

The background of the entire page is a photograph of stadium seating. The top half shows rows of yellow and grey seats. The bottom half is a closer view of yellow seats, some with numbers like 9, 10, 11, and 12. A red sports bag with a crest is resting on one of the seats in the lower left.

Season Review 2017/18

2017/18 賽季回顧

Presented by the Hong Kong Football Podcast

由 Hong Kong Football Podcast 製作

Contents

- 4 Early shouts**
- 8 Premier League match by match**
- 12 Season awards**
- 17 Hong Kong clubs' place in Asia**
- 24 Anthems, booing and the law**

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Grenzenlos Groundhopping travel around Germany and Europe to watch football and learn fan cultures in different leagues. If you are interested in football outside Hong Kong, visit their page and find out more. All reviews are in German, English and Chinese.

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It's your weekly round-up of news, scores and chit-chat from around local football. It is out every Wednesday, and has just completed its second full season. You can listen on Soundcloud, iTunes or Stitcher. You can subscribe by scanning the codes on the back of this magazine, or googling "Hong Kong Football Podcast".

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Cover photo: Chris Lau

Published on May 21, 2018

Hello

Before attentions turn to the World Cup in Russia, it's time to take a look back at the past year in local football, and have a think about what might come next.

We've got a story about the national anthem booing saga, which sadly took up so much of the coverage of the Hong Kong team over the past 12 months, and is likely to return when abusing the anthem becomes a crime. Whether you like the new law or not, it will irrevocably change the mood at international matches. We have tried to give some context, and a dispassionate record of what has been happening over the last three years.

We'll also give our views on the best players, coaches and goals of the season, and ponder what comes next for the city's clubs in Asian competition, now that the Champions League group stage spot is gone.

At the time of going to press (just before the FA Cup final), we don't know who will be in next season's Premier League, and things don't look good for Yuen Long, one of the city's most popular clubs. Hopefully they can stick around. But if not we wish them a speedy return.

One team that didn't make a speedy return was South China. For the first time in 100 years, top-flight local football went ahead in Hong Kong without the Caroliners, to whom we pay passing tribute on this magazine's cover.

Hong Kong football is a complicated business, but that won't kill our passion for it.

Read on, and we'll see you next season,

趁各位的視線轉到俄羅斯世界盃前，現在是時候回顧過去一年的本地賽季，然後再想一想接下來會如何發展。

我們寫了一篇關於噓國歌事件的文章。在過去十二個月內，有關香港隊的報導都很不幸地被這件事搶去焦點。當噓國歌正式被列為非法行為後很可能會使事件再次重演。不管你認不認同《國歌法》，這都會無可挽回地改變國際賽的興致。我們嘗試找出事件的前因後果，以一個客觀的角度去探討過去三年所發生的一切。

我們亦會透過今季最佳球員、最佳領隊及最佳入球分享一些想法；還會細說香港失去亞冠分組賽席位後，接下來應如何應戰亞洲賽事。

在截稿前，我們仍然未知下季有誰會參加港超，而本港最受歡迎球隊之一元朗的前景並不樂觀。我們希望他們能夠留在港超，否則便祝他們能夠早日回來。

而南華就是未能早日回來的那一隊，香港的頂級聯賽在百年來首次未有「少林寺」角逐。我們借了封面向他們獻上我們小小的敬意。

香港足球是一件很複雜的事，但絕對不會影響我們對它的熱誠。

現在請你細心閱下去，我們來季再見。

The Hong Kong Football Podcast

Early shouts

*Observations
from the
season just
finished*

Fallen giants don't get up

When we published last season's review, it never crossed our minds that there would be a season without South China. A year on, there is no question the absence of the Caroliners - voluntarily relegated when their main financial backer pulled out - has taken its toll, not just on attendances but on the league's competitiveness. The side's debut season in the amateur First Division neither delivered on the promise of rejuvenation nor gave loyal fans hope of a quick return. Hong Kong's most celebrated club only just escaped relegation. The only positive: even their fiercest enemies now realise how much they miss South China.

上年的賽季回顧出版時，我們從來沒有想像過會有一個沒有南華的賽季。在南華因失去主要贊助資金而決定自願降班後，「少林寺」的缺席不單令港超的入場人數下降，更影響了整個聯賽的競爭力。他們在業餘甲組首季的表現不但沒有履行復興的承諾，也沒有為擁南薈帶來盡速回歸頂級聯賽的希望。事實上，在南華體育會選擇繼續忽略他們的足球部下，這隊香港史上最成功的球會只能剛好逃過降班乙組的命運。也許正面的看：連死敵們也開始想念著南華足球隊。

Good luck, Chuck

Despite his bad-boy reputation, there was never any doubt that Chuck Yiu-kwok is one of the best Hong Kong players around in recent years. Last season he was among the top local scorers in the league, and since then he has kept his reputation as an unpredictable yet brilliant striker. In January, the 23-year-old returned to the representative team and scored within a few minutes of his substitute appearance in the Guangdong-Hong Kong Cup. Since then, he made further headlines by signing for Swiss second-tier club FC Chiasso, making him one of just two professional football players from Hong Kong to earn a living in Europe, along with Bury's Tsun Dai.

縱使卓耀國被稱為壞孩子，但毫無疑問他是香港近年其中一個最出色的球員。他是上季其中一個入球最多的本地球員，不但以實力贏回掌聲，更被認為是一個變幻莫測之餘又出色的前鋒。在2018年1月，這位23歲球員被港隊重召，更在省港盃以後備上陣，數分鐘內便為港隊射入得分。他後來加盟瑞士乙組球隊基亞索，再次登上本地足球頭條。他和效力貝利的戴偉浚是香港僅有在歐洲以足球為生的職業球員。

Hong Kong's new mascot

Chances are high that you spotted this little green man in the stadium last season. The "Lo Mor" gained prominence on Hong Kong's notorious Golden Forum, where it was a symbol of the so-called hard plastic trolling culture. But recently, local fan group Chi Sin Lo has transferred him from his natural online habitat to the football terraces, where he has been warmly received. The aim was to attract a younger generation to the game and help them realise it is not "on9" (stupid) to support local football. Meanwhile, "Lo Mor" has worked his way up the food chain, becoming the unofficial mascot of the Hong Kong representative team.

在剛過去的一季，你很有可能曾經在球場見過這隻綠色毛公仔。「腦魔」於著名的高登討論區成名，象徵著所謂「硬膠」的網絡文化。直至最近，本地球迷組織「癡線佬」將它從網上世界帶進足球看台上，並深受球迷愛戴。此舉是為了吸引年輕一代入場，希望令他們理解支持本地足球並不是「鸚鵡」的行為。「腦魔」的地位亦都漸漸崛起，成為香港代表隊的非官方吉祥物。





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One great shot

Tai Po goalkeeper Li Hon-ho launches a goal kick forward for his side, during a 1-0 win over Southern in February

