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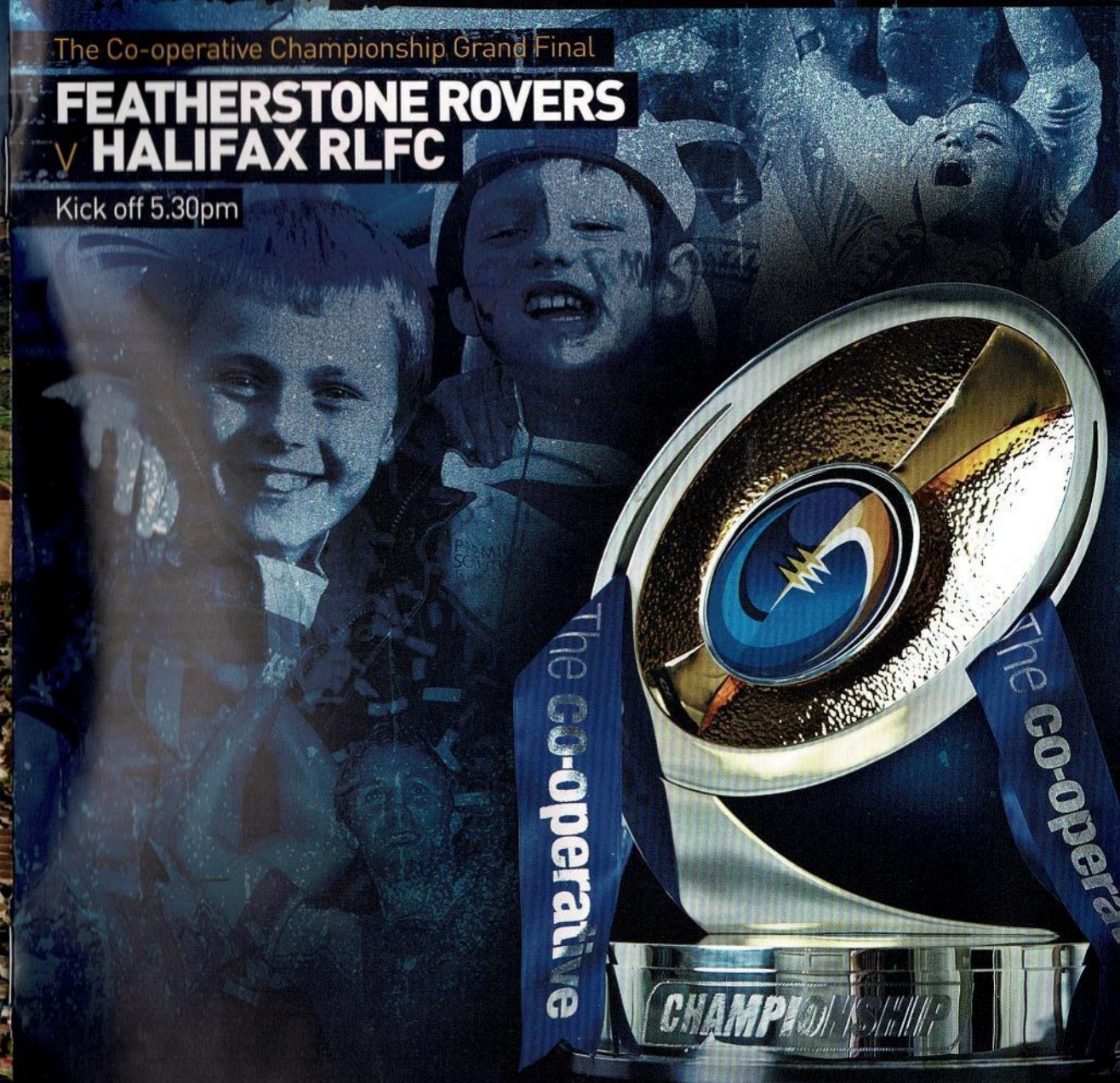
The Co-operative Championships
FINALS DAY 2010

Halliwel Jones Stadium, Warrington, Sunday 26 September

The Co-operative Championship Grand Final

FEATHERSTONE ROVERS
v **HALIFAX RLFC**

Kick off 5.30pm



The Co-operative
Championship One Play-off Final

OLDHAM RLFC
v **YORK CITY KNIGHTS**
Kick off 3pm

The Co-operative Rugby League
Conference (National) Grand Final

WARRINGTON WIZARDS
v **HUDDERSFIELD UNDERBANK RANGERS**
Kick off 12.30pm

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WELCOME

THE CO-OPERATIVE CHAMPIONSHIPS FINALS DAY 2010
The Halliwell Jones Stadium, Warrington, Sunday 26 September



ON BEHALF OF THE RFL, it gives me great pleasure to welcome everyone back to the Halliwell Jones Stadium, Warrington, for the 2010 Co-operative Championships Finals Day.

This afternoon promises to be an outstanding triple header of contests that showcase the very best that Rugby League has to offer at Championship, Championship One and RLC National level.

The 2010 season has been a fascinating one, with three of the sport's oldest names collecting the League Leaders Shields in their respective divisions: Featherstone Rovers in the Co-operative Championship, Hunslet Hawks in Co-operative Championship One and Bramley Buffaloes in the RLC National. My heartfelt congratulations go to all three clubs.

Hunslet have already clinched the Co-operative Championship One title, but Featherstone still have Halifax standing between them and the title of 2010 champions. Huddersfield Underbank Rangers will be hoping to go one better than last season, when they take on Warrington Wizards in the RLC National Grand Final. There is also the matter of the second promotion place into the Co-operative Championship to be decided today, in what I fully expect will be a high quality Championship One Play-off final between Oldham and York City Knights.

One major final has already been played this summer and who could forget the breathtaking finish in the Northern Rail Cup Final, when Batley Bulldogs' late try defeated Widnes Vikings at Blackpool? That competition continues to grow in stature thanks to the support of the clubs, fans and sponsor and the same can be said about the Co-operative Championships and RLC National.

I would like to thank everyone at the Co-operative who have proved once again that they are a great fit with the ethos and culture of Rugby League. Our work together will continue to go from strength to strength in 2011.

My thanks also go to the competition's official broadcast partners Sky Sports for their outstanding coverage of the Co-operative Championships on Thursday evenings, broadcasts which continue to grow in popularity.

Finally, I would like to wish the six finalists the very best of luck today and I hope that all supporters have a fantastic day.

Richard Lewis
RFL Chairman



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OFFICIAL NOTICES ANTI-RACISM POLICY

The RFL's 'Tackle It' policy states it will not tolerate racism of any kind and will take specific action against spectators who engage in racist chanting, abuse or intimidation. Rugby League is a great family sport and, with this in mind, action will also be taken against spectators who use foul and abusive language.

PLEASE KEEP OFF THE PITCH

The RFL requests that spectators do not venture onto the pitch during or after the game. Such action is against ground safety regulations and the RFL reserves the right to take any action against any person infringing these regulations.

MAN OF THE MATCH AWARDS

The Rugby League Writers' Association will select today's Man of the Match award for The Co-operative Championship Grand Final, and the winner will be presented with the Tom Bergin Trophy. The Co-operative Championship One Play-off Final Man of the Match will be awarded a commemorative trophy, while The Co-operative Rugby League Conference National Man of the Match will be awarded the David Oxley Trophy.

IN THE EVENT OF A DRAW

If, at the end of 80 minutes, the scores are tied, then the match will be decided on a 'Golden Point' basis with the winners being the first team to score. If that score is a try, then no conversion kick is necessary. In addition, any unused interchanges from normal time are carried over.



LOTTERY FUNDED

The RFL gratefully acknowledges the support of Sport England for many of the programmes currently being used to develop the sport's potential, both within its existing heartland and in wider areas. Sport England's ambition is to get 2m people doing more sport by 2012. It does this by investing in, advising and developing community sport; and by working with organisations such as the RFL to encourage more people to take part in both formal and informal sport. For more info visit: www.sportengland.org

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FOREWORD



ON BEHALF OF THE CO-OPERATIVE I wish a warm welcome to everyone here today.

The Co-operative has been involved in Rugby League since 2007, as title sponsor of what was the National Leagues and what is now known as The Co-operative Championships. This rebranding, which occurred at the same time as our own rebrand, reflects the growing status of the league, and the qualities demonstrated by all involved both on and off the pitch.

Today we are lucky enough to witness three high quality games, with the eventual winners all taking the spoils for a successful season. In 2010 it is as tough now for a team to make it to Finals Day as it has ever been. Since the long summer season is followed by the play-offs, this format is unrelenting and teams need to be at the peak of physical fitness from the season's start to finish.

We are proud to be associated with such a top class international league and proud to be able to reward the fans with campaigns such as the 'Fan of the Year' search. The fans are of critical importance to us and the RFL - without you we wouldn't have the fantastic atmosphere we see here today.

We are also proud of the membership scheme we have set-up, which is in its third year now, and allows for fans to support their favourite clubs financially. The Co-operative operates at the heart of communities up and down the country, as does Rugby League. We continue to be proud of our association with Rugby League and will continue to work together into 2011.

Whether your team wins or loses, we hope you enjoy the day today; get your photograph taken with the mascots, applaud the fan of the year, shout and scream in support of your team but most of all enjoy yourselves and congratulate whoever ends up victorious today.

We are sure to witness another thrilling day of Co-operative Championships Rugby League.

Very good luck to all six teams taking the field today.

LIZ MATKIN

Head of Sponsorship, The Co-operative Group

PLAY-OFFS

The play-offs have been every bit as thrilling as the regular season. Here's how they unfolded...

QUALIFYING SEMI-FINAL

Thursday 9 September

FEATHERSTONE ROVERS (28) 46

Tries Welham, Saxton, Manning, Briggs 3, Finn
Goals Briggs 7

HALIFAX RLFC (16) 16

Tries Penkywicz, Royston, Worrincy **Goals** Paterson 2
Big Fellas Stadium, Featherstone. **Attendance** 2,553

A hat-trick from Kyle Briggs helped Featherstone reach their first Co-operative Championship Grand Final, after they overcame dogged Halifax resistance at the Big Fellas Stadium.

The visitors took a 6-0 lead through Sean Penkywicz but three tries in a nine-minute spell, from Ben Kaye, Stuart Dickens and Tommy Saxton, soon put Rovers in command.

Halifax's Makali Azue and Rover's Kris Welham had a blood-curdling clash which left both on the sidelines and reflected the

well-placed kick was picked up by Tommy Saxton, who surged forward and handed over to Matty Dale, who in turn allowed Leeds youngster Dane Manning to beat Rob Worrincy and touch down.

Still Fax would not lie down, and Worrincy used his pace to help close the deficit to 22-16.

With half-time approaching, there was everything to play for, but then, after a tap penalty 10 metres out, Briggs barreled over and then converted for a 12-point lead at the interval.



Halifax redoubled their efforts but Rovers' rearguard held firm

intensity of the contest, and Fax certainly weren't giving up the ghost just yet, and Shad Royston pulled a converted try back to make it 16-12.

Featherstone's next try was a cracker. Liam Finn's

Halifax redoubled their efforts but the Rovers rearguard held firm, and, shortly after the hour, the tiring visitors couldn't stop Liam Finn exploiting a gap and dashing through for an impressive solo try.

FINAL TABLE THE CO-OPERATIVE CHAMPIONSHIP

TEAM	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	Diff	Bns	Pts
FEATHERSTONE	20	18	0	2	735	334	401	2	56
HALIFAX	20	16	0	4	684	509	175	2	50
LEIGH	20	12	1	7	580	403	177	5	43
BARROW	20	12	1	7	607	449	158	1	39
WIDNES	20	11	0	9	619	488	131	5	38
SHEFFIELD	20	10	1	9	503	545	-42	3	35
BATLEY	20	7	0	13	479	488	-9	8	29
TOULOUSE	20	8	0	12	486	649	-163	3	27
DEWSBURY	20	6	0	14	444	505	-61	8	26
WHITEHAVEN	20	4	0	16	281	707	-426	4	16
KEIGHLEY*	20	4	1	15	362	703	-341	5	10

*Keighley deducted nine points after going into administration

ELIMINATION PLAY-OFF 1

Thursday 2 September, Leigh Sports Village **Attendance** 1,516

LEIGH (18) 24

Tries Armitstead, Smith, Nany, Nash
Goals Nany 4

SHEFFIELD (12) 26

Tries Bergin 2, Hirst, Yere 2, Szostak
Goal Brown

Sheffield Eagles pulled off the first shock of the play-offs with a dramatic late winner to ensure a premature end to Leigh Centurions' campaign.

Despite losing influential full-back Misi Taulapapa to injury in the first minute, the South Yorkshire side took advantage of Chris Hill's sin-binning to score two early tries through Tom Bergin and Joe Hirst, either side of Dave Armitstead's effort for the home side. It was three tries each at the break but Leigh's were all converted, giving them an 18-12 advantage.

Another try apiece, Leigh's converted, left the score

at 24-16, but when Simon Brown added the goal to Alex Szostak's penalty try just before the hour, the deficit was back to two points. Bergin then raced over with five minutes left to snatch victory.



MINOR SEMI-FINAL

Friday 10 September, Craven Park **Attendance** 2,231

BARROW (8) 14

Tries Ostler, Coyle
Goals Rooney 3

SHEFFIELD (8) 21

Tries Cook, Rowe, Lindsay
Goals Brown 4
Drop-goal Brown

Defending champions Barrow Raiders were beaten by another late charge from in-form Sheffield Eagles at a stunned Craven Park.

In a tight contest, converted tries from James Coyle and Martin Ostler plus a penalty from the ever-indispensable Jamie Rooney put the home side 14-8 up, with Sheffield only boasting Brendon Lindsay's converted try and a Simon Brown penalty.

That advantage looked as if it might be enough with time running out, but Sheffield found a second wind to surge past the Cumbrians in style.

First Alex Rowe touched

down and Brown levelled the scores, then Matt Cook went over for another six-pointer to completely turn the tie around. Brown then capped a memorable performance with a drop-goal to send the Eagles into ecstasy.



ELIMINATION PLAY-OFF 2

Sunday 5 September, Craven Park **Attendance** 2,434

BARROW (18) 38

Tries Catic, Harrison, Campbell 2, Coyle, Ballard, James
Goals Rooney 4, Ballard

WIDNES 0

This repeat of last year's Northern Rail Cup Final proved more one-sided than anyone expected, and suggested that Barrow were ready for a spirited defence of the Championship crown they won here last year.

Tries from Ned Catic, Liam Harrison and Liam Campbell gave the Raiders a deserved 18-0 lead at half-time.

Widnes, who had beaten Barrow three times already this year, did their best to hit back after the break but the home defence held firm, and when James Coyle went over for a fourth converted try to make the gap 24-0 after 47 minutes, the Vikings looked



like a spent force.

So it proved, as further tries from Andy Ballard and Matt James, plus a second for Liam Campbell, put the cap on a morale-boosting win, and earned Barrow another home tie, this time with Sheffield.

MAJOR SEMI-FINAL

Thursday 16 September, The Shay **Attendance** 1,490

HALIFAX (24) 42

Tries Penkywicz, Black, Barlow, Aizue, Paterson, Worrincy, Royston
Goals Paterson 7

SHEFFIELD (6) 16

Tries Mills, Rowe, Ropati
Goals Brown 2

Halifax weathered an early storm to overcome a gallant Sheffield Eagles challenge and reached a second Grand Final in successive seasons.

The visitors, who had won at both Leigh and Barrow earlier in the play-offs, began strongly and put pressure on their hosts in the first 20 minutes of the game. When winger Danny Mills gave them the lead with a converted try, they looked capable of another shock.

However, four tries in 11 minutes from the home side's Sean Penkywicz, Ben Black, Sam Barlow and Makali Azue, plus Lee



Paterson's try straight after the break, put a different complexion on the tie.

Further tries from Rob Worrincy and Shad Royston secured victory despite Alex Rowe and Tangi Ropati replying for Sheffield.

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THE COACH FEATHERSTONE ROVERS



"THE TOWN IS BUZZING"

There's a good feeling around Featherstone, reckons Rovers coach **Daryl Powell**

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR YOU TO REACH THIS FINAL?

It's another stepping stone. It was a really good achievement to win the League Leaders' shield and this would be icing on the cake. It means a massive amount to our supporters and the town is buzzing.

HOW CLOSE TO YOUR BEST WAS THAT SEMI-FINAL PERFORMANCE AGAINST HALIFAX?

It was some way off our best to be honest - we were a bit scratchy with the ball. But defensively in the second half we really stood up. We were really patient in the way we went about things and we just squeezed Halifax out of the game. When you get to the play-offs you need a different mentality and I think we achieved that, making it difficult for them to get back in the game.

HAS THE DEFENCE BEEN THE FOUNDATION OF YOUR SUCCESS?

I think it is always crucial for any team that you get that right. Ryan Sheridan works hard with our boys and they've bought into everything

we've done. We do a lot of work on ways of controlling the opposition.

WHAT WERE YOUR EXPECTATIONS WHEN THE SEASON BEGAN?

I thought we'd be really competitive - we weren't too far away last year. We've recruited well and got good people on board from a playing point of view and good staff so I was confident we'd be challenging

the will is here and we're trying to grow. We do a massive amount in the community, the directors work really hard and there's a huge positivity here. It's a strong club and it's getting better all the time.

IS IT DIFFICULT TO GET THE PLAYERS TO PEAK AT THIS POINT AFTER SUCH A LONG SEASON?

I don't think so. We've managed

When you get to the play-offs you need a different mentality, and I think we achieved that

at the top of the pile. We wanted to get to both finals but having said that, we've still probably exceeded expectations.

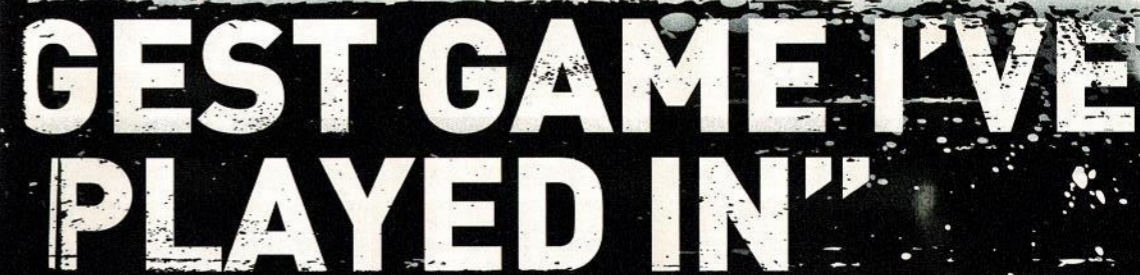
TWO PLAY-OFF FINALS IN THREE YEARS - IS THIS A CLUB ON THE UP?

