AN INTERVIEW WITH
JASNA REED
U.S. WOMEN’S CHAMPION

ALSO INSIDE
WORLD TEAM
CHAMPIONSHIPS
NORTH AMERICAN
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### ON THE COVER:

**USA National and Collegiate Women’s Champion Jasna Reed**

Photo by Jose Valdes ©2006; Cover Design by Tom Nguyen ©2006

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4. **Ball Handling:** Be careful when handling ping-pong balls to avoid cuts or burns.
5. **Table Setup:** Ensure the table is properly set up and the net is securely fastened.

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Contest: Best Excuses for Losing a Table Tennis Match!

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Table Tennis Documentary
By Jesse Scaceca

dafifilms is pleased to announced that their documentary about the world of American table tennis, currently titled "Niche: American Table Tennis," will be debuting on The Tennis Channel on June 10, 2006.

The film, which has been in production since September 2004, features Harlem-based table tennis player Wally Green. Wally is one of the few Americans who regularly plays the International Pro Tour. Though he has never won a Pro Tour match he always plays with a singular passion. The documentary also dives into Wally's life away from the table where he is an aspiring rapper, has a beautiful Japanese girlfriend, and a 9-year-old son.

"Niche: American Table Tennis" includes footage from the U.S. Open, NATT Team's Tournament, the Nationals, and various international tournaments. It also includes appearances from American table tennis personalities including Larry Hodges, Tim Bogdan and Alan Williams.

The documentary, which is 60 minutes in length, will air multiple times on the network. For more info, see www.dafifilms.com or email jesse@dafifilms.com.

---

They Said It...
By Larry Hodges

"I am truly sorry for my action. I should never disgrace the Chinese table tennis team. Working in the fields is a good re-education process for me." -Chinese National Team Member and 2004 Olympic Men's Doubles Gold Medalist Chen Qi, of his punishments for flinging the ball to the ground and kicking a chair into the air after losing the Asian Cup Final to teammate Wang Hao in Japan on March 5. The 21-year-old's punishments included an apolgy, drilling in a military boot camp, a week working in the fields, and an undisclosed fine for his televised tantrum.

"Excitement is reason enough to bat a small, hollow ball back and forth for an hour. But if that doesn't tempt, consider this: Participants in ping-pong glean tangible health benefits. They may even lengthen their lives." -Opening paragraph in article in Los Angeles Times on May 21, 2006, in article by Hilary Macgregor and Rosie Mestel. It goes on to outline the various health benefits - calories burned, mental workout, muscle toned, social benefits, etc. Contributed by Rafford Harrison.

"Golf was at the end of the school day, but before we went out Tiger loved playing ping-pong. Yeah, he beat me at that, too." -David Gilliland, Tiger Woods former High School golf teammate. From the Assoc. Press, Apr. 7, 2006.

"Activities that require hand-eye coordination, such as table tennis, work the cerebellum, which governs thought processing." -Daniel Amen, M.D., author of Making a Good Brain Great, in a list titled "3 ways to boost brainpower." In his book, Amen calls table tennis the best brain sport because it improves hand-eye coordination, it's aerobic, uses both upper and lower body and causes you to use many different areas of the brain to function. Submitted by Ali (Li) Ellicm and Sheri Piman.

"Through 16 weeks of testimony, I would go home one night swayed in one direction. The next day, when cross or direct began, it would go the other direction. And I think we all felt that - you felt like a Ping-Pong ball." -Mr. Baggett, one of the jurors on the Enron trial case, according to New York Times, May 26, 2006. Submitted by Steve Thoren.

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USATT League Watch
Sponsored by Paddle Palace and Stiga

By USATT League

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!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active Leagues</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Matches</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 1, 2006</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>68,831</td>
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Junior of the Month: Trevor Runyan

By Wallace Liu

When Jim Runyan spotted a newspaper article about young Bay Area table tennis players performing well at the U.S. National Championships, he brought his son Trevor to Bill Lui's Concord Table Tennis Club. Though Trevor was only seven at the time, he was already playing in various other sports, leaving only one day a week for table tennis practice. When Trevor was twelve, however, his turning point in table tennis came. He participated in Attila Malek's summer training camp, which greatly intensified his interest in the sport. Ever since, Trevor has maintained a passion for table tennis and trained hard in it. Five years of rapid progress later, he finds himself one of the best juniors on the continent.

Trevor's recent run of success has supported this notion. At the 2005 U.S. National Championships, he defeated both Adam Hugh and Misha Kazantsev, the top two ranked USA juniors. These wins allowed him to make the national junior team. Then, at the North American Championships in May, Trevor made an even more impressive showing. In the Junior Boys' Singles event, Trevor scored his biggest win yet, upsetting Canada's Shen Qiang, the number one seed and the 41st ranked junior in the world. In the semifinals, he defeated his teammate John Leach, and then finished runner-up to Hugh in the event. To top it off, Trevor helped the U.S. junior team defeat Canada's team with a 3-0 victory over Bryan Michaud, ensuring the U.S. a spot at the World Junior Championships in Egypt.

Currently, Trevor has his eyes set on winning the Junior Boys' event at the U.S. Open and playing well in Egypt. Though he has competed in the World Junior Circuit in Spain, Canada, and Brazil, the World Junior Championships will be his biggest and last junior tournament. To prepare, Trevor is practicing about five days a week in Palo Alto and Concord, with such prominent Bay Area players as Freddie Gabriel, Piotr Zajac, Ahha Fong, Jackie Lee, James Guo, and Whitney Ping, as well as Germany's Stefan Feth. Trevor believes the strong points in his game include his dependable, powerful backhand and his creative serves. His short game, however, still needs more development. Trevor also keeps in shape by weight training, jumping rope and running. His training will become more intense in the summer, as he plans to participate in a two-week training camp with Stefan Feth (now living in Mountain View, CA), a two-week national team training camp at Texas Wesleyan University, and a three-week Chinese training camp where he'll also play in the China Junior Open.

After high school, Trevor aims to play in Europe and make the U.S. national men's team. Long term, Trevor's goals are to be national champion and an Olympian. His motivation stems from the enjoyment of playing well in tournaments and the fun of the fast-paced sport, and also from the support of his family and coaches. Dennis Davis has had a significant influence in Trevor's game, refining his skills and improving his mentality. Trevor has been coached by Dennis for the last four years and gives a lot of credit to him. Other coaches who have helped Trevor along the way include Bill Lui, Dennis Yi, Attila Malek, Masaaki Tajima, Mark Nordby, and Dan Seemiller. Trevor's father Jim, however, deserves the most credit. He spends time looking for places for his son to play, and always tries to plan ahead for Trevor's future. Jim does not pressure his son to win, instead, as Trevor says, "all he cares about is that I try hard and have a good attitude. He always encourages me to eat a good diet, get rest and train smart." Trevor also remains grateful to USATT for allowing him to compete abroad and gain valuable experience. He is also thankful to his mother Sondra, as well as his older sisters Kylee and Sara, for taking the time to drive him to practices and cheering him on at tournaments.

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Paddle Palace welcomes Stefan Feth to the US. He is establishing residency in northern California and will be taking up coaching duties at the Palo Alto Table Tennis Club. Stefan is a Joola sponsored player and uses Mambo C, max rubber and the Joola Sting blade. Since the 2005 US Open he has a world-class record of 32 and 9. He won the 2006 San Diego Open, 2006 Western Open, 2005 Lafayette Open, 2005 Western Open, and the Newguy Table Tennis Championship tournaments all with an impressive 6-0 record. Stefan is single and enjoys traveling, the internet, and music.

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I really like this robot! We use it all the time at the club for both our junior camps and adult programs. The kids have a great time and the adults really get a work out." -- Fan Yi Yong, #1 Rated player in the USA.

NEW HUNTER BLADES on COMBO SPECIAL!
President’s Report
By Sheri Soderberg Pittman

As our sport continues to evolve, there are always new challenges and opportunities for USATT. My philosophy is to utilize these “President’s Reports” to provide you with the context for these new developments as well as to share my insights with you. That is why I also call this space the “association primer series.” It’s been a busier year than usual for me as president. I appreciated the chance to attend many events and to meet with numerous people who are dedicated to promoting table tennis. Let’s look at the evolution of our sport’s development and how that impacts USATT.

How the ITTF is Changing the World of Table Tennis
At a recent event, someone remarked, “Just look at how much table tennis has changed over the past several years. In some ways, you can say it’s a totally different sport.” He was referring not only to the 11-point game and larger ball, but also to the heightened level of professionalism in the areas of international event creation and management, marketing, media coverage and development programs.

All of these concentrated efforts cause USATT to experience growing pains of our own. Most national associations cover far less geographical territory and can easily organize year-round training programs for their national team members. Many of the national associations also enjoy direct governmental financial support. In addition, with the designation of several new countries over the past handful of years, there were many new teams at the World Championships this year. Under this scenario, our teams faced the challenge of not only trying to advance, but also of just trying to maintain our current standing. Add to that the fact that USATT has chosen to allocate a greater percentage of elite athlete funding to the younger generation, to the juniors and cadets.

At the Board level, we knew that this financial re-allocation could have a short-term negative impact on national team performance, but it was nonetheless frustrating to see our players struggle so hard, to see them not adequately prepared at the World Championships. This experience heightened my resolve to try to improve the national team development situation. One initiative on the forefront is the designation of a national team training center. The criteria will likely be posted this summer. We look forward to working with interested communities toward the realization of this necessity.

Ways to Optimize Our Development
Continentaly speaking, USATT is a member of the North American Table Tennis Union. NATTU is one of the ITTF’s six continental unions and its primary members are the United States and Canada. While we fight for the continental titles once a year, we also see that working together for our mutual development makes sense. We are in the process of figuring out ways to combine our limited resources to see how we can best work with Canada to our athletes’ advantage. USATT is also a participant in the Pan-American Games and several associations within the Latin American Table Tennis Union are considering ways to work more closely with us. For example, the ITTF has recently expanded its marketing presence into Latin America, with an impressive start. Miguel Delgado, the former leader of LATTU, is responsible for the effort and he sees a great opportunity for cooperative events among the Pan-American countries. The ITTF has also recommended some competitive integration within the Americas, and there will likely be zonal qualifications for future ITTF junior or cadet competitions. In the meanwhile, the ITTF continues to be open-minded about ways to coordinate initiatives with USATT.
Carrying on the Legacy of Ping-Pong Diplomacy

The bottom line for any discussion involving excellence in table tennis always takes us back to China. You can read all about the Hongshanshu Friendship Tour, celebrating the 35th Anniversary of Ping-Pong Diplomacy in this issue. Tim Boggan really captured the essence of our day-to-day activities. What stood out to me during the trip though was the emphasis the Chinese place on the historical importance of the seeds of friendship between our two countries through Ping-Pong Diplomacy. Recapturing our place in American history is a high priority for me. When I talk to people outside of our sport about Ping-Pong Diplomacy, they seem to have only a vague recollection of the historical event. The Chinese said that details about Ping-Pong Diplomacy are taught to school children, so the legacy of the event is ongoing there. We have a lot of "catch up" work to do on our end. I am in the process of collecting information from the original participants so that we preserve as much of the firsthand accounts as possible. I agreed to work closely with the Chinese Association to develop ways to integrate our special relationship into more specific future initiatives.

In the last issue I expressed USATT’s thanks to the sponsor, Hongshanshu, and the Chinese Association. Mere words cannot capture the true gratitude we feel. Our delegation was treated to a lifetime memory. I hope that in the future we can expand exchange visits so that all of our members who wish to participate can have a similar experience of a lifetime.

Health Benefits of Table Tennis

Through table tennis, may we all live a long and happy life. Our clothing sponsor Mitch Rothfelsch, showed up at the World Championships down 100 pounds! How did he do it? He primarily credits table tennis. He said that he just decided to lose weight and he thought that the best strategy would be to start training again. Congratulations, Mitch!

Through my years promoting the sport, the one thing educators always stress is that they are under constant pressure to produce good results when it comes to standardized testing. Everyone knows the health benefits of regular exercise, but what they always tell me is something with a different emphasis: "Hey, if you can produce evidence that table tennis is good for kids’ brains, then you could get it into the school systems nationwide." Well, we may have some good news. Just recently I learned of a book by Dr. Daniel Amen, Making a Good Brain Great: The Amen Clinic Program for Achieving and Sustaining Optimal Mental Performance. And, although I haven’t had a chance to read the book yet, I did do some Internet research. I came upon this statement by Dr. Amen at his clinic’s website, "It is important to be smarter when it comes to our brains. Golf, tennis and table tennis are better sports, especially for children." In another article, he wrote: "Golf is good. Tennis is terrific. Table tennis is the world’s best game!"

Other Initiatives

As I reported earlier this year, I am continuing to work with various individuals about club support and club growth. These initiatives and developments will be presented to the Board at our meeting in July.

At the ITTF level, I am working on producing a draft of a Code of Conduct for the ITTF. I have also volunteered to present a strategy for increasing the number of women serving on ITTF Committees. Only national associations can nominate candidates for the ITTF Committees. The next time ITTF Committee members will be elected is at the 2007 World Championships. I am in communication with some of our female members now and would like to hear from any women interested in being nominated for one of the ITTF Committees.

I would like to close by again thanking USATT’s many generous volunteers and dedicated staff workers.

2006 USATT Elections

USATT’s Board of Directors consists of 13 individuals. Up to this point, eight are elected by the general membership. Terms are staggered. Four positions are filled during even years and terms run for four years. So, this fall, the term of four Board members will expire.

The Board has been reviewing model bylaws from the United States Olympic Committee that would standardize all of the national Olympic sport associations. These model bylaws include a change in the format of elections. Currently USATT has four officers and four at-large Vice Presidents. Under the USOC proposal, there would only be one officer, the Chairperson of the Board. New positions would be created to include two independent directors, a coaches director (elected by USATT certified coaches) and an officials director (elected by USATT certified umpires and referees). The guidelines, which have been previously posted at USATT’s website, contain several other changes.

USATT’s Board of Directors will hold our next meeting in conjunction with the U.S. Open. The Board is expected to finalize details for USATT’s 2006 elections at that time. We will then post pertinent information at the USATT website, www.usatt.org.

Meanwhile, if you are interested in being a candidate, you may contact the Nominating & Elections Committee Chair, Ross Brown, at ross@rossb.net. Ross can then directly correspond with you after the Board’s decision to inform you of the seats to be filled.

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USA TABLE TENNIS MAGAZINE • July/August 2006


ROCKSTAR GAMES PRESENTS: Table Tennis

Review by Chris Troy & Tom Nguyen

Sweat dripping from their forehead, heart rate increasing, and palms clammy, two elite players take their places as the audience and defeated players watch as the Rockstar Presents: Table Tennis Final began. Chris versus Angelica, Jergen vs. Carmen, the match-up was the same. The atmosphere at the Hawk 'N Dove bar and the game's table tennis championship arena seemed identical. The crowd would burst into cheers when points were won while dead silence would succumb over the crowd during each rally. Point after fast-paced point the two competitors battled furiously where only one would claim the title of "Champion." In the end Chris and his player, Jergen, reigned supreme.

On May 16, 2006, Rockstar Games partnered with North American Table Tennis for a preview party for their XBOX 360 video game, Rockstar Presents: Table Tennis. Over 40 participants joined in on the fun to take a "swing" at playing the game.

The Rockstar crew, Rodney Walker, Harry Allen, Justin Hills and Wally Green, brought XBOX 360's, three projection screens, and loads of fun packed into the game Rockstar Games created.

Gaming Elements

First, I'd like to let everyone know that I (Chris) am a hardcore gamer so I know good or bad games when I play them. If you don't believe me, if you were to check out how many days I've played the game World of Warcraft, you would see that I have over 170 days played on that game in the past two years of my life. Yes, I'm that hardcore.

Now, that you know a bit about my gaming credentials, let's talk about the game.

Table Tennis is a fairly straightforward and simple game with no mini-games, career or create a player modes. The modes you can choose are Tournament, Practice, Multi-player and XBOX Live modes. The game has 11 different characters to choose from. Each character has their strengths and weaknesses ranging from power, spin, serve and accuracy. After choosing a character, you are given choices of different jerseys to choose from with the name of the player's sponsor on it, such as Butterfly, Joola, or Killerspin, to name a few.

After choosing your jersey, you then pick a venue to play in. Rockstar created a variety of playing areas, from a national tournament in China to the rooftops of a warehouse.

Gameplay

After choosing the character, jersey and venue, it's time to get down and play some table tennis. The gaming engine is excellent. If you have never heard the term "gaming engine," in relation to this game, it describes the physics of each shot/ball, how the players move, how smooth the game play is and other such components.

Controls are easy to pick up as different buttons control your spins while the joystick controls the player's movements as well as the direction of the ball. As you know, Table Tennis is a VERY fast-paced game, so button and movement response from the controller to game is very important to players in order to win points. There were a few times when you want to blame the game for moving your character one way, while you move your joystick the other. However, this isn't the game's fault. What happens is in your haste to try and return a shot, you try to do too many things at once. Trying to move your character to the ball, choosing what type of spin you want to hit, and directing the ball all within .5 seconds makes you press buttons so feverishly that you most likely do something unexpected. The game might be simple and straightforward, but mastering it does take time.

One thing which is obviously different when comparing the game to real life is how rallies can go on for a solid minute, which is not very realistic. However, the rallies are still very exciting because of how fast paced the play becomes when you get in the zone. I think there are two reasons why some rallies last for such a long period. One is because if you don't try to direct the ball's direction, you can basically hit the ball on the other side of the table consistently without worrying about hitting the ball out of bounds. The other reason is because the average person who has never seen table tennis in real life has never actually felt the excitement and actual speed of the game, even with short rallies.

Graphics

If you're like me, when you visit wax museums you get freaked out because of how life-like the statues look. When I first started playing this game, I pretty much had the same reaction. This is in NO way a bad thing, especially for a videogame. The character models in this game are extremely detailed. Actually seeing the characters progressively sweat makes you feel as if you would be able to smell the B.O. coming off the characters during the matches. It also amazed me that with so much detail and work gone into creating each character and venue, there was no frame lag or choppiness. In fact, the game play was impressively smooth, bright and full of color. I think this is one of the reasons why Rockstar doesn't have a "create a character" aspect of the game. Customizable characters from other games are not as detailed as Table Tennis's pre-created characters in comparison. If a "create a character" aspect of the game was created, I doubt the details of the current characters would be as impressive.

Sound

During the preview party in Washington D.C., the event was held on the second floor of the bar. When some participants first walked to the second floor they asked where the table tennis tables were because they thought they heard an actual match going on when they were walking up the stairs. Those comments are a great testament to how real the sounds are in the game. We all know that during a real table tennis match, sound helps our timing. The same can be said with this game. The sound of the ball hitting the paddles as well as hitting the tables helps players set up epic fast-hitting rallies, assisting with the timing on when to press the hit button to gain the most power. The game is also available to be played using 5.1 Digital Audio, which doesn't hurt either.

General Comments

Rockstar Presents Table Tennis is a very straightforward game. Although there are no career or create a player modes, the game is still fun and exciting to pick up and start playing with the 11 players already available. From watching the participants at the preview party, the learning curve seemed to be about 15 minutes. All of them varied in videogaming and table tennis skill levels. Once you start getting better at the game and start playing the different tournaments, you can unlock many different items in the game such as better equipment and additional players. Playing the game with friends or XBOX Live is where the game truly shines. If you were at the Hawk 'N Dove bar during the final, you'd easily agree when you felt the gaming excitement buzzing from everyone. Also, the game is only $39.99 compared to other XBOX360 games which sell for $59.99. This game is a great bang-for-the-buck title to pick up and have fun with friends.
Club of the Month: Newport News TTC
By Ray Hopkins • www.nnttc.com

Just like many others in the Hampton Roads Virginia area I had the passion for table tennis without the facilities to play competitively. Well, thanks to the efforts of Hiep Tran and with the support of the Newport News Parks and Recreation Department, the Newport News Table Tennis Club was formed. The official opening was September 15, 2004, and we have been steadily growing ever since.

The club is available for players of all ability levels regardless of gender or age and our membership dues are very reasonably priced. We currently have 12 Joola tables and over 100 barriers at the state-of-the-art Midtown Community Center where we compete. Our regular schedule is Mondays and Wednesdays from 6-9:30 p.m. During this time we have tables available for competitive matches or practice. We also offer training through our coaching director Dan Barrett.

Even though Tran, NNTTC President, is given a lot of the credit for initiating the start of our club he received plenty of help. We should recognize Bernard Eballar (Vice-President 1), Morris Abraham (Club Manager and Treasurer), Richard Council (Vice-President 2) and Dan Barrett, who besides coaching is also our tournament director. We have also been helped tremendously with sponsorship from Mr. Tom Manley of TC Electric and from the city of Newport News. Thanks should also go to tournament sponsors Cox Communications, Table Tennis Pioneers, and Extended Stay Hotels. To help promotions we have been featured in the area newspaper The Daily Press and on local ABC news affiliate WVEC.

Our first year was highlighted by the success of hosting three USATT sanctioned tournaments. We also started USATT sanctioned league play once a month. We set up three divisions based on player ratings. Between the tournaments and the leagues, we brought to USATT more than 100 new members. Our tournaments and leagues attract many players from all over the U.S. and an international player, Vitaliy Deyark (former Ukraine Junior Champion). NNTTC brought back the Virginia State Championships. It had been over 30 years since our area had hosted this event. Our president, Hiep Tran, won the State Championships over Daniel Le of Fairfax, VA.

Besides table tennis, NNTTC raised money and helped retirement homes to buy a heater and air conditioning. NNTTC donated all proceeds from our September league play to the American Red Cross after the Katrina disaster.

Even though table tennis is the main attraction for our club to gather together, it has been a wonderful way to make new friends. The club promotes this by sponsoring summer picnics and Christmas parties throughout the year to bring everyone together away from the rigors of competition.

The NNTTC would also like to invite anyone visiting Newport News or any surrounding cities to come out and enjoy a fun and competitive night of table tennis with our club. Our website (www.nnttc.com) provides all the information you will need.

USATT League of the Month:
The Gwynedd-Mercy College League
By Ben Wolski

The Gwynedd-Mercy College Table Tennis League was set up this spring to bring recreational players into the sport of table tennis. The league quickly ramped up the intensity of match play at every skill level in the club. Players gained an understanding of the newer scoring system, rating system, service rules, and got a better feeling for match pressure. In addition, players were much more open to the idea of coaching after playing a few league matches. Suddenly, everyone wanted to learn a new serve and how to hit a better backhand.

The league took place in the afternoon after class to allow for the highest turnout of students and lowest number of time conflicts. A number of students changed work schedules and study times in order to play in the league. The structure of the league system gave students (a) a set time frame; (b) a set number of matches; and (c) insured that most matches were pretty even.

It also seems that the formation of the league on the college level opened up the socialization of the club. Club members were forced to play mostly on the basis of skill level rather than social group. Suddenly, soccer team members were mixing it up with international students. First-year students were having real conversations with older students about what classes to take and what paddle to buy. In short, the league provided a complex social balance to the club which I think is one of the key advantages to running a league system at the college level.

Gwynedd-Mercy College is located about twenty minutes from Philadelphia. The table tennis club has five tables and is open to all current students; the fall 2006-7 team will be made up of players developed in the spring league. Head coach Ben Wolski (this writer) will lead the Griffins into competition in the Mid-Atlantic Division of the NCTTA and run a new league for students in the fall.
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USA TABLE TENNIS MAGAZINE • July/August 2006
Will Shortz:
Puzzlemaster & Table Tennis Player
By Pat Yee

Between waiting for matches at clubs, players occupy themselves with anything from idle chit-chat to crosswords and, while few players have the talent to say that they solved the crossword puzzle from the Tribune or Times, only one USATT player has the background to actually say, “I made that crossword.”

Crossword puzzle editor of The New York Times Will Shortz, a puzzle fan and avid table tennis player, can say that.

Shortz, like many Americans, first discovered table tennis in the rec. room of his childhood home in Indiana where he developed his own game.

“I was so small when I started that my head barely poked above the table,” he said. “By necessity I held the paddle Seemiller-style ... which I still use today.”

His early “intense if friendly” competitions with his family influenced him enough to continue to play after his move to New York in the early 80’s.

“I joined the USATT for a few years and played in a couple tournaments,” Shortz said. “Then life got too busy and I stopped.”

While difficult for table tennis fans to imagine being “too busy” to hit around, Shortz’s career achievements include founding and directing the American Crossword Puzzle Tournament as well as making weekly puzzle features for NPR’s Weekend Edition and the New York Times.

Eventually, as many fans do, Shortz found himself craving to play again.

“During the 15 years I didn’t play, when asked what my interests were besides puzzles, I always said ‘table tennis,’” Shortz said. “So I always knew I’d return to it someday.”

In 2001, he finally rediscovered table tennis play in a serious environment.

“A friend, knowing how much I missed table tennis, found me the Rivertowns Table Tennis Club,” Shortz said. “I started playing there twice a week.”

Later, Shortz found the Burke TTC which further increased his play. “Today, with two clubs each less than 20 minutes from my house, I generally play six nights a week, averaging 2 ½ to 3 hours a night. Saturday is my ‘day off,’” he said. “As you see, I have become obsessed with this game.”

His table tennis hero is Kalinikos Kranaga of Greece. “I can’t get enough of his whiplike backhand,” he said. Of his American table tennis hero, George Brathwaite, he said, “I’d like to be as good a player as he is when I’m 70.”

Though Shortz’s career has him constantly traveling, it generally hasn’t affected the frequency of his play.

“Whenever I travel I try to find a local table tennis club, either at my destination or, if I’m driving, somewhere along the way,” Shortz said.

His involvement in table tennis made his business trips less hectic, as he got to play in his free time. He’s hit at clubs from Chicago to Los Angeles in the United States and France to Poland in Europe.

“Playing at other clubs allows you to meet other people and see a local slice of life wherever you are,” Shortz said. “It helps you stay in shape, too.”

To Shortz, the physical aspect and convenience of play work well together for a busy person to stay fit and active.

“Usually I’m soaked in sweat after 20-30 minutes of play, and that’s only the start of an evening,” he said. “When I’m done I feel relaxed and refreshed.”

Though a very physical sport, Shortz considers table tennis mental as well. Thus table tennis suits perfectly world’s only professional enigmatologist, defined by Shortz as “someone who studies and writes mathematical, word, or logic puzzles.”

“Both table tennis and puzzles put a high premium on mental flexibility,” he said. “You have to change your game continually as your opponent changes his.”

So between the two mental games, which does Shortz prefer?

“Well, puzzles are my profession, as well as my hobby, so they come first,” Shortz said. “But table tennis is a close second. If for some reason I have to miss playing for a couple days, I get itchy.”

However, Shortz is one among many interested in puzzles. The film Wordplay opened in theaters June 16 to positive reviews. About half of Wordplay takes place at the 2005 American Crossword Puzzle Tournament, which Shortz directs.

“It was the most exciting tournament in the event’s 28-year history,” Shortz said. “I start sweating every time I watch the film, and I know how it turns out!”

Despite his enthusiasm for both puzzles and table tennis, Shortz’s rarely combines both.

“I use table tennis references once in a while,” Shortz said. “But so far never anything the average solver wouldn’t know. Thus, no [crossword answer has been] Ma Lin yet.”
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Wade Sun ... Inventor ... Ping Pong Player
By Pam Ramsey

Out of many thousands, Wade made it to the top 30 for the new hit Reality TV show, American Inventor, which airs Thursdays at 9 PM on ABC.

He discovered and developed a new technique that quickly and safely destroys recordable media such as CD-Rs and DVD+Rs. What’s more, he designed and prototyped a simple, easy-to-use device that implements this much needed data-security feature, for which "modern technology" has clumsily produced CD shredders for. Wade named and trademarked his new product as the Compact Disc Eraser, which caught the attention of the producers and the judges on the show. For more info, see his website at www.DiscEraser.com.

