In keeping with its status as BWF’s Principal Global Partner and Global Development Partner, HSBC has been promoting active and healthy lifestyles through badminton.

Last November, top badminton stars joined HSBC executives at ‘City Badminton’ in Hong Kong for an initiative by HSBC Life. This saw community groups, including the Hong Kong Sports Association for Persons with Intellectual Disability, students from Pui Kiu College, local junior talents, HSBC staff and shoppers at host venue Olympian City two participate in badminton activities such as coaching clinics and play-to-win contests. They were also shown the physical and mental benefits of exercise. More than 3,000 people took part in this venture.

Among those involved were HSBC’s Greater China Chief Executive Helen Wong; HSBC Life’s Hong Kong Chief Executive Officer Edward Moncreiffe; multiple Olympic gold medallist and world champion in men’s doubles, Fu Haifeng of China; 2017 men’s singles world champion, Viktor Axelsen of Denmark; and Olympic mixed doubles gold medallist and former World No.1 in men’s and mixed doubles, Lee Yong Dae of Korea.

“As a leading life insurer in Hong Kong, helping build a healthier community is one of HSBC Life’s promises, and this is the reason why we have been supporting a number of initiatives through HSBC’s partnership with BWF,” said Moncreiffe.

“We hope this can encourage people to lead an active life and start taking control of their wellbeing for both the body and the mind so that they can live longer, fitter and happier.”

WHAT A YEAR!

The Badminton World Federation began 2018 with a vision to secure the long-term future of the sport, and with that established an exciting and enterprising relationship with our Principal Global Partner, HSBC.

We also launched the revamped HSBC BWF World Tour and engaged a new agency in Infront Sports & Media to drive our connection with our fans and deliver a higher standard of event and sport coverage.

This, on top of our moves to create new areas of governance and integrity and increase expectations and projects within our various departments, has led to a very successful year with many positive developments that has helped badminton grow globally.

In 2019, we look forward to working with our key partners to ensure the HSBC BWF World Tour evolves even further. BWF Secretary General Thomas Lund says the revamped World Tour was well received and brought new excitement to the badminton landscape.

“As from the feedback we have received, the restructured World Tour has appealed to fans and players alike, with higher prize money, greater coverage on television and spectacular presentation,” Lund said.

“BWF’s overall objective is to continuously grow the sport worldwide. Through our partnership with HSBC, we now have a platform to accentuate and accelerate this growth.

“We look forward to embarking on this journey together with HSBC and utilising their energy and vision to take the sport to new heights.”

Helen Wong, Chief Executive, Greater China, HSBC, shared this sentiment, labelling the partnership and the recently completed HSBC BWF World Tour Finals in Guangzhou, China, a huge success.

“We are proud to have helped badminton grow in 2018. This sponsorship has enabled us to connect in a new way with customers and communities in our key markets, including those in Greater China,” she said.

“We are also excited to welcome the World Tour Finals to the Pearl River Delta – a strategically important market for HSBC. We look forward to seeing our partnership with the BWF go from strength to strength in the years to come.”

Continues on Page 5
Dear Colleagues and Friends,

I wish to begin by extending New Year greetings to the global badminton family.

As is customary when we come to the end of another year, we reflect on the past 12 months – our achievements as well as what we can improve upon – but we also become fixed on the upcoming year; its challenges and our goals.

The year ahead is a critical one for our sport and for the Badminton World Federation as we rev up for next year’s Olympic Games in Tokyo. In addition to all the preparations around that showcase, we will for the first time in our history showcase Para badminton in the Paralympic Games. This will be a significant accomplishment, especially for our athletes with impairments who have longed to compete at the pinnacle of sport.

On Tuesday 1 January 2019 – while most of the world celebrated a new year – I suspect some of our Para athletes may have been strategising for their Paralympic quest, with qualification starting on that signature date. It was indeed another milestone on their journey towards the ultimate sporting glory and we will excitedly follow their progress until Sunday 29 March 2020 when qualification ends. Later in the year, on Monday 29 April, it will be the turn of our elite players to start their race towards the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. Their qualification period runs until Sunday 26 April 2020.

May I wish athletes vying for the 172 badminton places in the Olympic Games and the 90 badminton places in the Paralympic Games all the best.

