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USA Table Tennis Magazine
VOLUME 72, NUMBER 2

Interview With USA Team Member Tawny Banh by Larry Hodges
The Rating and Ranking Systems Revisited by Gilbert Simons
History of USA Table Tennis, Part I (1928-39) by Tim Boggan
Book Review by Steve Isaacson
Editorial: Destroying the Spirit of the Game by Masaaki Tajima
2000 USA Table Tennis Hall of Fame Awards
Club of the Month: Sunset TTC by Harvey Gottliffe
Youth Pages
How To Recruit Juniors To Your Club by Larry Hodges
Youth Club of the Month: Central Junior High by Tina Thompson
Youth of the Month: Lee McCool by Tom Wintrich

TOURNAMENTS:
Special Team Coverage of the USA Nationals
by Tim Boggan, Scott Gordon, Larry Hodges and Richard McAfee
USA Tournaments
International Results: ITTF Pro Tour Finals

COACHING:
McAfee Mechanics: Advanced Movement Drills by Richard McAfee
The Backhand Modulation of Wang Liqin
by Wei Wang, Photo Sequences by Diego Schaaf
The Beginner’s Series, Part I: The Forehand Drive by Larry Hodges
Includes Photo Sequence of Five-time U.S. Men’s Singles Champion
Dan Seemiller by John Oros

USATT AND OTHER NEWS:
Cartoon by Steve Isaacson
USATT Elections
They Said It!
President’s Report
Coaches’ and Officials’ Report
Letters
USATT Club Programs
Net Serve by Tim Titrud
Tournament Directors and Coaches Meetings
at the USA Nationals by Larry Hodges
Obituaries: Sam Balamoun, Fred Grobee, Lilly Bellak
Weekly Ratings by Megan Kulenburg
Tournament Schedule

ON THE COVER: David Zhuang ©2001 by kausphoto.com

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS APPROVE ELECTION REFORMATION COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS

A five-person ad hoc Election Reform Committee was approved at the July Board meeting to propose comprehensive revisions to the USATT election procedures. The recommended revisions were due to the Board no later than September 1, 2000. The committee consisted of Wendell Dillon (Chair), Amy Feng, Jimmy McClure, and Neil Smyth. The committee referenced the current Standing Rules for the Nominating/Elections Committee, Jimmy McClure's 3-page document, and Sheri Pittman's 14-page proposal. The following recommendations were approved at the Board of Director’s Meeting in San Diego, November 16-19, 2000, and is effective in year 2001:

1. The eight (8) elected Board members will be elected for four-year terms. One-half (four members) of the Board to be elected at one time. The elections will be held in even-numbered years, with officers to take office on December 1 of the election year.

2. The President, Secretary, and 2 Vice-Presidents will be elected in Olympic years. The Executive Vice-President, Treasurer, and 2 Vice-Presidents will be elected in other even years.

3. Ballots will be mailed in early September and returned and counted no later than mid-October.

CORRECTIONS

In the Jan/Feb 2001 issue, page 6, in the “New USATT Membership Rates” article, the membership rate for an Under 15 Three-Year Membership was listed as $55. It should have said $45. Also, it should have mentioned that the college membership fee is for full-time college students (including graduate students). A valid (current) registration card/ID or a photocopy is required at the time of purchase.

4. The next election will be held in the fall of 2001 to elect the President, Secretary, and 2 Vice Presidents. These officers would serve a three-year term until the 2004 election. The other officers will be elected in 2002 to serve a four-year term until the 2006 election.

5. Current serving officers will continue in their present positions until the new Board takes office in December 2001. The new Board would elect an Executive Vice-President and Treasurer to serve until those officers are elected by the membership in 2002.

6. All eight (8) elected Board members will be elected at-large.

7. The President appoints the Community-Based Programs Representative with concurrence of the Board. The term of the office will be 2 years.

8. No change is recommended relating to the election of athletes representatives.

9. The Nominating committee submits the report of candidates to the Board no later than July 1 of election year.

10. Candidates by petition must submit 150 signatures on approved forms to the Nominating Chairman no later than August 5. The committee will report the list of names with the required number of signatures to the Board by September 1.

11. Minor changes are proposed for the election of Olympic and National Athlete Representatives. The Olympic Representative will be elected before the U.S. Open. The male and female National Athlete Representatives will be elected with the regular elections. All elective offices will begin December 1 of the election year.

USATT ATHLETE REPRESENTATIVE ELECTIONS

Elections were recently held for the USATT offices of Olympic Athlete Representative and National Athlete Representative (Male and Female). The final vote breakdown is as follows, with the winners in bold and the term of office in parenthesis.

**Olympic Athlete Representative**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Li Ai</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sean O’Neill</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lily Yip</td>
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**National Athlete Representative - Female**

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tawny Banh</td>
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<td>Virginia Sung</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lily Yip</td>
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**National Athlete Representative - Male**

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<tr>
<td>Chi-Sun Chui</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Khoa Nguyen</td>
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<td>2</td>
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**They Said It...**

By Larry Hodges

“We talk very much in detail and extensively about the tactics against Persson and Karlsson. There is no point talking about him (Waldner), he always plays differently anyway, he cannot be anticipated, you have to take Walder as he is.” Swedish Head Coach Cai Zhenhua on preparing his team for team matches against Sweden.

“National Handbat Champion...” Steve Berger, answering his cell phone just after winning the title at the USA Nationals.

“When I push, he usually loops. When I pushed in the fifth game, he went ‘POW!’” Cheng Yinghua, explaining how he lost the fifth game against David Zhuang in the final at the Nationals.

“Oh-oh – is this an indication of what level he thinks I am?” Sean O’Neill, when he saw Cheng Yinghua warming up for their quarterfinal match with Julian Waters, who’s rated about 1900.


Japanese Air Ace (Clyde Kusatsu), shot down by Pappy Boyington (Robert Conrad), faces rough treatment at the hands of Pappy’s men. But when he clobbers them at ping-pong, they draft him to represent their unit at a tournament against a rival Seabee outfit! Co-stars Dana Elcar, John Larroquette, and Dirk Blocker. The episode of the TV show “Black Sheep Squadron” shown on Jan. 10, 2001. The episode was called “Prisoners of War.”

“When’s the last time you lost a match because your smashes and power loops kept hitting the table but just couldn’t get through your opponent’s defense?” Dave ‘Lefty’ Williams, in a discussion about whether a player needed a faster blade, on the newsgroup rec.sport.table-tennis on Dec. 5, 2000.

“Florida football coach Steve Spurrier visited with his athletics director Saturday night and came away with a black eye. The injury didn’t result from a confrontation but from a game of table tennis. ‘I went for a low shot, and I went right into the wall,’ Spurrier said. ‘Pingpong can be a dangerous sport as I learned. It’s too rigorous for me.’” The Decatur Daily, Oct. 9, 2000, pg. D3.
President’s Report
By Sheri Soderberg Pittman

Since I became president in May of 1999, I have been heavily involved in many of our association’s activities. As many people have pointed out to me, and I agree with them, the workload tends to multiply. It is much better for our association, and for our leaders, to delegate and, in particular, to make sure that our association becomes both more staff-driven, and, in areas where that is not possible, to find capable volunteers who can manage specific responsibilities.

COMMITTEE CHAIR POSITIONS FILLED
I am pleased to share with you the completed new structure of our standing committees. Contact information for each of the chairs can be found at our website. Other positions have also been filled and are noted on our website.

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<tr>
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<td>Disabled Athletes</td>
<td>Sharon Frant Brooks</td>
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<td>Dennis/Taylor</td>
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<td>Sel Boyars</td>
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<td>Finance/Budget</td>
<td>Tong Lee</td>
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<td>Attila Malek</td>
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<td>Grassroots/Collegiate</td>
<td>Hank McCoullum</td>
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<td>Grassroots/Adults</td>
<td>Donna Chen</td>
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<td>Grassroots/Seniors</td>
<td>Dave Sakai</td>
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<td>Cindy Marcum</td>
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<td>Jimmy McClure</td>
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<td>Hardbat</td>
<td>Scott Gordon</td>
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<td>Wendell Dillon</td>
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<td>Wayne Johnson</td>
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<td>Women’s Development</td>
<td>Gao Jun</td>
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NEW MONTHLY REPORTING TEMPLATE
I also forwarded to headquarters a new monthly report template that will provide the Board with a much better tool to assess and monitor staff and committee activities. I anticipate that we will be able to adapt the format for posting on our website.

AL PRAST JOINS STAFF AS FINANCIAL MANAGER
One of the first things I did in 2001 was travel to headquarters along with Treasurer Tong Lee. Together with Margaret Smith, we interviewed and hired Al Prast, our new financial manager. He comes to us with many years of accounting experience working for the U.S. Army and is diligently processing all of our financial matters. We had hoped that he would have been able to close out all of our 2000 financials in time for Tong Lee to submit a report in this issue, but Al needed more lead time to accomplish the task. Al replaces Karie Wright, who worked part-time and decided to join another NGB. Al will be working full-time. Once he catches up on pending financial matters, he will assist our association in developing additional financial accountability measures and in putting together budget runs for various association projects.

USOC RELATIONSHIP IMPROVES WITH NEW SPORTS MANAGEMENT TEAM
As I have previously reported, the USOC has created a new “sports management team” concept in which a three-person team oversees a designated list of NGBs. Chris Vadala, Wes Barnett, and Leslie Gamez are our USOC sports management team. They met with us and the staff for several hours during our early-January trip. Blair Tripodi, the USOC Marketing Director, attended the meeting for about two hours. During the meeting, we discussed the new partnership arrangement between the USOC and USA Table Tennis. We look forward to this new management style. They reported to us that USATT was among the two or three sports out of about 28 NGBs that were expected to meet their 2000 markers. I extend a special thank you to staffer Debbie Doney who prepared all of the documentation needed to show that we had satisfied the requirements of the markers. We are awaiting official USOC confirmation of our successful completion of our markers. At that time, we will also receive a special bonus payment exceeding $13,000.

STAFFING CHANGE WILL IMPROVE MEMBERSHIP SERVICES
During my trip to Colorado Springs, I was also able to speak at length with staff members. I have submitted a staffing proposal to Margaret Smith, who is overseeing office operations in the absence of a designated executive director. The main change in assignments will affect Debbie Doney, who will become much more directly involved in providing club and program development services. This change in focus will assure that you, our association’s members, will get better membership services.

Already one change has taken place to improve the satisfaction of members, namely Tami Walker’s contribution toward getting the ratings backlog eliminated.
WELCOME TO NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Tawny Banh and Todd Sweeris joined Board of USA Table Tennis as the newly-elected Female and Male Player Representatives. They will each serve a two-year term. Thank you to Lily Yip and Jimmy Butler for their service. A special thank you also to Amy Feng, our previous Olympic Athlete Representative. Li Ai now serves in that position.

THANK YOU TO U.S. NATIONALS VOLUNTEERS

The U.S. Nationals was an extremely pleasant event, thanks mostly to Margaret Smith and Tournament Director Wayne Johnson. If you weren’t there, I hope you enjoyed the on-line point-by-point tournament coverage provided by Larry Hodges. I also want to extend a special thank you to all of the very capable and dedicated staff and volunteers who ran the event, as far as I could tell, glitch-free. We were also honored to host a member of our sports management team, Wes Barnett.

Special thanks also, as always, to our tournament sponsors – Stiga/Scalade, the Stratosphere Hotel, United Airlines, the Las Vegas & Convention Bureau, and Paddle Palace/Nittaku.

And another round of thanks go to the organizers, presenters, and attendees of the Tournament Directors Workshop and the Coaching Seminar. The meetings were well-attended and participants had positive remarks about both events.

NEIL SMYTH HONORED

At the U.S. Nationals I honored Neil Smyth with a newly-created special recognition, the President’s Award. This past U.S. Nationals marked the 25th Anniversary of the event. Neil Smyth was largely responsible for the creation of the concept – a U.S. national tournament to balance off the international flavor of our U.S. Open. Thank you, Neil, for all of the joyful moments this tournament has brought to the thousands of participants and fans who have attended this great event!

DAN SEEMILLER AND MASAKI TAJIMA – COACHES OF THE YEAR

In early January, I attended the USOC Coach of the Year Recognition weekend in New York City. Dan Seemiller received the honor as National Coach of the Year and Masaki Tajima received the honor as Developmental Coach of the Year. The USOC, along with the host city, makes this event a once-in-a-lifetime memory for those coaches selected to receive this award. The coaches, and their special guests, are treated to all kinds of VIP perks. For this event, Masaki invited his mother and Dan’s daughter was his guest.

The USOC requests that the president or executive director, at the USOC’s expense, also participate in the weekend’s festivities. I had a great time visiting with our coaches as well as getting to know more president and executive directors of the other sports, as well as USOC officials.

The trip also gave me the opportunity to meet with fellow Board member, George Brathwaite. George, a retired United Nations staffer, gave me a personal tour of his old stomping grounds. Then he took me to the local club. A couple nights later, the club members had a special dinner to celebrate the occasion. Unfortunately, I was not able to visit with them long, because the dinner conflicted with the USOC schedule, but it was great to see the always-present camaraderie of our table tennis family.

NEW NATIONAL TEAM TO BE DECIDED IN FEBRUARY

Turn to our website, www.usatt.org, for coverage of the Team Trials, which will be held February 7-11. Our writing wizard, Larry Hodges, will once again provide nearly up-to-the-minute updates and behind-the-scenes coverage of the event. USA Table Tennis acknowledges the San Diego Table Tennis Association and the USOC for assisting with the event logistics.

PREVIEW OF NEXT PRESIDENT’S REPORT

As this issue goes to press, we have a number of projects in the works – including some pending sponsorship deals, an improved Internet presence, and planning for the 30th Anniversary of Ping Diplomacy. I look forward to seeing these developments, and others, reach fruition in the near future. As always, please follow our website for the latest association news.
**Coaching Report**

**WHY BECOME A USATT CERTIFIED COACH?**

By Dan Seemiller, USATT Coaching Development Director

The USATT is actively recruiting coaches to sign up and take the coaching certification test. Once you become certified as a club coach or higher you will be eligible to participate in the ongoing coaches education courses. As a player/coach you will learn many of the techniques needed to improve in this difficult sport of ours. If you think you might be interested, contact USA Table Tennis at usatt4@ix.net.

In the coming weeks, we plan on holding seminars at the U.S. Open and U.S. Nationals (you must be certified to participate). We will continue to send instructional articles from international magazines to all the coaches to be filed in their manuals. All club, state and regional coaches will receive our 2-hour video clinic to help with their educational process and an outline on how to run a clinic/training camp.

We also plan on continuing to profile and recognize active coaches in the magazine. Updating the coaches website is an important agenda item that will be done throughout the year. Another idea in the works is to provide all full-time coaches with USATT business cards. Also, a new membership benefit package will be available to all coaches. It is important that you as coaches try to enlist your students to become members of USATT. This will benefit you as well as the USATT.

The U.S. Olympic Committee has funds available for coaches education. In the coming year the USATT will request grant monies which will be used in part to hold a coaches clinic. It is our hope that this seminar will be 3-4 days in duration and target the most active club, state, and regional coaches.

Lastly, we will recognize and award the coaches with the most active junior programs and the coaches whose students attend this summer’s Junior Olympics/Junior Nationals in Hampton Roads, Virginia.

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**An Official’s View**

**In Defense of the Good Old Seasoned and Experienced Umpires**

I received and read very carefully a copy of the Final Report of the ITTF Umpires and Referees Task Force. Let me start by congratulating the Task Force Committee for a job well done. I know how much energy, effort and dedication it takes to produce such a document. However, after reading the report one may feel that parts of it are exclusive and somewhat discriminatory. I hope my comments are not viewed as negative criticism. In fact my goal is to complement the report and create a document which will consider all umpires and referees on an equal basis.

The concern is geared toward part I, article 2.6.3, where it is stated that these (IU – International Umpires) should have a good command of English and should not exceed 60 years of age. In Part II, the same statement is repeated again as, IU A-Category-Maximum age 60 years.

This requirement was proposed several years ago and many associations opposed it. We pleaded our case previously and convinced the ITTF and BGM to vote against the age limit for selection of IU umpires for major events. We seek the help of all concerned and the Task Force Committee to eliminate such restrictions for those selected to umpire the Olympic Games, World Title Competitions, Pro-Tour Grand Finals, etc., for the following reasons.

First, some associations may consider the requirement inappropriate and disrespectful. In the U.S. it is against the law to practice Age Discrimination. It is illegal to base the selection of an umpire on the basis of age.

Second, as the Task Force considered quality over quantity, one hopes that the same logic would apply to age; that means “quality over age.”

Third, some of the best umpires have been top players. Players in their prime do not want to be umpires. They become umpires later in their lives.

Fourth, financial restrictions limit the ability of younger umpires to participate in major tournaments on the local, national, and international level. Therefore, experience may not be developed at an early age. It is mostly those who have retired early who become dedicated and prosperous enough to travel and become more experienced.

Fifth, players do not look at the age of the umpire. They want a knowledgeable, talented, experienced, efficient, objective and fair umpire regardless of his or her age.

Sixth, TV appearances rarely capture an umpire during a match. TV concentrates on the players and the game itself. The cosmetics which have been used in the past, i.e., colorful shirts, etc., did not attract more players, or TV coverage, or larger audiences.

Seventh, let us not forget that some of the best players who survived through the years are not young players. One wonders: are we going to make an age limit for players in the near future to “give a younger image to the sport?”

Eighth, table tennis has flourished on the premise that it is a sport for all ages. As the average life span increases, the number of older players and older umpires will increase.

Finally, umpiring for major events is a great incentive that inspires many older umpires to continue umpiring and improving their performance, looking forward to that day when they can umpire at center court in a major event.

For the above reasons, I am seeking the help of all those who can influence such decisions, of all umpires concerned, and of the members of the Task Force Committee, to eliminate the age restrictions on the selection of umpires for major events.

You can reach ITTF President Adham Sharara at:
President’s Office, ITTF
1125 Colonel By Drive, Suite 2900
Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5R1, Canada
Tel: +1613 7332468 Fax +1613 7334603
E-mail: ittf@itff.com
These hotels have agreed to set aside rooms until 04/25/01 for the St. Joseph Valley Open. The rooms will be released after that date so please take advantage of their support and reserve your room as soon as possible.

