



★ THE RUGBY LEAGUE ★
★ OF THE ★
EXTRAORDINARY

KINGSTONE PRESS CHAMPIONSHIPS FINALS



SUNDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER 2013
LEIGH SPORTS VILLAGE

THE KINGSTONE PRESS CHAMPIONSHIP GRAND FINAL
SHEFFIELD EAGLES v BATLEY BULLDOGS
KICK-OFF - 4.30PM

THE KINGSTONE PRESS CHAMPIONSHIP ONE PLAY-OFF FINAL
OLDHAM v ROCHDALE HORNETS
KICK-OFF - 2.00PM

CONFERENCE CHALLENGE TROPHY FINAL
LEIGH MINERS RANGERS v WIGAN ST PATRICKS
KICK-OFF - 11.30AM



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RFL

WELCOME!

On behalf of the RFL it gives me great pleasure to welcome everyone to Leigh Sports Village to watch the action unfold at the conclusion of a momentous season for both the Kingstone Press Championships and the wider sport.

Today we will be treated to three high intensity games, starting with Wigan St Pats versus Leigh Miners Rangers, two clubs steeped in the history of Rugby League who are contesting the Rugby League Conference Challenge Trophy.

Rochdale Hornets will then take centre-stage in the Championship One play-off final, when they will be hoping to win their first trophy since 1922 against Oldham. With promotion to the Kingstone Press Championship at stake, not to mention local pride, a classic final is virtually guaranteed.

Today's action will climax when Sheffield Eagles and Batley Bulldogs go head-to-head for the right to be crowned Kingstone Press Championship champions 2013 in a Grand Final packed full of intrigue and adventure.

This is Sheffield's third successive Grand Final and the defending champions are widely favoured to become the first Championship winners to retain the title, but in Batley, the Eagles have tough, in-form opponents whose coach, John Kear, knows more than most how little the bookies' ratings mean in big finals.

Since the 2013 campaign got underway back in February, the Championships have delivered entertainment and excitement, the likes of which we have rarely seen, and the season has recorded some truly momentous achievements.

In Championship One we saw North Wales Crusaders win their first ever trophy, the Northern Rail Bowl, in a game which also saw London Skolars appear in their first ever professional final.

This season also saw Hemel Stags, Oxford and the University of Gloucestershire All Golds making their professional debuts, adding an exciting new element to the make-up of the Championship One competition. For Hemel and Oxford to make the play-offs in their debut

season is a terrific achievement and reward for a lot of hard work by all concerned at both clubs whilst the All Golds, too, showed they can mix it with some of the game's most established clubs.

All three have provided a completely new dimension, look and feel to that tier of competition and have made highly credible debuts in the professional ranks.

In the Championship, Featherstone Rovers won an impressive fourth consecutive League Leaders' Shield, becoming the first Championship club to do so in the summer era, highlighting their continued progress in what has become an ever-more competitive competition, while Leigh Centurions once again claimed the Northern Rail Cup final.

That neither club were able to reach today's Grand Final testifies to the high calibre of the competition within the Championship.

This season has also seen the introduction of a new Championships title rights partner in Kingstone Press Cider, who we are delighted to welcome here today to their first ever Championship Finals Day.

Kingstone Press have thoroughly embraced the Championships this season and it has been a delight to watch them engage with clubs, players and fans across both competitions through a series of entertaining promotional campaigns. The refreshing enthusiasm and energy with which they have approached this new venture has been matched by the member clubs and their respective fans, with the result being a very strong first year, which promises much for the partnership in the future.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our broadcast partner, Premier Sports, for their continued dedication to the sport through their regular Thursday night slot, which has broadcast some of the most entertaining Rugby League seen on screens anywhere in the world this year.

Premier Sports are also the official broadcast partner of the



Rugby League World Cup 2013, where we will no doubt see many Championships stars in action for their nations throughout October and November. I'm also sure we will see fans from across the Championships getting behind their country in the tournament.

Finally, I would like to extend my best wishes to all six clubs involved today in what will be a day to remember for every Rugby League supporter.

These clubs have earned the privilege of bringing down the curtain on what has truly been an extraordinary year for their competitions in so many ways, and I have no doubt that the 2013 Finals Day will do great justice to all that has gone before.

Ralph Rimmer
RFL Chief Operating Officer



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FOREWORD

As the Official Sponsor of the Rugby League Championships, I am honoured to have the chance to pen a few words as we sit down to watch the culmination of a superb season of Rugby League. As a lifelong fan of the sport I have been delighted at the welcome we have received from everyone, at the RFL, the clubs and most importantly, from you, the fans.

For us it is the passion for the sport that really makes the difference. It's evident everywhere in this great game.

We see it week-in, week-out from the players. It is what creates the competitiveness, the excitement and tension during the games. It drives teams to constantly attack no matter how late in the game or how far behind their opponents. It makes for some cracking sport and I have no doubt that we are going to see even more dedication, skills and excitement today.

We see devotion to the game at the clubs, from the CEOs and coaches to the bar staff and matchday stewards. The owners are passionate about building successful teams that are hubs in their communities. What is even more impressive is the commitment of the many volunteers who give up their time to help out at games.

Last, but by no means least, is the passion of the Championships fans. We have seen this at every match we've been to, the fervor of their support, the joy of seeing their team win and the suffering for those fans whose team lost that vital match.

We have also seen it online as fans try to win tickets or talk to us on Twitter or Facebook. This led us to create the King of the Fans competition, our hunt for super supporters. The nominations showed the dedication of the fans, the sacrifices they make for the sport and their commitment to the future of the game.

Today we will be announcing 23 King of the Fans, one from each club, and crowning the Ultimate King of the Fans. We also hope to see many of you testing your Rugby League skills in the Fan Zone.

As we come to the end of our first season as sponsor, we are looking forward to some great Rugby League today and to next season. We're proud to be a part of this brilliant sport and to be part of the Rugby League family.

Good luck to all of today's teams and we hope you all enjoy the day.

Gordon Johncox
Managing Director



BATTLING BATLEY BARE TEETH

Featherstone Rovers finished three points ahead of the field in the Kingstone Press Championship regular season, but the League Leaders' Shield winners lost out to Golden Point specialists Batley Bulldogs, who finished fifth in the table but have defied the odds over the past three weeks to meet Sheffield Eagles in today's Grand Final after a fantastic play-offs series.

QUALIFYING SEMI-FINALS

FEATHERSTONE ROVERS 20
BATLEY BULLDOGS 21
(after Golden Point extra-time)

Batley held their nerve with a second Golden Point triumph in two days to eliminate the top-of-the-table finishers and qualify for a first Grand Final appearance. It was the 88th minute when replacement

hooker George Flanagan landed the winning drop-goal from 30 metres. "My wife asks me why, at my age, I still want to be involved," said John Kear. "I coach for days such as these."

Scorers: Featherstone: Tries: Worthington, Hardman 2. Goals: Finn 4. **Batley:** Rowe, Potts, Johnson. Goals: Moore 4. Drop-goal: Flanagan.

BELOW:
Batley players
celebrate victory
over Leigh

HALIFAX SHEFFIELD EAGLES

10
29

Sheffield avenged their earlier play-off loss to Halifax with an accomplished display to reach a third consecutive Grand Final. There were no slip-ups from them second time around as Halifax fell at the penultimate hurdle, despite Ryan Fieldhouse's opening try. Pat Walker replied with the first of his two and his 70th minute drop-goal helped steer the Eagles home. "Today there was the character, will and want from the team," coach Mark Aston said.

Scorers: Halifax: Tries: Fieldhouse, Tyrer. Goal: Tyrer. **Sheffield:** Tries: Walker 2, Lulu-Togagae, Taulapapa, Turner. Goals: Brambani 4. Drop-goal: Walker.

PRELIMINARY SEMI-FINALS

LEIGH CENTURIONS 14
BATLEY BULLDOGS 15
(after Golden Point extra-time)

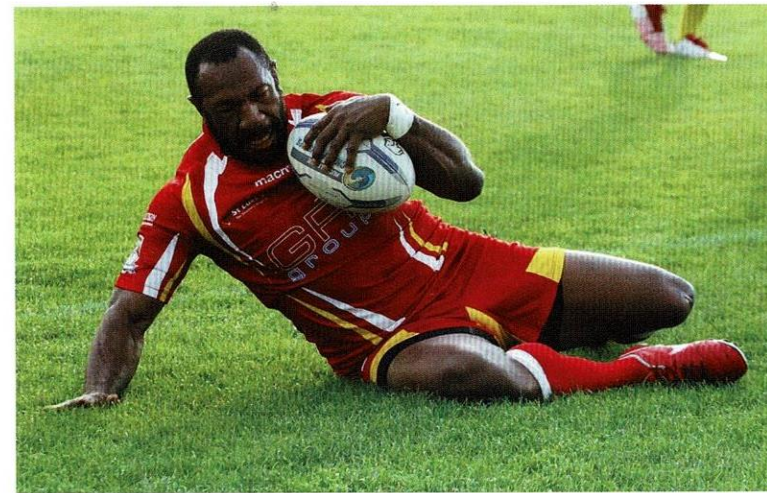
Seven minutes into Golden Point extra-time, Ben Black struck the winning drop-goal for John Kears Batley. His Bulldogs were outscored three tries-to-one and Leigh's misery was compounded by Martyn Ridyard's failure with a last-gasp penalty to put the Centurions through, while Gareth Moore's five goals from five attempts kept battling Batley alive.

Scorers: Leigh: Tries: Higson, Finnigan, Pownall. Goal: Ridyard. **Batley:** Try: Bretherton. Goals: Moore 5. Drop-goal: Black.

SHEFFIELD EAGLES DEWSBURY RAMS

52
16

Dewsbury were no match for Sheffield in the Eagles' last ever



match at the Don Valley Stadium. They brought the curtain down on their home in style. Menzie Yere scored a hat-trick, Tom Armstrong bagged a brace and there were further tries by Michael Knowles, Mitch Stringer, Scott Turner and Dominic Brambani, who also landed eight goals.

Scorers: Sheffield: Tries: Turner, Yere 3, Stringer, Armstrong 2, Knowles, Brambani. Goals: Brambani 8. **Dewsbury:** Tries: Scott 2, Craven. Goals: Hyde, Gallagher.

QUALIFYING PLAY-OFFS

FEATHERSTONE ROVERS 40
LEIGH CENTURIONS 26

On the day they collected the League Leaders' Shield, Featherstone roared into a 28-4 lead, at which point a somewhat bewildered Leigh got their act together and clawed their way back to within eight points of Rovers before Andy Bostock's 74th minute try put paid to any comeback notions.

Scorers: Featherstone: Tries: Sharp 2, Worthington, Saxton 2, Dale, Bostock. Goals: Finn 6. **Leigh:** Tries: Brierley 2, Ostick 2, McNally. Goals: Ridyard 3.

SHEFFIELD EAGLES HALIFAX

6
21

The tie was a rarity for no points being scored in the first half, but Andy Bracek eventually got the ball rolling for Halifax and a Craig Ashall drop-goal then stretched their lead. Vinny Finigan registered Sheffield's only try. Late tries by half-backs Paul Handforth and Scott Murrell sealed Halifax's semi-finals passage.

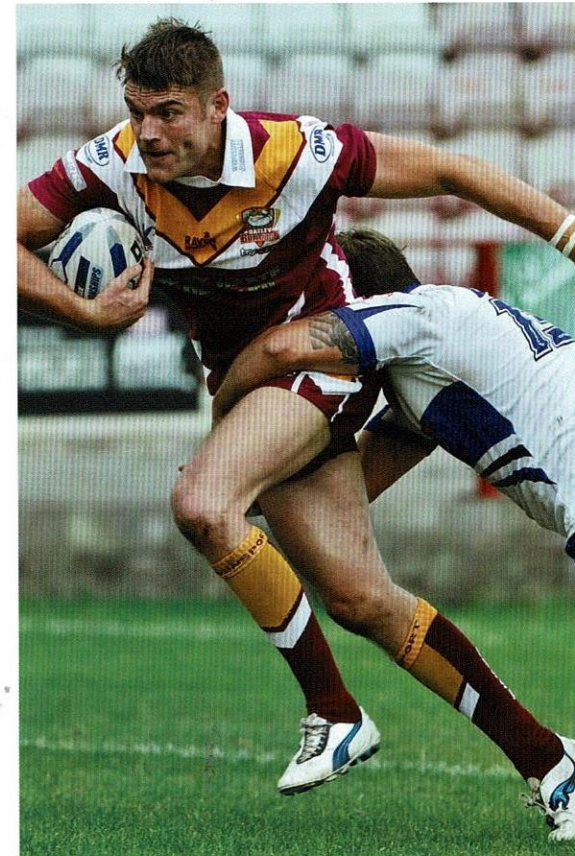
Scorers: Sheffield: Tries: Finigan. Goal: Brambani. **Halifax:** Tries: Bracek, Handforth, Murrell. Goals: Tyrer 4. Drop-goal: Ashall.

ELIMINATION PLAY-OFFS

BATLEY BULLDOGS 68
WORKINGTON TOWN 28

Batley touched down a dozen tries in racking up their highest score of the season as Workington crashed out. Town opened the scoring with the first of Jamie Thackray's hat-trick, but the match went quickly downhill for them as John Davies scored the first of his brace in a runaway win.

Scorers: Batley: Tries: Davies 2, Campbell, Bretherton, Walton 2, Greenwood, Flanagan, Moore, Walmsley, Johnson, Mennell.



ABOVE LEFT:
Menzie Yere
scored a hat-trick
for Sheffield
against Dewsbury

Goals: Moore 7, Hemingway 3. **Workington:** Tries: Thackray 3, Forber 2. Goals: Forber 4.

DONCASTER DEWSBURY RAMS

28
30

Dewsbury held on to progress to the semi-finals after leading 30-12, and withstood a late Doncaster onslaught. The Rams' five tries were all scored before the break. The home side responded with quickfire touchdowns by Mark Castle, Lee Waterman and Grant Edwards, but Dewsbury dug in at the end.

Scorers: Doncaster: Tries: Robinson, Waterman 2, Castle, Edwards. Goals: Scott 4. **Dewsbury:** Tries: Watkinson, Nash, Hale, Buchanan, Jones. Goals: Hyde 5.



