



Dr. Chen Chia-hui, PE instructor and soccer coach



Assistant Professor Dr. Chia-hui Chen joined Taiwan Tech in 2018 as a PE instructor and coach of the Taiwan Tech soccer team. She earned a Master's and subsequently a Ph. D degree at the National Taiwan Sports University, and then entered the National Sports Training Centre in Kaohsiung (2015 - 2018) to train Taiwan's most outstanding athletes in soccer, swimming and taekwondo .

Chia-hui Chen managed to turn her passion – her love for soccer – into a profession which is all the more remarkable in Taiwan where women are still under-represented in sport-related professions. In an interview, Professor Chen talks about her unusual career choice.

Q: How did you get interested in soccer?

Chen: I got into soccer during high school. My school was one of the few that had a female soccer team. The coach realized that I had some talent and encouraged me – and my parents! – to develop my talent. I continued my senior high school education at this school which allowed me to improve my soccer skills a lot.



Q: How about your university education? Could you specialize on soccer?

Chen: I went to Ming Chuan University which was one of the few universities with a female soccer team and enrolled in the Department of Advertising and Strategic Marketing. After graduation, I knew that I wanted to become a PE teacher, and that I needed to have a Master's degree. I managed to get into a Master's program at National Taiwan Sports University – which was quite difficult at that time – where I met my future supervisor who has had a big influence on me. He encouraged me to go on with a doctorate. At NTSU, I had classes like psychology, physiology, biology and so on, but it was not possible to choose soccer as an academic subject.

Q: Female soccer is not yet on the radar of most Taiwanese, and sports in general is quite a male-dominated profession. What is your view on this?

Chen: Actually, the Taiwan women soccer team, the “Mulan Soccer Club” has had a very good standing in Asia for many years. Only recently, other countries, in particular South East Asian and China countries, have picked up, and we have been falling behind. I think that the problem has to be seen in a wider context. Sports marketing is not that developed in Taiwan, we focus on celebrities in the show business rather than on athletes. And, your looks are very important, you have to be pretty to gain media attention, that holds especially for women. But things are slowly changing, Successful female athletes, like weight-lifter Hsing-chun Kuo who won the bronze medal in the 2016 Olympics, have gained a lot of media attention recently.

Q: Tell us about your experiences with the Taiwan Tech soccer team when you entered NTUST in 2018.

Chen: Taiwan Tech has already a soccer team for several years when I joined the school. Among the 29 players, 19 were international students from all over the world. The first year, I was mainly observing them, trying to get an understanding of the situation. In the second year, I really took over and started to spell out the rules of the game – for example, I made it obligatory to come to the training sessions at least once a week.



Q: How did you deal with intercultural differences and different attitudes to playing in such as multinational team?

Chen: Building up a team spirit is essential. Everybody has to understand that it is not the most important to be the star of the team, but to be a good team player. That's why I am insisting on a certain discipline – no matter how brilliant you are, you have to come to the training sessions. Another challenge is the language problem. Although my English improved a lot, I am working with translators for in-depth explanations. Luckily, we have students from Hong Kong or Macao who can help me with this.

Q: How about our female students. Will there soon be a Taiwan Tech women's soccer team?

Chen: Female students get introduced to soccer through my PE classes. In the beginning, there was only one student who signed up, now there are already 15 girls who have joined and are keen to improve their skills. So, let's see how this will develop, I do encourage them of course.

Q: What are your future goals at Taiwan Tech?

Chen: Of course, I want to build up a strong Taiwan Tech soccer team. We have made it to the 5th place in the nationwide competition last year, let's see if we can improve this year. But I also want to promote my academic career. As everybody else, I am required to do research and publish papers. I have been working on performance-improving cooling strategies in my doctorate, and I would like to continue this research – once I have got more time ...