

March 2010

Newsletter

FROM THE CHAIR

In our last newsletter to members, in October, we explained our participation in meetings which had been held relating to the future of the professional club, and our attitude to that future.. Now, after a very frustrating period of delay, for reasons beyond anyone's control, we are able to report to you that we had a meeting with Chris Hamilton - Bill Quinn relationship to be clarified, then weather problems, and finally two meetings of the RFL's disciplinary committee caused the delay, but we were delighted to be able finally to talk to Chris in a constructive way about how the Trust may be able to help in the future development of the club.

Geoff Cooke, who was one of the two Trust representatives who were at the meeting, has explained its possible implications elsewhere in this Newsletter, but it can surely only be good news from the point of view of our membership that, at long last, we seem to be moving our main focus back to the topic of ground development, which of course was the principal reason why Rugby Oldham came into existence in the first place.

One of the strengths of a Trust such as we are is that we are a part of a much larger organisation, Supporters Direct, and representatives of Rugby Oldham have recently attended a couple of meetings of SD's rugby league sub-group. Several useful ideas emerged, which we hope to be able to apply in our own context in the future, but it was particularly interesting to discover that we are by some distance the largest RL supporters' trust. This is no doubt partly because of our unique objectives, in the area of the ground target as well as furthering the game in all its elements in the town, and not just the pro club. Thus we are pleased to be able to continue our links with, and assistance to, both the amateur and the youth game. Amateur clubs in the town have begun to take out Trust membership, as also has the strong association of the professional club's former players. The greater our membership, whether individual, family, club or corporate, the stronger will be our voice as future decisions are made about the development of the game in Oldham.

A crucial aspect of our existence is that we are a democratic and open organisation, and it is again time for elections to our board. Four elected members of the board, Iain Ashworth, Dave Blackburn, Steve Brown and Brian Walker, retire after their two-year period of office, and there are vacancies for five board members to be elected. Enclosed with this Newsletter are relevant election documents, and we hope very much that some of you will consider seriously the possibility of standing for election. New blood is always crucial for organisations such as the Trust to remain healthy and forward-looking. In particular, we would be very keen to attract a member or members of the Trust with an interest in looking after our website, which we are fully aware is currently less than ideal ; indeed, if anyone is interested in taking on such a role, even without also taking up a position on the board, we would also be very pleased to hear from them.

Regards,
Iain Taylor, Chairman

GROUND DEVELOPMENT FUND

Throughout the period of dispute regarding the ownership and running of Oldham RLFC Rugby Oldham Supporters Trust has maintained a strictly neutral stance. Last autumn, board members attended meetings at the instigation of Bill Quinn and assured him that the Supporters Trust was there to assist whoever was in charge of the professional club in whatever manner deemed suitable, subject always to the approval of our members. Such a commitment did not imply that we were siding with one side rather than another and it was always our intention to seek talks with Chris Hamilton to ensure impartiality.

We are pleased to report that after a number of delays we have now been able to meet with Mr. Hamilton and that friendly discussion ensued. In fact we have put to him a proposal which we hope our members will approve and which we are revealing here for the first time so that our members are the first to know what we have in mind. {continued overleaf....}

GROUND DEVELOPMENT FUND (CONT)

Since Rugby Oldham was created in the first instance with the intention of obtaining a ground for professional and community use within the borough and since Mr. Hamilton now seems to have taken discussions with Oldham Borough Council to a stage where this is a very real possibility we are proposing to create a Ground Development Fund which will be administered entirely separately from the professional club and which will be available for use irrespective of who owns the professional club. The intention is that any ground cannot be used as collateral for loans and that it cannot be sold off to pay debts as was the case with Watersheddings.

There are a number of important questions to be answered first, the most significant being the actual ownership of the proposed stadium at Whitebank. Assuming that in the first instance the stadium will be leased the terms of the lease and the length of tenure will be the next issue. There would have to be sufficient guarantees to ensure we were not pouring money down a black hole but providing the guarantees we are seeking are forthcoming we think this could be an exciting development which will benefit rugby league in Oldham into the foreseeable future.

