

League **1895**

Issue 2 – September

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International Rugby

League

+MORE!

EVERYTHING RUGBY LEAGUE





SUPER LEAGUE TABLE

AS THE SEASON COMES TO A CLOSE,
HERE'S HOW THE SUPER LEAGUE TABLE IS
LOOKING.

	Wins	Draws	Losses	Points
1. St Helens	19	0	6	38
2. Castleford Tigers	16	2	7	34
3. Wigan Warriors	16	1	8	33
4. Warrington Wolves	16	1	8	33
5. Huddersfield Giants	15	3	7	33
6. Leeds Rhinos	15	2	8	32
7. Catalans Dragons	12	1	12	25
8. Widnes Vikings	12	1	12	25
9. Hull Kingston Rovers	9	3	13	21
10. Wakefield Wildcats	10	1	14	21
11. Hull FC	9	2	14	20
12. Salford Red Devils	9	1	15	19
13. Bradford Bulls	7	0	19	8
14. London Broncos	1	0	24	2



CHAMPIONSHIP TABLE

	Wins	Draws	Losses	Points
1. Leigh Centurions	24	0	1	73
2. Featherstone Rovers	17	1	7	58
3. Doncaster	17	1	7	57
4. Halifax	15	2	8	55
5. Sheffield Eagles	15	0	10	51
6. Dewsbury Rams	15	0	10	51
7. Workington Town	11	1	13	45
8. Keighley Cougars	12	0	13	43
9. Batley Bulldogs	11	1	13	42
10. Whitehaven RLFC	12	0	13	42
11. NW Crusaders	7	0	18	30
12. Rochdale	7	0	18	25
13. Swinton	5	0	20	24
14. Barrow Raiders	4	0	21	18

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY LEAGUE

BY TIM NUTTALL

In 2002 I went to only my second live Rugby League match, it was Great Britain v New Zealand at the Huddersfield's Galpharm Stadium, a 14-14 draw. I don't remember much about the game itself, I probably didn't know the game as well at that time. But, what I do remember was the amazing atmosphere generated in the stadium and how fast and furious the action on the pitch was. That was my introduction to international Rugby League, it was a good one!

So, to fast forward to the present day, some 12 years later, what of the state of international Rugby League now? Quite frankly, the state of the international game is an embarrassment to our great game. The gap between the big 3 nations and the rest seems to be as big as it ever was, though the game is played in more countries, there is no sign of any of these nations barging into the monopoly, except maybe the Pacific nations if they are given the chance. There was hope that France could be that country, but results against the big 3 have been poor and they hardly lit up the last World Cup with much distinction did they?

The problem goes further than improving the general standard of the international game, there are major things which Nigel Wood, now in his role of Chairman of Rugby League International Federation, needs to address among the top 3 nations. There is no structure to the fixture list, which doesn't allow for forward planning. There was talk of a GB tour to Aus and NZ at the end of next season, but apparently ARL have promised their players the Autumn off from playing, so it doesn't seem as if it is going to happen any time soon. I am not sure how much credence the Aussies place on the international game, not the players maybe, I am sure they feel honored every time they play for their country. But the NRL regard their comp as the best in the world, it probably is and they also have state of origin, again probably bigger than any international game they could play.

We need to look closer to home as well, last week, England RL named a 35 man training squad which is to get together next week, but there is no game scheduled. In fact, England don't have a fixture until they play Samoa in Brisbane on the 25th October. It seems very a strange to pull the team together when there isn't a game, there should be a game! This is where we don't help ourselves, there needed to be a weekend set aside for international week. The original Origin concept was quite good, the problem with it in the intervening years was that SL coaches didn't really want to release their players when SL games

were scheduled that weekend.

So, how could it work? Well, I would leave the Challenge Cup final where it is, but I would allow the SL teams to enter a round later. So in the gap that is created, we could have an 'international day', England could play a full strength Exiles team, and, as a curtain raiser, I would have the Knights playing France, perhaps a 3rd game which could see Wales v Ireland/Scotland. The alternative is to have England v England Knights, that game would surely have an edge, as you would have lads in the Knights desperate to prove a point to Steve McNamara.

The World Cup in 2013 was a great success for the Country, games played in new places, and a great decision to play games in places such as Halifax and Leigh, it got everyone involved. The RFL, and more importantly the RLIF, need to make sure the momentum isn't lost. Samoa have joined the 4 nations this Autumn, that's a positive move and it would be nice to see them perform well in that tournament. Sally Bolton, who was the General Manager of the 2013 World Cup has left her post, she would have been an ideal person to keep within the RFL, given a senior role in revitalising our domestic game, in terms of communication, sponsorship etc.

Tomorrow (Thursday) sees the Football World Cup start, cars with England flags on them, people grouping round the TV together to cheer the lads on. It would be great if in 5-10 years time, our World Cup could have new people watching it? And a thriving, competitive tournament where maybe 4/5 teams would have realistic prospects of winning it.

I have no doubts that our lads love playing for their Country, an allegation that is always levelled about some of our Footballers. What players and supporters want, is a clear, defined plan for the international game, to know what games are being played in the next 2-4 years, rather than simply rolling on year by year not knowing what is coming up.

I'm not a Chief Executive, Chairman or sponsor, I am however, a massive Rugby League fan, frustrated at the lack of a competitive international game. We have a fantastic product, we have some fantastic players on both sides of the world, what we need now is for someone with some foresight to make it all happen. I would hate us to be in the same position in 5 years time.

THE FUTURE OF THE BRONCOS

BY SAM AJAYI



For the past 4 to 5 years the Broncos have been producing young talented players like Dan Sarginson, Kieran Dixon, Mason Caton-Brown and Tony Clubb being produced, the future really does look bright for the club!

The fact the players are leavening to northern clubs and still shining, proves that London Broncos are doing something right. In this article I will be discussing the likelihood of the Broncos producing the next Shaun Johnson or the next Sam Burgess. I will also discuss how the future of the club is in the hands off the academy players not the 1st team players.

The likelihood of Broncos getting relegated is very close (note from editor: London have been relegated); most of the fans have accepted that, Joey Grima has accepted that. When I spoke to one of Broncos trio who signed a weeks ago, Harvey Burnett about next season, he responded, 'We plan to get back to Super League straight away if we go down'.

Going to championship might be good for us, as we will get a chance to regroup as a team and as a club. With two big signings already made (note: many more signings have been announced), the future looks promising in championship. One of the fans pointed out in an interview that super league next year will do us 'no good'. I certainly agree with that, as we don't have the right players yet to get our first win or avoid relegation.

With the broncos having a strong foundation with the London RL, I really do believe I have played with the next Shaun Johnson and played with the next Sam Burgess and I believe there are more players like Kieran Dixon to come. As the places for scholarships in the club are very competitive and the London RL origin series is very a hard series to win. The league structure helps players from different age groups to develop. I made my first u15s debut as the age of 12 (in year 8) allowing me to get use to tackling the size of 15 year olds. This will help prepare players for the super league and u19. It's not the 1st team players that decided our next step but it is the players in the scholarships and academy. And if we can build a team for the future, in the next 5 -10 years we will be competing for play offs. What people need to realise is that there are people working hard in the background to make rugby league grow in London. The next Sam Tomkins is waiting to be discovered by a Broncos scout.

In my understanding Oscar Thomas and Alex Walker has signed for the broncos (note: they both signed until the end of 2015). With more signings still to come, the future is truly looking bright.



HISTORY OF ODSAL STADIUM, BY @BULLIEVE2013

Bradford Northern took charge of Odsal on January 1st 1934 with very little work done on the site, in fact the work left to do was vast, all the site contained on that day was a huge bowl shaped arena, with high sloping sides of earth and rubbish that had been strategically dumped by the Bradford cleansing dept. At this point it was very hard to imagine that it could ever become a Rugby League ground.

