

Chairwoman's Report 2019-20
29th June 2020

Hong Kong has experienced an unprecedented 12 months starting off with disruptions due to mass social events and disruptions in the first half of the season followed by Covid-19, experienced with the rest of the world, resulting ultimately in the cancellation of the domestic competitions. Above all else, I must thank all clubs, players, coaches, umpires and the office for their co-operation, understanding and support during these extraordinary times.

Our national team continued to train despite the disruptions subject to the availability of different venues. We remain grateful to the generous support afforded to our national team programme by the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) Team Sports Funding and by our sponsors Rutonjee and JDH (Jamie Dwyer Hockey) and the Dillon family's sponsorship towards our youth. We appreciate that the overall level of sponsorship will be reduced in the current climate.

This season saw the largest number of teams in the top two divisions in recent years, with 9 teams in the premier division and 10 in division 1, continuing the committee's objective to bring back up the number of teams playing at a higher level. Whilst at last season's AGM we were already able to announce provisionally the divisions for the next season, given the ongoing uncertainties surrounding Covid-19 and the related restrictions, this will not be possible at this AGM. However, clubs have already been given the opportunity to raise any specific issues regarding next season for consideration in our questionnaire. This should enable the next committee to finalise the divisions within the next month.

We will endeavour to release fixtures earlier to enable clubs to plan accordingly and avoid giving walkovers through lack of players. I reiterate to all teams the same point as last year - with more money being invested in team sports in Hong Kong, hockey faces increasing competition for the use of pitches. If we do not continue to make full use of the pitches made available for league fixtures, then we simply risk losing pitch slots.

This season was particularly challenging and I thank teams for their patience, particularly when games had to be rescheduled at the last minute due to protests in October and November. These were frustrating times but thanks to the work of our fixtures secretary, the HKHA office and the teams involved, we had been able to make up almost all of those games by Chinese New Year.

Notwithstanding the above, given the growing number of different team sports in Hong Kong, the pitches are an increasingly valuable commodity both for matches and training as hockey faces increasing competition for the use of pitches. All teams must be mindful of this when giving walkovers and/or requesting any changes to matches after fixtures are finalised. Save for key holidays such as Christmas, Chinese New Year and Easter, teams should expect to play matches on all weekends between September 2020 to May 2021 with a small number of weeknight matches as well.

We hosted our second Premier Hockey 5s tournament in January with our affiliated club premier division teams and using the FIH hockey 5s format. Positive feedback was again received and I hope that this event, which has served as a showcase of women's hockey in Hong Kong and promotes a format being pushed by the FIH, continues to grow. I would like to thank everyone who helped make this happen, including Eva Thometz, Simon Chapman, HKFC and Jowie and Ambrose.

I would like to highlight the HKHA's Code of Conduct which applies to all participants and the overall spirit in which the game should be played. We are receiving more reports of unsportsmanlike behaviour and seeing an increasing number of cards. In one particular game a sexual harassment complaint was made against a player. The matter was handled by Council in accordance with the HKHA's Sexual Harassment Prevention and Handling Policy and has been concluded in the strictest confidence. However, I sincerely hope that future incidents will not require such escalation as participants and umpires work more closely together.

With regards to the abandonment of the women's competitions, a discount will be made on team registration fees for next season. Questions received have highlighted the need to clarify what team registration fees paid by clubs to the HKHA are used for. In addition to covering domestic competition costs, the monies contribute to ongoing fixed overhead costs necessary to the running of the HKHA (such as rent and salaries) and the national team programme (the ongoing success of which is essential to the HKHA's standing as a National Sports Association (NSA) and standing when gaining access to public venues for hockey related activities such as courses, training and matches), promotion and development of hockey amongst the community. Therefore, given the majority of the costs of the HKHA are ongoing notwithstanding the abandonment of the competition, savings will not be correlative to the number of games played/not played. The final amount will be calculated and approved as soon as possible once the HKHA's accounts for 2019-20 are finalised.

Finally, further to discussions at last season's AGM, HKHA Council circulated a proposal to clubs about its plans to reorganise the HKHA and bring the allocation of responsibilities on Council in line with other national sports associations, both in Hong Kong and overseas. The objective is to create a more streamlined and unified organisation with all members of Council working towards the common goal of developing and promoting all areas of hockey equally.

In order for the changes anticipated by the proposed reorganisation to be successful and benefit the whole hockey community, all those elected to Council roles must give equal consideration to the development and opportunities to be created for men, women and youth and consider hockey overall rather than individual sections. We continue to see increased collaboration amongst the men and women's sections and are moving in the right direction, though there continue to be, on occasion, significant differences on key points. Any reorganisation will need to be approved at the Council's AGM by each of the men and women's sections of affiliated clubs. Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask questions before such meeting.

Finally, I would like to thank the outgoing committee, everyone in the office, council members and all the clubs for all their support and patience during these unique twelve months.