



# **Season Review 2016/17**

## **2016/17 賽季回顧**

**Presented by the Hong Kong Football Podcast**

**由 Hong Kong Football Podcast 製作**

# Contents

- 4 Early shouts**
- 6 Premier League month by month**
- 11 Chan Yuen-ting and women in football**
- 16 Season awards**
- 21 A disappointing season for the national team**
- 26 Local teams took on Asia .... Asia won**

## What is the Hong Kong Football Podcast?

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 first full season, which included interviews with players like Eastern's Josh Mitchell and Southern's Paul Olivier Ngue. You can listen on Soundcloud, iTunes or Stitcher. You can subscribe by following the codes on the back of this magazine, or google "Hong Kong Football Podcast".

Cover photo: Chris Lau

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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. [www.facebook.com/GrenzenlosGroundhopping](https://www.facebook.com/GrenzenlosGroundhopping)

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# Hello

**GET IN TOUCH**

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Summer is a good time for two things: One, to do stuff other than watching football; and two, for taking stock of the season, enjoying the great moments it gave us, and pondering the bigger questions it raised. A lot of those questions have to do with what (if any) progress Hong Kong football has made in the last 12 months.

And we have a few articles that might make you think about those questions. But away from all that serious stuff, there are a load of reasons to be happy about the past 12 months in Hong Kong football. These include an exciting last-day finale, higher total attendances than before and great performances from new foreign stars like Manuel Bleda and Nikola Komazec. But there were also great showings from young local players like Wong Wai, Tan Chun-lok and Wong Tsz-ho, and a bunch of young local coaches in the top half of the Premier League. There were a load of top-class goals too, and big nights in Asian competition.

And that time Bojan Malisic kicked a ball into the traffic on Boundary Street.

Read on. And we hope your team does better next year.

夏天適合做的有兩件事：第一，做一些除了看足球以外的事情；第二，為剛完結的一季作出分析，享受球季為我們帶來的精彩時光及想一想球季中產生的問題，很多問題都與香港足球在過去十二個月來的進展程度（如有）相關。

我們有數篇文章可能會令你思考上述的問題，但除了這堆較嚴肅的問題，在過去十二個月當中的確有很多能為香港足球感到高興的原因，包括聯賽煞科日的爭霸賽、總入場人數上升及新外援如洛迪古斯和高美斯等的出色表現。本土年輕球員如黃威、陳俊樂和黃梓浩等，加上在聯賽榜上游的一眾年輕本地教練的表現都十分傑出。今季還有不少世界級入球和多個令人難忘的亞洲賽之夜。

還有保贊將球踢到去界限街的馬路上。

繼續讀下去吧，我們希望你支持的球隊在來季會做得更好。

From,

**The Hong Kong Football Podcast**



# Early shouts

Observations  
from the  
season just  
finished

## Festus leads CSL charge

While the local Premier League remains closest to our hearts, we can't overlook the success of a Hongkonger across the border. Festus Baise (pictured, top), who just turned 37, played a major role in Guizhou Zhicheng's unlikely promotion to the Chinese Super League last year. Other Hong Kong internationals, like Jack Sealy and Jean-Jacques Kilama, got mainland moves last year, but none of them stepped up as easily as the Nigerian-born centre-back. Festus now captains the Guizhou team in the CSL, making him Hong Kong's most successful player at club level right now. Chinese rules on foreign-registered players mean he might have to leave Guizhou soon, which would interest a few local teams.

## Local heroes make a mark

Away from the top-two tussle, it was good to see district teams making up three of the top six this season. After a slow start, Southern went 12 matches unbeaten to consolidate last season's progress. They were the only team to beat Kitchee in the league. Yuen Long (pictured, bottom) faded a little after an explosive start, but under new coach Tsang Chiu-tat they went from relegation candidates to play-offs. And the samba boys of Tai Po shone at times, with stars like Lucas da Silva (pictured, centre). They missed out on the play-offs on the last day, but can be pleased with sixth place after promotion, to go with the Sapling Cup. These are teams with strong community links, which represent their districts well.

## Land of the rising Sun Hei

When the Hong Kong Premier League started up back in 2014, Sun Hei decided to continue in the semi-professional First Division. But after three years the team looks ready for a comeback. Established in 1986, Sun Hei have a respectable history, with three league titles and two Senior Shield trophies to their name. Their success in Hong Kong's second tier this season comes down largely to one man: 24-year-old Yuen Chun-sing, who scored a ridiculous 43 goals, nearly half of the team's entire goal tally. Formerly a youth player in the Hong Kong national team, he only returned to semi-professional football in 2015, but has now earned a move to Tai Po for the 2017/18 Premier League.



# Month by 每月睇 month

How the the 2016/17 Premier League season panned out

**August** After briefly looking like they might go out of business altogether, champions Eastern made it into the 2016/17 season. Kitchee brought in former Bundesliga midfielder Lam Zhi-gin. BC Glory Sky and R&F joined the league, with Tai Po and Hong Kong Football Club promoted. HKFC started with a worrying 6-2 loss at Yuen Long, while Nikola Komazec set down a marker for the season with a debut goal for South China against BCGS.

**八月** 季前經歷散班危機後，應屆聯賽冠軍東方覓得新贊助商以「東方龍獅」繼續參戰港超，並簽入西班牙籍前鋒洛迪古斯。傑志則成功收購前德甲中場林志堅為球隊增強實力。新一季有標準灝天和R&F富力空降港超，同時亦有大埔和港會升班。港會在首戰以6:2慘敗元朗，而新加盟南華的外援高美斯在處子戰為球隊射入奠勝一球擊敗標準灝天。



**September** saw BCGS grab early points with a 2-0 win over R&F. But R&F sprang a shock the next week with a 2-1 comeback win away at Pegasus.

**九月** 標準灝天以2:0 擊敗富力全取三分。不過富力隨即在作客飛馬一仗中反擊，以2: 1反勝。

R&F stunned Pegasus in September at the Hong Kong Stadium. **Photo: HKFA**



## October

Two Michael Hampshire goals in the last 10 minutes earned a win for HKFC away at BCGS. Five current or former Pegasus players were arrested over alleged match-fixing involving reserve division games the previous season. Southern got their stuttering season back on track with a 7-0 win against HKFC. Both Eastern and Kitchee dropped their first points of the season in thrilling draws with South China. But Caroliners coach Ricardo Rambo was sacked after a humiliating 4-2 home defeat to Rangers.

## 十月

米高堪士在最後十分鐘梅開二度為港會作客標準灝天取得勝利。五名現役或前飛馬球員因涉嫌上季預備組賽事中打假波被廉署拘捕。開季以來未嘗一勝的南區終於以7:0擊敗港會。東方和傑志均被南華戲劇性逼和而在今季首次失分。「少林寺」當時的看守教練列卡度帶領球隊意外以2:4不敵理文流浪後隨即被降職為助教。

## November

Manuel Bleda overtook Komazec at the top of the scoring charts, helped by four goals in Eastern's 6-2 win over BCGS as the champions won all three matches for the month, scoring 12 goals. A 90th-minute winner from Fung Hing-wa helped nine-man Tai Po beat 10-man Rangers 1-0. A 4-0 demolition of BCGS started Yuen Long on a run of five wins in six, which was fuelled by goals from Stefan Pereira and Aleksandar Radelovic. Kitchee dropped two big points in a 0-0 draw with BCGS.

