

# ENHANCING BADMINTON'S FUTURE

## INTRODUCTION

This year is a landmark one for the Badminton World Federation as we have boldly embarked not only on a new tournament cycle but, more significantly, a new tournament structure which will be pivotal to our sport's ongoing evolution and success. We have also welcomed new partnerships – and launched the HSBC BWF World Tour – which will bolster our drive to take badminton to an even higher level.

In the fast-paced, cutting-edge world of sport, change and innovation are vital constants to succeed in an increasingly saturated marketplace and it is important to increase the excitement and engagement in our sport to grow our fan base globally. Key statistics have shown that our collective hard work has been paying off. Badminton has been on the rise on important fronts:



**Olympic  
status  
upgraded**



**Commercial  
revenues**



**Broadcast viewership  
– 600 million  
households**



**Active players  
globally  
– 135 million**



**Global fan base  
– 497 million**

These are accomplishments of which we should all be justly proud but this is not the summit and we cannot afford to be complacent now. The time is right to do more; to go further; to be bolder – and not to wait until decisive shifts and advances in our marketplace trigger our response. We must be proactive if we want to maintain badminton's steady upward trajectory – and be a leading sport progressing to the top of the sporting landscape.

Most importantly, we must remain relevant to youth to attract their attention and gain their life-long loyalty.

## STRATEGIC FOCUS

'Badminton as Entertainment' is a primary focus in the BWF Strategic Plan 2016-2020 approved by Council in October 2015. This is about capturing inspirational performances through events, communicating this through high-end television production and global broadcast, showcasing athletes as stars and engaging a global fan base through a range of digital platforms. BWF has already started to transform our sport in various ways, including the improvements in the quality of television production; the introduction of Hawk-Eye and speed-gun technology; usage of in-venue jumbotrons for replays and other displays; showing on-court projections and animations; and hiring professional commentators and in-venue announcers.



# BWF COUNCIL'S PROPOSAL

In keeping with the Vision embraced in the BWF Strategic Plan 2016-2020 – ***Making badminton a leading global sport accessible to all - giving every child a chance to play for life*** – and deeply inspired by the key words of our Mission, the BWF Council wishes to propose a suite of initiatives to further elevate badminton within the realm of 'sportainment' – the complex and savvy blend of sports and entertainment that is the blueprint for success within the sport-event industry today.

The proposed improvements are designed to elevate the sports presentation of BWF events and badminton in general. They include in particular an **enhanced scoring system**, but the progressive strategy encompasses other initiatives such as **reduced on-court coaching**, the implementation of the **Experimental Service Law (Fixed Height)**, already being tested from March 2018, and a **range of enhancements regarding the general presentation and promotion of the sport** we all treasure. These improvements are closely aligned to BWF's commitment to entertainment, excellence and innovation within our badminton product.

BWF Council's overall strategy includes further enhancements to the presentation of our sport which are already part of BWF's

operational plans. In summation, BWF is focusing on:

1. Innovating competition rules, including changes to the scoring system, on-court coaching and service-height regulations.
2. Enriching fan experience – which includes a range of communication strategies and initiatives, such as building a broader digital presence for BWF.
3. Raising the profile of our stars and players – which includes promotion and education initiatives around our star players.
4. Increasing the commercial value of our sport – which has already resulted in a new agency agreement and new sponsorship partners for our tournaments.
5. Strengthening our profile as an innovative and cutting-edge sport – the progressive initiatives in the strategic approach will fulfil this objective.
6. Enhancing our broadcasting product – already part of the partnership with our agency, Infront Sports & Media; with the focus on enhancing our broadcast product.

# UPGRADING OUR SPORT - KEY ELEMENTS

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Here are some important factors at the forefront of the BWF Council's considerations.

