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UGANDAN RUGBY NEED TO SOLVE FINANCIAL PROBLEMS

Here's a challenge. You are in a title race with one or two other rivals, but the teams you are sure of picking easy points from would rather save their meagre resources rather than turn up and lose by embarrassing scores. What would you do? It sounds like a trick question because who would not want to pick up hassle-free points? Now imagine if settling for that kind of win meant you would forfeit a bonus point, which depends on a particular quality of victory, in this case by scoring four or more tries. What then? Would you still take it?

In the national rugby topflight, title contenders Heathens recently opted to move their home game against the Hippos to Jinja because the latter could not afford to travel to Kyadondo. The Heathens could have settled for a 20-00 victory. They chose to go for more.

According to Heathens president Derekford Mugumisa, the decision was the result of innovative problem-solving based on cordial discussions between the two clubs. Mugumisa said:

"Two clubs. One conversation. Problem solved. Our colleagues at @HipposRugby reached out over the weekend.

The funding challenges



I SAY SO
CHARLES MUTEBI

affecting our game at this moment could have seen yet another walkover this coming weekend, as they likely would not make that trip. We chose to work together and found this solution instead.

"Happy that our Clubs' relationship is this much-improved for conversations like these to happen... looking out for each other! The funding conversation around our game

as a whole is a real one, and we simply cannot continue to approach things as "we have always done." Less rigidity (and gatekeeping?). More problem-solving."

The game ended 41-17 in favour of the Heathens.

Now, was the decision a good idea? Can you fault the Heathens for doing what they did? Is there any doubt that saving the league from another walkover this season was commendable? Of course, there are clear merits with the Heathens' decision, even though they would have obviously never gone through with it if it was clear they would pick five points from Hippos.

The bigger issue is not in doubt, though. Ugandan rugby is struggling. It was not so long ago that the sport was being heralded as the model for attracting corporate sponsors. Now, many of their clubs are on the brink of collapse. Walkovers have become a regular feature this season, with several clubs simply unable to honour their fixtures.

It is not a rugby-specific problem. In an amateur setting like ours, financial difficulties are part of life. What is not clear is what rugby can do to reverse the trend. Rugby Uganda and the clubs have to find a way to address the financial challenges in the sport. Somehow.

From the past

A team takes part in a warm-up session to fine-tune their players ahead of the International Hockey Easter Tournament at Lugogo Hockey Ground on March 26, 2016.

