# TOULOUSE DUMPED BY **SECOND-TIER SIDE**

SEVEN Elite 1 clubs are through to the quarter-finals of the Coupe de France, but Toulouse, sensationally beaten by Elite 2 side Villegailhenc, are not among them.

The side from the outskirts of Carcassonne regularly used as a feeder team for the Elite 1 club, are currently third in the second tier.

With 43-year-old player-coach Vinnie Anderson, once of Carcassonne, St Helens, Warrington and Salford, showing the way, Villegailhenc were 22-0 ahead by half-time.

Although Toulouse came back with four tries of their own, Anderson's side seized their chance to become the only second-tier team to move into the quarter-finals, adding 22 more points for a stunning 44-28 victory. They will now face Albi.

Carcassonne, winners of the Lord Derby trophy when it was last played for in 2019. crushed Elite 2 side Carpentras 88-6.

Georgy Gambaro, Clément Soubeyras and Morgan Escaré all scored hat-tricks, while Corey Mulhall and Clément Boyer each touched down twice. Half-back Clément Herrero totalled 26 points from twelve goals and a try. Carcassonne will be at home to Lézignan in the quarter-finals.

Rivals Limoux, with halfbacks Stan Robin and Pat Templeman running the show, rattled up the same total against Lescure, winning 88-0 after leading 52-0 at half-time.

The most intriguing tie of the round took place at St Estève, where the Catalans, in eighth place in the league table, took on Avignon, two places above them.

Avignon, who lost to bottom club Villeneuve in the league the week before, took control in the first half, scoring four tries in reply to Léo Llong's fifth-minute score for the Catalans.

St Estève, who lost Loan Castano and Tanguy Zenon to the Dragons side which travelled to Wakefield, improved in the second period.

But Avignon extended their lead through winger Sofiane Ghanem and virtually booked their quarter-final place before forward Bastien Scimone and halfback Lenny Chachoua reduced the deficit. It finished 29 16. Avignon will now take on Pia.

In the other all-Elite 1 tie. Albi demolished

Despite a length-of-the-field interception

## FRENCH ROUND-UP WITH MIKE RYLANCE

try by Villeneuve fullback Hamza Bachoukh in only the second minute, Albi finished the first period in command. New Zealand forward Chase Bernard, in top form recently, powered over twice in four minutes before Tony Gigot crossed from fullback Christopher Hellec's return pass

From 30-12 at half-time, Albi added four more tries, including a second for Pierre Carivenc, to cruise through.

Lézignan had a comfortable passage into the next round, beating Elite 2 team Entraigues

Pia also progressed easily, winning 78-22 at third-tier club Ferrals, near Lézignan, with 58 of their points coming in the first half.

St Gaudens negotiated a difficult tie at Villefranche-Aveyron (once known as Villefranche-de-Rouergue), who are currently second in Flite 2

Mitch Garbutt's side triumphed 30-20 after trailing 20-10 and will travel to Limoux in the next round

#### RESULTS Coupe de France

Albi 52	Villeneuve 18
Carpentras 6	Carcassonne 88
St Estève-XIII Catalan 16	Avignon 29
Entraigues 12	Lézignan 68
Ferrals 22	Pia 78
Lescure 0	Limoux 88
Villefranche-Aveyron 20	St Gaudens 30
Villegailhenc-Aragon 44	Toulouse 28

#### **FIXTURES**

S	a	tι	ırc	lay	Febr	uary	25

Saturday repruary 25	
Albi v Villeneuve	19:00
Avignon v St Estève-XIII Catalan	17:00
Lézignan v Limoux	18:00
Sunday February 26	
Carcassonne v Toulouse	15:00
St Gaudens v Pia	15:00

#### NE man in particular could be forgiven for being torn when the second round of the Betfred Challenge Cup takes place this weekend.

That man is Kenny Sykes - and why might he find himself spinning like a top come Sunday?

The answer is that one of the outstanding ties is between Betfred League One side Hunslet and Heworth, of the Impact Performance National Conference League First Division.

