Oldham RLFC

The Roughyeds

Arriva Trains Cup
West Group Match v Swinton Lions

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OLDHAM	V	SWINTON LIONS
Gavin Dodd	1	Wayne English
Will Cowell	2	Dave Llewellyn
Gareth Barber	3	Mark Bolton
Jon Goddard	4	Chris Maye
Nick Johnson	5	Chris Irwin
Neil Roden	6	Ian Hodson
Ian Watson	7	Warren Ayres
Steve Molloy	8	Tau Liku
Keith Brennan	9	Rob Barraclough
Paul Southern	10	Rob Whittaker
Lee Doran	11	Phil Cushion
Dane Morgan	12	Danny Heaton
Lee Marsh	13	Kris Smith
Pat Rich	14	Neil Hayden
Simon Svabic	15	Peter Cannon
Martin McLoughlin	16	Chris Brett
Martin Elswood	17	Craig Wingfield

Match Officials:

REFEREE: G Hewer
TOUCH JUDGES: P Taylor, TD Beech
4TH OFFICIAL: C Walker

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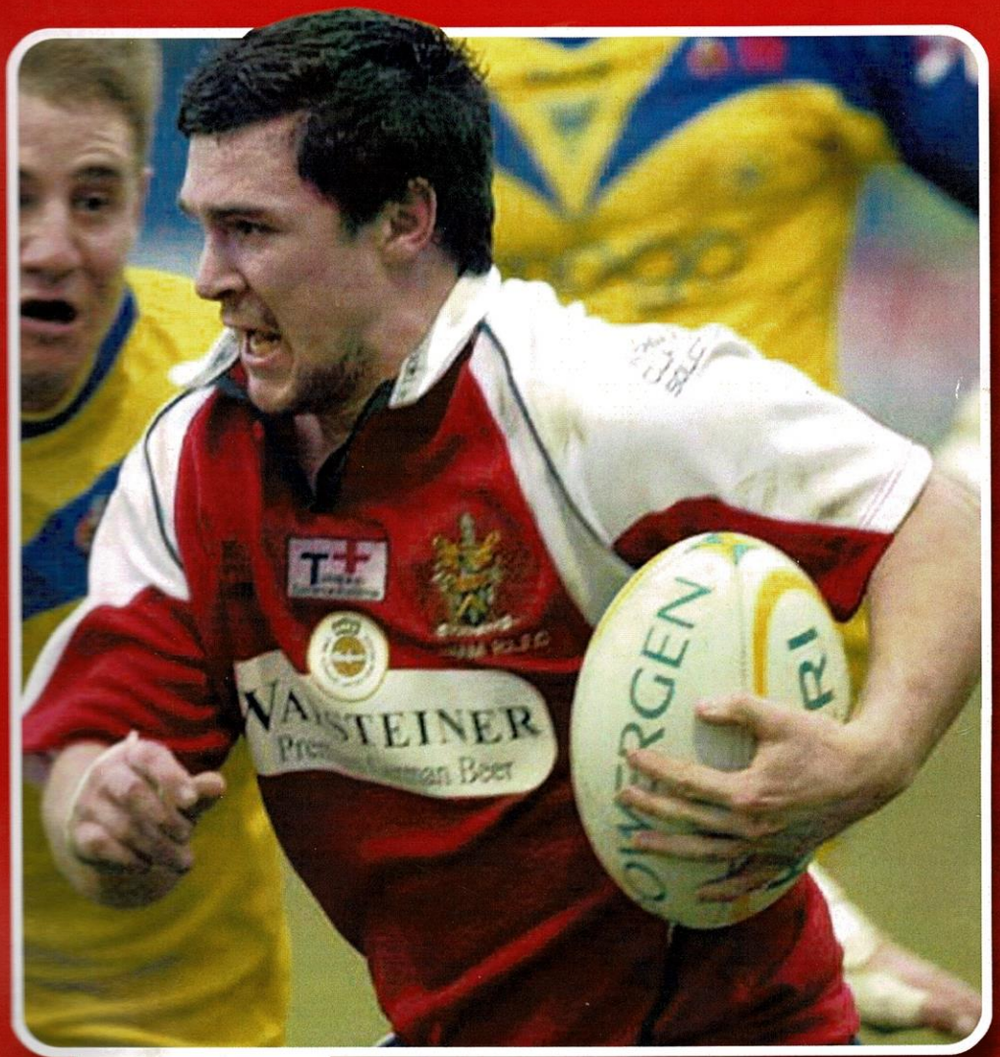
Oldham RLFC

OFFICIAL MATCHDAY PROGRAMME **£2.00**

The Roughyeds

Arriva Trains Cup
West Group Match v SWINTON LIONS



ARRIVA TRAINS CUP 2004

BOUNDARY PARK
SUNDAY 4TH APRIL 2004
KICK OFF 3.00pm

The Roughyeds

Oldham Rugby League Football Club (1997) Limited

14 Waterloo Street
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Club Shop: 0161 627 2141

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Bernard Ganley 1950-61
John Etty 1954-56
Derek Turner 1955-59
Bob Irving 1964-74
Martin Murphy 1966-82
Andy Goodway 1979-85 & 1993-94

ARRIVA TRAINS CUP 2004

ARRIVA TRAINS CUP FORMAT

The competition includes all 20 National League clubs.

It commences Sunday 1st February with 5 groups of 4 teams. They are North, West, East, Pennine and Yorkshire. The West group includes Leigh Centurions, Swinton Lions, Chorley Lynx and Oldham Roughyeds. Each club plays the other three home and away plus one other team home and away from one of the other groups. In Oldham's case this is Rochdale Hornets.

To qualify automatically for one of the eight quarter final positions a club must finish top of its group. The other three qualifiers will be decided by the five group runners-up plus the best third placed club (based on points/points difference) entering a free draw. The draw will produce three matches, the winner of each will provide the other three quarter finalists.

The quarter finals and semi finals will be 'out of the hat' with the first team out having home advantage.

The final is scheduled for Sunday 18th July with the venue to be decided.

The previous winners are Huddersfield Giants and Salford City Reds.

1998-2003

Trans-Penine Cup
Finalists - 1998

Northern Ford Premiership
Club of the Year - 2000
Grand Finalists - 2001

MOST APPEARANCES: John Hough, **175** - Jan 1998 - September 2003
CONSECTUTIVE APPEARANCES: Phil Farrel, **67** - *April 2nd 2000 - March 15th 2002
**John Hough was on the team for every match February 1st 1999 - April 16th 2001 (82)*

TRIES IN A SEASON: Mark Sibson, **23** - 1999-2000
GOALS IN A SEASON: Pat Rich, **146** - 2000-2001
POINTS IN A SEASON: Pat Rich, **320** - 2000-2001
DROP GOALS IN A SEASON: Neil Roden, **7** - 2001-2002

TRIES IN A CAREER: Mark Sibson, **60** - 1999-2002
GOALS IN A CAREER: Pat Rich, **254** - 1999-2001
POINTS IN A CAREER: Pat Rich, **576** - 1999-2001
DROP GOALS IN A CAREER: Neil Roden, **18** - 2000-2003

TRIES IN MATCH: Mark Sibson v Wigan St. Judes, **4** - Feb 8th 2000 at Boundary Park
Mark Sibson v Queensbury, **4** - Jan 28th 2001 at Boundary Park
David Gibbons v Chorley Lynx, **4** - Jan 30th 2001 at Boundary Park

GOALS IN A MATCH: Simon Svabic v Swinton Lions, **10** - Apr 6th 2003 at Boundary Park

POINTS IN A MATCH: Gareth Barber v Dewsbury Rams, **26** - Apr 2nd 2002 at Hurst Cross (7 goals, 3 tries)

DROP GOALS IN A MATCH: Neil Roden v Workington Town, **2** - dec 17th 2000 at Derwent Park
John Braddish v Hull KR, **2** - Dec 16th 2001 at New Craven Park

HIGHEST SCORE/WINNING MARGIN: v Yorks Wasps, 70-6 - Apr 1st 2001 at Huntingdon Stadium
v Queensbury (amt), 64-0 - Jan 28th 2001 RLCC 3rd Rnd at Boundary Park

IN THE CHAIRMAN'S OPINION

with **CHRIS HAMILTON**

Welcome back to Boundary Park for today's last home game in the group stages of the Arriva Trains Cup.

Our performance last week against Rochdale was probably, over 80 minutes, the best of the season so far, in so much as we played consistently for the whole game and, given that it was in a local derby with all the passion and commitment that those games entail, it was even more rewarding.

In the games we have played so far this season I don't think there has been too much wrong with our attack but even that has get steadily better over the last couple of games and anybody who has been to those games will have seen some of the best tries scored by an Oldham team for many a year. There is no finer sight than a player going full length of the field to score and the tries by Gavin Dodd and Nicky Johnson in the last two games have been superb. You only have to witness the reaction of the players at the time to realise how much the team get from it as well.

