

**THE RUGBY LEAGUE** OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE RFL

# BULLETIN

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*on the inside...*



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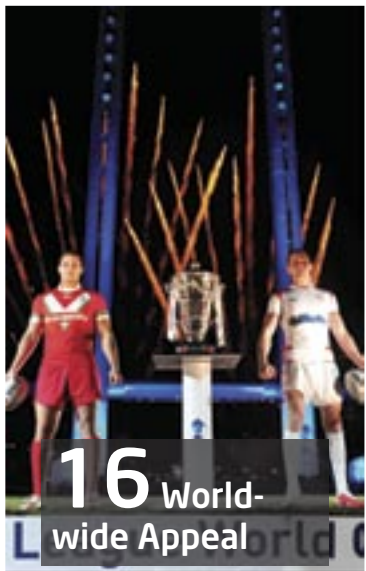
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6 The Big Kick Off



12 World Class



16 World-wide Appeal



20 Spreading the word

## CONTENTS

- 5 Media Matters
- 8 A facility first!
- 9 Winning bravehearts & minds
- 10 A tour de force
- 14 Further expansion
- 20 Spreading the word
- 21 Warriors march
- 22 Insurance boost
- 24 Ince claim the spoils
- 26 Fighting back
- 27 Welcome & valued
- 28 Festive finals
- 29 Every Bulldog has its day
- 30 Cash back deal launched

DECEMBER 2010 ISSUE 68  
THE RUGBY LEAGUE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE RFL

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on the inside...  
The Big Kick Off World Class Spreading the word RFL





# INSIDE THIS ISSUE

## Welcome to issue 68 of the Rugby League Bulletin ....

This edition is the last one for 2010 and there is plenty of exciting and thought-provoking articles in the coming pages for everyone with an interest in Rugby League.

The main cover story focuses on the 2013 Rugby League World Cup and sees Nathan Clarke catch up with some former international stars to find out what it means to represent their country in the sports biggest event, whilst there is also a look back at the tournaments "kick off" event which was staged at Manchester's new MediaCityUK development late last month.

Once Christmas and the New Year have passed and we enter 2011 the major events are soon upon us.

Neil Barraclough looks ahead to both the Magic Weekend and the World Club Challenge which will be held in February.

Neil previews the Engage Super League's big kick off by looking at what will be on offer to the fans, whilst also selecting his own five key moments ahead of the opening seven games and he also speaks to former Wigan hero Barrie-Jon Mather ahead the Warriors return to the world stage when they take on the night of the St George Illawarra Dragons.

Elsewhere in this issue Rob Wilkinson finds out the latest from the north of the border as he sees what is going on in Scotland and in addition looks back on a successful Northern Rail Cup competition that is set to improve further next year, while Phil Hodgson supplies two articles that look at the forthcoming BARLA County Cup Finals and how Hull side Myton Warriors made the most of taking part in the hugely successful Community Game Raffle.

Also, Nick Boothroyd speaks with youngster Ellie Smith after she was named as a Young Ambassador for the London Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012 and Dave Lawrenson reports on a brand new facility part funded by the RFL's Facilities Trust that is set to help boost the game in London.

Finally, may I take this opportunity to wish all readers a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

TOM HOYLE

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## RL IN NUMBERS



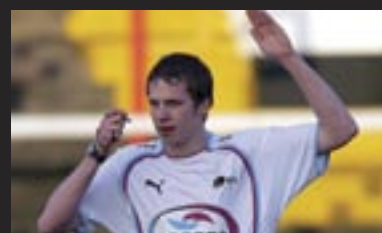
**36,299** Supporters at the 2010 Four Nations Final in Brisbane



**2,788** People "like" the RFL's Facebook page



**14** Teams to take part in the Millenium Magic weekend



**3** New additions to the RFL's Match Officials squad

## MEDIA MATTERS .... with Nick Boothroyd

### Although the Four Nations tournament concluded in mid-November the International game has remained in the forefront of people's minds well into December with the launch of the 2013 World Cup ....

The launch took place at the new MediaCityUK venue in Salford in the middle of a week in which the eyes of the world were on Zurich as FIFA controversially awarded the football World Cups to Russia and Qatar.

Nevertheless, the launch got some decent coverage and most importantly momentum can now start building for the competition in three years time.

I can't remember a Rugby League competition ever being launched so far in advance and with towns and cities across England and Wales being invited to bid to host matches we can look forward to a steady stream of positive local media coverage over the next few years.

International media interest was also generated with the unveiling of an expanded competition structure meaning that more developing Rugby League countries from areas such as North America will have the chance to compete against the world's best.

On a national level the Rugby League World Cup forms part of what is being referred to as the "Golden decade of sport" in the UK alongside other high profile events such as the Olympic Games in 2012 and the Union World Cup in 2015.

Coincidentally the decision by the RLIF back in 2009 to hold the League World Cup in the UK was made on the same day that Union bosses learnt that they had won the right to hold their World Cup on these shores.

The subsequent media coverage from these announcements was very positive with both competitions being talked up on evening news bulletins and in the national papers the following day.

Rugby League will continue to reap the benefits from forming part of the "golden decade of sport" and we will continue to bang the drum for our sport when this is mentioned in the media.



Lightening up the sky - the World Cup launch

In terms of introducing new people to the sport across the country and getting more people playing Rugby League there is no better tool than hosting a World Cup.

It is important that we take advantage of the increased profile the sport will enjoy to convert as many casual viewers as possible

into fans and participants.

We can only hope, but if England manage to lift the trophy it's difficult to overestimate the positive impact this would have for Rugby League and the coverage in the media.



The Magic Weekend returns to its spiritual home in February as Super League XVI kicks off with an action-packed feast of Rugby League. NEIL BARRACLOUGH looks at what’s in store ....

If you’ve been a Rugby League fan during the last 10 years, the chances are you’ll have visited Cardiff at least once.

The city’s superb Millennium Stadium hosted the Challenge Cup final in 2003, 2004 and 2005 as well as the first two “Magic Weekends” in 2007 and 2008.

And Rugby League bosses have made the bold decision to kick-start next year’s Engage Super League competition with seven intriguing fixtures that have already whetted the appetite for 2011.

After a two-year stint in Edinburgh, the Magic Weekend rolls back into the Welsh capital with all guns blazing - and 13 clubs believing they have the ability and courage to overtake Wigan as the country’s dominant force.

There’s also a return to the original fixture format, with four derby clashes making up more than half of the opening weekend’s entertainment.

“The overwhelming majority of fans told us that they wanted to see local rivalry matches,” said Nigel Wood, the RFL’s chief executive.

“I’m sure thousands of loyal Rugby League supporters will be excited by the prospect of watching seven superb encounters.”

Wood added, “All of the clubs will have the chance to lay down a marker for the season ahead, particularly St Helens who will be desperate to put one over Wigan after their defeat to the Warriors at Old Trafford.”

Saints full back Paul Wellens has backed Wood’s words. Wellens’ side have lost each of the last four Engage Super League Grand Finals but under new coach Royce Simmons are determined to claim their first title since 2006.



Good to be back - the Millenium Stadium

# The Big Kick Off

## MAGIC WEEKEND FIXTURES

Saturday 12th February  
1pm Huddersfield Giants v Warrington Wolves  
3pm Catalans Dragons v Harlequins RL  
5pm Castleford Tigers v Wakefield Trinity Wildcats  
7pm Wigan Warriors v St Helens

Sunday 13th February  
12noon Salford City Reds v Crusaders  
2pm Leeds Rhinos v Bradford Bulls  
4pm Hull FC v Hull KR

## 5 MAGIC MOMENTS IN THE MAKING



HOW WILL WILLIE MASON PERFORM IN HIS HULL KR DEBUT?  
The former Australia international shot to worldwide fame after his 2006 Tri Nations bust-up with Stuart Fielden and Jamie Peacock. Now the former Canterbury enforcer is set to blast into Britain - with former Kangaroos team-mate and Hull FC hero Craig Fitzgibbon likely to be one of the first men to ‘welcome’ him to Super League.



CAN MATT DISKIN GET ONE OVER HIS OLD RHINOS TEAM-MATES?  
Diskin’s departure from Headingley was one of the shocks of the off-season. New Bulls boss Mick Potter swooped and the gritty hooker, who won the Harry Sunderland Trophy during his time with Leeds, will be out to spoil the Rhinos’ start to 2011.



WILL NEW-LOOK SALFORD START IN STYLE?  
The City Reds have splashed the cash ahead of their final season at The Willows. Coach Shaun McRae hopes the likes of Stephen Wild, Iafeta Palea’aesina, Luke Patten and Chris Nero will take Salford into the top eight - and they will be desperate to hit the ground running.



CAN ROYCE GET SAINTS ROLLING?  
Royce Simmons takes over from Mick Potter with one aim: to bring silverware back to St Helens after a two-year drought. Victory over Wigan in his first competitive game in charge will give the likeable Australian a huge boost and make him an instant favourite with the club’s fans.



IS BRETT HODGSON ABLE TO STOP THE GIANTS?  
Former Man of Steel and Huddersfield full back Hodgson comes face to face with his old employers when he makes his Warrington bow. And with the Wolves determined to avenge last year’s play-off defeat against Nathan Brown’s men, the weekend is set to open with an absolute cracker.

