BADMINTON WILL BE BACK
United we stand

What a difference three months make.

We began 2020 with great excitement and anticipation as the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games came into view.

Now, we find ourselves in a very different and quite foreign situation – not only for our badminton community but the entire world.

Our thoughts first and foremost are with everyone affected by this global pandemic and I hope everyone is keeping well and safe.

The badminton community has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in many ways and it has been our No.1 priority since this started to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of all athletes, their entourage, officials and the greater badminton fraternity.

Tournament cancellations and the flow-on effect this has on elite players and coaches, whereby they could now be in a position of temporary unemployment and loss of income is something we have had to consider and make preparations for.

Likewise, the sad, but necessary postponement of Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games on Tuesday, 24 March left us with many questions regarding the future of both events plus technical difficulties around rankings and qualification.

The BWF team has been working round the clock to find solutions to these questions with the aim of providing the best possible result for our elite players, while taking all necessary precautions around health and safety.

We are delighted that the International Olympic Committee (IOC), International Paralympic Committee (IPC), Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee (TOCOG) and Tokyo Metropolitan Government have been able to agree on new dates for Tokyo 2020.

The Games of the XXII Olympiad will now be held 23 July to 8 August 2021, with the Paralympic Games to follow from 24 August until 5 September 2021.

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We soon wish to provide clarity on how this affects the Olympic qualification system. Our review process is expected to take a few more weeks upon which we will make another announcement.

We also made the call to freeze the World Rankings and World Juniors Rankings, with ranking lists backdated to 17 March 2020. As soon as it is deemed safe and plausible to resume competition, we will communicate the procedure for unfreezing of the rankings.

Right now though, it is about following the advice of authorities, including the World Health Organization (WHO) and various health experts, to be able to make the right decisions at the right times.

As you are aware, we have suspended a number of tournaments in May, June and July and have rescheduled the TOTAL BWF Thomas and Uber Cup Finals 2020 a second time to 3-11 October 2020.

We have strong human and commercial considerations to protect the key structures of our sport that will ensure it survives these volatile and uncertain times, and with the full support of our Member Associations, Continental Confederations, international top players and key stakeholders, we hope to “start again” soon when the time is right.

In the meantime, stay safe at home. Let’s get through this together.

Poul-Erik Høyer
For the greater good

With the COVID-19 global pandemic wreaking havoc on the sporting calendar, the Badminton World Federation (BWF) had been obligated to make some tough but important decisions as the health, wellbeing and welfare of the badminton community remained our utmost priority.

Rankings on hold

On 31 March, 16 days after the last shuttle was hit at the YONEX All England Open 2020, BWF froze its World Rankings and World Junior Rankings until further notice.

The last rankings list released on 17 March would now be used as a basis for entry and seeding once suspended international tournaments are safe to resume.

Clearer information would be communicated on the ‘unfreezing’ process following the commencement of the international circuit and when BWF has an overview of the sporting calendar.

A solution is being sought to do it in a staggered way in order to avoid any extreme drop off of points from previous tournaments, which may disrupt the ranking structure.

Olympic qualification system under review

On 30 March, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), International Paralympic Committee (IPC), Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee (TOCOG) and Tokyo Metropolitan Government announced the new dates for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

BWF has initiated a review process to confirm the impact of the Games’ postponement to next year (Olympics: 23 July-8 August, Paralympics: 24 August-5 September) on the qualification system.

This process is expected to take several weeks and BWF will make an announcement once all circumstances have been carefully considered.

The consequences of the World Rankings freeze will not apply to the Olympic qualification system.

With the Olympics taking up its slot next August, the rescheduling of the World Championships 2021 is also being looked at. Alternatives dates are being discussed with hosts Spain.

Tournaments rescheduled

The safety of all athletes, their entourage, officials and the greater badminton community remains BWF’s top priority.

After close consultation and in consensus with Host Member Associations and Continental Confedurations, BWF took the necessary step of suspending a number of HSBC BWF World Tour, BWF Tour and other BWF-sanctioned tournaments scheduled to take place in May, June and July 2020.

