

Ahead of his time

Roy Francis and Rugby League by Peter Lush

This is a new publication about how Roy Francis started out in Brynmawr, a book full of his achievements in detail; how he became one of the most highly regarded players and coaches in Rugby League and how he coped with racism travelling across Britain to play in games during war time. He grasped experience from rehabilitating soldiers and turned it into a unique coaching technique.

In pre-team talk in 1950-1951, Roy's tactics whilst Coach at Hull FC against rivals Hull KR wasn't about the game but more of a war that was going to take place. I've been to a few of these and it can be quite tribal, where it's not unusual for a household to have family members supporting opposite sides, luckily the games only split them up for 80 minutes.

Noted are Roy's thoughts of the benefits of combining Rugby Union and Rugby League; how he played and coached in front of huge crowds and his opinion of how to play the game and deal with the rules of Rugby League, which he didn't always agree with and on a personal note how he used his position to consistently raise money for charities.

Winning the Challenge Cup for the first time as Coach in 1968, the water-logged pitch prevented him showing off how good his Leeds side were and this disappointed him. The referee was under pressure to play the game as there were 87,000 inside Wembley plus a huge television audience, and although victorious they nearly lost in the last kick of the game, Don Fox missed a conversion. The BBC show it every year on Cup Final Day.

For some time, Roy was quietly forgotten except among Hull and Leeds supporters. Jim Mills who played Union for Cardiff in the sixties before changing codes to League, was coached by Francis when playing for North Sydney and states he was the first modern coach.

"Ahead of his time" is a full record of Roy Francis's achievements as player and coach and how a boy from a town on the edge of the South Wales Valleys changed Rugby League.

Book details: 184 page paperback illustrated with over 50 photos.

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The book can be ordered from www.llpshop.co.uk, Amazon, Abe Books, eBay or from any bookshop. An ideal present for Fathers' Day.