HOW IT FINISHED

Final regular season table	Pl	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	B
1 Featherstone	26	22	0	4	940	362	70	4
2 Sheffield	26	22	0	4	806	474	67	1
3 Halifax	26	19	2	5	817	476	62	1
4 Leigh	26	18	0	8	752	495	58	4
5 Batley	26	16	1	9	670	394	57	7
6 Doncaster	26	12	1	13	593	594	44	6
7 Dewsbury	26	12	0	14	492	620	42	6
8 Workington	26	11	0	15	483	681	39	6
9 Whitehaven	26	11	0	15	485	774	37	4
10 Swinton	26	9	0	17	516	738	34	7
11 Keighley	26	8	0	18	492	719	33	9
12 Barrow	26	8	0	18	482	792	33	9
13 Hunslet	26	6	0	20	529	704	30	12
14 York	26	6	0	20	493	727	26	8

THE TALE OF THE TAPE

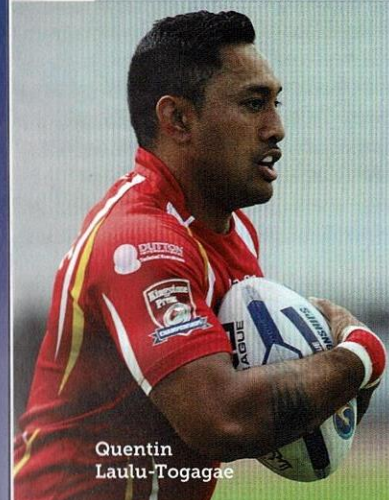
Premier Sports pundit and Salford Red Devils coach **Brian Noble** analyses the key battles in today's Kingstone Press Championship Grand Final.



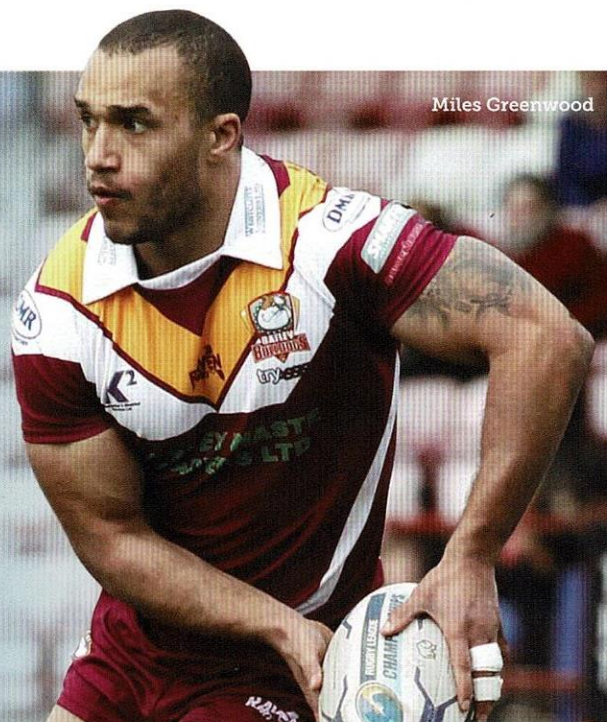
FLYING FULL-BACKS

Miles Greenwood v Quentin Laulu-Togagae

They are two lightening quick players. Miles Greenwood has been brilliant all season for Batley, and we saw in the semi-final against Halifax exactly what QLT offers - it was a man-of-the-match performance even though he didn't get the award. The whole back three match-ups for both clubs is massive - QLT, Scott Turner and Misi Taulapapa versus Greenwood, Greg Johnson and either Johnny Campbell or Gareth Potts. The game has changed a lot, and full-backs and wingers are now absolutely pivotal to the success of your team, both at the beginning of your sets, and at the end of opposition sets, when they need the ability to catch the ball under pressure and clean situations up.



Quentin Laulu-Togagae

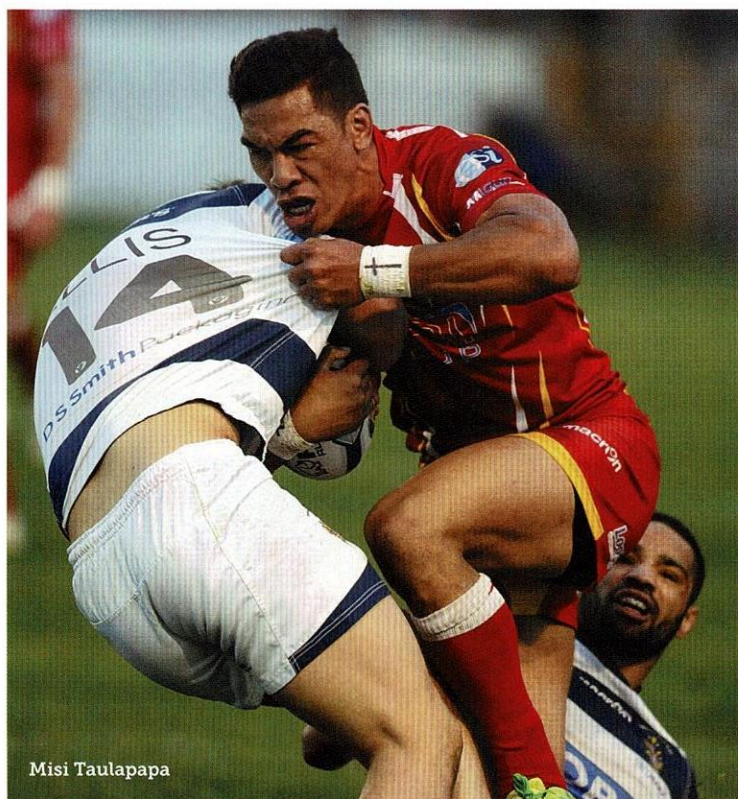


Miles Greenwood

ELECTRIC WINGERS

Greg Johnson v Misi Taulapapa

Here are two really exciting wingers that will go head-to-head. Greg Johnson has scored some fabulous tries this season and we've seen a few of them on Premier Sports - he's absolutely electric. He has great footwork, speed and the ability to beat people in a small amount of space. I remember covering one game for Premier and it was a terrible day in the rain - he beat three or four players in the middle of the field and I thought I had to give this lad a chance in Super League, which I have done with Salford Red Devils next year. Taulapapa is tough - he's played for Cronulla Sharks in the NRL. He finishes well, is quick, brave and wants to carry the ball a lot. They are two of the competition's best wingers.



Misi Taulapapa

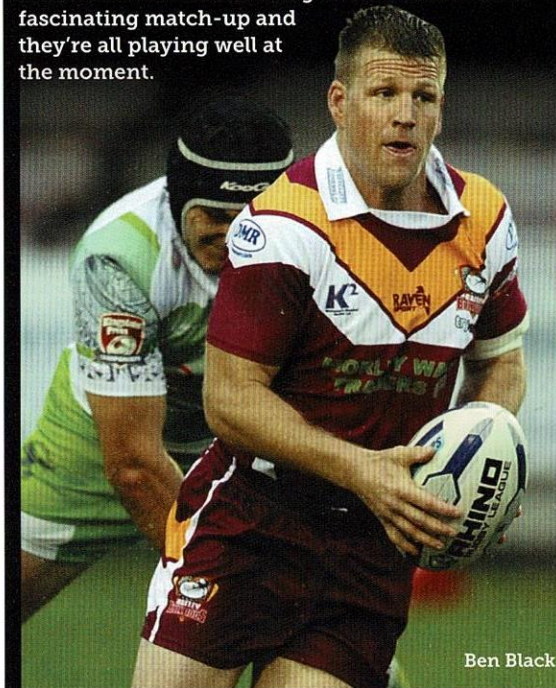


Greg Johnson

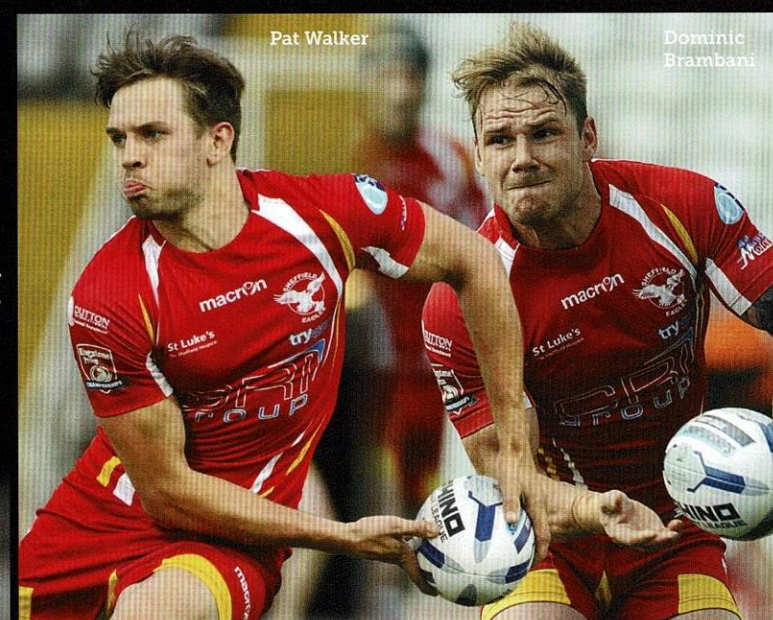
THE BRAINS TRUST

Ben Black and Gareth Moore v Pat Walker and Dominic Brambani

I've been really impressed with Brambani and Walker at Sheffield in the last few weeks. They've really helped turn the side's form around. Walker has stood up to the mark and has taken the line on, while Brambani has that outstanding kicking game. Their teamwork is massively important to Sheffield. For Batley, Black loves to run the ball, and both he and Moore have decent kicking games. I'd say the two running half-backs are Moore and Black, with Walker and Brambani being more kickers - it's a fascinating match-up and they're all playing well at the moment.

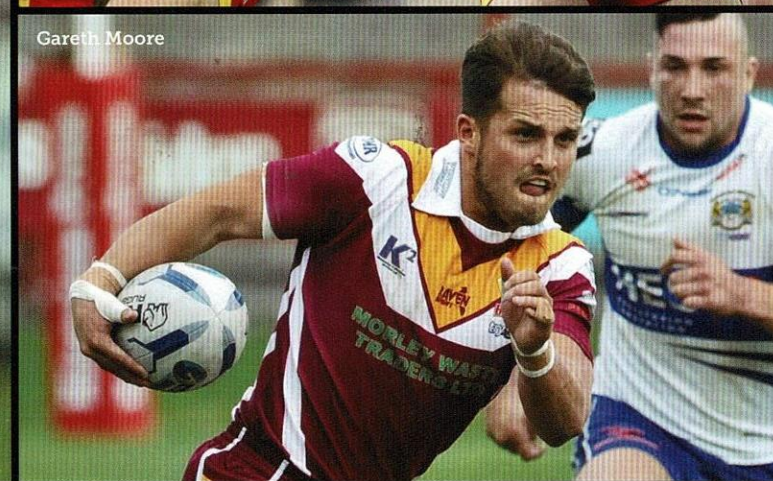


Ben Black



Pat Walker

Dominic Brambani

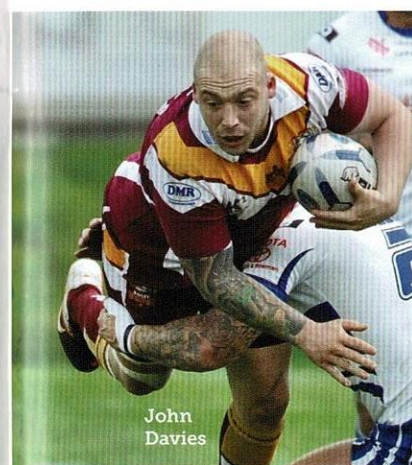


Gareth Moore

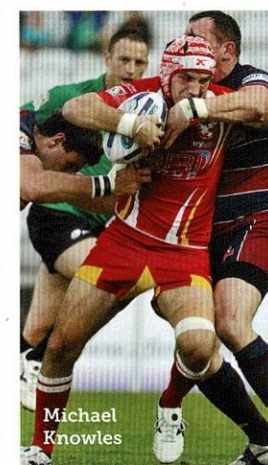
DURABLE BACK ROWS

John Davies v Michael Knowles

Michael Knowles is probably the back row of the season for me - every time we've covered Sheffield for Premier Sports he's been one of their go-to men. He has good skills, disrupts the line, has a short kicking game and has good footwork. He's really pivotal to their success. Davies is more of a grunt and grind man, and has a very high work rate for Batley. He seems to want to make 50 tackles and 50 hit-ups every game. They have a similar history in how they've got to this stage, having both played for Castleford Tigers, and it's a good match-up.



John Davies

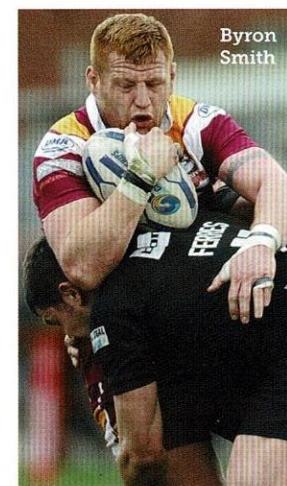


Michael Knowles

LEADING FROM THE FRONT

Byron Smith v Mitchell Stringer

The two captains today are both front rows who lead by example. Mitch Stringer is steeped in Sheffield Eagles history and has become a really important leader for them. Byron Smith has done the rounds earlier in his career and has now settled at Batley. He has that distinctive red hair, and you can't go missing on the field when you have that. Both players can give their sides real momentum, and set the example as captains up front.



Byron Smith



Mitchell Stringer

THE COACHES

John Kear v Mark Aston

It's a fabulous match-up. The job John Kear has done at the back-end of the year in regrouping his troops has been outstanding, and it's been similar for Mark at Sheffield - both have had bad spells but have timed their runs at the end of the season well. They've both done terrific jobs and are excellent coaches who have got their teams over the line. It's a reflection on both how tightly knit their teams clearly are - when you have that you can ask them to go the extra mile in tight situations, and that has shone through in do-or-die football.

OLD ALLIES GO HEAD-TO-HEAD

Fifteen years ago at Wembley, John Kear masterminded arguably the greatest upset in Challenge Cup history as coach of Sheffield Eagles, with Mark Aston as his inspirational presence on the field. Gareth Walker, Editor of Rugby League World and reporter for The People, caught up with both men as they prepare to go head-to-head in today's Kingstone Press Championship Grand Final.

