



# TEAMS



## OLDHAM ROCHDALE

Coach: Steve MOLLOY    Coach: Martin HALL

- |                |    |                |
|----------------|----|----------------|
| Gavin DODD     | 1  | Wayne McHUGH   |
| Chris IRWIN    | 2  | Sean COOPER    |
| Iain MARSH     | 3  | Mick NANYN     |
| Jon GODDARD    | 4  | Jon ROPER      |
| Chris CAMPBELL | 5  | Lee WILSON     |
| Simon SVABIC   | 6  | Warren AYRES   |
| Neil RODEN     | 7  | Ian WATSON     |
| Steve MOLLOY   | 8  | Paul SOUTHERN  |
| John HOUGH     | 9  | Andrew WALLACE |
| Paul NORTON    | 10 | Andrew GRUNDY  |
| Lee DORAN      | 11 | Matt LEIGH     |
| Ryan STAZICKER | 12 | Gareth PRICE   |
| Chris MORLEY   | 13 | Damian PRICE   |
| Keith BRENNAN  | 14 | Steve DOHERTY  |
| Paul ANDERSON  | 15 | Wes ROGERS     |
| Danny GUEST    | 16 | James BUNYAN   |
| Dane MORGAN    | 17 | Matthew LONG   |

**TODAY'S**  
REFEREE: R. LAUGHTON



### OFFICIALS

D. MALLALIEU  
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# OLDHAM RLFC

Official  
Matchday  
Magazine

£2.00

*The Roughyeds*



**ROCHDALE HORNETS**  
NATIONAL LEAGUE 1 AT BOUNDARY PARK  
THURS 17TH APRIL 2003 KO 7.45PM

# OLDHAM

at the very heart of the North West

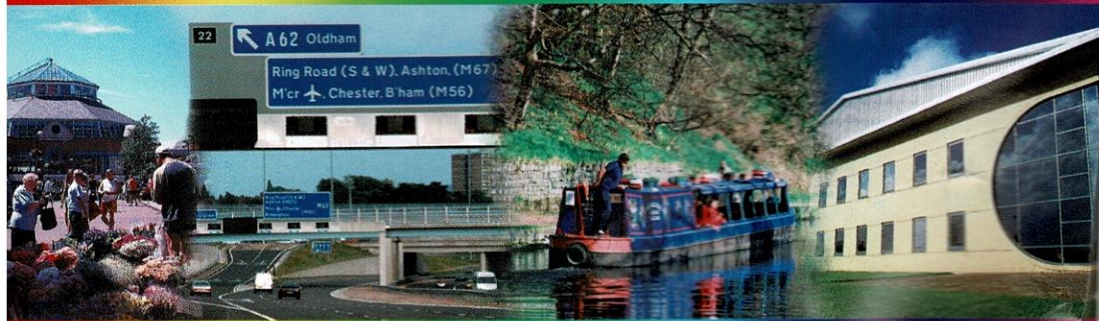
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Andy Goodway 1979-85 & 1993-94

# IN THE HOT SEAT

## Christopher Hamilton

AFTER what has been a very difficult group stage in the Arriva Trains Cup we certainly know how tough this season is going to be.

Salford have set the standard that the rest of us now have to match and that must be the challenge that we rise to.

We are obviously disappointed not to have qualified from the group but after a rocky start our performances in the last three weeks have shown that the new players are settling in which is what we need.

Tonight's game will be the first ever National League fixture to be played and a derby against our nearest rivals Rochdale, again coupled with the heavy promotion of the game in the local press should hopefully ensure a reasonable crowd.

There are several unusual features with this years league format not least of which is the fact that with only 10 teams in the Division we will play everybody home and away which will be the first time that has happened since our first season in the second division in 1988.

It will also be strange not having a sponsor for the league this time after having been associated with Ford for the past three seasons and I can't help feeling disappointed at that. You would have thought that with the 2 divisions being structured the way they are and with both of them looking very competitive that the league would have been able to secure a deal. The official comment from Red Hall is that they are trying to get more money for the naming rights and I believe that is long overdue.

Finally, with only 18 league games before the play offs there is not much margin for error. We know we are in for a battle tonight please give your vocal support to the team.

Enjoy the game.



Chris

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS MATCHDAY MAGAZINE DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THOSE OF THE MANAGEMENT AND STAFF OF OLDHAM RLFC (1997) LTD.

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE OLDHAM EVENING CHRONICLE & RUGBY LEAGUE EXPRESS FOR THE USE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

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ROUGHYEDS  
FROM YOUR MATE  
JOHN WILLIE**



**JOHN WILLIE  
TO HIS MATES.**

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## *Molloy's Message*



WELCOME to our opening National League fixture against our neighbours Rochdale Hornets. I'm sure tonight will be fiercely contested as the whole competition will be. Whoever it was at Red Hall whose brainchild this format was needs congratulating as gone are the days of sides regularly running up 60 or 70 points with the possible exception of Salford who I feel are a better side than Huddersfield last season. A lot has been said about the advantage of being full time and the fact that, as yet, no side that has been relegated from Super League has lost a league or cup game with the exception of the Challenge Cup seems to back this up. It is an indication of the standards and professionalism that will be needed for us to compete with the likes of Salford. We are not there yet but feel we are going in the right direction.

The Arriva Cup has been a disappointing contest for the likes of both Rochdale, and ourselves which only emphasises the importance of getting off to a good start. This game has added importance as our other Easter fixture has had to be postponed on Easter Monday as Doncaster share a ground with the football club. This means we don't have another fixture until 4th May. We don't want to be dwelling on a mediocre performance against Rochdale for such a length of time so it is imperative we don't let ourselves down today. On the positive side this lay-off may well ease the injury situation which over the last month or so has steadily worsened. Let us hope we are getting them out of the way early on and will have a relatively free injury situation for the rest of the season.

Let's hope you can cheer us on to a winning opener and start the Easter period off on a high note.  
Enjoy the game.

Steve

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**IN TOWN  
 Today-Rochdale**



**Warren Ayres - Half back/Hooker:** Left Salford to gain regular first team experience with Hornets. Took a while to settle, but established himself last term and produced several match winning performances. A ball playing half back with a great turn of speed, his father Warren, was a big Hornets favourite in the 70's.

**Damian Ball - Loose Forward:** A player who tasted Grand Final success with Dewsbury. Joined Hornets before the start of last season adding his classy ball handling skills to an already impressive pack. Renowned as a creative player he is also a regular points scorer.

**Matt Bateman - Winger:** Product of St Helens youth development he joined Hornets from Swinton in the close season. A regular points scorer throughout his career he is hoping for a big season with Hornets this term.

**James Bunyan - Second Row:** Left Doncaster midway through 2001 season due to their financial problems. Has strengthened Hornets squad with his power and speed and can be called on to play in a number of different positions if needed. A relentless tackler and regular try scorer.

