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MARTIN'S CORNER



WELCOME to this afternoon's Northern Ford Premiership Preliminary Semi-Final game.

This will be our fifth and arguably most important meeting with Oldham this season. Reaching the Play-offs was our objective at the beginning of the season. Now we're here we can't afford any slip-ups, it's sudden death and there's a tremendous amount at stake.

On paper this is probably the fixture that most people associated with the club wanted. A local derby offers the prospect of a big gate and no doubt much will be made of the fact that we've won all the previous four encounters. However, none of that counts for anything this afternoon. Our opponents will be on a real high after last week's win at Hull KR and they will be as desperate as us to progress to the next round of the play-offs. I also know that in three of those games there was less than one score separating us and the results could have easily gone against us.

By finishing third in the NFP standings we've had the benefit of a couple of weeks off and that's allowed us to shake off a few niggling injuries and build up for the final push. It's a bit of a cliché but we must now take each game as it comes, not take anything for granted and get into our stride quickly after our little break. We must do the simple things well, be solid in defence and take our chances when they come.

It should be a great occasion for the fans and it's absolutely vital you again get behind the team this afternoon. There's been a good buzz around the ground in recent home games and your vocal support on our travels has also been really welcome. I'd like to think that we've repaid you with some good performances and results. Hopefully today we can extend that sequence and you can play your part.

Enjoy the game.

Martin

ROCHDALE HORNETS RLFC

P.O. Box 48, Rochdale OL16 1PE Tel: 01706 648004 Fax: 01706 344545

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Company Secretary: Mr. P. Reynolds
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David Ledsham, Gareth Walker, Mike Floyd,
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THE VIEWS EXPRESSED BY INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTORS MAY NOT REFLECT THE VIEWS OF ROCHDALE HORNETS RLFC

BOARDROOM BRIEF

Today we offer a warm welcome to the Chairman of Oldham his fellow Directors, officials, players and all the supporters of who have made the short journey to Spotland for this afternoon's Northern Ford Premiership Preliminary Semi-final game. We also want to welcome the club and match sponsors. We really value your support and hope you have a marvellous day's entertainment.

A little over a month ago Oldham were the visitors here for our last home game of the season. That turned out to be a tense nail-biting affair, fortunately we came out on top and that result along with two excellent away results at Chorley and Doncaster enabled us to finish in the third spot in the NFP final standings.

At the beginning of the season our first objective was to reach the play-offs and we've got to be really happy about finishing third behind Huddersfield Giants and Leigh Centurions — both of whom have been able to operate full-time squads.

It has been a long hard season and we now hope that everyone can lift themselves for the final few games. We appeared to be hitting good form at the end of the season proper and have had the benefit of a few weeks off. Hopefully that has allowed the squad to be rejuvenated and won't translate itself into rustiness or affect the momentum that Martin Hall and the players had generated.

The fact that Oldham are our opponents today adds more than a little extra spice to the occasion. Derby games are always eagerly anticipated and usually tremendously hard fought affairs. We may have won four times against Oldham already this season, but there was nothing between the sides on three of those occasions, and of course there is the little matter of avenging last year's defeat in the Play-offs.

A good attendance here this afternoon will be welcome for both sides. Oldham's gates have slipped of late and you will also be aware of our ongoing financial difficulties. Trying to make ends meet in this day and age is extremely difficult and we are doing all we can behind the scenes to generate income from a variety of different sources.

We've said it many times before but your continuing support, whether it is through sponsorship or advertising, is vital.

One of the most important revenue streams for the club is the Saturday Yankee Lottery as it guarantees a level of income for 52 weeks of the year. We would urge all our supporters to join the lottery or extend their contribution if already a member. Perhaps you could try to encourage other family members, friends or work colleagues to join. Quite simply, an extra 5 people paying £2 per week provides £500 income and given the margins we are working on you can probably appreciate how important it is to increase lottery take-up.

On a positive note, we want to thank you all for your continuing support. If we win today we guarantee ourselves another home fixture next week. However, as we are in a sudden death situation, defeat would mean our season is finished. In the event of that happening we look forward to seeing you back here next February when the new season starts.

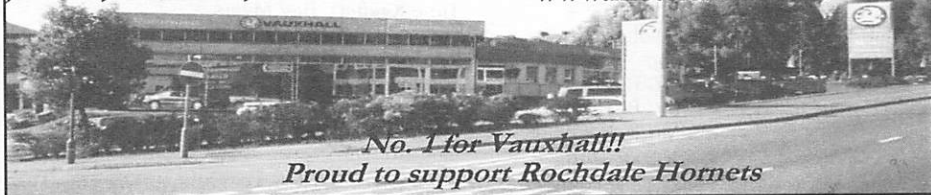
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OLDHAM

Gavin DODD A local youngster who is learning the ropes at Oldham. A wing or full-back, 20 year old Gavin played for the NFP under 21's at Widnes and is sure to be pushing for a regular place this season, either as competition for Mark Sibson at full-back or as a lively winger who knows where the try (goal) line is.