## “The overwhelming majority of fans told us that they wanted to see local rivalry matches,”

“It will be a tough game and a superb opener for Super League and both clubs, that’s for sure,” said Wellens.

“It’s the biggest club game in world Rugby League and will be a fantastic spectacle for everyone there.

“Everyone knows the history between the two sides and that does give the game a real edge, but we’ll be putting that aside. We just want to start the season with a bang.”

The climax to Saturday’s action is likely to see Louie McCarthy-Scarsbrook, Josh Perry and Michael Shenton play their first competitive games for Saints.

And there will be some unfamiliar faces across all 14 teams as fans get their first chance to witness their new heroes in the flesh.

But it’s not just on the pitch where things

have changed. Six clubs - Bradford, Catalans, Crusaders, Harlequins, Leeds and St Helens - start the season with new head coaches.

How Mick Potter, Trent Robinson, Iestyn Harris, Rob Powell, Brian McDermott and Royce Simmons get on will provide a series of fascinating sub-plots to the weekend.

McDermott, in particular, has been dealt an exciting first game in charge of the Rhinos against Bradford, the club with which he made his name as a player.

“It’s a good challenge for us and something for us to get our teeth into,” said the new Leeds boss. “Leeds v Bradford games are always big games.”

He added, “It will be special to take on Bradford. The Bulls were a massive part of my life for many years and it would be wrong of me to say otherwise.

“We will be going out to do a job against them on 13th February and trying to get our season off to a winning start, but I do hope that Bradford return to form next season. I think the game needs its big clubs to be strong and Bradford are one of our game’s biggest clubs.”

Straight after that West Yorkshire derby comes the battle for Hull’s bragging rights as Richard Agar’s men face the side that ended their play-off hopes last season.

Fans of all 14 Engage Super League clubs will watch the Magic Weekend with interest - will you be there?





# A facility first!

**The official opening of a new floodlit all weather 3G pitch at Archbishop Lanfranc School in Croydon took place late last month. DAVE LAWRENSON was in attendance ....**

Part funded by the RFL Facilities Trust, this is first time Rugby League's governing body has been involved in funding a facility in London and the South East.

The initiative forms a vital part of the RFL's Community Strategy in developing Rugby League in south London.

Great Britain Rugby League legend, Martin Offiah MBE was guest of honour and cut the ribbon before stepping onto the new pitch.

"We had nothing like this when I was growing up in London," he said.

"This is a fantastic facility which will be great for Rugby League in the area, both for the clubs who play here and all the schoolkids who are going to use it."

"The Rugby Football League and all those involved in this project, are to be congratulated. Hopefully we'll see some Rugby League stars of the future playing on here."

David Gent, speaking on behalf of the RFL Facilities Trust, said, "This is a terrific development for Rugby League and the game in South London. I'm tremendously excited by the developments in London and the South East."

"There is so much potential for growth in the sport in London, involving both young people and adults; we've only just scratched the surface. A facility like this will attract people of all ages and backgrounds to play

***"This is a fantastic facility which will be great for Rugby League in the area, both for the clubs who play here and all the schoolkids who are going to use it."***

and volunteer, help them to develop their skills and enable them to simply enjoy the sport."

"If we manage to develop some top class Rugby League players through having this facility then that will be fantastic but the very fact that young and old alike from all around this area will be able to play in such a great environment, is at the heart of the RFL's involvement in this partnership."

Lamont Bryan, a current member of Harlequins RL Super League squad, who grew up in the area and began playing Rugby League with the South London

Storm, was also present along with the newly appointed head coach of Quins, Rob Powell, who spent four years as a sports development officer based at Archbishop Lanfranc school.

Dan Steel, Regional Development Manager (London & South East) commented, "This is a great step forward for the development of Rugby League in London, in particular south London, and the culmination of a huge amount of work by Archbishop Lanfranc School, South London Community Rugby League and the London Borough of Croydon.

"We're really pleased to have formed a partnership with such a strong community-based school, and the facility itself is first class. This is a great commitment by the RFL to the development of the sport in London, and provides us with a huge opportunity to grow the sport in south London, which we're determined to make the most of."

The new pitch was in use straight after the launch, with local schools taking part in the Year 8 Carnegie Champion Schools competition.

The facility will also be home to two Rugby League clubs, South London Storm and Croydon Hurricanes.

*For more information on facilities visit [www.therfl.co.uk](http://www.therfl.co.uk)*

**ROB WILKINSON goes behind the scenes to see what's happening north of the border ....**

The future is looking very good for Rugby League in Scotland if recent developments are anything to go by.

The SRL is laying the foundations for success with a number of initiatives aimed at encouraging and nurturing the next generation of talent.

Despite a solitary Alitalia European Cup win over Ireland and missing out on a place in the 2011 Four Nations, Rugby League is making great strides north of the border with the inaugural Gillette sponsored Saltire Schools Cup competition in full flow, the creation of a new junior player development centre and the prospect of hosting the 2011 Student Four Nations next April in Glasgow.

Scott Thorburn, recently appointed as SRL Business Development Manager, took up the story, "Rugby League is making very real inroads into the Scottish sporting psyche and we are now taking concrete steps to ensure that momentum continues.

"The 2010 season has seen a number of notable milestones including an historic victory in the Community Four Nations tournament for our "A" team and another successful year for our domestic league competition with Carlisle Tigers upsetting the odds by beating Edinburgh Eagles in an exciting Grand Final at the start of August.

"The league is growing every year and 2011 will see the establishment of a junior and senior club in Aberdeen for example. We are receiving enquiries all the time from people interested in starting a Rugby League side or finding a club to play for.

"In September Glasgow's Smithcroft Secondary School, a veritable breeding ground for Scottish Rugby League talent, became the first educational establishment to sign up for the Saltire Schools Cup competition and many other schools have followed suit since then for what will become a real fixture in the SRL calendar," added Scott.

Scotland Rugby League's elite youth gathered together at the Scotstoun Stadium in Glasgow in October to form a new player development centre with twenty under 15s and the same number of under 16 players selected from clubs throughout Scotland.

Graeme Thompson, the Chairman of Scotland Rugby League's Performance Group, who oversee all representative rugby, commented that, "Each player will undergo a seven month training programme incorporating all aspects of Rugby League."

"The programme is aligned with the Rugby Football League's UK player development system and will provide young Scottish players with the critical opportunity



# WINNING BRAVEHEARTS & MINDS!

to test themselves against regions south of the border."

"This is the first time that the SRL has attempted to put in place a formal performance programme for developing young players," added Thompson, who was previously the RFL's Performance Director.

Players will be monitored over the seven month period and fed back on the elements they require to improve on. Both squads will play against English Regions next April and June 2011.

The Student Rugby League announced in the autumn that the 2011 Student Four Nations, featuring Scotland, Ireland, England and Wales, will be held at the Scotstoun Stadium in Glasgow from 18 - 22 April 2011.

It returns after a nine year absence with the last Student Championships

being held in 2002 at the Old Scotstoun Stadium. The stadium has been rebuilt to international standards with stands that can accommodate up to 4800 people.

"All in all there's a lot going on," exclaimed Scott.

"Crucially we are seeing support forthcoming from commercial organisations across Scotland. Sponsorship is a vital ingredient and if we can continue this progress then interest will only intensify. We have a lot to offer!"

"Much of our focus is on establishing Scotland as a force in the game in time for the 2013 World Cup in England and Wales but that is not the endgame. We are thinking much further ahead than that!" concluded Scott.

**For more details visit [www.scotlandrl.com](http://www.scotlandrl.com)**



On the face of it a winless tour to the Southern Hemisphere doesn't sound like the greatest success story ever but nothing could be further from the truth for the England women's Rugby League team. ROB WILKINSON explains ....

A twenty strong squad set off for New Zealand at the start of October featuring players from six different club sides. They faced a tough ask in the form of a two Test series against reigning World champions, the New Zealand Ferns.

A 22-22 draw in their warm up match against a Counties Manukau side in Manurewa suggested that England were up to the task. Indeed they nearly clinched victory with a last minute drop goal attempt that flew just wide.

Onto Whagerei one week later for the first Test against a formidable and unbeaten Ferns side. The 2008 World Cup winners were beginning a slow rebuilding process and fielded four new caps for a match played out in front of just short of a thousand spectators. England struggled to cope with the Antipodean power and pace although Paula McCourt (Wakefield/Townville Panthers) grabbed a late consolation try, goaled by her club team mate Natalie Gilmour, in a 44-6 defeat.

Despite starting brightly with an early Lyndsey Anfield (Wakefield/Townville Panthers) try, the second Test followed a similar course with the Ferns notching a 38-6 win in front of a vocal crowd, including several players from the England men's team, at the Trust Stadium in Auckland. The Ferns were skippered by the inspirational Trish Hina, fresh from the All Blacks World Cup final win in the fifteen-a-side code.

"Despite the results it was a very valuable exercise in team building and I feel every player who was on the tour benefited from the experience," exclaimed England coach Brenda Dobek.

"We mustn't forget that we were playing the very best in the world and we matched them in many areas but didn't have the same slickness and cutting edge of New Zealand."

