

Grounds and Fixtures AGM Report 2018-19

17th June 2019

The start of the season saw a static 49 teams playing across 5 divisions in the women's league, one division less than the previous year. For this season, we restructured the divisions to make them slightly bigger, allowing for a more even spread of games across the season. This dovetailed with our continuing objective of improving the standard of high-level hockey over time, by gradually including more teams in the premiership.

We had 8 teams in the premier division (up from 6), 10 teams in division one, 10 teams in division two (up from 8), 10 teams in division three (up from 9) and 11 teams in division four (up from 8). The divisions (except division 4) played two rounds and division 4 only played one round. However, both the premier division and division 4 were then split and played an additional half round to determine seedings for their knock-out competition and with respect to division 4, qualification.

We are maximizing the use of the pitches, with most games completing matches within a tight schedule of 90 minutes. However, this season we allowed additional time, where possible for premiership games – sometimes up to 15 minutes depending on pitch availability. We will ask for feedback from clubs on how this worked and ensure that it doesn't disadvantage the other teams. We have reiterated that the onus for ensuring games start/finish on time is the responsibility of umpires and captains and although this will require continued education to build awareness and action, there was a marked increase in diligence in starting/finishing games on time. The committee would again like to thank Hong Kong Football Club for their ongoing support allowing us to use their pitch and affording flexibility to us.

It is worth noting that although we were able to fit everything in, it is an extremely tight schedule and clubs must keep requests to move matches to a minimum. We were impacted by the hurricane early in the season which meant that more than one pitch was out of action for a period of time. This is in addition to the unsafe quality of some of the pitches in dry weather, meaning we are not able to use those pitches.

The one day premiership showcase tournament including a visiting team from China (Shenzhen) was the 5-a-side tournament at Hong Kong Football Club. We moved the fixture to be just after the Christmas break and this worked very well as a kick start to the second half. Worth noting that the calibre of hockey played was evened out across the premiership teams, in part due to teams only needing a smaller number of higher level players to compete well. Attendance was excellent and feedback was positive. The committee would like to thank everyone who was involved in the planning, organization and set up of this tournament, including in particular the team at Hong Kong Football Club.

The Knock-out Cup was impacted by some teams withdrawing at the last minute and the number of requests for rescheduling made it challenging to fit everything in. In order to ensure a better quality, competitive competition, we will need to remind teams again that the Cup is not optional and that penalties can be incurred. I also received some feedback that removing pool games can mean an extremely short cup run for teams. I think we are doing

the best we can given the pitch availability right now and overall, teams did play more games throughout the season but there is no harm reviewing this.

Combining the Men's and the Women's competitions for the finals days works well in terms of bringing the two hockey leagues together and showcasing the best of Hong Kong hockey. I would like to see Men's and Women's games played throughout the season on both Saturday and Sunday as is customary in many countries. It's not acceptable in this day and age to assume that Women can't play on Sunday because there are no outsourced childcare options.

My recommendations to the incoming committee are as follows:

- Circulate fixtures for all league games and pitches slots for knock-out tournament matches and one day tournaments at the start of the season thus reducing the risk of clubs making late requests to change fixtures or conceding walkovers.
- Continue with the premierships showcase tournament immediately after the Christmas break.
- The division sizes worked well this year and I would recommend keeping as is for the next season to ensure a consistent number of games amongst all divisions, spread as evenly as possible. Thus avoiding the situation in previous seasons where there were large gaps.
- Revisit the extended time for premierships games, to ensure that this is helpful for them and doesn't disadvantage all clubs.
- Ensure feedback is gathered re. striking the balance of increasing the size of the premierships division and how to structure the season. Noting that there is still a large gap in caliber between the top and the bottom end of the division.
- Maximise usage of pitch time to include more weeknight games, enabling teams to play more matches.
- Continue to emphasise the importance of starting/finishing on time (with a lead being taken by umpires and captains) to ensure the smooth running of the league.
- KO Cup – continue to combine the finals days. Remind Clubs that this is not a mandatory competition with penalties for withdrawing teams. Keep the structure of the competition under review.

Prepared by Christine Wood, Grounds & Fixtures Secretary