

# CASE STUDY: RUGBY LEAGUE

## SQUAD SELECTION AND PERFORMANCE MONITOR

Driving England Rugby League forward with a powerful performance analysis solution

WHO:  
**RFL PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS TEAM**

The RFL is the governing body for Rugby League football in Britain and Ireland. Based at Red Hall in Leeds, it administers the England national rugby league team, the Challenge Cup, Super League and the Championships.

RFL Chief Executive, Nigel Wood has recently unveiled his strategy for an England World Cup win in 2017.

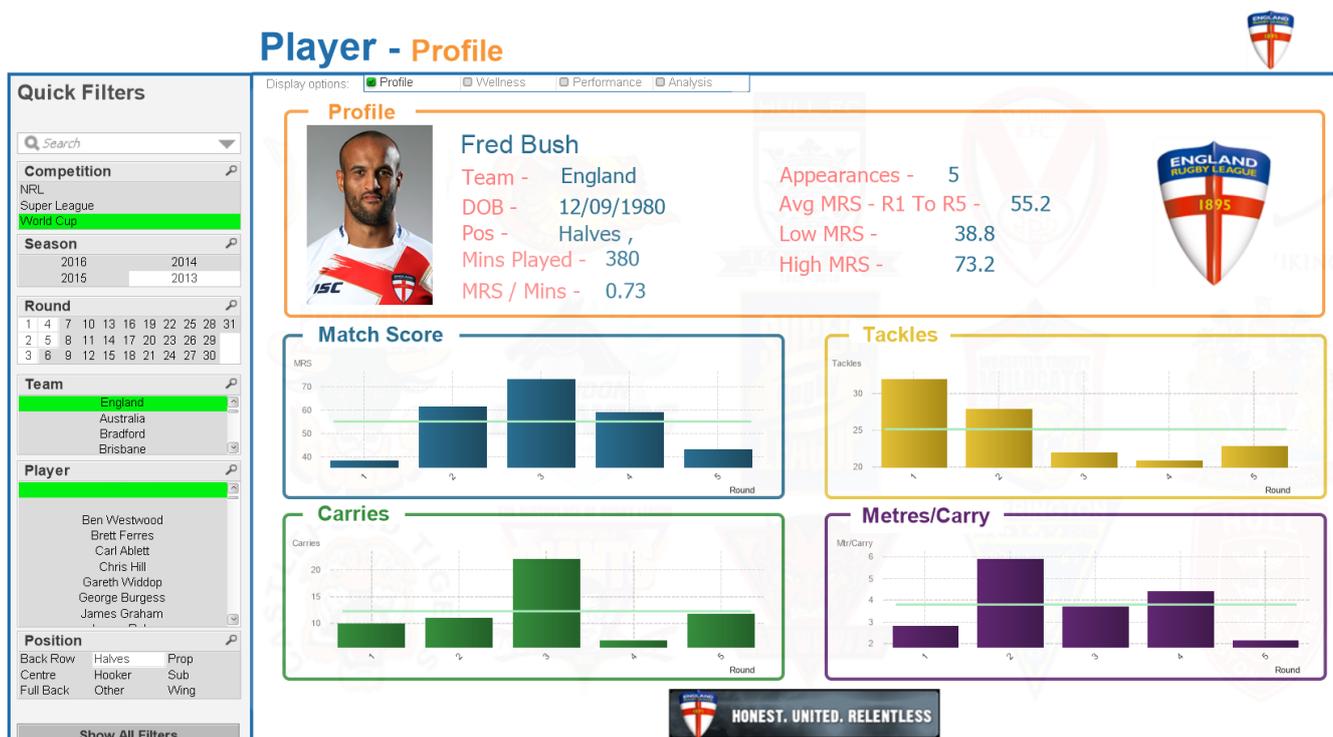
The RFL England Performance Analysis Team contributes to this strategy by gathering and analysing relevant data in support of the Head Coach and his staff to help improve player and national team performance.

CHALLENGES:  
**SPREADSHEET CHALLENGES**

The RFL previously employed spreadsheets for their Performance Analysis activities. In this context spreadsheets have a number of inherent limitations, including:

- Inability to easily handle and combine multiple data sources
- Lack of dashboard visualisation of KPIs with detailed drill-down capability
- Lack of interactivity and the difficulty of sharing between interested parties

A system was needed that could display information in a dashboard format. This would help make sense of the huge data volumes and also facilitate more detailed investigation in an easy, intuitive manner.



“There is no doubt this technology has fostered new insights into identifying our top performers.”

Jon Roberts  
Performance & Coaching Director  
Rugby Football League

It was important that data could be combined from different competitions, such as Super League, the Australian NRL and International matches to gain holistic views.

Equally important was the facility to undertake analysis from any location in the world, via the internet. Analysis needed to be equally deep on laptops, smart phones or tablets.

Data flexibility was another key requirement. Being able to incorporate data from related areas of Sports Science, such as Wellness, GPS and Body Composition, and Performance measures in Training and actual games were seen as crucial.

#### SOLUTION AND OUTCOME:

##### **QLIKVIEW DASHBOARD SOLUTION**

ClickiT developed and helped deploy a QlikView-based solution to solve the challenges faced by the RFL. The flexibility of the solution enabled them to take a more scientific approach to defining and measuring performance metrics.

The solution incorporates a unique performance scoring system, which establishes a “Match Rating Score” (MRS). The MRS is based on multiple performance indicators with associated weightings. The weightings are designed to reflect the relative importance of each metric.

This approach awards points based on the way the Head Coach wants the team to play. He is free to set the KPIs, based on his perception of what will lead to success.

Within that approach, negative points can also be awarded to discourage certain traits and actions. As a simple example, a try may be awarded 10 points, whereas an action that leads to conceding a try may be awarded -10 points.

Coaching Staff can set targets for each player to improve upon using this solution. Individual progress can then be measured.

The England Rugby League squad is selected from players playing week-in-week-out in the Super League. Various aspects of their performance each game are recorded by Opta who then supply the data to the RFL.

This is then automatically uploaded into the QlikView application after each round to be combined with all previous rounds/seasons. From this data the Head Coach and Analyst have complete freedom to examine the data via dashboards and detailed drill-down facilities.

National Squad members are clearly identified, as are fringe players under scrutiny, Junior Internationals and foreign players.

The evaluation system immediately highlights players ‘off the radar’ who are performing well and thus may need to be considered for the national squad.

The system also highlights performance on a minutes played basis, clearly indicating “impact” players. This is particularly important for interchange players who may only play between 10 and 60 minutes per stint in a game.

## HARNESSING MASSES OF PERFORMANCE DATA

to create exciting possibilities

There is too much detailed functionality to include in this short study, but other key functionality includes:

- Player Comparison across multiple KPIs by position, time period, groups, competitions and trends
- In-depth individual player analysis across different facets - attack, defence, ball-handling, kicking
- Analysis of possession during a game

A particularly interesting facet is the “Moneyball” approach, whereby it is possible to make up teams from the squad of players to see if they achieve certain levels of combined performance scoring (on paper!) suggesting they will be competitive against the certain opposition.

#### ENABLER:

##### **QLIKVIEW ANALYTICS**

The QlikView Analytics Discovery solution bridges the gap between traditional Business Intelligence solutions and inadequate spreadsheet applications.

Its in-memory associative search technology allows users to explore data freely rather than being confined to a predefined path of questions. QlikView's self-service analytics can be deployed in weeks or even days.

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