

SILK CUP

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IN THE UK FROM LUNG CANCER**

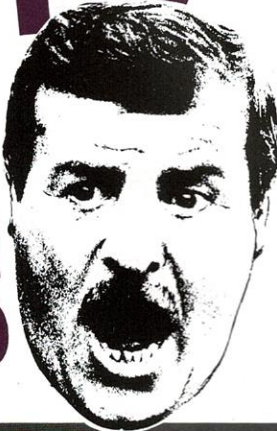
Health Departments' Chief Medical Officers

The Rugby Football League
**SILK CUT
CHALLENGE
CUP**




1989-90 SEMI-FINAL
OLDHAM v WARRINGTON
CENTRAL PARK, WIGAN
MARCH 31st 2.00 p.m.
OFFICIAL PROGRAMME £1

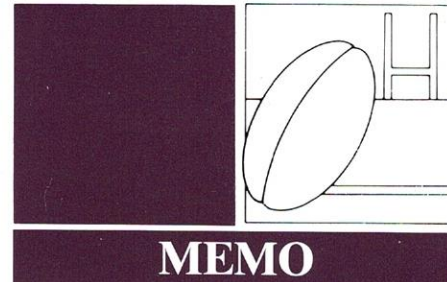
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League

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THE **Mirror** DAILY



MEMO

SEMI-FINALISTS

All four 1990 Silk Cut Challenge Cup semi-finalists are from West of the Pennines for the second successive year, but only the third time since the final was taken to Wembley in 1929. St. Helens, Wigan and Warrington are again semi-finalists as last year, with Oldham through to the last four for the first time since 1986.

Yorkshire provided all semi-finalists in 1962, 1973 and 1983.

Oldham are the only one still seeking their first Wembley appearance despite this being their fifth semi-final. They are also aiming to become the first Division Two team to play at Wembley. Since the re-introduction of two divisions in 1973-74 only two other teams have reached the semi-finals — York, who lost to Wigan in 1984, and Halifax beaten by Hull KR in 1980.

In another two-division era, Oldham finished as Division Two champions in 1964 after losing to Hull KR in the semi-finals following a second

replay.

Wigan are on course to become the first team to win the Cup in three successive years after equalling the record run of 13 successive Challenge Cup tie wins. Oldham were the last team to beat them in the Cup — 10-8 in the first round of 1987 at Watersheddings.

1990 SILK CUT PRIZES

Prize money for the 1990 Silk Cut Challenge Cup has been increased by 50 per cent with this season's Wembley winners receiving a record £30,000.

This is the first season of Silk Cut's new £900,000 three-year sponsorship of Rugby League's most famous knockout competition, played under the Silk Cut banner since 1985.

Of the 1989-90 sponsorship investment of £275,000, a total of £165,000 will be awarded in prize money with the remaining £110,000 being deposited in the League's Capital Development Fund for ground improvements. The complete 1990 Silk Cut Challenge Cup prize structure is:

Round	Per Team	Total
Preliminary	12 × 2,000	24,000
First	16 × 2,000	32,000
Second	8 × 3,250	26,000
Third	4 × 5,000	20,000
Semi-Finals	2 × 8,500	17,000
Runners-up	1 × 16,000	16,000
Winners	1 × 30,000	30,000

TOTAL PRIZE MONEY 165,000
CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT FUND 110,000

GRAND TOTAL £275,000

SILK CUT HEAD TO HEAD PREVIOUS CHALLENGE CUP MEETINGS

1898-99	(2)	Oldham	14	Warrington	0
1906-07	(F)	Warrington	17	Oldham	3 at Broughton
1919-20	(2)	Oldham	9	Warrington	0
1924-25	(2)	Oldham	12	Warrington	7
1928-29	(2)	Warrington	7	Oldham	0
1953-54	(2)	Oldham	4	Warrington	7
1985-86	(2)	Oldham	13	Warrington	6
1987-88	(1)	Warrington	17	Oldham	6

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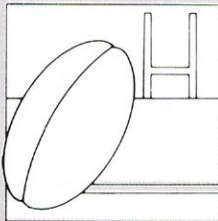
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Oldham's 1988 Lions tourist Mike Ford.





FORUM

Points machine John Woods has served Warrington — starring in their Silk Cut Challenge Cup semi-final last year — and is rivalling Oldham for the Second Division title with his current club, Rochdale Hornets. For the last 15 years Woods has been chasing British Rugby League's holy grail, an appearance in the Silk Cut Challenge Cup Final at Wembley. But, so far, this Great Britain international stand off who is recognised as one of the best players of his generation has been one of those players who have failed to make it all the way to Wembley. The veteran goalkicker talks to JOHN HUXLEY, of the Sunday Mirror, in this Big Match face-to-face.

Q: What is your verdict on both teams?

A: Oldham are a very strong team. Coach Tony Barrow has built a big, fast and mobile pack who will cause even the best teams in the land a great deal of trouble. Last season when they were relegated they were a poor team by First Division standards and Barrow has spent quite a sum of money in rebuilding them. But, like any team coached by Tony, they are aggressive, fit and ready for work. I was very impressed with them when we played them at Spotland on Boxing Day and they have a substantial following for extra inspiration.

Warrington, my last club before I moved to the Hornets, are a very strong side although their form tends to be erratic. They can be virtually untouchable or vulnerable. But there is no doubting that they have a considerable amount of talent on their side with Steve Molloy improving in every game, scrum half Paul Bishop capable of great things and willing, dedicated players like Gary Sanderson.

Q: What does an appearance at Wembley mean to a player?

A: It's every player's ambition to play in at least one final. I feel that my chances are beginning to fade now, but I'm just like Featherstone Rovers' Jeff Grayshon, I keep playing and hoping. For 15 years I've failed and the nearest I came was last season with Warrington when we were beaten by Wigan in the semi-final at Maine Road, Manchester.

