

# LEZIGNAN - HERE IS A TIE TO STIR UP CUP FEVER

by ROGER HALSTEAD

THE 'new' Oldham club, now in its 12th season, will break fresh ground when it plays French opposition for the first time in the

fourth round of the Carnegie Challenge Cup on the weekend of April 4 and 5.

FC Lezignan Corbieres, who beat Workington Town 18-6 at a waterlogged Derwent Park in the last round, come to Oldham as 2008 French champions and with a squad that will fancy its chances of progressing to the last 16.

Roughyeds have welcomed the draw. Few fans will travel from the delightful little market town that is Lezignan in the sleepy Corbieres region of southern France, but the tie can be expected to arouse significant interest locally given its novelty value and the opportunity for fans to experience something different.

The former Oldham club played Paris St Germain in Super League but before that, in the early 1990s, the then coach Peter Tunks and his

No 2 Eric Fitzsimons took their squad to France on a pre-season tour for matches against Pia, Carcassonne and Villeneuve-sur-Lot.

They set up base camp in Lezignan and there was much to enjoy about the region -- the local red wine for one --- as well as the rugby league. As far as I can tell that somewhat tenuous link, and the tour memories it evokes for those lucky enough to be on it, is the only one that brings Oldham and Lezignan together.

By the way, does anyone out there speak French? If so, this is how the Lezignan club broke news of the draw on its official website (apologies to French students everywhere for the lack of accents in the text):

"Le tirage du quatrieme tout de la Carnegie Challenge Cup a eu lieu ce soir en direct sur le BBC.

"Lezignan devra se deplacer a nouveau en Angleterre, a Oldham cette fois-ci, club de la banlieue de Manchester qui evolue en Championship one (ex National League Two, la 3ieme division anglaise), tour comme l'advesauvre du tour precedent.

"Lezignan qui aurait pu recevoir un club de Superleague a beneficie d'un tirage equilibre que devrait offrir un match serre pour obtenir une place en huitieme de finale de cettecoupe d'Angleterre.

"Le match aura lieu le 4 ou 5 avril 2009".

The Lezignan team at Workington lined up like this: Jared Taylor; Gregory Mazard, Luke Hession, Cedric Bringieur, Aurelien Bourrel; Aurelien Cologni, James Wynne; Christopher Beattie, Cedric Lacans, Adel Fellous, Philippe Laurent, Charly Clottes, Alaster Brown. Subs: Nicolas Manessi, Thibault Ancely, Yoan Tisseyre, Franck Rovira.

By all accounts scrum-half Wynne, an Aussie who played for France in the recent World Cup, controlled the game with his guile and ability to organise his forwards.

Full-back Taylor, another Aussie who has played in the French national side, also played well as did stand-off Colegni, who was on loan to Celtic Crusaders last year from Catalans Dragons.

The French dominance was based mainly on forward, though, and it was generated by powerful props Chris Beattie and Adel Fellous. Beattie, another Aussie, has had considerable experience in the NRL and has also played Super League with Catalans, while Fellous was at Widnes last year, having played also for UTC and France.

Writing in League Express about Lezignan's win at Derwent Park, Martin Butcher summed up thus: "The visitors control of the ball was amazing. In fact, their first-half display was damn near perfect, and all against the severe elements.

"Orchestrating it all was scrum-half James Wynne. His distribution was good, his kicking was sensational and he took on the defence to great effect. Cologni was in similar mould and when Wynne saw yellow, the stand-off took over the responsibility with great aplomb.

"To complete the picture, full-back Taylor had the knack of chiming in at just the right time when the defence was most stretched."

Said Oldham chief executive Chris Hamilton: "Lezignan clearly have a strong side with some quality players and this will be a tough tie for us. With home advantage, though, we have a good chance to go through.

"It will be the first time we have played a French team and we think the tie will arouse a lot of interest among our fans.

"They won the French championship last year and they currently lie fourth in the Elite League so they are clearly a club of some standing. It should be a great cup tie and one we will all be looking forward to."

Further details about the tie will be announced as soon as they are available.

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- **Wednesday** ~ news and views from the Roughyeds
- **Thursday** ~ all the news from the amateur clubs



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# Oldham

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**Back row (left to right):** Ben Heaton, David Allen, Jason Boults, Danny Halliwell, Luke Menzies, Lucas Onyango, Paul Reilly, Richard Mervill, Luke Sutton, Chris Clarke.  
**Middle:** Paul Hulbert (kit supervisor), Wayne Kerr, Craig Robinson, Chris Baines, Anthony Bingham, Scott Mansfield, Phil Joseph, Neil Roden, Jamie 'Anson, Stevie Gibbons, Mark Smith, Lee Greenwood, Tommy Goulden, Rachael Johnson (physiotherapist).  
**Front:** Martin Roden (conditioner), Craig Littler, Marcus St Hilaire, Paul O'Connor, Robert Roberts (captain), Tony Benson (head coach), Paul Highton (vice-captain), Andy Ballard, Gary Sykes, James Coyle, Thomas Coyle, Mark Cass (assistant coach).

**AUTOMATIC promotion isn't the only target in the sights of the ten clubs going to the starting gate in the chase for honours in Co-operative Championship One this season.**

There's money on the table, too... lots of it for the club that comes out on top after 18 games spread over five and a half months.

Oldham, Blackpool, Keighley, Workington, Rochdale, Dewsbury, Swinton, London Skolars, Hunslet and York will all be looking at the challenges ahead and licking their lips at the prospect of winning the title, moving up in the world to the higher division...

AND picking up a cool £50,000 to help along the way. You can even miss out on the automatic route, go

up via the play-offs and still collect a handy £20,000.

Oldham, the Nearly Men of second division rugby in 2007 and 2008, know what it feels like to crash at the final hurdle of the Grand Final.

And for the team that suffers that fate this year there will be some small consolation in the form of a cheque for £10,000.

So its money, money, money for Championship One clubs this year - £50,000 for the club that will strut its stuff as top dog come early September; £20,000 for the Grand Final winners in early October; and £10,000 for the outfit that experiences the Grand Final heartbreak that Roughyeds suffered two years on the run.

It's all part of a total £200,000-plus prize package for the two Co-operative Championship divisions as the RFL strives hard to promote the sport below

Super League as a product that can stand alone and on its own two feet in the battle to put bums on seats.

Teams in the Co-operative Championships will continue to get television exposure, as they did last year, with Oldham already booked in to share a couple of slots in the Sky Sports schedule.

Our game at York City Knights will be played on the evening of Thursday, June 25 and our clash with London Skolars at Boundary Park will go ahead on Thursday, August 6, both games kicking off at 7.30pm and both screened live by Sky.

Championship One threatens to be another season packed full of drama, elation and bitter disappointment in a helter-skelter ride of highs and lows as ten clubs battle for two promotion places.

**It all starts here today. Hang on to your hats... it's going to be quite a ride!**

# View from the inside...



**In true Oldham style here we are kicking off our Championship One season a week before the rest of the division.**

As you will be aware we have done our utmost to ensure that, for the first time, all our home matches are played at Roughyed Stadium and in that respect we are grateful to John Chadwick and Blackpool for

agreeing to bring this match forward from June or straight away that idea would have fallen on its face!

There is certainly never a dull moment at the club and we constantly have a series of challenges that other clubs don't have to contend with.

Starting a week early will, however, give us an opportunity to put down a marker as with the season consisting of only 18 matches this time there will be little room for error.

Today is the starting point of what we hope will culminate in a successful year come September and everybody at the club is focussed on what we want to do - not only today but every week.

Every club in the division will start off their league campaign with hopes and aspirations and regardless of how their season has gone thus far will be keen to make an impression in the division and our opponents today will be no exception. Blackpool have recruited well and have already made people sit up and notice that they will be a tough proposition this time around.

For our part we must focus on ourselves and doing what we do best and let the opposition worry about us rather than the other way around.

The quality within our squad speaks for itself and we must now be

rectifying the things that have not been right so far and maintaining the things which have because we know only too well from previous experience that mental preparation is just as important as physical preparation each week.

Looking at the teams within the division it is hard to see where points will be picked up easily but easy to see where points will be difficult to come by as all the teams look stronger than last time around. There is no doubt that whoever does well this season will have done so on merit by being consistent and disciplined and those are two attributes we as a club must strive to attain.

The Challenge cup draw made last Monday has thrown up an interesting clash with us facing our first ever game against French opposition and we will be doing our best to make that another memorable occasion but today is all about league points and lets hope we can get off to a winning start and go to the top of the table!

Once again please get behind the boys and play your part in creating a great atmosphere and hopefully three points!

**Thanks for your support.**

*Chris Hamilton*

Chief Executive

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## INTRODUCING JULIE, OUR NEW COMMERCIAL MANAGER

**THE board is delighted to announce the appointment as club commercial manager of Julie Cleave from Warrington, who worked in a similar capacity for Super League club Warrington Wolves between 2002 and 2005.**



Julie, who is 48, has a career background in sales and, through her connection with the Wolves, has become a rugby league fanatic. She was commercial manager in the Warrington club's Wilderspool days and during the period when the Wolves were

relocating to the Halliwell Jones Stadium.

In the past three years she has managed a public house in Warrington, but in her own words she has "hugely missed the super world of rugby league." Julie started work with the Roughyeds last week and really enjoyed her first game day last Sunday when we won through to the fourth round of the Carnegie Challenge Cup with a 26-8 triumph over Yorkshire amateurs Charlston Rovers -- our third Challenge Cup win over the same opponents in six years.

"It was fantastic to be involved again on game day," said Julie, "and doing the job I love best.

"When the Oldham opportunity arose I was interviewed by (chief executive) Chris Hamilton and I quickly realised it would be the right job for me. The club is ambitious and striving to move forward, and so am I.

"My job will be all about developing contacts and building relationships with people. We need the support of the town and its business community, but partnerships are a two-way thing and I will be keen to make sure that we as a club do all we can to promote the businesses of our sponsors and backers.

"When people in this area get to know me they will soon see that that is how I work."

On leaving school, Julie served in the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) for eight years before spending the next ten years selling newspaper advertising for the Warrington Guardian series, working on various titles in different areas.

She later became sales manager, a post she held for several years, of the Devere Group's Village Hotel in Warrington, and it was while working in this capacity that she developed a keen interest in Warrington Wolves, professionally at first but eventually as an avid supporter.

Julie, who lives in Warrington and has a 21-year-old son, Glenn, leapt at the chance to join the Wolves' staff in 2002 and went on to spend three years as commercial manager during a time of great activity and excitement at the club, highlighted by the move from Wilderspool to the Halliwell Jones.

"I love the game," she added, "and I can't tell you how much I have missed working in the sport in the last three years. It's great to be back, and I'm just eagerly looking forward to the challenge." Because her Dad played for Warrington Rugby Union Club her youth was spent in a union environment, but all that was to change when she got involved with the Wolves -- and rugby league.

Here at Oldham, she will be working hard over the next few weeks getting to know the area, its commerce and its business people.

If you want to speak to the club on any matter relating to commercial activity, sponsorship or forging a partnership between your business and Oldham RLFC (1997) Ltd you can contact Julie at the Roughyeds office on 0161 628 3677.

## WHERE AND WHEN WE PLAY



Date	Comp	Opponents	V	Time	Res	Score	Att
Fri, Feb 13	NRC	Widnes Vikings	A	7.30pm	W	22-20	2,783
Wed, Feb 18	NRC	Rochdale Hornets	H	7.30pm	W	54-4	1,028
Sun, Feb 22	NRC	Sheffield Eagles	H	3.00pm	L	22-34	1,173
Sun, Mar 1	NRC	Hunslet Hawks	A	2.00pm	W	32-14	582
Sun, Mar 8	CCC3	Sharlston Rovers	H	3.00pm	W	26-8	800
Sun, Mar 15	CC1	Blackpool Panthers	H	3.00pm			
Sun, Mar 22	CC1	Keighley Cougars	A	3.00pm			
Sun, Mar 29	CC1	Workington Town	H	3.00pm			
Sun, April 5	CCC4	Lezignan	H	3.00pm			
Fri, April 10	CC1	Rochdale Hornets	A	3.00pm			
Mon, April 13	CC1	Dewsbury Rams	H	8.00pm			
Sun, April 26	CC1	Swinton Lions	H	3.00pm			
Mon, May 4	CC1	London Skolars	A	3.00pm			
Sun, May 10	Carnegie CC (5)						
Sun, May 17	CC1	Hunslet Hawks	H	3.00pm			
Sun, May 24	CC1	Swinton Lions	A	3.00pm			
Sun, May 31	Carnegie CC (Quarter-Final)						
Sun, June 7	NRC (Quarter-Final)						
Sun, June 21	NRC (Semi-Final)						
Thurs, June 25	CC1	York City Knights	A	7.30pm			
Sun, July 5	CC1	Workington Town	A	3.00pm			
Sun, July 12	NRC Final (Bloomfield Road)						
Sun, July 19	CC1	Keighley Cougars	H	3.00pm			
Sun, July 26	CC1	Dewsbury Rams	A	3.00pm			
Sun, Aug 2	CC1	Rochdale Hornets	H	3.00pm			
Thurs, Aug 6	CC1	London Skolars	H	7.30pm			
Sun, Aug 16	CC1	Blackpool Panthers	A	3.00pm			
Sun, Aug 23	CC1	York City Knights	H	3.00pm			
Sun, Sep 6	CC1	Hunslet Hawks	A	3.00pm			

Play-offs start Friday, Sept 11  
Grand Finals Day Sunday, October 4

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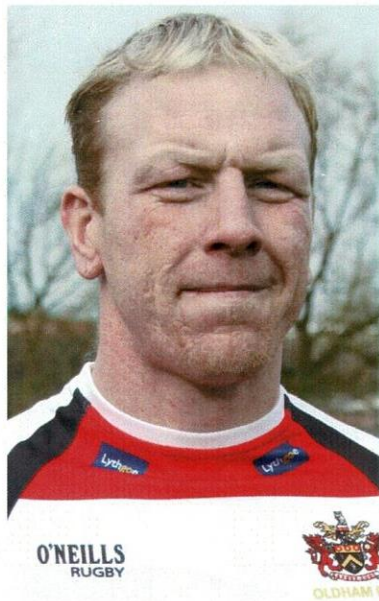
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**PLAYER PROFILE**

**No 4 PAUL REILLY**



Roger Halstead talks to the man who went from novice to headline-grabber in only four short years.

**IT'S HARDLY THE LIFE OF REILLY FOR A PART-TIME PRO WITH A FULL-TIME JOB**

**AFTER 11 seasons at Huddersfield, England caps, nearly 200 Super League games, a Challenge Cup final appearance and a serious spinal injury that would have floored lesser men, Paul Reilly couldn't contemplate turning his**

**back on the game that had given him his living for more than a decade.**

"When he was lying in a hospital bed waiting for the removal of a disc - "No 7 disc to be precise," he recalled - he knew that, on the wrong side of 30 and after an injury like that, he would never again get up in the morning and go to work in a track suit and through the doors of a Super League club.

If he was going to stay in the sport he loved as a player it would be either as an amateur or as a part-time pro. Enter 'Junior' (or Marcus St Hilaire to most of us). "Come to Oldham," said Junior. "It's great. I can recommend it . . . and it will be like old times."

Reilly and St Hilaire have known each other since they were kids. They were in the same class at Rawthorpe High School; they played in the same youth team at Moldgreen; and although their pro careers went in different directions they linked up again at Huddersfield when Junior returned from Leeds.

"And now we're back together again at Oldham," said Paul, "and I'm learning how to adjust to holding down a full-time job AND playing pro rugby league at the same time.

"I'll be looking for another job soon because the one I have is coming to an end. But since I came to Oldham I've had a driving job - my alarm goes off at 4.15am, I'm out of the house by five o'clock, get home at 4.00pm and then leave for training at 4.30. It's a long day for a 32-year-old family man, but if I want to stay in the game at this level - and I most certainly do - it's got to be done.

"I'm happy here and I'm glad I took Junior's advice. Whether it's Super League or Co-operative Championship One, rugby is rugby. The crack with the lads is the same, you take the knocks just the same and you love scoring tries just the same.

"Had I been forced to finish altogether it would have been a real blow to me. I hope my next full-time job is a bit less demanding because it has been telling on my rugby. I know that. It was great to score three tries at Hunslet and play virtually the full game, but I know I haven't been at my best because I have been a little bit tired.

"I know the best is yet to come. I am looking within myself to come up with massive

improvement and I know it will come, especially if I can sort out a job with better hours."

Paul has a fascinating story to tell. He is the only one of a family of four - sister Jessica and brothers Karl, Daniel and Sean - to play rugby and even this Huddersfield Giants legend didn't handle a ball until he was 14 going on 15. His school pal David Holmes finally persuaded him to join him at Moldgreen and the rest, as they say, is history.

At the age of 16 he was playing for the Moldgreen first team in the National Conference and two years later he had to pinch himself to assure himself that he was not dreaming: that he actually was sitting on the Huddersfield bench at The Boulevard of all places waiting for his first-team debut.

The young Reilly clearly had a lot to offer. But when he was playing for Moldgreen as a boy his rags-to-riches story didn't follow the usual pattern. There was no talent scout inviting him to sign pro, no interest whatsoever from the pro clubs.

He went himself to Halifax for a trial, but nothing came of that. Then he walked into Fartown, headquarters of his home-town club, and offered himself for trials. It was the start of an 11-year love story. Reilly and the Giants became inseparable.

"Some clubs came in for me when Giants got relegated to the Northern Ford Premiership," he recalled, "but there was no way I was going to leave my hometown club. I vowed to help them to get back up there, and we did it in one year after going through the season unbeaten.