## 十一月

洛迪古斯在射手榜取代高美斯成為神射手，並在東方以6:2擊敗標準灝天一戰中取得四個入球。東方在本月三戰全勝，一共射入十二球。只有九人應戰的大埔憑著馮慶煒在第九十分鐘一箭定江山以1:0贏十人應戰的流浪。元朗以4:0擊潰標準灝天展開他們在聯賽中六戰五勝的佳績，狀態大勇的雲迪奴域和史堤芬彭利拿為元朗取得多個入球。傑志被標準灝天逼和痛失重要的兩分。



This match, between South China and HKFC on November 26 was abandoned because of the weather. **Photo: HKFA**

## December

At the top, Kitchee and Eastern played out a stale 0-0 draw, in a game neither team wanted to win. At the bottom, R&F grabbed an advantage by beating HKFC 1-0 at home. A late Leong Ka-hang winner against South China gave Pegasus their first win in five, and gave South China their first loss in five.

## 十二月

榜首大戰傑志對東方以0:0悶和，兩隊都未有表現出爭勝決心。而在榜尾，富力主場以1:0擊敗港會在聯賽榜上取得優勢。飛馬靠著梁嘉恆的入球絕殺南華，終於取得近五戰首場勝仗，同時也是南華近五戰的首場敗仗。



## January

This month saw two major departures for South China, with Chan Siu-ki joining Pegasus and Andy Russell joining Malaysia's Palau Pinang. Kitchee won the first silverware of the season, beating Eastern 2-1 in an excellent Senior Shield final. But a week later they lost their first game of the season to Southern, 1-0, losing ground on Eastern. South China's new signing Marko Perovic got one assist and scored two on his debut against BCGS, including a great free kick. Kitchee brought in experienced South Korean defender Kim Dong-jin, and Tai Po brought in Hong Kong international Itaparica, from Xinjiang Tianshan.

## 一月

本月先後有兩名南華的重心球員離隊：陳肇麒加盟飛馬及羅素轉投馬來西亞球隊檳城。傑志在今季贏得首項錦標，在銀牌決賽以2:1挫東方成為冠軍。不過傑志隨即在一週後被南區以1:0打破聯賽不敗身，令東方有機可乘升上榜首。南華的新簽外援麥高派路域首仗上陣便為球隊射入紗絕罰球，最後一傳兩射協助南華大勝標準灝天。傑志簽入大賽經驗豐富的南韓球員金東進。大埔簽下從中甲球隊新疆天山雪豹回流的港腳伊達。

Pegasus' Leong Ka-hang celebrates his winning goal against South China.  
Photo: Hong Kong Pegasus



## February

Rangers moved to Sham Shui Po Sports Ground, but lost their first game there to South China. At the bottom, R&F ensured a double over HKFC by hitting four in the first 70 minutes, but three late goals from HKFC nearly earned them a comeback. Southern's 6-0 battering of BCGS made it five wins in a row, during a run of 12 league games unbeaten. This set up a third-versus-fourth "Battle of the Buses" against Yuen Long, which ended in a forgettable 0-0. R&F's star Chuck Yiu-kwok bagged four goals in four matches for the month, but – after 9 goals in his first 8 league games – Nikola Komazec entered March without a goal in six.

## 二月

理文流浪回到深水埗運動場主場出戰可惜首戰便以0：1不敵南華。在榜尾，R&F 富力對港會一仗首七十分鐘攻入四球，港會雖然在賽事尾段追回三球，但仍然逃不過兩循環都要敗給富力的命運。南區以6：0大勝標準灝天取得五連勝，並延續十二場不敗的佳績。同時令南區升上聯賽第三名，在「巴士打吡」中迎戰聯賽第四名的元朗，以0：0悶和賽事。R&F 富力球員卓耀國在二月份的四場賽事合共攻入四球，而南華的高美斯雖然在頭九場賽事射入十球，但至二月底已累積六場入球荒。

## March

HKFC grabbed a massive result, winning 2-1 at Tai Po, but Komazec ended the club's mini-revival – and his own lean spell – in their next game, with a long-range free kick in a 4-0 win for South China. Sandro got five goals in two games as free-scoring Kitchee beat Yuen Long 4-1 and Rangers 5-1. Kitchee kept pace with Eastern, who beat South China 4-3 in a thriller at the Mong Kok Stadium, Bai He scoring the winner in extra time.



## 三月

港會爆冷以2：1擊敗大埔；惜之後對南華一戰，高美斯不但打破港會翻身希望，同時亦打破自己的入球荒，在主場射入遠距離罰球，最終大勝港會四球。隨著辛祖在兩仗射入五球，傑志以4：1輕取元朗及以5：1大勝理文流浪，在聯賽榜上緊追東方。東方則在旺角大球場憑著白鶴補時絕殺以4：3險勝南華。

Tai Po beat Yuen Long to get back into play-off contention.  
Photo: HKFA



## April

Jordi – on loan from Kitchee – scored a hat-trick for Rangers in a 3-3 draw with Eastern. That result put Kitchee within four points of Eastern with a game in hand. Tai Po beat Yuen Long and South China back to back to pull themselves back into the play-off race. HKFC confirmed their place at the bottom of the table for the season with a 10-0 loss to Kitchee, who then beat Pegasus and South China to set up a last-game title decider with Eastern. Tai Po won the Sapling Cup, beating Pegasus 2-1 after extra time in the final.

## 四月

現時效力流浪的傑志借將佐迪在主場出戰東方時上演帽子戲法，迫和對方為球隊搶得一分。東方失分令踢少一場既傑志追近至只有四分差距。大埔接連擊敗元朗和南華，重燃爭取季後附加賽資格希望。港會被傑志大炒十球後，篤定將以榜尾完成今季賽事。而傑志擊敗飛馬和南華後，將會在煞科戰對東方爭奪今季聯賽冠軍寶座。在菁英盃賽決中，大埔在加時階段以 2: 1 反勝飛馬成為冠軍。

## May

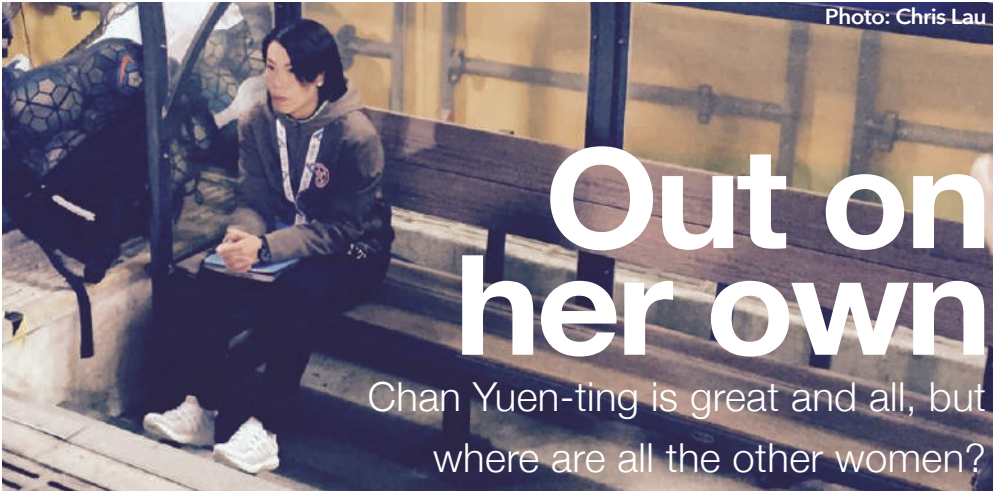
On the season's last day, Kitchee dominated Eastern, winning 4-1 with a hat-trick from Sandro, to win the league by two points. South China beat Yuen Long with a last-minute penalty to secure fourth place. A week later, Kitchee beat South China 2-1 in the FA Cup final to complete the treble.