It's a really good, traditional club moving into the professional era well. It still needs to develop but

players pretty well. The conditioning staff have done an excellent job so we've been fresh when needed to be. The biggest problem is the week off - we needed to keep players tuned in between the qualifying semi and the Final. You need an intensity about you and we've worked hard to make sure we're focussed and ready to go in the final.

"THIS IS THE BIGGEST GAME I'VE PLAYED IN"

Featherstone's hat-trick hero from the semi-final, stand-off **Kyle Briggs**, has had an exceptional season. But he knows the job is not complete



A HAT-TRICK IN THE SEMI-FINAL - HOW PLEASING WAS THAT?

I was very pleased, everything went according to plan. It was a tough game and we don't expect any less in the final. The job is not done yet and we don't want to get too hyped-up about just reaching the final.

WHAT DOES THIS FINAL MEAN TO YOU PERSONALLY?

As a club it is massive, from the board all the way down. Personally, it is massive because it is the biggest game I will ever have played in. The only other final I've played in was the play-off final with Doncaster to get promoted into this league, so it is important for me but even bigger for the club as a whole.

THERE HAVE BEEN RUMOURS OF SUPER LEAGUE CLUBS COMING IN FOR YOU. ANY TRUTH IN THAT?

There is a bit of truth in it but nothing dead set. Other teams have the chance to come in and buy me if they want to, but I enjoy life at Featherstone, I'm still contracted to the club, and at the moment that's all I'm interested in.

DO YOU PREFER SCORING TRIES OR MAKING THEM?

I'd have to say making them because up until this year I'd never really been a try scorer (This season Kyle has scored 16 tries). I've now got quality players around me and it allows me to get on the end of some of the breaks and good team play.

IS IT AN EXTRA ADVANTAGE TO HAVE A WEEK OFF?

Yes, I think so. It allows players time to recover and get rid of niggling injuries. We've been lucky this year with weeks off during the season. We had a bye during Easter weekend, which is the first time I've rested over Easter since I started playing.

IS THERE A GOOD TEAM SPIRIT AT THE CLUB?

It's the best I've experienced at any club. Everyone looks after each other and we could sense that everyone was really up for a good campaign during pre-season. We didn't start well, losing to Leigh in the Northern Rail Cup, but we found our feet and kicked on from there.

HOW HAVE YOU FOUND DARYL POWELL COMPARED TO OTHER COACHES YOU'VE PLAYED UNDER?

He's definitely one of the best, along with his assistant Ryan Sheridan. Daryl is a great man-manager and that has played a big part in our success this season. He's a great coach and I think he's got a massive

future, maybe coaching in Super League - if Featherstone don't get a licence themselves. Daryl actually signed me at Leeds when I was 16, but when I left, I stopped developing as a player and never had any feedback. Daryl and Ryan have worked hard on improving my game and they have done wonders for me this year.

DO YOU HAVE A DAY JOB OR ARE YOU FULL-TIME PROFESSIONAL?

I'm a professional. I do the community coaching at the club but I used to be a plasterer. It has really helped me not having to work nine 'til five, but I like getting my hands dirty so I still keep my hand in with a bit of plastering.

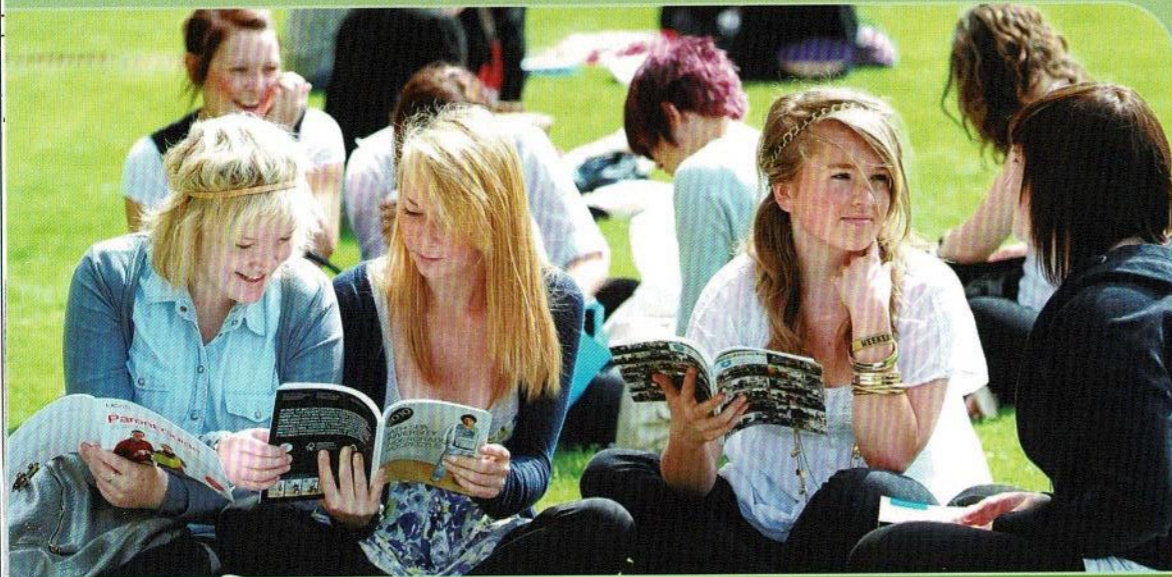
HAS THERE BEEN EXTRA INTEREST IN THE TOWN THIS SEASON?

Featherstone is a great rugby town and our results have given everyone a really good lift. You can see around town how proud the fans are. We are getting bigger crowds and we are really well supported. I just hope we can give them something more to cheer about in the Grand Final.

Daryl Powell and Ryan Sheridan have worked hard on improving my game, and they have done wonders for me this year

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THE COACH HALIFAX RIFLE



"WE'LL BE STRONGER"

Halifax have overcome adversity this season and are in good shape for the final, reckons coach **Matt Calland**

AFTER YOUR WIN OVER SHEFFIELD DO YOU FEEL YOU ARE BACK TO YOUR BEST?

I think so. I think it was probably the best we've played all season. We controlled the ball well, our defence was solid, we scored two tries from kicks, and we worked really hard for the points. We've been known for letting soft tries in recently so the defensive aspect was very pleasing.

three times they've beaten us this season and I'm hoping this time we will actually play as we know we can do, and get the result.

IT'S BEEN AN UP AND DOWN SEASON - HAVE THOSE PROBLEMS ULTIMATELY MADE YOU STRONGER?

Yes they have. There have been problems on and off the pitch and don't forget our injury situation.

YOU'VE GOT SEVERAL PLAYERS RETIRING AFTER THIS SEASON - WILL THEY BE HARD TO REPLACE?

Definitely. David Wrench has been awesome - his work rate's unbelievable, he just never stops going. There were a lot of raised eyebrows when I brought Graham Holroyd back but he was magnificent against Sheffield, with a kicking masterclass. So they'll be missed.

WILL THE EXPERIENCE OF LOSING LAST YEAR'S FINAL HELP YOU THIS TIME AROUND?

I think so. We were a bit nervous and the occasion got to a couple of players. I think those players will come back stronger this time around.

HOW'S THE MOOD IN THE TOWN?

I'll be honest, I was disappointed in the crowd for the Sheffield game - maybe they'd lost faith in us after the Featherstone game previously. But hopefully, now we've redeemed ourselves they'll get behind us in good numbers in the final and cheer us home.

If any other team had the injuries we've had I don't think they would have made the final

WILL YOU HAVE TO PLAY THAT WELL AGAIN TO BEAT FEATHERSTONE IN THE FINAL?

I expect so. To beat them, we're going to have to have high ball control and our defence is going to have to be strong. They're well organised and hard to beat and have a massive attacking threat. But we've been way off our best in the

We've had six or seven key players out for large parts of the season. If any other team in the Championship had suffered the casualties that we did, I don't think they would have made the Grand Final. It shows how tough these blokes are. But over the season, it has brought us closer together and we've got stronger and stronger as we've gone on.

'THIS WILL BE SPECIAL'

Halifax winger **Rob Worrincy** has a reputation for long-range tries. But a try from anywhere will do today if it wins his side the Grand Final...



HOW HAS THIS SEASON GONE FOR YOU PERSONALLY?

It's been a pretty good year for me. I managed to get more tries than last year, got into the All-Star Team and if I can make the team for the Grand Final this one will be really special.

HOW WELL DID YOU THINK YOU PLAYED AGAINST SHEFFIELD?

It was a great result. I think we expected it to be a tighter game but we got the rub of the green, and a few bounces went in our favour. We played pretty smartly - our completion rate was up around 86 per cent in the first half and I think we chose the right options in the right areas of the field and generally cut the errors down.

YOU SCORED A 90-METRE TRY - ARE THOSE THE KIND YOU DREAM OF?

I do have a tendency to score long-range tries but it's just as satisfying to score a short-range one because you get the same amount of points for the team. I'll take any kind of try if it'll win us the Grand Final.

YOU WON'T HAVE HAD A BREAK LIKE FEATHERSTONE - WILL THAT BE A BLESSING OR A CURSE?

I don't think it's necessarily a bad thing. We played Featherstone the week before and we were rusty. We took our second chance very well and built up some confidence which we wouldn't have had otherwise. It can work both ways - they've had a rest but we might be a bit sharper.

DO YOU START FEELING THE PHYSICAL TOLL AT THIS END OF A LONG SEASON?

You definitely start feeling the knocks and bumps but this is a Grand Final and it's 80 minutes. Some players go through their entire career without playing in a Grand Final so the adrenaline takes over and after the 80 minutes, win, lose or draw, you can worry about your knocks then.

YOU'VE BEEN AT HALIFAX FOR A COUPLE OF YEARS - HOW HAVE YOU FOUND IT AS A RUGBY TOWN?

You can see how much the team means to them. Just to see the disappointment on the fans' faces when we lost to Featherstone showed you the passion they have

for the game. Sometimes it's a pressure for you but it's mostly a motivation - you're not just playing for a jersey you're playing for a town and a great club with a lot of history and a proud community.

HOW HAVE YOU FOUND MATT CALLAND AS A COACH?

He's been really good for me. When I first came to the club I took a while to get used to how they play. At times I wasn't playing near to my potential. Matt gave me a pat on the back and said 'I know why I signed you and I know you can prove it'. I can't give him enough credit for bringing me on as a player.

He's helped me get my positioning better in defence and we've worked

on my ball-handling skills, passing from dummy-half and dealing with high balls. I can't thank him enough for all he's done for me.

back. As a professional player it can be all 'take take take', thinking about individual glory. It's nice to give something back and do what

Some players go through their career without playing in a Grand Final, so the adrenaline takes over and you forget about the knocks

DO YOU WORK PART-TIME AS WELL AS PLAYING?

I work as a community officer for the club. It's good to give something

people did for you when you were young. If I can help one child to pull on a pair of rugby boots and play the game I feel very honoured to do that.

KEY MEN FEATHERSTONE

Rovers captain **Stuart Dickens** (left) spotlights some team-mates who could make a difference today



“ONE OF THE PLEASING THINGS about this season has been our consistency. We’ve only lost two games, and they were both by only two points.”

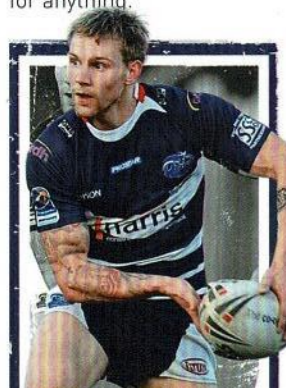
“There’s a really good team spirit among the lads and we all get on really well. One of the young players died in an accident early in the season and although that was awful, it actually brought us closer together. We said to ourselves that this season would be dedicated to Gareth Swift.”

“I feel like I’ve played OK myself but the team and I know we’ll need to be at our very best in the final. I’m sure Daryl will have done his homework and we’ll be prepared for anything.”



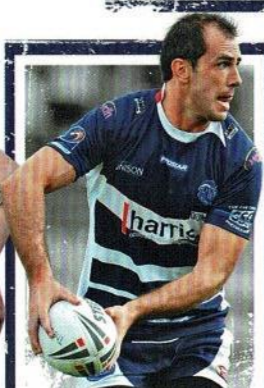
LIAM FINN SCRUM-HALF

“His organisational skills are fantastic. He directs us around the park and keeps us sticking to the game plan. He’s got a grumpy side to him but that’s what you need to keep people on their toes. He’s got a great kicking game and we’ve scored a lot of tries from that, which is a part of our game which was lacking. It’s given us an extra dimension.”



KYLE BRIGGS STAND-OFF

“Briggsy has really kicked on as a player. We’ve developed a really good working relationship on the right-hand side and he’s got a strong defensive game. Half-backs often get targeted but opponents will find he’s no pushover.”



TOMMY SAXTON FULL-BACK/CENTRE

“Tommy was voted our player of the year, and deservedly so. All year his work in the back field and his running from dummy-half has made a big difference. He always takes two or three men with him every time he carries the ball and that’s such a bonus for us.”



ZAK HARDAKER WING

“Zak is a young kid who has come into the team and scored 20 tries in 13 games. He’s great under the high ball and he’s a tall kid as well so he scores a lot of tries from high kicks. He looks very slight but he’s strong and carries the ball really well.”



TONY TONKS PROP

“My front row partner. Tony’s got better and better this season. In training we’re told not to get carried away but Tony only knows one way to play and that’s 100 miles an hour. He’s like a big lump of wood and he’s been unstoppable in the last few weeks.”

KEY MEN HALIFAX

Halifax full-back **Shad Royston** (left) spotlights some team-mates who could make a difference today

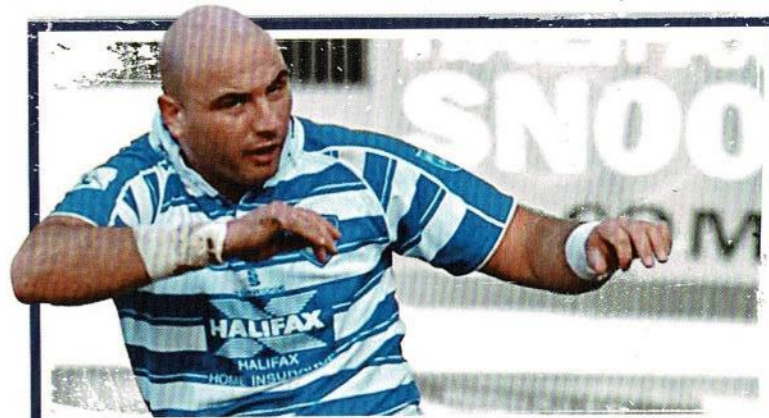


“IT’S BEEN A BIT OF a rollercoaster season. We’ve put some good wins together but we had a bit of a slump in mid-season. Then towards

the end we started stringing things together again.

“I’ve had a good year personally, and I’m happy with how things have gone. I’ve scored a lot of tries but those have been the result of good work from everyone on the team.”

“The semi-final performance was probably the best we’ve played for a long time. We needed to put things right in a few departments like ball control and discipline. If we can play like that again then I’m confident we’ll give a good account of ourselves in the final.”



GRAHAM HOLROYD HALF-BACK

“Graham’s got so much experience and a great rugby brain on him. He reads the game well and leads the team around the park. He’s a real leader on the pitch - one of the older heads. This is his third stint at the club and his last game before retiring, so he’ll be keen to go out on a high.”



BOB BESWICK LOOSE FORWARD / HOOKER

“Bob leads by example - he’s always chasing, always taking up the dummy-half duties, making tackles and doing any job that needs doing to get us around the park. He’s a real asset and you need players like that in a Grand Final.”



ROB WORRINCY WING

“He’s had a really good year for us. He’s strong at the back and very dangerous with ball in hand, as you saw with his 90-metre run in the game last week. He gives us that unpredictability, and if you get him running in space he’s always so hard to catch.”



DAVID WRENCH PROP

“He and Dave Larder are both retiring after this, and they’re the unsung heroes of the team. He makes crucial tackles and runs lines that other players don’t want to. He’s also cool under pressure, which is what we’ll need in the final.”



SEAN PENKYWICZ HOOKER

“He’s become our super sub. He’s unpredictable and a real livewire. He comes on and runs from dummy-half and I’m not sure if even he knows what to expect, but when he makes something happen it can really give everyone a big lift.”

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ROAD TO THE FINAL

Today's two finalists have battled it out at the top of The Co-operative Championship all year. Here's how they sealed their passage to Warrington...

FEATHERSTONE ROVERS

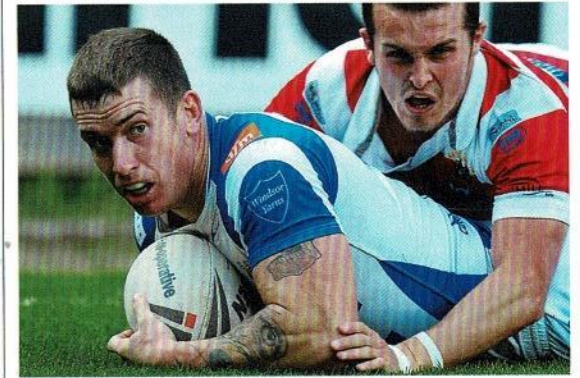


DATE	OPPOSITION	SCORE
28 FEBRUARY	BATLEY BULLDOGS (H)	36-10
14 MARCH	DEWSBURY RAMS (A)	40-10
20 MARCH	BARROW RAIDERS (A)	20-6
28 MARCH	WHITEHAVEN (H)	54-18
2 APRIL	HALIFAX RLFC (H)	44-4
11 APRIL	SHEFFIELD EAGLES (A)	40-16
22 APRIL	KEIGHLEY COUGARS (H)	76-12
30 APRIL	WIDNES VIKINGS (A)	9-8
6 MAY	TOULOUSE OLYMPIQUE (H)	24-26
18 MAY	LEIGH CENTURIONS (A)	24-16
22 MAY	TOULOUSE OLYMPIQUE (A)	34-28
30 MAY	DEWSBURY RAMS (H)	36-32
10 JUNE	HALIFAX RLFC (A)	26-16
27 JUNE	WIDNES VIKINGS (H)	30-22
4 JULY	KEIGHLEY COUGARS (A)	24-6
8 JULY	LEIGH CENTURIONS (H)	34-26
25 JULY	WHITEHAVEN (A)	48-0
1 AUGUST	SHEFFIELD EAGLES (H)	30-32
8 AUGUST	BATLEY BULLDOGS (A)	34-26
22 AUGUST	BARROW RAIDERS (H)	72-20

QUALIFYING SEMI-FINAL

9 SEPTEMBER	HALIFAX RLFC (H)	46-16
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HALIFAX RLFC



DATE	OPPOSITION	SCORE
28 FEBRUARY	SHEFFIELD EAGLES (H)	32-26
11 MARCH	BATLEY BULLDOGS (A)	34-24
18 MARCH	WIDNES VIKINGS (A)	30-28
28 MARCH	LEIGH CENTURIONS (H)	10-48
2 APRIL	FEATHERSTONE ROVERS (A)	4-44
5 APRIL	TOULOUSE OLYMPIQUE (H)	50-6
8 APRIL	KEIGHLEY COUGARS (H)	40-20
25 APRIL	WHITEHAVEN (A)	28-10
16 MAY	BARROW RAIDERS (H)	46-24
23 MAY	KEIGHLEY COUGARS (A)	46-32
30 MAY	LEIGH CENTURIONS (A)	46-40
6 JUNE	DEWSBURY RAMS (H)	28-8
10 JUNE	FEATHERSTONE ROVERS (H)	16-26
27 JUNE	DEWSBURY RAMS (A)	37-30
11 JULY	WHITEHAVEN (H)	66-16
22 JULY	BARROW RAIDERS (A)	42-34
29 JULY	WIDNES VIKINGS (H)	30-16
8 AUGUST	SHEFFIELD EAGLES (A)	38-24
15 AUGUST	BATLEY BULLDOGS (H)	30-22
21 AUGUST	TOULOUSE OLYMPIQUE (A)	38-24

QUALIFYING SEMI-FINAL

9 SEPTEMBER	FEATHERSTONE ROVERS (A)	16-46
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MAJOR SEMI-FINAL

16 SEPTEMBER	SHEFFIELD EAGLES (H)	42-16
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THE ROVERS' RETURN?

We look back on a rollercoaster Championship season

FEBRUARY/MARCH/APRIL

Once again this year's Co-operative Championship has proved a league full of intense competition, thrilling, unpredictable action and no shortage of skill, positively reflecting the strength in depth of the European game.