Having looked forward, I would like to reflect now on the successes of recent months and to applaud those whose hard work has been rewarded on court. Whether it be our Players of the Year for 2018, those who earned gold at the HSBC BWF World Tour Finals or the next generation of stars who showed their skills at the LI-NING BWF World Junior Championships 2018 in Canada, there have been several athletes who have shone in the past few months. Congratulations to all medallists and winners at these events as well as to the hosts in Guangzhou (China) and Toronto (Canada) for their wonderful hospitality and organisation.

As has been well publicised, 2018 heralded the dawn of a new and extensive partnership with HSBC and, with that, the remodelling of our global tournament series into the HSBC BWF World Tour. This sponsorship agreement – with HSBC as our Principal Global Partner and our Global Development Partner – has catapulted badminton to unprecedented heights, with enhanced sports presentation as we spread our sport to more markets globally. Among other important strides we have made this year has been to increase prize money across our new event structure. We have noted players’ delight about this and some have cashed in handsomely this season.

It is pleasing to see a number of players (both singles and doubles) with six-figure earnings this year, with the top singles players Kento Momota and Tai Tzu Ying yielding US$379,250 and $381,200 respectively from their on-court success; with Tai surpassing the million-dollar mark in career earnings. The BWF Male Players of the Year – Marcus Fernaldi Gideon and Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo – shared US$469,475 (US$234,737.50 each) for their record-setting eight World Tour victories. The fact that several of our players can earn a comfortable living from being professional athletes is one of the most tangible indications of our sport’s growth and increasing prosperity. BWF is committed to continuing to raise prize money and to developing badminton at all levels.

Regarding BWF Major Events, we have announced hosts for 18 tournaments (in 11 Member Associations from four continents) during the next seven years. It is a landmark occasion as we endeavour to increase badminton’s global appeal and exposure in traditional and developing markets. This unprecedented step – awarding 18 hosts in one bid process – aligns with BWF’s vision to establish long-term targets to broaden our development initiatives and it allows our hosts to work closely with BWF and our title sponsor – Total – to ensure the staging of world-class tournaments as we continue to grow the sport globally.

As you can see, a lot is happening in badminton and there is much more to do in the season ahead. We have enjoyed a strong first year with our new World Tour and now we must improve upon this initial outing. I wish to thank all who worked diligently to ensure the inaugural year of the HSBC BWF World Tour was a tremendous success, especially our colleagues at HSBC and Infront as well as all event hosts. BWF looks forward to collaborating with you all to make 2019 even better for badminton.

In closing, I wish to say how happy I am to hear that one of our biggest stars, Lee Chong Wei, is recovering well from his recent health challenge. We wish him well as he continues his quest to return to competitive badminton.

Poul-Erik Høyer
BWF President
PARA’S BEST – SHEPHARD AND OKTILA

Jack Shephard and Leani Ratri Oktila were recognised in December for their stellar achievements in 2018, being crowned BWF Male and Female Para Badminton Player of the Year respectively.

The star players pocketed an identical tally of 11 golds and one silver during their respective campaigns. They received their awards from BWF President Poul-Erik Høyer at the Gala Dinner in Guangzhou, China, ahead of the HSBC BWF World Tour Finals.

England’s Shephard was honoured ahead of France’s Lucas Mazur and David Toupe, Ukun Rukaendi (Indonesia), Kim Jungjun (Korea) and Cheah Liek Hou (Malaysia). Oktila of Indonesia emerged the winner from a cast of nominees featuring Rachel Choong (England), Manasi Girishchandran Joshi (India), Japan’s Ayako Suzuki and Yuna Yamazaki and Sujirat Pookkham of Thailand.

“I’m feeling honoured and proud of myself for what I’ve achieved this year,” said Shephard who competes in the SS 6 sport class.

The 21-year-old won two titles at each of five events – Spain, Dubai, Ireland, Japan and the European Championships.

“To be named Male Para Badminton Player of the Year ahead of the amazing other players is a great achievement. I think it’s the biggest award in Para badminton, and I believe I’m the first SS 6 (Short Stature) player to win it. It’s an amazing feeling!”

His ultimate goal is to qualify for – and of course to win – the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games at which Para badminton will debut.