I've been beaten in the quarter-final three times and the semi-final once and I can tell you that last year's defeat was very hard to take. That's because I was just 80 minutes from my dream coming true and the chance of victory was there during the game.

I was never more nervous in my life than that day. But it is just a quirk of the professional game that some of us are destined never to go to Wembley while others see the place three or four times. I never changed clubs looking for the chance to hit the Wembley trail and I must just be destined never to go.

Q: Is there any difference in the build-up to a semi-final than to any other cup game?

A: I can remember last year. We trained hard all week for the game and the atmosphere was hyped up by all the media attention. But that was the only difference. When you are a professional you look at each game in the same way and the planning for victory is what occupies you most.

Even though I played for Warrington the excitement for me in my home-town of Leigh was immense and I shall never forget the experience.

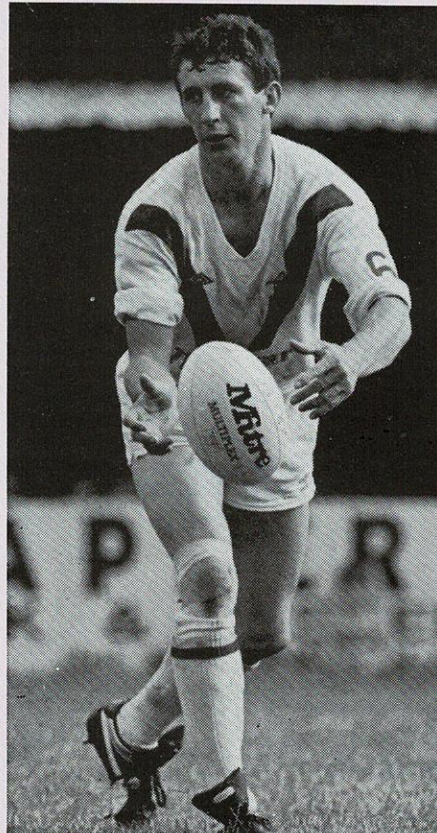
But more than any other game on the way to the final you try to reduce the number of errors you make in a game. By that stage in a competition you are usually playing teams who feed on mistakes and the less you make the more chance you have to win.

Q: What's your favourite Wembley memory?

A: That's just got to be 1971 when Alex Murphy's Leigh team beat red-hot favourites Leeds. I was a 15-year-old then who was playing with Leigh Colts.

We went to Wembley for the day and I still treasure that memory. It's amazing when you consider that the price of the coach and ticket into the game cost me less than £5 then. What do you get for that kind of money today?

When we got back to Leigh that night I expected the town to be jumping but it was absolutely dead. I presume everybody was still in London celebrating. And, coincidentally, I subsequently played with and against so many of the players who appeared at Wembley that day in my own career.



Rochdale Hornets £50,000 capture John Woods, ex-Warrington stand off and Oldham rival for the Second Division title.

Q: Looking back at last year's Silk Cut Challenge Cup semi-final with Wigan, what are your impressions?

A: Warrington felt confident that we could beat Wigan and when we were leading in the second half that belief was still with us. Wigan kept a very steady game pattern going all the time and when they managed to pull level with us I still felt we were in with a great chance of winning.

Then Joe Lydon sickened us with a fantastic drop goal. It must have been 50 or 60 metres and I remember being staggered by it. I couldn't believe he would go for goal from that range. And the ball was still going up when it went between the posts.

That's what beat us because the moment that happened Warrington's heads went down and Wigan were on the way to Wembley — again!

Q: Do you think it is possible for a Second Division team to make it all the way to Wembley?

A: Speaking as a Rochdale Hornets player this season, I think it is possible. Oldham are a classic case. They have the strength and power to compete with First Division teams. The major difference between the First and Second Divisions is consistency each week, but this is a cup competition and anything is possible.

In this case, Warrington coach Brian Johnson will have more pressure on him than Oldham's Tony Barrow. Everybody will expect the First Division team to win automatically and that means pressure. Tony has been to big games before while Brian was at the same stage last season with a team which was coached by Tony. It makes for a classic confrontation.

Q: You've played under both coaches how do you assess them?

A: They have vastly contrasting styles. Brian Johnson is much more quiet and studious spending time collating information from videos and the like, while Tony is much more aggressive and loud. He puts over the same information but in a much different way.

I enjoyed working with Tony and count him among my personal friends these days. My style of play didn't particularly fit into Brian's way of playing the game and I moved on to Hornets. Brian is very thorough and professional and it will be very interesting to see whether the two teams reflect the two men's styles this afternoon.

Conducted by JOHN HUXLEY, of the

**SUNDAY
Mirror**



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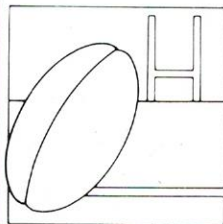
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to both of today's semi-finalists*

**BEST OF LUCK
TO BOTH TEAMS IN
TODAY'S SEMI-FINAL**

Wire centre Tony Thorniley.





ROUGHYEDS

Can Oldham finally break their 'duck' and win through to their first-ever Wembley Cup Final? That has been the burning question for every neutral in Rugby League since the Roughyeds produced the upset of the Silk Cut competition by eliminating Champions Widnes with a magnificent quarter-final performance at Naughton Park.

For coach Tony Barrow, the five-week wait between the third-round and the semi-final has been an agonising one. Like the rest of Oldham, he is aching to end the club's long wait to appear beneath the famous twin towers. Victory this afternoon would allow the League club to make their Wembley debut 24 hours before soccer neighbours Oldham Athletic who have already secured their Littlewoods Cup Final place.

