

USA TABLE TENNIS

The Official Magazine of USA Table Tennis

**Jorgen Persson Leads
Sweden to Victory at
World Team
Championships**

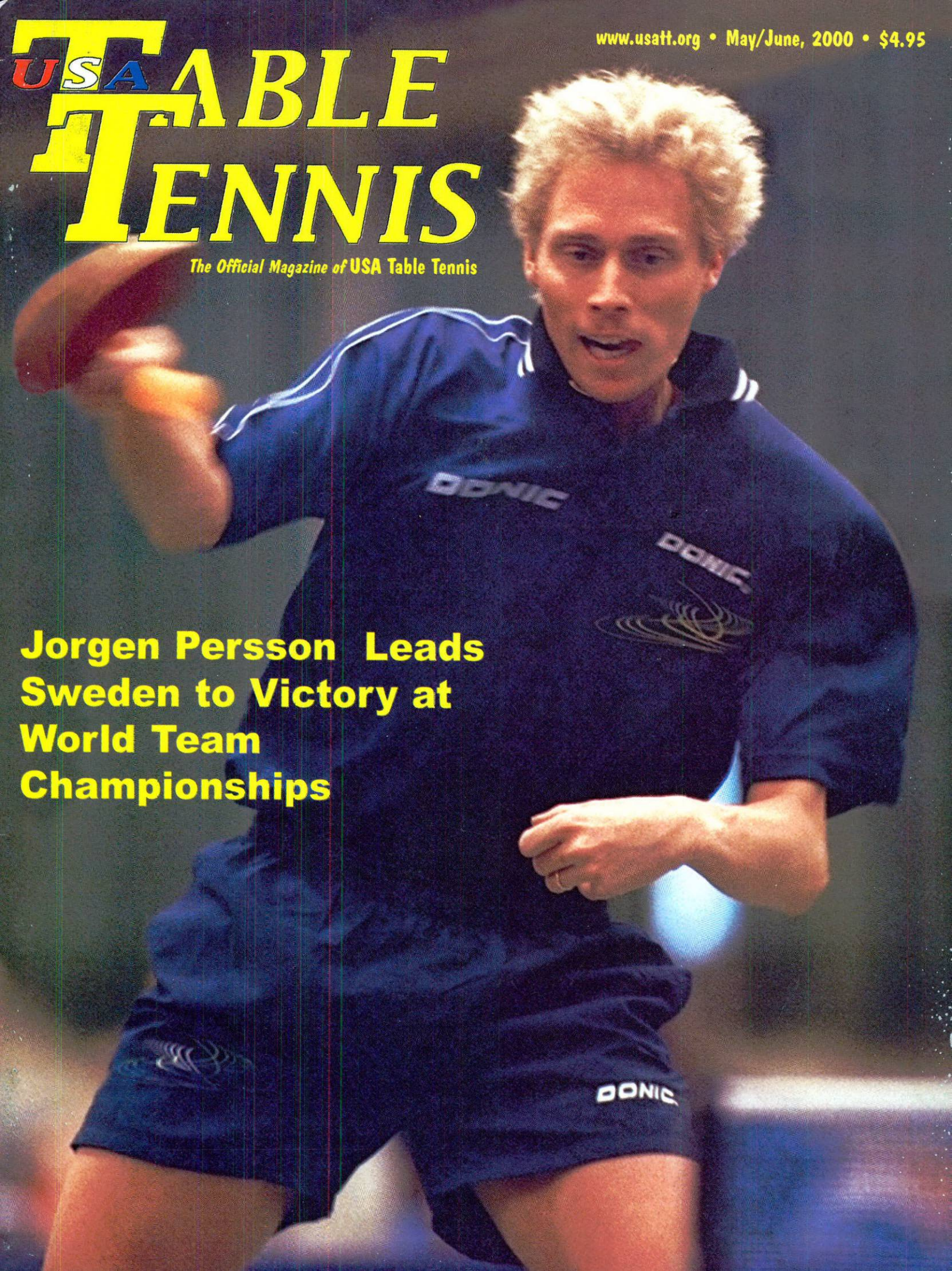




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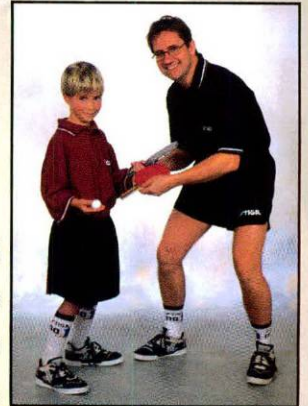
Peter Karlsson
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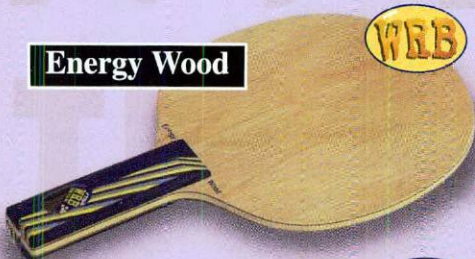
- 1971 - World Champion Singles Champion
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- 1973 - World Team Champion
- 1973 - World Singles Finalist
- 1977 - Stiga Super Carbon enters the market
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- 1985 - US Mixed Doubles Champion
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- 1986 - US Mixed Doubles Champion
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- 1987 - US Mixed Doubles Champion
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- 1988 - US Doubles Champion
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- 1991 - US Mixed Doubles Champion
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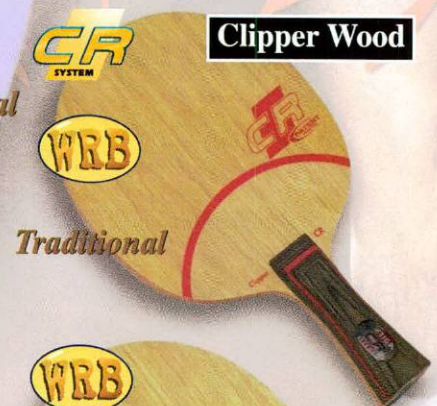
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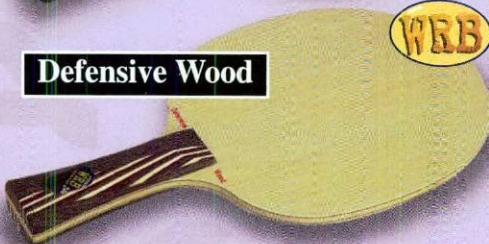
Offensive Classic



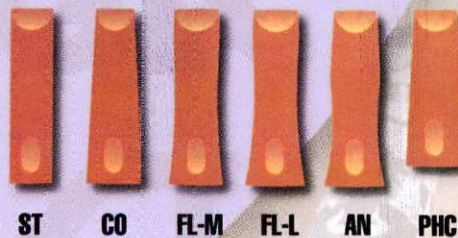
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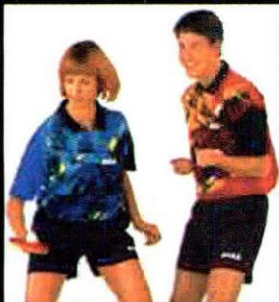


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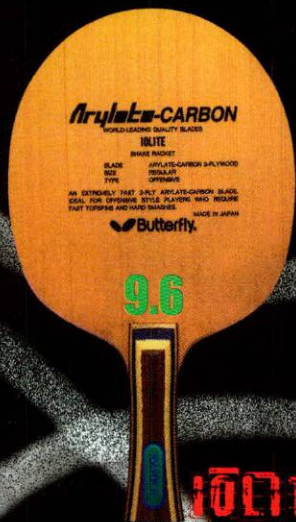
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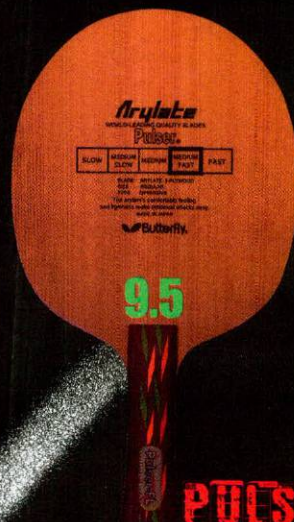
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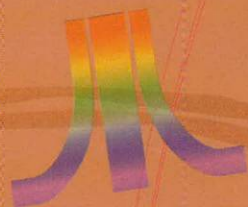
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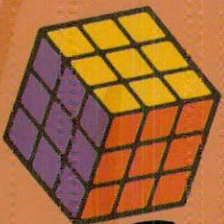


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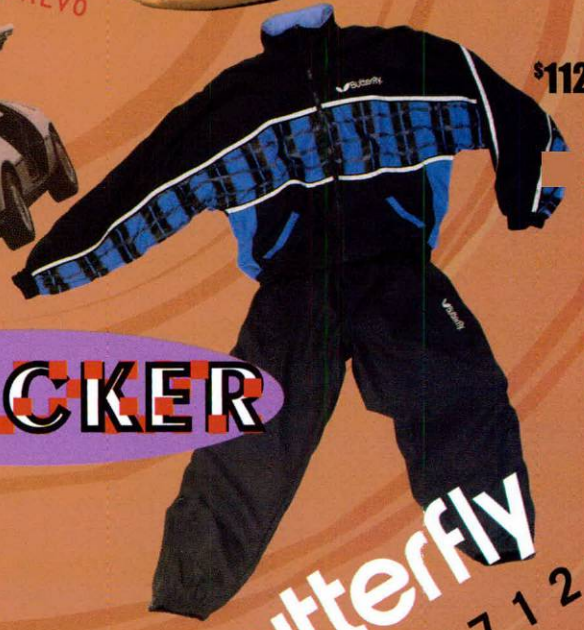
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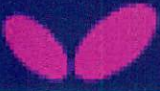
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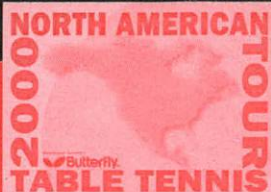
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Rating:

Email: (for confirmation purposes)

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(complete both sides!)

Your Name:

Tour Stop:

Please fill in events (see advertisement):

Tour Date:

1)

4)

7)

2)

5)

8)

3)

6)

Doubles Partner (one event only):

Number of Events	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Event Fee:	\$		
Adult	\$35	\$55	\$75	\$95	\$110	\$125	\$140	\$150				
Youth U -18	\$30	\$45	\$60	\$75	\$ 90	\$105	\$115	\$125				

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Tour Date

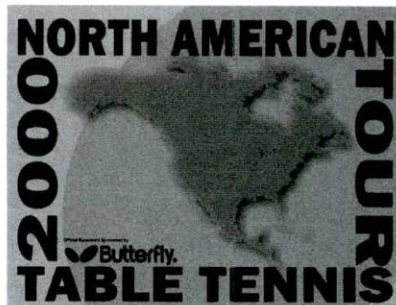
April 28-30, 2000
 May 12-14, 2000
 June 23-25, 2000
 July 28-30, 2000
 August 18-20, 2000
 Sept 29-Oct 1, 2000

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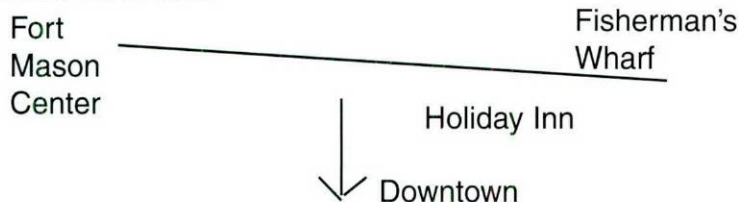
Events	Day	Time	1	2	3-4	5-8
1 Open Singles	Saturday	10:00 AM	\$ 1,000	\$ 500	\$ 250	\$ 125
2 Women's Singles	Sunday	10:00 AM	\$ 250	\$ 125	\$ 60	
3 Under 22 Men's Singles	Saturday	4:00 PM	\$ 140	\$ 70	\$ 35	A = Award
4 Under 22 Women's Singles	Saturday	4:00 PM	\$ 140	\$ 70	\$ 35	
5 Under 18 Boys' Singles	Friday	7:00 PM	\$ 100	\$ 50		
6 Under 18 Girls' Singles	Friday	7:00 PM	\$ 100	\$ 50		
7 Under 16 RR Singles	Sunday	12:00 PM	A	A		
8 Under 13 RR Singles	Sunday	9:00 AM	A	A		
9 Under 10 RR Singles	Saturday	12:30 PM	A	A		
10 Over 40 RR Singles	Sunday	12:00 PM	\$ 120	\$ 60		
11 Over 50 RR Singles	Saturday	5:00 PM	\$ 100	\$ 50		
12 Over 60 RR Singles	Sunday	9:00 AM	\$ 80	\$ 40		
13 Under 2600 Singles	Sunday	9:00 AM	\$ 150	\$ 75		
14 Under 2500 Singles	Saturday	9:00 AM	\$ 120	\$ 60		
15 Under 2375 RR Singles	Saturday	6:00 PM	\$ 100	\$ 50		
16 Under 2250 RR Singles	Saturday	2:30 PM	\$ 90	\$ 45		
17 Under 2125 RR Singles	Sunday	10:30 AM	\$ 80	\$ 40		
18 Under 2000 RR Singles	Saturday	11:30 AM	\$ 70	\$ 35		
19 Under 1850 RR Singles	Sunday	2:00 PM	\$ 60	\$ 30		
20 Under 1700 RR Singles	Saturday	2:30 PM	A	A		
21 Under 1550 RR Singles	Saturday	7:00 PM	A	A		
22 Under 1400 RR Singles	Saturday	4:00 PM	A	A		
23 Under 1200 RR Singles	Saturday	10:00 AM	A	A		
24 Under 1000 RR Singles	Sunday	10:30 AM	A	A		
25 Novice RR Singles	Sunday	2:00 PM	A	A		
26 Hardbat RR Singles	Friday	7:30 PM	\$ 100	\$ 50		
27 Hardbat U 2000 RR Singles	Saturday	11:30 AM	\$ 80	\$ 40		
28 Hardbat Doubles	Friday	6:00 PM	\$ 100	\$ 50		
29 Under 4200 Doubles	Friday	6:00 PM	\$ 100	\$ 50		
30 Under 3200 Doubles	Friday	6:00 PM	\$ 80	\$ 40		

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President's Report

By Sheri Soderberg Pittman

Since this issue of the magazine coincides with the conclusion of my one-year term as president of USA Table Tennis, I am devoting this article in the "association primer series" to discussing my role as the president, including my assessment of the year in review.

One of the most common misconceptions about the presidency is that it is a paid position. It is not. As a volunteer, I have devoted upwards of 40 hours a week and traveled on about 15 trips, including twice for roughly two weeks. It's been an intense year.

I set out with a plan to implement several immediate changes. In other areas, opportunities presented themselves to us. In all, I will distill the activities of this past year down to a discussion of ten points: our magazine, our headquarters staff, our legal counsel, our USOC relations, our coaching program, our budget, our tournament structure, our national schools program, our ITTF/international relations, and our association's prospects for growth.

1) MAGAZINE

Last July Acting Executive Director Linda Gleeson and this administration decided to hire Larry Hodges to serve as the interim editor/webmaster when the vacancy in the position occurred. We removed the in-house publication responsibility from headquarters at a time when the executive director position was also vacant. Larry immediately created a schedule to get the publication cycle back in sync with the cover months, noticeably improved the magazine and website content, and dramatically increased advertising revenues. He has done an outstanding job. Needless to say, our executive director Ben Nisbet, upon being hired, decided to keep Larry on.

2) HEADQUARTERS STAFF

When I became president last May, we had already been without an executive director for three months. A large backlog of work was becoming larger on a daily basis. Our former Deputy Executive Director, Linda Gleeson, stepped in and valiantly attempted to keep our association functioning smoothly during the transition. It was a hectic time period. I wound up getting more involved in the operational aspects of our association than I had intended to, but the prolonged job vacancy also proved to be a blessing in that I had tremendous say in the ultimate hiring of Ben Nisbet as the new executive director.

Ben's knowledge of table tennis – both as a once-2300 player and as a 6-year Board member and association treasurer – as well as his long-term career in banking inspired the Board to hire someone from our association to serve as the executive director. The alternative was to hire a sports management professional who had never been exposed to table tennis. I was confident then that we made the right decision; from my point of view, we needed an in-house

leader who understood our sport, our association, as well as our relationships with the USOC and the ITTF. From the feedback that I've heard, the general consensus is that Ben has been doing an excellent job.

Even though the roles of the president and the executive director are distinct, in reality, the two roles are quite intertwined. The goals of the president and the executive director should be mutual. Their visions should be shared. And their public positions should be, for the most part, unified. When these all occur, the energies of the president and the executive director coalesce and that synergy brings a surge of progress. While we still have a great deal of work to do, I am confident that we are well-focused and are moving forward quickly.

3) LEGAL COUNSEL

As an attorney, I stressed to Ben that getting our legal affairs in order would be a high priority. Ben decided to change our legal counsel. Our approach has shifted from being reactionary to being proactive in dealing with legal issues. This approach has also added to my workload since I usually review and discuss almost all of our developing and pending legal issues with Ben. While this new focus on our legal matters has no doubt added to our business expenses in the short-term, we have taken dramatic steps to protect our association's present and future legal interests.

4) USOC RELATIONS

Before I discuss the year-long interaction we have had with the USOC, I would like to share some breaking news. On the weekend of April 15, I attended the USOC Board of Directors meeting. I even had the chance to meet the USOC's new chief operating officer, Norm Blake. Early media reports had stirred up some controversy. There were media reports that he had actually targeted table tennis as one of the sports that would receive even less financial support from the USOC. In marked contrast to those reports, according to his formal presentation, our funding will not decrease. Certainly there will be many changes in our relationship with the USOC. Future "association primer series" articles will undoubtedly address both our evolving relationship and specific details as they emerge.

Over the last weekend in August, a group of eight participants drafted our new High Performance Plan (Plan) with the guidance of our USOC liaison, Kelly Skinner. Again, while the workload was significant, this was another blessing because the resulting document gave us an association blueprint that is consistent with this administration's goals and intents. We were able to postpone the planning weekend to the last possible time when everything could still be completed in order to meet the other



involved deadlines – the setting of our 2000 markers and our 2000 budget – but would also include our newly-hired executive director. The intense weekend became, in essence, Ben's first days on the job.

During the Plan meeting, our USOC liaison made it clear that the USOC was going to significantly increase its pressure on us to produce Olympic medalists. Indeed, the USOC merged each sport's Athlete Development Pipeline into the heart of that national governing body's Plan. In September the Board approved the essence of our new Plan, which was still in draft and skeletal form, and immediately committed ourselves to following the six goals we enunciated in our new guiding document. I will now discuss the progress we have made on those six goals.

5) GOAL TO DEVELOP OLYMPIC AND WORLD CHAMPION MEDALISTS

Early on in my presidency, both of our national coaches, Dan Seemiller and Doru Gheorghie, exhibited the desire not only to coach the national team, but also to assume the overall responsibility for our national coaching development plan. I agreed. I felt that there should be a mutuality of purpose between the national coaches and the coaching committee. The USOC implicitly shared this same point of view through its mandate that the national coaches both attend and write a significant portion of our Plan. So, while our coaches gear up for the Olympics, they are also laying the foundation for a new national coaching infrastructure along with Coaching Committee Chair Mark Nordby.

NORTH AMERICAN CORPORATE GAMES

World Trade Center Palm Beach has recently acquired the North American license to host the North American Corporate Games annually. Table tennis will be among the sports offered. The Games will be held in Palm Beach County each year over the last weekend in October.

If you are interested in participating in this year's Corporate Games, please contact Mark Conboy at (561) 616-1999. More information about the event will be available in the next issue of the magazine as well as at the U.S. Open.

Although both our men's and women's team fell slightly in their world rankings, we also enjoyed wonderful accomplishments this year. USA swept the Pan Am Games gold medals as well as a bronze medal. We also just garnered nearly all podium spots during our continental qualifications for the Olympic positions.

6) GOAL TO INCREASE FUNDING SOURCES

The most noteworthy accomplishment we've had in this area is our 4-year clothing sponsorship contract, which we have valued at over \$125,000. As we go to press, there are a couple of other sponsorship negotiations that we appear to be close to finalizing.

7) GOAL TO CREATE A PROFESSIONAL STRUCTURE FOR DOMESTICALLY-HELD EVENTS

The staging of the Nationals and the Olympic qualification trials, and the pre-tournament preparation for the 2000 U.S. Open/ITTF Pro Tour were critical because our events serve as a public and visible barometer of our association's ability to become a more viable sport in our country.

Our association's handling of the Olympic qualifications in Rochester, NY drew favorable remarks from the Canadian association as well as ITTF President Adham Sharara. Although Adham was not able to attend the event, he was impressed by both the television coverage that he saw and the feedback that the Canadians gave him. I believe that we are poised to deliver similar results this summer at our U.S. Open/ITTF Pro Tour.

8) GOAL TO IMPLEMENT A NATIONAL SCHOOLS PROGRAM

Our markers require us to initiate a minimum of two regional school programs. In March our association signed a contract with the Warren Company. The Warren Company is responsible for finding both interested school systems and local funding to support bringing a multi-sports program into the schools. This program is already underway in the Rochester, NY area. The Palm Beach County Sports Commission has also expressed strong interest in starting a school program this fall.

9) GOAL TO ESTABLISH A HIGH LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT AND VISIBILITY WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Due to the cancellation of the world championships in Belgrade last spring, the event was eventually split into two tournaments – in Holland and in Malaysia – and so I wound up attending two world championships within this past year when normally no world championships would have been scheduled. The once-in-four-years Pan Am Games also coincidentally

fell into this time period. The trips enabled me to pursue an international agenda for our association.

Last August Adham Sharara was elected the new president of the ITTF. One of his priorities is to assist our association in promoting the growth of table tennis in the United States. We welcome his commitment.

I have also proposed a new relationship with the Chinese association. We see the mutual benefits that we can derive through modernizing "ping pong diplomacy" as greater market and business opportunities develop between our two countries.

10) GOAL TO FOSTER AN ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH USATT-AFFILIATED CLUBS GROW AND PROSPER

This goal is perhaps our most general and all-encompassing goal. Club Development & Membership Services Chair Alan Williams is working hard to refine proposals for the Board to consider. Similarly, George Brathwaite is developing a league proposal.

One aspect of fostering a positive environment for clubs to grow and prosper is for the Board to treat our general membership with respect. As I promised when I ran for election in 1998, I will seek to restore the vote for our association's officers to the general membership at our Board's May meeting. I also support removing substantive election matters from our association's standing rules and placing them in our By-Laws. Proposals to substantially change election procedures should require adequate notice to the membership to allow for timely membership feedback in order to avoid retroactive announcements or self-delegation of authority on the Board's part. Our next election cycle will take place in 2001, which will overlap nicely with the 2000-2004 quadrennial cycle. Because both the USOC and the ITTF operate on quadrennial cycles, I will propose that we adapt our election cycle to the Olympic quadrennium. That way future administrations would be responsible for both creating and carrying out one in the same vision.

And so, as the term of my presidency draws to an end, I thought it might be interesting to write about the year in review. If it is the will of the Board when we convene the first weekend in May, I am willing to continue to serve as president until the next election in 2001 when, hopefully, the membership will once again elect its officers.

Without specifically mentioning any names, I also want to thank everyone who has dedicated hard work, long hours, and personal talents toward the advancement of our sport during my term as president. I have appreciated it immensely. Volunteers are critical to our success.

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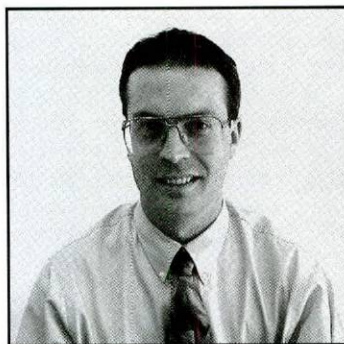
Executive Director's Report

By Ben Nisbet

Thanks to Richard McAfee, his staff, Ray Mack, the 40 local volunteers, USA Table Tennis Officials, Bud Light, Butterfly, Monroe County Sports Development Corporation, and The Greater Rochester Visitors Association, The 2000 Olympic Team Trials for Table Tennis was a resounding success. We held the event in a hockey arena, and the lighting and limited airflow in the building brought forth outstanding table tennis, particularly on the women's side, where the world-class defensive play of Virginia Sung and Chris Xu added to the suspense.

Unlike an athlete who remembers a tournament by matches won or lost, I must evaluate a USA Table Tennis event as a performance.

- Were the conditions ideal for high-level play?
- How well did we promote the tournament?
- Did the spectators enjoy our production?
- Were our sponsors satisfied?
- Did we promote our sport in the local community?
- How well did we work with local clubs in attracting new members?
- Were the needs of our Volunteers met?



The criteria I have established above has never been fully addressed at USA Table Tennis headquarters. Without consistent leadership at the Executive Director position and without insider knowledge of our sport, USA Table Tennis staff and volunteers had previously focused their efforts on ensuring

that our top athletes and entries in our tournaments were satisfied. This is by no means an easy task (I can't believe how complex our tournaments really are!), but it misses some critical questions, which are addressed above.

If we want to promote our sport and show the world what a great sport table tennis is, we must improve production of our major events. If we can't get it right, we reinforce our image that table tennis is a recreational game in which one wins with a few "tricky" spins.

In Rochester we took a major step in getting our production formula right. I look forward to the U.S. Open, where you can expect to see some positive changes in how USA Table Tennis runs its events!



An Official's View

Rules Changes 2000:

Yes, We Can Make a Difference

By "Dr. Azmy"

I would like to congratulate the delegates of USA Table Tennis, players and officials, and those who fought all the past years to make some changes in the rules of the game of Table Tennis. It shows that when we cooperate together with patience, perseverance and wisdom, we can make a difference. Here are new rule changes made by the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF).



1. Several years ago, Gus Kennedy proposed a motion, reflecting the sentiment of USATT, regarding the service. The motion was that during the serve, the player should strike the ball between his body and the end line of his side of the table. After years of carrying the banner for change and convincing several other associations, a proposal is being tested. It will emphasize the rule that in service the ball will be struck **between the closest part of the body and the end line of the table**. That means that even the elbow cannot be in front of the ball. The final wording will be stated in the upcoming ITTF Bulletin.
2. The act which disturbed a lot of players, and for which I received the highest number of complaints in the U.S., finally will come to an end. **A racket cannot be changed during a match unless it is accidentally damaged so badly**

that it cannot be used. There is an understanding that the change has to be to a racket of the same specifications. That means a player should have two identical rackets with him at the site of the table. I am glad that this motion has passed as it will end all the complaints about changing to a racket with junk rubber close to the end of a game.

Several other changes have been accepted. The main ones are as follows:

1. The ball has a new diameter of 40mm and a weight of 2.7 grams. (This change will take effect starting Oct. 1, 2000. From that date, the 40mm ball must be used in international competitions, but associations may, at their discretion, continue to use the 38mm ball for domestic competitions.)
2. A player obstructs the ball if he, or anything he wears or carries, intercepts it when it **is moving towards the playing surface and** has not passed beyond his end line, not having touched his court since last being struck by his opponent. (The bold wording is what has been added.)
3. The referee can disqualify for the remainder of a competition a coach who has been sent away from the playing area twice during that competition.
4. In World Championships doubles events, both players must be from the same association.

Please understand that all of these changes apply to international competitions only. However, USATT can apply all or some of them. I am sending a copy of these proposals to the Officials Committee and USATT Board of Directors for their consideration and possible adoption.



MACY BLOCK OPEN TABLE TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIPS

(Formerly The Sun TV Open)

June 24 & 25, 2000

Greentree Racquet Club, Pittsburgh PA

EVENT #	EVENT	FEE	DATE & TIME	1ST	2ND	3-4	5-8
01.	Open Singles	\$25	Sat. 11:30 a.m.	\$500	\$300	\$200	\$100
02.	Open Doubles	10ea.	Sat. 4:30 p.m.	150	100	50	
03.	U-22 r/r	15	Sat. 9:00 a.m.	100	50	30	
04.	O-40 r/r	15	Sat. 3:30 p.m.	100	50	30	
05.	O-50 r/r	15	Sun. 11:30 a.m.	75	50		
06.	O-60 r/r	15	Sun. 1:30 p.m.	60	40		
07.	U-2500 r/r	15	Sun. 9:00 a.m.	150	100	50	
08.	U-2375 r/r	15	Sat. 5:30 p.m.	125	75	50	
09.	U-2250 r/r	15	Sun. 11:30 a.m.	100	50	30	
10.	U-2125 r/r	15	Sun. 9:00 a.m.	100	50	30	
11.	U-2000 r/r	15	Sat. 11:30 a.m.	100	50	25	
12.	U-1875 r/r	15	Sat. 5:30 p.m.	100	50	25	
13.	U-1750 r/r	15	Sat. 9:00 a.m.	70	40		
14.	U-1625 r/r	15	Sun. 9:00 a.m.	60	40		
15.	U-1500 r/r	12	Sat. 2:00 p.m.	T	T		
16.	U-1350 r/r	12	Sat. 9:00 a.m.	T	T		
17.	U-1200 r/r	12	Sat. 11:30 a.m.	T	T		
18.	U-1000 r/r	12	Sat. 3:00 p.m.	T	T		
19.	U-18 Boy	12	Sun. 1:30 p.m.	60	40		
20.	U-16	10	Sun. 12:00 p.m.	50	30		
21.	U-13	10	Sun. 11:30 a.m.	T	T		
22.	U-4100 Doubles	8ea.	Sat. 7:30 p.m.	120	60		
23.	U-3500 Doubles	8ea.	Sat. 7:30 p.m.	100	60		

****Doubles events #22 & #23 start at the same time. Players may enter only one event; either #22 or #23**

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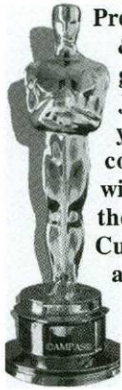
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They Said It...

By Larry Hodges

"Just because my brother-in-law has cancer doesn't mean that I need radiation therapy." -Marty Reisman on the subject of the 40mm ball. He now supports it.



Hi ... This is Scott Siegel, President of R.S. Owens & Company, and we got your letter today. Just wanted to tell you that we stand corrected and we will make a note that the Mark Matthews Cup and the Oscars are two of the most prestigious awards that we manufacture. So I appreciate



your letter for setting us straight and we will certainly correct that oversight! - Siegel's response to a letter from Steve Isaacson, Executive Vice President of the USA Table Tennis Hall of Fame, regarding Siegel's statement that the Oscars that R.S. Owens & Co. produce are the most prestigious of all the awards they manufacture.

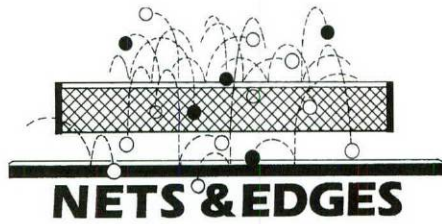
Our guess is that TV viewers won't notice - not with the diameter of the ball expanding from 1.5 inches to (drum roll, please) ... 1.6. -From article on the new 40mm ball in Seattle Times, February 28, 2000, by Dwight Perry. First contributed by Tyra Parkins.

Yes, Ms. Ping Pong. She does not exist and will not exist until after the Olympic Trials. -Eric Owens, when asked if he has a girlfriend.

BRENDAN WITT AND OLAF KOLZIG Capital Ping Pong Players

The Washington Capitals [hockey team] are on a winning streak - Tuesday night's 4-2 licking of the Florida Panthers put the Caps on top of the NHL's Southeast Division. What's their secret? According to No. 19, 25-year-old defenseman Brendan Witt, it's coffee and ping-pong.

"We have this pregame ritual," the 6-foot-2, 215-pound Canadian told us yesterday. He and goaltender Olaf Kolzig carpool to MCI Center from Crofton. "I live close to a Starbucks and we usually stop there. We get grandes of the Sumatra house blend - that's one of their strongest coffees. It gets you awake anyway." Once at the arena, "we play ping-pong for a good half-hour. We crank up the tunes and get a little competition going. It gets pretty serious. . . . There was a time there in January when I actually owned Olie, but he's back in form now." -Washington Post, March 9, 2000, page C3.



NETS & EDGES

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More info? Have slides to share? Contact Tom Wintrich at tomwin@msn.com or (505) 323-3563.

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CORRECTIONS....

On page 67 of the March/April issue, the picture on top left is labeled as Chen Jing vs. Li Ju, the women's finalist. It is actually Chen Jing vs. Wang Nan in the quarterfinals.

On page 28, the wrong photo ran with the Grady Gordon profile. This is the correct photo.

The photo of Howard Lamb on page 64 was misattributed. It was taken by Terry Canup, who was also left off the photographer's list on the table of contents despite taking the ITTF Pro Tour Finals photos on page 66.

MORE CORRECTIONS....

Dear Editor,

The Jan/Feb issue was another great issue of the magazine. I have two simple requests for the next issue.

First, on page 52, the "Officials Awards" box. You mistakenly identified Azmy Ibrahim as the Tournament Referee. I think this was just an oversight on your part since you already knew that I was the Tournament Referee. Probably a case of mistaken identity - "all foreigners look alike." A simple correction in the next issue would be appreciated.

Second, the performance of the USA umpires and Deputy Referee at the 2000 World Team championships should be recognized and mentioned in the next issue. Aly Salam and Azmy Ibrahim represented USA as International Umpires, and Y.C. Lee was one of six Deputy Referees working the tournament. In addition, I was chosen out of 122 umpires to umpire the Women's Team Final match between China and Taipei, one of only two team finals.

Finally, the article by Richard McAfee on page 26 about the Atlanta November Giant Round Robin apparently had a case of an over-active spell checker, changing my name and sex from "Aly" to "Amy."

Just goes to show you that your magazine is so interesting, some people read it cover to cover and catch all the mistakes. No big deal about the name, I have been called worse.

**Aly Salam
Smyrna, GA**

Dear Editor,

Hello and Greetings from South Florida. I had a conversation with Ben Nisbet [USATT Executive Director] about getting involved in promotional work for the Boys' & Girls' Club.

I'm running a tournament on April 8 at a local Boy & Girls club. I am donating \$800 of the proceeds to the facility to get a program started for some kids to play in the U.S. Open. I'm doing my part to give back to the youth of table tennis. Media one, the company that I work for (an Internet and cable TV company) is donating \$400 and the cost to have T-shirts made up. I hope I can do more promotional work for the Boy & Girls Club because I believe in what they represent.

**Brian Pace
Coral Springs, FL**

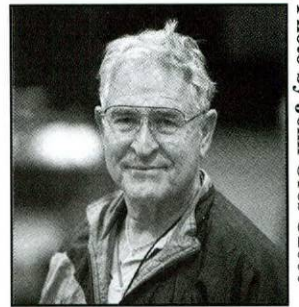


Photo by John Oros ©2000

DOES YOUR GAME NEED AN OVERHAUL?



Take it to our master mechanic.

USATT National Certified Coach, Richard McAfee will be offering his unique style of teaching at five week long camps this summer. Coach McAfee is the author of the popular "McAfee's Mechanics" column published in the USA Table Tennis Magazine.

Level One - The camp for the developing player. Learn biomechanical correct stroke fundamentals delivered in a simple proven system of instruction. Perfect for players rated -1700. You will leave with a solid understanding of stroke technique, methods of practice, and a plan for your future development.

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Level Three - This is a hard-core tournament players camp, perfect for serious tournament players who are putting in lots of hours in practice. Minimum rating for participants is 1700+. The focus is on advanced drill methods, learning how to plan your competitive season (peaking), physical training programs, match skills, nutrition, and psychological skills. Jump-start your tournament game.

