TODAY'S TEAMS

UNISON

ROVERS Coach Gary PRICE		OLDHAM Coach GARY MERCER
Craig MOSS	1	Jon GODDARD
Bryn POWELL	2	Gavin DODD
Danny MAUN	3	Will COWELL
Richard NEWLOVE	4	Alex WILKINSON
Matty WRAY	5	Nick JOHNSON
Josh WEEDEN	6	Simon SVABIC
Jon PRESLEY	7	Marty TURNER
Jim CARLTON	8	Paul NORMAN
Andy KAY	9	John HOUGH
Nathan SYKES	10	Ricky BIBEY
James HOUSTON	11	Simon HOUGHTON
Adam HAYES	12	Tere GLASSIE
Carl HUGHES	13	Mark ROBERTS
Andy McNALLY	14	Dana WILSON
Danny EVANS	15	Keith BRENNAN
James FORD	16	James KIRKLAND
Andy JARRETT	17	Carlos MATAORA

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National League One

FEATHERSTONE ROVERS
v
OLDHAM

Monday 28th March 2005
Kick-off 7.30

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UNISON

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FEATHERSTONE ROVERS RLFC

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Elected to NR FL: June 1921

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Mr T Jones, Mrs P Jones,
Mr T Mullaney, Mr J Reed, Mr J Williams

ROVERS HIGH ACHIEVERS

Most Goals in a Match:
13 by Mark Knapper, v Keighley
17th Sept 1989
Most Goals in a Season:
165 by Jamie Rooney, Season 2002
Most Goals in a Career:
1210 by Steve Quinn, 1975 to 1988

Most Tries In a match:
6 by Mike Smith v Doncaster,
13th April 1968 and by Chris Bibb v Keighley,
17th September 1989
Most Tries in a Season:
48 by Paul Newlove, Season 1992/93
Most Tries in a Career: 162 by Don Fox,
1953 to 1966

Most Points in a Match:
40 by Martin Pearson, v Whitehaven
26th November 1995
Most Points in a Season:
429 by Jamie Rooney, Season 2002
Most Points in a Career:
2654 by Steve Quinn, 1975 to 1988

Highest Score For: 96 - 0
v Castleford Lock Lane 8th February 2004
Highest Score Against: 75 - 20
v Leigh Centurions 10 July 2004

Most Appearances in a Career: 440 by
Jim Denton 1921 to 1934
Representative Players:
Great Britain: T Askin, J Bridges,
T Clawson, M Dixon, S Evans, Deryck Fox,
Don Fox, D Hobbs, G Gordon, S Molloy,
A Morgan, S Nash, P Newlove, P Smith,
J Thompson.
Tourists: T Askin, C Bibb, J Bridges,
G Cooper, C Dooler, S Evans, Deryck Fox,
Don Fox, D Hobbs, S Nash, P Newlove,
I Smales, J Thompson
World Cup Tourists: A Morgan, P Smith,
J Thompson
England: J Bridges, I Butt, M Dixon,
S Evans, V Farrar, J Hirst, D Hobbs,
A Morgan, J Mullaney, P Newlove, P Smith,
R Stone, J Thompson, A Wood
Wales: P Banner and H Box
Ireland: L Casey, L Child and Paul Darley
Scotland: N Lowe, J Houston,N Graham
France: F Banquet, D Divet,
Max Greseque and Freddie Zitter
New Zealand: B Tuuta
Great Britain Under 21's: C Bibb,
P Bonson, Deryck Fox, P Lyman, P Newlove,
M Pearson,I Smales
Great Britain Under 24's: K Bell, S Evans,
D Fennell, V Farrar, M Gibbins, J Gilbert,
D Hobbs, T Ramshaw, P Smith, V Thomas,
J Thompson, L Tonks
Academy Tourist: J Stokes
Academy Internationals: J Stokes, N Lowe,
K Pratt, S Dickens

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Division Two Premiership Winners: 1992/93
Divsion Two Premiership Runners-Up:
1987/88
RL Challenge Cup Winners:
1966/67, 1972/73, 1982/83
RL Challenge Cup Runners-Up:
1951/52, 1973/74
Yorkshire Cup Winners: 1939/40, 1959/60
Yorkshire Cup Runners-Up: 1928/29
1963/64, 1966/67, 1969/70, 1970/71, 1976/77,
1977/78, 1989/90
Captain Morgan Trophy Runners-Up:
1973/74
Yorkshire League Runners-Up:
1928, 1962
1st Division Grand Finalists Runner-Up:
1998

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From the Top with Gary Price

Live The Dream

I'm glad we can put the Northern Rail Cup to one side for a bit. I'm not knocking the comp, we've gone well in a tough group. I'm just fed up with the bad luck it's brought us.

We have been worse than decimated, and I'm a bit fed up with going on about it, but now we've lost Richard Blakeway, key player for the season, and Andy Jarrett is now a long term injury, everything is up in the air.

I think it was someone like Field Marshall Montgomery who said that you can make all the detailed plans you want before a battle, and you must do, but as soon as the battle starts then the plan changes completely.

That, in principle is what it's like for us right now. Our injuries have detracted from and distracted us from what we are trying to do in a major way. It's been impossible for us to hit the highspots we are capable of. One of the good things that has come out of this, is that as a group of people we have developed steel in our backbone. We just take what lady luck throws at us and get on with it together.

I spoke about the role our debutants played in our away game against York. One of the pleasing and satisfying things to come out of all this has been to see the way these players have come on. Craig Moss and Greg Nicholson for instance are getting more opportunities and developing as players because of it. John Fowler and Steve Coulson are in the same category. Andy Kay is proving to be a real pocket dynamo isn't he? Carl Hughes has also done well, playing out of position.

Which is best, winning the game unspectacularly as we have been doing, or losing them as we were doing this time last year?

We are winning games, without doing so particularly well. My view is that we should take this as a sign of the character of the squad, given the circumstances, rather than a criticism of it.

Which is best, winning the game unspectacularly as we have been doing, or losing them as we were doing this time last year?

