

September 2022

2022-2023 COMPETITIVE CIRCUIT RESTRU

MANITOBA BADMINTON
TOURNAMENT

what now?
a post-Herb Richard Open
UPDATE

(from the ED's desk)

a note to our members...

I want to first thank all of you who contacted us with questions, concerns, and feedback in the days leading up to the Herb Richard Open. As the first non-junior event of the MBA season, this year's Herb Richard Open was our first opportunity to see the results of the recent modifications to our tournament structure. Of course, that means it's also the first opportunity for things to go wrong.

The changes to the overall tournament structure were made with long-term gains in mind and the knowledge that we'd have to adjust and adapt as we go. Some adjustments are anticipated to take place after one or two seasons, and some are slated for five or more years from now. None were made without taking into consideration where we are and where we want to be.

In the following pages, I aim to highlight the "why" behind certain changes and present the data that informed the changes we proposed and are working to implement. Also, the post-tournament survey results show some misconceptions about how seeding is done and how ranking points are calculated, which I will address here as well.

This document will read as an answer to some frequently asked questions, a guide to the changes, as well as a backgrounder on the *why* and *how* we are addressing some of the issues facing our sport today in Manitoba. To keep things organized, you'll find a table of contents on the next page.

Happy reading



Mélanie Curé
Executive Director

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Why?

In short? Because folks have been asking for change for years.

One email received said: "It is clear to me that many issues that have been brought up to the MBA over the past few years have seen little to no improvement". Indeed, many have been asking for change to competition for several years. (Granted, change doesn't look the same to everyone. While some want more games others want less. Some want to see single-consolation events and others prefer a drop-down or round robin format.)

In the preamble found in our *Competitive Circuit Restructuring* document, we listed the main concerns and issues we wished to address. It's certainly a tall order which is why some solutions were proposed in the short term, to be followed by larger-scale change in the long term.

So, change it is. Meaningful change can be uncomfortable and while we don't expect everyone to be happy, dialogue is the key to keeping us on the right track and able to serve the community. We are grateful to those willing to stick with us through the process as we grow.

ABOUT THE MBA COMPETITION MODEL



Competition and community events have long been part of the Manitoba Badminton Association's portfolio and calendar. As our community grows, so does the need for a wider variety of events that enables shuttlers across the province to play the game in a competitive environment no matter their age or level of ability.

The restructured model aims to tackle a variety of issues brought forward by our membership over the years: lack of quality games, inconsistency of seeding, timing of events and draws, scheduling that disproportionately disadvantages rural players and young adults, lack of competition opportunities for non-elite athlete and lack of support (both financial and otherwise) for clubs and community leaders wanting to bridge the gap by hosting events for those athletes. Some of these difficulties were further exacerbated by the recent pandemic, leaving most grassroots programs with no court access at all.

The updated MBA competition model aims to tackle many of the difficulties while leaving room for growth and adjustment. We've looked beyond provincial and national borders for inspiration and taken cues from national programs in Europe. Among the changes are a modification of tournament format, updated eligibility rules for both the *Junior* and *Senior Provincial Championships*, an adjustment to ranking and seeding, the addition of a regional circuit and championship for junior athletes, as well as a new *School Series* and *Community Series*, meant to bridge the gap between school badminton and help support grassroots growth and initiatives across the province.

Why now?

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. Meaningful change is exactly what it sounds like and requires a willingness to step out of our comfort zones without taking out the pitchforks.

To "Why now?", I have two answers:

One, why *not* now? What better time than in the wake of a sport- and community-altering public health crisis that has already led to discomfort and change?

Two, because it's needed now more than ever. In the past two years, while badminton was available on an intermittent basis in Winnipeg, it was decimated and rendered impossible in nearly all other regions of the province. Rebuilding and bringing our grassroots community back into the fold cannot be done passively without enacting changes to enable and encourage their growth.

Grassroots who?

Few topics will get me monologuing until I'm blue in the face: the sociolinguistic French-language question in Manitoba (aka how elitism will forever be my nemeses), the supremacy of plain Cheerios over all other variations, and the incredible importance of the consistently under-considered grassroots and *B-C-D* cohorts.

