

What is the Ruder-Bundesliga (German Rowing League)?

A benefit for rowing and media – get infected by the Bundesliga-Virus

Nearly every German knows the brand „Deutschlandachter“ (German eight), the flagship of the republic, that became multiple Olympic and world champion. During the Olympic Games in Beijing, only the opening ceremony had higher audience ratings than rowing.

“The new Ruder-Bundesliga is an absolute benefit for the media and for rowing. Not even die-hard rowers would possibly have thought how attractively the fastest water sport practised by own strength can be presented” sports reporter Yorck Polus of TV channel ZDF and NDR presenter Juliane Möcklinghoff agree. The Ruder-Bundesliga (RBL), a new race series for teams of eights introduced in 2009, offers rowing clubs nationwide another extremely sportsmen-, spectator- and media-friendly regatta format.

In this new league system the club teams starting on each of the six seasonal racing weekends collect points for the league tables through their placements in the races. “The concept of this league system has been applied in other team sports for more than 40 years” Arne Simann, one of the founders, says. “Nearly everyone, even though not adept to the sport, may understand what is happening in the league and assess the performance of the teams” Hamburg-born Simann states, who is responsible for press relations, presentation and public image of the RBL events.

From participant sport to spectator sport

The new race series shall accomplish just this for the traditional sport of rowing. The 45 best German club eights solely compete in the as explosive as diverting 350 m distance. Thereby about 100 races take place in one day and the enthusiastic spectators may watch every team up to six times during races and race preparation. “Media and spectators may thus develop a different relationship to the sportsmen and the once anonymous ‘galleys’ get names, faces, characters and personalities” Simann explains only one aspect of how the public shall get an understanding of rowing. And obviously the concept hit a nerve with the public.

So far at least 5,000 spectators throughout the day were attracted on each racing weekend. “Needless to say that it takes its time until non-rowing spectators understand that the event of modern rowing is highly attractive. But word will get around and in the years to come, a racing day could become a destination for family trips as this is something for everyone” Nils Budde, who developed the concept of the RBL, explains the holistic approach of the league. “Until now rowing was a sport for participants only. One has to rethink and we have take care that not only the participants get a better quality but that by creating the event itself, rowing will become a fascinating spectator and media sport.”

Concentration on the basics – The royal league of rowing on sprint distance

Furthermore, after time trial (like in Formula 1 qualifying) the eights compete in the final round in a knock-out system. The initiators as well as the German Rowing Association (Deutscher Ruderverband – DRV) agree that beyond being attractive to the public, the Ruder-Bundesliga



offers the chance of returning the long-bygone media-related attention to their sport. Founders Arne Simann and Nils Budde thereby solely focus on the royal league of rowing – the eight – in their concept in order not to overstrain spectators and interested parties with the complete ‘jungle’ of the diverse boat classes.

So that the racing days become an event for everyone, each race is being accompanied by an exciting and informative presentation and captivating bass sounds. If nothing else, a feeling of adrenaline drenched goose bumps is guaranteed once the teams are being asked to the start for the duel races, at the same time being heated up by exciting music. “Due to the short distance, the audience may see the start as well as the finish line at the same time. And as the races only take one minute each, we generate numerous races, which – despite the 350 m distance – finish within 1/100 of a second and have to be decided by photo finish camera. Obviously the spectators want to see exactly this and the athletes love experiencing it as well” Simann reports on his impressions after countless talks with spectators and sportsmen. “Moreover, due to the short distance we are able to go directly into cities. Narrow canals may turn into boiling pots as a result of spectators being on both sides, coming close to the atmosphere in a stadium if not even exceeding this. The athletes and boats are within reach.”

