

In what is easily the biggest off-season story in Rwandan football, Bank of Kigali (BK) have pulled off a massive sports contract, locking down a lucrative five-year principal sponsorship deal with the country's crowd darlings, Rayon Sports.

The mega-deal, officially inked in the capital on Friday, July 17, will see the bank pump a staggering Rwf 1 billion annually into what is dubbed *Gikundiro's* coffers.

Running all the way through 2031, this groundbreaking partnership isn't just about writing checks; it is structurally designed to hand the struggling Blues immense financial muscle while directly turning their fierce, fanatical fanbase into a living revenue stream.

As the club's new official banking partner, the BK logo will now take pride of place right on the front of both the Rayon Sports men's and women's team jerseys.

But that is just the baseline. The real beauty of this deal lies in its performance-based incentives. *Rwanda Dispatch Sports* understands that the final monetary value could skyrocket way past the initial Rwf 1 billion mark, with extra windfalls heavily tied to fan engagement and the actual adoption of BK's retail products. Showing just how serious they mean business, the bank had already quietly injected over Rwf 170 million into the club during a six-month courtship period preceding Friday's grand signing.

Speaking during the signing of the contract, Desiré Rumanyika, the bank's Chief Digital and Retail Officer, said, "The partnership is intended to support the long-term, sustainable development of Rayon Sports while contributing to the growth of football in Rwanda and creating new experiences for supporters,"

Rayon Sports President Abdallah Murenzi described the agreement as a major milestone that would strengthen Rayon Sports' financial future and provide a more sustainable model for supporting the club's ambitions on and off the pitch.

To truly bring the fans into the ecosystem, the partnership introduces a specialized suite of "Gikundiro" banking products. The Blues faithful will now have access to customized current, savings, and business accounts, alongside Gikundiro-branded debit cards tiering from Classic and Platinum all the way to the premium Signature category.

The kicker? Every single time a fan swipes that dedicated Gikundiro Card, a

percentage of the transaction goes straight back into the club. It is a brilliant win-win for the ecosystem, the fans keep the bank busy, and their everyday spending directly fuels Rayon Sports' march toward long-term financial sustainability.

The agreement follows BK's growing investment in Rwandan sport, including its five-year, Rwf3.25 billion title sponsorship of the Rwanda Premier League, now known as the BK Pro League.

Rayon Sports had a highly demanding and mixed 2025/2026 campaign. While they remained fiercely competitive, they fell just short of the ultimate domestic silverware:

Last season, Rayon pushed their eternal rivals APR FC all the way to the wire, but ultimately missed out on the league trophy. A crucial 1-1 draw against APR in early May 2026 kept them in the hunt, but too many draws down the final stretch, including a 1-1 stalemate against SC Kiyovu to close out the season on May 29, saw them finish behind the army side.

The club reached the advanced stages of the Peace Cup, but agonizingly lost a high-stakes penalty shootout (1-1 FT, 1-0 on pens) against arch-rivals APR FC on May 23, 2026, missing out on the cup trophy.

In the CAF Confederation Cup, their journey was cut short in the preliminary rounds, bowed out after a tough tie against Tanzania's Singida Black Stars in September 2025.

Behind the scenes, Rayon has been walking a financial tightrope for the last couple of seasons. As a fan-owned club, they lack the direct institutional or military funding that rivals like Police FC or APR FC enjoy. This has led to severe cash flow crises including:

The club hit rock bottom off the pitch in October 2025 when FIFA slapped them with a strict registration ban. The global football governing body sanctioned Rayon Sports after they failed to pay outstanding wages and compensation owed to their former Brazilian head coach, Roberto Oliveira (Robertinho). This severely handicapped their ability to comfortably navigate the January 2026 transfer window.

Additionally, internal financial turmoil saw the club routinely struggle to clear player and staff dues. By the end of late 2024, the club publicly owed over Rwf 86 million

in accumulated player wages and unpaid signing-on fees, sparking dressing-room unrest and making it difficult to retain top talent.

The Rwf 170 million that BK quietly injected into the club over the last six months was essentially an emergency lifeline used to stabilize operations, settle immediate debts, and lay the groundwork for this massive Rwf 1 billion-a-year bailout.