**"Whilst the results may not have gone our way during the Tour, the experience has proved invaluable to the girls and an ideal first step in our preparation for the 2013 World Cup."**



# A TOUR DE FORCE

## THE SQUAD

LYNDSEY ANFIELD (Wakefield/Townville Panthers), JODIE CUNNINGHAM (Warrington Ladies), ANDREA DOBSON (Wakefield/Townville Panthers), AMANDA DONALDSON (Copeland Wildcats), KIM FIELD (Combined Services), LOIS FORSELL (Middleton Ladies), HOLLY FREESTONE (Copeland Wildcats), NATALIE GILMOUR (Wakefield/Townville Panthers), CHARLENE HENEGAN (Bradford Thunderbirds), PAULA MCCOURT (Wakefield/Townville Panthers), KIRSTY MOROONEY (Bradford Thunderbirds), KATIE O'TOOLE (Wakefield/Townville Panthers), CLAIRE ROBINSON (Warrington Ladies), SARAH ROPER (Combined Services), EMMA SLOWE (Wakefield/Townville Panthers), BETH SUTCLIFFE (Warrington Ladies), RACHEL TWILBIL (Bradford Thunderbirds), GEMMA WALSH (Wakefield/Townville Panthers), JOANNE WATMORE (Warrington Ladies), JENNY WELSBY (Warrington Ladies)

"I was delighted with the progress made by a number of players on tour although it would be unfair to single anyone out. Being within an intensive environment where we are training every day will only have helped many of the squad members who will be stronger characters for it," added Brenda.

Nineteen-year-old Lois Forsell who was sent off in her first England international, was in full agreement, "It was a very worthwhile exercise and, whilst we worked very hard, we did have a lot of fun times and I think we all returned home having gained lasting friendships.

"The New Zealanders are a very tough side and you have to be prepared for that but overall it was an experience that I'll

never forget and it will only improve us as a side," added Lois.

Head of Player Development Barrie Jon Mather added, "Whilst the results may not have gone our way during the Tour, the experience has proved invaluable to the girls and an ideal first step in our preparation for the 2013 World Cup."

"The lead up to the tour saw the squad of 34 girls undergo some rigorous training and exposure to levels of performance that haven't been expected from them in the past.

"Everyone should now be aware of the levels of commitment and professionalism that will be required to make the England squad in coming years.

The 20 players selected in the touring squad have now had the opportunity to test themselves against the current World Champions.

"Whilst we were found wanting in some areas we are now aware of what needs to be done to correct this. All the girls returned from the tour with a clear indication of what it will take to win the World Cup and are looking forward to the challenge," added Barrie.

With a testing 2011 to come for the England women, it's clear that the experience Down Under will stand them in good stead.



# With the World Club Challenge just around the corner, NEIL BARRACLOUGH catches up with a former Wigan hero to reflect on one of the club's greatest achievements ....



Memories can last a lifetime – just ask Barrie-Jon Mather.

It is 16 years since the dual-code international experienced what he describes as the highlight of his career, but the night of 1 June 1994 remains etched in his brain.

An unfancied Wigan team missing first choice props Kelvin Skerrett and Andy Platt travelled to Brisbane for the World Club Challenge just weeks after coach John Dorahy had been sacked and replaced with Graeme West.

But what followed was one of British Rugby League's highlights of the nineties as the likes of Shaun Edwards, Jason Robinson and Andy Farrell pushed the Aussie premiers and then held off a second-half fightback to record a remarkable victory.

"One of the things that sticks in my mind is going up to receive the trophy," says Mather.

"All the Australian fans suddenly changed from booing us to cheering us. We'd been there for a couple of weeks and they'd really been getting into us, saying that the Broncos were going to tear us to bits.

"That all changed when we got the win. We stayed in Australia for a day after the game, and things were completely different."

"When we'd gone out in town before the game, everyone had been shouting about how we were going to get stuffed. Suddenly there was a massive change, with all these Aussies coming up to us, slapping us on the back and saying they knew we were going to do it all along."

Mather, who returned to Rugby League 18 months ago to take up the position of Head of Player Development for the RFL, was a fresh-faced 21-year-old back in 1994.

If he didn't know what was in store when he set off for Brisbane, it quickly became clear.

"We flew out 10 days before the game," he remembers. "Fair play to Westy (Graeme West), because for the first four or five days we were miles out of Brisbane and away from everything. It was a quiet place and the boys enjoyed themselves, shall we say."

"But about five days before the game we moved into Brisbane and we knew then we had to get into work mode. Nobody gave us a chance, and the pressure came from ourselves more than anyone else.

"Then training started to ratchet up a level or two, and Shaun (Edwards) made it quite clear to all the boys that we were only there for one reason and that was to win."

When it came to it, Wigan started sensationally. Denis Betts somehow grounded Edwards' towering bomb before Mather scythed through on halfway and dummied past a young Wendell Sailor for the Cherry and Whites' second try.

If you watch the highlights of the game

## WORLD CLUB CHALLENGE RESULTS

2010 Melbourne Storm 18-10 Leeds Rhinos  
2009 Manly-Warringah Sea Eagles 28-20 Leeds Rhinos  
2008 Leeds Rhinos 11-4 Melbourne Storm  
2007 St Helens 18-14 Brisbane Broncos  
2006 Bradford Bulls 30-10 Wests Tigers  
2005 Leeds Rhinos 39-32 Canterbury Bulldogs  
2004 Bradford Bulls 22-4 Penrith Panthers  
2003 Sydney Roosters 38-0 St Helens  
2002 Bradford Bulls 41-26 Newcastle Knights  
2001 St Helens 20-18 Brisbane Broncos  
2000 Melbourne Storm 44-6 St Helens  
1997 Brisbane Broncos 36-12 Hunter Mariners  
1994 Wigan 20-14 Brisbane Broncos  
1992 Brisbane Broncos 22-8 Wigan  
1991 Wigan 21-4 Penrith Panthers  
1989 Widnes 30-18 Canberra Raiders  
1987 Wigan 8-2 Manly-Warringah Sea Eagles  
1976 Eastern Suburbs 25-2 St Helens



**"Hopefully the atmosphere will take the club back to that Manly game in 1987. We should get 25,000 fans in the DW Stadium and get the place absolutely rocking."**

on YouTube, the Australian commentators can't believe that a young upstart ignored Martin Offiah in support and chose to back himself.

Mather, however, laughs at that suggestion. "It was more to do with the fact that I probably didn't see him," he says.

"That try is one of the few things I remember about the game, because the rest of it went by in a blur. I remember getting through the first line of defence and then not believing that nobody had tackled me yet. I just carried on running and somehow got over."

He adds, "I was only just breaking through at the time and the whole event was a great experience from my point of view."

And while the result may have shocked the wider Rugby League community, Mather insists the Wigan players had faith. "We always had the belief we could do it," he says.

"That was one of the main things about that team. When you looked around at players like Shaun (Edwards), Denis (Betts), Martin (Offiah) and Dean Bell... there were 17 internationals in that squad. When it

got tough, we were all prepared to knuckle down and get the hard graft done.

"Having said that, that night in Brisbane is still probably the highlight of my career. Not many teams can say they've gone to Brisbane and beaten a side like that in their own back yard."

Mather will be a keen observer when Michael Maguire's modern day Warriors face St George Illawarra Dragons at the DW Stadium in February.

"Hopefully the atmosphere will take the club back to that Manly game in 1987. We should get 25,000 fans in the DW Stadium and get the place absolutely rocking."

And with the likes of Sam Tomkins and Darrell Goulding facing their first World Club Challenge, does Mather have any words of advice for the current generation?

"They're all good enough by now not to need any advice from me," he says. "They've just got to go out there and enjoy it."

"The Wigan fans of 20 years ago probably thought this game would come around for them every year, but history's proven that you never know when you'll get another chance at it. You've got to make the most of it when it's there."

Developing talent - BJ Mather

Ready to rock - the DW stadium

# WORLD CLASS

## WARRIORS IN THE WORLD CLUB CHALLENGE

Proud Wigan have won the World Club Challenge three times – a feat only matched by Bradford Bulls. However, the Warriors' last taste of success came back in 1994 and the clash with St George Illawarra Dragons will be Wigan's first World Club Challenge in 17 years. Here we look back at their previous record.

### 1987 Wigan 8, Manly 2

Nearly 37,000 fans packed into Central Park to see Wigan take on a side featuring Cliff Lyons and Des Hasler. Manly went ahead with a third-minute penalty but four penalties from David Stephenson carried the Englishmen home amid huge scenes of celebration.

### 1991 Wigan 21, Penrith 4

Four years later the World Club Challenge was switched to Anfield, with French referee Alain Sablayrolles taking control of a game that was riddled with penalties in the early stages. Frano Botica kicked four goals inside the first 13 minutes to give Wigan an 8-0 lead, with tries from Sam Panapa and David Myers wrapping things up. Joe Lydon added a drop goal to send Penrith – including Graeme Bradley, Graham Mackay and Royce Simmons – home with their tail between their legs.

### 1992 Wigan 8, Brisbane 22

Terry Matterson inspired the Broncos in their first World Club Challenge appearance. Julian O'Neill and Kerrod Walters scored before half time, with Michael Hancock adding another soon after the break. Shaun Edwards responded for Wigan but Hancock's second try, from a wonderful pass by Steve Renouf, confirmed the Aussie win.

