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## Teams

### OLDHAM

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2. Geoff MUNRO
3. Brian CAFFREY
4. Mick PARRISH
5. Clive SULLIVAN
6. Dennis O'NEILL
7. Ray ASHTON
8. Geoff CLARKSON
9. Dave WALKER
10. Billy HARRIS
11. Alan PLATT
12. Bob MORDELL
13. Terry FLANAGAN (Capt.)

14. Clive HUNTER
15. Steve HERBERT

### BARROW

Blue Shirts/White 'V'  
White Shorts.

1. Dave ELLIOTT
2. Ralph McCONNELL
3. Nigel FRENCH
4. Ian BALL (Capt.)
5. Tony WAINWRIGHT
6. Mel MASON
7. David CAIRNS
8. Dave CHISNALL
9. Howard ALLAN
10. Malcom FLYNN
11. Steve KIRKBY
12. Kevin JAMES
13. Derek HADLEY

14. Mike JAMES
15. Eddie SZYMALA

Referee: G.F. Lindop (Wakefield)

Touch Judges: B. Norbury (Littleborough), R. Tomlinson (Widnes)

**NEXT MATCH AT WATERSHEDDINGS**

Sunday 8th March, 1981 - WARRINGTON



# OLDHAM

V

# BARROW

Watersheddings - Sunday 1st February, 1981.

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**Secretary:** J. Chadwick

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Brian Gartland

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Barry Conner - Leslie Cook - Michael Coombes - Mike Cowley - Pasquale D'Adamo -  
Stephen Dobb - Eric Fitzsimons - Terry Flanagan - Alan Forster - Andrew Goodway -  
Ken Gwilliam - Tony Handforth - Billy Harris - Colin Hawkyard - Steve Herbert - Clive Hunter -  
Clive Jones - Paddy Kirwan - Steve Littler - Paul Lowndes - Ray Martland - Bob Mordell -  
Geoff Munro - Martin Murphy - Gerrard Nolar - Tony Ogden - Ian Ogden - Roger O'Mahoney -  
Mike O'Rourke - Gareth Owen - Mick Parrish - Johnny Patterson - Alan Platt -  
Gordon Pollard - Ian Radcliffe - Warren Ryans - Derrick Seabrook - Clive Sullivan -  
Dave Taylor - Garry Walczak - John Walls - Dave Walker - Joe Warburton - Phil Ward -  
Mike Worrall

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**Official Time Keeper:** J. Roscoe

### CLUB RECORDS

Record Victory	67-6 against Liverpool City April 59
Record defeat	11-67 by Hull K.R. Sept. 78
Record attendance	28,000 v Huddersfield Feb 24th 1912
Record receipts	£4,897 v Leeds 3rd March 1968
Record transfer fee paid	£10,650 to Workington for Ike Southward March 1959
Record transfer fee received	£11,002: 10s from Workington for Ike Southward Jan 62
Record try scorer	Reg Farrar 49 tries 1921/22 season
Record goal scorer	Bernard Ganley 224 goals 1957/58 season
Record point scorer	Bernard Ganley 28 pts v Liverpool City April 59
First game	October 21 1876 v Stalybridge
Highest number of Points Scored	Bernard Ganley 2881
Most Appearances	Joe Ferguson 685
Most Tries	Pre 1900 Jack Hirst 233 Since 1900 Alan Davies 182

### CLUB HONOURS

Rugby League Championship Play-off winners: 1909-10, 1910-11 and 1956-57  
Runners-up: 1906-07, 1907-08, 1908-09, 1921-22 and 1954-55  
First Division Champions: 1904-05  
Second Division Champions: 1963-64  
Rugby League Challenge Cup winners: 1898-99, 1924-25, 1926-27  
Runners-up: 1906-07, 1911-12, 1923-24 and 1925-26  
Lancashire Cup winners: 1907-08, 1910-11, 1913-14, 1919-20, 1924-25, 1933-24,  
1956-57, 1957-58 and 1958-59  
Runners-up: 1908-09, 1911-12, 1918-19, 1921-22, 1954-55, 1966-67 and 1968-69  
Lancashire Championship winners: 1907-08, 1909-10, 1921-22, 1956-57 and 1957-58  
Runners-up: 1908-09, 1910-11, 1911-12, 1919-20, 1923-24 and 1954-55  
Lancashire Shield winners: 1975-76 1979-80  
Colts Premiership Trophy: 1979-80



## BARROW BOUNCE BACK

ONE of the most pleasing aspects of the season so far is the re-emergence of Barrow as a name to conjure with in the Rugby League.

