

FEATURED STORY

PARTNERSHIP IN THE ROAD TO SUCCESS OF COACHES AND ATHLETES



△ Liu and Chen got medals at major competitions regularly

Hong Kong elite Wushu athlete Liu Xuxu and Chen Suijin both laughed out loud when they spoke about their first encounter with Wushu.

"I was too restless when I was a child. My family said to me, if you really like to run around so much, go learn Wushu," Liu said.

"I actually started by learning dancing at first, because it's beautiful. One day, the Wushu coach next door saw me and told me that I was suitable for practicing Wushu. So I went," Chen Suijin said.

The two stumbled their way into the world of Wushu when they were ten. Almost twenty years have passed since then. Wushu has brought them to various competitions all over the world. With their skills, they have brought back countless medals for Hong Kong's Wushu world. But now, what lies ahead?

"I like Wushu very much. I like to show people what I have, but I'm also worried that when I grew older, I can't follow this path forever." Liu said, "If you find yourself a position and make an exit plan, you will be more at ease when you compete and more willing to give everything you've got. Athletes would have to face the problem of path changing someday."

The Foundation Certificate in Sports Coaching Theory Program offered by the Hong Kong Coaching Committee showed her a new direction. "After practicing for so many years, what I'm good at is like one of my specialties, my trade mark. I want to pass them on to the younger generation. This course has taught me a lot."



△ Liu and Chen looking valiant during the competition

Liu used the "decomposition method" taught in the course as an example. She said that when students don't have in-depth knowledge of Wushu, they cannot learn complicated combinations in one go. Under such background, coaches could choose to disassemble the movements and slowly show it to them. "It's like when a child is learning how to speak, you have to teach it one word at a time," Liu said. "I don't think there are athletes with bad conditions. The coach must have a method for them. Otherwise, even if the athletes have great conditions, there is nothing that could be done."

Chen is also a graduate of the above-mentioned program. She shared a similar view and said that one of the lessons in the program taught her how to choose teaching materials and training methods for athletes of different ages. For example, when a child's bones are not mature enough to withstand weight, the coach can first develop his speed or coordination, and then add on weight training after he reaches adulthood. "Whether a athlete has talent or not, if the training methods are appropriate, he will become a good athlete," Chen said.

Another module of the Program that impressed Chen was Prevention and Management of Sports Injuries. "Injuries are inevitable for athletes, also for coaches." Chen said, if coaches were athletes before, their experience can help many others take fewer detours. "As a competitive sport, Wushu constantly pursues something that's of higher standard. The skills and methods you have as an athlete will come precious."



△ Coach Lam and his two honored students were delighted to share their visions of coaching



△ Dr. Masa Leung (second from the right), manager of the Coach Education Department, thanked them at the venue

But having experience and skills is just the first step of becoming a good coach. Lam Hong Kwai, Head Coach of the Hong Kong Sports Institute, who has led many Hong Kong elite Wushu athletes in various competitions, said that familiarity with skills and the ability to demonstrate are only the "basic necessities" of a coach. A good coach needs to know the theory of sports science and know exactly when to implement it.

"Some athletes do not return after some time of training. Usually they encounter some setbacks. For example, they have not been able to participate in the competition in these two years. He may feel that it happened because of his lack of abilities." These must be dismantled through the coach, one step at a time. The coach should help the athlete set short-term goals. When he finishes them one by one, he will gain a sense of accomplishment. The application of sports science in this case promotes better results.

Speaking about his journey, Lam said that the most important thing to do as a coach is to cater for the needs of the athletes. If the athlete has something stuck in his mind, the coach needs to find out and resolve it.

In addition to managing training sessions, coaches are also responsible for all the details of an athlete's life, from accommodation to diets. "If you care about the athlete's feelings and his needs, and just force him to train, it will not be good for neither his psychological nor skill development," Lam said.



△ After the interview, the two athletes demonstrated their excellent skills on the spot

Liu and Chen have met dozens of coaches since they began practicing Wushu. What makes a good coach? Liu said: "Kids leave their parents when they are very little in order to practice Wushu. I feel that being a good coach, besides from skills, he should also teach you how to be a man." When you practice Wushu, you first to learn to be a man, the most basic etiquette of being a man is to put things right, then what you practice will be right. "A good coach will not only let you practice Wushu, he will tell you the core value of being a person, I think this is very important," Chen said.

The relationship between athletes and coaches are like partners, and also like family members. Chen has a better metaphor. She said that athletes and coaches are like the two legs of a person. When you lost one of them, the trip to your goal will be out of balance.

"The relationship between coaches and athletes is mutual. Coaches are constantly learning when they teach. When the athletes practice, the coaches also learn something from them," Chen said. "I think athletes need coaches. Like Liu Xiang, he is already the world's top athlete, he still needs a coach to accompany him. This is because athletes and coaches complement each other."