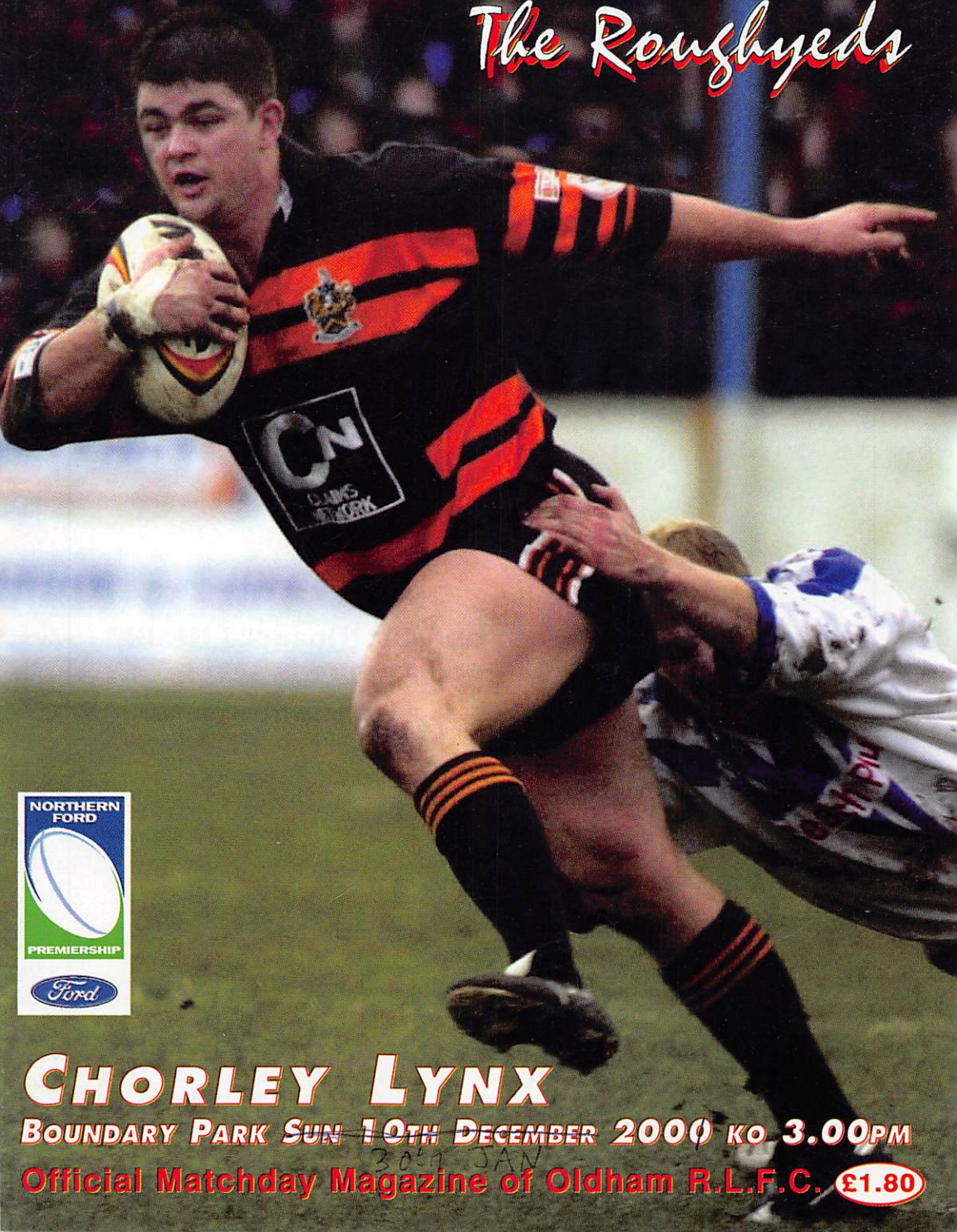


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The Roughyeds



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Up Front

... with Christopher Hamilton



A WARM welcome to Boundary Park for this afternoon's opening home NFP game against Chorley Lynx. Henry Morris, their Chairman, and everybody connected with the club have had a very tough time over the last few months culminating with the suspension of their Rugby Football League Membership.

I am delighted to say, however, that with the considerable support of their new backers, the Hemmings Family, the future now looks brighter and we wish them all the best this season.

We started the season well up at Barrow last week where the support was tremendous and to all of you who made the trip **THANK YOU**.

Today we officially welcome to Oldham RLFC all our close season recruits and wish them well with our club. We are also delighted to welcome our new club sponsors, J. W. Lees & Co., Claims Network Limited and our associate club sponsors Prosport. We thank them for their support and hope that their partnership with us will be a long and mutually beneficial one.

Finally we hope that this season will be a successful one for the club and we wish Mike Ford, the coaching and support staff good luck in all their efforts. There has been a tremendous amount of work put in prior to the start of the season and if hard work is anything to go by we are already top of the league.

Enjoy the game and keep up your fantastic support.

Chris Hamilton



The Roughyeds

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Shayne McMenemy

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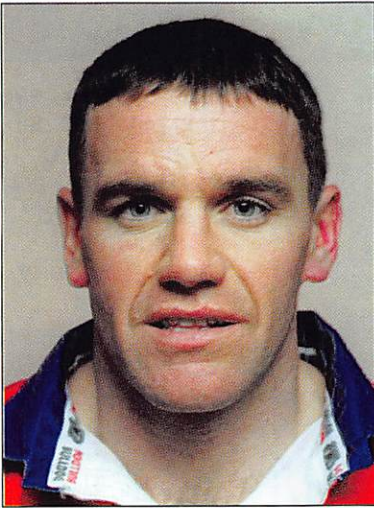
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FORD FOCUS . . . with Mike Ford



WE ARE pleased to welcome our visitors from Chorley Lynx today. When it looked as though the club might be expelled from the League Oldham gave them our backing in their fight to continue, so we are happy that their struggle was successful. I am especially pleased to welcome Graeme West with whom I played at Wigan where he was club captain and an inspiring leader. I hope he can bring some success to Chorley, though not, of course, at Oldham's expense.

The result at Barrow last week was an improvement on last year, having lost there narrowly 19-16. It is a measure of the progress we have made that we were slightly disappointed with our performance when we know how good Barrow are at home and how difficult it is to get a win anywhere in Cumbria.

The victory was based on generally solid defence despite conceding four tries. Given that we saw so little of the ball in the second half we were pleased with the outcome. As in the South Sydney game our prop forwards worked tirelessly, although we showed tremendous enthusiasm and work rate right through from 1 to 17.

Our kicking game was much improved from the South Sydney match but we want to do even better in this department as we do in ball retention. When I talk about educating the players being on ongoing necessity I mean that we have to select the right options at the right time. We must not get too carried away when on top and, similarly, must not get too down when things go wrong. Given that the attitude and enthusiasm of the Oldham players is absolutely outstanding, I feel that we are getting there.