Photo: Alan Man Photography

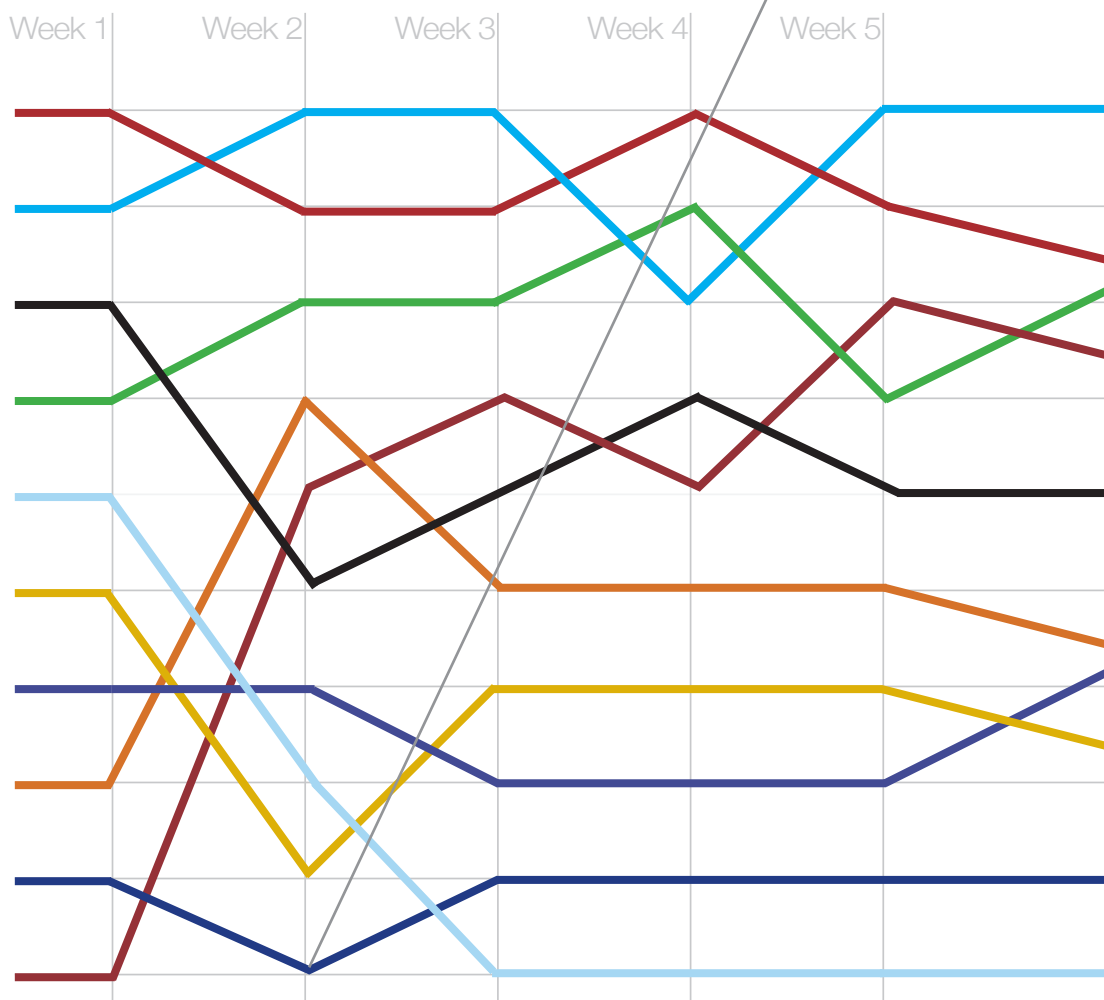


Match by match

How the Premier League season played out



Eastern made a bad start to the term, losing their first four matches, including this one against Tai Po. Photo: HKFA





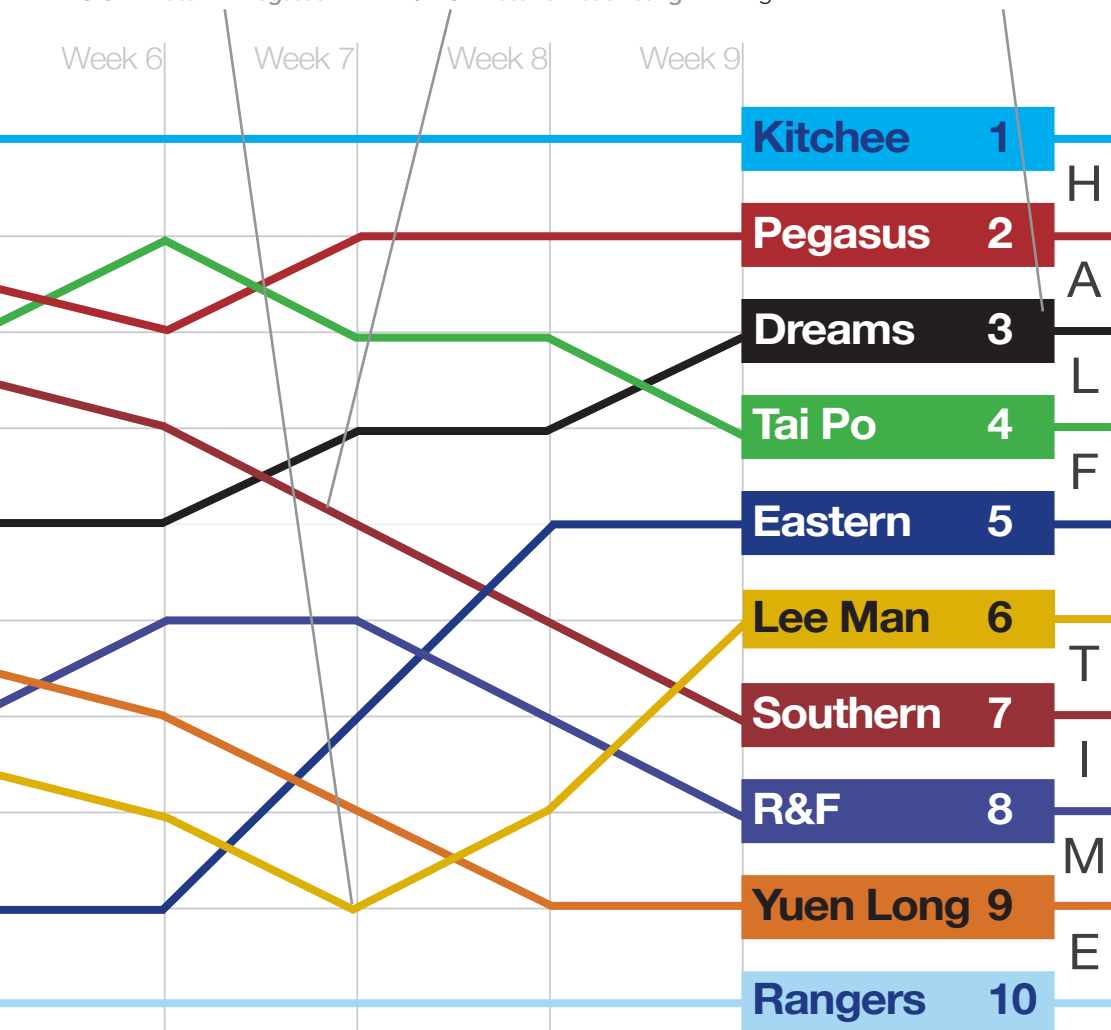
Pegasus beat Lee Man 2-0 to stay near the top, leaving Lee Man with one win from their first six. Photo: HK Pegasus



Southern got two 2-2 draws against Kitchee (above) and Pegasus, during a winless run of 10. Photo: Christie Leung



After four wins from eight, Dreams hit third place. They never won another league game. Photo: Dreams FC





