

game line-up

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OLDHAM SQUAD	Played	BARROW
PAUL ASHTON		KHAMAL GANLEY
CHRIS BAINES		LEE NORMAN
JASON BOULTS		NICK BEACH
GENO COSTIN		PHIL ATKINSON
ANDY CRABTREE		LIAM HARRISON
ANDY GOREY		JAMES NIXON
IAN HODSON		MICHAEL BASAN
JOHN HOUGH		DARREN HOLT
DREW HOUSTON		PAUL RAFTERY
SIMEON HOYLE		ANDY ELLIS
GARETH LANGLEY		JAMIE BUTLER
CRAIG LITTLER		MICHAEL SMITH
RICHARD MERVILL		PAUL WILCOCK
PAUL O'CONNOR		PAT WEISNER
STUART OLDHAM		JAMIE MARSHALL
LUCAS ONYANGO		SHANE IRABOR
NEIL RODEN		JAMES FINCH
WES ROGERS		ANTHONY HORTON
LEE SANDERSON		BRETT MCDERMOTT
IAN SINFIELD		LEE DUTTON
KRIS SMITH		DAVE ARMISTEAD
MICHAEL STOUT		GEOFF LUXON
SAID TAMGHART		MARTIN OSTLER
TONY TONKS		LIAM FINCH
ALEX WILKINSON		
LEE WINGFIELD		
ADAM HUGHES		
ADAM ROBINSON		

match officials

REFEREE: Mr J Child. TOUCH JUDGES: G Jones, J Farrell
4TH OFFICIAL: S Kilpatrick.

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V BARROW

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K.O. 3.00PM

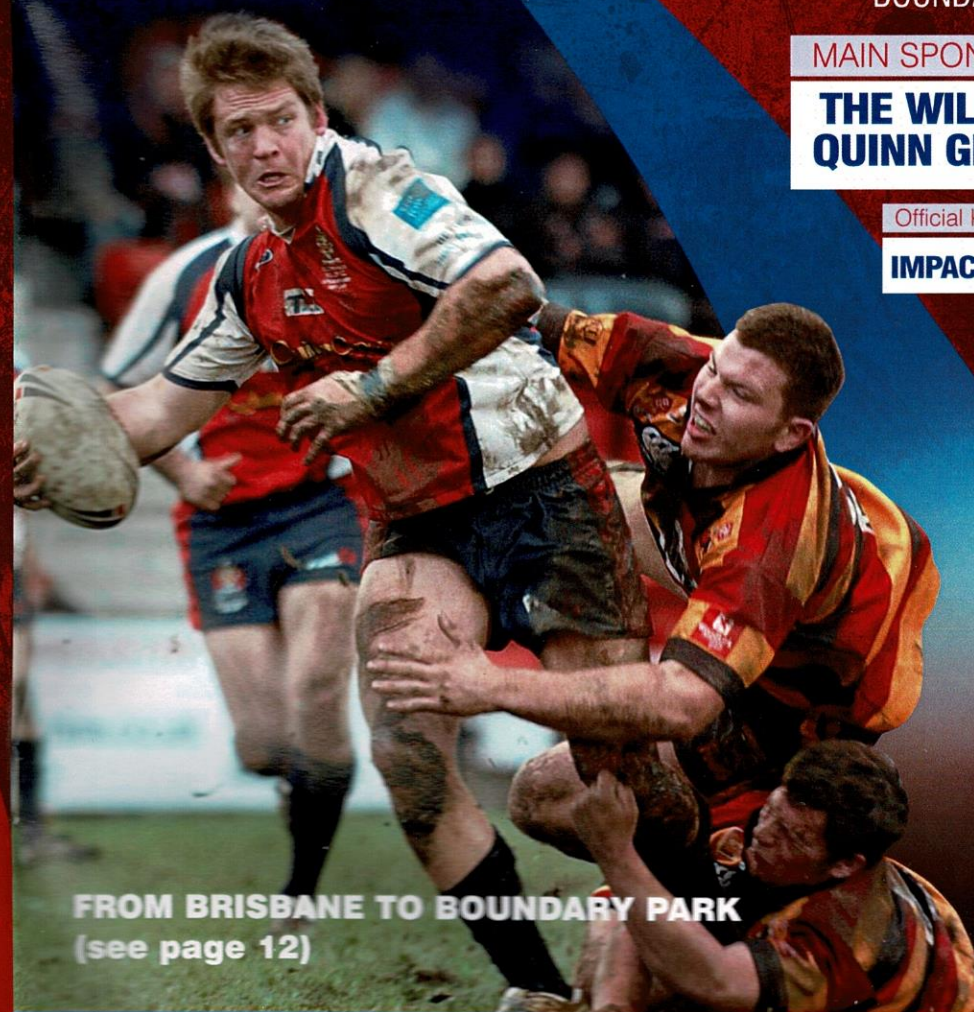
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The bucket collection at Sedgley Park during the Harlequins game raised £138,41p for Breakthrough Breast Cancer

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MOST APPEARANCES: John Hough, 228 - Jan 1998 - Sep 2006

CONSECUTIVE APPEARANCES: Phil Farrel, 67 - *April 2nd 2000 - March 15th 2002
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TRIES IN A SEASON: Nick Johnson, 25 - 2004

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
James Bunyan v Featherstone Rovers, 4 - Apr 12th 2004 at Boundary Park

GOALS IN A MATCH: Simon Sybick 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 Huntington Stadium
v Queensbury (am), 64-0 - Jan 28th 2001 RLCC 3rd Rnd at Boundary Park

The views expressed in this matchday magazine do not necessarily reflect those of the management and staff of Oldham RLFC (1997) Ltd.

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We would like to express our thanks to the
Oldham Evening Chronicle, League Publications
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boardroom **view**

with Chris Hamilton



Today sees us play our final game at Boundary Park for two months.

Our visitors today Barrow are flying high and have made their intentions for this season clear in that they want promotion and have backed that up with the signing of some quality players. Having had a good start to the season they will come today full of optimism.

Last Sunday's game was a big disappointment from a crowd point of view. After the performance against Celtic Crusaders the week before I would have expected a bigger turnout than the 559 who made the effort to go to Sedgley Park.

It is an inconvenience for all of us to have to play games out of town and the change of kick off time was made not to inconvenience supporters but to try and accommodate what they may have wanted to do on a big day for sport.

The team put in a massive effort which was perhaps overshadowed by the scoreline reached by Harlequins who were ruthless in their performance on the day. He did not do justice to the work put in by the lads particularly given the injuries we suffered which left us with no substitutes after about five minutes of the second half.

Couple that with the fact that we made no money to speak of on the day and you can take it from me that we have had better days.

At least, as the saying goes, we can now concentrate on the league!

Hopefully by the time you are reading these notes we will have further strengthened the squad by at least a couple of players which, with the injuries we picked up last weekend, will make a big difference. The value of a large squad is never more proven than when a team picks up several injuries at once and last Sunday was incredible in that respect.

The last few weeks have also seen several clubs hit financial difficulties and it brings home just what we as a club went through recently - the only difference being that we did the honourable thing and repaid our debts in full. I hope that the RFL will take into account such things when deciding what sanctions, if any, are to be taken against those clubs.

Once again it shows how fragile the financial position of clubs can be and if you were to undertake a review of clubs in the game there would be very few - Super League included - who have not encountered problems of one kind or another over the past five or six years.

That again illustrates just how vital your support each week is and hopefully there will be more people at the game today to show their support for the club.

Please get behind the lads today and help cheer them on to what can hopefully be a vital three points.

Enjoy the game

Chris

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deek's coach approach

with Steve Deakin



Welcome to Boundary Park for today's game. This is the last match of what has been a very tough month for everyone concerned. It has certainly been very trying and demanding on the players.

We are in a good vein of form at the moment and despite the scoreline against Harlequins last week there were lots of positives to take out of the game --- particularly the way we defended and made them have to work very hard for their opportunities. I felt our fitness levels were outstanding and that was the reason we were able to go toe-to-toe with them for so long.

The outcome of today's game will not determine a favourite for promotion as there are too many games left and anything can happen between now and September. But certainly, as in previous games, it is a great opportunity for us to progress and, at the same time, integrate new players in to our systems.

One of the outcomes of the Challenge Cup game last week was the loss of five players and

if we are going to pose a threat at the business end of the season --- ie, the play-offs --- then we need a squad commensurate with that standing.

At the risk of repeating myself our support --- particularly in Bridgend, when a massive effort was needed in terms of taking time off work and distance travelled --- continues to be outstanding. I cannot over-emphasise the need for this to continue.

Things don't always go according to our wishes and our efforts to get back up to National League One won't hinge on the outcome of any particular game.

But the consistency of support has reflected the consistency of performance by the players and together we are forming a group dynamic that is taking this club forward and upward.

Please do not be afraid of making yourselves known to the players and mixing with them after the game, but respect their efforts as they respect yours.

