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The Official Magazine of USA Table Tennis
September/October 1999

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USA Table Tennis
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PRESIDENT
Sheri Soderberg Pittman

EDITOR, DESIGNER & ADVERTISING MANAGER
Larry Hodges
8810 Walnut Hill Road
Chevy Chase, MD 20815
301-986-5601 (ph&fax) • itworld@erols.com

EDITORIAL BOARD
Dennis Taylor (Chair), James Allen,
Tim Boggan, Jim McQueen, Sheri Pittman

CIRCULATION DIRECTOR
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HEADQUARTERS STAFF
Ben Nisbet  Executive Director
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CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Tim Boggan, Larry Hodges, Azmy Ibrahim,
Tong Lee, Diego Schaaf, Arno Stienen,
Todd Sweeris, Wei Wang, Alan Williams

PHOTOGRAPHY
AllSport, Mal Anderson, Terry Canup,
Dan Cochran, Larry Hodges, Joe Holman,
Tong Lee, Richard McAfee, Ted Nowak,
John Oros, Diego Schaaf, Michael Wetzel

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Although Florida, and thus my home, were spared by Hurricane Floyd, I feel slightly buffeted by the non-stop whirlwind of activity in the 100 days since I became president in May.

At the outset of my presidency I sought to take care of three details: keeping the magazine on track; hiring an outstanding candidate for executive director; and making sure that the national coaching program matched the philosophies of our national coaches. Here is a brief status report: Larry Hodges has been working feverishly on the magazine; Ben Nisbet has seamlessly assumed the executive director’s duties; and finally, Mark Nordby was just appointed as the new Coaching Committee Chair.

At the same time I was working on these domestic issues, I took the opportunity to network at the international level. If you’ve ever met me or seen me in action, then you know that I spend a lot of time meeting with people. And that’s what I did at the Pan Am Games and the World Championships. I am confident that many of these contacts will provide us with excellent resources and opportunities.

USATT is seeking to improve our stature both nationally and internationally. Our newly-adopted High Performance Plan (to be featured in the next magazine) assures the membership that we will follow a track that interweaves the best of the U.S. with your home life. If you have a happy home life, then you have true acceptance of my apology, he also gave me many insights as to ways that our association can work with the top players to improve future U.S. Opens.

Lastly, best wishes to Zoran Primorac and his new bride, Daniela. When we talked about his results at the world championships, he commented that winning such titles certainly make for memorable moments in your life. But, with a content heart, he pointed out his fiancée and added, “The most important thing is happiness.” I appreciate his sentiment all the more after escaping the wrath of Hurricane Floyd. And so it’s back to the second 100 days!

USATT HIRES BEN NISBET AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

USATT’s First Executive Director Hired From Within Our Sport

PROFILE:
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CAREER HIGHLIGHTS
Vice President, European American Bank (EAB), New York, NY; Business development and relationship manager; January 1987 to September 1999.

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES
Treasurer, USA Table Tennis, January 1993 to April 1999

EDUCATION
☐ Foreign Exchange Education, The Institute for European Studies, Vienna, Austria, May 1983.

PERSONAL – Wife: Remy; Son: Avery Cage (age 4); Dog: Samantha

TABLE TENNIS HIGHLIGHTS
☐ USATT Member since 1975
☐ Participated in two National Sports Festivals, July 1981 and July 1983
☐ Competed in over 200 nationally sanctioned tournaments
☐ Attended six-week training program in Stockholm, Sweden
☐ National Collegiate Semifinalist
☐ Currently rated 2181, but retired from competitive play while Executive Director except occasional local tournaments

GOALS
☐ Increase USATT membership by creating new affiliations with non-member clubs and by seeking recreational members.
☐ Add corporate sponsorship for National and Youth teams.
☐ Raise the number of high quality tournaments for our elite athletes.
☐ Create a Youth Endowment Fund.
☐ Establish partnerships with educational exchange programs so our top youth athletes can train overseas.

A FEW WORDS FROM BEN....

As USATT’s treasurer for the past six years, I gained a unique understanding of our association, its members, and staff. As a successful commercial banker in New York City, I had the fortune to review and uncover the inner workings of some of New York City’s most successful businesses and not-for-profit organizations.

I see tremendous opportunity for our sport. We have favorable demographics, an energized and committed board and staff, and a strong group of volunteers to draw upon. I am very excited about my new position and plan to run 100 miles an hour from day one to produce tangible results for our athletes and membership. I will write a more extensive report on my plans later on.
They Said It...

By Larry Hodges

“Get so disgusted. And then I get disgusted at getting disgusted.” - Todd Sweeris, at the Pan Am Games.

“Ping-Pong must not be confused with table tennis, a game of often conflicting rules, miscellaneous sources, and non-standard equipment. Ping-Pong is an indoor game of skill and science.” A thought-provoking quote from A MANUAL OF PING-PONG: The Game Its Tactics and Laws, by Cornelius G. Schaad (1929). Contributed by Scott Gordon.

“I didn’t lose ratings points!” - Jackie Lee, after winning all six events she was entered in at the 1999 Junior Olympics.


CORRECTIONS

In the last issue, the article on the San Diego Table Tennis Association (page 15) was attributed to Pat Ramsey. It should have been attributed to Pam Ramsey. (To learn more about the SDTTA, go to www.sdtta.com.)

In the list of U.S. Open Exhibitors in both the last issue of the magazine (page 28) and the U.S. Open Program (page 8), Table Tennis International was left off the list. He has been an exhibitor at the U.S. Open for six straight years.

In the last issue, Zoran Primorac was identified as being from both Croatia and Yugoslavia (page 45). He is from Croatia.

1999 USATT NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

By the time you read this, you should have already received or will be receiving in the near future an entry form for the 1999 USATT Nationals in Las Vegas, December 15-19. If you have not received an entry form by the first week in October, please contact USATT Headquarters at 719-578-4583 or usatt4@cyv.net. The deadline for the issue will be used in the tournament. These deadlines will also be included with the entry form.

Help support USA Table Tennis and the 1999 USATT National Championships by using the following tournament sponsors for your travel needs:

1) By popular demand, the outstanding Stratosphere Hotel and Casino will once again serve as the host hotel for the USATT National Championships. To reserve your room at the Stratosphere, call 800-827-1525 and ask for the Reservation Department. Identify yourself as a USA Table Tennis member to receive the special rate of $29 per night (plus tax) for a single or double room. Shuttle bus service will be available only between the Stratosphere and the Las Vegas Convention Center.

2) For your airline travel, contact the United Airlines Olympic Travel Desk at 800-841-0460 (7:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday). Use Code 542HQ to obtain a discount over their lowest available fares.

3) For your driving needs, contact Budget Car Rental at 800-922-2899 and ask for Reservations. Mention that you are with USA Table Tennis to receive the most competitive rental prices available in the Las Vegas area.

USA Table Tennis needs your support. Your assistance in utilizing the above tournament sponsors will go a long way in helping us negotiate with these vendors in the future.

USA Table Tennis would like to thank Escalade Sports, the official supplier of Stiga tables for the 1999 USATT National Championships, for their continued support of table tennis in the United States. If you are interested in purchasing a Stiga table which has been used at the 1999 USATT Nationals, please contact Escalade Sports at 800-457-3373. Ask for Denise at Extension 201. We look forward to seeing you in Las Vegas!
LONG PIPS LISTING?

Dear Editor,

There seems to be a major problem in that players, umpires, referees, and tournament people cannot find out what will be legal or illegal in regard to long pips rubber sheets. We have all been hearing about these rubbers surfaces that do not meet a certain ratio of height/thickness and will be barred by the ITTF. I was assured by a top official that the last issue of Table Tennis Magazine that I received in July, 1999, with the U.S. approved equipment list, would clear them. However, this list banned nothing with business as usual.

I haven't any information at this time that the USATT is going to follow the ITTF guidelines and ban everything. The present published list has all long pips rubber as legal although many from Butterfly, Juic, Donic, and Yasaka, to name a few, were banned by the ITTF as of July 1, 1999. Some other marginal ones may be barred in the year 2000.

The ITTF list has been available to USATT officials for about a year. Why has the USATT delayed getting this vital information on what, if anything, will be barred? If many of the long pips are to be barred in sanctioned play, the players using them need to have time to change and all other players need to have some idea what they will be playing against. To be properly enforced, information on barred facings should have been published no later than last January.

The Fall season is upon us and there are a lot of unhappy campers who need this information or call it all off. Say so in publication so players, umpires, referees, and others will know. Don't write about the ratio bit, as we have no way of measuring it. Just the banned list published for all USTTA members to see in plain English.

-Signature

Editor's Note: Bob is correct - this listing should have been in earlier issues. It is on the previous page.

CALIFORNIA TABLE TENNIS HALL OF FAME BANQUET

George Kelemen, Y.C. Lee, Rich Livingston and Gene Rossman were inducted into the California Table Tennis Hall of Fame on June 11, 1999. Their qualifications are outstanding; however, space limitations forced the cutting of the article on this by Sid Wasserman from this issue. The article can be found at the USATT web page at www.usatt.org.

TWO WAYS TO ELIMINATE SANDBAGGING

Dear Editor,

I am writing this letter because of numerous sandbagging incidences I heard about at the U.S. Open. My son and three other players from my own club experienced sandbagging first-hand. There were other players talking about it, so I am sure it was widespread. The worst offender that I came across was an 1800 player - playing with a 1000 rating. Even if it were true that this player improved an INCREDIBLE 800 points in the short period of time after the rating cut-off date, he still should have been playing in the 1400 and 1500 events. How many players do you know that can improve 800 points between the cutoff date and the tournament (approximately three months)?

Here are a couple of ideas on how to help eliminate this problem:

1. From the date of the upcoming tournament, go back one full year and use the players' highest rating during that period. Because you would use the highest rating during that one-year period, it would not matter if he spent the rest of the year "dumping points" to sandbag in a big tournament. -Or-

2. Schedule the play from the highest ratings to the lowest. Then if you have events such as 2400, 2300, 2200, 2100 etc., anyone advancing from the preliminary round robin would be allowed to play only in that event and one event lower. Here's how it would work: If a player advances from his round robin in the 2200's, he would be allowed to play in the 2100's but not in any event lower than that.

These ideas may not completely eliminate sandbagging, but at least it would be a start and would help an honest player to at least have a chance of winning in their event.

Come on players - let the tournament directors know how you feel. Spending hundreds of dollars to travel and play at our best is not fun and is an embarrassment. This is money that could be spent on tournaments if we can have honesty in our game.

Sincerely,

Alan Millett

USATT BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Due to their length and the limited space in the magazine, the minutes of USATT board meetings were simply too long to fit in this issue. They can be found at the USATT's web page at www.usatt.org.
INTERVIEW WITH U.S. MEN’S COACH
August 24, 1999

By Larry Hodges

Dan Seemiller

Dan’s Resume...
...the “Condensed” version:
Age: 45
Player:
• 5-time U.S. Men’s Singles Champion
• 11-times U.S. Men’s Doubles Champion
• 6-times U.S. Mixed Doubles Champion
• Quarterfinalist, Men’s Doubles, ’77 Worlds
• #19 in the World in late 1970s
Coach: Current U.S. Men’s Team Coach...
... Head Coach of the South Bend Table Tennis Club...
... USATT’s Developmental Coach of the Year, 1998.
Leader: USATT President, 1990-95... Director of countless tournaments, including the 1986 U.S. Nationals and numerous 4-star tournaments such as the Sun TV, Macy Block and St. Joseph Valley Opens.
Hobbies: Golf, softball and staying in shape.

USATTM: What are your competitive plans for the future?
Dan: Right now, I don’t have any. My focus is just on improving the team. I don’t see how I can really compete when I’m the coach. I might play in some senior events sometimes. I’ll probably play some hardbat.

USATTM: Tell us about your venture into hardbat table tennis.
Dan: I played a lot of hardbat when I was a kid. That’s how I started. I played maybe three years with a hard bat. Since I was twelve, I didn’t really play hardbat again until the Houston U.S. Open last year. I played only once or twice, against Reisman, about three years ago. I didn’t even practice. I figured I’d just go out and try it in Houston. I was lucky, and won that event, and I was pretty pumped up about it. The last couple of events I haven’t done as well. I like it, and think I will continue to play some hardbat.

USATTM: Tell us about your near-baseball career.
Dan: When I was in high school, I tried out for both the basketball and football teams, and in both cases, the coach said I was too small. That’s part of how I got into table tennis. I played nearly every level of baseball – little league, pony league, American legion, high school. I made all star teams in every one of those. I made the Western Pennsylvania Allstar Team. I had some professional tryouts, and some professional scouts looked at me. But by the time I was 17, I was getting tired of baseball, and was really getting into table tennis. Some of the scouts or teams were considering drafting me, but I told them I was into table tennis, and I wasn’t going to be playing baseball, and they lost interest at that point.

USATTM: What position did you play?
Dan: I mostly played second base. I played baseball right-handed. (Editor’s note: Dan plays table tennis left-handed.)

USATTM: What is the biggest strength of the USA Men’s Team?
Dan: Fighting spirit, good camaraderie. Physically, they are strong.

USATTM: What do they need to work on?
Dan: The number one thing is the short game – serving short, receiving short serves, flipping, dropping the ball short over the net. That’s where the Europeans and Asians can pretty much kill us. That’s probably the hardest skill to learn in table tennis, and we just don’t do it at their level.

USATTM: How can we strengthen the USA Team in the short-term?
Dan: Short-term, we definitely need more training camps. We only have one or two per year. That’s clearly not enough. We should have at least four or five per year. But that’s for the short term.

USATTM: How about for the long-term?
Dan: We need to look more at the younger players. My goal is to work with the kids that are 11 to 15 years old, and send them to international tournaments and see if we have any possible stars coming out of that group. If we do that over and over again, and let the kids know that if they do well they’ll participate in more trips, we’ll get the more serious kids involved. Maybe we’ll come up with a star, someone like Han Xiao or Mark Hazinski or Michael Liu, or someone like that. For the future, we need to identify players like this at an earlier age, and not wait until they’re 17.

USATTM: Several USA Team Members told me that you put them on a physical training program well before the Pan Am Games. What type of training did you have them do?
Dan: I worked with each one, and each got something different, mostly stretching and running. For example, for Todd Sweeris, it was mostly speed running and long distance work, and a little bit of light weight training. For others, it was something different. We mostly took what they were already doing, and added some things.

USATTM: What was the most interesting thing that happened at the Worlds or Pan Ams?
Dan: I’d say the team spirit at the Pan Ams. We were all so focused on winning a gold medal, and when we did it, it was an incredible feeling. We were smiling for two days – we were really pumped up. The Pan Ams were great. It was an awesome feeling to shoot for the gold medals and win them. It couldn’t have been better. It was about as excited as I’ve ever been in table tennis.

USATTM: If you were an objective outsider setting the odds of the U.S. sweeping the golds, what would you have put the odds at?
Dan: At least 10-1 against us. We were the underdogs in men’s singles, and probably in men’s team as well. In women’s singles and teams, we were probably favorites, but not by much.

USATTM: What are your strengths/weaknesses as a coach?
Dan: I’d say my strengths are motivation and leadership, and the kids really respect me. But I know one of my weaknesses is probably on new techniques on serves and backhand loop.

USATTM: Are you a full-time coach at what club, and for how long?
Dan: I’ve been with South Bend Table Tennis for three years. It’s a big club, with 12 bariered courts and good lighting. It’s a real nice club.

USATTM: What is the practice schedule there?
Dan: Practice is five days a week. Varsity practices on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Junior Varsity practices on Mondays and Fridays and Saturdays. The cadet team practices on Mondays and Saturdays.

USATTM: Tell us about the program.
Dan: We have twelve on the varsity team. Junior Varsity has five. The cadet team changes a lot as we have new people all the time, but they usually have from eight to twelve players. Altogether, we have about 25 or 26 junior players. The program is going very well. I’ll be starting a school program in a few weeks once school starts. We’ll certainly have a lot more cadets in our program this year for sure.

USATTM: Indiana had a great showing at the
Junior Olympics this year, winning nine golds. Congratulations!

Dan: Yeah, that was the best we’ve ever done.

USATTM: You now run two 4-star tournaments each year: the St. Joseph Valley Open in Indiana, and the Macy Block Open in Pittsburgh. Tell us about them.

Dan: The Macy Block Open in Pittsburgh used to be the Sun TV Open. The South Park Table Tennis Club is sort of the sponsor of these tournaments. It’s a big tournament. We enjoy doing it in August every year, and we receive a lot of entries from the east coast. It kind of boosts the club in Pittsburgh – every time we do it, the club gets more members from the publicity. For nearly all my life I’ve run a big tournament in Pittsburgh. Before the Sun TV, it was the Eastern Open. I always felt that if you had a club, and you wanted to be successful, you had to run at least one big tournament per year. We’ve run a big tournament every year in Pittsburgh as long as I can remember, at least since 1975, when we first ran the Eastern Open.

USATTM: I saw at the Macy Block Open a lot of Seamillers working! I saw four Seamillers at the control desk at one time, and more at registration and concessions.

Dan: Our whole family works on it. Ricky, Randy, Timmy and I are all at the control desk. My wife, Val, does registration. My cousins do concessions. They used to come to watch in play, but this time they got to watch Ricky play.

USATTM: How about the St. Joseph Valley Open?

Dan: The South Bend Table Tennis club first began running the St. Joseph Valley Open back when I was USATT President, I think in 1993, and they held it for three years, through 1995. They were really good tournaments, at Notre Dame. Because of financial concerns, they didn’t do it in 1996 and 1997. When I first arrived in 1997, I said “We’ve got to get this tournament started again.” We got the club players to help work on it, and we got a sponsor. I thought that if we are going to have a junior program here, we needed at least one big tournament each year; otherwise we’re not really legitimate. We got that going in 1998, starting kind of small with $6500 in prize money, but now in 1999 we raised it to $10,500. It looks like next year (Memorial Day in May) it might even go up higher. With our junior program here, we just feel we need a 4-star tournament so the kids can play in a big championships, and not have to travel. It’s cost effective, since we have at least 15 juniors who play in it, and so rather than them all having to go on the road to some big tournament, they can do it at home.

USATTM: You were USATT president from 1990-95, and so have insight on this office. Any thoughts on the new Sheri Pittman presidency?

Dan: I think it is going pretty good. I have a lot of respect for Sheri. So far, I’m impressed – she’s made a lot of great decisions. It seems to me that USATT is back on track, and it’s got to be a part of it. I think some very good things might be happening in the future.

USATTM: Tell us about your family.

Dan: I have five brothers and three sisters, so I’m from a big family. My wife is Val, and I have a daughter, Sarah, 13, and a son, Dan Jr., who turned 9 yesterday.

USATTM: Thank you Dan!
FREDDIE GABRIEL:

In Search of Table Tennis Excellence

By Tong Lee

Just turned seventeen, Freddie Gabriel stands nearly 6 feet 1 inch tall, and looks like a slightly smaller version of Jimmy Butler. It has been seven years since he came under the tutelage of Coach Bill Lui at Concord Table Tennis Club in Pleasant Hill, California in 1992. He has certainly come a long way since then.

The odds against Freddie becoming a top junior were long. Bill was a relatively inexperienced coach then, and Freddie was his first student. Also, Freddie comes from a tough neighborhood in the city of Richmond. It could have been so easy for him to be on the streets in his neighborhood, had it not been for table tennis.

Despite the odds, Freddie, with a current rating of 2444, has developed into the second highest rated player in Northern California after Khoa Nguyen. Two players especially contributed to his development: Piotr-Peter Zajac and Terrence Lee, who joined the Concord TTC in 1993 and 1994, respectively. Piotr soon became his training partner and on-the-court rival, and at one point in time he had a higher rating than Freddie. They kept pushing each other to greater heights. When Terrence appeared on the scene as a beginner, Freddie took him under his wing. He spent hours a week training regularly with him, and unselfishly taught him just about everything he knew. In a couple of years, Terrence had narrowed the gap to within 200 points, and thus was in a position to contribute as a training partner to Freddie’s table tennis development.

Freddie has somehow found ways to get around to play in various San Francisco Bay Area clubs five to six times a week. He has also played in practically all local tournaments and traveled to national and major tournaments all over the country. These are possible because his coach and a team of Concord TT Club members have extended more than a helping hand to support him in his pursuit of table tennis excellence. This is a result of his tenacity to solicit help from others and of their willingness to reach out to him.

Freddie’s strengths are his all-round game and his consistency. According to women’s national coach Dom Gheorghe, he is in the best physical condition among the elite juniors who have attended training camps at the Oakbrook National Training Center. He uses inverted rubber and can loop consistently from both sides. Without great power, he more than compensates for it with a good defense, serve, and return of serve. His mental toughness and intelligent placement of shots are two of his strong suits.

On the way to the top, Freddie has won numerous national titles in age and rating events. Among the highlights of his career was the 1995 Nationals where he won Under 2000, Under 2100, made the semis of Under 2200, quarterfinals of Under 2300, and won the Junior High School Doubles with Terrence Lee. He emerged from the tournament with a rating of 2273, which made him #1 in the country for both U-14 and U-16 age groups.

Another memorable win occurred on one of his two trips to Sweden with the U.S. Junior National Team. He defeated the top defensive Swedish junior player who was playing in the Division One league that Keith Alban will be playing in when he returns to Sweden this Fall.

Despite these achievements, Freddie’s rating has stalled during the past 12 months. His highest rating of 2473 came after the 1998 Sun TV (now Macy Block) tournament. Nonetheless, he feels that he is playing better than ever before. In many matches, it’s a matter of just a point or two that would have made a difference in defeating 2500+ players and winning many rating points. In recent months, he has been training with Fan Yi Yong in Portland, Oregon. Freddie hopes that Fan will be able to set him up with a club or with one of Fan’s friends in Europe or Asia. Training overseas full-time is perhaps his best hope in his pursuit of excellence in table tennis, and to realize his aspirations to be a world-class player.
The 1999 North American Teams Open Table Tennis Championships and North American Hardbat Championships Entry Form

Entry Deadline: Postmarked by November 12, 1999. Entries postmarked after November 19, 1999 will only be accepted according to space availability, with an added $25.00 late fee.

Team type (circle one): Open / Women's / U-18 Girls' / U-18 Boys' / O-40 Seniors' / Collegiate

*For each player, a $5.00 Membership ID Number lookup fee will be charged if ID number is not supplied.

Team Captain:

Membership ID Number*

USATT / CTTA Rating:

Membership Expiration Date:

Player 2:

Membership ID Number*

USATT / CTTA Rating:

Membership Expiration Date:

Player 3:

Membership ID Number*

USATT / CTTA Rating:

Membership Expiration Date:

Player 4:

Membership ID Number*

USATT / CTTA Rating:

Membership Expiration Date:

Player 5:

Membership ID Number*

USATT / CTTA Rating:

Membership Expiration Date:

Registration Fees:

Teams $350.00 per team

Hardbat Events: $15.00 for each event

USATT Rating fees: $5.00 per player

T-shirt $15.00 each: S M L XL XXL

USATT Membership fees: $25.00 adult/yr $8.00 child/yr

Total Fees Due: Make checks payable to North American Teams Championships. $25.00 penalty for returned checks.

For complete tournament information, visit our web-site at: www.nateams.com

Compete in the Largest Tournament in the World!