And Kenny is, and indeed has been for many years, heavily involved with both clubs.

A product of Heworth, he signed for Hunslet

from the York outfit in 1971. On retiring after 13 seasons at Hunslet, he returned to his roots and won the inaugural National League championship with Heworth in 1986-87, when the side also reached the BARLA National Cup final

He went on to be the York club's secretary for many years and, after stepping down from that role, has been president in recent seasons.

All the while he has remained closely involved with Hunslet, and is president of the Hunslet Ex-Parkside Former Players' Association (probably the most exclusive organisation in world sport as membership is limited to men who played for the club at the famous Parkside ground prior to its controversial sale in 1973). He has also been

chairman for several years.

The Hunslet Hall of Famer said: "It will be a good day for 'us' - whichever team you wish to describe as such!

"You couldn't have made it up, really. I'm just looking forward to the day and to a good game of Rugby League.

The connections don't end with Kenny.

Heworth player Liam Watling is a former Hunslet man while Harrison Briggs, who scored a try in the Villagers' first-round win over Oulton Raiders, is the son of former Hunslet player Dan Briggs.

And the latter knows all about what the Challenge Cup means to the South Leeds club, having touched down in their glorious victory over Super League Huddersfield back

London Chargers, meanwhile, booked a capital derby at Wests Warriors with their success over another Southern side, North Herts Crusaders

Chairman Craig Monteiro said: "This will be our 14th game in the Challenge Cup since we were first invited in 2014.

"We were pleased we got past North Herts in the first round. It's always unpredictable at this time of year, and the Crusaders came down with a strong side who provided a challenge.

"While we would have preferred to go up North and test ourselves against a heartlands team, we are still excited to play another round in this famous competition against a Southern Conference League side.

"The fact that there are three SCL teams in the second round shows how strong the sport is down here.

"We've beaten Wests twice out of the last three times we have met them, but have lost every Grand Final we have played them in, so we're expecting this to be a close game."

Wests' Kim Parkinson said: "It's a replay of the 2021 and 2022 SCL Grand Finals, and our win against Skirlaugh in the first round has given us a huge confidence boost.

"But we are well aware that London Chargers are a talented side with quality and depth across the park."

Ince Rose Bridge's reward for the derby success at Wigan St Patricks is a trip to League One Workington Town - and a renewal of acquaintance with former coach Anthony Murray, who is now at the helm at the Cumbrian outfit.

Secretary Tony Sanby told League Express: "We know we will have a very uphill struggle against professional opposition, but we will enjoy the occasion whatever the result.

"The mood in the camp is very buoyant after our win at Pats and our young players are savouring being in the limelight locally

"And it will be nice to meet up with Muzza. is all about enjoying the experience and building towards the start of our league fixtures in the NCL First Division."

Hull Dockers will entertain Midlands Hurricanes at Hull KR in an intriguing meeting of NCL Premiers and a League One outfit.

The Dockers' Stan Pickering said:

## **BARLA NATIONAL CUP**

HOLDERS Waterhead are out - but Siddal were grateful for the late try which sent them through to the final with a 32-18 victory.

It came from Ben West five minutes from time, with Richard Pogson adding his sixth goal, and settled increasingly jangling nerves after the Warriors had blasted back from 20 points down early in the second period to be only eight points adrift.

Waterhead, who won the coveted trophy last year as a Division Three side in what is now known as the Impact Performance National Conference League, are now in Division Two, having understandably secured promotion.

And the Oldham side therefore travelled to Halifax as underdogs against a Siddal outfit who can be expected to challenge yet again for the NCL title.

Waterhead are not fazed by reputations and signalled their intent to again feature in the final (against Haresfinch, who beat Drighlington, on a date and at a venue to be announced) when, with prop Phil Joy setting a huge platform, Callum Murphy raced over in the seventh minute, Jenson Hamilton tagging on the goal.

Siddal, however, boast a long pedigree and refused to be rattled.

Conner MacCallum opened the home account on 25 minutes, and Keenan Ramsden followed suit eight minutes later.