I will not subject you to the abstract of my research theses from a past life, and in truth I welcome arguments in favour of Honey Nut Cheerios (which are a clear #2). However, I *will* outline how and why all of this needs to start with the grassroots. And have no fear, I come bearing receipts.

First, a disclaimer: I myself am a grassroots athlete and coach, and that perspective is what I bring to the table. While some will see this as bias, I see it as an informed lean. 20+ years of coaching and 11+ years of competing in the MBA circuit means a few hundred athletes and thousands of hours and conversations. I've heard the grumbings and am familiar with the narratives within the grassroots and *B-C-D* communities, as well as those outside of it.

I do not claim to speak for grassroots and *B-C-D* athletes, no one person can. Nor do I pretend to understand all there is to know about high-performance athletes. This is why I surround myself with folks who do understand these perspectives and who bring what I can't to the conversation.

1. GRASSROOTS WHO?

Over the years, I've often heard grassroots players referred to as folks who "play for fun". This is usually stated in juxtaposition to those who "play to compete" or, in other words, *A* or *high-performance* players. While I don't believe there's any malicious intent behind these statements, they can be damaging and detrimental to the community at large. There are of course shuttlers who play for fun (I hope we all do!) and/or only on a recreational basis; many have no desire to compete in tournaments. However, to refer to members who pay the same registration fee, take the same weekends off, and — in some cases — tack on hundreds of kilometres and accommodation costs as players who "play for fun" devalues the decades of play, volunteer organizing, volunteer coaching, and dedication to the sport they clearly demonstrate.

So who are they?

*The term grassroots refers to the beginnings or fundamentals. In sport, the term describes sport at the community level. In a typical sport system or hierarchy, grassroots sports will be the foundation, or elementary, layer (Phillips et al., 2011). For sport, grassroots includes junior and senior sport and it is both recreational and the platform for the high-performance development pathway. Grassroots sport makes an important contribution to all sport systems because it forms the entry point to sporting activity for most people. Competitions at grassroots level are the foundation of the sport system from which talent pools develop, and athletes can move upwards in the development pathway toward higher levels of sporting competition (De Bosscher et al., 2008). [...] The majority of these local sport clubs will be non-profit and managed by a volunteer committee and a workforce of volunteer coaches, managers, fundraisers, maintenance staff, and other positions required for the club to operate.*¹

In short, the grassroots are the bedrock upon which we build the rest.

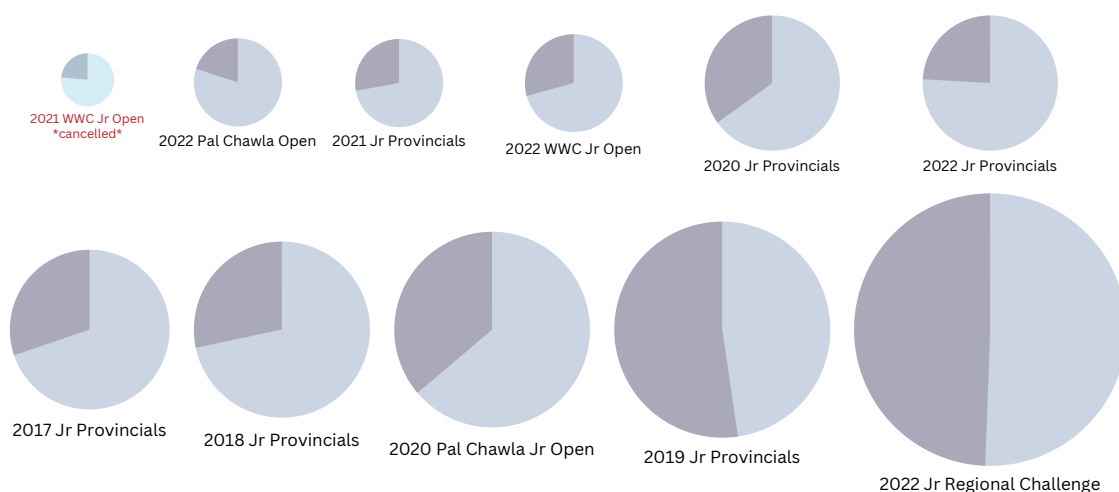
¹ Sharpe, Stirling, and Charles Mountfield. "Grassroots." *Encyclopedia of Sport Management*. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2021. pp. 220-222.

