



It's crazy costume time at the Football Club as participants including Vikram (above, left) and Eli as well as the father-son team (right) of Simon and James Barton, three, give their full support to fund-raising for Operation Santa Claus. Photos: David Wong



## Fung shui master allegedly robbed of US\$800,000

John Carney

There was more bad fung shui last week for the man who made a fortune out of the business, Tony Chan Chun-chuen: it was revealed he had allegedly been swindled out of nearly US\$800,000 by a New York limousine driver and did not realise it until investigators contacted him.

Chan – whose claims to the estate of the late billionaire Nina Wang Kung Yu-sum were rejected by the Court of First Instance in February and who got slapped with an Inland Revenue tax bill for nearly HK\$350 million in April – was allegedly scammed in July 2008 after he flew into New Jersey's Teterboro Airport on a private jet and took a ride in a limousine to Manhattan.

The driver, Peter Rahhaoui, kept the details of the credit card Chan had used and ran up a massive bill on it, US prosecutors said. Chan was charged the appropriate amount for the journey, but Rahhaoui over the next four months charged to the American Express card US\$794,986. It was only when the limousine company's bank saw the irregularities and contacted the federal authorities that the scam came to light.

The *New York Post* and *The Wall Street Journal* both reported last week that Brooklyn federal prosecutors had confirmed there was a case.

The initial complaint filed by US federal authorities can be found on the federal courts website. It says Chan is co-operating fully. He has provided documents to Hong Kong and United States authorities to prove he was not in the US when the charges accrued, and identified Rahhaoui as the limousine driver.

Rahhaoui has denied all charges. A trial is expected at Brooklyn Federal Court early next year.

That Chan did not notice any discrepancies on his credit card statements may have been because he had other things on his mind – in the latter months of 2008 Chan was preparing for his Hong Kong High Court battle over Wang's estate.

Credit card fraud is increasing, and what Chan allegedly experi-



More bad news, in NYC, for Tony Chan

enced is an everyday occurrence. Shane Harmon is business development manager at Monex, a credit card processing company, and says it easily can happen. "The driver could have scanned his card using a machine

that can be easily bought in any IT or computer shop," he said. "It's a magnetic strip reader that can read the details off the black strip on the back of your credit card. Either that or the driver took down the details of his card whenever the limo was booked and later used them himself. It's as simple as that."

After Wang's death, the fung shui master was involved in an expensive High Court battle with the China-chem Charitable Foundation over who was to inherit Wang's estimated HK\$100 billion fortune.

Police arrested Chan after he lost the court battle in February, as the judge had declared that the will Chan relied on was a forgery. Chan was released on HK\$5 million bail.

Chan is struggling to pay rumoured debts from market losses as well as crippling legal bills from the battle for the estate. He was ordered to pay Chinachem Charitable Foundation's HK\$140 million legal bill, on top of the estimated HK\$200 million he spent on lawyers himself.

The taxman also joined the line of creditors knocking on Chan's door in April, claiming that he owes the Inland Revenue Department nearly HK\$350 million in profits tax.

In August Chan launched another bid to stymie the Inland Revenue's attempt to recover the amount when he filed a writ at the Court of First Instance, seeking a judicial review challenging the department's decision on June 22 to refuse to accept his notice of objection to two profits tax assessments and 23 property tax assessments. The two profits tax assessments allegedly arose from the provision of personal services and involved HK\$115.6 million for the 2005-06 financial year and HK\$231.2 million for 2006-07.

## Squash games deliver best showing in 6 years of fund-raising

# HK\$1.1 million raised in a riot of colour and costumes

Lana Lam

It was a day of frenzied action at the Football Club yesterday when squash players decked out in fancy dress hotfooted it across the courts to raise HK\$1.1 million for charity.

The 12th Wing Ding charity contest brought more than 100 squash players to the Happy Valley venue for a seven-hour fund-raiser that ended with an auction and raffle draw.

The squash tournament is one of the most colourful events during Operation Santa Claus, an annual charity appeal organised by the *South China Morning Post* and RTHK. This year, Operation Santa Claus hopes to raise HK\$12 million for 16 Hong Kong-based groups that help the city's most needy.

The Wing Ding tournament has been part of Operation Santa Claus for six years and has collected more than HK\$1.6 million for the campaign. The more than HK\$500,000 raised last year was a record.

Event organiser Tim Everest said the target this year was HK\$1 million. By last night, the event had raised HK\$1.1 million.

"It's absolutely awesome. I'm a



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natural pessimist but I like a nice surprise," Everest said. "It's a community effort and I'm thrilled that we broke through the target."

The event saw 14 teams of 10 players battle it out for points, each grade playing non-stop for 40 minutes, with a horn blasting every three minutes to signal the start of a new game on a new court. Players raced from court to court, gulping down cups of water during breaks; for some, beer was the preferred drink.

Standard squash sportswear took a backseat as contestants turned up in the spirit of the fund-raiser, showing off fishnet stockings, Superman costumes, firemen's uniforms, full-

length chicken suits and sailor outfits. One group of men came dressed as Japanese geisha, complete with thigh-high pink robes, fake breasts and neon-pink wigs with pigtails.

Rajesh Mirapuri and Shivan Hemmani, both dressed up as Supermen representing the United States Recreation Club team, were enjoying their second Wing Ding tournament.

"It's hot playing in a costume but it's just great to see everyone let go and have fun and it's all for a good cause," Mirapuri said. "It's also a great way to be remembered in a fun way," he said, referring to Yuen Kam-wing, a physically handicapped man who worked at the Admiralty squash centre during the 1980s and 90s, and who the event is named after. Yuen died in 1998, aged 33, because of complications related to his illness.