Pogson, who improved both scores landed a penalty-goal in the closing seconds of the half to establish a 14-6 lead, and those two points provided an important buffer in the later stages.

With prop Toby Muscat-Baron increasingly effective, Siddal stretched their advantage to 26-6 within five minutes of the restart, Pogson converting quickfire tries by Byron Smith and Dom Booth - but the contest was far from over.

Waterhead's Murphy grabbed his second score on 50 minutes, Isaac Pomfrey raced in on the hour, and Hamilton's two goals

ensured that the Oldham outfit were back in the issue at 26-18.

But West's score ended the involvement

of Waterhead, who despite defeat, further enhanced their reputation as a club with a strong sporting ethos.

ar story in the other semi-final. in which HARESFINCH beat DRIGHLINGTON 28-18.

The home side led 10-0 on eight minutes thanks to tries by Jordan Morris and Nathan Goodwin, the latter converting his own score.

Damon Fletcher replied for Drighlington, Kieron Boulton adding the first of his three conversions, but the St Helens outfit forged an 18-6 lead by the break, Danny Large having posted an unconverted brace.

Haresfinch's Bri Unsworth and Drig's Sam Thornton traded touchdowns in the third quarter and the tit-for-tat exchanges continued in the last ten minutes, Goodwin nipping in for the former (Josh Ainsworth adding the goal) and Jack Barnes closing for the Leeds side.

Saturday 18 February BARLA NATIONAL CUP

SEMI-FINALS: Siddal 32 Waterhead Warriors 18; Haresfinch 28 Drighlington 18.

## **YOUTH & JUNIOR**

**BIRSTALL VICTORIA are pushing the** boat out following the success of their Under 14 team in reaching Saturday's BARLA Yorkshire Cup final.

The side, based near Batley, will face Stanningley, and Birstall official John Pickles said: "This is the first time a team from Victoria have made it through to the final of the main cup and we would therefore be grateful for the support of our current and past players, volunteers and anyone from the area who can come and cheer the boys on.

"As a small club, we have always relied on support from our local community and now is the time we need to ask again.

"It's an achievement in itself to see these boys reach the final after four tough games - against King Cross and three very good Hull teams.

"Having already won Division One, the Heavy Woollen Under 14 Cup and the Yorkshire League Under 14 Challenge Cup, we're all waiting to see if this small club in Birstall, with very limited facilities, can once again make their mark.

"Let's get behind the boys! They have been together since the Under 7s and have worked really hard to become the best team in their age group in the country - and with very little fanfare.

"We don't have a clubhouse, fancy

changing rooms or even own our own field, but we do have an amazing family club where everyone helps each other out no matter what.

"In the current times I believe their spirit and teamwork should be celebrated and their story may encourage more children to take up this brilliant sport."

## **BARLA YORKSHIRE YOUTH CUPS**

Saturday 18 February UNDER 13 CUP FINAL: Lock Lane 14 Kippax 4. SUPPLEMENTARY CUP FINAL: Dewsbury Moor 52 Hull Wyke 0. LINDER 12 SUPPLEMENTARY CUP FINAL: Shaw Cross Sharks 28 Dewsbury Moor 18.

Fixtures Saturday 25 February UNDER 14 SUPPLEMENTARY CUP FINAL: Cottingham Tigers v Skirlaugh (11.30pm) CUP FINAL: Birstall Victoria v Stanningley (1.00pm)CUP FINAL: Dewsbury Celtic v Lock Lane All at the Millennium Stadium, Featherstone.