Grassroots who? (cont.)

2. PLAYERS AS PIE

In the fall of 2021, I took a deep dive into numbers of past junior events, looking for answers to questions from a parent who was disappointed with our choice to cancel the WWC Jr Open. Going in, I suspected that grassroots and rural participation was a factor but I was unprepared for just how large a factor it was.

The following charts show key junior events in the past 5 years, with dark blue slices showing the grassroots representation; the bigger the slice, the larger the pie.



3. PANDEMIC WOES

Like other sports, badminton was knocked down in the past two years due to fluctuating restrictions and closures. While badminton opportunities in Winnipeg floundered, athletes in and near the city were able to access courts (restrictions permitting) thanks to large community centres and venues such as the Winnipeg Winter Club and Prairie Badminton. Some Winnipeg clubs chose to move their groups to venues such as these in the absence of available school gyms.

Outside the city limits, the badminton community was decimated. With the exception of the Brandon Badminton Club, grassroots and rural clubs rely on community-use permits in schools (which were suspended from early 2020 to September 2022) and have no access to courts otherwise. Few areas have community gyms — let alone gyms with courts and the equipment needed — so clubs in these areas were left completely stagnant for nearly two years. This means that while access was limited in Winnipeg, it became non-existent for nearly all other shuttlers. That's nearly two years of missed opportunities for recruitment and retainment of new athletes, especially juniors. In fact, many of our clubs have *still* not restarted activity.

Grassroots who? (cont.)

4. SO WHAT NOW?

Now more than ever, the grassroots piece needs our attention. Placing too many of our eggs in the high-performance and professional baskets (so to speak) hinders grassroots growth and lack of support at the grassroots can potentially weaken its high-performance counterpart.² This is supported by research on the matter, and a search of research sport science literature shows the growing focus on grassroots and underserved communities, positioning sport as the powerful social development and community-building tool it is.

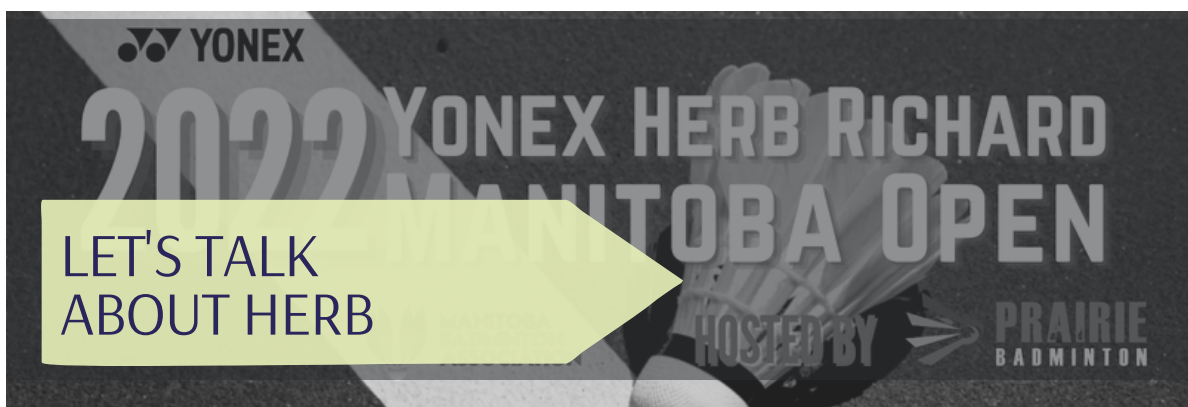
From a funding perspective, growing and supporting our grassroots will lead to a growth in numbers. A growth in numbers means an increase in funding which means more programs and so on and so forth. It is in all of our interests to ensure that our sport is a place for all and that we're putting in the work to bring everyone into the fold.

So what does this look like for Manitoba? Clubs need support and their members need meaningful competition opportunities. Many new events were created or grew in the past decade, including the *Rural SuperSeries* (now the *Regional SuperSeries*) and the B & C Championship.

Moving forward, we want to expand on these events and ensure we create space for these athletes at our *SuperSeries* and *Championship Series* events. We've also created the *Community Series* with the grassroots and community clubs in mind, offering support and shuttles to member clubs who host tournaments for their communities.

