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Hong Kong Olympian Vivian Kong writes heartfelt letter to parents urging support for child's fencing dreams – 'everyone has their own path'

- Former world No 1 says she has received messages from aspiring young fencers whose parents 'think they are not super-talented or training hard enough'
- 'Let her enjoy her favourite sport and encourage her to find all the life lessons we can learn from sports,' Kong pleads in letter

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Published: 8:01am, 30 Nov, 2021

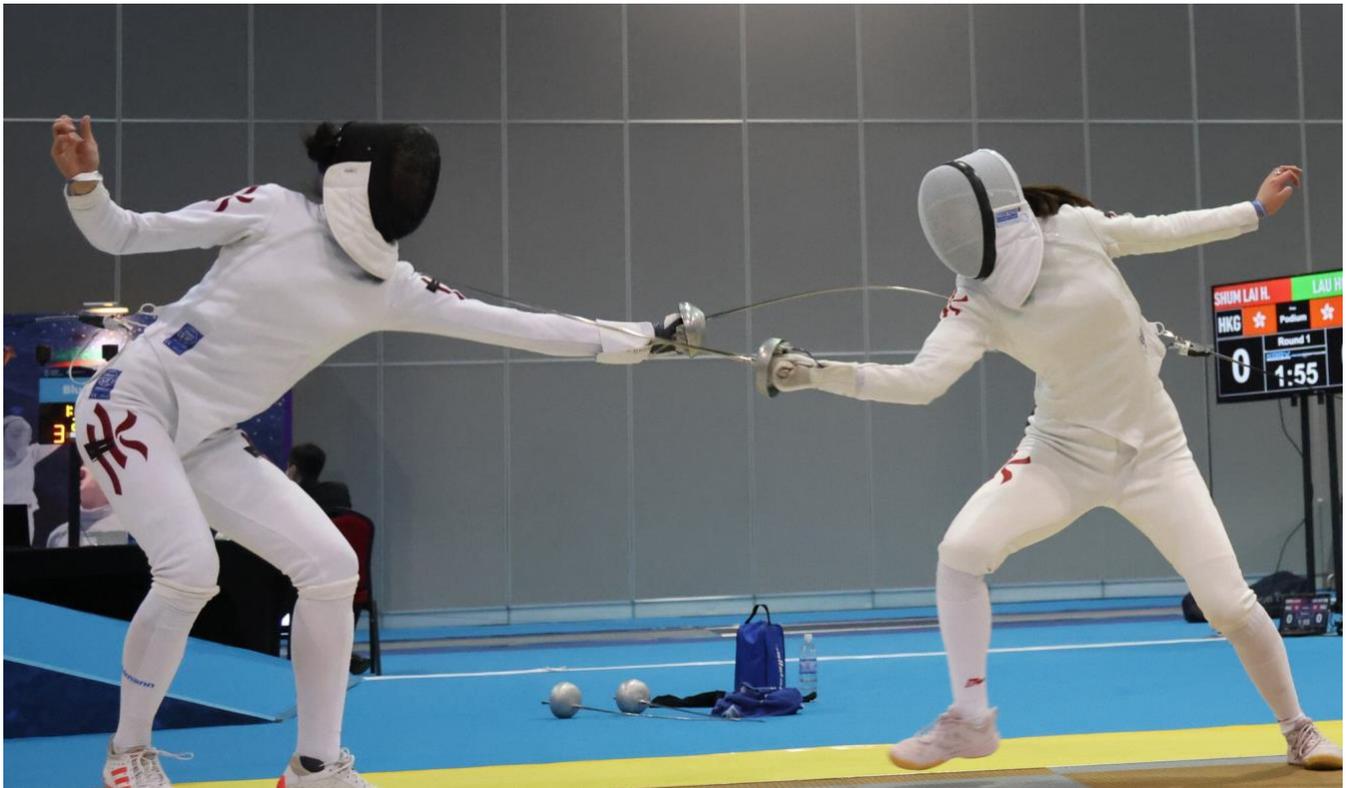


Former epee fencing world number one Vivian Kong Man-wai in a World Cup event in Chengdu in 2019. Photo: International Fencing Federation

Hong Kong Olympian Vivian Kong Man-wai has publicly shared a letter she wrote to a young local fencer's parents encouraging them to foster their child's passion for the sport.