Finally the tremendous vocal support we got at Barrow was of enormous benefit. Thanks for you commitment and keep it up today.

As ever, enjoy today's match.

Mike

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Michael's Match

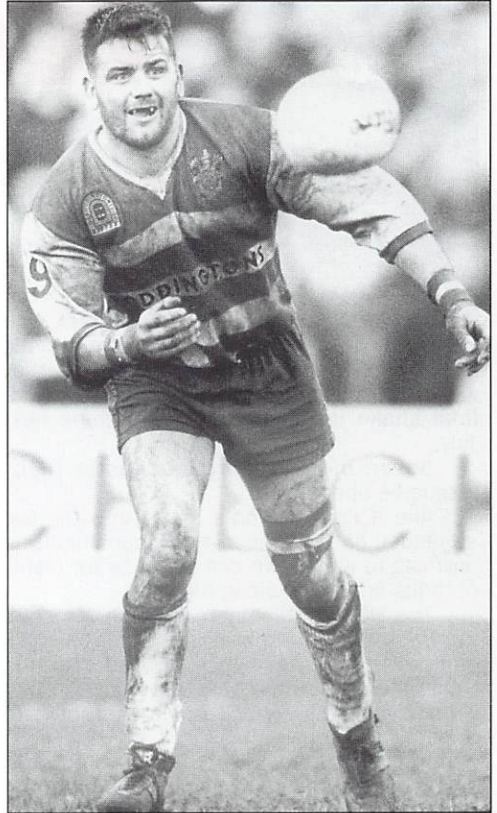
... from the pen of Michael Turner



ALTHOUGH the Roughyeds played the old Chorley Borough during the Watersheddings days, it is only since the new club was formed in 1997 that we have entertained the "Lynx." Perhaps the most exciting game between the two clubs was the first encounter on May 31st 1998, which took place on the Preston Grasshoppers Rugby Union ground. The match ended in a draw, eighteen points each with Oldham coach, Paddy Kirwan and Lynx skipper, Andy Ruane both left to reflect on what might have been in the after match press interviews. Indeed both teams would have to admit that here was a point lost, rather than a point gained.

From "Lynx" point of view the game looked secure when they led 18 - 6 going into the last quarter. This was achieved through tries from Steve Ashcroft, Neil Parsley and Phil Jones, who also tacked on three goals. Ruane was having a field day against his old club, dictating much of the play from acting half back when Lynx were in possession and putting in some bone crunching tackles in defence.

On 58 minutes, Kirwan introduced veteran forward Paul Round as substitute. This proved to be an astute decision on the part of the Oldham coach as "Roundy" turned back the clock with a display of power running. An immediate return was realised when he burst through the Lynx defence to set up a try for Steve Wilde. Less than five minutes later Neil Flanagan had crossed the line again with both scores converted by Chris Wilkinson. This added to an earlier try from Darren Robinson and a Wilkinson goal brought the scores level and, with still a quarter of an hour to go, Oldham were in full control and looked odds on to take the spoils. But try as they most certainly did the Roughyeds could not breach the "Lynx" defence again. As the clock ticked on, no less than three attempts at drop goal by Wilkinson were off target, as Oldham pressed for the winning score. Indeed the majority of the last fifteen



Andy Ruane the ex-Oldham favourite and Lynx captain in 1998

minutes saw the Roughyeds camped on their opponents line, but it was not to be and the score-line remained 18 - 18.

One consolation for Oldham was an impressive debut from future captain Andy Proctor.

Oldham team:

S Wilde; A Mead, R Darkes, S Cooper, C Eckersley; C Wilkinson, N Flanagan; A Proctor, D Robinson, M Edwards, J Nadiole, G Shaw, M Martindale SUBS: I Sinfield, N Varley, M Prescott,

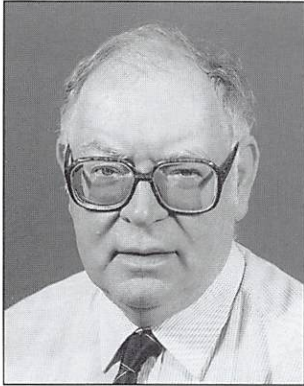
P Round.

Attendance

1,351

ROGER

ROGER



THE Roughyeds can look forward to the new Northern F o r d Premiership season with plenty of optimism and with a realistic belief that they

what is certain to be an even tougher and more competitive campaign than last year has been first class.

On and off the field no stone has been left unturned in the search for the magic formula that separates winners from the rest.

Ford has kept his coaching staff and his players from last season and has strengthened his squad with half a dozen signings.

will be strong enough to be involved in the final shake up for NFP honours come next July.

Seven months of roller-coaster rugby league lie ahead.

And if last season's surge into the top six and then into the play-off semi-finals is anything to go off, we can stand by for plenty of thrills and spills along the way.

The NFP is steadily building in strength, increasing its credibility as a meaningful competition in its own right and creating within the sport's fan base a perception that we now have a lively and viable alternative to Super League.

The 'Rugby League Raw' television series devised and presented across the North of England by Yorkshire Television at the end of last season worked wonders for the public awareness of what the NFP has to offer.

The Roughyeds played their part impressively, not least by their defeat of Doncaster in that extra-time thriller at Belle Vue, and earned recognition at the NFP awards night in Leeds when they were awarded the Club-of-the-Year Trophy.

Mike Ford was one of three nominees for the Coach-of-the-Year award and Shayne McMenemy was named in the NFP team of the year: a terrific achievement in the new club's third season and in Ford's first year with the Roughyeds.

It's good to look back and remind ourselves of last season's magic moments if only to extract inspiration for the new challenges that lie just around the corner.

From the outside looking in, one has to conclude that the preparation by Oldham for

He has taken on proven and experienced additional backroom staff in conditioner Tony O'Brien, physiotherapist Lisa Sharratt and chief scout John 'Jacko' Jackson.

And in Dr Ian Wilkinson and Dr Stuart Bailey he completes a 'hands on' medical team that will be represented at every match and at every training session.

At board level, the acquisition of new kit sponsorship deals featuring John Willie Lees and Claims Network Ltd in a unique 'twinning' arrangement - each worth a five figure fee for one year only - demonstrates that the club's recent achievements have been recognised above and beyond regular followers of the Roughyeds and of the NFP.

The NFP as a whole is enjoying similar recognition, as indicated when a huge turn out of media folk, involving writers, reporters, a TV crew and radio men, attended the League's official launch of the 2000-2001 season at Spotland the other day.

Featherstone's Steve Wagner chose the perfect time to unveil his plan for providing a structured promotion path from the NFP to Super League, about which much has been said and written already.

We gained maximum exposure for a scheme that, on the face of it, has much to commend it. The timing of the announcement, unfortunately, killed off any chance of significant publicity for the actual start of the new season.

Nevertheless, the NFP and Oldham Roughyeds have much to look forward to through winter, spring and on into the hazy, lazy days of summer and beyond.

