

Trusted Advice

Gatien, Toth & Persson
reveal their secrets

Yang Ha Eun

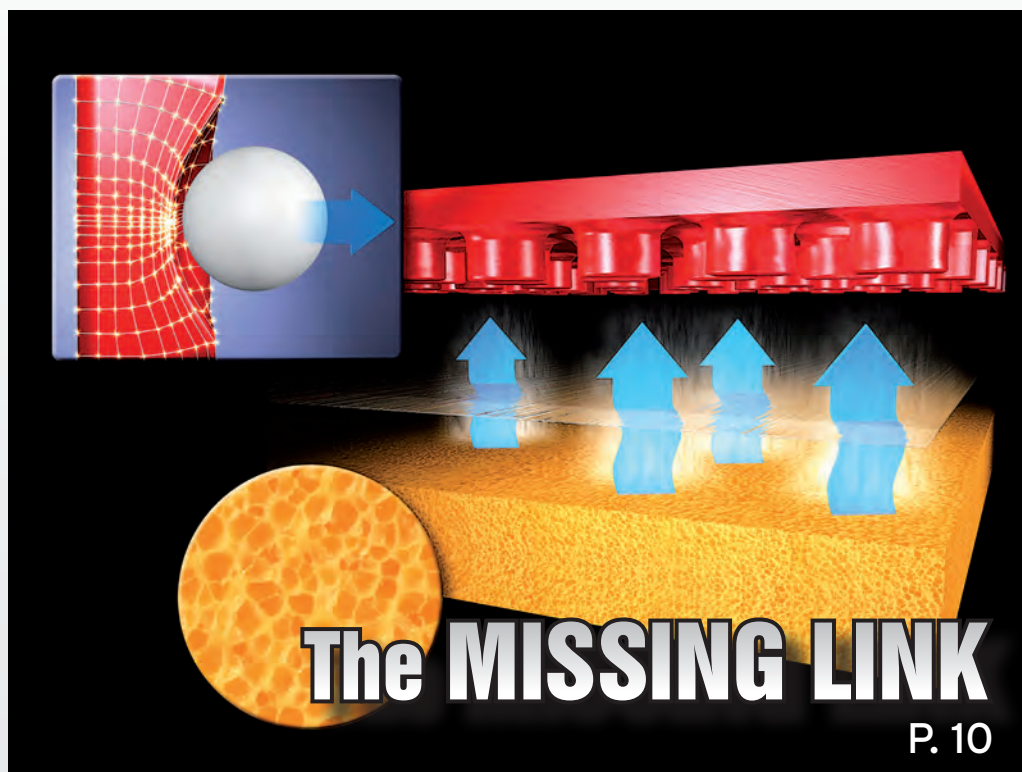
- FUTURE OLYMPIC CHAMPION?

Whatever works

THE NOBLE ART OF COACHING



Special YOG Edition



| ABOUT FUTURE SPIN

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“ I have said, from the very beginning that we (the ITTF) are very well equipped to take advantage of the Youth Olympic Games idea. Our target age 15-16 years is the correct one and will put some tremendously skilled young talents in the spotlight before they become widely known.

MIKAEL ANDERSSON

FUTURE SPIN

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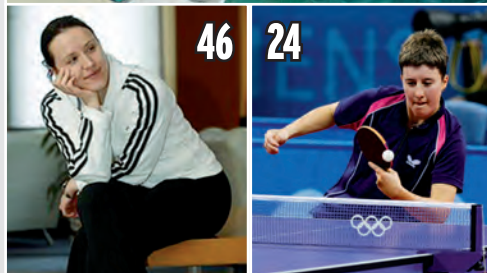
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Youth Olympic Games

Let the games begin

- The Future Beckons



BY MIKAEL ANDERSSON, DIRECTOR OF TRAINING AND EDUCATION | PHOTO ANDREA JACOBSEN

When the IOC opens the first ever Youth Olympic Games in Singapore, a new and exciting time for youth sports has arrived. I am pretty sure that we, in the good hands of an ambitious organizer, will be in for a treat served with plenty of passion and enthusiasm.

It will however, moving forward, be incredibly interesting to follow the aftermath and the evaluation of the Youth Olympic Games as a happening and future factor for the Olympic movement.

Let's aim for a strong YOG concept that captures the strength and true spirit of youth sports. Under close guidance from the IOC, National Olympic Committees should be awakened on issues related to talent identification, coaching development and the IF;s (International Sports Federations) brought onboard with strong Youth and Junior Programmes. Only then - the purpose will be fulfilled and long term success become a fact.

WITH ONLY A TWO YEAR BUILD UP PERIOD for Singapore, the factor of time was not on anybody's side leading up to the Games. The almost furious IOC rush from idea to implementation caused, at least for the ITTF, some unfortunate confusion especially related to athlete's progress and preparation. This is a field in which the IOC normally plays a strong role, using the well established Olympic Solidarity concept. I hope that strategy changes and adjustments will come into effect well in advance of the next summer sports gathering in Nanjing, China 2014.

