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ON THE COVER: Palo Alto's Auria Malek by John Oros ©1999

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USA Table Tennis
One Olympic Plaza
Colorado Springs, CO 80909
719-578-4583 (ph) • 719-632-6071 (fax)
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EDITOR, DESIGNER &
ADVERTISING MANAGER
Larry Hodges
8810 Walnut Hill Road
Chevy Chase, MD 20815
301-907-3663 (ph) • 301-907-3666 (fax)
ltworld@erols.com

CIRCULATION DIRECTOR
Margaret Smith
719-578-4583 • usatt@iex.net

EDITORIAL BOARD
Dennis Taylor (Chair), Tim Boggan,
Jim McQueen, Sheri Pittman, Wei Wang

HEADQUARTERS STAFF
Ben Nisbet Executive Director
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Fran Boardman Ratings Coordinator
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CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Tim Boggan, Terry Canup, Bob Gusikoff,
Larry Hodges, Azmy Ibrahim, Chung Lau,
Tong Lee, Sean Lonergan, Richard McAfee,
Henry McCoullum, Alan Newman, Dirk Petersen,
Sheri Pittman, Larry Rose, Phil Schafer,
Dan Seemiller, Wei Wang, Alan Williams

PHOTOGRAPHERS
Mal Anderson, Terry Canup, Dennis Davis,
Maria Pasqua Francesca, Larry Hodges,
Paul Kovac, Tong Lee, Richard McAfee,
Diane McAfee, Michael Mulvey, John Oros,
Adam Redding, Diego Schaaf, Bill Scheltema

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CLUB COMMITTEE ANNOUNCES MEMBERSHIP DRIVE  
By Alan Williams, Chairman, USATT Club Committee

On each USATT membership application there is a blank line where players list their ‘Home Club.’ Now, with the help of three industry heavyweights, the USATT will reward those clubs that attract the most USATT members.

Beginning on January 1st, 2000, the HQ staff in Colorado will track the club information on each new or renewed member's application. At year's end, the club that has been listed on the most applications will win a brand-new Butterfly Centerfold Roll-Away table, generously donated by Martin-Kilpatrick.

The clubs that finish second and third for this incentive will win a Newgy Robo-Pong 2000 and a gross of three-star Nittaku balls from Paddle Palace, respectively.

I am delighted that these manufacturers and distributors unhesitatingly stepped forward to assist us. They all expressed great support for clubs in America and asked to be included in future efforts. Now there is another reason for clubs to recruit new members for the USATT, which has the happy effect of increasing the size of the club, as well.

The club committee members are Diana Gee, John Starr and John Yos.

---

COACHING COMMITTEE UPDATE  
By Dan Seemiller, USATT Coaching Development Director & USA Men’s Coach

Attention All Current and Future Coaches  
USATT has gone through many changes recently with a new president and several new board members. The coaching committee has changed direction with Mark Nordby as the new National Coaching Chairperson and myself as the new Coaching Committee Chairman. Our two main objectives: More coaches working with juniors in the U.S., and more knowledgeable coaches.

Mark has a bachelor's degree in Math/Statistics from Northern Illinois University. He is a former PGA golf instructor who worked in Illinois, Colorado and California. Since quitting the golf business in 1995, he has become very involved in table tennis. He is a very active tournament player, and is a full-time table tennis coach in the suburbs of Chicago. Mark has worked as my assistant coach at many clinics, and coached my South Bend Junior Team at the Junior Olympics when I was away coaching the U.S. Men’s Team at the World’s last August. From my personal experience, he is an excellent coach of strategy and improving strokes. He loves the sport and is interested in giving his time to improving the coaching situation in this country. His experience in attaining his golf certification and his current role as a full-time coach of 17 players make him a qualified coaching chairman.

At our first meeting on September 19, we laid out nine specific goals to work on. See box for a listing of these goals.

At the bottom of this page is a registration form for players who would like information on becoming certified coaches.

---

COACHING COMMITTEE GOALS
1. Simplify the coaching certification program to just four levels: club, state, regional, national.
2. Increase visibility of all certified coaches.
3. Create a pipeline of shared information between the committee and all active coaches.
4. Strive to help interested coaches become better instructors.
5. Rework the coaching certification test for all levels so they will be clear and more effective at showing what knowledge our coaches are lacking (for example, more essay questions).
6. Create a video library available only for active certified coaches to use.
7. Emphasizing coaches who are active with junior development.
8. Conduct coaching clinics (for coaches) by the committee at little or no cost.
9. Require all coaches to report their current level of activity.

---

Name: ____________________________________ Phone: ____________________________
Address: _____________________________________________________________
City: ___________________ State: ___________ Zip Code: ____________  
DOB: ___________________ Club Affiliation: __________________________ Rating: ________

Please send completed form to: Mark Nordby, National Coaching Chairman, 1104 Whitfield, Northbrook, IL 60065

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USA TABLE TENNIS MAGAZINE • November/December 1999
Planning for the Future of USA Table Tennis
By Sheri Soderberg Pittman

With this issue of the magazine, we are launching an “association primer” series that will provide you with a behind-the-scenes look at how and why leaders of USATT make decisions that affect the future of our association. We expect that these decisions will move our sport forward to greater heights, respectability and appeal, eventually culminating in the goal of producing Olympic and World Championship medalists.

Strategic planning is critical to our association’s success, which is one reason that the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) mandates each national governing body (NGB) under its umbrella to periodically review and revise its sport’s High Performance Plan (Plan). This article will give you a glimpse into the creation of our updated Plan and show how the Plan impacts the future of USA Table Tennis.

USOC Moderation of Plan
Kelly Skinner, our sport’s USOC liaison, and I discussed the Plan logistics during a one-hour phone conversation on August 10th, the day after I arrived home from the World Championships. On the next day we, along with our colleague Rebecca Crawford, spoke again for an hour.

The first draft of our updated Plan was due on 9/15. To accommodate this timeline, a designated group would meet the last weekend in August to put together the Plan. The Board would then meet two weeks later to review and revise the Plan in time to meet the deadline.

Obviously, this was not an ideal situation from a time-efficiency and deliberation-oriented viewpoint. It was caused, to a large extent, by the USOC’s new approach to developing the Plan. It was initiated five years ago, but the Plan has gone through several iterations and has become considerably more complex.

The USOC’s new approach put the emphasis on setting priorities, focusing more of our resources on those priorities, and making a commitment to following our Plan. As much as every association would like to be “all things to all people,” for most associations, financial constraints and other realities make it impossible and unwise to have an all-encompassing, open-ended Plan.

An additional sum of money from our joint marketing agreement with the USOC comes in the form of centralized funding. All spending of that funding must be related to our Plan’s identified Pipeline-related priorities. In fact, each year we must provide the USOC with an annual report documenting our compliance with the parameters set for the spending of centralized funding.

Another component of the USOC’s new approach was the need to streamline our decision-making process as to who those participants should be. Kelly and Rebecca suggested as the attendees: the two national coaches, two athlete representatives, the executive director, the president, the treasurer and the youth committee chair (since the coaching committee chair was vacant). Accordingly, the invites and drafters of the Plan were:
- Dan Seemiller, Men’s National Coach
- Doru Gheorghe, Women’s National Coach
- Tawny Banh, Athlete, Women’s Team Member
- Ben Nishet, USATT Executive Director
- Sheri Pittman, USATT President
- Tong Lee, USATT Treasurer
- Barney Reed, Sr., Youth Committee Chair

Plan Participants
The USOC strongly recommended that the Plan workgroup be limited to eight participants to ensure that we stay unified in our focus. To streamline the decision-making process as to who those participants should be, Kelly and Rebecca suggested as the attendees: the two national coaches, two athlete representatives, the executive director, the president, the treasurer and the youth committee chair (since the coaching committee chair was vacant). Accordingly, the invites and drafters of the Plan were:
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- Ben Nishet, USATT Executive Director
- Sheri Pittman, USATT President
- Tong Lee, USATT Treasurer
- Barney Reed, Sr., Youth Committee Chair

Over the course of one weekend, the group drafted new mission, vision, and values statements; current and ideal Pipeline scenarios; a SWOT (strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/threats) analysis; and goals. The blend of association roles, personalities and objectives on the part of each participant meshed well. Discussions often sparked spirited debate. We all thought that Kelly did an excellent job of facilitating. He challenged us, not criticized us; then he guided us, not directed us; then he offered his on-going support to us, not abandon us. This approach — combined with a fresh input of energy from the Board, new committee chairs, and a new Executive Director — promises to usher in a new era of invigoration for our association.

Two weeks later, Rebecca attended the Board meeting and gave an overview of the USOC’s expectations regarding the Plan. Echoing a statement Kelly made several times during the drafting weekend, she said that
the Plan shouldn’t just exist as a binder on a bookshelf, but should serve as our association’s guiding document. The Board spent several hours reviewing the new Plan, revised some of the wording, then adopted it in principle.

Key Goals of the Plan
The six key goals of the Plan mirror the critical success factors that we believe we must attain to improve our Pipeline. Although the goals are enumerated, at no time did we prioritize among the priorities, so the numbering of the goals is not significant. The wording of the goals may change slightly before the Plan is officially submitted for final approval in January. It is also possible that the plan may undergo some revisions at the Board’s November 12-14 meeting. These are the goals as this magazine goes to press:

1. Develop Olympic and World Championship medalists;
2. Increase funding sources;
3. Create a professional structure for domestically-held events;
4. Implement a national schools program;
5. Establish a high level of involvement and visibility within the international community;
6. Foster an environment in which USATT-affiliated clubs grow and prosper.

USATT’s Markers for 2000
After the Board approved the Plan, Ben Nisbet and I worked together and sought input from other Board members, committee chairs and headquarters staff to develop USATT’s markers for 2000. During the time period I was preparing this report, the Board approved our markers. They are still subject to USOC review and ratification. I’ve condensed what we are submitting to the USOC by omitting the proposed documentation for each marker and reworded some portions of the markers to conform to language I have used throughout this report.

As I wrote earlier, the markers are supposed to flow from the Plan. The markers should be challenging. At least two of the markers must relate to performance.

Since the USOC prohibits NGB’s from proposing marketing concepts and actual tournament staging as markers, there are no markers that directly flow from Goals 2 and 3. Instead, we are internally working on both goals. As the executive director, Ben Nisbet is the primary person responsible for increasing new funding sources, both through sponsorships and increased revenues. Margaret Smith is assuming responsibility for overseeing the creation of a binder that covers all aspects of USATT’s two major events (the Open and the Nationals).

1. Club Enhancement Program
USA Table Tennis will undertake four initiatives to identify, expand and support youth development programs at its affiliated clubs. Our existing club network is the best available domestic resource for junior development programs.

“The essence of the Pipeline is to simultaneously widen the base of developing players ... while generating and supporting elite athletes as they progress...”

Strategies:
* USA Table Tennis will institute and maintain an annual club survey which locates and identifies existing junior development programs and junior recruitment efforts.
* USA Table Tennis will develop an on-line database of certified coaches offering youth development coaching.
* USA Table Tennis will develop a network of volunteer coordinators on a nationwide basis to assist affiliated clubs with the institution of youth development programs.
* USA Table Tennis will hold seminars for club representatives at each of the National events, including a seminar at the US Open, July 5th through July 9th in Fort Lauderdale with US Men’s Team Coach Danny Seemiller addressing topics relevant to instituting, expanding and marketing club-based youth coaching.

2. Youth Enhancement Program
USA Table Tennis will undertake three initiatives to enhance youth development.

Strategies:
* USA Table Tennis, in conjunction with an industry sponsor, will designate two regional areas to participate in a pilot program instructing teachers on how to teach table tennis to elementary school children.
* USA Table Tennis will assess reasons for the downward trend in the participation level at the Junior Olympics and will adopt a 5-part plan to increase participation.
* USA Table Tennis will dedicate a special youth activities oriented 2-page spread (with no more than a half-page ad) to youth activities in each issue of our national magazine and will create a youth activities link on our website.

3. Combined Youth and Coaches Trip to China
USA Table Tennis will co-develop, with China, a trip for elite youth athletes and youth coaches that will focus on improving the youth athletes’ skills, exposing the youth coaches to the Chinese coaching techniques, and providing the players and coaches with a goodwill competition finale.

Strategy: USA TT will send the elite youth players and youth coaches on the trip in the summer of 2000. (USA TT reserves the right to designate an alternative country should unforeseeable political or military action make travel to China inadvisable or impossible.)

4. Achievement of World Ranking by Two Youth Athletes
Two of USA TT’s elite youth athletes will achieve world rankings in 2000.

Explanation: The youth athletes will have to defeat at least two world-ranked players in order to become world-ranked themselves.

5. Improvement of Men’s or Women’s Team at 2000 World Team Championships
Either the Men’s or Women’s Team will improve their finish in the 2000 World Team Championships over their 1997 results.

Explanation: In 1997, USA TT’s teams finished 26th (Men) and 31st (Women).

USATT’s 2000 Budget
Next on the agenda is the approval of the budget for 2000. The Board will devote a considerable amount of time to setting next year’s budget during our mid-November Board meeting. Upcoming reports will provide additional information and details about the Plan, the markers, USA TT’s budget and other association issues.

2001 Election
The next election for at-large or regional Board members is scheduled in 2001. The Board is aware of our duty to re-examine the current by-laws and standing rules pertaining to election issues. I am committed to keeping the membership informed of developments so that the membership has a chance to give input before the Board takes action on any proposed changes to the by-laws or standing rules.

Volunteers Needed
As always, we welcome input from the membership, especially when the input helps our association to achieve its goals. Please contact us to discuss ways that you can help contribute to the success of our association’s future.

New Rating Proposal
At the Nationals, there will be an open informational board meeting with the new ratings proposal the major topic. See your player’s packet at the Nationals for more information.
More to Come: Rules Changes & Further Recommendations

Last issue I tried to summarize the most important changes in the rules. This time I will discuss some more which may help prepare umpires for the future. The complete list is coming out soon in a new rules book.

I would first like to comment on some of the letters I have received on the rule changes. I hope by now those who asked several times about the list of illegal long pips have found some answers in the last issue of the magazine.

The issue which occupies the minds of most officials today is the "Time-Out" rule. I have consulted with several officials in several associations, and here are some of their observations and recommendations.

- Time-out was introduced for the convenience of TV programming. Therefore perhaps it should be limited to television matches only.
- Time-out cannot be applied without an umpire. There is a fear that it may be difficult to apply and it may lead to conflict among players if an umpire is not present. Therefore it should be limited to umpired matches only.
- Associations can limit the applications of time-outs as long as they include their policies on the entry form.
- I attended the Japan Open last month. The time-out procedures required four cards. One is given to the umpire, and the other three are present at the assistant umpire's table. All of them are on a white background with a big capital "T" in black on both sides. Three of them are 3"x4", and one is 5"x8".
- A player, a coach, or a captain in the case of team matches can ask for a time-out by hand signal in a "T" shape. The umpire will raise his hand holding the "T" card. The assistant umpire will place the big card standing on the side of the table of the player(s) who asked for the time-out, and place a standing small card by the scoreboard on the side of the player(s) who took it.
- Time-outs will be recorded on the match card for future references.

All of this information will be presented to the official committee meeting in December for their formulation of a policy for USATT tournaments. A final note: the time-out policy is only required at international events.

Another issue of inquiry was the wisdom of the new policy of requiring the ball to pass beyond the end-line of the receiver to be out of play. This issue has been discussed in the ITTF Rules Committee and the USATT officials' seminar for several years. In the age of loops and spins, etc., the ball may pass the side of the court of the receiver and come back to it. With the present rule, if the ball passes the court of the receiver, over the sideline, it is considered out of play. Therefore, if the receiver catches it before it comes back to the table he will win the point. This is more possible in a doubles match where one of the players will be very close to it when he passes the court. Interviews with several players revealed that their understanding was that the ball had to pass the end-line. Therefore the rule came to confirm what most of the players are enforcing now, and to end all the hypothetical situations which promoted endless discussions in the past.

In the next issue I will cover other changes in the rules.
ATHLETE SELECTION PROCEDURES AND ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES FOR THE 2000 OLYMPIC GAMES

For the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) has allocated to North America three positions for males and three positions for females. These positions must be allocated between the United States and Canada. At the present time, USA Table Tennis (USATT) is discussing with Canada how these allocated positions will be divided.

Regardless of the agreement with Canada, USATT will hold a round-robin competition to rank order eligible athletes (USATT Olympic trials). Nomination for the Olympic team or for the possibility of competing against Canadian athletes in singles will be based upon this rank order of finish in the round-robin competition (best of 5 games matches) from approximately the top 12 eligible women and top 18 eligible men in the country. A separate and updated selection procedure is being developed for the doubles and will be communicated to athletes in the near future.

It is imperative to note that this does not guarantee the winner(s) a position on the 2000 Olympic Team. The final nominees will be determined in a playoff with Canada. At the completion of the playoff with Canada, USATT will nominate the athletes to the United States Olympic Committee (USOC). The USOC will then name the 2000 Olympic Team. In the event of resignation of a selected athlete or in the event of illness or injury to a selected athlete, as determined by USATT or USOC medical staff, a replacement athlete will be selected by moving down the rank order of finish list from the trials.

The time and place of the competition for the men’s and women’s singles and the men’s and women’s doubles has not yet been determined. We expect that the U.S. trials will be held in late January and that the North American trials with Canada will be held in March/April 2000.

EACH ATHLETE MUST MEET USOC OLYMPIC ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS TO BECOME AN OLYMPIC TEAM MEMBER. THIS MEANS, SUBJECT TO CERTAIN LIMITED DISCRETIONARY VARIATIONS, EACH ATHLETE MUST BE A UNITED STATES CITIZEN PRIOR TO THE START OF THE U.S. OLYMPIC TRIALS. If you have any questions about whether this rule applies to you, please contact USATT Headquarters.

Invitations to the U.S. Olympic trials will be issued based upon the post-Nationals ratings on January 1, 2000. In order to make that determination, each potential trials invitee must by December 31, 1999:

1. Supply USATT with a legible copy of the picture page of his/her United States passport.
2. If the athlete is a naturalized citizen and has been a citizen for less than three years, he/she must also inform US Table Tennis of: a. the name of the former association b. whether he/she represented that association in the Olympic Games, in continental or regional games or in world or regional championships. If so, the athlete will need to provide USA Table Tennis with a waiver from the former association.
3. Be a current USATT member, have a valid mailing address, and have participated in USATT-sanctioned tournaments in the past year.

It is vital that the above materials be received by Margaret Smith at USA Table Tennis Headquarters no later than December 31, 1999. The sooner this information is submitted, the easier it will be to resolve any potential eligibility issues. Failure to comply with this deadline will result in an athlete being declared ineligible for the trials and, therefore, the Olympic team. If you have any questions about these rules, or if you are unsure whether USATT’s records are complete, you are strongly encouraged to contact USATT Headquarters.

If you have questions regarding the above, please do not hesitate to contact Margaret Smith at USA Table Tennis Headquarters at 719-578-4583 or usatt@ix.net.

STEFAN FLORESCU INDUCTED INTO HALL OF FAME

USA Wheelchair Sports Hall of Fame Stefan Florescu, 72, of Lincoln Park, Michigan, was inducted into the recently established “Michigan Athletes With Disabilities Hall of Fame” on October 7, at a banquet at the San Marino Club in Troy, Michigan. Guest of honor at the banquet was Gordie Howe, of pro hockey fame.

Florescu, many times regional, national and international wheelchair table tennis champion, was the first member of a USA Paralympic team to win a gold medal in international competition, winning a gold medal at the 1964 Tokyo Paralympics. Florescu pioneered in the founding and promoting of wheelchair divisions at the USATT Nationals.

USATT Board of Directors

President: Sheri Soderberg Pittman
1520 Dale Lane • Delray Beach, FL 33444
(561) 276-4615 • sheripittman@netscape.net

Executive Vice President: Dr. Jings Wang
11511 E. Garvey Ave. • El Monte, CA 91732
(626) 350-0116

Treasurer: Tony Lee
1295 Quaunt Court • Lafayette, CA 94549-2624
(925) 296-5531 • tlee94549@yahoo.com

Secretary: Dennis Taylor
1916 R St. NW, #207 • Washington, D.C. 20009
(202) 667-9622 • Piccotp@aol.com

Vice President: George Braithwaite
580 Main St., Apt. 756 • Roosevelt Island, NY 10044
(212) 980-8442 • braithwaite_g@hotmail.com

Vice President: Khoa Nguyen
3286 Pappanni Way • San Jose, CA 95148
(650) 937-6147 • khoanguyen@yahoo.com

Vice President: Barney D. Reed
3213 Monthean Park Place • Hendersonville TN 37075
(615) 822-1198 • barney.reed@gte.net

Vice President: Bob Treteway
P.O. Box 2138 • Colorado Springs, CO 80901
(719) 339-2519 • tabletennis@usa.com

Vice President & Foundation Representative: Jimmy McClure
4226 Country Club Blvd. • Cape Coral, FL 33904
(941) 945-1718

Group B Vice President: Jeff Davis
Asst. Dir. Of Operations • University of Colorado
1420 Austin Bluffs Parkway
P.O. Box 7150 • Colorado Springs, CO 80933
(719) 593-3491 • jdavis@mail.uccs.edu

Olympic Athlete Representative: Diana Gee
1008 S. Severgn Drive • Exton, PA 19341
(610) 594-9439 • dkgee@yahoo.com

National Athlete Representative: Jim Butler
1011 Augusta Dr., #103 • Houston, TX 77057
(713) 952-1528 • jbutler@ping-pong.com

National Athlete Representative: Lily Yip
14 Dock Watch Hollow Road • Warren, NJ 07059
(732) 748-9712 • atlanta96@email.msn.com

Executive Director: Ben Nisbet
USATT, One Olympic Plaza
Colorado Springs, CO 80909
719-578-4583 • usatt5@ix.net
I'd like to share with my fellow table tennis enthusiasts the experience I recently had with the 40mm ball, and the thoughts that followed.

The rallies at my level of play, about 1700-1800 level, were somewhat slower, but I adjusted rather quickly, and soon I was not making more unforced errors than I usually make. However, since the speed of the ball was slower, it was easier for my opponent to make good returns and also win points. Therefore, naturally, I did not like the larger ball very much. Irrespective of personal feelings, I seriously doubt that legalizing the 40mm ball will result in increasing popularity of table tennis on television, which is the core of the whole campaign. It is unlikely that world-class players will be affected by this change. Those mainly affected will be the play of average players. Consequently, after a short transition period the speed of play at the pro-tour level will -- fortunately -- still be fast enough for true table tennis enthusiasts/spectators to enjoy, but too fast for the television people to change their minds about table tennis.

