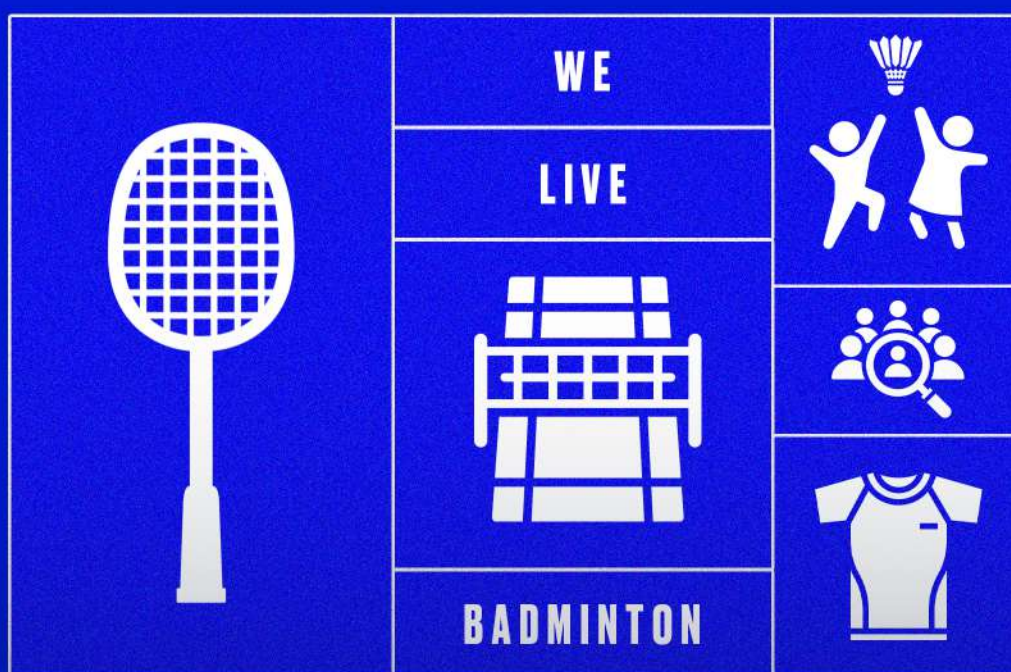


EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF YOUNG BADMINTON PLAYERS



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SHUTTTLERS

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

 **BADMINTON
EUROPE**



Published in March 2025 ©Badminton Europe Confederation

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1

1.1. Badminton in Europe: history, facts and figures

Badminton is one of the most participated sports globally. It is estimated that more than 300 million people play badminton as a recreational activity, through school programmes or as part of a structured system which includes national and international competition individually and as part of teams.

Badminton was introduced to the European Continent in the beginning of 19th century. Today the sport is governed in Europe by the Badminton Europe Confederation (BEC), which was founded on 24th September 1967. BEC is one of the five continental confederations under the Badminton World Federation (BWF).

The BEC Strategic plan 2025-2028 outlines the vision and mission statements. The vision statement of BEC can be expressed through the word: GLUE.

GLUE comes from the first letter of the four words: Grow, Lead, Unite and Excite. The mission statement of BEC is as follows:

- Grow the sport of badminton in Europe in terms of exposure, fan base, commercial revenues, participation and performance
- Lead, govern, facilitate and support badminton federations in Europe and show leadership to inspire and connect these federations
- Unite the European badminton community
- Excite and entertain sports fans to improve the image of badminton

The BEC Strategic plan 2025-2028 comes to life through the many activities, programmes, project and events delivered within the 5 priority areas: Development, Events, Business, International relations and Governance.

1.2. Badminton Europe strategy and goals for the next decade

With the mission of growing participation in Badminton and excite everyone involved, the SHUTTLERS project plays an important role for BEC. Recruiting and retaining kids to play badminton and continue picking up the racket and shuttle for the rest of their lives is important for the growth of the sport as well as allowing as many people as possible to profit from the many social and health benefits badminton provide as a game and as a community.

The SHUTTLERS project falls under the responsibility of the BEC Development Committee and is placed under the strategic area of Grassroots which has the specific long-term strategic objective “To facilitate increased and retained participation within Members through engagement, inclusivity, promotion and recruitment”.

The European Framework for the Recruitment and Retention of Young Badminton Players – based on sound research – will be instrumental in guiding the concepts and programmes that will be developed and implemented through the SHUTTLERS project. The framework will also play an essential role in the future development of recruitment and retention initiatives and programmes that BEC, the BEC Members, other sports or any other organisation may use to motivate and encourage kids to be physically active and lead a healthy lifestyle.



CHAPTER TWO

YOUTH BADMINTON IN EUROPE

2

2.1. Participation figures across countries and current trends

The player registration figures for European badminton players since the Covid-19 pandemic show a positive trend (see the below table). A registered player is a player who is registered with one of the BEC European Member Associations. However, there is evidence that shows that many more people play badminton regularly on a recreational basis with friends in a self-organised, non-registered way and therefore, the exact number of people regularly picking up a racket and shuttle is hard to estimate.

Year	Number of registered players
2021 (Covid-19)	796.486
2022	824.980
2023	824.041
2024	833.796

The proportion of registered players between the European countries is also very diverse. The French Badminton Federation (210.347 registered players) and the German Badminton Association (168.603 registered players) are the two countries with the most registered players in Europe. However, there are also 19 BEC Member Associations that have less than 1.000 registered players. Some of these countries have a population of more than 10 million people, thus it can be argued that there is a significant growth potential for badminton in many European countries.

Getting children in the 4-12 year-old bracket to start playing badminton and continue playing for life will allow them to benefit from the many health and social advantages of playing badminton. Understanding the motivation and the underlying mechanism for kids to get involved in badminton is crucial and developing recruitment and retention programs which are based on that understanding is important.

2.2. Project Shuttlers

Even though the benefits of participating in sport are widely known, low participation rates and high dropout rates from sports during the teenage years continue to persist in Europe. The project ‘Kid Shuttlers – Attract and Nurture Young Badminton Players’ (SHUTTLEERS) led by Badminton Europe aimed to address the barriers and obstacles faced by most of the Badminton clubs at grassroots level to recruit and retain young Badminton players, while facilitating and enhancing a healthy and active lifestyle for our future European communities.

The specific objectives of this project were:

- Strengthen the organizational and administrative element Badminton clubs to create a more sustainable Badminton model.
- Identify best practices in relation to the recruitment and retention of children in sport with a specific focus on Badminton.
- Develop strategies to enhance the recruitment and retention of young Badminton players.
- Facilitate the adoption of the project outputs across European countries.