It seems a long, long time since players like Willie Horne, Phil Jackson, Dennis Goodwin, Joe Ball, Frank Castle, Reg Parker and Co were taking the League by storm.

But there was a touch of former glories about Barrow last week-end when the men from Furness met Warrington at Wigan in the final of the Player's Trophy. The fans poured out of Barrow in their thousands with trains, coaches and cars taking the blue and white army to Wigan.

It was just reward for the painstaking efforts of the ambitious Barrow board to revive former glories at Craven Park.

In the past couple of years Barrow have done a lot of recruiting from both League and Union with probably their most notable capture that of centre Ian Ball from top-class Union in the London area.

Son of a former Barrow full back or half-back Ball is a northerner who was reared in the Cowley Grammar School rugby academy of Ray French.

He and another Cowley lad full back Steve Tickle joined Barrow from Union but the unlucky Tickle has missed much of Barrow's glory so far this season because of injury.

Not so Ball. As a brilliant goalkicker and deceptively fast inside back TV fans will long remember his magnificent long-range break that set up a try for Ralph McConnell in the Player's headline-hitting displays and is being freely tipped as a possible for the England team to be picked soon.

Nigel French is another Union man from the London area who could be in the side today but there are doubts about yet another "convert" winger Chris Camelleri who has spent a few weeks on the sidelines after injury.

Camilleri won his first Great Britain Test cap against the New Zealanders last Autumn and he, too, has proved a sound capture.

Mel Mason and David Cairns are a fast and industrious half-back pair while up front Barrow can boast a strong and mobile pack with several players who will take some holding.

Derek Hadley, at loose-forward, is a vastly-underrated footballer whose attacking skills bring out the best in runners such as Steve Kirkby and Kevin James a devastating second-row pair if they are not tackled strongly.

In the front-row Barrow boss Frank Foster, our former pack leader in the early seventies, has the luxury of being able to choose from two experienced hookers in Howard "Smiler" Allen or Eddie Szymala, who is just returning to action after a long injury lay-off.

David Chisnall, the former Leigh and St. Helens prop, could be at No. 8 with Derek Flynn on the blind-side.

All things considered Barrow are a workmanlike and competent side whose confidence will have risen as they progressed to the final of the Player's Trophy.

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## 25% DROP EACH SEASON

**By Roger Halstead**

(Oldham Evening Chronicle)

If it's tough at the top for Rugby League clubs it's heaven help those who are fighting for their first Division survival.

With four clubs going down each season -- 25 per cent of the First Division -- the competition must be one of the toughest in world sport.

No First Division team has a current winning run of more than three league matches and only one point separates the bottom five teams.

The fear of relegation has always been there though it is probably even greater now because of the economic climate.

Most clubs are in deep financial trouble and they dread relegation like the plague. Second Division gates spell even greater financial worry. Financially, Oldham are perhaps a little more secure than most but, nevertheless, they are certainly looking over their shoulders at the Second Division with more than a little trepidation.

The pressures are by no means peculiar to Oldham and of the clubs in the bottom six four have had major changes behind the scenes since the start of the season as they have searched desperately for a winning formula.

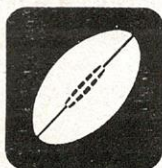
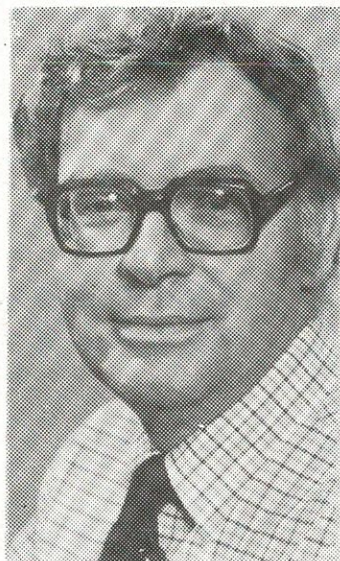
The division is so competitive that any team experiencing ill luck or a bad run of injuries can soon find itself deep in trouble.

Oldham, for instance, have lost five league points through losing the initiative in the dying seconds of matches -- one against Castleford, two against Leeds, two against St. Helens.