Wade believes Table Tennis inspires creative thinking. “Most of the brightest, funniest, and most creative people I know are friends who play Table Tennis!” Wade himself is no exception to this statement, having the meanest penhold backhand loop known to man. An inventor since the age of 4, Wade has never gone this far with any of his past inventions. “My past is full of ideas and self-made prototypes, but for one reason or another, they never made it. But in the process, I learned many things, including how to patent and how to develop marketable products. Now, I’m learning so much about marketing, and it all has become an exciting new career path for me!” A San Diegan, Wade graduated from UCSD in 1997 as an Electrical Engineer, moved to San Jose for work, and then moved back to San Diego in 2005 after getting married.

And his “best invention” is yet to be released. sometime in late July of this year. Yes, they are expecting their first baby — it’s a boy!

SDTTA would like to say CONGRATULATIONS and GOODLUCK to Wade!

An Excellent Adventure in Iran
By Peng Chan

I recently paid a visit to Iran and played at a local table tennis club. (I’m a USATT member rated 1649.) Here’s an account of my adventure.

I visited Tehran and Shiraz, Iran in March of 2006. I contacted Mr. Shahrok Shahmazi of the Iranian TTF before I left the U.S. and inquired as to where I could play TT during my stay there. I was put in touch with a Mr. Tehrani, the coach of the Shorideh Shirazi Table Tennis Club in Shiraz, Iran. The club has been in existence 16 years, the last 10 at its present location. Mr. Tehrani has been the coach for eight years. The club has about 40 members from all age groups. The hours of operation are from 6:30-10 PM everyday. During school vacations, the club is also open from 9AM-12PM.

The club is loaded with talented players, all shakehanders with Butterfly Bryce and Riber rubbers. The club has five tables that are manufactured locally. I had the wonderful opportunity and misfortune of playing two of their top players. I was soundly beaten by Ashkan Zolfaghari, age 19, who was the 2001 national under 14 champion. Although there’s no rating system in Iran, I’m sure he’d be rated over 2000.

Ehsan Kakae, 16, a member of the national team, offered to play with me but I wisely declined. Other star players in the club include Saeid Masood, the current men’s national singles champion in the Under 18 category; Moud Yaghoubi, 15, ranked third nationally in his age group; and Sina Zaree, 12, ranked third in his age group.

Everyone at the club was polite and accommodating. I was offered cookies and given a ride back to my hotel. One player even invited me to his house to sample his mother’s home cooking!

For more information about the club, feel free to contact Melidi at melidi.yaghoubi@yahoo.com or Arsalan at arsalan_zolfaghari@yahoo.com.

The letter below is in regard to Coach Daniel Rutenberg of Frisco, TX, USATT’s Volunteer Coach of the Year for 2005.

May 19, 2006
Dear Coach Rutenberg,

I want to congratulate you for being a finalist for the 2005 National Volunteer Coach of the Year. You are the first coach from Table Tennis to ever be named a finalist for Developmental Coach of the Year award, which is a great accomplishment. The USOC appreciates your efforts in developing future athletes of Table Tennis for the United States.

You will be receiving a plaque for your nomination and a very nice cherry award box that signifies that you are a finalist for 2005. The awards should arrive to you in the month of July.

For your information, the selection committee has chosen Cindy Hart of USA Speedskating as the Volunteer Coach of the Year.

Cordially, Catherine Sellers, USOC Coaching

To Tournament Directors and Committees

I appreciate the effort and time that it takes to have a tournament. Table tennis is a very competitive and fun sport.

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Yours In Table Tennis, Larry Clark

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• Former Head Coach for the Szechuan Province of China
• Chinese National Team, 1977-87
• 1985 & 1993 U.S. Open Men's Champion
• USATT's Coach of the Year, 1996
• Butterfly-sponsored full-time coach
• Certified by USATT as a National Coach

Coach Jack Huang
• Former Head Coach for the Guangxi Province of China
• Chinese National Team, 1976-83
• U.S. #1 Player in 1990
• Former U.S. Senior and Men's Doubles Champion
• USATT's Developmental Coach of the Year, 1997
• Butterfly-sponsored full-time coach
• Certified by USATT as a National Coach

Coach Larry Hodges (August & December Only)
• Author of Table Tennis: Steps to Success
• USATT's Developmental Coach of the Year, 2002
• Director/Manager/Coach at Resident Training Program for Table Tennis at Olympic Training Center, 1985-89
• Many-time U.S. Junior Team Coach
• Certified by USATT as a National Coach
• USATT Coaching Chairman, 1993-95
• Former full-time coach
• Member, USA Table Tennis Hall of Fame.

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**An Official’s View**

By “Dr. Azmy”

**Propositions Decided at the AGM 2006 in Bremen**

**Comments by Dr. Azmy**

3) There is only a slight change, the word “and” has been replaced by “or”.

5-6) They have been withdrawn.

7) This is in line with the new rules for playing Wheelchair players. It made it clear that the rule refers to the service only.

8-10) These are all changed to be effective on Sept. 1, 2008. The idea is to postpone the implementation until after the 2008 Olympics.

11) The decision reached was that all the changes proposed by ITTF be withdrawn.

12) These are regarding the new Team format and its approval.

A) This is regarding the uniformity of rubber surface.

**Propositions**

Changes are signified by asterisks.

1) **Proposed by the French Table Tennis Federation**

1.5.3.1 The Executive Committee shall consist of the President and *6* Executive Vice-Presidents of which one shall be appointed by the President as Deputy President and another one shall be appointed by the Executive Committee *responsible for finance.*

**Defeated**

2) **Proposed by the French Table Tennis Federation**

1.18.6 Elections

Voting procedure of the Executive Committee: One round vote, elected by the relative majority: The candidates are elected in a decreasing order of the number of votes gathered by each of them not exceeding the number of available positions.

**Withdrawn**

3) **Proposed by the Finnish Table Tennis Association**

2.6 THE SERVICE

2.6.4 From the start of service until it is struck, the ball shall be above the level of the playing surface and behind the server’s end line, and it shall not be hidden from the receiver by the server or his doubles partner *or* by anything they wear or carry.

**Passed**

4) **Proposed by the Finnish Table Tennis Association**

2.13 THE ORDER OF SERVICE, RECEIVING AND ENDS*

2.13.7 The player or pair starting at one end in a game shall start at the other end in the next game of the match and in the last possible game of a match the players or pairs shall change ends, *if either player or pair wants to,* when first one player or pair scores 5 points.

**Defeated**

5) **Proposed by USA Table Tennis**

2.6 THE SERVICE

2.6.1 Service shall start with the ball resting freely on the *flat* open palm of the server’s stationary free hand.

**Withdrawn**

6) **Proposed by USA Table Tennis**

2.6 THE SERVICE

2.6.4 From the start of service until it is struck, the ball shall be above the level of the playing surface and behind the server’s end line, and it shall not be hidden from the receiver, *the umpire or the assistant umpire* by any part of the body or clothing of the server or his doubles partner.

2.6.5 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.

**Withdrawn**

7) **Proposed by the ITTF Rules Committee**

2.9 A LET

2.9.1 The rally shall be a let

2.9.1.5 If the receiver is in wheelchair due to a physical disability and *in service* the ball, *provided the service is otherwise correct* 2.9.1.5 leaves the receiver’s half after touching it in the direction of the net, …

**Passed**

8) **Proposed by the ITTF Equipment Committee**

3.2.4 GLUING

3.2.4.1 Coverings may be attached to racket blades only by means of pressure-sensitive adhesive sheets or adhesives that do not contain a prohibited solvent; a list of prohibited solvents is available from the Secretariat.

**Passed**

9) **Proposed by the Japanese Table Tennis Association**

3.2.4 GLUING

3.2.4.1 Adhesives containing volatile organic solvents shall not be used from 1st September *2008*.

3.2.4.3 A properly ventilated area shall be provided for the attachment of racket coverings to rackets and liquid adhesives shall not be used anywhere else *at the playing venue*.

**Passed**

10) **Proposed by the ITTF Athletes’ Commission**

3.2.4 GLUING

3.2.4.1.1 Adhesives containing volatile organic solvents shall not be used at the playing venue from 1st September 2006 and shall not be used at all from 1st September *2008*.

**Passed**

11) **Proposed by the Japanese Table Tennis Association**

3.2.4 GLUING

3.2.4.2 Tests for prohibited solvents will be carried out at World and Olympic title competitions and major Pro-Tour tournaments and a player whose racket is found to contain such a solvent and a player when forbidden act in the *playing venue* of the preceding clause is discovered by the competition staff from 1st September 2006, is liable to be disqualified from the competition and reported to his association.

**Defeated**

12) **Proposed by the German Table Tennis Federation**

3.2 EQUIPMENT AND PLAYING CONDITIONS

3.2.5.10 Advertisements on playing clothing shall be limited to

3.2.5.10.1 The maker’s normal trademark, symbol or name contained within a total area of 24cm*50* cm*.

**Defeated**

13) **Proposed by the German Table Tennis Federation**

3.2 EQUIPMENT AND PLAYING CONDITIONS

3.2.5.10 Advertisements on playing clothing shall be limited to

3.2.5.10.4 Not more than 2 advertisements, contained within a combined total area of 80cm*120*, only on the front and the sides of* shorts or skirt.

**Passed**

14) **Proposed by the ITTF Umpires and Referees Committee**

3.4.4 INTERVALS

3.4.4.2.3 The request for a time-out, which can be made only *between rallies in a game* shall be indicated by making a “T” sign with the hands.

**Passed**

15) **Proposed by USA Table Tennis**

3.4.4 INTERVALS

3.4.4.2.4 On receiving a valid request R) for a time-out the umpire shall suspend play and *he* while seated, shall hold up a white card *with the hand on the side of the player/pair who requested it till the end of the time-out*.

**Passed**

16) **Proposed by USA Table Tennis**

3.5.2 MISBEHAVIOUR

3.5.2.1 Players and coaches shall refrain from behavior that may unfairly affect an opponent, offend spectators or bring the sport into disrepute, such as abusive language, deliberately breaking the ball or hitting it out of the playing area, kicking the table or surrounds, *wiping the hands on the surface of the table* and disrespect of match officials.

**Defeated**

17) **Proposed by the ITTF Junior Commission**

3.8 INTERNATIONAL ELIGIBILITY

3.8.4 A player is eligible to represent a Continental Federation (1.17.1) in *senior and* or junior events *of continental teams only if he is eligible to represent a member Association of this Continental Federation according to 3.8.3.* *For cadet events in which Continental...
Federations enter continental teams, Continental Federations may enter players who are eligible to represent a member Association of this Continental Federation according to 3.8.3 and/or players who, on the first day of a competition, have been permanent residents for at least three years in a country over which a member Association of this Continental Federation has jurisdiction.

Defeated

18) Proposed by the European Table Tennis Union
(to omit 4.1.9.2 completely)
4.1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS
4.1.9 Events
4.1.9.2 In doubles events, both players shall be from the same Association.

Defeated

19) Proposed by the German Table Tennis Federation
4.3 OLYMPICS COMPETITION
4.3.2 Events
4.3.2.1 The Olympics competition shall include at least men's singles, women's singles, men's team events and women's team events.

Passed

20) Proposed by the German Table Tennis Federation
(to insert a new paragraph 4.3.2.2)
4.3 OLYMPICS COMPETITION
4.3.2 Events
4.3.2.2 The Team Match System in team events and women's team events.

Passed

21) Proposed by the European Table Tennis Union
(to omit 4.4.9.1.1 completely)
4.4 WORLD JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIPS
4.4.9 Events
4.4.9.1.1 With the exception of mixed doubles events, both players of a doubles shall be from the same Association.

Defeated

A) Put forward by the ITTF Equipment Committee
Technical Leaflet 1/4A
A requirement that for the racket coverings the rubber surface should be uniform and without coating shall be included in the Technical Leaflet.

Passed

USATT Board Motions & Votes
April, 2006
Motion: Move to nominate Sheri Pittman to replace Bob Fox as USATT delegate to the 2006 ITTF's Annual General Meeting, to be held in Brisbane.
Motion by Sheri Pittman; Second by Tim Bogdan; Motion passed: 10-0-0-3
In Favor: Tim B, Dell S, Khoa N, Barney R, Jing W, Whitney P, Lily Y, George B, Tong L, Joseph W; Against: None; Abstain: None; No Vote: Sheri P, Robert B, Ashu J


Missing: Bill Meiklejohn, Ray Kunze, Art Wirtschafer, Craig Krum and Don Hauer.

Senior Corner

By Olga & Stan Kahan, USATT Senior Committee Co-Chairs
949-830-6699 (ph) · 949-240-7167 (fax)
naf@berkeley.edu

On June 2, 2006, three prominent Californians, Dennis Davis, John Miller and Khoa Nguyen, were inducted into the California Table Tennis Hall of Fame at its banquet, chaired by its president, Y.C. Lee. The banquet was held in Laguna Woods Village, Laguna Woods, where the Meiklejohn North American Seniors Tournament took place.

Since 1994, the CTTTHOF has honored and inducted those residents of California who have achieved preeminence in the sport of table tennis as players and/or officials or contributors.

On the same occasion, the USATT Senior Committee awarded trophies to NSTTFA - the National Seniors Table Tennis Association Committee - for its members' dedication, excellent teamwork and innovations in executing the Meiklejohn North American Seniors Tournament (formerly the Meiklejohn National Seniors) which has been running for seventeen consecutive years.

This table tennis event started in 1989, during the 25th anniversary of Leisure World, Laguna Hills, CA. The coordinator of the celebration approached the Laguna Hills TT Club for involvement in the anniversary event. Harry Bloom, Paul Thompson and Julius Margolis responded positively to his request. Harry's wife, Alice, assisted in advertising and publicity affairs. Julius Margolis asked Harold Kopper, from Southern California, to help them in organizing that local tournament. "It is a wonderful idea," responded Kopper. "It is my pleasure to host such a tournament."

Leisure World donated $1000 for expenses and trophies. Ken Hoover brought a valuable oriental rug from Arizona for auction. Other volunteers, among them Walt Wehrl, worked hard to make the tournament a success. Ninety players took part in table tennis competitions. In 1990, Julius Margolis became Tournament Director, and Bill Meiklejohn, who at that time, was actively involved in table tennis, contributed money and the local tournament was renamed the Meiklejohn National Seniors Table Tennis Tournament and it became open to the entire country. It became an annual event. Walt Wehrl was appointed the tournament treasurer, dealing with monetary affairs, trophies and the diner. Herb Gilbert showed his expertise in setting up table tennis equipment and environmental issues. With every year the number of events increased as did the number of players.

In 1994, Julius realized that "new blood was required," and the L.W.T.T. Club's president at that time, Carol Cartwright, suggested Olga Feingold, who became Margolis' assistant and, starting in 1996, the tournament director for seven consecutive years. The tournament grew steadily to 260 players with 32 events. There also were innovations in age and rating events and scheduling.

After 2002, Olga decided that the baton should be passed to her assistant tournament director, Ray Kunze. Olga was elected the tournament committee chair. The name of the tournament also was changed to the Meiklejohn North American Seniors and "some new blood" was added to the NSTTFA. (This non-profit table tennis organization was legally registered in 1999.)

Ray Kunze, the present tournament director, summarizing the tournament's achievements, said, "The group responsible for putting on our Meiklejohn Tournament has changed over time; it is larger, perhaps, more organized and its members are certainly older and a bit more reserved. The average age of committee members is 78! One soon learns that being a committee member is hard work. Our meetings are usually noisy affairs with heated arguments and sometimes lots of laughter. In the end, reason usually prevails. I believe that overall we have put Bill Meiklejohn's money to good use and that we have produced an event of lasting value that we can all be proud of."

Corrections

In the Under 10 Girls' Rankings in the last issue, two players were inadvertently left out. Kaylyn Olivera, NV, rated 295, should have been #5; Yahaira Fidelh, NY, rated 240, should have been #10. The last issue included the USATT Approved Equipment List. Included in the list were listings of table tennis rackets, balls machines and net sets. However, neither USATT nor ITTF require these to be approved or sanctioned.
Richard McAfee’s first USTTA-sanctioned tournament was in 1963 at the Orlando, FL City Auditorium. He’d come in as the Florida Boys Club Champion and thought he was pretty damn good with “his trusty fifteen-plied-handle hard rubber racket.” But was he in for a surprise! In his first game in the Junior’s he was beaten 21-2, and didn’t win a game all day. What were his opponents playing with to show such “spin and speed”? The inverted sponge rocket of course. When his father arrived to take him home, Richard prevailed on him to buy him one of those much needed rackets. And with Tournament Director Harry (“H”) Blair’s help, a Butterfly selection was made—and McAfee’s long table tennis career was started. Perhaps because of this memorable occasion the first of his K National and 13 State American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD) Conventions. With the help of Scott Preiss he both entertained and educated these professionals. Such a prolification of responsibilities came his way—to all of which he applied himself diligently. He was the USATT National Coaching Chair: the first time a head coach or head coach at Anderson College (allowing the school to give scholarships), Richard manned a promotional USTTA booth and conducted articles but other diverse ones—for example, on major tournaments.

After coming of age as a Junior, he graduated to winning Orlando Open Singles and Doubles events (usually with Ray Merglino). His steady progress eventually resulted in a National title—the 1972 U.S. Open Class B Championship (275 entries). Richard’s most notable triumph was yet to come. It was big news, and Topics readers had Joe Sokoloff’s story to thank for it (Mar.-Apr., 1973, 26). Our five-time National Champion D-J Lee was beaten—for the first time by a U.S. native-born player—when the 22-year-old McAfee did him in at the June, 1972 Detroit U.S. Open Team Championships.

Joe was teammate and coach to Richard when the tie with Ohio was 1-1 and Richard was faced with D-J. “It was decided,” said Joe, “that Richard should stay up to the table and hit with Lee and not back up and give him chances to loop.” Key to the 1st game was the combination of Richard’s tricky fakehand serves and particularly his follows with “a newly developed stroke called the WHIP DRIVE” (utilizes a whipping motion of the wrist and elbow). “An enormous amount of strength is required to execute the shot,” said Joe, “and Richard has been doing special wrist-strengthening exercises for some time now. Richard is 6 feet 5 inches tall and weighs 225 lbs.—which also helps.”

With Richard up 12-8 in the 1st, Joe hurried to find his misplaced camera—and along with his frantic but successful search he told every Florida player he saw that Mac was beating D-J. Coming back to the court, knowing how emotional Richard was, Joe organized a cheering section to urge him on. “The cheers had to have been effective, for Mac finished that game with a succession of backhand kills—and "THE CROWD WENT WILD!"

The key to Richard’s successful play was that “he could counter backhands with D-J and force him back from the table and get a shot for the point.” After losing the 2nd by playing too soft, Mac was up 19-16 in the 3rd—but then D-J “went for three kill shots off Mac’s serve and brought them all in beautifully.” Richard looked at Joe—Joe shrugged “and flashed a Number 2 all or nothing serve play.” Both killer follows went in—and Richard, mobbed by well-wishers, had made History!

The following year, before taking a long absence from the game, McAfee managed Joe Newgard’s Miami Club, “Newgy’s,” earlier known as Fuji’s when the former Japanese Champion was holding court there. It was at Fuji’s where Ross Brown, who gave the speech honoring Richard at the Vegas Awards Banquet, first met his lifelong friend. (More than 30 years later they would reach the Esquire Doubles final at the 2004 U.S. Open). On his return to the Sport in the 1980’s, Richard began to concentrate on what he’d always been interested in—coaching. And now, what a proliferation of responsibilities came his way—to all of which he applied himself diligently. He was the USATT National Coaching Chair; the Founder/Director of the Association’s National Schools Program; the Director of the U. S. Eastern Training Center where Shi Yong Wang was Head Coach and where I myself had holed up putting together the 1990 Baltimore U.S. Open World Veterans Program.

Now, too, Richard manned a promotional USTTA booth and conducted the first of his 8 National and 13 State American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD) Conventions. With the help of Scott Preiss he both entertained and educated these professionals. Such a variety of Table Tennis instruction Richard’s given. Even while he was a full-time Coach at Anderson College (allowing the school to give scholarships), he couldn’t help but be involved in Junior Olympics work, for, as his friends Marv and Caron Jeff have said, “Richard’s been teaching kids, helping them, ever since we can remember.”

Richard took on a huge responsibility when he was named Competition Manager for Table Tennis at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games. This position, requiring tact, also demanded that he run the warm-up 1995 Atlanta World Cup. Progressive management experiences would follow, from the Atlanta Paralympics, through North American and U.S. Team Trials, to when the ITTF would name him Competition Manager for the Brazilian Open. Little wonder he received the IOC’s Olympic Merit Award.

Having formed many connections in Atlanta, he later became President of the Association there, and also Head Coach at The Sporting Club, a premier racket and health club, where he could offer private and group lessons, and also run a summer camp program. By 2003 he’d received Georgia’s AAU Coach of the Year Award.

Meanwhile, year after year, Richard, a Certified National Coach, would contribute to the USATT magazine not only Coaches Corner articles but other diverse ones—for example, on major tournaments, sports psychology, the impact of the 40 mm ball. None, though, were more well-known than his McAfee’s Mechanics series. In these he stressed that if any individual stroke is to be successful—regardless of a player’s grip, playing style, or personal technique—it must be formed...
with an eye to 1. Timing; 2. Application of Force and Friction; and 3. Contact Point on the Ball. It was only a matter of time before in 1999 he was named the USOC's Developmental Coach of the Year.

Richard also won the USOC's 2004 "Doc Counsilman" Table Tennis Science Award. Like Dick Miles, he values the use of the robot, and, in directing his "Newgy" Coaching System, he uses a "spin wheel" to teach his students how to develop spin strokes.

Richard was a USATT Delegate to both the World Championships and the World Masters Games, and so was certainly up-to-date on international techniques and training methods. He repeatedly gained practical experience abroad when as the new millennium approached he began conducting annual Olympic Solidarity Courses for the ITTF, beginning with a stint in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and continuing on into 2005 where he worked in Myanmar (formerly Burma).

Also, in 2005, the ITTF sent Richard to southern Thailand where seven months earlier the Tsunami had struck with great destructive force. The Thai government feels that "Getting people back into their normal everyday activities, which includes sport, will help in dealing with the stress of the disaster." So Richard, marveling at the recovery effort, did his bit for the Relief Project there—made sure that the schools got donated t.t. equipment (through the generous help of Butterfly and Newgy's).

Of course it was his practice not only to coach but to teach others to coach and train players, and to continue programs he'd organized.

Richard has moved with his wife Diane, and daughter, Sarah, to Aurora, Colorado, where of course at the Colorado School of Mines T.T. Club he quickly continued his love of coaching.

In his speech honoring Richard at the Stratosphere's Induction ceremonies, Ross Brown concluded:

"...One definition of a career is 40 years of enthusiasm. Richard has had an exemplary career, so far. But we still need him. It is my hope that table tennis will continue to enjoy Richard's involvement for many years to come. Of course, Richard is honored by his induction into the Hall of Fame. But I also believe that the Hall is honored, as well, by his induction.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I present to you a great coach, an organizer without equal, a true diplomat, a tireless emissary of table tennis, and my very dear friend, Richard McAfee.”
In Memoriam:
Grady Cox Gordon (1926-2006)
By Tim Boggan, USATT Historian

Dear friends,

I am so sorry to give you the grave news about my condition. After 2 months of severe indigestion and weight loss, a CT scan of my abdomen done last Thursday revealed a 7 cm. (about 2 inches) tumor. A biopsy of the tumor done the next day confirmed it to be an adenocarcinoma.

The prognosis is grave. It involves the portal vein (the necessary vein that drains all the intestines) and it has spread to the local lymph nodes. It is too far advanced for surgical cure. Also this type of cancer responds very poorly to chemotherapy. So, the options for successful treatment are virtually nil. I am beginning to appear so I will have a bilateral stent placed this coming Friday so that bile can flow into the intestinal tract...

Amazing.
Grady, the surgeon for 37 years, the consummate professional, poised in full control even now—again telling it like it is as he’s done so many times in the past. Only this time he has to tell it to himself, for he’s the patient, and a dying one. Has to tell it to the patient’s loved ones, too—Cathy, his wife of 54 years; his three sons; his daughter; his grandchildren; his two brothers, his sister. No doubt since he started his surgical practice in Waco, Texas back in 1961 he’s gotten very experienced at having on occasion to give grim news. But knowing that his own “life expectancy will likely be only a few months,” to show such iron objectivity, to be so realistic, duty-minded, and considerate of the “family” (and that includes his many friends), is to be almost unbelievably courageous.

Especially when he might have known he didn’t have a few months. The Friday on which he’d heard his death sentence was April 7; he had only 12 more days to “live” before going into a coma on the 19th and dying on the 22nd.

But at least he had almost 80 years among us and accomplished much. A lengthy obituary sent to me by Grady’s friend George Hendry spoke of how active he was in his Waco community: “a member of Trinity United Methodist Church, church choir, and held leadership positions on the Board of American Red Cross, American Cancer Society, Camp Fire Girls of America, the YMCA, Caritas, Planned Parenthood, Inner City Ministry” and how he was also active “in the Baylor Institute for Senior Learning and the Texas Memorial Society.”

And then of course there was sports. He was a member of the University of Texas Varsity Tennis Team, “held a high state ranking in tennis for many years, and was honored by inclusion in the Texas Sports Hall of Fame...He also held the Waco City Racquetball Championship for three years.”

When his photo first appears in my History of U.S. Table Tennis, it’s 1971 and Grady’s first enough to win the Senior’s in a Southwest tournament. But his medical practice, his family, and all his other activities really don’t make it practical for him to play in the U.S. Open or Closed. He makes appearances in 1978 at the Oklahoma City U.S. Open and at the 1983 Closed in Las Vegas, playing doubles with George Batson. But it’s not until he starts his Waco Club in 1985 that we begin to take him seriously. At the 1986 Closed he’s runner-up to Betty Hull in both the Singles to one of his arch-rivals, George Hendry. George came to admire Grady more and more as both a competitor and a sportsman, urging he be considered for the USATT Hall of Fame. and relished their tournament. But his medical practice, his family, and all his other activities includes his many friends). is to be almost unbelievably courageous.

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After that 89 Open we don’t see Grady in the majors for a while. As he’ll tell me later, in 1992 and ‘94 (when he lost the U.S. Closed 60’s to Mintsiveris) he came through “laminectomies to relieve his spinal stenosis and traumatic arthritis”—delighting in that accurate technical objectivity which he applied even to self. Perhaps his interest in being precise, as well as a desire to travel—I remember him telling me how much he, his wife and sister recently enjoyed visiting Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, and the spectacular Iguazu Falls—led him to be an International Umpire.

As Grady moves toward his 1998 retirement, he scores his first major wins—the Over 70’s at both the 1996 U.S. Open and U.S. Closed. I tabulate that for 8 straight years—from 1996 through 2004—Grady was in the final of the U.S. Open 70’s, winning 6 times (5 in a row), losing twice. That for 6 years he was in the final of the 70 Doubles, winning 3 and losing 3. And that for all 5 years—2001 through 2005—he was in the final of the 75’s, winning 3, losing 2.

He always said, “You gotta play this Game with your head, heart, and hands”—and, boy did he play it, almost every day at his Waco Club. Yes, he was bothered by fluid in his knee, but he had confidence in the Glucosamine Condroitin he’d been taking (if it had worked successfully on animals in Europe, why wouldn’t it work on him?). He wanted to keep fit, and that meant doing aerobics and holding to what he called a “Zone Diet”—40% carbs, 30% protein, and 30% fat. If something went wrong, Grady wasn’t likely to wait, he’d move to fix it. At one tournament he was sporting a snazzy lumbo sacral binder—that is, a belt to stabilize his unstable back. I also recall him having right wrist surgery to take out an arthritic bone, and orthoscopic surgery for a rotator cuff tear in his right shoulder.

