

KCC Football Section Report 2019-2020

Jon McKinley
KCC Football Section Convenor and
General Committee Representative



It's been an unpredictable season, but one that has seen KCC teams make good progress despite a premature end to the league campaigns for all of our senior and junior teams, as further competition in the various Hong Kong Football Association and affiliated leagues that we compete in was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The first highlight of the season was the re-entry of the KCC to the HKFA League Division Three. We started with a 2-1 victory over Tsuen Wan with goals from Ambrose Wong and Nikhil Narwani, and despite a few narrow defeats, we were looking to climb to a mid-table position when the season ended prematurely. Coach Stevic and manager Luke Schroder put together a squad of players that worked hard for each other, maintained a positive attitude and were a credit to the club.

In the Yau Yee League, KCC Dragons had a mixed season in Division One under Coach Bredbury. We started the season well, beating Squadron 4-0, but further wins eluded us as we failed to gain 3 points in a game for 7 weeks with our second win finally coming against French Kiss - although we managed to draw 3 of our 4 matches in between. A number of games were then postponed due to the social unrest before the winter break. By then we had managed to obtain 20 points from 12 matches, leaving us in a comfortable position, but these were the last points the Dragons were to obtain this season, as only two games were played after the holidays due to the pandemic.

In Yau Yee League Division Two, the KCC Knights under Coach Brown had an excellent season, and after a slow start – losing their first two matches 3-0 and 2-0 – won five matches in a row before the league was called to a halt. Despite being in with a good chance of promotion to Division One, with the entire league season being declared void, the Knights will start again in Division Two in 2020-21. The other stand-out KCC senior team this season was the KCC Cavaliers, who swept almost all before them to stand at the top of the Hong Kong Legal League Division Two when the season was stopped. Given that the standard of this league has improved considerably in recent seasons, this was a superb achievement by Coach de Laiglesia, player-manager Jordan Jarvis and the players.

In the HK Legal League Division Two, the KCC Royals maintained a steady level, playing 19 matches in the season. In all, 38 players represented the KCC Royals during the season, with young blood being injected into the squad in the shape of several Yau Yee players. One of the highlights of the season was a cup win over Division One outfit J Leaguers, where 3 -0 down at half-time, the Royals showed considerable resilience to level the score and take the tie to penalties, winning 5-4 in the shoot-out. Under manager David Christmas, the KCC Royals produced some excellent performances in the second half of the season, resulting in a healthy league position of 9th.

Finally, the KCC's newest senior football team, the KCC Monarchs took their bow this season in the Legal League Legends Division for players aged over 35. With the help of assistant managers Geoff Ho and Jim Down, manager Dimitri Lamarlere was able to assemble a keen squad of players, however as the majority were in their 40s and 50s they often found themselves outmatched against teams

fielding mostly players in their late 30s. Nonetheless, the KCC Monarchs produced a number of good performances, most notably a 4-3 win over a strong Discovery Bay team, and the spirit in the team remained high right to the end of the curtailed season.

The junior programme had a difficult season, having to adjust training schedules on a weekly and at times daily basis. We started the season just after the social unrest turned its focus to locations close to the club. This continued throughout the first half of the season. Covid-19 then disrupted the rest of the season.

Children's safety was our driving focus during this time. Covid-19 caused the HKFA to cancel most of its league season and the HK Junior Football League was severely disrupted due to lack of pitch availability. Our junior players often trained without matches in prospect, doing fitness sessions without a football and even online. Despite these challenges, we managed to offer most of the scheduled training sessions up until the end of the season, and recorded some success amongst the various age groups -

- The KCC team in the HKFA U12 golden age division 3 finished top of their league and were looking to a mid-season promotion to the second tier.
- The KCC team U11 team played up a year in the HKFA U12 division 2, and was second with three wins and one draw, with every chance of making it up into the first division in the middle of the season.
- The KCC U10 team in the HKFA U10 golden age division 2 reached 3rd position, also performing admirably.
- The U13 HKFA team qualified once again for the first division, in which all KCC teams from U13 to U16 age groups now compete.

With so few matches played it is hard to determine how all these teams would have fared over the course of the season. Nonetheless, these results already represent a strong achievement and we look forward to a full 2020-21 season.

With six senior teams to manage – and a junior and colts programmes featuring some 500 boys and girls ranging in age from 6 to 18 – the section committee has had a busy season keeping tabs on the players as well as the overall management of the teams. Special thanks are due to Adrian Townson, who as Secretary to the section makes sure that we keep on track, Shyam Nainani who ensures that we use our finances prudently and productively and Steve Palfrey who has spent many early Saturday mornings at the KCC supervising the running of the junior programme.

As at July 2020, the Football Section had 11 Sporting Subscribers and 52 Junior Subscribers (of whom 31 were aged below 23). This represents roughly 40% of the playing strength of the section's five senior teams (not including the KCC Monarchs over 35s team). We have tightened the criteria for joining the KCC as a Football SS by limiting entry only to our three top-level senior teams in the HKFA and HKFA-affiliated Yau Yee Leagues. We have also adopted a strict policy of requiring JS who are no longer representing the KCC on a regular basis to resign their memberships.

The Football Committee consists almost entirely of former SS (who have since transferred to OVM or become SVM), current SS and JS. Our top-level and HK Legal League team managers and assistant managers are also former or current SS or JS. The significant contribution that these former and current subscribers make to the section and to the KCC as a whole is a matter of record, and we will continue to recruit high-quality players and strong club supporters to the section in the coming season.

In 2020-21, we will also make changes to the organisation of our senior teams to give players the opportunity to develop further and to build on the progress that we have made this season. We aim to challenge for honours in all three leagues, and with the committed and talented players and coaches that we have at the club and the support of the wider membership, we expect a strong showing in the coming season.