Gary Price

"Girls in a League of Their Own"

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Players Stats 2005 with Terry Jones

Live The Dream

	Season 2005 Apps	Sub	T	G	DG	Pts	Total Senior Record Apps	Sub	T	G	DG	Pts
NATHAN BATTY	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	8	2	-	-	8
RICHARD BLAKEWAY	2	-	-	-	-	-	31	1	14	4	3	67
JIM CARLTON	1	5	-	-	-	-	28	32	3	-	-	12
STEVE COULSON	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
STEVE DOOLER	3	1	1	-	-	4	139	40	39	-	-	156
DANNY EVANS	1	2	-	-	-	-	88	64	29	1	-	118
JAMES FORD	-	3	-	-	-	-	12	16	5	-	-	20
JOHN FOWLER	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
ADAM HAYES	6	-	-	-	-	-	31	8	7	-	-	28
JAME HOUSTON	4	-	-	-	-	-	7	7	2	-	-	8
CARL HUGHES	6	-	1	-	-	4	6	-	1	-	-	4
ANDREW JARRETT	2	1	2	-	-	8	9	21	4	-	-	16
ANDY KAY	3	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
NEIL LOWE	-	2	-	-	-	-	136	57	63	1	-	254
ANDY McNALLY	3	1	3	-	-	12	21	7	11	1	-	46
DANNY MAUN	6	-	2	-	-	8	6	-	2	-	-	8
CRAIG MOSS	4	2	2	-	-	8	12	4	3	-	-	12
RICHARD NEWLOVE	6	-	2	-	-	8	86	9	58	-	-	232
GREG NICHOLSON	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
BRYN POWELL	6	-	3	-	-	12	6	-	3	-	-	12
JONATHON PRESLEY	4	-	1	-	-	4	28	11	15	-	-	60
DEAN RIPLEY	1	1	-	-	-	-	9	2	2	-	-	8
NATHAN SYKES	5	-	1	-	-	4	5	-	1	-	-	4
IAN TONKS	3	1	1	-	-	4	83	7	6	-	-	24
JOSH WEEDEN	6	-	3	21	1	55	6	-	3	21	1	55
MATTY WRAY	6	-	6	-	-	24	38	-	23	-	-	92

Man of the Match
Thornhill Trojans – Home
MATTY WRAY

Man of the Match
Hunslet Hawks – Home
ADAM HAYES

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Positive Energy

Steve Talking
– a Chairman's View

Live The Dream

I'd like to extend a warm welcome to Oldham, Gary Mercer's team, the club's officials and their fans, for what is sure to be a tough encounter in this first round of National League One.

I'd like to echo Gary's comments regarding the trials and tribulations of putting out a competitive team with our squad so badly affected by injuries. Everybody concerned is working their damnedest to get players back on deck. Thanks for all your hard work. The good news is of course is that we have qualified in a very sticky group and we've of necessity put on show some very good youngsters. Who knows what the future holds for them?

We finished strongly last year and we need to carry that forward into this years' campaign..

We need to hit the ground running in National 1. Our squad, even in its current predicament, can compete with anyone. We finished strongly last year and we need to carry that forward into this years' campaign.

At board level we are currently working out roles and responsibilities for our directors in response to the way things are developing at the club and in the community. Steve Lingard will still be our director of Rugby of course, and Eric Gardner will continue as secretary and treasurer. I will be heavily involved in building bridges, and developing the relationships we already have in the communities which the club serves. We feel that this is a two way street. By building these relationships, we feel that people will identify with Rovers more strongly and want to become involved.

We want to build upon what Glyn Robinson has already done in his tenure as chair. Glyn is now no longer a Rovers' director, but he will still be very much involved behind the scenes. I'd like to thank Glyn for his 'time, talent and treasure' on behalf of us all.

Our MP, Jon Trickett has been a pillar of strength for Rovers, and we will continue working with John in taking Rovers forward in engaging more and more with our local communities.

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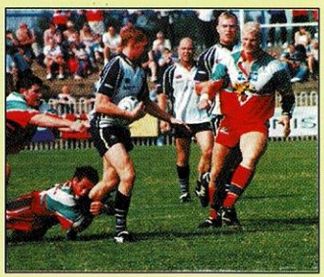

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all the best
for the 2005 Season

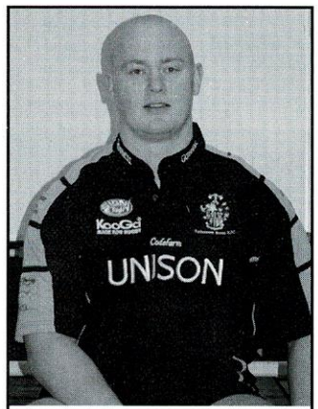
Where I'm Coming From
with Jimmy Carlton

Live The Dream

Each week a Rovers star talks about their life in Rugby League.
This week: JIMMY CARLTON

I don't read too much into a game. It doesn't matter who we are playing, I just get on with it. I suppose they call it playing with passion these days. I just call it getting stuck in. I think anyone watching me play can see that. Some of this is because I get easily wound up and people say stuff to me to provoke me. I've done a lot of work to keep this in check, but I still say I play the game with a lot of emotion. When we played Cas earlier on in the season, they were trying to provoke me all the time.

I suppose they call it playing with passion these days. I just call it getting stuck in.



Jim is having to cool it a bit with his offload

For instance, when I'm running with the ball, I try to run over the top of people rather than round them. Why go round the houses? I'm chuffed with the way my off-load is coming on. I've used it since when I was a kid and it's great to get one in. But I'm thinking about not doing it as much. This is because other teams have spotted me doing it and are ready for it.

For me, the hardest part of the game is keeping fit. When I had a year out I piled the weight on, this is because I enjoy eating and drinking. I don't like missing games though. It's really frustrating. Because of this, I'm always the first to put my hand up to play, even if I've got a bit of a knock or something, when the team has got loads of injuries, like I said, I'll put my hand up: if it isn't broken that is.

Touch Wood, I'm nearly always in the seventeen. I usually come off the bench. In many ways I prefer this. It's good to come on and start smashing people who have just had twenty minutes worth of the lads who have started the game. Although, like I said, I love getting my off-load going, it's the emotional part of the game that does it for me.

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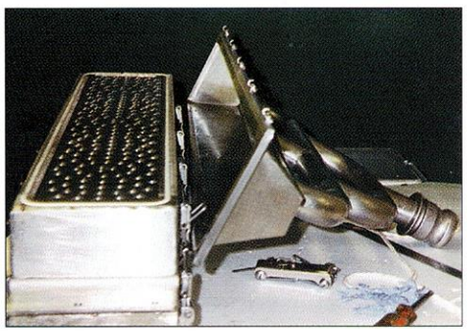

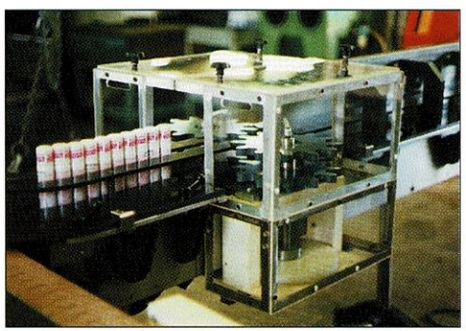

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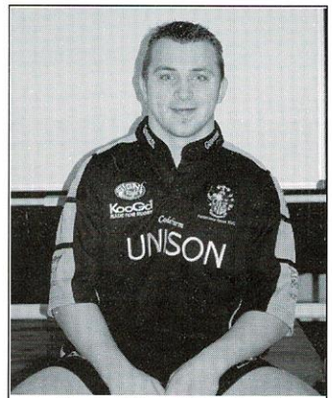
18 to 21 Club with Bob Fowler

Live The Dream

I have to print a retraction to a statement I made in the Thornhill Trojans Programme. In that piece I wrote that Andy Kay was 5ft 5". I have been asked by Andy to point out that this in actual fact is false. He is, he tells me 5ft 6". I am happy to write this retraction for the pocket dynamo. I said at the start of the season that both Andy and Paul Hughes would fight it out for the vacant hooking spot. I am pleased that one of them has been given his chance. In this case it is Andy Kay. He is 18 years of age and comes from Bradford Bulls territory of Drighlington. He actually played junior rugby with the Bulls and made the English schools' under 15 side, so their loss is most definitely our gain. I hope Paul gets his chance as well soon; Paul is the younger brother of Carl Hughes who has made a big impression this season.



