



2023
**SUMMER
BASH**

SAT 27 MAY &

SUN 28 MAY

LNER COMMUNITY STADIUM | YORK
OFFICIAL PROGRAMME

BETFRED



**PASSIONATE ABOUT
RUGBY LEAGUE**





FRANK'S WELCOME





Welcome to York and to the seventh Betfred Championship Summer Bash. It's supporters, as well as the teams and players, who make this event and it's wonderful to see you here. Thank you for your support.

And thanks also to our hosts, the LNER Community Stadium – a well-appointed venue which provides the perfect stage for the game's athletes to showcase their immense skills to supporters both inside the stadium and watching at home on Viaplay.

In many ways York is a perfect choice for Summer Bash – a beautiful city, steeped in history, easy to get to (especially when the trains are running!) and boasting attractions to suit all tastes. The Minster City really does offer something for everyone.

York, both city and stadium, was a key venue during last year's Rugby League World Cup – from the launch of the women's competition at The Hospitium, through to England's semi-final against New Zealand which attracted a record rugby crowd of more than 7,000. It's great to be back!

Also back at Bash for 2023 are Toulouse Olympique, Swinton Lions and Keighley Cougars whose derby match against Bradford Bulls on Sunday evening promises to be one of the highlights of the weekend. Perhaps we really are saving the best till last. Who knows? That's the beauty of sport. There's so much to enjoy over the weekend and so much to play for.

I am also delighted that a Betfred Women's Super League fixture is included within the weekend's programme – a reflection of the continued progress of the women's game, York Valkyrie's status as a major force and Warrington Wolves' emergence as a new kid on the block. All those present, and Our League viewers at home, are in for a treat.

It leaves me to wish all teams the very best of luck this weekend and to leave supporters with one final message: Enjoy the Game!

Frank Slevin

Chair

Rugby League Commercial

FRANK'S WELCOME





BASH 2022 REVIEW

36	Barrow	V	Widnes	24
60	Batley	V	Dewsbury	6
6	Bradford	V	Halifax	22
16	Featherstone	V	Leigh	46
12	London Broncos	V	Sheffield	38
18	Newcastle	V	York	27
28	Whitehaven	V	Workington	10



SAT 27 MAY

SUN 28 MAY



12:45



11:30



15:00

13:45



17:15

16:00



19:30

18:15





ENGLAND V TONGA



TOTALLY WICKED STADIUM
SUN 22 OCT 14:30

JOHN SMITH'S STADIUM
SAT 28 OCT 14:30

HEADINGLEY STADIUM
SAT 04 NOV 14:30



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RUGBY LEAGUE TOGETHER

TACKLE IT

**TACKLING DISCRIMINATION,
GROWING THE GAME**

RUGBY-LEAGUE.COM/RLTOGETHER



In 2020 the RFL published TACKLE IT, a sport-wide action plan to make Rugby League a truly inclusive sport by tackling discrimination and breaking down any barriers to involvement.

TACKLE IT is a plan by the sport, for the sport, with organisations and individuals at all levels of the game responsible collectively for its implementation. And among the many objectives and actions – some already achieved, others work in progress – is an expectation that partners promote and celebrate diversity and inclusion. This year, they are doing this through the RL Together campaign.

RL Together puts inclusion at the forefront of high-profile events such as the recent mid-season internationals against France, cup finals and grand finals. Professional clubs too are delivering inclusion fixtures – a platform for connecting with communities and showcasing what’s happening on the ground at club level.

In March Castleford Tigers became the first Betfred Super League club to deliver an inclusion fixture, when they entertained the newly crowned World Club Champions St Helens in a match broadcast live by Channel 4. Since then, many more clubs from across Super League and the Betfred Championship have followed suit, most recently York Knights. Coming up soon after Summer Bash and Magic Weekend are inclusion fixtures at Toulouse Olympique and Bradford Bulls, with several more in the pipeline.

Inclusion is part of Rugby League’s DNA. And by becoming more diverse and standing firm against discrimination, Rugby League will be a stronger sport – one that is truly representative of all its communities.

RL TOGETHER





WIDNES

SWINTON



PREVIEW MATCH 1



Widnes Vikings are looking to break their Summer Bash duck following defeats at the hands of Leigh (2019) and Barrow Raiders (2022).