The opening fixture of the season epitomised all those qualities before the live Sky Sports cameras as Leigh and Barrow Raiders fought out a pulsating 20-20 draw.

Alas, for newly promoted Keighley Cougars the season started badly before a ball had been thrown in anger. The West Yorkshire club were deducted nine points for going into administration during the winter.

Thankfully, local businessmen saved the club from going under, but a measure of the challenge facing Barry Eaton and his team came with a thumping 72-10 defeat at Widnes in their opening game.

Featherstone, who finished sixth

in 2009, started the season on fire, racking up eight straight victories, including eye-catching wins at Widnes and Barrow.

Leigh also impressed under the stewardship of former St Helens boss Ian Millward, and by the end of April they were also unbeaten with seven wins and a draw to their credit.

Widnes hosted a Championship record crowd of 3,686 fans at the Stobart Stadium on March 18, but a 28-30 defeat to Halifax was typical of the Vikings' struggle to keep pace with the leaders. Paul Cullen's men also went down to a thrilling 38-42 defeat to Toulouse, as the French once again proved dangerous.

Elsewhere, Sheffield, after finishing third in the 2009 regular season, made a dismal start, recording just one win in their first seven. Yet things looked even bleaker for the other newly promoted team, Dewsbury, who crashed to eight straight defeats.

MAY/JUNE

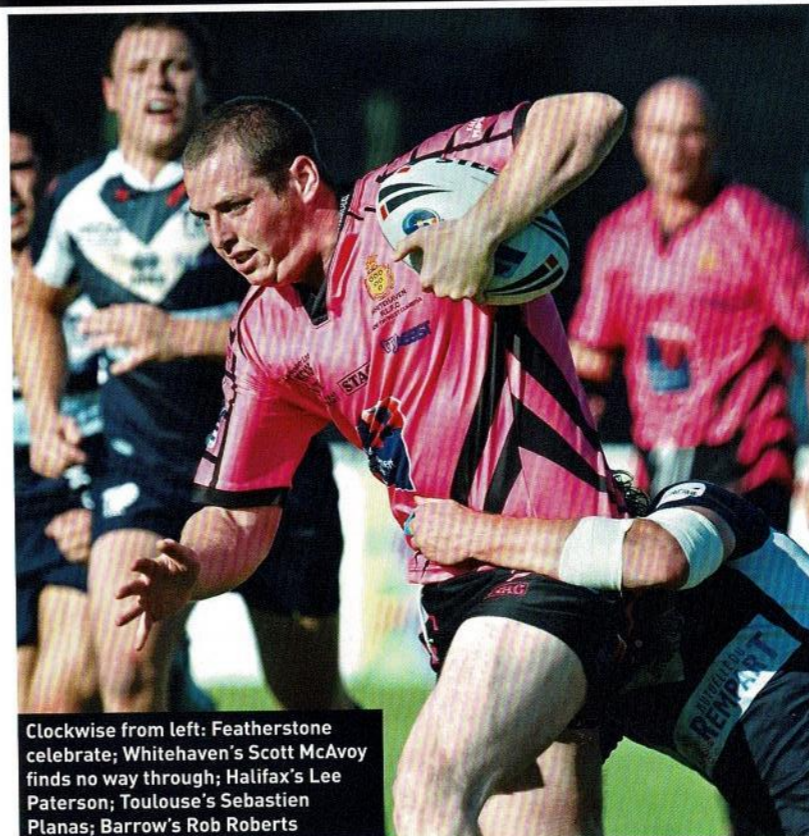
Despite a shock 24-26 home defeat to Toulouse, Featherstone continued to blaze a trail at the top of the table, recording another five straight wins including victory over Leigh.

The Centurions were stuttering, with three wins and three defeats during an indifferent mid-season period. Halifax enjoyed a good couple of months, with victories over Leigh and Barrow strengthening their title aspirations.

Meanwhile, Widnes Vikings, so impressive in reaching their second successive Northern Rail Cup final, struggled for league consistency, crashing to four successive defeats.

Elsewhere, Sheffield Eagles began to soar, winning five times in six games to ease their relegation worries. But heading in the opposite direction were Whitehaven, who slumped to seven straight defeats in May and June.

At least there was better news



Clockwise from left: Featherstone celebrate; Whitehaven's Scott McAvoy finds no way through; Halifax's Lee Paterson; Toulouse's Sebastien Planas; Barrow's Rob Roberts



for Dewsbury, who arrested an 11-game losing streak to finally record their first win of the season at Keighley on June 13. The Rams then proved the old London bus adage by winning their next game against title-chasing Halifax.

Keighley, burdened by that nine-point deduction, still sat at the foot of the table, but raised the spirits of their supporters with wins at Whitehaven and in-form Sheffield.

JULY/AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

Featherstone had led from the front for so much of the season, and they didn't falter over the final furlongs. The Colliers did suffer a narrow home reverse to Mark Aston's Sheffield, but a win at Batley clinched top spot and they finished the regular season in style with a 72-20 demolition of reigning champions Barrow.

Halifax finished with a wet sail, claiming victory in their final six

matches to finish second. Leigh and Barrow both stuttered but placed third and fourth, respectively, to book their play-off places.

Widnes bounced back from the disappointment of losing a thrilling

and so it proved, as they managed just four wins and a draw all season. But who would join them?

Dewsbury recovered from their horror start to the season to end the campaign with four straight victories

Featherstone Rovers had led from the front for so much of the season, and they didn't falter over the final furlongs

Northern Rail Cup final to Batley with four straight league wins, but the Bulldogs finished the season with just one win from five games, leaving Sheffield to round out the play-off positions in sixth.

The battle to survive the drop was always likely to be beyond Keighley

and preserve their championship status. That meant Whitehaven followed Keighley through the relegation trapdoor. A 12-game losing streak was to prove fatal for the Cumbrians. At the other end of the table, though, the drama was only just beginning...

CREAM OF THE CROP

The Co-operative Championship All-Star Team makes for one formidable line-up



This year's Co-operative Championship All-Star team is as talented a bunch as you'll find in this league...

1 SHADROYSTON
Halifax RLFC
This Australian utility is just as good at defending and fielding a high ball as he is at scoring tries at the other end.

2 JOHNNY CAMPBELL
Batley Bulldogs
The top scorer in the Championship this season, pace and strength make him a real handful.

3 MICKNANYN
Leigh Centurions
A veteran try-scorer and goal-kicker who has been a strong attacking weapon for the Centurions this year.

4 NEDCATIC
Barrow Raiders
The highly-experienced Australian has been a consistent performer for the champions, turning his hand to duties both in the pack and among the backs.

5 ROB WORRINCY
Halifax RLFC
A darting winger who is always a danger man for Halifax and has been in great form out wide this year as his team took second spot.

6 JAMIE ROONEY
Barrow Raiders
The former Wakefield man has shown again that he is truly a class act. His kicking game, tidy distribution and ability to take on the line have been crucial for the Cumbrians.

7 LIAM FINN
Featherstone Rovers
A pivotal player in Featherstone's table-topping season, with peerless organisational skills.

8 STUART DICKENS
Featherstone Rovers
The beating heart of Featherstone's pack has been formidable this year.

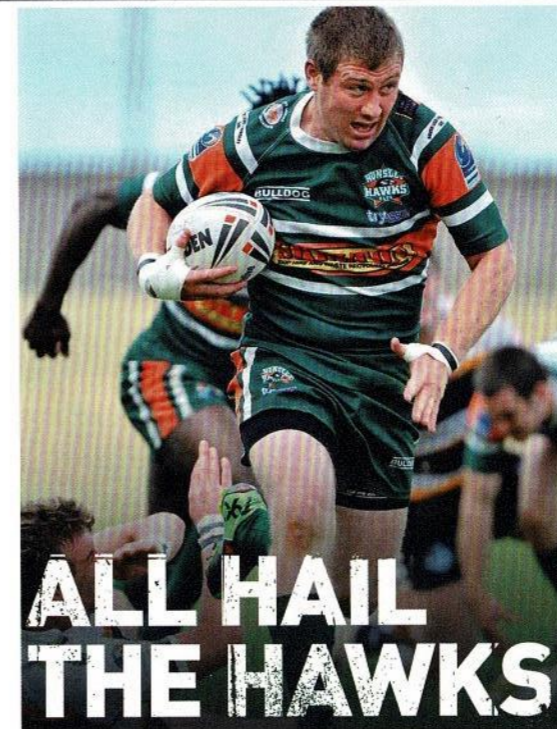
9 CRAIG COOK
Sheffield Eagles
19 tries tell their own story and this hooker has been a priceless playmaker for the Eagles.

10 SEAN HESKETH
Batley Bulldogs
An aggressive young Irish international who has really made a name for himself.

11 JONGRAYSHON
Featherstone Rovers
A second rower whose tough tackling and ball-carrying have been vital in helping Featherstone reach the Grand Final.

12 LEEDORAN
Widnes Vikings
A pack workhorse who has pace, ball-playing ability and a reputation for busting tackles to add to the industry you expect from a second rower.

13 MATTY DALE
Featherstone Rovers
In his second spell at Featherstone, this former Hull FC youngster has shown what a talented prospect he is at loose forward. He boasts skill and positional sense allied to go-forward grunt.



Hunslet player-coach Paul March (above) on their title-winning season

"We were confident we could win the title from the beginning of the season. We'd taken in nine players from York and added James Houston and Stuart Kain from Featherstone and they all added something different to the squad.

"We only have part-time players and it took a while for them to play as I wanted, but the whole squad contributed massively and we began to gel after a few weeks. However, we lost our second league game at home to Oldham and that really dented our confidence. But the key to success is how you react to those defeats, and we sat down after the game, vowed it would not happen again, and went on a nine-match winning run.

"Looking back, there were a couple of stand-out games. I thought our 28-12 win at home to Blackpool straight after our second defeat at Rochdale was important. But I also remember putting 60 points on an Oldham side who pushed us all the way in the title race. One try we scored went through seven pairs of hands, and it was moments like that which made our season.

"We eventually clinched the title with a 30-24 win at Blackpool. It was a great feeling to win the title but it is the players that deserve the credit. Their attitude has been the key to our success. From the experienced players such as David March and Tommy Haughey to the youngsters like Dave Clayton, John Oakes and Michael Mark, everybody has played their part. That said, we now face the prospect of a bigger challenge next season and to enjoy more success will require even harder work."

ONE VISION

The Championship One All-star team includes players from both today's finalists

1 PAUL O'CONNOR
Oldham
The Roughyeds' player of the year has been a revelation at full-back since his arrival at the club.

2 DAMIEN MUNRO
Blackpool Panthers
His prolific try-scoring and reliable defence have been vital to Martin Crompton's side.

3 LEE WATERMAN
York City Knights
A talented ex-amateur, this 23-year-old has really shone at this higher level.

4 WAYNE MCHUGH
Hunslet Hawks
A pacey back who has been a constant threat for the Hawks.

5 WAINE PRYCE
Hunslet Hawks
Along with McHugh, he has been responsible for countless tries for Hunslet.

6 NEIL RODEN
Oldham
A highly experienced half-back who is always at the heart of Oldham's best play.

7 PAUL MARCH
Hunslet Hawks
The player-coach of the table-toppers guides them round the park with great expertise and motivates his men brilliantly.

8 ANDY HOBSON
Blackpool Panthers
This powerful and aggressive prop has had disciplinary problems, but on his day he is a formidable pack enforcer.

9 PHIL WOOD
Rochdale Hornets
A skilful kicking game and quality dummy-half distribution have helped Rochdale reach the play-offs for the first time.

10 GILDUDSON
South Wales Scorpions
A great young hope for Welsh Rugby League who has been a tireless pack aggressor this year, and is one to watch for the future.

11 JARRAD STACK
Workington Town
A try-scoring Aussie back rower who has been instrumental in helping the Cumbrians make the play-offs.

12 CRAIGASHALL
Rochdale Hornets
This versatile forward is a skilful play-maker as well as a gutsy pack grafter and is often at the centre of Rochdale's best moves.

13 DAVID MARCH
Hunslet Hawks
Alongside his brother Paul, this powerful ball-playing forward has helped pull the Hawks' strings to great effect.

ANALYSIS



Terry O'Connor, the former Wigan and Great Britain prop who is now an analyst for Sky Sports, assesses Featherstone and Halifax

FEATHERSTONE HAVE BEEN THE

best side in the Championship this season, which is surprising when you think back to the Northern Rail Cup early in the year, and their failure to even qualify through the group stages. Coach Daryl Powell and the players quickly managed to sort out their early season problems and they boast the best defence in the league.

"They have also managed to beat Halifax in all three previous clashes this season, but I certainly do not dismiss Matt Calland's men. If Halifax can control the speed of the ball at the ruck they have the players to blow the opposition away, and Rovers will be aware of that threat."

UP FRONT

"I see the two packs as being quite evenly matched, but Halifax will

have to stop Featherstone's front row, led by their skipper **Stuart Dickens**, an absolute man-mountain who is their leader both on and off the pitch. Another rock for them is fellow prop **Tony Tonks**. He will also cause the opposition a real headache.

"Meanwhile, in the back row, **Tim Spears** will do a lot of the dirty work and lead from the front while **Jamie Field** is also a born winner.

"Halifax prop **Makali Azieu** has scars all over his body to suggest he is not one to back down, and his tactic will be simple - to run straight and direct. **Neil Cherryholme** is a young front rower looking to make his mark on the game, and then they have the likes of **Frank Watene** and **Dominic Maloney** chomping at the bit to come from the interchange

bench. **David Wrench** and **Dave Larder** also bring real leadership qualities to the Halifax back row and when the going gets tough they'll do the dirty work and keep the engine room of the side pumping away."

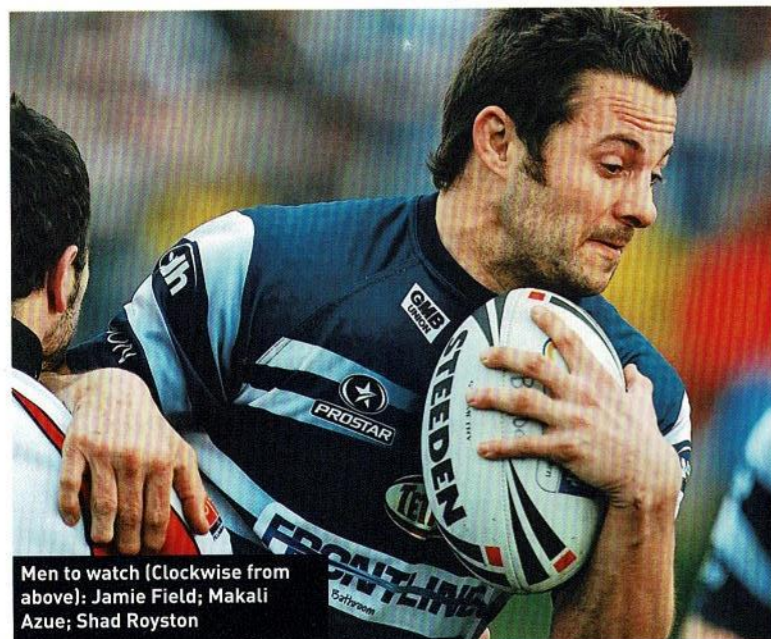
CREATIVE PLAYERS

"I've been very impressed by the **Kyle Briggs** and **Liam Finn** half-back combination for Featherstone. Both have caught the eye with their kicking skills and I've loved watching Briggs's attacking play, which is some of the best outside Super League. He is always prepared to take players on and can score a try out of nothing. Indeed, he managed a hat-trick in the qualifying play-off between these two.

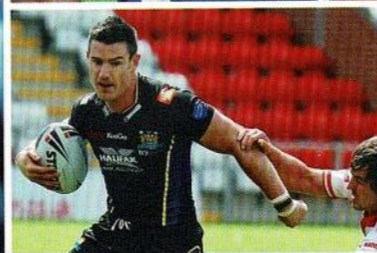
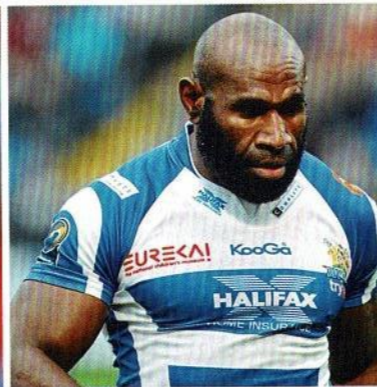
"**Ben Kaye** is also electric from dummy-half, and the nippy little



Pivotal performers (clockwise from above): Frank Watene; Stuart Dickens; David Wrench; Ben Kaye

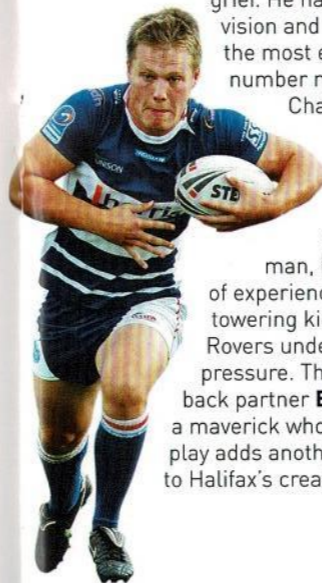


Men to watch (Clockwise from above): Jamie Field; Makali Azieu; Shad Royston



hooker will be a focal point of many of Featherstone's attacks.