Fifteen years ago John Kear and Mark Aston were masterminding the biggest Challenge Cup final shock in history together - now they stand on opposite sides of a Kingstone Press Championship Grand Final.

Kear was coach and Aston the Lance Todd Trophy-winning scrum-half when Sheffield stunned Wigan at Wembley in 1998.

Sheffield celebrated the 15-year anniversary of their momentous win earlier this year, with both Kear and Aston in attendance.

But now their thoughts will focus entirely on getting one over on each other as the Bulldogs and Eagles meet in today's Grand Final showdown.

Sheffield, as current champions and having topped the table for much of the season, are hardly a surprise package but few would have backed the Bulldogs to join them, even just before last Sunday's dramatic Golden Point win at Featherstone Rovers.

Few, apart from today's opposing coach Aston, that is.

"I wouldn't say it was expected, but I knew it could happen," said Aston. "I had been speaking to a few guys and saying

that there was definitely a chance Batley could win at Featherstone.

"There isn't any pitch advantage there, because they both play on a similar sort of ground, and when you take that out of the

BELOW:
Batley coach
John Kear

equation, and throw in the fact that Kear is renowned for doing this kind of thing, they always had a chance.

"They have a few players leaving at the end of the season so will want to finish on a positive outcome, so while it wasn't expected, it wasn't a surprise to me either.

"What it shows is the character of that group of people, and the desire and will that they have. They were losing 18-0, so to pull that back against Featherstone at their place is a pretty remarkable effort, I'm really pleased for John and for Batley - they've worked hard for so many years without a lot of credit."

Victory - sealed by George Flanagan's 88th minute drop-goal - was Batley's second consecutive Golden Point win, having managed the feat in front of the Premier Sports cameras at Leigh seven days earlier. What odds on extra-time for a third weekend in a row tonight?

"I've obviously coached a number of games in my career and had only ever been involved in one



ABOVE:
John Kear with
the Challenge
Cup trophy in
1998

LEFT:
Sheffield's current
coach Mark Aston

BELOW:
Aston enjoying
Challenge Cup
success and
a man of the
match award
with Sheffield at
Wembley 15 years
ago

Golden Point match, so to have two on the bounce is a bit surreal," said Kear. "If it happened again we wouldn't flinch. We think that games of rugby last for 88 minutes now.

"Sunday was absolutely outstanding. We played great against a very good team. We were 18-0 down after 38 minutes and I felt that the game hinged on Alex Rowe scoring just before half-time.

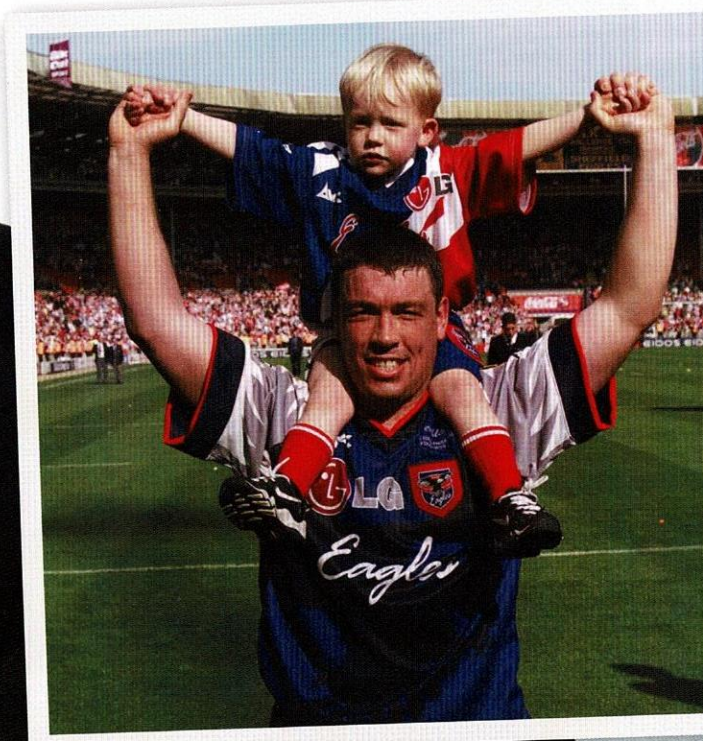
"We'd studied Featherstone's game with Leigh and knew they would come out, play at a million miles-an-hour and knock us about in defence. Against Leigh, I think they were something like 28-4 up at half-time, but we restricted them to 18-6 and you cannot play at that tempo for 80 minutes - it's absolutely impossible.

"At half-time we spoke about the fact that we'd weathered their storm - and how we had to create our own."

They certainly did that, earning the admiration of Eagles boss Aston. That respect is mutual on Kear's part, and he is full of praise for Sheffield's 2013 campaign.

"They are a marvelous team, there's no doubt about that. This year they had a great Challenge Cup run to the quarter-finals, made the final of the Northern Rail Cup, have now reached the Grand Final and were second in the regular league season.

"That is absolutely awesome and just shows the quality of their team. We should congratulate their players and coaching staff on a great season but, hopefully, we can make them come up short one more time."



MITCHELL'S A MARVEL!

KAPOW! ... OOOOFF! ... THWACK! **Gareth Walker**, Editor of Rugby League World magazine and Rugby League correspondent for The People, meets Sheffield's very own Batman.

Sheffield Eagles' bid to win a second successive Kingstone Press Championship Grand Final will be led by a caped crusader obsessive.

Prop Mitchell Stringer's fascination with Batman was uncovered in a television feature earlier this year.

Stringer's entire right arm is covered in Batman tattoos - something he intends to extend to his shoulder and back during the off-season - and his home is littered with collectables of the DC Comics character.

Teammates, friends and even family call him Batman - and his voicemail carries that name as well.

Now the newly-crowned Kingstone Press Championship Player of the Year will be hoping for one more heroic performance as Mark Aston's side look to retain the title they earned by beating Featherstone Rovers last season.

"All the lads sort of knew about it anyway, so I've had more stick off my family and friends," said Stringer of his television expose.

"I've always been a fan of Batman, as a kid I'd always be getting Batman figures for birthdays and Christmas. It's my 30th next month - and I'll still be getting some for that. I was always saving toys and memorabilia."

Born in Yeovil before moving to Barnsley at the age of two, Stringer has certainly been a leader for the Eagles this season, especially after taking the captain's armband from the retired Jack Howieson.

The pair had been the pillars on which Sheffield's success in recent seasons had been built, and Howieson's decision to hang up his boots early in the campaign was a bit like Batman and Robin going their separate ways.

BELOW: Mitchell in action against Doncaster in the Northern Rail Cup semi-final.

BOTTOM RIGHT: ... and against Leigh in August.

"ONE OF OUR GOALS FOR THIS SEASON WAS TO WIN BACK-TO-BACK GRAND FINALS, AND THAT'S WHAT WE'RE GOING TO TRY TO DO"

But instead of having a negative effect on Stringer, he has thrived on the added responsibility, with his performances reaching such a level of consistency that he was crowned the competition's best player at an awards ceremony in Leeds on Thursday night.

He led the new Championship Player of the Year table for most of the season, putting him in pole position heading into the final weeks of the season.

Similar to his comic book hero, however, he wasn't particularly keen on the spotlight.

"I didn't know that much about the nomination to be honest," he said. "I don't get the papers or read too much into stuff like that, so I didn't know until I got the letter for the presentation night the other week. For me it's more about the team than any individual player."

That team stands on the brink of historic back-to-back titles, though they have had to recover from a mid-season stumble that threatened to derail their entire campaign.

Within the space of eight days, the Eagles were knocked out of the quarter-finals of the Tetley's Challenge Cup at home to struggling London Broncos

in disappointing fashion, then lost the Northern Rail Cup final to Leigh Centurions.

When they were beaten in their opening play-off game at home to Halifax, it looked as though being the best side at this level for the vast majority of the season was going to count for little.

"We've played 37 matches this year and won 30, so we've been very successful as a team," said Stringer. "But we've struggled in the big games. Against London in the Challenge Cup we didn't perform, and it was the same against Leigh in the Northern Rail Cup final."

"The performance against Halifax last week had been coming for a while. We'd struggled for about six weeks with performances and looked a bit tired. But the last couple of weeks Tubby [coach Mark Aston] has freshened things up and we looked a lot stronger."

"We had a few meetings as a squad, and were very honest with each other. The players who weren't playing so well and those that were spoke and there were a few home truths. One of our goals for this season was to win back-to-back Grand Finals, and that's what we're going to try to do."

Batman has spoken ...



BLACK'S BOOT TURNS TO GOLD

Ben Black is Batley's man with the golden boot. **Neil Barraclough**, the Daily Mail's Rugby League reporter, met the Bulldogs' king of the drop-goals.

When Ben Black runs out for his third Kingstone Press Championship Grand Final today, he does so because of one man.

Batley's Australian stand-off believes the Bulldogs' progress and success can be put down to the influence of veteran coach John Kear - or JK, as Black prefers to call him.

Black starred in last Sunday's nail-biting 21-20 Golden Point win over Featherstone Rovers, as the fifth-placed side eliminated the table toppers.

Incredibly, it was Batley's second Golden Point success in eight days, coming after they had dumped Leigh Centurions out of the play-offs in similar fashion.

Now he cannot wait for this afternoon's showdown - and

insists Kear is the man behind Batley's Leeds Rhinos-esque run to the Grand Final from fifth spot.

"It's an awesome feeling to be in the Grand Final," said Black. "The boys have really dug deep all year and JK is just a perfect example of that. He's a legendary bloke and a legendary coach."

"If there was one person that was going to take us to the Grand Final, JK's that person. He's been key to everything we've achieved."

"He's been around for a long time. He's been to Challenge Cup finals and been in Super League for goodness knows how long. He's brought a spirit into the club - this Bulldog spirit - and it's absolutely amazing."

"The last six weeks, we have just been on such a high. We have proven in the last two

games, with them both going to Golden Point, how much we will stick together."

Bulldogs will start as major underdogs against Sheffield Eagles, having already lost twice to Mark Aston's men in 2013. A 13-6 defeat in February was followed by a 14-8 reverse in June, but Black is adamant Batley and former Sheffield coach Kear can still taste the ultimate success.

"There's no reason why we can't win it," he said. "We are on a bit of a roll at the moment. Sheffield are the reigning champions, so it's not going to be an easy game at all, but with the way we are going and the way we are feeling, we are on a bit of a high. I know the

BELOW: Ben kicking against Leigh in the Championship play-off.



"THE BULLDOG SPIRIT BETWEEN US IS INCREDIBLE, NOBODY EVER GIVES UP. WE'RE A SIDE WHERE EVERYONE WORKS HARD. EVERYONE WORKS NINE-TO-FIVE JOBS AND THEN WE COME IN AND TRAIN THREE DAYS A WEEK"

boys are confident and we have made sure we have had a good week in preparation.

"The Bulldog spirit between us is incredible, nobody ever gives up. We're a side where everyone works hard. Everyone works nine-to-five jobs and then we come in and train three days a week. To finish the season like this is an amazing achievement, not just for us as players but for the club as well."

The 31-year-old stole the show in the 2010 Grand Final, landing the match-winning drop-goal for his former club Halifax.

And he was at the centre of the action a fortnight ago, hitting the winning one-pointer in extra-time against Leigh before playing a key role in helping Batley recover from a 20-6 deficit against Featherstone.

"This is my third Grand Final over here," he says. "I've won one and lost one, but this will be a good week. A lot of people in our side haven't been in this situation and they'll be a bit nervous. Hopefully, I can use my experience to help calm people down."

"It's going to be a big day for most people, but you've got to try to reel in the excitement and just look forward to it."

"It's going to be tough. We never beat Sheffield - they are our bogey side and they always seem to get the better of us - but we've got to play them at a different venue now. JK is the perfect man to get us to this final and get us to win it. He's a legend. He knows how to get us up for this final and the preparation needed. I'm very confident."

"It's huge for the club. Batley haven't made a Grand Final for a long, long time. We don't have too many fans, but they make so much noise."

"They're there all the time and they've always stuck by us. It's an excellent achievement for the club. We're all in it together and, hopefully, we can hold the trophy."



SIX OF THE BEST

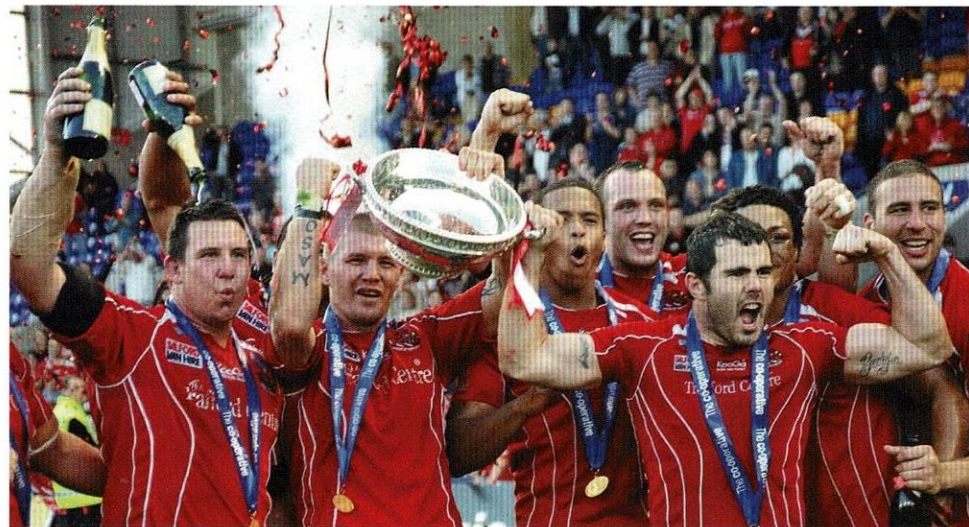
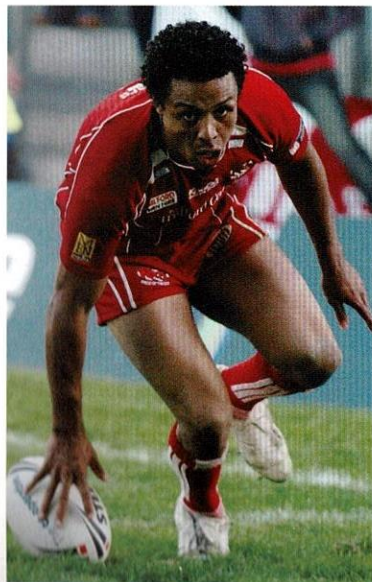
Dave Middleton selects his half dozen most memorable Championship and former National League One Grand Finals from the past 15 years.

