



Hong Kong, China Rowing Association

Indoor Rowing as an Integrated Youth Development Tool

A Case Study in a Small Federation

A Brief History of HKCRA

- Records exist of regattas being held in Hong Kong as early as 1845 and the first club was established in 1849.
- The Federation is relatively young however, having been established as the “Hong Kong Amateur Rowing Association” in 1978. Next year, in 2018, we will celebrate our 40th Anniversary!
- A temporary boathouse was established on the Shing Mun river in Shatin, in the New Territories, in 1982.
- The Hong Kong Jockey Club then funded the construction of a permanent rowing centre at the same location, completed in 1985.
- In the same year, Hong Kong hosted the 1st Asian Championships – attended by now Honorary FISA President, Denis Oswald.

HKCRA History (Cont.)

- In 1986, the Jubilee Sports Centre (now the Hong Kong Sports Institute) employed a full-time coach to support the development of rowing and to train teams to compete internationally.
- In 1989, we won our first medal at a major regional event – bronze in LW1x at the Asian Championships. We took part in our first Olympic Games in Barcelona in 1992.
- In 1997, Hong Kong returned to Chinese sovereignty and we became “Hong Kong, China Rowing Association”.
- In 2001, with support from the Government and Jockey Club, a second rowing centre was opened on the same river in Shatin.
- In 2013, a high-performance centre was opened in the HKSI.

HKCRA Today

- Today the HKCRA has 30 clubs with some 1,500 registered members. Clubs include public, university, university alumni, corporate, school, para rowing, coastal and disciplined services.
- In addition, school students who have not yet joined a club, may take part in organized youth programmes and represent their schools in local competitions.
- A full annual programme of local regattas, including a Hong Kong Open Championships, Hong Kong University Championships and Hong Kong Schools Championships are run every year.
- Open and School Indoor Championships are also organized, as well as Coastal, Para and Masters events.

Development Challenges

- Hong Kong's urban areas are densely populated, with very little space for recreational activity. The majority of local schools have very limited sports facilities – most often only a semi-covered, concrete playground.
- Because of high land premiums, most sports organizations do not own their own facilities (HKCRA is one of the few exceptions) and have to make use of public sports facilities. Here there can be booking conflicts between individual members of the public and organized clubs.
- Academic pressure on students is very high and most schools allocate only very limited time to sports or physical education and organize only a few traditional sports.

Reaching Youth Rowers

- Since schools were reluctant or unable to form rowing clubs, the Association (with limited Government funding) initiated a “Youth Development Programme” to reach out to local secondary schools.
- With water rowing venues limited to the Association’s two centres, rowing machines were the obvious tool to attract initial interest from students in the schools.
- A small team of coaches was established to visit local schools territory-wide and to introduce students to our sport using rowing machines.
- With the support and agreement of teachers, this was usually done during regular PE classes.

YDP Structure

- The YDP has the following main elements:-
 - School Visits - with measurement and data collection
 - Centre Visits
 - Star Courses
 - Young Athlete Training Scheme
 - (RowKids - for Primary School students)
- The YDP also offers pathways to development and high-performance programmes:-
 - Talent Identification Programme
 - Development Squad
 - HKSI Potential Athlete
 - HKSI Junior Scholarship Holder
 - HKG Junior Team

Statistics

- On average, the YDP coaching team will visit some 30 secondary and 5 primary schools each year. A total of 20,000 to 25,000 students will take part in the visit activities in the school.
- Some 400 to 600 students will take up the opportunity to join a follow-up Centre Visit.
- Approximately 300 to 350 will complete the Star Course Programme.
- At this point some will join clubs, whilst others will continue training under the Young Athlete Training Scheme, or move to TID/Development/Potential groups.
- Over 100 youth rowers will be in ongoing training at any one time.

Observations

- Rowing machines provide a novel and attractive “turn-key” to access the schools and to gain support of teachers.
- Running activities during normal PE classes allows contact with the largest possible number of students.
- Coaches can carry out rudimentary TID observations at the school.
- Rowing can attract a segment of students who may not excel at other more traditional school sports.
- Response rates from lower academic band schools and lower socio-economic groups were better and have become a focus.
- Many students can't swim – thus implemented swimming tests!
- Many top HKG rowers came via this programme in recent years.

Indoor Competition

- With large numbers of students being introduced to indoor rowing via the YDP, it made sense to encourage indoor competition between schools in parallel.
- With the cooperation of the Hong Kong Schools Sports Federation, we have established two major annual inter-school competitions (Kowloon & HK Island, and New Territories). Youth events are also offered in the Hong Kong Open Indoor Championships.
- In 2017 inter-school competitions attracted some 2,800 entries from 116 schools.
- The indoor rowing link with schools has also led to the creation of an on-water School Rowing Championships and some 90 schools took part this year.

Provision of Equipment

- The growth of Indoor Rowing stimulated demand for rowing machines in schools and other partner organizations.
- A problem was to provide this equipment at a reasonable price, since the Asian commercial fitness industry traditionally mark-up prices by around 100%!
- ROWSport Asia was established as a subsidiary company of the HKCRA to import and distribute rowing equipment – particularly rowing machines – to schools and clubs at more reasonable prices.
- A significant portion of revenue from these sales is returned to the Association in the form of support for more activities and projects.
- Over 60 schools have purchased their own rowing machines. A rental model might also be used.



Hong Kong, China Rowing Association

THANK YOU!