

The following was compiled by Stan Hales, our U S B A President and I thought you would enjoy checking out the way we compare to "Big Brother" tennis in some departments at least. Very clever, don't you agree?

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FOR PUBLICATION OR QUOTATION

BADMINTON, EVERYONE!

The All-England Tennis Championship, commonly known as Wimbledon, has come and gone for 1985. The media's thirst for Wimbledon's upper crust traditions is again quenched, and Boris Becker has become a household word. But what of the other All-England Championship? What of the All-England Badminton Championship, commonly known as Wembley? The traditions of this great tournament go back to its founding in 1899, just 22 years after Wimbledon's first year. This tournament is well known in England, where badminton is far more popular than tennis, and it is equally well known in nearly all of the 80 countries affiliated to the International Badminton Federation. Yet, the United States remains nearly ignorant of Wembley and of badminton as a competitive sport, and the media here do little to help.

This is all about to change. The world sporting community in general, and the International Olympic Committee in particular, have had the wisdom to give badminton the respect it deserves. By unanimous vote of the I.O.C. in June, badminton will become a medal sport in the 1992 Olympics and thereafter, and will make its debut in Seoul as an Exhibition Sport. The United States Olympic Committee has now invited the United States Badminton Association to join as a Class A member. The future of what is really the world's most demanding racket sport looks rosy indeed. But there is much education to be done before badminton is understood in the United States.

Badminton is the least understood sport in this country. The misperception of the game is enormous. American sports fans, however, put great stock in sports statistics, and it just may be that the numbers below will be enlightening. These figures were gathered to compare the men's singles finals at Wimbledon, in which Boris Becker (Germany) defeated Kevin Curren (U.S.A.), 6-3, 6-7, 7-6, 6-4, with the men's singles finals at the World Badminton Championships held in Calgary in June, in which Han Jian (China) defeated Morten Frost (Denmark), 14-18, 15-10, 15-8. These statistics must be admitted as describing the current top standard of each sport.

At Wimbledon, the singles final lasted a total of three hours and eighteen minutes. In these 198 minutes, the tennis ball was in play 18 minutes. For 180 minutes, the players were walking or sitting, in between rallies. That means three hours of rest for 18 minutes of play. One could say that the intensity of the match was only 18/198, or 9%.

At Calgary, the final lasted one hour and sixteen minutes. However, in these 76 minutes, the shuttle was in play 37 minutes, for a playing intensity of 37/76, or 48%. This is just the beginning of the story.

At Wimbledon, Becker and Curren played a total of 299 points (or rallies), and these points contained 1,004 individual shots, including missed first services. Simple arithmetic reveals an average of 3.4 shots per rally, including missed first services. At Calgary, there were only 146 rallies played, but with a total of 1,972 shots. Han and Frost produced an average of 13.5 shots per rally. Here is another way to look at this: there were 5.1 shots per elapsed minute at Wimbledon, and 25.9 at Calgary.

A simple estimate of distance traveled by the players, based on the figures above and on an assumed 22 feet traveled per player per shot, would suggest that the tennis finalists each ran about 2 miles in 3 hours 18 minutes; the badminton finalists each covered 4 miles in 1 hour 16 minutes. Those millions of Americans who believe badminton to be an easy game should ponder this.

Tennis is a great game, and it deserves all the attention and popularity it receives. But badminton does not deserve the disdain it has received, especially in this country, for so long. Badminton deserves the respect generally accorded to the world's most demanding sports, for that is what it is. Badminton players deserve the respect generally accorded to the world's best trained athletes, for that is what they are.

At last, badminton will certainly obtain this respect through its Olympic position. And the media may then have to admit the enormous appeal of this game. And then Wimbledon may have to share the world's spotlight with Wembley. We of the United States Badminton Association look forward to that day.

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