How To Topspin Like Oh!

Korea's Oh Sang Eun Sweeps Men's Singles & Doubles at the USA Pro Tour
FEATURES

USATT Club and Juniors of the Month: San Gabriel Club by Bobby Roberts 14
History of U.S. Table Tennis, Vol. IV, review by Scott Gordon 21
USATT League of the Month: The Arkansas League by Eugene Atha 22
Vladimir Samsonov: Sportsmanship at the Top by Paul Kovac 22
2004 Mark Matthews Lifetime Achievement Award: J. Rufford Harrison
by Tim Boggsan 24
Table Tennis Crossword Puzzle by Larry Hodges 25
USATT Junior/Cadet Girls Training Camp by Coach Lily Yap 36
Footwork: Playing Without Arms by Ian Marshall 79

TOURNAMENTS

2005 U.S. Open and the ITTF Pro Tour: 16 Pages of Action! 38
International: Chinese Taipei, Korean, Brazil and Chile ITTF Pro Tours 35
Mohican Sun Killerspin Extreme by Ed Hoghead 70
Para Pan Ams and Cerebral Palsy-ISRA World Championships 70
Stiga Open on the Stiga North American Tour by Alan Williams 72
Eastern Open on the Stiga North American Tour by Alan Williams 72
Meiklejohn North American Senior Championships by Tim Boggsan 76
Jefferson City Missouri Parks and Recreation Two-Man Teams by Steve Downing 80
Golden State Open by Michael D. Boot 81
USA Regional Tournament Writeups & Results 82

COACHING

Inside Coaching: Coach Planning and Periodization, Part 2 by Ben Grigore, Doru Gheorghe & John Allen 28
Tips of the Month by Carl Danner 33

SPECIAL FEATURE: Spin in Table Tennis
- Basics Corner: The Forehand Loop (Topspin) by Glenn Tepper 29
- Everything You Ever Wanted To Know About Spin by Larry Hodges 30
- Spin in Table Tennis: Interview with USA Men’s Coach Dan Seemiller
  Plus - Dan names the Spinniest Players in the World! 34
- The Backhand Topspin of Oh Sang Eun by Wei Wang, photos by Diego Schaad 84

USATT AND OTHER NEWS

Ad Listing, short stuff 9
Cartoon by Marek Zochowski 10
Editor’s Report by Larry Hodges 10
They Said It! by Larry Hodges 10
President’s Report by Sheri Pittman 16
An Official’s View by Amy Ibrahmin 20
Senior Corner by Olga & Stan Kahan 20
Obituaries: Andrej Grubba, Zdenko Uzorina, Dora Morrison 26
Cartoon by Cartoonjazz.com 31
Ye Olde Ratings by NATT 58
USATT Tournament Schedule 65

ON THE COVER:

Photo of Oh Sang Eun by Gerry Chua ©2005
Cover Design by Tom Nguyen

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Paddle Palace 18-19, 47, 48-49, 58-65
Butterfly 6-7, 40-41, 88
Newgy 44-45
North American TT 12-13
SpinTech 15, 82
DHS America 11
Highland Open 23
U.S. Anti-Doping 36
Bumpernets 53
Alpha TT 85

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U.S. Open Pro Tour
Men's Singles & Doubles Champion
Oh Sang Eun at the U.S. Open with some of the junior players from the San Gabriel Table Tennis Club.
U.S. Open coverage begins on page 38.

The San Gabriel Club and their junior program is profiled on page 14. Posing with Oh are (L-R): Erick Shahnazari (9), Christian Roberts (10), Ethan Chua (7), and Anand Engineer (10).

USATT League Watch
Sponsored by Paddle Palace and Stiga
www.usatt.org/league

By USATT League
Director Larry Hodges

Below are the current stats on the USATT League, which now has leagues in 47 states and DC. The League started in September, 2003. Take a trip to www.usatt.org/league, explore the pages, and join -- or start! -- a league!

Aug. 1, 2005
Active Leagues 142
Participants 4055
Matches 52,599

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USA Table Tennis Magazine – on the newsstand! This is from the Barnes & Noble in Gaithersburg, Maryland. The one in front was moved there for the picture. Go up three rows and you’ll see how the copies were actually placed.

Editor’s Report
By Larry Hodges

I just returned from the Barnes & Noble in Gaithersburg, Maryland, and there it was – the 2005 July/August USA Table Tennis Magazine on the newsstand, the first time ever! It was in the middle of all the tennis magazines. Unfortunately, all you could really see was “USA Tab” since the rest was obscured by the neighboring magazine.

A total of 432 copies were distributed on 152 newsstands – see below. If sales are adequate, we hope to expand this.

- 52 Borders
- 43 Hastings Books & Records
- 39 Barnes & Nobles
- 13 Shinders
- 2 B. Daltons
- 2 Newsbreaks
- 1 Readers World

It’s been a while since I’ve done an editor’s report, so here’s a rundown of the past year.

Covers – to help improve the “look” of the magazine – especially for the newsstand – we brought in designer Tom Nguyen to do the covers, starting with the Nov/Dec 2004 issue. He’s done an excellent job.

Amazon.com – we’re on sale there!

Plastic bags – due to problems with torn covers, we started mailing the issue out in plastic bags a year ago.

Ad revenue continues to expand. Ad revenue per issue is now about $13,000 issue, about the same as the annual revenue (six issues per year, then and now) when I was first hired in Dec., 1991. Interested in advertising? See www.usatt.org/magazine/ad_rates.html.

New features this year include the regular crossword puzzle an expanded coaching section. We’ve been running table tennis cartoons by Marek Zochowski for several years; last year we began running ones from cartoonjazz.com as well. Visit their web site if you are interested in table tennis club t-shirts, screensavers or wall art – part of the proceeds go to USATT.

And a special thank you to super photographers Gerry Chua, Sungill Kim, Diego Schaal, and all the others who I apologize for not listing!

They Said It...
By Larry Hodges

“In another larger room was an untidy heap of velvet-lined dining chairs, with the remains of a table tennis table thrown on top of them.” - A description of a room in Saddam Hussein’s personal yacht. From the British Broadcasting website, and reported in other media, April 10, 2005.

“Local games evolved into the National Slipper Ping-Pong Championship and, from last year, a Slipper Ping-Pong World Championship.” - From July 4, 2005 article on Slipper Ping-Pong in Japan (yes, table tennis with slippers for rackets!) at: http://mdn.mainichi-msn.co.jp/waiwai/news/20050704p2g00m0dm007000c.html

“China sends up four more manned space missions, including one in September that docks at the International Space Station, where the Chinese pilot beats the US astronaut at weightless ping-pong.” - From http://folk.bum.blogspot.com, Dec. 31, 2003.

“I have been offered $20,000 to lose a game, but that was absolutely against my principles.” - USA National Women’s Champion Gao Jun, in Easter Sports Daily (China), June 14, 2005. Contributed by Bruce Liu.

Shhhh! I think she’s dreaming about her first tournament.
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USATT Club & Juniors of the Month:
San Gabriel Table Tennis Club & Junior Program
www.paddleattack.com • By Bobby Roberts

The San Gabriel Valley Table Tennis Club (CA) may not be the largest or most extravagant club around, but it certainly has become one of the most well known clubs in the U.S. This is largely due to Coach Grace Lin and her junior players, who have been producing spectacular results during the past three years.

The club is located in El Monte, CA and is the home to about 60 junior players ranging from 7-18 years of age. Several of these players have equipment sponsors, which include Joola, Butterfly and Andro. The club also has many adult members who like to challenge each other and most of all, take their shot at some of these talented young juniors. On any given day, it is not uncommon to see a ten-year-old beating an adult. The SGVTTC club has five tables and is open seven days a week for private and group training, and open play.

There is no doubt that the SGVTTC club is a club that focuses mostly on its junior training program. One of the many things that helps attract new young kids and keeps the others focused is the outstanding example set by some of the club’s star players such as Jeff Lin Huang, Steven Chan, Anthony Liu, Jonathan Chen and Alicia Wei.

The SGVTTC club president is Dr. Jiing Wang, who is also the USATT Executive Vice President. Dr. Wang and head coach Grace Lin, along with the support of the club’s assistant coaches, Ming Liang and Luck Tai, have done a fantastic job at turning this club into one of the premier junior training centers in the USA. They believe local clubs are the backbone of youth development. Dr. Wang, Coach Lin and her assistant coaches feel it’s important to discuss and evaluate each player’s needs on an individual basis, which allows them to focus on the individual’s specific needs and are better able help the players improve and help better prepare each player to move on to the next level.

The club is extremely fortunate and appreciative of the support they receive from the community and the phenomenal support they receive from all the parents of these young players. Fred Yu has also played a significant role in the success of the club and his dedication and energy in helping the club is much appreciated. I feel I can speak on behalf of the club and parents when I say thank you to Gerry Chua for his tireless efforts and dedication as a photographer. Gerry is exceedingly generous with his photos of all the players from the SGVTTC club. Paddle Palace, Joola and Nittaku are also sponsors and strong supporters of the club and the club’s tournaments. A special thanks goes out to Judy, Michael, Don and everyone else at Paddle Palace.

When in Southern CA, if it’s excellent coaching you’re looking for or just some great competition, please feel free to stop by the SGVTTC club. You can also get more information at the club’s website, www.paddleattack.com.

The SGVTTC club had 10 junior players, ranging from 7-14 years old, attend and shine bright at the 2005 U.S. Open, recently held in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Here are the results of these juniors. Congratulations to the SGVTTC club on another successful tournament!
The Spintech Pavilion outdoor weatherproof rollaway table, manufactured in Germany, is yet another addition to the Spintech Professional Table Tennis Tables Product Line. This table is extremely durable and delivers championship quality play for outdoor use. Its true ball bounce is very similar to an indoor table.

It features a 1-3/4” steel frame supporting a professional non-aluminum weatherproof melamine resin playing surface along with an automatic under carriage assembly with plastic coated square steel profile, movable with (4) 3-1/2” heavy duty casters. It has height level adjusters. A Professional weatherproof net set is included.
President's Report
By Sheri Soderberg Pittman

In the last president's report, I wrote about what it's going to take to get our athletes to the medal stand. One of those elements is the belief that USATT is worthy of everyone's attention. In this "association primer series," I'd like to acknowledge many individuals who are contributing to our association's transformation. Additionally, I will provide some updates.

USATT & Killerspin Arbitration Concluded

Robert Blackwell and I have prepared the following joint statement:

The arbitration between USATT and Killerspin is over. The arbitrator found that Killerspin owes USATT $61,000. Feel free to review the arbitrator's ruling if you wish to read about more details. (See link in 8-14-05 news item at www.usatt.org.)

Those of us involved in the arbitration learned many lessons. Through this experience, we are confident that we will be able to anticipate and to prevent any differences and resolve them in a less costly and time-consuming fashion if they do arise again. We clearly realize that understanding and cooperation will better promote the interests of both organizations. We have, therefore, decided to work together more cooperatively, leave the past in the past, and focus on the future. In the coming months we will be formulating strategies to increase USATT's membership base, improve the U.S. Open and enhance the performance of our athletes in international competition.

We appreciate each other's commitment to contributing to the transformation of the American table tennis landscape. We are now closing the door on all arguments, finger-pointing and any other negative behavior related to the arbitration. We ask that all members similarly put this matter to rest. We are excited about working together for the future of USA Table Tennis.

Sheri Pittman, USATT President
Robert Blackwell Jr., Killerspin President & USATT Vice President

Thanks to U.S. Open Staff & Volunteers

Thanks to all of the 2005 Liebherr U.S. Open staff and volunteers. The staff of North American Table Tennis operated the event. Judging from my interaction with the participants, it was a well-run and enjoyable event. We will announce the location for the 2006 U.S. Open as soon as we have chosen the venue.

A Slew of USATT Governance Changes Expected

A few years ago the United States Olympic Committee went through a very-public reorganization. It has taken some time for the USOC to articulate the new direction it is taking. One development has been the drafting of Governance Guidelines for each of the national governing bodies (NGBs). The USATT Board will be taking up the various provisions in our next two Board meetings, scheduled September 23-24 and November 10-11. For a complete look at the proposal, visit www.usatt.org. Potential changes include downsizing the number of Board positions, adding independent directors, restructuring elements of our elections, reorganizing our committee structure, delineating Board and staff functions, etc. The USOC wrote that "the sole objective is to ensure the USOC and NGBs implement good governance practices to strengthen the Olympic movement in the U.S."

The USOC also stated that it "will eliminate base funding for National Governing Bodies effective 2006. To ensure there is no misunderstanding about what this means, we want to be clear. While it is true NGBs will no longer receive guaranteed funds in the form of a base dollar amount, the dollars still remain for NGBs in a pool format. Under the new system, NGBs will be awarded funds based on the USOC's review of the NGB's performance and programs. In some instances NGBs will receive more dollars, and in other cases less, but all funding decisions will be based on a thorough review by the USOC." To date, we are unsure how USATT will be affected. As soon as we know, we will report it to you.

Meetings with the International Table Tennis Federation

Since I became USATT president, I have worked very hard to understand the potential collaborations between us and the ITTF and other national table tennis associations. As I became more involved, I encouraged the ITTF to make USATT a priority, including, and especially, in the area of marketing. Several years ago, the ITTF created a marketing division, which they later spun off as "TMS." TMS has been quite successful and is being run very professionally. ITTF President Adham Sharara recently indicated that he is pleased with the progress USATT has made over the past several years. He stated that he would like to initiate an ITTF-USATT strategy. We had two meetings over the summer to begin those discussions. While I was in Ottawa, we also met with Anders Thunstrom and Christian Veronese of TMS. This is a tremendous opportunity for USATT and addresses our Board's #1 quadrennial priority: creating a marketing division. I believe that this would be the first-ever formal agreement between the ITTF and USATT. It is an especially timely opportunity for USATT given the uncertainties connected with the USOC's recent statement about future NGB funding.

Sheri and Alaor Azevedo, president of the Brazil Table Tennis Confederation, at the Bubba Gump Shrimp Restaurant.
Where else would they eat?
Meeting with Brazil Table Tennis Confederation President

The Brazil Table Tennis Confederation (CBTM) has designed a national table tennis association software management system. Its president, Alaor Azevedo, initially described the functions of the software to me and NATT staff in Shanghai at the World Championships. Richard Lee then traveled to Brazil in June to see a more in-depth presentation. At the U.S. Open, ITTF Latin American Continental Vice President Miguel Delgado participated in a meeting with USATT and NATT representatives to further discuss the software and its capabilities. Then Alaor and I met in Miami in July. USATT is looking closely at the system and its applications. It would allow us to automate many membership functions. This would free staff from many of the processing functions. Staff would then be better able to focus on development strategies. If we decide to purchase the software system, USATT would also be able to provide improved tracking functions for club activities and the soon-to-be-implemented state associations. Alaor combined his expertise in hospital administration with input from international table tennis technical consultants when he specified what core functions should be included in the software.

At our meeting, Alaor also stated that he believes it is imperative within the scope of global expansion of our sport for the U.S. to become a powerful force in world competition. He offered to enter into an association-to-association partnership to exchange best practices, training opportunities, and association resources.

Tim Boggan’s History of Table Tennis

Tim has just published Volume V of his ongoing History of U.S. Table Tennis books. The most recent volume is devoted to the Ping Pong Diplomacy Years, 1971-72. The next volume will cover 1970 to the mid-1970s. If you would like to purchase any of the volumes, please contact Tim directly. Additionally, if you have special photos or stories related to the timeframe for the next volume, please let Tim know.

USATT Magazine Now on the Newsstands

Congratulations to USATT Magazine editor Larry Hodges. For years he has dreamed of getting our product on the newsstands. The breakdown of distribution to 152 stores is: 52 Borders, 43 Hastings Books & Records; 39 Barnes & Nobles; 13 Shinders, 2 B. Daltons, 2 Newsbreaks, and 1 Readers World. Way to go, Larry!

Accolades for Our Athletes’ Performances

Congratulations to Gao Jun for breaking into the top 10 in the 8/2/05 ITTF rankings. Congratulations also to Jeff Huang, Don Alto and Steven Chan for winning the Cadet Boys’ Team event in the Stag Canadian Junior Open, part of the ITTF’s World Junior Circuit earlier this month. Jeff and Steven teamed to win the Cadet Boys’ Doubles. Congratulations also to coach Masaaki Tajima.

The USATT Board of Directors has been working closely with USATT Executive Director Doru Gheorghe to update USATT’s High Performance Plan toward improved elite development of our athletes. We recognize the many challenges in front of us as USATT struggles to compete against countries whose infrastructures are stronger and better funded.

The Return of the U.S. Open Team Championships

USATT recently awarded tournament management functions of the revived U.S. Open Team Championships to NATT. NATT will continue to host its own team tournament over Thanksgiving weekend. The USOTCs will be scheduled in the spring of 2006 and will be held on the west coast. Look for more details soon. We are pleased to offer you this additional opportunity to compete.

Any More News?

Please let us know what you’re doing to create new opportunities for table tennis! As always, I can be reached by e-mail at sheripittman@yahoo.com.
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Neos Sound Ultra light, extra speed 15% lighter than reg. rubber. Sponge: 1.8, 2.2, 2.3. Item: RSNES/SPEED 8.8/SPIN 11/CONTROL 7.4/POWER 6.7

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- All legs can be level adjusted for even, stable play
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**Another Successful Tournament**

By “Dr. Azmy”

Let us congratulate ourselves for a successful U.S. Open Pro-Tour Tournament. I would like to extend my gratitude to all those who contributed in one way or another to the championships, especially the unknown soldiers. Such a tournament takes full work for at least six months, and many sleepless nights for at least the last three weeks before until its completion.

Many players expressed their satisfaction with the tournament on both sides, the U.S. Open and the Pro Tour. They enjoyed playing and watching others in their best matches. According to them it was a smooth running, well-organized tournament. One suggestion from many players was that the light should be brighter next year.

Congratulations also to Olga Kahan, who is now a member of the ITTF Veterans Committee. She is a symbol of dedication, self-sacrifice, hard work, efficiency, courtesy, and sincerity. Olga has dedicated her life to the promotion of Table Tennis Senior Tournaments. She is Chairperson of the USATT Senior Committee.

USATT has been awarded the bid for 2007 World Junior Championships. This is the first major world table tennis competition in the U.S. since the Atlanta Olympics. There will be opportunities for umpires and volunteers.

I received an email from an IU stating that there are more than those five items, mentioned in my article in the last issue of the magazine, that are important for the evaluation of the umpires. Yes, that is true.

The five basic ones I mentioned were the hand signals, application of the service rules, enforcing the coaching guidelines, limiting unauthorized behavior of players and coaches, and accuracy of completion and delivery of match forms.

The evaluation form actually contains 33 requirements, 13 of them for Pre Match performance, 14 for During Match, and 6 for Post Match. Once again we have to remind the umpires that some of these activities are for presentations on TV and they have to be followed now in all tournaments. (A comment by an evaluator on most of these items is to improve the umpire’s performance in future matches.) The evaluation is based on the umpire’s overall performance.

**Rules Changes:** In the last issue I covered all of the propositions before the ITTF. Three of them have a direct bearing on players and umpires effective this September:

“In service, as soon as the ball has been projected, the server’s free arm shall be removed from the space between the ball and the net.” This means that the server may bring the free hand to the body rather than moving it out of the way.

The Service against Players in Wheelchairs (applicable when playing standing athletes): When a player, in a wheelchair due to physical disability, is receiving a service in singles, the rally shall be a let if the ball leaves the table by either of the receiver’s sidelines (on one or more bounces) or comes back toward the net.

The Doubles Play in Wheelchairs (applicable when playing standing athletes): When two players, in wheelchairs due to physical disability, are a pair playing doubles, the server shall first make a good service, the receiver shall then make a good return but thereafter neither player of the disabled pair may make good returns.

However, no part of a player’s wheelchair shall protrude beyond an imaginary extension of the centre line of the table. If it does, the umpire shall award the point to the opposing pair.

Specific wording on these changes will be published by the ITTF and USATT before September.

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**Senior Corner**

By Olga & Stan Kahan, USATT Senior Committee Co-Chairs
949-830-6699 (ph) * 949-240-7167 (fax)

Hot summer days are slowly fading away, leaving memories of the World Master’s Games last July, attended by senior athletes from all over the globe. The table tennis enthusiasts came to Edmonton, Alberta, located on Canada’s western prairies; they came to compete for the fun of the game and social interaction.

Meanwhile, the 2005 Stiga North American Tour (Stiga Open, Eastern Open and Southern California Open) included Senior Events – Over 40, 50 and 60 – which awarded checks and trophies, given in memory of Sol Feingold.

The Meiklejohn North American Senior Championships (June 2-5, 2005) opened its doors to neighboring countries and left a memorable place in the history of Senior Table Tennis in the U.S. (See article in this issue by Tim Boggan.)

NBC showed an interest in the Meiklejohn Seniors and televised an interview with Olga Kahan, USATT Senior Committee Co-Chair and Meiklejohn Seniors Chair, and with one of the Meiklejohn Committee members, Herb Gilbert, on the SPM News (Friday, June 3, 2005). This telecast emphasized the positive aspect of table tennis on senior players’ physical and mental well-being. 86-year-old Herb Gilbert graciously permitted the TV interviewer to win a televised match, thus ensuring its inclusion in the News.

The Over 90 event missed one member who decided to go on a romantic cruise rather than go for the gold. (Perhaps he won gold, anyway.) At any rate, Ron (that’s 00/ spelled Romeo) Chernoff has no regrets and at last reports is still cruising. This left the Over 90 event to indefatigable 92-year-old Harry Bloom.

During the Meiklejohn tournament, the USATT Senior Committee members met together to discuss and evaluate its activities, which were steadily spreading during the last twelve months. The members were satisfied with current developments and also agreed that it would be desirable to arrange continental or international senior table tennis championships in 2006 or 2007, possibly in Las Vegas, in order to bring U.S. senior table tennis onto the world map of sport for seniors.

The 18th Annual San Diego Senior Olympic Games, including table tennis, will be held in the Activities Center, Balboa Park, on Sunday, Sept. 25. For more details, please contact the commissioner, Neil Smyth, at 619-421-3984.

Another great event, the Huntsman World Senior Games, is in October, 2005, in St. George, Utah. The table tennis competition will be held Oct. 3-7, in the Dixie Center and will be directed by Grant Misbach (a USATT Senior Committee member) and Shonie Aki (a former USATT Vice President).

We hope to see you senior players actively take part in these events!

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Some of the Meiklejohn Seniors Tournament Staff lounges about while Marilyn Miller runs things: Tom Miller, Craig Krum, Shonie Aki, Olga Kahan, Stan Kahan and Mas Hashimoto.
Review of History of U.S. Table Tennis, Vol. IV

To appreciate the depth of Tim Boggan's work, simply look at the three-page acknowledgement section at the beginning of Volume IV. Indeed, this 450-page giant, and each of the preceding volumes, is the result of distilling hundreds of reference sources to a single chronological compendium. Tim is staggeringly prolific, more so than any other author I know. It has taken me longer to write this review than it took him to write Volume V. Tim, when you finish the series, they beg for an INDEX!

Not everyone will enjoy Tim's writing style. Make no mistake, his English is syntactically flawless. However, Tim is the Charlie Parker of authors, his prose sending the reader through twists and turns, leaving one gasping for air. Many of my foreign-born friends complain that they can't navigate a Boggan sentence from start to finish. He also has a few stylistic inventions of his own. I've heard of verbalizing a noun - but when Tim adverb-izes game scores, he "China-S-1-beat-Sweden" tests the limits of Strunk & White. [Dang - now he's got me doing it].

But enough about style, this book is about U.S. table tennis between 1963 and 1970. What makes these volumes so fun is that they lovingly treat every subject with equal importance. The 1963 U.S. Open is covered, for sure, but so is the 1963 Greenville Open, and the 1963 Worlds. Every event, every personality, is given the seal of significance. And it doesn't stop there. We learn about rules changes, exhibitions, political infighting, promising juniors, technical advancements, funny anecdotes, Canadian events, the rise and fall of champions (and even officials), weddings, babies, and on and on.

There are of course the stories of great American players of that era. We meet John Tannenhill, Angelita Rosal, Danny Pecora, Mike Ralston, Wendy Hicks, Brooke Williams, Glenn Cowan, and of course there are the continuing adventures of Erwin Klein, Bobby Gusikoff, Marty Reisman, and Leah Neuberger.

We get to see some of the "lesser" players - who we all know as perennial fixtures in USAIT events - in their prime, like Shonie Aki, Harry Deschamps, Ralph Stadelman, Robert Norman Burke and countless others. It's fun to see pictures of people I know and read about who they almost beat. And what about Benny Hull, Atul Shah, Darryl Flann, Kevin Bell... they must have been darn good, how come I'd never heard of them?

Then there are the pictures. Some really grabbed me - the beautiful Orlando challenge board, the elephant in Cobo Hall, the haunting photo on the back cover of the U.S. team in Prague, my first coach Jeff Mason as a junior, a spectacular action shot of Pat Havlich catching a Dylan graphically divided through twists and turns... gorgeous young women players now old enough to be my mother, and a rather -er- frightening picture of Philip Woo Cheng. What became of the young faces in the photo of our 1963 junior team? Are any of them still playing?

There's Alser's extended stay in America; Baddeley and Jacobsen's "looper" tour; D.J. Lee doing exhibition tours with Bergmann (I didn't know D-J did those too); Patty Martinez's phenomenal comeback victory in the 1965 women's U.S. Open final when the 13-year-old was down 15-20 in the 5th and won; the evolution of the USATT emblem; the 1969 U.S. victory over Austria; Glenn Cowan with short hair....

Did you know that CBS, NBC, and ABC all televised local table tennis tournaments, with folks like Bud Palmer providing commentary? Or, that at the 1967 Worlds the ageless Dick Miles stretched the European champion Gomov to five games? Did you know that an American (Stef Florescu) won the gold medal in the Tokyo Wheelchair Olympics before the USATT even had such events? Do you know who was the "Combut Champion"?

This book especially impressed me with respect to two heavy topics. One was just how poor the U.S. team was when compared with the world's best, and Tim took no prisoners: "...this dismal decade they will be out of the 'loop,' will not compete against a variety of even 2nd-rate International players... Not only had our U.S. players been deficient in learning the new techniques, but who among them, or among our embryonic coaches, was stressing rigorous physical preparation, training?"

Another serious topic which I found utterly fascinating concerns the relationship between the ITTF, the USA, and China. We hear a lot about the Ping Pong Diplomacy of the early 1970s. But Tim shows us what preceded that, and it was chilling. China did not participate in the 1967 and 1969 worlds, but they were engaged in heated discourse with the ITTF concerning the inclusion of Taiwan in international competition. As early as 1963 a letter from China to the ITTF is steeped in cold war hatred:

"...[to recognize Taiwan] is in fact asking the ITTF to follow U.S. imperialism's policy of hostility towards the Chinese people.

And, in 1968:

"Those who disregard the 700 million Chinese people's firm stand and insist on serving the U.S. imperialist's plot... shall be responsible for all the serious consequences arising therefrom.

Yow... what happened in the intervening three years (to 1971) that would produce "friendship first, competition second?" I suspect we learn in Volume V that, despite the ensuing good will, the Taiwan problem didn't just disappear.

I must finish my review on a lighter note - after all, this IS a book about ping-pong. So I'll close by saying that it was a particular joy to follow the ascent of one of my heroes: Patty Martinez. Seeing her in the 1965 womens U.S. Open final when the 13-year-old was down 15-20 in the 5th and won; the evolution of the USTTA emblem; the 1969 U.S. victory over Austria; Glenn Cowan with short hair....

Thanks, Tim. You make me proud to play table tennis in America.

Note: Boggan's History volumes are $33 each. Send check to Tim at 12 Lake Ave., Merrick, N.Y. 11566, phone: 516-868-0434; e-mail: timboggan@aol.com.

USA TABLE TENNIS MAGAZINE • September/October 2005
USATT League of the Month:
The Arkansas League
By Eugene Atha

May 14th marked the conclusion of the 2004-2005 Arkansas Independent League season with the season ending singles tournaments followed by the league’s annual dinner to give out awards. The league finished its 17th consecutive season since restarting in 1989 with a two-man team format; since then it has expanded from two to three divisions, with the season running from October to May. This season 23 teams and 62 players competed in the league, with 13 of the teams electing to play in the post season team tournament, and 21 players participating in the singles tournament.

This was the first year since 1997 that all three divisions chose to sanction their singles tournaments. The A division (@1600 and above) tournament went strictly by ratings in the finishing positions. Don Jackson, Arkansas’ highest rated player, swept through the field; runner-up Glen Davis found a reserve of energy he did not have as the tournament began to edge out Paul Hadfield and Viful MhapseeKar.

