



Photo courtesy of Constance Mols Bayles
Jack and Marion Harvey are avid badminton players.

Badminton: Is it a forgotten sport?

By **CONSTANCE MOLS BAYLES**

When was the last time you played badminton? I couldn't even begin to tell you the last time I played. It had to be at least 15 years ago at a family picnic. Is badminton a forgotten sport? Not at the 2007 National Senior Olympics in Louisville, Ky., June 22 to July 7.

I have been fortunate this summer to have the opportunity to attend the National Senior Olympics as both a participant and as an observer. I was touched by the number of adults, ages 50 through 100, who competed. Observing various sporting events, I realized how much fun the participants were having. My new friend, Jack Harvey, truly inspired me. He traveled from Spokane, Wash., with his wife Marion to compete in badminton.

As I watched Jack play, I was impressed with his agility, confidence, enthusiasm and determination to win. Jack, age 83, has been playing badminton for 70 years and has attended all 10 National Senior games since they started in 1987. Jack has four children, seven grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. He is a retired engineer who loves woodworking.

When asked, "What do you do to prepare for an event like the Senior Olympics?" he responded, "I practice and train with a person who is a lot younger than me, the local coach for junior tennis and badminton. I work out with him; I do aerobics three times a week, weight-lifting, and play badminton about two to three times a week at

the local community center." When asked, "Why do you participate?" his answer was, "I like the competition, I love the game and I enjoy meeting people." As I watched Jack mingle with the crowd, he seemed to know everyone. Jack has been involved in the planning of the Olympics since their inception. Jack told me that he feels young, stays busy, and does not feel his age.

When asked, "What kind of obstacles have you faced during the past?" he responded by telling me about his open-heart surgery this past year. It was quite noticeable that the surgery did not stop his competition at the Olympics. We also talked about who has been his greatest inspiration. He described a man at the neighborhood park who motivated him to learn how to play tennis and badminton when he was young. Jack commented, "He believed in me".

Jack and I discussed the fact that badminton seems to be somewhat of a lost sport. It does not seem to get the attention it used to. Badminton came from a Chinese game (5th century BC). Athletes used their feet to kick the shuttle. Later, in ancient Greece and India, instead of using their feet, athletes used rackets. A game called shuttlecock, or jeu de volant, appeared in Europe during the 1600s. Badminton is a game for two or four players. Players hit back and forth over a net with a racket, trying to keep the shuttlecock (a cork ball that has feathers) from hitting the ground. At the Senior Games, 258 people played singles, 258 doubles, and 184 mixed doubles.

The International Badminton Federation is the governing body of badminton (140 member nations). The IBF reports that about 200 million people worldwide play the game. Badminton became a medal sport during the 1992 Summer Olympic Games. China, South Korea, Japan and Malaysia are some of the countries where badminton is very popular. Badminton has also been a competitive sport supported by the National Senior Olympic Committee.

Marion, Jack's wife, also competes in badminton. She was not competing in the 2007 games because she was undergoing chemotherapy at the time when her state qualifiers were taking place. She told me that she is feeling much better and nothing will stop her from competing at the 2009 Senior Games in San Francisco.

So, is badminton a forgotten sport? I think by now you know the answer to my question. It may be time for all of us to dust off the badminton set, gather family and friends, and play the game. Jack and Marion have shown us how they live life to the fullest. Get involved in an activity that interests you. Staying active is an important step to living a "Healthier Tomorrow."

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