Julian Ragless, a long-time Wing Ding player and squash fanatic, said he loved the chance to dress up – he was speaking through the chicken headpiece that formed part of his full-length attire. "Our target this year was the best costume, not the points. We're happy to score highly on the entertainment value."

Darren Chan Sheung-chung,

project officer with the Direction Association for the Handicapped – one of this year's beneficiaries – witnessed some of the crazy antics and colourful costumes. "It looks crazy but it's very funny. They are very kind and I feel so warm today," he said after meeting some of the players.

Chan became wheelchair-bound after a mainland traffic accident in 2000. He spent six months in hospital and lost all mobility in his legs and fingers. His spinal cord was also severely damaged.

Born in Fujian (福建) province, he studied in Hong Kong and was a mechanical engineer before the accident. Coping with life as a tetraplegic, someone who has lost partial or total use of his limbs and torso, was very hard at first and he spent several years in depression, he said.

"Since I got a job, I've changed," he said, having joined the association two years ago. "Before that, I had only the government disability allowance, I was so sad during that period."

Chan benefited directly from Operation Santa Claus in 2005 when money raised from the appeal helped the association provide extended care for the newly handicapped.

### Help make a difference

#### How you can give

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While contestants have a good time, a girl (right) passes a collection box around to play her part for charity.



## War and peace – redemption for PLA's Trailwalker champions

John Carney

What a difference a year makes. Twelve months ago a war of words broke out when competitors in the Oxfam Trailwalker accused the People's Liberation Army of using questionable tactics after the Hong Kong garrison swept the first two places in their competition debut.

They claimed the PLA had used a support crew of over 50 people who got in the way and made a nuisance of themselves. In the aftermath of the race the PLA was adamant it had done nothing wrong. Others, like Michael Maddess and Jeremy Ritcey from fourth-placed team Salomon Gatorade Racing, made accusations of gamesmanship.

A year on and the PLA again claimed the first two places on Friday night – their winning team set a new Trailwalker record of 11 hours, 59 minutes and three seconds. But this time it was smiles all round.

Endurance runners Maddess and Ritcey were in the Salomon Bonaqua Racing team that finished third, but they had no complaints.

"The best team now. There's no

doubt about that. We passed the PLA's second team at one stage but we couldn't keep up the pace," Maddess said. "It was really tough out there, but we still ran a better time than last year and it's great to be the first Hong Kong team home."

The good vibes were endorsed by the PLA Hong Kong Garrison's deputy commander, Major General Wang Junli, who played down his men's achievement, preferring instead to go on a charm offensive.

"We are the People's Liberation Army but the most important word is 'people'. We want to serve the people and be of use in the community," he said. "I want to emphasise winning

I want to emphasise winning was not important. We just wanted to take part and contribute

Major General Wang Junli, deputy commander PLA Hong Kong Garrison

was not important. We just wanted to take part and contribute to the event. I think we have succeeded in doing that."

A record 1,150 teams took part, comprising 4,600 walkers, who tackled the 100 kilometre MacLehose Trail from Sai Kung to Yuen Long. Competitors have 48 hours to complete the course.

However, one worry is that the Trailwalker will become a victim of its own success. Now it is the premier endurance event for trail runners and hikers, with teams getting more competitive each year. It's something Hong Kong Oxfam's vice-chairman, Bernard Chan, is very aware of.

"More people want to run the Trailwalker instead of hike it so it raises expectations," he said. "The problem is people are now comparing the event to the Standard Chartered Marathon.

"But there's a big difference between the two as that is a sporting event while this is a fund-raising event. It's a matter of striking a balance between the two. We need these fast teams to generate interest but fund-raising is always the priority."

## Liberals work on image after split

Fanny W. Y. Fung

The Liberal Party is desperate to rid itself of the tag of representative of heartless bosses in the wake of the departure of core member Michael Tien Puk-sun over differences on labour issues.

At a special meeting of its general affairs group yesterday, members discussed remedies a day after Tien declared he was quitting its ranks. They decided to do some soul-searching so that all members could discuss the party's future direction.

The latest split reflected the party's struggle to boost its popularity with the public without losing the support of the business sector. Tien backed a campaign to boycott Cafe de Coral over its offer to staff of a pay rise if they gave up paid meal breaks.



Michael Tien: left over labour issues

His stance came under fierce attack from party vice-chairman Tommy Cheung Yu-yun, the lawmaker for the catering sector.

The fast-food chain later reversed its decision after widespread public outrage.

After the 3½-hour meeting, former vice-chairwoman Selina Chow Liang Shuk-ye said: "We don't like being misunderstood that we represent only employers, or even worse, only heartless employers. We hope to improve our image.

"Our values are very clear. We're a centre-right political party concerned about economic development, [which] is key to employment and the livelihood of the people."

Tien's brother, former party chairman James Tien Pei-chun, gave an account of the former's growing differences with the party. He said his brother first told him about the difficulties he faced in co-operating with party leaders about six months ago. "So I suggested that Mrs Chow and I could participate more.

"But after a series of incidents, especially the recent Cafe de Coral incident, we found we were going farther and farther apart. So I told Michael: you will be very unhappy if you continue working like this... Our party core value is to take care of mainstream small and medium-sized enterprises and the middle class... Think about it.

"You may be happier working as an independent in the coming two years [before the Legco election]."

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