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TT Info

October 2006



TABLE TENNIS NEW ZEALAND



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From the Editor



Welcome to the new-look *Table Tennis Info* magazine, a publication for New Zealand's table tennis players and supporters, and produced by them too.

Table Tennis Info aims to keep you up to date with what is going on at all levels of the sport.

From the Chief Executive Officer's reports to an insight into new local development squads to umpires' reports - we aim to cover a broad cross-section of news and views.

In this issue we also have tournament reports from the Commonwealth Games, the Oceania Championships, and the North Island and Veterans Championships.

In addition to giving learned advice to young players wishing to follow in his footsteps, New Zealand's longest serving high profile player, Peter Jackson, tells us about the highlights of his career and his greatest wins.

We also have one of our newest international table tennis representatives, Jenny Hung, talking about her time at this year's Commonwealth Games.

An article by a New Zealand sports journalist makes suggestions to clubs on how to go about raising the sport's profile in the public eye and we do our best to clear up the current confusion surrounding New Zealand's player rating lists.

Input from players and supporters throughout the country is welcome for the next issue. It's your magazine and all stories will be considered for publication. We aim to have the next installment of *Table Tennis Info* in your letterboxes early next year.

Enjoy!

Ben Collins
Editor
E-mail: Benedict.collins@gmail.com

Many Thanks Robin

It was with much regret that we had to accept Robin Radford's decision to hand over the reins of the TT Info magazine.

Robin, together with assistance from John Kiley, have contributed much to the fabric of the TTNZ community through their hard work and dedication on producing a high quality, member focussed magazine. We hope we have been able to learn from their excellent example, and that the TT Info magazine you are about to read comes somewhere close to the standards set by Robin.

Robin, we wish you all the best in your editorial retirement and thank you for all your hard work and efforts over the years.

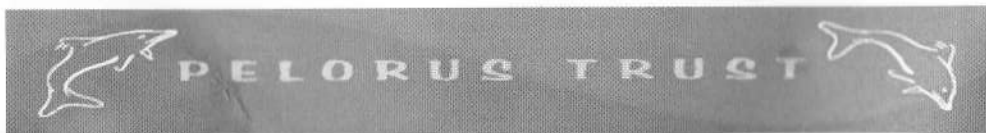
Mike Loftus
TTNZ CEO

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Publication Assistance

Table Tennis New Zealand would like to sincerely thank the Pelorus Trust for their generous grant, that has made the publication of this edition possible.



There's Only One Peter Jackson

After 23 years representing New Zealand at the highest level, Peter Jackson decided to hang up his bat after this year's Commonwealth Games. *Table Tennis Info* asked Peter to tell us a bit about his career and its highlights. Peter also gives young players some tips on what it takes to reach the top.



1) What is the name of your French club and where is it located?

U.S Yportaise is its name and it is on the French coast just south of the English Channel.

2) What division do you currently play and what is your ranking in France?

Last season we played in Pro B, which is the second highest division in France. My ranking, including all the foreigners who play in France, is number 69. This is equivalent to about number 30 on the list of French-only players.

3) You have just retired from international competition after 23 years representing New Zealand. Where and when did you begin as a player? And tell us a bit about what it was like for you starting out in the sport.

It's 23 years since I started in the NZ senior team at the 1983 Commonwealth and World Championships. The first time I played for New Zealand was in 1980 when I was in the NZ junior team that went to Australia to play against the Australian State sides.

I began in our house playing with my two older brothers and my mother. We had a table in the basement and played quite often. My first club was in Manurewa in Franklin (now Counties-Manukau) and I started there when I was nine. My mother took us three boys around everywhere to play table tennis and I enjoyed it a lot. Even from a young age I was always one of the best for my age so I guess that made it more interesting as I was winning most of the time.

4) You were ranked number one in New Zealand for many years. Tell us a little about your domestic career, titles you have won, and any highlights from playing in New Zealand.

My career in New Zealand was for many years a little difficult because I was unable to win the NZ Championship Men's Singles title. I lost five times in the final to Barry Griffiths before finally winning the title in 1990 when Barry didn't play. Barry was always a very difficult opponent for me and I had to play at my very best to beat him at all. He was always well prepared for the NZ champs so to some extent it was not surprising that I hadn't been able to beat him when it came to the big one.

One highlight of my domestic career would be making the final of the men's singles at the NZ champs in 1982 at the age of 17. Another was the winning of the national title for the first time in 1990, beating Andrew Hubbard in the final.

I will also always remember defeating Barry Griffiths in the national final for the first and only time in 1993, to win my second national title.

5) For many years now you have played professionally in Europe. Could you describe what it is like being a pro?

I have enjoyed my career as a professional but you obviously have to enjoy the training as this is the most important ingredient if you are going to succeed. I trained twice a day, five days a week, for about six years in a row, so that was a lot of practice. Often you have to organise your training too as you are normally pretty much on your own, without a lot of help in arranging practice sessions.

6) After more than two decades representing New Zealand in international competitions you must have many highlights. Tell us about a few of them?

Some highlights that come to mind: In 1983 taking the deciding match for New Zealand against the Dominican Republic, to win 5-4 and in so doing to defeat the number one from the other team; winning the Oceania teams' title for New Zealand; winning Bronze medals in the Commonwealth Champs in Men's Doubles with Barry Griffiths in 1985 and with Shane Laugesen in 1997; winning the Oceania Men's singles title in 1990 and again in 1996.

6) What do you regard as having been your most significant achievements in international table tennis?

I think all the titles I've won in the Oceania Champs would be my most significant achievements as in some ways we can only compare what we have achieved against other players who have had the same opportunities as ourselves.

7) Tell us a little about a few of your best wins in international table tennis.

The best players I have beaten would be: Ilija Lupulesku, Koji Matsushita, Hiroshi Shibutani, Matthew Syed, Leszek Kucharski, Steffen Fetzner, Philippe Saive, Andrej Podpinka, Igor Solopov, Desmond Douglas, Lo Tsuen Tsung.

I think if you look at the list you will find five defensive players. All of the players above have been ranked in the top 100 in the world for many years and some of them consistently in the top 50 in the world. At my best I was very strong against defence and a prominent Swedish coach once gave me the compliment of putting me in the top 10 players in the world against defence.

8) What was your top world ranking and in what year did you achieve this?

My highest world ranking was 113th and that was in 1996, although I felt that my best level was achieved in 1989 through 1991.

9) To what do you attribute your success?

Dedication to training and also to a lifestyle where, on a continual basis, I tried to look after my body as well as I could. Obviously I also possess a natural talent for the sport, which is a huge prerequisite for success.

10) What are your plans now that you have retired from international table tennis?

I am still intending to play professionally for my club in France and I have recently started a full-time job in the accounting field here in France. I am married and have two children so I have settled in France for the near future.

11) What advice do you have for young New Zealand players who are looking to try and reach representative level?

Train hard and try to get as much good advice as possible from all coaches. Try out what the coaches tell you and if it doesn't work for you then that's fine. Go and try to find another solution.

12) If table tennis players are going to progress to being competitive on an international level what qualities or characteristics do you think they must possess?

They have to possess natural talent but, more importantly, they must have the motivation to train hard. The ability to listen and learn as much as possible is also important. I think you need to be able to pick out the good advice for you from the advice that is not right for you. Every player has a different style of play which is his or her style and you need to find out what works best for your style. Experimenting is very important in order to progress. Learn from other players by watching what they do and talking to them about how they do it.

That's all from me. I hope it will be helpful to players who want to progress to being successful international players.

Peter Jackson

Chief Executive's Newsletter



Developments in the last year and a half have been coming thick and fast in Table Tennis New Zealand, leading to our being increasingly recognised as a lead organisation for a number of new initiatives across sport.

Included in these is the coach education framework redevelopment connected with the development of supporting education module resources; the TTNZ Talent Development plan that we have incorporated across all areas of player, coach and official development frameworks; our 'No Exceptions' programmes, including pilot wheelchair table tennis and disabled children's participation initiatives; the online participant database and ratings system; and our risk management programme.

These developments would simply not happen without the time and efforts contributed by a core group of volunteers at both national and association levels, or the assistance of our funders.

In the same vein, the time contributed by our national and regional coaching teams, in a primarily volunteer capacity, has seen the standard of play nationally rise to a level where our junior girls' consistently qualify for the World Junior Championships, and our men's, women's and boys' teams more than hold their own in the Oceania region.

The challenge for the TTNZ Board and management is to continue the growth we have experienced with still very limited budgets and staff resources.

Best practice in the New Zealand sport sector would suggest that a framework of 'National strategy, regional delivery, and local ownership' works best in producing results and retaining the structures required to ensure long term sustainability. To this end, the TTNZ Board has commissioned Chris Ineson, former CEO of the New Zealand Sports Foundation, to complete a review of our structures nationally. The recommendations from Chris are expected to shed light on areas of strategy and delivery shortfall, in order that TTNZ, regions, associations and clubs can better structure ourselves to meet the needs of our participants. It is expected that a series of recommendations will be available for discussion at the AGM in Hamilton in November 2006.