May 26th & 27th, 2001

37th ANNUAL ST. JOSEPH VALLEY OPEN ENTRY BLANK

Mail entry to:
Dan Seemiller
P.O. Box 608
New Carlisle, IN 46772

Circle events entered:

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Eating fee $3.00
USATT membership fee $7.00
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Letters...

Dear USATT President Sheri Pittman:

In your Dear Members column (USATT Magazine, September/October 2000) I read your Fee Structure section concerning the Life USATT Membership. I called Margaret Smith at USATT to verify what I read because I simply could not believe you were serious. According to your Structure, as a member who currently has on his 3-year membership more than one and one half years left, I would have to pay $500.00 to upgrade to Lifetime Membership, and I would receive as an incentive two silk ties. Thanks a lot. Come on, Sheri, and the whole Board of Directors who voted for this Fee Structure. This kind of smooth, sorry fundraising attempt is exactly what turns basement table tennis players off from becoming full, active USATT members. I am 62 years old and have been buying 3-year memberships ($60.00) for many years. The "valuable two silk ties" incentive aside, in order for me to see any financial benefit from the Life Membership, I would have to live and want to stay a USATT member for more than 25 years. And think about my seventy- and eighty-year-old fellow USATT members. Please, do not tell me the main purpose of the Life Membership is to support the sport. The tangible benefits to being a USATT member are so minuscule that just being a member means supporting the sport. Before you decide on the price of the Life Membership fee you have to realize that not every potential lifetime member is a corporate lawyer. But if you want to set the price of the Life Membership so high, by the same principle as they calculate Life Insurance premiums, the Lifetime Membership fee should be age dependent. Except that in the Membership fee case the size of the "Premium" should be inversely proportional to the age.

Paul Kovac, International Umpire
Silver Spring, MD

USATT Treasurer Tong Lee Replies....

Dear Mr. Kovac:

As one who has worked hard at coming out with a reasonable fee for the Millennium Membership, it is best for me to briefly respond to your letter.

A major source of USATT revenue comes from membership fees. Last year, the Association collected less than $200,000 from membership fees, but we have a headquarters budget well in excess of $300,000 so that there is a staff to run the office administratively and serve the membership. Many members do not realize that there is a fixed cost or an overhead to run USATT. One may never call up headquarters to talk to Margaret, read the magazine, visit our web site, and play at the U.S. Nationals or Open. But it does cost money, and lots of it, to make these resources available to all members. There also are variable costs such as sending International Umpires and Referees to overseas tournaments.

The fee of $500 for the Millennium Membership is set high enough so that there would be a significant excess to fund programs after accounting for some overhead and the cost of six magazines per member per year. We have to consider interest rates, average life span of life members, inflation as it relates to printing and labor costs, economy of scale, and other factors that may affect the cost of each issue of the magazine. I had considered a fee structure based on age. Mensa, the organization for people with a high IQ, has such a structure that involves a formula to calculate the fee. If one wants to be picky, we will have to consider another set of fees for females who live longer than males. One can also argue for a fee based on zip codes, and one for smokers and non-smokers. Administratively, implementation of fees based on all these considerations is cumbersome.

In the final analysis, we have to set a reasonable fee using the process of averaging. Sheri would be more popular if a life membership cost $300 (and the regular fee is reduced), but the financial interests of the Association come first. You, as 62-year-old male with a life expectancy of another 19.07 years (according to one study), may not find the fee so attractive. However, the fee is a bargain for Han Xiao, a 14-year-old top junior from Maryland who could live another 64 years. I myself purchased a Millennium Life Membership, and I have never played in a USATT-sanctioned tournament. As for the gifts, I asked USATT to forget about the tie, but send my T-shirt to a cute little girl named Chantal whom I met at one tournament through her dad, Dennis Taylor. The Millennium Life Membership fee structure may not please everyone, but I believe it is generally reasonable and fair to USATT and to prospective members.

Tong Lee
Treasurer, USA Table Tennis

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Letters...

Gentlemen:

I have been actively involved in Table Tennis since 1946. I founded the U.S. Table Tennis Hall of Fame in 1966 and was myself inducted in 1994. Throughout my career, I have been primarily concerned with the fairness of competitions, the impartiality of officials, and the awarding of valuable prizes in a festive atmosphere of victory.

Amongst the first inductees in the Hall of Fame was our only World Singles Champion, Ruth Aarons, winner of the G. Geist Prize in 1936. Since those first inductions I have continually agonized over what appears to me to be a tremendous injustice both to Miss Aarons and to Miss Trude Pritzi in the Finals of the 1937 Championships in Austria. It is clear that these two women were the very best in the world.

As you are aware, the final match was stopped due to a "time limit," and the title declared "vacant." It is far too late to dispute the fairness or necessity of this "time limit." Suffice to say that the incident has been the topic of thousands of conversations during the last six decades. It is also far too late to determine whose agenda was satisfied by this pre-World War II result.

However...in those very same world championships...in the final tie of the Swaythling Cup...Hungary's Soos and America's Jimmy McClure were similarly stopped just short of the completion of their third game...Also for a "time limit" violation. This did not result in a "vacancy" or a disqualification for either player. On the contrary, they were each awarded 4 point toward qualification for either player. On the contrary.
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Tom Miller

Eligibility
Players must be 40 or over by December 31, 2001. Unrated players may play only in Age events. Players must be members of USATT, or must send a fee to join, and must be US or Canadian residents.

Rating
A player’s rating and seeding will be based on the listing in the March-April issue of USA Table Tennis Magazine.

Events Restrictions
No more than four events per day. No more than two doubles events per day. If you need a partner, we will try to find you one. The large 40 millimeter ball will be used.

Rules
All rules of USATT will govern and be enforced. All matches will be 2 of 3 games except for the semifinals and finals of the over 40 singles, which will be 3 of 5.

Application Dates and Cutoff
All entries and fees must be postmarked by Monday May 21, 2001. We guarantee acceptance of the first 185 entries only.

Driving Directions
Laguna Woods is 10 miles south of the John Wayne Airport (Orange County Airport) via the 405 and 5 Freeways. Take the El Toro exit and continue south 2.5 miles to Gate 9 at Calle Corta. Leisure World is a gated community. Ask the guard at the gate for directions to Clubhouse 5.

Accommodations
Tournament participants will be given special rates at the Best Western Laguna El Toro Inn. Contact: Best Western Laguna El Toro Inn 23702 Rockfield Blvd. Lake Forest, CA 92630 (800) 528-1234 (949) 458-1900

Additional Sponsors
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USA TABLE TENNIS MAGAZINE • March/April 2001
The Rating and Ranking Systems Revisited

By Gilbert Simons, Founder of SDTTA
E-Mail: gilsimons@aol.com • Web page: http://members.xoom.com/gsimons

THE PROBLEM: The USATT uses a hybrid rating system, taken from the USCF (U.S. Chess Federation). The outer shell uses the Event Rating System, determining winners and runner-ups in tournament events. E.R.S. Draw Sheets are used throughout. But within the events, the guts of the E.R.S. have been removed, and replaced by a unique Chess Match Ranking System, winners taking away points from losers.

In a fully integrated Event Rating System, not only are the two finalists rewarded, but so are up to 40% of competitors advancing to later rounds. Competition is an individual journey by each player, progressing upward as far as his efforts and abilities take him. Practice and coaching are rewarded.

In the $6 million Golf Players Championship of March, 2000, Hal Sutton won and collected $1.08 million. Tiger Woods, second, received $648,000. Seventy-eight other players won lesser amounts from $270,000 down to $10,980 for four players at 13 over par (the 80th ranked player receiving over double the prize money won by the U.S. Open Table Tennis Champion). That is an Event Rating System, shell and substance.

In the USCF and USATT scheme, the Match Ranking System converts competitions into conflicts. Rutgers Professor David Popone explains: “In competition, persons or groups struggle to reach the same goals, but they focus on the goals being sought, not on the competitors...defeating the competitor is not the main aim.” “Conflict, on the other hand is, “the process of social interaction in which two or more persons struggle with one another for some commonly prized object or value.” This is a critical difference between the Match Ranking System and the Event Rating System.

The Ranking component becomes, for the vast majority of players, the sole focus, subverting the Event Rating System. A handful of players vie to win the event; all other players concentrate on maintaining or upgrading their ranking, only important to their ego.

The win-loss component of the USATT’s peculiar Ranking System, (not shared by any other sport other than Chess), attempts to fix players’ final Rank as soon as possible. This runs counter to human desires. Players want to chart and control their own progress. Yet the Match Ranking System is in essence established by the ranks of other players, fixing a player’s Rank between higher and lower ranked players. Secondly, players share a universal desire to advance, progress, achieve. The Match Ranking System frustrates this yearning as well.

While some win more than they lose (particularly the young), thwarting the Raters, sooner or later the win-loss formula makes them hit the wall of players better than they, and they fall into their dead-end slot. On their journey, points they garnered cost established players (who had not lost skills) numerous points and made thousands such players lose interest in tournament play and USATT membership.

The only responses to the Match Ranking System by players are to sandbag and dump, purposefully losing matches to drop down to a lower category so as to win another trophy, or to quit when they realize that they could progress no further. Players do both in large numbers, causing table tennis to lag far behind other sports for decades. John Prean, ETTA Chairman from 1986 to 1991, put it succinctly in an article entitled, “Death Wish,” in Table Tennis News of March, 1993: “There never was much of a case for having ranking lists at all, unless these added fun the game and generally advanced the sport. The opposite is now the case...The current scheme punishes losses quite severely...and players have a great chance of returning from long, expensive trips with fewer points than they set out with and probably lower ranking. It should have been obvious long ago that the present scheme is enormously discouraging and ultimately damaging.

“As the ghastly implications sank in, more and more players decided not to go to tournaments...A positive incentive exists NOT to play...The English ranking scheme is now a disaster area...The death wish of the sport seems to know few limits.”

The USCF suffers the same fate, most juniors leaving the sport upon reaching adulthood. Jack Peters, Chess Columnist for the L.A. Times, wrote of “the nationwide slump in adult tournament attendance,” and about “weekend tournaments which used to fill the local chess calendar, are now held only occasionally.” (Dec. 3, 2000)

THE SOLUTION: The simple solution is to expel the Ranking malignancy from the Event Rating System. Both shell and contents are then in harmony. Rankings do have their very limited use for seed and team selection. Tennis, golf, and virtually all other sports achieve this task using the normal Ranking System.

A pure Event Rating System permits the introduction of an official USATT Classification System, providing the sport badly needed prestige. Martial Arts obtains status with its 20 official belt colors and ranks. All sports with any standing have official classifications. Table tennis does not. Local directors choose to have U1275, U1525, U1140, U2050, etc. Players have no established goals to shoot for. The sport is in its infancy.

Below is a suggested Classification System with its related Point Spread between Classes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classes</th>
<th>Master Points Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Novice (Recreational):</td>
<td>0 - 99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. D (Recreational):</td>
<td>100 - 399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. C (Recreational):</td>
<td>400 - 699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. B (Recreational):</td>
<td>700 - 999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A (Recreational):</td>
<td>1,000 - 1,299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Advanced (Recreational):</td>
<td>1,300 - 1,599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Master (Recreational):</td>
<td>1,600 - 1,799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Elite Master:</td>
<td>1,800 - 2,099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Elite Bronze Master:</td>
<td>2,100 - 2,399 including 200 B. points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Elite Silver Master:</td>
<td>2,400 - 2,699 including 200 S. points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Elite Gold Master:</td>
<td>2,700 - 2,999 including 200 G. points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Professional Master:</td>
<td>3,000 - 3,299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Professional Bronze Master:</td>
<td>3,300 - 3,599 including 300 P.B. points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Professional Silver Master:</td>
<td>3,600 - 3,899 including 300 P.S. points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Professional Gold Master:</td>
<td>4,000 - 4,299 including 300 P.G. points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Professional International Master:</td>
<td>4,600 - 4,899 including 300 P.I. points.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As USATT gains hundreds of thousands of new members, tournaments for specific player populations (such as children, seniors, women, recreational, elite, and professional players) will need to be held. No ceiling to the number of points obtainable exists, where the higher the level, the harder it is to gain points. If a large number do
The ACBL (American Contract Bridge League) experienced this phenomenon due to its 250,000 members, and increased its Levels from 8 to 12. The following is a suggested Rating Chart for awarding points in Tournament Events, conforming to the above Classification System:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of entries</th>
<th>winner</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd-4th</th>
<th>5th-8th</th>
<th>9th-16th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-23</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-31</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32-47</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48 up</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional levels can easily be added as thousands of new players join the ranks. Only players qualifying for the particular event are counted in the entries column. Players from lower classes winning points have such points doubled or tripled, based on their class. Excess points are awarded at face value. Players thus quickly reach their current true level. Points are never lost. Sandbagging and dumping are eliminated.

Players easily determine the number of points in contention, and how many points they have won. Established players start at their highest level. Entry-level players can easily be assigned accurate ratings by the use of standard tests, using Robots, or tests conducted by USATT Certified Raters.

Table tennis, being an international sport, has many websites all over the world. The web site that has the best information is Lynn’s Table Tennis World at: www.callnetuk.com/home/tabletennis

This site covers the international table tennis scene, but with an English flavor. Some of the topics that it covers include table tennis news, upcoming events, profiles of players, techniques, equipment, history, a photo gallery, links to other web sites, and player rankings.

The beauty of the Internet is how it brings us information from all parts of the world. Table tennis, being an international sport, has websites all over the world. The web site that I will profile this month is an English web site, Lynn’s Table Tennis World at: www.callnetuk.com/home/tabletennis

This site covers the international table tennis scene, but with an English flavor. Some of the topics that it covers include table tennis news, upcoming events, profiles of players, techniques, equipment, history, a photo gallery, links to other web sites, and player rankings.

The best part of this site is Lynn’s section of articles on technique and coaching. The articles on technique are divided into stroke, service, footwork, and tactics. These articles are well written and very informative. An example of this is the article on penhold and shakehand grips. In this article, Lynn argues that a more accurate term for these grips would be forkhold and chopstickhold. He feels that eating habits have helped determine our playing styles. People in the West eat with a fork, and therefore most players in the West use the shakehand or fork-hold grip. However, in the East, chopsticks are more commonly used, and thus the players are more comfortable using the penhold or chopstick-hold grip. (Maybe I will need to visit more sushi bars before I switch over to the penhold grip?)

Many of Lynn’s articles follow a unique approach and give new insight into the world of table tennis.

Also, be sure to check out the sections that profile all the World and Olympic champions down through history. Then you can continue your tour of English table tennis by clicking on his links to other English table tennis web sites.

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USA TABLE TENNIS MAGAZINE • March/April 2001
History of U.S. Table Tennis: Volume 1, 1928-39
By Tim Boggan, USATT Historian
Review by Steve Isaacson

If you’re expecting a world-class book review, remember, this is not the New York Times...and I am not William F. Buckley. But if you’re reading this magazine, it figures you’re a table tennis fan. To say that History of U.S. Table Tennis is the best book ever written on table tennis is like saying Cheng Yinhua can loop! It’s a truism...a fact...an absolute! No...Don’t look for any instruction here. You’ll have to learn how to serve on your own...or buy another book with instructions...or spend more time with your robot. There will be no tips here...only the most complete review of a decade in sports I have ever seen. Get ready for 375 pages featuring people you may actually know, and over 200 photos and graphics painstakingly collected for years by Leah Neuberger, Ruth Aarons, Frank Dwelly, Yoshio Fushimi, Reginald Hammond, Mark Matthews, (Marcus Schussheim), Mayo Rae Rolph Roy and George Schein.

Tim Boggan has spent years personally interviewing scores of players all over the world so this book can be absolutely correct. The only limitations have been the faulty sixty-year-old memories of the players themselves, but even then Boggan has checked and cross checked and checked again for accuracy.

If this were a book about baseball or basketball or golf, Barnes and Noble would be your first stop. No...Dontlook for any instruction here. You’ll have to learn how to serve on your own. Sol Schiff was perhaps the next best. He denies it. McClure’s four world titles? McClure’s four world titles? (Actually, he won a 5th as captain of the 1949 Corbillon Cup winners but I hardly think his serves were a factor). The greatest players in the world, five-time champion Viktor Barna and four-time champion Richard Bergmann agreed that Schiff’s serves were the work of the devil and virtually impossible to return. We will never know the importance of these serves.

The second story is even stranger. In 1936 our own Ruth Aarons won the Women’s Championship of the World, slaughtering the German champion, Astrid Krebsbach 16,14,11, after dispatching the defending champion Marie Kettnerova in the semis. However, in the 1937 Final between Aarons and Austria’s Trude Pritzi, the title was declared “vacant” at the end of a time limit. “Vacant”??? What does that mean and why? Are we to believe that two intelligent young women, the best two table tennis players in the world, consciously allowed the title to disintegrate before their eyes without protest, without screaming, without today’s obligatory legal action? Did Pritzi know of the time limit? Did Aarons? Where were our officials? Can you imagine Lance Armstrong courteously pedaling over a mountain cliff just because the road ran out? Preposterous!! What happened? Why? Who caused it? Just another never to be understood legend of our sport. Ruth Aarons retired shortly thereafter!

During your journey through History of U.S. Table Tennis you’ll read about “Table Tennis Topics,” you’ll learn about the early feud between Parker Brothers’ American Ping-Pong Association (APPA) and the fledgling USTTA. You’ll learn about our first National Champion, Marcus Schussheim, and his successors: Coleman Clark...Jimmy Jacobson...Abe Berenbaum...as well as the 1933 Champion Sydney Heitner, who was to disappear from his Glen Cove, Long Island home on April 29, 1950...never to be seen again! Gallons of ink will be well spent on the two greatest players of the decade: New York’s Sol Schiff and Jimmy McClure of Indianapolis. You’ll learn about the dominant women of the decade: the invincible Ruth Aarons, Jay Purves, Emily Fuller and Delores Kunz. You’ll get a first glimpse at the Indianapolis beauty, Sally Green, who was a finalist in the last U.S. Open of the decade. You’ll have to wait for Volume II to read about her unprecedented five straight titles. You’ll read and see pictures of the fabulous venues of the early championships: Chicago’s Palmer House and sold out Stevens Hotel; New York’s Pennsylvania Hotel and Waldorf Astoria. You’ll read about the important officials who built the USTTA: Carl Zeisberg, the editor of the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, Elmer Cinnater, Reginald Hammond and Sidney Biddell, as well as USTTA president, Jim Clouther, who would lead the association into the 1940’s. You’ll be amazed at the Hungarian men...and the Hungarian and Czech women. You’ll read incredibly detailed descriptions of Ruth Aaron’s march to the 1936 world title, along with American victories in the 1937 Swathyling and Corbillon Cups. You’ll agonize through the 1936 and 1937 Men’s Doubles reign of Buddy Blattner and Jimmy McClure and the 1938 victory of McClure and Schiff. You’ll live through Schiff’s 21-1 record with that victorious 1937 team.