## 五月

在賽季的最後一天，憑著辛祖連中三元，傑志以 4: 1 大勝東方，成日以兩分之差後上奪得聯賽冠軍。南華在最後一刻射入十二碼絕殺元朗，成功守得第四位。一星期後，傑志在足總盃以 2: 1 擊敗南華奪標，成為本季三冠王。



Kitchee club captain Lo Kwan-yeo lifts the Premier League trophy. Photo: Chris Lau



# Out on her own

Chan Yuen-ting is great and all, but where are all the other women?

By Tobias Zuser

This season Chan Yuen-ting made history, again. She became the first woman to lead a men's team into the AFC Champions League, a season after becoming the first woman to lead a men's team to a top-tier league title. Her story looks like a big step for female managers in male-dominated sports. But while she is hailed as an idol, what is the context of her achievement? Has football in Hong Kong been giving women more opportunities than in the rest of the world? Or was it all just luck?

Within hours of Eastern winning the Premier League a year ago, Chan's story was global news. Later, she was given a Guinness World Record, and in December she was named AFC Women's Coach of the Year. It had taken more than 150 years of football history to reach that point.

Ever since, "Beef Ball" has become a popular figure in Hong Kong and abroad. She became a pundit on Le-

絲絲

上季成為全球首位女教練帶領男子球隊贏得頂級足球聯賽冠軍後，陳婉婷今季再一次創造歷史，成為首位率領男子隊參戰亞冠盃的女教練。她的故事看似為女教練在男士主導的體育項目中踏出一大步，但當她被視為偶像的同時，成功的背後又有什麼故事呢？香港球壇是否真的比世界其他地方為女性提供更多參與機會？還是一切都只是巧合？

陳婉婷在一年前為東方贏得聯賽冠軍後，在數小時內隨即成為國際新聞。其後，她被列入健力仕世界紀錄。在十二月，陳當選成為亞洲足協年度最佳女教練，是經歷超過 150 年的足球歷史後才有首位女性能達到這項成就。

自此，「牛丸」在香港和海外都成為一位十分受歡迎的人物。她除了加入樂視擔任球評，還以勵志演講者身份出席多間公司的活動。



Sports and has attended corporate events as a motivational speaker.

But getting there was anything but planned. Chan's interest in football emerged late and only flourished when she was at university. She joined the women's team of a regional football club at 19, and played for the women's national team.

Her family was sceptical. The women's league is amateur; players and staff have regular full-time jobs. Chan took out a loan to pay for postgraduate studies in sport medicine and health science, while also working as a football data analyst. In the following years, she was offered the role of assistant coach for various youth teams and top-tier clubs. Then, in December 2015, head coach Yeung Ching-kwong suddenly left Eastern, where Chan was an assistant, leaving her next in line. Chan's career would not have taken off without the sanc-

但這一切都並不是在計劃之中。陳婉婷對足球的興趣來得比較晚，要到她升讀大學後才變得更加狂熱。她在十九歲時加入了一隊女子區隊，也曾為香港女子代表隊效力。

陳一開始曾遭到家人的反對。女子聯賽是一個業餘聯賽，球員和職員都各有正職。她申請貸款報讀運動醫學及健康科學理學碩士，同時從事數據分析員。其後，陳在多間青年隊及頂級球隊擔任助教。到 2015 年十二月，東方主教練楊光正突然宣佈離隊，當時身為助教的陳婉婷隨即接任。她的職業生涯若沒有得到一個男人的批准，便可能不會起飛。這個男人就是東方總監梁守志，而梁提起當時的決定是「毫無疑問的」。

陳婉婷現時一直被表揚為先鋒人物，很容易令人將她的成功以性別平等的方向去理解。東方不似是因為陳的性別而任命她當主教練。儘管陳婉婷未有當職業球員的經驗，但她在不同球隊的幕後工作時，證明了她在技術方面的專業知識。陳在二十七歲便能掌握本地其中一隊勁旅的命運，是球壇上一個前所未有的突破。

任命一位女教練去執掌男子隊的確是十分罕見，但是，在某程度上，任命女教練去執掌女子隊亦同樣罕見。最近有數據指出，女子足球中的女教練數目持續下降，現時在歐美國家，大多領隊角色都由男人擔任，同時，亞洲亦有類似趨勢。

在多個訪問之中，牛丸曾經坦



Chan with the Eastern chairman Peter Leung, after winning the league in 2016. Photo: Chris Lau

tion of a man – club director Peter Leung – who has retrospectively called his decision a “no-brainer”.

Now that she has been celebrated as a pioneer, it's tempting to understand Chan's success as a move towards gender equality. It doesn't seem she was hired because of her gender. Despite lacking a substantial career as a professional footballer, she had proved her technical expertise, while earning her stripes in positions that had mainly kept her behind the scenes. Finding the fate of one of the best local teams in her hands, aged only 27, was an unprecedented breakthrough.

Hiring a woman to coach a men's team is extraordinary, but so – to a lesser extent – is hiring a woman to coach a women's team. Recent figures suggest the share of female coaches in women's football has steadily declined, with a majority of managerial roles in Europe and the United States taken by men. A quick look at the coaching benches in Asia suggests a similar tendency.

In interviews, Chan has been surprisingly outspoken about the pressure she faced during her first weeks in the job, and the fear she would not live up to expectations. But her team delivered results, and with them came the respect of the football community.

Nevertheless, it's important not to ascribe too much significance to this. Although research shows female coaches often perform “significantly better” than their male counterparts, Chan was not

言談到接任後的首數星期中所承受的壓力及對怕不能達到眾人期望所產生的恐懼。後來她的球隊成功造出成績，使她從中得到球壇中人的贊賞和認同。然而，我們絕不能把她的成就賦予太多意義。即使有研究指出女教練的執教能力通常都比男教練「明顯較好」，但是，陳當時並不是被任命去改革球隊，她只是一位從球隊內部招來的典型臨時代教，並

## **Her breakthrough has been foiled by the continuous emphasis on her gender**

需要有超水平的表現才會被考慮升為全職教練。她只是正正達到這要求。

陳婉婷為全球所有擁有相同夢想的女性立下榜樣，但我們同時應要反思為何她

的成就當中，令人驚訝的部分經常只限制在她如何跨過性別屏障和她曾經迷戀的大衛碧咸在她的事途上扮演的角色。

媒體不斷強調陳婉婷的性別，在某程度上阻礙了她的突破。無論是男教練或是女教練，贏得港超聯冠軍本來就是一項成就，比起曾助英格蘭贏得世界盃冠軍的名將卜比摩亞帶領東方時所創的成就更高。但是，當她在男子項目的頒獎禮中贏得年度最佳女教練時，證明陳仍然被以不一樣的角度去被評價。

在接受英國衛報的訪問時，她表示意識到自己為有同樣夢想的年輕女性樹立了榜樣。被問到成功



Eastern faced Suwon Samsung Bluewings in the AFC Champions League. Photo: JRP Borthwick

appointed as a change agent. She was the typical temporary caretaker, recruited internally and needing to perform extraordinarily well to be considered for the job full-time. She just did that.