USATT Sanctioned Five-Star Event
Baltimore, Maryland Convention Center
Thanksgiving Weekend
November 25-28, 1999

TOURNAMENT TABLES FOR SALE

Butterfly tables used at the North American Team Championships can be purchased. The price includes the Table, net set, and shipping the week after the tournament.

Complete entry form mailed with the new Butterfly Catalog in October!
NO tour of American Table Tennis clubs would be complete without a stop at the South Park Table Tennis Club in Pittsburgh, PA. It's proof that people make a great club.

South Park claims to be America's oldest continuously affiliated club. Lillian Geyer began the club in 1957, and it has been in continuous operation for the past 42 years.

The club meets twice a week, on Tuesday nights for league activity, and Thursday nights for Open Play. An unprepossessing building with a concrete floor and florescent lighting, South Park has the advantage of being free. The use of the "South Park Home Economics Building" is donated by the county. It is a long building with one wall completely made of glass, looking into the playing area.

Eleven totally baniered Stiga tables go into play at each session, with generous court sizes. Annual dues are only $30, and the club does a 'no-mark-up' deal with its members for equipment sales. At any given time there are 35 to 60 active members, fluctuating seasonally. The club annually co-hosts a 4-Star tournament, this year the "$6,200 Macy Block Open."

But it's the people who make this club a National landmark. Club President Barry Rodgers is a former VP of the USAATT and is the latest in a long line of luminaries who have operated this facility. Club Champion is Randy Seemiller. It is the home club of 1999 Maryland Medalion Champ Chip Coulter, who was recruited by elder statesman Stan Carrington ... obviously this is a club with a pedigree, where legacy and history are renewed twice a week.

"We would never have gotten so far without Dr. Bill Walk," Coulter explains. A member since 1963, Dr. Walk is an International Referee. He also has the distinction of being the man who brought the Seemillers into organized table tennis.

"I heard about this young kid who won a City Parks and Rec Department tournament, played outdoors," Dr. Walk relates, "and they said he could block everything that was hit at him but that his grip was all wrong. So I got him to come to our club and dammed if it wasn't true ... aside from a little difficulty in returning serve, Danny Seemiller really could play with that odd grip." Soon the Seemiller clan was neck-deep in the game, making trips to the Teams, playing in tournaments, and today Danny, Randy and Ricky are three of the best known names in our sport. "That little guy who played so well at the local playground made the World Top 20... with a grip no one said could work."

Chip winces when I suggest that the club contains 'Seemiller Wannabes' but observes that 'the grip' is the method of choice for 80% of the club's top players. "And we seem to do all right," he understates.

Club President Barry Rogers worries that the club may someday lose its free ride at the county-owned facility. "Every time they talk about remodeling it, I get nervous." Barry observes. "We're trying to put together a nest egg against the day that someone figures out we have too much of a good thing."

The good thing the South Park people really have is each other. Dedication, passion and a history of recruiting fresh blood have brought this club national recognition, a 42-year lineage, one of the country's best-loved events, a family of Hall-of-Famers, an International star and great expectations for the next century. Just don't ever suggest that it's members hold the paddle in a funny way ... that's only one legacy of many.
**Maryland Table Tennis Center**

Senior Training Camp and Christmas Training Camp

18761-Q Frederick Rd., Gaithersburg, MD 20879 • 301-519-8580 (ph) • 301-519-3487 (fax)

- **Senior Camp** November 3-7, 1999
- **Christmas Camp** December 26-31, 1999

**INFORMATION**

- **Senior Camp**: For Players over age 40 (Players over age 30 who are old of heart may be accepted).
- **Christmas Camp**: All Ages, all levels
- **Enter Early!** Only first 20 players are guaranteed spots.

**Fee**

- $220 (Minimum deposit: $50)
- Make checks out to MD TTT

**Housing**

- Econo Lodge, 1/3 mile away
  18715 N. Frederick
  Gaithersburg, MD 20879
  301-963-3840
- (Mention Table Tennis for best rate)
- Free HBO, ESPN, CNN, coffee

**Senior Camp Schedule**

Nov 3 - 7: 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM
3:00 PM - 6:00 PM

**Christmas Camp Schedule**

Dec. 26: 3:00 PM - 6:00 PM
Dec. 27-30: 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM
3:00 PM - 6:00 PM
Dec. 31: 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

**COACH CHENG YINGHUA**

- 1996-97 U.S. Men’s Singles & Doubles Champion
- U.S. #1 world ranked player
- Former Head Coach for the Szechuan Province of China
- Chinese National Team Member, 1977-87
- 1985 & 93 U.S. Open Champion
- Full-time coach
- USATT’s 1996 Coach of the Year

**COACH JACK HUANG**

- 1996-97 U.S. Senior Men’s Singles & Doubles Champion
- U.S. #1 player in 1990
- Former Head Coach for the Guangxi Province of China
- Chinese National Team Member, 1976-83
- Full-time coach
- USATT’s 1997 Developmental Coach of the Year

**COACH LARRY HODGES**

- Author of *Table Tennis: Steps to Success*
- Director/Manager/Coach at Resident Training Program for Table Tennis at Olympic Training Center, 1985-89
- Many-time U.S. Junior Team Coach
- Certified by USATT as a National Coach
- USA Coaching Chairman, 1991-95
- Professional coach for many years

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**MDTTC 1999 Senior and Christmas Camp**

Circle camps: Senior Camp Nov. 3-7 Christmas Camp Dec. 26-31

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An Official's View

By Dr. Azmy Ibrahim
1999 U.S. Open Referee

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ome of the expected rule changes did not pass, while some of the unexpected ones were approved. I will try to report on the most important ones, and explain the reasons behind these decisions.

The proposal for the larger 40mm ball did not pass. However, there were some rumors that this proposal will be introduced again at the meetings in Malaysia. Many players do not like the 40mm ball. The findings of the experiment by Larry Hodges (reported in the May/June issue) are valid. I have introduced the big ball in our club, and the results were exactly the same. However, there is a factor which Larry did not consider, and that is the weight of the ball. The ball which has been used so far was produced in China and has only one weight, which is a little bit heavier than the regular ball. That is why the effect of the big ball did not seem to make any difference in producing longer rallies. Nittaku in Japan produced four different balls with different weights, and experimented with which one could be used to create longer rallies. I have the four balls and tried them with different players. While the players did not like the big ball in general, they admitted that the lighter ball was the one which prolonged the rallies. At the BGM meeting in Eindhoven the weight of the ball was questioned, and even the size of the ball was also questioned. Actually the size of the ball is slightly less than 40mm. All of these factors contributed to the decision of not approving the ball at this time.

The same thing happened to the proposal for lines on the ball. Nittaku is experimenting with different balls with colored circles on them. One is white with blue circles, the other is yellow with red circles, and another is yellow with black circles. I have the balls and used them at the club, but there was no agreement on preference or ability to read the spin. Once again it seems that such attempts are not producing their intended results.

All the proposals regarding the serve did not pass. However, they were returned to the Committees for further studies. The rules proposals that did pass are in the sidebar.

I would like to close my report on a positive note. I have carried the plight of those who wrote to me directly, or to the USATT, complaining about changes of rackets with different surfaces, usually long pips, near the end of a game, causing a great disadvantage to the opponent. I asked the ITTF Rules Committee to consider one of several alternatives: to disallow the change of a racket of different rubber during the whole match, to disallow the change of a racket if the score in a game reached 10 points, or to limit the change of racket for only between games.

To my surprise the committee voted unanimously to disallow the change of a racket of different rubber during the whole match. That does not affect changing a racket with the same rubber in case of accidental damage. We have been informed also that Japan applies this rule in all their internal tournaments.

A word of caution: this rule cannot be applied now. It has to pass by the voters at the coming BGM meetings. In defense of all the ITTF committees, I have to say many times many proposals die on the BGM floor. I have in my hands research and several studies which have been conducted by the Technical, the Equipment, and the Rules Committees which resulted in the introduction of very important proposals, which all vanished once they reach the BGM floor, for reasons which I am not at liberty to discuss at this point.

Finally, I would like to congratulate and thank our delegation to the BGM, who did a great job, and influenced many decisions at this meeting. I am confident that they will fight for this proposal when it comes for a vote in the near future.

News From The World Championships

NEW RULE CHANGES (for international events)

- A player obstructs the ball if he, or anything he wears or carries, touches it in play when it has not passed his end line, not having touched his court since last being struck by his opponent. (That means a player should not touch an out-of-play ball until it passes his end line).
- The blade, any layer within the blade and any layer of covering material or adhesive on a side used for striking the ball shall be continuous and of even thickness. (That means that the side which is not used for striking the ball does not have to conform to this rule).
- If a game lasts for 15 minutes, all subsequent games of the match shall be played under the expedite system. (That means it does not matter if it is 19-19, or 20-20, or 21-21, etc).
- An umpire and an assistant umpire shall be appointed for each match. (That means this is the end of using two assistant umpires).
- The assistant umpire or a separate official will act as a stroke counter.
- A player or pair may claim a time-out period of up to one minute during an individual match or during an individual match of a team match.
- In an individual match the request for a time-out may be made by the player or pair or by their designated adviser; in a team match the request may be made by the player or pair or by the team captain.
- The request for time-out, which may be made only when the ball is out of play, shall be indicated by making a “T” sign with the hands.
- During a time-out a white card shall be placed on the playing surface, on the court of the player or pair making the request.
- Play shall be resumed as soon as the player or pair making the request is ready to continue.

USA TABLE TENNIS MAGAZINE • September/October 1999
As, understandably, there isn’t room in this issue for an article on the World Championships from me (I did take a few notes—maybe next issue?), there certainly isn’t room here for anything from the several ITTF Meetings in Eindhoven I was a part of except for some highlights.

I’m going to concentrate not on what happened at Council Meetings—where, for example, (1) I voted in the majority for time-outs in both individual and team matches (one per player), which I think adds drama to the Sport, and (2) where I voted in the majority NOT to agree with the proposal of the Athletes’ Commission: “That no extra entries in World Championships individual events be made available for Associations with players near the top of the ranking list” (China’s expertise is killing us). Instead, I’m going to stress some of the decisions made at the Biennial General Meeting (BGM) that USATT President Sheri Pittman, U.S. First Delegate; Richard McAlce, U.S. Second Delegate; and I, as ITTF Council Member for North America, attended. The three of us sat together and conferred on every issue that required a vote... which Sheri would then cast, for, like any of the 189 member-countries, even those without teams here in Eindhoven, the U.S. had but one vote.

With the retirement of ITTF President Xu Yinzeng, Adham Sharara, who’d been Deputy President, was elected by acclamation to replace him. Pierre Albertini, the President of the Federation Francaise de Tennis de Table, was elected the new Deputy President over Hans Giesecke in a secret ballot, 82-39. Re-appointed from USATT to ITTF committee positions were Rufford Harrison, chair of the Equipment Committee; Azmy Ibrahim, Corresponding Member of the Rules Committee; and Dr. Michael Scott, on the Sports Science Committee. USATT President Sheri Pittman was newly appointed as a Corresponding member of the ITTF Media Committee, and Jimmy McClure was appointed to the President’s Advisory Council.

The U.S. voted with the majority NOT to reduce the upper limit for the thickness of sandwich rubber to 3 mm.

The U.S. voted with the majority NOT to have the ball “marked with two black or dark blue lines” (in order to tell the player if the ball’s spinning).

The U.S. voted for the German proposal: “That when the ball is struck in service it must be between the server’s body and his end line” (so that the ball can be seen by the receiver). This was defeated.

40 mm Ball Saga

Likely the most talked about item on the Agenda was the much touted ITTF Executive Committee’s plea for acceptance of the larger 40 mm (actually as it exists now, 39.6 mm) ball. Concurrence required at least a 75% majority of those countries in attendance voting.

The ITTF presented an attractive 5-page Update Report on the 40 mm ball to the Delegates. It stressed that “The 40 mm ball is slower, generates less spin and is more visible for players, spectators and media.” Perhaps. But Richard felt that the 40 mm ball, depending on its weight, might even be faster than the 38 mm ball, and that inevitably changes in rubber would in time generate as much spin on the ball as we have now. So perhaps the strongest argument for the new ball was the increased visibility it offered.

But if, as the Report says, “ITTF videotapes with matches and exercises filmed under the same playing conditions show clearly that it’s easier to discern the 40 mm ball from the 38,” the ITTF was its own worst enemy in presenting us with a short tape supposedly to that effect. Far from influencing Sheri, Richard, or me, the film turned us off. We were all unconvinced—especially if, as had been hypothesized, we in the room, the Sport itself, were all on the threshold of “an historic moment.” For this short tape was so amateurishly done—so rhetorically slanted, so inconclusive—that it rendered suspect any other claims its advocates were making. If this ball proposal weren’t to be seen as merely some sort of desperately-needed ITTF marketing gimmick, if the TV networks were really so enthusiastic, why not show the 40 mm ball differences? (Did the ITTF not do this better?)

This matters because the 40 mm ball was NOT getting an endorsement from the ITTF Equipment Commission, or the Swedish and German Associations, and the three of us—Sheri, Richard, and I—agreed that the U.S. just couldn’t vote for it despite the admiration and goodwill we all had for Adham, our new President, who was much in favor of its passage.

So, oh, time for the vote. Delegates, when your country’s called, answer loud and clear. Sheri does, but some others don’t. As if they’re uncertain, they have to be asked again whether they vote For or Against—especially the fellow who’s answered “Present.”

Result: 84 For, 30 Against. The proposal fails—but just barely: it needed 86 votes For to pass. Had the U.S. voted For, the proposal would have had a 74.56 majority—but, no-body would have tried to round that off, right?

But, again, that’s not the end of the matter. Because the vote is so close and so important, someone suggests that perhaps the voice tally isn’t absolutely accurate. Were there some countries whose delegates didn’t answer when called on? Were they abstaining? (That was urged of course—abstentions didn’t count, for the majority was decided on the basis of only the 114 votes cast.) So, to be sure, let’s have every eligible voter write his For or Against or Abstention on a piece of paper and put it into a common ballot box. Won’t that be better?

Are some of you readers a bit cynical about how this second vote will turn out?

If so, right away I must say that President Sharara, who’d taken the 84-30 defeat with remarkably good humor, gave a little speech in which he asked everyone to vote in exactly the same way as he/she had voted before. Yes, certainly—but wasn’t there a coffee break coming up? Uh-huh. Of course I know what you’re thinking. But Adham made sure we took the written vote before the break. And would you believe the result? Again 114 votes cast—and with only one change: 83 For, 31 Against. And 10 Abstentions. So, a win for... Integrity.

Now, as you might guess, there’s already talk of the upcoming Meeting at the World Team Championships in Kuala Lumpur in February. Plenty of time to sway those 10 who abstained, eh?

McCLURE to SWITZERLAND

ITTF and USATT Hall of Famer Jimmy McClure, recently named to the ITTF’s “President’s Advisory Council”—with China’s Xu Yinzeng, Hong Kong’s Henry Yue, India’s Ranga Ramanujan, and Yugoslavia’s Mishka Kapetanic—has accepted an invitation to attend an Oct. 23-26 meeting in Lausanne, Switzerland, with ITTF President Adham Sharara and IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch. Taking Nell along for a little skiing, are you Jimmy? -Tim Boggan
USA MATCHES AT THE 1999 WORLDS

By Tim Boggan

Fresh from their Teams’ victories in the Pan-Am – er, rather, tired from re-routed flights and troubled by lost luggage – half the U.S. contingent struggled into Eindhoven to connect with its other half. Team Leader Bob Fox continues to be diligent – he’s got USOC “tracking” specialists trying to find the lost bags. Mean time: “We have to buy playing outfits ... and shoes ... unless – what’s your size? We don’t all play at the same time – maybe we could share?” Such unpleasantness: it’s as warm-up disorienting as playing the opening preliminary matches, amid this prolonged August heat-wave, in an un-air conditioned “Ice-Rink,” half a mile’s sweltering walk from the main venue, the Indoor Sportcentrum, also un-air conditioned, where meals are offered to all players, not just the seeded ones whom spectators have clustered there to watch.

Well, the U.S. came to play, didn’t they? Let’s get on with it.

MEN’S SINGLES

All of our Men players, except for David Zhuang, our U.S. and now Pan-Am Champion (current World Ranking #113), may be said to have been skating on thin ice. For only David will advance out of his round-robin – luckily, to meet another qualifier, Slovenia’s Sasa Ignjatovic (World #174).

David wins the 1st easily, but then seems paralyzed. He loses the 2nd at 9 and is down 5-0 in the 3rd. He’s so soft – his hands haven’t any snap to them. But – ignis fatuus – Ignjatovic doesn’t know what he’s seeing when David opens his bag of serves and out jumps – what? He’s terrible at returning them. Down 19-16 but with the serve, David scores 4 in a row, then is outplayed when he chooses to passively block. Down game-point, David merely rolls the ball to Sasa’s middle – but that’s momentum enough. Two ignominious errors by Ignjatovic – and David has won it, 23-21. He points with both fingers to his temples, but not as if to shoot him.

What is the matter with him? Forget the 4th – he’s not at all aggressive. In the 5th, at 7-all, he’s not at all aggressive. In the 5th, at 7-all, he has the serve. On losing lie says, “Shoot me, Tim. Put me out of my misery.” Nosiru perseveres and, 24-22 in the 3rd, knocks out Finland’s #4 Akis Kontala.

Keith Alban drops his first two matches (he can’t back up from the table, else is overpowered), but against Nicolas Razafimanirafy of Madagascar he has as satisfying a straight-game win as if he could quickly, correctly pronounce his opponent’s last name.

Todd Sweeris, going into the 3rd after a to-heck-with-it 21-5 loss in the 2nd to the Ukraine’s Sergej Sokolovskij (World #728), certainly has an aversion to his play. But whether the “his” refers exclusively to Todd’s play, or to his opponent’s as well, is moot. For on losing 23-21 on a ball that he was about to wallop – of course it caught the edge – Todd is heard to mumble: “the guy was clueless ... “serves” pushed four straight no spins straight into the air” ... “nothing in my legs” ... “missed sitter after sitter shoulder high” ... Anyway, I gather the less said about this deplorable match the better.

WOMEN’S SINGLES

Barney Reed has nothing to regret, for his only loss – to the Egyptian Ahmed Ali-Saleh (World #143) – is not a bad one, as Ali-Saleh, who won the Arab Championships in Casablanca last December, will go on to upset the only Yugoslav player visa-wise able to play here, Slobodan Grujic (World #59).

Eric Owens, however, loses a very bother-some match – his opener to Kazeeem Nosiru, a Nigerian who plays in Belgium’s Super League. In the 1st, Eric’s down 9-4, then, looking to be in firm control, up 14-10 ...17-13. But from here on in, neither player can win a point, can only lose them, and since Eric’s making most of the errors it’s 19-all. Whereupon Nosiru fails to return serve, and then in trying to return spin with spin barely grazes the ball – which is not so surprising because under these conditions when a player puts a lot of spin on the ball it really “stops.” Up 1-0 and 17-12 in the 2nd, Eric’s looking like a winner. At 19-all, maybe he’s not.... No, definitely he’s not: the Nigerian makes a Super League backhand counter (20-19), then when Eric pops one up he swats in a winning forehand (21-19).

Concentrate, Eric! He does ... for a while. But, down 9-7, he loops a simple ball three feet long. At the turn, Nosiru is yellow-eyed, but it’s Owens who should be worried – he’s lookin’ beat. Is down 13-9 ... 17-10 ... serves and is aced with a return. On losing he says, “Shoot me, Tim. Put me out of my misery.” Nosiru perseverses, and, 24-22 in the 3rd, knocks out Finland’s #4 Aki Kontala.

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All but one of our U.S. Women – the youngest – will play in the first round proper. Teenager Michelle Do, though not advancing from her round robin, shows poise in defeating Catherine Davies of Wales, and (up game-point and eagerly, perhaps too eagerly, attacking) does well to -23, -15 extend German chopper Katrin Meyerhofer (World #216).

Amy Feng, who’s long observed her do’s and don’t’s, is yet relegated by rule, like enthusiastic newcomer Do, to the lesser #3 qualifying position in her round robin. No doubt she could give those positioned #1 and #2 10 points a game, but what do they care? Only one of them will enter the Consolation’s, and she neededn’t have bothered, for 1st-round waiting there for her was (8, 12) a Chinese. Perhaps Amy, too – out there practice-blocking against 20-year-old Asian Games winner Wang Nan’s spiny loops – feels she needn’t have bothered. Was it fun for Amy drawing, in the round of 128, the about-to-be World Champion? Some would think so.

It didn’t bother Tawny Banh that she had to play Ding Ying. How good could this chopper be if she were ranked World #116? The lowest of the Chinese. And (-21, -9) for a glorious moment Tawny was all aflate. In that 1st game she mixed powerful smashies with clever drops to lead 16-14. Then, though Ding got two edges and Tawny failed to return two serves, at 21-all either young woman could have been the winner. Not so, however, the next two games when Ding showed she could attack too.

Lily Yip? So she lost quickly to Belarus’s Tatia Kostromina. She’d go to China – train for the Olympics. More importantly for the moment, Judy and Adam were ecstatic. The long-distance call from the Junior Olympics came through: "Mom, mom, I’m winning medals!"

Gao Jan, World-what does-it-matter (#19), went through the motions with Estonia’s Emilia
Vali. And might have done the same with 38-year-old Valentina Popova, but Popova was, and still is, with that jerky jab-block/jab-top forehand, a more formidable player than she looks. The best in Europe 15-20 years ago, she still has a Champion’s pride, and, given the opportunity, is able to take a 19 game from Gao (though Gao gave her an 8-2 spot and in the end twice failed to return serve).

Onward, Gao. But what preparation has our new Pan-Am Champ had for this World’s? And her opponent, Wang Hui (China’s World #18), what preparation has she had? ... Who, naturally, will beat who easily?

MEN’S DOUBLES

In a first-round match against Norwegian choppers Stian Winther and Raymond Gonzalez, Barney and Eric were down 1-0 but up 15-10 in the 2nd. Eric, having trouble returning serves, asked Coach Seemiller if they were legal. They were. But did our ‘98 North American and U.S. Doubles Champions ask Danny if they were rushing a bit much? They were. And, from up 15-10, lost 11 straight.

David and Todd had unexpected 22, 15 trouble with Kofii Sallah-Duse and Fessou Lawson-Gaizer, a lefty-righty pair from Togo. Next round, against Kontala and Belarus defender Evgenyi Chitchineiev (pronounced of course SHET-ih-nihn), they again scored 37 points, but, though Kontala was having trouble countering David’s dripped-on pips, and though David and Todd were leading 20-18 in the 1st, this time they couldn’t win that key game, losing the match at 20 & 17.

Also in first-round action, Keith paired with Scotland’s Michael Auchterson to defeat a South African duo in three. Then, having gained confidence, they at least enjoyed a losing but contested match against the French team of Nicolas Chatelain/Michel Martinez.

