

## Para Badminton in Canada

Para Badminton is in full speed leading up to the 2020 Paralympics in Tokyo, Japan from August 25 – September 6, 2020. Although Canada is behind the rest of the World as far as Para Badminton is concerned we have made great progress in developing the sport.

Badminton Canada held the first Para Nationals May of 2016 in Moncton, New Brunswick. At this competition Wyatt Lightfoot, from Assiniboia, Saskatchewan won Gold in the SS6 classification (short stature), and won Bronze in doubles with Aaron Keith. In December of 2016 Para Team Canada which included Wyatt Lightfoot SS6 athlete and Frank Gaudet as Head Coach from Saskatchewan competed in the Pan Am Championship in Medellin, Columbia and the next week in the first International tournament in Medellin, Columbia where Wyatt won Silver in doubles with Aaron Keith.

In 2017 Wyatt went to Dublin, Ireland in June and then went in November to Colorado Springs, USA where Wyatt won Bronze in Singles SS6 and Bronze in doubles SS6 with Justin Kendrick. Badminton Canada then held the Canada Para National in Vancouver and the number of participants increased. Wyatt Lightfoot won gold in Singles SS6. Wyatt also won the Para Junior Athlete of the Year from Badminton Canada.



In 2018 the Canadian Team travelled to Dublin, Ireland then went on in August to compete at Sao Paulo, Brazil where Wyatt Lightfoot won Bronze in SS6 doubles with Dawson McClure. The Canadian Para Badminton Nationals were held in Vancouver where Wyatt won gold in singles SS6 and won gold in doubles SS6 with Emillen Langelier. Wyatt Lightfoot was presented with the Para Junior Athlete of the Year from Badminton Canada for 2018. Team Canada went on to compete in Lima, Peru in November for the Pan Am Para Badminton Tournament where Wyatt won bronze in singles SS6 and bronze in doubles SS6 with Dawson McClure. Frank Gaudet also went as coach to Nationals and also as head coach in Lima, Peru. 2018 was another successful year for para badminton training and experiences in competing with other countries.

Training continues for the athletes in Canada. They train most days up to five days a week and at least one to three hours per day. In Wyatt's case he had private coaching from Frank Gaudet and then had training with the Elite able bodied athletes from Saskatchewan. This includes some stretching and warmup activities. He also had a mental coach and was advised by a nutritional coach.

In 2019 Wyatt Lightfoot went to compete in the 5<sup>th</sup> Turkish Para badminton ENESCU International in Antalya, Turkey where he won bronze in mixed doubles SS6 with Irina Borisova, Russia.(Note: Badminton Canada supports certain tournaments per year but the athlete may travel to any tournament to compete.) The next tournament was in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The next Team Canada tournament which was sponsored was the Canada Para Badminton International 2019 held in May in Ottawa, Ontario. Team Canada current sponsored athletes are:

Wyatt Lightfoot	SS6(male)	Assiniboia, Saskatchewan
Richard Peter	Wheelchair 1(male)	Vancouver, B.C.
Yuka Chokyu	Wheelchair I (female)	Vancouver, B.C.
Bernard Lapointe	Wheelchair 2(male)	Moncton, New Brunswick
William Roussy	Standing Lower 3(male)	Baie-des-Chaleurs, Quebec
Pascal Lapointe	Standing Lower 4(Male)	Montreal, Quebec
Olivia Meier	Standing Lower 4/SU5(female)	Winnipeg, Manitoba
Frank Gaudet	Head Coach	Regina, Saskatchewan

Any athlete can compete in the para nationals whether or not they are sponsored by Badminton Canada. They can also compete if they wish in the International Tournaments as long as they are a member in good standing.

Canada went on to compete at The Irish Para Badminton International held in June in Dublin, Ireland. We competed very strongly with several quarter final finishes. At this tournament Yuns Oh from Winnipeg, Manitoba and Duc Goi from Toronto, Ontario also competed.

Picture Dublin, Ireland: Top L to R: Frank Gaudet Head Coach Regina, Saskatchewan. Pascal Lapointe, William DeRoussy, Yuns Oh, Olivia Meier, Duc Goi. Front Row L to R: Bernard Lapointe, Wyatt Lightfoot Assiniboia, Saskatchewan, Yuka Chokyu. Missing from Picture R. Peter.



The next tournament Team Canada competed in was the World Championships in Basel, Switzerland. This marked the first time that able bodied and para athletes competed at the Worlds at the same venue and at the same time. We again competed strongly but came up short for medals. Team Canada immediately left Switzerland to compete at the Pan American Games in Lima, Peru where this was the first time in history that Para Badminton was being played at the Pan American Games. Team Canada was quite successful:

Pascal Lapointe and Olivia Meyer	Canada	Gold SL3-SU5 Mixed
Olivia Meier	Canada	Silver SU5 Women
Pascal Lapointe	Canada	Bronze SL4 Men
R. Peter and B. Lapointe	Canada	Bronze WH1-WH2 Men
Yuka Chokyu	Canada	Bronze WH2 Women
Wyatt Lightfoot	Canada	Fourth SS6

William DeRoussy

Canada

Fourth SU3

Frank Gaudet

Canada

Head Coach



The Pan American Games was a great success for all of our athletes who attended. Everyone who attended made history as this was the first for para badminton. Proud to be Canadian.

Wyatt Lightfoot also travelled to Odense, Denmark in October 2019 where he won bronze in SS6 doubles with Miles Krajewski (USA).

Team Canada which includes Wyatt Lightfoot SS6 from Assiniboia, Saskatchewan, Yuka Chokyu(WH1), Vancouver, B.C., Pascal LaPointe(SL4), Montreal, QC, Olivia Meier(SL4), Winnipeg, Manitoba and Frank Gaudet Head Coach from Regina Saskatchewan went on to compete at a test Event for the Tokyo Olympics in Tokyo, Japan in November. At this event Mikail Bilenki from Vancouver also participated along with the other Team Canada members. Team Canada competed strongly but finished in the quarter finals. The test event was successful and the venue was amazing. We are definitely looking forward to the Olympics.

The Olympics will be held in Tokyo in 2020 where this will mark the first time Para Badminton will be played in the Olympics. The Olympic trials started on April 1, 2019 and will end on March 31, 2020. Para is different from able bodied badminton, to qualify for the Olympics as an able bodied player you have to be one of the best players in the pan am zone and Para players have to be the top seven in the world to qualify. There are fifteen events around the world that you can try to get more points than everyone else in your classification to qualify. As of today, there are three more events left Sao Paulo, Brazil, Lima Peru and Cartagena, Spain. Frank Gaudet from Regina, Saskatchewan will be Head Coach for the remaining events but unfortunately Wyatt Lightfoot from Assiniboia, Saskatchewan who is currently ranked 25<sup>th</sup> in the World will be unable to attend the remaining events due to medical reasons.

Frank Gaudet will be attending the 2020 Senior and Para National Badminton Championship which will be held in Winnipeg, Manitoba on January 29, 2020 to February 1, 2020 as head coach. The national team will be getting together to train as well as playing in the event. Anyone can play at this event it is open to the public. We wish Team Canada to have success at the Nationals and in the coming events for the Olympics and also wish Wyatt a speedy recovery.

Badminton is an amazing sport and para badminton is open to all ages. If you are interested in para badminton and meeting new people either recreationally or competitively and possibly travelling to meet like minded people in Canada and around the world please contact Frank Gaudet at [saskbadminton@sasktel.net](mailto:saskbadminton@sasktel.net).

Submitted by: Joy Gaudet