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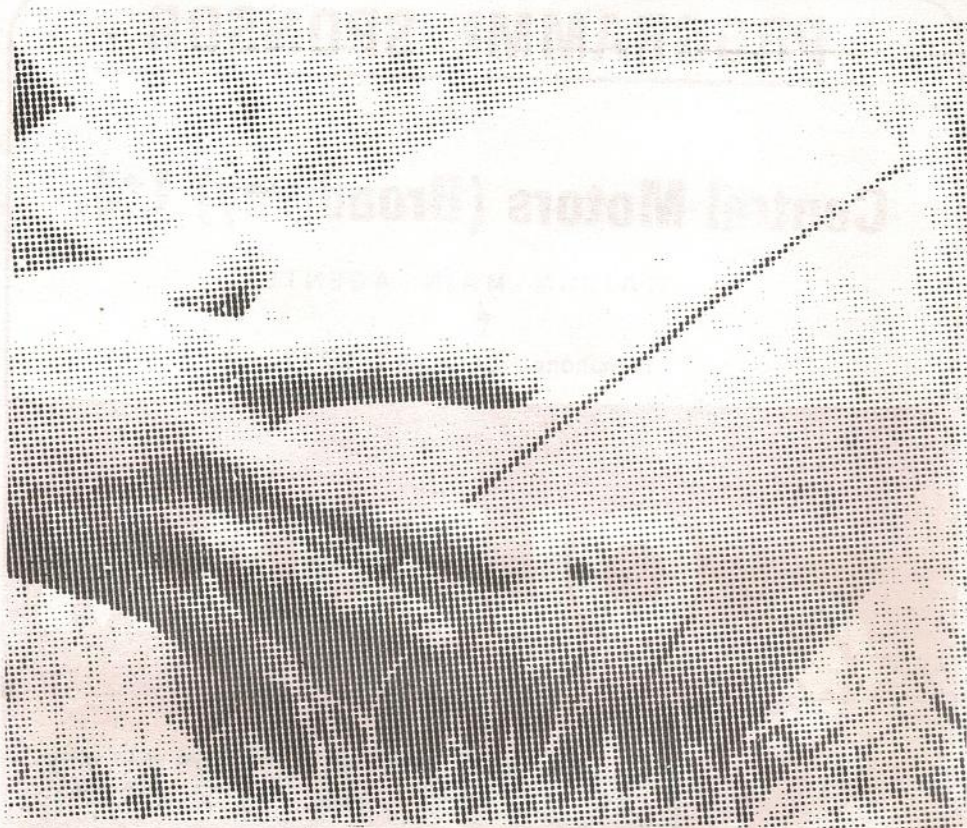


10p

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Runners-up: 1908-09, 1910-11, 1911-12, 1919-20, 1923-24 and 1954-55.

Lancashire Shield winners: 1975-76.

OLDHAM OUTLOOK

THERE was a flurry of activity at Watersheddings shortly before last week-end's signing deadline at midnight on the Saturday.

Officials spent a hectic 48 hours leading up to deadline midnight and they succeeded in signing Swinton prop Dennis Ashcroft and Leigh's Welsh back-row man Clive Jones in a double coup.

We do not reveal transfer fees paid that is club policy but a "substantial" fee was paid for Ashcroft and a "reasonable" fee for Jones, both of whom went straight into the pack at Blackpool last Sunday.

To lose to a last-minute try at Borough Park was a bitter disappointment after all the activity of the previous two or three days.

But it takes time to blend any pack of forwards and it has to be remembered that both Dennis and Clive had not even trained with their new mates and even Jim Fiddler had only played three times previously in an Oldham jersey.

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We cordially welcome to the club the two new forwards plus Gary Walczak, the young forward from Rochdaliens RUFC at Littleborough, who joined us this week on professional forms.

Ashcroft is 28 and comes to us from Swinton after spending seven or eight years at Wigan where he was a regular first-team prop.

He is a good handler, experienced scrummager and busy tackler and he is a player whom we inquired about earlier in the season but whom Swinton would not let go at that stage.

Jones is 29 and a former Aberavon and Glamorgan RU player who was one of several Welshmen to come north from Aberavon several years ago.

He had two seasons at Warrington and then moved on to Leigh where he won Welsh RL caps against France, England and New Zealand.

Walczak, aged 24, is a Rochdale school teacher at Wardle High School and has spent all his rugby life with Rochdaliens as a second-row forward.

He stands 6ft. 2ins. and tips the scales at nearly 14½ st. He is a speedy back-row runner and a sound tackler, qualities that several times earned him recognition for the East Lancashire RU representative side.

Though he was signed three days after the deadline we later discovered from headquarters that the deadline applies only to professionals moving from one club to another and not to players signed from amateur RL or Union ranks.

Other players might also have been signed. Right up to the deadline we were negotiating with Featherstone for young second-row man Dave Vickers, who was listed at £6,000.

Vickers had refused the Rovers' request to come off the list and he agreed, in talks with our manager Graham Starkey, to come to Watersheddings.

All that had to be done then was to agree a fee with Rovers. But they stuck out for the full money, having only just picked up more than £20,000 for hooker Keith Bridges from Bradford, and we did not consider it a viable proposition to pay so much for a young and largely untried performer.

We had also considered a move for Mick Nolan, the St. Helens stand-off. Saints would not allow us to take him on trial, however, and we felt we did not know sufficient about him to lay out the cash.

We recognise that still more has to be done and supporters can rest assured that it will be done.

Harvey Ashworth

(PRESIDENT OLDHAM RUGBY LEAGUE FOOTBALL CLUB)

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Our Visitors

DONCASTER, today's visitors to Watersheddings, are currently picking themselves up after the shock of losing their two-man management team last week-end.