You’ll be amused by the 1935 U.S. Corbillon Cup team at the London Worlds. U.S. #6 (formerly #2) Helen Ovendon and her pickup partner, Julia Ruth, lost every match. Julia was the “ping pong playing” stepdaughter of Babe

1936 World Women’s Singles Ruth Aarons, the U.S.’s only World Singles Champion.
Ruth! Just another piece of table tennis history. You'll find a myriad of actual letters...suspending or defending all kinds of table tennis folks, for all kinds of deeds...the worst of which, apparently, was chiseling.

There are stories about the Easterns and Westerns, the CNE and the Interstates. You'll read about St. Louis' Bill Price and Garrett Nash and George Hendry...Chicago's mighty Bill Holzrichter, and Rocky Graziano's good friend, Lou Pagliaro. And don't forget young Betty Henry, of South Bend, Indiana...the U.S. #16 who somehow played her way to the semifinals of the 1938 Worlds!

Leaf through the pages and agonize at the continued failure of Sol Schiff to win the Worlds' Singles, a title he truly deserved...but never won!

How often do you get to read a book about people you actually know...people you played against...people you've had dinner with. These were the giants of the game. Some are still regulars at our tournaments: Schiff, McClure, Frank Dwelly, George Hendry. Others are still around: Sally Green Prouty and Carlton Prouty, Billy Holzrichter, Doug Catland, Laci Bellak, Mark Matthews, Mildred Wilkinson Shipman.

As you read this book, do not for a moment assume Boggan's unorthodox style of writing is two steps below correct. On the contrary, it is three steps past perfect. No writing style can be mastered until the writer is first thoroughly competent. Then and only then can he stray from what is termed "correct." A great poet must first master the art of rhyme before he chooses not to rhyme!

I for one can't get enough of Boggan's unique style of writing. I have even tried, unsuccessfully, to imitate it.

If you are a table tennis player and you like Boggan's style, History of U.S. Table Tennis will soon be the most important book in your library.

If you are a table tennis player and you don't like Boggan's style, History of U.S. Table Tennis is still the best book you'll buy this year.

"To say that History of U.S. Table Tennis is the best book ever written on table tennis is like saying Cheng Yinghua can loop! It's a truism...a fact...an absolute!" -Steve Isaacson (see review, previous page)
DESTROYING THE SPIRIT OF THE GAME
By Masaaki Tajima

Over the last 30 years in table tennis, as a coach, director, and organizer, I have stated my share of opinions, suggestions, and complaints regarding our sport. One subject that's been bugging me over the years came to a head at the 2000 Nationals. I have not encountered this type of incident in 11 years although I have seen it happen to others too often.

One of my junior students was faulted on her serve four times, three of them consecutively, in the semifinals of the Under 1200 event. After she was ahead 8-2, she was warned that after she tossed the ball, her racket went beneath the plane of the table as she was winding up to strike the ball. On her next serve she was faulted again. From my coaching position directly behind her, I saw her racket was going perhaps 2-3 inches below the plane of the table after the ball was tossed legally. I could see she was making a desperate attempt to correct her stroke. But she was faulted three more times consecutively.

At that point, I went on the court to dispute the marginality of his call. After the umpire took my complaint defensively, I called the tournament referee and asked for a new umpire. The tournament referee refused, saying that her racket was going below the plane of the table, and was therefore illegal, and so he was not going to overrule him or change the umpire.

But after pointing out the pettiness of the infraction verses the severity of the penalty and the destruction it was causing, he had a conference with the umpire, and as the match continued, no more faults were called. But the harm was done. She was devastated. Up until then, she was playing the best she had ever played, fired up and charged against an opponent I didn't think she could beat, because in the quarterfinals he had beaten a player she had lost to two previous times. Already in tears and unable to concentrate, I gave her the option to default, but she elected to continue. With her spirit destroyed, she lost.

People in the stands also saw the inequity of the situation. Even the supporters of her opponent left the stand before the end.

Over the years, I witnessed many incidents where players were faulted on their serves in critical situations, but never in my 30 years in the sport have I witnessed a player being penalized by an umpire bent on executing its laws to such an extreme that it destroyed the spirit of the player and competition.

Comments such as, "You need to teach your students how to serve legally and this won't happen," are like saying if you raise your kids correctly they won't make any mistakes in life. Even the best of us make mistakes.

The guidelines I give to my students regarding serves (as well as any other technical elements) are in its execution; perfect and legal as possible, and avoid petty disputes with an opponent or an umpire, so as not to lose focus and concentration on the task at hand.

Few players always serve legally as the rules are written. If all players in all situations were faulted for every infraction no matter how trivial or petty, exactly and precisely as the rules are written, our sport would fall even deeper then it is because then it would be the equivalent of a police state where human emotion, the spontaneous excitement, the inner-most reason why we pursue sports, is taken away.

Overall, umpires do an outstanding job in this thankless position and they have come a long way. I have many umpire friends who over the decades started out as club umpires and developed to the international level with sensible purpose and vision cognizant of their position and duty. But periodically, akin to bad cops with a chip on their shoulder, some get into a position of authority with impaired judgement and an agenda.

Even the best umpires make mistakes. Two years ago at the Nationals, another of my juniors lost in the final of Under 1700 due to an error in scorekeeping by the umpire. For over 15-17, my student won the following point but the umpire gave the point to the opponent by mistake. From my position in the coaching corner, I could not see the score. Only when spectators started yelling did I notice the error, but the next point had already started. When I called on the umpire to fix the error, he refused to change it, saying he didn't recall the error and the opponent didn't recall it either. I consoled my student, citing we all make mistakes, it's part of life we must learn to deal with, making us that much stronger because of it, and then move on. But this was no mistake.

The point of the formulation of rules is to create a level and equal playing arena. The enforcement of rules is to preserve the level playing field, not to call rule violations for the sake of technical violations. This is common sense interpretation. The bigger picture we all must strive for, not only umpires who sit in judgement, but overzealous coaches, parents and players who will do anything to win, is to create and be part of an environment of excitement. Perpetuate this and our sport will grow.

The spirit of competition is why we pursue sports. For the betterment of our sport, this is the direction we should be striving, not the result and not the enforcement of the law to the extent where it destroys it. I am very proud of the way my student handled the situation. She didn't argue with the umpire or quit, although her spirit was broken. A young girl just trying her best, a model student we should all emulate. But this type of umpiring is intolerable.
TOURNAMENT DIRECTORS MEETING AT THE NATIONALS
By Larry Hodges

USA Table Tennis held a Tournament Directors Seminar the day before the Nationals, on Tuesday, December 12, from 1:00-6:00 PM. 25 tournament directors or people in related areas attended. Present were Ray Cavicchio, Wendell Dillon, Steve Gibson, Blake Hoard, Larry Hodges, Olga Feingold Kahan, Stanley Kahn, Scott Kasson, Larry Kesler, Craig Krum, Megan Kulenburg (who was present to answer numerous ratings-related questions), and three others attended. Present were Ray Cavicchio, Donna Chen, Winston Chen, Dan Cia, Seemiller, National Men's Team Coach and Mark Nordby, National Coaching Chairman. Attending the meeting were Rodil Acapiado, Ken Beauchamp, Michael Bucholz, Chris Castro, Ray Cavicchio, Donna Chen, Winston Chen, Dan Cran, Doru Gheorge, Dana Hanson, Larry Hodges, Scott Kasson, Joseph Lee, Bill Lui, Attila Malek, Phil Moya, Michael Mui, Jim Rautis, Bob Salmmeron, Richard Santos, Roberto Saria and Tim Titrud. After I gave a presentation on recruiting juniors for your club (see page 60). Dan and Mark took us on a journey through what is probably the most advanced book on table tennis on the market: “Train to Win” by Michel Gadal. This is not a book for beginners - this is a book: “Most of the time, given that they have never experimented with the possibility of playing faster, a lot of players believe themselves to be limited … have athletes play at a speed far superior to that to which he is accustomed. Obviously, at this time the success factor will not be taken into account.”

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COACHES MEETING AT THE NATIONALS
By Larry Hodges

22 coaches attended the USATT Coaches meeting at the USA Nationals, run by Dan Seemiller, National Men’s Team Coach and Mark Nordby, National Coaching Chairman. Attending the meeting were Rodil Acapiado, Ken Beauchamp, Michael Bucholz, Chris Castro, Ray Cavicchio, Donna Chen, Winston Chen, Dan Cran, Doru Gheorge, Dana Hanson, Larry Hodges, Scott Kasson, Joseph Lee, Bill Lui, Attila Malek, Phil Moya, Michael Mui, Jim Rautis, Bob Salmmeron, Richard Santos, Roberto Saria and Tim Titrud. After I gave a presentation on recruiting juniors for your club (see page 60). Dan and Mark took us on a journey through what is probably the most advanced book on table tennis on the market: “Train to Win” by Michel Gadal. This is not a book for beginners - this is a book: “Most of the time, given that they have never experimented with the possibility of playing faster, a lot of players believe themselves to be limited … have athletes play at a speed far superior to that to which he is accustomed. Obviously, at this time the success factor will not be taken into account.”

2000 USATT HALL OF FAME AWARDS

By Tim Boggan, USATT Historian

On Dec. 14, 2000, more than 100 stories heavenward, in the Stratosphere Hotel at Las Vegas, the 18th Hall of Fame Awards Banquet was held before another capacity crowd. Three new inductees were honored - National Champions Attila Malek and Cheng Yinghua, and longtime Contributor Bob Green. In addition, the second annual Mark Matthews Lifetime Achievement Award was presented - to Sol Schiff.

Many thanks to all involved - the participants, the attendees, and the extremely helpful and courteous hotel banquet staff. Also, for their continued efforts to make the Hall as prestigious as possible, a special thanks to Hall of Fame President Jimmy McClure, Hall of Fame founder Steve Isaacson, MC Tim Boggan, and Lifetime Achievement Award donor Mark Matthews (formerly Marcus Schussheim), our first (1931) National Champion.

Now, a little about the Award recipients. (For more details, see my “Profiles” on the USATT website – www.usatt.org)

**ATTILA MALEK (Player)**

Before emigrating to the U.S. in 1978 – via Italy, where he and his wife Sylvia had to wait seven months for the CIA to check them out – Attila Malek played for the Ganzmavag Club that was third best in the 12-team Hungarian League. But good as he’d been – for years, he’d often played 6-8 hours a day – it would take him time in the States to regain his form. “Only through tournament play,” he emphasized, “can you learn again and again that you must never be afraid to take your usual shots.” And in the final of the 1979 U.S. Closed, he wasn’t afraid – beat Danny Seemiller, 18 in the 5th.

In 1980, Malek, D-J Lee, and Scott and Eric Boggan won the U.S. Open Team Championship, after which Attila followed fellow Joola-sponsored teammate Lee out to Las Vegas where for seven years he’d have a steady job as a casino dealer and, with the birth of his sons, Chris and Scott, new responsibilities. During this time he was a member of the U.S. Team to the 1983 Tokyo World’s, and at the 1985 U.S. Closed he made a successful debut in winning the Over 30s.

In the late ’80’s Malek and his family (including now daughter Brittany) would leave Vegas for California, where Atilla would get into the mortgage, then the insurance business. But neither playing cards nor business cards offered him enough satisfaction. Fortunately, he found his calling, became a born again Christian – for “God,” he says, “always gives you the desires of your heart. He changed my life, put me back seriously into table tennis. Not just to play, but to do the work of the Lord, whatever in the Sport that might be.”

More Over 30 wins in the majors followed, and in 1993 Atilla won the U.S. Closed Over 40. In the 1994 Meiklejohn Over 40 there was a poignant bit of drama in the 5th game of his losing match against Seemiller. Atilla is up 13-10, then drops 6 in a row to go down 16-13. At which point he calls to his son Scott who’s been rooting for him to “Please go away.” And the kid – who’s wearing a T-shirt with the definition of “Holy” on it: “set apart in the service of a loving God” – knowing his father didn’t mean to hurt him, quickly, dutifully does set himself apart…only to continue to root for him from a distance.

Much more important to Attila in this new millennium, however, is not his own continued success on court – at the ’98 U.S. Open he reached two finals – but his work with children and their parents at his Newport Beach, CA full-time Training Center. He wants through competitive table tennis to teach these youths Christian values, wants these “gentle fighters” to be aware of the importance of being civil and decent. He feels God has given him the vision to bring about Local, Regional, and National Scholarship Fundraising Tournaments so that “Juniors as young as 7 years old will be able to start to earn money toward their education.” Hence he’s formed Power Pong Youth International, a non-profit organization that he prays will attract sponsors. “I dream,” he says, “of an Association that has the know-how to make the U.S. the Table Tennis capital of the world.”

**CHENG YINGHUA (Player)**
Many of us came to know, of Cheng Yinghua when he won the 1985 U.S. Open. Three years later, since he'd been Head Coach for China's Sichuan Province, the USTTA was pleased to hire him, and position him at Colorado Springs to be a practice partner and coach for our National Team members and Resident Training Program hopefuls.

By 1988 Cheng had been a member of the Chinese National Team for over 10 years. His career began when his grade-school Phys. Ed. teacher, whom little Cheng sometimes beat, encouraged him and even loaned him a penholder racket to play with. This, embarrassingly, he lost. But the teacher was nice, and found another racket - one, as History would have it, for a shakehands player.

In time, a coach recommended that Cheng enter his province's table tennis school. So, as a 12-year-old, he began drawing a salary. His parents were proud and encouraged him. "You must listen to the coach," said his mother. Not that she saw him very much, for at his home away from home "he trained six hours a day, six days a week."

With his European-like, two-winged inverted shakehands game (at which he's "equally comfortable blocking or looping"), Cheng was most valuable to the Chinese as a world-class practice partner for the National Team. But he did have tournament successes of his own. In 1982 he got to the final of the Chinese Elite Championship in '83 he won the Finland Open; and in '87 he paired with World and Olympic Games Doubles Champion Chen Longcan to score a first in Doubles at the prestigious 6th China National Games. He also won Men's Singles at the 1985 and 1993 U.S. Opens.

By 1991, Cheng, who'd already won the Corporate Games in San Francisco and been on a couple of winning USOTC teams, began a dual career of coaching and competing in his adopted country. One later "Profile" of him had it that from 1992-96 he and his fellow Chinese National, "Jack" Huang, who'd also come to the States, on basing themselves at the Potomac Club and at the National Training Center in nearby Rockville, MD, coached more than 30 Junior National Singles winners. No wonder in 1996 Chen was named USOC National Coach of the Year. And while spreading "Chinese coaching methods in over 50 training camps and over 10,000 hours of private lessons" here in the U.S., Cheng also went around the country sometimes losing but usually winning tournament after tournament from his arch rivals - Johnny Huang (whom he beat in the final of the '93 U.S. Open), David Zhuang, Xu Huazhang, and Jimmy Butler.

Climaxing his 1994 season was his deuce-in-the-3rd win at the World Cup in Taipei over France's then World Champion Jean Philippe Gatien, the eventual winner of the tournament. Later, at the '95 U.S. Open, he played a great but losing 24-22 in the 5th match against a Chinese Taipei youth he'd coached when he'd been hired twice by Taiwan to train their national team: Chiang Peng-Lung, destined to be the 1999 U.S. Open and 2000 Asian Champion. Shortly afterwards, at the World Team Cup, Cheng helped the U.S. achieve its best Team result in decades, building up his confidence by downing Sweden's former World and reigning Olympic Champion, Jan-Ove Waldner, then finishing off Belgium's Philippe Saive and France's Damien Eloi.

There then followed, as the old millennium moved to its close and Cheng was named USOC Athlete of the Year, three U.S. Closed Men's Singles and two Men's and two Mixed Doubles Championships. And, yes, Cheng was playing in the Over 40 events now, and doing quite well - for example, in the 2000 Meiklejohn tournament he took home $2,300 in prize money. Not bad, considering at one time in his life he hadn't money enough to buy a racket.

**BOB GREEN (Contributor)**

Bob Green, more than just an accomplished player, was primarily a versatile contributor to the Sport - at first, most notably locally, as the 15-year successful manager of a table tennis club, one that in the 1940's in Columbus, Ohio could boast of over 200 players in All-Star, industrial, commercial, and novice league play.

As a rapidly improving player, Bob had early Mixed Doubles success with Leah Thall of Columbus (later World Mixed Doubles Champion Leah Neuberger). And, in Singles, he aided the U.S. in routing the Canadians in 1941 Toronto Team Matches, and afterwards won, among other tournaments, the Ohio Open. By the Spring of 1945, he was among the Top 10 players in the country. Bob would eventually retire from competition, then, after a long absence, would come back to win U.S. Over 60 and 70 titles, as well as several Senior Olympic Championships. In his heyday, Bob also helped to improve the games of Thelma "Tybie" Thall (Leah's sister, who would also be World Mixed Doubles Champion), Ohio Junior Champion Dave Spence, and another U.S. Top 10 player, Guy Blair.

Bob was best known nationally, though, as a Tournament Director. After receiving praise for his handling of the Western Open, he put on the '48 National's in Columbus. This drew a 136 entries - a record for the 1940's. The matches were played on 16 tables, double the number used previously. Photos of the huge hall of the tournament show the vast spidery wiring Bob took immense pains to put up so that the players would have the best lighting possible. Relatively patient he was too when in the semi's Doug Cartland, who was playing Dick Miles, went through maybe a dozen balls, and then insisted on Green finding more. "My wrist still twitches from spinning then," Bob would say later. Miles won that semi's, then would go on to beat Marty Reisman in a marvelous deuce-in-the-5th final.

