



## COMPETITIONS COMMITTEE

Once again all three competitions have been bedevilled by the fact that we are at the bottom of the pecking order. Replayed league games take precedence even when there is absolutely nothing hanging on the result, several clubs have had decent runs in the National cups and this has taken up the available weekends and finally there has been the sheer bloody mindedness in some clubs wanting to do things their way. At least we have managed this season to finish all the competitions in the season in which they started!

This season there was no progression; this seemed to have created blockages in previous years so the three competitions were divided solely on final league position. The eight senior clubs in the County enter the Cup, the next sixteen are seeded into in the Trophy and the rest contest the Plate. This meant for the Cup that the finalists would play three games, the Trophy four games and the Plate a maximum of five. With the demand for increased league sizes and the purported colossal number of blank weekends being reported at County meetings it seemed to us, perhaps somewhat naively that there should be no problems at all with the various competitions and there should be a smooth progression. Alas we were totally wrong.

Can I thank those clubs who played their matches on, or before, the correct date or as soon as possible afterwards and helped to make some of the season run smoothly. Every club we visited we were received with generous hospitality and a seemingly genuine desire to co-operate, however in the event it was not always so.

The committee are going to change the rules slightly next season, probably bringing in a clause that BOTH clubs will be eliminated if the game is not played by the due date, thus avoiding the mutual recriminations that have ensued several times.

The final of the Trophy for last season was played at the start of this season, resulting in a good win for Leigh, thanks to Tyldesley for the arrangements.

In this year's Cup, Sedgley beat Manchester fairly convincingly in the first round, Waterloo similarly disposed of Broughton Park and Fylde had a good win over Preston Grasshoppers. Vale withdrew and gave West Park a walk over. In the Semi Finals West Park gave Sedgley a walk over due to league games piling up and Waterloo beat Fylde in an entertaining game by 48-16, much closer than the score sounds. In the final, on a cold evening under the Sedgley lights, Waterloo were triumphant by 30 points to 19 although it was once again a much closer game than the score line indicates. Congratulations to Waterloo who played through all three rounds.

The Trophy proceeded a little by fits and starts, but the semis were played on the same day when Leigh beat near rivals Wigan 25 to 13 and Blackburn beat Aldwinians by a somewhat smaller margin of 22 - 16. The final, played at Preston Grasshoppers on May Day Monday resulted in a win for Leigh once again with a score of 22 - 21 in a pulsating game with the result in doubt right to the end.

The Plate with the largest number of entrants threw up most problems, the first semi final was Heaton Moor against Ormskirk this was played on the scheduled date with Moor being comfortable winners by 24 to 3. In fact at the game a senior County figure said that the first half had been the best half of rugby he had seen all season. In the other half of the draw various problems meant that the last three rounds were played in very short order. Bolton beat Bay Horse on the 26th April by the very close margin of 26 - 24, the following Wednesday Eccles went to Bolton and won 13 - 5. To set up the final on May Day Monday. On the day Heaton Moor once again proved that they have the edge over Eccles, having beaten them twice in the league already this season. The result of the final was in doubt right up to the final whistle with Eccles pressing strongly at the end and nearly scored a try in the last minute of injury time. The final score of 11 - 6 shows just how close was the game.

Thanks to the Lancashire Executive for keeping the prize money the same even though there was no sponsor to pay the bills this season, thanks to the committee members who have attended matches and meetings in impressive numbers, thanks to Preston Grasshoppers for hosting the Trophy and Plate Finals and thanks to the clubs who have provided great rugby during the season.

### **BRIAN MINOR**

*Cup Committee Secretary*