In the B’s (@1300-1600) the final four duplicated their relative standings in regular season play although that did not necessarily reflect their ratings relative to each other.

Yijun Ding did not lose a match in the six-man round robin, and newcomer Michael Adjei showed why his peers voted him the most improved player in their division by finishing with a 4-1 record. John Falco and Charlie Brooks were tied for third with a 2-3 record, but John took third by virtue of his victory over Charlie.

The C’s saw newcomers Jason Barrington and Sean Jackson edge out the more veteran Terrence Holland and Cliff Li to take first and second respectively. Jason had the highest rating of the players, but he had lost to all three of his opponents in the final round robin during the regular season. He avenged those losses and defended his rating by not dropping a match in the tournament; likewise, the only loss Sean suffered during the day was to Jason, although he went four or five games against everyone he played. Cliff and Terrence put on a great match for the third place trophy, with Cliff hitting a spectacular forehand winner at 11-10 in the fifth to claim the victory.

Vladimir Samsonov:
Sportsmanship at the Top
By Paul Kovac, International Umpire

At the recent U.S. Open/ITTF Pro Tour I umpired many good matches, but the one between Samsonov and Wosik was for me a memorable one. It was a quality match, but the reason it stood out was not because of its drama or the incredible shots the players made. I was the assistant umpire and I found the match very special, as it should have taught many players a lesson in true professionalism.

Samsonov, of course, was a clear favorite and therefore subject to more pressure than his opponent. Samsonov is a formidable opponent for every player, and when he lost the first game it looked like it would be a “no mercy” fierce fight. He then won a close second game, where he overcame Wosik’s initial lead.

In the third game, when Samsonov was winning 8-7, he made an exceptionally clever return and earned enthusiastic applause by the audience. Under the circumstances, the 9-7 lead would have most likely given him sufficient lead and momentum to win that game. As the assistant umpire, I adjusted the score on the score indicator and got ready to judge Wosik’s next service. Samsonov pointed to the score indicator suggesting that I should change the score because it was, in fact, Wosik’s point. I looked across the table, but the umpire was not helping. Wosik indicated that the 9-7 score was correct and was ready to serve, but Samsonov insisted that the score be changed.

I learned over the years of international umpiring that when a player wants to give up a point, he/she probably had a good reason for doing so. In such a situation the umpire better not argue, so I changed the score to 8-8. When Wosik saw me doing that, not having noticed anything wrong with Samsonov’s return, he thought it was one of the umpires’ unjust decision. It was obvious from the expression on his face that, as a silent protest, he was going to deliberately miss his next service. As I noticed this, Samsonov noticed it as well. He came to my desk and explained to me that as he was making the last return he touched the ball twice. The umpire did not notice it. the assistant umpire, I adjusted the score on the score indicator and changed the score to 8-8. When Wosik saw me doing that, not having noticed anything wrong with Samsonov’s return, he thought it was one of the umpires’ unjust decision. It was obvious from the expression on his face that, as a silent protest, he was going to deliberately miss his next service. As I noticed this, Samsonov noticed it as well. He came to my desk and explained to me that as he was making the last return he touched the ball twice. The umpire did not notice it, the assistant umpire did not notice, Wosik obviously did not notice it and, neither did the spectators. Nothing would have been easier for Samsonov than to get away with this and have this point to his credit. But it was Mr. Professional in him who disallowed something like this to fly.

Samsonov won the match with Wosik. When the match was over, I decided to suggest Samsonov for the recently established Dr. Scott’s fair-play reward. I knew of nobody else who would deserve the reward more at that tournament. Unfortunately, I learned that the reward would be given for the first time at the 2005 U.S. National Championship in December.
To get this rate you must tell the hotel that your rooms are for Highland Open!

The Lincoln Center Fieldhouse has Taraflex flooring with excellent lighting!

Deadline for entry I Tues., Oct. 11, 2005 (but don't wait until the last minute!) Please enter me in the circled events I agree to comply with all USATT regulations I accept responsibility for my participation and relieve the Lincoln Center Fieldhouse, sponsors, and the USATT of any liability resulting from injury to myself or damage to my property.

Mail entry to:
Dan Seemiller
P.O. Box 608
New Carlisle, Indiana 46552

Circle events entered:

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Highland Open Entry

Enter early enter early enter early enter early enter early

Limitations will be placed by event & in total participants Deadline for entry is Tuesday, Oct. 11 (but don't wait until the last minute!) Please enter me in the circled events I agree to comply with all USATT regulations I accept responsibility for my participation and relieve the Lincoln Center Fieldhouse, sponsors, and the USATT of any liability resulting from injury to myself or damage to my property.

Mail entry to:
Dan Seemiller
P.O. Box 608
New Carlisle, Indiana 46552
(219) 844-2140 $69 per night (includes breakfast)

For more information, visit www.highlandparks.org
J. Rufford Harrison (the "J" stands for "John") was born in England in the merry month of May, 1930, and named "Rufford," so the story goes, after a ruined abbey where boyfriends liked to take their girlfriends. When Rufford came of age, he was less interested in Keats's "verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways" than in adhesive resins, er, make that resins, adhesive resins—which is what, as a Ph. D. in chemistry at King's College, London University, he specialized in. In fact, not only was Rufford a chemist, he was the President of the roughly 70-member Kings College Chemical Society. While at Kings, he was very active in his church choir, and also found time to play table tennis and be his League's Secretary.

In 1953, Rufford came to the U.S., settled in Niagara Falls, and there met his first wife June, a kindergarten teacher, by whom he'd have two children, a daughter, McCrae, and a son, Bryce. By the mid-50's, Rufford, continuing his work with DuPont, had resettled his family in Delaware, and of course had resumed playing table tennis, now at his local Newark Club.

Since Rufford had been an Umpire for the English TTA, he had a keener interest than most in officiating and soon became—what the USTTA had been lax in having—a Referee/Umpire's Chair. The Sponge Controversy was slowly coming to the fore, and Harrison's 1956 position was clear: "I don't think sponge will ruin the game." But he would later become a member of the USTTA's Racket Standardization Committee that would decide, as a one-year experiment, to ban sponge play in the U.S. for the 1958-59 season.

In 1958, Harrison, just turned 28, ran unopposed for the USTTA Presidency. And in 1959 he attended his first World Championships, in Dortmund, Germany. As our Delegate to the International Table Tennis Federation's U.N.-like Biennial General Meeting, he could see from his own table that, when alphabetically it came time for the U.S. to vote for or against the next, 1961 World Championships to be played in "Red China," Peking had already secured the vote. So, though Rufford, though the U.S. government wouldn't allow a U.S. Team to participate, I, after all, am surely a citizen of the world, hence why not vote "For," for somewhere down the line it might bring us some goodwill.

And why not some "Cold War" goodwill too? With Leonid Makaroff, his USSR ITTF-delegate counterpart at Dortmund, Rufford arranged a Cultural Exchange Program, and in 1960 U.S. Juniors under the Captainship of Walter Keim went to Russia and Russian Juniors came to the U.S. Harrison ran for the USTTA Presidency in 1960, and was re-elected. During his office he found time to play in tournaments and, though (shh) he was once hustled by our Hall of Fame founder Steve Isaacson and his trusty checkerboard, he did win a number of Delaware Closed titles.

By the end of his two Presidential terms Rufford had replaced the mimeographed Association Newsletter with a return to the larger format of the traditional magazine, Table Tennis Topics, and had upped the net worth of the Association from $4,000 to $12,000.

Four years as President was enough, Harrison said. However, he continued in political office, became the USTTA Recording Secretary, a position he'd retain, unopposed, through two more elections. In addition, he became Chair of two USTTA Committees very dear to his heart—the Equipment Committee and the International Committee. He also began an International News column for Tennis Topics and the Equipment Committee work that, especially when he was named ITTF Equipment Committee Chair, would consume him for three decades. So at Munich he not only drank beer, he attended fistfuls of Meetings (some of lesser importance, but "two of Congress, four of the Advisory Committee, two of the Equipment Committee, one of the Rules Committee, one of the Junior Commission, one of continental representatives, and one on the measurement of ball speeds."

At the '71 Nagoya World's, as play was coming to a climax, Harrison, as our International Chair, was suddenly thrust into the spotlight. Sung Chung, his Chinese counterpart, approached him rather than President Steenboven—perhaps because back in '59 Rufford had supported the '61 World's at Peking?—and asked if the U.S. Team would like to come to China for a week or so, all expenses paid! Thus was born "Ping-Pong Diplomacy." And of course there followed the reciprocal visit of the Chinese to the U.S. in 1972—which Rufford was very much an organizational part of.

But 1971 and '72 wasn't the end of the Diplomacy. There was the '75 Reunion (the 25th Anniversary and the initial American trip to China), but the reciprocal visit of the Chinese to the U.S. Harrison of course came to the U.N. Reception in the Delegate's Lounge. Henry Kissinger spoke "beneath the enormous tapestry of the Great Wall that the Chinese Government had sent as a gift in 1974; Tricia Nixon Cox attended, so did future ITTF President Xu Yusinsheng. Later it was off to China for another Reunion. And still later for Harrison another trip to Beijing and Shanghai with companions Henry Kissinger, his wife and bodyguard for a 30th Reunion.

In Nov. of 1974, USTTA President Charlie Disney appointed Rufford Executive Vice-President—an office he would hold until 1980. He did have one close race for this position though: in 1978 he was elected by just 28 votes. Quite unusual, huh? Could it have been any closer? Lou Bochenski, the only other qualified candidate for the office, drew 23 votes. Yep, add 'em up, that's right: Rufford 28 votes, Lou 23 votes—Rufford won by 5 votes. Talk about USTTA-member apathy.

From 1980-86, Harrison would serve six years as Recording Secretary. A high point during this tenure occurred in Jan., 1984 when Rufford and Marty accepted an invitation from President Ronald Reagan to attend a White House dinner in honor of China's Premier Zhao Ziyang.

Rufford was always dashing off letters to ITTF and USTTA Committee, along with articles for table tennis magazines the world over. Despite my Rolluff!!? Rrruuff!!? considerable differences with him over the years, I continue to marvel at how much this man of Science obviously enjoyed writing and communicating. Why wasn't he an English or a History major? But then to know Rufford is to know how curious he is, how inquiring a mind he has for both Science and Art.
Never mind that he can be a bit Ph. D. pedantic at times. "Aposiopesis" is not—but of course you know it's not—your everyday word. Still, don't be afraid, go ahead, ask him a question, any question—this, for instance: Do ping-pong balls have something other than air in them? And he'll answer: "Camphor is mixed with nitrocellulose to make celluloid, in which it prevents brittleness. It happens to be volatile, however, and a concentration of camphor builds up in the air inside the ball. That's why you can smell a crack."

He learned all that in a chem lab or at a ball factory in Pusan, South Korea?

So much of Rufford's life has been spent attending Federation Meetings in every part of the globe. He must be, our President Sheri Pittman notwithstanding, the most traveled official in the history of U.S. officedom. And sometimes he's looked, well, lonely at these Meetings. However, I who've been on quite a few ITTF trips myself, recall with pleasure the one I took in 1998 to Durbin, South Africa with Rufford and Marty, for we combined business with pleasure—went on a safari. And of course as happens during the course of a morning out in the wild, where the vultures sit and wait, one has to pee. In this case it was Marty—and, as modesty dictates, she'd have to go behind a bush. "Watch out for the lions," Rufford called ironically, jovially to her. Lions? But then, Ohhh, m'god, there is one, just on the other side of the bush where Marty is. She screams. The guide yells, "Don't run! Don't run!" Such a commotion—but while the vultures flapped their wings, Marty escaped.

Decades are replaced by decades, but throughout Rufford continues to thrive. Retired now from DuPont, 75 but still slim and fit, Rufford, when he isn't still working for the ITTF on non-toxic glues or whatever, spends some of his free time singing with his New Hampshire choir, working in local government, and of course charming, with his humility, his appreciative wife Marty.

Everyone in the know would agree that Harrison's contribution to the Sport is unique. He served on the USTTA Executive Committee through one 10-year stretch, then another 12-year stretch—that's 22 years in USTTA E.C. office. And with the ITTF he's served even longer, is still serving on President Adham Sharara's Advisory Committee. Such dedication is almost unparalleled, and makes Rufford worthy not only of the ITTF's Order of Merit and the USATT's Hall of Fame, but another coveted honor. Ladies and Gentlemen—the 2004 recipient of the Mark Matthews Lifetime Achievement Award. J. Rufford Harrison.

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Table Tennis Crossword Puzzle #2 By Larry Hodges

Solve the crossword puzzle, and YOUR NAME will be published in the next issue, along with solution! All answers can be found in this issue.

Send solution by Oct. 1 to Editor Larry Hodges at larry@larrytt.com, 240-686-0128 (fax), or USATT Magazine, 13403 Demetrias Way, Germantown, MD 20874.

Across
1. Spinny forehand loop.
3. At 52 of these stores.
6. 23 teams competed in this league.
8. A type of spin.
11. Over 90 Champion.
14. Won the team final.
15. Player of the Year for America's Region.
17. 7-year-old poses with Oh.
18. Won five events!
19. Swept the 13 & Under events.

Last Issue's Solution
Those who successfully solved it:
Thomas An
Jimmy Pappadeas
Andrew Hutzel

Down
1. Came back from down 0-3 against Peter-Paul.
2. Wins in Brazil.
4. Came to the U.S. in 1953.
7. Creative part of table tennis.
10. 37 in a row!
12. European star could play with both hands.
13. Second under 1350, 135 point rating increase.

Alternate solution to 12 across: Pittman -A
Andrzej Grubba (1958-2005)

By Iam Marshall, care of ITTF

Andrzej Grubba, a man who delighted the crowds wherever he played, died of lung cancer in his hometown of Sopot in Poland on July 21, 2005. He was forty-seven years old.

Born on May 14, 1958 in Zelgoscze near Gdansk, his efforts transcended the sport of table tennis. Undoubtedly in his chosen sport he was Poland's most famous player ever, but he was also one of his country's most celebrated sporting personalities; every Polish sport's enthusiast knew his name.

Early Days

Parents and teachers encouraged Andrzej to play sports but not being the physically strongest in stature, the contact sports of football and handball were not for him; so at the age of eleven in 1969 he tried table tennis. He started to play at school and then joined the Neptun Club where his father and elder brother Jerzy encouraged him.

Under the guidance of Magdalena Kucharski-Skuratowicz (a former national champion and the mother of the man who was to become Andrzej's national team colleague and doubles partner Leszek Kucherski) he made rapid progress and with Leszek eventually played successfully for the Gdansk Students Club.

He made his debut for Poland in the European League in 1976 against Austria and coached by Dr. Adam Giersz, a man Grubba acknowledged to be the greatest influence on his career, progressed to become one of the modern era's most exciting players.

Career

Andrzej Grubba achieved a great deal in his career. He won three bronze medals at World Championships: Men's Team (1985), Men's Doubles (1987), Men's Singles (1989); he won the World Cup in 1988, five titles on the ITTF World All Stars Circuit and the European Top Twelve in 1985.

Sadly for Grubba the one title which his supporters dearly wanted him to win was the Men's Singles crown at the European Championships; it always proved elusive. The only gold medal to come his way at the continental tournament was the Mixed Doubles title in 1982 with Bettine Vriesekoop; in Men's Singles he came close, being the runner-up in 1984 and 1990, and a semifinalist in 1986 and 1992.

Achievements

He achieved a great deal but for Andrzej Grubba there were two feats that he considered to be above all others. He was voted “Sportsman of the Year” in Poland in 1984, a wonderful recognition for his efforts and an honor that made him a national legend in his own lifetime. Secondly he was proud of the rankings that he gained being the European #1 in 1985 and the World #3 in both 1988 and 1992.

Wherever he played he proved to be a great favorite, with his spectacular backhand loop his trademark. He enjoyed a long standing agreement with the manufacturer Tamasu Butterfly and when he moved to Germany in 1996 he proved himself an invaluable member of TTC Zugbrücke Grenzau.

Saddened

The Sporting World is saddened by his passing. One of his contemporaries, England's Desmond Douglas, was stunned when I broke the news. “He was always so fit, he never smoked, he had a healthy life style,” said Douglas. “He was such great person, you just couldn’t help but like him; it’s sad, very sad.”

Andrzej could use both hands when he played, you never knew where to hit the ball to stop him attacking,” Douglas continued. “I played against him so many times, it was difficult for me playing him; he was always there at the major championships, it’s hard to believe that someone I grew up with on the international scene isn’t there anymore, you just don’t expect someone to die so young.”

Douglas was as sincere as ever and perhaps more than most he appreciates the agonizing times that the Grubba family are now experiencing. Desmond’s father also died from cancer.

Family

Our thoughts are with the Grubba family, his wife Lucyna, a former Polish national team handball player, his sons Tomek and Maciek, his brother Jerzy and his sister Marzena. I hope that in these hours of great sorrow that his family and friends can remember the good times, the joy he brought to millions of people worldwide who watched him ply his incredible table tennis skills.

He was respected wherever he played; he was a wonderful table tennis player, the great showman, the entertainer and though his international playing days finished some years ago he had a great deal to offer the sport of table tennis. He recently had been elected to the ITTF Board of Directors and no doubt would have proved an invaluable member.

Andrzej Grubba made table tennis an exciting sport to watch, he attracted the crowds; a charming man, sincere and caring, he was a remarkable player and a remarkable man. He is greatly missed.

In Memoriam:

Zdenko Uzorinac (1929-2005)

By Tim Boggan

I'd first met my Zagreb counterpart Historian friend, Zdenko Uzorinac, at the 1971 Nagoya World's where in the Jubilee Cup we both did well, though losing to the eventual winner, the Czech Laci Stipek, a former World Doubles Champion.

As I was then editing the USTTA magazine Table Tennis Topics, I wanted a European correspondent and urged Zdenko to begin sending me articles—which he did, covering tournaments from all over Europe. For example, at the '72 European Championships, he wrote how the former Champion, Sweden's Kjell Johansson, as early as the 2nd round, had rejected 25 balls, then, after the exasperated umpire stepped in and chose one, Kjell, "still unhappy... was disqualified." Whereupon, said Zdenko, "all the Swedes threatened to go home!" So, alright, a compromise was reached: pick one of three, Kjell, and let's get on with it... and he did.

To have a correspondent like Zdenko, involved in a labor of love, willing out of friendship not just to send me results of overseas tournaments but to provide human interest anecdotes about world-class players, was a boon to the U.S. readership.

I also that year found out quite a bit about Zdenko himself.

"...[At] the World Championships in Wien... [Vienna, 1951] he won a bronze medal in Squayhling cup competition. In 1962/63 he and his teammates Vogrine and Hrub, representing GSTK Zagreb won the European Club Championship. He was the World Journalist champion in Prague 1963, and second in Ljubljana in '65... He has beaten such well-known players as Stanek, Miko, Stipek (Czechoslovakia), Scholer (W. Germany), Fuji (Japan), Roothoff, Amouretti (France), Pignicic, Harangui (Hungary), Mellstrom, Borg (Sweden), and Negulescu, Giurgiuca (Rumania)."

Zdenko, I learned, had likewise beaten post-WW II players he'd long been competing against: "Dolinar, Hanagozo, Vogrine; Markovic, Hrub, Tenar; and Korpa, Veecko, Surbek, Stipamic, Karakasevic." He was also "the table tennis commentator for the newspaper 'Vecernji List' in Zagreb," and for several years now had been coach of the famous Mladost women’s club.

As correspondents we hit it off very well. I regularly told him what was going on in my life and sent him issues of the U.S. magazine, which he liked, and he'd tell me what was going on with him—how, for example, after an "extraordinary tour of Spain" that summer, he'd played "only lawn tennis," but then was in such good shape that he'd won another major Over 40 Championship. He was about to...
Dora Morrison (1912-2005)

**In Memoriam:**

**Goodbye with a Smile**

By Scott Preiss

A friend of mine passed away last week and this friend was very special to me. I met Dora Morrison five years ago during the Stiga Pacific Rim Table Tennis Championships in Portland, Oregon. This was an event I had attended this event for years, but when I walked into the gym that day, that moment will remain with me for the rest of my life.

As I entered the gymnasium there was a call for me on the loudspeaker to see Jim Scott, the tournament director at the front desk. When I arrived Jim asked me if I would play doubles with Dora Morrison, a big supporter of the Portland Table Tennis Club. I quickly said of course, and he said good, go to table number one.

When I arrived there was 90-year-old Dora with a big smile on her face. This was her first doubles competition and she was excited to play with a professional player. Although she may have been honored to play with a good player, it was my honor to play with a woman who was willing to enter the playing arena at 90!

Although I have had thousands of great moments in my table tennis career, when I reflect back on that moment with Dora, I realized that all of the U.S. Opens, all of the U.S. National Championships, all of the times I visited the table tennis clubs throughout the United States, and the hundreds of table tennis exhibitions I performed for the last 30 years had a reason. It was seen in the eyes and smiles of my friend Dora while playing and competing in table tennis. It proved to me that there is no age limit for having fun and friendly competition, often people would say to Dora, “I hope I can play like you at your age!”

Dora and I often kept in touch and I received several phone calls from her in the past few years. I was also lucky to have the opportunity to visit Dora at her apartment complex in Portland, Oregon, and perform table tennis exhibitions with Dora and her friends there. Dora and I also had the chance to play doubles together at the Stiga Senior Table Tennis Championships in California a few years ago. What a remarkable lady. I am glad Dora that you had the chance to live life to the fullest, and that I had the chance to be a part of your wonderful life. To you Dora I say goodbye with a smile.
Inside Coaching
Coach Planning and Periodization (Part 2 of 2 parts)
By Ben Grigore, Doru Gheorghe and John Allen
Ben is USATT’s Technical Director; Doru is the USATT Executive Director and USA Women’s Team Coach; John chairs the USATT Coaching Committee

“Periodization is a continuous series of periodic cycles (macro, medium “meso,” and micro-cycles) toward a course of progressing to a desired level for yield of an exact target” (Harre, 1987).

A vital part of effective coaching is having a well thought-out plan for what will be taught throughout a season. Too often, coaches simply teach the skills that were taught when they played or meander through a season without a plan. The purpose of this article is to help provide coaches with tools to evaluate instructional goals; and to form season and lesson plan strategies toward a successful training plan for your players.

Always discuss with your player/players the importance of having a training plan and the components of an effective plan. A season plan gives direction to your program; it establishes goals to work towards. Creating a seasonal training plan also establishes an appropriate scope and sequence for presenting certain skills for athletes at any skill level.

Coaches who are experienced planners gather information about total practice time for the season, competition schedule, team makeup, facilities, and other basics before they begin the planning process. The coach establishes instructional goals to provide direction for the season, and selects the subject matter required to achieve each goal. The coach then organizes material for instruction, evaluates abilities of athletes at the start of practice season, adjusts tasks as necessary, and assigns particular tasks to practice days.

In periodization, the long-term training period (macro-cycle) can be for one to five years. This cycle is characterized by periodic changes in tasks and focus of training. This gives long-term perspective and a greater scope to the overall training plan in order to meet the desired goal(s). A five-year macro-cycle can be divided into annual training cycles. Annual training cycles are then divided into meso-cycle periods. For longer meso-cycles periods it is recommended to evaluate activity at six weeks. Every meso-cycle is then divided into micro-cycles, which correspond to a cyclical structure of daily or weekly training activities.

For example, a five-year macro-cycle periodization plan is described as follows:
- The first year your player will perform approximately 1000 hours of technical training.
- The second and third year’s technical training will increase to approximately 1200 hours.
- The fourth and fifth year’s technical training will increase up to approximately 1400 hours.
- Mental training is recommended during most training sessions for thirty to sixty minutes, particularly for competition readiness.
- Physical conditioning is varied between aerobic, strength, endurance, speed and flexibility modes depending on the period of cycle of training. This should consist of two to three sessions of training per week.

Build Period
This meso-cycle period initiates players into a new macro-cycle and season.

The build period is relatively short and focused on physical conditioning to develop core fitness for table tennis. As a player re-engages activity after the active rest period conditioning builds to a high level of intensity toward maximum fitness potential. This potential is directed towards greater muscular strength and endurance, as well as a core of aerobic fitness.

This conditioning then provides a solid foundation for subsequent speed training, and higher intensity technical training to occur in the following plan cycles. Muscular endurance development provides greater confidence in the latter stages of challenging competition. Muscular strength allows for more explosive offensive strokes and tactics, such as third ball attack and attacking on serve returns.

Considering a typical USATT tournament season, this period would be recommended in August and/or January. As in any athletic sport, physical training in table tennis is specialized and specific to the demands of practice and competition performance. High-level table tennis conditioning demands include, aerobic, anaerobic, strength, endurance and flexibility fitness training.

Specialization Period
Once the player sufficiently completes the build period they are ready to move into a Specialization period. During this period, the player shifts focus to more technical training of core skills and stroke techniques to prepare for the upcoming tournament period. Following a USATT season schedule, this could occur in August and/or February.

Core physical conditioning is maintained, but more emphasis is applied to more technical training drills on the table in preparation for the upcoming tournament period. Technical training drills for footwork, stroke and power development, as well as basic and advanced stroke variations of speed, spin, and timing when contacting the ball. Later in this cycle focus becomes more intent on tournament preparation. Serve and serve return training becomes more regular, as well as core tactical training, such as third- and fifth-ball attack drills.

Competition Period
In comparing USATT and Swedish playing season schedules....

The typical period for U.S. players is from February to July and then September to December. In Sweden the tournament period ranges from September to April. It is important throughout these periods to maintain stroke stability in order to develop and maintain self-confidence. Also to continue progress toward higher-level technique.

Multi-ball practice can be used two or three times per week. Intensity and volume of this training is varied depending on the playing level and fitness level of the player. Serve training is done on a daily basis to maintain effectiveness in serve execution and return of serve.

Although technical training is the main purpose of this period, a player’s physical condition is not neglected. There are two or three training sessions per week, lasting approximately 60 minutes, and their aim is to maintain aerobic capacity and increase the speed and explosive of the lower limbs.

Rest Period
The longest rest period for Swedish players occurs in May and players should practice an active rest with light training activity in table tennis. The logical period for U.S. players is in July after the U.S. Open and during the Christmas and New Year holiday. This is a critical time of year as the player must recover and “recharge their batteries” in order to be strong for the future training periods. This rest helps them shake off physical fatigue and psychological stress caused during the season. During this period players are free from training, and rest until the next build period.

Rest is also important between cycles, this is fundamental to the periodization method.

As intensity increases during a cycle, the rest period provides physical and mental relaxation upon conclusion of a cycle or intense training session. This allows the player to recover and return fresh in their approach to the next cycle, training session or competition.

Evaluation
The player should have regular and periodic physiological, physical and psychological evaluation. It is important to evaluate progress to measure achievement toward desired goals. Focus on skills, techniques and tactics as items to evaluate and use an agreed upon method to measure progress. Avoid too much emphasis on results for the tournament period evaluation. Focus on particular tactical and strategic execution as constructive measures of performance and for consideration at future competition.

It is recommended to evaluate progress after each period concludes. Additional evaluation should occur during and after the tournament...
Periodization is an effective method of planning for table tennis success. As your experience grows with this method we hope it becomes a useful tool for you toward greater success as a coach.

For additional coaching info, see helpful resources at www.usatt.org and select the "Coaching Page."

**Basics Corner: The Forehand Loop**

Looping, an extreme topspin shot, is generally recognized as the most useful and most important of all table tennis techniques. The nature of topspin means the ball can be hit with great spin or speed and the rotation of the ball will draw it downwards toward the table. Initially, players are taught to contact the ball as the ball is descending after the top of the bounce, but at elite levels, players are taught to contact the ball at various points to increase variation. (Demonstrating the forehand loop is Vladimir Samsonov of Belarus, former world #1.)

### Looping Against Backspin

**Preparation**
From a position with the left foot forward for right-handers, the hips, waist and shoulders all rotate to the right, bringing the weight onto the right leg, as the arm is brought back and lowered under ball height. The shoulder points to the ball on the backswing. To play a ball with more backspin a lower backswing and a more open blade is required.

**Swing**
The racket moves in an upward path as the legs straighten and the hips, waist and shoulders unwind to the left.

**Contact**
The forearm accelerates as contact is made in a brushing action on the top of the bounce or soon after.

**Follow Through**
The weight transfer to the left leg is completed with the arm follow through, finishing in a 90°-90° position (90° at the elbow, 90° between upper arm and body).