Oktila, who is classified as an SL 4 (Standing Lower) athlete, has proven a powerful force across the spectrum of SL 3, SL 4 and SU 5 in which she competes in singles and doubles (sometimes combined) events. She won triple crowns at three events – Dubai, Ireland and Thailand.

The 27-year-old thanked her country for supporting her quest for excellence and hopes to continue her successful run in the coming years as she too eyes the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games and bringing more glory to her badminton-loving country.

QUALIFICATION QUEST UNDERWAY

The race for qualification for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games has begun!

Tuesday 1 January 2019 was the beginning of qualification for the showpiece event.

Here is a snapshot of key dates and key information regarding the historic road to the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games in which badminton will debut.

• 2 April 2020 – BWF publishes the Paralympic rankings list and will notify National Paralympic Committees (NPCs) of the allocation of qualification slots for doubles. Following the confirmation from the NPCs, the BWF will notify them on allocation of qualification slots for singles.
• 3 August 2020 – Deadline for the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee to receive sport entry forms from NPCs.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

• 90 Para badminton players – 46 male and 44 female – will head to the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics.
• Badminton has been allocated 14 medal events: seven for males, six for females, and one (SL 3 – SU 5 mixed doubles) is a mixed category.
• There are ten singles events, three doubles events, and one mixed doubles event.
• Each National Paralympic Committee (NPC) is allocated a maximum of 11 male and 10 female qualification slots, with exceptions to be granted if an athlete qualifies through a Bipartite Commission Invitation.
• An NPC can field a maximum of two athletes per singles medal event (except in SS 6 men’s singles, where the maximum is one, and in SL 4 women’s singles, where the maximum is three, if all of them have qualified in the Paralympic singles ranking list).
• The maximum allocation for an NPC is one pair per event in the doubles and mixed doubles categories.
Diverse storylines pervaded the inaugural HSBC BWF World Tour Finals 2018 with the demise of favourites along the way, the resurgence of a golden pair and sweet redemption for one consistent performer.

Slicker and bursting with star power, the rebranded season finale touched down in Guangzhou with fans busily buzzing about various possibilities: Would Kento Momota sign off his amazing comeback with the year-end crown? Would Tai Tzu Ying again prove too good for all challengers in women’s singles? Could the ‘Minions’ go back-to-back at the season-ender? Would Japan dominate in the women’s tandem event as that nation had done throughout the season – and would Zheng Siwei/Huang Yaqiong continue to rule the mixed doubles kingdom?

By the evening of Sunday 16 December, all those questions were answered as the title deciders unfolded at Tianhe Gymnasium in the badminton-loving Chinese city.

What a way it started, with perennial runner-up Pusarla V Sindhu (1) finally ascending to the top of the podium at a major championship and beating one of her biggest rivals at that. The beanpole Indian toughed out an absorbing encounter against the relentless Nozomi Okuhara of Japan to savour women’s singles glory, 21-19 21-17; arguably the most memorable win of her career.

Pusarla impressed in the five-day tournament, competing unbeaten and downing a string of high-profile opponents, including Tai – who was forced to withdraw in the group stage due to injury – and Japan’s defending champion, Akane Yamaguchi, who defeated Pusarla in last year’s final.

“I’m really proud. The year has ended on a beautiful note. People have been asking why I always lose in the finals. I had to ask myself also why I was losing. Finally, I got the answer. Now I can say I’ve won the gold!”

“It’s special because I won all my matches. I have no words. Although I won (the final) in straight games, it was very tough and each point was hard. I got emotional (after winning) because it’s my first gold. I wanted this win very much,” said a beaming Pusarla.

Next was mixed doubles and, despite the all-China clash, there were fireworks from start to finish as favourites, Zheng Siwei/Huang Yaqiong, had to fight back to force a decider against their teammates, Wang Yilyu/Huang Dongping (2). The latter had toiled in their stellar compatriots’ shadows all season, losing four World Tour finals as well as the World Championship gold medal match.

Continues on Page 5
The new year also brings exciting opportunities to further our presence in the digital sphere. BWF is eager to work with Infront to evolve how the sport of badminton is perceived on the global stage and to drive engagement with athletes, fans and stakeholders.