"Rovers will need to watch out for Halifax hooker or loose forward **Bob Beswick**. One of his big plays is his 40-20 and he seems to come up with at least two a game. **Sean Penkywicz** will then come off the bench to give Featherstone more grief. He has outstanding vision and is one of the most elusive number nines in the Championship.



"Stand-off **Graham Holroyd**, the former Leeds

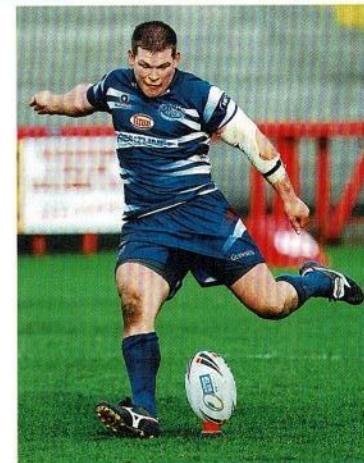
man, has bags of experience and his towering kicks will put Rovers under extreme pressure. Then his half-back partner **Ben Black** is a maverick whose instinctive play adds another dimension to Halifax's creative threat.

FINISHERS

"Out wide, Featherstone have two hugely talented wingers in **Zac Hardaker** and **Tommy Saxton**. They are not only great finishers but they're brave and are prepared to roll their sleeves up, carry the ball and generate some go-forward.

"Halifax are also blessed in this area of the field and in **Shad Royston** they have one of the stand out players outside Super League. He can score tries, is an outstanding kicker and there are few better in the game under the high ball.

"Winger **Rob Worrincy** is also strong and quick and is another to be watched.

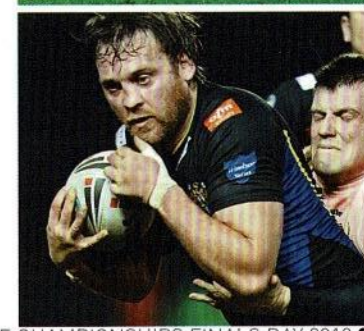


SUMMARY

"I don't believe this is the foregone conclusion many people expect. In fact, I couldn't really pick a winner.

"The team that edges it will be the one that keeps their discipline, retains their composure, and gets to play their natural game.

"I, for one, can't wait."



PLAY-OFFS

The battle for promotion to the Championship was full-blooded from the first kick, as Keighley, York, Oldham, Hunslet, Blackpool and Swinton competed for the prize

QUALIFYING SEMI-FINAL

Sunday 12 September, Whitebank Stadium Attendance 1,275

OLDHAM (16) 41

Tries Chandler 2, Whitmore, Bentley, Kerr, Clarke

Goals McNally 8

Drop-goal McNally

Oldham made it four play-off finals in a row at the first time of asking but they will have been glad of the extra week's break after being given a gruelling test by the side immediately below them in the table.

A game of 12 tries was ultimately won by the boot of Roughyeds scrum-half Gregg McNally. The Huddersfield loaneer kicked eight goals from eight attempts and hit a pressure-relieving drop-goal into the bargain.

The lead changed hands five times in the first half alone. After McNally's penalty had opened the scoring, Ian Bell's try gave York the advantage before Joe Chandler re-established the home side's lead by picking up a high bomb from Neil Roden which was knocked back into the mix. McNally converted only for Ryan Esders to barge over and make it 12-10. Another exchange of converted tries before half-time meant the visitors had the lead at the break, and they went 22-16 ahead soon afterwards when Lee Waterman scored an unconverted try out wide.

Coming up to the hour, things were looking tough for

YORK (18) 32

Tries Esders 2, Waterman 2, Bell, Thorman

Goals Waterman 4

Oldham as York continued to apply much of the pressure. However, when Wayne Kerr stretched over to score on 60 minutes, the subsequent goal levelled the tie.

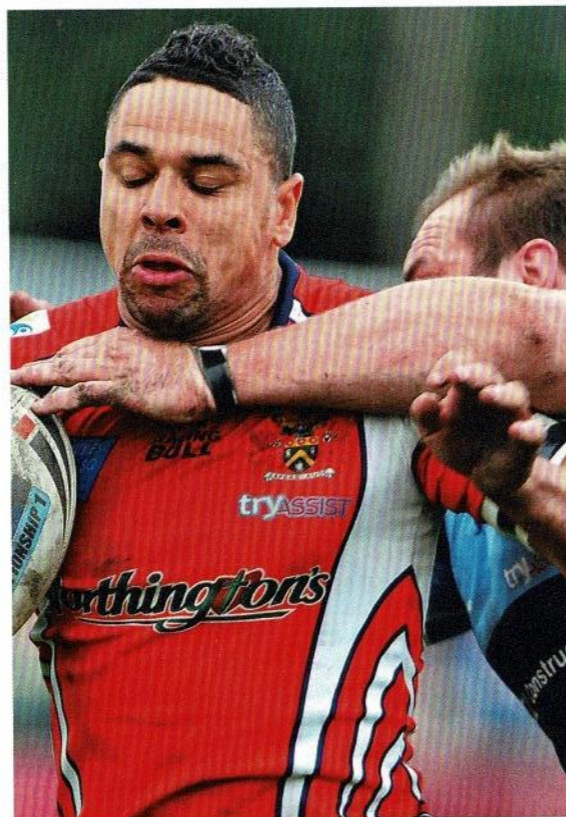
The scores were still locked at 22-22 with 13 minutes remaining when McNally successfully nailed his one-pointer, but any thoughts that the scoring might end there were soon to be dispelled by McNally himself, whose skilful work put in Valu Bentley.

When Chandler bagged his second with five minutes remaining, the victory looked secure, with York tiring and playing up the slope.

But the Knights found new reserves of energy to come back at their hosts and further tries from Waterman and Chris Thorman made it 35-32, and an unlikely comeback was on the cards.

However, Oldham regained possession from the restart and Matty Ashe put in Chris Clarke between the posts, the goal making it 41-32.

York would have to pick themselves up to have a second crack at making the final, entertaining Blackpool the following weekend.



FINAL TABLE THE CO-OPERATIVE CHAMPIONSHIP 1

TEAM	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	Diff	Bns	Pts
HUNSLET	20	18	0	2	828	305	523	1	55
OLDHAM	20	17	0	3	694	438	256	1	52
YORK	20	12	0	8	617	534	83	3	39
BLACKPOOL*	20	15	0	5	805	370	435	3	38
ROCHDALE	20	10	0	10	630	498	132	7	37
SOUTH WALES	20	9	0	11	576	468	108	7	34
WORKINGTON	20	8	1	11	494	498	-4	7	33
SWINTON	20	9	1	10	570	581	-11	4	33
DONCASTER	20	8	0	12	518	588	-70	4	28
LONDON SKOLARS	20	2	0	18	444	900	-456	4	10
GATESHEAD**	20	1	0	19	236	1232	-996	1	-2

* DEDUCTED 10 POINTS FOR OPERATIONAL RULES BREACH

** DEDUCTED SIX POINTS FOR OPERATIONAL RULES BREACH

PRELIMINARY SEMI-FINAL 1

Sunday 5 September, Woodlands Memorial Ground Att 308

BLACKPOOL (0) 36

Tries Clough, Ainscough 2, McCully, Munro, Halliwell

Goals Hemingway 6

Few neutrals would have bet on Workington to beat third-placed Blackpool before kick-off in this game, yet at half-time few would have bet against them.

After outplaying their hosts, converted tries from Jack Pedley and Jarrad Stack, added to Darren Holt's early penalty, put them 14-0 up after only 21 minutes. Yet despite the Panthers twice being reduced to 12 men due to yellow cards, the score stayed that way, and this would prove to be a game of two halves.

A try from the hosts early in the second period got their tails up before a 90-metre

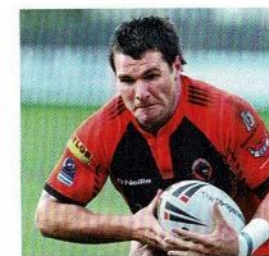
WORKINGTON (14) 26

Tries Stack 2, Pedley, Miller

Goals Holt 4, Kaighan

interception score from Martin Ainscough made it 14-12. Ainscough then grabbed a second and Mark McCully made it 24-14.

Elliot Miller pulled it back to a one-score deficit but tries from Damien Munro and Danny Halliwell clinched it for Blackpool making Stack's reply too little, too late.



MINOR SEMI-FINAL

Sunday 12 September, Woodlands Memorial Ground Att 453

BLACKPOOL (22) 34

Tries Ainscough, Mayberry 2, Forber, Halliwell, McCully

Goals Hemingway 5

Blackpool Panthers earned themselves a shot at making it to finals day with a bruising victory over Rochdale Hornets.

After going behind to a Danny Samuels try after 15 minutes, Panthers fans would have feared a similarly sluggish start to their previous play-off game against Workington, but four tries in 15 minutes from Mark McCully, Martin Ainscough, Casey Mayberry and Carl Forber settled their nerves.

However, two converted tries either side of half-time brought the Hornets back to 22-20 down as Rochdale refused to give up on their

ROCHDALE (14) 26

Tries Gorton, Crook, Wood, Samuels

Goals Crook 5

first Championship One play-off run. But a try from Danny Halliwell and a Tom Hemingway penalty restored a two-score cushion for the home side and, after Adam Bowman was sin-binned, a second for Mayberry and another Hemingway penalty made the tie safe before Dean Gorton managed a late consolation try for Rochdale.



PRELIMINARY SEMI-FINAL 2

Sunday 5 September, Spotland Attendance 375

ROCHDALE (38) 60

Tries Crook 2, Ashall 2, Bloomfield 2, English,

Bowman, Cookson, Hayes

Goals Crook 10

South Wales Scorpions' debut play-off appearance proved to be a baptism of fire at Spotland.

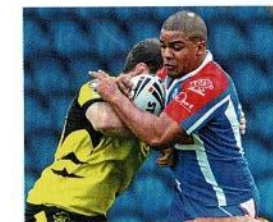
A fierce Hornets onslaught in the first half all but sealed the tie. Converted tries from Wayne English, Adam Bowman, Craig Ashall and two tries plus a penalty from Paul Crook put the home side in total control in their own debut play-off appearance, building a 32-0 lead in just 28 minutes.

A depleted Scorpions side got a consolation before half-time but Dale Bloomfield's six-pointer made it 38-4 at the break.

SOUTH WALES (4) 26

Tries Parry, Murphy 2, Mills, James

Goals James 3



Despite a converted try from Aled James, two more home scores made it 50-10, and after two quick-fire tries from the visitors, Rochdale also added two more, and Aled James's last-minute breakaway try couldn't prevent his side slumping to a record defeat for the Newport-based club.

MAJOR SEMI-FINAL

Sunday 19 September, Huntington Stadium Attendance 673

YORK (20) 38

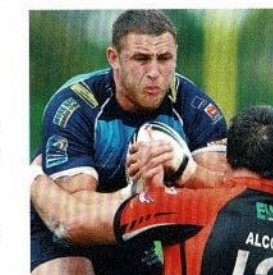
Tries Waterman, Benson, Ratcliffe 2, Wilson, Thorman

Goals Waterman 7

York City Knights took their second chance to reach Warrington with both hands last Sunday, and their passage was never seriously in doubt after a commanding first-half display.

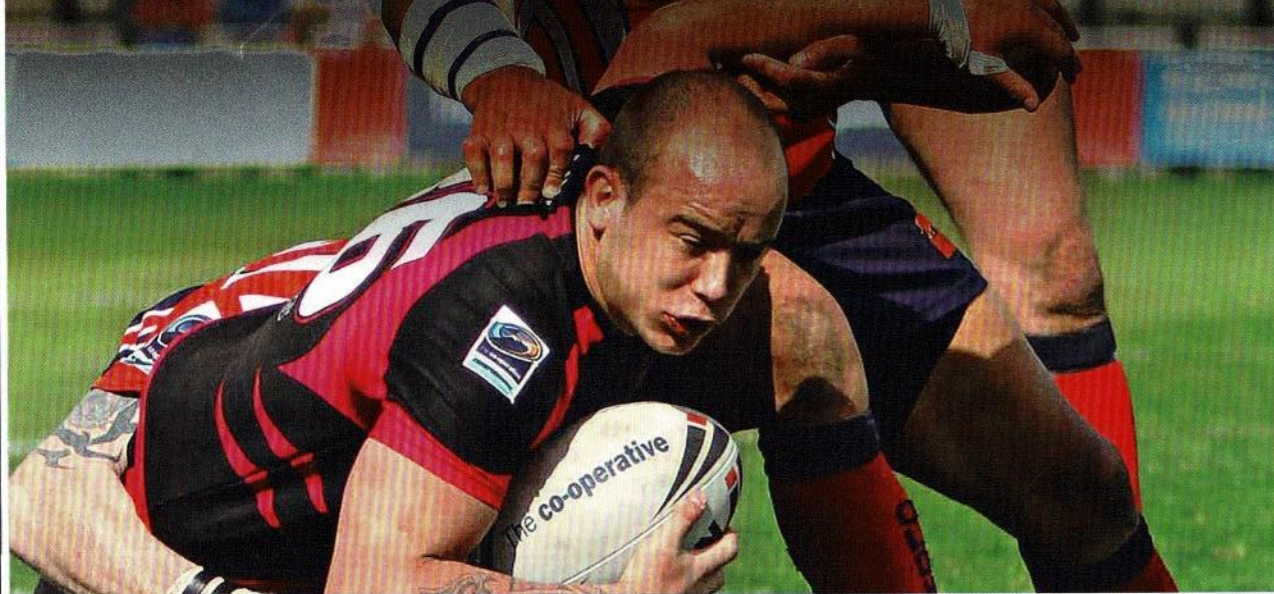
Top scorer Lee Waterman touched down after just three minutes, and although he couldn't convert his effort, he added the extras to Alex Benson's 13th minute effort to make it 10-0. Carl Forber pulled one back for the Panthers but then tries from Danny Ratcliffe and Dan Wilson stretched the lead to 20-6 at the break.

Paul Anderson's six-pointer for the visitors



meant they still had hope heading into the final half-hour, but two converted tries either side of the hour mark effectively sealed the Lancastrians fate, despite another try from Mark McCully late on. Waterman's seventh goal, a penalty, completed the scoring.

THAT WAS THE YEAR THAT WAS



The Championship One season was dramatic right up until the final round

FEBRUARY/MARCH/APRIL

Determined to go one better after three years of play-off heartache, Oldham set the early pace in the Co-operative Championship One, and ended April sitting pretty on top. No thrashings, a few scares...but wins are wins.

Across the pennines, Hunslet bounced back from an early defeat to the Roughyeds to post five consecutive 40-plus scores. Blackpool were the other form team, with a 100% record helping them top the table after six rounds of the competition.

At the bottom, Gateshead Thunder were rebuilding after relegation and financial difficulties. A six-point deduction meant they were up against it, but a win over fellow

strugglers London Skolars in round two was a welcome morale boost.

Skolars remained winless after two months, with only a pair of bonus points to rub together. But their policy of bringing through local talent meant it was always going to be two steps back before one forward.

Meanwhile, Rochdale were winning as many as they were losing, and York endured an indifferent start as defeats at Workington and Doncaster put them in mid-table. It was Donny's first win in 24 matches when they came from behind at the Keepmoat.

South Wales Scorpions' bright start - three wins out of four - ended with defeats to Hunslet, Oldham and Swinton, but they were clearly competing in their debut season.

MAY/JUNE

Blackpool thumped a patched-up Gateshead side by an incredible 132-0 but there was only one way to go after that, and defeats to York and Oldham followed, costing them the top spot. A seventh successive victory meant Oldham hit the summit, but on their debut at the new Whitebank stadium, York spoiled the party, and they lost top spot in emphatic fashion when Hunslet visited and crushed them 60-4. However, Rochdale took advantage of a hangover from that win to beat the Hawks 28-22.

It may have been the wake-up call the leaders needed, as their subsequent victory over Blackpool was the first of eight straight wins that would ultimately seal the title. The seashiders' luck was taking a downturn, as their chairman and major investor Bobby Hope resigned due to ill health in June.

The infuriatingly inconsistent Rochdale followed that win over



Clockwise from far left: South Wales's Jamie Murphy; Oldham's Wayne Kerr; Rochdale's Paul Crook; York's Michael Brown; Hunslet celebrate winning the title



Hunslet - their fifth win in a row - with three straight defeats to sides lower in the table. York were also blowing hot and cold, but came into form as the summer started with four straight wins. Gateshead were crashing and burning though - not so much as a bonus point for the Tynesiders as they went into the final two months of the season stuck on a minus points total. Not that London Skolars were faring any better - still without a win all season.

JULY/AUGUST

Did we mention Rochdale's inconsistency? Well, London Skolars took advantage of it to record their first win since May 2009 with a last-minute try. They went on to record five more points in their final five games to suggest better times may be ahead.

Blackpool were deducted 10 points for financial irregularities but, thankfully, they only needed to beat

Gateshead to seal their play-off spot, which they duly did, 78-10.

Hunslet continued to win and win, but they were pushed all the way by Oldham, who ensured that the Hawks couldn't be certain of the title

Hunslet continued to win and win, but Oldham ensured that they couldn't be certain of the title until the final round of games

until the final round.

There was also drama in the chase for play-off places, as Swinton's 94-0 thrashing of Gateshead brought them within a points for-and-against difference of only seven behind seventh-placed Workington, due to the Cumbrians' defeat at Doncaster.

In the end a number of teams swapped places during the final weeks, but York eventually won third place and a crack at Oldham for the right to go straight into the play-off final. Blackpool also did enough

to earn a home play-off, as did Rochdale.

Finally, hats off to South Wales Scorpions, who made the end-of-season shake-up at the first time of asking, thanks to late-season wins over Oldham and Doncaster.

It was all to play for...

