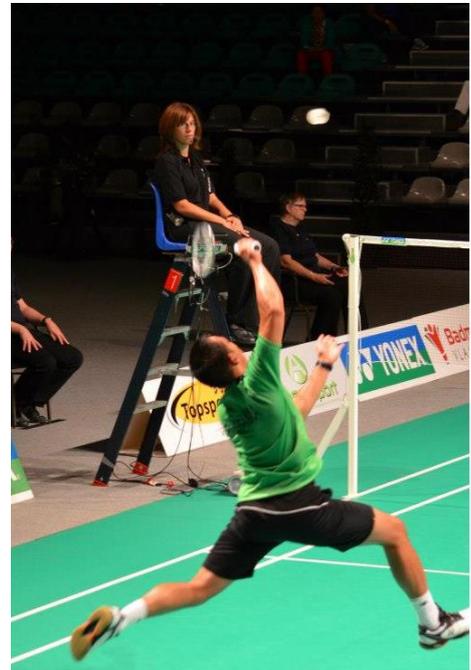


Yonex Belgian International, 13.-16. September 2012

The tournament was held in Leuven, which is the capital of the province of Flemish Brabant in the Flemish Region of Belgium. It's a true university centre in which the town is more alive during the academic year. The university, with about 35,000 students every year, is the oldest Catholic University in the world, founded in 1425. Due to this great number of students the longest bar in the world, that's what Leuven's Oude Markt is called, is located there. Around forty cafés on one square means that students and locals never go thirsty.



Oude Markt



MS final

The hall is located in a large sports and recreation centre 2,3 km from the hotel so walking to the hall was not really an option. Transportation was very well organised from the arrival to the Brussels airport on Wednesday morning till the departure on Sunday afternoon. Two meals a day were provided in the hall, as well as water, coffee and fruit. On Saturday evening we were invited by the organisers for a nice dinner at the local Chinese restaurant.

Tournament was played on six courts, with three line judges per court in the qualification, and the first two rounds of the main draw. Thanks to the international group of line judges everything worked smoothly and we had a great support on the court. All together, there were 26 umpires (13 BEL, 2 GER, 2 NED, 2 FRA, ITA, SCO, EST, IRL, FIN, SWE, AUT). Referee was Nicos Vladimirov from Cyprus, and the deputy referee was Isabelle Jobard from France. We worked on Thursday and Friday in three shifts, I was the unlucky one who had only one shift off in those two days and of course it was the middle shift on Friday. We worked in groups of three umpires per court, which is very boring after a couple of matches, and I must say I don't see a justified reason for doing this. Also there were too many umpires in quarter finals (21) and semifinals (18) so it was a lot of pointless waiting with nothing to do in the hall. Even though I understand that they wanted to give everyone a chance to work in the quarter finals and semifinals it would have been much better if they divided us in two groups so we could have some time off in the morning or in the afternoon. The hall was completely redone for the finals, with a live TV broadcast on Belgium national TV and a lot of spectators, which was a good experience that doesn't happen very often on the badminton circuit tournament. All together I had 29 duties (including men's singles final), 14 as an umpire, and 15 as a service judge.

If we put aside my dissatisfactions mentioned above, Belgian international is an excellent tournament, very well organised, with a lot of friendly people involved (from the drivers to match control) in a lovely town, where the umpires are not just a necessity. Highly recommended!!

Katarina Itrić