

Challenges never stop!

2021 was another challenging year! COVID pandemic is still on. We are lucky to see the whole rowing community keeps working hand in hand and make things happen!

Challenges and opportunities – hand in hand make things happen

While COVID is still with us the whole last year, there have been various restrictions disturbing our rowing activities, both training and racing. Thanks to the office and the committee members, with their tireless effort and innovative solutions, the Association has successfully conducted more than half of the scheduled races of this year, except Hong Kong Rowing Coastal Championship, Inter-school Indoor Rowing Championships and International Master Regatta!

The highlight would be the organisation of the Asian Continental Qualifier Event for 2021 World Rowing Virtual Indoor Championships on 24th January 2021. This is the first ever live virtual indoor rowing event the Association organised (it is also the first ever in Asia). It attracted over 250 entries from 14 countries. The racing videos were streamed through social media platform to be watched by people around Asia and the world.

The COVID pandemic did not stop the rowing development. With the leadership of our out-going coaching director, Sam Wong, our rowing introductory program (Galaxy Course) has been revamped to integrate the Board Rowing and Coastal Rowing into a united pathway. This provides a clearer pathway for beginner to get in touch to rowing. A huge work has been done by the team on this project, not only working out the syllabus but also on upgrading the existing coach, making them to be able to teach the new syllabus. Thanks a lot to Sam and the team.

Board Rowing keeps on thriving with the partnership model introduced last year and the active outreaching activities by the outreach team and individual director and members. We have successfully made partnerships with various organisations, e.g. AYP, Vessel, Playground Association, HKYFG, HK Scout Association, Youth Outreach, PLK and etc on board rowing / indoor rowing development. Board Rowing courses will also start in LCSD centre early 2022 as a pilot program. Over 100 new Board Rowing instructors have been trained in the last year. It is exciting to see Board Rowing has been included in some of our partners' 3rd party funded multi-years programs that will start in 2022. While the initial works on Board Rowing has been successfully done, the coming challenge would be developing a system that can provide a clear pathway for our partners, clubs, and individuals to follow. Thanks to all the amazing efforts done under almost zero resources from our outreaching team led by Sam and formed by volunteered coaches of the Association, and also, the current and outgoing directors, John Cheung, Ho Kim Fai and KF Cheung.

Apart from COVID pandemic, the closure of the Sha Tin Rowing Centre was expected to bring a huge disruption to the current rowing activities as Sha Tin Rowing Centre is the home of half of our clubs. The decanting process involving massive amount of work on planning, communication and execution towards boats and equipment storage and movement, was finally successfully done. At



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☎ (852) 2699 7271
📠 (852) 2601 4477
@ hkra@rowing.org.hk
🌐 www.rowing.org.hk
📘 hkrowing
📷 hkrowing
📍 Sha Tin Rowing Centre,
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the beginning, it was worried there would be a lot of arguments between clubs. Yet, it was surprisingly to see the whole rowing community (members, coaches, volunteers and office staffs) works together to overcome all the difficulties. It was wonderful to see clubs sharing boats with each other!

High Performance Program – Keep pushing during challenging time

The past year has continued to be challenging for our High Performance Programme as the worldwide pandemic made it almost impossible to travel overseas to train or compete. Athletes also had to undergo a number of closed training camps in the HKSI in order to continue regular training at home.

Nevertheless, thanks to World Rowing and the Japanese Rowing Association (JARA), the Olympic Qualification Regatta for Asia and Oceania and the Tokyo Olympic Games were able to proceed successfully. The qualification regatta gave the opportunity for 6 of our top rowers to compete and, ultimately for our young female rower Winne Hung to qualify for the Olympic Games. At the Games Winne put in a spirited effort despite racing out of her usual weight category and against opponents who were considerably older on average.

Although travel was difficult, many of our athletes continued to improve at home with 10 new personal bests on the ergometer and 22 on the water. Athletes Chan Chi Fung and Claire Burley also set new Concept 2 World records for various ergometer challenges and Chan also won the British Indoor Championships, setting a new Hong Kong and British Championship record.

The squad now turn their attention to preparations for the 2022 Asian Games to be held in Hangzhou next September.

Having led the high performance program for almost 36 years, our head coach, Chris Perry, decided to retire from his position, and his last day of work will be on 24 December. Without Chris, the high performance program of Hong Kong Rowing will definitely not be able to go as far as now! Chris's work for Hong Kong Rowing is invaluable!