Chief among the postponed competitions is the prestigious TOTAL BWF Thomas & Uber Cup Finals 2020 in Aarhus, Denmark.

Initially moved to 15-23 August, the tournament has since been rescheduled a second time following the Danish Government’s decision on 6 April to extend its ban on “larger gatherings” until the end of August. The TOTAL BWF Thomas and Uber Cup Finals 2020 will now be held on 3-11 October.

BWF in consultation and consensus with Badminton Denmark, tournament organisers Sport Event Denmark and the local Aarhus government, concluded that a move to October was the best solution.

Solutions for the BWF AGM 2020 and Members’ Forum, both key highlights on our calendar, are also being considered.

Affected HSBC BWF World Tour events meanwhile, include the BLIBLI Indonesia Open 2020 and TOYOTA Thailand Open 2020.

In the meantime, BWF is liaising closely with the Athletes’ Commission on the unfortunate impacts of the COVID-19 situation on players.

The thoughts and wishes of everyone at BWF remain with those affected by this pandemic.

― BWF Secretary General
Thomas Lund

“The health, safety and wellbeing of all athletes, their entourage, officials and the greater badminton community are our top priority.”

— BWF Secretary General
Thomas Lund
Life in lockdown: Training, hobbies, family

Badminton players, like their peers in other sports, aren’t used to leading physically restricted lives.

For elite players in particular, who are used to spending most of their time training, competing or travelling, developments over the last month have posed challenges they’ve never faced before. From leading physically active lives, they’ve had to adapt to life under lockdown.

Yet, elite players have achieved their success primarily because they seek to make the best of every situation on court. Following this principle, they are, for the most part, seeking to keep themselves sharp despite the challenges of social distancing and confinement. Some have also used the extra time available to pursue off-court interests.

The approach to training has varied depending on whether they are part of a national set-up or relatively independent, and also on the extent of the lockdown in their respective countries.

Independent players like Beiwen Zhang and Michelle Li have devised their own home workout routines.

“I haven’t been in contact with my coach, but I’ve been doing home workouts as well as running outdoors to keep my body in shape,” said world No.15 Zhang, who admits that it is “very difficult” to stay motivated.

Macau Open champion Michelle Li has turned crisis into an opportunity by setting up a home gym.

“I’ve turned my room into a gym,” said the world No.10 Canadian. “I’m using adjustable dumbbells since I can’t fit anything bigger into my room. It’s still great and I love it because there is such a wide variety of full-body exercises I can carry out with dumbbells. I’ve also adopted a new habit to go out for runs and walks with my niece and enjoying nature more. I still connect with my coach once in a while just to check up and make sure I stay focused.”

On the other hand, players from badminton powerhouses like Thailand and Malaysia have to follow a programme devised by team coaches, with daily workouts monitored live over video.

“I train with my teammates and coaches using the Zoom app,” said men’s doubles world No.9 Soh Wooi Yik. “I also have some weights in my house to keep myself fit. I have workouts at home with the programme given by my coaches and I watch videos of badminton matches to analyse my game.”

The situation is different for men’s singles No.2 Chou Tien Chen, who was quarantined along with the rest of the Chinese Taipei team on their return home from the Yonex All England Open 2020.

“I was quarantined for 14 days. The government arranged a place for us to train while we were under quarantine. We spent half a day training and the other half in our own rooms. I read the Bible regularly, so I felt calm and spiritual peace,” said Chou.

The players have since returned to their homes; Chou’s compatriot Tai Tzu Ying even posted pictures of herself hiking in the woods.

Like Tai, players have used the time to pursue other interests. Sapsiree Taerattanachai frequently posts videos of herself playing the guitar or cooking; Soh Wooi Yik sings with his family and is learning cooking from his mother, while Danish star Mia Blichfeldt is into knitting and reading books.

Quite significantly, a few players are also doing their bit to help frontline workers. Taerattanachai, for instance, posted pictures of herself making face masks at home that she later donated to hospitals.

Despite the uncertainty on the lockdown tenure, players are glad they are finally getting time to catch up with their loved ones. It is certain, therefore, that the players will be recharged and raring to go once the season kicks in again.

“Chou Tien Chen and Beiwen Zhang deal with isolation their own way.”