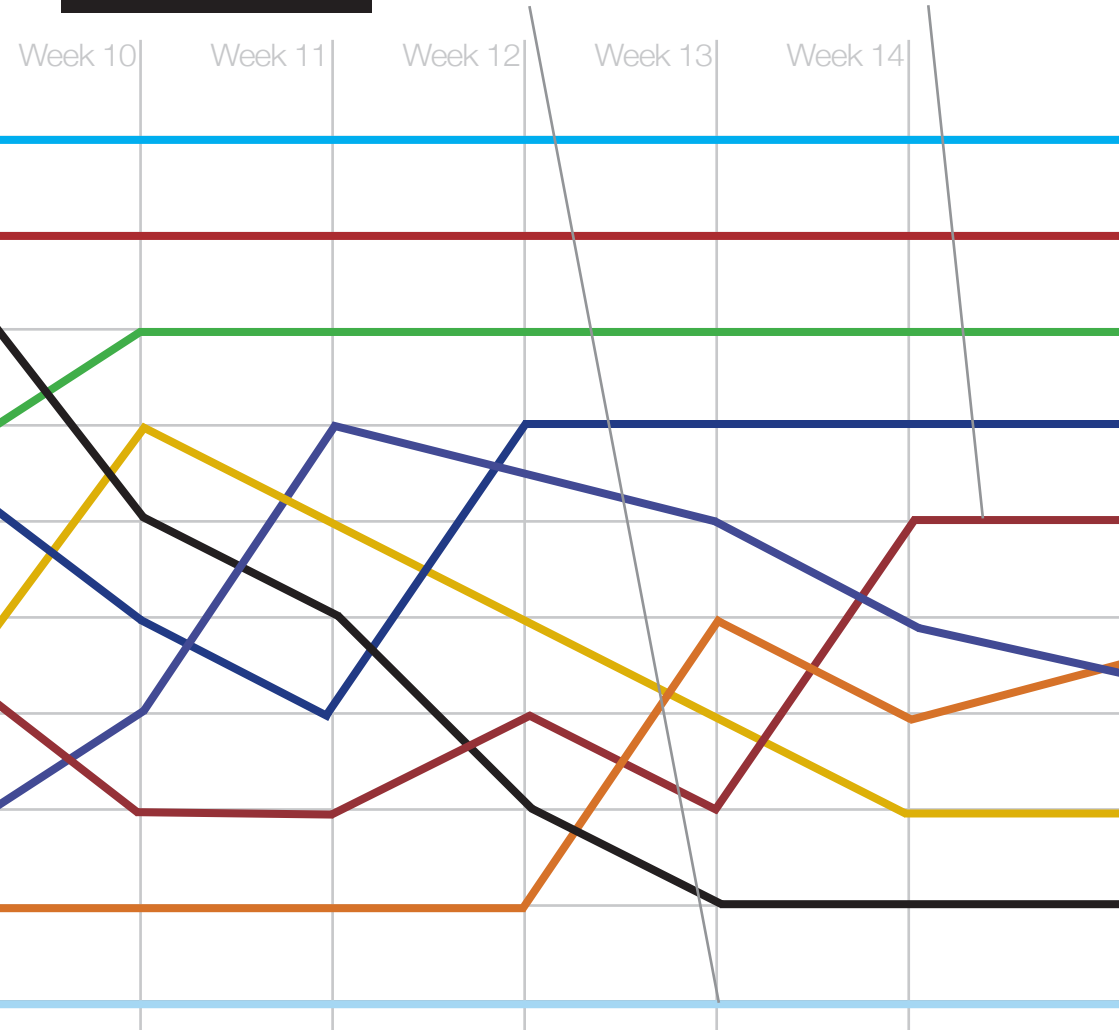
Yuen Long won the Senior Shield, beating Eastern in the final, the first goal by Everton (above). Photo: HKFA



Rangers got a 2-2 draw away at R&F, securing one of the just six points they won all season. Photo: HKFA



Southern salvaged a good end to the season with five wins from their last eight. Photo: KC Southern FC





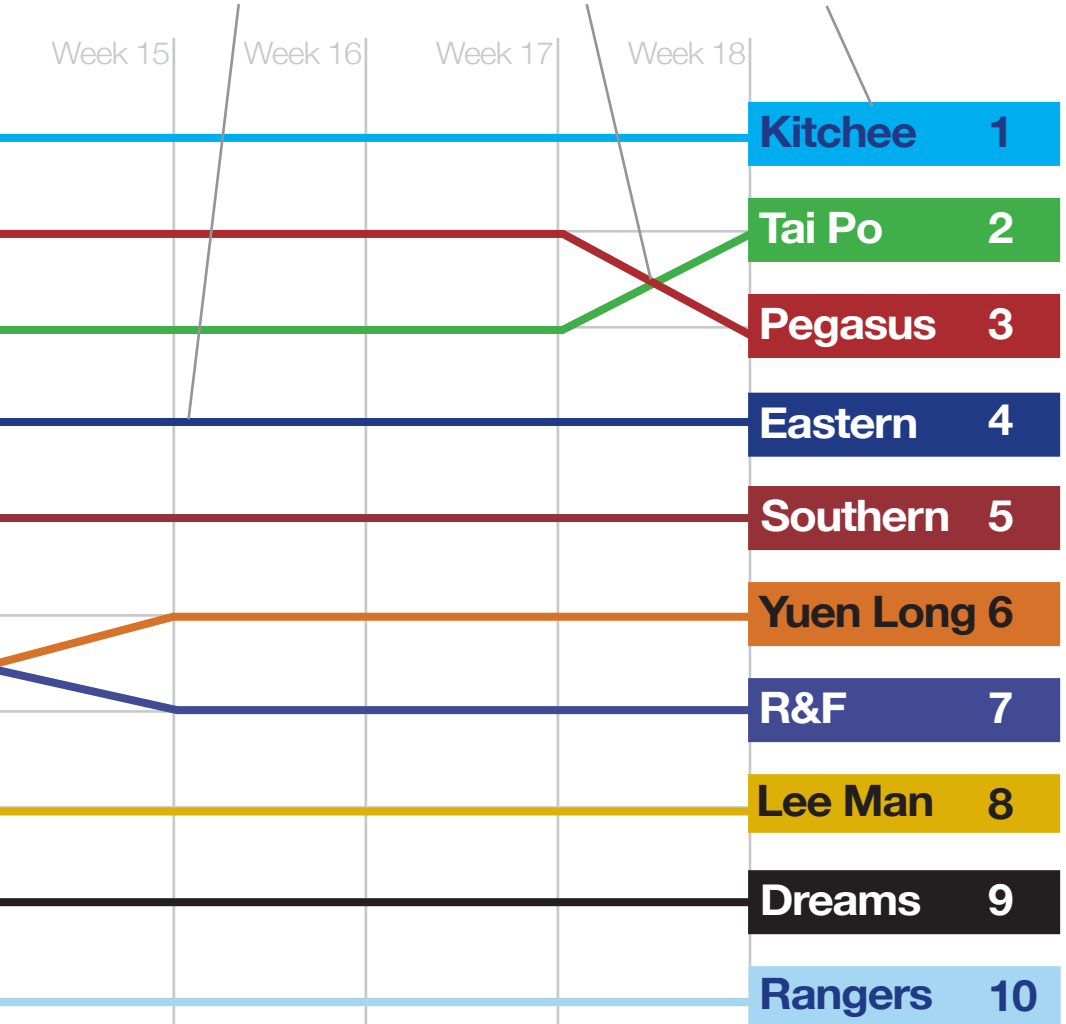
Eastern ended strongly too, scoring 23 goals in their last eight, finishing fourth.
Photo: Eastern Long Lions



Tai Po came back to beat Pegasus 2-1 on the last day, pipping them to second place. Photo: HKFA



Kitchee ended the season as champions, unbeaten in the league and 13 points ahead of Tai Po. Photo: HKFA



Season awards

Goal of the season

最佳入球

Marcos de la Espada 馬高斯
v Yuen Long, 03/03/2018

Marcos de la Espada surprised a few people with a great season for Southern, bagging 16 goals. And while others may have scored more than the bearded Spaniard, no one netted a better strike than this one against Yuen Long. He jumped to chest the ball in the air, back to goal, before spinning for a bicycle kick past Chan Ka-ho. But let's not forget the three excellent free kicks that Diego Forlan scored early in his Kitchee stint, Tai Po's team effort to get their fifth at home to Rangers and Manuel Bleda's strike against Yuen Long in November.