1. Mission to attract new fans while not compromising the integrity and principles of badminton.
2. Our new commercial partners – including agencies, broadcasters and key sponsors which are integral to the top flight of our sport – expect BWF to innovate more, thereby ensuring our badminton product remains competitive, relevant and popular – and that it continues to grow globally.
3. Other racket sports – and sports in general – are experimenting with their presentation, scoring formats and match/event lengths to optimise fan and player/athlete experience.

## GOALS

1. Increase the excitement, engagement and innovation of badminton.
2. Enhance badminton's position in an increasingly saturated global sports market.



These changes focus on badminton's elite level and international tournaments and the presentation of our star players to our fans through television, digital channels and various media globally. The BWF Council, however, accepts that member associations can decide if and how to implement the proposed changes in their national contexts to accommodate, in best way possible, the different levels of recreational and competitive players being part of the athletes' pathway to world-class level.

The BWF Council, led by President Poul-Erik Høyer, is convinced that these are among the enhancements that can propel badminton to a new and even more exciting horizon. It is the necessary way forward in the sporting environment in which we operate.

# ENHANCING THE SCORING SYSTEM

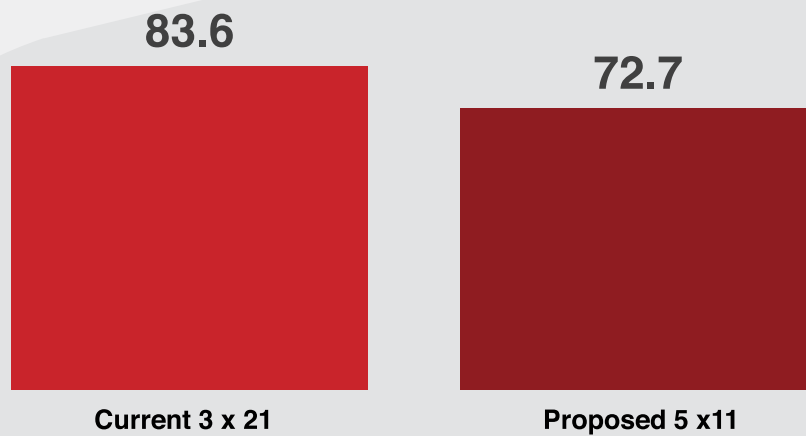
The proposed changes to the scoring system are an essential part of the overall strategic goal to optimise the presentation of badminton at the highest level.

The rally-point system has clearly been successful but the BWF Council feels further enhancement of badminton is vital at this stage if our sport is to maintain and indeed grow its share of the sports-entertainment landscape.

The key objectives include:

1. Building suspense quicker – more intensity in matches (see second diagram below).
2. Increasing the excitement in matches.
3. Shortening the length of matches (to reduce physical impact on players and optimise television broadcasts).

## Average (mean) number of rallies in a match

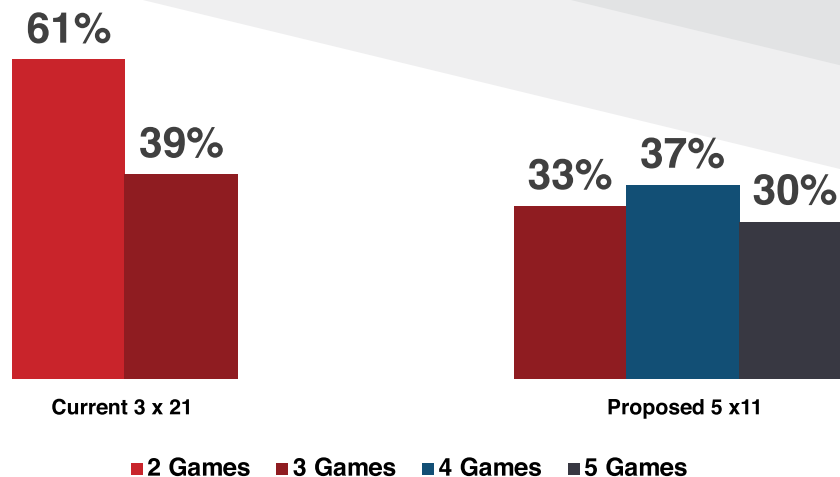


One of the pillars of this evolutionary package of innovations is therefore a proposal to change from current scoring system of three games to 21 points to **five games to 11 points**.