Managing Director of Infront Pan-Asia, Ian Mathie, says the aim is to deliver a higher standard of event in 2019 and thereby ensure the future for badminton remains bright.

"Last year was massive with the launch of a new World Tour consisting of 27 events together with the BWF attracting such blue-chip global brands as HSBC and TOTAL which represents a real endorsement for the sport," he said.

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"This year, BWF and Infront’s increased focus on digital is a really exciting prospect as without doubt this is what is needed to reach and engage with existing and new fans."

As we build towards major milestones such as the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games and the much-awaited debut of Para badminton at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, our partners will continue to be vital in developing a strategic position for the sport.

We thank all our partners – HSBC, TOTAL, Yonex, Li-Ning, ELO, Laymau, Badminton Photo and Infront – for their continued support, professionalism, dedication and vision and we wish them the very best in 2019.
The honouring of the young Chinese pair Han Chengkai and Zhou Haodong with the Most Promising Player of the Year award was recognition of how much they have already accomplished in their fledgling careers. Just last year, they were contesting the qualifying rounds Superseries events. In 2018, however, they were in contention at the business end of tournaments, making semifinals in India and Singapore before finishing runners-up at the VICTOR China Open and winning the YONEX French Open.

Han and Zhou grabbed the Eddy Choong Award ahead of He Jiting (China), Apryani Rahayu (Indonesia), Gregoria Mariska Tunjung (Indonesia) and Goh Jin Wei (Malaysia).

“This award is of great significance to us,” said Han Chengkai.

“This was a year in which we showed great improvement in our performances. We had great results at the China Open and the French Open. This will inspire us to get better.”

He Jiting was also nominated in the Most Improved Player category alongside Satwiksairaj Rankireddy/Chirag Shetty (India), Anthony Sinisuka Ginting (Indonesia), Mayu Matsumoto/Wakana Nagahara (Japan) and Seo Seung Jae (Korea). Matsumoto and Nagahara won the nod of the Awards Commission, with the Japanese pair showing tremendous poise in winning the TOTAL BWF World Championships, and continuing with strong performances through the latter part of the season. Matsumoto and Nagahara were among a clutch of Japanese women’s doubles pairs to perform strongly in 2018.

“It’s really special for us to win this award. It’s great reward for the hard work we’ve put in this year,” said a delighted Matsumoto.

While Tai Tzu Ying (Chinese Taipei) ruled women’s singles with seven World Tour titles and the Asian Games gold, Kento Momota (Japan) made a stirring return to elite badminton by winning the Badminton Asia Championships and the World Championships, besides World Tour titles in China, Denmark and Japan. Meanwhile, Marcus Fernaldi Gideon/Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo and Zheng Siwei/Huang Yaqiong were the standout pairs in men’s doubles and mixed doubles respectively.

Zheng (China), Gideon/Sukamuljo (Indonesia) and Momota (Japan) were in the running for the Male Player of the Year award; with the mighty ‘Minions’ taking the coveted title for the second successive year after a stellar season that saw them claim eight World Tour titles as well as Asian Games gold.

“It’s a great honour to win this award for the second straight time. It’s an inspiration for us to keep working hard. We did well all through the season but I would say our highlight was winning the Asian Games gold,” said Sukamuljo.

Nominees for the Female Player of the Year were Huang Yaqiong (China), Yuki Fukushima/Sayaka Hirota (Japan) and Tai Tzu Ying. Ultimately, Huang, winner of nine titles – including the World Championships and the Asian Games – was rewarded for an excellent season.

“Last year I was nominated but I missed it. This time I finally won this award and I feel really happy,” said an overjoyed Huang.

China’s Shi Yuqi and Pusarla V Sindhu of India won the awards for the Best Dressed Player in the male and female category respectively.
WAY TO ‘GOH’!

There was light for Goh Jin Wei (1) after she had “cried endless nights” the last two years – the Malaysian regained the title she won in 2015, capturing the LI-NING BWF World Junior Championships 2018 in Markham, Canada.

Goh admitted that her failure to keep her 2015 crown in 2016 and 2017 had hurt her no end, and the victory in the women’s singles final – 21-13 21-11 over Denmark’s Line Christophersen – had finally taken a weight off her shoulders.

