

## **Celebrating the 70th Anniversary with a blast**

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**The Belgian Badminton Federation celebrates its 70th Anniversary this month with a chain of activities.**

Despite being 70, there is no time to slack. These are the back to back activities happening this week to highlight and celebrate the tremendous achievement of the Belgian Badminton Federation.

- YONEX Belgian International 2019 (11 to 14 September)
- Celebration of becoming a Royal Federation – Royal Belgian Badminton Federation & 70 years (14 September)
- Badminton Europe Confederation (BEC) Strategy and Board of Directors Meeting (14 & 15 September)

BEC spoke to Mr. Sven Serré, President of the Belgian Badminton Federation about this milestone.

### ***What does it mean for the Belgian Badminton Federation to turn 70?***

70 years is already a respected age. In November 1949, the Belgian Badminton Federation was created. Badminton was not well known by the broad public at that moment, certainly not in a post-World War II period, but a few passionate players and philanthropists decided to start up an official federation. Nowadays there are more than 36.000 official playing members in Belgium, registered across the two leagues, Badminton Vlaanderen, the Flemish region in the north of Belgium and the Ligue Francophone Belge de Badminton (LFBB) in the Walloon region in the south of Belgium. We are happy that badminton in Belgium is still growing and giving a lot of pleasure to our players.

### ***What are the biggest achievements or milestones of your federation?***

It's not always easy to work with a two leagues format, but this is the political reality in Belgium where sports policy has been politically regionalized. Finding compromises is the message! And those compromises are the strength of our federation, working together and putting the players in the center of our activities is the proof of the pudding. Belgium organized World Championships a very long time ago, in 1984, hosted the Poona Grand Prix for several years, had a player participating at the first Olympic Games for badminton in 1992, organized a few European Championships and can count for 15 years again on topbadminton in Belgium, with the YONEX Belgian International and the YONEX Belgian Junior, without forgetting the well known Youth OLVE International tournament during the Easter holidays for the last 40 years now. All top quality organizations that are, or have been, very appreciated by a big number of international and national players. But the biggest achievement is the overall success of badminton in Belgium, not only for our top players, but even more for all the players playing tournaments and competition, Para badminton, senior badminton or junior badminton.

***How will you celebrate this big day?***

The celebration of the Belgian Badminton Federation will be held alongside the YONEX Belgian International, celebrating its 15th anniversary. We have introduced a file to become a 'Royal federation'. As Belgium is a Kingdom, it's possible to be recognized by His Royal Highness the King as Royal after 50 years of work. It's a honorific title, but it shows the unity within our federation and with our country. The project is there for almost 20 years and now it's time to finalize it, especially if you know that it was one of the objectives of my predecessor, Edgard Verpoorten, who passed away almost 3 years ago. It's a sign of recognition to all people that helped during these 70 years to level up badminton to what it is nowadays. After the finals of the YONEX Belgian International, there will be a gala dinner that will bring all former champions, the boards of Badminton Europe and the Belgian Badminton Federation, as well as all the important stakeholders together.

***Any message to your stakeholders or partners?***

It's clear that without stakeholders you can't survive nor develop. My gratitude goes towards all the volunteers that over these 70 years never counted the hours they were offering to badminton. You need everybody and everything – time, energy, vision, money, sponsors, partners, policy makers, technical officials, coaches and don't forget the most important: players, pleasure, fair play, good will and respect! It's one big family, all dreaming of the sport in the world, badminton. Sincere thanks to all those people that one day helped to settle and to improve badminton in Belgium. We'll try to go on with the same flow.