Roger Halstead

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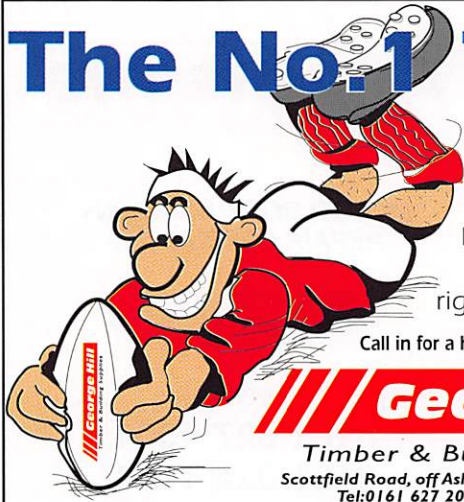
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In Yer Face



I MAKE no apologies for returning to the subject of the World Cup, which, despite all the criticism was NOT a disaster. A few thousand spectators at Reading, Gloucester, Belfast, Watford etc. largely represents people not normally followers of the game turning out in generally appalling conditions to watch Rugby league, a game they are not supposed to be interested in!

Perhaps someone at R.L. H.Q. might care to analyse the crowd figures. Barring the Final, the biggest gate was in London. More people at Cardiff than the Reebok. A better gate at Watford for a quarter-final than at Widnes or Castleford. Encouraging attendances in France. Add to this the nationwide I.T.V. teletext poll in which 71% of respondents (against 29%) said Rugby League was a superior sport to Rugby union and we ought to question whether the so called 'M62 corridor' really is the game's heartland any longer. If only we could get away from a game administered by club chairmen!

To any right thinking R.L. fan Super League should have 14 teams and 26 fixtures. The newly announced 2001 fixture list is a travesty. (Ask any Oldham fan who endured Gary Hetherington's 8 team second division when we met London Crusaders six times in a season). If we accept the current twelve clubs in Super League, the two newcomers should be from South Wales and the South of France. S.L.E. of course won't have it because it means spreading News Corp money more thinly! But, excuse me, isn't S.L.E. a MARKETING organisation! wouldn't you think that attracting new corporate sponsors was a major part of its function, the successful implementation of which would cover any deficit involved in expanding the league by two clubs?

Meanwhile, we bemoan the lack of success of the home nations in the World Cup. Well, consider the following....

After five years of Super League it is evident that Australian and New Zealand players are stronger, fitter and faster than British players. Why? If massive contracts and full time professionalism can't produce players who are competitive what is going on at Super League clubs to justify their expenditure? When you watch the Australians play they don't do anything out of the ordinary. BUT they do everything as a team, play to a plan and make few mistakes. Most of all they hardly

ever miss tackles. And a player guilty of missing tackles is likely to find himself quickly replaced by the latest up-and-coming youngster. Consider this: no British coach would have omitted Robbie Paul from his team even if it meant re-jigging the formation and playing people out of position. Yet Paul's appearance as a substitute in the World Cup final showed just why Frank Endacott did not rate him as a first choice when a couple of handling errors and several missed tackles revealed his weaknesses. Yet here is a player who is a star of Super League. How far off the standard then are the likes of Keith Senior, Scott Naylor, Tony Smith, Paul Anderson, Darren Fleary etc. etc? And what sort of coach plays a man well short of match practice (Paul Sculthorpe) and drops a tackling machine hooker (Paul Rowley) in favour of a halfback with no number 9 experience (Tony Smith) who couldn't tackle a brown paper bag? However the coach can only work with the players he's got. Wouldn't it be better if more of the players in our premier competition were available for home nation selection. (N.B. soccer faces the same problem!) Ask this question: are there ANY overseas players in the Australian N.R.L. who are NOT out of the top drawer? Then ask: how many overseas players in Britain are here because they are not good enough for first grade back home? Speaks for itself doesn't it? So could someone tell Super League Chairmen that five overseas quota players plus any now off quota because they've been here five years (fathom that one out!) doesn't do the game any good.

One final point. Watching Castleford at the end of last season in a Super League fixture on T.V. Stevo made the following observation after the Tigers had brought on a substitute: 'since the introduction of Barry Eaton Castleford have been completely transformed'. BARRY EATON - an N.F.P. player on loan from Dewsbury! Makes you thinks, doesn't it?



Barry Eaton

from Dewsbury! Makes

you thinks, doesn't it?

G.C.

AS A new season dawns every club in the League will be looking for improvement but, inevitably, not every club will succeed. Last season's top eight still look the strongest sides in the competition, though the order they finish in will no doubt be different. Those outside the eight will be hoping to gatecrash the party, some making wholesale changes to do so, others relying on a bit of fine tuning. If last season is anything to go by it promises, once again, to be an enthralling year. Here's how I envisage things panning out.

Top of the tree - look no further than last year's Grand Finalists Dewsbury and Leigh. The Rams boast both stability and a top Coach. Their new recruits, Andy Fisher (Wakefield), Richard Pachniuk (Hunslet) and Paul Smith (Castleford) can only strengthen their team. While Leigh have lost two quality hookers in Mick Higham and Anthony Murray to Barrow, re-placement Mark Roden from Wigan will still form part of a formidable front-row with Tim Street and Dave Whittle. Welsh international Chris Morley will replace Heath Cruickshank in the second row with other significant additions being John Hamilton and Jason Johnson from St. Helens together with John Duffy, Simon Svabic and Dave Bradbury from Salford, the latter two both being ex-Oldham. In addition, in Sean Richardson and Simon Baldwin the top two possess the best running second-row forwards in the league.

Hoping to topple these two will be Doncaster, Keighley, Widnes and Oldham. The Dragons in my view are on the plus side of the balance sheet, their recruits being better than those discarded. All have experience, Paul Mansson the ex-Hunslet and Widnes Kiwi being a top play-maker, Simon Irving ex-Leeds and York a quality centre, and the widely travelled Brad Hepi, a tough Kiwi loose-forward. Keighley have also added to their strength, with Jim Leatham from Hull K.R. their top acquisition. The Cougars problem, however, is whether Steve Deakin can emulate Karl Harrison in the coaching stakes.

Widnes and Oldham make for an interesting contrast. The Vikings have gone for big name recruits. Although they could regret the loss of big prop Lee Hansen to Swinton, the list of newcomers is impressive. Leading the way is Karle Hammond, but look at these: Jason Demetriou, Chris McKinney, Scott Martin, Joe Faimalo, Mark Forster, Stephen Holgate, Stuart Rhodes, Ian Watson, Phil Coussons. Now that's what I call 'muck or nettles'. But can they be blended into a unit?

