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## young up post

Hugo Chui is a rising star on the local rugby scene.  
Photo: Frankie Tsang

As one of Hong Kong's most promising rugby players, Hugo Chui knows that dreaming big is half the battle, writes **Vien Tsang**

**H**ugo Chui Ho-ching pictures himself running across the pitch of the Hong Kong Stadium, scoring tries while the crowd cheers him on.

This might only be a dream just now, but as one of Hong Kong's most promising rugby players, it's not an unrealistic one.

"The Hong Kong Sevens is an event I have been watching since I was a kid. I have seen a lot of our local heroes playing and sweating it out on the pitch to earn glory," says the 19-year-old.

"I have been a ball boy at some league games, too. I often dreamed about being one of those big guys competing and being watched."

Despite still waiting for his senior debut for the Hong Kong team, the Form Six student at St Stephen's College started representing the region in 2008, and has enjoyed success with the junior squad.

Hugo and his team claimed the Asian Rugby Football Union Under 20s Sevens Series title in December 2014, after

winning the opening leg of the competition in Malaysia. But even this achievement pales in comparison to his experience the previous year.

"I first played for the Under 18s Rugby Sevens Team at the 2013 Asian Youth Games in Nanjing (南京). During the semi-final against Japan, we came back after trailing 12-0 at halftime to win 19-12," he recalls.

"We battled against Thailand in the final. The fans cheered for us and eventually we won 31-12. It was the first gold medal for Hong Kong in the 2013 Asian Youth Games.

"And being the flag-bearer for Hong Kong at the opening ceremony was definitely the icing on the cake."

Having played rugby since he was five, Hugo has been involved in a number of fifteens and sevens matches for both the Hong Kong team and his club. His advantage is his speed, so even though he enjoys playing both forms of the game, Hugo finds sevens suits him more.

"I can run 200m in 24.11 seconds," he says. To give you an idea of how fast that is, the record for the Division One Boys A Grade

200m at the HKSSF Inter-School Athletics Championships, set in 2014, is 22.38 seconds. "I am not as sturdy as some other players and fifteens is more demanding physically. But in a game of sevens, I can use my speed more and create opportunities for my team," explains Hugo.

"I like the satisfaction that rugby brings me, in terms of experiencing both victories and losses with a team.

"I also enjoy playing centre, as I get to be the decision maker and can create chances for wingers or attack by myself."

Just like many young players, Hugo has someone that he looks up to, as he seeks to improve his game.

"Rowan Varty, the star player in the senior squad, is my idol. He has captained the Hong Kong team in lots of matches. He has got great leadership abilities, technical skills and speed," says Hugo.

**His advantage is his speed, so even though he enjoys both, Hugo finds sevens suits him more**

"One time I was asked to train with the senior squad.

Rowan realised how

nervous I was and he told me to relax.

"During the training, it was obvious that in terms of strength and speed, there was a big gap between myself and the senior squad, but Rowan came up to me again to encourage me. He is such a leader, as well as an iconic Hong Kong rugby player."

Hugo still needs some time to consider whether he will follow the same path and commit to a full-time rugby career. "I'll be taking the DSE exam soon. My future depends on what my results are like and whether I get some good university offers. From there, I'll decide whether to study or whether to start a professional rugby career," he says.

The popular Cathay Pacific/HSBC Hong Kong Sevens takes place next month. It marks the 40th anniversary of the annual showpiece, where 28 teams will battle it out for glory from March 27-29. Hong Kong has been drawn in Pool E along with Uruguay, Brazil and Mexico.

Hugo is sure Hong Kong will do well.

"The strongest opponents will be Uruguay, Spain and Russia but I think the Hong Kong team has a good chance of winning a qualifying spot," he says.

Score tries, stay calm and keep up