### Looping Against Topspin

Looping against topspin is used increasingly as players develop and involves topspinning the opponent’s topspin ball. It can be played from away from the table as the ball is falling, close to the table (off the bounce) or at the top of the bounce.

**Preparation**
From a position with the left foot forward for right-handers, the hips, waist and shoulders all rotate to the right, bringing the weight onto the right leg. The arm is brought back and lowered under ball height, although higher and more closed than against a backspin.

**Swing-Contact**
The arm moves forward and upwards, though in a more horizontal arc than against a backspin. Contact is beside the body at hip height with the racket closed.

**Follow Through**
The weight transfer to the left leg is completed as the body rotates to the left. The racket finishes high with the arm in a 90°-90° (90° at the elbow, 90° between upper arm and body).
Everything You Ever Wanted To Know About Spin...
...But Were Afraid to Ask!

By Larry Hodges, USATT Certified National Coach
Reprinted From July/August 1999 USATT Magazine

The biggest difference between a serious table tennis player and a basement player is spin. Serious players use spin on both their serves and rallying shots, both to control the ball and to force errors from their opponents. What we are going to do is go over the types, effects and purposes of the various spins, how to create spin, how to read spin, how to handle spin, and how spin actually makes a ball curve in flight.

The Types of Spin

How many basic types of spin are there in table tennis? The most common answer is four: topspin, backspin, and sidespin in both directions. For many players, this is an adequate answer. However, the more correct answer is seven, plus an infinite number of combinations.

The ball can rotate in three different axis that are perpendicular to each other, and the ball can rotate in two directions on each of these axis. Assume you’ve just hit a ball away from you, and are watching to see how it rotates.

- If the top of the ball is rotating away from you, it is topspin.
- If the bottom of the ball is rotating away from you, it is backspin.
- If the right side of the ball is rotating away from you, it is “right” sidespin.
- If the left side of the ball is rotating away from you, it is “left” sidespin.
- If the ball is spinning clockwise (relative to you), it is “right” corkscrewspin.
- If the ball is spinning counter-clockwise (relative to you), it is “left” corkscrewspin.
- If the ball is not rotating at all, it’s no-spin!

No-spin is considered a spin on its own. In fact, if you listen to top players, you’ll hear them refer to “heavy no-spin,” which sounds rather contradictory! It’s actually a no-spin serve that is faked to look like heavy spin (usually backspin).

Corkscrewspin is rarely seen except in serves by advanced players. It generally can only be produced with a high-toss serve. If you ever face this corkscrewspin, read over the difference between sidespin and corkscrewspin carefully. If you imagine the axis of rotation, it’s easier to understand. For sidespin, the axis is up and down. For corkscrewspin, the axis points straight at and away from you. (For topspin/backspin, it is left to right.)

For the truly nerdy, there are really 27 specific combinations of spin, by taking every possible combination of backspin/topspin, sidespin and corkscrewspin, rotating in either direction. (Yes, there are even 8 spins that combine all three – you can do that!) We’ll leave it as an exercise to list all 27. (Don’t forget no-spin!)

Effects of Spin

All spins have three major effects: how they travel through the air, how they bounce on the table, and how they bounce off the opponent’s racket. Here is a listing of each spin’s major effects.

Topspin
- In the air: Curves downward
- Bounce on the table: A low, fast bounce
- Rebound off opponent’s racket: Jumps upward and fast

Backspin
- In the air: Tends to float
- Bounce on the table: Ball slows down
- Rebound off opponent’s racket: Shoots downward

Sidespin
- In the air: Curves sideways
- Bounce on the table: A slight sideways bounce, but not too much
- Rebound off opponent’s racket: Bounces sideways

Corkscrewspin
- In the air: Light sideways curve
- Bounce on the table: Very sharp sideways bounce
- Rebound off opponent’s racket: Not too much effect off opponent’s racket, unless opponent’s racket is very open or very closed, in which case it bounces sideways

Purpose of Spin

Spin is used when serving or rallying either to control the ball or force an opponent into error. Let’s examine the purposes of each type of spin.

Topspin

When serving, topspin is used primarily to force a high return or a return off the end. If an opponent doesn’t make an adjustment (i.e. aim low), the topspin will force either a high return or a return that goes off the end. Often players use a very fast motion to fake a backspin serve, but actually serve topspin, fooling their opponent into an error.

In a rally, topspin makes the ball drop very fast, and so allows a player to hit the ball very hard and still have it drop down and hit the table. Not only does it allow a player to attack a very low ball, but it gives a larger margin for error on all rally shots, with the topspin pulling down balls that would otherwise go off the end. One way of thinking of it is as follows. If you hit a relatively low ball hard but without topspin, the ball might only have enough time to drop so as to hit the last foot of the table. With topspin, it might be able to drop and hit anywhere on the last three feet. This means your target is three times as large!

Just as when you serve, the topspin you put on the ball will make your opponent tend to return the ball either high or off the end. The loop drive, which has extreme topspin, is the most important rallying shot in table tennis. It forces an opponent into either a defensive return or a difficult counter-attack.

Backspin

When serving, backspin is used to try to force an opponent into returning the ball into the net. It is also effective in forcing a defensive return that you can attack. Often players fake either topspin, sidespin or no-spin when serving backspin, trying to trick the opponent into an error.

In a rally, backspin is a relatively defensive shot. Against an incoming backspin, a backspin return (a “push”) is a way to jockey for position, and against many players, it is quite effective. However, it gives the opponent the opportunity to attack (especially with a loop drive), and so should not be overused.

There are also many defensive players who back off the table and return topspin attacks with backspin (“chop”) returns. Again, this gives the opponent the opportunity to attack, but some players do quite well this way, returning ball after ball with backspin until the opponent either misses or gives an easy ball to put away.

Sidespin

Sidespin is used primarily when serving. The purpose is to try to force an opponent into returning the ball off the side, or into returning the ball where you want him to. Also, since sidespin jumps off the paddle relatively quickly, it forces opponents into hitting many off the end as well as off the side. Often sidespin serves are disguised as backspin serves, and opponents push them back, and go off the side. Sidespin is also mixed with topspin when serving to force mistakes – opponents have to worry about going off the side and going off the end.

Sidespin is not used much during a rally except at the higher levels. Top players sidespin loop, sidespin lob and sidespin push. Beginning and intermediate players should learn to do these shots early on as well. That way, when they reach the higher levels, they’ll be able to control these shots.
Corkscrew Spin

Corkscrew spin is not too common in table tennis, and is usually only used by advanced players when serving. It is difficult to produce except with a high-toss serve (i.e. a serve where the ball is tossed 6-10 feet or more into the air). Sometimes, a player out of position will scoop a ball off the floor, and when the ball hits the table, it jumps sideways because of corkscrew spin. Lobs and counterloops also may have this type of spin.

When done on the serve, it can be very effective. When the ball hits the far side of the table, it jumps sideways, throwing an opponent off. Additionally, an opponent's instincts for returning corkscrew spin are often off. Suppose you serve with a corkscrew spin so that the ball is rotating clockwise as it travels away from you. If your opponent hits under the ball (a push), the ball will jump to your right. If your opponent hits toward the top of the ball (a drive), the ball will jump to your left. Imagine the rotation of the ball and which way it jumps on contact with an opponent's paddle, and you'll see.

No-spin

No-spin serves are extremely effective because it is relatively easy to fake spin, but put no spin on the ball. If you can convince your opponent to react to a spin that isn't there, you don't need to put spin on the ball.

Most often, players fake a backspin serve, but contact the ball near the handle (where the racket moves slowest) and just pat the ball over the net with a vigorous but non-spin producing serve. If you use a big wrist snap after contact, and a big follow-through, your opponent will probably think there is spin on the ball — when it's actually "heavy no-spin"!

In a rally, no-spin is also used to fool opponents into thinking there is spin on the ball. Most players open their rackets when returning a backspin push, so if you give them a no-spin push, they will pop the ball up. Similarly, you can fool players by using a no-spin loop.

Another good use of no-spin is with a fast serve. If your opponent thinks your fast serve has topspin, he closes his racket slightly. If the serve actually is no-spin, the ball goes into the net. What makes this effective is that the serve must be fast enough so that the opponent doesn't have time to react to the ball's spin (or non-spin).

A ball with spin will jump off the paddle with energy both from the ball's velocity and its spin. A no-spin ball has no spin, and so bounces out slower. This means that players often put no-spin balls in the net because the ball doesn't bounce out as fast as they expect. Similarly, players often put spin balls off the end by not taking the extra bounce from the spin into account.

Creating Spin

Spin is created at two times: when serving, or when rallying. The main difference is that when serving, you are in complete control of the ball — you can toss it up just the way you want to. In a rally, the ball comes at you in different ways that you have to react to.

To create a good spin, you need three things: racket speed, a grazing contact, and a grippy racket surface. (With a non-grippy surface, you can't put as much spin on the ball, but you can return an opponent's spin — but that's not quite the same as creating spin.)

It's important to be loose and relaxed if you want to create a good spin. If your muscles are tight, your muscles won't work together properly, and you'll get little spin. Imagine hitting something with a whip, and then with a rigid stick. Notice how the tip of the whip travels much faster than the tip of the stick? That's the difference between loose, relaxed muscles and stiff (stick-like) muscles.

Service Spin

There are an infinite number of service motions where you can put spin on the ball — but that's outside the context of this article. What we want to go over are the principles behind getting that spin when serving.

To get maximum spin, you should use a grippy inverted surface. A less grippy surface, such as pips-out, can create spin, but substantially less. To really spin that ball, you need a surface that really grips the ball.

You need the racket to really be moving at contact — you want to accelerate the racket through the ball. With whatever service motion you use, you need to start with the arm moving, and then snap the wrist as you contact the ball. Most of the racket speed comes from the wrist — perhaps 70% — so work on using as much wrist as you can.

Lastly, you need to just graze the ball at contact. The finer the contact, the more spin you will get. Top players with really spiny serves can be almost violent as they move their racket to the ball during the serve — yet, since they only graze the ball, the ball moves very slowly, often barely making it to the net. Nearly all of their energy is being used to create spin, not speed. It will take practice. Get a bucket of balls, and go practice!

A good way to practice getting spin on the serve is to serve onto the floor, away from the table. Try to put spin on the ball so the ball bounces sideways or backward on the floor. If you put a good backspin on the ball, it should bounce a few times away from you, come to a stop, then bounce or roll back at you! If you put a good sidespin, it should bounce sideways after a few bounces. Put some targets on the floor and try to spin the ball so it bounces around the targets. (Theoretically, a pure sidespin would not bounce sideways, because its axis of rotation is on the bottom of the ball, so there would be no sideways bounce. However, in bouncing on the table, the axis will move backward, creating a slight corkscrew spin and thus a sideways bounce on the second bounce. Isn't that simple?)

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"HE'S GOT SUCH A KILLER SPIN, I DON'T KNOW WHY HE DOESN'T WIN MORE TOURNAMENTS."
Rallying Spin

During a rally, you normally will use mostly topspins and backspins, with an occasional no-spin or sidespin thrown in.

Most drives have some topspin, but when you want to really produce a heavy topspin, you have to loop the ball. To really get a good topspin, you need to use your entire body, like a tennis player. The technique for looping is outside the scope of this article, but the principles are the same as when serving - racket speed, grazing and a grippy surface. Also, see above about relaxed, loose muscles - be a whip, not a stick!

The nice thing about looping, and topspin in general, is that not only does the topspin give you a wider margin for error, but the topspin often sets you up to attack the next ball as well. Especially on the forehand side, players learn to loop or drive the ball over and over until they see an easy ball to put away, or the opponent misses.

Topspin is also used when lobbing. A high ball with a lot of topspin (and often sidespin) can be hard to smash. The topspin makes the ball take a fast bounce off the table, and the topspin will make it jump out when it hits your racket. At the higher levels, looping is one of the most spectacular shots, but it can be quite effective against many players.

Backspin is used during a rally when pushing or chopping. A push is a defensive or neutral backspin shot against an incoming backspin shot. Many players are very good at attacking pushes, so choose when to use this shot carefully. Many players overuse it, especially when returning serves - often trying to push even against a sidespin or topspin serve! (Which leads to disastrous return high in the air, off the end or off the side.) However, a good push can be pretty valuable. The key is to make sure it is an effective push. Learn to put a good backspin on the ball, keep the ball low, and push to a wide angle. You should also learn to push quick off the bounce (so the opponent has less time to react), and perhaps to push short by just touching the ball lightly (so that it bounces very short on the other side of the table, making it hard to attack). At the highest levels, most players often push short. But this is a tricky shot, so I’d recommend learning a good deep push first. If you are pushing deep, try to push very deep, so the ball goes within at least a foot of the endline.

Sidespin is used in rallies mostly by relatively advanced players. It can be used when pushing, blocking, looping or counterlooping. It is used basically to throw the opponent off and force a mistake. (Jan-Ove Waldner, probably the greatest player of all time, is a master at this - he is famous for sidespin blocks and sidespin pushes.) When looping, especially against a block or a topspin (especially when counterlooping), you should usually put some sidespin on the ball, normally so that the ball curves to the left (for righties). A stroke with about 15% sidespin is more natural than trying to loop with pure topspin. Advanced players can sidespin both ways.

Reading Spin

The singles hardest thing to learn is to do in table tennis is to learn to read spin, especially against a good serve. Because there are no simple, easy-to-follow methods, it takes a lot of practice and experience. However, many players play for years and never gain this experience because they don’t understand the principles of reading spin. Although it is best to read spin from the racket’s contact with the ball, you can’t always do that perfectly. You should use a number of pieces of “evidence” to really read the spin. What follows are eight factors take into account when trying to read spin, especially when returning serves.

1) The grippiness of the racket surface the opponent is using.

Inverted racket surfaces usually give the most spin, but inverted surfaces run the range from extremely grippy surfaces that will create huge amounts of spin to very slick surfaces that will not (antispin). Pips-out surfaces will not create as much spin as a grippy inverted surface, but most shorter pips can create a moderate spin. Longer pips normally don’t create too much spin. (Note the difference between creating spin and returning an opponent’s spin – item 8) below.)

2) The amount of spin from the racket’s contact with the ball.

The amount of spin is related directly to the racket’s speed and grazing motion at contact (in addition to the grippiness of the racket surface). The faster the racket is moving at contact, and the more the racket grasps the ball, the more spin. You should be able to see the racket speed, but make sure you are watching the part of the racket that is actually contacting the ball. Many players use a fast racket motion, making it seem like there is a lot of spin, but contact the ball near the racket’s hand, where the racket isn’t moving as fast. The result is less spin, which is effective if the opponent thinks there is more spin on the ball.

You can tell how much the opponent has grasped the ball in several ways. First, see how fast the ball came off the racket. If the ball was moving very fast at contact, but the ball came out slowly, the energy had to go somewhere - it went into spin, via a grazing motion. Second, see how the racket approached the ball at contact - you can see if it was a grasping contact, if you watch closely. Third, the sound gives it away. A grasing motion is very quiet, with at most a high-pitched “hissing” sound. If there’s a “thumping” sound, there is less spin.

3) The type of spin from the direction of contact with the ball.

The type of spin comes directly from the direction the racket is moving at contact with the ball. Often, this is easy to tell - just watch which direction the racket is moving at contact. It gets tricky, however, when the opponent uses a “semicircular” motion. This means the racket changes direction during the serving motion. Your mission is to try to see what direction the racket was moving at contact.

There are two ways of doing this. First, you can try to get a very short “video” of the contact in your mind, and from that, see what direction the racket was moving at contact. If you can learn to create this video in your mind, soon you’ll be able to pick up the contact more consistently. Second, try to see which direction the ball comes off the racket. If it comes up slightly, it is topspin; if it comes off sideways, it is sidespin, etc. However, since the racket may be moving very fast, it is not always that easy to judge this.

In both cases, when you are learning how to read the type of spin, call out to yourself (in your mind or out loud, if your opponent puts up with it!) the type of spin on each serve, until it becomes second nature.

4) How the ball bounces on the table.

If you aren’t sure of the spin from racket contact, you can pick it up from the way the ball bounces on both sides of the table. If the ball has topspin, it will take a low, fast bounce. If it has backspin, it will tend to die and bounce short. If it has sidespin or (especially) corkscrew spin, it will bounce sideways.

5) How the ball travels through the air.

You can read the ball’s spin from its flight in the air. A topspin arcs through the air and drops rapidly. A backspin tends to float, with a flatter arc. A sidespin curves sideways. A corkscrew spin doesn’t curve much in the air, but its sideways bounce off the table makes it appear to do so.

6) Seeing the ball spin (or not spin) itself.

You can read the spin (or non-spin) from the ball itself. Some players can read a non-spin ball by seeing the label. Many advanced players claim to be able to read directly off the ball, most likely from how blurred the ball’s label is. This is not easy to do, and while some players claim they can do this, others claim it is impossible.

7) Amount and type of spin on previous similar serves/shots.

Even if you can’t read the spin from any of the above indicators, you can read it from experience. If you misread a spin one time, the next time you see that motion - even if you can’t really read it - you can guess it is the same spin. For example, if you think you see a backspin serve, but every time you return it, it pops up or goes off the end, you...
are probably misreading a topspin. When you see this "backspin" motion again, put aside your natural reflex, and treat it like a topspin.

The major problem with this, of course, is that your opponent might vary the spin with a similar motion — and if you aren’t really reading the spin, you’ll have great trouble reading any changes. So use past indicators to make corrections to your reading of spin, but only in combination with the above indicators, or as a last resort.

8) In a rally, how much spin was already on the ball, and how much of it is being returned.

If you put spin on the ball, your opponent might simply return your spin back to you. This happens most often if your opponent has a less grippy surface, especially long pips. Surfaces such as long pips (but also short pips and antispin) can return your own spin back to you. For example, if you put a heavy topspin on the ball, a player with long pips can give you all of your spin right back at you without doing much. A player with a more grippy surface can also return your own spin, but to a much lesser degree.

Handling Spin

Handling spin is mostly an exercise in racket angles and stroke direction. For every spin, there is a racket angle that will compensate for it. There is also a stroke direction that will compensate for it. Choosing which to use is the question. In general, use an upward stroke and open racket to compensate for backspin, while using mostly racket angle to compensate for other spins. (Open racket means aim racket upward; closed racket means aim racket downward.)

Against a sidespin, the more aggressive you are, the less the spin will "take" on your racket, and so the less it will affect you. The softer your contact, the more the ball will jump — so tentative players often have more trouble with spin than aggressive players.

When learning to read spin on a serve, it’s a good idea to wait on the ball, and take it as late as possible to give yourself more time to react. As you improve, you should start taking the ball quicker. However, even advanced players often take the ball later against a player with tricky serves.

Here is a rundown on how to return the various spins.

- **Topspin**: Close your racket (i.e. aim the hitting surface downward). This will compensate for the tendency to hit the ball of the end or pop it up. Against a heavy topspin, you’ll most likely use a simple block to return the shot. Take the ball quick off the bounce — otherwise, you’ll have to contend with the ball’s low, fast bounce.

- **Backspin**: Open your racket (i.e. aim the hitting surface upward). This will compensate for the tendency to hit the ball into the net. If you are topspinning, stroke upward and lift the ball upward. This is the perfect time to loop with heavy topspin!

- **Sidespin**: Aim the opposite way. A good rule to remember when returning sidespin serves is to aim in the direction the server's racket came from. If you return the sidespin somewhat aggressively with a topspin, you can treat the incoming sidespin almost like it was a topspin, ignoring the sidespin.

- **Corkscrew Spin**: Anticipate the sideways bounce on the table, and be in position for it. Don’t get too caught up trying to learn how to handle this spin too much as it is usually only seen at the higher levels. However, it is interesting to note that if you push against a corkscrews with an open racket, hitting toward the bottom of the ball, the ball will bounce sideways off the racket. If you topspin it back (with a closed racket, hitting toward the top of the ball), the ball will bounce off your racket in the opposite direction. Imagine the incoming spin and how it will "grab" your racket based on whether you hit toward the top or bottom of the ball, and you’ll see this.

What Makes A Spinning Ball Curve In The Air?

Now we get into serious science, so those less science-minded, here's your cue to leave and go practice!

Imagine a ball with topspin. As it travels through the air, the forward movement of the top of the ball forces air forward (or more precisely, slows down the movement of air over the top of the ball). This causes air to be "clumped" together toward the front top of the ball, creating an area of high air density. Similarly, the backward movement of the bottom of the ball pulls air backward quickly, creating an area of low air density toward the front bottom of the ball. The high density air mass at the top of the ball forces the ball downward; the low density air mass at the bottom of the ball "vacuums" it downward.

The result: the ball drops. That’s what makes a ball with topspin drop. The same applies to all spins, but as the spin orientation changes, the movement of the ball changes. For example, a sidespin creates a high-air density area on one side of the ball, a low-air density on the other, which forces the ball to curve sideways.

Backspin doesn’t really curve up, but that’s because of gravity. The backspin is pulling the ball up; gravity is pulling it down.

The result is a ball that tends to travel in a line at first (to float) before the backspin is finally overcome by gravity.

Conclusion

Spin is the biggest difference between "basement" stars and advanced players. Players may learn to rally better than others, but if they can’t handle spin — or create their own — they’re at a huge disadvantage. Learn to use and handle spin, and you’ll quickly leave the basement players (and most tournament players) behind. Get Spinning!
Spin in Table Tennis:
Interview with USA Men's Coach
and Five-Time Men's Singles
Champion Dan Seemiller
By Larry Hodges

You were known for your very heavy spins, especially on your forehand loop and backhand serve. What are the most important points for creating great spin on a forehand loop?

There is no magic formula. Racket speed and friction on the ball from the rubber create the spin. Some tips—use your whole body...legs, waist, shoulders—many players use only their arm and shoulder. Use your whole body if you want to spin the ball harder on your loop. Also, remember to accelerate the forearm and use some wrist. Use your free hand to start the acceleration process.

What are the keys to your creating extreme spin on your serves? Are there any differences in this between forehand and backhand serving?

Make sure you have enough backswing to create racket speed. On my backhand serve, my racket almost touches my ear before I slash down, across, and up on the ball. Think of your serve as a karate chop—try to create a violent motion at impact. The forehand serve is more dynamic, spin- and speed-wise. Also, it is easier to serve both sidespins from the forehand position than it is with the backhand. The backhand serve specializes on placement and height. Again, racket speed, friction, use of wrist & forearm will dictate the level of spin. A player should also use the body and exchange weight a little to create momentum.

Your student, Mark Hazinski (U.S. #3 in men's rankings), has one of the spinniest backhand loops in the U.S. What are the keys to creating great spin on the backhand loop?

Use of legs, forearm, and most importantly wrist. Remember to snap the forearm to create the racket speed and time the wrist movement upward at impact. Let the ball come close to the body, don't reach out too far. It's easier to lift when the ball is in tight to the body. Racket should point to the target before finishing to the side a little. Friction and racket speed are the key elements.

What are the keys to heavy backspin when pushing or chopping?

First, use forearm & wrist create the racket speed. Second, you would need to judge the friction or brushing of the ball when making contact. When pushing, take the ball early off the bounce and use speed and spin. A push or chop does not have to be defensive. If done correctly a push or chop can be an offensive weapon. When chopping, use the body and exchange weight into the shot to create maximum spin.

In 1982, you played Eric Boggan in the final of men's singles at the USA Nationals. Eric led 19-16 in the fifth and final game. Both you and Eric were primarily topspin players, but you mixed in chopping, which threw him off, and won five straight points and the title. Can you tell us about that finish, and how you used backspin to win such a key match?

Eric and I were rivals so I had to make a game plan to play him. Eric was awesome at blocking loops and countering. His offense was weaker. My plan was to try to cut down on the countering rallies by throwing in some chops during the rally. Usually when I played I liked to take the offense 70% of the time. But, against Eric I felt that would be too physical (he could block anything) and play right into his hands. Against him, my plan was to attack only 50% and force him to play offense 50%. This way I could block him out of position sometimes. It also made him unsure of when I would attack.

At the end of the match I felt he would be more uncomfortable with my pushes and blocks than my loops and counters. I made him attack and luckily for me he missed one of his own serves at 19-18 and two errors later I won the championship.

Anything else to add?
Spin the ball as much as possible in practice, then try to use it in play. Produce heavy backspin on your pushes, sidespin on the serves, and high topspin rotation on your loops. When I'm coaching students, I'm always telling them to spin the ball more. Spinning the ball allows a player to have better control over the ball and more accurate placement on the table.

USA Men's Coach Dan Seemiller Names the SPINNERIEST PLAYERS

Clockwise from the right
Spinniest Forehand Loop: Wang Liqin (CHN)
Spinniest Backhand Loop: Kalinikos Kreanga (GRE)
Spinniest Push: Kong Linghui (CHN)
Spinniest Chop: Joo Se Hyuk (KOR)
Spinniest Serves: Hao Shuai (CHN) & Chen Qi (CHN)

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Chinese Taipei ITTF Pro Tour
Taiwan, TPE • June 16-19, 2005 • By Larry Hodges
USA's Gao Jun Sweeps Women's Singles & Doubles

Eight-time USA Women's Singles Champion Gao Jun became the first USA player ever to win men's or women's singles at an ITTF Pro Tour event, and the third ever to win men's or women's doubles, sweeping both women's singles and doubles at the Chinese Taipei ITTF Pro Tour.

In the final of women's singles, Gao, then ranked #16 in the world but now #10, came back from down 0-2 in games to defeat world #8 Li Jia Wei of Singapore, 8-6,5,16,11,9. Gao had recently defeated Li in the 16ths of the 2005 Worlds on her way to reaching the quarterfinals. In the semifinals, Gao defeated her left-handed doubles partner, Shen Yanfei of Spain, 6,6,5-6,2,7. The event was dominated by pips-out players. Gao is a pips-out penholder, and both Li Jia Wei and Shen Yanfei are shakehanders with pips on the forehand. Gao's road to the Championship was as follows:

Final: Gao d. Li Jia Wei (SIN), -8,-6,5,16,11,9 SF: Gao d. Shen Yanfei (ESP), 6,6,5-6,2,7 QF: Gao d. Ai Fujinuma (JPN), 4,-10,14,11,13 8ths: Gao d. Haruna Fukuoka (JPN), 3,6,9,5 16ths: Gao d. Yuka Shiosaki (JPN), 6,10,-8,10

In women's doubles, Gao and Shen Yanfei teamed for the first time and defeated Sun Bei Bei/Wang Yue of Singapore, 7,10,6,4-6,4.