WOMEN’S DOUBLES

After receiving a bye, Gao and Amy open against Veronica Pavlovich (World #103), partnered not by (her sister?) Viktoria (World #114) but by Tatia Logatskaya (World #137). This Belarus pair had beaten a good Russian team (Irina Palina, World #39, and Svetlana Ganina, World #127 and the winner of the Women’s Consolation here), so they did their (-20, 18, -7) best to be taken seriously by our team. After which Gao and Amy had a short, undermanned encounter (11 & 16) with China attackers Lin Ling (World #14) and unranked 17-year-old Li Nian, who’s shortly turn out to be one of the single semifinalists!

Lily and Tawny met and shook hands with two expatriate Chinese, the German defense specialists Qianhong Gotsch and Jie Schopp, 13 & 14. Michelle paired with Aussie Tammy Gough (rhymes, like matching shirts, with dough?) for some rough treatment at the hands of a Belgian pair, 11 & 16.

MIXED DOUBLES

Gao and David also receive a bye, then beat the Danish pair, Trine Grauholm/Michael Maze. But next round they lose two-zip to the strong Germans Nicole Struse (World #19) and two-time European Youth Champion Timo Boll.

Amy and Eric follow the pattern of most of our Doubles play — they down a weak team (here, Uganda), then are ready to lose two straight to any advancing pair — here the entertaining defenders Gotsch and England’s Matt Syed who’s contracted to write pre-Olympic Games articles for the London Times.

Tawny and Barney meet China’s Yang Yin/ Qin Zhijian. “Note the two teams’ differing body language,” says an observer. Yeah? Well, anyway, whoever wins this match, 8, 12, will get to the semifinals. On go the Chinese.

Lily and Todd face the stand-tall Koreans, Kim Moo Kyo/Oh Sang Eun. But Todd says he can’t see very well what’s happening. He’s wearing glasses — not his usual contacts, which are still in his lost luggage. Actually, by this time half the Team’s luggage has been found ... only can’t be delivered because the rule is that handlers have to have in hand more than half the luggage before they can speed it to its destination. But, trying to concentrate as best he can, Todd squints at the scoreboard, determines that he and Lily are at 16-all in the 1st. ... That was encouraging. But, seeing how they’re still at 16 when the game ends, now it’s not. In the 2nd, as their best shots are countered, the U.S. is down 19-8, and lose the match at 16 & 9.

Michelle and Keith, who weren’t in Winnipeg, have their baggage. Also their youth. Next time maybe they’ll beat the Poles, Kusinski & Molik, but not this time: 8 & 13.

MEN’S RANKING TOURNAMENT

(Open to non-qualifiers and 1st round losers.)

Barney’s up against another Egyptian, Sherif El-Suket (World #222), but after losing the 1st at 19 rallies to win. However, he has no chance against Denmark’s Finn Tugwell who’ll lose (19, 17) to the eventual winner, Magnus Molin of Sweden.

Keith falls to Hungary’s Peter Fazekas — but Danny rightly praises him for hanging tough in winning that 23-21 2nd game.

Neither Eric nor Todd play in this “Men’s Ranking” tournament. Their absence strikes one of our support group as being, well, rank. But after spending years of hard work, they know when they’re spent.

As for Barney, how much has he played, how long his trip? Unlike his mates, he’s got verve, vigor, spice. He wants a livelier, more with-it look. Ergo: his sudden bottle-blond transformation. And, with it, all this talk of bonding with Barney, Sr. and what shade he’ll choose. Perhaps atomic turquoise, or poppy red?

WOMEN’S RANKING TOURNAMENT

(Open to non-qualifiers and 1st round losers.)

Amy, our World #73, decided not to play in the Consolations, but Lily did and won her first two matches — the one against Chinese Taipei’s Pan Li-Chun in particular 19, -12, 11 panning out well. But against Livia Kosaka (not Lynne who played at the Pan-Ams), it seemed, as one onlooker said, Lily would lose her rhythm, find it, then lose it again — often playing predictably into Kosaka’s backhand and forehand as if she were her drill partner, while being only sporadically effectively with her own attack.

Michelle, so inexperienced, couldn’t put any pressure at all on France’s Sylvie Plaisant (World #224).

“My bag still hasn’t come ... I’ve been using napkins as towels!” - Tawny Banh

But Tawny (World #177) was able to take on another Frenchwoman, Anne Sophie Gourin (World #115), and, winning 19 in the 3rd, show better nerves. Down 15-12 in the deciding game, Tawny scores 6 in a row, during which Gourin fails to return consecutive serves. Then, at 19-all, Gourin serves off — and Tawny says, “Yes!” innocently. Then, no problem with Brazil’s Ligia Silva whom she’d blanked in Winnipeg. And now she’s advanced to the player she wanted — Australia’s China-born Miao Miao, whom Table Tennis Illustrated in its Nov.-Dec., ’97 issue featured as one of “Tomorrow’s Stars.”

At the Swedish Open Tawny’d asked Miao, ‘95 European Cadet Girl’s Champion, to hit some with her, and the disdainful look Miao gave her in refusing was of course being freshly replayed now in Tawny’s mind. Focused she is. So much so that when the umpire tells her to tie her shoe sometime other than up against the table edge, she ignores him. Ignores him even when he waves his yellow card at her. Rallying after losing the 1st, she finds that the win couldn’t be more satisfying.

So, a U.S. player in the quarter’s of a World event — not your everyday occurrence. It’s Tawny vs. Bulgarian Champ Katalina Vitcheva (World #154). When play ends, Coach Doru (who’ll soon be yellow carded for clapping his hands and saying, “Alright”) will make the point that in this match “Tawny made all the points.” That is, against thisopper, Tawny, playing aggressively, will make the action happen, will win or lose the points. Unfortunately, she’ll lose more than she’ll make. But, Bravo, Tawny, our best showing in any event.

‘And you know what?’ she says, “My bag still hasn’t come ... I’ve been using napkins as towels!”

When the heat’s on, Tawny adapts.
MIXED DOUBLES – Final: L.Ma/Y.Zhang (CHN) d. Z.Feng/J.Sun (CHN), 15,19,-9,15; SF: Ma/Zhang d. L.Wang/N.Wang (CHN), -13,-8,12,11,13; Feng/Sun d. Z.Qiu/Y.Yang (CHN), 16,9,9; QF: Wang d. R.Tian/Zhang (CHN), 13,9,18; Ma/Zhang d. G.Liu/N.Li (CHN), 14,18,14; Yin/Qiang d. S.Yan/H.Zhang (CHN), 17,15,15; Feng/Sun d. K.Guo/L.Lin (CHN), 11,-21,20,17,8; Wang/Wang d. S.Park/S.Esk (KOR), 7,12; Tan/Zhang d. T.Boll/N.Struse (GER), 13,12,16,19,14,18,18,16; Yang/Suk d. Q.Gotsch/J.Schopp (GER), 15,16; Park/Kim d. K.Naite/R.Sakata (JPN), 17,17,16; Cheng/Xu d. H.Wang/H.Cheng (CHN), 15,12.

HOW USA PLAYERS DID

Men's Singles

Preliminaries:
David Zhuang, 2-0: d. Shushekov (UZB), 12,8; d. Sandeep Mahat (NEP), 10,12. Advanced to main draw.

Eric Owens, 2-1: d. Jonu Tusa (ALB), 21,15; lost to Kazem Nosiru (NRG), 19,19,15; lost to Aki Kontala (FIN), 17,22. Did not advance.

Todd Sweevers, 2-1: d. Ibrahim Al-Hasan (KUW), 16,8; d. Adrian Albert (LCA), w/o; lost to Serge Sokolovskij (UKR), 17,5,21 – the last point on an edge ball! Did not advance.

Keith Alban, 2-1: d. Nicolas Razafiraminjany (MAD), 14,19; lost to Mika Rasanen (FIN), 16,12; lost to Izak Abramov (ISR), 10,7. Did not advance.

Round of 128: David Zhuang d. Sasa Ignjatovic (SLO), 13,9,21,10,17.

Round of 64: Ruwei Tan (CHN) d. David Zhuang, 12,11,12.

Women's Singles

Preliminaries:
(Gao Jun, Lily Yip and Tawny Banh seeded out)

Michelle Do, 1-1: d. Catherine Davies (WAL), 18,9; lost to Katrin Meyerhofer (GER), 23,15. Did not advance.

Amy Feng, 3-0: d. Dani Casas (COL), 12,10; d. Elena Mocrousov (MDA), 15,9; d. Shanasa Achilova (UZB), 15,8. Advanced to main draw.

Round of 128: Gao Jun (USA) d. Emilia Vahl (EST), 13,6,9; Wang Nan (CHN) d. Amy Feng (USA), 17,11,10; Taitana Kosimova (BLR) d. Lily Yip (TPE), 14,11,10; Ying Ding (CHN) d. Tawny Banh (USA), 21,8,9.

Round of 64: Gao Jun (USA) d. Valentina Popova (SVK), 14,11,19,7.

Round of 32: Hui Wang (CHN) d. Gao Jun (USA), 13,12,12.

Round of 16: David Zhuang/Todd Sweevers (USA) d. Kofi Sallah-Duse/Fosso Lawson-Saitzer (Tog), 22,15; S.Winther/R. Gonzalez (NOR) d. Jonuz Tusa (ALB), 21,15; lost to Kazeem Nosiru (NGR), 10,8.

Round of 96: David Zhuang/Todd Sweevers (USA) d. Chire (TPE), 13,12,14; d. Martin Boileau (FRA), 13,15,14; d. E.Levy (ISR), 18,16,18; d. Blaszczyk/Gatien (FRA), 13,15,14.

Women's Doubles

Preliminaries:
(Gao Jun, Lily Yip and Tawny Banh seeded out)

Round of 128: David Zhuang/Todd Sweevers (USA) d. Kofi Sallah-Duse/Fosso Lawson-Saitzer (Tog), 22,15; S.Winther/R. Gonzalez (NOR) d. Jonuz Tusa (ALB), 21,15; lost to Kazeem Nosiru (NGR), 10,8.

Round of 64: E.Chtchetinine/A.Kontala (BLR/FIN) d. David Zlitiang/lbbi (USA/SCO) d. Shane Ovenneyer/Kurt Peterson (RSA), 19,12,12.

Round of 32: Hui Wang (CHN) d. Gao Jun (USA), 13,12,12.

Round of 16: David Zhuang/Todd Sweevers (USA) d. Kofi Sallah-Duse/Fosso Lawson-Saitzer (Tog), 22,15; S.Winther/R. Gonzalez (NOR) d. Jonuz Tusa (ALB), 21,15; lost to Kazeem Nosiru (NGR), 10,8.

Women's Doubles

Preliminaries:
(Gao Jun, Lily Yip and Tawny Banh seeded out)

Mixed Doubles

Round of 128: David Zhuang/Owen (USA) d. Byre, Tawny Banh/Lily Yip (USA) d. Silvija Erekoul/Bijana Golic (YUG), w/o; H.Hubert/C.Detrigne (BEL) d. Michelle Do/Tammy Gough (USA/AUS), 8,13.

Round of 64: E.Chtchetinine/A.Kontala (BLR/FIN) d. David Zhuang/Todd Sweevers (USA), 20,17; N.Chatalin/M.Martinez (FRA) d. Keith Alban/Michael Achterlonie (USA/SOC).

Women's Doubles

Preliminaries:
(Gao Jun, Lily Yip and Tawny Banh seeded out)

Mixed Doubles

Round of 128: David Zhuang/Owen (USA) d. Byre, Tawny Banh/Lily Yip (USA) d. Silvija Erekoul/Bijana Golic (YUG), w/o; H.Hubert/C.Detrigne (BEL) d. Michelle Do/Tammy Gough (USA/AUS), 8,13.

Round of 64: E.Chtchetinine/A.Kontala (BLR/FIN) d. David Zhuang/Todd Sweevers (USA), 20,17; N.Chatalin/M.Martinez (FRA) d. Keith Alban/Michael Achterlonie (USA/SOC).

Women's Doubles

Preliminaries:
(Gao Jun, Lily Yip and Tawny Banh seeded out)

Mixed Doubles

Round of 128: David Zhuang/Owen (USA) d. Byre, Tawny Banh/Lily Yip (USA) d. Silvija Erekoul/Bijana Golic (YUG), w/o; H.Hubert/C.Detrigne (BEL) d. Michelle Do/Tammy Gough (USA/AUS), 8,13.

Round of 64: E.Chtchetinine/A.Kontala (BLR/FIN) d. David Zhuang/Todd Sweevers (USA), 20,17; N.Chatalin/M.Martinez (FRA) d. Keith Alban/Michael Achterlonie (USA/SOC).
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MEN'S SINGLES
Final: David Zhuang (USA) d. Liu Song (ARG), 21,-22,20,20; SF: Zhuang d. J.A. Gambra Said (CHI), 20,9,14; Song d. F. Arado De Armas (CUB), -20,11,12,10; QF: J.A. Gambra Said d. E.S. Sosa Sanchez, 19,-18,15; Zhuang d. P. Peter-Paul (CAN), 14,16,16; Arado De Armas d. Todd Sweeris (USA), 17,-16,19,16; Song d. Hugo Hoyama (BRA), 22,-11,-11,18,18; 8ths: Sosa Sanchez d. C. Alvarado Perilla (COL), -21,19,18; Gambra d. Pablo Tabachnik (BRA), 16, -16, 15, -14, 16; Peter-Paul d. Thiago Monteiro (BRA), 16,-22,16,14,20; Zhuang d. Dexter St. Louis (TRI), -16,15,16,-14,9; Sweeris d. David Fernandez (PUR), 12,11,19,-14,15,16; Morales d. Guillermo Munoz (MEX), 17,-13,12,10; Alvarado Perilla d. Juan Frery (ARG), 9,15,-15,15; St. Louis d. Xavier Therien (CAN), 13,12,10; Morales d. Guillermo Munoz (MEX), 17,11,-21,18,22.

USA Men's Preliminaries
David Zhuang 3-0: d. Nigel Webb (JAM), 6,18; d. Pineda Lizardo (VEN), 15,5; d. Guillermo Munoz (MEX), 17,16.
Todd Sweeris 2-1: d. Joseph Dibbs (JAM), 16,12; d. RA. Diaz Sanchez (COL), 13,17,16; lost to Thiago Monteiro (BRA), 19,14.
Eric Owens 3-0: d. Trevor Farley (BAR), 18,-15,21; d. H.J. Mujica Arape (VEN), 15,16,22; d. A. Morales Marengo (CHI), -12,22,20. (Note Owens' scores here!)

WOMEN'S SINGLES
Final: Gao Jun (USA) d. Lijuan Geng (CAN), 16,-19,14,18,2 (not a scores here!); SF: Gao d. Petra Cada (CAN), 8,15; Feng d. Tawny Banh (USA), 14,16,16; Amy Feng (USA) d. Cancino Tepez (CHI), 15,14,16,18; Silva d. M. Armas Nuyez (BRA), 11,7,10; 8ths: Banh d. Olate Rodriguez (CHI), 17,-14,18; Cada d. Mariel Ramirez (CUB), 18,-16,17,13,17; Lyanne Kosaka d. S.L. Tepez Cancino (CHI), 19,12,18; Silva d. M. Armas Nuyez, 16,12,9.

USA Women's Preliminaries
Gao Jun 4-0: d. S.M. Ramirez Rojas (ESA), 6,9; d. E.T. Ferreira (BRA), 2,7; d. Olate Rodriguez (CHI), 17,9; d. F. Ramos Portillo (VEN), 13,6.
Amy Feng 3-0: d. O. Vila Reynoso (DOM), 9,14; d. S.M. Morel Messina (CHI), 13,10; d. Petra Cada (CAN), 13,13.
Tawny Banh 3-0: d. De Ying Wang Liang (ESA), 7,15; d. Ligia Silva (BRA), 15,19; d. Y. Rodriguez (CUB), 17,18.

(Men's Results, con't from previous page)

Men's Ranking Tournament (Consolation) Singles
• Round of 128: Barney J. Reid (USA) d. Sherif El-Sakett (EGY), -19,15, 13;
  Keith Allan (USA) – Bye.
• Round of 64: Finn Tugwell (DEN) d. Barney J. Reid (USA), 12,12, Peter Fazeekas (HUN) d. Keith Allan (USA), 13,21,13.

Women's Ranking Tournament (Consolation) Singles
• Round of 128: Tawny Banh (USA) d. Rumenka Krsteva (MAC), 12,10; Lily Yip (USA) – Bye; Michelle Do – Bye.
• Round of 64: Tawny Banh (USA) d. Anne-Sophie Gourin (FRA), 18,-18,19; Lily Yip (USA) d. Li-Chun Pan (TPE), 19,-12,11; Sylvie Plaisant (FRA) d. Michelle Do, 9,9.
• Round of 32: Tawny Banh (USA) d. Ligia Silva (BRA), 12,11; Lily Yip (USA) d. Maroos DeSmet (NED), 5,8.
• Round of 16: Tawny Banh (USA) d. Miao Miao (AUS), -16,17,14; Chris Xu (CAN) d. Amy Feng (USA), 10,14,10.
• Quarterfinals: Tawny Banh (USA) d. Miao Miao (AUS), 16,17,14,16; Tawny Banh (USA) d. Amy Feng (USA), 10,14,10.

WOMEN'S TEAMS
FINAL: USA d. Argentina 3-2
Liu Song (ARG) d. Eric Owens (USA), 12, 10;
Todd Sweeris (USA) d. Juan Frery (ARG), 12, 8;
Eric Owens/David Zhuang (USA) d. Juan Frery/Pablo Tabachnik (ARG), 9, 16;
Liu Song (ARG) d. Todd Sweeris (USA), 10, 14.
David Zhuang (USA) d. Pablo Tabachnik (ARG), 12, 14.

SEMI-FINALS:
USA d. Canada 3-0
Eric Owens (USA) d. Xavier Therien (CAN), 15, -15, 16;
David Zhuang (USA) d. P. Peter-Paul-CAN), 16, 14;
Todd Sweeris/Eric Owens (USA) d. P. Peter-Paul/Horatio Pintea (CAN), 18, -17, 16.

Argentine d. Brazil 3-1
Hugo Hoyama (BRA) d. Juan Frery (ARG), 13, 14;
Liu Song (ARG) d. Thiago Monteiro (BRA), 19, 14;
Juan Frery/Pablo Tabachnik (ARG) d. Thiago Monteiro/Carlos Kawai (JPN), 17, -18, 16;
Liu Song (ARG) d. Hugo Hoyama (BRA), 19, 16.

USA PRELIMINARIES
USA d. Venezuela 3-0
Tawny Sweeris (USA) d. H.J. Mujica Arape (VEN), 16, 17;
David Zhuang (USA) d. Pineda Lizardo (VEN), 16, 9;
Eric Owens/Todd Sweeris (USA) d. Pineda Lizardo/Alcama Gomez (VEN), 9, 18.

USA d. Colombia 3-0
Eric Owens (USA) d. Perilla Alvarado (COL), 19, 15;
David Zhuang (USA) d. Valencia Ramirez (COL), 13, 20, 16;
Todd Sweeris/Eric Owens (USA) d. Perilla Alvarado/Sanchez Diaz (COL), 18, 15.

WOMEN'S TEAMS
FINAL: USA d. Canada 3-0
Gao Jun (USA) d. Lijuan Geng (CHI), 21, -11, 17;
Tawny Banh (USA) d. Chris Xu (CAN), 17, -19, 22;
Amy Feng/Tawny Banh (USA) d. Lijuan Geng/Petra Cada (CAN), -20, 15, 13.

SEMI-FINALS:
USA d. Chile 3-0
Amy Feng (USA) d. Cancino Tepez (CHI), 15, 10;
Amy Feng (USA) d. Olate Rodriguez (CHI), 16, 13;
Amy Feng/Tawny Banh (USA) d. Olate Rodriguez/Messina Morel (CHI), 17, 20, 14.

Canada d. Brazil 3-0
Chris Xu (CAN) d. Lyanne Kosaka (BRA), 7, 11;
Lijuan Geng (CHI) d. E.T. Ferreira (BRA), 6, 2;
Petra Cada/Chris Xu (CAN) d. E.T. Ferreira/Ligia Silva (BRA), 14, 16.

USA PRELIMINARIES
USA d. Venezuela 3-0
Gao Jun (USA) d. L.M. Perez-Soto (VEN), 6, 9;
Tawny Banh (USA) d. F. Ramos Portillo (VEN), 10, 15;
Amy Feng/Tawny Banh (USA) d. L.M. Perez-Soto, 13, 7;

USA d. Brazil 3-0
Amy Feng (USA) d. Lyanne Kosaka (BRA), 17, 15;
Gao Jun (USA) d. E.T. Ferreira (BRA), 2, 15;
Tawny Banh/Amy Feng (USA) d. E.T. Ferreira/Ligia Silva (BRA), 10, -14, 15;

Tawny Banh (USA) d. Blanca Alejo (DOM), 10, 7;
Amy Feng/Gao Jun (USA) d. Blanca Alejo/Renoso Vila (DOM), 10, 11.
At the conclusion of a beautiful vacation to Europe, my wife Wei and I arrived in Eindhoven, Netherlands on Sunday morning. The 45th World Championships! We hurried over to the playing hall to get our accreditation. As we approached the entrance, we were met by the noise of what seemed like a hundred ping pong balls and the crack of 200 glue-saturated rackets. And in fact it was almost correct - on each of the 20 tables there were four players warming up cross-court. A closer inspection of the faces revealed a virtual Who’s Who of the table tennis world - everybody was getting ready for the big event. 652 competitors were entered into the five individual events - Women’s Singles, Men’s Singles, Women’s Doubles, Men’s Doubles and Mixed Doubles. The team event was split off to be held in Malaysia early next year.

The modern hall’s floor was covered with a dark red playing surface, and the 20 green barred courts with beautiful green-top tables combined for a very pleasing visual effect. The lighting was a little uneven, and the center tables seemed relatively dark, but that would not prove to be a big problem for the players - at least not as much as the record heat wave that was to sweep Holland in the following four days. Either the hall had no air conditioning, or the organization chose not to turn it on to avoid blowing the ball around - but the condition inside the Eindhoven Indoor Sports Center turned sauna-like from the first day of competition, which had the unfortunate result that many players struggled to get enough grip from their humid rubber to play at their highest level.

During the first two days of the tournament the singles qualifying events and the early rounds of doubles events were played. On Wednesday at noon the first round of men’s singles started. A young Danish player by the name of Michael Maze had caught our eye in practice and we wanted to see his performance in the first round. This young kid oozes talent - comparisons with Waldner are dangerous, but in his case inevitable. He invents strokes on the spur of the moment, has golden touch and a great sense for the game. Our assessment is that he probably will go far, if only he can get his temper under control.

Unfortunately for him his opponent was a pips-out penholder hitter, He Zhi Wen, (pronounced “Huh Jer Whane”), a Chinese expatriate playing for Spain. Initial complete consternation by Maze - 9-21, gave way to spurts of genius - 21-16, then to frustration - 15-21, to a solid fight - 21-19, and ultimately, in the fifth game, to a runaway temper - 12-21. As a side note to this young talent: He and his men’s doubles partner Finn Tugwell suffered the worst defeat of the tournament a little later in the day, when, after dominating the pair of Kalininok Kreanga and Siobodan Grujic in a 21-15 first game and shredding them in most of the second game to take a 20-10 lead – that’s right, one more point to go – they suffered a meltdown of gargantuan proportions, losing this game 21-23, and the third, in complete shock, at 14. Not very impressive, you may say, but I believe Maze is worth keeping an eye out for.