Enjoy the game,
Deaks

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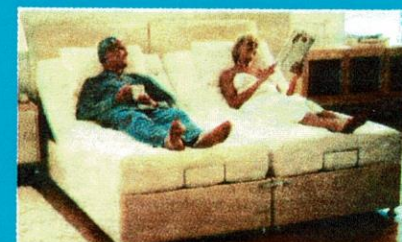
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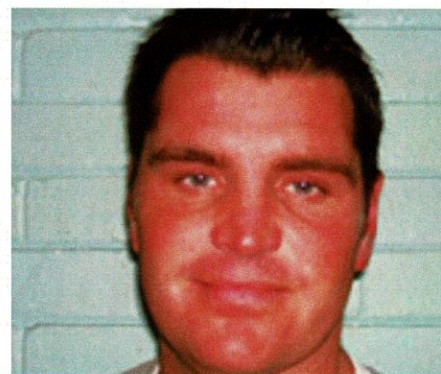
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CAPTAIN'S LOG

with Wes Rogers

**'Wes Rogers' column, reproduced from the
Oldham Evening Chronicle'**



Wes Rogers

They have been throwing money at quality players like Michael Smith and Pat Weisner. Smith is a proven Super League player who I've come up against before — he's a big handful and we will need to work on him, as he's perhaps not the fittest. Deaks will be pinpointing the weaknesses we can try to exploit this week.

It is a big test but if we can win it puts us in the top grouping in the National League Two table and takes us away from the mid-table sides a little bit.

Looking back at our time in Wales, the whole weekend was great and the lads did themselves and the club proud. There was disruption on the way down with the journey taking six hours and Kris Smith having to pull out shortly before the game. But if you look at the fact that we didn't concede a single penalty and had such a high completion rate, it was a near-perfect performance.

I had a good chat with Bill Quinn on that weekend and was impressed by his plans. He's not here for a laugh and joke, that's for sure. He wants the club to be back in the top league. If you look at the talent on show at the weekend we had an Oldham lad in Joe Walsh playing against us for Harlequins and there was young Eamonn O'Carroll playing for Wigan as well to name but two.

There's a lot of talent in the town and hopefully in the years to come we can tap into it. I'd also like to take the chance to congratulate Waterhead and Saddleworth on gaining promotion.

I was down at the game between the two recently and there was a good atmosphere there which was good to see. They are both going in the right direction and it will be great having so many derbies next year, with Oldham St Anne's involved as well.

WE went in to the Harlequins game with confidence following the Celtic Crusaders win last week and though we didn't expect to win we thought we could give a good account of ourselves.

I think we did that, especially with the injuries we had to cope with. My knee went early on — I heard a popping noise and it gave way. Hopefully it is not as bad as I think could be, though I'll just have to give it some rest for now.

Said Tamghart came off two minutes after coming on, Geno Costin couldn't return to the field and there was Chris Baines as well. The boys, especially the forwards, deserve a pat on the back for their efforts. Jason Boults did a full 80 minutes and Richard Mervill played for just under an hour.

It was a good performance, we did alright in the circumstances and it is out of the way now. Barrow is a massive game for us and, injuries aside, we can call on the three lads who were cup-tied for the Harlequins match. It should give us a boost.

with Geoff Cooke

cooke-ability!

How easy it is to over-reach yourself in the world of professional sport. Every year someone somewhere puts the future of their club in jeopardy.

Oldham Athletic prior to the arrival of the 'three amigos' and Oldham R.L.F.C. before 1997 are pertinent local examples of this. Last year in the world of rugby league it was Halifax flying the distress signals until Howard Posner returned to take over the reins once again. And, given the awful examples of Leeds United and Boston United (who actually went into administration at half time in their final match to ensure the mandatory ten point penalty was imposed on this season's record rather than next) how praiseworthy was the determination of Chris Hamilton and Sean Whitehead not to go down that path but to meet their obligations in full?

Now, half way through the season it's Doncaster Lakers who find themselves teetering on the brink. A new stadium and full time playing staff has not brought the support in either backers, sponsors or paying spectators that Chairman John Wright expected. Contracts have been torn up, players jettisoned and court action taken. The Lakers stand on the brink of extinction.

Surely this cannot be to the benefit of the game? For years R.L.H.Q. has tried to exert a measure of control over club finances to ensure this scenario is not played out on a regular basis. Clubs, of course, are only interested in their own immediate aims and are understandably reluctant to divulge too much information on their plans and structures. Nevertheless for the health of the game as a whole a proper measure of co-operation with Red Hall to prevent this annual instability has to be achieved.

BUT, at the same time Super League has to come clean about its future plans. If the desired objective of a franchise system and possible expansion is merely to accommodate a club in South Wales and a second French outfit what chance the likes of Doncaster, Halifax, Widnes, Leigh, Whitehaven or even, longer term, Oldham ever attaining Super League status? Because, if the door is going to be shut to ambitious N.L. clubs they might as well channel their energies in an altogether different direction.

Has the move to full time referees been a success? Judging by recent events, especially at the Millennium Stadium, the answer must be no. To have lost a quality referee like Karl Kirkpatrick who refused full time status and was therefore refused appointments to Super League games, was foolish in the extreme. And is, for example, (with no personal criticism intended) Steve Ganson a fitter and better decision maker for being full time?

However, what is clear is that communication with an assessor or video referee in stand or studio needs to be banned - as I understand it is supposed to be at the moment. It's hard enough trying to concentrate with players and coaches constantly trying to gain an advantage on the field without being distracted by someone whispering in your ear. At the moment the evidence is that refereeing standards are not improving which is a tragedy for the game.

Yet, at the same time, an odd outstanding performance shines through such as Gareth Hower's handling of the Celtic Crusaders V Oldham match at Bridgend.

Of course, if players insist on breaking the laws of the game, a referee has to take action but there is a fine balance between being over-zealous (easy for an up and coming referee eager to please an assessor sat in the stand) and being lax. The game can't proceed without the referee and his touch judges but the age old truism still applies that the best referee is always the one you notice least.



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by ROGER HALSTEAD

GENO --- BORN TO BE A LEAGUE PLAYER BUT TWICE TOLD: 'YOU CAN'T PLAY HERE SON'

Sporting snubs for a genuine Guardian Angel

WITH a name like Christopher Gene Terence Costin, the all-action forward known to Oldham fans as simply 'Geno' was born to be a rugby league player.

Born in sunny Brisbane, capital city of Australia's Sunshine State on March 15, 1984, he was named after Kangaroos Test star Gene Miles and Wynnum-Manly favourite Terry Butler. Brisbane Broncos were still just a distant dream in the mindset of thousands of Queenslanders.

In those days super stars like centre Miles and the King of Queensland rugby league, Wally Lewis, played for Wynnum --- and in the year Geno entered this world, born of parents Bob and Diane, Wynnum won the premiership. There was cause for double celebration in the Costin household and it was to link the two events that Bob and Diane called the youngest of their three children Christopher Gene Terence.

The Costins were league lovers and Wynnum fanatics, although Dad played soccer for Queensland and enjoyed an all-round interest in sport to such an extent that even now, aged 61, he plays golden-oldies rugby union whenever opportunity knocks.

Mr and Mrs Costin were here in England from mid-March until a few days ago and even though he was on holiday 12,000 miles from home Bob couldn't resist the temptation to turn out for a Northwich-based golden-oldies RU side called the Full Monty's.

He has now played golden-oldies union in Australia, New Zealand, the UK, France and Argentina. Is it any wonder, then, that Geno got the wanderlust like his father and inherited a deep passion for the oval-ball game.

Brother Robert was eight years old and already tossing a rugby ball around when Geno made his entry. Sister Anita was ten.

"Yep, I was the baby all right, and by a country mile too," mused Geno. "We just grew into rugby. It was what all the young lads did back home then. We lived just across the road from the Wynnum club and at my first school, Guardian Angels, we all played."

Little did he know then that at his next school, Iona College, he had to play rugby union --- or nothing.

Whoever said the 'class' system didn't exist in Australia? Here were we Brits thinking rugby league was banned only by the old Vichy Government in France and by some of our "posh" schools and colleges in upper-crust England when along comes an all-Australian boy to kill that myth once and for all.

Said Geno: "Many believed Iona College to be the best school around. It was a private school in a poor area. Mum and Dad had to pay for me because they thought that's where I would get the best all-round education. It was good, and it was the cheapest private school in the whole of Queensland."

"But league was not on the curriculum --- only 'rugby'. League was played in the public (state) schools, but in the private sector it was 'rugby' or nothing. It was made perfectly clear to you, too, that you had to be committed to the school and its rules and you were expected to do your best for the school at any sport you were good at."

"League, of course, wasn't one of them so Mark Ogden and I --- we were friends from back then --- played no league at all from the age of 13 to 17."

"As luck would have it my best friend's father was manager of one of the colts teams at Wynnum and as soon as I left Iona College I got a chance to fulfil an ambition by joining my local league club."

Geno played under-19s league at Wynnum for two years before graduating to 'A' grade in the Queensland Cup.

Like his father, his passion was for sport and at the end of 2004 he got full-time paid work as a development officer for Queensland Rugby (the Union variety). A condition of his employment was that he didn't play league --- for the second time in his young life Geno had come up against sporting barriers.

"I didn't play league at all in 2005. By 2006 I was desperate to play league again, so I told my employers that if I couldn't play the sport of my choice I would look for another job. They compromised and said I could play league, but not in the area in which I worked as one of their development officers."

Geno was determined he was going to play, so he moved half an hour's drive down the coast to play for Souths Logan in order to do his own thing but to keep his full-time job in the other code of rugby.

In his third game for Logan he dislocated a finger. Nine weeks later, during which time he had continued to play, he had to see a specialist who ordered an operation.

He was ruled out of the last eight games of that season, and it was while he was a passenger on the touchlines that he decided to fulfil a dream and do all in his power to get fixed up with a club in England.

"I didn't know anything about the English game outside Super League," he said, "and I hadn't a clue where I wanted to go. I sent a lot of clubs a lot of emails and it looked as though Carl Briggs was going to take me to Gateshead when he went over as coach."

"He withdrew, however, and then got in touch with Oldham and with Deaks to say he had two young Australians who would do a job for him."