"One of the proudest moments of my rugby life was getting a testimonial with my hometown club. It was capped off with a special match at Headingley, Leeds v Huddersfield, which formed a joint benefit game for Keith Senior and me. That was a match and an occasion I will never forget."

But back to the beginning. Six weeks after Darryl van de Velde had offered the 18-year-old pro terms he made his debut off the bench at Hull in one of the most intimidating stadiums in the game - the Boulevard. The very name brings back memories of the Threepenny Stand and of an atmosphere that used to get to the most experienced of campaigners.

Paul takes up the tale. "I can still see it now," he said. "Our full-back Ben Barton took a knock and I was told: 'Get warmed up'. It was almost four years to the day since I had followed my pal into Moldgreen as green as grass.

"I must have done okay because I was picked at full-back for the next match against Widnes at The McAlpine and I won the man of the match.

"I will never forget those early days. It was awesome just walking into the same dressing room as players like Gary Schofield and Phil Veivers, stars I had seen on TV and read about in the papers. They were great with me and I try to be the same with youngsters who are just coming into the game now.

"I had a great time at Huddersfield. It was a fantastic 11 years of my life and even now I feel so proud - and touched - when I'm walking through the town and kids recognise me and want to say hello.

"It makes me realise how fortunate I've been; how much I've had from the game; and how much I want to put something back.

"Looking a little bit further ahead, beyond Oldham, I want to get into coaching or into something where I can help to develop the sport at grassroots level. Take schools for instance. There used to be a lot more rugby league in the schools than there

is today and until we sort that out - right at the bottom - we'll never compete with the Aussies."

Reilly relishes the memory of his career highlights . . . like playing for England under Karl Harrison and Denis Betts . . . like scoring two tries and lifting a man-of-the-match award against Ireland . . . like his testimonial with Huddersfield . . . and like playing in a Challenge Cup final against St Helens at Twickenham and pulling off THAT tackle that fans still talk about several years later.

Saints winger Ade Gardner had broken free up the touchline and Reilly covered across field and came from nowhere to bring him down. Words cannot do justice to a tackle in a million, but its one they still talk about in Huddersfield and beyond.

Modesty prevents Paul giving a first-person description but, speaking of the game in general terms, he felt that Saints' vastly superior big-match experience was a key factor in their victory.

"Despite the disappointment of defeat it was an overwhelming experience," he said. "Just to walk out at Twickenham into a packed stadium and with so much tension around took my breath away, and I think it affected a lot of the other Huddersfield lads too.

"Saints had seen it all before, and that made a huge difference."

Only mountains and valleys last for ever, of course, and it came as a huge wrench when it was time to bid the Giants goodbye. Had it been anyone other than John Kear who had invited him to join Wakefield he wouldn't have gone.

It was to prove a disappointing final curtain on his Super League career. A few games into his Belle Vue experience he hurt his neck against Leeds and a game or two after that he suffered a recurrence at Hull, this time seriously. For a considerable period of time his career was threatened. He admits to panic when he realised he had no feeling and he passed through a period of his life when rugby was firmly put into perspective.

Surgeons removed one disc and had considered taking a second one, but if they had done that he would never again have been able to play any form of contact sport. It wasn't an option for Paul.

Months later, after exhaustive tests and assurances from the medical world that he could play again, he was turning out for Moldgreen in a couple of outings to get his confidence back before he signed for Oldham.

He is convinced it was the right move for him and he is relishing the prospect of helping Roughyeds to achieve their goal of promotion to the higher division in 2009.

Family wise, he lives in Huddersfield with wife Paula and they have six children, teenage twins Bradley and Jordan; teenage girls Leah and Jade; and six-year-old Cody and three-year-old Joni.

There's never a dull moment in the life of this Reilly - and I guess he wouldn't want it any other way.

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# A NIGHT OF SPICE!

**A PARTY of 35 Oldham players and backroom staff, headed by Kiwi coach Tony Benson, went out for an evening meal together in their build-up to today's big kick-off in Co-operative Championship One.**

As part of a bonding exercise ahead of the first league game of the season against Blackpool Panthers here at Boundary Park, the Benson boys were delighted to accept an invitation to enjoy a meal after training at an Indian restaurant and bar in Peel Street, Chadderton.

'Delight Spice', owned and managed by Oldham-born Malik Miah, is but a good goalkick's distance from the Roughyeds' office and shop in Lansdowne Road, Chadderton and Malik had heard all about the exploits of his local rugby league team. "It was my absolute pleasure to have the boys of the Oldham Rugby League Club in my restaurant," said Malik, "and they go into their league campaign with the best wishes

of everybody at 'Delight Spice'. "I enjoyed myself in their company, and I think the rugby league players enjoyed our hospitality in return."

Malik spent much of his boyhood in Bangladesh, but he returned to Oldham when he was 12 and he grew up in a town in which the professional rugby league club formed an integral part of the local community.

It was only recently, however, that he began to take more than a passing interest in the Roughyeds.

Now, he plans to decorate some of the walls in his restaurant with pictures of the Roughyeds players and he has vowed to watch the team in action at Boundary Park before the season is much older.

"Malik's hospitality was first class," said coach Benson. "The lads were bowled over by his generosity and by the way his staff looked after

us. The food was sensational. I eat a lot of Asian foods, but this was the nicest I've ever had.

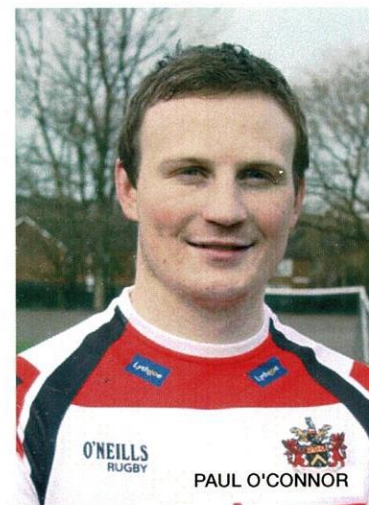
"Malik is going to get behind the club and support the players and we will be returning the hospitality when he is ready to come and watch us play."

He has owned 'Delight Spice' for the past three years, but it was only recently that the premises were refurbished and extended to accommodate live entertainment every weekend.



# ROBERTS AND O'CONNOR NAMED IN FORM TEAM

**Congratulations are certainly due to Roughyeds Paul O'Connor and skipper Robert Roberts for their inclusion in the Rugby League World Team of the Month printed below.**



Both of these players have been exceptional in their own individual ways in our four 4 NRC matches. Oldham can probably count themselves unlucky that Andy Ballard wasn't in there as well, as he was easily the top points scorer in The Northern Rail Cup with 52 points, his nearest rival being Johnny Woodcock from Sheffield Eagles.

**Team: Paul O'Connor (OLDHAM); Lee Paterson (Halifax), Kane Epati (Dewsbury), Mike Mitchell**

**(York), Paddy Flynn (Widnes); Jon Presley (Keighley), Ben Black (Halifax); Frank Watene (Halifax), Sean Penkywicz (Halifax), Scott Law (Keighley), Taron Wildey (Dewsbury), Dylan Nash (Gateshead), Rob Roberts (OLDHAM).**

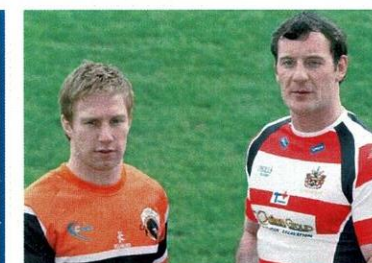
It is interesting to note that seven of the 13 come from Championship 1 (two each for Dewsbury, Keighley and Oldham and one for York.)

From the Championship, Halifax have four and Gateshead and Widnes one apiece.

In many respects the players chosen are from the clubs expected to do well in the League according to the bookmakers.

In the Championship, Halifax are favourites at 2/1 with Widnes at 9/4. In Championship 1 Dewsbury and Oldham are joint 6/4 favourites with York at 6/1 and Keighley 8/1.

But you can be certain of one thing there - nobody will be taking anything for granted in the Oldham camp, who know it will be a tough, long season, having experienced being favourites for promotion in the last two seasons and just falling short.



**Panthers and Roughyeds go head to head at the RFL's official launch of Co-operative Championship and Co-operative Championship One, ahead of today's opening game between Oldham and Blackpool here at Boundary Park.**

Blackpool boss Martin Crompton has built a handy-looking squad and he has targeted a play-off place in 2009.

Among his key signings are half-backs Martin Keavney and Liam McGovern and back-row forward Ian Hodson, the former Oldham favourite.

Hodson isn't the only ex-Roughyed on the Blackpool books. Damian Munro, Simon Svabic, Craig Farrimond and Chris Campbell are all at the seaside, while club chairman John Chadwick and coach Crompton have both had Oldham connections in the past, back in Watersheddings days.

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# GAME ON



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The league season kicks off here plus our experts predict winners



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*Getting to know you... Mennell and Duffy take centre stage*  
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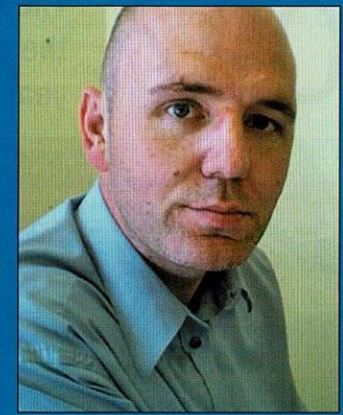
## NEXT WEEK

We profile the resurgent Rams ahead of start of Championship One



# A draw to inflate cup dreams

As draws go it was one of the more extraordinary ones the Challenge Cup has seen. There are five all Super League ties in the fourth round after Monday night, giving the BBC executives one of those headaches they must dream about. Who to show live? what are the odds on that? Etc, etc.



While those clever chaps in broadcasting house decide who else to show apart from Leeds versus St Helens, the draw has opened some serious doors for those outside rugby league's top flight.

Without wanting to tempt fate the Championship and Championship One is guaranteed (by my slightly dodgy reckoning) at least seven teams in the fifth round, assuming Featherstone beat Wath Brow and Oldham see off Lezignan – admittedly no easy task.

For Barrow and Keighley there is the chance to claim famous victories at home against Wigan and Castleford respectively while York must travel to Warrington and Leigh likewise to Wakefield. If one of them can upset the odds that would mean half the remaining sides in the last 16 would be non Super League. Surely that must be some kind of record in modern times!

Then what happens if we get three or more all Super League ties in the fifth round? The mind boggles.

Back to reality and the start of the league campaign. When the Super League franchise system was agreed all those years ago many knowledgeable rugby league watchers predicted bad times ahead for the then National Leagues with no automatic route back into the big time.

In fact what has transpired is exactly the opposite and the two divisions begin this weekend in a health as rude as we have seen for many a year. The Championship looks a great division and as wide open as it has ever been. Yes Halifax look strong but there are so many teams who, on their day, could and will probably beat Matt Calland's side.

It is undoubtedly hugely competitive and that can only be good for the sport.

Ian Mort touches down for Leigh in the Challenge Cup on Sunday. The Centurions face Wakefield in the fourth round



# Who will shine in 09?

The league season kicks off this weekend and results in the cup competitions have provided good pointers to the year ahead. We asked six experts for their predictions



## The co-operative

### A) WHO DO YOU THINK WILL WIN THE CHAMPIONSHIP AND WHY?

Widnes haven't had the best of starts but I'm sure they'll come good. Halifax are already looking good in the Northern Rail Cup, though, so I think they'll be the team to beat.



**DAVE WOODS** – ex Thunder coach

### B) WHO WILL BE THE PLAYER TO WATCH IN THE CHAMPIONSHIP AND WHY?

Dylan Nash (pictured) is a young lad I had at Gateshead. He's a quick and powerful player. He breaks tackles, has a good one-handed offload and a good step so he's got everything really.

### C) WHO WILL WIN CHAMPIONSHIP ONE AND WHY?

If Oldham are going to win it, it's got to be this year. They probably should have won it last year but have kept the nucleus together. Otherwise, I think York are a dead-set dark horse.

### D) WHO WILL BE THE PLAYER TO WATCH IN CHAMPIONSHIP ONE AND WHY?

Oldham's Rob Roberts is a great leader and he's big and strong. He gets them around the park really well, leads by example and he's got experience on his side as well.



### a) Who do you think will win the Championship and why?

I honestly believe the Championship is as wide open as it has ever been. The main reason being there is no deposed Super League side ready to do the almost too predictable immediate return to the higher level. In respect of the teams who will contest the top spot I feel Halifax, Barrow, Featherstone and Widnes or Leigh will be in and around the top with Halifax eventually winning out. The halves and hooker – Govin, Penkywicz, Gleeson and Beswick – form a good spine for the team and with a good rotation of forwards I believe they will have a sustainable squad of players through the season



**ANDY KELLY** – ex Rams coach

### b) Who will be the player to watch in the Championship and why?

Greg McNally (Whitehaven) – like a lot of people I just feel he has the all-round ability to be a big success and will want to prove his readiness to step up

### c) Who will win Championship One and why?

Championship One is, if you believe what you read, a two-horse race with Oldham and Dewsbury looking to step up a division. And, on paper looking at the squads, it is easy to see why especially in the case of Oldham. The Rams have recruited a very hard working and industrious squad, a number of key experienced players and a good back up of youth. The challenge to the crown will also come from York and possibly Keighley. I can't separate the two main contenders so won't try, just suffice to say it won't be an easy passage through the course of the season. Watch out for the likes of Blackpool and Hunslet, who will peg back some sides' ambitions this year

### d) Who will be the player to watch in Championship One and why?

Alex Bretherton of the Dewsbury Rams missed most of last season through injury. He has the all round ability to play a major role in their title and promotion push. He is a player who, if he avoids injury, could step up not one but two divisions.

A) WHO DO YOU THINK WILL WIN THE CHAMPIONSHIP AND WHY? I'm not sure what's going on at Widnes – very up and down – so I'll go for a resurgent Halifax to do a Northern Rail/Championship double.



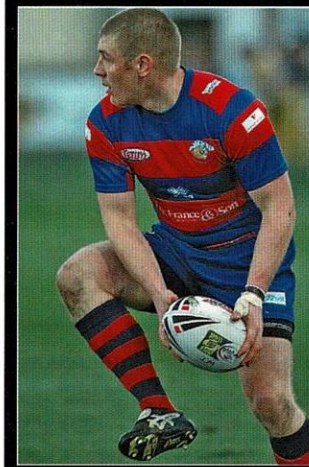
**DANNY LOCKWOOD** – Editor, League Weekly

B) WHO WILL BE THE PLAYER TO WATCH IN THE CHAMPIONSHIP AND WHY?

If Widnes are going to get their noses over the line they need James Webster to stay fit and build performances around him, as he did at Hull KR.

### C) WHO WILL WIN CHAMPIONSHIP ONE AND WHY?

It's a three-way race and Oldham will be hoping their experiences last season will stand them in good stead. York will be buzzing too but as a Dewsbury bloke I'll put my heart where my head should be.



D) WHO WILL BE THE PLAYER TO WATCH IN CHAMPIONSHIP ONE AND WHY?

Do twins count as one player? Paul (pictured) and David March have the talent to spoil the aspirations of their 'home boys' at the Tetley's Stadium.

### a) Who do you think will win the Championship and why?

Halifax did well last year and despite losing Graham Holroyd, they've recruited well, bolstering an already impressive squad. Some thumping wins already show they mean business this year.



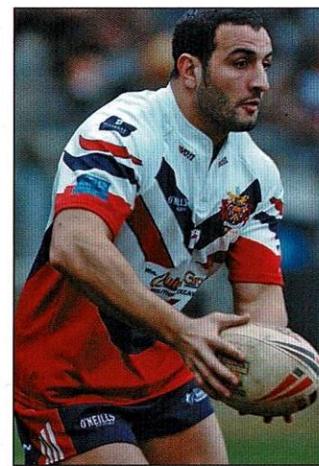
**BEN COLLINS**

### b) Who will be the player to watch in the Championship and why?

Said Tamghart (pictured) was a revelation at Oldham last year and it will be interesting to see what impact he makes, not only at a higher level, but among a quality side like Halifax.

### c) Who will win Championship One and why?

Dewsbury have regrouped following relegation and their impressive Northern Rail Cup form, including victory at ambitious Featherstone, shows they are primed for a tilt at Grand Final glory.



d) Who will be the player to watch in Championship One and why?

World Cup star Charlie Wabo has brought some extra colour and charisma to Hunslet Hawks and it will be worth watching how the PNG international takes to the English game.

### a) Who do you think will win the Championship and why?

As much as Halifax have impressed in the Northern Rail Cup I am not sure they should be as short as 11/10 – the odds we have got from Totesport – to finish in the regular season. Sport and rugby league is littered with clubs who could not maintain the pace. That said Matt Calland has assembled a great squad with few discernible weaknesses and I can't see past them and Widnes. As well prepared as Featherstone are, they need to make enormous strides to make up ground compared to last season. In conclusion I just fancy Widnes to sneak it in the final furlong.



**MARK FLANAGAN** – Editor, Game On

### b) Who will be the player to watch in the Championship and why?

Andy Kain at Featherstone can be the main beneficiary of playing alongside someone of the calibre of Iestyn Harris. The scrum-half has made a good start to this season and at the age of 23 is ready to blossom with some super players around him.

### c) Who will win Championship One and why?

I have got strong fancy for York. While Dewsbury have been catching the eye by all-but winning their group in the Northern Rail Cup, the Knights have done superbly, beating Whitehaven (albeit midweek) and giving Batley a game. Will definitely be Oldham, them and the Rams in the top three.

### d) Who will be the player to watch in Championship One and why?

Would love to be able to pluck out a teenager on his way up but can't look past Graham Holroyd. Age is not on his side but still has more than enough to stand out in this division. If he can stay clear of injury will nudge Swinton up a couple of places and into the play-offs.