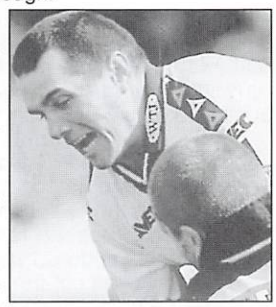
Oldham, by contrast, have a lot of stability with all last year's squad still on board and several young newcomers with a point to prove. Chris Farrell, Daryl Lacey, Gareth Barber, Kevin O'Loughlin, Paul Norton and Jason Roach give the Roughyeds more strength in depth. They should be serious challengers for honours.

Featherstone and Hull K.R. could be the two most vulnerable of last term's top sides. Neither looks to have significantly strengthened their hand and the Robins could rue the loss of Dave Harrison as coach.

Barrow came closest to a breakthrough last time, but I don't see any improvement and without a big turnaround on their travels they won't get enough points to make the eight. Cumbrian neighbours Whitehaven and Workington will both expect better results. Whitehaven will look to Paul Cullen's coaching and Dave Watson's on field savvy, while Town will want a return on their investment in such as Tane Manihera, Hitro Okesene, Lokeni Savelio and Fata Sini. I fear they will be disappointed.

Meanwhile, Hunslet Hawks have off-loaded several out of contract players and coach David Plange will rely on a crop of talented young players to see him through.

Jon Sharp has rung the changes at Batley. Popular scrum-half Glen Tomlinson returns to Mount Pleasant via Bradford and Wakefield and is a class act, as is Aussie prop Jeff Wittenberg from Sheffield. The Bulldogs should at the very least improve their results at home. Similar radical changes have taken place at Rochdale, Sheffield, Swinton and York. On paper Hornets look better than a year ago but much will depend on Martin Hall's coaching and establishing an immediate understanding.

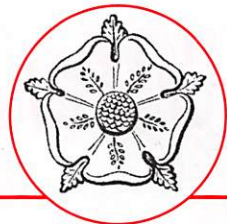


Glen Tomlinson

Sheffield Eagles are in the same boat, as are York Wasps who, inevitably, have several players returning from Castleford including full-back Jamie Benn. Meanwhile Swinton will miss the departing Ian Watson, a quality scrum-half who played so well for Wales against Australia in the World Cup Simi-final.

So, finally to the unknown quantities, Gateshead and Chorley, who both have outstanding coaches in Andy Kelly and Graeme West. The Thunder will be a popular addition to the league and don't be surprised if they turn over a fancied team or two. Hopefully, Chorley can also put together a competitive side. It may take time, but if I know Dennis Ramsdale and Graeme West they won't accept second best. So, where last year I forecast Lancashire Lynx to finish bottom, this season I'll forecast that Chorley Lynx will not be propping up the table come July.

IN Town TODAY



CHORLEY LYNX

SINCE LAST season, when as Lancashire Lynx the team finished bottom of the League, the club has undergone a complete metamorphosis. Transferred from the ownership of Preston North End F.C., the newly re-named Chorley Lynx are now the rugby playing arm of the Chorley Sporting Club and will play all their home fixtures out of the compact Victory Park Ground.

The club made its most important appointment in Graeme West, their new Coach, on a 3 year year contract. He is fresh from coaching Canada in the Emerging Nations World Cup and will work alongside the highly respected team manager Dennis Ramsdale. Both men are ex-Wigan, Ramsdale a former flying wingman, West a New Zealand international second-row who went on to coach at Wigan and Widnes. It will be no surprise, therefore, if the Wigan connection figures large in the new Lynx set-up.

One ex-Wiganer is STUART FISHER who was a star of the Warriors' championship winning Alliance side. He brings distribution and organisational skills to the team which, it is hoped, will bring out the best in his team mates.

G R A H A M
TABERNER
is another ex-Wigan man, though he joins Lynx from Leigh where he had only limited opportunities. Sound in both attack and defence.

Hooker IAN TALBOT also started at Wigan, but since then had spells at Wakefield and Dewsbury. He is an ex-Great Britain Academy international and featured in the Rams Grand Final winning side. However the arrival of Richard Pachniuk at Ram Stadium sees Talbot transfer his 100% commitment to Victory Park where it is expected he will be a big influence.

Other newcomers to the side include DAVID WADSLEY formerly of Salford. A pacey back with plenty of stamina.

23 year old DEAN CONWAY comes to Chorley from Leigh. A big, rugged prop Dean has

plenty of experience and is the right age for a maturing front-rower.

No relation, STUART CONWAY comes from local amateur football and has shown up well in pre-season. So too have other amateurs graduating to senior football in KEIRAN LACEY and TONY SMITH. Meanwhile, for the moment, PETER CAIN and LUKE MADEN will retain their amateur status as they are hoping to gain representative honours with B.A.R.L.A. Chorley hope to sign both on professional forms when these ambitions have been fulfilled.

Still with Lynx after the trials and tribulations of last season are a number of good young players. Best known to Oldhamers is prop or second-row MIKE PRESCOTT, who signed for the Bears from Golborne and re-signed for the newly formed Roughyeds before seeking pastures new. Now the right age, with the size and experience to make an impact.

Young hooker CHRIS RAMSDALE, son of Chorley general manager Dennis, has twice been the Lynx Academy's player of the season. He put in a noteworthy effort at Boundary Park last term before retiring with a broken arm. He is now, happily, over the injury and raring to go again.

21 year old fullback PAUL ROBERTS has a good kicking game and can be devastating when fielding and returning opposition kicks. He proved the point with two tries in the friendly with Workington Town.

Like Roberts, LUKE VINCENT also stays at the club after last season's difficulties. A big, strong-running forward, Vincent toiled manfully last term and could make an even bigger impact this.

Several players step up from the Academy side, notably WARREN HINDLE, DALE CHRISTY and GARETH POTTER, all of whom now have the chance to prove their worth at a higher level. Meanwhile GARY DOHERTY, an elusive runner who can score from anywhere on the pitch, is expected to be a major force in his second year at the club.

Finally, Chorley have recruited some experience to go with all the youth mentioned in utility back LEE BARGATE. Signed by Batley from Middleton Amateurs (Leeds) in 1990. Bargate has had two spells at Mount Pleasant with time at Featherstone sandwiched in between. Obviously favoured by David Ward, who signed him for both the Rovers and the Bulldogs, Bargate did not seem to fit new Batley coach Jon Sharp's plans, so hopes to make a big impression at the Lynx.



Graham Taberner

Walkerbouts

... with Brian Walker

ALL THE WRONG MOVES

an autobiography by Terry Clawson

WATERSHEDDINGS is littered with examples of experienced players arriving at the club for the first training session banknotes bulging out of their back pocket. The size of the bulge or the shine on that new club car determined their attitude to the new club and, in most cases, the length of the time the banknotes took to disappear or the shine on the new car to fade coincided neatly with the length of time those players tended to stick around before disappearing in a cloud of dust (usually in a car already provided by their next club) along Ripponden Road.

I could name a team of such players, Terry Clawson taking his place at open side prop and probably as captain; but there would be more than one or two contenders for that.