In the long term, we hope to have a larger and more comprehensive tournament circuit that includes a circuit for high-performance and nationally-competitive athletes, and one for grassroots and provincially-competitive athletes. That will require substantial growth over the next few years and sustainable programs, including some new projects that are in the works. In the short term, we are creating space for all levels of competition-seeking athletes by divisioning our events when numbers allow. This will help ensure that all players, regardless of level, get more consistent quality matches.

² Moscoso-Sánchez, David, Álvaro Rodríguez-Díaz, and Jesús Fernández-Gavira. "Elitist rhetoric and the sports gap. Examining the discourse and reality of sport in Spain." *European Journal for Sport and Society* 12.1 (2015): 31-51.



SEEDING ERRORS

Let's get this one out of the way, because the answer is simple. It was pointed out to us as soon as draws were posted that mistakes were made in both Men's Singles and Men's Doubles. And that was true; both were caused by human error. In Men's Doubles a very high-ranking team was missed by one seeder, which skewed their overall rank considerably, while in Men's Singles a copy-paste error occurred when transferring seeds from a seeder's file to the main spreadsheet, again affecting a high-ranking player and skewing his average.

Both errors were quickly rectified and an updated seeding file was sent to the referee. Updated draws were posted the next morning.

TOURNAMENT FORMAT & PLAYOFFS

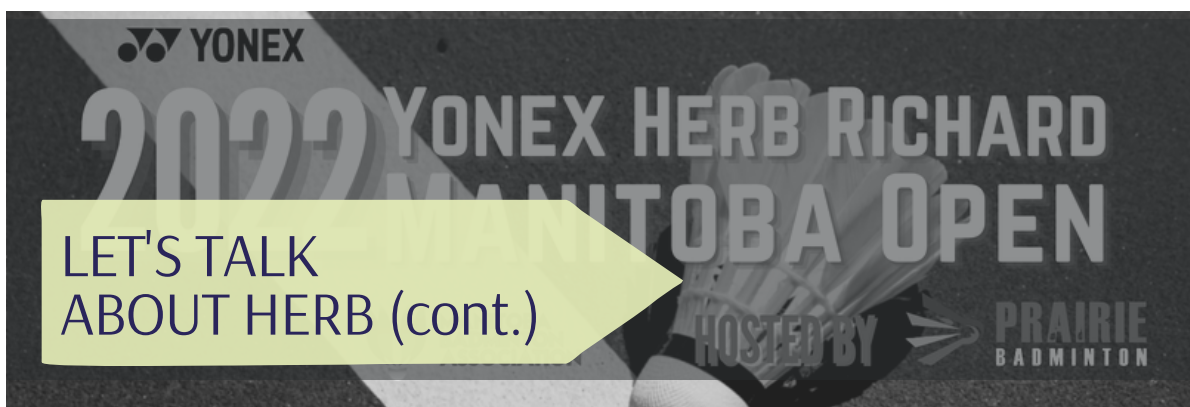
Unfortunately, the Division 1 format was listed differently on our website's tournament page and in the tournament regulations on *TournamentSoftware*. While the website listed that Division 1 would run as either a single-consolation or round robin + playoff event, the regulations listed it as a round robin + playoff event. I apologize for that oversight. The latter is indeed what was listed in the *Competitive Circuit Restructuring* document as well as our tournament hosting documents and forms. As such, we chose to stick with that.

In the case of nearly all draws, the 3-game minimum was met in the group stage so playoffs had been designed to pull only the top entry from each pool. However, many of you pointed out that this would mean that teams or individuals who lost their first match in the group stage would view remaining matches as inconsequential, which would be detrimental to competition. After an overwhelming amount of feedback requesting a change, draws were modified. (This did create a situation where some felt they had too many matches, and I will be proposing some edits to our tournament format to the Competition Committee.

TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE

Again, a listing error led to confusion and for that I apologize. The tournament regulations listed that semi-finals and finals would take place on Sunday, which was our intention.

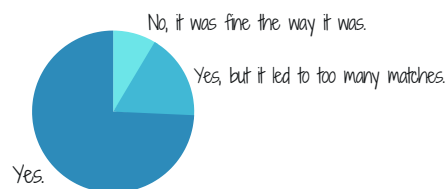
While we do intend for some events to run straight through, for the moment the plan was to keep finals (and semi-finals when needed) on Sundays for our *SuperSeries* and *Championship Series* events. In the case of the Herb Richard, we followed what the regulations had stated.