> "It is also significant that in the last few games the players who will dictate how well we perform as a team have been more influential."

Perhaps the most pleasing aspect of recent games, however, has been the improvement in our defence. A lot of work has gone in to improve this area of our game and hopefully this improvement will remain and get even better because without good defence you will win nothing.

It is also significant that in the last few games the players who will dictate how well we perform as a team have been more influential. They are obviously developing a better understanding of the players around them and vice versa – lets hope that this recent form continues right throughout the season.

Today's opponents Swinton will come wanting to avenge our recent win at their ground and we must make sure we are on our guard to avoid any backlash. The Lions are in a phase of rebuilding and I am sure all connected with the club will be hoping that they have a fully fit squad as they go into the start of the National League Two season where they will have hopes of at least getting into the Play Off spots.

It was also interesting to note last week that of all the National League One teams there is perhaps only one side who has performed consistently well so far and that is Leigh. They have already found the advantage of their big squad as they have managed to maintain their winning start despite having key players injured at various times.

It is particularly interesting to see how they are already tipped as odds on to get promoted to Super League even before the League season has kicked off and now, for the first time I can remember, the Leigh management are keen to play down the "favourites" tag they have created for themselves – funny old game aint it?

Last weekend also gave us the opportunity to show the country just how good rugby league is compared to rugby union with all the televised games that where shown. If only we could get people sufficiently interested enough to come and support our teams in the flesh everything would be a lot easier!

At this moment in time I am not able to tell you what will be happening when we have to vacate Boundary Park but we are hoping that all the necessary information will be in our possession shortly so that we can give you ample notice of what the arrangements will be. It is obviously not ideal but can't be helped and once again on behalf of everybody at the club I would like to thank you for your ongoing support.

As ever enjoy the game today, keep the atmosphere going which has been so good for the past three games and hopefully we will be cheering the team on to another win.

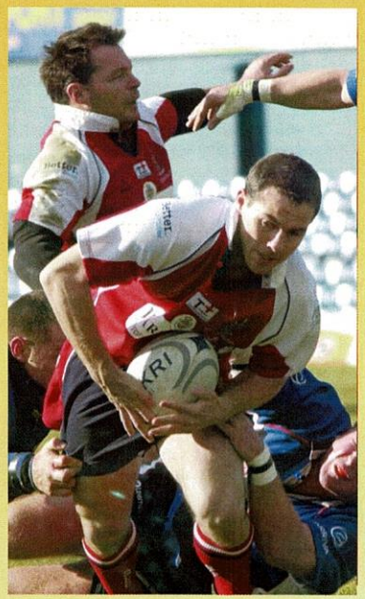
Best Wishes

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 express our thanks to the Oldham Evening Chronicle, League Publications Ltd, Phil Burdge and all concerned for the use of photographs.

Together, a winning team



Oldham Council is proud of its association with Oldham Rugby League Football Club and the rich heritage of the sport in the Borough. Oldham Rugby plays a key role in community life and in helping to enhance the reputation of the Borough.

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COACHLINES

with **STEVE MOLLOY**

A big welcome to Paul Kidd and the Swinton Lions playing staff and spectators, for our return fixture in the Arriva Trains Cup. The league stage of the competition is now drawing to its close and it is important that we maintain our recent form in the remaining two fixtures and thus qualify for the knock out stages of the competition. These two games are also vitally important as a platform for the start of the National League One season.

Swinton have a large Oldham connection and they will all be looking for big games today so our professionalism will again be called upon against an improving Lions side. Although everybody last week was talking about the two hat tricks and great they were, I was more interested in our defence and once again we met our defensive target, which is very pleasing. It is only on the back of good defence that spectacular tries like those scored by Nick and "Doddy" in the last two games can be scored.

> "Over the last couple of weeks the squad has set a standard that we have always known we were capable of."

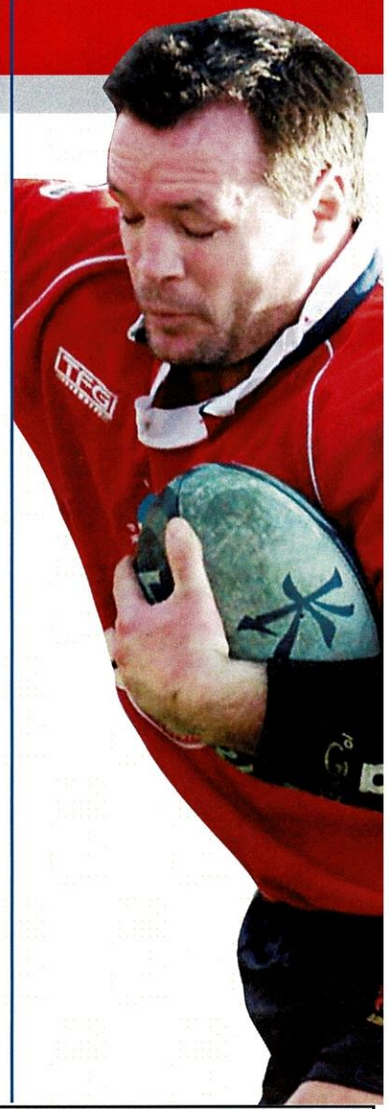
Over the last couple of weeks the squad has set a standard that we have always known we were capable of. What is important now is that this standard must not only not drop, but we must do all in our power to push it even higher. The players to be fair to them are fully aware of this and have been working hard to reach the required levels.

The squad situation has eased slightly with the recruitment of Pat Rich and the return of Gavin Johnson to full fitness. It is good to have Pat back in the squad and Gavin has been having a run out in the Senior Academy side. They, after their heroics last season, are finding it very difficult in their grading process where they are pitting themselves against the Academy sides of Super League Clubs. Not only are these players generally older than our lads but in the main full time professionals with all the advantages that brings. Hopefully however they will take something from the experience and be able to capitalise on it once they are playing in their own grade against sides they are more matched to in terms of age, experience and ability.

Over the last two home games your support has been very vocal and this is really appreciated by all of the lads. As I have said many times before it really does make a difference. So let's hope for more of the same today.

Enjoy the game,

Steve



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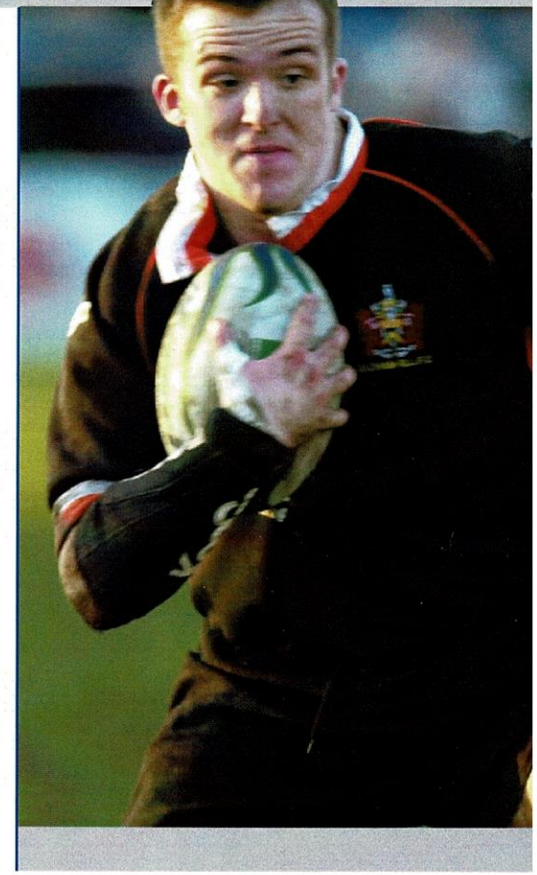
IN THE CAPTAIN'S CORNER

with PHIL FARRELL



Another good performance against Hornets last week. To me it just topped the Warrington game for overall professionalism and working to a plan. Once again I thought our kicking game was of a high standard and once more the tries came with Nick getting another hat trick and Ratty (Neil Roden) also getting three. To me "Ratty" is just hitting form at the right time with the first game of the League season not too far away. I am still setting this as my target but there may be an outside chance of me playing before then.

I am really pleased to see Pat Rich back at the club and all the players who played with him before are of the same opinion. Pat is a true professional and one of the hardest trainers it has ever been my privilege to play alongside. And, going off the month he has been with us, nothing has changed. Although most of you will remember Pat because of his goal kicking, his fellow players will tell you there is not a harder working, better tackling centre around. He might not be the fastest centre three-quarter but that first tackle, when he came on as sub against the Hornets, hopefully showed you all what to expect from Pat this season. He is truly a great addition to the squad.