*Andy Kay (5ft **6ins**)*

I hope the news about Andy Jarrett is more positive than was first thought - he looked to be in some discomfort as he left the field against Hunslet Hawks. I did hear he was to have a scan this last week, so let's keep our fingers crossed.

There has been speculation recently about the worth (financially) of operating both under 18 and under 21's teams. On paper many would say it is a drain on the club's finances which could be used elsewhere. I don't go along with this at all. Featherstone Rovers have a proud and dignified history of producing International class players. Sometimes this has been done without any monetary backing whatsoever. In fact when I played in 1961, we actually paid to play. The club paid the insurances and for the transport, but very little else. Today, more than ever, it is a necessity for National League teams to operate a junior team. It is compulsory in Super League. A club's ambitions could be said to be linked with it's junior operations. We can therefore be rightly proud of our heritage and history in this field. Obviously many serious minded youngsters have ambitions to play Super League and will opt to sign for a Super League team rather than a National league team. However, we at Featherstone have become known as a team which will give talented young players a chance. It is the transfer system of young players which seems to me as unfair, and this is something that needs addressing in the appropriate department - and that is something which I am not qualified to opine about.

At Featherstone, players are looked after and treated as members of the Featherstone Rovers club set up. As players show they are becoming ready to step up a level, they will be asked to travel with the first team, act as water carriers etc and join in the dressing room atmosphere. I cannot see the time when this famous club will not operate junior rugby league sides. It is something with which the club has become synonymous - and rightly so. Next Sunday we will probably get the chance (even if it is only as a spectator) of seeing the last player to leave the club and get a fair return for us. I refer of course to Karl Pratt. Karl still has a soft spot for the Rovers and some of his mates from a couple of seasons ago still play here.

Yes, the club could always use money for many projects - but three projects stand out and will make the club one of the leaders in junior rugby. Firstly the Rovers study centre is probably the finest in Rugby League - or will be when it is completed; secondly, Rover's scholarship gives young lads a chance of education and learning in the game; and thirdly, our record of producing home grown talent will always be recognised as one of the finest outside Super League. More power to the people who work so hard to operate this part of Rovers, and for the Board's foresight in sponsoring the schemes.

Good night, have a safe journey home and we'll see you against the Bulls.

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A FRISA View with Paul Cox

Live The Dream

A Tale of Two (rugby league) Cities

It was the best of times for Southern French team UTC/Perpignan, who were given two and a half years' notice that they would be inducted into Super League XI. Time and certainty that has enabled them to plan and build and recruit; enabled them to go full-time a year ahead of entry; to bring in David Waite as coaching and strategy guru; to win full backing from the French rugby league and a huge portfolio of sponsors and backers. All so that they will be ready and able to compete on equal terms in Super League XI (although just in case they can't, they've been given a three-year exemption from relegation).

It was the worst of times for Northern English team Leigh, to have won promotion to Super League in the very season that will see two English clubs relegated in order to allow the parachuting in of the said fortunate Gauls. To have not known their fate until they won the National League One Grand Final just two and a half months before the start of Super League X, by which time all the best available players had long been snapped up by their elite opponents. With no parachute payment or sugar daddy to ease their passage from the National League after the manner of Salford and Huddersfield, Leigh have done it the hard way, having fought like hell, and having been there or thereabouts for six straight seasons. It's taken everything they've got, and I really fear for their survival if – it would be cruel to say 'when', although it is almost certain – they are relegated at the end of this season.

What's the betting that if they were to go under, the Super League clubs, or the RFL, would ensure their continued elite operation, as recently happened with London? No need to answer, that's a rhetorical question. But the answer to the proper question - What's the solution to the problem of the crippling risk of promotion/relegation between NL1 and Super League? – is so easy, so obvious, and has been made so many times before by so many people, that it hardly seems worth stating again. Except that I have a page to fill, so I will.

And no, it's not that a French team shouldn't be promoted at the expense of a 'heartlands of England' team. I was and remain in favour of the inclusion of a French team in Super League XI. The survival of a truly international rugby league depends on a strong fourth nation. That nation is and has to be France, which has been strong in the recent past, and the inclusion of a French Super League club is the best way of helping them back to the international rugby league elite. It's not like Paris St Germain, where there was no rugby league tradition. The Gascony-Languedoc-Provence region of Southern France is as 'rugby league heartland' as Yorkshire or Lancashire. But it needed support, decimated and undermined as it was for decades by the French Rugby Union. It needed urgent and special treatment, unlike, say, a Welsh or a London club, who should in my opinion work their way through the ranks if they want elite rugby league; prove that there is a basis in the region by working and building from the amateurs up through the National Leagues.

So, to the solution? A fourteen team Super League. All television and sponsorship monies controlled by one truly independent governing body, the RFL, and distributed equitably and proportionately down the leagues. A strict, absolute sum salary cap set proportionately for each league. Automatic promotion/relegation for the top/bottom team in each division, and play-offs between the next five teams to determine the second promotion/relegation spots.

Other things must happen too, of course. Individual clubs must do more to help themselves, for example, by becoming more commercially and community savvy. But only when the solution, or something very like it, as set out in the paragraph above is introduced will the gulf between the elite and the rest be reduced such that it would be a disappointment to Leigh if they were to be relegated, rather than the 'worst of times' disaster I fear it will be.

The views expressed above are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the committee.

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Supporters Club Notes
with Steve Lancaster

Live The Dream

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Tonight is the start of the League campaign, with the visit of Oldham. Welcome to Oldham fans this evening. Hopefully, your club can sort out your well publicised problems and prosper. Good luck to you – all clubs are needed in Rugby League.