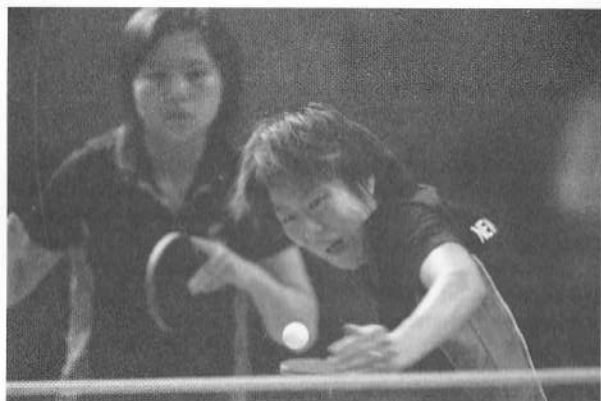
As someone once said, "The one constant in life is change". And I am sure that the next few years will see us continuing on the path of developing world-class services in support of a world-class sport, for all of New Zealand.

All the best
Mike Loftus

Maintaining Our History

Table Tennis New Zealand archivist Robin Radford recently launched a new website featuring photographs of TTNZ players, coaches and officials past and present. The website can be accessed via the www.tabetennis.org.nz.

While the site includes many New Zealand table tennis photographs, it is by no means complete. Accordingly, we ask that you send us any photographs you may have of the table tennis community, in order that these can be uploaded to the site. Once your photo is scanned, it will be returned to you. Of particular interest are photos of past New Zealand champions, and players.



2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games

15-26 March 2006



Commonwealth Games Report

By Ben Collins

As Table Tennis New Zealand's media liaison officer at this year's Commonwealth Games in Melbourne, Australia I had the opportunity to follow the tournament from beginning to end.

Here are some of the highlights in my eyes.

Women's Teams

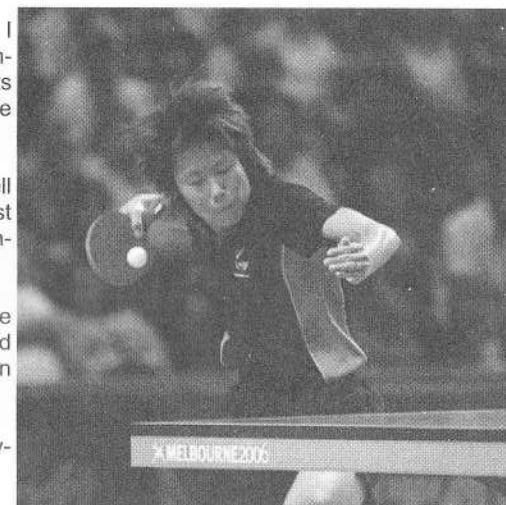
After losing two of their three pool matches I was just about to issue a press release informing the folks back home that the Black Bats women's team had failed to qualify for the quarter finals.

While Karen Li had played exceptionally well and won both her singles matches against Canada the others in the team had been unable to win a game and New Zealand lost 2:3.

But then, courtesy of an absolutely bizarre qualification process, the Black Bats managed to sneak through into the last 8 after games in other pools went their way.

Karen's two singles wins against Canada proving the difference.

New Zealand drew Australia in the quarters and far from being a whitewash that the majority were predicting the Black Bats threw everything at their Trans-Tasman rivals.



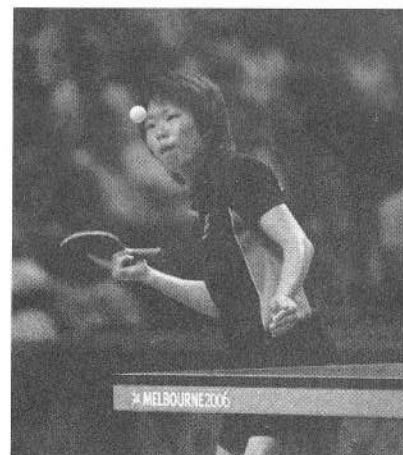
Again, Karen won both her singles matches including a thrilling five set victory over Australian Jian Fan Lay.

After winning the first two sets Karen lost the next two easily and trailed 2:4 in the fifth before clawing her way back into the match and winning 11/9.

Earlier Annie Yang had lost to Jian Fan Lay in three straight sets and while Sophie Shu was defeated 0:3 by arguably Australia's top player Stephanie Sang.

However, Karen's two victories had locked the scores up at 2-2 and a thrilling final match between Black Bats number two Annie Yang and Australia's Miao Miao ensued.

Miao Miao, with vastly greater experience than her Black Bats rival was expected to dominate from the beginning.



However, Annie stunned the Australian – and temporarily silenced the passionate Australian home crowd – by winning the first set 11/9 and then racing to a 6/2 lead in the second set of the decider.

But Miao fought back winning the second set 11/9.

The third set was heart-in-the-mouth material as Annie had four set points however she could not convert and eventually Miao persevered Annie losing 13:15.

The fourth set was over quickly Miao winning 11-2 and Australia went on to win silver.

Women's Doubles

For me this was undoubtedly the highlight of the Black Bats performance at the Commonwealth Games.

In the quarter finals Black Bats Karen Li and Annie Yang won in a thriller against Indian pair Mouma Das and Poulomi Ghatak.

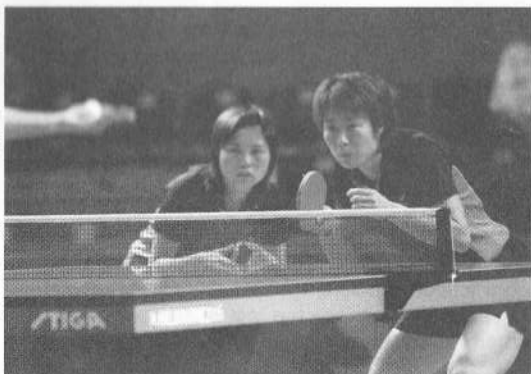
After leading two sets to one, and failing to convert a match point in the fourth, the Black Bats pair had to survive four match points against them in the fifth and final set.

Talk about nerve racking.

Then, after losing in the semi-final to the top seeded Singaporean pair the Black Bats faced Australia in the play-off for the bronze medal.

Karen and Annie put in a brilliant performance against Australian's Miao Miao and Jan Fang Lay.

Unfortunately Karen and Annie fell agonisingly short in their quest for a medal.



After winning the first two sets the New Zealanders dropped the next three – two of those deuce.

Eventually Karen and Annie lost: 11/5 - 11/9 - 11/13 - 8/11 - 10/12.

Had the medal system that was in place at the Manchester Commonwealth Games in 2002 still been employed Karen and Annie would have won a bronze automatically just by making the semi-final.

Peter Jackson

As is mentioned in greater detail elsewhere in *Table Tennis Info* New Zealand's top men's player Peter Jackson retired from international table tennis at the Commonwealth Games.

Peter lost in the last 16 to Singapore's Xiao Cai four sets to one: 9/11 - 11/9 - 7/11 - 12/14 - 1/11.

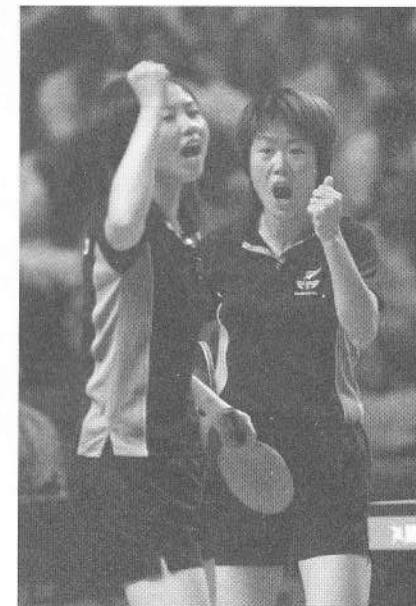
Twenty-three years at the top level of any sport is an amazing achievement.

Politicians

One of the only disappointments in Melbourne was hearing the criticisms being levelled against the New Zealanders by their own Sport's Minister.

After watching Karen and Annie fight tooth and nail to try and bring back medals it was hard to swallow Trevor Mallard's comments about Kiwi's lacking the killer instinct and mental toughness required to win medals.

While I know it's political instinct to point the finger elsewhere, I couldn't help wondering what a difference it would make to our men's or women's table tennis teams – in terms of being able to compete or train abroad – of having just one Government Minister's salary split among them yearly.



A Birthday To Remember



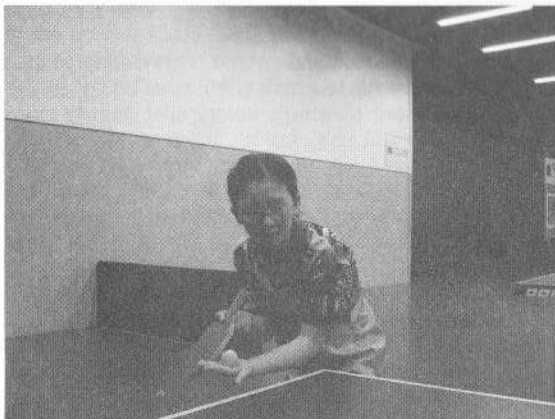
For Jenny Hung the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne, Australia this year was an experience she will never forget.

Not only was it her first Commonwealth Games; she was also one of New Zealand's youngest athletes – she turned 15-years-old during the event.

Jenny tells *Table Tennis Info* what it was like being there and what she learned.

1) What was it like being one of New Zealand's youngest athletes at the Commonwealth Games?

It was great. I thought everyone would not think much of me but everyone was treated as an equal in the NZ team. And because of my age, they really looked after me. There was also less pressure on me too, which really helped in the competition.