### A) WHO DO YOU THINK WILL WIN THE CHAMPIONSHIP AND WHY?

Winners: Halifax. Fax are a settled squad under a familiar coach, making them the safe bet to better Widnes in the race for the first 'tick' towards the 2011 licence application.



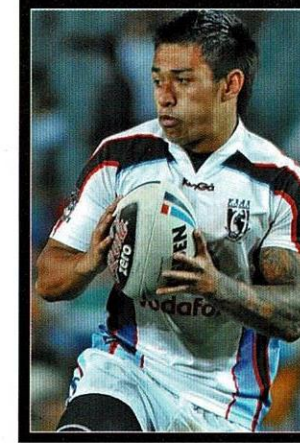
**PAUL BENNETT** – Columnist

### B) WHO WILL BE THE PLAYER TO WATCH IN THE CHAMPIONSHIP AND WHY?

Aaron Groom (Sheffield Eagles, pictured) – impressed for Fiji during the World Cup and, providing there are no hiccups with his visa, the half back should give the Eagles an extra dimension.

### C) WHO WILL WIN CHAMPIONSHIP ONE AND WHY?

Winners: Oldham. The Roughyeds' consistency should make it third-time lucky, edging a close-fought title battle between themselves, Dewsbury and York.



D) WHO WILL BE THE PLAYER TO WATCH IN CHAMPIONSHIP ONE AND WHY?

Paul March (York City Knights) – the former Super League star and Knights player-coach seems really up for this season in an effort to get his men promoted at the second time of asking.

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# the world according to **SCULLY**

**Paul Sculthorpe had some great times in the Challenge Cup and here gives his thoughts on 'the magic' of the competition and the season so far**

THE engage Super League season is well underway and the Co-operative Championships are about to begin, and already I think we've had some very competitive games with matches being very difficult to predict.

The Challenge Cup fourth round draw took place this week and it has thrown up some very interesting ties, the highlight of which is my old team St Helens travelling to Leeds.

Most of the media focus, and I'm sure the BBC cameras, will be on this match, which would have made a perfect final I suppose.

It is interesting to see that at least five Super League teams won't be making it into the next round as they are drawn against each other.

This makes the already enthralling Challenge Cup even more exciting as more teams from the Co-operative Championships will be making it further in the competition and providing tremendous excitement for their supporters.

For instance, Keighley will be delighted with a home tie against Castleford as this will hopefully increase the number of fans attending from both clubs, with Cougars fans hoping for a top flight scalp.

That's the magic of the cup across all sports, and it keeps everyone – fans and players – excited.

Tony Smith's new Warrington side will have an opportunity to get back in the winning habit with a game against York. I'm sure they'll be viewing this as a chance to start a good run out and reignite their poor start to the season.

With the French contingent in the draw, it adds to a really exciting fourth round, and I'm sure there will be a few surprises as the competition progresses.

I was lucky enough to play a few times in Challenge Cup finals and win four of them, although last year was hugely disappointing coming off injured only a couple of minutes into what was my final appearance.

One of the highlights of my career was the 2004 final when I lifted the cup for the first time as St Helens skipper at the Millennium Stadium.

It was an amazing day with glorious weather and to beat Wigan, our big rivals, made it a special occasion.

The big downside however was that my brother Danny was on the losing team for Wigan, and as much as I felt joy in winning, I was thinking of Danny and the disappointment he was feeling after the final whistle.

Lining up in a final against Danny made it very special for the Sculthorpes but his heartbreak showed me how important the Challenge Cup is. It's a competition everyone grows up with and many people's first rugby league memories are from watching it on TV or attending the final.

The fact that supporters from all clubs attend the final illustrates first-hand that rugby league is a very strong community and I think it's testament to our sport and its supporters that this happens each year.

As I mentioned, The Co-operative Championships kick off this week with Thursday's first live match on Sky seeing Widnes taking on Toulouse.

I've said before that I felt Widnes should have been given a Super League licence and it will be interesting to see how they progress this season under the new stewardship of Paul Cullen

Best of luck to all the teams playing this weekend – enjoy the games.



**Paul Sculthorpe is a Co-operative  
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# OFFMESSAGE

Who's next for the chop? That question seems to be dominating RL right now. Ireland coach **ANDY KELLY** bemoans the sacking culture

**W**ELL it's here. The new season is underway. Super League is approaching round five, the Northern Rail Cup is into the knock-out stages and the Championship starts this weekend. One trophy is already decided with the World Club Challenge Trophy heading down under to Manly (didn't I hear calls of sack the coach?).

We have teams who are setting the pace against the odds – Wakefield Wildcats, Hull KR, Castleford and Hull – while Leeds are picking up where they left off (no wait on... 'keep the coach').

The other end of the scale are teams who are not meeting the expectations of supporters and pre-season pundit predictions. This then opens a new dimension where coaches become the focus of attention and their livelihoods become the subject of much speculation.

We have already seen the departure of one well respected coach. Steve McCormack became the first victim of the season having lost his position as head coach of Widnes Vikings after one game. It is difficult to comprehend a decision which means Steve is coaching Scotland at the World Cup in Australia to watching Wigan Athletic and out of the game.

Speculation and attention soon switches as the witch hunt continues.

Not long ago Brian Noble's head was on the block with the Wigan Warriors crowd baying for blood. He got a stay of execution with back-to-back wins – one away and more importantly one at home. The head swivels and Jimmy Lowes of Warrington Wolves catches the eye. He becomes the bookies favourite or at least was. Just as the axe is raised the club appoint Tony Smith and Jimmy has a chance to survive being cast into the wilderness.

But we must have a sacrificial lamb and Shaun McRae of Salford City Reds becomes the new bookies' choice and the chairman gives him an unconditional vote of support (oh no! He will definitely get the sack now).

Then there is Steve McNamara of the Bradford Bulls. If you believe what you hear he is another coach teetering on the brink and what about Kevin Walters at Catalans. Is the form of the French team good enough? That's near to half of the coaches in the Super League who are failing and ready for the chop. Drop down the division and we have more coaches being put under the same pressure – Dave Rotheram, Paul Kidd and don't forget Dave Woods – he didn't even get to the start line.

One thing is for sure ... this will not end.

Only a single club can ultimately win the prize. A few will gain credit in the challenge but most will fall short – this is a fact.

No relegation at the top end of the game should bring stability but it would appear not for the coaches.

The club's facilities for training and preparation of the team, injuries to players and fiscal policies can have an effect on the coach's ability to do his job. None of this is relevant when the jury sit and decide a coach is failing and indeed judgement passed and the verdict is 'failed'. Results and expectation are the real coach killer.

For coaches under pressure there is also the unsightly prospect of supporters turning on them. Insults are thrown and they are almost exclusively personal. A coach's dignity is bought for the price of a season ticket or entrance to the ground.

He also gets no right to reply as this gives licence for further abuse and families, whose only crime is to support their husbands, partners and dads, become legitimate targets for the less than complimentary comment.

Coaches are pretty resilient and realistic people who know that some of the game-related comment is legitimate. If results don't go the way they should they have a very short period of grace to try and turn things around or the boardroom beckons and ultimately the proverbial sack is the outcome.

A coach understands that that is part of a coaches life, even if they don't always agree with the decision.

What is really hard to accept is that irrespective of many years of good work and improvement brought about by a coach – with a team or individual players – when this collapse of faith comes and in the short term results are poor, he is out on his ear and no longer able to do a job in the game.

Karl Harrison, Gary Wilkinson Steve McCormack, Gary Price, Steve Deakin – to name but a few – are all waiting for some other poor bloke to lose his living so they can attempt to resurrect theirs.

What is also disappointing is that the game has no other place for his experience. As rugby league grows and spreads its boundaries geographically and attempts to appeal to more and more age groups and genders there is no place to fit, no service to render.

They can only 'head coach' at clubs and in no other area of the game or so it seems. A number of coaches will drift into the other code and find a useful conduit for their skills. For the rest it is back to reading the trade press and looking for the next victim of the dreaded chop.

This is not a gripe at the fact coaches get the sack, as that is part of the life they lead. But when the time comes spare a thought for his dignity and family and if you've watched the game for as long as you say, keep your comments within the boundaries of decency.

The bloke you're shouting at has a family – probably close by – will have made sacrifices over and above the required remit in his desire to bring the much sought-after success to a club.

He didn't set out to coach a team to lose or perform badly, is aware of the pressure he is under and will ultimately accept his fate and lose his living.

He will almost certainly leave with dignity and pride – but be left at times with neither.



Former Dewsbury and Wakefield coach Andy Kelly

## Vikings turn to ex-England coach

WIDNES Vikings appointed Paul Cullen as their Head Coach on Monday evening.

The former England, Warrington and Whitehaven head coach agreed a two-year contract with Widnes and was due to take charge following the Vikings' opening Co-operative Championship game against Toulouse.

Widnes Chairman Steve O'Connor is delighted with the acquisition of Cullen, who led England to a Federation Shield victory over Tonga at Widnes in 2006.

"We had 17 applications and it was pleasing to see that the name of Widnes is one that is still held in high regard within the rugby league world," said O'Connor.

"I have met with three of the applicants and during my meeting with Paul I was impressed with his enthusiasm and vision for the future of the club, one which I share with him.

"Paul has coached at all levels of the sport and will bring with him a wealth of experience to the role.

"This, coupled with the exciting squad we have, should give us the platform to launch an assault on the Co-operative Championship while being just two games away from the Northern Rail Cup final."

Paul Cullen is looking forward to life at the Stobart Stadium Halton.

He said: "I'm really excited to be joining Widnes. The plan is simple, we need to get Widnes into Super League where we belong."

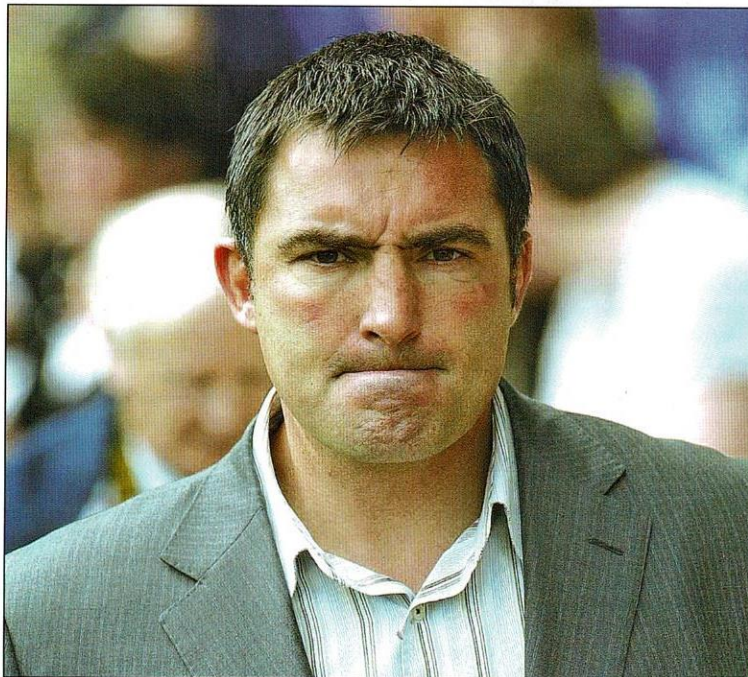
O'Connor added: "I would like to put on record my thanks to John Stankevitch for the work he has undertaken over the last few weeks and I am sure he will be a valuable member of our coaching team for the future."

## Ballard's target

ANDY BALLARD loves a challenge – and when people tell him he has no chance of smashing Mick Nany's Oldham club record of 362 points in a season it makes him all the more determined to have a go.

"I like to prove people wrong so I've nailed that down as my personal goal for the season," said Oldham's goalkicking winger.

With four appearances so far, Ballard is doing okay. He has kicked 18 goals and scored four tries for 52 points, or an aver-



Paul Cullen is the man in charge at Widnes after this week

age of 13 a match.

Last season, when Nany smashed Pat Rich's seven-year record, he averaged between 11 and 12 points per game over the full season.

Ballard was rested and left out of the side for the Carnegie Challenge Cup win against Sharlston Rovers, but with the Roughyeds through to the fourth round of that competition and also through to the quarter-finals of the Northern Rail Cup he may yet have as many opportunities as Nany did to keep his points tally growing.

## Wednesday discount

ALL Rugby League supporters are advised that the next Wembley Wednesday will take place on March 18.

Wembley Wednesdays have been introduced by the RFL to make this year's Carnegie Challenge Cup Final even more affordable to supporters and involves more than 3,000 tickets for the Wembley showpiece being sold for the great value price of just £10.

Plenty of the discounted seats were sold on the first Wembley Wednesday (February 11) and the remaining tickets will be on

sale at the RFL Box Office from 9am on Wednesday 18.

The seats in question are located in the back three rows of Wembley's upper tier and offer breathtaking panoramic views of the pitch and exciting stadium.

Phil Williams, the RFL's Marketing Manager, said: "We want to make the Carnegie Challenge Cup Final more accessible and affordable to everyone and that is why for a limited period only we will be selling a number of Wembley final tickets for just £10.

"A Wembley final is a truly memorable occasion for the whole family, and in the current climate some of our supporters may be experiencing challenging economic times.

"We hope this move not only attracts those who might be indecisive about the Wembley final but also opens the occasion up to a whole new audience who may never have previously considered buying a ticket for one of Britain's biggest sporting events."

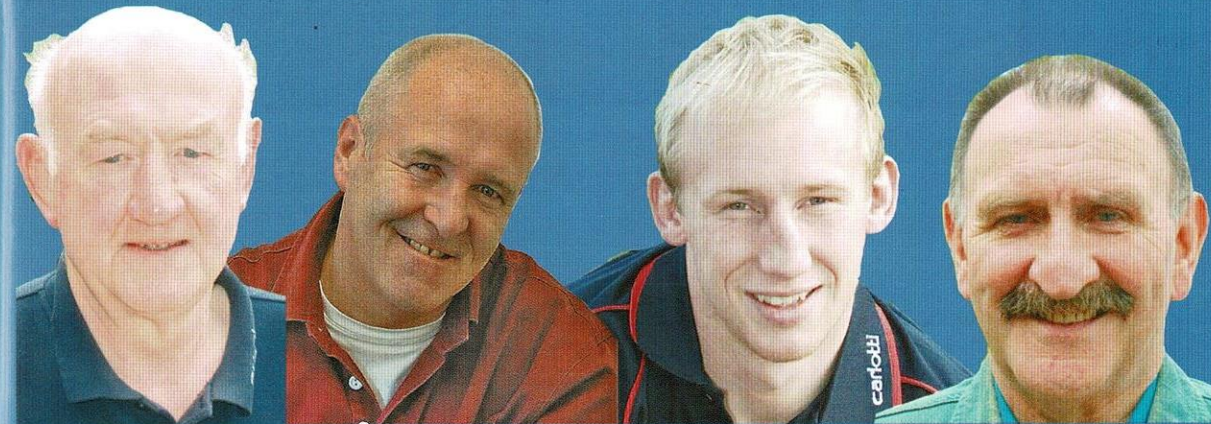
The RFL Box Office will open from 9am and will close at 5pm, and the £10 tickets will be sold via phone on 0871 226 13 13 and the website [www.rugbyleaguetickets.co.uk](http://www.rugbyleaguetickets.co.uk) on a first come, first served basis.

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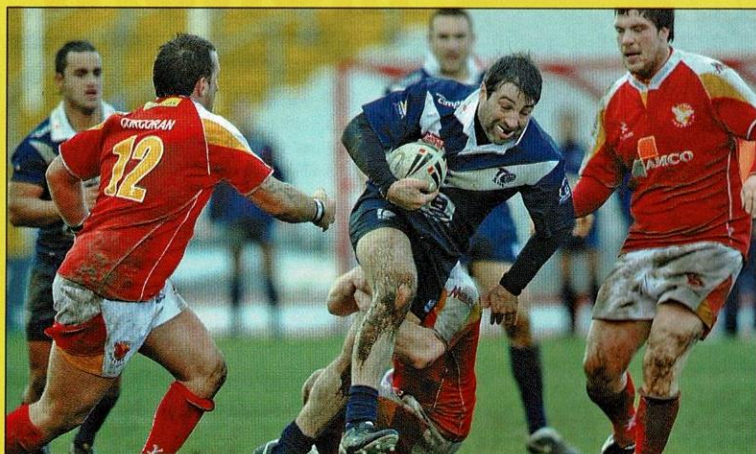
GAME ON will be produced for every regular round of Northern Rail Cup, Co-operative Championship matches, plus play-offs (up to the final) and initial stages of the Carnegie Challenge Cup. It will be on sale primarily at clubs on match day but fans can guarantee a copy by contacting Mrs Adele Latham on 01924 439498. Copies can be bought singly for £2.75 (inc p&p) or by multiples thereof. Or send a cheque made payable to Game On and send to Game On, Edward Latham House, 1 Oates Street, Dewsbury, W Yorks, WF13 1BB. At this time we cannot accept card payments.

# ACTIONREPLAY

## Doncaster and Queens await their fate



**FRENCH FLAIR...** Francois Jovani crosses for Carcassonne's solitary try against Dewsbury (above) and (below) Olivier Pramil finds a gap in the Sheffield defence for Toulouse



IT WAS rugby league's day of shame at the Keepmoat Stadium in Doncaster on Saturday with scenes of ugly violence very rarely seen in the sport's history.

Police with truncheons raced across the pitch with the match between the Dons and Queens still in progress to try and calm the fighting that had broken out in the stands. The referee called a halt to action with 61 minutes having been played. The RFL met this week to decide what further action would be required.

After 20 minutes of fighting the game was abandoned for safety reasons.

