

The first period of a successful local sport in the ranks of Georgikon

Egy sikeres helyi sportág első időszaka a Georgikon berkeiben

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Abstract: At Georgikon, which has more than 225 years of tradition, in addition to teaching a wide spectrum of disciplines, the institution's task is also to provide students with an appropriate level of physical preparation. In recent years, the local appearance of badminton, an increasingly popular sport, has been closely intertwined with the university. The development of this sport started with the rental of gyms by a few keen badminton enthusiasts in the Keszthely area, and then found its home at Georgikon. It eventually became an official national sports association and currently serves both the town and the university. Badminton is a sport that originated in India and then officially spread from England in the middle of the 19th century. This sport is on the program of the Summer Olympic Games since 1992. In Hungary you can play badminton on indoor courts in around 80 locations, and the number of official clubs is currently around 60. Half of the domestic badminton venues are located in and around Budapest. Badminton is currently played in 5 settlements in Zala County. The Keszthely Badminton Association has been officially registered since 2011. Thanks to a small enthusiastic group, it was previously possible to play badminton in Keszthely, and since the beginning of the 2000s, those who like the game have rented various city gyms for training. Since 2010, the gym of Georgikon has been used as the training venue for the sport. The association currently has around 50 active members, mostly hobby players and a smaller part competitors. Among the players of different ages, in addition to the larger town membership, university students, university employees and their family members are also represented. Badminton is one of the 20 official sports associations in Keszthely, which has gained recognition in the area and is still very popular today.

Keywords: badminton, Keszthely, Georgikon, health preservation, university

Összefoglalás: A több, mint 225 éves hagyománnyal bíró Georgikonon a széles spektrumú tudományágak oktatása mellett a hallgatók megfelelő szintű fizikai felkészítése is az intézmény feladata. Az utóbbi években egyre népszerűbb tollaslabda sportág helyi megjelenése szorosan összefonódik az egyetemmel. A sportág fejlődése a néhány Keszthely környéki lelkes tollaslabdát kedvelő sportember tornatermek bérléseivel indult, majd a Georgikonon talált otthonra. Végül hivatalos országos egyesületté vált, s jelenleg is szolgálja a várost és az egyetemet egyaránt. A tollaslabdázás egy Indiából eredő, majd hivatalos szabályokkal a 19. század közepi Angliából világszerte elterjedő sportág. A Badminton elnevezés egy angliai települést jelöl. A

hazánkban is egyre népszerűbb mozgásforma a nyári olimpiai játékok programjában 1992-től szerepel. A beltéri tollaslabda játék mintegy 80 helyszínen űzhető Magyarországon, a hivatalos klubok száma pedig 60 körüli jelenleg. Budapesten és Pest vármegyében található a hazai tollaslabdázási helyszínek fele. Zala vármegyében jelenleg 5 településen tollaslabdáznak. A Keszthelyi Tollaslabda Egyesület hivatalosan bejegyzett formában a 2011. évtől működik. Egy kisebb lelkes társaság révén korábban is volt már tollaslabdázási lehetőség Keszthelyen, a 2000-es évek elejétől az edzésekhöz különböző városi tornatermeket béreltek a játékot kedvelők. 2010-től a Georgikon tornaterme szolgál a sportág edzéseinek helyszínéül. A nagyobb részben hobby játékosokból, kisebb részben versenyzőkből álló aktív tagok száma jelenleg 50 fő körüli az egyesületben. A különböző életkorú játékosok között a nagyobb városi tagság mellett az egyetemi hallgatók, egyetemi dolgozók és családtagjaik is képviseltetik magukat. A tollaslabda a 20 keszthelyi hivatalos sportegyesület egyike, mely elismertséget vívott ki magának a környéken, s mely ma is igen népszerű. Ebben szerepet játszik az a tény, hogy viszonylag kis fizikai felkészültség és technikai tudás megléte esetén is igen szórakoztató játék. Az elmúlt évtized során több mint 200 fő már legalább kipróbálta a sportágot a városban, a Georgikon tornacsarnokában, hivatalos beltéri körülmények között. Ez a szám Keszthely mai lakosságának több mint egy százalékát teszi ki.