2) What did you learn being at the Games?

Well, the atmosphere, definitely! I learnt that support really makes a difference! Because table tennis is not a mainstream sort of sport, in NZ and even at other international tournaments not much support is shown.

But at the Games, because it was so important, Australia had heaps of support. You could just see how it lifted the Australian team up while their opponents just sank lower and lower.

3) How did you play there?

Not very well actually.

Well, not as well as I would have liked.

Because of my lack of experience back then, during important matches and decider games, I didn't have enough confidence and dealt with the pressure wrongly.

4) How did you prepare for the Commonwealth Games (how, where, and with who did you train)?

At the start of this year, the women's team went to Guangxi, China, for five weeks training. We trained with the Guangxi girls' and boys' team.

Not long after that we had a training camp in North Harbour and Auckland for two weeks in which we trained with players in the high performance squad as well as with the men's Games team.

5) What was your favourite event at the Games, singles, doubles or teams? And why?

Definitely teams!! We had soooooo much fun together!! We supported each other really well. We stuck together as a team and everyone played really well. Especially when we played Australia in the quarter finals, we had to compete with the Australian support. After cheering so much for NZ everyone's throat hurt.



6) Your coach was former Commonwealth Games' gold medal winner Li Chunli. What was it like being coached by her?

It was awesome just to know there is someone there who has been through this and knows how to do it right.

It really helped and she knew all the other players and coaches so she did a really good job of coaching us. And also, every team looked up to us because of Chunli's success last time.



7) What was being in the Athletes Village surrounded by athletes from every country in the Commonwealth like?

Great!

It felt great to be in this massive space filled with the Games competitors only! And with all the other countries just next door it was a great new experience.

Normally it's just table tennis with table tennis, rugby with rugby...etc. It was great to be able to hang out with people who do something different from you.

8) What was the highlight of the Commonwealth Games for you?

The closing ceremony! All the players running into the centre of the stadium shouting and screaming and trying to get on TV. It was so funny and so much fun.

9) What are your plans and goals for table tennis this year and in the future?

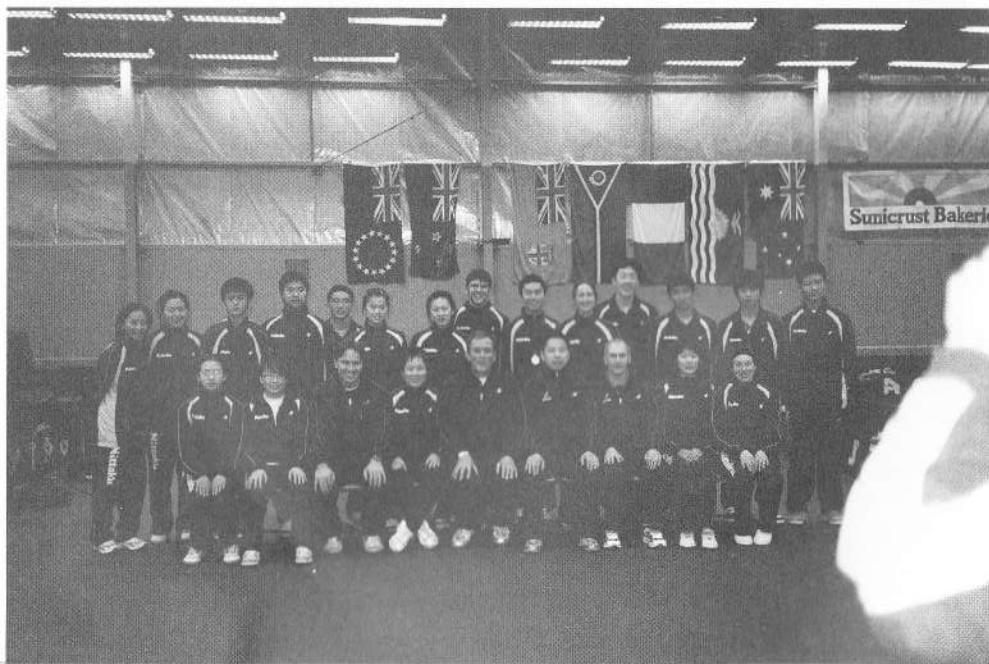
Get into the top five at Cadets for any event, top 12 at WJC in Egypt. Going to an Olympics!!





2006 Oceania Championships

26 June – 1 July 2006



Finals Fever

By Wayne Gearbox

At the Oceania Championships the team finals were once again an Australia-New Zealand affair.

The new look New Zealand team of Brad Chen, Nathan Lowe and Calvin Kwong got off to a great start with Brad taking the opening game off Australian number two, Kiet Tran, in a close five set encounter.

However, the lead was short lived with the top Australian and Commonwealth Games silver medalist William Henzell getting Australia on the board in a dominant performance against Nathan.

With the scores at 1:1 the Australian number three, Fernando Chamara, similarly showed his skill and experience, taking out Calvin.

With New Zealand down 2:1, Brad then fought gallantly against Henzell.

To me, this game was truly one of the matches of the tournament, Brad won the third set 20-18, but lost the fourth set which effectively ended the match.

New Zealand lost 4:1 with Nathan losing the fifth match to Tran.

New Zealand (1) versus Australia A (4)

CHEN Brad - TRAN Kiet: 11-9, 11-7, 8-11, 11-9

LOWE Nathan - HENZELL William: 4-11 7-11 2-11

KWONG Calvin - FERNANDO Chamara: 9-11 2-11 12-14

CHEN Brad - HENZELL William: 6-11, 11-13, 20-18, 7-11

LOWE Nathan - TRAN Kiet: 11-8, 8-11, 7-11, 8-11

Women's Final

The women's team final began in a similar fashion with New Zealand number one, Karen Li, looking trim, athletic and as sharp as ever when she took on and beat her arch-rival Stephanie 'the Great Wall of China' Sang in the opening match.

Leading 1:0 next on for the Black Bats was one of the up-and-coming junior stars of the future Michelle McCarthy, who faced Miao Miao.

It was always going to be a hard task for Michelle and while she won the first set 12:10 she lost the next three sets.

At one a piece, the third match saw the New Zealand table tennis golden girl (only 15-years-old and already a Commonwealth Games representative!), Jenny Hung, take on seasoned Aussie campaigner, Peri Campbell-Innes.

It was another good effort but once again New Zealand was on the wrong side of this ledger, Jenny lost and the Black Bats were down 2:1.

Next, Karen played a real see-saw of a match against Miao but lost 3:1 and Michelle lost the fifth match 0:3.

New Zealand (1) Australia A (4)

LI Karen - SANG Stephanie: 11-6, 8-11, 13-11, 11-13, 11-6
MCCARTHY Michelle - MIAO Miao: 12-10, 7-11, 6-11, 4-11
HUNG Jenny - CAMPBELL-INNES Peri: 9-11, 11-6, 8-11, 9-11
LI Karen - MIAO Miao: 6-11, 8-11, 11-9, 8-11
MCCARTHY Michelle - SANG Stephanie: 6-11, 6-11, 8-11

Junior Boys

Next up were the Junior Boys who, although they were serious under-dogs, had spent several nights talking up their chances and counter-tactics with haka practices and numerous games of Texas Holdem Poker!

Leading the way was Ryan (Bin Bin) Zhu, who narrowly lost to Robbie Frank.

Then Steven Zeng lost 0:3 to Kyle Davis and Matt Lowe lost to Trent Carter and before you knew it the game was over and the Kiwis had lost.

But the boys did get some consolation when Ryan gave Kyle, who happens to be the top under-18 Australian and current Oceania Champion, a lesson in how to play table tennis winning 11-2, 11-4, 11-3.

Still the boys, like the women and the men, went down 4:1.

Under 18 Boys: New Zealand versus Australia A

ZHU Ryan - FRANK Robert: 9-11, 11-4, 5-11, 8-11
ZENG Steven - DAVIS Kyle: 8-11, 8-11, 6-11
LOWE Matthew - CARTER Trent: 12-14, 2-11, 9-11
ZHU Ryan - DAVIS Kyle: 11-2, 11-4, 12-10
ZENG Steven - FRANK Robert: 9-11, 9-11, 11-4, 6-11

Junior Girls

Just when things looked like they had gone completely pear shaped out came the girls who were intent on steamrolling the Aussies and instilling some Kiwi pride.

Sophie Shu, Jenny Hung and Hannah Squire proceeded to do a number on the Aussie girls that would make all Kiwis proud.

And although Hannah, just one point from victory, made us wait an extra set, at 3:0 the match was sealed and the Aussie girls decided they had had enough – the game was stopped with New Zealand clearly on top.

Under 18: New Zealand (3) versus Australia A (0)

SHU Sophie - CARPENTER Michelle: 11-8, 17-15, 11-9
HUNG Jenny - TAPPER Melissa: 12-10, 11-6, 11-5
SQUIRE Hanna - NG Cassandra: 12-10, 11-4, 13-15, 11-5

Final Thoughts: Three silvers and one gold constitute a good effort by the New Zealand team.

Karen Li Triumphs

By ITTF Publications Editor Ian Marshall

New Zealand's Karen Li emerged out of the shadows on Saturday 1st July 2006 to clinch her first ever Women's Singles title at the Oceania Championships; the runner up in 1996 and losing semi-finalist in 2000, 2002 and 2004, she laid the ghosts rest to overcome the fast attacking play of Australia's Miao Miao at the final hurdle.