Bob also ran the 1950 National Team Championships - for a record-breaking 12 teams. The entry fee was $30 a team, and all players were required to wear white, with the name of the player and his team on the back of his shirt. Unfortunately, play occurred during Columbus's worst blizzard in 37 years. Reisman was stranded in Pittsburgh; and the first-ever California team to attend these NTC's got stuck in Richmond, Indiana and didn't arrive until the 5th match of the final tie - at 10:15 Sunday evening!

For a while Bob was Editor of the Association's magazine, *Topics*, and wrote an interesting "Sidelines" column (one topic had to do with the Vice Squad being called in at the '52 Cleveland National's to stop certain players from gambling on the matches). Years later Bob would write a "Did Ya Know?" column (and again delighted readers with talk of how our International player Doug Cartland got caught trying to smuggle hundreds of watches into the U.S.).

Green's most recent major accomplishment was (with Leah's sister Tybie's blessing) to preserve former USTTA Historian Neuberger's historic material that had given meaning to her life. By working three hours a day for three months, he was able to pack up, bind, and ship me, who'd succeeded Leah as Historian, a select treasure trove of 22 cartons, 627 pounds, of irreplaceable records and memorabilia. The preservation of this historic legacy became a catalyst for me to persevere with my own collecting so as to write, and now see published, the first volume of my projected multi-volume History of U.S. Table Tennis. For this selfless effort on Bob's part, I'm sure I'm only one of many who, as long as the Sport is played, will be indebted to him.
SOL SCHIFF
(Lifetime Achievement Award Winner)
After honing his game at the 92nd St. YMHA with the encouragement of George and Leo Schein, Sol, at 15, was both the 1933 New York City Junior Champion and High School Champion. At 16, he won the coveted Singles and Doubles titles at the (1st) 1934 USTTA Open.

In 1935 he attended his first World’s and took the Men’s Consolation, defeating England’s Alec Brook, who, as the crowd roared with laughter, “put Sol’s [knuckleball/fingerspin] services everywhere except on the table.” For his straight-game victory, Sol received a silver medal, and an exact though naturally smaller 1 1/2-inch Sheffield silver replica of the prestigious Singles Cup given to Men’s Champion Victor Barna.

Sol was just 18 when, after starring for victorious N.Y. at the Team Championships, he won the 1936 American Zone U.S. Closed. After that, amid very debatable circumstances, he was suspended – prevented from playing in that year’s World’s and U.S. Open – for USTTA President Carl Zeisberg, as part of his vendetta against Ping-Pong. had made Sol a scapegoat for signing a racket contract with Parker Brothers.

At the 1937 World’s, Sol compiled a fantastic 21-1 record in Swaythling Cup play that greatly contributed toward the U.S.’s one and only win in that competition. In Singles, he led that year’s eventual World Champion Richard Bergmann 2-1, but lost in 5.

In 1938, after the ITTF followed the lead of the USTTA and lowered the net from 6 and 3/4” to 6” Sol paired with 1936 and ’37 World Doubles Champion Jimmy McClure to win a 3rd straight Doubles Championship for the U.S. In Singles, after knocking out 1936, ’37, and ’39 Singles runner-up Alex Ehrlich, Sol was beaten in the quarter’s by Tibor Hazi. However, before returning to the States, he and 1935 U.S. Open Champion Abe Berenbaum won the English Open Doubles. And once back home he and McClure added the U.S. Open Doubles to their increasing triumphs.

Sol would go on for decades to win honors on and off the table. In the 40’s he would be a 3-time U.S. Open runner-up, and in the Singles at the ‘47 World’s he gave that year’s runner-up, Ferenc Sido, a furious 5-game battle. But it was in Doubles that much of his later fame came. Astonishingly, through 27 years, he was a 10-time Men’s Doubles and 15-times Mixed Doubles U.S. Open finalist. And at the annual CNE tournament in Toronto, a tournament second in prestige only to the U.S. Open, Sol’s record shows 5 Singles, 8 Men’s Doubles, and 11 Mixed Doubles wins.

Back in the 30’s he’d begun giving exhibitions around the country, and in wartime continued them, before, during, and after he’d served in the Army. Later, selling table tennis equipment, he became a much sought after dealer for his accommodating nature and ready availability. Still later, furthering our international contacts, and putting all his domestic experience to good use, he served as President of the USTTA for an unprecedented 10 years, 8 of those consecutively.

It’s with good reason then that for his lifetime dedication to the Sport Sol was, is, and always will be known as “Mr. Table Tennis.”

McAfee’s
Mechanics
By Richard McAfee
USATT Certified National Coach
Advanced Multi-ball Movement Drills
Table Tennis is a demanding physical sport, requiring excellent footwork and a high aerobic capacity. As a full-time professional coach, I continually find that multi-ball drills are among the best tools I have to improve an athlete’s movement and physical condition. Here are several advanced movement drills that will greatly increase your footwork skills, balance, leg strength, heart recovery rate, and aerobic capacity.

Warning! These are very demanding drills. Start off slow; try to do from 8-12 repetitions of each drill. Try to work your way up to 24 repetitions.

Physical Setup
You will need a barrier of some kind (wall or surround) placed 6 feet to the right and left sides of the table parallel to your end of the table. These drills can be done with a ball feeder (multi-ball) or with a robot delivering the balls.

Forehand Movement Drill
The concept of this drill is to execute a forehand loop from the backhand corner, then move to your right (right-handers) and touch the barrier, then return in time to loop the next ball. The ball feeder times the delivery of the ball to ensure maximum effort. Standard two-step movement should be used; do not cross your feet. While moving, try to keep your upper body from leaning sideways; as it will throw the body out of balance.

Backhand Movement Drill
Same drill as above, except that you will be executing backhand strokes and moving to your left.

Up and Back Movement Drill
This drill requires a barrier between 10 and 12 feet back from the table on your side. The ball feeder now delivers a short underspin ball alternately to the forehand and backhand.

The concept of this drill is to execute a forehand flip, then move as quickly back as possible and touch the barrier behind you and return for the next ball. Alternate between forehand and backhand flips. This is a great drill for defenders.

IMPORTANT NOTE
Please remember that these are very strenuous drills. Start slowly and work your way into shape. You will quickly see an improvement in your physical conditioning, balance, and footwork speed.
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- Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the Modern Olympic Games

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The Backhand Modulation of Wang Liqin

2000 ITTF Pro Tour Champion & 2000 U.S. Open Champion • By Wei Wang, USATT Certified National Coach

Photos by Diego Schaaf ©2001
Wang Liqin (pronounced “Lichin”), 22 years old, worked himself into the #1 position in the ITTF World Rankings flying much of his career under the radar. In the shadow of his elder teammates, Kong Linghui and Liu Guoliang, Wang had a chance to work on his technique and match performance. While they carried the Chinese Team, he was fighting difficulties with what can only be described as choking under pressure. I have often heard discussions that make that condition sound like an incurable disease. Let it be said here: NOT SO! Everybody chokes! Under certain conditions the pressure is greater than a player’s resistance, and the player will cave in. Nobody is immune, not Waldner, not Kong, not Wang. But you! The difference lies in the way in which we overcome this problem. If you deny that it happens to you, it will continue occurring the same way under the same conditions forever. The first step is recognizing that it is a natural reaction to certain conditions, and the second is to learn techniques to deal with it. Wang Liqin provides the most obvious proof that this condition is curable, because we can see the contrast between his earlier days, before he had found a solution, and after. But you better believe that dealing with this issue has been a major part of every top player’s training. Wang’s coach worked on this problem with his protégé by making a list of 70 questions relating to mental preparation, a list of scenarios to which he supplied Wang with specific answers, which the player had to memorize. These answers allowed Wang to break out of his cocoon and conquer the situation when his mind started to play tricks on him. He has now matured into a formidable player, winning last year’s U.S. Open, and most recently the ITTF Pro Tour Finals in Yokohama, Japan, trading the #1 spot with Kong Linghui since July of last year.

Wang’s big weapon is his monstrous forehand, possibly a topic for a future article. Here, I want to look at his backhand. There is no way he could bring his big weapon to bear if his backhand were not rock solid. Deriving it from Kong’s modern, economic stroke, Wang is already the second generation of players who moved away from clearly distinguishing between their various backhand strokes and rather have taken a “one stroke fits all” attitude. In earlier days, hitting, punching, blocking and looping were all distinctly different from each other – from backswing to follow-through. The sport’s evolution has brought light, powerful rackets, extremely grippy rubber, performance-enhanced by speed glue, and a topspin dominated game. Very few flat balls are played during a rally, and so the need to move the hand into different starting positions has been reduced. The players can minimize up and down movement with their hand, large movements that could introduce an error. Instead, they have developed a stroke that, in its shortest form, is a block, and by adding to the beginning and/or the end, can mutate into a punch or a loop. This allows for a smooth transition from a defensive posture to offense. To compensate for the shorter stroke, more energy is generated by the upper arm and shoulders and the wrist is used for fine tuning.

When studying these pictures keep in mind that Wang is over six feet tall. With shorter players, all these movements have to occur higher relative to their body.

The three sequences we chose at first glance look very similar, yet the first one is a block, the second a punch and the third a loop. The first two pictures on all of them are almost identical: From the ready position, Wang draws the racket back to where the forward motion will start. On the top row, the fourth picture represents that point. He’s leaning forward, his right shoulder held a little lower than the left, and the racket is directly below his face. Note the shoulder rotation between frames 3 and 4, in anticipation of the ball. This is important, because now the whole arm is in position so the upper arm can be the main force behind the stroke. The wrist remains firm, which reduces the risk of an error induced by the force and spin of the oncoming ball.

Sequences two and three are two immediately consecutive strokes. In the second sequence, the oncoming ball carries a little less force than in sequence one, and Wang decides to punch it to set up a loop. While he pulls the racket a little further back and slightly lower than before, he delays his shoulder rotation. In the fourth frame he starts the forward motion, having extended his backswing by a few inches compared to the previous stroke and breaking his wrist backward a little bit (sequence 2 frame 5). Now he uses the shoulder rotation to add force to his forward stroke, which also is a few inches longer in front. So, by lengthening his blocking stroke on both ends, he made it a punch. So far that’s not much of a stretch. But now, in the third sequence, using almost the same rhythm, without moving his feet, he extends the backswing much closer to his body and even more downward (Sq3, fr2). In frame 4 it is obvious that now Wang is using much more wrist. Also, he dropped his shoulder early again, this time to have the rotation help with the upward swing across contact. These pictures show one aspect with beautiful clarity: Wang’s ability to control his timing according to the circumstance. The block, as a control shot, requires contact close to the body (Sq1, fr5). With the punch, more aggressive, he moves contact forward a bit (Sq2, fr5), and when looping the contact point moves even further forward (Sq3, fr5). All this is controlled by adjusting the timing within a constant rhythm.

By recognizing these subtleties and trying to implement them to the best of our ability, we can refine our own game – maybe not to Wang Liqin’s level, but beyond what we can do if we ignore them.
Great new website matches your excellent service. Well done. Thank you for helping my wife select the best Christmas gift of 2000! Tibhar Movie Shirts. I'm a very satisfied customer.

Jef Savage
Fort Loudon, PA

Your wide selection and easy to use website makes ordering a cinch, and your customer service is unparalleled. Thanks for all of your help.

Brandon Loftus
Franklin, WI

I am a newcomer to the sport of table tennis and I found that your internet site was the easiest to use on the web.

Amy Gross
Shaker Heights, OH

Just wanted to drop a note about how good your website is!! I have been sending my friends to the site to check out all the options. In particular I want to comment on how superb your "PADDLE WIZARD" is!! I went through it myself and it really helps in making a decision on what to get. Keep up the good work.

Matt Slasor
Aloha, OR

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The Beginner’s Series:

The Forehand Drive

By Larry Hodges, USATT Certified National Coach
Edited by Dan Seemiller & Mark Nordby

This is the first in a series of articles for beginning players. More advanced players can learn as well – even advanced players need to periodically review their basic techniques.

Note that the article is written for right-handers; however, the photo sequence is of left-handed Dan Seemiller, five-time U.S. Men’s Singles Champion.

The forehand drive is the strongest shot in the game because, unlike the backhand, the body is not in the way during the shot. Also, the muscles used in the shot are generally better developed than those used in the backhand. It will likely become the best shot for most of your players. It is done pretty much the same way with all three grips.

Backswing

Rotate the body to the right at the waist and rotate the arm back at the elbow. The elbow should stay near the waist. Weight should be rotated to the right foot.

During the backswing, the racquet should open slightly. The racquet tip and arm should point slightly down, with the elbow at about 120 degrees or so.

Forward Swing

Start by rotating the weight forward onto the left foot. This initiates the forward swing. Now rotate the arm on the elbow forward, keeping the elbow almost stationary. The elbow angle should decrease to about 90 degrees. The waist should be rotated forward. Backswing and forward swing should be one continuous motion.

Contact

Contact should be made at the top of the bounce, in front and slightly to the right of the body. This will close your racquet as it contacts the ball. The racquet should rotate around the ball, creating topspin.

Sink the ball into the sponge using the upward and forward motion of the racquet. Stroke through the ball - do not stop the swing at contact.

Follow-Through

The racquet goes roughly to the forehead or around the right eye, similar to a salute. Taller players follow through lower. Shorter players (and most kids) follow through a little higher. Weight should be transferred to the left leg, with the shoulders and waist rotated to the left.

Note that the forehand smash is the same as the forehand drive except harder. Use as much forehand snap as possible and put all of your weight behind the shot. Sink the ball deep into the sponge and wood.

When guiding the player through the forehand drive, make sure that he/she keeps his/her elbow about 4 inches from the body. For a right-handed player, you should keep your left arm on the player’s playing elbow to keep it in place. Guide his/her arm with your right hand, using your own forehand stroke. Make sure the player stands at least slightly sideways and strokes from the elbow.

For left-handers, guide the stroke with your right hand doing what for you would be a backhand. Your right hand should be to the left of the child’s head. Hold his/her elbow in with your left hand.
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If you were one of the 724 players at the 2000 USA Nationals, you probably saw one of the best finals ever while competing in one of the best run national tournaments ever. Poorly run national tournaments used to be the norm; then they became part of our past history; now they're practically relegated to myth status - every year, fewer and fewer of us were actually around when events could run days (yes, plural!) behind, where time scheduling wasn't worth the paper it wasn't always printed on anyway, and you never knew if the top players would actually play or walk out.

Many, many thanks go to those who put this event together - especially Wayne Johnson, who took over the reigns as tournament director just months in advance, as well as the overworked headquarters staff that put so much time into this event. For a complete list of the USA Nationals staff, go to the USA Nationals home page at www.usatt.org/events/2000Nationals

Now sit right back and you'll hear a tale, a tale of 105 hours of table tennis heaven.

Men's Singles
By Larry Hodges

There were two five-game battles here - the other 14 matches were pretty straightforward. Brian Masters (who many forget won the gold medal for Men's Singles at the 1983 Pan Am Games - something no USA player had ever done until David Zhuang did it in 1999) won the first two against Thor Truelson pretty easily, at 11 & 12. But Thor was not through, and pulled out the next two at 19 & 20. Brian turned it on to win the fifth at 9, but that was it for him - with various nagging injuries, he defaulted next round to Todd Sweeris.

The most watched and most interesting match this round was between Nison Aronov and Han Xiao. This was Nison's first tournament in six years - he'd been a professional player back in his native Tajikistan - and he would win Under 2400 here, as well as make the semifinals of Over 30. But his hands were full with Han Xiao, who recently had become the first 13-year-old ever to break 2400 with a 2419 rating. (In the ratings used for the Nationals, he was 2368 to Nison's 2355.) It went to 19-20 in the fifth, Han serving; he served, attacked, and Nison was quickly off the table lobbing.


1996, 1997 and 1999 USA Men's Singles National Champion Cheng Yinghua
QUARTERFINALS
David Zhuang vs. Todd Sweeris

Why were these two, who had played each other in the finals just two years before, playing so early? Because Todd, in a “I don’t care” match six months before had lost to 2,300-rated John Wetzel, thereby messing up his seeding, knocking him out of the top four. Lesson learned.

This match was like so many other matches between these two: Todd battles shot for shot, seems on his way to win — but David pulls it out in the end. With David’s wife Joannie Fu coaching and babysitting for their daughter Zoe on her lap (since only one coach is allowed, was that technically legal? ... what advice could Zoe whisper illegally to David between games?), David came back from down 2-1 in games to dominate the important points in games four and five.

The match was mostly a battle of pips-out backhands — Todd’s shakehand vs. David’s penhold. In the end, the difference might have been David’s going for more of a forehand smash when Todd went for forehand loop kills.

Some key points: After losing the first (21-15), and falling behind 15-17 in the second, Todd looked like he was on his way to being eliminated. He needed a one-minute time-out (one allowed per match per player), and then won three in a row, and won the second, 21-19. In the third (where Todd was helped near the end by a well-placed lob right on the edge), Todd was up 19-17, then 19-19, then 20-19 Todd.

David smashed to deuce it, and then they had at it — incredible rally — Todd smashing “winner” after “winner,” but David blocking and then Cardiff them back — until Todd misses an “easy” one! But down game point, he aces David with a backhand down the line; at 20-20, he counterloops a winner; and then he aces David again with a down-the-line backhand loop.

The fourth was all David, 21-14.

In the fifth, David takes an early lead, and holds it to 16-14. From there on, it’s all David. Match to David, 15,19,21,14,15.

Khoa Nguyen vs. Brian Pace

Brian had his chances. At 16-all in the first, Brian lost five in a row, including three in a row on his own serve. In the second, he led 19-17 with the serve. In the third, he scored three in a row from down 17-13 to pull to 17-16. But in the key points, Khoa’s shots kept hitting, while Brian missed some relatively easy ones. Match to Khoa, 16,19,16.

Eric Owens vs. Barney J. Reed

The first two games were dead even — but each time, Barney made careless mistakes to let the games get away. In the first, leading 20-19, Barney served a long, slow serve, practically an invitation to Eric to loop in a winner — which he did. Down 20-21, Barney missed an easy backhand loop. In the second, at 19-all, Barney whiffs a forehand loop, then misses a counterloop. In the third ... down 10-1, Barney calls a timeout, but it’s too late. Match to Eric, 20,19,6.

