WELL DONE, THAILAND

After months of planning and hard work, the HSBC BWF World Tour 2020 season successfully and safely concluded in Bangkok.
Welcome to a new year, and a fresh start

There were times I wished I had a crystal ball. It would certainly help in predicting outcomes for the next 12 months.

But while we enter 2021 with a hint of trepidation, the months ahead present us a unique opportunity to forge stronger, dynamic structures for badminton to prosper in these challenging times.

The year 2020 yielded many lessons as well as solutions to problems we never thought we would have. Last month’s magnificent staging of the Asian Leg of the HSBC BWF World Tour, including the HSBC BWF World Tour Finals in Bangkok, Thailand, is a prime example.

Consequently, we now find ourselves in a better position to handle anything COVID-19 and its associated complications may throw at us.

Although the COVID-19 vaccine may in time create a world with fewer restrictions, BWF expects that the pandemic will still influence tournament hosting throughout 2021.

And that’s why it’s essential for the BWF Membership to unite in our efforts to get badminton back on track.

In view of the likely financial burden upon tournament hosts to implement heightened health and safety protocols at their events, BWF has approved a COVID-19 Support Package to ensure tournaments can continue to be part of the HSBC BWF World Tour and BWF Tour in 2021.

Top of that list is a comprehensive action plan for a revamped, reshaped tournament calendar centred around cluster events to ensure a more feasible way of getting our players and Para badminton players on court more regularly.

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The support will help hosts cover the costs of testing mechanisms, arrangements around transport and hotel safety, cleaning, provisions of face masks to participants, and issuing of sanitising equipment.

We have also published a revised Safety Protocols and Operating Procedures document outlining mandatory advice and measures for all BWF Major Championships and HSBC BWF World Tour hosts, as well as detailed solutions to complete the Tokyo Paralympics qualifying process.

Let’s hope that through these actions we are able to see an amazing year of competition, with fantastic, regular tournaments spearheaded by the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and Paralympic Games.

Equally vital to our collective task of future-proofing the key structures of badminton amid COVID-19 is the rigorous collaboration and planning process leading up to the 82nd BWF Annual General Meeting.

Last year it was decided to continue with the quadrennial BWF Council Elections originally scheduled for 2021 even though it could be impacted by COVID-19 restrictions on travel for delegates.

Off the back of the resounding success of our first Virtual AGM last July, and the slim prospect of a face-to-face AGM in 2021, we proposed to the Membership a framework for a second Virtual AGM.

This and other proposals were voted on at a decision-making virtual Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) on Saturday 30 July 2021.

To my delight, the Membership passed all three motions tabled, paving the way for further governance innovation when we conduct our AGM and BWF Council Elections virtually in May 2021.

I want to congratulate the Membership for taking this step and making it possible for BWF to maintain its high governance standards.

COVID-19 will no doubt continue to be a factor in 2021, but I have full confidence that BWF is ready to tackle the year head-on with purpose, efficiency and success.

Poul-Erik Høyer
January 2021 will occupy a unique place in badminton history for the conduct of three back-to-back events in Bangkok, in a safety bubble.

When the Asian Leg began, it seemed improbable that any player or pair could end up sweeping all three titles – not just because of the quality of the field, but the physical and mental toll involved.

That Wang Chi-Lin/Lee Yang and Dechapol Puavaranukroh/Sapsiree Taerattanachai accomplished that improbable feat is testament to their physical and mental prowess; it will remain a special accomplishment for some time to come.

The Asian Leg started with most participants having spent months away from competition and a week’s hotel-room quarantine in Bangkok, and so it was expected there would be upsets as the top players needed time to rediscover their rhythm.

Among those who couldn’t find or maintain their normal level were Pusarla V Sindhu, Lee Zii Jia, Fajar Alfian/Muhammad Rian Ardianto and Anthony Sinisuka Ginting.

Ginting did start promisingly, reaching the YONEX Thailand Open semis, and seemed headed for victory against Viktor Axelsen before inexplicably losing his way. He couldn’t make headway in the next two campaigns.

The inconsistency of some big names opened up opportunities for those outside the spotlight. Goh V Shem/Tan Wee Kiong were among the newsmakers in the first week with a surge into the final, eventually falling in three close games.

Pornpawee Chochuwong made a mark at the HSBC BWF World Tour Finals, beating favoured names like Ratchanok Intanon and Tai Tzu Ying. Liew Daren had his moments, upsetting Anders Antonsen in the first, and making the quarterfinals of the second.

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The tournaments also gave us a glimpse of the immediate future. Thom Gicquel/Delphine Delrue, who made two semifinals, emerged as stars. So too have world junior champions Leo Rolly Carnando/Daniel Marthin, who enjoyed a strong run in the first week. An Se Young consolidated her reputation as the face of the next generation in women’s singles.

