

OLDHAM TEAM CHECK RYEDALE-YORK

DUNCAN PLATT	- 1	- GRAHAM SULLIVAN
RICHARD IRVING	- 2	- DAVID KETTLESTRING
DES FOY	- 3	- BASIL AKE
JOHN HENDERSON	- 4	- STUART MORRIS
PAUL LORD	- 5	- NICK PINKNEY
BRETT CLARK	- 6	- GARRY ATKINS
MIKE FORD	- 7	- BRENDAN CARLISLE
LEO CASEY	- 8	- IAN PAVER
ANDY RUANE	- 9	- STEWART HORTON
JOHN FIELDHOUSE	- 10	- PAUL MAXWELL
PAUL ROUND	- 11	- STEVE OLSEN
CHARLIE McALISTER	- 12	- RICK HEYES
RICHARD RUSSELL	- 13	- GEOFF PRYCE
TOMMY MARTYN	- 14	- TBA
KEITH ATKINSON	- 15	- TBA

Referee: Mr. P. Crashley (Wakefield). Touch Judges: Mr. J. Lloyd (Red Flag), Mr. J. Glover (Orange Flag)

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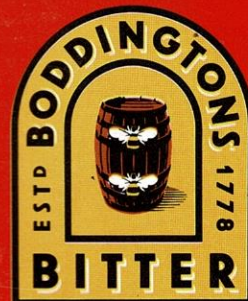
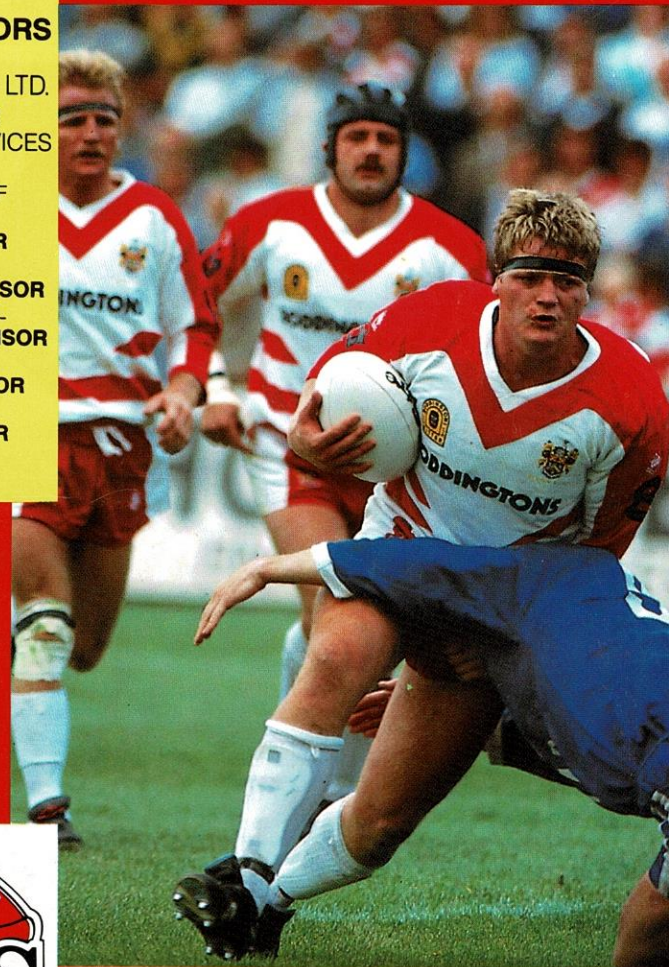
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Record Receipts: £37,505.50 v Wigan,
5th October, 1989

Record Transfer Fee Paid: £70,000 to
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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 points
v Liverpool City, April 1959

First Game: 21st October, 1876 v Stalybridge

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Ganley, 2,881

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Most Tries: Pre 1900, Jack Hirst, 233
Since 1900, Alan Davies, 182

CLUB HONOURS

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First Division Champions:
1904-05

Second Division Champions:
1963-64, 1981-82, 1987-88

Rugby League Challenge Cup Winners:
1898-99,
1924-25, 1926-27

Runners-up:
1906-07, 1911-12, 1923-24, 1925-26

Lancashire Cup Winners:
1907-08, 1910-11, 1913-14, 1919-20, 1924-25,
1933-34, 1956-57, 1957-58, 1958-59

Runners-up:
1908-09, 1911-12, 1918-19, 1921-22, 1954-55,
1966-67, 1968-69, 1986-87, 1989-90