Cheng Yinghua vs. Sean O’Neill

Playing Cheng with a mostly one-winged playing style like Sean’s is like trying to play on a 10-foot wide table. Cheng can loop or quick-block strong to the corners equally well with his forehand or his backhand, and since he’s comfortable against most players’ opening shots — which he quick blocks right back to their weaker side (or the open court if the opponent is out of position) — opponents are generally only as strong as their weaker side against Cheng. In past years, Sean might have run down a few more balls and ripped a few more winners, but his style is all wrong for playing Cheng, and Cheng is just too strong overall. As it is, after taking a few years off, he wasn’t as fast as he used to be. (Before this match, Cheng warmed up with Julian Waters, who’s rated about 1900; when Sean saw this, he quipped, “Oh-oh — is this an indication of what level he thinks I am?”) Match to Cheng, 9,11,10.

SEMIFINALS
David Zhuang vs. Khoa Nguyen

This match was dominated by the crowd almost as much as David. The crowd was nearly all for Khoa, from neighboring California. Whenever Khoa scored, the crowd went crazy; when David (from New Jersey, 3000 miles away) scored, there was an eerie silence.

Khoa came out in the first game dominating, and goes up 5-0, 8-2. (The crowd goes crazy.)

The rest of the way, David outscored him 19-5, (Utter silence.) The difference? David is maneuvering Khoa all over the table, stopping Khoa’s relentless attack. Khoa is also having great difficulty with David’s serves, while David has not trouble with Khoa’s. Nearly every point started out with David in command.

In the second, Khoa again comes out strong, going up 4-1 on David’s serve. (Crowd goes crazy.) Again, David takes over, outscoring Khoa the rest of the way 20-11. (Utter silence.) In the third, Khoa only goes up 3-2 (noise) — and then is outscored 18-10 (silence). But that only brings us to 20-13. Khoa makes a list-ditch effort, scores three in a row (noise), and steps around toloop — but David blocks a winner to the open court. (Moderate applause.) Match to David, 13,15,16.
Quarterfinalist Barney J. Reed

Cheng Yinghua vs. Eric Owens

This match is similar to Cheng’s quarterfinal match with Sean O’Neill. Both Sean and Eric are basically one-winged loopers. This doesn’t mean they don’t have backhands – but neither have backhands that match up with Cheng’s, and both play styles where they try to cover as much of the table as possible with their forehands. As mentioned earlier, playing Cheng with this style is like playing on a 10-foot wide table. Eric has a great forehand loop and great footwork, but Cheng moves him around and mixes up shots so much that Eric never looks comfortable, and so he either has to go for crazy forehand loops – which Cheng usually quick blocks – or play backhand, where he almost always loses. The match is over quickly, 11,10,15.

FINAL

David Zhuang vs. Cheng Yinghua

Cheng has three ways of playing David: he can play a two-wing looping game; he can play an aggressive forehand looping game; or he can play a steady counterattacking game. Pips-out penholder David can either block steadily, or play aggressive with his forehand. In this match, Cheng chose to play his two-winged looping game almost exclusively – and since David blocked mostly to his backhand, it became a match-up of Cheng’s backhand loop versus David’s backhand block and forehand pick hits. Cheng played more forehands from his backhand corner in the first two games, but was erratic – and mostly stepped stepping around in the last three games. One result of Cheng’s not using his point-winning forehand very often: long, vicious topspin rallies, with Cheng looping, David blocking and hitting.

In the first two games, it was all David (14 & 16) – to the surprise of most in the crowd, since defending champion Cheng went in as the odds-on favorite. Whether it was the bigger (40mm) ball, David playing better, or Cheng playing worse, Cheng simply wasn’t able to control play as he has in the past – instead, David maneuvered him around, while Cheng tried to wear him down with his backhand loops. Cheng seemed erratic, while David looked comfortable.

In the next two games, Cheng took more control – with the rallies almost exclusively Cheng’s backhand loop against David’s blocks and hits. Some questioned why Cheng didn’t use more forehand, but later he said he just didn’t feel comfortable on this forehand, and thought he could dominate this way. Since he had played more forehand in the first two games, and lost, perhaps he had the right idea. Cheng wins games three and four at 18 & 18.

Between the fourth and fifth games, a spectator walked onto the court and began arguing with the umpire – apparently claiming that David’s serves were illegal, and demanding that the umpire fault him! Security was about to be called, but the spectator left the court.

In the fifth, Cheng goes up 5-2, and throughout the game, he is always either up a point or two, or the score is tied. But he can’t pull away. David is playing more and more aggressively with his forehand, smashing balls that before he might have looped.

Cheng goes up 15-13, but after missing first a backhand loop and then a forehand loop, it’s 15 all in the fifth. Cheng calls a time-out, but when he returns, he misses a backhand loop, and David takes his first lead of the game, and yells, “Woo!” At 16 all, David smashes, Cheng loops the smash back, and David smashes a net-dribbling winner! David walks to the side of the table and kisses the net - just as he had done earlier on another net-dribbling winner. The crowd loves it – but David’s just begun his crowd-pleasing antics.

When Cheng puts David’s next serve into the net, David yells, “Good shot, Cheng Yinghua!”
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Women’s Singles
By Richard McAfee

Chang Jun Gao swept the Nationals for the fifth straight year: Women’s Singles & Doubles and Mixed Doubles

At the start of the Women’s Singles Event, the one question in everyone’s mind was, “could anyone stop Jun Gao Chang’s march to her 5th straight title?” Not since the great Insook Bhushan, who won 11 singles championships, has anyone so dominated the women’s field.

The competition this year included an interesting mix of youth and experience. However, the early rounds provided no surprises as the top seeds easily advanced. There were two good matches in the round of 16 with Jackie Lee (2115) winning a seesaw match over Whitney Ping (2005) 11,-22,11,22 and Emily Ping (2073) outlasting Donna Chen (1991) 20,-18,13,11.

QUARTERFINALS
As expected, Gao Jun (2641) was far too steady for Jackie Lee. Displaying the great ball control that she is famous for, Gao won at 8,13,8. Joining her in the semifinals was the defensive star Virginia Sung (2422). Virginia chopped and looped her way to a straight game win over Whitney Ping (2005) 11,-22,11,22 and Emily Ping (2073) outlasting Donna Chen (1991) 20,-18,13,11.

The bottom half of the draw provided the only close match of the quarterfinals with Lily Yip (2368) surviving the strong challenge of 17-year-old Michelle Do (2249) in four tough games, 19,-19,16,20. Only Lily’s years of international experience and a few brave forehands pulled her through. In the last quarterfinal match, number two seeded Tawny Banh (2464) cruised by Simone Yang (2319), 11,15,7.

SEMIFINALS
Gao Jun, who may control spin better than any player, male or female, in the U.S., was never fooled by the fine chopping play of Virginia Sung and won the match in three easy games. Virginia had no answer for Gao’s assortment of clever drop shots and well-placed forehand attacks. Match to Gao, 9,11,4.

Tawny also had little problem defeating Lily in straight games, 14,14,15. While Lily showed glimpses of the fast penholder attacking play that had taken her to many National Finals over the years, she could not match the consistency of her younger opponent. Over the last two years, Tawny’s game has shown great improvement. Her backhand is now much more of a weapon and once she gets in the first forehand loop, she rarely loses the point. In this match, Tawny just had two many weapons for Lily to deal with.

FINAL
The stage was now set for a showdown between U.S. Olympic teammates. Game one of the final saw Tawny start out strong. For the first time in the tournament, someone was actually controlling play against Gao. Early in the game, Tawny was able to control the backhand-to-backhand exchanges as well as make a number of very strong forehand loops. Tawny’s level of play and aggression left both a Gao and the large crowd stunned, as she took the first game at 16. Tawny started game two much the way as she had left off at the end of the first game, attacking everything in sight. However, little by little Gao began to work her ball control magic. Constantly changing both the location and spin of her returns, Gao began to force more errors from Tawny’s backhand. At the same time, Gao began to mix in more and more of her own forehand offense. Game two to Gao at 14. In game three, Gao completely took over the match. Once Gao found the right blend of offense and defense, Tawny had no answer for Gao’s world-class game. Game three to Gao at 7. Game four was much the same (21-16) as Gao rolled to victory. Both athletes received a great ovation from what was the largest crowd in recent years to witness a women’s final.

It has been a great last year for Gao Jun and she deserves special congratulations. At the recent Olympic Games in Sydney, she became the first American to reach the main draw, and now a fifth straight singles title. Will Gao be able to break Insook’s record of 11 National Singles Titles? Only time will tell. She certainly has the skills as well as a style that should keep her at the top for many years.

Women’s Singles & Doubles and Mixed Doubles
Finalist Tawny Banh

Photo by kausphoto.com ©2001

Women’s Singles & Doubles and Mixed Doubles
Finalist Tawny Banh

Photo by kausphoto.com ©2001
Youth Events
By Larry Hodges

UNDER 22 MEN'S SINGLES
The top four seeds made it to the semifinals. Top-seeded Ashu Jain (NJ, rated 2445) won the final over Lee McCool (GA, rated 2370) relatively easily, at 15 & 12. However, it was the semifinals that had the better matches. In one semifinal, McCool upset second-seeded 15-year-old Mark Hazinski (U.S. #1 under 16, #2 under 18, rated 2408) at 18 & 11. In the other semifinal, 13-year-old Han Xiao (U.S. #1 under 14, #3 under 18, rated 2368 — and recently as high as 2419) led 20-15 match point against Ashu — but Ashu pulled out the match with some great serving at the end, 17, 15, 20.

BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL SINGLES
David Umel Jr. defeated Vincent Cheng in the final, 13 & 17. David had a struggle in the semifinals with Danny Tran, winning 16, 20, 13, while Vincent had received a default from Lee McCool.

BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL DOUBLES
Last-minute entry Terrence Lee (who hadn’t been playing in quite some time) and David On couldn’t pull out the final, losing to Vincent Cheng/Ngai-Chi Chung, 17, 17, 14.

BOYS' JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL SINGLES
Top-seeded Mark Hazinski won this event pretty easily, defeating Howard Lamb (who had received a default from second-seeded Han Xiao, who had to catch a flight back to Maryland) at 17 & 12.

BOYS' JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL DOUBLES
Mark Hazinski and Howard Lamb, who had played in the Junior High School Singles final (see above) dominated the event, winning the final over Auria Malek and Vadim Sherman.

BOYS' PRIMARY SCHOOL SINGLES
Adam Hugh won his third title here, and the three events were a wide-ranging trio. He’d already won Under 2200 and Under 4200 Doubles (with Whitney Ping); here he defeated Mikhail Kazantsev in the final, 14-18, 10. He and the rest of his family — Lily Yip, Barry Dattel and Judy Hugh — would be taking home quite a stack of hardware back to New Jersey!

BOYS' ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SINGLES
Additionally, Adam Hugh won his third title here, easily defeating Howard Lamb (who had received a default from second-seeded Han Xiao, who had to catch a flight back to Maryland) at 17 & 12.

UNDER 22 WOMEN'S SINGLES
In the final round robin, Jackie Lee upset Olympian Michelle Do, -16, 16, 16, to win the title. Coming in third and fourth, respectively, were Whitney Ping and Stacey Lee.

GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL SINGLES
Olympian Michelle Do, after struggling for the first two games, finally got back into Olympian form, winning the final over Emily Ping, 21, -13, 8.

GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL DOUBLES
Michelle Do and Whitney Ping won the final over Jackie Lee and Allison Seibel, 19 & 7, giving Michelle a clean sweep in the high school events, and a first place trophy for Whitney to go with her finalist trophy in Junior High School Singles. It was Whitney’s second doubles title, since she had also won Under 4200 Doubles with Adam Hugh.

GIRLS' JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL SINGLES
Jackie Lee, who had already won Under 22 Women, added this event to her trophy case, defeating Whitney Ping in the final, 15, 18, 12.

GIRLS' PRIMARY SCHOOL SINGLES
Judy Hugh, whose brother Adam had won Boys' Primary School Singles, matched him and did her share to add hardware to the family trove here. She defeated Atha Fong in the final in a nail-biting two games, 21 & 22.

GIRLS' ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SINGLES
In the championship round robin, Amy Huang came in first, defeating Amanda Kazemi (runner-up) and Adrian Lam in straight games.

Photos of Do, Hugh and Kazemi by John Oros (C) 2001.
Photos of Fong, Jackson & Lee by kausphoto.com (C) 2001.
Hardbat Events
Steve Berger is New Hardbat Champ
By Scott Gordon

It's been many years since a hopper has won a U.S. Nationals crown. Has it been since ... the hardbat days? Well, not quite (Insook Bhushan took the women's title as recently as 199I), but "defense" has not exactly been the strategy-du jour for, well, just about as long as most of us can remember. But New York chopper Steve Berger brought back the big D in dramatic fashion in Las Vegas at the recent U.S. Nationals Hardbat Open. Steve had a brutally tough draw, a path laden with former hardbat champions Ty Hoff and Larry Hodges, as well as perennial contenders Lily Yip and Ashu Jain, all four with reputations as defense-killers.

Lurking in the background was the specter of the 40mm ball: Did it belong in hardbat play? Did we even really have a choice? Lily and Steve liked it. Robert Mayer thought it wasn't "classic." Reisman hated it. Some didn't care.

The liveliest preliminary match saw Rudy Miranda of California defeat hardbat legend Marty Reisman in a wild see-saw affair (18-18,20). The money man himself could only offer praise for Rudy's brave play in the final exchange, where Rudy successfully smashed a series of out-of-nowhere winners, despite the obvious pressure of deuce-in-the-third. Rudy quite nearly made the quarterfinals, losing a heartbreaking and very close struggle to Nick Mintsivis in the 8ths after winning the first game 21-9.

Other matches in the 8ths saw Loc Ngo win a minor upset over hardbat veteran Barry Dettel (19,19), and Steve Berger gain an argument-ridden win over Ashu Jain. In the latter, Jain won the first game 21-17, aided by what appeared to be superbly-hidden serves (illegal in hardbat). Referee Paul Kovac claimed that he couldn't ascertain whether Jain's serves were in fact hidden. According to the hardbat rules, Jain's serves were technically "OK," since it is up to the discretion of the umpire. But with so many vocal bystanders observing what appeared to this author to be a clearly hidden serve, Ashu graciously served out the match without hitting the ball. Unfortunately for Ashu, it cost him the next two games, probably because the adjustment threw him off. So remember, readers, be prepared to serve without hitting the ball when you're playing in a hardbat event. (Footnote: Steve would himself have a point deducted in his next match against Ty Hoff, for a noticeably illegal service toss.)

The quarters, now 3-out-of-5, included straightforward wins for Lily Yip over Nick Mintsivis (10,13,14), and Derek May over Robert Mayer (-16,15,10,16), as well as the two best matches of the tournament: Berger vs. Hoff, and Hodges vs. Ngo. In both cases, the underdogs prevailed in brilliant fashion.

Berger was given little chance against defending champ Ty Hoff. Hoff's finals win at last year's Nationals over defender Derek May could perhaps have been described as "crushing," and there was little reason to expect that Berger would fare any better (May had defeated Berger in their last outing). But Steve was "on." In what would be the most talked-about match of the tournament, Steve chopped the hardbat icon down in five grueling games, his chops staying low and heavy, and his Bergmann-esque-at-the-barrier returns sending gasps through the crowd. But the biggest factor was that, by the third game, on those rare occasions when Steve stepped in to attack, his sometimes-precarious offense was rock-solid. The match see-sawed through the first four games (12,-16,15,-17), but Ty started running out of steam halfway through the 5th. His hits started becoming labored, but he didn't give up. After shipping behind 13-19, an exhausted Ty nailed a perfect crosscourt kill, one of the best in the match and perhaps the last one he had in him. Yet Steve somehow managed to chase it down and get it back, and Ty visibly withered. It was one of the most dramatic moments in recent hardbat memory.

After the match, the downed champion was asked for his opinion on the 40mm ball. Ty's response was interesting. Although he felt that the 40mm ball hurt his play, he thought it was good for the game, that it helped create some of the dramatic play at these Nationals. A brave thing to say, for someone who had just lost such an important match.

The afternoon quarterfinals were also very entertaining. The Xemex and linal were a bit anticlimactic. Lily's 20,16,14 win over May saw her blasting kill after kill through the outgunned retriever. Derek tried repeatedly to switch styles and play the role of the attacker, but to no avail. Up to now, Lily had coasted to a spot in the finals without having lost a single game. Her opponent was to be Steve Berger, as Steve dispatched Loc in even quicker fashion. 17,15,14. Steve seemed to simply and patiently get every ball back, and Loc, lacking Ty's explosive power, just didn't have the ammunition to break through.

The final between Lily and Steve was a foregone conclusion. Many times they had battled each other, and up to that point Steve had never even taken a single game from her. At last, after losing five major hardbat finals, Lily was going to win one. No, Steve had a secret weapon sitting in his corner as coach, none other than 10-time National Champion Dick Miles. (See photo on page 46.) Miles' advice was so simple: chop down the center line, with very little backspin, to "shorten the table." Do it over and over.

Could it really work? Amazingly, it did. Lily looked paralyzed from the start, pushing instead of hitting, losing the first game at 15. She fell behind in the second too, but at 13-17 suddenly found a groove and rallied to take a 20-18 lead. But Steve then took the next four points, and after he won the deuce battle, 22-20, Lily seemed completely discouraged. Outlookers started to theorize that an ancient curse had been somehow levied against her; that somehow, inexplicably, she was going to lose her sixth major hardbat final in a row. Crestfallen, she lost the third game at 13, playing exhibition at the end.

As dejected as Lily was, Steve was justifiably ecstatic. A full-time hardbat player, he has trained hard for this win. For nearly an hour, he sat next to the table, accepting congratulations and savoring his victory. In a fitting postscript to his win, Steve's cell phone rang. "Who could that be?", he asked aloud. After digging in his bag, he found his phone, pressed the talk button, and calmly answered it: "National Hardbat Champion...."

HARDBAT DOUBLES

Maybe it's time to call this event the "Hoff/Hodges Cup." This time, the brilliant and often entertaining father-son duo of Derek May and father Pete were Larry and Ty's latest victims in the Thursday morning final (13,10). The champs had earlier dispatched a tough team of Loc Ngo and Ralph Stadelman in three games, while May/May won their semifinal on an injury default. There was one notable upset in an earlier round, in which Berndt Mann and Hock paddle artisan Don Varian reached the quarterfinals by beating some hapless dudes from California, who shall remain nameless.

