

## **Chairwoman's Report 2020-21**

22<sup>nd</sup> June 2021

This season has proven to be even more challenging than the 2019-20 season as we continued to face the challenges of the global Covid-19 pandemic. First and foremost I would like to thank the committee this past season and all those in the hockey community who have continued to demonstrate their co-operation, understanding, respect and support during another unprecedented and difficult period.

Despite the ongoing disruption to availability of pitches, our national team was able to continue to train on and off the pitch. The HKHAWS remain grateful to the generous support afforded to our national team programme by the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) Team Sports Funding and the Dillon family's sponsorship towards our youth. I would also like to congratulate our head coach Arif Ali, who will continue in the position, following his contract renewal earlier this year, together with our national strength and conditioning coach Chris Marshall.

The start of the season was delayed till early November due to Covid-19 restrictions. Thank you to all who worked hard for the winter league to be able to start within a very short time frame as the HKHAWS aimed to offer what it could in everchanging restrictions in relation to sport. The season began with forty-six teams across five divisions.

Most teams were able to enjoy three/four weekends of league matches before the HKHA was forced to suspend the league at the end of November, with some teams already affected by rescheduling due to teams affected indirectly by Covid-19 measures.

Following the further relaxing of restrictions earlier this year, the HKHAWS sought to resume the league again in mid-March. At this stage one team had pulled out mid-season. However, following the gym cluster, the HKHA decided in line with other NSAs, to delay the return to competition by an additional two weeks. Subsequently three more teams pulled out of the league. Some walkovers were still given in subsequent matches across all grades.

Therefore, whilst disappointing that once again the committee objectively could not rely on league standings to fairly determine automatic promotion/relegation or winners or losers, I was pleased that teams were able to play at least half a season's worth of matches. In particular, I would like to give particular recognition and are grateful to those teams who still played with less than 10 or 11 players rather than give a walkover, which allowed more people across the board to keep playing. It is also noted some clubs took this opportunity to encourage other players to play up and develop in a way they would have not been able to necessarily in a usual season. Given the socio-economic crisis going on these small silver linings were positive to see and embody the spirit which we have tried to encourage all season.

I would like to congratulate HKFC A who were the sole winners within the winter competition in 2020-21 after they retained the Guv Dillon Cup after finishing top in the first round of the premier division, top in the additional half round of the top half of that division and beating the runners-up Coyotez in the final 3-1 in extremely hot weather and finishing the season undefeated. Congratulations HKFC A.

The HKHAWS anticipates, given the number of teams that pulled out mid-season, that many clubs will need more time to determine the number of teams that they will be able to field next season.

Therefore, it is not yet possible to announce provisional divisions yet, but the new committee will aim to do so as soon as reasonably possible.

The HKHAWS will continue to release fixtures as early as possible to enable clubs to plan accordingly and avoid giving walkovers. As noted last year, hockey continues to face increasing competition for the use of pitches. Boundary Street will not be available for the first half of the season so teams should expect to play some mid-week matches in Happy Valley, Kings Park or Lok Fu as we aim to maximise the use of pitches made available to the HKHA.

You will all have seen the circular about our open junior sessions and the committee's intention to create a mid-week youth representative team with both HK eligible passport holders and non-HK passport holders. The aim is to create more opportunities for our youth to play matches in higher grades and receive coaching from elite female players, who we hope will motivate the girls to continue in the sport and thus also create a pathway into the junior national team then senior team.

Please encourage the youth players in your clubs to consider this opportunity. Depending on interest this is a programme that we would like to build on in the future.

The season was concluded with a few one day "fun" 6 aside tournaments where positive feedback was received. Teams were happy to be playing more hockey in a fun environment and it was good to see more people trying umpiring for the first time; the majority of teams and players supported these individuals. Thank you Eva Thometz for arranging these tournaments. I would like to use this opportunity to highlight the HKHA's Code of Conduct which applies to all participants and the overall spirit in which the game should be played.

In addition, I would like to remind everyone that many people who help to run the league, in particular umpires, are individuals volunteering their time, rather than professionals. Whilst we are always aiming to improve the standard of umpiring in our league games, we also need to create an environment where people are encouraged to umpire and will be respected for doing so. We need to increase the pool of umpires and the standard. Any ideas on how we can do this are always greatly welcomed.

With regards to registration fees for the next season, please note this will be discussed at council level. As you will see from the income statement our income this year was greatly reduced and expenditure reduced only due to the lack of international level competitions. We are hopeful such events will resume as our national team continues its objective of qualifying for the next Asian Games. Their next tournament will be the Asia Indoor Cup in November 2021. Thus, overheads and other expenses described in my report last year are expected to increase in 2021-22. Therefore, teams should be prepared for registration fees to be at least the same level as in the 2019-20 season.

To close off my report I would like to highlight the contributions of a few key people.

Firstly, it is with great sadness we remember Fabian Gregory who passed away suddenly early this year. As well as being the Hong Kong men's national coach he was also the women's head coach of Valley and we would like to recognise and remember his contribution to women's hockey during his time with us here in Hong Kong.

I would like to thank Amy Lip who resigned earlier this year as manager of the women's national team after 18 years. This is an incredible achievement and on behalf of the HKHAWS I would like to applaud her and thank her for her service over all these years to the team.

On behalf of the HKHAWS I would also like to extend our thanks and appreciation to Heather Galbraith. Her experience and guidance has been invaluable over the last few years on the national squad sub-committee.

I would also like to thank Snowy Ewis who after being our treasurer for many years, has stepped down and recently left Hong Kong. I'm extremely grateful for the help and advice she provided over the years

Finally, I would like to thank the outgoing committee, everyone in the office, council members (in particular Karina Lam for her ongoing guidance and contributions to the HKHAWS) and all the clubs for all their support and patience during these turbulent twelve months.