Throughout the coming months of 1934 work slowly transformed the arena into something that resembled a sports ground, but not without its difficulties as the club had to turn to the public in an aid to have a playing surface to play on, the public could buy a piece of turf at 6d (2p) and donate it to the club. It was calculated around 49,500 pieces were required to cover the entire surface at a total cost of £1,237 10 s 0d (£1237.50) the idea was, that everyone who had bought a piece of turf a grid would be put together showing which piece they had bought and hung in the club house when built, but this idea never came to any fruition.

With time running out it became apparent that before the start of the season money was becoming very short and there was a lot of work to be done including a stand to erect and a perimeter fence, however the Rugby League to came there aid on June 7th and granted a loan of £2000, the stand was small and situated where the players underground dressing rooms are today.

The first match to be held at Odsal was Northern's 2nd game of the 34/35 season against Huddersfield. Sadly though the result at Bradford's new home was not meant to be that day, going down 31-16, it must also be noted too that at this time the playing surface was as flat as a billiard table. Despite the new home and surroundings it took

Northern some time to break the Odsal duck it was on November 17th with a 15-2 victory against Featherstone Rovers it finally came.

Odsal has hosted quite a few events over the decades not just Rugby league including Baseball, Tennis, Show Jumping, Basketball, Speedway, Trotting, Cricket, Football, and the odd boxing match and most recently held a concert. Odsal remains iconic in Rugby League mainly as it still holds the record attendance for a Rugby League match, 102,569 in 1954 for the Warrington-Halifax Challenge cup final. It also holds the record for a non final Rugby League match attendance 69,429 which was Northern V Huddersfield in 1953, and in recent times held the Super league Attendance record 24,020 for a match against the Leeds Rhinos but lost this to Wigan in 2005. It must also be noted that speedway was hugely successful at Odsal founded in 1945, but sadly disbanded in 1997. There have been talks of speedway returning but this seems a distance hope at the moment.

Whilst in todays electrical era its common to see Odsal on T.V either on Sky Sports or the BBC, ITV, Bradford Northern's first televised match from Odsal came in 1953 on January 10th against arch rivals Leeds which the result went in the favour of Northern 34-5. Over the years many plans have been put forward to make it the Wembley of the North and have a sporting village at Odsal but these ideas have always fallen through or been blocked for whatever reason, lets hope one day that the dream will become reality, and Odsal will truly be the icon it deserves to be in Rugby League.





SUPER LEAGUE COMING SOON

All the next round previews by Mark Dean and @ACasTigersFan

Wigan Warriors against Leeds Rhinos

Friday night in Round 26 of the First Utility Super League takes us to the DW Stadium for the visit of the newly crowned Challenge Cup winners Leeds Rhino's against last season's double winners Wigan Warriors.

Wigan went down to what many would consider a surprise defeat to Widnes Vikings last Friday and Leeds meanwhile having their short-handed pockets picked by Saint's last week, even after having Joel Moon dismissed early in the piece. Leeds have now lost three on the spin in the league, but importantly punctuated by ending their Challenge Cup heartbreak within that streak, so perhaps that is understandable. The Rhinos would have been hoping to build on their impressive showing last week, proving there was no cup hangover with a solid week, no distractions and build again; sadly for them Mr Hardaker, Mr Moon and his dismissal and the international retirement of Kevin Sinfield have ensured that there is equal off the field attention on them as on it. Kevin Sinfield has clearly been a marvellous servant to the British and English, Joel Moon's dismissal and subsequent suspension seems to have roundly been viewed as about right. Given this is a preview of the game and not a piece in its own right about Zak and the issues therein with the RFL – I am going to leave that particular issue be!!!

Jimmy Keinhorst replaces the suspended Moon in the squad with the embattled Hardaker keeping his place and the faith of his coach and chairman. Wigan on the other hand have had their own problems in the build up losing the returning Iain Thornley for the rest of 2014, terrible luck for the back who was in the process of getting back to full tilt from a previous serious injury. Matty Bowen returns to their 19 man squad declared.

For me, this is the tie of the round because it features two teams desperate for second spot and who have to beat each other to make that ground up on those above them, defeat for Leeds consigns them to probably 5th or 6th, but if they win then second is a possibility. Wigan win and they have a genuine crack at claiming second and its privileges in the post season when they end their campaign at home to Warrington a week later.

Betting wise, I would have Wigan 4 point favourites looking at the league table, but for me this game is all about the Rhinos. There is always a price to pay in energy, emotion, application or desire from a cup win, last week they appeared

to dodge that particular bullet and put a shift in against Saints, but the hump is still to be seen and I think the loss of Moon and the various distractions of this week, the energy levels will just flicker enough to let the Warriors pounce. Wigan 20 Leeds 8

Bradford Bulls against Widnes Vikings

Sunday 7th takes Round 26 of the 2014 Super League to Bradford for the rebuilding and somewhat resurgent Bulls to take on all but play off certainties Widnes Vikings.

Widnes have steadied the ship and then some after their failure to show in the Challenge Cup semi against Cas dispatching Hull KR and Wigan. The Bulls plight has been well documented but we have seen in recent weeks the freedom and relaxation that often comes when a fate is sealed, everyone remembers why they're there, the pressure dissipates and so results have followed. Chev Walker was quoted this week as saying that the feeling has reminded him of how it felt playing rugby as a child again – on Sky Sports Boots n' All.

To see a former titan of the game like Bradford with so many glorious honours under their belts competing outside Super League will ultimately help the overall structure, because compete Bradford will and they will have to. Leigh, London, Featherstone, Halifax and Doncaster are not planning on giving up easily and for the other clubs next season they'll be the scalp clubs target. Matt Diskin announced this week that he will call time at the end of this season, with a significant number of other players on the move the end of season feel is going to be palpable although having got up to take the points from Leeds Rhinos and Wigan Warriors in recent weeks the Bulls were grounded again by the high flying Tigers in a largely forgettable event at the Mend-a-Hose Jungle last week. Regardless of the 19 declared (at the time of writing the squad is not released) there will be a mix of players competing for their 2015 spot and impressing their new coach and a number signing off and hoping to in style.

Widnes have flattered to deceive at times this season, poor Dennis Betts is searching for the illusive missing piece from his charges consistency! Week on week and for an entire 80 minutes, the nucleus of the Vikings squad has a lot of experience and they have been solid without much spectacular this season. I am taken back to Kevin Brown in an interview after a Man of the Match performance on Sky Sports earlier in the season when he described them as "a team of triers"! That is a little tongue in cheek, but I get the feeling watching them that they are in it together and compete for each other as much as anything else. The Vikings have the luxury of a more settled situation than the Bulls, even with some Twitter talk of interest from down under in Kevin Brown!

This game to me is all about Widnes and how they want to play. They need a single point to make mathematically certain they can't be pipped to the play-offs by Hull KR or Wakefield and if they stay with Bradford and play their own game the Bradford confidence is paper thin and they should claim the points at a canter.

Bradford -10 points for me in the betting and I expect the Vikings to cover that with some to spare.
Bradford 12 Widnes 26

Salford Red Devils against London Broncos

To the A J Bell stadium Salford for the Red Devils against London Broncos on Sunday in the penultimate fixture of 2014 for both these teams. I have to admit in trying to frame this preview compared to the action at the top of the table, it has a little "after the lord mayor's show" feel to it I am sorry to say.

Both teams coming off the back of poor performances and disappointing defeats to say the least there is a question about what on earth each of these teams are playing for? Salford are at odds with everything it seems, including themselves and I find it hard to preview or predict them in any way. They are the classic "on paper" team, on paper they're top four material all night and all day but there is clearly something not happening throughout the dynamic. Dr K may not be to everyone's taste, but he has given the game and the club a profile and as a fan, I would like to see financial power Salford enjoy for my own club no question, you don't build new stadia with history and heritage, you build them with money! The juxtaposition being that you can't fill them with money or make teams play with money. More speculation this week of player unrest and difficulties in the squad culminating in the "mutual consent" agreement that Gareth Hock will depart helps little.

