League players rock badminton court

By Jeff Walls

BAR HARBOR — The Mount Desert Island YMCA hosted—and roasted—Colby College in a badminton tournament this Sunday. The Mount Desert Island team came away with all but one of the victories against the highly touted collegiate team.

Colby brought 10 players to compete against the home team of 12. "This is the largest crowd we have attracted so far and, as you saw, the games were of a high quality and almost always evenly matched," said Nishi Rajakaruna, the organizer of the Mount Desert Island badminton league.

In the first round, Colby athletes played against Mount Desert Island players. The top two players from each side were picked for the semi-finals and then the winners from each of the semi-finals ended up in the finals.

The sport is fast paced and very athletic with athletes making soaring leaps and last-ditch dives, often within seconds of each other.

"I think this is the best tournament we have had," said Rajakaruna. There have been four since 2004. "Badminton as a sport is gaining more recognition and we have players from all ages coming to practice three to four times a week," he said. "I get 10 to 15 little kids who come to my workshops once or twice a year, so that is also a good thing to popularize this sport which is very big in many parts of the world."

Rajakaruna has played badminton competitively in Sri Lanka and British Columbia where competition is extremely tight. "It truly is a wonderful sport that, if you are careful, can play until the ripe old ages!" he said.

"I am always amazed at our older players, Line Rechholtz (who was runner-up this year), Sonia Field (who was runner-up last year), and Doug Dubois, who do well at these competitions playing against very young players," said Rajakaruna.

He is very encouraged by the increased participation in the sport. "I am always amazed to see how much interest we have generated over the last few years," Rajakaruna went on. "I am hoping to have a tournament for kids soon."

Results:
1. Women's Singles Finalists were Line Rechholtz (MDI) and Anna Simeonova (Colby College). Anna from Colby won the final 21-7, 21-10 and became the 2007 women's singles champion.
2) The Men's Singles Finalists were three-time winner Nishi Rajakaruna and Taj Mohammed, both from Mount Desert Island. They met in last year's finals also. Rajakaruna won the final 21-13, 17-21, 21-18 to become the men's champion for the fourth year in a row.
3) Doubles Finalists were also from Mount Desert Island. Nishi Rajakaruna and Sonia Field, last year's winners, met last year's runner-up, Taj Mohammed, and Meher Perveen. Taj and Meher won the finals 21-20, 14-21, and 21-14 to become the doubles champions for 2007.

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