"Both Mark and I signed within a fortnight. As you know I was led to believe I would be exempt from the quota because my grandad was English. He was from Sussex. That turned out to be not the case."

The repercussions of that have been well documented publicly over the past few weeks and Geno now wishes to put that episode behind him and to concentrate on making the most of the long league season that stretches ahead.

His return to the side at Blackpool, after a seven-week lay-off with a shoulder injury sustained at Dewsbury, was welcomed and acclaimed by fans who had missed his strong and straight running and his insatiable appetite for work on defence.

For his part, Geno is looking forward immensely to playing on firmer grounds after being introduced to rugby league in England in the wet, cold months of February and March.

He also believes that Roughyeds can make an impact in Co-Operative NL2, while being fully aware of the challenge from other fancied teams, particularly Celtic Crusaders, several of whose players from Down Under he knows well.

He said: "I think the pitches in England have a big part to play in how a team performs on any given day. They

seem to vary considerably in size and in surface condition. Playing on Boundary Park, for instance, is vastly different to playing at Dewsbury, just to use that as an example."

"I've found the soccer pitches seem to cope with the wet weather better than some of the traditional rugby grounds."

"Dimensions vary a lot as well --- and they are also different to the size of the grounds we are used to playing on in Australia. A 40-20 back home, for example, has to be a much longer kick than most of the 40-20s we see here."

"From the footballing point of view, the game here tends to be a little bit more physical and I think it's fair to say it perhaps has a little bit more one-out football. Perhaps that's a result of the wet, cold conditions that prevail in the early part of the English season."

"There is a big emphasis in the English game on set completion and when you also take into account cold, wet conditions and sometimes tricky conditions underfoot I think it tends to produce more one-out football. It's inevitable, perhaps, that it should happen that way."

"The spin-off from this results in more 'collision'. Generally speaking I think tackling techniques are perhaps a little bit better back home --- they're certainly different --- and I think it's a combination of all these factors that seems to make the game here more physical."

"I hope people don't see this as a criticism. It certainly isn't that. But you asked what differences I found in the game here and the game back home and that's how I see it."

"But the summer stretches ahead of us now and the warmer, drier weather and firmer pitches might make a difference to how teams play. I think we saw a sign of that in our game at Blackpool on a hot, sunny afternoon."

Geno, as popular a figure off the field as he is on it, is often asked which position in the pack he prefers --- prop or second-row.

"I see myself mainly as a front-rower," he said, "but I have to admit there are times when I fancy the idea of playing wider out. To be honest it is difficult to say which I prefer."

"I love to test myself up front against teams with good props. Featherstone looked to have some good props and I was really disappointed not to get a go at them. On the other hand I do like a bit of variety and you can get that playing in the second row."

Geno's role models, perhaps significantly, are both front-rowers. It goes without saying they will be Queenslanders, and they don't come much better than Shane Webcke and Danny Nutley.

"Webcke was everybody's hero in my part of the world," said Geno. "A great player, a good guy and with such a great attitude and dedication to the sport that he was a role model for everyone."

"As for Nutley, I have the greatest admiration for him because he made it in the front-row when, really, he had no right to. He doesn't have the build for the job, but he is a fantastic front-rower and that says a lot about the man."

Turning to more pressing matters here in the Roughyeds camp, Geno believes Celtic Crusaders will be the team to beat (this piece was written before Steve Deakin's men went into battle at Brewery Field a fortnight ago) and he should know what he is talking about, given that he has played alongside and against several of the Welsh club's Aussie contingent.

He has played in the same team as Damien Quinn and Jace Van Dijk and has opposed Mark Dalle Cort and Darren Mapp.

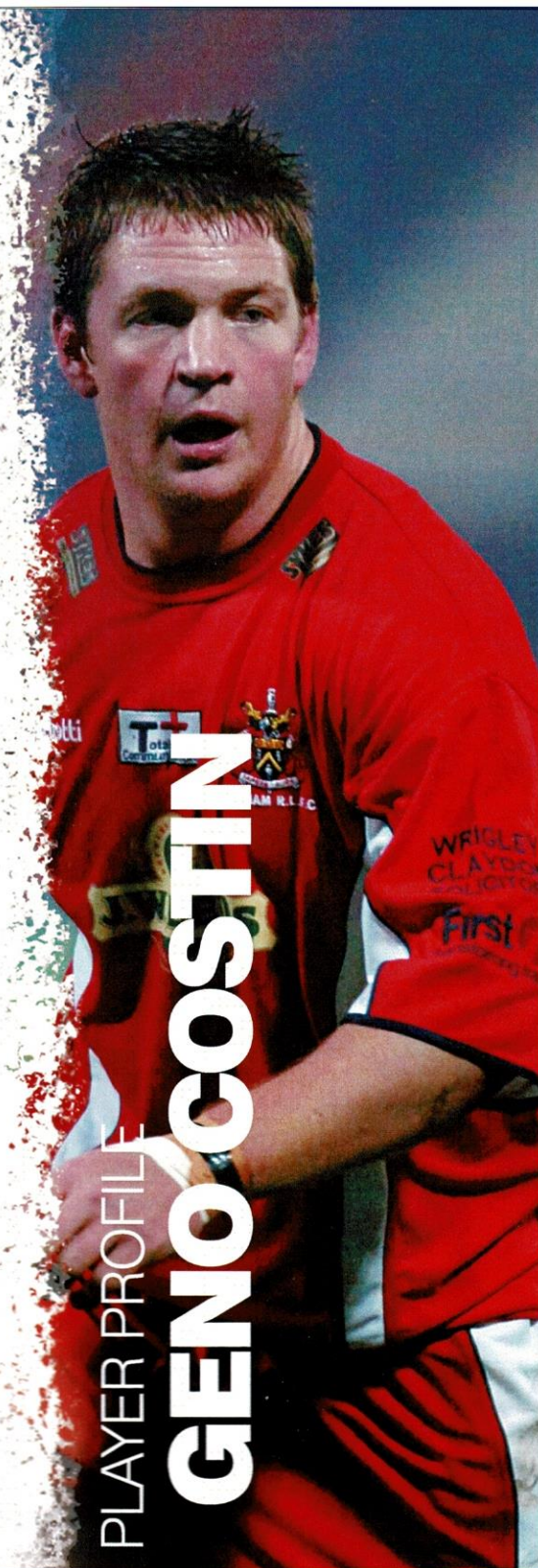
"I have played against teams coached by John Dixon," said Geno, "and they are very well coached. They are disciplined, they execute well and they are good around the rucks: I think they will definitely be the team to beat as the season unfolds."

The next four months will determine Geno's mid-term future. "I want to see how I go through the rest of this season," he said. "I would like to stay in England for 2008, but I think the time to weigh things up and make decisions will be the end of the year. It's too early to say right now."

Going off what we have seen so far of the likeable Queenslander, Roughyeds fans will be hoping he sticks around for a long time yet.

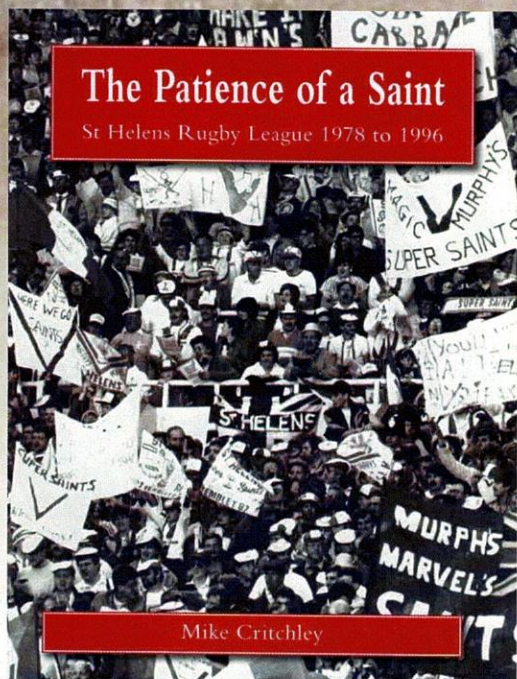
PLAYER PROFILE

GENO COSTIN



AROUND & ABOUT

with The Heritage Trust



battle outside the social club.

Mike Critchley, a life-long St Helens fan and who reports on the club for the St Helens Star has just this week launched his new book *THE PATIENCE OF A SAINT* within which he recalls and reflects on a series of Saints' matches played between 1978 and the start of the Super League in 1997, one of which is the Oldham cup-tie. He says:

Oldham 5 St Helens 6, 15 March 1981 Challenge Cup Round 3

When you saw David Oxley's fixed grin and polo neck on Monday's Look North it could only mean one thing – "gentlemen, the draw".

Oxley was a seemingly strange figurehead for rugby league. Although born in the game's heartlands in Hull, he came across as a bit of a toff. However, you can't knock his record because Oxley was at the helm when rugby league dragged itself up from its bootstraps, particularly with a sponsorship drive that boosted the game's coffers. His strategy gave the sport, which had struggled to come to terms with the decline in attendances in the early 1970s, a lifeline. Sponsors were lined up for the championship and most notably the Challenge Cup – which was backed then by tobacco company State Express.

With league leaders Warrington, cup kings Widnes and holders Hull KR in the black velvet bag for the last eight it was music to our ears to hear: "Oldham... will play... (shuffle, rattle) ...number 22... St Helens." Saints looked odds on for another semi appearance – and a step closer towards the holy grail of a trip to Wembley.