For those of you who didn't read my column in the Advertiser, earlier in the week, I must tell you about "Marshy's (Iain Marsh) blonde highlights. I don't know who he thinks he is but the lads and I think he looks like Ashley off Coronation Street. Appearance seems to be occurring a lot in my columns for the Advertiser and the match day programme. Last week I announced that Paul Southern was without doubt the worst dressed player in Rugby League turning up for training in surfing shorts and shirt. Well now, on the other hand, we have Pat Rich turning up in pin stripe suit straight from the office – talk about chalk and cheese – he looks as if he's just got home from school. He always just manages to get his jacket and tie off before I see him. You never know he might turn up in his wig in the future. Do lawyers still wear wigs? You don't hear of many lawyers playing rugby league do you? They probably have more sense.

Great vocal support from the main stand last week, let's hope the team encourage you to be just as vocal again today.

Enjoy the game,

Faz

> "I am really pleased to see Pat Rich back at the club and all the players who played with him before are of the same opinion."

Daniel Thwaites are proud to be sponsors of Oldham Rugby League Club and wish them every success for the season

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AS IAN SEES IT

with **IAN WILSON**

Richard Mathers; Stuart Reardon; Gareth Ellis; Martin Aspinwall; Karl Pryce; Danny McGuire; Rob Burrow; Ryan Bailey; Wayne Godwin; Andy Lynch; Paul Wood; Gareth Hoch; Sean O'Loughlin.

How about that for a Great Britain team to take on the Aussies in a couple of years time? And I haven't included quite a few other coming stars, such as another ex-Oldham lad Chris Bridge, Jamie Langley, Jamie Rooney, Richard Whiting and Graham Horne, not to mention such as Kevin Sinfield and Richard Horne who are still young but already well established in the David Waite/ Brian Noble squad.

The point I am making, obviously, is that there seem to be quite a clutch of youngsters with genuine quality coming through in Super League at the moment. Most have developed via amateur clubs and then Academy set-ups of the top Super League clubs, with a few graduating by way of National League clubs first.

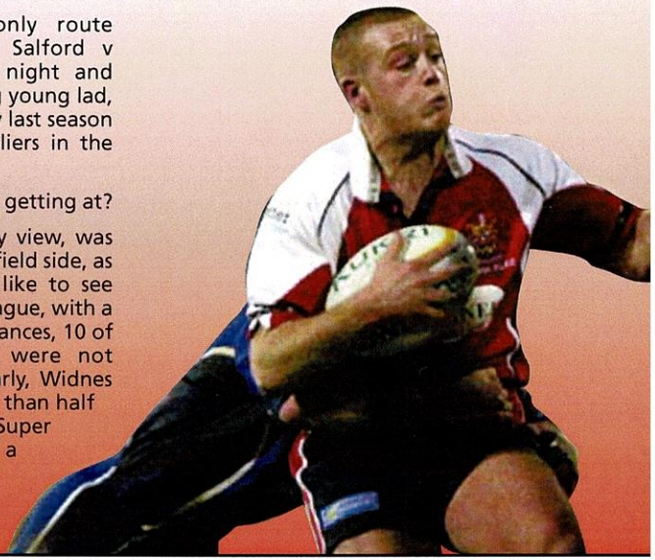
That is, however, not the only route nowadays. I went to watch Salford v Wakefield the other Saturday night and Trinity had a huge, very promising young lad, Darrell Griffin, at number 8. Only last season he was playing for Oxford Cavaliers in the TotalRL.com summer conference.

So what, you may say. What is he getting at?

The other side of the coin, in my view, was the make-up of the current Wakefield side, as an example. Much as I would like to see them well established in Super League, with a decent ground and decent attendances, 10 of their 17 on show at Salford were not qualified to play for G.B. Similarly, Widnes regularly turn out a 17 with more than half overseas players and most other Super League sides have more than a handful in their squads too.

I know the standard line – that if they are good enough they are old enough, and that our up-and-coming youngsters benefit from playing in the same club set-up as overseas stars. But 10 out of 17 overseas? I just don't buy it.

If we had a minimum of, say, three overseas-qualified players per club, and if we spent the money thereby released on development in the UK – and I don't just mean along the M62 corridor – we would surely produce more of the McGuire's and O'Loughlins and, indeed, Griffins. And, in this context, more should also mean better. It must be a numbers game. The more lads, nationwide, who are playing rugby league, the more players of real international quality will come through. And the best chance of seeing real expansion is surely a victory on home soil, on TV, over the Aussies. Will Super League clubs push the game's bosses in this direction?



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This month's National League Profile in the rugby league monthly magazine RUGBY LEAGUE WORLD by Gareth Walker features our own Coach Steve (Molly) Molloy and they have been kind enough to allow us to print extracts from the piece and use some of their photographs.

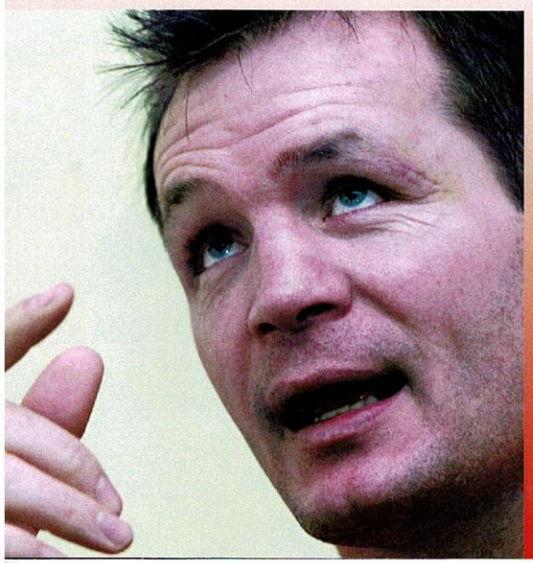
PROPPING UP OLDHAM

Gareth WALKER
NATIONAL LEAGUE Profile.

There's probably a lot that people don't realise about Steve Molloy's Rugby League career.

For one thing, he was the player who helped foist soccer's much – debated Bosman ruling on free transfers into the sport, following a wrangle over his own situation at Featherstone. He is also one of a select few players to be chosen for Great Britain while playing outside the top flight. Throw in two missed Challenge Cup Finals- one after a fall out with a coach, the other when he was cruelly cup-tied- plus seven different clubs and now a demanding player-coach's role, and you have quite a story.

.....Now in charge ....of Oldham, a club that knows all about swimming against the tide...Molloy's own office is definitely too small to stage an interview, packed as it is with the recently arrived replica shirts, while the room we do eventually occupy included crates of the club's sponsor's German beer.



But don't expect Molloy, Hamilton or anyone else at the club to be sulking about the club's situation. That would be completely against the ethos of the club.

"You either feel sorry for yourself and say 'the world's against us' – or you try and do something about it, "Molloy says.
"Chris (Hamilton) has always done that, and I'm of the same train of thought. We want to go out there, hold our heads up high and try and get on track. Chris demands devotion to the club and I think he's got the right person in me. I live in the town, and hear all the feedback – it hurts me when people are having a go. Oldham has been a hotbed of rugby for so long that people expect the club to be a force. We're working very, very hard to make sure we are."

Molloy is not, as is commonly perceived an Oldhamer by birth. He was born...in Manchester....and not until his family moved to Oldham did rugby league become a part of his life... he had a less than auspicious start, breaking his leg in his first full game. It didn't deter him though...He represented England Schoolboys, and was BARLA under 19's captain at just 17, ensuring there was no shortage of admiring professional clubs when he decided to leave the amateur ranks...But when he decided to turn pro on his 18th birthday it was Warrington he chose.
It took him a year to break into the first team, and when he did he recalls running onto the field against Widnes..."I felt like ten men," he recounts with a smile.

It was in his third season....after playing in all the rounds of the Challenge Cup in 1990.... that the calm waters were first troubled.
"Brian Johnson (Warrington's Coach) decided not to select me (for the Wembley Challenge Cup Final) and I thought it was a tad unfair after I'd played in all the games. It was a bitter pill and I decided it was time to move on."

...If Molloy were to leave...another club would have to stump up a sizeable fee. Fortunately for him....Leeds' coach, David Ward....paid £110,000 for his services.

"You just can't believe that somebody would pay so much for someone at the beginning of their career,"Molloy says.

Unfortunately for Molloy, Ward had departed within 12 months to be replaced by Doug Laughton, who brought in a host of new players. After spending three months in the Alliance at one stage – he forced his way back into the side eventually earning Great Britain selection in France.
"Me and Dougy didn't particularly see eye to eye and when my contract expired...I looked for somewhere else."

Featherstone who had just been promoted and had sold Paul Newlove... had money to spend...

signed Molloy who embarked on what he describes as his best four years of rugby.

"You struggle to get the recognition because you are playing for Featherstone," says Molloy....and this feeling was heightened when they failed to make the cut for Super League in 1995. But Molloy defied the odds....earning selection for the 1996 Lions Tour despite playing outside the top flight.