"Oldham fans are among the most knowledgeable and fanatical in Rugby League, said Barrow "Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to take this club to Wembley for the first time. I must have heard the tale about the club's heartbreak 1964 Cup semi-final defeat a thousand times since arriving at the Watersheddings. Then, Frank Myler's Oldham side almost made it four years ago but froze on semi-final day against Castleford. Let's hope the wait ends today. I've every confidence in our ability to make it this time.

"This team reminds me of the Leigh side which won the Cup in 1971, tremendous team spirit binding everyone together in a common cause. It would be nice to look back at the end of my League career and reflect on having played in Leigh's first Cup-winning team and to have coached Oldham to their first Final. I know that only another performance like the one against Widnes will be good enough in the semi-final."

It is bound to be an emotional day for the former Warrington coach, as he attempts to plot the downfall of some of his firmest friends in the game. His self-confessed love of making

a bargain signing has paid handsome dividends at the Watersheddings, where last season's relegation from the Stones Bitter Championship only proved the prelude of a tremendous 1989-90 season.

In addition to qualifying for their fourth semi-final of the Wembley era, Barrow's boys contested a memorable Lancashire Cup Final with Warrington, took St. Helens all the way in the quarter-final of the Regal Trophy and have rarely looked like faltering in the promotion race.

Among the first of Barrow's signings following his arrival at Oldham in November 1988, was goalkicking Widnes full-back Duncan Platt, who landed four quarter-final goals against his former colleagues. With six tries and 90 goals, Platt has stepped out of the shadow of brother Andy, the Wigan and Great Britain forward, whom he hopes to oppose at Wembley in four weeks time.

Ex-Moldgreen junior Richard Irving has made the right-wing berth his own in the face of competition from New Zealander Charlie McAlister and Castleford's 1986 Wembley centre Gary Hyde. Irving's 10 tries include one in the Lancashire Cup Final against the Wires and a hat-trick in the home defeat of Chorley.

Long-serving utility back Des Foy has made a welcome return to the Watersheddings after a brief stay in Australia, where he toured with the 1984 Lions and gained the first of three Great Britain caps, at stand-off, opposite Wally Lewis. Back in the centre berth, the pacy former Under-24 international scored five tries in a home defeat of Hunslet in January.

Free-scoring former Leigh and Lancashire centre John Henderson is back from injury after scoring two tries in the opening match of the season against Workington. He scored a crucial touchdown in the third round defeat of Widnes and grabbed hat-tricks against Fulham and, in Cup football, against Workington Town.

Castleford junior product Paul Lord, brother of Leeds full-back Gary, has improved dramatically under Barrow's guidance this season, scoring 21 tries including three at Keighley earlier this month. His aim is to emulate Gary, a Wembley winner with Castleford four years ago.

Australian stand off Brett Clark is in his second spell in English football having helped St. Helens to the 1987 Wembley Final against Halifax. The Western Suburbs half-back, having faced competition from brilliant former

Leigh Miners teenager Tommy Martyn, includes a Cup try at Salford in his total of 12 this season.

Scrum-half Mike Ford is another to have graced Wembley, appearing for Wigan in their epic 1985 defeat of Hull. The former Under-21 international left Central Park for Leigh, eventually returning home to Oldham and gaining a place in the 1988 Lions tour party.

Prop forward Leo Casey is emerging as one of the dark horses for Lions tour selection this summer having joined Oldham initially from the local St. Annes junior outfit, forming a formidable front three with converted hooker Richard Russell and ex-Widnes, Warrington and Saints forward John Fieldhouse.

Russell – switched to number nine because 'he had all the attributes' according to Barrow – has rediscovered the form which earned Colts and Under-21 international honours whilst at Wigan, to keep former Rochdale and Widnes livewire Andy Ruane on the sidelines.

Fieldhouse, another member of St. Helens 1987 Wembley side, dearly wants to return at the expense of his original club for a winners medal. Man of the Series in Britain's 1985

home meetings with New Zealand, Fieldhouse gained all his seven Test caps in that 1985-86 period.

Barrow's eye for a bargain has shaped one of the most effective back-row threesomes in the business in the shape of second-row forwards Keith Newton and Shaun Allen, and dynamic skipper John Cogger. Newton had the satisfaction of scoring the decisive try against former club Widnes in the quarter final at Naughton Park, while former Under-21 international centre Allen has found a new lease of life as a regular secondrower.

Cogger, an Australian bundle of energy who won the 1987 Second Division Player of the Year award whilst with lowly Runcorn, tops the Oldham try chart with 22, including three against Hunslet and a Cup effort at the preliminary stage against Huddersfield.

Already, Oldham are looking ahead to the First Division, signing Halifax utility back Tony Anderson and giving trials to Bramley's pacy Wingman Peter Lewis. Long-serving Keith Atkinson, ex-Leeds prop John Fairbank and one-time under-21 international Paul Round, a tryscorer for Saints at Wembley three years ago, are others in an ever-improving squad.

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British COAL

GREAT BRITAIN V AUSTRALIA 1990

Tickets for the British Coal Test between Great Britain and Australia at Wembley in October will be half the price of next month's Silk Cut Challenge Cup Final. Seats for the long awaited Anglo-Aussie clash on Saturday 27 October are priced £15, £12, £10 and £8, compared with a top price of £29 for April's sell-out Cup showpiece.

The Rugby Football League are also offering discount schemes for the British Coal series with the Kangaroos, current World Champions and unbeaten in any match on the last two tours of Britain in 1982 and 1986.

Wembley party trip organisers will be rewarded with an extra free ticket for every 20 purchased.

Organised school groups can obtain a 25 per cent reduction with £8 seats available at £6.

