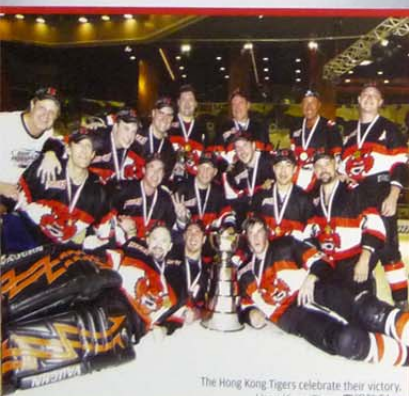




Grant Phillips shows off his gear before a game. 守門員Grant Phillips 已為賽事準備就緒。



The Hong Kong Tigers celebrate their victory. 香港隊在五月九日慶祝勝利。

## Blades of glory

Asia's largest ice hockey tournament is set to be another big hit at MegaBox



### 冰球比拼 載譽凱旋

一個平常的周六下午，一眾國際冰球好手在賽場上各展其長，Hong Kong Tigers的隊長兼前鋒Greg Smyth舉旗向一班支持者，看見他們氣息凜冽，全神貫注的神情，令這位來自加拿大的冰球好手對上眼裏發亮。

每年春天，氣氛熾熱的「Mega Ice五人冰球賽」於東九龍的MegaBox舉行，為期兩周的賽事，吸引了來自美國、加拿大及歐洲等地的世界職業冰球運動員來港比賽，參賽人數超過1,000人。Greg Smyth稱，這項賽事在世界冰球壇上相當有名，各國均派出最佳隊伍參賽。

比賽激烈之餘，場外氣氛亦不遜多讓。賽事於多個週末舉行，比賽場地與地庫上的觀眾位置有不少距離，各隊的支持者除欣賞賽事之外，也可於不同的角度大快朵頤。賽事完結後，

運動員更可到溜冰場對出的室內觀景台欣賞維港景色及把酒言歡。

今年的賽事於五月九日圓滿結束。經過一輪精彩的對決，最終由Hong Kong Tigers以四比一擊敗北京聯隊，勇奪錦標。這項國際賽事已是第三年在港舉行。賽事得以在本港舉行，全賴MegaBox內面積達國際賽標準的Mega Ice溜冰場。參賽運動員對這個場地的質素、設備、管理以至比賽氣氛均讚不絕口。他們稱這世界上難得有一個溜冰場可以擁有30米高的玻璃牆，可遠望多利亞港美景；比賽後也不用離開場地所在，便可以反個痛快。

Hong Kong Tigers的守門員Grant Phillips表示，孩童時在加拿大他已愛上冰球，六歲便開始於冰上馳騁。當他到香港發展事業時，他最熱心便是去玩冰球的樂趣。到港後得知香港亦有較小的溜冰場可供比賽，故即使未能盡展所長他也不放棄。當Mega Ice

It's Saturday afternoon and the international ice hockey players are positioned on the ice. Greg Smyth, the Hong Kong Tigers captain and leading goal scorer, looks up, seeing crowds of fans watching him expectantly. "It's an amazing feeling," the Canadian says. "A real adrenaline boost."

Such is the atmosphere at Mega Ice Hockey 5's, the largest ice hockey tournament in Asia, which is held each spring in Hong Kong. More than 1,000 players compete in the two-week event, coming from as far afield as the United States, Canada and Europe. "It's world-class competition at the highest amateur level," Smyth explains. "People know that this is a top tournament, so they send their best teams."

They also come for the party. Staged over successive weekends, it's a social event, too. The viewing areas at rink level and above include various restaurant options, so fans who come for the action can make a day of it by staying for lunch or dinner.

After the game, players can relax and enjoy a beer on the outdoor waterfront terrace. They agree that when it comes to playing hockey anywhere in the world, there's nothing to compare with this venue.

This year the tournament ended on May 9, with the Hong Kong Tigers claiming the title of champions, with a 4-1 victory over Beijing Peng Hun in an exhilarating final. It was the third year that international ice hockey of this caliber has been played in Hong Kong. It's only been possible since Mega Ice, the city's only international-sized ice rink, opened at MegaBox in East Kowloon. Players consistently cite the quality of the rink, the facilities it offers, expert management and, in particular, the atmosphere. Where else can you play, they say, looking out of a 30 metre-high window with views of Victoria Harbour? They don't even have to leave the premises to have fun afterwards. "At Mega Ice, it's all here," says Grant Phillips, the Hong Kong Tigers goalie.