Lancashire Championship Winners:
1907-08,
1909-10, 1921-22, 1956-57, 1957-58

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

Lancashire Shield Winners:
1975-76, 1979-80

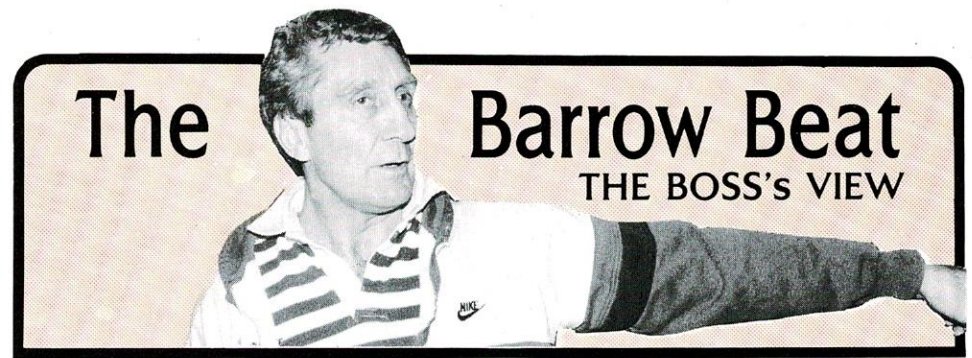
Colts Premiership Trophy:
1979-80

Second Division Premiership:
1987-88

WE'RE PUTTING OUR SHIRTS ON OLDHAM



The Barrow Beat THE BOSS'S VIEW



THE prize for today's winners is an appearance at Old Trafford next Sunday in the final of the Second Division premiership. It is a major Rugby League occasion and it is sure to attract a bumper crowd. There is a lot of prestige attached to it so there are big rewards for the winners of today's Oldham-York and Hull KR-Dewsbury semi-final tussles.

We have played well in our last two games against Rochdale Hornets on Easter Monday and against Swinton in the first round of the premiership and it will need an equally-sound performance to take care of York today.

The visitors are something of an unknown quantity, in that we have not played them in the Second Division, but they have finished in fourth place and you can bet that they will come to Watersheddings today all fired up to try and pull off a similar shock to that which Dewsbury caused when they won at Rochdale in the last round.

It is up to the Oldham players, with the backing of the home crowd, to counteract York's enthusiasm and make sure that we preserve our unbeaten home record this season in readiness for the start of the First Division campaign in August.

I would like to thank you all for your loyal and continued support this season

and trust that you will all be back later in the summer ready for the big kick-off in the higher strata.

We have hit a few highs and lows together over the past few months, but a lot more highs than lows when you consider we reached the Lancashire Cup final, the Silk Cut Challenge Cup semi-final and the quarter-final of the Regal Trophy.

Promotion, of course, was always the priority, and we can now look forward eagerly to what the new season has in store.

On a personal note, I was surprised but delighted to be nominated for the coach-of-the-year award, alongside John Monie and Brian Johnson, but I would like to pass on my thanks and congratulations to all my players for what they have achieved this season and what I hope they will continue to achieve in the next eight days.

Without the players, nobody can achieve anything, so I sign off my column for this season with a big THANK YOU to them. They will have a rest soon — but only a short one — and then we will be back training in earnest for the First Division.

Have a good summer.

TONY BARROW

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TODAY'S

VISITORS

Welcome to Ryedale-York

THE Minster men, who now take the name of Ryedale-York, come to Watersheddings for the semi-final of the Second Division premiership today and it is their first visit since the 1985-86 season when both teams were in the First Division. Oldham won 8-2 at York in November and 24-16 at Watersheddings on January 12, 1986, and only one member of the squad on duty that day, substitute Paddy Kirwan, is still active on the Watersheddings scene.

Due to the way the Second Division fixture formula worked out, the two clubs have not met this season in league competition so today's encounter will be something of a novelty for both teams and both sets of supporters. York finished fourth in the division — one place beneath Oldham — and they come here today by virtue of Dewsbury's surprise win at Rochdale in the first round.

Beaten only twice at home in the league, York possess a young, talented and pacy squad of players under the coaching helm of Gary Stephens, the former Wigan and Halifax scrum-half and a canny play-maker around the base of the scrum and in the loose.

Chris Hammerton, York's regular scrum-half, may have to miss today's game due to a knee ligament injury, but York possess a more-than-able deputy in local boy **Brendan Carlisle** — one of only several members of the side born and brought up in the York amateur Rugby League. Indeed, one such player, **David Kettlestring**, on the right wing, only turned professional in January, but he has quickly made an impact, not least by scoring SIX tries in one match against Keighley earlier in the season.

Centre **Basil Ake**, the former New Zealand junior RU international, who was signed from Bradford Northern, scored a hat-trick of tries from the centre position against Halifax in the first round to become the club's leading try-scorer this season with 18. His co-centre, **Stuart Morris**, formerly with Dewsbury, has scored 16 tries and the left-winger, **Neil Pinkney**, is another dangerous finisher. A former Great Britain under-19 international, he is still an amateur although he is expected to sign pro forms any time now.

Stand-off **Garry Atkins** has spent part of the season out on loan to Halifax, but he has returned to York to make the No. 6 role his own since New Zealander David Watson, who has now joined Hull KR, broke his arm.

In the forwards, York have a nice blend of youth and experience, with most of the experience provided by hooker and captain **Stewart Horton** and loose-forward **Geoff Pryce**, a player who is in his testimonial year. Horton was a Castleford player and was actually picked by Mal Reilly to go on the 1988 tour of Australia, but he had to pull out due to an ankle injury.