London having broken their duck have resumed relatively normal service and 2014 has been over for them as a campaign since April in my opinion, everything for the Bronco's is about 2015 and beyond and I wish them well. Their plight has done nothing for the game, their profile or the sport as a whole this season which is a shame. I feel sure the good people of Leigh, Doncaster, Featherstone, Sheffield and a host of others will be out in 2015 to prove that London had been taking up 'their' top flight, on that basis their biggest challenge may be yet to come! I had the pleasure of speaking to Joey Grima briefly and visiting their facility at Barnet they are using recently and knowing the energy of Andy Henderson, Jason Loubser, Joey himself and some unsung people in the background the likes of John Keyes I wish them well.

As a prediction it is crystal clear that whatever 19 Salford put out will be more than capable of beating London, which I wholeheartedly expect to happen. First 20 minutes would be massive in this one, if London could get a score or two and get the Devils bickering it could be tighter than people think. As a bookie, I would probably have Salford -20 but sheer faith and affection alone wants London to stay well inside that.
Red Devils 26 Broncos 4

Huddersfield vs Hull FC-

We're getting to the point in the season now where league positions are being consolidated, leaving some teams in the peculiar position of having nothing to play for anymore but pride. A sort of 'limbo' between the end of this season and the next. This is the position in which Hull FC now find themselves: 5 points adrift of the final playoff spot with just 4 points to play for, and miles ahead of relegation. The old cliché dictates that they should now play with freedom; throwing off the shackles and throwing the ball about left right and centre. We've seen Hull turn over big teams before this season, for example beating St Helens, and last week's thrashing of their neighbours will see them high in confidence for this one.

Huddersfield, however, are very strong at home and they are one of the form teams in the competition with a firm eye still on 2nd spot. Unlike Hull they do still have lots to play for and know that they need to bounce back after throwing away a commanding lead last week against fellow contenders Warrington. I feel that Huddersfield will prove to be too strong up front and too fast in the backs for this Hull FC team, who will nonetheless put up a good fight.

Prediction: Huddersfield by 10 points.

Hull KR vs Catalan Dragons.

Anyone who spends their days staring at the table right now (and being a Cas fan, I certainly do) will know that this is a huge game. Hull KR are only just in reach of the playoffs, and Catalan are one of the teams they still have a chance of catching. Consistency has been a major problem for Hull KR this season who have a bad knack of backing up good performances with hammerings (not going to name the obvious-recent one) and visa-versa. They have to be fired up for this one. The equation is simple: win, or the season is over.

They're playing the incredibly two-faced Catalan Dragons. Two-faced because, whereas they are fantastic at home, they have proved very-beatable away. Obviously travel has a lot to do with this, and I can't think of many more difficult away journeys for the French team than travelling all the way to Hull. In their favour they do have some of the most outstanding players in the division, with on-fire forward Elliot Whitehead and the try-machine Morgan Escare at full-back providing much of their threat. However, deciding to leave out one of their senior players in Leon Pryce could cost them at this stage of the season. I'm going to go for a good Hull KR victory, keeping them in touch of the playoffs and Catalan's spot in it.

My prediction: Hull KR by 18 points.

Castleford Tigers Vs Wakefield Wildcats.

I promise to be totally unbiased throughout this. Maybe.

I almost cannot believe I am typing these words with just two games to go, but Cas are now the last team who can keep up with Saints at the top, unless they beat Warrington on Thursday (that game was still to be played at the time of writing this). Even if that is no longer a possibility, being able to finish 2nd just 12 months after coming roughly where Salford are now is phenomenal, and much of that has been down to the Tigers' blistering home form. They play with confidence, and at times arrogance, throwing the ball from left to right and are the 2nd top scorers in the league. Combine this with players like Daryl Clark, who has the ability to turn games on their heads in mere seconds, and the Tigers have established themselves quite rightfully as one of the best teams in the league this season.

Wakefield too are coming on strong at this point. James Webster has his team playing fantastic rugby, and last week's demolition of Salford proved that this game is by no means a given for Cas. Wakefield will come to Cas, as they always do, determined to get one over their neighbours and reclaim the Adam Watene trophy. They too have some interest in the Play-offs so I expect them to be fired up. This is going to be a fiery, high-scoring affair, which I think will see Cas prevail and all-but secure a top-four spot.

My prediction: Cas by 14 points.



The Grand Final Countdown, By Mark (@wilko2205)

What a year it's been so far. The end to Super League XIX is looking to be the best in recent memory. We're halfway through the penultimate round of the regular season, so at this point it should be pretty clear who's winning the League Leaders' Shield, who's finishing in the top four and who's getting the remaining play-off places, right? Wrong. Let's have a look how things stand.

Let's start with those final two play-off positions. Now compared to the other spots, these look the most secure right now. Realistically, short of two monumental defeats, Catalans are safe due to their points difference. Conversely, unless Wakefield can pull off about 20 tries in their last two games, they're not making 8th place. It seems the last play-off spot is between Widnes and Hull KR. In order for the Rovers to clinch that vital spot, they'll have to beat Catalans and Wakefield, and hope that Widnes lose at their visits to Bradford and Salford. If this happens, however, they'll be guaranteed a play-off position due to their superior points difference. Again, stranger things have happened, but that's two difficult fixtures. This one may be staying as it is.

Fortunately for the neutrals, and agonisingly for those involved, the top 6 is not that predictable. We now know that only Saints and Cas can win the League Leaders' Shield, but Cas aren't even guaranteed a Top 4 spot yet. At the moment the top 5: Saints, Wigan, Warrington, Castleford and Huddersfield are all well within their rights to believe a play-off spot is in their reach. Every one of those teams knows that if they win their remaining games, they are guaranteed a top four spot. For Leeds however, it may be out of their hands. Following their defeat at Wigan, the Rhinos need Cas and Huddersfield to lose both of their games for them to have a chance at those qualifying play-offs.

As for the top spot, we may be onto one of the most incredible stories Super League has ever produced. Last year, Castleford Tigers finished 12th. The highest they've ever finished in Super League is 5th, which they did in 1999 and 2000. At the end of last season, they lost their only household name in Rangji Chase, who joined Salford, leaving Cas with some blokes called Finn and Sneyd or something. Not to say Sneyd's not up to the job, but the bloke doesn't know where to look when he's kicking. Hopefully they can avoid relegati...oh right. Turns out, fresh from a Wembley appearance, they're the only challengers to St Helens' League Leaders' Shield. When Chase left, the Tigers were finally able to shake that awful "One-man-Team" reputation that had started. Fantastic players such as Clark, Shenton, Huby, Carney and our two aforementioned half-backs have been given the opportunity to shine. And you have to feel all the neutrals (maybe not Wakey fans!) are hoping that they can pull off an upset and finish top ahead of Saints. But after Saints were denied the title by the boys up the road, Cas may have the same fate. They have to beat their local rivals this weekend to be in with a chance of top-spot-glory. But let's say they do. Let's say Huddersfield beat Hull FC. Let's say it really does come down to the wire. What happens?

This last round will be a cracker. Of the top 5 teams, 4 are playing one another in the final round. Wigan vs Warrington, Huddersfield vs St Helens, which has almost worked out as two mini-finals with a whole lot at stake. Thursday night the winner of Wigan vs Warrington will be guaranteed a top-4 spot. The loser will have to hope the other fixtures go well. This is always a great game, and is a replay of 2014's Grand Final. On the Friday, St Helens visit Huddersfield. If Saints win, they finish top of the league, and award the loser of Thursday's game a top 4 spot. If Giants win, they get that top four spot, guaranteed. Last time Saints were in Huddersfield they won under controversial circumstances (putting it lightly) when Danny Brough's drop goal was mistakenly called wide by referee Phil Bentham, knocking the Giants out of the Challenge Cup. Huddersfield will absolutely be looking for revenge. This will be a fantastic game, no question!

Here's how I think it's going to go down.

- Castleford
- St. Helens
- Wigan
- Huddersfield
- Warrington
- Leeds
- Catalans
- Widnes

And don't even get me started on the play-offs.



CHAMPIONSHIP COMING SOON

Dan Fowler Previews every round 26 game!

The most important round of all, the 450k prize pot of 2nd place is still to be decided, in conjunction with the last relegation spot. Let's get down to it..