KEY MEN OLDHAM

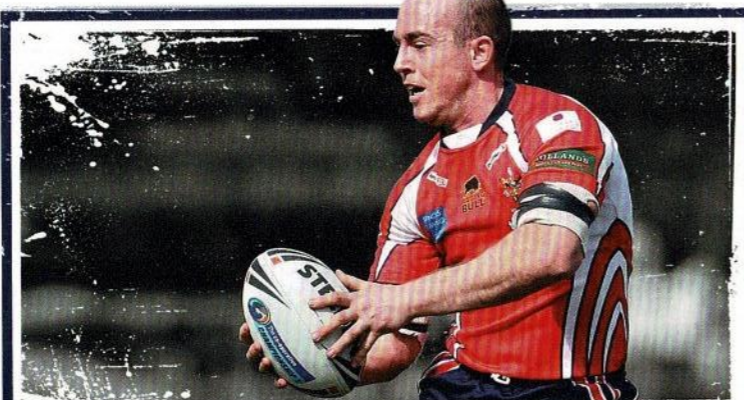
Coach **Tony Benson** (left) spotlights some of the men who could make a difference for Oldham today



"AT THE START OF the season we were given little chance and we didn't even know if we would have a club back in November.

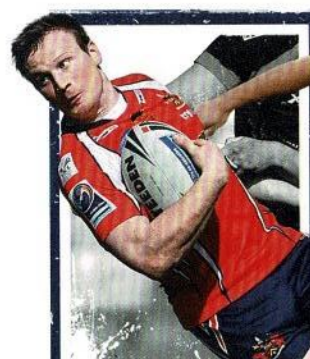
"The squad came together very late - we promoted five from the reserves and we made use of Academy players - so to finish second again was quite a feat.

"When the players first assembled I got a great feeling, as attitudes were really good. But we knew that to do well in this competition the players had to play above themselves week in, week out, and that's what they've done. I believe we are a better team than the one that lost in last year's play-off final and if we perform on the day we are going to be very hard to beat."



MARTIN RODEN HOOKER

"Martin is a very solid toiler who is a good calming influence on the team and helps direct us around the park. He is also the club's trainer and his sports science background really helped us during pre-season. He is my monitor for how players are feeling and lets me know when to pick my preparation up or drop things down."



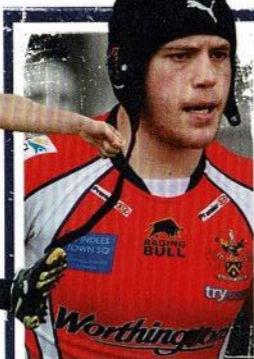
PAUL O'CONNOR FULL-BACK

"He has been outstanding week in, week out. His returning of the ball is excellent and he makes a lot of ground for us in this area. He is good under the high ball and sound defensively, and he is also a good communicator."



NEIL RODEN STAND-OFF

"To demonstrate how valuable Neil is to us, he wasn't playing in the three games we've lost this season. He's Martin's cousin and a lot happens around him. The key to his game is his excellent pass selection and he also has a really good kicking game."



CHRIS CLARKE PROP

"We have four outstanding props but if I had to single one out it would be Chris, who is 19 years old and has really picked up his skill levels this year. Physically and mentally, he is more than capable of playing at a higher level."



VALU BENTLEY LOOSE FORWARD

"The older brother of Catalans duo Kane and Andrew Bentley has been massive for us this season. His strength is that he can switch from playing as a front rower to a stand-off. He makes the hard yards, but also has a good pass and good feet."

KEY MEN YORK

York coach **Dave Woods** introduces five players who could shape his side's challenge today



"SINCE I ARRIVED at the club in June, the squad have been fully open to the style of rugby I hoped to play, although we have been a little

inconsistent this season.

"We lost four players - and key players at that - for the entire season, including our club captain, and considering this we've done pretty well.

"I think they've improved every week since I've been here and we ended the season pretty strongly. As a group of players they've definitely improved their discipline, their natural approach to the game and their defence, and with this in mind, I am confident we can perform well in the play-off final."



JACK LEE HOOKER

"An arrival from Featherstone just before I arrived, Jack has been a huge addition for us. He regularly puts us on the front foot and plays to a consistently high standard. He is a constant threat from dummy-half but he also possesses good defensive qualities. He brings leadership skills to the team and is a good bloke to have around."



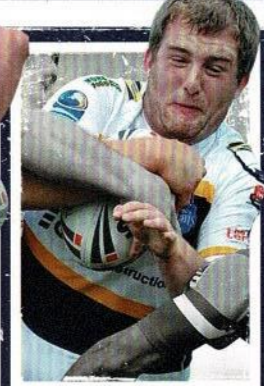
DANNY RATCLIFFE FULL-BACK

"Danny is coming into his best form of the season at the right time. He pushes up really effectively and knows when to come into the line. He also possesses very solid defence and he's a versatile player who can play at stand-off."



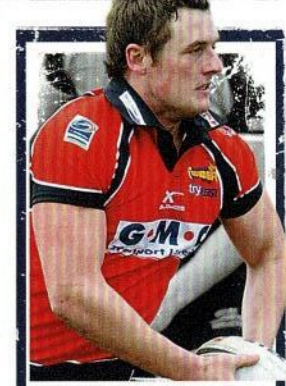
JORDAN ROSS SECOND ROW

"A former Leeds and Rochdale player who I made captain when I took over in June. He does so much of the hard, unseen work for the team. He runs great lines, can defend all day, and can make 30-odd tackles a game. A real good workhorse."



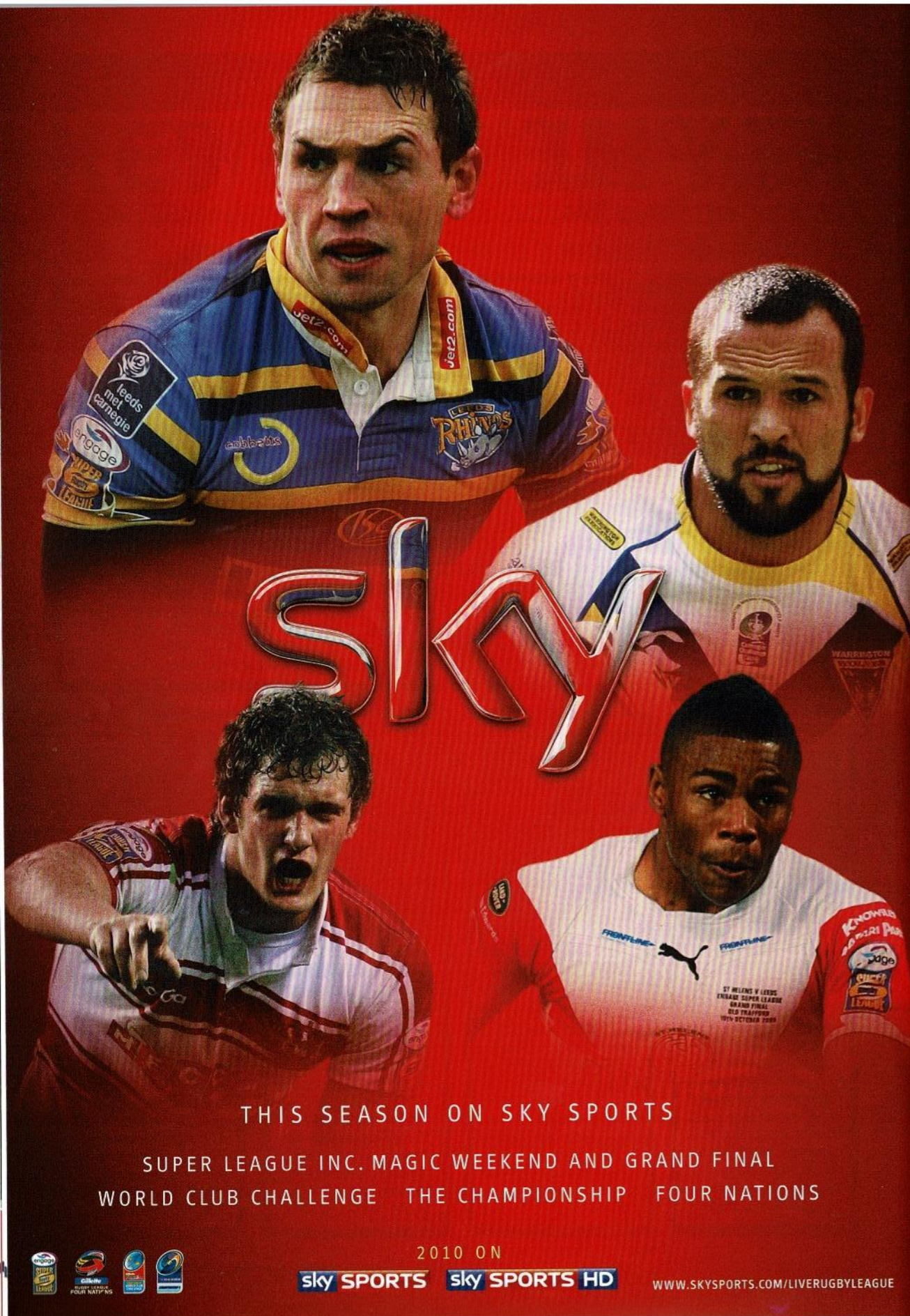
JACK STEARMAN PROP

"A local lad who often comes off the bench for us as an impact player. He'll give us great go-forward and when he runs he is very hard to put down. He regularly helps put the opposition on the back foot and provide an attacking platform for the team."



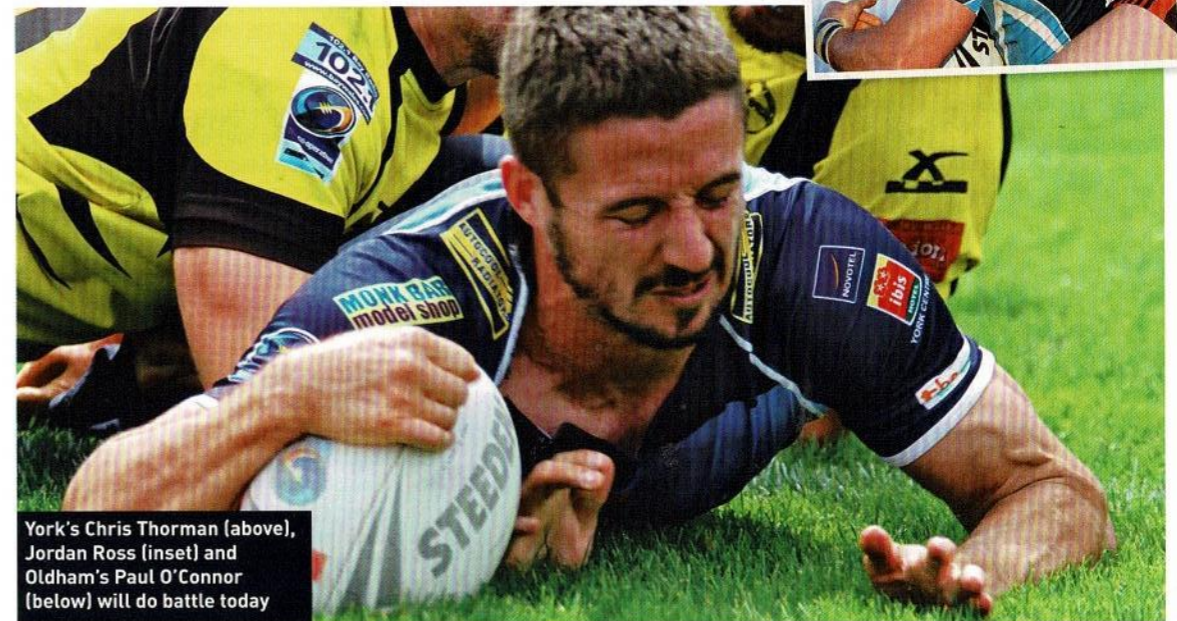
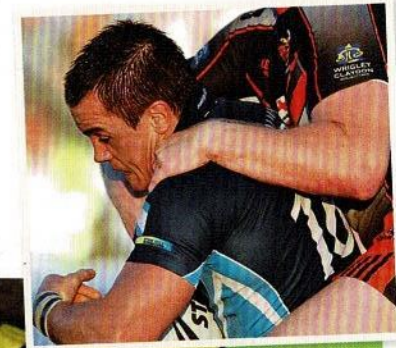
ALEX BENSON PROP

"A former Hull FC youngster who has really seized his opportunity this year. He carries the ball very effectively and he's got an impressive off-load. He's great in contact and has all the qualities you would look for in a modern front row forward."



PREVIEW

Gareth Walker assesses play-off finalists Oldham and York



York's Chris Thorman (above), Jordan Ross (inset) and Oldham's Paul O'Connor (below) will do battle today

▶ **OLDHAM WILL BE AIMING TO END** four years of hurt when they face the resurgent York City Knights today.

The Roughyeds have finished on the wrong end of the last three play-off finals at this level, having lost out to Featherstone Rovers, Doncaster and Keighley Cougars.

Now, yet again they stand one step away from promotion to the Co-operative Championship, and will this time start the clash as marginal favourites, having finished second behind champions Hunslet Hawks.

However, they will be wary of the threat posed by the Knights, who pushed them all the way in the qualifying semi-final at Whitebank Stadium.

Star of the show that afternoon was the Roughyeds' on-loan halfback **Gregg McNally**, who will again have a big part to play this afternoon. The Cumbrian-born Huddersfield Giants youngster has been in excellent form, and his battle with York's vastly

experienced **Chris Thorman** will go a long way to deciding this contest.

Thorman is undoubtedly York's go-to man, and also their assistant coach. The former Huddersfield and Hull FC playmaker was outstanding in Sunday's 38-18 win over Blackpool Panthers and will be looking for another influential display.

Watch out for the opposing full-backs, too – not least Oldham's ultra-consistent **Paul O'Connor**, who was nominated for the Co-operative Championship One Player of the Year.

York will also field young Hull KR loanee **James Haynes** who has impressed in recent weeks.

In the pack, second rower **Jordan Ross** has had a towering end to the season as York skipper, and his work rate

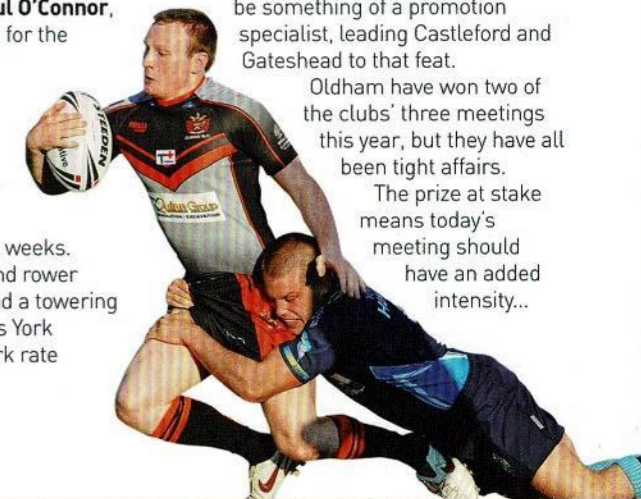
will be central to their effort today. For Oldham, talented youngster **Joe Chandler** plays a similar role.

The two coaches have both tasted success at this level. Kiwi **Tony Benson** won the Northern Rail Cup with Leigh Centurions, and has become a popular figure in his two seasons at Oldham.

In opposition, Australian **Dave Woods** has proved himself to be something of a promotion specialist, leading Castleford and Gateshead to that feat.

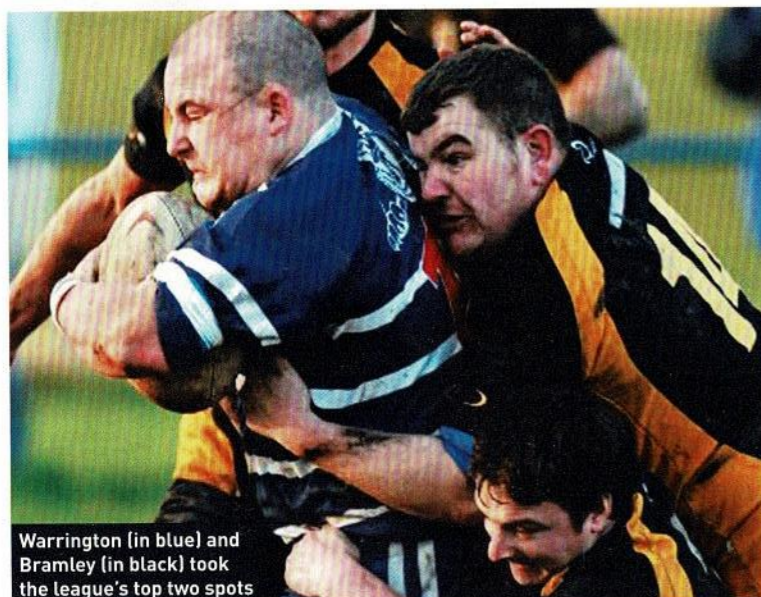
Oldham have won two of the clubs' three meetings this year, but they have all been tight affairs.

The prize at stake means today's meeting should have an added intensity...



SEASON REVIEW

Co-Operative Rugby League Conference (National)



Warrington (in blue) and Bramley (in black) took the league's top two spots

The signs were clear from the start that this year's Conference National would be a closer competition than ever before.

APRIL/MAY

Reigning champions Bramley Buffaloes battled to an opening day win at Hemel Stags despite the talismanic Paul Drake getting his marching orders, while last year's Grand Finalists Huddersfield Underbank were thumped 54-20 by Warrington Wizards. Liverpool Buccs beat Nottingham and newcomers Kippax Knights showed they meant business with a 30-24 win over Dewsbury Celtic.

The Leeds-based Knights then made it three wins from their first four, the last of which was a 17-12 local derby win at Bramley under the Buffaloes' 'Friday Night Lights'. Before a bumper crowd, they proved their credentials as a real force in this competition.

Featherstone Lions won four of their first five, suggesting their drive

to win back the title they last won in 2007 might be one to take notice of.

Meanwhile, Warrington were also looking strong with four wins from their first five, before they met Bramley at Wilderspool for the right to go top. The Buffaloes prevailed 36-30 but it was clear that the champions weren't going to have everything their own way this season.

JUNE/JULY

The first week of the summer saw Kippax's honeymoon on top come to an end, as Hemel Stags moved to within four points of the summit with a 20-12 win. Bramley overtook the Knights on top by beating another of the top teams, Featherstone, 30-12.

In the following week, Huddersfield, Warrington and Kippax beat Nottingham, Featherstone and Liverpool respectively, but the gap in the scores in each case was 12 points or less, suggesting once again that anyone could beat anyone in this

league on their day, and that bonus points could ultimately be crucial.