The project was led by Badminton Europe – the governing body for 53 European Member Associations – together with Sport Coaching Europe, Universidad Europea, Austrian Badminton Association, Deutscher Badminton-Verband e.V. and the Lithuanian Badminton Federation. The main deliverables of the project included:

- An Education Toolkit for clubs and Member Associations on ‘Strengthening the Badminton Club Model’
- The European Framework on Recruitment and Retention of Young Badminton Players
- A series of Modules on Education through Sports
- The Badminton Open Week Guidebook
- Kids and Club Retention concept



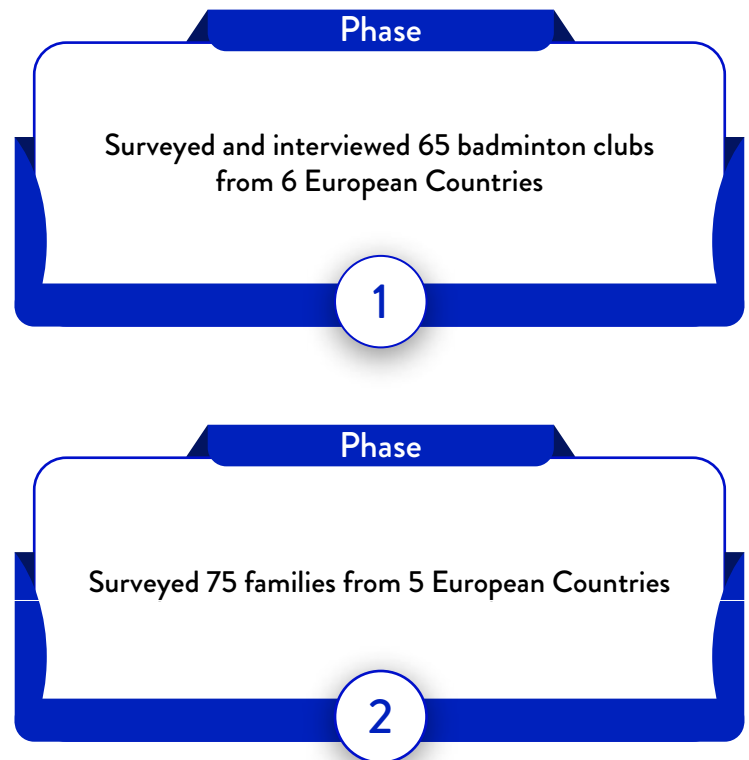
2.3. Recruitment and Retention in Badminton Today

Before developing a framework for the recruitment and retention of young Badminton players, Badminton Europe, as part of the activities of project SHUTTLERS, embarked in a multi-country research project to better understand the current situation. The research was conducted in two phases.

Phase 1 involved surveys and interviews with 65 Badminton clubs in 6 European countries (Denmark, Germany, Spain, Lithuania, Austria and England). This phase aimed to establish the status of the surveyed Badminton clubs, and to explore their recruitment and retention strategies.

Phase 2 included surveying 75 families in 5 European countries (Denmark, Germany, Spain, Lithuania, and Austria) whose children (14 years old and below) were members of a Badminton Club. This second phase aimed to understand how children (and their parents) decide to join a Badminton club as well as the factors who lead children to stay in Badminton, or unfortunately to drop out. The following sections summarise the findings of this research and start pointing to what some of the solutions may be.

2-phase approach for the research



2.3.1. Badminton Clubs in Europe

The majority of surveyed clubs were located in small and medium size towns, potentially signalling the need for the creation of more inner-city clubs for children who traditionally do not have access to Badminton. Positively, a large proportion of the surveyed clubs boasted near equal male/female participation, provided introductory activities for children and offered a broad range of competitive opportunities.

Notably, the largest number of young people in the surveyed clubs belong to the 13-16 age group (65%) with the 7-12 accounting only for 30% and 0-6 being just 5% of the total population. This speaks well to the club's ability to recruit new participants at an age when they are typically dropping out of sport (12-14). However, it also points out at the potential to increase recruitment in the lower age groups.

Although overall the club's workforce structure appeared to be healthy and well resourced, there are still some elements which points towards a culture of voluntarism in some of the clubs. This warrants further investigation. Part of this is the challenges experienced by clubs in finding new or training existing coaches to increase the proportion and standard of qualified coaches.

An additional challenge to recruitment and retention is that most Badminton clubs (89%) had to share their training facility with other sports. Moreover, most clubs did not have access to additional facilities (e.g., fitness gym, cafeteria, etc). These two facility-related areas were highlighted as one of the main barriers for recruitment and retention by nearly 40% of the clubs, thus appearing as a significant area for development where national federations may be able to support clubs most.

Another area of concern for clubs was the lack of development and/or delivery partnerships with 69% of them not having any (e.g., with local, regional or national government, education board, private sponsors, etc). Clubs thus rely mostly on members' fees and public grants to fund their activities.

Partnerships and other non-traditional revenue generating activities could help clubs grow and flourish.

Despite the above, most clubs were satisfied with their recruitment ability. This could reflect a certain fear from clubs not to grow beyond their current means and to jeopardise their current structure and reach, however precarious. Clubs stated that social media and school visits/programmes were the most popular and effective recruitment methods, yet that competition with other sport was identified as the main barrier for recruitment. Exploring how Badminton can position itself as an alternative to mass sports – especially for those children who drop out – could be an effective step to increase recruitment.



Overall, however, the findings show that most clubs only recruit once a year or every six months and thus have the potential to engage in more periodic and regular recruitment drives and campaigns. Moreover, very few clubs (10.4%) regularly survey their participants to gain valuable feedback as to how to improve. This is a key area for improvement going forward.

Finally, the three main factors contributing to retention according to the clubs were customised training and competition by age/level, member appreciation/social events, and social media engagement. Supporting all clubs in becoming proficient in all these areas is a must.

2.3.2. Parents and Young Players

A large proportion of respondents (over 90%) came from middle- and high-income families with no migratory history. This may signal the potential for the growth of Badminton amongst children from low-income families and non-national parents. Notably, female parent responses outnumbered – nearly doubled – males. This may indicate that in the Badminton context, mothers mediate their children’s participation more than fathers.