### 1994 Wigan 20, Brisbane 14

A morale-boosting British victory Down Under, Wigan were initially written off and expected to lose comfortably at ANZ Stadium. But tries from Denis Betts, Barrie-Jon Mather and Jason Robinson put Wigan 18-4 ahead, meaning Brisbane tries from Michael Hancock and Julian O'Neill were not enough to undo the early damage.

What a win - success in Brisbane





A series of regional meetings between representatives of existing clubs, interested newcomers and RFL Development staff have begun the process of putting the structure together for the 2011 Co-operative Rugby League Conference season ....

The summer-based competition that covers England, Scotland and Wales celebrated passing the 100 club barrier in 2010 and Dan Steel, RFL Regional Manager for London & the South East, who is the competition's lead officer, has no doubt that RLC XIV will continue the unprecedented recent expansion of the code.

Dan Steel said, "The management group are getting feedback from last season and doing our usual thorough review.

"The season culminated with three worthy champions; Warrington Wizards at National level, St Albans Centurions who carried off the Harry Jepson Trophy for Premier clubs while Northampton Demons became the first side in the RLC to defend a crown when they retained the Regional title."

"As with any analysis, there are always areas that we can improve but the success story that is the Rugby League Conference is set to be further enhanced."

He added, "We have received expressions of interest from clubs new at National level and geographical expansion will continue in the pyramid below that."

"There is a real hunger for Rugby League in the summer the length and breadth of the three countries and we are looking to come up with the most equitable and workable structure."

"Announcements like that of the 2013 World Cup continue to raise Rugby League's stock and it is our avowed aim to cater for the increased demand from players, officials and fans wherever they may be."

# FURTHER EXPANSION



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# WORLDWIDE APPEAL

Representing your country in a World Cup is the pinnacle of most sporting stars careers and the opportunity to compete before a worldwide audience, while showcasing your own country, is one that many athletes can only ever dream off.

The 2013 Rugby League World Cup, which will be hosted by both England and Wales, will make that scenario a possibility for players involved with both countries and the prospect of seeing the World's greatest players compete in local stadia will excite Rugby League fans from all over the UK.

2013 will see the World Cup return to British soil for the first time in over a decade and with Wales failing to qualify for the 2008 tournament and England failing to live up to their potential in recent competitions, expectations will be high that both sides will perform well in front of a home crowd.

"The World Cup in any sport is the pinnacle for all the players. I was fortunate enough to play in the 2000 World Cup and 2013 is still two years away," said Paul Sculthorpe, an English World Cup representative in the 2000 World Cup.

"There are a lot of quality players coming through the system at the minute and they'll only be better come 2013. Hopefully we can keep developing young and talented players to keep the England and Wales squads up there challenge with the best.

"World Cup's only come around a few times in your career and not a lot of people get the opportunity to play in them so you have to make the most of it and enjoy it and to be in a winning side is the stuff of dreams."

History has shown that home advantage can prove to be a tremendous boost for national sides. England's football side rode the tide of home support to be crowned World Champions in 1966, just six years after the Great Britain Rugby League team had clinched the World Cup on home soil for the first time.

"Playing for England in a home game is fantastic," said Sculthorpe.

"The World Cup is the biggest competition you can play in and to be able to represent England in front of a home crowd is indescribable.

"We always have great support when we play at home. The club fans all come

**"It's fabulous for us to get to host the 2013 tournament. It's fantastic for the sport to get the best teams and the best players over here and it can only be a good thing for Rugby League."**

**Although it's still three years away the Rugby League World Cup is creating a lot of interest to both players and fans of the game. NATHAN CLARKE catches up with some former international stars to find out what it means to represent their country in the biggest event in the sport ....**

together to support the country and it's a fantastic atmosphere playing for your country in that arena and it's extra special in a world cup."

"It's fabulous for us to get to host the 2013 tournament. It's fantastic for the sport to get the best teams and the best players over here and it can only be a good thing for Rugby League."

While expectations of success will be high, it was under the banner of Great Britain that players from both nation last tasted success on the International stage, having won the World Cup in 1972 - the third time Great Britain had won the tournament since its inaugural staging in 1954.

The Great Britain side which competed in that initial tournament, captained by Scotsman Dave Valentine, were considered by most analysts from that era to be the tournament's underdogs, but it was they who returned home victorious after defeating France 16-12 in the final in front of 30,000 fans at the Parc des Princes, Paris, a feat the England and Wales sides of 2013 will be hoping to emulate when their opportunity arrives.

It was in 1960 and on home soil for the first time that Great Britain clinched the second of their three World Cup titles, defeating Australia 10-3 in one of the most ferociously contested games in World Cup history at Bradford's Odsal Stadium, reclaiming the title the Australians had won in 1957.

The legendary Alex Murphy was one of the Great Britain stars on that day and he fondly remembers the moment he became a World champion.

"To me, playing in the World Cup meant everything," he said. "It's a dream for any young player to play in the competition and the sort of thing that's only fantasy until it happens.

"Even when I signed professional it was still something I dreamed about and for me



World Cup experience - Paul Sculthorpe

**"To me, playing in the World Cup meant everything,"**

as a 21 year old, winning the World Cup was something I never thought I'd achieve and when you do win it, it's just magnificent."

It was then the turn of Welsh legend Clive Sullivan to hoist the World Cup trophy aloft when Great Britain won their third World Cup title in 1972. Sullivan scored a fantastic length of the field try in the final against Australia on that day to secure the trophy for Great Britain. He then went on to play an instrumental role in England's fate during the 1975 tournament.

That tournament was a landmark one in the history of British Rugby League as, for the first time in World Cup history, England and Wales competed as separate nations.

Wales had earned their place in the 1975 competition after sealing a famous victory over France earlier that year in the first game played by the Welsh on home soil or 24 years. The Welsh side went into the tournament with high expectations and a crop of talented players which included the talismanic Sullivan.

He scored the winning try for Wales when they came up against England in the first of two encounters between the two sides during the competitions league structure. It was a defeat that ultimately prevented England from being crowned World Champions in 75. In fact, that defeat to Wales was the only game England lost during the competition, but draws against New Zealand and Australia resulted in the England side finishing second in the league table, a single point behind the champions, Australia.

It wasn't until 1995 that Wales and England once again competed as separate



nations and it was also the first year since 1970 that the Rugby League World Cup returned to British soil, with England and Wales playing joint hosts for the first time.

Both home nations were full of international stars, with iconic names such as Martin Offiah, Ellery Hanley and Shan Edwards amongst the England ranks and Jonathan Davies, John Devereux and Iestyn Harris among the names on the Welsh team sheet, many of whom had played together when representing Great Britain during the 1992 World Cup.

England topped their group, defeating Australia, Fiji and South Africa on the way to set up a semi-final encounter with the winners of group one, a group that included Wales.

Having defeated France in their opening game of the tournament, Wales faced a crucial encounter against Western Samoa to secure a place in the semi-final against England at Old Trafford stadium. That game has gone down as one of the most memorable games in World Cup history, when some of the greatest players in the world, at the peak of the skills played under lights at the Vetch Field, Swansea.

"I'll always remember the 1995 game against Western Samoa," said John Deverux, one of the Welsh stars that day who had played alongside many of the English players when Great Britain competed in the 1992 World Cup final.

"There was a massive crowd there and I'll never forget seeing the police come into the changing rooms to tell us they would have to delay the kick-off and it really lived up to its billing. In fact that game was most physical game I ever played in, in either code of the game."

Knowing that the Welsh side from 1975 had caused a major upset by defeating England in that tournament, Wales were desperate to defeat the Samoans and secure a place against England and set up an all or nothing eliminatorm against their close neighbours.

"Our first game was against France in Cardiff and we won that and then we had a massive game against Western Samoa to set up a semi final against England," said Welsh icon Jonathan Davies.

"Samoa had some massive stars in their team like Va'aiga Tuigamala but that game is one of the fondest memories of my playing career. Western Samoa versus Wales at The Vetch, it was an unbelievable atmosphere.

"I don't know what the capacity of the Vetch field was but I'm sure that there were more people in there than there should have been."

Davies notched up four goals and a drop-goal in that game to help Wales clinch an historic 22-10 victory over the south sea islanders and set up a famous home nations semi-final encounter.

"The Samoa game was a ferocious encounter," said Davies. "People still talk about it to this day, especially the ones who were there to see it."

"There was about sixteen thousand fans there but it felt more like 26 thousand, it was a very intense atmosphere and it was maybe the most physical game that I ever played in."

"We went on to play England at Old Trafford and it was incredible the number of Welsh people who travelled up to that game.

## "It is a great boost for Rugby League in this country to secure the World Cup in 2013. The last tournament staged in Australia in 2008 was an enormous success."

People like Offiah and Betts were all club mates of our boys and to be playing against them was surreal having played with them on tour for Great Britain."

"It was a very intense match and even though they were clear favourites and won, it was a game that we could have won if video referees were around in that time. I still pull Martin Offiah's leg because he was more like an American Footballer in that game because he bounced the ball down for two of those tries."

Now the World Cup is returning to the UK and New Zealand will arrive with the tag of defending champions having won the competition for the first time in their history in 2008. The pressure will be on favourites Australia and home-side England to try to de-throne the new World Champions.