1998

Wakefield Trinity	24
Featherstone Rovers	22

at Huddersfield (8,224)

Billed as "A Night to Remember", few who witnessed the first Grand Final will have forgotten a classic. The win gave Wakefield the right to apply for a Super League place. However, it was not secured until a try by prop Francis Stephenson in the 76th minute. Trinity took the game by the scruff of the neck with tries inside eight minutes by Roy Southernwood and Josh Bostock on the right wing. Danny Baker struck back for Featherstone, but Bostock's second try had most people thinking it was going to be a stroll for Trinity. However, Rovers stormed back after the break with quickfire scores by Chico Jackson and Steve Collins in taking a six-point lead. Garen Casey converted his own try in drawing Wakefield level, before Carl Hall squeezed over in the 69th minute. Featherstone thought they had the game sewn up, when Karl Pratt swooped, only for a ruling that Asa Amone knocked on, before Casey converted Stephenson's decisive score.



1999

Hunslet Hawks	12
Dewsbury Rams	11

at Headingley Carnegie (5,783)

Another pulsating Grand Final came down to a 62nd minute drop-goal by Jamie Leighton for Hunslet, whose coach David Plange compared the success to winning the Challenge Cup with Castleford in 1986. Dewsbury went on 12 months later to beat Leigh Centurions 13-12 in the Grand Final at Bury, but coach Neil Kelly was frustrated that his side on the night simply failed to perform to their full capabilities. Dewsbury began well enough by supplementing Adrian Flynn's try after 26 minutes with a Barry Eaton penalty and a drop-goal by Richard Agar. The scores were level at 7-7 by half-time though, after Paul Cook had swooped for the Hawks, Chris Ross converted and Latham Tawhai added a one-pointer. Hunslet went ahead when Iain Higgins crossed, then Damian Ball tied the score again at 11-11 with an unconverted try. Dewsbury had their chances, but the Hawks stood firm. Eaton was denied late on and Butch Fatnowna's cover tackle kept out Flynn, after Leighton had coolly dropped the all-important goal.

2008

Salford City Reds	36
Celtic Crusaders	18

(after extra-time; 18-18 at 80min)
at Warrington (7,104)

Salford stared down the barrel before coming up trumps in a remarkable Grand Final. Celtic Crusaders were 20 seconds from victory when they conceded a crucial penalty. They had twice come from behind and were grimly clinging to an 18-16 lead when Darren Mapp held down Richard Myler. Cue the prolific John Wilshire from 38 metres. The last kick of the 80 minutes shook Crusaders to the core. A reprieved Salford went on to secure the league title through quickfire tries by Ian Sibbit, who latched on to Robbie Paul's teasing kick, and Paul White's second touchdown on the left wing. Myler's late try gave a misleading impression in terms of the final score after 100 minutes, but as Shaun McRae, the Salford coach, said: "We've gone through every emotion, from an easy win, to a tight one and being beaten. They just never went away." The sight of the night was David Tangata-Toa, not known for any long-distant runs, pinning his ears back from half way for the fourth Crusaders try, exhorted by coach John Dixon to "go David, go".

LEFT:
Paul White scored two tries in the 2008 final for Salford against Crusaders

ABOVE:
The victorious Salford City Reds

TOP RIGHT:
Barrow's Andreas Bauer in the 2009 final

CENTRE RIGHT:
Ben Black in action for Halifax and Featherstone in the 2010 final

BOTTOM RIGHT:
Misi Taulapapa scoring in last year's final and Sheffield celebrating with the trophy



2009

Barrow Raiders	26
Halifax	18

at Warrington, 11,398

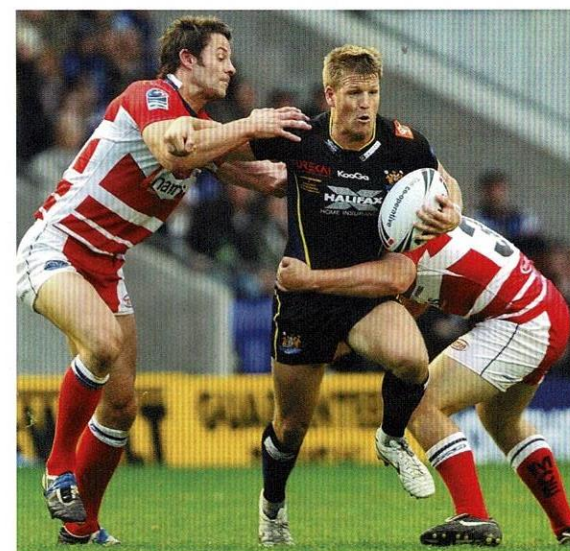
Barrow ended a 26-year trophy drought, although there was some controversy about Lee Paterson being put off in missing a crucial conversion for Halifax. Paterson was attempting to convert a try after 70 minutes by Mick Govin, which would have levelled the score at 20-20 and possibly forced the game into extra-time. Television replays showed that a Barrow player illegally ran from behind the line in an effort to distract Paterson, who was distraught at missing four of five place-kicks. For the Cumbrian side, it was their first triumph since lifting the Lancashire Cup in 1983. It was a remarkable success for the club following promotion from National League Two the previous year. Barrow retrieved a 10-0 deficit, before a Ben Black try edged Halifax ahead again. Jamie Rooney's conversion of a try by Dave Allen after 62 minutes gave Barrow the lead for the first time. A brace of tries by Andreas Bauer proved conclusive for the delighted Cumbrians.

2010

Halifax	23
Featherstone Rovers	22

(after Golden Point extra-time; 22-22 at 80min)
at Warrington, 9,443

Drama all the way, from the fire in a stand at The Halliwell Jones Stadium that caused a 45-minute hold-up, to the last act of another blisteringly-good Grand Final. Halifax scrum-half Ben Black had been instrumental in his side's comeback from 20-4 down. Ninety



seconds into added time, Black slotted a Golden Point drop-goal to win the Championship title for an overjoyed Halifax. They had looked down and out in a game that Featherstone controlled for almost an hour, despite Rob Worrincy's length-of-the-field try in opening the scoring for Halifax. Rovers responded with tries in three minutes by Kyle Briggs and the first of Zak Hardaker's brace on the right wing. When Matt Dale crossed and Hardaker grabbed his second try, Halifax's goose looked to be cooked. But Black set to work in scoring a try, then immediately laying on another for Luke Branighan, before Stephen Bannister tied the score with a 75th minute touchdown. Halifax had first crack in front of the Rovers posts and Black didn't let them down.

2012

Featherstone Rovers	16
Sheffield Eagles	20

at Warrington, 6,409

Sheffield Eagles gained revenge for their hefty 2011 Championship final loss to Featherstone Rovers in achieving their biggest success since upsetting Wigan Warriors in the 1998 Challenge Cup final. Mark Aston was the Eagles' Lance Todd Trophy hero that day and, as coach, steered his beloved Sheffield to more glory, having triumphed from fourth place. "We've come a long way in a short time. I'm living the dream," said Aston after a dramatic final. Rovers were not easily shaken off. They responded through Ian Hardman to Scott Turner's early try for the Eagles. A fantastic try by Quentin Lauu-Togagae, his 35th of the season, gave Sheffield a two-point advantage at the break. Jon Hepworth scored for Rovers as the lead chopped and changed before the decisive try by Misi Taulapapa in the 57th minute. Sheffield hung on desperately in the last quarter for the victory, which meant a second final defeat for Featherstone, who had also missed out on the Northern Rail Cup in 2012.





THE KINGSTONE PRESS

CHAMPIONSHIP

GRAND FINAL 4.30PM

MATCH OFFICIALS

Referee: M Thomason

Video Referee: P Bentham

Touch Judge: A Gill

Touch Judge: M Woodhead

Reserve: J Cobb

Time Keeper: I McGregor

Match Commissioner: P Crashley

IN THE EVENT OF A DRAW

If, at the end of 80 minutes of play in any of the fixtures, the scores are tied, the match will enter extra-time and be decided on a 'Golden Point' basis, the winning team being the first to score. The teams are allowed an additional three interchanges during extra-time.



The RFL is supported by Sport England for many of the programmes currently being used to develop the sport's potential across the country. Sport England is focused on helping people and communities across the country create a sporting habit for life. It will invest over £500m of National Lottery and Exchequer funding between 2012 and 2017 in organisations and projects that will:

- Help more people have a sporting habit for life
- Create more opportunities for young people to play sport
- Nurture and develop talent
- Provide the right facilities in the right places
- Support local authorities and unlock local funding
- Ensure real opportunities for communities

PLEASE KEEP OFF THE PITCH

The RFL requests that spectators do not venture on to the pitch before, 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 who infringes these regulations.

ANTI-RACISM POLICY

The RFL's 'Tackle It' policy states that it will not tolerate racism of any kind and will take specific action against spectators who engage in racist chanting, abuse or intimidation. Action will also be taken against spectators who use foul and abusive language.

DRINK AWARE

Rugby League is a family sport and our matches take place in a fantastic environment. We want all our fans to have a good time, however we encourage everyone to drink responsibly.

	SHEFFIELD EAGLES	T	G	DG
1	QUENTIN LAULU-TOGAGAE			
2	SCOTT TURNER			
3	MENZIE YERE			
4	TOM ARMSTRONG			
5	MISI TAULAPAPA			
6	PAT WALKER			
7	DOMINIC BRAMBANI			
8	JACK HOWIESON			
9	ANDREW HENDERSON			
10	MITCH STRINGER			
11	MICHAEL KNOWLES			
12	PETER GREEN			
13	JOE HIRST			
14	JAMES DAVEY			
15	ALEX SZOSTAK			
18	DUANE STRAUGHEIR			
17	LIAM HIGGINS			
18	NEV MORRISON			
19	VINNY FINIGAN			
20	PAT SMITH			
21	MATT GARSIDE			
22	COLTON ROCHE			
24	DARIO ESPOSITO			
25	EDDIE BATTYE			
27	CONNOR SCOTT			
32	CORY ASTON			

	BATLEY BULLDOGS	T	G	DG
1	MILES GREENWOOD			
2	GARETH POTTS			
3	JASON WALTON			
4	DANNY MAUN			
5	JOHNNY CAMPBELL			
6	BEN BLACK			
7	GARETH MOORE			
8	BYRON SMITH			
9	PAUL MENNELL			
10	CRAIG POTTER			
11	ALEX BRETHERTON			
12	MARK APPEGARTH			
13	ASH LINDSEY			
14	GEORGE FLANAGAN			
15	KEEGAN HIRST			
16	JON DAVIES			
17	LIAM WALMSLEY			
18	RICHARD WATERWORTH			
19	ALEX ROWE			
20	AYDEN FAAL			
21	GREG JOHNSON			
22	ADAM SCOTT			
23	TOM HEMINGWAY			
24	DANNY WHITMORE			
25	JAY LEARY			
26	ALISTAIR LEAK			
27	DAN FLEMING			
28	ANTHONY MULLALLY			
29	ALEX WALMSLEY			
30	JACOB FAIRBANK			

OLDHAM

1	RICHARD LEPORI
2	MO AGORO
4	STEVEN NIELD
5	DALE BLOOMFIELD
6	LEWIS PALFREY
7	NEIL RODEN
8	LIAM GILCHRIST
9	SAM GEE
10	JASON BOULTS
11	JOSH CROWLEY
12	DANNY LANGTREE
13	MARK HOBSON
14	ADAM FILES
16	KENNY HUGHES
18	PHIL JOY
19	MICHAEL WARD
21	DAVID COOKSON
22	LIAM THOMPSON
24	TOM WHITEHEAD
25	JON FORD
	AARON HALL
	NIALL BRADLEY
	DANNY RASOOL
	SAM SINGLETON

ROCHDALE HORNETS

1	WAYNE ENGLISH
2	GARETH LANGLEY
5	DAVE SUTTON
6	PAUL CROOK
7	STEVE ROPER
8	JOHN COOKSON
9	ALEX McCLURG
10	WARREN THOMPSON
11	CHRIS BAINES
12	DAYNE DONOGHUE
13	JORDAN CASE
14	ALEX TRUMPER
15	BENJI LLOYD
16	MATTY CROW
17	MARTIN WARING
18	JOE GREENWOOD
19	ANDY AINSCOUGH
20	JOE BATE
21	DANNY DAVIES
22	MIKE RATU
23	DAVE HULL
24	MARK GOODMAN
25	CHRIS TYRER
26	DAVE LLEWELLYN
27	GARETH FRODSHAM
29	CARL FORSTER
30	ANDY UNSWORTH
31	CHRIS HOUGH
32	DOM SPEAKMAN

LEIGH MINERS RANGERS

TODD APPLEBY	FORWARD
CHRIS BARLOW	FORWARD
ROSS BRADLEY	BACK
JONATHAN CARROLL	FORWARD
SEMISI COCKER	FORWARD
LIAM COLEMAN	HALF BACK
ALLAN COLEMAN	FORWARD
ANTHONY DOYLE	FORWARD
THOMAS FARRIMOND	FORWARD
GARY GITTINS	FORWARD
LEE GITTINS	FORWARD
MARTIN GRAY	FORWARD
GARY GREENOUGH	FORWARD
ANDREW GROVES	BACK
JOSEPH HARRISON	FORWARD
ANDREW HODSON	BACK
KEVIN HOWELLS	FORWARD
DANIEL JACKSON	FORWARD
DANIEL JONES	FORWARD
DARRYL KAY	FORWARD
MARTIN LEWIS	BACK
STEVEN MARSH	HALF BACK
SEAN McDONALD	FORWARD
RYAN MONAGHAN	FORWARD
JAMES MUIR	FORWARD
LUKE MURFIN	FORWARD
DANIEL MYERS	BACK
MARK NICHOLSON	FORWARD
SCOTT O'BRIEN	HALF BACK
GARETH PAINE	BACK
CONNOR PARTINGTON	FORWARD
SEAN PENDLEBURY	BACK
DARRELL ROWLAND	FORWARD
DAVID ROWLANDS	FORWARD
CHRISTOPHER SLATER	FORWARD
ADAM THOMASON	FORWARD
STEPHEN TOOZE	FORWARD
SIMON TRAVIS	BACK
SCOTT TRAVIS	HALF BACK
LUKE WARBURTON	FORWARD