Korean ITTF Pro Tour
Suncheon, KOR • June 9-12, 2005
Men's Singles – Final: Oh Sang Eun (KOR) d. Lim Jae Hyun (KOR), 8,9,7,7; SF: Oh d. Ryu Seung Min (KOR), 9,10,18,16; Lim d. Werner Schlager (AUT), 2,5,11,-9,8,8; QF: Ryu d. Jo Ji Hoon (KOR), -6,9,5,11,1; Oh d. Lee Jung Woo (KOR), -7,11,8,10,3,6; Schlager d. Gao Ning (SIN), -10,5,5,4,-9,3

Men's Doubles – Final: Lee Jung Woo/Ryu Seung Min (KOR) d. Jo Ji Hoon/Kim Tae Hoon (KOR), 7,8,4,5; SF: Lee/Ryu d. Chen Weixing/Robert Gardos (AUT), -7,-9,6,6,6; Jo/Kim d. Seiya Kishikawa/Ryuosuke Sakamoto (JPN), 7,7,9,8,13,9

Women's Singles – Final: Kim Kyung Ah (KOR) d. Li Jia Wei (SIN), 9,10,7,10,6,2,10; SF: Kim d. Kim Soong Siil (KOR), 7,13,8,4,-9,10; Li d. Moon Hyun Jung (KOR), -8,-10,7,6,8; QF: Li d. Wang Yue (SIN), 10,5,9,7,-8,10; Moon d. Haruna Fukuoka (JPN), 9,9,3,11,6; Kim Song Sil d. Kim Bok Rae (KOR), 8,6,9,9,8; Kim Kyung Ah d. Sayaka Hirano (JPN), 10,7,7,6,5

Women's Doubles – Final: Tan Paey Fern/Zhang Xueling (SIN) d. Sun Bei Bei/Wang Yue (SIN), 9,-6,10,-6,5,5; SF: Tan/Zhang d. Ai Fujinuma/Reiko Hiura (JPN), 9,11,8,-7,8

Brazil ITTF Pro Tour
Rio De Janeiro, BRA • June 23-26, 2005
Men's Singles – Final: Adrian Crisan (ROU) d. Peter Franz (GER), 8,3,7,-7,5; SF: Crisan d. Jens Lundqvist (SWE), -1,9,10,9,7,8; Franz d. Jorg Rosskopf (SWE), 7,8,4,6,9,8; QF: Franz d. Jo Ji Hoon (KOR), -8,10,9,9,7,8; Rosskopf d. Zoran Primorac (HRV), 7,9,6,9,8; Crisan d. Patrick Chila (FRA), 9,2,1,7,4,4

Women's Singles – Final: Gao Jun (USA) d. Li Jia Wei (SIN), 6,6,-5,-6,2,7; SF: Gao d. Ai Fujinuma (JPN), -6,-5,5,10,11; Li d. Wang Yue (SIN), 5,9,6,6; Zhang d. Yuka Watanabe (JPN), 6,6,5,2; Sun d. Sun Bei Bei (SIN), 9,10,6,-7,8

Women's Doubles – Final: Gao Jun/Shen Yanfei (USA/ESP) d. Sun Bei Bei/Wang Yue (SIN), 7,10,6,-6,5; SF: Gao d. Haruna Fukuoka/Sayaka Hirano (JPN), 5,6,-4,6,6; Sun/Wang d. Tie Yana/Zhang Rui (HKG), -7,9,6,7,8

Chile ITTF Pro Tour
Santiago, CHI • June 29-July 3, 2005
Men's Singles – Final: Oh Sang Eun (KOR) d. Peter Franz (GER), -5,5,-7,9,4,4; SF: Oh d. Johan Alexeqwitz (SWE), 7,4,6,4; Franz d. Jean-Michel Saive (BEL), 9,9,-7,8,3; QF: Saive d. Lee Jung Woo (KOR), 7,8,6,10; Peter d. Fazekas (HUN), 5,5,8Axelqvist d. Jo Ji Hoon (KOR), -8,6,5,10,-6,9; Oh d. Peter Sereda (SVK), -7,9,-6,4,1,5

Men's Doubles – Final: Oh Sang Eun/Lee Jung Woo (KOR) d. Peter Franz/Janos Jakab (GER/HUN), 6,4,9,8; SF: Oh/Lee d. Cho Eon Rae/Jose Monteiro (KOR/POR), 12,7,9,4; Peter Fazekas/Ferenc Pazy (HUN), 6,9,9,6

Women's Singles – Final: Kim Kyung Ah (KOR) d. Kim Bok Rae (KOR), 6,8,4,6; SF: Kim d. Jun Hye Kyung (KOR), -11,-9,10,7; Kim Bok Rae d. Moon Hyun Jung (KOR), -7,-8,-12,14,12,6; QF: Moon d. Georgina Pota (HUN), -8,-5,9,7,9,4; Kim Bok Rae d. Viktorija Pavlovc (BLR), 4,7,9,-6,6; Jun d. Li Jiao (NED), -7,6,9,9,7; Kim Kyung Ah d. Song Ah Sim (HKG), -7,-10,5,5,10

Women's Doubles – Final: Tie Yana/Zhang Rui (HKG) d. Viktorija Pavlovc/Veronica Pavlovc (BLR), -12,7,7,10,8; SF: Tie/Zhang d. Lee Hyang Mi/Moon Hyun Jung (KOR), 5,7,10,-8,2; Pavlovc/Pavlovc d. Kim Hye Hyun/Kim Jung Hyun (KOR), 10,-9,4,-11,2,9,7

USA TABLE TENNIS MAGAZINE • September/October 2005
The purpose of this USATT- and ITTF-funded, ten-day training camp was to give our young female athletes the mental, physical, technical training and skills to enable them to compete as future world-class players. U.S. cadet girls' coach Emilia Gheorghe, En Long Wang (a guest coach from Canada), and I were responsible for running this camp.

The camp ran from July 12-22, 2005, at Juno Beach, FL, in conjunction with the hosting of the U.S. Open. Frankly speaking, this was no Crispy Crème summer excursion, as Gheorghe and I designed a no-nonsense, rigorous world-class program which challenged our girls' abilities and gave them a taste of a demanding table tennis training program. The camp focused much more on the player's individual work ethic than just on having fun.

On a typical day, a four-hour training session consisted of: warm-up, multi-ball practice, individual work with the coaches, more multi-ball, a lunch break simulated skills drills, more skills and drills versus male practice partners, match play, and finally more physical conditioning, including lots of running. The training was tougher than most of the girls expected as Gheorghe and I demanded a strong work ethic and performance by each of our players, and the girls responded to the challenge!

Coach Gheorghe noted, "The girls worked very hard, without complaints. The ten-day camp was a very good opportunity for me to work with each player individually, to have the players practice at least four hours a day. I was very pleased to see some improvements by the end of the camp. I believe that everyone’s game improved a great deal."

Coach Gheorghe and I are looking to a bright future for the USA Women's Table Tennis Team.

Coach Gheorge added, "We need more training camps like this one. We need to have a place where our girls and women can go to practice, supervised by expert coaching. Hopefully, the USATT will open up a USATT Regional Training Center for us."

I personally hope to see more funding for USA Women's table tennis. Our Women's Team finished in the top sixteen in the World Rankings. We should be focusing more on becoming one of the international elite teams. We can do this - with the proper funding for training camps, team competitions, and Pro Tour Events.

Furthermore, I've suggested enlisting the help of the local clubs to provide better and more cost effective training sites coupled with strong male practice partners to challenge the women.

In China there are many male players who become women's team training partners. The men help the women to play stronger and train harder physically. This is one of the reasons the Chinese women are so powerful and unbeatable. We should utilize the principle of using strong male practice partners and player-coaches for all our women's teams.

In closing, I would like to thank all the coaches, volunteer practice partners, and other participants who made this training camp a success. It was my pleasure to work with Cadet Coach Emilia Gheorghe, a former world-class player, and guest Coach En Long Wang, who always ensured our girls had plenty of expert training. Special thanks to Doru Gheorghe and crew for a professional table set up. Thanks to all the practice partners: Keith A'ban, Matthew Lee, Sarah Zhuang, Diana Wang and to coach Marty Prager and Terese Terranova's local club. Moreover, congratulations to our players for their commitment, strong efforts and positive attitude throughout the camp.

Players in Camp

USA Cadet Girls' Team: Jennifer Mast, Olena Sowers and Alicia Wei.
USA Junior Girls' Team: Judy Hugh Barbara Wei and Laura Xiao.
Canadian Junior Girls' Team: Sara Yuen, Shirley Yan, Lisa Li, Marie-Andree Levesque and Anna Ngan, and Tienace Lowe of Guyana.

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Ft. Lauderdale, FL • July 7-10, 2005

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**Men's Singles**

By Larry Hodges

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**Men's Singles Runner-up & Doubles Champion**

Lee Jung Woo of South Korea

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**Round One**

**Belgian Ends Danish Hopes, USA Exits**

The big upset this round was Yannick Vostes (world #338) of Belgium coming back from down 1-3 to win over Finn Tugwell (world #82) of Denmark, 7-7-7-7-7-7-7.

Another near upset was Brazil’s Caru Guadalupe (world #217) against Martin Monrad (world #75) of Denmark. The match seesawed back and forth, with the first four games all romps, and then the last three dead even. In the seventh game Matsunoto took a huge 7-2 lead – only for Monrad to come back and win the match, 2-7-7-10-10.

However, the wildest match was Germany’s Torben Wosik (world #51) coming back from down 0-3 to win over Canada’s Pradeeban Peter-Paul (world #308), 2-7-9-7-11-11. In game six, Yusuke led 10-6 and 11-10 before pulling it out 13-11.

The last three USA men went out this round, Cheng Yinghua (world #159) lost to France’s Loic Bobillier (world #153), 8-6-7-11-5, in a match that was so close except for the last game. David Zhuang (world #194) lost to Korea’s Cho Eun Rae (world #144), 9-8-9-9, with every game heartbreakingly close. And top seed Vladimir Samsonov of Belarus (world #5), after playing a pair of close games, romped in the end over Barney J. Reed (world #456 when last ranked in Oct., 2004), 12-11, 11, 5.

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**Round Two**

**The Calm and the Storm**

The top half of the draw was the calm before the storm: quiet and predictable as the higher rated player won all eight matches easily by a combined game score of 32-5, with only two of those 32 even going to deuce.

The most interesting match on this nice and predictable half was between Germany’s Thomas Keinath (world #79), and a regular participant in the Stiga North American Tour and Patrick Chila (world...
Keinath won the first two— including a game two 11-2 shellacking— but it was back to predictability as the higher-ranked Chila won the next four games and the match, -12, 2, 7, 9, 6.

Now we move to the bottom half of the draw, where like Hurricane Dennis (soon to hit Florida, although we’d miss the worst of it), it was havoc as top seeds were blown to the wind and the underdogs howled. Seeds #2, 3, 5, 10 and 14 were all blown from the tournament.

#2 seed Chuan Chih-Yuan (world #10) of Chinese Taipei was well on his way to victory, leading 3-0 on Martin Monrad (world #75) of Denmark when the winds of fate changed. It wasn’t Monrad’s first brush with elimination; in the round before, he’d been down 7-2 in the seventh against Brazil’s Cazzu Matsumoto before winning that game 14-12.

“I felt stressed at the start of this match, and he’s a little better,” Monrad said of his match with Chuan. “I was making easy mistakes. After I was down 0-3, I decided I had to keep fighting. After I won the fourth, he started making mistakes, and then it was 3-3. In the seventh, he had some trouble with my serve.”

The match went to 8-all in the seventh, where Chuan, now under pressure, missed two easy forehands. Monrad finished by ripping a winner, and won the inatch, -6, -8, -6, 6, 7, 6. Not a single close game.

“He plays close to the table,” Monrad said. “I had to fight for the table, don’t let him push me off. I had trouble with his serve early in the match, but for some reason he started using different serves, which I was more comfortable with.”

#3 seed Jean-Michel Saive (world #12) of Belgium had even more trouble with Korea’s Yoon Jae Young (world #108), losing rather decisively at the end, 7, 10, -8, -6, 6, 7, 6. Not a single close game.

“He plays close to the table,” Monrad said. “I had to fight for the table, don’t let him push me off. I had trouble with his serve early in the match, but for some reason he started using different serves, which I was more comfortable with.”

#5 seed Alexei Smirnov (world #18) of Russia was blown away by Korea’s Cho Eon Rae (world #144), by the rather one-sided scores of 7, 2, 7, 5.

#10 seed Zoltan Fejer-Konnerth (world #40) of Germany was also eliminated by chopper/looper Gionis Panagiotis (world #78) of Greece in the best spectator match of the round. This chopping/looping style, best exemplified by Korea’s Joo Se Hyuk in making the final of men’s singles at the 2003 Worlds, is becoming more and more popular, with long pips on the backhand to chop like standard choppers, but an all-out looping forehand with inverted.

#14 seed Robert Gardos (world #6) of Austria was eliminated 4-0 by Sweden’s Par Gerell (world #126), 8, 10, 9, 2.

#7 seed Gao Ning (world #32) also struggled, just getting by Stephan Feth (world #173) of Germany, 7, 8, 8, 9, 10, 7.

Round Three
Mixed Fortunes For Swedes

Sweden’s Jens Lundqvist (world #33) had the difficult job of handling the shot-making abilities of France’s Damien Eloi (world #43). When I asked Swedish Coach Peter Sterneborg what Lundqvist had to do against Eloi, he said, “It’s difficult to know what to do against him because he makes so many spectacular shots. The main thing is to be consistent, let him make errors, keep the ball on the table. Lundqvist is probably stronger mentally, and so was able to come back in the seventh game.” In that crucial seventh, Eloi led 6-1, but only scored two more points as Lundqvist won the match, -10, 9, 11, -6, 8, 5, 8.

Fellow Swede Par Gerell (world #126) was not so lucky, losing to Singapore’s Gao Ning (world #32), 9, 6, -6, 8, 8. Lefty Gerell’s ranking might be deceptive, as he had knocked off world #60 Robert Gardos of Austria the round before. However, Coach Sterneborg said the two had played many times before and Gerell had won before.

Against Gao, Gerell said, “I tried to play offense, but I had difficulty with his serve. He had trouble with mine as well. We both mostly won on our serves. He played well, and rarely missed easy balls, while I’d miss about two each game. That was the difference in the match.” Coach Sterneborg agreed with the assessment. Many of the points were straightforward counterlooping between these acrobatic shakehanders.

Germany’s Thomas Keinath (world #79) had his chances with Korea’s Oh Sang Eun (world #7), leading 3-2 in games. “I have a better short game,” Keinath said. “In the last two games, he played less short balls, more topspin at the start of the rallies.” Match to Oh, 5, 10, 12, -9, 9, 7, 7.

Koreans Lee Jung Woo and Cho Eon Rae, ranked #48 and #144 in the world, played another seven-game thriller. Cho, a shakehand two-winged looper, had upset Russia’s Alexei Smirnov (world #18)

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Men's Quarterfinalist Jens Lundqvist (SWE)

the round before, but lost here to his lefty penhold looping teammate, -3,-7,-8,-7,-10.6.

In other matches, Vladimir Samsonov (BLR) defeated Torben Wosik (GER), -8,-5,10,8,8; Martin Monrad (DEN) defeated chopper/looper Panagiotis Gionis (GRE), 3,10,-9,9,8; chopper/looper Chen Weixing (AUT) defeated Christophe Legout (FRA), 5,9,5,9; and Fedor Kuzmin (RUS) defeated Yoon Jae Young (KOR), 8,-8,12,5,7.

Quarterfinals

Top Seeds Coast

Belarus's Vladimir Samsonov (world #5) came out strong against Sweden's Jens Lundqvist (world #33). Samsonov has a reputation for sometimes playing too soft, letting opponents attack and relying on his defense to win. Not so this time. Samsonov came out looping and counterlooping powerfully from both wings, and using his defense to get back into points. Lundqvist has a powerful forehand loop, but often could only watch as Samsonov counterlooped winners to the wide forehand. Lundqvist also has a nice forehand flip, often flip-killing serves and short pushes, yet he rarely scored with them as Samsonov would counter or loop them back, and often take over the attack. Toward the end, he seemed to try for too much, and so missed more and more loops and flips. Match to Samsonov, 11,6,7,9.

"It wasn't as easy as it may have looked," Samsonov said. "He was a bit unlucky today. His game was off, missing a lot of forehands he'd usually make. I'm very happy to be in the semifinals." Tactically, he said that the main strategy was to use a lot of serve variation and keep attacking while playing steady.

Korea's Oh Sang Eun (world #7) has had a lot of practice against chopper/loopers, with teammate 2003 World Men's Singles Finalist Joo Se Hyuk. So it was no surprise that he won the first three easily against Austria's

Chen Weixing (world #16), another acrobatic chopper/looper in almost the same mold as Joo. However, there are differences.

"Joo attacks more, and has more power," said Oh. "Chen's backhand chop is heavier."

In games four and five, Chen picked up his attack, and won a lot of points with surprise attacks. Many choppers can rush the table to attack with the backhand, but to do so with the forehand is far more difficult and takes more foot speed — and is something choppers like Chen and Joo have perfected. However, in game six, Oh put Chen more on the defensive, and won the match, 9,7,6,6,8,8.

Asked about his tactics against Chen, Oh said, "Topspin to the middle, make him choose forehand or backhand, then attack hard to the forehand." Often Chen was stuck making awkward or soft forehand topspin returns, or erratic chops from the middle. Samsonov, who was watching the match, said, "Never attack soft to his forehand, or soft anytime he can get his forehand on the ball."

Denmark's Martin Monrad (world #75, with a win over world #10 Chuan earlier) defeated Singapore's Gao Ning (world #32) by pulling out two close deuce games. In game three, Gao led 10-8, 11-10 and 12-11, but Monrad was able to win 14-12. In game six, it was Monrad who led 10-8, only to have Gao deuce it. However, Monrad won the next two points (including a net winner at 10-all) to win the match, 9,7,12,9,6,10.

Said Monrad, "It's the first time we played. I spoke with the Swedish player who had played him the round before [Par Gerell], and so had an idea of what to do. I knew his serve would be difficult to receive, and my receive in the match wasn't too good, just good enough. I needed to play the first ball short, and attack first. He has a strong, aggressive forehand, and a good backhand block but not a strong backhand attack. His backhand is good against speed, but not as good against slower topspin. I don't usually topspin slow, but I did so against him."

Korea's Lee Jung Woo (world #48) is a lefty penhold looper. The key to his win over Russia's Fedor Kuzmin (world #47) was the fourth game, where Kuzmin led 9-7. Kuzmin played a point where he soft-blocked several balls in a row, one too many as Lee finally tied it at 6-all. At 7-all, Lee dominated with his backhand loop in winning three in a row, and won the game 11-8. In the fourth, Oh led 9-5, then it was 9-8, the Oh won 11-8 again.

In the fifth game, Samsonov came alive, and he dominated most of the points as he went up 8-3. Helped by unreturnable net dribblers at 8-3 and 8-6, Oh pulled to 8-7. Samsonov counterlooped a spectacular winner to lead 9-7, then played three sloppy points, and Oh's up 10-9 match point. Oh serve and ripped a clean winner to end it, and he advances to the final, 8,4,8,8,9.

Oh said of his tactics, "I had to play short balls and attack first. I mixed up my short serve between no-spin and backspin, mostly no-spin." Oh also expressed surprise at Samsonov's not holding leads, since he usually wins when he gets ahead. Oh thought Samsonov let up a few times.

The second semifinal was between Korea's Lee Jung Woo (world #48, but winner of men's singles at the Chinese Taipei ITTF Pro Tour a few weeks ago) and Denmark's Martin Monrad (world #75, but with the upset earlier of world #10 Chuan Chih-Yuan of Chinese Taipei).

Lee could have the fastest footwork in table tennis — he and teammate Ryu Seung Min should have a race. He also has great forehand power and no hesitation in using it against any ball. His serves were also very
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good – and Monrad was rarely able to return them effectively.

Penhold looper Lee won the first two easily, 11-7 and 11-4. There aren’t too many lefty penhold loopers in Europe, and certainly none with the speed and power of Lee, and it was obvious Martin wasn’t too comfortable this match. He probably would have done better against Lee’s higher-ranked but more “orthodox” teammate, Oh Sang Eun.

In the third, Monrad returned serves better, and went up 7-4. Lee pulled to 8-9, then ripped a winner to tie it up at 9-all, with Lee to serve. Monrad called a timeout. Lee then served twice, and Monrad pushed both serves deep to Lee’s wide backhand. Lee ripped the first – off! The second time Lee was caught, seemed to be covering the forehand side first, and ended up softly looping the ball (something he rarely did) off the end. Game three to Monrad, 11-9.

Game four came and went quickly, 11-1 for Lee.

In the fifth, Monrad returned serves better, and makes it to 8-all. Then Lee goes up 10-8 match point, with the serve. At match point #1, Lee serves slightly long, and Monrad loops a winner. At match point #2, Lee serve and rips – off! Then it was Monrad’s turn to serve and rip a winner and go up 11-10. However, that was his last lead as Lee won the next three points and the match, 7,4,-9,1,11.

Monrad said, “He was faster, quicker, more explosive than me today. But the main thing was I had trouble with his serve, which is usually my strength.” Because of his problems with Lee’s serve, and because Lee has so much power, Monrad was rarely able to get into a point or to counterloop, one of his strengths, since Lee so often ended the point on the first two shots with his powerful loops.

Lee said that early on his tactic was to study Monrad, since the two had never played. “Once I saw that Monrad would have trouble with my serve, I felt confident,” he said. He also said that he was in peak form.

Lee’s fast footwork isn’t a fluke. Besides training full time with the Korean team (usually five hours per day), he also does his own physical training in the morning and night. He said he does a lot of multi-ball training. His coach is Yoo Nam Kyu, the 1988 Olympic Gold Medalist for Men’s Singles.

Recently, he’s had success, defeating fellow speed-demon Ryu Seung Min three of their last four times. He’s also beaten Oh, his teammate and upcoming final’s opponent, although he lost the only time they played in a Pro Tour match – at the Korean ITTF Pro Tour in June, where Oh had won 4-2. “He’s beaten me many times,” he said modestly of his record against Oh.

Final
Oh, Those Koreans....

Coming into the USA ITTF Pro Tour, Oh had won two of the last three ITTF Pro Tour events – last weekend in Chile, and a few weeks before in Korea. Sandwiched in between was the Chinese Taipei Open, which was won by 21-year-old teammate Lee Jung Woo in his first Tour singles victory.

Barely half an hour before, these two had won Men’s Doubles here, just as they had in Chile. And now they were facing off in an all-Korean Men’s Singles Final.

They are regular practice partners, but have only played one “official” ITTF match, at the Korean Open a few weeks ago, which Oh won 4-2. However, as Oh said, “Because we play each other all the time, we know each other’s game.” From start to finish, it was obvious neither had many tricks to unleash on the other – so the match was a battle of pure fitness and skill. Lee did have some serves that gave Oh trouble early on, but much of that problem might have been Lee’s follow-up attack, not the serve itself.

Shakehander Oh has the better backhand and more experience. Penholder Lee has the more powerful forehand and possibly the fastest footwork in table tennis. Because he tries to cover so much ground with his forehand, he can be erratic or be out of position, which Oh would quickly take advantage of.

In game one, Lee fought off two game points to win 13-11, winning on a spectacular counterloop that caught Oh off guard.

In game two, Lee had two game points, but couldn’t convert. At 10-all, Oh served into the net, giving Lee the ad. Lee then served, and after several loops, had a finishing loop – but missed! Lee would have another ad at 14-13, but not the relatively easy shot. At 15-14, Oh returned a net dribbler that Lee miraculously returned and was able to rip the next ball, but rushed by Oh’s reflex block, missed the follow-up loop.

Oh jumped to big leads in each of the next three games. In game three, he led 7-3, then Lee tied it 7-7, but Oh won 11-8. In game four, Oh led 5-0 and 6-1, then it was 6-5. At 7-6, Oh scored four in a row to win. In game five, Oh again jumped to a 5-0, 6-1 lead. Lee closed to 6-4, but Oh pulled away from there (including a spectacular backhand counterloop at 7-4) to win the game and match, 11,4,8,6,5.

“I had trouble with his serve the first two games,” Oh said of his struggles in those games. “Generally, the strategy is simple. You can’t give him chances to loop at full power. You have to move him around to the wide corners, and keep varying your shots so he’s never quite comfortable.”

Asked about his recent success on the ITTF Pro Tour, Oh smiled and said that since the recent World Championships, where he had made the semifinals of Men’s Singles, he had trained even harder.

When asked the same question, Lee gave almost the same answer. “Practice is the only way to become the best player. When other players take time off, I try to put in extra practice. I try to use my time wisely.” In addition to the usual five hours or so of training with the Korean Team, Lee regularly does extra physical training in the morning and at night.

When asked what he needed to do to challenge the best players in the world – the Chinese – he again said it would take much practice, and increased confidence. “Confidence is the main thing. When I first played internationally, I lost many matches. As I played more, I won more and gained confidence.” With their recent dominance of the ITTF Pro Tours in the absence of the Chinese, the Koreans are well on their way toward challenging the Chinese.
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Women's Singles

By Larry Hodges

Women's Qualifier
Koreans End American Hopes

T here were 16 Qualifier Groups at the USA ITTF Pro Tour. The
top seed advanced in 14 of them. The two top seeds that did
not win their groups? It wasn’t a good day for USA; Jasna
Reed and Tawny Banh, both seeded #1 in their groups, did not
advance. All other top seeds advanced. Dominating the Qualifier
was Korea, which won 9 of the 16 groups. Japanese players won three,
Hungarians two, and Singapore and Germany one each.

While Korea was romping, none of the 16 USA players in the
Qualifier advanced, leaving USA with Gao Jun (world #16 and seeded
into the main draw) as their only woman left after Day One.

Jasna Reed, world #109, was #1 seed in Group 9. She and Kim
Soong Sil of Korea (world #208) both won 4-0 over the #3 player,
Canada’s Li Zecong. Kim advanced with a 9,-7,9,3,5 win.

Tawny Banh, world #151, was #1 seed in Group 16 – but she
too faced a Korean, but probably a more formidable one. Kim Bok
Rae, a chopper, was #57 in the World in May, but due to inactivity,
left the world ranking list in June. She made the final of Women’s
Singles at the Chile ITTF Pro Tour last weekend, but it didn’t matter
– she was unranked and so unseeded. Kim won the match, 5,8,9,5.
Banh also lost to France’s Carole Grundisch, world #180, 11-9 in the
7th. Kim advanced 8,5,5,2 over Grundisch.

Former USA junior star Nan Li reappeared on the tournament
scene, unseeded in Group 11. After almost blowing a 3-0 lead in
winning in seven over Canada’s Wennin Chiu (10,6,10,-8,-10,10,8),
she faced Korea’s Kim Jung Hyun (world #115). She had the Korean
on the ropes, leading 3-1, but couldn’t hold it, losing 9,-7,-9,-4,9,5,9.

Round One
Three Surprises

The biggest upset was Wang Yue Gu’s upset of Korea’s Kim
Kyung Ah (world #6, and #3 seed here). Wang (world #59) had played
Kim in doubles at the Korean Open, and said that she felt confident
in this match because of that. Playing a drive, drive, smash! strategy,
the confidence paid off as Wang won, 9,-9,9,-13,9,6.

It was a bad round for Germany as two of their top women were
upset in surprising 4-0 matches. Nicole Struse (world #33) lost to
Reiko Hiura (world #68) of Japan, 7,6,4,9, while Kristin Silbereisen
(world #45) lost to Lee Eun Hee (world #79) of Korea, 9,10,8,1.

The third German woman, Elke Wosik (world #37) barely
survived as well, outlasting Kim Hye Hyun (world #174) of Korea,
4,-7,9,6,-7,-9,6.

The near comeback match of the round was between Hiroko Fuji
(world #60) of Japan’s and Renata Stribkova (world #64) of Czech.
Fuji, the highest ranked player who had to go through the Qualifier
to advance, won the first three games, but Stribkova won the next
three rather easily before Fuji pulled out the match, 8,9,8,-7,-7,8,8.

Two other close matches were Zhang Rui (world #19) over Jim
Hye Kyung (world #61) of Korea, -7,8,7,7,-10,-13,-8,7.

USA’s Gao Jun (world #11 after her singles win at the recent
Chinese Taipei ITTF Pro Tour) had to work hard to advance against
Korea’s Kim Jung Hyun (world #113), 3,-4,5,-11,2,9. Gao is the last
USA women left in singles.

Round Two
Hong Kong Moves On to Quarterfinal Battles with Singapore,
Netherlands and USA

Gao Jun had her hands full with the two-winged looping and
backhand serve of Hiroko Fuji of Japan, world #60. Gao led the first
game 9-7, but lost four straight points, and lost the second badly, 11-4.

“She made some unbelievable shots to win the first two,” Gao
said. “I didn’t play that well today, somehow couldn’t focus. My
mind felt ‘messy’.”

Like others, Gao was having trouble with Fuji’s big backhand
serve, especially in the first two games. Fuji takes an extremely long
backswing, and literally turns her back on her opponent during the
backswing.

“She serve isn’t legal,” Gao said. “Everyone enforces the service
rule on forehand serves, making sure you take your playing arm out
of the way right after contact, but she’s hiding the serve with her body, and nobody calls it. It happens so fast it’s hard to react to. The serve is very fast and spiny.”

However, Gao began to handle the serve better, taking the next two games easily. The next two games were anything but straightforward, however. In game five, Gao led 9-6, then lost four in a row. Fujii smashed Gao’s next serve into the net, 10-10. Fujii tried looping a Gao push, but the ball landed shorter than she expected, and she ended up lunging at it as she spun it off. Gao ended the game with a smash and raised fist.

In game six, Gao led 7-4, then lost six in a row as Fujii ripped everything in sight. “I couldn’t focus there, and thought I’d lost that game,” Gao said. At 7-5, Gao did a lunging backhand block that landed so short that Fujii was caught lunging again, and popped the ball up. Gao killed it – but Fujii backhand blocked a winner. She followed that by flipping in Gao’s serve for a clean ace to the forehand. Down 7-10, Gao put together three nice points. Fujii backhand killed down the next point to get to match point, and Fujii serve and looped off. Match to Gao, 9, 7, 11.

Netherlands Li Jiao (world #18) also had to battle with Singapore’s Sun Bei Bei (world #25). Li, a lefty penhold looper, would range all about the court looping, while Sun, a shakehand, stayed close to the table, often looping off the bounce. “She’s small, and has short arms, so I made her reach by serving short to the forehand or long to the backhand,” said Li. “I used varied serves, especially topspin, and followed with a loop. I also went wide to her backhand to make her reach for balls.” Match to Li, 7, 11, 9, 9, 9.