— Chou Tien Chen
A study by a team at Coventry University has found that the BWF Shuttle Time Schools Programme for schoolchildren is superior to the UK’s regular national curriculum on Physical Education classes in terms of improving Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS), a key indicator of overall fitness.

Undertaken by Michael J Duncan and his colleagues, the study was conducted on 158 children (83 boys and 75 girls) aged 6-9 years from two primary schools over a 10-week period. The children were divided into three batches; one batch underwent Shuttle Time training twice a week, another once a week, while a third group continued their regular twice-a-week PE classes consisting of one weekly session focussed on cricket and the other on hockey and basketball.

The study titled ‘Dose Response Effects of the BWF Shuttle Time Programme on Children’s Fundamental Movement Skills, Motor Fitness and Physical Activity’ was funded by the BWF Sport Science programme.

Tests on FMS (locomotor and object control skills), perceived FMS and motor fitness were assessed before, immediately after and 10 weeks after the Shuttle Time intervention.

The researchers filmed the children and analysed how competent they were in their FMS, and asked the children to self-assess how well they thought they could perform different movement patterns.

The time taken to sprint 10m, distance jumped in a standing long jump and how far the children could chest pass a 1kg medicine ball whilst seated were also measured and taken as indicators of motor fitness. Collectively, these assessments provided information on their movement quality and quantity.

**Key Findings**

Engaging in Shuttle Time improved children’s FMS immediately following the intervention but importantly, the improvements in FMS were maintained 10 weeks after the intervention had finished. This demonstrates that undertaking Shuttle Time had a lasting impact on the children’s FMS. The children who undertook Shuttle Time twice per week saw larger improvements in their FMS than the group that undertook it once a week.

Likewise, for motor fitness (movement outcomes) engaging in Shuttle Time either once weekly or twice weekly produced similar results with groups demonstrating improvements in 10m sprint speed and standing long jump distance post intervention and 10 weeks post intervention.

**Conclusion**

Engaging in the BWF Shuttle Time Schools Programme results in marked improvements in both movement quality (i.e. FMS) and movement outcomes (i.e. motor fitness) in children aged 6-9 years old. Thus, Shuttle Time presents an effective mechanism to developing positive health trajectories for children, giving them the fundamental movement skills to lead physically active lives both as children and into adulthood.
BWF has entered the exciting next phase in the AirBadminton project.

Following the global launch of AirBadminton last May, BWF reached out to production companies to confirm the manufacturing process of the AirShuttle and continue the development of the product to further improve stability, durability and performance.

Since commencing this project six years ago in collaboration with the Institute for Sports Research (ISR) at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, the goal has been to develop a new shuttlecock to allow people to have a more positive experience of badminton outdoors.

The main considerations were that it must be played with the same rackets and have increased resistance to wind.

With the appointment of a manufacturer in Chinese Taipei in December 2019, we began to see the fruits of our labour as we commenced the mass production of the AirShuttle.

At the same time, we started to establish partnerships with brands and retailers to ensure that the AirShuttle and associated equipment are accessible to everyone at an affordable price.

This has been an important step of the project as each market has its own unique consumer behaviour that we need to accommodate.

BWF has also been working closely together with the Continental Confederations and Member Associations to ensure the AirShuttle gets to as many people as possible.

BWF Secretary General Thomas Lund said: “The goal is for the AirShuttle to thrive in all badminton markets and we are delighted by the positive reactions to the first and second phases of the rollout.

“We have been able to test the waters through activations and promotions conducted by our Member Associations and it’s been promising to see a very high demand for the AirShuttle.

“We have passed this feedback onto our brands and retailers and we are currently working with them to create sustainable marketing and distribution plans for each region.

“Excitingly, we already have several brands onboard and we’re looking forward to more coming on shortly.”

— BWF Secretary General Thomas Lund
‘New stars’ created

Digital and social media play an important role in promoting sports participation and generating engagement for fans.

In recognition of the need that the long-term growth of badminton is dependent on creating star players who act as role models and inspire fans across the world, Badminton World Federation (BWF) partnered with one of the world’s leading digital and social consultancy agencies, Seven League, to deliver its Star Creation Programme.