WIGAN ST PATRICKS

TOM ATHERTON	FORWARD
ANTHONY ATHERTON	BACK
SIMON ATHERTON	FORWARD
RYAN BAXTER	FORWARD
DANIEL BIRKETT	BACK
JAK BOOTH	FORWARD
JONATHAN BROWN	FORWARD
JONATHAN CHAMBERLAIN	FORWARD
MATHEW CHARNOCK	BACK
PAUL FARNWORTH	FORWARD
ANTHONY GALLEAR	FORWARD
LIAM GANNON	FORWARD
PHIL GLOVER	FORWARD
ANTHONY GRIFFITHS	HALF BACK
BRADLEY HARGREAVES	BACK
KIERON HARRISON	FORWARD
DEAN HATTON	FORWARD
JOSEPH HIGHAM	FORWARD
ANDREW HIGHAM	BACK
JORDAN JONES	FORWARD
LIAM MARSHALL	FORWARD
JOHN McCOY	BACK
RUSSELL McFARLANE	FORWARD
JONATHAN PADGETT	FORWARD
DAVID PARKINSON	BACK
JOE PRIOR	FORWARD
DANIEL PYKE	BACK
KRISTOFFER RATCLIFFE	FORWARD
LYNDON ROBERTSON	FORWARD
LEWIS SANDFORD	FORWARD
JAYDEN SANDFORD	BACK
REECE SEDGWICK	FORWARD
STEPHEN SIMM	BACK
BRADLEY SMITH	FORWARD
RYAN SMITH	HALF BACK
TONY SUFFOLK	FORWARD
LUKE TAYLOR	FORWARD
THOMAS WOODCOCK	BACK
STEPHEN WOODS	BACK



THE KINGSTONE PRESS

CHAMPIONSHIP ONE

PLAY-OFF FINAL 2.00PM

MATCH OFFICIALS

Referee: C Leatherbarrow

Video Referee: J Child

Touch Judge: A Fazackerley

Touch Judge: S Kilpatrick

Reserve: P Brooke

Time Keeper: D Campbell

Match Commissioner: R Connolly

CONFERENCE CHALLENGE

TROPHY FINAL 11.30AM

MATCH OFFICIALS

Referee: T Grant

Touch Judge: I Scott

Touch Judge: T Hudson

IG: C Etchells

IG: C Straw

RR: P Graham

Reserve: C McDonagh

Time Keeper: S Williams

Match Commissioner: N Robinson

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CAN THE HORNETS STING AGAIN?

North Wales Crusaders dominated Kingstone Press Championship One to achieve promotion. Local rivals Oldham and Rochdale, who finished second and third behind the Wrexham club over the regular season, will battle it out to join them after a fascinating play-offs series.

FINAL ELIMINATOR

OLDHAM 64
LONDON SKOLARS 8

Oldham set up a sixth meeting of the season with rivals Rochdale after obliterating the Skolars. The Londoners had enjoyed their best ever season, but this was a game too far for them. Centre Jon Ford scored his fourth hat-trick of the year to take his season's tally to 19. Dale Bloomfield and Adam Files scored two tries apiece and Lewis Palfrey landed 10 of 11 goal attempts. "We were much more like our old selves. We were relaxed and played with smiles on our faces. We did the basics well and did them with speed. They are a great bunch of lads who want to play for their team and club," said Oldham coach Scott Naylor.

Scorers: Oldham: Tries: Crowley, Ford 3, Bloomfield 2, Lepori, Cookson, Files 2, Langtree. Goals: Palfrey 10. **Skolars:** Tries: Hurst, Paxton.

QUALIFYING SEMI-FINAL

OLDHAM 22
ROCHDALE HORNETS 23

Paul Crook landed a last-minute drop-goal to steer Rochdale through to the final after the two rivals had been locked at 22-22. Oldham scored four tries to the Hornets' three, but Crook's kicking off the tee was just as accurate as he landed five from five attempts. It was Oldham's first loss since June. "Rochdale played the right rugby for the conditions. We didn't help ourselves making mistakes coming away from our line and gifting them good field position," said coach Scott Naylor. "Our goal at the start of the season was to win



promotion. We're only 80 minutes away from it," said Rochdale coach Ian Talbot.

Scorers: Oldham: Tries: Ford, Hughes, Agoro 2. Goals: Palfrey 3. **Rochdale:** Tries: Greenwood, Case, English. Goals: Crook 5. Drop-goal: Crook.

ELIMINATION SEMI-FINAL

LONDON SKOLARS 44
HEMEL STAGS 28

Hemel were blown away by a whirlwind first half display by the Skolars, who raced into a 38-0 lead at the interval. Alex Hurst grabbed a hat-trick in a 22-minute spell, James Anthony touched down twice and there were further tries by Oscar Thomas and Rob Thomas. Smokie Junor added another within four minutes of the resumption, at which point the Skolars shut up shop. Hemel responded with five tries but had left themselves too big-a-

mountain to climb. "The first half was the main target and we controlled the game from there. It couldn't have gone better," said London coach Joe Mbu.

Scorers: Skolars: Tries: Anthony 2, Hurst 3, O Thomas, R Thomas, Junor. Goals: Skee 5, O Thomas. **Hemel:** Tries: Forgham, Pritchard, Hill, Swindells, Young. Goals: Swindells 4.

QUALIFYING PLAY-OFF

ROCHDALE HORNETS 26
LONDON SKOLARS 24

A 45-metre penalty by Paul Crook put Rochdale through to the qualifying semi-final. Crook's successful strike was all that separated the sides in a cracking tie at Spotland. London Skolars did themselves proud in clinging on to the Hornets' coat-tails throughout, helped by two tries by former Great Britain wing Gareth Raynor. They were 24-20 ahead when Crooks

LEFT: Action from the Qualifying semi-final as Oldham's Danny Langtree fronts up against Rochdale

ABOVE: Oldham's Lewis Palfrey spots a gap in the Hornets' defence

BELOW: Skolars' Alex Hurst, who scored a 22-minute hat-trick against Hemel Stags

struck a second time in converting Dave Llewellyn's late try. "They made it tough for us and kept coming back," said Rochdale coach Ian Talbot. "I've a very young side still learning the game but I'm very proud we ran them as close as we did," said delighted Skolars coach Joe Mbu.

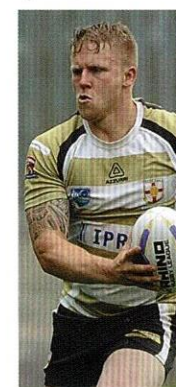
Scorers: Rochdale: Tries: Case, Sutton, Baines, Llewellyn. Goals: Crook 5. **Skolars:** Tries: Thomas, Raynor 2, Anthony, Skee. Goals: Skee, McLean.

ELIMINATION PLAY-OFF

HEMEL STAGS 30
OXFORD 26

The goalkicking of BJ Swindells steered Hemel Stags past a gutsy Oxford in a pulsating tie. Swindells's five goals ultimately proved the difference for Hemel, whose assistant coach Jermaine Coleman said: "I'm happy we won, but disappointed with some of our execution. Against a better team, we'd probably have lost. But it speaks volumes for the character of the players." Oxford coach Tony Benson said: "There really was nothing between the teams apart from the kicking. This was a fantastic advertisement for Rugby League."

Scorers: Hemel: Tries: Hill, Mbaraga, Molloy, Pritchard, Mostyn. Goals: Swindells 5. **Oxford:** Tries: Leather, Calladine, Johnson 2, Robinson. Goals: Leather, Thompson.



HOW IT FINISHED

Final regular season table		Pl	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	B
1	Crusaders	16	14	0	2	568	212	43	1
2	Oldham	16	12	1	3	510	289	41	3
3	Rochdale	16	10	0	6	538	375	32	2
4	Skolars	16	9	1	6	489	468	32	3
5	Hemel	16	8	0	8	381	365	28	4
6	Oxford	16	5	2	9	326	436	23	4
7	Gateshead	16	4	1	11	356	542	20	6
8	Scorpions	16	5	0	11	368	506	19	4
9	All Golds	16	2	1	13	286	629	12	4

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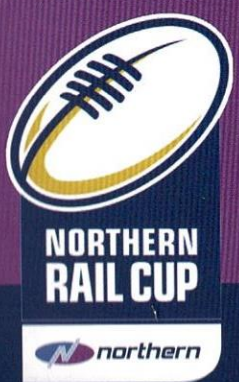


Training tip



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and card charges when
you buy train tickets at
northernrail.org

Robbie Hunter-Paul is an ambassador
for the Northern Rail Cup.



northernrail.org



OLDHAM ROUGHYEDS



FORD FOCUSES ON FINALS GLORY

"It's a big final, but we'll just approach it in the same way we have approached games every week," Oldham back Jon Ford tells **Neil Barraclough**, Rugby League reporter for the Daily Mail.

Oldham centre Jon Ford insists the Roughyeds are finally ready to seal Kingstone Press Championship One play-off final glory.

Young star Ford claimed a first half hat-trick in Oldham's 64-8 semi-final win against London Skolars last week. Now he is aiming to help chairman Chris Hamilton finally celebrate victory in a play-off final.

"We believe we can get the right result," said Ford, despite the Roughyeds' record of having lost the 2001, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 finals.

"I was speaking to Neil Roden about it the other day. He was talking about the amount of Grand Finals the club's been in, and it will really help myself and some of the other lads to have people like him knocking around offering their experience and advice."

Ford has spent 2013 on loan from Salford (now Red Devils) and is determined to finish the season on a high as a way of saying thank you to Oldham coach Scott Naylor.

"Scott was at Salford when I first began there, but this year has been the first time he's actually coached me. He's really smart. He's aided my development an awful lot, and he's also quite calm in what he says and how he says it. He's not a ranter and raver. If we're losing at half-time, for example, then he doesn't panic."

"He also spots things plenty of other people would never pick up on when we're doing our video reviews. He's been great all year."

Oldham arrive in today's final having finished second in Kingstone Press Championship One. Now Naylor, Ford and everyone else at the club are focused on producing one last performance to cap a remarkable year.

It is only a fortnight since local rivals Rochdale Hornets beat Oldham by a solitary point, but Ford is adamant that result will have no bearing on today's match.



ABOVE:
Jon Ford
touching
down against
Rochdale
recently

"A lot of the boys were disappointed after the Rochdale game, especially with it being a derby. Hopefully, we can put it right today. Scott's done a lot of work with us through the season, we've scored lots of points and we've really improved as a team."

"We have got two good pivots in Kenny Hughes and Lewis Palfrey and a really strong pack in front of them, so it's a big team effort. Everyone plays their part and knows their job. It's a big final, but we will just approach it in the same way we have approached games every week."

"Our preparation has been good and we are not short of confidence, but equally we know what happened last time we played Rochdale. We will have to be ready to concentrate and play well if we want to get the right result."

Ford admits that repaying Oldham's faithful fans is also a huge motivation behind the club's drive for success in 2013. "Our fans are great," he said. "In Championship One you travel

all over the country, but our fans have been to every game and have cheered us on. I know all the boys appreciate it and it would be great to give them something to smile about."

"We have got a really good spirit at the club, and that's so important. Everyone gets along with each other and we are all close friends. I've come in on loan from Salford, but I've felt part of it from day one here. We spend a lot of time together travelling in this competition and we are a really close group of guys. Hopefully, that will stand us in good stead."

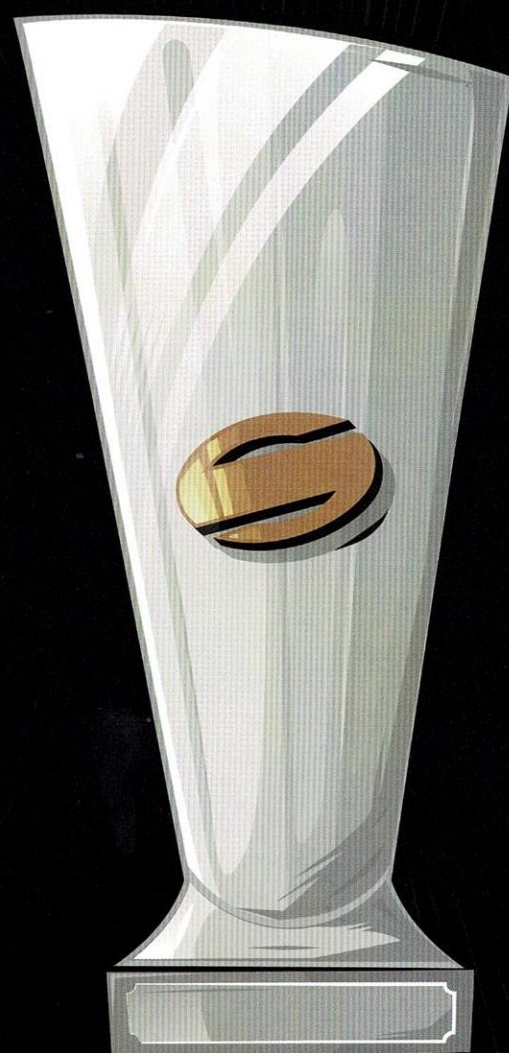
But Ford is fully aware of Rochdale's qualities, stressing that his team-mates will not underestimate their biggest rivals.

"Rochdale are a really good team," he said. "They are strong in attack, they like to pass the ball and keep things open, and they can also keep things simple and just complete their sets if that's what they need to do. It's all about who stays calm and handles the conditions the best."



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MANCHESTER**

ROCHDALE HORNETS

HORNET HOUGH IS BUZZING

Chris Hough is determined to make the most of Rochdale's first final appearance for many years, as the experienced Hornets hooker tells **Neil Barraclough**, of the Daily Mail.

It has been a long time coming and Rochdale hooker Chris Hough intends to relish every minute of the Hornets' first final for 22 years.

Rochdale have not always had much to cheer about in that time, but Hough, 32, will be doing everything he can to ensure that there is a happy ending today for the Hornets faithful.

"I've been involved with the club, on and off, for the last 10 years, and this is why I came back. I wanted to help get the club promoted and I'm not going to stop until we've done that," said Hough.

"Rochdale has been a big part of my life and this final is going to be a big occasion. All my family has supported the club for years, and there are lots of other people at the club that it means a lot to.