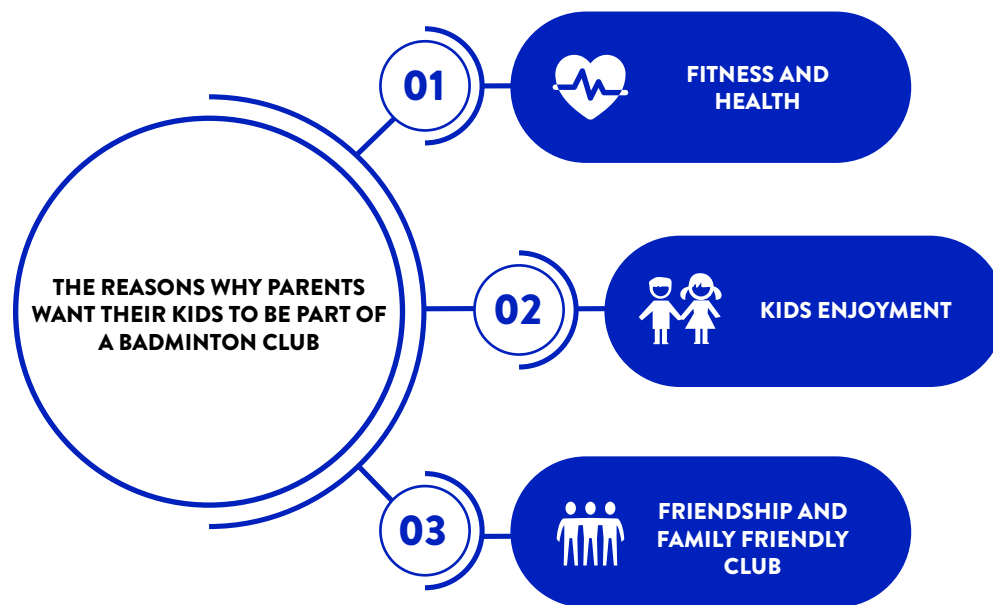
Notably, most children only played Badminton (61%). Clubs may need to consider how to attract players who are already playing other sports. Related to this point, elite/performance levels of participation were reported by 35% of parents. This is an unusually high percentage of participation at this level for a sport. This may indicate a need to grow the recreational side of the sport, especially amongst younger children.

In this regard, many children (40%) were introduced to Badminton through their families. However, school Badminton lessons and outreach activities appeared to also be effective in recruiting new players and thus should be considered and perhaps increased. Crucially, social media did not appear to be a central recruitment strategy and therefore appears to be an avenue worth exploring for clubs and federations.

How are children introduced to Badminton?



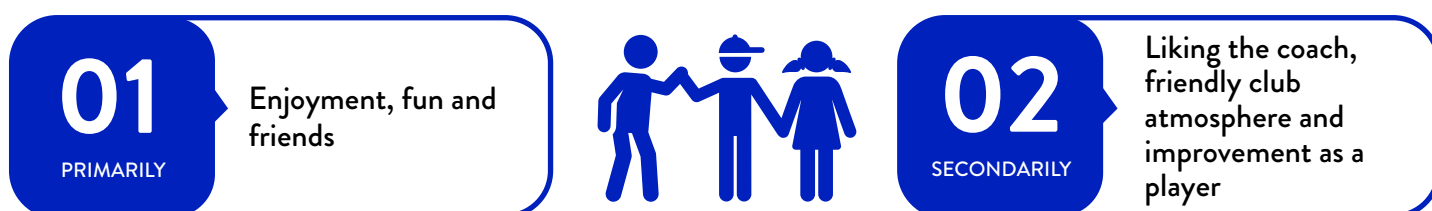
From the parent’s perspective, the most important factor leading to children joining a club was the desire for their child to be fit and healthy. This area is thus elevated as a potential key focus in the promotion of Badminton in Europe. Parents also felt that children’s enjoyment of their participation in Badminton was the most important factor both for sustaining and discontinuing participation. Friendships and a family club feeling were also highly ranked by parents as factors that keep children in Badminton and thus clubs and coaches may wish to prioritise these areas. Therefore, club and coaches’ may wish to prioritise fun, family and enjoyment in their sessions as a mechanism to improve both recruitment and retention.



Coaches were consistently highlighted as central to the experience and key to recruitment and retention. This may indicate a need for clubs to emphasise in their recruitment the need to employ coaches who are a good fit to work with children and motivate them to stay in the sport.

Children themselves stated that enjoyment and fun were the primary reason why they started and continued to play Badminton. Children also ranked having friends at the club as a key reason to join. Clubs may wish to explore how to best capitalise on ‘friendship networks’ to more specifically target potential new recruits (i.e., through school visits, one-off bring a friend events/parties, member-led social media posts, etc).

Kids themselves stated that they started playing badminton because



Beyond enjoyment, liking the coaches, a friendly club atmosphere and a sense of improvement were highly ranked by children as key to sustained participation. Exploring effective ways to enhance the club’s family atmosphere and for children to gain a higher sense of competence and improvement may offer a high return on investment.

Children reported that internal opportunities to compete was the type of Badminton activities they enjoyed the most. Clubs could consider creating or increasing the number of internal competitions they run to offer children more opportunities to test their skills in a friendly, non-threatening environment.

Finally, excessive pressure from parents was highlighted by children as a potential factor leading to dropout. Clubs and coaches may wish to consider incorporating parent education sessions to help them support their children in the best possible way to extend their Badminton involvement.

2.4. The need for a European Framework for the Recruitment and Retention of Youth Badminton Players

The research findings above highlight both strengths and areas for improvement in the way Badminton clubs and federations approach the recruitment and retention of young Badminton players. Such variety in current practice at club level, together with the significant and broad-ranging advances in the academic knowledge of the drivers of sport participation in children, call for the development of tool that allows national federations and clubs alike to make sense of this very important area and develop tailored, context-specific strategies to drive recruitment and retention. The European Framework for the Recruitment and Retention of Youth Badminton Players aims to be this evidence-based, practice-informed tool.

We are mindful that clubs around Europe are already doing a great job in bringing more children and their families into Badminton and keeping them there. We are also mindful that not every club will be able to consider some or any of the ideas proposed in the framework due to their specific circumstances.

We hope however, that this framework offers an opportunity for reflection and provides some departure points for your club to consider how to best support the recruitment and retention of children in your club.



CHAPTER THREE

THE BIG PICTURE OF YOUTH SPORT GLOBALLY

3

3.1.1 Young people today

Children and young people today face a variety of challenges. They are growing amid what has come to be known as a polycrisis, reflecting the combined impact of, amongst others, the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, the looming threat of global warming, the destabilising effect of war and conflict, and an unparalleled and unchecked access to social media influences. (Hoyer et al., 2023). Consequently, levels of stress amongst the world's population today are significantly higher than a decade ago (Gallup, 2024).