Senior Camp - This is a camp designed especially for the over forty athlete. Emphasis is placed on helping the senior athlete get the most out of his/her games. Special physical training and stretching programs designed for the senior table tennis athlete will be introduced.

Session Dates

June 12-16	Level One
June 19-23	Level Two
July 17-21	Level One
July 24-28	Level Three
Aug 21-25	Senior Camp

Camp Information

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The 40mm Ball...



Dear Editor,

So far I believe that Mr. Shahara's reasons for the new size ball; i.e., television, etc., are hard to believe. Television is not provided here because the networks have no market for it here. However, to Mr. Shahara, I submit that if an American player ascends to the quarters or semifinal of a world event, the networks will be there; and they will not care if the ball is 38mm or 138mm.

James Ritz
Vallejo, CA

Dear Editor,

The ball was introduced to our club two weeks ago, and after an initial "what the heck?", it is now extremely popular. The away-from-the-table players seem to be the quicker to adapt to the smaller break on the bounce and less spin.

The blockers (ME) seem to have more problems, BUT, I still love it, and I think it is doing just what was needed for table tennis. It makes the spin manageable and allows for returns of previous balls that would be called "winners."

I see little reason for anyone to hate the new ball, unless they lived on serves. It is slower and less spinny, but not so different you can't adjust to it quickly.

This is actually the first time I'm really excited to go the club and play in quite a while.

James Allen
Simpsonville, SC

Dear Editor,

Like all players, at whatever level of play, I have had to adjust over the 29 years I have been playing to new materials and rules. It was perhaps inevitable that the ball would come under scrutiny at some point. What I cannot understand is how 2mm will make any significant difference to television coverage of the sport, as has been claimed. My limited experience of the sport as a spectator is that audiences who watch are nearly always players, even when watching the sport on TV. We understand the technicalities and difficulties of the game. However, every sport has its ergonomics. I just cannot see how the extra 2mm is going to make the ball that much easier to see on TV. If we take lawn tennis, all the equipment is proportional to the playing area. The ball travels at speeds in excess of Table Tennis, so I just can't see how the change is going to benefit the sport overall, when both a Tennis Ball traveling at speed and a Table Tennis ball traveling at speed look about the same size on TV. It just does not make sense, especially as the entire service industry will have to gear up to the new ball size.

This brings me to the crunch. I just bought a Newgy RoboPong 2000, which by its decision, the ITTF just made obsolete. Must I now spend another \$300 plus for a replacement head because of an argument for TV viewers, which just doesn't seem to make logical sense, as previously argued? I am not against progress, which is a clear benefit to the game for player and spectator alike, but I am not convinced by this one.

Jef Savage
Fort Loudon, PA



Cartoon by A.L. Miller ©2000

So the motion is to adopt the 500mm ball, which not only is more visible on TV, but also indicates the type of spin. All those in favor....

Dear Editor,

On February 23, 2000, the world of table tennis spoke of a desire to increase the size of the ball to 40mm. Actually, when the vote is roughly 100-4, it's a shout for change. Just as we saw when the island nation of Kiribati rang in the new millennium and other countries solidified their status as Y2K compliant, it's now time for the USATT to vote to do the same.

In spite of the magnitude of this change, there is evolutionary precedent for us to follow the lead of the world and change as well. Back at the 1952 World Championships, Hiroje Satoh showed up with a sponge racket and handily won the title. Yet, most U.S. players stuck with hard bat until the 1960s. As of 1952, the U.S. had won eight world titles. Since then? One. That was the mixed doubles tandem of Erwin Klein and Leah Neuberger in 1956 in Tokyo (with Klein using sponge, Neuberger a hard bat). Marty Reisman was the number one seed at the '52 Championships. Have many top seeds have we had since then? Zero.

Given the already long challenge that our top and junior players face, we ought to feel a sense of duty to change entirely to the 40mm ball. Imagine the consternation of players (especially those just mentioned) to walk into an environment of complete and utter anarchy not knowing what type of equipment they will play with. Imagine the hysterical laughter from the rest of the world when our players show up at tournaments and warm up with the old ball.

As we have seen from the advent of the sponge racket, failure to adapt quickly to change is a journey to mediocrity. Let's learn from past mistakes and not let history repeat itself.

Peter Chamberlain
Bartlesville, OK

Dear Editor,

The 40mm ball lasted about 10 minutes at our club in Butler, Pennsylvania. Before I arrived, the 10 players that were present tried the ball and threw it out. They complained that it was slow, boring to play with and subtracted far too much from the game.

Paul Sybert
Butler, PA

Dear Editor,

I played with the new Yasaka 40mm ball on Monday, and found it to be a high-quality ball. I have some really spinny and fast serves that my usual opponent has a lot of trouble with, and he had NO trouble returning them with the new ball. It definitely takes the serves out of the game; I think that serving short is the best option. I usually play a medium (average) distance from the table, but in trying out different playing styles, I found that either standing farther back or right on top of the table was more effective, and flat hitting instead of looping was MUCH more successful. When we switched back to the 38mm ball, we could definitely see an increase in the amount of service winners and shorter points. I think that the 40mm ball will create more long rallies, which I think will be a lot more fun, especially for newcomers to the sport. And if it encourages more people to try and be competitive more quickly, that can't be a bad thing. For a young up-and-coming-player, I'd suggest using it immediately, especially if you have hopes of competing at a national or international level someday, because the game WILL be different. Might as well get a jump on it now!

Doug Wruck
Milwaukee, WI

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George Payer
George Payer
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ITTF MEETINGS

(Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Feb. 21, 23-24)

By Tim Boggan, ITTF Council Member for North America



Although I attended two and a half days of Meetings in Kuala Lumpur, I want to limit myself here to making comments that I think might be of interest to most readers.

1. First, the vote on the "big ball," as everyone knows by now, wasn't contested. Literally, no more than a handful of countries, if that, voted NO, including the U.S. via our President/Delegate Sheri Pittman (with concurrence from our Second Delegate Tong Lee and me). I must say that, after this ball's proposed passage was narrowly defeated in Eindhoven, the ITTF made a better presentation for it this time, and, since it was clear from the beginning that all the major powers in the Sport were willing, in a show of solidarity, to give it a try, its success was a *fait accompli*. So, beginning Oct. 1, 2000, the "big ball" (40mm, 2.7g) will be used in all international competition. Should the U.S. and other Associations want to, they can continue using the 38mm ball in domestic competition.

I personally don't think the change in the ball is going to win us the TV audience that's necessary for our Sport to progress, and after being psychically tuned in to 50 years of triumphs and tears with the "old" ball, I don't want to go to the "new" one unless I see a good reason for doing so. What we need to promote Table Tennis is player personalities, fan identification. We need color, drama like I saw in certain (and uncertain) ties at Kuala Lumpur. I think what we ought to emphasize is the human not the technological. And to me that means coaches have to be able to stride the court surrounds screaming advice, and heroes and villains (including of course referees and umpires) have to be found and exposed.

2. I voted YES to the proposition (Passed) that a racket can't be changed unless it's badly damaged. I like the idea of deception (as in that other table-game I'm most familiar with, Bridge), but, really, one has to get a handle on what one values most in a sportsman – and that's heart not hesitancy, pride not pettiness.

3. I voted NO to the proposition (Not Passed) that, if after a rally a player wasn't ready to play the next point in 20 seconds, his opponent would automatically get a point ... unless the umpire thought the delay warranted. Much as I don't like stalling, and agree that the Athletes' Commission is right to want to do something about it, I think the umpire ought to be able to stop undue delays by just talking like a human being to the offender.

4. Since I want coaches to be able to coach overtly I don't want them penalized for doing so. I particularly voted NO to the proposition (Not Passed) that the Referee be given the power "to take disciplinary action" for players' and coaches' "misbehavior anywhere in the playing venue." Tch, tch. C'mon, Officer. Cool it, sit down, have a beer with us.

5. I voted NO to the proposition (Passed) that at the next World Singles event no more than 7 entries from any one country be allowed. That is, the standard 5 + only 2 extra if that country has at least 2 of its players (or now even if it has all 10) ranked in the Top 10. China is ruining the Sport?

6. I voted NO to the proposition (Passed) that in World Championship doubles events both players have to represent the same Association. You shoulda won at Eindhoven, Samsonov and Primorac.

The following experiments will be tried in upcoming Pro Tour events – though not all of them will be tried in any one event.

a. A Service Rule where it has to be in front of the server's body as it falls.

b. Start the last game of the match at 10-all.

c. Play the matches best 3 out of 5 – the games only up to 11, with a change of serve every 3 points (or possibly "the next server should be the player who lost the previous rally").

There was much discussion as to just how future World Championships would be scheduled. At Osaka, in 2001, the Team and Individual events will again be combined. So there won't be any World Championship in 2002. France would like to hold only the Individual events in 2003 – and made a point of illustrating how they would have a projected *loss* of \$500,000 if they were to try to hold both events. India and South Korea are also interested in hosting at least one World Championship event in the future. ITTF decisions on venues and dates will be made later.

It appears likely that changes will be made to the questionable format used in the World Team Championships at Kuala Lumpur.



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Club of the Month

The Johns Hopkins University Table Tennis Club is off to a strong start this year, drawing an average of 20 to 25 participants to each of its three weekly meetings. The club meets every Tuesday and Thursday for at least three hours each, and Friday for five hours, in the Newton H. White Jr. Athletic Center Main Gym, playing on eight beautiful Butterfly Europa tables.

The club's main activity at each meeting is a rotating league system on four tables. The competitors on each table are grouped according to skill, with table one players the highest skill level and table four the lowest. Players play matches against everyone in their group, and at the end of each meeting the top third from each table moves up one table, the middle third stays on the same table, and the bottom third drops to the next lowest table. This allows members to compete against those of similar skill, while still changing things around enough to enable them to play with different people. It also gives all participants an equal amount of playing time.

But the leagues are not the only activities that club members engage in. Coaching sessions are held with 2495-rated Sean Lonergan, a two-time intercollegiate champion and one of the top players in the U.S. In addition, many tournaments are available in school, in Maryland, along the East Coast, and nationally as well. In fact, nearly

THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY TABLE TENNIS CLUB #1 Ranked College Team in the Country!

By Khoi Than, Club President

twenty JHUTTC members are also members of USA Table Tennis. Says Fong Hsu, biomedical engineering graduate and club co-founder, "The opportunities for play are limitless. Aside from the high level of play within our awesome club, our members travel far and wide to compete in USATT-sanctioned tournaments ... and bring home the trophies from them." In just six local tournaments this school year, Hopkins players have won eleven first-place titles and finished second four times. At the North American Teams Championship over Thanksgiving Break, one of the largest, if not the largest, tournament in the world (with JHUTTC's other founder Richard Lee serving as Tournament President, and Hsu as Tournament Co-Director), Hopkins brought three teams, making it the best represented university at the tournament. At the JHU Intramural Tournament in early December, club members won two of the three divisions. And, at the USA National Table Tennis Championships later that month in Las Vegas, Lee (rated 2305), a senior computer science major, performed spectacularly. He reached the semifinals of Under 2400, the quarterfinals of Under 22 Men, and the round of 16 in the ultimate event, Men's Singles.

But Lee isn't the only star on the JHU squad. Right behind him is junior biomedical engineer Jeff Hsin, a former top American youth player who has won titles at many major U.S. tournaments, including the Junior Olympics. Other club

members have taken titles at state championships, the U.S. Open, and other tournaments in their respective cities and nations.

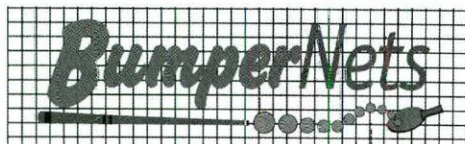
The past semester was a very busy time for the table tennis club. However, the spring semester will be even more hectic! Activities lined up for this semester include more USATT and in-school tournaments, as well as competitions against other colleges and universities. The team's intercollegiate meets began as soon as the semester started and will continue throughout the spring, ending with the National Collegiate Table Tennis Association finals on April 2. So far they're off to a great start. At the eight-team Mid-Atlantic Division meet on January 29, the JHU varsity team (average USATT rating 1994) finished first, winning by an average team score of 4.43 to 0.57. At the second and final Mid-Atlantic meet on March 12 they did even better, winning by an average of 4.83 to 0.17 (losing only one match the whole day, in doubles against Rutgers University)! As the defending national champions and #1 seed, the team expects strong competition but holds even stronger expectations. Varsity team member and biophysics junior Victor Yeung says, "We're really driven to win the title again. Doing so would leave no doubts about our stature as the premier collegiate table tennis organization in America."

For more information about the club, visit its web site at <http://jhunix.hcf.jhu.edu/~jhuttc> or e-mail kdthan@jhu.edu.

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GREATEST U.S. MALE AND FEMALE PLAYERS OF THE CENTURY

By Tim Boggan, USATT Historian

As you can see, in the necessarily short (and therefore far from career-embracing) paragraphs below, I've selected (limited myself to) 16 male and 16 female players, all U.S. citizens, who may well have claim to being the best of the U.S. best. I'm concerned here only with their *play*, though many of these players, including the ones I've picked as the greatest, have made substantial contributions to the Sport in other ways.

I include those who were already world-class when they arrived in this country (though only their U.S. Open records before they began living here), and leave it to readers to decide if these players can fairly be considered. I make no attempt to rank the players, which I consider an impossible task, and regret that I have to leave out some U.S. Singles and Doubles Champions whom others might legitimately wish to include. All these players, and many more, deserve to have their careers elaborated on, and of course I'm in the process of trying to do just that in my USATT Hall of Fame Profiles (see: www.usatt.org).

Who, finally, for *me* – and I consider results in international competition to be the most important criterion – are the greatest? Among the Men, **Dick Miles**. Among the Women, **Ruth Aarons/Leah Neuberger** (tie).

MEN:

Eric Boggan

- *World #18
- *World Eighthfinalist
- *U.S. Open MS Champion
- *U.S. Open MD Runner-up
- *5-time North American World Cup Rep (defeats World Champion Jiang Jialiang)
- *Seoul Open MS Runner-up
- *Kimura (Swe.) Grand Prix MS Champion
- *Stockholm Grand Prix MS Runner-up
- *Norwegian Grand Prix MS Champion
- *Swedish Grand Prix MS Champion
- *English Open MS Quarterfinalist
- *German Open MS Quarterfinalist
- *Norwich Union Grand Prix MS Qualifier—4th
- *Jamaica Lovebird MS Champion
- *Middlesborough (Eng.) MS Champion
- *Gateshead (Eng.) MS Champion
- *Israeli Open MS Champion
- *Scandinavian Junior Open Champion
- *2-time U.S. Closed MS Champion
- *5-time U.S. Closed MS Runner-up
- *U.S. Closed MD/XD Champion
- *2-time Eastern Open MS Champion

Bernie Bukiet

- *World MS Quarterfinalist
- *3-time U.S. Open MS Champion
- *3-time U.S. Open MS Runner-up
- *6-time U.S. Open MD Champion
- *5-time U.S. Open MD Runner-up
- *3-time U.S. Open XD Champion
- *2-time U.S. Open XD Runner-up
- *3-time Eastern Open MS Champion

Jimmy Butler

- *2-time Olympian
- *World Team Cup MVP
- *North American World Cup Rep
- *North American MS Runner-up
- *3-time U.S. Closed MS Champion
- *2-time U.S. Closed MS Runner-up
- *U.S. Closed MD Champion
- *Sears Invitational Runner-up

Doug Cartland

- *World MS Quarterfinalist
- *2-time World MD Semifinalist
- *U.S. Open MD Champion
- *2-time U.S. Open MD Runner-up
- *U.S. Open XD Champion

Cheng Yinghua

- *2-time U.S. Open MS/MD Champion
- *U.S. Open XD Champion
- *North American World Cup Rep (defeats World Champion Gatién)
- *North American MS Champion
- *3-time North American MS Runner-up
- *3-time U.S. Closed MS Champion
- *2-time U.S. Closed MD/XD Champion

Erwin Klein

- *World Mixed Doubles Champion
- *World MS Eighthfinalist
- *4-time U.S. Open MS Champion
- *U.S. Open MS Runner-up
- *5-time U.S. Open MD Champion
- *2-time U.S. Open MD Runner-up
- *4-time CNE MS Champion

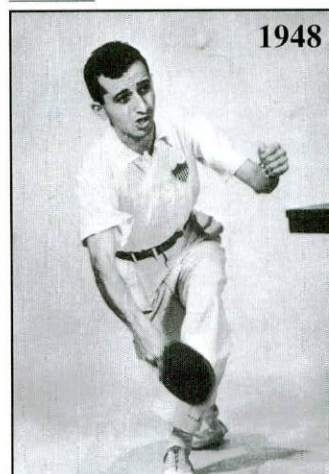
Dal Joon Lee

- *6-time U.S. Open MS Champion
- *U.S. Open Runner-up
- *4-time U.S. Open MD Champion
- *2-time U.S. Open MD Runner-up
- *U.S. Open XD Champion
- *4-time U.S. Open XD Runner-up
- *2-time U.S. Closed MS Runner-up
- *6-time Eastern Open MS Champion

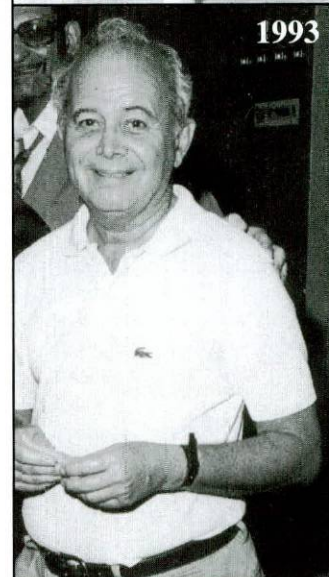
Jimmy McClure

- *3-time World MD Champion
- *World Men's Team Champion
- *World XD Quarterfinalist
- *English Open MS/XD Runner-up
- *2-time U.S. Open MS Champion
- *U.S. Open MS Runner-up
- *3-time U.S. Open MD Champion
- *2-time U.S. Open MD Runner-up
- *U.S. Open XD Runner-up
- *(1936) U.S. Closed Runner-up

Dick Miles



1948



1993

- *World Mixed Doubles Champion
- *World MS Semifinalist
- *3-time World MS Quarterfinalist (twice leading World Champions in 5th)
- *World MD Semifinalist
- *World MD Quarterfinalist
- *English Open XD Champion
- *Leinster (Ire.) Open MS Champion
- *10-time U.S. Open MS Champion
- *U.S. Open MS Runner-up
- *4-time U.S. Open MD Champion
- *3-time U.S. Open MD Runner-up
- *2-time U.S. Open XD Champion
- *2-time U.S. Open XD Runner-up
- *7-time Eastern Open MS Champion

Sean O'Neill

- *2-time Olympian
- *North American World Cup Rep
- *Pan Am MS Runner-up
- *2-time Pan Am XD Champion
- *North American MS Champion
- *Western Japan Open MD Champion
- *Record 18 Gold Medals at Olympic Festival
- *5-time U.S. Closed MS Champion
- *U.S. Closed MS Runner-up
- *5-time U.S. Closed MD/XD Champion

Lou Pagliaro

- *World MS Semifinalist
- *World MD Quarterfinalist
- *4-time U.S. Open MS Champion
- *2-time U.S. Open MD Runner-up
- *4-time Eastern Open MS Champion

Editor's Note:

Naming the "USA Players of the Century" is a controversial job. No matter how you do it, it ends up being somewhat subjective. Do you focus on national titles? International titles? Great wins? Rankings? Impact on the game?

After much discussion with Tim Boggan and others, Tim and I agreed to focus on what they did on the table, both nationally and internationally. From this, we got our choices – and phone calls from those who thought we were wrong (or thought that he/she should have won). I've already heard an earful – it's a no-win situation.

Yet, if you look at the records, these players have it. For example, there are players with comparable international records to Miles – but who weren't close to his national record (10-time U.S. Men's Champion). A few had somewhat comparable national records, but fell far short internationally.

There are several finalists who emigrated to the U.S. Only their record after they moved here is counted.

You can read longer profiles of most of these players at the USA Table Tennis web page at www.usatt.org, under the hall of fame listings.

Are the players chosen the "USA Players of the Century"? They are the picks of USA Table Tennis Magazine. Is it the final verdict? Not in the least! For those of you who disagree with our choices, and have your own nominee, send us a letter explaining why you think another person should be the nominee. We do have to limit letters to 300 words due to space limitations. Longer ones may be edited down or rejected. Send your own nominees to: Larry Hodges, Editor, USA Table Tennis Magazine, 8810 Walnut Hill Rd., Chevy Chase, MD 20815, or email to ttworld@erols.com.

Now ... read on ... you will be tested!

Marty Reisman

*World MS Semifinalist
 *World MS Eighth finalist
 *World MD/XD Semifinalist
 *World MS Consolation Champion
 *English Open MS Champion
 *2-time U.S. Open MS Champion
 *4-time U.S. Open MS Runner-up
 *3-time U.S. Open MD Champion
 *2-time U.S. Open MD Runner-up
 *U.S. Open XD Runner-up
 *3-time CNE MS Champion
 *Leinster (Ire.) Open Runner-up
 *South America International MS Champion
 *Saint Paulo Open MS Champion
 *2-time Eastern Open MS Champion

Sol Schiff

*World MD Champion
 *World Men's Team Champion
 (38-4 in '37-'38 Swaythling Cup play)
 *World MS Consolation Champion
 *World MD/XD Quarterfinalist
 *English Open MD Champion
 *U.S. Open MS Champion
 *4-time U.S. Open MS Runner-up
 *6-time U.S. Open MD Champion
 *4-time U.S. Open MD Runner-up
 *9-time U.S. Open XD Champion
 *6-time U.S. Open XD Runner-up
 *(1936) U.S. Closed MS Champion
 *5-time CNE MS Champion
 *3-time Eastern Open MS Champion

Danny Seemiller

*World #29
 (63-1 in Swaythling Cup 2nd Division Play)
 *World MD Quarterfinalist
 *North American World Cup Rep
 *4-time Western Japan Open MS Champion
 *2-time U.S. Open MS Runner-up
 *2-time U.S. Open MD Champion
 *U.S. Open MD/XD Runner-up
 *Jamaica Benson/Hedges MS, MD, XD Champion
 *Middlesex (Eng.) MS/MD Champion
 *Canadian Open MS Runner-up/MD winner
 *5-time U.S. Closed MS Champion
 *4-time U.S. Closed MS Runner-up
 *11-time U.S. Closed MD Champion
 *7-time U.S. Closed XD Champion
 *CNE 10-time MS finalist, 1973-83
 *6-time Eastern Open MS Champion

Johnny Somael

*World MS/MD/XD Quarterfinalist
 *U.S. Open MS Champion
 *3-time U.S. Open MS Runner-up
 *3-time U.S. Open MD Champion
 *2-time U.S. Open MD Runner-up
 *U.S. Open XD Runner-up

David Zhuang

*Olympian
 *Pan-Am MS Champion
 *U.S. Open XD Champion
 *3-time U.S. Closed MS Champion
 *4-time U.S. Closed MD Champion
 *6-time U.S. Closed XD Champion

WOMEN:**Ruth Aarons**

*World WS Champion
 *World WS Finalist
 (Finalists Disqualified)
 *World Women's Team Champion
 (23-1 in '36-'37 Corbillon Cup Play)
 *World WD Semifinalist
 *World XD Quarterfinalist
 *English Open WS/XD Champion
 *English Open WD Runner-up
 *4-time U.S. Open WS/XD Champion
 *U.S. Open WD Champion
 *U.S. Open WD Runner-up

Sharon Acton

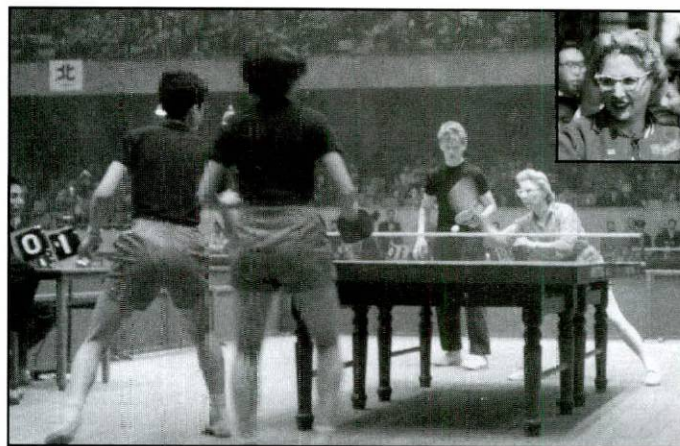
*U.S. Open WS Champion
 *3-time U.S. Open WS Runner-up
 *4-time U.S. Open WD Champion
 *U.S. Open WD Runner-up
 *2-time U.S. Open XD Champion

Insook Na Bhushan

*2-time Olympian
 *U.S. Open WS Champion
 *U.S. Open WS Runner-up
 *2-time U.S. Open WD Runner-up
 *U.S. Open XD Runner-up
 *3-time Pan Am WS Champion
 *2-time Pan Am XD Champion
 *Pan Am WD Champion
 *2-time Jamaica Lovebird WS/WD Champion
 *Jamaica Lovebird WS Runner-up
 *Irish Open WS Runner-up
 *German Open WS Quarterfinalist
 *3-time North American WS Champion
 *11-time U.S. Closed WS Champion
 (also won U.S. Closed event in '76 U.S. Open)
 *2-time U.S. Closed WS Runner-up
 *5-times-straight CNE WS Champion
 *4-time Eastern Open WS Champion

Patty Martinez Cash

*3-time U.S. Open WS Champion
 *4-time U.S. Open WD Champion
 *U.S. Open WD Runner-up
 *2-time U.S. Open XD Champion

**Jun Gao Chang**

*U.S. Open WS Champion
 *U.S. Open WD Champion
 *Pan Am WS Champion
 *English Open WS Semifinalist
 *North American WS Champion
 *4-time U.S. Closed Champion
 *4-time U.S. Closed WD Champion
 *4-time U.S. Closed XD Champion

Bernice Charney Chotras

*2-time U.S. Open Champion
 (17 years apart)
 *2-time U.S. Open WS/WD Runner-up

Amy Feng

*Olympian
 *U.S. Open WS Runner-up
 *2-time U.S. Open XD Champion
 *North American WS Champion
 *2-time North American Runner-up
 *4-time U.S. Closed WS Champion
 *4-time U.S. Closed WD Champion
 *4-time U.S. Closed XD Champion
 *CNE WS/WD/XD Champion

Peggy McLean Folke

*World Women's Team Champion
 *World XD Semifinalist
 *World WS Consolation Champion
 *English Open WS/XD Champion
 *U.S. Open WS/XD Champion
 *U.S. Open WS Runner-up
 *2-time U.S. Open WD Champion
 *4-time Eastern Open WS Champion

Emily Fuller

*World Women's Team Champion
 *World XD Semifinalist
 *2-time U.S. Open WS/WD Champion
 *U.S. Open WS/WD Runner-up
 *U.S. Open XD Champion
 *3-time Eastern Open WS Champion

He-ja Lee

*U.S. Open XD Runner-up
 *Jamaica Lovebird WD, XD Champion
 *3-time U.S. Closed Champion
 *3-time U.S. Closed Runner-up

Reba Kirson Monness

World WD Runner-up
 *U.S. Open WS/XD Champion
 *2-time U.S. Open WS/XD Runner-up
 *U.S. Open WD Runner-up

Leah Neuberger (far right and inset) and Erwin Klein on their way to winning World Mixed Doubles against Japan in 1956.

Leah Thall Neuberger

*World XD Champion
 *World WS Semifinalist
 *World WS Quarterfinalist
 *World WS Eighthfinalist
 *3-time World WD Semifinalist
 *2-time World WD Quarterfinalist
 World WS Consolation Runner-up
 *9-time U.S. Open WS Champion
 *4-time U.S. Open WS Runner-up
 *12-time U.S. Open WD Champion
 *7-time U.S. Open WD Runner-up
 *8-time U.S. Open XD Champion
 *5-time U.S. Open XD Runner-up
 *11-time CNE WS Champion
 13-time Eastern Open WS Champion

Sally Green Prouty

*5-time U.S. Open WS Champion
 *3-time U.S. Open WS Runner-up
 *3-time U.S. Open WD Champion
 *4-time U.S. Open WD Runner-up
 *5-time U.S. Open XD Champion
 *3-time U.S. Open XD Runner-up
 *multi-time Western Open WS Champion

Mildred Shahian

*World Women's Team Champion
 *English Open WS Champion
 *2-time U.S. Open WS Champion
 *3-time U.S. Open WS Runner-up
 *6-time U.S. Open WD Champion
 *7-time U.S. Open WD Runner-up
 *U.S. Open XD Champion
 *3-time U.S. Open XD Runner-up

"Tybie" Thall Sommer

*World XD Champion
 *World Women's Team Champion
 *World WS/WD Semifinalist
 *World WS Eighthfinalist
 *English Open WD/XD Champion
 *3-time U.S. Open WD Champion
 *U.S. Open WD Runner-up

Connie Stace Sweeris

*U.S. Open WS Champion
 *U.S. Open WS Runner-up
 *3-time U.S. Open WD Champion
 *U.S. Open WD Runner-up
 *4-time U.S. Open XD Champion

USA Table Tennis Goes to the Movies!

By Larry Hodges

Table Tennis isn't exactly known as a TV sport, but many people do not realize there really are some movies and TV shows that feature table tennis. Many are available at your local video store. What follows are reviews of some of the more "classic" showings of table tennis in movies. (Next issue: TV.) I put the list together by posting notes on the Internet newsgroups rec.sport.table-tennis and alt.movies, plus ones I'd seen or heard about over the years.

All shows that I have seen are graded from one to five paddles for amount of table tennis, quality of table tennis, and quality of the movie in general.

Forrest Gump (1994)

Director: Robert Zemeckis; 142 minutes



Does this movie really need to be explained? Is there anyone who hasn't seen it? Hanks stars as a simple-minded but well-meaning man who leads a charmed life as he teaches Elvis Presley to dance, becomes a football star, meets John F. Kennedy, serves with honors in Vietnam, meets Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon, speaks at an anti-war rally at the Washington Monument, hangs out with the Yuppies, discovers the break-in at the Watergate, opens a profitable shrimping business, becomes an original investor in Apple Computers, and runs back and forth across the country for several years. However, it is his table tennis exploits that interest us.

Forrest becomes an international table tennis star on the U.S. team that tours China in 1971. The rallies are not particularly realistic, but are spectacular to watch. To create them, Hanks simply did the motions (and he has really awkward strokes), and the ball was added by computer afterwards. You can also rent the video "Through the Eyes of Forrest Gump," which is about the making of the movie, including the table tennis scenes.

Table Tennis Quantity: 4 paddles

Table Tennis Quality: 4 paddles

Movie Quality: 5 paddles



W.C. Fields and Jan Duggan in *You Can't Cheat an Honest Man*.

You Can't Cheat an Honest Man (1939)

Directors: George Marshall, Edward F. Cline; 79 minutes

In this movie, W.C. Fields stars as a crooked circus manager. There is no table tennis until near the very end, but then there's a 3-4 minute sequence that is one of the funniest I've ever seen.

Fields is already causing turmoil at a party when he walks into a room with a ping pong table. He picks up a paddle, and says in his nasal voice, "What's this, a beaver tail?" He then puts the paddle down and has a conversation for a few minutes with someone else. He then walks back to the table, picks up a paddle, and begins to play a guest.

Throughout the sequence (and it's all one single rally, apparently), Fields is trash-talking and yelling one-liners. The sequence begins with Fields intentionally returning the first shot with the edge of his racket (a nifty trick). Then, the two rally like typical ping-pong players, i.e. slowly. Then the camera speeds up, and the rally becomes very fast, as does the side-to-side turning of the many onlooker's heads. A ball goes into a woman's mouth; Fields smacks her in the back, the ball pops out onto the table, the rally continues. Then the two begin blasting the ball back and forth as the camera pans in on each of them. If you watch closely, you can tell that their shots aren't going anywhere near the table, but the effect is that they are making one incredible shot after another from all parts of the room. Then the ball flies out the window, and lands on a water fountain, balancing on the top of the water spout; no problem, as Fields races outside, and smacks the ball back

through the window, and races back in; the rally continues. The ball gets stuck in the updraft of a fan; Fields smacks it back into play, and the rally continues. Fields finally wins the point by smacking the ball and knocking down his opponent.

Side note: this is the movie where Fields mutters the immortal line, "Somebody's taken the cork out of my lunch." The movie also features the ventriloquist act of Edgar Bergen with Charlie McCarthy.

Table Tennis Quantity: 2 paddles

Table Tennis Quality: 5 paddles

Movie Quality: 3.5 paddles

W.C. FIELDS AND THE SEARCH FOR "...AN HONEST MAN."

While searching for table tennis movies, I experienced a bizarre coincidence. Potomac Video is one of the largest local video stores, and I went with a list of table tennis movies to search for. The movie I was looking for wasn't on the shelf, so I was about to go to another section to look for another movie when I overheard a man saying, "There must be a W.C. Fields section." Since I too was looking for a W.C. Fields movie, I asked the man what he was looking for. He said, "I'm looking for 'You Can't Cheat An Honest Man.' I want my son to see this crazy ping-pong scene in it." It was exactly the movie I had been looking for!

Both of us gave up on finding the movie, since it wasn't where it was supposed to be. Later on, I came back to look one more time, and found it out of order.

Nice Girls Don't Explode (1987)

Director: Chuck Martinez; 92 minutes

The premise of the movie is simple: the hero is a ping-pong star, and his girl friend's mother will do anything to make sure her daughter doesn't go out with ... a ping-pong player! In other words, there is nothing lower than a ping-pong player! Whenever our hero meets with his girl friend, fires break out, explosions go off, and you think it must be supernatural. (Spoiler's alert - plot about to be given away!) Actually, the girl's mother has rigged the entire region. She is spying on the two, and whenever they get together, she sets the fireworks off by remote control. In the end, things work out, and the mom agrees to their marriage.

At the start of the movie, there are scenes showing the hero winning trophies, and there's a scene where he rallies with a Popsicle. At the very end, he's playing in the final of the Chinese Open. His new mother-in-law drops a cookie, which falls onto the court. The hero slips on it during a rally, and makes a desperate return of a shot which arcs through the air and lands on the net, where it balances precariously for several seconds before falling over and winning the Championship for him!

Table Tennis Quantity: 1.5 paddles

Table Tennis Quality: 2.5 paddles

Movie Quality: 3 paddles

A Great Wall (1986)

Director: Peter Wang; 103 minutes

This is one of the few movies that takes table tennis seriously. A Chinese man living in San Francisco decides to take his family back to China. His son, a high school football star, joins the local youth table tennis team, and becomes their best player. In the final of the local youth championships, he is up 2-0 and 18-13, but loses deuce in the fifth.

Throughout the movie there are recurring scenes of serious table tennis training going on, including a spectacular sequence of kindergarten kids in training. (We can only hope this was the Chinese Kindergarten Champions, and not just a typical group!) You see the Chinese coach working with players at various times throughout the movie. However, the main two players in the movie, the football star and his rival, are obviously both actors, and to the educated eye, they are made to look "good" by top players either hitting or lobbing the ball right to them, or (in many cases) feeding multiball. In the youth final, many of the nicer rallies are obviously done by a coach feeding multiball - look closely, and you'll see the ball doesn't always come back from where it was hit to. There's also a shot where one player smashes cleanly off the end, but the rally continues in one continuous sequence - a coach is obviously feeding multiball. There's also a small problem in that it's ob-

vious that other players in the training session are better than our two "stars" - but they're the stars, so they are in the final!