At 7 p.m. the second-round matches were played. Fredrick Hakansson of Sweden met Kim Tae Soo of Korea. Hakansson, the heir apparent to the Swedish table tennis throne, has had a rapid ascent in the rankings after recently coming back from his “wrong turn” to golf. The match was very entertaining. The Swede took the first game at 14. But for the rest of the match, although he got himself into the points with relative ease, he simply got over-powered again and again by Kim Tae Soo’s monstrous forehand. 21-7, 21-14. Kim led most of the fourth game, but Hakansson stayed within reach. After Kim led 20-19, Hakansson ended a long counterlooping rally when his shot hit the net, rolled for about six inches along the top of the net, fell over and hit the edge on Kim’s backhand side. Kim, in the save of the tournament, leaped from his position 10 feet behind the table to retrieve the ball in a full stretch and gingerly lifted it around the net post so precisely that it wound up rolling across the table top back to Hakansson. Match over, 21-19.

In the same round Waldner had a wake-up call. After a not altogether easy first game against the Russian Sergei Andrianov (21-17) the Magician seemed to have solved whatever problem he might have had with Andrianov’s solid forehand and crisp backhand (Game two: 21-18). In the third game the Swede fell behind 8-12 after some misses. Andrianov had started adjusting to Waldner’s sidespin balls and was now looping them effortlessly. Waldner continuously made the mistake of challenging Andrianov’s backhand - even though Russian players are notorious for having solid backhands. Consequently a more and more confident Andrianov scored backhand bomb after backhand bomb and, although Waldner fought back with his own power shots, he lost the game at 18. Game four again began with some huge shots by the Russian, but Waldner raised his game up a notch, particularly his serves, which were yielding four or five points per sequence. Andrianov would not go away. From 15-17 down he got to 18-18 and pressured to take a 20-18 lead. Waldner got a service winner and played out great points to tie it at 20, then 21-21. Another great power point gave the Swede the lead and an attempted backhand that flew off the Russian’s racket edge gave him an uncomfortable 21-21 win.

On Thursday August 5th the third round started. #1 seed Vladimir Samsonov of Belarus played against Danny Heister, a Dutch lefty, in a feature match that got full TV coverage for obvious reasons - we were in Holland after all.

Samsonov started the match by keeping all the balls to Heister’s backhand and was able to control the Dutchman for a while (8-7, 17-12). But Heister went for every shot, kept surprising the young talent from Belarus with well-placed counterloops, and finally, with a phenomenal serve, Heister deuced the first game. Samsonov brought his power to bear to win the go-ahead point and, already driven deep into his defensive game, won the game winner when Heister missed the put-away shot, 23-21.

The local hero started the second game hot and took a 7-3 lead, but Samsonov adjusted quickly and started getting to his counterloops with more ease. He adjusted so well, in fact, that he parked Heister at the 7-score for the next 10 points, allowed another couple of points - now dominating, placing his loops at will and catching Heister wrong-footed - and humiliated his opponent 21-9. The Dutchman roared into the third game, taking advantage of a little letdown in concentration by Samsonov and took it 21-19, but the Belarusian giant awoke again to put a 21-8 accent on the match.

Timo Boll, the young German left-hand looper, looks very impressive. There is a special clarity in his technique. Nice to watch, nice to learn from. After a resounding second-round win over France’s Patrick Chila (12, 19, 16) he was the next to meet Kim Tae Soo. In an extremely pretty match the two traded strong loops, but often a rally finished when, after trading several power loops, Kim suddenly produced a forehand that was seemingly twice as strong. Boll used a new shot very effectively. In each World Championship we have attended, there was some new
Clockwise from top right: Current and past U.S. Team Members Barney J. Reed & Wei Wang have the best seats on the page for two shots of Men’s Singles Runner-Up Ma Lin; an agitated Chinese Head Coach Cai Zhenhua tells Ma Lin how to win against Waldner; Men’s Singles World Champion Liu Guoliang; Liu falls to the floor at the moment of victory; Women’s Singles Finalist Zhang Yining; a hustling Men’s Singles Semifinalist Werner Schlager; Schlager listens to coach; Swedish Coach Tickan Carlsson watches Waldner go down; Women’s Singles World Champion Wang Nan.

From the World Championships
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Men's Singles World Champion Liu Guoliang won the closest men's final ever: 16, -19, -19, 16, 22 over Ma Lin.

shot that was emerging—either in its embryonic state or already as a fully developed new technique. In Eindhoven, we noticed that many European players succeeded in ending counterlooping rallies by stepping in closer to the table, bending their knees very low—almost sitting on their heels—and looping a power shot off the bounce with a quick arm motion over their head. The resulting ball is a sight to see! Although we had seen it on occasion, many players were suddenly using it very deliberately and often, Boll among them. Locking Kim in on his backhand side, he took the first game 21-17. Korea's #1 paid attention. Still insisting on using his main weapon—the forehand—Kim turned even wider, sometimes playing with his left foot against the barrier, just to be able to use his forehand. The few times that Boll figured he might take advantage of that and go wide to Kim's forehand, the flying Korean ran the ball down and punished it—almost always for a winner. Kim won the second in a close 21-19 battle, and the third at a more comfortable 16. Tied in the fourth at 17–17, 18–18, Kim got a net dribbler that ended a long, exhausting rally: "The Back-Breaker!" as one of our friends likes to call out in those situations. Game and match to Kim 21-18.

J.O. Waldner met He Zhi Wen in the 3rd round. He walked to the table radiating confidence that could only be transcribed as:"I know you, I've played you a thousand times." Indeed, in his many years, he must have played countless pips-out penholders. Despite that, it took him a few minutes to find the range, too long to hang on for the first game, and He Zhi Wen won it at 18 with some great smashes and many Waldner errors. A different Waldner met He Zhi Wen in the second game. The adjustment period was over and the genius had freed reign: 4-1, 8-2, and the Spaniard seemed bamboozled. And now, on top of it, Waldner started using his apparently newly developed power game—yes: "Waldner" and "power game" in the same sentence—and it worked beautifully. He Zhi Wen had to increase the risk in his shots, get some points, but Waldner won the game at 14 with a lobbing point. Game three: The Spanish/Chinese athlete played brilliantly, anticipating well and smashing early and hard, but Waldner was now hot, was ready for the hits and turned an 11-11 tie into a 17-13 lead and a 21-15 game win. The last game seemed like a formality: Waldner was in the "Zone," where he picks up many great smashes and many Waldner loops and rip-the-forehand sequences he took the game at 18. In game four it became clear that Primorac's game was a size bigger than Liu's: Unless Liu placed his loops perfectly, Zoran was able to produce too much power for Liu to handle. So Liu played very carefully to stay with the big Croat, 5-5, 10-10, 15-15, and with a few strong forehands and well-controlled pushes, he managed to take the game, 21-19. The fifth game started as a backhand battle. Primorac was waiting for a loose ball so he could punch it hard, while Liu tried to force quick exchanges, which favored him, 5-5, 8-8, 11-11. Now, with Liu firmly rooted on the backhand side, Primorac started taking advantage of his much shorter opponent's limited reach, played wide to Liu's forehand and opened to 17-13, and won 21-15.

In one of the women's singles quarterfinals, placement and judicious use of power brought him to a 16-14 lead and after some of his patented backhand-serve-from-the-forehand, turn-and-rip-the-forehand sequences he took the game at 18. In game four it became clear that Primorac's game was a size bigger than Liu's: Unless Liu placed his loops perfectly, Zoran was able to produce too much power for Liu to handle. So Liu played very carefully to stay with the big Croat, 5-5, 10-10, 15-15, and with a few strong forehands and well-controlled pushes, he managed to take the game, 21-19. The fifth game started as a backhand battle. Primorac was waiting for a loose ball so he could punch it hard, while Liu tried to force quick exchanges, which favored him, 5-5, 8-8, 11-11. Now, with Liu firmly rooted on the backhand side, Primorac started taking advantage of his much shorter opponent's limited reach, played wide to Liu's forehand and opened to 17-13, and won 21-15.

Few expected Werner Schlager, world #15, to make the semifinals. Nobody told him.

Men's Singles Runner-up Ma Lin demonstrates his penhold backhand loop.

Up 2-0 and 16-11 in the semifinals, Defending Men's Singles Champion Jan-Ove Waldner lost to Ma Lin.
top seed Wang Nan played against Chire Koyama – formerly Chinese top player He Zhili, now playing for Japan. There is some bad blood between the Chinese Table Tennis Establishment and Koyama that stems from some anti-Chinese statements she made years ago, and from the fact that she still keeps posing a threat to China’s top women, and so if Wang had a “must win” match during this championship, this was it! Koyama plays an almost pure blocking style - very reminiscent of USA’s Cheng Yinghua – and attacks only when the opportunity presents itself very obviously. Controlling Wang’s attack shots superbly, and blocking them with a soft touch so they wouldn’t go back with any energy, Koyama forced enough errors to win the first game 21-18. Wang paid attention to that in the second game, stepped in a little after Koyama’s blocks, which gave her more authority (9-9, 15-15), but still she was caught too far back often enough to endanger the second game with a 16-19 deficit. Besides the coach at court side, most of the Chinese Team was watching and cheering loudly. About to this point: Cai Zhenhua, the Chinese head coach. He, we were told, believes in his power to turn a game around by conspicuously appearing at court side if there’s trouble. It might be superstition, coincidence or intimidation, but we have seen this work several times. He chose to show up now. Without saying a word, he sat down in the stands next to the court – and things changed. Wang pulled to 18-20, 20-20, and won the game, 22-20. Wang came into the third game clearly understanding what to do: Staying close to the table, now knowing that Koyama’s attacks couldn’t hurt her, she pulled out a 5-0, 11-2 lead. The veteran from Japan tried to adjust by forcing her attacks, but that’s just not in her game. She made more errors and lost the third game at 5.

To neutralize Koyama’s blocking, Wang had apparently decided to attack her forehand exclusively. This turned out to be a smart move. Blockers must return to their center position after every shot if they don’t want one side to remain exposed. If the attacks are on alternating sides they can continue their momentum and comfortably reach the second ball, but if they are continuously pressed on the same side, they have to keep changing direction. After two or three times, their balance will be less than perfect, which will cause a loose ball. Wang used this to open a 17-13 fourth-game lead, but then – with the end in sight – started hoping for the points more than fighting for them, and let Koyama catch up to 18-17. After a short pause, Wang woke up and ripped a few choice loops to finish the match, 21-18.

For connoisseurs of the new European power game, the J.O. Waldner-Christophe Legout (FRA) match was one of the best feats of this tournament. Legout has grown beyond his days when he was a Gatien-clone. He now owns a huge backhand, which, combined with an even more stinging forehand, makes him extremely dangerous. His forceful yet light footwork projects him with incredible speed toward the ball and allows him to maintain high pressure on his opponents.

The atmospheric condition in the hall was almost unbearable – not much more heat and humidity was needed for the Indoor Sports Center to develop its own weather. Occasionally condensation formed on a player’s rubber and the player would badly miss-hit. All players were drenched in sweat after half a game. Time and again, Legout had to ask the umpire to allow him to dry his hand. When standing in his ready position, sweat dripped from his chin, even his racket handle, and he was practically standing in a puddle. He lost his footing several times and had to use his towel to dry the floor. Dangerous conditions!

Despite that, the two athletes treated the spectators to a profoundly entertaining spectacle. Waldner was sharp. Legout needed 5 or 6 power loops to turn an initial 1-4 score into a 5-5 tie. Recognizing that he needed every ounce of his considerable resources, Waldner pumped his fist in satisfaction when he opened up a 9-6 lead. With a series of outstanding serves and equally impressive receives Waldner secured the game at 13. In game two, the Frenchman jumped out to a 7-1 lead with a solid receiving game and some great blocks. Waldner reacted to pull to within one (7-8), and although Legout was playing like a wildcat, Waldner stayed with him 16-16, 17-17 and served at 17-18. In the next rallies, he missed some loops that looked easy, which led us to believe that he fell victim to wet rubber. 21-18 for Monsieur Legout. In a third game that began very even, both Legout and

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Waldner had elevated their level even further. Waldner with sharp punch blocks and Legout with several reverse cross-step backhand crosscourt rips had battled to a 15-15 tie. Waldner now produced a series of his “A” serves, took a 20-16 lead and played one of his fading sidespin backhand blocks which Legout powered into the net, 21-19 Waldner.

During the whole match, there were some Italian players behind me, who were commenting to each other, and interestingly, exclusively referred to Waldner as “il maestro” – the master – as though this were his given name. Certainly, Waldner lived up to that, particularly when serving. A 1-4 score in game four seemed no real deficit when he started serving. Legout didn’t miss them outright, but he couldn’t do much with them either. 5-5, 8-7 Waldner. When Legout managed to go ahead 11-10 he had to interrupt the match because the floor beneath him was too wet to play, and even after drying off he had to immediately interrupt his next serve because some sweat had dripped on the ball. A few very dynamic points later, Waldner tried to serve himself out of a 16-19 hole. Legout took the first point off J.O.’s sequence (16-20), and then the maestro served into the net. 21-19 Waldner.

The deciding game was everything the previous games had built it up to be: Legout cracking forehands and backhands, Waldner easily measuring up to the task, occasionally pumping a fist after winning a fiercely contested point – 10-10. Now the defending World Champion was firing on all cylinders, leading 15-10. Two phenomenal backhand rips from Legout were answered by two exquisite receives by Waldi, who soon led 17-13. After a loop winner off a net ball, 18-13, Waldner couldn’t be stopped anymore and he won, 21-14, to finish the match. With a flushed face he walked back to the chair – exhausted, no longer perfectly stable on his legs, looking more like a survivor than a winner.

Friday – the quarterfinals day – was a treat! First, I saw what for me was the best women’s match ever. Before that, the semifinal battle of Otilia Badescu (ROM) against Hyun Jung Hwa (KOR) at the 1993 World Championship in Gothenburg had held that distinction. 17-year-old Zhang Yining (CHN) had to play her teammate Li Ju. In 1996, when my wife Wei returned to her “alma mater,” the Beijing team, to train for the Olympics, she had met the then 14-year-old Zhang, and during one of the times, when the curious girls were asking Wei all kinds of questions about the outside world, Zhang complained: “So much hard practice! When is it my time to compete?!” Having seen her play, Wei answered: “It’s not time yet, but your time will definitely come!” Neither of them anticipated Yining’s results to be this significant this soon.

It is common for Western observers to dismiss China/China matches as “fixed.” So deep is the damage that the Chinese did to their reputation in years past, when they would mandate the winner for competitive or political reasons, that they will probably never live it down. Fixing the outcome of a match cut so deeply into the psyche of the Western understanding of sportsmanship that many are no longer willing to accept the outcome of such a match as is. It is, however, no longer so: In this match-up, a relative newcomer was going up against a proven quantity. In the past, #12 seed Zhang might have been told to let #2 seed Li win because of Li’s 5-0 record against another semifinalist – Ryu Ji Hye of Korea. If Ryu should win against Wang Nan, China would then still have a good chance for the gold. But this match was very obviously competitive. Each player had her own personal coach sitting at courtside, and the outcome – Zhang’s win – was not the best China could have hoped for. Another indicator that the ugly times are over is the fact that the players now get a substantial financial incentive from the Chinese Association to win medals, and so do their coaches. With a few thousand dollars at stake, it is harder to convince a player to throw a match. If they still wanted to do that, it is unlikely that they would have instituted this awards program. Of course, we’re not so naive to think that the players would disclose such arrangements if they existed, but in conversations with them we have had no indication that this young generation of players has ever been asked to do that. Generally, such a request leaves a psychological mark on the competitors, one that none of this crop of players seems to bear.

And then there is the play. This match – Zhang vs. Li – was from beginning to end a rip-roaring war. This new crop of Chinese women players no longer emulates other women: They try to copy the Chinese men’s styles, and it shows: Power reigns! Although they still possess the legendary touch and the strategic savvy of their predecessors, these young girls play more athletically and with a greater range.

Although Zhang ultimately won the match handily (13, 10, 13), the points were long, tightly contested, beautiful rallies. Li often would take what looked like a sure finishing shot only to have Zhang run it down and rip it past her. Both players were counterlooping from half distance, but it was still different from the men’s game. The player’s quick, yet smooth loop strokes produced disproportionately fast drive balls that looked as though projected by rubber bands, and their flawless footwork allowed them to just power them back. I hope that some of this footage will make it into circulation. In my eyes, it deserves as much recognition as any match in this event does.

Now, I was finally going to see the match I had been hoping for ever since I saw Kung Linghui play for the first
time: Kong-Waldner. In earlier conversations we had with the young Chinese talent, he told us that as a kid he had studied Waldner extensively on videotape. For those who are familiar with that as a kid he had studied Waldner extensively had with the young Chinese talent. lie told us time: Kong-Waldner. In earlier conversations we sat there in anticipation of this match, somehow Waldner’s record against Kong seemed insignificant.

Game one started with both players showing a power game uncharacteristic for both. Kong quickly responded to Waldner’s 9-7 lead with strong blocks and powerful loops and tied it at 10. Under pressure, 16-14 down, Kong saved a point by chopping and then loop-killing Waldner’s push. Again uncharacteristic for the usually stoic Chinese, yet telling of his intensity, was his loud scream after winning this point. In fact both players were playing very intensely, and technically there was nothing between them. 17-17, 18-18, deuce. While counterlooping during the next point, Waldner’s ball touched the net causing a Kong miss, and Waldner took the game 22-20.

Kong started the second game with some huge forehands, 4-1. Waldner gave him one of his best serves, and the Chinese with the golden touch dropped it a few inches from the net—all most unplayable for Waldner. Leading 7-1, 11-2, Kong out-blocked Waldner with one of the shots usually attributed to his opponent: The backhand sidespin block from the center of the table deep into the opponent’s forehand—out of Waldner’s reach. Kong’s loops now were so spinny that Waldi kept blocking them out, 21-13 Kong.

In game three the two rivals kept challenging each other’s backhands, both occasionally trying to score with a sharp punch to the forehand. By now, he who pushed lost the point. Waldner could not seem to stay with Kong on forehand counterloop battles. Kong’s variation in speed and spin was too great. In a seesaw battle they reached 15-15, but a couple of service winners, a 5 lead in the fifth, but suddenly, from 4-9 down, Kong scored 9 consecutive points to seal the match and win, 21-16.

The women’s semifinal at 11 a.m. was a match of the seventeen-year-olds: Zhang Yining against teammate Li Nan, the youngest player in the main draw, a left-handed penhold looper. Zhang was not playing as loosely in the first game as she had been in her quarterfinal upset win, probably because she was playing an equal rather than a higher player. She lost the game 21-18, but, after finding her rhythm and playing her dynamic looping game, easily recovered to win game two, 21-10, and game three, 21-15, stretched to lose game four, 21-14, but recovered her form to allow her a 21-15 fifth game win and a spot in her first World Championship final.

WOMEN’S FINAL
The women’s gold medal match was played on the same day at 3 p.m. Zhang, again playing a teammate favored to win, seemed completely unencumbered. She was swinging freely from both sides, blocking Wang’s attacks and immediately counter-attacking, keeping an increasing advantage over Wang throughout the first game, occasionally pumping her fist after a good point. 18-14, a couple of Kong-like super heavy pushes
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that caused Wang's loops to roll on the table, and Zhang won the first, 21-15. In the second game, she played Wang like a man would: She pushed long to her, let her take the first shot and then just ripped a massive counterloop. 21-14. Zhang. But Wang, at the tender age of 20, is already a seasoned veteran. She responded to the pressure like a champion: she got better. Her shots became harder, higher risk, yet with fewer errors, and she found an exploitable weakness by continuously pressing Zhang's backhand. 8-3, 10-3, the teen started spraying the balls all over the court and lost to Wang, 21-5. Zhang pressed hard in the fourth, adding variation to her forehand to force some blocking errors from Wang. She was playing fearlessly, but Wang's pressure against her backhand still worked. 11-9 Wang. Suddenly, everything clicked into place for the #1 in the world and she closed the game out, 21-12. In the fifth game Wang continued her strategy. Zhang was again looking for points by forcing errors on Wang's wide forehand, but had to adjust since Wang was now waiting there. 7-7, 11-9 Wang. Now, the deficit in experience started costing Yining badly. Wang knew exactly what she wanted to do, and it was just a matter of execution, while Zhang, in her search for answers, started to unravel and went down in a 21-11 blow-out.

\section*{Men's Semifinals}

Sunday - The tournament's conclusion with the men's singles. The semifinals were played at 11 a.m. and noon, the final at 4 p.m.

The match that everyone was talking about, Waldner - Ma Lin, came first. Strange for table tennis was the cooperative warm-up: usually players counter forehands and backhands to tune their rhythm and touch, but these two took turns looping and carefully blocking the ball back precisely so the other would get a comfortable shot.

Waldner dove headlong into the first game with some clean serve-attack points, answered by Ma's excellently placed loops and deceptive spin. The game so far was not pretty - pure third-ball attack. It seemed that both felt disadvantaged in long rallies. At 11-9 Waldner was totally focused while Ma seemed to still be feeling his way into the match. Ma tried to force an underspin game, seeing an advantage in taking his huge shot first. Waldner, the old fox, understood immediately and gave him no spin or topspin serves. He didn't seem to care either way, just as long as it was not his opponent's preference. At 17-11 down, Ma hadn't used his backhand much and was more one-dimensional than in previous matches - just another nethand looper to Waldner. But long points did seem to favor Ma, and he caught up to 16-18. A few great rallies brought Waldner a 20-18 lead, and a spectacular forehand put-away of one of Ma's blocks closed the game, 21-18.

Game two: Ma was not playing quite as confidently as in other matches. He seemed overwhelmed by the occasion, surprised when his big shots came back and rattled when he grossly misread Waldner's serves. On the other side, the Men's Final

Maestro was playing flawlessly and even the edge balls went his way: 19-11, 20-13, 21-14.

With a 2-0 game advantage, Waldner's confidence was soaring. Dominating serve-attack points brought a 9-6 lead in game three, but then a couple of neat edges and Ma's favor jumped the Chinese player's game. He closed to 9-11, got another edge, and then Waldner opened the score again to 15-10, 16-11. And then it happened, initially not really perceptible, but none less effective: Ma inconsistently stepped making mistakes and remembered his backhand. He started catching up, 14-16, 17-17, and forced small but costly Waldner errors. At 18-18, J.O. missed a couple of attempted ficks, and Ma won the game with a big penhold backhand loop, 21-19.

A rejuvenated Ma started the fourth game with big serve-attack points, winning most long rallies, 4-1, 7-3. In the middle of the game, the umpires missed an edge ball in Waldner's favor. Ma pointed it out without hesitation and earned a big round of applause. From 11-9, Ma pulled away with sharp, deceptively placed attacks set up by short serves to the Swede's forehand. 15-9, 18-12, 20-15. Now Waldner, laying everything into his serves and scoring four consecutive points, looked like he might tie, maybe even win - Ma was rattled, but then Waldner missed a forehand loop and gave the game away, 21-19.