I tabulate that from 1996 through 2005 Grady, using long pips on one side, short pips on the other, was in the final of 6 U.S. Closed Over 70’s, winning 4, losing 2; was in 7 U.S. Closed 70 Doubles finals, winning 3, losing 4; and was in all 5 Over 75 finals, winning 4, losing 1. His repeat toughest matches were, not surprisingly, with those who consistently threatened to win 70 singles and doubles themselves—in alphabetical order: Tim Boggan, Frank Dvelly, George Hendry, Dick Peregrine, Marty Reisman, Leon Ruderman, and Lynnwood Smith.

Perhaps Grady’s favorite doubles partner was his longtime friend “Buddy” Melamed who said, “I don’t know anyone who ever disliked him, and no one that he wasn’t friendly with.” Their favorite matches had to be when in their 1998 Closed 70 Doubles final they beat Y.C. Lee/Leon Ruderman, 25-23 in the 3rd (from 20-15 down), and in the following year at the Closed when they beat Brathwaite/Reisman to reach the finals of the 60’s. Grady himself had to cherish the last and perhaps most satisfying Singles win of his life. In an earlier 2001 U.S. Closed match with Reisman, Grady said he’d been “outpushed and out-positioned,” but at the 2005 Closed he boasted Marty after being 3 match points down.

So where do we go from here?...
I am sorry to have to leave you like this...
Each of you has meant a great deal to me. Thanks for all your friendship and all your kindness over the years. It has been a great experience to have known each of you. Keep up the good work and pass it on.
Forever yours,
Grady

A good reference to pancreatic cancer is www.medicinenet.com/pancreatic_cancer/article.htm

Amazing. Who could forget such a farewell...such a man.
In Memoriam:
Abbott Nelson (1919-2006)
By Steve Isaacs

I began playing table tennis at Chicago’s famous Net and Paddle Club in 1950 when I was 13 years old. There were a number of highly ranked players who showed up regularly, and to my 13-year-old eyes and my 55-year-old memory, Abbott Nelson was certainly in that select group that included Bernie Bukiet, Bill Holzrichter, Allan Levy, Ralph Bast, V. Lee Webb, Marvin Prager, Bill Meszaros, Frank Tharaldson and Keith Porter ... and he was surely good enough to beat me!

I didn’t know at that time that Abbott had teamed up with Dan Kreer to win the 1938 National Intercollegiates for Princeton University, upsetting the favored defending champions from the University of Pennsylvania. Nor did I know that while living in California Abbott had won the Los Angeles County Open, been elected vice president of the fledgling California Table Tennis Association, and won the very prestigious 1949 Pacific Coast Open.

Then, according to Tim Boggs’ History of U.S. Table Tennis, Vol. II, Abbott left Los Angeles to come to the Chicago area ... first to Waukegan and then to Northfield, Illinois. Carlton Prouty told me that while living in California Abbott had won the National Intercollegiates for Princeton University, upsetting the favored defending champions from the University of Pennsylvania. Nor did I know that while living in California Abbott had won the Los Angeles County Open, been elected vice president of the fledgling California Table Tennis Association, and won the very prestigious 1949 Pacific Coast Open.

By Steve Isaacs

Michael LoRusso (1945-2006)
By Jackie DiLorenzo & Jennifer Johnson

On May 18, 2006 Table Tennis and the world lost a beloved member of our society, Michael (Mike) LoRusso. He joined our ranks in the 1970’s and had been a devoted, solid, and hard-working member since the beginning of his time with us and up until his 2006 death. He founded the American Wheelchair Table Tennis Association (AWTTA) along with Ed Morrison and Tyler Kaut. He was a member of the AWTTA Board of Directors, Tri-State Wheelchair Athletic Association, USA Table Tennis Disabled Players Committee, National Wheelchair Athletic Association Board of Directors (now Wheelchair Sports USA) and United Spinal Association. In all of these organizations he acted in various capacities such as Chairman and Treasurer. He was a member of numerous National, Pan American, World Championships and Paralympic Table Tennis Teams, as well as a multi-time medal winner. He also organized and managed many international wheelchair table tennis teams while being a player himself. He was the first person to introduce wheelchair table tennis to New Jersey in 1974. He was well known for his work with disabled children as well as motivational speaker to newly disabled persons. In addition to his love of athletics, he was a member of a theatre company in Manhattan where he enjoyed all aspects of performance arts. He had a great appreciation for American actors, film and theatre. He retired from AT&T where he was an Electrical Engineer. In addition to leaving behind his teammates, family and friends, he is survived by his beloved wife, Lena. She was very devoted to him for all of their short time together and was the love of his life. His passing has left us all with a great sense of loss. May he rest in peace.

Because of Mike’s love, dedication and passion for wheelchair table tennis the family requests that in lieu of flowers donations be sent to the American Wheelchair Table Tennis Association (AWTTA), payable to AWTTA. Attention: Marty Young, 5 Roland Drive, White Plains, NY 10605.

Richard Badger (1921-2006)
Long Beach TTC loses its long-time president
By Chris Karadjov

Richard Badger, Long Beach Table Tennis Club president from 1970 to 2001, passed away on Feb. 26, 2006 after an illness. Club members honored Richard’s memory by holding a minute of silence at the conclusion of the Winter League on March 18. More than a few of them attended the memorial service in Inglewood.

The club board unanimously voted to name its annual summer tournament the Richard Badger Memorial Tournament, to honor the great contribution of its long-time president, who fought and won city’s approval for the current enviable playing location at Jefferson Middle School in Long Beach.

Among his many accomplishments, Richard was an avid table tennis player, who represented the United States at four veterans world table tennis tournaments – in Zagreb, Yugoslavia (1988); Baltimore, Md. (1990); Dublin, Ireland (1992); and Melbourne, Australia (1994). He was a life member of USATT. Richard was inducted into the California Table Tennis Hall of Fame in 1997.

Born in Long Beach, Richard graduated from Wilson High School, served as a First Lieutenant in the U.S. Army during World War II, and went on to a degree in chemistry from Michigan Tech in 1948.

He was called again on active duty in Fort Bragg, N.C., during the Korean War. Richard had more than a 30-year-long career with Shell Oil.
We were a group of Americans (limited to a party of 25) who with spring in our steps were invited to China on a goodwill trip to celebrate the 35th anniversary of “Ping-Pong Diplomacy.” Sponsoring our carefully prepared (Mar. 26-Apr. 4) tour was Mr. Liu Weijun of the fashionable Hongshanshu clothing company, assisted by the charismatic Zhuang Zedong (Chuang Tse-tung), the famous 1961-63-65 World Men’s Singles Champion, the two supported by an abundance of obliging officials who feted us with friendship everywhere we went—in Beijing, Shanghai, Changshu, Zhouzhuang, and Suzhou.

As in 1971, 15 of us, including the 7 “originals” in the group, had no expenses whatsoever; the remainder, for this everything-done-for-you trip of a lifetime, paid their own way. Getting much attention from the press were ’71 veterans Connie Sweevers, accompanied by her brother Bob and his wife Jan; Olga Soltesz; Judy Bochenh Hoarfrost, accompanied by her daughters, 20-year-old Megan, and 17-year-old Adrienne; Rufford Harrison, accompanied by his wife Marty; John Tannehill; and me, Tim, who, in showing off my “Ping-Pong Diplomacy” book with its cover of Zhuang exchanging gifts with Glenn Cowan, quickly drew a bevy of photographers and journalists that brought photos of me in the next morning’s Beijing papers.

Though Glenn was no longer with us, his mother Fran, accompanied by Glenn’s cousin, Nancy Domash, was a favorite of Zhuang’s and her solicitousness towards her gave her special status and the media’s eye. A real trouper, and always a very appreciative one, she, too, as we continued our trip would have her picture in several papers. I also remember seeing an Olga/Connie photo and one with Rufford and Zhuang. Meanwhile, many of our own delighted in taking group or individual shots, and one photographer assigned to us, Wang Wei-jiang, familiarly known as “Roy,” was said to have taken about 8,000 photos!

Our U.S. leader and tireless, convivial spokesperson was USATT President Sheri Pitman, accompanied by her father Jerry and his vivacious wife Janet. USATT Executive Vice-President Dr. Jing Wang was a most helpful interpreter; and other Board members Barney Reed, Sr., Khon Nguyen, and Lily Yip who seemed indefatigably of service to everyone everywhere, were also always noticeably supportive. Impossible to miss were Ross Brown’s martial arts brown belt and Homer Brown’s ageless on-course “shuff.” In attendance for only one evening was Robert Blackwell, and for only a few days Anne Cribs and Melinda Franklin, representatives of the San Francisco Bay Area’s upcoming World Junior Championships.

March 27. This was our first morning together, and, after the ever-present, ever elaborate, East/West hot/cold breakfast buffet, we emerged from our 4-star North Garden Hotel in the downtown Wang Fu Jing area of Beijing at the expectant ready. Accompanied by an energetic, directing, but non-English-speaking Zhuang and an interpreter/guide, we were bussed off amidst the near-chaotic bustle of big-city cars, horn-honking buses, pedaled bikes, electric bikes (changed every two days), motorized scooters, and scooting pedestrians all darting about, apparently just dashing to be hit. Our destination? That monumental wonder of world architecture, the Great Wall.

No beasts of burden clogging the way this year. Times have changed. Down what used to be the Royal Steps—all but the Emperor forbidden to live on it, traverse it...Past the big Beijing Gates where drums atop would beat out the alert that protection was imminently necessary. And if the warriors went out to fight, and lost, ah, could they, bringing disheon, expect to return through these same Gates?

...On away from the city into a misty countryside and our guide’s warning about what severe sand and dust storms from eastern Mongolia might do to Beijing: seriously pollute water, soil, and plants—the wind-carried chemicals that very day choking the city, contaminating its air quality, causing harm to people’s eyes, skin and respiratory system.

Those who picked up the China Daily English newspaper from the hotel could read that 17,000 workers were already employed in construction work on 20 of the 31 Beijing-based sites for the 2008 Olympic Games, but that, in addition to the harmful sandstorms, the voracious American White Moth, unless somehow controlled, might "turn the green Olympics into a brown one by eating all the leaves from Beijing’s trees.”

As for the Great Wall itself, was it a stretch to say that it seemed indestructible? In the more than three decades since I’d been there many a visitor had read about it... “extends five thousand kilometers from east to west in north China like a gigantic dragon wriggling its way across deserts, grasslands, and mountains.” Began to be built in the 7th century B.C. Eventually the defense walls of private dukedoms were linked and other sections added. The Wall we’d see today was mostly the product of the Ming dynasties (1368-1644). Somewhere along the line, people began hearing, “One is not a hero until one reaches the Great Wall.”

Fittingly, on entering, we heroes and heroines were given a commemorative keepsake: the product of the Ming dynasties (1368-1644). Fittingly, on entering, we heroes and heroines were given a commemorative keepsake: the product of the Ming dynasties (1368-1644).

By Tim Boggan, USATT Historian

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Participants from the original 1971 Ping-Pong Diplomacy, L-R: Tim Boggan, Connie Sweceris, Jack Howard, Olga Soltesz, Judy Harefrst, John Tannehill, Rufford Harrison

March 28. After our sponsor Liu Weijun's Press Conference, where again we were the subjects of interviews, we all went to Hongshanhu's Fashion Show at the 5-star Beijing Hotel, and there, strutting their stuff with nary a discernible trace of nervousness, were our very own—Janet, poised, smiling; Olga in control, pleasantly flaunting her skirt a bit in recognition of our close-up encouragement; Judy with upswept hair and in curvaceous red; and her daughter Adrienne, looking, as she walked towards us, just as sophisticated as applauding older sister Megan in her strapless cocktail dress: indeed, perhaps Adrienne looked too sophisticated, for she got a "Not on your life" response from Mom when the most experienced of the male models approached the 17-year-old asking for a date. Also gamely there, brazen to the runway beat, though without the fashionable duds, were Barney, Khoa, Ross, and Homer who backstage had watched fascinated as the professional models, unselfconsciously ro and Homer that they went out for a little walk and ended up in some side-alley, unnamed pizza place where Homer insisted he drank Belgian beer.

March 29. We were bussed by Tian'anmen Square, where at any one of repeated gatherings from Nov., 1965-Nov., 1966 a million Red Guards massed to solidify the Great Cultural Revolution. Later, in June, 1989, it was an infamous site, for protesting students were massacred there, which our guide said many millions outside of Beijing were totally unaware of. (A lot of backwardness in west and north China—many still living by candlelight.)

We were dropped off for an extended stroll through the Forbidden City, now called the Palace Museum. Renovations had been going on there since 2002, and the building housing the crown and war rooms of the Ming/Qing dynasties was about to get its first facelift in more than 300 years. Everywhere you looked there were lines and lines of visitors (as at the Wall, many more domestic than foreign), with lots of groups wearing the same color of apparel, chiefly matching caps (more baseball-like than the fold-up floppy one our Bob wore), all following a leader carrying high a don't-lose-me flag.

Well-preserved as a Museum-City, it'd been around for 600 years. Any picture-book of the place would tell you that it's the "most intact architectural complex of palaces in the world." That it occupies an area of over 720,000 square meters with 9,000 bays of halls and rooms. A meter is 39.37 inches—but never mind the arithmetic: it's BIG. The "surrounding walls are 17 meters high and 3,428 meters long," and it has a moat "52 meters wide and 3,800 meters long." Deep inside for five centuries Ming and Qing rulers were protectively ensconced. Not only was it forbidden for anyone uninvited to enter the City, but it was forbidden for those in the City to venture out. Again, plenty of photo ops—a favorite being the brave pose before the claws of one of two ferocious-looking bronze lions. Which is the male and which is the female?—that was every guide's requisite question to the visitors. And a reminder to me of the journalists' "safe" query: "Mr. Boggan, what changes do you see in China since you were here last?" Now, would you believe, as we passed through courtyards, up steps and down, into and out of halls, going from one end of the City to the other, we noted not only modern restroom facilities but an ATM machine... and also a Starbucks! The two suggesting coffee, danish, and juice for a weary tourist group of 50?

As usual, we were treated to a celebrity lunch—with, as usual, the young women servers all lined up welcoming us with smiles as we entered the bright-banne red "Ping-Pong Diplomacy" restaurant, our chopsticks and place settings waiting for us resplendent. Then the upright napkin placed partially under our large immovable showplate to dangle there conveniently for hand and mouth use, never to be dropped during the course (courses) of the meal. Among the staples I could recognize at lunch or dinner, to be washed down by tea, bottled water, wine, or beer, were various soups, rice with lots of egg, fish of varying kinds, different mushroom dishes, pork, an unsuccessful attempt at beef, shrimp, tofu, eel, eggplant, various greens, and also some gelatinous, custardy, or sweet things, perhaps known only to our group's Gourmet Reviewer, Nancy. As always, it was a meal fit for an Emperor.

At Zhuang's table tennis club at the No. 4 Primary School of Zhongguancun everyone in the U.S. contingent was given a bouquet of flowers, while Chinese greats Xi Enting and Liang Geling seemed amused by it all. Someone told me that relatives of Chairman Mao and Premier Chou were in the audience, but that they weren't introduced with the other dignitaries. Sheri, reiterating her tour-theme of preserving the Ping-Pong Diplomacy legacy for friendship generations to come, had her counterpart in a young student addressing us all in a very sure, VERY strident voice.

How, afterwards, the matches went, I couldn't much tell, but I believe only John and Olga won, so we got the worst of it. I played a 1-game mis-match (fellow kept giving me high topspin to hit and I wasn't up to it); thereafter I was preoccupied fielding such questions as "What was Mr. Cowan like?" Two Chinese who years ago I'd helped with information about our '71 trip showed me their Ping-Pong Diplomacy books, which I and others in our group autographed. Meanwhile, the great majority of the audience was made up of school children and I could hear them whooping and applauding for the home team. It was a fun scene.
Following play we were taken to a seafood restaurant where someone in authority finally had more sense than we, still picking at the dishes, did, and called a halt to all by bringing out the meal-ending watermelon. Here we were presented with a souvenir dinner plate with Zhuang’s calligraphy on it, the inscription reading either, as one interpreter put it, “The little ping-pong ball explodes to the world!” or, as another had it (more to my liking), “The little ball pushed the big ball forward.”

**March 30.** We paid a visit to the Beijing Children’s Activities Center where we introduced ourselves—Connie, I remember, proudly bringing in her son Todd as an Olympian, and me proudly bringing in my National Champion sons and Eric’s world-class status. I think it was here, in a room where two tables were set up, that Sheri took on Zhuang and won a point from him. Children pressed round, delighted with our handshakes and autographs—though here or somewhere a girl with pen in hand approached Jack, asking who he was. When he said, “Jack Howard,” she shook her head negatively and hurriedly walked away, not wanting his autograph. This reaction, with a little laugh, he delighted telling everyone.

The Beijing #2 Middle School was quite something. It had been in operation 80 years—and during this time Zhuang’s mother and Zhuang himself had been in attendance here. A classy 60-page brochure given us, with photos representing every school discipline or activity shared by teachers and their pupils, indicated that it encompassed the 7th through 12th grades and serviced 2,400 students. It was very modern—with a closed circuit TV system and a computer network. We were brought before a student body, where the Principal of course warmly greeted us, and Yu Bin, doing heavy duty on this trip, was again the moderator. Yu, along with Zhuang, would have to return to Beijing in a couple of days for the 50th celebration of China/Japan relations (China having played in its first World’s in 1955). Presently China/Japan needed some “Ping-Pong Diplomacy,” for relations between the two countries were strained due to Japan’s Prime Minister’s insistence on visiting the Yasukuni war shrine, symbol of Japan’s past militarism.

Sheri on being introduced said some appropriate words, then, as was her custom, asked us one by one to identify ourselves. I ended by throwing the students kisses. One well-rehearsed question (from an English major?) asked anyone in our party to respond to “What differences are there now in China from when you were here before?” Jack’s immediate reply to the speaker was, “One difference is that you weren’t born when I was here before.” Which drew a chuckle. He later closed with not a difference but a similarity, “Before, the Chinese were the world’s best players; now, the Chinese are still the world’s best players.”

Then we were off to explore the “Children’s Palace,” with its “Museum of Notables,” its striking courtyard fountain, and its grounds and structures laid out like a mini-Forbidden City. Here it was possible to train for 55 sports, and here young Zhuang had practiced his table tennis. Of course we were shown the requisite room where 10 or so tables were precisely spaced and chairs lined a wall.

Lunch this day was spectacular, for we all had Mongolian fire pots, our own little stoves, in front of us. When the water boiled, our young women servers began cooking lamb, beef, vegetables for us, dippin’ them into a traditional brown sauce. Again, we were not immediately to leave Beijing for Shanghai, the pots might have flamed through the afternoon.

We were all worried about inter-China-travel weight restrictions—needlessly. China’s very capable Liu Yi, “Karen,” who’d be a Delegate at Bremen, expertly took over, gathered up our passports, matched them to the already purchased tickets, provided porters for our excessive luggage, and we were all whisked through security like VIPs. When we arrived at the Shanghai airport we were met by high school flower girls not only giving us bouquets but carted our luggage to waiting buses. We didn’t stay in Shanghai but were driven perhaps an hour and 45 minutes northwest to Changshu where, arriving at our 5-star International Hotel, all was in readiness for us, including a dinner that pleasantly surprised Olga, for it offered her steak and French fries. Ordinarily to enter your hotel room you stuck the card-key into a door slot, but with this one you merely drew the face of it across a similarly positioned marker. Then to turn on the lights, you needed keep your room card in the activator, where you were in danger, on leaving, of forgetting it; instead, you merely inserted one of Homer’s ubiquitous BumperNets cards. That apparently worked on any activator in China.

And speaking of being worked on, apparently Sheri and John had very different experiences with massages, wanted or not wanted. Later, on my return to Beijing (my flight was delayed, I’d missed a connection, and had a 24-hour layover), I was awakened in the middle of the night at my Air China Hotel by a phone call. "Do you want a massage?" said a male voice. "No," I said sleepily. "Pretty girl... lie persisted. "No," I said, "I don’t want a massage."

**March 31.** Shanghai! To one of us it was “The most impressive city I’ve ever seen!” To another it was “Just a bunch of big buildings.” High rises there were—more than 500 of them! And in a creative variety of shapes—surreal, almost, by day or night, like Tiitii Billion’s Gotham city. As for last year’s World Championship venue, As for last year’s World Championship venue, we went: Hongshanshu Goodwill Tour. “Ping-Pong Pony diplomacy” for relations between the two countries were strained due to Japan’s Prime Minister’s insistence on visiting the Yasukuni war shrine, symbol of Japan’s past militarism.

“Shangri La” in the sky and the lit up Aurora Building with its 25-story scene showing scenes as divergent as birds and art masterpieces; look the other way and you’d see crowded, pillared buildings tinged all golden against the black sky. Meanwhile the river was a contrasting dark where to the side of us spiritual boat and barges, unit and seemingly unmanned, gradually surfaced into sight, halting there, no, slowly edging along, as if having risen, submarine-like, as we passed. Better not hit them. Then, back on shore, we were off, dozing in our bus return to Changshu, Mr. Liu’s home turf, a monied community of maybe 1 of China’s 30 million.

**April 1.** The venue of the Changshu Welcome Ceremony had a spread-out red banner of the kind we’d seen and would continue to see everywhere we went: Hongshangyu Goodwill Tour. “Ping-Pong Diplomacy” 25th Anniversary Commemoration. Visit of U.S. Table Tennis Delegation to China. Mar. 26—Apr. 4, 2006. Following the protocol openings, Sheri again introduced the U.S. contingent, urging the “originals” to say some words. Judy, I remember, identified herself as having attended 4 World Championships, and I took the opportunity, “Ping-Pong Diplomacy” book in hand, to explain the cover picture, which was not taken the day Zhuang originally presented his gift to Glenn, but later, after Glenn had had time to find his gift in a shop in the balconies of Nagoya—the red, white, and blue, peace emblem flag of a shirt with the words “Let It Be” written on it. Through the focus is on Glenn and Zhuang’s gift to Glenn, the all-important exchange is there: Zhuang is holding that folded “Let It Be” shirt. Sheri’s dad, Jerry, valued his copy of the book—said they ought to make a movie of it. Alright with me.
April 3. The last day of the tour, for tomorrow we’ll all be leaving in various morning shifts for the airport. Our bus ride past the often seen yellow fields of rapeseed (it produces an oil lubricant) and an occasional outdoor pool table (far more of them out there than you’d think) brought us first to the famous water town of Zhouzhuang. Its 900-year history had been preserved with 60% of the residents still living in the ancient houses along the river spanned by 14 bridges. (One aged man I saw washing his clothes in a canal as throngs of tourists passed by.) Most famous, said our guide, was the so-called Double Bridge. In 1984 an oil painting of it by an expatriate Chinese living in America became well-known enough to be put on a United Nations postage stamp. It’s a story-book place—where a bridegroom is urged to carry his bride across three of these bridges; and a wealthy married man is paddled off into the night to visit, supposedly unbeknown to his wife, his concubines.

One talked-about residence was Shen’s which had 7 courtyards, 5 doors and 100 connecting rooms. Another was Zhang’s where “sedans go in by the front door while boats pass through the [70-room] house.” You enter one of these olden-day millionaire’s homes and you may see an up-to-date sign that says, among other prohibitions, “No spitting. No firecrackers” (to ward off evil demons, for these Chinese were very superstitious). As you go from room to room there an inch-high solid entranceway rail obstructions you must step over. They’re there to keep out the evil spirits (who are thought of as being very short, unable to get over these barriers).

One passes through a Men’s Tea Room (maybe business talk here), followed by a Women’s Tea Room (maybe mah-jong played here). Continuing on, there’s a kitchen. A backhall dining room. A home-study schoolroom. Hanging on the wall of one house, I remember, was a tapestry chart showing 100 different figures for the same word—that ought to be in a classroom. In one room of one well-appointed house, there was a famous man pictured sitting Buddha-like, several slabs of gold in his lap. He was the Zhouchuang “Father of Foreign Trade” (grain, silk, pottery, handicrafts) who made his fortune through use of the local canals leading to Shanghai and the outside world.

After we’d lunch at a former farmer’s house converted into a restaurant, we used our free time not by taking a gondola ride but by wandering about the tourist-booth byways in search of “different” little presents to take home. I came upon Khoa buying two lockets, each with a daughter’s name engraved within on a small kernel of rice. I got two too, for my wife and sister-in-law. Khoa, urging me not to settle our bill too quickly (“We have to go lower, go lower”), did the successful bargaining.

Our last tour stop was in Suzhou—and because the 2,500-year-old “city proper and its outskirts are crisscrossed by numerous rivers spanned by many arched bridges,” it’s called the “Venice of the East.” Since no wars were carried on here, many refugees came down from the north
to enjoy its paradisical tranquility. Today we were visiting “The Humble Administrator’s Garden”—one of the four most famous gardens in China. Five hundred years ago an imperial official began supervising the construction of this garden and was doing so well with it, gaining so much attention, that the Emperor, feeling his own power threatened, fired him from his official position. Hence, it’s sometimes called “The Unsuccessful Politician’s Garden.” But that was o.k.—he cultivated his garden not for sightseers but for his own home satisfaction, a labor of love.

Here, too, was an entrance warning sign: “Travelers should be civilized and polite. No urinating in the garden.” Approximately 12-13 acres in size, the Garden was divided into sections. Originally one family held title to it all, but a son lost part of it gambling. A judicious use of wood, rock, water, and plant “life” preserve the Garden’s beauty. As we meandered about, I noted The House of Nice-Smelling Rice (sticky Shu rice), the Bonsai Gardens (potted plants as dwarfed trees), birds in cages (like the talking myna), the Bamboo Pavilion, and The 36 Pairs of Mandarin Ducks Hall with literally male and female ducks in a pond fronting the building where inside you could see richly ornamented furniture. After we exited, we passed the strikingly beautiful Buddhist pagoda, tiered perhaps 10 stories high, that earlier we thought might be in the Garden itself.

Our trip was coming to an end—there remained only the final Banquet. How difficult it was to take in and retain even a small amount of all that we’d been exposed to. And what interesting differences there’d be if each of us could relate specifically what we’d seen and felt during these nine days. Even little things. Had Jack not told me at the Banquet he liked the corn pizza, I wouldn’t have known it. He enjoyed the taste; I didn’t, didn’t even try it. Multiply that tiny experience by how many variants, and, if one could only remember, how much he/she could write. Karaoke singing concluded our last feast. Someone thought it fitting that we sing “Let It Be” to Glenn, and so a group including Funn did, and that brought tears to her eyes.

April 4. Having said my goodbyes the night before, I was the first to leave in the morning. About 3:20, just as promised, a car, actually a cab, came for me. The driver raced off down the deserted street, ignoring all red lights, until suddenly he got a call on his radio to come back to the hotel. Someone else had last-minute decided to go to the airport? Nope. As we pulled up, there was Mr. Liu waiting. He opened the cab door and gave me, as he would everyone else, both a commemorative Album of photos, 46 pages, precisely 5 photos to a page, and a disk of them as well. He wanted to make sure I, We, remembered this “Redwood” Ping-Pong Diplomacy trip for a long, long time.

**Review of Tim Boggans’ History of U.S. Table Tennis, Vol. VI**

Review by Mitch Seidenfeld

With the History of U.S. Table Tennis, Volume VI, Tim Boggans’ passion, purpose, and profession converge to produce a masterwork. He delivers a multi-dimensional and deeply personal recounting of U.S. table tennis in the early seventies. Readers crisscross the U.S. experiencing the trials and tribulations of tournament play, developing clubs, and a national association still charting its course.