Wales too will be determined to make a statement having missed out on the World Cup stage in 2008. The Welsh side has been bolstered by victory in the Alitalia Cup and securing a place in the 2011 Four Nations and the Welsh players will be keen to repeat the heroic performances seen of the class of 1995 during the 2013 competition.

"A few years ago we were faced with very few players to pick from and the game was decimated with the number of players we lost," said John Devereux.

"But for at least eight years Rugby League has been played in schools in Wales and now

we're starting to develop quality home grown players again

"It's great to see what New Zealand Rugby League has achieved, it has come a long way and they've turned over the number one side in the World in the last World Cup and the recent Four Nations and hopefully the home nations will be able to emulate them in the coming years."

With England having had great success in producing some of the most talented youth players in world rugby in recent years and Wales upsetting the odds to win the 2010 Alitalia Cup and secure a place in 2011's Four Nations, by 2013, the home nations will be hoping to rediscover the form of tournaments gone by and make the fourteenth staging of Rugby League's World Cup the greatest competition in tournament history.

Speaking at the World Cup's kick-off event at Manchester's new Media City, RFL Chairman Richard Lewis said, "It is a great boost for Rugby League in this country to secure the World Cup in 2013. The last tournament staged in Australia in 2008 was an enormous success."

"Our aim is to build on that success and to deliver a profitable tournament that further enhances the international game across the globe and raises the profile of the sport in the UK. The 2013 Rugby League World Cup promises to be the biggest and best tournament in the history of the game."



# Ready to launch

The 2013 Rugby League World Cup has been officially launched after the RFL hosted a "kick-off" event at Manchester's new MediaCityUK development on Tuesday 30 November ....

The 2013 competition, which will be contested in venues throughout England and Wales, will be the 14th staging of the Rugby League World Cup and has already been backed by Rugby League legend Ellery Hanley and former Olympic medal winner Iwan Thomas.

Speaking at the tournaments kick-off event held at MediaCityUK, in what was the first event of its kind to be held at the new venue, RFL Chairman Richard Lewis said, "It is a great boost for Rugby League in this country to secure the World Cup in 2013. The last tournament staged in Australia in 2008 was an enormous success.

"Our aim is to build on that success and to deliver a profitable tournament that further enhances the international game across the globe and raises the profile of the sport in the UK."

Having been awarded the rights to host the event in June 2009, the RFL utilised the kick-off event to make a series of major announcements about the tournament, including the identity of 12 qualified teams and to outline the scale of its ambition to host the most successful Rugby League World Cup of all time.

Australia, Cook Islands, England, Fiji, France, Ireland, New Zealand, Papa New Guinea, Samoa, Scotland, Tonga and Wales have all been confirmed as competing nations and they will be joined by one qualifier from a European Qualifying group consisting of Italy, Lebanon, Russia and Serbia and one qualifier from an Atlantic Qualifying group consisting

of Jamaica, South Africa and the USA.

The competition's structure will consist of two groups of four, with England drawn alongside perennial foes Australia, Fiji and Ireland in Group A and World Cup New Zealand facing Pacific Island rivals Papua New Guinea, Samoa and France in Group B. Scotland will face Tonga and the European qualifiers in Group C and joints hosts Wales have been drawn against the Cook Islands and the Atlantic Qualifiers.

Speaking in the events promotional video, Prime Minister David Cameron also put the weight of the Coalition government behind the RFL's announcement, emphasising the sporting potential the next decade offers.

"This government is right behind the RFL," said Cameron. "As one of the sports that this country holds closest to its heart, we know what a privilege and honour it is to host this tournament and I'm fully confident that the RFL will do the United Kingdom proud and I look forward to working closely with them to make sure it is a great success.

"The next decade promises to be one of the most exciting in our countries history. There will be the Olympics, the Cricket World Cup, hopefully the Football World Cup and the Rugby League World Cup. Coming so soon after the Olympics, the RFL have the opportunity to ride on the crest of that wave and host and truly memorable tournament."

First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones added, "It is a privilege for Wales to be given this opportunity. We saw tremendous success during the 1995 World Cup when

Wales was host to numerous fixtures and the Welsh public came out in force to support their home team and to witness some of the world's greatest players.

"With Rugby League enjoying a new found growth in Wales in recent years and with the sport having been played in schools throughout the country for the past eight years, we are confident that hosting games in venues such as the Millennium Stadium will be a great way of helping boost the sport in Wales.

"Hosting such an event will also provide a welcome financial boost to those towns and cities who secure the right to host fixtures, training camps and house the playing squads and with the potential for many visitors set to be attracted to these shores, the economic impact has the potential to be great."

### GROUP STRUCTURE

Group A - England, Australia, Fiji, Ireland (three go through to quarter-finals)  
Group B - New Zealand, France, Papua New Guinea, Samoa (three go through to quarter-finals)  
Group C - Scotland, Tonga, European qualifier (winners through to quarter-finals)  
Group D - Wales, Cook Islands, Atlantic qualifier (winners through to quarter-finals)

In Groups C and D, teams play the other nations in their group and also one team from the opposite group as follows - Scotland v Atlantic qualifier, Tonga v Cook Islands, Wales v European qualifier.



Past masters - Davies & Murphy





Role model - Ellie Smith

In her role as Young Ambassador, Ellie will aim to raise participation in sport amongst young people, promote the 2012 Games and raise the profile and understanding of the events.

Ellie was nominated for the role by her school, Castleford High. Her father Martin Smith explained some of the reasons why.

"She is an extremely motivated person who's a strong team player with a great personality whilst remaining level headed."

"A few months ago Ellie was extremely honoured to be a ball girl at the Leeds Rhinos v Warrington Wolves Carnegie Challenge Cup Final."

"Whilst on holiday a few days after the Challenge Cup Final a young Spanish girl was drowning in a pool, and Ellie was the only person to unselfishly react to avoid what could have been a disaster."

"These are just a few of the reasons why people warm to her and realised she would make an excellent ambassador for the Olympics."

"Rugby League is Ellie's passion, and she would love to try and get more young people actively playing the sport that she loves."

Ellie admits that Rugby League will be on her agenda as she pursues her new role. "I am looking forward to being an influential role model and hopefully encouraging young people to achieve their ambitions," she said.

***"During my campaign as a young ambassador my aim is to raise awareness of girl's Rugby League and try to encourage more girls to start playing this thoroughly enjoyable sport."***

"More and more young people are becoming less active and choosing to stay at home and play on their computer etc, which drastically reduces the amount of physical activity that they participate in."

"During my campaign as a young ambassador my aim is to raise awareness of girl's Rugby League and try to encourage more girls to start playing this thoroughly enjoyable sport."

"Rugby League should be featured in the 2012 Olympics, and what better time would there be to promote the greatest game on earth than over the next two years."

"Women's Rugby League is rapidly becoming more popular and would benefit from more media coverage to raise its profile. After being captain for Yorkshire under 15s girls, my inspiration has grown to publicise the sport and get more people involved."

"During my short playing career I have been very lucky to have a few great mentors, such as the PE staff at Castleford High School, Keith Bullimore and my dad, and I would like to thank them for my guidance."

# SPREADING THE WORD

**Castleford Panthers under 16s player Ellie Smith has been selected as a Young Ambassador for the London Olympic & Paralympic Games in 2012. NICK BOOTHROYD finds out more ....**

Go-ahead Hull outfit Myton Warriors are aiming to do it "bigger and better" when the next RFL Community Game Raffle takes place.

That will take some doing, given that the Warriors scooped the prize of £1,500 worth of equipment for the most tickets sold in this summer's event to add to the identical cash figure from 2,000 ticket sales, but it's within the bounds of possibility.

The success of the 2010 venture was founded largely on the efforts of the two Open Age sides and the Warriors Under 15s and, having seen the benefits - including tackle bags and Steeden balls provided for every team - the rest of the club is chomping at the bit to get involved next time.

Player and Commercial Manager Lee James, one of the driving forces behind the success, pinpoints two elements as key factors in the Hattons Solicitors National Conference League outfit selling more tickets than any other club.

"The first prize of five days in New York, plus spending money, was fantastic, and I think it helped that it wasn't rugby-orientated, which helped us sell tickets to everyone, not just people who are Rugby League supporters.

"We were also able to "sell" the scheme to our players on the back of our recent experience. We'd held sponsored bike ride the previous year, when each lad had been asked to pull in £60 worth of backing."

"For the Community Raffle, we asked that players bring in the same amount - helped by having something to offer in return, with that superb first prize and many others, including England shirts and Engage Super League Grand Final tickets."

With 2,000 tickets sold by only three of Myton's sides, it's clear that other clubs are already under pressure if they are to take the first prize for sales in 2011. There is, however, plenty of incentive.

The Warriors, in addition to the provision of funding for equipment, were allocated a box for eight people at the Engage Super League Grand Final at Old Trafford last October.

And not surprisingly, given the number of tickets they sold, a number of club members won prizes, although not the major one of the New York trip.

"Two lads won England shirts, and two others got Grand Final tickets," said James. "The A team used the money from the sales to fund a new strip, a tight one that makes it harder for opponents to get a grip and tackle us, and we borrowed that for the first team when we played at Stanley Rangers and won recently, as the second team was without a game."