馬高斯今季為南區射入16球令不少人感到意外。雖然有其他球員的入球比這位滿面鬍鬚的西班牙人多，但沒有人的入球能夠與他在對元朗射入的一球相比。馬高斯先背向龍門跳起用心口控定，再轉身以「窩利」射破陳嘉豪的十指關。大家亦不要忘記科蘭在剛加盟傑志時射入三個絕世自由球，還有大埔在主隊對流浪射入的第五球，以及洛迪古斯在十一月對元朗的入球。



Photo: KC Southern FC

Coach of the season

最佳教練

Yeung Ching-kwong 楊正光
Pegasus

In 2017 Pegasus finished eighth, with 26 points from 20 matches (1.3 points per game). This season they finished third, with 34 points (1.9 per game). Key to the turnaround, along with Travis Major's goals, was the appointment of Yeung, formerly of Eastern, who instilled a system that got the best from the likes of Joao Emir, Eugene Mbone and Chan Siu-ki. Honorable mentions go to Alex Chu, whose Kitchee side went unbeaten in the league, and showed spirit and bursts of ambition in the ACL, and Tai Po's Lee Chi-kin, for second place and two finals.

飛馬在上季的20場中取得26分排名第八；今季則以34分，只輸四場以第三名完成今季賽事。他們能夠在今季大翻身的主要原因，除了美查為球隊射入多個入球，還有楊正光的任命。他成功為飛馬調整出一個合適的戰術，令球員能夠發揮出最佳水準。但不得不提及傑志的朱志光。在他帶領之下，球隊不但在聯賽不敗，還有在亞冠中展露不屈的精神。還有為大埔的爭取進入兩項杯賽決賽和聯賽季軍的李志堅。



Photo: HK Pegasus FC

Young player of the season

最佳
青年
球員

Cheng Chin-lung 鄭展龍
Dreams FC / Kitchee

Even if Cheng Chin-lung had not scored one of the biggest goals Hong Kong football has seen in years (see page 17), this would have been a very good season for the 20-year-old. Initially loaned to Dreams, Cheng became an integral forward for the league newcomers. His fellow Dreams youngster Lam Hin-ting deserves a mention, as does Pegasus' Wu Chun-ming and of course last year's young player of the season Tan Chun-lok.

即使鄭展龍未有射入香港近年其中一個最重要的入球（詳見第 17 頁），這位 20 歲小將將在今季的表現仍然十分超卓。他在季初被外借到夢想 FC 時，便已經成為這隊聯賽新丁重用的前鋒。他在夢想的年輕隊友林衍廷亦值得一提，還有飛馬的胡晉銘及上季的最佳青年球員陳俊樂。



Photo: Dreams FC

Player of the season

最佳
球員

Krisztián Vadócz 華杜斯
Kitchee

There could be only one winner. The big Hungarian midfielder's arrival last January added steel and control to an already great Kitchee side, along with 11 goals, and his engine-room partnership with Huang Yang has become indispensable to the team. The Kitchee fans chanting at the end of the season that they wanted him to stay were on to something. Other players lighting up the league in 2017/18 included Pegasus' Joao Emir and Travis Major, and Tai Po duo Wong Wai and Igor Sartori.

贏家只能有一位。這位高大的匈牙利中場的加盟，鞏固了原先已經十分強大的傑志，而他在中場夥拍黃洋的推動力成為球隊不可缺少的一部份，更在今季射入十一球。傑志球迷們在季後高歌要求華杜斯留隊便證明了他在球隊的地位。2017/18 球季亦有其他表現不錯的球員，當中包括飛馬的利馬和美查；以及大埔的黃威和伊高沙托尼。



Photo: Kitchee



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interview

**So you are Hong Kong
Football Podcast player
of the season,
congratulations!**

Whooh! Thank you very much.

**Is there anyone else who
has impressed you in the
league this season?**

It would be easy to just pick
three guys out of our team.
The opponents had also

Player of the season 本季最佳球員 **Krisztián Vadócz** 華杜斯

The star of Kitchee's unbeaten league campaign sits down with James Legge and Tobias Zuser

good players. Wong Wai, he's good at Tai Po, Joao [Emir] from Pegasus, to just name midfielders. Travis [Major] is doing good at Pegasus, but there are some Brazilians like Everton [at Yuen Long]. All these guys are always bringing danger. This is good in the Hong Kong league. Everyone has some really good player who can decide matches. →

恭喜你獲選為 Hong Kong Football Podcast 的今季最佳球員！

Whoo! 多謝。

本季有其他球員在聯賽的表現令你留下深刻印象嗎？

從我的球隊去選的話，我很容易便能選出三名球員。而對手亦有不少好球員。黃威在大埔的表現很優異；中場球員的話我會選飛馬的利馬。美查在飛馬的表現也很好，還有其他巴西球員如（元朗的）艾華頓。他們經常都帶來威脅，每支球隊都有能夠建功的球員，對港超來說是一件很好的事情。 →

Last season we thought you were a defensive midfielder, but you've chipped in with goals and been further up the pitch. Was that a conscious move?

Normally I don't like it if they call my position 'defensive midfielder'. I can play, of course, as a defensive midfielder, but I like to be more of a central midfielder, participating in everything. Because of Huang Yang, he's doing a huge defensive job, and he's always covering my back - when I'm walking down the street I'm always looking back, making sure he's there. Last year our situation was we were chasing Eastern. So we had to deal with it, we had to play according to this, no chance to make any mistakes, so that's why I only went up when we celebrated goals, because we had to be more stable. From this year, I started from the beginning with the team. We had the chance to make mistakes because there are still many games ahead of us and from the beginning we were the leaders on the table, so it gave me, especially, more freedom on the pitch.

What has been the high point of the season?

I hope we don't know yet, because it's still coming. But of course winning the championship is always special. Participating in the ACL, not only for Kitchee, but for the whole Hong Kong football [scene]. Even people who don't like the football were coming to watch those matches, so I think we could move, a bit, the whole city. So that was something special.

How do you feel the ACL campaign went?

I think if you ask someone else, they'll say it was successful. I'm always a bit more critical. I think if we had collected more points - just one, two, three points more - it would have been more satisfying for me. Because I think we competed. Of course the results say we were a bit the underdog and a bit the inexperienced side of the group. But it was not easy to beat us, despite the huge goal difference. ■

上季我們以為你是一個防守中場，但今季你卻射入不少入球和位置變得較前。這是一個部署上的轉變嗎？

通常我不喜歡我的位置被稱為「防守中場」。當然我能夠踢防中，但我比較喜歡踢中場中去參與場上的一切。而黃洋一直都護著我的後方，擔當了防守重任 - 我走在街上時也會經常回望，確保他在我的後方。上季我們處於力追東方的位置，所以我們要出盡辦法，依計行事而不能容許任何差錯。當時我只會在慶祝入球時才會走前，因為我們要保持穩定。今年開始，我在季初便成為正選。由於往後仍有漫長的賽程，所以我們有容許犯錯的空間。而我們由開季便穩座榜首，使我在場上有比較多自由去發揮。



哪一刻是今季的尖峰？

我希望仍然是未知之數，因為今季仍未完結。但贏得聯賽冠軍一定是特別的一刻，還有出戰亞冠。這些時刻不是傑志專屬的，而是對整個香港球壇都是十分特別的。就連不熱愛足球的人也到場看亞冠賽事，所以我認為我們能夠輕輕地帶動整個城市。所以我認為亞冠是十分特別。

你覺得亞冠之路如何？

我想如果你問其他人的話，他們會說是成功的。但我比較挑剔，我認為如果我們可以取得多些分數的話，不論是一分、兩分還是三分，我便會比較滿意，因為我們曾出過力去爭勝。最後的結果指出在小組中我們是被看低一線和較沒有經驗的一隊，但即使得失球差大，他們要打敗我們不是一件易事。■

Between



Will dropping from the Champions League to the AFC Cup be a blessing or a curse for Hong Kong clubs?