"I think they initially took me as someone to play in the midweek games, but I managed to force my way into the Test squad and played twice."

On tour however he began to get itchy feet...and was persuaded that he needed to be playing in Super League, and matters started to turn sour at Featherstone. He was not free to walk away from Post Office Road despite being out of contract. Having seen the Bosman ruling introduced in soccer, he decided to take steps to challenge the situation.

"Featherstone slapped a ludicrous transfer fee on me. I know they had two or three reasonable offers for me, one from Saints, when I came back off tour. But nothing came of it and I had virtually 6 months out of the game. I got the players union involved ...and there was talk of it going to the European Court. But I think, behind closed doors, they (The R.L.) ...said 'sell him, get what you can for him, because when the Bosman ruling comes you're not going to get owt'".

.....[Then to}Sheffield Eagles, whose assistant coach Steve Deakin had coached him as a junior at St Anne's. It was a good move for Molloy, to a progressive club on the up. But there was a definite down side. By the time Molloy's wrangle with Featherstone had ended he had missed the Challenge Cup deadline. The Eagles were then well on their way to a Wembley showdown with the mighty Wigan – and the greatest Final shock in the competition's history.

"It is one of my biggest regrets that I wasn't on the field with them (Sheffield Eagles)," Molloy said.

When Sheffield merged with Huddersfield Molloy moved with them to the McAlpine Stadium and was disappointed with his form, having been named Eagles' Player of the year in 1999. Midway through the 2000 campaign the Giants appointed a new coach in Tony Smith and Molloy feared being cut amid a mini clear out, even spending time out on loan at Oldham under Mike Ford. But the opposite happened. Molloy remained, had an excellent year in 2001....and Smith's presence sparked off a desire to coach in the now 30-something prop.

He was offered a contract by the Giants now in the old NFP, but turned it down, believing a Super League Club would show interest, but nothing came up.....until he got a call from Paul Storey at Batley, inviting him to Mount Pleasant...and when Australian John Harbin offered him a move to the Roughyeds, he jumped at the chance {and the rest is history.)

...the start to 2004 has been far from smooth-including a heavy home defeat to Leigh that Molloy described as "unacceptable"... But Molloy is applying that battling Roughyeds spirit to the situation, and is determined to succeed.

"Excuses are the easy way out. The club is here because of Chris Hamilton's determination-he's probably out there as we speak trying to secure sponsorship deals. That's the good thing about Oldham Rugby League, and what I'm trying to instil in the players-the work ethic that Chris has got and that I've got. That's what it calls for, and we can be serious challengers when it comes down to it. As a club we want to play Super League, and we have got potential. I've climbed every ladder as a professional player, now I'm intent on doing that as a coach."

STATISTICS

Player stats for season 2004

Player	Appearances (Including Subs) [Max. 11]	Tries	Drop Goals	Goals	Total Points
Jon Goddard	11	3	-	-	12
Will Cowell	11	5	-	-	20
Iain Marsh	8	6	-	-	24
Gareth Barber	11	1	-	17	38
Nick Johnson	11	12	-	-	48
Simon Svabic	10	-	-	22	44
Ian Watson	11	2	-	2	12
Paul Southern	10	2	-	-	8
John Hough	5	-	-	-	0
Dane Morgan	11	4	-	-	16
Lee Doran	11	3	-	-	12
Martin Elswood	7	-	-	-	0
Craig Farrimond	4	-	-	-	0
Gavin Dodd	11	6	-	-	24
Gavin Johnson	2	-	-	-	0
Adam Sharples	3	-	-	-	0
Neil Roden	8	6	-	-	24
Martin McLoughlin	10	-	-	-	0
Steve Molloy	9	-	-	-	0
Lee Marsh	10	3	-	2	16
Keith Brennan	8	1	-	-	4
James Bunyan	6	1	-	-	4
James Lomax	2	-	-	-	0

Due to time constraints the Swinton Player Profiles has been left out of this weeks programme

Unrivalled coverage of Oldham Rugby League spanning 3 centuries!

Joe Ferguson

1899 to 1923

Arguably the greatest ever Oldham player, Joe made a record 627 appearances for the club. But for the First World War his appearances may have crept up to 700, a fantastic record

Alan Davies

1950 to 1961

Of all the big-name players who graced Watersheddings in the "Fabulous Fifties", Alan Davies was king. One of the greatest centres the sport has ever produced, Davies was the complete rugby league player

John Hough

1998 to present

John, a local lad, made Oldham RL history on December 2, 1997, when he became the new Roughyeds club's first signing. With 180 appearances, he is now contracted for 2004 and looking forward to his 7th season as a Roughyed

Across the decades, the Chronicle has kept its readers on the ball with match reports, news and views from Oldham Rugby League Club — the Chronicle's reporters and photographers have been there for every game.

From the club's first game in 1895 to its most successful post-war season in 1956-57 to the present Oldham Roughyeds, the Chronicle has been on the touchline!

Make the most of your evening with Score on Monday and Roughyeds Round-up every week during the season

The Voice of Oldham 150 years 1854 - 2004

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WALKERBOUT

With Brian Walker

UNRAVELLED

The answers to the questions posed in the Oldham Evening Chronicle by St Anne's RLFC's Jimmy Patterson have until now remained unanswered. So here goes:

The shield is indeed a rugby trophy. A rugby union trophy. In 1897 league as we know it hadn't yet evolved and although 22 gate taking clubs had two years earlier broken away from the English RU to form the Northern Union the sport was still 15 aside rugby union. But rugby was big time in the town, Oldham were in their pomp and there was already a good number of well-run sides in and around the Borough.

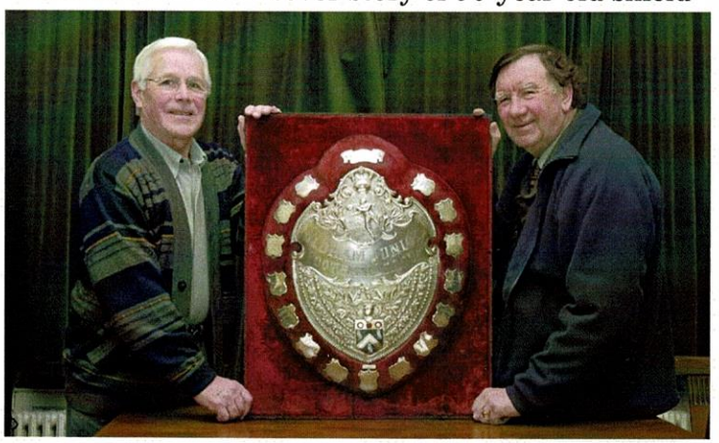
A year earlier the youthful George Hutchins, then an official of Roscoe Hornets, and with the help of the Chronicle began to organise a competition for junior players. The response was overwhelming; resulting in 33 sides being formed into three divisions of 11.The Chronicle duly provided the trophy, the very shield featured in the article.

The first league handbook, which was printed in 1899, confirmed that during season 1896/97 Glenby Hornets won the first division and the second by Cranbrook Hornets but the winners of the third division was not given. During season 1897/98 Millcroft won the first division, Watersheddings Jnrs the second and Grosvenor Albion the third.

The league was operated from the Royal Oak Hôtel in Union St with Hutchins the Secretary. He eventually went on to become one of Oldham's and the game's most famous officials, being appointed joint manager to both the 1928 and 1932 tours to Australia (the Ashes were brought back on both occasions), in 1938 became Chairman of the Rugby League and also pioneered the sport in France and schoolboy rugby here in Oldham as well as refereeing the first ever Standard Cup Final.

After his death in 1947 he was honoured by the famous two tiered stand at Watersheddings being named in his memory and more recently one of the new streets built on the old Watersheddings site was nominated to carry his name.

Church looks to uncover story of 90-year-old shield



£4,000 worth of sporting history

story **ROGER HALSTEAD**
picture **VINCENT BROWN**

LIFELONG rugby league fan Jimmy Patterson was staggered when he had an old shield valued and was advised to insure it . . . for £4,000.

For more than 90 years the shield has been in the keeping of St Mary's RC Church, Oldham, after it was handed over to their Christian Young Men's Society on June 3, 1911.

The CYMS headquarters next to the church were demolished in 1971 and, since then, the shield has hung in the presbytery.

Said Jimmy, a St Mary's parishioner for years: "The shield seems to have been there for ever, but nobody knew much about it so we decided to do some investigating.

"It appears that it was first donated by the Oldham Evening Chronicle in 1897 for competition between teams in the Oldham Junior Football League, but there is some doubt whether they played rugby — northern teams had broken away from the Rugby Union in 1895 to play what we now know as rugby league — or football."

In later years St Mary's boasted a strong amateur rugby league side. And there may be a clue in the figure of a rugby player passing a ball that is embossed on the shield.

