

RUGBYFULL FYLDE MATCH REPORT ON SUNDAY AT
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Spragg: Full focus then welcome break

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A fortnight's break after this weekend is warmly welcomed by Fylde RFC head coach Warren Spragg – as it helps his promotion-chasing side to give tomorrow's opponents South Leicester their utmost focus and respect.

After visiting National Two North's third-bottom club tomorrow, third-placed Fylde's final five opponents include top-six rivals Chester, Huddersfield, Otley and Sedgley Park.

Fylde bounced back from their defeat by leaders Hull Ionians with last Saturday's impressive 54-10 Woodlands win over Stourbridge.

And Spragg told The Gazette: "With a two-week break to follow, we can give 100 per cent focus to this weekend and complete respect to South Leicester, who are fighting for their lives."

"If the Chester game had been the week after South Leicester, you can fall into the trap of looking too far ahead."

"It's a break for some battered and bruised bodies

before the final run-in in a hectic season."

South Leicester have leaked 59 points to top two Hull and Chester, in their latest fixtures and Fylde head there in the highest of spirits after a praised performance against Stourbridge.

Spragg said: "We got the response we wanted from the lads, just like after the game we lost at Sheffield Tigers in January. We

got some stuff wrong at Hull and we put it right, and the players should be really proud of their overall performance.

"We weren't perfect – the line-out was probably the

worst it has been all season in terms of clean possession – but we had a lot of attacking play and the support play was a joy to watch."

"Sometimes when Connor Wilkinson or Tom Carleton make a line-break other lads expect them to run it in but that won't happen every time."

"We need to support in order to finish chances and it was pleasing that something we had identified and addressed in the week worked so well in the game."

As for the tender age of this squad, the coach added:

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Points between
Fylde and
leaders Hull



Nick Ashcroft uses his experience to take Fylde forward against Stourbridge

"Yes, we have a lot of players around 18-20, but in terms of league experience they have had a really quick apprenticeship to learn their trade."

"A lot of them have played 50-70 league games and in that sense are more experienced than a lot of their older opponents."

Even so, Spragg was delighted to welcome warhorse Olli Parkinson back after injury last weekend and hopes to have stalwarts Matt Garrod and captain Adam Lewis

available tomorrow.

The coach said: "With Olli you get a high tackle count and workrate as well as a consistent level of performance, and we probably underestimate his rugby skills. He is quicker than we give him credit for."

"Hopefully we'll have him, Matt and Nick Ashcroft fit for the rest of the season."

Skipper Lewis missed last weekend's match after being concussioned against Hull and Spragg said: "As long as Adam

comes through the return-to-play protocol and is signed off by the doctor today, he will hopefully be fit to play."

Scrum-half Cam Cremp-ton will hopefully be available too after injury ended his afternoon early against Stourbridge.

"Cam had a bit of neck soreness before half-time and ended up going to hospital," explained Spragg, "but we're happy it's nothing more than a muscle problem, so credit to the medical staff."

'Lion' Rose will return to action in April

By **Adam Lord**adam.lord@jpimedia.co.uk
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Brian Rose's return to the ring has been confirmed.

Blackpool's former world title challenger will be back in action at the Liverpool Olympia on April 19, with his opponent to be confirmed.

The 34-year-old made his long-awaited comeback last November and is looking to get himself firmly back in the super-welterweight mix in 2019.

Rose had been out of the ring for 18 months when he picked up a hard-fought points win over Alistair Warren in Manchester.

However, a shoulder injury sustained in that fight scuppered plans for a WBO European title fight with Conrad Cummings in Belfast before the year was out.

"The Lion", 30-5-1 as a professional, is back to full fitness and has been going through a tough training camp in Los Angeles with trainer Bobby Rimmer.

There Rose has been based at Tiki Ghosn's Huntington Beach Ultimate Training Centre. He has been training alongside mixed martial arts great Quinton 'Rampage' Jackson and with strength coach Paul Herrera and nutritionist Eric Huerta.

Rose's Liverpool fight will be broadcast live on YouTube channel iFL TV.

Crews warm up for NW Stages in winning style

By **Phil James**tango@blackpoolgazette.co.uk
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A pair of leading local crews were in rally action last weekend and came home with top awards as they prepare for the closed road Legend Fires North West Stages in partnership with Simpson's Skoda later this month.

Simon Bowen and Richard Robinson won the Questmead Stages in their Subaru Impreza S11 WR, while Neil Wearden and Callum Cross took the top awards in the 1600cc class after finishing fifth overall in their Hyundai i20.

Organised by Warrington

and District Motor Club, the event was held at the Three Sisters Race Circuit, near Wigan.

The 25-mile competition gave crews the ideal chance to test their cars prior to the Garstang-based event.

The torrential rain prevailed for all but the last of the 11 special stages, giving competitors the opportunity to assess grip levels provided by different tyre patterns and compounds.

All in all, it was a good exercise for the two Over Wyre crews, who had the bonus of winning some trophies!

It also gave Bowen the opportunity to identify a gearbox issue but he's confident it will



be sorted in time for the 'Legend'. He said: "Today gave us some valuable seat time and the chance to try some settings. If it rains like it did today on the North West, we'll

be ready!"

Former World Rally Championship contender Wearden, having his first outing in his recently acquired Hyundai i20, was in equally buoyant

mood. He said: "We couldn't have asked for a better day. We tried a winter tyre for a couple of stages but it cost us time, so that was a valuable lesson learnt."

"I feel I can get more speed from the car but the North West won't be about driving flat out. It will be about driving intelligently."

Blackpool South Shore Motor Club had a third crew in action as Lee Hartley and Barry Armer contested the 1400cc class in their Skoda Felicia. They missed out on a class podium finish, having suffered problems with the car's braking system for much of the day.

North West Stages spectator details will be published in the Gazette in the week leading up to the event that begins with a ceremonial start in Garstang on the Friday evening prior to the rally itself on Saturday 23.

Simon Bowen and Richard Robinson (Subaru Impreza WRC) with (inset) Neil Wearden and Callum Cross (Hyundai Accent i20)
Picture:
www.pro-rally.co.uk