There will also need to be a properly constituted administration of any Development Fund, perhaps in the form of trustees, to ensure open and transparent dealings but Rugby Oldham has access to exceptional legal advice and expects to be able to deal with problems as they arise.

In addition as part of a national movement, namely Supporters Direct, Rugby Oldham has access to expertise generated by this organization of dozens of soccer, rugby league and rugby union trusts. We have already had contact with a representative of F.C. United which is currently running its own Ground Development Fund. Furthermore, we believe that we will be in a better position to apply for grant funding than a limited company by virtue of our status as a Friendly Society.

We welcome feedback on this proposal and will be putting to a referendum its acceptance or rejection.

Geoff Cooke
Media & Community Relations Officer

MEMBERSHIP

Rugby Oldham is the most successful Supporters Trust in rugby league with over 400 members. We believe this is the case because we can be clearly identified assisting professional, amateur and junior rugby in the borough. It is generally thought in the Supporters Trust movement that 10% of a club's average home gate is a significant membership. As you can see we are way ahead of that and we thank each and every one of you for giving your support.

When we first set up we made provision for you to supply an e-mail address but our latest membership form did not have room for this. Can we ask that any new member who can supply an e-mail address but has not done so to contact us? Similarly we would like to have any changes of e-mail or home address if you can provide these. We are working on the possibility of using e-mail to update you regularly and we are also hoping to update the website page with news more frequently.

e-mail replies to geoff.cooke0454@ntlworld.com

PLAYERS' ASSOCIATION

The Oldham Players' Association has recently swelled the membership of Rugby Oldham – already the largest supporters' trust in rugby league - to well over 400.

Said Bob Henthorn the association's treasurer "The Players' Association is pleased to be associated with Rugby Oldham, a Community Trust dedicated to enhancing the future of rugby league in and around Oldham at all levels.

"We have been particularly impressed with the way that the Trust has gone about its business in doing just that – supporting this great game of ours whether it be with the town's amateur clubs, the Service Area or the Roughyeds where it broke new ground by sponsoring the club's Reserve side.

"We have shared a concern that for far too long many talented youngsters have had to turn to other clubs to progress their rugby league. Already this is paying dividends with the first team squad including home-grown young players.

"We were impressed with what the Trust's chairman Iain Taylor had to say when he addressed one of our recent meetings and the Trust can be assured it will receive the full backing of our membership."

RUGBY OLDHAM CHALLENGE THE RUN-IN

If Saddleworth Rangers are to retain the trophy they realise that they face a stiff challenge from Oldham St Annes, Rochdale Cobras and Higginshaw all of whom have designs on lifting this coveted piece of silverware.

It should, and hopefully will, go down to the wire.

As was detailed in the last Newsletter the six competing clubs may be spread over five different leagues or divisions but the rules of this intriguing competition disregards this and takes account of each club's match by match performance so that on a day to day basis the league table can be adjusted. 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.

So, in their own particular leagues how are the six clubs faring?

Rangers are currently top of National League One but they and at least half a dozen other clubs are battling it out for one of the three coveted promotional spots. Rangers' boss Terry Flanagan set promotion as priority this time around and shouldn't be disappointed. A division below Oldham St Annes have also got designs on a promotional spot whilst in the same league Waterhead are targeting to escape the bottom four.

Progressive Higginshaw have enjoyed a great season so far in North-West Counties 4 and could well go up this time around whilst a division below Cobras are also in spitting distance of a promotional spot.

The strongest outfit of the lot are, of course, Hollinwood who are unjustly placed in bottom spot of Pennine 4 but sturdily propping up the 54 clubs above them!