Karen Li won 11-7, 8-11, 11-9, 2-11, 11-5, 11-6 and the one person she can thank for the success is her elder sister, Li Chunli who was her coach throughout the tournament.

It is Li Chunli who, in previous years, has been the sister to grab the headlines. Winner of the Women's Singles title on four occasions at the Oceania Championships and the gold medallist at the Commonwealth Games in 2002, now aged forty two she is concentrating her efforts on coaching. If you are confused as to the names, the younger sister is Li Jinli but always known as Karen!



Busy

Meanwhile, Karen Li must be one of the busiest people in the world of table tennis. Not only is she a fine player, she was one of the coaches on duty for the Oceania team at the World Cadet Challenge in 2005, she'll no doubt occupy the same role in Serbia in 2006 and she is a member of the successful team that has secured the World Junior Championships for Auckland, New Zealand in 2008!

Furthermore, she is recently married!

Define Roles

"Yes it's hard to combine all the various roles but here it was important that I got my role exactly right, here I was a player", said Karen Li. "I've never won before, I lost to Miao Miao in the team final and now I'm going to the Women's World Cup."

Despite the wide variety of roles, Karen Li had been on duty earlier in the year for New Zealand at Commonwealth Games and aware that the Oceania Championships followed, she had prepared thoroughly. "We went to China to train", explained Li Chunli. "Technically I think Karen's backhand topspin has improved in recent months, she now thinks more when she's playing and she is mentally stronger."

Enjoyment

These were all facts that showed in the final against Mia Miao. "I just went out there to enjoy myself", said Karen Li. "I didn't think about winning or losing and yes, I was in a good frame of mind."

Watching the contest was Glenn Tepper, the ITTF Development Manager. "Karen won many points by playing wide to the forehand of Mia Miao", he said. "Her win means she's broken away from the shadows of her elder sister."

Karen Li has now assumed the mantle of being New Zealand's top female player; it's a role she seems to relish and one she clearly regards as a new challenge.

New Zealand Teenager Gives Defending Champion a Severe Fright



By ITTF Publications Editor Ian Marshall

Top seed and defending champion, Australia's William Henzell, duly booked his place in the semi-finals of the Men's Singles event at the Oceania Championships in Geelong but in the quarter-finals, on Friday 29th June 2006, he was given the fright of his life. The man to cause the scare: eighteen year Ryan Zhu of New Zealand.

Twenty-four year old Henzell won 9-11, 8-11, 11-6, 8-11, 11-9, 11-7, 11-8.

"I just tried to topspin the ball whenever possible, simply just put it on the table and be consistent", said Henzell who faced imminent defeat in the fifth game. He trailed 1-5 and was down three games to one.

Incredible Backhand

"In the fifth game I took a 'time out' when I was losing 1-4, then he played an amazing backhand topspin, it was a tremendous shot, I'd no chance", said Henzell. "I just thought if he's going to play like that I better just enjoy the rest of the game, I think it relaxed me and I started to play better."

Henzell recovered, he won the fifth and sixth games but in the seventh game he was down again, disaster loomed; the New Zealander went ahead 7-3. "I just thought to myself, last year at the

Liebherr Men's World Cup I had such a great time in Liège I want to be in Paris this year!" explained Henzell. "I felt I was playing well and I thought the quality of the table tennis in the seventh game was high."

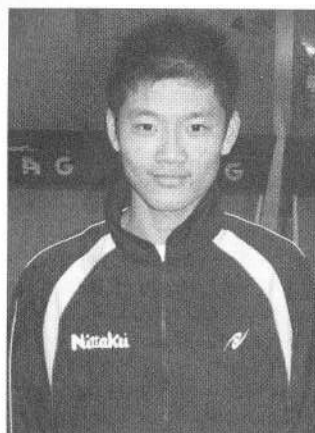
Philosophical

Meanwhile, Ryan Zhu was in philosophical mood. "I'm happy about the match, I had the advantage in the fifth and seventh games", he said. "It was just individual points, I don't think anything really changed tactically, William played well."



Phillip Xiao To Lead Oceania Cadet Team

By ITTF Publications Editor Ian Marshall



There was tremendous excitement at the Oceania Table Tennis Championships in Geelong on Wednesday 28th June 2006; for parents and coaches there were palpitations as the younger generation took to the stage

The teenagers fought tooth and nail for a place in a competition that will prove a major landmark in their careers and one they will never forget, a place in the Oceania team to travel to Europe for the ITTF World Cadet Challenge in October 2006.

"Twenty-two of the most talented cadets in the region battled hard during the World Cadet Challenge qualification tournament", explained Glenn Tepper, ITTF Development Manager, whose splendid efforts are now bearing fruit in Oceania. "In 2005 the Oceania Boys' Team was only points away from a medal, so expectations

are high."

Competitive

It is in the younger age groups that Oceania is at its most competitive with other continents and they have adopted a policy for the ITTF World Cadet Challenge that gives great encouragement to the smaller table tennis associations in the area.

"Countries could enter a maximum of two players in each of the boys and girls qualification tournaments" continued Glenn Tepper. "Oceania has also adopted the 'with the future in mind' policy in that the Oceania Team must be made up of four different countries."

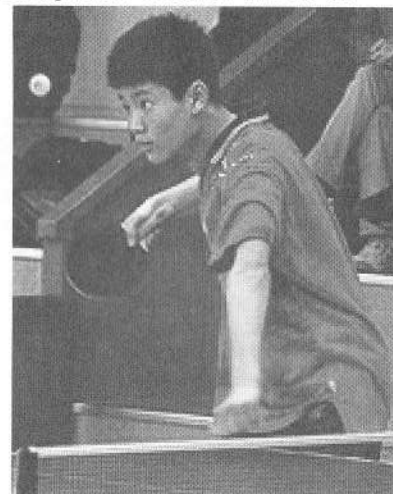
A very positive move by Oceania; one which supports the ITTF Development Programme and gives the Pacific Islands a major boost.



Phillip Xiao

"The boys' team is led by Phillip Xiao of New Zealand who qualified in a three way count back", explained Glenn Tepper. The young man was understandably delighted to have booked his place in the team.

"The World Cadet Challenge will be a new experience for me; I'll meet many different styles", he said. "My aim is to be competitive and do well, I am currently training ten hours each week but I hope to increase that in the lead up to Serbia."



Phillip's View



By Phillip Xiao

The first day of the Oceania Championships held in Geelong, Australia, was a very special day for me. We were competing for places in the U-15 Cadet Oceania Team which will travel to Serbia later this year. Not only is this my last year in the Under-15 age group but as only one person from each country could qualify there was added pressure – I knew it was not going to be easy.

The favourites, Australia, brought two of their best players, while the South Pacific was represented by players from the Cook Islands, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, and Tahiti. It was a large round robin but I managed to get through all my matches against the players from the South Pacific comfortably.

Later in the afternoon were the important matches – Australia versus New Zealand. Many parents, relatives and coaches began turning up for these matches and the crowd really seemed to get more involved that it had earlier in the day.

First up was David Powell, a strong player who got the better of me and won 3:1. I felt I had some good chances during the match but I was not decisive enough when things got tight. Naturally, I was not happy with myself. But I knew that I had to keep positive and stay focused because there were still two more matches to play. Fellow Kiwi, Terry Zeng, also lost to David. Like me he also had good chances but was unlucky, with David getting lots of nets and edges. Terry lost 1:3.

I then played another Aussie, Buu-Tha Ung, a left-hander with a strong forehand. Before the match I was still unhappy about losing to David but also quite afraid as I'm normally weak against left-handers. I somehow managed to win 3:0 and it was very comfortable in the end – I think he may have been more nervous than me! But the important thing was that I was still alive in the tournament.

My last match was against Terry. We're team mates so knew each other's games quite well, having played each other countless times before. This showed as Terry raced to a 2:0 lead. At that stage I felt like I was trying to win too quickly and had to re-focus and take it just one point at a time. I managed to win the next two sets and square it up 2:2. In the final set I think I was now a lot calmer and Terry seemed to be shocked at seeing his lead vanish and was now probably more nervous than me. It was a tense final set until I took a few points in a row and never looked back, winning 11:4.

In the other match the two Australians squared off and Buu-Tha beat David 3:1, creating a three way tie for first. I had a chance... Yes! I had won on count back. My exact word after I realised I had won – "Phewwwwwwwww!" I think I was more relieved than ecstatic.

My 3:0 win against Buu-Tha was the main reason I had scraped through. Winning the Oceania Cadets would not have been possible without the guidance of my excellent coach, Aaron Li, throughout the day. But most of all I need to thank my parents who came to support me and Shane Laugesen who trained with me daily leading up to the tournament – including at 5 a.m. on the morning of my flight to Australia. Also a special thanks to the rest of the New Zealand players who came down and supported me even though they weren't playing and to HB Sports for sponsoring me and helping me toward my success.

Umpiring at the World Junior Circuit, Geelong, Victoria Australia



By Daniel Fan

Tulamarine Airport Day Tour

Unexpected things began happening to me from the very beginning of the World Junior Circuit Tournament in Geelong this year.

It began when I arrived at the airport at 9.30 a.m. and there was nobody there to meet me. After 40 minutes of waiting and looking, inside and out, still no one had appeared to pick me up!

