

August 31st, 2020 is my last official day with Badminton Manitoba, and I wanted to share some brief reflections with anybody who cares before I leave.

I can hardly believe that 10 years has gone by since I start working full time for the association as Executive Director. A lot can happen in 10 years, both personally and professionally, and I get a bit nostalgic thinking about all the life and work-related events that have dominated the past 10 years. I married my best friend, lost a mother, gained 3 children, matured through Christ, bought a house, sold a house, bought another, and so on and so fourth. Workwise, we (MBA) were in a rough spot 10 years ago. Income was low and there was not much reserve in the tank, officials were almost non-existent, player development and training opportunities were dwindling, and there was a lack of trust, joy, and transparency within the community.

Enter myself, a single year post-bachelor degree when I was entrusted with the role of Executive Director, and easy to say that though I was young, ambitious, and energetic, I was also young, naive, and lacking wisdom that comes with age and experience. The first chapter of Proverbs suggests that the youth are strong but also in great need of prudence, knowledge, and discretion. What a scary thought in hiring a 23-year-old to right your ship!

Nevertheless, God and the badminton community were gracious with me as I fumbled my way through the years.

If there is any conviction that has weighed on me heavier through the years, it is that at times I put goals and productivity before people and relationships. I put the cart before the horse as it were. This is a result of pride, something that runs thinner through my veins today than it did 10 years ago, but there are victims along the way that I would like to take this opportunity to apologize to. I was at times selfish and took credit where credit was due elsewhere. I could become a bit of a bull in a china shop in trying to achieve the goal, which in the end was a strategy that worked against itself. But people forgave, and understood, and gave me additional chances and continued to work with me. This forgiveness and understanding came at a pivotal time in my walk with God which strongly affected my work for the MBA.

God used this as an opportunity to remind me that our job is first and foremost to love Him and people as ourselves, and the job that I worked needs to fit within that. This is not just a matter of obeying God (which is good of course) or spiritual maturity, but I have found it to be a profitable goal for business as well. When the relationships of people involved were properly taken care of, and people felt cared for, then the work became much more enjoyable and productive as a team. Though the badminton-related ideas and goals were the purpose for the meetings and bringing people together, they ended up taking a backseat to make sure that people were cared for in the process. Yes, that means that more time is needed to accomplish tasks, but in the end, it proved the proper way of doing business.

An interesting thing happened once the focus turned to people rather than product. With a more gospel infused thinking related to work I was able to find greater joy in working with the people that I worked with. The more I spent time talking and getting to know my colleagues, volunteers, coaches, etc., the more I saw the beauty that God had put in them, and the more I saw the beauty in them the more I wanted to get to know them and work with them. When you love the people you work with it makes working not feel much like working at all, and it takes a lot of the pressure off of the job as well.

Secondly, with the focus more on relationships (God and people), the stress of needing to reach certain participation numbers, create as much profit (or not lose as much), or please everybody had become much much less, and I could just work to the best of my abilities. Deadlines were adhered to and of course we tried to stay the course of improving all aspects of the association, but ultimately the satisfaction with the job or my self-worth were not determined by any of this. My identity rests in Christ and what he says of me, not in what I achieve at work, in the office, or on the badminton court. Christ says that I'm a sinner who's been redeemed by HIS work on the cross dying for my sins, and that all work and play can now be enjoyed knowing that we are his children. I am able to work HARD and leave the results to his design. I am able to apologize more sincerely more clearly seeing my weaknesses. I am able to forgive much quicker, seeing the sin in myself and knowing that Christ has forgiven me.

Since 2010 when I started, membership has tripled, programs have grown, funding has increased (just recently!), overall operating budget has grown by an average of 70%, officials have more than tripled and have grown in quality and certification, we have a more balanced view on Badminton "Manitoba", a dedicated 9-court badminton facility has opened up, and we have hosted 6 national championships since 2015. We've been to Flin Flon/OCN, Thompson, Snow Lake, Gypsumville, St Laurent, Grand Rapids, Sandy Bay, Brandon, Dauphin, Notre Dame De Lourdes, Steinbach, lac du Bonnet, Powerview/Pine Falls, Arborg, Gimli, Riverton, Norway House, God's Lake Narrows, Morden, Winkler, and that's just the start of it. We are now in a much more stable financial situation to keep the association strong and making sound decisions. The sport is growing in popularity both recreationally and competitively, and we see it in all sorts of different ways, and all over the province.

So who gets the credit for all this?