The Vikings go into the game with a league record of six wins and five losses from 11 games – including a defeat last time out against leaders Featherstone Rovers. It was a tough afternoon for John Kear’s side, who as well as suffering back-to-back defeats were forced to deploy 18th man Will Tilleke after losing Matty Fleming, Zach Eckersley and Lewis Hatton to head injuries. With Anthony Walker also failing a head injury assessment, Kear admitted he had never seen anything like it during his coaching career. Kear was nevertheless delighted with his side’s effort and expects his side to return to winning ways at York today.

Swinton Lions go into the game six points behind Widnes in 12th place and having not tasted victory over their opponents for 25 years. Victorious in their last two visits to Bash (against Rochdale Hornets in both 2018 and ’19), the Lions also go into the Vikings clash on the back of defeat last time out against Bradford Bulls. It was a high-scoring contest at Odsal and head coach Allan Coleman will no doubt be looking to his Lions to tighten up in defence while continuing to improve with ball in hand. Mike Butt is just one try away from a career century.



SQUADS



WHITEHAVEN BARROW



PREVIEW MATCH 2

With **Whitehaven's** regular Bash rivals Workington Town playing League One this season, it's the turn of Barrow Raiders to provide the Cumbrian rivalry.

The Raiders haven't beaten Whitehaven since 2017 and currently lie 13th in the league – two places and three points behind their opponents today. Just two points separated the two sides when Whitehaven won at Barrow on Good Friday and if they are to succeed today they'll need to heed the words of head coach Paul Creary, who is asking his players to play the percentages a little more following their away defeat at London Broncos last time out. Forward Danny Langtree is just one try away from a career century.

History may be on Whitehaven's side – but current form is not, 'Haven having suffered a 60-0 whitewash in their most recent match at Halifax Panthers. "We are 100 per cent playing and hope to get the win over Barrow", says club captain Karl Dixon. "It's a big few months coming up and we need all the support we can get to keep the club where it should be. Hopefully us as a team can keep picking points up and end this season on a high."



SQUADS



LONDON

TOULOUSE



PREVIEW MATCH 3

The penultimate game on Saturday sees **London Broncos** face **Toulouse Olympique** - the two sides have faced each other just once at Summer Bash back in 2018 when Toulouse walked away 40-28 victors in a match that included outstanding long range try.

Eleventh-placed London travelled to France earlier this season and will be seeking revenge on their opponents after suffering a 52-0 defeat. They head into the fixture having ended a three-game winless run with a 30-16 win over Barrow Raiders at the Cherry Record Stadium in Round 11.

Former New Zealand international, Dean Whare recently joined the capital side and could be in line to make his Broncos debut – the centre has made 19 appearances for New Zealand and featured 36 times in the Super League for Catalans Dragons.

Their opponents Toulouse are preparing for their fourth consecutive trip to Bash and although they have impressed in France this season, their away form has not - their last two trips include a 19-12 defeat at Swinton Lions followed by a narrow 17-16 loss against Batley Bulldogs. Olympique head into the match sitting third in the Championship with seven wins from 11 and Sylvain Houles side will be keen to turn their away form around with a win on Saturday.



SQUADS



FEATHERSTONE

YORK



PREVIEW MATCH 4

Saturday's final game will be a meeting between **York Knights** and league leaders **Featherstone Rovers**.

The showdown will be only the second time the two sides have met at Bash – the first being a 42-10 victory for Featherstone.

The Rovers head into Saturday's game with a perfect 11 from 11 record in the Championship this season with Sean Long's men now enjoying a six-point gap at the top of the table. Featherstone will be looking to continue their winning streak going but will have to do so without on-loan half-back, Riley Dean, who has been recalled by Warrington Wolves.

Gareth Gale scored a hat-trick during Featherstone's 46-4 win over York earlier in the season and with Knights having home advantage, they will be looking to be the first team to take points off the current league leaders.

The Knights became the last Championship side standing in the Challenge Cup after defeating London last weekend. That success means a fourths straight victory for Andrew Henderson's side in all competitions.

York are currently eighth in the table with five wins in the Betfred Championship and have a 50% strike rate at Bash with their only victory coming last year against Newcastle Thunder.

Rovers on the other hand have struggled at Summer Bash in previous years and have won just one match from six.



SQUADS

WALKER WOLVES



SUNDAY 28 MAY
LNER COMMUNITY STADIUM 11.30AM





York Valkyrie will be seeking to record a sixth straight win in 2023 when they face Warrington Wolves at the Summer Bash on Sunday (11.30am) at the LNER Community Stadium!