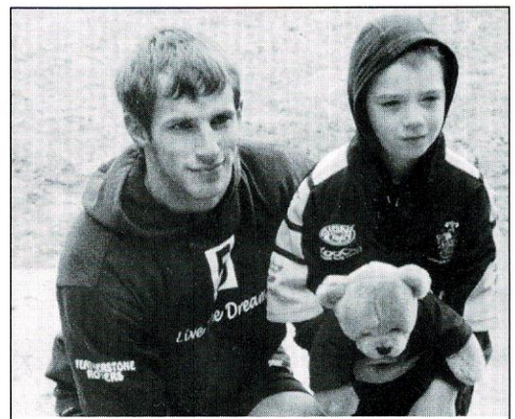
Rovers' next away fixture is at Hull KR, on April 10th. The Supporters Club will run a bus, and bookings can be made by ringing the above numbers, or by calling into the Hut this afternoon, or next week against Bradford.

Youngsters can put their names down to be Mascots for the Rovers in the Hut. Tonight's Mascot is Chelsey Hare, aged 10. Chelsey enjoys cheerleading for Normanton Knightingales, and her favourite player is Josh Weeden. Brothers Jordan and Reece Wilcox were Mascots for the match against Hunslet. Jordan is aged 5, Reece is 4 years old. They both enjoy playing with their dog, and riding their bikes, as well as cheering on the Rovers.

Jonny Carr aged 8, was the Mascot at Castleford on Friday night. He plays for Stanley Rangers Under 9s, and Josh Weeden and Bryn Powell are his favourite players.

Rovers need a good start to the League season – let's hope for a good game and get behind the players with our vocal support. Enjoy the match and have a safe journey home.

Joe Powell, Mascot for Thornhill Trojans home match, with Jim Carlton.



Benjamin Willoughby, Mascot for York home match, with Matty Wray.

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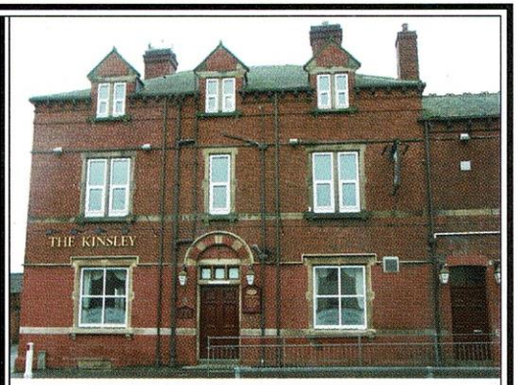

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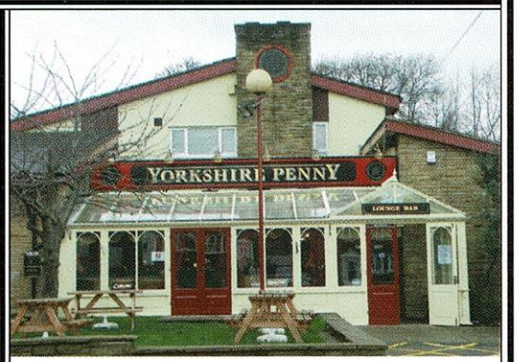

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Running in the Family

with Mark Las Palmas

Live The Dream

This week, we look at a slightly rarer, but not unique, case of three generations of Rovers players in the same family.

HORACE, RAY AND PAUL LYMAN

Paul Lyman was one of the most talented players that Featherstone Rovers produced in the 1980s. Signed in 1982, his career got off to a flying start when, at just seventeen years of age, he starred in Rovers' Wembley triumph. Playing most of the game at centre, he had replaced John Gilbert, the victim of a first half hatchet job by Hull. Paul's career developed as an outstanding loose forward. A strong runner onto Deryck Fox's passes, he could break the line regularly, with sufficient pace to finish many breaks himself. He was also a copybook cover tackler. He won county honours as a sub. in 1985, and the following year he marked his full Yorkshire debut with a trademark try. A GB squadman in 1986, he was discarded without getting a chance to play the touring Kangaroos. From then on he was troubled by a persistent knee injury, and in the end it was good business for Featherstone that saw him go to Hull KR in exchange for a hefty fee and Chris Burton, in 1989. Paul Lyman played a total of 159 games for Featherstone and scored 62 tries.

Paul's father Ray played for Featherstone in 1968, like his son after him was a back row forward. His first team opportunities were limited by the presence of Jimmy Thompson, Arnie Morgan and Tommy Smales, some competition. He played just four first team games.

Ray's father Horace was a utility forward who began his Rovers career at the beginning of the Second World War. His first game in a Rovers shirt was at full-back in September 1939. It was a baptism of fire that resulted in a heavy defeat, and the following week war was declared, and the league scrapped. During the war he gradually established himself as first choice blind-side prop forward next to open-side Frank Hemmingway and hooker Jim Bowden. The war ended and so did Horace's career more or less. He finished in 1946, but returned for a single farewell match at Hunslet in October 1948. He played a total of 83 games for Featherstone and managed 2 tries

Before Rovers joined the league in 1921, Jim Lyman, Tom Lyman and Joe Lyman all played for Featherstone Rovers. Joe Lyman had a long and distinguished career at Dewsbury capped by an appearance in the first ever Wembley cup final.

This writer doesn't know if any of these players were related to Horace, Ray and Paul. Do you? Writeto

fevrovers_history@hotmail.com.

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FEATHERSTONE ROVERS RLFC
SEASON 2005

Back - Left to Right: Carl Hughes, Craig Moss, Ian Tonks, Danny Kirmond, Steve Dooler, Andy Jarrett, Jimmy Carlton, James Houston, Danny Evans, Dean Ripley, Josh Weeden

Middle Row - Left to Right: Adam Hayes, Andy McNally, Neil Lowe, Gary Price (Coach), Nathan Sykes (Captain), Kevin Hobbs (Asst. Coach), Richard Newlove, Nathan Batty, Danny Maun

Front Row - Left to Right: Richard Blakeway, Andy Kay, Matty Wray, Paul Hughes, Jon Presley, Brynn Powell

Oldham Team Profile

UNISON

RICKY BIBEY: Former Wigan and St Helens prop. Signed for Oldham just before the start of the 2005 season. He has also had a spell on loan at Leigh, for whom he played in a National League first division grand final. Aged 23, he has more than 50 Super League appearances behind him and he has the rare distinction of having won a Challenge Cup winners' medal for Wigan against St Helens and also for St Helens against Wigan.

WILL COWELL: Somewhat unlucky with injuries, yet this popular Cumbrian — a native of Whitehaven and reared in rugby league at Kells — has still played 60 senior competitive games for the Roughyeds after joining the club from Warrington at the start of the 2002 season. He has scored a total of 16 tries for Oldham, mainly from the wing. Works hard from defence in helping his pack to carry the ball forward.

GAVIN DODD: Favourite position, full-back, but also able to play centre and wing. Played mainly wing in the last two seasons because of the outstanding form at No 1 of Jon Goddard. Strong runner, quick too and capable of scoring tries from deep inside his own half. Made his debut five years ago and has an excellent try-scoring record — 44 in 110 senior appearances.