Children and adolescents, the most vulnerable demographic, are bearing the brunt of this crisis. UNICEF has identified a range of direct impacts of the polycrisis on children, including food and fuel poverty, threats to democratic rights, and reduced multilateralism – all of which contribute to increased inequality and a pandemic of lowered mental and physical wellbeing and heightened anxiety and stress (UNICEF, 2023). Organised sport, a common form of physical activity, has been proposed as a tool to mitigate the negative impact of the polycrisis on children and adolescents and as a catalyst for individual and social growth (UNICEF, 2019).



a DO YOU HAVE COACHES WHO UNDERSTAND THE NEEDS OF GEN ALPHA AND GEN Z? z

However, children (Generation Alpha; born from 2012 onwards) and young people (Generation Z; born between 1997 and 2012) have relatively different ways to understand and navigate the world than their parents and grandparents. In sport, this may translate into a disconnect between traditional sport structures and provision which were designed over 50 years ago, and the needs and wants of the new generations.

While there are intergroup differences between Gen Z and Gen Alpha research shows that collectively they have distinct leisure preferences (Balon, 2023; Gould, Nalepa & Mignano, 2020) favouring:

- Immersive and tech-driven entertainment (e.g., mobile streaming and gaming, VR and Augmented Reality, etc)
- Use of on-demand services and short-form and interactive content
- Values-based activities (i.e., activities which fulfil their desire for sustainability, inclusion, and collaboration)

It is important to highlight that any attempt to generalise the preferences and behaviours of an entire group of people simply based on their date of birth is flawed and runs the risk of caricaturising them. Notwithstanding this, generational trends offer an interesting departing point to analyse and propose existing and new ways to engage and retain children and young people in sport.

A final point in relation to the relevance of the intergenerational gap in sport. Research shows how the coaching workforce is an ageing population (Brazier et al., 2025). Most coaches are between 35 and 54 years of age, white and male. Younger coaches represent a minority of the coaching workforce, and this poses the risk of, over time, not having enough coaches in the pipeline to service the demand for grassroots sport. Understanding what motivates or deters the older components of Gen Z from taking up coaching and securing the supply chain for future generations also requires attention.

3.2. Facts and figures

Against the background described in the previous section, research spanning multiple countries and sports (Emmonds et al., 2022) reveals high levels of dropout in youth sport from the onset of adolescence. In some sports, between 70-90% of registered participants disengage by age 18. Globally, only one in five adolescents meet the WHO's guidelines for physical activity (WHO, 2022) and levels of physical activity are progressively declining in the EU (Eurobarometer, 2022). Moreover, consistent with the logic of the polycrisis, adolescents who dropout from sports experience greater psychological difficulties and more social and emotional problems (Vella et al., 2015).

3.3. Why children drop out of sport and what may keep them engaged

Recent research conducted across 7 European countries (Lara-Bercial et al., 2023a) identified the most important reasons why children drop out of sport. Prioritising schoolwork, finding new things that they liked more than sport, and performance-related stress were the top three reasons. Other notable reasons included not enjoying taking part in sport anymore, no-one convincing me to stay in sport, not feeling good enough or as good as my peers, coach-related stress, limited playing time and not having close friends involved in sport.

Remarkably, the reasons for dropping out varied between boys and girls, and as a function of several variables such as participation level, socioeconomic status, or age at dropout. In addition, and even though some of the drop out reasons were significantly more important, dropout appeared to be caused by the combination of several factors and their intersection with the specific characteristics of a young person and their context leading to their decision to drop out. Therefore, drop out can be thought of as an individual, context-based, time-bound phenomenon.

Notwithstanding the individual nature of dropout, federations, schools and clubs can put in place generic measures that may contribute to increasing recruitment and reducing discontinuation for most children and young people. Lara-Bercial et al. (2023a) identified some general themes:

1. Creating an appropriate climate which is developmental, motivational, caring and safe (Bronkhorst, Van der Kerk & Schipper Van Veldhoven, 2018) wherein children can thrive and enjoy sport in their own terms (Lara-Bercial et al., 2023b).
2. Increasing the environment's capacity to promote, amplify, listen to and give due weight and consideration to the voice of the child – as per articles 12 and 13 of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) – so that the participants' needs and wants can be fulfilled and not those of the adults (Lara-Bercial et al., 2023b; Lundy, 2007).
3. Achieving a better balance between children's academic workload and their ability to engage in sport and physical activity. This may include a combination of reducing homework, providing homework clubs in school time so children do not have to complete it at home or sport clubs offering homework clubs at their sites.

Beyond these general recommendations, the next section will explore Badminton specific opportunities to increase recruitment and retention of children and young people based on the evidence presented so far.

CHAPTER FOUR

RECRUITING AND RETAINING GEN ALPHA IN BADMINTON

4

4.1. Delivering High-Quality Badminton Sessions and Programmes

Given everything that has been discussed so far in this document, it is easy to lose perspective of the most important element to attract children to Badminton and to keep them engaged in the sport: delivering high quality sessions and programmes led by suitable coaches. Now, within this broad statement the existing evidence highlights several key factors and features that make sessions and programmes ‘high-quality’.

Recruiting and Retaining Gen Alpha in Badminton



Delivering High-Quality Badminton sessions and programmes

- Fun, friendship and fitness are key
- Learning and improvement



Getting the Badminton message across

- Badminton branding and marketing
- Parents as badminton agents
- Meeting the kids where they are at



In and beyond the club

- Developing “better” clubs for young people
- Badminton in schools and kindergarten
- Badminton in the community
- Badminton in “unusual places”



Re-imagining badminton for Gen-Alpha

- Alternative training formats
- Alternative competitions formats
- Girls only sessions
- Badminton as fitness

4.1.1. Fun, Friendship and Fitness are Key

Research conducted as part of the SHUTTLERS project led by Badminton Europe found that parents and children identified Fun, Friendships and Fitness as the main three drivers of participation and retention.

- **Fun:** having fun in sport is not only about the enjoyment of the activity itself (i.e., playing Badminton), but it can also be linked to many other factors. Visek (2015) found that ‘fun’ could be divided into 11 dimensions:
 1. Trying hard (e.g., trying your best, being active, competing, setting and achieving goals)
 2. Positive team dynamics (e.g., playing well as a team, supporting teammates, being supported by teammates)
 3. Positive coaching (e.g., respectful, knowledgeable, encouraging, good role model, a coach you can talk to)
 4. Learning and improving (e.g., being challenged to get better, learning from mistakes, using skills learned in practice during a game)
 5. Games (e.g., getting playing time, playing an evenly matched team, playing in a nice field/court)
 6. Practice (e.g., well organised, with freedom to be creative, variation of activities/tasks, including scrimmages, small group activities/tasks)
 7. Team friendships (e.g., getting along with teammates, being around your friends, hanging out with teammates outside practice, meeting new people)
 8. Mental bonuses (e.g., keeping a positive attitude, ignoring the score, winning)
 9. Game time support (e.g., parental support during games, being congratulated for playing well, having people cheer during games)
 10. Team rituals (e.g., all wearing same gear, high-fiving/fist bumping, team parties, carpooling, team shout)
 11. Swag (e.g., having nice equipment, earning a medal/trophy, travelling to new places for games, getting pictures taken)

