



Competitive match between players.

“Badminton has impacted my freshman year as it has allowed me to make many new friends. It’s helped me find community...

Being part of the team has provided me with a sense of belonging.” -

Freshman, Jaiden

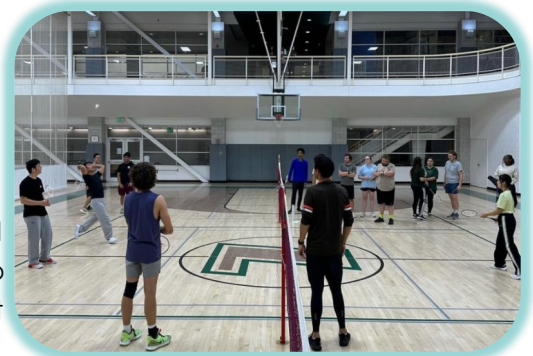
Zollman

Thank You Loyola Badminton By Sylvia Gredzinski

My biggest concern going into college was whether or not I was going to meet my people—the ones who I can connect and have a good time with. I knew all the freshmen were going to be in the same boat as me which eased my stresses; however, I constantly had the fear that everyone would make friends and I would be stuck by myself. Before college, I was told that joining clubs and different activities would be the best way to meet people since we would all share a common interest. People stressed this a lot, and I’m going to stress this, too. Joining clubs was one of the best decisions I’ve made at Loyola so far.

I remember seeing a flyer posted on the wall advertising the badminton club. I thought it was funny because who actually plays badminton seriously? I always liked the sport and was fairly good at it, but I never considered actually playing since it just seemed like a joke to me. The most serious experience I had before the club was playing with my friends in gym class at my high school. I really enjoyed playing the sport so I thought *why not show up to one practice and see how I like it?* I’m not gonna lie, although I was with my friend who I had met just a few days earlier, I was still fairly nervous. When we showed up to the FAC, it took a while to find the courts since we had never ventured that far into the facility before. But eventually we entered a room filled with people and were honestly a little shocked at how many others showed up for the event. This was the start of something that I never dreamed of doing. I was shocked to find out that Badminton was considered an actual club sport about three weeks into the practice—it wasn’t just a gathering of people who liked to play. This was an actual group of students who committed their time to the sport and contributed to being part of the team.

After that first practice, badminton became a prominent part of my life at Loyola. Having everyone joined together created a familial feeling because everyone got along almost immediately. We are an inclusive team and are appreciative of our members. Just the other day, our team captain sent us a message telling us “What a lucky group of players we have on this team.” I look forward to practice every Monday and Saturday. Twice a week I get excited to see a community of people who all get along, and the only disagreements between us are whether the birdie flew



In-practice tournament with Lil Yachty tickets on the line.

out of bounds or not. Everyone who participates has a good time.

The badminton community contributes something for everyone. For me, it provided a second family, people whom I have become very close with and enjoy spending time with. I am not afraid to be myself around my team and I always have such an amazing time at practice. Others can agree as well. Freshman Frebruk Mikre, another loyal member of the team, stated, "Badminton Club has expanded my social circle and allowed me to gain a new skill. The team has provided me a space for growth, stress relief, and motivation." Being a part of the team doesn't only provide a way to be active, it allows you to be social and be with others who share similar interests. The friendships made on the team are like no other. All of us come from different backgrounds, and we are surrounded by many different personalities, but we all share something in common that we get to bond over. One thing is for sure, you will always have a group of people to support you and who want you to get better. You'll never get bored; someone is always cracking a joke and you'll be surrounded by laughter. There's a special bond between the team—we share our own inside jokes and we connect with our teammates on a different level.

Although it may not seem like a rigorous sport, at every practice, players get extremely competitive, Freshman, Gigi Li even claims that her least favorite thing about it is the "wet hair from sweating" at the end of each practice. We are all hungry for the win and willing to push ourselves to the limit to score the extra point. We give each other tips on how to serve better and where to stand in order to receive the birdie. Badminton teaches agility and how to quickly take advantage of your reflexes. Each game, you focus on the patterns your opponent makes and learn their movements to predict what they will do next, then plan your next course of action. Badminton teaches you to think quickly on your feet and focus on the present. The sport is intense, and emotion flows through the court with each match. You can see the focus on each player's face as they focus on their next move. Competitiveness plays a huge role in the sport and each player always aims to face someone of better stature to hone their skill. Being on the team has helped shape me into a better person and player by teaching me motivation and determination.

I did find there were very few complaints from the players I talked with at Club Badminton. The only things Jaiden Zollman dislikes is the "limited court space and lack of tournaments." Badminton isn't the most well-funded club, and it doesn't receive the greatest recognition either, which is why we lack being able to attend more events as it becomes expensive to bring the whole group. This is why we host fundraising events and participate in different volunteer opportunities to try to raise money for the team. One of our most recent events was working concessions in the Ravens stadium. That day we made over \$1500 and using the money we hope to attend another annual tournament in Philadelphia in

*"I love how the badminton team is able to draw in such a diverse group of fun, motivated, and open-minded students, many of whom I've had the privilege of befriending." Senior,
Peter LoPresti*



Captain Peter LoPresti discussing a match with two players.

April. Everyone on the team does their best to contribute, and even though volunteering may be daunting to some, it always turns out to be a lot of fun because our friends are all together.

Joining clubs is important in finding your group. When you go to events that you are interested in, you are guaranteed to find other people who share the same interest as you. Just by attending, you are already surrounded by people who you share something in common with; you already have one thing to talk about. It's okay to feel nervous in the beginning, everyone is, it's normal. But sometimes you must push yourself out of your comfort zone. Being afraid should never stop you from exploring your options, gaining new experiences, and meeting new people. Take advantage of the time you have in college, and meet as many people as you can. Even though it may not seem like it, four years isn't a whole lot; this is when you must use your time wisely and form connections with people, and joining clubs is a perfect way to do that. Realistically, I never saw myself playing badminton, but I can say wholeheartedly that I love the sport, and I'm so grateful to be surrounded by people who I know have my back. Even if it's not joining the badminton team, show up to different events, participate in things you're interested in, talk with others, especially during your freshman year. You don't get much time, don't waste it on being afraid of trying new things.



The Loyola Badminton Family

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