"People like Ray and Ena Myers have given their life and soul to the club. It would be fantastic if we could win it for people like that; it really makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand up just thinking about it.

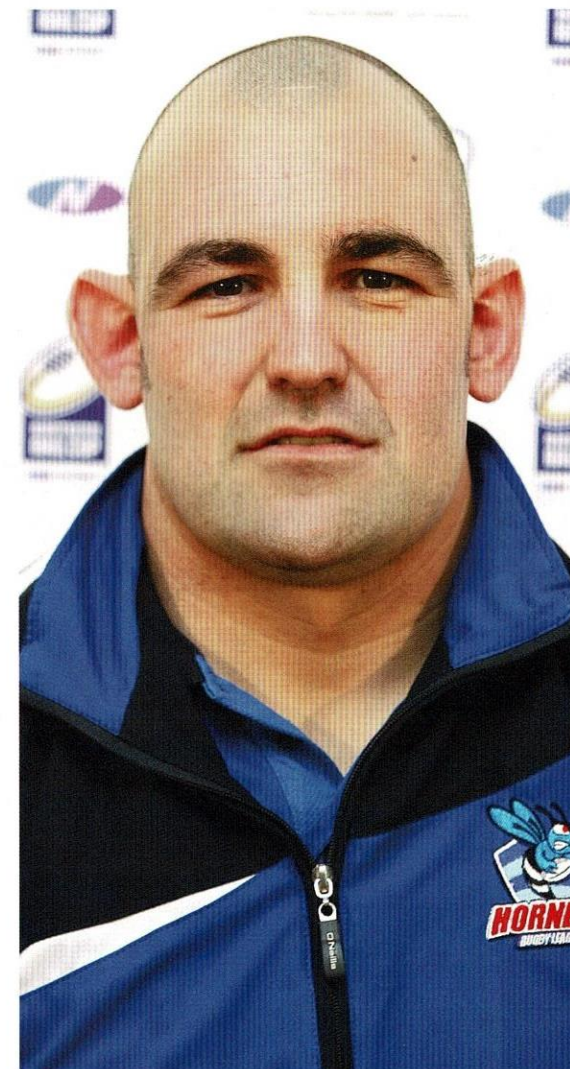
"The club's fans are absolutely fantastic. As a club Rochdale has quite a lot of passionate fans and, hopefully, they'll come here and cheer us on."

It could all have been so different for Hough, who appeared to have severed his ties with the club at the end of last season.

"I made the decision that I was going to hang up my boots last year. I was told there was no coaching role for me and I was finding it hard to get my head around just playing, but the longer I thought about it, the more I needed to come back.

"My wife Nicola said, 'What are you sat moping for? Get back to Rochdale'. Thankfully, I kept in touch with the coach Ian Talbot. I was hungry for it and I've got no regrets.

"Now we're only 80 minutes away from promotion and I feel like a youngster again."



ABOVE: Chris Hough returned to the Hornets this season after retiring

As it happened, Hough quickly found himself back in the coaching groove as Talbot's assistant. It is a position that has given him a unique insight into the Hornets' season so far.

"We went through a bit of a sticky patch in the middle of the year. We lost three away games and we all sat down and had a chat. Team spirit is one thing we've certainly got; we all enjoy each other's company and we're all mates - not just team-mates. When you think of those pre-season sessions, doing

"WHEN YOU THINK OF THOSE PRE-SEASON SESSIONS, DOING HILL RUNS ON A SATURDAY MORNING IN THE WINTER, IT COULD ALL BE WORTH IT NOW WE'RE JUST 80 MINUTES AWAY FROM OUR GOAL"

hill runs on a Saturday morning in the winter, it could all be worth it now we are just 80 minutes away from our goal.

"But we are not getting carried away; we will keep our feet on the ground. We will be confident, but so will our opponents. The trick is to play with a smile on your face - that's when you play your best rugby."

Victory today would also cap a remarkable first year in the job for coach Talbot, who Hough is quick to praise.

"From my point of view, he's put a different light on things," said Hough. "He has come from coaching the Under-20s at St Helens and has brought a different approach to the coaching here.

"He puts his arm around you and gives everything he has got. He has helped my game no end this year.

"Tal has always told me very clearly what he wants out of me in each game. I know my part and what my role is, and that's a big thing for any player. I listen to everything he's got to say. He has been at a club like St Helens for years and years, so he really knows what he is talking about.

"He will give us a game plan for this match and we as players will put everything into it. It's all about composure and completion at this stage. Whoever keeps calm will come out with the result."



THE BATTLE OF THE BOROUGH

The Conference Challenge Trophy final features a local derby rivalry, billed as the Battle of the Borough, as **Ryan Sparks**, of League Weekly, reports.

The first of today's triple-header shapes up as history in the making for Greater Manchester rivals Wigan St Patricks and Leigh Miners Rangers.

Both are perhaps guilty of underachieving in 2013, occupying seventh and eighth places, respectively, in the National Conference League Premier Division with three games of the regular season remaining.

But fans of the sport's amateur game are undoubtedly in for a treat here today, with two of the sport's most famous names clashing in what has been dubbed the 'Battle of the Borough'.

For the Miners, who overcame Egremont Rangers by the skin of their teeth last year to be crowned champions of the first-ever Conference Challenge Trophy, this is a chance to retain a title and set a record for winners of the future to contend with.

St Pats, with top flight play-off ambitions still very much intact, arrive attempting to clinch their first piece of silverware in almost 26 years.

The Wiganers triumphed over Elland in the 1988 BARLA National Cup final and, prior to the NCL's summer switch in 2012, they starred as runners-up in the Interim Grand Final. However, coach Richard Owen - in his 10th year

with the club - insists the time has come for the men from Clarington Park to make an addition to their trophy cabinet.

"It's our first proper cup final in over 20 years and it has been an awful long time coming," said Owen. "Everyone involved with the club is excited at the prospect of winning silverware."

"Anyone who watches amateur Rugby League will tell you that Wigan St Patricks-Leigh Miners Rangers games are not for the faint hearted."

"They are usually packed with skill and aggression. The RFL could not have wished for a better final in my opinion."

"We have had something of a disappointing season and we realise, with just a few weeks to go after this, that this could act as the turning point for us."

"We can still make the play-offs, we are targeting sixth spot, and we fully believe we could be a threat even from there."

Paul Whitworth makes up one half of the Leigh coaching staff alongside joint coach Allan Coleman. The pair took charge at the start of the 2012 campaign and promised to eventually deliver success, bringing the good times back to their famous Twist Lane home.

They perhaps did not envisage cup success at the first time of asking but, having "been there and done that", Whitworth has revealed how retaining their crown was at the top of the Miners' agenda prior to the season's start.

And the Rangers have no intentions of handing over the summer season's knockout prize without a fight.

"We targeted the final again. It is something we want to almost take ownership of if possible," said Whitworth. "I feel we do have some form of advantage this year, with it being our second straight final, and we do know a heck of a lot more about our opposition this time around. But, above

all, we are hoping to make history by winning it for a second time, setting a record for the future."

"The competition hasn't distracted us from the league. It has just been a case of us slipping up here and there in games, which we perhaps should have won."

"If we can deliver our 'A' game then we will win, if we don't then we know what Wigan St Patricks are capable of."

"As a unit we are more together this year, we perhaps are a better team."

St Pats are hoping to field star half-back Ryan Smith in a bid to halt the Miners' Scott O'Brien, who - as he did in last year's final - proved the difference between the two sides.

Smith, a former Leigh Miner, was facing a race against time to prove his fitness following a three-week stint on the sidelines.

"Ryan is desperate to play for obvious reasons, with Leigh being his ex-club, and for that reason he has been playing in the reserves prior to the final," Owen explained. "We fully expect him to pull through and he will provide us with another dimension."

But the Miners have "tricks up their sleeve", according to boss Whitworth. In addition to the return of rising talent Josh Ward, who has spent the Kingstone Press Championship campaign here at Leigh Sports Village

with Leigh Centurions, the Rangers' medical staff were planning to hand late fitness tests to a pair of key players.

Amateur internationals Lee Gittens and Adam Thomason have struggled with knee injuries of late, but their involvement this afternoon could be vital.

"We are doing everything we can to get Lee and Adam out there, they are undergoing extra scans and physio treatment," said Whitworth.

"All three are excellent players and, although we like to reward the players who have impressed over the course of the season, we are mindful of the fact that such quality could get us across the line in a big game."

Challengers Wigan enjoyed a narrow 14-12 success over the Miners when the two clubs last met in March - three weeks into the second summer season in the amateur game.

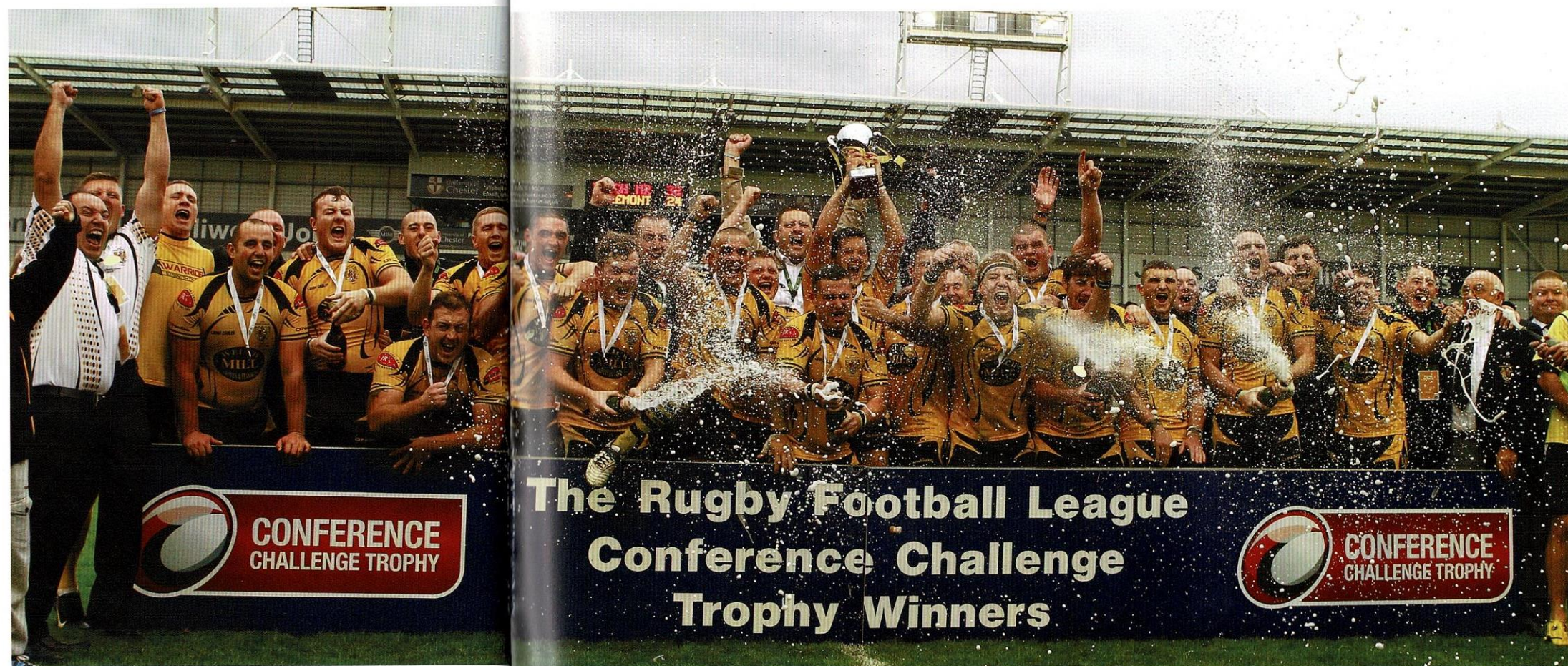
That victory, ironically, appears to have ensured St Pats' position above Leigh on the league ladder and the Miners look set to now miss out on a much-desired play-off finish.

But all of that will be forgotten should they reclaim their crown jewel today.

LEIGH MINERS RANGERS 32 EGREMONT RANGERS 24

OCTOBER 01, 2012

Leigh Miners Rangers lifted the inaugural Conference Challenge Cup with a nail-biting win over a gallant Egremont side at The Halliwell Jones Stadium last year. What had appeared to be a routine win for over an hour turned into a frantic finale as the remarkable Egremont comeback hauled them from 26-0 down to 26-24 with five minutes remaining before Miners' hat-trick hero Martin Lewis ensured the Leigh side's name on the cup.





JIGSAW ARE CHAMPIONS

The Wheelchair Rugby League season recently drew to a close with Bury Jigsaw triumphing in the Grand Final.

The Lancashire side were joined at the KC Stadium Arena, Hull, by Halifax and the Mersey Storm in a three-way fight for the national title as all sides played their part in an afternoon to remember.

Played in a round-robin style the day produced three games of skill, bravery and no little drama. The key piece of action seeing Bury's Adam Rigby hit a last-minute touchline conversion to defeat Mersey in an epic encounter.

The day opened with Mersey rallying from 6-16 down with just 10 minutes left to recover and beat Halifax 24-16 in what was perhaps the day's most exciting match. Andy Wharton was outstanding for Halifax, but it was Paul Craig's tactical punts down court which helped to swing the game for Mersey. The deciding fixture saw Bury

comprehensively defeat Halifax who, despite a superb score by Gina Smallwood, struggled to cope with the pace of Rigby and Martin Norris.

"The games today were outstanding and, having defeated their two closest rivals, Bury are deserved champions," said James Shuttleworth, RFL Club & Competition Manager.

"I would like to congratulate all three clubs on their attitude and performances today and also thank KC Stadium Arena for use of their superb facilities.

"We are planning on starting the next season in April 2014 and I am confident we will have a few new sides taking part as the sport continues to develop."

To round off a great day for Bury, Adam Rigby was selected as the Grand Final Most Valuable Player.

For more information on Wheelchair Rugby League, visit www.wheelchairrfl.co.uk

CHAMPIONS REMAIN ON COURSE

With the regular season coming to a close, champions Wath Brow Hornets are well placed to defend their **Hattons Solicitors National Conference League** title.