Jon GODDARD A 19 year old and the youngest member of the squad, Cas. lad Jon has joined Oldham on loan from Castleford thanks to the old pals act. Graham Steadman is a firm friend and former team mate of former coach Ford, and saw a loan spell with Oldham as the ideal way to bring Jon along. Already this is bearing fruit as Goddard's defence has been superb and as his confidence grows it is expected that the tries will soon be coming.

Will COWELL A 21 year old who played at Warrington, this Cumbrian utility back is equally at home at full-back, wing or centre. Played 18 Super League games for Warrington after signing from Kells, the Whitehaven amateur club. Recommended to Oldham by former Wolves boss Daryl van de Valde, Will is keen to kick-start his career in the NFP with the Roughyeds.

Chris CAMPBELL A recently signed 21 year old utility back, signed from Whitehaven after impressing in trials. Is the son of ex referee David Campbell. Signed for Warrington from Crossfields amateur club as a seventeen year old and was the top Alliance try scorer in his first season with 26 tries from full-back. Played 10 matches in Super league before following coach Paul Cullen to Whitehaven on a full-time contract. Unfortunately broke his jaw early in his Whitehaven career.

Gareth BARBER 20 year old Oldham born half-back or centre who was reared on rugby with his best pal, the Leeds and Great Britain loose forward, Kevin Sinfield. When Sinfield signed for Leeds Rhinos, Barber signed for Warrington, but returned home to Oldham before the start of the 2000-01 season. Played for the NFP under 21's at Widnes in the autumn.

Keith BRENNAN A versatile half-back or hooker, local lad Keith shot to prominence last season when his form was so good that, for a time, he kept John Hough out of the number 9 shirt. A natural footballer with good hands, he damaged a hamstring in the pre-season Law Cup game with Rochdale and then damaged a knee in his come back game in the cup against St. Helens.

Steve MOLLOY Steve had been playing for Batley on a short term contract after leaving Huddersfield at the end of last season. A strong prop forward and ex captain of England, Steve's other previous clubs are Featherstone and Sheffield. A local lad Steve will go some way to filling the gap left by Simon Knox and Leo Casey. Steve has of course recently been appointed the club's Player coach.

John HOUGH The first player to sign for his home-town club when the new Roughyeds were formed by Chris Hamilton and his fellow directors in the autumn of 1997. Before the start of last season, he had played 87 of the club's 90 matches and had scored 32 tries, a phenomenal record for a hooker. He didn't enjoy one of his better seasons in 2001, but a change of job, and less travelling, has seen him back at his best in 2002.

Jason CLEGG Second biggest forward at the club after Danny Guest. Is a former Bradford (Northern, not Bulls) forward, who has had four good seasons with Oldham. Powerful on the break, he is a favourite of the Oldham supporters and regularly picks up the Junior Roughyeds Player of the Year award.

Paul NORTON Journeyman forward and former Lancashire Lynx stalwart, who played 31 of 34 games last season. A hard worker and value for money performer, 'Knocker' was sorely missed at the start of the season when he was recovering from a groin operation.

Bryan HENARE Joined Oldham midway through last season from St. Helens on loan. A Kiwi back-rower who has played for Auckland Warriors, Bryan played a prominent role in Oldham's surge to the Grand Final in July 2001 before signing permanently for the club for the 2002 season on a one year contract.

Lee DORAN Another young player in whom Oldham have a lot of confidence. A Wiganer, Lee has worked his way through the Oldham Academy and Alliance sides and is now on the verge of breaking through to the first team on a regular basis. Showed up well for the NFP under 21's as one of five Roughyed players in the squad.

Neil RODEN A clever half-back who joined Oldham from Wigan, with Farrell, a season and a half ago. Has only missed a couple of games since. Can play stand-off or scrum-half and was a key figure in Oldham's run through to the NFP Grand Final last Summer. A knee injury kept him out of the pre-season warm-up games, but he is sure to be a regular performer in the long and testing 2002 campaign.

Gavin JOHNSON A young centre or wing, or occasional back-row forward, Oldhamer, Gavin spent two seasons at Odsal in the Bradford Academy side and made the occasional appearance for the Bulls in the Alliance Championship. Spent almost a season earning his Oldham spurs in the Alliance team before signing a two year deal last September.

Anthony GIBBONS formed a reliable centre partnership last season with goal-kicking Pat Rich, who has now left the club to go on a twelve months world tour. Looked certain to be the first-choice centre again this season, but suspension and a bad ankle injury have meant he missed the start of the season, but he is now back as a permanent member of the squad.

Danny GUEST Another of the Roughyed 'originals' who returned to the club two seasons ago. A big prop, he is expected to be a force to be reckoned with in the NFP this season after signing a new one year deal.