It was a good round for the other two Singapore women. Top-seeded and defending champion Li Jia Wei defeated Germany’s Elke Wosik (world #37), 5, 8, 5. Wang Yue Gu (world #59), victorious the round before against Korean chopper Kim Kyung Ah (world #6), was victorious against another Korean chopper, Kim Bok Rae (world #43), 4, 7, 9.

It was a very good round for the four Hong Kong women. Tie Yana (world #7) had no problems with Korea’s Moon Hyun Jung (world #26), 9, 8, 3, 4, 10. The only Hong Kong player who was truly pushed was Song Ah Sim (world #16), who had to come back to win against Japan’s Hiura Reiko (world #68), barely pulling it out in seven, 7, 9, 7, 8, 9, 7.

Quarterfinals

Hong Kong and Singapore Move On

The battle between Hong Kong’s Lau Sui Fei and Netherlands Li Jiao (world #18) was a battle between penhold loopers. Lau’s very high high-toss serve may have been the difference as she won, 7, 7, 6, 7, 9.

Singapore’s Wang Yue Gu continued her string of upsets, this time showing that she could beat non-choppers and non-Koreans as well with her 6, 5, 11, 8, 7 win over Hong Kong’s Song Ah Sim. Earlier she had taken out Korean choppers Kim Kyung Ah (world #6) and Kim Bok Rae (world #43).

Defending champion and world #7 Li Jia Wei defeated penhold looper Zhang Rui (world #19), 4, 10, 8, 5. In a draw full of inverted loopers, Li is a shakehand with inverted on the backhand, but short pips on the forehand. (Wang Yue Gu also has short pips, but on the backhand.) Li hits and loops on the backhand, while playing a ferocious hitting game on the forehand.

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Dr. Michael Scott Officials Award Winner William Cheung (R) is presented plaque by Dick Evans, Award Supervisor. At the USA Nationals in December there will be a new award sponsored by Dr. Scott: The Swaythling Cup International Sportsmanship Award.

Women’s Singles Quarterfinalist
Gao Jun of USA - now World #10

Gao said that she didn’t think she had a good chance in this match, and it was obvious that Tie felt comfortable against her change-of-pace pips-out penhold blocking and hitting game. “Taiwan was good enough for me,” Gao said of her winning the recent Chinese Taipei ITTF Pro Tour.

Semifinals
A Tale of Four Styles

The Women’s Semifinals featured two match-ups between Hong Kong and Singapore, and four players with four very different styles.

The first match-up was between Hong Kong’s Tie Yana and Singapore’s new star, Wang Yue Gu. Both are right-handed shakehanders, and both play looping forehands, but that’s where the similarity ends. On the backhand, Tie is a steady topspinner, while Wang has a vicious pips-out hitting attack. When Wang’s backhand attack is on, she can overwhelm almost any opponent. However, it takes a lot to overwhelm Tie’s steady two-winged topspin. While Tie is “steady aggressive,” Wang is “pounding aggressive.”

The two had played many years before in China as juniors, but not since. Both players played very fast, grabbing the ball and serving almost immediately, so the match ended very quickly.

Tie quickly went up 6-1 in the first game. Wang closed to 8-6, but Tie closed it out, 11-7. In the second, Tie went up 10-8 and promptly lost four in a row, the last one on a somewhat wild backhand swat into the net. However, from there on Tie dominated, winning the last three easily as she won, 7-10,8,4,7.

About playing Wang’s aggressive backhand, Tie said, “I had to block and try to stay close to the table when Wang hit hard, while looking for chances to backhand loop and take control of the point. Whenever possible, I needed to attack first, usually with a backhand loop.”

The second semifinal was an even bigger contrast in styles. This time Hong Kong sent penhold looper Lau Sui Fei against Singapore’s Li Jia Wei, the defending champion. While she is known for her pips-out forehand hitting, it was her backhand loop that dominated this match. Often she would more toward her forehand to backhand loop from the middle of the table. Even more deadly was her backhand loop of Lau’s serve, often for clean winners to Lau’s wide forehand.

The serves were a contrast as well. Lau uses a very high high-toss serve (often having to circle about to get to the ball as it came down). Li, like teammate Tie Yana and Japan’s Fuji Hiroko, serves mostly backhand. On the women’s side at least, it seems that the backhand serve, which so long played as a secondary serve to forehand pendulum serves, is re-emerging as a strong serve. A main advantage of the forehand serve was hiding contact, but since that became illegal, it no longer has that advantage.

Li started out winning the first easily, 11-4. Lau went up 9-5 in the second, Li pulled to 9-8, but Lau won 11-8 to tie the match up. Li completely dominated next two games, mostly with her backhand loop, which kept Lau off her game. In the fifth, Lau pulled ahead 10-8, and served off! Then she serve and quick-pushed off, and it’s 10-all. Lau gets another game point at 11-10, but blocks off. Finally, at 12-all, Li wins a backhand exchange, and then Lau serve and whiffs a loop at a push, and Li is in the final, 4-8,5,2,12.

“I thought I was in better form, and so I felt confident,” said Li of the match.

And so the final will be another Hong Kong - Singapore battle, between the spinning Tie Yana and the spinning and hitting Li Jia Wei.

Final
Defends Her Title

Singapore’s Tie Yana summed it up best: “Li played very well. She was the better player today. She made almost no unforced errors, and at the end I had no confidence.” Result: Hong Kong’s Li Jia Wei (world #7), successfully defended her 2004 USA ITTF Pro Tour title with ease, defeating Tie (world #9) in the final at 3,4,6,8.

“I felt very good mentally, and played very well,” Li said of the match. That also pretty much sums it up.

The first two games were just what they seemed - straightforward romps. Game three was a little different as Tie led 4-1, then lost eight in a row. Tie also led 7-3 in the fourth, and scored one more point.

Li’s backhand serve regularly set up her attacks. Tie used both backhand and forehand serves, but neither was effective.

Li dominated both with her backhand loops from close to the table, and with her forehand pips-out hitting. Tie also likes to topspin her backhands, but most often Li would do it first, forcing Tie to block as Li backhand looped and forehand smashed seemingly at will.

Tie compared Li’s backhand to world #1 Zhang Yining. “Li’s backhand loop is faster, but Zhang’s is usually steadier.” However, today Li’s was as steady as Zhang’s ever was, and with that, the championship was hers.
USA Junior Girls:

Working Toward the Future

By Larry Hodges

The cheers were loud as USA Junior Team Member Judy Hugh won her first qualifier match here in the USA ITTF Pro Tour, 14-12 in the 7th over India’s Manta Pralibu. Perhaps some of the international travel was paying off for USA’s top junior girl?

However, her teammates were not so lucky, with Barbara Wei, Laura Xiao and Sophia Yi all losing their first matches. Only Sophia won a game. They all had more matches to play, with the hope of advancing to the main draw. But that might be a bit much to hope for at this time. Even after her win, Judy didn’t think her chances were great in her upcoming match against a Japanese player, with the winner to advance. (The Japanese player would win.)

The USA junior girls’ team doesn’t always win now, but they are hoping to build for the future. Over the past year they (along with the USA boys’ teams) have traveled to international tournaments in Portugal, Spain, Sweden and twice to Canada. They have upcoming trips to Brazil, China and Canada again. They will also be in a 10-day training camp right after the U.S. Open in Miami, Florida, where all the USA junior & cadet teams will be training together. But is it enough?

Without these trips, “They would never see some of these styles,” said USA Junior Girls’ Coach Lily Yip (Judy Hugh’s mom and many-time member of USA National Team). “However, our players need more and longer training. They need a consistent training program every day after school. Even the camp after the U.S. Open is only ten days – we need to get them to train together for three or four weeks at least. From age 15 to 17, the training is so important. They have the basics down, but need more physical training to develop speed and power. If they have speed and power, consistency will come with it.”

Consistency was a problem for some of the players. Asked what USA needed to work on to compete internationally, Judy said, “We need to work on consistency, since they all play like robots. They keep the ball on the table and never miss.”

“Serve & receive,” said Barbara Wei, fresh off her match where she’d struggled with the serve of Helena Halas of Slovenia. She’d led 7-2 in the second game, but felt she’d lost because she wasn’t really confident she could win. She was looking forward to the training camp where she’d work on her serve & receive, and perhaps develop more confidence in her abilities. Asked if she was ready for the physical training they’d be doing, she made a face but said, “Sure!”

Judy and Barbara both agreed on the value of the international trips. Judy said, “We see different styles, see where we stand, and gain the experience to compete internationally.” She added that besides consistency, most international players were quicker and had more stamina – and that she now knew she’d have to do a lot of physical training to compete.

“China is the best place to train,” said Coach Lily, formerly a top regional player from China. “I’m taking some of our players to train in China in August for two and a half weeks – our top two junior girls, Judy Hugh and Barbara Wei, and our top two cadet girls, Olena Sowers and Stephanie Shih.

USA has a ways to go, but the first step has been made – realizing what is needed to compete internationally. Next comes the hardest step – learning to compete internationally.

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**U.S. Open Senior & Hardbat Events**

By Tim Boggan

**Over 30 Women**

Lily Yip (4, 4, 0; 8, 7, 4; 7, 6, 7) took the Women’s Over 30’s by beating both last year’s winner Charlene Xiaoying and last year’s, as well as this year’s, runner-up Hye-Sook Brenda Mun. For either player, a match with Lily was sure to be lopsided—but in the Women’s U-2100 final, Brenda, down 2-0, came back to win a thriller from Charlene, 14-12 in the 5th.

**Women’s (and Men’s) Hardbat**

Ah, by Sunday morning, Lily was lookin’ better. Moreover, it was Hardbat time. And, yes, it was again her event—again, as in 2003, over finalist Alex Perez. Seeded players not advancing from their round robins were the energetic 51-year-old Li Yuxiang (not, I hasten to say in lieu of his money-winning prowess so powerfully obvious elsewhere, a hardbat aficionado) and Keith Alban whose on-line workshop courses have repeatedly given him new intuitive insights into the workings of holistic “Energy Medicine.” Li was replaced by 57-year-old Lim Ming Chui (his married daughter lives in Tokyo) had been practicing with husband Bob. Lily said she’d had a long day—was in the Hall for 12 hours, playing, as well as coaching four U.S.-Junior-Team girls. Apparently under the somewhat dim lighting, she’d become blurry-eyed—that, or she was just getting old.

**Over 40 Women**

In the Women’s over 40’s, Lily successfully defended her Championship—with one little glitch—she dropped a game to Barbara Kaminsky. Finalist Ann Alvarez, after being down 2-1 and at 10-all in the 4th in her semi’s with Puerto Rico’s Sarida Rosario only to take the deciding 5th, 11-1, was then roughed up herself by Lily. “How’d you drop that 11-8 game to Kaminsky?” I asked Lily, knowing of course that Barbara had been practicing with husband Bob. Lily said she’d had a long day—was in the Hall for 12 hours, playing, as well as coaching four U.S.-Junior-Team girls. Apparently under the somewhat dim lighting, she’d become blurry-eyed—that, or she was just getting old.

**Over 50 Women**

In the Women’s Over 50’s, last year’s two finalists fought it out again—with Bella Livshin again winning the Championship from Charlene Liu. But whereas peripatetic California coach Livshin twice straight-game escaped a protracted battle with Liu both at last year’s Open and Closed, this year’s Open final found Bella down 2-1 before pulling it out in the 5th. Nor did Livshin have it easy in the semi’s, for #1 seed Ann Alvarez (rated 2091), with her unusual thumb and forefinger-on-the-one-side-of-the-blade grip (“American style,” Bella called it), stubbornly -8, -3, 7, -9 made a match of it.

In the other semi’s, Donna Sakai, with games 1-1, pulled out a key 12-10 3rd to advance by Danuta Andrzejewksa in 4, only to lose a taut 5-gamer to Liu. Since Donna was heard to lament, “I can’t read the right spin, can’t pick the right shots,” it seems to me that husband, Dave, ought to tell her, in a nice way, that, if she wants to win as she did 40 years ago, she needs practice, plenty of practice.

**Over 60 Women**

Alvarez, though bothered by the Florida heat, often fanning herself with her racket, won the Women’s 60’s. In the semi’s, she met Suzanna Sanders who with her husband Bob (his married daughter lives in Tokyo) had recently spent a celebratory couple of weeks in Japan and Korea. “Something unfulfilled has now been filled,” Suzanna said, wreaked in stars and stripes headband. No, she wasn’t alluding to a win over Ann; rather it was her relief and pleasure that Bob’s cancer was in remission. As for her -9, -9, 7, -7 loss to Alvarez, that, she said, was because, “I have a sick head—was leading those first two games, then stupidly relaxed.”

Runner-up Andrzejewski, meanwhile, in the other semi’s, was taking down Kaminsky, 8 in the 4th. Barbara complained that she didn’t have the right playing shoes, never felt comfortable, never felt she had secure footing. Regarding her final with Alvarez, Danuta told me that one side of Ann’s racket “isn’t legal.” But the two women and their umpire agreed that if Ann, with her one-sided windshield-wiper grip, ever used that forbidden side, the point would be Danuta’s. “I’m trying to find a solution to Ann’s game,” said Danuta. “I thought maybe I could get her off balance. But she’s so difficult to play against because nobody plays like her.”

**Over 30 Men**

Y Yu Xiang either. A former 3-time Chinese National Champion—Singles (1976), Doubles (1977), Team (1978)—and a 2-time World Veterans Singles and Doubles Champion (1996 and 1998)—“Yu Xiang’s” lost none of the gutsy mental strength that...
powered him to those past Championships. Just in passing, I note that Li (2521) didn’t win the 2600’s, but by getting to Canada’s Qiang Shen in the final—with a come from behind—4, 6, 8, 9, 10 win over Jose Miguel Ramirez-Martín of Guatemala in the quarter’s, and an even grittier—7, 6, 7, 12, 9 comeback in the semi’s over Canadian Guo Peng—he sure came close.

In advancing to the final of the 30’s, #1 seed Li had 3 easy victories, but in his 2nd match, against another Guatemalan, Omar Flores, he was down 2-0 and at a precarious 10-9 in the 3rd before surviving. In Li’s half of the Draw, the Northwest’s Yang Sung, up 2-0 on Florida’s Henry Forte, just held on to win 11-9 in the 5th, while Hong Kong-based Chi-Sun Chui, with wins over Rosenzweig and Barry Dattel, continued to surprise his father, Lim Ming, who knows Chi-suns play at most once a week.

Shao Yu, the #2 seed, had more than a worrisome moment in his advance to the final—having to stop, first, Georgia’s 2404 Kwaovi Didi De Souza, 7 in the 5th, then Perez, 9 in the 5th. Along the way, Alex was 1-1 and at 10-12 with Don Hayes, 2050 winner over 51-year-old anti-armed Jim Schnorff. Although Perez was said to have beaten Shao Yu two weeks earlier, he certainly hadn’t any control in losing the first two games to him 3 and 4. But, composing himself, gaining confidence, out away from the table topspinning, he evened the match. But now Shao errs twice to give Li the game and the match. Luxi collapses, sprawls, rolls on the floor—and both Zhuang and Shao exchange looks that say it all.

Over 40 Men

As the competition grows older, “Yuxi” becomes younger, stronger—his replay of last year’s win in the 40’s is never in doubt anymore than is runner-up Barry Dattel’s sweep to the 4-game final. Li drops only one other game—to Guillermo Rosales who’d advanced by Dave Sakai after being down 2-1 and at 10-12 in the 4th, Semifinalists were Santos Shio over George Brathwaite, and 52-year-old Werner Stollenmeier who, before losing to Barry, had paid strict-neck attention to business in eliminating Larry Balyvi, 13-11 in the 4th, penholder Ray Liang, 15-13 in the 5th (beat him with long underspin balls, said Werner), and Gregg Robertshaw 11-9 in the 4th. Watching Li against Barry, you saw that he had to keep adjusting his slipping legband (he’d pulled a muscle at Tahl Leibovitz’s club), and that, when he served, his free hand came to rest against his hip. Quite stylish...as is that “Luxi” backhand that hurts astonished murmurs into spectator after spectators’ memory.

The 45-entry Under 1800 Over 40’s was won by penholder Kent Tillinghast over Ray Filz, 12-10 in the 4th in the semi’s and Lev Nosel in the final. Not only did Kent’s wife film his triumphs, but their home movies will show Kent out there practicing with his young son, Kyle, whom he’s teaching to play...shakchands. Earlier, in the 4200 Doubles, Kent (rated 1649) had gotten his first taste of high-level play (“the ball goes so much faster”) by partnering Paul David, U-2500 winner at Marty Prager’s pre-Open tournament, to a 9-11 in the 5th near win over (“Their long pips throws off your timing”) Werner Stollenmeier/Gary Harbeck, finalists to Ashu Jain/Adam Formal.

Hardbat: Over 40’s/Doubles/and Under 2000’s

The Hardbat Over 40’s saw Chris Lehman in the thick of the action—winning his semi’s against Larry Hodges, -19, 19, 16, but losing the final to Steve Berger, -18, 8, 19. Although Larry was back into writing humorous sci-fi & fantasy stories (he’s had eight published), he was pretty grim coming off the table after this all-too-real loss. He was very disappointed in his serve and follow game—but he really expected too much, trying to go from concentrating on the extensive ITTF coverage he was doing to abruptly go into a match where movement and timing were all important. Lehman, on the other hand, was as fit as you’d expect someone 55 years old to be who could run a 5K race in 18:46. If Berger, a jazz guitarist who’d been doing gigs with Bob Dorough, Musical Director of ABC’s “Schoolhouse Rock” show back in the ’70’s, hadn’t been practicing in New York with Marty Reisman and Harry Evans, he likely wouldn’t have had just that little extra focus he needed. One learns how to concentrate by playing with Mart.

Lehman, however, did win the Hardbat Doubles with Rosenzweig, whose practice session with Chris before the Cary, N.C. tourney provided an epiphany for Dave. Suddenly to his surprise he could hit a forehand—one good enough to beat Eric Owens there and win $300. Here, what with Chris able to open a topspin ball and Dave, following up with a smile and swing of vicious abandon, they socked Berger/Hodges silly, then prevailed over Jain/John Jarema in the final in 3.

“If we’re playing “Classic Hardbat,” said Peter Markus on returning to the Game after a long absence (he’d denizened at Reisman’s N.Y.C. Club for 13 years), “why aren’t we playing with a 38mm ball?” The Under 2000 Class Hardbat went to #1 seed Bruce Liu, 14, 9, 12, over 63-year-old John
Harrington from Phoenix who’d knocked out Tim Boggan. “Remember 1977?” John said to me after our match. Uh...yeah? “When you beat me, you told me defense wasn’t enough, I had to have an attack.” So now, with wife Lorraine as his project manager, he banged backhands through me.

Over 50 Men’s Singles & Doubles

Over 50’s winner Li cruised into his final without losing a game—beating along the way his Doubles partner, Long Island’s 58-year-old Dan Green (for 30 years, Dan said, his Huntington Club had met at Finley Junior High, only recently to be no longer welcome, the gym space given over to the school’s marching band). Dan, whose son Justin won the 1450’s, scored a thrilling 15-13 in the 5th upset of Hank McCoullum after Hank had 12-10 in the 4th ousted Carlos Estrada. Meanwhile, Lim Ming Chu, who could be seen relaxing, hitting reunion balls with his daughter Jane, a former U.S. Intercollegiate Champion, had better tighten up, or not tighten up. In his semi’s against the discombobulating Chris Lehman, Ming got off to an 11-13 bad start, but 11-9 in the 5th righted himself just in time. After which, for a moment there in the final, at 1-1 and 9-10 in the 3rd, it appeared Ming would rather Li than Chris.

In the 50 Doubles, Chui and Homer Brown 5-game advanced past Estrada/Chu Bin Hai, only to lose to Li/Green. Anyway, be assured that Homer, attending his 37th straight U.S. Open and, perhaps because of that, or his encouraging Bumpeners bumped-up season, was making his usual Trojan-court, psych-up sounds during play. As in the 40 Doubles, which Luxi/Dan had won over visiting Germans Reinhold Braun/Karl-Josef Assenmacher, so also in the 50 Doubles did they stop Defending Champions Dick Hicks/Hank McCoullum—with Dan, whom Li has been coaching since he had his old club in Port Washington, Long Island, helping mightily by often keeping Hank from hitting to Li. Earlier, Dick/Hank had scored two 5-gamers. One over Marv Leff and his friend Stollmenmeier, a Florida resident who’d learned to play in his native Germany, and who going into the 5th game of this doubles disconcertingly lost the right nose pad to his glasses. The other over the established partnership of Gary Harbeck/Steve Federico who’d made the semi’s by downing Brathwaite/Sakai in 5. Gary pointed out that he and Steve had beaten George and Dave two years ago— “We had all our notes and were ready,” he said straight-faced.

Over 60 Men

In the Men’s 60’s, Defending Champion Hicks, unchallenged, reached the final. His semi’s opponent, Elman Concepcion, said a Cuban coach had told him how to beat Dick, but he hadn’t taken the fellow’s advice. “What’d he say?” I asked naively—and got the answer I should have expected, a silent smile. Elman had beaten Jose Francisco Cortes the round before (“I really think Concepcion practices nets and edges,” said Frank). But Cortes did o.k., despite open-heart surgery that had severely curtailed his playing, he’d upset 68-year-old Houshang Bozorgzadeh, 14-12 in the 5th. Perhaps before they could shake hands, Houshang came running over to my court, asking if the event wasn’t best of 7 games. (The former Iranian National cum U.S. Captain/Coach wouldn’t be shut out completely though—would partner Hicks to a win in the 60 Doubles over Brathwaite/Leff.) On the other side of the Draw, Brathwaite, down 1-0 and at 10-all in the 2nd with Alan Grambo, had a delayed adjustment. “These old timers don’t allow you to play any rhythmic game,” said The Chief. It wasn’t only Alan’s strategy (hooking his forehand, or forcing George to his backhand side), it was his funny-rubber racket (he bakes it? thought George) that Brathwaite had to get used to. George’s semi’s opponent, two-wing looper Mike Greene, who I remember as a staunch supporter of the U.S. both at the ’71 Nagoya and ’73 Sarajevo World’s, startled George from 3-game start to finish, “Aren’t you in the wrong event?” The Chief said to the very youthful-looking 65-year-old whom he beat 3, 4, 12. Mike of course was the more bouncy-buoyant for having just upset Marv Leff 12-10 in the 5th.

The Hicks/Brathwaite final, someone said, was a “classic match”—though not of course a hardbat one, since Dick was using Stiver and Friendship 755. Backhand pushes, pushes, pushes from both, forehand top from George, more pushes, more topspin from George, every once in a while an attempted hit by one or the other (a point or two either way producing a significant swing)—that was the patient pattern of the match...including a very long last point won by George. While Dave Sakai was suggesting to Brathwaite that he ought to open to Hicks’s middle, force him to make a decision how to receive, Dick might have been thinking what at the end he was humorously saying, “I thought I had a chance when Dave started to coach George.”

Over 70 Singles & Doubles

Though eligible for the 70’s, Brathwaite declined to play—felt it “degrading” that there was no cash prize offered for this U.S. Open event. The #1 seed, therefore, was Marv Leff who practically had a bye to the final. In
The match started with some confusion for spectators. It was bad enough trying to keep track of the two Koreans with similar names, Kim Hye Hyun and Kim Jung Hyun. However, “Jung” apparently had run out of shirts and borrowed her teammate’s, so both shirts said “Kim Hye Hyun” on the back.

The “fake” Hye ("Jung") was right-handed, and shorter than her lefty partner. Both are shakehand players. Jung is 19, the real Hye is 21.

The two came in unseeded, but took out the second-seeded Hong Kong team of Lau Sui Fei/Song Ah Sim in the first round, -10,11,7,9,-7,6,6. They advanced to the Final with wins over Singapore’s Li Jia Wei/Park Mi Young, 11,11,6,9,9; and over another Singapore team in the semifinals, Tan Paeyern/Zhang Xueling, 9,11,13,8.

In the Final, the Koreans faced the top-seeded team of Tie Yuna/Zhang Rui from Hong Kong, who’d won all three of their matches 4-1. Whenever the Koreans would score, they had sort of a soft yell they’d do, which sounded like “Aah” spoken with a guttural voice. In the first game, they were only able to do this four times as Tie/Zhang won game one 11-4.

However, the Koreans battled back. At 9-all in the second, Zhang missed a forehand, and Tie missed a backhand, and it was all tied up. The Koreans romped in game three, 10-8, after a time-out. But it didn’t help. At 8-7 they had turned against them as well. At 8-7 they had an edge ball winner for Hong Kong, which wins the match for Hong Kong, 4-9,5,5,9.

"We were lucky, getting the net and the edge," Tie said of the last game. “Tactically, we started pushing long more at the end, and they seemed to have trouble with that.”

Women’s Doubles

Champions

Zhang Rui & Tie Yuna of Singapore

U.S. Open Coverage Continues on Page 66

USA TABLE TENNIS MAGAZINE • September/October 2005
If you believe you should be on the Olympic Eligible list, contact Ben Grigore at USATT, 719-866-4583, technical@usatt.org. You must be an Olympic Eligible USATT member and have played in the past year to be on the list.

**TOP OLYMPIC ELIGIBLE MEN**

1. NY 2708 Zhuang, David
2. MD 2489 Cheng, Yinghua
3. CA 2497 Seemiller, Daniel
4. CA 2399 Huang, Yao Xi
5. CA 2607 Hazinski, Mark
6. TX 2339 Golic, Biljana
7. OR 2285 Yang, Simone
8. NY 2282 Sung, Virginia Wei-Ni
9. NJ 2272 Hugh, Judy
10. CA 2267 Zhao, Hong
11. CO 2252 Elliott, Ali
12. CA 2245 Wang, Heather Hua
13. IL 2497 Leibovitz, Tahl
14. CA 2435 Banh, Tawny
15. CA 2206 Chen, Diane Dongye
16. CA 2169 Do, Michelle
17. MD 2132 Wu, Katherine
18. KS 2103 Xiao, Laura (Jingyao)
19. CA 2087 Wei, Barbara
20. WA 2062 Lei, Lani
21. CA 2089 Umeda, Priscilla
22. NY 2241 Tran, De
23. CA 2069 Umel, Priscilla
24. CA 2069 Umel, Priscilla
25. CA 2054 Alvarez, Ann

**TOP WOMEN**

1. MD 2651 Gao, Jun
2. MI 2483 Reed, Jasna
3. NJ 2449 Yip, Lily
4. CA 2435 Banh, Tawny
5. CA 2399 Huang, Yao Xi
6. TX 2339 Golic, Biljana
7. CA 2385 Lee, Jacqueline
8. CA 2316 Ping, Whitney
9. OR 2316 Fang, Simone
10. NY 2282 Sung, Virginia Wei-Ni
11. NJ 2272 Hugh, Judy
12. CA 2267 Zhao, Hong
13. CA 2242 Elliot, Ali
14. CA 2245 Wang, Heather Hua
15. CA 2206 Chen, Diane Dongye
16. CA 2169 Do, Michelle
17. MD 2132 Wu, Katherine
18. KS 2103 Xiao, Laura (Jingyao)
19. CA 2087 Wei, Barbara
20. WA 2062 Lei, Lani
21. CA 2089 Umeda, Priscilla
22. NY 2058 Panicz, Svetlana
23. CA 2054 Alvarez, Ann
24. CA 2092 Kye, Moji

**TOP OLYMPIC ELIGIBLE WOMEN**

1. MD 2651 Gao, Jun
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4. CA 2435 Banh, Tawny
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7. CA 2385 Lee, Jacqueline
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9. NJ 2272 Hugh, Judy
10. CA 2242 Elliot, Ali
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12. CA 2223 Kretschmer, Maria
13. CA 2206 Chen, Diane Dongye
14. CA 2103 Xiao, Laura (Jingyao)
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17. MD 2087 Wei, Barbara
18. NC 2087 Wei, Barbara
19. CA 2080 Fong, Kyna
20. NY 2058 Panicz, Svetlana
21. CA 2089 Umeda, Priscilla
22. FL 2035 Deizio Infante, Marisol F.
23. CA 2017 Livshin, Bella
24. MD 2008 Liu, Challen Xiaoying
25. NJ 2009 Shih, Stephanie

**Tournaments Processed**

This list was compiled on 08/05/05 (ages are as of that date) and includes all tournaments received through 07/24/05. Due to space limitations, only current members who have played since 04/11/05 are included. This document may not be reproduced without prior written permission of USA Table Tennis. Copyright 2005.