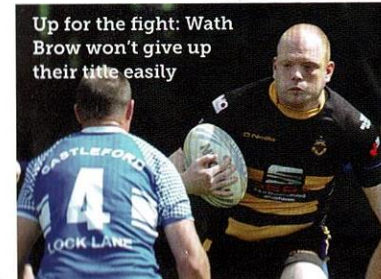
The Cumbrian giants will want to take the fastest possible route to the Grand Final - which will be held at The Select Security Stadium, Widnes, on Sunday November 17, kick-off 2.30pm - and with only a few weeks of weekly rounds remaining, they seem to be slowly clicking into top gear.

English Lions duo Karl Dixon and Fran King will be key figures for the Hornets, as will the free-scoring trio of Luke Davidson, Jamie Devine and Mark Watson.

Lock Lane, Thatto Heath Crusaders and West Hull all look to have already done enough to join Wath Brow in the end-of-season shootout, but one of Siddal, Egremont Rangers and Wigan St Patricks are going to miss out as they compete for the two remaining play-off places.

In Division One, East Leeds and Wigan St Judes have led the way for the majority of the season and it looks odds-on the duo will be in the top flight next year, whilst it is likely either Hunslet Warriors and Rochdale Mayfield will join them.

Shaw Cross Sharks, Normanton Knights and Askam have been the leading lights in Division Two, however the Cumbrians seem destined to miss out on a top-two finish.



Up for the fight: Wath Brow won't give up their title easily

Another notable showing has come from Elland, who have made some real improvement this campaign.

Division Three saw Kells and Pilkington Recs finish first and second respectively with only points difference giving the Cumbrians the title, whilst honourable mentions also go to Peterlee Pumas, Wigan St Cuthberts and Coventry Bears in their debut year in the NCL.

For the latest news, fixtures and results in the NCL visit www.nationalconferenceleague.co.uk or follow @OfficialNCL

RAFFLE DEADLINE APPROACHES FAST

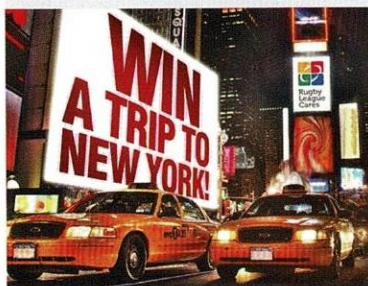
The sixth Community Game Raffle is approaching the home straight with over 100 clubs having requested tickets for the huge club fundraiser.

The 2013 raffle has a host of great prizes on offer with a five-night trip for two to New York, including £500 spending money, the fantastic first prize.

As with previous years each community club or school will receive 70p off each £1 ticket they sell, with the remaining 30p going to the Rugby League Cares charity.

Clubs have until Tuesday November 5 to return their sold tickets, whilst the draw for the 2013 Community Game Raffle will take place on Saturday November 23.

For more information on the Community Game Raffle visit www.rlcommunitygameraffle.co.uk



KNOW AN UNSUNG HERO?

The BBC Sports Personality of the Year 2013: **Unsung Hero Award** is now up and running and community Rugby League clubs are being encouraged to send in nominations for the prestigious prize.

Celebrating their 10th anniversary this year, the rewards recognise the remarkable achievements of people from all across the UK.

The deadline for nominations is Monday October 14, after which panels will meet in each of the BBC's 15 National and English Regions and a winner from each will be chosen.

The overall winner will come from one of those 15 and will be announced on the night of the BBC Sports Personality of the Year programme which this year will be held at the First Direct Arena, Leeds, on Sunday December 15.

For more information or to nominate someone for the 2013 Unsung Hero Award visit www.bbc.co.uk/sport/0/sports-personality/14678879

2013 CHAMPIONSHIPS ALL STARS



Featherstone's Will Sharp (left), Steve Crossley (centre) and Liam Finn with the League Leaders' Shield

2013 Kingstone Press Championship League Leaders' Shield winners Featherstone Rovers and Championship One winners North Wales Crusaders lead the way in this year's Championship All Stars selections, with four and five representatives, respectively.

Featherstone have winger Will Sharp, prop Steve Crossley and loose forward James Lockwood in the squad, alongside half-back Liam Finn who makes his second consecutive appearance in the Championship All Star team.

2012 Championship winners Sheffield Eagles have three players in the squad with prop Mitchell Stringer and centre Menzie Yere joining full-back Quentin Lauu-Togagae, who makes his second consecutive appearance in the All Star 13.

Leigh Centurions have two players in the squad, with Stuart Littler joining hooker Bob Beswick, while Batley Bulldogs (Greg Johnson), Doncaster (Paul Cooke), Barrow Raiders (Liam Harrison) and Workington Town (Karl Olstrum) all have one player in the All Star selection.

In Kingstone Press Championship One, North Wales Crusaders have a quintet of representatives in the 13 with Rob Massam, Andy Mouldsdales, Dave McConnell, Gary Middlehurst and Jono Smith all earning selection.

Oldham and London Skolars both have two representatives in the squad, with Oldham duo Richard Lepori and Jon Ford joining Skolars' duo Dylan Skee and Rob Thomas.

Dalton Grant (South Wales Scorpions), Mason Caton-Brown (Hemel Stags), Warren Thompson (Rochdale Hornets) and Tyla Hepi (University Gloucestershire All Golds) complete the Championship One All Star squad.

The Kingstone Press Championships All Star teams are selected by *League Weekly*.

KINGSTONE PRESS CHAMPIONSHIP ALL STARS

- 1 Quentin Lauu-Togagae (Sheffield Eagles)
- 2 Greg Johnson (Batley Bulldogs)
- 3 Stuart Littler (Leigh Centurions)
- 4 Menzie Yere (Sheffield Eagles)
- 5 Will Sharp (Featherstone Rovers)
- 6 Paul Cooke (Doncaster)
- 7 Liam Finn (Featherstone Rovers)
- 8 Mitch Stringer (Sheffield Eagles)
- 9 Bob Beswick (Leigh Centurions)
- 10 Steve Crossley (Featherstone Rovers)
- 11 Liam Harrison (Barrow Raiders)
- 12 James Lockwood (Featherstone Rovers)
- 13 Karl Olstrum (Workington Town)

KINGSTONE PRESS CHAMPIONSHIP ONE ALL STARS

- 1 Richard Lepori (Oldham)
- 2 Dalton Grant (South Wales Scorpions)
- 3 Jon Ford (Oldham)
- 4 Mason Caton-Brown (Hemel Stags)
- 5 Rob Massam (North Wales Crusaders)
- 6 Andy Mouldsdales (North Wales Crusaders)
- 7 Dylan Skee (London Skolars)
- 8 Rob Thomas (London Skolars)
- 9 Dave McConnell (North Wales Crusaders)
- 10 Warren Thompson (Rochdale Hornets)
- 11 Tyla Hepi (Gloucestershire All Golds)
- 12 Gary Middlehurst (North Wales Crusaders)
- 13 Jono Smith (North Wales Crusaders)

KINGSTONE PRESS CHAMPIONSHIP AWARDS

At a glittering event in Leeds last Thursday evening, the full Kingstone Press Championship 2013 awards were announced and presented, with Sheffield Eagles' Mitch Stringer scooping the prestigious Championship Player of the Year award.

The top division Coach of the Year was claimed by Doncaster's Tony Miller, with Ryan Brierley of Leigh Centurions taking the Young Player of the Year award.

Championship One Player of the Year was named as Jono Smith from North Wales Crusaders and his coach, Clive Griffiths was presented with the division's Coach of the Year award.

Gloucestershire All Golds - in their first year of the competition - can be rightly proud of developing Championship One's Young Player of the Year, Tyla Hepi.

The full list of the winners is: **Championship Player of the Year:** Mitch Stringer (Sheffield Eagles)

Championship Young Player of the Year: Ryan Brierley (Leigh Centurions)

Championship Coach of the Year: Tony Miller (Doncaster)

Championship One Player of the Year: Jono Smith (North Wales Crusaders)

Championship One Young Player of the Year: Tyla Hepi (Gloucestershire All Golds)

Championship One Coach of the Year: Clive Griffiths (North Wales Crusaders)

Northern Star winner: Andy Jordan (Batley Bulldogs)

Referee of the Year: Chris Leatherbarrow

Championship Club of the Year: Halifax

Championship One Club of the Year: North Wales Crusaders

Match Officials Achiever: Mike Woodhead

2013

A VINTAGE YEAR!

It has been a packed season and the action cranks up here today, and at the Super League Grand Final at Old Trafford next Saturday, before 2013 culminates in the Rugby League World Cup.

Chris Irvine, of The Times and Sunday Times, picks out his highlights of the year to date.

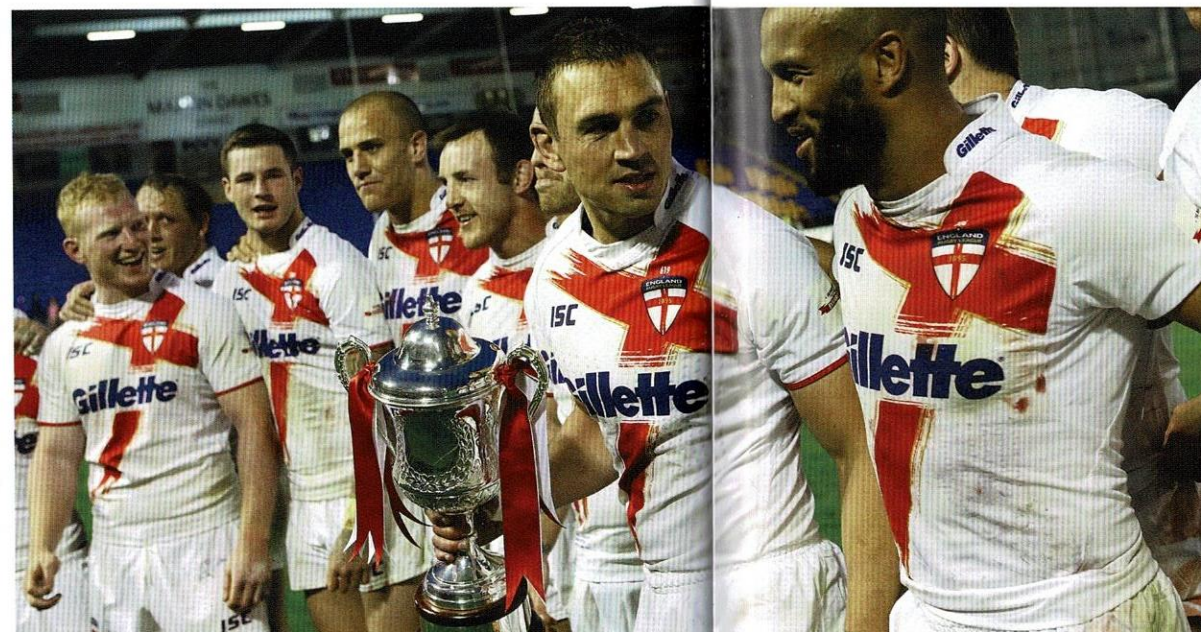
FEBRUARY

Melbourne Storm came, saw and conquered holders Leeds Rhinos to win the Probiz World Club Challenge for a third time. The Melbourne, Queensland and Australia spine of Billy Slater, Cooper Cronk and Cameron Smith prevailed as the Australian champions edged out the Rhinos 18-14 at Headingley Carnegie through tries by Slater, Jesse Bromwich and Tohu Harris. "We've plenty of bruised bodies as well as egos," said Leeds coach Brian McDermott.



MAY

It wouldn't be Magic Weekend without controversy and the end to the Hull FC - Hull Kingston Rovers derby, game three of seven over two thrilling days at the Etihad Stadium, did not disappoint. Hull FC had come from 16-6 down to draw level when Daniel Holdsworth hoisted a bomb that caught out Greg Eden. Craig Green pounced for the winning score, coming from an offside position, which video referee Steve Ganson failed to spot. An apology for the try award came too late for embittered Rovers.



JUNE

It felt a long way from the World Cup, but England went about their midsummer business in a ruthless first half demolition of the Exiles at The Halliwell Jones Stadium in Warrington. England had lost two of their three previous encounters against the cream of Super League's overseas crop, however they made certain of victory through Zak Hardaker, James Roby and Sam Tomkins before Leroy Cudjoe scored the first of his brace of tries before the break in a 30-10 victory.

JULY

Leigh Centurions twice fought their way back from eight points down to beat Sheffield Eagles 43-28 at The Shay and lift the Northern Rail Cup for a fourth time since 2004. The Centurions marched to victory, scoring 27 points in the last quarter. "We weren't expressing ourselves as we hadd planned. Once we did, everything slotted into place," said coach Paul Rowley. North Wales Crusaders lifted the first of their two pieces of silverware this year by beating London Skolars 42-24 in the Northern Rail Bowl final.



AUGUST

Wigan Warriors won the Tetley's Challenge Cup for a record-extending 19th time. Far from a repeat of the 1985 Wembley classic against Hull FC, the final was littered with errors and never really got going, but none of that detracted from Wigan and Shaun Wane's achievement as the first British coach since John Kear with Hull in 2005 to win Rugby League's oldest competition. "I always felt comfortable. We had taken some stick, but I know the team spirit and character we have," said Wane, of his side's 16-0 triumph.