Among the early winners were Cranbrook Hornets, Watersheddings Juniors, Oldham Central Football Club, Heyside Football Club, Higginshaw Football Club, Glodwick Juniors, Salem Rangers, Rochdale Athletic, Central Hornets and Egerton Football Club.

St Mary's CYMS won it in three consecutive seasons — 1908-09, 1909-10 and 1910-11 — whereupon a Councillor J Hirst presented the shield to them for permanent keeping on behalf of the proprietors of the Chronicle at that time, Hirst and Rennie.

Said Jimmy: "I thought it might be worth a bit, but I was amazed when I was told it should be insured for £4,000. With so much history attached to it, we need to find it a more appropriate place for safe keeping, perhaps where it can be seen by more people.

"We would also like to find out more about it. I'm sure it would have quite a story to tell if only it could talk."

Pictured are Jimmy Patterson (left) and church member Gerard Down, a member of the winning team when the trophy was last presented.

NATIONAL LEAGUE TALK

with GARETH WALKER of RUGBY LEAGUER & LEAGUE EXPRESS

TONY HANNAN LOOKS AT A COMPETITION THAT CAN REALLY LAY CLAIM TO BE EXPANDING THE GAME - FROM THE GROUND UP!

THE conventional wisdom among many in Rugby League is that the Tetley's Super League concentrates too much on fancy ideas of expansion rather than getting it right closer to "home".

The National Leagues, on the other hand, are the place to go shopping for the game's real bread and butter - the Hunslets, Hull KRs and Swintons of this world.

Yet just how true is that? Well, on the one hand, it is obviously an accurate description. Life in the National Leagues can be a raw, gritty if exciting struggle, a million miles away from the, by comparsion, glamourous nationally televised top flight. There are some great, historic names going about their weekly business - names without which Rugby League would just not be the same.

Taking a wider view, however, the argument is harder to justify. Think about it. When Super League kicked off back in 1996, there were four teams from beyond the sport's traditional M62 confines - Workington, London, Sheffield and Paris. Gateshead passed through in 1999.

How many are there now? And if the Broncos carry on the rest of the season the way they started it - and the game's leaders pluck up the courage to actually relegate them - how many will there be in Super League X?

That would be a rather embarrassing way to celebrate ten years of a competition that was originally to see teams established in Newcastle, Cardiff and, ahem, Barcelona, wouldn't it? Let's look at the current situation in the National Leagues.

Leaving aside the amateur NL3, which can this season boast teams in St Albans, Carlisle, Birmingham, Teesside, Essex, South London, Sheffield, Coventry, Hemel Hempsted, Bramley, Huddersfield, Warrington, Bradford and Manchester, and there is a much more positive story to tell.

Notwithstanding the Cumbrian triumvirate of Whitehaven, Workington and Barrow, the National Leagues continue to play home to the likes of York, Keighley and Doncaster, none of which - to my knowledge - have an M62 junction to be proud of.

Then there are the newbies, Gateshead Thunder and the London Skolars, both battling away admirably in NL2, at a level where they don't have to bleed themselves dry financially as they pioneer this great game out there on the frontiers. Same goes for Chorley.

The fact is, if Rugby League is ever going to live up to its potential for growth at a semi and ultimately fully professional level, it is most likely to do so through the National Leagues.

Not only are they a more realistic breeding ground from a new club's point of view, they also provide the perfect environment for promising if inexperienced players - such as those from the Arriva Trains Conference, Totalrl.com summer Conference or Student Rugby League - to test themselves.

In short, the National League structure allows Rugby League to build and develop geographically from the ground up, while ensuring a parity of competition that provides great entertainment for fans and players throughout all three divisions.

Gareth Walker is away.

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PLAYER PROFILE NICK JOHNSON

NICK Johnson is starting to make a name for himself . . . and if he can maintain his current habit of scoring tries he looks certain to smash Mark Sibson's new-club Roughyeds record of 24 in a season, set in 2000.

With hat-tricks in each of his last two games, against Chorley at Victory Park and Rochdale Hornets here at Boundary Park last Sunday, the 20-year-old local lad has taken his try tally for the season so far to 12 in 11 games.

He is half way to Sibson's record --- and the National League first division hasn't even started yet!

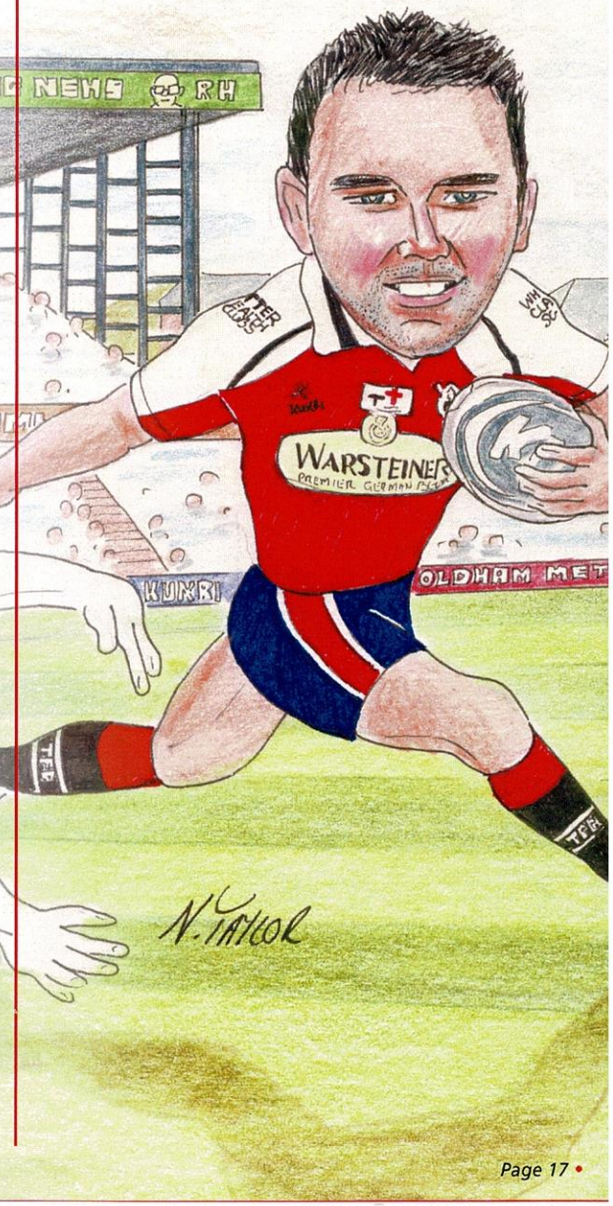
The first of those 12 was against Rochdale in the Law Cup on January 18 and as pre-season matches do not count towards official Rugby League records he is credited with 11 in the latest list of National League try scorers, circulated by the RL press office this week.

These were distributed before the midweek match, Swinton v Whitehaven, but at the time Richard Newlove of Featherstone was on top with 13, followed jointly by Johnson and Whitehaven's Mick Nanyn, each with 11.

Nick would love to finish as the top try scorer outside Super League in his first full season with his home-town club, but first of all he has within his sights a chance to become only the second player in the history of professional rugby league in Oldham -- and that goes back to 1895 -- to score a hat-trick of hat-tricks.

He needs to score three more today to equal a feat achieved by Geoff Munro 24 years ago. Many supporters will have fond memories of Geoff up there on the hill at Watersheddings. Like Nick, he wasn't built like a speed merchant, but he was deceptively fast and exceedingly strong on the break: a winger you would always back to score if he was close enough to get a glimpse of the whitewash.

In that season of 1979-80, Geoff scored



NICK JOHNSON CONT...

three against Doncaster, three in the next match against Rochdale and another three in the next game against Halifax, and those tries not only gave Munro a place in the club record books but they also helped Oldham to win promotion that year, going up in third place.

There are obvious similarities in the interest created by Munro's ability to get to the line all those years ago and the way Oldham fans are starting to talk about Johnson's knack of putting the ball over the line.

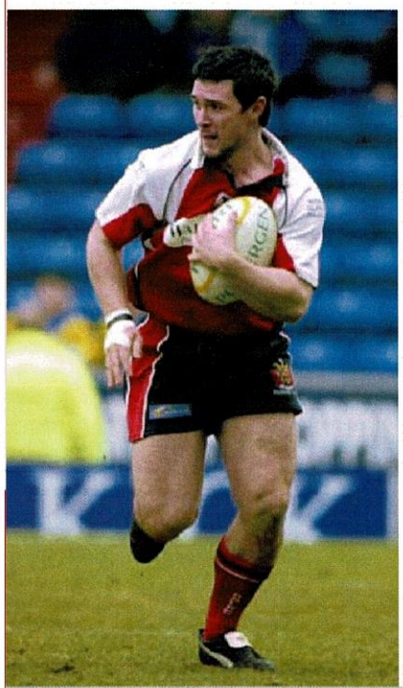
If you take into account the four tries he scored in four games while on loan here from Bradford Bulls at the end of last season, Nick's overall record for Oldham is 16 tries in 15 outings.