The "Help Desk" didn't help at all! My last hope was a piece of paper in my pocket. The night before I'd got onto the Table Tennis Australia website and luckily had written down their number on that paper just in case. I was lucky - it did work.

Half an hour later I met Jim, the Deputy Chair of Table Tennis Geelong, and his wife, Joan. They told me that we were looking for five Japanese players whose flight had landed 30 minutes before mine. But we couldn't find them. So the waiting and searching continued, for even longer this time.

After making lots of phone calls, finally Jim was told that the Japanese were already in the hotel in Geelong; they had taken a shuttle by themselves.

Five minutes later – it was now 12.30 - we were on our way to Geelong.

Jim's mobile was ringing again: "Are you going to pick up the Hong Kong player? Her flight is 1:50 p.m." We got off the motorway immediately, had something to eat and headed back to Tulamarine Airport. This time not a single person was at "Arrivals".

"What is going on?" I asked myself. Jim came back an hour later. "No flight today. The Hong Kong player's flight is tomorrow. TT Geelong made a mistake." I hope Jim's mobile phone bill will be reimbursed by his boss!

Thankfully that was the end of my extended tour of the airport. Eventually we got on our way to Geelong once more. It was 2:50 p.m.

Official Team

We had 17 umpires for this tournament. Four were from the Pacific nations - they're the candidates of the Oceania Umpire Training Course - one was from Japan, there was me from New Zealand, while the rest, of course, were from Australia.

The Australia umpiring team was amazing. Three couples in this team made it seem more like a family business. Age-wise it was a mixed bag. The youngest one, Jonathon, is only 34. He and I were the newest International Umpires. One of the most venerable citizens, Len Powell, was about five times older than the average player there. He's 75 years old. Can you believe that? But wait! His wife Barbara even older - she is 77! Both are WJC and experienced Australia International Umpires. Good on them!

My roommate was Dave Delpratt, who recently was awarded a Blue Badge. I only discovered that after I returned home and got on the ITTF website. (Mind you, at that time he didn't know that either). He is a very good umpire. He told me lots about his experiences at the World Championships and Athens Olympic Games.

All the officials got on very well, talking to and helping each other. I learned a lot from them, although I disagreed with some of what they said. For example, they insisted that you should never leave your umpiring seat until the end of the match. But it doesn't say anything about this in the rule book. I don't know if it's a requirement at the World Championships or Olympic Games – I guess it could be a little bit of "Aussie Rules"!

The hardest day for the officials was Friday, July 7. I arrived the stadium at 8:00 a.m. When I left it was 9:20 p.m. The schedule was really tight - every 30 minutes a new match. The sole respite came during the meal break. I umpired 21 matches.

"I'm exhausted," complained Barbara Powell. I was absolutely impressed with her. She did so well and all her matches were up to standard. Don't forget that she is 77. I think that's what people call a "work ethic".

Controversy

It was good to see some top junior players, Japanese player Matsudaira Kenta among them, performing in Geelong. He beat Denmark's Michael Maze in the first round of Pro-Tour China in June. He is 15.

Nobody would disagree with my assessment that the most impressive player of this circuit was the Korean boy, Jung Young Sik. He is a very talented player and he's only 14. His potential, I believe, is huge.

Speaking of the Korean team, I don't think that two controversial incidents of the tournament can be ignored. The first one happened at the boys' final. I didn't see what happened actually because I was umpiring the girls' final on another table.

I heard afterwards that the assistant umpire, Dave Delpratt, my roommate, had signaled the umpire to give the Korean coach a yellow card for illegal advice (some said a red card after that to send him away). The coach was very angry and wouldn't let his boy, Jung, return to the game. Play was suspended for 15 minutes. The final result was 3:1; Japan "A" beat Korea.

The second incident happened at a girls' singles semi-final on the last day during a match between Korean Gwak Su Min and Croatia's Sanja Paukovic, the eventual champion. The assistant umpire, Johnathon this time, faulted Gwak for an illegal service action. I was off duty and sitting among the spectators.

The Korean team not only stopped playing this time; they packed up and left the stadium to board their bus. It was Raul Calin, ITTF Tournament Manager, who used his negotiating skills to bring the Korean team back to play 45 minutes later.

I would like to say that in both cases there was nothing wrong with the umpires' decisions. They were just doing their jobs and applying the rules. You can appeal if you believe that a decision was unjustified, but in the process please do respect your opponents, match officials and the spectators.

The WJC is over. It was a costly trip but it was great experience for me and I really enjoyed it. I hope that in the future we can get some funding for New Zealand officials to travel overseas and perform on world stages.

A Night to Remember

The 2005 AGM weekend provided TTNZ with the ideal opportunity to celebrate the members who have contributed so much to the game in New Zealand. Six people (Richard Lee, James Morris, Ken Wilkinson, Trevor Flint, Yvonne Fogarty and Bryan Foster) were inducted to the TTNZ Hall of Fame by Chairman Graeme Muller. The gala dinner provided a lively and engaging environment for the inductions, as well as for the awarding of 2005 annual awards to current players, coaches and volunteers. Below are some pictures from the special evening.



L/R: **Maureen Tomlinson, David Jackson, Alan Tomlinson, Shona Cudby, Trevor Flint, Judy Connolly**



Yvonne Fogarty responding to her induction



Trevor Flint and Graeme Muller



Bryan Foster



L/R: **Richard Lee** listening to Chairman **Graeme Muller**

2006 North Island Championships



John Stapleton—Liaison Officer for Championships

This year's event was in Palmerston North, held in the arena at the old showgrounds. The Norths have been around for 60-odd years and a review is needed if the event is going to remain healthy in the future.

Positioning of future events

Traditionally the Norths have been held over what are now the July school holidays, with the Souths held on Queen's Birthday weekend and the Nationals in August. When the four-term school year came in the season lengthened. The Nationals went to a late September start and the Souths to a new date in August. These were the big events. Most of the country's top players went to all three and big crowds were drawn to the matches.

Unfortunately this is no longer the case. Entries in the Norths were down to around 167 this year, I believe, and in recent years entries for the Souths have been well under 70 in some cases. This year the spectators at the finals of the Norths on the Saturday contained probably around a dozen non-players and about 60 players at most, and this is not a one off. This is now the norm for the North Island finals. On the Sunday there is now usually even less atmosphere as all the players are rushing to get home early.

It is worth considering a revamp of our major tournaments and their purpose. I know there is a lot of talk about making the Nationals a showpiece event with international visitors and much increased media coverage, and this is an important part of raising the sport's profile in NZ.

What about the North Island Championships then? Do we still try to promote these as one of the big three or do we concentrate resources on the one major event, the Nationals? The alternative, of course, is to place the emphasis on participation at the Norths and the Souths. Most of the players are there to play games, and lots of them. They want plate events, team events, round robins, the works, and enter as many events as they can. This is what we generally get at our local association events and this now appears to apply also to the Norths and Souths. It could be time to re-evaluate these tournaments' place in NZ and how we market them – as events for the players or as events to promote the sport at the highest level. I doubt it can be both.

NZ-Closed

There has been healthy discussion about having a NZ-Closed meeting and positioning it in the July holiday time slot, with the Norths moving elsewhere in the calendar. The NZ-Closed would then become our # 2 high-profile event and the Norths and Souths could be marketed more as participation events. This new tournament would also be a better fit for team events, which are very popular still, as proved this year with around 30 teams at the North Island Champs.

Timetable

I heard lots of moans about the drawn-out length of the Norths. The same old comments kept surfacing: "There are so many empty tables, why can't I play my game now?" and "Why did I have to wait four hours between matches?" Could the Norths be reduced to three days? To their credit the organisers basically discarded the timetable provided to them and tried to put games on ahead of schedule in order to satisfy the players and finish early. Well done to the hosts.

Who entered

Where were the girls and where were the veterans? B and C grades appear to be a hit and continue to get good entries but entries from the junior girls are still too low to be healthy and the vets are staying away in droves. Again, perhaps another reason to focus our energies on participation strategies and attract players, especially girls, to come.

Where did the entries come from? Well, not from North Taranaki, Wanganui, Northland or Wairarapa, and not many from a few other associations either. Three of those named are neighbouring associations too. This is another area of concern.

Umpiring

The cries went out from referee Averil Roberts for umpires but the umpires were nowhere to be found. It was very difficult to enforce the rules and uphold the best standard of conduct when we had so few officials to call on.

I have a view on this. What if we did what they do in the Football World Cup and decide each year that umpires are going to come down hard on a certain rule? For example, next year it could be the service rule. Let it be known that at the Nationals this will be strictly enforced. That way coaches and players are fully aware of this and during the whole season they should be making sure they comply. If they ignore the announcement they will be in for a rude shock at the Nationals. This should then raise the standard for the whole year and in all events. The following year you could concentrate on the dress code. And so on. To achieve this we would need to make it a requirement upon the hosts to ensure a pool of qualified umpires was available to work a minimum number of tables throughout the tournament, not just finals either, at all levels. Also an entry-level umpires' presentation of about an hour, or better still a DVD that outlined the main rules to players, coaches, parents, etcetera, would hopefully raise standards across the board.

Would this work? Maybe one for the umpires' committee.

Social aspects

Associations don't have socials anymore because basically no one goes. Most seem to just want to play their games and leave. It isn't like this overseas, so why here?