It should have been Queens' cup final, a well-deserved day out, but with just 10 minutes gone, one fan from Queens took off his shirt and got involved in a punch up. Amazingly stewards did not eject him from the ground, but the warning signs of trouble were clear.

Dons coach Tony Miller described it as: "A very sad day for Doncaster and rugby league as a sport, in the 20 years I've been involved I have never witnessed scenes like this and there is no place in rugby league for this."

Wath Brow ground out a glorious victory over LONDON SKOLARS in dreadful conditions at The Recreation Ground.

The Cumbrian amateurs battled their way back to claim a famous 14-12 victory, having trailed 2-12 with just 15 minutes to go.

Scott Teare levelled the scores with a try under the posts and Ryan Robb's simple conversion put the amateurs ahead for the first time but at the most crucial time.

The French sides put in a great showing, led by Lezignan, who won 18-6 at WORKINGTON TOWN.

In conditions much more suited to ducks than rugby league, they adapted much quicker to take the win and dump hosts Workington out of the Challenge Cup.

There was no opportunity for either side to display their true credentials and in the end it just turned into a forward battle.

Lezignan's pack were much bigger and they overcame their opponents by three tries to one to take the victory.

Carcassonne are another side used to the warm climate afforded by the south of



**RUSSIAN ADVENTURE:** Sergey Sidorov attacks the Leigh line

France so cannot have played many games in the wet and windy conditions at DEWSBURY before going down 18-6.

Carcassonne had little chance to show their French flair as ground conditions and heavy rain spoiled any chance of open football.

Dewsbury, one of the form sides of the early season, forged into an 18-0 lead by half-time but the visitors showed they can play one-up stuff, more than holding their own after the break.

There will be a queue of Championship coaches wanting a copy of the DVD from SHEFFIELD as the wraps came off Toulouse Olympique, who went down 22-6 at the Don Valley Stadium.

But it is difficult to say if they will learn a lot. Toulouse looked like a side that hasn't played a game this year and is trying to integrate new players.

With a player sent off early in the second half they were reduced to hanging on as the Eagles grew in confidence and controlled the game.

KEIGHLEY moved into the next round after a titanic battle with French visitors the Pia Donkeys, scraping a 30-26 victory.

Keighley certainly didn't make an ass of themselves as they showed great team work and determination.

Russian invaders Lokomotiv Moscow found it tougher going as they were crushed 82-6 by LEIGH.

The Centurions scored 15 tries including a hat-trick from winger Sam Reay, winning at a canter against a poor Moscow side, with the game won in the opening 13 minutes when they scored three converted tries. Trailing 46-0 at the break it looked like a record Centurions score was on the cards, but credit the Moscow side who scored the opening converted try of the second half with a glimmer of skill, before the Centurions continued to steamroller the visitors.

Among the try-scorers was man-of-the-match Martyn Ridyard, whose distribution skills were to the fore who went 80 metres for a fine individual try on the stroke of

half-time.

That wasn't the biggest win of the round, the honour going to FEATHERSTONE, whose scrum-half Andy Kain led onslaught against the outclassed Army, winning 94-2.

Man-of-the-match Kain grabbed four of Featherstone's 18 tries as they fell just short of a club record score.

Joe McLocklan and Jack Lee were halted inches short of the line in the dying seconds as three-time Challenge Cup winners Rovers narrowly failed to beat their record 96-0 victory over amateurs Castleford Lock Lane at the same stage of the competition in 2004.

WIDNES were not far behind, skipper Mark Smith leading the way for the Vikings with a hat trick of tries as they thrashed Saddleworth 88-0.

John Stankevitch's men ran in 15 unanswered scores and produced the first nil of the season which will give the Vikings the confidence they needed ahead of this week's Toulouse test, after an indifferent display last Wednesday in Cumbria.

Stankevitch said he 'challenged' Smith to put in a captain's knock and he obliged with three tries. When Smith plays well the Vikings are almost unstoppable and that was very much the case against Saddleworth.

HALIFAX also eased into round with a 80-16 victory over plucky Loughborough Students at The Shay.

For the Midlands outfit it was more of a case of enjoying the challenge of facing one of the strongest teams outside Super League, rather than expecting any miracles.

They certainly enjoyed the occasion, despite the heavy defeat amid the wintry downpours, they showed plenty of grit and determination.

They also received the biggest cheers of the day when scrum half Andy Killerby intercepted not once, but twice, as he raced over for interception tries – his second effort deserved the reception as he out-paced the cover from fully 85 metres.

YORK also marched into the fourth

round after a comfortable 50-10 win over Wigan St Patrick's at a blustery Huntingdon Stadium.

The Championship One side started off like a house on fire, scoring three tries in the opening nine minutes and never looked back.

It was much tougher for OLDHAM, who battled hard to a 26-8 victory over Sharlston.

If pride in performance counts for anything Sharlston emerged with a 100 per cent mark from their tough examination at Boundary Park.

They trailed only 12-8 until 12 minutes into the second half; getting a standing ovation at the end from Oldham fans as well as their own.

It took the Roughyeds only nine minutes to hit the front when Gary Sykes, Dave Allen and Danny Halliwell worked the short side to send winger Lucas Onyango in for a try which Halliwell improved.

Piklingtons gave BATLEY a huge scare and were always in the game before going down to a 34-24 defeat at Knowsley Road.

Had a few bounces of the ball gone their way, Pilks could have been joining their illustrious hosts in the bag for Monday's draw.

It was a landmark game for Recs full-back Mark Ashton, who touched down three Ste Rawsthorne kicks to grab a hat-trick.

SWINTON can consider themselves very lucky to be into the fourth round after edging out the gallant amateurs of Siddal 10-6.

If an unknowing observer had seen the game, they would have been hard-pushed to spot the professional team as Siddal, backed by a crowd of over a thousand, finished the stronger and were the more adventurous with ball in hand.

In fact, Siddal could and should have pinched it in the dying minutes to claim a famous victory.

HORNETS RL had to work hard to beat a spirited Leeds Met team 38-24 in an entertaining clash at Headingley.

There were two games that saw professional teams go head-to-head.

GATESHEAD are through to the fourth round for only the third time in their history – but they left it late against WHITEHAVEN at the Thunderdome.

A pulsating cup tie looked to be going Haven's way when the visitors ran in three tries in five minutes during the final quarter.

Two of them went unconverted – the story of Haven's afternoon – and a six-point lead left the door open for a resolute Gateshead.

Ironically it was a proud Cumbrian, winger Stewart Sanderson, who scored twice inside the last five minutes to give Gateshead a famous 42-38 victory.

BARROW had too much for BLACKPOOL, claiming a 44-12 success. The outstanding Liam Harrison claimed two tries while winger James Nixon bagged a hat-trick.



# Barrow v Dons



Saturday March 14th, 2009. Kick off 6.30pm. CRAVEN PARK

## BARROW RAIDERS

SPONSOR	No. PLAYER
Advance Roofing Supplies	1 Gary Broadbent
Johnston Recruitment	2 Mike Backhouse
BAE Global Combat Systems	3 Ian Bell
Premier Solutions	4 Liam Harrison
Furness Heating Components	5 James Nixon
Jimmy Redfern Associates	6 Liam Finch
The Infield Hotel	7 Liam Campbell
Saunders Transport	8 Brett McDermott
The Marine Travel Company	9 Andrew Ellis
Mike Sear	10 Lee Dutton
Estuary Electrical	11 Andrew Brocklehurst
E.P. Access	12 Martin Ostler
R.F. Miller Accountants	13 Andrew Bracek
Shaun Anderson Osteopath	14 Paul Noone
Abbey House Hotel	15 Chris Young
Larry Hunt, Cross Keys	16 Jamie Butler
Coniston Holidays	17 Scott Kaighan
Jimmy Redfern Associates	18 James Finch
Kevin Hodgson	19 Chris Larkin
Paul Turner (NWEM)	20 Nicky Beach
Larry Hunt, Cross Keys	21 Joe McKenna
Optec Fibres	22 Ned Catic
BAE Global Combat Systems	23 Waisale Suka
SITA (UK) Ltd	24 Allpate Tani
E.P. Access	25 Sevania Koro
Jimmy Redfern Associates	27 Darren Holt
S & M Leisure (kit)	28 Michael Darby
Nigel and Alison Atkinson	32 Ruairi McGoff
Alastair McGregor	35 Matt Storey

COACH: DAVE CLARK

LAST SIX RESULTS: L-WLWWW  
 LAST SIX HOME: WLW-WWW  
 TRIES: Andrew Ellis 5, Liam Finch 4,  
 Liam Harrison 4, Mike Backhouse 3  
 GOALS: Paul Noone 21  
 DGs: -  
 MAN TO WATCH: James Nixon

No.	TODAY'S TEAM	No.
	<b>Full back</b>	
	<b>Right Wing</b>	
	<b>Right Centre</b>	
	<b>Left Centre</b>	
	<b>Left Wing</b>	
	<b>Stand off</b>	
	<b>Scrum half</b>	
	<b>Prop</b>	
	<b>Hooker</b>	
	<b>Prop</b>	
	<b>2nd row</b>	
	<b>2nd row</b>	
	<b>Loose forward</b>	
	<b>Interchange</b>	

### SCORERS

- Tries
- Conv
- Pens
- DGs

### MATCH OFFICIALS

Referee: J Leahy  
 Touch: J Roberts, G Evans  
 Fourth Official: A Kirkbride

### BENNETT'S BET

"Home advantage should swing battle of promoted clubs - Barrow by 16"

## DONCASTER

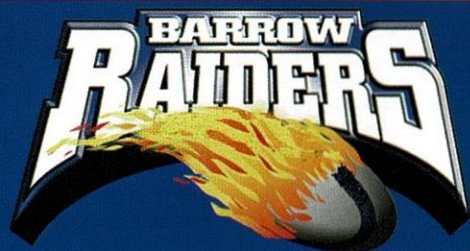
No. PLAYER	SPONSOR
1 -	
2 Dean Colton	Green Energy Solutions
3 Andreas Bauer	Geffery Broadhead
4 Shaun Leaf	Pipers Car Sales
5 Wayne Reittie	DISC (Dons Supporters)
6 Kyle Briggs	Active Workwear
7 Paul Handforth	Needhams Bikes
8 Michael Haley	APS Toolhire
9 Craig Cook	
10 Alex Benson	Jane Speakman
11 Peter Green	Everlast Waterproofing
12 Craig Lawton	Everlast Waterproofing
13 Josh Weeden	Andy Booker
14 Scott Jones	Martins Famous Fish Market
15 Mark Castle	
16 Nathan Freer	
17 Ross Divorly	DISC Dons Supporters
18 Craig Holt	RTN Motor Spares
19 Ryan Steen	
20 Michael Coady	Jill Scarrow
21 Garry Ellery	
22 Andy Speake	
23 Scott Smith	Sue Walford
24 Jake Bassinder	
28 Jamie Bovill	

TRIALISTS  
 Albert Rounding  
 Phil Crosby

COACH: TONY MILLER

Sponsored by Custom Property Developments

LAST SIX RESULTS: WW-LWWW  
 LAST SIX AWAY: LWLW-WW  
 TRIES: Michael Coady 4  
 GOALS: Kyle Briggs 8, Andy Speake 7  
 DGs: -  
 MAN TO WATCH: Peter Green



## CLUBCALL

## Barrow v Doncaster

# It may not be perfect but is still all ours

BARROW Raiders own the ground that they play on.

It may be in need of some TLC but it is all ours and although we may not have the hospitality facilities of other clubs you will find our welcome is as warm as any.

One drawback to playing four games in 14 days is that we have to get the pitch ready, the boxes cleaned etc.

We cannot just turn up and pay the rent after someone else has done all the work. Our volunteer groundskeeper Dick has been working overtime to keep the pitch



Craven Park, home of Barrow

ready for both game days and training.

Others have offered their services to sweep the terraces and clean the changing rooms. Without them we would struggle and the club is indebted to them.

The potential is

there to renovate the stadium so that it will tick a lot of the boxes for any future bid for a Super League franchise.

That would require a lot of financing but nowhere near the amount that we would need to build afresh.

up for grabs. It could be that instead of the usual concrete, reachable by car only, stadia, that one which is traditional and based in the town centre may offer something extra to those who rule on the franchises in future years.

But, and boy is that a big but, it all relies on being able to raise the money to finance it all.

Now where did I put my ticket for the Euro Millions draw?

Vice-chairman  
**DAVID SEAR**

# Forwards have raised game to required levels

AFTER the pressure of the two cup competitions we now face the different demands of the Co-operative Championship as we meet the challenge of Doncaster in the first league fixture. Being at home is an advantage and one we hope to make full use of.

We have been getting decent crowds at home so it should be a good atmosphere, with the supporters being close to the action and one which is completely different to the environment at the Keepmoat Stadium to which the Dons are accustomed.

Our pack found themselves pretty much on the back-foot in our first game at Halifax but since then have gone from strength to strength. They needed to learn from their experiences at The Shay and up the pace of their game both mentally and physically.

The performance against Widnes in the Northern Rail showed what we are capable

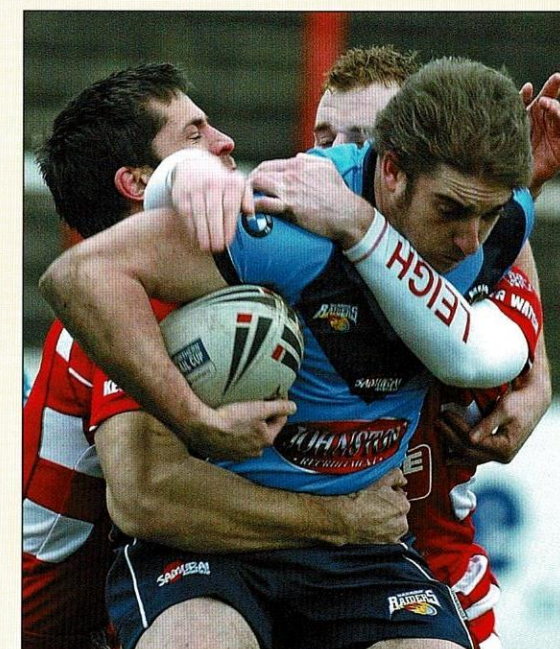
of as the forwards took the game to the Vikings in an uncompromising fashion both in attack and defence. The job I have is to make sure we have that level of intensity and commitment to show at every game. Anything less in such a strong competition will be punished by the opposition.

James Nixon featured in the Blackpool game after being out with injury. He managed to help himself to a hat-trick which owed a great deal to the service from centre Liam Harrison. Liam himself scored a brace and it looks like the partnership between them will pay dividends once again.

One player the fans have all been talking about is Gary Broadbent who has returned to his home town club.

He is proving why he is so highly rated by many in the game with some stand-out displays.

Coach Dave Clark



Liam Harrison - special praise

Main match sponsor: JD Joinery

Associate match sponsor: Leanne Findley & friends



# Batley v Featherstone



Sunday March 15th, 2009. Kick off 3pm. MOUNT PLEASANT

## BATLEY BULLDOGS

## FEATHERSTONE ROVERS

### SPONSOR

Mavis, Mac and Jack

Fletcher family  
Laurie and Andrew Grailey  
Batley Rock and Roll  
Batley Nash

The Benson family  
Leyland Paints  
Brian Hooley  
George & Mary Gomersal  
Study Centre

Gary Tingle & Lorraine  
Norman Thewliss

Stanningley U-14s & U-17s

Mary Hughes

### No. PLAYER

- 1 Ian Preece
- 2 Ben Feehan
- 3 Dale Cardoza
- 4 Danny Maun
- 5 Johnny Campbell
- 6 Mark Barlow
- 7 Paul Mennell
- 8 Byron Smith
- 9 Kris Lythe
- 10 Luke Stenchion
- 11 Kevin Crouthers
- 12 Mark Toohey
- 13 Ash Lindsay
- 14 John Gallagher
- 15 Anthony Henderson
- 16 Johnny Simpson
- 17 Craig Potter
- 18 Jermain McGilvary
- 19 George Flanagan
- 20 Dave Tootill
- 21 Nathan Armitage
- 22 Nat Browne
- 23 Chris Buttery
- 24 James Archibald
- 25 Damien Reid
- 26 Jamie Aitcheson
- 27 Darryl Cardiss
- 28 Danny Samuels
- 29 Jack Watson

**COACH: GARY THORNTON**

**LAST SIX RESULTS: L-LLWLW**

**LAST SIX HOME: LWLL-LW**

**TRIES: Darryl Cardiss 3, George**

**Flanagan 3, Chris Buttery 3**

**GOALS: George Flanagan 14**

**DGs: -**

**MAN TO WATCH: George Flanagan**

### No. TODAY'S TEAM No.

Full back	
Right Wing	
Right Centre	
Left Centre	
Left Wing	
Stand off	
Scrum half	
Prop	
Hooker	
Prop	
2nd row	
2nd row	
Loose forward	
Interchange	

### SCORERS

- TRIES
- CONV
- PENS
- DGs

### No. PLAYER

- 1 Tom Saxton
- 2 Waine Price
- 3 Ian Hardman
- 4 Andy Kirk
- 5 Jon Steele
- 6 Iestyn Harris
- 7 Andy Kain
- 8 Tony Tonks
- 9 Jack Lee
- 10 Stuart Dickens
- 11 Matt Dale
- 12 Jamie Field
- 13 Richard Blakeway
- 14 Tommy Haughey
- 15 James Houston
- 16 Joe McLocklan
- 17 Joe Hirst
- 18 Tim Spears
- 19 Sean Hesketh
- 20 Stuart Kain
- 21 Steve Dooler
- 22 Matt Handforth
- 23 Gareth Swift
- 24 John Fallon
- 25 Scott Wilson

Chelsey, Charlie & Megan Large  
Lorne Mosley

### SPONSOR

- Peter Smith Motorcycles
- Bev Coleman
- Patrick & Gemma McNeil
- The Buccaneers Club
- Mark Hutchinson
- Maureen Tennant-King & Emily Harris
- Shindigz
- Terry King
- Charlie Robinson/Lynne Whitehouse
- Vic & Sue Johnson
- Doug & Barbara Wilford
- Blue Lagoon Bar
- Susan Parker
- Blue Lagoon Bar
- Study Rovers
- Gary Crompton
- Howard Lawton
- John Lycett
- Peter Smith Motorcycles
- Rovers Scholarship
- Hollie Bennett
- Charlie Watson
- James Evans
- Capro Contracts

**COACH: DARYL POWELL**

**LAST SIX RESULTS: L-WWLWW**

**LAST SIX AWAY: WLLW-WW**

**TRIES: Andy Kain 6, Waine Price 5,**

**Sam Smeaton 4, Jon Steel 2.**

**GOALS: Stuart Dickens 13,**

**Iestyn Harris 11.**

**DGs: -**

**MAN TO WATCH: Andy Kain**

### MATCH OFFICIALS

Referee: P Brooke  
Touch: K Povah, P Ward  
Fourth Official: S Williams

### BENNETT'S BET

"Mis-firing Bulldogs may be easy prey for the Rovers - Featherstone by 10"



## KERR INTERIORS

from Concept to Completion



## CLUBCALL

## Batley v Featherstone

# We need more of the good and less of the ugly

It was nothing more than a relief to eventually beat Pilkington last week and with the disappointment of not reaching the quarter finals of the Northern Rail Cup things are not as rosy as we would have hoped for at this stage of the season.

