

How to make a dream a reality

Vien Tsang has a dream to start the very first Hong Kong Womens National Floorball Team. Yet making that dream a reality is proving a lot harder than one may think. With constant struggles of finding venues, players, and coaches it is easy for Vien to lose hope. But fellow floorball players from around the world have helped and supported Vien's dream, and kept her moving forward.

Vien first started playing floorball just two years ago. Originally she played field hockey and through her hockey friends she was introduced to floorball. She instantly fell in love with the fast pace and rhythm of the sport. Growing up Vien wanted to invest more time into sports than she was able to. Now that she is grown up, she wants to make up for this by not only investing most of her time in building floorball in Hong Kong but also working as a sports journalist and for the Floorball Federation of Hong Kong (<https://www.floorball.com.hk/>). Since being introduced to the sport she has had plenty of opportunities to travel. Whilst travelling Vien tries to join in as many trainings in different floorball clubs around the world. This not only helped her improve her skills, it also gave her the support and proof that she could successfully start her own floorball team here in Hong Kong.





But how do you actually build interest and skill in a new sport?

"Im still trying to figure out the most successful way to promote the sport"

The biggest issue is knowing where to start. Do you start with marketing and promotion? Because marketing leads to interest, and interest leads to more players. Once there's enough players it's easier to get venues. But venues are also very hard to come by in Hong Kong because of what little space is available. This can make them very expensive which can be a big turn off for players that want to play recreationally. Sometimes it can seem like a never ending battle. But Vien thinks she may have found the solution, which is investing in the players.

"One thing that is quite obvious but didn't expect. It is a team sport. I am super passionate and freelance and I can be flexible. But because it's a team sport, you need to gather people. "

What Vien meant by this and went on to explain, is that by investing in the people and the players, you invest in the sport. The best way she felt to do this was for her and her teammates to gain as much experience as possible. She signed them up for a tournament in Guangzhou, which was a complete fiasco. They were by far the newest team, and it was a mixed tournament yet they had the most amount of female players. They later went to Singapore, where floorball is more developed. There not only were they able to train with other floorball players in Asia, it was the first time many of them had been coached by a proper coach. So the skills and lessons that they learnt were a huge stepping stone for both Vien and her push to have floorball recognized as a serious sport in Hong Kong.



"After all the most important thing is to keep your head down and improve your skills."

Although Vien's dream may be to start the very first Womens National Floorball team, she realises that she still has far to go before that becomes a reality. This was made evident when she talked to some of her friends in various Hong Kong sports federations. And they made a good point in saying that just because you have the players doesn't mean you should go out and represent Hong Kong. If you go out and you're not ready then you may not live up to the reputation that Hong Kong has created in international sports. Therefore it's better to focus on training hard, making the sport sustainable then going to international tournaments to represent Hong Kong.

One way to help make the sport sustainable is through getting sponsorship and different organizations to back you. This relieves some of the burden of trying to finance everything from the players. Although Vien has not yet secured any long time sponsors, she has been able to create opportunities to promote the sport, and get products from small companies. Vien has secured a booth at Sport SOHO's annual SportsExpo on the 16-18 of August.

(<https://expo.sportsoho.com/en/sportsexpo>)

Learning from others

With the opportunity to travel, Vien has been able to learn from other clubs around the world on how they built up floorball in their own country. One club in Shanghai pushed floorball in universities and generated interest from university students. Now they have a good base of university graduates who have continued to play, and the floorball federation has a good relationship with the universities so they are able to use their facilities. Vien saw this and realised she needed to do the same here, and build relationships with organizations to help promote her club, and the sport.

You can also look at tag rugby here in Hong Kong as an example, they were able to gather more players because they marketed themselves as a fun way to

continue playing rugby but in a different more inviting environment¹. Maybe floorball can market themselves the same way here in Hong Kong seeing as it is slightly similar to Field Hockey.

In the context of Hong Kong

"In some ways when you try and start any sport the barriers are the same regardless of what country you are in."

It was refreshing for Vien to see that these clubs around the world also had problems in the initial phases. But some issues are unique to Hong Kong, like the lack of practice space for instance. Whilst Shanghai has an abundance of space and recreational sports may not be as high of a priority. Venues are therefore a lot easier to book than in Hong Kong, where space is very limited and costs are high.

One thing that was very interesting from Viens point of view is that she believes Hong Kong's sport culture is not yet established. Many Hong Kong athletes are trying to bring back medals from international tournaments. But even when they do, their name might be known for a week or two but afterwards the general public forgets them. This can be both good and bad. Bad in the sense that you don't get the recognition that you deserve. Good in the sense that the barriers of entry are quite low, and it is still possible to build a national team from the ground up. Therefore, although Vien and floorball may have a long way to go there is still hope.

However Vien has been able to hit some milestones on this journey. Setting up a sports team (Hong Kong Kiddos Floorball Team) in March and winning their first ever local championship this year was a huge success in her books. And getting the green light from the federation to build a Hong Kong Womens Floorball team has laid the groundwork to make her dream a reality.

¹ <https://www.scmp.com/sport/hong-kong/article/2160166/rugby-where-you-dont-get-smacked-how-mixed-gender-sport-tag-bringing>



So what makes Hong Kong different to other countries when it comes to floorball?

Vien summarized this quite perfectly when she said "*Hong Kong is not a big city or place, but everything is possible because it's an international city.*" There will always be someone who is interested and passionate, people come in with different experiences that can help propel your sport to be the next great sport of Hong Kong. Hong Kong is constantly changing and adapting which means new opportunities present themselves on the daily. Vien would never have thought that 2 years ago she would be able to invest so much energy into the sport and also gain so much support for it from third parties. But today she is able to make her dream a reality and even though it may be a long journey, she knows that it is possible.