I am concerned about the issue of changing table tennis equipment and other measures we currently have to stomach, suggested or rumored, such as, for example, a higher net. Changing equipment is not a good idea. Little, if anything, will be achieved, and enforcing the proposed change(s) may destroy the sport of Table Tennis as we know it. I am just a mediocre player and I realize that this change is not being suggested for the sake of players at my level. Those who started this “let’s change the equipment” crusade may think it doesn’t matter what players at this average level think but perhaps they should think again. After all, the 1500 to 2000 rated players make up the largest group of serious table tennis players, and they contribute a lot to the popularity of the sport, as well as to the revenue of the whole table tennis industry.

The campaign to change the equipment is money driven. Every person who loves table tennis would like to see more money in it, to reward players for their hard work and excellence.

However, there is a naïve idea going around that if we could make table tennis more attractive to television, table tennis would become more popular and the money would pour in. This is a myth, simply wishful thinking. Table tennis is not off the air because the ball flies too fast, and it will not be on the air because the ball will fly a little slower. The high velocity of an ice hockey puck or a baseball has not taken these sports off the air either. Table tennis will be put on the list of television’s favorite sports when the TV people find sufficient number of sponsors willing to pay 5-7 digit sums for 30 seconds of air time in hope that the audience will be large, so that they can sell millions of packages of laxatives, rolls of toilet paper and other products. However, the audience will not be large merely because table tennis will be on the tube. In order for TV executives to be reasonably sure that the eyes of a commercially significant number of people will be glued to TV screens, watching and willing to put up with the monotonous commercials thrown at them during interruptions, which is the sole purpose of television broadcasting, table tennis must be popular. It is unrealistic to expect television to contribute to the existing popularity of a sport in any significant way. Table tennis is not a can of Budweiser. When Anheuser-Busch wants to make Budweiser more popular by way of television, the company has to pay TV stations a lot of hard bucks. We want just the opposite. We want TV stations to pay for the privilege to broadcast table tennis, as they have to do for other sports. Take football, baseball, soccer, ice hockey or golf. These sports became popular long before TV sneaked into our bedrooms and family rooms. With the invention of television, these sports only became commercially easier to exploit. One does not have to be a rocket scientist to conclude that, in order to attract those zillions of advertising $$$ and get on TV, these sports had to be popular first.

Some of you may wonder why so much of the world supports the current experimenting with table tennis equipment, when this sport is already quite popular in most of the world. In Europe and Asia, major table tennis events are frequently televised, regardless of the small ball flying at 100+ miles per hour over the (only) six-inch high net. This worldwide campaign to increase the popularity of table tennis is actually aimed at increasing the popularity of this sport in the USA. This is as much surprising as it is commendable. The surprising part is that the rest of the world, for a change, wants to help this country with something, rather than bad-mouth it or beg for handouts.

The worldwide interest in the welfare of table tennis in USA is not all that unselfish. It happens because the world knows that this is the country where the money is, not that there is anything wrong with that, to use the famous Jerry Seinfeld’s line. And history has shown that the financial prosperity, worldwide, of those involved in sports that are popular in the USA is exemplary. Let’s join the world in the effort to make table tennis more popular, but let’s stop looking for the culprit in the currently regular equipment, or ascribe to television divine powers of a savior.

In this context, it is amusing to see some of our desperate measures aimed at increasing popularity of table tennis in the USA. Take, for example, the routine of playing loud music during finals at the U.S. Open or National Championships. It is orchestrated as a result of a sorry hope that aping the circus, which takes place during important events in some more popular sports will make table tennis popular as well. This nonsense, which nobody seems to be able to stop when the finalists are ready to start to play, has no other effect than to annoy the spectators. These people do not have to be preached to. They came to see the finals because they already like the sport. It should not be news for the well-traveled USATT officials who ordered it that in countries where table tennis is popular, this obnoxious musical extravaganza does not exist. Fortunately, loud music was not played during the staged events at the recent U.S. Open. Those responsible for this revolutionary change deserve to be commended for the courage to part with the former, silly practice.

Top table tennis players must work as hard as champions must in other sports, and it would be only fair if they would be rewarded as generously as their counterparts in more popular sports. The magic word which could make this happen is popularity and not television. Consequently, those who want to make more money in table tennis, players and officials alike, should drop the dangerous experimentation with the fundamentals of the sport. Instead of focusing on television as the means through which table tennis might get more popular, they would do a better service to themselves and to the sport if they became more involved in approaches which could be more successful. The first step in the right direction, at least in this country, would be to organize a successful league. Even if, at the beginning, it would have to be subsidized. This would be the best investment USATT can make. Initially, perhaps, a competition among clubs or states. This would slowly but surely result in enlarging the base of local patriots willing to pay admission fees. Having a successful league would bring the status of table tennis in this country to a par with that in Europe. Messing with equipment won’t do the trick. For those who want to play with a larger ball and a higher net we have tennis, remember?

Acknowledgement: Author is grateful to Larry Hodges for the generous gift of the 40mm balls tested.
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USA Table Tennis selected Doru Gheorghe as the Coach of the Year and Richard McAfee as the Developmental Coach of the Year for 1999. For this honor, both attended the USOC’s Fourth Annual Coaching Recognition and Awards weekend in Washington, D.C. in mid-September.

I feel it’s imperative that I give adequate notice to all potential future candidates: this accolade ranks right up there with those select few “moments of life” that a person cherishes forever. I know because I was there.

Everything about the event was first class. We, and especially the coaches, were treated like VIPs the entire weekend. Rumors flew around that the reported tab for the weekend alone amounted to a quarter of a million dollars. This seemed entirely believable. Attendees were greeted at the airport, driven to the Marriott hotel in the heart of downtown, given specially designed souvenirs to commemorate the honor, and offered not just a sightseeing and hospitality component, but an array of simultaneously-scheduled activities.

The Washington/Baltimore Regional 2012 Coalition (Coalition) jointly hosted the weekend program with the USOC. The Coalition is vying to become the candidate for America’s bid proposal to host the 2012 Olympics. With their attention on a broader objective, restraint was not on the agenda. More than 30 sponsors were acknowledged in the program.

Two different D.C. tour options, or golf, were Friday morning’s options, leading up to the Kennedy Center luncheon. Attendees were encouraged to take in the spectacular views from the open terraces adjoining the dining room. The waiters, dressed in black tuxedos and wearing white gloves, lined up with their plates and surrounded each table as they delivered the meals. Because the weekend coincided with Hurricane Floyd, however, several attendees were delayed. In fact, all airports in the northeast were closed on Thursday, the day of everyone’s scheduled arrivals. The USOC decided to defer to the luncheon’s awards ceremony and instead combined it with an already-scheduled early evening reception in order to accommodate the late arrivals.

At the awards ceremony each sport’s coach was given a plaque and photographed. It was a family event. Doru brought his wife, Emilia, and son, Patrick. And Richard brought his wife, Diane. My sole responsibility for the weekend, from the USOC-perspective, was to honor the coaches and to appear with them in their official picture. I was happy to honor Doru and Richard. In addition to their excellent contributions in the area of coaching, both of them are also dedicated to table tennis on a broader level. (See USA’s website, www.usatt.org, for specific details about their coaching career accomplishments.)

Annapolis was the site of Saturday’s activities. Attendees could choose to go sailing on the Chesapeake Bay, go on a tour, or attend the Navy football game.

The black-tie Fourth Annual Awards Gala, the culmination of the program on Saturday night, was extraordinary. The International Trade Center was one block from the hotel, so we walked to it as a group. Doru and Richard, accompanied by Diane, resplendent in her ball gown, were ushered away from us toward the end of the reception along with the other award recipients. Then all the guests, including a bevy of local VIPs and event sponsors, were seated for the honorees’ dramatic entrance. A spotlight shone on the cascading marble staircase and the honorees were announced sport by sport as they descended.

During the evening’s program, top USOC officials spoke and presented the coveted special awards. (For an article on these awards at the U.S. Olympic web page, go to www.usoc.org/usons/aug99/coaches1.htm.)

I chose to forego all of the optional social events. On Saturday morning I went to the flourishing Potomac club. Afterwards, Gao Jun, her husband, Frank Chang, and I returned to the hotel to meet with Doru to discuss her pre-Olympic training options. On Sunday I went over to Richard Lee’s house for a North American teams event tournament staff meeting. I took advantage of the unforeseen opportunity to stay overnight and to discuss a variety of issues with Amy Feng and her husband Xiaolei Hu when the second leg of my flight from Atlanta was canceled on Thursday. My thanks to all for a wonderful and memorable weekend.

USATT HALL OF FAME AWARDS BANQUET
This annual event will take place at the Nationals on Thursday, December 16 at the top of the Stratosphere Hotel. The 1999 inductees to be honored, chosen by the USATT Hall of Fame Committee, are Y.C. Lee and Dr. Michael Scott. Also, Mark Matthews (formerly Marcus Schussheim), our first, 1931, U.S. National Champion, has donated a new, annual “Lifetime Achievement Award” to be presented at the Banquet, and the first recipient to be honored will be Bobby Gusikoff. More information will be available at the tournament site.

ADDITIONS TO USATT APPROVED EQUIPMENT LIST
The following rubber sheets have been added to the USA Table Tennis Approved Equipment List and may be used in USATT-sanctioned tournaments. If you have questions, please contact USA Table Tennis Headquarters at 719-578-4583 or usatt@iex.net.

- Friendship 837 Long Pips (ITTF Approved)
- Friendship 755 Long Pips (ITTF Approved)
- Friendship 563 Medium Pips (ITTF Approved)
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Interview with **ADHAM SHARARA**  
New ITTF President

By Larry Hodges

**Hometown:** Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
**Age:** 47

* * * * *

**USATTM:** Tell us about your table tennis background.

**Sharara:** I started to play TT in Cairo, Egypt, at the Maadi TT Club. When my parents emigrated to Canada, being a young boy, of course I followed. I did not play TT in Canada (Montreal) for over a year. Then I started to play again and eventually became the Canadian Junior Champion in 1969-70. I started coaching even when I was a junior and became the Provincial Coach and Technical Director of the Quebec Province in 1972. I retained that position until 1978 when I took up the same responsibility at the National Level for the Canadian Table Tennis Association (CTTA). I have worked on a part-time and full-time basis for the Canadian TTA in various positions: National Coach, Technical Director, High Performance Director and Director General over the years from 1978 to 1998. In January 1998 I left the CTTA as a professional in order to focus on the ITTF. I maintain the position, on a voluntary basis, of Chairman of the High Performance Committee of the CTTA. I also advise the CTTA in various matters.

In 1989 I was elected to the first of two terms as Vice President of the ITTF for North America, which ended in 1993. In 1995 I was elected as ITTF Executive Vice President (Marketing). In 1997 I was elected as Deputy President of the ITTF, and in August 1999 I was elected President of the ITTF.

As a player I represented Canada in international competitions from 1972 to 1975. As a coach I represented Canada internationally from 1973 to 1987. I have written several coaching manuals and development plans for table tennis in Canada.

**USATTM:** Tell us about your non-table tennis background.

**Sharara:** I graduated from Lachine High School in Lachine, Quebec (a suburb of Montreal) in 1969. I attended four years at McGill University to 1973 in Electronics Engineering. However, I completed the fifth and final year of the program in 1978-79 to graduate as an Electronic Engineer.

I worked for the City of Montreal Sports Department, the Quebec Table Tennis Federation and the Canadian Table Tennis Association, as well as serving on several Canadian government committees and commissions in sports and international affairs.

I started several businesses in electronics, translation company, real estate, foreign investments, etc. At the moment I live from my personal businesses and investments. I no longer work for any sport entity and my work for the CTTA and ITTF is strictly on a volunteer basis.

I have been married since 1982 to Mariann Domonkos, who is also a table tennis player, coach and administrator.

**USATTM:** What have been your major activities recently on the ITTF?

**Sharara:** In my four years in the Executive Committee of the ITTF I helped inaugurate the ITTF Pro Tour concept. I pushed for the implementation of the first Women’s World Cup in 1995 (now an annual event). I insisted on the equal participation of women in the Qatar Open (now a natural occurrence). I helped put in place a Marketing Division based in Ottawa which now generates 70% of the ITTF income. I was also instrumental in establishing a new office for the ITTF in Lausanne near the IOC headquarters. This is our technical and Olympic Office. I influenced the redesign of the professional structure of the ITTF.

**USATTM:** What are your major plans for the ITTF?

**Sharara:** Implementing my P4 philosophy: Popularity, Participation, Profit and Planning. These will be the pillars of the ITTF Planning process. Over the next year a detailed comprehensive plan will be generated covering the following aspects: Strategic Plan, Development Plan, Marketing Plan, Business Plan and detailed Operational Plans for the professional staff. (Editor’s Note: Sharara’s article can be found on the Internet at the ITTF web page at www.ittf.org.)

We have a plan to update and revamp the current constitution.

We are also working very hard to place more TT on TV screens. The 1999 World Championships have been picked up by FOX Sports International across the USA and Latin America.

**USATTM:** What is your opinion on the 40mm ball proposal, and why?

**Sharara:** I will work very hard for the adoption of the 40mm ball. It is an excellent change for TT. We need a “new and improved” image to our sport. We are being criticized that the ball is not visible on TV. The bigger ball will be more visible, slightly slower and slightly less spin. These are all positive changes. The change to 40mm does not change the techniques. There is a very small adjustment needed. I am all for anything that will better our sport, make it more visible on TV, with a minimal change.

**USATTM:** What were the reasons for the new Aspect Ratio Rule regarding long pips, and what is your opinion on this?

**Sharara:** This is a highly technical matter. The opinion in the ITTF is divided on this issue almost 50%-50%. The reasons were to improve the look of the game. Several associations complained that the old pimples were detrimental to the game. I am really neutral on this. My P4 philosophy is as follows: Will the change increase the Popularity of the sport? Will it increase Participation? Will it generate a Profit (to organizers, manufacturers, etc.)? Is it part of a Planning process? If
we can answer YES to at least two of the first three questions, and if Planning is an integral part, then I am all for it. This is how I analyze the 40mm ball. Will it increase Popularity? I say YES. Will it increase Participation? Definitely. Will it generate profit? Of course. So let’s do it.

USATTM: Will the team event be held separately in future World Championships?
Sharara: That is one possibility. It will be separate in Kuala Lumpur because of the circumstances in Belgrade. This will be a very good test to see how the separate World Championships will feel.

USATTM: Do you see table tennis as more of a participation sport or a spectator sport?
Sharara: Both. Again you are asking me about the first P (Popularity) and the second P (Participation). We must work to increase both. The ITTF’s role is more to increase the Popularity through TV exposure of international events. The National Associations have a dual role of increasing the popularity and increasing the participation base.

USATTM: If you were asked by a major sports news outlet what is so great about table tennis, what would you say?
Sharara: Watch it and play it, then you tell me what you think. This would be my answer. This would be my answer. We must get people to play TT, and to see the benefits of a participation sport or a spectator sport.

Sharaa: Both. Again you are asking me what you think. This would be my answer. We must get people to play TT, and to see the benefits of a participation sport or a spectator sport.

USATTM: What’s the most interesting incident that you’ve experienced in table tennis?
Sharara: I have experienced many interesting incidents. But I would like to point out one special experience. I was in Nairobi to attend the African Championships in 1996. The tournament was running very well and all the players were competing as usual. But I was told about a small club in a church in the slums of Nairobi called the Ste. Theresa Club. I went to a place in Nairobi which is very poor. But I saw some boys playing table tennis. These boys would normally be in the streets doing drugs or committing crimes. But because of TT and the goodwill of Father John of the Ste. Theresa Church, the volunteer coach Andrew and the donations of generous people such as Jane Pinto of the Kenya TTA, these kids are off the street and not dead. This is when I saw that table tennis can serve another purpose than just high level competition and entertainment.

USATTM: Are there any new upcoming plans for the ITTF Allstar Circuit?
Sharara: We no longer have an All Star concept. Instead we are promoting and improving the ITTF PRO TOUR. In 2000 the Pro Tour status will return to the U.S. Open with $65,000 in prize money for Pro Tour events. This is a joint Marketing venture between the USATT and the ITTF. I am confident that we will succeed.

USATTM: What would be needed for a World Championships to be held in the U.S.?
Sharara: If it is a combined world championships with all seven events over a 15-day period, the U.S. would need at least $6 to $8 million in sponsorship to pull it off. However, if we adopt separate yearly championships the cost is drastically reduced and it would be possible for the USA to hold the Worlds more cheaply.

USATTM: In what ways can the USATT and the ITTF better work together to better expand table tennis into the American market?
Sharara: We are starting already by placing TT on USA TV screens. We are also cooperating with the USATT in improving the U.S. Open, but there is a lot of ground work and development work that must be done by the USATT, or any other national Association, within the country at the developmental level. The ITTF can only respond to initiatives from the National Associations. We are ready to help, but we cannot interfere in internal plans and priorities.

USATTM: Any final words?
Sharara: I am very optimistic that table tennis will see a major surge in popularity over the next five years. But we must be bold and make those changes that will help push the sport to the forefront.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear in the USATT magazine.

USATTM: Thank you!
More than a quarter of a century ago, a friend of Bernie Hock’s, Dave Russell, wrote a letter to the USTTA’s Topics to say that this “old buzzard” Hock, “a number-one-class character,” just had to be remembered in the magazine. “You can’t let a champion, a fine man, and a person who has done more for table tennis than most anyone to just fade away.”

But talk to another good friend of Bernie’s, Gene Bricker, and you get the idea that, while Bernie himself often wanted to keep a low profile, he was also very independent, very stubborn, and inwardly resilient. So that to self and certainly to select others, his longtime identity as table tennis batmaker — hand-made hard-rubber rackets for the stars — was secure. He was Hock, which meant he wanted precisely what he wanted. No surprise then that being so persistent — some would say cantankerous — to the end, he resisted surgery, despite several heart attacks. Forget hospitals, forget doctors and operations, he might be in pain, but he’d endure.

And considering how he’d had a cigarette habit even as a teenager, and some slips and harrowing hangings-on in his early occupation as a roofer, he did endure — for much longer than anyone expected. Fifteen years before New Albany’s John Riley called to tell me that on Aug. 18th Hock had finally succumbed, I’d received a February 2, 1984 letter from Bernie in which he says: “...my illnesses plague me day after day. It’s a trial for me to do anything. I can work in my shop about 1/2 hour to an hour, then I have to rest. Sometimes I go 4 or 5 days without working in my shop.

“I go to the T.T. Club twice a week to hold things together. Once in a while I will play a game of doubles. Our [New Albany, IN] Club is 52 years old.”

Bernie was a man who had a place ... like Benny Hull, whom I waved farewell to last issue, and his equally fabled Waltham, MA Club.

I’m sure any number of people have letters from Bernie — I know has Marty Reisman, and of course Don Varian has recently acquired much important archival material on taking over Bernie’s Co. Marty won his ‘49 British Open with a Hock racket (a 3-ply for control, later he’d switch to a faster 5-ply). “The Hock was the bat in use at Lawrence’s famous New York City Club,” says Marty. Dick Miles, who won so many U.S. Open Championships with a 3-ply Hock bat (“He knew just how I wanted it — with the handles loose, no glue”) remembers Bernie as being “very nice, very soft-spoken.” And Jerry Hock, the youngest of the five brothers, and a long-time player himself, recalls how in the beginning the boys made their own table, and how Bernie was very early into making rackets — stretching inner-tube rubber over the wood to produce a surprising playable effect.

History offers us a famous photo, taken in Kokomo, IN, in 1937 by Coach Schleff, of a group of 15 player/organizers who’ve united to form a more progressive Indiana T.T.A. There, with McClure, Bob Green, John Varga, Bill Hornyak, Indiana TTA President W. B. Hester, and others, is Bernie, in his mid-20’s, with a fine shock of hair. (Looking at this photo again now, I’m reminded of how startled I was at his 1993 induction into the Indiana Hall of Fame to see him so totally bald). He’s standing there in 1937, upright in the service of his country, or TTA, arms at his sides, all attention — as if he knew he was, or wanted to be, a part of something important.

And of course he served our Sport well — both as bat-maker and bat-welder.

At the 1950 U.S. Open Bernie won the first of his two Open Senior Doubles Championships. His partner (perhaps through a connection with the English Leyland Rubber Co.?) was England’s Jack Carrington, World Doubles finalist with 2-time World Singles Champion Johnny Leach. Bernie’s second major was in 1954, with his regular partner Gene Bricker. Later, he won the 1966 U.S. Open Over 50 Singles and the 1965 and ’66 U.S. Open Over 50 Doubles, again with Bricker.

As the years went by, it was said Bernie was always compulsively ready to make 12 times the number of rackets he actually sold, and he sold hundreds, thousands annually, maybe 75,000 in his lifetime — for they were asked for by aficionados and would-be aficionados of all ages, even after sponge bats began more and more to be accepted. The cost of the plywood he bought was relatively high, but it made for a better bat, for he had “less than 1% loss to warpage.” And no wonder — for he’d insisted that the plywood factory that made his bats follow his specifications to the letter, “redrying the three veneers, face, back, and center core, to a specific moisture, a special glue, and [had it all] heated together under certain pressure and heat.” He also requested, among other things, “that the face and back veneers be from the same tree or log and from consecutive slices off the log.”

By the early ’80’s, the workers who’d hand-made this plywood were retired, and the factory itself had closed. But Hock was still filling orders. By the mid-80’s, umpires were looking for the ITTF logo on tournament players’ rackets. This, Hock rackets didn’t have, but as then USTTA Rules Chairman Mal Anderson explained, since Hock had paid the USTTA approval fee, and since his racket met USTTA specifications, “and it isn’t possible to prove that the rubber on it is original or not,” players may play with it in any U.S. tournament other than an international one like the U.S. Open.

I’m sure in his declining years Bernie was thrilled with the resurgence of Hardbat play. Now, given the active USATT Hardbat Committee, its subscription Newsletter, its Championship tournaments, Hall of Famer Hock’s many friends needn’t worry. Neither he nor the Classic Game he did so much to foster will ever fade away.

(Editor’s note: Note Hock ad on facing page - the Hock Company still thrives!)
SPINNERS CLUB OPENS ON LONG ISLAND
By Alan Williams

Most clubs are the work of just a handful of individuals, a small group of people with a dream. This is true also of the ‘Spinners Table Tennis Club,’ which opened in Plainview, NY, in May of 1999. The dreamer in this case was Michael Lalvani, a boundless source of energy with an incandescent smile.

