathematically still in with a chance and it is up to us to win all our remaining matches to put some pressure on those clubs who are better placed than ourselves.

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OUR VISITORS BY DON YATES

Although the Oldham players and staff will not give up their fight for promotion until it is mathematically impossible for them to go up, the mixed results over Easter virtually ended their top four hopes and left the club facing another season in Division Two.

In contrast to Oldham, their visitors this afternoon, Doncaster are enjoying their best season since 1968-69 when they ended the season in 24th position after winning 11 matches. So far this season they have recorded nine victories, which is more than they have won in the past four seasons put together, and so they are sure to end this campaign away from the bottom position which they have occupied at the end of the past three seasons. Although Doncaster have never won at Watersheddings they come here this afternoon with a certain amount of confidence for they have already won five league matches on their opponents grounds with those victories coming at Halifax 15-5, Blackpool 22-7, Swinton 32-25, Keighley 21-13 and their best result of all, a 17-16 victory over Rochdale Hornets at the Athletic Grounds. Despite these encouraging statistics it must be noted that Doncaster have also had their share of disappointments and have suffered double defeats at the hands of Leigh, Barrow, Huddersfield, York and Batley with Huddersfield emphasizing their superiority by winning 44-10 at Fartown and then by 31-8 at Tatters Field. Oldham, too, have beaten Doncaster twice this season for prior to February's 21-7 cup success Oldham had won a league game at Doncaster by 18-3 although it was not until late in the game that Oldham were able to make sure of victory which indicates the extent of Doncaster's recent improvement.

One of the stars of the Doncaster revival this season is 17-stone London born prop Tony Banham whose try against Oldham here at Watersheddings in the Challenge Cup was his eleventh touchdown of the season. Earlier this year Banham was hoping to break his club's try scoring record which stands at 17 but with his tally still on the 11 mark he now looks unlikely to collect the required seven in the five matches remaining. Twenty-six-years old Banham is now enjoying his second spell at Tatters Field for after joining Doncaster from Keighley he was allowed to move to Hull in November 1974 but could not command a regular first team spot at the Boulevard so, after a period on loan to York, he returned to Doncaster last September. His form since has been most impressive but so, too, has that of high scoring winger Graham Beale who began the season in amateur rugby with Lock Lane before joining Doncaster last November. He made his debut at Rochdale and marked the occasion by landing four goals in Doncaster's shock 17-16 victory and has gone on to record more than 60 points since with his best performance coming at Keighley last month when he scored 15 points with a try and six goals.

Doncaster now occupy eighth position in the league table, just three places below Oldham and their recent form indicates that they will once again prove to be formidable opponents for an Oldham side who, although starting favourites, must be on their toes in order to win and so record their fifth double league victory of the season.

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- 5 LUND, S.
- 6 BATES, A.
- 7 RADCLIFFE, I. *T*
- 8 CHARLES, C.
- 9 O'MAHONEY, R. *2T*
- 10 HUGHES, B. *T*
- 11 FORSTER, A.
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- 6 IRWIN, J.
- 7 HANLEY, K.
- 8 LOWE, R.
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Brian Batty

Two completely contrasting items of news from China are sure to have captured interest among Rugby League fans - and sheep farmers - from Workington to Woollongong.

Let's hope that it is a sign of progress on both counts.

Along with the news that Chinese herdsmen claimed to have produced a new breed of sheep which can yield pure black wool comes the revelation that their country is interested in Rugby League.

The Aussies will have double interest - sporting and national - for they have never seriously rated the Chinese All Blacks up to now.

But, seriously though, it will pay Rugby League to offer the Chinese all the help they need in investigating the possibility of trying our sport.

League officials David Oxley and David Howes are ready to help foster any possible relationship with the Chinese as they have been doing with America's Mike Mayer.

The first move has been made by a lecturer at the English Embassy in Peking.

He has written to League headquarters in Leeds asking for information on the game.

'What appeals to the lecturer is that League is better suited to the Chinese physique,' says official Howes.

'There is, of course, the strong feeling that the Japanese might be better off playing League rather than Union.

'After all, they would not be at such a great disadvantage as they are in the line-outs with their lack of size.

Well, I can't see the Chinese being any smaller than the Papuans who play the game in New Guinea and are still hoping to make an impression at international level one day.

I am sure the Chinese would actually produce the stronger player of the two countries and they would want to win at all costs if the sport got a hold of them.

MAN IN THE MIDDLE

This afternoon's match will be refereed by Trevor Court of Leeds who will be 32-years old later this month. He has been refereeing since 1972 and reached Grade One status in 1975. Mr. Court is married with two children and is a schoolteacher by profession. He has a great interest in schools rugby league and also enjoys badminton and table tennis. Last season he refereed the Lancashire versus Cumbria County match.

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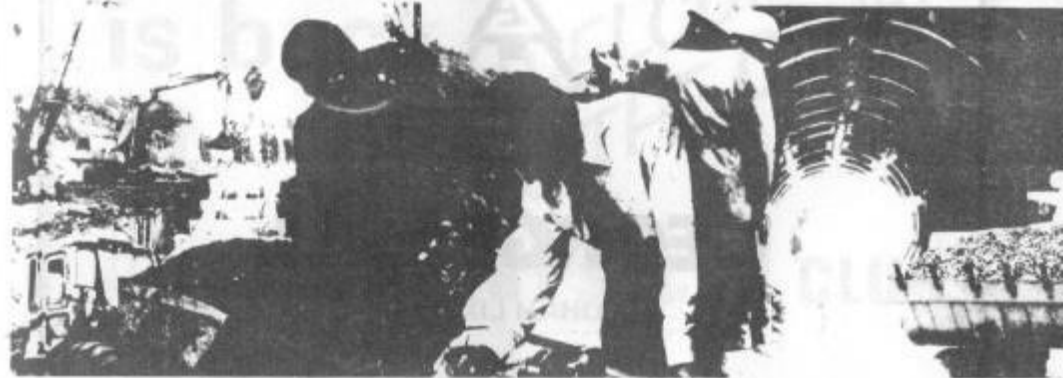
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Sunday 2nd April

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