

FROM THE CHAIR

Many of you will have read the articles in the local press, the rugby league newspapers or postings on the Roughyeds' website surrounding the situation at the professional club with regard to the position of its directors and your board would like to take the opportunity of using this newsletter to update everyone regarding the Trust's reaction.

At this juncture it would be remiss of me not to welcome the fluttering of new members who have recently joined the Trust and to say a thank you to those of you who are now long standing members and who continue to back us. Please continue to encourage friends and relatives to join the Trust as we are stronger in numbers. Remember membership forms can be downloaded from our website www.rugbyoldham.org

Regards,
Iain Taylor
Chairman

UPDATE

Given that Oldham RLFC's season is still not over as this is being written, no one outside the club knows what might happen over the coming weeks and months. The apparent rift which occurred earlier this year between the club's two main men, and the uncertain financial position of the club which is an inevitable consequence, mean that some sort of upheaval seems inevitable once the players have completed their efforts on the field for 2009. It also means that the precise relationship between the Trust and the club is also the subject of some uncertainty.

Since the Trust was founded, we have been keen to establish positive relationships with all the rugby league communities in Oldham, and the professional club has a seat on the Trust's board, as do the Oldham Amateur League and the Service Area; even though it has chosen not to attend board meetings for some time, it continues to receive all minutes of those meetings.

When the rift between Messrs. Hamilton and Quinn came into the public domain, the Trust made contact with both parties, to see if it might be able to make some useful contribution towards the club's future development. Given that we know that not all the Trust's members are able to access our website, it is perhaps worthwhile repeating here two statements which we put out in recent weeks. They were dated July 30 and September 15 respectively, and read as follows :

30 July 2009

"Rugby Oldham Supporters Trust has had frank discussions with 75% shareholder Bill Quinn. The Trust can reveal that Bill Quinn has NOT walked away from Oldham RLFC but is actively seeking a resolution to the current crisis. Mr Quinn is still in negotiation with Chris Hamilton and believes the implementation of certain changes can move matters forward. The discussions held to date with Rugby Oldham have been cordial and productive. Rugby Oldham stands ready to assist any party or parties with the best interests of professional rugby in Oldham at heart and will co-operate with all existing or any potential new investors in the club.

To progress matters further the Supporters Trust will seek talks with Chris Hamilton, the club's 25% shareholder and CEO. Should it become necessary the elected board of the Supporters Trust, as a democratic members' organisation, will seek a mandate from its members to take whatever action is deemed necessary to secure the future of a professional rugby league club in Oldham. Rugby Oldham has also had in depth discussions with Supporters Direct, the national body with experience in dealing with professional rugby and soccer clubs, whose advice and assistance could prove invaluable in the current circumstances."

UPDATE (CONT)

15 September 2009

“Given some rumours, questions and accusations which have been circulating recently amongst some members of the rugby league community in Oldham, the board of the Trust felt that it was sensible that we should get back in touch with our members, to clarify the situation.

In response to an approach to him from the Trust, after a meeting had been held with Bill Quinn, Chris Hamilton replied to Rugby Oldham on August 20. He explained that, because of the current uncertainty about the direction and structure of the club going forward, there was no benefit in he and the Trust holding the suggested meeting until things became clearer. This we fully understood, and this continues to be the position. He also informed us that he had held a positive meeting with Laura Harrison of Supporters Direct - the national body which represents supporters' trusts throughout the country - and that, in his opinion, once the current situation is resolved, then 'there is plenty we can work on together'.

The position of the Trust overall remains as it was previously. We are in existence as a group of people who have the furtherance of the sport of rugby league in Oldham as our aim, whether that be at professional level or in relation to amateur and youth RL – and the fact that Rugby Oldham's membership is greater than that of any of the other RL supporters' trusts in existence perhaps says something both about the town and about the way the Trust has attempted to represent the views of its rugby league community since it was formed. Members of the Trust have no other 'agenda' than that. We continue too, to be of the belief that the best single way of ensuring the future success of the game at all levels in Oldham would be for there to be a community-owned RL-dedicated stadium in the town, the pursuit of which objective, of course, was the primary focus and motivating force behind those who first mooted the idea of the Trust.