Clawson has now published his autobiography 'ALL THE WRONG MOVES' presumably to make a few more quid. Nothing wrong with that, but if you are an Oldham fan looking for a good Christmas morning read generating fond memories of the old club forget it! Don't waste your £9.99p.

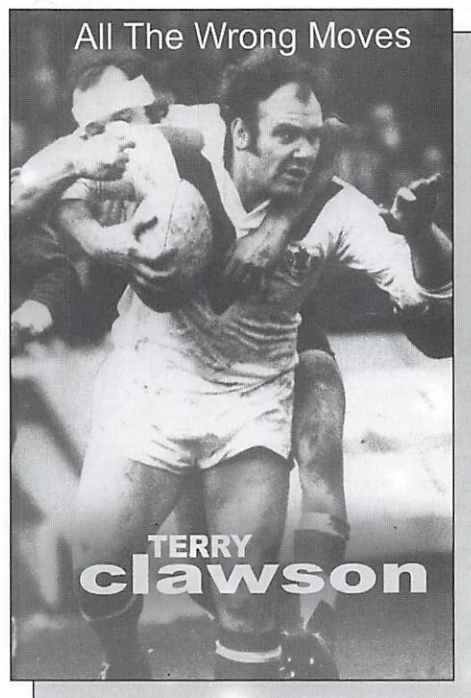
On the other hand if you are looking for something perhaps unique in sporting autobiographies, in this case one not ghost written but straight from the pen of the man him self, and, from a rugby league prop to boot, go for it!

Clawson splits the book into twenty two chapters, most coinciding with his time at one club or another! The story is of a rock hard rugby league mercenary who gave and expected no quarter, but who represented his country with pride both here and on tour.

He didn't enjoy his stay at Oldham, best reflected by comments which include "You need to have eyes up your arse when you play for Oldham" (directed at whom I am not quite sure!) and when referring to then club and GB physio Dennis Wright "He was a top

man was Dennis. He did a better job (as physio) than anyone and was a smashing bloke too. Not only that he was very similar to me, in that he liked a good laugh. And looking back at my time at Watersheddings I doubt he had many of those at bloody Oldham!"

I suspect club chairman Arthur Walker wasn't exactly splitting his sides either when Clawson disappeared up Ripponden Road in that cloud of dust, already signed by York (at the usual big loss) having played no more than twenty two games for the club, and this time still in the car the club had provided!



The Autobiography 'All The Wrong Moves' is available by mail order from League Publications, Briggate, Brighouse, HD6 1DN at £9.99p plus £1.50p despatch or to use your credit card phone 01484 401895.

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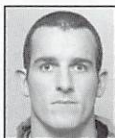
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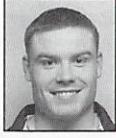
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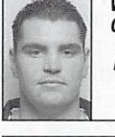
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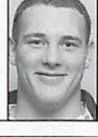
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Cook(e)ing up a storm



RUGBY LEAGUE against the World. If you thought a hundred years of outright hostility to our game had come to an end with the professionalisation of that other code...think again! The reporting of the Rugby League World Cup outside of the game's own press has been an absolute and total disgrace. And some of those who earn their living as so called journalists should be sacked from their positions as being incompetent to do their job! Once upon a time events were covered by REPORTERS, but not any longer. Have you noticed how at all levels now, whether it be T.V. news, radio or the press, we are subjected to the OPINIONS of commentators not reporters? Once you switched on the news to get the facts and turned to the likes of Newsnight for opinion, comment and interpretation. Not any longer. All of which might not be so bad if most of the pieces written about R.L. had anything to do with the games being played and the people who play and watch them. But no, half the World Cup pieces were written with no reference to events on the pitch and most seemed to have only one purpose, namely to denigrate the 'greatest game on earth'. Even R.L. friendly journalists such as Andy Wilson and Paul Wilson writing in the Observer saw fit to condemn the sport. Yet, lo and behold, on reading Andy Wilson's World Cup Diary in the December edition of Rugby League World it transpires that the man actually **enjoyed** the World Cup. Would that he had transmitted this to the readers of the Observer, a paper which reaches a much wider audience. But, then, that wouldn't have served the purpose of the 'kick and clap' brigade whose game is so well organised it has to turn to R.L. coaches and players to improve its standards, since turning professional. Do journalists not see the irony of the situation? Like I said, Rugby league against the world.

I AM all in favour of international Rugby League and would like to see a regular five nations tournament in our calendar. For

those who worry about attendances at such fixtures I would point out that, to the best of my knowledge, that other game actually **REQUIRES** every affiliated club to purchase a set number of tickets thereby ensuring good attendances at international matches. I would suggest Rugby League do something similar leaving the clubs to decide how to dispose of their allocation whether by payment, part payment, free issue or any other method. Just a thought!

ANOTHER piece in Rugby league World for December (yet another free advert, by jove!) caught my eye. In his always excellent column (crawler!) Harry Edgar proposed a rule change I have advocated ever since the new rule was introduced, namely a reduction from ten metres to five metres at play the ball. (You see they all come round to my way of thinking eventually!). Potential outcomes: 1) fewer runaway scores 2) less easy for props and hookers to make "easy" yards (Sorry Houghy) (why, when we have a 10 METRE rule do we talk about 'hard YARDS'?) 3) closer, more exciting games 4) more skilful ball handling by props (think Mick Morgan) or loose-forwards (think Terry Flanagan). 5) Less chance of the Aussies absolutely thrashing us (must be a good thing!). Any takers?

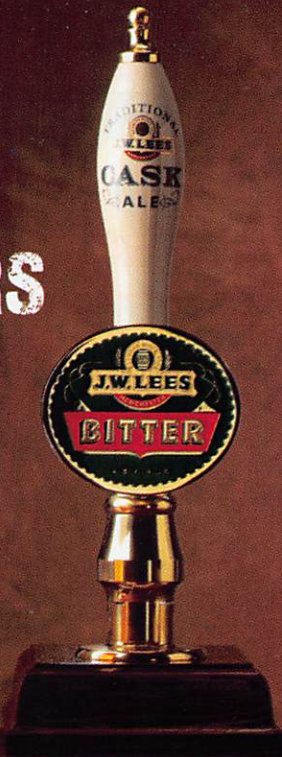
LAST WEEK'S opening fixtures in the new N.F.P. season went pretty much to plan. Barrow would have been disappointed with a home defeat by Oldham after making Craven Park such a fortress last term. Similarly Gateshead would have liked an opening win but will have been encouraged by a gate of 2332. Best win of the day was Sheffield's 34-1 hammering of Batley.