We went to Oldham with a real spring in our step, and the town was beginning to whisper Wembley again. In fact it was more than a murmur when we got to the centre of the mill town, all you could hear was Saints fans, including a load of likely lads, singing "Wem-ba-lee, Wem-ba-lee, Wem-ba-lee!" to the tune of "Here we go".

The front page of the Oldham Evening Chronicle on Monday 16th March revealed startling news to those sports fans that hadn't been to the Oldham v St Helens Challenge Cup game at Watersheddings the day before. Evidently, almost 9,000 fans – the club's biggest crowd for six years – had already paid at the turnstiles when someone unlocked the double gates at the scoreboard corner resulting in hundreds of fans surging through. Mid-way through the first half a barrier at the Watersheddings end crashed. It was little short of a miracle that a disaster didn't ensue. Police had been brought in to sort out scuffles between the two sets of fans prior to the game and afterwards there was a

The rickety old Watersheddings ground, surrounded by four old fashioned wooden stands, was jam packed to the rafters with more than 9,000 on. You could barely move to locate your mates so it was just a case of trying to find a cluster of Saints fans and squeezing in. It was a cracking atmosphere nonetheless. Once again it was close, with only a Peter Glynn drop-goal separating the sides at half-time and at the end. We won by the odd point in 11 – but that closeness added to the elation at the final whistle. There was also a little bit of scuffling – with an older lad from our school running down the side street waving a police cone round his head shouting "Come and get it you Oldham b*****!"

The yobs were a mixture of new romantics and casuals with the more fashion conscious having wedge haircuts, wearing Kickers on their feet and being very fussy about not getting their Pringle jerseys pulled out of shape.

As our convoy was leaving the town a mob of Oldham knuckleheads lurked on the traffic island, each of them with a couple of half bricks in their hands, waiting to pelt our coaches. You could see it coming, but the members of the coach in front had other ideas. A gang, led by a lad still gamely wearing an out-of-fashion Mohican haircut and a studded leather jacket with Adam and the Ants emblazoned across it, piled off, scattering the assembled Oldham yobs from their vantage point. It allowed the rest of the coaches a safe passage out without a single brick finding a target. Even those on the Supporters Club coach, who didn't condone that sort of behaviour, looked grateful. In fact our coach, full of family men and women, were cheering. One perfectly respectable bloke declared with a chuckle, "We even won the fight an' all!"

Unluckily for our saviours, their bus driver decided he wanted to be out of town ASAP and pulled away before the conquering heroes returned, leaving them stranded.

Bricking coaches was normally more a threat than a reality, Supporters Club committee members like Enid and Jenny helped matters a lot by making sure it was a calm trip home, insisting on scarves being taken down from windows. It seemed a pointless exercise, because everyone knew who we were. It is not as if Featherstone and Warrington were suddenly holiday destinations attracting buses of tourists.

There had, however, been a case at Oldham a couple of years previously when one fan had decided to drop his trousers and pull a moony at the home yobs. Unfortunately for him a brick took the back window out and the young bloke spent the entire journey home picking lumps of glass out of his backside. Whether the lad dared to go and see Sister Duffy at Providence Hospital to get his injury cleaned up is another matter. How would he explain after dropping his trousers to the no-nonsense nurse? "It is like this Sister..." The Prov, which was the town centre, shut down in 1981 despite a massive campaign and fundraising to keep it open. Irish nurse Duffy had etched more than a few

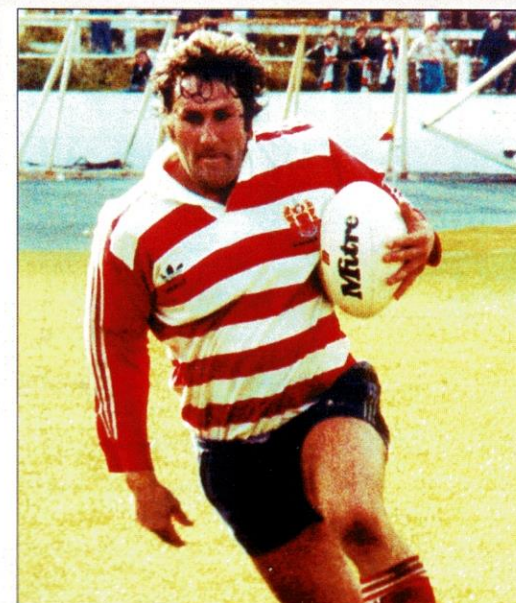
of her own lines in the town's folklore – people still talk about her fondly today.

For the record Oldham's Welsh international prop Gareth Owen opened the scoring with a try in the 14th minute converted by Eric Fitzsimmons. Saints hit back four minutes later with a converted Liptrot try and the result sealed early in the game by a Peter Glynn drop goal on the half hour. Oldham's star man was second-row forward Alan Platt, who, according to the match report, played himself to a standstill. Saints coach Kel Coslett said "It was a fabulous advertisement for Rugby League and a tie that could have gone either way right up to the hooter".

Oldham: Caffery, Munro, Hunter, Parrish, Fitzsimmons, O'Neill, Kirwan, Owen, Martland, Harris, Mordell, Platt, Flanagan. Subs, Herbert for Mordell.

St Helens: Griffiths, Jones, Arkwright, Parks, Mathias, Glynn, Peters, James, Liptrot, Hope, Chisnall, Nicholls, Pinner. Subs, Gorley for Nicholls.

Mike's book, available in paperback from all good bookshops is excellent value at £12-99. The ISBN is 9781903659-32-8. It can also be ordered (post free) from London Publications, PO Box 10441, London, E14 8WR. Credit card orders via website www.llpshop.co.uk



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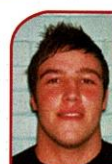
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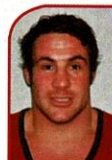
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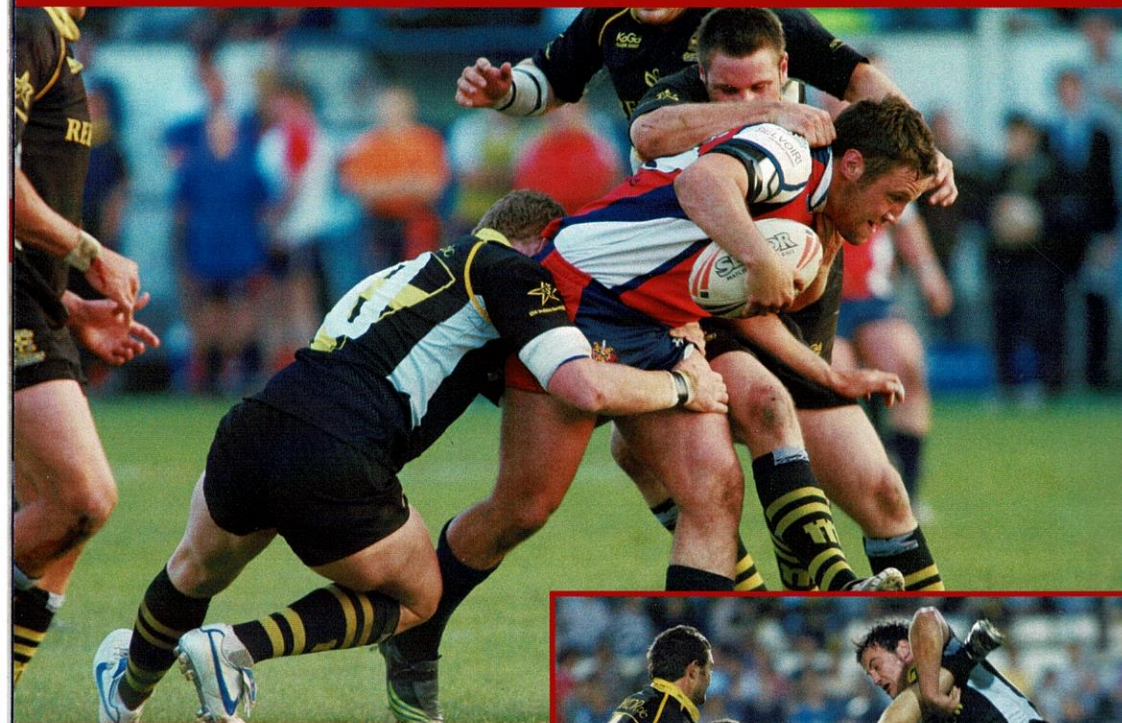
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ROUGHYEDS IN ACTION

the bootroom

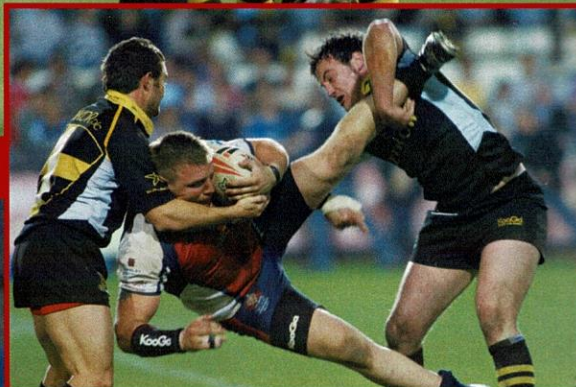
THE MEN WHO CARRY ROUGHYEDS' HOPES AND AMBITIONS INTO 2007.