The movie is about 2/3 in Chinese with English subtitles. The rest is in English.

Table Tennis Quantity: 2 paddles

Table Tennis Quality: 4 paddles

Movie Quality: 3.5 paddles

Ping Pong Bath Station (1998)

Director: Gen Yamakawa; 110 minutes

Shortly before we went to press, I saw a brochure for an upcoming film festival. It rather grabbed my eye because there was a picture of a woman playing penholder about to serve next to a description of this movie! It is in Japanese, but English subtitled. I haven't seen the movie, but their description begins as follows: "To the ranks of great sports comedies can be added this serene crowd-pleaser about the inspirational power of table tennis to overcome ennui and adversity." It apparently is about a 42-year-old Japanese housewife with a husband and son who abandon them to become a table tennis player.



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Stairway to Heaven (1946)

Previously titled A Matter of Life and Death

Directors: Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger; 115 minutes

There is one rather interesting table tennis scene in this movie. An English pilot is about to crash in World War II, and he has no parachute. He talks to and falls in love with a girl on the radio. He tells her his situation, they say goodbye, and he jumps out of the plane rather than burn up in a crash. He wakes up unharmed, thinking mistakenly he's in heaven. It turns out he's the first "mistake" by the afterworld in over 1000 years – the "angel" that was supposed to lead him to the afterlife (a hilarious Frenchman) missed him during his fall, and so he survived. A series of scenes follow where the angel tries convince him to follow him to the afterlife – with time stopping for everyone else while they talk. Because he has now met and really fallen in love with the girl he met on the radio, he refuses.

In one scene, the pilot is sleeping at his doctor's house, and his doctor and the girl he's in love with are playing table tennis while discussing his case. (They're just basement players, but pretty good rallies.) They stop playing, and talk for a while, then go back to playing. The angel comes to visit, and the game freezes with the ball in mid-air, and the doctor in mid-stroke. The really hilarious thing is that when the pilot goes over to them, they are both frozen in a different position than when they had been in before! Oops! After a while, the angel goes away, and the table tennis game continues as if nothing had happened. In the end, there is a trial in the afterlife, and the pilot wins the case, and is allowed to continue living. According to Blockbuster Entertainment, the movie is a 5-star movie. I agree.

Table Tennis Quantity: 1.5 paddles

Table Tennis Quality: 3.5 paddles (because of frozen ball in air effect)

Movie Quality: 5 paddles

Ping Pong (1987)

Director: Po Chih Leong

I was not able to find out much about this movie. Law student Elaine Choi becomes a "Ping Pong Diplomat," bouncing between modern family relationships and traditional Chinese customs, in an effort to discover the secrets of Sam Wong's enigmatic will.

The Adventures of Elmo in Grouchland (1999)

Director: Gary Halvorson; 77 minutes

One of the characters is entertaining the main antagonist by playing table tennis. The character is Bug the bug, who plays by hitting the ball, and running around the table to hit the ball back. (Information contributed by Kevin Walton.)

Blood, Sweat & Tears:



Ol Dragon in Danger (1996)

Director: Mitsuhiro Mihara

I couldn't find this movie, and am not sure if it has English subtitles or not (it's in Japanese). A woman in an arranged marriage falls in love with a rich handsome man at first sight, who likes table tennis. She comes to compete with her rival in every respect since they were children by playing table tennis to obtain the "prince on the white horse."

Inventing The Abbotts (1997)

Director: Pat O'Connor; 106 minutes

This movie is set in the 1950s. Two brothers who don't get along very well periodically play table tennis in their attic. There's also an interesting scene in a soda shop where, during a conversation, you can see a ping pong paddle hanging on the wall, and a ping pong ball sitting on the counter.


Table Tennis Quantity: 1 paddles

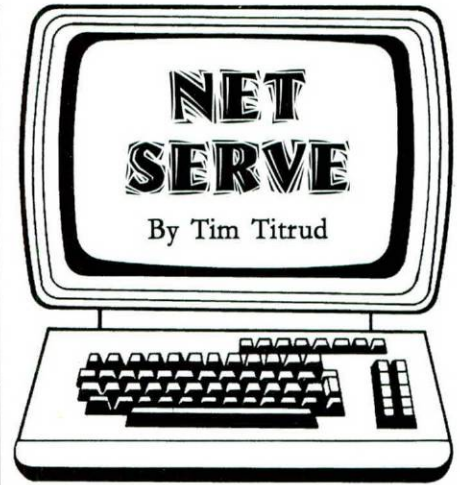
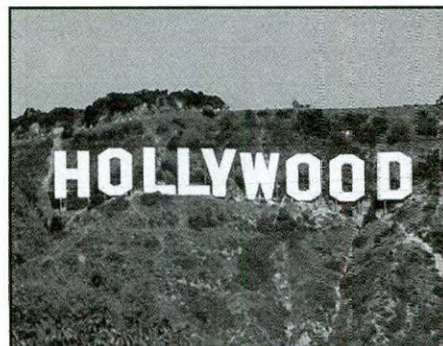
Table Tennis Quality: 1 paddles

Movie Quality: 3 paddles

Scum

There are a couple of table tennis scenes in this British prison film from the 1970s, but I was unable to find out much about it.

NEXT ISSUE: USA Table Tennis Magazine explores Table Tennis on TV. If you know of a TV show that featured table tennis, let us know! Current list includes episodes of The Gary Shandling Show, Get Smart, The Odd Couple, Everyone Loves Raymond, and Sesame Street. (The only one I've actually seen is the Shandling Show, so if you want to send in a short description of any of these, send it in!) 



DENIS' TABLE TENNIS WORLD

"Denis' Table Tennis World" (<http://users.hol.gr/~dimoss/>) was created in April 1998 by Dimosthenis E. Messinis, a former Greek table tennis player who is currently the Scientific Director of the Greek Table Tennis Association and the Physical Trainer of all the Greek National Teams. The site is a typical portal site for all table tennis fans. Inside this site you will find many articles which cover technique, tactics, equipment facts, coaching and scientific subjects as well as tips for everyone on a monthly basis. You will also see unique table tennis exercises covering all levels and playing styles, which will help you to organize your training session. Don't forget to fill in the forms provided to get an email notification of the monthly updates!

Some of the articles and the exercises in "Denis' Table Tennis World" are included in "Table Tennis: From A to Z," a book written by Messinis which will be available for shipment in April 2000. The book itself is a treasure of information for both beginners and advanced players as well as for coaches who want to reach the top, according to World #15 Kalinikos Kreanga.

Visitors to this site will have the opportunity to see photos of the most well-known table tennis players, meet new friends, and learn the most recent news about the sport. The official rules section and a special beginners' page are dedicated to all who want to get involved in this exciting sport.

I think "Denis' Table Tennis World" deserves your visit because it gives you a more scientific approach to table tennis. Bookmark it and stay in touch with the most recent technical and tactical trends in table tennis!

To recommend other interesting table tennis related web sites, please email me at SIXLEAVES@AOL.COM

Photo by Gerry Chua ©2000



**Croatian Open
Men's Singles Champion
Vladimir Samsonov**

CROATIAN OPEN

Zagreb, Croatia • March 23-26, 2000

Mens' Singles – Final: Vladimir Samsonov (BLR) d. Chiang Peng-Lung (TPE), 14,19,19;
SF: Samsonov d. Jan-Ove Waldner (SWE), 10,9,13; Chiang d. Jean-Michel Saive (CRO), -17,17,12,14; **QF:** Samsonov d. Koji Matsushita (JPN), 11,15,16; Waldner d. Seiko Iseki (JPN), 15,-19,16,-19,18; Chiang d. Yang Min (ITA), 18,-13,-13,19,12; Saive d. Jorgen Persson (SWE), 14,14,9.

Women's Singles – Final: Chire Koyama (JPN) d. Krisztina Toth (HUN), 15,-16,9,13;
SF: Koyama d. Jing Tian-Zorner (GER), -9,21,11,13; Toth d. Tamara Boros (CRO), -16,15,15,14; **QF:** Toth d. Chen Jing (TPE), 18,11,-19,-8,17; Boros d. Alessia Arisi (ITA), -15,17,-15,16,11; Tian-Jorner d. Viktoria Pavlovich (BLR), 18,16,12; Koyama d. Olga Nemes (GER), 16,22,11.

Men's Doubles – Final: Chiang Peng-Lung/Chang Yuan-Su (TPE) d. Karl Jindrak/Robert Gardos (AUT), 18,16; **SF:** Chiang/Chang d. Vladimir Samsonov/Zoran Primorac (BLR/CRO), 14,-17,18; Jindrak/Gardos d. Aleks Karakasevic/Andrea Filimon (YUG/ROM), 19,14.

Women's Doubles – Final: Chen Jing/Jing Xu (TPE) d. Rinko Sakata/Kazuko Naito (JPN), 11,12; **SF:** Chen/Xu d. Krisztina Toth/Elke Schall (HUN/GER), w.o.; Sakata/Naito d. Svetlana Ganina/Kostromina Tatyana (RUS), w.o.

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SAC-REC WINTER OPEN

Sacramento, CA • February 5, 2000

By James Therriault

95 players participated and had a great time, with all events round robin. Individually barriered courts and an accurate time schedule added to the enjoyment. The mood was a fun and peaceful one, with only one player over 2150 entered – Avishy Schmidt, who was our open winner even though he was almost knocked off by local Thanh Nguyen in his first match. The sportsmanship of all the players was outstanding. Much credit in this regard is due to Northern California Coaches Bill Lui and Masaaki Tajima, who are two of the finest people in our sport.

One of Masaaki's up-and-coming students is 11-year-old Misha Kazantsev, who played well in all the higher events. He ended up taking home the 2nd place trophy in Under 2000, with longtime San Francisco competitor Kingston Gee winning the final, 19 in the third, due to some outstanding play of his own.

Reno's Howard Lambert took home two trophies by ousting fellow Nevada player Rick Vanderhorst in the Under 1500 final, but losing to Mike Sturtevant (Modesto) in the Under 1350 final. Way to go Mike! I'm sure Howard's rating will move up quite a bit. Andrew Huynh also took home two trophies (second in Under 750 and Under 500). Those events were won by Larry Scott (Grass Valley) and Navid Rastegar (Palo Alto), respectively.



Photo by John Oros ©2000

The Under 1200 final was an all-Fairfield Club final, as Ray Pugh got past a hot Daniel Amen. And in the last match of the tournament, Harvey Gotliffe (Santa Cruz) and Alex Varady (Concord) gave the few of us left a thrill in the under 1625 final as Harvey rallied from 20-17 down in the third to win 24-22, with Harvey using his hardbat to chop and pick hit his way to victory!

Congratulations to Sacramento's Dave Moon and Dave Manhart in winning Under 3300

Doubles over Joseph Yick and Hackie Honda. Twelve teams entered, a new record for doubles. Look for a possible two-person team format in one of our future tournaments.

And last but not least, in the hardbat final, the ever-improving hardbat enthusiasts Scott Gordon and Lorin Benedict dueled, with Scott prevailing in three games. Thanks to all the players for their cooperation and support to make this a great tournament!

Open: Avishy Schmidt d. Ionut Zamfir, 16,7.
U2300: Joey Hu d. Auria Malek, 13,-14,19.
U2150: Thanh Nguyen d. Thomas Yeh, -18,14,11.
U2000: Kingston Gee d. Misha Kazantsev, 20,-14,19.
U1875: Kock Lee d. Wallace Liu, 12,18.
U1750: Ngai-Chi Chung d. Wesley Lee, 17,-20,16.
U1625: Harvey Gotliffe d. Alex Varady, -16,19,22.
U1500: Howard Lambert d. Rick Vanderhorst, 11,12.
U1350: Mike Sturtevant d. Howard Lambert, 13,-16,16.
U1200: Ray Pugh d. Daniel Amen, 16,7.
U1000: Ralph Harriman d. Trevor Runyan, 19,-14,17.
U750: Larry Scott d. Andrew Huynh, -12,17,19.
U500: Navid Rastegar d. Andrew Huynh, 20,10.
Under 15: David On d. Kevin Phung, 14,13.
Hardbat: Scott Gordon d. Lorin Benedict, 14,-17,10.
U3300 Doubles: David Moon/Dave Manhart d. Joseph Yick/Hackie Honda, 2-1. 🏓

MILLENNIUM MADNESS OPEN

Mesa, AZ • March 12, 2000

By Wayne Johnson

There was a lot of great action at the first tournament hosted by the Mesa Table Tennis Club. Competition was so good that no one walked away undefeated and the Championship Class ended in a 4-way tie! A total of 39 players entered the giant round robin and handicapped singles.

Championship Class

The finals of the Championship Class came down to a giant round robin of seven players. Five of the players were well-warmed up since they had played six matches in the preliminary round robin. One would think that the top two seeds would have an advantage since this would be their first matches. But wrong – like wine, fine table tennis play ages over the day!

Leo Lucas of Arizona completed his matches with a record of 4-2 but had losses that proved costly against Tom Wintrich of New Mexico and Luis Houed of Arizona. Even with this, Leo had to stick around until the end since he still had a chance.

Tom Wintrich of New Mexico was the next player to enter the tie with 19-in-the-third win over Mario Lorenc of Arizona. Tom was in good posi-

tion to win with a win over Lucas and Houed.

So it all came down to the last match of the tournament between Luis Houed of Arizona and Mike Perez of California. With a win, Mike would seal up first place; a loss would cause a 4-way tie with Houed, Lucas and Wintrich. Houed won the first game at 17. After the games Houed had a talk with Lucas about strategy for game two. Perez jumped out to a 10-0 lead in game two. Perez then yelled over to Lucas, "Hey Leo, tell him some more!" Perez ended up winning the game at 15. In the third game Houed found his groove again and won easily at 11.

In the tie breaking, Tom Wintrich came out on top due to his win over Houed. Luis Houed took second with Leo Lucas in third and Mike Perez in 4th.

Championship: 1st Tom Wintrich; 2nd Luis Houed; 3rd Leo Lucas; 4th Mike Perez

Class A: 1st Matt Winkler; 2nd Dan Hambleton; 3rd Michael Shieh.

Class B: 1st Jerry Boerwinkle; 2nd Keith Cabatana; 3rd Len Winkler.

Class C: 1st Bob Enders; 2nd LeRoy Hensley; 3rd Lucille Kolnik.

Handicap: 1st William Brin; 2nd Jane Magras. 🏓



Tom Wintrich (above), Luis Houed, Leo Lucas and Mike Perez were in a four-way tie for first in the Open. Tom won out in the tie-breaking procedure.

North American Olympic Trials

April 6-8, 2000 • Rochester, NY • By Larry Hodges



Some had trained for much of their lives for these Trials. So it was inevitable that, with 32 players battling for six spots (3 men, 3 women), there was much heart-break ... but also great relief for those who made it. (See doubles note at end of article.)

The Trials ran smoothly and (except when earlier matches held things up, which happened often – there were numerous expedite matches) mostly on time. Often there were 500+ spectators in the stands. Many thanks to the volunteer staff that put this event together – Richard McAfee, his staff, Ray Mack, the 40 local volunteers, USA Table Tennis Officials, Bud Light, Butterfly, Monroe County Sports Development Corporation, and The Greater Rochester Visitors Association.

Eight USA men, eight Canadian men, eight USA women, and eight Canadian women, all the survivors of their country's Olympic Qualifier, congregated in Rochester to do battle with those who would deny them one of the six Olympic singles spots reserved for North America. Three players – USA's Gao Jun, and Canada's Johnny Huang and Lijuan Geng – had pre-qualified due to their world rankings.

An interesting contrast was the age of the players. The 16 Canadians averaged 20.6 years of age, with their women averaging 18.8, their men 22.4. The 16 USA players averaged 27.5, with both the men and women averaging over 27 years of age.

On day one, half the field was eliminated. Players were put in groups of four, with the top two advancing to the final eight, with carry-over matches counting. Each group had two USA and

two Canadian players.

In Group A, Cheng Yinghua lost a game to Shashin Shodhan in his first match. Two days later, in his last match of the tournament, Cheng would lose a game to Canada's Horatio Pinteia. In between, he would win 24 straight games. Cheng and Kurt Liu advanced, but not before Shashin forced Kurt to five games, 16, -17, -16, 19, 15.

In Group B, David Zhuang and Horatio Pinteia advanced. David didn't lose a game; Horatio had battles with both USA's Keith Alban (-17, 15, 15, 22) and Canada's Dennis Su (-19, 11, 21, -19, 9).

In Group C, Khoa Nguyen, unseeded because he no longer had a world ranking after his 2-year "retirement," found himself in a group with USA's Todd Sweeris and Canadian Pradeeban Peter-Paul – easily the strongest group on the men's side. All three would very likely have advanced in most other groups. But something had to give – and Khoa, who had missed making the Olympics by one spot in both 1992 and 1996, went down in the preliminaries this time, losing to both of these rivals – first to Todd, 19, 21, 17, then to Peter-Paul, 15, -9, 18, 17. Sweeris and Peter-Paul advanced, with Sweeris getting the carry-over win over Peter-Paul, -18, 10, 12, 13.

In Group D, Canada's junior phenom, just-turned-15 Bence Csaba, upset Canada's #1 seed, Hai Tao Geng, 15, 20, -14, -18, 15 (losing nine in a row from up 18-12 in the fourth, but pulling out the fifth), and forced a 3-way tie between himself, Geng and Eric Owens. USA's Sean Lonergan lost 18 in the fifth to Owens, and went into his

last match, against Bence, knowing he needed to win 3-0 to have a chance to advance – but after losing the first, it was over. In the three-way tie, Owens and Geng advanced, with Geng getting the -16, 23, 20, 16 carry-over win over Owens.

The women's preliminaries were less eventful. Jasna Reed, no longer with a world ranking, was unseeded, but except for her two "upsets," the higher seeded player won every match.

In Group A, USA's Lily Yip and Canada's Marie-Christine Roussy, playing with the "Seemiller" windshield wiper grip, advanced with relative ease, with Lily getting the carry-over win over Roussy, -15, 13, 5, 11.

In Group B, USA's Tawny Banh came from 15-17 down in the fifth win against Canada's Petra Cada, 18, -24, -20, 18, 18. Both advanced, neither losing a game to the rest of the group.

In Group C, USA's Virginia Sung (a chopper with short pips on the backhand, inverted on the forehand) and Canada's Wen Xiao Wang (an attacker with short pips on the forehand, medium pips on the backhand) advanced, with Virginia getting the carry-over win over Wen, 10, 10, 21.

In Group D, the "unseeded" USA's Jasna Reed went lost only to Canada's defensive star Chris Xu, a conventional chopper with long pips, and both advanced. USA's Michelle Do, the top USA seed in the group, was a victim of Jasna's unseeded status – if Jasna had been seeded #1 (as her rating would have put her), Michelle would have battled with Virginia Sung instead of Jasna to advance.

In the Final Eight, Cheng Yinghua easily went 7-0, with a final game record of 21-1 (27-2

Men's Final Eight

Name		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Record	Place
A Cheng Yinghua	USA		W 13,19,17	W 15,19,13	W 13,18,13	W 17,10,18	W -14,19,7,19	W 16,18,12	W 13,18,12	7-0	1
B Eric Owens	USA	L 0-3		L 0-3	L 1-3	W 14,15,13	L 0-3	L 1-3	W 2-3	1-6	7
C David Zhuang	USA	L 0-3	W 14,19,12		W 13,-15,-12,18,18	W 17,17,4	W 10,17,14	W 17,-19,11,13	W 19,20,-17,-19,13	6-1	2
D Todd Sweeris	USA	L 0-3	W 18,19,-20,16	L 2-3		W -18,10,12,13	L 2-3	W 19,-18,15,17	L 1-3	3-4	4
E Pradeeban Peter-Paul	CAN	L 0-3	L 0-3	L 0-3	L 1-3		W 15,20,22	L 2-3	L 2-3	1-6	8
F Horatio Pinteia	CAN	L 1-3	W 20,17,13	L 0-3	W 13,14,-19,-20,17	L 0-3		L 0-3	L 0-3	2-5	6
G Hai Tao Geng	CAN	L 0-3	W -16,23,20,16	L 1-3	L 1-3	W -14,16,25,-17,13	W 6,19,18		L 0-3	3-4	5
H Kurt Liu	CAN	L 0-3	W 16,-19,18,-15,17	L 2-3	W -15,14,18,18	W 20,-21,15,-16,15	W 16,10,15	W 18,11,12		5-2	3

Women's Final Eight

Name		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Record	Place
A Lily Yip	USA		W 15,14,13	W -15,17,-11,9,21	W 17,-9,-12,19,9	L 0-3	L 1-3	L 1-3	W -15,13,5,11	4-3	5
B Chris Xu	CAN	L 0-3		L 0-3	L 2-3	L 1-3	W 13,17,19	W 20,12,-17,-19,14	W 5,10,12	3-4	6
C Tawny Banh	USA	L 2-3	W 16,12,19		W 11,10,-18,20	W 15,11,17	W 18,-24,-20,18,18	L 0-3	W 12,11,16	5-2	2
D Virginia Sung	USA	L 2-3	W 18,11,-17,-12,12	L 1-3		W 10,10,21	W 11,17,16	L 2-3	W 12,-19,12,8	4-3	3
E Wen Xiao Wang	CAN	W 20,19,17	W 19,-20,17,14	L 0-3	L 0-3		L 0-3	W 19,14,18	W 8,8,9	4-3	4
F Petra Cada	CAN	W -19,13,18,16	L 0-3	L 2-3	L 0-3	W 16,19,14		L 0-3	W 16,12,12	3-4	7
G Jasna Reed	USA	W 11,19,-12,20	L 2-3	W 20,13,18	W -16,17,-15,14,15	L 0-3	W 18,15,16		W 12,19,13	5-2	1
H Marie-Christine Roussy	CAN	L 1-3	L 0-3	L 0-3	L 1-3	L 0-3	L 0-3	L 0-3		0-7	8

for the tournament), to take the first Olympic spot. Cheng was in top form, looping and blocking from both sides relentlessly. He obviously wanted this very badly.

In the tournament's biggest battle, Sweeris was up 2-1 in games and led 17-13 (and 16-10 before that) in the fourth against David Zhuang, then 14-11 in the fifth. Both times Zhuang won all five on his serve, and Zhuang ended up winning, 13, -15, -12, 18, 18.

From there on, Zhuang ran out the field, ending up 6-1 to take the second Olympic spot.

The battle for the third and final spot was between Sweeris, Kurt Liu and Hai Tao Geng. However, when Liu defeated Sweeris in round five (-15, 14, 18, 18), he was in the driver's seat. Sweeris led 16-14 in the fourth, but Liu scored five in a row on his serve, a la Zhuang. Sweeris served at 18-19, Liu popped it up, but Sweeris missed! Liu ended it with a net-ball winner. For Geng to have a chance to catch Liu, he would have to beat both Sweeris and Cheng. He lost both, and so Liu got the final spot, with Sweeris the first alternate.

The women's Final Eight had a more exciting finish. Going into the final round, seven of the eight players were still in the running for an Olympic spot! Jasna Reed, Tawny Banh and Wen Xiao Wang were all 4-2, while Virginia Sung, Lily Yip, Chris Xu and Petra Cada were all 3-3. Only Roussy was back at 0-6, but hoping to be a final-round spoiler against Jasna. It wasn't to be, as Jasna won to grab the first spot, 12, 19, 13 (coming back from 12-17 in the second game) to finish with a 5-2 record.

Due to the extremely complicated scenario, the instant Jasna won against Roussy, Canada's Wen Xiao Wang (playing Tawny Banh at the same time) unknowingly clinched a spot. Roughly speaking, it meant that at worst, Wang would finish fourth. However, since a country is restricted to a maximum of three players, and USA would then have four players (the pre-qualified Gao Jun, and a sweep of the top three spots here), the next spot would go to the highest finishing Canadian - Wang. Tawny Banh, who would win against Wang in this final round, clinched the second spot with a 5-2 record - if she'd lost, the spot would have gone to Lily Yip.

Virginia Sung, loser of five-game matches to both Jasna and Lily Yip, finished third at 4-3. However, with USA's Gao, Jasna and Tawny all grabbing spots, and the three-player country limit, the next spot went to Wang. (Wang, Sung and Yip all finished 4-3, with the final order determined by their game record among themselves.)

So, including pre-qualified players, here are the final North American Olympic Singles Players:

- **USA Men:** Cheng Yinghua, David Zhuang
- **USA Women:** Gao Jun, Jasna Reed, Tawny Banh
- **Canadian Men:** Johnny Huang, Kurt Liu
- **Canadian Women:** Lijuan Geng, Wen Xiao Wang

One week after the Olympic Singles Trials were the **Olympic Doubles Trials** - finishing as we go to press - more next issue. Here are the Doubles Teams:

- **USA Men:** Cheng Yinghua/Khoa Nguyen, David Zhuang/Todd Sweeris
- **USA Women:** Gao Jun/Michelle Do, Jasna Reed/Tawny Banh
- **Canadian Men:** Johnny Huang/Kurt Liu
- **Canadian Women:** Lijuan Geng/Marie-Christine Roussy



Olympic Qualifiers
(clockwise from top left)
David Zhuang, Cheng Yinghua, Tawny Banh and Jasna Reed join pre-qualified Gao Jun on USA Olympic Singles Team.



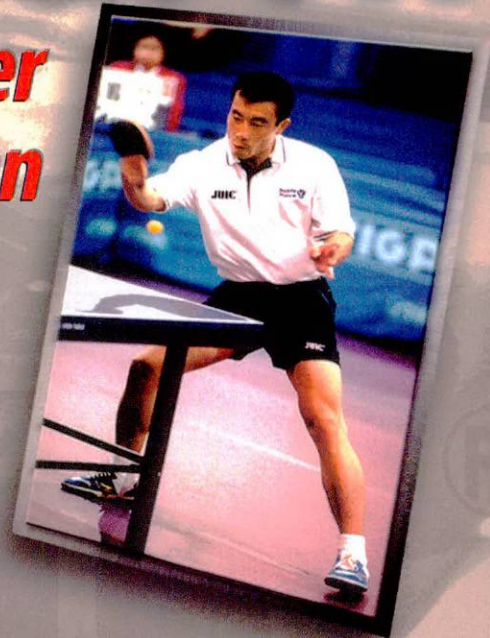
Kurt Liu and Wen Xiao Wang joined Johnny Huang and Lijuan Geng on the Canadian team.

Preliminary Women's Results (Top two advance):
Group A: 1st Lily Yip (USA), 3-0 (d. Roussy, -15,13,5,11; d. Lee, 16,16,14; d. Chiu, 8,19,9); 2nd Marie-Christine Roussy (CAN), 2-1 (d. Lee, 10,13,13; d. Chiu, 13,25,-23,12); 3rd Vivian Lee (USA), 1-2 (d. Chiu, -12,18,-17,23,19); 4th Wennin Chiu (CAN), 0-3.
Group B: 1st Tawny Banh (USA), 3-0 (d. Cada, 18,-24,-20,18,18; d. Gee, 5,7,18; d. Gagnon, 8,11,12); 2nd Petra Cada (CAN), 2-1 (d. Gee, 18,14,16; d. Gagnon, 3,10,19); 3rd Diana Gee (USA), 1-2 (d. Gagnon, 17,10,19); 4th Jo-Annie Gagnon (CAN), 0-3.
Group C: 1st Virginia Sung (USA), 3-0 (d. Wang, 10,10,21; d. Yang, -15,19,14,14; d. Pilon, 2,16,12); 2nd Wen Xiao Wang (CAN), 2-1 (d. Yang, -17,21,19,15; d. Pilon 13,17,9); 3rd Simone Yang (USA), 1-2 (d. Pilon, 18,8,14); 4th Erica Pilon (CAN), 0-3.
Group D: 1st Chris Xu (CAN), 3-0 (d. Reed, 20,12,-17,-19,14; d. Do 15,9,15; d. Zheng, 10,10,8); 2nd Jasna Reed (USA), 2-1 (d. Do, -16,13,10,16; d. Zheng, 12,10,16); 3rd Michelle Do (USA), 1-2 (d. Zheng, 11,8,16); 4th Pei-Pei Zheng (CAN), 0-3.

Preliminaries Men's Results (Top two advance):
Group A: 1st Cheng Yinghua (USA), 3-0 (d. Liu, 13,18,12; d. Shodhan, 13,9,-15,15; d. Kamkar-Parsi, 15,15,5); 2nd Kurt Liu (CAN), 2-1 (d. Shodhan, 16,-17,-16,19,15; d. Kamkar-Parsi, 11,20,17); 3rd Homayoun Kamkar-Parsi (CAN), 1-2 (d. Shodhan, 15,-24,-8,23,16); 4th Shashin Shodhan (USA), 0-3.
Group B: 1st David Zhuang (USA), 3-0 (d. Pintea, 10,17,14; d. Alban, 17,14,10; d. Su, 19,21,16); 2nd Horatio Pintea (CAN), 2-1 (d. Alban, -17,15,15,22; d. Su -19,11,21,-19,9); 3rd Dennis Su (CAN), 1-2 (d. Alban, 19,20,19); 4th Keith Alban (USA), 0-3.
Group C: 1st Todd Sweeris (USA), 3-0 (d. Peter-Paul, -18,10,12,13; d. Nguyen, 19,21,17; d. Therien, 9,14,17); 2nd Pradeeban Peter-Paul (CAN), 2-1 (d. Nguyen, 15,-9,18,17; d. Therien, 16,-16,13,-14,19) 3rd Khoa Nguyen (USA), 1-2 (d. Therien, -20,11,-15,13,14); 4th Xavier Therien (CAN), 0-3.
Group D: 1st Hai Tao Geng (CAN), 2-1 (d. Owens, -16,23,20,16; d. Lonergan, 12,-19,12,16); 2nd Eric Owens (USA), 2-1 (d. Lonergan, 18,-16,-15,12,18; d. Csaba, 9,18,13); 3rd Bence Csaba (CAN), 2-1 (d. Geng, 15,20,-14,-18,15; d. Lonergan, 15,17,14); 4th Sean Lonergan (USA), 0-3.

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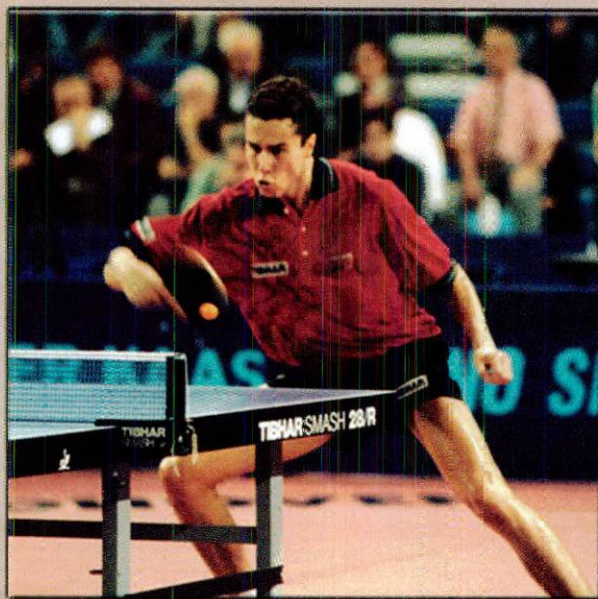
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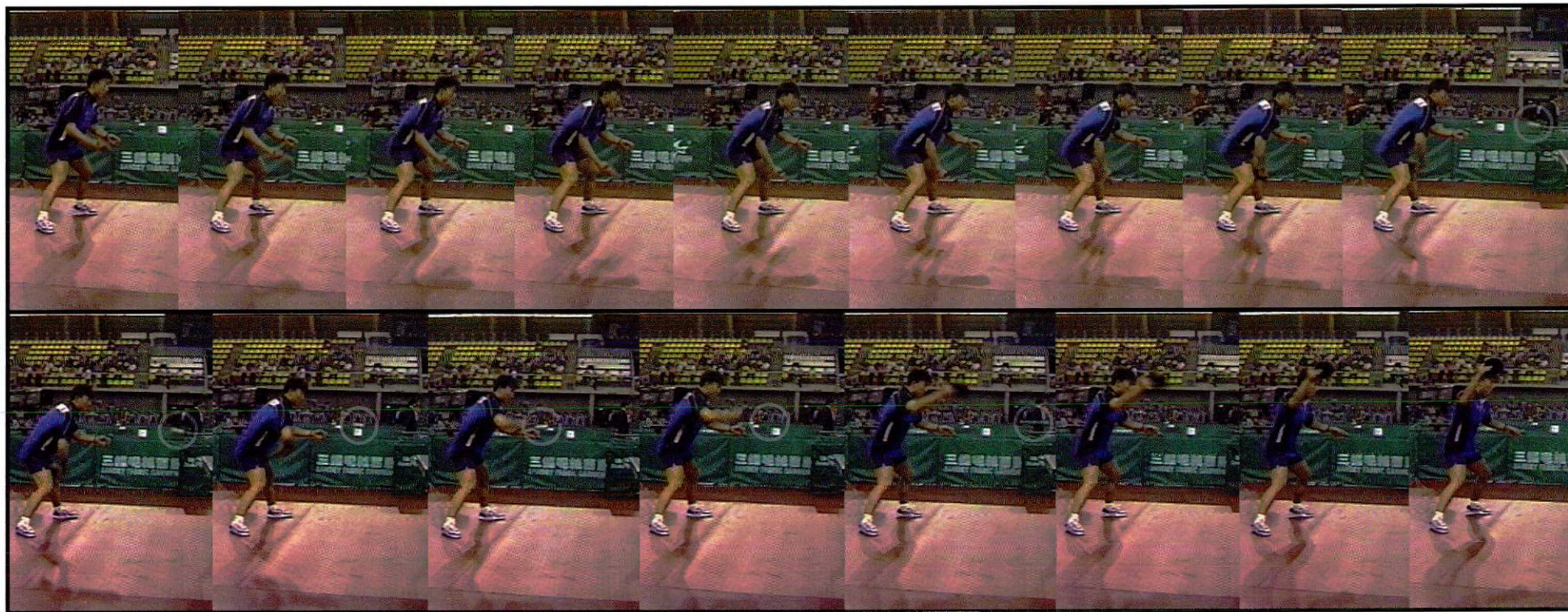
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The Penhold Backhand Loop of MA Lin

1999 World Championships Men's Singles Finalist

By Wei Wang, USATT Certified National Coach



Photos by Diego Scharf ©2000

The penhold style of playing table tennis has gone through some fundamental changes in the last two decades. In the early 80's, when two-time World Champion Guo Yaohua was dominating the shakehand players with his outstanding serves, strong forehand loop, and, perhaps most significantly, his patented sidespin backhand block, the Europeans were struggling to find a way to overcome that dangerous style. The shakehand technique had not yet been developed enough to exploit the penholder's Achilles heel – their backhand. High arcing backhand loops were

tional penholder and lost 3-0. Conversely, in the semifinals at the 1999 World's, Ma Lin – already a second-generation two-side penholder – stayed with his game plan against the Swedish ace, using all three “dimensions” and outlasting him in a five-game match in which he won most long rallies. At the Team World Championship in Malaysia, the Swedes again took the crown from the Chinese, but it seems like the penholders can certainly hold their own with two players in the top five of the world rankings.