It was a wise friend of mine who once shared a childhood reflection from the pulpit, "As a child, I sold & made profits from a lemonade stand using lemons/water/sugar from my parent's fridge, a table my parents supplied, a sign that my mom helped me make, and using the land my parents owned. And yet I had the audacity to claim all the credit and profit." This illustration was simple enough to get through my thick skull that what we often claim for ourselves is actually a gift from God. I say this because as I look back onto my 10 years with Badminton Manitoba I can see more clearly all the ways that He has provided resources that I could not provide, people to do work whom He had empowered, circumstances that He ordained, and trials that He allowed us to overcome. It is humbling to look back and see all this provision which did not need to be provided.

There are several chapters at the end of the book of Job that describe this in a similar but more powerful way, such as Job 38: 25-27: "Who has cleft a channel for the torrents of rain and a way for the thunderbolt, to bring rain on a land where no man is, on the desert in which there is no man, to satisfy the waste and desolate land, and to make the ground sprout with grass?" When you can see the great power of God in the world around you it can make you feel frail and small; and when you're able to see your proper size and frailty then you get a more accurate reflection of God's mercy and grace upon you and those around you; it's truly everywhere, and I've felt it time and time again at work. Should I beat my chest and say "me, I'm the man" whilst God did all the dirty work? Far be it from me to do such a thing, for I was but a serviceman in his plan.

Finally, as I have already mentioned, it is the people that have been so pivotal to the association. This association is nothing with the hundreds of coaches, officials, volunteers, club presidents/organizers who selflessly devote their extra time to grow the sport and pour their energy and passion into the benefit of others. If you happen to be one of those people, give yourself a pat on the back because

you've been a part of a bigger story and you've contributed to making the lives of others better. To that matter, there are several special people deserve to be mentioned in this letter that I should not miss.

Archie Chawla was pivotal in not only identifying me as a player out of high school, but for getting after me time and time again to play more, enter tournaments, start coaching, complete my certifications, help me into the role of Executive Directro, and he believed in me the whole way.

Presidents Cam Inglis, Don Snider, Sylvio Tessier, David Harrison, and Barrington Nichols have all shown me different ways of leading the MBA, given me different skills and perspectives to consider, and offered good business and personal advice that I use to this day.

Kody Taylor and Marj Niemi have been two part-time but rock-solid pillars of strength for the association, and as good friends as you could have in a job like this. Both are able to roll with the punches and put in extra time when needed to get the job done, learning new skills, and ultimately still willing to give a good hug at the end of the day even though I pushed them through more than their job description indicated.

Linda was our bookkeeper and not only was gracious with teaching me several accounting basics but also in accepting many last second requests, and late nights in getting work done on time. She also has been more than a colleague, a great friend forever.

Justin, not only one of my best friends but also a worker that I learn from daily. He's the most dependable, accountable, self-initiating, thoughtful and no-BS persons I've worked with and it has made it a dream to work with him through the years, and is a big reason why it was so easy to open up Prairie Badminton with him.

My wife Michelle is not just my ultimate best friend in life but also the mother of our three children and my personal business advisor. Any time I'm feeling frustrated or needing perspective, she's able and willing to listen to my situation and give sound advice; always more thoughtful, patient, and God-fearing than I originally would have reacted, and for that I'm very thankful.

There are of course countless others who I have been in contact with over the years that I would love to thank, but I am trying to keep the list concise. I will hopefully continue to see many of you around the community, perhaps at our new club (Prairie Badminton), and will be happy to hug or shake hands or elbow bump or whatever is socially and hygienically acceptable at that point!

While my work at Badminton Manitoba was rewarding and fruitful, I always felt a bit helpless in the end with how much I could help the athletes who wanted to compete at the highest level, and that never sat well with me. There was always a lingering desire to do more for the community; that my skillset was not fully being utilized, and truthfully my desires were to do more work on the ground and impact people on a more intimate level. The opportunity to coach and manage a club that can grow the community at a rapid pace, and support athletes wanting to improve themselves and compete at the highest possible level was an opportunity that we (myself and Justin) didn't want to miss. Alas after many years of grit and grind I am able to make the transition to this new role and say goodbye to the job that has done me well for 10 years.

My only MBA related encouragement to end this letter is to please work with your association as best you can as it will benefit you and everybody else. If you've got something to contribute, then the MBA

can use your help. If you have a grievance, please come to the MBA with a potential solution. Please remember that although your employees (Melanie, Marj, and Justin) are super awesome and highly capable workers, they are still only 2 full-time and 1 part-time employees and therefore are limited in what they accomplish. The real work is done out there by all of you.

I'm excited that Melanie Cure has taken my position as I believe she's the right person for the job. I will be happy to continue to work with her closely moving forward. I would encourage everybody to work with her as best possible to keep our community progressing in the right direction.

Personally, I wish you all to "taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the one who take refuge in him", Psalm 34:8.

Thank you and hope to see you around!

Ryan Giesbrecht