

Theme 5

The Birth of Rugby League

Pupil Resource Sheet 1b

Amateurs, Professionals and Broken Time Pay

Amateurs and Professionals

Before the 1850s men could earn money as sportsmen, mainly as cricketers, boxers, jockeys and athletes. Football and rugby, in the forms we know them, had still to be invented.

In the 1850s an idea came from the public schools and from cricket that it was better to play the games for their own sake rather than for money. Then players would be more likely to play in

a sporting manner than try to win at all costs.

This divided those who could afford to play for nothing – the gentlemen **amateurs** – from those who needed to earn money from playing if they could – the **professionals**. So the idea that games should be played for their own sake, and not for money, divided the rich from the poor.

Rugby Bans Payments to Players

The Rugby Football Union was run by men who had time to do so – upper class gentlemen amateurs who did not need to work such long hours as the working class men. They saw association football as a rival and as a game for the lower classes. When the Football Association passed laws allowing players to be paid in 1885, the rugby union law-makers were determined that rugby would remain 'superior' by not allowing such payments.

Some Huddersfield players had been given testimonials, where they were given presents or money to recognise

their efforts for the club. In October 1886 the Rugby Football Union gave itself the power to suspend a player or club for 'as long as it thinks fit' if they found that a player had been given anything except the money it cost him to travel to his matches (expenses).

There were few problems with these rules in the south of England, where rugby was mainly a game for upper class gentlemen. In the north of England, where rugby was mainly played by working men from the mills and mines, it meant that, despite the huge crowds, even the best players could not be paid.

Broken Time Pay

The 1886 rule included a ban on '**broken time pay**'. Broken time pay made up the money that players lost if they left work early to get to their match on time. As miners and factory workers worked until 1pm or 2pm on Saturdays, players would have to leave early for almost every away game.

Huddersfield had paid 'broken time' to their players for away games for several years before 1886 and this ban seemed very unfair. If a Huddersfield cricketer left his work early to get to his cricket match, he could be paid

some money by his cricket club to make up the wages he lost.

A Huddersfield rugby player who left his mill early to get to his game on time lost part of his wage.

Many clubs in Yorkshire and Lancashire had money in the bank from their thousands of paying spectators, and in June 1893 the Yorkshire Rugby Union asked the Rugby Football Union for permission to make broken time payments to players.

Huddersfield Banned

By the 1890s rugby was big business in West Yorkshire. The Yorkshire Cup, which started in 1877, attracted a crowd of 27,654 for the third round tie between Leeds and Halifax at Headingley in 1891. This was bigger than the crowd for the FA Cup Final that year.

In 1892 a league called the Yorkshire Senior Competition was set up to add to the interest and excitement of the Yorkshire Cup. Huddersfield was one of the ten founder members

The competitions attracted massive support. Grounds were developed with grandstands, seats and fences. This cost money. To keep it flowing in clubs had to attract the best players and were tempted to break the rules on paying players.

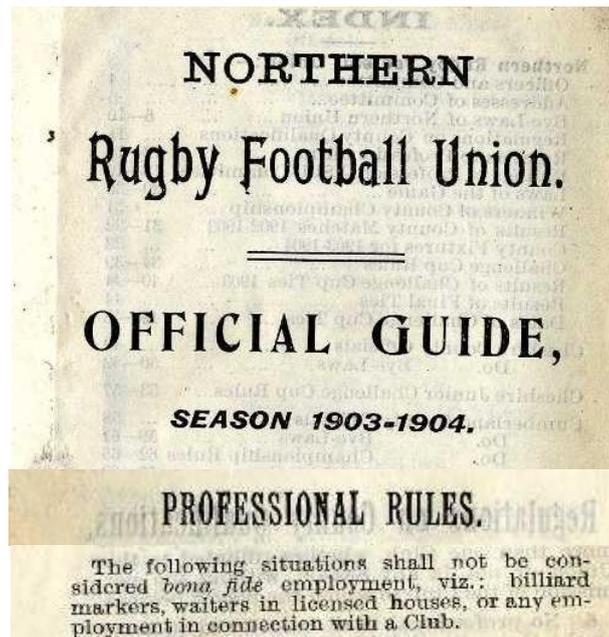
In 1893 Huddersfield signed two of the best three-quarters in Cumberland, Frank 'Jock' Forsythe and George Boak, from Cummersdale Hornets.

They were offered weekly pay and a job at the Read Holliday chemical works in Huddersfield.

One of the fiercest opponents of paying players was the Reverend Frank Marshall, headmaster of King James Grammar School, Almondbury, and a member of the Huddersfield and Yorkshire rugby committees.

Marshall reported Huddersfield for breaking the rules in paying and finding jobs for Forsythe and Boak. He knew the punishment would be harsh, having led investigations that had seen other clubs suspended.

Huddersfield were suspended for eight matches. Forsythe and Boak were prosecuted in Cumberland for leaving their jobs without giving due notice to their employer. Marshall was forced to resign from the Huddersfield committee.



Above is one of the rules broken by Huddersfield when they signed George Boak (below left) and Frank 'Jock' Forsythe (below centre) from Cummersdale Hornets.

Below right is the Reverend Frank Marshall who fiercely opposed any form of payment to rugby footballers, reported Huddersfield for breaking the rules and got them suspended.