Kulcsszavak: tollaslabda, Keszthely, Georgikon, egészségmegőrzés, egyetem

1. Introduction

The health-preserving effect of sport cannot be questioned. Numerous international and domestic researches have previously proven that physical activity plays a key role in maintaining our health (e.g. Ács, Borsos and Rétsági 2011; Lee et al. 2011; Stephens 1988; Caspersen et al. 1985). Movement improves our condition, thus our health, and can help us live a longer, quality life. The range of sports is very wide. Everyone can find the right form of exercise for them. This study deals with the sport of badminton and its situation in Hungary, more specifically in Keszthely. The sport of badminton has undergone rapid development both internationally and domestically in the past half century.

No matter how you look at it, the perception of badminton in schools, leisure sports, or association sports is positive. The reason for this is probably that badminton is a very fun game despite the relatively low level of physical preparation and technical knowledge. Its increasing popularity worldwide led, among other things, to badminton being included in the program of the Olympic Games from 1992 (Lemke, Meseck, 1996). Today, badminton is one of the most popular sports with the most followers on Earth. According to some Internet sources, with 950 million followers, it ranks 6th in these statistics (Internet 1), which is mainly due to Asian followers. It is estimated that more than 200 million people play this sport worldwide today.

2. Materials and Methods

The method of the study is basically document analysis. It is primarily based on what kind of growth and change occurred in Keszthely with the appearance of the sport of badminton in the area, and how it became popular recently. In addition to the rather narrow domestic and international written badminton literature, there are some internet sources that provide help in this regard. In Keszthely, the statistical data series, annual reports and reports of the association (KETE) help to outline a more accurate picture of the situation. We tried to present the local development of the sport with diagrams and figures, during which the increase in the number of athletes, the appearance of the younger generation at training sessions, the local interest in

summer children's camps, and the regional interest in the amateur adult competitions organized by the association were primarily in focus. Data extracted from reports and other literature were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods and processed using Microsoft Office 2013 excel.

3. Results and Discussion

Badminton became an officially recognized sport in Hungary in 1966 (Fodor et al. 1983, Rázsó 2010). During the emergence of the sport of Badminton in Hungary and its rapid development over the past 50 years, more and more people practise this form of exercise in our country. Thanks to coaching training, the number of professionals working in the sport of Badminton has increased. With the further training of physical education teachers and the equipping of schools with badminton equipment, the sport in our country has undergone a great development in terms of the education of the younger generation. The Hungarian Badminton Association organizes the competitions, training camps, and organizes the briefly outlined system. From elementary school to the end of high school (6 age groups), among others, amateurs and competitors can train at the Student Olympics, and competitions are even organized for university students. The number of official clubs is constantly increasing (over 60, Internet 2), and today this game can be played at more than 80 locations in Hungary.

Contrary to popular belief – that this sport is mostly played in beaches and gardens, and the goal is to keep the shuttlecock in the air for as long as possible – badminton is a typical indoor sport. The outdoor conditions – wind, sunshine, rain, etc. – they reduce the enjoyment value of the game, but it can be played outdoors as a hobby. The basic goal of the game of badminton is to force the opponent to make a mistake. Those sports halls are suitable for the official sport of badminton, in which it is possible to create several courts, and in which in addition to the appropriate court dimensions (6.1 meter width, 13.40 meter length; Fodor et al. 1983), the necessary interior height is also available. The sport can be played excellently even with a hall height of 6-7 meters, however, 9 meters in more serious competitions, and 12 meters for Olympic and world competitions is the minimum requirement.

Of course, when training young people for sports and healthy physical exercise, the smaller available track sizes and facilities are also sufficient at the beginning. In the case of badminton rackets, there is a wide selection, from metal beginner rackets to graphite and titanium professional rackets. Similarly in the case of shuttlecocks, there is also an abundant supply on the market, from various plastic shuttlecocks to the official competition shuttlecocks consisting of 16 goose feathers. In terms of sportswear, badminton has no special requirements, and in terms of sports shoes, there is also a large selection available, from the simplest sneakers to the most professional indoor shoes, depending on the skill level.

