



SUPER LEAGUE NEWS

LENAGAN DELIGHT AT WIGAN'S PROGRESS

By CHRIS JONES

WIGAN Chairman Ian Lenagan admits that he is delighted with the progress his club has made this season after a difficult start under new coach Adrian Lam, with Wigan now lying in fourth place in the Super League table and breathing down the necks of Warrington Wolves and Hull FC.

Lenagan recently extended Lam's contract into the 2020 season and the Chairman couldn't be happier with what is happening at his club, as well as the prospects for next season, with Jackson Hastings and George Burgess set to join the Warriors, while George Williams will depart for the Canberra Raiders.

"We are aspiring to second slot if we can get it. Every slot is better than the next lowest one in the top-five structure, so we want to finish as strongly as possible," Lenagan told League Express.

"It didn't take a lot to persuade Jackson that if he were to stay in the UK he should play for Wigan. He wanted his agent to try to get a slot in the NRL but he realised that if he is to get an NRL club he needs to play for a big club in Super League."

And Lenagan admits to being happy with Hastings' potential role at his club. "I am much impressed by the way he has matured," he added.

"He wants his chance to be back in the NRL, perhaps as early as in 2021. At this stage we have a group of young halfbacks at Wigan who will eventually take over in those positions. We always plan medium term in the as you can see with the way Morgan Smithies has developed. We have four very young forwards who are all now on the verge of becoming regular first-team players."

"And it will help to have a reserve competition and many more competitive games next year for players who are on the edge of the first team."

"Adrian is delighted with where we have got to in August. Wigan and Leeds both had the same sort of start and he is delighted with the fact that we have now forced our way into the play-off positions."

"We tend to get the Aussie coaches to help develop British coaches in the way Michael Maguire did with Shaun Wane. With Adrian we now have Matty Peet and John Winder, as well as Sean O'Loughlin and Thomas Leuluai when they stop playing. I always like appointing assistant coaches who we believe can eventually step into the leading role."

The only fly in the ointment for Wigan is the recent injury suffered by captain Sean O'Loughlin and the uncertainty that gives rise to over his playing future.

"You never know with Sean," said Lenagan, when asked whether his

captain will play on next season.

"He wanted to end with the British Lions and I don't know whether that will now be possible. But he is a great guide for Smithies."

Meanwhile Lenagan is playing a major role in Super League's search for investors in the competition.

"There is a working party that will report in about four weeks' time. That group includes people with a knowledge of private equity and investment," he explained.

"If there is a deal there, it has to be the right deal that is well structured to serve the interests of Super League and benefit the game."

"A successful investment could help us with the profile of the competition."

But he is reluctant at this stage to make detailed plans for a new broadcasting deal from 2022, and he is unsure whether Super League will expand or remain the same as it is now.

"It's still early days to negotiate a new broadcasting deal," he said.

"It's hard to know where Netflix, Amazon, BT Sport and other media companies will be in 2022. But we will use the relevant experts to guide us through the broadcasting world."

"At this stage it's hard to be sure whether there will be scope for expansion of Super League."

"There are minimum standards but they are not applied but I'm sure there is scope for Super League and the RFL to work more closely together on this subject."

And the Wigan boss admits he would like to see London having a long term presence in Super League.

"I do support the Broncos being in Super League, especially when they are bringing their own players into the competition, and more and more people are taking the view that a London club in the long term will deliver great benefits for Super League," he added.

"If London were to go down there is a fair chance they will get back again."

"They are a very good team. That they have been so successful is a great tribute to them."

And Lenagan has similar feelings about the prospects for a second French club being in Super League, even though BeIN Sport will no longer broadcast Super League games next season.

"BeIN Sport pulling out means that there will be another opportunity for television in France," he said.

"So I'm not too concerned about that."

"But I like Toulouse and I rate them highly. Toulouse and Perpignan together would be very attractive for a French broadcaster, with one home game in France taking place every week."

"I certainly think that would be an interesting prospect for the competition."



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WEEK

TEAM: St Helens defeated Warrington Wolves at the Halliwell Jones Stadium on Thursday night, winning 12-30 in a Challenge Cup final dress rehearsal.