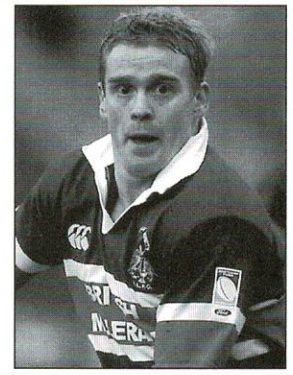
**Sean Cooper - Centre:** Signed from Oldham in November 1998, Sean combines pace and power on attack and defence whether playing Centre or on the Wing. Has experience of playing at the top level and is consistently near the top of Hornets try scoring list.

**Andy Grundy:** Another product of Wigan's youth development arrived at Hornets in the close season after a spell at Chorley Lynx. At 24 years of age he still has the best years of his career in front of him and will be looking for a big season at Hornets.

**Matt Long - Prop:** Signed on the eve of the 2002 season from Widnes, Matt is the son of a former Dewsbury and Bradford star. He is a tremendous physical presence on the field and scores more than his fair share of tries for a Prop.

**Casey Mayberry - Centre, Winger:** Another addition to the squad last season, joining from Halifax Blue Sox. A pacey player who can play anywhere across the backs. Is capable of scoring tries from anywhere on the field and has become a great favourite with the fans.

**Mick Nanyn - Centre:** Another close season coup when he signed for Hornets. He was Swinton's leading try and points scorer for the last two seasons. Reliable goal kicker.



Paul Owen

**Paul Owen - Full Back/Stand Off:**  
 An elusive runner and reliable under the high ball Paul reinforced his reputation last year with a series of solid, eye-catching displays. A great favourite with the fans, pulls off tremendous one-on-one tackles and is a regular try scorer.

**Gareth Price - Prop:** Another young player who signed in the close season and is looking to further his development and achieve success at Hornets.

**Wes Rogers - Second Row:** Signed from Oldham after the start of 2001 season. Regularly makes an impact in a very strong pack with his sound defensive qualities. On attack he also scores his fair share of tries.

**Paul Smith - Loose Forward, Second Row:**  
 Joined Hornets before the 2002 season from Swinton where he marked himself out as one of the best young stars in the NFP. Continued to impress last season with his powerful running style, great hands and try scoring record. Has caught the eye of a number of clubs and Paul could have a great future in the game.

**David Stephenson - Loose Forward:** Another player with Super League experience, most recently with Hull Sharks. It was a major coup when he signed for Hornets. A wily campaigner, with a robust running and tackling style he has a good pair of hands and leads by example.

**Ian Watson - Scrum Half:** At 26 years old Watson has a wealth of experience and is a current Welsh international. Good ball handling skills and astute tactical kicking game. Signed from Salford in the close season.

**Danny Wood - Centre, Stand Off:** Earmarked as a player of exceptional talent from his junior days. Signed for Hornets three seasons ago, regularly puts in man of the match performances. A creative player who can be relied on to score more than his fair share of tries. Extremely reliable goal kicker.

# A Potted History of . . . . . Rochdale . . . . . by Don Yates

THIS EVENING Oldham and Rochdale Hornets kick-start the 2003 Northern Ford Premiership, League One campaign into action. During the past couple of seasons both clubs have been involved in the end-of-season play-offs but, unfortunately, neither club has been able to climb up into Super League.

Rochdale Hornets were formed in 1871 and, like Oldham were founder members of the Northern Rugby Football Union in 1895. There have been many exciting tussles between Oldham and Hornets down the years with matches between the two figuring strongly in the history of the Rochdale club. The first major trophy won by Hornets was the Lancashire Cup in 1911 when Hornets beat Oldham 12-5 in the final at Broughton. The Roughyeds, fielding eleven internationals, were favourites to win that final but the result was never in doubt as Hornets dominated the game.

The period either side of World War One was a good era for Hornets who appeared in four other Lancashire Cup finals and also won the Lancashire Championship in season 1918-19. They lost to Wigan in the 1912 Lancashire Cup final but gained revenge two years later when they beat Wigan 3-2 in the 1914 final.

When the war ended in 1919 the Lancashire Cup competition was staged in spring when Hornets won the trophy by beating Oldham 22-0 in the final. The following autumn Oldham gained revenge by beating Hornets 7-0 in the 1919 final. Two seasons later, 1921-22, Hornets won the Challenge Cup for the only time in their history. En route to the final Hornets met Oldham at the quarter-final stage, a match which attracted a crowd of 26,664 to the Athletic grounds. It was the biggest crowd to attend a Rochdale Hornets match at that venue.

After beating Oldham 5-2, Hornets went on to beat Hull 10-9 in the final before a Headingley crowd of 35,000, at that time the biggest crowd to watch a rugby league match in Britain. That crowd record stood for only two years, until April 1924, when 41,831 crammed into the Athletic Grounds for the Challenge Cup Final in which Wigan beat Oldham 21-4. The biggest crowd for a league match at the Athletic Grounds also involves

Oldham who drew 19,654 in October 1954 when the Roughyeds beat Hornets 18-4. The record gate for a Hornets match at Spotland was also set when Oldham were the visitors. On Boxing Day 1989, 8,061 saw Hornets beat Oldham 24-12. The record crowd for any rugby league match at Spotland was the 8,974 attendance at the Northern Ford Premiership Grand Final when Widnes beat Oldham 24-14 in 2001.

The first Sunday match staged by Hornets was against Oldham in March 1968 when, once again, the Roughyeds won at the Athletic Grounds 13-10.

Two years previously, during February 1966, a Hornets home fixture was staged at Watersheddings. The Athletic Grounds were not equipped with floodlights in those days so Hornets, with a lengthy list of postponed



Johnny Noon

fixtures to arrange, switched their match with Wigan to Watersheddings. The experiment was not a success. Hornets lost 35-5 before a disappointing crowd of 2,005. Earlier during that 1965-66 season Hornets reached the Lancashire Cup Final when former Oldham centre Johnny Noon was their player-coach. Warrington beat Hornets 16-5 in that final and they also beat Hornets in the final of the 1974 Regal Trophy competition, a gallant Hornets team going down 27-16. Hornets put up an even braver show in the 1971 Floodlit Trophy final when they visited St. Helens and kept the home side try less, losing out on goal kicks 8-2.

That Regal Trophy final 29 years ago was the last occasion Hornets appeared in a major final. Having failed to qualify for the Arriva Trains quarter-finals, Hornets, as well as Oldham, must now concentrate on first finishing high enough up the table to qualify for the Northern Ford Premiership play-offs and then launching a determined bid to win a place in Super League amongst the elite of our game.