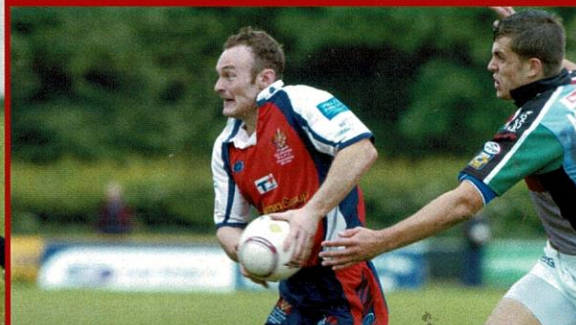
Chris Baines powers through the tackles during Oldham's 34-26 win over Celtic Crusaders



Ian Hodson brushes off a challenge in Bridgend



Tony Tonks is felled against the Welsh side



Paul Ashton offs a pass in the 66-6 defeat to Harlequins

ASHTON, Paul (half-back): Aged 27, Paul learned his trade at Saddleworth before playing for Halifax, Rochdale, Keighley and Swinton. Got his big chance at Oldham in 2006, initially on a week-to-week basis, and did enough to earn a full contract for 2007. Can play at scrum-half or stand-off.

BAINES, Chris (back-row): A young forward who also did enough for coach Steve Deakin last year, while on loan from Warrington, to win a contract for the latter part of 2006 and then for 2007. Toured New Zealand with Great Britain Young Lions in 2003. Product of Chorley Panthers and Wigan St Pat's.

BOULTS, Jason (prop): One of many new boys in the Roughyeds squad for 2007, 23-year-old Jason arrived on the recommendation of two of his former Halifax team mates, Jamie Bloem and Alan Hadcroft. Spent four years as a young prop with Bradford and then had two seasons at The Shay, missing only a handful of games.

COSTIN, Geno (prop or back-row): A 22-year-old Aussie, Geno first established himself in the Queensland Cup with Wynnum-Manly, but last year played in the same comp for Logan Souths. A rugby workaholic, he puts in overtime on defence and, in possession, always runs strong and straight.

CRABTREE, Andy (hooker): Won Great Britain academy honours in his Wigan Warriors days. Came from Swinton this year. A tidy footballer with good hands and game awareness, he can also play loose-forward. Alert and alive at dummy half.

GOREY, Andy (winger): A scrum-half in his Royton Tigers days, Andy became a good full-back in the former Roughyeds academy side. It was as a winger, however, that he finished 2006 as the club's top try scorer with ten — no mean feat in a losing side.

HADCROFT, Alan (centre): A robust middle back, 29-year-old Alan signed from Halifax for the 2006 season, but his campaign was marred by a series of shoulder injuries, notably at Barrow and Whitehaven. Future as a player in some doubt, but highly regarded as coach Steve Deakin's acting No 2.

HODSON, Ian (back-row): Initially rejected new offer for 2007 due to work commitments, but the Roughyeds door remained open and he re-signed in March after playing the odd game or two for Tyldesley RU Club. One of the club's better performers in 2006, he always gave maximum input, even when asked to play at stand-off.

HOUGH, John (hooker): First player to sign for the 'new' Roughyeds club. Still here nearly ten years later — that's loyalty with a capital L. Joined Warrington from Waterhead as a boy, but carved himself a niche in the annals of the new Oldham club when he signed as a free agent on December 2, 1997. Has played more than 230 games.

HOUSTON, Drew (second-row or centre): Once a youngster linked with Melbourne Storm, Drew had two seasons in the Queensland Cup with Storm feeder club Brisbane Norths before heading south to join Dapto whom he helped to

become champions of the Illawarra competition last year.

HOYLE, Simeon (hooker): Formerly with Keighley and Halifax, Simeon is a hooker of the old school — tough in defence yet able to make things happen from dummy half. Helped Keighley to win promotion in 2003 in the same team as Paul Ashton, Richard Mervill and Ian Sinfield.

LANGLEY, Gareth (winger): Pacy, and a good finisher, 'Gaz' joined Roughyeds this year after five years at St Helens. He was Saints academy player of the year in 2005 and runner-up in 2006. Played at Salford as a teenager before joining his hometown club at Knowsley Road.

LITTLER, Craig (centre): Another Saints old boy, Craig was Langley's centre for four years at Knowsley Road. A year younger, he had the chance of another year with St Helens academy, but opted to sign for Roughyeds and continue his centre-winger partnership with Langley.

MERVILL, Richard (prop): Formerly with Halifax and Keighley, Richard joined Roughyeds for 2007 after playing Down Under in the same Dapto side as Drew Houston. Suffered a broken hand in one of his early games for Roughyeds, but goes into Co-Operative NL2 action in a good seam of form.

O'CONNOR, Paul (full-back): Signed for hometown Widnes after winning students' International honours for Ireland and for Great Britain. Looked good in three loan games for Roughyeds in 2006 and returned on a more permanent basis in 2007, although he will be away for 14 weeks on a pre-arranged trip Down Under.

OLDHAM, Stuart (winger): Formerly with St Helens and Swinton, Stuart played his first serious rugby with Sedgley Park and Liverpool St Helens RU clubs before switching codes to join Saints. Had two seasons with Swinton and became one of six Lions to sign for Roughyeds for 2007.

ONYANGO, Lucas (winger): A real flier, aged 25, Lucas grew up in rugby union in his native Kenya. Has played for Sale Sharks, Manchester and Leigh in Union, and also Widnes Vikings in League. Did well at Vikings before damaging a knee. Over that now and keen to make the most of his chance at Oldham.

RODEN, Neil (half-back): Neil rejoined Roughyeds from Leigh for 2007 after leaving the club initially to go to Batley in 2004. In his first stint here he scored 290 points (68 tries and 18 drop goals) in 142 games over four and a half seasons. Has overtaken Mark Sibson as the 'new' club's leading all-time try scorer.

ROGERS, Wes (prop): Aged 29, and club captain. Like Neil Roden and Ian Sinfield, has rejoined Roughyeds for a second spell. Signed for Widnes as a 15-year-old, then had three years at Swinton, one here, three at Rochdale and three more at Swinton before coming 'home' for 2007.

SANDERSON, Lee (halfback, hooker): Signed in March after a difficult period with Barrow. Roughyeds paid an undisclosed transfer fee for the Leigh lad, whose uncle, Ian, was an

accomplished Oldham hooker in Watersheddings days. Lee has previously played for Leigh, London Broncos, Rochdale and Barrow.

SINFIELD, Ian (back-row): Another experienced forward who has returned to his hometown club for a second stint. Brother of Leeds captain, Kevin Sinfield, Ian played in the first ever Roughyeds game at Rochdale on New Year's Day, 1998. Had four years here, then moved on to Rochdale, Keighley and Swinton.

SMITH, Kris (back-row or centre): Kris, aged 28, has been on the books of four Super League clubs, namely Leeds, Salford, London and Halifax. A product of the Eccles amateur club, he was snapped up by Leeds while still a teenager. Joined Roughyeds after four seasons at Swinton.

STOUT, Michael (second-row or centre): Signed from Swinton, Michael has a good turn of speed for a forward and likes to use it while breaking wide out. Played at academy level for both Warrington and Widnes. Chose to join Oldham after rejecting a Swinton offer for 2007.

TAMGHART, Said (utility): A French international, Said has represented his country at every level, including full Test matches against Australia and New Zealand. Came under Steve Deakin's influence when both were at UTC, better known now as Perpignan-based Catalans Dragons.

TONKS, Tony (prop): Roughyeds have high hopes of the 22-year-old Yorkshireman, signed from Bradford Bulls just prior to the start of the Co-Operative NL2 season. One year at Wakefield academy, then six at Bulls as a full-time prop, including last season on loan at Doncaster.

WILKINSON, Alex (centre, wing): Played his early rugby with Royton Tigers and toured with GB schoolboys to Australia in 1999 and with England academy to New Zealand and Australia in 2001. While a young prop at Bradford Bulls, he had loan spells with London Broncos, Huddersfield and Hull before going part-time with Roughyeds to continue his studies.

WINGFIELD, Lee (second-row): Played for GB at amateur level in Russia, France and Australia, but desperately unlucky with injuries since he turned pro for Roughyeds on a two-year deal covering 2006 and 2007. In top form early this year, but then broke a hand before suffering a serious knee injury against Swinton on his first game back.

HUGHES, Adam (centre): The massively experienced 29-year-old boasts over 150 Super League appearances during spells with Leeds, Wakefield, Halifax, Widnes and Leigh. A powerful, pacy centre who knows where the try line is, he signed for Oldham in preference to several other clubs.

ROBINSON, Adam (second row): A tough and uncompromising player who relishes his defensive duties, the 20 year-old Yorkshireman turned down Featherstone in order to sign for the Roughyeds from Doncaster. Formerly of the Stanley Rangers amateur club, he started his professional career at Wakefield.

with Ian Wilson

roughyeds'

roar!

How much is it really costing the club not to have its own ground? On the day that Rugby Oldham holds its AGM - the fundamental aim of the Supporters' Trust is to generate a dedicated RL ground in the town - it seems a very pertinent question to ask.

I could, of course, look into the past to try to answer the question. The "cost", since the end of Watersheddings and the failures of promises apparently made but unfulfilled since then, is of course simply astronomical. One only has to look at the status of the club now compared to what it used to be - and what a marvellous night was last Friday's fiftieth anniversary dinner, on the subject of the glorious past! A huge vote of thanks should go to the small band of committed enthusiasts who put in so much effort to make sure that the event took place.

However, let us stick to short-term costs only. The crux of the matter is that it is by no means just the obvious loss-of-revenue aspect which needs to be measured, on top of the actual cash outlay involved in paying our Boundary Park hosts. Clearly, if we did own our own ground, we would have no rental cost to pay to anyone else, and revenues from catering, etc. on each match day would accrue to the club - but there is much, much more.