Then there were the inspirational stories. Hans-Kristian Solberg Vittinghus, promoted from the reserves’ list, made a stunning run into the TOYOTA Thailand Open final, often fighting back from a desperate position. Greysia Polii, who lost her elder brother recently, had an emotional journey to the TOYOTA Thailand Open title with Apryani Rahayu.

Axelsen and Carolina Marin also had a shot at a third title and were only stopped by opponents who produced their best under pressure. The brilliance of Antonsen and Tai stood in their way.

The final day of the HSBC BWF World Tour Finals saw absorbing battles in all five finals, thus providing a fitting end to three weeks of competition in Bangkok.

Kudos to the Badminton Association of Thailand and Royal Thailand Government for making this a reality.

Wang Tzu Wei had productive outings at all three tournaments.

Tai beaming with delight as she shows off her prizes.
The array of measures put in place by hosts Badminton Association of Thailand and the Royal Thai Government to ensure the safest possible environment for athletes and their entourage at the Asian Leg of the HSBC BWF World Tour proved worthwhile at the conclusion of the three consecutive badminton tournaments on 31 January. Once the final prizes were handed out, the closing of a new ‘badminton bubble’ at the Impact Arena brought hope. It signified a new ecosystem for future tournaments.

The strict measures, in compliance with the requirements of Thailand’s Department of Disease Control, were communicated to Member Associations, players and coaches before departure. After many months of dedicated behind-the-scenes collaboration between BWF, Badminton Association of Thailand and the Royal Thailand Government, the stage was set, though a little different.

**Pre-departure**
- Athletes and entourage must return negative COVID-19 test; possess valid Certificate of Entry.

**Arrival (4 January)**
- At Suvarnabhumi Airport, participants subjected to body temperature checks.
- Escort to official hotel by police, on buses, in socially-distanced assigned seats.
- Three-day self-isolation in rooms while awaiting swab test results.
- Food delivered three times daily outside rooms for 14 days while in mandatory quarantine.
- Only two players from same country allowed to use lift at same time. Lifts sterilised after each use.

**Pre-tournament**
- 824 negative tests were returned (via email to reduce risk) in first round of testing.
- Following this, players were allowed to move in allocated bubbles among their teams for training while observing social distancing. These measures remained in place throughout the three weeks.
- Practice: One country at a time.

**During tournaments**
- All participants subject to regular swab tests at official hotel.
- Hand sanitising and mask-wearing outside rooms compulsory throughout their stay.
- No handshakes, socially distanced entries and new shuttlecock dispenser.
- Service and line judges wore masks.

**On Court**
- Players and journalists stood two metres apart; masks worn at all times.

**Mix Zone**
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After the mandatory 14-day quarantine, some measures were lifted. Running outside the hotel in team bubbles were permitted. Outside food could also be ordered (24 hours in advance) and players were allowed to visit their teammates’ rooms.

A happy Carolina Marin at the gym in Impact Arena.
Notably, those who had been off the circuit for almost a year knew the significance of the Asian Leg to their careers and the sport.

**Players**

**Anthony Sinisuka Ginting, Indonesia**
“BAT and all the support staff have been great. I stay in my room and only leave for training or playing. I always find fun things to do like playing games or watching action films. I feel safe here.”

**Sourabh Verma, India**
“I’m really grateful to BWF and BAT because it wouldn’t have been possible to play badminton again without them. It’s really good we were all here a week before the tournament.”

**Josephine Wu, Canada**
“It’s amazing how BAT has been able to move people with the least amount of contact. ’Staying in room’ was something we had to adjust to. We’ve done online games to keep ourselves sane.”

**Oliver Leydon-Davis, New Zealand**
“We’ve had to make changes, as it’s not your typical tournament preparation but it’s the same for everyone, just need to adapt.”

**Brice Leverdez, France**
“It’s great to be back playing badminton.”

**Coaches**

**Anthony Clark, England**
“We’re staying in a lovely place and playing badminton again. Things are much stricter but we understand why. We’re fortunate to be here and that’s what everyone has to try and embrace.”

**Kenneth Jonassen, Denmark**
“The protocols are very useful, they need to be in place in these times. Makes sense with people travelling from all over the world. At the end of the day, we understand it’s necessary.”

**Reza Roshan Omid, Iran**
“It’s a big tournament to organise. Safety has been prioritised for all the players, technical officials and support staff of these three tournaments.”

**Umpires**

**Abdul Latif Jaohari, Indonesia**
“It’s a good way for the Thailand Government, BAT and BWF to bring badminton back. As technical officials, we look forward to sharing this experience with future hosts.”