TERE GLASSIE: The most experienced of Oldham's three new Cook Island internationals, 27-year-old Tere has played all over the park in his years in Australia. These days he will operate mainly at prop or second-row. Auckland-born, he has lived in Australia for most of his life and has played at various levels in various competitions in New South Wales. Recommended to Oldham by ex-Kiwi Test star Kevin Iro after he helped Cook Islands to a Pacific Cup victory over NZ Maoris in the final of the 2004 competition.

JON GODDARD: Walked off with all Oldham's major player-of-the-year titles in 2004 after a brilliant season. Was also named as one of the LHF Healthplan National League first division's top three full-backs. Played in 32 of Oldham's 33 games that season and was man of the match in many of them. A Castleford lad, he signed originally for his hometown club, but he joined Oldham three seasons ago and he has never looked back after being switched from centre to his favourite No 1 job.

SIMON HAUGHTON: Formerly with Wigan Warriors and then Orrell RU Club, Simon won many medals and honours with the crack Wigan side, often playing second-row alongside Denis Betts and matching Betts in the try-scoring charts. Joined Oldham in mid-December, 2004 and was certainly Mercer's highest-profile capture. He played mainly in the backs with Orrell, but Mercer plans to use him as Wigan did — as a wide-running second-row forward with a thirst for tries.

JOHN HOUGH: A hooker, John is unique in Roughyeds folklore. He made local rugby league history in early December, 1997 when he signed for the newly-formed club as a free agent from Warrington Wolves to become the Roughyeds' first ever signing. Since then he has been a magnificent servant which was rewarded in November, 2004 when he was offered and accepted a three-year contract to take him up to retirement. He has played in 194 senior games for the Roughyeds — more than any other player.

NICK JOHNSON: An old-style winger who loves to hug the touchline, Oldham-born Nick played in all 33 Oldham games in 2004 and scored 26 tries to set a club record for most tries in a season. Formerly with Bradford, last season was his first full campaign with the Roughyeds and he got off to a flier by scoring 15 tries in the first 13 games. In a purple patch last March and April he scored ten tries in five games against Warrington (cup), Chorley, Rochdale twice and Swinton.

PAUL NORMAN: Back in his younger days, Paul used to play for the former Oldham club, mainly in the 'A' team in those formative days of his rugby league career. When that club went into liquidation in 1997, he moved on to Leigh where he had several good seasons and became one of the most reliable front-row forwards in the National Leagues. He was happy to come back to Oldham and has already showed himself to be a 100 per center. Mr Reliable, indeed.

MARK ROBERTS: Mark impressed at Oldham while on loan from Warrington at the end of the 2004 season. The management, and Mercer, had no hesitation in going for him again for 2005, this time on a more permanent basis. Like all the other senior players, with the exception of John Hough, he is on a one-year contract. Mark proved his value last year and he is expected to have a good season in the back row of the pack.

SIMON SVABIC: Stand-off Simon began his career with the old Oldham club, moved on to Salford and then Leigh and then came back to Oldham for the start of the 2003 campaign. Now in his third year with the club, he is a midfield tactician with good hands, a rugby brain and a kicking game.

MARTY TURNER: A 23-year-old New Zealander, Marty is the club's overseas quota player for 2005. He will operate at scrum-half and will have the additional responsibilities of goalkicker. It will be his job to take the team around the field. He has played most of his rugby in Australia and comes to Oldham on the recommendation of his fellow Kiwi and Widnes coach Frank Endacott. The tip was so strong that Mercer felt he had no alternative but to unload Aussie forward Dane Morgan to make way for his playmaker on the quota.

ALEX WILKINSON: Another former Royton Tiger, Alex signed for Bradford as a youngster and he has a fair bit of Super League experience under his belt, having played out on loan for London Broncos and Hull FC, for whom he later signed permanently. Full time rugby and physiotherapy studies at Huddersfield didn't mix so he got his release and signed for his home town club, where his father used to be the club doctor. Younger brother also played for the Roughyeds until injury put paid to his hopes of a career in the sport.

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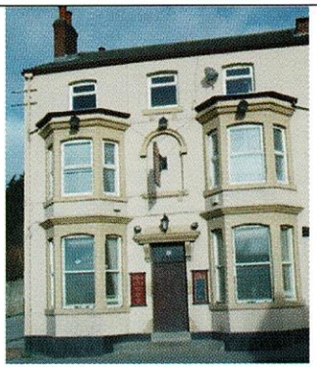

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They Said It

UNISON

'It has been talked about that we are prepared to offer him this that and the other, but we will not offer £200,000 for a player.

If Bradford are to prepared to throw money at him, then good luck to them and I believe he will stay with them'... Gloucester Rugby Union Club coach Nigel Melville, after his club failed to secure the services of Lesley Vainakolo. Proving that Rugby Union isn't quite as awash with money as we perceive it to be. Maybe Wales will 'discover' that he has Welsh ancestry and yearns to return to the valleys that he loves. On the other hand it looks like he'll stay at the Bulls.

'If you take away what they (Bradford) brought, it leaves us with about 3,000 Leigh supporters, which is about the same as we got in National One' ...Executive Director of the Centurions Derek Beaumont.

'Wakefield have been on the rack. Now they've got up from the canvas'...Eddie Hemmings commentating on the Wildcats-Saints massacre.

'It was endorsed in principle and depends on budgets and the club releasing the selected player for the tour'...NZ Rugby League Chairman Selwyn Pearson commenting on the planned 'All Golds' Centenary tour to the UK in 2007. It is proposed to include a leading Australian player in honour of Australian legend Dally Messenger, who played for New Zealand on the 1907 'All Golds' Tour.

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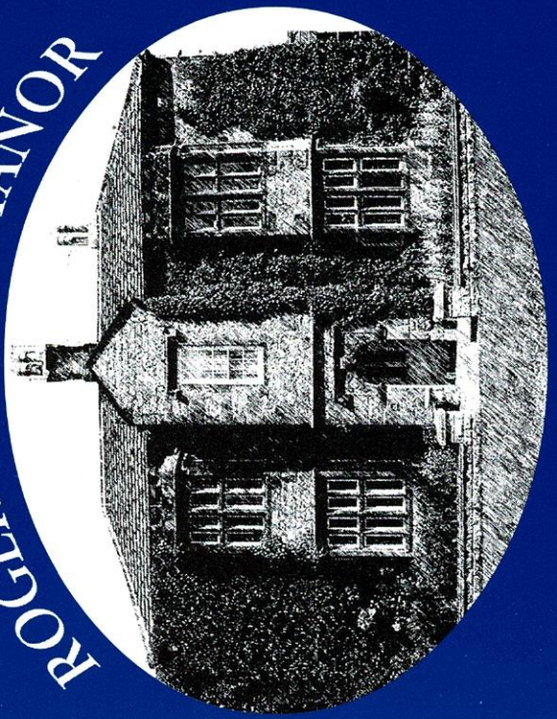
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Sunny Side Up

with Mark Las Palmas

UNISON

TEN YEARS ON

Welcome to Oldham for the opening game of Featherstone Rovers' 85th league campaign, and our 11th successive season outside the top flight. The tenth anniversary of the Murdoch bombshell is next week and I'll leave you to your own reflections on that. So much has already been written on the subject, what more can be added? Back in April 1995 it was of course the final few games of the season which inadvertently proved so crucial to the make up of the new league. Oldham provided the opposition to Featherstone's final top flight match, and for all we knew at that stage, maybe our last ever game on St.George's day, 23 April 1995. Our 36-14 win was convincing enough, but wasn't going to help us stay in the top flight though. Fred Banquet had a productive afternoon, notching two tries and seven goals.

