



### The fastest sport in the World?

Elite badminton is fast – really fast. Racket and shuttle technology, improved court surfaces and the simple fact that the players now have incredible athletic ability have seen to this. So how fast is it compared to other sports? Consider this:

- Andy Roddick's tennis serve can just top 150mph
- A Ferrari formula one car can hit 200 mph but it takes at least 13 seconds
- Pelota balls (the traditional Spanish ball game) can nudge 200mph
- But Badminton has got all these beaten with shuttles being clocked at 206 mph.

So is it the fastest sport in the world? Let's take a look at the most highly paid sportsman in the world – Tiger Woods. In competitive play Tiger's ball will fly off his driver at 180mph, so Nathan has got him licked there. For

fun, Tiger can drag out a two-inch longer driver and match Nathan's pace and the "long drive" specialist top guys will make an incredible 220mph. For me that's fast but no cigar – it's too specialist. I am going to make the claim that Badminton is the fastest sport in the world.

The saying goes "speed is of the essence" and it is certainly one of the most essential components of athletic training for Badminton. If the shuttle speed is impressive, then the elite players "body speed" is even more so.

You have to get there or the game is over. Back court aerial, low recovery at the foot of the net or scrambling mid-court, you need to deliver your body and racket to the shuttle. Explosive short distance speed and dynamic flexibility at pace are essential.

Once you're there you've got a job to do. Redirecting a shuttle with precision, tactical finesse or just raw

power with infinite variation is difficult. No point in arriving out of control, out of balance or out of puff! You need to be in perfect body shape and balance, relaxed and reactive, your shot selection needs to have been made and you need to have done all this in literally an instant – fast minds as well as fast bodies.

Now you've got to get out of there quick. Your body and its momentum may have been stretched to its limit to make the shot but that's tough because it's likely to be needed some place else on the court in the next two seconds. You need to recover body shape and court position, you need to be on the move ready to go again and you need to be watching your opponent and the shuttle as you do this. And you might only have about 1.2 seconds to work with – I'm thinking you are going to need to be very quick.

So when we are training elite badminton players, one of

our key criteria is to train total body speed. Be it plyometrics, power training, fast feet drills, agility drills, it's all contributing to both producing and controlling speed.

Badminton players at all levels should "feel the need for speed". Club players, and even beginners should become familiar with basic speed and agility drills and practice and challenge their ability with them. Keep it safe, build it up slowly, don't go diving into high level plyometrics, maybe start with some simple speed lunges or skipping routines and get some advice from a qualified coach

My favourite training maxim is that all the best athletes can "get there and come back" and in the case of badminton players they can do this as fast, if not faster, than any other sport.

● **Bob Wood is a Chartered Physiotherapist and Consultant to Badminton England**