



The (shuttle)cock and ball story!

by Julia Strong, Club Future Manager

Badminton and football go together... Premier League 4 Sport. 20 Premier League football clubs working with 29 Premier badminton clubs.

So, what's all the fuss about?

The innovative PL4S project started back in September 2009 and is being delivered in partnership with the Premier League and our Premier Badminton Clubs. Its key aim is to offer young people the opportunity to play higher quality badminton more often or even for the first time. In the run up to London 2012 PL4S is helping young people to get involved in sport outside of school by offering opportunities in four Olympic sports – judo, table tennis, volleyball and of course badminton!

Guess which sport is the most popular?

Over 6,600 young people took part in one of the four sports of which more than 2,000 chose badminton, making it the most popular choice. Of those 2,000 engaged through the badminton sessions 65% came back for more and as many as 46% want to keep playing badminton.

These fantastic results could not have been achieved without the support and dedication of our own club network. Premier Badminton Clubs and their coaches support the delivery of badminton through an extensive satellite network of 87 clubs in local schools and over the last year have run more than 1,200 badminton sessions. The PL4S programme is helping to support the development of our hub clubs within the Community Badminton Networks and Performance Centres and we are hopeful that the demand for badminton will be converted into lifelong participation within badminton clubs and beyond.

Black Arrows Badminton Club Making badminton appealing for girls

The project recently started a badminton session in an all-girl's school. However, this alone does not attract new female participants.

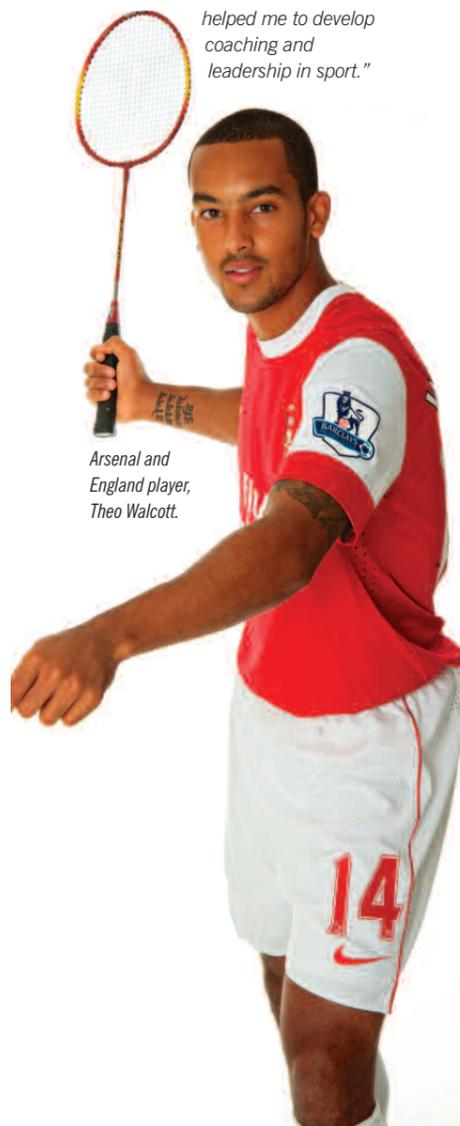
Attracting more girls has been achieved through changing the format of the sessions. The project co-ordinator highlights that, "The club is run very casually and regularly and has music playing in the background. Girls can also join in and sit out when they like. The fact the club is run by Black Arrows' coaches with an Arsenal connection helps give it a more relaxed feel than other sessions on offer." Many of the girls attending are looking to develop their badminton skills further, with several asking about competitions, joining a local team and wanting to take part in the London Youth Games.

Ebbisham Sports Club Not just about the playing

It's not just some potential participants that can be hard to reach. Volunteers and coaches can also be difficult to attract and for those wanting to work in sport, career opportunities can also be hard to come by. Dom, one of the sports education students at Epsom and Ewell High School has demonstrated just how beneficial the programme can be. Dom only started playing badminton in 2008, but since then she has literally thrown herself into our sport. Taking part in competitions and taking on a leadership role at one of the

PL4S clubs. Speaking about the project, Dom says, "It is a great way to get involved outside of school. A group of us from the PL4S club went to the Surrey County B tournament and being involved has given us the chance to volunteer and take part in events such as the Surrey Youth Games, attain a Badminton Junior Helper and Level 1 Coaching Awards. I am the PL4S

Ambassador and this has helped me to develop coaching and leadership in sport."