"We're convinced it helped us score a vital try, so the Community Raffle has, even if indirectly, aided us on the pitch."

"It's also funded new track suits and polo shirts for match days. Looking the business, we believe, translates into points on the field."

Myton, despite being without Head Coach Kevin Armitstead because of the illness of his beloved mother Betty, who sadly passed away on Saturday 27 November, in recent weeks, have consolidated in Division One and cannot be ruled out of the promotion frame after drawing with title favourites

# WARRIORS MARCH

**After winning the club prize in this years Community Game Raffle Myton Warriors are already looking forward to the 2011 fund raiser. PHIL HODGSON finds out about the clubs success ....**

Oulton Raiders - who, in truth, had to dig deep to snatch a point - and coming back from 10 points down with only four minutes left to win at Stanley Rangers.

Said James, "Those two results have given us a boost after three successive defeats and we are lucky that Tony Spence, the BARLA Great Britain Under 23s and Yorkshire coach, has been able to step forward for us in Armo's absence, working well with Tony Rowbottom.

"We're also glad we were able to use our second team's kit at Stanley, where the tightness of the fit helped us beat off a challenge for one of our vital tries."

Injuries and work commitments, meanwhile, have put pressure in the second string this time, and all seven fixtures in the GMB Union Hull League's Premier Division were lost before the side was "relegated" to Division One in mid-November.

That demotion should boost the team for the remainder of the season and gratify all at a closely-knit club. There's a key to that

solidarity in how the Warriors dealt with the fruits of their labours in the Community Raffle.

"We decided that the eight people who would share the box at Old Trafford for the Engage Super League Grand Final would be those who made an effort, rather than simply those who sold most," said James.

"For example, a lad who is out of work wouldn't have the same opportunities to sell tickets than someone in a factory, say. So we put names into a hat on that basis, and then conducted a draw to establish the lucky winners."

***"We're convinced it helped us score a vital try, so the Community Raffle has, even if indirectly, aided us on the pitch."***



Team effort - Myton players work together





Youth and Junior Rugby League clubs across the country have benefited from an investment of over £60,000 which the RFL Community Board has made to subsidise insurance premiums in 2010 ....

Every Youth and Junior club in the country has benefited from this investment which meant that personal accident and death by natural causes insurance was discounted depending on the status of the club.

Community Board Chair, Richard Lewis said, "Paying the annual insurance can be very expensive for community Rugby League teams.

"The Community Board were therefore delighted to be able to make this investment which provides a major financial boost to clubs in a difficult economic climate."

Clubs which have been accredited Clubmark Gold status have benefitted from a 90 per cent discount on insurance whilst Clubmark clubs have benefitted from a 70 per cent discount.

Clubs that have signed up to the RFL Partnership agreement have received a discount of 50 per cent and all other clubs have saved 30 per cent.

Richard Thorpe, Oulton Raiders ARLFC Treasurer said, "Running an Amateur Rugby League club takes teamwork and no small amount of funding.

"As a Clubmark Gold club our working relationship with the RFL is proving to be a real win-win situation for us.

"The subsidising of our Players insurance to the tune of just over £1000 is a fabulous example of the support we receive.

At a time when fundraising is especially hard, that saving is money we can now use to support our kids and keep them enjoying "the greatest game of all", thanks RFL"

Martin Eden, Thatto Heath ARLFC Secretary said, "As a club we've managed to make a saving of £792 on our insurance thanks to the RFL's Community Board.

"We're unfortunately in a period of financial uncertainty and this generous offer has come at the perfect time for us."

For more information on the RFL's clubmark and partnership agreements visit [www.therfl.co.uk/community\\_clubs](http://www.therfl.co.uk/community_clubs)

To keep to date with news from Rugby League's Community Game visit the RFL's Official Facebook page [www.facebook.com/rugbyfootballleague](http://www.facebook.com/rugbyfootballleague) or follow us on Twitter @CommunityRL

# INSURANCE BOOST

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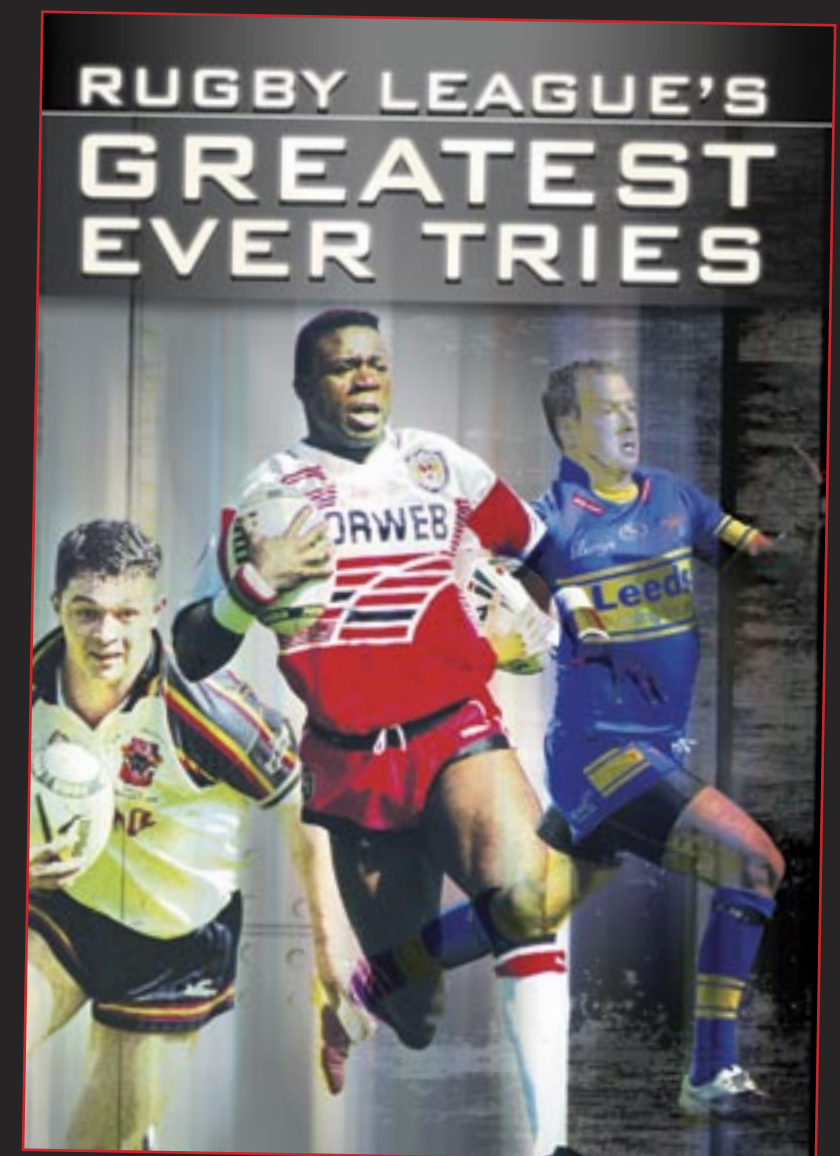
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All entries should be sent via e-mail to [tom.hoyle@rfl.uk.com](mailto:tom.hoyle@rfl.uk.com)



Entries close on Wednesday 12 January 2011.



**PHIL CAPLAN looks back at the last winter action in the Gillette National Youth League ....**

Appropriately perhaps, fog shrouded Featherstone's Big Fellas Stadium as the curtain came down on the final winter campaign of the Gillette National Youth League.

To cap it, impressive Wigan-based Ince Rose Bridge completed the double of topping the truncated regular season standings and taking out the Grand Final, as the showpiece competition prepares to move to summer in 2011.

Superbly led - as they had been all season - by playmaking loose forward Kenny Baker and prop Jack Morrison, Ince had too much firepower for gallant Dewsbury Celtic, running out 42-6 victors in the decider and receiving the trophy from Garry Schofield.

Dewsbury were a revelation in their first year at this level and were again well served by centre Matthew Sheridan and ball handling prop Josh Brooke.

The sides were the top two ranked after the eight round weekly campaign, both finishing with only one defeat and coming through home semi final play offs.

Ince accounted for 2009 runners up Leeds Stanningley who had led the table for much of the competition, Celtic downing Keighley Cougar Cubs 20-12 in an all Yorkshire thriller.

A total of 18 teams set out on the hunt for glory, the final placings decided on a percentage basis of wins and then points difference.

Defending champions West Cumbria and excellent newcomers Thatto Heath Crusaders were just counted out of the top four despite finishing level with Stanningley with five wins from their seven outings.

Just behind them three other clubs on their debut left a big impression, Milford Marlins and Sheffield Hillsborough Hawks together on nine points with Holderness Vikings just behind them.

Local rivals Featherstone Lions and Castleford Lock Lane vied with each other throughout in mid-table, former winners Leigh Miners Rangers heading Leigh East and claiming their local bragging rights.

Bradford Dudley Hill's inconsistencies in their inaugural entry caught them out and there was no lack of commendable effort from Gateshead Thunder and Hemel Stags; Widnes West Bank and Saddleworth Rangers finding it similarly tough.