**New Tournaments Included in Ratings**

| Ctrl FL Summer Open & FL Cup Team Champ | Brooklyn July Open | Sportsfest IX 2 Player Team Open | Georgia Games | 1st Annual Wild Bill Hickok Open | Cary Open Giant RR Jamboree #5 | US Open | So. FL US Open Warm Up Tournament | CITTC Independence Day Open | Framingham TTC June Open | NYC 2005 Open | Stiga Open | California Open | 2005 NC State Games | Scenic City Open | Virginia State Championships | Schaumburg Summer RR | 2005 Rose City Open | Maryland Circuit | Meiklejohn National Seniors Open | Canton Giant RR | Charlotte TTC Open Benefit | 2005 Bob Viducich WA Open |

**Ratings Questions?**

You can now search for all your results online at www.usatt.org. Should you have any ratings-related questions, contact Felisa I luuizins, USATT Headquarters, One Olympic Plaza, Colorado Springs, CO 80909. To find out your rating if you cannot access our website, send a self-addressed, stamped postcard with your name and the date of your last tournament. You may also contact us at 719-866-4583 or by e-mail at ratings@usatt.org.
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<td><strong>ALL-TIME FAVORITE</strong></td>
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CA 1692 Sturtevant, Mike NY 1624 Style, Joseph
OH 1670 Stumpp, Kurt AL 1179 Stremmel, Timothy
FL 2121 Stollenmeier, Werner KS 1452 Stoker, Larry CA 1607 Thai, Khoan A
MI 1631 Stewart, Sidney NY 1731 Steinsdoerfer, Reinhard PA 1957 Steiner, Samuel L
AZ 864 Springer, Keith KS 1012 Spencer, Douglas C.
FL 1740 Spann, Ray D. NY 1813 Tan, Carl
IL 1608 Sosnowski, Marion CA 1368.Somerville, Sunny B.
CA 824 Somerville, Sunny E CA 1990 Tal, Vincent CT 1242 Trusiewicz, Mike
CA 1109 Sneer, Ken R. CA 1514 Thornton, William
CA 1746 Tran, Huy
NY 1594 Tran, Van
CA 1224 Tran, Quang
NY 1783 Tran, Vang J.
CA 1757 Vagudeva, Tarun
CA 1006 Suzuki, Chiyako
CA 1081 Sung, Monica
NY 1436 Sung, Yoon-Jean
MD 609 Stagg, John KS 1728 Taplin, George Earl
NY 1017 Xiong, Xing IN 1720 Zhang, Youyan
CA 1322 Zhou, Hai Feng FL 1489 Stojanovic, Milan
MD 1840 Wu, Rita CA 1322 Zhou, Hai Feng
CA 1910 Tran, Huy
NY 1364 Tran, Pho
CA 1054 Tran, Vu
CA 1536 Tran, Xuan M.
CA 1910 Tran, Xuan M.
CA 1734 Tran, Huy
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September 3-4 – Maryland Circuit, Eldersburg, MD. Contact: Yvonne Kronlage, 410-489-7291. 0 Star

September 3-4 – Kam Man Cup/Metropolitan Open Teams, Suffern, NY. Contact: Lify Yip, 732-748-9712. atlantv96@msn.com. 0 Star

September 10 – Cary Open Giant RR Jamboree, Apex, NC. Contact: Jim McQueen Jr., 919-787-3788. jmcqueen@nc rr.com. 0 Star

September 10-11 – 2005 Gateway Open, St. Louis, MO. Contact: Stan McQueen Jr., 919-787-3788. mcqueenjr@espinitech.com. 0 Star

September 11 – Brooklyn September Open, Brooklyn, NY. Contact: Brooklyn TTC, 718-421-2200. esuen1972@yahoocom. 0 Star

September 17 – Power Pong September Open, Fountain Valley, CA. Contact: Vi Bloom, 562-430-9026. halbloomin@dsolextreme.com. 0 Star

September 17 – Heart of FL Open TT Tour, Haines City, FL. Contact: Raymond Spann, 863-965-0760. TableTennis@verizon.net. 0 Star

September 17 – Biggest Little Reno Sparks Open, Reno, NV. Contact: Carlos Oregon, 775-851-1992. cortegon@charter.net. 0 Star

September 17-18 – Newy Robo-Pong Open, Murfreesboro, TN. Contact: North American Table Tennis, 301-738-8250. info@natetabletennis.com. 0 Star

September 17-18 – NJTTC September Round Robin, Westfield, NJ. Contact: Larry Bavley, 908-654-9009. tournament@njttc.org. 0 Star

September 18 – Framingham TTC September Open, Framingham, MA. Contact: Sanjay Dixit, 508-521-1464. sanjay@framinghamittc.com. 0 Star

September 24 – Maryland Giant RR, Eldersburg, MD. Contact: Yvonne Kronlage, 410-489-7291. 0 Star

September 24-25 – 6th Annual Willoughby Hills Giant RR Open. Willoughby Hills, OH. Contact: Ron Arcaro, 440-585-9625. tjarc@rocketmail.com. 0 Star

October 1 – Arkansas Open, Little Rock, AR. Contact: Eugene Atoh, 501-835-5291. eartha@swbell.net. 0 Star

October 1-2 – 2005 Spinmania, Shelton, CT. Contact: Michael Lalvani, 404-895-7746. Michael@espinitech.com. 0 Star

October 2 – 2005 Concord Cup Youth Open, Pleasant Hill, CA. Contact: Phillip Hudson, 925-689-7463. philhicks@hotmail.com. 0 Star

October 3-7 – Huntsman World Senior Games, St. George, UT. Contact: Merrill Barney, 800-562-1206. bwgs@infowest.com. 0 Star

October 8 – Cary Open Giant RR Jamboree, Apex, NC. Contact: Jim McQueen Jr., 919-787-3788. jmcqueen@ncrr.com. 0 Star

October 8 – Maine Fall Open, Lewiston, ME. Contact: Richard Shea, 207-782-7018. rshea@aurburnsch.edu. 0 Star

October 8-9 – Canton Fall Open, Canton, OH. Contact: Gary Podos, 330-493-4530. grpong64@umconnect.com. 0 Star

October 8-9 – 20th Annual Bernard Hock/Harvest Homecoming Open, New Albany, IN. Contact: Jeff Smith, 812-923-1433. pearoo@insightbb.com. 0 Star

October 8-9 – Maryland Circuit, Eldersburg, MD. Contact: Yvonne Kronlage, 410-489-7291. 0 Star

October 8-9 – NJTTC October Open, Westfield, NJ. Contact: Larry Bavley, 908-654-9009. tournament@njttc.org. 0 Star

October 8-9 – NJTTC October Open, Westfield, NJ. Contact: Larry Bavley, 908-654-9009. tournament@njttc.org. 0 Star

October 9-10 – 2005 DFW Winter RR, Dallas, TX. Contact: Gary Luddy, 214-200-3737. garyluddy@nctc.org. 0 Star

October 9 – Cary Open Giant RR Jamboree, Apex, NC. Contact: Jim McQueen Jr., 919-787-3788. jmcqueen@ncrr.com. 0 Star

October 9 – 2005 Maryland Giant RR, Eldersburg, MD. Contact: Yvonne Kronlage, 410-489-7291. 0 Star

October 15 – Asheville Fall Open 2005, Asheville, NC. Contact: Roddy B. Lee, 828-225-1744. leery@bellsouth.net. 0 Star

October 15 – 2005 MDTTTC Fall Open, Gaithersburg, MD. Contact: Wei Xiao, 301-916-4861. wxiaoxiao42@hotmail.com. 0 Star

October 15-16 – 2005 MDTTTC Fall Open, Gaithersburg, MD. Contact: Wei Xiao, 301-916-4861. wxiaoxiao42@hotmail.com. 0 Star

November 19 – Sunburst Tour 2005 #6, Clearwater, FL. Contact: Margo Lindsay, 727-669-0899. pongboy@tampabayrr.com. 0 Star

November 19 – 2005 DFW Winter RR, Irving, TX. Contact: Donna Chen, 214-240-5975. dfwttc@sbcglobal.net. 0 Star

November 20 – Brooklyn November Open, Brooklyn, NY. Contact: Brooklyn TTC, 718-421-2200. esuen1972@yahoocom. 0 Star

November 25-27 – 2005 N. American Teams Open Championship, Baltimore, MD. Contact: North American Table Tennis, 301-738-8250. info@natetabletennis.com. 0 Star

December 3-4 – Maryland Circuit, Eldersburg, MD. Contact: Yvonne Kronlage, 410-489-7291. 0 Star

December 3-4 – Valley of the Sun Open, Phoenix, AZ. Contact: Wayne Johnson, 480-755-9976. wjohn@danceres.com. 0 Star

December 4 – Power Pong December Open, Fountain Valley, CA. Contact: Vi Bloom, 562-430-9026. halbloomin@dsolextreme.com. 0 Star

December 10-11 – NJTTC December Round Robin, Westfield, NJ. Contact: Larry Bavley, 908-654-9009. tournament@njttc.org. 0 Star

December 11 – Brooklyn December Open, Brooklyn, NY. Contact: Brooklyn TTC, 718-421-2200. esuen1972@yahoocom. 0 Star

December 18 – Framingham TTC December Open, Framingham, MA. Contact: Sanjay Dixit, 508-561-1464. tournament@massctc.com. 0 Star

December 14-17 – 2005 USA Nationals Championships, Las Vegas, NV. Contact: USA TT Headquarters, 719-866-4583. usatt@usatt.org. 0 Star
**Women Under 21**

By Larry Hodges

Korea dominated the event, with three of the four semifinalists, with only France’s Carole Grundisch stopping their sweep. However, while she would battle in the semifinals, it would be an all-Korean final.

Grundisch contributed to the Korean sweep by taking out the top seed, Singapore’s Sun Bei Bei, ranked #25 in the world in women’s singles – that’s open women, not under 21. Grundisch had a long struggle with Sun before prevailing, -7,7,4,-6,-8,5,8.

In the semifinals, she faced Kim Jung Hyun in a battle of shakehand loopers. Kim won the first two easily, but Grundisch won the next two before Kim won the fifth and coasted in the sixth. Match to Kim, 7,4,-5,-10,8,2. After the match, the Korean coach spoke with Kim for a long time as Kim attentively listened.

Asked what she needed to do to win the match, Grundisch said, “Concentrate better. It was very late, and we were playing in a big hall full of tables, with all the other tables empty. I couldn’t concentrate.” Asked about Kim’s game, she said, “She has good serves and a very good forehand. I thought that her shots would be faster, but actually they weren’t so fast, and I had some trouble with that. I was able to win on my serve. On her serve, she had trouble when I pushed deep to her backhand.”

The other semifinals was between Koreans Lee Min Hee and Lee Eun Hee, which went the full seven before Lee prevailed, -7,-7,4,8,-9,9,8.

**Men Under 21**

*Training Leads to Victory*  By Larry Hodges

The top two seeds in the Men’s Under 21 ITTF Pro Tour were from Slovakia. Yet, when the final was reached, it was an all-Korean final.

Both Slovaks made it to the semifinals. Top-seeded Peter Sereda defeated Canada’s Faazil Kaasam in the 8ths and France’s Christopher Bérint in the quarterfinals, both 4-1. However, the tide turned there as Korean penhold looper Kim Tae Hoon won, also 4-1, -11,8,8,8,12.

Second-seeded Pistej Lubomir had a tougher time reaching the final, going seven games in the 8ths against Brazil’s Casuo Matsumoto (the one who’d had Martin Monrad 7-2 in the 7th in the Men’s Pro Tour), and again in the quarterfinals against Korea’s Lee Jin Kwon. Matsumoto had led 3-2 before Lubomir won the next two easily in winning -5,9,-9,10,-8,7,7. Lee had led 3-1 before Lubomir again turned it on, winning the last three easily as he won -9,8,-11,6,7,3,7.

In the semifinals, Lubomir again found himself down 3-1, and again turned it on as he won the next two easily. He almost pulled off the comeback, but Korea’s Cho Eon Rae won the last game 11-9 to reach the final, 10,7,-8,7,-3,-7,9.

So the all-Korean final was between shakehand looper Cho Eon Rae and penhold looper Kim Tae Hoon, with shakehand Cho winning, 9,-9,6,7,7. Kim played his penhold backhand conventionally (same side for forehand and backhand). When I later asked Lee Chul Seung about this, he said that most Korean penholders still play their backhands that way, but a few were experimenting with the reverse penhold backhands pioneered by the Chinese.

Both Cho and Kim had excellent receive, with angled flips and short drop shots. However, it was their acrobatic footwork that was most impressive. Korea often seems to have the fastest and fittest players. How do they do it?

I spoke with Korean team member Lee Chul Seung, who explained their training program. He said that the Korean National Team and Youth Team train together. While the top youth players usually hit among themselves, sometimes they hit with the top players. On Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, there is a morning and afternoon training session. On Wednesdays and Saturdays, there is only a morning session, with Sundays off except when there are tournaments.

In addition to the training sessions, they do intense physical training. On Mondays and Thursdays, they do interval training, which means sprints (usually 100 meters) and side-stepping drills over and over. On Tuesdays and Fridays, they do circuit training – sit-ups, pushups, squat thrusts, more side-step drills, and other exercises. On Wednesdays and Saturdays, they do long distance running. They also do weight training as a team once a week, with players doing additional training on their own.

Lee said that to develop speed, circuit training with sprints and side-stepping are most important. For side-step training, he suggested players side-step side to side between two tables, touching each table with the opposite hand, and doing this as fast as possible.

The next time you see Ryu Seung Min (2004 Olympic Men’s Singles Gold Medalist) and wish you could move that fast, now you know what it takes.
Youth Events

By Larry Hodges

Canada’s Qiang Shen, who recently immigrated from China, easily won 18 & Under Boys, defeating USA #1 junior Adam Hugh in the final, 13,7,6. He also won Under 2600, defeating senior star Li Yuxiang in the final 7,5,4,9. (Li would win FIVE senior events! See senior article.) In the semifinals, Qiang defeated USA #1 Under 22 player Mark Hazinski, 10,12,7,12.

USA’s Jeff Huang dominated the 15 & Under Boys’ Singles event, never losing more than a game to anyone. In the final, he defeated Don James Alto, 6,6,7,6. Jeff also won Under 2400 over Hector Gatica, 3,6,7,9,8.

USA’s Don James Alto swept 13 & Under Boys’ Singles & Doubles, in addition to making the 15 & Under Boys’ Singles Final. He won the final over A.J. Brewer, 2,8,7. The only game he lost in the event was in the semifinals against Yahoo Zhang, where he won 8,11,9. In Doubles, he teamed with A.J. Brewer to barely pull out a 7,4,8,3,10 win (from down 8-10 match point) over Marcus Jackson/Yahao Zhang. A.J. Brewer also made the semifinals of 15 & Under Boys’ Singles, while his brother, Christopher, made the final of 9 & Under Boy’s Singles, losing to Peru’s Patricio Torres Zevallos, 6,8,6.

USA’s Lily Zhang only won one event – 9 & Under Girls’ Singles, 3,3,3 over Erica Wu – but she also made the final of 11 & Under Girls’ Singles, barely losing to Carelyn Cordero, 7,8,16,9,6. Matching her was Canada’s Li Zecong, who won 15 & Under Girls’ Singles over Canada’s Shirley Yan (5,15,10,8) and made the final of 18 & Under Girls’ Singles, losing to Canada’s Sara Yuen, 8,12,10,5.

Other champions included 11 & Under Boys’ Champion Ilya Moundous, 7,7,4 over Santiago Sevilla Herrera; 13 & Under Girls’ Champion Alicia Wei, 9,3,5 over Andrea Mawyin Juez; and 15 & Under Doubles Champions Jorge Mino Puga/Dino Suarez-Aviles, 6,10,7,2 over Jeff Huang/Steven Chan.

Korea dominated Under 21 Men’s and Women’s Singles with a pair of all-Korean finals. In Under 21 Men’s, it was Cho Eon Rae (who also made the final 16 in Men’s Singles) over Kim Tae Hoon, 9,9,6,7,7; in Under 21 Women’s it was Lee Eun Hye (who also made the final 16 in Women’s Singles) over Kim Jung Hyun, 4,4,6,8,7,9,8.

There were also the Under 30 events – designed to keep out most of the aging USA National Team? Or a popular event with a very large field? In Under 30 Men, it was Mark Hazinski nining it over Adam Hugh, 9,9,9,9; in Under 30 Women, it was Huang Yao Xi over Judy Hugh, 3,7,7.
**ITTF Pro Tour**

**Men's Singles** - Final: Oh Sang Eun (KOR) d. Lee Jung Woo (KOR), -11,4,8,6,5; SF: Oh d. Vladimir Samsonov (BLR), -8,4,8,6,5; Lee d. Martin Monrad (DEN), 7,4,-9,11; QF: Oh d. Chen WeiXing (AUT), 9,7,6,-6,8; Samsonov d. Jens Lundqvist (SWE), 11,6,7,9; Lee d. Fedor Kuzmin (RUS), 4,-9,8,9,5; Monrad d. Gao Ning (SIN), 9,7,12,-6,10,8; Samsonov d. Torben Worsak (GER), 8,5,10,8,8; Lundqvist d. Damien Eloi (FRA), 10,9,11,6,8,5,8; Chen d. Christophe Legout (FRA), 5,9,5,9; Oh d. Thomas Keinath (GER), 5,-10,12,9,7,7; Kuzmin d. Yoo Jae Young (KOR), 8,8,12,5,7,7; Lee d. Cho Eon Rae (KOR), 3,7,7,8,10,10; Gao d. Par Gerell (SWE), 9,6,6,8,8; Monrad d. Panagiotis Gionis (GRE), 3,10,9,9,8,16; Samsonov d. Robert Svensson (SWE), 2,8,7,4; Wosik d. Magnus Molin (SWE), 7,3,7,7,6; Eliot d. Peter Serveda (SWE), 11,5,8,3; Lundqvist d. Yannick Vostes (BEL), 9,7,6,6,5; Chen d. Lubomir Pijetek (SWE), 10,6,3,5; Legout d. Johan Axelqvist (SWE), 4,9,7,8,8,3; Keinath d. Patrick Chila (FRA), 12,2,7,9,9,6,9; Oh d. Christian Larsen (DEN), 7,5,7,6,9,9; Yoon d. Jean-Michel Saive (BEL), 7,10,6,6,4,4; Kuzmin d. Loic Bollifiet (FRA), 8,8,8,6,6; Lee d. Jung Woo (KOR), 8,8,9,9,6; Cho d. Alexei Smirnov (RUS), 7,2,7,5,7; Gao d. Stef Feth (GER), 7,8,8,10,10; Gerdal d. Robert Gardos (AUS), 8,10,9,2,2; Gionis d. Zoltan Fejer-Konnerth (FRA), 7,8,7,6,7,2,3; Monrad d. Chuan Chih-Yuan (TPE), 6,8,-8,6,6,7,7.

**Women's Doubles** - Final: Oh Sang Eung/Lee Jung Woo (KOR) d. Lee Chul Seung/Yoo Chang Jae (KOR), 6,4,9,5; SF: Oh/Lee d. Fedor Kuzmin/Alexei Smirnov (RUS), 7,7,10,9,9; Lee/Yoo d. Patrick Chila/Damien Eloi (FRA), def. (injury to Chila); QF: Chila/Eliot d. Chen WeiXing/Robert Gardos (AUT), 6,7,8,-3,5,10,10; Lee/Yoo d. Christophe Berti/Loic Bollifiet (FRA), 11,13,9,11,9; Lee/Lee d. Rodolphe Despres/Christophe Legout (FRA), 7,6,9,3,9,9; Kuzmin/Samsonov d. Magnus Molin/Robert Svensson (SWE), 8,3,5,10,9,4.

**Senior Events**

**Over 30 Men's Singles** - Final: Li Yuxiang d. Shao Yu, 9,-11,-9,11; SF: Li d. Chi-Sun Chiu, 8,8,6; Shao d. Alexis Perez, 3,4,-8,-7,9; QF: Li d. Sung Yang, 7,1,7,5,15; Chiu d. Barry Dettel, 9,8,9; Perez d. Alexander Zamora, 12,8,6,3,6,6,7.

**Over 40 Men's Singles** - Final: Li Yuxiang d. Barry Dettel, 9,-2,5,3,3; SF: Li d. Santos Shili, 7,7,8; Dettel d. Werner Stollmeiner, 9,5,7; Li d. Sung Yang, 8,8,7,3; Shi d. George Brathwaite, 8,7,10,9,3; Dettel d. Eyal Adini, 6,3,8,8; Stollmeiner d. Greg Robitshaw, 11,9,9,9.

**Over 50 Men's Singles** - Final: Li Yuxiang d. Lim Ming Chui, 7,10,9,4; SF: Li d. Daniel Green, 7,6,6,5; Chiu d. Christopher Lehman, 11,6,5,9; Lehman d. George Brathwaite, def.; Chiu d. David Sakai, 7,1,12.

**Over 60 Men's Singles** - Final: George Brathwaite d. Richard Hicks, 8,10,4,3; SF: Brathwaite d. Michael Greene, 8,9,4,4; Hicks d. Eyal Adini, 8,3,8; Shao d. Christopher Lehman, 11,9,9,9.

**Over 70 Singles** - Final: Mandin Leung Lynwood Smith, 9,9,6,3.

**ITTF Pro Tour Under 21 Men's Singles** - Final: Cho Eon Rae (KOR) d. Kim Tae Hoon (KOR), 9,9,6,7,7; SF: Cho d. Lubomir Pijetek (SVEK), 10,7,8,3,3,3; Kim d. Peter Serveda (SVK), 11,8,8,8,12,12; SF: Serveda d. Christine Bertin (FRA), 2,8,9,7,5; Kim d. Loie Bolibolff (FRA), 9,9,9,9; Cho d. Johanne Axelqvist (SWE), 12,9,9,10,10; Lubimir Pijet Li Jin Kwon (KOR), 9,8,11,5,7,7.

**ITTF Pro Tour Under 21 Women's Singles** - Final: Lee Eun Hee (KOR) d. Kim Jung Hyun (KOR), 4,4,-6,8,7,9,9; SF: Lee d. Kim Min Hee (KOR), 4,7,4,9,9,9; Kim d. Jung Hyun Carole Grundisch (SWE), 7,4,5,10,-8,12,4,2; Grundisch d. Sun Bei Bei (SIN), 7,7,4,6,8,8,5; Kim d. Nathalie Cahoreau (FRA), 5,5,4,9,7; Min Iice d. Laura Stumper (GER), 11,9,8,4.

**Youth Events**

**Under 30 Men's Singles** - Final: Mark Hazinski d. Adam Hugh, -9,9,9,9; SF: Hazinski d. Samson Dubina, -2,7,8,4,3; Hugh d. Jose Miguel Ramirez-Marin, 12,8,6,8; QF: Ramirez-Marin d. Kim Bong Geun, 6,4,6; Hugh d. Kevin Farley, 8,9,7; Dubina d. Jake Roberts, 6,4,12; Hazinski d. Lester Sanjay, 8,6,8,4,6.

**Under 30 Women's Singles** - Final: Huang Yao Xiao d. Judy Hugh, 7,7,8,3; SF: Huang d. Nan Li, 3,7,7; Hugh d. Dan Zhang, 10,2,8,7,8,4; QF: Huang d. Diana Li, 1,2,3; Li d. Mimi Bosika, 10,12,9,9,10; Wang d. Andrea Muralles Estrada, 4,6,5; Hugh d. Maria Jose Solares, 8,5,5.

**ITTF Pro Tour Under 21 Men's Singles** - Final: Cho Eon Rae (KOR) d. Kim Tae Hoon (KOR), 9,9,6,7,7; SF: Cho d. Lubomir Pijetek (SVEK), 10,7,8,3,3,3; Kim d. Peter Serveda (SVK), 11,8,8,8,12,12; SF: Serveda d. Christine Bertin (FRA), 2,8,9,7,5; Kim d. Loie Bolibolff (FRA), 9,9,9,9; Cho d. Johanne Axelqvist (SWE), 12,9,9,10,10; Lubimir Pijet Li Jin Kwon (KOR), 9,8,11,5,7,7.

**ITTF Pro Tour Under 21 Women's Singles** - Final: Lee Eun Hee (KOR) d. Kim Jung Hyun (KOR), 4,4,-6,8,7,9,9; SF: Lee d. Kim Min Hee (KOR), 4,7,4,9,9,9; Kim d. Jung Hyun Carole Grundisch (SWE), 7,4,5,10,-8,12,4,2; Grundisch d. Sun Bei Bei (SIN), 7,7,4,6,8,8,5; Kim d. Nathalie Cahoreau (FRA), 5,5,4,9,7; Min Iice d. Laura Stumper (GER), 11,9,8,4.

18 & Under Boys' Singles - Final: Qiang Shen d. Adam Hugh, 11,3,6,10,7; SF: Qiang d. Pierre-Luc Hinse, 8,6,9; Hugh d. Peng Guo, 8,7,3,3; Hugh d. Peter Chiu, 3,5,7; Gao j. John Leach, 6,8,9,5; Hinse d. Steven Chan, 6,8,9; Qiang d. Sean Lee, 3,5,7.

15 & Under Boys' Singles - Final: Jeff Huang d. Don James Alto, 8,6,6,6,7,8; SF: Huang d. Sean Lee, 8,8,6; Alto d. A.J. Brewer, 8,9,2; QF: Alto d. Jorge Mino Puga, 8,5,4,9,4; Brewer d. Dino Suvarez-Aviles, 4,10,8,5,9; Lee d. Marcus Jackson, 9,7,7,7,13; Huang d. Yao Zhao, 3,7,4.

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**USA TABLE TENNIS MAGAZINE** • September/October 2005
13 & Under Boys' Singles - Final: Don James Alto d. A.J. Brewer, 2,8,7; SF: Alto d. Yahoo Zhang, 8,11,9; Brewer d. Marcus Jackson, 4,3-10,6,9; QF: Jackson d. Alex Wang, 5,4,6; Brewer d. Jonathan Chen, 8,4,6; Zhang d. Kevin Ma, 7,9,9; Alto d. Manuel Adorno Caraballo, 9,4,2.

11 & Under Boys' Singles - Final: Ilya Moundous d. Santiago Sevilla Herrera, 7,7,4; SF: Moundous d. Ivan Marcelo Arcos Merino, 4,6,6-10,8; Herrera d. Christopher Roberts, -10,8,8,8,3; QF: Moundous d. Mauricio Abril Ondrquez, 3,7,8; Merino d. Vikash Sahu, 9,4,5; Roberts d. Patricio Torres Zevallos, -5,3,4,6; Herrera d. Namikyo Oh, def.

9 & Under Boys' Singles - Final: Patricio Torres Zevallos d. Christopher Brewer, 6,8,6; SF: Zevallos d. Ethan Chu, 9,7,6; Brewer d. Ignacio Torres, -8,5,4,9.

18 & Under Girls' Singles - Final: Sara Yuen d. Li Zecong, 8,12,-10,5; SF: Yuen d. Barbara Wei, -10,7,7,6; Li d. Shirley Yan, 15,2,5; QF: Yan d. Judy Hugh, 8,9,-9,8,9; Li d. Andrea Muralles Estrada, 10,8,12,9; Yuen d. Laura Xiao, 6,4,7.

15 & Under Girls' Singles - Final: Li Zecong d. Shirley Yan, 5,-15,10,8; SF: Li d. Olena Sowers, 6,3,8; Yan d. Jennifer Mast, -10,5,11,10; QF: Yan d. Janice Lan, 7,4,7; Mast d. Vanessa Valladres Salgado, 8,4,9,8; Sowers d. Lyanne Aponte, 7,11,7; Li d. Alicia Wei, 5,9,11.

13 & Under Girls' Singles - Final: Alicia Wei d. Andrea Mawyn Juez, 9,3,5; SF: Wei d. Marielle Chua, 6,3,8; Mawyn d. Carisyn Cordero, 6,10,-7,9; Wei d. Leona Madison, 3,8,7; Chua d. Amy Huang,-6,-6,9,10,6; Cordero d. Lily Zhang, 9,8,-8,10; Juez d. Janice Lan, 13,8,5.

11 & Under Girls' Singles - Final: Carisyn Cordero d. Lily Zhang, 7,8,16,9,6.


15 & Under Doubles - Final: Jorge Mino Puga/Dino Suarez-Aviles d. Jeff Huang/Steven Chan, 6,0,10,-7,2; SF: Puga/Suarez-Aviles d. Sean Lee/Don James Alto, -5,10,7,6; Huang/Chan d. Marcus Jackson/Zhang Yahan, 5,6,9,10.

