

香港棒球 四十春秋

李錦泉 香港棒球總會會長

香港棒球總會二十周年，我要向它致以最真摯的祝福。作為九位創會成員的其中一位，我的心情是欣慰又感恩：欣慰，是好像親眼見自己的孩子已經長成；感恩，是孩子在成長過程中，難免有病痛，受傷，有許多不眠之夜，但都一一熬了過去。開始頭十年，是創業期，路是艱難的；後十年，有了突破口：男棒參加了代表亞洲最高水平的《亞洲棒球錦標賽》，和世界六強中的亞洲四強：日、韓、台、中同場較量（另兩強是美國和古巴）；女棒則更走上了世界舞台，參加了世界盃女子棒球錦標賽，獲得了國際普遍讚譽。我們用了二十年，達成了衝出香港，走向世界的願景。二十周年是香港棒球運動的一塊新里程碑！

香港棒球總會從成立至今的二十年，所走過的路，大都記錄在季刊《上壘》內，成為香港棒球歷史其中一頁的重要文獻。只是再往後過去二十年的事，即距今四十年，那裡曾有多人為棒球拓荒的事蹟，就漸漸被忘懷了。下面我想寫一點那還未被忘懷的二十年，算是香港棒球史的遺補，也是對當年一起打拼的先行者，無論已逝或在世的，一個思念和敬意。

戰後的香港棒球運動相對起足球，壘球，籃球，羽毛球，恢復得比較晚。70年代初，康樂體育事務處，簡稱康體處，舉辦了第一屆兒童棒球訓練班，那是由署內一位非常熱愛棒球運動的林良平主任負責，參加的學員多數來自那些家長在假日無暇加以照顧的社會基層孩童。當結業時（只此一班），林主任向我提議，可否繼續帶領現有再加進新的小童，組成一支華籍兒童隊，並答應從旁幫助加入香港唯一由外籍人士組成的Hong Kong Little League（香港少棒聯盟），參加賽季賽事。由於球具、用品、制服、參賽費，並每年季終聚餐等費用，為數不菲。幸運的是最後得到少棒聯盟同意免除一切費用，並且提供一切棒球器材，（當然大部份都是用過的），只要我們有隊伍參加，不論多少隊伍都無限量支持。這對我們日後發展棒球，影響深遠。這第一屆，也是唯一一屆的結業禮，是在跑馬地草場內舉行，由當時首席康樂體育主任容德根先生親自頒獎。

直至80年代初，沙田成為香港首個從鄉村變成一個衛星城市。當年沙田區康樂體育主任周啓明先生構思“新城市，新運動”的理念，提議在沙田區發展少為人知的學校兒童棒球運動，邀請香港少棒聯盟合辦課程。當時我是少棒聯盟董事中的華籍代表。我們於是廣邀沙田區內學校參加。棒球在那時即使是經濟起飛的年代，仍然是一種極陌生的運動，認識者極少，結果只得區內基覺小學盧光輝校長率領其學生參加。其後區內所有學生組成的棒球隊，都參與“沙田體育會”轄下的“沙田棒球會”。當年的沙田專員曾蔭權先生極力支持這“新城市，新運動”的構思。1983年沙田的“沙燕隊”打敗了實力超強的日本少棒隊，破天荒地取得了從來只由日本隊獨佔的冠軍桂冠。這在當年是一件轟動大事。沙田區有關部門決定以沙燕命名橫跨城門河最長跨河橋為“沙燕橋”。沙田棒球會由於得到政府大力支持，在大圍有專用訓練場，又虛心積極的吸取了日本棒球的技術精髓，紀律嚴明的教練風格，日漸壯大，參賽的隊伍覆蓋了少棒聯盟所有級別的賽事，戰蹟彪炳，雄踞一方。沙田棒球會對推廣棒球，讓更多香港人認識棒球，並產生多名優秀的香港代表隊運動員和教練員，應受到歷史的肯定。

80年代，少棒聯盟的球季全部集中在何文田與土瓜灣交界的英皇佐治五世紀念學校(KGV)舉行。那裡有一塊大草場，可同時進行三場少棒賽事。因為地點適中，場地寬大優美。在80-90年代中，是香港少年棒球的“黃金盛世”。那些年間，有一群熱心家長開始認識少棒運動對兒童長成有具正面幫助，於是思考如何把少棒納入更有系統組織，從精神、品格、體魄、技術、紀律，培養好我們的下一代，讓更多香港九龍區兒童參加這種健康的運動。經過多年深思探索，長時間討論，最後集結了一群志同道合，熱愛棒球運動，絕無功利私念的家長，出錢出力出時間，（我們都不是很富有的一群，但有肯為社會做點有益事情的傻瓜）務要把棒球在香港發揚光大，讓更多不同年齡性別的市民參加。

最後，這個歷十多年的偉大構思的果子“香港棒球總會”，在1993三月宣告正式成立。香港棒球總會走

了二十年；嚴格來說，香港棒球運動走了四十年，在國際棒球界已經建立了聲譽。令人遺憾的是，香港至今竟沒有一個可固定使用的標準棒球場，這和擁有世界大都會的美名極不相稱。回望四十年，我願意當年先輩的努力沒有白費，汗沒有白流，後繼者把棒球推向了他們當年想都沒有想過的高峰；再看今天，我更願意香港廣大的棒球族群不再流蕩，練習和比賽無定所。作為一個年長的棒球人，我誠懇的請求：請給香港一個棒球場，鑽石形的，有美麗的綠草和紅土，這就是我在夜深人靜常常夢見的那一個。

