

CECIL MOUNTFORD

writes on

RUGBY LEAGUE TOPICS and Personalities

Most colourful and widely discussed personality in Rugby League football today, Cecil Mountford, is writing an exclusive series of articles in the "Sunday Chronicle". The greatest out-side half-back of recent times he has won every honour the game in this country has to offer.

Don't miss his comments appearing EVERY WEEK in the

Sunday Chronicle

Let us all roll up to Leeds next Saturday in our thousands, and give the boys the necessary vocal encouragement which counts so much when away from home.

Today we extend a very hearty welcome to our near neighbours Oldham, whose team includes several of our own Leigh boys. We look forward to a grand game, and remember our earlier great matches with them this season.

We are now approaching our final home games of the present season. May I thank all of you who, by your many letters, and personal contact with myself have helped these notes to materialise. To all who have contributed to our efforts, I sincerely extend our whole-hearted thanks. We appreciate your help, we want you to appreciate ours.

Happy watching,
Supporting-leigh-yours,
STANLEIGH.

SCHOOLBOY RUGBY

Schoolboy Rugby in Leigh is having another successful season so far. The Champion School of Leigh, Manchester Road County Secondary School Boys have reached the Semi-final of the "Daily Dispatch" Shield Competition. They will visit St. Helens to play St. Austins School in the near future and are hoping for a place in the final for the first time since 1936.

The town team has played two matches in Section 'B' of the Lancashire Cup Competition, beating Salford at home and winning at Barrow last Saturday by 29 pts. to 2 pts. The backs are improving rapidly and with the forwards more than holding their own the team has developed into a formidable combination. The match at Swinton has still to be arranged but the needle match against Wigan Boys will be played at Kirkhall Lane on Saturday, April 5th, kick-off 11 a.m. The Wigan team is a very strong one and contains 3 boys who played for Lancashire against Cumberland some weeks ago and will be all out to avenge their defeat of last season. This match will virtually decide the leaders of Section 'B' who play the leaders of Section 'A' in the final of the Cup.

The Junior Schoolboys League has also made much progress this season. 9 teams are playing in a knock-out Cup Competition, the final of which will take place on Friday, April 25th at Kirkhall Lane. On the same evening the final of the Rubin Cup will also be played, thus providing a feast of entertainment for lovers of Schoolboy Rugby.

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CLUB COMMENTARY

In the midst of mounting cup-tie tension we welcome the attractive Oldham side to Kirkhall Lane this afternoon in an all important league match.

Both teams are so placed in the fight for league honours that neither can afford to lose any more ground in the keen struggle that is developing.

Eight clubs have an interest in the "top four" and their points record and remaining fixtures are as follows:—

Bradford N. ... 44 pts.	<i>Home</i> —Bramley, Hull, York, Wakefield, Featherstone. <i>Away</i> —Leeds, York.
Wigan ... 43 pts.	<i>Home</i> —St. Helens, Leigh, Barrow. <i>Away</i> —Workington, Rochdale, Belle Vue, Cardiff, Salford.
Hull ... 43 pts.	<i>Home</i> —Dewsbury, St. Helens, Hull K. R., Keighley. <i>Away</i> —Bradford, Huddersfield, Castleford, Bramley.
Huddersfield ... 42 pts.	<i>Home</i> —Batley, Wakefield, St. Helens, Hull. <i>Away</i> —Wakefield.
Workington ... 40 pts.	<i>Home</i> —Wigan, Rochdale, Leeds, Salford, Widnes. <i>Away</i> —Barrow, Rochdale.
Leigh ... 40 pts.	<i>Home</i> —Oldham, Liverpool C. <i>Away</i> —Wigan, Warrington, Widnes, Barrow, Rochdale, Keighley.
Warrington ... 39 pts.	<i>Home</i> —Halifax, Barrow, Leigh. <i>Away</i> —Halifax, Barrow, Widnes, Swinton, St. Helens
Oldham ... 35 pts.	<i>Home</i> —Belle Vue, Rochdale, Halifax. <i>Away</i> —Leigh, Swinton, Hull K. R., St. Helens, Rochdale.

It can be clearly seen that we face the hardest programme but it is not our policy to abandon the fight for the top four in favour of the Cup as many of our Supporters advocate.

Cup Semi-Final.

We received an allocation of 6,000 tickets for next Saturday at Headingley which were on sale yesterday and this morning and the balance if any, will be on sale at today's match through special turnstiles. 18,000 tickets have been printed and in addition there will be unreserved accommodation for 20,000 at 2/6.

Our players are confident of the outcome of the Cup Semi-final tie with Featherstone although they are by no means underestimating the opposition.

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For those who are unable to go over to Yorkshire, the "A" team will entertain Barrow and the progress of the match at Leeds will be regularly transmitted over the loud speakers.

In conclusion we wish to record our thanks to Mr. Alf Beecroft for the special article on "Two Divisions" which he specially wrote for today's programme.

OUR VISITORS

Not only did Oldham join the historic breakaway of clubs from the Rugby Union in 1895, but they hold the distinction of supplying the Northern Union with its first Secretary—Mr. Joe Platt, a distinguished administrator who guided the new professional organisation for a quarter of a century.

It was in 1899 that Oldham occupied their present well-equipped home at Watersheddings, and after the first world war became a power in the land.

Their record in R.L. Cup football was remarkable; reaching the final in four successive seasons, 1924-5-6-7 and winning the trophy on the second and fourth occasions.

Previously they had been champions in 1905, 10 and 11 and also won the N.U. Cup in 1899, Six times Lancashire Cup winners and three Lancashire League Championships complete the honours record.