# From The Pen Of

. . . . . Michael Turner



## Of Roughyeds And ... Hornets

FOR THE second time this season we have the pleasure of a visit from our near neighbours from Rochdale and wish a warm welcome to their players, officials and supporters.

Here are a few interesting facts regarding Roughyeds v Hornets previous encounters:

In the very first season of the Northern Union Oldham defeated Rochdale by thirteen points to eight at Watersheddings on November 30th 1895. The return match was also played in Oldham the following March after Rochdale's ground had been suspended due to crowd trouble! Once again the Roughyeds triumphed this time 16 - 3. Rochdale's first victory came on November 2nd 1901 with a 10 - 6 success at the Athletic Grounds.



Oldham second row forward Tommy Ayres helps to bring down a Rochdale opponent in the match at Watersheddings on New Years Day 1947. Result: Oldham 32 Rochdale 5.

The match at Watersheddings on February 13th 1915 was abandoned after 35 minutes because of a snow blizzard with Hornets leading two - nil. The replay a month later saw Rochdale winners by nine points to five. The following year, amidst the backdrop of the First World War, the Roughyeds won a friendly match played in Oldham on April 29th 1916 by twelve points to two with the proceeds going to the soldiers rest home in Blackpool.

Oldham played their first ever Sunday fixture at Rochdale on March 3rd 1968 and returned home with a 13 - 10 victory courtesy of two goals from Brian Curry and a try each for John Donovan, Wilf Briggs and Tommy Davies.

Oldham's first visit to Spotland was on Boxing Day 1989 when a great holiday attendance of 8,170 saw Hornets the winners 24 - 12. The return match brought the curtain down on the 1989-90 campaign with this time Oldham convincing winners by thirty points to two, again before a good crowd of 6,333 on Easter Monday April 16th 1990.

WELL HERE we are at last, the first ever National League game being played at Boundary Park against the old enemy, Rochdale Hornets. We have this honour as all the other clubs kick off on Good Friday. It is amazing to me how many people really see this as the start of the season proper and have not been interested at all in the Arriva Cup. Quite a few people I have spoken to, including, would you believe, season ticket holders, have not been to any of the games except for the Rochdale game. To me an Oldham game is an Oldham game and means I must be there, but let us hope that there is a great start to the league campaign and the crowds improve.

There certainly couldn't have been a better advertisement for the game than the two games we saw over the weekend. The Leeds v St. Helens game especially was an absolute corker and must have done great good for the game in general. It is rumoured

that the powers that be at the BBC were heard to say that they thought it was the most thrilling game they had ever shown on Grandstand. This is certainly no bad thing as TV contracts are up for renewal very shortly. The other thing that got a comment on television and certainly was a talking point at Salford on Saturday was the number of Oldham lads and players with Oldham connection who were connected with the game. Oldham fans can't help but wonder what might have been if we had been able to hold on to or sign players like Sinfield, Sculthorpe, Joynt, McDermott, not to mention Tommy Martyn who was injured.

Quite a few people have been asking me how the new National League set up works so here goes. Each team in each division plays each other twice at home and away. This then leads to a Play Off series, home advantage being determined by final league placing at all times.

**Week 1 (In both NL1 & NL2)**

A 3rd Place v 6th Place (*Loser eliminated*)

B 4th Place v 5th Place (*Loser eliminated*)

**Week 2**

C 1st Place v 2nd Place (*Winner to Grand Final*)

D Winner A v Winner B (*Loser eliminated*)

**Week 3**

E Loser C v Winner D (*Loser eliminated*)

**Week 4**

Sunday 5th Oct 2003 THE GRAND FINAL

Winner C v Winner E

(Winner of NL2 Grand Final automatically promoted)

**PROMOTION AND RELEGATION PLAY OFFS**

**Week 1**

A NL1 8th Place v NL1 9th Place (*Winner stays in NL1*)

**Week2**

B Loser of NL1 (8th v 9th) v Loser of NL2 Grand Final  
 (*Winner to NL1, Loser to NL2*)

\*Club finishing bottom NL1 automatically relegated.

**What could be simpler ??????**

# Walkerbout

with  
**Brian Walker**

## DENNIS WRIGHT 1931-2003

I FIRST met Dennis Wright more than half a life time ago back in the early 60's. He was of a group of sports mad regulars who caught the X12 Halifax to Manchester via Watersheddings bus service; 7.40am out of Watersheddings and 5.30pm back from Manchester's Mossley St bus station, every weekday, week in week out. It's imprinted. Jeff Furness, Colin Kershaw, Roland Gaskell and Robin somebody or other who played wing for Halifax Rugby Union and Dennis got him a trial at Oldham. They said he wasn't good enough although he signed pro for some West Riding club or other but it turned out that for once Oldham were right.

Dennis' proper job was lecturer of physiotherapy at Manchester's Withington Hospital but his 'other', more interesting earner was physio to the Roughyeds. We would winkle out of him the 'low down' or think we had, Robinsons in Saturday, McIntyres out, Smethursts playing second row instead of centre, Sims is back on the wing, Price is being transferred to Blackpool and so on and so forth. It brightened up the mornings, regardless that Robinson didn't play and McIntyre did, Sims played full back and Price went on to Rochdale, but it didn't matter.

In an earlier life Dennis had played wing for Oldham Athletic and Glasgow Rangers but now

that he lived in the red side of town he was forgiven. Mind you it was as plain as the hand in front of your face to see that those qualities you associate with the archetypal football winger were ingrained in his character, quick thinking, focussed and determined.

I remember at the time the Israeli/Arab war was raging and the Israelis were unexpectedly giving the Arabs a pounding. Someone likened it to Oldham beating Wigan 62-0 succeeding only in stimulating the wrath of Dennis. It was the compassion of course, the support of the helpless, particularly the kids. He cared.

He spent 14 years as physiotherapist at Oldham Rugby League Club, eight at Salford and seven at Wigan and in the medical sector, sixteen years at Withington Hospital followed by a further eighteen at Rochdale Infirmary. He was loyal.

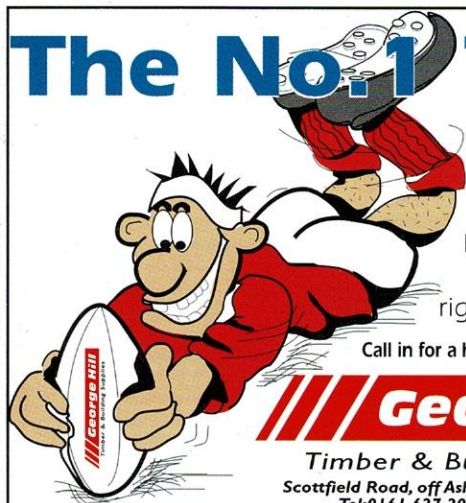
He was successful too, whilst at Oldham he was appointed physio to the Great Britain team and in 1972 was with the side that lifted the World Cup in France, the last time this was achieved by a British side.