Ma Lin, world #5, turned 20 years old in February. He followed behind Liu Guoliang and benefited

to achieve the right contact. As you may have noticed, the blades these new penholders use have larger heads than the old rackets. This reduces the probability of hitting the ball with the fingers that are now stretching quite far onto the striking surface.

His stance is almost exactly like a shakehander. He drops his arm and tilts his racket inward between his knees. With a distinct whipping motion, he starts the forward drive by raising his elbow and shoulder. When he contacts the ball his forearm has snapped forward and is almost horizontal. At the same time his wrist straightens out and he

more a target than a weapon. Penholders just had too much time to turn and take a strong forehand. But the penhold styles' weakness was glaring and obvious, and so the Europeans set out to build up the backhand. The Chinese Table Tennis Association recognized that trend and warned their coaches and players early: "Beware! The European Wolf is coming!" – referring to the increasing success of the Swedish Team. The penholders became even quicker and more uncompromising. Another two-time World Champion, Jiang Jialiang, was the most successful of a new breed of all-out attackers who used short pips to finish the rallies quickly with one devastating smash. But finally – at the 1989 World Championships in Dortmund – the Wolf caught its prey: The Chinese Team suffered a crushing 0-5 defeat. Persson, Waldner and Appelgren had finally developed their backhands enough to keep the Chinese players from running around their backhand, and even Appelgren's backhand loop, which by today's standards is a slow shot, carried enough power to tip the balance.

The Chinese Association put the penholder on its "endangered species list" – extreme measures were needed to assure its survival. After the shock of '89, the most promising young penholders were told to experiment with using the so far unutilized side of their racket. The hope was to develop a third dimension to their game by maintaining a strong forehand bias, but in addition to the almost exclusively defensive conventional backhand, a stinging attack became possible. Liu Guoliang, Feng Zhe and Wang Fei were the first to register success with this idea. The shakehanders' basic anti-penhold strategies – lock them into the backhand or pull them wide into the forehand and thus open their backhand – didn't work against the new penholder. They could now go toe to toe with shakehanders on either side and stay with them in long rallies from mid-court, if they had to – if they could only remember to use all their weapons! In the 1997 World Championships Yan Sen came out blazing against Waldner, but soon forgot his new backhand, reverted into a conven-

from Liu's pioneer work and uses the "new" backhand even more naturally and frequently. He is capable of producing a backhand loop equal to most shakehand players.

In this sequence, he is practicing repeated loops against a block. He modifies his forehand grip by straightening his middle, ring and little finger on the backhand side of the blade. This changes the blade's angle and provides a solid grip. At the same time he relaxes the index finger, so the blade can rotate a little counterclockwise along its axis. This is needed

torques the racket around the ball. A high follow-through completes the motion.

Although it looks familiar due to its close proximity to the shakehand backhand loop, this shot is completely foreign to conventional penholders, because at no time could they ever before afford to allow such a late timing on the backhand side. Be aware of that, if you want to add this shot to your repertoire: It takes recognizing new timing concepts – and a lot of practice. But if you get it, you'll be able to enjoy the best of both worlds.



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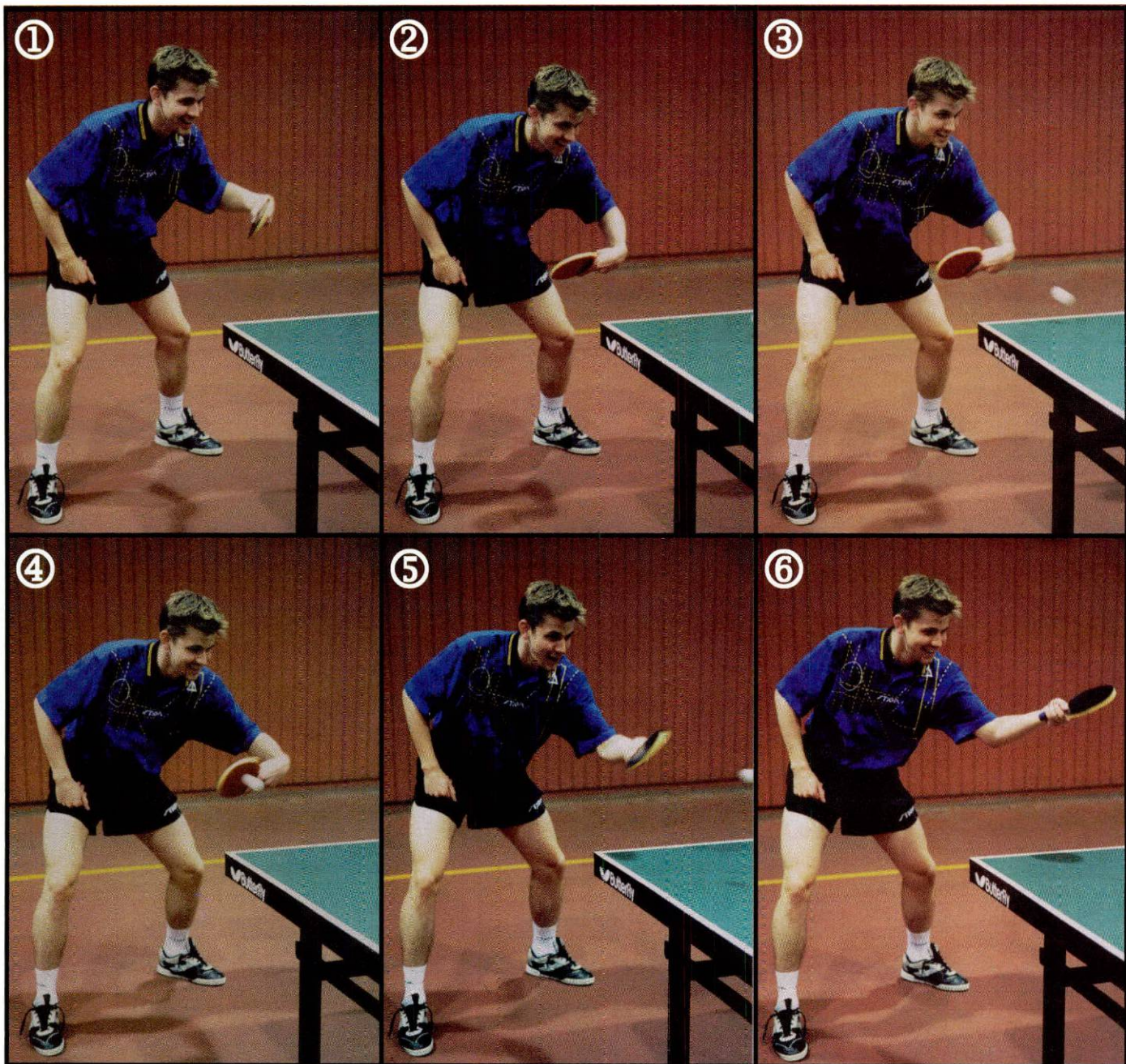
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The Backhand Drive of USA Team Member

By Larry Hodges, USATT Certified National Coach

BARNEY J. REED



Here we see the backhand drive of USA Team Member Barney J. Reed. Since he's left-handed, right-handers can copy the photo as if it were a mirror. Study it well, as this is serious stuff – even if Barney isn't in a particularly serious mood as he demonstrates the shot! The drive is against topspin.

Photo 1: Barney brings his racket back. Note that he has already cocked his wrist backward.

Photo 2: He has completed his backswing, and is about to start the forward swing. Note the cocked wrist, ready to stroke the racket through the ball. Weight is evenly balanced

on both legs, with weight slightly forward. He is in a slight crouch, which gives more leverage for the shot and makes movement quicker. His left leg is slightly back (for a left-hander), which makes him ready for either a forehand or a backhand. Many advanced players use this type of stance for their backhand, forehand and neutral stances to save time on their forehand shots (especially if they play close to the table), since there is little weight transfer needed on most backhand drives, unlike the forehand drive.

Photos 3-5: The wrist and forearm stroke through the ball with a slight upward motion. Racket is closed at contact, and rolls slightly

over the ball, i.e. the racket is closing throughout the forward swing. A light topspin is put on the ball both from the rolling motion and from the rebound effect of the incoming topspin ball – a topspin ball automatically rebounds back with topspin when hit with a grippy surface.

Photo 6: Racket follows through forward naturally, and ends up pointing roughly to where the ball is going, or slightly to the left (to the right for a right-hander). Racket is almost parallel to the table at the end. Weight is still balanced evenly on both legs.

Next issue: Khoa Nguyen's Forehand Loop. 



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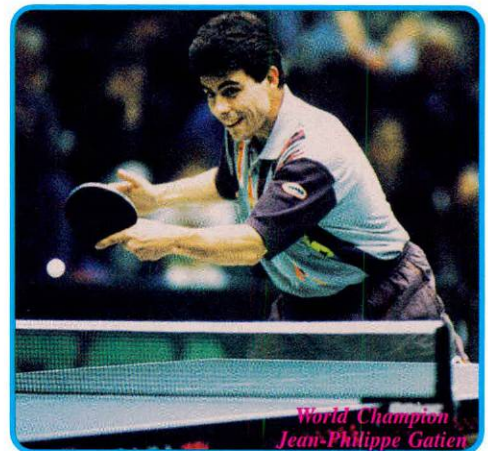


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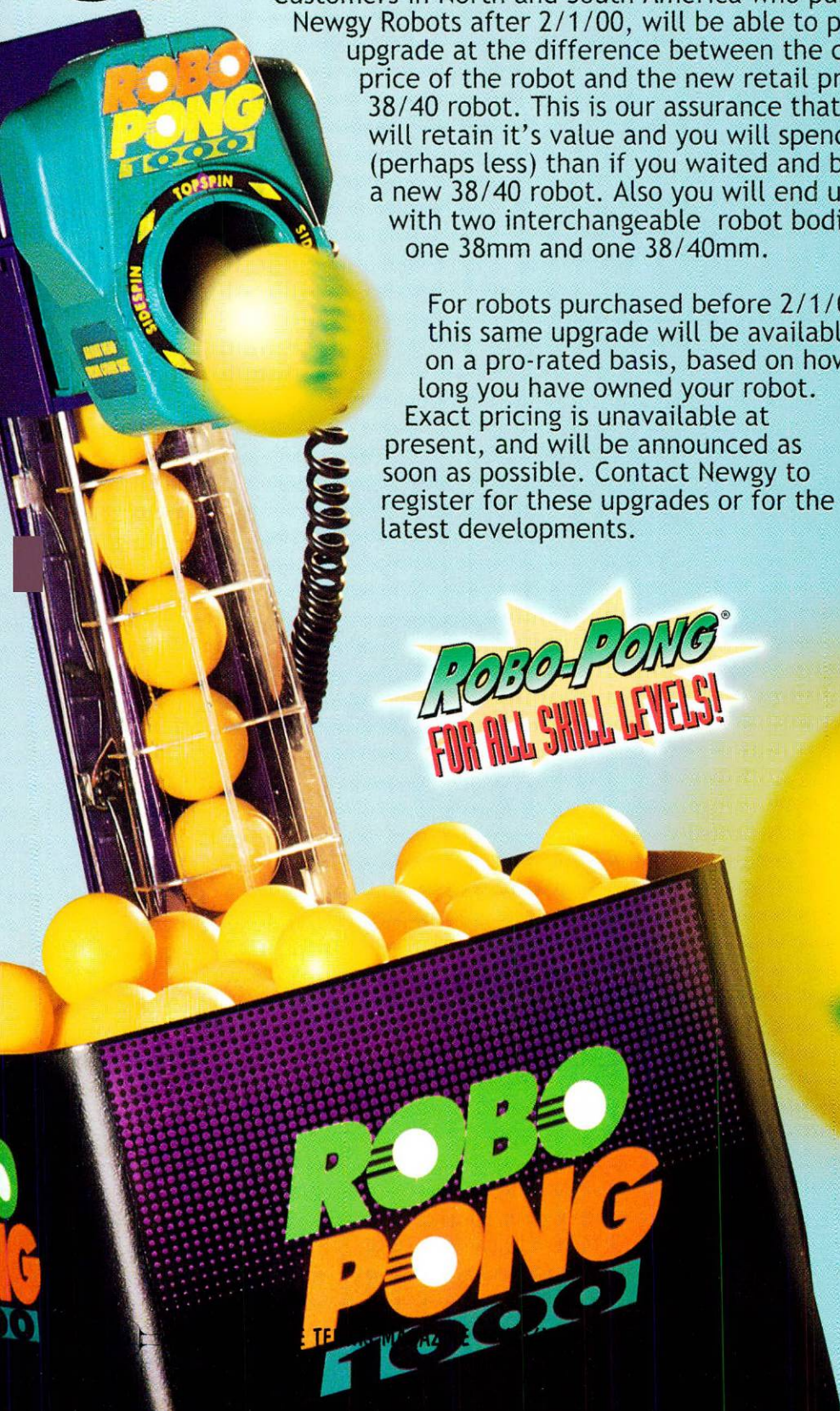
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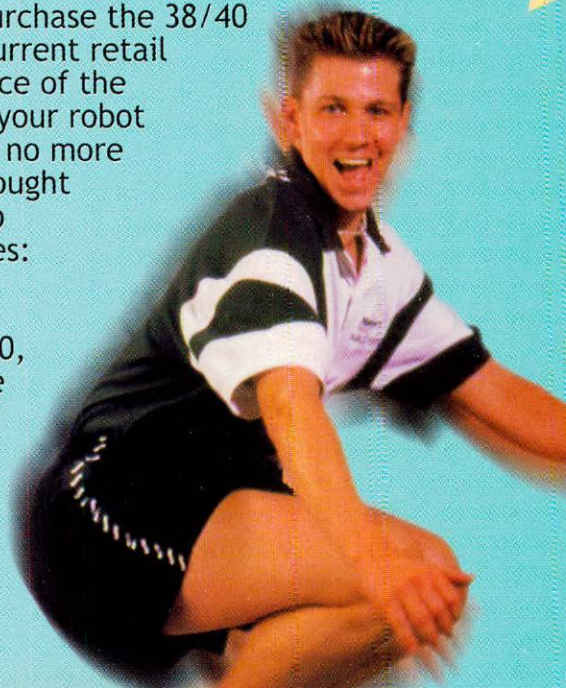
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USA Women at the Worlds

How to Finish 33rd at Kuala Lumpur While Losing Only One Tie

By Tim Boggan

Thirty-third! Out of 66! Are our U.S. women really that bad? Trust me – no.

In fact, on paper (Jan., 2000 ITTF World Rankings), we'd #23-#75-#129-#161 match-up reasonably well with, say, Sweden (#59-#60-#196-#240) or Russia (#55-#67-#94-#118), teams that finished tied for ninth.

Significantly, however, Sweden and Russia were in the Top 24 teams from the 1997 Manchester World's, and the U.S. wasn't (we'd played without Jun Gao Chang and Amy Feng and had lost a pivotal 3-2 tie to England). This meant, according to the A-Group, B-Group, C-Group format being used here in Kuala Lumpur, that if Sweden and Russia could win 60% of their initial matches in the 24-team A group (four round robins, six teams in each), they would, despite their two losses, theoretically still be in contention to take the overall Championship and, by winning just one more match against a lower-ranked opponent, would be assured of finishing no worse than a tie for ninth!

So readers should keep in mind what they might sometimes forget: the relentless impingement of the past on the present.

Our new millenium U.S. Women's Team – ranked, from Manchester, 25th, not 24th – was drawn into a three-team round robin against World #69 Lebanon and World #72 Mongolia. So of course there'd be no intensity in, even little interest in, these ties. We were just too good.

Against Lebanon, Tawny Banh gave up 16 points – total. Lily Yip 13. Michelle Do 17. Lest we laugh, remember, someone said, "These Lebanese are stars at home."

In the warm-up against Mongolia (Mongolia couldn't beat Lebanon), which was no warm-up at all for Gao, who again didn't play, Tawny again gave up 16 points – total. Amy 21. And Michelle (on the draw sheets it was always just "Michelle," as if she didn't have a last name), 20 – except that you weren't to count that first game which she unaccountably lost at 19 ... to, shhh, a man. Or so it seemed, for when the umpire told this Mongol she had to put on her number, she, Bold, obliged – Bold being, according to the Program listing, the 4th man on the Men's team. But so what? Who would know the difference? Would even the umpire care? Some flimsy, often curled up, sloppily-pinned-on number was always better than none.

At this point, the U.S. still theoretically could win the World Corbillon Cup title.



Clockwise from top: Gao Jun, Amy Feng, Lily Yip, Tawny Banh, Michelle Do.

Photos by Gerry Chua ©2000

Also, we were progressing toward the fulfillment of one of our four needed USOC "Markers" for the year 2000 – that of achieving a world ranking for two youth athletes, one of whom hopefully would be Michelle, who I heard needed two wins over world-ranked players in order to get a world ranking herself. Our fifth, optional "Marker" – that of improving our world ranking in the Team's (25th in the Women's, 32 in the Men's) – had been rejected by the USOC as "not challenging enough."

So, to continue keeping our hopes alive, we would now play Austria in ... oh, oh, a "knockout" tie that was really a down-and-out-for-the-count knockout. For, while the winner would continue on theoretically to have a chance for the Championship itself, the loser would fall to, at best, 33rd place!

Some format! And one we'd better be ready to accept.

But we weren't ready – hadn't been tested, and weren't prepared to be tested, period.

Still, on paper, our World Rankings (#23, #75, #129, #161) compared quite favorably with Austria's (#49, #148, #333, #390). But Coach Teodor "Doru" Gheorghe decided not to play Amy (she was going to retire? had been woe-folly out of practice since making the Team – hadn't played in the Closed and had no intention of trying out for the upcoming Olympics). So, the U.S.-Austria match-up became on paper our #23-#129-#161 vs. their #49-#148-#333 – which suddenly made the tie seem a lot closer.

Moreover, Austria's shakehands lefty Liu Jia, in just the last two months, had jumped from World #72 to World #49. Check her out, and you'd see that in both the Oct., '99 Austrian and Nov., '99 Swedish Opens she'd beaten Sweden's Asa Svensson (World #59), and that in the Dec. Czech Open she'd reached the semi's, where she'd



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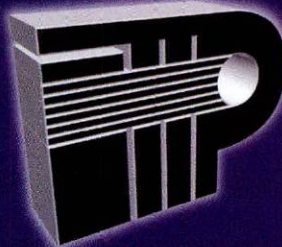
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downed fellow Chinese expatriate, Singapore's Li Jia Wei, 3-0. (Who was Li Jia Wei? Coming into Kuala Lumpur, World #17, and the winner of the just held Commonwealth Games.)

In the standard A vs. X, B vs. Y, C vs. Z, A vs. Y, B vs. X arrangement of matches, Austria (ABC) might be expected to play Liu Jia in the (A) first and fourth positions, their #2, Judit Herczig, in the (B) second and fifth positions, and their #3 Michaela Zillner in the (C) third position. Were the U.S., too, to play according to the above pattern, the match-up would be – since Coach “Doru” preferred for the #2 spot in this tie the steady Tawny to the unsteadily more spectacular Lily – Liu vs. Tawny, Gao vs. Herczig, Lily vs. Zillner, Gao vs. Liu, and Tawny vs. Herczig. Which would mean that Austria ought to be 2-1 down to us with the last two matches up for grabs.

However, “Doru” didn’t play the expected order. He preferred Gao vs. Liu, Tawny vs. Herczig, Lily vs. Zillner, Tawny vs. Liu, and Gao vs. Herczig – making the first two matches up for grabs.

But Austria, under its Women’s Captain Liu Yan Jun, didn’t play the expected order either. Their variation was this: they would play their #1 Liu Jia in the (A) first and fourth positions, as expected, but, since they had a weak third, would gamble on playing their #2 in just a single 3rd position (C) match. This set-up brought Liu (#49) vs. Gao (#23), Michaela Zillner (#333) vs. Tawny (#161), Judit Herczig (#148) vs. Lily (#129), Liu vs. Tawny, and Gao vs. Zillner. Obviously, matches two, four and five would likely result in a 2-1 edge for us, so the first and third matches were critical – we needed to win one of those two.

Austria had come out of its round robin with a walkover over Tahiti and a 3-0 win over World #41 Brazil (a team both the U.S. and Canada had blanked at the Pan Am Games). But at least Liu Jia, unlike Gao, had played a match (several hours earlier that afternoon).

For whatever reason, Gao got off to a horrible start – was down 7-0, 11-2! She just had no intensity, really needed to get her blood flowing, seemed sluggish. Her big-blade bat, someone said, had a wood sound, a hollow sound – and, in her 21-11 loss, the occasional scant encouragement our Team’s supporters could muster drew no echoing response.

In the second game, Gao moved from being down 8-4 to down 10-9. Then, when, with the help of a net, Liu added two more points, “Doru” called Time Out. From the balcony I could see, as he talked to Gao, his hands moving this way and that until, as if holding something carefully, a vase, his hands cradled, stopped, then in a final gesture threw the vase sideways. Crash! Gao came back to the table to go down 14-9, 16-10. But helped by Liu’s misserve, she drew to 16-14. Then a ticked net threw her timing off and her hands into the air; but she smiled, and from 18-14 down again persevered – to 18-17. Whereupon Liu served and followed, served and followed – smacked in two beauties that stopped Gao’s rally cold.

Gao of course felt badly that she’d lost, but

it was obvious that this Liu Jia *was* good, and it seemed certain she’d later beat Tawny. Which meant we needed to win all the rest.

Tawny justified “Doru’s” confidence in her. She stayed focused, carried the attack. Up 13-12 in the 1st, she broke free to 17-13, 20-15 and coasted home. In the 2nd, up 7-5, she seemed to gain strength when the umpire carded Liu – Liu the Coach not the player – and upped her advantage to 9-5, 16-11, 18-14. Then she faltered, even whiffed her last serve, and it was 18-17. But Zillner could make nothing of her serve, serve, serve. Tie 1-1.

“And yet, after losing 8 ties and winning but 3 games, the English women finished half a dozen places ahead of the U.S. women, undefeated except for their loss to Austria. Such is the Group D vs. Group E positional advantage for losers in this questionable format.”
-Tim Boggan, in Women’s write-up, page 48

Since both Liu and Gao figured to have upcoming winners, the pressure was all on Lily – her match was the all-important determiner. And – wow! – why couldn’t we start when we had to? Lily, down 14-6, was tight, tight, tight. This 1st game was another bloodless annihilation. Something better happen for us in the 2nd....

It did – at mid-game, Coach Liu was red-carded. Personally, I’ve long thought it absolutely idiotic not to let coaches coach – the more drama the better. But it was Herczig who then scored three in a row to go up 15-11. Now, just as Gao had fought back in that 2nd game, so did Lily – 15-all. When, however, Lily was bested in a backhand exchange, “Doru” called Time Out and busied his hands. But how give Lily the confidence she needs? The points kept slipping away from her – she couldn’t hold on. It was really her forehand that did her in – she had the shots, she took them, but the ball wouldn’t go in. Not at the beginning of the match, the middle of it, or now at the end. She just stayed cold.

Of course Lily’s loss made the 4th match the decider – but, try as she might, Tawny, down 10-3 in the 1st, had no chance against the Pro Tour-hardened, always-in-control Austrian-Chinese.

So, 33rd-40th – that was our humbling lot. Whereas had we beaten Austria, we’d be faced with Indonesia. Indonesia, as of the Dec., ‘99 ITTF Rankings, fielded World #127, #220, and #248 – and with this team did what the U.S. couldn’t do, knocked out Austria.

How much time and effort the ITTF has spent on refining its Ranking System, and yet how questionable one’s assumptions still are about players rated even 100 or more places

apart. This time, though Austria’s Liu won her two, the Austrian Captain’s gamble of again playing his #148 second-best player in the 3rd match backfired when #248 downed #148, 21-10 in the 3rd. Exit Austria from Championship contention.

Undefeated Indonesia – that with a primed Gao Jun and Amy Feng could have been us – thus became one of the 16 remaining teams that could still win the title. Which didn’t mean that after they lost to Sweden, 3-0, they’d be, at worst, 16th. The diabolical format – the befuddling bane of tournament-covering journalists everywhere – now had them playing more matches, vying for 13th through 28th place.

So I can’t help but think we should be where that #127, #220, and #248 Indonesian team is – playing Luxembourg for a shot at joint 13th place. And, despite U.S. Open winner Ni Xia Lian’s presence, winning. For Indonesia’s #248 again came through, beating Luxembourg’s #165.

O.K., Indonesia had to settle for joint 17th place, for they lost to Croatia as expected, since, as one fellow said, in Tamara Boros Croatia had “the best white woman in the world.”

But forget what might have been for the U.S., back now to sobering reality. Austria had beaten Greece, so we could too? What was our line-up? Lily (X), Tawny (Y), and unranked Michelle (C). Who were we up against? Unranked player (A – who needed experience), World # 180 (B), and #317 (C). What was our motivation? To avoid the possibility of 40th place.

In the first match, Yip, down 1-0 and at deuce, couldn’t win. In the second match, Banh, at deuce in the 1st, won, but then she lost the match. Tawny’s a fighter alright, but, favoring her backhand, she has footwork problems, too often just doesn’t get into forehand position fast enough. So, it was clearly time for Michelle to rise to the occasion. And, mark this, she did, in the 3rd. Which so inspired, or embarrassed, Tawny and Lily that they followed with straight-game wins. Lily, blocking and pick-hitting per “Doru’s” advice, finally began playing to her capabilities and gave up only 18 points all told.

So now, onward – we were, at our worst, 36th. But, no ESP required, surely we were a lock against Spain, who resisted with World #283, #314, and an unranked player. Hooray! We won the close ones. Tawny (#161) got by Sara Perez (#283), 19 in the 3rd. Lily, 12, 11, seemed to make a rank amateur out of unranked Isabel Lozana. And – mission accomplished – Michelle beat the 200-pound-solid, surprisingly athletic Roser Vila, her second world-ranked player, 2-0, 19 in the 2nd.

There remained in our way only Thailand’s #203, #226, and #363. Though Tawny didn’t tremble, she could average only 15 points a game against World #203 Nanthana. But with Gao playing – and winning – her second and third matches in Kuala Lumpur, and with Lily, too, scoring an easy victory, we remained undefeated ... except for that one loss to Austria.

However, I guess you’d have to say that the USOC was right. Our improvement in the World Rankings didn’t seem challenging enough.

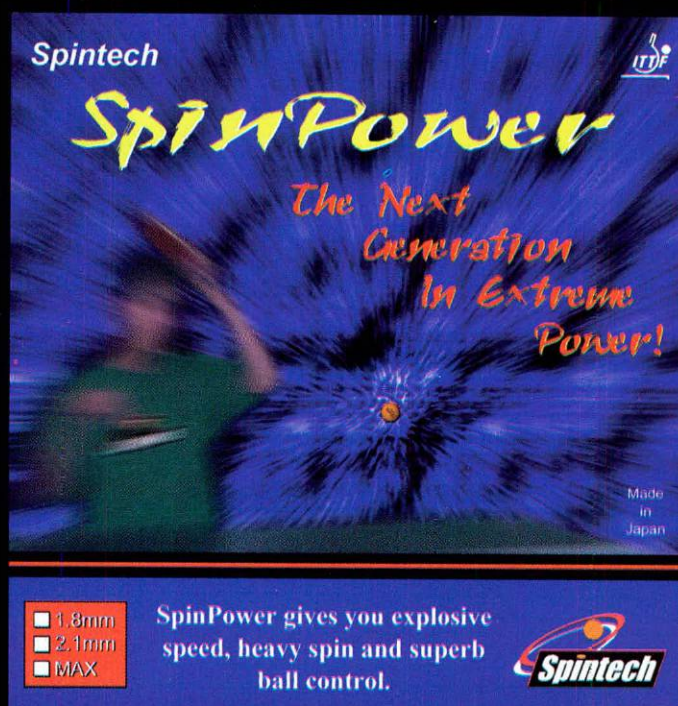



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USA Men at the Worlds

How to Finish 36th at Kuala Lumpur

By Tim Boggan

Thirty-sixth! Out of 77! Are our men really that bad?

Trust me – maybe.

Without Cheng Yinghua (#73), we're (see Jan., 2000 ITTF World Rankings), #108, #208, #316, #403 pretty weak on paper.

And indeed, in actuality, you'd have to say right from the beginning that for us this World Swaything Cup Championship was a bummer.

Case in point: at the end of our first three round-robin ties, we were undefeated – still had a theoretical chance for the Championship.

Huh? That's bad?

It is when you haven't given up a point. When, after a long and tiring trip half way around the world, it turns out that your first three opponents don't show. So they were World #65 Venezuela, #95 Tanzania, and unranked Madagascar. At least we'd have gotten the idea we were in a tournament – and Keith Alban might have begun to make his mark, and ours. For we were eager to satisfy the USOC that we could achieve a world ranking for our two youths on this trip, and as our Michelle Do was taking advantage of the opportunity, we wanted Keith to, too.

The ITTF, I might add, was so put out that team after team – almost 20 among the men – didn't show that they supposedly plan to assess, at least those who didn't notify the Tournament Committee of their withdrawal, their entry fees and hospitality charges.

Our U.S. men's first playable tie was against Switzerland – and here there was another disappointment in that Switzerland's aging best, World #112 Thierry Miller, didn't come to Kuala Lumpur. Our men needed to be tested, and, as the three Swiss in this tie were all World #430 or higher, it didn't look like much of a warm-up for us. Still, Coach Dan Seemiller, anticipating our next tie with Brazil, figured he'd better give our line-up – David Zhuang, Todd Sweeris, and Eric Owens – some much needed table time. The only surprise in this more or less routine straight-game win for us was the 3rd match. After Owens took the first, I looked at the Swiss as he started the second game and couldn't resist the playful thought, "He's Beat before he's Stauffered." An idiotic pun – the

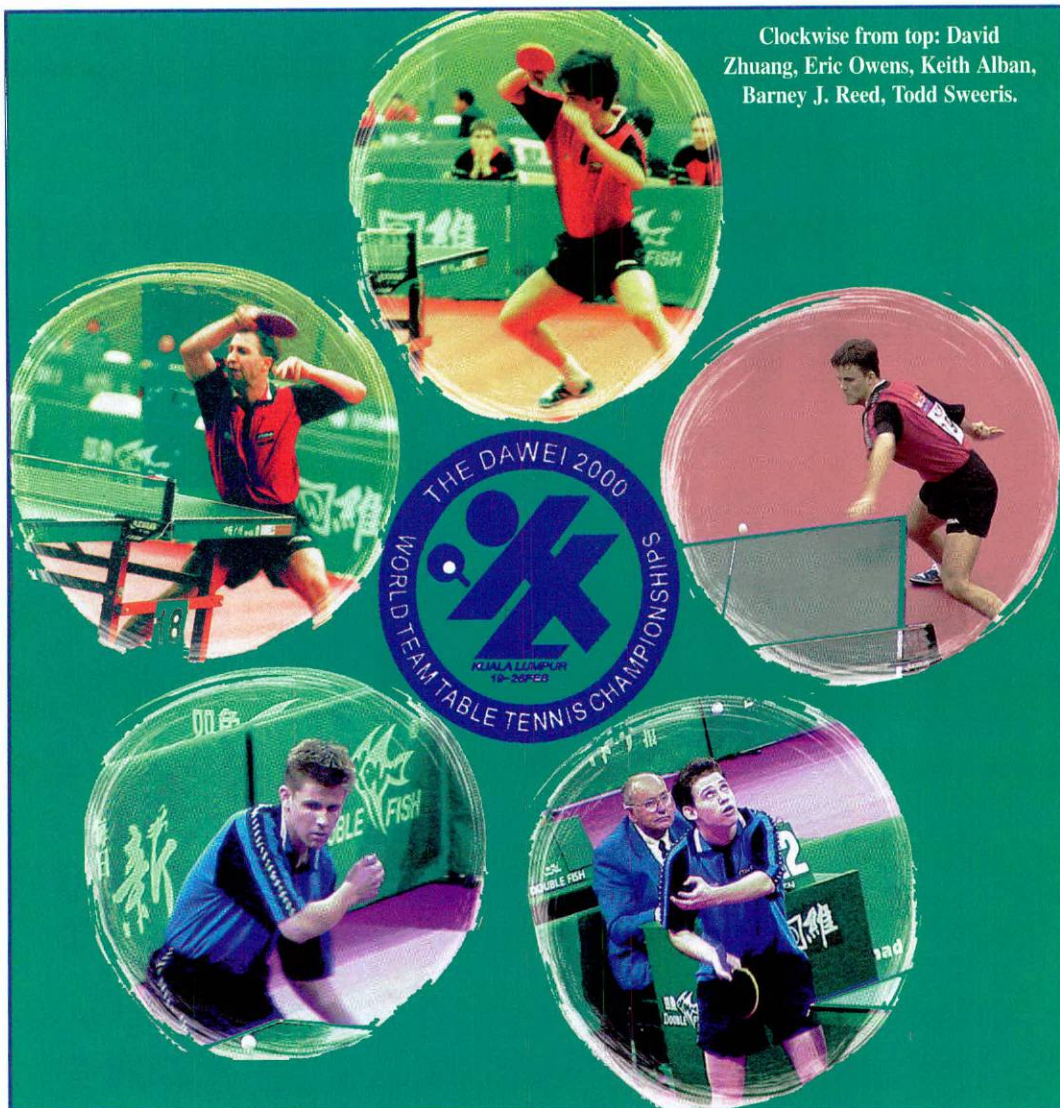
more so since this World #430 Beat Stauffer proceeded to win the next two games from Eric.

Our first test then was Brazil, who'd had easy ties against Mongolia and Nepal, but a very good 3-1 warm-up with Ukraine. Win the tie against Brazil, and we'd go on our undefeated way. Lose it, and disaster – for we'd fall, fall, fall ... to World #33 at best. You can bet that this aptly named "Knockout" format wasn't to everyone's liking, for immediately half the winning Group E through Group T teams would fall into an embarrassing abyss.

Although readers will remember that this same U.S. threesome – Zhuang, Sweeris, and Owens – came home in glory from the Pan Am Games, having beaten Argentina in the final (Argentina finished 50th here), they might have forgotten that prior to the criss-cross semi's (where we beat Canada, who was without Johnny Huang), we'd lost to Brazil. Had, in fact,

dropped some dispiriting close games. Down 1-0 and at 19-all in the 2nd, Owens, serving, had seen Hugo Hoyama (World #89) bang in two winners off his serves. Then Sweeris, on coming off a straight-game loss to Thiago Monteiro (World #357), had met Hoyama, had rallied in the 1st from 19-15 down to go game-point up, only to lose it 23-21, and then in the 2nd, up 20-16, had somehow lost six in a row. Not the best thoughts to carry south from Winnipeg for this extremely important tie in Kuala Lumpur.

Because the humidity was high here in KL, David and Todd's pips play might be affected? But, no, for unlike the Hall in Eindhoven last August, this one was kept so cool that spectator after spectator needed a jacket. In the first match David gets us off to a stirring start, plays two strong second-half games against Monteiro, who can't score more than 14. U.S. 1 – Brazil 0.



Clockwise from top: David Zhuang, Eric Owens, Keith Alban, Barney J. Reed, Todd Sweeris.

Photos of Eric Owens, Barney Reed and Keith Alban by Tong Lee ©2000. Photos of David Zhuang and Todd Sweeris by Gerry Chua ©2000.