Michael was in the software business when he returned to the game in 1996. He hadn’t touched a paddle since his college days in 1973. Not knowing which equipment to use, Michael bought seven paddles from a dealer, and thereby hangs a tale.

“I decided which one was best for my game and tried to return the other six,” Lalvani recalls. “The dealer wouldn’t take them back! Not even for 50% of the original price! So I began to offer them to my friends, and before I knew it, I was ‘Spin Technology,’ a Joola distributor and yes, I offer an exchange or money-back guarantee on Spintech products!”

Not a man to do things halfway, Michael, in addition to his TT equipment distributorship, opened the ‘Spinners’ club. “We are on the 6500 sq. ft. second floor of a building on Dupont Street in Plainview. I set up seven tables, but there is room for ten or eleven. I put an anti-slip coating on the concrete floor and installed fluorescent lighting. We have a 1200 sq. ft. pro shop and are open six days a week.”

The club hours are Noon to 10PM Tuesday through Sunday, with Monday as the day of rest. League play is held on Wednesdays, and paid coaching is available from USATT-Certified Coach James Ma, a former member of the Beijing Men’s Team. Ten dollars buys a day of play for walk-ins, and annual memberships are also sold. Michael has already recruited 40 members and is holding monthly two-star tournaments. If this leaves you feeling a little breathless, hold onto your paddle cleaner, there’s more.

“My friend, Roger Persaud, is trying to organize a regular intra-club competition with the other two clubs on Long Island,” Michael explains. “They use donated facilities, but there are some very strong players who go to them regularly and we think we can start a Long Island Table Tennis League between our active clubs. I am also urging Eric Boggs to get back into the sport.”

Michael has no end of ideas that he feels would be good for our association and the sport. Unlike many, however, he ‘walks the walk’ as well as he ‘talks the walk.’ “I make certain that everyone who buys a table from me gets a USATT membership. Why would you not want that? I met one gentleman who told me that he once belonged to USATT but that he saw no benefit to it and so he didn’t rejoin. I felt so strongly that he was wrong that I paid for his new membership myself. We must organize more activities for recreational players so that they have a reason to stay involved!”

There is no moss on Michael, that’s for certain. Altogether, it makes you rather pleased that a shall-be-nameless equipment dealer had a ‘no returns’ policy, and left one man determined that he could do better.
INTERVIEW WITH

ASHU JAIN

By Tim Boggan

The Stats

Age: 19
Home Club: New Jersey TTC for many years, now the University of Michigan TTC (Ann Arbor) where he goes to college (college of engineering)
Titles/Rankings: U.S. #2 Under 22 ... Former Junior Olympics Under 22 and Under 18 Singles Gold Medalist ... Former ranked U.S. #1 for Under 18 and Under 16 ... 1998 Eastern Open Collegiate and U2500 Champion ... Two-time U.S. Junior Team Member ... Millcreek Open Champion (Oct. 2, 1999, Erie, NY) ... current rating: 2498.

TIM: Ashu? Jain? What kind of names are those?
ASHU: Actually, my legal first name is Ashoo, but I write it the way it's always been written. Ashu. I was born and raised in New Delhi, India, and, as you might assume from my last name, my family members are Jains. That is, we belong to the Jain religion, and though I myself am not religious, I am a practicing vegetarian, as my parents and grandparents were before me.

TIM: And you came to the U.S. for the table tennis opportunities here?
ASHU: Be serious. My family immigrated here — on Independence Day, 1990 — when I was 11. We came for a better lifestyle in terms of convenience and cleanliness, and especially for a brighter future. We stayed with my aunt who was living in Edison, N.J., and, as you might assume from my last name, my family members are Jains. That is, we belong to the Jain religion, and though I myself am not religious, I am a practicing vegetarian, as my parents and grandparents were before me.

TIM: How so?
ASHU: Coach Jon Bosika, who runs at the Athletic Center — a sports club-like place in Davison, Michigan, arranged it. At first I was reluctant to go, thought, for instance, there might be a language problem. But I was surprised to find that just about everyone spoke English, and that the U.S. influence was very strong — in movies, clothes, music. As I was waiting at the airport for Jon and his daughter Mimi to arrive, I met an attractive girl, and we got to talking and she offered to show me around Constanza. But later when I phoned her, she wasn’t at home, and then I got involved, and I never saw her again.

TIM: Just involved, eh? I think it’s time you told me and our readers just what your daily table tennis training was like.
ASHU: O.K. I’d wake up. Then I’d go to the beach, where I’d run a mile or so, then do sprints. There were three coaches at the Training Center — Head Coach Filimon (his son, Andrei, a Romanian National somewhere among the World’s top 125), had a good 5-game win over Italy’s Yang Min at the Eindhoven World’s; Jon; and a fellow named “Pete” who gave me excellent multi-ball practice, improved my footwork and balance, and in general encouraged me. It was Jon, though, who helped me the most.

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ASHU: All perfectly respectable. I went to Romania, to a place called Constanza to train, to improve my table tennis. I was lucky to stay at the 4-star Mamaia Beach hotel — the Hotel Jupiter — at $10 a night. I had a roommate — Lee Bahlm, from Grand Rapids, about a 2100 player. He was very helpful — always woke me up (I’m not a morning person). Before I left the U.S., some friends of mine teased me. They said, “The country’s so poor that the maids at whatever broken-down hotel you’ll stay at will steal everything you’ve got.” But the maids even did our laundry for us — and the maids on the Beach and everywhere else were nice too. Romanian girls are beautiful!

TIM: Absolutely ridiculous. You’re gonna be a good player — and train like this? And Bucharest — what was the night life there like?
ASHU: C’mon, I was in Bucharest just one night. It’s congested, lots of people on the streets, like in New York, but it’s a cleaner, less polluted city than New York. I did NOT go to Romania to be a party animal.

TIM: Alright, I believe you. But why Romania? How did you decide to go there?
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With Jan-Ove Waldner at World Team Cup in Atlanta in 1995
TIM: This training went on for how long each day?
ASHU: We had two sessions — morning and evening. In between, I had time for napping and tanning. And I just happened to meet Coach Filimon’s niece Alina on the beach. She was playing cards with some friends. “Oh,” I said casually for an opener, “what game is that?” ... “How do you play it?” ... She laughed when I told her that because of my dark color, someone had confused me for a gypsy. Turns out people sometimes mistook her for a gypsy too, because her skin was almost as dark as mine. I went out with her, and continue now to correspond with her. Too bad Romania doesn’t have AOL!
TIM: I take it you weren’t practicing or playing with her at the Training Center?
ASHU: No, but, besides my roommate Lee, there were other players there with me. Mimi Bosika of course. Scott Endicott, an 1800-1900 player, from Detroit. And a girl named Ute — not an Indian, but she’d been in Romania for a year or so, believe as a nanny, and I guess the fact that EVERYONE smoked cigarettes there, gave me a little fever and a severe headache, so I had to miss one practice and one physical workout. Also, in the beginning at the Training Center, only sparkling water was available, and I hated having to gulp the carbonation to quench my thirst. But then we found a place that sold natural water and we bought that in bulk.
TIM: I believe you. But our readers ... Perhaps you’d care to elaborate?
ASHU: I beat Barney with serves. Actually, in Pittsburgh my serves were key against everyone — even Cheng Yinghua, whom I lost to but sometimes played decently against. My serves are by far the best part of my game, and they must rate with the best in the country. I really owe thanks to my friend Dylan Martin who first made me see the importance of good serves. I don’t think after going to Romania my serves are better than they were before, but I’m placing them better now. Cheng must have mishandled half a dozen of them per game. I liked the non-slip playing floor in Pittsburgh, but the conditions were very fast there, the ball skidded, and, since it seems to me Cheng plays a simple, soft game, I had nothing to lose in going all out against such a favorite.
TIM: As you must know, there’a a fruit drink in Romania, made from plums, called “tuica.” I wonder if you brought any of that back to your University of Michigan Wolverine friends. What’s the expression? ... It puts hair on your chest.
ASHU: Go ahead — be flippant with me. I’m a cocky stud. But I get the last word. My grandfather said of me, “Ashu’s like a horse that starts late in the race, but comes back to win it.”
“Call 911! Quick!” I told my wife Karen. It was 7:00 a.m., July 10, 1997. All the left side of my body had just gone totally numb and I had fallen back on the couch. A few minutes later I was in an ambulance, sirens screaming, speeding toward UCLA Medical Center.

How many times had I seen such a speeding ambulance and wondered who the poor soul in it was and what was wrong with him? Now I was that poor soul and something was very wrong with me. I didn’t know what it was, and I was very frightened.

A few minutes later we pulled into the Medical Center’s underground parking lot, and that would be all I could remember of that morning.

My wife Karen later told me what had followed. I was rushed into surgery for an eight-and-a-half-hour operation on my brain. I’d had an aneurysm. A blood vessel had ruptured in it was and what was wrong with him? Now I was that poor soul and something was very wrong with me. I didn’t know what it was, and I was very frightened.

A deep depression set in as I began to realize what a cruel twist my life had taken and what a bleak future I now had. What future?

The days at Rancho were filled with six or seven hours of therapy, and I soon met my new means of getting around — a wheelchair.

I was feeling pretty sorry for myself until I started taking therapy classes with others and saw people much worse off than I was. They hadn’t given up and were trying hard to improve their quality of life. My deep depression began to wear off a little and I too tried to make the best of my condition.

I had some things to be thankful for. I had life by coming to see me. Also visiting me there at the hospital were Ron Von Schimmelman and Howie Grossman, and my old friend Maxwell Lawrence who would call and come to see me. I wonder if they knew how much those visits meant to me. They were very kind indeed to make that trip to help me recover. I thank them with all my heart and soul.

Several weeks later, as the old travelogues would have it, “I would say, ‘Farewell to Rancho Los Amigo’ and head for home.” I’d regained much of my spirit and looked forward to being at home with my wonderful family.

My wife Karen — an angel in disguise — would take care of me, and I would start work on “Legends II,” great therapy in itself.

In the first few weeks I would get many calls — and it pleased me very much to hear from Dick Miles, Marty Reisman, my longtime dear friend Alice Green, and again Maxwell Lawrence. These thoughtful calls really cheered me up and helped me get better.

As for resuming my life... I read, watched TV — mostly sports and the History channel — listened to music, and went outside to watch Frannie and her friends enjoy a swim or jump on the huge trampoline we have in our back yard.

I read Christopher Reeve’s book (“I Am Still Here”) and it helped me a great deal, gave me strength to continue making the best of my life. He is some incredibly courageous man. Also, I take heart just by looking across the street to see Mrs. Kelly. She is a 97-year-old woman who uses a walker as she takes out the garbage each day. I admire the many people with unbelievable courage and take strength from them, realizing all the more that I am lucky to be alive.

Thanks again to everyone for their kindness and positive thinking, and to Tim Boggan for being there for me. And, above all, a special thanks, and love, to my amazing wife Karen who makes my life worth living.

Take care everyone. Goodbye for now. Always, I love you all.

By Bob Gusikoff

Bobby Gusikoff receives the trophy for winning the 1959 Eastern Open from Bob Chaimson. Gusikoff would go on to win the U.S. Open that year.
TABLE TENNIS MAKES THE GRADE AT PENN STATE

By Henry McCoullum

Penn State University has teamed up with the Newgy Corporation to introduce table tennis to undergraduates through the Exercise and Sports Activities program. The table tennis program at Penn State is now an official course which counts toward general graduation requirements. This is the first time ever that a major university is making it possible for table tennis to be taught to students. Utilizing state-of-the-art technology, made available by the Newgy Corporation, 40 students are receiving intensive instruction, training and exposure to the sport using Robots and other equipment. In addition, students get the benefit of reviewing tapes of themselves executing the basic forehand and backhand techniques of the game. This allows them to compare their performance against the top players of the world as seen from taped matches from the world championships. Exclaimed Carrie Hippchen, a student of the class, as she smashed a forehand: “this class is a great opportunity to learn table tennis as a lifelong sport. I’m looking forward to being a part of this program for the next two years.”

Over the next 4 semesters, Penn State will collect research data and information from the students to be used in getting other Top Ten schools to adopt an instructional table tennis program. In addition to the efforts being made by Newgy, the USATT will make a new category of memberships for college students. With the combined forces of Newgy, the USATT and universities like Penn State, the country will be preparing to win medals in table tennis starting in the year 2008. The Club Sports program at Penn State is helping the sport take a giant step towards its Olympic future by providing opportunities for students to travel to compete in national tournaments across the country. The Penn State program will get the ball rolling by increasing membership and interest and bringing serious competitors to this great sport of table tennis.

Penn State University is located in Happy Valley, Pennsylvania, where some of the happiest people here are not just Nittany Lion football fans but members of the Table Tennis Class offered at the school. Meeting three times a week for two hours each session, these students hone their ping pong skills and play a sport that they enjoy. Penn Staters get the chance to practice their talents both by using the Robots, machines that spew balls out in sequence to reinforce what is being taught in class, and by playing fellow classmates and instructors. All of this adds up to beginners and experts alike getting the chance to have fun and improve their table tennis skills.

The Master Tennis Table Class, under the instruction of Henry McCoullum, takes place every Thursday from 7:30 to 9:30 in the Mary White Building and gives students the chance to either take up the sport for the first time, learn the proper techniques of a sport they have only passively played, or perfect their previous table tennis skills. Students earn credit toward their Exercise and Sport Activities requirement and eventually get to play in a table tennis tournament where they will each earn a national ranking. Participants who also wish to become umpires are encouraged to take this class in order to prepare for certification exams.

One of the best aspects of the class for both beginners and experts is practicing their skills using the Robots, a technology made possible by Newgy. Playing “Robo-Pong,” students use their forehands and backhands against the Robot as it shoots out balls in rapid succession at different angles, heights and speeds. This adjustability of the Robot’s part is great for a variety of strengths and weaknesses of the class and lets each student work on what they need to improve most. A sensor is also placed on the table to give players something to aim at and serves as a way to monitor the student’s success against the Robot. Once the student has worked on the necessary skills using the Robot, they can move on to playing classmatess in singles and doubles matches. Taking what they learned from the Robot, students see the fruits of their labors by playing games against their peers.

With more practice using both the Robots and playing games with fellow students, Penn State students get the chance to improve upon their table tennis skills, making their time in Happy Valley even happier.

As the bumper stickers say, they are “Penn State Proud” at the university, and with the adoption of this program, they will be just as proud of their table tennis players, as they are their other athletes.

CONCORD GRASSROOTS GRANT

By Phil Schafer

The Concord Club greatly appreciated its 1998 $1,000 USATT Grassroots Grant. It assisted us in continuing our 26-year mission of offering high-quality table tennis in Concord, CA. A combination of strong youth programs, a good facility, continual equipment updates and dedicated volunteers has kept the organization strong and growing. Total membership reached a record 150 in 1998.

The Grant money has helped us:
• Offer table tennis four days per week.
• Conduct junior (Novice, Intermediate & Elite) training programs; periodic adult training programs are also offered.
• Reimburse the Club Coach Bill Lui for transportation expenses to local tournaments to coach his junior players.
• Expand the Club’s equipment improvement program.

A $4 daily playing fee gives adult members three hours of playing time on the Club’s 12 tables, including balls, while junior members pay $2; non-members pay $2 extra. The facility is open 7-10 p.m. each Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evening, and 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Sundays. Thursdays are reserved for a round-robin tournament format, where rated players face off with 4-6 opponents; the match results are processed with a rating point system similar to the USATT’s.

The success of the training programs continues to exceed expectations. The Club started with one training session per week in 1995, increased to two programs in 1996 and now offers three junior sessions plus periodic adult clinics. Many of our juniors rank in the nation’s top-10 for their respective age groups; three were invited to the tryouts for the 1999 U.S. Men’s and Women’s National Teams.

Alas, it costs money to run a successful operation. For 1998, our major expenses included over $21,000 for rent, $875 for balls and $2,125 for equipment upgrades (three new tables). Other expenses included a reimbursement of over $400 for the Club Coach’s travel expenses to regional tournaments and $500 for needy player travel assistance. Primary revenue sources are daily playing fees, memberships ($40 for families, $30 for adults and $15 for juniors and full-time students) and the Golden State Open tournament.

We shall continue our mission of promoting table tennis by expansion of the junior and adult training programs as well as updating our equipment. These endeavors are fiscally challenging. The USATT Grassroots Grant was a valuable tool in meeting our 1998 expenses.
Before he was 11 ... 13 ... 15 ... 17 and out of the Junior's, Jimmy Butler had won a remarkable 24 U.S. Open and Closed Championships. Already he stood tall in the History of U.S. Table Tennis, and, as was apparent to everyone, his stature in our Sport could only continue to grow, and grow, and grow.

Formative Years

From the beginning, Jimmy's father, Dick, had coached him, along with older brother Scott, and now, with the 1978-79 season getting underway, Dick was optimistic about the boy's future. Seven-year-old Jimmy, he says, "has been playing a little over a year. He serves, pushes, hits, and blocks off both wings and will give any novice player a serious run for his money.” So don't sell Jimmy short – by next summer his U.S. Rating will be 929, and, wow, will he smack in backhands.

But it was Jimmy's brother Scott, three years older, who first began winning U.S. Championships and traveling abroad for the Butler family. In 1977 I'd met Nisse Sandberg, founder and benefactor of the celebrated Swedish Angby Club, and he'd urged me to bring a U.S. Junior Team to Sweden for the '78 Scandinavian Junior Championships, which I did. Thereafter, Jimmy's mother Sue began a Swedish-American Exchange Program with Nisse involving host families on both continents. Scott celebrated his 11th birthday with the Torsell family in Sweden, and was quite astonished that after he'd blown out the candles on his birthday cake they came back lit again! Could anyone doubt there was something magical about going to Angby, to Europe?

Following in Scott's footsteps were other youngsters – current or about to be U.S. Champions – Sean O'Neill, John Stillions, Brandon Olson, and, eventually, Jimmy himself. So the Exchange Program flowered: Swedish players were so anxious to come to the States that there were 29 in all playing at our 1980 U.S. Open.

Jimmy was very fortunate: out there in Iowa City, Iowa, to have Dick as a coach and Scott as a practice partner. Scott had sought advice from the famous Japanese World Champion Ichiro Ogimura (and would later go to Japan to "Ogi's" training camp). No doubt Dick and Sue, and perhaps, young as he is, Jimmy too, would get the passed-on benefit of what Ogi thought most important: "keeping your enthusiasm and love for the game"; and they would also be made aware (further aware?) of a potential problem: "worrying about getting a lot of money from the sport.

"When we were young," Jimmy told me just recently, "Scott worked harder, practiced harder than I did. I just wanted to play tournaments and games. Without my brother I would never be the player I've become. He was a great blessing. He looked after me when we traveled and was always in my corner."

In the April, '81 issue of Topics, Scott interviewed the then 10-year-old Jimmy. Perhaps it comes as no surprise that Jimmy says, "I don't like drill and stroke practice ... [but] I know it helps me improve and my dad makes me do it." Jimmy confesses his biggest problem is "Temper, keeping my head ... If I think I should win and I'm not winning that bugs me." Later, in a 1989 interview, Jimmy remembers an earlier temper tantrum. "I was playing this kid," he says, "and I slammed the racket on the table and said, 'If you hit that racket on the table and screaming, just about crying. My dad was really upset because he was watching that match and he actually came out to the table and said, 'If you hit that racket on the table one more time I'm defaulting you.' I was so mad, I looked him right in the eye and I just slammed the racket on the table. He hauled me off the court, sat me in a chair and said, 'You're defaulted.' I was so embarrassed after that."

Jimmy also says in this interview, "I don't really like easy matches. It's no fun." Says, "I like to go for the big shot even if the game is close." His goals as a 10-year-old? "Travel. I like to be the paper and on TV. I like to see my picture in public and be known for something special.”

In the Spring of 1982, Jimmy, 11; along with Scott, 14; U-15 U.S. Junior Olympic Champ Khoa Nguyen, 15; Brandon, 15; and Sean, 14, go to China, thanks to a determined Sue Butler and C.F. Liu, and with some help from Paul Lee. Fifteen hours in the air to Beijing. When the boys played against a visiting Japanese junior team, Sue wrote that the Chinese watching cheered for the U.S., especially for Jimmy, "the clown, who amuses them greatly anyway on or off the court." Sue also wrote that "Jimmy broke a baby tooth molar and the filling came out.” That meant he had to go to a hospital for dental work – the right hospital, the one the Americans helped build, not the Soviets. The tooth was already infected, and had to be pulled. "With an anaesthetic?" asks Sue. "Of course," said the Beijing nurse disdainfully – as if to say, "How backward do you think we are here?” The bill? $1.10. A highlight of this trip – as if the Tooth Fairy had granted a wish – was the Chinese Men's Team's practice session with the boys. There giving them tips were such world-famous champions as Guo Yuehua and Liang Geliang.

It was understood that no U-13 National Championship would escape Jimmy – not an Open, Closed, or (with his dad as dedicated National Chairman) Junior Olympics.

For his 13th birthday, in Feb., 1984, Jimmy returns to Sweden. He likes to take sugar pills for quick energy. He also likes to arrive late for classes at his (Swedish) school, and properly gets yelled at by the teacher. After five weeks he brings back his table tennis loot: an inflatable raft, Kodak disk camera, crystal bowl, tool set, silver and gold cups, gold-etched plate, sweat suit, toaster oven, and tennis racket. Jimmy's table tennis has improved – his U.S. Rating is now 2212.

Coach Li Henan, who, with her husband Ai Liguo, was a big help to the U.S. Juniors when they were in China in that spring of '82, says that Jimmy "would be among the top players in China in that same age bracket." He "has a nimble body and is quick on his feet. His backhand counter is fast and he can change lines quickly with it. He's a smart player when he plays with good placement and spin. Sometimes he gets mad and has trouble controlling himself." But, she adds, this is not a problem that will last.

Jimmy loses to a Swede, Daniel Freijhammer, whom he shares a home Exchange Program with, in the 1984 Open 15's. But then he wins the Closed 15's over Dhiren Narotam.

In May of '85 Jimmy, Scott, and other juniors play in Sweden and Norway.

On his return, Chinese Taipei players stop Jimmy from winning the 1985 U.S. Open U-15 singles and doubles titles. But of course he'll be...
the '85 USA U-15 Junior Olympic and Junior National Champion.