The Star Creation Programme is designed to help grow both the global popularity of players and badminton as a sport.

Over the past six months, leading athletes Kim Astrup (DEN), Mia Blichfeldt (DEN), Ashwini Ponappa (IND), Sapsiree Taerattanachai (THA) and Beiwen Zhang (USA) participated in a practical social media tutoring course with the goal to:

▸ Enhance their social media skills and understanding
▸ Grow their social media followers
▸ Generate better engagement with their fans
▸ Build their personal brand

▸ Inspire the next generation of players and fans; and
▸ Increase their brand value

In April 2020, the five players graduated from phase one of the pilot programme taking away with them a number of social media best practices.

“The [Star Creation] Programme was great. I loved being part of it,” said Ponappa.

“The team [at Seven League] helped me understand the importance of social media and interacting with fans. I loved the creative ideas that were shared and I have definitely enjoyed posting and being more open about sharing things.”

Blichfeldt added: “The programme has given me more confidence and the understanding of how to make good content and get more involved with my followers.”

BWF Secretary General Thomas Lund said he hoped each Star Creation athlete would encourage their peers to consider joining the programme.

“Badminton players have a unique opportunity to develop a close relationship with fans. We worked with Seven League to develop a programme to help athletes do this so that they can be a star on and off the court.

“We are very satisfied with the results of the pilot programme and we look forward to seeing more players sign up in the coming years. Hopefully, this will inspire all our players to become active on social media to create even more attention on themselves as stars and badminton in general.”

A second batch of players have already begun their weekly sessions with Seven League as part of phase two of the project.

They include Michelle Li, Gronya Sommerville, Chirag Shetty, Sikki Reddy, Lu Ching Yao and Yang Po Han.

The next step is to commence advanced interview and media training tips to help prepare athletes for major tournaments like the Olympic Games.
In February, the release of the 2019 International Sports Federations Social Media Rankings by Burson Cohn & Wolfe Sports (BCW Sports) showed BWF to be well on course to deliver its goal of being the No.1 International Federation on social media.

BWF topped one category and featured in the top five of numerous others as the sport’s native platforms experienced exponential growth over 12 months.

More good news followed a month later as BWF’s fourth placing in Redtorch’s 4th edition of the #SportOnSocial League Table – the 2019 social media performance ranking of 35 IOC-recognised International Federations – justified the robust execution of its new social and digital strategy.

Based on performance across the four main social media platforms – Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube – BWF ranked higher than football, table tennis, swimming, athletics, cycling and tennis and behind only basketball, rugby and volleyball.

BWF was first on Twitter, second on Facebook, fourth on YouTube and sixth on Instagram.

Particularly remarkable was our overall Instagram performance given that we only launched our account on 13 August 2019. The successful audit and revamp of our short-form video content also led to some impressive numbers on Facebook and YouTube.

Overall, the engagement level we have had with fans in 2019 has given us the incentive to aim even higher this year.

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**Highlights**

**No.1**

- **Facebook**
  - 4K new followers († 50.06%)
  - 85 million engagements († 1249%)
  - 235.5 million video views († 419%)
  - 160.9 minutes of video viewed († 321%)

- **Instagram**
  - 233,015 followers since launch with 8.68 million engagements

- **Twitter**
  - 37.4K new followers († 27.6%)

- **Weibo**
  - 824.7K new followers († 92.1%)

**BCW SPORTS**

- Jumped to 4th from 12th in overall rankings
- 43% growth on Facebook (second only to equestrian)
- 6th in total video views in the 4.5 months BWF was active

**No.2**

- **Total Views** on Facebook (659,782,934), sandwiched between FIBA 3×3 and FIBA
  - 149,000 people per post (based on real users, as opposed to automated bots or sporadic users)
  - Most Interactions on Twitter with 588 per post, behind FIFA

- **No.3**
  - 186,064 Facebook comments

- **No.4**
  - Highest Follower Growth on Instagram with 233,015 new followers since launch – an extraordinary increase of 5,602.7% (behind FIVB, FIBA and World Rugby)