Fans will be encouraged to book for all three British Coal Tests by being offered £1 off each ticket in a triple order.

The Wembley encounter on 27 October — the first Rugby League Test in the capital since 1973 — is followed by the Second Test at Manchester United's Old Trafford on 10 November and the Third and final meeting at Elland Road, Leeds, on 24 November, all kicking off at 2.15 pm.

Tickets for the northern venues are priced £12, £10 and £8.

The League's Director of Marketing and Television, Maurice Lindsay, said: "The Board of Directors has decided that the massive 50 per cent ticket price reduction offers an across-the-board incentive for supporters — old and new — to witness this clash of giants at the country's top stadium.

"The objective of the other schemes are to encourage group bookings and school parties for the Wembley fixture and persuade fans to commit themselves to all three British Coal Tests."

The League is currently finalising plans with British Coal, sponsors of Great Britain in a four-year £750,000 deal, and their London agency for a support programme of media, ground and programme advertising, plus a series of special promotions.

Orders can now be sent with cheques or postal orders made payable to The Rugby Football League — or order forms requested from — The Test Ticket Office, The Rugby League, 180 Chapeltown Road, Leeds LS7 4HT. A stamped addressed envelope should be enclosed.

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SILK CUT CHALLENGE CUP.

LINE UP

OLDHAM

Red and white jersey

Coach: **TONY BARROW**

- DUNCAN PLATT**
- RICHARD IRVING**
- DES FOY**
- JOHN HENDERSON**
- PAUL LORD**
- BRETT CLARK**
- MIKE FORD**
- LEO CASEY**
- RICHARD RUSSELL**
- JOHN FIELDHOUSE**
- KEITH NEWTON**
- SHAUN ALLEN**
- JOHN COGGER, Capt.**

WARRINGTON

Primrose and blue jersey

Coach: **BRIAN JOHNSON**

- 1 DAVID LYON**
- 2 DES DRUMMOND**
- 3 GARY MERCER**
- 4 TONY THORNILEY**
- 5 MARK FORSTER**
- 6 ROBERT TURNER**
- 7 PAUL BISHOP**
- 8 TONY BURKE**
- 9 DUANE MANN**
- 10 STEVE MOLLOY**
- 11 BOB JACKSON**
- 12 GARY SANDERSON**
- 13 MIKE GREGORY, Capt.**
- 14 PAUL DARBYSHIRE**
- 15 NEIL HARMON**

Scrum

1 2 3 4
 5 6 7 8
 9 10 11 12
 13 14 15 16
 17 18 19 20

Penalties

1 2 3 4
 5 6 7 8
 9 10 11 12
 13 14 15 16
 17 18 19 20

SILK CUT AWARD

Today's Man of the Match, selected by the Press, will receive the Silk Cut Award of £250 and an inscribed memento.

Referee: **JOHN HOLDSWORTH**, Kippax
 Touch Judges:

S. JACKSON, Wakefield (red flag)

G. WHEATLEY, Leeds (yellow flag)

Scrum

1 2 3 4
 5 6 7 8
 9 10 11 12
 13 14 15 16
 17 18 19 20

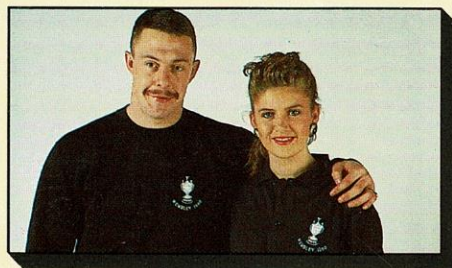
Penalties

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 17 18 19 20

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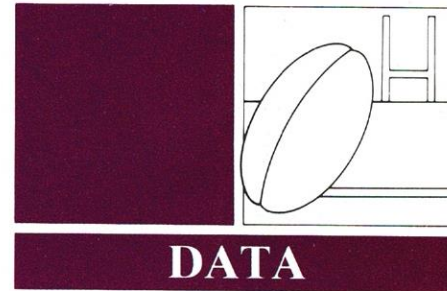
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Silk Cut Award winner in the first semi-final St. Helens hooker Paul Groves, with David Oxley (left) and Silk Cut's David Topping and Jim Elkins (right).



DATA

Underdogs Oldham are this afternoon aiming for an eighth Challenge Cup Final appearance. Their last was in 1927 and the Roughyeds have yet to tread the sacred turf of Wembley.

Two years before the move to Wembley in 1929 Oldham had just completed a still record fourth successive final appearance. Since then, however, they have been beaten four times in the semi-final in 1934, 1960, 1964 and 1986.

The nearest they came to reaching Wembley was in 1964 when they drew 5-5 with Hull K.R. in the semi-final at Leeds and were winning 17-14 after 12 minutes of extra time of the replay at Swinton when bad light caused the match to be abandoned. Rovers won the third game 12-2 at Huddersfield, crowds of around 28,000 attending each of the three ties.

Oldham have lifted the coveted Challenge Cup three times beating Hunslet 19-9 in Manchester in 1899, Hull K.R. 16-3 at Leeds in 1925; and Swinton 26-7 here at Wigan in 1927.

Although Oldham have never been

to Wembley, today's squad has more experience of the world famous stadium than Warrington.

Scrum half Mike Ford partnered Lance Todd Trophy winner Brett Kenny in Wigan's epic victory over Hull in 1985. A year later Gary Hyde was at centre in Castleford's success over Hull K.R. in 1987, the St. Helens side which lost 18-17 to Halifax contained Brett Clark, John Fieldhouse and Paul Round.

Prop forward Tony Burke is the only Warrington player to have appeared at Wembley, with the beaten St. Helens sides of 1987 and 1989.