An even start in the fifth game, marked by good rallies, big forehand shots and several big Ma backhands extended from 2-2, 5-5 though 9-9, with each trying to control the other with short serves. Waldner took an 11-9 lead with two beautiful ficks but gave it back by missing two high balls. Ma scored with a big backhand, 14-14, and got Waldner to miss two serves, 16-14. Pressing hard to attack the third ball, Waldner missed too many; 15-18, 16-19, 17-20, and Ma finished the match with a heavy underspin serve, 21-17. The defending champion was out.

Werner Schlager, on the circuit for many years, said that early this year he noticed something - points that usually ended up Ma's. He tied it at 15-15, 16-16. Ma survived a long lobbing point when an exhausted Liu mis-
hit, and Ma eventually survived the game, 21-19. Ma was 2-1 up in games – was another youngster going to dethrone his elder?

Liu started the fourth game a little out of sorts, but it didn’t cause too much damage, 1-3, 4-5. He tried to force Ma’s backhand, but Ma turned and unleashed a hair-raising forehand. Ma was playing so well that it took Liu five full smashers to get through him one point, 7-6, 9-6 Ma. Now, Liu seemed to regain control. He tied the score at 9 and was anticipating Ma’s shots better, outblocking him deep to the forehand. Increasing his pressure, Liu looped a backhand, turned and pulverized Ma’s block, then got a net ball. 17-15 Liu, and ultimately 21-16.

Game five: Liu came out very aggressively, 2-0, 2-1 and Ma, pressed into the backcourt again, lobbed a ball for an edge. Despite a couple of shirt changes, Liu was drenched in sweat, and understandably, he seemed a little slower than at the beginning of the match. Ma scored again by lobbing, 6-4 Ma. Liu suffered a little “heavy-arm” syndrome, but he fought on to 10-10. Liu, anxious, hit too hard too early and fell 10-13 behind. But he had to take the initiative; otherwise Ma’s attacks were too strong. He continued his high-risk strategy, and succeeded in forcing Ma to lob over and over again. 17-17. Liu’s costly easy block error and a rushed hit gave Ma 19-18 lead, but a couple of well played points, one of them a forehand loop with the closest men’s singles final in history, 24-22. Liu tried to change his strategy. He went all out, smashing Ma, but he fought onto 10-10. Liu, of course, his bag after the win, and I saw him bend over, feet of Liu when he stepped over the barrier to congratulate his opponent. The victory made a stir, Therese Terratiou and Marty Prayer were one of the top Northern California players, some of the top Northern California players among her hitting partners, but also enjoys practicing with other local juniors. China’s Michelle practiced every day. She counts Michelle Do sits down after her first match in the World Championships. She takes a towel and wipes a few beads of sweat from the brow. The soft spoken 16-year-old has a satisfied look on her face. She just scored a resounding victory over Catherine Davies of Wales, 10 & 13.

During the match, Michelle displayed no jitters. She just ripped through her unsuspecting victim as though she were playing in a local tournament: confident and fearless. Michelle says that she was a little nervous during warm-up, hoping she might win a game or even match at her first appearance in this prestigious event. But when she stepped to the table she felt comfortable.

The young Californian, born in Milpitas on June 5, 1983, has been playing for six or seven years already. Her brother and her dad got her started, and when her brother’s coach saw her playing he decided to begin coaching her, too.

In preparation for the World Championships Michelle practiced every day. She counts some of the top Northern California players among her hitting partners, but also enjoys practicing with other local juniors. China’s legendary Deng Yaping is her favorite player although her style is completely different from Michelle’s.

Her next match is against a chopper, Katrin Meyerhofer of Germany. Our junior is a little anxious because she lacks practice against that style. And indeed, although she puts up a great fight in the first game, losing it 25-23, her lack of experience in international play costs her the necessary patience to last out the young German chopper, and he loses the second game 21-15.

So Michelle goes home from a first World’s with a respectable 1:1 record. Her composure at the table bodes well for Michelle’s future. She will be back many times – she’s got the right stuff.

Keith Alban

In his first match of his first World Championship, 15-year-old Keith Alban had to play Mika Rasamen of Finland, a strong 2650 level looper. He knew it would be an uphill battle, and he lost 16 & 12. But he is a realist. His goal was to go out there and do the best he could – and gather as much experience as possible for the future.

When Keith started playing table tennis just before he turned nine, he didn’t know of the existence of a world championship. Later, when first heard about it, he never thought he would get to play in it, let alone at the tender age of 15. So when he heard that he would be traveling to Eindhoven he was excited and happy.

Keith was born just outside of New York City on December 10, 1983, but his family moved to Parkland, FL early in his life. After first getting exposed to table tennis at a summer camp he and some of his friends went to a local table tennis club. He got hooked on the sport, and luckily his parents supported his switch from soccer to table tennis.

Therese Terratiou and Marty Prager were his early coaches, the ones who led him to his first successes. Keith now lives in Sweden and has been practicing at Angby for the last year and a half, getting his education via correspondence school. There, he practices two to four hours a day. When he is in the U.S. he cannot practice that much because of a lack of practice partners.

Waldner and Wang Tao are his favorite players, but Keith knows he’s not expected to perform at their level yet. He is quite relaxed before his next match – he has nothing to lose. Izaak Abramov from Israel, who would later defeat Austria’s Qian Qianli, beats him at 10 & 7, but then Keith wins his match against Madagascar’s Nicolas Razafimamatory 14 & 19, and so can bring home a victory from his first appearance in his chosen sport’s prime event. He’ll be back.

Michelle Do

Michelle Do sits down after her first match in the World Championships. She takes a towel and wipes a few beads of sweat from the brow. The soft spoken 16-year-old has a satisfied look on her face. She just scored a resounding victory over Catherine Davies of Wales, 10 & 13.

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The young Californian, born in Milpitas on June 5, 1983, has been playing for six or seven years already. Her brother and her dad got her started, and when her brother’s coach saw her playing he decided to begin coaching her, too.

In preparation for the World Championships Michelle practiced every day. She counts some of the top Northern California players among her hitting partners, but also enjoys practicing with other local juniors. China’s legendary Deng Yaping is her favorite player although her style is completely different from Michelle’s.

Her next match is against a chopper, Katrin Meyerhofer of Germany. Our junior is a little anxious because she lacks practice against that style. And indeed, although she puts up a great fight in the first game, losing it 25-23, her lack of experience in international play costs her the necessary patience to last out the young German chopper, and he loses the second game 21-15.

So Michelle goes home from a first World’s with a respectable 1:1 record. Her composure at the table bodes well for Michelle’s future. She will be back many times – she’s got the right stuff.

USA JUNIOR STARS AT THE WORLDS

By Diego Schaaf

Keith Alban

Michelle Do
THE BACKHAND LOOP OF VLADIMIR SAMSONOV

World #1 Ranked Man for Most of 1998-1999

By Wei Wang, USATT Certified National Coach

Photos by Diego Schaaf © 1999
The first time I saw Vladimir Samsonov of Belarus play, he was 17 years old, and we were watching him beat Zoran Kalinic at the 1993 World Championships in Gothenburg, Sweden. He was doing it with amazing simplicity. Everything looked easy and obvious. His movements were calm, and it was evident that there was absolutely no way Kalinic could win. It was a clash of generations – the old Yugoslavian penholder, who in previous years had blocked his way into the top ranks of table tennis, versus the young genius who was playing such a modern game that it almost invalidated any older style.

The trademarks of his game are great clarity, extremely smooth movements that produce surprisingly powerful shots, and a very even temper that allows him to perform equally well under pressure as he does when he’s cruising. Vladimir is now a “mature” 23 years old. His strokes have grown even more consistent. He was seeded #1 at this year’s World Championships, but to everyone’s astonishment was taken out in the 4th round by the red-hot Ma Lin (15, -13, -18, -16). Still, he already has an impressive career record: ranked #1 for most of 1998, European Singles and Doubles Champion 1998, runner-up at the 1997 World Championships, to mention just a few of his accomplishments.

His efficient strokes are built upon the fact that large muscle groups are easier to control than small ones, and when used correctly, generate much more power. In every one of his shots, his torso and thighs have a critical role in ultimately projecting his racket hand with such speed that what looks like a relatively slow arm movement results in a major explosion at impact with the ball. He uses the smaller muscles in his arm more to fine-tune direction and spin than to generate the stroke. This is what allows him to rarely be off balance or too late to recover. Even if he just finished a rally-ending loop kill, he still stands there, ready to continue. A key to his consistency is the clear execution of the three elements of his stroke: backswing, contact, and follow-through.

In this sequence Samsonov is practicing with his teammate, Evgeny Chtchetinine, a chopper. This loop is off heavy underspin and results in a fast, spiny drive shot.

On the top row of frames, he starts his backswing. Samsonov sets up with a wide stance, his left foot slightly in front of the right (although square in relation to the incoming ball), and drops his arm loosely, keeping the weight relatively even on both feet which keeps all of his options open. (In fact, this is a characteristic common to all top player’s strokes: They delay committing to a shot as long as they can so they can do the fine adjustment necessary to produce the best possible shot.) During his backswing, he rotates his hips to the left. At the end of his backswing, Samsonov drops his right shoulder, which sets his racket between his knees – his upper arm still loose, but his hand starts pulling the racket head backwards and he starts shifting his weight to the right leg. In the middle of the second row, he is ready to release his power, like a spring that is fully compressed. Note how low his head is relative to the table – his chin only inches higher than where he eventually will make contact. And remember: Samsonov is well over six feet tall!

Now the secret behind his uncanny ability to produce tremendous power with what looks like a slow, smooth stroke: he simultaneously pushes off with both legs, and with an extra strong push from his right leg, thrusts his left hip forward, rotates his shoulder – all large muscle groups – and lifts his upper arm. His lower arm remains loose, and the racket still points back a little. His hand travels forward on about a 45 degree path toward the contact point and the wrist swings forward into the ball at contact (third row, second frame). At contact, his lower arm has “caught up” to the upper arm, his shoulders have rotated to almost perpendicular to the trajectory of the ball and his hips have moved forward by about half a foot, yet his head has remained remarkably stable. Immediately after contact, the trajectory of his racket changes to almost straight up (row 3, frames 3 and 4).

Samsonov’s follow-through is a very important segment of his stroke and he will do a full follow-through even on a soft loop. This allows him to maintain his consistency: every shot is the same. He continues to push upward with his right leg, which further rotates his hip and shoulders. On the follow-through, his upper arm does not go much past horizontal, but his forearm rotates until it points almost straight up (row 3, last frame), and his weight winds up completely on his left leg. With all the rotation, his head continues almost motionless. This eliminates any visual distortion and allows his eyes to remain focused on the ball. Despite the extensive follow-through, Samsonov recovers quickly and so completely that you can’t tell whether he has just started looping or he has already done five of them.

Although he did not win this World Championship, he continues to be Europe’s best hope for the future. His smooth technique will allow him a long career, and he will be a force to be reckoned with for years to come.
TO PIP OR NOT TO PIP
Inverted or Short Pips on the Backhand?
By Todd Sweeris, U.S. Olympic, Pan Am & National Team Member, and Larry Hodges, USATT Certified National Coach

Many shakehands players play with short pips on the backhand. Players like China’s Wang Tao or USA’s Todd Sweeris use short pips on the backhand as a dangerous weapon. Should you? Let’s look at the advantages and disadvantages of short pips on the backhand.

Disadvantages of Short Pips
1. **Less Spin**
   You can put spin on the ball, but not as much as with inverted.

2. **Loop is less effective**
   It has less spin. It can still be effective against backspin, since the incoming backspin can be converted to outgoing topspin. But pips will create less spin than inverted.

3. **Need to stay at table**
   Since pips don’t create controlling topspin or backspin, and is less lively than inverted, it is difficult to use except close to the table.

4. **Need to stroke more (less rebound)**
   Pips out doesn’t rebound the ball out as fast as inverted, so you need to stroke more. If you don’t, you will make a weak return. (On the other hand, you can create a good dead ball this way – but that’s better as a variation, not as a front-line shot.)

5. **Less consistent blocking loops**
   Since the pips don’t grab the incoming topspin as well, the ball slides on the surface a bit. This causes a loss of control, especially when blocking at high speeds. Also, since the outgoing ball might still have some of the incoming spin (unlike with inverted), the outgoing balls are more varied, making them hard to control.

6. **Middle weakness**
   Since pips do not rebound the ball out as well as inverted, you have to stroke the ball more. (See #4 above.) When covering the middle (i.e. the playing elbow), players often don’t stroke as much. This is a bigger problem with pips than with inverted.

Advantages of Short Pips
1. **Spin affects it less**
   This is because of the lower frictional coefficient of the surface (compared to inverted).

2. **More control on return of serve**
   This is closely related to #1 above. Spin takes on the surface less, so it is easier to return spin serves.

3. **Better smash against spin**
   This too is related to #1. Since spin takes on the surface less, you have a larger margin for error when smashing.

4. **Good for quick shots**
   Since spin doesn’t take on the surface as much, you don’t need as much time to judge the incoming ball. This means you can play a quicker shot.

5. **Deadness effect**
   A pips-out ball comes out relatively dead (i.e. spinless) compared to an inverted ball. Since most players are used to inverted this gives them trouble. This is especially effective when rushing an opponent, i.e. hitting the ball quickly (see #4 above). In this case, an opponent has to generate more force against the incoming dead ball, but with less time to do it.

6. **Combination effect**
   If you have inverted on one side, and pips on the other, an opponent has to adjust to both sides.

Wang Tao’s pips-out backhand: The best backhand hit in history?

Players with weak backhands might consider going to pips-out on the backhand for a short time to improve their backhands. You could put it on for just a few drills to make you stroke the ball, or you might give it a full-fledged tryout of 3-6 months. Either way, you’ll be stroking the ball more when you go back to inverted, and have a better backhand hit.

So… pips or inverted? Probably all serious players should try pips-out as an experiment. Then analyze your game, your physical build, your natural tendencies, and make a decision!

In Memoriam:
BENNY HULL
(1922-1999)
By Tim Boggan, USATT Historian

At the 1992 World Veterans Championship in Dublin, Ireland, Benny Hull, just turned 70, paired with Philadelphia’s 72-year-old George Rocker to win the World Over 70 Doubles from a field of almost 50 teams. Since George attacked the ball with his forehand and Benny favored a backhand flick, they hit upon the successful strategy of countering from either side what their Belgian opponents’ were accommodatingly slow to understand was not a safe, half-speed topspin. “Benny was superb!” exclaimed George afterwards. “George looped them to death!” Benny exclaimed. Understandably the partners were ecstatic.

Just a few years later, George collapsed after a jog in the rain and was remembered in an In Memoriam article in these pages. Now, Benny’s widow Ann writes, “It is with great sadness that I must tell you that Benny died Thursday, July 29th...”
after a long illness. He had been suffering from severe emphysema for over five years and during that time had had many hospitalizations. His love of life kept him going where a lesser man would have given up long ago.”

Benny certainly was never one to give up. Stricken with polio when he was 18, he nevertheless moved those gimpy legs and fast hands for more than half a century...not only around the familiar tables of his legendary Waltham, MA Club, which he opened in 1950 and ran for decades, but at tournaments around the country.

In talking about his Garber Auto Driving School, which he managed for 40 years, Benny said, “Anything I do is long term.” That applies to his involvement in tennis, and to the long-term influence he had on others. At his Waltham Club he always encouraged Juniors - and among those who’d fondly remember him and thank him would be Ralph Bockoven, Kurt Douty, and particularly Ben Nisbet, all of whom became over the years top New England players, with Ben now the USATT’s new Executive Director. Benny also formed a longtime friendship and successful doubles partnership with nearby Natick’s Frank Dwelly.

In 1972, Benny and Frank (who’d been a formidable player since the late 1930’s) began making their partnership noticed at the U.S. Open. That year, and in 1976 as well, when Benny was 54, they were runner-ups in Over 40 Doubles.

Definitely Benny was into winning trophies long term. In fact, the older he got, the more persistent he seemed to become - more aggressive, more tenacious at the table. (As one of his opponents once said, “He moves you. You don’t move him.”) In the 1986 U.S. Closed at the GreenTree Racquet Club in Pittsburgh, Benny scored a remarkable achievement. He won the Over 60’s - deuce in the 5th over U.S. Hall of Famer George Hendry, then the Over 70’s - deuce in the 5th over U.S. Hall of Famer George Hendry, then the Over 80’s - deuce in the 5th over all the way to that World Championship with Rocket-Ralph, did he faller. In 1987, in the Over 60’s, he was runner-up to Hendry, himself only three years away from being a World Over 70 Champion. And in 1988 he and Frank won another Over 50 Doubles - at the Miami Beach U.S. Open.

Benny was a Champion, and, though he’d been unlucky to have become somewhat disabled as a teenager, he’d hardly have wanted sad songs or tears. Would not want them now, I think of Benny as having had a straightforward, tell-it-like-it-is approach to life. When in the 1970 Toronto CNE tournament I made the fanatical-father mistake of playing my 7-year old son Eric in the Men’s, who did he meet in the first round? Benny. And who by the time the match had ended was on the table, under the table, complaining all the while, acting like, well, a frustrated 7-year old? Eric. “Benny,” I said, after the match was over and he couldn’t have been more patiently enduring or nicer, “I’m sorry, I don’t know what possessed me.” “Hey,” he said, perfectly matter of factly, “he’s your problem, not mine.”

Sometime later, I was an overnight guest at Benny’s home - I must have come up to Waltham, or perhaps somewhere else in the Boston area, for a weekend tournament, and he was very nice, insisted on putting me up. Anyway, what I remember most was that, as, for whatever reason, we drove around his neighborhood, anyone he passed that sunny afternoon got a horn-honk, a wave and a greeting from him, and they of course all responded with a grin and a hand up in return. Amazing. I thought, this guy really cares about people. I scarcely know any of my neighbors, and he knows them all.

No wonder, though now Benny’s gone by, we in the table tennis community remember his passing...and so look up, smile, and salute him again here.
Unprecedented Triumph: U.S. Players Win ALL The Gold!
By Tim Boggan

The U.S. Women's Gold Medal Team likes to wear funny cowboy hats & vests. (L-R: Amy Feng, Gao Jun, Tawny Banh.)

Editor's Note: This is Tim's very shortened article on the Games. For his original, please see the USATT Web Site at www.usatt.org.

Mark this: that at the U.S.'s first Table Tennis appearance at the Pan American Games in San Juan in 1979, we failed to win a single Gold medal; now, 20 years later, in 1999 at Winnipeg, we won all the Gold medals, swept every event - the Men's and Women's Team's and the Men's and Women's Singles. Special congratulations to individual winners David Zhuang and Gao Jun.

INITIAL PROBLEM
But, oh, a six-hour delay before the tournament could start. Why? Because the Latin American Table Tennis countries, particularly Brazil and Cuba, wanted the Team seedings to be based on the results of the last Pan Am Games (1995) NOT the IOC/PASO/CTTA agreed-upon last ITTF World Team Championships (1997). This was their perennial point of view, and one that, until acquiesced to, had caused havoc at the '87 Indianapolis Games.

However, finally, for the first time, play would proceed with seedings based on ITTF World Rankings and with the understanding that both the 3rd and 4th place teams would receive bronze medals. The key to this decision was my ITTF liaison work, and the CITA's willingness, with the cooperation of LATTU President Miguel Delgado and Technical Director Rufford Harrison of the USA, to implement a change in the Men's Team playing format artfully suggested by Tournament Referee Mike Skinner. Instead of a Single Elimination format following the four initial round robin pools, there would be an additional two pools of four advancing teams each, from which winners and runners-up would play crossover matches to determine the gold, silver, and bronze medal winners.

FORMAT
The format, which would be the same for both the Men's and Women's Teams, necessarily involved three players (the maximum any one Team could bring to these Games). A tie was best three out of five matches - with two singles, followed by a doubles, and, if needed, two more singles. Since no one player could play three matches, a tie shaped up like this: A vs. X; B vs. Y; AC vs. YZ; B vs. X, and C vs. Z - which allowed for some deceptive strategy on the part of coaches. Ours of course being, for the Women, Teodor "Dom" (iheorghe and, for the Men, Dan Seemiller.

WOMEN'S TEAMS
In Women's Group A, all ties but one were won 3-0 - with #1 seed Canada (World #16) advancing without the loss of a game. The lone exception was the opening "swing" tie, won by #4 seed Chile (World #53) over Cuba, 3-2, in a series of very suspenseful matches.

In Women's Group B, all ties but one were won 3-0 - with the #2 seed U.S. (World #25) advancing easily, winning 18 of 19 games, including a 21-2 win over Brazil's Ferreira by our former World Women's Doubles Champion Gao Jun (barely known on the draw sheets as Chang, Jun G.). Someone watching this 21-2 game (in which Gao served off) asked me, "Tim, are you keeping point by point coverage of this match?" And then added, "The Brazilian girl has no way of scoring."

But #3 seed Brazil (World #41) had little trouble advancing.

CROSSOVER MATCHES
Led by former World Women's and Mixed Doubles Champion Lijuan Geng, and coached by 10-time Closed Champion Mariann Domonkos, Canada zipped Brazil. Against Chile, the U.S., too, won comfortably - though Amy Feng and Tawny Banh were extended to three in the doubles. This after being up 1-0 and 19-15 in the 2nd. Whereupon Amy's serve-off-and-serve reaction eventually had to give way in the 3rd to whispered strategy suggestions to a lensed-up Tawny.

Left: "Hometown Hero" Eric Owens with medal & clippings. Right: Gao Jun poses with friends of hers from China, Pan Am Badminton Gold medalists Kevin Han and Yeping Zhao, both now representing the U.S.
FINAL

Cheering our U.S. Women's Team on in the 9:00 p.m. final—unfortunately a final, because of media commitments, played simultaneously with that of the Men's Team—were the USATT's new President, Sheri Soderberg Pittman; her flag-waving Minnesota friends, Greg Miller and Len Witz, our ubiquitous, ever playful Sports Science Official, Dr. Michael Scott; his fellow International Umpires, Tom Miller and Aly Salam; and Dell and Connie Sweeris, who, undoubtedly more than the others, were watching #201—their son Todd whom, globally, table tennis newsletters and web sites were proudly proclaiming, "Highest-ranking CPA worldwide."

The surprise Canadian strategy, in playing Geng in only one singles match, was to give up the sure Geng over Tawny win for the sure Geng/Petra Cada doubles win, and allow the favored Chris Xu (whom I'd heard at the recent U.S. Open had beaten two 2550 players) the chance to play and defeat Tawny.

Canadian Champion Geng was certainly ready for U.S. Champion Gao, for just before the match, in a hallway outside the playing area, she was stretching and shadow-stroking. And, sure enough, in the 1st, Geng's at 20-15 game point. Despite beating Geng for the first time at the recent U.S. Open, Gao said she had no confidence against her. However, maintaining her composure, not forcing but maneuvering the ball, Gao wins five in a row to deuce it, then, after again being down match point, finally, 23-21, sweeps in a winning forehand.

But, as if unfustered by this abrupt turn, Geng, 21-11, wins the 2nd with ease. In the 3rd, after giving up 8 out of 9 points through the mid-game, Geng is down 17-15. Then—controversy. Geng returns a ball she thinks hit. Gao walks slowly, unconcernedly back, to pick it up. As she's about to return to the table, she hears Geng's claim, appears absolutely astonished. She sweeps iii a winning forehand.