By James Legge and Tobias Zuser

In 2019, Hong Kong clubs will play in Asia's second-tier competition, the AFC Cup. But after two years of competing with the continent's elite in the AFC Champions League, dropping down can feel like something of a comedown.

Chances of a trophy will certainly be higher at the lower level. Going from minnows in the ACL ocean to the big fish in the smaller pond, Kitchee could take a shot at winning the tournament, despite its usual West Asian domination.

But which level do Hong Kong clubs belong at? ACL performances over the past six months provide differing accounts.

Eastern were first up, losing 4-2 to Thanh Hoa in the second qualifying round. They were devoid of ideas and outclassed by the Vietnamese side, proving that they have more →

在 2019 年，香港的球隊將會出戰亞洲足協盃。經歷這兩年來在亞冠與亞洲精英角逐後，香港要跌到次級賽事不禁令人有倒退的感覺。

出戰較低級的賽事能令贏獎盃的機會大增。傑志亦會由亞冠海洋中的小魚成為小池塘裡的大魚，即使西亞的球隊在亞協盃獨當一面，但傑志仍能嘗試爭標。

但到底香港球隊屬於哪個等級？在過去六個月中，香港球隊在亞冠的表現令人提出了不一的意見。

首先有東方在外圍賽次圈以 4: 2 不敵越南清化，毫無計策的東方被這支越南球隊技術性擊倒，證明他們在亞洲賽以外還有更多根本問題仍待解決。

而傑志的亞冠之路 — 首先由分組賽啟程，抱著能比東方表現得更好的希望。雖然出師不利，但後來有明顯改進。作客天津權建以 3: 0 →

fundamental issues to deal with than Asian competitions.

Kitchee's ACL run - going straight into the groups and hoping to improve on Eastern's sobering 2017 campaign - started poorly but got better from there. A 3-0 loss away at Tianjin Quanjian preceded a 6-0 home loss to an excellent Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors. The Jeonbuk game did - despite the scoreline - show an improvement on the Tianjin one, with Kitchee switching to proper full-backs to create a back five, rather than playing forwards Paulinho and Fernando on the wings, which had left the flanks exposed against Tianjin.

Kitchee had attempted to cash in on their ACL push by bringing in big-name signing Diego Forlán - in the squad at the expense of league top scorer Lucas Silva - and moving the games to the 40,000-seater Hong Kong Stadium. That attempt was dealt a blow in the Jeonbuk match. Not enough tickets had been printed, leaving fans queuing down the road to buy them. Many just gave up and left, while others did not get into the stadium until half time, when Kitchee were 5-0 down. The final attendance was 13,519, but turnouts never recovered from the ticket mess, and the battering.

Up next were two matches against Japan's Kashiwa Reysol, Kitchee's best-looking chances to pick up points. And while the Hong Kong side seemed on a level with Kashiwa in the away match, bolstered by the return from injury of left back Dani Cancela, the front two of Forlán and Alex Akande could not get on the ball in any meaningful way. Their opponents eventually showed their quality, pulling the defence out of shape before setting up Junya Ito for the winning goal. Kitchee coach Chu Chi-kwong did go for it with a few attacking substitutions, as he did throughout the tournament, but to no avail.

Enter the dragon

The home Kashiwa match would bring a rather more impactful substitution, and one of the most memorable moments in Hong Kong football's recent history. During the first 80 minutes of an even match, most of which Kashiwa played with 10 men, Kitchee had not found a breakthrough. Eyebrows were raised when Chu sent on Cheng Chin-lung, who had been out on loan during the first half of the season. But after getting the ball from Forlán in the 92nd minute, and ignoring the Uruguayan's calls for the return pass, the 20-year-old left-footed a delightful curler into the top corner.

It was the first goal scored by a Hong-konger in the ACL, ensuring the first win for a Hong Kong club in the competition. Many of the 7,000 or so fans in the ground will never even have heard Cheng's name before the match, but at the end they were chanting it. Quite a moment for the young player, and for local football.

Those three points were the only ones Kitchee would win in the group stage, because of a heartbreaking 1-0 loss to Tianjin in Mong Kok, Anthony Modeste nodding in at the very end of a match in which Kitchee failed to take their chances. As with most of the games, Kitchee might have been more dangerous if Lucas Silva had been on the pitch instead of Forlán. The final defeat to Jeonbuk, 3-0 away, was predictable.

Taking only three points, scoring one goal, is not a good look. But there can be no question that the team improved massively on Eastern's campaign a season earlier. Aside from the matches against Jeonbuk, one of Asia's best teams, Kitchee showed themselves capable of holding their own at this level. And while they were clearly the weakest team in the group - understandable, in a debut season - they were not the whipping boys. →



Eastern's match with Thanh Hoa (top) did not suggest they would thrive in Asian competition right now; Kitchee's away match with Kashiwa Reysol (middle) ended in disappointment, but the home match ended with this goal (bottom).

Photos: Alan Man Photography, Kitchee, Ken Wu



落敗後，在主場被超班的全北汽車大炒 6：0。他們在天津被對方看準兩翼空位狂攻，吸取教訓後便收起保連奴和費蘭度兩位翼鋒，派出五名後衛穩守防線應付全北。這場比賽若不看賽果，傑志在戰術上的部署比天津一戰的確有進步。

傑志亦為亞冠大花金錢簽入名將迪亞高科蘭，犧牲了聯賽神射手盧卡斯，並將亞冠賽事移師至能夠容納 4 萬人的香港大球場上演，可惜在傑志對全北的賽前便遇到困難。賽會未有印制足夠門票，造成球場外大排長龍一片混亂。有部球迷更放棄排隊而離去，其他人則在上半場完結後才能成功購票入場，而當時傑志已經落後 5 球。最後的入場人數高達 13,519 人，但仍未能夠彌補因售票混亂和批評造成的損失。

接著對日本球隊柏雷素爾的兩場賽事是傑志最能奪分的機會。在作客日本的賽事中，傑志和柏雷素爾被認為實力不相上下，可惜即使傑志有左閘丹尼傷愈復出和前線的科蘭以及艾力士都未能大有作為。對手在尾段發力，憑伊東純也突破防線射入致勝一球。傑志教練朱志光最後換入攻擊球員亦無補於事。

「龍」爭虎鬥

傑志在主場迎戰柏雷素爾一戰中作出一個比較有用的調動，為香港球壇帶來近年最難忘的一夜。雙方在賽事的首 80 分鐘處於拉鋸狀態，柏雷素爾在大部份時間只有十人應戰，而傑志則一直久攻不下。其後朱志光派出上半季被外借的鄭展龍落場應戰的決定令人質疑。這名 20 歲小歲在 92 分鐘接應科蘭的傳球後，先未有理會烏拉圭名將的回傳要求，然後以左腳抽入死角破網。

這是由香港人在亞冠射入的第一個入球，同時為香港球隊在亞冠取得首次勝利。近 7 千人的入場觀眾當中，很多人在賽前可能從未聽過鄭展龍這個名字，但所有人在賽後都一直呼叫著他的名字。對這名小將和本地足球來說，這是一個十分美妙的時刻。

這三分是傑志在整個分組賽當中取得的唯一分數。他們在旺角迎戰天津權建，被莫迪斯迪在尾段射入 1：0 的賽果令人心碎，導致傑志抱憾出局。在大部份比賽 →

中，傑志若派出盧卡斯比科蘭可能帶來更大威脅。而一如所料，傑志最後作客全北慘吞三蛋敗陣而回。

雖然最後只能取得一個入球而獲三分，在數字上看起來並不理想。但相比起東方上季在亞冠的表現，無可否認地傑志的實力有大幅進步。除了對亞洲強隊全北汽車的賽事之外，傑志都展現了能夠在高水平賽事中站穩陣腳的能力。傑志在亞冠首季亮相便成小組內最弱的一隊是可以理解的，但他們不是魚腩部隊。