四十春秋，固無憾焉。

Hong Kong Baseball Development in Four Decades

Laurence Lee President of Hong Kong Baseball Association

Translated by: Jennifer Eagleton

On the twentieth anniversary of the Hong Kong Baseball Association, I would like to offer my sincerest congratulations. As one of the nine founders of the Association, I am filled with joy and gratitude. Joy – as if I witnessed my own child growing up. Gratitude – for seeing the child pull through illnesses, injuries and sleepless nights. In the first decade as a start-up, the road was rough. In the next decade, a breakthrough was made. Our men's baseball team participated in the Asian Baseball Championship – the highest level tournament in Asia – and competed with Japan, Korea, Taiwan and China, four of the top six teams in the world (the rest being USA and Cuba). Our women's baseball team made it to the world stage and participated in the IBAF Women's Baseball World Cup, winning international recognition. It has taken us twenty years but we have proven to be able to break out of Hong Kong and compete internationally. The twentieth anniversary is indeed a new milestone for the sport of baseball in Hong Kong.

The development of the Hong Kong Baseball Association over the past 20 years since its inception was mostly recorded in its quarterly publication "RUN", which has become an important source of information regarding the history of baseball in Hong Kong. However in the 20 years before the Hong Kong Baseball Association was formed, i.e., 40 ago, there were stories of baseball pioneers that have gradually faded in people's memory. Let me write about some of these stories from that era as a contribution to Hong Kong's baseball history as well as my tribute to the trailblazers, both deceased and living.

In post-war Hong Kong, compared to soccer, softball, basketball, or badminton, baseball experienced a slower recovery. In the early 1970s, the Recreation & Sport Service (RSS) organized the first training course for children's baseball. The person in charge was Mr. LAM Lang Ping of the RSS who had a passion for baseball himself. At the time, most of the participants came from lower income families where parents did not have time to take care of their children on holidays. When the first and only class graduated, Mr. LAM asked me if I could continue to lead the graduating participants, together with some new ones, to form a Chinese kids' team. He even promised to help us join and compete in the Hong Kong Little League which, at the time, consisted of teams with Western players only. Nonetheless, equipment, uniforms, joining fees, and end of year gatherings all added up to the cost. Fortunately the Hong Kong Little League agreed to waive all fees for us and even donated all (used) baseball equipment to us. As long we sent in the teams, no matter how many, the League would support us. This made a huge and lasting impact to our development. The graduation of the first-year (which was also the only year) class was held at Happy Valley and the Principal Recreation & Sport Officer of RSS Mr. Dicken YUNG was there for the presentation.

In the early 1980s, Shatin became Hong Kong's first satellite city transformed from being a rural area. The Senior Recreation & Sport Officer of RSS at the time, Mr. Jimmy CHOW, came up with the idea of "New City, New Sports". He suggested that Shatin district promote a little-known sport called baseball at its schools and invited Hong Kong Little League to organize courses. I was the Chinese representative among the directors of the Hong Kong Little League at the time. We sent out invitations to many schools in Shatin to participate in our program, but in those days, despite the high economic growth of the city, baseball was an unfamiliar sport that few people knew about. The result was that only Kei Kok Primary School under the leadership of its principal Mr. LU Kwong Fai, participated. Since then, every student baseball team in Shatin became a member of the Shatin Baseball Club of the Shatin Sports Association. The Shatin District Officer at the time, Mr. Donald TSANG Yam Kuen, was an ardent supporter of the concept of "New City, New Sports". In 1983, the Martin Team defeated the very strong Japanese youth team and snatched the crown from its usual recipient. The victory sent strong ripples in the community. The authorities in Shatin decided to name the longest bridge across the Shing Mun River, Martin Bridge to commemorate this victory. As a result of strong governmental support, the Shatin Baseball Club was able to have its own training ground in Tai Wai. We learnt from the technical excellence of Japanese baseball and their strong coaching style. Over time we got bigger and the teams in our association participated in the Hong Kong Little League matches at all levels and did very well. The Shatin Baseball Club certainly played a role in promoting baseball in Hong Kong and developing a number of excellent players and trainers representing Hong Kong.

In the 1980s, all the matches of the Little League took place at King George V School (KGV) at the intersection between Homantin and To Kwa Wan. KGV had a huge lawn that could hold three Little League matches at the same time. It had a central location with expansive grounds. The 1980s to mid-1990s was the golden period for youth baseball in Hong Kong. During that time, a group of parents began to realize playing baseball was good for children's development. They began to ponder how youth baseball could be developed more systematically in order to develop the children's spirit, character, body, technique, and discipline and to allow more children in Kowloon participate in this sport. After years of investigation and discussion, a group of like-minded parents who shared in their passion for baseball and their generosity contributed time and money (we were not very wealthy but we were willing to do something good for society) in order to promote baseball in Hong Kong and let more people from different age groups, regardless of gender, to play the sport.

At long last, after a decade of conception, the Hong Kong Baseball Association was formed in March 1993. The Association just passed its 20 year mark, but baseball in Hong Kong has been developing for 40 years and has earned itself international recognition. Unfortunately, to date Hong Kong still does not have a dedicated standard baseball pitch, despite the city's reputation as a world metropolis. Four decades have passed. I wish those who worked hard for baseball in Hong Kong did not do so in vain. I also hope those who come after me will help the sport reach new heights. Today, I wish all the baseball lovers out there can have a home for training and for matches. As a senior baseballer, I sincerely request: Please give Hong Kong a baseball pitch, diamond-shaped, with beautiful green grass and red clay, like the one I dream of often.

This will mean forty years have not gone by for nothing.