Association rivalry

Is this a thing of the past? I can remember from past years some great on-the-table rivalries between Hutt Valley, Waikato, Canterbury, Counties, and the like. There was really noisy support when one of their own was playing someone from another association. Apart from a little bit of support in the main finals, this is no longer evident.

You may have heard of the proposed regional franchise set-up, with our country divided into six or eight regions. Soccer did it and has names like Fed 1 and Fed 2. No one outside of the sport has any idea of who is playing whom. Would this work in our sport? Rugby have marketed their Super-14 franchises well, but then they still have the provinces playing in the NPC as well.

Processes

We have one set of rules which are listed in the TTNZ handbook and they are there to be followed so that there is consistency and fairness. There are set processes for changing rules if changes are needed. In no circumstances should rules be ignored by those who choose not to follow them for whatever reason. There were many instances at the Norths where rules were clearly not followed in the processing of the draws prior to the tournament itself and this is sad to report. For the organisers on the day this created a whole raft of problems, which, to their credit, were handled with common sense. Lucky that people like Shona Cudby have so much respect from the players, otherwise we could have had some ugly disputes.

Personalities in our sport

I guess it is also fair to say that we lack the personalities in the sport that we used to have and therefore the excitement of one-to-one feuds between celebrity rival players. Recall the rebels of their day - Kerry Palmer, Andrew Hubbard, Malcolm Temperley; the battles between Peter Jackson and Barry Griffiths; the defender, Graham Lassen, versus the looper, Richard Lee. All these added spark to the tournaments. Is any of that spark still there today?

The main events

The men's singles was won by Brad Chen, the current NZ men's champ, who beat Shane Lauge- sen 4-0 in the final. If Brad applies himself then he certainly has the talent to break into the world's top 150. He is exciting to watch, especially when defending way back from the table. He and Shane had some tough battles last year but on this day Brad was far too strong.

In the semis Brad had struggled to come to grips with Simon Wallace, the ex-Cantab sticking throughout to a set game plan that frustrated his opponent. And it almost paid off. Simon came back from 1-3 down to level at three games all, before Chen took the final game. The other semi- final was a little disappointing as Shane crushed Peter Craven 4-0. Peter has certainly played better than this in the past but credit must go to Shane who forced Peter into a series of errors through some smart play.

The women's singles was also a 4-0 score line as Karen Li beat the Auckland-based Korean chopper, Jung Mi Kim. Karen, who is off to the World Cup in September, has been in great form, carrying on from the Commonwealth Games. She never allowed her opponent into the game. Earlier, in the semi-final, Kim had beaten Sophie Shu 4-2. Shu had an inconsistent tournament but gave one of her better showings in this match and was unlucky not to extend the match the full distance. Angela Li from Canterbury also had a good event, reaching the semi-finals.

Overall

I would describe the Norths as friendly and a meeting where the hosts used a fair bit of common sense in making some difficult calls. They ran the event for the players, with their interests foremost in mind. As a player I would like to thank Stew Hickford and his team for a well managed event and a fun time.

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Ratings Update

The changes in the Ratings System over the last year or so have seen plenty of feedback, both negative and positive, from players.

By way of background, TTNZ moved to the new web-based Ratings System in May 2005 in order to provide increased transparency to players with regard to their rating results and how these are recorded.

The Ratings System now allows all players to log on to view their results, with an ability to contest results recorded wrongly.

In the first year of operation, all tournament results were manually entered, thanks to the hard work of Shona Cudby. Over the last couple of months we have finalised an interface that allows tournaments reported in the Xpand2Play tournament management system to be electronically uploaded to the Ratings System, meaning we eliminate inevitable data entry errors and ensure timely upload of results (and also meaning that Shona doesn't spend all of her spare time keying results).

The Ratings System is designed as an ongoing measure of players' results, with this reflected in their positioning on the Ratings List at any one time. Over time, as more results are entered against each player, all players should achieve the correct rating position.

However, initially some manual manipulation is being done in consultation with the Technical Committee and Associations, in order to place players at a level that best reflects their abilities as of today.

This in turn allows tournament organisers to use the Ratings List for seeding events, without too much further manipulation of seeding places.

The calculations within the Ratings System have been thoroughly tested and we are confident that they are working as they should. This includes the weighting of results based upon tournament type, positions of the competing players on the Ratings List, and the age restrictions associated with an event.

For more details on the weighting table and calculations, please visit the TTNZ website at www.tabletennis.org.nz.

Many players often express surprise or confusion when their player rating moves up or down the list even though they may not have played a tournament recently.

This happens because ratings operator, Shona Cudby, often receives tournament results months after the event. For example, Shona recently received two very old Association tournament results after 12 more recent tournaments had been played.

In this instance, Shona says, players who competed in the Association's tournaments had their old results entered. Then, because tournament results must be entered in the order that they are played if the ratings are to be valid, she had to recalculate the ratings for the subsequent 12 tournaments.

The recalculation of ratings from the dozen more recent tournaments means even the ratings of players who did not play in the two older tournaments are also affected.

On a Shoestring in Slovakia



By Peter Craven

Just days after the National Championships finished last year I found myself boarding a flight to Slovakia.

My club was situated in a small village near the capital Bratislava and by the time I arrived there the season had already begun so I got straight into my training.

There were normally six players – a mix of seniors and juniors - who would practise together twice a day. The training there was highly structured, set by a coach and conducted in a professional environment. Four of the players, myself included, were accommodated in a flat which adjoined the hall, meaning that we could practise whenever we wanted.

We played in two leagues, one being the National Slovak League, the other the Central European Super League.

The latter contained the top clubs from Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Austria, Hungary, Croatia and Slovenia and some of the world's top players, like Werner Schlager and Zoran Primorac.

One of the highlights of playing in Slovakia was being in the team that won the National Slovak League. It was an away match and the home crowd was quite hostile towards us. The match was first to eight but we started poorly and my team was down 2:6. Then we moved up a gear and came back to win a thrilling encounter 8:6.

The finals aside, life in Slovakia was quite difficult at times. Not only was I a long way from home; I could often find myself being left to my own devices when we didn't have training and on the weekends. It was times like these that I had to remind myself why I was there and concentrate on my training.

Being selected for the New Zealand team to go to the April World Championships in Bremen, Germany, gave me all the motivation I needed toward the end of the season. While in Bremen the team and I came up against some very strong competition and it reinforced for me just how far off the pace New Zealand is at the international level.

In New Zealand we train a lot less than players overseas do, especially at junior level, and a lot of that training is organised on an individual basis. We can do nothing about our geographical disadvantage, which makes it difficult to compete regularly at international tournaments. However, without a national league New Zealand is also deprived of stiff regular domestic competition.

I believe a key factor inhibiting the introduction of a national league in New Zealand is the overall playing level throughout most of the associations. And with many associations not having meaningful development programmes players have to wait until an older age before they really begin their training. Thus their formative years in the sport are somewhat wasted and they are subsequently forced to try and play catch-up by way of training and competing overseas.

To have any chance of reaching the level of a country like Slovakia – which was just outside the top 20 at the World Team Champs - New Zealand associations need to create strong, structured training and have it on a daily basis. This would produce a greater pool of competitive players with which we could create a national league. A strong domestic table tennis scene would then become a reality.

A First Year Scholar

TT Info magazine asked top women's player and New Zealand representative Michelle McCarthy to explain just what it has been like for her moving from the comfort of Wellington this year to take up a table tennis scholarship in Waikato.



By Michelle McCarthy

This year I decided to move from Wellington to Hamilton to further my academic studies and continue my table tennis development. I enrolled at the University of Waikato in a four-year Management degree, with Japanese included.

As part of my move to the Waikato I applied for, and was awarded, a Sir Edmund Hillary Scholarship – joining Sarah Ho who was already a scholar. The university set up the scholarship for students who want to achieve a high level of performance in both their studies and their sport.

The scholarship was an important part of my university decision; I wanted something to assist me in achieving to the best of my ability academically and in table tennis. For me, the benefits of the Hillary Scholarship Programme are divided into three main areas; University, Table Tennis and General/Overall.

The university benefits include having the fees for all my courses covered and being in the personal development programme with access to the likes of sports psychology, time management and leadership seminars.

The university recognises that we have sporting commitments alongside our studies and allows flexibility when there are clashes. How this works in practice is that we can make arrangements with our lecturers if we have table tennis commitments during assessments or need assignment extensions at times when we have tournaments.

TTNZ, in partnership with Waikato Table Tennis, is responsible for running the skill development part of the Hillary Programme. Murray Finch (National Junior Coach and a Waikato Squad Coach) manages this, and also assists me greatly in improving my game. Tom Liu, the Waikato coach, is primarily responsible for individual coaching. Tom's time has been funded by the First Sovereign Gaming Trust. I am entitled to two one-and-a-half-hour sessions with him per week. Both Murray and Tom work closely with the university within the Hillary Programme and give us 100% support in achieving our goals.

The overall benefit of being actively supported in striving to achieve in all the integrated areas is probably the most important benefit. The Sir Edmund Hillary Scholarship Programme is very helpful in keeping us on track.

At the beginning of the year we have training programmes and schedules of our classes and tournaments formulated for us by a personal trainer and high performance sport advisor. This means we set out with a plan of what we want to achieve and how we can achieve it.

I have received a free gym membership and, through the group sessions, get to train and mix on a weekly basis with other high performance athletes from a range of sporting fields. This year I have also been lucky enough to receive sponsorship from Tibhar through the NZ agent Marc Nichol, one of the key people in the Waikato Association.