Chan has set a massive example for other women with similar dreams. But it's important to reflect on why her success has been constantly reduced to astonishment at how she managed to cross the gender barrier and what role her "crush" David Beckham played in it.

Her breakthrough has been foiled to an extent by the continuous emphasis on her gender. Winning the Premier League is a standalone achievement, for a man or a woman. It's more than England's World Cup-winning captain Bobby Moore won when he managed Eastern.

But winning Women's Coach of

the Year whilst in the men's game shows how Chan is still evaluated differently.

In an interview with the *Guardian*, Chan has said she's aware of having become a role model for young women in similar situations. Asked about the reasons for her success, she hinted at cultural characteristics of the region, suggesting there's hardly any discrimination between men and women in Hong Kong.

And despite Hong Kong being about to get its first ever female chief executive, this opinion is at odds with realities in the city. According to a 2015 survey, around 30 per cent of men and 50 per cent of women show progressive attitudes towards gender equality, which puts Hong Kong on a similar level with China, Singapore, and Thailand. This is the same city whose



equal opportunities commissioner suggested, on International Women's Day, that housework and looking after elderly relatives are parts of women's careers.

Over the years, women's football in Hong Kong has improved slightly, but the allocation of resources is still far from satisfactory. Local players can only participate in the amateur women's league, with the best talents having to rest their hopes on a career overseas.

To make matters worse, league games are usually played on the least popular football grounds, with questionable pitch conditions, such as the rarely used Causeway Bay Sports Ground.

It's important then, to acknowledge the incidental nature of Chan's appointment, which is not an intended outcome of the current structures. Hong Kong – 150th in international football rankings – is one of the least likely places to produce the first female football coach to win a top-flight men's championship. And it's arguably this very unlikeliness that made it possible. For most women, coaching a men's team is still off-limits, barring them from the opportunity to pursue a professional career as a football manager. Hopefully, the recognition of Chan's huge success will eventually go beyond celebrating the "miracle", and address more important questions about gender equity in football. Why did this take so long? And, where are the other women? ●

的原因時，她指出在香港幾乎沒有性別歧視，同時暗指這是本土文化特色。

儘管香港即將會有史上首位女行政長官上任，但這個結果與香港的現實是不一致的。根據 2015 年的調查，約三成男性及五成女性受訪者對性別平等持開放態度，調查結果與中國、新加坡和泰國相近。平等機會委員會主席更曾在國際婦女節當日發表女性較適合做家務及照顧老人家的言論。

過去多年，女子足球在香港逐漸有起色，但在資源分配方面仍然絕不理想。本地球員只能出戰業餘女子聯賽，有天賦的球員只能祈求到外地發展的機會。更差的是，比賽通常都要在最沒有吸引力而且會令人質疑草地質素的足球場上舉行，例如是幾乎空置的銅鑼灣運動場。

大家必須承認陳婉婷的任命只是偶然事件，而不是現有社會架構下所預期得出來的結果。現時在國際足球排名 150 位的香港，是最沒有可能培訓出一位女帥去贏得頂級男子聯賽冠軍的其中一個地方，而這個不可能也許就是最後成功的原因。對大部分女性來說，執教男子隊仍然是不可能的任務，阻擋了她們去追尋成為職業足球領隊的機會。希望日後大家對陳婉婷在球壇成就上的認同最終會除了讚揚她的「奇蹟」外，還會去探討足球上性別平等的重要問題。為什麼要經過這麼長時間才達到這一步呢？同時，其他女性又在哪裡？●

# Season awards

The prizes  
that everyone  
really wants  
to win

## Goal of the season

**Lai Lok-yin**

v BC Glory Sky, 11/09/2016

There was a hatful of great goals this season, notably Marko Perovic's debut free kick against BC Glory Sky, Lee Hong-lim's curler against Rangers and Jared Lum's run and finish against Southern, at the end of a lovely Kitchee move. But the award had to go to young Pegasus midfielder Lai Lok-yin for this sweetly struck rocket of a volley, direct off a corner. BCGS even had a man on the line, but he had no chance. Timing; concentration; technique. What a strike.

See a gif of the goal  
by scanning this code



Photo: Hong Kong Pegasus

## Coach of the season

**Tsang Chiu-tat**

Yuen Long

Five of the top six teams this year followed the orders of a local coach. While Eastern's Chan Yuen-ting made history in the ACL, and Alex Chu almost eliminated a K-League club with Kitchee, there was another remarkable star in the making. The award goes to 28-year-old Tsang Chiu-tat, who – in his first season in charge – made sure Yuen Long had nothing to do with relegation this year, and became a force to be reckoned with. Honourable mentions go to Southern's Ricky Cheng and Tai Po's Lee Chi-kin, who continue to raise the bar for tactical cleverness.



Photo: KMB Yuen Long FC

## Young player of the season

**Tan Chun-lok**  
Tai Po

Although he picked up a very sneaky booking in the Sapling Cup semi-final, Tai Po's No 16 ticked all the boxes in our award checklist. Just 21 years of age, Tan Chun-lok has become the backbone of his team and also captained it, in the absence of Wong Wai. After spending his formative years in the UK, Tan is already one of the strongest defensive midfielders in the league and is unsurprisingly breaking into the national team. Eastern defender Wong Tsz-ho, or "The Prince", as he is affectionately known, will be a contender for next season's youth crown.



Photo: Santiago.K

## Player of the season

**Nikola Komazec**  
South China

There were players who scored more goals, like Sandro and Manuel Bleda, but none had an impact on the league like the big Serbian. Other contenders for the prize would be Kitchee's star attacker Fernando, or their metronomic midfielder Huang Yang. Honourable mentions to Jordi, rejuvenated at Rangers, and to both Everton Camargo and Chuck Yiu-kwok, who led the line so well to keep BC Glory Sky and R&F off the bottom.