So far it's been "The Good, The Bad and The Ugly" with us playing some good rugby at times and scoring points, some bad rugby at other times and conceding points and ugly rugby at other times which is hard to watch.

Everyone at the club knows we need to improve and we also know we can improve, so let's see how we go over the next few important weeks.

I cannot believe William Hills have not made us favourites for relegation, which is our traditional position. Instead we are 25-1 to win the Co-operative Championship ahead of Gateshead and Doncaster who are both 33-1 which is

### By Kevin Nicholas Batley chairman

surprising when both clubs did better than us in the Northern Rail Cup.

I hope they have seen grounds for optimism in some of our play so far.

The main concern last week was Danny Maun but thankfully he was declared fit at hospital and it was not as bad as it looked when he was stretched off.

Anthony Anderson was probably man of the match against York but he is now out with a broken thumb, so we cannot wait for Johnny Campbell to get back playing, hopefully within two weeks.

I do not know who we have in the Challenge Cup as I write but if we draw a big club it will have little financial benefit as in the fourth round Super League season ticket holders get in free, so we need to win this round and draw a big team in

the fifth round for it to be financially beneficial.

Today is a massive game for both clubs as we open our league campaign. Featherstone really are making efforts on and off the field this year particularly with the acquisition of Iestyn Harris and of course our friend Tim Spears who we welcome back for the first time. It will be very difficult for us as they will be coming into the game with more confidence than us.

However, sometimes we play better with our backs to the wall and that's the way I see it today. We need a good defensive performance to start with and to play over 80 minutes and then we have a chance of a result.

As a club we need to get behind Gary, Joe and the team as we all know what is needed and we need to pull in the same direction. Good luck to both teams and enjoy the game.

# Key injuries have hurt our progress

I THINK it's fair to say we have not got off to the best of starts to the 2009 season.

Failing to qualify for the later stages of the NRC has been a huge disappointment to us and we have not played consistently well throughout the opening five games of the season. Our pre-season form against Dewsbury and Hull KR seems a million miles away and we need to fix it up - and quickly.

Injuries have played a big part in this as I have been unable to field the same team two weeks in a row and this has disrupted things quite a lot.

Those injuries have also come to our key players such as Mennell, Toohey, Lindsay, Campbell, Henderson and Lythe and has really tested the depth of the squad. We have lacked fluency and consistency which we need going into the Championship cam-

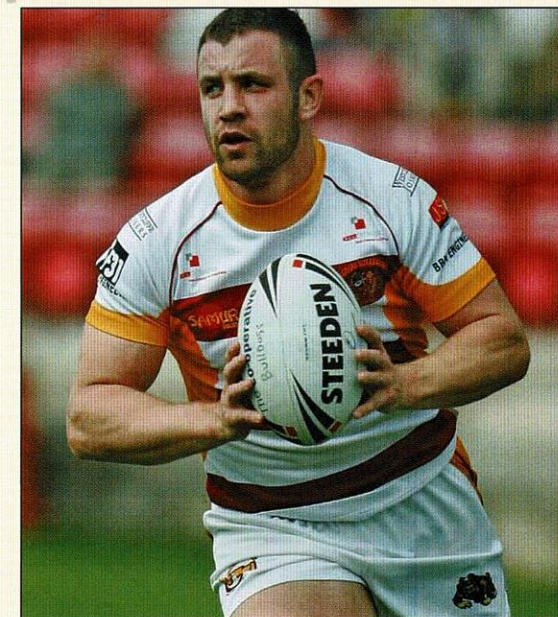
paign because of this.

However, I am confident that we can get it right. The boys' commitment to training and the effort they are putting in is evident and they are all really keen to turn things around.

We just need to start executing the game plan for a full 80 minutes as we have been playing in fits and starts at the moment - showing glimpses of some really exciting football, but also some really poor defence and individual errors - all within the same game.

Having said that I have been encouraged by some evidence of how good we have been, and that is what we are focussing on, building on the positive aspects of our play and looking at purging out the negative stuff that has cost us games so far.

Today will be a huge test for us, taking on one of the Championship 'big guns' in



Mark Toohey has been missed by Batley this season

Featherstone Rovers.

Their close season signings have been high profile both on and off the field, and none more so than influential stand off Iestyn Harris and coach Daryl Powell. They also have one time Batley favourite in Tim Spears who will be looking to impress on his first trip back to the Mount in opposition colours. They probably start the season as one of the favourites for a top 4 finish

and they will be looking to get off to a good start, as will everyone else and we must make sure our improvement starts today.

I would also like to welcome the parents, players and officials of Dewsbury Moor U-13s and Featherstone Lions U-13s who will be contesting a Yorkshire League game as a curtain raiser to the big event.

**Gary Thornton**



# Oldham v Blackpool



Sunday March 15th, 2009. Kick off 3pm. BOUNDARY PARK

## OLDHAM RLFC

## BLACKPOOL PANTHERS

### SPONSOR

Sporting Image	No. PLAYER
Premier Signs UK	1 Paul O'Connor
Totalplus Communications	2 Andy Ballard
Totalplus Communications	3 Danny Halliwell
Tech Doors	4 Paul Reilly
Office Supplies Now	5 Lee Greenwood
Nigel Marland	6 James Coyle
John Barrett	7 Thomas Coyle
	8 Paul Highton
	9 Gary Sykes
Rudy Wilkes and Bev Mayall	10 Jamie l'Anson
	11 Dave Allen
John and Lynda McAndrew	12 Tommy Goulden
	13 Rob Roberts
	14 Richard Mervill
Clayton Green Brewers Fayre	15 Jason Boults
Karen and Paul Gough	16 Wayne Kerr
	17 Craig Robinson
	18 Neil Roden
	19 Craig Littler
Cagney and Lacey	20 Simeon Hoyle
	21 Lucas Onyango
Maureen and Peter Woodhead	22 Phil Joseph
	23 Chris Baines
Totalplus Communications	24 Marcus St Hilaire
	25 Luke Menzies
	26 Luke Sutton

No.	TODAY'S TEAM	No.
	Full back	
	Right Wing	
	Right Centre	
	Left Centre	
	Left Wing	
	Stand off	
	Scrum half	
	Prop	
	Hooker	
	Prop	
	2nd row	
	2nd row	
	Loose forward	
	Interchange	

### No. PLAYER

- 1 Johnny Leather
- 2 Damien Munroe
- 3 Tom Woodcock
- 4 Mark McCully
- 5 Chris Muggan
- 6 Simon Svabic
- 7 Chris Forster
- 8 Peter Fairhurst
- 9 John Clough
- 10 John Hill
- 11 Paul Alcock
- 12 Kris Ratcliffe
- 13 Rob Draper
- 14 Martin Keaveney
- 15 Mel Alker
- 16 Ian Hodson
- 17 David Llewellyn
- 18 John Boland
- 19 Liam McGovern
- 20 Tom Wild
- 21 Andy Marsh
- 22 Keiron Tucker
- 23 Daryll Kaye
- 24 Chris Campbell
- 25 Wes Lawton
- 26 Craig Tunstead

### SPONSOR

- Blackpool Supporters
- Derek Way Roofing
- Clover Tech of Wigan
- Chorley Supporters
- Morris and Oxley
- S. Beilby and Family
- Blackpool Supporters
- ACM Scaffolding Services
- Seabridge Freight Services
- Robert Yates Design
- Paul Wilson
- Clark Draper Family/Sheperds Inn, Lowton
- G&M Building Contractors
- Rema Tip Top
- Morris Bakers
- S. Beilby and Family
- Morris and Oxley
- Meyer Group Ltd
- Morris and Oxley

### SCORERS

- Tries
- Conv
- Pens
- DGs

COACH: TONY BENSON

LAST SIX RESULTS: L-WWLWW  
 LAST SIX HOME: WWLL-WL  
 TRIES: Andy Ballard 4, Danny Halliwell 3, Paul Reilly 3, James Coyle 3, Lucas Onyango 3  
 GOALS: Andy Ballard 18, Danny Halliwell 13. DGs: -  
 MAN TO WATCH: Lucan Onyango

### MATCH OFFICIALS

Referee: C Halloran  
 Touch: S Moss, L Todd  
 Fourth Official: J Downham

### BENNETT'S BET

"Roughyeds to see off the threat of the improved Panthers on home turf - Oldham by 16"

COACH: MARTIN CROMPTON

LAST SIX RESULTS: L-WLLLL  
 LAST SIX AWAY: LLW-LLL  
 TRIES: Mark McCully 4, Johnny Leather 4, Damian Munroe 2,  
 GOALS: Johnny Leather 12  
 DGs: -  
 MAN TO WATCH: Johnny Leather

Wm. Quinn Group Ltd.

### SUPPORTING OLDHAM

SPINDLES TOWN SQ  
SHOPPING CENTRE OLDHAM

People caring for people

WRIGLEY CLAYDON SOLICITORS SINCE 1795

## CLUBCALL

## Oldham v Blackpool

# 'We've been waiting for this match..!'

We are delighted to be the first team kicking off the start of the 2009 Championship One season with our match against Blackpool this afternoon.

On the back of a successful Northern Rail Cup campaign with ten points out of twelve and qualification secured from a refreshing but difficult new format, we are pleased with how things have gone so far.

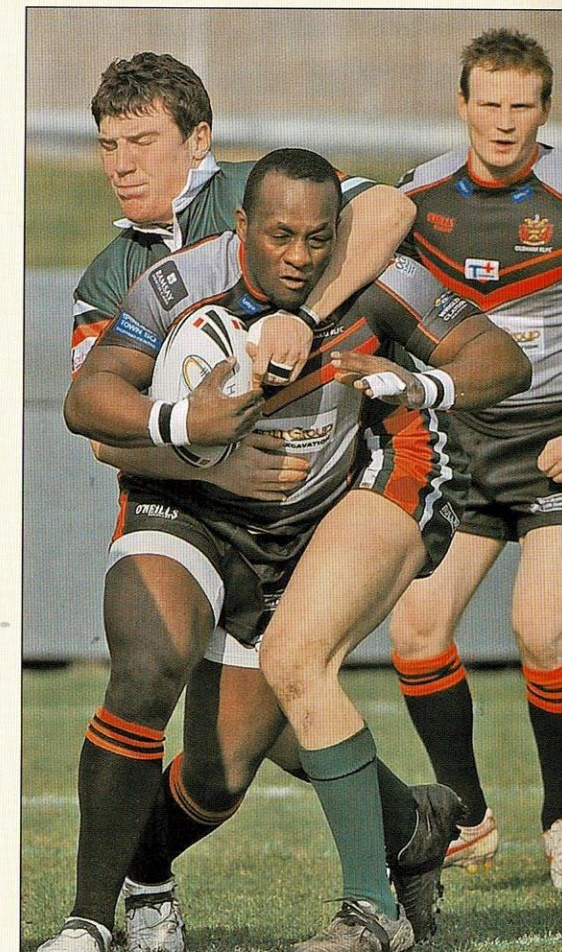
In many people's eyes this is where the season really starts and we know we will be in for a difficult game against a Blackpool side who have recruited well in the off season and who have already had people sitting up and taking notice of them with their results and performances in the Northern Rail Cup group matches.

This will be no easy game but we need to set out our intentions for the season ahead and there is no better place to do it than in your first game of the league season!

We have the quality of player and enough strength in depth to make our mark on the division and although the days of easy matches are gone everybody at the club knows that it is down to us to ensure that we do not make the mistakes we have made in previous seasons. It is easy to say but we all are aware that if on any given day you turn up expecting to win you will be left with egg on your face regardless of who you are up against.

There is no doubt as with any other season that it will have its ups and downs but it is one of our aims to make more highs than lows this time around if we can!

Christopher Hamilton, Chairman



Phil Joseph in action against Hunslet

## Fans are in for some champion action

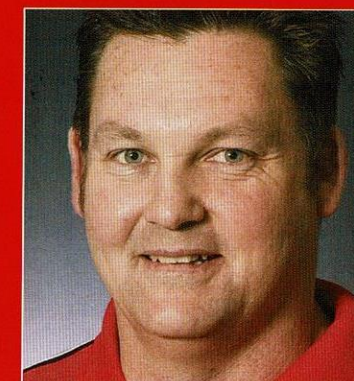
A BIG welcome to Boundary Park to the Blackpool team, directors and loyal fans.

Although we've enjoyed playing the Northern Rail games we have really looked forward to this game against Blackpool, the first in a series of Cooperative Championship games with each one more important than the last leading us to our ultimate goal.

This year's Cooperative Championship 1 looks even tougher than last season's National League Two competition.

On Northern Rail form there appears to have been a lot of shrewd recruitment completed in the off season with a very even spread throughout the teams, with every team looking competitive and anybody capable of getting up for a win on the day.

The gap has certainly closed between the Co-operative Championship and Championship 1. You only have to look at the final standings in the two pools at the



Coach Benson

end of the qualifying round of the Northern Rail Cup with three of us through to the quarter-finals and a fourth team only missing out by a bonus point.

Anybody with a ticket to a Championship game has great value for money and is in for some superb entertainment.

As a team we have been moving along reasonably well.

We are now into the third phase of our preparation, first getting ourselves into the necessary physical shape to compete week in week out, then getting match fit and trialing and working on combinations through the Northern Rail, and now settling on the right team and building on that.

Although this is a season long project of improvement, a good start today against a very strong Blackpool side is very important. I think we are up for it, and are currently travelling along pretty well; the exciting thing is we have so much improvement in us.

Tony Benson

# How Aston ensured there was a silver lining

**In May Sheffield Eagles host a 25th anniversary dinner. The club has a lot to be proud of and GAME ON spoke to the man who has been with them virtually all that time**

When Sheffield Eagles gather in May to celebrate the club's 25th anniversary there will be none prouder than head coach and chief executive Mark Aston.

There can be no denying the contribution of Gary Hetherington, who founded the original club in 1984 before leaving for Leeds over 10 years later.

The Leeds chief executive will be guest of honour for the silver anniversary dinner on May 14, but it is the man Hetherington lured as a promising young scrum-half in 1985 that has gone on to become synonymous with the club.

If ever there is a one-club man it is Mark Aston for he has remained at Sheffield, going upstairs after an 18-year playing career and a club-record 384 appearances.

From steering them to Challenge Cup glory in 1998 to overseeing the club's rebirth in 2000, Aston has experienced it all with the Eagles.

The 41-year-old still remembers the day that triggered him to ensure a rugby league presence would remain in the city following the ill-fated merger with Huddersfield in 1999 - a tale that will no doubt be recounted during the evening at Baldwin's Omega.

"I was walking round Hillsborough and there was a woman and her daughter that were absolutely devastated," he said.

"They said, 'Mark, we want our own club and we want you to run it.' I said, 'I can play, I can coach, but running a club - I wouldn't have a scoby doo!'

"I went home to my wife, Dawn, and said the merger's wrong. So I rang my Dad, Brian, who'd been at Leeds

with Gary and gone to Wakefield, and said 'we need to keep Sheffield Eagles alive'.

"We talked to some of the guys that are now the directors, had a fans forum and away it went.

"We put a business plan together and went to the RFL. We got knocked back at first but we kept going and got in.

"The game of rugby league could have been lost in South Yorkshire, which would have been disgraceful. It hurt us massively but we've overcome that and we're moving forward."

Business has been a key word during Aston's efforts to re-establish the Eagles' identity in the region.

Aston, therefore, has been happy to make gradual progress on the field, winning promotion in 2006 to National League One - now the Championship - and just missing out on last year's play-offs, so long as the club continues to build bridges with the community.

"People ask now, 'how have you done it over the last 10 years?'" he said.

"Well, it's quite simple. We're a business and if you haven't got the money don't spend it.

"I've got no sympathy for clubs that go bust because we did it tough and at times it was touch-and-go in the early period, but the big thing was to keep the development going and we've come through that.

"Finance is holding us back at times but if somebody walked through the door and gave me £1 million, it wouldn't be spent on players.

"It'd be spent on the development of this club for the long-term good, which is in the schools and the community.