- **Friendships:** although already mentioned as part of Visek’s conceptualisation of Fun, ‘friendships’ in sport deserve more attention, especially in the younger age groups. The SHUTTLERS project studies (Lara-Bercial et al., 2024a; 2024b) clearly signalled that having friends in the club was a significant factor for both recruitment and retention and thus it is something that clubs need to account for when recruiting players and when creating training groups to, as much as possible, keep friends together or if that is not possible, facilitate the formation of new friendships between children. In addition, research also shows that ‘not having close friends in sport’ is a significant dropout factor, especially for younger children (Lara-Bercial et al., 2023) and thus clubs should consider strategies to maintain or create friendships. This is in keeping too with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) which states that we are more likely to return to or adhere to an activity which satisfies our natural need for belonging (including friendships), autonomy and competence.
- **Fitness:** finally, the SHUTTLERS research (Lara-Bercial et al., 2024a; 2024b) discovered that for both parents and children, Badminton as a fun way to get fit was a major reason for joining and staying in Badminton. Therefore, it appears clubs could consider elevating this side of Badminton practice in their promotion materials as well as making it more prominent in their delivery and coaching narrative. Caution must be exercised to ensure ‘fun Badminton sessions’ do not become ‘fitness with a racquet’ removing the fun element of “just playing the game” which is highly valued by players.



4.1.2. Learning and Improvement

As highlighted by Visek (2015), a sense of learning and improvement is a big component of Fun and thus a significant factor for adherence to sport. Moreover, there is ample evidence in the scientific literature that a sense of competence (powered amongst other factors by a feeling of continuous learning and improvement) is central for players to stay in sport (Balish et al., 2014; Lara-Bercial et al., 2023). As mentioned earlier, competence, together with a sense of belonging and autonomy, is also a key tenet of Self Determination Theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000) and thus a key driver for

recruitment and retention. Therefore, clubs and coaches, could consider strategies to ensure that all players in the club can develop their sense of competence. These strategies may include:

- Ensuring programme activities and competitions are pitched at the right level for each group/player to ensure they experience success on a regular basis.
- Considering how best to group players for training and competition to ensure they feel their skill level fits well in that group.
- Find positive ways to demonstrate to players that they are improving. For example, through goal setting, stats keeping, or progression awards (i.e., like the belt system in Judo or Karate).
- Ensuring that competitions are as evenly matched as possible to avoid heavy defeats which can be very damaging to young, beginner players and jeopardise their continued participation in the sport.

4.2. Getting the Badminton message across

4.2.1. Badminton Branding and Marketing

The SHUTTLERS research revealed how children and their parents held the game in very high regard as a fun, valuable activity to engage with. In other words, Badminton is a good product, albeit always subject to improvement. Badminton being a good product means that once children and parents come into contact with it, there is a strong chance they will join a club and continue their engagement. The main problem identified by the SHUTTLERS research is how to get children and parents to the Badminton clubs and programmes. Once they get there, the sport takes care of the rest.

Like any product, for customers to buy it, the first condition is being aware that it exists. The SHUTTLERS research indicated that most recruitment took place via family or school links with some also happening in social media. Most surveyed clubs had underdeveloped branding and marketing strategies with room for substantial improvement. The same could be said from most national federations, especially in relation to the recruitment and retention of young players. Overall, it seems that there is an opportunity to increase the visibility of Badminton amongst children and young people and their parents.

Exciting and youthful branding can be a great tool to increase the recognition and appeal of Badminton. From revamping the federation's logo, to finding catchy names for youth-oriented Badminton initiatives accompanied by a carefully designed mascot, to making the promotional materials appealing to kids and parents, there are many things clubs, programmes and federations can do to make their brand and product more appealing to potential new customers.

Once a brand is in place – be it for the whole of the sport or for a specific initiative or club – developing a suitable marketing strategy to get the brand in front of the right people and with the right messaging for each customer segment is key. This framework, of course, is not designed to be a marketing guide for Badminton clubs and federations. It only aims to bring attention to this area of

work which sometimes may get overlooked in the “busyness” of everything else that goes into running a Badminton programme, typically by people that are already very busy already.

Notwithstanding this, we want to offer a couple of ideas in relation to reaching the two key groups that are needed to grow youth Badminton: parents and children.

4.2.2. Engaging Parents as Badminton Agents

Parents are central to youth sport. Specially during early childhood, parents are the main decision-makers who chose whether to take their child to one sport or club instead of another. They are also the main funders of youth sport typically paying their children’s club and competition fees. Perhaps most importantly, parents can be a club’s best advocate or critic. A parent’s “word of mouth” recommendation to another parents (of a schoolmate, a neighbour, a relative) is the strongest form of “marketing”. Developing and implementing strategies that encourage and empower parents to act as “recruitment agents” for the Badminton club could offer significant return on investment.

The SHUTTLERS research showed how, more specifically, mothers tended to be the main link between the Badminton club and their children rather than fathers. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that purposefully targeting mothers could be a good strategy to increase recruitment.



4.2.3. Meeting the kids where they are at

We saw earlier how Gen Alpha and Z children and young people engage with the world in different ways and through different channels than previous generations. The world of traditional organised sport is slowly accepting this and starting to “meet the kids where they are at”. Whether trying to grow the sport’s brand as a national federation or your club brand to increase recruitment and retention, using communication channels and styles that appeal to the target population is vital. Again, this framework is not a marketing guide, but we would like to offer some initial pointers that you can explore deeper on your own at some point or even engage with a marketing agency to support you in this respect:

- Use social media platforms most visited by children and young people. Examples of these include TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube.
- Create content that engages children and young people who favour highly visual and short form content that engages them at an emotional level.
- Engage them appropriately in the creation of their own content and promote and cultivate their own creative mind and power of self expression. This may be through content development competitions or “user takeovers” where they decide what happens in your channel for a set period.
- Engage social influencers from within and from outside the sport to promote the sport or your club. Of course, please check with your national federation safeguarding officer to ensure that the content you are creating, and the engagement mode is age appropriate and follow the relevant child safeguarding guidance.

4.3. In the Club and Beyond the Club

Increasing the profile of your club leading to higher recruitment and retention can be done in multiple ways and places. In this section we identify several places where this can be done and offer some initial ideas that you can explore in your own context.