Warrington, who were beaten in last year's Silk Cut semi-final by Wigan, last appeared at Wembley in 1975 when they were beaten 14-7 by Widnes. The Wire won the Cup the previous year, beating Featherstone Rovers by 24-9.

They have appeared at Wembley six times, including the 1954 draw against Halifax, and won there twice, in 1950 and 1974.

Oldham are aiming to become the first Division Two side to appear at Wembley since the reintroduction of two divisions in 1973.

Only two other Division Two sides have reached the semi-finals, Halifax losing 20-7 to Hull KR in 1980, and York going down 14-8 to Wigan in 1984.

In a previous era, Oldham finished as Division Two champions after losing to Hull KR after those three semi-final matches in 1964.

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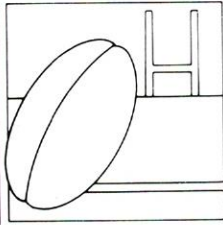


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SCORERS

TOP TEN TRY SCORERS

1. Martin Offiah (Widnes).....42
2. Greg Austin (Hull K.R.)29
Anthony Sullivan (Hull K.R.)29
4. Mark Preston (Wigan).....28
5. Shaun Edwards (Wigan).....25
Gerald Cordle (Bradford N.)25

TOP FIVE POINT SCORERS

1. Mike Fletcher (Hull K.R.) 11
2. Paul Loughlin (St. Helens)..... 16
3. Paul Eastwood (Hull) 19
4. Duncan Platt (Oldham) 7
5. David Hobbs (Bradford N.) 5

7. John Cogger (Oldham)24
Steve Larder (Castleford)24
Paul Lord (Oldham)24
 10. Owen Simpson (Keighley).....23
- The 1989-90 Top Try Scorer receives £25 a try from Stones Bitter.

TOP TEN GOAL SCORERS

1. Mike Fletcher (Hull K.R.) 153
 2. Paul Loughlin (St. Helens).....135
 3. Duncan Platt (Oldham)105
 4. David Hobbs (Bradford N.)103
 5. Mark Aston (Sheffield E.)99
 6. Mark Conway (Wakefield T.)95
 7. Steve Turner (Rochdale H.).....94
Colin Maskill (Leeds)94
 9. Robert Turner (Warrington)86
Paul Eastwood (Hull)86
- The 1989-90 Top Goal Scorer receives £5 a goal from Stones Bitter.

	Tries	Goals	Drop Goals	Points
1. Mike Fletcher (Hull K.R.)	11	153	0	350
2. Paul Loughlin (St. Helens)	16	135	0	334
3. Paul Eastwood (Hull)	19	86	0	248
4. Duncan Platt (Oldham)	7	104	1	237
5. David Hobbs (Bradford N.)	5	99	4	222

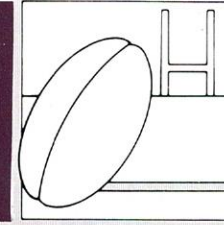
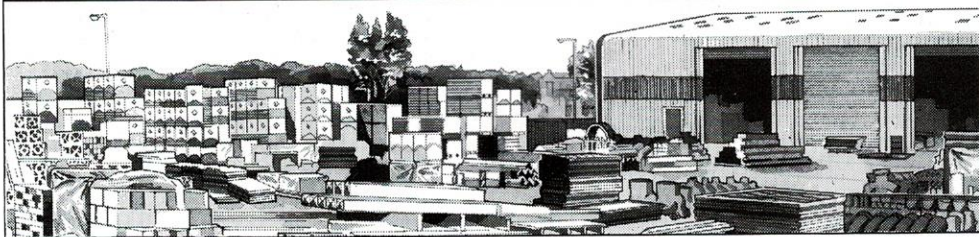
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COMMENT

Top sports writer ALAN WATKINS, of *The Independent*, attended the first *Silk Cut Challenge Cup* semi-final at Old Trafford three weeks ago . . .

Amid the orgy of anticipatory self-congratulation which has overtaken rugby union in England and Scotland, I took myself off to Old Trafford to see Wigan play St. Helens in the semi-final of the Rugby League *Silk Cut Challenge Cup*.

I had not seen League live since watching Wales play England and France at St. Helens, Swansea, in the years immediately after the War. Those were the days (which persisted until well after I had ceased watching matches at the ground) when Wales could field an international League side capable of taking on and even defeating England.

Here is a question for those of my fellow countrymen who moan about the defections to the League and their deleterious effect on the national side. If the seepage is so serious, why is it that it is not now possible to re-form a Welsh League team?

The answer, I am afraid, is somewhat depressing. It is that, of all the recent Welsh signings only Bishop and Davies, who is now injured, have been unqualified successes.

Another exception is Gary Pearce, who moved from Llanelli to Hull. We shall have to see what happens to David Young. Two Englishmen and a Scotsman — Peter Williams, Martin Offiah and Alan Tait respectively — have made the transformation with greater success.

It is, of course, a different game; but it is also fair to conclude that general standards are higher in the League. Ellery Hanley of Wigan would walk into any British Isles XV, whether as openside flanker or, perhaps even more dangerously, as an inside centre.

Sitting in front of us last Saturday (I had gone along with my grown up son) was a family consisting, I guessed, of a youthful grandfather, his two grandsons and his daughter or daughter-in-law. It was a pattern which repeated throughout

the stands. Families were out for the afternoon with young children. My impression was that League had replaced soccer as Saturday entertainment. There was none of that yobbishness found at soccer grounds and which, as I wrote last season, you are beginning to observe at Twickenham.

Let I arouse the indignation of the always charming and usually helpful Dudley Wood of the Rugby Football Union, I should add two things. One is that behaviour seems to have improved since last season. The other is that bad behaviour was not restricted to Twickenham during this period, as I may have implied, but was in evidence also at Cardiff, particularly during that miserable England and Wales match.