Our visitors in focus

OLDHAM Club Honours

Rugby League Championship Winners: 1909-10, 1910-11, 1956-57

Runners Up: 1906-07, 1907-08, 1921-22, 1954-55

First Division Winners: 1904-05

Challenge Cup Winners: 1899, 1925, 1927

Runners Up: 1907, 1912, 1924, 1926

Lancashire Cup:

1907, 1910, 1913, 1919, 1924, 1933, 1956, 1957, 1958

Lancashire League:

1897-98, 1900-01, 1907-08, 1921-22, 1956-57, 1957-58

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

Divisional Premiership: 1988, 1992

10 Oldham Milestones

1895 First game in the Northern Union, a 16-8 defeat at Hunslet

1899 Oldham beat Hunslet to become the first Lancashire club to win the Challenge Cup

1922 Reg Farrar sets a club record of 49 tries in a season

1927 The first radio broadcast of a Challenge Cup Final takes place when Oldham play Swinton at Wigan

1933 Alex Givvons makes his debut for the club he would be associated with for 60 years

1956-57 A three trophy season, Lancashire Cup, League and Championship Final

1959 Oldham pay a world record £10,650 to Workington Town for Ike Southward

1981-82 Mike Parrish becomes the only Oldham player to score in every game in a season

1997 Oldham beat Swinton 20-16 in their last game at Watersheddings on 19th January

1997 Oldham Bears drop out of Super League, go into liquidation and are resurrected as a Second Division team

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NORTHERN FORD PREMIERSHIP

TRIES

1	Hefin O'Hare	Huddersfield	24
2	Glen Tomlinson	Batley	23
	Bryn Powell	Hunslet	23
4	Earl Crabtree	Huddersfield	22
5	Jason Lee	Doncaster	21
	Neil Lowe	Featherstone	21
7	Jamie Rooney	Featherstone	20
	Ben Cooper	Huddersfield	20
	Neil Turley	Leigh	20
10	Andrew Isherwood	Leigh	19

GOALS

1	Jamie Rooney	Featherstone	117
2	Neil Turley	Leigh	105
3	Steve McNamara	Huddersfield	96
4	Danny Wood	Rochdale	94
5	Johnny Woodcock	Doncaster	90
6	Chris Charles	Hull KR	89
7	Tane Manihara	Workington	87
8	Darren Holt	Barrow	72
9	Gavin Brown	Sheffield	67
10	Dean Lawford	Batley	63

POINTS

1	Jamie Rooney	Featherstone	322
2	Neil Turley	Leigh	290
3	Johnny Woodcock	Doncaster	216
4	Danny Wood	Rochdale	212
5	Tane Manihara	Workington	210
6	Steve MacNamara	Huddersfield	204
7	Chris Charles	Hull KR	198
8	Darren Holt	Barrow	170
9	Gavin Brown	Sheffield	155
10	Chris Thorman	Huddersfield	154

Note - The above are for league games only, and the NFP scorers do not include points scored against York Wasps.

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Director

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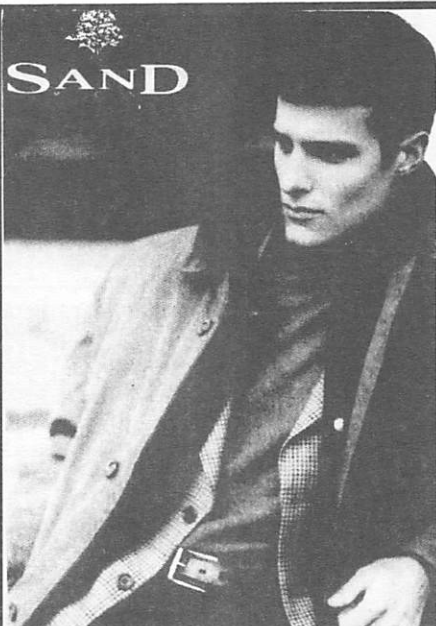
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Best Wishes to all at Hornets

GARETH WALKER of Rugby Leaguer & League Express looks forward to more excitement in the NFP play-offs.

ONE round of the Northern Ford Premiership play-offs has passed, and already teams have upset the odds. With a sprinkling of fascinating clashes ahead this weekend, more surprises lie in wait as teams scramble for Grand Final glory.

Last weekend we saw ninth-placed Oldham stun fourth-placed Hull Kingston Rovers 19-11 at Craven Park, while Batley Bulldogs recorded a highly impressive 27-14 win at Doncaster Dragons. Only Featherstone Rovers, against a tired-looking Whitehaven, managed to make home advantage count. There is little doubt as to which is the big game this Sunday. The NFP's top two clubs, Huddersfield Giants and Leigh Centurions, clash at the McAlpine Stadium with the winner going directly to the October 12 Grand Final.