It was also making for some cracking games, such as Huddersfield's 46-34 win over Nottingham. But so often it is form in the latter half of the season which counts, and Hemel's 32-4 win over Warrington suggested they had it on their side. Not so Featherstone, whose defeat to Bramley proved to be the first of five straight losses, which would ultimately put paid to their play-off hopes.

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

After a bright start, Kippax were finding life in the Conference National considerably more difficult in the second half of the season, and four straight defeats put their hopes of a play-off berth in danger until they saw off a fading Featherstone side 40-12 in their final fixture.

Warrington's 42-34 win over the same team sealed second spot for them with a week to spare, which meant Dewsbury's 24-0 default victory over Liverpool Buccaneers was enough to win them the last play-off spot. The tension of the contests we'd seen all season came to a head in the final rounds, as Hemel were edged out 20-18 by play-off chasing Dewsbury and gave Huddersfield hope of third spot after a 30-24 win at Nottingham.

The two teams were equal on points going into the final weekend which meant any slip-ups from Hemel at home to a resurgent Nottingham Outlaws would mean they relinquished third place.

A furiously-paced encounter saw the Stags come from behind to win 28-20. Hemel's five bonus points meant they were equal with Huddersfield despite having won one game fewer - which showed once again the importance of battling even when the game is lost.

PLAY-OFFS

Five hotly contested match-ups led us to today's Grand Final

ELIMINATION PLAY-OFF 1

**HEMEL STAGS 36
DEWSBURY CELTIC 11**

The Hertfordshire side were made to battle for this win as Celtic gave no quarter in the first period.

Two tries each and a drop-goal meant the score was 12-11 at half time, but Hemel began the second half piling on the pressure, and they were eventually rewarded with a Matt Mizzi try.

A 60-metre break from BJ Swindells then made the territory to help Jamie Acton to bag a converted try and, in the final 15 minutes, the home side began to run away with it as three more tries gave the scoreline a more convincing look.

ELIMINATION PLAY-OFF 2

**HUDDERSFIELD UNDERBANK 40
KIPPAX KNIGHTS 12**

A gallant debut season ended for Kippax with defeat at the Conference's form side and last year's losing finalists.

Early nerves for the hosts allowed the Knights to take the lead, but Rangers' robust defence prevented more damage, and four tries of their own meant a 18-2 lead at the break.

Another converted score looked to have given the home side an invincible lead, but Kippax's continuing efforts were rewarded with two tries, pulling it back to 24-12. However, Underbank then stepped up a gear and three further tries sealed victory.

QUALIFYING SEMI-FINAL

**BRAMLEY BUFFALOES 16
WARRINGTON WIZARDS 27**

A stormy encounter between the top two saw the Wizards seal a Grand Final spot for the first time since 2004.

The Buffaloes did themselves no favours by getting three players sent off and four sin-binned. Before any of that, though, the Wizards had got off to a flyer, taking a 14-0 lead via three tries in the opening 17 minutes. The home side hit back with a converted try of their own, but soon afterwards, Richard Hulme was red-carded for a high tackle, and after two more penalties and a drop-goal were scored by the visitors, there were two further sin-binnings to leave the score at 19-6 and the player count at 13-10!

A further six-pointer for Warrington followed and despite a stirring two-try fightback from Bramley another sin-binning and two more red-cards (for dissent and leading with the elbow) meant they faced an impossible task.

ELIMINATION SEMI-FINAL

**HEMEL STAGS 20
HUDDERSFIELD UNDERBANK 32**

Last year's beaten Grand Finalists produced a disciplined and well-organised second-half display to see off a spirited Stags side.

Hemel opened the scoring through Aaron Hall's converted try, but the visitors levelled after a high ball was touched down by Nathan Williams.

Despite a Stags penalty making it 8-6 at the break, Rangers came out stronger in the second period and soon took the

lead when Courtney Allette went over in the corner. Adam Ryder added another, and when a penalty and a Lee St Hilaire try were added to Huddersfield's total before the hour mark, it was clear there was only going to be one winner.

Ryder soon grabbed a second try and it looked like a rout could be imminent. However, to their credit, the Stags rallied with two converted tries to give the scoreline some respectability.

FINAL ELIMINATOR

**BRAMLEY BUFFALOES 12
HUDDERSFIELD UNDERBANK 24**

Bramley may have started favourites in this do-or-die encounter, but an injury-enforced reshuffle, plus more indiscipline, proved their undoing.

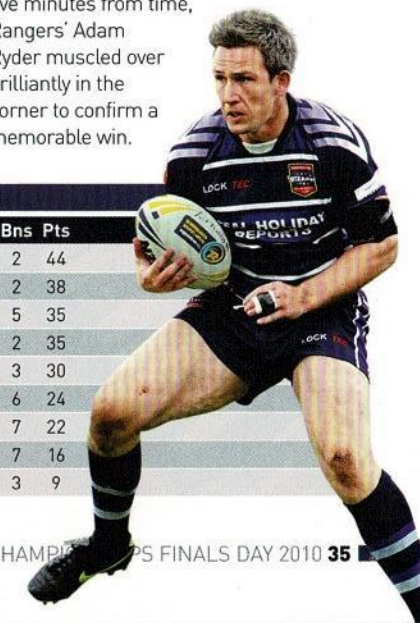
They were playing catch-up from seven minutes in, when Underbank's Neil Barrett intercepted a pass on halfway and sped over out wide. Five minutes later, Joe Worthington put them further ahead after catching a high ball in the corner. Neither try was converted, however, so when Jimmy Waddington put Bramley on the scoresheet on 28 minutes, the conversion meant there was just two points in it at the break.

The Buffaloes then levelled with a penalty, but Richard Hulme's sin-binning helped Underbank to build a 16-8 lead, Craig Green was then sent off for foul play, and after Rangers' resulting penalty score, Bramley were in big trouble.

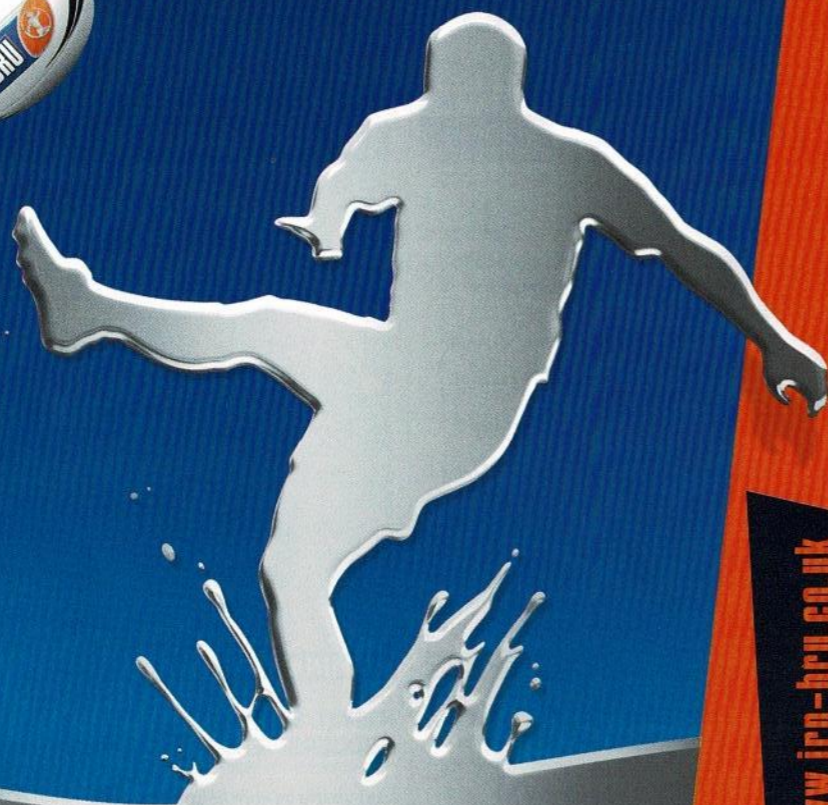
They did pull back to 18-12, but five minutes from time, Rangers' Adam Ryder muscled over brilliantly in the corner to confirm a memorable win.

FINAL TABLE CONFERENCE (NATIONAL)

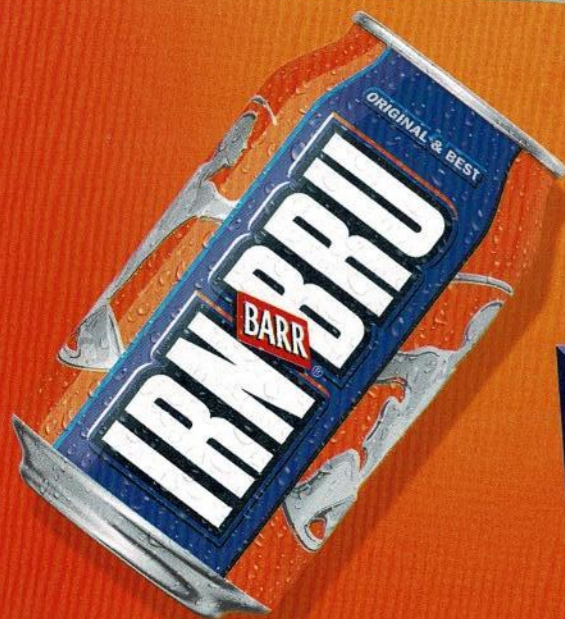
TEAM	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	Diff	Bns	Pts
BRAMLEY	16	14	0	2	442	219	223	2	44
WARRINGTON	16	12	0	4	576	409	167	2	38
HEMEL	16	10	0	6	415	296	119	5	35
H'FIELD	16	11	0	5	472	374	98	2	35
KIPPAX	16	9	0	7	367	379	-12	3	30
DEWSBURY	16	6	0	10	371	438	-67	6	24
F'STONE	16	5	0	11	366	454	-88	7	22
NOTTINGHAM	16	3	0	13	319	491	-172	7	16
LIVERPOOL	16	2	0	14	264	532	-268	3	9



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ONES TO WATCH CONFERENCE (NATIONAL) GRAND FINAL

KEY MEN

WARRINGTON WIZARDS

CHOSEN BY COACH CHRIS CAMPBELL



“I took over as coach at the beginning of the year and our first aim was to improve on our league position and try and get to the Grand Final and that’s what we’ve done.”

This year we’ve managed to bring in a lot of new lads - in fact, about half the squad is new. I don’t know what the club was like last year but from day one the dedication has been in evidence. In the past we’ve been there or thereabouts and the lads have all made a real effort to make sure we reached the Grand Final this season.

JONO SMITH SECOND ROW

“He’s played about 19 games for us this year and scored 23 tries. For a second rower he’s been outstanding in attack and defence. After a season out travelling he’s come back much improved and he has been awesome.”

DAVE YII CENTRE (RIGHT)

“He’s been a rock all year in the centre for us and really tightened up the right side of our defence. He started life at the Warrington (Wolves) Academy and has been with the Wizards ever since. He’s not the tallest, but you just cannot put him down.”

MATT CLARKE PROP

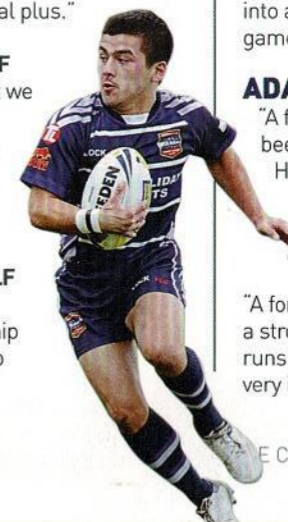
“He’s a policeman by trade, so it is not always easy for him to play. He’s a real tough tackler and he gives us 80 minutes, which as a prop is a real plus.”

IAN STEPHENSON STAND-OFF

“I had him earmarked as a winger but we didn’t have any half-backs, so we put ‘Stevo’ in at six. Since then, he’s been the only player who has appeared in every game for us. His kicking game and organisation are first class.”

ALAN REDDECLIFF SCRUM-HALF

“Our skipper switched from loose forward to the halves and his leadership has been fantastic. He and Stevo swap between six and seven.”



HUDDERSFIELD UNDERBANK RANGERS

CHOSEN BY COACH RICHARD KNIGHT



“After reaching the Grand Final last year, quite a few clubs wanted to take our scalp. It took some time to handle this, but we have finished the season like a

train and won ten on the bounce to reach the Grand Final. We have now got used to playing with a certain structure and the team has gone from strength to strength. We are a young side with average age of only 23, and we are even smaller this year than we were last, so we like to play at pace to get a roll on.

LEE ST HILAIRE LOOSE FORWARD

“The cousin of Marcus St Hilaire has won a lot of games for us single-handedly. Also known as ‘Big Face’, last season he played in the three-quarters for us but this year I threw him in at loose forward, made him captain and he’s been a revelation.”

NATHAN WILLIAMS FULL-BACK

“Nicknamed ‘square feet’, he’s an Aussie who is quick, strong and I’ve never seen him drop a ball all year. He’s one of those players who not only scores tries and does the glamorous stuff but will also do the hard carries.”

DAVE VALENTINE PROP (RIGHT)

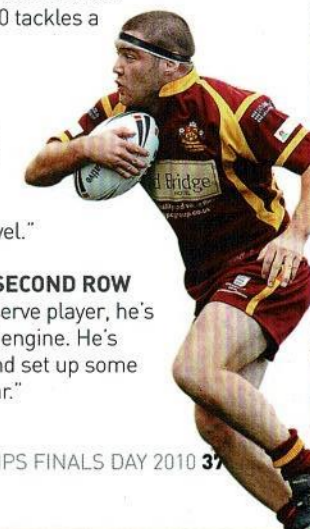
“The grandson of the former Great Britain captain of the same name. He’s small for a prop but he’ll run into a brick wall and make up to 60 tackles a game. He is just phenomenal.”

ADAM RYDER CENTRE

“A former union player who has been the league’s top try scorer. He’s not only as strong as an ox, but he is as fast as anyone I’ve seen at this level.”

CRAIG WILLIAMS SECOND ROW

“A former Huddersfield Giants reserve player, he’s a strong lad with pace and a good engine. He’s runs good lines and has scored and set up some very important tries for us this year.”



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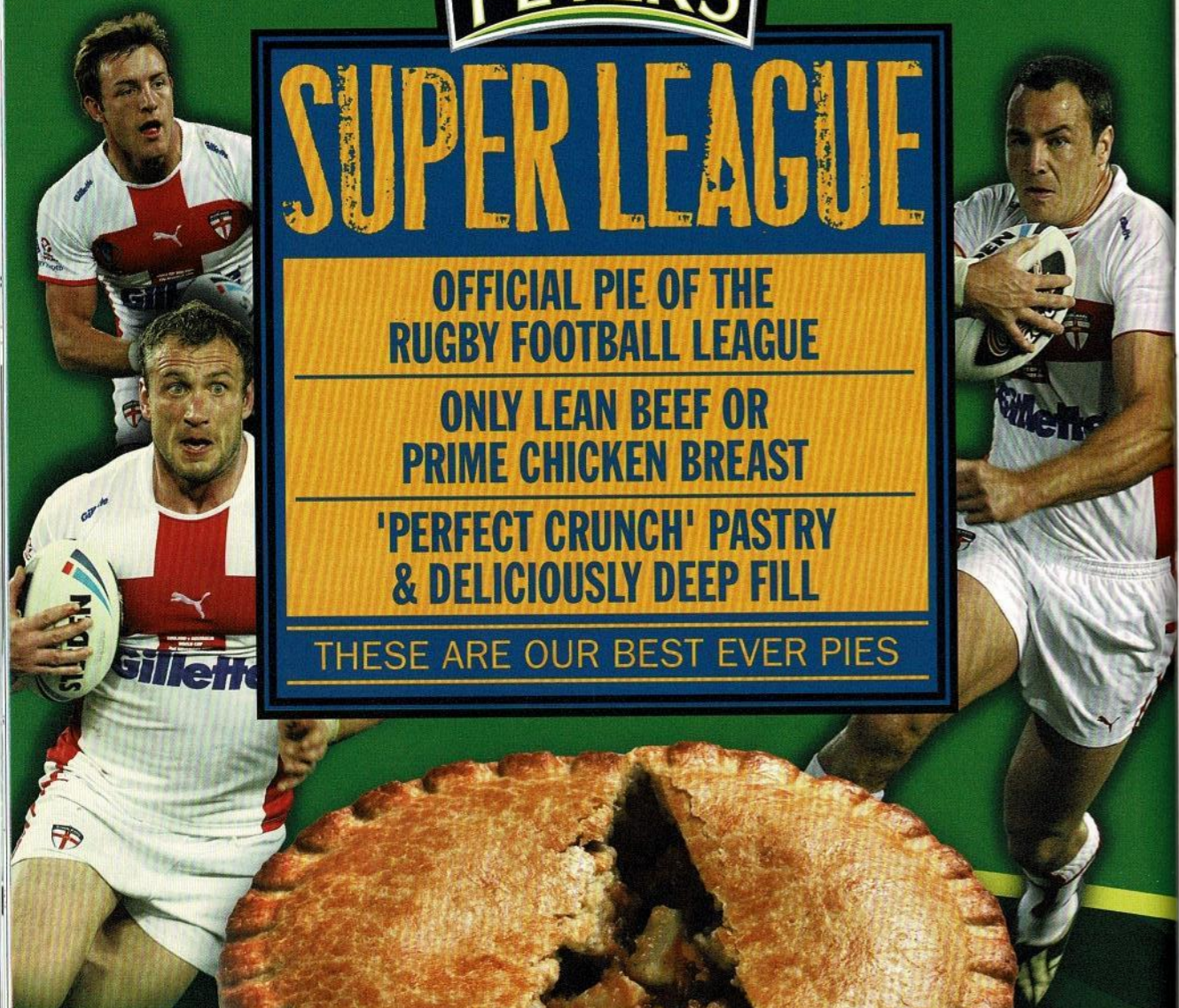
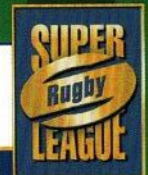
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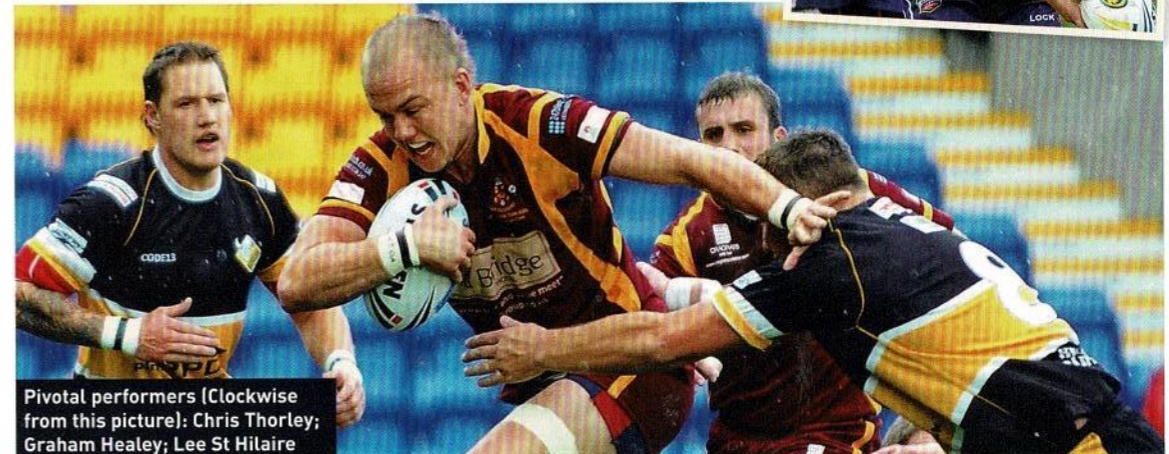
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ANALYSIS CONFERENCE (NATIONAL) GRAND FINAL

GRAND FINAL PREVIEW

The Co-operative Rugby League Conference (National) WORDS: PHIL CAPLAN



Pivotal performers (Clockwise from this picture): Chris Thorley; Graham Healey; Lee St Hilaire

▶ **LAST YEAR, HUDDERSFIELD** Underbank Rangers reached the first final in their 125-year history, when they played Bramley Buffaloes here. Bramley prevailed 38-22, but this year, Rangers got revenge by beating league leaders Bramley 24-12 in the final eliminator (see p35), to reach the final despite finishing in fourth position in the regular season table.