**Turn over for our full verdict on Komazec's impact**

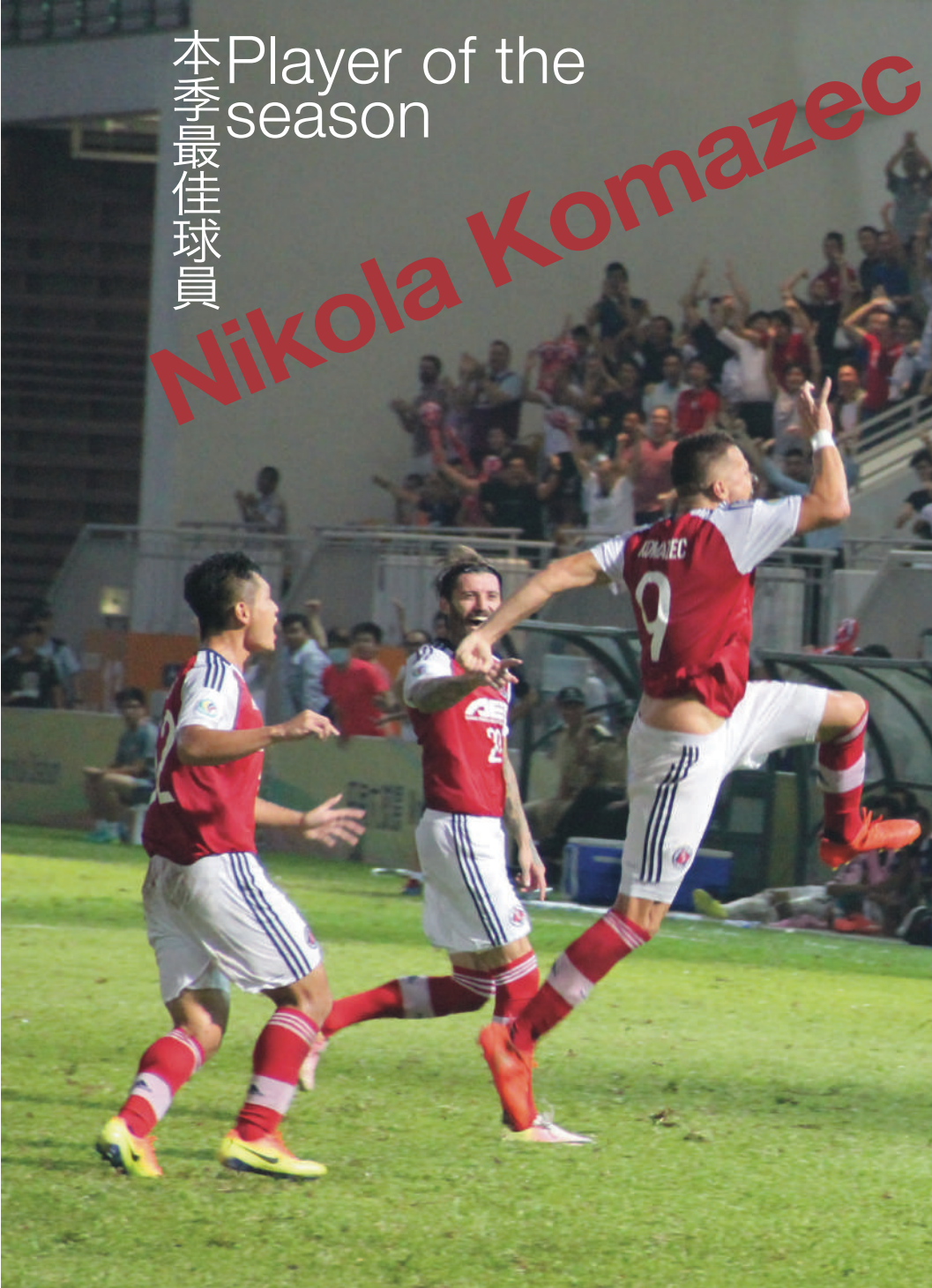



Photo: Chris Lau



本季最佳球員  
Player of the season

Nikola Komazec





Starting with his debut goal against BC Glory Sky, through the 12 goals he scored in his first 13 matches for South China, including goals against Johor in the AFC Cup, and into a quieter second half of the season, Nikola Komazec has made a huge impact. He finished joint third-highest goalscorer, with 13 goals. The two men ahead of him in the scoring charts – Kitchee's Sandro and Eastern's Manuel Bleda – had great seasons, but play in much stronger teams. The big Serbian got four goals against the top three, all of them crucial. But it's not just about the goals. Whenever the ball is near, his aim is to unleash that left boot with a shot on goal as soon as possible. His finishing and positioning, plus the emotion and camaraderie he puts into his game (we once saw him kiss Mahama Awal on the face just for winning a throw-in) make him a true character, and just the kind of player we all want to watch.

**高**美斯在處子戰對標準灝天便射入第一球，在首十三場為南華披甲的賽事中總共射入十二球，當中包括在亞協盃對柔佛的入球，再到比較平淡的下半季，他一直都為南華帶來了很大的影響。他在今季與另一位球員以十三球成為聯賽神射手榜上的第三位。雖然比他排名更前的傑志球員辛祖和東方的洛迪古斯都在今季表現得十分出色，但他們的球隊實力原本便比其他球隊強。這位高大的塞爾維亞球員在頭三名球隊的身上總共取得四個重要入球。不過，數字不只是他被選為最佳球員的原因。當每次有埋門機會時，高美斯只有一個目的，就是要盡快提起他的左腳射中目標。他的射門技術和位置感，以及他在比賽中投入的激情及和隊友之間的情誼（我們曾經見過高美斯在艾華贏得界外球後走去親吻他的臉頰）顯出了他的真實個性，而這正是大家最想見到的球員。

Photo: JRP Borthwick



# One country, too many systems

How a year of tactical  
inconsistency limited  
Hong Kong's progress

By Tobias Zuser and James Legge

The 2015-16 season was a historic one for local football. After Hong Kong held China to two unexpected draws, the city's most popular spectator sport had new momentum. Sure, the team finished behind Qatar and China in the group and had to write off a trip to the World Cup, but hopes of getting to the 2019 Asian Cup were high.

But amid the newfound euphoria, few stopped to reflect on whether the national team had really improved over recent years, what its long-term strategy was, and

2015/16 年的球季是本地足球歷史性的一季。在香港意外地兩戰逼和中國後，本地最吸引觀眾入場的體育項目成功創出新契機。當然，港隊最後在世界盃外圍賽小組排名比卡塔爾和中國低而未能出戰世界盃，但對於出戰 2019 年亞洲盃的希望仍然十分之高。

不過，在這股新興熱潮當中，有些人停止反省到底港隊的實力是否真的在進步；也未有檢討港隊的長遠策略以及主教練金判坤是否帶領港隊更進一步的合適人物。讓我們在港隊剛過去一季賽事中尋找答案。（劇透警告：內容可能會引起不安）



Photo: HKFA

whether Kim Pan-gon was the right coach to lead it forward. Let's take a look at the team's games since September 2016 to find some answers (SPOILER ALERT: they might be a bit unsettling.)

On 1 September, Hong Kong played Cambodia at the Mong Kok Stadium. The 4-2 win, with star man Itaparica providing a goal and an assist, was satisfactory, but glossed over some sad truths. The defence, which had been the team's biggest strength during the qualifiers, started showing serious flaws. With Festus Baise missing, the back line looked uncomfortable, disorganised and vulnerable, and Kim's six substitutions, apparently without any plan in mind, left the team looking incoherent. At times the team didn't seem to know what the match plan was, and players such as Jean-Jacques Kilama and Jack Sealy showed a lack of match practice at their respective clubs in China. Cambodia fielded only a youth team, and yet Hong Kong couldn't dominate. But at least luck was on their side, with Sandro converting a penalty and veteran Lo Kwan-yeo scoring by header (really, a header!).

After the cancellation of the friendly with Turkmenistan, Hong Kong played next against Cambodia away, winning 2-0. It was another flattering scoreline. Sandro's sixth-minute goal laid the foundation for the win, but the question remained: what kind of football was Hong Kong meant to play?



Hong Kong coach Kim Pan-gon.

