



Championship 2015 and Beyond

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BACKGROUND

Professional Rugby League has had a chequered record in London since the formation of Fulham in 1981. Following the first flush of success at Craven Cottage the club led a largely nomadic existence at the fringes of the semi-professional game until the inception of Super League in 1995.

London, rebranded as the Broncos, were admitted in to Super League I for 1996 and had early successes including a second place finish and an appearance in the last Challenge Cup Final at the old Wembley. Early enthusiasm though, from Barry Maranta and Richard Branson, slid away and a Director of the Broncos David Hughes effectively rescued the club and gave an almost open ended commitment to keep the Broncos in Super League while seeking additional funding.

The nomadic nature of the Club persisted until the involvement of Ian Lenaghan, working with Harlequins CEO Mark Evans, created Harlequins RL; adopting the colours and home of Harlequins and sharing admin and training facilities. For the first time the Club would be fielding a full professional youth structure; a far reaching decision that should now start to bear fruit.

Unfortunately for the club and the game in London, Ian Lenaghan took the opportunity of taking over his home town club Wigan Warriors. The Harlequins RL project momentum therefore stalled, accelerated by the departure of Mark Evans from Harlequins, and David Hughes found himself back in the position of sole funder. A late commitment to fund the club for the 2012-14 Super League franchise period offered stability, but the club's failure to build a functional off field structure and some poor on field decisions led to the failure of a relaunch of the Broncos brand and the decision not to fund the club for the 2014 season.

OBJECTIVE

Late in the 2013 season the feeling of unease in the ever dwindling Broncos support was palpable. A leaflet drop was conducted at the last home game to gauge support for a possible Supporters' Trust, established under Supporters Direct guidelines, working to take a stake in the Broncos. Contact with Broncos CEO was made and he wished the endeavour luck.

Most supporters approached had a positive attitude to the idea; and many actively made contact to pledge support and to keep updated. The lack of information from the Broncos was understandably the most important issue amongst supporters at that time, and little or nothing has happened since the season end to address this. If anything the lack of information and the drip of rumours has further alienated Broncos supporters.

Many, though not all, felt the club belonged in South West or West London. Whatever the future of the Broncos will be in 2014, rumour points to a home either in North (Barnet FC) or East (Leyton Orient) London and so action is required to try and build on, maintain and rebuild, the development work done in the West since the formation of Harlequins RL.

The key objective therefore should be to build a supporter owned community based professional club in South West / West London as the apex of a Rugby League pyramid with the goal of developing and providing goals for Londoners.

GOALS

Simply the goals of this new Phoenix club are best expressed in the Vision statement of the Dons Trust (<http://llocally.com/thedonstrust/aims-2/>)

"To maintain supporter ownership of a successful, financially stable, professional football club playing at the heart of our communities" and

"We will not forget the past, but will look to the future..."

Key to delivering this vision would a new club with an appropriate base in conjunction with Local Authorities and Education establishments. For example there are a number of young players from the Feltham area and the Broncos have previously worked with Feltham Community College (a Sports College). The need to make better use of Feltham Arena may also be an opportunity for a new club. These conditions will probably exist in other areas, and the exploration of this would need to be an early priority.

The goal of the new Club should be to be the true successor to Fulham; the heart of Rugby League in London, in particular the South West and West, at the heart of local communities.

2015

To provide a pathway for talented players already moving through the development system, the new club should aspire to membership of the lowest tier (Tier 3) of professional Rugby League (currently called Championship One) for season 2015.

It would be unrealistic to be able to enter a professional competition in 2014, especially given the fact that the Northern Rail Cup will not be played for in 2014. Had this been played as 2013, a pre-League season event played until Easter, it may have given adequate time to prepare a competitive side. Also given the current uncertainty of competition structures it would not be prudent to hastily commit to playing in a competition that could radically change with little notice.

BEYOND

The Club will strive to be at the heart of Rugby League in London; the true successor to Fulham. On the field the goal must be Super League status; leading the way in delivering Rugby League at the highest level while providing access to the game for all ages and abilities.

TASKS

To begin building this new Club, there are some key initial tasks to undertake

- Constitute a legal Trust entity
 - Supporters Direct are already engaged with this project
 - Recruit Trust members
 - Establish a Trust Board
 - Engage Local Authorities and Schools
 - Establish links with existing community Rugby League clubs
 - Engage the Rugby Football League on 2015 participation in Tier 3
 - an initial contact has been made with a Board member of the RFL on this
 - Engage the Rugby Football League on their plans for player development in London
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BUDGET

Playing Budget 2015

To illustrate the scale of the task ahead, a sketch budget for 2015 shows a requirement of some £150,000 in income generation to support a competitive Tier 3 side. These costs do not include the costs of player development and community work; essential elements for a successful and sustainable Club.

Description	Quantity	Unit Price	Cost
Income 2015			
Membership	200	£ 48	£ 9,600
Ticket Sales	11	£ 4,500	£ 49,500
Central Funding	1	£ 50,000	£ 50,000
Other	1		£ 150,900
Expenditure 2015			
Players Salaries	1	£ 150,000	£ 150,000
Support Staff Salaries	5	£ 10,000	£ 50,000
Facilities Hire	1	£ 40,000	£ 40,000
Insurance etc	1	£ 10,000	£ 10,000
Travel etc	1	£ 10,000	£ 10,000
Total			£ 260,000