Overall, I thought we had quite a good season that year (we had notable wins against Bradford and Saints), but I can understand those who thought that our relatively expensively assembled squad should have finished higher than 11th out of 16. We missed the top ten cut by two points, though of course tenth spot proved to be a poisoned chalice for today's visitors. We enjoyed the added excitement of a run to the semi-finals of the Challenge Cup. After accounting for Barrow in the first round 50-22 with a hatrick from Kiwi Brett Rodger, we were drawn to Salford in a tougher looking last sixteen tie. After a tight start, Rovers pulled away for a 30-10 win orchestrated from stand-off by Brendon Tuuta. A nice trip up to Cumbria for the quarter-final at Whitehaven, a few early tries to settle the nerves and a comfortable 42-14 win with French Freddie grabbing four tries. And so to the semi-finals where, incidentally, Featherstone went into the last four bag with Oldham. They got Wigan, we got Leeds, and the big guns met at Wembley. I can't help thinking that a Rovers v Roughyeds final would have been a superb way to mark the end of an era. As it was, we never really recovered from Garry Schofield's early interception at Elland Road, and Oldham were well beaten by the unstoppable Wigan. We did, however, score the then highest total by a losing team in our 22-39 defeat, but it was not much consolation for Rovers fans who were left with a frustrating feeling of what might have been. It was our 13th (and still most recent) Challenge Cup semi-final, of which we have won five.

What became of our team that day then? On duty for Rovers were Gibson, Butt, Rodger, Calland, Hughes, Tuuta, Aston, Molloy, Southernwood, Casey, Divet, GH Price and Roebuck. I can't remember exactly why they weren't playing but I guess Fred Banquet and Martin Pearson must have been injured. Within a few months, many players would have left, most of them to Super League clubs. Butt went to London, Calland to Bradford, Tuuta to Castleford (just typing that hurt), Aston and Banquet to Sheffield, Currier to Warrington, Divet back to France, and Price to South Sydney. The side that we were left with in the forgettable "Centenary Season" was a shadow of its former self, and our first summer season contained only Gibson, Hughes, Molloy and Roebuck from the semi-final line-up.

Since the enforced demotion Rovers have played 318 games up to last Friday, with a balance of 182 wins, 11 draws and 125 defeats, a 59% success rate. It seems a bit ridiculous to consider that in ten years we've undergone five different fixture format changes in playing our 237 league games, the number of teams in our league oscillating wildly between 10 (currently) and 19, and the number of fixtures between 18 (the current total) and 30. By trial and error we will hopefully stumble across the ideal fixture format soon. Our final league positions in contrast have been a model of consistency. Our last ten league seasons have seen us finish 4th twice, 5th six times and 7th twice. I'm sure the players will be going flat out to try and improve on that in 2005.

Last time's quiz asked the venue for the first ever GB v Australia test match, and that was QPR's Park Royal football ground in London.
This week's question: Who were the subs for our semi-final against Leeds in 1995?

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Rugby League's First Traditionalist

UNISON

How would you feel about an RFL chairman if he or she, during their tenure, saw introduced three brand new competitions to the sport, and instigated at least 8 major rule-changes.

Disgusting or what? If it ain't fixed don't break it (at least that's how I think it goes). Why can't they just stop tinkering with the game? Don't they care about tradition?

All this actually happened of course, and that chairman was Joe Platt of Oldham. Platt was Chairman (or more accurately, secretary) of the Northern Union from the breakaway in 1895 until its inception as the Rugby League (these new-fangled names: where will it end?) in 1920. Platt saw the inception of most of these changes early on in his career at the head of the game: and it was these changes which made Rugby League recognisable as the sport we know today.

Disgusting or what? If it ain't fixed don't break it (at least that's how I think it goes). Why can't they just stop tinkering with the game? Don't they care about tradition?

The Challenge Cup, The County Cups, The Championships were all introduced under Platt's stewardship. Line-outs were abolished in 1897; from 1901 it wasn't a knock on if you lost the ball forward and re-gathered it; numbers were introduced on jumpers in 1911; the play-the-ball was introduced in 1906; in 1905 open professionalism was allowed – remember that broken-time payments were a way of stopping professionalism, and the game was reduced to 13 men on the field in 1906.

Imagine someone trying to make changes of such magnitude today. The 'traditionalists' would go bananas.

Yet what Platt oversaw was the inception of one of Rugby League's greatest traditions: the willingness to innovate, to pioneer, and use an open mind. Platt was a true product of the late Victorian era. He was born the son of a farmer, but became a scholar and entrepreneur. He trained as a surveyor, and had his own surveying business. He also was a director of a spinning company, a bill-posting company. He also was managing director of the company that owned four of Oldham's Theatres. He died in one of them – The palace, during the interval of a performance.

I wonder how a 'can do' go-getter like Platt would see things today? Would he want things done the way they always had been? Go figure.

Joe Platt, farmer's son, entrepreneur and overseer of the changes that made Rugby League as we know it today.

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George Orr – knows the score

UNISON

Never let it be said that we here at Rovers lag behind when it comes to offering you the best when it comes to up to the minute 'in game' musical entertainment. This due to our stadium announcer Anna: of course Anna is without doubt the Natasha Kaplinsky of Rugby League, but without the ego and of course, on game day at least, without the sequins.

Anna is without doubt the Natasha Kaplinsky of Rugby League,

That is why whenever Rovers cross the whitewash you are as like as not going to hear that classic beat ballad; 'Is this The Way To Amarillo', by Conisborough's own Tony Christie. By the way, a word of thanks to Peter Kay for making it alright to like him. It certainly brings back memories of some big nights out at Wakefield Theatre Club. The basket meals, the crimplene, the brut, pure class.

But, and prepare to be shocked, the song is either complete nonsense, or Tony is in for a big shock when he finally reaches Amarillo. Why does he need to ask the way? Doesn't he know where he lives? If sweet Marie had flitted there whilst he was in nick, wouldn't she have told him how to get there when his period of bang up was over? Sweet Marie is either having him on or she's a delusion: either way it will end in tears.