“I cried endless nights, I think. Then I thought it was important that I worked hard, so I’m happy that I did it. It makes up for the disappointments because this is my final year in the juniors and I’m happy I could end it achieving my goal. It has been an incredible year, and I’m looking forward to the next year because Olympic qualification is beginning soon.”

There was also a second title for Kunlavut Vitidsarn (3) in men’s singles. The Thai defended his title beating Japan’s Kodai Naraoka 21-9 21-11.

Vitidsarn went into the men’s singles final aware of Kodai Naraoka’s rallying capabilities – the Japanese had dragged his semifinal opponent Li Shifeng into an endless baseline-to-baseline duel. Decisive, opportunistic play by Vitidsarn helped him comprehensively beat Naraoka in 43 minutes.

“I’m very happy to have defended my title,” said Vitidsarn. “I knew the pattern I had to play, and it went well. I’m proud that I played well under pressure.”

Meanwhile, China (4) successfully navigated testing waters to claim their fifth successive title at the LI-NING BWF World Junior Mixed Team Championships for the Suhandinata Cup.

The come-from-behind 3-1 victory over Korea gave China their 13th title overall and their best-ever streak of title wins, bettering their four-title sequence from 2007 to 2010.

China finished the event with the men’s doubles and women’s doubles gold medals, while Indonesia pocketed the mixed doubles. Liu Xuanxuan/Xia Yuting (5) claimed glory for China over Malaysia’s Pearly Koong Le Tan/Toh Ee Wei in women’s doubles; China won a second gold through Di Zijian/Wang Chang over Korea’s Shin Tae Yang/Wang Chan (2) in men’s doubles.

In the all-Indonesian mixed doubles final, Leo Rolly Carnando/Indah Cahya Sari Jamil (6) got the better of their compatriots Rehan Naufal Kushnerjanto/Siti Fadia Silva Ramadhanti.

Goh buried her demons with a domineering performance over Christophersen, who was bidding to become the first European women’s singles winner at the World Junior Championships.

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Korea got the start they were looking for, with Shin Tae Yang/Wang Chan outpointing Di Zijian/Wang Chang in a sizzling men’s doubles battle, 18-21 21-17 21-16.

Wang Zhiyi was once again the standout player for the champions, showing the same tenacity that she had in her stirring semifinal victory in which she had saved two match points. Wang won her women’s singles bout over Park Ga Eun, following which Li Shifeng made it 2-1 in men’s singles. Liu Xuanxuan and Xia Yuting sealed the tie for China beating Jang Eun Seo/Lee Jung Hyun in women’s doubles.

In the semifinals, China survived a tough battle against Japan, coming back from 1-2 and two match points down to win 3-2, while Korea held off Indonesia 3-1.

LI-NING BWF WORLD JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIPS 2018

MS: Kunlavut Vitidsarn (THA) bt Kodai Naraoka (JPN) 21-9 21-11
WS: Goh Jin Wei (MAS) bt Line Christophersen (DEN) 21-13 21-11
MD: Di Zijian/Wang Chang (CHN) bt Shin Tae Yang/Wang Chan (KOR) 21-19 22-20
WD: Liu Xuanxuan/Xia Yuting (CHN) bt Pearly Koong Le Tan/Toh Ee Wei (MAS) 21-16 21-16
XD: Leo Rolly Carnando/Indah Cahya Sari Jamil (INA) bt Rehan Naufal Kushnerjanto/Siti Fadia Silva Ramadhanti (INA) 21-15 21-9

LI-NING BWF WORLD JUNIOR MIXED TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS 2018

FINAL: China bt Korea 3-1 (Korea won men’s doubles; China won women’s singles, men’s singles and women’s doubles)
DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

BWF WORLD COACHING CONFERENCE 2018

- 9 world-class speakers invited
- 80+ participating coaches from more than 20 countries
- 5 scholarships for Pan Am coaches
- Each session was video recorded and is available on the BWF YouTube channel

The BWF World Coaching Conference 2018 was conducted at Hilton Toronto Markham Suites and Markham Pan Am Venue on 16-17 November 2018.

The programme dovetailed with the LI-NING BWF World Junior Championships 2018 and aimed at giving national and international coaches an opportunity to access the most up-to-date coaching methods and practices.