## **BARLA NATIONAL YOUTH CUPS**

Friday 17 February UNDER 18 ROUND TWO: Saddleworth Rangers 18 Featherstone Lions 0; Clock Face Miners 18 Milford 0. Saturday 18 February UNDER 16 ROUND TWO: West Bank Bears 18 Blackbrook Royals O. Sunday 19 February 2023 ROUND TWO: Salford City Roosters v Stanley Rangers -pp; Siddal U15s v Orrell St James -pp; Limehurst Lions O Rochdale Mayfield 18; West Bowling 18 Ashton Bears O. UNDER 14

ROUND TWO: Shevington Sharks Reds 50 Waterhead Warriors 0; Maryport v Elland -lr Fixtures Saturday 25/Sunday 26 February

UNDFR 18 ROUND THREE: Kells v Blackbrook Royals; Siddal v Waterhead Warriors: Clock Face Miners v Saddleworth Rangers; Newsome Panthers v Salford City Roosters; Crosfields v Wigan St Judes; Orrell St James v West Bowling; Latchford Giants v Leigh East; West Hull v Hunslet Amateurs. UNDER 16

ROUND TWO: Salford City Roosters v Stanley Rangers: Siddal U15s v Orrell St James ROUND THREE: West Hull v Castleford Panthers: Myton Warriors U15s v Stanningley; Rochdale Mayfield v West Bank Bears; West Bowling v Lock Lane; Wigan St

Judes v Dewsbury Moor: Gateshead Storm UNDER 14

ROUND THREE: Stanningley v West Hull Warriors; West Hull Raiders v Wath Brow Hornets; Cockermouth Titans v Shevington Sharks Reds; West Bank Bears v Blackbrook Royals; Leigh Miners Rangers v Kippax Welfare; Woolston Rovers Greens v Siddal Blues: Thatto Heath Crusaders v Crosfields

### **HULL YOUTH**

Saturday 25 February UNDER 13: Beverley v East Hull. UNDER 12: Skirlaugh v Myton Reds UNDER 11: Goole Vikings v Cottingham; West Hull Greens v Skirlaugh. Sunday 26 February UNDER 15/16: Skirlaugh U16 v Beverley U16; East Hull U16 v Skirlaugh Bulls U16; Myton U15 v West Hull Lynx U16; West Hull Jaguars U15 v Skirlaugh U15; East Hull U15 v Hull Wyke U15. UNDER 14S/15: Beverley v Cottingham; East Hull v Hull Wyke; Skirlaugh Knights v West Hull Warriors; West Hull Raiders v Skirlaugh Storm; Myton v Holderness U15. UNDER 13: West Hull Lions v Skirlaugh; Hull

Wyke v Holderness; Hull Dockers v Myton. UNDER 12: Myton Greens v West Hull Leopards; Hull Wyke v Lambwath Holderness v Hull Dockers; East Hull v Beverley.
UNDER 11: Skirlaugh Bulls v Hull Wyke;

Holderness v West Hull Yellows; Hi Dockers v Beverley: Myton v East Hull

## **BARROW ARL**

Friday 17 February
BARTON TOWNLEY CUP: Askam 18 Ulverston 0. Saturday 18 February
BARTON TOWNLEY CUP: Millom 34 Barrow

Saturday 25 February BARTON TOWNLEY CUP: Hindpool v Walney Central (at Walney); Roose Pioneers v Dalton.

## **WOMEN'S**

Results Sunday 19 February

**DIVISION ONE:** East Leeds 44 Illingworth 0; Wigan St Judes O Featherstone Lionesses 18. **DIVISION TWO:** University of Liverpool 0 West Bowling 74; University of Manchester O Cutsyke 18; West Leeds 30 Odsal Sedbergh 14; Batley 0 University of Leeds 28.

**Fixtures** Sunday 26 February

**DIVISION TWO:** Cutsyke v University of Liverpool: University of Leeds v West Bowling: Odsal Sedbergh v University of Manchester; West Leeds v Batley.

suppose 'quietly confident' would sum up our mood at the minute. Everyone is excited at the prospect of playing the Hurricanes at (Sewell Group) Craven Park, and the players are keen to prove themselves against a professional side.

"However we are under no illusions that this will be a difficult tie for us, but also one that will be important in determining that we can hold our own in the NCL top flight this year '

Ashton Bears are breaking new ground by facing Dewsbury Rams.

The match will be played at the League One club's ground because Ashton are unable to find a suitable venue in Wigan, but open-age manager Wayne Haselden said: "We are excited more than anything about the opportunity to have a crack at semiprofessional opposition for the first time.