First proposed in 2014, this plan is the culmination of almost four years of discussion and testing, with BWF having invested in detailed statistical analysis and modelling of potential scoring systems.

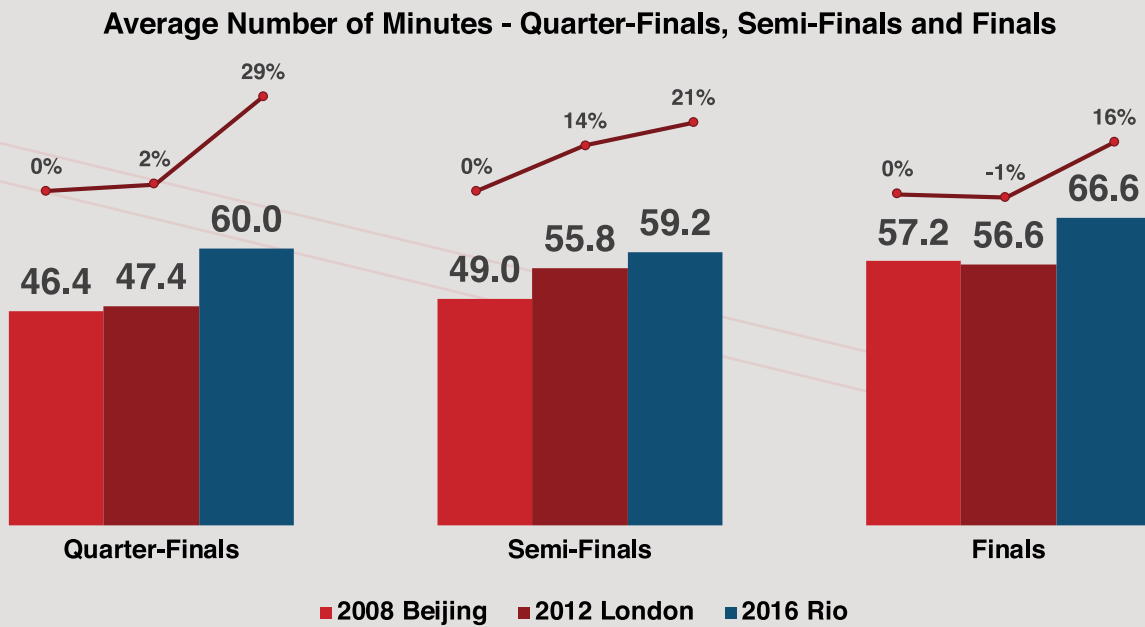
Admittedly, there have been mixed reactions to the testing and concerns have been raised about players having to adapt to too many changes at the same time. However, the BWF is confident our player community is flexible enough to adapt suitably within this Olympic cycle, thus giving players adequate time to get accustomed to a new scoring system and other enhancements before the Tokyo 2020 Qualification Period begins in 2019. Furthermore, the new scoring system will reduce the physical impact on players, protecting the health of our athletes and making it possible for them to compete in more tournaments.