The 27-year-old former Asian champion, and the first Hong Kong fencer to win a World Cup title in 2019, said she had received several messages from aspiring fencers whose parents “think they are not super-talented or not training hard enough”.

In response, she posted a screenshot on her Instagram account of a “humble letter” she had sent to one of the parents, with individual names blurred out, in the hopes others will see her words and consider allowing their children to pursue athletic endeavours.



Hong Kong fencer Vivian Kong Man-wai (left) in action against Chan Wai-ling at the Hong Kong Open Fencing Championships at the AsiaWorld Expo. Photo: May Tse

“Dear Auntie and Uncle, My name is Vivian and I’m a Hong Kong épée fencer,” said Kong, who clinched Hong Kong Open Championships gold on Saturday.

“I’d first like to say a tremendous thank you for raising [redacted] to become such a sweet, empathetic and kind little girl. I’m sending lots of love to you and your family.

“[Redacted] has told me how much she loves fencing, how hard she’s working, and how much she wants to do well. She has shown me how much she cares about her parents and what you think and say about her.

“I can only imagine the stress and pressure you have as parents and thank you for the unconditional love you have for your children. But I really hope you can trust [redacted]. Let her enjoy her favourite sport and encourage her to find all the life lessons we can learn from sports. The most important lessons I learned from fencing were not from winning medals, but being able to enjoy the hard work, staying hopeful, and loving what I do.

“Everyone has their own path and way of shining. Please believe in [redacted]. I believe in her. Lots of love, Vivian.”

The post received praise and similarly heartfelt messages from local athletes and influencers, but what ultimately matters most to Kong is that her words resonate with the future generation of local athletes, artists, wherever the passion lies.

“We just had the Hong Kong Open and it was amazing to see so many U-14s kids fence - so cute and lovely - but I also saw many lovely slightly stressed kids and parents,” Kong told the *Post*.

“Then I received this message from a 13-year-old girl and similar messages from kids usually about their struggles with parents, balancing studies and that their hobbies or feelings are not good enough. Having been through all the feels and parent-child interactions, I thought I should share how I feel and hopefully make her better.

“When we’re young, our values and world views are so heavily shaped by what our teachers and family tell us. It becomes super precious if a child is able to find something they love. Once we find our passion, it’s like a safe place to go to when things are out of control. It’s empowering and we know ourselves better through that pursuit.”



Hong Kong women’s epee fencer Vivian Kong Man-wai celebrates with coach Octavian Zidaru after winning a World Cup title in Barcelona in 2019. Photo: FIE

That is not to say academics or the pursuit of other professions is not welcome. Kong, a Stanford University graduate, recalled her parents’ approach to balancing their daughter’s work both in the classroom and on the piste.

“My parents valued academics and made sure I graduated before I was given the freedom to pursue fencing,” Kong said.

“I was OK with that, because I was nerdy and loved going to school. I was really lucky I could treat fencing as my hobby and balance the fun of it with the stresses of studies. It was not until [a severe ACL injury] after graduating did I really reflect on how much I loved the sport and how much I wish I had devoted more time to become a better fencer.”

On Friday, Kong posted a video of herself meeting 11-year-old student fencer Hubert Xu, in collaboration with non-governmental organisation the ChickenSoup Foundation to “relieve and empower families in crisis from multiple social, medial and financial hardships, empowering them to thrive on their own”.

According to the organisation, Hubert is the child of an “unemployed single mum with mental health issues and had a tumour”, while his sister has “serious special education needs”, all of whom live under “depressing living conditions”.

Having watched Kong and Tokyo Olympic gold medal-winning foilist Cheung Ka-long perform in the summer, Hubert wants to become an Olympian too, and Kong offers him tips for life, school and fencing over lunch in the video.



Fencing coach Vincent Tsui Man-sum with 11-year-old fencer Hubert Xu, who is a beneficiary of the ChickenSoup Foundation’s Project Family Cupid. Photo: K.Y. Cheng

Under the programme, Hubert also receives professional fencing coaching three times a week from 2010 Asian Games bronze medallist Cheung Sik-lui and former national fencing team coach Vincent Tsui Man-sum.

The Foundation reported that after six months, Hubert has improved his academic performance, while his mother, grandmother and sister’s health has stabilised.

Source:

https://www.scmp.com/sport/hong-kong/article/3157796/hong-kong-epee-icon-vivian-kong-writes-letter-parent-urging-support?module=perpetual_scroll_0&pgtype=article&campaign=3157796