The rest of the forwards are all local lads — **Ian Paver**, **Paul Maxwell**, **Steve Olsen** and **Rick Heyes**.

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OB Young Player of the Year TOMMY MARTYN



Tommy Martyn, Oldham's teenage stand-off who has burst into the first team with five tries in six games, was your overwhelming choice for the title of the Boddingtons-sponsored OB Young Player of the Year. He was presented with an inscribed silver salver and £150 cheque before the recent Swinton home game by Boddingtons representative Val Jackson. Congratulations Tommy!

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RUGBY LEAGUE can be a cruel game, as Oldham hooker Andy Ruane discovered when he broke his thumb in the Regal Trophy quarter-final against St. Helens.

The Roughyeds' number nine expected to be out of the first team for six weeks. Instead, he found his return delayed while his deputy, Richard Russell, played in the front row as Oldham embarked on a winning streak that took them into the semi-finals of the Silk Cut Challenge Cup and on the verge of promotion to the First Division.

Sidelined first by injury and then by Richard Russell's outstanding form was no fun for the twenty-seven-year-old.

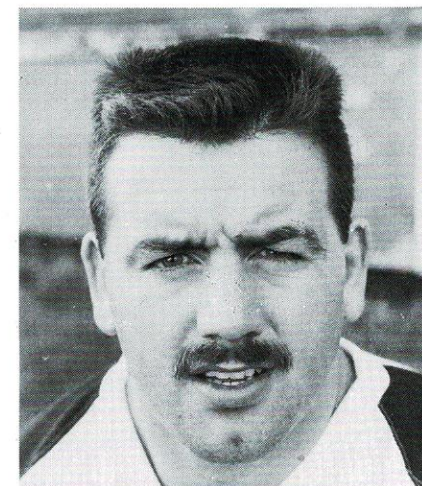
"The situation was very frustrating — I was watching the team do really well but couldn't take part in the action. I missed out on the whole of the cup run, which was a real disappointment, especially because all I'd done was broken my thumb!"

Rather than sit back and moan about his bad luck, Andy worked hard to ensure that when the chance came to regain his place in the first team, he was ready to take it with open arms.

Intensive training at Watersheddings and in his own time has paid dividends. Andy has figured in Oldham's last half dozen matches, recapturing the form that prompted Oldham to buy him from close neighbours Rochdale in the first place.

"Unfortunately, I felt that I was getting my form back just as things were coming to an end. I've managed to get in a few good games at the end of the season and there's still the Premiership. But I'm really looking forward to some hard training in preparation for next season, which I hope will be more successful for me!"

"This year's close season will be more important than ever, considering the teams we'll be facing next season. Every match will be like a cup tie, although that shouldn't present any problem at Oldham because we have become



a stronger and more experienced squad"

Andy, at 27, is one of the most experienced players on the Oldham books. He first started playing professionally at the tender age of 17 when he signed for Widnes, his hometown team.

The search for first team action took him first to Rochdale and then on to Oldham, where he has been impressing fans with his commitment, effort and superb tactical kicking ever since.

Commitment is essential to Andy, who is quite happy to travel to Watersheddings all the way from Widnes, where he lives with his wife Caroline and young daughters Kimberley and Rebecca. He runs his own damp-coursing business, which allows him to arrange his time around training.

"I've always taken rugby very seriously — even when I was a kid I used to enjoy the hard work that goes with playing the game. You have to want it to take up a big chunk of your time or you just aren't dedicated. And the players and the fans at Oldham are so dedicated to the game that now we're back in the First Division we should stay there!"

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John Fieldhouse breaks through the Swinton defence on his way to a deserved try during the recent 32-10 Premiership quarter-final victory against Oldham's near neighbours.



So close — Paul Lord, after running half the length of the pitch, is pulled up a couple of feet from the try line.

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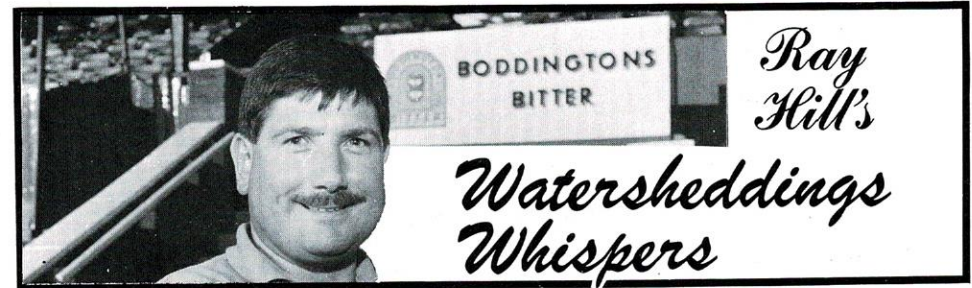
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WELCOME to what should definitely be my last column of the season. Dewsbury's surprise defeat of Rochdale means we meet York at home today with the winner going on to enjoy all the glamour of the Premiership doubleheader at Old Trafford on Sunday May 13.

