

National Volunteer & Coach Awards 2023



The winners of the National Volunteer & Coach Awards 2023 were presented on semi-finals day at the YONEX All England Open Championships in Birmingham on Saturday 18th March.

To recognise the phenomenal work of our voluntary workforce, Badminton England present two awards annually: Volunteer of the Year (sponsored by YONEX) and Geoff Rofe Young Volunteer of the Year (sponsored by YONEX).

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

The new Grassroots Coach Award (sponsored by YONEX) was introduced in 2022 and celebrates coaches who are working tirelessly in the community to provide a positive experience to a large number of players through their clear passion for the sport.

We are truly grateful for the number of grassroots coaches in our sport as these coaches make a positive difference in their local communities, providing the first experience of our sport, and driving badminton participation forwards across the country.

Congratulations to all three winners, as well as all the nominees and runners up – Badminton England are so proud of every single individual who makes badminton happen and our annual awards are intended to applaud those who have gone over and above in their roles.



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Volunteer of the Year 2023 Runners Up:

- Malcolm Taylor (Berkshire)
- Halima Mukit (Avon)

Volunteer of the Year 2023 (sponsored by YONEX) Winner: Helen Thornton

Helen was instrumental in setting up the Badminton Homes for Ukraine scheme as she established a relationship with the Ukrainian Badminton Federation to use the power of sport, and in this case badminton, to make a difference.

This included personally supporting families from both sides to fill out the required forms, liaising with the Ukrainian Badminton Federation to reach out to the families desperate for help, finding translators to offer their services for free to translate the application forms or speak to families in the Ukraine as well as Helen being on the end of the line to do the same for sponsor families in England.

Helen has worked tirelessly to support Ukrainian families and players, ensuring they are provided with opportunities, equipment and coaching to continue to play and compete whilst still having a safe place to settle and live, even playing host to one of the families for Christmas.

With Helen's leadership and commitment her model was replicated by other counties, and more clubs and coaches came forward to support more families.

Helen was also able to provide support and advice to Hummersknott Badminton Club in the North East which allowed a number of the Ukrainian Players, who Helen had supported to be rehoused, to be given fully funded places on their European tour to Greece and Cyprus for a once in a lifetime experience.



There are now at least a dozen families who have found refuge in the UK thanks to Helen's work, and she has saved the lives of numerous Ukrainian families through her drive and determination and providing them with some sense of normality in a hugely troubling time.

Lee Ward, Badminton England Senior Relationship Manager:

"Helen is so deserving of the Volunteer of the Year Award as she has shown the power of sport, how it goes beyond the simple act of playing and brings communities, people and lives together even in the most challenging and disruptive of circumstances."

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Geoff Rofe Young Volunteer of the Year 2023

Runners Up:

- Oliver Swales (Yorkshire)
- Alexander Ward (Lincolnshire)

Geoff Rofe Young Volunteer of the Year 2023 (sponsored by YONEX) Winner: Siân Phillips

Since achieving her Level 1 coaching qualification, Siân volunteers every week at the Bradford Kobras Performance Centre in Yorkshire, helping to coach and inspire younger players.

Siân shadows her school PE teacher twice a week and observes his approach to SEND and how she can use that herself in coaching and mentoring younger players.

In addition, Siân has shown PE teachers how to lead and coach badminton sessions to ensure that best practices are used in future PE lessons and has led school assemblies on welfare and eating disorders in sport which have been received very positively from fellow pupils and teachers alike.

She does all of this whilst working tirelessly towards her A Levels this year and achieve her very high predicted grades.

Siân is also an active member of Badminton England's National Youth Voice Forum where she regularly attends meetings and represents the voice of young people within the badminton community.



Tom Millbank, Head Coach at Bradford Kobras Performance Centre:

“Siân is a great coach – her confidence has grown massively through coaching. She has the self-belief, the ability and the knowledge to help other young people to reach their full potential.”

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Grassroots Coach of the Year 2023 Runners Up:

- Chris Travis (Gloucestershire)
- Paul Pratt (Yorkshire)

Grassroots Coach of the Year 2023 (sponsored by YONEX) Winner: Anna Collis

Anna has built up an amazing coaching business, SmashIt Sports Ltd, from starting with one evening of coaching to now coaching seven days a week and offering a variety of sessions to engage players of all ages and ability levels in Hertfordshire.

She has built up a club at Hatfield David Lloyd from scratch and took over coaching Biggleswade Junior Badminton Club as well as running weekly junior coaching sessions at other venues along with parent and child sessions.

Fourteen clubs and sessions are run weekly by Anna each week, plus holiday camps, tournaments, league matches and fitness sessions.

There are 200+ members of SmashIt Badminton Club (made up of both adults and juniors), between 50-75 children receive coaching from Anna and her team of coaches each week and there are now clubs available for young players in multiple locations and on many different days of the week, allowing juniors access to playing badminton where they live.

Anna's commitment to badminton is undeniable as she doesn't just coach, she runs events for everyone, she takes juniors on trips to inspire them, she has a Player of the Month Award and produces a monthly newsletter to keep parents in the loop.



A parent of one of Anna's students, Chris Patten:

"Anna stands out because she has the magical mix of enthusiasm, inspirational leadership, understanding of individual needs and a sheer sense of fun that is contagious!"

"Her badminton knowledge is extensive and has resulted in several top class players. My own son has massively improved in the last 6 months and has reached quarter finals in tournaments already!"