"They're the highest-ranked club we have ever faced but we will go there without fear and hopefully give them something to think about and do the club and the town proud at the same time.

"Nobody will give us a chance, and that's understandable from the outside, but we will just use that as motivation more than

The Bears, meanwhile, have confirmed that their scorers in the 28-12 first-round win over the British Army were, contrary to those supplied to League Express, Tyler Pilling and Matty Smith, with a brace apiece, while Dec O'Donnell scored a try and a goal and Alex Ashby touched down. Rob Sexton also landed a conversion

Dublin City Exiles will travel to Orrell St James after their comfortable victory at Hammersmith Hills Hoists.

Exiles official Clifford Newton said: "It has been a great experience entering the competition after a 20-year absence. The RFL and indeed hosts Hammersmith were very accommodating and put on a well-organised fixture.

"To be the first Irish team to come away with a victory in the Challenge Cup has been massive for us and is reward for the hard work the club has put in, both on and off the field.

"We were delighted that we did not let the pressure of the occasion get to the team, who put in an outstanding all-around performance.

He continued: "This time we head into the heartland of Rugby League, to face a team in Orrell St James with a renowned passion for. and history in, the sport.

"As recent North West Men's League Premier Division champions, they obviously have a pedigree in winning. We are hot on the heels of organising the logistics for the fixture, while assessing the opposition to plan how to compete in real terms.

"The Exiles boys are well up for the challenge and relish the opportunity to really be tested in a hotbed of Rugby League such as Wigan.

There is a real belief in the team, after our

### **CHALLENGE CUP SECOND ROUND FIXTURES** Saturday, February 25

Ashton Bears v Dewsbury Rams (2.00pm at the FLAIR Stadium, Dewsbury) Brentwood Eels v Wath Brow Hornets (1.30pm)

Cornwall v Rochdale Mayfield (1.00pm - live on BBC iPlayer) Fryston Warriors v Stanningley (1.30pm) Hunslet ARLFC v Pilkington Recs (2.30pm) Lock Lane v West Bowling (1.30pm) Myton Warriors v Leigh Miners Rangers (2.00pm) North Wales Crusaders v Royal Navy (2.00pm) Orrell St James v Dublin City Exiles (3.00pm)

historic win, that this is possible. The players are in very high spirits and are focused on the big challenge ahead."

Orrell coach Sean McHugh said: "It's a very interesting tie as the clubs don't know anything about each other.

"But we believe Dublin will be a stern test, coming over as all-Ireland champions. We will be well prepared after a tough first-round win at Distington. The lads are looking forward to another great day for the community of Orrell. and are hoping to do everyone at Orrell St James proud."

Elsewhere Great Britain Police are at home to Westgate Common, of Wakefield, courtesy of an impressive win at Featherstone Lions.

The tie will be played at Portico Panthers, of St Helens, on Sunday, and team manager Chris Cowling said: "We anticipate a very tough game. Westgate had an excellent result in the first round, beating NCL team Crosfields, and we know they are a good, well-drilled side. We will have to be at our very best to progress to the next round

"The spirit in the team has been excellent and we are looking forward to getting back on the field and hopefully putting in another solid performance.

"Our preparation has been good and it's important we build on the last result, not only to progress in the Challenge Cup but also in preparation for the year ahead."

Fryston Warriors, who accounted for Thornhill Trojans at the opening stage, have been rewarded with another home tie against NCL Division One opposition, with Stanningley

RAF v York Acorn (2.00pm, RAF Cranwell, Lincolnshire) Saddleworth Rangers v Thatto Heath Crusaders (1.30pm) Siddal v West Hull (2.30pm) Wests Warriors v London Chargers (Wasps RUFC, 2.00pm)

Sunday February 26

Doncaster v Oldham (3.00pm) GB Police v Westgate Common (2.00pm, Portico Panthers) Hull Dockers v Midlands Hurricanes (Sewell Group Craven Park, 2.45pm - live on The Sportsman) Hunslet v Heworth (3.00pm) Rochdale Hornets v London Skolars (1.00pm) Workington Town v Ince Rose Bridge (2.00pm)

Phil Hartshorne, from the Castleford outfit, said: "Everyone at the club is really looking forward to another home game.