Scott (17) and Jimmy (14) win the Men's Doubles at the '85 National Sports Festival. Their Team comes second. On blowing a big match-point lead to a Butler rally, Lim Ming Chui (who has two sons, both strong players) says, "You don't think against them. You take them too much for granted. You don't realize that they're growing, getting bigger, and that you're aging, your body becoming older, your mind getting worse."

Yeah? At the '85 Hoosier Open, I can't resist saying, 2254 Jimmy loses to 54-year-old me. But then at the '85 Nissen Open Jimmy wins the U-21's over Brandon and Khoa, and wins the U-2300's over Randy Seemiller and Dell Sweeetis. He's about to come of age.

Career Turning Point

At the 1985 Closed, there's a controversial modified double round robin format, and in one of the most watched of the early-round Men's matches Jimmy is playing Defending Champ Eric Boggan. Butler wins the first, and, since Eric is his idol ("I always had total respect for what he accomplished as an American"), he's very surprised that he's able to make more than a match of it. But when I come over and root strongly for Eric, Jimmy's intimidated; Eric comes to life, and Jimmy, nervous, loses the next two.

After completion of the first day's play, Jimmy thought he had no chance of winning the tournament. That evening in the arcade at Caesars Palace he was playing video games when Sean O'Neill saw him. Sean had figured out every possible scenario for the next day's play and explained to Jimmy that if both of them were to win all the rest of their matches, and if play otherwise proceeded normally, either of them could still win. Of course Jimmy knew that Sean knew that Jimmy could become his best ally - help clear the field for him - but that was o.k. "Sean instilled in me a new determination to play hard and not give up," Jimmy would say later.

Next day, a very unfortunate circumstance occurred - a player defaulted who shouldn't have - and this forced our 5-time Men's Singles Champion Danny Seemiller to do the right thing and tearfully concede Jimmy his place in the semi's. This brought about a second Boggan-Butler match. After losing the first game to Eric, Jimmy was at deuce in the second and when Eric served and moved fast to his left to follow, Jimmy placed a perfect return to Eric's far forehand that won him the point, and thereafter the game. After being beaten badly in the 3rd, Jimmy was match point down in the fourth, but won that game too. Then he took a 9-2 lead in the fifth that carried him to quite an upset victory. "That match with Eric gave me confidence," he said. "Afterwards I realized people took me more seriously than I thought."

Jimmy thus became the youngest male player ever to reach the final of a U.S. Men's Championships. No, he didn't win. Appropriately, Jimmy played very smart tactics against Eric. He forced Eric to open and then he'd return the ball with a sharp angled backhand or a flat forehand smash crosscourt ... [Jim's] game is going to keep getting stronger. He already has a killer instinct and isn't intimidated by anyone. He must be congratulated on the maturity he exhibited throughout the entire tournament.

Jimmy and Scott also distinguished themselves in Men's Doubles - reaching the final before losing to Quang Bui and Brian Masters. This '85 Closed, then, marks the end of the Seemiller/Boggan reign. And, with Sean's first win, the emergence of the new U.S. stars.

From now on, Jimmy will not just win Junior Championships, he'll be a threat in the Men's. Will, in fact, take the fall, 1986 Nissen Open (his first big tournament win in the Men's) from visiting Thai Champion, Chaitchai "Hank" Teekaveerakit, who shortly, while a student here in the States, will become our '86 National Champion.

In June of 1987, Jimmy goes to China with 16 other juniors. When he gets back, his forehead is bad, and he doesn't have confidence in it, doesn't want to use it. Since he suffers out there in Iowa City from a lack of practice partners, his dad tries to help by feeding him forehands.

In interviewing Jimmy for this Profile, I talked with him about aficionado parents and their kids. We both agreed that it was impossible for teenagers not to be embarrassed at times by their intense parents. Said Jimmy, "A son sometimes acts like he doesn't want his parents to watch him, and tries to give them that impression, but in reality I was always peeking around the gym when I was a teenager to make sure my parents were watching me." And you, he allows me to understand, what a relationship you had with your sons. "My father used to enjoy not only Eric playing, but he enjoyed watching you while Eric played. I guess he could relate to it all."

Jimmy emphasizes that both his mom and dad gave him “everything – every opportunity within their reach to improve. They are an embodiment of selfless love. I can never repay them.”

At the 1987 U.S. Closed, Jimmy, now wearing contact lenses (later, to rest his eyes, he'll switch to glasses off court), loses to Danny in the quarter's, 17, 20, 20. But though he wins the U-18 over Narotam, he's not at 16 (Rating 2501) satisfied to dominate the U.S. Juniors. "That," to his mind, "is not being a dominating player." He thinks of going to Europe. "I want to be a force in the United States and to be a top player in the world ... I want to improve. I have some weaknesses to overcome."

He decides, however, to enroll in the Resident Training Program (RTP) at Colorado Springs, and to finish his last year of high school there. In the Oct., 1988 World Team Trials Jimmy finishes first. He says that Coach Henan Li Ai has helped him with his forehand and that the RTP has been great. He practices after school from 4 to 7. Gets up some mornings at 6 to do multi-ball and lift weights. Is also on a weight program.

At the 1988 U.S. Closed, Jimmy loses (gets sick, throws up before the match) to Teekaveerakit,
Jimmy wins the 1992 Hall of Fame Open.

deuce in the fifth. Scott and Jim again come second in Men's Doubles, this time to Sean and Eric. In Dortmund, in '89 World Team play, Jimmy loses to Poland's World #17 Leszek Kucharski, but defeats Pakistan's World #105 Frajad Saif (who'd beaten Kucharski in the Olympics). In Singles he downs Brazil's #4 Takahashi, then loses to the current European Champion, Sweden's Mikael Appelgren.

At the 1989 U.S. Open, Jimmy's beaten by the Chinese star, Wei Qingguang, World Men's Doubles Champion in '87, and in the U-22's by Sweden's Thomas von Scheele, who'll be the World's Men's Doubles Champion in '91. But Jimmy and Scott, now the National Intercollegiate Champion out of Augusta, GA, win the U-5000 Doubles.

In the fall of '89 Jimmy will go to Falkenberg, Sweden (Erik Lindh and Peter Karlsson's Club) for four months. He'll be coached by 1971 World Champion Stellan Bengtsson, who'll sometimes go to Stellan and wife Angie's house (Angie's the Champion out of Augusta, GA, win the U-5000

The Vintage Jimmy Butler Backhand.

Teekaveerakit Jimmy is down 10-1 in the 3rd, says to himself, "If you can lose 10 points that fast, you can win them back just as fast." In another game, against Brian Masters, Jimmy is behind 20-13 and rallies to win that too. He wins 8 out of 9 deuce or 19 games. USA National Coach Larry Hodges will later pick up on this: Jimmy "will be extremely dangerous when he learns to play as well early in a match as he does at the end." I myself wonder if Jimmy's slow starts — his "spots" — subconsciously allow him to be more interested more quickly in the matches. But he loses his final match to O'Neill who's carefully avoided any backhand to backhand countering rallies. Jim and Scott finally win Men's Doubles — over Eric and Brian, after being down 20-17 match point.

In the 1990 Olympic Festival, Sean beats Scott in the semi's and Jimmy in the final, 19 in the 5th on a paddle point (after Jimmy's rallied from 15-20 down!)

At the North American World Cup Qualifier — in which he loses twice to the winner, Canada's Joe Ng — Jimmy, sponsored by Stiga-Yasaka, has an Olympic-eligible Rating of 2599, the highest of any U.S. player. Danny Seeinni says Jimmy's serves are much better as a result of his play in Sweden. Being a lefty, Danny says he's handicapped, can't see Jimmy's point of contact.

Jimmy returns for 10 weeks to Sweden (his 6th time there) to again be coached by Bengtsson, whom he'll credit for helping him to win his first National's. "I learned to train hard from Stellan. He taught me discipline and a work ethic. But I must say I always preferred competition and didn't enjoy training rigorously."

First Major

That first, wonderful, always-to-be-remembered U.S. Men's Championship, coming after he'd gained valuable experience by playing in the French Open, flowers for him at the 1990 Closed in San Diego. Jimmy and John Onifade are both 10-1, but John's last match loss is to Jim, which gives Jimmy a win in the head-to-head tie-breaker. It's been a struggle for him. He's had to go 5 with Narotam.

First Major

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First Major

Then is down 2-0 and 19-18 in the 3rd versus Teekaveerakit when he suddenly has what he calls "David" Zhuang, like Johnny Huang a fast-hands

First Major

Jim is honored with the first of his three Table Tennis Athlete of the Year awards.

In two March, 1991 tournaments, he's beaten by Chinese-expatriate, Canada's "Johnny" Huang, who's just too fast for him. But he does score a fine win over France's World #35 Olivier Marmurek, 19 in the 5th.

Altho Jimmy is training with another Chinese-expatriate, "Jack" Huang, at Colorado Springs, he has trouble returning his serves and loses to him in the final of the April, '91 Louisiana Open. Following that, at the April Sun TV Open, he loses to still another Chinese expatriate, "David" Zhuang, like Johnny Huang a fast-hands

First Major

For two weeks before these Championships Jim had been receiving treatments for a pulled muscle in his shoulder. The Sports Medicine Department at the University of Iowa had given him a suggested therapy — some long "rubber bands" to play with, pull on. But now, he said, nothing hurt. Perhaps those acupuncture "seeds" (poppy seeds they looked like) that Scott Press had implanted in Jimmy's ear lobes really were helpful?

"You'd be surprised at the high, the change, the electrical feeling Jim gets with his seeds," said Scott.

First Major

Against Onifade in that Championship final, Jim loses the first, says to late-arriving brother Scott, "Where were you? You missed the first five points." Jim also loses the 2nd from game-point up. But in the 3rd the crowd's abuzz. Says one onlooker, "I've never seen Jim play like this — hit in so many forehand winners." Down 17-15 in the 4th, Jim finds the swing stroke: a gauty winner off John's serve. From then on John loses his momentum. Coach Hodges will later say Jimmy's backhand is no longer the "liability" it was before his training in Sweden, and attributes his win to great serves, and to the fact that he'd relied less on his forehand and began timing with his forehand, especially following his often disguised serves. Jim says he's tried to copy Peter Karlsson's serve. "I've developed the one where I've played the same motion at the start, and then later change at the moment of contact for more deception. My racket kind of flies up by my head, and at the last second the changes for the speed, spin, and length of the ball."

"The new Champ has just given the nicest anniversary gift possible to Mama and Papa Butler. It turns out that on Dec. 23, 1961, precisely 29 years earlier to the hour (or so it seemed), Dick and Sue were married. This, then, was indeed a day to remember.

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Jimmy wins the 1992 Nationals.

uses to trade matches with O'Neill — here loses to Sean in an All Star match, after which he mildly kicks a table leg, pulls on the net.

Jim plays in both the ’91 World’s and Pan Am Games — in the latter loses a tough match to Brazil’s Hugo Hoyama, 19 in the 5th. Also loses the Sports Festival final in five to Sean.

Again Jim goes to Sweden, plays for “Falco” in not the Elite but the First Division. “Europe helped me to sharpen my skills, and gave me what the U.S. couldn’t,” he said. “It gave me an environment in which to totally concentrate on table tennis.”

At the ’91 U.S. Olympic Trials just prior to the National’s, Jim beats Sean, loses only to Danny (whom last year he’d had 17-0 one game).

In the ’91 Closed, Jim’s playing more forehand, beats Onifade in the semi’s, 3-0. Is up 15–11 in the 5th versus Sean in the final. But it’s quickly 16-all.

In the ‘92 U.S. Open, Jim beats Sweden’s World #8 Karlsson, but loses the 4th at 19 and then the 5th. His runner-up prize? $4,000.

In the fall of ’92, Jim plays for the first time in the Elite Division of the Swedish League.

Again his overseas play pays off for him. In the ’92 Vegas Men’s Team Trials he loses only to Masters, though he was down 20-17 in the 3rd to Danny before eventually winning 28-26.

More importantly, he wins his second U.S. Men’s Championship. Gets by young Todd Swerins in the 8th’s, -20, 17, 9, 20. Then beats Derek May in the 1/4’s, Danny in the 1/2’s, and Zhuang in the final — all 3 straight.

The ITTF’s Table Tennis Digest lists Jim — based on his increased World Ranking points — as the Most Improved Player of 1992. From Mar. ’92 to Mar. ’93 his increase was 178 points, and his Ranking went from #156 to #121.

Moreover, in ’93 he continues his improved play. At the Hall of Fame Open he downs Sean in the 1/4’s, Johnny Huang in the 1/2’s, and Ng in the final — all in the deciding 3rd.

At the ’93 World’s, in the Team’s, Jim loses to Belgium’s World #4 Jean-Michel Saive (up match point in the 2nd, Saive dives to the floor to return a ball and Jim, thinking the ball can’t be returned, is so shocked at seeing it come back with Saive still on the floor that he fails to return it). Against the Chinese first-time win over Wang Hao, unruffled but about to be World #31, Jim is up 1-0 and 13-6, has two match points, but can’t win it. Against Liu Guoliang, who’ll become the World and Olympic Singles and Doubles Champion, Jim is down 1-0 but at deuce in the 2nd — again can’t win it. He beats Austria’s World #72 Qian Qian. He almost has a great win over China’s World #20 Ding Yi; has him 1-0 and 19-14, then is faulted on a serve — and, as Jimmy’s a little perturbed about the bad call, Ding runs out the game and wins the match. Against South Korea’s ‘88 Olympic Champion Yoo Nam Kyu, Jim wins the first at deuce, then, at match point in the 2nd, serves a no spin ball down the line — only to hear this umpire, too, make a bad call, say “Let.” Now Jim doesn’t know whether to give Yoo the same serve or not, decides not to, instead serves one that Yoo takes advantage of — and Jim loses the game ... match. All these opportunities not taken advantage of — but what a threat he’s been.

Through the ’93 Open, Olympic Festival, and Sears Invitational, Jim’s record is spotty. But at the ’93 U.S. Closed, he beats Sweerins, Rop, and (“Move your feet,” reminds his friend and coach Brian Masters) Zhuang in the final, 19 in the 4th (down 11-17). Here’s Larry Hodges describing the sensational 20-19 point that Jim considers one of the great moments of his career: “Backhand to backhand [they go], neither player flinching, neither player willing to change directions or step around and try a forehand — just backhand to backhand, rapid fire machine gun shots. And on and on it went! Well before the rally was close to ending, the audience was murmuring in disbelief. How long can they keep this up at that pace?" On and on and on and on and on ... 44 shots altogether, 22 each, and we’re not talking easy backhands to backhands, these were solid hard drives, winners against your typical player." It was a Men’s Championship for Jimmy to savor — his last.

At both the ’94 Hall of Fame Open and the North American Championships, Jim got by Zhuang in deuce games, but lost to Cheng. He also split matches with Johnny Huang. Age — one might even say the beginning of middle-age — would never seem much of a factor with these expatriate Chinese, whereas Jimmy said of his Hall of Fame final, "my legs started to get tired and then everything started to go.”

Jim continues to play, as he has in the past, all the season’s big tournaments. He wins the Olympic Festival and holds his own against chief rivals Cheng and David.

In the fall of ’94 he will again play for Falkenberg — is usually on the table 25-30 hours a week. He’s had both a particular high and a particular low while playing for this Club. His high came in beating Waldner — “Closing out the greatest player ever to play the Game was harder than getting to match point.” His low came when he was benched on two separate occasions — “This happened before playing two of the most exciting matches of the year and was done for performance reasons by Coach Bengtsson. I disagreed, but humbly had to accept the decision.”

Another disappointment occurred in the ’94 Closed. After being in five straight U.S. Men’s finals, he was up 17-12 in the 5th against Leoninan in an early match, then lost 9 of the next 10 points and was shockingly out of the tournament!

Losses to Cheng, to Khoa Nguyen, David Zhang, Johnny Huang, and Darco Rop follow in the next six months. But playing again at the Pan Am Games he wins his second bronze medal in Singles. Says he has “a higher intensity” when he plays internationally.

At the ’95 U.S. Open, Jim beats South Korean penhold looper Hee Chan Kang, 19 in the 5th in the 1/4’s, is 1-1 with eventual winner Liu Guoliang in the semi’s (in the Team’s Jimmy had gone 19 in the 3rd with him after being down 20-14). In the All Star event, against Cheng in the semi’s, Jim repeatedly clashes with umpires who fault him 1-2-3-4 times for allegedly serving over the table, and he twice leaves the court in protest before going through the motions of finishing out the match.

Signing autographs after making the 1992 Olympic Team.
Before coming to the Nov., '95 U.S. Open Team Championships in Detroit, Jim’s discovered he’s a physical wretch. “My whole skeletal structure was a mess,” he said. “I’ve always had problems with tight muscles, but I never knew I had five dislocated ribs from a fall when I was younger. I’ve also developed curvature of the spine over the years.” His body hasn’t been getting enough oxygen, but now after treatments in Atlantic – “I’ve found a woman who’s incredible,” he says – he’s better. After colonics, neuro-muscular therapy, even visits to an American Indian Medicine Man – he’s seen six specialists in all – he’s come to the conclusion that “Health is everything.” A thought to hold onto no doubt, for, following his retirement from table tennis, he expects to be a neuromuscular therapist, specializing in treating muscles.

In the ‘95 Closed, Jim is beaten by Nguyen, 3-0, in the semi’s.

At the Feb., ‘96 Atlanta Cup he wins the Team’s by beating Romania’s about-to-be Open Singles Champion, Vasile Florea, deuce in the 3rd.

At the Sept., ‘96 Louisiana Open he beats Lonergan. Rop, and in the final Razvan Cretu in an incredible match, 19, 22, 31. So often Jim has to work really hard for his wins – it must take a lot out of him. After the Sept., ‘96 Sears tourney, Jim says he needs a rest, says his muscles are very tight. But he keeps playing – at the USOTC’s, the Southern Open, and at the National’s where, after beating Cretu and Sweeris, he loses to Cheng in the final.

At the March, 1997 World Team Trials Jim failed to make the Team. And though in ‘98 he would make it, he still felt that “This three-tournament format was the worst the USATT ever devised. So much depended on the luck of the draw.”

By now many of Jim’s matches have a deja vu quality about them. At the ‘97 Closed he beating Lonergan, then again loses to Cheng in the final.

At the ‘98 Eastern Open, he beats Zhuang, again loses to Cheng.

However, at the ‘98 U.S. Open he meets a new opponent – and his play is ... well, play. In the first of two hypo Hardbat Matches vs. Marty Reisman, Jimmy made History, for this Houston Match was given a very prominent place in the U.S. Open by USATT officials, though play was recognized by one and all as a match for thousands of dollars in private wagers and heretofore gambling had always been anathema to the Association. Though Jim beat Marty, the legendary Reisman, win or lose, will always be “The Money Player.” Jim likes Hardbat play – says that even though he’s retired he might play that just for the fun of it.

At the Sept., ‘98 St. Joseph Valley Open, Cheng beats Jim in the final of both the Open and the AllStar. In the June, ‘98 Texas Open, Jim loses in the final in four to still another Chinese expatriate arrival, Fan Yi Yong. And finally, in his last hurrah, at the ‘98 Closed, Jim is beaten by fellow Olympian Todd Sweeris in the semi’s in five.

“I’d thought about retiring after the ‘96 Olympics,” he says, “but still had obligations to sponsors. By the end of ‘98 my body was beat up, and I felt I’d accomplished all I could. I’d done my best and received many blessings, but I no longer had any attainable table tennis goals.”

...Jimmmy now heads off into the sunset of his career.

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Counterlooping at the Table

By Wei Wang, USATT Certified National Coach

It never ceases to amaze me to see how the top athletes of our sport adjust to its development. For example, as serves became better, the receiving game improved to the point that now an extraordinarily good serve is mandatory to even have a chance to stay in the point (a fact, by the way, that should be kept in mind as changes to the serve rules are contemplated! Weakening the serve might have the unexpected effect of creating receiver dominance - but that’s a different topic.) Similarly, the top performers have adapted to the sport’s ever-increasing speed. In the last few years, the defensive game has developed to the point where players can afford to allow their opponents to take the first shot - as long as it’s not too strong - block it to a hopefully uncomfortable location and then take the initiative by counterlooping. Lately, however, this strategy has not been as effective because most of the top players have become so fast that they can run down nearly every ball, and still generate great force on the second shot. To avoid this, players had to learn to deal with the first offensive shot more effectively.

On the backhand, the punch block as practiced by Jan-Ove Waldner and Zoran Primorac quickly proved to be a good answer, but the forehand needed a different approach. As we noticed more in the last World Championship than ever before, the quick off-the-bounce counterloop was becoming the weapon of choice. The technique had been mostly used by left-handed players like Erik Lindh and Wang Tao, since generally lefties have an advantage in anticipating a right-handed opponent’s placements, but its usefulness extends to all players who can anticipate. (Why lefties can do this is outside the context of this article, but basically, lefties are more used to playing righties than vice versa.) Although it’s not necessarily an immediate point-getter at the top level, it restores the initiative to the player who allows the attack under controlled conditions.

We chose Werner Schlager of Austria, semifinalist in the Dutch Open, and Lucjan Blaszczyk (pronounced Blaschchick) of Poland - victim of Kong Linghui in the round of 16 - as examples. You will notice similarities, but also distinct differences. The differences are due to personal style, intensity of the shot and player’s height. The shorter Blaszczyk is performing a medium speed shot in practice, while the taller Schlager is performing a stronger shot in the middle of a point. We will concern ourselves with the similarities.

Blaszczyk lives right by the table. For him this is not a new development. He has been using this shot for a long time, because it is critical to his close-to-the-table style. But it is a recent development that even players who usually play farther back often counterloop off the bounce. Notably, the overall intensity of the shot has increased. Schlager’s improved performance this year might be attributed to his willingness and ability to play closer to the table than would be typical for a traditional loop. As the point progresses he does get back to his favorite area 6-10 feet behind the table, but initially, he will stand his ground and add pressure with quick counters and the sharper angles possible from there.

