

KELLY ASTON MBE INSPIRING HER SPORT TWENTY FIVE YEARS ON FROM COMMONWEALTH GOLD TRIUMPH

2023 is another big year for Badminton in Wales with a new plan focusing on communities throughout Wales, increased Sport Wales funding to deliver it, an expanded staffing team, and re-invigorated voluntary commitment.

Results are already being seen with healthy numbers attending new Community Coaching courses, growth within senior competitions, more opportunities for Masters players, BW Performance player Jack Wilson included within the GB World Class Para Programme and a bronze medal for Saffron Morris at the recent European U17 Championships.

Over time Welsh badminton has had many success stories due to the talent, commitment and hard work of many different people but September 20th 2023 marks twenty five years since arguably the most significant achievement in the sport's ninety-five year history within Wales – on this day a young Kelly Morgan won the women's singles at the 1998 Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur.

Twenty five years on and it is the same individual – now Kelly Aston, Badminton Wales CEO since 2019 – driving her beloved sport to re-create those heady days. Kelly and the growing team around her know it will be a long journey but are committed to developing badminton into one of Wales' strongest community sports.



1998, I had the privilege of being selected to lead the Welsh Team as TEAM Wales Women's Captain at the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur. The 98 Games also gave me one of the greatest sporting achievements of my career in a Welsh Shirt – a Commonwealth Games Gold medal in the Ladies Singles Event. A moment in time that will forever fill me with immense pride.

25 years on and many years after hanging my rackets up, I am still committed to the Sport I love and have the privilege to be leading an incredibly dedicated and committed TEAM at Badminton Wales. Sport has certainly taught me hard work and patience and I am honoured to be part of such a diligent team who are committed to driving our new strategy to make the Badminton Wales vision a reality.

In addition to Kelly, others from Welsh badminton's illustrious past are also providing support through lending their expertise and enthusiasm to the vision - 'a vibrant, diverse and multi-talented Badminton Wales Community working together with a shared passion for the sport and a commitment to pass it on to future generations'.

Former Olympian and World top ten player Richard Vaughan from Llanbraddach sits on the Nominations Panel that recommends individuals to the Badminton Wales Board, and has recently been elected as Badminton Europe BWF Vice President.

Also included on the Nominations Panel are north Wales club player and Disability Sport Wales CEO, Fiona Reid and well-known Cardiff business-man and senior international YC Lim.

Former GB Performance Director Jon Austin who successfully led the GB team through two Olympic cycles, and has strong links to Wales, has recently joined the Badminton Wales Board, along with additional new Directors with legal, financial and facilities expertise.

Former European junior gold medalist Lyndon Williams and World top-twenty player Phil Sutton are playing an important role in re-connecting many former Welsh internationals with a sport that a number have lost contact with.

Chairing the Badminton Wales Board is another former international Peter Hybart, who brings experience of other sports following successful stints as CEO of Cricket Wales and Tennis Wales.

It is difficult to believe that it is twenty five years ago that Kelly won Commonwealth Gold – many of us remember the day so well. Within Badminton Wales we are determined to continue to grow our sport, and with Kelly leading us and many others providing fantastic support, we have every opportunity to do so.

Badminton Wales

