

## OFFICIAL OF THE MONTH – A HKEF PROMOTION SERIES



*Official of the Month is a series of interviews to be shared on the HKEF website highlighting the vital role of our officials*

Officials play a crucial role in all levels of equestrian competitions. Not only do they donate their time and experience in the running of events, they also provide a significant contribution to the expansion and growth of equestrian sports in Hong Kong.

To recognise the contributions of our officials and to introduce them and their roles, starting from this month, the HKEF is launching a promotional series of interviews with some of our hard-working officials. Every month we will introduce a new official to you highlighting their particular roles, sharing their passions, their journey and their stories.

Should you be interested in knowing more about our officials or in becoming a listed official yourself, or are just curious, do not miss it!

## **INTERVIEW WITH SHOWJUMPING JUDGES**

### **JOHNNY AND KAREN MAK**



Having a discussion at the Judges' Box on whether a pole being knocked down right after a horse halt at the jump would incur a further 4 penalties were father and daughter Johnny and Karen Mak. Here we chat with the two showjumping officials about their equestrian careers and the shared bonds with horses.

## ***Introduction to Johnny and Karen***

Johnny: My name is Johnny Mak. I am a HKEF National Jumping Judge, Steward and Eventing Delegate. I am also a FEI Level 3 Jumping Judge and Steward. Before becoming an official, I have been riding for years in Hong Kong. I attained my FEI Steward accreditation as well as the FEI Jumping Judge qualification, and eventually focused on jumping and judging work these years.

Karen: My name is Karen Mak and I am a HKEF National Jumping Judge and Steward. I had an eventing and showjumping background and competed up to international level. My focus is on officiating at local events.

## ***When did you start being a listed official in Hong Kong?***

Johnny: In 2008 when Hong Kong co-hosted the equestrian events at the Beijing Olympics, I was recruited for training to serve as a steward at the Games. I found officiating as interesting as being a rider, and therefore, I took the examinations to become a local judge and steward.

Karen: I was of course enlightened by my dad and started competing for Hong Kong locally and internationally. Dad's sharing about his official role made me realised that professional knowledge from an official's point of view was useful for riders. It provided another angle on what should riders be conscious of to compete and finish a course. Therefore, I also undertook trainings and examinations to become a listed official.





### ***How was your first-time officiating experience?***

Johnny: To be very honest I can't recall my first-time officiating - it has been 20 years since I first judged locally! But at my time, there were already plenty of senior officials at BREC to offer guidance and support for me to develop my equestrian career.

Karen: I was nervous on my first day judging because as a competitor, I understood that the bell and the clock would heavily affect riders' results and the whole operation of the competition. I was aware of the great responsibility as a judge, where I was accountable to the Judges' Box as well as all competing riders.

### ***What is your motivation to continue officiating?***

Johnny: Love of horses is of course the main reason - it is hard to continue the work if you do not love horses and the sport.

Karen: I agree that love and passion keep you going. It is also sort of a parent-child activity that brings us a common topic to explore and talk about. We enjoy a lot sharing the experiences we encountered during event days!





***What do you enjoy most about being an official in Hong Kong?***

Karen: I learnt a lot from the local arena and competitions, especially at junior classes. Most of the experiences I gained was actually from beginner classes, because young riders are not familiar with competitions and situations of all kinds can happen on the show ground.

Johnny: I do agree with Karen. Officiating at highest scale shows like the Masters of Hong Kong does not cost me extra effort – the top-class riders know what they are doing. All I have to do is to sit tight and appreciate the performances as I fulfil my duty. As for being an official in Hong Kong, I value the experience gained in handling different sudden occasions.



***What are the basic elements that a Jumping Judge and Steward must possess?***

Karen: You need to be hardworking - knowing the rules is basic for an official to make the best decision during an event, so read the Rulebooks. Your mind has to be fast as well, because every occasion in the arena can happen in a split second. Say, under what circumstances the judge has to ring the bell to pause the timing of the round for the obstacle rebuilding.

Johnny: Because no discussion can be allowed under such fast-paced competition rounds, the rules will give grounds for your split-second decisions. Of course, abundant experiences also mentally prepare you for any ad hoc situations. I had officiated as a jumping judge overseas and in Mainland, where the environment could be different from the local. In unfamiliar arenas, experiences would be an advantage for quick adaptation at your ease.

Johnny: While judges have less chance to get in touch with competitors, officiating as stewards requires your IQ and EQ a lot more as you face riders and instructors directly. It is unavoidable that some of your decisions are not satisfactory to them, and thus debate may arise. Just bear in mind that officials are here to help instead of being the villains to stop riders from competing.

Karen: Keeping your eyes peeled is also important being a steward, as different situations may happen in the show ground.

***To the HKEF members who have an interest in becoming an official, what is your advice to them?***

Karen: First of all, you have to know the sports – that's why reading Rules is so important. As said, hardworking is the basic to become an official. Always remember that we are serving the sports.

Johnny: When I was younger, I used to serve as stewards because there was more to see and experience. Cultivate your EQ to prepare for “debating” a lot. Walking around the stables also costs you more physical strength. Therefore, you need to have a vocation for and diligence in your duty. Getting older, I focused more on judging. Diligence and knowledge, combined with common sense, will make you a good judge. Last but not least, learn as much as you can – and from the absurder circumstances the better.