In both sequences, the player has just returned a short ball and is getting attacked. The first thing to note is how quickly they get into counterlooping position by skipping back with both feet and maintaining a stable upper body position, leaning slightly forward. Already on the way back, they have anticipated the placement of the opponent’s shot and are turning their shoulder. There is a relatively short backswing. Schlager’s is a little bigger, because he’s going for more. The stroke is mostly controlled by the body and a quick, short upwards snap of the forearm, but the racket angle is closed on contact. The contact point is high, close to the top of the bounce, and more in front of the player’s body than in a regular loop. When more power is needed, the legs play an increasingly important role, and in its extreme permutation - looping against a strong, flat drive - the players bend their legs even more to meet the lower ball in the same upper body position. Since this is mostly a set-up shot (although at full power, it can be a put-away), it is critical to get into position by recovering immediately. This is more apparent in Schlager’s sequence. He takes a further skip back with both feet and now lands in his favorite territory, ready for a big finishing shot. Blaszczyk recovers quickly, too, but he remains close and ready for another quick shot.

Before mastering this shot, your basic loop must be solid. Once you have it, though, much of the fear of the opponent’s attack will dissipate. You’ll start looking forward to it!

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TEN WAYS TO PLAY YOUR BEST IN A TOURNAMENT

By Sean Lonergan, 2-time U.S. Collegiate Singles Champion
and Larry Hodges, USATT Certified National Coach

1) Put together a list of tips for yourself. For example, you might write down “Stay low” if you tend to stand up too straight. Or you might write down, “Relax and have fun.” You should refer to this list periodically throughout the tournament.

2) Decide what your mental frame of mind should be. Some players get too hyped up for their matches, and so don’t play well. Others can’t get up for their matches, and also don’t play well. Decide where you stand in this spectrum, and either calm yourself down or psyche yourself up before each match. Decide in advance what you need to do. You might prepare differently for each match, based on the opponent’s playing style. If you anticipate that you will have to be more aggressive against one opponent, you might have to be more “psyched up” for that match. On the other hand, being hyped up might only make you miss more. You have to decide what works for you.

3) Work on specific strengths and weaknesses. Everyone has specific strengths and weaknesses that many of their matches are won or lost on. Decide what these shots are, and make sure to practice them both before and during the tournament. For example, if you have trouble with a specific serve, have someone serve it to you over and over - even if you have to pay someone to do it! Similarly, if you have a big strength, such as a forehand smash, make sure to get it going before the match begins, not when you’ve already dug yourself a hole by missing the first five attempts!

4) Decide what your actual and working goals are. For most people, the actual goal is to win. This doesn’t mean you aren’t there to have fun, but ultimately, most people are trying to win. However, if you go out to a match with this in mind, you might not play your best - you’ll be too nervous. Instead, have an “acting goal,” i.e. a goal that will maximize your chances of winning. Generally, make “playing your best” your actual goal. If you play your best, your chances of winning are maximized, right? You may vary this, however, if you tend to play too passive, for example, your working goal might be to play aggressively.

5) Arrange a warm-up partner and practice routine in advance. The night before the tournament, arrange who and when you will warm up with. Pick someone who you are comfortable warming up with. This is not the time to practice against someone whose games gives you trouble, or plays what seems to you a “weird” style - that’s what you should have been practicing against at the club in the weeks before the tournament! On the day of the tournament, you want someone who can help you groove your shots. Once your shots are grooved and warmed up, you can then adjust to the many wacky styles you may face (as well as more standard ones). Decide in advance what drills you want to do; don’t just do forehand to forehand, etc. - make sure to do footwork drills and serve & receive drills. Make sure to either play out points or play some games before you go out for your tournament match - you don’t want the first real points you play to be in a tournament match!

6) Bring food & beverages, and eat lightly. Good food & beverage services at tournament sites are rare. Drink water or bring your own drinks (powdered Gatorade, for example), as well as snacks (such as fruit). Avoid eating a large meal during the tournament unless you have two hours or more free afterwards. It’s best to snack regularly on easily digested food (mostly carbohydrates, or you will be somewhat tired while you digest the large meal.

7) Prepare for slippery floors. One of the most common mistakes I see is not preparing for a slippery floor. Over half of tournaments are played on flooring that is really slippery floors. Second, you should always bring a small towel or paper towels to a tournament. If the floors are slippery, dampen the towel, and put it to the side of the table. Every few points, rub your feet on them. Try this, and you’ll find it makes a huge difference.

8) Practice your serves. The day of the tournament, practice your serves! Tuning them up will pay off more for you, time-for-time, than just about any other practice. Yet most players don’t warm up their serves before a match, and so don’t have their best serves available.

9) Prepare physically. Prepare your muscles for combat! Before warming up, do some easy jogging to get them warm. Do a thorough stretching routine. Finally, before each match, you might do some short but vigorous physical activity to get the muscles prepared. You might shadow practice, or do a few sprints; however, make sure not to tire yourself out so much that you can’t play the match! Somewhat related to this is getting enough sleep in the last few days before the tournament. (Studies have shown that it’s actually more important getting enough sleep in the last few days before a sports activity than the actual night before!)

10) Do some meditation and mental visualization. Let’s not get mystical here. However, you will play better if you take some time before a match to clear your mind and do some mental visualization. Go somewhere quiet, and blank your mind out. Then visualize yourself doing the shots you plan on doing. A few minutes of this is worth more than an equal amount of practice time on the table.

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<th>BLADES</th>
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People who influenced me the most: There are three people who have the most influence on me, and they have helped me greatly at various stages of my development. The first one is my father, who was my first coach. The second is Yin Shao, my coach since 1989. The third is Chinese Head Coach Cai Zhenhua. My father trained me when I was little, and gave me an excellent foundation to build on. Coach Yin taught me a great deal in the technical and mental aspects, and crafted the very fine details of my game. Coach Cai has invested a tremendous amount of energy on me. He was willing to use me in important matches, and provided a lot of opportunities for me.

Most satisfactory match: The Atlanta Olympic final against Wang Tao. Technically I was below Wang, but in this important match, I was able to play at a super high level and win.

Most regretted match: The final in the 43rd (Tianjin, 1995) Worlds. I played very well, and was leading 2-1 in games. But I did not seize the opportunity. I feel regret every time I think about that match.

On Liu’s Selection to the Chinese 1996 Olympic Team By Chung Lau
Liu was not a unanimous choice when the national team selected the Atlanta Olympic participants. Ding Song was strongly considered, because he was so good against the likes of Salive and Karlsson. In the end, the coaches picked Liu because it was hard to find a doubles partner for Ding, due to his rare style. Back then, China could only send four players. Wang Tao/Lu Lin was the best doubles pair, and Kong was number one, world-ranked, so there was room for only one more. The coaches took a gamble with Liu, and started training Liu/Kong as a doubles pair at the last minute, relatively speaking. Liu ended up with two gold medals.

Most admired athlete: Michael Jordan. The NBA has so many great players, and Jordan still plays at a level above everyone. He is honest, and he has a healthy lifestyle. There is no reason not to like him.

The family structure that I favor the most: I like girls who are more traditional. I am a bit of a male chauvinist, and that might have been due to my family’s influence. My father is very career-oriented, and my mother takes care of the home. I think this is a very good arrangement, and allows the man to develop his full potential. I think it is better that the wife provides the support behind the stage.

Books I like to read the most: Swordsmen novels by Jin Yong (editor’s note – a hugely popular series in China) and Gu Long.

Music I like the most: Popular music, rock-and-roll and anything that is pleasant to listen to. Sometimes I go to discos; I don’t know how to dance, so I just listen to the music.

Things I want to do the most in the future: I have not given too much thought to the future. I have always been in table tennis, and I love to explore the intricacies of the game. I feel like I will never leave this sport, after playing for so many years.

Liu’s conventional penhold backhand (left) and unconventional one (right).
From August 16-27, 1999, I had the great pleasure to conduct an Olympic Solidarity Coaching Course for the country of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The country consists of a group of volcanic islands located in the West Indies, some 1300 miles south of Miami. Most of the country’s population is located on the main island of St. Vincent (population 96,000), with Kingstown the major port city. The rugged natural beauty of the country allows for magnificent views of both mountains and black volcanic ash beaches.

For those of you not familiar with the Olympic Solidarity Arm of the International Olympic Committee, it provides technical experts from all areas of sports to those counties requesting assistance. Once a member Olympic Committee requests a course, the appropriate International Federation selects the technical expert to conduct the course. The IOC pays for the travel expenses of the coach with the local Olympic Committee providing hospitality.

Upon my arrival, it quickly became apparent that the St. Vincent Table Tennis Association and its President, Dr. Juniher Bacchus, were ready to use the course to generate as much publicity for their sport as possible. Along with teaching two three-hour training sessions daily, there was a constant stream of newspaper, radio, and television interviews. Along with this, I was the guest for an hour-long sport radio call-in show. The response from the callers was so positive that our segment was extended an additional 20 minutes. Add to this meetings with the Minister of Sports, the Director of the Sports Council, and with various St. Vincent Olympic Officials, and you can see I was kept very busy.

The morning training sessions consisted of approximately 30 young athletes. My goal for them was to provide a solid education in the basics of stroke and spin theory. Many of these players had a very high level of talent and all were very motivated to train. The afternoon sessions were dedicated to the senior players, many of whom were members of the St. Vincent National Team. With these athletes, I had several goals. First, to bring them up to date on what was happening internationally in terms of techniques and training methods. Next, to provide them with a training outline for the next six months. To accomplish this, all senior players received a bound course outline consisting of more than 130 pages of supporting materials that I had assembled.

To conduct a course of this magnitude requires a great deal of hard work and support from many people. I would first like to thank two American Table Tennis Companies for their gifts of equipment. The Martin-Kilpatrick Table Tennis Company, the North American distributor for Butterfly, donated 24 professional rackets, along with two gross of balls and a ball stand. Newgy Industries Inc. donated a complete robot package, along with a gross of balls and a ball stand.

Many members of the local Table Tennis Association took holidays from work to provide assistance during the training sessions. Lunch and cold drinks were provided for each participant each day. In addition, I must thank Mr. Johnson for being my local guide and driver and Mr. Trevor Bailey, President of the St. Vincent Olympic Committee, for arranging a half-day trip by boat to the Baleine Falls. The three-hour trip was something out of National Geographic, complete with sharks, whales, and birds of all kinds. The falls themselves were truly a spectacular sight.

A special thank you is due to Sean Stanley, the National Coach for St. Vincent who worked alongside me every hour. He is very capable and I feel confident that he will continue the work begun during my visit.

The course ended with a closing reception at my hotel. Guests included many members of the government and representatives from other sports as well. All participants received official certificates from the International Olympic Committee.

I hope that some of you reading this article will someday have a chance to visit St. Vincent and the Grenadines. You will find a thriving table tennis community.
JUNIOR TRAINING IN THE U.S.

By Larry Hodges

How can the 1100 USATT junior members compete with the multitude of Chinese juniors? With a few exceptions, they can't right now—just as the Chinese women's soccer team couldn't compete with the best in the world just a few years ago. (And, of course, the Chinese women's soccer team made the final of the 1996 Olympics and 1999 World Cup—both times losing to the U.S.)

In the following pages, you'll read about many of the junior programs that are running in the U.S. You'll read about mass junior programs, like The Big Whack in Portland and the Newgy School Program. You'll read short profiles of a number of junior training programs in the U.S. You'll read about the differences in training in China versus in the U.S. And you'll read about juniors going overseas to China and Taiwan for training and tournaments.

I dream of the day when "Little League" table tennis becomes widespread. Will it happen? If it does, the people and programs you read about on these pages might very well be the pioneers, who will go down in history as the ones who made it happen.

Setting Up Your Own Junior Program

For information on setting up your own junior training program, contact Dan Seemiller, USATT Coaching Development Director and USA Men's Coach, at 219-654-7476. He will be running a seminar on this subject at next year's U.S. Open. Or get a list of USATT coaches from USATT (www.usatt.org or 719-578-4583) and see if there are any coaches in your area who can help out.

THE BIG WHACK!

Portland, Oregon • By Jim Scott

“[t] had 30,000 young players training like crazy every day for five years. I would beat China the Olympics after next.” Guess who said that? Gee, if someone could really do this, it would mean he had developed a great program on a national basis to find and develop all these fanatics. What would this program be?

Let’s call it The Big Whack, because in 1995 I decided to have a big tournament emphasizing whacking a ping pong ball. It occurred to me that I could have some fun getting thousands of juniors in my area watching and playing table tennis by offering them a tournament at the end of the year. They could actually qualify for it at their own schools.

What developed was a tournament that has grown each year and helped develop several clubs in the Portland Metro area. These are not USATT clubs, yet.

In 1998-99, about 30 schools held a preliminary tournament to send qualifiers to the May 1999 Big Whack final. (See July/August issue.)

Let’s assume all 30 schools are given free USATT memberships for all club members. Let’s assume that, because it’s after school during “at-risk” hours, parents feel it’s a great activity in a non-injury sport, and we can get 30 members per club. This would be 30 clubs of 30 members or almost 1000 new semi-serious USATT junior members in my city alone.

If the USATT were to work with me to implement this in 39 other major metro areas (and several USATT officers have shown interest in this concept), we would be able to develop about 40,000 semi-serious USATT junior members.

Then let’s say this sounds good to corporations or other sponsors agree to put up $2,000,000 a year between them to pay for all the “free” memberships. Each junior receives the membership for one year only and then decides whether to stay serious and purchase his own membership thereafter.

Meanwhile, we build our USATT tournaments toward more junior events which are low-cost. They could be age events or U500, U700, U900 types. This way many of them win things and start to tend toward “fanaticism” toward our sport. Once they become table tennis fanatics, we’re talking 2000+ ratings within a year or so, and then 2600 players in another year or so. Then gold in the Olympics after next!!! (Most knowledgeable coaches would say that this is impossible in this short a time frame. So let’s give them that, and instead of 2004, shoot for 2008. But folks, the point is that if we don’t get started, we’ll never get there!)

Success breeds more money and more money helps for more successful programs. I think we can spread a Big Whack model across the nation with a commitment by USATT and a written synopsis that sponsors will buy.

Here’s what we did in 1995-96 (our first year) which was greatly exceeded in 1997-98 and 1998-99:
1. We found 17 schools who already had enough tables to hold a preliminary tournament.
2. We did a school assembly to promote their tournament.

JOIN THE BIG WHACK CONTESTANTS
Scott Preiss, Whitney Pings, Jack Elder, Judy Harfrost, Fan Yi Yong, Jim Scott
3. We helped them run their tournaments and qualified several of their players for the year-end Big Whack championship.

4. We held the Big Whack at Portland Table Tennis Club in categories for elementary school (K-5), Middle (6-8) and high school (9-12) for both boys and girls. It was pretty great. Between Stiga, Paddle Palace, ASTI and the Oregon State Games, the prizes were terrific.

Note the demographics of the tournaments in our first year (1995-96):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Players</th>
<th>Qualifiers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 20</td>
<td>Neil Armstrong Middle</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 29</td>
<td>Gregory Heights Middle</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 29</td>
<td>Lincoln High</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 4</td>
<td>George Middle</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 9</td>
<td>Portland Christian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 10</td>
<td>Parkrose Middle</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 13</td>
<td>David Douglas High</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr. 16-18</td>
<td>Binnnsmead Middle</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>Apr. 24</td>
<td>N. Marion Elementary</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 25</td>
<td>Gray Middle</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 26</td>
<td>Sellwood Middle</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr. 26</td>
<td>Lot Whitcomb Elem.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr. 27</td>
<td>Tigard High</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 27</td>
<td>Meadow Park Middle</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 4</td>
<td>Westview High</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 11</td>
<td>Thomas Elementary</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 15</td>
<td>Fernwood Middle</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>287</strong></td>
<td><strong>148</strong></td>
</tr>
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</table>

Only 96 of the qualifiers showed up for the finals at The Big Whack at the end of May. Who cares; it's not the final tournament that's important but the locations of the preliminaries. Most of them are still playing ping pong on a regular basis as the result of our efforts. And the 96 players battled hard in the finals!

In 1997-98 and 1998-99, we did exhibitions each year in front of 15-20,000 students and had in excess of 2000 players in the preliminary tournaments. We developed a 9-team high school league in 1998-99 and also had a mini-middle school league with perpetual trophies established separately for boys' and girls' categories.

We have been favored with two unusually beneficial "strokes" of fortune. One, Escalade Sports has supported us in a major way with equipment which we could get into many of the schools. They have also allowed us the services of Scott Preiss, who most of our students still believe is world champion. Two, in 1998-99, Fan Yi Yong moved to Portland.

He did many of the exhibitions with us, which adds absolutely world-class credibility to our event. After all, Fan has beaten some world champions in his career and can also show our local juniors and sponsors how to win each year at the Stiga Pacific Rim Open as he did in 1998.

I am an insurance man. But I think I can win us some golds in the 2004 Olympics. All I need is USATT commitment to do national programs like The Big Whack, money, and about 30,000 junior fanatics.

---

**Comparing USA and Chinese Training**

By Han Xiao

Editor's Note – 12-year-old Han, the U.S. s top-rated Under 14 player at 2208, recently returned from a summer of training in China.

Most serious table tennis players know that junior training in China is more difficult than junior training in the United States. To see all the differences between junior camps in the U.S. and China, a visit to junior camps in both countries is necessary. I have been fortunate to do so.

The first major difference between the two countries’ junior programs is the time spent training. At the training camps held each year in Flint, Michigan, juniors range in age mostly from their early teens to seventeen or eighteen years old, excluding the national team's. This is about the same age range as juniors training on the Beijing City/Province youth team. Juniors at Flint train 4-5 hours a day, five days per week. Meanwhile, the Beijing juniors in the program practice 6 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Chinese juniors have plenty of competition. If they can't keep up with the other players, the coaches drop them from the team and find a replacement. The coaches have unbelievable expectations of them, because everyone on the team has won a junior title in a district, city, or province championship at some point in time. Coaches feel that these juniors should either maintain a spot at the top, or be replaced. In a country where literally everybody loves to play the sport, finding someone to replace a poor player isn't very difficult.

The second difference is the attitude of the players. Players in the U.S., myself included, tend to goof off because of low competition, especially when they're already at the top of their age group. It's not because they don't like playing anymore; it's because juniors at the top sometimes don't feel the need to practice hard because there's few who can match their skill level at that point. The Chinese juniors have plenty of competition. If they can't keep up with the other players, the coaches drop them from the team and find a replacement. The coaches have unbelievable expectations of them, because everyone on the team has won a junior title in a district, city, or province championship at some point in time. Coaches feel that these juniors should either maintain a spot at the top, or be replaced. In a country where literally everybody loves to play the sport, finding someone to replace a poor player isn't very difficult.

The third major difference is one that favors the U.S. Juniors in the U.S. tend to keep education as their first priority. In China, juniors either drop school or attend minimally once they make a fairly good team. This means that most of them receive poor grades, and if they don't make it in table tennis later on, they are stuck with little education and an uncertain future. However, there are certain people who are good students despite attending school only once a week. A friend I made on my China visit was a 12-year-old. He attended school once a week, and received 100% for math and 96% for language on his final exam. So it can be done! In the U.S., many juniors do the same thing: top five for their age group in table tennis, straight-A student in school. But either way, it isn't easy trying to excel in both.

The final difference I will address in this article is another that favors the U.S. Here is something to think about. A junior in the U.S. commonly plays 10-20 tournaments a year easily. In China, the best juniors play 5-10 tournaments per year, and the worst... well, they're happy if the coach lets them play just one tournament per year. Public tournaments are extremely rare. All the tournaments are club championships, province championships, international tournament trials, city championships, national championships... you actually have to be good to have fun. If our average 2000 player went into one of those province tournaments he would not have a lot of fun. It would probably be something like, "Wang defeats Smith at 3 and 4." Of course, not very many children get to play in province championships. So, there's a chance that our character, Mr. Smith, perhaps a 2000 player, will defeat a 15-year-old that has the skill level of a 2400 player. This is purely because children in China don't get enough tournament experience. Meanwhile, if Mr. Smith played a top U.S. tournament-experienced junior like Sunny Li... I'll hold that thought for a while in case I get bored and need to imagine something totally ridiculous.

The point is that junior training in China has its pros and cons, just like anything else. Sure, you get better strokes and quicken the pace of your game, but your mental skills don't really improve all that much. A seasoned Chinese junior is just as likely to lose at deuce to Mr. Smith as a new 10-year-old rising star in the U.S.

If juniors want to improve their table tennis, China is a pretty good place to go despite the huge cost of airplane tickets. However, if juniors want to skip school by training in China, it's a lot better just to try that here in the U.S. After all, is it worth it to train 8 hours a day for the sake of skipping school? If you're trying to play better table tennis as well as skip school, maybe that is a good idea....
NEWGY SCHOOL TABLE TENNIS PROGRAM

No Table – No Problem!

By Russell S. Jordan

8,000 kids participating in table tennis as a part of their school curriculum ... 30,000 kids in four different states, personally introduced to the sport by Newgy Industries Representatives ... 6,000 or more participants in each of the last two Pong-Master School Challenge Table Tennis Tournaments ... Over 200 different elementary physical education teachers in 20 different states teaching the Newgy table tennis curriculum ... Over 200,000 travel miles logged in promoting the sport during the past two years ... Whew!

These numbers were attained through a grassroots program developed by Newgy Industries, Inc. This grassroots development effort focuses on introducing table tennis into the physical education classrooms of America's elementary schools.

In August of 1997, Joseph E. Newgarden, Jr., President of Newgy Industries, retained the services of Barney D. Reed to formulate and lead a table tennis promotional effort. By adapting a school visitation effort that he had used while coaching in Sweden, Reed developed a table tennis promotional effort that has been completely embraced by the U.S. Educational System. His hook – table tennis without tables.

The program developed by Reed for Newgy consists of “off table” activities that allow children to develop basic striking skills useful in all sports. By moving the sport “off table” Mr. Reed found that most teachers became interested and responsive in teaching table tennis because striking skills are a basic component of most elementary physical education curriculums. This fact was never more apparent than at the 1998 Tennessee Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance Conference held on the campus of Middle Tennessee State University. Newgy Industries presented its Elementary Striking Skills Curriculum to a forum of nearly 200 physical educators, with nearly all of the attendees taking home a copy of the curriculum. From this one conference alone, Newgy received invitations to present its striking skills program in over 80 schools throughout the state of Tennessee. Newgy was also invited to perform teacher inservices for Nashville, Knoxville and Memphis area teachers.

The Newgy Program is simple. Teachers teach their students ball control skills that lead the kids to the adult sport of table tennis. The program uses a three-tiered progression in developing students’ skills.

After learning the shakehands grip and simple ball control exercises, students first begin by working on grip and stroke practice while sitting on the floor. They work in pairs, controlling forehand and backhand strokes for short distances across the floor. In the beginning stages, one partner rolls the ball about five feet across the floor to his waiting partner, who strikes forehand and backhand strokes in a controlled manner to his partner.