There's an election coming. As the wheels of our great democracy grind inexorably into action perhaps it's time to acknowledge the work of the all party Parliamentary Rugby League group. For example, without their efforts there would still be no Rugby League played in the armed forces; and look how it has expanded within those forces. Who would have thought for instance that the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst would have a team? But that isn't really my point, which is this; David Hinchcliffe, MP for Wakefield and erstwhile Health Minister has been a major driving force within the Parliamentary group.

David Hinchcliffe is standing down at the coming election. Nobody is irreplaceable, but it will be a tough call in Mr Hinchcliffe's case. The Group crosses party boundaries, and MP's of all three major parties are involved and in thanking David Hinchcliffe for his work I am doing just that. Keep enjoying your footy David.

Tony Christie; the memories of chicken in a basket and crimplene suits come flooding back.

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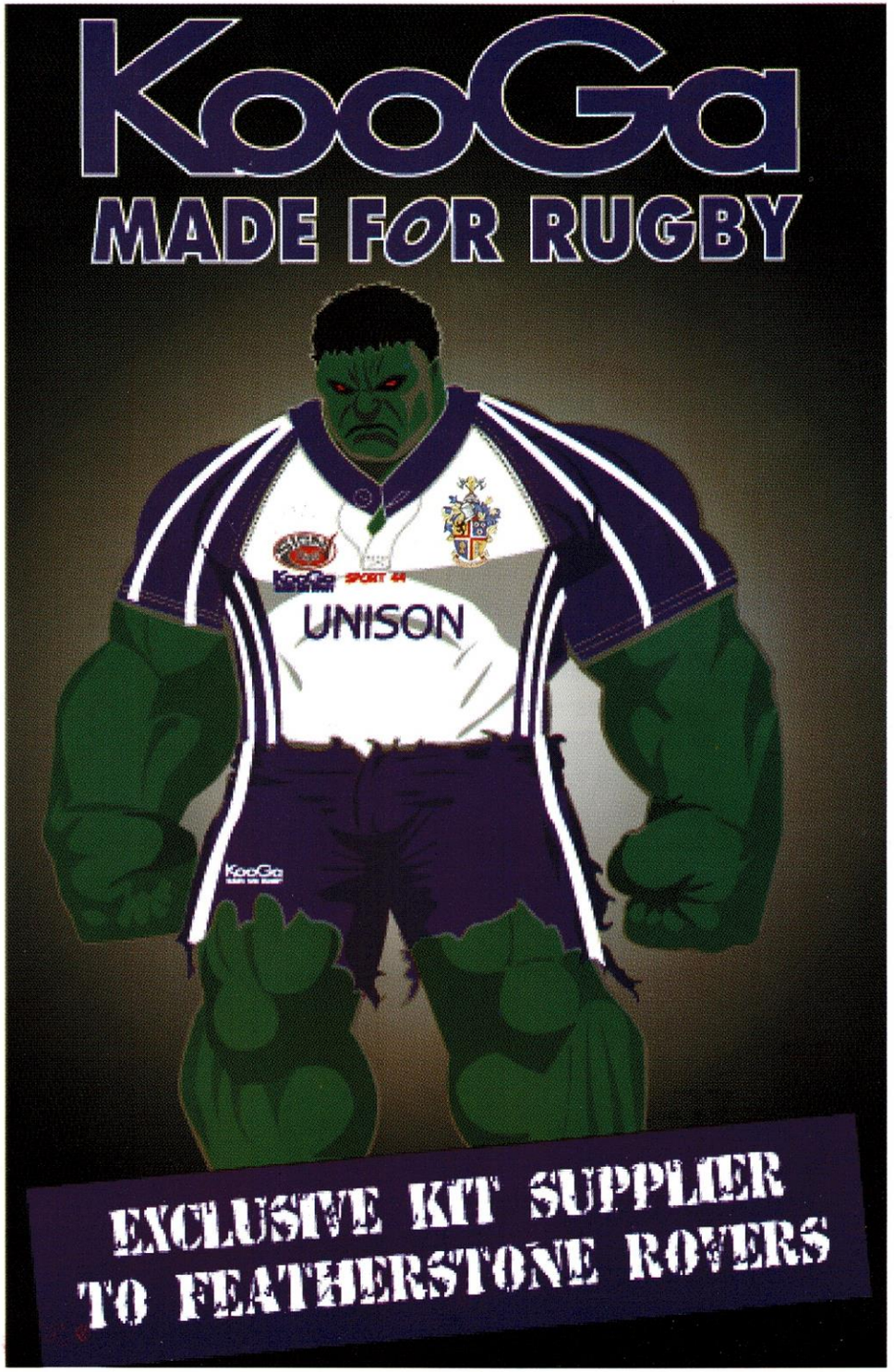

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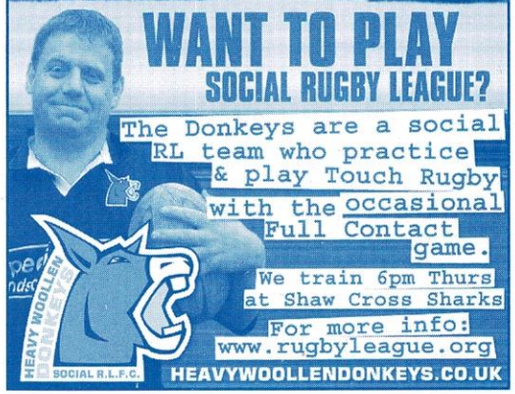

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Note: ( ) denotes subs not used