It's a fixture that both clubs have been relishing for weeks, and one that should attract the competition's biggest crowd of the season so far. Australian coaches Paul Terzis and Tony Smith are good friends off the field and even played on the same indoor cricket team Down Under. But all that will be put aside when the serious business begins at 3pm Sunday.

The Giants will undoubtedly start as favourites after their magnificent league campaign, but can the star-studded Centurions upset the odds?

At Spotland Rochdale Hornets entertain a buoyant Oldham side, and will hope to eradicate memories of their heart-breaking play-offs defeat to the Roughyeds last season. Hornets were minutes away from a Grand Final appearance before Mike Ford inspired a sensational Oldham comeback. Again there is a story behind the two coaches, Martin Hall and Steve Molloy, who played alongside each other at junior level in Oldham. Hall has seen his side defeat Oldham three times in Premiership games this season, but the widest margin has been by four points at Hurst Cross, and twice the gap has been just one. It promises to be another thriller.

Featherstone Rovers certainly welcomed Oldham's win at Hull KR as it gifted them an unexpected second home game, but the visit of Batley Bulldogs is far from a forgone conclusion.

The Bulldogs continued their remarkable resurgence with an away win at Doncaster, with full back Craig Lingard crossing for a hat trick of tries. But it looks like being the clash of two fine sets of half backs that hold the key to Sunday's game, with Rovers' duo Jamie Rooney and Richard Agar going up against Dean Lawford and Glen Tomlinson.

And then we have the start of the National League One Qualifying Series, with Sheffield Eagles entertaining Swinton Lions on Friday night and Keighley Cougars travelling to Barrow Border Raiders on Sunday. It would constitute a significant shock if either home side was to lose, but the Lions will fancy their chances at the Don Valley after pushing the Eagles close there recently. The return of player coach Mark Aston could prove crucial for Sheffield.

So another intriguing weekend lies ahead. The seasons of four more clubs will end on Sunday evening, but it would take a shrewd judge to accurately predict the quartet.

RESULTS 2001-02

			H/A	Score	Att.
Dec	SUN 2	BATLEY B	H	26-14	1,133
	Sun 9	Hunslet H	A	28-20	637
	SUN 16	SWINTON L	H	22-10	1,035
	Sun 30	Hull KR	A	24-20	1,305
Jan	Sun 13	Leigh C	A	14-14	3,444
	SUN 20	YORK W	H	54-0	1,044
	SUN 27	FARNWORTH (CC 3)	H	44-28	626
Feb	Sun 3	Dewsbury R	A	20-25	1,201
	SUN 10	LEIGH C (CC 4)	H	20-24	2,710
	SUN 17	CHORLEY L	H	32-22	771
Mar	Sun 3	Workington T	A	20-10	1,093
	SUN 10	GATESHEAD T	H	58-24	737
	Sun 17	Huddersfield G	A	4-58	2,938
	SUN 24	DONCASTER D	H	22-24	1,138
	FRI 29	OLDHAM (NC)	H	14-13	2,096
Apr	Sun 7	Dewsbury R (NC)	A	7-6	874
	SUN 14	HUDDERSFIELD G (NC)	H	10-30	1,476
	Mon 29	Batley B (NC)	A	24-25	457
May	SUN 5	HUNSLET H (NC)	H	42-11	879
	Sun 12	Doncaster D (NC)	A	33-20	1,219
	SUN 19	BARROW R	H	46-32	1,106
	Tue 28	Oldham	A	28-24	1,050
June	Sun 2	Sheffield E	A	26-14	910
	SUN 9	FEATHERSTONE ROVERS	H	33-16	1,117
	Sun 16	Keighley C	A	32-21	1,005
	Sun 23	Whitehaven	A	16-28	902
	Sun 30	Barrow R	A	8-15	654
July	Sun 7	Featherstone R	A	24-31	1,402
	SUN 14	DEWSBURY R	H	40-30	1,013
	SUN 21	SHEFFIELD E	H	64-2	1,038
	SUN 28	WHITEHAVEN W	H	30-28	914
Aug	Sun 4	Hull KR	A	12-13	1,502
	SUN 11	WORKINGTON T	H	62-20	1,029
	SUN 18	OLDHAM	H	18-17	1,980
	Sun 25	Chorley L	A	60-14	334
Sept	Sun 1	Doncaster D	A	40-36	1,041
	Sun 22	Play-offs OLDHAM	H		

FIFTY YEARS OF HURT

by Jim Stringer of www.rochdalehornets.com

If you thought that today's game was all about this season, think again. Jim Stringer of [rochdalehornets.com](http://www.rochdalehornets.com) unearths a more historical reason to get excited.

Hmm, I hadn't quite anticipated writing notes on yet another game against Oldham. This season, we've been spoiled almost to the point of sickness with this, the spiciest and most local of all derbies. With Hornets holding an unparalleled four-nil lead, it's not too hard to forget the clash at a similar stage of last season that saw a late Oldham rally swipe victory from the jaws of embarrassment. But this is a fixture that's always been close - and never less than interesting.

