

THE NANJINGER

NANJINGEXPAT

OCTOBER 2013 / ISSN 2091-9974



BATS & BALLS

By Misha Maruma

Rockets Rugby want YOU!

A couple of weeks ago I was in the pub when I overheard someone talking about rugby. His name was Romain and he was collecting some flyers that he was going to use to promote the team he played for; the Nanjing Rockets Rugby Club.

The Nanjing Rockets play in the Yangtze Delta Division (YDD), which comprises the Rockets, Wuhan Baiji and Hangzhou Harlequins. The teams played each other on 21st September in Hangzhou. The next tournament, the Sino 10s league, is in Shanghai on 19th October with the final round of the YDD taking place in Nanjing next month. The first round of the league was held in May in Wuhan.

When I spoke to Romain he said that the club wanted to expand and was looking for more players to enhance the squad and improve results. In fact, big defeats in May have been reduced to small defeats more recently, but that is not good enough for a club with committed players who have a passion for rugby.

The Rockets were founded three years ago by Dan Aylward and Mike West. Since then the club has sought to integrate themselves into the Chinese sporting landscape and have an online presence to match teams from all over the country including the Shanghai Hairy Crabs, the Beijing Devils, Xiamen Typhoon and the Chengdu Pandas who the Rockets will play in a friendly later this year.

So if you are a keen player and want to get involved in some competitive games there has never been a better time to join the club.

For those interested the first thing you should know is there is a fee; ¥150 for students and ¥450 for everyone else. For your money you join a club that provides coaching from experienced and trained coaches. Current coaches Cloyd Tavenner and Andy Ball have years of experience and their training methods have paid dividends as results have been steadily improving. Training is twice a week at either Nanjing Normal University or the Sports Institute with touch rugby on Wednesday and full contact training on Saturdays.



The club also has a solid basis going forward with President Mike West, captain Nathan Obore and vice captain Romain Kooger adding drive and determination to keep the club moving in the right direction.

I asked Romain what the future plan is for the club. His answer was emphatic. Short-term they want more players to join the team. In the long term the club wants to play in more tournaments around the country; more dates

and more venues. They also want to have more equipment available during training sessions to improve standards. Not currently sponsored, the Rockets are hoping to find such to help take them to the next level and compete with other teams nationwide.

As we all know, sport is about getting involved on a social level as well as a sporting one and the Rockets pride themselves in being an all-inclusive club. The team includes players from rugby play-

ing nations such as Britain, Ireland, France, Italy, South Africa as well as Papua New Guiana, Uganda, Kenya, Switzerland and of course China.

*Whether you are a beginner or intermediate player, if you are keen then the Rockets want you. Women are also welcome as well as anyone who thinks they can add something to the team's coaching. Interested? Contact The Nanjinger for details of how to get involved with the Rockets. **NU***

▶ Archery; hooding it up in Nanjing

I like to think that having the Asian Youth Games in Nanjing has inspired people to go out and try the sports to be found in my adopted home. So I was surprised to find out that archery is an activity that is available in Nanjing, but was not on the list of sports for the AYG.

When I think of a classic archer I think of Robin Hood and his band of vigilantes. The films' depictions show a man who is able to hit the bulls eye of a target from any angle and any range with deadly accuracy. It looks easy on TV, so how hard can it be?

Armed with a sense of optimism, I recruited two friends and we went to the Wutaishan stadium on Guangzhou Road. When we arrived we were told that the archery was not here anymore. No wonder it wasn't on the schedule for the AYG. So we ventured

across town to the Quanmin jianshen centre (全民健身中心) on Zhongshan Dong Lu close to Xinjiekou.

As we entered the modest sized venue on the eighth floor it was immediately obvious that we were the only foreigners there and that a basic level of Chinese would be needed to negotiate our way to the point of firing an arrow. The helpful staff meant that it was indeed only a basic level.

Now archery may look easy, but in fact it is very tough. The staff keep a close eye on the participant; with a very dangerous sport being played by complete novices it's no surprise.

It was a great afternoon of fun though and with non-members paying ¥15 for 12 arrows no one could complain.



Memberships are available to bring the cost down and it seemed that most of the Chinese taking part had membership cards when they paid on the way out.

*By the end of our time I was hitting the nine-point target and the occasional 10-point target. But this was only over a distance of seven meters or so. I now have a newfound respect for Robin Hood. Not his philanthropy mind you, but his ability to hit the smallest of targets from the longest of distances. **NU***