Doncaster v Batley Bulldogs preview -

Both teams will be fighting to the death, for different reasons altogether. Doncaster have a great shout of getting 2nd place, this depends on whether Featherstone, in second, fail to beat Keighley at Cougar Park. Batley, with their three points reinstated, find themselves in 9th place and simply need to win to secure safety.

Doncaster sent themselves into third place with a win over fellow top end team Halifax, in pretty convincing fashion too. A 39-18 win at the Keepmoat was exactly what Paul Cooke wanted from his team, Cooke even got two tries for himself. A half time score of 19-6 to Donny set the platform perfectly, tries came from Emmett, Cooke, Scott and a drop goal from the aforementioned Cooke. Andy Bracek got the only score for Fax. When Cooke got his second try of the game on 50 minutes, the game seemed completely over. Luke Adamson and Paul Mennell got two tries back for Halifax and put the scores to 23-18 but Donny would have the final say. Three Doncaster tries in ten minutes would put the bonus point beyond any doubt, Dave Scott got his second try on 70 minutes, then Steve Snitch scored both of his tries on the 74th and 80th minute respectively. If the South Yorkshire side show as much instinct and wit in the attacking department against Batley, they'll have done their job and be hoping Keighley throw a massive spanner in **F e a t h e r s t o n e ' s w o r k s .**

Everybody associated with Batley Bulldogs will have had many sleepless nights over the last few weeks. One because of their precarious position in the league, and two due to their three point deduction over Jacob Fairbank's ineligibility. But it seems clearer skies are on the horizon, the three points have been reinstated and the Dogs go into their final game with Doncaster with confidence, after a 42-0 drubbing of Swinton Lions at Mount Pleasant. Without influential prop forward Byron Smith, Batley didn't seem to miss him one bit as the West Yorkshire side blew their opposition away with a barrage

of try scoring. Only 14-0 up at half time from scores by Alex Brown, Sam Scott and Anthony Nicholson, Batley always looked comfortable and their second half performance proved that. Four more tries would be added to the Batley total after half time, adding gloss to the final score. Four pointers came from winger Wayne Reittie, stand off Ben Black, recently returned centre Ayden Faal and Alex Bretherton. A 42-0 FT score typified the no nonsense way Batley went about things in a must win game to keep their Championship status alive.

This Sunday at the Keepmoat would be the perfect game for a neutral to go to. The home side need to win to get at least a chance of second place, the away side need to win to keep their Championship status for another season. It's definitely one for the old cliché, 'It's all to play for!'

Halifax v Barrow Raiders preview -

Halifax return back to The Shay after a disappointing last round against Doncaster, capping off two weeks of no bonus points against two teams now above themselves. Third place is the best that Halifax can realistically hope for now, a very hopeful Fax fanbase two weeks ago can now be found dispirited and downbeat. You can see the overview of the Halifax game against Doncaster in the **D o n n y v B a t l e y p r e v i e w .**

Barrow gained their 4th victory of the season at the weekend with a great 36-16 win over Anthony Murray's North Wales Crusaders. The half time score was 18-12 to Barrow and many were predicting a close finish but this wasn't to be, a 18-4 second half win for Barrow saw them run away with the three points. But the game can be misunderstood, Barrow scored their three second half tries from the 74th to 80th minute. Matt Reid scored for the Crusaders in the 47th minute to make it 18-16 and the score stayed that way till the 74th minute when Barrow turned on the scoring. Aaron Lloyd, Dan Toal and Nathan Mossop all scored in the six minute period which stopped Crusaders getting a bonus point. A 36-16 win gives the Barrow camp confidence going into the last game, it's mathematically impossible for the Raiders to

not finish bottom but they're still fighting for results, as round 25 showed

[Keighley Cougars v Featherstone Rovers preview -](#)

Very similar to Doncaster v Batley game, both teams going hammer and tongs but for differing reasons.

Keighley Cougars need a win to secure safety but will be up against it v Featherstone who need a win to secure 2nd place. If Keighley lose, they'll be hoping Doncaster beat Batley by more than 12, or that Whitehaven lose to Swinton away, which is unlikely in my opinion. Keighley's last game came against Dewsbury, a bonus point for the Cougars troubles. 3 tries to nil, 18-0, to Dewsbury at HT. Ben Hellewell, Ryan Hepworth and Kieran Hyde with the scores. Danny Jones scored the first of the second half, but no comeback was to be had when Anthony Thackeray got a try to make it 24-6 after 70 minutes. Paul Handforth got a try in the 76th minute which was converted to give Keighley an important bonus point.

Featherstone, similar to Keighley, got a bonus point in their last match. Unfortunate for Rovers that they met an in form Sheffield who romped to a seven try victory. Three of Sheffield's tries came from former halfback Kyle Briggs who moved to South Yorkshire mid-season. Andy Kain opened the scoring for Fev after nine minutes but Briggs gave Eagles the lead five minutes later. After that, it was all Eagles and by scored and the one score separation continued. Menzie Yere busted a tackle and set Briggs up for his hat-trick and the game for Sheffield. 40-28 FT despite a Michael Knowles field goal attempt in the dying embers.

half time, Sheffield had registered three more scores to give them a 22-4 lead. A try for Misi Taulapapa on the wing put Sheffield a full score ahead at 10-4 before Lulu-Togagae scored two tries. Two conversions later and it was 22-4. It was a rather back and forth second stanza with Rovers looking likely to level scores up on more than one occasion, but Eagles always nicked a try from somewhere. Luke Teasdale scored first for Rovers before Duane Straugheir picked Ian Hardman's pocket to go over for the Eagles. Sharp and Teasdale again scored for Rovers and one score separated the sides. Kyle Briggs scored his second of the afternoon to put two scores between the sides before Chris Annakin

So, yet again, it's all to play for this Sunday at Cougar Park. Keighley have labelled the match 'the biggest game at Cougar Park in 20 years', it's as big for Keighley as it is for Rovers!

[North Wales Crusaders v Leigh Centurions preview -](#)

Relegated side v League Leaders. But don't get it wrong, it's still a big game for both. North Wales will be looking for a season ending win, giving the current crop of players confidence going into the Championship 1 season. Leigh will be wanting to go unbeaten bar one all season, giving the Leythers more belief going into the playoff games that await them. North Wales Crusaders fans can see their overview of the disappointing Barrow game in the Halifax v Barrow preview.

Leigh Centurions celebrated their Heritage Day with a 22-12 win over Workington Town, a team who'll be mightily unlucky to go down on the last day. Leigh were 16-6 up at halftime thanks to tries from Ryan Brierley, Adam Higson and Liam Kay, two goals from Ridyard adding to the Centurions tally. Carl Forber scored Town's only first half try, they would double their tries for the day later on. Brierley got his second of the day and the game was over with Town hardly threatening, Jason Mossop got the last try of the game for Town, gifting them a bonus point.



Workington Town v Dewsbury Rams -

Two teams currently in the playoffs will be wanting to finish the season off in the best way possible. Dewsbury are nailed on for 6th place but could get 5th if Sheffield slip up at Rochdale. Workington, if they win, can only stay 7th at best. A loss, however, could mean relegation if Keighley, Batley and Whitehaven all win convincingly and Town don't get a bonus point. Unlikely but could happen. Glenn Morrison has done a great job at Dewsbury and has completed his first transfer for next season already, Matty Wildie from Wakefield will make the move to Tetley's Stadium. Rumours include Patch Walker going back to Tetley's Stadium from Sheffield too. On the Workington front, Phil Veivers has done a miracle job at Derwent Park, the unbeaten streak they were on that ended a few weeks ago has seen the team almost secure safety. Town have been keeping a lot of their players on contracts so the team spirit that's already there will remain for seasons to come. Can Workington get a win and secure playoff rugby or will Dewsbury throw a spanner in the works and make Town fans nervous for other results?

Both clubs previous games have already been talked about. Find the Workington game against Leigh in the North Wales v Leigh preview. Find the Dewsbury v Keighley game in the Keighley v Featherstone preview.