Those five points would have put Oldham nearly half-way up the table but survival is not achieved on ifs and buts as any one of seven or eight teams in the bottom half will vouch.

So what is the answer? A return to one division would certainly take off a lot of the pressure but it would merely create many other problems.

Better by far, I believe, to retain benefits of two-division football but to replace the absurd four-up, four-down system of promotion and relegation with a more practical two-up and two-down method.



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## **ALEX RULES O.K.**

**By Alex Givvons**  
(RL Grade 1 Referee)

The Hardy Annual of Suggestions on how to improve the game are again arising in the National Press, and from supporters writing letters to the Rugby Leaguer. I have recently received a number of letters from fans putting the blame fairly and squarely with the referees. I can assure everyone that all referees and members of the Rugby League Council are constantly holding meetings to discuss all phases of the game and how to keep the game attractive whilst applying the law.

Everyone is concerned with scrummaging, but to suggest that the referee alone, by applying the law rigidly can make things perfect is a mistake, and can let a lot of people off the hook. Scrummaging has always been a problem area and over the years many suggestions have been put forward and some tried without success. The scrum was intended to give both teams an equal chance to win the ball (unlike RU). The fact that one team has the head whilst the other has the ball can cause problems. The no-head side want to see the ball therefore the arm is slipped, the pack is then no longer a solid unit.

There are more than 30 offences which can occur at the scrum, therefore the advantage law has been allowed to stay in the rules so that spectators will not see a game constantly punctuated with stoppages and mauls. Possibly referees have been playing "advantage" to much, for a penalty is often of a greater advantage.

Clubs and coaches could also help by practising the art of scrummaging, tight and low, solid pushing, hooker binding etc. I warrant that this is never done.

It may interest fans to know that they do have problems in other countries, but their referees feel that the introduction of the differential penalty has made matters worse, because the deterrent factor of a normal penalty has been removed. We are now seeing a fragrant abuse of the law. The referees solution must be to caution and ultimately dismiss persistent offenders.

The question is, **IS THIS THE ONLY SOLUTION??** Touch judges often come in for abuse through no fault of their own. It is not an easy task and he can often be torn between coming on to much, as opposed to not enough.

The ideal situation is when the officials work as a team of three to spot blatant offences. They have specific instructions to watch, off-the-ball incidents, niggling at the play-the-ball and blind side of the scrum, when a referee can be unsited or watching the ball.

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## SUPPORTERS CLUB NOTES

Anyone wishing to become a member of the Supporters Club can do so at any Canteen or in the Social Club at any time **Price** of membership £1.00

A coach will run to Halifax on Sunday February 8th, leaving at 2.15p.m. **Price:** Adult member £1.20 Adult non-member £1.40 Junior member 80p Junior non-member £1.00.

Challenge Cup at Blackpool on Sunday February 15th, leaving at 1 p.m. **Price:** Adult members £2.40 Adult non-member £2.60 Junior member £1.60 Junior non-member £1.80.

To Hull KR on Sunday February 22nd, leaving at 11 a.m. **Price:** Adult members £3.00 Adult non-member £3.20 Junior member £2.00 Junior non-member £2.00

**Metal Supporters Club Badges** are on sale at **60p**, **Blazer Badges £7.50** each. **Oldham R.L.F.C. Sweaters** sizes are 34, 36, 38, 40 in red, these are priced at **£10** each. **Red & White Rugby Shirts** sizes 30,32 **£6.50** each, 34,36 **£8.75** 40,42 **£10.35**. Red & White **Scarves** at **£1.75**. **Bobhats £1.25** each. **Colts Car Stickers 45p** each. All items can be bought from any canteen or in the Social Club at any time.



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# CLUB NEWS

## OLDHAM SCENE

IT was congratulations time at Watersheddings last week when the Supporters Club made presentations to several players at a function in the Social Club.

\*\* Martin Murphy, our long-serving full back, was presented with a gold watch for breaking the club's post-war appearance record -- a splendid achievement by Martin, whose debut for Oldham was way back in 1966.

\*\* Terry Flanagan, our young captain, was presented with a wallet to mark his achievement in playing twice this season for the Great Britain under-24 side. In each match -- against the New Zealanders and against France in Villeneuve Terry was not only the pack leader but was also the team's vice-captain.