Biggest game of today is Keighley against Dewsbury. Not being faint-hearted I forecast Cougars to win. Otherwise I expect home wins except for Widnes to overcome Rochdale at Spotland and - I don't believe I'm saying this - Gateshead to win at Batley



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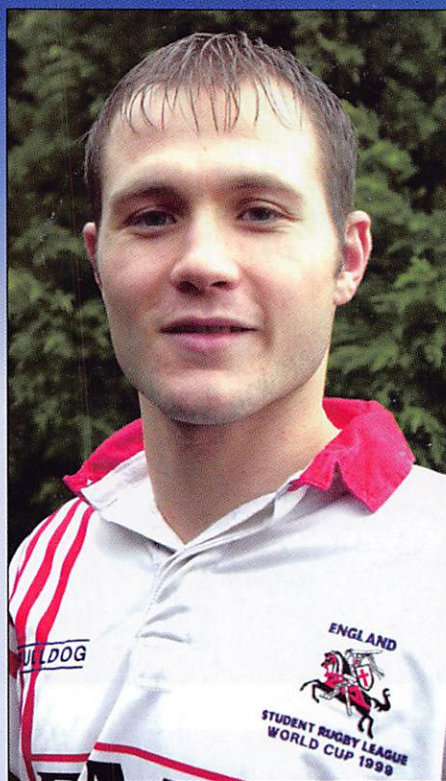
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121

...Gareth Barber

It is good to talk someone as refreshingly enthusiastic about his rugby as Gareth Barber. Having started to play at the age of nine, and loving it from the start, he has been backed all the way by his parents and family. At Saddleworth School he was encouraged by Eddie Barton (ex-Oldham player and the stats man at Oldham now), where he played alongside his mate Kevin Sinfield. Outside school Gareth played at Waterhead Rugby club, where men like Mick Clough were very helpful as were his many friends in the game. Amongst his heroes he lists Gary Scholfield who he watched many times when he was growing up, whilst at present he admires Tommy Martyn and Brad Fittler.

As a signed on player for Warrington from leaving school he learned a lot from their procedures and drills in their programme for young players and respects the likes of Paul Collen for instilling confidence and application. However, being an ambitious player, he felt the time was right to move on to face new challenges, new changes, a new club, his hometown club, Oldham, where he hopes to establish himself in the side and also learn a lot from coach Mike Ford whom he respects as a coach who "knows what he is doing".

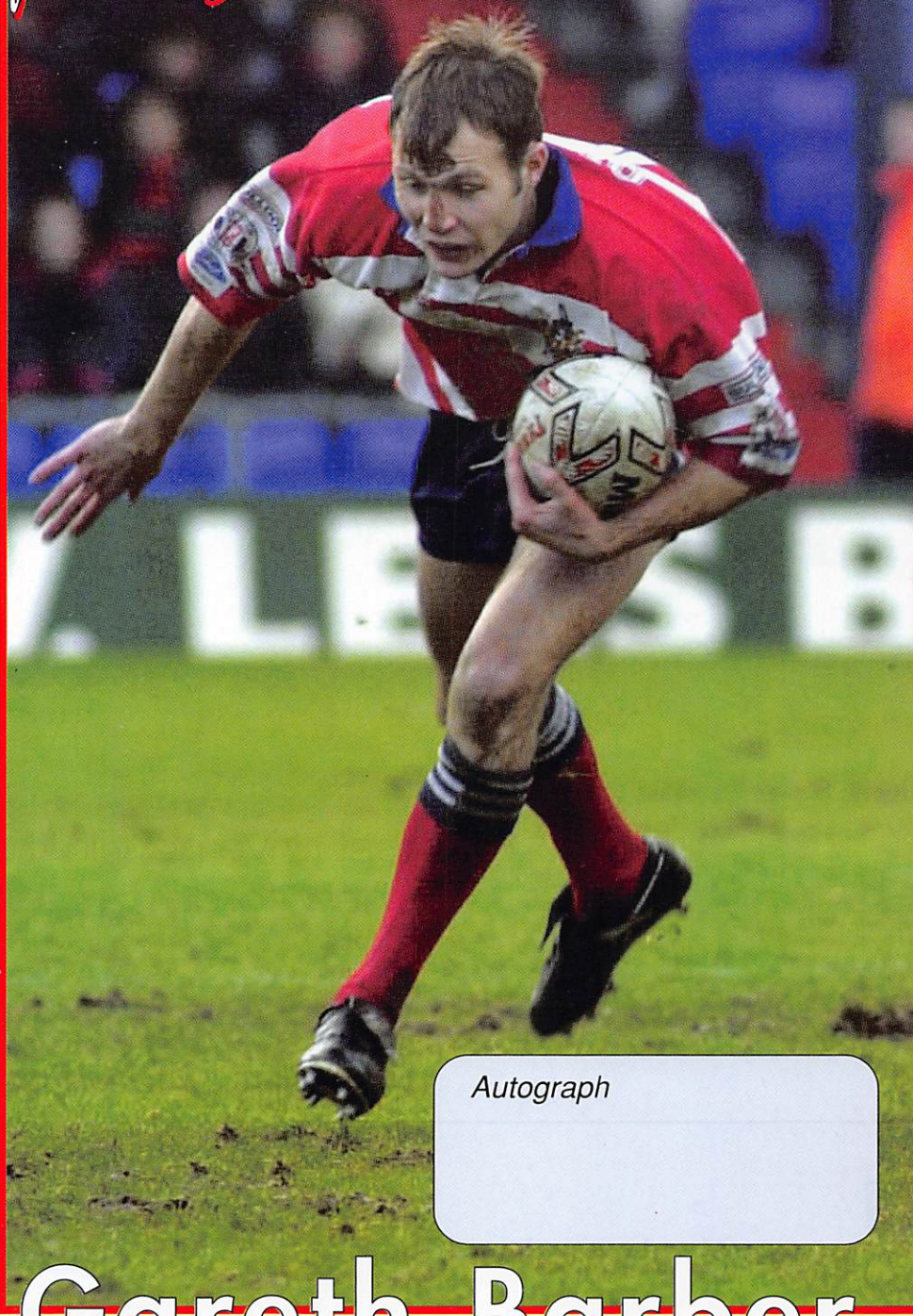


Fortunately, Gareth really enjoys training, because it does take up a good few hours of his time, and when not in college he relaxes with his mates, plays snooker, golf, play station games and still enjoys a good run whether sprinting or cross country.

Oldham's supporters are great he says; they get behind you when things don't always go to plan and give the lads a real lift when they make a load of noise. I congratulated him on the try he scored against South Sydney and wished him many more and all the best for the season to come. "It's a team game and I want to be part of a winning team. We are all confident, team spirit is high and we will do our best", said Gareth.