The start of indoor badminton in Keszthely can be dated to the turn of the millenium. In the beginning, a few local sports-loving hobby players (including Anita Kalamár, Csilla Korponay, Olivér Farkas, Tibor Szép, Gyula Buzás, Attila Buzás, János Márvány, István Lénárt, Ferenc Ángyán, Zsolt Rózsakerti, Péter Koncz, Tamás Tóth, Ákos Pintér) rented the gym of a primary school in Keszthely and then a secondary school of Hévíz for a few years on a weekly basis for the game. The difficulty was that you couldn't paint lines anywhere. Thus, every time the lines of the track had to be prepared at the beginning of the sessions with glue or chalk. It was a big step forward when, Ákos Pintér joined the university as a sport instructor, it was finally possible to paint 3 badminton courts in the sports hall of Georgikon, Keszthely (the first team in 2012, Figure 1).



Photo 1 The first badminton team in Keszthely

Source: own photo (2012)

From then on, regular, official badminton could be played in this sportshall twice a week in the town. Shortly thereafter, at the end of 2011, 15 people – including several of those listed above – founded the Keszthely Badminton Association (KETE, Founding Document, 2011), which was accepted by the Hungarian Badminton Association among its national official associations. The general assembly elected Ákos Pintér as the first president, and Olivér Farkas and Gábor Mayer as board members (Minutes, 2011). Since then, badminton trainings have been regular in the town on Thursday and Sunday evenings, for 13 years now – with the exception of the nearly 3-month summer holidays. Currently, the composition of the presidency is roughly the same (Gábor Mayer was replaced by Endre Nagy; Minutes, 2023).

After the renovation of the university sports surface in 2015, badminton training is now held on 4 badminton courts (Figure 2). The number of people attending the initial training of 8-10 people quickly increased in the association. Since badminton is played in very few places in Zala County (besides Keszthely, in Zalaegerszeg, Bagod and 2 years ago in Gyenesdiás), the news of this sport quickly spread. Children, university students and adults alike signed up to play badminton. Members have 2 training sessions each time. Beginners are followed by advanced training. The sessions are managed by qualified coaches (3 people, Ákos Pintér, Olivér Farkas and Miklós Fazekas). The fourth, former coach, Barbara Dancsa, moved from the town in 2023.



Photo 2 *Badminton training in the gym of Georgikon*

Source: own photo (2024)

The association rents the sports hall from the university (formerly University of Pannonia, now Hungarian University of Agricultural and Life Sciences) on an ongoing basis. Basically, the members keep the association going, in addition, financial support for smooth operation comes from tenders and a few years ago from the Keszthely Municipality as well. In addition to the town members visiting the training, Georgikon's teachers, employees, their family members and university students are also represented in the association. From the beginning of the 2010s, the sport of badminton was also included in university education at Georgikon. From then on, students could take up badminton as part of compulsory and optional physical education subjects and play the sport. The relationship between the badminton association and Georgikon became closer as a result. In addition to the hobby nature, some students from Georgikon also participated in national university badminton championships.

Since the beginning, more than 200 people have tried playing badminton in the town, which represents more than 1% of the population of Keszthely. The current number of active members is 55 (Presidential written annual report, 2024; Table 1), almost half of which are children and youth players. The data also show that the majority of players attending the association's training sessions are under 18 and over 35 (Table 2).

