

Evan on track to top in cross-country

AN Oldham teenager is following in his parents' footsteps and shining as a competitive athlete, writes **Lauren Barclay**.

Thirteen-year-old Evan Grime represented England at the Schools International Athletic Board Cross-Country championships in Swansea at the weekend.

It came just a week after he ran for Greater Manchester in Kent and he is already competing at Under-15s level despite being 13.

But it is no surprise as The Blue Coat School pupil comes from athletics stock.

The youngster, who runs for Salford Harriers, has been a club runner since the age of eight and has clearly inherited the running genes as both his parents, Ian and Jill were also accomplished athletes.

Ian competed for both England and Great Britain at 1,500m and 3,000m and Evan's sister, Erin, is also a successful

athlete, meaning all four members of the family have run for their county at inter-countries competitions.

At Pembrey Country Park on Saturday, Evan was 12th in a time of 14mins 59secs in the Junior Boys' 3,000m - eighth English Schools' competitor home.

And the family hope it will be just the start for the Royton youngster.

His gran, Linda Grime, is a big fan of her grandson's achievements and said it made her proud to see him competing for England Schools.

She said: "I'm very very proud of him."

"My husband (Evan's granddad) died last year, and he was really supportive of Evan's running."

"He would have loved to know that Evan had made it onto the England team."

"He (Evan) has worked really hard to get to where he is and should be proud of himself."



ENGLAND PICK: Evan Grime after his run for the county. Picture by woodentops.org

Boss: No problem with Zaha decision

GARETH Southgate "completely understands" Wilfried Zaha's decision to snub England and represent Ivory Coast instead.

The Crystal Palace winger will come up against the Three Lions at Wembley tonight as the two nations meet for the first time.

Zaha, 29, was capped twice by England - making his debut in the same match as Raheem Sterling in 2012 - but as both appearances were in friendly fixtures he was still eligible to switch allegiance to the country of his birth.

Having not been capped in a competitive game, Zaha made the call to play for Ivory Coast in 2016, with Southgate failing to persuade him otherwise, and he has gone on to collect 26 caps, playing at three Africa Cup of Nations.

Now he is set to face England, with Southgate setting the record straight about the situation surrounding Zaha's decision.

"Wilf is a very good player and when we had him with the under-21s he was in the middle of a very difficult spell both with Manchester United and then on loan with Cardiff," he said.

"I remember going to a hotel, Palace were playing away, and meeting with Wilf but at that point he had made his mind up. I can understand it because he had been four years without playing."

Zaha has continued to enjoy a fine run of form at Palace in recent seasons and has developed into a key component of Patrick Vieira's side.

Southgate, however, says it is impossible to consider how much of an impact Zaha could have had if he had decided to continue to play for England.

"It's hard to say what his role might have been with us," he added.

"He's a talent, Wilf and a massive part of Palace's ability to have stayed in the league and now the progress there making."

"He's a good player playing at a high level every week. He's a slightly different player to the ones we've got."

"He felt the Ivory Coast was the route to go and I totally understood that. He's had the opportunity to play in the Africa Cup of Nations and everything else, so no one had a crystal ball in terms of knowing how that would have worked out."

Rough start for Yeds as Cougars go in for the kill

By Roger Halstead

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OLDHAM RLFC 6
KEIGHLEY COUGARS 32

THE COUGARS were in "kill" mood and they hunted down Roughyeds with not a smattering of mercy.

It was the worst possible start to a new league season for Stu Littler's men with a bitterly disappointing performance, a heavy home defeat and a late leg injury for winger Tommy Brierley which, at best, looked like it might keep him out for some time.

That's two home defeats in two competitive games now - this following the Challenge Cup loss to the amateurs of Lock Lane early this month - so there's a lot of work and a good deal of soul-searching to be done this week before the next game at Hunslet this weekend.

Keighley were off to a flier with three tries in the first quarter of the game and, in fairness, the big factor in all this was Oldham's inability to satisfy Aussie referee James Vella that they had got it right regarding high tackling - a widely controversial topic right now and one that is causing players consternation at all levels of the sport.

Six of the first half's seven penalties went to Keighley, to say nothing of a few incidents of the current 'six again' legislation and no team can concede that amount of possession and position without suffering the consequenc-



ON THE ATTACK: Roughyeds in action against Keighley Cougars Picture: Dave Murgatroyd

es. "One of the things we need to work on in the current climate is clearly our tackling technique," said Littler after the game.

Both Littler and club chairman Chris Hamilton were at pains to point out that what happened on the pitch was down to poor performance by Oldham and to Keighley's good show, certainly not down to how the match was handled by the man in the middle.

Cougars were tougher, stronger; far more determined on defence and infinitely more fluent with ball in hand

and, as such, they were worthy winners, as the score would indicate.

Six tries to one tells its own story; in defence, Oldham's line speed was slow and sluggish; in attack they rarely looked like opening up a well-drilled and organised Cougars defence.

Jordan Andrade, a first-half sub, gave the home forwards the drive and impetus it had badly lacked hitherto and was a deserved winner of the home side's top gun award, chosen by former pack star Leo Casey.

Champagne-moment recipient,

Owen Restall, also gave an eye-catching show, scoring Oldham's only try and going close on another occasion from a Martyn Ridyard cross-kick.

In the main, though, Oldham were second best both individually and collectively.

They couldn't handle Keighley's aggression going forward and speed and skill when going wide and a couple of missed tackles were particularly costly early on.

Charlie Graham, the Cougars centre, burst through a soft one-on-one challenge to set up the opening try for his winger, Alix Stephenson and the powerful Branden Santi did likewise to provide a third Cougars try for full-back Lewis Young.

In between, second-row man Aaron Levy added the first of his brace in a stellar performance and at 16-0 to the good, Cougars already had their teeth and jaws ready for "the kill".

A try by Oldham-born centre Nathan Roebuck just after half-time took the Big Cats out to 20-0.

Restall then went in for Oldham's only try on the back of good work by James Thornton, but Keighley finished the stronger and, true to form, added late tries by Levy and Roebuck to finish comfortable winners and to underline their status as one of the favourites for promotion.

OLDHAM: Restall; Brierley, Cooke, Hartley, Holcroft; Ridyard, Hewitt; Nelmes, Jinks, Newton, Thornton, Ferry, Whittel. Subs: Wright, Spencer, Andrade, Coventry.

Ref: James Vella; Att: 815