Dennis died last week aged seventy-two. I only had the pleasure of his company for a short time all those years ago but would like to express on behalf of Oldham Rugby League Club our condolences to his family and friends.



Dennis Wright on international duty in France.

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# Back On The Terraces

..... With Simon Winnard

ACQUIRING Hartford Social club has been described as probably the club's most momentous step since it's rebirth in 1997. Finally able to call a place 'home', the club will now have the opportunity to lay down community roots and, at the same time, generate much needed income - something that they are unable to do on match days at Boundary Park.

Indeed, at a time when other clubs are 'down sizing' to cut costs, the Roughyeds are pushing forward on many fronts. True enough that the start to our season has not really matched up to our pre-season billing...yet. However, a commitment to continue to invest in developing good young players and a real concerted effort to promote the club with local youngsters have shown the club to be a progressive organisation that the town of Oldham should rightly be proud of.

Full credit for this must go to Chris Hamilton and his board. Chris has taken plenty of criticism in his time as Oldham Chairman - some of it balanced and from people not a million miles away and some of it uncalled for and way over the top. However, by taking that criticism in your stride in turn entitles you to rightly accept praise when it is due. In thanking the Roughyeds' Management Team for their efforts, we should also not forget the legion of willing volunteers that are undoubtedly the club's lifeline.

The departure of Anthony Murray to Workington comes as a surprise to many of the Roughyed faithful and opinion is split as to whether it will deplete the standard of Steve Molloy's squad. Unquestionably, he had one or two good games for Oldham in the early stages of the Arriva Trains Cup - albeit against poorer opposition. However, the author firmly holds the opinion that, whilst he was able to operate as reasonably effective cover in the hooker position, he was never going to cut the mustard at an extremely competitive NL1 level. Yes, he was able to draw a man when running from acting half and this in turn got the forward momentum going. However, that alone cannot be the mainstay of an

acting half's play - unless you are super fit of course and can do this on two or three occasions every set of six!!

Indeed, the one attribute that he fell down on is the one key skill that is an absolute must for a hooker in today's game. At times his distribution from the floor was, in my opinion, sometimes slow and inaccurate. Modern Rugby League is dominated by flat forward play and an undoubted emphasis on crossing the gain line to make those hard yards. The absence of reliable, speedy and accurate ball from the floor makes this almost impossible.

Ability aside, at a crucial time where our Coach and Chairman are asking for the players to stand up and be counted, players commitment to the cause cannot be allowed to come under question. In this case it has and the club and player have parted company, leaving everybody that remains at our club pulling in the same direction.

Interestingly, he has signed for Workington at what appears to be crisis time at Derwent Park. After a miserable early season, the Cumbrian club have parted company with their Coach Paul Penrice following their surprisingly heavy defeat at the hands of fellow strugglers Gateshead Thunder. Penrice is thought to have resigned from his position at Town after the 42-12 loss. This after similarly leaving the club before the season 'due to a lack of numbers at training' before affecting a miraculous u-turn. Whilst Town are hopeful of appointing a replacement before the start of their NL2 campaign, it seems a strange move on the 'utility backs' behalf. Sources indicate that he has been signed to play at halfback and I feel that scrum half in the NL2 will see Mr Murray shine - we wish him and Workington luck.

Finally, today we welcome Rochdale for yet another humdinger. Let's hope that the lads can play to their potential for a full 80 minutes today and open up our National League campaign with a win against our local rivals.

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# Iwa Slateloose



## FROM THE MINISTER FOR INFORMATION OF THE INDEPENDENT REPUBLIC OF ST. HELENS:-

1) There is absolutely no truth whatsoever in the statement of our enemies that we have not handed over monies due or that we were late in making payments to our allies and friends in the rugby league. The infidel dogs of Batley will suffer a thousand lashes for their outrageous lies and the heads of their leaders will be spiked on the goal posts of Knowsley Road.

2) It is quite untrue that we lost a game to the dogs of Huddersfield because they were a better team than us. Our players are the finest body of men in the land and can withstand any challenge. We will turn back the foe at the very gates of Merseyside and slaughter by 80 points any club brazen enough to question our authority. The dogs of Huddersfield will pay for their audacity many times over.

3) Still, to this day, I'm disappointed with the actions of that player who didn't have the honesty to admit he got it wrong. We all know it was illegal. May the Huddersfield dog Costin suffer a fate worse than death for daring to barge into our great and noble play-maker Sean Long.

4) The upstart unbelievers of Leeds have chosen to ally themselves with the dogs of Huddersfield and so challenge our rightful position as the champions of the game. May they suffer a death of a thousand cuts, or at least sin-binnings, so that we can wreak our revenge and take our place at the alter of the Challenge Cup in Cardiff.

5) Let the helpless arbiter of our fate the great Russell Smith be blessed with the wisdom of the ages. May he hear our plea in our hour of need. Let him not penalise the great Saints so that he may dwell in the land of milk and honey (Castleford) in peace and harmony. Let him stay his hand and whistle in our favour, for should he disrespect us he will be cast into the fires of hell to roast for all eternity.

6) We vow destruction to the pie-eaters of Wigan. The very name of their abode defiles our lips and taints us. They are our oldest and most intractable enemies but we will not be cowed even though they stand at our doorstep at the East Lancs Road. We defy them and defy them again to seize our crown for we are the champions of the entire rugby league and the glorious Ian Millward is our leader and messiah. Under the gaze of the all seeing and all knowing Millward we cannot be overcome and so it shall be until the last trump.

7) We refute the wicked calumnies of the misbegotten sons of Bradford. For months now they have bad mouthed us and our inspiring captain Christopher Joynt (may he always be honoured in the land of the Saints). He has been castigated for voluntarily surrendering before a tackle, a laughable assertion by those who know nothing of the rules of engagement and who choose to question the impartiality of the great Russell Smith (may his smiling countenance ever bear down upon us). The disrespectful behaviour of the foul goat James Lowes deserves our utmost condemnation. May his sons be fated to sign for Gateshead.

8) Cursed be the foul mouthed Garry Schofield for criticising our policy of enlisting foreign mercenaries. The men of Australia are the bravest of foot soldiers and would cross the widest desert to fight in our cause. The thought of vast riches by way of remuneration never crosses their minds and they are honoured to don our colours. We are proud of our friends and allies from down under and pour scorn on the heads of those who question their worth. May they choke on the dust of our sandals.