BWF’s goal is to have well-informed, educated and talented coaches throughout the badminton system.

Given that, the agenda of the conference covered a wide range of interesting topics and provided an opportunity for participants to update their knowledge and explore innovations in our sport.

This forum offered an opportunity for networking with many experts from the world of badminton, sport science and global sport.

Former Danish national coach Kenneth Larsen was one such expert. He talked about the deficiencies of repetitive training; the importance of training players to make choices; and the concept of split vision.

“I want to help people develop independence, reflective skills and self-esteem. That is about trying to implement a dialogue based on questions, where they try to come up with answers themselves,” said Larsen.

“It’s not about learning every situation, but being aware, and then it’s almost automatic. The big thing is the process of reflection, that they’re able to handle situations, without panicking or being afraid.”

The BWF World Coaching Conference 2019 takes place 22-23 August during the TOTAL BWF World Championships in Basel, Switzerland.

GLOBAL HEALTH BADMINTON STUDY

- 7 days of examinations
- 285 athletes from 39 countries involved in the clinical assessments

The BWF invited athletes at the LI-NING BWF World Junior Championships 2018 to take part in this research study and to provide information about their injury experiences during their sporting careers. Information gathered from this study will be used to guide and direct future athlete health as well as injury-prevention initiatives.

The aim of this study is to report injuries among elite junior badminton players and to investigate if certain risk factors are associated with previous and present injuries. BWF’s ultimate goal is to support the long-term health and fitness of elite badminton players.

The BWF looks forward to enhancing its development and coaching initiatives in 2019 and raising the standards of its educational programmes.

SHUTTLE TIME AND SPECIAL OLYMPICS COLLABORATE

In partnership with Special Olympics Texas and Special Olympics International, the BWF hosted a three-day Shuttle Time Teachers course and two-day Shuttle Time Tutors course in Houston, Texas.

Attendees were impressed with the incredible Shuttle Time resources and agreed that Shuttle Time training modules and videos will make for an easy implementation of badminton as a community or school-based sport.

All participants left the training with a badminton starter kit to further help in launching this new and exciting sport in the USA.

French player, Christo Popov, took part in the Global Health Badminton Study.
AN EVENTFUL YEAR

In its first year, the HSBC BWF World Tour proved to be a massive success. The newly-structured World Tour offered greater financial incentives to players, while focusing on enhanced presentation and production values. These efforts paid off with a greater uptick in the numbers of followers watching and following badminton.

One of the successes of the new World Tour was the opportunities it afforded players to improve their rankings and attempt qualification for elite events. There were thus a number of first-time qualifiers for the season finale – the HSBC BWF World Tour Finals.

Among the unusual features of the year gone by was that, despite the highly competitive nature of the circuit, four of the five categories were dominated by a single player or pair. Kento Momota, Tai Tzu Ying, Marcus Fernaldi Gideon/Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo and Zheng Siwei/Huang Yaqiong were the standout players in their respective categories. In women's singles, Tai Tzu Ying (3) once again had a brilliant year with eight titles overall, but she stumbled in the quarterfinals of the TOTAL BWF World Championships. Gideon/Sukamuljo (4) won nine title wins overall, while Zheng/Huang (12) were even more successful, winning the world crown and the Asian Games among their nine title wins.

It was rather ironic then that none of those who dominated the season could wrap it up with a title win at the year-end finale, the HSBC BWF World Tour Finals. Encouragingly for China, two young pairs emerged – Han Chengkai/Zhou Haodong and He Jiting/Tan Qiang.

CHINA, JAPAN TAKE TEAM TITLES

Li and Liu were crucial to helping China regain the Thomas Cup in Bangkok (2). China’s all-round strength proved too hard for Japan to crack in the final as they went down 3-1. China had earlier beaten Indonesia 3-1 in the semifinals while Japan overcame Denmark 3-2 thanks to the three Ks in their singles lineup – Kento Momota, Kenta Nishimoto and Kanta Tsuneyama (1).

Inspired by playing on home turf, Thailand denied China a place in the Uber Cup final for the first time ever. The host’s singles stars Ratchanok Intanon, Nitchaon Jindapol and Busanan Ongbamrungphan (5) proved their mettle as they saw Thailand to a 3-2 in the semifinals. However, the Thais were no match for Japan (11) in the final; the Japanese breaking a 37-year drought to claim their sixth title.