Soccer in Britain is, I am afraid, beyond redemption. But rugby union's administrators should ask themselves why it is that League can organise an altogether happier, more exciting event than they seem able to lay on. The answer, I think, is not, or not primarily, in the standard of play. The three Pilkington Cup finals at Twickenham from 1986 to 1988 set new criteria, particularly the 1988 match between Harlequins and Bristol.

But Twickenham is, though a great ground, an unfriendly ground. Old Trafford is not. It has been reconstructed and improved as a result of Manchester United's days of glory in the 1960s. Twickenham is being improved, true, but it will always remain a daunting sort of ground.

Apart from that, what about the play? Here are some random reflections. The standard of place-kicking in League is not what it is claimed to be. All the current Five Nations' goal-kickers, to say nothing of operators such as John Lilley of Leicester, are the superiors of anything on display at Old Trafford.

The rule that a knock-on is penalised by a change of possession rather than by a scrum means that players are reluctant to catch the ball from the kick-off, preferring instead to catch it from behind. But having to take what would in union be a 25-yard drop-out from the goal-line between the posts is thoroughly logical and just, and should be adopted by the union. Why, after all, should cowardice or error be rewarded by a gain of 25 yards?

The scrum remains a mess. But the referee is in charge as he is not either in soccer or, increasingly, in rugby union. Above all, the supporters seem to be better natured and more generous people than you will find shouting for Gloucester or Bath.

TOP OF THE LEAGUE



IT'S ALL GO IN OLDHAM - I'VE TO DRESS HIM UP AGAIN TOMORROW FOR THE SOCCER FINAL



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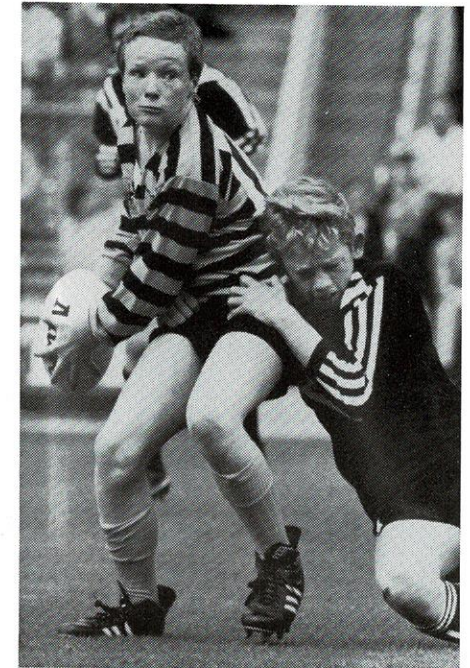
Doncaster Under-11s make their Wembley debut in the 1990 annual schoolboy curtain raiser to the Silk Cut Challenge Cup Final.

Their opponents will be Widnes Under-11s who beat Wigan 8-0 in the inaugural junior showpiece in 1975, plus Dewsbury and Batley 13-1 in 1983. Presenting the commemorative medals will be Radio One DJ Liz Kershaw.

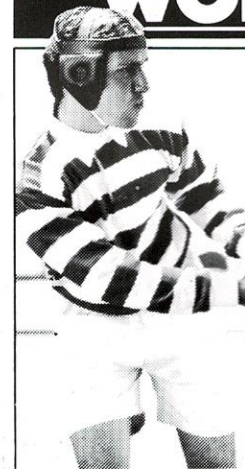
The ball boys for the final itself will represent Oldham Under-13s.

The 16th schoolboy spectacular will kick off at 2.00 pm on Saturday 28 April, for 12 minutes each way.

Schoolboy prodigies who have graduated from the Under-11 encounter to senior Wembley appearances include Joe Lydon, David Hulme, Mike Ford, Neil Puckering, David Plange and Denis Betts.



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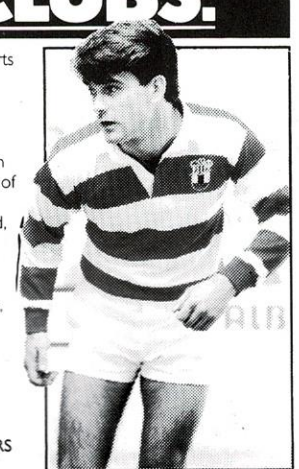
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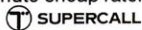


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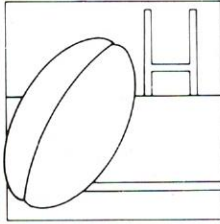
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Ex-Wigan Under-21 International, Oldham utility star Richard Russell.





WIRE

Losing Silk Cut Challenge Cup semi-finalists are not remembered for long. Players beaten at the penultimate stage of the glamour competition invariably discover a hollow feeling which remains with them for a lifetime. Therefore Warrington, gallant losers to Wigan, at Maine Road 12 months ago, are likely to be the hungriest of Cup fighters at Central Park this afternoon.

"The survivors from last year are bound to be fired up", said Australian coach Brian Johnson. "Nothing hurts like a Cup semi-final defeat and this represents a chance to atone for that disappointment. Oldham have beaten some good teams along the road to Wembley, but we've also done well to reach this stage and feel confident of today's outcome.

"We're happy with our current form after overcoming a catalogue of injuries in mid-season. Following our 24-16 Lancashire Cup Final defeat of Oldham — which gives us further confidence — we lost Greg Mackey to Hull and then saw the top forwards Mike Gregory, Billy McGinty and Bob Jackson sidelined with injuries.

"It's no co-incidence that our form since the turn of the year has improved with their return, while the influx of Kiwi internationals Duane Mann and Gary Mercer has been a contributory factor in the improvement. Signing Mercer gave me one of my most awkward decisions, because I had to release Joe Ropati, but Gary has justified his arrival at Wilderspool with some fine performances."