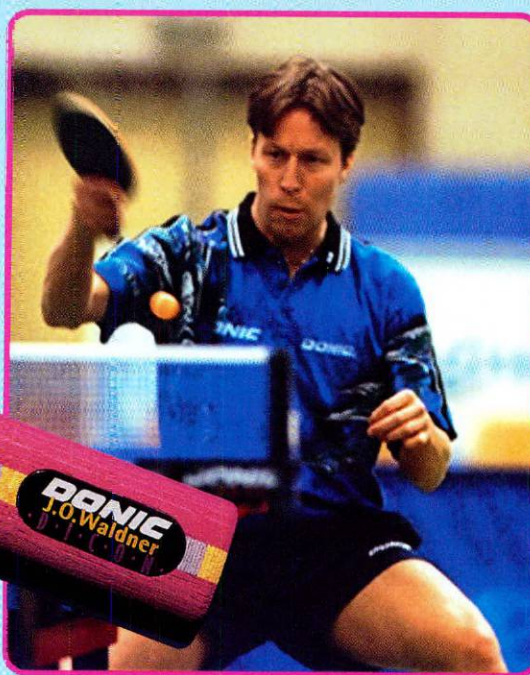
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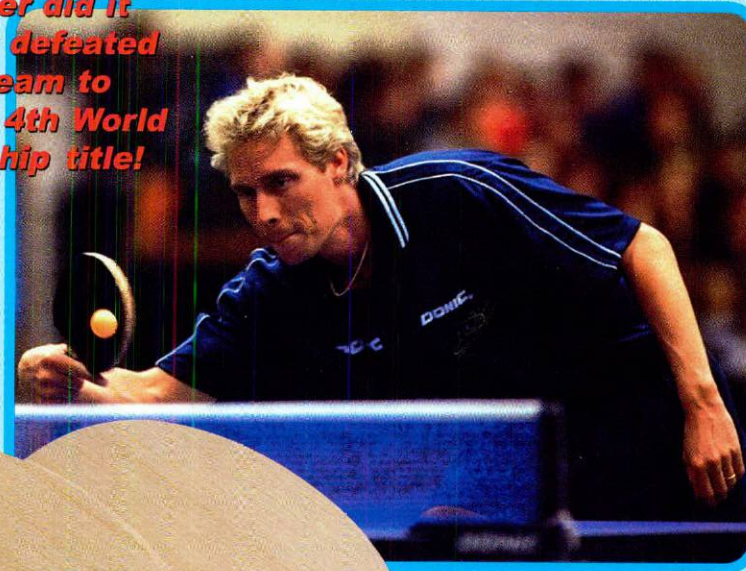


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Against Todd, Hoyama couldn't be more ready and quickly builds up winners to a 9-3, 15-6, 19-8 overpowering lead. Going into the 2nd game, Todd says he'll try to open before Hugo does, and on up to 14-all they go at it, at which point Hoyama gives the U.S. bench a look – as if to say, "Cool it with all those 'Yeah's!'" Perhaps this breaks his concentration, for he loses 5 in a row, and the match is tied at a game apiece.

Sweeris wants to attack Hoyama's middle – says Hugo likes the ball wide. Down 10-6 at the turn, Todd pulls to 11-9, then twice loops Hugo's serve long. After a Time Out, Todd fails to return another serve, is down 14-11. Down 14-13, he misses a backhand placement that would have been a winner, then ties it up, then misses a forehand that would have been a winner. From 16-all Hoyama runs it to match point. Now Pan Am *deja vu*. Todd rallies through a Brazilian Time Out, and with a fearless serve and follow deuces it. Then gets a break – push-returns Hugo's serve off, only to hear the scorer call a let serve. Hoyama, however, is totally unfazed by this call, and finishes off the match with two strong winners. What might have been: 2-0. What is: 1-1.

Against penhold player Carlos Kawai (World #194), who in Winnipeg had been bothered by a sore shoulder, Owens (#316) jumped off to a 3-0 lead, held it to 12-9. Then Carlos teed off on Eric's serve, Eric missed an incredibly high ball, and, after serving, whiffed his follow – 12-all. But, acing a serve return along the way, Owens is up 16-12; then, serving off, is at 16-15. Now two serves and two excellent follows, a backhand, then a forehand. First game to Eric at 17. As Coach Danny had anticipated in positioning Owens against Kawai, all that practice Eric had against penholders in Korea was paying off.

But, oh, how Owens begins the second – whiffs, pushes off, pushes into the net. He'll have some catching up to do. Some forehand counters help to close the gap, and, despite another whiff, he's at 10-all. At 12-all he makes a fine flip return of serve. Then serves into the net. He seems to be in and out of focus. Now, with two bad serve returns, out. Down 19-17, Eric agrees with Carlos that he's served a net. But the umpire, who as scorekeeper earlier had fumbled through mistakes and had even pointed self-deprecatingly to his mixed-up head, took it upon himself to overrule the players and awarded the point to Eric. Which is all he needed to run out the game and match. A big win for us. Now, just one more.

In Winnipeg Zhuang had avoided Hoyama, here he has to play him. At 17-all in the 1st, it's anybody's game. David serves, Hoyama winds up a return and the ball goes in. Then Hugo scores with one of his hurtling backhands. And now the shot of the tie: Zhuang swats one hard in, but Hoyama, what the hell, lashes out at it, as they say, blindly, and it rockets back past an astonished David ... in. Hugo, without changing expression, throws his hands up – just one of those things, a miracle, he seems unaffectedly to say.

Down 1-0 and 4-1 in the 2nd, David has Hugo back lobbing, but misses the putaway. However, he's still in the game – catches the

Brazilian on a fast down-the-line serve and pulls to 6-4. Then, on losing two more points, lets loose with some verbal explosives. From 11-all, David makes some bad serve returns. Then ties it up at 15-all. But again some really weak serve returns by David makes the end-game difference in this match – especially when Hoyama has the confidence and 19-16-up point-room to forehand sock in two of David's serves. Brazil 2 – U.S. 2.

In the 1st against Monteiro, whom he'd lost to twice in Winnipeg despite being 150 posi-

“...we first have to rise to some greatness before the most discriminating in our audience much cares whether we fail and fall.”

tion places ahead on the ITTF Ranking List, Sweeris, making errors, loses six straight early points in a row and can't get them back. Delve deep to some inner strength, Todd, or the Team's a goner. But he's just not playing well – has dug himself a 12-7 deep-down hole. Time Out. I don't know what Coach Danny told him, but when Todd rallies from 13-7 down to 13-10, the Brazilian Coach calls Monteiro over for a conference. It doesn't help – and with Thiago making mistakes it's 14-all. But then Todd whiffs, pops up a serve return, and is behind 17-14 When he misses a point-winning forehand, and pushes a ball to the top of the net that just won't go over, he's down 19-16.

But Thiago has trouble finishing, and Todd's adrenal rush gives him the ad. Then, as Fate would have it, a net ball, but still one up there to smack, throws Todd's timing off and he misses the game winner. Discouraging. But he shows heart – plays a great next point, is forced back, returns a ball from the barriers, only to go ad down. And then really down. All of us down. For getting a high one to his backhand, Todd swings, makes good contact, but the ball doesn't go in. Frustrated, he wants to let sail his racket ... anywhere. But, controlling himself, he flips it into a barrier separating the tables.

And now what a gulf separates us from any respectable showing at these Championships. Still, it's not a disgraceful loss – Hoyama is one of the top 100 players in the world, and Monteiro just seems to have the whammy over Sweeris, likes to hit his ball. Also, the plain truth is, the U.S. is just not that strong a team, at least at this tournament.

Had we beaten Brazil, we would have played Israel, for the Israelis had advanced without incident against Saudi Arabia. Or almost without incident – certainly nothing like in 1997 when, in a tournament in Kuala Lumpur, “hundreds of Muslims protested against an Israeli cricket team.” Since Malaysia has no diplomatic ties with Israel, the Government's opposition Muslim Party (PAS) protested to the Foreign Ministry the Israeli table tennis team's presence. But it was nothing more than a paper protest, for an Israeli player said, “It's great to be here.

We don't feel afraid. We're being well-treated.”

Brazil will go on in the next round to lose, 3-2, to Israel – with Israel eventually posting its “best-ever performance” at a World's, jumping from #41 to #25. The Israeli #139 will trounce Hoyama 8 and 17, and Israel's #204 and #246 will, per the Ranking book, down World #357 Monteiro in straight games. “I think we could take Israel,” said Coach Danny. But that was probably wishful thinking. For Greece (#16, #64, and #151) barely beat Israel in a 3rd-game fifth match, and Greece finished tied for 13th.

The U.S., meanwhile, will themselves now play the Saudis (World # 62 after Manchester), and will win, 3-0, though Barney Reed, playing his first match, will lose a 19 game. So, at least we won't finish 40th. Moreover, Keith Alban, also playing his first match, beat World #529, 2-zip, and so needed, I'd heard, only one more win over a world-ranked player to himself get a world ranking – which of course was one of our objectives. Go, Keith.

Against Finland (World #29), Keith, rather than a dejected Barney (“I'm 21-years-old. If I don't get experience now, I won't get it”), teams up with Sweeris and Owens. Since there's little difference between the best we can do (33rd) and the worst (36th), there's no overriding reason to play Zhuang. Besides, with the Rochester Olympic Trials coming up, he may already have left for China, via Taipei, where his wife Joannie and he will celebrate little Zoe's birthday.

Finland, with their three top players all better than World #200, wants to give their 4th, Mika Rasanen (World #325), experience, so he comes out for the #2 match against Alban – the most favorable pairing for Keith. But, though showing grit in staying alive with a 2nd-game 19 win, Keith can't much contest the 3rd. And since neither Eric nor Todd (down 9-1 in the 3rd) give him any help, he doesn't get to play another match this tie.

Will we finish 35th or 36th? Does anybody care? Sweeris has quickly gone off to Japan for three weeks of training, so we're left to play the last tie with the remains of the Team. Which at least gives Keith a second (or third?) chance to make his mark, and ours; and Barney a bit more limited play. It really was disappointing to the two of them that, unluckily, our initial round robin was so depleted.

Luxembourg (World #31) – that was the last team we lost three straight to. Alban, first off, drew the veteran Daniel Wintersdorf (about World #250), and lost two straight. Since Barney and Eric weren't exactly brimming with confidence or enthusiasm, they too lost, in 3, and so Keith never got a chance at Sandro Caenaro (roughly World #350). I must say, though, that Eric's -27, 19, -16 match against Jerome Raison, another World #250 player and a remarkable Waldner mimic, particularly with his serve stance and motion, was an interesting final to this last day's three-act play – which, no, I wouldn't call a tragedy.

Tragedies are not easy to come by. Fatal flaws are. But – sympathize if you can with those who weep for China – we first have to rise to *some* greatness before the most discriminating in our audience much cares whether we fail and fall.

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Sweden Upsets China In Spectacular Final

MEN'S SWAYTHLING CUP DRAMATICS

By Tim Boggan

Abridged version;

full version is at www.usatt.org

Look coolly, wondrously at Kuala Lumpur's much hyped twin towers, acknowledge their Olympian sky-stature, but then – bravo! – bring on the *action!* Which, as all the table tennis world knows by now, has to be the climactic, tumultuous China-Sweden Men's Team final, won by Sweden, 3-2. As, *deja vu*, the '89 veterans were upstaging their favored Chinese counterparts, *calm* was the Stadium's most unheard word. Until finally, at play's stunning end, silence and sadness struck thousands, while out there on the red carpet, on taking their entangled bow then rising to hoist up *pandemonium*, the Swedes danced happily, ringing hands and voices together like pure-hearted children...

But of course, even back when the tournament began, when the 24 top-ranked men's teams, divided into 6-team ABCD groups, began playing their life-and-death round-robin matches, *calm* was hardly the operative word. Certainly not, as we'll see shortly, for France, the '97 Manchester World's Swaythling Cup runner-up. Contending for this year's Championship crown (the format would be the same for the women) are the three teams that survived from each of the four ABCD groups, plus 4 qualifying lesser-ranked teams from Groups E through T. These 16 would then engage in single-elimination "knockout" ties to produce a winner (and, in a mind-boggling maze of a format, could also conceivably see some of its losers go on to contest for 28th place!).

In Group A, China as expected, romped through without the loss of a match, dropped, in fact, only one game – vis-a-vis Kong Linghui to Belgian Jean-Michel Saive. Saive, the '98 U. S. Open Champ, led Belgium to a (3-1) 2nd-place finish over 3rd-place Austria. For, after prevailing 29-27 in a deciding game against Ding Yi, "Jean Mi" (once World #1, now World #14) beat '99 Eindhoven World's Men's Singles semifinalist Werner Schlager (World #7). According to Belgian Men's Coach, Wong Da Yong, his Team, feeling they had no chance to win, decided only at the last minute to come to Kuala Lumpur when the ITTF urged them to be good sports. Does such an admission translate into "When there's a split Championship it doesn't pay for even a Top Eight Team to play in the (how prestigious?) Swaythling Cup"? Because, to put it bluntly, "China's expertise is killing the Game"?

Fourth-place finisher, once powerful Yugoslavia, almost didn't come to Kuala Lumpur either. The Yugoslav Minister of Sport had to be persuaded to support the Team. "Dule" Osmanagic, President of the Yugoslav TTA, was telling me that his people back home were used to winners – in basketball, handball, and volleyball. So, when one



of their stalwarts, the mercurial Aleksandar Karakasevic, son of former, much-admired Yugo International Milivoj, was "acting up" and wouldn't be coming here, he knew the Team would suffer for it. And, sure enough, they're beaten in a hard-fought 3-1 tie with Austria (when in the 4th match, against Ding Yi, Ilija Lupulesku, up 13-4 in the 3rd, loses 11 straight).

Last in this A group was Canada, who, though dropping all five ties, and then later a sixth to Slovenia, did manage to share 21st place by winning just once – against Indonesia. Originally ranked #25 from the Manchester World's, Canada caught a break when the Romanian Men's Team, short of funds, had to pull out, elevating the Canadians into the Top 24. Thus this year they advanced their World Team position by losing 6 out of 7 ties!

In Group B, France's first opponent was Chinese Taipei (deceptively World #23 from three years ago). 1993 World Champion Jean-Philippe Gatien opened against Chang Yuan Su, runner-up in our '99 U.S. Open. Down 20-14 in the 1st, Gatien gets to 18, then manages to sock in one of those cramped-looking forehands he's so comfortable taking to bring it to 19. Only then, ohh, he misses a perfectly easy put away. In the 2nd, Gatien's up 18-17, but Chang serves and viciously follows. Then serves again, and, after a backhand jab into lefty Gatien's backhand corner, smacks in another devastating forehand. Down 19-18, France calls Time Out. When play resumes, Chang serves and misses his follow. After a succession of errors, the Frenchman scores on his own serve and follow, then ties up the match with a controlling counter.

In the 3rd, Gatien's down 10-5, then up 14-13 before serving off. A backhand goes in, but (what's he thinking of?) a slow topspin return of serve can't be effective, and when he push returns the next one long, he's behind 18-16. He's still focused though, and his absolutely perfect drop-return of serve catches Chang, forces a Taipei Time Out. After which Gatien has one more side-step-

ping forehand in him to deuce it up. Then he topspins two off to lose what, at this point, his Team can't realize is going to be a very decisive deuce-in-the-third match.

Against Patrick Chila (World #20), current U.S. Open Champ Chiang Peng-Lung, forced into the 3rd, gets off to a rocketing 10-2 start – and France, behind 2-0, is not where Swaythling Cup finalists want to be.

Damien Eloi (World #18) will begin to pull them out? Up 1-0 and 8-3 in the 2nd against the Taipei 3rd, Chuan Chi-yuan (World #44), the temperamental Eloi is more velvety than volatile. But then, give him the chance to explode a ball long by several feet, and he's apt to throw up his hands and look

in astonishment at his teammates, as if to say, "Did you see that? Amazing – it missed!" Then he's apt to miss a few more. Luckily for him, from 16-all Chuan makes two horrible serve returns, and from 18-all errs twice again. So Eloi has two match points. Impatient would you call him? Fidgety? Perhaps. But for all his nervous energy, he can't make a winning connection, and finally loses the game 25-23.

On into the 3rd...where the Frenchman's serve returns are not always what they should be. In the end-game, Chuan catches him flat-footed with a backhand jab counter. And then after Eloi has Chuan apparently out of the point, the Chinese makes a miraculous lob, and when Damien swats it off, Chila on the French bench bends over and puts hands to head – his man is match point down. Now Eloi serves up not one but two precarious lets. But then Chuan swings and misses – deuce. Two fearless 3rd-ball attacks score for Damien, but each time he'd got them in he'd been ad-point down. Behind 24-23, he ends it all by missing a high ball. Chinese Taipei 3-France 0. French Captain Patrick Birocheau is publicly philosophical, reminds the media that at the '97 World's France survived two beginning round-robin losses.

Russia, too, went down in three straight matches – to the Netherlands. The big swing here was lefty spinner Trinko Keen's 23-21 in the 3rd victory over Dimitrij Mazunov, one of the few players on court to wear glasses.

The Netherlands then dealt Chinese Taipei a blow when both World #31 Keen and World #35 Danny Heister came back from 1st-game defeats to outlast Chiang Peng-Lung, and Heister spun out a straight-game win over Chang Yuan-Su (now a much improved World #53 since he knocked out the U.S.'s highest-rated player, Fan Yiyong, in the semi's of our Open last July – this when Chang was still World #126).

France would return to get the better of the Netherlands, 3-1 (though Gatien lost to Heister – coming up 26-24 short in another nightmare game).

Photo by Tong Lee ©2000

The media took to calling this B Group the "Group of Death." And, as if Gatién wasn't sick enough with his close and costly losses, he was stricken with food poisoning, and didn't even play against Sweden (France lost 3-0) or Russia (France won 3-0).

Counting their easy win over the Slovak Republic, France had a 3-2 record. Trouble was, presuming all the rest of the ties went as expected – with Sweden coming 1st in the group by knocking off both Chinese Taipei and the Netherlands – France's play-off record would be 3-2 (3-4), the Netherlands' 3-2 (4-4), and Chinese Taipei's 3-2 (4-3). Which would make France odd-team out.

Sweden did beat Chinese Taipei, but not without a struggle. World #19 Peter Karlsson lost to Chang in 3. Jan-Ove Waldner won twice, 2-0, tantalizing Chuang and Chiang with 19 games. And Jorgen Persson dropped a deuce game to 24-year-old Chiang (who'd catapulted up the Rankings in the last two years from #57 to #6, largely, he said, because of experience gained from his league play in France).

Undefeated Sweden had much more of a struggle with the Netherlands – though even if they'd lost, they would still have finished #1 in the group. Persson was promptly beaten, 2-0, by Keen. Then when Heister wrested away from Waldner a 24-22 2nd-game and drubbed him in the 3rd, Sweden was down 2-0, and the Netherlands had a good chance to move into a 2nd-place finish.

After Fredrik Hakansson (World #43) routinely disposed of World #140 Chen Sung, a Chinese expatriate long based in Holland, Persson and Heister mixed it up in a glorious match. From down 20-18 in the 1st, the Swede deuces it with a serve and rifled-in backhand follow. The ads come and go as topspin attacks from both men continue. Heister never plays a passive return, never attempts to just get the ball back. Even if it's hurtling by him, he lashes out in a long-arm attempted counter. He wins the 1st, 25-23....And is then up 12-6 in the 2nd. But Persson quickly rebounds to 13-all....At 19-all, they play one of the great points of the tournament – prolonged top and sidespin exchanges that curl round the spectators an ambiance of anticipatory delight. All rise to applaud Persson...who takes this game and the next. Sweden 2-Netherlands 2.

Against Keen, Waldner, down 19-16 in the 1st, seems lost – he's just been passive, has retreated from the table. Oh, oh, the Swede has the serve and may well be given impetus by the Dutch coach's Time Out strategy. *Reverse* psychology, you might call it – for, after returning to play from 19-18 up, Keen can't stop Waldner from scoring on a serve and follow. Then – gulp – the Dutchman pops up a return. Then watches helplessly as the Swede counters in a winner. Five in a row. Waldner looks to his bench, pulls up on an imaginary lever, and the Netherlands will tumble down to the 3-2 level.

Since Chinese Taipei lost to both the Netherlands and Sweden, and their Coach, Lin Chung Hsiung, was telling the media how "disappointed" he was with his players, France, now the presumed #4 in the group, still had hopes that they might back into contention. If the Slovak Republic could defeat Chinese-Taipei, the Slovaks, having beaten Russia, would be 2-3, as would the Taipei Team, and France, having got-

ten the better of the Netherlands with whom they shared a 3-2 record, would, in the new tie-breaker, jump to 2nd. But the Slovaks couldn't win any close game and fell 3-1. Then, since the Slovak Republic would quickly lose their last tie to the Netherlands, France had only one last hope. Russia, who hadn't won a tie, would have to beat Chinese Taipei.

Surprisingly, especially since Russia didn't field Mazunov, there turned out to be a good chance of this. For if Coach Lin had complained before that his Team wasn't living "up to expectations," what must he be thinking as they almost choked away their advancement. First off, Chuang and Alexei Smirnov are 24-all in the 3rd, which luckily for Taipei Chuang wins. But then when Chang in the #3 spot downs Fedor Kuzmin (World #238), what's Taipei's problem? This: Chiang (World #6) – how is it possible? – loses to Sergei Andrianov (World #121) and then, presumably because he's lacking in confidence, to World #81 Smirnov, 19-in-the-3rd. (Of course it's not always easy to see where Chiang's head is. Scandalously, he just hadn't tried in his televised Pro Tour Grand Final semi's against Kong Linghui in Sydney only a month before.) However, unfortunately for former #2 France, in the 3rd game of the 5th match, Taipei's Chuang comes through against Andrianov.

In the C group, 6th-place Hungary, 20 years ago the World Champions, could win only one match. And the Belarus team (5th), despite the firepower of World #1 Vladimir Samsonov, could win only one tie – Italy's Valentino Piacentini (World #145) beat them with a 3-game 5th-match upset over chopper Evgueni Chtchetinine (World #66); and the Greeks beat them, 3-1, when Kalinikos Kreanga took out Samsonov in 3 in the 4th match.

The Czechs meanwhile were in great shape. They'd opened with a 3-2 win over Greece, for, with Petr Korbel (World #32), Richard Vyborny (World #82) and Miroslav Bindac (World #90) each contributing to a complete Team effort, Kreanga's two wins went for naught.

Then, with Bindac taking out South Korean newcomer Ryu Seung Min, and '96 Olympic semifinalist Korbel beating up on both Oh Sang Eun (World #49) and Kim Taek Soo (World #12), the Czechs remained undefeated. Korbel served everything short, and returned every serve short, then spun the ball. When repeatedly Kim couldn't get in that necessary first big loop, our Todd Sweeris could say, "The Koreans didn't look like Koreans."

Belarus tried, but failed to stop the Czech advance. Chtchetinine beat Bindac, but Samsonov 15, -19, -18 couldn't put away Korbel.

Korea overpowered stubborn Italy 3-1, and blanked both Greece and (when Samsonov, perhaps needing recovery time, didn't play) Belarus.

Greece still had a chance to stay in contention, but they had to defeat Italy – for then they'd come 3rd in a tie-breaker, and Italy would tumble

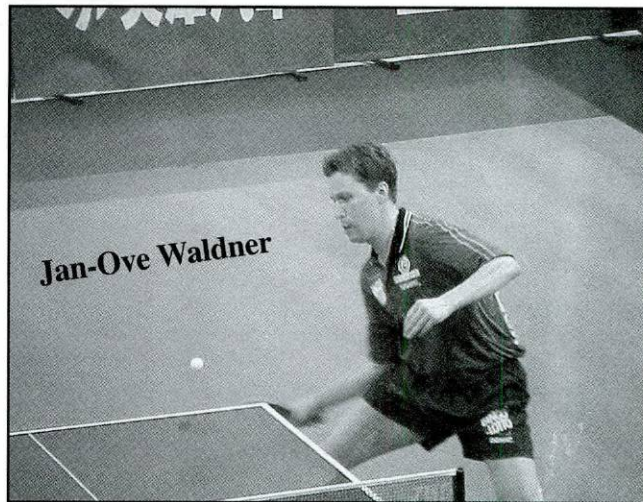


Photo by Tung Lee ©2000

to 4th. Whereas if Italy won, they might be first. Amazing, then, the importance of a single match in a tie. Mondello wins the 1st from Ntaniel Tsiokas (World #64), then in the 2nd, though it's the Romanian-turned-Greek who's just missed two hangers, it's Mondello who can't see – he's lost a contact lens in his eye? With the score 15-all he quite independently strides over to his bench and enlists the help of his coach. Who cares? The adjustment made, he goes on to lose this game, and then the match.

So now two winners from Kreanga will assure Greece's advancement to the last 16. And when the perennial Italian Champ Piacentini, in frustration over losing the deciding game 21-19, flips his racket into the net, Kreanga's gotten by him. But then with so much at stake, Min Yang upsets Kreanga in the 4th match (winning shakily the last game at 19 from 20-14 up). Still, it's looking good for Greece, for in the deciding 5th match against Piacentini, Ioannis Vlotinos (Men's Consolation runner-up at Eindhoven) is up 1-0 and 15-10 in the 2nd. But he can't win that game. In the 3rd, Vlotinos is up 15-13, then collapses, loses seven straight....And Greece, #6 in Manchester, fails to advance.

Italy is now assured of 3rd, even if they lose this last tie 3-0 to the undefeated Czechs. But, surprise, 4-time Italian Champ Mondello beats Korbel 2-zip, Min Yang ekes out a big swing match over Josef Plachy deuce in the 3rd, and, facing Yborny, Piacentini comes through with another clutch 3rd-game win. Which means that Italy, 4-1 (4-3) is 1st, Korea, 4-1 (4-4) is 2nd, and the previously undefeated Czechs, 4-1 (3-4) 3rd. Italy is thus in the enviable position of not having to meet China or Sweden until the semi's.

In Group D, England couldn't win a tie. Which suggests that the ETTA needs more Elite Player allotment from the Government, but will receive less? Slovenia – profiting from World #115 Robert Smrekar's upset of World #36 Matt Syed – could only beat England.

World #21 Denmark opened by threatening World #4 Germany. Allen Bentsson (World #55) beat Peter Franz (World #40). So had the Danes taken a 2-0 lead – Martin Monrad (World #80) almost made it happen, forced many-time German Champ Jorg Roskopf (World #21) to deuce in the 3rd – the trumpets might later have rung at Elsinore. Against World #5 Japan, Denmark continued its pesky play. After Bentsson scored over

Japanese Champion Hiroshi Shibutani, both Michael Maze ('99 European Youth Champion) and Finn Tugwell (World #155) forced their opponents into the 3rd. Then it took Koji Matsushita a 23-21 2nd game to finish off the feisty Bentsson. But, with one last tie to play, the Danes, 2-2, weren't out of it.

Poland, meanwhile, was being even more troublesome to the favorites than Denmark. When Shibutani – I'd heard he too had suffered food poisoning – lost two 19 games to husky Marcin Kusinski (World #114), it seemed a Polish corridor to the sea of advancement had opened, for World #29 Lucjan Blaszczyk (*you* pronounce it – I conveniently say "Blackie"), having powered through World #36 Toshio Tasaki, could be considered a favorite against Matsushita. Cagey Koji, World #26, was of course one of our Sport's remaining defensive stars, and very enjoyable to watch, but Blaszczyk, I was told, usually played well against chop. Only at this appropriate time, he didn't. When World #79 Tomasz Krzeszewski's 18 in the 3rd effort against Tasaki fell short, Japan escaped with a 3-2 win.

Against Germany, Blaszczyk, answering the bell with a knockout of Franz, returned to backhand-blacken former European Top 12 Junior Champion Timo Boll's eyes by running out the game from 18-16 down in the 3rd. But with Torben Wosik having been up 1-0 and 14-2 on Krzeszewski, and Boll up 1-0 and 15-5 on Kusinski, you'd guess that the Poles weren't going to contest that 5th match, and you'd be right – Franz was too much for Kusinski. But Poland, 2-2, still had a chance to advance.

And in their final tie versus Denmark, down 2-0, Poland, rallying triumphantly, did advance.

In attempting to secure a choice semi's spot, undefeated Japan came from 2-1 down to down undefeated Germany in 5. Wosik had allowed the Germans to take their short-lived lead by beating 37-year-old, World #25 Seiko Iseki....Who? Wei – the one who was called "Walter" when he came to the Westfield, N.J. Club years ago. Huh? You remember, Wei Qingguang – he and Chen Longcan won the Men's Doubles at the World's, then the Olympics. Yeah, even Japan has a has-been Chinese Swaythling Cupper now. Like his new name?...Certainly Japan liked how Iseki's teammates Matsushita and Tasaki doubled to down Boll and Franz for the envied positional win.

In the Single Elimination Draw, the four surviving E through T teams – Israel, India, Indonesia, and Hong Kong were matched up, respectively, with the four 3rd-place finishing teams from Groups ABCD – Poland, Austria, Netherlands, and Czech Republic. All four of these E through T interlopers were quickly 3-0 booted back out of the Top 16 – only to find themselves with other losers from somewhere else trying to avoid 25th place, or, who knows, on the contrary, trying to *be* 25th, because that team would be the new B-category Champion and would be given an award. Israel (World #25) *could* win for losing, while England (World #26) proved an apparently worthy runner-up.

Those four 3rd-place finishing teams from Groups ABCD, all still contenders, now had to play the 2nd-place finishing teams to see who would join the four 1st-place teams that had moved directly from round robin play into the

quarter's.

Poland fought well, but lost 3-0 to Korea.

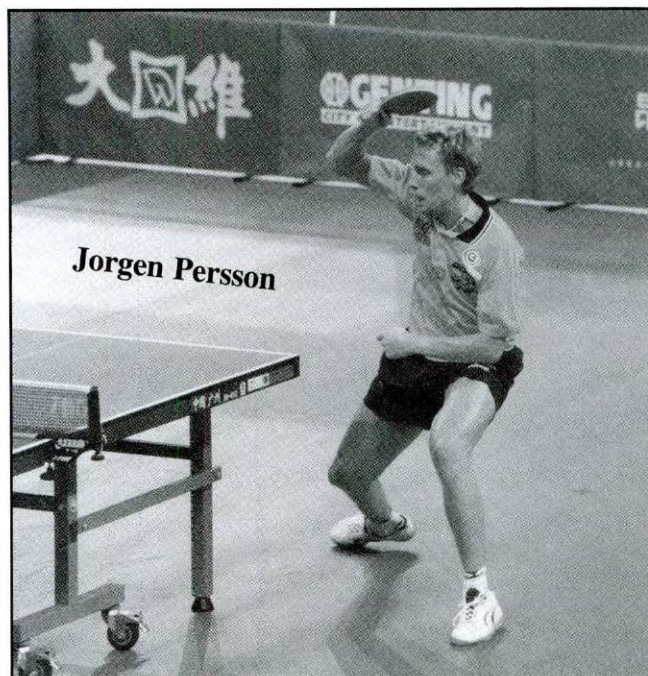
Against Chinese Taipei, Schlager, described as possibly "the best player in the world from half distance," -17, 9, 14 convincingly went the full distance with Chuang. But he'd have to take two if Austria were to have any chance of winning. Ready now to play an amateur, is he? That's what Chiang Peng-Lung, ITTF Website Player of the Month (Sept., '99), says he is – though of course in '99 in addition to his league play in France, he participated in 11 out of 12 ITTF Pro Tour events (with all monies no doubt donated to charity?). Such nonsense. World #7 is beaten by Taipei's World #6 – a *rank* amateur.

The Program listed five male players from Belgium – but veterans Andras Podpinka (World #68) and Thierry Cabrera (World #102) didn't play a single tie. Unranked Martin Bratanov (post-KL ranking World #132) joined the Saive brothers, and against the Netherlands understandably lost to Keen and Heister. But Philippe Saive (World #52) took care of Chen. And Jean-Mi...well, he rallied to beat Keen, but lost to Heister, 27-25 in the 3rd. So, sports, it's back to Belgium with a joint 9th.

Germany's 3-2 win over the Czechs was a shared triumph – but only because it was against the rules for Korbel to win three matches.

The China (3)-Korea (0) quarter's, played on a Thursday afternoon at 4:00 p.m., draws a block of maybe 25 China supporters dressed in white shirts with red lettering and waving red flags. When Ma Lin, China's runner-up in the Men's Singles at Eindhoven, takes the first point from Kim Taek Soo, '98 Asian Games Champion, a huge roar goes up. Ditto for the 2nd. "CHIN-a!" And 3rd. "CHIN-a!" In this battle of attacking penholders, Ma, repeatedly pumping a fist as he spins round and shouts self-encouraging yells at his bench, wins the 1st. In the 2nd, Kim's connecting with some wind-up, beautifully angled forehands that sweep him into a 9-4 lead. But then he's 14-12 down...17-15 up. At 17-all there's a Chinese drum roll...followed by errors on Ma's part that even the match.

The end-game 3rd is close – it's hard to believe in their match at Eindhoven Ma had won so easily. At 17-all there's some incredible, crowd-erupting, up, up-from-the-floor, sidespin-curling counter play – won by the Korean. From 18-all, Kim gets to match-point 20-18 with two fierce forehands. "When you look at Kim Taek Soo play," I hear someone say, "you think, 'Who could possibly beat him?'" "CHIN-a! CHIN-a!" Kim misses – 20-19...Ma risks it: serves and, lightning flash, thunders one in – deuce. Kim serves – Ma whacks it in. Ma serves – Kim pushes a return and Ma cross-court smacks that one in too. A fantastic finish. "CHIN-a! CHIN-



a! CHIN-a!" Next day, Kim is asked by a new arrival what happened. "I was up 20-18 in the 3rd" he said. Then he smiles, cocks a finger to his head and pulls the trigger.

The first match of the Japan-Chinese Taipei quarter's finds Tasaki, crouching tensely, cracking forehands, jabbing counters, and, from a squat, again and again smoothly sweeping through his road-runner penholder backhand. Win to Chiang, though – from 18-all in the 3rd.

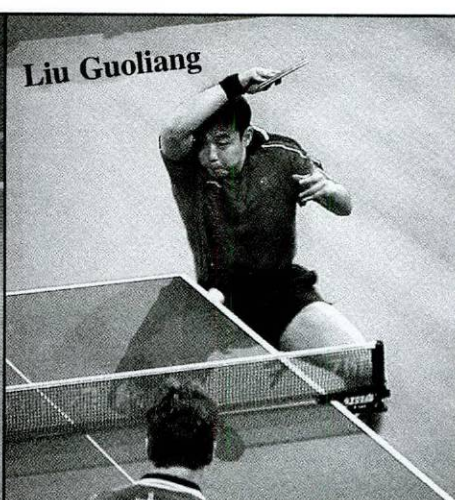
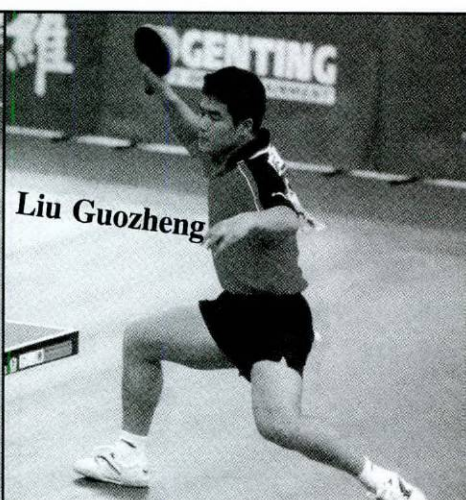
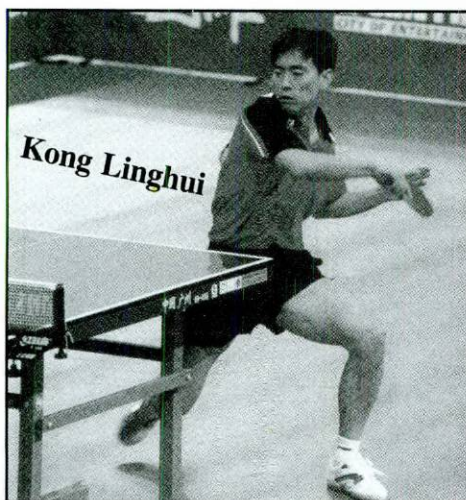
Chuang, who'd lost only to Waldner and Schlager, how'd he do? Was 7, 12 annihilated by Chinese expatriate Iseki. In the stands above, a small band of Japanese enthusiastically applaud.