**N.B. THE RUGBY LEAGUE HAS NOW APPOINTED A PSYCHIATRIST TO INVESTIGATE THE MEANDERINGS OF THE MINISTER.**

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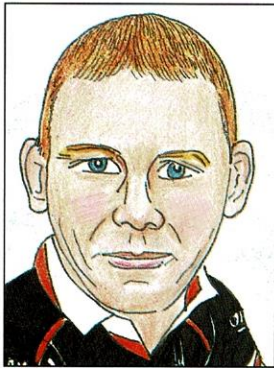
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# Tracey's Tittle Tattle



We'd been on the sunbed (in the salon, not at salvo) and it must have got to Shaz a bit, because she

"That's a lot of faffin' about in't it? Look at Rudolf Nureyev (I'd rather not I thought, after 2 John Willies in the Clayton Arms, I couldn't cope with any more) he were well lop-sided but he made his own arrangements (so to speak) so he was ok. He'd have looked a right wally with specially adapted rugby boots on."

I could tell her imagination was beginning to run riot so I had to calm her down a bit "Shaz", I said, "what are you on about? He's only got one leg shorter than the other, that's all." "Oh", she sighed, coming down to earth quicker than an American rocket, "He'd be all right playin' at Batley then?"

*Love & Kisses,  
Tracey*

was off again on her favourite topic. "Chris Irwin's fit in't he?" she said. "Yeah, not bad" I said, "but d'ye know he's lop-sided?" "Oh no" she said, looking offended, "I've never looked! Is that why he ran off into touch twice at Swinton? Why don't they put him on't other side, then at least he'd only veer off into the middle." I told her they were trying to sort him out with some special boots to level him out.

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

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# Profile of . . . . . Chris Irwin



**CHRIS IRWIN** was one of four players who signed for the Roughyeds from Leigh Centurians during the close season. Aged just 21, Chris scored 13 tries in 18 outings for the Centurians last season and has already made the Oldham right wing spot his own, crossing the line 4 times.

Signed for Wigan Warriors on his 16th birthday having gained England schoolboy honours whilst with Conference club Eccles. Played for GB Under 18's when he was at Wigan but turned down an extra 12 month extension to his contract to sign for Leigh.

One of 5 sport playing brothers, his ambition is to play in Super League with the Roughyeds.

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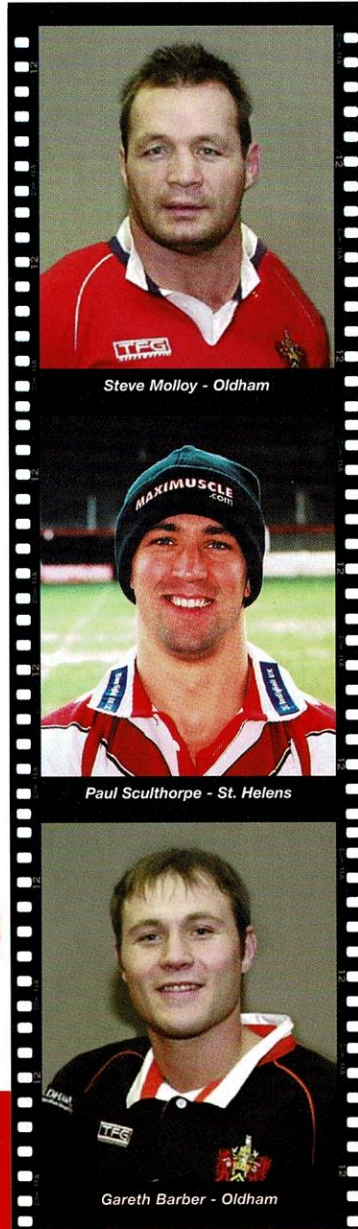
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Steve Molloy - Oldham

Paul Sculthorpe - St. Helens

Gareth Barber - Oldham

# Does the kit fit?



Chris Irwin

USUALLY gets up at 9.00am to a breakfast of cereal and a couple of boiled eggs with toast, which must be cut into soldiers. On the coach to matches he sits as close to the toilet as possible (weak bladder). So he tends to sit next to anyone with a similar problem.

Just before leaving the changing room he likes to whistle a little ditty (tunes vary).

The best advice he has received is "Keep focussed on what you are about, don't switch off".

Worst advice: "The ball is passed backwards, I hope you're not".

Best/Worst Changing Room

Best - Boundary Park

Worst - Leigh

Best/Worst Playing Surface

Best - St. Helens

Worst - Hull K.R.

Best/Worst Food

Best - The Leigh Sunday Dinner

Worst - Swinton

He says he has been lucky to work under a number of excellent coaches and doesn't really want to single one out. He thinks Molly is doing a splendid job so far as player/coach and agrees with Ando that this is remarkable as props are not usually the brightest of animals.

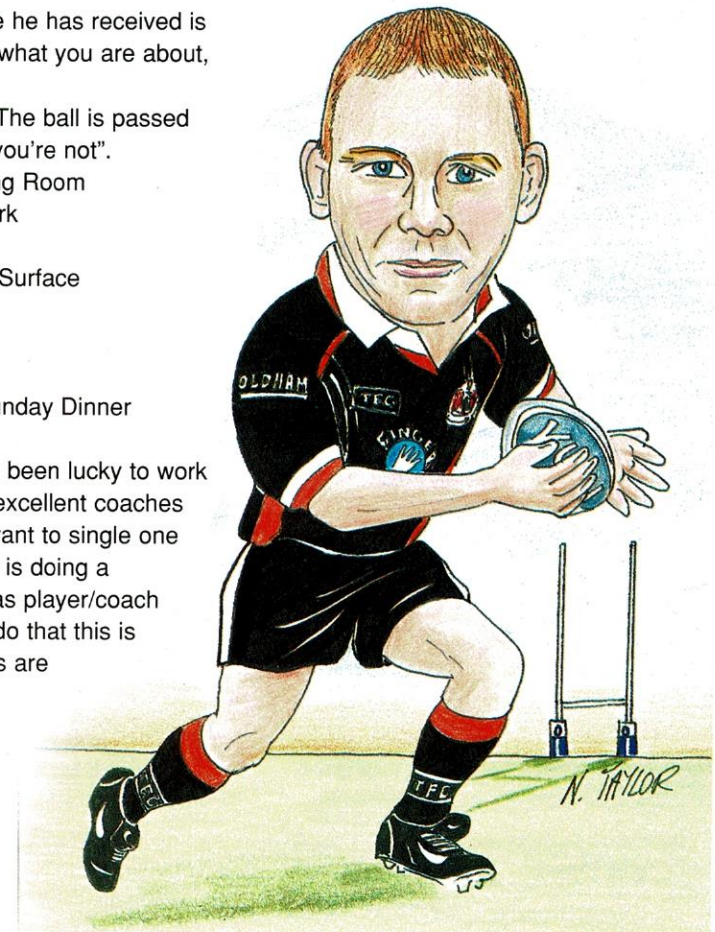
He thinks now the season proper is about to kick off that we will be in contention for the

major prizes. His nickname at present is Dennis after the ex United full back but he doesn't think he looks like him. At the present time because of his hair cut he says he looks more like an egg on legs.