Among the weekly stand outs and names to watch out for were; Ryan Softley (Bradford Dudley Hill), Keiran Johnson (Leigh East), Jack Bussey (Leeds Stanningley), Corey Lee (Thatto Heath Crusaders), Patrick Mooney (Hemel Stags), Ben Stead (Keighley



# INCE CLAIM THE SPOILS



**“We are looking forward to the switch to summer when the competition will have an even greater profile in the Rugby League community”**



Cougar Cubs), Luke Teasdale (Milford Marlins) Mathew Fogerty (Saddleworth Rangers) and Ryan Matthews (Sheffield Hillsborough Hawks).

The most memorable encounters included Bradford Dudley Hill's 33-28 success at Hemel, confirmed in the final minute when Benjamin Goddard took a high kick to deny the Stags one last raid, Thatto Heath's 34-32 downing of West Cumbria, Tom Rigby ensuring a memorable win, Josh Brooke's late try which saw Dewsbury edge out Stanningley in a tremendous derby clash, 14-12 and Gateshead Thunder's rip-roaring 31-30 win at home to Featherstone Lions.

Attention now switches to when the League reconvenes in March, the junior elite competition the first to nail its colours to the summer mast.

Expressions of interest have been received and accepted applicants and fixture format is set to be formally unveiled in the New Year.

There is eager anticipation as history beckons. "The Gillette National Youth League has been a revelation for Hemel Stags and is helping us achieve our goal of producing quality youth players," said club administrator Kevin Read.

"We are looking forward to the switch to summer when the competition will have an even greater profile in the Rugby League community," he added.

His enthusiasm is mirrored by Keighley Cougar Cubs team manager Liam Gillard. "As a club we are looking forward to the switch," he noted.

"We're confident it will lead to a better standard of play and that the improved quality of pitches will play a part in that."

"It's a big step forward for everyone but I'm confident that it will prove to be a successful decision in the long term."

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# FIGHTING BACK



Hull, perhaps long seen by Rugby League players and supporters from elsewhere as something of a “bear pit” arena, is leading the way in tackling bullying in the grassroots game. PHIL HODGSON looks at the work been done in East Yorkshire ....

The pro-active committee of the Hull & District Youth League is setting an example for leagues elsewhere, and bought enthusiastically into the “Hands Together to Stop Bullying” drive launched by Hull City Council and the Hull Young People’s Parliament.

The initiative, introduced in October, was timely, says Hull Youth official Paul Stephenson, who happily admits, “The arrival of Colette Eden as a full-time child protection worker has been a massive help for us.”

“Colette and her team are willing and able to listen and educate administrators like ourselves; something that was not always possible with the time and resources previously available to volunteers.

“Without in any way criticising hard-pressed volunteers who battled with the issue previously, the way that cases are now dealt with means that we no longer feel that we are in the dark, or fret that a welfare issue has not perhaps been fully dealt with.

“The information received from Colette’s team routinely feeds into not only our disciplinary process, but our transfer processes too.”

“As a league we can help facilitate any courses that are required at clubs and, equally importantly, clubs now receive feedback on cases and are themselves able

to see due processes in action.”

He adds, “We know that coaches and other volunteers feel much happier that there is now a better opportunity to refute any false allegations made against them whilst, as a league, we are much more confident that where action is required to help a child, or remove an individual from the game, it now happens through proper and expert resources.”

That wasn’t, perhaps, always quite the case.

Says Stephenson, “I am not afraid to say that not so long ago it began to appear that the words “child welfare” were used more as an opportunity to escape a disciplinary meeting, or to help secure a problematic transfer, than through concerns over the welfare of the players themselves.

“It was concerning to see the “welfare flag” increasingly waved, with supporting evidence often not forthcoming.”

“Were the allegations true, slightly embellished or plain old untruths? We never seemed to find out an answer; meanwhile, frustratingly, the stories reverberated around clubs that citing “welfare” was a free passage past any rule.”

The arrival of Eden, and the launch of the “Hands Together to Stop Bullying” campaign, which was linked to the National Anti-Bullying Week held in November, couldn’t have been better timed and

Stephenson, whose wife Susan is the Hull Youth League Secretary, enthused, “We both quickly realised that not only was this a great idea, but it also gave us the chance to repay in a small way the support we have received from Collette.”

“The Hull Youth Committee agreed unanimously at our next meeting and we even started our own collection of hands, with league stalwart Graham Holmes the first to raise his hands; the photo from which became our call for clubs to unite in this cause.”

“What happened next was truly awe-inspiring. We started to receive photographs of children, parents and volunteers illustrating their willingness to support the campaign and two of our newest clubs - Hull All Blacks and Haworth Park - were the first to get on board, quickly followed by the more established Hull Isberg club.”

“During the week itself we received more and more photos and news stories from across the city and the sheer effort at such as Beverley Braves and Hull Wyke was outstanding.”

“Our clubs even encouraged visiting clubs and supporters to take part (Morgan, aged 8, at Hunslet Warriors U12s please take a bow) and the Duke of York Open Age side also joined in the fun. Over 20,000 pairs of hands had joined in the campaign across the city.”

To showcase the inclusive nature of Rugby League, the RFL held an event in the House of Commons last month to highlight its commitment to challenging homophobia and ensuring that lesbian, gay and bisexual people are welcomed and valued throughout the sport. DANNY REUBEN finds out more about the landmark event ....



# WELCOMED & VALUED

Sarah Williams, RFL Equality and Diversity Manager is delighted to be launching a “Guidance for Rugby League Clubs – Challenging Homophobic Abuse and Behaviour” booklet.

Hosted by Greg Mulholland MP in the Macmillan Room of Portcullis House in the House of Commons, special guests included Equalities Minister Lynne Featherstone MP and Ben Summerskill from Stonewall.

Unfortunately, Gareth Thomas Crusaders and Wales RL star – and former Great Britain Rugby Union Lions Captain – was unable to attend due to illness.

The event was an outstanding success, with Members of Parliament and Lords being joined by players, the media, and stakeholders who take this issue seriously.

Sheffield Eagles were also in attendance to present their new, specially-designed kit carrying the “Homophobia Tackle It!” slogan which will be worn at a home game in February 2011, which is also LGBT history month to highlight LGBT issues.

Opening the event, Leeds North MP Mulholland said, “Rugby League is perceived to be one of the toughest and most ferocious sports anyone could play.”

“Whilst this is true in terms of the way the game is played, Rugby League has a history of being one of the most welcoming sports around.”

“I am proud to play a sport that anyone can play irrespective of ability, gender, race, sexuality or background. It’s testament to the work of all involved in the sport.”

The RFL takes very seriously its

commitment to inclusivity and is the first and only sports governing body to join the Stonewall Diversity Champion programme.

RFL Chief Executive Nigel Wood said, “Many believe Rugby League to be a brutal sport. I will not disagree that the on-the-field product can appear combative and aggressive, but it is always played in the correct mindset of competition and fairness.”

“This latter point translates across all those involved in Rugby League, and is the reason for the event today.”

Stonewall CEO Summerskill added to this sentiment saying, “The vision shown by Rugby League in recent years has been ground-breaking in making the sport more welcoming and accessible.”

“Stonewall’s Diversity Champions demonstrate a clear commitment to improving the working environment for their lesbian, gay and bisexual staff.”

“For many, sport is still one of the last great bastions of homophobia but we warmly welcome RFL’s commitment to openly challenging prejudice and unfairness.”

Although he was unable to attend, Thomas sent the following message to those that attended.

“All sports have a significant role to play in challenging homophobia and I am delighted to show my support to Rugby League and the RFL which has made such strong commitments to taking important issues like this seriously and is leading the way in terms of inclusivity.”

Whilst being presented with her Sheffield

Eagles shirt, Featherstone said, “Fans, players and officials know that racism is unacceptable, but sadly homophobia continues to be an issue in sport, at all levels.”

“The Government is committed to stamping out homophobia wherever it occurs, so I’m delighted to see the Rugby Football League and the Sheffield Eagles working hard to tackle the problem.”

“They’re setting a really positive example that all other sports bodies should be proud to follow.”

Rugby League is not only committed to challenging homophobia, its on-and off-field Respect campaign is a model for many other sports, including football and tackles all aspects of offensive and anti social behaviour.

The RFL is re-launching its Tackle IT! Campaign to include six equality strands in one comprehensive campaign for the 2011 season. A package of activities to support the initiative is also being developed including – a matchday text line incident reporting service for all 36 professional clubs, posters, DVD and learning resources and an improved matchday incident reporting mechanism.

For further information on the RFL Equality agenda and LGBT specific initiatives, please contact Sarah Williams, RFL Equality and Diversity Manager at [sarah.williams@rfl.co.uk](mailto:sarah.williams@rfl.co.uk) or visit the RFL website [www.therfl.co.uk](http://www.therfl.co.uk)



# FESTIVE FINALS

With Christmas fast approaching PHIL HODGSON looks ahead to the three BARLA County Cup Finals which always prove popular over the festive season ....



Centre of attention - Widnes West Bank Bears

As the Bulletin went to press, only one of the six contestants in the forthcoming BARLA County Cup Finals had been identified.

Rank outsiders Widnes West Bank Bears, the centre of attention, are preparing for a day in the limelight after reaching the Lancashire decider with a series of stunning successes.