Now Chang vs. Matsushita. In the 3rd, from 17-all, the agile Japanese moved to 20-17 match point. And then served long, off! "CHIN-a!" Did I hear right? Was this pro-Taipei spectator urging unification, or looking ahead to the semi's and a fight between the two? But though Chang responded, deuced it, he eventually lost 23-21 after Koji in one graceful motion went from chopping a ball to fluidly stepping into position to sock in a winner.

Next up for Taipei, Chiang. And even he would admit that he was practicing to *be* a modern-day professional. What a big sound his racket had, what a lot of glue. He beat Iseki two straight. Japan 2 – Chinese Taipei 2.

Tasaki was pure motion on court. How he hurried to pick up the ball, return to the table, and serve – the distracting movement of his hands a vital part of that serve. He and Chuang exchanged fast and furious topspins on into the 3rd. No, that wasn't a lob, it was Chuang's spinning racket – he'd just served off to end the match. Tasaki, pleased with the win, bowed formally to the balcony above. Japan would be in its first semi's since 1985.

In the Italy-Netherlands quarter's, Chen did his part in beating Piacentini. But Keen lost to 37-year-old "Yango" Min in 3. And Heister, three-times Netherlands Player of the Year, couldn't win a close one. First he dropped a 23-21 closing game to Mondello. At deuce, the Ital-



ian stops to tie his shoe, then, ad up, out of position but not having to worry about tripping on a shoestring, he hurtles back tableward and even as his opponent misses keeps running past the table and, screaming with joy, jumps the barriers. Then, in a match that is sure to prompt criticism from some Dutch uncle somewhere, Heister lost to Min, 24-22, and 21-19. "Yango" had waited six years to play for Italy. But today was worth it – his adopted homeland advanced to its first semi's ever.

The Sweden-Germany quarter's was won by Sweden, 3-0. Timo Boll, still in his teens, had climbed the German table tennis ladder to adjust the National Team picture that hung in the Hall of his hopes. He'd risen from being European Cadet Champion to European Junior Champion to German Men's Champion. But he couldn't stop 34-year-old Waldner's 19-in-the-3rd rally. "Waldi" had spun in a low-arcing ball to go up 20-18, had then erred, but on the next point had forced a balloon return from Boll, and, on seeing it was going to miss the table, had remained motionless – as if later in the picture-show of his mind's eye he'd enjoy replaying that crucial frame.

Nor could Roskopf win the important 22-20 1st-game from Persson – though leading 19-14. At 19-all, Roskopf short-stroked in a cross-court backhand blast, but then lost the ad with a wildly desperate forehand. Next came a serve and a whiff. Then, after hitting a fusillade of forehands, all of which Persson lobbed back, Rossi simply missed.

Hence, woe to Wosik who without psychic momentum could do little against Karlsson, runner-up to Samsonov in the European Masters two months ago.

And now, the China-Japan semi's. A Chinese drummer-boy, face dabbed in red paint, wearing a Chinese-flag hat, doubles as a cheerleader cueing a tier of ("CHIN-a! CHIN-a!") sporadically-roaring spectators overlooking the court below. There *are* some Japanese supporters, greatly outnumbered but bravely waving flags of their own – orange sun-circles on a white background. When at the end of the 2nd game against Liu Guoliang, Tasaki ties up the match with an exceptional counter, and the World Champion then starts the 3rd by serving off, you might think he's intimidated?...Rhythmic claps echo spaced drumbeats. "Time" pleads Tasaki – and, down 13-5 in the 3rd, his "Out" is a given. Liu, 21-11.

The Chinese begin singing (a martial hymn?) – as from an overhead choir.

Against Chinese-Taipei, Matsushita, retrieving like a professional tumbler, had been great fun to watch. Now he was just Kong Linghui's 12, 9 foil.

Fifteen years ago, Iseki, alias Wei, was the Chinese National Champion. Today, facing the '99 Pro-Tour Grand Final Champion, Liu Guozheng, he's down 14-4 in the 1st, 12-4 in the 2nd.

The Sweden-Italy semi's figured to be over with rather quickly too. Against Persson, Mondello got all of 9 the 1st game. But in the mid-game 2nd, the Italian takes on the role of swashbuckler. In response to a deftly dropped ball, he swings tableward as on a rope and, flashing by, backhands in a reposte that has the heretofore lethargic Friday afternoon spectators shaking off drowsiness for derring-do. A moment later, the Swede drops again, and in comes Mondello, this time bounding like a gymnast bent on doing a handspring, to return the ball and again end up in the barriers behind Persson, who this time has only to pitty-pat back a safe return. Supplying the crowd's craving for color and feeding off it himself, Mondello wins the 2nd at 15.

At 6-all in the 3rd, the dashing Italian stretches, and, somersaulting, successfully retrieves. Fantastic! Such energy. He's really putting out, but can he keep it up? Then another long, rousing rally – and this time he ends up outstretched on court, flat on his back. Persson drops again, Mondello's in to get it, then back out lobbing, winning the point. Persson pummels one – miraculously Mondello's racket is there to snap-return it. He looks at his bench as if to say, "Ever seen anything like it?" But Persson catches him at 18-all. "Go, Mondello, go!" I don't want the moment spoiled...for him or for me. Then, who would have thought it? Persson makes three horrendous errors. Italy 1 – Sweden 0.

What! Waldner loses the first to Min Yang. Don't worry – the next two Min will get only 14. Karlsson, to the accompaniment of a lone yodel, is at 18-all in the 1st with Piacentini? Don't worry – the Italian's game but he won't win one. "Waldi's" down in the 1st to Mondello? Don't worry – he's just won 1-2-3-4-5-6-7 in a row. Sweden 3 – Italy 1.

And now the tie everyone's waited for – the China-Sweden final. People are pouring in – eventually there will be 8-10,000 of them – and the partisan blocks have already secured their

vantage points. There in one corner of the Stadium are the prominent 5-star red flags and draped banners. In another across the way sit huddled a small but very vocal band of Swedes, some with painted faces, and most clothed in yellow. Periodically they practice their thunderclaps and chants – Vikings undaunted by the dearth of drink in this Muslim country. In the roped-off VIP section sit such Chinese luminaries as Xu Yinsheng, Li Fu-rong, Zhang Xielin, and Lu Yuansheng. When Cai Zhenhua comes into view walking toward the Dawei sponsor's cameramen stationed behind the row of barriers nearest the table, he's of course greeted as the celebrity he is. He smiles and waves – seems to glisten under the bright lights.

All, finally, is in readiness for the opening match between Waldner and Liu Guoliang. This is the Year of the (Golden) Dragon, Liu's sign, and one Feng Shui Master has offered the strong advice, "Do not let others upset your plans." Though headlines in a local paper warn, "Chinese fear threat of Waldner," the fact is that Waldner has never beaten Liu.

And, down 20-14, in the 1st, he certainly doesn't look like he's going to beat him now. Not, that is, until he wins 5 in a row, and China calls Time! When play resumes, Waldner serves – and Liu socks in a winner. Cai had told the media earlier that the Asians play "a more thinking game" than the Europeans. Was this an example of cool, controlled strategy? Or was it a kind of almost desperate gamble – a choke?

Think this abrupt stop to his rally didn't smart, was a psychological bummer for Waldner? Maybe yes, maybe no. But up 20-6 in the 2nd, he has Liu out of position and though the Chinese manages a counter, Waldner casually chop/blocks the ball back out of Liu's reach, moving imperiously round the table even as he follows through.

In the 3rd, Waldner the more noticeably is serving repeatedly into Liu's backhand (but always, since he'd aced Liu in the 2nd game, with the threat of serving fast down the line). Liu is not playing well, and this is reflected in the stands above – in, for example, Li Fu-rong's distress at what he regards as this or that mistake. But no sooner is the Swede up 13-9 than he falters. Liu, down 13-12, whiffs away a point and spins with a look of anguish toward his bench...which in a few moments receives a yellow card. ("Cool it!" Cai might have said, for he's later to tell the media

that Liu had not only made too many mistakes, he'd been too "temperamental.") About this time Waldner has his own way of calming himself. Instead of picking up the loose ball and proceeding to play, he kicks it a couple of times. However, from 17-all, Waldner is down match point.

But then, though twice not in a comfortable position, he contorts and stretches his body to score winners. Down 20-19, Liu has a ball coming off the net to hit, but misses. A jab-block fire-spurting down-the-forehand-line gives Liu the ad again, but then he whiffs the Swede's serve. And now there are no more ads in this match for the current World and Olympic Champion. Whereas Waldner, winner of the \$3,000 award as Men's MVP, has one more affirmation from aficionados everywhere that he is indeed "the greatest come-from-behind" player in the world.

Waldner, head-high, strides purposefully off court – but not to his bench to be congratulated. Where's he going?...Over to the red-vested cameramen who've been fronting him. He's about to hit one? He looks like he wants to – presumably because they hadn't honored his earlier request to stop their flashes, or at least their too intrusive, distracting shots. He mugs them with his facial features, then stops, squats, and, slowly raising up, thrusts up a hardened fist. Having settled that score, he then waves to the Swedes above, and retires from the court area to relax and recharge himself.

In the 1st game of the 2nd match, from 10-all, Persson pulls away from Kong and wins it at 17. The exuberant Swedes above are keeping vigorous time to their chanting refrains by insistently clapping – each banging his open palm with a blue-colored, bare-faced wooden racket. Play continues with Persson off to an 8-3 lead. But, down 14-9, Kong moves to 15-14 up. From 16-all, the Swede plays aggressively – earns four well-deserved points. Then makes two errors. Then loses an exciting-long topspin exchange. Then socks in Kong's serve. Sweden 2 – China 0.

"It's all over!" That's what more than one stunned observer was saying as the China cheering section is uncharacteristically quiet. Did they expect that other Liu – Liu Guozheng – to succumb to Karlsson? Surely not – not after they'd seen that 1st game 11-2...21-6 drubbing the Swede took. Rest your reddened hands, your dry throats, stout Vikings. See Waldner hurry off to the practice table? There's likely a match or two to go....2nd game: 21-16, Liu. Sweden 2 – China 1.

In the 1st Kong seems to be heeding the Golden advice given to the Rabbit-born: "Do not be discouraged as efforts will not be wasted." Some, though not all, of the Dawei photographers have been moved to the side, but one again apparently disturbed Waldner as, having rallied from 12-5 to 12-9 down, he stepped around his backhand – and he lost the next 12 points in a row! In the 2nd, as Kong made it 13-6, I noticed one cameraman openly applauding. When Kong won this game at 17, maybe it was all over. For Waldner over Kong would seem to have been a much better prospect than Persson over Liu, since at Eindhoven Waldner had beaten Kong in a tough 5-game match and Liu had 7, 10, 15 eviscerated Persson.

Want that side of the table, Jorgen? O.k. It keeps you away from the intrusive photographers when you most can't stand to look at them? At 6-

all in the 1st, Liu has Persson playing badminton returns and seemingly out of the point, but the Swede finds a way to get back in, and, as the on-lookers gasp, low-flying backhands and forehands bank the net in aerial combat. Up 9-6, Persson serves into the net. Surprised? Even the best do it. China, down 13-10, says "Time!" The Coach's message is to focus on the moment – it's time. Liu comes back, ticks off points fast as the passing seconds – is up 17-14...20-15. That's a 10-2 run that gives him some needed end-game room to 21-18 ace Persson with a flip-return of serve.

The flag-waving Chinese are delirious at the turnaround. But the Swedish yellow-jackets haven't given up – surely their chants and claps can stimulate and sting. The whole scene couldn't be better dramatized for the high-up TV cameras viewing not only the clash of the Titan teams; but the participating spectators, themselves warring with makeshift words and weapons. You, flag for drumrolls, please. You, by all means, make a racket.

At mid-game in the 2nd, Liu down 10-6, misses, smiles. He finds it ironic he's not playing well? He misserves, and when he loses the 15-9 point he smiles again. These smiles mean he's scared? Or mask what?...Grim determination, perhaps – for, winning 6 in a row, he pulls

to 15-all. Then – watch the endless replay of their strokes, their sleight-of-hand serves, can you tell what goes on in the hearts and heads of these superstars? – Liu loses 5 in a row. So Persson, after pushing two serve returns into the net, is ready for the climacteric. Dragon, beware!

Mid-point in the 3rd, Liu takes an 11-7 lead ("CHIN-a! CHIN-a!"), but can't hold it...16-all. The tension's great, but the points aren't. Liu particularly falters: serves into the net...drops a return into the – That's it! The thinkable unthinkable has happened! After 7 years the Chinese have been dethroned as Swaythling Cup Champions! Persson has collapsed – lies on the rust-red floor like an overturned bug, madly kicking his legs up as if in some surreal Kafkaesque world. He can hardly believe what's happened – as if, topsy turvey, there's been some inversion of the natural order. His teammates charge wildly at him – as if he were a helpless creature and they about to feast on him. Which, entwining themselves about him, they in a sense do. They break, re-form, join hands. Become again as little children – reintegrate, dance in a circle of unity. A childish consummation? Not on your life – for, given their world, their very demanding careers, wouldn't we all, as a reward, and if only for a moment, like to feel such joy?

World Team Championships Results

MEN'S TEAMS

Final: Sweden d. China, 3-2

Jan-Ove Waldner (SWE) d. Liu Guoliang (CHN), -19, 7, 21
 Jorgen Persson (SWE) d. Kong Linghui (CHN), 17, 19
 Liu Guozheng (CHN) d. Peter Karlsson (SWE), 6, 16
 Kong Linghui (CHN) d. Jan-Ove Waldner (SWE), 9, 17
 Jorgen Persson (SWE) d. Liu Guoliang (CHN), -18, 17, 18

Men's Semifinals

China d. Japan, 3-0
 Sweden d. Italy, 3-1

Men's Quarterfinals

China d. Korea Republic, 3-0
 Sweden d. Germany, 3-0
 Japan d. Chinese Taipei, 3-2
 Italy d. Netherlands, 3-1

WOMEN'S TEAMS

Final: China d. Chinese Taipei, 3-1

Li Ju (CHN) d. Tsui Hsiu-Li (TPE), 10, 11
 Wang Nan (CHN) d. Chen Jing (TPE), 7, 11
 Xu Jing (TPE) d. Zhang Yining (CHN), 19, 18
 Wang Nan (CHN) d. Tsui Hsiu-Li (TPE), 8, 19

Women's Semifinals

China d. Korea Republic, 3-1
 Chinese Taipei d. Romania, 3-2

Women's Quarterfinals

China d. Hong Kong, 3-0
 Chinese Taipei d. Germany, 3-1
 Romania d. Singapore, 3-1
 Korea Republic d. Japan, 3-1

Final Standings

MEN: 1. Sweden; 2. China; 3. Japan and Italy; 5. South Korea, Taiwan and Holland; 8. Germany; 9. Poland, Austria, Belgium and Czech Republic; 13. Yugoslavia, France, Greece and Denmark; 17. Belarus, Slovenia, Russia and Hungary; 21. Hong Kong, Canada, Spain and Slovakia; 25. Israel; 26. England; 27. Indonesia and India; 29. Norway; 30. Brazil; 31. Croatia; 32. Singapore; 33. Finland; 34. Vietnam; 35. Luxembourg; 36. United States; 37. Turkey; 38. Wales; 39. Egypt; 40. Saudi Arabia; 41. Nigeria; 42. Ukraine; 43. Thailand; 44. Bulgaria; 45. Australia; 46. Latvia; 47. Ireland; 48. Jordan; 49. Malaysia; 50. Argentina; 51. Estonia; 52. Sri Lanka; 53. Switzerland; 54. Scotland; 55. Mexico; 56. Bosnia-Herzegovina; 57. New Zealand; 58. Iceland; 59. Portugal; 60. Puerto Rico; 61. Qatar; 62. Macau; 63. South Africa; 64. Nepal; 65. Kazakhstan; 66. Philippines; 67. Bangladesh; 68. Cambodia; 69. Macedonia; 70. Uzbekistan; 71. Lebanon; 72. Mauritius; 73. Mongolia; 74. Cyprus; 75. Seychelles; 76. Brunei.

WOMEN: 1. China; 2. Taiwan; 3. South Korea and Romania; 5. Hong Kong, Japan, Germany and Singapore; 9. North Korea, Sweden, Russia and Hungary; 13. Belarus; 14. Lithuania; 15. Slovakia; 16. Croatia; 17. Canada; 18. Yugoslavia; 19. Holland; 20. Indonesia; 21. Czech Republic; 22. Italy; 23. Australia; 24. Ukraine; 25. France; 26. Luxembourg; 27. England; 28. Belgium; 29. Malaysia; 30. Bulgaria; 31. Austria; 32. New Zealand; 33. United States; 34. Thailand; 35. Israel; 36. Spain; 37. Vietnam; 38. Greece; 39. Portugal; 40. Turkmenistan; 41. Poland; 42. Kazakhstan; 43. Slovenia; 44. Moldova; 45. Venezuela; 46. Brazil; 47. Wales; 48. Finland; 49. Denmark; 50. Macau; 51. Macedonia; 52. Egypt; 53. Sri Lanka; 54. Lebanon; 55. Ireland; 56. Bangladesh; 57. India; 58. Estonia; 59. Uzbekistan; 60. South Africa; 61. Switzerland; 62. Mongolia; 63. Jordan; 64. Palau; 65. Mauritius; 66. Cambodia.

China Intimidates Taipei

JUST ANOTHER WOMEN'S CORBILLON CUP WIN

By Tim Boggan

The Kuala Lumpur World's marks a quarter-century in which the Women's Team of the Chinese Motherland has built up an image of herself in the psychic netherworld of her helpless opponents – she is, more than ever in this prosperity-minded Year of the Golden Dragon, the ruthless Dragon Lady. No offense intended – she appears to be an innocent, is somewhere between a just turned 18 and a just turned 24, is hardly a lady; also, she's quiet, and when she does speak she's not looking for a confidante, but doesn't want to irritate anyone either, so what she says is always innocuous. Yet how she can play the Game! Can even, when the occasion calls for it, *not* play – and not play with the best of them. Of course she won't mask the fact that she wants to win; she's human – she calculates, she feels. But to win with such discipline, such control – that's what intrigues one. Twelve Corbillon Cup titles out of the last 13! Only once, in the Year 1991, might a South Korea Team have gotten her Goat.

But though the shadow-side of this powerful figure hovers over all, what are those who are drawn to her to do? Compete or not compete? Because, as we all know, no one ever beat a Dragon Lady at her own Game....

Take Chinese-Taipei, for example. They were in China's A group round-robin, met the Lady that first night. But they knew better than to even *try* to win against her. Forget playing China expatriates Chen Jing (World #3) or Xu Jing (World #38). Both were over 30, wise beyond their years – they'd been there, done that, knew the score. Of course Chinese-Taipei couldn't publicly be walked over, so – what could they do? – they put up their 3rd, Tsui Hsiu-Li (World #114), who lost to Li Ju (World #2), 14 and 10. They put up their 4th, Pan Li-Chun (World #262), who lost to Sun Jin (World #4) 8 and 13 – oops, sorry, Sun had a 1st-game eclipse, went into hiding, lost it at 19. And they put up their 5th, Lu Yun-Feng (an unranked 16-year-old), who lost to World Champion Wang Nan, 9 and 6.

China advanced, 5-0, 1st. And 2nd was...? Chinese-Taipei, playing of course Chen Jing and Xu Jing (as they would against every opponent but China), over #3 qualifier, Sweden, 3-2. Chen, Gold Medalist at the Seoul Olympics 12 years ago when she played for China, won her two handily. But Asa Svensson (World #59) beat Tsui, and '94 European Champion Marie Svensson (no relation to Asa) got by Xu. Swedish U-13, U-15, U-17, and now U-20 Champion, Linda Nordenberg, coached at Norrkoppings by J-O's brother, Kjell-Ake Waldner, bravely resisted against Xu but succumbed in the 3rd.

Belarus, 2-3, came 4th – with easy wins over the Dutch (5th) and Lithuania (6th).

In Group B, against the strong Romanian team, France got off to a hopeful start when de-



fender Agnes LeLannic (World #131) held off highly favored Otilia Badescu (World #29). But then, though World #32 Anne Boileau, after 8 years with the French at the Institut National Sportif Education Physique (INSEP), could be voluble – "TIME!" she screamed on going down 13-9 in the 3rd against World #28 Mihaela Steff – she couldn't be victorious. It would seem Anne-Sophie Gourin (World #150) had the edge over Romania's Ana Gogorita (World #183), for though 10 years ago Gogorita was European Cadet Champion and two years later the European Junior Top 12 Champion, she never really fulfilled her promise, perhaps because playing in Germany made her feel doubly an "outsider." But this afternoon Gogorita won with ease. Romania 2 – France 1.

Boileau came back from her loss to Steff to beat 29-year-old Badescu, World semifinalist in '93. Down 1-0 and 20-14, Badescu brought it all the way up to 19 – then served and saw Boileau smack in a winning return. "Do I care?" the Romanian seemed to say – no way was Steff going to lose the 5th to LeLannic. Romania 3 – France 2.

North Korea had as its only returnee from its runner-up team at the '97 Manchester World's Kim Hyon Hui (World #44). But the only good thing about this tie for 3-1 loser France is Boileau's 3-game win over Tu Jong Sil (World #68). Last fall Tu won the Pyongyang Invitational from a quarterfinal field that included 7 North Koreans and 1 Chinese.

The French also lost, 3-2, to the Russians – though Boileau's two-wing topspin improvement and the confidence she got from being runner-up in last year's English Open enabled her, as expected, to beat both Svetlana Ganina (World #118) and Galina Melnik (World #67). France, then, finished 4th, blanking both Canada (5th) and Belgium (6th).

Since earlier Russia had feistily contested her tie with Romania, why in the world against North Korea did they sit out their two best players? The Russian give up – they'd settle for 3rd – was the more surprising because they'd had to have known of North Korea's struggle with Canada earlier that same day. Li Geng, China's '85 World Singles run-

ner-up, but for many years now the Canadian #1, had eked out a 24-22 in the 3rd win over Kim Hyang Mi, then lost a 24-22 game and subsequently the match to Kim Hyon Hui. But World #163 Wang Wenxiao ("Xiao-Xiao") had forced Tu to a deuce game. And, if the scores I saw were indeed official, Canada's Team 2008's promising junior Marie-Christine Roussy must have played the match of her young life in losing to Kim Hyon Hui 19 in the 3rd.

Since both North Korea and Romania were undefeated, the winner of their tie had quite an incentive – they wouldn't meet China in the Single Elimination play to follow until at least the semi's. Steff opens by dropping one game to Tu but not two. But when Badescu, continuing to struggle, loses 19 in the 3rd to Kim Hyon Hui, the maybe 25-strong – rainbow-colored! – pocket of North Korean supporters, mostly flag-waving women, cheer and chant. Romania 1 – North Korea 1.

These Koreans have a power shortage at home, but here Kim Yun Mi brightens their Team's outlook with a 9, 14 rout of Gogorita. One more match – and North Korea may again be runner-up to China.

Against Kim Hyon Hui, also a shakehands lefty, Steff is down 20-18 in the 1st, deuces it, then has three straight ads, but can't get the clincher. At 24-all, she mishits, then the Korean serves and follows with a winner. Kim, who squeals over her successful shots, is one of those players who "stalls" before serving, hoping to take advantage of a tense situation. But perhaps it's she who's the more nervous when Steff, catching the ball quickly off the bounce, rallies to deuce it, then win it, in the 3rd. Romania 2 – North Korea 2.

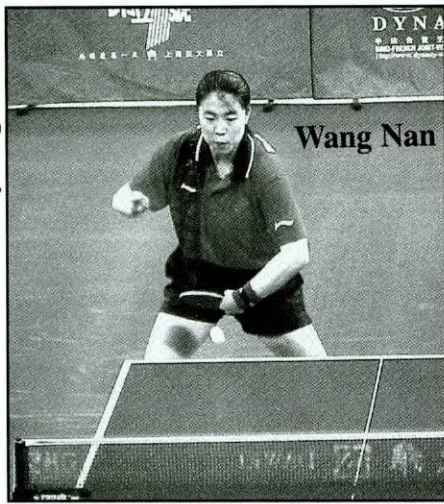
Which leaves Badescu, no longer disappointing, to say, "Sorry – lights out!" to the Koreans. Hey, she *can* play – she just won the Czech Open in Dec.

In the C Group, thanks to Silvija Erdelji, who won all five of her matches against the Croatians (6th), Italians (5th) and Slovaks (4th), and thus after her Corbillon Cup play jumped from World #98 to World #72, the Yugoslavs managed to advance as #3. Later, however (to the consternation of journalists trying to find their way through the maze of seemingly never-ending, who's playing who matches), Yugoslavia finished in a tie for 17th place, *behind* Croatia and the Slovak Republic, eventual 13th place finishers, both of whom they'd beaten in the round robin!

Before meeting Japan, Germany had lost only one match – '96 European Champ Nicole Struse's opener to Slovakia's Eva Odorova, not their National Champion, but runner-up to Valentina Popova, who 20 years ago was World #7, and who I continue to root for since she'll be 40 this year and her favorite writer is Chekhov.

Japan's aging star, Chire Koyama, alias China's 1987 World Women's Singles Champion He Zhili, where was she? She'd just played in the

Photo by Tong Lee ©2000



Pro Tour Grand Final in Sydney a month ago – lost in 5 there to World #2 Li Ju. He, or, rather, she had expatriated to Japan. Why? Because, so the story goes, China, angered when she didn't dump a match at the '87 World's as she'd been asked to, wouldn't allow her to play in the '88 Olympics. So she married a Japanese and from 1992 through 1997 became their National Champion. She wasn't in Kuala Lumpur because she was upset – on and off the court? Taking her place was another aging Chinese expatriate, Haneyoshi Junko, alias Li Jun, formerly World #8.

On the very first day of play Japan looked as though they'd be beaten – by Croatia. For after Tamara Boros (World # 10) had avenged her 24-22 in the 5th loss at Eindhoven to Rinko Sakata (World #43), Andrea Bakula (World #185) had upset Junko, 23 and 17, to give Croatia a 2-0 lead. But Japan came back to win, primarily because Junko's gutsy defense 21, 14 stopped a favored Boros sweep.

Against Germany, Junko made sure she wouldn't be unranked for long. This June she'd be 33 – what had she been doing for the last 10 years? Nothing that had softened her will to win, for in a stinging start-off match that she finished with a series of make or break forehands, she outlasted World #15 Jie Schopp, 24-22 in the 3rd. Then in a 3-game follow-up she downed World #6 Qianhong Gotsch. Since the German defenders had little difficulty with World #25 An Konishi's predictable topspin, the pivotal match of the tie was World #29 Nicole Struse's win over World #51 Ai Sakata, Rinko's younger sister.

In Group D, going into the last day of play, only England was out of it. And yet, after losing 8 ties and winning but 3 games, the English women finished half a dozen places ahead of the U.S. women, undefeated except for their loss to Austria. Such is the Group D vs. Group E positional advantage for losers in this questionable format.

Though Chinese expatriate Ni Xia Lian, current European Champion and 3-time Europe Top 12 twiddler, decisively won two matches, her Luxembourg team (5th) could not beat Ukraine (4th).

Against Hungary, Hong Kong's China-born, 18-year-old Song Ah Sim (World #61) played contested, though losing, matches with veterans Krisztina Toth (World #26) and chunky Csilla Batorfi (World #24). Kwok Fong Fong (World #81), who had the highest high-toss serve I've ever seen, did in Zita Molnar (World #108). But 19-

year-old Wong Ching (World #46), who got by Toth, dropped two deuce swing games to Batorfi. Hungary 3 – Hong Kong 2.

Another key tie for Hong Kong was Ukraine. They couldn't lose to them. Elena Kovtun (World # 84), with her stagey strokes – as if she wants to make sure even the audience in the farthest reaches of the Stadium knows she's chopping – cut down both Kwok and Lau Sui Fei (World #70). But her two wins weren't enough.

So, facing undefeated South Korea, who'd downed Hungary 3-0, Hong Kong, having lost to Hungary, will probably come 3rd with a 3-2 record. To create a 3-way play-off and profit from it, they would either have to blank the Koreans to win the Group, or merely beat them to come 2nd.

Hong Kong's Song, after losing the 1st game at 19 to Kim Moo Kyo (World #42), recovers to 19, 18 win the match. Then – another teenage thrust – shakehands chopper Wong takes the 1st at 19 from World #8 Ryu Ji Hye. "Enough!" the whole Korean bench must cry. And Ryu 11, 12 responds, rights herself. Hong Kong 1-South Korea 1.

But with Kwok now upsetting Eindhoven eighthfinalist Suk Eun Mi (World #27), all Hong Kong is rooting for a 2nd-place finish. Of course Ryu's not gonna lose to Song. But in the 5th match of the tie, in the 1st against Kim, Wong can do no wrong, wins 21-9. Hold your breath – there might be an adventure in the making....Alright, let it out, Kim didn't come close to capitulating.

Hong Kong has one last chance for 2nd, while Luxembourg, too, has chances. If Hungary loses to Luxembourg, there'll be a 3-way tie-breaker for 2nd. For Luxembourg to advance all the way to 2nd, they need to win 3-0. To come 3rd, they need to win 3-1. In either case, Hungary, now in 2nd place, would drop to 4th and no longer be in contention for the title.

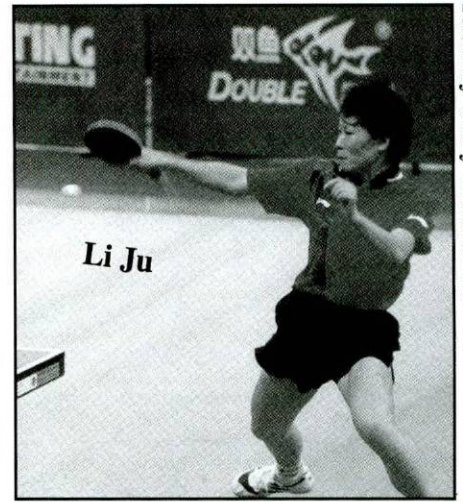
Naturally Hungary's practically conceded two of the first four matches to Ni Xia Lian (Batorfi will lose a meaningless 4th match to her, 4 and 3). It's the 3rd match that counts, and so Hungary is playing their #2 Toth against Luxembourg's #2 – a mismatch that Peggy Reggenwetter (World #165) makes interesting by getting to 19 the last game. Molnar then returns to complete the Hungarians' 3-2 win by downing Benedicte Meyer (World #325).

Coming together now in Single Elimination "Knockout" ties to produce a Champion are the 12 advancing teams from Groups ABCD plus the 4 qualifying Group E through T teams – Indonesia (who beat U.S. conqueror Austria 3-2), Czech Republic, Singapore, and Australia.

However, though only 16 teams remain, don't think you're going to see a conventional draw sheet, far from it. First, just four teams will drop out of contention – for the 4 qualifiers will play those teams that finished 3rd in the ABCD groups. Losing 3-0 will be the Czechs to Hong Kong and the Indonesians to Sweden. Losing 3-1 will be the Yugoslavs to Singapore. Losing 3-2 will be the Aussies to Russia.

Although Yugoslav National Champion Gordana Plavsic (World #160), -11, 20, 17 rallies to down the Singapore #3 Tan Paey Fern (World #123), her teammate Erdelji, whom the Yugos have to depend on to win two, loses 19 in the 3rd to both 18-year-old Li Jia Wei, the just crowned Commonwealth Champion, and 31-year-old Jing Jun Hong, the 19-in-the-5th runner-up.

Australia depends on Miao Miao (World #105



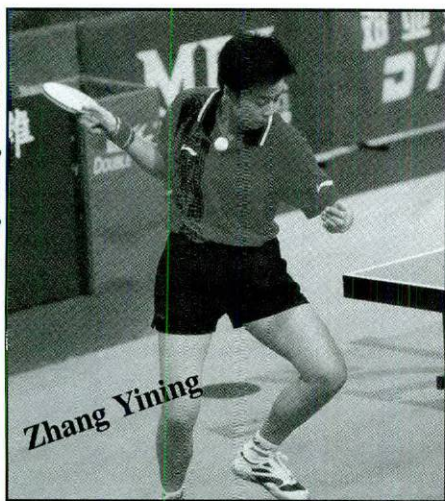
but after KL World #78), a Chinese who emigrated to Australia from Poland, and who lost to our Tawny Banh in the Consolation's at Eindhoven. But though she comes through – upsets both Palina and Melnik – neither Shirley nor Stella Zhou (no relation) can add the vital win the Aussies need. Australia's Coach, former Chinese National Coach Miao Cang Sheng, says that what Australia or any other country needs is "closed centralised training the whole year round with strictly no relationships and any other outside interference." Who's gonna be first to try this in the U.S.?

The four losing teams (only Singapore has survived from the Group E-T qualifiers) will now disappear from title-contention to surface elsewhere – with the intriguing proviso that the more ties they, and the other teams they're involved with, *lose*, the more chance they have of getting an Award – B1 for 25th place (France to receive *La Palme du Martyre*), B2 for 26th (Bravo, Luxembourg).

The four teams that have just won (including Singapore) will now play those teams that finished 2nd in the ABCD groups. In the top half of the Draw, upstart Hong Kong, winning 7 out of 9 games, tumbled last year's runner-up Korea DPR into a finishing 9th-12th tie and moved themselves into the quarter's – all for a Song, you might say, giving up but that one match to Kim Hyon Hui. Sweden, meanwhile, was no competition for Japan.

In the bottom half of the Draw, Russia's fast-hands Melnik, who used to have a bawl after some of her matches, inwardly danced with delight on upsetting Chinese-Taipei's Xu Jing and Chen Jing – wins that helped her to move from World #67 to World #49. But, as her comrades more tripped than tripped the light fantastic, Russia fell to Chinese Taipei, 3-2. Against Singapore, Hungary's 3rd, Molnar, survived a gritty -19, 20, 14 match with Tan to keep her team alive, but Toth, who'd earlier won the deciding game at 19 over Jing, couldn't work a repeat against Li. So Singapore, World #30 at Manchester, advanced to the quarter's.

