

## Player Profile: **Nha Nguyen – The Blocker**

Nha was born in Saigon (1942) in Vietnam as the fourth of seven children. He started swimming at age 5 and excelled in the freestyle sprints. However there was a table tennis table at his home and he started playing at age 10 with his brothers, where he developed his trademark blocking style. These were his main sports though he also played tennis as an adult.



After gaining university entrance at high school he passed the entrance exam to study education at Saigon University (1959-63). He graduated with a Master of Arts degree in Education. He was the Captain of the swimming team and won the 100 and 200 freestyle at the University Swimming Championships (1959-63). He represented the University at the South Vietnam University Sports Tournament.

Also at the University was Inh Van Le, the Captain of the table tennis team, who was to represent South Vietnam in table tennis. Inh was to win the Southeast Asian Games Men's Singles (1967) and Men's Doubles (1969) and was runner up in the Men's Doubles (1973). He was also a Men's Doubles bronze medallist at the 1962 Asian Games with his brother Tiet Van Le, who was the French Open Singles Champion

(1959) and was in the South Vietnam Men's Team that won Gold (1958 Asian Games) and Bronze (1959 World Championships). Inh Van Le moved to Australia and is a table tennis coach and top veteran player, winning 36 Australian Individual Veteran Titles (1993-2013).

Above - **Nha** at Titan Club.

After university Nha attended teachers college for 4 years and then taught English at high school. He married in 1974 and in 1975 he was selected as a Colombo Plan student (12 from South Vietnam) and came to New Zealand to study English at Victoria University, Wellington. Three months after he left, South Vietnam was defeated in the war by North Vietnam. Nha became stateless and unable to return home but was given permanent resident in New Zealand by the Government and become a New Zealand Citizen the following year. After his course, Nha found work at the Department of Social Welfare. His wife and son finally managed to leave Vietnam and arrived in New Zealand in early 1979. Nha purchased a dairy in Hawker Street and was there for 3 years before moving to the Austin Street Dairy (1982-2009) before retiring.

Nha started playing table tennis at the Titan Club (1975) and his University A Team (with Huy Hoang and R Clark) won the Wellington Table Tennis A Reserve Grade (1978). In 1980 his Titan Team (with Adrian Lust, Warren Mak, Lindsay Ward) won the Wellington A Grade Competition. Nha was also in the Titan Terriors Team (with Lindsay Ward, Harry Singh, Robert Chung) that won Premier 1 in 2007.



Paul Escott presents the Jackson Shield (2001) to Titan (Nha Nguyen, Malcolm Wong, Lindsay Ward). Nha was ranked 11 times on the Wellington Men's list and achieved a best ranking of 5 (2001) and represented Wellington at the New Zealand Championships and Veterans Championships in the veterans team. In 2008 Wellington, Eddie Moore and Nha, lost to North Harbour 2-3 in the Over 65 Men's

Team Final after earlier beating them 4-1 in group play. Nha won several veterans tournament singles titles including the Wanganui Over 40, Hutt Valley Open Over 50, Wellington Autumn Open Over 60 and Wellington Open Over 50 & 60. With Lindsay Ward, Nha won 15 veterans doubles tournament titles including 5 consecutive Wellington Open Over 40 Doubles (1998-2002).

Win and Nha Nguyen at Titan Club (2/2/2014) Nha was the first winner of the Titan Club Singles Championships (1994) and he also won in 1996 and 1997. His oldest son, Win, a former Titan Premier 1 player (2000) also won the Club Singles three times (1998-2000) and won the 1999 Wairarapa Men's Singles, Doubles and Mixed Doubles. Nha won the Club Doubles with Win (2000) and with Lindsay Ward (2008 & 2010). Nha also won the Titan Over 40 Singles in 1998 & 2001.





**Wellington Club Team which won the Wellington Tennis Men's Third Grade (1995) and Second Grade (1996)**

In tennis Nha joined the Wellington Club (1976) and continues to play there. His Wellington Team (with Adrian Lust, Peter Miller, Lindsay Ward, Graeme Hall) won the Third Grade (1995) and Second Grade (1996) in the Wellington Tennis Interclub Competition (1995/96 season). Adrian, Peter and Lindsay had all played top grade tennis and table tennis. Nha played in the New Zealand Tennis Veterans Championship in Blenheim (2000) and his photo appeared in the local newspaper.

Nha no longer plays interclub table tennis but still attends the Titan Club on Sunday mornings. He also walks, swims, plays tennis and snooker. His Petone snooker team was runner up in the Wellington Working Men's Competition (2012). He hopes to continue playing table tennis for a very long time!

Thanks to Kent Yu from <http://www.kentyuphotography.com> for editing the photo of Nha and Win.

**Malcolm Wong**

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