Photo: Ryan Kam

九月一日，香港在旺角大球場迎戰柬埔寨。這場 4: 2 的勝仗尚可接受，伊達不俗的表現為港隊一傳一射建功，但他矚目的表現蓋過了一些可悲的事實。港隊的防守能力在世界盃外圍賽時是整隊陣容中最強的一環，但後防卻在這場賽事中開始出現一些嚴重的失誤。由於法圖斯未能上陣，球隊的後防線看起來十分不穩、混亂和脆弱。金判坤作出的六次調動反而令球隊變得不協調，是一個很明顯沒有經過精心計算的安排。球員有時候更顯得不知所措，同時可以看得出基藍馬和積施利在中超缺乏上陣時間。即使柬埔寨當日只派出青年球員應戰，但香港仍然未能見壓倒性優勢，幸有幸運女神眷顧，最後辛祖射入十二碼和老將盧均宜的頭鎚入球（真的，用頭頂入！）為港隊錦上添花。

原定對土庫曼斯坦的友賽被取消後，香港作客柬埔寨淨勝兩球，憑著辛祖在六分鐘取得入球後便為港隊奠下勝機。賽果雖然能夠再一次討好球迷，但問題依在，到底香港想踢出什麼樣的足球？

接著是主場對新加坡的友誼賽。金判坤沿用他偏愛的輪換政策，整場賽事中，他總共派出了十七位球員上陣，有些球員甚至要在不擅長的位置上陣。這





Hong Kong struggled against Jordan. Photo: HKFA

### Why was Kim trying out new shapes and positions in the biggest game of Hong Kong's season?

Next on the schedule was a friendly at home against Singapore, and Kim continued with his favoured heavy rotations. Over the course of the game he fielded 17 players, sometimes out of position, prompting the question of whether the team would be able to seriously rehearse different match plans, that might work against stronger sides. Forwards like Alex Akande, Godfred Karikari, Sandro and Xu Deshuai, despite their collective talents, looked like they had no idea how to link up. But the two goals – from Kitchee duo Akande and Huang Yang – did give cause for optimism, both coming from high-quality link-ups.

In November, Hong Kong hosted the qualifying round of the EAFF East Asian Cup, a round-robin tournament including North Korea, Guam, and Taiwan. Only the group winners qualified for the final

令人懷疑到底這樣的輪換制度是否真的能夠排練不同陣式，而這些陣式又是否能在遇上比較強的對手時成功發揮效果？一班前鋒如艾力士、高梵、辛祖和徐德帥，即使他們擁有相當的實力，但他們在場上完全不合拍。不過，傑志雙雄艾力士和黃洋最後靠著高質素的組織而取得入球，的確會令人變得樂觀。

十一月，香港主辦東亞足球錦標賽第二圈小組賽，參賽國家包括北韓、關島和台灣，只有小組的冠軍才能夠晉身決賽圈。一如所料，賽事要去到最後一場才能分出冠軍誰屬，而這場就是香港對北韓。關島是香港的第一個對手，他們的實力在任何方面都遠比香港低。

不過，艾力士梅開二度和辛祖的入球為港隊領先3:0，及後被關島連追兩球，令港隊首戰有驚無險地全取三分。艾力士在香港對台灣一戰中個人包辦四個入球，包括一球漂亮的單刀，為香港贏得4:2，同時港隊亦踢出全季最有說服力的一仗。

香港在最後一仗迎戰北韓，被對手輕易以技術性擊倒。金判坤以三個左右閘球員組成一條三人防線，令後防表現得毫無組織。這再一次令球隊失去穩紮的根基，最後只輸一球實在是令人意外。前線方面，艾力士、高梵和陳肇麒不但被孤立，而且毫無表現。香港球迷以噓聲和恐嚇方式將一切怨氣發泄在對方球員身上，但落敗的責任仍然落在金判坤的身上，他竟然在季內最重要的賽事中試陣。

回望剛過去的世界盃外圍賽，港隊當中

round and, as expected, it came to the last match, between Hong Kong and North Korea. Before that, Hong Kong started against Guam, a team that by all measures should be way below them. But after going 3-0 up through two Akande goals and one from Sandro, they let Guam get two back to ensure a nervy end.

Akande then put on a one-man show against Taiwan in the second match, scoring four in a 4-2 win, in the side's most convincing performance of the season.

When Hong Kong eventually took on North Korea, it was soon apparent that the home side would be easily outclassed. Yet more disorganisation in defence – brought about by Kim apparently switching to three at the back with wing-backs – once again left the team on shaky foundations, at it was surprising that it only ended 1-0. The front three, of Akande, Karikari and Chan Siu-ki, was isolated and flat. Why was Kim trying out new shapes and positions in the biggest game of Hong Kong's season?

Looking back, the successful World Cup qualifier campaign was both blessing and curse.



Alex Akande scored four against Taiwan.  
Photo: Dennis Lo

所創的佳績可算是一種恩賜，也是一種詛咒。本土足球成為香港人的新驕傲，同時球迷們都被誤導以為港隊已經有能夠向強隊展示自己的實力。雖然很多人會反對這個觀點，但是香港能夠歷史性逼和中國，並非只因球員有超水準的發揮，運氣也佔很大因素，若不是旺角大球場內沒有門線技術。

球員的策略意識和體能耐力都是讓魚腩部隊能夠在強隊身上「偷雞」的關鍵因素，但過去多年，香港球員在這兩方面一直都沒有進步。我們不是要與冰島或是格魯吉亞相比，但是很多亞洲球隊已經開始著重足球的發展。

我們也不是要抹去金判坤為香港付出的功勞。當他來到香港時，球隊當時缺乏自信，但他能夠鼓勵球員，帶動他們為球隊向前邁進。然而，他的能力可能已經到了極限。加上 2017 年一開始便已不如意，香港在亞洲盃外圍賽抽得下籤，被分到死亡之組與黎巴嫩、馬來西亞和北韓同組。港隊在三月出發到中東，友賽約旦慘敗 4: 0，金判坤將年輕中堅李毅凱放到中場中位置的自創怪策未能發揮作用。

場上可靠的中場球員白鶴在金判坤於賽前告知會選用年輕球員出戰後，宣佈退出港隊惹來爭議。數天後，白鶴為自己顯出身價，在東方對南華一戰為東方射入重要的兩球。後來他還被足總評選為該月最佳球員。

很可惜，事情到香港出戰亞洲盃首仗時仍然未有改善，最後作客以 2: 0 不敵黎巴嫩。這代表香港的晉級之路一開始已經受到壓力。如果他們想再創奇蹟的話，球隊最好增強球隊穩定性，而不是只靠運氣。下一場賽事將會是在 6 月 13 日主場迎戰北韓。我們即管看看金判坤的背後還有什麼妙計吧。●

While Hongkongers were instilled with new pride in local football, many were misled into thinking the team was ready to prove itself against stronger opponents. It's an unpopular view, but Hong Kong's historic draws against China were not just based on inspiring performances by the team, but also a lot of luck – especially lucky that the Mong Kok Stadium didn't have goal-line technology.

Over the past few years, there has hardly been any development in terms of tactical awareness and physical stamina, which are the key ingredients for football minnows to frustrate the better teams out there. And we are not just talking about Iceland and Georgia, but a range of Asian countries that have started taking football development seriously.

This is not to diminish Kim's success with the team. When he arrived Hong Kong lacked confidence, and his motivational skills certainly brought the team a step forward. But he may have reached the limit

of what he can do for Hong Kong.

The year 2017 has not started well. Hong Kong began Asian Cup qualifying, finding themselves in a tough group with Lebanon, Malaysia, and North Korea. In March the team travelled to the Middle East, where they first took on Jordan in a friendly, and were battered 4-0. Kim continued the tradition of fielding players out of position, with centre-back Li Ngai-hoi struggling

in the centre of midfield.

**It would be great to rely on more sustainable things than luck**

Controversially, holding midfielder Bai He resigned from the national team,

after being informed that Kim would rather choose younger players. A few days later, Bai proved his current form on the pitch, scoring two crucial goals for Eastern against South China. The HKFA later named him the player of the month.

