KOINKLIJKE BELGISCHE BADMINTON FEDERATIE
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FEDERATION ROYALE BELGE DE BADMINTON
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30 August 2024

Speech at the occasion of the 75th Anniversary of the Royal Belgian Badminton Federation

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, presidents of European badminton federations, Mr. President of Badminton Europe, Mr. President of the Belgian Olympic Committee, esteemed athletes, board members, and recipients of our meritorious awards,

It is with immense pride and gratitude that I stand before you today to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Royal Belgian Badminton Federation. As we gather here, surrounded by the many faces that have shaped and continue to shape the legacy of Belgian badminton, I cannot help but reflect on the incredible journey that has brought us to this moment.

Seventy-five years ago, our federation began its humble journey in small halls within schools and community centres, everyone taping their own badminton courts. Those early days were marked by a passion for the sport, a commitment to community, and a vision of what Belgian badminton could become. Today, we see the fruits of that vision in the modern sports complexes that boast over 20 courts, hosting international events and serving as the beating heart of our vibrant badminton community. The growth we have witnessed is nothing short of extraordinary. Especially with the specific situation in Belgium were sport was regionalised on governmental level. There wouldn't be a history if it wasn't for the Flemish and Walloon Federation to take up the challenge, without them no Belgian Federation!

In the last 15 years, our athletes have risen to the occasion, bringing home medals from European and World Championships, Youth Olympics, and beyond. Athletes like Lianne Tan, Wouter Claes and Nathalie Descamps, Ine Lanckriet and Flore Vandenhoucke, Julien Carraggi , Charles Fouyn, Frederick Gaspard and last but not least, Kiki Man-Kei To. They have not only brought honour to themselves but have also placed Belgian badminton on the global map. Your achievements are a testament to the resilience and dedication that define our sport in this increasingly competitive environment.

But our success is not limited to the athletes on the court. Our volunteers, technical officials, and board members have also demonstrated excellence at

both national and international levels. From serving as technical delegate at the World Special Olympics badminton Tournament to volunteering at the recent Olympic Games, from being respected top referees, umpires, and line judges to producing two presidents for Badminton Europe and board members for both Badminton Europe and BWF, our federation has made a significant and lasting contribution on the global stage.

This remarkable progress would not have been possible without the countless volunteers who have dedicated their time, energy, and unwavering commitment to our sport. From organizing club championships and interclub competitions to overseeing interprovincial youth cups, league championships, and national championships across all levels— elite, juniors, seniors, para badminton, and the Special Olympics—our volunteers have been the backbone of our federation.

Your tireless efforts have made it possible for us to proudly host prestigious international events, such as the Thomas and Uber Cup preliminaries in the 80's, nowadays called the European men's and women's team championships, Europe Cups and Europe-Asia Cup in the 90's, the European U17 Championships early 2000, the first European mixed team championships in the new format in 2015 and of course, this week, we mark another milestone with the largest Senior Championships ever held in the history of badminton!

I've promised the President of Badminton Europe to let him cover that during his speech, but I want to the organising club: you guys and your team of volunteers are just amazing! A true testament to what it means to have so many fantastic volunteers in badminton.

So Mister President, as you see, every decade, since the eighties we have organised a major championship. So at the occasion of 200 years of independence of Belgium can we have the European Championships in 2030, can we mister president?

As we celebrate today these extraordinary achievements, we must also look to the future with anticipation and excitement. The next 75 years hold even greater opportunities, and challenges, for our sport and for our growing badminton community. With the same passion, dedication, and vision that have brought us this far, I am confident that, with the help of all the volunteers, but also more and more professionals, we will continue to build on our successes and create an even brighter future for Belgian badminton, let's call it a royal future!

To everyone who has played a part in this journey—our athletes, volunteers, officials, board members, and all of you here today—I extend my deepest thanks. Together, we have made history. Together, we will shape the future.

Thank you, and let us continue to smash, clear, and drive our way into the next 75 years with the same spirit and determination that have defined our past.

Bert Vanhorenbeeck