香港屬於哪個比賽？

香港的亞冠席位將會被馬來西亞在 2019 和 2020 年取代。而其他國家的競爭力一直在增強，實力大增的菲律賓便是一個例子，香港要贏回亞冠席位不是一件易事。

傑志在 2019 年先要挑戰亞冠外圍賽，但他們最後須在單場附加賽中擊敗來自澳洲、中國、日本或韓國的其中一隊。雖然他們在 2017 年作客蔚山現代僅負一球十二碼，只差一步便能出線小組賽，但這條路將會十分難行。

泰國的球會在近年印證了只有連續在頂級賽事與頂級球隊較量，才能夠追上強隊的水平。很可惜，亞冠和亞協盃現時的方式令比規模較小的成員，如香港，處於一個不利的位置而未能趕上其他亞洲列強。

若傑志未能晉級亞冠分組賽，他們便要與港超亞軍大埔在同組出戰亞洲足協盃。由於近期賽事制度改變，大埔要先勝出附加賽才獲參賽資格，而對手很有可能是來自北韓的球隊，要成為小組首名才能出線到亞協的決賽週。

在 2014 年傑志在旺角大球場上演的準決賽、還有南華在 2009 年出戰亞協準決賽均令球場爆滿，看得出香港球迷一直都十分看重亞協盃。若然能夠有較大機會挑戰更後的關卡，也許只當池塘中的大魚也不錯。 ■

Where does Hong Kong belong?

Hong Kong has now lost its ACL group stage spot to Malaysia - at least for 2019 and 2020. Winning it back may not be easy, given the growing competition, such as the ever-improving Philippines.

In 2019 Kitchee will get a shot at the ACL qualifiers, but would eventually have to upset a team from either Australia, China, Japan, or South Korea away in a one-leg play-off. They have come close in the past, losing on penalties to Ulsan Hyundai in 2017, but it will be extremely tough.

Still, as Thai clubs have proved in recent years, it is only through constant exposure to the best teams that you can match them. Unfortunately, the current format and the rigid separation of the ACL and the AFC Cup leave smaller associations, like Hong Kong, at a disadvantage as they try to catch up with Asia's best.

If Kitchee fail to qualify for the Champions League, they will land in the AFC Cup, where they will be joined by league runners-up Tai Po in the same group. However, due to recent format changes, the district team would have to qualify first, most likely by beating a club from North Korea. Only the group winner would later progress to the final stage of the tournament.

But Hong Kong fans have always shown an unusual admiration for the AFC Cup, filling the Mong Kok Stadium for Kitchee's semi-final in 2014 and even filling the Hong Kong Stadium for South China's semi in 2009. And with a realistic chance of reaching the latter stages, perhaps being the big fish will not be so bad. ■



Tianjin Quanjian's Anthony Modeste went close against Kitchee (top), before scoring in the final minutes (middle), to the delight of the travelling fans (bottom).

Photos: Dennis Lo





One great shot

Cheng Chin-lung toasts a huge win for Kitchee, thanks to his last-minute curler, against Kashiwa Reysol in March.

Photo: Kitchee



WILL HONG KONG FANS



FALL IN LINE?

By James Legge



At the back of the north stand of the Mong Kok Stadium, the spiritual home of Hong Kong football, there is a long, white desk, with about six seats. The sign on the desk says “Press Working Area”. But no journalist ever sits at the desk. At most matches it is populated by old men, loudly sharing jokes over horse racing newspapers. There is a proper press box in the opposite stand too, which is usually mostly empty.

Such is the interest of Hong Kong journalists in Hong Kong football.

But in November 2017, the city’s representative team became the focus not just of local but international media. And that interest peaked during an international friendly against Bahrain and an Asia Cup qualifier against Lebanon days later.

Because not only were Hong Kong’s

fans in the quite possibly unique position of booing their team’s own national anthem - China’s anthem, *March of the Volunteers* - but their antics had already set them on a collision course with the central government in Beijing.

Hopes and jeers

This latest wave of discontent has its roots in wider political strife - the pro-democracy and anti-Beijing feeling which has poured forth since the months-long pro-democracy Occupy protests of 2014.

At the Hong Kong representative team’s first match after the start of Occupy, a 2-1 win over Singapore in Mong Kok, a few fans waved yellow umbrellas - a symbol of the protests - during the anthem. They did the same a few days later against Argentina. Perhaps →

because Occupy was then viewed relatively favourably, or because no one took the side seriously as a sporting force, few noticed this arrival of politics on the terraces, in contrast with what was to come.

Hugo Cheung, a long-time local football fan, did not see much problem with the jeers.

“Well I mean it’s a ‘normal’ thing that people boo the national anthem, even the Scots boo *God Save The Queen*, so it’s understandable for Hong Kong people to do this under these political circumstances,” he said.

Things escalated in June 2015, at the start of World Cup qualifying, when hundreds booed the anthem ahead of a 7-0 home win over Bhutan. There was similar behaviour at other group matches. And later in the group stage, Hong Kong faced one of the two other international teams which use March of the Volunteers: China.

On a night of animosity, anxiety and eventual elation, the Hong Kong fans had been warned not to disrespect the song. They came prepared. As the players of both sides lined up for the anthem (which no Hong Kong player actually sang), fans unfurled banners which they had smuggled in, which read “Hong Kong is not China”. Some signs just read: “BOO”. They then booed, deafeningly.

The chorus of “We are Hong Kong” that followed was undeniably rousing. The police officers at the ground, much more numerous than at usual matches, could do little, as stewards waved for fans to rein it in.

The fans and the authorities were by now locked in a negative feedback loop. The FA was never going to stop playing the anthem, and the fans were unlikely to stop booing it. And, guaranteed a good story every few months, local media would always turn up to film the jeering, and then coax furious quotes from pro-Beijing politicians, amplifying the rancour and ensuring an even bigger crowd of angry fans - and journalists - at the next match. And repeat.

The China match ended 0-0, an excellent result for Hong Kong. The side’s stature and popularity grew, and so did the localist mood among the fans in red. So too did an increasingly angry streak, as the Lebanon players who had drinks cartons thrown at them and the North Korean wing back who was singled out for a confrontation can attest. At least one flag advocating Hong Kong independence began popping up. Fifa fined the FA twice for the booing.

Media circus

Angry Hong Kong football fans are nothing new. In 1969 - during another period of political tension, that time between communist sympathisers and the British colonial establishment, which flared up in particular during the street riots of 1967 - spectators started fires in the stands of Hong Kong Stadium after a league XI lost to an English International XI. The same happened after Rangers beat Eastern in a hot-tempered match at the stadium in 1971, and a car was set on fire outside. There were other similar flare-ups.

Writing about the recent drama on his blog in 2017, Mark Sutcliffe, the chief executive of the FA, noted its grim inevitability.

“Quite frankly it’s getting a bit tedious,” he wrote. “The fans who boo have made their point now and I’m pretty sure that if there hadn’t been such interest shown by the politicians and in particular the media, it would have stopped a long time ago.”

Lamenting that the focus had been almost totally drawn from the football, he wrote: “Our beloved game is being hijacked (to the obvious delight of the media) as a political tool by both sides in a polarised, fractured society.”