Rugby Oldham Amateur Club Challenge									
Team	P	W	D	L	L (u12)	ABP	DBP	Tot	%
St Annes	15	11	1	3	2	46	25	108	7.2%
Rochdale Cobras	12	8	-	4	3	35	24	86	7.2%
Saddleworth	17	13	-	4	2	39	31	111	6.5%
Higginshaw	14	9	1	4	3	26	23	81	5.8%
Waterhead	15	4	1	10	3	20	11	48	3.3%
Hollinwood	15	-	-	15	3	14	3	20	1.3%

ABP = Attacking Bonus Points
DBP = Defensive Bonus Points
Table after games on 1/03/10

TRUST SPONSORS BEN POWELL TROPHY

The Oldham Amateur League have taken a bold decision by moving this season's Standard Cup final to Manor Park the home of Oldham Rugby Union Club.

Forced off Boundary Park the league's officers didn't have too wide a choice especially as the deal surrounding the Roughyeds' potential new home at Limeside hadn't been completed at the time the decision needed to be taken.

The league's showpiece is scheduled for an 11am kick-off on Good Friday morning and once again Rugby Oldham will be backing the local league by sponsoring the Ben Powell trophy awarded to the game's man-of-the-match. At the time of writing the two finalists haven't yet been decided but the wide open spaces of Manor Park provide the ideal platform for an entertaining, expansive game of rugby league whoever the two competing clubs may be.

Support rugby league live ... be there!

YOUTH RUGBY

Garry Hepworth, local youth rugby's co-opted representative on our board, reports that, very sadly, there will be no Service Area team RL this coming May/June. This brings to an end the established pattern of town team representative rugby after the close of inter-club fixtures. The RFL has decreed that, instead of the inter-town fixtures, there will be a skills-based programme, to begin in September. Local coaches are being asked by the RFL to put themselves forward to help with this programme, coaching at the four age-groups U12, U13, U14, and U15.

The Oldham Service Area has expressed disappointment to the RFL about this decision. It has always organised skills days of its own along similar lines to those envisaged by the RFL, aimed to include the best 40 or so players in each age group, and strongly believes that Oldham lads will lose out by no longer being able to play against top players in the other Service Areas - and they are already disadvantaged compared with most others because their local pro club has no scholarship scheme.

Rugby Oldham Junior Club Challenge									
Team	P	W	D	L	L (u12)	ABP	DBP	Tot	%
Saddleworth	39	22	-	17	3	69	62	200	5.1%
Waterhead	27	10	4	13	3	28	27	96	3.6%
Milnrow Cobras	17	7	2	8	3	22	18	68	4.0%
St Annes	40	13	2	25	9	54	43	149	3.7%
Higginshaw	12	3	1	7	2	17	11	41	3.4%

ABP = Attacking Bonus Points
DBP = Defensive Bonus Points
Table after games on 01/03/10

MERCHANDISE



The sale of polo shirts embroidered with the 1950's and '60's Oldham Football Club logo was a great success, so much so it required three re-orders to fulfil demand.

We are pleased to say that we are still able to supply certain sizes and colours which are listed below and priced at £15.00,

These make ideal birthday presents or are excellent to wear when we finally get some warm weather.

BLUE: 38", 40" & 42/44"

WHITE: 38", 40" & 42/44"

RED 38", 42/44", 46/48" & 50/52"

Limited quantities, so first come first served. Phone 0161-652-5794 to order.

Rugby Oldham has also produced its own tie in Red, White and Blue stripes with the Rugby Oldham logo at the base. Very fashionable and stunning to look at this tie is for sale at £12.00 and represents fantastic value.

Again obtainable by ringing 0161-652-5794.

These items can also be viewed by visiting the Rugby Oldham website www.rugbyoldham.org

BUZZ HAWKINS

* The Oldham Player' Association are hosting "A night with Buzz Hawkins - the voice of the Bradshaws" to be held at Oldham St Annes RLFC clubhouse on Friday the 26th of March. It's just £5 including a buffet supper! I saw the show recently – it's brilliant! Tickets from Bob Henthorn – contact him on 0161 652 2918 or Bernard Halford on 07714 520063 or pay on the door, children welcome

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