Swinton Lions v Whitehaven preview. -

A relegated side v a side wanting to avoid it. Swinton Lions will be hoping to go into next season with a win at the end of this one, which could condemn Whitehaven to relegation. Whilst Whitehaven still have a chance of getting into the playoffs, they'll be keeping their eyes on the games at Doncaster and Keighley, hoping the former win and Featherstone do the same at Cougar Park. Whitehaven's current situation comes from the three points reinstated by the RFL to Batley due to Jacob Fairbank and his so called ineligibility. Dave Woods has complained about this in the papers but his team seemed to be on top form against Rochdale in Round 25. Swinton gave Batley nothing to worry about, even with Kevin Penny and Jordan Burke in the ranks. If they do the same against Haven, the hosts will be in a whole heap of trouble.

Both clubs previous games have already been over-viewed. Find the Whitehaven win at Rochdale in the Rochdale v Sheffield preview, whilst you can find Batley's hammering of Swinton in the Doncaster v Batley preview.



Rochdale Hornets v Sheffield Eagles preview. —

Rochdale Hornets v Sheffield Eagles preview. Rochdale are already relegated and this will be the last game Fiji international Ryan Millard plays for the club, he's off to top end club Featherstone next season. Sheffield come into the game after beating Millard's new club in a good fashion, read more about this in the Keighley v Featherstone preview.

Rochdale went up to Cumbria to face relegation threatened Whitehaven and were beaten convincingly 48-12 by Dave Woods's side. 30-0 to the home side at HT, Ian Talbot's men were just wanting to secure some pride and dignity in the second half. Tries for Haven came from Neil Thorman (2x) Jesse Joe Parker, Jordan Hand and Jordan Burns. The second half came around and Rochdale got their two tries in the 71st and 75th minute, both from Chris Baines. Whilst Haven got an extra three second half tries to their ever growing try scoring tally. Jordan Burns got his second with Brad Crellin and James Newton which secured a very good day at the Recre office for Whitehaven, a 48-12 win for the hosts.

Two weeks ago Sheffield trounced Rochdale 48-0 at Bawtry Road so you'd expect Eagles to add to their five win streak and go into the playoff games with six wins on the trot. But it's Rugby League, who knows?





GETTING TO KNOW — JOSH GRIFFIN

This week, I was lucky enough to speak to Salford's number 39, Josh Griffin and ask him a few questions. Here's the full interview—
Hi Josh, thanks again for doing this in your spare time. I appreciate it!

First of all, I'd like to ask about your time over in rugby union. How would you compare it to rugby league and do you think it helped you progress as a player?

My time in rugby union was something I always wanted to do and think I will go back eventually, obviously I played it from a young age and didn't play league 'till I was 16. It's a lot more fun to play than it is to watch, but the game is a lot different than meets the eye. League is a lot faster and much more physical, it's definitely helped me as a player in all the small aspects of the game, from passing, catching and kicking as they spend a lot of time on these things in training.

What attracted you to join the Salford Red Devils side from rugby union?

The original plan was to go back to union after my off season had finished, but I went down to Batley Bulldogs to give league another crack and to keep my fitness up. I played well enough there that Super League teams started sniffing around again, but Salford were the first people to offer me an opportunity to come on trial whilst still getting paid by union and playing for Batley so it was a weird situation. After my trial had ended they offered me a deal to the end of the season.

How have you found your time at Salford this year? There's definitely been some ups and downs for the club, this season, if you don't mind me saying.

As I've been at Salford for a short period, I haven't had the full effect of the ups and downs of the full season, it's just been good being back in full time environment, and obviously being around the players that Salford have is something special.

Hope you don't mind me asking but what do you make of Koukash's recent announcement of cancelling the players of the year awards at the end of this season? Do you think this could affect the players negatively?

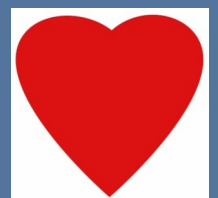
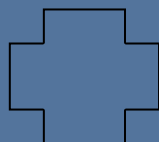
His announcement comes on the back of another very disappointing performance, the club are very ambitious and the players haven't performed well enough. It's a decision we fully understand and respect.

In a fight, who would win, you or your brother Darrell?

That's a tricky one. He's got the size and I've got the speed, depends how big the ring was if I could get out of the way...

What would your last meal on earth be?

Would have to be an English breakfast with all the trimmings. Black pudding, hash browns, the lot!



What was your first ever car like?

My first car was a VW polo that was lowered, big alloys and all the interior sprayed white and had a mean sound system in it. I wrote it off after 3 months haha.!

What's the most embarrassing song on your phone/ipod haha?

To be fair, the music is on point. I don't have anything embarrassing but there is one direction on it which the ex downloaded!...

What's your all-time favourite film?

Has to be Toy Story!

Chinese or Indian Takeaway?

Tricky one as I love both...gonna go Chinese!

What is currently your favourite TV programme?

This is gonna be strange, but love Dallas. My mum got me into it ha! New series starts on Thursday!

Do you have a big fear of anything?

Being on top of deep water makes me really uncomfortable, doesn't matter if it's a lake, river or sea, I'm always curious what's underneath me ha, but if I'm scuba diving I'm fine haha.

If you could have just one superpower, what would it be?

I'd love to be able to teleport, just be so much easier to get places.

What's the most embarrassing thing that has ever happened to you haha?

I've been lucky so far and can't really think that's ever happened to me where I've been embarrassed. Keep my self away from those situations!

Away from rugby league, what do you like to do?

Obviously most rugby players say golf which is true, but I also do personal training and I love helping my clients achieve their goals and help people change their lives (joshogriffo on Twitter for details hahaha). Also like to get to Leeds city Wall, where I get to do a bit of rock climbing.

What's in store in the future for you, Josh?

I've recently signed a 2-year deal at Salford so I'm in Super League for the next 2 years at least so I'm going to concentrate on that. I do one day want to go back to union but not anytime soon.

That's all the questions! Thanks again to Josh Griffin (@joshogriffo) for taking the time out to answer the questions! Hope you enjoyed getting to know Josh Griffin!



Who would you like to see feature in issue 3? Tweet us your thoughts @League1895

YOUR SAY!-

I decided to ask you guys a few questions and predict a few things via email. "Your Say" this week features Andy Sharpe, Tim Nuttall, Mark Stephenson and Chris Healey!

Who's been the most surprising team in 2014 and why?



Has to be Castleford. Daryl Powell has done an amazing job.

Chris



Tim

That has to be Castleford this year, many predicted they wouldn't even make the 8, let alone be in with a chance of claiming the league leaders shield. I have to say, I thought they would make the play offs at the start of year, Powell put together a strong squad and had made a big impact last year. But I don't think even Cas fans would have pictured themselves in the top 4, plus a trip to Wembley.

MARK

Castleford- After losing Chase and so many squad changes many tipped them for relegation (not me btw) but they have been the Team of the Year imo

ANDY

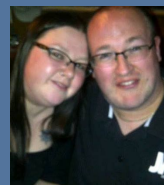
There can be no doubt that Castleford Tigers are the surprise team of 2014. After replacing Ian Millward with Daryl Powell early in 2013 they never really kicked on and finished in 12th place with just 9 wins from 27 games. However, they have been a revelation in 2014 and stand second with just 2 league games to go and still in with a chance of winning the League Leaders shield. Add in a Challenge Cup final appearance for the first time since 1992, albeit losing to Leeds Rhinos, and the exciting style of play that Powell employs and the talented players he has brought in such as Marc Sneyd and the unheralded Liam Finn added to the brilliance of Daryl Clark and Luke Dorn and a fearsome forward pack and undoubtedly you have the coach and team of the year.

Which players have stood out to you this year in the Super League?



Chris

Jamie Peacock and Chris Hill have been outstanding. Daryl Clark has had a phenomenal season also and would be my Man of Steel.



Tim

This is quite difficult, without wishing to be accused of being bias, I think Jamie Peacock should be MOS this season. He is just immense every time he plays. He must average something like 30-35 tackles per game and around 15 hit ups.