The administrators, coaches and players in Waikato are all very dedicated to enhancing table tennis in the region. This is evident through the very talented Waikato juniors rising through the ranks. They have made me feel very welcome here.

I have found it very important to have good time management and self-motivation once you reach university as it is the time when you gain complete control of, and responsibility for, your life. Balancing my university life and table tennis can be difficult. I have about 20 hours of class-time per week and training six days a week, sometimes twice a day. Living on campus I find that I have more time on my hands than in the past, although I am expected to put another 20 hours into study outside class hours.

But it's not all hard work and I think having a social life is essential; a good balance helps you to reach your full potential in all areas of life.

My studies and table tennis in 2006 have been greatly influenced by the huge support I have received from the Waikato table tennis community, TTNZ and Waikato University, through the Sir Edmund Hillary scholarship.

Overall, I hope this will result in my becoming a well-rounded sportsman with an adaptable academic base from which many exciting opportunities may arise in the future.



Tibhar Waikato is proud to say that most of the profits generated from the sales of our product is fed back into the sport of table tennis.

Tibhar Waikato gives full support to the University Of Waikato Sir Edmund Hillary Scholarship Programme. We currently sponsor Sarah Ho and Michelle McCarthy who have both represented New Zealand during the 2006 playing season.

For more information on Tibhar Waikato and the Hillary Scholarship Programme go to the Waikato Table Tennis Website www.wtta.co.nz

E-Table Tennis

It's new, it's got the latest news, views and current events, and it looks great. The website set up by Marc Nichol of Waikato Table Tennis is already proving popular, averaging between 50 and 100 unique hits a day.

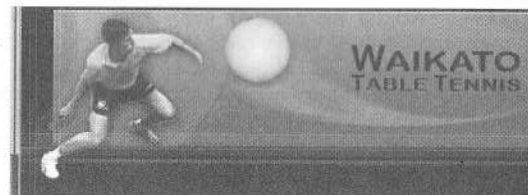


Table Tennis Info asks Marc why he and Waikato have set up this great resource.

1) Tell us a bit about why you've set this website up?

The WTTA website was set up to provide an information source but not only for Waikato players.

It was set up for players from all around New Zealand to view articles and information about local, national and international events. To get tips and maybe even learn tricks from coaches and players from around the world.

It is our aim to provide up-to-date information on local and international tournaments.

We aim to provide current information and results on the performances of New Zealand representatives as they happen.

2) How long has it been up and running for?

The website was upgraded to its current format in early May and is still being developed.

Other features to be provided in the near future include an active forum and chat room.

3) Who helped you build it and how is it funded?

The site was designed in conjunction with Enervate Systems in Hamilton, who offer a complete range of internet services.

The site was funded, hosted and maintained with the assistance of Tibhar Waikato.

Tibhar Waikato is currently in the process of building an on-line shop so that purchases can be made via the website.

Tibhar Waikato is a major sponsor of Waikato Table Tennis and two local players (Sarah Ho and Michelle McCarthy), who are both part on the Waikato University Hillary Scholarship programme.

4) Tell us a bit more about the strategic thinking behind the website - you have international results, domestic results, photos and news.

It is our aim to provide current information on national and international events. We will also provide profiles on national and international players.

At the same time, we welcome audience participation. If anybody anywhere has photos or any kind of news they want published or want us to profile one of their local players, or list local club or tournament events, we are also happy to do these things as part of our service.

5) What do you think are the strengths of the website?

Put simply, comprehensiveness. As I've said, we aim to be a comprehensive information source for the average player to access.

The website can be found at www.wtta.co.nz.

How To Attract Girls

It is often said that there are far more women in New Zealand than there are men, yet strangely, in the country's table tennis halls it often seems the opposite is true.

At that Auckland Table Tennis Association this is definitely the case; while the club can field numerous teams in competitive men's/boys teams in their respective categories it often struggles to find enough female players to form a single team.

That is why this year Auckland has initiated a programme aimed at boosting its number of female players.

In February 2006, Auckland began its weekly Girls Squad group. This followed a successful recruitment drive in November last year, promoted through community radio broadcasts and local community newspaper advertisements, which resulted in over 40 girls attending on the first night, keen to give table tennis a go.

While Auckland coaches Aaron Li and Shane Laugesen are there to help the girls with their games, the squad is also run by Jung Mi Kim, a former world ranked women's player and German Open winner.

The Girls Squad runs for two hours each session, with the girls undertaking structured exercises, working on their fitness and playing matches against each other.

Since the inception, the Girls Squad has attracted up to 20 girls who range in age between four and seventeen years old.

"Now that Auckland has gained the interest of these players," says Jung Mi Kim "the goal is to try and keep these girls coming back through making the training challenging and fun."



Sports Medicine for Table Tennis



By Dr Simeon Cairns

There have been considerable developments in the medical services available to support New Zealand table tennis players in the last 5 years. This involves expertise through sport doctors, physiotherapists (musculoskeletal specialists), podiatrists (foot specialists), massage therapists, dieticians (sports nutrition) and optometrists (sport vision). Many of these services are available through providers for the NZ Academy of Sport, but at a cost if the player is not registered as a carded athlete.

So what is the value of these services for table tennis? Traditionally they have focused on treatment and/or rehabilitation of injuries, that is to remedy short term problems. However, the modern approach is preventative in order to diminish the possibility of acute and overuse injuries in the future. This may include assessments of stamina, muscle endurance, muscle strength/power, flexibility, posture, balance, core stability, and hand-eye-coordination. To be effective it is then necessary to prescribe specific programs to remedy any problems that had been identified.

This medical support may not directly improve table tennis performance. However, good health is a requirement to allow skill training on the table, physical conditioning, and not to restrict competition performance. Moreover, one must try to avoid overuse injuries, especially with the shoulder and back in table tennis, so that major problems do not develop and thus restrict careers. With this in mind a full medical screen is compulsory for all Olympic Games athletes, and the musculoskeletal screen and sports vision tests are of particular relevance for table tennis.

The **musculoskeletal screen** aims to identify potential problems a player may experience associated with strength, flexibility (range of motion), posture, and patterns of movement that may contribute to injury. Although the findings of a screening, such as imbalance between muscle groups, may not involve immediate problems they may result in injury or loss of function in the long term. Fortunately such problems can usually be corrected with appropriate physiotherapy or conditioning programs.

The **sports vision** analysis involves standard vision assessments plus tests of 21 point binocular vision, peripheral awareness, hand eye coordination and balance, hand speed, visual alignment and visual memory skills (flash/react). Several of these tests have revealed that our national squad members have visual attributes that exceed those in many other sports, including other racquet sports. Strategies can be suggested to improve some of these aspects which are not determined entirely by genetics.

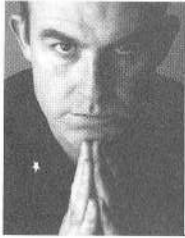
To get information on your local sports medicine providers please contact Simeon Cairns at simeon.cairns@aut.ac.nz.

Shopping for TTNZ

Table Tennis New Zealand recently entered into a partnership with online shopping mall FastShop which provides secure online shopping for major brands such as Canterbury Clothing and Line7, products from EasyBuy, PharmacyDirect and OfficeMax, and grocery shopping through Woolworths – all from the comfort of your own home.

Every transaction facilitated through the TTNZ FastShop website (<http://www.yourfastshop.co.nz/webshop/home.php>) helps TTNZ to raise funds. Simply browse through the vast range of products, services and latest hot deals from leading retailers. Be assured that your purchases are dealt with directly by your chosen retailer.

Mental Toughness



Richard Petrie was asked by TTNZ in 2005 to assist with the build up to the Melbourne Commonwealth Games, through working with players to develop exercises that assisted them in their mental approach to preparation and matches. Since then Richard has worked with a number of top New Zealand sports people and businesses in using his techniques to achieve extraordinary results.

In this article Richard provides us with an insight into Mental Toughness and its application, in preparation for providing some of the secrets in future issues.

Introduction

Increasingly over the past few years the term 'mental toughness' is being used by TV commentators to explain why two teams or individuals of similar ability have completely differing performance records, particularly at the vital point in the match when the game is in the balance. Some of you are now selected in teams because selectors know that ability wise you may not be as skillful but when the crunch comes you can deliver the goods (in my professional career I played in a 1st class team where the selection policy for a final was solely on each individual's ability to perform under pressure).

Lets cut to the chase...If you are going to dominate your sport you need to have an answer to these questions...

- Are you able to succinctly define what being mental toughness is?
- Can you learn mental toughness if you lack it?
- Can you increase your mental toughness if you already have it?

If you can...HOW DO YOU DO IT?

Asked your coach 'what % contribution does my mind make towards my success?'

The answer is usually amazingly consistent...They will always say that the mind is somewhere around '70-90% of success'.

Then you can ask yourself (or your coach) how much time are we going to dedicate to the 70-90% at training tonight?"

Chances are you will spend 100% of your time on the 10-30%

Don't you think this is crazy!!!

The fact is you can TEACH AND LEARN mental toughness. It can be easy and fun if you know what you are doing. Having a mentally tough team will win you a massive number of matches beyond your team's perceived ability level. The first step is to understand what it is...

What Exactly is Mental Toughness?