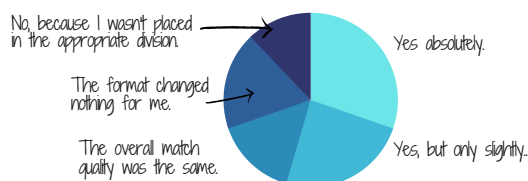
POST-EVENT SURVEY

After the event, we prepared and sent out a survey to gather feedback on the event itself as well as the format changes. More than a third of participants responded! Here are the key results.

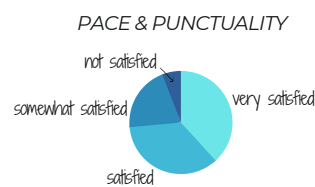
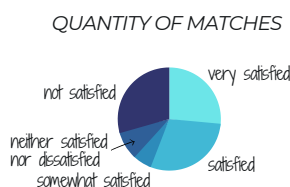
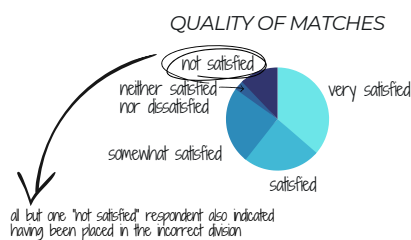
After a large amount of feedback from athletes, a decision was made to modify the draws (in many but not all events) and advance the top 2 entries to playoff and/or consolation. Did you agree with this change?



Do you feel this updated format increased the quality of your matches compared to events in past seasons?



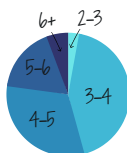
Overall, please rate the following.



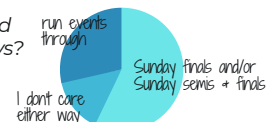
When I compete in a tournament, I prefer a guaranteed ____ matches per event.



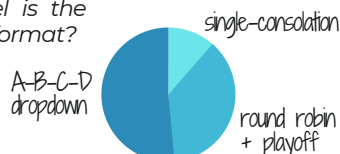
For me, the ideal amount of matches per event is:



Do you prefer tournaments that hold finals (and maybe semis) on Sundays? Or tournaments that run events straight through to completion?



What do you feel is the best tournament format?



WHY DID YOU CHANGE X?

SEEDING & DRAWS

Let's dive in, shall we?

In the future, we expect and plan to weigh the provincial ranking points more heavily than the seeder responses.

However, as we are coming out of over two years of inconsistent programming and competition, many of our athletes are still slowly returning to competition for the first time and have little or no ranking points. Because of this, we felt it prudent to add more weight to the seeding committee for the time being, to ensure people are sorted in the correct divisions despite their temporary absence from competition.

SEEDING & DRAWS

DIFFICULTIES

- Committee seeding susceptible to bias
- Heavy reliance on small group of seeders
- Ranking system heavily favours those able to play multiple provincial tournaments
- Athletes attending only one event per year hinders seeding process
- Inconsistent application of BWF vs. Badminton Canada seeding regulations (in relation to draw size)

ADJUSTMENTS

- Expanded, more diverse committee
- Less reliance on seeding committee
- Updated ranking system
- Final seed calculation weights:
 - 0.4 MBA Rank (as per provincial ranking points)
 - 0.6 Committee Rank (average of committee responses)
- Updated tournament eligibility requirement for *Championship Series* events
- Updated competition and draw format
- Seeding regulations to be implemented consistently at all *Championship Series*, *MBA SuperSeries*, *Club SuperSeries* and *Regional SuperSeries* events:
 - 8 seeds if there are 16 or more entries
 - 4 seeds if there are 9 to 15 entries
 - 2 seeds if there are less than 9 entries

More voices representing a more diverse pool of athletes will lead to more accurate seeding.

for consistency throughout our events

so athletes have clear schedules and can plan their weekends and to ensure more athletes (including B-C-D cohorts) to compete in all of our events

The round robin + playoff format was compared to the drop-down format that was in use and in all cases (except with <8 athletes) led to less overall games plus one extra round.