In the top half of the Draw, in the China-Hong Kong quarter's, Wang Nan is down 9-3 to Song in the 1st but continues picking up points, enough to win in straight games, and so increases the VIP ones she's also accumulating. Li Ju's doing alright too. Last month, she won the Women's World Cup. One can see why – for here, facing Hong Kong's Wong, an Asian Games quarterfinalist in '98, Li's up 1-0 and 10-0. Take



ality? Oh, alright, but that's usually World #26 Zhang Yining's assigned task. In earlier matches she'd gone 19 with World #329; 23 and 19 with World #240; and had brazenly lost a game to World #78. Here, down 6-1, getting off it might be presumed to a nervous start, she loses another game to World #81 Kwok Fong Fong. Never mind – Zhang's up 9-1 in the 2nd, 10-3 in the 3rd. China 3 – Hong Kong 0.

The only match in the Japan-Korea quarter's that seems much in doubt is the 1st between Rinko Sakata and Ryu Jie Hae. Sakata, who hadn't received a World Ranking until two years ago when she was almost 25, has the momentum, for, having won the 2nd, she's off to a 5-1 start in the 3rd. She steadily backhand pushes and chops Ryu's topspin, threatening all the while to pick-hit in a flashing forehand. Up 12-6, she has a great chance for an upset. But then she starts making errors and seems to visibly slump. Still, Sakata has heart. Down 18-17, she counters in a winner, and down 19-18 she scores again. But when her last two forehands miss, she won't get the chance to play World #50 Lee Eun Sil in the 5th whom she might have beaten. Hence, since Junko's primarily defensive game can't stop the Korean attackers, Konishi's win over Kim will be wasted. (And she'd bowed to her teammates so nicely on winning too.)

In the bottom half of the Draw, in the Germany-Chinese Taipei quarter's, defender Jie Schopp takes down Xu Jing – but Tsui resoundingly turns round her match with veteran Olga Nemes (World #37), and Chen Jing, winner of four Pro Tour Opens last season including the Grand Final, has so much firepower that, had mikes been installed at the table, Qianhong Gotsch, winner over Wang Nan at the '99 China Open, could have shown to one and all – sworn to, in fact – her command of the German idiom.

In the remaining quarter's, Romania ends Singapore's singular advance. Against Li, Badescu ekes out a huge, deuce in the 3rd win. Huge because Steff loses badly to '93 World eighthfinalist Jing – like Li, a member of what used to be known as "China's overseas corps," but which now has too many divisions to be called that. In the crucial match against Tan, the Singapore 3rd, Romania plays not Gogorita but Antonela Manac, who'd seen action in only one earlier match. Choosing Manac is manic? Nope – she beats Tan two straight. And when Steff -19, 19, 11 plays turnaround-now you're out with Li, "The Saga of Little Singapore" or "How To Move From 30th To 5th" has ended.

Plenty of drama remains in the upcoming semi's. Take the China-South Korea tie. China has a very conspicuous cheerleader/drummer boy. His drum is red, his drumsticks are red, his drum-strap is red, and he himself has red paint on his face. He's ready to go – is urging various pockets of flag-waving followers to take up the challenge of his drumbeats with appropriate bursts of shouts and cheers ("CHIN-a!...CHIN-a!"). First up – and she has her flag-waving supporters too – is World #42 Kim Moo Kyo, 2nd-round loser at Eindhoven to Asa Svensson but who with her teammates had prepared for this tournament by sparring with the Korean Men's Team. If Kim can hit balls against Kim Taek Soo, can't she hit them against Wang Nan? And 19, 19 beat her?...Uh, yes!

"CHIN-a!...CHIN-a!" Drummer boy, drum up some action! Li Ju and Eindhoven semifinalist Ryu Ji Hae are in the 3rd. Up 16-15 after misserving, Li gets in a good forehand and then Ryu, uncomfortably stretching in over the net to try for a putaway, misses to fall 19-15 behind. "CHIN-a!...CHIN-a!" Still aggressive, Ryu loops one in...then makes the mistake of topspinning slow, and when Li counters for a winner the Korean is 20-17 match point down. But she serves and follows – 20-18. Then there's a long spiny, suspenseful exchange – which she also wins: 20-19. "CHIN-a!...CHIN-a!" Now, though Ryu has the serve, she hasn't, as the point is played, the control. Out of position and perhaps feeling she's forced to take the chance, she tries an all-out, on-the-run backhand – which doesn't go in. South Korea 1-China 1.

Earlier, China's Head Coach Cai Zhenhua has told the media that the Chinese Women's Team "have been taught how to get out of tight situations and this is going to be our main weapon as always." As always? And is needing to get out of tight situations what we're seeing here? Or what we were seeing? For now Zhang Yining wins the 1st from '96 U.S. Open Champion Lee Eun Sil at 12, then, up 16-15 in the 2nd, runs it out. Vibrations abound in the Stadium. A thunderstorm is passing. Zhang shakes hands with Lee without looking at her, then comes back to her bench and slaps high fives. This 2-1 lead-taking win, as rain leaks down on the Press seats, leaves Wang Nan to mop up. Having recovered remarkably, she destroys Ryu 12 and 10. As there's a mass exodus, a man near me goes round collecting the small Korean flags.

In their semi's with Chinese-Taipei, Romania was back playing Gogorita in that key #3 match, but though she won the 1st from Tsui she couldn't win another. Steff's valiant play, however, looked to take us back 30 years to Munich, the last time the Romanians had come second in Corbillon Cup play. After opening with a win over Xu, this promising 21-year-old followed with a 19, -11, 21 squeaker against Chen, thus preserving Romania's chances. On then to the 5th and last match. Seventeen years have passed since Badescu won her 1st European Cadet Championship. Likely that seemed a long time ago when now she lost that tell-tale deuce game to Xu Jing. Perhaps, though, the Taipei player figured to have the stronger motivation. A local KL paper reported that for reaching the final – something no Chinese-Taipei Team had ever done before – each of the players would receive \$100,000 from the National Olympic Council of Taiwan. And almost double that if they could go on to upset China.

To get into the spirit of this final Championship tie I sit with my friend Nisse Sandberg among a block of Chinese enthusiasts. Cheers for the painted-up drummer boy and from the drummer boy – he's back at his beat. From time to time a large Chinese banner is raised behind me, brushing my neck. Little girls quite near me, dressed in their Golden Year best, wave tiny flags furiously and chant "CHIN-a!...CHIN-a!" or zestfully blow on their paper horns, as if to roll out curled-up dragons from their dens. They're having a grand time.

As Li Ju (World #2) and Tsui Hsiu-Li (World #114) come out to play, I take up my red pen and prepare for the worst. Tsui's middle seems highly vulnerable to Li Ju's slashing strokes. 1st game: 21-10. As play continues, Tsui's very self-conscious. She misses – slaps a hand to her hip...Misses – puts her racket on top of her head. 2nd game: 21-11. Advantage China.

Now Nan Wang (World #1) and China-expatriate Chen Jing (World #3) prepare to play. Both are lefty shakehands players, both nearly even in the rankings. Coach Lu Yuansheng has told the media that "Chen Jing is not the same player who lost to Deng Yaping in Atlanta four years ago. She has improved more [of course at 19 she'd already loyally won the '88 Olympics for China] and has beaten our top two players like Wang Nan and Li Ju in the ITTF Pro Tour circuit last year."

Fireworks aplenty, you think? 1st game: 21-7. Chen hits the last ball long – maybe by six feet. As play continues, Chen is down 9-5. "Time!" The minute will pass. The umpire calls or motions to her – she has to continue. 2nd game: 21-11. The kindergarten kids (and quite a few others) are "CHIN-a!...CHIN-a!" still having a grand time. Such exuberance, such innocence! Perhaps we'll see Chen come on court again in the 5th match – though this seems unlikely.

Now – oh, that's China's (World #26) Zhang Yining who's positioned #3. She's lost a lot of games – what are they playing her for? Why not (World #4) Sun Jin?

Never mind – Zhang's holding her own against Xu Jing. At least until about 16-all in the 1st when she makes two really embarrassingly bad shots. Down 19-18, she misses long. But then scores with a serve and follow. And before losing the last point thrills the crowd with some great lob-gets.

But what a start to the 2nd game – Zhang's down 6-1...and may never catch up. Well, what can you do? China can afford to lose a match – and does.

But Wang had better win against Tsui. Her \$3000 MVP Award depends upon it. Not to mention the Championship.

1st game: Wang, occasionally angling-off backhands, wins 21-8. She "was born to play the angles," Coach Lu has told the media.

The excitement has been too much for the kids. Show's over for them – they're quite subdued.

2nd game: Nan's up 9-3...only that's not enough of a lead for the World Champion. But from 15-all Tsui makes errors – and that costs her. As the last ball falls, the umpire, our Aly Salam, says it hit the side. There are no objections – all are satisfied with the 21-19 score. Game, match, and Cup to China.

Away from the Stadium perhaps many will set off firecrackers in celebration, and to try to ward off any evil spirits that Dragon-like remain.

In Memoriam

TIBOR (HOFFMAN) HAZI

(1912-2000)

By Tim Boggan, USATT Historian

Tibor Hazi, the Hungarian International who became a U.S. Hall of Famer, was born Feb. 9, 1912. His real name was Hoffman, but as Hungarian society was anti-Semitic (hence Braun became Barna, Klein became Kelen), he used the name Hazi. This brought him into “compliance with a Hungarian law requiring Hungarian contenders in government subsidized international sports to use Hungarian names.”

Hazi, who'd had contact with U.S. players at World Championships – he'd played doubles with Jimmy McClure in 1935 at Wembley – came to the United States in 1939. He'd seen the handwriting on the Budapest wall – for the Hungarian government had forced him to go to Gdansk-cum-Danzig to play at an S.S. club where of course Hitler's picture hung threateningly over him. “Do you eat pork?” asked his host. Even if it would take an Act of Congress, the U.S. would just have to become home and refuge for Tibor and his wife (nee Gal), a former World Women's Singles finalist, who pre-deceased him in 1990.

At the 1936 Prague World's, in the semi's of the Men's Doubles, Hazi and his partner, fellow Hungarian Ferenc Soos, were up 2-1 and 19-11 in the 4th ... only to lose to the eventual winners, McClure and Bud Blattner. This was a bitter blow to Tibor, for, aside from his 1933 Men's Consolation title, he was never to win a World Singles or Doubles Championship (though in 1934, partnered with Sandor Glancz in the Doubles, he did get to the final).

In World Singles play, Hazi, who over the years had a number of European titles to his credit, was usually a contender. In 1932 he'd gotten to the quarter's, in Dec. of '33 to the semi's, in '37 to the quarter's again, and in '38 to the semi's again. He had a close-to-the-table chop; a good block; a European elbow-up forehand that because of his unorthodox grip was struck from the backhand side of the racket; and, on moving his thumb into position, an excellent backhand flick.

Hungary didn't play in the '39 World's, but on Mar. 15 of that year, just two days before the start of the U.S. Open, the 27-year-old Hazi and his wife Magda, whom he'd married two years earlier, arrived in the U.S., and promptly came out to Toledo to compete. With his friend, Laszlo “Laci” Bellak, the '37 and '38 Men's titleholder, he won the Doubles, but in the Singles final, red-faced, he was beaten by McClure. Described as blue-

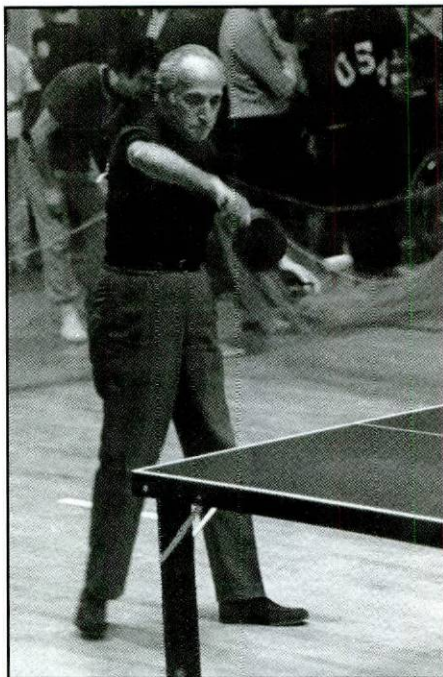


Photo by Mal Anderson © 1972

eyed, stocky, “scholarly and ruddy,” Tibor was not particularly athletic. He had sedentary pursuits – had studied accounting (reportedly was a graduate of the University of Budapest) and enjoyed playing chess. But neither Patience nor Humility were his strong points. And, as he hated to lose, his exertions, his emotions, often brought a flush to his face.

Though the Hazis' visa situation was precarious, Tibor and Magda toured the country, playing exhibitions and giving lessons, and in 1940, at the Indianapolis U.S. Open, though again neither won their respective Singles, they did win the Mixed Doubles.

Perhaps the biggest win of their lives, however, occurred in the winter of 1940-41 when the official USTTA magazine *Topics* reported that ... “Through the efforts of Dr. Harold Dudley, Secretary to Hon. James J. Davis, Senator from Pennsylvania, a [“private”] bill was recently passed by Congress admitting Tibor and Magda Gal Hazi as [U.S.] citizens.”

Along the way to citizenship, Tibor remembers he was once given a hard time. A Texas Congressman apparently found it very Un-American that Hazi had brothers who were officers in the Hungarian Army. He began grilling Tibor with repulsive questions – wanted to know, for example, “If the U.S. asked you to serve and you fought the Hungarians, would you kill your brother?” Tibor's response was blunt, “I'd be happy to serve [and in World War II he did], but I wouldn't kill my brother.”

The Hazis were helped to become American citizens because Carl Zeisberg, former USTTA President, introduced them to Washington, D.C. table tennis official, Lt. Col. George Foster, who worked in the Assistant


Secretary of War's Office (Foster urged the Hazis to move to Washington), and also because they drew the attention of President Roosevelt's (1941-45) Vice President, Henry Wallace. Wallace had visited Hungary as a young man and had always enjoyed playing table tennis.

When the Vice President found out that the Hazis had moved to Washington, he asked Tibor to come for a visit. “Don't stay for more than 15 minutes,” he was advised. But he and Wallace hit it off so well that Tibor stayed two and a half hours. Afterwards Tibor saw Wallace two or three times a week, occasionally had dinner at his home. “The Vice President's wife washed dishes,” he said. “I was amazed – I dried.” Hazi and Wallace played tennis together, and Wallace even came to the Columbia Table Tennis Courts that Tibor managed.

Hazi's heyday in the U.S. was in the early '40's. From 1941 through 1944 he ranked in the Top 4. He was runner-up in the U.S. Open not only in '39 but in '43, and a semifinalist in '41. For three straight years, from '42 through '44, he was a finalist in the prestigious Eastern Open opposite Lou Pagliaro, winning once, and losing twice. In '43 (as well as in '39) he won the U.S. Open Men's Doubles with Bellak. He would also win in '48 with Johnny Somael and in '54 with Bernie Bukiet. In addition to winning the Mixed Doubles in 1940, he also won in '43 with Mae Clouter and in '53 with Leah Neuberger. In 1947 he became eligible for the U.S. Open Senior's (then 35 and Over). And for 9 of the next 10 years he was in the final, and in 3 more in the '60's as well.

Tibor's wife Magda, who'd been born into a banking family and was well-educated, retired from table tennis after beating Mae Clouter in a sensational 26-24-in-the-5th final in the '42 Eastern's. She was what her husband wanted in a wife: “the cosmopolitan woman who knows how to maintain her poise both in the home and out in the world. Tibor himself, having turned 30, also sought a more balanced life – he became an accountant for the Charles H. Tompkins Co., builders, by day, and continued managing his Columbia Courts by night.

Eventually, for him too, the lights on the courts would be turned off. But meanwhile we can recall that it was in Tibor's 30th year, with a world-class career behind him, that he became eligible for his first USTTA Men's Ranking. That was for the '40-41 season, and he was ranked U.S. #4. Remarkably, 20 years later, for the '60-61 season, still fiercely competitive, he was ranked U.S. #8.

How Tibor loved the Sport – how long the light inside him shone. 



In Memoriam

BARRY RODGERS (1941-2000)

By Dan Seemiller

Barry Rodgers from Pittsburgh passed away early March from colon cancer that had spread to his liver. Barry was a good friend to many who play table tennis.

Barry was one of the kindest and honest people I've ever known. He was the President of the South Park Table Tennis Club for more than 15 years and he worked side by side with me as the co-director of the 10 Sun TV Opens that we ran together. He did an excellent job as the leader of the South Park Club. What I remember most about Barry is the time he would spend with new members coming to the club for the first time. Barry would make sure they were welcome and he'd always play 30 or more minutes against them. He would do this every week.

I also remember Barry having his tools out fixing tables and putting together barriers with our friends Bob Doby, Gary Egri, Roger Dickson, Chip Coulter, and Randy & Rick Seemiller. Sometimes when our Sun TV Opens were over nobody wanted to do the grunt work but Barry'd be out there non-stop,

boxing barriers and cleaning up.

Barry was also Vice President of USATT for five years, 1991-1995. He worked hard on junior development and spent hundreds of hours volunteering for committees and putting in the work. Barry was a low-key guy, never wanting to accept any credit, but believe me – he was an MVP.

Barry was 59 years old and leaves behind his wife Hedi and son Brian. The Pittsburgh table tennis community will miss him immensely. Personally, Barry was one of my dearest friends and a better man would be hard to find. Thank you Barry for making life and table tennis better for me. I'll never forget you.

In Memoriam

YOSHIO FUSHIMI

(1906-1999)

By Tim Boggan, USATT Historian

Yoshio Fushimi, from Shizuoka, Japan, emigrated to Chicago to work at his uncle's import firm, the Fuji Trading Co., in the fall of 1925 when he was 19 years old.

By 1932, Fushimi, a penholder but primarily a defensive player, was ranked #8 by Parker Brothers' American Ping-Pong Association. 1932 APPA National Champion Coleman "Coke" Clark so enjoyed Yosh's showmanship that in his (1933) *Modern Ping-Pong* he pictures him "rushing towards the table like a mad bull to return a short shot just over the net," only to crash "headlong into a ladder on the top of which perched a referee" – whereupon as Yosh returned the ball and won the point, down came "the ladder, referee, ice water and all." Fushimi was one of Clark's most valued exhibition partners – for "color" he would sometimes wear a native Japanese costume – and they played churches and schools, country clubs, Big Ten basketball games, and night clubs together.

In June of 1933 Fushimi, irritated that he was being forced in APPA tournaments to discard his favorite racket for a Parker Brothers model, met with Bill Stewart to discuss the formation of the USTTA (Stewart would be our Association's first President). Thereafter, urged on by a fervent appeal from Fushimi, a key group of prestigious Midwest players seceded from the Western PPA, and by the following summer all the leading players in the country had joined the USTTA.

Since throughout the '30's Fushimi continued to be a felt presence in Chicago table tennis, the Illinois TTA appointed him Captain of the 1941 Chicago Intercity Team, but after the Dec. 7 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor



In Memoriam

LARRY GARLAND (1939-2000)

By John Curd

Larry Garland, age 61, collapsed after playing a match at the Buckeye Open in Columbus, Ohio, on March 18. He was taken to Ohio State University Trauma Center, where efforts to revive him failed.

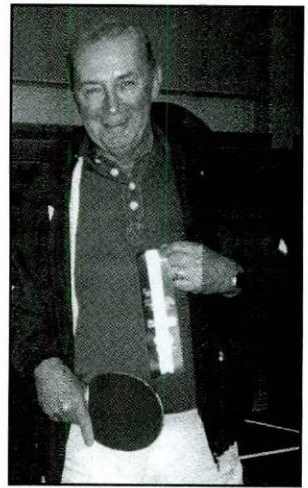
Larry, a successful Detroit area business and family man, died playing the sport he loved best. He won his last match.

He started playing "hardbat" in the early 1950s. As one of the top juniors in Michigan, he played with Ed Brennan, Tom Waters and Dan Robbins, to name a few. The re-emergence of hardbat table tennis, which Larry embraced, brought his anticipation and enthusiasm to new heights.

Larry competed in the Senior Olympics in Florida last October, finishing fourth in doubles. At the USA Nationals in Las Vegas in December, he won Under 1400 Hardbat, the first time the event has ever been held. He recently married, built a new house, and was looking forward to retirement.

To his wife Lynn, sons Russ & Michael, daughter Lorrie, grandchildren Rebecca, Stephanie, Danielle, Kristin and Brandon, our thoughts and prayers go out to you.

Table tennis will miss him. He was a real competitor but most of all he was just a nice guy.



In Memoriam

RALPH MUCHOW (1916?-2000)

By Tim Boggan, USATT Historian

Ralph Muchow begin playing serious table tennis as a teenager in Evanston, IL and made meteoric progress. For the 1934-35 season he was #23 in Illinois; for the 1935-36 season he'd won the Chicago Suburban Championship and was #14 in the U.S. His highest National Ranking, #9, came in the spring of 1937. In 1938 he was the U.S. Open Men's Doubles finalist with Chicago's Al Nordhem – beaten only by the just crowned World Doubles Champions Sol Schiff and Jimmy McClure. And in 1939 he reached the semi's of the U.S. Open Mixed Doubles with South Bend's Betty Henry.

By 1940 he'd received his dental degree from Northwestern, and, after serving in the Army during World War II, he went on to practice dentistry in Elgin, IL for over 50 years.

His March 7 obituary in the *Chicago Tribune*, which our USATT Hall of Fame founder Steve Isaacson sent me, said that Muchow had "a private, not-for-profit museum of 3,400 working antique radios" – the largest collection in the world – and that it was "featured in the February 1997 issue of Smithsonian Magazine."

Ralph's brother Gordon, who survives him, was also a well-known Chicago-area player who with our Hall of Famer Bill Holzrichter reached the semi's of the Men's Doubles at the 1939 U.S. Open.

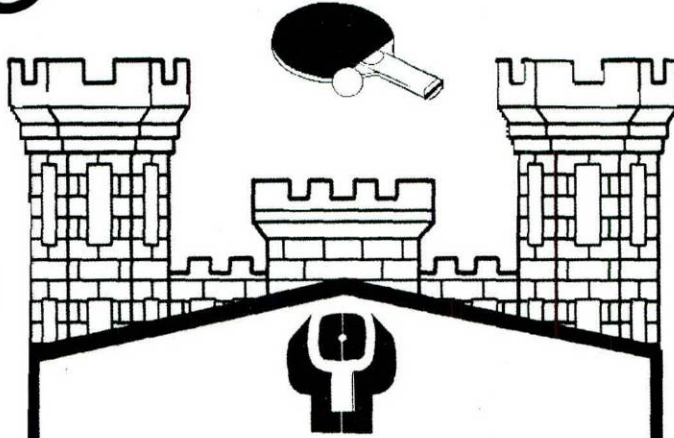
Our Association's sympathies to Ralph's wife, Carole, and family.

he immediately resigned. On the morning of Dec. 8, 1941 when he went to open the Fuji Trading Co., six FBI agents were waiting for him. Of course everybody who knew him came to his rescue. The owner of the building where he lived said he and his family could continue living there rent free, his family physician said he needn't worry about paying him until he got another job, the Chicago Team members brought him a large sum of money they'd collected from Chicago table tennis enthusiasts, even a Treasury Department agent wanted to give him a letter of recommendation. Eventually he was able to become a U.S. citizen.

When Bill Hornyak began running his Duneland All-American tournaments in Michigan City, Indiana in the late 1970's, Fushimi was lured back into table tennis to help him at the Control Desk and to umpire.

Some years ago – he appeared at major tournaments well into his 80's – Yosh sent me two scrapbooks he'd kept in the 1930's and these were historically very helpful to me. He was "a really nice guy," as those in the 1930's or, 50 years later, those in the 1980's who knew him would testify to. I myself would like to emphasize to his daughter, Jackie Ostling, who survives him, my pleasure in knowing such a decent, honorable man.

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TOP MEN

WA 2843 Fan, Yi Yong
MD 2729 Cheng, Yinghua
NJ 2696 Zhuang, David
CA 2686 Nguyen, Khoa Dinh
TX 2651 Owens, Eric
MD 2631 Sweeris, Todd
NY 2618 Musa, Atanda Ganiyu
TX 2558 Subonj, Viktorian
MD 2552 Li, Sunny
NY 2549 Boggan, Eric
FL 2537 Alban, Keith
NY 2514 Shao, Yu
NY 2511 Fernandez, David
IN 2498 Seemiller, Daniel
CA 2488 Shodhan, Shashin
NY 2487 Ekun, Abass
FL 2481 Pace, Brian
GA 2473 Masters, Brian
CA 2458 Choptaeng, Chaiyaphoon
CA 2457 Gabriel, Freddie
NY 2438 Liu, Hui Yuan
GA 2436 Peng, Xin
TX 2434 Cohen, Randy H.
GA 2433 Reed, Barney J.
NY 2423 Leibovitz, Tahl
IL 2416 Shiu, Arturo Pang
GA 2410 Beebe, T. J.
MI 2409 Jain, Ashoo
NJ 2404 Dattel, Barry
NJ 2399 Domingo, Rey A.

TOURNAMENTS PROCESSED –

This list was compiled on 5/3/00 and includes all tournaments played through 3/12/00. **Due to space limitations, only current members who have played in a tournament since 11/25/99 are included.** This document may not be reproduced without prior written permission of USA Table Tennis. Copyright 2000.

TOP WOMEN

MD 2653 Chang, Jun Gao
CA 2487 Huang, Yao Xi
MI 2473 Reed, Jasna
CA 2433 Banh, Tawny
NJ 2388 Yip, Lily
NY 2324 Sung, Virginia Wei-Ni
NJ 2306 Obern, Claudia
OR 2297 Yang, Simone
CA 2277 Do, Michelle
NY 2251 Wang, Li Jun
CA 2232 Tyan, Anzhelika
PA 2211 Gee, Diana
TX 2172 Zheng, Pei Pei
CA 2127 Lee, Jacqueline
MD 2119 Shen, Jessica
MD 2118 Lee, Vivian
CT 2105 Laskova, Inna
MA 2104 Fong, Kyna
IL 2080 Simovic, Marijana Maya
OR 2073 Ping, Emily
CA 2044 Ganapathy, Kavitha
OR 2021 Ping, Whitney
MA 2015 Chang, Karen
MD 2013 Liu, Xiaoying
TX 2002 Roufeh, Mahin
NY 1980 Kaler, Natalie
KS 1949 Hill, Nancy
CA 1928 Seibel, Allison
NY 1922 Schoenberg, Stacy
CA 1921 Livshin, Bella

All ratings-related questions should be directed to Megan Kulenburg, USATT Headquarters, One Olympic Plaza, Colorado Springs, CO 80909. To find out your rating, send a self-addressed, stamped postcard with your name and the date of your last tournament. You may also contact us at 719-578-4583 or by e-mail at usat3@iex.net.

TOURNAMENTS INCLUDED IN RATINGS

1999 North American Teams	Friends of Ping Pong	Lincoln Open	Sooner State Games	Schaumburg No Waiting Open
1999 Millennium Madness Team	Long Island December Open	USA Olym. Qualification Trials	Sports Fitness Jan Series	NH Millenium RR Open
Atlanta Winter Open	Championships	2000 Royan Ozark Winter Classic	Maryland February Circuit	Rochester Giant RR - 2000
Bay State Giant RR	MTTC 99 Winter Singles	Columbus Open RR	STTC Feb 2000	Harlingen RR Open
Maryland December Circuit	NJTTC December Open	Davison January Open	South Bend Newmar Open	STTC March 2000
Portland Double RR Open	USATT Nationals	Maryland January Circuit Teams	2000 Augusta Jr. Champ. Open	Sports Fitness March Series
Sacramento Dec. Warm-Up Open	Davison December Open	Midtown Athletic Club TTT	2000 Michigan State Champ.	City of Atlanta Jr. League Part 2
Senoda Open	City of Atlanta Jr. League Part 1	Schaumburg RR Open	Florida One Day RR	2000 Kansas Late Winter Classic
Sports Fitness Player Series	Cleveland Winter Open 2000	MDTTC February Open	NJTTC February Open	Atlanta Giant RR
Atlanta Winter Closed	Maryland January Circuit	Star of the North State Games	Arizona Open	Maryland March Circuit
1999 4th Annual USATT	STTC Jan 2000	Golden Western States Open	Davison Athletic Club Open	NJTTC March Open
Nationals Warm-Up	NJTTC January Open	Orlando Winter Open	Maryland Feb. Circuit Teams	2000 Millennium Madness Open
		Sac-Rec Winter Open RR	Newark Macy Block Open	

UPCOMING USA TABLE TENNIS TOURNAMENTS

May 27-28 - Golden State Open, Walnut Creek, CA. Contact: Phil Schafer, 3904 Bellwood Dr., Concord, CA 94519. Phone: 925-689-7463. philip.schafer@mcworld.com ★★

May 27-28 - St. Joseph Valley Open, Notre Dame, IN. Contact: Dan Seemiller, 301W. Front St., P.O. Box 608. New Carlisle, IN 46552. Phone: 219-654-7476 ★★★★★

June 2-4 - Meiklejohn National Seniors (Over 40), Laguna Woods, CA. Contact: Olga Feingold-Kahan, 4008 Calle Sonora, Apt. 2B, Laguna Woods, CA 92653. Phone: 949-454-2495. ★★★★★

June 3 - Sports Fitness Player Series, Clemmons, NC. Contact: Danny Hill, 3 Twin Brook Dr., Clemmons, NC 27012. Phone: 336-764-0010. dhilltt@aol.com

June 3 - 2000 Pensacola Spring Open, Pensacola, FL. Contact: Steve Sebastian 6495 Hermitage Dr. Pensacola, FL 32504. Phone 850-478-0336. Ssebastian@mindspring.com ★

June 10-11 - Maryland June Circuit, Eldersburg, MD. Contact: Yvonne Kronlage, 14160 Forsythe Rd., Sykesville, MD 21784. Phone: 410-489-7291.

June 10-11 - STTC June 2000, Plainview, NY. Contact: Michael Lalvani, 960 Round Swamp Road, Old Bethpage, NY 11804. Phone: 516-349-9192. Michael@spintechologies.com ★★

June 10 - Austin Open, Austin, TX. Contact: John R. Miller, 13102 Briar Hollow Dr., Austin, TX 78729. Phone: 512-258-3731. john@balconessoftware.com ★

June 10 - High Desert Invitational, Victorville, CA. Contact: Blake Hoard 15037 Stafford Ave, Adelanto, CA 92301. Phone 760-962-8846. Blakekibo@Iwon.com ★★

June 17-18 - MDTTT June Open, Gaithersburg, MD. Contact: Wei Xiao, 18761-Q Frederick Rd., Gaithersburg, MD 20879. Phone: 202-927-1958. ★

June 23-25 - Golden Gate Open on the North American Tour, San Francisco, CA. Contact: Richard Lee, P.O. Box 59451, Potomac, MD. 20859-9451. Phone: 410-366-6547. na_tour@hotmail.com ★★★★★

June 24 - HTTA Open, Houston, TX. Contact Roberto Byles, 4997 W. Bellfort, Houston, TX 77053. Phone 713-721-7529. Rbyles@houstonttc.com ★★

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

June 24-25 - Hoosier State Games, State Fairgrounds, Indianapolis, IN. Contact Richard Hicks, 301 N. Kitley Ave. Indianapolis, IN 46219. Phone: 317-351-8155(W) or 317-35301698 (H).

June 24 - 25 - Seattle Open, Boeing Oxbow Recreation Center, Seattle, WA. Contact: Daniel Sie, 15902 SE 48th Dr., Bellevue, WA 98006. Dsie@microsoft.com ★★★★★

June 24-25 - California State Open, Santa Monica, CA. Contact: Jo Kidd 20432 Elkwood St. Winnetka, CA 91306 Phone 818-700-0948, ★★

July 5-9 - U. S. Open/ITTF Pro Tour, Fort Lauderdale, FL. Contact: USA Table Tennis, One Olympic Plaza, Colorado Springs, CO 80909. Phone: 719-578-4583. usatt4@iex.net ★★★★★

July 8 - Sports Fitness Player Series, Clemmons, NC. Contact: Danny Hill, 3 Twin Brook Dr., Clemmons, NC 27012. Phone: 336-764-0010. dhilltt@aol.com.

July 8-9 - Maryland July Circuit, Eldersburg, MD. Contact: Yvonne Kronlage, 14160 Forsythe Rd., Sykesville, MD 21784. Phone: 410-489-7291.

July 15 - Bay State Games, Cambridge, MA. Contact: David Marcus, 25 Beacon St. Apt. 16 Somerville, MA 02143. Phone 781-205-7185. Davidmarcus@rcm.com

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

July 28-30 - Matthew Murad Memorial Open on the NA Tour, Landover, MD. Contact: Richard Lee, P.O. Box 59451, Potomac, MD. 20859-9451. Phone: 410-366-6547. na_tour@hotmail.com ★★★★★

July 29 - Waco 2000 Summer Round Robin, Waco, TX. Contact: Grady Gordon, 4712 Westchester Drive, Waco, TX 76710. Phone: 254-772-2838. Gcgordon@texasinternet.com ★

July 29 - Ann Van Vooren Round Robin, Houston, TX. Contact: Roberto Byles, 4997 W. Bellfort, Houston, TX 77053. Phone 713-721-721-7529. Rbyles@houstonttc.com ★

August 5 - Sports Fitness Player Series, Clemmons, NC. Contact: Danny Hill, 3 Twin Brook Dr., Clemmons, NC 27012. Phone: 336-764-0010. dhilltt@aol.com

August 5-6 - St. Louis Gateway Open, Webster Grove, MO. Contact: George Conlee, 1151 N. Dickson St., St. Louis, MO 63122. Phone: 314-822-4627. ★★

August 12-13 - Maryland August Circuit, Eldersburg, MD. Contact: Yvonne Kronlage, 14160 Forsythe Rd., Sykesville, MD 21784. Phone: 410-489-7291.

August 18-20 - Mid-Atlantic Open on the North American Tour, College Park, MD. Contact: Richard Lee, P.O. Box 59451, Potomac, MD. 20859-9451. Phone: 410-366-6547. na_tour@hotmail.com ★★★★★

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

August 26-27 - Florida State Closed, Orlando, FL. Contact: Olga Soltesz 1739 Shady Ridge Ct., Orlando, FL 32807. Phone 407-830-4009 ★★

September 2 - Sports Fitness Player Series, Clemmons, NC. Contact: Danny Hill, 3 Twin Brook Dr., Clemmons, NC 27012. Phone: 336-764-0010. dhilltt@aol.com

September 2-3 - Smack-N-Pack Team Tournament, Billings, MT. Contact: Romona Doll, 1256 Reece, Billings, MT 59105. Phone: 406-255-5210. londoll@imt.net ★★

September 9 - Sunbelt Team Round Robin, Houston, TX. Contact: Roberto Byles 4997 W. Bellfort, Houston, TX 77053. Rbyles@houstonttc.com ★★

September 9-10 - Ralph Robinson Memorial, Waltham, MA. Contact: Lim Ming Chui 65f Main St., Waltham, MA 02451. Phone 781-981-0651 or 781-862-1551.

September 9-10 - Maryland September Circuit, Eldersburg, MD. Contact: Yvonne Kronlage, 14160 Forsythe Rd., Sykesville, MD 21784. Phone: 410-489-7291.