\*\* Gareth Owen misses today's game because he is in France with the Welsh squad that played in Narbonne yesterday. Gareth was named as sub in the original Welsh team but there was a chance that he might have moved into the front-row because of fitness doubts surrounding Glyn Shaw. Gareth, too, received a wallet from the Supporters Club.

\*\* Finally, each of our six colts who were in the Great Britain party for yesterday's match against France at Leeds received a club sweater to mark their international recognition. Derek Seabrook was due to lead the British side which included Alan Platt, Stephen Dobb, Mick Worrall and Mick O'Rourke with Paul Lowndes in the shadow squad.



Presentation time for the Oldham lads in the Social Club as RL Queen Julie Ogden makes the awards on behalf of the Supporters Club. Left to right: Mick O'Rourke, Alan Platt, Paul Lowndes, Gareth Owen, Martin Murphy, Terry Flanagan, Stephen Dobb, Derek Seabrook.

## RELEGATION BATTLE

These notes had to be compiled before the Leeds game on Tuesday night but, at the time of writing, we had 11 First Division games remaining -- eight of them at Watersheddings!

Our only three away games are against Hull KR and relegation rivals Halifax and Leigh.

After Leeds and Barrow we have still to meet at home Warrington, Halifax, Widnes, Wakefield, St. Helens and Salford.

As the programme stands at present we finish off the league season in April with a trio of crucial games here at Watersheddings against Wakefield, Saints and Salford.

It is going to be desperately hard to stay up but with so many games on home ground - and with players now returning after injury absences - we must be in with a chance.

Before the Leeds game we have still lost only two matches at home out of seven played in the First Division this season - to Featherstone and Hull KR.

It is encouraging to note that we drew with table-topping Castleford, beat second-place Bradford, and also beat Leigh, Workington and Hull.

If we can continue that sort of home run all is not yet lost - and the players certainly will be doing all in their power to haul themselves clear of the relegation zone.

## TRANSFER DEADLINE

The deadline for signings before the Challenge Cup is noon on Monday, February 9th and, as always, activity has increased among the clubs as the date looms ever closer.

Our own Bob Blackwood, listed at £15,000, has gone to Workington on trial and hooker Tony Handforth has gone to Bradford under a similar arrangement. Geoff Clarkson has been listed at £9,000 at his own request but the committee has rejected a plea by Phil Ward for a reduction in his £5,000 fee.

Whitehaven have agreed to extend Dennis O'Neill's loan spell with us until the deadline as a result of Dennis having to miss a match because of a groin injury.

## BLACKPOOL TIE

THE Challenge Cup first-round tie at Blackpool on Sunday, February 15th is now only two weeks away and we hope to have as big a following as possible to cheer on our team at Borough Park.

Borough may be in the lower reaches of the Second Division but there is no way they will be a pushover in a cup competition on their own ground.

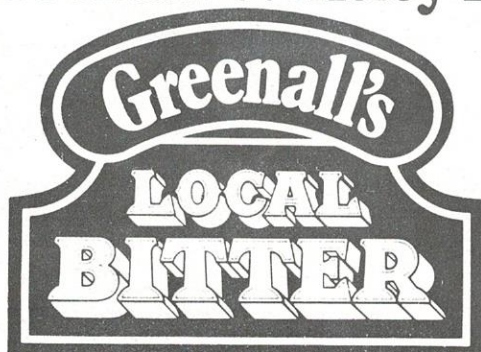
They are very capable of rising to the occasions, as shown when they had some shock wins in the First Division last season and when they drew with Wigan at Central Park only a few weeks ago.

It will prove to be a tough first-round hurdle for us but so far as vocal support is concerned we are confident we can give the players that "home-from-home" feeling at the seaside. Try and get there to give us a cheer and watch for notices in the press about coaches etc.





**It's Local Time  
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## COLTS AT HOME TO HULL KR IN CUP

THE Oldham Colts team has received a magnificent home draw in the first round of the Colts Challenge Cup -- Hull KR at Watersheddings!

The tie will be played in two weeks time, the day before the senior club meet Blackpool at Borough Park in the first round of the Three Fives Challenge Cup. The clash of the youngsters should be an absolute cracker so make a note in your diary and come along to support our highly-successful colts side which is keen to pick up more honours this season.

Last year's under-19 lads could lay claim to being the best colts side in the league, having won the championship title and the Premiership Trophy.