Johnson's reference to the Wire's mid-season form lapse is understandable. Warrington produced a 10-match unbeaten run at the start of the season, including an opening day defeat of Wigan, only to gain a mere four victories from their next 11 matches. They have bounced back to win six matches in eight outings, including a tremendous Cup quarter-final success at Odsal.

Former Widnes and Great Britain Colts and Under-21 full back David Lyon has steadily

emerged as one of the safest in the Stones Bitter Championship. After appearing on the wing in his early days at Wilderspool, he has slotted into the number one jersey as a sound successor to Johnson himself and was a member of last year's beaten semi-final side.

Great Britain winger Des Drummond — capped 24 times — is a player with rare pace, determination and undiminished finishing abilities. He won Championship and Lancashire Cup honours with Leigh, but Wembley has always eluded one of the game's most charismatic stars. After making a 1980 Test debut, he starred on the 1984 Lions tour Down Under, with his most recent cap being against France at Avignon two years ago.

Centres Tony Thorniley and New Zealand international Gary Mercer have combined effectively since the turn of the year, holding their places in the face of fierce competition from Lancashire County man Paul Cullen and 1984 Lions tourist Ronnie Duane. Mercer, formerly with Bradford Northern, took the place of compatriot Ropati at Wilderspool, following an outstanding Kiwi tour in which he won their British Coal Man of the Series award.

Thorniley is an under-rated and much-improved youngster, following last season's fine work of nine tries in 23 appearances with a further 11 touchdowns this season.

On the left flank, Great Britain winger Mark Forster, whose two Test caps came three years ago in home and away meetings with France, is one of the fastest men in the game. He has scored nine tries this term, including one in the second round defeat of gallant Trafford Borough at Wilderspool.

Goalkicking former Blackbrook amateur stand-off Robert Turner made his Great Britain Under-21 debut in the February defeat of France at Doncaster, landing two goals in a 20-6 victory. He then showed his durability by taking the man of the match award, as the Wire defeated Wakefield Trinity less than 24 hours later. Partnering Turner is ex-Cronulla scrum-half Paul Bishop, a star of Warrington's 1986 Premiership triumph and another fine goalkicker with a happy knack of scoring vital drop goals in big games. His two one-pointers proved important in a tense first round defeat of Featherstone, after he had wrested the number seven shirt from Martin Crompton.

Warrington's pack has altered drastically from the one which went down to Wigan a year ago. Gone are Australians Steve Roach and Les Boyd and into the front row come workaholic former Bramley, Leeds and St. Helens prop Tony Burke and Great Britain

Under-21 international Steve Molloy. Burke, is seeking his third Wembley appearances in four seasons, having been a member of Saints' beaten sides in 1987 and 1989. Molloy is likely to be co-prop to Burke, with New Zealand Test hooker Duane Mann having made a significant entry to the Warrington pack since the turn of the year. A 1987 signing from Oldham St. Annes, Molloy appeared in his first major Final, as Warrington won the Lancashire Cup earlier this season and was a try scorer in Britain's Under-21 defeat of France at Doncaster last month.

Mann played in the second-row before ousting Cumbrian Mark Roskell, continuing the impressive form which won him a New Zealand debut against Australia last summer, appearing in all five British Coal Tests against Britain and France on the Kiwi tour.

Former Fulham forward Bob Jackson was the difference between Oldham and Warrington in the Lancashire Cup Final meeting, scoring two tries and taking the Man of the Match award to complete a fairytale return to English football. His Cup quarter-final try against Bradford, was probably the most significant of a career which has blossomed since departing Penrith, in his native Australia,

for England.

Molloy spearheads a host of promising young forwards at Wilderspool, with fellow Under-21 internationals Neil Harmon and Phil Sumner, plus former Leigh forward Mark Thomas, pressing for inclusion. Thomas was a Cup semi-final loser with Leigh in 1987 and again, with Warrington last year.

Gary Sanderson and Billy McGinty have both earned representative honours, Sanderson appearing four times at Great Britain Under-21 level, while McGinty represented Lancashire for the second time against Yorkshire last September.

Gregory, the Great Britain skipper throughout the autumn's British Coal Test series against the Kiwis, has skippered the Wires for three years and is desperate to lead the club he joined in 1982 to a Wembley meeting with hometown Wigan. An outstanding Lions tourist in 1988, he made his 13th Test appearance in Perpignan a fortnight ago.

"The town's got the Wembley feeling again," said Johnson. "It's nice to see the primrose and blue colours out in such force. It's been a long time since the club's last appearance at Wembley, but we're determined to bridge the gap with a victory against Oldham."

Travelleads Top Fan

Travelleads Top Fan 1990 — Rugby League's Official Supporter of the Year — will follow Great Britain to New Zealand for the second and third Tests in a £4,000 prize package.

The sixth winner of the Travelleads Top Fan title and a guest will be flown by Air New Zealand to Auckland and Christchurch for the Anglo-Kiwi crunch encounters in July, plus a four-day break in Rotorua and a two night stopover in Los Angeles on the return journey.

Leeds-based Travelleads have again been appointed official Travel Agents for the 1990 Lions Tour to Papua New Guinea and New Zealand, having organised the 1984 and 1988 trips Down Under, as well as supporters' trips to Australia and America.

Nomination forms for the 18-night holiday prize are now available from the Public Relations Department, The Rugby Football League, 180 Chapeltown Road, Leeds LS7 4HT.

Five nominees will be interviewed by the Travelleads Top Fan panel of judges, headed by BBC Television Rugby League commentator Ray French, the winner being announced on 19 April.