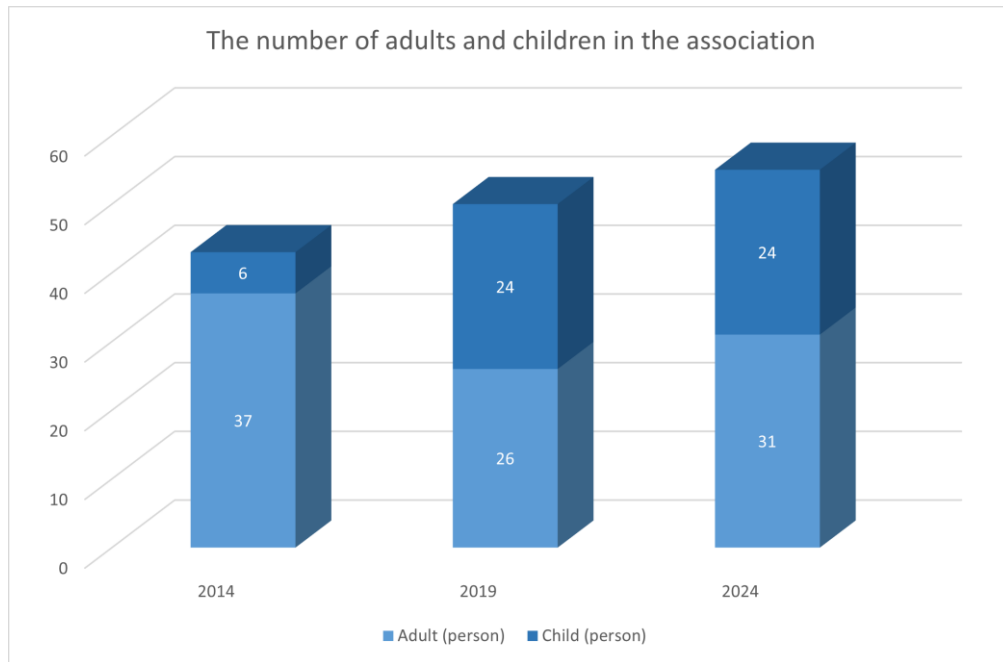


Figure 1 The number of active members in the association

Source: editing from own data (Presidential written annual reports)

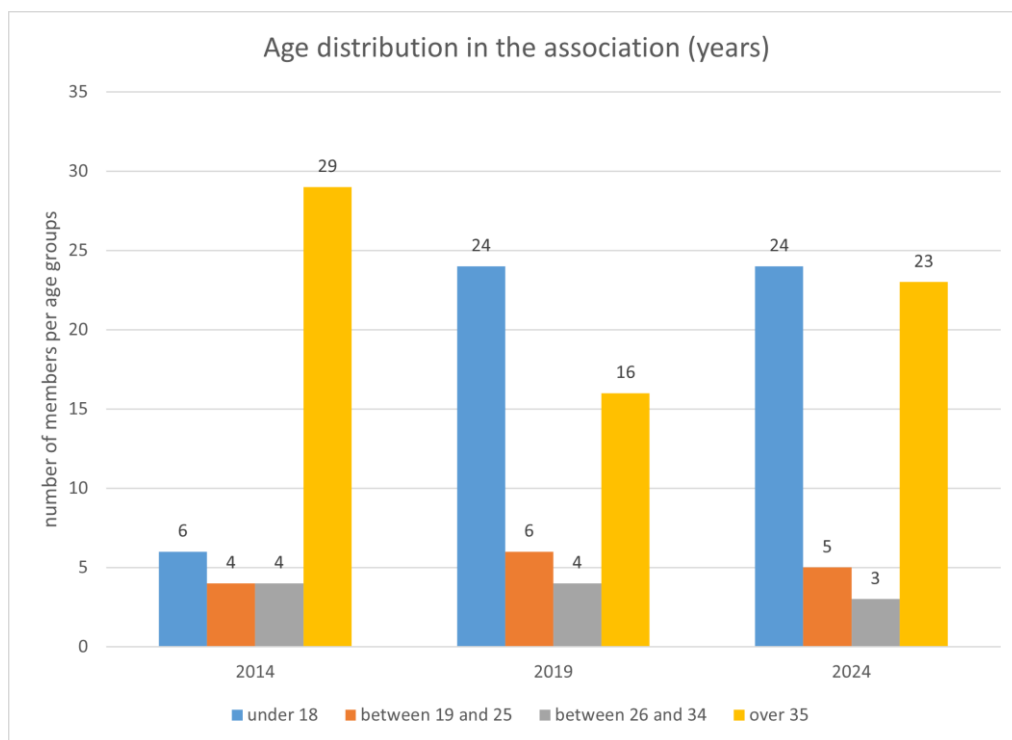


Figure 2 Age distribution in the association

Source: editing from own data (Presidential written annual reports)