If we win through to the final it will be a fitting climax to this most remarkable season which has seen us win promotion to the top flight and reach the final, semi-finals and quarter-finals of the Lancashire Cup, the Silk Cut Challenge Cup and the Regal Trophy respectively.

With such a great record of success throughout the season, demand for our wide range of souvenirs in the club shop has been overwhelming but I am pleased to say that we have just taken delivery of new stock so everything you need for the Premiership finals can now be purchased.

We are proud of the range of products we offer our fans and recommend that you all pay a visit and see the selection of Oldham RLFC goodies on display. They range from replica t-shirts to toothbrushes to the current "Simply the Best" record featuring Morgan's Every Which Way and the Oldham team and all represent great value for money.

Talking about money, most fans are well aware of the current financial situation at the club. To alleviate the situation the club wants to hear from anybody who wants to get involved with fund-raising ideas on behalf of Oldham RLFC.

What we are after is ideas to raise money and people who are prepared to put the time and effort in to make sure they work.

Remember, Oldham RLFC is your club and its success depends upon the support of fans like you. We have enjoyed a tremendous season this year but we want to do even better now we are back in the First Division. The more funds we have available the more likely we are to achieve our goal.

If you can help, give me a call on 061-620 4870 or catch me at the ground. I am keen to chat with anybody about fund-raising ideas — so come on, get in touch and let's work together to take Oldham RLFC right to the top.

In the meantime, have a nice break and I'll speak to you again next season when we're back in the First Division.

A BIG THANK YOU TO YOU ALL SAYS COLIN HAWKYARD

LOYAL Oldham servant Colin Hawkyard is approaching the end of his busy testimonial year and would like to thank everybody who has helped him.

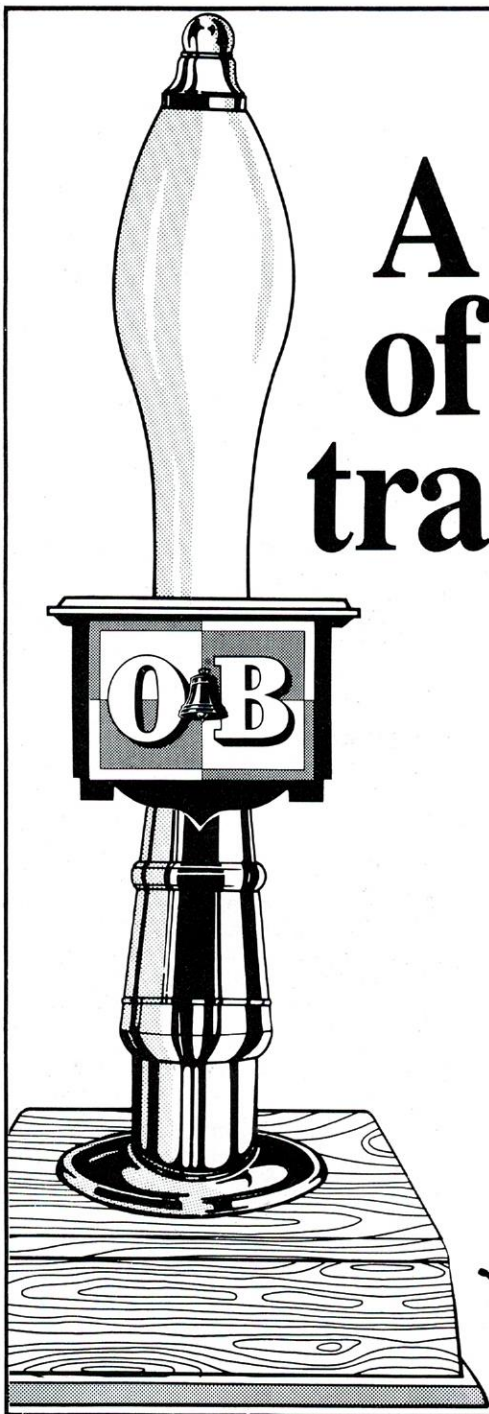
"As my testimonial draws to a close I'd like to take this opportunity of thanking everybody who has helped make this year such a memorable success.

"I've thoroughly enjoyed myself and hope everyone else who has attended events and supported me has too.

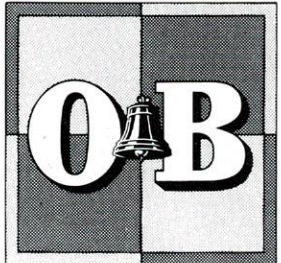
"As you know, I've always tried my hardest for Oldham on the pitch and am very grateful that the fans of the club have done the same for me during my benefit season.

"Thank you."

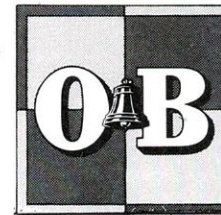
A collection will be held for Colin Hawkyard at today's game.



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CORNER

APRIL AWARD FOR PAUL

PAUL Round, who has made a successful comeback after spending most of the season out of action with injury, has won the OB Evening Chronicle Player of the Month award for April.

