



Fan Advisory Board / RFC Leadership Meeting

Ibrox Stadium

Wednesday 17 September 2025

Attendees

Rangers FC

Patrick Stewart, Chief Executive Officer
Kevin Thelwell, Sporting Director
James Taylor, Chief Finance Officer
Greig Mailer, Chief Communications and Marketing Officer
Darren Faulds, Head of Safety, Security, and Resilience
Greg Marshall, Head of Fan Engagement
Allison Walker, Fan Engagement Coordinator
Calvin Stroyan, Fan Engagement Executive

Rangers FC Fan Advisory Board

Stuart Langan, Chair
Matt Boyd
Craig Hannah
Jamie Cook
Kelly Johnstone
Gary Ralston
Fahd Bari

1. Introductory Comments

Patrick Stewart (PS) opened the meeting by confirming that no topic was off limits and that the FAB could use the time as they see fit. FAB members stated that while the group was established to address strategic issues, the overwhelming concern among supporters was the men's first team and the position of the head coach. It was agreed the discussion would concentrate on football matters.

2. Head Coach & Performance

All FAB members expressed their strength of anger and dismay and the fans' collective strength of feeling concerning recent first team performances, results and the position of Russell Martin. It was made clear that at this moment, the fanbase feels overwhelmingly united on this. The following, more specific, points were raised:

- The current frustration amongst fans is not only with the current results but is a culmination over a number of years. However, this season represents a significant downturn in performances and results, even within that context. Over the last two or three seasons the team have at least found ways to win key European games and matches against Celtic, though often when the pressure has been off. The

biggest problems have largely come away from home in fixtures where the club is expected to be the stronger team. This season, we have not resolved that problem. Broader context matters to an extent (in terms of the club's recent domestic record), but the current league position and underlying performances amplify concern dramatically.

- The playing identity promised at appointment hasn't been evident on the pitch.
- The stated principles appear to have already been abandoned, or deviated from, eroding confidence further.
- Head coach's public comments are viewed as deflecting onto supporters and have felt condescending to fans. This has damaged the relationship between Russell Martin and fans as much as the performances on the pitch.
- Expectations after the takeover were very high but feel unmet to some supporters.
- The FAB noted that recent performances, together with certain off-field decisions, have affected how the club is being perceived. Those frustrations are turning to apathy among some sections of the support.
- Finally, it was acknowledged that responsibility also lies with the players. The FAB noted that the squad has not always shown the consistency and qualities expected at Rangers FC, particularly during more challenging moments.

Kevin Thelwell (KT) acknowledged that results and performances had fallen short of expectations. He explained that the summer's recruitment strategy aimed to reduce the average age of the squad, adapt the playing style, and refresh the group with 14 signings. While training standards at Auchenhowie were described as very high, he accepted that this quality had not yet translated into results at Ibrox, and that this needed to change urgently.

PS noted that while the head coach carries responsibility for results, accountability also lies with the wider football operation and the board. He emphasised that decisions must be taken without emotion, with the aim of addressing the underlying causes of underperformance.

The FAB highlighted the strength of supporter frustration, noting that fans believed the team was already falling short of key targets for the season. They raised concerns that apathy was beginning to spread, reflected in cancellations from the Continuous Credit Card Scheme (CCCS) and increased use of SeatSub. The club acknowledged that fans have the right to express their dissatisfaction with the start to the season.

The FAB asked why the club had chosen to appoint Russell Martin, noting that the identity and intensity promoted at the time of his arrival had not materialised. They questioned whether the emphasis on possession football was suited to Rangers, given current performances. PS reflected on Rangers' record over the past 15 years, noting that since the club's return to the top-flight, only one league title had been won. He stressed the need to examine deeply why success has been so limited, looking at finances, style of play, recruitment, and broader structural issues.

PS explained that the process had been thorough in terms of references, interviews and data analysis. He said the club's analysis showed that possession-dominant teams are typically more successful in Scotland and across similar leagues throughout Europe. This analysis had shaped the search and ultimately led to Russell Martin's appointment. KT added that the intention is for Rangers to dominate both on and off the ball, creating more chances, better chances and ultimately success. He said there had been glimpses of this approach but accepted that the level had not been sustained and that the translation now had to happen quickly.

PS stressed that applying binary triggers to managerial decisions was unwise, as context is everything. He emphasised that while results were disappointing, the club felt that it was important to avoid making a reactive change. He reiterated the desire to avoid short-term, reactive cycles of change, pointing out that Rangers have gone through multiple coaches in recent years without resolving the underlying issues. While conceding results and performances had fallen short, it was noted that meaningful progress was being made behind the scenes that warranted backing. He acknowledged the need for the board and leadership to share accountability, noting that responsibility could not rest solely with the head coach.

Fan representatives asked whether prolonging Martin's tenure was linked to protecting the board's own decision-making credibility. PS replied that the board was willing to admit mistakes and accept accountability, but that acting too quickly could itself be a mistake, simply relieving pressure temporarily without fixing the deeper problems.

It was noted that while the technical aspects of the squad are best judged by coaching staff, it is possible to assess morale, atmosphere, and professionalism around a training ground. At present, the atmosphere at Auchenhowie is considered to be positive, with strong buy-in from the players, cohesion, professionalism, and work ethic compared with what has been seen in some other environments. The current group is seen to be in a strong position overall in terms of unity. It was acknowledged that optimism could ultimately prove misplaced if results do not follow, but there remains a belief that there is a genuine chance for improvement, though time will ultimately determine whether this translates onto the pitch.

A question was raised about whether the club has a Plan B, noting that fans are concerned about the possibility of prolonged uncertainty if results do not improve. PS explained that succession planning is a normal part of good governance across all key roles, and not specific to the head coach. While he stressed that this does not mean active steps are being taken to replace Russell Martin, contingency planning is a normal part of football and business operations.