"We're now employing a



**CLUB FOCUS  
- SHEFFIELD  
EAGLES**

**Mark Aston celebrates winning the Challenge Cup in 1998 and (inset) as he is now with his dual roles of coach and chief executive**

full-time head of youth performance, a community trust manager and a development officer with five or six part-time development coaches and just in the next six weeks we're going into 43 different schools in Barnsley, Sheffield

and Rotherham.

"As a club, we're probably bigger now than we ever have been. Not financially and not being at the top level, but we've never had the scholarship, Academy or reserve grade which we have now.

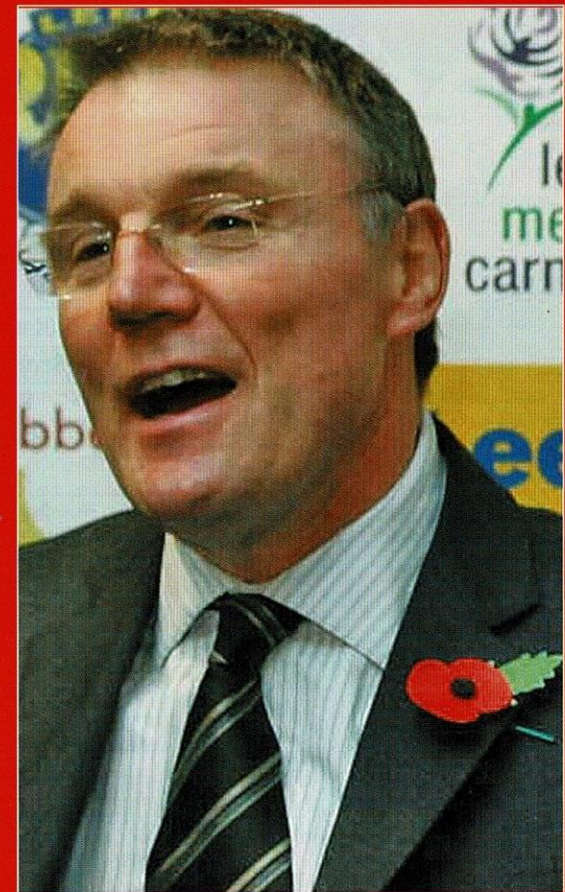
"We've never had all those pathways and the ultimate aim is to have 17 regionally-developed players from South Yorkshire playing for Sheffield Eagles.

"That's starting to happen and that will be the time that

we've been successful. Everything else will then come on the back of that.

"That's the legacy we want to develop and today is a proud moment to be associated with the club."

The Eagles were even the



**Gary Hetherington is returning for the anniversary dinner**

first club from either code to set up a charitable trust, the Sheffield Regional Rugby League Development Trust, to ensure community development work continued regardless of the club's fortunes.

Admission for last week's Challenge Cup game against Toulouse was a £1 donation to the Trust, which resulted in a season-best 1,554 seeing Sheffield book a fourth-round home tie against Dewsbury.

"We're trying to get people back that were involved with us in the early years," said Aston. "I bumped into someone the other day that hadn't been since the merger because they were that gutted about it.

"Hopefully we'll see a few more at the dinner because we've got a table for each year

and the table will be hosted by a player from that year."

The club is also hosting a lunch with Mike 'Stevo' Stephenson on March 27 which will help boost the coffers and take them one small step closer to returning to Super League.

"Councillors are asking me, 'When are you going to take us back to Super League?'" Aston added.

"There's a bright light at the end of the tunnel for Sheffield Eagles but it has to be when we're ready.

"If it's done right then one day we might get back to Super League.

"It's not the be-all-and-end-all at this moment in time but that light is getting brighter every year."



# Eagles v Leigh



Sunday March 15th, 2009. Kick off 3pm. DON VALLEY STADIUM

## SHEFFIELD EAGLES

## LEIGH CENTURIONS

SPONSOR	No. PLAYER
AMCO	1 Jonny Woodcock
Tolent	2 Bolu Fagborun
OSI	3 Menzie Yere
Jim Hawksworth, Suzanne Atkin	4 Mike Roby
Anne Collins	5 Ashley Thackeray
Pennine Business Forms	6 Brendon Lindsay
Sheaf Telecom	7 Gavin Brown
Hanlon & Wright	8 Jack Howieson
Barnsley Industrial Training College	9 Grant Edwards
Jayne Whaling	10 Mitchell Stringer
Jack Smith	11 Alex Szostak
Hanlon & Wright	12 Ged Corcoran
Bethany, Ian & Jackie Swain	13 Dane McDonald
G4S Events	14 Andrew Boothroyd
Albion Detection Systems Ltd	16 Trevor Exton
Buckingham Insurance	17 Tom Buckenham
Zeenaat Restaurant	18 Saqib Murza
OSI	19 Kyle Wood
Walkabout Sheffield	20 Matty Brooks
AMCO	21 Aaron Groom
Village Shop, Oughtibridge	22 Ryan Hepworth
HAS Consultants Ltd	23 Tangi Ropati
Jack & Laura London	24 Matthew Whitaker
	25 James Morrow
Hancock & Todd	26 Nick Turnbull
Modis	27 Tommy Trayler
Richard & Andrea Brook	28 Damian Gibson
	31 Sam Barlow
Jill Swire	34 Eddie Battye
Mr & Mrs Lee	35 Dan Hawksworth

No.	TODAY'S TEAM	No.
	<b>Full back</b>	
	<b>Right Wing</b>	
	<b>Right Centre</b>	
	<b>Left Centre</b>	
	<b>Left Wing</b>	
	<b>Stand off</b>	
	<b>Scrum half</b>	
	<b>Prop</b>	
	<b>Hooker</b>	
	<b>Prop</b>	
	<b>2nd row</b>	
	<b>2nd row</b>	
	<b>Loose forward</b>	
	<b>Interchange</b>	

### SCORERS

- Tries
- Conv
- Pens
- DGs

COACH: MARK ASTON

LAST SIX RESULTS: W-WLWLW  
 LAST SIX HOME: WLW-WLW  
 TRIES: Matty Brooks 3, Jonny Woodcock 3  
 GOALS: Jonny Woodcock 19  
 DGs: -  
 MAN TO WATCH: Jonny Woodcock

### MATCH OFFICIALS

Referee: D Merrick  
 Touch: B Armstrong, G Wallace  
 Fourth Official: A Sweet

### BENNETT'S BET

"Eagles to build on last season's strong home performances - Sheffield by 4"

No.	PLAYER	SPONSOR
1	Stuart Donlan	LISA
2	Dave Alstead	Professor & Mrs Dale
3	Steve Maden	
4	Tony Stewart	
5	Nick Stanton	Hattons Solicitors
6	-	
7	Ian Watson	CS Tyres
8	Andy Hobson	
9	Dave McConnell	
10	Mike Morrison	O'Neils
11	Dave Armitstead	Ask Platt
12	James Taylor	Brick Design
13	Aaron Smith	
14	Ian Mort	Professor & Mrs Dale
15	Adam Higson	Leythers Messageboard
16	Chris Hill	Civil Solution
17	-	
18	Sam Reay	
19	Adam Rudd	
20	John Cookson	
21	Dale Cunniffe	
22	Jamie Smith	
23	Martyn Ridyard	JR Taxis
24	Dean Hatton	
25	Adam Thomas	

Not allocated a number: Andy Ainscough, Danny Jackson, Danny Meekin, James Richies, Lee Marsh, Macgraff Leulalai, Ryan Powell.  
 Triallists: Brett Longstaffe, Jamie Durbin, Lee Wingfield

COACH: NEIL KELLY

LAST SIX RESULTS: L-WLWWW  
 LAST SIX AWAY: LLLW-LW  
 TRIES: Jamie Durbin 5, Martyn Ridyard 4, Steve Maden 3, Stuart Donlan 3, Aaron Smith 3, Ian Mort 3  
 GOALS: Ian Mort 21, Martyn Ridyard 10  
 DGs: -  
 MAN TO WATCH: Sam Reay

PROUD TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE SHEFFIELD EAGLES!

## CLUBCALL Sheffield v Leigh Centurions

# All eyes on the big cash prize

THIS is the main event - everything we have been doing has been building up to the start of the Co-operative Championship.

It's going to be a really tough competition this season with some strong squads and it's important to make sure that points from home games stay at home.

There's plenty to play for with a new three-year sponsorship deal with the Co-operative despite the economic downturn. We're playing for a nice prize fund with the champion of our league scooping £100,000 - that'd put a smile on the chairman's face.

Today's the chance to stake a first claim to a share in the honours - and of course the cash! This is a really competitive league and there won't be any easy pay days. I don't need reminding that we slipped up when Leigh came here last season - they were in a bad patch but came away with the win. Let's hope we can get revenge this afternoon.

It won't be easy, Neil Kelly has got together a strong squad and they came out of the Northern Rail Cup group games with three wins.

Leigh have also moved out of Hilton Park and have a new home - Leigh Sporting Village. I was there for the launch

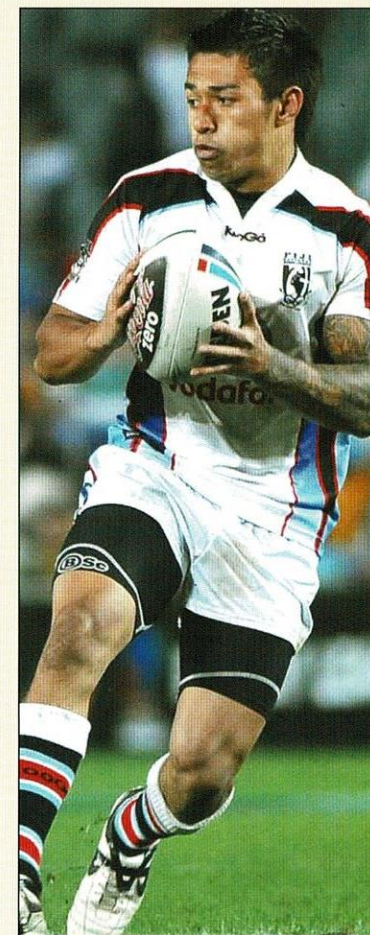
of the Co-operative Championship and was very impressed by the facilities. It's a purpose built stadium - and Leigh will always be there or there about in our league. We'll certainly be tested in the first weeks of the league season - after Leigh we're at Widnes and then over to Toulouse. That's quite a run of games coming after Halifax in the Northern Rail Cup and Toulouse in the Carnegie Challenge Cup. The squad will be tested and everyone has to be playing to their limit - no excuses accepted. But I wouldn't have wanted it any other way. We want the challenges.

Hopefully around now we will have Fijian-international Aaron Groom on his way over - or even here. And we're still hopeful that Trevor Exton will win his appeal and get a visa.

We got a reality check against Halifax a couple of weeks ago. I've told the lads after the game that 50 points at home is a disgrace - no other word for it.

But that's in the past - today it's about a new league season and making sure that Leigh don't leave with points. Let's go!

Mark Aston was interviewed by Jim Collins and is sponsored by Nick Firth Tiles.



Aaron Groom in World Cup action

# Eagles youth programme is flying

THE Sheffield Eagles youth structure is comparable to any team within Super League; our challenge now is to develop quality systems within our pathway.

The Sheffield Eagles Scholarship scheme is in its second year. Our aim is to develop the scholar's skills and game awareness, the scholar then takes those skills and uses them back at their club.

We have 43 registered players from under 13 to 16 and the players have to demonstrate commitment to their skill development, discipline at school and respect in the home. This combination of attributes gives us what we

## DEAN THOMAS Head of Youth Performance

feel are the building blocks to being a professional player.

At the end of year 1 Sheffield Eagles signed 3 scholarship players, Reece Williams, Dan Horsfield and Cory Hanson. These players made their debuts for the club in the Academy during 2008. Year 2 will see an outstanding group of scholars graduate to the academy and ones to watch are Kane Feek, Stefan Kazmieriski and Samuel Williamson.

The Rugby Football League authorised the Sheffield Eagles to operate the AASE scheme (Advanced Apprenticeship in

Sporting Excellence) and the project is the first of its kind for our sport. It sees an elite group of 16-19 year olds given 15 hours of coaching and work within full time education.

The scheme has given the club and individual the opportunity to show that quality players can be produced in Sheffield. To date the academy are lying joint top in the Yorkshire student league and players to watch are Grant Ripley, Adam Brook, Dean Scotthorne, Liam O'Leary and Kevin Wroe.

This will be my 2nd year in charge of the reserve grade. We have retained the best players from last season to complement those players

made available from the academy and 1st team.

Sheffield signed 3 players from reserve grade last season and 2 others were invited to train with the first team.

The growing reputation of the Eagles has also seen Jamie Cottill come on loan from Harlequins whilst he attends Sheffield Hallam University. The reserve grade completes the performance pathway up to 1st team and with an average of 18 last year it is hoped that those experiences will see improved performances.

Players to look out for include Mark Renshaw-Smith, Eddie Battye, Dan Hawksworth, Kyle Kesik and Steven Price.





# Whitehaven v Gateshead



Sunday March 15th, 2009. Kick off 3pm. RECREATION GROUND

## WHITEHAVEN

No.	PLAYER
1	Craig Benson
2	Craig Calvert
3	Rob Jackson
4	Derry Eilbeck
5	Ade Adebisi
6	Carl Rudd
7	Leroy Joe
8	Marc Jackson
9	Graeme Mattinson
10	Karl Edmondson
11	Howard Hill
12	Spencer Miller
13	Scott McAvoy
14	Danny Barker
15	Ryan McDonald
16	Andy Gorski
17	John Walker
18	John Patrick
19	Kyle Amor
20	Marc Bainbridge
21	Taani Lavulavu
22	Matt Tunstall
23	Marc Shackley
24	Gregg McNally
25	Jamie Theoharous

COACH: GED STOKES

LAST SIX RESULTS: L-WLWLL  
 LAST SIX HOME: WWW-WW  
 TRIES: Gregg McNally 6, Andy Gorski 3, Derry Eilbeck 3  
 GOALS: Gregg McNally 9, Carl Rudd 6, Marc Jackson 5  
 DGs: -  
 MAN TO WATCH: Gregg McNally

## GATESHEAD THUNDER

No.	TODAY'S TEAM	No.
Full back		
Right Wing		
Right Centre		
Left Centre		
Left Wing		
Stand off		
Scrum half		
Prop		
Hooker		
Prop		
2nd row		
2nd row		
Loose forward		
Interchange		

### SCORERS

Tries  
 Conv  
 Pens  
 DGs

### MATCH OFFICIALS

Referee: M Thomason  
 Touch: S Barrie, T Mahar  
 Fourth Official: T Selby

### BENNETT'S BET

"Haven to exact revenge for Challenge Cup elimination - Whitehaven by 8"

No.	PLAYER	SPONSOR
1	Ben McAlpine	
2	Danny Wilson	
3	Kevin Neighbour	Accent Magazine & North East Times Lady Cross Quarries
4	Dylan Nash	
5	Stewart Sanderson	
6	Neil Thorman	The Wheatsheaf Pub James & Matthew Wells
7	Luke Branighan	
8	Jason Payne	
9	Andrew Henderson	Brack Office Solutions Rob & Jackie Gardner
10	Tabua Cakacaka	
11	-	
12	Michael Knowles	PCL Travel
13	-	
14	Ryan Clarke	
15	Matt Barron	
16	Puna Rasaubale	The Schooner Inn
17	Chris Parker	
18	Robin Peers	
19	-	
20	Dave Vernon	
21	Ryan McBride	O'Brien Sandwiches Team Valley
22	Jamie Russo	
23	Jonny Scott	
24	-	
25	-	
26	Crawford Matthews	
27	Scott Woods	Dean Taxis 0191 444 4 444
28	Mark Dack	
29	Rhys Clarke	
30	Stephen Welton	

COACH: CHRIS HOOD

LAST SIX RESULTS: W-LWLWW  
 LAST SIX AWAY: WWWW-LL  
 TRIES: Stewart Sanderson 8, Dylan Nash 4, Joe Arundel 4, Kevin Neighbour 4  
 GOALS: Michael Knowles 11, Luke Branighan 8. DGs: -  
 MAN TO WATCH: Stewart Sanderson



We're supporting  
**Whitehaven  
 RLFC**



## CLUBCALL

## Whitehaven v Gateshead



**Dick Raaz  
 Chairman**

### New board welcomes help

Welcome to the Whitehaven Recreation Grounds and the opening of the Championship season.

Our side has had haphazard performances working up to this important season with painful losses at Leigh and Gateshead.

We intend to get off to a winning start as the season swings into full gear and certainly intend to get some

revenge for last week's struggle in Gateshead.

Our new Board of Directors and our new General Manager are committed to giving coach Stokes and our team the best support possible and to make it possible for our many fans to have an enjoyable day at this and future matches. We welcome our new General Manager, Nigel Beaty, and encourage all of you to meet

and introduce yourselves as you see him about the ground today or in future matches. He and the staff will be working hard to accommodate the many good ideas that have surfaced recently.

If you have talents or ideas you can offer, please see Nigel, me or any other of the board or staff.

Enjoy the day,  
 Dick Raaz

# If we tighten up we can finish top

THIS is the real deal, starting today... our opening match in the Co-operative Championship against Gateshead.

There is no room for error, as these are points we cannot pick up again. I believe we can finish top of the division this season, but there is no room whatsoever for complacency.

I can understand the disappointment of our fans in our performances in the first part of the year. It has been very frustrating for them.

Nobody was more disappointed than the players when we went out of the Carnegie Challenge Cup at Gateshead last weekend - except for the coaching staff that is.

We conceded two tries in the last few minutes to go out of the competition and this has been a very difficult week but we must remain positive and make up for it.

