

**Report of the Chairman to the Annual General Meeting
of the Hong Kong, China Rowing Association
27th December, 2020**

Make things happen!

It was a challenging 2020, the COVID pandemic brought a lot of impacts & challenges to the Association while at the same time, with the great effort from the board members, staffs, committee & commission members, we can still **make things happen!**

COVID Pandemic – The challenge ignites the passion

Since the first announcement of COVID Pandemic by the Government at the end of January this year, the two rowing centres were closed. No rowing activities until mid-February. The centres then were re-opened in a very limited and controlled manner, starting with 2-3 morning sessions per week, then extending gradually to sessions in daytime. Due to the ever-changing situation of COVID pandemic, the centres were closed intermittently. Great efforts have been made by the related staffs and directors to make sure all the safety measures in place, including developing safety policies and getting adequate virus prevention supplies at the earlier stage, to bring a safe rowing environment during the extraordinary time.

At the end, the 2020 ended with 187 centre closure dates and all the major championships and regattas, Hong Kong Indoor Rowing Championships, International Master Regatta, Hong Kong Rowing Championships, Hong Kong Rowing School Championship, Hong Kong Rowing Coastal Championships, being cancelled!

The tough time has also ignited the creativity and fighting spirit of the staffs, the directors, and the committee/commission members to keep our sport moving.

While face-to-face gathering was not allowed, we brought the indoor rowing challenge to the virtual world. We have successfully hosted the Festival of Sports Virtual Indoor Challenge that attracted 246 participants in June.

While the normal Shing Mun Regatta format was not allowed, the format was changed to make sure we complied to all the safety measures required by government and finally we have hosted 3 Shing Mun Challenge with new format in June, October and November. In total, we recorded 411 entries.

While there were group gathering limitation, we restructured our training courses with the use of Zoom. Starting from September, our Hong Kong Rowing Youth Academy started to use Zoom to conduct its training and 81 crews had been benefited from this.

The challenge ignites the passion!

During this very special tough moment, we still keep moving and make things happened!

Board Rowing Development – a new tool to bring rowing to everyone

Rowing in Hong Kong has been limited in Shing Mun River for the past 40 years, because of the relatively demanding requirement on the water body and the equipment. It is always our dream rowing can jump out of Shing Mun River to everywhere in Hong Kong. Board Rowing, with its stability, easy to learn and

to store nature, has been identified to be the best tool to be introduced to general public with focus on life style, fun and health, instead of competition only as in the past.

To facilitate the initiation of Board Rowing, the followings have been done:

1) Beginner Course & Instructor Course Development

Thanks to Sam Wong, our Coaching Director, who has spent massive time and effort to put together a solid syllabus of Board Rowing Introductory Course (BRIC) and Board Rowing Elementary Instructor Award (BREIA). BRIC is expected to be easily adapted by organisations/partners while BREIA would enable organisations/partners to develop their own instructors quickly and then to organise the BRIC in their centre or package BRIC to their own programmes to fit their own needs. In this way, we are encouraging rowing to be adopted easily by outside organisations/partners.

2) Partnership Development

Thanks to Ho Kim Fai, Fay and John Cheung, our directors, who captured this opportunity quickly to reach out to various organisations to introduce Board Rowing to them, especially Fay who used her own Rowing Board to initiate interest of peoples who never touches rowing before. Their amazing work, together with Sam and the coaches, bring us a very positive formal and informal partnerships with various organizations, including Playground Association, AYP, Vessel and some other developing opportunities. Most of them have adopted the BRIC/BREA syllabus as their main program framework.

3) Rowing outside Shing Mun

Apart from partnership with outside organisation, the Association is now developing various scheme to facilitate our members to be able to rent the Rowing Board to row outside Shing Mun River or even purchase their own Rowing Board that they can totally tailor their own rowing experience. There is also on-going plan to have our members to be able to row in our partners venues. The details are developing and will soon be launched.

4) Promotion

With the help of our Hong Kong National Squad as ambassadors and the great PR work by the Office, the Board Rowing has attracted media interest. Plans are developing to attract more media attention once the COVID pandemic situation alleviates and rowing is allowed again.

High Performance Program – Challenging Year

With the traditional “Start of Training Ceremony” at the beginning of January and the start of an Olympic year, there were high hopes for our High Performance Programme. Trials were held just before Chinese New Year to select a squad to prepare for the Asia and Oceania Qualification event planned for Korea in April. Straight after the holiday athletes Lee Ka Man, Winne Hung, Chiu Hin Chun, Chan Chi Chung, Lam San Tung and Wong Wai Chun, accompanied by Coaches Chris Perry and Kenny Wu set off for a training camp in Varese, Italy.

Unfortunately, after a month of excellent training, the growing COVID pandemic began to hit Italy hard and it was decided to relocate the camp to Shawnigan Lake in Canada. Two weeks later however Canada

also announced lock-downs and the team had to return to Hong Kong subject to 14-day quarantine and the news that the Olympic Games has been postponed to 2021.

After overcoming the disappointment, our team has continued to train in Hong Kong throughout the year. Despite the lack of short-term goals, thanks to the support from the Hong Kong SAR Government and the Hong Kong Sports Institute, our athletes have maintained their focus and re-set their targets for Olympic qualification and other major events in 2021.