September 16-17 - Lake Havasu Open, Lake Havasu, AZ. Contact: John Ballard, 1275 Bombay Ln., Lake Havasu City, AZ 86404. Phone: 520-453-8638. ★★

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

September 29 - Western Open on the North American Tour, Sacramento, CA. Contact: Richard Lee, P.O. Box 59451, Potomac, MD. 20859-9451. Phone: 410-366-6547. na_tour@hotmail.com ★★★★★

October 7 - Sports Fitness Player Series, Clemmons, NC. Contact: Danny Hill, 3 Twin Brook Dr., Clemmons, NC 27012. Phone: 336-764-0010. dhilltt@aol.com

October 7-8 - MDTTT October Open, Gaithersburg, MD. Contact: Wei Xiao, 18761-Q Frederick Rd., Gaithersburg, MD 20879. Phone: 202-927-1958. ★

October 14-15 - 15th Annual Bernard Hock Open, New Albany, IN. Contact: Richard Riley, Riley Ridge Rd., Lanesville, IN 47136. Phone: 812-952-3826. ★★

October 14-15 - Maryland October Circuit, Eldersburg, MD. Contact: Yvonne Kronlage, 14160 Forsythe Rd., Sykesville, MD 21784. Phone: 410-489-7291.

October 21-22 - Tri-City Open Fall Double RR, Richland, WA. Contact: Kirby Parker, 2304 Snohomish Ave., Richland, WA 99352. Phone: 509-375-1587. slvrfox@owt.com ★

October 26-29 - North American Corporate Games, West Palm Beach, FL. Contact: North American Corporate Games, 5840 Corporate Way, Suite 250, West Palm Beach, FL 33407-2040, 561-616-1999, info@nacorpgames.com

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

The Buckeye Open

Columbus, Ohio • March 18-19, 2000

By Steve Slabach and Larry Hodges



The first Buckeye Open, sponsored by Macy Block (with Berndt Mann sponsoring the hardbat open) came off as a success – and these words come from Hodges, not Director Slaback! Best of all were the playing conditions. The venue, at Ohio State University, provided the players with ideal, if cozy, playing conditions.

210 players competed in 26 events on 30 tables with playing conditions that were "...the best playing conditions ever," according to Wally Green, NY, who took advantage of the situation by winning Under 1900 Hardbat and making the 1875 Final (split with Eric Yeh, TX).

But the one who eyed the most bucks at the Buckeye Open was Khoa Nguyen, who dazzled the crowd with his athletic looping style and pure power in showing us how the game should be played (with apologies to hardbat!). The soft-spoken Californian was getting tournament tough for the upcoming Olympic Trials, and tough he was. After breezing his way to the semifinals, he faced his first real challenge in Barney J. Reed, GA. Barney won the first, 21-19, and led 19-18 in the second. Khoa got an edge to tie it at 19-all, and won the game, 21-19. He won the next two games relatively easily, at 16 & 15 – but if he'd lost that second game, you might be reading a different story here.

On the other side, Atanda Musa, NY, was waltzing his way into the finals without coming close to losing a game. Some readers may remember Musa during the 1980s, when he and the Skypower team from Nigeria won the U.S. Open Team Championships several times. Well, he's now living in New York, is over 40, and is still rated over 2600. The 10-time Nigerian Champion was once ranked #18 in the world, easily the best African player in decades, if not ever. Like Khoa, he plays a looping game, but while Khoa both loops and hits the backhand, Musa is known for his ferocious backhand loop. He also uses an extreme version of the shakehands grip, with his finger nearly down the middle when looping the forehand. He moves his finger around while playing, presumably lowering it for backhands.

However, the Musa of yesteryear was not in evidence in the first two games of the final as Khoa locked them up at 10 & 13. As the match continued, the rallies became more acrobatic, and soon we could see the Musa in his 20s as he won game three, 21-18. The fourth was also a battle, but this Musa, possibly more acrobatic than anyone else here, still wasn't the looping and counter looping machine of the 1980s as Khoa won the match, 10, 13, -18, 15. Khoa also teamed with Razvan Cretu, TX, to win Open Doubles over Mark Hazinski, IN, and Randy Seemiller, PA.

It was youth day in the higher rating events as 6'1" 14-year-old Mark Hazinski towered over the Under 2500 field, 13-year-old Han Xiao, MD, weighing in at 95 pounds, overpowered the Under 2375 field, and 18-year-old Lee McCool, GA, turned on the heat in the Under 2250 field, as well as making the Under 2375 final.

Although Director Steve Slaback, Assistant Director Charles Hill and advisor Dan Seemiller had planned the event months in advance, it was almost called off at the last minute due to an inappropriate disparaging remark made by the Director about a local TT club on a cover memo of the tournament application. Thankfully, the Director apologized for the disparaging remark; and normalcy was restored. It's amazing what a humble apology can do.

There were unusual tournament moments. Not just from John Tannehill, OH, lo-

**"...the best playing conditions ever."
-Wally Green**

cal homeboy and TT diplomat from another era, winner of the anticlimactic hardbat open against that veteran of so many hardbat matches, the wily Don Brazzel, MI, who just pulled out a 19 & 19 win in the semifinals against former U.S. Open Hardbat Champion Dan Seemiller, IN. Not from the crowd-pleasing match between 88-year-old Eugene Bricker, MI, and 10-year-old Rita Wu, MD, in the Under 1000 event, or from the all-Cochran, IN, Under 12 Final. Not just from Ashu Jain, MI, who, down 19-6 in the first game against Barney J. Reed in the Under 2500 semifinals, switched to hardbat for the rest of that game (he lost), then went back to sponge and won the next two. (Barney would get his revenge in the Under 22 final.) No, the really unusual moments came from the unexpected. A few players in their first USATT tournament, like Rina Singh, were matched with players whose ratings had not yet caught up with them – and so were often hundreds of points better than their listed rating. However, Rina and others had the good grace to question but not complain, slightly unusual in our sport.

One unhappy moment: Larry Garland had a heart attack at the tournament on Saturday and passed away later that day. (See obituary page 53.) I can only admire him for departing life in such a manner, doing what he wanted to do, participating in one of the most diversified sports, which embraces ethnicity, gender, and ages, giving all a chance to participate at their levels and higher. Larry, wherever you are, you are an inspiration and your rating is higher now with all of us. Thanks to all who came!

Open – Final: Khoa Nguyen d. Atanda Musa, 10,13,-18,15; **SF:** Nguyen d. Barney J. Reed, -19,19,16,15; Musa d. Razvan Cretu, 3-0; **QF:** Nguyen d. Bob Powell, 3-0; Reed d. Mark Hazinski, 15,14,12; Cretu d. Ashu Jain, 18,19,12; Musa d. Idan Levi, 18,14,5; **8ths:** Nguyen d. Greg Collins, 3-0; Powell d. Mark Nordby, -16,18,-16,15,19; Hazinski d. Phil Panno, 13,-19,19,7; Reed d. Denzil Flemming, 3-0; Cretu d. Randy Hewitt, 8,12,16; Jain d. Han Xiao, -19,8,8,-19,16; Levi d. Lee McCool, -19,-14,12,14,13; Musa d. W. Chen, 3-0.

Open Doubles: Khoa Nguyen/Razvan Cretu d. Mark Hazinski/Randy Seemiller, 10,16.

U2500 – Final: Mark Hazinski d. Ashu Jain, 15,13; **SF:** Hazinski d. Idan Levi, 10,10; Jain d. Barney J. Reed, 2-1.

U2375 – Final: Han Xiao d. Lee McCool, 16,16; **SF:** Xiao d. Mark Nordby, 6,10; McCool d. Bob Powell, n.s.

U2250 – Final: Lee McCool d. John Tannehill, 14,-19,18; **SF:** McCool d. Mark Nordby, 14,17; Tannehill d. Randy Hewitt, n.s.

U2125 – Final: El-Hallal Sleiman d. Mike Walk, 2-0; **SF:** Sleiman d. Jared Lynch, 16,19; Walk d. Chip Coulter, 16,17.

U2000 – Final: Rob Anderson d. Stan Pease, 18,17; **SF:** Anderson d. Larry Hawkins Sr., 2-0; Pease d. W. Radecki, 12,18.

U1875: Wally Green & Eric Yeh split prize.

U1750: John Curd d. Jim Dawson, 16,-15,19.

U1625: Jayson Peng d. Ramon Fernandez, 2-0.

U1500: John Schlegel d. Mark Collins, 16,16.

U1350: Michael Ward d. Dan Cochran, 2-0.

U1200: Jeremiah Kolb d. John Baker, 16,19.

U1000: Mike Behrendt d. Ashley Spilker, n.s.

Over 40 – Final: Atanda Musa and Randy Seemiller split prize.

Over 50: Leung Che-Him d. Richard McAfee, n.s.

Over 60: Mark Shapiro d. Bill Neely, n.s.

Under 22 – Final: Barney J. Reed d. Ashu Jain, 18,11; **SF:** Reed d. Lee McCool, n.s.; Jain d. Mark Hazinski, 2-1.

Under 18 – Final: Mark Hazinski & Jared Lynch split prize; **SF:** Hazinski d. Jordan Lynch, 2-0; Jared Lynch d. Dalibor Stojcic, n.s.

Under 16 – Final: Katherine Wu d. Charles Fan, def.

Under 14: 1st Eli Khan; 2nd Chris Dawson.

Under 12: Gordan Cochran d. Jordan Cochran, n.s.

U4100 Doubles: Bartl/Knuth d. Jain/Billington, n.s.

U3500 Doubles: Lynch/Cochran d. Abrams/Brown, n.s.

Hardbat – Final: John Tannehill d. Don Brazzel, n.s.; **SF:** Tannehill d. Leung Che-Him, n.s.; Brazzel d. Dan Seemiller, 19,19.

U1900 Hardbat: Wally Green d. Julian Waters, 16,17.



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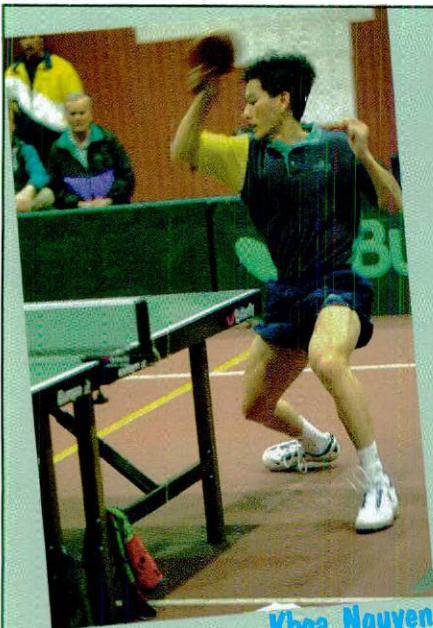
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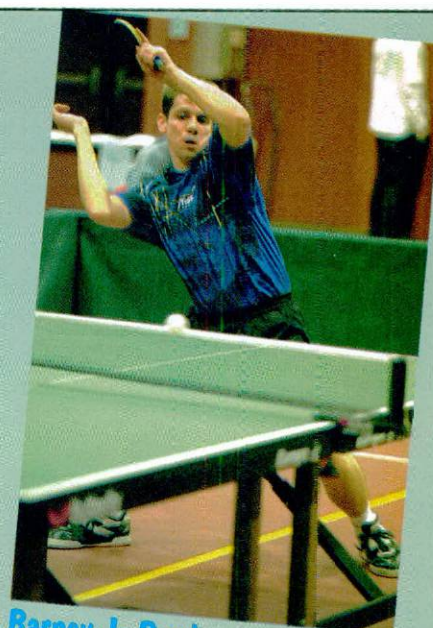
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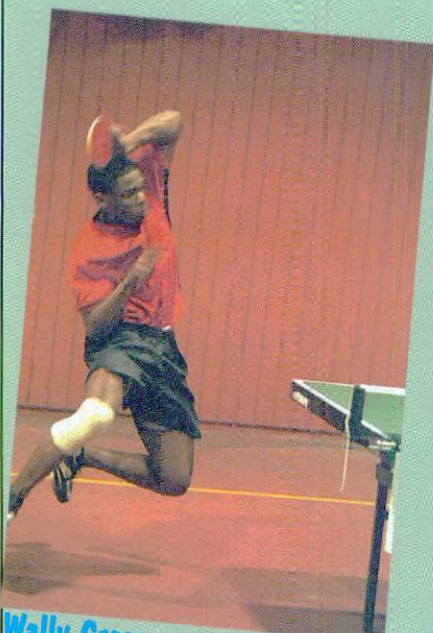
Khoa Nguyen



Atanda Musa



Barney J. Reed



Wally Green

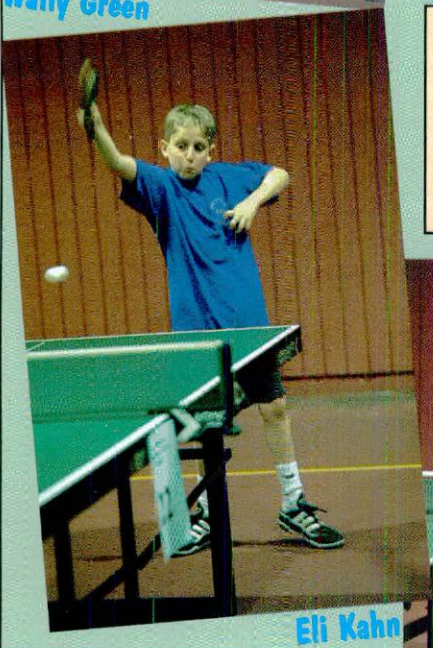


Idan Levi



John Tannehill

Scenes From The
Buckeye Open
Photos by John Oros ©2000



Eli Kahn



Han Xiao



Katherine Wu



Eric Owens and Scott Preiss

Being Eric Owens

Houston, We Have a Problem

By Scott Preiss

He is Eric Owens. He is only a problem when he is at the other end of the table tennis table. He plays to win. And he has been playing to win since he was six years old. I would know, because I first met Eric at the other end of the table when he was that age.

I was performing an exhibition with Eric for the Boys and Girls Clubs of America's National Convention. Eric's father Kenny and I had spoken on the phone but I had not yet met Eric. When I met him I was wondering whether he would be able to see over the top of the table for he was quite small for his age.

When I first saw the fire in his eyes peering over the top of the table I knew that this

little kid was going to be somebody. He had the burning desire to embarrass me in front of the crowds. The desire part was easy to figure out before the start of the game. For here was a kid who was racing motorcycles at five, and finished a full 26-mile marathon in 4 hours and 6 minutes at age nine.

It wasn't long after finishing the marathon that Eric started capturing National Table Tennis Titles. In the years to follow, Eric has won the Under 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, and 22 National Championship events, and won the North American Doubles Title, the U.S. National Doubles Title, and the gold medal with his teammates at the 1999 Pan American Games. Just recently, he returned from the World Team Championships in Malaysia where he represented the United States.

And now today, 18 years later, I see those same eyes across the table. Although Eric has grown quite a bit, he still has the same look on his face as he did 18 years ago. His

years of training in Houston, at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, the National Training Center in Flint, MI, and his frequent trips overseas keep him focused on one thing. To be the best he can be.

Following his career ever since and remaining good friends with his father Kenny, I have been fortunate to know Eric as a player and as a person. I have met few people in my lifetime who really loves and believes in what they are doing. Eric is one of them.

For several years Eric has strived to make the final four at the U.S. Nationals, and this year he accomplished that. With many National Titles already under his belt and an exhausting travel schedule (training in Korea, Sweden, Japan, China and many other countries), Eric stays motivated. He has a healthy diet, getting plenty of vegetables since he has been a vegetarian all his life. Eric exercises almost every day with weights, distance running, and meditation.

Scott: You have trained in many countries around the world. If you had to recommend a country for a player to train and try and be the best, which country would you choose and why?

Eric: China, without a doubt. It has the most discipline and structure for the sport of table tennis, and I think you have to be with the best to be the best.

Scott: What do you think of using a bigger ball?

Eric: I don't think it will make a big difference but I do think that the bigger ball will be better for TV. And maybe it will slow the game down a little. There was a big ball competition in China and the top players in the world won that event so I don't think it will affect worldwide play.

Scott: In a few weeks you will be playing some of the most important matches of your life [the North American Olympic Trials]. What kind of mental preparation do you do to prepare?

Eric: What I have realized is that everyone else is in the same boat as me. I think it will be a mental battle in the end. Whoever has the sharpest mental game will make the team. I am meditating a lot, practicing focusing and being calm.

Scott: How many years have you been thinking and trying to make the Olympic Team?

Eric: About eight years ago I decided that this is what I will do. In 1996 I was seeded 10th and finished 5th, and almost beat the members of the team that made the team that year. But almost doesn't count except in horseshoes and using hand grenades.

Scott: What kind of physical training do you do to prepare for the Olympic Trials?

Eric: I will run a lot because we have to play about 12 matches and I want to be fit for those. Distance runs of 9-12 miles once a week. 200 sit-ups, 50 pushups a day.

Scott: We are three weeks away from the Olympic Trials in Rochester. Name five things that you will do to prepare specifically for this competition.

Eric: Service and receive practice, multi-ball practice, footwork drills and eating well. Most of my time is also spent on my mental calmness.

Scott: Recently you were awarded a new car from General Motors Olympic Sponsorship through the U.S. Olympic Committee. What was your first reaction when you heard the news, and who gave you that news?

Eric: I never knew that I was going to win a car. When I signed up for the program, I thought that I would only get the use of a car for a year. I was reading through all the information after I returned from China and I noticed in small print that the car and the insurance was to be paid by GM, and also the commemorative car will then be owned outright by the athlete. That is when I fell out of my chair.

Scott: You have been coached by many coaches throughout your playing career. Can you name the coaches that first come to mind that assisted you with your career?

Eric: Lekan Fenuyi, Murray Ajala, Kenny Owens, Taju Ojode, Sevanko Bosaric, John Bosika, Christian Lillieroos, Doru Gheorghe, Danny Seemiller, Glenn Ost (85,87,89 Sweden World Team Coach), and Hans Tallan-Sweden, assistant coach at the Lyckeby Club in Sweden.

Scott: There are 15- to 17-year-olds that have their sight on making future Olympic Games. What advice can you give to these young Olympic hopefuls who live in the world of basketball, hockey, football and baseball?

Eric: Practice, Practice, Practice, get your priorities straight, and make sure that you have good balance with their schoolwork and training. Any other items in between are secondary. Get it right now, there is no other chance in the future.

Scott: When you play in a table tennis competition on a Saturday and Sunday, what kind of things do you eat, and what kind of foods do you reach for first?

Eric: I try to eat light carbohydrates, such as fruit, which is light and easy to digest, or juices, and then I try to eat protein in the evening, such as protein shake, protein supplements, maybe nuts.

Scott: Do you like Gatorade?

Eric: No. I don't think that it hydrates me as well as water and juice. I don't like the sweeteners that are in it, it just does not work for my body.

Scott: What do you think about using chocolate for getting a burst of energy before a match?

Eric: I think it is a mistake because you will crash after it digests. I use to do this but then saw the light and started eating bananas instead. Also the chocolate seemed to promote cramping in my body.

Scott: You have been a vegetarian since birth. What kind of reaction do you get from people about this?

Eric: They find it hard to believe that I have the strength to play professional table tennis without eating meat. Both of my parents are vegetarians and I was just raised that way, they thought it was a more healthy way of living.

Scott: What are your three favorite culinary foods?

Eric: Thai food is my favorite. Also Italian and Mexican.

Scott: What is the most unhealthy food that you eat?

Eric: Ice Cream – Pecan Pralines and Cream, and Mint Chocolate Chip.

Scott: You have about 50 National Titles to your credit. Which one are you most proud of?

Eric: The Pan Am Gold Medal was my biggest thrill. At the National Championship level I cherish my National Doubles Title and North American Doubles Title with Barney Reed Jr.

Scott: How many hours of serve practice do you do in a week?

Eric: Minimum of one hour a day.

Scott: Are you sponsored?

Eric: By Butterfly for 17 years.

Scott: How many World Champions have you had the chance to hit with? Which one of these players had you in the most awe?

Eric: I've hit with Jiang Jialiag. Waldner, Persson, Kong. Most in awe? Waldner.

Scott: How many table tennis shoes, sheets of rubber and balls do you go through in a year?

Eric: 20 shoes, 100 sheets of rubber, and over 1000 balls every year.

Scott: What are your favorite TV programs and movies?

Eric: TV: Friends and Cheers. Movie: Titanic

Scott: What is your favorite sport or hobby other than table tennis?

Eric: Badminton. My favorite hobbies are scuba diving – just recently certified – meditating, electronics shopping, beach volleyball, anything at the beach.

Scott: After you make the Olympic Team this year, if there were a spot on the Beach

Volleyball Team would you be interested?

Eric: Sure. Mixed Volleyball or Men's Singles.

Scott: Name three things that we can do in the United States to help promote the sport of table tennis.

Eric: Get the sport into schools and continue to develop school programs. Create Leagues throughout the country. A professional tour with lots of prize money.

Scott: You lived a different life through your teenage years by training when most were hanging out with their friends. Would you change anything about your childhood?

Eric: No, I think I had a great childhood. I was able to see the world, compete, learn to be in front of people without being intimidated. As a matter of fact I think I partied too hard during my younger years, and not really stop the partying a few years ago. Now I am more focused.

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m u c h

Scott: What was some of the first advice that you remember getting from your dad when competing in table tennis?

Eric: Don't cry, get ready, stay close to the table, use maximum spin. I remember clearly, I was six that year. He told everyone that the key to being a champion was to attack. But we had never-ending push wars.

Scott: How many exhibitions have you performed since you started playing? What was the largest crowd? Were you nervous?

Eric: Boy (sigh), a rough guess of 1000 exhibitions. The biggest was in front of 2000 people. Yes, I was nervous.

Scott: What do you think about most when you're nervous? What do you try to concentrate on?

Eric: Keeping the ball on the table.

Scott: When you were in junior high school, and your friends knew that you were a table tennis champion, what was their first reaction?

Eric: Not that many people in my school knew, I really did not want to advertise this.

Scott: How many tournaments do you play in a year?

Eric: 20, including about 8 outside the U.S.

Scott: How do you support yourself with all the travel, food, lodging, and expenses as you travel the world training?

Eric: It's hard financially. USA Table Tennis supports the National Training Center in Flint, so I can live and eat at no charge there as a member of the National Team. Any money that I receive from exhibitions or tournaments

I save and spend on training.

Scott: What kind of things would you like to do after your table tennis competing days slow down?

Eric: I am interested in Neuromuscular Therapy. My dad has neuromuscular therapy business that I would like to take over, or begin one of my own.

Scott: Speaking of therapy, I know that your dad has been treating your sports injuries for many years. How do you feel about this therapy?

Eric: I have had every kind of therapy there is, and my dad's technique is the best for me without a doubt. It does not only treat the symptoms, but also the problem itself. This kind of therapy is different from acupuncture, it's a unique muscle tissue therapy, points are held for about eight seconds pushing directly on the muscle, just a quarter inch at a time.

Scott: How many hours a week do you try and get therapy?

Eric: About one hour a day.

Scott: Which is your strongest and weakest shots or techniques?

Eric: My strongest is my forehand loop. My weakest is my backhand.

Scott: Besides the interviewer, who do you think has the best backhand in the world?

Eric: Jorgen Persson and Jorg Roskopf, but I like Persson's better.

Scott: Who has the best serves in the U.S. and the world, in your opinion?

Eric: David Zhuang in the U.S., Liu Guoliang in the world.

Scott: Who is your favorite training partner and why?

Eric: Jimmy Butler was before he retired. He was knowledgeable about the game and would practice hard in the right areas.

Scott: Which U.S. Player do you have the most trouble with?

Eric: David Zhuang, but recently I took care of that problem by beating him in Houston, TX when it was important.

Scott: When you were younger, who was your arch enemy at the table?

Eric: From 6 to 18 years old, my rival was Randy Cohen.

Scott: Do you and Randy still keep in touch?

Eric: Yes, as a matter of fact Randy just moved to my hometown of Houston.

Scott: Can he beat you?

Eric: Table Tennis is a funny sport, you can lose to anyone on any given day.

Scott: What tournament in the U.S. is your favorite tournament?

Eric: The North American Team Championship in Baltimore. I like team competition, working with other members of the U.S. Team, there is great reward when working as a team.

Scott: Do you remember the best shot you ever hit in your life?

Eric: I hit a shot against Horatio Pinteá that was pretty ridiculous. The tournament was the Mexican Open, we were in a long rally and he made a drop shot on my backhand side. I could not really do anything so I laid the ball in the air on his backhand side, he stepped around and smashed it as hard as he could to my forehand. As he was swinging I was swinging my forehand as hard as I could, and counter-smashed it off the bounce about twice as fast as he did, which was warp speed. I will never forget Horatio's face, we laughed until we died.

Scott: Do you have a girlfriend?

Eric: Yes, Ms. Ping Pong. She does not exist and will not exist until after the Olympic Trials.

Scott: What athlete do you admire the most and why?

Eric: Michael Jordan. For what he has accomplished, being in the highest league in the world and being so much better than other players is why I respect him the most.

Scott: What other sports do you follow?

Eric: Football and Basketball because I am from Houston, but when they started going downhill I lost interest in them.

Scott: How has USA Table Tennis assisted you in the past few years in helping you attain your goals?

Eric: The association gave us a bonus for winning the gold medal at the Pan Am Games, they also provide us with a stipend for being on the National Team. In addition we receive all our table tennis clothing for free, and they also provide the room and board and training at the National Training Center in Flint, Michigan.

Scott: Who is your favorite baseball player? Your favorite female athlete? Favorite TV personality?

Eric: Mark McGwire, Steffi Graff and Ted Danson. My favorite actor is Tom Cruise.

Scott: What celebrities have you played in table tennis?

Eric: Akeem Olajuwán, Garry Shandling.

Scott: What advice can you give to someone who just saw you perform a table tennis exhibition and is interested in being the best they can be?

Eric: Find a local club and coach at the local club and start working with them as soon as possible. Then join the association so that they can be in touch with all of the tournaments and events in the United States.

Scott: If you were not a professional table tennis player, what kind of job do you think you would be doing other than neuromuscular therapy?

Eric: Scuba instructor.

Scott: You started racing motorcycles when you were five years old? Why in the world would a five-year-old be riding a motorcycle?

Eric: I started riding bicycles when I was three and I was bored and wanted something faster. So my dad bought me a motorcycle when I was five and a year later I raced in the National Cycling Championships in the Astrodome. I finished 20th out of 100 riders.

Scott: So was Evil Knievel one of your childhood heroes?

Eric: At six I was not thinking of jumping over cars on fire, I was just trying to hang on to my seat.

Scott: You have performed hundreds of shows around the United States. Name a few of the Corporations that you have performed for.

Eric: General Motors, General Mills, Brother Corporation at Comdex and CES in Las Vegas, Sears Roebuck and Company, U.S. Olympic Committee.

Scott: Why do you like performing table tennis exhibitions?

Eric: I think it gives people a different perspective of the sport, it educates them as well as entertains them.

Scott: Who is your favorite exhibition player and why?

Eric: Scott Preiss, of course. He has so many exhibition paddles in his bag, that I still laugh every time I see him try and go inside that bag and pull out the right one. After hundreds of shows with him, he still can't find where his paddles are.

2000 Junior Olympics & Junior Nationals

Orlando, Florida • August 2-5, 2000

By Yvonne Kronlage, Table Tennis Director

The 2000 Junior Olympics will be held August 2-5 in Orlando, Florida at the University of Central Florida (about 20-30 minutes from Disneyworld). This is a beautiful facility with wooden floors and great lighting. There will be 16 Butterfly tables for the competition, plus four tables in an adjoining gym for practice.

The format will change from last year to give players more matches and better competition.

- **Junior Olympic Singles:** This will be the same as in previous years. Players will play round robins in their own age groups. Age groups will be Boys and Girls Under 10, 12, 14, 16, 18 and 22.
- **Doubles:** The only change in doubles is that it will be round robin groups, and your partner has to be in your age group. Doubles teams will be for Under 12, 14, 16, 18 and 22. (If there is enough interest, there might be under 10 doubles as well.)
- **National Championships Singles:** These will be round robin, with players automatically put in their age group and one age group above. Top-seeded players will be seeded; seeded players will not play in the round robin stage. A seeded player may advance to the next age group even if he will be in more than two age groups, i.e. if you are under 16 and seeded in under 16, you will be eligible to play in three events: under 16, 18 and 22.
- **Team Event:** There will be no limit on the number of teams from one association. Teams will be for under 12, 14, 16, 18 and 22. (If there is enough interest, there might be under 10 teams as well.) Teams will be made up of 2-4 players. All players must play within their age group (playing in older age groups will not be allowed.) Sign-up for teams will be August 3. Single players from a state (AAU) that does not have a second player will be signed up with another single player from another state as long as they are in the same age group and not among the top four seeded teams. Two players from the same state/AAU association of the same age group must play together or be eliminated. This way more athletes can play in the teams. The one thing is it's going to take longer so please keep this in mind when you make your return reservations – it won't finish early on Saturday (Aug. 5) as it has in the past. We're looking forward to seeing you all again and meeting new players.
- **Opening Ceremonies:** They will be held August 2 at 7:30 PM. Table tennis has not been included in the performing activities in the past. Well, this year we will. I have asked Richard McAfee, who will also be the referee, to organize a great exhibition for us. We hope you will all attend and support this great sport of table tennis.



To obtain a copy of the 2000 Junior Olympics Games entry materials, call 407-934-7200, or go to

www.aaujrogames.org

For further information, contact: Yvonne Kronlage
14160 Forsythe Rd.
Sykesville, MD 21784
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Junior
of the Month

Jackie Lee

By Greg Sawin

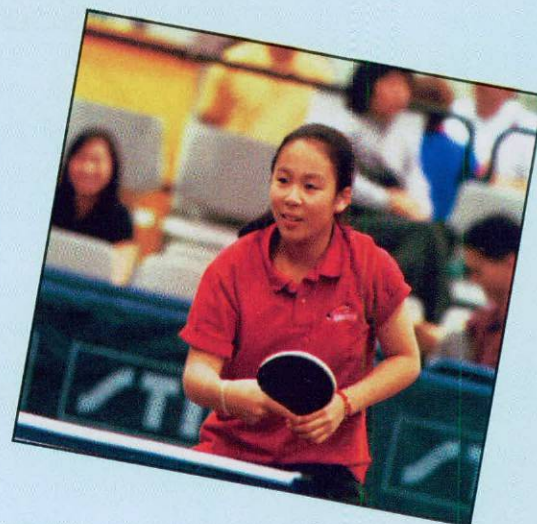


Photo by John Oros ©2000

In 1985 Jackie was born into a San Francisco Chinese-American family that already enjoyed playing table tennis, so it wasn't surprising when 8-year-old Jackie wanted to get into the act. Her father saw her keen interest, so in the summer of 1994 he took her to the nearby Sunset Recreation Center Table Tennis Club where she became a student of USATT Coach Masaaki Tajima. Jackie was a serious student right from the start and began playing in local tournaments. At the end of the year, Jackie surprised everyone by winning the Girls' Under 10 event at the 1994 National Championships in Las Vegas. She got really fired up when she won that title. That victory gave her "big motivation" to become a top player.

During the next few years, Jackie trekked across the country for a number of major tournaments. Often she won titles in events beyond her age group. Here are some highlights of her early accomplishments:

- 1996 National Girls' Primary School Champion.
- 1997 Tournament of Champions Women's Under 1900 and Girls' Primary School.
- 1998 U.S. Open National Allstar Under 18 Girls' Team Champion, Girls' Under 16 Champion, Girls' Under 18 Semifinalist, and Girls' Under 14 Semifinalist.

In 1998, when Jackie was only 12, she was selected as a member of the U.S. Junior Team that was sent to Sweden for training and competition. In a Swedish junior tournament, she competed in the Girls' 13 and Under event. She felt good about finishing second in her round robin because the top two in each RR advanced to the single-elimination phase. She was really cooking from that point onward – she never lost. She amazed everyone by winning that event.

From the beginning of her playing career, this spunky 5-foot-2 teenager got a reputation for creating big surprises as she continued to improve:

- 1998 National Women's Singles Quarterfinalist, Women's Under 22 Finalist, Girls' Junior High School Champion.
- 1999 Junior Olympics Girls' Under 14 Champion.
- 1999 Junior Nationals Girls' Under 18, Under 16, Under 14, Under 14 Doubles, and Girls' Team Under 22 Champion.

At the 1999 Sam Lima Memorial Labor Day Tournament, she beat Michelle Do (2209) in winning the Women's event, and won the Under 17 Junior event. At the 1999 Nationals, she was a finalist in Women Under 22 Singles, won Under 16 Junior Doubles with Mark Hazinski, and beat two-time Olympian Diana Gee (2324) in the quarterfinals of Women's Singles.

Jackie is a freshman at St. Ignatius College Preparatory High School in San Francisco. Her favorite subjects are math and Spanish. In her physical education class, she plays volleyball and runs half a mile each day, which takes care of her off-table training. In her spare time she likes to read and play the piano. She is considering law or medicine as long-term career goals.

Apart from the usual major tournaments this year, another item appears on her schedule: She will go to Japan and China for training this summer, along with other top Palo Alto Table Tennis Club juniors. Her goals are to make the U.S. Team for the 2001 World Championships in Osaka, and the 2004 Olympics.

Jackie (rated 2146) loops and drives strongly from both sides. She is sponsored by SpinTech Table Tennis. Under the watchful eyes of Jackie's coaches, Dennis Davis, Wang Zhi-Yong, and Valery Sarkisov, Jackie trains at the Palo Alto club three to four days per week, two hours per day.

Jackie appreciates the support from her family and friends, current coaches, and former coaches Masaaki Tajima, Bill Lui, and Terese Terranova.

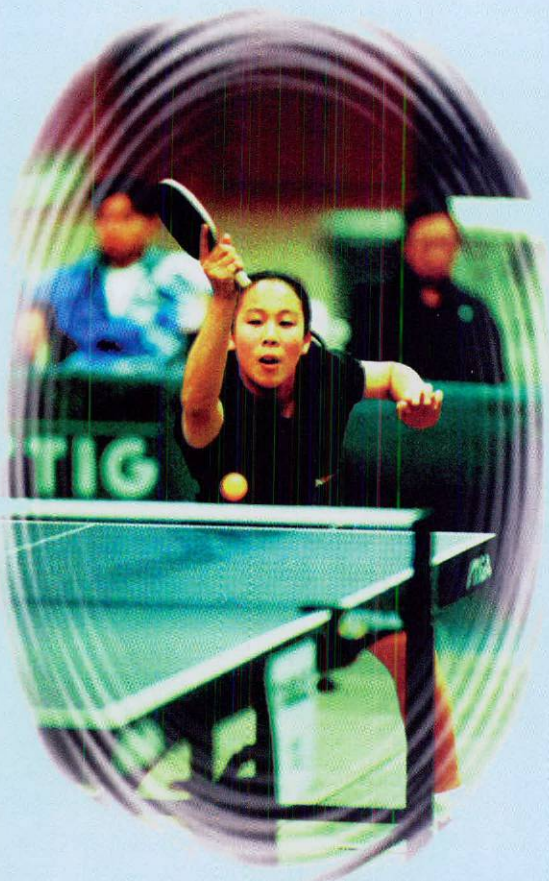


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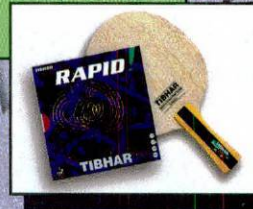
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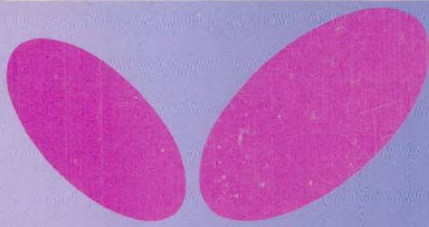
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