He'll be presented with an inscribed medal, £100 cheque and a case of Boddingtons Bitter to toast his success before today's game against York.

Commenting on Paul's comeback after back and knee injuries, award judge Roger Halstead said: "I selected Paul Round because he had a sound game away to Swinton and two excellent games at home to Rochdale and Swinton, culminating in two tries against Hornets and a deserved man of the match against the Lions."

"He has the advantage of not feeling the wear and tear of a long season but nevertheless it was good to see him back to the form that Oldham always thought he was capable of producing."

OB PUBS JOIN TOGETHER FOR HOSPICE APPEAL

OB PUBS throughout Oldham and the surrounding area are uniting to raise cash for the Oldham Hospice Appeal which needs funds of £250,000 every year to stay open.



These colourful customers from the Colliers Arms saw the light at the end of the tunnel when they travelled to the Grove pub near Boddingtons Strangeways Brewery from Chadderton using various forms of transport including skateboards and roller skates.

Customers at many OB pubs have already run charity events for Dr. Kershaw's Hospice and many more are planning to do so in the coming months.

Comments Ken Lupton, Boddingtons Pubs Operations Manager: "By focussing the attention of the entire OB estate on the fund-raising project we hope to be able to raise a fair percentage of the £250,000 needed this year.

"The vast majority of our OB pubs will be running at least one event over the next 12 months so all our customers will get the chance to contribute to this worthy cause. At the same time they can have a lot of fun too."



And fun was the name of the game when this OB pub quintet got behind the Oldham Hospice Appeal. Footsore regulars at the Streetbridge let their feet do the talking and walked all the way from Oldham to Blackpool—and raised loads of cash to boot.

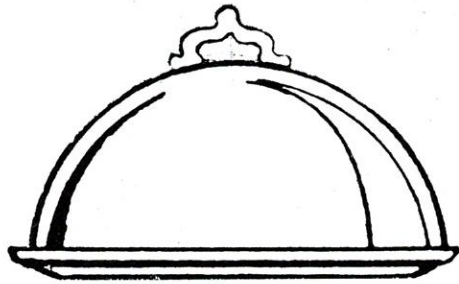


Dart-playing regulars at the New Museum Inn hit the bullseye with a 12 hour darts marathon scoring thousands of points and raising hundreds of pounds for the Hospice Appeal.

SEE YOU NEXT SEASON

THIS is the last OB Corner of the current campaign. We'll be back in September. Have a nice summer.

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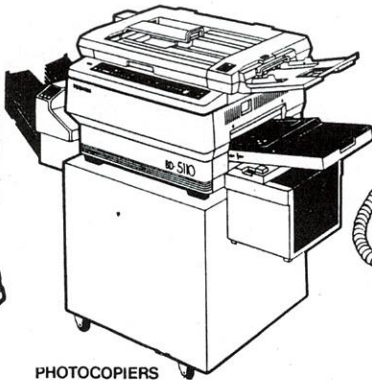
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Fixtures and Statistics