The Holmfirth-based club, who lay claim to be the oldest community set-up in the game, now face second-placed Warrington Wizards, who are in their first Grand Final since 2004. That year they lost to Coventry, having won the title – then known as National League Three – in its inaugural campaign the season before.

Huddersfield come in to the game as the Conference National's form side after a 10-match winning run leading up to the play-offs. In results this year between them, though, Wizards have done the double, triumphing 54-20 away at the Cross in the opening week of the season and winning 35-20 at Wilderspool.

Rangers boast the services of the Conference National's Young

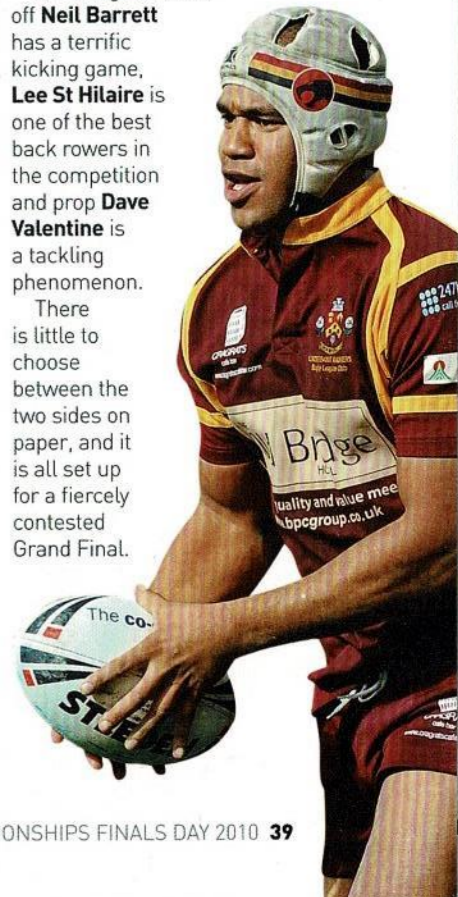
Player of the Year in **Adam Ryder**, who has been looked at by a host of professional clubs. The rip-roaring teenage centre has made a massive impression in his debut season, scoring 19 tries in the regular rounds and two in the play-offs against both Kippax and Hemel. He posted the winning score with a typically glorious effort to see off Bramley in the final eliminator.

Another youngster, 21-year-old back rower **Jono Smith**, was voted the RLCN 'Player of the Year' and has been in rampaging form throughout the season as the Wizards consolidated second spot. A regular try-scorer with his line-breaking runs and intelligent support play, his defence has also been top notch. He easily received the most man of the match awards in the regular season and scored 19 points as Warrington beat Bramley to make the Grand Final.

Others to look out for in the Wizards' ranks are full-back and coach **Chris Campbell**, in-form winger **Graham Healey**, scheming half-back or loose forward **Alan Reddecliff** and teak-tough prop **Tom Wild**.

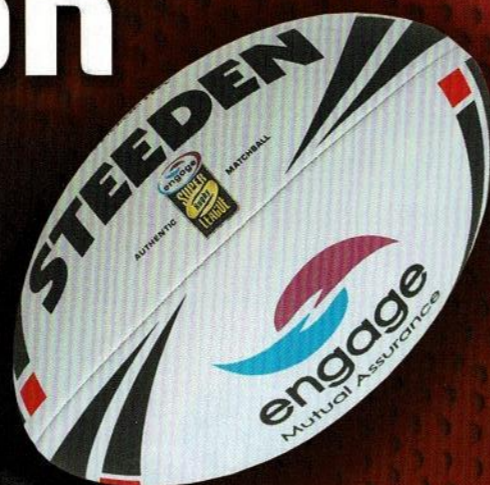
For Rangers, stand-off **Neil Barrett** has a terrific kicking game, **Lee St Hilaire** is one of the best back rowers in the competition and prop **Dave Valentine** is a tackling phenomenon.

There is little to choose between the two sides on paper, and it is all set up for a fiercely contested Grand Final.



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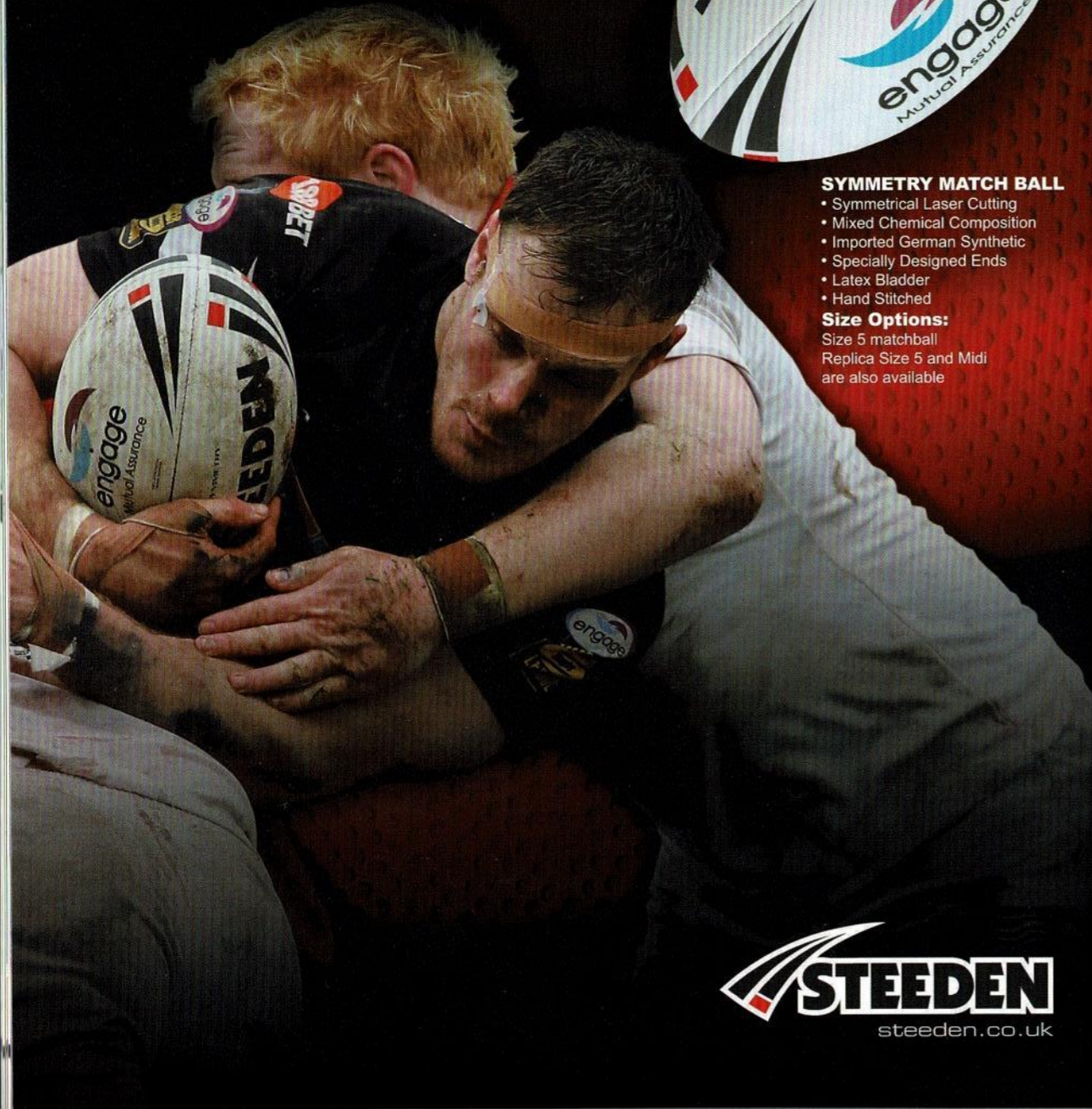


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NEWS FRONTLINE FAIR PLAY

THE FRONTLINE FAIR PLAY INDEX

The Co-operative Championship's fairest team is Sheffield Eagles after picking up the least points for penalties and indiscipline this season

SHEFFIELD EAGLES ARE OFFICIALLY the most disciplined club in The Co-operative Championship in 2010, finishing top of the Frontline Fair Play Index after 18 rounds of league matches.

They received a specially engraved Frontline Bathrooms Trophy and £5,000 worth of Frontline Bathrooms products at the Championship awards dinner in Manchester on Tuesday.

Frontline Bathrooms, a leading supplier to the UK bathrooms industry, are an Official Partner of the RFL. The Featherstone-based company launched their sponsorship of the Index in 2007 and it has been widely acclaimed as a major step forward in the promotion of discipline and fair play within the game.

The points for the Frontline Fair Play Index are calculated using the following formula:

1pt Technical penalty

3pts Sin-bin

4pts Sending-off sufficient

5pts per match ban

The Eagles (centre Menzie Yere pictured, right) managed to remain in the Number 1 spot after conceding only five points in the Fair Play table in their 29-28 victory against Leigh Centurions which was their last game of the regular season.

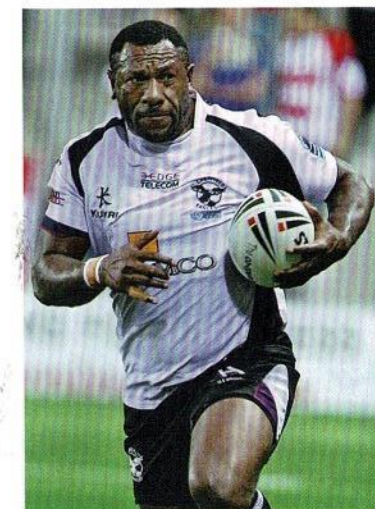
They finished a comfortable 14 points clear of nearest rivals Keighley Cougars, and their success in coming within 80 minutes of the

Grand Final shows that fair play and success can go hand in hand.

Although Sheffield did pick up four points for a sending off, eight of the 11 clubs in The Co-operative Championship actually achieved a clean record with no-one dismissed, so congratulations to them.

At the other end of the table, Widnes finished bottom. Chiefly due to picking up seven match bans, while Halifax finished 10th, gathering points from having the most players sin-binned this season.

The famous Frontline Bathrooms catalogue is now available at bathroom showrooms throughout the UK or online at www.frontlinebathrooms.co.uk



Team	Pens Conceded (x1pt)	Sin Bins (x3pts)	Sending off sufficient (x4pts)	Match Bans (x5pts)	Fair Play Total
1 Sheffield	131	2	1	0	141
2 Keighley	149	2	0	0	155
3 Featherstone	158	2	0	0	164
4 Batley	161	2	0	0	167
5 Dewsbury	163	2	0	0	169
6 Leigh	161	1	2	0	172
7 Toulouse	172	0	0	1	177
8 Barrow	149	2	0	5	180
9 Whitehaven	184	2	0	0	190
10 Halifax	184	5	0	2	209
11 Widnes	185	2	0	7	229

Stats are correct after round 22 of The Co-operative Championship on 25/08/2010



The Frontline Fair Play Index table after the final round of The Co-operative Championship. The table was updated after each round of games and is the RFL's official disciplinary barometer.

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SUPER LEAGUE
XV
GRAND FINAL**

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CHARGED GAME OF THE
SEASON JUST GOT EVEN
MORE AFFORDABLE**

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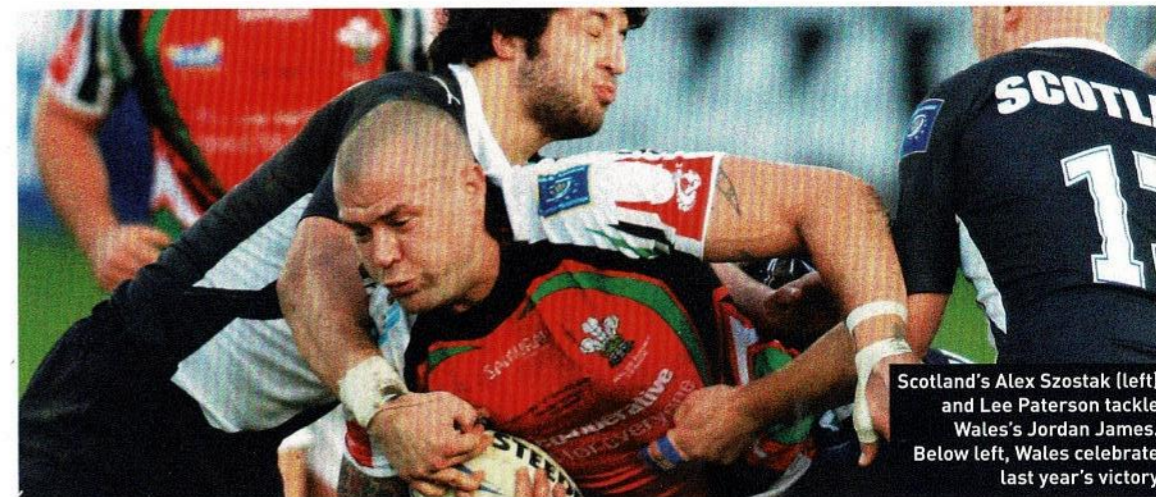
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EURO VISIONS

Some of today's players will be representing their countries in the Alitalia Rugby League European Cup



Scotland's Alex Szostak (left) and Lee Paterson tackle Wales's Jordan James. Below left, Wales celebrate last year's victory

FINAL DAY ALWAYS MAKES FOR A THRILLING climax to the domestic season. But for some players on the park today, there's another month of intense competition ahead, in the shape of the 2010 Alitalia Rugby League European Cup.

Wales, Scotland, Ireland and France contest this year's competition, with the added incentive that the winner will be awarded a place in the 2011 Four Nations tournament here in the UK.

Seven times European champions France have the advantage of playing their three games at home, and may well feature several players familiar to Championships fans, such as Toulouse's Vincent Duport and Matthieu Griffi. But they will still face a stiff test

from defending champions Wales, who claimed their fifth title last year, and have a strong side featuring a number of players from Crusaders RL and the Championship One's South Wales Scorpions, as well as Featherstone's Ross Divorty and Halifax's Sean Penkywicz.

Last year's beaten finalists Scotland,

meanwhile, may well call upon Featherstone's Jon Steel, a key figure in the Bravehearts squad in recent years, along with Sheffield's Alex Szostak, Brendon Lindsay and Mitchell Stringer.

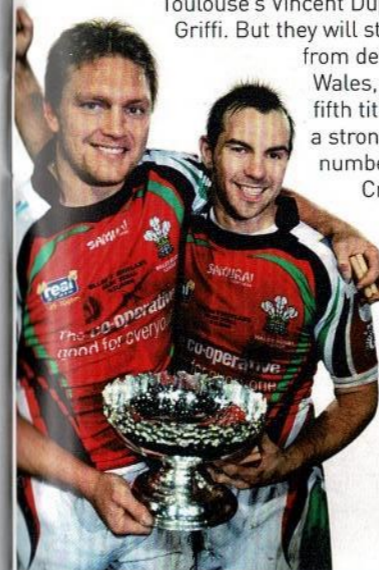
After a disappointing tournament last year, Ireland's Wolfhounds could include Featherstone's Liam Finn, Halifax's Bob Beswick and Oldham's Wayne Kerr, Greg McNally and John Gillam.

The European Cup profile itself continues to grow with the acquisition of Italy's national airline as title sponsor. French networks Direct 8 and Orange TV will broadcast all three France games live, while over here, highlights will be broadcast on Sky Sports.

Off the field, the competition goes from strength to strength. So it'll be fascinating to find out who can take the next step on the pitch.

FIXTURE SCHEDULE

- FRANCE v IRELAND** (Avignon) - 9 October
- SCOTLAND v WALES** (Glasgow) - 10 October
- FRANCE v SCOTLAND** (Toulouse) - 16 October
- WALES v IRELAND** (Neath) - 17 October
- FRANCE v WALES** (Albi) - 23 October
- IRELAND v SCOTLAND** (Dublin) - 24 October





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MOVING MOUNTAINS

The RFL's Julia Lee (left) plans to climb Mount Kilimanjaro in aid of the RFL Benevolent Fund



IN SPORTING parlance, the phrase 'a mountain to climb' has become a familiar one to describe a team facing a daunting task on the pitch. But one member of the Rugby League community is about to find out the true meaning of that saying.

The RFL's Head of Participation, Julia Lee will attempt to scale Mt Kilimanjaro in November to raise money for the RFL Benevolent Fund, a charity which aims to support players whose lives are affected by serious injuries sustained while playing Rugby League.

Kilimanjaro is the highest

trekking mountain in the world with a summit of 5,896m, and ascending the peak is an extreme challenge incorporating a high element of risk, but Julia is ready to give it her best shot.

"There are a number of reasons why I have decided to battle with my fears and fitness," she says. "Firstly and most importantly, I want to raise money for the RFL Benevolent Fund. I also needed a challenge which would test my mental and physical fitness. I want to overcome my fear of heights and improve my fitness. I know it's all a bit extreme but I never wanted an easy life!"

In her role as Head of Participation at the RFL, Julia works alongside the RFL's Regional Managers to encourage people from all quarters of the community

to get involved, whether by playing, watching, volunteering or officiating. She's doing a worthwhile job - and so is the RFL Benevolent Fund.