In the great tradition due Hornets/Oldham clashes, I went back through the record books to see how the two teams have fared over the last century. One hundred years ago, both teams were playing in the South East Lancashire league - in a fixture programme that took in Stockport, Broughton Rangers and Runcorn. In the first derby clash of the season Oldham lost 10-6 at Rochdale (hooray), only to reverse the result with an 11-nil home win just 7 weeks later.

It's interesting to note that, during that same season, Oldham had their game at Hunslet abandoned after 62 minutes because it went dark. Ten years later, Oldham and Hornets met three times. Twice in the league, Hornets losing at 'Sheddings 24-6 and winning 11-3 at home - and in the Lancashire Cup final at Broughton where Hornets ran out winners 12-5. This time Oldham had their game at Salford abandoned after 65 minutes due to heavy snow - they were winning 8-nil at the time and the score stood!

1922 saw the inaugural 'Infirmary Cup' which Oldham won at the 'Sheddings by 12-8 on the 9th September. In the season that followed, Oldham beat Hornets home and away (11-0 and 18-6 respectively). Three nil indeed!

Over the next decade, Oldham won the Infirmary Cup a further seven times to Hornets' three, but in 1932 maintained their record of bizarre abandonments with their game against St. Helens Recs falling foul of '...fog and darkness...' at half time.

1949 saw the advent of the newly named 'A. J. Law Cup' - which Oldham won convincingly 35-2. In traditional fashion, Oldham had their home game with Castleford abandoned after 52 minutes when a pea-souper descended over the 'Sheddings. Indeed, a glance through the record books shows Oldham's history littered with a litany of abandonments due to fog, bad light and deteriorating conditions. Weird.

But it was in 1952 that Oldham set the precedent for today's game. Meeting Hornets five times (Law Cup, Lancashire Cup home and away legs, plus home and away in the league), Oldham ran out winners a staggering five times. So, having seen Hornets register four wins thus far this term, we have the opportunity today to redress the balance of history. Having carried that one for half a century it's time to put things right. Five nil? Play-offs glory? The right to gloat? Today's game delivers all of these - and some real historical significance. We've waited a full 50 years to get our own back.

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PREVIOUS CLUBS?

Doncaster, Hunslet, Keighley

HONOURS?

NFP Champions with Hunslet in 1999

World Nines Champions with New Zealand in 1996

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT IN THE GAME?

I have loads, but beating Australia in the World Nines was awesome. They had some massive names like Wendell Sailor, Laurie Daley, Andrew Ettinghausen, Ricky Stuart and were coached by Mal Meninga.

WORST MOMENT IN THE GAME?

Injuries and having to watch from the dugout standing next to Hally.

BIGGEST INFLUENCE ON YOUR CAREER?

My older brothers! Competing against them in the back yard at a young age forced me to learn the ropes pretty quick. Also watching the Challenge Cup Final on TV back home made me dream of being a professional Rugby League player in England.

WHO WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE A 'ONE TO ONE' WITH AND WHAT WOULD YOU ASK THEM?

Sky Sports! Could you please sack Eddie and Stevo! I think they have to be the two worst commentators in sport!

ROLL CALL 2001-02

The following statistics reflect the withdrawal of York Wasps from the NFP

	P	Sub	Tries	Dg	Goal	Pts	Sponsor
Richard Agar	13		3		12	36	Mike & Lindsay Owen
Warren Ayres	14	7	6		22	68	The Moorcock Inn
Damian Ball	22	4	4			16	Mack 2
Joe Berry	9	16	1			4	Keith & Sheila Brierley
Marlon Billy	6		3			12	Interbake Limited
Martin Bunce	5	4	1			4	Coward & Sons, Printers
James Bunyan	23	7	9			36	Spot. League of Gentlemen
Matt Calland	30		15			60	Vining Solicitors
Sean Cooper	32	2	16			64	Tommy Cooper Appre. Soc.
Paul Davidson	20	5	7			28	
Steve Gartland	2	2				0	
Iain Higgins	13	2	7			28	Coward & Sons, Printers
Andy Ireland	1					0	
Dave Larder	13	12	7			28	Ged Davenport
Matt Long	2	28	7			28	Coward & Sons, Printers
Casey Mayberry	15	3	14			56	Barbara Taylor
Wayne McHugh	8	2	2			8	Coward & Sons, Printers
Marlon Miller	3					0	
Brendan O'Meara	17	6	8			32	Ray & Ena Myers
Paul Owen	29		15			60	Albany Hotel
Richard Pachniuk	31		11			44	Eric & Rita Armitage
Darren Robinson	1	1	1			4	
Wes Rogers	19	10	1			4	Mike Ashworth
Danny Sculthorpe	3						rochdalehornets.com
Ian Sinfield	4	10	1			4	Coward & Sons, Printers
Paul Smith	32		13			52	North Builders
David Stephenson	25	2	2			8	Spot. League of Gentlemen
Latham Tawhai	29		5	1	1	23	Heywood Market Traders
Andy Wallace	1	3					Coward & Sons, Printers
Dave Watson	6	2	2			8	Gary Webster
Lee Wilson	1	2				0	Coward & Sons, Printers
Danny Wood	26	7	10	1	119	279	Rossendale Engineering Ltd.