Daryl Clark has been brilliant to watch, he has great vision around the ruck and must be a half backs dream. He has big shoes to fill at Warrington, but I think he will bring a new edge to them.

I have also been very impressed with Alex Walmsley (St Helens) he really gets them on the front foot in games, very big and strong and glad he is around the England set up.

MARK

Daryl Clark ,Zak Hardaker ,Peacock ,Chris Hill ,Burgess ,Makinson & Ryan Hall.

ANDY

The main 2 players that stand out in my mind are Tommy Makinson and Daryl Clark. The Saints winger has had an outstanding year and the way he has finished off a multitude of back line plays with his brilliant dives in tight positions at the corner flag to score match winning or decisive tries is thrilling to watch. Castleford hooker Clark, at times, is unplayable. He has such speed of thought and foot that he is exhilarating to watch and I would love to see him take on the Aussies and Kiwis in the Four Nations. He is one of the few players that makes you nervous every time he gets the ball against your team as you know something will happen if he has his hands on the ball. The only downside for Castleford this year is the fact that Clark will be terrifying defences in the primrose and blue of the Warrington Wolves from next year.

Which team do you think will go all the way and win the Grand Final?



Leigh and Bradford

Tim

MARK Leigh & Bradford.



Chris

I think Leeds have the best chance, however the Challenge Cup win may see them tire.



Tim

Obviously I hope my team Leeds will manage to do it again, it won't be easy though, I think this years play offs could be the best ever. I have said all season that the Grand Final will be Wigan v Leeds, so will have to stand by that, and would love Leeds to pull it off. But I think Wigan will take some stopping.

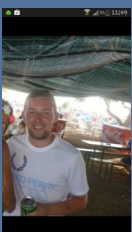
I don't think St Helens should be written off quite so easily, whilst they are without their pivots, they have a huge pack who will give anyone a game. It may not be the nicest St's team to watch, but they shouldn't be discounted.

MARK Leeds or Wigan

As much as I would love them too, I think the Tigers will fall short – just as Huddersfield did last year and will do so again this year. Wigan do not have the aura of invincibility that they had in 2013 and Warrington, although improving as the season goes on, I believe will not have enough to improve on 2 Grand Final defeats. This leaves us with the old stagers at St. Helens and Leeds Rhinos. My gut feeling is that the Rhinos will complete a League and Cup double as Wigan did in 2013

ANDY

Which teams do you think could get promoted next year from the Championship?



Chris

Leigh have the best chance judging from this seasons form. Also they will be operating as a full time club. Featherstone should have a good chance also. It will be interesting to see how they get on against London and Bradford.

ANDY

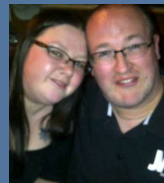
You have to look at the 2 relegated teams, Bradford Bulls and London Broncos. I believe the Broncos have recruited very well and the Bulls have shown in the last few weeks that they are a Super League quality side even though they will not be in the competition in 2015. I cannot see beyond these 2 sides although of the existing Championship sides, Leigh Centurions and Featherstone Rovers are the 2 most likely to cause an upset.

Finally, sum up this year's Super League competition in 5 words!



Chris

An unpredictable season of change.



Tim

Unpredictable
Exciting
Competitive
Controversial
Nervy!

MARK

Close ,Obstruction ,Refs ,Trys ,inconsistent

ANDY

Inconsistent, thrilling, disappointing, exciting, obstructive.

Thanks to Andy, Mark, Tim and Chris for getting in touch and featuring in this month's magazine! If you would like to feature in issue 3's "Your Say" be sure to get in touch @League1895!!

RUMOURS!

Rumours, every Rugby League fan loves them. So what better than to have a whole page on them?! Here's the latest rumours in the NRL and Super League!

Darius Boyd has told the Newcastle Knights that he won't be playing for them again, and it seems likely that he is set to join the Brisbane Broncos.

Frank Pritchard could be joining Hull FC soon-in-the future ...

Hull KR have released fullback, Greg Eden, from the last year of his contract so he can join an NRL side. Brisbane Broncos are currently the favourites to sign him.

Gold-Coast Titans boss, Neil Henry, has expressed an interest in Brisbane forward, Ben Hannant if the 29-year old can't agree a new contract at Brisbane.

Reece Robinson looks set to leave the Canberra Raiders, at the end of the current season.

Russell Packer, who is currently serving time in Lithgow Jail for a vicious assault, is being targeted by the Brisbane Broncos.

Huddersfield Giants forward, Jason Chan, looks set to return to the NRL after rejecting a contract which could have seen him sign a permanent deal with Hull KR.

Reports that Terry Campese has been told by the Raiders that he won't be playing first grade football for the NRL side next season. It's likely that he could be playing in the NSW cup for Mounties next season.

Raiders could re-sign play-maker, Sam Williams, who left the club at the end of the 2013 season to join the St George Illawarra Dragons.

Super Rugby side, Queensland Reds, are after North Queensland Cowboys and Australia representative prop, Jason Taumalolo.

Kurtley Beale and Israel Falaou have both been linked to the Canterbury Bulldogs

Reports that the Cronulla Sharks in the NRL are after English and Widnes play-maker, Kevin Brown.

Tim Moltzen, Jack Buchanan, Kurtis Rowe, Nathan Brown and Joel Luani have reportedly been given permission by the Tigers to leave the club, with Blake Austin in the same boat but set to link with the Raiders .

Sam Smeaton is being linked from Featherstone Rovers to Sheffield Eagles in the Championship

Gareth Hock, who recently handed in a transfer request at Salford Red Devils, is being linked with Hull FC and the Castleford Tigers for next season.

While Gareth O'Brien has been linked with the Bradford Bulls, Scott Dureau has been linked to the Warrington Wolves.

Paul Aiton could be on his way out of Leeds, reports suggest.

Castleford's Craig Huby and Jamie Ellis look like they're on their way to Huddersfield next season

Rumoured to London: Siosaia Vave (Cronulla, pictured), Luke Adamson (Halifax), , Patetisio Pelo (Skolars). (via @LondonFaithful).



Leeds Rhinos End 15 Years Of Hurt, by Oliver Roby

Ryan Hall put in a man of the match performance as Leeds Rhinos ended their long wait for a Challenge Cup triumph, overcoming Castleford in the Wembley showpiece to win the cup for the first time in 15 years.

Leeds wing man Tom Briscoe crossed in the opening minutes before Daryl Clark replied for Cas, but Danny McGuire added a second try for Leeds and Ryan Hall scored a vital pair of his own as Oliver Holmes' score was in vain for the Tigers.

Rhinos captain Kevin Sinfield added three successful conversions while McGuire added a drop goal in the closing minutes to secure the title.

While Hall took the headlines with his Lance Todd Trophy winning performance, it was a near faultless team effort as Leeds lifted the Challenge Cup for the 12th time in their 119 year history.

Leeds flew out of the blocks early on, with Tom Briscoe going over in the fourth minute after the Rhinos worked hard to power themselves up to the opposition 10, and the former Hull FC man finished off a flowing move on the right edge. Sinfield added the extras.

But Cas were not to be deterred and they enjoyed a good spell of possession, using three consecutive sets to camp themselves on the Leeds line and, after Justin Carney had a try ruled out, they finally scored with their last chance of an assault on the Leeds line.

Marc Sneyd directed a cut-back kick through the defence on the last tackle and hooker Clark gathered before twisting his way past Zak Hardaker to to dive over.

Sneyd flashed a simple conversion attempt wide and five minutes later, Leeds extended their advantage to eight.

Rob Burrow prodded a kick up into the Wembley sun and Luke Dorn stayed flat-footed as he lost sight of the ball and a flying Danny McGuire pounced, climbing high to dive over on the left.

Sinfield added the extras once again, taking the scores to 12-4 after a frantic opening 17 minutes.

On 25 minutes, the Rhinos were in again and it was Hall who produced a sensational try, born out of sheer brute force.