If we take just this season so far alone, what about the losses incurred as a result of our inability to play the Featherstone and Harlequins games at our own ground on the day scheduled? There is no doubt that the attendance for Featherstone on a Good Friday

afternoon would have been considerably greater than the 1162 crowd we did record ; and it might have been all the bigger if some imaginative marketing had put together a Standard Cup Final and first NL2 game of the season package, surely something which would not be beyond the abilities of the club's management IF we had the dedicated RL ground which we should have.

And then there is the Harlequins match. How heart-breaking it must be to all who put in time and effort in running the club to see a "crowd" of 559, at a Challenge Cup tie against a good Super League side, with some very eye-catching players like Scott Hill, Mark McLinden and Danny Orr in their ranks. The game, too, was scheduled for a Sunday lunchtime, with few if any competing attractions, with our previous performance having been a marvellous one, universally feted, and recorded for posterity via the TV broadcast from Bridgend. I would argue that there would have been valid grounds to criticize the club's marketing if such a contest, played at "Roughyed Towers", or whatever, had not attracted a crowd at least ten times that which actually appeared at Sedgley Park.

Such costs, and many others incurred over the seasons since we have been effectively groundless, are nothing but a huge negative for a club which is trying very hard to restore itself to a place among the game's elite. Let us all hope that we are not talking about our ground-induced problems for too much longer.

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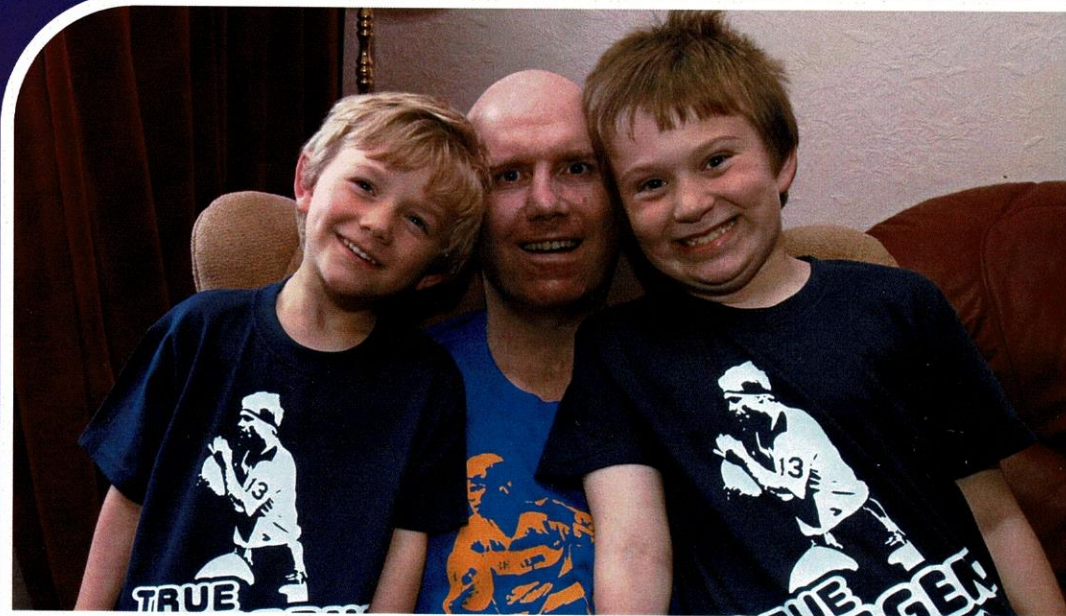
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carnegie challenge cup

OLDHAM 6 v HARLEQUINS 66

Challenge Cup round five, Sunday, May 13, 2007 at Sedgley Park

FEW were expecting an Oldham victory at Sedgley Park, even given the heroics of last weekend.

A comeback against National League Two opposition in Celtic Crusaders is one thing – but defeating Super League sides is another proposition entirely. True to form, Harlequins were in no mood to be embarrassed, scoring inside the opening minute and generally punishing every Oldham lapse with ruthless efficiency on the large rugby union pitch.

The Roughyeds competed well for the most part and, with more luck and slightly better options taken, could have more than the one Paul Ashton try to show for their efforts.

In the end, a 60-point margin of victory was a little harsh on the home side. But nowhere near as harsh as Lady Luck has suddenly become, as the injuries begin to pile up.

Wes Rogers (knee), Said Tamghart (ankle, two minutes after coming on from the bench), Geno Costin (hernia) and Chris Baines (ankle) all hobbled off the pitch during the game with serious-looking injuries, while Craig Littler also hurt his shoulder.

From the off, it was clear what the Roughyeds were up against. Quins full-back Chris Melling picked up the ball behind the halfway line and stole through a gap in the line to stride in – after only 56 seconds, with the away side's first touch of the ball.

The Roughyeds worked their way back in to the game and enjoyed a spell of pressure, forcing repeat sets and going close when Jon Wells was forced to knock the ball out in his own in-goal under scrutiny from Craig Littler.

But against a side as classy as the Londoners, further

scores were inevitable. Melling's excellent offload in the tackle led to the first of Paul Sykes' treble soon after, before a good drive from Daniel Heckenberg led to a second Sykes try five minutes later.

Karl Temata went over from close range, before Said Tamghart followed Wes Rogers in picking up an injury.

Andy Gorey's first task in coming on for the Frenchman was to chase Mark McLinden in vain as the Australian ran the full length of the pitch from a scrum near his own posts.

Alex Wilkinson went close with a run down the right wing, prior to Sykes completing his hat-trick. With Rob Purdham's boot proving an accurate weapon, Harlequins were 34-0 up before the half-hour and Oldham were staring down the barrel at a mammoth defeat.

Credit to Ashton then, whose determination to get on the end of Roden's grubber paid off with a try under the posts when he was only third favourite to get there first. Converting his own kick, Oldham held on to half-time 34-6 down.

By then Costin had retired and when Baines followed him off the field as the second half began, the Roughyeds were once again well up against it.

Jon Grayshon scored five minutes in and that was followed up by scores for Melling, Andy Smith and McLinden.

Ashton gave the home support more cheer with consecutive breaks that nearly led to tries with ten minutes left, before Smith's second and another for Temata to the hooter enhanced the winning margin for the Super League side.

SUPPORT GROUP NEWS

Summer rugby, love it or hate it? There are many reasons to substantiate both opinions and there are many of us who have mixed feelings, influenced by our own circumstances.

Well, allow me to keep to a lighter note on this subject and tell you that what I value about summer rugby is the opportunity to take a day, a full weekend or even a few days away, linked to an away match.

For those of us who are fortunate to be able to take advantage of such occasions this season is excellent --- Blackpool, London, South Wales, Gateshead, York, Cumbria, all attractive venues.

The visit to Blackpool (well, St Anne's) on that beautiful day in April was a fine example and was enjoyed by everyone. And a win to boot! What luxury!

SUPPORT THE ROUGHYEDS.

Sheila.

REUNION DINNER

DAVID Fairclough, better known as the former Liverpool FC super-sub, will be guest speaker at the Roughyeds' ten-year Law Cup reunion dinner in the social club on Friday, June 22. Bobby Bender will be the comedian and tickets, priced at £25 a head or £250 plus vat for a corporate table of ten, are available from Janet at the Roughyeds' office on 0161 628 3677.

The 18 players and two coaches who were on duty when the Roughyeds won the Law Cup at Rochdale on January 1, 1998 in the 'new' club's first-ever game have been invited to the dinner, one of several events to be held this summer to recognise ten seasons of operation by Oldham Rugby League Club (1997) Ltd.

Another is the proposed formation of an ex-players association. Martin Murphy is fronting this project and all ex-players, going back to Watersheddings days, are invited to a meeting in the social club on May 29, further details to follow. From that meeting it is planned to launch the association publicly at the Oldham v Hunslet game at Boundary Park on Sunday, July 22.

HOLT POINTS BARROW BOYS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

by ROGER HALSTEAD

New-look Raiders aiming high

DARREN Holt, nine years at Barrow, carved himself a place in Craven Park folklore recently when he smashed Willie Horne's all-time points scoring record.

The former Barrow legend racked up 1,814 points in his memorable 15-year career at the Furness club between 1943 and 1958. Those of us old enough to remember will fondly recall Horne's round-the-corner goalkicking style at a time when most marksmen approached the ball from directly in front.

Great kickers of the past, like Bernard Ganley or Jimmy Ledgard, to name but two, must have scratched their heads many times over at the sight of Willie approaching the ball from the side. How times change! When did you last see a goalkicker toe-ending the ball from a straight run-up?

I digress. The new points machine at Barrow, scrum-half Holt, finally wrote himself a place in the club's record books in a Northern Rail Cup win at York at the end of last month. At the end of that match he had totalled 1,826 points --- and the chances are that before this season is over, the long-serving 32-year-old will have added a load more to his collection.

I am indebted to the Rugby League World magazine and my buddies and neighbour Gareth Walker for use of these quotes from Holt taken from the May edition of the magazine, published by League Publications Ltd and a monthly "must" for any League fan.

Said Holt: "This is a big record and it means everything to me and my family. Just to be mentioned in the same sentence as Willie is a huge honour. Some people might be upset that one of Willie's records is going, but all I can do is go out and give my best: records are there to be broken.

"Of all the teams I've played in at Barrow this has to be the strongest. We've got strength in depth and that's always been lacking before.

"There's a buzz around the place. The way we have started we have to be up there among the favourites for going up and winning promotion if we just keep plugging away."

There are many similarities between the way Barrow have lifted themselves off the floor and the way the revitalised Roughyeds are doing the same.