The new head coach recruitment is in progress. The Association will give all support to the new head coach and the coaching team to make sure the High Performance Program keep excelling.

STRC Extension Project – all in good progress

The Shatin Rowing Centre extension project, which will give us additional boat storage and an additional floor on the Centre, has been in a good progress in the last year, with the great guidance and support from the Project Advisory Group, HK team Coaches, especially Sam Wong, all our affiliated clubs, our directors of the Board and our office members.

The following is a snapshot on the progress of the project that can only be achieved with a collective effort from all parties mentioned above:



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📘 hkrowing

📷 hkrowing

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1. All statutory approval received from Buildings Department;
2. Handover the entire centre to contractor on 1/11/2021;
3. Completion of the concreting for the roof floor on 26/11/2021;
4. Completion of foundation contractor on 15/12/2021;
5. Annex Building works started on 16/12/2021.

I would also take this chance to send a special thanks to Home Affairs Department and Hong Kong Jockey Club for all their support and assistance to the project in the last year.

I have to also thank to all clubs and members for your patience towards all the disruption brought by the Extension Project and also the HKCRA office, specially Chinz who work tirelessly during the whole process. It is wonderful to see every of us work together in the decanting process.

Hong Kong Indoor Rowing Record

The Hong Kong Indoor Rowing Record has been set for many years. In order to cope with the new world, the Indoor Rowing Committee and the Event Commission have revamped and improved the current record system by extending the base of the qualification as well as including virtual race. There are now 2 sets of records – one for Hong Kong resident and the other for all nationalities. This new arrangement is expected to stimulate more participation of indoor rowing in the coming future.

The 64th Festival of Sports

Invited by the organizing committee of the 64th FOS to be one of the signature sports, a brand new approach on organising the festival on rowing was introduced, resulting 2239 participations (771 participation in the last year). The new approach re-focuses on engaging those who are new to rowing instead of those who have been rowers. Instead of running 2 rowing races for rowers, introductory courses and fun day on board rowing and indoor rowing were conducted in schools, community centres and water sport centres. The whole rowing program was ended with a carnival in the city centre along Kwun Tong Promenade.

We have been lucky to have our partners, Playground Association, Vessel and AYP to co-organise the program. Without their help and assistance, the success would never be achieved! I would also take the opportunity to thanks for the 64th FOS organising committee putting trust on the Association to take up this great opportunity to promote rowing to the community!

I would also congratulation to our office, especially Tik who is the key person on driving every element of this festival. Your passion on doing things differently have successfully brought in an amazing result!

Coastal Rowing – new ventures outside Shing Mun River

With the temporary closure of Sha Tin Rowing Centre, it was decided to send our coastal rowing boats from Shek Mun Rowing Centre to all other partners' venue.



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The relocation of boats evolves to provide opportunities to our members to row in Sai Kung, Discovery Bay and Victoria Harbour. This initiative was firstly raised by the Chairman of Coastal Rowing Committee, John Cheung who are also director of the Board. John then spent a lot of time, together with our outgoing director Ho Kim Fai and Cheung Kwok Fai on connecting possible partners and facilitate the process. Thanks a lot for the effort to make rowing possible outside Shing Mum River and expanding over different areas of Hong Kong.

Hand in Hand to 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 led by our new Executive Director, Michael Wan, 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 thanks again our Head Coach Chris Perry on his contribution to the Association as a whole. Apart from the high performance program, Chris has also volunteered to take part in various capacities in Hong Kong, Asia and World Rowing to assist rowing development. His professional presence and contribution are invaluable to the rowing world. His work is essential to maintain the presence of Hong Kong Rowing in Asia and the world. Chris, thanks a lot to your contribution to Hong Kong Rowing and we wish all the best in your retirement life.

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.

To the end, I would like to mention an unsung hero. This rower is not a member of HKCRA but has organised countless rowing activities (3-4 outing weekly throughout last year), joint clubs' events and has helped a huge number of beginners to engage in rowing. He is also the one to facilitate regular night rowing in our beautiful Victoria Harbour! He makes people love rowing and takes rowing a life-long sports! He is Paul Kidman! Thanks a lot!

It is important we always stay hand in hand to build our sport and make things happen!

Passion to go beyond!