ABOVE: Leigh enjoying Northern Rail success

LEFT: England triumphed over the Exiles

BELOW: A good year for Wigan at Wembley

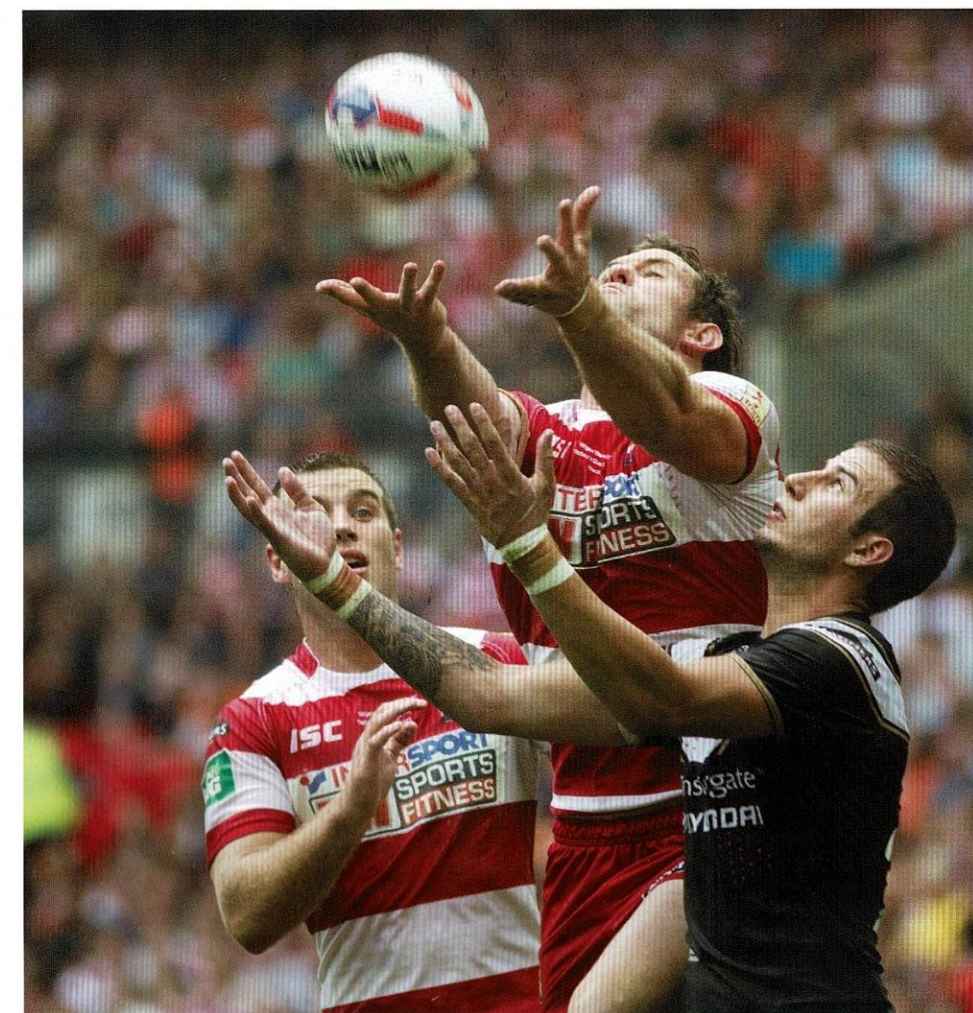
BELOW LEFT: North v South in Wales

FACING PAGE: Victorious Melbourne (top) and Craig Green winning the Magic Hull derby



SEPTEMBER

In an incredible year for the Wrexham-based outfit, North Wales Crusaders were crowned Kingstone Press Championship One champions following the biggest club game in Wales - a 35-22 victory over South Wales Scorpions that secured them promotion to the Championship in 2014, with a record of 14 wins and just two defeats. Featherstone Rovers received the Championship League Leaders' Shield for finishing the division three points ahead of Sheffield Eagles, their closest rivals over 26 rounds.



LET THE MAGIC BEGIN

Leigh Sports Village and other Kingstone Press Championship clubs' venues will play their part in a magical six weeks of Rugby League World Cup action, as Dave Middleton reports.

Kingstone Press Championship clubs are hosting their share of fixtures in the Rugby League World Cup, including the pool game between Tonga and Cook Islands here at Leigh Sports Village on Tuesday November 5.

Spotland Stadium, Rochdale, will feature the intriguing fixture between Fiji and Ireland on Monday October 28 and Derwent Park, Workington, is scene of the games between Tonga and Scotland on Tuesday October 29 and Scotland and Italy on Sunday November 3.

The Glyndwr University Racecourse Ground in Wrexham, home of promoted North Wales Crusaders, is staging two games: the Wales v United States match on Sunday November 3 and the second quarter-final on Saturday November 16.

Wales will also play the Cook Islands at The Gnoll, Neath, on Sunday November 10, on the same day that Halifax hosts the game between Tonga and Italy at The Shay.

All roads in the Rugby League World Cup lead to Old Trafford and the final on Saturday November 30 at the 'Theatre of Dreams'. First, though, there is the exciting opening ceremony at the Millennium Stadium, Cardiff, on Saturday October 26, followed by a double-header of England facing Australia and Wales playing Italy.

England coach Steve McNamara is due to name his World Cup squad next week, who will gather for a high-altitude camp in Potchefstroom in South Africa, before a warm-up game against Italy at Salford City Stadium at 4.30pm on Saturday October 19, part of a



double-header with England Knights facing Samoa at 2pm.

"They are massive games for us, and for Italy and Samoa as well," said McNamara. "We fly back in to the country from our camp in South Africa on the Wednesday and will be looking to put a few finishing touches to

TIME TO BUY YOUR RUGBY LEAGUE WORLD CUP 2013 FIX

With less than four weeks to the start of Rugby League World Cup 2013 - and kick-off times for all matches confirmed - there's not long left to book your RLWC fix.

The first two matches will follow the Opening Ceremony at the Millennium Stadium, Cardiff, on Saturday October 26, with England v Australia starting the tournament at 2.30pm. Wales will then face Italy at 4.30pm.

The 'Big Hit' semi-final double-header on Saturday November 23 will see the best four teams in the tournament go head-to-head at Wembley Stadium. The first game (winner of quarter-final 1 v winner of quarter-final 3) will kick off at 1pm and the second (winner of quarter-final 2 v winner of quarter-final 4) will start at 3.30pm.

The Rugby League World Cup final, which will be shown live on BBC1, will kick off at 2.30pm on Saturday November 30 at Old Trafford.

All of the games at the group stages, which take place on a weekday, will be evening kick-offs. Where two games take place on the same day at separate locations, there is a minimum of two hours between kick-offs.

For tickets call 0844 847 2013 or visit www.rlwc2013.com

the work we've done when we hit the field at Salford on the Saturday.

"There is a strong likelihood that some of the World Cup squad will be involved in the Knights game as well. This is the first opportunity we will have had in a long time to play the NRL-based players and some of them may be in need of an extended run. Both matches are about getting us ready to be the best we can be for kick-off against Australia."

England captain Kevin Sinfield said: "It's going to be a very special occasion opening up against Australia in Cardiff, but we've got to make sure that everything is done right up to that point, personally and collectively."

After playing Australia in their pool, England meet Ireland on Saturday November 2 at The John Smith's Stadium, Huddersfield, and Fiji at the KC Stadium, Hull, on Saturday November 9.

"There aren't any easy games," said Sinfield, who will be playing

in his third World Cup. "Ireland and Fiji represent tricky obstacles for us. It's how we manage ourselves as a group and prepare for those matches that will be vital."

"There's nothing bigger than being able to nail a string of international results and, hopefully, do something that as a country we have not been able to do for 41 years in winning the World Cup. It's huge."

Tickets for the England international double-header are available now at £15 for adults and £5 for concessions. Fans can also take advantage of a Salford City Stadium double event offer where you can get the Scotland v USA RLWC2013 match on Thursday November 7 as well as both England matches for £20 adults and £10 concessions. Tickets are available by visiting www.rugbyleaguetickets.co.uk or by calling the RFL Ticket Office on 0844 856 1113.

IN TRIBUTE TO TERRY CLAWSON

Terry Clawson, who died earlier this month at the age of 73, was a member of the last Great Britain side to win the World Cup in 1972 in a long and distinguished career that stretched from the 1950s to 1980 across 23 seasons at nine different clubs. Nothing, though, eclipsed his feeling as Britain were crowned world champions, with Clawson's two successful goal kicks proving the difference in the final against Australia.

Clawson was something of a rarity as a ball-handling forward of the highest order who could also kick for goal and just as adeptly out of hand. His talents were key features in the final at Stade de Gerland in Lyon, France, as Great Britain successfully avenged their loss to Australia in the 1970 World Cup final.

1972 was a defining year for Clawson, who blamed himself for missing three kicks at goal as Leeds lost the Challenge Cup final at Wembley that year 16-13 to St Helens. A week later, his three goals for Leeds helped beat St Helens 9-5 in the league championship final, and World Cup selection followed.

Clawson's humour and laid-back approach were also instrumental in World Cup success. Mike 'Stevo' Stephenson, Great Britain's hooker, said: "We faced Australia in the first match in Perpignan and weren't given a chance. I was so nervous but Terry was always quipping and joking. Lining up in the tunnel beforehand with the Australians, he just kept saying, 'look at the ugly bloke at the side of you.' He'd be doing the same in the scrums, but he somehow defused the whole situation. It got us over the nerves and allowed us to play."

On the strength of Britain's opening win over Australia, in which Clawson kicked six goals and was a cornerstone of the British pack, they needed to only draw against the same opponents in the final to win the World Cup. Clawson converted tries by Clive Sullivan, the captain, and Stephenson in a game that remained deadlocked during 20 minutes of extra time and ended 10-10, with Great Britain declared world champions.



Leigh Sports Village

RLWC 2013 DATES AND KICK-OFF TIMES

With less than four weeks to the start of Rugby League World Cup 2013 - and kick-off times for all matches confirmed - there's not long left to book your RLWC fix.

The first two matches will follow the Opening Ceremony at the Millennium Stadium, Cardiff, on Saturday October 26, with England v Australia starting the tournament at 2.30pm. Wales will then face Italy at 4.30pm.

The 'Big Hit' semi-final double-header on Saturday November 23 will see the best four teams in the tournament go head-to-head at Wembley Stadium. The first game (winner of quarter-final 1 v winner of quarter-final 3) will kick off at 1pm and the second (winner of quarter-final 2 v winner of quarter-final 4) will start at 3.30pm.

The Rugby League World Cup final, which will be shown live on BBC1, will kick off at 2.30pm on Saturday November 30 at Old Trafford.

All of the games at the group stages, which take place on a weekday, will be evening kick-offs. Where two games take place on the same day at separate locations, there is a minimum of two hours between kick-offs.

For tickets call **0844 847 2013** or visit **www.rlwc2013.com**

GROUP GAMES - ROUND ONE

1. Saturday October 26	Millennium Stadium, Cardiff	Australia v England (A)	2.30pm
2. Saturday October 26	Millennium Stadium, Cardiff	Wales v Italy (C/D)	4.30pm
3. Sunday October 27	MS3 Craven Park, Hull	PNG v France (B)	4.00pm
4. Sunday October 27	Halliwel Jones, Warrington	New Zealand v Samoa (B)	6.00pm
5. Monday October 28	Spotland Stadium, Rochdale	Fiji v Ireland (A)	8.00pm
6. Tuesday October 29	Derwent Park, Workington	Tonga v Scotland (C)	8.00pm
7. Wednesday October 30	The Memorial Stadium, Bristol	USA v Cook Islands (D)	8.00pm

GROUP GAMES - ROUND TWO

8. Friday November 1	Parc des Sports, Avignon	New Zealand v France (B)	8.00pm*
9. Saturday November 2	John Smith's, Huddersfield	England v Ireland (A)	2.30pm
10. Saturday November 2	Langtree Park, St Helens	Australia v Fiji (A)	8.00pm
11. Sunday November 3	Glyndwr University RS, Wrexham	Wales v USA (D)	2.00pm
12. Sunday November 3	Derwent Park, Workington	Scotland v Italy (C)	4.00pm
13. Monday November 4	MS3 Craven Park, Hull	PNG v Samoa (B)	8.00pm
14. Tuesday November 5	Leigh Sports Village, Leigh	Tonga v Cook Islands (C/D)	8.00pm

GROUP GAMES - ROUND THREE

15. Thursday November 7	Salford City Stadium, Salford	Scotland v USA (C/D)	8.00pm
16. Friday November 8	Headingley Carnegie, Leeds	New Zealand v PNG(B)	8.00pm
17. Saturday November 9	KC Stadium, Hull	England v Fiji (A)	2.30pm
18. Saturday November 9	Thomond Park, Limerick	Australia v Ireland (A)	8.00pm
19. Sunday November 10	The Gnoll, Neath	Wales v Cook Islands (D)	2.00pm
20. Sunday November 10	The Shay, Halifax	Tonga v Italy (C)	4.00pm
21. Monday November 11	Gilbert Brutus, Perpignan	France v Samoa (B)	8.00pm*

QUARTER-FINALS

22. Friday November 15	Headingley Carnegie, Leeds	Winner B v Winner C (QF1)	8.00pm
23. Saturday November 16	Glyndwr University RS, Wrexham	Winner A v Winner D (QF2)	1.00pm
24. Saturday November 16	DW Stadium, Wigan	Runner Up A v 3rd Place B (QF3)	8.00pm
25. Sunday November 17	Halliwel Jones, Warrington	Runner Up B v 3rd Place A (QF4)	3.00pm

SEMI-FINALS

26. Saturday November 23	Wembley Stadium, London	Winner Q/F 1 v Winner Q/F 3 (SF1)	1.00pm
27. Saturday November 23	Wembley Stadium, London	Winner Q/F 2 v Winner Q/F 4 (SF2)	3.30pm

THE RUGBY LEAGUE WORLD CUP FINAL

28. Saturday November 30	Old Trafford, Manchester	Winner S/F 1 v Winner S/F 2	2.30pm
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NOTE: All kick-off times shown are local (please note games 8 and 21 will kick-off at 19:00 GMT) and are subject to change

KING OF THE FANS

Kingstone
Press

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CIDER LOVERS

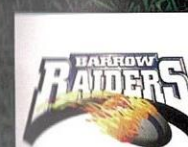


CONGRATULATIONS!

RUGBY LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIPS KING OF THE FANS WINNERS

As nominated by fellow supporters & judged by Kingstone Press Cider, the RFL and LoveRugbyLeague.com

Championship



Barrow Raiders
Louise Scarr



Batley Bulldogs
Colin Bottomley



Dewsbury Rams
Elsie Fryer



Doncaster RLFC
Barry Brown



Featherstone Rovers
Paul Coventry



Halifax RLFC
Peter McNamara



Hunslet Hawks
Louise Kehoe



Keighley Cougars
Susan Dodds



Leigh Centurions
Darren Sheppard



Sheffield Eagles
Mark Webster



Swinton Lions
John Spellman



Whitehaven RLFC
Shaun Drinkwater



Workington Town
Anne Wilson



York City Knights
Lauren Ruddock

Championship 1



Gateshead Thunder
Kevin Barlow



Gloucestershire All Golds
Martin Lovegrove



Hemel Stags
Steven Tiffen



London Skolars
Debbie Knight



North Wales Crusaders
Paula Evans



Oldham RLFC
Gerry Jones



Oxford RLFC
Andrew Spencer



Rochdale Hornets
Andy Birch



South Wales Scorpions
Sandy Feane