It follows that the Trust's aims stand completely separate from who happens to be owning and/or operating the town's professional club at any particular moment in time. If it is felt that as an organisation we may be able to help in furthering the success of the pro club, then we are very happy to attempt to do so. It was with such a mind-set that we first had talks with Bill Quinn in July, and also engaged in the communication with Chris Hamilton which is outlined above.

We will continue to be similarly willing to engage in discussions with any relevant party as this season moves to a conclusion over the coming days or weeks. In addition, we will not commit the Trust to any particular action without first seeking a relevant mandate from our members beforehand, as we are constitutionally bound to do.”

Although we were disappointed when our efforts to help to generate a community ground were at least temporarily scuppered by the club a couple of years ago, we have continued to try to build a good relationship with it, and the success of these efforts was reflected by the fact that the Trust has been the principal sponsor of the club's Reserves side during the past two seasons. No doubt there will be developments both at the club and in the area of the relationship between the town's pro club and the Trust in the near future. All we can really say at this stage is that we will endeavour to keep our membership as fully informed as we can.

SUPPORTERS DIRECT

Three representatives of Rugby Oldham attended the inaugural meeting of Supporters Direct's dedicated Rugby League section along with representatives of Bramley Buffaloes, Warrington Wolves, Salford City Reds, Swinton Lions, Hornets R.L. , Doncaster and Halifax Supporters Trusts on August 26th.

Useful contacts were made and ideas exchanged. Some interesting insights were gained into relationships between the Supporters Trusts and the professional clubs.

In two cases, of course, the Supporters Trusts actually run the clubs, namely Bramley and Hornets R.L. In the event that Oldham R.L.F.C.(1997) ceased trading – God forbid – their experiences would be a valuable template for Rugby Oldham should we ever become involved in trying to revive a professional presence in the town. Given the number of soccer clubs now run by Supporters Trusts, notably Stockport County and F.C.United in our area, the Supporters Trust business model is clearly one way to go.

SUPPORTERS DIRECT (CONT)

The Supporters Trusts at Salford, Halifax and Warrington all enjoy good relations with their respective pro. clubs. All contribute financially to the parent club and in return get support from the coaches and players at their functions. However, Widnes are totally unco-operative and want nothing to do with the Supporters Trust which, consequently, centres its work on community projects. Doncaster is a newly established Trust and is waiting on events to see what role it can play in a revived club.

Meanwhile Swinton Trust holds shares in the pro. club and last year, when the Board proposed a relocation from Sedgeley Park to Darwen of all places, the Trust successfully blocked the idea.

Finally, we discovered that with a membership of over 300 Rugby Oldham is the largest such organization in R.L.

Geoff Cooke

Media & Community Relations Officer

RUGBY OLDHAM AMATEUR CHALLENGE

The prestigious RUGBY OLDHAM CHALLENGE won last time around by Saddleworth Rangers is again being competed for by the Higginshaw, Hollinwood, Rochdale Cobras, Saddleworth Rangers, St Annes and Waterhead clubs during the 2009-10 season.

Each of the six sides are eligible to pick up points from every league match in which they play. Because clubs compete in different competitions - Higginshaw and Cobras in the North West Counties, Hollinwood in the Pennine and Saddleworth Rangers, St Annes and Waterhead in the National Conference leagues a mini-league will again be created.

Points are awarded as follows:

3 points for a win

2 points for a draw

1 bonus point for a loss by 12 points or less

There are also extra bonus points for both defensive and attacking prowess:

1 extra bonus point is awarded for every 10 points scored in a game.

1 bonus point for conceding 30 points or below.

2 points for conceding 20 points or below.

3 points for conceding 10 points or below.

In the event of clubs playing an uneven amount of fixtures at the end of the season points totals will be adjusted on a percentage basis.

Again, just as last season, league matches for the forthcoming weekend are formatted in a RUGBY OLDHAM advert printed each Thursday in the Oldham Evening Chronicle. League tables are also printed along with match reports and other features.