From its introduction through to the final chapter, the book teems with confrontation, competition, and controversy. During the “combinative” 1972 USTTA Presidential campaign Tim Boggans and Jack Carr engage in a battle for the heart and soul of the national organization. Changes to U.S. Team selection allow a young Danny Seemiller to side-step organizational politics and win his way onto a U.S. World Team that shows signs of First Division promise. And throughout the book timeless debates rage on over how to increase membership and return our national team to international respectability. Letters to the Editor, USTTA Executive Committee Minutes, and personal correspondence combine to bring perspective to a surprisingly diverse set of arguments.

In Vol. VI, Boggans faces one gigantic problem; himself. How will Tim Boggans, Historian be able to objectively evaluate Tim Boggans, Editor of Topics, President of USTTA, and father of two emerging superstars? His introduction eloquently addresses the problem and his solution flows heavily on the credibility he has built up over the years. He will do his best, and if good enough for him, it should be good enough for the rest of us. And it is. As Editor of Table Tennis Topics, Boggans was accused, more than once, of keeping the last word for himself. In Vol. VI, he is careful to leave the high ground unclaimed. What we remember are choice excerpts of well-written letters that support competing views.

In detailing matches, Boggans’ signature style is brilliant. So much happens so very quickly. He attacks each match from every possible angle. He weaves action with plot, character, and setting. He layers motivation and philosophy on top of tactics and scores. Conflict is everywhere. Where many observers see only wins and losses, blowouts and nail-biters; he highlights turning points, patterns of play, and momentum changes. Boggans is at his best when he uses classical allusions to bring meaning and texture to the tournament matches he unapologetically trumpets “as the lifeblood of the Association.”

And well-deserved credit goes to Larry Hodges for much of the page layouts. My earliest table tennis memories jumped out at me as I flipped from page to page. There are pictures of Magoo’s, my hometown club in Minneapolis, and its driving forces, Charlie Disney and Don Larson; Ted Stomma, the director of my first out-of-state tournament; Doc Goldstein, my first coach; and a poster for the $8000 Minnesota Classic, a high profile event that sparked my initial interest and my father’s return to the sport. Vol. VI contains hundreds of wonderful pictures, many contributed by Mal Anderson, that give it a satisfying visual dimension despite the financial realities of the project.

If you haven’t read this volume or earlier volumes of the History of U.S. Table Tennis, I encourage you to do so. Tim Boggans has given us our history. What we do with it will determine our future.
We are happy to say the first season of the TMS Northern California Table Tennis League in fall, 2005 went well. It definitely can be improved but we are looking for ways to make it better each season. It is the highest-rated league in U.S. table tennis history that has succeeded. The beginning phase of the league is when it is the hardest to get sponsors as there is nothing you can show that you have done before as it is starting from scratch. We are happy to have gotten sponsors for the first year of the league as most sponsors saw it as something they thought was minor and showed support for the league. Realtor Voltaire Benedicto Team Palo Alto emerged as the 2005 league champions, led by Barney J. Reed, Jackie Lee, and Aurora Malek. Preseason league favorites Sunnyvale Chevrolet Team Mountain View, led by two-time Olympian Khoa Nguyen, lost in the final. Barney was the 2005 TMS Semester Smash League MVP with a 17-1 record.

In the spring 2006 league, two Olympians entered the league and two Olympians left the league. The two entering Olympians were 2000 Olympian Michelle Do and 2004 Olympian Whitney Ping. Khoa Nguyen and Michael Hyatt, both two-time Olympians, had family and work commitments and could not take part this spring season. We hope to have Khoa back in the fall season. With Michael’s busy work schedule where he is constantly traveling, it may be too hard for him to commit to league matches. Most of the top players continued their participation this league season. There was no league team based in San Francisco so we added another team in Oakland. The Oakland Team, based in Lincoln Square, has had the best turnout in terms of spectators so adding that team turned out to be a fortunate situation for the league. However, we plan to have one team in San Francisco again this fall as the chairman of the San Francisco Chinatown Table Tennis Club has agreed to host one team.

We have two visiting Chinese players, Guo Xi and Fu Shu, from the Sichuan Province in China, who are playing in and contributing greatly to the strength of the league. Guo Xi, whose American name is James, defeated former India #1 and three-time Olympian Chetan Baboor at the 2006 U.S. Open Teams in Reno. He has also defeated Freddie Gabriel all three times they have played, and Barney J. Reed and Misha Kazantsev in local competitions. Fu Shu, whose American name is Sara, has defeated Reed, Gabriel, Shashin Shodhan, Aurora Malek and Jackie Lee, all in the fifth and final game. It’s safe to say that she’s good in the clutch. Sara also was recently sponsored by Butterfly. James and Sara have two of the best records in the league as James is undefeated at 7-0 and Sara is at 6-1, with her only loss to Gabriel the second time they played. After her loss, Sara said “Freddie has power.”

The surprise of the league season has been the superb play of young gun Sean Lee. He is at 6-0 with one win over Misha Kazantsev, Trevor Runyan, Whitney Ping, and two wins over an up-and-down Aurora Malek. James, Sara, and Sean all play for Realtor Voltaire Benedicto Team Palo Alto and they look in very good shape to repeat as league champions as they are 6-0.

Alpha Pong Team Concord looked very strong at the beginning of the season with a 1-2-3 punch of Freddie Gabriel, Trevor Runyan, and Philip Lim. However, at least one of these players has been missing in action in every league match they have played in. They are struggling to make the playoffs at 1-5 and in fifth place. The top four out of six teams will make the playoffs. There will be a one match semifinal and a two out of three final. Oakland-Lowell, led by Misha Kazantsev and Avishy Schmidt, is also virtually a lock to make the playoffs along with Palo Alto, barring a late-season collapse. Oakland-Lowell is at 5-1 and Misha and Avishy are a combined 14-5. Misha had a losing record in the fall season but has rebounded in a big way this season, going 8-3, and is showing the fire and fight within him that is sometimes lacking.

Aigoprotect Insurance Team Milpitas has been led by Shashin Shodhan, who has gone 9-1 to lead the league in victories. Milpitas is at 2-3 and their play in the second half of the season will determine if they will make the playoffs or not. Oakland-Lincoln, led by Barney J. Reed, is at 1-2 and has played the least matches as Barney has had commitments in Germany with his league team, being hired as a practice partner for the German Women’s National Team before the Worlds, and being a member

The “surprise of the league”: Junior Sean Lee at 6-0

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Belarus’s Veronica Peluchova

The surprising Belarus team made the semifinals, upsetting South Korea in the quarterfinals. Led by the Pavlovich sisters (who both upset the Korean ace, Kim Kyung Ah), they were the highest finishing European team.

even if they’d beaten the Koreans, a 3-2 tie-breaker would have knocked them out of the top 3, while the loss given the Koreans wouldn’t have affected their #1 position over Austria and they’d still have had a Bye to the quarter’s. Similarly, though Austria lost their last tie to Italy, the Italians could do no better than 2-3, so Austria’s 3-2 record with a head-to-head tie-breaker win over Germany still gave them 2nd place.

In Group D, the #1 seeds, the Japanese, posted a 15-1 record, losing only their opening match when the current Russian Champion, World #55 Svetlana Ganina, picking well from her forehand, upset World #17 Ai Fukuhara. (It was Fukuhara, with her up-close-to-the-table game, short pips on the backhand, who allowed our Nan Li to show really professional poise, for, on meeting her (Ai!). Nan was quickly down 8-0. She got the next point to ironic applause, and from there lost the game at 6. Then she followed by winning the next before losing in 4.)

Japan’s 3-0 win over Singapore might have been thought more of a bubble than a blood bath. But such is not the case: Haulu Fukuoka defeats Zhang Xueling, 11-9 in the 5th; Fukuhara, bobbing up and down as on an invisible pogo-stick, then goes on court to defeat World #4 Li Jia Wei, 11-9 in the 5th and lefty penhold ball-angler Saki Kanazawa defeats Xu Jan, 11-6 in the 5th.

Japan was also pressed by Croatia, intent on making a good showing to attract spectators to next year’s Zagreb World’s. but Fukuhara’s 13-11 3rd game helped her to beat World #7 Taniara Boros in 4. Kanazawa got by Cornelia Vaida when down 10-9 in the 5th; Fukuhara, bobbing up and down as on an invisible pogo-stick, then goes on court to defeat World #4 Li Jia Wei, 11-9 in the 5th; and lefty penhold ball-angler Saki Kanazawa defeats Xu Jan, 11-6 in the 5th.

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The #6 seed, Slovakia, and the #5 seed, the USA, finished in these respective positions, for when the two teams met, successive wins by Gao Jun, followed by Jasna Recl’s 8-9, 9, 11, 7 clutch comeback in the 5th, enabled the Americans to score a 3-2 victory. Actually both teams had other chances for success. The Slovaks gave a 3-match scare to the Croatians when World #69 Eva Odorova opened with a win over World #50 Vaida, then downed 2006 European Top 12 winner Tamara Boros in 5. Against Russia, the USA, sparked by Gao Jun’s wins over Irina Kotikhina and Oksana Fadeeva, came close to turning the tie, for

Against Germany, Austria won 3-0, but the tie was contested: Struse lost to 2005 European Champ Liu Jia 11-9 in the 5th (the 3rd straight loss to her, as indefatigable ITTF statistician Jean Jacques Hubermann informed me); and Wosik lost to Heine, also in 5. (Her Coach having been red-carded, Wosik, down 4-0 in the 5th, irrationally “retrieves” a ball by batting it backward between her legs to Heine’s side of the table).

Though 3rd-seed Italy ended up 5th, downing only last-place finisher Austria (who’d later blank our U.S. younger players), their World #47 Nicoletta Stefanova took down Germany’s Wu; and their World #37 Tan Monfardini Wenning had excellent wins over both Park and Kim. Italy also fought fiercely against the Netherlands—in fact, looked to be victorious when defender Tan took two and Stefanova, 3-time U-21 winner on the 2005 Pro Tour Circuit, was leading 2-0 in games in the 5th match against an apparently outclassed Creemers...only to see the 200-point differential become meaningless as Creemers rallied in an 11-7, 11-9, 14-12 thriller. This was a big blow to Italy— their last chance for contention, for, had they won this last match, there was still a chance they could beat Austria and advance over 3rd-Place Germany in a three-way 3-2 tie-breaker.

The Netherlands fought furiously against South Korea—Li Jiao’s 12-10 in the 5th win over Park Mi Young forced the tie into the 5th. But
Fadeeva, now a scholarship student at Texas Wesleyan pursuing a Master’s degree in Education, lost a tough 8-13, -12, -9 match to World #40 Jasna, after losing a 12-10 game to go down 2-1, regrouped to keep Croatia alive. Boris then gave her team a lift by besting World #4 Li Jia Wei. And Paovic straightaway stopped Xu.

Singapore rebounded with a 3-2 victory over Russia. After Kotnikha, married now and with a 2-year-old son, had taken out Tan Paey Fern, and Ganina had ended Zhang Xueling’s hopes, Russia led 2-1. But 2005 U.S. Open winner Li Jia Wei could not be stopped, and Tan, though down 1-0 and at 11-all in the 2nd, won the points she had to. This loss hurt Russia badly.

Russia went on to defeat Croatia in the 5th round—with Ganina beating both Vaida and Boris (13-11 in the 5th), and Kotnikha winning the 4th and 5th games in the 5th match. A very good effort, but not quite good enough. There ensued a 3-way tie-breaker to see who’d be 2nd and 3rd behind Japan. When the matches turned out to be 5-5 for all three teams, Croatia was declared best in games won/lost (24-20), Singapore next (19-20)—and Russia (19-22) was out of contention.

**Single Elimination Eighth’s**

The Single Elimination draw shapes up as follows: first, China, the Group A winner and #1 seed, and Hong Kong, the Group B winner and #2 seed, are positioned at polar opposites; then South Korea is drawn into China’s semi’s position and Japan into Hong Kong’s. All four have Byes. Then the teams finishing 2nd and 3rd are randomly inserted. Followed by the teams finishing 3rd, also randomly inserted. The Eighth’s match-ups then are as follows: Singapore vs. North Korea (the winner to face China); Belarus in a repeat match vs. Czech Republic (the winner to face South Korea); Hungry vs. Croatia (the winner to face Japan); and Germany in a repeat match vs. Austria (the winner to face Hong Kong).

In the Singapore-North Korea tie, the first three matches are nail-bitters. In all three, players come from behind to win. Singapore’s 2004 Asian Cup Champ Li Jia Wei, taking the 4th and 5th (at 9), downs Ko Un Gyong. Mi Yong Kim balances by besting Singapore’s Zhang Xueling, 8, 9, 9, 9, 10. Xu Yan, down 2-0 to Ryom Won Ok, gives Singapore the lead by winning the 3rd and 5th games 14-12! But then Kim beats Li, and Ko beats Zhang in anticlimactic straight sets to give North Korea the win.

The Belarus-Czech tie is almost an exact replica of their round robin one: Stribikova again stops Veronika Pavlovich 11-7 in the 3rd for the Czech’s only victory. Kostromina again finishes Smistikova in the 4th; and Victoria Pavlovich again prevails 6-1 in games over Stribikova and Vacenovska.

All matches in the Hungary (3)-Croatia (2) tie are decided 3-0 with the exception of Paovic’s 4-game win over Hungary’s Lovas. Boris, favoring a high-toss serve (she leans slightly back when ready to make contact, so, as the racket whips through, it won’t whip into her stomach), won the close ones—13, 6, 9, against Toth, and 11, 10, 4 against 2-time Pro Tour U-21 winner Potra—but for Croatia to survive their #1 needed help and she didn’t get it. Boris, 28, said if she hadn’t become a professional table tennis player she would have studied biology. (Is it too late to do that?)

The tie of the greatest interest in this Eighth’s round was of course the repeat German-Austria one in which the pro-German spectators hope the now different opening choice of players might work to avoid the earlier 3-0 Austrian victory. Germany starts with Kristin Silbereisen, rather than Struse, against Liu, and, as the 21-year-old German beat her last time out in the Brazilian Open, it looks as if she might win again. But up 2-1 and 9-7 in the 4th she falters and is forced into the 5th. Still, encouraged by repeated rhythmical claps from the stands, and spinning, crouching away from the table, fist up on won point after won point, she brings it to 8-all. Then she gets a net. Chance is good to Germany. But she gives the point right back with a timorous block. Don’t choke, Kristin! Oh, she pushes a ball back high and Liu properly whacks it—but misses! Then, gulp, Liu pushes her serve return into the net. Match to Silbereisen—who falls to her knees, hands to heaven.

Next up: the 35-year-old current and 8-time German Champion Nicole Struse against Li Qianbing who in a few days will celebrate her 21st birthday. Li would like a big present now. Struse didn’t win, but it was a great spectator match—marred by the umpire’s highly controversial call at an extremely inopportune time that so upset me, the protesting players and coaches, and any number of others—many booing and whistling, many just shaking their head in silence and later complaining about it privately over drinks or dinner. Surely some mechanism for redress should be in place other than an immediate and in this instance ineffectual appeal to the Deputy Referee in charge. How many Referees would feel it safer to avoid Controversy by not becoming involved, rather than to urge, or even insist, the Umpire change his judgment call?

The Programme and Struse’s past had certainly prepared the Umpire for his call. For Struse speaks of how “I give everything to win. I just mustn’t overdo it” while the interviewer adds, “With the help of a psychologist, she is trying to control her outbursts, feared by both friend and foe.” Still, in this instance...

Struse, partly hyped by Silbereisen’s unexpected win and her own 9, 10, 9 encouraging start against 2005 European Top 12 Champion Liu Jia (marred momentarily by some idiot taking a flash photo that, stopping Struse, drew her from a disapproving look and boss from the spectators), had rallied from 8-10 down in the 4th. So, wired, as any sports figure would be when she tied it up at 10-all, gave fist-up excitement toward Li in the spirit of competition...only to be faulted for—what?—abusing her opponent! This call was so silly, so pernicious, so devastating to the psyche of the whole German team and their fans that it really amounted to the Umpire not being impartial but taking sides. The fault was his. If ever an umpire lacked common sense it was this one. If ever an umpire wanted to kill the drama inherent in Sport—what photographer after photographer soul-searches for, that makes for Table Tennis Fascination—it was this one. He dishonored his calling and the Spirit of competition with this absurd charge.

The question is: what to do about it so that no blue badge umpire can exert such wrongful judgment and unfair power in the future? What recourse has the really offended player, the player’s team, and the players’ fans? Some act of “civil disobedience,” on court or off, by people with heart, wearing a red badge, a badge of courage, outraged at the insensitve injustice, was, and is, in order. And would it be too much in this day and age of increasing money prizes and ranking points to expect a show of old-fashioned sportsmanship on the part of the Austrians? Who, true to the Spirit of competition, would want to take this point?

The players, being professionals, tried to regroup. Problems doing this probably for the Austrians as well as the Germans. Understandably Struse, stunned, her rhythm and concentration broken, did not win this 4th game, or the 5th.

Nor did Wosik, up 2-0 and then 9-3 in the 4th, win from Heine. In that 4th, she went into, as she said, a “blackout” where, as the German fans desperately clapped (meaning “Dammit, let’s go!”), point after point got away from her. Tie’d at 5-all in the 5th, she fell into the soft, half-paralytic play (her “lead-arm loop” someone said) that had befallen her before and lost 5 straight and the match. “One of the darkest moments of my career,” she said afterwards.

Nor did Struse even take a game from Liu whom earlier she’d battled to 9-11 in the 5th. She’d gotten to 10-all in the 3rd, but then served into the net, and ended by taking a forehand that didn’t come close to the table.

**Quarterfinals**

Anyone expect China, with its little band of (“CHN-al”) routers to have trouble against North Korea?...Results: Zhang Yining over Ko, 3, 7, 3; Guo Yue over lefty all-out swinger Kim Mi Yong, 2, 9, 5; and 3-time World Cup winner Wang Nan (seen having a splinter removed from her forefinger before play) over Kim Jong, 8, 3, 3.

Belarus over South Korea, however—that figured to be contested. The Koreans played World #21 Moon in the 3rd spot, I assume for the expected “sure win”, and she did her part by downing Kostromina, catching her repeatedly on beautiful drops. That left the burden on World #9 Kim Kyung Ah to take two, or, failing that, for World #57 Park to chop down World #78 Veronika Pavlovich. No surprise when World #15 Viktorija Pavlovich, in very good form, opened with a 3, 5, 6 win over Park.
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But then, ah, Veronika—what impression have we of her? Has she got a prayer against the steady Top 10 Kim Kyung Ah? Although Veronika has her sister’s wonderful defense to practice her attack against, I didn’t think she could loop hard enough to get through 2005 Korean Open Champ Kim. But gradually she’s proving me wrong, winning the 1st, and taking a 7-6 lead in the 2nd before dropping 3 straight points. At 1-1 in the 3rd, Kim in the backcourt reaches and chop-returns an angled-off hit, then, hurrying, gets back for the drop, and afterwards is aggressive enough to take over the offense and win the point with a hard, topspinning winner. Even more so is the point they play at 9-9—all with the crowd erupting as Kim, though nearing 30, keeps making marvelous gets and Veronika persists in her unrelenting attack. When Pavlovich wins the 3rd at 9, there’s an upset in the making?

Only again Kim, up 6-3 in the 4th, has a 5-point run. The 5th looks to be more of the same as Pavlovich takes her timeout early and is down 5-2. But Veronika catches Kim at 5-all, goes ahead 6-5, is back even at 8-all, ahead 9-8—all with more superlative climax-building attack and defense play. Then both players are cautious. Kim has some high balls that she doesn’t topspin hard and Veronika, not wanting to pick one to counter, makes an error. Of course at 9-all it’s either girl’s game, and with more pressure on the favorite perhaps it’s not surprising that Pavlovich scores the upset. She half runs, half jumps wildly round the court and is embraced and kissed by whoever can reach her.

With Belarus up 2-1, and Viktoria heartened by her sister’s great effort, South Korea is no longer the favorite. We now have a match between two topically defensive players (judged to be pretty even, though Kim, 3-time 2005 Pro Tour circuit winner, had beaten Viktoria in the final of the Brazilian Open) and, as neither tries to avoid playing under the Expedite Rule, in due course in the 1st game it comes in, just after Pavlovich has gotten a net to go up 8-6. But when in a succession of points, Viktoria errrs, Kim serves and catches her on a surprise 11-ball drop, and Pavlovich builds to a point-getter but misses, the Korean is up 9-8. Again Kim tries to catch Viktoria on a drop but this one’s too high and Pavlovich socks it in. Then, surprise, Viktoria serves and boldly smacks the return, which Kim nets in the 1st. In the 2nd, Pavlovich is up 7-3, down 8-7, but then another of her always dangerous counters goes in. On, evenly, they go, as their Expedite strategy dictates, to 12-all. Here Kim makes a hit and drops instead...into the net. Pavlovich calls Time, then comes back to score a winner and shake a perhaps careful fist. In the 3rd, at 8-all, Kim starts looping the ball higher, moves to 9-8. And now Pavlovich is lucky: Kim almost gets her on a drop, forces up a high ball, but can’t put it away. Viktoria goes ad up, match point, and finishes with an edge. Pandemonium! Tears of joy!

Will any other seeded team be upset? Not Japan. They’re 3-0—or, make that 3-1—winners over Hungary...for, according to the final posted results. Pota did not lose 11-9 in the 5th but instead blanked, really blanked, 11-0, 11-0, 11-0. Fukuoka, silencing those little-girl squeals of delight as she scored on her jumping-serve serves, was 11-0,11-0,11-0, didn’t score the clincher. O.K., she keeps her cool, scores, and after play stops for a mobile phone going off, sinks in Kanazawa’s serve, wins the game, and goes on to Tie the tie into a 1-1 stalemate.

Continuing the momentum, Hong Kong’s Lau goes up 2-0, but then backs the pendulum turns and Japan’s Fukuhara, barely able to see over the table when she finishes her squat serves so effective against Lau, rallies to run out their match. Tie, who with her come-from-behind win had prevented a Japanese sweep, now proves too 11-3 in the 4th strong for Fukuhara whom she’d beaten in the final of the 2005 Asian Cup, and the tie is tied at 2-all. After which, Hong Kong Lin’s 9, 5, 4 win over Kanazawa results in a disappointing Bronze for Japan.

Final

What’s this? After ITTF Pro Tour Grand Final winner Zhang Yining’s routine 4, 9, 6 win over Lin (who got off to a befuddled start—was faulted on her first two serves and down 6-0, 10-1), China’s vaunted vulnerability takes an untimely hit. That is, Tie, who comes from Mainland China like her teammates, outplays last year’s World Mixed Doubles Champion Guo Yue in a seemingly never-ending thriller, 23-21 in the 4th! Guo was leading in this game 8-4, and through up 10-9 (with a high ball to hit in), 11-10, 12-11, 13-12, didn’t score the clincher. O.K., so China lost a match. A fluke outcome?

But then 3-time World Champion Wang Nan loses the first two games (12-14 in the 2nd) against Lau Sui Fei, and is teetering at the 10-all precipice in the 3rd. Wow! (CHIN-at CHIN-at) As a line from that “Magic Ball” anthem has it, “Everything is magic.” Can the unthinkable happen?...No. For the pressure here is a reminder of Wang’s very first match against the Czech Strbikova, and as she’d pulled that one out, so does she this one where there’s so much more at stake. She ends the 3rd by looping in Lau’s serve; gives us great clutch play from 8-all in the 4th to win at 8; and from 3-0 down in the 5th takes 11 straight!

Crisis averted, Zhang, imperturbable superstar (“No weakness, and no nerves.” I heard someone say), finishes off the valorous Tie, 8, 3, 3.

Oh, you wanted to bet on China? Sorry, that wasn’t allowed.
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Men’s Singles
By Tim Boggan

We Americans, despite President Bush’s unpopularity abroad, couldn’t have asked for a more accommodating World Championships. In Bremen we were put up at the 5-star Maritim Hotel and were so interconnected with the AWD-Dome playing venue, the Media Center, the ITTF Museum and Meeting Rooms, and the participants’ restaurants that we didn’t even have to step outside. Which from the point of view of the German police who took it upon themselves to provide low-key security for us—along with the Israelis and the Danes—was a blessing. Yep, they had us all booked on the top floor, and unless you slid your room-card into the elevator slot provided, you couldn’t exit out the elevator door at “5.” Occasionally in one place or another you’d see a muzzled police dog. But certainly any number of us didn’t feel at all sequestered—though once one of the casually dressed Force asked me with concern whether any of our players planned to go out that evening.

The Opening Ceremony, watched by attending representatives from 153 of the ITTF’s 202 member-countries, a large local audience, and millions of TV viewers, featured four giant screens facing all N-E-S-W sections of the arena. The show opens with a spectacular array of flashing lights: sedentary, spinning sparklers; sprays of light showering upward; and swift-moving rays hurtling about and above the arena like very fast-moving, very large grayish-white bats. Then, cue to act with the music and the MC’s patter. out rush a host of boys and girls, armed with rackets and balls, to miniature tables set up all over the playing floor. They’re accompanied, on the sidelines, by “Ping” and “Pong,” the tournament “mascots,” one black, one white, who look and act like large affectionate dancing bears but are described in media print as “panthers.” Panthers? Ridiculous—as are attempts by the kids to keep the ball in play on these little tables.

Impressive, though, is the fire act to a syncopated drumbeat that follows. Pots of rising flame surround a makeshift stage while bare-chested guys lift both hands barbell-like props, their ends set afire, and whirl them in unison this way and that; then they switch to fire sticks which they juggle about. As I watch from my spot in the media section, I’m suddenly surprised by the appearance of the MC to my left who appears taken aback when he finds a correspondent from Shanghai been in Bremen before, and I reply. “No. but I’ve been elsewhere in Germany.” What do I think of Bremen? It’s “fantastic,” I say (though I’ve not been out of the Hotel/Dome complex). After which he turns to the correspondent to my right, who, as it happens, is also from China. “See,” he says into his mike as from a prepared script, “they’re here from all over the world.”

After my act, the show continues. We see a lively troupe of men and women doing various dance routines; a mime playing (and winning) a solitary table tennis match; a choir spotlighted in the highest reach of the arena singing from Gounod’s “Faust”; then singers doing their best with a musical score by Elton John. Now an intermin of distinguished performances—welcomes from German ITTF President Thomas Weikert and Bremen Mayor Jens Bohmensen, followed by ITTF President Adham Sharara who pronounces the tournament officially OPEN!

To the thematic “table tennis hymn,” “Magic Ball,” first played at the Dortmund World’s in 1989, out rolls a huge, somewhat transparent ball with someone inside who by shifting his weight (and getting a little outside help) manipulates his way about the arena floor. Women gymnasts then come on in a choreographed performance—throwing, catching, and somersaulting through large hoops. A grand finale brings all the performers out to take their bows.

This colorful, varied Program completed, we can now turn to the 115 Men’s teams, or, rather, to the 24 Championship Division teams, that from the beginning I won’t say conceivably, but theoretically, have a chance to take the title—China of course prepared to do heavy 3-man duty with its #1, #3, and #4 players in the world. Do they lose a match in their opening 6-team A Group round robin? They do not... and manage to exercise World #6 Chen Qi and World #18 Ma Long with two seasons left in the Junior’s) while they’re at it. Do they lose a game? World and Olympic Champion Wang Liqin’s honorific one perhaps—to last year’s surprising semifinalist, Denmark’s World #17 Michael Maze who, particularly in serving, always looks like he’s trying to throw off his opponent’s timing by being excessively deliberate. As the winner of their Group, China gets a Bye to the quarter’s. Off court, too, they look en masse in control—with their matching dressy emblazoned jacket outfits or subtle pin-stripe suits.