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**Tanida Senawongsa, Thailand**
“This has been such a great experience, not just the badminton, which I have loved, but also meeting so many wonderful people from all over the world.”

**Adisak Bua-nuam, Thailand**
“I’ve had to adapt to new measures like swab tests every four days, isolating and bonding with a new team. This tournament is very different but it’s been really fun in parts too.”
BWF holds first Virtual EGM

On Saturday 30 January 2021, BWF staged its first virtual Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) as part of the comprehensive planning process leading up to the 82nd BWF Annual General Meeting (AGM) and the scheduled BWF Council Elections required to take place in 2021.

The EGM addressed a range of Council proposals to amend the BWF Constitution to include a clear framework for AGMs to take place in a virtual or hybrid format if necessary, and to use electronic voting systems. This was in response to BWF Council’s conclusion that there was a high risk many voting delegates from Member Associations would not be able to travel and participate in a physical AGM called for 22 May 2021 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions around travel.

The Council also gave due consideration and looked at the various COVID-19 factors that affected the criteria in the constitution related to calculating voting strength in the last six months of the four-year assessment period concluding on 30 September 2020.

All three proposals were passed by the Membership:

▸ To approve the holding of a Virtual AGM on 22 May 2021
▸ To approve amendments to the BWF Constitution; and
▸ To ratify the interim procedures the Council has used to calculate Voting Strength due to the COVID-19 impact

A delighted BWF President Poul-Erik Høyer said: “BWF’s focus continues to be on good governance and the Council proposals at the EGM aimed to do just that.

“I want to congratulate the Membership for passing all three motions tabled and making it possible for BWF to maintain its high standards. “This paves the way for further governance history to be made when we conduct our 82nd AGM and BWF Council Elections virtually on 22 May 2021.”

There were 228 participants, of which 112 were voting delegates representing a quorum.

Voting was conducted electronically using Lumi Technologies, and an independent lawyer was present to have oversight on the technology used and be witness to the EGM.

The EGM was delivered in five languages – English, French, Spanish, Russian and Arabic.
82nd BWF AGM to go virtual

For the second year running, BWF will conduct its Annual General Meeting in a virtual capacity. It will be staged on Saturday 22 May 2021.

A physical AGM was originally slated for Suzhou, China, in conjunction with the TOTAL BWF Sudirman Cup, 23-30 May 2021.

But the BWF Membership voted in favour of a virtual gathering at the EGM on 30 January 2021.

Elections for the following positions on Council will be held at the AGM 2021. Last year, it was decided to continue with the quadrennial BWF Council Elections in its current cycle as described in the constitution, even though COVID-19 could impact on travel by delegates.

▪ President
▪ Deputy President
▪ Vice President Para Badminton
▪ Ordinary Council Member (20 positions)

Members in Good Standing will be able to nominate and second candidates for this year’s election.

Vetting of nominated officials will be initiated for the first time under the updated BWF Constitution. This is in an effort to determine candidature eligibility based on criteria now described in the constitution, another step in improving our governance practice.

Key Dates

- **Friday 19 February 2021**  
  Deadline for proposals and nominations for Council elections

- **February-March 2021**  
  Vetting process for candidates for elections

- **Friday 2 April 2021**  
  Notice of the AGM (agenda, Annual Report 2020, papers, profiles of candidates for election)

- **Friday 16 April 2021**  
  Deadline for amendments to proposals

- **Saturday 22 May 2021**  
  BWF AGM and Council Elections
YOU MATTER

Yes, you do.
We are working hard to provide you the best possible tournament experience when you return to the courts. See you in your badminton gear soon.
Till then, stay healthy and safe.
Online excellence

Last year again saw BWF placed amongst the heavy-hitting social media international federations by Burson Cohn & Wolfe Sports (BCW Sports) in their 2020 International Sports Federations Social Media Rankings. BWF grew its Anglophone platforms at an unprecedented rate, despite the absence of a regular tournament calendar due to COVID-19.

### Highlights

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**Facebook**
- 158.8K new likes (↑ 23%)
- 8.6 million interactions
- 286.48 million video views

**Instagram**
- 178K new followers (↑ 66.65%)
- 17.1 million interactions
- 70.2 million video views

**YouTube**
- 66.1K views per video
- 192.3K new subscribers

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**In comparison to other IFs**

- **No.2**
  - Most Posts per day on Facebook
  - Most Interactions per post on Facebook

- **No.5**
  - Most Video Views on Instagram
  - Most Tweets per day

- **No.3**
  - Most Video Views on Facebook

- **No.7**
  - Most followed Olympic IF with 3.1 million fans (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter)

- **No.8**
  - True Reach index (Total number of views per post)
Desert metropolis to badminton hub

Not so long ago, Dubai and badminton seemed worlds apart. The emirate was known for hosting big-ticket events in other sports such as tennis and football; badminton never even lurked on the horizon.

