



Cricket fighting makes a comeback in Kaohsiung 鬥蟋蟀風重現高雄

Cricket fighting, a once-popular activity that fell out of fashion, is making a **resurgence** in schools in Kaohsiung. However, Ling-Jhou Primary School principal Wong Ching-tsai says that many students think the sight of a wounded cricket bleeding to death is too cruel, so now beetles, which are less aggressive, must be used instead.

Over the past few years, crickets have been used in lessons about local culture, but no one could have predicted that the clock would be turned back to the **heyday** of cricket fighting popularity. Now it's common to see kids gathered round in small groups, cheering on their crickets. Some even feed their crickets cabbage and sweet potato leaves to enhance their fighting prowess.

The resurgence of cricket fighting has overwhelmed Liao Cheng-hsiung, an expert with over 40 years of experience breeding crickets. He says the crickets used for fighting are bigger than the average cricket found in Taiwan, and are black with yellow spots.

Most elderly people will probably be familiar with cricket fighting. When Taiwan was an agricultural society, children were sent out to harvest grass in order to feed the water buffalo that cultivated the fields. During the cricket fights, the children would often use their grass as the stake, with the winner getting plenty of grass to feed his buffalo. People in their mid 30s should also be familiar with cricket fight-

ing. In days gone by, one of the most popular after-school activities was to catch crickets by pouring water into their underground lairs.

The crickets that Liao breeds do not like humidity, and are liable to be eaten by ants while they are still growing. To get around these difficulties, Liao has developed his own way of breeding them, using wooden boxes. The boxes ensure the breeding environment is dry, which results in higher productivity.

Liao said a female cricket lays up to 100 eggs at a time that hatch about three weeks later. Young crickets spend about two months growing, during which time they shed their shell eight times. He says his business has taken off due to a combination of two factors — natural science teachers placing bulk orders for 200 crickets at a time, and orders from owners of red arowanas, a kind of fish that feeds on crickets. Visitors have been known to come all the way from China to learn cricket-breeding skills from Liao, and he's always happy to pass on his knowledge.

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度廣為流行又消聲匿跡的鬥蟋蟀活動，又在高雄校園掀起風潮。然而，高雄芥洲國小校長翁慶才表示，多數孩子認為蟋蟀相鬥互咬、遍體鱗傷而死很殘忍，於是從善如流，把蟋蟀改成溫馴的甲蟲。

近幾年蟋蟀編入鄉土教材，沒想到掀起校園懷舊風潮，小朋友下課有空相約鬥蟋蟀，三五成群趴在蟋蟀前吆喝加油，為讓蟋蟀更有戰鬥力，餵食高麗菜、番薯葉，每隻蟋蟀吃得飽飽的。

校園風行鬥蟋蟀，讓蟋蟀達人廖正雄訂單應接不暇，有四十多年蟋蟀人工繁殖經驗的他說，一般鬥蟋蟀的主角即俗稱「寇宰仔」的黃斑黑蟋蟀，豆伯仔則是體型較大的台灣大蟋蟀，老一輩的人幾乎少不了鬥蟋蟀，早期農村社會的孩子，放學回家還得牧牛，當時小孩子割牧草當賭注，誰的蟋蟀鬥贏了，誰家的牛就有享用不盡的牧草。

五、六年級生應該也不陌生，童年最常玩的則是灌豆伯仔的遊戲，把水灌進蟋蟀洞穴，黑黑的蟋蟀馬上跳出來。

廖正雄繁殖的黃斑黑蟋蟀，不喜歡潮濕環境，過程中得避開螞蟥獵食幼蟲，所以他發明木箱繁殖法，竅門就是保持乾燥，產量和存活力提升不少。

廖正雄說，母蟋蟀繁殖力一次可達一百顆卵，約三週孵化，歷經八次換殼、約兩個月時間，即可成蟲。他說，自然科老師一次下訂就是兩百隻，紅龍魚也愛吃蟋蟀，這一兩年蟋蟀銷路不錯，甚至有中國人來拜師，他也傾囊相授。

(自由時報記者郭芳綺攝)

Cricket expert Liao Cheng-hsiung plays with two crickets, top left, and two crickets fight in a transparent box in Kaohsiung City, on May 25, 2010.

PHOTO: KUO FANG-CHI, LIBERTY TIMES

五月二十五日攝於高雄市的照片中，蟋蟀達人廖正雄逗弄著兩隻蟋蟀（左上圖），以及兩隻蟋蟀在透明箱中打鬥。

照片：自由時報記者郭芳綺攝

TODAY'S WORDS 今日單字

1. resurgence /rɪˈsʌːdʒəns/ n.

再現 (zai4 xian4)

例：There's been a resurgence of religious fundamentalism in recent years.
(近年來，宗教基本教義派又再度崛起。)

2. heyday /'heɪdeɪ/ n.

全盛期 (quan2 sheng4 qi2)

例：In his heyday, Mick was the best boxer in the country.
(全盛時期的麥克是該國最佳拳擊手。)