13 & Under Doubles - Final: Don James Alto/A.J. Brewer d. Marcus Jackson/Yahoo Zhang, 7,4,8,-3,10; SF: Alto/Brewer d. Manuel Adorno Caraballo/Carisyn Cordero, 7,4,-8,3,10; Jackson/Zhang d. Jonathan Chen/Alicia Wei, 6,6,5,8.

Hardbat Events (all games to 21)

Hardbat Singles - Final: Lily Yip d. Alexis Perez, 15,14,15; SF: Yip d. Steve Berger, 13,11,7; Perez d. Ashu Jain, 17,12,16; QF: Berger d. David Rosenweig, -19,13,19,-20,18; Jain d. Lim Ming Chui, 15,-13,18; Yip-bye; Perez-bye.


Over 40 Hardbat Singles - Final: Steve Berger d. Chris Lehman, -18,8,19; SF: Berger d. Lim Ming Chui, 8,15; Lehman d. Larry Hodges, -19,19,16.

Unbelievable! This one word sums up the 2005 Mohegan Sun Killerspin Extreme Table Tennis Championships held on May 29, 2005 at the fabulous Mohegan Sun Resort in Uncasville, CT (between New York City & Boston). Sixteen International Table Tennis Champions came from ten countries to vie for $100,000 in prize money. The men competed in four teams of three players and the women played one challenge match each.

Team Nitrx, consisting of recently crowned 2005 World Singles Champion Wang Liqin, Jorgen Persson, and Aleksandar Karakasevic, took first place honors over second place Team Smash (!Vla Lin, J-O Waldner, Ilji Lupulesku). Third and fourth place finishers respectively were Team Fury (Liu Guozlieng, Zoran Primorac, Koji Matsushita) and Team Blast (Andrei Filimon, Joo Se Hyuk, Johnny Huang). Wang Nan defeated Mihaela Steff three games to one game in one of the special ladies’ challenge matches while “Biba” Golic won over “Elie” Zainabudinova (former #1 woman from Kazagstan) in the other.

An estimated crowd of 8,000 for the combined two sessions watched in amazement as one great match followed another. Some of the highlights include: Primorac’s antics of vocally grunting with exertion during attacks against Joo while the spectators caught on quickly and grunted right along with Primorac - the bonding with the crowd was extraordinary; the decisiveness in which Karakasevic defeated Matsushita with long power and short touch - it seemed that no one, not even “Kara,” knew to which corner his backhand winner would go. The tension of the 2003 World Championship match was re-visited with Ma versus Joo (Joo defeated Ma at the Worlds and went on to make the final of men’s singles) – the crowd was alternately cheering “Joo Se Hyuk” and “Ma Lin” with each successive point until Ma pulled it out 14-12 in the fifth and the ebullient crowd began to storm the court.

The team matches culminated in Jorgen Persson battling J-O Waldner in a wonderfully entertaining match for the ages. The team standings were decided but, as Waldner revealed later, they always compete hard because the loser buys dinner. Some of Waldner’s off the table returns from 50 feet away rose 50 feet above the table and several feet to the side only to change direction and dive back onto the table – his long-time playing partner struggled to chase them down. The spectators loved the points and Persson will enjoy the dinner as the winner. The other international stars, resting after their matches, clapped and cheered in appreciation of the astounding rallies.

2005 Para Pan Ams
Mar del Plata Argentina • July 16-23, 2005
Tahl Leibovitz was named player of the Year for the America’s region for 2005.
Tahl, Mitch Seidenfeld, Norm Bass and Ed Levy qualified for the 2006 World Championships based on their Gold Medal performance in the Singles and Team events.

USA Medal Results
Men’s Class 10 Team - GOLD - Tahl Leibovitz and Mitch Seidenfeld
Men’s Class 8-9 Team - SILVER - Bob Bowlander and Duglass Younan

2005 Cerebral Palsy - ISRA World Championships
New London, CT • July 2-8, 2005
Men’s Class Team - USA (Pills & Levy) 4’11
Men’s Class Singles - Levy - Quarterfinalist
Women’s Open Singles - Rachelle Renaud 4’11
Women’s Class Singles - Rachelle Renaud 4’11
Wheelchair Singles - Kent Anderson 4’11

2005 USA Para Pan Am Team

Front: Kent Anderson
Smiles abounded everywhere. From the eager and cooperative Mohegan Sun personnel, to the amazed crowd, to the grateful competitors, to the Killerspin staff, and to the 40 volunteers, the event was a complete success. One international athlete signed the RAD table tennis table given to the Mohegan Sun Resort with: “The number one holiday resort in the world!” The fans seeking autographs numbered in the thousands and completely circled the mezzanine level of the arena. Yes, what an unbelievable event!

**Teams Semifinals**

**Nitrx d. Fury, 3-0**
- Wang Liqin d. Liu Guozheng, 10,6,8,9,5;
- Jorgen Persson d. Zoran Primorac, 5,8,5,5;
- Karakasevic d. Koji Matsushita, 9,6,6,10.

**Smash d. Blast, 3-0**
- Ma Lin d. Joo Se Hyuk, 6,5,11,11,12;
- Jan-Ove Waldner d. Johnny Huang, 4,9,9;
- Ilija Lupulesku d. Andrei Filimon, 8,8,7,10,7.

**Women's Challenge Matches**
- Wang Nan d. Mihaela Steff, -8,7,11,7;
- Biba Golic d. Elie Zainabudinova, 7,10,4.

**Teams Final**

**Nitrx d. Smash, 3-0**
- Wang Liqin d. Ma Lin, 11,9,-12,3,8;
- Karakasevic d. Ilija Lupulesku, -9,5,-8,9,8;
- Jorgen Persson d. Jan-Ove Waldner, -9,6,-11,7,8.

![Image of players in action](image1)

**Third Place**

**Fury d. Blast, 2-1**
- Liu Guozheng d. Andrei Filimon, 8,-8,9,12;
- Joo Se Hyuk d. Zoran Primorac, 11,11,-8,6;
- Koji Matsushita d. Johnny Huang, -8,-11,7,8,6.

**Scenes from the Mohegan Sun Killerspin Extreme**

Photos by Joe Daniel ©2005
Lafayette College was a wonderful host to this tournament, providing free ice water and a wonderful air conditioned playing space on a brutally hot weekend. About one hour from New York City, Easton PA seems well sited to serve the whole Northeastern table tennis community. The tournament hotel, however, was not so wonderful, having failed to inform us that they’d had a flood this spring, and surprising all their guests with cold showers on Sunday morning. So while we look forward to returning for the Lafayette Open in October, there will definitely be a new tournament hotel.

Hopefully all the same players will be back with reinforcements, because they were, without exception, wonderful to deal with, a really good crew. Good talking with Martin Theil, who is pictured in the latest Tim Boggan “History of Table Tennis.” Martin, at one time #38 in the US, now aims to have his name appear in the Top 15 lists on the senior rankings. He gave us some excellent advice, noting that the Elizabeth, PA airport was a good alternative to those listed on the entry blank. I think Martin, in addition to winning the Feingold Memorial Over 60 event, got off the line of the weekend. “Wonderful tournament, guys, but one word of advice? Lose the hotel!” Nothing but gratitude from this quarter either for Ref Terri Bell and volunteer umpires Chris Lehman and Larry Bavly.

Exceptional performances included Chris Watson’s, who double-dipped in the U-1250 and U-1100, taking first place in both. No tears either for the Friend family of New Hampshire, when father Todd took second in the U-1250, sister MacKenzie placed second in the Girls’ U-13, brother Spencer won the U-800 and the rapidly improving Chance Friend won a hard-fought final in the U-1700. Sara Yuen is always a pleasure. The young Canadian is unfailingly polite and courteous and one hell of a player. She and Larry Bavly really lit it up in the Final of the U-2250, with Sara taking a 13-11 win in the 7th game! Her compatriot Qiang Shen was amazing to watch. All he did was defeat Derek Wong (twicel) to win the Ying/Lo Junior categories of U-22 and U-18 and win a seven-gamer to take the U-2500 title away from Vladislav Boyarskiy! In fact, he gave Barney Reed and Atanda Musa all they could handle in his Open Singles Round Robin Group as well!!

The Canadians were very much in evidence, as Homayoun Kamkar-Parsi, Pradeeban Peter-Paul and Xavier Therien came through into the Open Singles Quarterfinals. Xavier made a really strong statement by hanging a loss on the tournament’s Top Seed, Women’s Champ Wang Chen, in the Second Stage Round Robin.

Quarterfinals
Xavier Therien vs. Gao Yan Jun
As mentioned, the Canadian with the strong off-the-table loop had upset Wang Chen in his Round Robin group. His “reward” was to be paired with Wang Chen’s friend from Germany, Gao Yan Jun, in the Quarterfinals. Xavier managed the first game, 11-6, but experience has shown that first game results are not much of an indicator with Gao. Patiently learning his opponent’s strengths and weaknesses, he then exploits them later in the match. This was a great match to watch, both men being very physical in their play and showing plenty of movement. But Gao emerged in five games, despite Xavier’s great effort. 6,6,8,8.

Homayoun Kamkar-Parsi vs. Atanda Musa
Kamkar-Parsi is a real annoyance ... to opponents. His close to the table play and rapid responses, his high-intensity glare and compact playing style put pressure, both tactical and mental on his opponent. Atanda Musa doesn’t have much of a reputation as a laid-back player, either! So not much of a surprise here that both men requested an umpire before their match ever began. No disappointment either. “Homie’s” short game and sudden openers were matched with Musa’s powerful forehand. Kamkar-Parsi had the better of it in the first game, 11-5, but Musa was determined to put him away. It wasn’t until the fourth game that he won through, dropping the second at 9 and a 13-11 loss in the third before lowering him 11-7 boom. Kamkar-Parsi was unshaken, however, and advanced, 5,9,11,7,8. Musa had his Over-40 money as some consolation, but was visibly irritated at not having won this match.

Adam Hugh vs. Wang Chen
Wang Chen’s loss to Xavier dropped her into the opposite bracket to face Hugh, who landed first in his Round Robin. But match time approached, and Wang Chen didn’t. Gao Yan Jun told us that a pesky back injury had nagged Wang Chen out of the competition. Spectators were disappointed to not see the two play, as local interest in the outcome was high. Nothing much memorable about a default.

Barney Reed vs. Pradeeban Peter-Paul
Peter-Paul has shown visible improvements in the past year, winning his first North American Tour title and displaying more consistent power play at each event. It’s not Barney’s good luck to step into this buzz
saw, and for the first three games he acquits himself well, although Praddy is always just a couple shots better, a few points to the good. In the fourth, the wind goes out of Barney’s sails and he has to settle for a Quarterfinalist’s money, 7,8,9,3.

**Semifinals**

**Gao Yan Jun vs. Homayoun Kamkar-Parsi**

As usual, Gao drops the first game, this time 11-5. But this match will see saw all the way to the end. Gao tries dragging Kamkar-Parsi wide, and the lefty uses every tactic he knows to make Homie cover more court, back off the table. Kamkar-Parsi’s service game is excellent, and his heart is very big, a very determined player, more likely to dive for a ball than to stand flat-footed and watch it sail away. Gao takes the second 11-5, Kamkar-Parsi strikes back 11-9 in the third. Gao seems to open up the door for his victory 11-8 and then a convincing 11-3 in the fifth to go in front 3 games to 2. But as I stated, no quit in Kamkar-Parsi! 11-8 and the two are tied three apiece. But there isn’t enough left in the tank to stand up to Gao’s withering attack, and 11-6 in the seventh game, he wins the semifinal. -5, -9,8,3,-8,6, and makes himself the first of our two finalists.

**Adam Hugh vs. Pradeeban Peter-Paul**

Finally the New Jersey element gets its chance to cheer for Adam, and shot by shot he gives them plenty to cheer! There’s no denying the skill, the dash, the fine shot-making of Adam Hugh. The problem is, and this throws a damper on his supporters, it just isn’t quite enough. Praddy, 11-9. Praddy 11-7, Praddy 11-9. But trailing in the fourth game, Adam puts pedal to the medal, and talking himself through it, takes the fourth game in deuce, 12-10. Having finally given his “peeps” a rallying point, Praddy takes it away 11-4 in the fifth and final game.

**Championship Match**

**Pradeeban Peter-Paul vs. Gao Yan Jun**

Only two players were now left in the quest for the biggest check, the title of STIGA Open Champ and the glory of “Final Victory.”

I had to feel good to see two gentlemen involved in that match, as both Gao and Peter-Paul had been “trouble-free” participants. This final also marked the deepest penetration Gao had ever mustered at a STIGA NA Tour Stop. So there was some satisfaction as well in knowing he’d have his biggest payday yet, as both players were assured of at least the $800 Finalist’s prize. Naturally though, both men were aiming for the $2,000 one!

It didn’t take long for Pradeeban Peter-Paul to claim it, as he triumphed in straight games, by scores of 7,3,8. Over the past 18 months, Pradeeban’s game has definitely taken a step forward. To me, he seems more confident, to have increased his stamina, and perhaps thinned down slightly, maybe five to ten pounds lighter than he was in 2003. His power is undiminished, but he makes wiser choices of tactics and has a faith in himself at crucial moments that might have been suspect before. From the Quarterfinals on, Pradeeban Peter-Paul dropped only one game, a 12-10 loss to Adam Hugh, in his march to the title.

We look forward to October 22nd and 23rd, and our return to this same venue for the Lafayette Open!

**Open Singles – Final:** Pradeeban Peter-Paul d. Gao Yan Jun, 7,3,8,8; SF: Peter-Paul d. Adam Hugh, 9,7,9,-10; Gao d. Homayoun Kamkar-Parsi , -5, -9,8,3,-8,6; QF: Gao d. Therien, 6,6,8,8; Kamkar-Parsi d. Atanda Musa, 5,9,11,-7,8; Hugh d. Wang, def.; Peter-Paul d. Barney J. Reed, 7,8,9,3.

**Women’s Singles:** 1st Wang Chen; 2nd Wenmin Chiu.

**Under 18, Under 22 and Under 2500**

**Champion Shen Qiang**

**Senior Champion Atanda Musa**

**Under 2375 Champion John Wetzler**

**Under 18, Under 22, Under 2500, Under 2375 Champion**

**Champion Shen Qiang**

**Senior Champion Atanda Musa**

**Under 2375 Champion John Wetzler**

**Open Champ and the glory of “Final Victory.”**

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**Women’s Singles:** 1st Wang Chen; 2nd Wenmin Chiu.

**Under 22, Chen d. Derek Won, 9,6,5,7.**

**Under 18, Chen d. Derek Won, 12,1,6,9.**

**Under 16:** 1st Janice Lan; 2nd Bryant Won.

**Boys Under 13:** 1st Preened Landers d. Vikash Sahu, -7,9,8,5,6,9.


**Under 10:** 1st Allen Wang; 2nd Dan Liang.

**Sol Feingold Memorial Senior Events**

**Over 40:** Atanda Musa d. Barry Dannell, 7,6,5,10.

**Over 50:** Lim Ming Chui d. David Sakai, 3,8,10,4.

**Over 60:** 1st Martin Theil; 2nd Fred Kistler.
The Eastern Open has a great tradition, stretching back decades. The title "Eastern Open Champion" is a prestigious and important title, with its roots deep in the history of American Table Tennis. It is my distinct pleasure to say that this year's tournament not only upheld and paid homage to that tradition, it deepened and enriched it. As is usual on the STIGA North American Tour, Tournament Operations were silky smooth. Tournament Director Tom Nguyen and Referee Pat Collins presided over a trouble-free tournament, with more than 200 players in match play. Lily Yip Sports acted as the tournament vendor on behalf of STIGA and Table Tennis Pioneers and she brought a fresh bounce of enthusiasm to the task. Her husband, Barry Dattel, was busy running the Zhiyu Hu Under 2000 Teams event on Sunday, so there were basically two tournaments running simultaneously in the hall.

Certainly, one of the elements that made this tournament more fun and more interesting was the entry of a strong Mexican contingent. Led by the well-known Guillermo Munoz and his 2486 U.S. rating, our friends from south of the border put on a fine showing. Munoz took second in Under 2500, with only Shao Yu getting the better of him. Munoz defeated Larry Bavly to take the Sol Feingold Memorial Over-40 title. Teammates Marcos Madrid and Carlos Chiu played the final match in two events, the Ying-Lo Under 22 Boys and Under 2375. In each match Marcos managed straight game victories to notch the wins. Laura Rosales and Sarah Rosas were first and second, respectively, in the Ying-Lo Under 22 Girls. Rosales added top honors in the Under 2000 rating event, a tough six-gamer over Stephen Hopkins, to complete the Mexican squad's accolades.

Everywhere you looked there were great matches and knots of spectators cheering on their friends and clubmates. Renata Peluchova exacted revenge for a loss to Judy Hugh at the New Jersey Open with a convincing victory here in the Women's Final. Legendary Lim Ming Chui had a memorable battle with Oleg Zuleskiy to win Over 50, but fell victim to Richard DeWitt in Under 2250. Chopper Deluxe Philippe Dassonval kept his promise to play his best, and gave us an exciting seven-game victory over Hing Sing Wong in the Under 2125 Final. Young Verma Rajat was always in play, advancing in several events, but posted his best effort in winning Under 1550 over Kevin Kuznetzow. That match ended with deuce games in both the sixth and seventh games!

As exciting as the undercard was, it was Open Singles that truly capped the Eastern Open with memorable moments and great play. Going into the tournament, most people expected a rematch of two great players who have done frequent battle at our Tour stops, Thomas Keinath and David Zhuang. It would have happened again, but thankfully, had David only been healthy. A sore shoulder caused him to withdraw from his qualifying Round Robin Group.

Quarterfinals

Thomas Keinath vs. Paul David

"I am ashamed," Paul said after this match. "What on earth for? I wondered? It was a terribly unlucky draw for Paul David that threw him into competition with Keinath in the first round. Not that there are any easy matches at this level! But Paul seemed to feel that he should have played better, had been outclassed. Against World #84 what is the shame in that? Thomas consistently kept Paul from putting his best forehand shots into play, and left Paul David with mixed feelings and $140, with scores of 5,5,7,5 going into the record."

Beat Stauffer vs. Chet Baboor

Stauffer came all the way from Switzerland with his friend Keinath, which produced some griping that he and Thomas were in the same bracket. "Thomas is my friend, he is like my International Bank," Beat explained as Keinath sorted through six different currencies to find a buck for the hot dog vendor. But assumptions are dangerous. Here was Chet Baboor, seemingly recovered from a recent elbow ailment and playing like a madman. All five games were very tight and competitive, but after a first game win, Stauffer could not get back on track. Sweat was pouring from Stauffer but Quarterfinal money was all he got for his exertion. Baboor advanced to meet Keinath, -9,9,7,7,10.

Guillermo Munoz vs. Adam Hugh

On table one a crowd gathered to watch these two players. One highly partisan contingent consisted, naturally, of fans of Adam’s, New Jersey compatriots rooting on their bright young hope. The other segment, swimmers from the meet in the same building, standing mesmerized and slack-jawed at the display these two mounted. There was little subtlety and a lot of firepower as Adam and Guillermo launched bomb after bomb from three steps off the table. The ball was wickedly curving, spinning, and accelerating as each exchange umped the ante. Some exchanges were so long that they were impossible to complete, as stray balls coming into the court would elicit a "let" from the umpire after eight or nine of these powerful loops from each player. Youth was served and the home folks were gratified as Adam won through, 9,5,4,6,6.

Gao Yan Jun vs. Barney Reed Jr.

Gao was fresh off his appearance at the STIGA Open in Easton in June, but Barney had gained success in this same hall in the past, taking the Eastern Open title back in 2003. This match was a real hot and cold affair. Gao spanked Reed in the first game, 11-4. Then the lefty pulls out a 16-14 win in the second, runs that a Mile further to an 11-8 win in the first game. Spanked Reed in the fit game. 11-4, Then

Open Runner-up Thomas Keinath
better when he’s mad like that,” one bystander tells me. I can’t see it. I think all the negative self-talk and exhortation distracts from the task at hand and becomes self-fulfilling. In any case, it’s Gao 7, 5, 4 in the last three games, and a Quarterfinal exit for Barney.

**Semifinals**

**Thomas Keinath vs. Chet Baboor**

Here we began to get the sense that something very special was happening. Baboor was far from steamrollered in his first two game losses, 9 and 7, but when he upped the ante by taking the third game 11-6, Baboor established two things. It was now certain that he belonged on that court with Keinath and we were going to have a contest, and Keinath’s invulnerability was punctured. Thomas is a proud player, one who knows the key to success is to win quickly and decisively, to never “play around” and let your opponent back in the match. Taking the fourth game 11-9 was a big win for him. But Baboor has some pride himself, and the crowd is cheering his dramatic 14-12 win in the next set, leaving the score now 3-2 in Keinath’s favor. You don’t get to be World Ranked by crumbling at moments like this. Baboor’s no stranger to pressure either, Commonwealth Games and Indian National Team in his background. So give credit to Thomas for fearless play and stellar execution when the chips are down! 11-4 he pounces on Chet to notch the deciding game of the six-game match. Baboor makes $320 for his finish, and as expected, Keinath is in the final.

**Adam Hugh vs. Gao Yan Jun**

This is the first meeting ever between these two players, and Adam’s home boys are all for it. See, there’s this odd thing about Gao Yan Jun. He is subject to upset when he encounters a player he’s never faced, but he extracts revenge in future meetings. Thomas Keinath acknowledged this, saying that Gao plays much better against practice partners and familiar opponents than he does against an unknown quantity. In the past, Xavier Therien, Han Xiao, Michael Oyebode, Paul David and Samson Dubina have posted wins against Gao, but his track record against those players in second meetings is much stronger, and rarely is he upset again. It’s difficult for Adam to generate any traction today, though, and 11-6, 11-6, he’s quickly down two games. The crowd gets its moment to vocalize in the third, but its still a 14-12 triumph for Gao. In fact, it’s straight games as he moves to the final with Keinath, winning the fourth 11-5. Keinath had been a frequent practice partner and had, in fact, first brought Gao to a STIGA North American Tour Event in 2004. This figures to be good!

**Championship Match**

**Thomas Keinath vs. Gao Yan Jun**

This is a wonderful match. Richard Mercado has built a full-sized Olympic court which is surrounded on four sides by spectators, three and four deep. Two excellent players face off with Chris Lehman as Umpire and we are off to the races. Keinath has such an excellent backhand, and his backhand flip over the table is deadly. 11-8, Keinath. Gao Yan Jun can really bring that forehand! Forehand to forehand he pushes Keinath wider and wider from the table with hard-breaking loops. 11-8, Gao. Thomas has world-class service, and when it really counts seems to conjure up a third-ball attack at will. 12-10 Keinath. Gao’s got a service game of his own, and his forehand flip against the short ball is magical! 11-9 Gao. Keinath is mentally tough, and is now stalking the court, talking softly to himself and pumping his fist, wanting to remove this obstacle to his title and the $2,000 check. 11-2, Keinath! Only one game from elimination, Gao must show he is mentally tough as well, plays fearlessly, even manages to make Thomas completely whiff a forehand as he shifts speeds and intensity on his loop. 11-8 Gao and it’s tied at three games apiece! What would be a storybook finish? How often can you actually have such a finish in reality? Two excellent players, displaying great skill and impeccable sportsmanship while trying with all their hearts.
to whip the other. Amazing! And the crowd knows it, fully mesmerized, loudly cheering BOTH players for each outstanding shot and play. Of course it goes 10-10 in the seventh. Gao wins his serve at deuce, and now all the pressure is on Keinath. Gao flips to the forehand, Keinath powers it back, Gao loads the return with so much topspin it dives beneath Keinath’s paddle as he forms his return and YES! 12-10 in the seventh Gao has upset the remarkable Keinath in front of a packed house. A disconsolate Keinath shakes Gao’s hand. Gao, leaping for joy in the backcourt, pockets $2,000 and the time-honored title of Eastern Open Champion.

A spectator, his eyes wide in adrenaline frenzy charges me at the desk. “Do you think?” he pants, “do you think that may be the best match you ever saw?” That’s some question to ask, no doubt fed by the roar of the crowd and the drama just ended. But honestly? You know it just might have been.

Best of all, its only a chapter in a continuing story, an unending road trip of sport that is the STIGA North American Table Tennis Tour. Now on to San Diego and the SoCal Open in August! I can hardly wait to see what happens next.


As for the running of this 4-day, 34-event tournament, we’re all indebted to those responsible: 1) to the steady hand of our Grand Dame Tournament Chair, Draw Doubles finalist Olga Khan, both abetted in her play by partner Anna Musa (“I followed his instructions—kept the ball short and in the middle; it was such fun, people supporting me; all very splendid!”) and urged on by her cornerman-husband Stan, himself a 1,300 doubles finalist with Leisure World Club Coach Lec Ngo; (2) to Tournament Director Ray Kunze who, considering that George Brathwaite had entered 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11 events, much appreciated the detective work Julius Marquis did in repeatedly tracking down “The Chief” and persuading him to “Get out to the table NOW!”; (3) to chief Control Desk operators Craig Krum, Mas Hashimoto, Marilyn Miller, and Shonie Aki (oh, what an 11, 9, 8-8, 11-10 generous match Shonie lost in the 1800’s to Larry Beatty); (4) to Tom Miller who observing me umpire said he could not in good conscience recommend me for a Blue Badge or even Belt; and (5) to Treasurer Walt Wehrli, who with a brave smile surveyed the stitches he’d had to have put in after he’d made the mistake of standing next to someone who’d made the mistake of getting in Dave Sakai’s way as, with reckless abandon, Dave went scrambling for a ball and Wehrli went wildly, “Sorry, but I can’t watch you play any more,” said Walt to Dave.

Opening day’s play among the 90-year-olds (no entry fee for them) saw Frank Buchanan (rated 425) gamely go up against his remarkable Clubmate Harry Bloom (1521) and average a respectable 5 points. The 7-entry 85’s went, as expected, to one of the weekend’s California Hall of Fame recipients, Ivan Slade, over Leo Egel who’d advanced by out-hitting Bloom. In the Under 1100’s, won by Fidel Vargas (rated 24 in a field of 26), Leo lost to the runner-up Don Bourassa, and in the 1200’s, won by Bourassa, Leo lost in 5 to the runner-up Ken Snaer.

Apparently Slade couldn’t get to the Clubhouse 5 venue by 10:00 a.m. Thursday, so didn’t enter the 80’s. That event went to unraked Rudy Ceja—in the semi’s over Marty Reisman’s good friend and fellow aficionado at Lawrence’s famed New York City Club, Dave Hartman, and in the final over former L.A. club owner, coach, and U.S. World Team Captain Si Wasserman.

Nor did Slade win the 20-75’s. After getting by me in 5, he went down in the final to Dick Peregrine who, despite years ago it seems, one lung lost to cancer, says he’s feeling great—and, as if to prove he’s got no stamina problems, not only took his time with Slade, but down 2-0 in the semi’s to Neil Smyth, rallied to eke out a 12-10 in the 5th escape—this after Neil himself, taking iron pills now to combat his earlier acute anaemia, had ousted Byng Forsberg in 5. But so Byng momentarily put his racket away; he’d soon be taking it out again from his European-Camper Volkswagen, or rather the campy sports bag shaped like that vehicle he’d gotten from the Volkswagen agency.

Best matches in the 70’s saw Al Miller over Carlos Ortegon, and Ken Dewhirst over Walt Witkowski, both 12-10 in the 5th. In the 1450’s, Ken was far from Derwist in the world, but he did lose to Peter Wen, 5-game runner-up to Lee Swander. In the 70’s final, Brathwaite, after spinning his way by Hiep Hoa Cung, downed Nick Mintseveris, 11, 11, 9. Earlier, George had dropped a game to Slade, and Mintseveris one to former two-time U.S. Open finalist Jack Howard, trying to find his game again after a 30-year layoff. Grooving his forehand was particularly difficult for Jack who lost in the semi’s of the 1600’s to Winston Ngai, 2nd-place finisher to Xiaocuang Cheng.

Slade teamed with Peregrine to win the 75 Doubles, but not without a 1st-round near fatal glitch, for against Richard Lee/John Moss they were down 2-1 and at 12-all in the 4th. Meanwhile, the runner-up pair, Smyth/Forsberg, was extended into the 5th by Kunze/ John Opperman. In the 70 Doubles, the Slade/Peregrine partnership was upset by Jack Pham/ Bob Johnson who then edged Howard/Boggan in 5 after the latter had stopped Miller/Suresh Kanekar, 8 in the 5th. Pham/Johnson took the final, downing the #1 seeds Wasserman/Forsberg, 3-0. Johnson, teaming with Alex Hermann, also came runner-up in
the Under 2800 Doubles to Antonio Ching/Asadur Chilingirian who were beaten in the Under 2300 Doubles by Ming Chen and Minh Lu, winners over Vargas/Kunikiko Jessup.