The players who benefit from the Benevolent Fund are often involved in their own epic challenges, undergoing rehabilitation and trying to regain some semblance of a normal life. The fund attempts to aid them in that quest, whether it be through helping pay medical bills or simply improving their quality of life with adapted bathroom facilities or house renovations.

If you would like to sponsor Julia and help her reach her donation target of £2,000 please visit www.justgiving.com/Julia-Lee For more information on the fund visit www.rflbenevolentfund.co.uk

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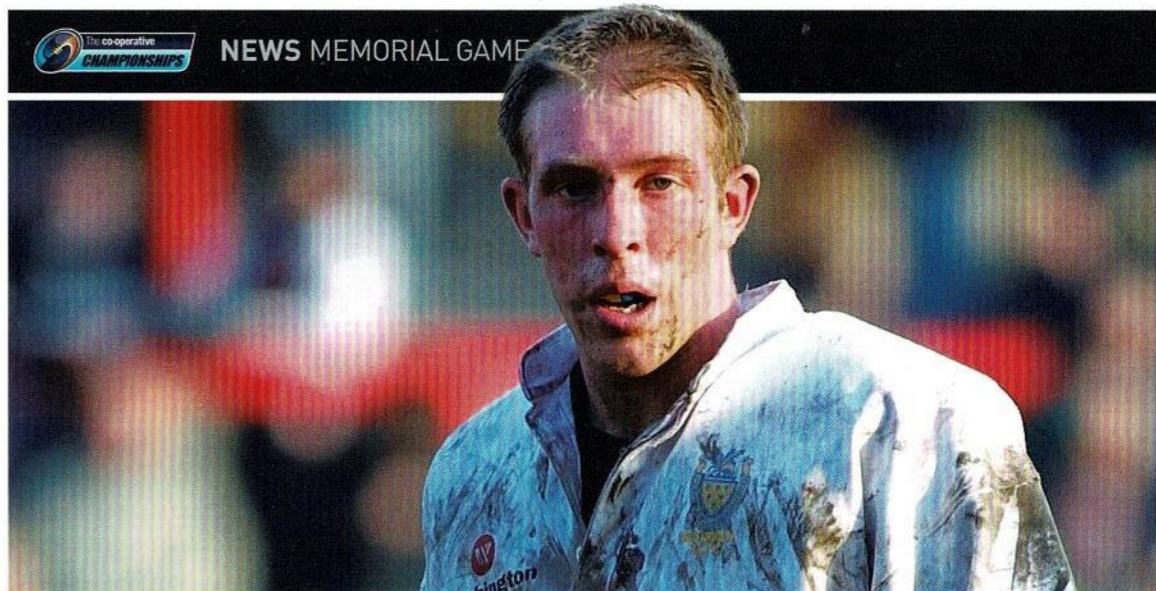
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 **RFL**



A GAME FOR GARRY

A special memorial game between England and Cumbria will commemorate the life of **Garry Purdham**

TODAY WILL DOUBTLESS PROVE to be a day of celebration for some, and commiseration for others. But next weekend, the day after the Engage Super League Grand Final, the Rugby League community will come together in Cumbria in support of a cause that is worth far more than any sporting silverware.

You will no doubt have heard about the death of former Whitehaven, Workington Town and Egremont Rangers player Garry Purdham in the Cumbrian shootings back in June. He will be remembered by way of a memorial game between England and Cumbria at Whitehaven's Recreation Ground on Sunday 3 October.

The proceeds will go to Garry's widow, Ros, and his young children, Flynn and Cameron. The game will also serve as part of Steve McNamara's preparations for this autumn's Four Nations tournament in Australia and New Zealand.

"I am delighted to bring the England team to Cumbria for this historic event," says McNamara. "It has been a big effort from everyone in Cumbria to get this game on, and we, as England, are more than happy to

make as big a contribution as we can, raising as much money as possible."

Much of England's train-on squad not involved in the Grand Final are likely to feature for England, while Cumbria are hopeful of fielding a strong side captained by Garry Purdham's England international brother Rob. The Cumbria team will include a number of players from the county's Co-operative Championships clubs - Barrow, Whitehaven and

"It is sure to be a great occasion to have the England team playing in Cumbria and one in which the whole Rugby League community can join in," said Dave Bowden, a spokesman for the committee which set up the game. "The Recreation ground can accommodate in excess of 8,000 spectators and it would be wonderful to see it full of fans from all over the country, who can perhaps tie the game in with a visit to the Lakes."

Much of the England train-on squad who are not involved in the Super League Grand Final are likely to feature for England

Workington - plus many other players hailing from the area, including Super League performers such as Hull's Ewan Doves, Harlequins' Oliver Wilkes and St Helens' Ade Gardner, if club commitments permit.

Entry will be by way of a special commemorative programme which will be available at the ground. Visit www.garrypurdham.co.uk for more details and information on how to make your way up to Whitehaven.

THE CO-OPERATIVE CHAMPIONSHIP GRAND FINAL

FEATHERSTONE ROVERS

DANNY ALLAN	Utility
KYLE BRIGGS	Stand-off
THOMAS CARR	Wing
MATTY DALE	Forward
STUART DICKENS	Prop
ROSS DIVORTY	Prop
JAMIE FIELD	Loose forward
LIAM FINN	Scrum-half
JON GRAYSHON	Second row
ZAK HARDAKER	Full-back
IAN HARDMAN	Full-back
BEN KAYE	Hooker
DANE MANNING	Second row
IAIN MORRISON	Second row
TOMMY SAXTON	Full-back/centre
JODIE SHERIFFE	Prop
SAM SMEATON	Centre
TIM SPEARS	Second row
JON STEEL	Wing
DUANE STRAUGHEIR	Centre
TONY TONKS	Prop
LIAM WELHAM	Centre
GARETH WILLIAMSON	Second row
DARYL POWELL	Head coach


HALIFAX RLFC

MAKALI AIZUE	Prop
STEPHEN BANNISTER	Second row
BOB BESWICK	Loose forward/hooker
BEN BLACK	Scrum-half
ANTHONY BOWMAN	Stand-off
LUKE BRANIGHAN	Stand-off
NEIL CHERRYHOLME	Prop
MARK GLEESON	Hooker
JON GODDARD	Centre
JAMES HALEY	Centre/wing
GRAHAM HOLROYD	Half-back
DAVID LARDER	Second row
DOMINIC MALONEY	Prop
DYLAN NASH	Utility
MICHAEL OSTICK	Prop
LEE PATERSON	Wing
SEAN PENKYWICZ	Hooker/half-back
MARK ROBERTS	Back row/centre
SHAD ROYSTON	Utility
SAID TAMGHART	Prop
FRANK WATENE	Prop
PAUL WHITE	Wing
ROB WORRINCY	Wing
DAVID WRENCH	Prop
MATT CALLAND	Head coach

TODAY'S OFFICIALS

ROBERT HICKS	Referee
TOM CRASHLEY	Touch judge
MICK WILSON	Touch judge
GREG DOLAN	Reserve referee
SIMON BARRIE	Reserve touch judge
STEVE PRESLEY	Match commissioner


THE CO-OPERATIVE CHAMPIONSHIP ONE

OLDHAM RLFC

MATTY ASHE	Scrum-half
VALU BENTLEY	Loose forward
JASON BOULTS	Prop
MARK BROCKLEHURST	Wing
JOE CHANDLER	Second row
CHRIS CLARKE	Prop
DAVE ELLISON	Prop
MICHAEL FOGERTY	Centre
JOHN GILLAM	Wing
BEN HEATON	Second row
IAN HODSON	Second row
WAYNE KERR	Prop
SCOTT MANSFIELD	Utility
GREGG McNALLY	Scrum-half
BEN MELLOR	Prop
PAUL O'CONNOR	Full-back
LUCAS ONYANGO	Wing
PAUL REILLY	Full-back
CRAIG ROBINSON	Second row
MARTIN RODEN	Hooker
NEIL RODEN	Stand-off
MARCUS ST HILAIRE	Centre
LUKE SUTTON	Prop
KASHLEY WATKINS	Second row
DANNY WHITMORE	Hooker

TONY BENSON Head coach

YORK CITY KNIGHTS

IAN BELL	Centre
ALEX BENSON	Prop
RICHARD BLAKEWAY	Loose fwd
CALLUM DINSDALE	Prop
MATTHEW DUCKWORTH	Second row
RYAN ESDERS	Second row
JON FALLON	Prop
NATHAN FREER	Prop
LUKE HARDBOTTLE	Prop
JAMES HAYNES	Full-back
JACK LEE	Hooker
STEVE LEWIS	Centre
TOM LINEHAM	Winger
MIKE MITCHELL	Centre
DANNY RATCLIFFE	Full-back
WAYNE REITTIE	Wing
JORDAN ROSS	Second row
ED SMITH	Centre
PAUL STAMP	Hooker
JACK STEARMAN	Prop
CHRIS THORMAN	Full-back
LEE WATERMAN	Centre
CHRIS WILLIAMS	Hooker
DAN WILSON	Full-back

DAVE WOODS Head coach

TODAY'S OFFICIALS

GARETH HEWER	Referee
ANDREW SWEET	Touch judge
STEVE WRIGHT	Touch judge
CHRIS LEATHERBARROW	Reserve referee
TONY MAHAR	Reserve touch judge
MARK CHARLTON	Match commissioner

THE CO-OPERATIVE RUGBY LEAGUE CONFERENCE (NATIONAL)

WARRINGTON WIZARDS

WARREN AYRES	Scrum-half
ANTHONY BRAIDE	Utility
NICK BRAIDE	Stand-off
DANNY BURGAN	Second row
MATT CLARKE	Second row
RYAN COSGROVE	Full-back
SCOTT DAVIDSON	Prop
DAN FAULKNER	Utility
DARREN FORSHAW	Wing
SHAUN GILMOUR	Second row
MIKE GRADY	Second row
GRAHAM HEALEY	Wing
WEZ LAWTON	Second row
CARL LEACH	Second row
SIMON McEVOY	Prop
CRAIG MIDDLEMORE	Wing
RYAN MILLINGTON	Scrum-half
NICK OWEN	Prop
STUART PIRRIE	Wing
ALAN REDDECLIFF	Stand-off
DANNY SHAW	Utility
JONO SMITH	Loose forward
IAN STEPHENSON	Scrum-half
DAN STUBBS	Prop
MATT TAYLOR	Hooker
TOM WILD	Prop
MATT WILSON	Loose forward
DAVE YII	Centre

CHRIS CAMPBELL Player/coach

HUDDERSFIELD UNDERBANK RANGERS

RICHARD AKA	Wing
LEON ALEXIS-BAILEY	Wing
TOM ANTONY	Scrum-half
NEIL BARRETT	Stand-off
STEPHEN BERRY	Hooker
JAMES BODSWORTH	Centre
DEAN BRADSHAW	Wing
ADAM CARROLL	Hooker
NATHAN CHAPPELL	Centre
ALEX CHATTERTON	Centre
SAM DALBY	Second row
DARREN HAWKYARD	Loose fwd
PAUL HORSFALL	Prop
SAM HOUSLEY	Prop
WILL MIDGLEY	Wing
SHAUN MITCHELL	Centre
JEREMY RYAN	Wing
ADAM RYDER	Centre
TOM SHARROCK	Second row
JAMES SMITH	Second row
VICTOR SMITH	Prop
LEE ST HILAIRE	Loose forward
DAVE VALENTINE	Prop
NAPOLEONI VINAKA	Prop
CRAIG WILLIAMS	Second row
NATHAN WILLIAMS	Full-back
JOE WORTHINGTON	Scrum-half

RICHARD KNIGHT Head coach

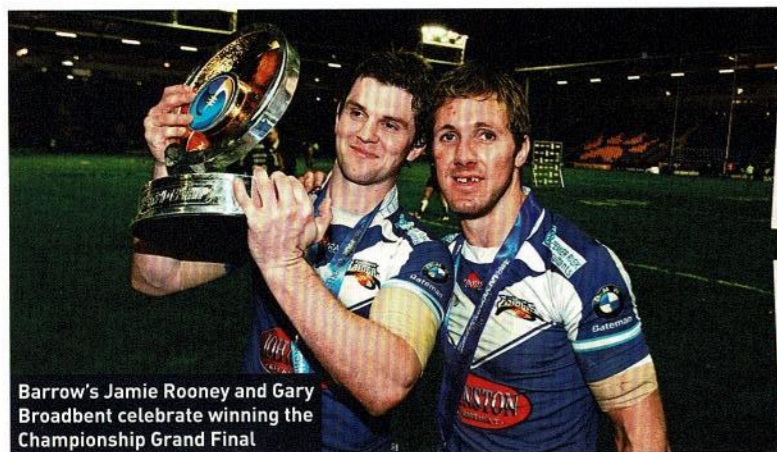
TODAY'S OFFICIALS

CHARLIE HALLORAN	Referee
TONY MAHAR	Touch judge
SIMON BARRIE	Touch judge
DANIEL TINDALL	In-goal judge
MICHAEL MANNIFIELD	In-goal judge
NEIL ASPEY	Reserve referee
STEWART KILPATRICK	Reserve touch judge
NEIL ROBINSON	Match commissioner



BIG DAY OUT

Finals Day has become an unmissable end-of-season party for The Co-operative Championships' clubs



Barrow's Jamie Rooney and Gary Broadbent celebrate winning the Championship Grand Final



Keighley toast promotion



Barrow fans



Bramley find it tough



Keighley's Jonny Presley

THERE'S A GREAT DEAL AT STAKE

for clubs taking part in today's finals, but fans still come here determined to have a party regardless of their team's result. Every year the crowds seem to get more colourful and the atmosphere more celebratory.

Last year, Barrow Raiders and Halifax fans had more to celebrate than most, since their very presence in the Co-operative Championship Grand Final earned them the right to apply for an engage Super League licence in 2011. Barrow were also toasting their first appearance in a major final since 1983. The league leaders duly rose to the occasion as they came from 10-0 down early on to triumph 26-18. Andreas Bauer's second try of the afternoon finally settled the matter with two minutes left on the clock.

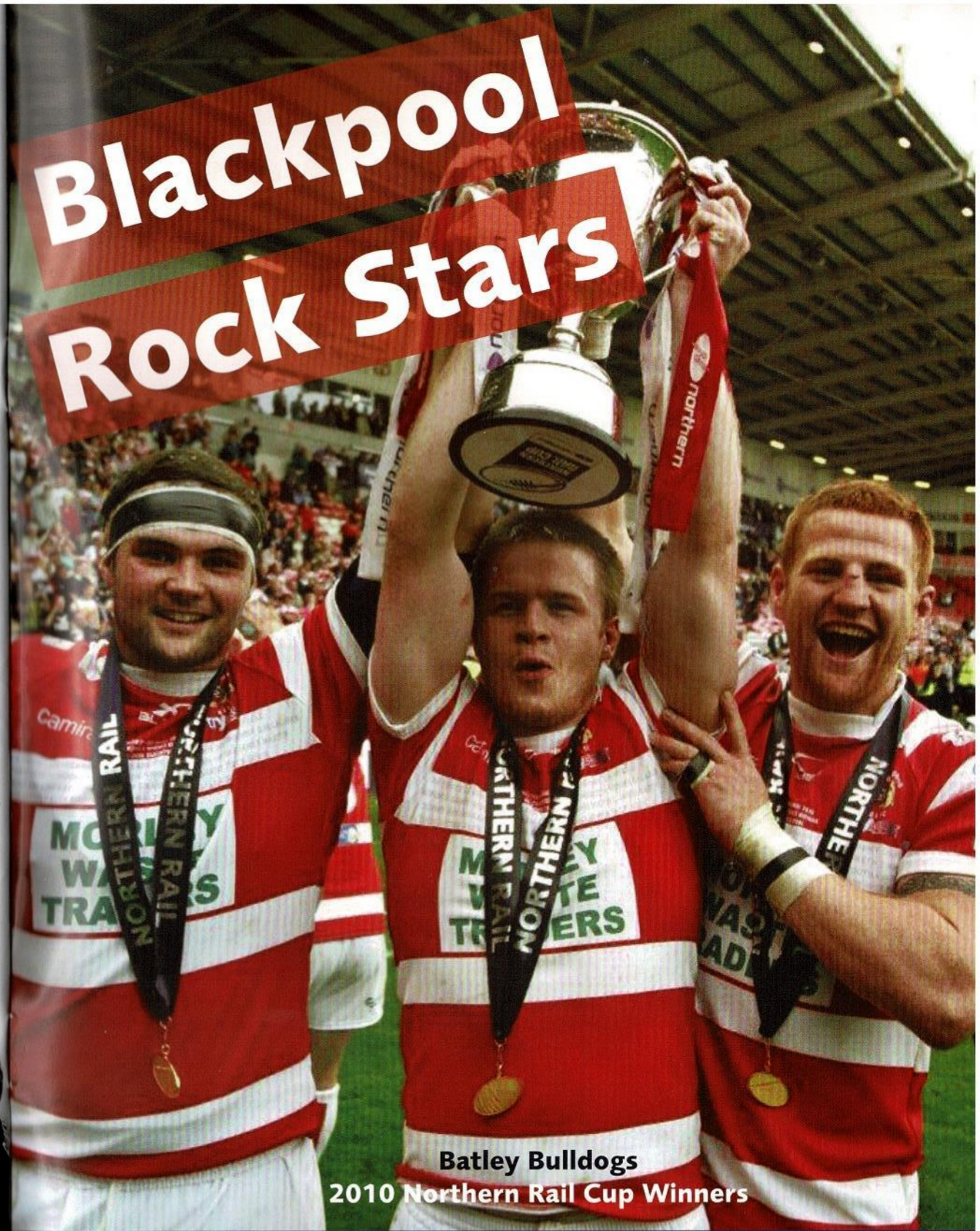
By that time, we had enjoyed nearly seven hours of action. It began with the Co-operative Rugby League Conference (National) Grand Final at 12.30pm, in which Bramley Buffaloes avoided a third successive final defeat in their fifth successive final overall, by beating Huddersfield

Underbank Rangers 38-22.

Oldham were also bidding to put two previous defeats behind them in their third successive Championship One play-off final. But Keighley Cougars had other ideas. After coming from behind at half-time, a commanding second half performance meant they were 28-16 up with five minutes remaining.

However, Oldham were not conceding defeat, and tries from Luke Menzies and Wayne Kerr in the dying minutes meant a relatively easy Chris Baines conversion would have tied the scores. The pressure told, and his miss meant Oldham missed out in the play-off final for a third successive year.

What fresh drama could be in store for us this year?



Blackpool
Rock Stars

Batley Bulldogs
2010 Northern Rail Cup Winners