Joke: What do you call a China man with a microwave on his head.

Answer: Ping!

Mitch



Best wishes to Oldham Rugby League this season.

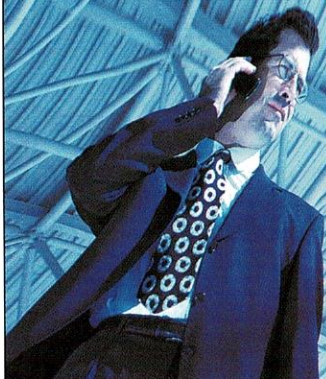
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# Senior Academy

with Sean Gartland



## Senior Academy Under 21 First Division Fixtures

APRIL 2003 F - A

12 BARROW RAIDERS P

21 SHEFFIELD EAGLES A 12.30

(DON VALLEY STADIUM)

MAY 2003

3 DONCASTER DRAGONS H 2.30

10 BARROW RAIDERS A 2.30

24 DONCASTER DRAGONS A 2.30

(THORNENSIAANS)

31 SHEFFIELD EAGLES H 2.30

JUNE 2003

14 BARROW RAIDERS H 2.30

28 BARROW RAIDERS A 2.30

JULY 2003

12 SHEFFIELD EAGLES H 2.30

19 DONCASTER DRAGONS A 2.30

(THORNENSIAANS)

26 PLAY OFF RND ONE

AUGUST 2003

2 PLAY OFF RND TWO

9 SNR ACADEMY FIRST DIV GRAND FINAL

23 PROMOTION/RELEGATION PLAY OFF 1

30 PROMOTION/RELEGATION PLAY OFF 2

The play off will take the following format:

**1st v 2nd**

with the winner through to the Grand Final

**3rd v 4th**

with the loser eliminated

**Loser game one v winners game two**

with the winner through to the Grand Final

The relegation/promotion issue will feature a similar play off format between the bottom three sides in the Senior Academy U21 Championship and the winner of the Grand Final of the Senior Academy U21 First Division with the Grand Final winner taking the top ranking in the placings. The intention is also to reduce the Senior Academy U21 Championship to 12 teams for season 2004.

**All of Oldham's home matches will be played at Oldham Rugby Union's Manor Park Ground at Bardsley.**

# Words of Wilson

... by Ian Wilson

AT LAST the season proper, at least, as far as we are concerned, begins today. I have nothing at all against the Arriva Trains Cup, or indeed the Challenge Cup. The first is a very worthwhile competition for second tier level clubs, giving them a chance to win silver, and the second is a major British event, still, putting our top players and clubs into the national spotlight. But around ten points and non-qualification was always going to be our Arriva Train fate, and similarly, early exit from the Challenge Cup. No; today begins a series of 18 games, none of which are going to be easy to win, but all (or most) of which are at least winnable in theory. And we probably need to win around one half of them to qualify for the play-off series, and around one third to avoid the catastrophe which relegation would mean to the club. A real challenge, then, which will go a long way to demonstrate what the players, and coaching staff, and indeed spectators, are really made of. I can't wait.

I do hope, though, that the forthcoming league fixtures are not spoiled by some of the less attractive features of the games we have seen so far this season. And top of my list of these are lack of continuity of play, and the proliferation of penalties, which is the main cause of it.

We are used to seeing quite a few penalties, for offside and play the ball offences mostly, in the first ten or fifteen minutes of the game, whilst the players are testing out the referee, and the ref is setting out his stall. This is fine, and, although it ought to last no more than a few minutes, really, I suspect we all accept it as part of the natural rhythm of a game. However we have recently been involved in games with more than 25

penalties in total, and from the match facts in each match report in League Express, this does not seem to be unusual. In other words, a penalty decision, in average, around every three minutes. When you think of the amount of time between a penalty being awarded and the ball being returned to open play, what it implies is getting frighteningly close to what we have always criticised in other football codes, in terms of stop start action.

I am not suggesting that the fault is all with referees, I should add. Stuart Cummings set the tone at the start of the season and the refs are merely doing what they are told, to some extent. Cummings, too, insists he has communicated the relevant interpretations to all coaches and clubs. So is it the failure of coaches, or of players, which is mainly to blame?

I was not able to get to Barrow the other week, so instead nipped down the road to watch Warrington v Hull. Russell Smith was referee, and he had a good match, I thought, in terms of maintaining full control and getting decisions correct. But sometimes, although general skill levels and the speed and power of the players, and team organisation were all several notches up on what I usually watch week on week, the game never really took off as a spectacle. This was again because of lack of continuity. It was punctuated throughout by penalties, all of them, as far as I could see, individually justified, but altogether adding up to a real problem. I hope Cummings, referees and the clubs can come together, to get things properly sorted out, before the quality of our 80 minutes of entertainment suffers permanently.

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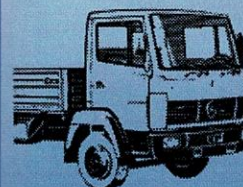
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# Express

By GARETH WALKER of RUGBY LEAGUER & LEAGUE EXPRESS

THE new format National Leagues kick off over what promises to be a fascinating Easter weekend.

After the precursor of the Arriva Trains Cup, the all-important league season now takes precedent.

The Arriva Trains Cup has undoubtedly been a success on many levels, and has also ensured that the 20 competing teams are now fully battle-hardened.

Several teams enjoyed excellent Arriva campaigns - most notably the unbeaten Salford and Whitehaven, and NL2's only qualifiers Barrow Raiders. Gateshead Thunder will also enter the league season in buoyant mood after their recent win over Workington, while new boys London Skolars will have learnt much about life in the professional game despite losing every match.

So now to the leagues, which promise to be hugely competitive and well balanced. Just try picking a top six in either division, and you will be leaving out teams that will set out to be firmly among the front-runners.

Are there any certainties? Well Salford City Reds look set to lead the way in National League One, though the week-to-week challenges that the competition should provide will ensure an unbeaten campaign is a massive task.

And the fact that the Champions are not crowned until Grand Final day will ensure that the season extends into October whatever the final standings in the league.

Otherwise it is extremely difficult to predict who will prosper and who will struggle in either division.

Every team will go into every home game believing they can win - making away wins take on added importance.