York have recorded five wins from as many matches so far this year, beating Leeds Rhinos (12-34) and St Helens (26-6) in their first two Betfred Women's Super League contests before easing to three Betfred Women's Challenge Cup triumphs over Barrow Raiders (4-44), Hull KR (122-0) and Leigh Leopards (0-54).

The Valkyrie take on a Warrington side side that have lost just one of their first four matches this year.

Warrington drew their opening BWSL match of the year against last year's Play-Off Semi-Finalists Wigan Warriors 22-22 and followed that up with dominant wins over Castleford Tigers (0-72) and London Broncos (64-10) in the Betfred Women's Challenge Cup.

The Wolves did however fall short against reigning Cup holders St Helens 38-4 at the Totally Wicked Stadium.

Nevertheless, Warrington can reflect on a promising start to their year given their newly-promoted Group One status.

The Group Two champions won all of their 12 regular season matches as they secured promotion to Group One.





NEWCASTLE
THUNDER

NEWCASTLE

SHEFFIELD



PREVIEW MATCH 6

Sheffield Eagles have won their last three Summer Bash match-ups and the Betfred Championship's bottom side, **Newcastle Thunder**, have it all to do to prevent the high-flying Eagles making it four.

Second-placed Sheffield won 44-20 at Kingston Park earlier in the season, but Director of Rugby Mark Aston won't be taking the opposition lightly. "They've got some players: Alex Foster, the Chapelhows, Mitch Clark," cautions Aston. "They can play, they're not far off getting a result. They'll be desperate, we know that, but we have to focus on ourselves. "We've set ourselves a target going into the next third of the season. We need to make sure we get that. It starts right here, right now. We've had two weeks [since the last game versus Keighley] to get everyone as fit as we can."

Victory over the Cougars enabled the Eagles to leapfrog Toulouse into second place and Aston is looking to his side to keep up the momentum. **Thunder**, with only one win all season, will be just as keen to turn things around. Chris Thorman's side have struggled to put points on the board since their opening-day win over Swinton Lions and a win today would undoubtedly inject much-needed self-belief into his squad.



SQUADS



HALIFAX

BATLEY



PREVIEW MATCH 7



The **Bulldogs** are an ever-present here at the Bash, with three wins from six appearances – all of them against Heavy Woollen derby rivals Dewsbury Rams. This time around Halifax Panthers, another Bash ever-present, provide the opposition in what could be the smash of the Bash.

Only points difference separates them in the Betfred Championship table, just four points separated them when the Panthers won at the Shay earlier in the season – and all bets are off on there being little between them here at Summer Bash.

The **Panthers** go into the match full of confidence following three successive league wins and a courageous effort in defeat against World Club Champions St Helens in the Challenge Cup last week. “We certainly left with our heads held high and proud”, coach Simon Grix told Viaplay Sports. “Everyone had to take a little bit of ownership there and I thought they did.”

And Grix has challenged his side to bring that same intensity to the rest of the Championship season as they look to secure a place in the play-offs. “If we can get our standards up”, says Grix, “and be consistent with it, then we’re in with a shot of having a good run at the end of the season.”

Yet the Bulldogs have won five of their last six league matches – and they were far from disgraced in that one defeat against leaders Featherstone Rovers. Current form, coupled with Batley’s record-breaking exploits at last year’s Bash records when they beat Dewsbury 60-6, point to a classic.



SQUADS



KEIGHLEY

BRADFORD



PREVIEW MATCH 8



The final game of the weekend sees **Bradford Bulls** face near-neighbours **Keighley Cougars**, making their Summer Bash bow.

Bradford on the other hand are Bash veterans – but the Bulls won't find reassurance from a record of one win in five. And their 34-6 reversal at Cougar Park in Round Seven still hurts.

Both sides have had mixed seasons, the Bulls winning six from 11 and the Cougars five from the same number. And both clubs are still searching for permanent successors to respective head coaches Mark Dunning and Rhys Lovegrove, who have seemingly paid the price for their sides' indifferent seasons to date.

Lee Greenwood continues in the caretaker role for the Bulls, alongside 'football consultant' Brian Noble, while Jamaica international Jy-mel Coleman assumes the Cougars' reins with the support of Jordie Hedges, Dean Muir and Jake Webster.

Expect plenty of tries, but don't bet on the outcome of this one!



SQUADS



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