



Rugby Club Leipzig e.V.

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Thoughts on RCL First Men's Team Not Seeking Promotion

After already waiving our right to compete for promotion last season, we find ourselves facing the same difficult decision at the end of this campaign. Once again, in close consultation and with the full consensus of the men's team leadership, we have concluded that promotion to the single-division First Bundesliga is not a sensible step at this time.

The reasons for this decision are multifaceted.

Firstly, we currently lack the squad depth in several key positions necessary to cope with the increased number of matches, the higher physical demands, and the significantly longer travel requirements that a full Bundesliga season would entail. At the same time, it is understandable that not every player is willing or able to take on the additional commitment associated with competing at that level. From our perspective, the risk of jeopardizing the stability of both the team and the wider club project would simply be too great.

In addition, the Score Bonus system introduced one year ago presents further challenges for clubs such as ours. The objective of encouraging Bundesliga teams to rely more heavily on homegrown players and to promote sustainable youth development is understandable and worthy of support. However, we believe that the current implementation lacks sufficient differentiation and that some of its underlying assumptions do not adequately reflect the realities of German rugby.

Anyone who takes an honest look at the conditions under which rugby operates in Germany will quickly recognize that clubs face very different circumstances. Many youth teams now operate as combined teams between clubs, young people are considerably more mobile than in the past, and ambitious players are frequently drawn toward a small number of centralized performance hubs within the German rugby system. Heidelberg, in particular, occupies a unique position as a national center of excellence. Against this backdrop, the expectation that Bundesliga clubs should primarily build their squads from players developed entirely within their own youth systems is, in many cases, unrealistic.

Furthermore, the starting conditions for rugby clubs across Germany are by no means comparable. This is not simply a matter of our club's current situation, but rather a broader question concerning the future development of rugby in Germany as a whole.

Many rugby clubs in western Germany benefit from structures that have been able to develop relatively uninterrupted over several decades. This observation is not intended to diminish the rich rugby tradition of Leipzig and eastern Germany. Our club can look back on the contributions of countless dedicated players, coaches, administrators, and former national team players who have shaped rugby in our region for many decades. We stand on the shoulders of these generations and continue to benefit from their commitment today.



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At the same time, many clubs in eastern Germany had to rebuild themselves under fundamentally different circumstances following German reunification. The dismantling of East German economic structures through the policies of the Treuhand agency and the associated social and economic upheavals continue to affect many regions to this day. Lower business density, less private capital, continued outmigration of young people, and a comparatively weaker club infrastructure make the development of sustainable sporting structures considerably more challenging.

Rugby, as a relatively small sport in Germany, depends heavily on volunteer commitment, local networks, and sponsorship. While clubs in economically stronger regions often have access to a broader base of potential supporters and sponsors, clubs in structurally weaker regions are expected to meet the same sporting requirements despite operating with significantly more limited resources.

There is another important challenge. Even where successful youth development programs exist, talented players often do not remain with their home clubs in the long term. Educational opportunities, university studies, and professional careers frequently lead young people to larger urban centers. Clubs invest substantial time, energy, and financial resources into developing players, yet often do not benefit from that investment over the long term. A regulatory framework that focuses almost exclusively on the number of club-developed youth players does not adequately account for this reality.

From our perspective, this raises an important question about the long-term direction Rugby Germany wishes to pursue.

Should the Bundesliga primarily serve to strengthen existing performance centers, or should it promote the development of rugby throughout the entire country?

If the latter is the objective, then the differing circumstances faced by clubs must be given greater consideration.

In our view, several constructive approaches could contribute to this goal:

- Targeted support for clubs in structurally weaker regions through development and infrastructure funds;
- Financial assistance for youth and school rugby programs outside the traditional rugby strongholds;
- Greater recognition of integration work and broader club development initiatives;
- Improved mechanisms to compensate clubs that lose talented players after investing in their development; and
- A review of whether the current Score Bonus model is genuinely capable of achieving its intended objectives across Germany.



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We fully accept the democratically adopted decisions within our federation and will continue to contribute to the development of German rugby. At the same time, we believe it is important to openly discuss the consequences of existing regulations.

It will be interesting to observe how the First Bundesliga develops over the coming years. If only a limited number of clubs are ultimately able to meet the sporting, organizational, and structural requirements on a sustained basis, then discussions about reform will likely have to be revisited sooner or later.

In our view, Rugby Germany should not evaluate its regulations solely on whether they increase the level of competition at the top in the short term. Equally important is the question of whether they contribute to the long-term growth of rugby across all regions of Germany.

A Bundesliga that can only be sustained by a small number of economically strong and historically established rugby centers may become stronger from a purely sporting perspective. However, it will not automatically become broader, more sustainable, or more representative of rugby in Germany as a whole.

At the same time, our club demonstrates that successful development is possible outside the traditional rugby strongholds. Through tremendous volunteer commitment, consistent youth development, and an open and inclusive club culture, we have succeeded in building a competitive team. The fact that we are even in a position today to discuss a return to the First Bundesliga is the result of many years of work by countless club members, administrators, coaches, players, parents, and supporters.

We therefore hope for an open discussion about how elite performance, youth development, integration, and regional growth can be pursued together. Only if rugby offers genuine opportunities beyond its traditional centers will the sport be able to grow sustainably across Germany in the long term.

Leipzig, 4 June 2026

**The Board of
Rugby Club Leipzig e.V.**