Sadly, the re-set of dates resulted our most successful and longest serving athlete – Carmen Lee Ka Man decided to retire. Due to medical and injury reasons, she cannot continue her training until 2021 and hence, she needs to announce her retirement in end-2020. She will of course remain as an honourable ambassador, member and friend of our sport. We also lost Coach Kenny Wu who had to return to the Mainland for family reasons.

All was not gloomy however and we were delighted that many of our top rowers were able to set new benchmarks and personal bests. Chan Chi Fung managed to break three official world records on the Concept2 rowing machine – an excellent achievement! His team-mate Chui Hin Chun also broke the long-standing “Shing Mun River One Lap Record” that had been maintained by three-times World Champion Peter Haining for over 20 years.

All eyes are now on 2021 and we are hoping to find out when the Olympic Qualification event for Asia can be held. A big thank you to all the coaches and staff of the Hong Kong Sports Institute for their hard work supporting the programme during this difficult year.

STRC Extension Project – a project for the future of Hong Kong Rowing

It is really exciting this year to see good progress on the STRC Extension project, which will give us additional boat storage space in an Annex building as well as a third floor on the Centre.

We are the most grateful to the Hong Kong Jockey Club for agreeing to fund this extension project. After nearly 40 years, the existing Centre is no longer sufficient for the Association's further development needs and this project will serve us very well for the next 40 years.

The main building tender will be issued shortly and work is expected to start in mid-2021. There will be very significant disruption to all of our activities. We will make strong efforts to reduce the impact, but hope that everyone affected will accept that the extended STRC will provide an exciting new home for HKCRA and our members once completed.

We all need to give a big round of applause to thanks Ken Leung and Anthony, between them have been central to bringing this long-awaited project to life.

Indoor Rowing – Go Virtual!

Due to the COVID pandemic, the Hong Kong Rowing Indoor Championships 2020, originally scheduled on 20-21 March 2020 was forced to be cancelled.

The Organizing Committee of HKRIC 2020 then decided to launch a series of Virtual Indoor Challenge with almost zero budget. The event, although not being able to attract amazing participation, but helped the organizing committee to gear up with all the knowledge on hosting indoor rowing race in a virtual platform.

With the knowledge gained, a team leading by Vick Yeung, together with the office decided to bring Festival of Sport- Indoor Challenge Sprit to virtual. This event at the end attracted 246 participants including a British rower! The success of the event was officially appreciated by SF & OC.

With all this success, the Association has offered the chance by FISA to host the Asian Continental Qualifier for the 2021 World Rowing Indoor Championships on 24 January 2021. This race is expected to attract all the top rowers from Asia to participate while their physical location can be anywhere in the world! The organizing committee, leading by Ng Wing Ning, Victor, our director, is working hard at the moment to make sure another big success, after the World Rowing Coastal Championship 2019.

Shek Mun Air-Conditioning Project

The air-conditioning in Shek Mun Centre has been out of order for years and has brought a lot of inconvenience to the members. With the formation of the working group consisting volunteers from Polytechnics University and our director Ken Leung last year, the Shek Mun Air-Conditioning Project has been successfully completed in September. With the new air-conditioning in place, rowers will have a comfortable environment in the coming summer.

Great initiatives from the Clubs

Clubs are always important to the developments of rowing in Hong Kong. During this challenging year, we still see our clubs kept trying their every effort to provide race opportunities for the rowing communities. It is great to see Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club to organise the 4th Harbour Regatta in Victoria Harbour, the Middle Island Masters at Deep Water Bay and the Around the Island Race and also Hong Kong Polytechnic University Rowing Club and Hong Kong Baptist University Rowing Club to organise the Inter-Universities Alumni Invitation Regatta. A lot of extra effort need to put into the organisation this year to provide a safe environment to the participants!

As travel out of HK was discouraged, interest and the consistency of team building went up as never before. This also shows the importance of our sport for physical and mental well being. Lantau Boat Club has grown their active rowers from 24 to 50 during this year!

I would like to take this opportunity to thanks for the efforts done by all our clubs. You are all important to the development of Hong Kong Rowing.

Thank You and Move Forward

On behalf of the Association, I would like to thank the Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China, as well as the Home Affairs Bureau, the Leisure & Cultural Services Department and the Marine Department of Hong Kong SAR Government for their support during this past year. I would

also like to thank for the Hong Kong Jockey Club for providing us the funding for the Shatin Rowing Centre Extension Project that would benefit for the future many years of rowing development of Hong Kong.

During the whole last year, our office staffs have demonstrated their great effort to cope with the ever-changing COVID pandemic landscape and keep rowing moving forward. Big applause to their excellent job!

I would also take this opportunity to announce that Annie Lam, our Executive Director, has decided to leave the association after her 10 years time here. She has assisted the Association in the past several years to achieve many major milestones including, hosting Asian Rowing Coastal Championship 2018 and World Rowing Coastal Championship 2019 , and, also the approval and commencement of HKJC STRC extension project. We wish her all the best in her new endeavours!

I have mentioned a lot of names to thank in this report but there are many more to be mentioned who have contributed to the Association last year. I would at the end thanks for all those silent contributors on behalf of the Association.

It is important we always be humble and serve the sport we love. Be a small potato to make things happen!

Passion to go beyond!