

兩敗俱傷

liang3 bai4 ju4 shang1

The World Cup qualifying match between Hong Kong and China has created much excitement, anguish and controversy. Neither China nor Hong Kong scored, but the home team were praised and their mainland counterparts chastised.

Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying tried to be diplomatic when he was expected to take the side of the local team, of course. So he drew flak for not showing enough support for the local boys.

Whatever view one might take, one thing is certain: the result did not help either team advance in the standings. As Hong Kong's acting captain Yapp Hung-fai observed, "A draw is not good for either of the teams." This is a situation that can be called "兩敗俱傷" (*liang3 bai4 ju4 shang1*).

"兩" (*liang3*) is "two," "both," "敗" (*bai4*) is "to lose," "to be defeated," "俱" (*ju4*) means

Idiom by Lon Yan

"complete," "all," and "傷" (*shang1*) is "an injury," "being harmed," "being hurt." Literally, "兩敗俱傷" (*liang3 bai4 ju4 shang1*) is "both lose, all hurt." It means "to cause destruction to both sides," "both parties suffering harm."

When two parties that are equally strong fight, the only result would be "兩敗俱傷" (*liang3 bai4 ju4 shang1*). When two department heads with the same clout fight each other, they would end up "兩敗俱傷."

We want to have "win-win" (雙贏) results, and not to engage in a destructive war that leads to "兩敗俱傷" (*liang3 bai4 ju4 shang1*).

Terms containing the character "敗" (*bai4*) include:

失敗 (*shi1 bai4*) – to fail

敗壞 (*bai4 huai4*) – to ruin, to corrupt

打敗 (*da3 bai4*) – to defeat

敗北 (*bai4 bei3*) – to be defeated, to lose a war