In the final of the Women's 70's, a new event, Violet Bloom, taught to be aggressive ago, who would you see sitting side by side? the door to History a little, make that wasn't challenged thereafter by Jinny Longee. by Attila Malek. on winning the P 13-11, Asadur Chilingirian who were beaten in the semi's she was able to keep the ball away rounded game was too much for Caroline.o f course and Bobby Feitelson, later known as Bobby Fields. The following year, Caroline o f course and Bobby Feitelson, later known as Bobby Fields. The following year, Caroline, age 12, after some instruction by Si Wasserman, played in a Pasadena tournament and won both the Women's and the Junior Doubles with Bobby.

Then, long after she'd given up table tennis to become the 7th-ranked women's tennis player in California, she'd gone to China to meet up with wife Kelly Miller. returned to the Gaine. Al''Howie had beaten the Lily Yip/David Hecht team 11-9 in the 51's. Lily said to Howie, "everyone in China will know.". "When 1 die," said Zhuang. No? "When Glenn Cowan died, did everyone in America know?" asked Zhuang. No? "When I die," said Zhuang, "everyone in China will know!"

The Chief goes on to win the $300 1st prize by downing Grossman who'd advanced in 4 over Nick Mintsiveris. In Feb. Howie had gone to China to meet up with wife Kelly and 6-year-old daughter Jennifer who's just starting to play. First, he'd been in Shenzhen, which allowed him to go to the Club in nearby Hong Kong (18 tables, perfect conditions) where he was graciously welcomed, the more so because the players there enjoyed playing against his anti. Then it was off to Beijing to celebrate the Chinese New Year at Zhuang Zedong's (Chiang Tse-tung's) Club. Howie arranged a transfer: I got Zhuang's book (in English). "When Glenn Cowan died, did everyone in America know?" asked Zhuang. No? "When I die," said Zhuang, "everyone in China will know!"

The 50's drew 40 entries, but, again, such were the accurate seedings and placings, that up through the 8th's there was only one 5-game match—Hiory Koshimoto over Lou Claude, Under 1300 runner-up to L'A.'s Anh Vien Mac. The quarter's brought two 5-gamers. Parviz Mojaverian was down 2-0 and at 10-all in the 3rd against Mintsiveris, but turned this gone-astray match around. Since winning a 5-game war of mumbled words with self wasn't enough for him, he wanted a further warning as to his limitations, so tinkled this little bell he was carrying around—said he'd taken it from a lost Iranian sheep. As for the deflated Nickie, well he remembered how, back in eerie Pennsylvania, bartending in his parents' restaurant, he used to be "built like a Greek god"—now, he said, in his usual mock self-deprecating way, he was just a geek, or "Greek."

Grossman reflected that his play in China helped him beat Hank McCoulum. Howie mixed his anti attack and defense well, got back many of Hank's spinny loops, and smacked in hard-hit forehands. However, against Dave Sakai, who tried always to spin the ball to Grossman's inverted forehand side, Howie reflected that his play in China helped him beat Hank McCoulum. Howie mixed his anti attack and defense well, got back many of Hank's spinny loops, and smacked in hard-hit forehands. However, against Dave Sakai, who tried always to spin the ball to Grossman's inverted forehand side, Howie said he was missing winners because he'd speeded up his forehands. "I'm older," he said, "I should slow down." Parviz then took out Dave who may or may not have heard the bell after a punishing 10,-9, 10, 10 semi's fight. Meantime, Reinhard Freimuth—who came to the U.S. from Frankfurt, Germany in 1963 and for the last 12 years has played with anti on both sides—though his balls were dead, he himself wasn't, came staggering out of a brutal 8,-12, 9, -9, 12 encounter with Guillory, 1800 runner-up to Hing-Kwok Law, only to fall in straight games to Lim Ming Chui. Later, in the 1900's, Freimuth would be back, snapping in backhands to rally past New York City's Sports Trivia expert Mark
Berg who himself had rallied in the 4th and 5th to down Tadao Inui. Problem was, Law, too, would be back, and in the final managed to win a 13-11 thriller from Reinhard.

Malek had reached the 50’s semi’s against Chui by blanking both Alex Salcido (“Looks the same as he did 40 years ago,” someone said) and Lon Dean who with his Herbert Neuhauser long pipes and Smash rubber had eliminated Bill Ukapataya-Sakul. Bill, often resting tucked in behind the bleachers, stretched out flat on the floor, rose to the occasion by winning the 2050’s over Ken Trinh in the quarter’s (from down 2-0), over Berg in the semi’s (after Mark had -5, -7, 14, 9, 8 tenaciously defeated Parul Engineer, as well as Allen Silberman in 5), and over Joe Tran in the final.

Malek had given Salcido and Dean trouble with his serves, but Chui, handling them far better, forced the #1 seed into the 5th before succumbing—after which Attila knocked off Parviz in a straight-game final.

In the Women’s 50’s, long pips cooker Min Ming Zhu downed Donna Sakai who was more or less relaxing after her cross-country (Shenandoah and the Smokeys to Sedona and the Grand Canyon) sight-seeing trip with sister Barbara Kaminsky. Then in the final Min won out over patent attorney Wan Yee Cheung whom coach David Zhuang was urging to be more inventive, hit more, especially after she very nearly lost earlier to Ting Ning Cheung, some 450 points behind her in the ratings.

The unrated Min didn’t play in the Women’s 40’s, but the unrated Mariona Cravens did. A Russian who participated in the 2003 World Senior Championships in Yokohama, she turned up in the U.S. at the recent Huntsman Games where, you might say, her Las Vegas husband-to-be was on the hunt…and a few months later the two were married. Of course it was a foregone conclusion that Lily Yip and Tianjin’s Hong Zhao, now an L.A. peripatetic coach, would make the semi’s. As it happened, that in both these monied events in which the payoff is considerably more for the quarter’s than the 8’s, Avi, as the #6 seed in both, should not have been drawn to play, as was the case, the #2 seed in the Elite, the #1 seed in the 40’s. These top seeds should be flipped to play either the #7 or #8 seed, and the #3 and #4 seeds flipped to play the #5 and #6 seeds. Of course this tournament offered two events with the same top seeds, so the organizers were afraid that if they went for the rather standard flip, the matches would repeat themselves. However, the player works for his rating. Where (get beat in the quarter’s or the semi’s) a swing in the 40’s event of $350 is more, or less, possible, depending on whether #6 Avi (2339) might catch a #4 2412-rated or a #1 2680-rated player—that’s quite a difference. It matters not whether Avi will actually get to Zhuang in the 40’s, this is too much of a swing, one’s rating minimized, Chance too important. It would have been worse if in the quarter’s #5 seed Lily (2397) had drawn #1 seed Zhuang.

Following his encounter with Schmidt, Musa advanced to the final with a 3-0 win over the #3 seed, former U.S. World Team member Dr. De Tran who, thinking ahead, is about to get married to Jennifer Darst, has, even while continuing to work at a Queens, N.Y. hospital, just bought a private practice, as well as an apartment, and plans, when he’s not sleeping, or taking cat-naps, to play at Table Leibowitz’s Club which is not more than 15 minutes away by car.

Also shy, but unable to recover against Lily who’d had table time in Hardbat and Women’s play, was the 4th seed Malek. Lily continues to amaze with her fast footwork and quick hits, and though she remembers a loss she had to Attila 10 years ago, she said to herself, “He’s not as good as before,” and took him down in 4. Then, behind 2-0 to Zhuang in the semi’s, Lily, undaunted, began thrusting backhands at David, then getting him cornered, swatted balls to his far forehand and humm’n along gave him a 5-game $450 scare. Might have given lots of other a scare too—because she said with a little smile that,

Zhao, now an L.A. peripatetic coach, would take him down in 4. Then, behind 2-0 to Zhuang in the semi’s, Lily, undaunted, began thrusting backhands at David, then getting him cornered, swatted balls to his far forehand and humm’n along gave him a 5-game $450 scare. Might have given lots of other a scare too—because she said with a little smile that,
"Women are smarter than Men," and that, beware all, she's into "strategy."

However, by tournament-ending 40's time, with its $1500, $1000, $500, $500 top prizes, the top four seeds came through. In the top half of the Draw, Zhuang breezed by Sakai, victor over Diane Chen who said that if she'd beaten David she'd switch and become a penholder against the other David. That Jun Fernando Valencia, with wins over Brathwaite and Schmidt, was playing shakehands, but with what (pips/inverted?), didn't make much difference to Zhuang. Meanwhile, 2073-rated Mark Wedret, if the scoresheet I'm looking at can be believed, who'd been down 2-1 to 1856-rated Duglass might avert one crisis but also another—for 4.-10.10,-7 stubbornly delayed his loss to "Women are smarter than Men," and that, Brathwaite and Schmidt, was playing prizes, the top four seeds came through. In going down gamely to Zhuang.

"Women are smarter than Men," and that, Brathwaite and Schmidt, was playing prizes, the top four seeds came through. In going down gamely to Zhuang.

moving to the high-desert atmosphere in the mountains near Victorville, the clean air had done wonders for him. True, up 2-0, he'd earlier lost a net-hanger of a match to Tung Phan and then another 5-gamer to him here in the bottom half of the 40's Draw, but he remained up-beat—said he and his friend Morales were going to represent Nicaragua at the World Championships in Bremen, Germany next year. Neither Phan nor Ramin Samari could take a game from Musa. In addition to playing in the tournament, Ramin had another connection with this Leisure World Club. Turns out he's an engineer who works for a medical company that builds pacemakers and heart valves. "We have a lot of customers here at Leisure World," he says.

Therriault persisted with his mixed bag of shots, downs Ohore in a close match, and -4, -10, 10, -7 stubbornly delayed his loss to Malek, who then in the semi's won an extended match from Loc Ngo. Attila was, as ever, praising God's goodness and enthusiastically extolling the opportunities for Franchises his Power-Pong Junior Development Program provided. No reason why an owner with proper guidance from Attila couldn't make $100,000 a year. He spoke of programs at his Los Caballeros Racket & Sport Club in Fountain Valley, of a Jewish Community Center and Elementary School (room there for 30 tables) in Irvine, and of the prospect of working with 400 kids in Calgary. Attila, too, in his semi's, resisted forcefully, but Musa remained too strong.

Though not strong enough to stop David who 10 for 10, playing strictly singles, was paid $160 a match. But instead of a shirt that read on the back, “David Zhuang: Professional,” perhaps we should follow Al Miller’s suggestion and put there the name and age of the player. Hence: "David Zhuang: 41" ..."Parviz Mojaverian: 56" ...“Dick Freimuth: 76" ...“Arthur (‘Buster’) Chase: 88" and so on up. The spectators might then find the play even more interesting?

Over 40 – Final: David Zhuang d. Atanda Musa, 8,7,5,-7; SF: Zhuang d. De Tran, 5,6,2,7; Musa d. Attila Malek, 3,6,4,-6.

Over 40 Elite – Final: David Zhuang d. Atanda Musa, 9,9,7, SF: Zhuang d. Lily Yip, 6,7,-5,8; Musa d. De Tran, 8,9,8.

Over 50 – Final: Attila Malek d. Parviz Mojaverian, 8,7,3; SF: Malek d. Lim Ming Chui, 9,-5,-4,7; Mojaverian d. Chong Keng Tay, 10,-9,10,10.

Over 60 – Final: George Brathwaite d. Howard Grossman, 7,7,6,7; SF: Brathwaite d. Che-Him Leung, -10,9,6,6,8; Grossman d. Nick Mintsiveris, 19,8,8.

Over 70 – Final: George Brathwaite d. Nick Mintsiveris, 11,11,9; SF: Brathwaite d. Hiep Hoa Cung, -8,5,5,9; Mintsiveris d. Jack Pham, 10,6,5.

Over 70 Doubles: Pham Johnson d. Forsberg/Wasserman, 7,8,10.

Over 75 – Final: Dick Peregrine d. Ivan Slade, 9,-10,9,9; SF: Peregrine d. Cornelius Smyth, -8,8,3,8,10; Slade d. Tim Boggan, 9,-9,9,-9,9.

Over 75 Doubles: Peregrine/Slade d. Forsberg/Smyth, 8,6,5.

Over 80: Rudy Ceja d. Si Wasserman, 5,-9,8,7.

Over 85: Ivan Slade d. Leo Egel, 6,2,5.

Over 90: Harry Bloom d. Frank Buchanan, 6,5,4.

Over 40 Women: Lily Yip d. Hong Zhao, 8,8,7.

Over 50 Women: Min Ming Zhi d. Wan Yee Cheung, 9,-9,7,-9,7.

Over 60 Women: Monica Sung d. Caroline Vassalo, 9,7,8; SF: Sung d. Su Chen Liu, 5,8,5; Vassallo d. Kuniko Jessup, 4,5,10.


U2400 – Final: Lily Yip d. Avishy Schmidt, 9,9,11; SF: Yip d. Tung Phan, 4,10,-7,11; Schmidt d. Loc Bao, 7,9,10.

U2300 – Final: John Thach Tran d.Ramin Samari, def.; SF: Samari d. James Therriault, 5,2,9,9; Tran d. Parviz Mojaverian, 8,5,3.

U2050 – Final: Bill Ukapatayaksakul d. Joe Tran, 7,7,8; SF: Ukapatayaksakul d. Mark Berg, 7,7,7; Tran d. Thomas Tang, -9,7,-9,4.

U1900: Hing-Kwok Law d. Reinhard Freimuth, 7,6,8,-8,11.


Over 1000: Xiaoguang Cheng d. Winston Nga, 7,7,8.

Over 1450: Lee Swander d. Peter Wen, -9,-6,9,9,4.

Over 1300: Anh Vien Mac d. Lou Claude, -8,6,-9,8,2.

Over 1200: Donald Bourassa d. Kenneth Snaer, 2,7,7.

Over 1100: Fidel Vargas d. Donald R Bourassa, 6,9,9,6.

Over 1000 Doubles: Ngo/Tran d. Musa/Ohore, -5,-9,7,5,5.

Over 1500 Doubles: Ngo/Velencia d. Nguyen/Le, 9,6,7.

Over 1200 Doubles: Tran/Youan d. Phan/Nguyen, 5,-5,7,-13,7.

Over 1300 Doubles: Grossman/Miller d. Phan/Pham, 8,8,7.

Over 1400 Doubles: Tran/Nguyen d. Ngo/Kahan, 9,3,6.


Over 1300 Doubles: Lu/Chen d. Jessup/Vagas, 6,7,-11,9.

Draw Doubles: Ngo/Lemaster d. Musa/Kahan, 0,7,8.

Footwork: Playing Without Arms
By lan Marshall, care of ITTF

Good footwork is essential for playing table tennis and if you are in any doubt whatsoever about that, ask Masoomeh Shokravi of Iran.

She has no arms, so plays table tennis with her feet and plays very well indeed. A very courageous lady who sets a most admirable example to the sporting world.

Shokravi will be competing in the disabled events at the 4th Women’s Islamic Games scheduled to be held in Teheran, Iran, Sept. 22-28, 2005.
Jefferson City Missouri Parks and Recreation Two-Man Team Championships

JEFFERSON CITY, MO • JUNE 11-12, 2005 • BY STEVE DOWNING

The Capitol City Table Tennis Club would like to say “Thank You” to everyone who attended and helped to support this 4-star tournament. There were a total of 90 players making 39 teams from 15 different states with total prize money valued at $7,500.

This team event was a two-day tournament featuring the first day preliminary 5-team round robins groups in the under 4200 division. The under 3400 division was split up with 6 and 7 team round robins. Players experienced a lot of tense moments and long drawn out matches competing during Saturday’s preliminary matches. The second day again featured teams assigned to round robin formats based on how they performed on Saturday. Sunday’s matches determined who would ultimately vie for the divisional titles in the 4200 & 3400 classes.

Under 4200 Division

The 4200 Division offered the 200 plus spectator’s some exciting and fierce competition to watch. The first day was an important day as teams were fighting to get into Group A for the first Place prize money of $2,000. Several players with a rating over 2200 team up with comparable ratings or with nationally rated juniors to make a team under 4200 rating points. The outcome was very competitive and did not allow for mistakes by any team members.

Team Ohio vs. Show Me the Money

This was an important team match as both teams were undefeated facing each other. Show Me the Money came into the tournament as the #1 seed. The match between team captain Parviz Mojaverian and Michael Mast came to an end as Michael Mast upset Parviz Mojaverian, resulting in Team Ohio advancing the next day to Group A.

Minnesota vs. Americantabletennis.com

Americantabletennis.com was the #2 seed in the tournament as they were undefeated until meeting Minnesota. Team Player-Joseph Podvin of Minnesota won both his single matches and doubles with his partner, Andrew Knips, to come out undefeated in their round robin.

Bradley University vs. Memphis Fighter

These two teams were the most closely matched teams of the tournament – Bradley University at 4156 and Memphis Fighter at 4165. The top player for Memphis Fighter was Sim Loon of Tennessee, who went undefeated in this match with wins over both Ming Zhang and Gene Szeto of Illinois. The team match came down to the last singles match between top Tennessee junior Shelby Lane and Ming Zhang of Illinois. Zhang took the match in three straight games and took his team to Group A the next day.

Florida Champs vs. O.K. Corral Gang

Florida Champs were the #3 seed in the tournament. The match between O.K. Corral almost put an end to their fight for Group A. The Florida Champs team captain, Dayanand Maharaj of Florida, went undefeated, with easy wins over Omar Kouatli and, in the last singles match, junior Ming Curran, both from Minnesota. Florida Champs continued onto the Group A the next day.

Reece’s Peanut Butter Cups vs. Broward Table Tennis Club

This was one of the most challenging preliminary matches for Group A. Reece’s Peanut Butter Cups were the #5 seed. Both teams were undefeated before facing each other for the showdown. The team match score was 2-1 as Broward Table Tennis Club seemed to be the ones advancing to the Group A Division the next day. The last two singles matches told the tale as Kevin Schulz of Illinois pulled out the win over Steve Federico of Florida in five games, winning the last game 13-11. The last match was the deciding team match as Mark Nordby of Illinois barely edged by Gary Harbeck of Florida, 11-9 in the fifth. Reece’s Peanut Butter Cups just pulled out the win to advance to the Group A Division.

As the winning five teams emerged into the next day of competition no one could predict who the team champions were going to be. As the day progressed each team had at least one loss as it looked like the

Reece’s Peanut Butter Cups and Bradley University Table Tennis were going to head to head and put the State of Illinois for first and second. The final result was Mark Nordby and Kevin Schulz winning the $2,000 over Ming Zhang and Gene Szeto, who ended up with second and $1,000.

The Capitol City Table Tennis Club would also like to say thank-you again to all of our sponsors for making this happen. The main sponsors for the tournament were the Jefferson City Parks and Recreation, Jefferson City Convention and Visitor’s Bureau, Stiga and Paddle Palace. Also a big thank-you to all the officials: international referee Larry Kester, chief umpire Chance Key, and Scott Meredith, Caleb Stephenson and Dr. E. David Scott for umpiring most of the team matches both days.

UNDER 4200 TEAMS

Class A Championships

1st Reesse’s Peanut Butter Cups (Mark Nordby & Kevin Schulz) IL
2nd Bradley University Table Tennis (Ming Zhang & Gene H. Szeto) IL
3rd Minnesota (Andrew Knips & Joseph Podvin) MN
4th Team Ohio (Nicholas Snider & Michael Mast) OH
5th Florida Champs (Dayanand Maharaj & Delroy Thompson & Uri Nathanson) FL

Class B Division

1st Broward Table Tennis Club (Steve Federico & Gary Harbeck) FL
2nd Americantabletennis.com (Scott Endicott & Grantley Charles) MI
3rd Memphis Fighter (Soon Lim & Shelley Lane) TN

Class C Division

1st Oklahoma Eagles (Winfred Addy & Sammy Hanna) OK
2nd Looping-Machine (Laura Xiao & Zbigniew Mastylo) KS
3rd Team Canton (Ivan Mast & Jennifer Mast) OH

Class D Division

1st Three Ball Death (Stan Pease & Scott Barone) IN & KY
2nd O.K. Corral Gang (Ming Curran & Omar Kouatli) MN
3rd Jasmine (Harry Chu & Hong Xian) MO

Class E Division

1st Bumpernets.com (Adam Brown & Patrick Sullivan) AL
2nd SIUTTC (Ed Bilinski & Azrai Ali & Greg Dillard) IL
3rd Fred & Jun (Fred Halbig & Jun Zou) MO

UNDER 3400 TEAMS

Class A Championships

1st The Midwest Smashers (Carl Miller II & Gordan Dickey, Jr) KS & NE
2nd Stompers (Quan Chen & Scott Lane) TN
3rd Offensive Minded (Alex Lehocky & William Todd) TN & MO
4th Springfield L (Paul Liu & Shang Lee) MO

Class B Division

1st Springfield’s Fines (William Lewis & Munkhbold Bayarsaikhan) MO
2nd 2 Men and a Paddle (Brad Wommack & Daie Boswell) MO

Class C Division

1st Ballers (Scott Rief & Homer Roman) KY & KS
2nd Chopstix (Jiejie Liu & Mona Dau) MO

39 teams from 15 states battled it out at the Jefferson Teams

Photo by Tracy Hernandez ©2005
The Concord Table Tennis Club's 31st annual Golden State Open (GSO) was replete with positive aspects. For the first time, it was promoted from a two-star to a three-star tournament. This led the 240 competitors to vie for a total purse of $4,200 as well as trophies. It also helped us obtain 30 sponsors.

All 23 events featured preliminary round robins and single elimination. Our new venue contained 13,000 square feet of usable floor space in which 24 courts were created with new Butterfly Centrefold tables; Paddle Palace supplied Nittaku 3-Star Premium balls. The facility also included a spacious lobby and ample control desk area with a PA system. From there, Data Manager Yau-Man Chan and his crew smoothly operated the check-in and payment process, called matches, and used David Marcus's Zermelo software to keep the matches moving. A small army of volunteers handled every aspect of the tournament's logistics. Referee Joseph Yick brought in umpires Yelena Karshtedt, Irina Hellwig, Saut Weinsteinc and Michael Boot. A strong field, including defending champion Stefan Feth and top national-level players, promised an exciting weekend.

Director Phil Schafer had every reason to be optimistic about the tournament's success. There were many memorable moments and performances throughout the tournament. But the Open Final Four round robin was particularly exciting. Feth went undefeated to take first place; Khoa Nguyen was the runner-up, followed by Freddie Gabriel and Barney Reed, Jr. Gabriel was the tournament's biggest story. A strong local player, Gabriel defeated fourth-seeded Michael Hyatt and went on to beat Khoa Nguyen. Gabriel's performance means that he will be a force to reckon with. He is reportedly training hard preparing for the U.S. Nationals, and many observers believe he can make the U.S. National Team.

Overall the tournament was a success, despite some glitches; but the Concord Table Tennis Club is working on ways to overcome them for the 2006 GSO. It will take place on Memorial Day weekend at the same venue, and promises to be better and even more riveting.

**Open Singles**
1st Stefan Feth; 2nd Khoa Nguyen; 3-4: Freddie Gabriel & Barney J. Reed.

**Open Doubles**
1st Freddie Gabriel/Peter Zajac; 2nd Khoa Nguyen/Wei-Yang Wu.

**Women**
1st Atha Fong; 2nd Colleen Lee; 3-4: Stephanie Chow & Fumi Christensen.

**Over 40**
1st Yong Ren; 2nd James Theriault; 3-4: Bunny Lee & Peter Chen.

**Over 50**
1st Peter Chen; 2nd Kock Loe; 3-4: Mark Johnson & Peter Tsang.

**Under 18**

**Under 12**
1st Lily Zhang; 2nd Brian Chen; 3-4: Jennifer Blaha & Natalie Sun.

**Over 4000**
1st Freddie Gabriel; 2nd Yong Ren; 3-4: Anh Tuan Nguyen & Martin Kosan.

**U2450**
1st Peter Zajac; 2nd Quan Huynh; 3-4: James Theriault & Guang-Kui Dong.

**U2150**
1st Dennis Yi; 2nd Quan Huynh; 3-4: Kevin Phung & Walter Guan.

**U2000**
1st Terry Tam; 2nd Cheung Wong; 3-4: David Rudesill & Aroni Banerjee.

**U1850**
1st Stanley Sun; 2nd Tri Tran.

**U1700**
1st Terence Chan; 2nd Stephen Adams.

**U1500**
1st Kevin Lin; 2nd Umesh Kukreja.

**U1300**
1st Lily Zhang; 2nd Felix Lu.

**U1100**
1st Barry Sia; 2nd Daniel Redden.

**U800**
1st Victor Kretof; 2nd Nissi Wusan.

**U500**
1st Natalie Sun; 2nd Amit Patel.

**U3400 Doubles**
1st Channing Chan/Johnny Huang; 2nd Stanley Sun/Victor Qui.

**U2800 Doubles**
1st Mark Johnson/Lisa Liang; 2nd Ron Buxton/Jonathan Chang.
The Backhand Topspin of Oh Sang Eun, USA ITTF Pro Tour Champion

By Wei Wang, USATT Hall of Famer and Certified National Coach
Oh Sang Eun is the first Korean shake hand player to make it into the top ten of the ITTF World Rankings. At well over 6 foot tall, Oh was one of the athletes who were able to meet the additional physical requirements when the ball size was changed from 38mm to 40mm in 2000. But even before the change, he impressed me with his impeccable timing, deft touch and awe-inspiring power. While he uses his long arms to generate extraordinary racket speed on his forehand, his most impressive shot is the backhand loop. There is an ease in the way his hand “flows” over the ball that contrasts with the raw power with which the ball leaves his racket. Much of that power is due to his timing. By accelerating his arm at the correct time and contacting the ball at the appropriate phase of its flight, he can maximize the severity of the impact. But equally important, if not more so, is his use of the large muscles in his body — thighs, back and shoulder.

When I first saw him at the 1996 U.S. Open, I was surprised at how much of his technique was completely different from what was traditionally considered the “Korean Style.” Of course this is largely due to his shakehand grip, but even within that style, he had developed a game that was usually associated more with Chinese players. Rather than using lightning-quick footwork, Oh truly uses both wings equally to cover the court, and instead of having a monstrous forehand stroke, he generates power with a relatively short, concise stroke and creates pressure with penetrating placement.

Oh Sang Eun was among the pioneers of a backhand usage that now has become a requirement at the top level: The full, aggressive stroke from any phase of the ball’s trajectory. When receiving serve, he whips over the ball right after the bounce, generating a spiny topspin ball which is hard to defend against. During the rally, he will take a ball at the top of the bounce, which allows a flat trajectory, almost like a hit, and he has absolutely free choice of placement, again putting a lot of pressure on the defense. Only occasionally does he allow the rally to force him into the backcourt, where he has to take the ball after it has started descending. His shot from there is massive, with a tremendous arc, often making the opponent wish he hadn’t succeeded in driving him back.

The picture series shows his most dangerous backhand, the one right off the bounce. First I need to point out something to all of those players who refuse to bend their knees: Look at how low he stands even before he starts the stroke (1)! He has a very wide stance, which lowers his upper body somewhat, but his legs are bent to almost 90 degrees. Of course this requires very good conditioning, but for a tall player to take full advantage of his height it is absolutely crucial. And then he lowers it even further (4). This allows him to add lift and drive to the stroke (5-10) by pushing off, first with his right leg, helping his body prepare for rotation, (5-6) and a fraction of a second later with his left leg (7-10), raising his upper body by about a foot during the stroke. Note the almost imperceptible shift in his balance, first a tiny bit to his right (4-6), and then, following the rotation of his upper body, to his left (7-11).

The stroke is quick and smooth, and it combines the backstroke to add to a whipping effect. While Oh is setting up his body, his hand remains above table level (1-2). Only after the ball bounces does he drop the racket (3-4) and almost immediately starts a counter motion raising his elbow (5-6). At 7, he lets his lower arm follow the upper arm, and the “whip cracks” right at contact, rippling over the top of the ball right in front of his left hip. Immediately after contact, Oh firms up his wrist again, slows his follow-through and prepares for the next shot.

Throughout his stroke, his head position barely moves. This adds to the stability of his body and improves control. Oh has stayed close to the top for many years, because of his ability and willingness to continuously develop his arsenal. He proves that the key to being competitive is to constantly learn new things. As soon as a player stops adding to their game, it is as though they stepped off a train — they will be left behind in no time.
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