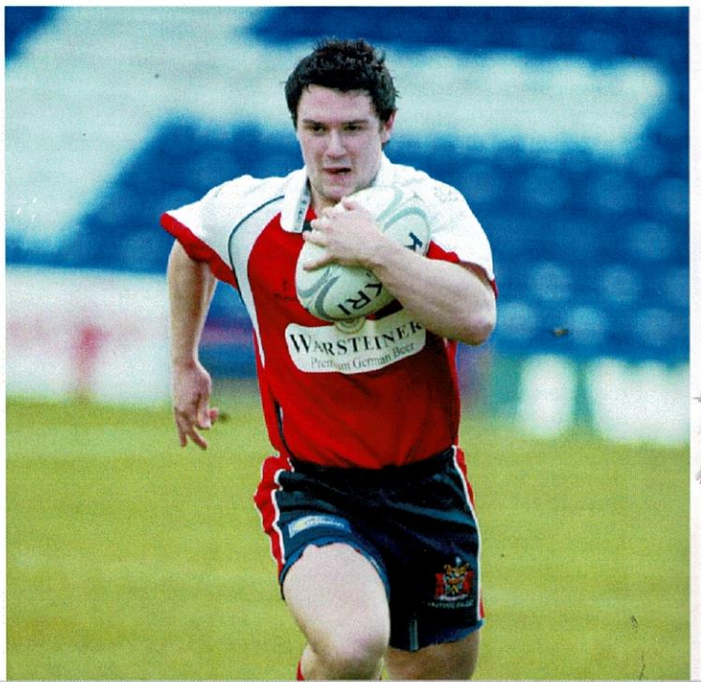
If he can maintain that ratio over the full season he will waltz past Sibson's best figures with plenty to spare. The former Great Britain academy player, who also had a spell on loan with London Broncos last season, eventually got his release from Odsal and that was the signal for Oldham to sign him up on a one-year deal and team him up at the Roughyeds with his elder brother Gavin.

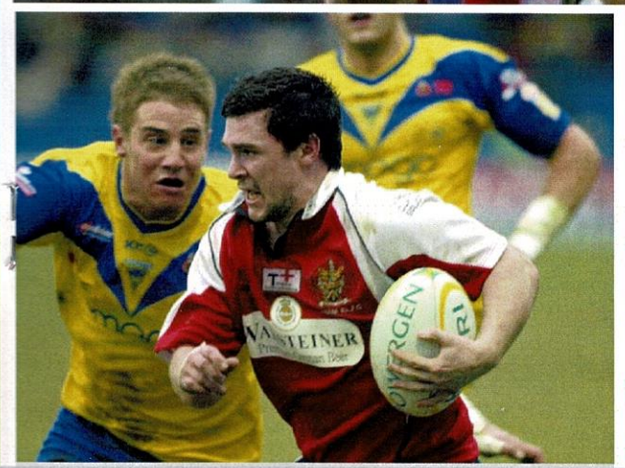
Nick's early-season impact has not gone unnoticed outside Oldham because he and his centre, Jon Goddard, are both named this week in the latest edition of Rugby League World as members of the mythical National League form team for the month of March.

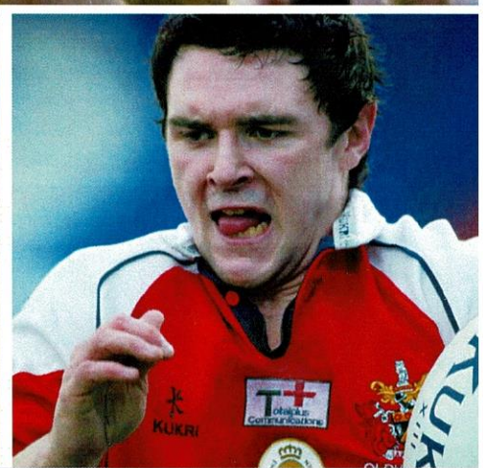
All this, and Nick isn't 21 until later this month. Congratulations when it comes --- and let's hope there are more reasons for handshakes with our left-winger before the season is much older.

ROGER HALSTEAD

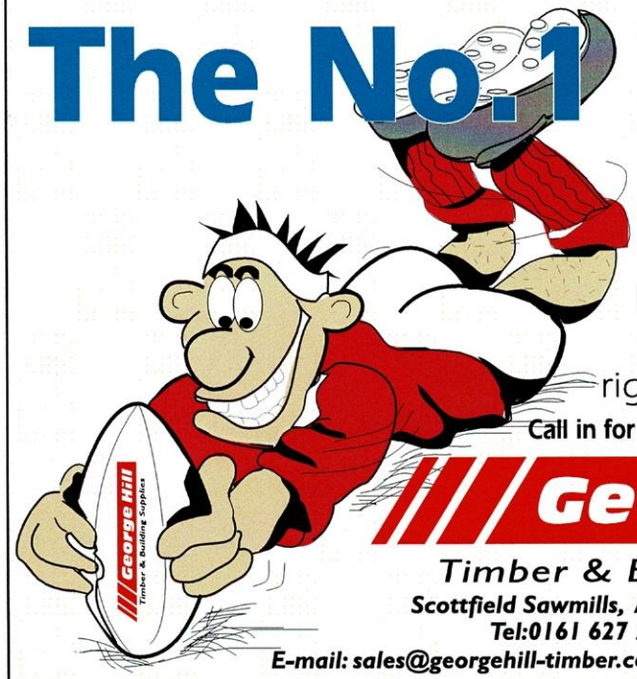








The No.1 TEAM



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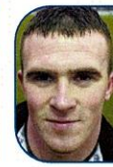

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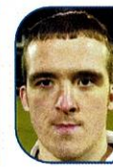

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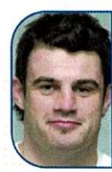

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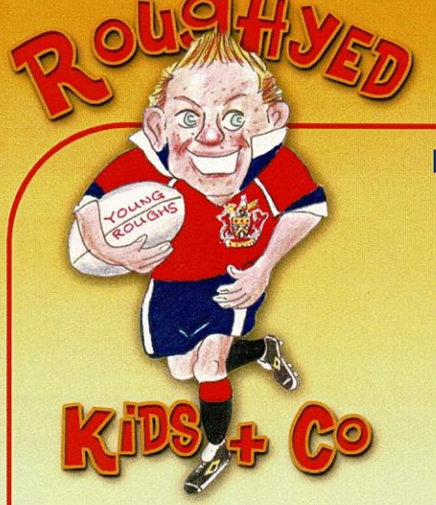

Hi Kids

SCHOOL'S OUT FOR EASTER AND WE BET YOU ARE ALL GOING TO HAVE A NICE BREAK. DON'T OVERDO THE EASTER EGGS AND DON'T FORGET THE PARTY ON THURSDAY NIGHT

The mascot for today's match is Kristian Goodinson. Kristian is ten years old and goes to St Martins Junior School. Many of you have spotted him on match days, as he is one of our hard working "ball boys". His hobby is of course Rugby and his favourite player is John Goddard.

Thanks once again to our sponsors Saddleworth Sports, F R Elswood Ltd, The Oldham Advertiser, Cartridge World Oldham, warburtons bakery & ASDA Chadderton.

Good Luck to Steve & the "Lads".

Janet & Carole

Todays Mascot

Kristian Goodinson

Age: *10*
Hobbies: *Rugby*
Favourite Player: *John Goddard*

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Well done to the lads on such an exhilarating display of open rugby against our near neighbours, Rochdale. They certainly confirmed my belief that the Warrington match was crucial in proving that a game played with such intensity advances the confidence and team spirit to a much higher level. We all know that there will be greater tests in the forthcoming weeks, but the doubters should surely be satisfied that Sunday's display shows the style of rugby that Steve Molloy wants the team to play when given the opportunity.

A big welcome back to Pat rich after all his travels. Always a favourite with the Oldham fans in his previous spell here, and judging from the first tackle he made on Sunday, a superb, hit, his second spell will prove to be equally popular.

On the social scene don't forget the forthcoming events to be held at the Social Club on Alfred Street, Werneth.