Creating divisions would lead to less lop-sided matches in early rounds, ensuring that all competitors have higher quality matches.

WHY DID YOU CHANGE X?

EVENT FORMAT & PLAYER ELIGIBILITY

early-bird
registration
prize draws or
reduced pricing

EVENT FORMAT & PLAYER ELIGIBILITY

For the 2022-2023 competitive season! Championship Series, MBA SuperSeries, Club SuperSeries, and Regional SuperSeries tournaments will have a new format. This updated entry and draw process will be more efficient, ensure more accurate match timing, and lead to higher-quality matches for players of all levels.



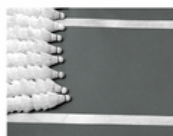
two divisions
When numbers allow, entries will be sorted into two divisions. Division 1 (top 8 or 16) will feature a round robin + playoff or single-elimination format. Division 2 will feature a round robin + playoff.



simplified seeding
The first 75% of Division 1 entries will be determined by ranking points at the end of the week prior to the close of registration. The remaining 25% will be determined by committee.



updated eligibility
To enter certain end-of-year events (incl. the Junior/Senior Provincial Championships), athletes must have competed in one other provincial ranking event throughout the season.



- Taking a cue from leagues and circuits in other national and international jurisdictions, the new tournaments aims to offer more quality matches to all of our athletes.
- When numbers and timing allow, tournaments will take place over two days only (ex. Saturday-Sunday), enabling more players to compete and removing barriers for those travelling.
- The new expanded seeding committee will include members involved in more levels of the game and will have a smaller role: determining the last 25% of Division 1 entries, and seeding athletes in both divisions.



Divisions are only created when numbers allow. Division 2 features a round robin + playoff format with 3 guaranteed matches. Division 1 formats will change (with 2 or 3 guaranteed matches). Division 1 format is the host's choice for Club SuperSeries events.



As opposed to athletes self-determining at registration, Division 1 entries are determined by ranking points (75% of entries) and seeding committee (25% of entries). Moving forward, athletes wanting to indicate a preference will be able to do so at registration.



Junior and Senior Provincial Championships registration will be open to Manitoba athletes who have played at least one provincial-ranking event throughout the season.



When possible, 2-day tournaments (spanning Saturday and Sunday) will be run, with events played straight through, to remove barriers for those cover long distances to attend.

EVENT FORMAT & PLAYER ELIGIBILITY

(THE FINE PRINT)

1 DIVISIONS

When numbers allow, entries will be sorted into two divisions as per the following quotas:

64+ total entries	→ Division 1 (top 32 entries) + Division 2 (remaining entries)
32-63 total entries	→ Division 1 (top 16 entries) + Division 2 (remaining 16-47 entries)
16-31 total entries	→ Division 1 (top 8 entries) + Division 2 (remaining 8-15 entries)
<16 total entries	→ No split

2 EVENT FORMAT

Division 1 will feature a round robin + playoff or a single-elimination competition format. Division 2 will feature a round robin + playoff competition format (3 matches guaranteed).

3 NUMBER OF SEEDS

Seeding regulations will be implemented consistently at all Championship Series, MBA SuperSeries, Club SuperSeries, and Regional SuperSeries competitions, in accordance with the following:

16+ entries	→ 8 seeds
9-15 entries	→ 4 seeds
<9 entries	→ 2 seeds

4 SEEDING COMMITTEE PROCEDURES

DIVISIONAL SPLIT PROCEDURE
The first 75% of Division 1 entries will be determined by provincial ranking points at the end of the week (Sunday) prior to the close of registration. The remaining 25% will be determined by the tournament's seeding committee, using the procedure and calculation weights on page 6.

SEEDING PROCEDURE (FOR DRAWS)

Seeding within divisions will be done using the procedure and calculation weights on page 6.

VISITING ATHLETES Athletes from other provinces or countries attending open Manitoba events will be ranked and seeded as per our Ranking Points Chart (when applicable) and procedures. In other words, an athlete's earned points from national, international, or (non-Manitoba) provincial events will be used to calculate a temporary provincial ranking based on the best 4 tournament results for divisional splitting and subsequent draw seeding.