"Tawny—where's she going? Everyone's waiting for her on court." Off Banh jogs. To the Women's Rest Room? If so, certainly not to rest. A case of nerves? "Don't worry..." but that's because... up 12-6... she's winning them. 21-17 Tawny.

In the deciding 3rd, Tawny's up 15-11.... But then Chris is more and more attacking, and it's 15-all... 18-all. No, Tawny, don't!! Pop-up—and Tawny's 19-18 down... 20-19 match point down. Then ERUPTION! The Men's Team tie is already over—the winners are ecstatic, are jumping around. Easy! Easy! Fortunately Tawny's not lost her concentration. Deuce!... Deuce again! Long-point hits and returns. And now—would you believe it?—another wrong pop-up, and Tawny's 22-21 down.... Then again at deuce!... Then ERUPTION! You thought the Men in concert were excited? Tawny's just won—and is she on a pogo stick! Hopping—then flying—around the court, she's so comically happy! U.S. 2—Canada 0.

It's hopeless for Canada now, for all have psychically agreed that Chris has no chance against Gao. Still, in the doubles, Geng and Petra try to be professional. But their hearts aren't in it—they lose 2-1. So, GOLD for the U.S. Women's Team.

MEN'S TEAMS

Of the 12 ties in the Men's A-D Group round robins, all were 3-0—except in the A Group #1 seed Canada had an ultra-precacious 3-2 win over Puerto Rico in which every match went the full three games. Canada was handicapped—not by their Coach, Nikolai Novikov, for many years Coach of the Soviet Union's medal-winning Teams (one star player he raised was former European Champion Valentina Popova), but by the absence of not only Johnny Huang, but their current Closed Champion Hai Teng Gao (Li's brother), their current Youth Champion Kurt Liu, and other top players Carl Xuan and Dennis Su, winner of the '98 Portuguese Open at Madeira, all of whom when the call came seemed to be at work or play elsewhere.

Puerto Rico also advanced, though challenged by Mexico. In advancing from Group B over 2nd-place finisher Colombia, the Men's Singles & Team Gold Medalist David Zhuang

U.S. had no trouble, though Eric Owens lost a deuce game to footstamping Diego Ramirez, then finished 21-16 strong from 16-all in the 3rd.

From Group C came Brazil, followed by Cuba.

In Group D, favored Argentina battled it out with Chile—winning in 9 games without needing the very formidable Liu Song in a second match.

2ND ROUND ROBINS

By Sunday evening the advancing Men's Groups, grouped into two round robins and positioned so that teams will not play any team they've played before, are ready for action.

But where was Cuba? They had a 7 p.m. tie with Canada.... Oh, oh, Referee Skinner feels he has to default them—and does. "They've defected," someone says humorously. But the humor had a dark side, for the talk of the town, especially when it drew Fidel Castro's wrath, was the attention given by the Winnipeg Sun to the three Cubans at the Games who had quickly defected. The Sun teased Castro with "a goodwill gesture"—it started a contest: offering a lucky winner free airfare to Cuba and a week's hotel accommodations there for two if he/she could correctly guess the number of defections that would occur by the end of the Games.

It was no joke to the distraught Cuban Coach when, arriving late with his Team, he pleaded—what with the changes and delays that had plagued the matches at the outset—he wasn't aware, until contacted, of this tie, at this time, tonight. Sporting, with the Tournament Committee's support, Canada agreed to play. But the Cubans were nada y pues nada.

Similarly, Brazil blanketed Puerto Rico, and Argentina did the same to Columbia.

Meanwhile, the U.S. men found themselves as if on a rickety bridge in the Andes hoping to get safely across. From the other side Chileans wanted to pass through too.

1st match: U.S. National Champion David Zhuang, 2-0, over penholder Jorge Gambra. Backed by the support of a very partisan crowd (members of the U.S. Volleyball Team, looking for something to do, had come to root for us too), Zhuang won what turned out to be the match-deciding 19 first when from 18-all Gambra failed to return two of David's stratospheric serves.

2nd match: Augusto Morales, another veteran penholder, over Eric Owens, 2-0. Morales was as expert as Gambra in positioning the ball—in this case, blocks and pushes to Eric's open forehand, as, anticipating incorrectly, Eric moved too quickly left to take up his attack.

3rd match: Morales/Juan Salamanca over Owens/Todd Sweeris, 2-0. Eric, coming off his singles defeat, wasn't at his best, and the U.S. put up little resistance. Chile 2—U.S. 1.

4th match: Zhuang over Morales, 2-0. David serves off—yells, "C'mon, wake up!" He does—to flag-waving chants: "U-S-A! U-S-A!"

5th match: Sweeris over Salamanca, 2-0. Todd, a 21-8 winner in the 1st and up 8-1 in the 2nd, is hot. "It's over," says a volleyballer. "Did you ever play that well, Dell?" says a wise guy. U.S. Hall of Famer Sweeris

USA TABLE TENNIS MAGAZINE • September/October 1999
Monday morning Chile also puts up a fight against Brazil. Morales doesn’t win but takes an eye-opener of a first game from Brazil’s lefty penholder Hugo Hoyama, a 3-time World Cup representative for South America.

Thiago Monteiro, Brazil’s ’98 Junior Champion, gives a start-off kick, as it were, to Jorge Gambra’s ensheathed right knee, or somewhere above, for though the Chilean doesn’t double over, he’s certainly in pain after choking away a 20-15 lead. In disgust at losing seven straight he flings his racket tableward. In the 2nd, Gambra’s up 16-14, down 19-16...20-18 match point. What a choker. Except now he isn’t. It’s his serve – and there goes his third ball in (“So!”), and then his 5th ball (“So!”). Deuce. Now Whack! and Counter-whack! Gambra’s game. And soon Gambra’s match.

Carlos Kawai’s having some arm-shoulder-back discomfort, but he and Monteiro, after splitting 19 games with Morales and Salamanca, tilt the tie to Brazil. Up 12-3 in the 3rd, really tilt it. Though that doesn’t stop Oswaldo Aree Caro, the dedicated Chilean Team Leader, from shouting himself hoarse right to the 21-13 end.

When Gambra has no chance against the “on” off-the-bounce attacker Hoyama, it’s Brazil 3 - Chile 1.

The tie that binds the audience this morning, though, is the Argentina-Cuba one. Liu Song, the favorite to win the Singles, 15, 19 gets by Cuba’s Ruben Arado, whose hair is cut shorter than a Marine-recruit.

Renier Sosa, the Cuban pick-hit-chopper, is “Mr. Cool.” Coolly, this way and that, and he parries Pablo Tabachnick’s blows, moves around the ringed court, lands right hands that hurt – wins easily on points.

Francisco Arado looks enough like Ruben Arado to be his brother, or, if at a secret tapping made public, someone recruited him to be. Anyway, they seem to get to know one another better in the doubles – and rally to down slap-hands-happy Tabachnick/Juan Frery in three. Cuba 2 - Argentina 1.

“Who won, Mom?” says an uninitiated child at the end of the Liu-Sosa match – as if after Song had won the 21-8 first-game there could be any doubt. And yet something wasn’t clear at the 23-21 end of the 2nd game. They didn’t play a 3rd, so Song won – but how’d it get that close?

With the tie 2-2, Frery needed this last match to insure his Argentine teammates a place in the crossovers, for they had Canada yet to play. But though Frery scored more 3-game points than Arado – that’s Francisco Arado – the Cuban proved, as at the Maracaibo Games a year ago, he knew how to win. Now, if Canada could beat Argentina, Cuba was certain of a medal.

In other morning matches, the U.S. dominated Puerto Rico (in response to Owens’ straight-game win over Fernandez, Coach Seamiller said, “Eric’s thinking. He’s making choices – has learned he can’t serve short all the time”). And Canada again, and again, and again outlasted Colombia – Xavier Therein, 19-in-the-3rd, over Ramirez; Pradeeban Peter-Paul, 23-21 in the concluding second, over Paul Diaz; and Therein/Horatio Pintea, -16, 19, 30 (sic!) over Diaz/Carlos Alvarado. Amazing – countries you used to take for granted you couldn’t any more.

In the early afternoon, Cuba finished off Colombia. As did Chile Puerto Rico.

In the Canada vs. Argentina tie, when in the 5th match Peter-Paul beat Frery in three, it was apparent that Canada (if necessary, on a tie-breaker) had won Group A. It was the only match they needed – and the only one they got.

Which brings us to the U.S.-Brazil tie. For the first time Zhuang was scheduled to play doubles and only one singles, the 5th rather than the 4th match. But obviously Seamiller felt his options would be better this way. He said he didn’t want his team too pumped up before the crossovers, but he also said, “Todd needed to play some hard matches.”

First off was Owens against World #72 Hoyama, and Seamiller’s advice was for Eric to stay away from the Brazilian’s backhand, and concentrate on placing the first ball, rather than all-out smacking it. Up 16-12 Eric’s doing just fine, but then serves up two bad ones which Hugo presciently pounces on.... At 19-11, Eric decides on a chop serve and Hoyama angles it away for a winner. Eric looks at his bench. Another serve, another Hoyama winner – 21-19. Eric looks at his bench.

In the 2nd, Eric is showing patience ... for a while. Then he twice gets aced by Hoyama’s breathtaking backhand and, down 13-18 he serves and watches as Hugo rolls a return that passes him through the diamond point on his far forehand. Brazil 1 – U.S. 0.

Against young Monteiro, Sweeris loses two straight. “The guy put zero pace on the backhand,” says Todd. “That messed me up more than anything.” Danny, meanwhile, is coming to the conclusion that “We don’t want this order.” As expected, though, David and Eric win the doubles. Brazil 2 - U.S. 1.

Another tough match for Sweeris. From down 19-15 in the 1st against Hoyama, Todd runs 5 in a row, so that, with the serve, he’s up game point. But the Brazilian finds not only a return but a winning follow.... At 21-all, Hugo catches Todd on a serve, and then wins it 23-21.

In the 2nd, Todd, up 20-16, lapses, cautiously allowing Hoyama to hit, loses 6 in a row. With its 3-1 win over the U.S., Brazil finishes #1 in the A Group. Which means that – as LATTU had originally pushed for – Canada and the U.S. will play in the semi’s. And, for sure, one LATTU team – either Brazil or Argentina – will be in the final.

SEMI-FINALS

U.S. vs. Canada. Eric Owens vs. Therien. The first ball of the match hugs the net, then drops right for Eric. A good sign? But Owens’ serves continue to be suspect. “Spin the ball – don’t try to murder it,” Seamiller has said. After Eric loses the 1st, Danny tells him, “Play the forehand and middle, forehand first. And don’t be afraid to serve long.” Says teammate Todd, “Get into it; buddy.” Eric does. Up 6-4 he does what he doesn’t like to do – serves long. A quick point. “Perfect!” says Sweeris. And after Eric comes off the court a 3rd-game winner. Todd exults, “You gave him three long serves in a row, and you won them all!”

Pradeeban, in a losing effort, can’t stay at the table with Zhuang, so he’s back lobbing. There are some great exhibition-like points for the maybe 20 outside spectators, so they’re not asking why Coach Novikov – whose long and successful career has been a labor of love, and who often appears to be, and perhaps has cause to be, melancholic – played current Canadian Closed finalist Peter-Paul in that singles/doubles position. However, if Owens hadn’t come through.... As Danny was to say later, after Owens/Sweeris had secured the doubles in three, Eric’s start-off win over Therien “changed the color of our medal.”

Brazil vs. Argentina. It was a foregone conclusion that the first two matches would be split – Hoyama over Frery; Liu Song over Monteiro. The doubles was key – and from 11-all in the 3rd the Argentines took a 2-1 lead.

Last September in the South American Championships in Asuncion, Hoyama scored a (19, -13, 12, 17) brave and brilliant win over Liu. But here Hugo’s 1st-game rally from 19-15 down was stopped by a net-edge, and in the 2nd, down 7-1, he never could catch up.
FinaL

U.S. vs. Argentina. A strange five-match final. Every one of them 2-0 — but none of them closely contested. The real scare for Seemiller came when he saw the playing order the umpire handed him. It was NOT that which before he’d checked and re-checked... was it? No need to worry — the submitted order had been correct. Interestingly, this order was the same one that Danny had said earlier he’d learned not to use again — it kept Zhuang away from Liu Song as it’d kept him away from Hoyana in the Brazil tie. So, though Liu won his two, it was a perfect 3-2 team effort for the U.S. — with Sweers giving up only 20 points total to Frey; Owens and Zhuang 25 to Frey/Tabachnik; and Zhuang 26 to Tabachnik. We looked good, had reason to celebrate, and we did. CTTA Coordinators — the Szajkowskis, father and son — were always guiding us to restaurants, helping us with transportation, and now, with President Pittman and Umpire Aly Salam leading the way, our victorious Teams and their entourage enjoyed a midnight supper and some modest Merrymaking at a downtown hotel.

Women's Singles

Current ITTF Rankings “snake” the 25 women into 6 pools, from which 12 players will emerge.

In Amy Feng’s round robin, against Chile’s Silvia Morel, Petra Cada, ’99 Canadian Closed finalist, had rallied to win the 1st from 18-14 down, lost the 2nd, then advanced by winning the 3rd 21-8. You might rally to win the 1st from 18-14 down, lost the 2nd, then advanced by winning the 3rd 21-8... You might say Petra’s passive/aggressive? Sometimes, as in her 8th’s match with Cuba’s small-boned spinner Ramirez, in which she was down 2-1 before winning, and in her quarter’s match with teammate Chris Xu, in which she dropped the first game before patiently allowing poor Chris on the average only 9 points a game, Petra seems to have to force herself to “work.” Perhaps this is because, at 6’1″, she has such a long reach that she’s content to swat her powerful flat-hit forehead flat-footed?

Anyway, Cada did as well as she coulda, for Gao Jun awaited her in the semis. Was Petra, uh, petrified out there trying to get to double figures, while the audience again and again was trying to figure out if they should clap at what they were seeing? “No,” said Petra, who has a reputation for being frank and outspoken. “And, no, I don’t think I embarrassed myself out there on court.”

You can bet that Tawny, who’d screamed “Yes!” and “Yes!” at Berta Rodriguez, wasn’t sluggish against 3rd seed Feng. Hadn’t Doru been telling her, “You must move! And, excepting herself to play, move she did — so much so that the umpire gave her a warning for being too excited. Oxymoronic, huh? Next you think you ceilings will soon be patrolling the stands searching for offenders, and pleased when they find them? But when Amy, up 20-19 in the 1st, flicked in a hard backhand winner, Tawny’s one opportunity went with it.

Meanwhile, the Li Geng-Ligia Silva quarterfinal match set up a Li Geng-Amy Feng semi’s.

For this match Doru was just offcourt. But where was Geng’s coach? Perhaps she didn’t want one? Was doing fine all by herself? Up 12-3... 21-14, she must have heard the applause — noted the Canadians in the stands. The second game, however, was tight... until down 14-13 Amy served into the net. This seemed to break her concentration, for a flurry of errors followed, and she again lost 21-14.

“The court’s so big,” someone says, “either of these players could lose their rhythm just repeating to pick up the ball.” Up 9-7 Geng serves off — loses something... is down 17-10. Doru’s comment that Amy makes points for Geng through her errors and that she’s got to concentrate on controlling the ball seems applicable to Geng as well. That is, until in the 4th she starts off accumulating points. Amy’s look turns from bored to disgust to bored. Down 15-5, she zips in a backhand. Big deal. At the end there’s a half-hearted attempt to play an exhibition point. Care to give a bronze penny for Amy’s thoughts?

The sold-out final is a looked forward to repeat of Geng and Gao’s Team match. Geng, looking quite composed, the black Magnitude of her pips play carrying her right along, goes up 14-11. But now, though Geng has the serve, she doesn’t move; she expects that net-ball she ought to reach for to come bouncing to her? It now seems that nothing good is coming her way — especially if Gao is unpredictably placing balls to her wide forehand and making her move. Soon she’s down 20-15, and the game has gotten away from her. She goes over to her empty bench, her back to the court, drinks from a bottle, and stares across at the blank curtains.

In the 2nd, Geng is again up 14-11, but trying to be as aggressive as Gao. Both favor steady backhand-to-backhand play, seeking a point-producing opportunity. When an opportunity of a different kind comes, Geng gets the umpire’s call. Yes, he agrees — her high-up return, on coming down, did hit the edge. Doru gives the umpire a questioning look, starts to rise, sits back — he knows he can’t overtell the call and doesn’t want Gao to disturb Geng. From 18-17 Geng’s attack brings her to a 20-18 fist-up cry. A well-played exchange makes it 20-19. Sporting applause, then total silence.

When Gao nets a return, Geng’s up on her toes — this is a win worth reaching for.

Geng is “up,” is moving better in the 3rd, is vigorously attacking. It’s her game all the way. Husband Hory brings her water. She drinks in the applause, whistles, cheers.

In the 4th, Geng retains her momentum. She’s up 5-0... 11-6, and smiling. Then — how does it happen? — the smiles are abruptly gone. Gao wins eight points in a row! Now heavy, footstamping applause. The Canadians mean it to mean, “Do something!” But Geng can’t — can’t do enough. Up 20-18, Gao serves, follows, passes... into the 5th.

In this last game am 1 keeping point by point coverage? You bet. And you can too. It’s 5-0 Gao when Geng, with strong backhand-to-backhand play, gets her first point. At 10-1 there’s a burst of applause — the scorer, who’s twice failed to turn the score correctly, has just pointed out that it’s the 5th game and the player-identifying signs need to be switched from one side of the table to the other. The participants having been made clear, the match resumes... 13-1. At 15-2 there’s renewed interest... on the part of the spectators. Heavy footstamping. “Do something!”... Geng does. At the 21-2 end she bows slightly to these not quite with it Canadians.

Men’s Singles

Current ITTF Rankings “snake” the 40 players into 10 pools, from which 20 players will qualify for the single elimination stage.

From the matches in these pools I see more clearly that every country here, no matter how small, has at least one player who’s capable of upsetting the majority of those in the field. For example, it’s no surprise that Abbie Clarke of the Barbados, World #520, wins in the 3rd over Mexico’s Luis Valdes. But when Valdes, World #502, can take a straight-game match from Canada’s Peter-Paul, the 9th seed here and World #282, you realize the vulnerability of almost any player in the field.

There’s no better illustration of that than #1 seed Liu Song’s startling deuce-in-the-3rd defeat by Renier Sosa. This Cuban chopper, who mixes his backhand spin so well that an experienced international like Liu admitted he had trouble reading it, and whose change of pace play included an ever-threatening pick-attack, was... unranked?

Nor could our own U.S. players afford to think, as they might have a decade or two ago, in some “superior” fashion, taking comfort and confidence in today’s paper-rankings. Though Sweers, the 6th seed here and World #201, advanced, he again lost to Brazil’s Monteiro, World #399.

However, Todd’s teammate Eric (World #319) proved his strength when, at an unprecedented late hour (his pool wasn’t scheduled to start until 9:30 p.m.), he beat Augusto Morales, the 10th seed here and World #289, deuce in the 3rd (after being down 1-0 and 18-12 in the 2nd). “Put every ball high and slow to this penholder,” advised Danny. “He’ll let you turn.” Amazingly, as if in a wish-fulfilling dream, Eric was also a winner, 23-21 in the 3rd over Barbadian Trevor Farley, World #506, and 24-22 in the 3rd over Venezuela’s Henry Mujica, World #517. Had anyone ever won three deuce-in-the-3rd matches in an international 4-man round robin like this before?
SINGLE ELIMINATION

The pairings for the single elimination part of the tournament were done scrupulously (as they were for the Women's). Players had to be separated geographically, for no country was allowed to be in a position to win three medals. Sosa assumed the #1 seed position, and, as Piñeta said, that meant someone was going to have the bad luck of getting Liu Song, Hoyama, seeded #2, took the 16th position at the opposite end of the draw - but he was no longer assured of being in the opposite half from Liu.... Indeed, Song had five possible positions he could go into, including three preliminary ones, which on coming out of it, would face byed players in the 8th's! He drew not a preliminary position but position 14. Which meant the first unlucky fellow he'd meet was ... Piñeta; the second, Hoyama.

After a frantic 100 matches in the Singles on a single day, Tuesday, there were now only 30 matches remaining (19 for the Men, 11 for the Women) - and three whole days to stage them in! In fact, after his exhausting late-night play, Owens didn't even have to show up on Wednesday!

Sweedis and Seemiller did though. "It's really neat to see Danny working with Todd," says Dell, Danny's old mentor. Against Ruben Arado, Todd's ready, is he? First point, he serves into the net. Then, making more errors, is down 7-2. But he quickly fights back ... and, up 20-18, receiving serve, he aced Arado with a clever positional return. You'd think Todd would feel good about that - but, returning to his bench, he says, "Something's wrong with my technique."

Down 17-9 in the 2nd after missing forehands and turning winners into losers, he looks, and is, disgusted. "I don't know why I'm so irritable," he says. But soon things are looking up. Todd wins the 3rd, is ahead 18-14 in the 4th.... Then loses six in a row, and, getting to 19, slow-loops off. "I choked that one away," he says. Yes, he certainly did - but, face it! Whom is he going to give an accounting to if not first to himself? In the 5th game he finds his balance - wins easily. Comes back to his bench properly chagrined. "I get so disgusted," he says. "And then I get disgusted at getting disgusted."

The most intense of the matches leading up to the 8th's is the Morales-Guillermo Munoz one. After being two match points down in the 3rd - "MEHICO!" - Munoz is still alive. And now, through the 4th and into the 5th, the Mexican is all fists and fire. Morales, blocking and looping, is winning every spirited exchange, but not Munoz's spirit. Again down match point, Munoz, exhorting himself to play, wins a long topspin rally. "MEHICO!" But at deuce, the Chilean's perfectly placed return catches Munoz off guard, and though he has no chance to get it, he falls scrambling for it. Then rises to loop long. A valiant effort.

This ad actually ran in the Winnipeg Sun!

Come on down To Cuba

We're sending a lucky reader to Cuba this winter. The winner receives airfare and one week hotel accommodations for two. All you have to do is correctly guess the number of defectors in the United States before the Pan Am Games end.

Just send this entry form or drop it off to:
Cuba Contest c/o Newsroom, Winnipeg Sun, 1706 Church Avenue, Winnipeg, R2X 3A2

My prediction is: _________________________________________________________________

The legal stuff. All expenses of Sun Media Contest Committee and their immediate families are included in entry. Only original entries will be accepted. On entry by mail, entries must be received by Jan. 15, 1999. A winner's name will be drawn Jan. 15. Entrant will be drawn at random and a correct entry form is drawn.

EIGHTHS / QUARTERFINALS

Top half of the draw: Sosa over Alvarado, 3-1.

Gamba, crowding the table as if he were unlimbedly attached to it, was forced to five by '95 Silver Doubles winner Tabachnik, but, undramatically, none of the games went past 16. Gamba did casually spin on the Taraflex floor though, which International Umpire Chandra Madhosingh, off court, saw red at - that was dramatic.

Against the crowd-pleasing Cuban charger in the quarter's, Gamba perseverated - endlessly pushes, rolls, waits for an opening. Up 2-1, he's off to a 6-1 lead in the 4th, then controls the table until, assured of a medal (it would be his 3rd - his first was in '83), he welcomes the on-court embrace of his Team Leader.