Their home defeat by lowly Wakefield Trinity in the first round of the Challenge Cup was a massive upset - and one which this year's team will be out to avenge! But a word of warning: Hull KR are one of only two teams to have beaten Oldham this season. We beat the Rovers here but they got their revenge on Humber side.

The full draw is: Widnes v Rochdale; **OLDHAM** v Hull KR; Halifax v Castleford; Hull v Hunslet; Leeds v Bramley; Leigh v Featherstone; St. Helens v Wakefield; Bradford v Salford.

Keighley have withdrawn from the colts competition and their fixtures have been taken over by Halifax.

In the league programme, Oldham continued their winning ways at Salford with a 27-6 win after struggling a bit in the first half.

It means we have still been beaten only twice all season but these notes had to be written before the match scheduled for last week-end against Halifax away. Several postponements have also occurred in the past few weeks because of the weather but the next three months promises to be an exciting time for our youngsters with cup and league honours at stake.

That is to say nothing of international honours and the Oldham club was proud yesterday at Leeds to see five of our lads in the Great Britain colts side which met France at Headingley.

The five were Alan Platt (second-row), Derek Seabrook (stand-off, capt), Mick O'Rourke (centre), and Stephen Dobb (wing) while Mick Worrall was the forward sub and Paul Lowndes was in the shadow squad.



**Munro touches down and races away after going in for the second of his two tries against Leeds.**



# NEWS FROM THE RUGBY LEAGUE

## TOP TEN TRIES (As at 18th January, 1981)

1.	John CROSSLEY	York	24
2.	Terry RICHARDSON	Castleford	15
3.	Andrew FLETCHER	Wakefield T.	14
	Ian BALL	Barrow	14
5.	Steve LANE	Hunslet	13
	Paul McDERMOTT	York	13
	Gary HYDE	Castleford	13
	Des DRUMMOND	Leigh	13
	Dennis RAMSDALE	Wigan	13
	John PENDLEBURY	Wigan	13

## TOP TEN GOALS (As at 18th January, 1981)

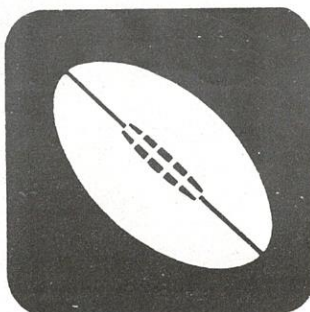
1.	Steve HESFORD	Warrington	95	2.
2.	Steve QUINN	Featherstone R.	90	
3.	Ian BALL	Barrow	76	
4.	Gary HYDE	Castleford	72	
	<b>MICK PARRISH</b>	<b>OLDHAM</b>	<b>72</b>	
6.	Steve DIAMOND	Wakefield T.	67	
7.	George FAIRBAIRN	Wigan	65	
8.	Jimmy BIRTS	Halifax	64	
	John GORTON	Swinton	64	
10.	Mick BURKE	Widnes	63	

## POINTS: (As at 18th January, 1981)

			Trs.	Gls.	Dr. Gl.s.	Pts.
1.	Steve HESFORD	Warrington	5	94	1	204
2.	Ian BALL	Barrow	14	72	4	190
3.	Steve QUINN	Featherstone R.	2	90	-	186
4.	Gary HYDE	Castleford	13	72	-	183
5.	Steve DIAMOND	Wakefield T.	6	67	-	152

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# The cup winner.



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## LEAGUE V UNION IN FRANCE

By **Brian Batty**  
Daily Mail

It comes as no surprise to those who have followed the fortunes of French Rugby to learn of the latest clashes between Union and League.

League's Test centre Jean Marc Bourrett's decision to join the Union side Perpignan leaves a nasty taste as well as a gap in French ranks.

And the fact that Bourrett is now being pushed in some quarters for a place in the international Union side exposes the whole business as a farce.

There are Union claims that all French League players are amateur but the clubs could prove otherwise.

I remember though discussing the Union set-up in Narbonne two years ago with an official of the local club who was running a bar.

He happened to be English and his revelations about the sort of money being picked up by Union players poured out until he discovered I was a journalist and not a supporter of the Welsh team due to face France.

Perhaps the sudden clampdown was caused by the fact that powerful Narbonne Union Club's headquarters were based in the room above the bar. But the most disturbing feature of the French situation is that Union president Albert Ferrasse has declared war on the League.