Of great interest to the spectators is the appearance of Sweden’s revered Jan-Ove Waldner, at 40 now of course not up to his World and Olympic Championship play but still the Swedish National Champion. Last year, he’d announced that he’d no longer be playing for his country in World Championships. It was a popular decision that he’d changed his mind.

Right off, Sweden won an important tie against Italy—with J-O holding 11, 12, 7 strong against World #54 Yang Min, a former Hungarian and Russian Open Champion from Shanghai; and the veteran Peter Karlsson, getting a chance to blitz Yang as he had Massimiliano Mondello after World #28 Jens Lundqvist, positioned as the Swedish #3, was upset by World #278 Mihal Bobocica.
Sweden also scored with the fans when World #32 Waldner prevailed over Maze in 5, thus contributing to the Swede’s shutout of the Danes. J-O didn’t do anything spectacular—he often served short to the 2004 European Top 12 winner, just seemed to take his time, undeterred by Maze’s flash counters. Waldner may be “soft,” but, unpredictable as he is, he sure can put the ball where Maze isn’t. Final case in point: J-O aces the Dane and as the ball goes down the line he follows it with gun-sight hand and trigger-finger pulled. Bull’s-eye! Way tip atop the stands, as in Vallialla, three bearded, helmeted Vikings outfitted in blue and gold, and backed up by a large Swedish flag, loudly chant their approval.

In the 2nd round, Italy lost another crucial match—to Romania when, bummer for Yang, up 2-0 against both Andrei Filimon and Adrian Crisan, he couldn’t add to Mondello’s win over Constantin Cioti. Some readers might recall that 10 years earlier Vasile Florea, now Romania’s National Trainer, had won our U.S. Open over South Korea’s current U.S. Open holder Oh Sang Eun.

But though Italy was almost certainly no longer in contention for the title they fought back against the Netherlands—their #3 Bobocić edging Barry Wijers, and Yang taking 5-gamers over the experienced pair of World #48 Danny Heister and World #33 Trinko Keen.

In a losing tie with Denmark that decided 5th/6th place, both Heister and Keen had been beaten in 4 by Maze, while Wijers, down 10-9 in the 5th to Martin Monrad, had been victimized by an unreturnable net ball.

Italy secured 4th place by downing Denmark, 3-2...but it was something of a pyrrhic victory, for following World #94 Finn Tugwell’s 11-9 in the 5th upset of Yang, Mondello downed Maze (in a Diego Schaaf photo shown chopping with a hammer grip)—after which Denmark’s "2005 Athlete of the Year" was apparently injured (though I’d not been made aware of it). He forfeited to Wang and indeed didn’t play any more the whole tournament. Monrad’s win over Bobocić was countered in the 5th by Mondello’s straight-game stop of Tugwell, Bronze winner in Doubles at the Athens Olympic Games.

In their key tie against Romania, Sweden got off to an encouraging 2-0 start when Karlsson downed Filimon 3-0, and Waldner, up 2-0 against World #18 Crisan, dropped the 3rd 12-10, and the 4th, but, warming to the crowd, eventually won a convincing 5th, then went down the line of his teammates shaking hands. Only now, a 3-match turnaround: Lundqvist was beaten by World #92 Cioti; Karlsson, after mis-serving with the ad, 15-13 in the 4th, by Crisan, the 2005 Pro Tour Brazilian Open Champ; and Waldner, battling back from two games down and 8-3 down to take the 3rd, 13-11, but then uncharacteristically not coming through a winner, by World #110 Filimon.

As the last ties were being played between Romania-Denmark, and Sweden-Netherlands, Romania’s record was 3-1. So even if they lost to Denmark they were still assured of finishing 2nd; for the only other team that could finish 3-2 was Sweden and the Romanians had beaten them head to head. Sweden was 2-2 and if they lost to the Netherlands, they’d be 2-3, tied with Italy and possibly Denmark unlikely to beat without Maze even a rather unmotivated Romania. But any tie-breaker with Italy or Denmark had already been decided on in Sweden’s favor, so the Swede’s last tie too was rather meaningless.

Actually, with the Romanians playing World #385 Lucian Filimon instead of Crisan, and Sweden playing World #96 Par Gerell instead of Waldner, both the favored teams were upset, 3-2. After Denmark’s World #76 Monrad had gotten the better of Cioti, the Filimon brothers gave Romania the lead, only to have Maze-substitute World #217 Christian Larsen surprise Cioti 13-11 in the 4th and 14-12 in the 5th. Lucian Filimon had blanked Larsen, but, despite being 2-0 up on Monrad, the Romanian was not to be unbeaten in his debut, for he lost his last three games.

In Group B, as expected, South Korea, coached by 1988 Olympic Champion Yoo Nam Kyu, was dominant. Though World #7 Oh was forced into the 13-11 4th by France’s Damien Eloi, a last-minute replacement here in Bremen for the injured Christophe Berret; and World
Korea’s Ryu Seung Min

#8 Ryu Seung Min forced into the 13-11 4th by French lefthander Chila, the Koreans dropped only two matches. Croatia’s World #23 Zoran Primorac who, on losing the 3rd 12-10 to Joo Se Hyuk, came right back to win the 4th 12-10 and the 5th at 6. Twenty-one years ago, Primorac had won the Junior Doubles at the European Youth Championships with our National Champion Ilija “Lupi” Lupulesku: now he was still strong enough to force Oh into the 5th. Shakehands chopper Joo was the chink in the South Korean armor? He lost another—

Korea’s Lee Jung Woo

in his 5th straight deuce game to Chila. Primorac met the ball squarely with a primo dropkick.

Croatia, who next year would hold the World Championships in Zagreb, hoped to do better, but in a 5th-6th battle could only defeat Brazil. Though finishing without a win in their round robin, Brazil played three tight 2-3 ties. They were leading Japan 2-1 after their current National Champion Thiago Monteiro (who got better by traveling to international tournaments by himself, without coach or confidante) downed the Japanese National Champion Yoshida; and their #3 positioned Cartu Matsumoto beat Taku Tsuchiya. But their once stalwart Hugo Hoyama lost two matches without taking a game, and Monteiro (who, since he can’t make a table tennis living in Brazil, now plays in a French league), was up 2-1, but then fell 6 and 2 to World #64 Koji Matsushita.

Against Belgium, World #107 Monteiro split matches, winning against World #187 Martin Bratanov but losing to Philippe Saive, while Gustavo Tsuboi, in downing Yannick Voster, was putting Brazil ahead 2-1. But World #98 Saive (now taking on other t.t. duties like being the 2005 World Cup Director at Liege) was too good for Monteiro, and Hoyama dropped two goosh 5-gamers. Against France, Brazil was beaten in the first two matches by Eloi and Chila, then rallied when World #198 Matsumoto bested World #126 Sebastien Jouer, and Monteiro had a great 11-9 in the 5th win over World #27 Chila. But again it wasn’t Hoyama’s day... or week.

France had an early, fortuitous 3-1 win over Belgium when Chila came from down 2-0 to beat the spunky Bratanov, and Eloi -15, 10, -6, 5, 2 finished off Jean-Michel Saive who, after his brother Philippe proved too formidable for Dany Lo, could not continue play. You see his 5, 2 ending against Eloi—J-M had pulled a muscle.

By winning a 12-10 4th game, and a 15-13 5th game from World #43 Rulwin Tan, the 36-year-old roadrunner Eloi (such energy, such passion for the game) got France off to a good start against Croatia, and, though World #73 Roko Tosic beat Jover in 5, Chila’s successive wins over Primorac and Tan proved decisive. After losing his 3rd straight deuce game to Eloi, Primorac met the ball squarely with a primo dropkick.

Japan’s upcoming ties were crucial to its staying in contention. The first test against Croatia it passed—thanks primarily to World #133 Saiya Kishikawa’s 5-game upset of Tan whose racket then slashed open the off-court curtains leading to I believe the men’s changing room. He was going to change? Why Primorac was chosen to play only one match I don’t know, but he beat the much-touted 16-year-old, Jun Mizutani. That wasn’t enough though, for Yoshida, smashing balls left and right, downed both Tomic and Tan. Behind 2-1 and 7-4, Tan, disturbed by the 2nd net Yoshida scored against him, flipped his racket into a courtside barrier, and, while his coach called Time, was yellow-carded. On losing this game 11-7, he comes off court and, not to be consoled by his teammates or coaches, exits by throwing his racket against the nearest wall... then beyond the curtains does what?

Japan caught a break against Belgium, for J-M Saive wasn’t fit enough yet to play. But is it any wonder that back in Japan the media gives the Women’s team all the attention? Philippe Saive beats both Kishikawa and Yoshida, and Bratanov upsets Mizutani.

The last ties pit Croatia (1-3) against Belgium (2-2), and Japan (2-2) against France (3-1). Should Croatia win, they’d be 2-3, as would...
for both Gorak and Blaszczyk, and Slobodan Grujic finished Gorak 12-10 in the 4th. And, no, Poland couldn’t stop the Czechs either, for though World #69 Wang beat World #21 Petr Korbel in 4, and Gorak, if I may use the expression, goose-eggled Martin Olejnik, Jakub Kobowski’s 5-game bid against Korbel failed, and World #111 Marek Klasek finished as he started with a 13-11 in the 3rd win. In addition to losing to Germany, Poland also went down to 5th-place Norway when World #24 Blaszczyk was upset by both Erlandsen and Wang who also blitzed Gorak.

Serbia placed 4th—losing its crucial opening ties. First, to the Czechs whose Korbel was in control and whose 3rd man had to be better than what Serbia had to offer—either World #348 Bojan Miloševic or World #358 Boris Vučelić. Then in a no-chance tie it was beaten by Austria. “The curse of talent” someone said of Karakasevic as he was behind the 8-ball to Schlager. He lost 8, 8—“just doesn’t want to work to be great.” Serbia did take Norway though—with Grujic bringing in two winners, “Kara” one.

The big positioning matches featured the Czechs against, first, the Germans, then, on an evening when U.S. International Umpires Chris Williams and Bill Walk would be officiating in Hall 1, the Austrians. Besides Korbel, the Czechs had the option of playing World #101, World #108, World #111, and World #190. They picked #108 Richard Vyboreny to play the 3rd match, while #190 Antonin Gavlas would play the 2nd and 5th matches. Of course Boll figured to win twice, unless Korbel could work a near miracle—and the Czech did open well, beat a second German hope, 20-year-old Seuss who, on losing 11-9 in the 4th, rather gently pounded the table with his fist and received a mild ovation.

The Czechs saw no point playing Gavlas in 3rd spot against Jorg Rosskopf—and, sure enough, smart strategy, for Vyboreny survived Rossi, his fans and the thumping racket of their dried-up balloons, in 5. But Korbel, who’s played for 10 different clubs, is now 34 and has an 8-year-old daughter, worked no miracle against the 2005 Pro Tour Grand Final winner Boll (who has this habit of wiping his hand on the table, a somewhat common practice our ITTF Rules Committee member Azmy Ibrahim, for one, wants stopped). So that left #190 rather than #101 Olejnik or #111 Klasek to win the day from #56 Seuss—which, as the German coaches and players rose from the bench with every winning Seuss point, Gavlas could not do.

Against Austria for 2nd/3rd place, Korbel again started well—beat Schlager (who at one point startled not only himself but everyone watching by shanking his serve). Next match, Vyboreny went into the 5th with Chen, but didn’t win. After which Klasek went into the 5th with Gardos, but didn’t win. What might have been ended with Korbel’s straight-game loss to Chen.

Group D, with all six of its teams strongly contesting, got underway with two upsets. Slovakia, the #6 seed, upset the CHINESE/Taipei-jacketed #2 team—thanks to the Slovakian 3rd man Michal Bardon’s win over Chang Yen-Shu, and to World #11 Peter Seroda’s victories over World #26 Chiang Peng-Lung and World #12 Chuau Chih-Yuan, the 2004 U.S. Open runner-up.

The other upset—the most astonishing in Championship Men’s play—saw Belarus defeat Russia, 3-2. And this, despite only one win by World #5 Vladimir Samsonov—he beat World #47 Fedor Kuzinin 12-10 in the 5th (after almost blowing it from 9-5 up), then lost to World #29 Alexei Smirnov 11-9 in the 4th. The unlikely Belarus hero? World #415 Vitaly Nekhvedovitch over Samsonov’s high-ranked opponents.

A word about Nekhvedovitch. He’s been a player, wears glasses (the great majority of players don’t, many of them being relatively young), and, as he reportedly drinks coke during matches, it’s not surprising he’s overweight. Belarus wasn’t going to bring him to Bremen, but, in Samsonov’s absence (and apparently Evgenyi Chchtetinie’s who had only one Pro Tour appearance in 2005), he won the Belarus National’s. Table Tennis Illustrated Editor Ian Marshall interviewed Nekhvedovitch after he’d played “like a man possessed,” and he said that, though this figured to be his last chance ever to shine, when he was up 6-1 in the 5th in the final match against Kuzinin and started to slip, he kept thinking he was going to lose. So he had to fight self as much as the Russian, and when he finally did win, shook his fists, trembled, and roared—said he felt “like an Olympic Champion.” His teammate, 3-time European Champion Samsonov, told Ian, “I’m so pleased for this guy.” And imagine how pleased you’d be if with some spare Euros you’d have felt like taking a chance and contacted Unibet. You could bet on the Men’s

**USA TABLE TENNIS MAGAZINE • July/August 2006**
matches but not on the Women’s. A 100 Euro bet on Belarus would have gotten you 750 in return. As it turned out, Slovakia, with only that one win, ended up last in the round robin. And they too, gave Russia quite a fight—indeed, almost beat them. U-21 Qatar Open winner Sereda downed Kuzmen; the Slovak #3 Lubomir Pustej trampled as with his own troika Andrianov, European Cadet Boys Champion in 1990, and World #122 Bardon tried -10,-9,11,10,-6 mightily but couldn’t come back against Kuzmen.

Greece also had trouble with Belarus because Samsonov destroyed Panagiotis Giannakis and World #13 Kalinikos Kranagia. On serving, Kranagia’s repeated motion is to bend down over the ball, getting his face up close because Samsonov destroyed Panagiotis, to which he returns as if at a drinking fountain. to which he returns again and again in many matches, many a tie—as with an unquenchable thirst. Vitaly tried hard to win the vital 5th from World #62 Gionis, but went down to the Greek’s long reach, 8,14,10.

**World Team Championships Results**

**MEN’S TEAMS - Final**

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**WOMEN’S TEAMS - Final**

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**CHINESE/Taipei,** after losing its opener to Slovakia, righted itself with a 3-1 win over Russia. World #12 Chuan stopped Kuzmin, 11-3 in the 5th, and Chang Peng-lung wouldn’t allow Smirnov a game. The other Chiang, Hung-Chieh, World #193 but winner of an ITTF Junior Scholarship and holder of the last two Canadian Jr. Opens, almost made it a sweep, took Andrianov into the 5th, before Chuan was back blitzing Smirnov. Through CHINESE/Taipei would beat Belarus, 3-0—Ching Peng-Lung over Samsonov in 5; Chuan over World #470 Aleksandr Kuchuk; and Chang over the 10, 4, 6, 12, 6 stubborn Neklivedovich—it was Greece or Hong Kong they had to beat.

It wouldn’t be Greece: Gionis, slicing backhands and long-stroke sweeping in forehands, upset Chuan in 5; head-handled
Kreanga, hands high in triumph, downed Chiang Peng Lung in 4; and net-lucky Ntanil Tsisokas got by Chang 11-9 in the 5th. That straight-set loss might be a killer if four teams were tied at 2-3, still a possibility.

Hong Kong’s formidable penholder Li Ching, Wang Wei tells me, had played shakehands when on the National Team in China—in fact, she says, his strokes resemble those of 2-time World Champion Jiang Jialiang’s. So would the 4th place pealing death the quarter’s. But Russia (2-2) still had clinched the #1 spot and that important ‘Bye to with Li Ching). posted a 4-1 record and so consequences. for, the results of the tie-breaker, CHINESE/Taipei and Belarus—with significant counters had scored against them—and it was head-to-head in their opening tie. (Only Kreanga China—in fact. she says. his strokes resemble Ching. Wang Wei tells me. had played seasoned Dimitrij Mazunov, back again as the beat Kuzmin but not Smirnov who also got by.

Russia (2-6). CHINESE/Taipei therefore would still finish 2’ld because Hong Kong beat them. In the bottom half. it would be Germany). In the bottom half, it would be Russia vs. Sweden (the winner to play #2 seed South Korea). France got by to a 2-0 lead over Belgium. China, holding firm, talking to himself, in the face of one of 2005 Pro Tour Grand Finalist Jean-Michel Saive’s down 2-0 determined rallies, won in 5 (after which J-M could be seen in front of his bench ripping off his rubber sheets). Eloi, though losing the 1st 11-13 and the 4th 9-11, came back to take the 5th from Martin Bratanov. In winning that 4th game, Bratanov, down 8-9, scored with the fans by returning not just one ball but two while sprawled on the floor, then got up in time to tie it at 9-9. The last two straight-game balancing matches tipped the 3-1 tie to France. Belgium’s Philippe Saive won out over Sebastien Jover, and France’s Chila (once pretending he was gonna jump high to power down a lob but instead dropping it in for a winner) downed Bratanov. Russia duplicated France’s start with a 2-0 lead over Sweden. Kreanga put a stranglehold on Karlsson’s two-down rally to win in 5, and Smirnov tumbled crowd-king Waldner 11-2 in the 5th (a loss which still earned J-O a big ovation). Then after Lundqvist downed Mazunov to keep Sweden alive, Karlsson tried his best, but he could he best could do was to grab the 3rd at 9 before losing in 4. So not even a quarter’s advance for once mighty Sweden.

In the Greece-Austria tie, Russian Open finalist Kreanga’s 15-13 stretched-out 2nd game win over Chen Weixing was key to his putting Greece’s best foot forward. But after that, all went backwards for the Greeks. Two 13-11 matches—by sharp-angled Schlager over the athletic, spin-changing defender Gionis, and Robert Gardos over Ntanil Tsisokas (wasting a 10-9 comeback from 2-8 down)—set up Schlager’s convincing 3-game finale over Kreanga.

Marek Klasek, with two 12-10 winners contributing to his upset of Crisan in 4, got the Czechs off to the start they wanted. And, though Romania’s Ciotti showed heart in not giving in to Vyborny, Korbel followed through with two easy wins over Filimon and Crisan to allow the Czechs their quarter’s entry.

USA RESULTS

Men’s Preliminaries: USA 1-4

India d. USA, 3-1: Achanta Sharath Kamal (IND) d. Mark Hazinski (USA). -9,6,8,7; Iljia Lupulesku (USA) d. Soumyadeep Roy (IND). 8,8,6,11; Subhajit Saha (IND) d. Mark Hazinski (USA). -10,6,4; Achanta Sharath Kamal (IND) d. Iljia Lupulesku (USA). 9,6,7,8

USA vs Finland, 3-0: Mark Hazinski (USA) d. Timo Tamminen (FIN). 7,8,7; Iljia Lupulesku (USA) d. Mikko Kontala (FIN). 3,6,1; Iljia Lupulesku (USA) d. Benedek Ohl (FIN). 8,10,5,8

Bulgaria d. USA, 3-1: Feng Zhe (BUL) d. Mark Hazinski (USA), 6,9,8,9; Iljia Lupulesku (USA) d. Todor Kessov (BUL) d. Barney J. Reed (USA). 6,7,4,7,7; Feng Zhe (BUL) d. Iljia Lupulesku (USA). 7,8,8,9

Singapore d. USA, 3-1: Yang Zi (SIN) d. Darko Rop (USA). 4,9,8,9; Ciao Xio Li (SIN) d. Mark Hazinski (USA). 9,5,5,7; Adam Hugh (USA) d. Lee Clarence Tien Ho (SIN). -10,7,9,6,6; Yang Zi (SIN) d. Mark Hazinski (USA). 10,8,10,10

Turkey d. USA, 3-0: Irfan Tavuclusoglu (TUR) d. Adam Hugh (USA). -9,6,8,2; Jiang Pengfei (TUR) d. Mark Hazinski (USA). 8,8,6,8; Saffa Aiev (TUR) d. Darko Rop (USA). 8,5,8,6

37-48 Playoffs: USA d. Wales, 3-2: Mark Hazinski (USA) d. Neil Page (WAL). 1,8, Adam Robertson (WAL) d. Adam Hugh (USA). 9,5,6,8; Mark Hazinski (USA) d. Steve Gersen (WAL). 6,7,10,11,6; Adam Robertson d. Mark Hazinski (USA). 6,7,9,9, Adam Hugh (USA) d. Neil Page (WAL). 4,6,2

37-44 Playoffs: Nigeria d. USA, 3-0: Kazeem Nosiru (NGR) d. Mark Hazinski (USA). 6,10,5,7; Segun Toriola (NGR) d. Barney J. Reed (USA). 7,3,11,6; Sean Ajetunmobi (NGR) d. Adam Hugh (USA). 7,7,3.

41-44 Playoffs: Canada d. USA, 3-1: Bence Csaba (CAN) d. Barney J. Reed (USA). 7,5,7,9; Pradeebar Peter Paul (CAN) d. Mark Hazinski (USA). 7,7,9,8,10; Darko Rop (USA) d. Quang Shen (CAN). -9,8,7,5; Bence Csaba (CAN) d. Mark Hazinski (USA). 11,7,8

44-40 Playoffs: USA d. Estonia, 3-2: Mark Hazinski (USA) d. Alexander Smirnov (EST). 5,8,9; Vallot Vainula (EST) d. Barney J. Reed (USA). 7,7,7,9; Sergei Petrov (EST) d. Darko Rop (USA). 9,11,7; Mark Hazinski (USA) d. Vallot Vainula (EST). 7,9,9,8,7; Barney J. Reed (USA) d. Alexander Smirnov (EST). 7,9,10.

Women’s Preliminaries: USA 1-4

Croatia d. USA, 3-0: Tamara Boros (HRV) d. Gao Jun (USA). -12,9,7,9; Sandra Pauvic (HRV) d. Jasna Reede (USA). 7,7,3,11; Cornelia Vaida (HRV) d. Crystal Huang (USA). 6,4,1

Japan d. USA, 3-0: Ai Fukhara (JPN) d. Nan Li (USA). 6,-9,6,6; Sakari Kanazawa (JPN) d. Jasna Reede (USA). 6,9,3,3; Kana Ishikawa (JPN) d. Mark Hazinski (USA). 7,10,1,1

USA d. Slovakia, 3-2: Eva Ondrakova (SVK) d. Jasna Reede (USA). 11,8,4; Gao Jun (USA) d. Lenka Kmotorkova (SVK). 5,8,2; Viera Marczevka (SVK) d. Crystal Huang (USA). 5,11,6,7; Gao Jun (USA) d. Eva Ondrakova (SVK). 8,6,9,3, Jasna Reede (USA) d. Lenka Kmotorkova (SVK). -8,9,9,11,7

Russia d. USA, 3-2: Gao Jun (USA) d. Irina Kotlikina (RUS). 3,7,12; Oksana Fadeeva (RUS) d. Jasna Reede (USA). -9,13,12,9; Svetlana Gamina (RUS) d. Nan Li (USA). 8,4,9; Gao Jun (USA) d. Oksana Fadeeva (RUS). 6,8,10,9; Irina Kotlikina (RUS) d. Jasna Reede (USA). 5,10,6

Singapore d. USA, 3-1: Pan Wei (USA) d. Zhang Xueling (SIN). -8,1,2,7; Li Jia Wei (SIN) d. Jasna Reede (USA). 8,8,8,4; Tam Paey Fern (SIN) d. Nan Li (USA). 5,6,10; Li Jia Wei (SIN) d. Gao Jun (USA). 9,9,5,5,3.

33-24 Playoffs: Chinese Taipei d. USA, 3-1: Huang Yi-Hua (TPE) d. Jasna Reede (USA). 8,9,8,4; Gao Jun (USA) d. Lu Yun-Feng (TPE). 7,7,5,9; Lee I-Chen (TPE) d. Nan Li (USA). 10,12; Huang Yi-Hua (TPE) d. Gao Jun (USA). 5,8,10,4

21-24 Playoffs: USA d. India, 3-0: Stephanie Xu Sang (AUS) d. Crystal Huang (USA). 4,5,11,5; Miao Miao (AUS) d. Nan Li (USA). 4,9,9; Cho May (AUS) d. Jackie Lee (USA). 8,6,13,6

23-24 Playoffs: USA d. India, 3-2: Poulomi Ghatak (IND) d. Gao Jun (USA). 6,7,1,9; Mouma Das (IND) d. Jasna Reede, 6,8,7; Jackie Lee (USA) d. Nandita Saha (IND). 3,10,6,9; Gao Jun (USA) d. Mouma Das (IND). 5,4,4, Jasna Reede (USA) d. Poulomi Ghatak (IND). 6,4,12

USA TABLE TENNIS MAGAZINE • July/August 2006
Quarterfinals

China (3) over France (0) wasn’t the butcher-shop slaughter some might have expected. No, not even when Wang Liqin right away opened a 7-0 lead against Eloi, for he was 1-1 with him after just squeezing out that 1st game, 12-10. Eloi did get to 8-all in the 3rd—but a missed might-have-been-a-winner mixed his pesky threat. Question: when World #6 Chen Qi, just turned 22, lost that 1st game to World #140 Danny Lo, did that mean he’d again met his match? (Lo had beaten Chen at the 2005 Qatar Open.) But, uh, only 19 lost-points-later, the Answer: no. And 2-
time World Singles finalist Ma Lin down 2-1 to Chila? How good—with a case of the jitters?—could Ma be? Just 13-11 in the 5th as good a showman as he had to be—racket-fanning himself and bringing his sleeve up to wipe the sweat off his face at crucial points.

Chila not only won a Bronze at the Sydney Olympics, but received, from French President Jacques Chirac himself, the “Chevalier de l’ordre national du mérite.” When Chila exits from the Hall, he’s besieged by autograph seekers, signs half a dozen times, moves a few steps on, is asked to pose for a photo with a kid as an alert parent with a camera takes advantage of the opportunity to capture this moment.

Inside Coaching:

Energy Master: Spin (second of two parts)
By John Allen, USATT Coaching Chair

To be “in the moment,” as described by basketball great Michael Jordan during his championship run while under the guidance of coach Phil Jackson and his zen influence, were defining moments of his championship performance. This is also an important state when applying energy in striking a ball in table tennis. A player has to react to the oncoming ball to strike it to produce a winning shot or strategy.

Article one reviewed principles associated with stroke technique and striking the ball. Recall from part one (last issue) that Principles I (timing when contacting the ball) and III (where to contact the ball) had to do with the flight and surface contact point of the ball in executing proper timing and stroke technique. Principle II is the “application of force and friction,” and commanding a player’s energy associated with this principle is the focus of this article.

Force and Friction

Young and new players alike are excited and engaged by spin, both the control and generation of spin. With all the variety of rubbers, wood and glue, applying force and friction is a constant challenge for players and coaches. Proper application of force must be reinforced often to direct a player’s command of spin to improve stroke efficiency and optimize the use of spin.

A key to generating force and friction is the snap of the wrist or elbow at the proper moment to create heavy spin or a forceful drive. Another technique from the snap of the wrist or elbow is to use a slow snap or a decelerating movement to soften the spin or drive. Negative energy in the form of tension hinders the snap from the wrist or elbow and reduces the range of flexibility and can limit a player’s range of placement and ball control. These are important observations for stroke development and in evaluating opponent’s strengths and weaknesses.