Up to and including Doncaster

NOTICE BOARD

PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Hornets' Captain Matt Calland and Loose Forward Paul Smith have won the Supporters Club's Player of the Year Award. The joint award was made recently at the Club's Annual Lunch. The Player of the Year is selected by votes from supporters who travel to away matches on the Supporters Club coach, and by the Rugby League Press Ratings for home matches.

MAN OF THE MATCH

The Kingston Communications Man of the Match Award against Oldham was awarded to Paul Smith.

GOLDEN GAMBLE

The Golden Gamble prize at the Oldham match was £200 and was won by John McAndrew. Today will see another big prize so don't forget your ticket.

OFFICE HOURS

As the season draws to a close may we remind all supporters that the Club Office/Lottery Office/Shop will be open as usual.

MONDAY to FRIDAY	9.00 a.m. - 5.30 p.m.
SATURDAY	9.00 a.m. - 12 noon

Agents/Collectors are required for the Saturday Yankee Weekly Draw, to collect door to door, at work or in your local pub or club. As always Agents receive 15% Commission, Bonus on Winners, Match Tickets.

Contact Steve Walmsley or Eric Armitage at the Club or ring 01706 648004. The Club needs your help. Thank you.

ROB HALL BENEFIT

Thanking everybody for the support throughout the year for Rob Hall's Benefit. A final fling today at half-time with a BUCKET COLLECTION. Thanks for your support.

SPORTSMANS DINNER

An end of season Sportsmans Evening will take place at The Albany Hotel, Heywood on Friday, 18th October, 2002, 7.30 p.m. for 8.00 p.m. All Hornets' players will be in attendance and the dinner will be followed by entertainment from Jonathon James. Tickets priced at £20 are available from Steve Walmsley and Martin Hall.

ABORIGINAL TOUR MATCH

The Aboriginal Development Squad arrive in England on the 17th October for their 2002 tour.

They begin their six match tour on **SUNDAY, 20th OCTOBER, 2002** here at **Spotland**.

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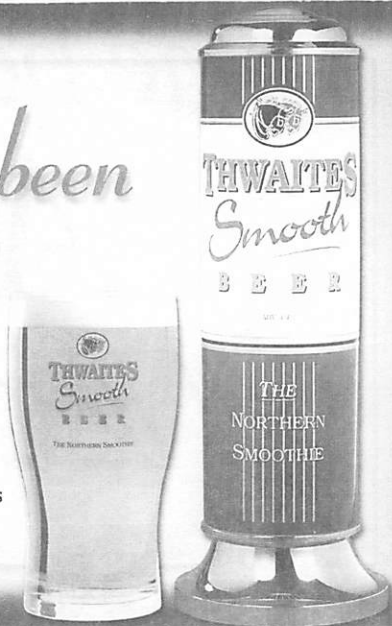
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NFP FINAL LEAGUE TABLE 2002

	P	W	D	L	For	Agst	Diff	Pts
Huddersfield Giants	27	26	1	0	1156	256	900	53
Leigh Centurions	27	21	1	5	1021	426	595	43
Rochdale Hornets	27	19	1	7	809	582	227	39
Hull Kingston Rovers	27	18	1	8	715	468	247	37
Featherstone Rovers	27	18	1	8	836	604	232	37
Doncaster Dragons	27	16	1	10	741	603	138	33
Batley Bulldogs	27	16	1	10	658	666	-8	33
Whitehaven Warriors	27	15	1	11	647	600	47	31
Oldham	27	13	3	11	748	553	195	29
Dewsbury Rams	27	14	1	12	723	616	107	29
Workington Town	27	13	0	14	677	677	0	26
Sheffield Eagles	27	13	0	14	597	648	-51	26
Barrow Raiders	27	12	1	14	707	670	37	25
Keighley Cougars	27	7	0	20	488	906	-418	14
Swinton Lions	27	6	1	20	473	918	-445	13
Chorley Lynx	27	5	0	22	477	994	-517	10
Hunslet Hawks	27	3	1	23	438	954	-516	7
Gateshead Thunder	27	0	1	26	338	1108	-770	1

LOOKING BACK TO

4 in a row

Rochdale Hornets and Oldham go into today's fixture having already met 4 times this season. What's more Hornets have won all of those previous encounters. However, today's game is undoubtedly the most important so far in that the winners will progress to the next round of play-offs and the losers have the best part of 5 months to contemplate what might have been before the new season starts up again.