Tommy Smales and Dick Lowe, who had been jointly at the Tatters Field helm for a couple of years or so, resigned after the home win against Whitehaven, thus keeping a decision they had made previously.

They resigned because of inconsistent results yet, ironically, their last match in charge saw the Dons beat the Cumbrians 19-10 to pick up their fourth Second Division win of the season but their first since November.

The board have had to re-organise this week. Billy Yates, the "A" team player-coach, has been put in command on a caretaker basis until the end of the season.

He will be assisted by recent full back signing Ian Markham, who will help with the backs, and second-row man Norman Cooper, the first-team skipper, who will help with the forwards.

Whatever the reasons for the resignation of Smales and Lowe there was nothing "inconsistent" about the Dons display against Whitehaven.

They scored five tries to Whitehaven's two and the victory was more convincing than the score suggests.

Full back Markham, very dangerous when linking up, scored two tries, stand-off Jimmy Irwin grabbed two, and centre Gary Brook scored the other.

Brook and Markham are two of several new players to be recruited by Doncaster in recent months.

Markham, aged 28, had been out of the game for two years and the Dons nipped in smartly when he was struck off by Hull KR.

His sound defence and exciting attacking play has added a new dimension to the Dons play, as has that of the versatile Brook, who made his debut against Whitehaven on returning to the club with which he launched his career.

Brook was a one-time half-back partner at Tatters Field of Mick McCone, later to become an Oldham favourite, and he later had spells at Castleford and Halifax before returning to the Dons on loan for a month.

Brook had a grand debut, making the break for the first try and scoring the fourth himself.

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BRIAN BATTY

England have carried off the European championship once again but a lot of people must be wondering what has to be done to capture the interest of the fans at international level.

Not for the first time have the fans failed to respond to the chance to back an international side.

Considering the conditions of snow blocked roads on the Pennines and a dreadful night in Cheshire, Widnes did remarkably well to get 5,000 for the England-Wales match at Naughton Park.

Yet despite all the hard work put in by officials we could only equal this figure for the vital decider between England and France at Warrington.

It is a sad state of affairs and one reason could be that so many fans were totally disillusioned after Great Britain's Third Test flop against Australia at Headingley earlier in the season.

Two other reasons could be that fans are now completely Sunday minded and have other things to occupy them on a Saturday or that they prefer to keep their cash in their pockets to support their clubs.

I know the League would have preferred to have played the decider on a Sunday but with such a huge backlog of fixtures they could not afford to clash with the club programme.

Certainly television could not be blamed for the disappointing attendance and yet I shudder to think how many people we would have got to Wilderspool if the match had been screened.

We have to have international football for the players to compete at a higher level to earn promotion for tours and Tests.

There was so much at stake in the England-France game that I expected at least double the size of crowd. It is a pity when you think of the crowds that roll up for Rugby Union internationals.

They are regarded more as social occasions and yet I think it is fair to say that there was more football from England in the first half alone than in half a dozen games played by their Union namesakes.

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- 15

Referee:
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DONCASTER

- 1 Ian MARKHAM
- 2 Bob HARRISON
- 3 Phil DAVIES
- 4 Gary BROOK
- 5 Stewart PIPER
- 6 Jim IRWIN
- 7 Dennis EDWARDS
- 8 Alan WALKER
- 9 Peter MOODY
- 10 Dave HOSSELL
- 11 Norman COOPER
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Next Friday (11 am), Mayfield of Rochdale take on Saint Anne's of Oldham at Watersheddings in the Final of the Oldham Standard Cup, which is without doubt the most well-known trophy in the Amateur Rugby League world.

This season the Standard Cup is celebrating its 75th anniversary, having been presented to the Oldham Amateur League prior to the 1903-04 season by the former "Oldham Standard News" newspaper, and this season's finalists are well capable of producing one of the best ever deciders in the competition's threequarters-of-a-century existence. Mayfield have reached the Final with victories over Saddleworth Rangers and Ferranti after receiving a bye in Round 1, while Saint Anne's have defeated Langworthy Juniors, Salem Hornets and Shaw.

Both teams are in Division 1 of the Pennine League, with Saint Anne's who have won the trophy for the last 2 seasons, hoping to become only the third side ever to achieve a hat-trick of Standard Cup successes, and with Mayfield being eager to win the Final for the first time since 1975 and also to establish their position as the current leaders of the First Division.

However, the attraction of the Oldham Standard Cup Final is not only the match but also the build-up event, for which the best ever programmes produced for an amateur game are already on sale throughout the town. The Oldham League's "Timed-try" tickets are also available, with £60 being awarded in prizes and with the proceeds going to the local amateur teams. The draws for each round of this season's tournament were again made live on Radio Manchester, who also organised a competition in connection with the Final, and who will be giving a full preview of the Final on their "BARLA Midweek" programme this Wednesday (7.15pm).

The Final is also fully sponsored, with former Oldham Amateur League personalities providing the costs of the match, programme, and match-ball. The Final is being sponsored by Peter Brown and Kevin Geany, who have themselves invited Halifax coach Maurice Bamford to present the Cup on their behalf, while Tommy O'Brien and Sons Building and Demolition Contractors are sponsoring the programmes, and Len Hutton and Son Cleaning Contractors are sponsoring the match-ball. As well as this income, the Oldham League are hoping for a crowd which might beat the record of 6,000 set in 1949, and for the first time produce receipts of over £1,000.

The other local competition to be decided during Easter is the Rochdale League's Riley Cup, with Mayfield "A" facing Spotland Rangers in the Final at the Athletic Grounds, Rochdale, on Easter Monday morning (11.00 am).

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