"On top of that, the lads are ready to test themselves against another team in a muchhigher division. The mood in the camp is really good and everyone is hoping we will have another bumper crowd behind us.

Thirteen of the 19 ties will be played on Saturday, including Cornwall's Challenge Cup debut against Rochdale Mayfield (1.00pm), which will be shown live on the BBC iPlayer.

Of the six Sunday fixtures, the match between Hull Dockers and Midlands Hurricanes will be streamed live by The Sportsman on their Rugby League Youtube channel from 2.45pm.

## **STUDENT RL**

#### Results

Wednesday 15 February
NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP: Liverpool John Moores 35 Gloucestershire 0; St Mary's 16

NATIONAL TROPHY: Oxford Brookes v Cambridge -nr; Warwick 12 Oxford 36; Leicester 0 UCLan 72; Cardiff v Exeter A -nr; Nottingham 52 Nottingham Trent A 0; Nottingham A 0 Northumbria A 62; Edge Hill 30 Hull 16; Loughborough A 46 York St

NORTHERN CONFERENCE CUP: Manchester 62 Huddersfield 8; Manchester Met 35 Newcastle A18

### **MIDLANDS**

TIER 1: Lincoln v Northampton -nr.

NORTHERN

TIER 2A: Salford v Manchester Met -nr. TIER 2B: Sheffield Hallam v Huddersfield -nr. SOUTH EASTERN: Reading v Oxford A -nr.

COLLEGE RUGBY LEAGUE
PREMIER DIVISION: Salford Red Devils 19

Furness Raiders 20.

NORTH WEST: Carmel v Oldham Sixth Form -nr; Wigan & Leigh 40 Warrington A 22. **YORKSHIRE** 

EAST DIVISION: Hull FC A v Wilberforce Sixth

## Fixtures

Wednesday 22 February

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP: Exeter v Liverpool John Moores: Leeds Beckett v Leeds: Loughborough v Newcastle; Northumbria Nottingham Trent

NATIONAL TROPHY: Exeter A v Cambridge; Nottingham v Oxford; Northumbria A v Edge Hill; UCLan v Loughborough A.

#### NORTHERN

TIER 1: Leeds A v York St John.

TIER 2A: Bangor v Lancaster; Manchester Met TIER 2B: Sheffield v Huddersfield.

SOUTH EASTERN: Oxford Brookes v Cambridge: Oxford A v Brighton. **COLLEGES** 

PREMIER DIVISION: Furness Raiders v Castleford

NORTH WEST: Carmel v Runshaw. YORKSHIRE

EAST: Hull FC A v Pontefract; St Mary's v Leeds

## **PENNINE LEAGUE**

Saturday 18 February

**DIVISION ONE:** Rochdale Mayfield 0 Fryston Warriors 18. **DIVISION THREE:** Clayton 32 Woodhouse 18.

FRIENDLY: Upton 24 Featherstone Lions 36

The 2022-23 season has now concluded.

## SECOND-ROUND DRAW PROVIDES PLENTY OF INTRIGUE

'M not sure whether I'm imagining it, but interest in the Betfred Challenge Cup among amateur teams seems to be higher than usual this

Perhaps Lock Lane's exploits in beating Oldham last year has helped galvanise the grass roots.

I don't know, but the appetite of those who are involved in the weekend's second-round games, whether through winning in the first round or through simply being invited at the second stage, seems to be nicely whetted.

Plenty have responded to my request for their thoughts on their prospects and readers can learn, elsewhere in this issue, what they think.

Meanwhile I offer my own thoughts – concentrating, in line with this column's remit, primarily on the amateur sides, including those who have been paired with professional opposition in the shape of Betfred League One teams.

Looking, first, at the Saturday games, I'm sure that Ashton Bears of the North West Men's League will acquit themselves well against Dewsbury Rams.