Mario Choy, a leader of local fan group Chi Sin Lo, was equally irked by the shifted focus. He said later: “I still remember the news report of TVB after the game [against Malaysia in October 2017]. They only mentioned the anthems, disregarding →

旺角大球場是香港足球的聖地，在北看台的尾段，有一張白色的長桌和六張椅子。這張長桌上寫著「傳媒工作區」，不過從來沒有記者坐在這長枱前工作。很多時候，長桌都被一些中年球迷佔據，他們坐在桌前看馬報的同時談笑風生。而在看台的對面也有一個傳媒專區，同樣也是長期空著。

這就是香港記者們對香港足球的興趣。

不過，在 2017 年的 11 月，香港代表隊不只成為本地新聞的焦點，更登上了國際新聞的版面。最觸目的時候是友誼賽迎戰巴林，以及數天後的亞洲盃外圍賽對黎巴嫩。

本地球迷在香港代表隊出場奏響中國國歌《義勇軍進行曲》時發出噓聲一事當中，不單置他們於一個不尋常的處景，他們的噓聲更令北京中央政府十分不滿。

“Even Scots boo God Save The Queen”

希望與噓聲

最新一波的不滿衍生自更廣泛的政治衝突——自 2014 年的民主運動「佔中」持續多月後，支持民主和反北京的情緒變得表露無遺。

香港代表隊在旺角場以 2:1 擊敗新加坡一戰是「佔中」發生後的第一場國際賽，有數名球迷在場內播放國歌時舉起代表著「佔中」的黃色雨傘。同樣的事亦發生在數天後港隊對阿根廷一戰中。也許當時「佔中」的立場被認為較有利；也許當時沒有人認真看待場內的示威者。但對照大家之後的反應，看來當時沒有人留意到政治已經降臨到看台上。

資深本地球迷張衡認為球迷們的噓聲沒有問題，他指：「我認為人們噓國歌是一件『正常』事，蘇格蘭也會噓《天佑女皇》，所以在現時的政治環境下，香港人的行為是可以理解的。」

2016 年 6 月，港隊在世界盃外圍賽以 7:0 大炒不丹，賽前有數百名球迷在場內噓國歌令事件升溫。在其他分組賽賽事中亦 →

40 years and waiting: Hong Kong's Asian Cup qualifying campaign

Back in 2016, Hong Kong's solid performances in the World Cup qualifiers, when they finished third in the group, offered confidence for the 2019 Asian Cup qualifiers. The tournament had been expanded to 24 teams, allowing more than half of AFC member associations to qualify, and offering Hong Kong a realistic chance to participate for the first time since 1968.

The positive outlook did not last long. Drawn in a tough group with Lebanon, North Korea and Malaysia, Hong Kong would have to edge out at least one of two historically (and factually) better teams.

The campaign started with an uninspiring 0-2 defeat in Beirut. But coach Kim Pan-gon and his men were back in the mix by June 2017 when a Tan Chun-lok goal secured a 1-1 draw with North Korea at the Hong Kong Stadium – providing the team with a crucial point against their direct qualification rivals. That good result was cancelled out in the next match, as the representative team took only one point from Malaysia after a missed Sandro penalty in stoppage time.

Kitchee regulars Jordi Tarres, Nando Recio and Dani Cancela finally got their HKSAR passports in September, and provided Kim with new options in attack and defence. Jordi in particular proved his worth, scoring on his debut in a friendly against Laos and in the subsequent qualifying match against Malaysia. James McKee added the second in the Malaysia match to ensure a 2-0 win. After a disappointing 1-0 loss to Lebanon in November 2017, in which Tan was sent off and the resulting penalty became the decisive goal of the evening, it all came down to the last match, away in Pyongyang.

Despite the historic opportunity, no one really seemed to believe in a successful mission. Least of all coach Kim, who suddenly announced his departure in December, leaving even his critics confused. Meanwhile, some local clubs seemed reluctant to make the best players available for the trip.

This – and the awkward fact that games in Pyongyang are usually played without live broadcast – created a strange, end-of-campaign anticlimax, with the 2-0 loss ending an exciting three-year journey in the least spectacular way possible. →

the result and performance. Such a disrespect to Hong Kong football.”

Laying down the law

National leaders in Beijing had come up with a solution, but maybe not quite the one Sutcliffe or Choy had in mind. On November 4, 2017, just 10 days before the match against Lebanon, China’s top legislators tweaked Hong Kong’s constitution, in effect compelling the city government to outlaw abuse of the anthem. The government is still working through the legislative process, but it is safe to say that it will soon be illegal to boo the song in Hong Kong.

While the law will criminalise disrespect in many contexts, it seemed clear that the standing committee had the booing in mind when Zhang Rongshun, deputy director of its Legislative Affairs Commission, cited “incidents of disrespect against the national anthem”, responsible for “triggering rage among Chinese including most Hong Kong residents”.

Nathan Law, a pro-democracy former lawmaker, disqualified from the Legislative Council in 2017 for taking his members’ oath wrongly, said he was against the ban.

Law, who has been seen at the team’s matches, said he would not boo the anthem and never had. But he said he understood why people would do it, and that the law was unlikely to stem the jeering fans’ antipathy towards Beijing.

“We shouldn’t have local legislation to punish people,” he said. “It doesn’t really change how people see China, it will only make their impression worse. Because they will think you are just using different tactics to suppress their views, as in many other issues in the city.”

A spokesman for the Mainland and Constitutional Affairs Bureau said: “The Government will listen to public views and ensure that the local legislation is in compliance with the Basic Law, including the provisions concerning freedom of speech.”

Choy said his group had no position on

the booing itself - “but I respect the freedom of speech of every single fan on the stand”. However, he pointed out the law could be tough to enforce.

“It would be impossible to catch or prosecute all the fans who had been booing,” he said. “Instead, I think they will try to get a few of them in trouble, as a means of public warning.”

The end?

But back to that match against Lebanon, when the atmosphere among the 10,000-strong crowd reached its most fraught (and which Hong Kong lost 1-0, on their way to finishing third in the group and failing to qualify). Coming so soon after Beijing demanded the new law, and with outlandish comments from senior politicians that there might be retroactive prosecutions for anyone caught jeering the anthem, the mood was angry and nervous.

The assembled journalists pointed cameras at the booing fans, causing many to demand they stop filming for fear it would get them in trouble. One local TV reporter who tried to go in amongst the crowd was set upon by an angry mob, who tried to snatch away his cameraman’s equipment. Even after he left the crowd for the main concourse, about 100 fans surrounded and yelled at him. What they wanted was unclear, and they eventually dispersed.

That game was the team’s last competitive home match for some time. That might provide a cooling-off period during which the law can slip in without too much impact on fans. But it remains to be seen how spectators will behave next time the anthem blares, pre-match, from stadium speakers. Or if anything on the pitch can draw as much public attention as this strange, and divisive, chapter in the life of Hong Kong football. ■

有類似事件發生。直至分組賽末段，香港迎戰另一隊以《義勇軍進行曲》為國歌的國家隊——中國。

在這充滿仇恨、焦慮和驚喜的一晚，香港球迷一直被警告不要蔑視國歌。香港人便做好準備而來。大會在球員進場後播放國歌（當中其實也沒有香港球員跟著唱），球迷們將一塊偷運進場的大橫額打開，上面寫著「Hong Kong is not China」，其他球迷則舉起寫著「Boo」的大字，然後發出震耳欲聾的噓聲。

球迷們隨後吶喊著「We are Hong Kong」，無疑地十分激動人心。保安們想盡辦法揮手去制止球迷，但即使場內的警察人數比平常的比賽多，他們也只能束手無策。

在此階段，球迷和賽會陷入一個惡性循環，足總絕對不會停播國歌；而球迷們亦不似會停止發出噓聲，更成為本地傳媒每幾個月必定報導的好題材。記者們會到球場拍攝球迷噓國歌，然後引用激進親中人士的訪問放大仇恨去確保下場比賽會有更多記者和憤怒球迷出現，然後不斷重覆。

香港最後以 0:0 守和中國，對港隊來說是一個絕佳的賽果。這一場比賽令 →

Kim's departure marks the end of an era. The HKFA faces the difficult task of carrying the momentum into the next cycle of qualifiers, for the 2022 World Cup and the 2023 Asian Cup. But this should give the next coach — whoever it might be — plenty of time to build on the recent development, while accelerating the integration of local talents such as Tan, Wong Wai and Cheng Chin-lung and hopefully ending the over-reliance on older naturalised players. There is a lot of work ahead, but Hong Kong fans have been patient since 1968. We can all wait a few years more.