Rugby League Public Affairs Executive David Howes said: "The Travelleads Top Fan award is unique in British sport, designed to acknowledge and reward our loyal and knowledgeable supporters, the fastest growing sector of the country's sporting public."



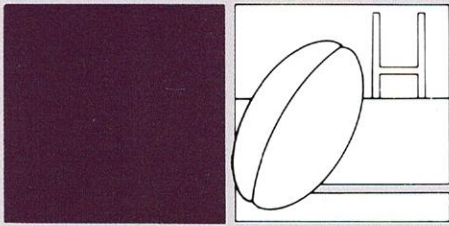
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ENGLAND

Warrington's Under-21 prop forward Steve Molloy.





1990

SILK CUT

CHALLENGE CUP

RESULTS

PRELIMINARY ROUND

Fulham	23	Doncaster	16
Leeds	8	Bradford N.	24
Millom	0	Bisons	4
Oldham	30	Huddersfield	8
St. Helens	39	Castleford	12
Thatto Heath	2	Batley	45

FIRST ROUND

Barrow	12	Sheffield E.	22
Bramley	14	St. Helens	22
Chorley	6	Keighley	12
Fulham	14	Ryedale-York	14
Hull	46	Halifax	0
Hull K.R.	4	Wigan	6
Nottingham C.	2	Dewsbury	32
Oldham	30	Workington T.	8
Rochdale H.	38	Carlisle	6
Runcorn H.	12	Bradford N.	22
Salford	56	Bisons	6
Swinton	10	Wakefield T.	10
Trafford B.	14	Hunslet	7
Warrington	20	Featherstone R.	12
Whitehaven	23	Leigh	22
Widnes	26	Batley	10

REPLAYS

Ryedale-York	12	Fulham	16
Wakefield T.	32	Swinton	4

SECOND ROUND

Fulham	2	Bradford N.	20
Hull	12	St. Helens	24
Salford	7	Oldham	18
Wakefield T.	27	Sheffield E.	12
Warrington	20	Trafford B.	11
Whitehaven	46	Keighley	10
Widnes	22	Rochdale H.	16
Wigan	30	Dewsbury	6

THIRD ROUND

Bradford N.	10	Warrington	12
St. Helens	44	Whitehaven	10
Wakefield T.	14	Wigan	26
Widnes	4	Oldham	16

SEMI FINAL

Wigan	20	St. Helens	14
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SILK CUT AWARD

Dick Jasiewiczz (Doncaster)
Paul Harkin (Bradford N.)
Roy Robinson (Millom)
Mike Ford (Oldham)
Shaun Devine (St. Helens)
Paul Gearey (Batley)

Steve Maguire (Barrow)
Paul Loughlin (St. Helens)
Jeff Bimson (Chorley)
Mike Taylor (Fulham)
Richard Gay (Hull)
David Bishop (Hull K.R.)
Paul Shuttleworth (Dewsbury)
Leo Casey (Oldham)
Steve Turner (Rochdale H.)
Billy Platt (Runcorn H.)
Mick Worrall (Salford)
Andy Kelly (Wakefield T.)
Darren Abraham (Trafford B.)
Chris Bibb (Featherstone R.)
James Ward (Whitehaven)
Alan Tait (Widnes)

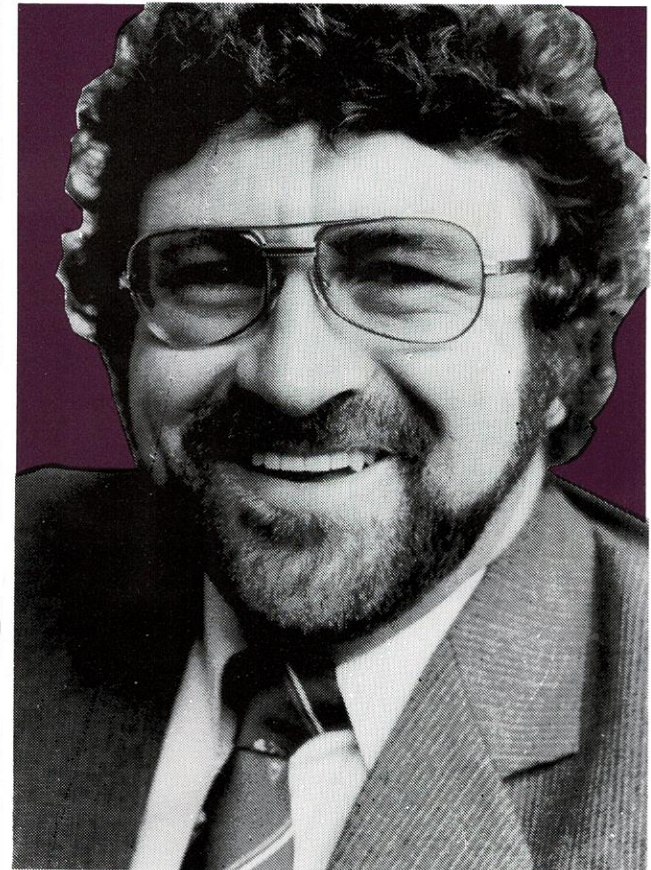
Russell Browney (Fulham)
Mark Conway (Wakefield T.)

Gerald Cordle (Bradford N.)
Shane Cooper (St. Helens)
Leo Casey (Oldham)
Billy Conway (Wakefield T.)
Stuart Galbraith (Trafford B.)
Brendan White (Keighley)
Paul Moriarty (Widnes)
Andy Platt (Wigan)

Kelvin Skerrett (Bradford N.)
Paul Forber (St. Helens)
Shaun Edwards (Wigan)
Keith Newton (Oldham)

Paul Groves (St. Helens)

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