The Spin Continuum

Another concept to describe one’s mastery level of spin is what I’ll call the Spin Continuum or Spin Scale (see Fig. 1). Using a “0 to +10” and “0 to -10” for degrees of topspin and underspin you can illustrate the concept of spin for strokes and for strategy development.

For example, a spin loop of an advanced player might be an eight or nine on the scale whereas an intermediate player’s loop might be a five or six and a counter-drive stroke might be a two or three. On the underspin side a light push might be a minus three; a heavy push a minus seven and a long pips chop of a loop a minus nine. The spin scale not only accounts for the spin a player can generate it also should account for a player’s aptitude for handling or controlling varying degrees of spin.

It’s also important to account for force or velocity of the ball in determining the appropriate energy needed to return a particular shot. Against a heavy spin loop, in addition to the proper racquet angle (determining the contact point on the ball), it’s important to use forward and downward force, moving the racquet forward to meet the ball at the proper trajectory. Whereas versus a strong drive loop, the proper racquet angle and a steady hand can consistently produce a solid return.

For developing a strategy against a particular opponent the spin continuum can be a useful tool. In evaluating an opponent’s strengths and weaknesses, we often consider a particular spin to a certain location as a tactic in an overall strategy, such as “use heavy underspin to their backhand.” Or against an intermediate penholder, “use a heavy slow spin loop to their backhand,” as a penholder may have difficulty angling their racquet to reach the proper contact point on the ball for a good block return.

So mastering energy to the basic principles and considering the spin continuum can provide an infinite teaching tool for coaches with their players.

Energy Mastery

So, with all these principles and tools how do we incorporate these into a winning technique? The principles should be a common thread in coaching strokes and in match play, and there are many opportunities to reinforce these principles. Also, they are relatively simple concepts to describe in teaching strokes or as advice during a match. Often a player will make similar errors in execution that relate to one principle or another, so that becomes a focal point in training. Or they may have a particular strength or weakness at a certain position for a specific (example heavy or light, -8 or -2) degree of topspin or underspin.

In addition to match play, ball control drills can develop spin mastery skills. A couple of fairly simple drills are:

1. Using a same course pattern (down line or cross), one player alternates looping and counter-driving (hitting), the other player alternates chopping and blocking; the loop should be used versus the chop and the counterdrive versus the block.

2. With a robot, use a set ball feed, and apply various spins and placements to the loop. Mix the spin type (under, top or side), mix the are of the return (spinny or driving) and vary the degree of spin on the return. The possibilities are endless!

Both of these will help understand spin and how the basic principles apply to spin and stroke technique. Additional variations of these drills can make them even more challenging for beginner through advanced players.

Mental practice can also aid in focusing energy to both return and create a particular spin or force to produce a positive result. Carried further, mental training or imagery can be used to apply the resulting skill to gain an advantage in a point, then take that visualized pattern to the table. It’s important to create specific detail in one’s imagery and build on it to produce a complete pattern or sequence, such as a specific stroke technique or series of strokes that make up a point-winning tactic.

Mixing spin (friction), force and placement are all important skills in the sport of table tennis today. Commanding these skills early in development will greatly aid a player’s ability to control these factors in match play and competition.

Table tennis requires changing and adapting these skills in a split second. Energy is an important element in these skills. Players who master this energy and play “in the moment” will make effective changes and adaptations and will realize positive results in their table tennis experience.

Continued on page 66
Basic Corner: Lobbing

The lob is a defensive technique played well back from the table in response to a smash or first topspin using a topspin action to hit the ball high in the air. The aim is to land the ball deep on the table with maximum topspin so that the ball bounce moves the opponent well back from the table. The lob is often used when a player is out of position to give him time to position himself to play a stronger stroke on the next ball.

Forehand Lob

Preparation
The player is in a forehand topspin stance with left foot forward, right shoulder rotated backwards and downwards and racket at knee height.

Swing – Contact
A relatively vertical brushing topspin action is used with contact depending on the height of the smash. Ideally contact will be waist height.

Follow Through
The racket follows through in an upward direction, finishing head height.

Backhand Lob

Preparation
The player is in a backhand stance with the right shoulder forward and downward. The starting position is below the ball and, as for backhand topspin, anywhere from between the legs to the outside of the left leg (as shown here).

Swing – Contact
A relatively vertical brushing topspin action is used with contact depending on the height of the smash.

Follow Through
The racket follows through in an upward direction, finishing head height.

Explore Over 300 Tips of the Week at www.usatt.org – every Monday since Dec., 1999!

Tip of the Month: July
The Returns You Want
By Carl Danner

When scouting an opponent, notice what service returns he or she prefers to make. Given that, think about which of your serves might work best to encourage the returns you will want from that opponent. The answer may not be your “best” serves, but it will be the best serves for you in that match.

Tip of the Month: August
Learn to Re-Loop
By Carl Danner

Here’s a fun way to learn re-looping, or at least get the feel. Both you and your practice partner stand several feet back and hit high topspin lobs to each other. Have fun with it, and try to make them spinnly. As you gain some touch, gradually reduce the height and get closer to the table. When you bring the shots down to normal level, you’re re-looping.

Here are some keys to making this work:
1. Contact the ball at the top of the bounce. This is important, because it’s hard to lift a falling topspin to hit the table consistently on the trajectory you want for a re-loop.
2. Use a very relaxed, almost rubbery arm. Tension kills this stroke. Remember to smile.
3. Emphasize footwork. You need to be in just the right place so that your relaxed arm swing will contact the ball at its height. That’s entirely a job for your feet. Top players don’t reach, lean, or contort their stroke to assure ideal contact. They move.
4. Your racket needs to be closed (i.e., aiming down) more than you think. Most re-looping errors go off the end.
5. Try for deep shots that bounce near the end line. They’re much better than shorter efforts. Regardless of whether you turn into a looping machine, it’s worth trying this technique to get more feel against topspin shots. Even a soft, glorified lob can be a useful option to handle an opponent’s loop.
Tournaments Processed
This list was compiled on 06/08/06 (ages are as of that date) and includes all tournaments received through 06/04/06. Due to space limitations, only current members who have played since 03/01/06 are included. This document may not be reproduced without prior written permission of USA Table Tennis. Copyright 2006.

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**Table Tennis Magazine**

USA Table Tennis Magazine - July/August 2006
John Pahl, 800-263-0433. JOHN.PAHL@holzher.com. 
July 3 - Official $1000 US Open Warm Up Doubles Tournament, Charlotte, NC. Contact: John Pahl, 800-263-0433. JOHN.PAHL@holzher.com. 
July 8 - Power Pong Open, Fountain Valley, CA. Contact: Vi Bloom, 562-430-9276. halblooom@dslextreme.com. 
July 3 - Official $1000 US Open Warm Up Doubles Tournament, Charlotte, NC. Contact: John Pahl, 800-263-0433. JOHN.PAHL@holzher.com. 
July 29 - Waco 2006 Summer RR. Waco, TX. Contact: Grady Gordon, 254-772-2838. ggordon@grandecom.net. 
August 4-6 - 2006 Eastern Open, Piscataway, NJ. Contact: North American Table Tennis, 301-738-8250. info@natabletennis.com. 
August 12 - Power Pong Open, Fountain Valley, CA. Contact: Attila Malek, 714-540-5162. powerhouse@aol.com. 
August 12-13 - Maryland Circuit, Eldersburg, MD. Contact: Yvonne Kronlage, 410-489-7291. 0 Star 
August 13 - Framingham TTC August Open, Framingham, MA. Contact: Qiumars Hedayatian, 617-669-5585. contact@massttc.com. 0 Star 
August 19 - 15th Annual Decatur Open, Decatur, AL. Contact: Walt Chenaill, 205-355-5754. mikespong@yahoo.com. 
August 26 - 26-27 - Pacific Coast Open, Santa Monica, CA. Contact: Ichiro Hashimoto, 818-700-0949 ichiro.hashimoto@csun.edu. 
August 26-27 - Florida State Closed, Orlando, FL. Contact: Olga Soltesz, 407-830-4009. 
September 2-3 - 2006 Berkeley Open. Berkeley, CA. Contact: North American Table Tennis, 301-738-8250. info@natabletennis.com. 
September 2-3 - Maryland Circuit, Eldersburg, MD. Contact: Yvonne Kronlage, 410-489-7291. 0 Star
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unusual opportunity, goes on a few more steps, signs another half-dozen or more autographs, and finally is allowed to break away.

Germany vs. Russia. Maybe the enraptured partisan audience would have liked a longer tie, so long as their guys won. O.K., suspense enough when Seuss lost the 1st at 9. But then, you might say, playing “to the nines,” he (9, 9, 9) won out over European Top 12 winner Smirnov (who'd been shown earlier on the giant screen above, scissors in hand, according to the umpire’s request to trim excess rubber off his racket). Against Kuzmin, Boll lost...easy, easy, just the 2nd game—and 12-10 at that. And now, when German Closed finalist Bastian Sieger, World #50, took the 2nd, 13-11, to go 2-0 up on (a too anxious?) World #274 Kirill Skachkov, you know the crowd sensed their home team was a medal winner.

Still, give the struggling (“I have to work on the psychological aspect of my game”) Qatari Jr. Open winner credit. He didn’t go gently into the good night. First, he persisted in winning the 3rd 14-12. Then in the tight end-game 4th (where Steger put up a controversial hand urging a point-play-over that to boos was denied, and which the covering cameras chose not to play back for the audience), Shachkov prevailed 12-10. So, all right, “Enough!” had to be the venomous thought that ran through the stands; we’ve had a little excitement, and one in which our guy didn’t get a fair shake, but let’s not blow this. And Sieger doesn’t—to the 11-3 delight of, I guess almost everyone, for I never do hear the smallest pocket of Russian support, never see that first Russian flag wave. Before they leave the court, the German team lines up, lifts their arms up to the spectators as to those in a hallowed, heavenly Hall and receive homage in kind.

In the Hong Kong (3)-Austria (1) tie, Ko Lai Chak was a steady 3rd-position winner over Robert Gardos, while teammate Li Ching took on the role of scrappy hero, running 3-0 circles round Chen Weixing, and outlasting Schlager in 5. Often against Li Schlager seems comfortable lobbing the ball, waiting to get into cutting counter-play, or moving in to win a point on a crack counterplacement. In their 2nd game, Li is faulted early for not throwing the ball up high enough, then, perhaps influenced by that call, on being down 10-11 he almost mis-serves, the ball just spinning over, then he does mis-serve to lose the game! Likewise in the 4th, at 11-11, Li mis-serves again, then swats a ball into the net to give the Austrian a 5th game reprieve that...he can’t take advantage of.

Finally, the South Korean-Czech tie was from the first match on never tied. Oh’s a sort of gentle giant with a wife and two-year-old son. In a Table Tennis Illustrated interview he acknowledged that some people in his country eat dog. “I couldn’t do that,” he said, “I like to stroke the dog.” On opening 11-5, 11-3 against Malek, he then gave the Czech some 3rd-game 12-10 slack. Joo Se Hyuk, after dropping the 1st to Korbel, didn’t drop another. And the 2004 Olympic Champion, Ryu Seung Min, ended it all by allowing Vobornec a mere 20 points.

Semifinals

China-Germany—now this was the spectators’ climax to the tournament. Granted against Seuss the superbly fit 27-year-old Wang Liqin was 9, 10, 9 extended to winning close games, and granted against Fejer-Konnerth 2005/2006 Asian Champion Wang Hao wasn’t 5, 2, 8 extended at all, there was still the fans’ “Wunderkind,” Timo Boll, and, as Germany’s assisting “4th man,” the crowd—looking down into the arena rooting passionately for their iconic “TEE-MO!” By this time, though, “CHIN-a!” too had found banner flags and vocal support. Timo’s first match—against Ma Lin, selected to play Table Tennis 20 years ago, when he was a child in kindergarten, turned out to be a 6-7, 7-3, 6, 7 dream-true turnaround—for to chants of “MA-lin! MA-Lin!” Boll runs out that 3rd game from 3-1. He’s on his way: spectators drum their feet, cheer and clap their man onward while thunderous music bursts in between games and at every “Time!” call.

Boll opens the 4th by hitting in a shot while falling on the seat of his pants. Ma must feel the pressure? Down 2-5 he jabs Boll’s serve into the net; down 5-6 he pops up the ball; down 6-7 he again fails to return serve. Boll ends the 4th on a net/edge. Opens the 5th with another edge. Takes over the offensive while Ma blocks. Soon “CHIN-a...ch-in-a” is drowned out by “TEE-MO!...TEE-MO!” When Boll wins and raises high his fist the roar is deafening. The crowd stands to the commanding lyric “Stand up!” “Stand up!” Then, after Ping and Pong, in sync with

the beat, merrily prance about with makeshift wooden racket in hand, it was crunch time—against Wang Liqin.

“TEE-MO!” of course had won accolades for beating Wang Liqin (along with Wang Hao and Ma Lin) in the 2005 World Cup. Now (as U.S. International Umpire Bill Walk calls the score in the slow, clear, no-nonsense region of American English, so different from the European announcer’s loud, upbeat hype) he has a good chance to do it again—for, as I never saw players whiff so much, he evens the match by winning the 2nd game 13-11, and then the 3rd 11-9. But—“Deutschland!” rings out the cry—though Boll and his bench are up 5-3, Wang’s powerful forehands take over for an 11-6 one-sided finish.

South Korea (3)-Hong Kong (0) hadn’t the exciting involvement-vibes of the China-Germany tie, but Oh’s 9, 9, 11 win (to cries along the way of “CHIN-a!”) over Hong Kong’s Cheung Yuk was, as little pockets of Koreans on both sides of the arena waved their flags, watch-worthy. Even more watchable was Ryu’s 9, -9, 11 free-fire fight against the speedy Li Ching. (Before the match started, the umpire had checked Li’s racket against the appropriate shear listings he had available at his umpire’s stand, and the rubber against the color measurement he’d pulled from his pocket.)

During the 2nd game, the Korean contingent started a cheer (“Wooooo”) that, echoing across the divide, sounded like (“WHOOOO”) a windstorm outside, or a table tennis ghost in the Hall. Following his win this game, Li did modified jumping jacks. Ryu, however, ends the match in the 4th with better moves—caught out of position, ball into his middle, he manages, falling away, to hit in a forehand winner. In the tie-deciding match, won by lefty current U.S. Open finalist Lee Jung Wu - 6, 8, 9, 5 over Slovenia Open finalist Ko, the Hong Kong player starts 8-1 strong, ends 6-6 weak. All of which means that, for the first time ever, South Korea has made the Men’s World Team final. Let’s give ‘em a hand as they go where no Korean man has gone before.

Final

But who among the 9,000 watching would pay to bet on China? Not even the Dome’s most honored guest—the Chinese Ambassador. Put up 1 Euro on China, you’d get 1.10 back. Put up 1 Euro on South Korea, you’d get 6 Euros back. The Magic Ball music brings out German flags and “Magic Dreams.”

Of course, you already knew—how could it be otherwise?—China was too alien-strong. Wang Hao opened 6, 8, 4 against World #7 Oh....And Ma Lin finished 9, 7, 7 against Lee Jung Woo. In between was sandwiched a meaty combination of Wang Liqin/Ryu Seung Min-play that, when all was spectator-consumed, Wang’s 8, -9, -9, 9 win would vanish into memory, giving likely only a select few of those who’d watched food for thought.
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USA Tournament Results

72nd Michigan Closed
Eaton, MI • Apr. 1-2, 2006
Men’s Singles: 1st Taju Oladokun; 2nd Bikramjeet Singh; 3rd Scott Endecott; 4th Jim Dixon.

Women’s Singles: 1st Kokiha Mummoothy; 2nd Joy Roselle; 3rd Lisa Sandovale; 4th Shirley Schwartz.

Open Doubles: Taja Oladokun/Dave Kryzypek d. Mike Veillet/Mike Baber, 3-0.
Over 40 – Final: Telsilmy Iloh d. Mike Baber, 3-2; SF: Iloh d. Frank Thierry, 3-1; Baber d. Mike Veillet, 3-1.

Open Doubles: Mike Veillet/Mike Baber d. Taju Oladokun/Jim Dixon, 3-0.

Over 50 – Final: Mike Veillette & Jim Dixon split prize; SF: Veillette d. Mark Merritt, def.; Dixon d. Dave Peradotto, 3-1.


C2600 Doubles: James Johnson/Kevin Johnson d. Carl Meredith, 3-1.

2, SF: Zhang d. Guenther Schroeder, 3-1, Tsao-Taiu Oladokun/Jim Dixon, 3-0.

Over 4000: Ilohg d. Frank Thierry, 3-1: Baber d. Mike Veillet, 3-1.

Open Doubles: Talu Oladokun/Dave Skizypek d. Mike Veillet/Mike Baber, 3-0.

U1300 Doubles: Tao jinhua & Gustav Jonsson, 3-0.


U1500: Thomas Ulich d. Joseph Helfand, 3-0.

U1600: Terry Robinson d. Kevin Johnson, n.s.

C1700: Allen Lin, Sallillel Darling, 3-1.

SF: Amin d. Tesilini Ilohg, 3-0. Singh d. Dillkin, n.s.


Over 60 – Final: John Hanington d. Ed .leronie, 3-0.

Open Doubles: Derrick Cone/Bernard SaViti d. Ortegon/Al Fer-enberg, 3-0.

Over 1600 Group A: 1st Jian Tan; 2nd Ivan Popov; 3rd Gary Alanovich.

Spring Open Giant RR
Indianapolis, IN • Mar. 18, 2006
Over 1600 Group A: 1st Jian Tan; 2nd Ivan Popov; 3rd Yuenian (Neal) Zhang.

Over 1800 Group B: 1st Daniel Caravillo; 2nd Gary Aranovich.

Spring Open Giant RR
Indianapolis, IN • Mar. 18, 2006
Over 1600 Group A: 1st Jian Tan; 2nd Ivan Popov; 3rd Yuenian (Neal) Zhang.

Over 1800 Group B: 1st Daniel Caravillo; 2nd Gary Aranovich.

USA Table Tennis Magazine • July/August 2006

Arizona Closed
Phoenix, AZ • Apr. 22-23, 2006
Open – Final: Luis Housed d. Derrick Cone, 6,6,7,5; SF: Housed d. Gia Leu, 9-11,7,5,3,7; Cone d. Auria Malek, 6,9,15,14,7.

Open Doubles: Derrick Cone/Bernard Savitz d. Simen Postavchuk/Matt Winkler, -14,6,6-5,11.

Over 60 – Final: John Harrington d. Ed Jerome, 5,11,10,4-7, SF: Harrington d. Lev Vays, 6,10,8,7; Jerome d. Roger Baldrner, 9,6,6,5.


U1100 – Final: Mario Lorenco d. Dannin Wu, 5,8,3-7,6; SF: Lorenco d. Mankit Ma, 9,5,10; Wu d. Mirem Lepara, 7-9,9-7,9,8.

U1900 – Final: Song–Han Liu d. Brian Annest, -8,10,5,6,-4,9.

U1750 – Final: Bill Kenig d. Andrew Manginelli, 8,9-5,8,-5,22.

U1600 – Final: Victor Flores d. Andrew Schaad, 5-8,6,-2,10,-7,9,2.

U1450 – Xavier Silveira d. Roger Baldrner, 9,7,5,9,8-8,4,10,6.


Under 16 – Final: Bence Toth d. Allen Lin, 3-0; SF: Toth d. Weitian Zhou, 3-0; Lin d. Brady Knox, 3-0.


Under 12: Adam Jacoby d. David Veillet, 3-0.

U1200 – Final: Aarhi Anand d. Bikramjeet Singh, 3-1; SF: Aman d. Tesilmy Iloh, 3-0; Singh d. Dulkan, n.s.


U1900: Paul Everts d. Allen Lin, n.s.

U1800: Shu Xue d. Damiil Rapoport, 3-1.


U1600: Terry Robinson d. Kevin Johnson, n.s.

U1500: Thomas Ulich d. Joseph Helfand, 3-0.


U1200: Milind Joshi d. Keith Schrock, 3-0.

U1000: Steve McDiarmid d. Leilo Casola, 3-0.

U3000 Doubles: Taja Oladokun/Stefan Mitroi d. Ivan Popov/Allen Lin, n.s.

U2600 Doubles: James Johnson/Keith Robinson d. Terry Robinson/Steve McDiarmid, 3-0.

Michigan Junior Stars Allen Lin, Bence Toth, Donald Hinshaw and Danny Dulkan
The 13th World Veterans Table Tennis Championships were held May 15-20 in Bremen, Germany, three weeks after the World Team Championships. Over 3700 participants from 60 countries competed in this mammoth event, making this tournament the largest ever in the history of Veterans table tennis.

To accommodate the record number of entries, 154 tables were set up in two playing halls. A third hall with 30 practice tables was always crowded with four players on each table doing cross-court drills. Even with the large number of participants, the tournament ran on schedule.

Some well-known former World, European, and World Veterans Champions that played in the tournament were Liang Geliang, Mikiel Applegren, and Wladimir Soloviev. The players were all very friendly and accommodated many requests for photographs and autographs.

Participants were entered into one of eight Veteran age categories (i.e. 40, 50, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80, and 85) for men’s and women’s singles & doubles. The format consisted of one qualifying round robin of four players where the top two finishers moved to the World Championship single elimination rounds, and the bottom two into a single elimination consolation round.

Many of the USA players advanced to the World Championship single elimination round for their events. Although Germany (1600+ players) and Japan (400+ players) won the majority of the medals, USA, with only 31 players, won one Gold and one Silver medal.

The next World Veteran’s Championships will be held in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil in May of 2008.
What a week. The 2006 Clear Channel College Table Tennis Championships showcased an array of talent from beginning to end. It featured veterans such as former U.S. National Champion Eric Owens, Olympic athletes Jasna Reed and Whitney Ping, and rising stars Adam Hugh and Jackie Lee. Also standing out were developing college stars Francois Charvet, Phuong Tran, Tom Yost, and Sabrina Worrell – names that are all too familiar to NCTTA followers and competitors.

It was an event full of both familiarities and surprises. Texas Wesleyan University successfully defended their national Men's Team title, sweeping the event for two consecutive years on their own home turf and three in a row since 2004!

Eric Owens and Jasna Reed joined to win Mixed Doubles, making it the third year in a row for Owens. NCTTA newcomer and Killerspin prodigy Adam Hugh took Owens to a thrilling five-game set in the Men's Singles final, with Owens coming out victorious. But what most fans did not expect to see was the patience and persistent fight in Hughes who had cleaved become a fan favorite after a pragmatic display of passion and drive. Hugh surely has many eventful seasons ahead with Princeton University. Perhaps the most thrilling moment of the entire tournament was when Virginia Tech overcame Texas Wesleyan in Women’s Doubles in the NCTTA Women’s Teams Championship event. Fans cheered, coaches hugged, and teammates celebrated. Play stopped in bordering courts to applaud the sensational effort put forth by the Virginia Tech women.

Joining U.S. College Table Tennis for the 2005-2006 season was the Wesleyan University, University of Southern California, University of Toronto, Stanford University, Ohio State University and last year’s champions, Virginia Tech. One interesting quarterfinal match to note was last year’s Women’s Champions Virginia Tech handing the Texas Wesleyan University Women another 3-2 loss. The Texas Wesleyan University teams are highly respected, but like any other sport events everyone roots for the underdog and on that day the underdog took home the prize, winning the hearts of those watching both in the stands and in other playing courts.

The semifinals saw Stanford University’s trio squeak by University of Southern California’s “Ping Pong Posse” 3-2, while the other semifinal saw University of Toronto defeat last year’s champions Virginia Tech 3-0. The third place match saw Virginia Tech defeat University of Southern California in a close 3-1 match.

The Women’s NCTTA Championship final featured Stanford University, led by Whitney Ping, and University of Toronto, led by Pei Pei Zhang. Notably both women were nominated for NCTTA Women’s Player of the year. Stanford and Toronto split the four singles setting up yet another doubles match that would decide it all. Ping and Feng of Stanford were too much for Toronto’s Zheng and Liu as Stanford University brought home the gold for the 2006 Women’s Clear Channel National Collegiate Table Tennis Championships!

The coed/men’s event saw 23 schools descend upon the Fort Worth, Texas area to play for the National Championships. The draw was split into six groups of three and four, with two teams qualifying for the Championship round. One such upset in the preliminary rounds was from a small Upstate New York school that came into the championships ranked 27th in the country, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, defeating the number one seed in the group and 7th ranked in the nation, University of Virginia. Other smaller upsets came with 20th ranked Florida State University upsetting 14th Rutgers, and 17th ranked University of California Davis upsetting 15th ranked University of Kentucky.
The second day of NCTTA Coed competition featured the top twelve teams playing for the National Championship while the rest played for placement. The top twelve were: Texas Wesleyan, Florida State, Virginia Tech, Illinois Institute of Technology, RPI, UC San Diego, University of Toronto, University of Southern California, UC Davis, University of Southern Mississippi, Ohio State and Princeton University.

The quarterfinals saw expected wins and curious upsets. The top two seeds eased into the semifinals with relative ease. Texas Wesleyan men ended Virginia Tech’s run, 3-0, while Princeton won by the same score over Ohio State University. The 5th ranked team in the nation, USC, rolled out somewhat of an upset by defeating the 4th ranked team in the nation, The University of Toronto, 3-2. Completing the day of upsets was 27th ranked school in the nation, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI), defeating the 23rd ranked University of California-San Diego squad 3-2 to advance to the semifinals. RPI would win NCTTA’s Superlative Award as most improved team of the year.

The semifinals represented a cross section of the College Table Tennis landscape, featuring the top two powerhouses of College Table Tennis, the small “Cinderella” school and of course the colorful Ping Pong Posse of USC. In semifinal #1, Texas Wesleyan University faced favorite underdog school RPI, and promptly ended their run at the nationals 3-0. A vicious dogfight emerged in the other semifinal, between the powerhouses of Princeton led by Adam Hugh and the Ping Pong Posse of USC – with the Princeton doubles team outlasting USC’s doubles team.

The final of the NCTTA Championships featured the number one and two rated schools in the country. A veritable David and Goliath presentation of U.S. College Table Tennis was to be seen. The NCTTA format has four singles and one doubles, but in the championships the fourth singles and doubles will not be played if the score is 3-0. Princeton would look to end TWU’s run at the National Championships, seating Adam Hugh versus TWU’s Ludovic Gombos. Hugh previously defeating Gombos in the ACUI semi-finals, but would not get to repeat his endeavor as Gombos came out firing and took Hugh down. Hugh’s loss seem to punch the wind out of Princeton’s sails as TWU took the championship as Eric Owens and Courtney Roberts defeated Princeton’s number two and three players in straight sets, thus accomplishing what modern sport enthusiasts call a “threepeat.”

The Texas Wesleyan University Men/Coed team won the NCTTA National Championships for the third year in a row, establishing themselves once again as the school to beat and giving the College Table Tennis world yet another year to regroup and come back and defeat the “New York Yankees” of College Table Tennis. Congratulations to the Texas Wesleyan Men’s team on a job well done! The future of college table tennis looks bright as these players continue to aspire to their respective long-term table tennis goals.

We would also like to take the chance to thank our valued sponsors Newgy Industries and USAATT for continually supporting ACUI and its mission. The NCTTA Championships were once again sponsored by Clear Channel Communications as title sponsor of the event, recognizing Rockstar Games, Newgy Industries and The Dallas Fort Worth Star Telegram for their additional valued contribution.

NCTTA Men’s Team Championships


NCTTA Women’s Team Championships
Final: Stanford University d. University of Toronto, 3-2; 3rd: Virginia Tech d. University of Southern California 3-0.