UNDER 2000 HARDBAT

It's not exactly objective reporting for a writer to chronicle an event in which he was the winner, but I'll try. This lively event had 26 entrants, and many of us presumed that highly-underrated Thanh Nguyen would win; he had just defeated 2200+ Engelbert Solis a couple of weeks earlier. But a serious arm injury plagued Thanh early on,
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• Full-time coach

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

Coach Larry Hodges (Only if large enough turnout)
• Author of Table Tennis: Steps to Success
• Director/Manager/Coach at Resident Training Program
  for Table Tennis at Olympic Training Center, 1985-89
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USA TABLE TENNIS MAGAZINE • March/April 2001  1/1
Senior Events
By Tim Boggan
Editor's Note. This is Tim's severely shortened article. For his original, please see the USATT Web Site at www.usatt.org.

OVER 30 SINGLES

After David Zhuang, and then later Cheng Yinhua defaulted, 5-time U.S. Champion Sean O’Neill came through an easy winner. Note a new face at this National’s: 35-year-old Nison Aronov was playing his first big competition in six years, and being cheered on by his wife, Veronika, and his coach since childhood, umpire Valeriy Eltanasov. He comes to the U.S. to New York City, as a former professional player of Dushanbe, Tajikistan, for backin 1982 he was a member of the Team that won the Russian Junior Championship. Dr. Michael Patin sponsored Aronov to Vegas, and perhaps sees to his health as well, since Nison, though he lost conclusively to Cheng in the semi’s, was pleased that he could still win points as he used to and feels - the more so because he won the 2400’s - that he’s getting back into competitive shape.

MEN’S OVER 40 SINGLES

Unlike Barry Dattel, Avishy Schmidt faced two formidable opponents before reaching the final. On losing the 1st game to George Brathwaite, Avi decided he’d better avoid straight counter-spin exchanges and so began effectively serving into the Chief’s middle. This brought him to Xiaobin Tao, who, out of Seattle by way of China, had gone to a “Spare-time Sports School” in Beijing for three years, and after an 8-year absence had only recently returned to the Sport. A pips-out blocker with a soft but strange-bounce backhand and a hard-hit forehand, Tao had beaten Avi in the 2400’s, but here proved less threatening.

In the final, Dattel begins as if he can do no wrong, but then when he’s up 16-4, the umpire faults him on his serve. “Oh, give him a warn-
Over 40 and Over 50 Women's Champion Mahin Roufeh

Barbara’s husband/coach/critic Bob that he ought to call a Time-Out. “What the hell am I gonna call a Time-Out for?” he responds. “She can’t win this game.” In the second, Barbara is up 15-10, only a Time-Out for? —“She can’t win this game.” Barbara then went on to apply a cold compress to her red face out there on court.

The other semi’s was won by Hui-Hua Donna Chen, 20-19, 20, over Charlene Xiaoing Liu. Donna, with a 16-9 lead in the third, appeared a comfortable winner, but when Liu scored 5 in a row, Chen’s coach James Rautis called a timeout, and that to some degree stopped Charlene’s momentum. When Donna confirmed that she was a little bothered by Liu’s late-game onrush of self-confidence, Rautis rose to her defense. “Donna’s a great fighter,” he said —“she’s just as competitive as Liu. It’s just not her style to poller.” To which Donna added, with a depreciatory laugh. “Maybe I should yell too.”

In the final, after Chen had lost the close first game to Roufeh, Rautis suggested that, since she was often outplaying to Mahin’s long-pips backhand, she’d do better to attack her short-pips forehand. And now Donna, cracking in penhold forehands and backhands with abandon, opened up a 12-5 lead —prompting Maran’s husband Jalil to call time. Then, blocking and smashing, it was Roufeh’s turn to score —“Yeah! Yeah!” she’d shout, forcing Rautis to call Time. But, never mind — with Chen up 20-15 — this game’s crisis had been met and conquered, no?... “Yes!” “Yes!” “That’s it. Two more! Let’s go!” “Yes!” “Yes!” This barrage of blows and shouts produced looks of anguish on Chen’s face, and at 20-19 she pushed a high ball into the net... Down 21-20, Chen for the first time suddenly broke into, not a yell, a wail, but a very momentary smile, for, absurd, she’d tried, again unsuccessfully, to put away a high ball to her backhand, had lost 7 straight points, the game, the match, the Championship.

For Roufeh practice had paid off. And I mean practice: for she and Jalil, whom she’d met at Tehran’s National College of Accounting more than 20 years ago, on finishing dinner at their home, do not watch TV or go out to the movies, they play table tennis — every single night.

OVER 50 MEN’S SINGLES

In the bottom half of the draw, where #2 seed Horace Roberts had to default because of an injured ankle, Bob Saperstein’s upset of just a teeny-weensy bit impatient Nick Mentsenires, was the only three-ager. Jiri Hlava’s steady, European-style spin game was 24, 19 challenged in the semi’s by Changing Duan. But Duan’s rally from 19-16 down in the first fell short, and though he has a good penhold jab, and a low, flat forehand that, if he gets to hit it, it goes in, Hlava tried hard not to let him hit it.

In the top half of the draw there was action aplenty. Brathwaite had 19, 1-15,1 with Wedret — he said he couldn’t believe the spin Mark with his modified Seemiller grip was generating and the counters he was making; said he beat him with nothing balls to his long pips. In the 50 Doubles, Wedret teamed with an I-don’t-care-what-happens,-‘I’m going to-smack-the-ball Bernie Savitz who terrorized his and Mark’s way through Hamid Hayat/Houshang Bazoragdez, and Jiri Hlava/Tim Kelly (19 in the 3rd), and in the semi’s forced Sakai/Brathwaite into three. For which, given this was a National Championship, Savitz was not alone in thinking that, considering there were 36 players paying entry fees in this Doubles event, he should have received something in the way of a prize.

Having gotten by Wedret in the 8th’s, George 21, 20 survived Sakai. The Chief told himself to minimize the usual backhand to backhand counters, play to the forehand, and, by changing the pace, look to get Dave out of his practiced rhythms.

McCoulumb, meanwhile, up against Morris Jackson would seem to have caught a break, for Morris was preoccupied with thoughts of being with his young son Marcus, his only practice partner these days, who was beginning play on another table. Turns out, though, that Morris’s long-pip blocks were preventing McCoulumb from mounting any concerted forehand-drive follow-up, so that when from 14-11 Hank lost 6 of the next 7 points, he seemed beaten. But up 20-15 match point in the 3rd, Morris was so pleased that he’d soon be able to see his son finish, that, never mind that Hank had stopped giving him points by trying to drive through him, in his eagerness to get off-court he became over-aggressive, and, in short, lost 7 straight.

McCoullum’s next victim was Dick Hicks, who’d beaten Hank in the final of the 50’s at this summer’s U.S. Open. Down 9-1 in the 1st and that game a goner, Hank knew he had to raise his level of play, and did, barely eking out a 22-20 win in the 2nd when even Hicks’s fancy footwork couldn’t get him into the right position as he tried to hit in a short ball. After that, Hank had Dick laboring through the no-contest third.

Against Brathwaite in the semi’s, McCoulumb was up 19-18 in the 1st when someone set up a camera forced George to wait between points and this proved distracting to Hank, and he lost the game at 19. Then, knowing he had to take chances, he rebounded to win the 2nd. In the 3rd, The Chief spun and McCoulumb pummeled the ball. Up 19-18, Hank 1-2-3 times blasted away at George but couldn’t get through. Undaunted, he finished with two match-deciding kills that advanced him to the final and Hlava.

Hank, a professor at State College, PA, enjoyed preparing for his multi-event entry into this tournament with interval training 4-5 times a week — jogging, sprinting — to the backdrop of the rolling countryside of the Nittany Mountains. Jiri, originally from Czechoslovakia, received political asylum in Germany in 1972 and for two years played in the 3rd division of the Landesliga. Then, with 10,000 German citizens out of work, he was given an emigration present of 10,000 marks and he and his American wife Carmen came to the U.S. With a Masters degree in Psychology from Boston University, he now works two Drug Rehabilitation jobs. He, too, carefully conditioned himself for this tournament — entered only one singles and two doubles, and insisted that for him the best preparation was sleep, three good nights’ sleep.

These two players didn’t like it — and I don’t blame them — that after they were scheduled to play their 50’s final on table #1, they were then shifted to table #14 and given an umpire without scorecards. Both McCoulumb and winner Hlava felt that this too typically unfeeling move by The Computer denigrated the large-entry 50’s event and its finalists who, instead of being given the red carpet treatment they deserved were in slipper fashion relegated to the hard, cold concrete.

OVER 50 WOMEN’S SINGLES

A surprise for me here to be introduced to Betty McCloskey, who had an upset win over Tybie Sommer. As Betty Jane Schaefer, McCloskey made the final of the U.S. Open Mixed Doubles in 1948 and was U.S. #6 that season — the same season Tybie won the World Mixed Doubles with Dick Miles.

After an injury to her foot that forced her to use a walker, Sharlene Krizman Wilson wasn’t sure she’d be able to make these Championships, but here she was, supported as usual by daughter Deb, and braced to flick backhands and sock flat-hit forehands at Donna Sakai. Up 1-0 and 15-10 in the 2nd, Sheerl saw victory in sight, but, alas, for her, never secured it. Donna then went on to lose to Roufeh in a well-contested semi’s.

Our last U.S. Open Barbara Kaminsky had beaten Suzanne Sanders quite decisively, but on dropping the 1st game to her here Barbara realized she couldn’t let Suzanne keep hitting forehands to her backhand, so by taking over with her own forehand, she was able to reach the final.

Reflecting on her 18, 19 defeat, Barbara concluded that (1) if she pushed too long, she’d sooner or later pop up a ball and Mahin would crack it, and (2) when she moved over to take the offense she should have, despite Mahin’s often-at-the-ready soft-block defense, hit her forehand crosscourt where there was more room instead of persistently trying to hit down the line. Well, as husband Bob says, live and learn.
OVER 60 MEN'S SINGLES

Hicks, who in addition to winning the Indiana State Championship a Guinness record 25 straight times, and who has pocketed just as many National Championships (isn’t it about time he was inducted into the USATT Hall of Fame?), arrived at the final by giving up little more than 10 points a game. But then his opponent, Brathwaite, after rallying from 19-15 down in the 1st, persevered to win in three, and so avenged his last year’s loss to Dick.

George never seems to have an ache or pain or injury. For the occasional cold, he gulps down two Dristan tablets—and, voila, the cold is gone. He starts off the day with a grapefruit, a big bowl of oatmeal, and a banana; then in the afternoon has a bagel and coffee; and in the evening maybe a Caesar salad and a banana, then in the afternoon a bagel and coffee; and in the evening maybe a Caesar salad and a banana, and then is right back over again—Frank asked the umpire to check the net. The umpire stuck out his finger, put it on the net. Play continued. Slade’s ball spun over the net to drop on Dwelly’s side. From an ominous lst-game start—when Slade had no chance against Hendry in either the 75 or 80 final. But these two remarkable men are worth talking about.

Ivan, a U.S. citizen since 1958, was born in England in 1916. The monograph he wore on a playing shirt—OSTG—stands for Oxford and St. George’s Youth Club in London, where for more than 20 years, he played table tennis, as well as soccer, squash, and racquetball, ran track, and even, at a 109 pounds, boxed—activities that kept him off the troubled East End streets. Every five years or so, he goes back for OSTG reunions. But not for him there—he only began playing again in 1991—just socializes. He emigrated to the U.S., to New York City, in 1950. Since he enjoyed pounding the drums, he traveled to Boston two days a week in hopes of learning how to be an arranger, but, well, the vibes weren’t right. Fortunately, he also went three days a week to the Pratt Institute in New York City and so became an inside designer in the furniture business, and lived in Hartford, CT for a number of years before moving to California in 1976. His wife’s name is Rita, she’s from upstate N.Y., and they’ve 7 children, 11 grandchildren. One daughter lives in St. Louis, so when the Slades visit her, Ivan plays at Hendry’s Club.

Like George, Ivan’s had a number of serious ailments. After injuring himself playing Reisman here in Vegas he’s been out of competition for three years. Meanwhile, he’s still been the warrior. Has had two constructive surgeries on his shoulder, a polyp eliminated from his rectum, an inch taken off his colon, and a tumor removed from his appendix (“The size of a pickle,” said his Jewish doctor). “Was it kosher?” replied Slade). I marveled how Ivan at 84 could move so well, considering that he had a tympanic that was, as they say, portly. “I have a vertical hernia,” he announces. “The lining of my stomach muscles have deteriorated. Here, feel—this isn’t fat.” And so saying he leans back in his chair, and out pops his stomach, and, sure enough, it’s rock hard. “It doesn’t hurt, so the doctor says leave it alone.”

And what injuries or ailments has Hendry been leaving alone? Fortunately, not much. The elbow with the tendinitis that kept him from playing he had to rest—the only cure. He has eye trouble, but the dry kind of macular degeneration, so that, considering George’s age, doctors don’t feel surgery is called for. He wears a hearing aid and has learned to lip read, so one on one, face to face, he’s fine, but, as he says, “Put me in a crowd and I’m lost.” Figuratively mask a hearing deficiency he might; but literally he nightly wears a C-PAP “mask”—to pump air through his nose, should he stop breathing as he sleeps. The prostate cancer he quickly did something about took radiation treatments five days a week for eight months; that must have tried even his well-known table-patience. The arthritic hip? That’s often painfully stiff. But if he wanted to add the 80’s crown to a lifetime of triumphs, he had no choice. Either he had to play on the dust-coated concrete that made the floor slippery. Or, worse, play on the red-matted court where the ball doesn’t bounce. And so having to keep picking it up.

Still, all things considered, maybe one of the best therapies for what ails Ivan. George, all of us, is playing competitive table tennis? And when you see all these aging tournament players in action, more than 300 of them in the events I’ve briefly covered here, how old do you think is old?
2000 Nationals Results

**MAJOR CHAMPIONSHIPS EVENTS**

**Men's Singles** - Final: David Zhuang d. Cheng Yinghua, 14,16,16-18,18-19; SF: Zhuang d. Khoa Nguyen, 13,15,16; Cheng d. Eric Owens, 11,10,15; QF: Zhuang d. Todd Sweeris, 15,19,12,14; Nguyen d. Brian Pace, 16,19,16; Owens d. Barrett, 16,20; Dehui d. Cheng d. Sean O'Neill, 11,11; Sweeris d. Cheng d. Ashu Jan, 17,12,6; O'Neill d. Samson Dubina, 10,10,9; Reed d. Tuan Le, 17,15,14; Owens d. Derek May, -19,16,15; Owens d. McLeod, 18,11,8; 2nd Tuan d. Sean O'Neill, 11,10,9; Sweeris d. Cheng d. Ashu Jan, 17,12,6; O'Neill d. Samson Dubina, 10,10,9; Reed d. Tuan Le, 17,15,14; Owens d. Derek May, -19,16,15; Owens d. McLeod, 18,11,8;

**Women's Singles** - Final: Ashu Jan d. Lee McCool, 15,12; SF: Juin d. Han Xiao, 17,15,20,20; McCool d. Mark Hazinski, 18,11,10; McCool d. Frank Remenyi, -19,10,8,19; Sweeris d. Brian Masterx, def.: Yip, 14,14,15; QF: Chang d. Jacqueline Le, 8,13.8,1; Sung d. Pham, 1 2.18.17: Masters d. Thor Truelson, 11,12,-19.-20,9.


**Seniors**


**RATING EVENTS**

**Under 2000**


**Under 1500**


**Final**: Peter Randol d. Joseph Cochran, 16,14; SF: Randal d. Harish Chamatru, 17,12,15; Cochran d. John LeDoux, 20,16.

**Under 1200**


**Under 1500**


**Final**: Peter Randol d. Joseph Cochran, 16,14; SF: Randal d. Harish Chamatru, 17,12,15; Cochran d. John LeDoux, 20,16.

**Under 1200**


Rating Events
By Larry Hodges

As is often the case, junior players dominated many of the rating events, including a sweep of the U2200, U2100 and U2000 events (won by juniors Adam Hugh, Samson Dubina and Mikhail Kazantsev, respectively). They almost swept the next event as well, but it was the Under 1900 Women Singles that Elaine Kwok won.

But the dominant player in the rating events - the only one to win more than one singles rating event, or even to make the final of two - was non-junior Roscoe Lock, who won not two, but three events - Under 1200, Under 1100 and Under 1000 Champion. He won all three finals in straight games. He also was in the semifinals of Under 1300. Locke joked that he owed much of this success to “A lot of Gatorade.” On a more serious note, he said he owed it to the encouragement from a very good friend and table tennis enthusiast, Amy Wong, who had passed away two months before. “She could have won the Under 1100 event,” Lock said, “I did it for her.”

The other rating event double winner was Adam Hugh, who won Under 2200 and Under 4200 Doubles (with Whitney Ping), giving him his third championship (he also won Boys’ Primary School Singles).

Multiple Winners at the USA Nationals
Jackpot Winners!

TRIPLE WINNERS: ★★★
Gao Jun Chang: Women’s Singles, Women’s Doubles, Mixed Doubles
Michelle Do: Women’s Doubles, Girls’ High School Singles & Doubles
Adam Hugh: Boys’ Primary School Singles, Under 2200, Under 4200 Doubles
Roscoe Lock: Under 1200, Under 1100, Under 1000

DOUBLE WINNERS: ★
George Brathwaite: Over 60 Men’s Singles, Over 50 Doubles
Mike Dempsey: Men’s Disabled Class 1-5, Men’s Disabled Class 4-5
Wally Green: Under 3700 Doubles, Gusikoff Benefit Division Two
Mark Hazinski: Boys’ Junior High School Singles, Junior High School Doubles
George Hendry: Over 75 Singles, Over 80 Singles
Jackie Lee: Girls’ Junior High School Singles, Under 22 Women’s Singles
Whitney Ping: Girls’ High School Doubles, Under 4200 Doubles
Mahin Roufeh: Over 40 Women’s Singles, Over 50 Women’s Singles
Dave Sakai: Over 40 Doubles, Over 50 Doubles
Cheng Yinghua: Men’s Doubles, Over 40 Doubles
David Zhuang: Men’s Singles, Men’s Doubles

10-times U.S. Open Men’s Singles Champion Dick Miles at the Nationals, where he coached Steve Berger to the hardbat title.