Jim Lohr in his book "*Mental Toughness for Sport*" describes mental toughness as- "*the ability to consistently perform to the top end of your ability regardless of your competitive circumstances*"

This is a good definition as to what it is but does not give much away as to how to do it. There are a few implied assumptions in this statement, (1) that winning is not a necessity to demonstrate mental toughness and (2) that it is an inner mind game and therefore within the control of the individual.

So it is important to note that it does not just apply to a pressure situation or a tight finish, but also when you are taking a good old fashioned hiding from someone with superior skills, equally you will need to demonstrate the ability to perform to the *top end of your ability* when you are clearly dominating your opposition, as it is easy in this situation to cruise.

Former LA Lakers coach Pat Riley outlines the difference between an 'excellent game' and 'game excellence'. To him to have an excellent game was a one off event where as 'game excellence' was a standard that was consistently high regardless of the situation, tough game or easy game. Game excellence was Riley's way of defining mental toughness

How then do you define the process of achieving mental toughness?

I would define it as the awareness and ability to get yourself into the best possible state of mind for the task at hand, and have the emotional strength to remain there regardless of the competitive circumstances.

Keeping all other things equal by getting in the best state of mind you are maximizing your chances of performing to the top end of your ability.

"Over 60% of 'talent' is down to mental strength"
Glenn McGrath

Mental Toughness is a learned skill. Like any skill, you cannot strengthen what you do not understand, what you cannot measure and what you do not practice.

If I asked can you walk across a plank of wood placed on the floor 4 inches wide without stepping off the side of it would you feel confident about your ability to achieve the task?

Now how would you feel if I said that we would raise the stakes and put the same plank up 10 floors above the ground straddling two tall buildings? Of course the task has exactly the same technical difficulty level but is the emotion level the same?

Hopefully not. Ideally there would be a large degree of fear and reluctance -for good reason.

How does this apply to sport?

Players who have great skill levels at training are sometimes paralyzed during pressure moments of a game. Even top players can make silly mistakes when exposed to the pressure of the situation. Even when the skill level required is as basic as walking across a narrow plank. A big pressure moment in front of a large crowd can make you feel like you are 10 stories above the ground.

While practicing putting Tiger's father would subject him to big distractions such loud noises to help him practice his focusing under distracting and stressful circumstances.

Emotional muscle is built the same way as physical muscle by repetition of exposure to increased levels of stress

What does being in a peak state give you that a bad state does not?

It is hard to explain something to someone who has never experienced it before or maybe did not recognize it when it did happen. It is easier for me to put them in a peak state than to try to explain it. For those of you who have experienced it you will know what I am talking about. For those who have not to explain it would be like the ear trying to explain sound to the eye... the best I can say is it is like being in a state of mind where you have magic powers... like you are Michael Jordan or Tiger Woods. For a lot of sportspeople the hundreds of bad days you have to endure are worth it for the few magical days where you get to feel this good in your sport.

Here are some things you can experience...

- Access to a higher level of skills and abilities
- ESP in the form of better awareness, responsiveness and anticipation
- Increased stamina, speed, power and strength
- Feeling of ease and confidence
- Calm mind
- Total focus

Better results than you could achieve without being in such a state of heightened awareness

Rather than wait and hope to find a great state of mind once or twice a season my whole goal is to teach you how to get into a great mental zone when ever you choose.

Now you understand a useable approach for what it is let us re clarify why it is important.

Why Is It Important For You To Be Mentally Tough?

Let's take a couple of contexts to demonstrate the value of mental toughness. If mental toughness is the ability to put yourself in the best possible predetermined state of mind to achieve the outcome you want then there are many times within a game where it would be useful to be able to snap into the peak state of mind for that activity.

"When you get to this stage of the tournament, mental strength is as big a factor as the physical side."

Clive Woodward on making the Rugby World Cup final.

However...

it is not just access to your abilities it is the Power to make the right Decisions

Most people are unaware of how their state of mind controls decision making. Your state of mind influences everything. Not only does your state of mind affect your automatic responses in a sporting context but also your decision making ability in *any* context. Have you ever tried to make a really important decision when you were stressed and lacking confidence? What quality of decision do you make? And let's face it... make bad decisions in any important arena and you quickly get into big trouble

"A decision made in fear is always the wrong decision" Tony Robbins

OK we all agree the mind is really important, the question is how can we harness it?

In the next issue of TT Info, Richard will let readers into the secrets of mental toughness and how to train the mind to succeed.

Veterans' Committee



By Ron Garrett, Convener of present committee.

The term of the present committee comes to an end in October. Nominations from Associations or applications from individuals will be called for in September from which the TTNZ Board will appoint the committee for the next two year period.

The role of the committee is;

To further the quality and quantity of participation and performance of veterans table tennis in New Zealand, through:

- Coordinating national veterans' events and ensuring these are supported through TTNZ.
- Interacting with TTNZ to secure funds, both commercial and grants, for the furtherment of veterans table tennis.
- Acting as advisors to TTNZ on issues surrounding veterans' participation and veterans' events.
- Coordinating the selection and National and International event participation of NZ Veterans teams in line with TTNZ handbook selection policies.
- Assisting associations in the promotion and conducting of veteran's events and social participation.
- Managing income and expenditure in line with annual budgets and reporting these to TTNZ CEO and Board in a timely manner.

If you look at "who's who" on management committees throughout NZ associations you will find that well over half are veterans. They are already busy in helping table tennis grow and have a wealth of experience. People of similar interest and ideas are needed to further advance the veteran's area of our sport.

It is my view that some associations do very little for veterans, or for that matter at the other end of the scale, some do little for juniors (and there are probably some very good reasons for that). The survey done late last year bore this out in relation to veterans.

To me, the sport is seamless from junior to veterans, let's face it if we do not have juniors we will not have veterans.

The committee will act as advisors to associations but is not set up to do the work. The base work must be done at home.

Think about it and put your name forward for the committee.

At the same time applications will be called for the selection panel for the next two years. This involves selecting the test teams to play Australia at Easter each year. This is the only task at this stage, but if interest increases in players going to Aussie Champs the selectors may have to get involved in deciding who plays in the NZ Team and who ends up in a President's team. The full panel will make the final selection, but it is expected that panel members will have responsibility for checking out availability of players within one or more age groups. Naturally this depends on makeup of final panel.

For both the committee and selection panel it is important that you have email available.

Connecting With The Press

Sunday Star-Times journalist Steve Kilgallon writes about sport week in and week out. We asked Steve how table tennis could go about boosting its public profile through the media. Here are his responses:

CHANGING THE sport to fifteen a side, the table to a field and the name of the team to the All Blacks would be the easiest way for table tennis to pick up more publicity.

Sadly, most sports in New Zealand will always labour behind the huge focus the mainstream media has on rugby union, and in particular the ABs.

So after accepting the status quo, the story becomes how you make the best case to take the remaining column inches ahead of every other sport in the queue.

At national level, it is a difficult contest when larger, often more successful sports such as netball and hockey employ full-time media liaison staff to push for space.

But at a regional or local level, the majority of newspapers will be short on full-time staff members in the sports department and often short of local interest stories to fill their sections with.

They will be well aware of the local rugby, league and cricket scenes, but chances are they won't have the time or the money to have really investigated how a sport like table tennis works in their area.

Tell them there is a good story - and if there is, you're a good chance of seeing it in the paper. The best first step for any local sports organisation is to identify which media they are likely to find success with.

It's pointless to chase a national media organisation. But your local newspaper or talk radio station will be more receptive. Nominate a senior official to establish a personal relationship with a specific journo. They will come to see you as a reliable source of news.

Then find 'angles' for them to write about.

Don't be too precious if they don't like them. It's the scattergun approach: hit them with ten well-thought out ideas and it's likely a couple will fit.

Make it easy - supply background information, contact details for everyone that could possibly have something to say on the story.

'Hang' the story on an upcoming date: if you have a Saturday event coming up and you're targeting a Sunday paper, you'll want a preview in the week before.

So get in touch the Tuesday before that so they can plan the story into their schedule. Then prove your reliability - follow up the story, provide them with results (as promptly as possible) and suggest follow up features.

If the winner has an interesting background or a story to tell, tell the journo: chances are they will never find out otherwise, as they will spend most of their work time digging on stories in bigger sports.

Once you have your foot in the door, it should get easier.



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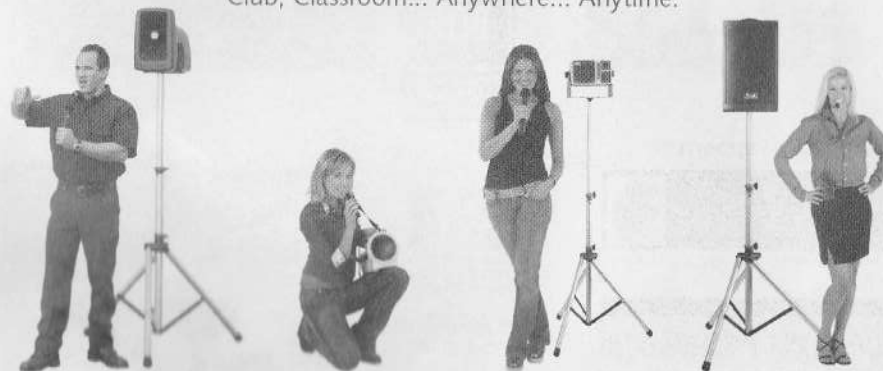
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