40 多年的等待：香港在亞洲盃屢戰屢敗

回想到 2016 年，香港在世界盃外圍賽的表現穩健，以第三名完成分組賽並為 2019 年出戰亞洲盃外圍賽注下強心針。這項賽事的參賽名額現已增至 24 支隊伍，令超過一半的亞洲足協成員可獲資格晉級，令香港自 1968 年以來有更加切實的機會首次參與亞洲盃決賽週。

可惜這個樂觀的前景並未能持續。香港抽得下籤與黎巴嫩、北韓和馬來西亞同組，必須擊敗兩隊傳統勁旅之中的最少一隊才能在能脫穎而出。

港隊的晉級之路在首仗便以 0:2 敗走黎巴嫩，後來教練金判坤帶領著港隊在 2017 年 6 月主場迎戰北韓關鍵一戰當中，→

Tan Chun-lok gets sent off against Lebanon. Photo: Dennis Lo



港隊的名望和支持度大增，也同時令球迷的本土情懷升溫。場內的憤怒情緒也不段上升，有球迷向黎巴嫩球員丟紙包飲品和北韓的後防球員被單打指罵是其中一個證明；場內還有主張香港獨立的旗幟飛揚。而國際足協事後針對噓國歌事件對香港足總罰款。

傳媒馬戲團

香港不是第一次有激進球迷出現。在 1969 年 — 當時親共人士和港英政府對待，正值另一段政治風波更引發六七暴動 — 在港聯大敗給英格蘭代表隊後，有球迷在香港大球場的看台上縱火。同樣事件亦發生在 1971 年在流浪擊敗東方的一仗中，更有球迷在場外燒車，還有更多類似的衝突。

香港足總行政總裁薛基輔在 2017 年的網誌中提及到近期的事件，無可避免的提及到這個嚴峻的處境。

他寫出：「老實說，這件事變得有點令人煩厭。發出噓聲的球迷已經達成目的。而我敢肯定，若然政府和傳媒不是有這麼大的反應，這件事一早就會完結。」他對事件的焦點令人幾乎忘記港隊的表現感到痛惜：「我們熱愛的運動正在被（傳媒的幸災樂禍）騎劫，在這極端和分裂的社會中成為兩大派的政治工具。」

本地球迷組織領袖蔡明孝同樣為足球的焦

點被轉移感到不滿，他說：「我仍然記得無綫電視在（2017 年 10 月對馬來西亞）賽後的新聞報導當中只有提及國歌，完全無視賽果和球隊表現，對香港足球毫無尊重。」

立例規管

北京的一眾國家領導人事後隨即提出解決方法，但卻不如薛基輔或蔡先生所想。在 2017 年 11 月 4 日，就在對黎巴嫩一仗的十天前，全國人大常委會對香港的憲法作調整，務求令香港政府立法禁止侮辱國歌。港府現時仍在為《國歌法》進行立法工作，但相信在香港噓國歌很快便會成為非法行為。

《國歌法》將很多不尊重國歌的情況列為非法行為，基本法委員會副主任張榮順更指出一些不尊重國歌的事件引起包括廣大香港居民在內的全國人民的極大憤慨，顯示出國家常委有留意著噓國歌事件。

在 2017 年因被裁決宣誓不當繼而被

Hong Kong fans get angry (during the match, not the anthem).
Photo: Dennis Lo



取消立法會議員資格的前立法會議員羅冠聰反對立法。多次入場支持港隊的他指自己曾未亦不會噓國歌，但同時理解為何港人的做法，並指出新例不會減低他們對北京政府的反感。

羅說：「我們不應透過本地立法去懲罰市民。這不會令大眾改變對中國的看法，只會令他們對中國的印象更差，因為他們會認為政府就如應付社會上其他問題一樣，只是在採取不同策略去壓制眾人的意見。」

政制及內地事務局發言人指，政府會聽取市民意見，同時確保本地立法程序會符合《基本法》的規定，保障市民的言論自由。

蔡先生指他所屬的球迷組織在噓國歌一事沒有立場，但他尊重看台上每一位球迷的言論自由。不過，他認為執法將會有一定難度：「政府不可能捕捉或檢控所有噓國歌的球迷，但我認他們會先檢控幾位球迷以儆效尤」

結局？

回到剛才提及過對黎巴嫩的一仗，場內近萬名球迷將氣氛推到最高漲狀態（最後以 1:0 敗陣的港隊看似會以第三名完小組賽而未能出線）。同時又迎來北京對《國歌法》的立法要求，有資深政客更提出《國歌法》可設立追溯期追究有份噓國歌的球迷，令場內情緒變得既憤怒又憂慮。

一眾記者將鏡頭瞄準噓國歌的球迷，令很多人擔心會惹麻煩而喝止記者拍攝。有一名電視台記者嘗試走到看台中拍攝時被一班暴怒的球迷襲擊，他們更嘗試搶走攝影師的器材。即使該位記者離開看台後，仍然被約一百名球迷圍罵。他們的目的是不明，而人群最後亦慢慢消散。

這一戰是港隊在主場近期最後一場的重要賽事，未來的一段時間也許能提供一個冷靜期，在通過《國歌法》時減低對球迷的影響。不過，下次賽前在球場喇叭播出國歌時，球迷會如何反應仍然是未知之數。也許場上會有其他事情能令公眾的關注度蓋過香港球壇這奇異的一頁。■

憑著陳俊樂的入球逼和 1:1 搶得重要的一分，延續港隊出線的希望。可惜辛祖在作客馬來西亞補時階段射失十二碼令香港痛失兩分，導致主場對北韓的佳績被抵消。

傑志的正選球員佐迪、列斯奧和丹尼終於在 9 月獲發香港特區護照，為金判坤在前場和後防提供了新選擇。佐迪在香港對老撾的友賽中首次披甲便取得入球，其後對馬來西亞亦能領功盡顯身價。麥基在馬來西亞一仗中射入第二球奠定勝局。港隊在 2017 年 11 月因陳俊樂在禁區犯規而被罰十二碼，失下決定性的一球而不敵黎巴嫩，令最後一輪作客平壤成為最關鍵的一仗。

儘管香港仍然有歷史性晉級的機會，看來沒有人相信這個任務能夠成功實現。首先是金教練在 12 月突然宣傳離任，就連批評者都表示難以理解。同時，有些本地球隊似乎都不太願意讓他們的最佳球員到平壤出戰。

這一切，包括平壤的賽事就如以往沒有現場直播，將這三年來的緊張旅程營造了一個既奇怪又反高潮的氣氛，在最不引人注目的方式以 2:0 負仗完成最後一幕。

金判坤的離任標誌著一個時代的結束。香港足總正面臨艱難重任，要想辦法去保持球隊氣勢並将它延續到下一回的外圍賽，即 2022 年世界盃及 2023 年亞洲盃。不過這段時間將會為下一任教練提供足夠時間繼續在現有的基礎上發展，並可促使本地人才的融合，如黃威、陳俊樂和鄭展龍，有望能夠不再依賴對年齡較大的入籍球員。港隊仍有很多地方需改進，但香港球迷自 1968 年都一直抱著耐心，大家仍可再多等幾年的。■

By Tobias Zuser

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