In Memoriam
FRED GROBEE (1915-2000)
By Tim Boggan

On Nov. 21, 2000, two days before Thanksgiving, 85-year-old California Table Tennis enthusiast Fred Grobee just stopped breathing, and all efforts to revive him failed. A year earlier he’d been in intensive care at the Veterans Hospital in Long Beach because his damaged lungs wouldn’t expel carbon dioxide. For safety’s sake then, he’d been put on a BIPAP machine whenever he slept. Also, he had heart blockages, but since he was often weak and tired, his doctor advised against surgery and opted for medication.

Fred’s Annual November Family Report came to me and others from the poetic address of “Grobee Cove in Garden Grove.” This was just a mile or so from Disneyland, where on recent New Year’s Eves he and Carol – “the best wife in the world” – would reminisce to thoughts of Auld Lang Syne – after all, they’d been married 57 years. Fred also leaves a son, Don, a daughter Kaye, and three grandchildren, Mark, Danielle, and Brianna.

For Fred, Table Tennis was a game of skill of course, but also fun. Indeed, he put together some catchy rime-words to that effect, and at our USATT Hall of Fame Banquet a couple of years ago I distributed some paper “bat-fans” he’d made up (one side red, the other black) that cleverly advertised the lyrics that he was still trying to improve on when he died (“I’m dreaming of success with my revised table tennis song”). Fred’s artistic side also surfaced in the tournament photos he took for me when I was Editor of Topics and Timmy’s.

In his 80’s Fred managed to participate in our U.S. Closed, then had to settle for once a week play at his local Senior Citizens Center, then when there was no air to gulp when he quickly became winded he had to stop playing altogether. Or, well, almost, for when he was a passenger in a car driven by his wife, he still couldn’t resist swinging his racket, practising his stroke. Maybe, just maybe, he might one day play again. The man had a real love of the Game, huh? Or, as he once put it in a letter to me, “What would we do in this world of ours were it not for the dreams ahead?”
In Memoriam
SAM BALAMOUN
December 23, 1942 - January 8, 2001
By Ray Arditi

He had the classical moves of a ballet dancer and delighted audiences with his
goofy-off-the-floor chops, high lobs, and
telling pick hits. He would challenge you with his
tenacious defense - sponge or hardbat.
(Man, did he love to play!) And there was his keen sense of humor... "Uh-huh!" he would
say as he changed the degree of chop on the ball (after your loop went into the net) On
January 8, the SE Pennsylvania TT community lost one of its most beloved players - Sam
Balamoun.

Sam's passing occurred at the Pottsgrove TTC. He had just finished playing a hard-fought
match with Steve Lowry and was ready to challenge Parviz Mojaverian to not one,
but two sets. "Parviz, we have to get in shape for Middletown," may have been his last
words, for Sam and Parviz had planned to compete at the Middletown Open that weekend. Sam walked up to the table like the true
gentleman/TT warrior he was, laid his racket down, and then suddenly collapsed. One of
the players, Tom Mohn, D.D.S., administered CPR while Parviz held him, but by the time
the ambulance arrived, Sam had departed.

Sam was in his heyday during the 70's and was considered one of the top defensive
players on the east coast. He won events in national tournaments and garnered numerous
PA Closed titles, including Open Singles Runner-up in 1974 and 1975 (losing to Ricky
Seemiller) and winning in 1981 (defeating Mike Walk). And in '75, the team of Sam
Balamoun, Hamid Hayatgaib, Stanley Smolanowicz and the late Bill Sharpe placed 2nd in the "A" division in the U.S. Open Team
Championships, losing narrowly to Canada.

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Championships, losing narrowly to Canada.

In Memoriam
LILLY BELLAK
By Tim Boggan

When Hungarian-born Lilly Bellak, wife of ITTF and USATT Hall of Fame great Laszlo
"Laci" Bellak, died in Miami after a long illness, Laci immediately brought her body to New York, where, on Friday, Dec. 28, 2000, she was interred at Mt. Ararat Cemetery on Long Island. Relatives and friends participated in traditional rabbinical services. My wife and I and, though Laci's longtime friend Dick Miles was in Hawaii, his wife Mary attended. Sol Schiff and Marty Reisman were two who sent their condolences.

Lilly and Laci were married for 53 years. When he met her in the 1940's, she was bright and beautiful, and (swimmer, skater, tennis player) an excellent athlete. It was she who, about the time Laci turned 40 and they moved to Miami, suggested that, yes, he'd done pretty well for himself in table tennis, but that, since the Sport in the U.S. was not going to give them much of an income, it was time he followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather and go into the printing business.

After it was clear that Laci, with Lilly's help, was going to make quite a success of this new venture, he again began winning

commitments playing on different occasions World Singles Champion Richard Bergmann, and World Doubles Champions Miles and Sandor Gnanz.

Sandor spoke of how "kids twice a week" came, and how Laci "helped to develop many of the leading players of Miami." Sandor also said, "I remember all the sodas Lilly Bellak had for those kids and how she really had a time keeping the place clean after each table tennis session."

Lilly was a good woman - had spiritual thoughts, read religiously, every morning - and, in indulging Laci in his irresistible zest for elfish quips and stories that were ironically both self-aggrandizing and self-deprecating, was a great comfort to him, for he was always a person who thrived on being the center of attention. Over the decades Laci and Lilly traveled together - so much so, that one day in the 1990's in Miles' New York apartment, I heard the line I'll always remember Lilly by, "Laci," she said playfully, plaintively, "tell me a story you haven't told me before."

In Lilly's old age, Laci was a comfort to her too. When a couple of years ago her health began to fail, and her kidneys had ceased to function and she was on dialysis, he saw to it that she had round-the-clock care.

He kept her reading her mother's prayer book to end many a morning.
The USATT National Rankings

TOP MEN

WA 2823 Fan, Yi Yong
NJ 2794 Zhuang, David
ND 2762 Chang, Yinghua
CA 2659 Nguyen, Khoa Dinh
TX 2621 Owens, Eric
MD 2613 Sweeris, Todd
NY 2553 Musa, Atanda Ganiyu
LA 2549 Jonsson, Perter
TX 2543 Crebu, Razvan
TX 2532 Subonij, Viktorian
IN 2524 Seemiller, Daniel
FL 2503 Albo, Keith
GA 2502 Reed, Barney J.
VA 2489 O'Neill, Sean Patrick
NY 2484 Shao, Yu
NY 2469 Ekon, Abass
CA 2468 Gabriel, Freddie
NY 2452 Liu, Hui Yuan
GA 2444 Masters, Brian
MI 2438 Jain, Ashoo
CA 2429 Wu, Wei Yang
CO 2419 Mendez, Francisco J
PA 2412 Pandit, Sharad
IN 2409 Hazinski, Mark
NY 2405 David, Paul
PA 2399 Seemiller, Randy Lee
GA 2398 Peng, Xin
NY 2396 Aronov, Nisson
IL 2396 Lewowski, Bogdan
NY 2377 Perez, Alexis
PA 2374 Ramamurthy, Srinivasan
NC 2372 Christopher, Andy Nigel
IN 2367 Mahmoud, Noshi
NY 2366 Leibovitz, Tahl
TX 2360 Levi, Idan
TX 2359 Oshodi, Taju
CA 2354 Le, Tuan Dal
VA 2348 Pham, Hung
GA 2344 Aronov, Nisson
CA 2336 Baca, Vladimir

TOP WOMEN

MD 2607 Chang, Jun Gao
NJ 2487 Wang, Chen
IL 2471 Reed, Jasna
CA 2468 Bahr, Tawny
CA 2467 Huang, Yao Xi
NY 2381 Sun, Ding
NY 2352 Paluchova, Renata
NJ 2345 Yip, Lily
OR 2253 Yang, Simone
CA 2253 Do, Michelle
CA 2232 Tyner, Anzelika
IL 2226 Kretschmer, Maria
CA 2215 Lee, Jacqueline
GA 2154 Masters, Boglarka
CA 2142 Sun, Angela
MD 2039 Wu, Katherine
IL 2038 Bastrzyk, Marta
IL 2007 Simovic, Marijana Maya
TX 2007 Guan, Shanshun
CA 2004 Sanchez, Joan Rae
OR 2003 Ping, Whitney
OR 1999 Ping, Emily
MD 1981 Lu, Charlene Xiaoying
FL 1961 Wronska, Beata
TX 1948 Rouleau, Mahin
CA 1941 Seibol, Allison
NY 1936 Kaler, Natalie
VA 1918 Wang, Chao
TX 1913 Chen, Hui-Hua Donna
VA 1912 Kwok, Elaine
CA 1908 Lee, Stacy L.
CA 1905 Huyhn, Tran
CA 1901 Milicic, Neda
NY 1859 Schenfield, Stacy
VA 1821 Bhargava, Tanu
MD 1817 Sakai, Donna
VA 1810 Kaminsky, Barbara
MI 1804 Sweeris, Connie Mae
KS 1798 Xiao, Laura
MT 1781 Conlan, Lena Maria

TOURNAMENTS PROCESSED

This list was compiled on 1/29/01 and includes all tournaments played through 12/17/00. Due to space limitations, only current members who have played in a tournament since 10/1/00 are included. This document may not be reproduced without prior written permission of USA Table Tennis. Copyright 2001.

TOURNAMENTS INCLUDED IN RATINGS

Western Open
South Bend Fall Open
Sports Fitness Player Series
Concord Cup Youth Open TTT
Huntsman World Sr. Games
15th Annual Hock Open
Arkansas Closed
Colorado Springs Open
Maryland October Circuit
Vermont Peak Fall Foliage Open
2000 Charlotte Open
2000 Millcreek Open
Best of the West Open
Fall Still Small Ball Open TTT
Southern Open
T-Tonics Classics
T-Tonics Classics
T-Tonics Classics
T-Tonics Classics
T-Tonics Classics
Atlanta Giant RR
Atlanta Giant RR
Atlanta Giant RR
Atlanta Giant RR
Atlanta Winter Open
Bay State Giant RR
OR - Mayo Rolf Cup
Pensacola Holiday Open
Sac-Rec December Open
South Bend Open
Sports Fitness Player Series
Friends of Ping Pong
Maryland December Circuit
NJTTC - Fall Open
Neal Natcher Portsmouth Open
Portland Double RR
Southern Open
Sports Fitness Player Series
North American Teams
North American Teams
North American Teams
USA Nationals

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All ratings-related questions should be directed to Tami Walker, USATT Headquarters, One Olympic Plaza, Colorado Springs, CO 80909. To find out your rating, send a self-addressed, stamped postcard with your name and the date of your last tournament. You may also contact us at 719-578-4583 or by e-mail at usatt3@iex.net.

USA Table Tennis Magazine - March/April 2001
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**National Ratings List**

(In Alphabetical Order by Last Name)

**Players' favorite source for table tennis supplies**
January 7 - March 11 - City of Atlanta League Closed, Atlanta, GA. Contact: Ralph L. Flesley, 2404 Sandfall Ct., Atlanta, GA 30331-8472. Phone: 404-344-4728. rmpresley@aol.com

February 24-25 - Golden Western Open, Santa Monica, CA. Contact: Jo Kidd, 20432 Elkwood Dr., Winnetka, CA 91301, Phone: 818-700-0948. **

February 24 - Harold Wheeler Memorial Giant RR, Columbia, SC. Contact: Francis Kovach, 620 Colonial Dr., West Columbia, SC 29160. Phone: 803-755-0071

February 24 - Davison Athletic Club Open, Davison, MI. Contact: Jon Bosika, 1463 Wexford Drive, Davison, MI. Phone: 810-658-8153. **

February 24 - Maryland February Circuit Giant RR, Eldersburg, MD. Contact: Yvonne Kronlage, 14160 Forsythe Rd., Sykesville, MD 21784. Phone: 410-489-7291.

February 25 - Fair Lawn’s First TT Open, League Closed, Atlanta, GA. Contact: Ralph rampresley@aol.com L. Presley, 2404 Sandfall Ct., Atlanta, GA

February 25 - Maoland February Circuit, Wexford Drive, Davison, MI. Phone: 810-658-7000. **

February 26 - Arkansas Closed, TBD. Contact: Eugene Aha, PO Box 6263, Sherwood, AR 72124. Phone: 501-835-2591.


March 24 - MDTTC October Open, Gaithersburg, MD. Contact: Wei Xiao, 18761-Q Frederick Rd., Gaithersburg, MD 20879. Phone: 202-927-1958. weixia042@hotmail.com

March 24 - Maryland March Circuit Giant RR, Eldersburg, MD. Contact: Yvonne Kronlage, 14160 Forsythe Rd., Sykesville, MD 21784. Phone: 410-489-7291.

March 24-25 - 2001 Rhode Island Open, Lincoln, RI. Contact: Chuck Cavicchio, 25 Greenwood Lane, Lincoln, RI 02865. Phone: 401-353-6999.

April 7 - Sports Fitness TT Players Series, Clemmons, NC. Contact: Danny Hill, 3 Twin Brook Dr., Clemmons, NC 27012. Phone: 336-764-0010.

April 7-9 - MDTTC April Open, Gaithersburg, MD. Contact: Wei Xiao, 18761-Q Frederick Rd., Gaithersburg, MD 20879. Phone: 202-927-1958. weixia042@hotmail.com

April 14 - MIT Millennium +1 Spring Open Table Tennis Tournament, Cambridge, MA. Contact: David Marcus, 25 Beacon St., Apt. 16, Somerville, MA. Phone: 781-205-7185. davidmarcus@alum.mit.edu

April 21-22 - Maryland April Circuit, Eldersburg, MD. Contact: Yvonne Kronlage, 14160 Forsythe Rd., Sykesville, MD 21784. Phone: 410-489-7291.

April 21-22 - Tri-City Open Spring Double Round Robin, Richland, WA. Contact: Kirby Parker, 2304 Snohomish Ave., Richland, WA 99352. Phone: 509-375-1587. SILRF0X@owt.com

April 28 - Maryland April Circuit Giant RR, Eldersburg, MD. Contact: Yvonne Kronlage, 14160 Forsythe Rd., Sykesville, MD 21784. Phone: 410-489-7291.

May 5 - Three Rivers TTC Spring Tournament, Fort Wayne, IN. Contact: Dirk Petersen, 4512 Spring burn Dr., Fort Wayne, IN 46855. Phone: 219-337-1925.

May 5 - Sports Fitness TT Players Series, Clemmons, NC. Contact: Danny Hill, 3 Twin Brook Dr., Clemmons, NC 27012. Phone: 336-764-0010.

May 5-6 - Maryland May Circuit, Eldersburg, MD. Contact: Yvonne Kronlage, 14160 Forsythe Rd., Sykesville, MD 21784. Phone: 410-489-7291.

May 12 - The Fourth Annual Maryland Medallion Championship, Frostburg, MD. Contact: C. James Williams, P.O. Box 327, Frostburg, MD 21532-0327. cjwms@minspring.com

May 17 - Buckeye Open 2001, Columbus, OH. Contact: Steve Slaback, 697 Waxwing Ct., Westerville, OH. 43082. Phone: 614-899-1415. sslaback@columbus.com

May 21-22 - Connecticut Open, Groton, CT. Contact: Jeff Weidman, 14 Pymble Lane, Groton, CT 06340. Phone: 860-559-5888.

May 24 - Maryland May Circuit Giant RR, Eldersburg, MD. Contact: Yvonne Kronlage, 14160 Forsythe Rd., Sykesville, MD 21784. Phone: 410-489-7291.

May 26 - Maryland May Circuit Giant RR, Eldersburg, MD. Contact: Yvonne Kronlage, 14160 Forsythe Rd., Sykesville, MD 21784. Phone: 410-489-7291.

May 26-27 - Golden State Open, Walnut Creek, CA. Contact: Philip Sahafer, 3904 Bellwood Drive, Concord, CA 94519. Phone: 925-689-7463.

June 16 - Biggest Little Reno-Sparks Closed, Sparks, NV. Contact: Howard Lambert, 760 Encanto Ct., Sparks, NV. 89436. Phone: 775-425-2284.


June 24 - California State Open, Santa Monica, CA. Contact: SCTTA/Jo Kidd, 20432 Elwood St., Winnetka, CA 91306. Phone: 818-700-0948.

July 4-8 - US Open/ITTF Pro Tour, Ft. Lauderdale, FL. Contact: USA Table Tennis, 719-578-4563. usat4@ix.net

May 5 - Three Rivers TTC Spring Tournament, Fort Wayne, IN. Contact: Dirk Petersen, 4512 Spring burn Dr., Fort Wayne, IN 46855. Phone: 219-337-1925.

May 5 - Sports Fitness TT Players Series, Clemmons, NC. Contact: Danny Hill, 3 Twin Brook Dr., Clemmons, NC 27012. Phone: 336-764-0010.

May 5-6 - Maryland May Circuit, Eldersburg, MD. Contact: Yvonne Kronlage, 14160 Forsythe Rd., Sykesville, MD 21784. Phone: 410-489-7291.

May 12 - The Fourth Annual Maryland Medallion Championship, Frostburg, MD. Contact: C. James Williams, P.O. Box 327, Frostburg, MD 21532. Phone: 301-689-9941. cjwms@minspring.com


May 19 - Ann Van Vooner Memorial Cup, Houston, TX. Contact: Robert Mayer, 9396 Richmond Ave. #143, Houston, TX. Phone: 713-827-7273.

May 26 - Maryland May Circuit Giant RR, Eldersburg, MD. Contact: Yvonne Kronlage, 14160 Forsythe Rd., Sykesville, MD 21784. Phone: 410-489-7291.


June 16 - Biggest Little Reno-Sparks Closed Table Tennis Tournament, Reno, NV. Contact: Howard Lambert, 760 Encanto Ct., Sparks, NV. 89436. Phone: 775-425-2284.