McGuire moved the ball wide to a stationary Hall and there looked to be nothing on with Kirk Dixon and Luke Dorn standing in his path, but he simply charged through the two men, forcing his way over for a truly memorable score, his 21st of the campaign.

With the scores at 16-4 after the first 40 minutes, Cas needed to score the next try to keep their chances of success alive and they obliged almost immediately.

On 47 minutes, Tigers captain Michael Shenton stepped through the Leeds right edge and found fellow Cas youth product Oliver Holmes on his inside, who showed a terrific turn of pace to evade two would be tacklers and go over beneath the posts. Liam Finn converted.

The next 20 minutes was a real battle as both sides looked to wrestle control of the match, but Leeds finally broke clear with just under 15 minutes left thanks to Hall's incredible strength which proved decisive once again. He took on no less than four defenders as he muscled his way over from close range.

That was Hall's fourth score in as many final appearances at Wembley and Sinfield made it three from four conversions to give the Blue and Amber a 12 point buffer going into the final 10 minutes.

McGuire managed a late drop goal to bring about a party atmosphere for the Leeds fans in the closing moments as the club's 'Golden Era' finally got its' hands on the final piece of the jigsaw – **a Challenge Cup title.**



RL on 'Sky'-Grievous Inanity and the Gruesome Twosome.

BY CHRISTOPHER HENSON

Like our great game, television and sport presentation has evolved over the last twenty years. Ideals and methods potent decades ago are considered brash, un-becoming and even offensive now—just ask Andy Gray. So when it comes to the greatest sport on Earth, why should we settle for anything less than exciting and enterprising?

Rugby League. A sport that, having brought joy to millions over the years for its take-no-prisoners, hard and honest nature, I believe, holds all of its appeal in two things: the toughness of the sport, and the uniqueness of the sport. It is then only natural to expect that a sport that stands apart from any other would be presented to the viewing public in a way that reflects its fundamental greatness and (forgive me for sounding bias or aloof here) superiority over other sports. As such, I find the unappealing shambles that is the 'Sky Sports' presentation of the game to be, putting it mildly, hugely aggravating.

As an avid supporter of a 'Super League' team (that shall remain nameless—impartiality and the like) I can recall seeing my first ever game some years ago, and just being blown away by the speed, excitement and general disregard for pain and adversity on show. Following this, I attended games occasionally, purchasing my first season ticket a couple of years ago. It should be noted that it is only until I purchased a season ticket that I became an 'avid' fan, immersing myself in the game, becoming familiar with its rules, history, its current plight, the nature of the beast with a working knowledge of every team in 'Super League'. Unfortunately, it was around this time that I also watched my first game on 'Sky'.

The wondrous, fast-flowing action of the game I fell in love with was boiled down to a series of hyperbolic platitudes from our 'expert' analyst and a commentator who, while I don't have a problem with him himself not having been a player, feels the urge to force his opinion on every single moment in the game that is even slightly contentious or, worse, exciting. The 'gruesome twosome' are not only caricatures, but border on self-parody.

Here's a nostalgic analogy. The great Eddie Waring, while he did have a tendency to grate, was still a charismatic and entertaining talker, and was always good value. Memories stream back from the 1968 'Watersplash' final and the famous 'Oh, I feel for the lad' at the games dramatic climax. Can you imagine how it would have played out if 'Sky's' team had done the coverage? Indulge me: 'Boy, he's got to get the message out—there is water on the pitch.', 'We're nearing the end of this first stanza, and I reckon that the Wakefield outfit has got to start

thinking about the D-R-O-P G-O-A-L.', 'The ball's splashing all over, it's a right schamozzle!', 'Oh, I don't believe it. This hombre stepped up to the plate and put it wide, that's an N-O C-O-N-V-E-R-S-I-O-N', and so on (the last one may be a bit of an exaggeration, but you get the point). Instead of being immortalised, that match would have simply been stored away and wiped faster than you can say Peter Cook and Dudley Moore.

I'm not breaking new ground here, either. After the 2012 'World Club Challenge', Jonathan Liew of the 'Telegraph' published an article about how our 'Sky' caricatures are just that: caricatures of what people in the South think people in the North are like. His article hit the nail on the head, and should really have been heeded, as now we find ourselves still with our arresting, brutish team who, instead of showing our great game for what it is, cloud it in a mist of cliché's and out-dated views of a game that is different to the one they played in.

For the sake of fairness, I must point out some of the things that 'Sky' do right, one of them being the fact that not every presenter reverts to the type set since 'Super League' began, and that is due to the fact that two of them have played in and experienced 'Super League' and the modern game for what it is. They are also younger, and, at the risk of sounding slightly ageist, this makes them decidedly more relatable for a younger viewing audience—one that will have to carry the baton (some might say poisoned chalice) of rugby league support in the foreseeable future. As such, we need to keep them interested, and that means making the television coverage, for want of a better phrase, 'down with the kids'.

This is not a smear campaign. I do not detest or despise the people who bring us our weekly...ordeal of Rugby League Football, but I think that we have to admit that the sport's presentation is sub-par at best and, please forgive me for repeating myself, but I feel this point has to be hammered home. The endless platitudes and slightly jittery talking to the camera and discussion during matches of pretty much anything but the match itself make what should be an enjoyable, entertaining experience compounded by our sporting spectacle (the general low quality and intensity of some 'Super League' matches is an issue best discussed by someone much more experienced and involved than I) a chore, with thousands of our fans' fingers reaching feverishly for the saviour that is the mute button.

This may come as a surprise, but I myself do not buy into the whole 'Sky' thing (partially out of a belief in better ways to spend my time, partially out of general skinny-ness), so you might think of this making me ignorant or uninformed on the subject, but I see it as having had such little exposure, and still forming these opinions, means that even in my brash and subjective state, something has to be amiss. And being just an avid fan of the sport, and being regularly exposed to the viewpoints of fellow fans, I can assure you I am not alone in these rumblings.

So, in summation, I think it is important that, amidst innumerable problems that always seem to coincide with our game, we do not lose sight of a fundamental issue: television coverage, instead of spreading the game to and enticing a wider audience demographic, is causing unrest and aggravation amongst the people who, I believe, own the sport and truly have its best interests at heart-the fans. Statistics show that 'Sky' has large audience shares for 'Super League' (significantly larger than that of, say, our distant cousin of a fellow code), but that is of no use if our life-long fans will only view games that they can commentate on expletively, with beer in hand, and with no large amount of restraint. On the plus side attendances might rise. On the downside, people might lose sight of phrases such as 'claret' or 'little chip over the top'. Still, it would only be beneficial to have an enterprising, eloquent and, above all else, refreshing team bringing Rugby League into your homes.

As an aside, you will notice there has been no naming and shaming here, and this piece is intended to be tongue-in-cheek. Tongue-in-cheek in the sense that I absolutely mean all of it.



Nihilism in RL-Entrenched pessimism keeps the game in the wars.

By Christopher Henson

Maybe it's a Northern thing, but whenever me and some fellow League fans discuss the game's current plight, whether it's at chess club or gathered at a Noam Chomsky seminar, we only seem to be able to talk about the issues surrounding poor marketing, low-quality competition, Australian superiority or 'Sky's' own Terry Tibbs. As a result, I have begun to ponder; are all of these contributors really to blame for our game's failings, or is it a deep-rooted issue within us fans that we're not happy unless we've got something to complain about?

To quote silent comedian and perennial moustache and hat wearer Charlie Chaplin: 'You'll never find a rainbow if you're looking down'.

This rainbow we can view as taking many forms. In some aspects, it's Rugby League competitions in this country that surpass their Australian counterparts; in others it may be a financially sound sport where no clubs enter administration; then again it may be our game being the most prevalent and popular in this country. But as old Charlie says, it is hard to envisage our game ever reaching any of these dizzying heights if the people involved, our fans, administrators, journalists et al, will insist on continuing to look down.

