

Keith Sandhu, born Charnjit Singh Sandhu, is a respected figure within rugby league whose journey spans playing, coaching, and international development. A lifelong Leeds Rhinos supporter, Keith has represented university rugby, BARA, GB Pioneers, and spent many seasons at the “mighty” Leeds Akkies. While his playing days shaped him, it is through coaching and leadership that his influence has grown most powerfully.

Keith’s first introduction to rugby league came through a local pub side, Wortley

Dragons, where he joined largely because his friends were playing. What began as a social decision quickly became something deeper. Early in his career, he found himself playing alongside Papua New Guinea World Cup players and a former Challenge Cup finalist — an extraordinary introduction that exposed him to rugby’s global reach and physical intensity. It was at the University of Bradford, however, where Keith truly fell in love with the game, immersed in a culture of discipline, camaraderie, and lifelong friendship forged

through shared study, training, and competition.

Raised in a first-generation South Asian household, Keith grew up with a strong emphasis on education over sport. He was one of the first in his family to play rugby league, and while his family did not fully understand the game, they never stood in his way. His journey was not without challenges. Keith experienced racism on the pitch, including targeted abuse and physical intimidation. One defining moment saw match officials take decisive action, reinforcing his belief that while racism exists, it is not representative of the sport as a whole.

Keith’s coaching career is marked by success and impact. He led Leeds Akkies Ladies and Men’s teams to multiple honours, earned Coach of the Year recognition, and later excelled in university rugby at Leeds and Sheffield Hallam.

Beyond this, Keith has become a genuine pioneer of rugby league development, leading



GB Pioneers and working with International Rugby League to grow the game across more than 18 countries, including Greece, Ukraine, and Norway.

Keith’s legacy is rooted in representation, resilience, and belief — showing that South Asian players can thrive in rugby league while valuing education, leadership, and community.

**“ KEITH HAS BECOME A GENUINE PIONEER OF RUGBY LEAGUE DEVELOPMENT, LEADING GB PIONEERS AND WORKING WITH INTERNATIONAL RUGBY LEAGUE TO GROW THE GAME ”**