But, having had to relinquish home advantage through the unavailability of a suitable ground in Wigan, the Bears will be up against it in facing a team rebuilding after demotion from the Championship.

Cumbrian giants Wath Brow Hornets, meanwhile, always seem to be copping ties in London (maybe they should buy property in the capital) but the Impact Performance National Conference League giants should be too strong for a gallant Brentwood Eels.

**Talking Grass Roots** with PHIL HODGSON ANY NEWS ON AMATEUR RUGBY LEAGUE? Contact Phil Hodgson on 07786 980909 or email: philhodgson2@aol.co.uk

like Wath Brow, of the NCL top flight - might not be without hope at Cornwall, who are making their first appearance in the competition.

I doubt I'll be the only person tuning in to live coverage on the BBC iPlayer anticipating a rousing affair in which Mayfield's hooker, the very experienced Sean Penkywicz, could

What about Fryston Warriors versus Stanningley? Well, the Warriors beat another NCL Division One team last time out, in Thornhill, and many folk Castleford way insist they should have seen off another (Normanton) in the recent BARLA Yorkshire Cup final, only for a 26-4 lead to be overhauled. This could be a real humdinger and, for me, is too close to call.

Hunslet Amateurs, now up and running following the merger of NCL champions Club Parkside and the Warriors, should be too strong for Pilkington Recs, who are a tier below, although they could come unstuck if they take the visitors lightly, and much the same can be said of the clash of Lock Lane and West Bowling.

NCL Division Two outfit Myton Warriors are at home to Premiers Leigh Miners Rangers, who you'd expect to prevail. But, as always, mindset could be crucial.

League One side North Wales Crusaders are rather stronger than struggling to see them losing at home to the Royal Navy, although the visitors should certainly be fit, as will the RAF against visitors York Acorn, who did well to avoid relegation from the NCL Premier Division last year after having looking doomed

Back in the North of England, Orrell St James versus Dublin City Exiles is intriguing, for sure, but I expect the Wigan side's deeper knowledge of intense Rugby League

And I also expect Thatto Heath Crusaders' high pedigree of recent years to count at that grand club Saddleworth in a meeting of teams in the third and top ranks of the NCL.

That cannot be said of the tie between Siddal and West Hull, both of whom are likely to be battling for the NCL title. Stand well back and

And, if you're in London, do exactly the same at Wasps RUFC, where Wests Warriors are hosting London Chargers on a day in which, wonderfully, three Southern amateur teams (Brentwood being the other of course) are involved in the Challenge Cup.

A professional outfit - London Skolars – are at Rochdale Hornets on the Sunday, when you'd favour the hosts to progress.

Another meeting of two League One teams, Doncaster and Oldham, isn't easy to call.

Rochdale Mayfield, though – many fans appreciate and I'm GB Police against Westgate a5961e6c-213f-4525-8d09-1313c878cc6a

Common, which is at St Helens amateurs Portico Panthers, could be rousing, with much perhaps depending on who the Police have available.

Ince Rose Bridge, for their part, have pledged to head to Workington Town determined to enjoy the occasion and renew acquaintance with their former coach Anthony Murray, who is now in charge of the League One side.

Many eyes, though, will be on Hull Dockers' game with Midlands Hurricanes, at Hull KR's Sewell Group Craven Park.

The tie is being broadcast live by The Sportsman and should be worth watching. Can the home side, newly promoted to the NCL Premier Division, upset the League One team? I think they can, although the Hurricanes have recruited well from the Hull area in recent years and that could be a factor, as is the reality that they are a better team than people tend to think. I know that for sure, having seen them scupper my own side Hunslet in the league last

Which brings me to the last tie, which is Hunslet versus Heworth and which represents a dream come true for Kenny Sykes, who not only played for both clubs for many years but is Heworth's president (and was their secretary for many years) and Hunslet's chairman.

I expect Hunslet, of League One, to win, but I also expect NCL Division One side Heworth to do themselves and the amateur game proud, as they always have done, going back to the days when they set the template for the ethos that was central to the launch of the National Conference League.