Against Moreira, Peter-Paul is the 22-20 last-topspin winner - but as if arbitrarily, for each player has scored exactly 100 points.

Zhuang would advance to the semi's with a routine straight-game quarter's win over Peter-Paul. But David's earlier Wednesday evening 8th's match with Dexter St. Louis, who's played competitively in France for years, is anything but routine. A letty, Dexter has serves that make it difficult for a right-handed player to see the ball. On beginning them, he habitually bounces the ball by tapping it with his fingertips several times before he palms it - as if petting it, asking it to be true to him when he sends it on its way. Dexter's powerful backhand follows seem strangers to David - he backs up, isn't ready to accept them.

It's 1-1 in games when Zhuang, up 13-12 in the 3rd, protests the umpire's call that gives a point to St. Louis. Dexter's reaction is intense: he goes over to the scoreboard, flips it back to 13-12, says repeatedly he doesn't want to accept this call against David because "I don't believe he'd cheat me a point." Play continues from 13-13 with David saying to Dexter, "Forget about it." But perhaps with this outpouring of faith in his fellow man come second thoughts? Intruding thoughts? St. Louis loses this game at 16.

At the beginning of the 4th, Zhuang seems to have the beginning of a leg cramp? "Oh, no!" says Dexter - up 5-2 he's given one back. But then overpowering Zhuang with his play, as he had the audience with his sportsmanship, the charitably-minded Trinidadian builds his lead to 9-3 ... 14-9 ... whereupon David can't go on like this - asks for an injury time-out of up to 10 minutes. Has he merely a cramp (in which case he has to play on or forfeit the match) or some other problem, perhaps a pulled muscle? Referee Skinner (not Dr. Skinner), as if echoing St. Louis's chantableness, allows the ever-ready physiotherapist from the Games' support group to work hurriedly on Zhuang - massage him with Ruba 335 and tight-tape his thigh. David continues the 4th game, but at one point he sits on the floor and, as he stretches his leg, asks his bench if he can't have more time. No, he has to play... On into the 5th.

Though David appears to be suffering, he's also mobile and off to a 7-2 lead - while Dexter's racket is on the floor, as if it too is suffering some frustrating pain, no doubt for its owner who's just missed a point-winner. St. Louis, down 10-5 ... 14-5 ... can't get himself together or, as it turns out, his game into double figures. "The worst thing in the world," someone says, "is when the other guy has an injury - it really messes you up." Messee's up the judgment of others too - like the umpire of this match, for in the lopsided end-game he yellow-cards Danny (his first ever) for giving "advise."

Well, things aren't always what they seem. And though, as after the match Dexter is heralded as a great sportsman, and a therapist continues working on David who says his whole left side has tightened, both sympathies and a lack of it vibrate round the hall. When, as will be clear when David plays Peter-Paul the next afternoon, he can with more therapy move sprightly, it seems clear to many that he's merely cramped St. Louis's style. (Though had St. Louis wanted to keep warmed-up, focused, with a practice partner during the 10 minutes in question, Referee Skinner said he would have allowed it.) In any event, before the tournament is over, the leader of the Trinidad delegation writes a letter to the ITTF asking for a review of the Injury Rule which he and others feel was unfairly relaxed here.

In the bottom half of the draw, Sweeris gets by Fernandez in straight-games. So will be play Owens or Francisco Arado? Photographers are interested in this U.S.-Cuba match. But Eric is a 3-1 loser. His off-day yesterday turns out to be one today too. He's won his gold medal and now just can't concentrate, can't move, just isn't ready to play.

How about Todd? In the 1st he's up 17-16, then serves into the net and...
Todd Sweeris came within a match of a bronze for singles to go along with his team gold.

can’t get another point. In the 2nd, he’s a 21-16 winner. Says to his bench, “I can beat this Cuban backhand to backhand.” Arado, shirt sleeves curled up to his armpits, giving him a revved-up sidehead look, rallies from 19-17 down in the 3rd — wins it at 19 when Todd tries a low percentage flip return of serve. What to do? Danny asks him to ease up on his long serves and play more to Arado’s forehand and middle. Right away, though, Todd, down 9-2, is making too many errors. But then, as a pocket of cheering Cubans urges him to make more, he pulls to 9-8 — only to see Arado execute a perfectly placed return that stops his momentum and drops him 14-8 into the hole again.... Several points later, Todd serves off ... and, 20-13, it’s the pits.

For the three (-17, -14, -19) games chance allots him, Pinetta’s strategy is to serve fast to Liu’s backhand to keep him from attacking. Usually the Argentine’s first return doesn’t have much bite, but his second one does. Whatever — there aren’t many rallies.

Liu and Hoyana, the #1 and #2 seeds, then play in the quarter’s — and in this match, says Seemiller, “There’s more looping than the average player will see all year.” Liu has to be very quick against Hoyana’s off-the-bounce attack — an attack that at 22-1 in the 1st sees him loop two balls long. Though Liu whirs into his serve like a discus thrower, or rather someone half that size mimicking it was Hugo. up 19-7 in the 2nd and 14-6 in the 3rd, who seemed to be catapulting the ball....

Nor is the 4th close — Hoyana, who reached the last 16 at the ‘96 Olympic Games, gets 8. What causes this turnaround? The fact that Liu keeps chopping the ball so close to the back edge? Or that, defending from his backhand, Song has a better angle at the table to start and sustain his forehand assault? Anyway, what an awful start for Hugo in the 5th — he’s down 7-0... Then 9-7. Then — missing an easy topspin and throwing his racket to the table — 12-8. More swings: 14-9... 19-16. Down match point 20-17, the Brazilian goes for another big ball, misses, remains head down over the table.

SEMMINALS

David Zhuang vs. Jorge Gambra. “He couldn’t get through you in the Team’s, so no need to be too aggressive,” Seemiller says to Zhuang whose thigh remains tightly taped. In the 1st, David, up 5-2, seems to be momentarily testing his legs, moves them up and down like pistons, while Don Rackey, the USOC gymnastics trainer who after working with David has attached himself to our Team, approves.... David has to be more aggressive. Why? Because Gambra’s not missing anything and has run the score to 10-6 his favor. At 13-all, David gives Gambra a spinsy serve — and Gambra aces him down the forehand line.... But after Zhuang’s been behind the whole game, and is still down 20-19, he serves and Gambra nets the return. “Whooh!” says David. Gambra serves, misses, then nets another serve return. Seemiller points out that Gambra handles topspin well, so why not give him more backspin? Why not indeed? David wins the next game at 9. Although the 300 or so spectators seem slightly more partial to Gambra than Zhuang, when, at 9-11 in the 3rd, David scoops up a net ball and curls it round the net post for a winner, the crowd applauds mightily. At an 11-all moment of silence, a child’s voice cries out, “Go Chee-lay!” But David, free and easy, wins the game at 14. He waves to the spectators as he leaves the court and they applaud.

Liu Song vs. Francisco Arado. It’s 10-1 in the 1st! But what did you expect when World #35 meets World #246? Uh, it’s Arado who’s leading 14-3. His caroming counter-block has just aced Liu before he’s finished his wind-up follow-through. Still, the Argentine’s footsteps serve are intimidating. And how well he mixes his shots. But Liu’s getting killed, right? Not exactly. It’s 16-14.... And, yes, Arado, though never reluctant to attack, is fortunate to get 22 points to win this game. The next three he’ll average 11.

FINAL

Two years ago Zhuang played a practice match with Liu in Taiwan when Song was coaching a bank team there, so their games are known to one another. Still, stiff-looking backhand chop, chop, chop from Liu — then very quick dance-like-steps and the flash of a forehand going by. David looks astonished — as if he has no chance against such a winner. Then Liu shows him something else — as one fellow says, “The highest, softest loop I’ve ever seen” — which David sends three feet off the table. Add to that David chastising himself for swinging at a bad ball — and is this a match he’s going to win?... Maybe, for Liu, marvelously entertaining to the spectators though he is with his backhand defense and any-second forehand attack, is not so unpredictable to the experienced player facing him. Against St. Louis’s up-to-the-table barreling one-ball backhands David hadn’t control, but against Liu he quickly adapts, has time to correctly anticipate Liu’s fast positional changes. From 6-4 down, Zhuang’s 15-8 up. Then forehands aplenty — and, such is the turn of events, Zhuang’s down not one but two game points. But at 21-all David makes a fine wide return of serve that catches Liu, and — “Yeahhh, let’s go!” — wins the first fist-up.

In the 2nd, it’s the usual backhand chop, chop, chop — interspersed with the left-handed Liu’s gradual glide left to take forehand control, often thwarted by David’s equally quick block or counter forcing him back again. At 9-7 Zhuang, Liu, forced right, manages to stab back a ball from behind his back, but, high though it is, David misses it, then sinks slowly under the table. “Yeahhh!” yells Song. Down 17-14, Liu surprises David with a down-the-line serve, then bangs in David’s too soft return, then sends David lurching for the ball so that it’s too much of a stretch for him to recover. Again, fearless forehands abound, are accompanied by the combatants’ staccato cries and the spectators’ passionate applause.

At 22-all, David roars to himself, “C’mon now!”• A mild outburst that Umpire Derek Mikita feels warrants, in the heat of battle, not a verbal calming but a yellow card. Which I think is idiotic — and in a moment you’ll see why. Now comes the most exciting point of what is turning out to be the great climactic match of the tournament. A long exchange — shots of every description — ends when David misses a beautifully disguised drop, knowing even as he strokes the ball he’s hit it too tentatively, and so instinctively follows up by swatting it 30 feet into the barriers. Mikita is no idiot. He does not see red — does not reach for his red card gun that will kill the game and the all-too-rare intensity of the hundreds of spectators. Better in lieu of a card, a net wins 24-22 for the Argentine.

It’s just a fantastic match. Makes you think Table Tennis is a wonderful sport. Wouldn’t all those watching want to see an instant replay of point after point? What am I saying? That’s what they’re getting now in the 3rd. Zhuang’s started to hit more to Liu’s forehand. If Song counters, David can block to his backhand. “C’MON!”... “YEAH!” Unbelievably it’s deuce after point? What am I saying? That’s what they’re getting now in the 3rd.

A change of shirts for the 4th, but no change of pace. Liu continues to be a study in fast footwork. And he’s so tenacious. Once he’s in forehand position, which is often, he keeps swinging. But then, leading all the way, up 20-19, Liu fast-steps into forehand position and ... and hesitates, chooses not to smack the ball in hard but to softly roll it. A fatal mistake — for, despite losing that point, he now strangely repeats his tenuous play and loses this 4th and final deuce game 22-20. David is, finally, the winner.

Smiles, embraces, handshakes, animated evening talk, mild revelry. Not much time to relax though after this grueling week — David and his supportive teammates have a flight to Amsterdam to catch. But regardless of what awaits them in the Eindhoven whirl to come, they are all now a part of Pan-Am history — are already travelers in the realms of gold.
TOP MEN
OR 2842 Fan, Yi Yong
MD 2781 Cheng, Yinghua
NJ 2716 Zhuang, David
MD 2636 Sweeris, Todd
TX 2632 Butler, Jim
TX 2596 Owens, Eric
VA 2574 Onifade, John B.
TX 2566 Subonj, Viktorian
NY 2565 Shao, Yu
FL 2545 pace, Brian
LA 2544 Cretu, Razvan
NY 2541 Ekun, Abass
MD 2539 Lonergan, Sean
FL 2537 Albam, Keith
GA 2532 Hyst, Michael
MD 2524 Huang, Tong Sheng Jack
GA 2505 Jagwani, Mukesh
IN 2505 Seemiller, Daniel
CA 2503 Guo, De-Zhi
CA 2502 Nguyen, Khoc Dinh
TN 2497 Reed, Barney J.
LA 2495 Cohen, Randy H.
MD 2493 Masters, Brian
NJ 2488 Jain, Ashu
IN 2464 Chui, Chi-Sun
GA 2455 Peng, Xin
MD 2451 Li, Sunny
CA 2449 Gabriel, Freddie

TOP WOMEN
MD 2648 Gao, Jun
CA 2487 Lin, Grace Xi-Zhen
MI 2477 Giosu, Emilia
GA 2443 Feng, Amy
CA 2438 Banz, Tawny
NJ 2287 Yip, Lily
NY 2282 Sung, Virginia Wei-Ni
CA 2256 Tian, Angelica
NJ 2249 Oben, Claudia
MI 2246 Bosika, Mimi
CA 2209 Do, Michelle
TX 2199 Subonj, Roxana
MA 2153 Chui, Jane Hone
CA 2126 Fong, Kyna
CA 2126 Kwang, Min Hee
MD 2121 Baival, bogilka
CA 2117 Lim, Ruth
CA 2113 Huang, Li-Jun
IL 2092 Simovic, Marjava (Maya)
FL 2072 Casas, Diana
CA 2057 Lee, Jacqueline
MA 2043 Chang, Karen
NY 2031 Wong, Vicki
OR 2024 Ping, Emily
CT 2021 Laskova, Irina
OK 1978 Ping, Whitney
CA 1956 Wu, Nan
TX 1951 Routehr, Mahin

TOURNAMENTS INCLUDED IN RATINGS
Joe Bujalski Memorial Open
1999 Cleveland Summer Open
Maryland July Circuit
1999 Waco Summer RR
MTTC 99 Open
Maryland Circuit July Teams
Georgia Games Closed
Show-Me-State Games
Arizona Sizzler Giant RR
Champion TTC Summer Open
Keystone State Games
Portland Summer Double RR Open
Surf City Open
Maryland August Circuit
St. Louis Gateway Open
Sports Fitness Player Series

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USA TABLE TENNIS MAGAZINE • September/October 1999

Now here's a paddle, says Barbara Wei, U.S. Junior Olympic Under 12 Girls' Champion.
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<th>USA TABLE TENNIS MAGAZINE</th>
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**Players' Favorite Source**

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UPCOMING
USA TABLE TENNIS TOURNAMENTS

October 2 - Sports Fitness TT Players Series, Clemmons, NC. Contact: Danny Hill, 3 Twin Brook Dr., Clemmons, NC 27012. Phone: 336-764-0010.

October 2 - 1999 Millcreek Open, Erie, PA. Contact: Sam Steiner, 3616 Zimmerly Rd., Erie, PA 16506. Phone: 814-454-7103.

October 2 - Chattanooga Fall Open, Chattanooga, TN. Contact: Charles Collins, 9218 Windstone Dr., Ooltewah, TN 37363. Phone: 423-266-7400.

October 2-3 - Maryland Circuit, Eldersburg, MD. Contact: Yvonne Kronlage, 14160 Forsythe Rd., Sykesville, MD 21784. Phone: 410-489-7291.

October 2 - Strike One October Open, Burlington, MA. Contact: Lim Ming Chiti, 10 Williams Rd., Lexington, MA 02420. Phone: 781-862-1551.

October 3 - Strike One October Open, Burlington, MA. Contact: Lim Ming Chiti, 10 Williams Rd., Lexington, MA 02420. Phone: 781-862-1551.

October 9 - 10/10 Chinese One-Day RR, Hollywood, FL. Contact: Marty Prager, 2681 E Marina Dr., Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33312. Phone: 954-963-0204.


October 9-10 - Colorado Springs Open, Colorado Springs, CO. Contact: Larry Rose, 10 P一碗sdale Cir., Manitou Springs, CO 80829. Phone: 719-865-0141.

October 9-10 - Top of Texas RR, Amarillo, TX. Contact: Dennis Prather, 3308 Eddy St., Apt. 1-202, Amarillo, TX 79109. Phone: 806-467-8814.

October 11-15 - Huntsman World Senior Games, St. George, UT. Contact: Shonie Aki, 1900 Vine St., Berkeley, CA 94709. Phone: 510-527-1309.

October 16 - Three Rivers TTC Fall Tournament, Ft. Wayne, IN. Contact: Dirk Petersen, 4512 Bum Drive, Ft. Wayne, IN 46835. Phone: 219-485-4218.

October 16 - Sac-Reo October Open, Sacramento, CA. Contact: James Therriault, 2500 Q St., #1, Sacramento, CA 95816. Phone: 916-531-3209.

October 16-17 - Tri-City Fall RR, Richland, WA. Contact: Kirby Parker, 2304 Snohomish, Richland, WA 99352. Phone: 509-375-1587.


October 23-24 - Southern Open, Houston, TX. Contact: Roberto Byles, 4997 W Bellfort, Houston, TX 77035. Phone: 713-721-PLAY.

October 23-24 - 1999 MATTIC October Open, Middletown, PA. Contact: Don Vastine, 231 Oakhill Dr., Middletown, PA 17057. Phone: 717-994-7164.

October 23-24 - TT&M Fall Open, Phoenix, AZ. Contact: Len Winkler, P.O. Box 9219, Phoenix, AZ 85068-9219. Phone: 602-953-8177. lenwink@goodnet.com.

October 23-24 - Columbus Macy Block Fall Open, Columbus, OH. Contact: Al Fish, 457 Midgard, Columbus, OH 43202. Phone: 614-263-5207.

November 6 - Sports Fitness TT Players Series, Clemmons, NC. Contact: Danny Hill, 3 Twin Brook Dr., Clemmons, NC 27012. Phone: 336-764-0010.

November 6-7 - Maryland Circuit, Eldersburg, MD. Contact: Yvonne Kronlage, 14160 Forsythe Rd., Sykesville, MD 21784. Phone: 410-489-7291.

November 6-7 - Stiga Pacific Rim/All Star, Portland, OR. Contact: Jim Scott, 14049 NE San Rafael, Portland, OR. Phone: 503-261-0672.


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


December 15-19 - USA National Table Tennis Championships, Las Vegas, NV. Contact: USATT, One Olympic Plaza, Colorado Springs, CO 80909. Phone: 719-578-4583. usath@ix.net.


April 1-2 - Colorado River Open, Parker, AZ. Contact: John Ballard, 1275 Bombay Ln., Lake Havasu City, AZ 86404. Phone: 520-453-8638.

USA TABLE TENNIS MAGAZINE • September/October 1999
EXCERPTS FROM KIM TAEK SOO’S DIARY
By Kim Taek Soo

Note: This is an excerpt of an article that was originally written in Korean by Kim and published in the Seoul Sports News. It was then translated into Chinese and posted at http://my.sppm.net.cn/pingpong/7/101/81.htm. It was then translated by Chung Lau into English. The article is made up of excerpts from Kim’s diary.

KIM TAEK SOO FILE
Birthdate: May 25, 1970
Siblings: three brothers, two older, one younger
Height: 5’9”
Weight: 152 lb
Interest: golf, Go (amateur 7th level)
Favorite food: seafood
World rank: 7 (both before and after Worlds)

KIM TAEK SOO ON KIM TAEK SOO
Table Tennis and Kim
“Sometimes I am not sure whether my name is Taek Soo or Ping-Pong.” (Note: they sound similar in Korean). “It may sound a little funny, but just like that, ping pong has played an extremely important role in my life. Not only now, but in the years to come, I will live and die with ping pong.”

Rewards
Through living in France, I understand what a benefit. My salary in France was 700,000 francs. I dare say that my contribution has exceeded that. Caen has already requested to extend my contract. But if there is a chance, I would like to play in China. There are several Chinese clubs that have extended invitations to me.

Interests
I have quite a few interests. I used to be addicted to Go (the ancient Chinese board game), and I recently play a lot of golf which I picked up when I was in France. In the summer I like water-skiing. I like to drive, and in France, I once drove at a speed of 240 km/hr.

Marriage
I have a girlfriend now, and we have been dating for over two years. She is a nice girl who understands athletes. When I was in France, I spent over $1,000 a month on telephone bills. Sometimes I really wanted to see her, so I just flew back to be with her for a little while, and then went back to France. As far as getting married, that will have to wait until after the Sydney Olympics.

Future
I will play as long as I am physically able to. I have the Asian Championship title, and my next goal is the Worlds and Olympics gold. Especially the Sydney Olympic gold: that is the most important. After retiring I want to be a coach. Now after every match I put down all my thoughts on my portable computer. This is preparation for future coaching work.

KOJI MATSUSHITA SPEAKS OUT AGAINST LONG PIPS
Japanese Defensive Star, World #27, Will Switch To Short Pips
By Arno Stienen

Koji Matsushita, 31 years of age and still the best Japanese defender, made a remarkable announcement: “I will switch to short pips after this season.” Even at his relative old age, he is still motivated by the successes of Chinese world class defender Ding Song, who has played with short pips since ‘93. After the switch Ding Song won the Swedish Open Championship and the bronze medal for singles at the ‘95 Worlds.

Koji Matsushita, 31 years of age and still the best Japanese defender, made a remarkable announcement: “I will switch to short pips after this season.” Even at his relative old age, he is still motivated by the successes of Chinese world class defender Ding Song, who has played with short pips since ‘93. After the switch Ding Song won the Swedish Open Championship and the bronze medal for singles at the ‘95 Worlds.

Besides Ding Song, other top defenders using short pips include women such as Germany’s Qianhong Gotsch (world #5), Chinese youngsters Wang Hui and Chen Hongxia (world #18 & 22, respectively), and England’s Lisa Lomas (world #82). Jing Tian-Zörner (world #4), now German and still playing with long pips, reports from her native country China: “They’ve told me you don’t stand a chance here with long pips anymore.” This seems to be especially true in the men’s game.

Currently all defenders in the Chinese table-tennis schools learn to play with short instead of long pips. They follow the model of Ding Song, who chops with short pips on the backhand and uses his spectacular strong forehand topspin whenever possible. The possibility to alter the effect and to successfully attack with short pips balances out against the better control of long pips against power loops.

But Matsushita made an even stronger statement: “Long pips should be outlawed altogether. This probably isn’t the best change for the defenders, but it will help table tennis. If you look at the successes some of the Chinese women with long pips have without moving...”
The Macy Block Open (formerly the Sun TV Open), had 194 players, 30 tables, 27 events, and at least 10-12 Seemillers roving around as players, workers or spectators.

All of Cheng Yinghua’s matches here were basically executions, except for his defeat in the Open final to Todd Sweeris. On the other hand, Todd spent the tournament skating on ice that appeared thinner than the 2.0mm sponge on his racquet. Yet Todd escaped the clutches of Abass Ekun, T.J. Beebe and Ashu Jain to escape with the Open Singles and Doubles titles (the latter with Cheng), as well as an exhibition-final second-place Allstar Men’s finish.

It was 17-year-old TJ, on day one in the quarterfinals of Allstar Men, that first threatened to end Todd’s Pan Am Gold celebrations. TJ’s backhand loop was giving Todd trouble – Todd seemed unable to punch the ball out anything but the table, finally found the table, winning it 21-16. In the fifth, TJ led again – 7-4, 13-11, then 15-all in the fifth as the tournament nearly came to a halt to watch. But Todd, whose loop was often hitting everything but the table, finally found the table, and won three in a row on his serve, 18-15. Serving at 16-19, TJ served into the net. and blocks Abass out of position in the net, then blocks Abass out of position on the constantly counterlooping Ashu. The resulting wide-angled counterlooping rally was, shall we say, heroic in nature and seemingly won by both players several times. But Todd advanced to the semifinals, only to go down 2-0 in games there to Abass (who had defeated Barney 3-0 in the quarters). “Up 4-0 in the first, I thought this was going to be easy!” Todd later said. Todd did something the next two games (after taking to Randy Cohen between games), winning them both at 7(!) to force a fifth game. Perhaps it would be easy?... Abass is serving at 18-all in the fifth, but Todd wins the next two, pushes one in the net, then blocks Abass out of position to win the match, -16, -20, 7, 7, 19. The key to the match, Todd said, was taking Randy’s advice to move the ball around more, rather than simply trying to pin Abass down on his backhand.