The primary goal of the association is to preserve health. Therefore, although KETE is a hobby club, young children have been successfully competing in student badminton competitions for years. Several of them have already appeared in national finals (national 5th places are the best

so far, thanks to Kamilla Kutasy and Ákos Kovács-Markó). Several of the adults regularly participate in amateur regional competitions in the country, where they have already achieved numerous podium positions. We have so far won 2 gold, 3 silver and 4 bronze medals in senior national badminton championships – categories starting at the age of 35 (thanks to Anita Kalamár, Judit Szabó Meszlényiné, Gábor Mayer, Olivér Farkas and Ákos Pintér). Every year, KETE organizes a regional amateur adult badminton competition in Keszthely (Table 3), as well as occasional county Student Olympic rounds for children. It is clear from the data that there is a serious interest in these competitions in the region. In addition to the local competitors, players mostly come to Keszthely from Tapolca, Szombathely, Győr, Pápa, Bagod, Segesd, Zamárdi, Kaposvár and Pécs (Presidential written annual reports, 2011-2024).

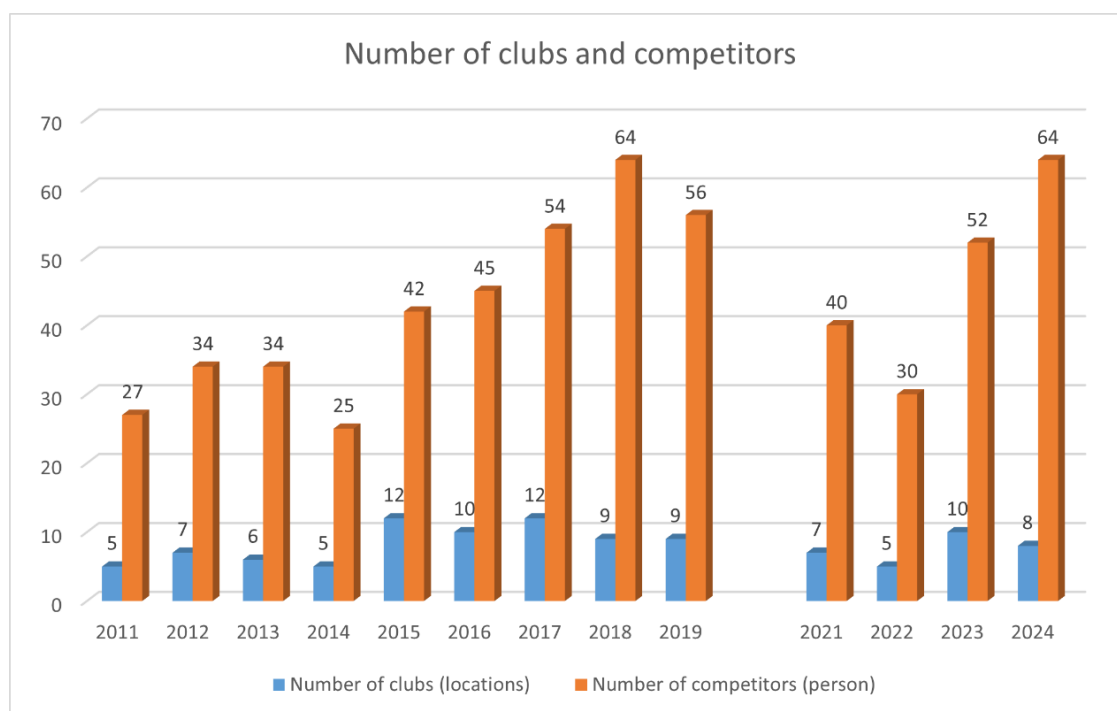


Figure 3 Regional adult badminton competitions in Keszthely

Source: editing from own data (Presidential written annual reports)

In the summer, from the beginning, the association holds 1-2 one-week summer children's camps per year (Table 4), the effect of which is clearly visible in the recent increase in the number of young association players. In such cases, in addition to the local coaches, a guest instructor (in the past Imre Pánovics, and in recent years the badminton coach Henriett Illés Takácsné from Segesd) helps with the children's camp. In addition to Keszthely, children also come to the camps from smaller settlements in the area, where, in addition to getting to know the sport, they can also go to the beach and participate in other joint team-building programs.

