

HKSRFU PRESIDENT ANNUAL REPORT – 2010/11

The Society has experienced another stable and successful year. This would not have been possible without the sterling efforts of EXCOM, which made my task as President so much easier. The allocation of portfolios to Ricky Short (Communications), Peter White (Membership), Stan Harman (Tournaments) and Warren Needham (Kit), alleviated some of the workload on the referee's department and allowed for a more stream-lined process. Dougie continued to keep his mean eye on the accounts, Les handled our correspondence and, of course, Bernard and Patrick did most of the day-today donkey work.

Membership was steadily increased after a number of iRB courses were conducted during the year. In all, five level one and one level two courses were completed with a total of 59 participants. At the September Workshop, the iRB's "Rugby Ready" programme was rolled out to the 60 members in attendance, together with special coaching from members of the HKHKRFU.

Appointments to the HKRFU Saturday Leagues steadily increased from last season to 388 appointments, and other games including mini festivals, colts, schools, girl's festivals and a rapidly expanding tertiary league, saw as many as 1680 additional appointments being covered, an overall increase of 15% on the 2009-10 season. Our thanks go to the convener, Patrick Kwok, and to all those members backing up from the Saturday Leagues for another run on a Sunday!

The culmination of the 2010/11 season, the Grand Championship Finals, resulted in Tobi Lothian refereeing the exciting 1st Division final between the eventual winners, Valley against DeA. This capped off another excellent season for Tobi after his selection to the Asian Games in December. Dewi Rowland's selection to the D2 final (and the A5N Test between UAE vs Japan in April 2011), was also a fine effort as was the well deserved appointment of Macro Woo to the D3B final. Macro, who travels to HK every weekend from Guangzhou, was rewarded with his first "cap" in May 2011, appointed by ARFU to take charge of the HK vs Singapore woman's Test. Other GCF appointments included Steph Lehner (D2 Plate), Warren Needham (D3A and in June 2011 to the ARFU U20 tournament), Ricky Short (D4A), Tony Wong (D4B) and Gabriel Lee (Woman's XV Div).

I am very pleased to let you know that in the Annual Report of the HKRFU, the Chairman, Trevor Gregory, paid tribute to one of our members. Here's what Trevor wrote in his report:

On the officiating front, Gabriel Lee continues to break new boundaries, having already refereed at the Women's RWC Sevens tournament, in October she was recognised again when she was selected to officiate at the Women's Rugby World Cup in England. In the past few weeks she has also been appointed as one of 8 individuals to the iRB's new international elite panel of women referees, a truly fantastic achievement.

The iRB have further indicated their support by offering her, one of only ten positions for officials, at the prestigious Talent Optimization Programme in Stellenbosch, South Africa at the end of July 2011. Selection to the women's quadrangular Nations Cup in Toronto,

Canada and her presentation of "Referee of the Year" award, has topped-off a memorable twelve months for Gabby and the Society is immensely proud of her achievements.

Thank you to the many Society members who were passionate enough about their refereeing to recognise that continuing development of their skills, knowledge and fitness will forever enhance the game of rugby in Hong Kong and the Asian region.

However, the season was not without its problems, the main one being referee abuse. There were far too many incidents, both on and off the field. These cases were, however, dealt with promptly with the Clubs involved. In particular, problems at minis games, and especially at King's Park, were just totally unacceptable. Action has been taken by the Minis and I am grateful to their past Chairperson, Kim Lam, and the incoming Chairperson, Case Everaert, for the ongoing efforts to stamp out the unruly behaviour of coaches and spectators. The banning of alcohol from the pitch at King's park will undoubtedly help.

Don't forget that as Referees you have the ultimate control of what happens on and off the pitch. If the organisers and/or team officials cannot control their players or supporters, you can. I have warned the Minis Section and Trevor Gregory that if unacceptable behaviour takes place and does not stop, our referees will abandon games and offending clubs will have to look elsewhere for Referees. Our Society will support with all means at our disposal any Referee subjected to abuse. Trevor has assured me that we also have the full backing of the HKRFU. In fact at the AGM of the Minis, he told the large audience that he had the perfect solution to stopping Referee abuse at Minis - ban all parents! That got a laugh until he said he wasn't joking.

There were also problems with Colts matches. Therefore, I was pleased to read the following words from their Chairman, Simon Reid-Kay, in his annual report to the HKRFU and printed in their annual report:

Referees

Bernard Fienberg and Patrick Kwok, together with the team of referees make the leagues and tournaments possible. The Colts Committee will, as ever, do their best to ensure the referees receive the support and respect that they deserve from players, coaches and spectators.

Finally, you may have heard that I was standing for election as Director Laws & Referees on the Board of the HKRFU. I am pleased to inform you that my election to that post was confirmed at the HKRFU's AGM on 23rd June. I would like to thank the members of EXCOM who canvassed support for me and to Police, Kowloon, Football Club, Women's Rugby and our own Society for nominating and/or seconding my nomination. Martin Kibble, previously Director Laws and Referees, was elected Secretary of the HKRFU.

Enjoy the summer break and don't forget to put in your diary the date of the pre-season camp, Saturday 27th August.

John Findlay, President, HKSRFUR
24 June 2010