4.3.1. Developing “better” clubs for young people

Typically, and logically, Badminton clubs are run by adults. As such, and often unwittingly, the way clubs and the programmes they offer are designed, marketed and presented can fail to appreciate the experience of the child within the club. This framework encourages you to purposefully try to see your club and the experiences it provides through the eyes of the children and young people, and more importantly, to ask them directly about their views, feelings, likes, and dislikes within the club so we can continue to create child-centred clubs and activities that meet their needs. As per articles 12 and 13 of the UN’s Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have a right to express their views freely and for those views to be listened to, respected, and where appropriate and feasible acted upon.



- **Safeguarding:** the first and most important piece of the jigsaw is to make sure that Badminton clubs are safe spaces for children and young people. BEC is committed to ensuring safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities and complies with best practice (BEC). Consult your national federation’s safeguarding policies and make sure you implement all their recommendations. In short, safeguarding is about 1) putting all possible measures in place to minimise the risk of children being harmed at your club in any way; and 2) ensuring that if anything happens there are clear protocols and procedures that all at the club (including adults and children) are aware of. A key element of safeguarding in sport is to make sure that there are at least two people at the club who have received specialist training and can act as the club’s safeguarding officers and that all adults have received basic training to be able to identify and report any safeguarding concerns. If you want to know more please consult UNICEF’s International Safeguards for Children in Sport or explore Safe Sport International’s high-quality information and resources.
- **Adult attitudes towards junior club members:** research shows that the attitudes of adults in the sport environment are a significant factor in children’s enjoyment and desire to continue their sport participation (Lara-Bercial et al., 2023a). This includes coaches, administrators, volunteers and any adult who comes into close or peripheral contact with them promoting a sense of welcoming, trust, respect, ownership, fun, and belonging. From simple things like ensuring adults know the children’s names and who their parents are, to providing opportunities for children to take responsibility for some elements of the club, to creating opportunities for children and their parents to socialise in and outside the club is key.
- **Badminton facilities:** ensuring the facilities are appropriate for children is key. This may include the provision of safe and adequate changing rooms and restrooms, ensuring that the courts are hazard free, and that the equipment is adaptable to meet the needs of children of different ages and stages of personal and Badminton development. It may also include the provision of “club kit” which builds their club loyalty (i.e., playing kit, hoodies, bags, etc) and the use of colourful displays and decorations that attract their attention.
- **Adaptive programming:** traditional youth sport structures can be quite rigid and based on dated assumptions about children and their families. These include the days and times of the sessions, the cost, the groupings, the type of coaching provided, the competitive opportunities offered, etc. Therefore, these structures may fail to provide suitable opportunities for many children and their families who may not fit the existing structures. While appreciating that, as shown by the SHUTTLERS research, most clubs do not own their facility, flexibility and adaptability in the programming is key to ensure that as few children and possible are discarded even before they have had an opportunity to sample the sport.
- **Additional facilities:** the SHUTTLERS research also showed that beyond their Badminton courts, very few clubs had additional facilities such as fitness suites/gyms, a café, a viewing area, classrooms or a members’ lounge. Parents and their children stated that having additional facilities would be a much-needed addition to their clubs. These additional facilities cannot only benefit player development (e.g., a weight room), but also facilitate socialisation (e.g., a games room with a football table and a videogames console), and even support academic development (e.g., a study room where older players can complete homework before their training starts).

4.3.2. Badminton in schools and kindergartens

The SHUTTLERS research indicated that most children came into Badminton via family connections with the sport. Only a small number of children came into the sport having discovered it in school. Therefore, there is potential for Badminton to increase its presence in schools be it through regular sessions, one off sessions/festivals, interschool festivals/competitions, or even just through the distribution of leaflets within the school. Working in conjunction with the local education authority and the local sport development unit may open up vast opportunities to increase Badminton's presence in school. It may also provide an additional income stream for clubs and coaches.

4.3.3. Badminton in the community

Similarly, very few of the surveyed children had arrived at the Badminton club via outreach community activities and thus this is also a potential area for growth. Again, working with the local sport development unit may provide opportunities to run taster or even regular Badminton sessions in other sport facilities across the city creating a network of satellite Badminton centres which may feed into the main club venue. This may also open opportunities for further revenue generation, and coach recruitment, development and employment.

4.3.4. Badminton in “unusual places”

Finally, Badminton lends itself well to establish a presence in “unusual places” where it may offer an ad-hoc opportunity for leisure and fun. A notable example of how this may be done is Table Tennis. Over the last decade Table Tennis tables have proliferated in relatively unusual spots as a form of quick leisure, social activity. This includes shopping malls, parks, bars, office staff lounges, school yards, community centres, etc. Badminton, or modified versions of it, may be used in similar ways to raise the profile of the sport and increase the chances of children and adults alike coming into contact with it. Likewise, organising demonstrations/competitions with high-level players in non-traditional spaces (e.g., shopping centres, city centre squares) may offer an alternative way of encountering Badminton for children and young people that would otherwise have never learned about the sport.



4.4. Re-Imagining Badminton for Gen-Alpha

As mentioned earlier, while sharing many traits with previous generations, Gen Alpha children also have some very distinct traits which, for some of them, may mean that engaging with Badminton in traditional ways (regular 3-day-a-week training, weekend competitions, travel teams, etc) does not appeal to them, or fit with other leisure pursuits or their family's schedules or financial situation. This is likely to become even more important going forward and thus clubs may wish to explore ways to attract and retain this otherwise "lost" segment of the population. In other words, Badminton may need to adapt to children and not the other way around.

4.4.1. Alternative training formats

As an alternative to the traditional multi-day training programmes, clubs may establish "turn up and play" weekly training sessions aimed at children who do not wish to commit to a demanding training schedule but who still enjoy playing the sport in their own terms. These sessions could take place several days a week giving children and their families a more flexible pathway which puts them in control of their own participation.

4.4.2. Alternative competitive formats

Similarly, alternative competitions formats may provide additional motivation for children stay in Badminton. For example, for those children who are not interested in traditional competitive tournaments, a festival approach where playing Badminton matches is part of a wider programme of activities may be more suited. A festival may include Badminton, but also face-painting, learning to juggle, TikTok video making, etc. Moreover, national federations may explore new, exciting formats of the sport that may appeal to younger generations. Examples of how other sports have created new formats to make their sport both available and more attractive to more people include 3x3 Basketball, Beach Volley and Rugby 7s.

4.4.3. Girls Only Sessions

Research shows that for many girls, especially those with low confidence or low perceived competence, taking part in mixed sessions can be very daunting and off-putting. Ensuring that your club offers girls-only sessions and a welcoming atmosphere for girls of any level of ability is paramount to recruiting and retaining more girls into Badminton.