3. Recruitment and Academy

Supporters raised concerns about squad building and recruitment strategy. It was noted by the FAB that this season's squad appears stronger than last year's, yet performances have not reflected that improvement. They expressed frustration that significant funds have been allocated to younger players seen as "projects". There was reference to the 2020/21 title-winning side, which contained experienced leaders with a "Scottish DNA" and a deep understanding of Rangers' culture.

KT acknowledged the questions but explained that not all recruitment considerations could be made public. They outlined the rationale behind some recent signings. For example, Mioviski was seen as a sensible acquisition given his prior success, age profile, and leadership qualities, while Chermiti represented a higher risk-reward signing with the potential to deliver both on the pitch and in future transfer value. The strategy is to balance players capable of contributing immediately with younger talents who could grow into the role and generate long-term value for the club, which could be reinvested back into strengthening the squad in the future.

Concerns were also raised about the reliance on loan signings, particularly in defence, which created a perception that Rangers were developing players for other clubs. KT explained that the strategy aimed to balance short-term impact with longer-term value. He noted that while the use of loans was more concentrated in this window, several of those players could remain beyond the season.

The FAB raised concern that players seemed unable to translate what was being reported as high training standards into performances on the pitch. The FAB again flagged that this is ultimately irrelevant if it cannot be translated to matchdays. PS said that resilience was a key factor both in the appointment of the head coach and in player recruitment. He acknowledged that younger profiles may be less consistent than experienced players but stressed that the strategy is to identify players who have demonstrated the ability to overcome setbacks and grow through challenges. KT noted again that translating training levels to performances at Ibrox is essential.

In terms of the Scottish market, KT accepted there is a perception of reluctance to sign domestic players. While acknowledging this perception, it was noted that the club has signed Scottish players in recent years (Barron, Cameron) and remains open to doing so when they represent the right value and quality. KT emphasised that certain Scottish international players are unattainable for Rangers due to financial realities, while others must be carefully judged on their ability to contribute meaningfully. He said the club is deliberately strengthening the Academy and pathways at Auchenhowie, aiming to create a tighter environment and ensure stronger contributions from home-grown players in the future. It was highlighted that youth development must combine strong coaching, education, and support with genuine opportunities for first-team football.

Examples were provided of increased focus on planning further ahead within the Academy structure, including identifying future prospects earlier and ensuring loan opportunities for younger players where appropriate. It was also noted that Russell Martin is personally investing additional time working with younger players after training.

4. Player Management

Concerns were raised regarding the management of certain players, with Nico Raskin cited as an example where ongoing uncertainty has created frustration among supporters. The lack of clarity around his situation was said to leave space for speculation, which in turn risks fuelling perceptions of inconsistency or unnecessary exclusion.

PS emphasised that managing players within a football environment is always complex, particularly under media scrutiny, and that some decisions may appear counterintuitive

from the outside but are made for the long-term benefit of the player, the squad and the club. It was noted that the situation with Nico had been resolved relatively quickly and pragmatically, and the club reiterated the importance of addressing matters promptly, drawing a line under them, and moving forward together.

5. Accountability

A question was raised about whether senior leadership, including the CEO and sporting director, would consider their own positions untenable if results under Russell Martin did not improve.

PS made it clear that he constantly reflects on his own position and performance and stressed that his role as CEO will be judged on many different factors across the club. He emphasised the need to remain focused, objective, and analytical in decision-making, avoiding short-term reactions. PS acknowledged the frustration and hurt caused by poor performances, confirmed the club listens to supporter sentiment, and stressed that no decisions are taken lightly. However, he felt that stepping aside would not resolve underlying issues and that he has a responsibility to work through the issues, continue building strong long-term foundations, while also working urgently to improve short-term results.

KT added that being under threat is part of the responsibility of senior leadership in football. He stated that he does not ignore supporter views, as shown by the club's willingness to engage openly in forums such as this one. He acknowledged that criticism of recruitment and performance is valid but argued that his role requires resilience and commitment to long-term goals. KT stressed that Rangers is "worth fighting for" and gave assurances that he and PS will give everything to ensure the club returns to where it belongs.

6. Communication & Engagement

It was suggested that the ownership group, had previously indicated a willingness to engage directly with supporters if issues arose. Given the current situation, some fans felt this commitment should now be acted upon. PS responded that while day-to-day operations and communications are managed by the executive team, there is regular contact with ownership, and they are fully aware of current challenges and supporter sentiment. He reiterated that the club values open dialogue and that forums such as this one are important opportunities to hear concerns and explain the club's position.

7. Refereeing

The FAB raised concerns about recent refereeing decisions, reflecting wider supporter frustration with the standard of officiating. They asked what steps the club was taking to address these issues. PS confirmed that the club had already raised its concerns directly with the Scottish FA. He said discussions were ongoing and that the club had made clear its dissatisfaction with recent performances by officials. While he admitted the process

was frustrating, he noted the Scottish FA's willingness to discuss issues and acknowledge mistakes when presented with evidence could lead to more consistency over time.

8. Closing Remarks

The FAB reiterated that they had a duty to reflect the views of supporters openly, even when those views were critical of the club. Whilst they appreciated the board's willingness to provide rationale for decision-making, the FAB remain unanimously unconvinced that progress will come quickly enough or at all under Russell Martin's stewardship, reiterating fan expectation of accountability at all levels should things not improve rapidly.

PS said he respected the role of the FAB in representing supporter views and confirmed that the leadership team would continue to engage constructively through this forum. He emphasised that responsibility for the current situation rested with the board and the football department, and that the focus remained on turning performances around quickly while building the long-term structures required for sustained success.