If we keep defending as we have of late, we won't win anything. Concede an average of 12 to 18 points per game and you will struggle.

Your defence should reflect your desire and attitude. We have a little bit to work on. But we will improve, there's no doubt about it.

Former Whitehaven coach Paul Cullen is back in the Co-operative Championship with Widnes Vikings, and it is going to be interesting to see what happens there.

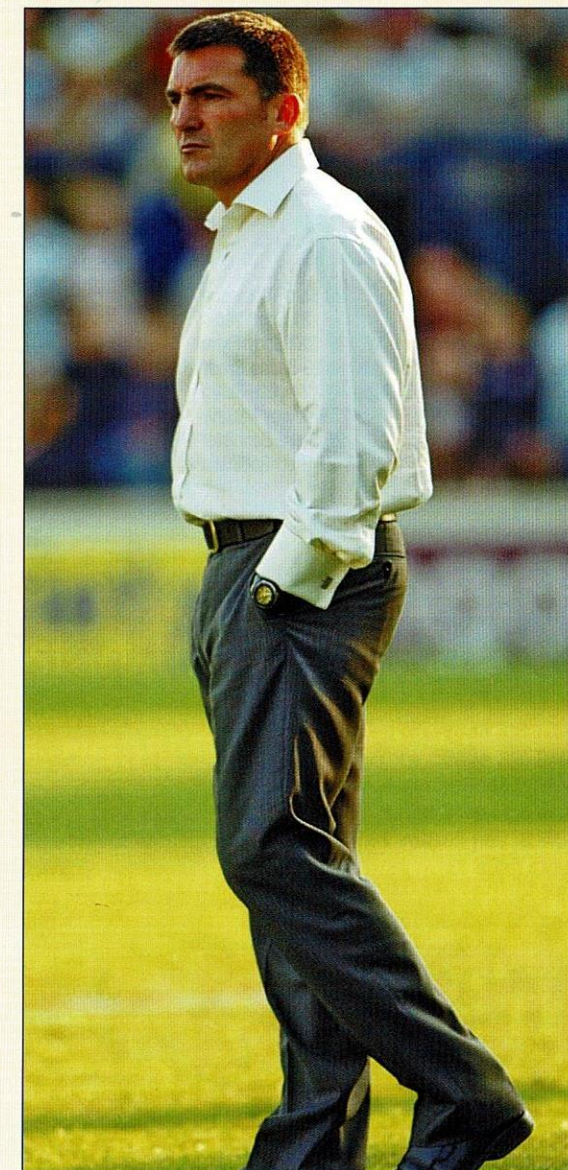
It's good to see him back in coaching, and I wish him all the luck in the world - except when he comes here. It is great to see a coach of his quality in this division.

Widnes and Halifax both have good depth to their squads this year. Halifax are obviously going to be up there, and Leigh are capable of beating anyone. Barrow are similar to us in that they have a really good first team and it might be a case of keeping them all healthy.

My only reservation about Toulouse is the volume of football they'll be playing, season on season, though I imagine they'll bring some fresh players in.

Their visa criteria probably aren't the same as ours, and they'll be able to bring in some overseas players.

Enjoy today's game.



**Coach Ged Stokes**

Good to see the return of a familiar face... Paul Cullen



# Widnes v Toulouse



Thursday March 12th, 2009. Kick off 7.30pm. STOBART STADIUM

## WIDNES VIKINGS

## TOULOUSE OLYMPIQUE

### SPONSOR

John Mather & his many sons!	1 Loz Wildbore
Barbara Spence	2 Dean Gaskell
Widnes Supporters Club	3 Richard Varkulis
Widnes Supporters Club	4 Toa Kohe Love
Kath Filkin	5 Danny Mills
VIQI	6 Anthony Thackeray
VIQI	7 James Webster
Museum Visitors	8 Iain Morrison
R J Lewis	9 Mark Smith
Widnes World	10 Jim Gannon
Swavesey Newsagents, Cambridge	11 Lee Doran
Widnes Supporters Club	12 Richard Fletcher
Robert Johnson	13 Lee Paterson
James Owen	14 John Duffy
Marcus Booth	15 Tim Hartley
The Dennett Family	16 Gavin Dodd
Uncle Jack	17 Ben Kavanagh
Fraser Family	18 Matt Strong
Halton Borough Council	19 Michael Ostick
Leam Fox	20 Sam Thompson
SDP Landscapes	21 Scott Yates
Lesley & Reg Warner	22 Paddy Flynn
West Bank Bears ARLFC	23 Shane Grady
Riverside College Sports Dept.	24 Josh Simm
Mullally's Barbers	25 Anthony Mullally
North West Contracts	26 Steve Bannister
SDP Landscapes	27 Brett Robinson

No.	TODAY'S TEAM	No.
	<b>Full back</b>	
	<b>Right Wing</b>	
	<b>Right Centre</b>	
	<b>Left Centre</b>	
	<b>Left Wing</b>	
	<b>Stand off</b>	
	<b>Scrum half</b>	
	<b>Prop</b>	
	<b>Hooker</b>	
	<b>Prop</b>	
	<b>2nd row</b>	
	<b>2nd row</b>	
	<b>Loose forward</b>	
	<b>Interchange</b>	

### SCORERS

Tries  
Conv  
Pens  
DGs

COACH: JOHN STANKEVITCH

LAST SIX RESULTS: L-LWWLW  
LAST SIX HOME: WWW-LWW  
TRIES: Jim Gannon 4, Toa Kohe-Love 3, Mark Smith 3, Gavin Dodd 3  
GOALS: Tim Hartley 14, Scott Yates 13  
DGs: -  
MAN TO WATCH: Tim Hartley

### MATCH OFFICIALS

Referee: G Hewer  
Touch: R Cowling, RJ Stokes  
Fourth Official: M Thomason Video ref: R Hicks

### BENNETT'S BET

"Vikings to raise their game for new boss Cullen - Widnes by 18"

### No. PLAYER

1	Rory Bromley
2	Sebastien Payan
3	Sebastien Planas
4	Damian Couturier
5	Joris Canton
6	Constant Villegas
7	Nathan Wynn
8	Brendan Worth
9	Martin Mitchell
10	Mathieu Griffi
11	Timothy Wynn
12	Mathieu Almarcha
13	Eric Anselme
14	Antoni Maria
15	Jerome Gout
16	Olivier Pramil
18	Adrien Viala
20	Sylvain Houles
21	Bruno Ormeno
22	Nicolas Faure

COACH: GILLES DUMAS

LAST RESULT: Lost 22-6 at Sheffield in Challenge Cup last Sunday  
TRIES: Damian Couturier 1  
GOALS: James Wynn 1  
DGs: -  
MAN TO WATCH: Damian Couturier



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  
THE VIKINGS



Hattons SOLICITORS



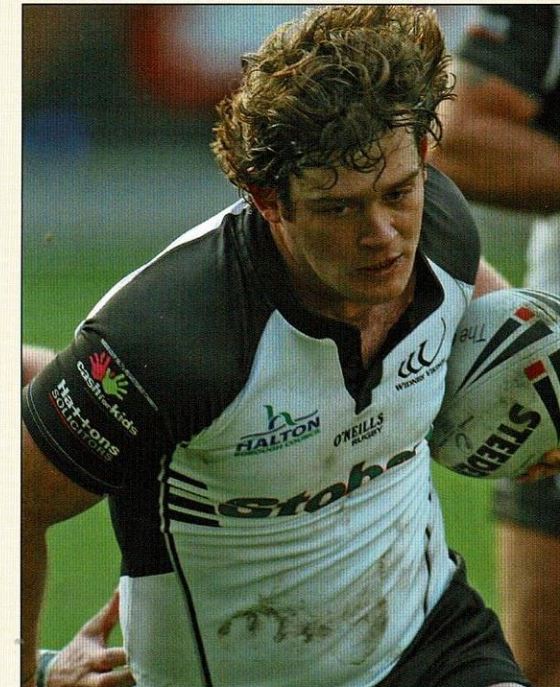
Stobart



## CLUBCALL

## Widnes v Toulouse Olympique

# Toulouse? No we aim to succeed!



John Duffy and the boys will be looking to give new coach Paul Cullen a flying start

Tonight's game against Toulouse Olympique is a great way to kick off the Co-operative Championship, especially live on Sky TV and with a big crowd expected to roar us on to three competition points.

The introduction of the French side will certainly add something to the competition and I know the players are looking forward to testing themselves against European opposition.

As you will all be aware this evening is my last game as caretaker coach following the appointment of Paul Cullen earlier in the week.

In welcoming Paul to the club I am pleased that I have left the team on a firm footing following our opening night defeat to Oldham in the Northern Rail Cup.

It was my goal to ensure that we qualified for the quarter finals of the Northern Rail Cup which is a vitally important competition to us this year. 40 point victories over Gateshead and Blackpool helped us on our way and whilst defeat at Barrow was disappointing I thought some of the comments in the media were over the top.

We are also in the fourth round of the Carnegie Challenge Cup with a game against Halifax early next month following our victory over Saddleworth last Saturday.

It was good to see the players adopt a 'ruthless' approach and we must learn to kill teams off by playing for 80 minutes, not relaxing when we get ahead.

I also enjoyed the fans forum that was held in the Crown Inn last Thursday.

It is always good to speak to fans face to face and I hope that everyone who attended found it interesting and informative on the back of the defeat at Barrow. I thought that the players who attended spoke well and showed that they have the right attitude towards the game.

Finally, I would like to thank Steve O'Connor for the opportunity to look after the team for the last few weeks. It has been an enjoyable experience and one I look forward to repeating in a couple of years time!

John Stankevitch

## All aboard for a fairytale start to the season

GOOD evening and welcome to the Stobart Stadium Halton for the inaugural Co-operative Championship match of the season. I would also like to extend a warm welcome to the players and officials from Toulouse as they embark on life in the Championship.

### Alex Bonney

### Chief Executive Officer

On Monday of this week we announced that Paul Cullen would be joining the Vikings as Head Coach for the next two seasons.

Paul was one of 17 applicants for the position and I know Steve O'Connor was impressed with the enthusiasm and commitment shown by Paul during their meeting.

Personally I was also impressed with the way Paul referred to Widnes as 'we' in his quotes for the press release announcing his appointment.

On the subject of enthusiasm and commitment I cannot talk highly enough of

the work undertaken by John Stankevitch since the departure of Steve McCormack. John had already impressed during his role as assistant coach and the added experience gained over the last few weeks will no doubt help him in the future.

During the last few weeks, off the pitch, the staff of the Valhalla Foundation have been working hard to promote this opening game with various schools initiatives and promotions being undertaken.

As well as children visiting us from primary schools in Halton we welcome youngsters from Liverpool, Sefton, Knowsley and Chester tonight to the

Stobart Stadium, Halton.

Meanwhile our marketing department have run various campaigns and promotions with our partners City Talk 105.9, our matchday sponsors Airbus UK and Trinity Mirror newspapers under the guise of the Liverpool Daily Post, Liverpool Echo and Metro newspapers, as we look for a bumper crowd to kick start this exciting season.

With our matchday hospitality also sold out for the game we are sure of a great night and one which is fitting to welcome our guests from the Co-operative who are the competition sponsors as well as the Widnes branch of the Co-operative Travel who have supplied a wonderful prize of a family trip to Disneyland Paris to be given away at half time.

Let's hope that we have a fairytale start to the season!

# IN P R O F I L E

**JOHN DUFFY**  
**WIDNES VIKINGS**  
Squad Number: 14

## BACKGROUND

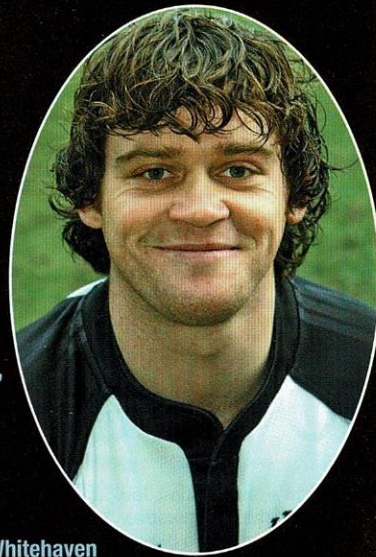
**NAME:** John Duffy  
**AGE:** 28 (DOB: 02/07/1980)  
**POSITION:** Scrum-half  
**HEIGHT:** 5' 9". **WEIGHT:** 14st 4lbs.  
**MARITAL STATUS:** Married, with two daughters, Megan (8) and Emily (2)  
**BORN:** Wigan  
**AMATEUR CLUB:** Wigan St Patrick's  
**SIGNED PRO:** 1994 (Warrington)  
**PREVIOUS CLUBS:** Warrington, Salford, Leigh, Whitehaven

## FAVOURITES

**CLUB SUPPORTED AS A KID:** Wigan – my dad used to take me.  
**SOCCER TEAM:** Wigan Athletic.  
**OTHER SPORT:** Football – used to watch Wigan Athletic too.  
**HOBBIES:** Mainly just spend my spare time with my family.  
**FOOD:** Pasta.  
**DRINK:** Guinness.  
**HOLIDAY:** Australia.  
**MUSIC:** Rock – Kings of Leon (pictured).  
**FILM:** Shawshank Redemption.  
**TV:** Friends.  
**SUPERSTITIONS:** No, not at all.

## CAREER

**BEST TEAMMATE:** Lee Briers at Warrington.  
**BEST OPPONENT:** Andrew Ettingshausen – I played against him in the 1997 World Club Challenge for Warrington against Cronulla.  
**BEST PLAYER IN THE WORLD:** Anthony Watmough looked pretty good in the back row for Manly last week.  
**BEST COACH I'VE PLAYED FOR:** Rob Tew – he's chairman at Newcastle Knights now but had me as a kid at Warrington and was brilliant.  
**COACH I'D LIKE TO PLAY FOR:** John Stankevitch!  
**MY STRENGTHS:** My enthusiasm and leadership skills.  
**MY WEAKNESSES:** Probably my kicking at the minute!  
**HIGHLIGHT:** Playing in the World Cup for Scotland.  
**LOWLIGHT:** Snapping my leg just after I got in the first team at Warrington – I'd just turned 17.  
**ULTIMATE WISH:** To get Widnes up into Super League.  
**AFTER FINISHED PLAYING:** I work in the club's community section as well at the moment, going into schools and helping out coaching on the Scholarship. I've just finished my Level 2 coaching course so I'd like to get into that somehow with the young lads then work my way up.



# AHEAD OF THE GAME

**PAUL BENNETT** gives his slant on life in 'the greatest game'

## Give testimonials where they're due

CALL ME a miserable old sod, but has the whole idea of a 'testimonial' turned into a bit of a farce?

Well that was just a thought that struck me the other day when reading details of Jamie Peacock's three-month testimonial, which will run from April to July this year.

Now I thought the idea of testimonials were to award the most loyal players for 10 years' service at one club.

But, of course, Jamie hasn't done that having played the first half of his career to date at Bradford before moving to his home town side in 2006.

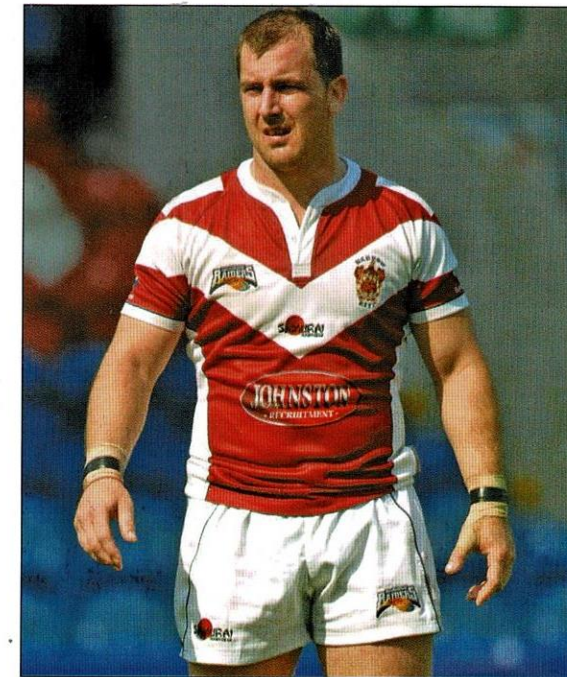
That's why his testimonial has been awarded by the Rugby Football League – not Leeds themselves – for his service to Super League and England/GB, apparently.

Don't get me wrong, I'm a massive fan of Jamie Peacock. He's always come across as a great guy, very media friendly and – most importantly – he never gives anything less than 100 per cent for the cause. He is, in my opinion, one of the top three players in world rugby league right now.

If those are the criteria by which testimonials are to be awarded these days then nobody deserves one more than him.

But should those really be the criteria?

I don't know. Maybe I'm a little old fash-



**Darren Holt** has spent ten years with Barrow

ioned when it comes to the whole idea of benefit years, but I've always thought they should be reserved for the real club stalwarts – not necessarily the most talented of players but the real club men who have spent 10 years of their lives putting their bodies on the line for the cause.

I also tended to look more favourably on testimonials in the days of part-time professionalism

when players were paid considerably less – although, admittedly, many players these days adopt charities that then receive a percentage of the money raised from their events.

Whether Jamie intends to do that, I don't pretend to know. He may well given he's always come across as the benevolent sort.

My grumble is not that play-

ers are 'money-grabbing' in any shape or form.

(And, anyway, there's always eBay for that if you've got any spare losers' medals going.) My only point of contention is the cheapening of the achievements of those players who have given 10 years' service to one club, often men who have turned down the chance of a bigger money contract elsewhere to stick with their side.

Barrow's long-serving scrum half Darren Holt is also the subject of a testimonial this year after 10 years with the club, in which he amassed a record 2,234 points. Now that's deserving of real recognition in my humble opinion.