TRY: Tommy Makinson's try on Thursday night was superbly created with a brilliant pass from young star Jack Welsby and completed by a stunningly athletic dive at the corner post by Makinson.

PLAYER: Rhysie Martin scored half of Leeds Rhinos 48 points against Catalans Dragons on Friday night, with a superb try and ten goals, with no misses.

STORY: The RFL's match review decided last week that five Catalans players should be suspended following their game against Warrington Wolves, but the disciplinary panel then decided that only two players should be suspended.

QUOTE: "We've seen a worrying trend emerging, where certain players seem to feel it is their right to question, to argue, or in extreme cases to engage in a running battle with match officials." RFL Match Officials Director Steve Ganson, following last week's trouble in Perpignan.

IMAGE: Leeds Rhinos fans at Headingley looking happier than they have done throughout the season so far, after their 48-8 victory over Catalans Dragons.

TWEET: "It's been real. It's been emotional. I've had highs & lows. But my dreams have been exceeded. I'll be forever indebted to the sport. #RugbyLeague #SportChangesLives" Toronto Wolfpack star Ashton Sims (@ashtonsims2) announcing his impending retirement last week.

MILESTONES

CAREER
GREG BIRD made the 350th appearance of his career in Catalans' 30-10 home win against Warrington in Round 24 ... JIMMY KEINHORST (Hull Kingston Rovers) made his 150th career appearance ... MORGAN ESCARE (Wakefield Trinity) made his 150th career appearance ... JUNIOR SAU (Leigh Centurions) made his 250th career appearance ... JAMES GREEN (Bradford Bulls) made his 150th career appearance ... TED CHAPELHOW (Widnes Vikings) made his 100th career appearance ... LIAM McAVOY (Newcastle Thunder) made his 150th career appearance ... EVAN SIMONS (Newcastle Thunder) made his 150th career appearance ...

CLUB
LUKE THOMPSON made his 150th appearance for St Helens ... DOMINIQUE PEYROLUX made his 100th appearance for St Helens ... JOE BURGESS scored his 100th try for Wigan Warriors ... MICKY HIGHAM made his 150th appearance for Leigh Centurions ... STEVE GROSSLEY made his 100th appearance for Bradford Bulls ...

SUPER LEAGUE
ZEB TAIA (St Helens) made his 150th Super League appearance ... KIERAN DIXON (London Broncos) made his 100th Super League appearance

BIRTHDAYS



BEST WISHES TO THE PLAYERS IN THIS WEEK'S BIRTHDAY

- Today (12th):** Gavin Marguerite (Toulouse Olympique) 23, Calum O'Neill (Widnes Vikings) 19
- Tuesday (13th):** Tom Johnstone (Wakefield Trinity) 24, David Thompson (Whitehaven) 24
- Wednesday (14th):** Sam Moea (Catalans Dragons) 33, Conor McGrath (Halifax) 23, Josh Tonks (Hunslet) 28
- Thursday (15th):** Tom Curwen (Warrington Town) 30
- Saturday (17th):** Arthur Romano (Catalans Dragons) 22, Jack Bussey (Featherstone Rovers) 27, Johnathon Ford (Toulouse Olympique) 30, Brandon Douglas (Doncaster) 22
- Sunday (18th):** Liam Byrne (Wigan Warriors) 20, Tyler Dickinson (Batley Bulldogs) 23, Jy Hitchcox (Bradford Bulls) 30

READERS' POLL

? Which teams will finish second and third in Super League? ?

Warrington Wolves and Hull FC
Warrington Wolves and Wigan Warriors
Hull FC and Wigan Warriors

Last week we asked you:

Who would you like to see as the new coach of St Helens from next season?

You answered:

- Shaun Wane (formerly of Wigan Warriors) 20%
- Jason Demetriou (assistant coach at South Sydney Rabbitohs) 18%
- Richard Marshall (assistant coach of St Helens) 15%
- Sean Long (formerly assistant coach of St Helens) 14%
- Paul Wellens (assistant coach of St Helens) 14%
- Ian Watson (coach of Salford Red Devils) 13%
- Shane Flanagan (formerly coach of Cronulla Sharks) 6%

Cast your vote at
TOTALRL.COM