The fact that the Union are trying to establish a team in the Lezignan - always a hotbed of League over the years - clearly worries French officials.

If the Union clubs are to offer better terms - even disguised as expenses - then how many players are likely to persevere with a career in League?

I cannot see English League secretary David Oxley's report on the situation to the English Rugby Union meeting with any other response than to be conveniently brushed under the carpet.

And I am sure that if the French were ever called to conduct an investigation they could turn and point an accusing finger at Wales.



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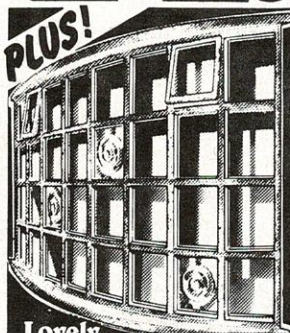
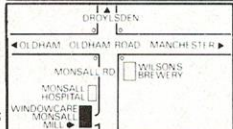


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## FIRST TEAM FIXTURES 1980/81

Date	Opponent	F. A.
Aug. 3 Sun.	Rochdale (Charity Match)	32 - 15
Aug. 10 Sun.	St. Helens (Friendly)	12 - 30
Aug. 17 Sun.	Swinton (County Cup)	11 - 5
Aug. 24 Sun.	County Cup 2nd Round	15 - 13
Aug. 31 Sun.	Castleford	14 - 14
Sept. 7 Sun.	Bradford	10 - 21
Sept. 14 Sun.	Featherstone	17 - 32
Sept. 21 Sun.	Hull	11 - 16
Sept. 28 Sun.	Leeds	14 - 16
Oct. 5 Sun.	Leigh	15 - 12
Oct. 12 Sun.		
Oct. 19 Sun.	Widnes	18 - 28
Oct. 26 Sun.	Workington	18 - 10
Nov. 2 Sun.		
Nov. 9 Sun.	Featherstone	10 - 31
Nov. 16 Sun.	Bradford	9 - 2
Nov. 19 Wed.	Salford	22 - 7
Nov. 23 Sun.	John Player York	9 - 11
Nov. 30 Sun.	Wakefield	15 - 24
Dec. 7 Sun.	Workington	4 - 25
Dec. 14 Sun.	Widnes	
Dec. 21 Sun.	Hull K.R.	9 - 27
Dec. 26 Fri.	St. Helens	10 - 11
Boxing Day		
Dec. 28 Sun.	Hull	2 - 30
Jan. 1 Thurs.	Warrington	11 - 27
New Years Day		
Jan. 4 Sun.	Barrow	
Jan. 11 Sun.	Leeds	
Jan. 18 Sun.	Castleford	
Jan. 25 Sun.		
Feb. 1 Sun.	Barrow	
Feb. 8 Sun.	Halifax	
Feb. 15 Sun.	Challenge Cup 1st Round	
Feb. 22 Sun.	Hull K.R.	
Mar. 1 Sun.	Challenge Cup 2nd Round	
Mar. 8 Sun.	Warrington	
Mar. 15 Sun.		
Mar. 22 Sun.	Halifax	
Mar. 29 Sun.	Leigh	
Apr. 5 Sun.	Wakefield	
Apr. 12		
Apr. 17 Fri.	St. Helens	
Good Friday		
Apr. 20 Mon.	Salford	
Easter Monday.		

## 'A' TEAM FIXTURES 1980/81

Date	Opponent	F. A.
Aug. 7 Thurs.	Higginshaw (Friendly)	26 - 2
Aug. 14 Thurs.	Saddleworth Rangers	p
Sept. 3 Wed.	Salford	6 - 13
Sept. 9 Fri.	Warrington L.C.C.S.	2 - 8
Sept. 18 Thurs.	Swinton	27 - 23
Sept. 25 Thurs.	St. Helens	6 - 15
Oct. 2 Thurs.	Leigh	10 - 23
Oct. 9 Thurs.	Rochdale Hornets	16 - 13
Oct. 16 Thurs.	Widnes	12 - 11
Oct. 18 Sat.	Whitehaven	18 - 10
Oct. 25 Sat.	Workington	20 - 14
Oct. 30 Thurs.	Wigan	15 - 29
Nov. 8 Sat.	Blackpool	7 - 8
Nov. 14 Fri.		
Nov. 20 Thurs.	Salford	p
Nov. 27 Thurs.	Swinton	16 - 11
Dec. 4 Thurs.	Wigan	14 - 13
Dec. 11 Thurs.	Widnes	18 - 7
Jan. 3 Sat.	Barrow	10 - 8
Jan. 9 Fri.	St. Helens	
Jan. 17 Sat.	Whitehaven	
Jan. 31 Sat.	Barrow	
Feb. 5 Thurs.	Warrington	
Feb. 19 Thurs.	Blackpool	
Mar. 6 Fri.	Warrington	
Mar. 14 Sat.	Workington	
Mar. 19 Thurs.	Rochdale	
Mar. 26 Thurs.	Leigh	