It just seems to me that anyone and everyone gets a testimonial these days. Down at Headingley there's another Jamie – Jones-Buchanan – whose also got one this year, and I'd argue that all his best rugby is still ahead of him, yet we're already looking back on his career as if he's about to pack up.

What's that? I'm a miserable sod? Fair dos, but I'm sticking by my guns. Testimonials? Bah, humbug.

Paul Bennett is deputy editor of League Weekly



# IN P R O F I L E

**PAUL MENNELL**  
**BATLEY BULLDOGS**  
Squad Number: 7

## BACKGROUND

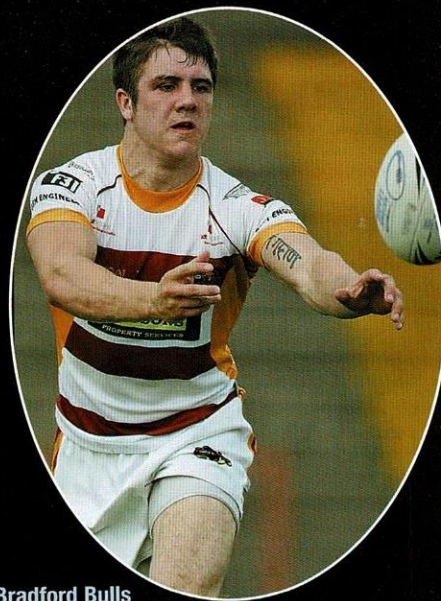
**NAME:** Paul Mennell  
**AGE:** 22 (26/10/1986)  
**POSITION:** Scrum-half  
**HEIGHT:** 5'7". **WEIGHT:** 13st 7lbs.  
**MARITAL STATUS:** Single  
**BORN:** Dewsbury  
**AMATEUR CLUB:** Dewsbury Moor  
**SIGNED PRO:** 2003 (Huddersfield)  
**PREVIOUS CLUBS:** Huddersfield Giants, Bradford Bulls

## FAVOURITES

**CLUB SUPPORTED AS A KID:** Whoever was at the top of the league!  
**SOCCER TEAM:** Wolverhampton Wolves.  
**OTHER SPORT:** Tennis, Formula 1.  
**HOBBIES:** Playing Guitar, Music.  
**FOOD:** Lasagne.  
**DRINK:** Rubicon (Mango).  
**HOLIDAY:** Australia/Tenerife.  
**MUSIC:** Pete Doherty, The Killers (pictured)  
**FILM:** SuperBad.  
**TV:** Home and Away.  
**SUPERSTITIONS:** None.

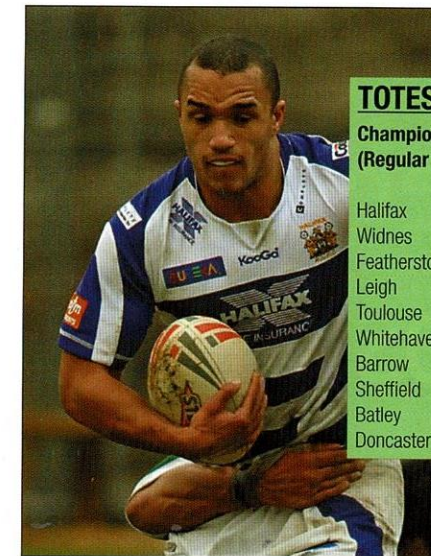
## CAREER

**BEST TEAMMATE:** Luke Stenchion or John Gallagher.  
**BEST OPPONENT:** Mickey Higham.  
**BEST PLAYER IN THE WORLD:** Sean Long.  
**BEST COACH I'VE PLAYED FOR:** All have had different strengths.  
**COACH I'D LIKE TO PLAY FOR:** Not really considered it.  
**MY STRENGTHS:** Passing.  
**MY WEAKNESSES:** Can't be revealing too much to the opposition!  
**HIGHLIGHT:** Playing against Penrith Panthers for Huddersfield in 2003.  
**LOWLIGHT:** Injuries.  
**ULTIMATE WISH:** To play in the NRL.  
**AFTER FINISHED PLAYING:** To emigrate to Australia.



# ON THE MONEY!

## Halifax have what it takes



### TOTESPORT ODDS FOR 2009

Championship (Regular season)		Championship 1 (Regular season)	
Halifax	11/10	Dewsbury	11/8
Widnes	7/4	Oldham	6/4
Featherstone	8/1	York	6/1
Leigh	14/1	Keighley	10/1
Toulouse	16/1	Swinton	12/1
Whitehaven	20/1	Blackpool	20/1
Barrow	20/1	Workington	40/1
Sheffield	66/1	Hunslet	40/1
Batley	66/1	Rochdale	66/1
Doncaster	66/1	London Skolars	125/1

Are Miles Greenwood and co value for money at 11/10?

With the league campaign kicking off this weekend Totesport's expert rugby league odds compiler MIKE OXLEY gives his take on the campaign ahead



WITH the Northern Rail quarter-finals almost decided, for the next seven months it is mostly down to the bread and butter league competitions for all 21 clubs.

The Championship looks a two-horse race to me with Halifax having the best credentials and are worthy favourites at 11/10.

Widnes have stuttered in the Northern Rail and still have not put a permanent manager in place up to the writing of this column. I see the Vikings as an average national league team this year even with a fully fit squad and going into their first game against an unknown Toulouse outfit they have at least six first teamers out for the next coming weeks.

Toulouse could be anything, but one thing is for sure, their players will take a couple of weeks to get together and they will make it hard for anyone travelling over the water to Franc.

Featherstone and Barrow could be the dark horses to pinch a second or third spot, but whether they are strong enough to challenge Halifax for top spot I doubt it. Both Rovers and the Raiders have recruited well and you get the feeling that they were just flexing their muscles and finding their feet in the Northern Rail, hoping to peak in time for the lengthy league season.

Whitehaven and Leigh look as though they will finish mid table at best and need more consistency to make a top four

spot. For the wooden spoon I see newly promoted Doncaster and Gateshead battling it out but one thing is for sure they are both capable of causing a shock or two at home on their day.

But the consistency that is needed week in week out is just not going to be there due to the strength in depth of their squads not being up to the other teams in the division.

Some value might be found with bookmakers in match bets for the season.

An example would be Halifax 8/15 v Widnes 11/8 – the prices are based on which team will finish the highest in the league over the regular season.

Championship One has the similar look of the Championship with Dewsbury having the best credentials to warrant the favourites tag at 11/8.

The Rams have been the form team in the Northern Rail Cup group stages, which include two impressive victories over Championship teams Featherstone and Batley. Their nearest challengers are Oldham at 6/4 and there is no doubt that the Roughyeds have a decent squad. They look like they will be capable of challenging Dewsbury for top spot.

The other teams in the division are much of a muchness and some have major doubts on current form such as London Skolars, Hornets and Workington who I think will be basement material and the only battle they have on their hands is who will avoid the wooden spoon.

The dark horses who have the improved their squads on last season are York and Hunslet. I would not be surprised if they are scrapping for the third spot come the end of the season and both are capable of giving the better teams in the division a game at home.

Looking at this weekend's matches I would look at Whitehaven turning last week's shock exit from the Challenge Cup against Gateshead on its head. As we have spoken in the past the Cumbrians are a ten points better team on the handicap at home rather than away. And with Thunder beating them 42-38 with home advantage last week, I would be looking to back Haven giving up 12 points or less on the handicap.



bet online

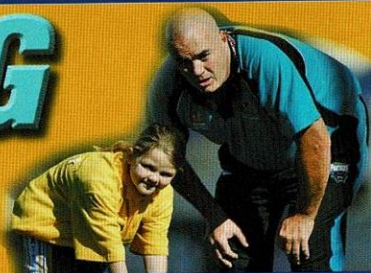
totesport.com



bet by phone

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# SPREADING THE WORD



## Featherstone give thumbs up to Rugby League Leaders Award

FEATHERSTONE Rovers have given their thumbs up to the Rugby League Leaders Award which they have been delivering to local schools and colleges and teaching the participants how to run RL sessions for younger children.

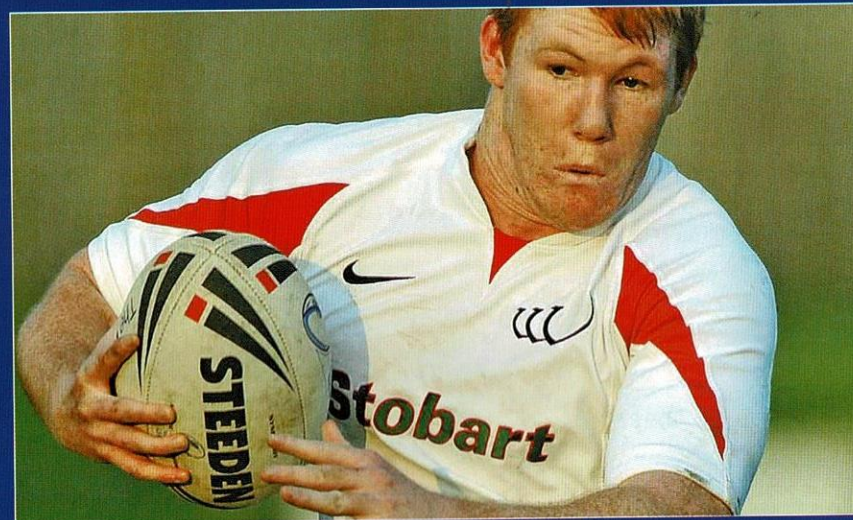
After being selected as the National League club with the best Community Programme in 2007, Rovers established the Featherstone Sports and Education Foundation which now facilitates their Community Department, an integral part of which has been the delivery of this award.

Students taking the course have learned how to coach, administer and officiate a tournament for younger children and these were delivered initially to Year 10 and Year 11 pupils at the Featherstone Technology College.

Following its successful inception and now in conjunction with the RFL, the Foundation is currently delivering the programme at Minsthorpe 6th Form College and Selby 6th Form College. Meanwhile Kings High, Pontefract, St Wilfreds, Featherstone and Carleton High, Pontefract are potential venues for the future.

First team regulars Matty Dale, Ian Hardman and Jon Steel have been involved in

**Featherstone Rovers have long been a club at the forefront of innovative community programmes. GAME ON spoke to development manager Kevin Hobbs about their latest initiative which sees the club going into college to train the rugby league coaches of the future**



**Ian Hardman is playing his part**

this community programme which means that Rovers can now deliver an enhanced programme to a wider audience.

Meanwhile a further addition to the community team is

Laura-Beth Jagger, who is able to teach some exotic circus skills including tight rope walking, dance, cheer leading and performing arts.

Kevin Hobbs, Featherstone

Rovers Community Development Manager, said: "A mixture of classroom and practical sessions give the student the opportunity to grow in confidence and at the end



**Winger Jon Steel has been at the forefront of Featherstone's community drive**

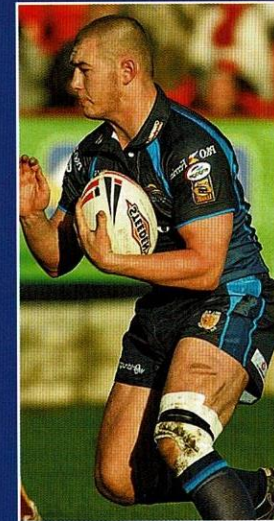
of the course they are mostly comfortable in their ability to deliver a quality tournament for their charges.

"Probably the other key element that they are unaware of is the Health and Safety

aspect of their duties as a coach. This is a huge responsibility and is largely taken for granted when an athlete turns up for training.

"Actually fronting a session for the first time is quite

daunting and I found that the students had largely forgotten what they had previously learned so I offered expert advice and when we had a re-cap session the penny appeared to drop."



**Matty Dale is also helping out the community programme**

The administrative aspect to the course is a real challenge and ensures the students have to work hard to achieve their target of running their own tournament and by having to contact target schools, teachers, other staff etc, arrange venues and of course officials to referee this is a test to both their imagination and resources.

The course is designed to bring the participants out of their comfort zone – by the time they have to actually deliver their sessions to their chosen junior school they had grown immeasurably in confidence and their own coaching ability.

The participants became very supportive of one another and offered sound advice during periods of uncertainty.

This was hugely evident on tournament day where each student, having been designated a specific role, was encouraged and supported fully by the other team members.

The Rugby League Leaders Award really forces the students to think hard and consider their ability and understanding when they are in unfamiliar circumstances.

It enables them to gain in confidence as their personality develops.

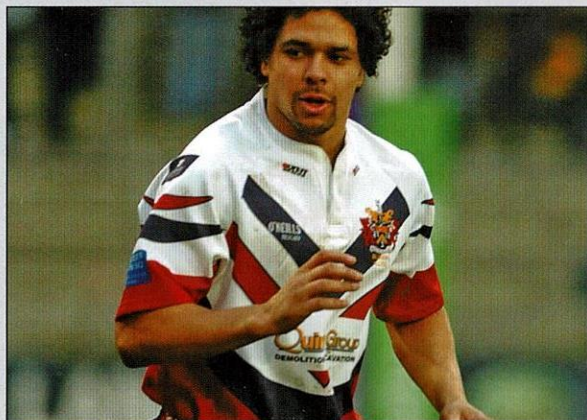
There are other beneficiaries, namely their respective schools, junior clubs and the junior children that they deliver the programme to, without realising the fact they have indeed also become a role model.

# KNOW YOUR STUFF?

## AROUND THE CLUBS

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS WEEK'S HOME CO-OPERATIVE CHAMPIONSHIP AND CHAMPIONSHIP ONE CLUBS?

1. **BARROW** – The Raiders have drawn which Super League side in the fourth round of this season's Carnegie Challenge Cup?
2. **BATLEY** – From which club did centre Danny Maun sign for the Bulldogs?
3. **OLDHAM** – With which three clubs has Roughyeds utility player Marcus St Hilaire previously played Super League?
4. **SHEFFIELD** – Which Eagles player scored Papua New Guinea's only try against Australia in last autumn's World Cup pool match?
5. **WHITEHAVEN** – Haven have recently handed a trial to the younger brother of which current Super League star?
6. **WIDNES** – New coach Paul Cullen has previously coached in the Championship (formerly National League One) with which club?



Marcus St Hilaire, now of Oldham but formerly of... see Q3

## GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

DO YOU REALLY KNOW YOUR RL? HERE ARE SEVEN TOUGHIES TO TEST ALL RUGBY LEAGUE FANS

1. Who is the coach of new French co-operative Championship side Toulouse Olympique?
2. The Red Hot Flames are the cheerleading squad of which engage Super League side?
3. In which two years has John Kear won the Carnegie Challenge Cup?
4. From which club did Halifax sign prop forward Neil Cherryholme?
5. In what year was Wigan captain Sean O'Loughlin born?
6. From which rugby union club did Widnes sign Martin Offiah in 1987?
7. Which former Great Britain chief coached St George-Illawarra to the NRL Grand Final in 1999?
8. In what year was the Man of Steel Award introduced?
9. Who is the only player to have won the Man of Steel Award on three separate occasions?
10. Australian Brian Smith formerly coached which two current Super League sides?
11. At which rugby union club is former Wigan and Great Britain star Shaun Edwards currently the head coach?

## ANAGRAMS

Rearrange the following phrases to make the names of three Co-operative Championship and Championship One coaches:

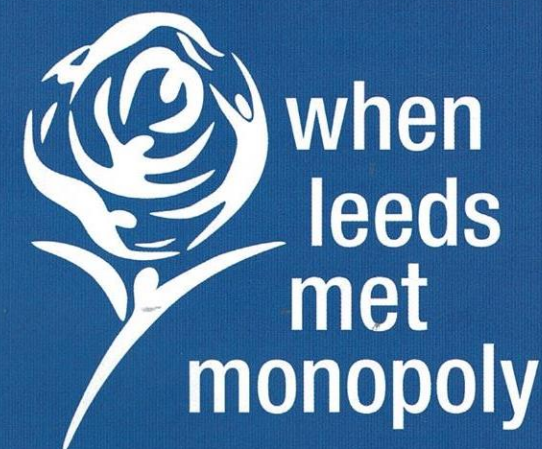
1. OH, RICH SOD
2. RAW WINTER JOT
3. OVER THE DRAMA

**ANSWERS:** SIX AT HOME: 1. Wigan Warriors, 2. Dewsbury Rams, 3. Leeds, Huddersfield and Bradford, 4. Vere Menzies, 5. Sean Long, 6. Whitehaven.  
**ANAGRAMS:** 1. Chris Hood, 2. Warren Jovitt, 3. Dave Rotherham, Hanley, 10. Hull FC and Bradford Bulls, 11. London Wasps.  
**GENERAL KNOWLEDGE:** 1. Gilles Dumas, 2. Salford City Reds, 3. 1998 and 2005, 4. Bradford Bulls, 5. 1982, 6. Rosslyn Park, 7. David Wale, 8. 1977, 9. Elerly



# MONOPOLY

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## Play Monopoly with Leeds Met and you could win a fabulous holiday in St Lucia...

Leeds Metropolitan University has launched the Leeds Met Monopoly Challenge, and is attempting to break a world record in support of local and international volunteering initiatives.

Take part in this Monopoly tournament and have a chance to win a £6000 holiday for four at the Coconut Bay Resort & Spa in St Lucia!

Heats begin on 28 February 2009, and we want as many people to register as possible...

Register a team of 5 and you'll receive a limited edition Leeds Monopoly board.

Register as an individual and you'll get a limited edition 'When Leeds Met Monopoly' t-shirt.

**There are hundreds of prizes to be won... so what are you waiting for?**

Visit [www.leedsmet.ac.uk/monopoly](http://www.leedsmet.ac.uk/monopoly) to sign up now!