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Gareth Barber

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THE BODY'S OVER HERE, MORSE



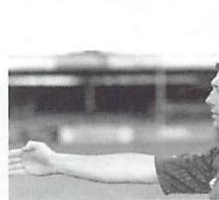
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OLDHAM RLFC



The Roughyeds



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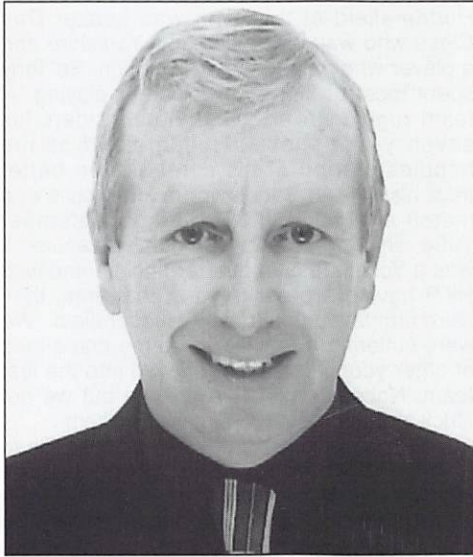


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Behind the Scenes

... with Dave Roberts

JOHN BARRATT - TIME KEEPER



How did your job come about?

Jack Roscoe packed it in, and I was asked to step in. I think my first game was against Whitehaven. I'm now in my third season and I really enjoy the job.

I have made many friends and amongst them is the Rochdale time keeper Ray Mayer who is very ill at the moment and I wish him well.

What other job do you do for the club?

I take the kits to the laundry after every game and wash the towels, subs

suits etc. also I spend 2 days a week collecting for the Saturday Yankee.

I believe you used to be a referee?

I was treasurer of the Oldham Referees' Society, I even did the line in a match at Watersheddings, but one thing that comes to mind was I once awarded (by mistake) the Man of the Match to a player that I sent off after 3 minutes!

What are your favourite and least favourite grounds?

My favourite is Rochdale, because we always show them how to play rugby, my least favourite is Bradford, where everything is too far away.

Tell us anything unusual that's happened?

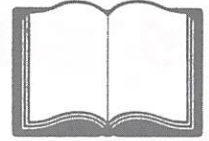
Last season at Swinton we were in a narrow lead and the Swinton timekeeper sounded the hooter and walked away but the referee had not heard it and the game continued so I had to get him back into the stand and thankfully the referee heard it the second time and we won the game. Another story I heard was at Headingley when the hooter would not work and the timekeeper had to make a noise down the P.A. System.

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Amateur Album



.....WITH DON YATES

THERE are many larger-than-life characters involved in local amateur rugby but none more so than Tony Finan, former star hooker and goal kicker with Saddleworth Rangers, journeyman professional with Huddersfield, poacher turned gamekeeper when, amazingly, he enjoyed a spell refereeing, and now supporter, sponsor and general advisor as licensee of the Weavers Arms, Huddersfield Road, headquarters of the Watersheddings Wanderers club.



Tony Finan pictured whilst on holiday during the early 60s when he went to see the licensee of the Torbay Inn, who was none other than Bob Sloman.

Tony spent virtually all his amateur days with Saddleworth. When he joined them in 1958 they were down on their luck, penniless and not too successful on the pitch. But Rangers did not struggle for long and during the following five years they took off to become the strongest club in amateur rugby. Finan was an integral piece in Rangers' meteoric rise that reached its peak in 1963. That year Rangers won the Standard Cup, beating St. Mary's 20-0 in the final which saw Finan awarded the Ben Powell Trophy as man-of-the-match. They then lifted the Lancashire Cup with Finan as skipper. He regards that 13-0 victory as the highlight of his career and a few weeks later he was handed the Oldham Amateur League's player-of-the-season award.

He was also handed a professional

contract which took him to Huddersfield. Unfortunately for Tony, skipper of Huddersfield at that time was hooker Don Close who was also skipper of Yorkshire and a player who gained test recognition. So Tony spent most of his Fartown career playing 'A' team rugby. Nevertheless he considers his seven years stint at Huddersfield as the happiest period of his career, even better than his time at Saddleworth. He recalls one match against Hull KR during September 1964 which gave him particular pleasure. It was a Yorkshire Cup quarter-final tie and with HKR having a great team at that time, they were firm favourites to beat Huddersfield. 'We were suffering from injuries so me and a load of other youngsters were shoved into the first team. Nobody gave us a chance but we got stuck in and beat 'em 6-5. It was brilliant'

When his playing days were over Finan had a short spell as coach. He took Higginsahw to the Standard Cup Final but realised that coaching was not for him so he took up an even more surprising challenge: he began refereeing. Of course Tony knew all the tricks and skulduggery in the game so quickly raced through the grades and received some top appointments. In 1984 he refereed the National Youth Inter-League Final at Workington where Copeland beat Wigan 14-8 and he has also refereed two Standard Cup Finals. He is rightly proud of his involvement with the Standard Cup competition, having appeared in three finals, two on the winning side, won the Ben Powell Trophy, coached a side to the final and refereed in another two finals.

Nowadays Tony and his wife Ethel run the Weavers Arms which must have more sporting sections than any pub in the land. As well as being the headquarters of the Watersheddings Wanderers, the pub runs four soccer teams, a cricket team, a rounders team and, of course, the usual pub games and quiz teams. They even have an annual fishing competition, golf day and crown green bowling match. Tony also sponsors the Collettes dance troupe, but is happiest when talking rugby and reminiscing about the game he loves. If you ever have a spare afternoon, call in and get him to talk rugby. You'll have a great time.

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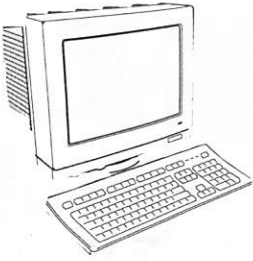
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... with Simon Winnard

LAST WEEK we saw the announcement that a substantial cash alternative to applying for promotion to Super League would be offered to the NFP Grand Final winners. Some people may be justified in viewing this as yet another ploy to keep NFP clubs excluded from the closed shop of top flight RL in this country. However, in terms of practicality, the words 'gift horse' and 'mouth' immediately spring to mind. If the powers that be see fit to pay hard cash for my team to stay out of their elitist competition which I have no ambition to join in its present form anyway, then who am I to argue?

After recently signing for his home town club, Karle Hammond publicly stated that he had become disillusioned with Super League, calling it a four team competition. There are a limited number of Super League players that make the grade. These players are invariably snapped up by the big four as the



Karle Hammond

discarded remainder are left to do the rounds. Those ex-Bears who were party to the former club's relegation (namely the likes of Faimalo, Maloney, Crompton, Bradbury, Atcheson, Davidson et al) are prime examples as they continue their nomadic RL careers. If these players, along with the obligatory imports, offer the only alternative to compete with the likes of Wigan and Bradford is it really any surprise that the Super League status quo has offered the same play-off and bottom teams in the last three seasons? Should the Roughyeds emerge victorious from the NFP Grand Final next summer, I will have only one thing to say, show me the money!

Widnes, amongst others have stepped up their bid for promotion to SL with a plethora of top ex-Super League signings which has seen them touted as this year's favourites. Whilst I acknowledge that they will be stronger this term, I'm looking no further than Dewsbury to

once again lead the way. Keighley, Leigh, Featherstone, Doncaster and of course our beloved Roughyeds will all mount a serious challenge with the Viking Veterans also somewhere in the picture. Oldham will of course compete with a much stronger squad than last season, full of brimming with talented, young and committed professionals eager to make a name for themselves in the game.