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## FIXTURE CHAOS FOR LOCAL AMATEURS

With the second half of the 1980-81 season now well under way many amateur clubs are once again finding themselves with several matches outstanding. Despite a somewhat mild Winter period compared with recent years, local-league teams face a severe backlog of fixtures in the forthcoming weeks, mainly due to commitments in the early part of the season in various cup competitions, as well as many matches having had to be postponed because of players being selected for Inter-Town and County sides. And, naturally, when a league game is postponed due to a cup match being played or when players are called away for representative duty, it effects not only the club directly involved but also their scheduled opponents on the day.

The dates of cup events often overlap thus causing further problems for clubs, while the excessive use of pitches in the later end of the season following the worst of the weather also takes its toll of fixtures.

Oldham League clubs have been especially hard hit this season due to both the town's open-age and under-19 teams reaching the semi-finals of their BARLA Inter-League tournaments. With amateur clubs able to postpone matches if just two

players are involved in any representative squad, several local sides have found themselves with regular free dates due to the majority of the under-19s town-team also appearing for their clubs in the open-age leagues. In fact, the dates for those semi-finals have yet to be determined by BARLA, thus causing even more fixture chaos before the season ends.

Even the Greater Manchester Youth League, which operates for teams at under-15 and under-17 age groups, has been severely affected, although only six teams currently challenge for the two divisional awards. To complete the league's fixture list for the season therefore requires just 10 matches to be played by each team, but so far only one side has managed this feat. As well as league games and the local cup matches, teams are now being affected by the decision of BARLA to run an Inter-League competition and a County Championship for Under-17s.

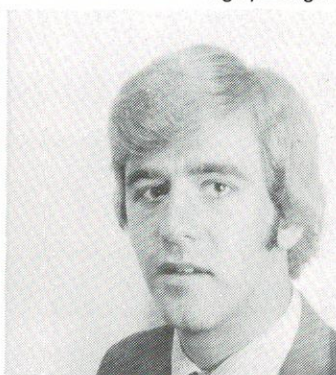
Representative matches are naturally essential for giving the country's top players a chance to oppose each other, and are accepted by the amateur clubs as such. However, a question could be asked as to whether all the domestic competitions are really of benefit?

The BARLA County and National Cups are again priority events, while local cup tournaments, such as the Oldham Standard Cup, not only give players the pride of trying to become the top club in their area, but also bring much needed financial rewards to the teams. Competitions such as the Pennine Cup, however, bring neither glory or finances to individual clubs, and could reasonably be withdrawn from the ever increasing fixture list, although there would naturally be opposition to this move from the League administrators. The officials naturally require the receipts and sponsorship which the League obtains from the Final, although a reasonable solution would be for the event to only begin in the later months of the season, with any clubs facing a backlog of matches therefore given the option of not entering. Currently the Pennine Cup starts in September and continues throughout the season, thus attracting many clubs who only enter in case they are eliminated in the early rounds of other events and thus face several open dates. In practice, however, the reverse situation often applies.

This weekend has seen the Stimorol National Cup begin, while next weekend four local clubs will be involved in a struggled to reach this season's Oldham Standard Cup Final. At Waterhead Park, trophy holders Saddleworth Rangers meet Higginshaw, who themselves hold the record for Standard Cup wins, while at Greenfield there will be an all Premier Division clash between Waterhead and Mayfield. The Final will take place as usual at Watersheddings on Good Friday morning.

By Alan Burke

Public Relations Officer,  
Oldham Amateur Rugby League.



FOR ALL THE LOCAL AMATEUR RUGBY LEAGUE NEWS:  
B.B.C Radio Manchester (206 medium wave; 95.1 v.h.f.)

BARLA REPORTS Every Friday 6.30 pm  
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