Spice is added by the Man - of - Steel competition worth £500 to the winner again being sponsored this season by local builders' merchants **JOSEPH PARR (ALCO) LTD.**

There's a long way to go but the latest RUGBY OLDHAM CHALLENGE league table looks like this:



Rugby Oldham Amateur Club Challenge								
Team	P	W	D	L	L (u12)	ABP	DBP	Tot
Saddleworth Rangers	4	4	-	-	-	12	7	31
Rochdale Cobras	3	2	-	1	1	15	6	28
St Annes	3	2	-	1	-	10	4	20
Higginshaw	3	1	-	2	2	4	4	13
Hollinwood	3	-	-	3	-	3	-	3
Waterhead	2	-	-	2	1	1	-	2

ABP = Attacking Bonus Points
DBP = Defensive Bonus Points

Table after games on 21/09/09

NEW MEMBERS

As our chairman has said earlier, there have been several new members join the Trust recently, and we thought existing members might like to see a copy of the letter which has been sent to them with acknowledgement of their joining and an update on our activities.

"Dear Member,

Please find enclosed your membership certificate and your share number . We thank you for choosing to become a member of Rugby Oldham Supporters Trust and hope that by working together we can have some influence over the direction taken by the game within the town.

Already we have done considerable work to promote rugby league in Oldham.

We have created a competition unique in amateur rugby and back this with weekly advertising of the week's upcoming games in the Oldham Chronicle. We also helped sponsor the Standard Cup Final programme.

We support the Service Area and sponsor the trophies for their Finals Day. As with the amateurs we run a Club Challenge for those clubs able to take part and, in addition to providing the winner's trophy, we provide a Man of the Series trophy.

Both the Amateur Club Challenge and the Junior Club Challenge can be followed from time to time in the relevant sections of the Oldham Chronicle.

For the last two seasons we have been the main sponsors of Oldham R.L.F.C. Reserves with particular emphasis on helping players born in and developed in Oldham Borough.

In the future we would like to see a Scholarship scheme set up which would enable the ring-fencing of junior talent within Oldham rather than the area being an open house for other clubs at Super League or Championship level to raid the best talent.

Originally Rugby Oldham was set up with the aim of creating a dedicated rugby league community stadium. Although we were overtaken by events after making considerable progress in this area this objective could come back onto the agenda depending on how developments unfold regarding the professional club and Oldham Athletic.

With uncertainty dogging the future of the professional club Rugby Oldham has declared its intention to help wherever it can no matter the ownership of the club.

There are currently seven Rugby League Supporters Trusts, two of which (Bramley and Hornets R.L.) actually run professional clubs. We are proud to say that Rugby Oldham has the largest membership of all these and we hope that with your continued support we can build on the successes to date.

We are a democratic organization and every member is entitled to vote for or to stand for election to the Board. You will receive notification of elections and nominations which are ratified by the A.G.M. held each May.

In addition, you will receive Newsletters from time to time updating you on our latest activities.

We have our own website (rugbyoldham.org) where you can access information about the organization and, by using the 'buy at' facility, aid with fundraising at no cost to yourself.

THANK YOU from the Board of Rugby Oldham"

Looking for a Christmas gift?

Rugby Oldham will have a brand new mens' tie for sale from December priced at only £10, yes £10. The tie is navy blue with a red and white stripe section to reflect Oldham rugby colours. It will include the Rugby Oldham motif at the base of the tie in a discrete silver. An ideal stocking filler, the design is stunning.

ALSO, from November there will be a Rugby Oldham polo shirt in a choice of colours. This will carry the logo design used as the Oldham Football Club letterhead in the 1950's and onwards and which appeared at various times on the club programme. The design was also used throughout Michael Turner's History of Oldham R.L.F.C.

The colours available are Red, White and Blue in sizes 34/36", 38", 38/40", 42/44", 46/48" and 50/52". Order early as re-orders with the manufacturer might take some time due to minimum quantities being required. Once again this will be a unique garment and is suitable for both men and ladies. The cost will be £15 and again the polo represents an ideal and unusual Christmas gift.

Orders for the above items can be placed on 0161 620 9583 or 01457 875084

Cheques are payable to:- Rugby Oldham

Details will also appear on our website:- www.rugbyoldham.org

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