Arsenal and England player, Theo Walcott.

Whitley Bay, Medicals & Elmfield Badminton Clubs Festival success

The Newcastle United badminton festival was staged in the June half-term holiday at Walbottle Campus School. Forty-six budding badminton players, male and female and aged from 11 to 17 years of age took part. Players who attend the satellite sessions on a weekly basis were invited along to the event and were encouraged to take part in singles and doubles matches. The idea of the day was to give those young people the opportunity to play in a competitive environment and put into practice what they have been learning throughout the year at their respective satellite clubs. Olivia who attended the day said, "I thoroughly enjoyed the badminton, it was great fun and there were lots of young people of different abilities taking part. I will definitely be attending the next competition."

Bryn & Lowton St Lukes Badminton Clubs Football stars and the Olympic challenge

The Wigan Athletic PL4S project hosted a 'Places for Players' badminton tournament for the four schools involved in the project with help from Wigan Sports Development and the local badminton clubs. As part of the Places for Players scheme the young people received a visit from a number of Wigan Athletic players. The young people who have been attending the badminton satellite sessions at the four schools were rewarded with the chance to not only play in the tournament but a chance to play against the two football stars in a badminton match. The two lucky participants, from Golborne High School just lost out 11-7 to the professionals but after the game Paul Scharner (who has since joined West Bromwich Albion) admitted to playing badminton as a child. He said, "I used to play badminton as a youngster; this project is a great opportunity for young people to access Olympic sports." The PL4S Co-ordinator said, "The project has been running for five months now and has 16 clubs across all sports up and running, we have already engaged and retained over 350 young people so far which we see as a massive success."

What next?

The Premier League and our badminton clubs will continue to work together over the next season to build on the encouraging results from the first season. There will be a big focus on getting more girls playing badminton and as the project progresses we expect to see a greater transition of young people from satellite to hub clubs, or Performance Centre perhaps.

Good luck to all our badminton clubs involved in the project and on behalf of BADMINTON England a massive thank you!



Above: Aamir Ghaffar with children from Tottenham Hotspur launch.

CourtSide caught up with BADMINTON England Ambassador Gail Emms, MBE to ask her a few questions about Premier League 4Sport.

Olympic Silver medallist Gail Emms has been a BADMINTON England Ambassador since the launch of the programme.

Q: So Gail, what has been your involvement with the Premier League?

I took part in the major launch for the PL4S programme at Tottenham Hotspur – which was great for me as it's my favourite club! I also got to head up to Manchester to take part in the Manchester United launch which was featured on Match of the Day. Both events were great and gave lots of local kids the opportunity to get on court with me and also some big name footballers – definitely something they're not likely to get a chance to do without this programme!

Q: What benefits do you think working with the Premier League has brought?

Really the 'stardust effect' of the Premier League has to be the biggest benefit. It helps attract young people into a sport I love and ultimately results in increased numbers of people playing, coaching and becoming young leaders for clubs across the country.

Q: What have been the key outcomes from the relationship so far?

I know for BADMINTON England it's being able to increase the popularity of the sport and link into the wider badminton objectives around getting more young people playing in local communities. One of the bits we're really proud of is how passionately our Community Badminton Network clubs and Performance Centres have been working on the programme and have managed to get over 2,000 young people involved in the first year alone! The work and dedication that went into achieving that has been phenomenal.

Q: Who would you put forward as a shining example of someone or an organisation that has had a real difference made to it by working on your programme?

A great example is the unstoppable driving force Jean Dean and hub clubs Fords and Everton Park, linked with Everton and Liverpool. Delivering eight successful satellite clubs, there is no doubt that having a link to the Premier League has played a major part in getting more young people to play badminton. Jean was even voted the Yonex National Volunteer of the Year for 2009 in recognition of the work she contributes to the sport of badminton.

Q: Why is football a good awareness raising tool?

It's a great programme for young people and getting them involved in sport – both in terms of playing and for developing coaches or creating leaders for the future. Already the PL4S programme has helped increase the number of talent identity opportunities in the Hull area, which has seen some of these kids from the PL4S programme being selected for the first rung on that ladder.



Above: Gail Emms with Michael Carrick and Wes Brown of Manchester United.

