

# YONEX Volunteer of the Year Award Winners 2020

Amid the excitement and spotlight of the world class action on show at badminton's greatest show – the YONEX All England - Badminton England took time out to unveil the two winners of 2019 YONEX Volunteer of the Year awards.

Thousands of committed volunteers across the country work tirelessly each week to make badminton happen nationwide – and whilst they may not get the headlines, they produce badminton magic that, each month, makes badminton the most played racket sport in England.

Volunteers are pivotal in growing our sport; whether they give up a few hours a month to lend a hand at club nights, or volunteer on a daily basis, we are so proud of each and every single volunteer we have. They really are the life and soul of badminton.

To recognise the phenomenal work of our voluntary workforce, Badminton England present two awards annually; the YONEX Young Volunteer of the Year and YONEX Volunteer of the Year.

These prestigious titles are awarded to two volunteers who have stood out in demonstrating undoubted passion, commitment and dedication to badminton across 2019, and had a positive impact and influence on others' experience within the sport.

For 2020, these prestigious awards were presented to:

## 2020 YONEX Young Volunteer of the Year: Annie Zhu

Annie is a truly inspiring young lady who, at only 16 years of age, has shown huge potential as a volunteer in the Tees Valley area.

She had been showing potential as a volunteer for several years at Thornaby Junior Club but, after attending the Badminton England North Young Leaders Academy in 2018, she really blossomed in 2019 into a confident and inspiring Young Leader.

Alongside training at the Tees Valley Badminton Academy and playing 3-4 per week, she always acts as a role model and manages to give her time to younger, less experienced players at the weekly Thornaby Junior Club session. She has been the lead Young Leader at numerous local school events such as Racket Pack festivals and the County Finals of the School Games as well as assisting Tournament Referees at the Tees Valley Gold/Silver/Bronze tournaments.

To date, Annie has helped at four tournaments, entering results onto Tournament Software and has acted as the court manager.

After attending the Young Leaders Academy, she was invited to be a Young Official at the National Badminton Centre in Milton Keynes at the Finals of the National Schools Championships.



Not satisfied with her successes as a Young Leader, this young volunteer wanted to further develop herself so she could improve the quality of the coaching advice she was giving to the junior players and her ability to develop the quality of their play. In April 2019, she successfully gained her Level 1 Coaching Qualification, only one month after her 16th birthday!

Alongside her volunteering, her commitment to “be the best she can” is evidenced by successfully applying in 2017 for a place on the sub regional Future Champions programme. Annie's goals for the future include; completing her Level 2 Coaching Qualification when she turns 18 years old, using her own training and involvement with the Future Champions programme to inspire others, continuing with her current level of volunteering, volunteering at top level prestigious tournaments (such as the Yorkshire Gold Masters) and successfully applying to universities to start training as a doctor.

## 2020 YONEX Volunteer of the Year Award: Melanie Vickery

Melanie devotes 16 hours each week of voluntary coaching to the North Wiltshire Badminton Project, which she set up, in partnership with a Level 3 Head Coach. The nucleus of the operation was to devise and deliver coached foundation sessions specifically tailored for 5-12 year olds who would, when sufficiently competent, be able to join the coached and social sessions of good local junior badminton clubs and represent those clubs in the local leagues. Melanie has been orchestral in building up a solid staff of coaching assistants who are fundamental in making the foundation sessions happen. These comprise of six Level 1 coaches, another Level 2 coach and a host of junior assistants. Throughout 2019, she has continued to develop new projects and ideas to build up numbers in all the sessions. She has formed a strong relationship with Badminton England, set up various new sessions and delivered a handful of foundation badminton holiday day camps. She also developed a large scale marketing campaign by producing branding for her van and buying merchandise which was used at the Chippenham Carnival and Melksham Party in the Park.

Melanie has worked hard to develop relationships with local primary schools to deliver the Racket Pack and identify children to signpost to North Wiltshire Badminton Project sessions. In October 2019, she delivered a festival in Chippenham as part of The Racket Pack Tour which was a great success and introduced 60 new children to badminton.

During league season she spends her Saturday afternoons team managing, coaching and generally supporting the various teams in the Mid-Wiltshire Junior League and during 2019 she also founded a new senior club, Vectors Badminton Club, to provide advanced playing opportunities to the more developed, older junior players.

