

## **Badminton not affected by slowdown:** **Thomas Lund**



**(File Photo: Thomas Lund, COO, Badminton World Federation)**

Thomas Lund, Chief Operations Officer of Badminton World Federation, is more than just an important functionary in a rapidly-growing sport. He was one of the doubles greats of the nineties, with two World Championships (1993 and 1995), three All [England](#) titles, and a number of other major trophies in both the paired events. In this interview, Lund talks about the state of World Badminton in the months after the London Olympics, and the rise of Indian badminton:

**Do you see any connection between the economy and the growth of Badminton? Especially in Europe, where the slowdown is more pronounced and might affect talent development?**

As a business, I think we've been fortunate to have some of our key markets in Asia, because the slowdown has not been as big in Asian region as in the European region. Frankly, we have seen a tremendous growth in terms of revenues, and a tremendous business success behind the sport over the last years with the structural changes we've made around the sport. But we hope it will turn around in the European and US region. Maybe it would have been bigger if the slowdown had not happened. We haven't really experienced a drop; we've experienced a big growth, but maybe it could have been more, who knows.

**Are you worried about the lack of singles talent in Europe, considering that there only one or two in the top-20?**

I'm not too worried. Things go up and down in any country. I know there are solid development systems in many countries. These countries might be low right now, but they will come up with players. Developing players is not something you do over night; it's a long term thing, where you need to work in a system.

**There is talk of the [Indian Badminton League](#). How much of an impact do you think it will have on International Badminton?**

Leagues in general have existed for many years. National Leagues are the backbone of development system, and have grown up from the grassroots to a commercial level. The process here is probably a bit different...but it will probably spread the popularity of the sport. Leagues are used as a national element to

create a backbone and stability around the sport. They certainly have a place in our sport. It is obviously about creating a model that can fit well into the international tournament system. I don't think leagues can replace the international individual system of the major events.

### **What has been your experience with propagating Badminton in the US?**

We're continuing to make efforts. We're working both top-down and bottom-up, which means we're focussing on advising countries on setting up top performance systems. But also we're trying to get Badminton into schools, making it something that's natural in the day-to-day activities of people. Those two things should hopefully create a strong base for the sport in any country. We have Rio (Olympics) coming up, so we obviously are looking at South America.

We've done a lot in terms of how we work with streaming media. One of the regions we get most hits from is from that region, from the American region, Canada and the US. So we're trying to spread the sport. We've had broadcast agreements over the last couple of years.

### **Have you been able to attract the younger generation through the online medium?**

The online medium has worked well. It doesn't beat the broadcast media in terms of reach, but it's a great supplement, obviously in regions with lesser players. We'd like to get the attention of the youth into badminton. So we're reaching new audiences, and the youth is important to us in these new territories.

## **Your opinion of Indian Badminton at the moment?**

Amazing development. We have some interesting statistics, that Badminton is no.3 in terms of TV interest in this country.

Obviously we know cricket is so popular in this country, and for Badminton to come to no.3 among so many sports, it's a really big improvement and connected to Saina's popularity. And not only Saina. Other women's singles and men's singles players are coming up, and it proves that the development system is able to produce good players. It's a positive development. Hopefully Saina will be there for a few years to come.

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