



## Theme 5

# The Birth of Rugby League

## Pupil Resource Sheet 2

### Rugby Football Union Annual General Meeting

20 September 1893  
at  
Westminster Palace Hotel, London

The following is not an exact transcript of this meeting, but includes many of the phrases and the entire meaning of the main speakers.

### The Main Speakers

**James Millar**  
President, Yorkshire Rugby  
Football Union



**William Cail**  
President of the Rugby  
Football Union



**Rowland Hill**  
Honorary Secretary,  
Rugby Football Union



**Mark Newsome**  
Committeeman, Yorkshire  
Rugby Football Union



**Reverend Frank Marshall**  
Committeeman, Yorkshire Rugby Football Union



**JW Thorp**  
**Joe Mills**  
**J Gledstone**  
**FC Cousins**  
**KB Holmes**  
**M Northin**  
**Roger Walker**

President, Cheshire Rugby Football Union  
Lancashire Representative  
Honorary Treasurer, Yorkshire Rugby Football Union  
Oxford University and Richmond representative  
Midlands Counties Representative  
Bowling Old Lane (Bradford) Representative  
Manchester Representative

**James Millar:**

I propose that the players be allowed compensation for bona fide loss of time.

Why? Simply because of the changed conditions under which rugby is now played. Formerly it was played by the public schools, the universities and the wealthy, but the game has now become a favourite winter pastime of young working men. This is particularly the case in the great centres of industry and manufacturing in the north of England. The rugby union, unfortunately, still fails to recognise this new type of player.

The working man has to leave his work and lose his wages to play for his club, his county or his country. Is that fair?

I have no desire to make rugby football a way of making money, but it was not meant that players should play at a loss. We refund players' travel expenses, why not refund their lost wages.

By removing this unfairness we would also remove any excuse for players to be paid any other money and put up a barrier to professional rugby.

**William Cail:**

I can speak for four northern counties outside Yorkshire and most of their clubs are not going to support this proposal.

Payment for broken time is as close as you get to making players professionals. Most clubs will be unable to pay their players even if we allow it. The result will be that a few clubs with a lot of supporters will flourish whilst most of the rest will be killed off.

**Rowland Hill:**

What this proposal means is paying men for playing rugby football. In theory the working man could be away from work playing rugby football for a whole week and be paid his week's wage without doing a stroke of work.

**JW Thorp:**

It is against the interests of rugby football and British sport to support this payment. The game should be played for enjoyment and to teach the spirit of sportsmanship, not for money. I wish to see the amateur game kept pure for our children.

**Mark Newsome:**

With the number of working men playing in Yorkshire we have had to fight payments to players far harder than any other county. The working man is the only class of player who suffers by playing.

You say that broken time pay will ruin smaller clubs, but transfers from small to big clubs already go on. Broken time payments will take away the excuse these players have for leaving.

**Reverend Frank Marshall:**

This proposal means players becoming professionals. The Yorkshire Union is really trying to find a way of dodging the laws. Yorkshire clubs get huge support and want to have the best players to keep up their level of support and money through the gate.

It is absurd for Mr Millar to suggest that working men lost out by playing for their country. If I were to ask players to spend two or three days in London, travelling in saloons, having the best meals and going to the theatres or music halls, all for free, thousands would give up three days' wages for such a trip.

**Joe Mills:**

The working men of Yorkshire and Lancashire feel that instead of wasting money on tours, dinners and theatre trips some of the money, which they have helped to earn, would be better spent on themselves and their families.

**J Gledstone:**

We only propose payment for loss of time, not allowing professionals. The real question is: 'Are you going to impose a penalty on the working man and not on the gentleman amateur?'

**FC Cousins:**

Rugby football is a game for amateurs, and professionals in disguise have no business in it. They entered the union as amateurs and if they do not wish to continue as amateurs they can leave the union.

**KB Holmes:**

The 51 clubs in my district are almost entirely composed of working men and they are satisfied if they get their rail fares and hotel expenses.

**Mr Northin:**

Broken time pay would mean the end of my club. We can't afford it.

**Roger Walker:**

Broken time pay would cause trouble in the team. One man would get more than another, depending on what they earned. I have seen this at my local cricket club. One player, whose wages and broken time pay were small, won the match on his own. Another, whose wages and broken time pay were much higher, got no runs and no wickets.

The proposal would mean professionals. This would probably work in Yorkshire and Lancashire. If these counties want it they should separate themselves from the Rugby Football Union.

**James Millar:**

It is far better to pay working men for broken time so that things that are now done stealthily can be carried out in the light of day.

**RESULTS OF THE VOTE**

	<b>For Broken Time Payments</b>	<b>Against Broken Time Payments</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
<b>In Our Class</b>			
<b>At the Rugby Football Union</b>			