



Northern Marianas Badminton Association

A Sustainable School-Based Badminton System: Lessons from the Northern Mariana Islands

Area: Events

Sub Area: National Competitions, Participation Programmes, Player Development, Sponsorship & Partnerships Initiatives.



① Overview

The Interscholastic Badminton Program is a school-based development initiative designed to promote youth health, grassroots participation, and elite athlete pathways. Delivered in partnership with the CNMI Public School System and TakeCare Insurance, the program integrates structured training, competitions, and leadership development for students across Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. Since its launch, the program has engaged over 1,400 students and created a sustainable & competitive pathway from school sport to national and international badminton competitions.

③ Actions Taken

The program introduced a year-round interscholastic league supported by strong partnerships, regular training, and mentorship.

Key actions implemented were:

- Strategic Partnerships with education and health stakeholders ensured facilities, funding, and institutional support.
- Mass Participation Training through thousands of Shuttle Time and weekly sessions prepared students for competition.
- Coach and Youth Leader Development trained 52 new leaders, including student-athlete mentors.
- Competition Pathway established regular middle and high school leagues plus an elementary invitational.
- Innovation and Youth Ownership enabled youth-led initiatives such as the AirBadminton Jamboree.

② Challenges

Before 2021, youth badminton opportunities were limited to casual play. Schools lacked structured competitions, trained coaches, and clear development pathways. At the same time, the community faced increasing youth inactivity and exposure to unhealthy lifestyle habits. Students with potential had no pathways to higher-level competition.

④ Key Results

The program has become a flagship grassroots-to-elite pathway model with measurable outcomes:

- 1,400+ students reached (approximately 16% of student population)
- 2,500+ annual training sessions delivered
- Near gender parity with 51% female participation
- 52 trained youth leaders supporting delivery
- National teams formed directly from league players
- Top 3 finishes in regional U15 and junior championships

⑤ Why Is This a Best Practice Model?

This model is considered a best practice because it connects every stage of athlete and youth development into one coherent, sustainable system. By integrating a grassroots-to-elite pathway, it ensures long-term athlete growth while providing clear progression opportunities. Key features include:

- Integrated Grassroots-to-Elite Pathway ensures long-term athlete development.
- Multi-Sector Partnerships provide sustainability, resources, and shared social impact goals.
- Inclusive Participation & Gender Equity demonstrates accessibility and inclusive program design.
- Youth Leadership Ecosystem builds leadership skills while expanding program capacity.
- Early Engagement Strategy creates a continuous pipeline of young athletes.

⑥ Key Takeaways for Replication

Member Associations seeking to replicate this model should consider the following lessons:

- Embed sport programs within school systems for consistent participation.
- Develop structured competitions to complement training.
- Train youth leaders to multiply coaching and event delivery capacity.
- Build long-term corporate and government partnerships aligned with health and education outcomes.
- Provide clear athlete pathways from grassroots to elite levels.

Conclusion

The Interscholastic Badminton Program demonstrates how a well-structured school league can simultaneously improve youth health, increase sport participation, and produce international-level athletes. Its integrated partnership model, inclusive participation strategy, and strong development pathway make it a scalable best practice for badminton development worldwide.