Hornets' derby winning streak started almost 10 months ago back in November 2001 with a solid 27-14 victory in the A. J. Law Cup. They dominated the game from the outset and were well worth their 16-2 half-time lead. A number of Hornets' new signings were on parade and three of them, Richard Pachniuk, Matty Long and Richard Agar (two tries and two goals) opened their scoring account. A Marlon Billy try, Danny Sculthorpe drop goal and Danny Wood conversion completed the scoring for Hornets. Oldham's scores came from Brennan and Henare with Braddish kicking three goals. Perhaps the most poignant memory will be of Pachniuk picking up the Karl Marriott Memorial Trophy for his man of the match performance. "Pach" had played alongside Marriott on several occasions in his first spell at the club.

By contrast to a trophy that has been in existence for over 80 years, the next fixture between the two sides was in the inaugural Buddies National Cup on 29th March. This was to prove to be the first of a series of tight contests with Hornets scraping home 14-13 in front of 2,096 fans. Tries from Sean Cooper and Matt Calland plus Danny Wood's 3 goals proved to be enough to see Hornets scrape home. Oldham's scores came through McNicholas. A Roden drop goal and Braddish (4 goals). In a script that was to repeat itself later in the season a late Danny Wood goal put Hornets in front in the dying minutes of a game that Oldham probably thought they would hang on to.

The only game to have been played on Oldham's turf resulted in a 28-24 victory for Hornets. The key period was a six minute spell early in the second half when Hornets scored three tries through Paul Owen (two) and Matt Calland. Hornets' other scorers were Warren Ayres and Iain Higgins with Danny Wood kicking 4 goals. At one time Hornets appeared to be coasting but late tries from Brennan and David Gibbons set up a grandstand finale. Oldham's other scores came from Barber and Campbell (two), Brennan kicked two goals. Biggest disappointment was that a crowd of only 1,050 witnessed the mid week game.

The most recent match on 18th August was another pulsating affair. Played in part during a torrential downpour both sides enjoyed spells of dominance and the lead. Oldham fought back from 10-4 down to hold a 10-17 lead at half-time and even with a converted Paul Smith try against them, looked capable of holding out. A disputed penalty for offside provided the turning point, giving Danny Wood the chance to slot a long range kick and secure the valuable two points for Hornets. Hornets' other scores came from Mayberry and Pachniuk with Ayres kicking 2 goals. Oldham's scorers were Goddard, Doran and Barber (2 goals and one drop goal).

And so today's fifth instalment. Hornets will start favourites, but if the closeness of this season's results are anything to go by home advantage and higher league placing will have little bearing on the outcome. For many Hornets fans victory today will go a little way towards erasing the memory of last years play-off defeat.

Let battle commence.

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THE PLAY-OFFS

The path to the Grand Final is mapped out below.

Final NFP League standings determine who has home advantage in any particular Match.

15th September ELIMINATION SEMI-FINALS

Match A - Hull 11 v 19 Oldham
 Match B - Featherstone 42 v 14 Whitehaven
 Match C - Doncaster 14 v 27 Batley
 Huddersfield, Leigh and Rochdale - byes

22nd September PRELIMINARY SEMI-FINALS

Match D - Huddersfield v Leigh
 (Winner to Grand Final, loser to Major Semi-Final)
 Match E - Rochdale v Oldham
 Match F - Featherstone v Batley
 (Winners to Minor Semi-Final, losers eliminated)

29th September MINOR SEMI-FINAL

Match G - Winner Match E v Winner Match F
 (Winner to Major Semi-Final, loser eliminated)

5th October MAJOR SEMI-FINAL

Match H - Loser Match D v Winner Match G
 (Winner to Grand Final, loser eliminated)

12th October GRAND FINAL - at Widnes

Winner Match D v Winner Match H

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Replica Shirts	Age 6-14	£32.95
	Med - XXL	£39.95
Baseball Jackets		£49.99
Sweatshirts	Med -XL	£18.00
Jogging Suits		£25.00
Polo Shirts	Age 3-12	£12.00
	Med-XL	£17.00
Fleece Jackets	Med-XL	£31.50
Embroidered Shirts		£12.00
Woollen Hats		£4.99
Umbro Warm-up Sweaters	Large	£15.00
Enamel Badges		£3.00
Car Stickers		£1.95
Mugs (standard)		£2.50
Mugs (large)		£3.50
Pens		£0.50
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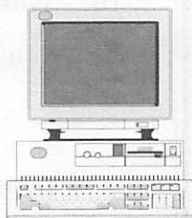
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1. Paul OWEN
2. Sean COOPER
3. Brendan O'MEARA
4. Matt CALLAND
5. Casey MAYBERRY
6. Danny WOOD
7. Latham TAWHAI
8. Matt LONG
9. Warren AYRES
10. David STEPHENSON
11. James BUNYAN
12. Damien BALL
13. Paul SMITH
14. Andy WALLACE
15. Iain HIGGINS
16. Wes RODGERS
17. Joe BERRY