ACUI Results

Men’s Singles – Final: Eric Owens (Texas Wesleyan) d. Adam Hugh (Princeton), 9,-9,3-8,7 3rd: Ludovic Gombos (Texas Wesleyan) d. Carlos Chiu (Texas Wesleyan), -11,6,5,11; SF: Owens d. Chiu, 10,9,7; Hugh d. Gombos, -6,9,-6,8; QF: Owens d. Dinko Kranjac, 2,6,5; Hugh d. Courtney Roberts, 10,-8,4,6; Chiu d. Abdul Rahman, 8,8,2; Gombos d. Augusto Bertone, -7,9,13,11.

Women’s Singles – Final: Jasna Reed (Texas Wesleyan) d. Jackie Lee (University of California-Berkeley), 7,-10,6,7, 3rd: Phuong Linh Le Tran (University of Houston) d. Whitney Ping (Stanford), 8,10,6; SF: Reed d. Ping, 7,6,-13,7; Lee d. Tran, 9,-8,10,9; QF: Reed d. Kyna Fong, 5,7,1; Ping d. Marisol Delzo, 5,8,5; Tran d. Biba Golic, -6,9,-7,8,8; Lee d. Virginie Degraeve, 9,7,8,0.

Men’s Doubles
1st: Eric Owens/Courtney Roberts (Texas Wesleyan University/UC Berkeley)
2nd: Ludovic Gombos/Dinko Kranjac (Texas Wesleyan University)

Women’s Doubles
1st: Jasna Reed/Jasna Reed (Texas Wesleyan University)
2nd: Whitney Ping/Kyna Fong (Stanford University)

Mixed Doubles
1st: Eric Owens/Jasna Reed (Texas Wesleyan University)
2nd: Imran Pariyani/Jackie Lee (University of Southern California/UC Berkeley)

Men’s Consolation Singles
1st: Imran Pariyani (University of Southern California)
2nd: Lei Qian (Illinois Institute of Technology)
3rd: Raja Vengala (Southern Illinois University)

Women’s Consolation Singles
1st: Qualei Fang (Virginia Tech)
2nd: Supanida Arayametee (University of Wisconsin)
3rd: Helen Ni (University of Maryland)

College Paralympics Singles
1st: Ed Levy; 2nd: Pam Fontaine; 3rd: Robert Gouge; 4th: Nancy Bredenthall
A wesome isn’t that a California word? "Awesome." If you were impersonating a California accent, the Valley Girl Stoner culture that stereotypes California in movies and on TV, "Awesome" would be sprinkled throughout your speech. But "awesome" has another, older meaning, one associated with incredible mountain ranges and deep gorges, breath-taking sights and earth-moving events, "awesome" as in "filled with awe and admiration." So it is that second, older meaning of "Awesome" that must be applied to the Butterfly San Diego Open.

Anticipation of this tournament was very high, as it sported one of the strongest Open Singles Draws in recent memory for a domestic four-star event. Three of the Top 200 players in the world were present to contest the title, including the highest rated Canadian player, Wilson Zhang, ranked #144 on the planet. Stefan Feth, newly arrived from Germany, sported an equal rating to Wilson’s #2714 (US). The world-ranked #191 and fans were keen to see what would happen when these two met for the first time in competition. Then, to add fuel to the fire, these two were eclipsed in the seeding by Fan Guoliang of Spain, World #110, who recently had defeated Damien Eloi of France, currently #48 in the World! Whomever won this title, we were confident that these three players, joined by Barney J. Reed, Pierre-Luc Hinse, Crystal Huang and Junior phenom Jeff Huang, were bound to give us a real show.

You couldn’t ask for a better setting for this unfolding drama! Butterfly was an excellent sponsor, and Greg Cox and his associates at Martin-Kilpatrick were responsive to our needs and supportive of the players. San Diego is a beautiful city and Balboa Park is a crown jewel of that city. The Balboa Park Activity Center was designed with racquet sports in mind and this tournament justified that effort! With 200-participants, fabulous play at all levels, SDTTA’s active and passionate support, and semifinals and finals witnessed by six packed bleachers of stumping, screaming, cheering fans, the Butterfly San Diego Open was as much fun as I can recall ever having! The final two matches are likely to be talked about for years to come for their excellence and drama.

But lest I jump ahead o the narrative thread, let’s recap the action in the "Undercard" first. Special mention must be made of the exceptional field in Women’s Singles. A larger than usual field contested the event, all eager to try themselves against Li Yuanuan, fiancée of the USC Ping Pong Posse member. Li is both project IT and one of the four highest rated players at the tournament, although she declined to enter the Open category. Li’s polished and unflappable, Li’s skill on both wings won her many admirers and established a goal for the other women in their future training.

The Sol Feingold Memorial Senior Events created great joy for the players, and memorable matches for these lifetime rivals. In the Over 40, Guillermo Munoz defeated Dr. Tuan Le for the honors, in the Over 50 Lon Dean had sweet victory over Rodel Valdoria in a hard-fought 4-2 decision. In the Over 60 Bill Ukapatayakul bested Bill Ryan 8, 13, 7, 9. Ironically, those two finalists are slated to be Doubles Partners at the upcoming U.S. Open in Charlotte, NC!

Whenever Tuan Le is present, you can count on a cheerful attitude and a consistent effort. He did nothing to damage that image by coming second in both the Over 40, and as runner-up to Shasmin Shodhan in the U-2375. Impressive as well was young Mr. Jose Lujan. This dynamic youngster showed stamina and spirit in his performances, placing second in the U-2000 to Jesus Sanchez and first in the U-2125 over Patrick Wu. Jose has no less successful in the Ying-Lo Junior competitions, where he finished second to Jeff Huang in the U-16 Boys, and first in the U-18, edging out Mark Wei.

The Ying-Lo Junior events are designed to maximize play for the youngsters and serve as pretty good indicators of progress within the peer groups. Here, it was Eric Shahnavazi winning the Boys’ U-10 with Nathaniel Chu second. For Girls’ Under 10, Erica Wu held the top spot and Isabel Chu was runner-up. Girls’ Under 12 was Tammy Gu’s spotlight, defeating Monica Serrano at deuce in the sixth game. John James Alto showed his continued ability to capture events by taking Boys’ U-16 honors, shading Ignacio Ascencio. Monica Serrano and Natalie Sun finished 1 and 2 in the Girls’ U-16; Jeff Huang was the winner in Boys’ U-16 and gave a wonderful effort in finishing second to Canada’s Pierre-Luc Hinse in the U-22. Sara Fu eclipsed Bruna Valsic in Girls’ U-22 and Tammy Gu grabbed a second title in Girls’ U-18, with Christiana Davita the runner-up.

It’s always gratifying to see a player reach new personal heights, pushing themselves to achievements they had not realized they could reach. So here’s a tip of the NATT hat to the incomparable, Stefan Feth for reaching the final of the Boys’ U-1250 to Jesus Sanchez and first in the U-1250 over Patrick Wu. Jose has no less successful in the Ying-Lo Junior competitions, where he finished second to Jeff Huang in the U-16 Boys, and first in the U-18, edging out Mark Wei.

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as Fan, a pips-out penholder with a reverse penhold backhand loop, takes an entirely different tack than I had expected! Instead of a full-on smashing attack, Fan is playing a “touch game”! This is absolutely awesome in its own way, and I struggle to understand how it is working. Is Pierre-Luc retreating too quickly from the table? Fan pulls him in and out, side to side to side! This never seems to be an opening, a chance to attack for Hinse. It’s an energy-saving tactic for Fan, firmly in control and never doing more than he has to to win the point. Holding Hinse to 6,8,9,8, Fan puts on a clinic and reaches the Championship match.

Wilson Zhang vs. Stefan Feth
This is not TV wrestling, it’s an unscripted athletic competition. But you couldn’t have asked any better of it! A much anticipated match-up of U.S. rated 2714 Stefan Feth against Canada’s top player, Wilson Zhang, also rated 2714! Both of these gentlemen have played NATT events before, but this is the first time they’ve met. Nearly 400 spectators are eagerly waiting to see how this plays out, and the stakes are steep. Semifinalists at the Butterfly San Diego Open are slated for $300 paydays but a coin for the Final. Only five matches are in progress on the “other” tables as Umpire Saul Weinstein tosses the coin for the Final.

Final
Fan Guoliang vs. Stefan Feth
Well, take a deep breath. After that incredible Feth/Zhang semifinal, there can’t be any more fireworks... can there? The NATT schedule has worked well in clearing the tournament players to join the throng of eager spectators for the showdown. Only five matches are in progress on the “other” tables as Umpire Saul Weinstein tosses the coin for the Final.

This is a completely different Fan than we saw in the semis with Hinse! His game now is on display against an adrenaline-pumping Stefan Feth. It’s flat-out attack on Fan’s part, smashing and hitting in a tight seascape of exchanges. Fan takes game one 17-15! Now there is no doubt that we are in for a Final of spectacular dimensions. Feth even's the count, 12-10 in the second. Back and forth the two men battle! There will be no dramatic comebacks here and nothing to hold back on as the two finalists trade barrage after barrage and game after game. 11-8, for Fan, 11-9, for Feth. 11-9, for Fan. You’ve had your chance to improve Feth’s game, and you can’t possibly do better. Feth gets an inch... this... my friends, is great stuff! Feth turns up the heat, and Fan seems to be flagging and 11-5 for Feth in the sixth game... yes, it’s three all! Well, with a setup like that, could it fail to be 9-all in the seventh game of the Final? Because that’s where they found themselves. After a solid hour of beautiful struggle and wonderful play, two points will decide which player wins the title and gets $500, and who goes home with $700 and regret. “It seemed to me a shame,” Stefan tells me later, “that one of us had to lose. I enjoyed the match so much, that I thought, at nine-all, we have both won here today.” It’s not a thought that interfered with his performance at that moment, because with a whistling backhand loop winner cross-court, Stefan

Feth wins game seven, 11-9, and the title Butterfly San Diego Open Champion! The crowd, quite frankly, goes bananas, and showers both players with love as they shake hands. What an amazing tournament we were treated to!

Stefan notes with pride that in his march from the Quarters to the Title, he defeated, in succession, the fourth, second and first seeds in the Open Singles draw. How does he feel about his upset victories over the World’s #144 and #110 men? “That’s the way it is in table tennis today. Anyone ranked between #100 and #30 is clearly capable of beating anyone else. I think it is more competitive now than it has ever been.” Personally, I’d be hard-pressed to think of better competitors, better sportsman, and better people than we had the honor of meeting in San Diego.

The crowd is buzzing and smiling, laughing and appreciative of the dramatic conclusion as they file out of the Balboa Park Activity Center. As the NATT staff finishes their work, we look back in gratitude to our sponsor, Butterfly, Ref Linda Hsing and her umpiring crew, the host club SDTTA, the San Diego Parks and Recreation Department, the staff of the Activity Center and most of all to the players, coaches, parents, spectators, fans and friends who made this one of the best tournament experiences I’ve had. In a word, awesome, dude!
Every tournament has its own personality and its own character. Here, there was a clear issue of quality vs. quantity, a series of closely contested matches in the Championship event, and the most dramatic outcomes of the Tour this year in the Single Elimination matches that led to the title.

It’s not possible to describe the turnout as anything but disappointing. Despite keeping the event registration open until two days prior to competition, only slightly more than one hundred players entered. Those who did attend expressed surprise at this, but as to why it happened, only those who elected not to participate can answer. Several people wondered if the Passover/Easter holiday played part in the turnout, only slightly more than one.

The schedule in the region was the explanation. What wondered if the Passover/Easter holiday played part in the turnout, only slightly more than one.

Relieved of any crowding issues, the tournament used only 16 tables, allowing spacious court sizes and preventing any delays from forming. Several events, like women’s singles and the Over 60 and Over 50 events were cancelled due to lack of players. At the upper end of the field, however, there was deep and rich talent. The New York and New Jersey region sent us Paul David, De Tran, David Zhuang, Shao Yu and the remarkable Wang Chen.

Maryland luminaries Cheng Yinghua, Han Xiao, Richard Lee and Khaleel Asgarali counter-balanced them to renew a regional rivalry that is one of the nation’s best.

Best performances need to be mentioned for the HSU family, no relation to the tournament director. In the U-950, John Hsu was runner-up to Hans Hsu, while Nathan managed to take second place in both the U-800/Unrated (Vikram Raja being first) and the U-1100 where Zhao Yihong came back from a 0-2 deficit to earn the honors.

The Ying-Lo Junior competitions saw a fine performance by Allen Wang, winner of both the Boys’ Under 10 and the Under 13, over Erick Shahnazari and Jimmy Zhan, respectively. Kevin Lee outpaced Charlie Sun in the Boys’ U-16, while Isabella Chen defeated Janice Lan for Girls’ U-16 laurels. Joseph Wang edged out Thomas An for Boys’ U-18, while the Boys’ U-22 was a clean win for Raghuram Nadmichet, Alden Fan finishing a worthy second.

The redoubtable Raymond Chen, who never seems to age, was the U-1550 champion, by virtue of a straight game victory over Paul Armentano. If Raymond could bottle and sell the secret of his healthy longevity, there would be plenty of takers! Edmund Mercier of Wisconsin made the trip to Maryland worthwhile, taking back trophies for his victory in the U-1700 over Lan Jianqing, and finishing second in the U-1850 to the hard-hitting David Jarrin.

Charlie Sun solidified his rating position by winning the U-2000 in four games against July Waters, the USATT Iron Man award winner. Admiration must also be extended to Nazruddin Asgarali, Khaleel’s father. He turned in one of his best STIGA tour results ever, first by winning the U-2250 over young Peter Li in seven beautiful games, then by attaining victory in the U-2375, besting the skilled chopper, Kuzuyuki Yokoyama (5,1-7, 11-8,8), “My dad plays really well against choppers,” offered the proud son. Dad plays really well against his age group, too. In the Sol Feingold Memorial Over 40, Nazruddin defeated Pennsylvania’s John Wetzler before losing to De Tran and finishing second. John had managed consecutive wins against De, but De Tran turned the tables this time in capturing his title.

Paul David met Christopher Teile in the U-2500 Final. Paul entered with a straight game win over three-balling Richard Lee, while Teile played a wonderful match with Yokoyama, filled with lengthy points and marvelous rallies.

Teile’s blocking skills couldn’t contain Paul’s withering forehand attack, and Paul David carried away the larger check, by scores of 9, 7, 8 and 6.

Open Singles: Quarterfinals
David Zhuang vs. De Tran
De’s a worthy player, but David’s a legend, and deservedly so. 11-4, 11-6, 11-6, then 16-14, David advances to the semifinals and De collects $125.

Han Xiao vs. Wang Chen
This is the consequence of coming second in his group; Han has to face the 2671-rated Wang Chen. But this match is a shocker! An impressive display of both power and command for Han, and he leaves Wang Chen behind in the Quarterfinals, 9,7,9,5. Wang Chen accepts the last two on David’s! Spectacular! Deuce in the final game, and I think to myself that it’s a shame Han must lose, he’s played so well. I could have saved the sympathy. Han wins four straight points, the first two on his serve and the last two on David’s! Spectacular! Deuce in the seventh of this nail biter! Both players have gone all out, David’s sparring almost-got-their attempt to return a net ball stands out in my memory. But hometown fans have joy today! After the big comeback, Han caps the seventh game, 15-13 for his victory.

Cheng Yinghua vs. Shao Yu
Shao Yu comes out of the box firing! It is possible that Shao has picked up something from Khaleel’s match? Spotted a weakness? As play continues, I look for patterns. Two nothing Shao Yu leads! 11-3, 11-5, this is downright amazing! I do see a shift. Unlike the match with Khaleel, Cheng cannot control the point, the choices and angles against Shao Yu today. Gunning straight forehands at each other also seems to play into Shao Yu’s hands. He is playing tenaciously despite trailing so quickly. Cheng is not grim death however. His sense of playfulness is evident when Shao sends him scurrying from corner to corner in a long rally, but after winning the point, Cheng stops, bends over, back up, bends over, back up, and makes the “fish blowing bubbles” face that signals how taxing this is. It is a joke, of course. He may be 48, but he is as fit as you please! Cheng’s
Championship Match
Cheng Yinghua vs. Han Xiao

After all that, we have half an hour for the speculation to build. This match pits master vs. student. Cheng has been Han’s principal coach for over a decade. One amazing thing I see during play is that despite all the times Han has seen Cheng serve, he can still be fooled by the man’s service game. I imagine there can’t be any surprises between these two, and no doubt Cheng holds a psychological edge. Points are well played, but the conclusion seems pre-ordained. 11-6, 11-9, 11-9, 12-10, Cheng Yinghua is the 2006 Matthew J. Murad Memorial Open Champion!

Ronald and Gloria Murad, parents of Matthew, an MDTTC member who tragically died in an auto accident only hours after the 1999 Teams Championship, stand with our finalists. Ronald and Gloria Murad have supported this tournament for six years in memory of their son. In their home is a trophy, a large beautiful loving cup on a wooden base. On that trophy is a plaque, with the names of our previous Champions. There you will find David Zhuang’s name, twice. Fan Yi Yong’s name, twice. And there is Thomas Keinath, the wonderful German Bundesliga star. But none of this seems to mean as much as when this year’s champion, former Player of the Year, former Coach of the Year, U.S. Men’s Singles Champion and U.S. Olympian Cheng Yinghua turns to Matt’s parents and says “I knew your son. He was my student. He was a good boy.”

It’s moments like that that justify every effort made by NATT staff, our Ref, Terri Lee Bell, and the exertions of our participants. Thanks to all for their help and participation in memorializing our friend, Matthew, and to our players for a wonderful competition. See you at the next NATT event!
Virginia Open
Charlottesville, VA • April 29, 2006
By David Del Vecchio

The end of April brought over 80 table tennis players from around the mid-Atlantic to the picturesque grounds of the University of Virginia for the 2006 Virginia Open. The tournament was hosted by the UVA Table Tennis Club with support from the Charlottesville Table Tennis Club and several local companies. Charlottesville has a surprisingly active table tennis community for a town of its size and was delighted to have the largest-in-state Virginia Open tournament for the second straight year. Participants from a wide range of age and skill levels enjoyed the beautiful facilities of the University's Aquatic and Fitness Center which allowed for 17 generously spaced tables on wood floors in the well-lit venue. Despite window shades, the setting sun did create some blinding, "Where is the ball?" moments on a few tables, but otherwise the playing conditions were quite good (even the floors were well-cleaned, obviating the tableside need for the ever-popular moistened shoe rag).

The absence of any overwhelming favorites in the field meant that several events were closely contested. Joseph Wang of Gaithersburg, MD started the day off strong, beating Daniel Le of Fairfax, VA to win the U2400 event in a tough four games. Joseph had his hands full in the U2200 event, however, losing in five to Joe Griffis, a tenacious blocker from Richmond, VA. Joe Griffis also figured strongly in the Open event, eventually bowing out in the semifinals, but he still had enough stamina to defeat pips-out hitter Simon Brain (North Carolina) for the Over 40 title. Interestingly, the other Open semifinal was a Joseph Wang/Daniel Le rematch. Joseph Wang had dropped out of the Under 18 event to focus on the Open and as expected still had plenty of energy for Daniel Le's chopping and counter-looping game. But apparently Daniel Le had learned something from the earlier encounter as this time the chopper came out on top in five games.

Shankaren won all his matches in straight sets although losses to Seemiller and Cochran. The crowd-pleasing match was easily the five-set, multiduce battle between Shankaren and Mark Nordby, with Shankaren winning by a hair at 11-11, 9-11, 9-11, 11-10, 11-9.

Open Champion Dan Seemiller receives prize money - cash! - from Tournament Director John Dichiario.

Wisconsin State Championship
Shorewood, WI • April 22, 2006
By Tournament Director Linda Leaf

The Shorewood Table Tennis Club (www.shorewoodttc.org), located in Shorewood, Wisconsin, just north of Milwaukee, sponsored the first state championship tournament in fifteen years. 70 players from all over the State participated, eager to meet and compete.

USATT membership and statewide player enthusiasm were substantially increased. The Shorewood TTC is dedicated to promoting the sport of table tennis and is already planning for next year's championship event in April, 2007.

We would like to thank the Shorewood School District: Recreation Department for their continued cooperation.

Open Singles: 1st Aaron Avery; 2nd Andrew Knips; 3rd Zorigt Radnaasaa; 4th John Winze.


Women: 1st Supanida Arayamee; 2nd Carole Mueller; 3rd Linda Leaf; 4th Sue LeVine.

Seniors: 1st Tom Running; 2nd Dennis Lange; 3rd Dan Winze; 4th Dick Peregrine.

Youth: 1st Vivek Ramakrishnan; 2nd Randy Yocum, Jr.; 3rd Kevin Xie; 4th Yee Wang.

U1800: 1st Long Le; 2nd Dick Peregrine; 3rd Jim Weiland; 4th John Winze.

U1400: 1st Brett Ogorzalek; 2nd Elroy Rasmussen; 3rd TJ Wang; 4th Vivek Ramakrishnan.
Fourth Annual Utah Valley Open
Pleasant Grove, UT • April 7-8, 2006 • By John P. Pratt

The Fourth Annual Utah Valley Open Table Tennis Tournament was sponsored jointly by Pleasant Grove City Recreation and the Timpanogos Table Tennis Club. We are very grateful to Pleasant Grove City for providing the gym free of charge, and for paying half of the cost of the awards medals.

Two new events were added this year, Over 70 Singles and Class A Doubles, making fifteen events on seven tables in just one day, from 9:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. It is the only tournament in Utah with an event for Women, Youth, and Mixed Doubles.

One innovation this year was that Olympic style medals were given for Gold, Silver and Bronze, rather than trophies for only first and second place. Moreover, the medals for all of the morning events were engraved with the names of the winners during the afternoon events, and then presented to the winners. The medals from afternoon events were also engraved after the tournament for the local contestants.

Open Singles: 1st Byron Davis; 2nd Andy Leung; 3rd Batchimieg (Meg) Tsedenbal; 4th Jeff St. Clair.

Open Doubles: 1st Bernie Ratcliff/Nathan Reeve; 2nd Batchimieg (Meg) Tsedenbal/Sami Kergaye; 3rd Byron & Carol Davis.

Mixed Doubles: 1st Byron/Carol Davis; 2nd Batchimieg (Meg) Tsedenbal/ Matt Heaton; 3rd Tom & Diane Hale.

Women: 1st Batchimieg (Meg) Tsedenbal; 2nd Carol Davis; 3rd Diane Hale.

Age 50-59: 1st Byron Davis; 2nd James Loong; 3rd Jeff St. Clair.

Age 60-69: 1st John Pratt; 2nd Tom Hale; 3rd Craig Zimmerman.

Over 70: 1st Grant Misbach; 2nd Merrill Newren.

18 & Under: 1st Tyler Loong; 2nd Spencer Loong; 3rd Benjamin Wing.


Class A Doubles: 1st Sean Guo/Tom Hale; 2nd Grant & Matt Misbach; 3rd James & Tyler Loong.

Class A: 1st Haris Johnsen; 2nd Dan Handy; 3rd Thuan Vuong.

Class B: 1st Rick Heilbut; 2nd Eric Holje; 3rd Nathan Reeve.

Class C: 1st Tyler Loong; 2nd Matt Carlson; 3rd Calvin Petersen.

Class D: 1st Brett Robertson; 2nd Matt Smith; 3rd Nathan Handy.

Butterfly MDTTC April Open
Gaithersburg, MD • April 1-2, 2006 • By Wei Xiao

The April Open at the Maryland Table Tennis Center saw players of all different levels once again vying for titles in eight events. In the open, the usually reliable Lixin Lang (2150) fell in consecutive matches to two junior players, 3-1 to Joseph Wang (2080) in his round robin, then again 3-1 to Reza Ghiasi (2154) in the quarterfinals. Reza found himself quickly down 3-0 to fellow Maryland junior Peter Li (2197) in the semifinals before fighting back to win the next two games at 6 and 9, only to stop down in the final game, 11-6. The final was a repeat of the previous Maryland Open, with Peter Li challenging top seed Han Xiao (2571). Han again won 4-0, meeting resistance in the final two games but not quite enough to drop a Maine.

In the Under 2200 event Kevin Ma (1880), who had been playing well throughout the tournament but had yet to pull off an upset, finally won his goal thanks to Joseph Wang. However, Kevin could not keep his momentum going, and lost in the quarterfinals to Mark Berg (1924). The final was played between the top two seeds, Peter Li and Lixin Lang, with Peter coming away with a comfortable 3-0 victory.

One other notable mention during the tournament was that the finals of the Under 1850 and Under 1600 events were identical. In both events John Hopkins college Student Frank Lee (1570) was able to overcome local junior Carson Truong (1429) in the championship match to win the trophy. Carson had beaten Frank earlier in the Under 1850 preliminary RR. The Under 1100 final was between JHU club players, with Abhishek Gupta winning over Matthew Sedlock in five games.

Congratulations to all our winners, and thanks to all our participants for making the tournament a success once again.

Open – Final: Han Xiao d. Peter Li, 3,3,8,9; SF: Xiao & Hiep Tran, 4,4,5,7; Li d. Reza Ghiasi, 8,7,9,-6,9; QF: Tran d. Joseph Wang, 5,-7,7,8; Ghiasi d. Lixin Lang, 5,6,-6,10; Li d. Kevin Ma, 8,5,7; Xiao-bye.

U2200 – Final: Peter Li d. Lixin Lang, 3,8,6; SF: Li d. Joseph Wang, 8,9,6,7,3; Lang d. Mark Berg, 5,4,1.

U2050 – Final: Charlie Sun d. Mark Berg, 10,11,7; SF: Sun d. Jimmy Pappadeas, 4,3,8,7; Berg d. Ho Yon Kim, 9,8,12.

U1900 Final RR: 1st Bernard Nkoume, 4-0; 2nd Jimmy Pappadeas, 3-1.

U1850: Frank Lee d. Carson Truong, 14,-5,14,8.


U1350: Daniel Kokotov d. Paul Amebrante, 4,6,10.

U1100: Abhishek Gupta d. Matthew Sedlock, 9,-8,8,9,10.

USA TABLE TENNIS MAGAZINE • July/August 2006
North American Championships

Rochester, MN • May 12-13, 2006 • By Lily Yip, USA Junior Girls’ Coach

The 2006 North American Championships were held in the scenic North Midwestern city of Rochester, Minnesota on May 12-13. Rochester is a farm city and adjacent to Canada, our neighbor to the north. Stephanie Shih said that it is somewhere in the middle of nowhere, but I like the beautiful farm scenery that reminds me of my village in China.

As usual, Canada brought a strong team of players to the competition and they “came ready to play.” Bence Csaba won the Men’s Singles and Doubles Title.

Fortunately we had the former World Team Champion Wang Chen on the USA Women’s Team, and as expected she won Women’s Singles. Both Bence Csaba and Wang Chen qualified for the 2006 World Cup.

Our juniors fought very hard. Adam Hugh won the Junior Boys’ Singles title. Trevor Runyan finished second, defeating Canadian #1 Qian Shen. The Junior Boys’ Team defeated the Canadian Team to qualify for the World Junior Championships in Egypt.

Our junior girls did very well even though we lost to the Canadian Team (3-1). In Junior Girls’ Singles, Judy Hugh lost to Zhang Mo in the final, but defeated Zhang Mo in Women’s Singles. The Cadet Girls’ final was between two USA players and was won by Olena Sowers over Ariel Hsing.

Congratulations to all the winners for your excellent play. Keep up your hard work!

*Men’s Singles – Final: Bence Csaba (CAN)*
D. Mark Hatzinski (USA), 7,9,4,8,10, SF: Csaba d. Pradeeban Peter-Paul (CAN), 7,5,8,7, Hazinski d. Adam Hugh (USA), 11,9,5,10,5.