Date	Opponents	V	KO	P	Res	F - A	Tries	Goals	Att
Sep 3	3 Workington	H	3:00		W	40-8	Henderson (2), Cogger (2), McAlister, Lord, Ruane, Russell	Platt (4)	3,743
10	Hallifax	A	3:00	11	L	12-22	Platt, Cogger	Platt (2)	8,612
16	Barrow (Lancs Cup)	A	2:30		W	46-2	Lord (2), Ford, Casey, Platt (2), Allen, Hyde, Cogger	Platt (5)	2,300
27	St. Helens (Lancs Cup)	A	7:30		W	36-6	Robinson, Ford, Platt, Cogger, Allen, Newton	Platt (6)	7,834
Oct 1	1 Hull KR	H	3:00	12	W	12-4	Lord	Platt (4)	5,797
5	Wigan (Lancs Cup)	H	7:30		W	19-18	Fieldhouse, Newton, Ford	Platt, Hyde (2), Ford (dg)	8,603
8	Runcorn H	A	3:00	9	W	34-6	Russell, Clarke (2), Meadows (2), Clawson, Irving	Hyde (2)	2,500
14	Warrington (Lancs Cup final)	-	3:00		L	16-24	Irving, Robinson, Lord	Platt (1), Hyde (1)	9,895
18	Hallifax	H	7:30		W	14-3	Lord, Fairbank	Hyde (3)	6,953
22	Carlisle	A	3:00	5	W	10-32	Fieldhouse (2), Hyde, Fairbank, Cogger, Meadows	Hyde (2), McAlister (2)	1,200
29	Batley	H	3:00	3	W	22-4	Ruane, Martyn, Meadows, Irving	Martyn (3)	4,120
Nov 5	Doncaster	A	3:00	2	W	22-20	Casey, Lord, Hyde, Fairbank	Hyde (3)	3,813
12	Keighley	H	3:00	2	W	50-34	Clark, Hyde, Irving, Ford, McAlister, Meadows, Ruane, Lord, Russell	Hyde (7)	4,113
19	Fulham	A	2:30	2	W	40-10	McAlister, Ruane (2), Clark, Cogger, Allen, Ford	McAlister (6)	1,440
26	Doncaster	H	3:00	2	W	30-8	Lord, Meadows, Ruane, Robinson, Clark	McAlister (5)	4,914
Dec 3	Bramley (Regal Trophy)	A	3:50		W	48-16	Robinson, Cogger (2), Lord, McAlister, Clawson, Clark, Croston	Platt (8)	1,632
10	Huddersfield (Regal Trophy)	H	3:00		W	22-8	Cogger (2), Croston	Platt (5)	5,205
17	St Helens (Regal Trophy)	A	3:00		L	18-32	Fairbank, Cogger (2), Lord	McAlister	7,752
26	Rochdale H	A	3:00	4	L	24-12	McAlister, Lord	McAlister	8,150
Jan 1	Swinton	H	3:00	3	W	29-14	Ford, Lord (2), Cogger, Russell	Platt (4), Ford (dg)	4,954
7	Hunslet	H	3:00	3	W	48-10	Foy (5), Cogger (3), Fairbank	Platt (6)	3,644
14	Huddersfield (SCCC)	H	3:00		W	30-8	Clark, Allen, Newton, Cogger, Fairbank	Platt (5)	4,593
17	Hull KR	A	7:30	3	W	9-6	Irving	Platt (2), Platt (dg)	6,530
21	Chorley	A	3:00	3	W	44-6	Irving (3), Foy (2), Cogger (2), Newton	Platt (6)	2,851
28	Workington (SCCC Rnd 1)	H	3:00		W	30-8	Platt, Henderson (3), Clark	Platt, Atkinson (4)	3,710
Feb 4	Fulham	H	3:00	3	W	52-4	Henderson (4), Foy, Casey, Newton (2), Platt, Lord	Platt (5)	3,549
11	Salford (SCCC Rnd 2)	A	3:00		W	18-7	Russell, Clark	Platt (5)	6,542
18	Chorley	H	3:00	2	W	66-16	Clark (3), Russell (2), Martyn, McAlister, Casey, Cogger, Irving, Foy, Round	Platt (9)	3,576
25	Widnes (SCCC Rnd 3)	A	3:00		W	16-4	Henderson, Newton	Platt (4)	11,820
Mar 4	Huddersfield	H	3:00	3	W	23-8	Cogger, Lewis, Lord, Martyn	Platt (2), Atkinson, Martyn (dg)	5,615
7	Keighley	A	7:30	3	W	30-10	Ruane, Lord (3), Martyn, Irving	Platt (3)	1,252
11	Batley	A	3:00	2	W	30-14	Lord (2), Casey, Clark	Hyde (7)	2,800
18	Runcorn	H	3:00	1	W	60-2	Allen (2), Casey (2), Cogger (2), Lord, Irving, Anderson, Hyde, Clark	Platt (8)	5,132
21	Hunslet	A	7:30	1	W	42-14	Lord (2), Russell, Henderson, McAlister, Platt, Fieldhouse	Platt (7)	2,000
24	Huddersfield	A	3:00	1	W	22-14	Ruane, Robinson, Fairbank, Irving	Atkinson (3)	1,900
31	Warrington (SCCC semi-final)	-	2:00		L	6-10	Irving	Platt	15,631
Apr 4	Workington	A	6:15	2	L	14-21	Atkinson, Fairbank	Atkinson (2), Ruane	800
8	Carlisle	H	1:30	2	W	48-16	McAlister, Clark (2), Lord, Henderson, Atkinson, Irving, Flanagan	Atkinson (6)	2,865
13	Swinton	A	3:00	3	L	12-14	Foy, Casey	Platt (2)	3,600
16	Rochdale	H	3:15	3	W	30-2	Platt, Round (2), Henderson	Platt (7)	6,300
22	Swinton	H	3:00		W	32-10	Henderson (2), Fieldhouse, Ford, Martyn	Platt (6)	4,540

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If the club is to have a successful future, every effort must be made to budget from a profitable situation rather than one of deficit, and that is the ONLY reason why the directors are asking the supporters to stand an increase — only the second such increase, incidentally, in the last four or five seasons.

Turnstile admission will be £5 and seats will cost £7. The turnstile cost for pensioners and juniors will be £3.

However, big savings can be made on season tickets, particularly if they are purchased before June 1, and by buying a season ticket you are getting free admission to 'A' team games, a priority on big-match tickets next season, and you are ensuring that the club gets maximum benefit from your investment because season tickets are not subject to League levy.

Season ticket prices are as follows (and you can work out the savings based on 13 First Division home games):

BEFORE JUNE 1

Main stand and Hutchins stand seats £75; ground £50; pensioners and juniors £33; one adult and one child (standing) £80; one adult and two children £110; two adults and one child £130; two adults and two children £160.

AFTER JUNE 1

Main stand and Hutchins stand seats £80; ground £55; pensioners and juniors £36; one adult and one child (standing) £86; one adult and two children £118; two adults and one child £140; two adults and two children £172.