June 16 - MDTTC October Open, Gaithersburg, MD. Contact: Wei Xiao, 18761-Q Frederick Rd., Gaithersburg, MD 20879. Phone: 202-927-1958. weixia042@hotmail.com

June 23 - Maryland June Circuit Giant RR, Eldersburg, MD. Contact: Yvonne Kronlage, 14160 Forsythe Rd., Sykesville, MD 21784. Phone: 410-489-7291.

June 23-24 - California State Open, Santa Monica, CA. Contact: SCTTA/Jo Kidd, 20432 Elwood St., Winnetka, CA 91306. Phone: 818-700-0948.

July 4-8 - US Open/ITTF Pro Tour, Ft. Lauderdale, FL. Contact: USA Table Tennis, 719-578-4563. usat4@ix.net
Club of the Month

SUNSET TABLE TENNIS CLUB
San Francisco, California
By Harvey Gotliffe

On most Saturdays around noon except at tournament time, you'll find parents and adult playersweeping and mopping the large wooden floor of the auditorium at the Glen Park Recreation Center in San Francisco, and then setting up the four Butterfly tables and barriers.

Meanwhile, a bevy of 10- to 16-year-old players are stripping the rubber off of their paddles, scraping off yesterday's residue, and carefully applying speed glue and rubber for today's training and matches. The youngsters are also kibitzing around about what happened since they were last together.

Masaaki Tajima is not kibitzing around. As a certified national coach, and recently named USATT Developmental Coach of the Year, he surveys his brood on hand and plans the day's activities - the lessons to be taught, the specific workouts for each of his players, the weekend pairings - and makes meticulous notes on his ever-present legal pad.

Tajima is not a lawyer, he's more of a judge - a judge of his players' strengths and weaknesses, of what it takes to motivate them, to improve their playing ability, and to discover whether they have the heart and desire to want to grow in their games. Even more important, he looks at each of his players as an individual and tries to translate his lessons for playing table tennis into lessons for living life.

He believes in excellence through personal development, winning is secondary.

For the 30 members of the Sunset Table Tennis Club (STTC), who range in age from 10 to 65, Tajima is their coach, leader, harshest critic and greatest supporter, and with the younger members nationally ranked in their age group, the STTC has come a long way in 12 years.

Tajima began playing at the San Francisco Table Tennis Club in 1970, and when he became president in 1976 he began to promote and organize the club. He saw the need for a program for juniors and went to Japan for three months in 1979 to learn coaching techniques to bring home.

The STTC came into being in 1989, and Tajima organized the activities, created standards and philosophies which he has refined through the years. As the program grew, the STTC moved to Glen Park in 1995, and Tajima spent his own money and bought new tables for the club. Through the years Tajima has coached such top juniors as Mark Liu, Jackie Lee, Peter Zajac and Shashin Shodham. The club's current youngsters have seen their ratings rise as they have grown as human beings.

And the growth is family style. Misha Kazantsev and his mother Yelena Karshetd, a USATT referee, won Under 3200 Doubles at the North American Open in San Francisco. Misha came to the club in 1997 as a beginner and his now rated over 2100. At the last U.S. Nationals in Las Vegas, Misha won Under 2000, finished second in Boys' Primary School Singles, and made the semifinals of Under 1200.

The Phung family are also regulars at the STTC, with 10-year-old Robert, 12-year-old Kevin (whose rating has doubled in his 18 months at the club to over 1600), and 16-year-old Karen, who made the semifinals of Under 1200 at the 2000 Nationals.

Siblings Karen and John Springer have also raised the level of their games, with John making the final of Under 500 and the semifinals of Under 800 at the 2000 Nationals. Sisters Minh Thanh and Minh Chau, along with their father Hai Nguyen, have trained regularly at the club since 1999.

Tajima tries to help each player improve as a person, teaching and motivating them to grow mentally, emotionally, physically and technically - and in that order. At the end of each weekend session, the players gather around as Tajima bluntly reviews their play and their attitude, and after a tournament, they are given typed sheets analyzing their performance.

"I approach coaching in the same light as parenting," said Tajima. "You feed, clean, educate the child, give them the right direction, so at some point you can be confident they can go out on their own. Part of raising this self confidence is self-reliance, but you can't teach it. You have to let go, and let them experience self-awareness."

From their marked improvement on the tables and in their young lives, the lessons they receive at the STTC have been successful.

Coach Masaaki Tajima and club members discuss their play at the Nationals.

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USA TABLE TENNIS MAGAZINE • March/April 2001
Interview With Tawny Banh

By Larry Hodges

Tawny has been a member of the U.S. Team for seven straight years (including the gold medal winning team at the 1999 Pan Am Games), and has been in the Women's Singles Final at the U.S. Nationals three straight years. As this issue was about to go to press, Tawny was elected to the USATT board of directors as the Female Athlete Representative.

How old were you when you started to play, and how did you start?

Tawny: I started to play at age 13 in Alhambra, California. This is fairly late, considering the fact that my former & current U.S. teammates all started before they were seven years old. The way I started out is quite weird. I played with my older siblings on a small table with a wooden racket and a cardboard net. (I absolutely don't recommend this!) It was just for fun.

Who were your coaches when you started out? Who are your coaches now?

Tawny: I'd like to take the opportunity to credit my one true coach, Richard Ching (several times a Filipino National Team Member & Singles Champion in the mid '80s). When Ching first coached me for one and a half months, my rating jumped 250 points. Under his superb guidance from '88-90, I gained about 600 rating points. Unfortunately, in 1990, he had to return to the Philippines due to family reasons. I have the utmost respect for him because not only did he voluntarily coach me, but he treated me like a sister, friend, and practice partner. Without Ching, there wouldn't be a Tawny today!!! After his departure, I basically played on my own with friends at Almansor Park. My current coach is Tang Gao Lin, former coach of World Champion Chen Longcan and our Cheng Yinghua. Before he came to the U.S. in July 2000, he had coached the Malaysian, Indonesian and Thailand National Team. He's currently an honorary coach at Jerry Young's LATTA (Los Angeles TT Association). Lastly, my lifetime table tennis coach will always be my oldest brother, Tin.

Who are your sponsors/supporters?

Tawny: My #1 supporters are my loving family. They have a lot of faith in me and allow me to make my own table tennis decisions. Yasaka is my table tennis sponsor. I'm extremely fortunate to be able to receive supplies directly from Japan, and the best part is that they are very generous. My other supporters are Mr. Jerry Young and his Los Angeles TT Association (LATTA), Dr. Jiing Wang (SGVTTC), and Mr. Yungtai Hsu (Pacific Athletic Center). Because of all this support, I've managed to have a successful career for the past three years.

Who do you practice with, and how often?

Tawny: There are many clubs in Southern California. The disadvantage is that all the top players are spread apart. My practice partners include the whole gang at LATTA, even President Jerry Young & Treasurer Duc Loi! Among them are James Sun, Yao Xi Huang, Keith Loi, Marek Szpakiew, Eric Lam, David Roberts and June Valencia. Although everyone is rated 100-300 points lower than I (except one), I always feel that I learn something when we play together. Thanks, guys! How often I practice depends on my college schedule.

Have you ever trained overseas? Tell us about it

Tawny: I have trained solely in the U.S., with the exception of a three-week training camp in China in March prior to the 2000 Olympic Trials. The training was average, but it was enough to help me earn a spot on the 2000 Olympic Team. Numerous people praised me for being so successful for starting late, having extremely limited coaching, and especially training only on U.S. soil. I feel that if I had the formal training and coaching my current and former U.S. teammates had when they were young, I'd be an even better player.

What are your greatest table tennis accomplishments?

Tawny: My first greatest accomplishment would definitely be qualifying for the 2000 Olympic Team. I'm most proud of qualifying for singles & doubles with my OWN blood and sweat! My next greatest accomplishment is qualifying for the U.S. National Team for seven consecutive years (1994-2000). Lastly, winning a gold medal in the team event against Canada at the '99 Pan American Games.

Jun Gao Chang is the main player blocking you from winning Women's Singles at the Nationals. What do you need to do to beat her?

Tawny: There's no simple answer. For me to beat Gao, I would have to put a lot of time, effort, energy, and discipline into my training. And I just don't have that much
Time! I have other things going on in my life. She was former World Team & Doubles Champion and teamed up with Olympic & World Gold Medallist Deng Yaping & Qiao Hong. I'm already lucky that we're on the same team and that I'm playing against her on a competitive level. When we first played five years ago, she beat me 21-7.

Who is your favorite player and why? Tawny: It would definitely be Jan-Ove Waldner of Sweden. He's the "Michael Jordan of Table Tennis!" He not only has the best sportsmanship, but he also captured every major international title there is. Most importantly, he has lasted for almost two decades, still defeating top world players (Kong Linghui, Liu Guoliang, Wang Liqin) that are 10-15 years younger. Every top player during his time has either retired or is a coach. The bottom line is that Waldner makes table tennis look so simple that anybody can literally pick up a paddle and play. NOT!!!

Outside of table tennis, what do you like to do? Hobbies, sports, etc. Tawny: I love to listen to music, watch movies & sports (all except hockey & soccer), and of course, SHOP for clothes.

Are you a full-time table tennis player? Or do you work or go to school? Tawny: I would love to play table tennis full-time, but I'm currently a senior at California State University of Los Angeles. Obtaining a college degree is vital in life, everyone should have one. The 4-5 classes I have left before I graduate are very difficult, so I think I will have less time to practice this year. I'm also coaching a youth program during the weekend, sponsored by LATTA.

What are your table tennis goals? Tawny: My short-term goal is to become U.S. National Champion and to earn a spot on the U.S. National Team as long as I play. My intermediate goals are to become North American & Pan American Singles Champion. Also, I want to improve my world ranking to top 100. Right now, I'm ranked 150. It's hard to improve my ranking because the U.S. Team hardly gets a chance to participate in international competitions. Unlike the U.S. rating system, your world ranking decreases when you don't compete. My long-term goal is to make the 2004 Olympic Team - that is, if I continue to play.

How about your non-table tennis goals? Tawny: In the future, I would like to open a chain of businesses and run them with my family.

Any advice for new players who would like to someday make the USA Olympic Team? Tawny: Discipline yourself! One will definitely face many difficult obstacles in their career. Don't let it overcome you, you overcome them. Believe in yourself, never give up and you will achieve!

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The three most important things required to get junior players into your club are:

1. **Have a program.** New junior players will rarely join a club if they have to call winners on a table where they get killed, and where most club members avoid them because of their age and because they are beginners.

2. **Promote the program.** No one will come to your program if they don’t know about it.

3. **Have other juniors.** Junior players want to be in programs with other players their age.

So the key thing to do is to set up a program—usually a junior training program—and then promote it until you get enough junior players so that you reach “critical mass” enough junior players that the program is attractive to new juniors. At that point, the program becomes nearly self-supporting, with players joining as fast or faster than they leave. How do you reach this stage?

We will assume you have set up your program, and are now trying to get junior players to join in—i.e. are trying to reach “critical mass.” Here are tried and successful ways of getting junior players into your programs. Before you start on these you will need to put together a flyer about your program, and a press release. (Many programs use a free introductory class, perhaps six weeks long, once per week, as a “hook.”)

1. Fax or email your press release to the calendar section of every local newspaper. Let’s elaborate:
   a. Go to the yellow pages from the phone book.
   b. Look up “newspapers,” and write down the phone number of every local newspaper.
   c. Call every local newspaper, and ask for the email address and/or fax number for the calendar section of their newspaper.
   d. Send a press release to every newspaper that has a calendar section. Make sure to send it at least six weeks in advance, and to send one each time a new program begins.
   e. Call the calendar sections a few days later and make sure they received it, and to remind them to run it. (This last step is very important.)

2. **Distribute flyers at Asian (especially Chinese) schools**. Look them up in the phone book, or ask local Asian players about them. (They usually meet at local schools on weekends.) Then mail, fax or email the flyer to them. If you call up the school leaders and tell them about your table tennis program, they will probably send students your way. The Asian community (especially Chinese) is the easiest group to reach if you live near any large city, and can be the foundation of your program—or at least get your program to “critical mass.” (This is the same theory used in martial arts in the U.S.) This is probably the single most successful way of getting new junior players.

3. **Distribute flyers at local schools.** (See article on this by Dan Seemiller in the Jan/Feb 2001 USA Table Tennis Magazine, page 60.) Offer to teach a class during their PE classes, or do exhibitions. An exhibition at a local club is a good “hook” here.

4. **Give copies of the class flyer to all local club members to give out to relatives or friends.** Family members of current club members are a treasure trove of new players. Make sure to give a copy of the flyer to any new player who comes to any local club.

5. **Do a mailing of your flyer to all current and past USATT junior members in your region.** You can get address labels very cheaply (3 cents each) from USATT. You can get them by age, by zip code, or just about anything else.

6. **Put up your flyer in every local Rec Center, YMCA, and Boys’ and Girls’ Clubs that has tables.** Look them up in the phone book, and call to find out if they have tables. It might be a good idea to create a flyer with tear-off phone numbers at the bottom. You might also ask if you can teach a class at the facility, and get them to promote it for you.

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**CENTRAL JUNIOR HIGH TTC**

**Lawrence, Kansas**

By Tina Thompson

Since January 2000, a special after-school program has been offered at Central Junior High in Lawrence, Kansas. Titu Nedelcia, a native Romanian and internationally known and respected table tennis player and coach, has been offering table tennis instruction as part of the after-school program. This program is funded through a federal grant known as 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC). Awarded to schools with high poverty levels, students in 21st CCLC schools typically do not have the same access to extra-curricular activities.

Titu came to Lawrence with his wife, who is working on her master’s degree at the University of Kansas. Employed as a professional coach in his native country, he wanted to continue coaching and share his passion for table tennis in Lawrence. Through a serendipitous chain of events, he was put in touch with the after-school program coordinator at Central Junior High, Dr. Tina Thompson. With his persistent recruitment, table tennis participation has steadily increased from January, 2000 to January, 2001. What began as a fledgling six-student class has grown to over 15 students. Given that table tennis is not viewed as a “serious sport” in the Midwest, these numbers are particularly impressive.

During 1999-2000, Titu organized two in-house table tennis tournaments. All participants earned a t-shirt and a medal and the top players earned trophies. Special medals were awarded to students in one of four categories: most disciplined; best attendance; best sport; and best technique. Titu consistently seeks ways to recognize his students, not only with material rewards, but through ongoing encouragement and praise.

Perhaps what is most admirable about Titu Nedelcia is his willingness to adapt his instruction to match the facilities and equip-
Lee McCool has an equipment sponsor. Better yet, the blade Lee McCool plays with bears his own name — the Carbo Cool, which, you have to admit despite the obviousness, is a pretty cool name. McCool also has a 2300-plus rating which made him eligible to compete in the recently concluded team trials in San Diego. Additionally, McCool logged two separate wins in Under 2500 singles in last season’s North American Tour competition and made an impressive showing in men’s singles at the Nationals in December, losing to the third seed, Khoa Nguyen, in four games in the eighth. None of this might seem extraordinary for a veteran player of the game, even for one who is 19 years old, as is McCool, since it’s not unusual for a teenager to have logged ten years in the sport. McCool, however, has only been playing four years. That’s certainly not a lot of time to go from clueless basement player to team trials participant.

Playing ping-pong at a friend’s house before discovering club play, in this instance, the Atlanta Table Tennis Club. Sound familiar? Of course, it’s the universal path to USATT competition, except McCool also had the good fortune of discovering Donn Olsen at the Atlanta club. Olsen immediately took the 15-year-old under his wing and began directing his development. In return, McCool gave Olsen three hours a day, six days a week for the first year. One of the interesting restrictions coach Olsen placed on his student was not allowing him to loop in that first year. Hit-only was the mantra and while that particular coaching strategy easily warrants a separate discussion, we just have space here for the obvious: Lee McCool can hit and loop, giving him two offensive weapons, and Lee McCool has only been looping for three years.

McCool continued to give more time to practice and by his senior year in high school (last year) was actually allowed to leave school at 1:15 in the afternoon so he could get in six hours a day of practice, usually broken up into two three-hour sessions. It had not been unusual for him to practice that long on weekends before his senior year, but now he was logging the serious time on weekdays as well. In addition, Olsen was taking McCool all around the country, competing in as many tournaments as possible. Practice, practice, practice plus ongoing tournament play, all under the guidance of a dedicated coach, has created a remarkable young player in a very short time. McCool is quick to credit his improvement to Olsen. And for those of you wondering why you might want to become a USATT certified coach as Dan Seemiller asks elsewhere in this issue, you have to consider the challenge of fostering great play in another person as Olsen has done.

Lee McCool wants to compete at the international level. In pursuit of his international ambitions, McCool is quick to overlook his current rating and his immediate achievements as relatively unimportant markers. He’s already logged experience on the ITTF pro tour, having joined that amazing collection of pro players that competed in the U.S. Open in Florida last summer, and on their next stop in Rio de Janeiro, where he competed in the qualifying rounds of that summer’s Brazilian Open. He did not advance to the single elimination round but that was no great disappointment given the strength of that draw. Nevertheless, he hung out with the big boys and while he certainly was impressed with their play, especially Werner Schlager, he wasn’t intimidated into thinking he couldn’t someday play the game at their level. Going for the top rung on the ladder is an ambitious goal indeed, but given McCool’s proven work ethic (practice animal some say) and his lack of fear of the opposition as he says, it’s going to be an interesting climb for the rest of us to observe. We will have that opportunity at least through the 2001 U.S. Open, after which McCool hopes to go to Europe for fall league play.

What does Lee McCool like most about playing the game? “The excitement that comes from playing in the flow.” And what does he mean by the “flow”? Essentially putting the whole playing package together in the heat of battle: footwork, strokes, composure, strategy and aggression. It’s a dance really, he agrees, the instantaneous choreography of competition, and it’s made all the more exciting when you’re fighting an opponent who is in the flow with you.

Michael Lalvani, owner of Spintech, witnessed enough exciting play of McCool’s that he decided to become his equipment sponsor. He took his commitment a step further by producing a signature blade for the young star who more than anyone else can now state matter-of-factly how cool it is to have his own carbon blade.

It’s going to take a lot more than coolness for Lee to fulfill his dream of being a serious international player, but if he can continue to use his work ethic to build upon the knowledge and skills he has acquired so quickly in his first four years, he’s got a legitimate shot at experiencing the excitement that comes from playing in the world-class flow. That would be cool.
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