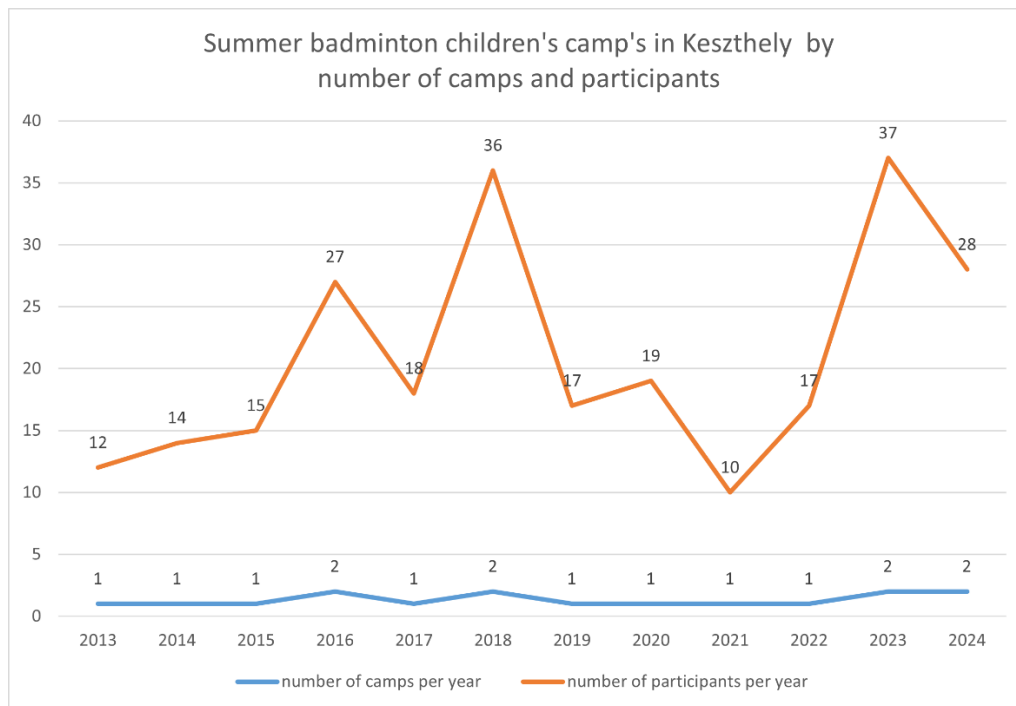


Figure 4 Summer badminton children's camps in Keszthely

Source: editing from own data (Presidential written annual reports)

KETE has already appeared on several forums in and around Keszthely, presenting the sport of badminton. The association regularly participates in fall sports programs organized several times in the town, where you can get to know the sport at demonstration training sessions. This is also necessary, since in this way the supply is ensured, because a smaller dropout can be observed in the older generations. It was an excellent local advertisement for badminton that the Hungarian male participant of the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics (because of Covid, it was in 2021), Gergely Krausz, had already visited the association and played with the members. On two occasions in the summer, we were invited to Révfülöp (Summer of Balaton, national TV show), during which we were able to promote our beloved sport and Keszthely, more widely. It is gratifying that KETE is recognized in the town and in the region, and the opinion of the association is already sought in sports-related questions and discussions. In the future, the aim of the association is primarily to pass on the love of movement through this sport, and to train and compete the most skillful players as far as possible (Figure 3).



Photo 3 The bigger half of the current badminton team in Keszthely

Source: own photo (2024)

Thanks to the now almost a decade and a half of badminton in Keszthely, regular games started once a week in the neighboring Gyenesdiás settlement a few years ago, where with the construction of the new school gym it became possible to play badminton as well. Since then the official badminton association (GYETE) was also established in the settlement. An excellent relationship has developed between the two clubs, and thanks to the geographical location, many people visit the training sessions of both settlements.

4. Conclusions

The relationship between Georgikon and the Keszthely Badminton Association goes back a decade and a half, providing its members with the opportunity to maintain their health through the sport of badminton. In addition to town members, several university students, workers, former workers and people connected with Georgikon also attend the association's training sessions. The staff of the campus sports center also participate in the management of the association and in the teaching of badminton as coaches. Badminton is now one of the few sports in Keszthely that is closely connected to the Georgikon, and thus contributes to enhancing the reputation of the university. Hopefully, in the future, even more university citizens will play sports, either in the association or elsewhere, following the words of the Roman poet Juvenalis: „a sound mind in a sound body”.

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