	Score	Att.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
February 2005																			
13 Hunslet	W28-12	1102	McNally2T	Powell	Maun	Newlove	WrayT	Weeden2T4G	Presley	Tonks	Hughes	Sykes	Dooler	Hayes	Blakeway	Riley	Lowe	Carlton	Moss
20 CAS TIGERS	L10-22	6353	McNally	Powell	Maun	Newlove	Wray	Weeden1T3G	Ripley	Tonks	Hughes	Sykes	Dooler	Hayes	Blakeway	Moss	Lowe	Evans	Carlton
27 YORK CITY K.	W21-20	1460	Moss	PowellT	Maun	Newlove	Wray	Weeden4G1DG	Presley	Tonks	Hughes	Sykes	DoolerT	Houston	Hayes	Ford	Jarrett	Evans	Carlton
March																			
6 York City Knights	D20-20	1463	Moss	PowellT	Maun	Newlove	WrayT	Weeden2G	PresleyT	Carlton	Kay	Evans	Houston	Hayes	HughesT	(Ford)	Fowler	Nicholson	Coulson
13 **Thornhill Trojans**	W48-10	774	MossT	PowellT	Maun	NewloveT	Wray4T	Weeden6G	Presley	Jarrett	Kay	SykesT	Houston	Hayes	Hughes	McNallyT	Dooler	Ford	Carlton
20 HUNSLET	W28-18	1050	MossT	Powell	Maun2T	NewloveT	Wray	McNally	Weeden2G	JarrettT	Kay	Sykes	Houston	Hayes	Hughes	Ford	Nicholson	TonksT	Carlton
25 Castleford Tigers																			
28 OLDHAM																			
April																			
3 Powergen Challenge Cup - Fourth Round																			
10 Hull Kingston Rovers																			
17 WHITEHAVEN																			
24 Batley Bulldogs																			
May																			
8 Powergen Challenge Cup - Fifth Round																			
15 ROCHDALE HORNETS																			
22 Barrow Raiders																			
June																			
5 HALIFAX R.L.F.C.																			
12 CASTLEFORD TIGERS																			
26 Doncaster Dragons																			
Powergen Challenge Cup - Quarter Finals																			
July																			
3 Oldham																			
10 HULL KINGSTON ROVERS																			
24 Whitehaven																			
31 **BATLEY BULLDOGS**																			
Powergen Challenge Cup - Semi Finals																			
August																			
7 Rochdale Hornets																			
14 Halifax R.L.F.C.																			
21 BARROW RAIDERS																			
27 Powergen Challenge Cup - Final																			
September																			
4 Castleford Tigers																			
11 DONCASTER DRAGONS																			
18 LHF Healthplan Play-offs																			
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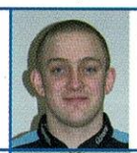
NATHAN BATTY Sponsored by **Ace Precision Engineering**	CARL HUGHES Sponsored by **The Lycett Family**	 RICHARD NEWLOVE Sponsored by **Paul Cox** FRISA
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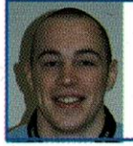 JAMES HOUSTON Sponsored by **Richard Taylor** FRISA	ANDY McNALLY Sponsored by **Pete Smith Motorcycles**	

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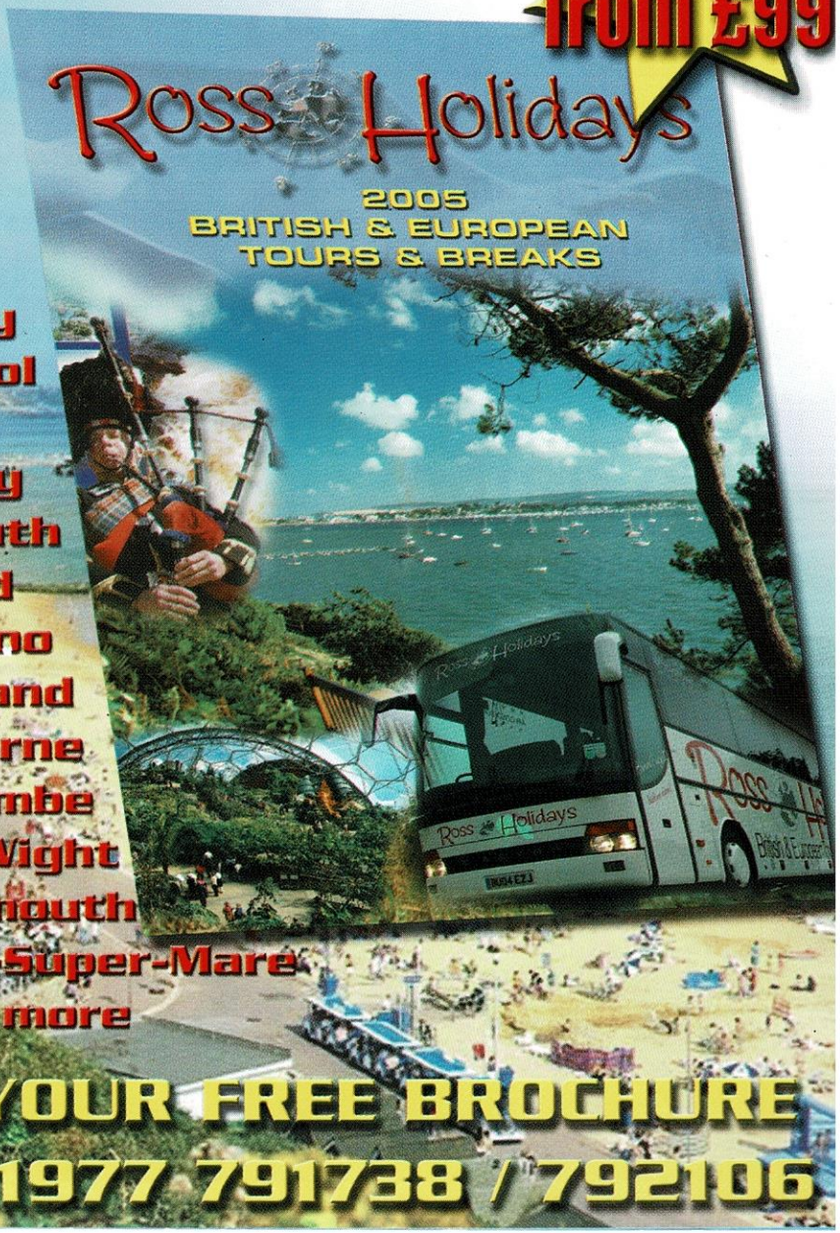

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Testing time for players

THE culmination of the Northern Rail Cup and the launch of the league campaign - the Easter weekend should provide a feast of exciting action.

But it's not quite as straight forward as that.

Two games in four days over the holiday period present a huge challenge for coaches and players at this level, especially when the matches hold such importance.

For several clubs, their final NRC game on Good Friday can hold the key to whether or not they qualify for the knock-out stages of the competition.

And every single team in the National Leagues will be keen to get off to a positive start when the LHF-sponsored leagues get underway just four days later.

So where will clubs' priorities lie? This isn't Super League, where a squad of 25 full-time players can be rotated to an extent.

And with a host of clubs suffered serious injury problems at present, resources will be dramatically stretched over the weekend.

For example, Barrow Raiders were down to just 14 fit players last week after a horror start to the season. York City Knights went into last week's clash with Castleford with 12 players on the treatment table, while Featherstone Rovers have lost several of their best players to long-term injuries.

One coach saw the situation arising early in the season, knowing his side had a huge derby match on Good Friday, closely followed by a crucial league opener on Easter Monday.

He voiced his concerns at the time, but was given a slap on the wrists by authorities.

The fact is, that coaches will have to prioritise, and may decided to rest players on Good Friday.

As is always the case at this level of the game, however, it is not a straight-forward argument against playing back-to-back matches.

Clubs in the National Leagues need the significant income generated over the Easter period - there are some massive matches set to take place on Good Friday. The revenue earned in some of those games will set clubs up for months.

And the players will no doubt rise to the occasion, as they always do. It will be tough going for them and their coaches - but don't expect too many to be moaning about it.

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