Second, from rolling the ball on the floor, the partners move to standing. While standing they practice dropping and striking the ball to their partners. From here they move to striking the ball against the wall. It is here that they begin to incorporate a succession of shots by playing the ball after it rebounds from the wall.

where the students drop and strike ping-pong balls at targets set up a short distance away.

The program is uniquely designed in that it allows teachers to teach the basics of the sport without any previous experience in table tennis. A majority of the skills emphasized in this program focus on development without using a table tennis table. This allows children to participate in the sport on a level that encourages developmentally appropriate learning. Further, the program allows teachers to teach the basics of the sport without having to purchase expensive, space-occupying equipment.

The Newgy Program provides a solid foundation for table tennis development because it provides physical educators with instructional methods that complement their teaching needs. The USATT has contacted Newgy about working together to promote this program on the national level. With a little luck and much hard work, the future of table tennis in America will greatly improve. Stay tuned!
PORTLAND, OREGON JUNIOR PROGRAM
By Tim Titrud
Like most clubs in the U.S., the Portland Table Tennis Club consists mostly of balding middle-aged men. The junior program at the PTTC is in the development stage and is small in numbers, with about 8 to 10 regulars. Most young people have many different activities and sports to choose from, so we have found it difficult to market the sport of table tennis. Many of the juniors in the PTTC, like in many clubs in the U.S., are children of club members. Since table tennis players can produce a limited number of children we have found the need to recruit players from the schools.

We have performed many school exhibitions to promote our program, but they have yet to bring a single junior into our program. Last year we developed table tennis teams in nine High Schools in the local area, and the kids enjoyed the team matches we organized. However, it was very disappointing because very few of these teenagers took the sport seriously, and so they had little interest in coming to a structured practice session. Our strategy this year is to develop after school programs in four to five local elementary and three to four junior high schools. We have started our first after school program at Lot Whitcomb grade school and over 20 children are involved. The students meet twice a week for an hour and a half. Most of the children from Lot Whitcomb have never played table tennis, so it has been fun to watch their improvement. This week for the first time the children from Lot Whitcomb will join our junior sessions at the PTTC. From the excitement these kids are showing it looks like our strategy is working.

The PTTC junior training sessions are Wednesday and Friday nights. Fan Yi Yong leads the practices, assisted by his wife Wei Xiao and Tim Titrud. The juniors take turns with multiball training with Wei and Yong. The children work on drills, and teamwork is stressed. The more advanced kids are required to spend time helping the beginners.

Last year, the juniors took a trip to Houston to play and train with their juniors (see July/August issue, page 17). This was very successful, and we will be planning other trips this year in order to keep the kids' interest high.

NORTHERN CA. BAY AREA JR. PROGRAMS
By Larry Hodges
Here's a brief rundown of the many very successful junior programs in this area.

CONCORD TTC
This club is actually located in Pleasant Hill. Coach is Bill Lui, USATT Developmental Coach of the Year in 1996. Junior training classes are on Mondays, Tuesdays and Sundays. Program has produced Freddied Gabriel, Piotr Zajac and Terrence Lee, and trained Michelle Do, Kyra Fong and Jackie Lee. Current promising 2nd generation juniors are 10-year-old Sergey Gutkin, 11-year-old Atha Fong, 11-year-old David On, and 11-year-old Trevor Runyan.

PALO ALTO TTC
Located at the Cubberley Center, a large community center in Palo Alto. Head Coach is Dennis Davis. Associate coaches are Zhi-yong Wang and Valery Sakisov. Training classes Saturdays and Sundays. Has produced former top juniors such as Shashin Shodhan, Vineet Agarwal and Jimmy Guan. Current top junior is 16-year-old Michelle Do; some up-and-coming juniors are Vadim Sherman (14) and Aurora Malek (13).

SUNSET TTC
Club is located at Glen Park Rec Center in San Francisco. Produced former top junior Mark Liu and Jackie Lee (14). Training classes are on Saturdays and Sundays. Up-and-coming juniors include Mikhail “Misha” Kazantsev (12) and Wallace Liu (14).

DAILY CITY TTC
Located at the Daly City War Memorial Rec Center. The club's coach, Richard Hernandez, coaches 13 junior players, whom he puts through both regular table practice and off-table practice, including weight training, jumping rope and shadow practicing.

SAN JOSE TTC
Masaaki Tajima coaches juniors twice a week at this club.

HOUSTON, TEXAS JUNIOR PROGRAM
By Viktor Subonj
In February of 1997, HTTC founded its junior program under the supervision of General Manager Roberto Byles and Head Coach Viktor Subonj. They have been working together for the last two years and the first results are starting to show. “We felt that something was missing in our club,” Roberto said, remembering how everything started. “We thought if we start with the kids, the club will have long-term members.”

After numerous exhibitions at schools and community centers, the first kids started to come in. “We started the program with twice a week sessions and extended it to three times per week. Our goal is to find sponsors for the program and extend sessions to every day,” Viktor said. Both agreed that the most difficult thing is to keep the kids interested.

“Organizing various tournaments for their age groups is definitely a good motivator,” Roberto said. Viktor added, “Our goal is creating an optimal training system that can compete with any other system in the world. That will be possible with the help of sponsors.”

The group has 16 kids between the ages of 7 and 14, with most of them practicing regularly. Recently, some of the Houston juniors have produced excellent results. Howard Lamb (14) won the U1900 event and came in second in U2000 at the U.S. Open in Ft. Lauderdale. Until recently turning 14, he was ranked second nationally in Under 14 with a rating of 2127. 13-year-old Niv Regev’s rating is 1634 after just one year of hard practice, while Timothy Wang (8) is ranked fourth nationally in the Under 10 category. Ori Melnik is ranked sixth in Under 10, and Kimberly Byles is awaiting her first rating. They are all strongly motivated to practice harder and improve their skills. Howard Lamb’s goal is to become the best junior in the country in two years, while Timmy Wang wants to be the top-ranked Under 10 by next year. Roberto and Viktor both concluded that targeting kids from different ethnic communities, Chinese, Vietnamese, Jewish, Russian, etc., may be the key to making our junior program even more successful.
ATLANTA, GEORGIA JUNIOR PROGRAMS
By Richard McAfee

The junior scene in Atlanta, Georgia is looking stronger than ever with both clubs in town running organized junior training programs.

Ralph Presley, along with W.C. Cleveland, has organized the program at the Central Atlanta Table Tennis Club, which meets at Coan Park. In addition, Ralph also conducts an outreach program at the Ben Hill Recreational Center several days each week. These programs are producing a large crop of up-and-coming juniors.

National Coaches Richard McAfee and Mladen Ljije are coaching sixteen cadets and juniors twice a week at the Atlanta Table Tennis Association (Chastain Park). Team members are aged from 7 to 17 years old.

Other coaches have helped out from time to time, including George Cooper and CATT's President Donn Olsen. Donn's student, Lee McCool, is quickly rising into the national ranks.

Top Atlanta Juniors include:
- T.J. Beebe 2393
- Philip Mar 1804
- Lee McCool 2132
- Robert Anderson 1743
- John Mar 1883
- David Perkel 1442
- Alex Yadgarov 1883

With this many juniors training, Atlanta will be bringing a large contingent to next year's Junior Olympics in Orlando, Florida.

See yuh-all there!

T.J. Beebe, left; Atlanta Juniors at last year’s Junior Olympic Trials.

AUGUSTA, GEORGIA JUNIOR PROGRAM
By David Cole

The Augusta Table Tennis Club has been developing youth table tennis in Augusta since 1968 when Pete May began a youth training program at the local Boys' Club. The program has evolved over the years into the Augusta School League that operates October to February every year. Derek May took over as the Youth League Director last year with David Cole organizing the 1999-2000 competition year.

The emphasis of the league is to create an environment where juniors can enjoy the league for itself or provide motivation for players to seek further training. The Richmond County Recreation Department has set up a training program for juniors that are interested in enhancing their skills. The County provides facilities and has hired Xin Peng to coach twice a week.

Several juniors have improved to the point of playing in USATT sanctioned events. Michael Hadsell, Jr. (17) has traveled to most of the national tournaments over the last couple of years. Allison Cole (11) and James Cole (9) participated in the 1999 Junior Olympics. Several other junior players have been participating in the sanctioned Augusta Circuit tournaments.

Our summers consist of wall-to-wall training camps and along with our senior citizens and parent's programs, we are in the process of starting our junior after-school program. We took six of our kids to the Junior Olympics in Cleveland, and the six won ten medals. All had been playing less than a year, and one 10-year-old girl, after playing only seven months, won silver in singles, doubles and teams. The interest and support of the Chinese Community has been incredible, and thanks to tremendous support from the principal, Mr. Sug Chan, our Chinese connection has been the happiest table tennis experience of our lives.

CORAL SPRINGS CHINESE CULTURAL JR. PROGRAM, FLORIDA
By Marty Prager and Terese Terranova

In 1997, Keith Alban, our student for five years, was safely embarked on his training program in Sweden, joining former student Randy Cohen in full-time professional play and training in Sweden. The two-table club in the Laurel Gardens Apartment Complex, where we had developed Keith, T.J. Beebe, Anthony Torino and a number of other national champions, had closed and we were using a physical fitness club for lessons. One student's father turned out to be the principal of the Chinese Cultural School in Coral Springs. He invited us to the school to see what could be done. Their program consisted of two old tables which they put up once a week, a handful of adults and a couple of juniors. Terese and I rolled up our sleeves, went to work, and a year and a half later are proud to report that we now have a constantly growing group of some 35 kids, ages 6 to 17. Our tournament playing team consists of 20, with the beginner and intermediate group numbering about 15. Along with their private lessons there are two elite team training sessions and two beginner sessions per week. This is all done on six Stiga tables and a seven-day-a-week training program.

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Josh Bernstein

Photo by John Oros © 1999


Photo by Larry Hodges © 1999

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SOUTH BEND, INDIANA JUNIOR PROGRAM

By Dan Seemiller

The South Bend junior program, started in 1992 by Brad Balmer, has averaged around 25 students per year. In 1994 the club hired Victor Tolkachev, originally from Latvia, and trained in the Russian system. The juniors benefitted from his knowledge and tough approach. Victor stayed for three years and then returned to Latvia.

In 1996 I was hired and the program has successfully continued. We currently have 10 varsity, 4 junior varsity and 12-15 cadet members. Varsity is for players over 1200, J.V. for other rated juniors and the cadet group is for beginners. Our program is unique in that the club’s main focus is on the junior players.

The Lynch brothers, Jared (left) & Jordan (right).

NEW JERSEY JUNIOR PROGRAM

By Lily Yip

I currently have thirty to forty children between the ages of six and sixteen training with me each week. Most come to the Saturday Clinics, some take private lessons, and others do both. My Saturday clinics are one and one-half hours long. I schedule the training classes on a four-week cycle.

I use ten tables on four racquetball courts. There are usually two to three coaches and a couple of practice partners. I use a newgy robot on one of the tables. During these sessions I move the kids around to different stations. You will find some playing matches or practicing drills and others will be with the coaches who will be correcting and refining their techniques. The coaches will teach the children the correct strokes and each child will take turns at the table while the coaches feed the balls and make suggestions. During the

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND JR. PROGRAM

By Larry Hodges

The Maryland Junior Program dominated the Junior Olympics and Junior Nationals in the 1990s, winning more gold medals and total medals than any other state every year from 1992-1999. In all but one of these years they won more golds than all other states combined. They also have had the largest contingent of players every year since 1992, usually sending about 30 junior players – more than any other state every Junior Olympics this decade.

Coaches Cheng Yinghua and Jack Huang and I have been the main full-time coaches during this period (although I am no longer

four-week session I will schedule organized competitions. I will match up the groups based on skill level, to make it more competitive.

There have been quite a few who have come out of these sessions and become competitive tournament players. My son and daughter both started this way. Adam (11) has just reached 2100, and my daughter, Judy (9), is 1100. They are both number one in their age groups, and they each won four gold medals at the Junior Olympics this past August. I am very proud of their accomplishments. There are others that have great potential and I am sure you will see and hear from them in the future.

Table tennis is a wonderful sport that people can play all their lives. Those that learn correct techniques and have sound basics can achieve higher levels of expertise and will have more enjoyment from the sport. It is very important to start the juniors with good basics because their potential is limitless. Clinics such as mine give children a chance to play with other children while learning these techniques.

coaching take place each week at the MDTTC and PCTTC. Well over half of this is junior training, with a huge influx of players in the 9-12 age group the past few years. Group junior training sessions are held three times a week at MDTTC, twice a week at PCTTC. Most advanced junior players attend about two group sessions per week, take one to two hours per week in private coaching, and attend one of the clubs for open play about one to two times per week. As of August, 1999, there were 73 juniors from Maryland who were USATT members (most from MDTTC/PCTTC), as well as a number from Virginia who also play or train at these clubs—too many to list here. (There were also many Maryland/Virginia juniors playing/training who were not – yet – among the 73 USATT members.)
The Palo Alto Table Tennis club junior program traveled to Zhongshan, China for three weeks of intensive training, August 2-24, 1999.

I was pretty sure that the junior players traveling with me did not know what to expect during our training in China. I knew. Last summer I took Michelle Do and David Rudesill to Shanghai for training. I knew it would be hot and humid with no air conditioning in the training hall. I knew that some of the juniors were not used to eating Chinese food. I knew that the hotel was not going to be what they were used to. I knew they would be sweating more in three weeks than they had in their entire lives.

One wonders why you put yourself through so much. The reason is the training. I believe the training in China is second to none in improving developing players. All our players were rated between 800-1850. The players who went were: Michelle Hu, Shelley Lee, Auria Malek, Danny Bruno, Levy Klots, Minh-Chau Nguyen, Minh-Thanh Nguyen, Wesley Leong, Santiago Coste Jr. Two parents also came with us for the entire trip: Trinh Vo and Hawk Lee.

We trained at the Zhongshan Sports School in Zhongshan City, Canton, China. The school is a government-supported sports training center for a large variety of sports including table tennis, basketball, swimming, track and field, and Chinese Martial Arts. Many of the students at this school come from other provinces around China so they have a large dormitory for all the resident athletes.

The training hall was a large gym with twenty tables. The first day we arrived there was a young junior training camp. There were about thirty juniors under 10 years old. The group we trained with was between 12-18 years old. Most were under 15 years old, only three players were older than 14. The practice partners playing levels were between 2000 and 2300. There were two women players visiting Zhongshan from Shanghai, where we trained the previous summer. They were both over 2400. Auria Malek and Santiago Coste trained with the ladies for the first two days.

The training was twice a day with the morning session from 9AM to 11 AM and the afternoon session from 3PM to 5PM. The training was Monday to Friday, with Saturday being Round Robin Match Day. Each morning session our players trained with designated training partners. Some days I picked the drills everyone would do and other days one of the Chinese coaches would select the drills. Many of the drills focused on consistency and developing technique. Generally, the players knew where each ball would be played throughout each drill. This was the kind of training our group needed because there were many changes that needed to take place in their technique. The afternoon sessions were multiball. The training school supplied us with four players who would feed multiball to our players for two hours. I had one table that I did multiball for our players. I was able to spend a lot of time with each player over the three weeks to correct or teach new techniques.

Each Saturday we would play matches with the Chinese junior players. Each of our players would play at least eight matches in the day against eight Chinese juniors. Four matches in the morning session and four matches in the afternoon session. After the third and last set of round robin matches, Santiago had won six matches and Auria had won three.

Auria and Santiago got the opportunity to practice with a member of the Chinese Junior National Team. He had the best serves I have seen in a long time. I would estimate his rating to be over 2700. He is sixteen years old. It was nice of him to play with them. As you could imagine, the quality of training was a little lower than he was used to.

While we were in Zhongshan, we found out that Auria had been selected to play at an international tournament in Taiwan for the U.S. Junior Team. I had to put Auria on the plane to Taiwan, not to see him again until we returned to California.

We left Zhongshan after three weeks of great training to spend a few days shopping and sightseeing in Hong Kong. Unfortunately, a typhoon hit and we did no sightseeing and very little shopping.

I would like to thank Palo Alto Coach Wang Zhi Yong for all his help and contacts to make our trips to China possible. I also want to thank Hawk Lee and Trinh Vo for all their help during the trip. Next Year: Japan!!
THE JUNIOR TREK TO TAIWAN

By Kyna Fong

This summer, from August 19 to August 25, members of the U.S. Junior National Team flew to Taipei, Taiwan to compete in the first ever 1999 I Love Taipei First Commercial Bank Cup Junior Table Tennis Tournament International.

Altogether, the American contingent consisted of sixteen people. Of those sixteen there were three coaches, Gao Jun, Lily Yip and Jack Huang, and one team manager, Dr. Jiing Wang. Representing the U.S. on the junior girls’ team were Whitney Ping (OR) and Katherine Wu (MD) for the Under-15 division, and Michelle Do (CA) and Kyna Fong (CA) for the Under-18 division. Howard Lamb (TX), Mark Hazinski (IN), Adam Hugh (NJ) and Auria Malek (CA) represented the Under-15 division of the U.S. junior boys’ team while Freddie Gabriel (CA), Sunny Li (MD), Terrence Lee (CA), and Judy Hugh (NJ) represented the Under-18 division.

Most likely, the presence of that last team member will confuse some readers and cause them to wonder why in the world a ten-year-old girl played as a member of the under-18 division of the boys’ national team. Yet other readers may be wondering about the absence of some other obviously qualified junior players. The reason goes as follows.

First of all, the decision actually to send a contingent to this tournament was not made until quite close to the travel date. Thus, USATT officials had very limited planning time for the trip. At the moment, Lily Yip was with her children, Adam and Judy, vacationing in China. Since Adam had been selected for the under-15 team and the American contingent needed another coach, Lily’s proximity to Taiwan made her an obvious choice for coach. Unable to leave her daughter behind in China, Lily asked whether Judy could come along and was granted permission. Several reasons contributed to USATT’s decision. First of all, it needed another coach and another player; secondly, flying a coach and a player from China was much cheaper than flying them from the U.S.; lastly, USATT was falling short on finding competitive players and coaches to fill the teams.

In addition, many obviously qualified players couldn’t go on the trip due to the short notice and lack of preparation time. For instance, Han Xiao and Michael Liu, two of the original choices for the Under-15 boys’ team, were forced to stay home as they found that getting a visa to Taiwan for holders of Chinese passports would take six to eight weeks. Other qualified players already had other commitments, such as Jackie Lee, who did not want to miss her first few days of high school.

Now, the reason Judy became a playing member of the U.S. Boys’ Team was that, the day before the departure date, Keith Alban, who had agreed to play in Taipei, was unable to go due to an injury, and Judy was the only extra American player present to complete the team. Nevertheless, Judy’s addition was greatly beneficial to the whole team, for if she hadn’t been there, the seven boys would have had no choice but to squeeze onto one four-person team and to play far fewer matches than they otherwise would have played. With Judy, the count rose to eight and two teams could be entered into the draw, allowing everyone a chance to play in every team tie.

On August 19, all the American team members, with the exception of Lily, Adam, Judy and Auria (all of whom were in China), flew to and met in Los Angeles. The five boys had flown in from the National Training Center in Flint, Michigan, where they had been training for the past week or so. They later returned to Flint after the trip to train a few more days.

Unfortunately for the team, unfavorable weather conditions governed that day and both flights from Los Angeles to Hong Kong and from Hong Kong to Taipei experienced long delays. Finally, at 12:30 AM on August 21, the day tournament play was to begin, the team arrived in the Taipei airport where tournament officials were waiting with a shuttle bus to take the team on an hour-long trip to the hotel. Yet more delays awaited the team at the hotel. Arriving around 1:30 AM, the team had various troubles checking in, and even greater difficulties dividing up the rooms. Since those team members flying in from China had arrived several hours earlier, they had already taken and fallen asleep in their rooms. When the whole team arrived, however, various rooming incompatibilities were discovered. As a result of the whole mix-up, which came to an end around 3:00 am, Jun Gao and the four girls’ team members ended up all squeezing together into one room with two tiny double beds and a few thin strips of hard floor.

Three hours later, everyone woke up with fair doses of jet lag, ate breakfast, and took the shuttle to the playing site where they warmed up for the first matches scheduled at 9 AM. Needless to say, the players were not at the highest levels of consciousness, but thankfully, the excitement of playing in a large international tournament on the other side of the world motivated the team at least to feel a bit sharper.

As a tournament devoted entirely to juniors under the age of eighteen, there were only six events: girls’ team, boys’ team (both held on the first day), girls’ U-18 singles, boys’ U-18 singles, girls’ U-15 singles and boys’ U-15 singles (all held on the second and third days). Still, the tournament attracted 25 teams for a total of more than 120 players, mostly representing various Asian countries, including Hong Kong, Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Vietnam and of course, Taiwan. With its large sponsor, the First Commercial Bank of Taipei, the tournament offered large cash prizes along with medals to its winners. In the team events, first place awards were US $3,000; second, US $2,000; and third, US $1,000. In the singles’ events, champions took home $600; runner-ups, $400; and third-place winners, $200. Interestingly enough, equal prizes were awarded in boys’ events as in girls’ events and in older events as in younger events.

The tournament was held in a fairly nice facility in downtown Taipei called the Taipei Gymnasium, which offered bright lighting, very high ceilings and hardwood floors. Eight Spoineta tables were set up in the main gymnasium for tournament play, and six were available on the third floor for practice. The practice tables were actually the site of a local table tennis club, of which there are incredibly many just within the city of Taipei. (For example, while strolling around downtown, within a block of the hotel, the American team accidentally stumbled upon a club in the basement of a clothing store.) Each table was allotted plenty...
and Adam. Last but not least was the "Wash prices" and one girls' team. Representing the team, regardless of age, could play.

Doubles match in which any two players on the team to consist of at least four players, and each had its own umpire and scoreboard. Furthermore, for the team events, signs were hung on the barriers indicating which team was playing which. There was plenty of seating for spectators in a balcony overlooking the playing area, and prominently hung all around the balcony and gymnasium were advertisements for various sponsors, which ranged from table tennis companies to orange juice producers to high-quality jewelers. The only major complaint our juniors had about the facility was its bathrooms. Few of the girls were accustomed to Taipei's "toilets," which consisted more or less of a basin plopped into a hole on the floor. Consequently, the girls' team made frequent trips across the street to McDonald's.