Badminton facilities were limited to multi-sport halls owned by schools, with few coaching opportunities. Things started to change when the emirate’s leaders took the initiative to make Dubai a sports destination.

The turning point for badminton was 2014 when the Dubai Sports Council joined hands with BWF to host the Dubai World Superseries Finals under a four-year agreement. The Dubai Badminton Development Project, a brainchild of the above partnership, envisaged a multifaceted programme aiming to develop badminton in the emirate, starting with Shuttle Time Dubai.

Holistic Approach

Realising that the sport could only flourish with the development of an ecosystem involving Emirati and expatriate players, academics, coaches, venues, Technical Officials (TO) and competitions, a team was formed under the UAE Badminton umbrella. Besides establishing a junior and senior national ranking circuit and regular Technical Officials’ development activities, it also organised coach education, school programmes and training of event organisers, while ensuring regular competition opportunities for players.

Thus, an adequate supply of TO workforce was available for the multitude of events spread throughout a busy badminton calendar.

Dubai in 2021 is a regional hub for badminton, the home of nearly 30 badminton academies, over 400 junior ranked players, over 100 certified TOs, and several world-class arenas. During the pandemic, the UAE Badminton team kept itself busy by conducting AirBadminton tournaments, Special Olympics virtual coaching sessions, Shuttle Time national skill development programmes, a community clubs tournament, Emirati Women’s Championships, and the 6th edition of the Shuttle Time Dubai Club Championships, while strictly adhering to COVID-19 protocols.

Jaffer Ebrahim, BWF Dubai Badminton Development Manager, noted the high-profile nature of events held in recent months that have helped build Dubai’s reputation as a badminton hub.

“Meticulous conduct of the Special Olympics World Games Abu Dhabi 2019, IWAS World Games, Fazza-Dubai Para Badminton International and other international events in recent years prove the Dubai Badminton Development Project has been not only successful in promoting badminton as a popular sport in the region but also brought about the upliftment of badminton in and around Dubai. Thanks to the team’s efforts, badminton has become a natural choice for schools and universities in the region,” Ebrahim said.

With the opening of 10 world-class indoor stadia in the past few months, there is no stopping badminton’s development in Dubai.
Under the BWF Membership Grants Programme, activated in 2020, over 100 BWF Member Associations received their first sums of money in November.

Due to COVID-19, the funds were aimed at stimulating a return of badminton activities, with ‘Back to Badminton’ the underlying theme.

These are some of the highlights of the national activities delivered in November and December.

**Africa – Senegal**

CNPB Senegal delivered its first BWF Shuttle Time Tutors and Teachers courses in November and December to promote and develop the sport. A three-day Tutors Course and a two-day Teachers Course targeting PE teachers, attracted 34 participants from different regions of the country. At the end of the courses, 14 participants were certified BWF Shuttle Time Tutors and Teachers.

Antoine Jean Joseph Diandy, CNPB Senegal President:

“By launching the Shuttle Time courses for tutors and teachers, BWF and the Badminton Confederation of Africa gave us the opportunity to popularise this sport throughout Senegal.”

**Asia – UAE**

In a historic agreement, Dubai’s oldest and popular sports club Al Nasr launched its women’s badminton team in December, marking the first time a national club adopted badminton as a priority sport. Twenty-six women joined the programme, which will see them trained by certified coaches for national and international tournaments. Plans are underway to establish national club programmes to start the National Women’s League in the first half of 2021.

Ghazi Al Madani, UAE Badminton Committee Chairman:

“With badminton entering the national club system, we are confident girls now have a complete pathway to excellence.”

**Europe – Kosovo**

In November, Badminton Federation of Kosovo organised a camp to promote AirBadminton to club players. A separate event to promote badminton was also held at Don Bosko College which drew 70 participants, including from seven elementary schools in the Municipality of Gjilan.

Lulzim Haziri, Kosovo Badminton Federation President:

“Because of our young population, the sport is getting popular.”

**Oceania – Fiji**

The Fiji Nationals and Junior Nationals were held over four days in November, bringing together a whopping 118 players across 21 events.

Barry Whiteside, Fiji Badminton Association President:

“After the COVID-19-enforced down time, the players just couldn’t wait to get into competition again!”

**PanAm – Suriname**

Suriname Badminton Association organised an AirBadminton launch event in December to encourage public to experience the new outdoor game. This includes a mini team competition on two beach sand courts and a tryout session on three grass courts. The event saw the participation of more than 60 people.