The Bears, of the Kukri North West Counties Division Two, booked a berth in the Red Rose decider with a sensational 16-10 victory at Premier Division title outsiders Blackbrook at the semi-final stage.

That win followed a notable verdict over Division One leaders Clock Face - victors, themselves, over Premiers Wigan St Cuthbert's in the previous round - in the quarter-finals as West Bank served vivid evidence that there is plenty of life in BARLA outside the Hattons Solicitors National Conference League and the top divisions of the five major Regional Leagues.

Bank are in the decider after recovering from 10-6 down at the break to win 16-10 at Blackbrook, adding tries by Steve Gilmour and Nicky Frost, plus a Tommy Arrowsmith penalty, to Steve Mellor's conversion of Greg Pitchling's first half effort.

Wests, however, have been waiting a fortnight, as Bulletin went to press, to learn the identity of their opponents - and, for that matter, the date and venue - in the final.

Plunging temperatures and snow have put paid, twice, to hopes of play in the other Lancashire Cup semi-final in which holders Halton Simms Cross are bidding to topple North West Counties League leaders Bank Quay Bulls.

It's a similar story in Cumbria and Yorkshire, except that neither semi-final has yet to be concluded in either competition.

Glasson Rangers and Seaton Rangers were hoping it would be a case of "third time lucky" on Saturday 11 December, and that was also the situation facing Distington and Barrow Island, as the Iggesund BARLA Cumbria Cup got stuck in the snow.

Across the Pennines, BARLA Yorkshire Cup holders Charlston Rovers were also experiencing frustration, caused by the weather, over the resolution of their semi-final with Drighlington. And Ace Insurance (Europe) BARLA National Cup holders Queens had seen their tie with Crigglesstone All Blacks repeatedly put on hold as the freeze continued to bite.

The repeated postponements have led to a danger that BARLA's plans for now-traditional Yuletide finals in each of the three competitions could be thwarted and Secretary Roger Fagge, in the build-up to the 11 December games, made it clear that venues should be switched, or alternative grounds found if necessary, to get the matches out of the way.

Fagge and his Board of Management are mindful that BARLA County Cup Finals played over the Christmas period are hugely popular with supporters, particularly in Yorkshire, where it is hoped to stage the decider at the Big Fellas Stadium, Post Office Road, Featherstone, on Monday 27 December.

No dates or venues have yet been set for the other two finals, both of which will be keenly awaited; whoever survives the outstanding semi-finals.

West Bank won't need reminding that they will face a huge task against either

Halton Simms Cross or Bank Quay Bulls. But having got rid of Clock Face as well as Blackbrook on their way to the decider, the upstarts will not want for confidence and are certainly in the mood to stage an upset.

The Yorkshire Cup Final, meanwhile, will be a meeting of "big" guns unless Crigglesstone can pull off a major upset by beating giants Queens on the latter's own midden. If they do, they will certainly have proved their right to take on either Charlston or Drighlington in a competition dominated by Pennine League teams following the recent exodus from the CMS Yorkshire League.

It's a real either/or situation, too, in the far northwest. Seaton will be strongly fancied to win their tie at Glasson - although the Maryport outfit may have something to say about that - while the game between Distington and Barrow Island represents a clash of sides in the Iggesund Cumberland and Kukri North West Counties Leagues; as such, the teams will be relatively unknown to each other.



www.tryit.co.uk

ROB WILKINSON looks back on a great Northern Rail Cup competition and says he can't wait for the 2011 action to begin ....



Match winner - Alex Brown

## EVERY BULLDOG HAS ITS DAY



The Bulldog spirit will always prevail in the end and what an end it was to the 2010 Northern Rail Cup competition!

As Batley's Alex Brown touched down in the corner with just seconds remaining the joy, surprise, shock and despair was almost palpable amongst the eight thousand plus supporters who had made their way to Blackpool's Tangerine Mecca, Bloomfield Road.

The joy and surprise belonged to the two thousand or so fans who had traversed the Pennines from the Heavy Woollen area whereas the shock and despair belonged to the overwhelming Widnes majority who departed with a heavy heart.

The 2010 Northern Rail Cup final was the culmination of 47 games in a tournament involving 20 English clubs, many steeped in Rugby League heritage. Batley Bulldogs are one of those clubs and they've been more immersed than most in the game's traditions

since the inception of the Northern Union in 1895, but they'd rarely tasted success.

That's why the victory was so much sweeter. The platform had been laid by the dogged determination of coach Karl Harrison to never give up and the joy, elation and ecstasy was there to witness by all, including a healthy live Sky audience, as the final hooter sounded.

Last season's competition departed on time. Well almost! The wretched winter weather (snow on the line...and a lot of it!) put paid to the majority of the first round of fixtures at the end of January but Blackpool, Keighley, Leigh, Oldham, Dewsbury and London Skolars didn't suffer any cancellations as they set off on their odyssey in the direction of the Fylde coast.

Each club played an initial four group games at the start of the season with eight sides progressing to the quarter-finals played on the first weekend in June. This proved

to be the final station stop for the Hunslet Hawks, Sheffield Eagles, York City Knights and Barrow Raiders.

Then onward to the semi-finals where the Bulldogs upset the odds in a live TV win at Leigh Centurions and the Keighley Cougars came off the rails at the hands of the Vikings. All the signals were there for an upset on the big day!

The final destination beckoned and it was left to Northern Rail ambassador Robbie Paul to check out the venue. The media savvy Kiwi legend fronted up a short video together with the furry mascots of both Batley and Widnes. It proved a popular initiative and just the ticket for the media!

Finally the climax was upon us in mid July with a typically British seaside day painting the backdrop. It was sullen, wet, overcast and grey but that did nothing to dampen the spirits of the thousands in situ at Bloomfield Road.

Every dog has its day and so it proved as the lead swung back and forth before Brown's last gasp intervention. Batley's famous Frontier Club had never seen a party like it as the town's heroes returned home.

Here's to more of the same in 2011! Next season the Northern Rail Cup will follow a similar format and timetable with the same number of clubs however there's a new arrival and one regretful departure. The disappearance of Blackpool Panthers is a blow to the competition but there's a touch of joi de vivre in the form of Toulouse Olympique.

Whilst Toulouse may not yet feature on any Northern Rail timetables, you can be sure that plenty of British Rugby League fans will be looking to escape what is expected to be another bitter winter and make tracks to the south of France!

As the Northern Rail Cup gets set to depart again, it's clear that this popular start of season competition is a great way of getting the Rugby League year off on the right lines.

For more details visit [www.northernrail.org](http://www.northernrail.org)



In high spirits - Batley celebrate

www.tryit.co.uk



# CASH BACK DEAL LAUNCHED



The RFL have launched the 2011 Carnegie Challenge Cup cash back offer which allows community Rugby League clubs to buy tickets for the showpiece event at Wembley and then receive a lump sum of money for their club in return. NICK BOOTHROYD explains how clubs can make some serious money ....

The bulk ticket purchases can also be combined with hotel accommodation making this a convenient way for supporters to secure their place at the final of Rugby League's most prestigious knock out cup competition on Saturday August 27.

Ray Tennant, RFL Business Development Manager said, "The 2010 Carnegie Challenge Cup Final was a sell-out and fans that didn't move quickly enough to reserve their tickets missed out on a fantastic occasion.

"I would encourage anyone who is considering travelling to Wembley in a group for next year's final particularly from community Rugby League clubs to contact us so we can give you more information.

"Last year the RFL gave away over £40,000 back to groups of Rugby League fans from professional clubs, community clubs, schools and even local pubs and I would advise people not to miss out in 2011."



There are four packages available for supporters to take advantage of.

Option ONE offers supporters an upgrade to a Carnegie Challenge Cup Final £31 ticket for just £26 and for every ticket purchased there is £5 cash back

Option TWO offers a £51 ticket for just £41 and for every ticket purchased there is £10 cash back.

Option THREE includes a £51 ticket for just £41 as well as one night's accommodation in your choice of one of seven local hotels all for just £116 and for every ticket purchased there is cash back.

Option FOUR also includes a £51 ticket for just £41 combined with two night's accommodation in your choice of one of seven local hotels for just £146 with cash back for every ticket purchased.

The hotels which supporters can choose between are: Crown Hotel Heathrow, Park Inn Watford, Ibis London Elstree, Holiday Inn London Elstree, Holiday Inn M4, Jurys Inn Watford and Holiday Inn Brent Cross.

A large number of community Rugby League clubs took advantage of the cash back deal in 2010 including Halton Simms Cross and Terry Nanson from the Widnes based club said, "The hotel we stayed in was excellent, with the rooms and food being of a high standard and the staff only happy to help.

The tickets provided were in an excellent position so we could see all the action clearly, if we choose to run the trip again we would not hesitate to arrange it through the RFL or recommend it to anyone wanting to book the same type of trip."

If you are interested in taking advantage of the cash back offer or want to learn more please contact -

RAY TENNANT,  
RFL Business Development Manager  
07595 520 338 or ray.tennant@rfl.uk.com

BEV COLEMAN,  
RFL Business Development Executive  
07595 520 578 or bev.coleman@rfl.uk.com

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WIGAN WARRIORS	V	ST HELENS	KO 7PM

### SUNDAY

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