The tournament organizers also printed out a 65-page, partly bilingual tournament program that listed pictures, names and birth dates of all players, coaches and team leaders, grouped by team. In addition, it listed the tournament draws, and at the end, contained large, color advertisements for each of its sponsors. The programs, however, were distributed only to coaches and team managers.

The format of the team events required each team to consist of at least four players, two under the age of 18 and two under the age of 15. Each team tie was played best three draws, and at the end, contained large, color advertisements for each of its sponsors. The programs, however, were distributed only to coaches and team managers.

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The boys had a bit more difficult of a time. Playing in the highest-level event, Boys' Under-18 members played each other in singles; the next two matches for a 3-1 victory and a trip to the semifinals.

In the singles' events, all rounds were single elimination. Although a few American juniors failed to get by their first opponents, several marked notable wins.

On the girls' side, after easily disposing of her first opponent from a local school in Taipei, 2-0, Michelle ran into the eventual runner-up for the event and was forced to bow out, 0-2. Katherine Wu also noted an exciting deuce-in-the-3rd win over a girl she had beaten in the team event. Her next opponent, however, squeezed a third-game win by her and eventually went on to place third in that event.

The boys had a bit more difficult of a time than the girls, advancing only two out of the first round. Auria and Freddie. In his first match, Auria fought hard with a series of "Cho!'s and deservedly took the match in the third game. Still fighting hard in his next match, Auria let the win fall out of his grasp, losing 1-2.

Playing in the highest-level event, Boys' Under-18 singles, Freddie delivered several stunning performances to advance to the quarterfinals. In the first round, Freddie defeated a high-ranked Taiwan player in a thrilling 19-in-the-third match. Although his next round was a bit easier, it was not so by much and ended with a triumphant Freddie running off with a three-game win. Suddenly the young American star found himself in the quarterfinals, facing off against a rising Asian sensation. Exchanging fierce counter-looping rallies throughout the match, soon the two young men were tied one game to one, 20-20. Team members from both sides cheering at full volume, Freddie pumped himself and gave it his all... Alas, the effort fell short. Final score, 21-23: game, match and ticket to the semifinals to his opponent.

On the night of the last day of tournament play, the tournament organizers held a players' party in the hotel, where seating was assigned at the door by drawing out of a hat. As a result, strangers from different countries ended up sitting at the same tables and were given a chance to meet new people. After meals had been served, the hosts kicked off the entertainment with each team singing a song on Karaoke. The shy American delegation ended up singing the only English song of the night, "Killing Me Softly," and was treated to some generous applause. After those performances came several relay races, in which teams did such things as balancing ping pong balls on spoons which they held in their mouths or running in pairs with a balloon squeezed between their backs. With all the amusements and socializing, the party turned out quite fun.

Afterwards, the U.S. team had one and a half days of free time before having to head home. Much of the first free day was spent at a local amusement park and later at the famous Taiwanese "Night Markets" where various trinkets, such as necklaces, purses, watches, etc. could be bought for less than a dollar! Not surprisingly, luggage was brought home significantly increased in size.

The next day, after the game of the team opted to catch up on some sleep before catching the flight home while the other half chose to follow Coach Gao to a nearby club where the First Commercial Bank-sponsored junior team trained. Interestingly enough, this club was located right inside the large First Commercial Bank building itself, among the offices and bankers. Here, the U.S. juniors practiced with and played matches against the First Bank team. Seeing how their Asian counterparts trained and their range of levels was quite helpful to the U.S. team, allowing them to gauge their own abilities. Regrettably, the American team had to make an
early exit to catch their early afternoon flight. Thus ended the fun and exciting expedition.

Although the American juniors were unable to bring home any medals or cash prizes, they did come home with much new experience and knowledge. For one thing, most discovered that their own levels were amazingly close to their Asian counterparts. Many of the U.S. juniors, although they lost their matches, still were able to snatch a game or two, and few felt as if they absolutely could not keep up with their opponents. In fact, this tournament inspired many young spirits as they saw how, as a new crop of American juniors, they do indeed have a chance to be competitive on the international scene. Should only they put their minds and hearts to the task.

The American juniors were also able to witness firsthand the noticeably different attitude Asian countries had towards the sport of table tennis. First of all, the tournament was probably the most accurately scheduled and punctual American tournament had ever witnessed; and the reason for that quality was neither smarter nor more efficient tournament organizers, but just more eager and disciplined players. Matches never fell behind schedule because once one was over, the players for the next match were always sitting by the side, waiting to jump in and start their match. They just had a different kind of attitude and discipline from what is common here in the U.S.

Another non-American convention the U.S. juniors saw a lot of was the proliferation of coaching during matches. Nobody took a slightest notice in it, even when it occurred very obviously during important matches. For these players, coaching during matches seemed like the norm. Needless to say, umpires paid no heed to it. An excellent but hilarious example of such coaching occurred during one of Whitney's matches against a girl from Vietnam. Between each and every point, the Vietnamese girl's coach would talk very loudly to her about what she should do. Before one important point, she was preparing to serve backhand. But she was confused as to what she should do. Therefore, her coach yelled out that she should serve forehand. Cases such as those, although not such apparent levels, were abundant throughout.

Also interesting was the way Asian players were used to warming up. Here in the U.S., players already loathe having to cross-court their warm-up table with another pair. In Taiwan, however, seeing 15-20 players warming up on the same table was the norm! Not a second was wasted, as a pair would start hitting as soon as the previous pair missed and were going to pick up the ball. Efficiency was definitely foreign to much of the U.S. team.

During the Opening Ceremonies of the tournament, the U.S. Junior team had the opportunity for an encounter with a famous Taiwanese public figure: Ma Ying Jeeou, the Mayor of Taipei. Several important officials had been scheduled to give speeches at the ceremonies and among them happened to be that dignitary, who apparently loves to play table tennis. After the speeches and the ceremonies, the U.S. team members were invited to meet and take pictures with the mayor as a bonus.

All in all, the U.S. juniors had an experience they will never forget and by which they will benefit for years to come. Nothing can take the place of international match experience in the development of these promising juniors. Their minds have been opened and expanded in innumerable ways by this trip and all are eager to battle again next year. On behalf of the U.S. Junior Team, I'd like to extend a huge thank you to USATT!

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All ratings-related questions should be directed to Fran Boardman, USATT Headquarters, One Olympic Plaza, Colorado Springs, CO 80909. To find out your rating, send a self-addressed, stamped postcard with your name and the date of your last tournament. You may also contact us at 719-578-4583 or by e-mail at USATT3@iex.net.

TOP MEN
OR 2842 Fan, Yi Yong
MD 2784 Cheng, Yinghui
NJ 2720 Zhuang, David
MD 2945 Sweeia, Todd
TX 2632 Butler, Jim
TX 2596 Owens, Eric
VA 2574 Crislade, John B.
NY 2571 Musa, Atanda
NY 2568 Ekuk, Abass
TX 2550 Suborj, Viktorian
MD 2539 Lonergan, Sean
TX 2538 Creu, Prazvan
GA 2537 Hyatt, Michael
FL 2535 Alban, Keith
NY 2533 Shao, Yu
MD 2524 Huang, Tong Sheng Jack
CA 2520 Nguyen, Khoa Dinh
GA 2505 Jagwani, Mukesh
CA 2503 Guo, Da-Zhi
MI 2498 Jain, Ashoo
IN 2498 Seemiller, Daniel
LA 2493 Cohen, Randy H.
MD 2493 Masters, Brian
TN 2488 Reed, Barney J.
IN 2476 Chu, Chi-Sun
MD 2451 Li, Sunny
GA 2449 Peng, Xin
IL 2446 Shiu, Arturo Pang
CA 2442 Shohani, Shashin
CA 2434 Gabriel, Freddie

TOP WOMEN
MD 2648 Gao, Jun
CA 2487 Lin, Grace
MI 2477 Chiou, Emilia
CA 2446 Feng, Amy
CA 2438 Bahn, Tae萌
NJ 2291 Yip, Lily
NY 2272 Sung, Virginia
CA 2258 Tian, Anjieca
NY 2249 Opaz, Claudia
MI 2248 Bosika, Mimi
CA 2230 Zhao, Hong
TX 2207 Suborj, Roxana
MA 2133 Chu, Jane Hone
MD 2149 Lee, Vivian
MA 2128 Fong, Kyle
CA 2128 Huang, Min Hee
MD 2121 Balanyi, Boglarka
CA 2116 Lee, Jacqueline
TX 2107 Rosen, Peggy
FL 2072 Casas, Diana
MA 2043 Chang, Karen
IL 2031 Simovic, Marijana
NY 2031 Wong, Vicki
OR 2024 Ping, Emily
CT 2021 Laskova, Inna
CR 1976 Ping, Whitney
TX 1951 Roufeh, Mahin
NY 1947 Kaler, Natalie
CA 1946 Yu, Millie
OR 1942 Hoarfrost, Judy

TOURNAMENTS INCLUDED IN RATINGS
Ann Van Vooren Memorial Cup
1999 Charlotte Open
1999 Decatur Open
Schaumberg RR Open
Macy Block Open
San Francisco Summer Open
Davison August Open
Teams and More Open
Sports Fitness Player Series
1999 Sam Lima Memorial
Palama Closed
Kansas Summer Classic
Indianapolis Summer Open
Maryland September Circuit
Pacific Coast Open
Portsmouth Open Invitational
Bemer Plus Sunbelt Teams
Lake Havasu Open
NJITC September Open
Northwest Open
Arkansas Closed
Cincinnati Giant RR Open
Davison September Open
September Augusta Open

1999 MATTC September Open
Daly City Mayoral Trophy
Long Island September Open
Chattanooga Fall Open
Sports Fitness Player Series
1999 Millcreek Open
Maryland October Circuit
San Diego 40th Anniv. Open
Strike One October Open

USA TABLE TENNIS MAGAZINE • November/December 1999
UPCOMING
USA TABLE TENNIS TOURNAMENTS


November 20 - City of Aiken Open Fall TT Classic, Aiken, SC. Contact: Rick Sullivan, 170 Suffolk Dr., Aiken, SC 29803. Phone: 803-648-5018. ★★

November 20 - Fresno Fall Classic, Fresno, CA. Contact: Cliff Contreras, 4670 E. Butler, Fresno, CA 93702. Phone: 559-454-2608.


November 26-28 - North American Teams Open, Baltimore, MD. Contact: Richard Lee, P.O. Box 59451, Potomac, MD 20859-9451. Phone: 301-365-8651. nateams@hotmail.com. ★★★

December 4 - Sports Fitness TT Players Series, Clemmons, NC. Contact: Danny Hill, 3 Twin Brook Dr., Clemmons, NC 27012. Phone: 336-764-0010.

December 4 - Friends of Ping Pong, Houston, TX. Contact: Roberto Byles, 4997 W. Bellfort, Houston, TX 77035. Phone: 713-721-PLAY. ★★

December 4 - 1999 Millennium Madness Team TTT, Wichita, KS. Contact: John Potochnik, 6927 Woodbury Ct., Wichita, KS 67226. Phone: 316-636-8026. john.potochnik@lsil.com.

December 4 - Portland Double RR Open, Milwaukie, OR. Contact: Bill Mason, 4012 NE 83rd Way, Vancouver, WA 98665. Phone: 503-230-7541.

December 4-5 - Maryland Circuit, Eldersburg, MD. Contact: Yvonne Kronlage, 14160 Forsythe Rd., Sykesville, MD 21784. Phone: 410-489-7291.

December 4-5 - Valley of the Sun Open, Mesa, AZ. Contact: Wayne Johnson, 1964 E. Manhattan Dr., Tempe, AZ 85282. Phone: 480-755-9976. wjohn@dancris.com. ★

December 5-6 - Orlando Winter Open, Orlando, FL. Contact: Olga Soltesz, 1739 Shady Ridge Ct., Orlando, FL 32807. Phone: 407-830-4009. ★★


December 24-25 - New Year's Open, Naples, FL. Contact: John Potochnik, 6927 Woodbury Ct., Wichita, KS 67226. Phone: 316-636-8026. john.potochnik@lsil.com.


February 5-6 - Orlando Winter Open, Orlando, FL. Contact: Olga Soltesz, 1739 Shady Ridge Ct., Orlando, FL 32807. Phone: 407-830-4009. ★★


1999 OGIUMURA CUP JAPAN OPEN
Kobe, Japan • September 23-26, 1999

Vladimir Samsonov of Belarus (L) and Ma Lin of China (R) in action at the Japan Open. Samsonov defeated Ma in the men’s singles final, but Ma won men’s doubles with Qin Zhijian.

Men’s Singles – Final: Vladimir Samsonov (BLR) d. Ma Lin (CHN), 13,16,16,17; SF: Samsonov d. Jorgen Persson (SWE), 14,17,6,18; Ma d. Yoo Seung Min (KOR), 14,15,20,15,20; QF: Samsonov d. Patrick Chilla (FRA), 19,14,19,12; Roskopf d. Timo Boll (GER), 6,16,13,15; Yoo d. Jean-Philippe Gatien (FRA), 20,12,12; Ma d. Liu Guo Zheng (CHN), 19,21,12,12; 8ths: Samsonov d. Yan Sen (CHN), 13,19,14; Chila d. Wang Liqin (CHN), 10,14,14; Boll d. Tassaki Toshio (JPN), 15,11,13,12; Roskopf d. Zoran Primorac (CRO), -10,11,14,18; Yoo d. Chuang Chi-Yuan (TPE), -14,16,22,19; Gatien d. Oh Seung Eun (KOR), 12,18,14, -10,13; Liu d. Damien Eloi (FRA), -14,17,14, -14,15; Ma d. Leung Chu Yan (HKG), 17,13,17; 16ths: Chuang Chi-Yuan d. Jan-Ove Waldner (SWE), 17,19,11,19,18; Boll d. Kim Tack Soo (KOR), 15,14,18,19; Jorg Roskopf d. Yoo Nam Kyu (KOR), -20,16,7,19; Tassaki d. Chiang Peng-Lung (TPE), -18,13,22,20,21; Liu d. Jorgen Persson (SWE), 14,19,17,20; Samsonov d. Kiho Shinnosuke (JPN), 19,15,7; Yan d. Sanada Koji (JPN), 14,18,16; Chila d. Yuzawa Ryu (JPN), -20,18,20,12; Wang Liqin d. Koji Matsushita (JPN), 14,18,16; Primorac d. Joo Se Hyuk (KOR), 19,15,15; Yoo Seung Min d. Christophe Legout (FRA), -8,11,19,19; Oh d. Jean-Michel Saive (BEL), 13,17; Gatien d. Park Sang Joon (KOR), -10,11,14,18; Eloi d. Cheung Yuk (KOR), 6,6,16; Leung d. Iseki Seiko (JPN), 21,8,14; Ma d. Chang Y.S. (TPE), -15,15,15,16.

Women’s Singles – Final: Wang Nan (CHN) d. Koyama ChiRe (JPN), 17,12,18,11,18; SF: Wang d. Sun Jin (CHN), 19,15,10,17; Koyama d. Wang Hui (CHN), 15,9,14, -19,15; QF: Wang Nan d. Tamara Boros (CRO), -19,14,18,17; Sun d. Nishiyi Y (JPN), -12,14,15,11; Koyama d. Ryu Ji Hae (KOR), 18,19,14,17; Wang Hui d. Liu Jia (CHN), 7,12,17,9; QF: Wang Hui d. Sun Jin (CHN), -19,-24,17,15, Chen d. Nicole Struse (GER), 10,14,10; Wang Hui d. Miliaela Steff (SIN), 16,-12,11,14; Tian-Zorner (GER), 21,18,16,17; Wang Hui d. Ching Hsing (CHN), 19,14,16; Waldner d. Chiistophe Legout (FRA), 12,-18,12; SF: Ma d. Lean- Philippe Gatien (FRA), -18,-19,17.9,13: Tan d. Chiang Peng-Lung (TPE), 19,18,16,16.

Women’s Doubles – Final: Yang Ying/Sun Jin (CHN) d. Jan-Ove Waldner/Jorgen Persson (SWE), 19,14; SF: Ma/Qin d. Le Chu Seung/Park Sang Eun (KOR), 12,-15,18,19; Samsonov d. Jorgen Persson (SWE), 14,17,17; 8ths: Wang Nan d. Tamara Boros (CRO), 13,14; Waldner/Persson d. Wang Liqin/Yan Sen (CHN), 16,14; Gatien/Chila d. Christophe Legout/Damien Eloi (FRA), 18,16.

Women’s Doubles – Final: Yang Ying/Sun Jin (CHN) d. Li Ju/Wang Nan (CHN), 17,19,16; SF: Yang/Sun d. Song A.S./Kwok F.F. (HKG), 9,14; Li/Wang d. Csilla Batorfi/Kristzina Toth (HUN), 19,15,17; QF: Yang/Sun d. Suk Eun Mi/Elke Schall (KOR/GER), 12,14; Song/Kwok d. Konishii A/Fujinuma A. (JPN), -12,13,19; Batorfi/Toth d. Takeda Akiko/Kawagoe Mayu (JPN), 19,15; Li/Wang d. Ryu Ji Hae/Kim Moo Kyo (KOR), -17,15,17.

1999 GERMAN OPEN
Bremen, Germany
October 14-17, 1999

Men’s Singles – Final: Liu Guoliang (CHN) d. Vladimir Samsonov (BLR), 12,-10, -20,16,15; SF: Liu d. Jan-Ove Waldner (SWE), 14,17,6,18; Samsonov d. Damien Eloi (FRA), 9,14,15; QF: Liu d. Tan Ruiviu (CHN), 18,18,17; Samsonov d. Jorgen Persson (SWE), 14,19,-5,20,17; Eloi d. Werner Schlager (AUT), 14,12,17; Waldner d. Ma Wenge, (CHN), 17,-14,19,14,18; QF: Liu d. Zoltan Fejer-Konnerner (GER), -19,11,18,-19,13; Samsonov d. Liu Guozheng (CHN), 18,-15,20,15; Persson d. Patrick Chilla (FRA), 9,15,11; Schlager d. Johnny Huang (CAN), -18,10,14,13; Eloi d. Wang Liqin (CHN), 19,14,16; Waldner d. Christophe Legout (FRA), 14,-13,16,20; Ma d. Jean-Philippe Gatien (FRA), -18,19,17,13; Tan d. Chiang Peng-Lung (TPE), 19,18,16,16.

Women’s Singles – Final: Wang Nan (CHN) d. Li Ju (CHN), 15,16,11; SF: Wang Nan d. Chire Koyama (JPN), 19,14,19; Li Ju d. Wang Hui (CHN), 8,15,9; QF: Wang Nan d. Cheng Ying (FRA), 6,7,-8,20,14; Koyama d. Joo Se Hyuk (KOR), 19,15,15; Yoo Seung C 62 t= 37,19,18.16: Chilad. Yuzawa (TPE), 18.-13.-22,20.21: Liu d. Jorgen Persson (SWE), 14,-19,16,17; Wang Hui (CHN) d. Qianhong Gotsch (GER), -20,17,19,12; Li Ju d. Je Schopp (GER), 17,9,17; 8ths: Wang Nan d. Tamara Boros (CRO), 19,-24,17,15; Chen d. Nicole Struse (GER), 9,7,10; Koyama d. Cheng Hongxia (CHN), 16,-12,11,14; Tian-Zorner d. Otilia Badescu (ROM), 8,14; Gotsch d. Li Jia Wei (SIN), 10,14,10; Wang Hui d. Mihaela Steff (ROM), -19,-21,19,18; Schopp d. Zhang Yingying (CHN), 20,-14,12,15; Li Ju d. Zhang Yingying (CHN), -19,12,16,15.


Women’s Doubles – Final: Csilla Batorfi/Kristzina Toth (HUN) d. Zhang Ying/Ying Ying (CHN), -20,14,21; SF: Batorfi/Toth d. Aganovic/Tamara Boros (CRO), -9,19,14; Zhang/Zhang d. Li Ju/Wang Nan (CHN), 12,13; QF: Li/Wang d. Jing Tian-Jomner/Olga Nemes (GER), 18,22; Zhang/Zhang d. Cheng Hongxia/Wang Hui (CHN), 15,16; Aganovic/Boros d. Kazuko Naito/Keiko Okazaki (JPN), 8,16; Batorfi/Toth d. Chen Jing/Xu Ying (TPE), 16,-19,19.
One hundred and ten players, including Razvan Cretu (TX), Barney Reed Sr. and Jr. (TN), Dave Roberts (CA) and Samuel Mark Smith (TX) participated in this Labor Day weekend tournament in Palo Alto. In the absence of Fan Yi Yong, the $700 prize for the Open Singles event was indeed open.

In the Women’s Open, Jackie Lee (2058) defeated Michelle Do (2209) for the first time. Barney Sr. (2202) fell to 13-year-old Aurora Malek (1793). Barney Sr., who spent his time playing, watching and coaching his son, and talking to others about his elementary school program in Tennessee quipped after the match, “I guess the Taiwan trip did do him some good.”

Dennis Davis described Sam Lima, who founded one of Northern California’s first table tennis clubs in the early fifties, as the father of table tennis in the Silicon Valley. Sam’s club attracted world-class table tennis players, such as former world champion Ichiro Ogimura. It is interesting to note that President Sheri Pittman played there when she was a college student at Santa Clara University. Dennis has appropriately memorialized Sam’s contribution to the sport with this Labor Day tournament. Dennis, his wife Kirsten and other volunteers ran the tournament on time and without a hitch, and deserve congratulations for an enjoyable and successful tournament.


Open Doubles: Khoa Nguyen/Piotr Zajac d. Shashin Shodhan/Philip Lim; -16,17,14.

Women’s Singles: Jackie Lee d. Michelle Do, 17,20.

Under 17: Jackie Lee d. Aurora Malek, 13,14.


U2250: Yong Ren d. Trillo Voltaire, 10,11.


U1900: Aurora Malek d. Mikhail Kazantsev, 15,18.

U1750: Jim Langley d. Wendell Loadholt, -19,13,12.


U1500: Pat Castro d. Bala Lakshminarayan, 17,15.

U1400: Gary Alcares d. Lee Swander, 17,14.

U1250: Pat Castro d. Gary Alcares, 14,-17,21.

U1150: Regis Chapman d. Henry Han, 16, -17,16.

$2000 LAKE HAVASU OPEN
Lake Havasu City, Arizona • September 18-19, 1999
By Alan Newman

Tournament Chairman Paul Campbell, Open Winner Attilla Malek, Runner-up Ramin Samari, Lake Havasu TTC President John Ballard.