Unfortunately, things did not get better in Hong Kong's opening group game against Lebanon, who beat them 0-2. This means the national team is already under pressure if they would still like to qualify for the 2019 Asian Cup. But if Hong Kong intend to pull off another miracle, it would be great to rely on more sustainable things than luck.

Next up is North Korea again, at home, on June 13. Let's see what else Kim has in the locker. ●







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**CHAMPIONS**  
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**D**espite the trauma of the two games against Guangzhou Evergrande (we'll get to that bit later), Hong Kong's two biggest clubs had two matches against foreign sides that gave reason for optimism.

Kitchee's match against Hanoi FC was one of those nights that reminded us why we all love watching football.

The amazing thing was that the first goal in this frenetic 3-2 win didn't come until the 72nd minute, when Hanoi hit Kitchee with a slick sucker-punch. But what followed –

# Bridging the gap

Hong Kong teams' Asian adventures prove they are still some way off the region's best (but it's not all bad)

By James Legge

**雖**然兩次慘敗廣州恆大是一個悲痛的經歷（後段會有分析），但香港的兩大球會均有兩場對外隊的賽事中仍然可以找到保持樂觀的原因。

傑志對河內 FC 當晚便提醒了我們熱愛看足球的原因。

最令人驚訝的是，這場震撼地以 3: 2 完場的賽事，要去到第 72 分鐘才由河內來一個十分順暢的冷箭射入全場第一個入球。其後由傑志追和，到補時階段反超前，再被河內追和，最後因艾力士傷出而被迫以十人應戰，這一切都令香港大球場內的傑志球迷大軍坐立不安。

即使傑志在場上人數數字上處於不利位置，主教練朱志光仍然想盡能夠勝出的辦法。

賽事去到超過加時 120 分鐘時，傑志中場球員林嘉緯仍然能在最後一



Hanoi defenders look on as Sandro's goal bounces in.  
Photo: JRP Borthwick



Kitchee equaliser, extra time, taking the lead, getting pegged back and down to 10 men because Alex Akande went off injured – put the compact army of Kitchee fans in the Hong Kong Stadium on the edges of their seats.

Despite the numerical disadvantage, Kitchee coach Chu Chi-kwong kept going for the win. And when Lam Ka-wai, Kitchee stalwart, cramping up after more than 120 minutes of play, met Fernando's cross to nod it in for the winner, Chu got his deserved reward, and the fans in the stadium went nuts. Strangers hugged; one guy ripped his top off; one woman was crying. What a moment.

Kitchee's next game was for a place in the group stage. Away at Ulsan Hyundai, on a bitterly cold night

刻接應費蘭度的傳送成功用頭破網絕殺河內，最後還因體力透支而不禁抽筋。朱教練得到應得的回報，場內的球迷同時也瘋狂地慶祝－陌生人互相擁抱，有人激動得扯去上衣，在我身旁的女士在哭泣，這是一個多麼震撼的場面。

傑志接著要到南韓最南部作客蔚山現代，在寒冷的一夜爭取分組賽的最後一席位。這一夜，傑志差一點便能成功。

在膠著的上半場，被蔚山低估的傑志棄用了他們慣常的主攻踢法，轉用一個防守性較強的陣式，在後防佈置了五名球員，並且發揮得不錯。費蘭度和辛祖是傑志唯一的攻擊球員，而華杜斯和黃洋都能夠將球傳送到前場都有利位置。這個踢法防守性強之如，又沒有顯露出憂慮。

後來傑志因為欠運而失球，然後金奉珍入球為傑志追和，兩隊進入加時階段及互射十二碼，可惜艾力士和費蘭度射失十二碼令球隊出局。

傑志能夠與蔚山激戰至互射十二碼階段才不幸落敗，證明了他們擁有能夠挑戰亞冠的實力，對他們下季代表香港出戰分組賽來說是一個吉兆。

at the bottom of South Korea, it brought them so close to glory.

During a stale first half, Ulsan looked like they had underestimated Kitchee, who adapted their usual attacking style to a more defensive one. They played with a back five, and organised themselves well. Fernando and Sandro were the only real attacking outlets, but the likes of Krisztian Vadocz and Huang Yang managed to get the ball to them in good positions. It was defensive without being fearful.

After conceding a horribly unlucky first goal and equalising through Kim Bong-jin, Kitchee took Ulsan all the way to extra time and penalties, but Akande and Fernando missed their kicks to send the Blues out.

The fact that Kitchee got so close, losing so unluckily, was a testament to their performance in the competition, and bodes well for next season, when they will represent Hong Kong in the group stage.

Eastern's task was always going to be tougher than Kitchee's, with six matches against teams from Asia's biggest leagues. The first fixture, away at Chinese champions Evergrande, was about as tough as it ever could have been.

They also had to play without any real fans, after Guangzhou authorities barred Eastern supporters on vague security grounds. The fact that Eastern itself then paid supporters HK\$3,000 compensation for tickets that had only cost HK\$170, claimed it was the club's own fault without any explanation, and de-

而東方的任務本來已經比傑志的更困難，他們要應付來自亞洲各大頂級聯賽的球隊六次。首仗作客中超冠軍廣州恆大可以說是他們有史以來最艱難的一戰。

廣州市的相關部門以保安理由禁止東方球迷入場後，東方要在沒有真球迷支持下出戰。球隊其後向每位已付港幣170元購票的球迷各賠償3000元，聲稱事件為球會內部失職並拒絕提供任何解釋，又拒絕向亞州足協舉報恆大公然違反相關足球條例，這種種行為都出賣了東方最忠實的球迷。令球迷更加傷心的是，他們的主贊助竟派出來自佛山分部的員工扮成東方支持者到天河體育場去觀看球賽。

當晚，由陳婉婷領軍的隊伍需要一點運氣才能有勝出機會，可惜在開賽兩分鐘便有一名球員因犯手球而被驅逐離場，繼而被射入十二碼而落後。後來只得九人應戰為球隊帶來更大打擊，導致東方慘敗7:0。這一晚，是東方的一場惡夢。

接著在主場迎戰的兩隊對手都不如恆大可怕，當中以1:1逼和日職球隊川崎前鋒更是東方今季的高峰（也是今季最令人難忘的一夜）。東方在這仗的四位後防球員有中場球員白鶴和迪高伊利罩著，直至川崎的後衛奈良龍樹在禁區內將洛迪古斯踢跌之前，兩名中場球員都幫球員抵擋了不少攻勢。奈良龍樹被逐離場，洛迪古斯則為東方射入十二碼。這球十二碼和紅牌都是十分有爭議性，不過運氣這次是在香港人的一方。

東方領先後一直讓川崎控球在腳，他們的全場控球比率只有26%。但當他們搶得控球權時便變得十分果斷和有自信，在精準的時間傳球給前線的洛迪古斯、麥基和李康廉，令兩翼能夠得以發揮。

不過，去到下半場時，東方門將葉鴻輝作出了一個罕有的錯誤判斷出迎撲空，令川崎球員板倉滉成功鏟射破網追和。

對東方來說，這是十分扎實的一分，同時證明了他們可以在最佳狀態（及有運氣）時能夠與亞洲某些頂級球隊在場上較量。

下一戰是來自南韓的水原三星藍翼，





Manuel Bleda scores his penalty against Kawasaki....