On the other side of the draw, Shao Yu had to win five-gamers with Under 2375 Winner Richard Lee in the 8ths (8, 20,-20, -18, 16) and Under 2500 Finalist (he split final with Barney) Randy Cohen in the quarters (-9, 15, 19, -22, 6) to get to Cheng in the semifinals, where Cheng would coast at 14, 15, 11.

The final? Cheng “wasn’t feeling well,” and defaulted the match. Cheng also split his Over 40 final with Abass, and left for the long drive home.

Despite TJ’s near upset of Todd, he then found himself on the other side, as a blast from the past – former U.S. Team Member Ricky Seemiller, in his annual appearance here – upset him not once but twice, in the 8ths of the Open and in the U2500 quarterfinals. But TJ did win U18 Boys’ singles over Under 14 Winner Han Xiao.

Many thanks to the Co-Directors Dan Seemiller and Barry Rodgers, to Chip Coulter (who, when not busy at the desk was busy winning U2125), and to the entire Seemiller clan who helped run this tournament. (Yes, at various times you would find Danny, Ricky, Randy and Timmy Seemiller all working behind the desk, while Dan’s wife Val and various Seemiller cousins did registration and concessions!) Also thanks to sponsors Macy Block, Butterfly and the South Park Table Tennis Club.

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Allstar Men – Final: Cheng Yinghua/Todd Sweeris, 10, 17; SF: Cheng d. Abass Ekun, n.s.; Sweeris d. Shao Yu, 8, 12, 6, 12; QF: Cheng d. Ashu Jain, 13, 11, 14; Ekun d. Randy Cohen, -11, 19, 17, 13, 13; Shao d. Barney J. Reed, 20, 19, 18; Sweeris d. T.J. Beebe, 19, 11, 16, 16, 16.

Allstar Women: 1st Vivian Lee; 2nd Stacy Schoenberg; 3rd Louise Giarn.


Over 50 – Final: Parviz Mojarvizerian d. Dave Skokie, 18, 14; SF: Mojarvizerian d. Ed Watts, 14, 13; Skokie d. Steven Chow, 7, 15.

Over 60: 1st Neil Myers; 2nd Tom Cheung; 3rd Bob Brickell.

Under 22 – Final: Shao Jain d. Barney J. Reed, 21, 11, 19; SF: Jain d. T.J. Beebe, 15, 17; Reed d. Peter Zajac, 18, 15.


Under 15: Han Xiao d. A.J. Carney, 14, 16.


U2500 – Final: Barney J. Reed & Randy Cohen split; SF: Reed d. Ricky Seemiller, n.s.; Cohen d. Ashu Jain, n.s.


U2250 – Final: O.J. Magnus & Patrick Mualem split; SF: Mualem d. Larry Hodges, 13, 18, 15; Magnus d. Dave Sakai, n.s.


U1750: Terry Bell d. Ross Brown, 14, 14, 10.

U1625: Chris Williams d. Eric Finkelstein, 2-1.


U1350: Dan Doyle d. Gordon Cochran, 14, 12.


U1175: Terry Bell d. Ross Brown, 14, 14, 10.


U900: Samson Dubina d. Tom Yost, 19, 8, 16; SF: Dubina d. Stacy Schoenberg, n.s.; Yost d. Alex Meleshunco, n.s.


U750: Terry Bell d. Ross Brown, 14, 14, 10.

U625: Chris Williams d. Eric Finkelstein, 2-1.


Australian Open
Melbourne, Australia
August 19-22, 1999

MEN'S SINGLES—Final: Ma Lin (CHN) d. Kalinikos Kreanga (GRE), 18,18,17; SF: Ma d. Wang Tao (CHN), 7,2,0,17-17; Kreanga d. Werner Schlager (AUT), 6,14,1,18; Kreanga d. Werner Schlager (AUT), 6,14,1,18; QF: Ma d. Chuan Chih-Yuang (TPE), 20,15,14,16; Wang d. Chiang Peng-Lung (TPE), 11,21,12; Kreanga d. Iseki Seiko (JPN), 20,14,10; Schlager d. Qian Qianli (AUT), 14,13,10; 8ths: Ma, D. Karl Jindrak (AUT), 9,13,12; Chuan d. Ryo Yuzawa (JPN), 17,19,16; Wang d. Kosta Lengerov (AUT), 24,16,15,20; Chiang d. Olivier Marmurek (FRA), 28,16,14; Kreanga d. Peter Jackson (NZL), 12,16,12; Iseki d. Tsokas Ntaniel (GRE), 16,19,12,12; Qian d. Chang Yuan-Su (TPE), 18,10,15,18; Schlager d. Leung Chu Yan (HKG), 18,12,13.

WOMEN'S SINGLES—Final: Chen Jing (TPE) d. Sun Jin (CHN), 15,19,14,19; SF: Chen d. Jing Tian-Zoerner (GER), 13,16,20; Sun d. Ni Xia Lian (LUX), 18,21,15,11; QF: Tian-Zoerner d. Jing Xu (TPE), 18,11,11; Chen d. Wang Yuegu (CHN), 17,12,7; Ni d. Song Ching (HKG), walkover; Sun d. Song Ah Sim (HKG), 8,18,15; Jing Xu d. Kim Boon Sik (KOR), 11,18,20; Wang Yuegu d. Tong Fei Ling (TPE), 12,17,22,14; Chen d. Liu Jia (AUT), 18,8,18,17; Ni d. Stella Zhou (AUS), 12,8,19; Song d. Fuji Hiroko (JPN), 9,19,9; Sun d. Nishi Yuka (JPN), 12,9,13.


1999 JUNIOR OLYMPICS/JUNIOR NATIONALS
Cleveland, Ohio
August 5-7, 1999

By Larry Hodges

The other big winner was Mark Hazinski of Indiana, with five gold medals: National Under 16 and Under 18 Boys' Singles, Junior Olympic Under 16 Boys' Singles, and Under 18 Boys' Teams and Doubles. Mark was also the recipient of the Joe Ferrell award, given for outstanding play and sportsmanship.

Day three was the State/Association Team Competition. Jackie wasn't the only one sweeping events. This was the year of brother/sister combinations. Siblings Richard and Vivian Lee of Maryland made havoc of the Under 22 events, winning seven golds and one silver in eight events, with a silver in Under 22 Girls' State Teams the only setback. -f-4 .[5 (out of 40) golds for the rest of the country! They were won by Stacy Schoenberg of New York, who won Junior Olympic Under 18 Girls' Singles and Under 18 Girls' Doubles; Lori Spilker of Ohio, who won Under 18 Girls' Doubles with Stacy, and Shelby Lane of Tennessee, who won Under 10 Boys' Doubles with Joey Cochran of Indiana. (It was pointed out that New York's Stacy Schoenberg trains with the New Jersey players; if you add her total to New Jersey's, they tie Maryland at 13 gold medals.)

With Jackie Lee, Mark Hazinski, and the Lee and Hugh siblings winning 27 golds, that only left 13 for the others. However, a pair of brother/come backs from Indiana -- the Cochran's and the Lynch's - took home quite a few of these. Joey Cochran pulled off the Under 10 sweep, winning three golds for National and Junior Olympic Boys' Singles and Under 10 golds.

Photos by Larry Hodges ©1999.

Jackie Lee (above) and Mark Hazinski (above right) were two of the biggest medal winners. But could they win at "Junior" Table Tennis (right)?

I didn't lose rating points!" OK, that's not exactly "I'm going to Disney World!", but that's what Jackie Lee of California said after winning six gold medals in six events, with only one loss (to Vivian Lee in Under 22 Girls' Teams) for the tournament. Four times she and Katherine Wu of Maryland battled it out in a singles final, and four times the 2058-rated Jackie defeated the 1864-rated Katherine. National Under 18, Under 16 and Under 14 Girls' Singles, plus Junior Olympic Under 14 Girls' Singles - that's four singles gold medals, plus Under 14 Girls' Doubles (with Katherine) and Under 22 Girls' State Teams (with Stacy Lee, no relation). Could Disneyworld be far behind?

Actually, Disneyworld was probably exactly one year away, since the Junior Olympics/Nationals will be held in Orlando, Florida next August, right next door to Disneyworld. Which makes it the perfect tournament/vacation outing for junior players. Which means that next year there will be more than just 86 players (29 of them from the Maryland program) for this National Championship? Many of the strongest juniors in the country -- especially from California and Maryland -- didn't show up this year for various reasons, including the top seven junior boys and the top four junior girls. Of the 12 Defending National Singles Champions, only three returned this year - and Jackie Lee was two of them (defending Under 14 and Under 18 Girls' Singles Champion). A number of players were training overseas in China, and Keith Alban and Michelle Do were playing in the World Championships -- scheduled at the same time -- in the Netherlands. Hopefully we'll get everyone together next year. A number of coaches and Tournament Director Yvonne Kronlage discussed various ways of increasing the number for next year. You'll see ads for the tournament in USATT Magazine next year, something that didn't happen this year.

Day one was the Junior Olympics. All age events here were round robin, with players only playing in their lowest age bracket. Day two was the Junior Nationals, all single elimination, with players entered in the three lowest age brackets. Doubles was also held on day two. Day three was the State/Association Team Competition.

Jackie wasn't the only one sweeping events. This was the year of brother/sister combinations. Siblings Richard and Vivian Lee of Maryland made havoc of the Under 22 events, winning seven golds and one silver in eight events, with a silver in Under 22 Girls' State Teams the only setback, despite Vivian going undefeated in singles. (They'd repeat their duo performance a few weeks later at the Macy Block Open, where Vivian would win Allstar Women, and Richard the Under 2375 event.) Siblings Adam and Judy Hugh of New Jersey -- whose mom, Lily Yip, was away playing in the World Championships -- were creating even more havoc in the younger events. Judy won five golds: National Under 12 and Under 10 Girls' Singles, Junior Olympic Under 10 Girls' Singles, Under 12 Girls' Teams and Doubles, plus a bronze in National Under 14 Girls' Singles. Adam won four golds: National Under 14 and Under 12 Boys' Singles, Junior Olympic Under 12 Boys' Singles, and Boys' Teams. He also got silvers in Under 14 Boys' Doubles and National Under 16 Boys' Singles.

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Adam Hugh (above left) has nothing to hide his head for; neither does smiling sister Judy (left); nor does Ming Luo (right). All three won gold.

Photos by Larry Hodges ©1999.
Under 18 and Under 16 Girls' Singles; Andy Li of Maryland, with gold for Under 22 Boys' Doubles and Teams, along with silvers for both National and Junior Olympic Under 22 Boys' Singles, and Stacy Lee of California, with gold for Under 22 Girls' Doubles and Teams, and silvers in both National and Junior Olympic Under 18 Girls' Singles.

The only other singles gold medalist not yet mentioned: New Jersey's Kenneth Chen, who won gold for Under 18 Boys' Singles, along with a bronze for Under 18 Boys' Doubles.

Next year: We're going to Disneyland!
**USA TOURNAMENT RESULTS**

**DECACUT OPEN**
Decatur, Alabama
August 21, 1999
Open: 1st Amy Feng; 2nd Tai Long Tey; 3-4: Donny Flowers, Soon Chien Lim; 5-8: Xiaolei Hu, Soon Ann Lim, Junduo Zhao, Jungki Lee.
Class AA: 1st Shaoze Hu; 2nd Ernesto Kawamoto; 3rd Roberto Saria; 4th Billy Neely.
Class A: 1st Neville Parakh; 2nd Phil Thompson; 3rd Roger Peterson; 4th Herb Bennett.
Class BBB: 1st Daniel Wang; 2nd Elbert Smith; 3rd Doyle Gray; 4th Errol Thomas.
Class BB: 1st Paul Slubicki; 2nd Tim Rogers; 3rd Ray Thrift; 4th John Flanagan.
Class B: 1st David Landry; 2nd Charlie Phatanak; 3rd Shelby Lane; 4th Patrick Flanagan.

**MARYLAND CIRCUIT**
Eldersburg, Maryland
August 7-8
Open: 1st William Ma; 2nd Mark Davis.
U1800: 1st Mark Davis; 2nd George Rozanski.
U1400: 1st Alex Roesell; 2nd John Vos.
U1200: 1st Roger Lank; 2nd Paul Wolf.
U1000: 1st John Harris; 2nd Ross Kelley.
U800/Novice: 1st Karen Ma; 2nd William Van Wright.
Over 40: 1st William Ma; 2nd Mark Davis.
Under 18: 1st Karen Ma; 2nd Janet Ma.
U3000 Doubles: 1st William & Karen Ma; 2nd G.S. Krishnan/Mary Ma.

**1999 CLEVELAND SUMMER OPEN**
Cleveland, Ohio
July 18, 1999
Open RR: 1st Akrum Geelani; 2nd Kamoru Adio; 3rd David Berenson; 4th Sam Steiner.
U2300RR: Kamoru Adio d. Akrum Geelani.
U2100RR: Sam Steiner d. David Berenson.
U1900RR-Final: Split-Cliff Sullivan and David Berenson.
U1500RR: Michael Kaneck d. Richard Caplin.
U1300RR: David Bourne d. Matthew Rustomov.
Hardbat: Cliff Sullivan d. David Berenson.

**FUTURE CHAMPIONS!**
Logan Michael Wetzel, 15 months, and Max Hu, 12 months. Logan is the son of Decatur Open Referee and Co-Director Michael Wetzel; Max is the son of Decatur Open Champion (and 4-time U.S. Women’s Champion) Amy Feng and Decatur Quarterfinalist Xiaolei Hu.

**PORTLAND SUMMER DOUBLE ROUND ROBIN**
Portland, Oregon
August 7, 1999
Table One: 1st Fan Yi Yong; 2nd Ron Carver.
Table Two: 1st Peter Wong; 2nd Ken Ping.
Table Three: 1st Bill Mason; 2nd Walter Wong.
Table Four: 1st Bob Ho; 2nd Joe Badrena.
Table Five: 1st Aaron Soussman; 2nd Jim MacFarlane.
Table Six: 1st Joanne Miller; 2nd Harry Ermantraut.

**ST. LOUIS GATEWAY OPEN**
St. Louis, Missouri
August 7-8, 1999
Open Singles: 1st Tai Tey; 2nd Yufei Xiao; 3-4: Michael Liu & Don Jackson.
Women's Singles: 1st Roseinary Davis; 2nd Allyson Ellis; 3rd Laura Xiao; 4th Ariadna Neznamov.
Wildcard Singles (Random Draw): 1st Tai Tey; 2nd Don Jackson; 3rd Stan Sokol.
Hardbat Singles: 1st Tai Tey; 2nd Don Jackson; 3-4: Paul Olivier & Daniel Truong.
Over 40: 1st Jimmy Kimple; 2nd Brian Bartley; 3-4: Sonny Henderson/Guy Hendrickson.
Over 60: 1st Tom Klutho; 2nd Les Ruthven; 3rd George Conlee; 4th James Petrie.
Under 16: 1st Laura Xiao; 2nd Aaron Hendrickson; 3rd Jack Pan; 4th Danny Levy.
Under 13: 1st Laura Xiao; 2nd Aaron Hendrickson; 3rd Jimmy Pan; 4th Danny Levy.
U2100: 1st Daniel Truong; 2nd Roger Jett; 3-4: Sonny Henderson/Guy Hendrickson.
U1900: 1-2: Due Dinh & Babak Fakharpour split; 3-4: Gouyvan Liu & Guy Hendrickson.
U1700: 1st Sam Akula; 2nd Earl Brightup.
U1500: 1st Rich Hendry; 2nd Earl Brightup.
U1300: 1st Robert Simmons; 2nd Tony Kowk.
U1100: 1st Eddie Hodges; 2nd Jesse Maniger.
U950: 1st Clarence Ray; 2nd Danny Levy.
U3600 Doubles: 1st George Hendry/George Conlee; 2nd Jeff Hildebrand/Eric Toenjes.
U3000 Doubles: 1st Sam Akula/Larry Rhea; 2nd Tim Kemp/Rick Goertz.

**JOE BUJALSKI MEMORIAL OPEN**
Schaumburg, Illinois
July 10, 1999
Open: Dickie Fleischer d. Engelbert Solis.
U2250: Michael Bartenland & Engelbert Solis split prize.
U1850: Junduo Zhao d. John Hauser.
U1350: Andy Moy d. Yi Chen.
U1250: Yi Chen d. Kevin Pollard.
U1050: Matt Waltz d. Mike Palm.
U850: Cameron Marantz d. Jimmy Do.
U650: David Nalls d. Nate Oddman.
Handicap: Alnoor Sumar d. Mike Palm.

**Bennett.**
ARIZONA SIZZLER
Phoenix, Arizona
August 7-8, 1999
Championship: 1st Leo Lucanu; 2nd Alex Lai
Class A: 1st Luis Houdet; 2nd Ping Fuschino.
Class B: 1st Alan Newman; 2nd Marco Borillo.
Class C: 1st Ed Warwic; 2nd Tim Wright.
Handicap: 1st Jane Magras; 2nd Dan Bryan.

MTTC 1999 OPEN
Seattle, Washington
July 24, 1999
Open Singles: Danny Ho d. Yong Jiang Liu.
Mixed Doubles: Yang/Wunderlich d. Kawamoto/Kawamoto.
U2200 Singles: Sung Woo Yang d. Erika Kosarko.
U1900 Singles: George Mason d. Victor Wu.
U1700 Singles: Lamson Do d. Mark Gorse.
U1500 Singles: Enoch Yiu d. Reinald Law.
U1300 Singles: Peter Chiu d. Reinald Law.
U500 Singles: Stephanie Kawamoto d. Heinz Schwarz.

SURF CITY OPEN
Santa Cruz, California
August 7, 1999
Open: 1st Freddie Gabriel; 2nd Peter Zajac.
U2100: 1st Masaki Tajima; 2nd Sam Roberson.
U1800: 1st Hong-Shong Zhang; 2nd Sam Roberson.
U1500: 1st Vadim Sherman; 2nd Vadim Buk.
U1350: 1st Philip Mark; 2nd Patrick Castro.
U1200: 1st Philip Mark; 2nd Patrick Castro.
Over 50: 1st Imita Borisova; 2nd John Brown.
Under 18: 1st Mikhail Kasatants; 2nd Diana Viet.
Wheelchair Open: 1st Mike Dempsey; 2nd James Hall.

SUMMER WACO RR OPEN
Waco, Texas
July 24, 1999
By Grady Gordon
47 players gathered from around the state of Texas to do battle for the top spot at the Waco Open, held in the cool confines of the Waco Convention Center. This year the event was held in conjunction with the Games of Texas so the venue was changed to the convention center rather than the usual location of the Muns-McLean Gym on the Baylor campus.
The “A” group was made up of several “heavyweights,” including Idan Levi (2268), Nelson Ramos (2205), and Sam Smith (2104) of Dallas, Robert Mayer (2204) and young sensation Howard Lamb (1914) of Houston. Robert Mayer, the tall and surprisingly quick Houstonite played superbly to outplay the pack to take the winning $150 prize. The second prize of $100 was earned by Sam Smith with his flashy performance. The third prize of $75 went to Nelson Ramos, a newcomer to the Dallas arena. Idan Levi’s performance was sub-par and he came in fourth for $50.
Two outstanding members of the Waco table tennis club received plaques of recognition: Pat Cunyns, a non-player, for her annual contribution of running the control desk, and Ira Walton, aka “The old pro,” a faithful long-time member of the club, for his tireless work in keeping our table tennis club active.
With the one-day tournament starting at 8:45 AM, and with the help of computer software developed by Randy Medcalf (contact him directly at 713-271-6199 or go to visualinterface@pcm.net for info on this), the tournament was completed at about 9:30 PM with a happy but exhausted group of great competitors.
A Division: 1st Robert Mayer; 2nd Sam Smith; 3rd Nelson Ramos; 4th Idan Levi.
B Division: 1st John Ying; 2nd Daniel Yu; 3rd Eddie Young.
C Division: 1st Robert Payne; 2nd James Shope; 3rd Jerome Branton.
D Division: 1st Ira Walton; 2nd David Livings; 3rd Harry McKeever.
A Doubles: 1st Sam Smith/Idan Levi; 2nd Robert Mayer/Howard Lamb.
B Doubles: 1st Richard Howell/Rick Mueller; 2nd Eddie Young/John Ying.
C Doubles: 1st Rene & Elias Risik; 2nd Jerome Branton/Sam Lathan.
D Doubles: 1st Charles Shaw/Paul Holmes; 2nd Richard Grant/Harry McKeever.

GEORGIA CHAMPIONSHIPS
Augusta, Georgia
July 21-24, 1999
By Donna Cole
By all accounts the tournament was a smashing success, with 180 players competing in tournament.
We started with the Super Novice event. There were 50 boys from the Boys’ Club and 25 girls from the Girls’ Club, plus 10 others from Parks and Recreation. Many of them had never played the game. But we solved that by having adult scorers on each table. We had 12 tables with at least 8 players on each table. Each match was one game to 11. The matches were fast and furious. We started at 10 a.m. with a grand march introducing the players one by one, and finished by 1:30 p.m. Whew! It was great fun to see all the new players.
The Georgia Cup returned to Augusta after three-year stay in Atlanta. The Augusta Table Tennis Club, consisting of Derek May, Scott Butler, Xin Peng, and Pete May, overcame the CATTC club from Atlanta in the finals. This was the 23rd annual playing of the Georgia Cup. It all started in 1977 with the AGTTA club from Atlanta winning the first title. It is a rich three-way rivalry between the Augusta club and the CATTC and AGTTA clubs from Atlanta that we hope will continue for many years to come, with some new clubs from other cities.
Wendell Dillon was the Tournament Referee and Computer Guru. We had over 25 volunteers helping to make the event run smoothly and be fun for everyone. Counting our girls in the Super Novice as well as the main event, we had 36 female players. We think that’s great for our sport.
See you next year Wendell!!!
Georgia Cup: Augusta TTC d. CATTC (Atlanta)
Men’s Singles: 1st Xin Peng; 2nd Derek May
Women’s Singles: 1st Cathy Beckham
Open Doubles: 1st Xin Peng/Derek May
Over 40: 1st Xin Peng
Over 50: 1st Doyle Dye
Over 60: 1st Herb Beckham
Under 18: 1st Mike Hadsell, Jr., Augusta
Under 14: 1st Courtnie Austell, Augusta
Over 14: 1st Courtnie Austell, Atlanta
Under 12: 1st Patrick May, Augusta
Under 10: James Cole, Beech Island, SC and Micah Presley, Atlanta
Under 18 Doubles: 1st Mike Hadsell, Jr. & Patrick May
Class A: 1st Levoid Brown
Class B: 1st Mike Dukes
Class C: 1st Paul Slubecki
Class D: 1st Elijah Conn
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