4.4.4. Badminton as Fitness

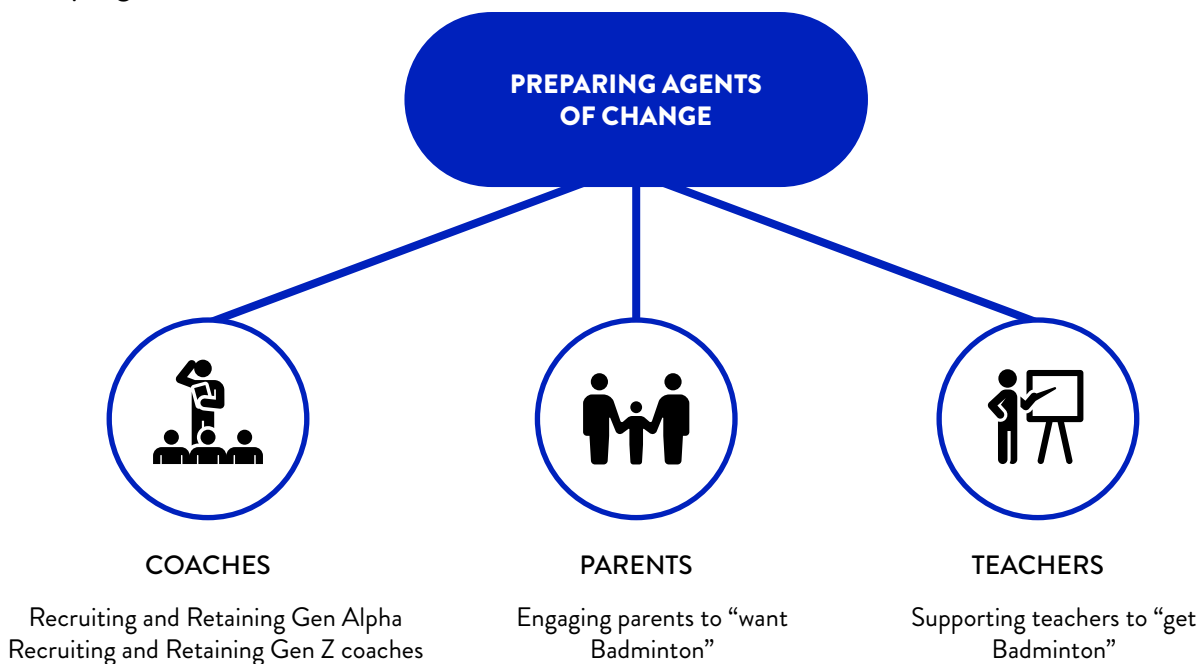
The SHUTTLERS research indicated that Badminton as a fun way to get fit and be healthier was a key reason for both parents and children to take part. It is also true that many Gen Alpha children, due to the impact of social media influencers and the greater emphasis placed on healthy lifestyle education in schools, have become more conscious of wanting to live healthier lives. Promoting Badminton explicitly as a fun way to get fit and even creating additional fitness-based sessions may increase your club's recruitment and retention power.

CHAPTER FIVE

PREPARING THE AGENTS OF CHANGE

5

Recruiting and retaining more children and young people into Badminton requires a concerted effort by a whole network of people. We highlight three groups, coaches, teachers and parents who can become the agents of change for Badminton and play a significant role in getting more kids playing it and keeping them there.



5.1. Empowering Coaches

Coaches are the frontline of the sport. They engage directly with children and can be the main difference-maker with regards to whether the Badminton experience is positive or not for a child. We want to highlight two particularities in relation to the role of the coach and how to empower them to make a difference.

- **Coaching and Retaining Gen Alpha:** as previously mentioned, Gen Alpha children may share some characteristic traits which may impact how they respond to coaching. For example, in most European nations, Gen Alphas have typically been brought up in more collaborative, less authoritarian environments than previous generations both in the family and school where their views and opinions matters and where a level of collaboration and shared decision-making may be expected. Likewise, they are used to making their own leisure

choices, particularly online, and thus may expect a similar approach in sport. Helping coaches understand and explore these particularities and how to manage them to their advantage and to promote the enjoyment of the young players could provide them with a very useful tool to retain them.

- **Recruiting and Retaining Gen Z Coaches:** In addition to the above, recent research indicates that most youth sport coaches are aged 35 to 55 (Brazier et al., 2025). This does not only have the potential to widen the intergenerational gap described in the previous point but poses a large risk to the sustainability of the sport as currently there is no guarantee that as older coaches retire, new generations of coaches are ready to take their place. Therefore, clubs may need to explore ways in which younger coaches can be recruited, educated, developed and deployed. These coaches will most likely belong to Gen Z, current or former club players, and thus understanding their needs and the way they view the world will also be important to maximise the chances of them joining the coaching workforce. Some elements to consider may include:
 - Flexible working hours
 - Suitable starting points and adequate mentoring
 - Shorter coaching qualifications which can be completed in modular formats
 - Competitive hourly rates/salaries

5.2. Supporting teachers to “get Badminton”

In previous sections we highlighted the importance of the school setting as an introduction to Badminton and the great potential of the school system to drive the recruitment of new players into clubs. Teachers can in many cases be the “gate keepers” when it comes to a Badminton club being able to come into a school to deliver taster or regular sessions or just to promote club-related activities. Clubs need to do everything they can to help teachers grasp the benefit of including Badminton into their curricular and extracurricular activities. For example, Project Shuttlers will create resources for teachers to support numeracy development through badminton. In addition, finding ways to introduce to teachers the physical and mental wellbeing inducing properties of sport in general and Badminton in particular, or its psychosocial and academic benefits is paramount. Moreover, helping teachers gain a basic understanding of Badminton so they can run their own sessions and competitions with minimal club support can also be valuable. Likewise, donating or financing the purchase of Badminton equipment for schools can be the push a school may need to “buy into Badminton”.

5.3. Engaging parents to “want Badminton”

Especially at an early age, parents – mothers particularly – are typically the decision-makers when it comes to their children’s sport participation. Finding ways to reach the parents of those children local to your club and helping them not only discover Badminton but to appreciate what Badminton can do for their child is key. From social media to community newsletters, and why not “Parent & Child” sessions or club open days, finding ways to connect with parents is key to a successful recruitment strategy. Moreover, once their children have become club members, finding ways to engage parents as “club users” themselves or club volunteers can enhance their sense of belonging to the club and in the long term contribute to their children remaining at the club for longer.