Steve Deakin took on a job here at a time when he knew tough days lay ahead

--- at a time when he knew that, in many ways, he was on a hiding to nothing. His resolve never wavered, though, even when his team was relegated last season without a single league win.

Up at Barrow Paul Crarey took over at Craven Park in a similar situation. Crarey revealed in Rugby League World: "I had a

meeting with the board and they said 'we've got no money, no players -- do you still want the job?' I

said I did."

Crarey's one request was that the board should stand by him irrespective of results. And he now says: "They have been fantastic".

The Roughyeds board have similarly stood rock solid behind Deaks from day one, united in their solidarity and totally appreciative of the job he did last year in extremely difficult circumstances and the progress the squad is making this year under his continued stewardship.

There are other similarities, too. Both clubs were financially broke and almost busted not too long ago, but both are now enjoying far happier times on the financial front with the result that new players are being attracted to bolster their squads.

In recent weeks Roughyeds have brought in Lucas Onyango, Lee Sanderson (from Barrow incidentally) and Tony Tonks.

Raiders hit the headlines --- certainly in the North-West Evening Mail and in the trade papers --- with the captures from Hull KR of former Super League players Michael Smith and Pat Weisner.

Crarey's belief is that players of this calibre, mixed with the many Barrow born players in his squad, will provide the right blend to turn his team into genuine promotion contenders.

Smith, a vastly experienced and clever ball-handling forward, has the skills to take this division by storm.

Weisner made a similar move from one Craven Park on the East coast to another Craven Park on the West shortly after his Rovers team mate Smith had taken the same route.

The Australian Weisner can play stand-off, loose-forward or hooker and will provide Crarey with numerous options as well as vast experience in the positions within his team. He has extensive experience of the National Leagues, having had previous spells with Leigh and Halifax, as well as playing in Super League with Harlequins.

Crarey was quoted thus at the time of the Weisner signing: "We are very excited about Pat coming in. He is a great support player, he has good vision and he can organise the team. We feel he will add an extra dimension to our team."

He will do that all right ---- and the new-look Raiders will certainly be a force to be reckoned with in Co-Operative NL2 this year.

It is good to see. The game in the Furness area had been on a downer for far too long. The rise of the club in that region is a great boost for rugby league and a tonic for the quality of rugby currently on offer in the National Leagues.

Oldham RLFC Appearances and Scorers, 2007

players statistics

[up to and including May 13]

NAME	PLAYED	TRIES	GOALS	POINTS
P. Ashton	10	3	24	60
C. Baines	10	1		4
J. Boults	10			
G. Costin	7	1		4
A. Crabtree	11	1		4
A. Gorey	5			
I. Hodson	5	1		4
J. Hough	2			
D. Houston	13			
S. Hoyle	12	1		4
G. Langley	13	7	2	32
C. Littler	12	2		8
R. Mervill	9	1		4
P. O'Connor	13	4		16
M. Ogden	5	1	10	24
S. Oldham	1			
L. Onyango	3	2		8
N. Roden	12	4		16
W. Rogers	10			
L. Sanderson	3		4	8
I. Sinfield	9	1		4
K. Smith	10	5		20
M. Stout	4	1		4
S. Tamghart	13	2		8
T. Tonks	3	1		4
A. Wilkinson	12	10		40
L. Wingfield	4	1		4

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with GARETH WALKER of RUGBY LEAGUER & LEAGUE EXPRESS



Re-discovering the Challenge Cup magic

HAS the Carnegie Challenge Cup lost its magic for clubs at National League level?

It's difficult not to come to that conclusion after glancing at some of the scorelines from the fifth round of the competition last weekend.

St Helens 70 Rochdale Hornets 10. Hull 44 Sheffield 6. Oldham 6 Harlequins 66.

And not just that - the attendance for those three matches read as follows: 3,586, 4,363 and 559.

But that would not really tell the full story.

Despite the lop-sided scorelines from those three fixtures, all of the coaches declared themselves happy with their team's respective performances - with Rochdale and Oldham bosses Darren Abram and Steve Deakin labelling them their best displays of the year.

Then there was the hugely encouraging showings from Barrow Raiders and Whitehaven in the same round.

NL2 Barrow, despite missing a host of first choice players - most notably Super League stars Michael Smith and Pat Weisner, who were cup-tied - put in a hugely creditable performance at Warrington before going down 48-16.

As their coach Paul Creary noted: "Warrington beat Salford by 50 points and they are a Super League team. So for a National Two side with mainly locally based players, who were playing amateur rugby last year, to only get beat by 32 points is a massive achievement."

Whitehaven did even better, giving French side Catalans Dragons a few scares before eventually going down 14-24.

And let's not forget the efforts of Castleford and Widnes in the previous round.

The Tigers pushed Bradford Bulls all the way, with the Vikings doing the same to Wigan in a televised tie.

So although it is clearly not all doom and gloom - personally I find suggestions to seed the famous old competition as totally ridiculous, if predictable - the crowd figures are undoubtedly worrying.

Days when an away game with one of the big guns could guarantee a small club's future for a year appear to be long gone.

And people blaming the lack of shocks for those figures are being short-sighted - even when Super League clubs face each other the numbers are down massively on the league matches.

Just 2,964 watched Salford against Huddersfield, while the 9,612 that turned up to Leeds versus Wigan was almost 7,000 down on the Super League meeting in April.

Maybe the game's authorities should look to slash ticket prices across the board in a bid to entice fans back to the competition - what about £10 and £5 for every Challenge Cup game?

Though Super League is undoubtedly king at present, we certainly shouldn't allow the magic of the Challenge Cup to disappear.

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Matthew Chambers
Oldham Advertiser
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Mick Kilgannon
Ray Broadbent
Iain Taylor
Joseph Lawrence Perrins
Costin Electrical Services Ltd (Phil Costin)
Hans Bateson
John Kettleton

JANET Yewdale, latest £500 winner in the Roughyeds' Five Alive lottery, has been a staunch supporter of the club for the past five and a half years and has spent the last 18 months working full-time in the club's office.

It's a job she loves. "There's never a dull moment," she said, "and I can honestly say coming to work isn't a hardship. It's not a job -- it's a vocation."

"It's been a hard slog these past 18 months, but Chris and Sean have been absolutely heroic in their determination not to let the club go under, and only those close to the situation have any real idea what they have been through and the number of man hours Chris has put in to keep the club alive."

"Now Bill Quinn is here, the team is coming along nicely and Steve Deakin is starting to reap some reward for tackling what must have seemed like an impossible task when he first took it on."

"Deaks has been just as dogged and determined on the playing side as Chris and Sean have been on

the administrative side.

"And I do honestly believe that, both on and off the field, the club is set fair for moving onwards and upwards."

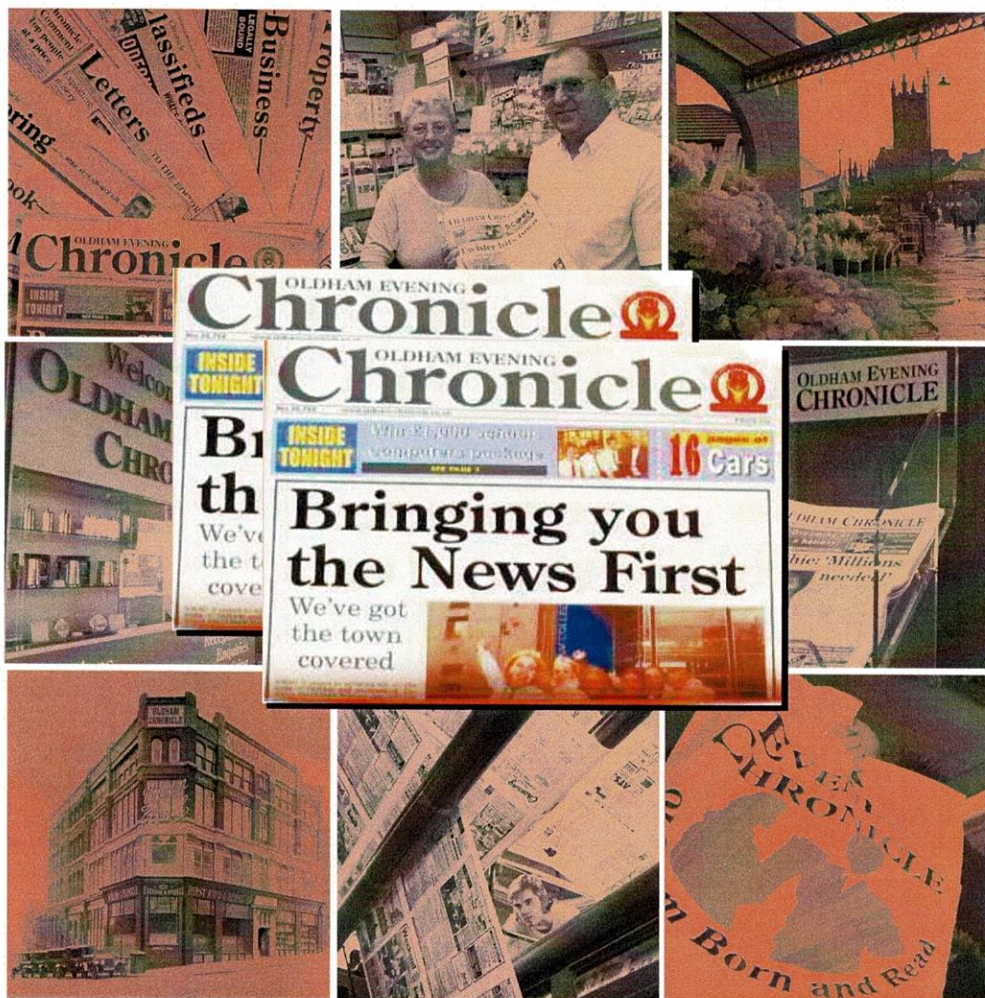
Janet has been known to perform just about every duty there is to perform at the club, including washing the kit, and her mum, Doreen, and son George are almost part of the fixtures and fittings, as anyone who frequents the social club and attends the Roughyeds functions there will readily testify.