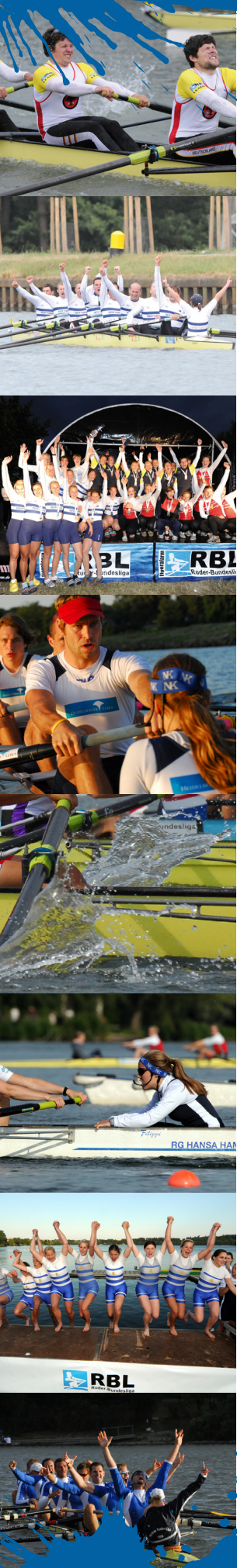
Successful athletes of Olympic Games, World Championships, U23 World Championships and World Junior Championships cater for high standard

“When the eights thunder down the stretch with more than 40 beats per minute, bass in the ears and being cheered by the crowd, it is even for long-standing fans a completely new and highly emotional experience!” Michael Giesecking, who accompanied the team Minden “up&awake” at last year’s racing weekends in Münster and Ratzeburg, describes the atmosphere on site. “You definitely have to see it again this season! It’s simply awesome!” In addition to that, the athletes are a class of their own. More than 50 successful athletes of Olympic Games, World Championships, U23 World Championships and World Junior Championships took a seat in the boats of their clubs. Among them are current world record holders like Bernd Heidicker (RV Emscher), twofold Olympic champion Stephan Volkert (Rhein-Ruhr-Pred8oars) or Oxford-Cambridge winners Thorsten Engelmann and Steffen Buschbacher (Essen and Emscher). This explains the high level of the Bundesliga quality. In 2009, the top ranked team Krefeld beat the German national eight, which won the World Cup in Munich, on sprint distance. Bernd Heidicker (RV Emscher), world record holder, world champion and long-standing stroke of the Deutschlandachter is infected by the Bundesliga virus: “The popularity and potential of the new Ruder-Bundesliga is huge; I think that the standard will still increase significantly.”

Last but not least as motivation we have the largest prizes ever distributed in German history of rowing. The champions of women’s as well as men’s eights in the first RBL season 2009 won brand new racing boats valued € 25,000 and thus were able to support the young talents in their clubs. “Due to the new concept of the RBL, the high-performance sport rowing is real fun.”

Rowing – THE traditional sport in Germany

Rowing is one of, if not the traditional sport in Germany. The technically demanding, powerful sport exists since 1836 when Germany’s first rowing club, Der Hamburger und Germania Ruder-Club, was founded by young Hamburg merchants at the Außenalster. This was already 47 years earlier than the German Rowing Association (founded 1883), Germany’s first sport



association. Since the beginning of the modern Olympic Games, rowing is elementary part of the Olympic program. The eight, royal league of rowing, being the largest and fastest boat class always took and still takes up an exceptional position. The team boat, which measures 18 m and weighs up to one ton including crew, represents team spirit, commitment, elegance and energy like no other boat class.

Loners go down in an eight; everyone in the team is absolutely dependent on each other. Only if the divisions rhythm (stroke), unrestrainedly power (waist resp. "engine room"), exact balance (bow) and conductor (coxswain) work together in consonance and all small cogs in this big machine grip into each other without loss, only then does the artwork of a "rowing flow" compose, only then does the power plant eight start to run or even fly over the water. In principle it is the same like in an orchestra. Eight good soloists do not make an exceptional orchestra. Only when they have gotten used to each other for many years and got a feeling for one another, when they know how their partner reacts in certain situations, when they trust each other blindly and are able to anticipate are they on their way to be world-class. This is exactly how a rowing eight works.

More information: www.ruder-bundesliga.de