In my humble opinion, it is understandable that a lot of people want to accentuate the game's negative aspects when commenting on them. After all, bad

news sells quickly, and we all like a good whinge. What I find puzzling is the constant barrage of negativity that comes shooting out whenever we see a lopsided score-line or we lose some superstars, times when instead of being optimistic, identifying areas that need rectifying and building positively towards improving them, all we hear and read, for days on end, is how good the NRL is by comparison, how attendances are dropping, or how the game is too centralised in the North. I'm not saying these problems don't need to be recognised, but if it takes a gobby Northerner to get people to recognise the negativity that runs through our game like a virus, then so be it.

It would be ignorant to suggest that our pessimism has a direct bearing on the development issues within the game, whether they be in an administrative capacity or financially, but my word they have a bearing on how we deal with them.

We have no control over certain issues that arise within our game. But we do have control over our mind-set, and attitudes towards them. We do have control over our personal reactions, and it is those that need addressing, for the game's sake. I mean, 'ee by gum.

SUPER LEAGUE TEAM OF THE MONTH SEPTEMBER

TWEET YOUR TEAM OF THE MONTH TO @LEAGUE1895



HULL DESTROY THE OLD ENEMY

BY @HULLFCFAITHFUL

At a rocking and hostile KC Stadium, Hull FC put to the sword their frequent nemesis, delivering a dominant display – especially in the middle – to record a 28-0 –yes NIL victory.

Led by an outstanding forward pack the Black and Whites were far too good for the Robins, comfortably winning the arm wrestle in a brilliant display. The hosts were sensational from minute one, setting the tone for a fierce contest they simply ran harder and tackled harder.

Some of the hits were bone crunching, a proper derby, with a proper derby atmosphere, the home crowd was as vocal as ever – and the Hull team thrived off it.

Referee James Child was as ever busy with his decisions, and once he gave FC there first penalty and glimpse of field position, they didn't waste it. The recently in-form Kirk Yeaman was on hand to send Fetuli Talanoa in for the game's first score and the place was rocking. Rankin missed the difficult conversion, and it remained 4-0.

It's worth pointing out the Tongan's work rate alone, after all he puts a shift in every week, but last night was different class. Making metres for fun, the powerhouse broke tackles at ease, and was arguably the pick of a brilliant bunch.

Despite the banned shoulder charge, shoulders were flying in left, right and centre. The more Rovers' infringed at the play of the ball, the more it seemed to get Hull fired up. They didn't disappoint, and the huge frame of Setaimata Sa barged his way over to open up a two score lead, despite the attentions of three to four Robins would be 'tacklers'.

At 10-0, Hull were clearly guilty of enjoying themselves, and a promising Rovers attack was vibrantly brought to a swift end by a thunderous hit by Chris Green, for easily one of the biggest cheers of the night. Hull FC were completely on top of their opposition, and a Jordan Rankin penalty extended that lead to twelve going into half time.

The second forty was no different, and on the fuel of Carlsberg's Special Brew, Tom Lineham crossed for the first of his brace, again barging his way over, showing another glimpse of the increasing physicality Hull FC had over Hull KR.

To say Hull just beat Rovers would be a bit naïve, they absolutely battered them, a scuffle followed, and the fans raised the roof. The KC hasn't been like that in years, it was literally rocking, giving a brilliant atmosphere. The Black and Whites were on their feet, the Robins on their bums, they hardly made a noise all night.

Jordan Thompson was next to join in the fun, once again showing his tremendous pace for a forward, rounding off Greg Eden for a superb score. At 22-0 Hull were toying with their opposition, giving a severe marker to what they are capable of.

Despite a difficult few years, one limelight in that period has been Hull's forward pack, and as bold as this statement is, when they're on song, there isn't much better in the competition. Full of grit, graft and determination, they simply wanted it more, and just like they did against St Helens, bruised and controlled their opposition.

The KC was in **party mode** now, and on the back of their minds was keeping that NIL next to Rovers' name permanent. Hull did just that, and Tom Lineham showed how lethal his pace can be, intercepting a looping pass to race eighty metres, despite the attentions of well-known speedster Omari Caro.

That proved to be the game's final score, shamefully so as Richard Horne was denied the fairy-tale end, falling inches short of the line. Never-the-less though, a 28-0 score line was just reward for a Hull FC team which played with vigour, showing tremendous intensity levels worthy of a Hull Derby.

You've missed a trick there Sky, ditching the contest for a higher ranked fixture. Nothing in Super League will compete to that, the hits were massive, the crowd hostile, a brilliant absorbing night of rugby and one that will be remembered for years to come – well in the west side of the city anyway.



The New World Club Challenge Structure

-Your views from Twitter

We at League1895 asked you on twitter what you thought on the brand new World Club Series involving 3 teams from the NRL and 3 teams from the Super League. Mixed responses is what we got:

@SuperLeagueCOYV - "It's new and exciting with a beautiful chance for other teams to shine and prove a point to make a name for themselves but on the other hand it should always be the best RFL team facing the best NRL team. It would show who produces better quality."

@rhinorobinson - "Should be league leaders / challenge cup winners and GF winners then runners up if one team dominates the trophies."

@PopePope64 - "It must be the League winners not the Grand Final winners play the league winners of the NRL this way the two best team play."

@Macca_Leeds— 'What does it mean? Is it now a challenge between SL and NRL? As in is it a three game series and a comp is named a winner? Or are the other two games pointless in the build up to the main champ vs champ game?'

@pastitref - "Great idea long overdue."

@gatwardian - "Wait and see."

@RLLatest— 'A lot of people aren't seeing the positive side of it, but at the end of the day, we could beat 3 NRL aides...imagine that!'

@red_dan— 'so, who benefits? Certainly not anyone outside of the 'big 4', pointless, and dividing the comp more... Wealthiest clubs from both comps straight in, with GF winners to make it look fair, massive divide coming up.'

@pjrobins - "It's just an extension of the new league format are for the top clubs.RL will be happy when only four clubs are left game is dead."

@londonfaithful - "It's an exciting concept to bring the two drifting worlds of rugby league back together. The concept of bringing the best teams in the world together is mouthwatering to a rugby league fan to add to the already exciting 2015 England-NZ series. Glad to see the world of rugby league moving in the right direction finally."

Previous World Club Challenge results (2000-2014):

Melbourne 44-6 St Helens, St Helens 20-18 Brisbane, Bradford 41-26 Newcastle, Sydney 38-0 St Helens, Bradford 22-4 Penrith, Leeds 39-32 Canterbury-Bankstown, Bradford 30-10 Wests, St Helens 18-14 Brisbane, Leeds 11-4 Melbourne, Manly-Warringah 28-20 Leeds, Melbourne 18-10 Leeds, St George 21-15 Wigan, Leeds 26-12 Manly-Warringah, Melbourne 18-14 Leeds, Sydney 36-14 Wigan



**Golborne Parkside Pirates
invite your team to come and try our**

“Tough and Muddy”

Junior Assault Course

Saturday 20th September

For junior rugby teams from the age of 6 up to and including the under 10's a team challenge of strength, agility, mud, and water but most of all FUN.

A mix of traditional assault course challenges like cargo nets, and tyre hopping mixed with rugby based hurdles including the dreaded “Tackle Shield Gauntlet”

Are your kids tough enough?

If you are a coach of a junior rugby team or a parent of a child who plays junior rugby, why not enter your team in this year's Golborne Parkside Pirates Tough & Muddy.

With prizes for the quickest team and quickest individual for each age group and stalls with cakes, sweets, raffles, hot food and the bar there is fun for everyone so why not bring the whole family. Plus why not bring your own super soakers to make it even wetter and more fun while watching your team go around the course.

It's just £2.50 per child to enter but why not ask them to get sponsored for doing the event so you can raise money for your own teams while helping us raise money for ours by entering.

To guarantee your team's place payment is required upfront and spaces are limited so don't delay in ensuring your spot in what is guaranteed to be a great day.

To book or for more information contact us at
toughandmuddy@outlook.com

Please help us spread the word about the event on facebook and twitter #toughandmuddy

**Are Ye Tough Enough to
complete the pirate challenge,
shipmates? #toughandmuddy**



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Thanks for reading issue 2. Hope you enjoyed!