The club office is open each week day from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Saturday mornings from 9.30 a.m. to 11 a.m., so hurry to buy your season ticket, help the club and save yourself some money on turnstile prices.

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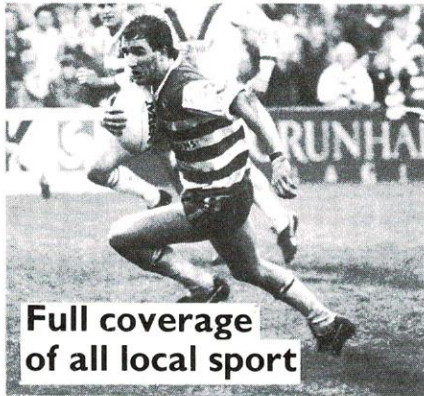


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'A' Team Round-Up

Slalom Lager Alliance League

FIRST DIVISION							Pts
P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	
Hull	28	23	1	4	847	47	
Leeds	28	22	1	5	826	45	
Castleford	28	18	0	10	763	36	
Hull K.R.	28	17	0	11	600	34	
St. Helens	28	16	0	12	671	32	
Wigan	28	16	0	12	644	32	
OLDHAM	28	15	1	12	586	31	
Warrington	28	15	1	12	652	31	
Halifax	28	13	0	15	517	26	
Featherstone	28	11	0	17	635	22	
Widnes	28	11	0	17	450	22	
Salford	28	9	2	17	623	20	
Swinton C	28	10	0	18	441	20	
Hunslet	28	7	0	21	425	14	
Carlisle	28	4	0	24	449	8	

Thank You from the 'A' Team

The players and coaching staff of the 'A' Team would like to thank all the loyal fans who have supported the side throughout the season.
Their encouragement and vocal support has been excellent and is very much appreciated.

'A' Team Fixtures and Statistics

Date	Opponents	Venue	Res	F	A
Sep 1	St. Helens	A	L	2-15	
8	Halifax	H	W	24-16	
15	Castleford	H	L	16-27	
29	Hull KR	A	L	14-20	
6	Salford A (LCCS)	A	L	0-6	
12	Halifax	A	L	10-22	
27	Hull	A	L	6-20	
3	Widnes	H	L	10-14	
10	Wigan	H	L	16-20	
17	Hull	H	D	16-16	
24	Leeds	A	L	16-28	
1	Warrington	H	W	36-12	
8	St. Helens	H	W	20-18	
22	Featherstone	H	W	28-26	
29	Swinton	A	L	20-23	
5	Hunslet	A	W	32-0	
12	Hull KR	H	L	6-12	
19	Warrington	A	L	12-18	
26	Salford A	H	W	26-18	
3	Salford (SACC Rnd 1)	A	L	12-30	
9	Castleford	A	W	32-18	
23	Wigan	A	W	17-12	
2	Featherstone	A	W	20-16	
16	Leeds	H	W	32-22	
23	Salford A	H	W	22-23	
30	Hunslet	H	L	18-35	
7	Carlisle	A	W	50-23	
13	Swinton	H	W	38-4	
20	Widnes	A	W	8-0	

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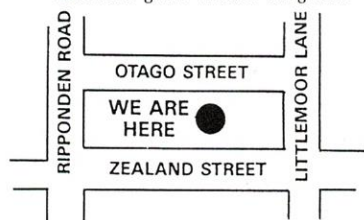
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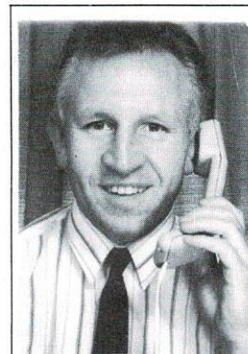
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THE whiff of Old Trafford is once again with us, and now only Ryedale-York stand in the way. But we have already seen in the earlier round of the play-offs that there can be no room for complacency. I have had the opportunity to run the rule over Ryedale-York earlier in the season and witnessed their demolition job on Halifax and, going off that display, cannot be taken lightly. It would certainly be a marvellous way to end the season by going to Old Trafford and once again playing a part in one of the best days on the Rugby League calendar. But before looking ahead to what might be, let's look back to what has been.



Jack Dearden

Right from the start of the season, there hardly seems to have been a week gone by without Oldham not making some kind of news. Once again, our best performances have been reserved for some of Rugby League's elitist teams. The coach and staff at Watersheddings in my view have managed to supply entertainment whilst picking up points.

Although you can't please all of the people all of the time, you only have to look at the situation just across the Pennines at Halifax to realise that no-one has a divine right to win matches. What has happened at Thrum Hall this season should serve as a warning to all clubs. Obviously, only they themselves will know the real reasons for their dramatic demise, and this once again indicates the thin dividing line between success or sorrow.