She was one of the first fans to sign up for Five Alive. "It's fund-raisers like these that can help to take the club forward," she added, "and I think Five Alive offers good value for money. We've got 84 supporters in the lottery now, but if there is anyone out there who might be thinking about it we would like to hit the 100 before the season is much older."

Want to join? Give Janet a ring on 0161 628 3677.

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journalistic license

by Matthew Chambers

IS it time to revamp the Challenge Cup?

Looking at the attendance figures for last weekend's games, it certainly appears that something needs to give. Oldham's crowd of 559 at Sedgley Park for the Harlequins tie was a dismal figure but there were several mitigating circumstances — Latics' play-off semi-final later the same day will have had an adverse impact, as will the early kick-off and the fact that the 'home' game was being played out of town.

Elsewhere, all-conquering St Helens could only muster an attendance of 3,586 for their home game with Rochdale, Salford drew 2,694 against Huddersfield and Wakefield, up against Bradford, had 3,700 watching.

Even Leeds — average Super League attendance, over 17,000 — attracted a measly 8,982 for their (highly entertaining, as it turned out) home game against Wigan.

It was a very poor effort all round. Poring over attendance figures, calculator in hand, is something of an obsession for some followers of this game and most of the time you get the feeling that time could easily be spent doing something more worthwhile.

Concentrating on the pitch rather than counting the spectators, for instance. But in this case, the statistics are clear-cut: the competition, at least in its early stages, simply isn't a draw for fans. Solutions? Well, it is clear that for all their giant-killing potential Super League-versus-National League ties fail to deliver a good contest far too often.

Perhaps a restructuring of the competition is needed — maybe restricting professional clubs in the lower leagues to four places in the last 16, which they must first play off for.

Within a congested fixture list — should Oldham reach the final of the National League Two play-offs they will have only one 'free' weekend before October 14 — the Northern Rail Cup (incorporating

French sides?) could be used to perform this function.

Of course, this would mean the amateur sides missing out, which would be a shame. But given the intensity of their own competitions, within another hugely congested fixture list, perhaps removing the Challenge Cup burden could ultimately be a positive step.

* Finally, an appeal. Former Leigh and Warrington player Ian Knott, just 30 years old and with over 250 Super League appearances to his name, has been told he probably won't work again.

The Derker man, now living in Runcorn, had 16 painkilling injections before winning the Grand Final with Leigh in 2004 after sustaining a back injury.

Since retiring from the sport the discs in his back have kept slipping to the point which he can't even play with his sons. He has had five operations in two years, is on 24 painkillers a day and spends 80-per cent of his time lying down to control the pain. The charity XIII Heroes, which provides assistance for seriously injured rugby league players, has provided Ian with both mental and financial support — including a recent casino evening — and has been described by Ian as being a "fantastic" help. In stark contrast, he says, to the authorities.

The next event being planned by XIII Heroes is a benefit dinner in Warrington in June. For more information, or to make a donation, ring XXIII Heroes on 0161 678 0608 or visit www.xiiiheroes.com, where donations can be made on-line.

Matthew

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down memory lane

with Murph

'MURPH' LAUNCHES A STROLL DOWN MEMORY LANE FOR FORMER PLAYERS

MARTIN Murphy, who played more post-war games for Oldham than any other player, is "proud and privileged" to become the first member of a new Oldham RL ex-players' association to be launched soon.

Now aged 58, and living in Moorside, the lion-heart full-back spent 15 years at Watersheddings and clocked up 462 first-team appearances to boast the third highest number of games for the club in more than 100 years of pro rugby league in Oldham.

Only Joe Ferguson (627 between 1899 and 1922) and Jack Read (463 between 1925 and 1939) played in more games than 'Murph', who was No 1 in the post-war record books; who wore No 1 on his full-back's shirt during his long service to Oldham; and who now becomes member No 1 in the club's new association for former players.

It is being set up in conjunction with Roughyeds and is open to anyone who has played professionally for either the current club or the previous Oldham club, which was liquidated in 1997.

"An active ex-players association in Oldham is long overdue and I am honoured to give it a kick-start," said Martin, who had the distinction of captaining the former club in its centenary season of 1976-77.

Still a window cleaner in the town after nearly 30 years in the job, he added: "I have wonderful memories of my rugby days and I would love to share them with the blokes who played for Oldham at the same time.

"In those days we spent years at one club and built up friendships which shouldn't be allowed to

fade as we get older. I still see some of my old team mates around town, but I would love to meet up again with out-of-towners like Tommy Davies, Tommy Warburton, Tommy Canning and Wilf Briggs, just to name four.

"An organised association will enable former players from various decades to renew old friendships. The years are rolling on. If we are going to do it there is no better time than now."

On behalf of the Roughyeds, former Oldham Chronicle reporter Roger Halstead, who covered

Oldham RL for the paper for more than 40 years, will work alongside Murphy in getting the new body up and running.

The plan is to hold an initial meeting in the Roughyeds social club on May 29 to be attended by Roughyeds, interested ex-players and particularly those who might wish to become involved in the setting up and administering of the association.

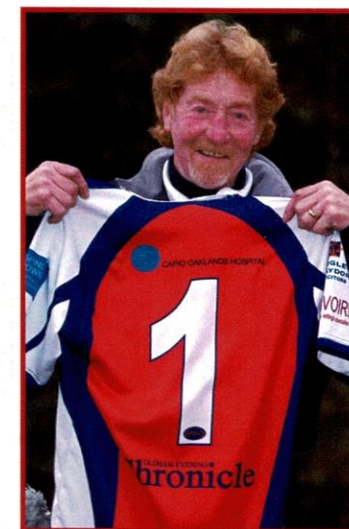
From that meeting, it is planned to launch the association publicly at the Oldham v Hunslet game at Boundary Park on Sunday, July 22.

In the meantime, all ex-players interested in joining Murphy on his trip down Memory Lane are

asked to ring Janet at the Roughyeds office on 0161 628 3677 or email to chris@oldhamrugbyleague.fsnet.co.uk providing name and contact details.

For the record, only eight players have recorded more than 400 senior games for Oldham, going back to 1876, and two of them played for years in the same team as Murphy --- winger Mike Elliott (446 games) and hooker Kevin Taylor (429 games).

All three are included in the club's Hall of Fame



2007 fixtures

DATE	OPPONENTS	CUP	VENUE	K. O.	RESULT	W/L	ATT
31/01/07	Warrington Wolves	Friendly	Home	7.45pm	42-6	W	789
11/02/07	Rochdale Hornets	NRC	Home	3.00pm	8-24	L	1,145
18/02/07	Swinton Lions	NRC	Home	3.00pm	18-28	L	1,017
25/02/07	Dewsbury Rams	NRC	Away	3.00pm	22-32	L	819
04/03/07	Rochdale Hornets	NRC	Away	3.00pm	6-16	L	816
10/03/07	East Hull	CCC 3	Away	2.00pm	26-10	W	214
18/03/07	Dewsbury Rams	NRC	Home	3.00pm	8-32	L	622
25/03/07	Swinton Lions	NRC	Away	3.00pm	42-18	W	555
01/04/07	Keighley Cougars	CCC4	Away	3.00pm	26-16	W	1039
04/04/07	Featherstone Rovers	NL2	Home	7.45pm	12-23	L	1,162
09/04/07	Hunslet Hawks	NL2	Away	3.30pm	NEW DATE BELOW		
15/04/07	Blackpool Panthers	NL2	Away	3.00pm	40-20	W	501
29/04/07	Keighley Cougars	NL2	Home	3.00pm	32-20	W	847
04/05/07	Celtic Crusaders	NL2	Away	7.35pm	34-26	W	3441
13/05/07	Harlequins	CCC5	Home	12.30pm	6-66	L	559
20/05/07	Barrow Raiders	NL2	Home	3.00pm			
26/05/07	London Skolars	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
03/06/07	Workington Town	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
10/06/07	York City Knights	NL2	Home*	3.00pm			
17/06/07	Featherstone Rovers	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
24/06/07	Keighley Cougars	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
01/07/07	Gateshead Thunder	NL2	Home*	3.00pm			
08/07/07	Swinton Lions	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
15/07/07	Barrow Raiders	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
22/07/07	Hunslet Hawks	NL2	Home	3.00pm			
29/07/07	York City Knights	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
05/08/07	Blackpool Panthers	NL2	Home	3.00pm			
12/08/07	Workington Town	NL2	Home	3.00pm			
19/08/07	Gateshead Thunder	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
22/08/07	Hunslet Hawks	NL2	Away	7.30pm			
02/09/07	Celtic Crusaders	NL2	Home	3.00pm			
09/09/07	London Skolars	NL2	Home	3.00pm			
TBA	Swinton Lions	NL2	Home	3.00pm	TO BE REARRANGED		

Play offs will take place on Sundays, September 16, 23 and 30 with the Grand Final on Sunday 7th October.
Home* venue to be arranged.

Key

NRC – Northern Rail Cup
NL2 – National League Division 2
CCC – Carnegie Challenge Cup

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