CHAPTER SIX

6

PLAYING DOUBLES: CREATING PARTNERSHIPS FOR GROWTH

Running a Badminton Club is a complex and work-intensive activity. Most clubs operate on a hybrid model of full-time, part-time and volunteer staff, typically in hired facilities with limited resources. The SHUTTLERS research found that only 31% of Badminton clubs had partnerships with other organisations to improve their offer, delivery and performance. In the current economic climate, with political economic and social instability, developing synergistic and mutually beneficial partnerships with other organisations with shared objectives might become central, not only for thriving, but perhaps even for surviving.

Playing doubles: Creating partnerships for Growth

01

Local Authorities

02

Local Companies/business

03

Local community organisations

04

Local Badminton Clubs

6.1. Local authorities

Local authorities typically have at the heart of their policies and actions plans to increase the health and wellbeing of their constituents. Part of this will be the provision of opportunities for citizens to be physically active, especially at a preventative level trying to instil healthy lifestyles amongst children. Badminton clubs may have an opportunity to work with local health promotion units or sport development departments to include Badminton sessions into their promoted activities. This may lead to additional recruitment into the club and help generate revenue and create opportunities to employ more coaches.

6.2. Local companies/businesses

Local companies/businesses may see opportunities to enhance their brand recognition amongst the communities they serve through sponsorship deals with sport clubs, be it in kind (i.e., through the supply of equipment or services) or in cash. In some countries, companies are allowed to donate money to community organisations such as sport clubs as part of tax-relief schemes. Moreover, local companies may also become club advocates promoting the club's activities amongst their workforce and through their communications channels.

6.3. Local community organisations

Similarly to businesses, local community groups (e.g., scouts, church groups, NGOs) may have synergies with your Badminton club, from being able to donate their facilities to provide Badminton sessions for their members, to promoting your club at their events or help you fundraise.

6.4. Local clubs

There may be a tendency in organised youth sport to see other clubs as competitors and thus to working in isolation and even opposition to other clubs in the neighbouring areas. While there is an element of competition, for example, in the fact that both clubs may be trying to recruit children from the same locality, there are also areas where clubs can work together for mutual benefit. These areas may include the pooling of financial resources to jointly employ a coach that can work across both clubs, the organisation of events and competitions that allow players to play and compete without having to travel long distances, or the development of joint funding applications.



CHAPTER SEVEN

CLOSING COMMENTS

7

This Badminton Recruitment and Retention Framework has outlined some of the key issues and concerns as well as proposed some potential initiatives and strategies. We are mindful that clubs around Europe are already doing a great job in bringing more children and their families into Badminton and keeping them there. We are also mindful that not every club will be able to consider some or any of the ideas proposed in the framework due to their specific circumstances. We hope however, that this framework offers an opportunity for reflection and provides some departure points for your club to consider how to best support the recruitment and retention of children in your club.

Thank you for making Badminton what it is!



CHAPTER EIGHT

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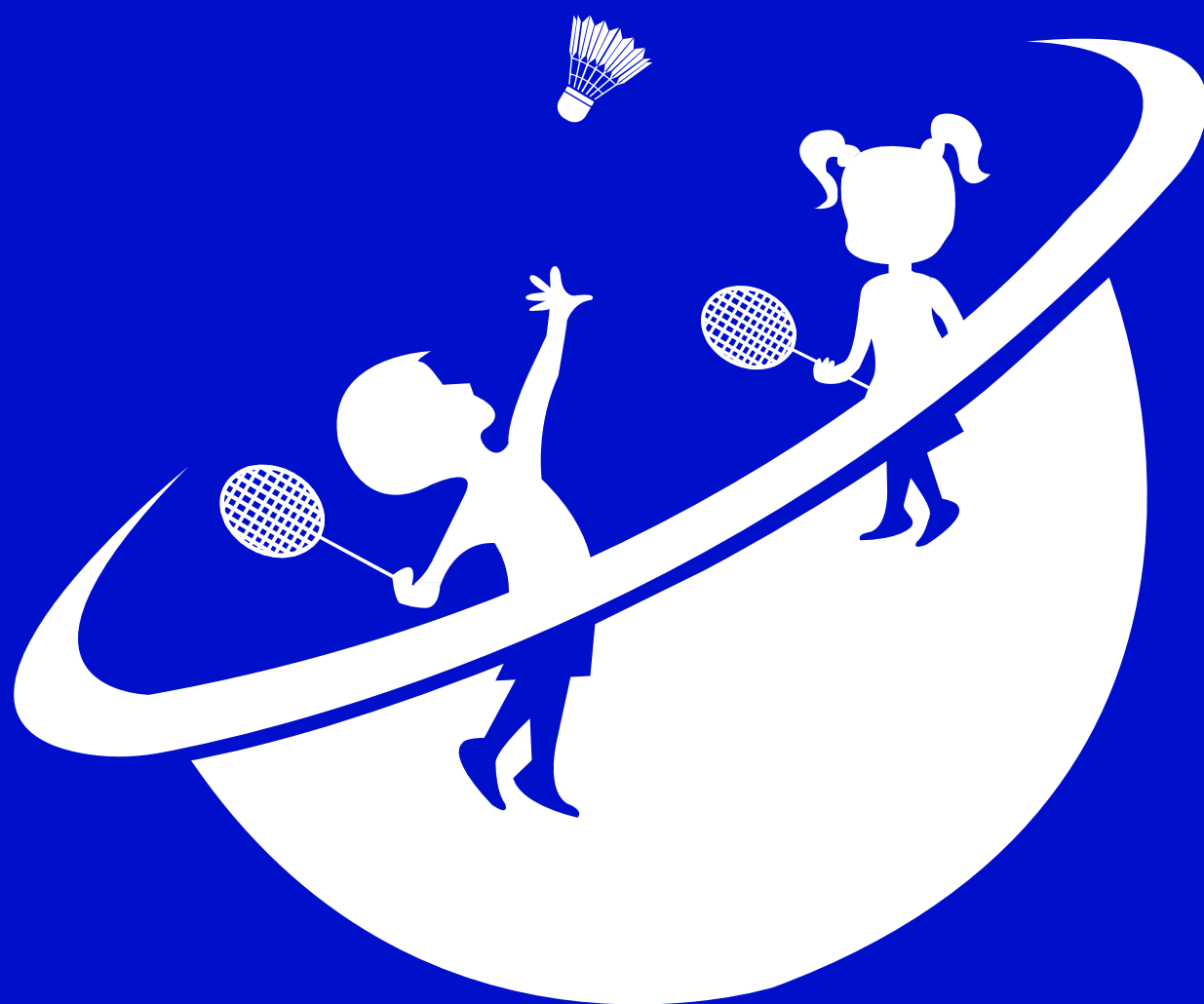
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