Another aspect of the game this season which for me has been an increasing worry is the plight of some of the clubs at the lower reaches of the second division. I don't think that victories by 70-90 points is good for the game. Similarly, the situation that Runcorn find themselves in, having lost all their fixtures, is another occurrence which the league can well do without. I would urge the powers that be to

look quickly and seriously at the implementation of three divisions. Especially with the current arrangement of the 2nd division fixture list.

Another improvement I would like to see will come as no surprise to Rugby League followers, concerning not only the standard but the consistency of referees. In particular, the fascination of an eight-match ban. I don't condone foul play, but I do feel that Rugby League is an aggressive contact sport and this season some of the enjoyment has been removed.

One thing that I have enjoyed, though, has been the emergence of the re-vamped youth policy at Watersheddings, and one or two of the club's youngsters would appear to have all the attributes to play the game at the highest level. There is no guarantee that young players will all eventually end up as proficient 1st team players but, as the saying goes, if you don't buy a ticket, you won't win the raffle!

An indication of the benefits of a successful youth policy can be taken from Wigan, who look likely to win everything apart from the boat race. An interesting observation comes to light when you look closely at their playing register, because they have not made a major transfer signing for the last 18 months, their last signing of a Rugby League player being Andy Platt.

Finally, here's hoping for a successful season next year in the top flight — when the REAL test will come. Enjoy the entertainment.

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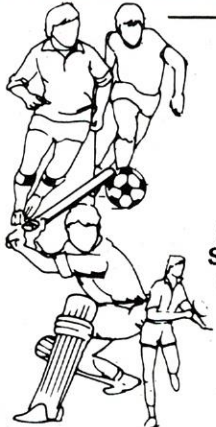
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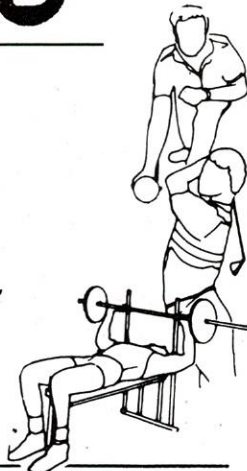
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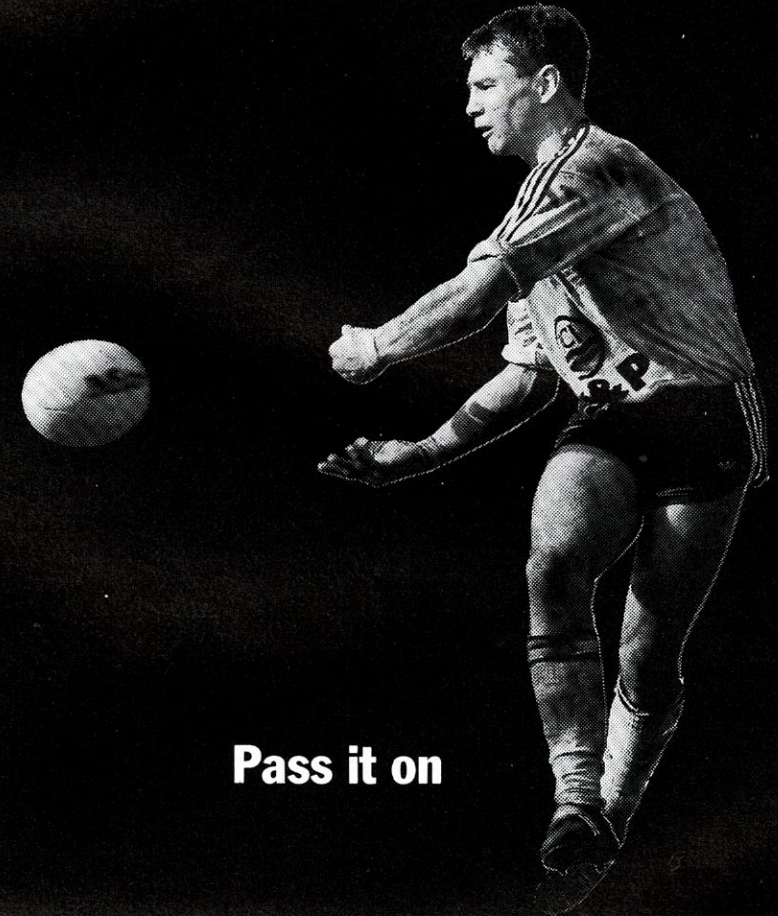
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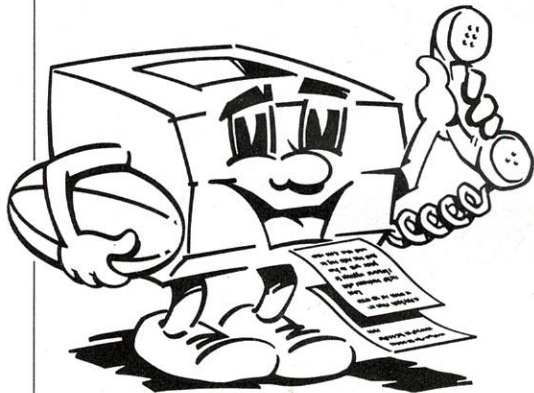
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