...and celebrates.  
Photos: Ryan Kam

clined to report the incident to the AFC for a blatant breach of the rules was a betrayal of their most loyal fans. And that their sponsors then sent Guangzhou-based employees to the Tianhe Stadium to sit there pretending to be Eastern fans added insult to injury.

On a night when Chan Yuen-ting's men would need luck on their side, conceding a penalty and having a man sent off for a handball on the line in the second minute was not ideal. Going down to nine men made things even harder, as the 7-0 final score suggests. It was a horrible night for the Hong Kong champions.

But two home games against less terrifying opposition came next. And the high point for Eastern (the second of those memorable nights from this season) came in the first of these, in a 1-1 draw with Japan's Kawasaki Frontale. Eastern's back four was well protected by Bai He and Diego Eli in midfield, and withstood a lot of pressure, before

東方原本有機會可爭得另一分。可惜洛迪古斯和伊達因傷缺陣，令東方比上場對川崎更加著重「泊大巴式」防守。這個策略本來是可行的，但在水原的前鋒菲利拿落場後，成功趁東方防線的一次犯錯中攝入禁區，在無人看管的情況下射入全場唯一入球。

經過首仗侮辱性慘敗及這兩場在旺角上演的賽事後，東方能夠晉身下一圈的希望已經幻滅，但他們的表現都有很大改善。不過，當亞冠在一個月重回時，東方的惡夢再次重現。

東方繼作客水原慘敗 5:0 後，接著又在主場慘吞恆大六蛋。這次他們不能再以紅牌或欠運為輸波藉口。東方被技高一籌的恆大技術性擊倒，伴隨恆大的還有來自作客球迷發出恍如軍隊般齊整的鼓聲和打氣聲，在九龍又熱又潮濕的天空下迴響。上半場東方的表現雖然有改善及只失兩球，但之後球隊有如中門大開，恆大的球星阿倫和保連奴都能取得入球。

很多恆大球迷靠著東方售賣門票的漏動而購得主場門票引起保安問題，最後恆大被獲分配更大的作客球迷區，球迷在場內的表現十分突出。恆大球迷在不斷唱出中國國歌後拉起「殲英犬、滅港毒」的標語。此刻，香港球迷不再克制，以同樣惡言回應作客球迷，叫出帶有侮辱性的反中國說話及問候對方的母親，也有球迷舉起英屬香港旗。這個場面令所有人都覺得不快。恆大後來因為

Kawasaki defender Tatsuki Nara brought down Manuel Bleda in the box. Nara was sent off, and Eastern got a penalty, which Bleda scored. Both the penalty and the sending-off were dubious decisions, suggesting maybe luck was on the Hongkongers' side this time.

From then on Eastern were happy to let Kawasaki have the ball. They only had 26 per cent possession in the match. But when they had the ball they looked so much more decisive and assured, getting it up the pitch at the right moments, for Bleda, Jaimes McKee and Lee Honglim to chase, making good use of the wings.

But in the second half, Eastern goalkeeper Yapp Hung-fai made a rare error in judgment, coming for a ball that he didn't have to, and ended up jumping over Kawasaki's Itakura Kou as he knocked the ball home to equalise.

It was a solid point for Eastern to take, and proved that they could compete on the same pitch as some of Asia's finest, when at their best (and with luck on their side.)

The next game, against Suwon Samsung Bluewings, of South Korea, could have got Eastern another point. But they had to play without the injured Bleda and Eli, leaving them to park the bus even more than they had against Kawasaki. And it could have worked, except for the arrival of Suwon's forward Johnathan, who took advantage of a lapse in concentration in the Eastern defence to slip into the box and nod the ball into the goal.



Paulinho scores the first of his two goals for Guangzhou in Hong Kong.

Photo: Dennis Lo

球迷的標語而被罰 2 萬 2 千 5 百美元（比保連奴的兩日薪金還少），及被罰閉門作賽兩場但緩刑兩年。

東方在亞冠最後一戰作客川崎前鋒的表現仍然未能令人刮相看。基本上，東方在整個分組賽的賽事都在捱打，六戰當中只能射入一個有爭議性的十二碼便已經證明一切。

有人指香港球隊若只出戰次級賽事亞協盃可能會比出戰亞冠盃好，這樣的話他們便能與水平較近的球隊如柔佛及班加羅爾等較量，從而可以有機會晉身更後的階段。若本地球隊在下季的表現仍然跟東方一樣不堪入目的話，有這些想法的人可能很快便會離港足而去。在 2018 年，傑志將會出戰亞冠分組賽。他們今年在外圍賽的表現，特別是作客蔚山一仗，都顯出他們能夠比東方表現得更好。但根據亞洲足協的外援條例，傑志必須棄用幾位重心球員。傑志的神射手辛祖和中場黃洋屬本地球員，但失去林柱機、林恩許和林志堅（雖有居港權但未有香港護照）將會是對傑志的一大打擊。傑志的確有機會能夠比東方奪得更多分數，但這仍然是一大挑戰。●



That Guangzhou banner. Photo: Dennis Lo

After the first-match humiliation, the two games in Mong Kok showed massive progress, even though any hopes of getting into the next round were over. But when the ACL returned a month later, it all went wrong again.

A 5-0 walloping away at Suwon preceded the 6-0 Mong Kok Massacre at the hands of Guangzhou. This time Eastern couldn't blame red cards or bad luck. They were just outclassed by their near neighbours, as the militaristic drums and chants of the Evergrande fans echoed into a warm and humid sky over Kowloon. After an improved performance in the first half, which ended only 2-0, the floodgates opened, with Alan and Paulinho the stars for the Chinese giants.

The Evergrande fans, who were given an extra-large away section because so many of them sneaked their way to tickets in the home end (thanks to a flawed ticketing arrangement), also made their mark. After repeatedly singing the Chinese national anthem, they unfurled a banner which read "Annihilate British dogs, extinguish Hong Kong independence poison". Hong Kong fans responded with equal venom and no more restraint, chanting anti-China insults and maternal slurs. Some waved British colonial flags. It was an unedifying sight for all concerned. For the banner, Guangzhou were fined US\$22,500 (less

than two days' wages for Paulinho), and if they do anything like that again they'll have to play two games in an empty stadium.

Eastern's last match, away at Kawasaki, didn't change the overall outlook. Eastern had a generally torrid time in the ACL group stage. Scoring only one goal – from a dubious penalty – in six matches tells its own story.

### **Eastern's group stage record**

**Played: 6**  
**Won: 0**  
**Drawn: 1**  
**Lost: 5**  
**Scored: 1**  
**Conceded: 24**

Some have said it would be better if Hong Kong teams were still in the AFC Cup, Asia's secondary competition, rather than the ACL. Then they could compete on a similar level against teams like Johor and Bengaluru, and stand a chance of making the latter stages. Those people might get their way pretty soon, if Hong Kong teams do as

badly in the future as Eastern did this season.

In 2018 Kitchee will play in the ACL group stage. Their games in qualifying this year, especially away at Ulsan, suggest they might stand a better chance than Eastern did. They also have to drop fewer stars because of foreign player rules, as their top striker and holding midfielder, Sandro and Huang, are both locals. The loss of Matt Lam, Jared Lum and Lam Zhi-gin (permanent residents but not passport holders) will hurt though. There's a chance they'll get more than the one point Eastern got. But it is still a massive challenge. ●



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