In their great era of the 20's they had some fine players, with a great pack including forwards such as Bob Sloman, Herman Hilton and A. Brough and, in the backs, Guardsman Tom Rees (now a referee), Jack Oster and Sid Rix, whilst legendary stars of the earlier days were Jim Lomas, A. Ward, Tyrers, Longworth, Smith, Hall and Holland—everyone an international and Test player.

In recent seasons the team has exasperated its supporters by some very in and out form and this season they looked like having a run in the Cup but were defeated at Leeds in the second round.

Under the coaching of Bryn Goldswain the accent has been on open football so we are assured of a good game today.

Strong rivalry will come from Ganley, Stirrup, Daly and Davies, all with connections as former players or local boys of Leigh. Veteran of the backline is Mitchell who is still a strong and forceful player while youngster O'Grady has already had County honours on the left wing. Of the forwards Ogden is the longest serving player. He will be No. 8

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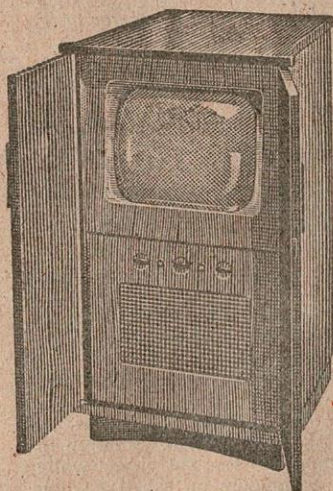
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11—MOSSOP
12—TABERN
14—McFARLANE

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2—WARHAM
3—MITCHELL
4—DAVIES
5—PLATT (TRY)
6—DALEY
7—STIRRUP
8—OGDEN
9—KEITH
10—ANTHONY
11—DAY
12—LITTLE
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while at 10 will be another young County player Jackson. Second row will be selected from Day, Little and Winslade. Little is a recent signing from Harlequins while Winslade has been selected for the first time to play for Wales against France on April 6th at Bordeaux.

TWO DIVISIONS TORPEDOED

By Alfred Beecroft ("The People")

So the attempt to establish two divisions of the Rugby League has failed and we carry on as we are, with about eight clubs at the most having something to fight for from now until the end of the season. A two-thirds majority of the 31 clubs in membership was necessary to bring the proposal into being, but far from being a close thing the actual voting was 15 against and 14 for, so it was well and truly thrown out. How long for nobody knows, but it seems fairly safe to assume that most of us will be in the doddering stage before a new set of ideas men revive the idea.

The setback must have been pretty disheartening to those members who have given considerable time and thought to it, and who fondly imagined they had filled up all the loopholes, at least sufficiently so to satisfy the waverers. Your own club, Leigh, were among the most enthusiastic supporters of the plan which they rated so highly that they were quite prepared to become members of the Second Division when formed, a true demonstration of their faith in the project. They at all events had the courage of their convictions. It was not to be expected that all the clubs now languishing in the bottom half of the present League table, would be eager to give the scheme their blessing, but there is a feeling that they haven't gone into the pros and cons of it as closely as they might have done. Even the sensible appeal of your chairman, Jim Hilton, that no harm would be done by giving it a trial, fell on deaf ears. The circular letter of the League Management Committee suggested that Two Divisions should be put into operation for three years and no longer unless a two-thirds majority voted for its retention at the conclusion of that period. Fair enough, you might think. Let's try it and if we don't like it we can throw it overboard. Sounds reasonable enough, but the sound must have been a hollow one to the 15 clubs who, by turning the plan down, showed they are quite satisfied with things as they are. Some of us think they are easily satisfied—unless you chance to be talking to some of them and find they have one moan after another about how things are going with them, but bless your life they don't want any alteration.

Rather surprises me that they don't turn out their players wearing knickerbockers and all the other football raiment such as teams played in fifty or sixty years ago, according to the old photographs which so proudly adorn the walls of many board-rooms. I am almost prepared to believe that the delegates turned up at the Huddersfield meeting which rejected the plan, in waggonettes or driving a pony and trap. It should come as a surprise to the diehards to know that Mefeking has been relieved! But I don't think the vast majority of present-day Rugby League supporters felt relieved on hearing that the two-division idea has been shattered, without even being given a chance to show whether it would work or not. There are many things with which I do not see eye to eye with our ruling body, but I think they put the case "for" very fairly and squarely, and did their best to meet all possible objections to it, such as the safeguarding of local "Derby" fixtures and increasing the Levy Fund contributions from ten to fifteen per cent. What they had not quite bargained for was a 1952 mentality being displayed in 1952. If anyone can tell me there's any sporting justice in a team not being officially the League Champions although finishing top of the table, they're welcome to try although no one has yet managed it. You can imagine the song and dance there would be about it in the Soccer world if a team leading any one Division all the season was deprived of the championship simply because they lost one deciding match—and possibly against a team three places lower in the table. There'd be blood running down Lancaster Gate! Still, we do these things in the Rugby League, and apparently will continue to do ad infinitum. What a truism is the old saying: "there's nowt so queer as folk," particularly those who run some R.L. Clubs!

SUPPORTERS' CLUB NOTES

Hello Everybody,

I cannot let this occasion pass by without extending to our players, our heartiest congratulations on their grand victory over Leeds last Saturday. I do not intend to single out any one player, because I feel that the victory was achieved by 100% Team Spirit. It was a grand game, fought in a fervent Cup-tie spirit, which in no way deteriorated the finer points of our game, and I am confident that such a spirit will carry us through the Semi-final to Wembley. You all know as well as I do, that we have no easy task, over a team that achieved such a notable victory over the favourites, but nevertheless, I am certain our fine team work and your support will be the deciding factor.

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