LEE FIGHTS CANCER

While the on-court thrills grabbed the majority of the attention, the most heroic battle unfolded off-court, in the case of Lee Chong Wei (8). The Malaysian legend had achieved a historic dozen at his home tournament, but soon after had to confront a far bigger challenge as he was diagnosed with nose cancer. Lee showed the same fighting qualities that he is renowned for on court en route to making a full recovery.

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The inspirational 36-year-old is reported to have returned to training as he plots his comeback to the international arena.

**FIXED-HEIGHT SERVICE**

Perhaps the most significant development in badminton last year, from a regulation perspective, was the introduction of the fixed-height service. Following the Badminton Association of Malaysia’s proposal in 2017 to trial fixed-height serving – to which BWF membership agreed – BWF started experimental testing from 1 March, 2018. Testing started at the YONEX German Open on 6 March followed by the YONEX All England Open Badminton Championships 2018. The Experimental Service Law (Fixed Height) mandated that “the whole of the shuttle shall be below 1.15 metres from the surface of the court at the instant of being hit by the server’s racket”.

All Grade 1 events – except the BWF World Junior Championships – underwent testing as did Grade 2 events (the HSBC BWF World Tour and BWF Tour Super 100 events) and continental championships in April.

In May, while testing was ongoing the BWF membership voted in favour of implementing a fixed-height service, with the BWF Council’s proposal achieving the required two-thirds majority in voting at the Annual General Meeting in May.

A total of 252 votes were cast by the BWF membership, with 129 votes in favour of changing the scoring format while 123 votes went against the motion. A total of 168 votes would have been necessary for the scoring system to be changed.

**LENTHY BANS FOR TAN AND ZULKIFFLI**

Badminton players, Tan Chun Seang and Zulfadli Zulkiffli, were suspended in May from competing in badminton for 15 and 20 years respectively for breaching the BWF Code of Conduct in Relation to Betting, Wagering and Irregular Match Results.

They were also banned from any involvement in badminton for 15 and 20 years respectively. The bans covered administrative, coaching, officiating, or development functions. In addition, Tan was fined US$15,000 while Zulkiffli was fined US$25,000 by a BWF Ethics Hearing Panel.

The three-member independent Panel found that Tan committed 26 violations of the 2012 Code of Conduct in Relation to Betting Wagering and Irregular Match Results while Zulkiffli committed 27 violations of the 2012 Code of Conduct in Relation to Betting Wagering and Irregular Match Results and four violations of the 2016 Code of Conduct in Relation to Betting Wagering and Irregular Match Results.

The independent Panel noted both players “engaged in corruption offences over a significant period and a significant number of tournaments” dating back to 2013.

Both players are appealing their bans.

**BUILDING INTEGRITY CAPACITY**

In October, BWF began working with its membership to strengthen national integrity programmes, bringing together Secretaries General and Council members from the badminton associations of India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand to share information and knowledge on key integrity pillars: Rules System; Education and Awareness; Monitoring & Investigations; and Judicial Processes.

This BWF pilot project examined the current national structures around safeguarding the integrity of badminton and how to build capacity in that area and fortify the sport against corruption. The four Member Associations shared common issues and discussed the next steps in their respective integrity programmes.

The sessions included a joint presentation from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), whose Recognise | Reject | Report theme addressed the importance of athletes recognising approaches, knowing how to reject these and ensuring they report these approaches.

**RECORD ‘MAJOR EVENTS’ ANNOUNCEMENT**

In November, BWF unveiled 18 hosts for upcoming BWF Major Events from 2019-2025, with badminton’s top tournaments headed to 11 Member Associations across four continents.

It was a landmark occasion for BWF as it endeavours to increase badminton’s global appeal and exposure in traditional and developing markets worldwide. The unprecedented decision to award 18 hosts in one bid process aligned with BWF’s vision of establishing long-term targets to broaden its development initiatives.

The inspirational 36-year-old is reported to have returned to training as he plots his comeback to the international arena.

The independent Panel noted both players “engaged in corruption offences over a significant period and a significant number of tournaments” dating back to 2013.

Both players are appealing their bans.

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