

For my volunteer experience, I decided to volunteer for the Badminton competition of the Senior Games that was to take place on September 23rd, 2022. I learned that the event started at 8:30am and didn't end until 2:30pm. When I first arrived at the Triangle Badminton & Table Tennis Center in Morrisville, NC at close to 8am, my nerves started getting the better of me. I had no idea who was in the building or how many would be competing against one another. When I got into the building and walked back into the warehouse-like arena, I saw 6 courts set up for the tournament. I went up and introduced myself to the staff and the other volunteers who arrived early. One thing that caught my eye was that there were at least 2 EMTs stationed inside of the breakroom in case something went wrong during the competition. Once I was introduced to everyone, I got to know a little bit more about what the volunteers would be doing and gave us a small "cheat sheet". After meeting the staff and a couple of volunteers, I was handed a volunteer shirt and I began the process of sweeping up the courts of shuttlecock feathers that were knocked off during warmups.

Once we were finished sweeping up the courts and deemed that court 3 wasn't going to be in use due to unpeeled tape posing a tripping hazard, we gathered around the award table to get started. The staff noticed they had an even number of individuals, so they began to pair us off into groups of two: one was to keep track of the score while the other helped determine if the shuttlecock went in or out of bounds depending on the match set. I was paired with Cole, a student also from NC State University who was also doing volunteer work for one of his PRT classes. The staff handed us a clipboard with the names of the players with a scorecard beneath. Each game would be a best out of 3 and the winner would advance as the event was a single elimination. There was also a list of age groups that competed: 55-59, 60-64, 65-69, 70-74, 75-79, 80-84, 85-89, and 90+. Below that there was the list of classes at which the event was taking place: Men's Singles, Men's Doubles, Women's Singles, Women's Doubles, and Mixed Doubles.

The first match we officiated was a women's double match that Cole kept score and I made sure the shuttlecock stayed in bounds for the game. The result of the first match was a blowout in two sets for a team who had been to the state finals. Our second match was a mixed double's that was more interesting as there were more questionable calls that could have gone either way when determining if the shuttlecock was in or out of bounds. One of the participants of the mixed double's match, David Hostetler, who was almost 90, had already competed in almost 30 activities for the senior games earlier in the week. After a closer match in which David and his teammate won gold, Cole and I officiated for multiple singles, doubles, and mixed matches throughout the day. We officiated close to double digit games within the six and a half hours of competition.

One of the major highlights was that I got to officiate for Melvin, one of my grandfather's fraternity brothers from Greenville, NC. It was interesting to see people from Greenville, Henderson, and even Wilmington competing in an event that was located in the triangle. All of the competitors were polite and thankful towards Cole and I for officiating and making sure the event ran smoothly. I was really surprised and impressed by how agile the seniors were at their age as a man near his 90s was able to run at full speed towards the shuttlecock and spike it with such force. I learned a valuable lesson that no matter how old you get, you can still have the agility and strength of someone younger. The level of competitiveness and skill was unparalleled as one of the gentlemen I conversed with told me that he started playing badminton at the age of 60, but on the court, it looked like he had been playing for his whole life.

After the last event Cole and I officiated (Men's single), we turned in our clipboard and looked over the brackets for the tournaments. There were many people who placed in gold and silver while a few earned bronze as well. After volunteering at this badminton event, I found it interesting enough that I told the main staff members to put my contact information down in case I wanted to volunteer for next fall's badminton tournament.