*Men’s Final Eight Group One: 1st Pradeeban Peter-Paul (CAN), 3-0 (d. Hugh, 3,8,6,4,6,7; d. Dubina, 7,4,5,6; d. Hince, 6,3,8,10,13,6,4); 2nd Adam Hugh (USA), 2-1 (d. Dubina, 9,4,5,9,11,11; d. Hince, -5,-10,9,11,7,7); 3rd Pierre-Luc Hince (CAN), 1,2 (d. Dubina, 9,10,10,3); 4th Samson Dubina (USA), 0,3.

*Men’s Final Eight Group Two: 1st Mark Hatzinski (USA), 2-1 (d. Csaba, 9,10,6,7,6,11,6; d. Shen, 9,10,6,4,7,7); 2nd Bence Csaba (CAN), 2-1 (d. Shen, 8,7,7,8,11; d. Kamkar-Parsi, -5,1,9,10,9,8); 3rd Qiang Shen (CAN), 1-2 (d. Kamkar-Parsi, -10,9,9,3,10,11); 4th Homayoun Kamkar-Parsi (CAN), 1-2 (d. Mark Hatzinski, 12,4,4,9,9,4,5).

**Women’s Singles – Final: Wang Chen (USA)**
D. Zhang Mo (CAN), 5,10,10,7; SF: Wang d. Huang Yao (CAN), 10,6,6,9,9; Zhang d. Sara Yuen (CAN), 11,9,5,7,10.

*Women’s Final Eight Group One: 1st Zhang Mo (CAN), 2-1 (d. Huang, 9,8,9,5,5; d. Li, 3,6,7,6); 2nd Huang Yao (CAN), 2-1 (d. Li, 9,5,8,9,13,8; d. Hugh, 7,8,10,6,8,10); 3rd Nan Li (USA), 1-2 (d. Hugh, -7,8,5,9,9); 4th Judy Hugh (USA), 1-2 (d. Zhang, -6,9,10,1-6,9,7).

*Women’s Final Eight Group Two: 1st Wang Chen (USA), 3-0 (d. Yuen, -9,9,9,9,9; d. Chiu, 6,5,7,2,2; d. Wei, 6,5,5,4); 2nd Sara Yuen (CAN), 2-1 (d. Chiu, 5,4,6,7,13,7,7; d. Wei, 8,9,4,7,8); 3rd Wennin Chiu (CAN), 1-2 (d. Wei, 7,8,-3,10); 4th Barbara Wei (USA), 0,3.

*Men’s Doubles – Final: Bence Csaba/Qiang Shen (CAN) d. Adam Hugh/John Leach (USA), 2,8,10,11,11; SF: Csaba/Shen d. Xavier Thieren/Pierre-Luc Hince (CAN), 4,5,4; Hugh/Leach d. Pradeeban Peter-Paul/Homayoun Kamkar-Parsi (CAN), 5,8,13,13.

*Women’s Doubles – Final: Zhang Mo/Shirley Yan (CAN) d. Alex Yan (USA), 7,5,8,10; SF: Zhang/Yan d. Stephanie Shih/Barbara Wei (USA), 2,6,7; Hugh/Fong d. Tang Qi/Marie-Andree Levesque (CAN), 3,1,8.

*Junior Boys’ Final: Zhang Mo/Brandon Fong (USA), 4,6,10,8,9; SF: Zhang d. Shirley Yan (CAN), 4,5,4; Hugh d. Atha Fong (USA), 9,7,9,5,2.

*Junior Girls’ Final: Zhang Mo/Shirley Yan (CAN) d. Judy Hugh/Atha Fong (USA), 9,8,8,14; SF: Zhang/Yan d. Stephanie Shih/Barbara Wei (USA), 2,6,7,7; Hugh/Fong d. Tang Qi/Marie-Andree Levesque (CAN), 3,1,8.

*Cadet Girls’ Final RR: 1st Olena Sowers (USA), 5,2; 2nd Ariel Hsing (USA), 4,1; 3rd Carmen Lee (CAN), 3,2; 4th Emmanuel Lavoie (CAN), 2,3.

*Cadet Girls’ Doubles – Final: Carmen Lee/Emmanuel Lavoie (CAN) d. Ariel Hsing/Oleng Sowers (USA), 8,10,4,8,5.

*Junior Boys’ Teams: USA d. Canada, 3-1: Qi Tang (CAN) d. Misha Kazanzev (USA), 4,9,7,9; Adam Hugh (USA) d. Andre Ho (CAN), 9,9,10; Trevor Runyan (USA) d. Bryan Michaud (CAN), 8,8,6; Adam Hugh (USA) d. Qi Tang (CAN), 11,9,10.

*Junior Girls’ Teams: Canada d. USA, 3-1: Qiang Mo (CAN) d. Stephanie Shih (USA), 6,5,9,8,8; Judy Hugh (USA) d. Shirley Yan (CAN), 11,9,8; Qi Tang (CAN) d. Atha Fong (USA), 3,2; Zhang Mo (CAN) d. Judy Hugh (USA), 10,4,8.

Tahl Leibovitz

I win my championships with STIGA!

2005 USOC Paralympic Table Tennis Athlete of the Year
2005 Robo-Pong Open U2500 Champion
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2005 USOC Athlete of the Month Finalist
2005 Para Pan Am Championships Triple Gold Medalist
2005 Most Outstanding Standing Disabled Player
2004 California Open U2500 Champion
2004 Paralympic Games - Bronze Medalist
2003 US Open Paralympic Championships Gold Medalist
2002 US Nationals Men's Doubles Bronze Medalist
2002 US Open Paralympic Singles Champion
2001 Para Pan Am Championship Triple Gold Medalist
2001 Most Outstanding Standing Disabled Player
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2001 US Open Paralympic Singles Champion
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22nd St. Joseph Valley Open
SOUTH BEND, IN • MAY 6-7, 2006 • BY DAN SEEMILLER

The 22nd annual St. Joseph Valley Open was held at Indiana University at South Bend, otherwise known as IUSB. The new student activities center with beautiful wood flooring and 32 barred courts made for the perfect setting for this prestigious tournament. Many thanks to sponsors Newgy Robots, Butterfly, Serido, Inc., Lane Music, Norm Brown and Paddle Palace for their help in making this a quality event.

There were 158 participants entered in the 22 events. In Under-18 Boys, Bang Chao Huang won a 3-1 decision over South Bend’s Joe Cochran. Bang, who was also the #1 seed in Open Singles at 2665, has been training with the Yao family. He has pips out on the backhand and a big forehand loop; quite a rating game for a 17-year-old. Alex Yao dominated the Under 14 event without losing a game, defeating Kenny Xiao 3-0 in the final. Stephen Cochran, who was also the #1 seed in the semi-finals of Under-2500, and lost to John Leach in the Under 2375 final. Tom Yost zipped his way over A.J. Brewer in the Under 2250 final. Tom plays an unusual style where he counters and blocks everything and in the final he never missed a shot.

In the finals, Mark Hazinski defeated his St. Joe Valley title for the third year in a row and 4th overall with a routine 4-0 win over his coach, Dan Seemiller. Hazinski’s power was obvious as Dan had a lot of difficulty with Mark’s opening topspins.

In Women’s Singles, Alicia Burnett won 3-0 over Anna Fita in the final.

In the rating events: Thor Truelson had a couple of good wins over A.J. Brewer and Nick Snider to reach the final of Under 2500. Snider knocked out #2 seed Lukasz Fita in the preliminary stage. Mark Nordby made the semifinals of Under 2500, and lost to John Leach in the Under 2375 final. Tom Yost zipped his way over A.J. Brewer in the Under 2250 final. Tom plays an unusual style where he counters and blocks everything and in the final he never missed a shot.

Mark your calendars for the Nov. 18-19 Highland Open 3-star event. To check out the sites and scenes of this year’s tourney go to our website at www.sbttc.org.

Open Singles – Final: Mark Hazinski d. Dan Seemiller, 4-3, 4-2, 4-0. SF: Hazinski d. Dan Drinici, 8-4, 9-8; Seemiller d. Bang Chao Huang, 4-2, 2-8, 6-4. QF: Hazinski d. Nick Snider, 4-0; Drinici d. Joe Cochran, 4-0; Seemiller d. Lukasz Fita, 4-0; Bang d. A.J. Brewer, 4-1.

Open Doubles: Dan Seemiller/Mark Hazinski d. Bang Chao Huang/Justen Yao, 9-4, 5-8, 11.

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McAfee’s Mechanics:
The Falkenberg, A Great Drill with Infinite Variations
By Richard McAfee, USATT National Coach

There are some drills that should be in everyone’s training program. One of these is often called the “Falkenberg Drill,” named after the famous club of the same name in Sweden where it was popularized, especially by 1971 World Men’s Singles Champion Stellan Bengston.

The basic Falkenberg Drill is quite simple. Your partner (feeder) places two balls to your backhand side and one ball to your forehand side. (See Diagram A.) You make one backhand return, then step around and play a forehand from your backhand side, then move to your right (right-handers) and play a forehand. You should return all your strokes to one location, either the feeder’s backhand or forehand. The feeder normally blocks your topspin returns. The drill should be done at a speed where you can execute all the strokes with at least a 60% success rate. If you fall below this level then slow down the ball feed.

What is great about this drill is that it combines ball control skills, switching between forehand and backhand strokes, along with movement in both directions. It covers three of the most basic moves in table tennis: covering the wide forehand and wide backhand, and stepping around the backhand to use the backhand from the backhand corner. While the basic drill is quite simple it can be greatly expanded as your skills improve. Here are three of my favorite advanced variations:

**Falkenberg with In and Out Movement**

This variation increases the number of strokes in the pattern to five. The feeder places two balls to your backhand side, two to your forehand, and then one to your backhand. (See Diagram B.) You execute the basic Falkenberg drill, and then step back to mid-distance and make one forehand loop and one backhand loop. You then step in and repeat the drill.

**Falkenberg – Inside and Outside Ball Contact**

Advanced players can vary their contact point on the ball to create either right or left sidespin on their returns. They do this by having the end of their racket traveling around the outside (away from you) edge of the ball or by having the end of their racket travel on the inside edge (closest to you) edge of the ball. I often use the Falkenberg drill as a tool to teach this skill. The feeder simply calls out a pattern such as, “inside, inside, outside.” This would mean that the first stroke (the backhand) would be an inside contact, the forehand from the backhand side would be an inside contact and the final stroke (forehand from forehand side) would be an outside contact. After several repetitions, the feeder would then call out a new pattern of three shots. After doing this drill for some time, players find they have almost total ball control and are able to place the ball anywhere on the table from any position.

**Falkenberg with Forehand Decision**

The basic three-shot sequence of the Falkenberg drill is used. However on the third shot (forehand from forehand side) you need to make a quick decision about where to place your return. If the feeder places the ball wide to your forehand, then your return should be wide to the feeder’s forehand, trying to cut the sideline of the table. If the feeder places the third ball to the middle of the table, your return should be toward the feeder’s backhand. (See Diagram C.) The object of this drill is to learn to make quick decisions about ball placement, looking to find the opportunity to attack your opponent’s backhand. This makes a great multi-ball drill.

These are only a few of the many possible variations of this drill. See if you can invent some of your own. The Falkenberg is one of those classic drills that will help you improve many elements of your game and should be a regular part of your practice routine.
Women: Alicia Burnett d. Anna Fita, 3-5,7.
Over 40 – Final: Dan Seemiller d. Spencer Minh Lam, 8,7,6; SF: Seemiller d. Robert Hui Luo, 6,7,4; Lam d. Mitch Seidenfeld, 8,7,7.
Over 50 – Final: Dan Seemiller d. Tadao Inui, 6,1,2; SF: Seemiller d. Valeri Khodyrjev, 7,8,7; Inui d. Tim Dannenfelser, -9,4,13,8.
Under 18 – Final: Bang Chao Huang d. Joe Cochran, 4,9,5,6; SF: Bang d. John Leach, 5,6,8; Cochran d. Justen Yao, 7,7,9,4.
U2500 – Final: Dan Seemiller d. Thor Truelson, 8,6,4; SF: Seemiller d. Mark Nordby, 6,9,8; Truelson d. Nick Snider, 14,10,1,2,7.
U2375 – Final: John Leach d. Mark Nordby, 4,10,4; SF: Leach d. Spencer Lam, 7,12,11; Nordby d. A.J. Brewer, -11,5,-15,5,12.
U2125 – Final: Lanny Hewitt d. Daniel Yeung, 6,7,13,3,8; SF: Hewitt d. Aaron Avery, 10,6,8; Yeung d. Leon Li, 9,7,9,6.
U2000 – Final: Pawel Gluchowski d. Tadao Inui, -8,9,6,9,8; SF: Gluchowski d. Jiawen Bian, 9,-9,-6,10,0; Inui d. Don Hinshaw, 7,9,9.
U1875: Tom Dannenfelser d. Bence Toth, 6,3,3.
U1750: William Thompson d. Dan Kennedy, 8,8,9,6.
U1625: Jun Galban d. George Moses, 4,6,8.
U1500: Joe Hollingsworth d. Jeff Smart, 7,5,10,9,9.
U1350: Jeff Schiff d. Roop Guru, 12,7,9.
U1200 Final RR: 1st Eric Arnett, 2-0; 2nd Matt Fullen 1-1.
U1000: Anup Parikh d. Orlan Smith, 4,-7,9,7.
U800 Final RR: 1st Rick Dennie, 5-0; 2nd JoAnne Tressler, 4-1.
U4000 Doubles: Joe Cochran/Andre Khailo d. Mark Nordby/Wayne Luan, 8,-8,6,0.
U3500 Doubles: Anna & Lukasz Fita d. Al King/ Bob Douglass, 8,10,11.

Scenes from the St. Joseph Valley Open
Photos by Jason Denman ©2006
Interview with Jasna Reed, USA National Women's Singles Champion

By Larry Hodges

Major Titles
- 1988-92: 20+time Yugoslavian Champion in Singles, Doubles & Team events
- 1988 Olympic Bronze Medal - Women’s Doubles (Seoul)
- 1988 European gold - Mixed Doubles with Iljia Lupulesku (Paris)
- 1991 two Gold’s - Women’s Singles & Doubles at Mediterranean Games (Athens)
- 1991 two Gold’s - Women’s Singles & Doubles at Balkan Games
- 1992 European gold - Women’s Doubles with Gordana Perkucin (Stuttgart)
- 2001 North American Champion - Women’s Doubles
- 2001 & 2002 USA National Champion - Women’s Doubles
- 2002 Collegiate Women’s Singles, Doubles and Mixed Doubles Champion
- 2003 Gold Medal - Pan-American Games - Women’s Doubles
- 2003 USA National Women’s Singles, Doubles, Mixed Doubles Champion
- 2004 USA National Women’s Singles and Mixed Doubles Runner-up
- 2005 USA National Women’s Singles Champion
- 2005 North American Women’s Singles Runner-up, Women’s Doubles Champion
- 2006 Collegiate Women’s Singles, Doubles and Mixed Doubles Champion
- Member, 2000 & 2004 USA Olympic Team (#1 at 2004 USA and North American Trials)
- Member, USA National Team, 2000 to present
- Certified by USATT as a National Coach

Age: You are so right!!!
Height/weight: 5'/7.120
Coaches: Fikret Fazlic, Davoin Kvesic, Zlatko Novakovic
(longest and most influential), Bela Sel, John Bosika, Doru Gheorghe
Sponsors: Nittaku & Paddle Palace
Blade: Nittaku, Jasna
FH rubber: Nittaku Hammond
BH rubber: Nittaku Hammond
Glue: Nittaku
Current/Highest Rating: 2477/2566
Education: Bachelor’s degree in Political Science from Oakland University in Rochester, MI, Currently pursuing a
Master’s degree in Education at Texas Wesleyan University.

Congratulations on winning the Collegiate National Championships! Tell us about college and your future plans. Feel free to elaborate!

Thank you. This year’s Collegiate Nationals was the strongest ever. The women’s singles level was almost equivalent to the USA Nationals. I didn’t really think that I would win so easily. I guess I was “lucky” than others. You know me, I am always afraid before the tournament, and I always deny that I have a chance against anyone, but when it is over I act more confident.

Texas Wesleyan University keeps bringing good athletes/students to its program. We are still the only university with table tennis scholarships. Of course not everyone is entitled to it, but everyone is welcome to be a part of our great program. It is an ideal place for anyone interested in higher education while taking part in organized table tennis training in an environment with all levels of teammates. I think this is the only way for young players to continue playing, unless they are willing to sacrifice their education for something uncertain.

I was part of both worlds (international and national scene), so I think that I am pretty fair when I make these statements. Nowadays many (I would say 90%) of table tennis players in the top 200 in the world have only a high school degree, and sometimes not even that. This is not yet a sport where you can secure your future by being in the top 200. Everyone outside the top 30 men and 10 women in the world are just surviving from what they make. We all know how difficult it is to become those 40. Also, even if you are very talented, but are in a country that does not invest much in table tennis (camps, coaches, athletes, tournaments, etc.) it would cost a fortune to reach a high enough level where your name would be meant something in the table tennis world. Until that changes in our country, and until our sport gets the deserved credit throughout the world, with many TT athletes with good contracts, we should focus on combinations of education and sport. If we start building serious table tennis programs, like the one here at Texas Wesleyan, we would eventually be closer to world level. All the other sports in the U.S. would be nothing if they did not have college leagues and organized training. It is a miracle that we have players at all, without any serious clubs, and only one university program with scholarships in the whole country.

I wish all other schools had such an amazing President (Dr. Harold Jeffcoat) and Athletic Department as we have here. They created us in 2001, and they have taken great care of us ever since. We might be a small school, but we definitely have made our mark in the sports that are played here. Beside table tennis, where we won six out of seven national titles this year, we have National Champions in basketball, and all other sports here won at least their conference championships. I am happy to be part of Texas Wesleyan, and very proud of every student/athlete on this campus.

It is interesting that winners of the highest senior standing award for student achievement were none other than two National Champions, Eric Owens (table tennis) and Ben Hunt (basketball). See www.dfw.com/mlb/dfw/sports/colleges/14562577.htm.

Starting next semester at Texas Wesleyan, Keith Evans and I will be Head Coaches. At the same time I will continue to work on my Master’s in Education. If everything goes well I will graduate in Spring, 2007. After that I would like to go further in school. I want to stay here as long as possible, since I really like it.

How were the Worlds? Anything interesting to tell us?
I was not so impressed with Worlds this year. I guess without Tawny there, it did not feel like the World Championship. Tawny, this is the last time that you let us go without you!!

At the Worlds or the College Nationals, what was the most interesting or memorable match? Tell us about it.
At the Worlds we played in a group against Slovakia, and the team tie was at 2-2. I played the final and final match against Lenka KmotoKova. She was leading 2-0 in sets and 8-4 in points, and I came back to 2-2. The fifth set started really well for me, and I was up 10-0! As most table tennis people know, I have my own way of thinking, which sometimes doesn’t make sense to others. So, as we were playing it crossed my mind that I might win 11-0, so I thought I should miss one ball. Because in my serve, so it was 10-1. As I predicted, she started winning point after point. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and I was thinking “ok, she is not the world champion, she will not make everything on the table by the end of the set if I play my game and not wait for her to miss.” Luckily, I got the next point. Yeah, everyone on the U.S. team almost had a heart attack (not only because our average age is high).

Another interesting match would be the Women’s Doubles Final at the Collegiate National Championships. It is always great to have nice surprises, and in this match my doubles partner was Sabrina Worrell. She was the leader and main reason why we won the match. We defeated a much stronger team. I can say that this title was even sweeter than the one in singles. Big thanks to Sabrina.
How do you prepare for major tournaments? Do you prepare differently now than when you played full-time in Europe?
Larry, I think it is well known how I prepare for major tournaments or any others. As said in my recent Paddle Palace interview: For me it is ideal to stay mentally fresh, to keep the desire to fight. It's good to play, but not too much. For me, if I play too much, I become more robotic and lose feeling. Most of the time I fight like an animal. I think that helps me win the end, because I fight harder than others. The last three years, I did not play full time. I practiced only on Fridays before tournaments, and played matches on weekends. I play more here.

You are known for a rather unique service motion. Tell us how you developed that.
Everyone serves in a similar way, so I was thinking about how to have an unusual and ugly motion, and worked really hard on it. It is ugly, you have to admit, but it is a very safe serve. Difficult to flip, attack or loop. 90% of the time it is perfectly short, so opponents can't do much. But, if you really want the truth about the evolution of my serve, here it is: As a kid I had a serve that was similar to this one, but I needed to bend my knees and have my head at table level. Years passed and it became harder and harder to get up after the serve, so I started serving more from a standing position. The final product is the serve which has become my trademark.

What are your table tennis goals?
Right now my goals in table tennis aren't necessarily as a player. As I said earlier, I will be a head coach at Texas Wesleyan next semester, so my priority would be to take care of our players. There is so much room for our program to improve, as well as table tennis in the U.S. I would like to make a difference in both. It would be great to develop the first U.S. Olympic medalist.

As a player, I will play as long as I enjoy competing. I don't see any reason to stop yet, since it doesn't take too much of my time, and I don't see myself without table tennis.

Also, I can still help my University for many years as a player, not just as coach. In the Paddle Palace interview I said how you can play table tennis from age five till you die!! I did not start at five, but I can go for the other one.

What are your non-table tennis goals?
I am working on myself. I want to be a better person. The priority is on improving my personality in a way that will improve my ability to work with others. I am on the right track. I think that I am changing. Also, I want to go as far as I can in school. I will finish my Master's before Summer 2007, but I will not stop there. I really like school, and my job here.

What do you like to do outside table tennis? Hobbies, sports, etc.
In earlier interviews when you asked me this question, I would just erase it, or leave it blank. Now, I have an answer. I love to spend time with my team - Texas Wesleyan. We have dinners, picnics or we go to movies together. I am just so lucky to have them around. They are all great in their unique way: Sabrina, Johnese, Kareema, Peter, Andre, Tim, Aldis, Mike, Dinko, Carlos, Courtney, Sadiq, Ludovic, Abdul, David, Keith, Eric.

What were the most important factors that turned you into a world-class player and Olympic Medalist?
It is probably a whole puzzle of things that helped me produce the results that I have.
First would be the determination of my parents and sister. They kept pushing me into table tennis. I admire them for never putting any pressure on me regarding results. It was ok to lose, but it was not ok to not practice seriously. It was easy to see that I couldn’t play for many hours (lack of focus), so my coach decided that I should play 1.5 hours of quality training per session. Most of the days I had two sessions of 1.5 hours.

Second would be coaches Davorin Kvesic and Zlatko Novakovic. They got me to the level of an Olympian. I don’t really know why and how I did certain results, because it was never about playing and preparing for one tournament only. I just played in my club, which was so organized. I had many sparring-partners. Every weekend I had a competition, either for club, national team, league for club, European league, European Champions Cup, Worlds, Europeans, Open Tournaments, National Tournaments.

My parents never had to spend money on coaching, trips, or equipment. Everything was covered by the club inside the country, and the national team for international tournaments or matches. In order for athletes to improve there have to be many opportunities for competition and good training, which I had. Also, there are many players that had exactly the same conditions as me, but they never reached the same level. So, there has to be some other missing pieces to our puzzle. I can just speculate.

I also think that I was lucky to be more talented than most others. That helped in part because I didn’t need to practice as much as others to reach a high level. An athlete has to have a strong personality and have leadership skills in order to be a champion. I have those traits.

For me equipment also plays an important role. It is very crucial to have good rubber on my blade. If I do not have the right equipment, I feel like I am playing a different sport.

Maybe as an outsider, you can tell me more what it is that made me a champion!

What’s your advice for up-and-coming players?
Practice hard (I did years ago), find good coaching, good sparring-partners, have good equipment - blade and rubbers (very crucial element for me), respect your parents, coach and opponents. Come to Texas Wesleyan, where you can earn an education, and we will provide great sparring partners and coaching!
The World Champions have nothing to fear, it would seem. Again, the Chinese Team asserted its dominance over the table tennis world with a sweep at the team event in Bremen, the men winning every match of every team tie – except one. So, if you have the luxury of being able to choose any of your five players to put in the #1 spot in a team match, who would you worry about? Who's that thorn in your side that contaminated what would have been a pristine winning record? World #2 Timo Boll, that's who. The German lefty has long been considered the greatest threat to Chinese players, and in the semifinal, playing with the home field advantage of a very vocal and enthusiastic crowd, he provided China with some of their few tense moments by winning the opening match against Ma Lin and later pushing Wang Liqin into the fifth game.

What makes Boll so dangerous is that his game is an almost perfect antidote to the modern game strategy. Among the most dangerous shots in the top-level game is an attack...
shot off a serve. If a serve comes out less than perfect, it can open the door to a sharp attack; even good serves can be attacked, albeit less violently. Boll plays into that by sometimes serving in just such a way as to allow a moderate attack and then counter-looping from very close to the table. That shot is so quick and usually so well placed that it often ends the rally. On his receive, he loops a relatively slow but spinny ball with either forehand or backhand, then steps back and prepares to counter-loop. Only extreme dynamics and tremendous power can rattle Boll when he’s at mid-distance. Most often, though, he finds an opening for a misdirected, well-placed counter-shot that breaks the opponent’s rhythm or leaves him out of position and scores Boll a point.

In order to be ready to generate that quick counter-loop, Boll only rarely blocks passively. Every shot is a loop, from a short mini-stroke over the table to a full-arm rip from farther back. In this sequence, he is “blocking,” while his partner is doing a forehand looping drill. Yet, instead of holding the racket firmly and guiding the ball back, Timo adds topspin with every stoke. Even when a massive bomb comes toward him, he still takes the time to do a backswing and brush over the ball.

The contact timing is pretty much the same as for a block. His basic hand position helps: The racket favors the backhand by having the backhand side down most of the time (1). For forehands, he can turn it around quickly, but all he needs to do for the backhand is pull his racket toward his body (2-5). Notice how the racket is almost horizontal. He keeps his hand high in front of him throughout the preparation, but the backswing itself is very quick. The ball has already crossed the net when he pulls his wrist back, and by the time it has bounced on the table the racket already points almost backward (3-5). He leads his stroke with his elbow (5) and with a quick motion “throws” the racket over the ball, adding his power to the force the other player already put on the ball. The follow through is relatively short (6-8).

Another subtle but important factor is his body control. First, his wide stance serves as a solid base. He can bend his legs and make minute adjustments without having to move a foot, just by leaning a little one way or the other. More and more we move away from the concept that each individual stroke must have its own distinct set-up. If a ball is within the area we can cover by making a slight upper body adjustment, we should do that and reap the benefit of gained time and control. Each one of us has our individual level of flexibility, but with a wide stance like Boll’s, he can reach balls in a two-foot wide range without having to re-set his feet. He achieves a stable balance by using his free arm very effectively.

Notice how much he bends down between the relaxed position and just before contact (1-5). In perfect synchronization, his body movement is slightly ahead of his arm motion, supporting the stroke with an upward push of his legs and a light, but well-timed rotation of his upper body to the right (6-8). After the follow through, he keeps his arm high and is ready for any eventuality.

The resulting ball skips off the table toward the opponent and demands a similarly quick stroke from him, the quality of which determines whether Boll responds with a full-attack loop or another controlled shot to set up a later put-away.

In order to use this counter-loop in your game instead of blocking, it has to become second nature. As soon as the ball comes, the racket must be horizontal and the hand ready to swing back. To achieve that, this stroke must become an integral part of your practice. In each practice rally, block a few balls conventionally and then start using this motion. Soon enough, you’ll get that sweet feeling of moving from a defensive posture to regaining control of a point by applying more pressure than your opponent expected. So now get ready for your put-away!

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