8 April Easter EGGstravaganza –a family party night.
16 April – Race Night.
29 April – Quiz Night.

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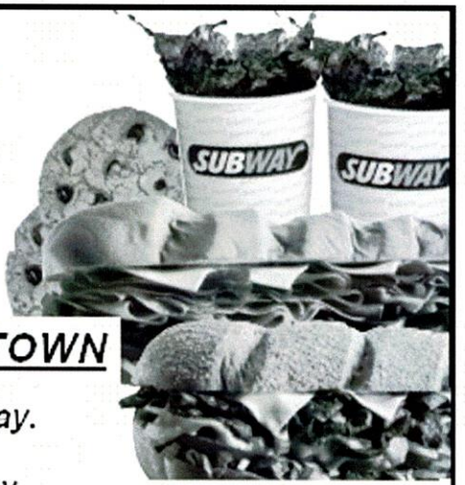

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ON THIS DAY

DON YATES LOOKS BACK TO APRIL 4TH YESTERYEAR

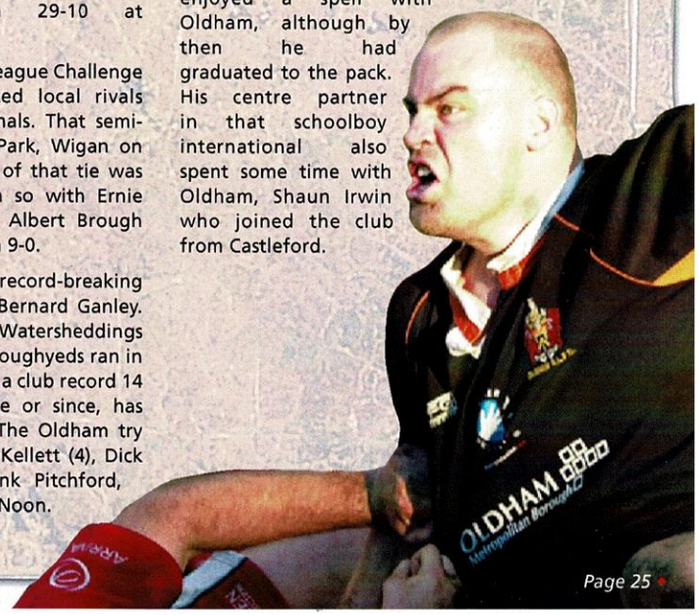
Oldham and Swinton have met on this day on no fewer than five occasions. Not surprising really because for many years it was traditional for these two rivals to meet on Good Friday. The first April 4th meeting of Oldham and Swinton, however, was on Easter Monday 1904 when winger Frank Spottiswoode scored the only try of the match when Swinton were beaten 11-2 at Watersheddings. Forty-three years later, on Good Friday 1947, a Station Road crowd of 14,500 saw the Lions win 9-3, all the points coming from tries. The great Oldham team of the late 1950s were pushed all the way when they visited Swinton on Good Friday 1958. Both clubs scored four tries but the difference between the two sides was full-back Bernard Ganley, whose eight goals enabled Oldham to win 28-18. Swinton's double First Division Championship winning squad of the early 1960s was in decline by Good Friday 1969 but enough of the squad remained and they proved too good for Oldham. John Gomersall (2), Alan Buckley and Bobby Fleet scored tries and Ken Gowers landed three goals as the Lions won 18-8 at Station Road. Oldham were Second Division Champions during the 1981-82 season when centre Mick Parrish played and scored in every match for the Roughyeds. He scored two tries and four goals on Sunday 4th April 1982 when Oldham defeated Swinton 29-10 at Watersheddings.

In 1925 Oldham won the Rugby League Challenge Cup and, in so doing, defeated local rivals Rochdale Hornets in the semi-finals. That semi-final tie was staged at Central Park, Wigan on Saturday 4th April. The only try of that tie was scored by stand-off Ben Beynon so with Ernie Knapman, George Hesketh and Albert Brough adding goals, the Roughyeds won 9-0.

Saturday 4th April 1959 was a record-breaking afternoon for Oldham full-back Bernard Ganley. That day Liverpool City visited Watersheddings and were well beaten 67-6. The Roughyeds ran in thirteen tries with Ganley landing a club record 14 goals. No Oldham player, before or since, has landed more goals in a match. The Oldham try scorers in that match were Alan Kellett (4), Dick Cracknell (4), Ken Jackson, Frank Pitchford, Geoff Sims, Sid Little and Johnny Noon.

It was on this day in 1980, Friday 4th April, that Oldham won a Second Division match at Rochdale by 36 points to eighteen. Winger Geoff Munro scored a hattrick of tries in that match but the most significant try scorer that evening was substitute Paddy Kirwan. Paddy had been signed the previous year from Saddleworth Rangers and made his debut that evening at the Athletic Grounds. Earlier in the year the diminutive scrum-half with the heart of a lion had twice represented Great Britain at colts level and he later made one appearance for the senior Lancashire team. Paddy went on to make 151 first team appearances for the Roughyeds and scored 33 tries before joining Leigh in 1988. Later he was a member of the Oldham coaching staff when the team spent a couple of seasons in Super League and he was head coach when the current club was formed late in 1997.

Thursday 4th April 1985 was a memorable day in the career of current Roughyeds coach Steve Molloy. That day he played for England Schoolboys against France at the Costello Stadium, Hull. England won 22-16 and prop-forward Molloy scored one of his side's five tries. Another try scorer for England that day was centre Ian Gildart who, ten years later, enjoyed a spell with Oldham, although by then he had graduated to the pack. His centre partner in that schoolboy international also spent some time with Oldham, Shaun Irwin who joined the club from Castleford.



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in yer Face

with Geoff Cooke

There will be those traditionalists among us who will have enjoyed the inclement weather we have all had to suffer a few weeks ago.

Many will have relished standing in the middle of a rugby ground at 8.00a.m. on Saturday morning, kicking their heels into a frozen pitch and trying to determine whether, by a 3.00p.m. kick off later that day,the sun will have melted all the snow and defrosted all the hard, rutted surface.

Many will have enjoyed the hours spent on the telephone to the local media, the gatemen,the coaches, the players, the catering staff,the opposition team, and of course the referee and his touch judges, informing them that the match has or has not been postponed.

Others, having spent yet more hours in midweek checking every available weather report and temperature gauge, will have delighted in shovelling the snow from around the steps to the clubhouse and in scattering rock salt on and around the terraces,the entrances and the exits." (League Weekly 1-3-04)

Now this piece of ironic bashing of the winter R.L. enthusiasts may make for good copy but I would point out for the benefit of those who had not noticed that the recently doubtful or postponed fixtures are part of a programme of SUMMER, not Winter, rugby. To be fair to League Weekly the editorial goes on to point out that in coming years this uncertainty surrounding the playing of Powergen Challenge Cup matches will disappear as the competition is restructured to accommodate the new schedule for the B.B.C. Nevertheless I cannot but wonder at the current structure.I have no doubt that Summer rugby is here to stay but I still find it bizarre that a so-called Summer season commences in February/March with warm-up fixtures arranged at any time from Boxing Day onwards. Surely the idea behind the switch of seasons was to eliminate the playing of matches when the weather was likely to be at its worst? The existing format does not achieve that so poking fun at those who favour the old system is wide of the mark. If we were to have a truly Summer season then I would suggest that the first round of fixtures should not begin before April and that the season should be extended into September/October months when the weather can be glorious and when the vast majority of clubs which do not qualify for the play-offs have no games. This would also have the advantage of widening the gap between the Challenge Cup Final and the play-off Grand Finals, enabling potential spectators to budget more effectively.This then leaves November clear for International fixtures and leaves December as a month of rest for the players to enjoy Christmas without the demands of intensive training or playing.

It all makes sense to me but I have no doubt it won't in the corridors of power.

The Oldham programme for the Sharlston cup tie carried a timely piece from League Express journalist Gareth Walker asking "Where are the crowds?" While we are led to believe that Super League goes from strength to strenght the National League clubs are struggling to attract decent gates. I have said before that is time some enterprising journalist or administrator with all the facts and figures at their finger tips did an in depth analysis of attendances. At both Batley and Dewsbury home supporters have said to me that their gates are worse when Super League fixtures run concurrently with lower division games because people go to Leeds or Bradford. In previous seasons when there has been a bigger gap between the start of the season in the respective leagues it should be possible to establish whether this is true or not. However, I wonder if there could be another reason? A friend who is an occasional Oldham fan told me he couldn't be bothered to attend the first match of the season because it was an Arriva Trains Cup game. It wasn't so much that Chorley were unattractive visitors as that there were no league points at stake and his perception was that the league was all that matters. Now that is bad news both for the Oldham club and for Arriva whose sponsorship is so valuable. However, I wonder if the format is just too complicated: the cross group games distort the early stages and the play-off games can lead to blank weekends in May, June and July, the very months when rugby should be flourishing if it is to be a major Summer sport. I am all in favour of lower division cup competition because it is an added chance to acquire some silverware but I wonder if a straight knockout would not be better (with two-legged ties if necessary) and, maybe, a plate competition for first round losers. And, if my pal is to be believed, it would be a distinct advantage if one day Super League, NL1 and NL2 all consisted of 14 teams, providing 26 fixtures. While that opens the door to the aspirations of the likes of Coventry, Crawley, Bramley, Carlisle and South London until their standard is good enough it looks likely that we will have to settle for what we've got. Nevertheless it does no harm to look to the future, especially if it involves expanding the game nationally.