With just 18 fixtures per club, no side can afford a bad run of form early in the season or they will find themselves quickly off the pace. And with top six play-offs taking place, and teams down to eighth

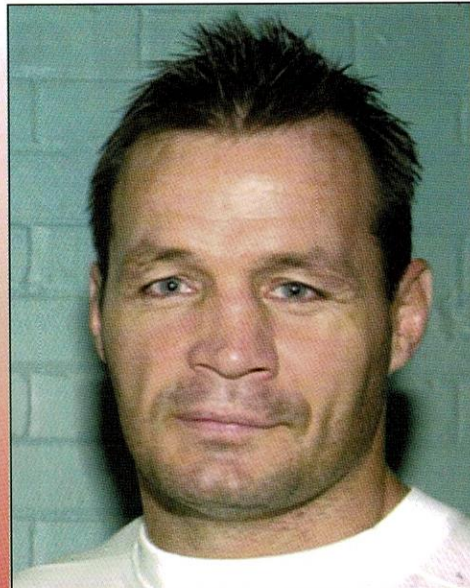
in NL1 involved in the relegation issue, virtually every side will have something to play for late in the season.

To help clear up any confusion, a list of the key features of the new system are shown below.

They all add up to what will be another tremendous season at this level.

#### KEY POINTS OF THE SYSTEM

- The winners of the National League Two Grand Final i.e. the NL2 Champions are automatically promoted.
- The club finishing bottom of National League One is automatically relegated.
- Then the 8th placed club in National League One plays off against the 9th placed club in NL1.
- The winner of that game stays up.
- The loser goes on to play the National League Two beaten Grand Finalist.
- The winner of that game is in National League One next year - the loser is in NL2.



Steve Molloy - League Express Man of the Match v Salford

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# CLUB CALL CLUB CASH

Dear Members,

It does not seem that long ago since we launched the Club Cash Lottery and yet we have already paid out over £9000. Your support has not only been vital but extremely essential to the future well-being of our club.

Please would you consider helping us with our April Project which is 'INTRODUCE A FRIEND'. Any member who brings on board one or more new members during April will be entered into our MEMBER SPECIAL DRAW which will take place on 4th May at the home game against Dewsbury Rams.

The prize will consist of one free entry into the National Lottery for the next 26 weeks with the chance of becoming a millionaire.

Also during the summer, the club will be presenting a series of spectacular Cabaret Nights, just introduce 5 new members to our lottery during April - £1 per week per member - and you will receive free tickets to the shows for you and your loved one, plus a complimentary boot of wine.

'WHEN WE PARTY - SO WILL YOU'

Thanks once again for your support and I sincerely hope that you can help us yet again in the month of April.

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"	Paul Price, Hare & Hounds, Ashton U Lyne	B4008
"	Sue Done, Chadderton, Oldham	A1989
"	Sandra Collett, Chadderton, Oldham	A9113
"	Andy Broadbent, Denshaw	C5664

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# In Yer Face

TONIGHT'S Roughyeds v Hornets fixture is the first game to be played under the new structure of National League's One and Two. The recent history of clashes between these two old rivals is one of close and exciting encounters and I am sure tonight's match will be no exception. In the Arriva Trains Cup competition Hornets had the better of their opponents with a draw at Boundary Park and a victory at Spotland. However, in the final mini-league table both sides finished with nine points, Oldham outscoring their rivals by thirteen points, to finish ahead. This confirms the closeness of the two sides as regards ability and it is to be hoped that Oldham will have learned the lessons of their two previous meetings when Hornets never-say-die spirit enabled them to come from behind and take points off a lackadaisical Roughyeds outfit.

In Ian Watson and Paul Smith Hornets have two outstanding playmakers with the ability to open up the tightest of defenses. Watson was in excellent form at Spotland and masterminded a spectacular come back with his shrewd handling and precision kicking.

Another to watch out for is fullback Paul Owen whose pace and eye for an opening make him arguably the most dangerous attacking fullback in the new division.

Close to the line ex-Oldham favourite (though it seems an eternity since he appeared in Roughyeds colours) Richard Pachniuk is always a threat as well as being a workaholic defender. He is backed up by solid forwards Paul Southern, David Larder, David Stephenson and James Bunyan (who sometimes doubles up at centre). With pacy wingmen Casey Mayberry and Marlon Billy capable of running in the tries Hornets are a side to be reckoned with.

So where does that leave the two clubs prospects for the new National League One season? At the moment logic says Salford are favourites with Leigh, perhaps, next in line. Much will depend on who can steer clear of injuries and avoid suspensions because the rest of the teams look to be pretty much on a par. With their neighbours moving into a new stadium and becoming a force to be reckoned with in Super League

Hull K.R. are showing signs of renewed ambition and are keen to make progress. Similarly, Whitehaven, who were unbeaten in their Arriva Trains Cup pool will take some handling. With Featherstone and Doncaster also likely to prove tough opposition both Oldham and Hornets will have to be on their mettle to gain points regularly. This means that solid home performances are vital because gaining points on the road could prove difficult. My assessment leaves Dewsbury and Batley both of whom I regard as eminently beatable, although Mount Pleasant has been anything but pleasant for Oldham players and fans in recent times. Conclusion: stand by for a highly competitive division and take nothing for granted. In my view every side is capable of taking points off each other.

National League Two should be equally competitive. Gateshead and London Skolars are the obvious also-rans at this stage and might have been joined by Workington until the change of coach last week. On their form in the Arriva Trains Cup Hunslet and Keighley could start as the front runners, but Darren Abram has worked wonders with Chorley Lynx, as have Paul Broadbent and Steve Ferres starting from scratch at new boys York City Knights. With Peter Roe's Swinton bouncing back from two heavy defeats by Salford and Oldham to secure a draw with Whitehaven, the Lions will have plenty to say for themselves and are poised to go much better than last season. Barrow and Sheffield will be especially difficult at home but neither side travels well so their results are likely to be a mixed bag.

With Super League also proving competitive so far, the current Rugby League season is shaping up nicely. In the long term I suspect Super League will come down to a contest for honours among the usual suspects with Leeds and Hull looking stronger this term and Wigan a little weaker. Interest, therefore, by well focus on the relegation struggle. Halifax are probably favourites but don't be surprised if the battle against the drop involved more than a few clubs, not because their standards are poor but, rather they are better and more even.

GC

# ON THIS DAY

... with Don Yates



GOOD FRIDAY 17th April 1992 was a significant date in the career of Hornets utility forward and former Oldham hooker David Stephenson. It was on that date that Stephenson made his senior debut in professional rugby when he appeared at loose-forward in the Oldham team that won a Second Division match at Rochdale Hornets by 21 points to ten. Stephenson had joined Oldham the previous February from the Queens Park amateur club of Leeds. He made 59 appearances for the Roughyeds and scored five tries before moving on to Hull in November 1997 following the demise of the original Oldham club. He has since returned to this side of the Pennines with Rochdale and is sure to be a major thorn in the side of Oldham tonight.

Another player who today celebrates the anniversary of his senior professional debut is Oldham back-row forward Chris Morley. His first professional club was St.Helens and he actually made his debut against Oldham on Sunday 17th April 1994. It was a First Division match that will live long in the memory of Oldham supporters. Desperate for a win to avoid relegation, Oldham visited St.Helens in the penultimate match of the season.



