

# Sporting show has moving moments

REVIEW: Trying for the World, Theatre Royal, Workington

THIS won't go down as Workington Playgoers' greatest production.

If it proves anything, it is that while play acting has found a natural home in professional football, it's a difficult thing to marry to the spirit of the toughest and fastest ball game in the world.

Trying for the World is the Playgoers' contribution to the cultural programme of the Rugby League World Cup, which arrives in Workington next Tuesday.

The play is more a very fast series of scenes and sketches scripted and directed by Ian Hinde in a true

home-grown effort to reflect on Workington Town's golden years, when men were men but when the maternal voice of womanhood was heard loud and clear above the stirrings of brass band music.

Although fast-paced, the opening night performance on Tuesday showed signs of under-rehearsal, which served to flatten some of the earthy jokes and plane the edge off the laddish humour.

Much of the action centres on the 1950s when Workington Town won the RL Championship just six years after the club's foundation – a magnificent feat which presaged three Wembley Challenge Cup finals.

The experienced in the cast were outnumbered by novices, but there was the bonus of the appearance of teenage professional Reece



**TV STAR:** Reece Douglas stands out in Workington Playgoers' production of Trying for the World

Douglas (BBC show Waterloo Road figures large on his CV) playing several roles.

The script disguises the names of some of the club's

greatest players but between them Luke Norendal, Gregory Webzell and Stuart Evans sketch the careers of (among others) Paul Charlton and the late Ike Southward.

Heart-warming and at times moving is Douglas's instantly recognisable portrayal of the late Cec Thompson, the black player whose story is one of the most inspiring in any sport.

There's a big mixed cast. Ian Hinde puts in a good shift as narrator and actor and impresses as the influential figure of Mr Marshall (aka Tom Mitchell, the club's guiding force).

There is also a lot of good and convincing work from Maynall Weir as the hard-bitten coach.

The run ends tonight. For tickets, call 01900 602122.

**PHIL CRAM**