OLDHAM

Tangerine & Black

1. Gavin DODD
2. Mark SIBSON
3. Anthony GIBBONS
4. Jon GODDARD
5. Joe McNICHOLAS
6. Gareth BARBER
7. Neil RODEN
8. Steve MOLLOY
9. John HOUGH
10. Jason CLEGG
11. Lee DORAN
12. Bryan HENARE
13. Dave GIBBONS
14. Keith BRENNAN
15. Gavin JOHNSON
16. Will COWELL
17. Danny GUEST

MATCH OFFICIALS

Referee: Mr. J. King

Touch Judges: Mr. R. J. Stokes, Mr. R. Stevenson

Reserve Referee: Mr. P. Bentham

Today's Mascots are:-

LOUISE PICKUP Aged 11

BRADLEY CALLAND Aged 4 and AMIE JANE CALLAND Aged 5.

MATCH COMMISSIONER: Mr. P. Crashley

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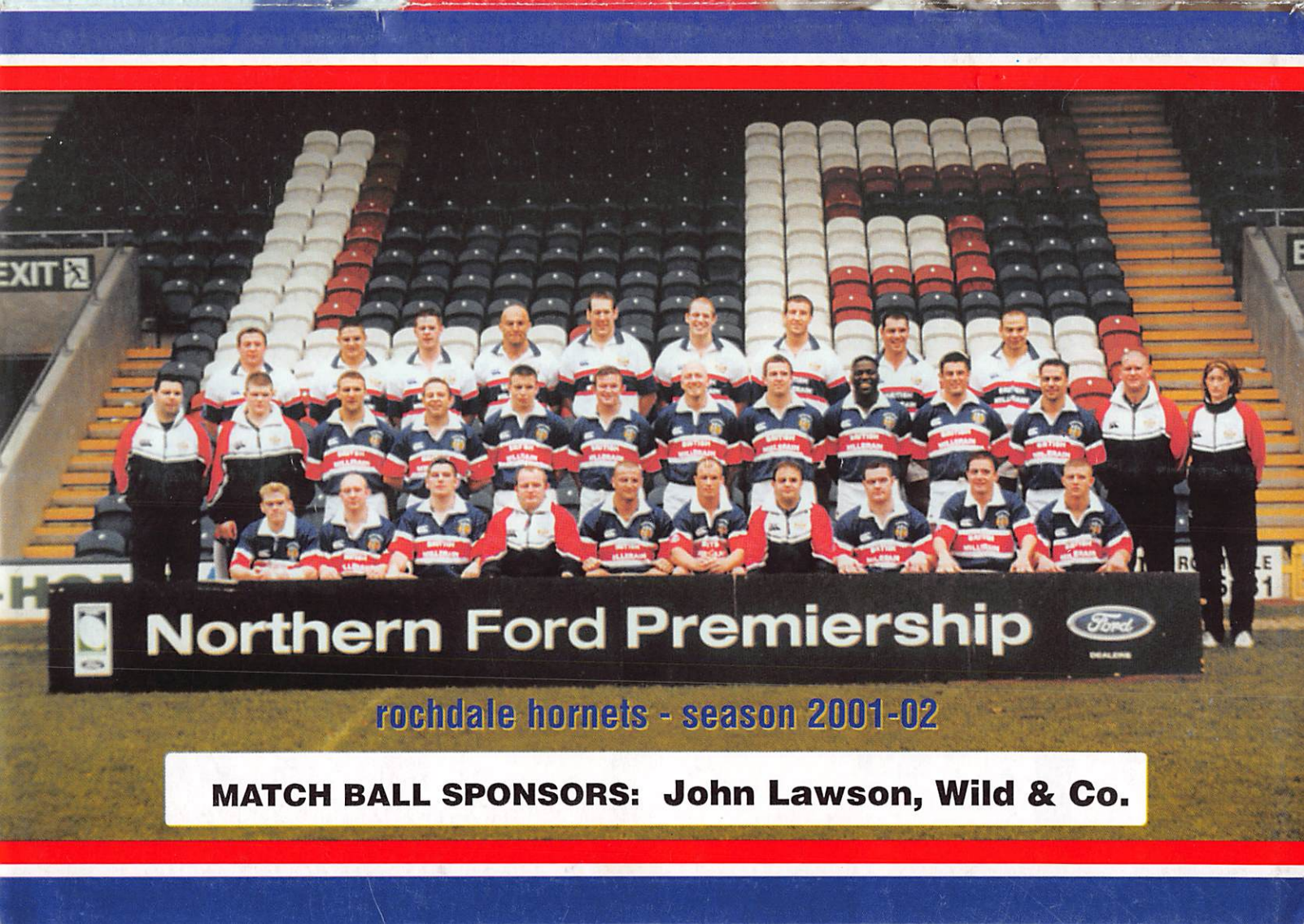
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