Chris Morley

Saints were expected to win but, remarkably, after 50 minutes Oldham were 30 points to six ahead. The revival by St.Helens during those last 30 minutes almost brought them victory but Oldham hung on to register a memorable 30-26 victory. Chris Morley was one of the St.Helens substitutes that afternoon. He had joined Saints from the Woolston Rovers junior club in December 1991. He made 78 appearances

for Saints and scored eight tries before moving to Warrington in January 1998. Morley then had spells with Salford, Sheffield Eagles and Leigh before he came to Boundary Park last autumn.

On Saturday 17th April 1937, Brough Park, Newcastle-upon-Tyne was the scene of an international match involving a Rugby League XIII and Wales. Unfortunately the weather on the day of this match was dreadful, the cold wind and driving rain reducing the attendance to 3,000. Wales won 15-12 with loose-forward Alex Givvons (Oldham) giving an outstanding performance despite those conditions. He scored two of the three Welsh tries. Another Oldham player, Norman Pugh, was included in the Welsh second-row whilst Knapman of Rochdale Hornets was included in the League XIII pack.

Another Rochdale Hornets forward to gain representative recognition was prop-forward Eddie Brown. On Thursday 17th April 1969 he was a member of the Great Britain under-24 pack which took on France at Wheldon Road, Castleford. The French were no match for the home side who ran in ten tries to win 42-2.

This Sunday morning Saddleworth Rangers and St.Annes meet here at Boundary Park in the final of the Standard Cup competition. These two clubs have met twelve times previously in the final of this trophy. Sixteen years ago, on Good Friday 17th April 1987 St.Annes were clear winners of the Standard Cup when they defeated Saddleworth 38-18, the highest aggregate score in any final. It was much different eight years later, on Easter Monday 17th April 1995, although, once again St.Annes won but Rangers took them into extra time. The final score was 18-10 with Mark Graham, Shaun Walker, Mark Smalley and Keiran Deakin scoring tries for St.Annes and Dean Hamilton adding a goal. Michael Clayton and Darren Chadwick scored tries for Saddleworth with Danny Wilkins adding a goal.

# STATS AND FACTS

## APPEARANCES & SCORERS SEASON 2003

PLAYER	APP	SUB	TRIES	GOALS	D/G	PTS
Gavin Dodd	11	0	8	0	0	32
Iain Marsh	10	1	3	0	0	12
Jon Goddard	9	0	3	0	0	12
Paul Anderson	8	3	4	0	0	16
Joe McNicholas	6	1	2	0	0	8
Simon Svabic	7	5	2	34	0	76
Neil Roden	10	0	2	0	2	10
Steve Molloy	10	1	0	0	0	0
John Hough	8	2	4	0	0	16
Martin McLoughlin	4	4	0	0	0	0
Lee Doran	12	0	3	0	0	12
Chris Morley	8	3	1	0	0	4
Phil Farrell	7	0	4	0	0	16
Gareth Barber	5	4	4	13	0	42
Gavin Johnson	0	1	0	0	0	0
Ryan Stazicker	9	2	2	0	0	8
Danny Guest	1	4	0	0	0	0
Chris Campbell	5	0	2	0	0	8
Anthony Murray	4	1	1	0	0	4
Chris Irwin	8	0	4	0	0	16
Will Cowell	3	0	0	0	0	0
Darren Shaw	2	3	0	0	0	0
Keith Brennan	2	6	2	0	0	8
Dane Morgan	3	3	2	0	0	8
Adam Sharples	0	1	0	0	0	0
Jason Clegg	0	2	0	0	0	0
Paul Norton	4	1	0	0	0	0

### ARRIVA TRAINS NATIONAL LEAGUE CUP - WEST FINAL TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Diff	PTS
Salford City Reds	10	9	1	0	580	104	476	19
Leigh Centurions	10	7	1	2	321	211	110	15
Oldham	10	4	1	5	268	282	-14	9
Rochdale Hornets	10	4	1	5	272	299	-27	9
Swinton Lions	10	1	1	8	120	414	-294	3



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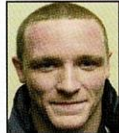
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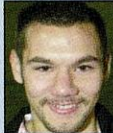
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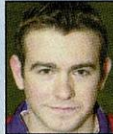
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# Fixtures

DATE	OPPONENT	RLFL	ATT
<b>DECEMBER 2002</b>			
28	ROCHDALE HORNETS	LAW C W	28-22 2,141
<b>JANUARY 2003</b>			
19	LEIGH CENTURIANS	NL C L	14-22 3,070
26	EAST HULL	CC R3 W	32-6 1,270
<b>FEBRUARY</b>			
02	ROCHDALE HORNETS	NL C D	22-22 2,050
09	LONDON BRONCOS	CC R4 L	12-42 1,014
23	SWINTON LIONS	NL C W	24-16 923
<b>MARCH</b>			
02	BARROW RAIDERS	NL C W	50-11 1,280
09	SALFORD CITY REDS	NL C L	4-62 2,839
16	LEIGH CENTURIANS	NL C L	26-31 1,945
<b>CC QF</b>			
23	ROCHDALE HORNETS	NL C L	25-34 1,314
30	BARROW RAIDERS	NL C W	23-16 781
<b>APRIL</b>			
06	SWINTON LIONS	NL C W	68-14 1,032
13	SALFORD CITY REDS	NL C L	12-54 2,162
<b>CC SF</b>			
17	ROCHDALE HORNETS	NL 1 H	
21	DONCASTER DRAGONS	NL 1 A	P
26		CC FINAL	
<b>MAY</b>			
04	DEWSBURY RAMS	NL 1 H	
11	SALFORD CITY REDS	NL 1 A	
18		NL C QF	
25	LEIGH CENTURIANS	NL 1 H	
<b>JUNE</b>			
01	HULL KINGSTON ROVERS	NL 1 A	
08		NL C SF	
15	WHITEHAVEN	NL 1 H	
22	BATLEY BULLDOGS	NL 1 A	
29	ROCHDALE HORNETS	NL 1 A	
<b>JULY</b>			
06		NL C FINAL	
13	FEATHERSTONE R.	NL 1 H	
20	DONCASTER DRAGONS	NL 1 H	
27	DEWSBURY RAMS	NL 1 A	
<b>AUGUST</b>			
03	SALFORD CITY REDS	NL 1 H	
10	LEIGH CENTURIANS	NL 1 A	
17	HULL KR	NL 1 H	
24	WHITEHAVEN	NL 1 A	
31	BATLEY BULLDOGS	NL 1 H	
07	FEATHERSTONE R.	NL 1 A	

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