5 PROVINCIAL CHAMPIONSHIP ELIGIBILITY

In order to compete in Junior Provincial Championships and/or Senior Provincial Championships, athletes must have competed in at least one other provincial-ranking event throughout the season.

*Provincial residency regulations still in effect for Closed events.
In order to compete in the Junior Regional Championships in Winnipeg, athletes must have competed in at least one of the four regional events: the North Jr Regional Challenge, the East Jr Regional Challenge, the South Jr Regional Challenge, or the West Junior Regional Challenge.

When determining Division 1 entries, the first 75% of entries (ex. first 12 entries in a 16-entry draw) are determined by provincial ranking points only. Then, all seeding results are averaged and the highest-seeded entries not already in Division 1 are added until the remaining spots are filled.

When determining tournament seeds, provincial ranking points are weighed at 40% and seeding committee averages are weighed at 60%. As shuttlers return to competition and we return to regular events, this weight split will be incrementally adjusted until provincial ranking points become more heavily weighed than seeding committee averages.

Junior Regional Championships will be open for registration to Manitoba athletes who have competed in at least one regional Junior Challenge (North, East, South, West)

RANKING & SEEDING

Most of the seeding process is outlined above, but the feedback received and survey responses highlighted a lot of misunderstandings about how the process works. I will tackle some frequently-asked questions and a few incorrect assumptions here.



Why are international and national events added to provincial ranking points? These shouldn't be included because it isn't fair if many don't have the opportunity to participate.

Disregarding international- and national-event results in our ranking system would lead to some of Manitoba's top athletes being left with little to no points, relegating them to lower divisions and leaving them unseeded when they participate in provincial tournaments. This is in no one's interest and would effectively deter and discourage our athletes from pursuing higher-level opportunities, which will only hinder the growth of our community.

Also, to ignore these results would create a disconnect between Manitoba and other Canadian jurisdictions, as we'd be working contrary to the system used by other provinces as well as Badminton Canada.



Tournament points should be awarded no matter what format (elimination or round robin) is being used by the host.

They are! Points are awarded regardless of format at all MBA-sanctioned events.



More tournaments should be worth ranking points.

With the exception of our Community Series events as well as some School Series events, the only tournaments not worth ranking points are those not affiliated with or sanctioned by the Manitoba Badminton Association.



Points from Masters or Junior events should not be counted towards rankings.

Points from those events are only counted for events of that age category. For example, because the Herb Richard Open is a senior tournament, only points accumulated in senior (but non-Masters) events are considered.

In any case, only the top 4 point results are included in a player's total ranking points.
(ie. a player that earns points in 10 tournaments only has the top 4 tournaments' points added to their total score)

some closing thoughts...

Changes to our competition circuit were not done haphazardly, nor did we intend for these changes to be final. The proposal was brought to the Competition Committee — which includes representation from 5 different clubs (including lead coaches from both Prairie Badminton and the Winnipeg Winter Club) — and adjusted with feedback from its members. After a week of further review from committee members and discussion with leads from grassroots clubs, the *Competitive Circuit Restructuring* document was presented to the Board of Directors for feedback and approval.

Creating space and opportunity for all of our athletes (regardless of age, gender identity, background, home club, or level of ability) and offering meaningful competition are top priorities. From the beginning, we approached this process with the growth of our community in mind. Our tournament circuit is meant to work alongside all of our programs, including *School of Badminton* programs, our provincial and regional team pathway, our post-secondary initiatives, and our club and school team programming.

At this time, I will be proposing that the following adjustments be implemented:

- addition of the A-B-C-D dropdown format option for Division One events
- added flexibility to split divisions for a 8-, 12-, 16-, 24-, or 32-entry Division 1 depending on the event format
- request and consider player input at registration regarding appropriate division
- outline the *round robin* tie-breaker process in tournament regulations
- added flexibility on Division 1 formats for *Regional SuperSeries* events
- earlier final registration deadlines to enable a quicker turnaround of seeding documents and draws
- post-tournament surveys after all events so that our competitors can inform our decisions and enable us to keep improving

If our sport is to grow in Manitoba, it needs to do so for all players and provide opportunities for everyone to grow and find a home on our courts. However, any worthwhile change or improvement will come with growing pains. We are grateful to all of you for your patience and feedback as we adjust.

All the best,



Mélanie Curé
Executive Director