Phillips says he was "born and bred" to play ice hockey. As a child in Canada the game was in his blood – you start playing at about the age of six, he explains, and never stop. When he moved to Hong Kong for business, his biggest regret was having to give up the game. He later discovered that it was played here, although on a lesser scale and on smaller rinks that were "second best". "On smaller rinks, you can't play with a full team," he explains. "It changes the game completely." Mega Ice is the only venue where a full team can be played.

In any ice hockey game the goalie is the most critical position. It's not for everyone, but Phillips relishes the pressure. "You can raise your team from the bench, or you can sink them very quickly," he says.

Phillips prepares mentally by following a set ritual when dressing for the game. Thanks to technical advances, a goalie's protective gear is much lighter these days, and now weighs about 9kg. But still it takes about 30 minutes to put on the skates, mask, helmet and the shockproof foam-lined plastic pads that will hopefully keep him safe from the pucks that come shooting his way at lightning speed.

He fuels up before the game on carbohydrates, consuming pasta, pizza or spaghetti to provide enough energy to endure 40 minutes on the ice.

Smyth agrees that you need to be fit. He's had more than his share of injuries, including numerous broken bones and "probably about 100 stitches". That was mostly in Canada, where hockey is a contact sport. In Hong Kong they play a non-contact game, so injuries are less likely – and since this places a greater emphasis on skill, it provides an even more exciting spectacle for fans.

To play at league level requires a commitment of at least two nights per week: one to compete and one to practise. It's a major part of players' lives. "With our 24/7 work styles, hockey is my night out. It's my 'field of dreams' – the place where I come for peace," says Phillips. "I leave the phones, e-mails and faxes behind, and focus on the game. Afterwards, we hang out and



Frank Burbach from the Consulate General of Germany, Jacobus Versteegh from the Consulate General of Canada and Daisy Lam from the Hong Kong Tourism Board attended the opening ceremony of the tournament, along with representatives of all supporting units. 德國駐港領事Frank Burbach、加拿大駐港總領事Jacobus Versteegh、香港旅遊發展局林雷韻姐女士，聯同各贊助機構代表出席「五人冰球賽」開幕禮。

chat." During the course of the game and over a beer or two afterwards, friendships are formed and networks expanded. Smyth also found that hockey helped him to settle in Hong Kong. "While I was trying to establish myself, I met many high-level people in a short amount of time through my hockey connections," he says.

Hong Kong is the centre of ice hockey in Asia. It's developing faster here, and has the most number of players – including many up-and-coming juniors. Mega Ice Hockey 5's is their chance to shine, with categories for kids from as young as seven, and divisions for women and men. Sponsors include Coors Light, Kerry Logistics, Kowloon Shangri-La, McDonald's and the South China Morning Post.

Spectators at the tournament are always guaranteed a fun packed and exciting experience.

之後，那有盡有的設備及達到國際級規模的賽場，令他們可以全身投入，感受較小的場地不同日而語。

守門員是冰球場的靈魂人物，壓力相當大。Grant Phillips稱，守門員對球隊的成就感到關切作用。每次比賽前，他都會利用穿戴裝備的30分鐘時間，為賽事作好心理準備。守門員的全套保護裝備包括護膝、頭盔等，約重九公斤，這比運動員的裝備更重。運動員則要以高速在冰上飛馳，防擋護墊尤其重要。賽事舉行之前，Grant Phillips曾隨隊食大量碳水化合物，例如意粉及薄餅等，讓身體有足夠能量支持40分鐘的比賽。

Greg Smyth亦同意打冰球需要有良好的體能。在加拿大，冰球是強擊性的運動，他也有多次受傷，包括骨折及患上差不多100針的傷口。不過在香港，冰球並非強擊性運動，球員只受體的衝擊較低，加上比賽以技術為主，對觀賽人而言亦較具吸引力。

要加入聯隊訓練，運動員一周最少進行兩晚訓練，包括一次訓練和一次比賽。Grant Phillips表示，一周247的工作，晚上玩冰球反而給予他平穩心緒的機會。輪到冰上成為他的夢想，他可以打電話、電郵及傳真等途徑查詢訓練，全情投入比賽。比賽後，他可與隊友把酒談天，加深與隊友之間的友誼及默契。此外，冰球亦讓他更快適應香港的生活，來港建立事業的初期，透過此運動，他成功與不少高層人士建立人際網絡。

香港是亞洲冰球中心，在港發展迅速，並擁有最多運動員，當中包括不少極具潛力的青少年選手。「Mega Ice五人冰球賽」是運動員一展身手的好機會，賽事尚有小至七歲的兒童組及男子組等。今年比賽於4月28日至5月11日舉行，贊助商包括Coors Light、嘉里物流、九龍香格里拉大酒店、華商富貴及南華早報。冰球賽事每場都精彩緊張，現場觀眾必定讚賞與興奮。