## Average number of games (peaks) in a match

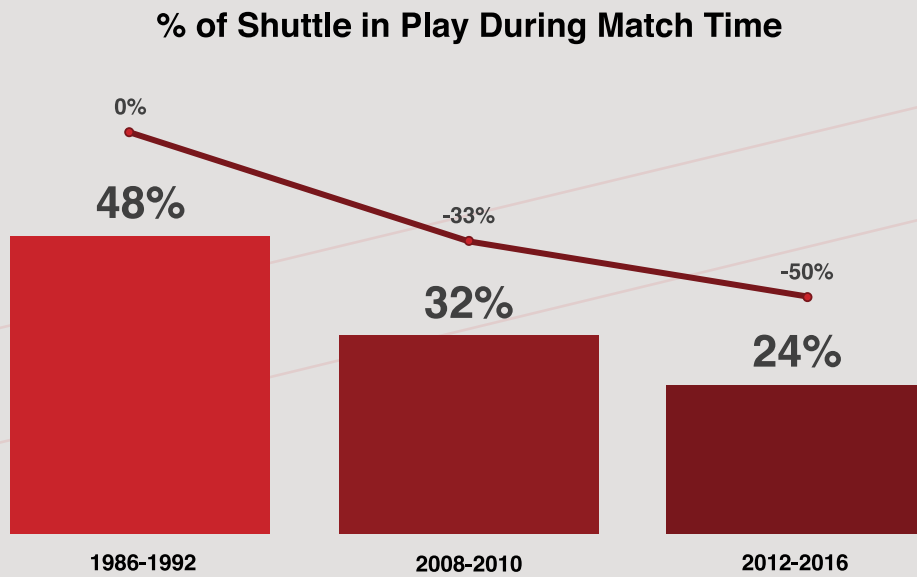


# CURRENT SCORING SYSTEM - CHALLENGES

- The length of matches at elite level has dramatically increased over the last two Olympic cycles (see diagram below), which has resulted in periods of play without excitement in matches.



- Match length at the top level of the sport has been significantly influenced by the increase in breaks between points, which has led to the shuttlecock actually being in play for a lower percentage of the total match length (see diagram below).



- Scheduling has therefore become more complex with very long hours of play at the top of the sport.
- Increased match lengths, reduced draw sizes (more matches between closely ranked players) and greater scientific input into player preparation, has led to greater physical and mental stress for the elite players which risks increasing player injuries and withdrawals.

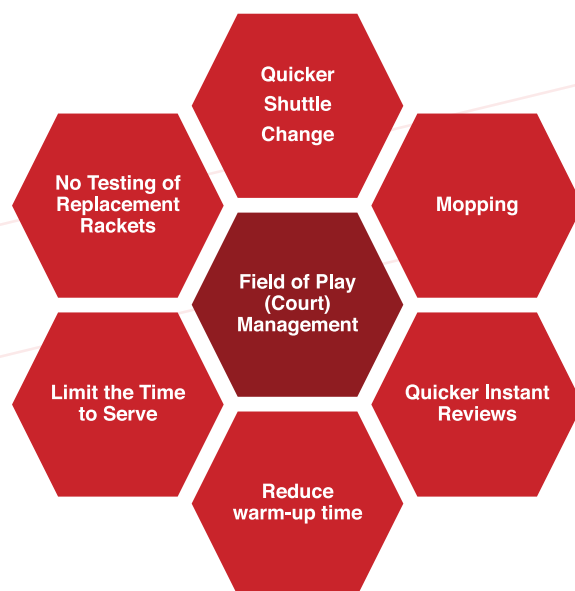
**NOTES:**

- Percentage calculated based on increase/decrease of first event/period.
- 2012-16 sample taken from Men's Singles only

# PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

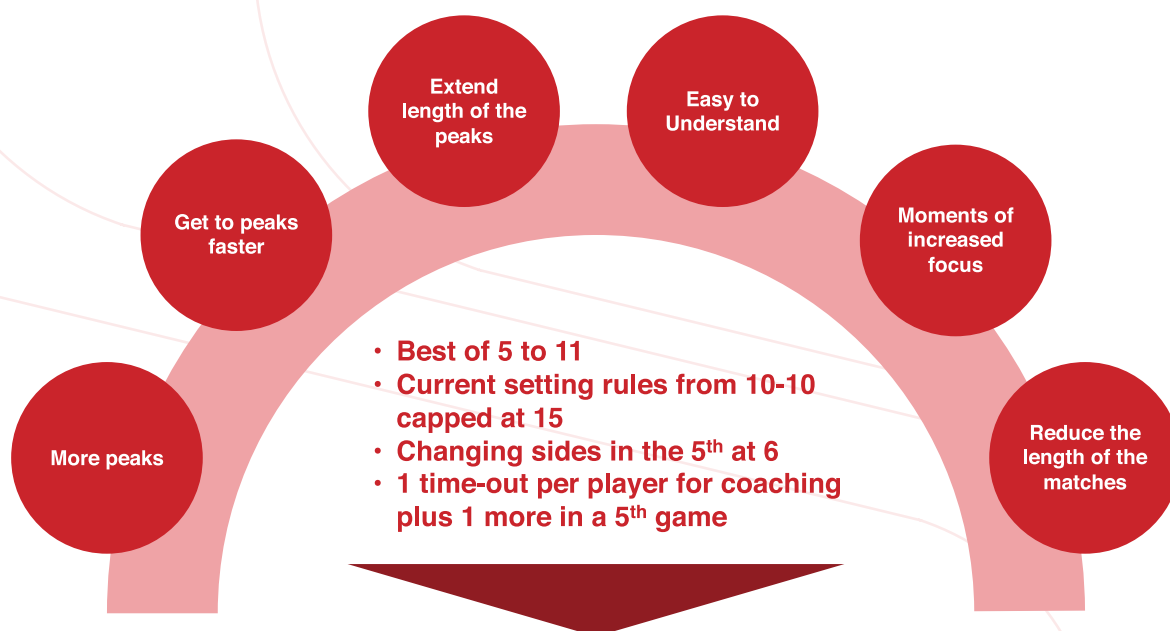
1. Decrease the length of games and matches by adapting the scoring system.
2. Reduce time being taken between points.
3. Reduce warm-up time; racket testing.\*
4. Reduce on-court coaching.\*

\* Being considered for implementation by BWF Council.



# PROPOSED ENHANCED SCORING SYSTEM

The proposed enhanced scoring system therefore centres on the below structure:



**Enhanced scoring system for all BWF-sanctioned World Ranking tournaments (The BWF World Junior Championships will be the only junior event included)\***

