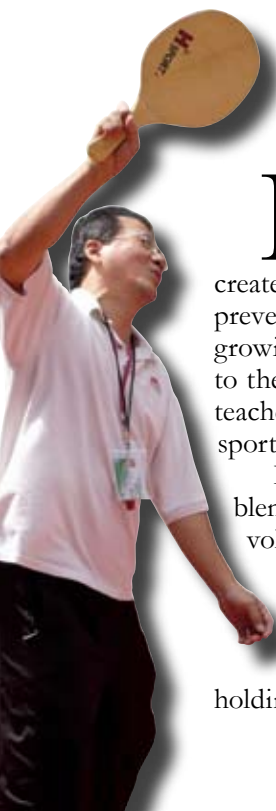




# A new sport is born

photos and text by Shannon Lam



**R**acket volleyball, a new, locally created sport designed to prevent wrist injuries is growing popular, thanks to the efforts of passionate teachers, including the sport's creator.

Racket volleyball blends the rules of volleyball and the techniques of badminton. Each team has four players, with each holding a racket to strike a

ball which is softer than a volleyball. Once a team fails to strike back and the ball lands on the court, the other team gets one point. The team who scores 15 points first wins the game.

"The game is easy to be picked up. It is new and exciting. Team spirit is important in the game, as the four players move about, everyone has equal opportunity to set and attack," said Ray Ngan Wai, a Form Six student at Lock Tao Secondary School in Tai Wai, who has been playing racket volleyball since Form Three.

He joined the school's racket volleyball team as soon as it started up. "I wanted to try new things at that time," continued Ngan, who was also

a member of the school's badminton and volleyball teams when he took up the new sport.

Ngan said the happiest thing is that he and his friends could try to make use of the skills they have learnt from badminton and volleyball to play this new sport. And the little experiments make them feel good.

Man Chun-hin, a Form One student at the same school, said that playing racket volleyball means that one is less likely to





get injured. However, “it is difficult to control the racket,” he said.

Another Form One student, Kwok Ho-yin, also a member of the school’s badminton team, likes racket volleyball better than Man does.

“Racket volleyball is not difficult to control and it is quite interesting,” he said. Using a racket means you can attack stronger than if you were just using your hands, according to Kwok. Yet, he said that the court net is a bit high for the players.

Comparing racket volleyball and volleyball, Derek Li Tsz-wai, a student of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, commented that he likes volleyball more, though he never tried the new sport.

“Overcoming difficulties gives me a lot of satisfaction. Volleyball is an exciting and tense game,” he said.

Racket volleyball is the brainchild of Lock Tao Secondary School physical education teacher Fong Chi-cheong.

According to his 30-year teaching experience, Fong found students hurt their wrists when playing volleyball. “Students don’t like having bruises on their wrists after playing volleyball, especially for girls,” he said. This means that students soon lose interest in volleyball and soon give up playing it, he added.

It was when schools were suspended during the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic in 2003 that Fong had the time and

inspiration to establish the new sport.

Fong said that he initially just wanted to modify volleyball by using a bat, instead of hands, to hit the volleyball. Later, he further modified his idea by using a lighter ball.

“Chubby kids and younger ones can handle it easily,” said Fong.

Fong said that fewer players in the match enhances players’ involvement and cooperation. He also insisted that the game is more exciting as “using a racket makes the rhythm of a match faster which makes it similar to badminton”.

Gavin Chung Lui-ping, the principal of Lock Tao Secondary School, is supportive of the new sport. The school included it in their physical education curriculum and has tried to put it as one of the activities for the parent-teacher association. “Even parents like to play it,” said the principal.

He also encouraged teachers to popularise and further develop the sport. “We will try to allow teachers to have more space to develop this sport. We have to adjust teachers’ working hours for that,” Chung said.

Racket volleyball is gaining popularity among some primary schools in Shatin.

The school offers free training courses and shuttle buses for the students of other schools to play racket volleyball at the school. Some primary schools have set up a school racket volleyball team.

However, racket volleyball cannot be played at public volleyball courts or badminton courts, unless special approval is given by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department.

“If we want to use the courts, we need to apply for a special permit that




## “Chubby kids and younger ones can handle it easily.”

involves a more complicated procedure,” said Fong, the sport’s creator.

Apart from the shortage of courts, there are other hindrances in developing and promoting the new sport, according to the Hong Kong Racket Volleyball Association, which was formed by the physical education teachers of Lock Tao Secondary School.

Fung Tat-hon, vice-president of the Association, said that the biggest problem in popularising the sport is the of lack human resources to promote it.

Only a few teachers are available at weekends and holidays to promote it. “That’s why the public doesn’t know much about it,” said Fung.

Yet, for the founders of the new game, the most memorable thing is not how popular the sport is, but “the precious support of our colleagues and the parents,” said Fung. 



Students are doing warm-up exercise before playing racket volleyball.