Last season I was slated for saying that Super League was in danger of turning into nothing more than an antipodean nursing home league – a last big payout for has been Aussies looking to ease into retirement. However, those comments seem to have been somewhat vindicated as the rush of signing announcements has, one year on, been followed by a similar number of retirements. In fact, rumour has it that a major Australian Zimmer frame manufacturer is being lined up as the next big Super League sponsor. Stepho may then be forced to change some of his standard one liners from "he doesn't have to get out of the way" when talking about a possible obstruction to "he can't actually get out of the way."

The influx of playing, coaching and administrative personnel from down under has seen the likes of Joe Lydon, Ellery Hanley and now, possibly, John Kear follow Phil Larder to Rugby Union. Not so long ago these men were trusted with the very future of our Rugby League in this country. Indeed it was Larder who penned the Rugby League Coaching Manual, whilst more recently Lydon was the man entrusted to undertake a complete review of our game. As an exercise in crisis management (as we continue to fumble from one crisis to the next), Lydon was expected to decide exactly which direction our game should take going into the new millennium. I take it that this direction is southbound to Twickers?

Unfortunately, it appears that you have to have an Aussie accent to be heard in the corridors of power at Red Hall these days. British Rugby League currently finds itself in an increasingly precarious position and can ill afford the drain of its most valuable resource – its own people.



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'THE DON'



ON THIS DAY . . .

Don Yates looks back to December 10th yesteryear

OLDHAM'S first home Championship match of the NFP season sees Chorley Lynx visiting Boundary Park. With the Roughyeds having put 48 points past Chorley at Victory Park last June, Oldham will be favourites to win, although in this game, and against these opponents, you can never tell. In September 1995 Chorley lost 74-0 against Bramley so were given little hope in the return fixture which was played exactly five years ago today, on Sunday 10th December 1995. Bramley did look like winning early in the second-half when they led 12-8, but then up popped former Oldham winger Martin Holden. He raced in for a 75 yard interception try and later landed his fourth goal to put Chorley 20-12 in front. Unfortunately, Bramley came back with a late controversial try and penalty to force a 20-all draw. Apart from Holden, former Roughyeds' hooker Andy Ruane was at loose-forward for Chorley, whilst coaching Bramley at that time was another former Roughyeds' star, half-back Ray Ashton, who was sat on the substitutes' bench. In addition, loose-forward for Bramley was Roy Jewitt, the former Waterhead star whose recent outstanding coaching achievements were featured in our South Sydney programme. Whilst Chorley and Bramley were drawing on Sunday 10th December 1995, Warrington were entertaining Rochdale Hornets in a Regal Trophy quarter-final tie which featured no fewer than seven Oldham born players, five of whom were amongst the scorers. Stand-off Chris Churm scored a hatrick of tries for Hornets but still ended on the losing side, with Warrington winning 38-20. His half-back partner was Neil Flanagan, like Churm, a former St. Annes Junior. There were two other



lestyn Harris

Warrington line-up, Mike Ford, who was substitute, and stand-off Iestyn Harris, who landed five goals. The other three Oldham boys who lined up for Warrington, each of whom scored tries, were hooker John Hough, winger Chris Eckersley and second-row forward Paul Sculthorpe.



John Hough

It was on this day in 1938, Saturday 10th December, that Oldham travelled to Widnes where they lost a league match 6-5. Making his first team debut in that match was centre threequarter Billy Mitchell arguably the best centre never to win representative recognition. Mitchell had been signed from St. Mary's the previous September and went to to make 310 appearances for the Roughyeds during the following 17 years. He was extremely popular with his teammates, a real 'players' player, who went on to coach the 'A' team when his playing days were over. Mitchell died in June 1998, aged 76 years, but the memories of his outstanding contribution to the club for over 20 years will remain for ever.

During the 1902-03 season Lancashire won the County Championship with a 100% record. Two outstanding Oldham forwards of that era, Joe Ferguson and George Frater, were involved in that success and both played for the county on Wednesday 10th December 1902 when Durham & Northumberland were beaten 10-5 at Broughton. Neither of that duo, however, were born in the county. Ferguson was a Cumbrian, signed from Ellenborough Rangers, who actually went on to play 31 times for Cumberland following his 15 Lancashire appearances. Frater, a Scot, signed for Melrose RUF, represented Lancashire ten times and also skippered the Other Nationalities side.

Fixtures

Date	Opponent	Result	Att
DECEMBER			
3	Barrow	F - A	28 -16 1,294
10	CHORLEY	H	
17	Workington	A	
24	Rochdale	A	
JANUARY			
1	WIDNES	H	
7			
14	LEIGH	H	
21	Swinton	A	
28	Silk Cut Challenge Cup	H	
FEBRUARY			
4	WHITEHAVEN	H	
11	Silk Cut Challenge Cup		
18	GATESHEAD	H	
25	Silk Cut Challenge Cup		
MARCH			
4	HUNSLET	H	
11	Dewsbury	A	
18	SHEFFIELD	H	
25	Featherstone	A	
APRIL			
1	York	A	
8	BATLEY	H	
13	ROCHDALE	H	
16	Widnes	A	
22	Batley	A	
29	KEIGHLEY	H	
MAY			
6	BARROW	H	
13	Chorley	A	
20	WORKINGTON	H	
27	DONCASTER	H	
JUNE			
3	Gateshead	A	
10	SWINTON	H	
17	Whitehaven	A	
24	Keighley	A	
JULY			
1	Hull KR	A	

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Oldham is already at the heart of the motorway network and now also benefits from the new M60 orbital route. Metrolink is also coming to the town, and the brand new £3.4 million central bus station has opened this year.



The M60 Motorway



Town Centre Shopping

There are many other reasons which make Oldham a desirable place to live, work and visit - its reputation for hard work, commitment and down to earth friendliness are just some of them.

Put them all together and they make Oldham a leading player at the heart of the North West.

Enquiries about projects being undertaken by the Council, or any of its policies, to the Marketing and Communications Unit, PO Box 160, Civic Centre, West Street, Oldham OL1 1UG,

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OLDHAM 
Metropolitan Borough 



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Coach Mike FORD

CHORLEY LYNX

Coach Graeme West

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| Pat RICH | 4 | Graham TABERNER |
| Warren BARROW | 5 | Gary DOHERTY |
| David GIBBONS | 6 | Gareth POTTER |
| Neil RODEN | 7 | Staurt FISHER |
| Andy PROCTOR | 8 | Dean CONWAY |
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| Shayne McMENEMY | 12 | Peter CAIN |
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| Mike FORD | 14 | Stuart CONWAY |
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| Chris FARRELL | 17 | Dave WADSLEY |

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STEVE ADDY  **4th**



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