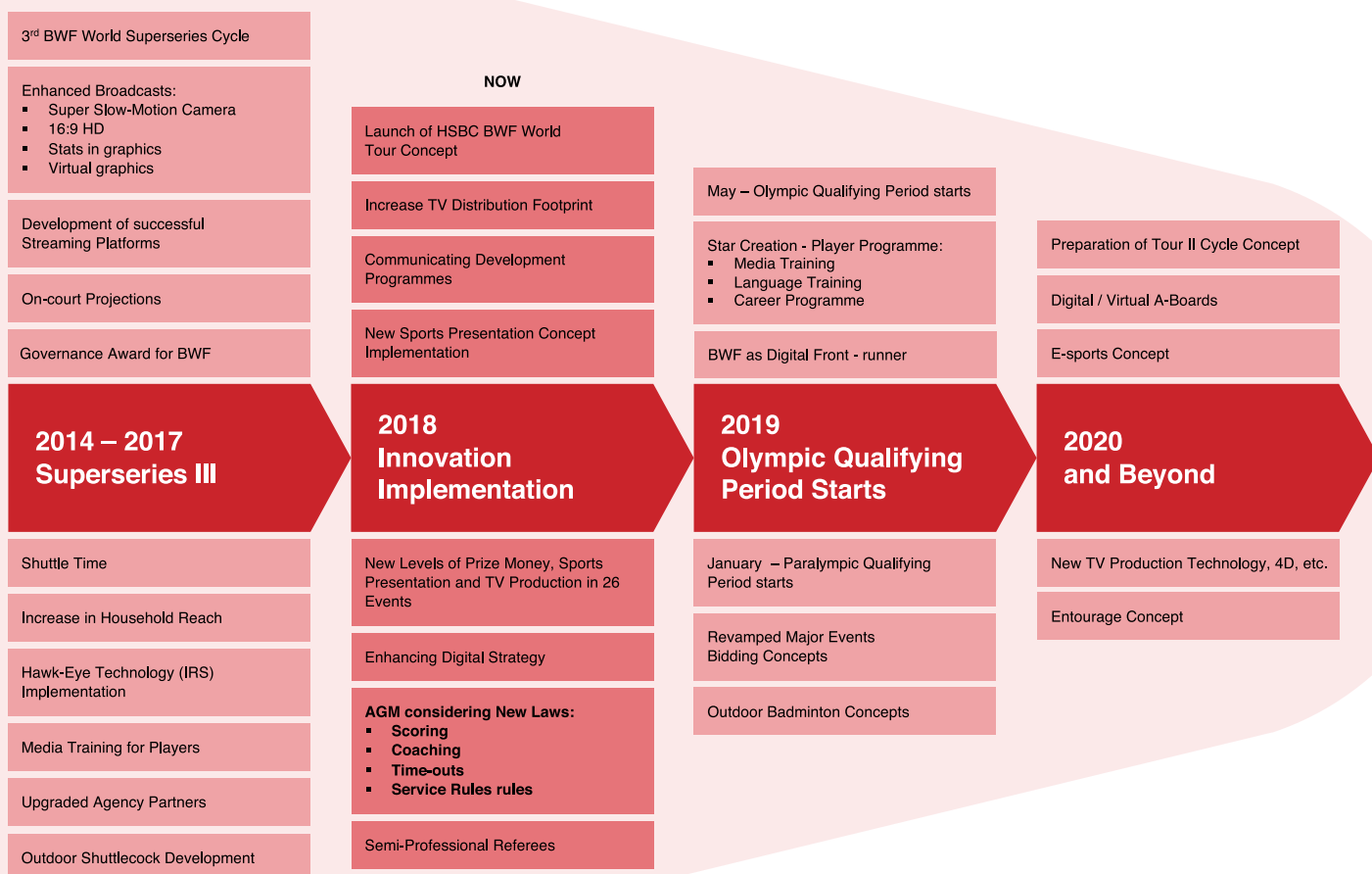
\* National federations / member associations can opt to adopt different systems for their national competitions and an atmosphere of flexibility and adaptability of our sport should be enabled by BWF

More detailed information around the proposals to the BWF membership will be provided in the materials to be sent to the membership on **Friday 30 March, 2018**, in preparation for the BWF Annual General Meeting in Bangkok on **Saturday 19 May, 2018**.

The key areas for the BWF membership to consider will be:

1. A new and enhanced scoring system to increase the excitement of the sport at the top level and to shorten the length of matches.
2. A reduction in on-court coaching.
3. A service-law change with a fixed height for serves to improve the quality and consistency of service judging.

# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES



## FOR THE BETTERMENT OF BADMINTON

For any sport to remain at the pinnacle of the sports-entertainment industry, it must undertake periodic self-evaluation and innovation to continue attracting and exciting fans – fans who have countless, amazing choices in a competitive global sports market.

In the Badminton World Federation, we have done so and, in recent years, we have celebrated milestone after milestone in our federation's history. We have been applauded for landmark achievements and we have continued to define badminton for generations to come.

Now, it's time for us to be even bolder; not just the BWF Council but all of us – all 189 member associations. This must be a collective journey on which we embark, to embrace change and to confidently chart badminton's course to the forefront of global sport.

We must seek unprecedented heights across the spectrum of our sport.

All of us in the BWF Council believe that is our destiny – and we must pursue it vigorously.

It is now up to you – our members.

We invite you to absorb the detailed information which has been presented and we look forward to your robust support in our quest to do what is best for badminton.