Table tennis is alive and thriving in the desert. The fourth annual Lake Havasu Open, held Sept. 18-19, attracted 104 players, the most ever. The tournament had 23 events, 13 of them with cash prizes.

Open singles included former national champion Attilla Malek, as well as last year's Lake Havasu Champion, Loc Ngo. In the final match in the Open, Ramin Samari, the second seed, gave Malek a scare by winning the first game and nearly the second, but after that things went Malek's way as he won in four games.

The women's singles event included the highest rated woman to ever visit Lake Havasu, Hong Zhao. Making up for an earlier upset loss in the Open to Nick Mintsiveris, Zhao easily cruised to victory, with Ping Fuschino from Phoenix placing second.

Top seed in Open doubles were the two highest rated players in the tournament, Malek and Samari. Although it seemed almost a sure thing that they would win, the team of Loc Ngo and Rudy Miranda pushed them to five games before finally accepting second.

This year there were no diminutive, young prodigies of talent in the Junior Singles, but Matt Winkler of Phoenix showed that his game is improving at a rapid pace as he defeated the Malek-coached Michael Armen. Amongst the local hopefuls, Melissa Campbell of Parker scored a remarkable upset victory over Devin Wiley of Lake Havasu.

The hardbat event included many excellent 2000+ players more usually associated with the modern looping game. In the final, Mintsiveris, known for his crafty play, was overcome by the superior smashing attack of Loc Ngo.

Mike Perez collected a pile of trophies, placing first in Over 40 Singles & Doubles, and in Draw Doubles, and second in U1500 Doubles. His success in doubles was rivaled by Dave Kendall, who took first in U3500 Doubles and second in both U2800 and Draw Doubles.

Ky Nguyen, who won U1600 Singles in Parker in March, has improved, and this time took first in U1750 Singles and second in U1900. Steve Archambo also had an excellent tournament, placing first in U1600 Singles and second in U1500.

Lake Havasu's own John Ballard, proving that he ripens and matures with age, teamed with Californian William Cooper to place second in Over 60 Doubles behind Ragnar Horvath and Alex Horvath.

Special thanks go to lead sponsor Barnacle Bill's Boat Rental's, and to Paddle Palace and Nittaku for supplying tournament balls.

Open Singles: 1st Attilla Malek; 2nd Ramin Samari.
Open Doubles: 1st Attilla Malek/Ramin Samari; 2nd Loc Ngo/Rudy Miranda.
Women's Singles: 1st Hong Zhao; 2nd Ping Fuschino.
Over 40 Singles: 1st Mike Perez; 2nd Leo Lucas.
Over 50 Singles: 1st Leo Lucas; 2nd Ragnar Horvath.
Over 60 Singles: 1st Ragnar Horvath; 2nd Alex Horvath.
Over 40 Doubles: 1st Mike Perez/Ping Fuschino; 2nd Mike Didio/Paul Campbell.
Over 60 Doubles: 1st Ragnar Horvath/Alex Horvath; 2nd John Ballard/Bill Cooper.

Hardbat: 1st Loc Ngo; 2nd Nick Mintsiveris.
U1900: 1st Thangavelu Dhinakaran; 2nd Ky Nguyen.
U1750: 1st Ky Nguyen; 2nd Tony Gumatauto.
U1600: 1st Steve Archambo; 2nd Michael Armen.
U1500: 1st Len Winkler; 2nd Steve Archambo.
U1400: 1st Bob Chew; 2nd David Gove.
U1300: 1st Franz Schauer; 2nd Les Kosowski.
U1150: 1st Christian Panescu; 2nd Jack Howell.
U1000: 1st Adolfo Tolarmente; 2nd David Cook III.
Unrated: 1st Walter Baier; 2nd Dorald Gregory.

Draw Doubles: 1st Mike Perez/Stanly Kahan; 2nd Mike Didio/Paul Campbell.

U3500 Doubles: 1st Wilfredo Escobar/David Kendall; 2nd Mike Perez/Larry Cross.

The tourney was a huge success with 48 players and play was completed in one day on seven tables.

Open: 1st Mark Nordby; 2nd Mark Hazinski; 3rd Randy Hewitt.
Elite Over 2050: 1st Mark Hazinski; 2nd Don Hamilton; 3rd 1700+ Randy Hewitt & Mark Nordby.

U2100: 1st Lee Bahlman; 2nd Jared Lynch; 3rd Jordan Lynch.
U1950: 1st Jordan Lynch; 2nd Ercei Kerner.
U1800: 1st John Card; 2nd Joe Clemons.
U1600: 1st Michael Lacey; 2nd Michael Casey.
U1400: 1st Eli Kahn; 2nd Ronald Kolb.
U1200: 1st Carl Kahn; 2nd Ben Kolb.

40mm Ball Open: 1st Don Hamilton; 2nd Mark Nordby.
40mm Ball U1900: 1st Dann Yoder; 2nd Ercei Kerner.

Non-USATT Open: 1st Howard Newcomer; 2nd Arif Hameed.

Non-USATT Under 16: 1st Chris Pommer; 2nd Nicole Lynch.

Open Doubles: 1st Mark Nordby/Don Hamilton; 2nd Lee Bahlman/Brian Fowler.

U3800 Doubles: 1st Ercei Kerner/Jerry Marcum; 2nd Mark Artman/Jerrell Clark.

Open Singles Winner Mark Nordby.
**BEMER PLUS SUNBELT TEAMS**

*Houston, Texas • September 18, 1999*

**By Terry Canup**

With the generous sponsorship of Bemers Plus (a top Houston luxury car dealership), the Houston Table Tennis Center played host to this year's regional team tournament. Finishing first in the “A” division was the Acorn Press team of Viktor Subonj, Huan Nguyen, & Roxanna Subonj. Second place went to the Misfits team of Razvan Cretu, Kazuhiro Ohara, Iman Levi, & Sam Smith.

Additional top teams included: New Orleans with Randy Cohen, John Beaumont, & Sam Wang; Bemers Plus with Roberto Byles, Hector Bennett, & Carrie Bodden; Lethal Matrix with Aaron Struth, Howard Lamb, & Randy Medcalf. Winning the B Division was the Beg Tets team (Simon Edlund, Ivan Amaya, & Cyril Agbontaen). The C's were won by team MR (Richard Howell, Rene Rzek, Martin Sebowski).

The format of play is a best of 7 matches. The first 6 matches are singles. Then if necessary, the 7th and deciding match is doubles. The first team to win 4 is awarded the team title. Play was in a dual round robin format. The first round robin seeded the players into the A's, B's, and C's. The top four teams were automatically seeded into the A's, thus avoiding the preliminaries. Following the divisional round robin, final placements were determined by crossover play among all of the 16 teams. Each team could only have one player playing that was over 2250 in USATT ratings.

This tournament marked the first events for two recently moved top players. Razvan Cretu (2544), formerly of New Orleans, moved to Dallas, while Randy Cohen (2493), has moved to New Orleans. It also saw the first tournament play in four years for former U.S. team member Peggy Rosen. Featured were 4 of the top 30 male players in the country. The matches reflected this tightly bunched high-level play. Cohen and Oshodi brought the crowd to their feet.

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**CONCORD CUP YOUTH OPEN**

*Pleasant Hill, California • October 10, 1999*

**By Phil Schafer**

This was the second year for table tennis in the Concord Cup youth sports competition, a program including eight other sports (gymnastics, wrestling, boxing, softball, soccer, tennis, swimming and kickboxing). The California International Sports Foundation and the Concord Department of Leisure Services sponsor the Concord Cup series; the Concord Table Tennis Club was a co-sponsor of the table tennis event.

Tables are underway for next year's event. Areas for improvement include attendance and match scheduling.
The 14th Annual Colorado Springs Open was held at SportsCentre I at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs. Top-seeded Jim Doney of Colorado Springs made it through the draw without losing a game. Jim had a few close calls, especially in his quarterfinal match against Tim St. Germain of Colorado Springs, where he came back from a 20-17 deficit in the first to finish the match at 20,19,12. Second-seeded Bohdan Davidowicz failed to advance past the first round, falling to Mike Tarter. In the finals, Doney met Alex Vizelman, the winner of the Under 1800 Singles event held Saturday. Alex defeated Kevin Young in the semifinals. In Open Doubles, new USATT Executive Director Ben Nisbet teamed with Scott Preiss to defeat Doney and Dave Hays. Ben is donating his prize money to USATT’s Junior Development Fund. In the last match of the tournament, Hays defeated Dennis Gresham of Albuquerque in the Under 1950 Finals.

Open Singles - Final: Jim Doney (CO) d. Alex Vizelman (CO) 12,8,19; SF: Doney d. Bob Jackson (CO) 14,14,8; Vizelman d. Kevin Young (CO) 11,10,17,20.

Open Doubles - Final: Ben Nisbet/Scott Preiss (CO) d. Jim Doney (CO)/David Hays (WY) 15,18; SF: Nisbet/Preiss d. Dana Jeffries/Tim St. Germain (CO) 19,12; Doney/Hays d. Eric Benton/Dave Edwards (CO) 19,12.

Over 30 Singles - Final: Tim St. Germain (CO) d. Tom Wintrich (NM) 14,11; SF: St. Germain d. Allen McDermott (CO) 14,-18,10; Wintrich d. David Hays (WY) 14,16.

Over 40 Singles - Final: Tom Wintrich (NM) d. Carlos Barrientos (CO) 20,18; SF: Wintrich d. Jim Walker (SD) 13,14; Barrientos d. Dan Hambleton (CO) -17,8,10.

Over 55 Singles - Final: Dennis Gresham (NM) d. Allen McDermott (CO) 17,-18,20; SF: Gresham d. Vic Smith (NM) 12,4; McDermott (CO) d. Edgar Stein (NM) default.

Under 18 Boys' Singles: 1st Austin Edwards (CO); 2nd Carlisle White (CO); 3rd Troy Taller (KS): 2nd Brandon DePries (CO); P Adam Hendrickson.

Under 14 Boys' Singles: 1st Aaron Hendrickson (KS); 2nd Brandon DeVries (CO); 3rd Adam Preiss (CO).

U1950 - Final: David Hays (WY) d. Dennis Gresham (NM) 12,14; SF: Hays d. Allen McDermott (CO) 15,-11,10; Gresham d. Tom Wintrich (NM) 10,-15,18.

U1800 - Final: Alex Vizelman (CO) d. Rick Massoth (NM) 18,-16,18.

C Singles: Tulio Wolfdorf (CO) d. Max Hamilton (NM) -14,10,18.

D Singles: Mike Dancel (CO) d. Mike Padgett (CO) 15,-16,11.


U1100 RR: John Redman (CO) d. Adam Jarvis (CO) 23,16.

U-3400 Doubles: Rick Massoth/Max Hamilton (NM) d. Carlos Barrientos/Brian Foley (CO) 18,7.

1999 Paul Cracraft Memorial Sportsmanship Award: Dennis Heath (CO).

Photo by Larry Hodges ©1999

Left: USATT Marketing Chairman Dave “Lefty” Williams takes a break from the Olympic Public Relations Association meetings in Colorado Springs (Sept. 22-25) for a quick hike up Pikes Peak.

Right: The table tennis sculpture at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs.

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USA TABLE TENNIS MAGAZINE • November/December 1999
MARYLAND SEPTEMBER CIRCUIT
Eldersburg, Maryland
September 11-12, 1999
Open: 1st Larry Johnson; 2nd Mahash Balaganghar.
U2100: 1st Larry Johnson; 2nd Cahibuzo Onukwufer.
U1900: 1st Cahibuzo Onukwufer; 2nd Larry Johnson.
U1700: 1st Rajan Kumar; 2nd Dzevad Dzdzarevic.
U1500: 1st David Elliott; 2nd Alex Roesell.
U1300: 1st G.S. Krishnan; 2nd Mike Harris.
U1100: 1st George Williams; 2nd Michael Nester.
U900/Novice: 1st Michael Nester; 2nd Ruslan Mogilnay.
Over 40: 1st Cahibuzo Onukwufer; 2nd Lee Sumner.
Over 60: 1st Alex Roesell; 2nd Ross Kelley.
Under 18: PMike Harris; 211(1 Dino Dezdarevic.
Sumner.
U1800/Novice: P' Michael Nestor; 2nd
U1500: 1st David Elliott; 2nd Mike Harris.
U1200: P' Fong Hsu; 2nd George Williams.
U1400: 1st Tom Helmke; 2nd Chris Puls.
U1600: 1st Ray Willis; 2nd Anthony Solana.
U1800: 1st Joshua Bernstein; 2nd Carl Simons.
Hard Bat: 1st Simon Brain; 2nd Lee Sumner.

MARYLAND OCTOBER CIRCUIT
Eldersburg, Maryland
October 2-3, 1999
Open: 1st Nazruddin Asgarali; 2nd Steve Hochman.
12-year-old Khaleel Asgarali swept the U1800 and U2000
events, while father Nazruddin “Oscar” Asgarali won the Open and Over 40.
U1800: 1st Khaleel Asgarali; 2nd Lee Sumner.
U1600: 1st Ray Willis; 2nd Chris Puls.
U1400: 1st Tom Helmke; 2nd George Williams.
U1200: 1st Fong Hsu; 2nd Ray Aker.
U1000: 1st Dmitri Shkolnik; 2nd Ross Kelley.
U800/Novice: 1st Howard Yang; 2nd Celus Weeks.
Over 40: 1st Nazruddin Asgarali; 2nd Lee Sumner.
Under 18: 1st Megan Burris; 2nd Greg Barboza.
U3000 Doubles: 1st John Vos & Ray Aker; 2nd
Tom Helmke & William Vanwright.
Jr/Adult Doubles: 1st Justin Chao & Mark Jones; 2nd Megan Burris & Yvonne Kronlege.
Hard Bat: 1st Simon Brain; 2nd Lee Sumner.

SCHAUMBERG OPEN
Schaumberg, Illinois • August 21, 1999
Group A: 1st Steve Huang; 2nd Maya Simovic; 3rd Aaron Avery; 4th Jason Miller.
Group B: 1st Armano Remtula; 2nd Manuel Tuzzon.
Group C: 1st Bart Salazar; 2nd Bernhard Reiter.
Group D: 1st Jack Winsiewski; 2nd Jim Waltz.
Group E: 1st Alnoor Sumar; 2nd Ambirene Daya.

CHARLOTTE OPEN
Charlotte, NC • August 21, 1999
Class A: 1st Nigel Christopher; 2nd Guillermo Rosales; 3rd Bryan Lusiana; 4th Craig Ward; 5th Jeff Thomas; 6th Tom Griffin.
Class B: 1st Bobby Jones; 2nd Gerald Singleton; 3rd Mike Robinson; 4th Mike Hadsell; 5th Amir Amidi; 6th John Pahl.
Class C: 1st Dave England; 2nd Hani Bizzi; 3rd Elias Gomez; 4th Corey Macelven; 5th Michael Yip; 6th Andy Claytor.

1999 CLUB CHALLENGE RR
Columbia, SC • August 8, 1999
Open: 1st Xin Peng; 2nd Nigel Christopher; 3rd Derek May; 4th Jeffery Thomas.
Open Doubles: 1st Jeremy Finkbeiner/Jeffrey Thomas; 2nd Mike Harris/Mike Duke.
Class A: 1st Tony Murnahan; 2nd Adam Forsythe.
Class B: 1st Tim Hougland; 2nd Derek Scott.
Class C: 1st Roger Peterson; 2nd Emie Powell.
Class D: 1st Randolph Scott; 2nd Jeremy Finkbeiner.
U1400 Class A: 1st Harold Wheeler; 2nd Helen Huang.
U1400 Class B: 1st Chun Pang; 2nd Carl Looper.

FLORIDA STATE CLOSED
Orlando, Florida • August 28-29, 1999
Open: 1st Brian Pace; 2nd Keith Alban; 3-4: Jacques Cases & Randy Cohen.
Open Doubles: 1st Randy Cohen/Rafael Flores; 2nd Brian Pace/Keith Alban.
Women: 1st Amy Huo; 2nd Danuta Andrzejewiska; 3rd Bik-Yin Lai.
Over 40: 1st Dickie Fleisher; 2nd Steve Federico.
Over 50: 1st Jim Beckford; 2nd Jerry Alderman.
Under 18: 1st Jason Connolly; 2nd Jay Hearn.
U2100: 1st Rafael Flores; 2nd Phuong Tran.
U1950: 1st Steve Federico; 2nd Mark Herbert.
U1850: 1st David Marshall; 2nd Wesley Greaves.
U1750: 1st Juan Perez; 2nd George Fong.
U1450: 1st Asif Jadasung; 2nd Darrell Pepper.
U1300: 1st Kedar Kirtane; 2nd Carl Simons.

1999 CLUB CHALLENGE RR
Clemmons, NC • August 14, 1999
Open: 1st Jim McQueen; 2nd Rick Matthews; 3rd Tony Provenzano; 4th Sonny Bradley.
Over 40: 1st Andi Sumar; 2nd Steve Mundy.
Over 50: 1st Bill Neely; 2nd Greg Cox.
U2000 Class A: 1st Gerald Singleton; 2nd Tony Banjoko.
U2000 Class B: 1st Art Stewart; 2nd David Sterling.
U2000 Class C: 1st Bobby Jones; 2nd Sam Faminiba.
U1200 Class D: 1st Doug Paul; 2nd Rosco Whitfield.
U1200 Class E: 1st Chuck Grojean; 2nd Mark Magitinan.
U3600 Doubles: 1st Jim McQueen/D.J. Settle; 2nd Simon Brain/Lobo Lin.

SFTT PLAYER SERIES #1
Clemmons, NC • September 4, 1999
Open: 1st Jimmy McQueen; 2nd Danny Hill; 3rd Tony Provenzano; 4th Tony Banjoko.
Over 40: 1st LeRoy Piilai; 2nd Rick Mundy; 3rd Greg Cox; 4th Tony Provenzano.
Over 50: 1st Gerald Singleton; 2nd Tony Connolly.
U2000 Class B: 1st Roscoe Whitfield; 2nd Tony Murnahan.
U2000 Class C: 1st Roy Wilson; 2nd Serey Averin.
U2000 Class D: 1st Susan Salzgeber; 2nd Hunter Weikel.
The 1999 Southern Open ran smoothly and almost always on time. It was a long weekend for tournament director Robert Mayer and staff — but a great one for the record 162 participants on 24 tables at the Houston Table Tennis Center.

Fan Yi Yong reached the final of the Open with little challenge — winning by scores of (8,9,11), (10,10,11), (12,7,6) and (9,12,12) in his march to the final. (All Open matches were best of five.) In the final, who did he meet?

Cheng Yinghua had entered the tournament, but he’d passed the U.S. citizenship test a few weeks earlier, and his swearing-in ceremony was scheduled for 9:30 AM on Saturday — in Baltimore, 1500 miles away. He couldn’t change it, and so withdrew. Jim Butler was at the tournament — but as a spectator. He’s retired — see feature on him this issue. Darko Rop also was at the tournament, but also as a spectator — he too is retired. Eric Owens? Nope, he was doing exhibitions in Wisconsin, shortly after returning from training in China. David Zhuang? A good guess — but he was taken out in the semifinals, 3-0, by Open Finalist Todd Sweeris.

It wasn’t exactly a romp for Todd, however. Down 19-17 in the first, Todd ran off four straight on his serve to win at 19. In the second, Todd again wins at 19. Todd is playing very patiently, never pressing, giving David a steady stream of pips-out backhand drives, just hard enough to keep David pinned down. Eventually, one of them would step around and play forehand, or one would go down the line — but Todd’s forehand loop and steady pips-out backhand drives were wearing away at David’s pips-out penhold blocking/hitting game, and David seemed vulnerable this match — in Baltimore, 1500 miles away. He didn’t enter Under 18, using his very strong backhand loop over and over, won the Under 2100 event over Thuy Tran. Thuy got his first place trophy by teaming up with Hieu Ngo to win Under 3600 Doubles.

Open Singles — Final: Fan Yi Yong d. Todd Sweeris, 17,14,18; SF: Fan d. Khoa Nguyen, 9,12,12; Sweeris d. David Zhuang, 19,19,17; QF: Fan d. Abass Ekun, 12,7,6; Nguyen d. Razvan Cretu, 10,12,20; Sweeris d. Randy Cohen, 16,20,20; Zhuang d. Michael Hyatt, 19,17,16; 8ths: Fan d. Eyal Adini, 10,10,11; Ekun d. Sumeon Lonerang, 14,19,19; Nguyen d. Viktor Subonj, 14,13,15,17; Cretu d. Xiaobin Tao, 12,16,13; Sweeris d. Taju Oshodi, 14,16,19; Cohen d. Shao Yu, 17,19,15,17; Hyatt d. Brian Pace, 18,12,15; Zhuang d. Avisly Schmidt, 9,9,16.


Allstar Women: 1st Mahin Roufeh; 2nd Roxanna Subonj; 3rd Blanca Alejo; 4th Kimberly Byles.

U2450 — Final: Idan Levi d. Hector Bennett, 21,7; SF: Levi d. Taju Oshodi, 12,16; Bennett d. Aaron Struth, 15,20,19; QF: Oshodi d. Hoan Nguyen, 15,22,13; Levi d. Cary Bodden, 17,16; Struth d. Eyal Adini, 12,22,16; Bennett d. Avisly Schmidt, 18,16.

U2250 — Final: Hector Bennett & Hoan Nguyen split prize; SF: Bennett d. Origene Nyangui, 18,19; Nguyen d. Larry Hodges, 20,15,17.

U2100 — Final: Howard Lamb d. Thuy Tran, 11,14,12; SF: Lamb d. Rafael Flores, 20,11; Thuy d. George Fang, 13,20,16.


U1800: Hong Chuong d. Aaron Abagoa, 16,11.

U1650: Hong Chuong d. John Truong, 10,9.


U1250: Wilfred Oliphant & Elias Rizk, 14,15,18.


Hardbat: Taju Oshodi d. Hector Bennett, 19,19.

Hardbat U1800: 1st Simon Edlund; 2nd John Stovall.


Under 18: 1st Robert Andersson; 2nd Daniel Yu.

U4500 Doubles: Bennett/Nguyen d. Levi/Smith, 19,19.


The Fan Yi Yong "Frisbee" Backhand Loop:

Photos By Terry Canup
and John Oros
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Photos of Fan Yi Yong, Todd Sweeris, Khoa Nguyen, Razvan Cretu, Viktor Subunji, Howard Lamb, Blanca Alejo and Robert Mayer ©1999 by Terry Canup.

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