- **No.5**
  - Highest Growth of Page Likes on Facebook with 202,697 new likes (42.72%)

**REDTORCH**

- Jumped to 4th from 12th in overall rankings
- 43% growth on Facebook (second only to equestrian)
- 6th in total video views in the 4.5 months BWF was active

- Created the most content for IGTV, reaching 13 million views
- Second highest growth on Twitter with 38%
- Second highest growth on YouTube with 589K new subscribers

- 161 million views during the TOTAL BWF World Championships and TOTAL BWF Para Badminton World Championships 2019 alone. 1.5 videos returned more than one million views.
In May, BWF will launch a new Statutes App which has all the rules and regulations of the BWF in one convenient location. Available for both iOS and Android platforms, the content mirrors the five chapters of the BWF statutes page of the website (link here).

Chapter 1
Governance

Chapter 2
Ethics

Chapter 3
Judicial Processes

Chapter 4
Rules of the Game

Chapter 5
Technical Regulations

As new and modifications to existing regulations are approved, these updates are posted on the BWF website and in the App. The App has a place to bookmark pages, integrated BWF social media feeds and links out to BWF websites. Technical officials, players, coaches, team managers and other members of our global badminton community will find this a convenient tool to easily access information about any of the rules and regulations affecting their role and engagement in badminton.

Download on the
App Store

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www.bwfbadminton.com
New ‘i am badminton’ ambassadors announced

It has been five years since BWF’s Integrity Unit was formed.

In this time, BWF’s ‘i am badminton’ awareness campaign has been at the forefront of our efforts to communicate our approach to integrity.

On 22 April, we proudly announced a new role call of global superstars from the World Tour and Para badminton to the list:

▸ Pusarla V. Sindhu (IND)
▸ Michelle Li (CAN)
▸ Zheng Si Wei (CHN)
▸ Huang Ya Qiong (CHN)
▸ Jack Shephard (ENG)
▸ Valeska Knoblauch (GER)
▸ Chan Ho Yuen Daniel (HKG)
▸ Marc Zwiebler – Athletes’ Commission Chair (GER)

The campaign provides the players a platform to express their love and respect for badminton by advocating and committing to clean and honest play.

It’s hoped such a concerted effort will not only raise awareness across the entire badminton landscape but encourage players to be active participants in shaping the integrity of the sport.

Pusarla V. Sindhu said playing clean and honest is very important in any sport.

“This message starts with one voice. If we as ambassadors can highlight this, then this will spread to more players,” she said.

“You are playing the sport for yourself. You need to be happy about it. You have to play it very clean and that is very important to me.”

Michelle Li added: “Sport provides a great experience and opportunity for the younger generation because you can learn so much and provides you with a lot of life lessons.

“When we’re on the court, we are all working really hard and trying to go for the same goals, so we all want to be on the same starting line.

“Therefore, it’s important to be clean and honest as it is a true representation of your ability.”

The new batch of ambassadors will continue the great work of a number of elite players, past and present, who have fronted the campaign since 2016.

They include BWF President Poul-Erik Høyer; BWF Para Badminton Athletes’ Commission Chair Richard Perot, and superstars such as Saina Nehwal, Viktor Axelsen, Hendra Setiawan, Christinna Pedersen, Chen Long, Misaki Matsutomo and Akaya Takahashi.

Collectively, they will help communicate to the playing group the key messages of the campaign and attend badminton and Para badminton tournaments where they will share with the future generation their commitment to clean and honest badminton.

President Høyer said: “Every player has the right to compete in clean and fair sport. Match fixing, match manipulation and doping are contrary to the spirit of sport.

“As an ambassador, we all play an important role in safeguarding the future of badminton.

“Our youth and Para badminton players are perceived to be at greater risk of match manipulation and doping due to their lack of exposure on the international circuit.

“When we’re on the court, we are all working really hard and trying to go for the same goals, so we all want to be on the same starting line.”

— Michelle Li

“The idea of the ‘i am badminton’ campaign is for us as role models to share our experiences with these target groups so they have a heightened level of awareness on the importance of anti-match manipulation and anti-doping.”
#iambadminton

i am clean
i am honest
i am badminton