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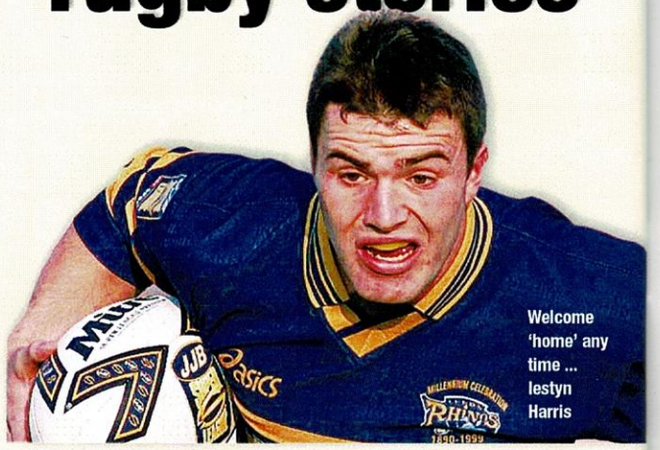
Publisher League Weekly

rugby stories



Welcome 'home' any time ... Iestyn Harris

SO, FOLKS, what's the betting Iestyn Harris will be back delighting Rugby League crowds before you've had to give the lawn its first mow of the year? Iestyn's face was a picture last Saturday when outgoing Welsh rugby union coach Steve Hansen dragged him off prematurely, at a time when the ex-Warrington and Leeds Rhinos man was sparking the entire Taffy three-quarter line. Union has its qualities, but wearing three-quarters out through exhaustion isn't one of them. Harris would see more action in one Tetley's Super League game than in half a dozen union outings.

There's a real paradox for people like Harris - the thrill of playing in front of a packed Millennium Stadium, Twickenham or Murrayfield, for a couple of months in the year, then the weekly drudge of slow, second rate rugby on the domestic front, before little more than three men and a dog. Much may boil down, in Iestyn's case, to how much he wants to feel fulfilled in exploiting his mercurial talents. Winning a Union game is predominantly down to the performance of the pack, and however much three-quarters may prove to be matchwinners, their ability and opportunity to dictate or dominate a game is by nature limited. So come on home to a real game Iestyn lad, and remind yourself how much you really have to offer as an athlete.

HENRY PAUL'S situation isn't that far removed, except that he still hasn't managed to establish himself at the national level like Harris. Mind, given that Will Greenwood has just played five internationals without breaking sweat in the England cause, there's still time for Henry – if the row between Gloucester and the RFU doesn't bring matters to a head first. Joe Lydon (remember him?) wanted Henry for the Hong Kong 7s, but Gloucester kept him for a league match, and as they split his salary, there were bound to be tears before bedtime. Henry would no doubt be welcomed back with open arms .. but might feel he's still got a point to prove. Proud blokes, those Kiwis. Even 'English' ones. One man it's hard to see ever coming back to League is Jason Robinson, mostly because Jason could play Union until he's 40, if he keeps his pace over 20 yards. Of all the cross-code switches, I thought Jason's was best timed. A devastating finisher and broken field runner, he's never had the sustained pace of, say, Martin Offiah. I thought League defences had worked Jason out towards the end at Wigan. It still didn't make him easy to snaffle, but hey, why do you think England took Phil Larder as defensive coach? He's a society darling these days, is the newly urbane Mr Robinson, and good luck to the lad. Of all the converts, there's probably least for Jason to come back for.

SO TO complete the Union meanderings, come on, let's pick some Six Nations 'stars' and fit them into one of our top teams. Let's see ... England hooker Steve Thompson wouldn't make the Bramley Buffaloes darts team, with his throwing. Lawrence Dallaglio might wow the ladies, but he couldn't lead a lemming off a cliff, on the evidence of this campaign. Ben Cohen? Yup, he'd get a wing spot I reckon. Richard Hill would make a handy second row for us as well. But beyond that? Not a lot to shift our Super League boys. Brian O'Driscoll would be a star, as might one or two of the other Celtic backs and the odd loose forward – once we got them fit. But after watching the recent Powergen Challenge Cup ties and early Tetley's Super League rounds, it probably frightens the lot of them half to death...

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"Roughyeds v Lions"

Photo 1. The first image goes back to "Good Friday" April 4th 1955. Oldham went to Station Road in a rich vein of form having thrashed Wigan the previous Saturday at Watersheddings (26 – 0), and returned home from the encounter with a victory by seventeen points to nine. The action shows Oldham's, right wing Dick Cracknell plunging over for the first Roughyeds try. The attendance was 16,000.

Picture 1

Photo 2. The date was January 19th 1997 and the occasion was the last first team match ever played at Watersheddings. Swinton provided the opposition as they did for the first match on the ground one hundred and eight years earlier. A crowd of 4.717 turned up to see Oldham win the match 20 – 16. The photograph shows Oldham centre Paul Topping emerging from the tunnel before the match.

Picture 2

Fixtures

DATE	OPPONENTS	CUP	VENUE	K. O.	RESULT	W/L	ATT
01/02/04	**Chorley Lynx**	**AT Cup**	**Home**	**15.00**	**64-14**	**W**	**1096**
06/02/04	**Castleford Panthers**	**Powergen CC**	**Home**	**19.30**	**16-8**	**W**	**1003**
15/02/04	Leigh Centurions	AT Cup	Away	15.00	51-32	L	2316
22/02/04	Swinton Lions	AT Cup	Away	15.00	18-30	W	783
29/02/04	**Sharlston Rovers**	**Powergen CC**	**Home**	**19.45**	**24-4**	**W**	**1301**
07/03/04	**Leigh Centurions**	**AT Cup**	**Home**	**15.00**	**10-54**	**L**	**1805**
14/03/04	**Warrington Wolves**	**Powergen CC**	**Home**	**15.00**	**10-44**	**L**	**2859**
21/03/04	Chorley Lynx	AT Cup	Away	15.00	10-40	W	370
28/03/04	Powergen CC Quarter Finals	Powergen CC					
28/03/04	**Rochdale Hornets**	**AT Cup**	**Home**	**18.00**	**56-12**	**W**	**1214**
04/04/04	**Swinton Lions**	**AT Cup**	**Home**	**15.00**			
09/04/04	Rochdale Hornets	AT Cup	Away	19.30			
12/04/04	**Featherstone Rovers**	**NL 1**	**Home**	**15.00**			
18/04/04	Powergen CC Semi Final 1	Powergen CC					
18/04/04	Halifax	NL1	Away	15.00			
25/04/04	Powergen CC Semi Final 2	Powergen CC					
25/04/04	AT Cup Play-offs	AT Cup					
02/05/04	**Leigh Centurions**	**NL 1**	**Home**	**15.00**			
09/05/04	Hull Kingston Rovers	NL1	Away	15.00			
15/05/04	Powergen CC Final	Powergen CC					
23/05/04	**Rochdale Hornets**	**NL 1**	**Home**	**15.00**			
30/05/04	**Batley Bulldogs**	**NL 1**	**Home**	**15.00**			
06/06/04	AT Cup Quarter Finals	AT Cup					
13/06/04	Keighley Cougars	NL1	Away	15.00			
20/06/04	**Whitehaven**	**NL 1**	**Home**	**15.00**			
27/06/04	AT Cup Semi Finals	AT Cup					
04/07/04	Doncaster Dragons	NL1	Away	15.00			
11/07/04	**Halifax**	**NL 1**	**Home**	**15.00**			
18/07/04	At Cup Final	AT Cup					
25/07/04	Leigh Centurions	NL1	Away	15.00			
01/08/04	**Hull Kingston Rovers**	**NL 1**	**Home**	**15.00**			
08/08/04	Rochdale Hornets	NL1	Away	15.00			
15/08/04	Batley Bulldogs	NL1	Away	15.00			
22/08/04	**Keighley Cougars**	**NL 1**	**Home**	**15.00**			
29/08/04	Whitehaven	NL1	Away	15.00			
05/09/04	Featherstone Rovers	NL1	Away	15.00			
12/09/04	**Doncaster Dragons**	**NL 1**	**Home**	**15.00**			
19/09/04	NL 1 & 2 Play-offs	NL1					
26/09/04	NL 1 & 2 Play-offs	NL1					
03/10/04	NL 1 & 2 Play-offs	NL1					
10/10/04	NL 1 & 2 Grand Finals	NL1					
17/10/04	NL 1 & 2 Prom/Releg. Play-offs	NL1					

Key
AT Cup – Arriva Trains Cup
Powergen CC – Powergen Challenge Cup
NL1 – National League Division 1

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