The Power of the Olympic Rings is as we all know perhaps stronger than ever. Olympic success is for the athlete - young or old a life

changer in many ways. For the NOC's, the rings are about existence and control - for most of the international Sports Federations - like ours a life-line of recognition and funding.

To take such a powerful tool and apply, right on, to Youth Sports, is not an easy undertaking by any means. I am not necessarily talking about the level of performance or the entertainment value for spectators at the venue or in front of the TV. Instead I am convinced that youth will succeed, even exceed expectations and show a tremendously advanced skill set in all sports.

No - the major test will be to make the Games itself 100 % athlete and coach centered. In my mind - only then can the Youth Olympic Games develop into a long term success for youth sports specifically and for the Olympic movement as a whole.

Let's hope that we, all the stake-holders, together can contribute towards a strong YOG concept, or call it movement if you like. Perhaps we can stay focused on a few needs; a few potentially important changes that only can come along with the good will of the IOC.

Let's believe strongly in the importance of securing young talents from all over the globe, regardless of nationality and financial terms access to quality preparation, advanced coaching and encourage them to prepare and compete well. This is the main challenge to consider for the IOC and for the International Federations. The YOG can - if the set up - the concept - the funding falls in place become a much needed factor in spreading the wealth of Olympic sporting success.

EVENTUALLY THE SUCCESS OF THE YOG will come down to a general approach towards KEY Factors like respect for the young athletes, understanding of development aspects and finally how we are able to evaluate the concept and teach the qualities of our sport. The Olympic Rings does bring attention, pressure and expectations to the field of play and anxiety to coaches and athletes. Those, basic elements of competitive sport will and should, regardless of all the educational and cultural projects offered, always be present.

Allow me to explain my thoughts and why we, officials, professional staff and as a spectator need to show RESPECT and UNDERSTANDING for athletes »»





» and coaches and properly engage ourselves in the evaluation process of the Youth Olympic Games.

In RESPECT I have the fundamental rights to participate should an athlete and his coach achieve their goals and qualify for the Games. To recognize the need for quality coaching is also part of the ever so important coach and athlete's relation. Normally a partnership strong and alive in youth years.

TO UNDERSTAND ALL ASPECTS of development is to have insights about the reality for sports in many countries where youth sports are underfunded or not funded at all. The Youth Olympic Games movement filtered down to the national level and strongly supported by international bodies can change the world, create opportunities and make dreams more accessible for young talents.

Simple thought perhaps - yet vital in its simplicity. How do we EVALUATE success or defeat at the Youth Olympic Games level?

Can the National Olympic Committees and government sport



agencies shy away from what now is becoming a desperate hunt for Olympic Medals and instead learn to apply long term perspectives?

Can the IOC and international sporting bodies work with talent identification - coaching education and create a momentum to level the playing field in sports ?

Are we able to see the potential talent to support him and her and believe in progress from young athletes although they in Singapore will stand in the shadow of the podium takers? Only if and then can we start working seriously with the strong benefits that a Youth Olympic Games movement will bring to sports in general.

Another hopeful idea is that National Olympic Committees with the YOG concept handed to them, will become more actively engaged in talent identification and athlete development, covering all sports - not only those steeped in national tradition and success. As international experts in Table Tennis we need to TEACH the sport specifics involved in athletes and coaching development. And also do it in an understandable and motivating way. To make NOC's be-

The Theatre of Dreams, the H.I.S. World Championships in Yokohama in 2009.



“ **The Power of the Olympic Rings is as we all know perhaps stronger than ever. Olympic success is for the athlete - young or old a life changer in many ways.**

» believe in talents from sports currently, perhaps off the national radar, is a challenge as good as anything.

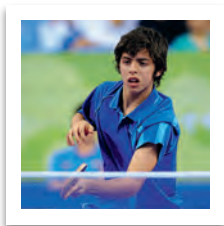
ANOTHER VERY INTERESTING FACTOR is the media, marketing aspects of the YOG. No doubt in my mind that we sooner, depending on the actual momentum of the movement, could reach a point when the commercial interests are worth a closer look. The IOC lately moving away from an all open access philosophy to a more traditional red tape media strategy does indicate that values have to be protected.

Although it is far-fetched to believe that the YOG with the current heavy investments and much lesser income will generate immediate profit, the future should look friendly also from a commercial point of view. You catch the YOUTH - you catch the future. The fact that IOC media partners have shown relatively strong willingness to broadcast from the YOG is a good indication of growing interest and the message that the local organizers have met and exceeded their sponsorship targets simply superb news.

But back to the sport of Table Tennis and a quick look at future ITTF challenges looking to be solved for us to capitalize well on the Youth Olympic Games idea.

I have said, from the very beginning that we (the ITTF) is very well equipped to take advantage of the Youth Olympic Games idea. Our target age 15-16 years is the correct one and will put some tremendously skilled young talents in the spotlight before they become widely known. Athletes that we know, I would say almost in person, following years of work with the ITTF Global Junior Programme - a very good idea when it all started back in 2002 - that now comes up as a brilliant tool for youth development.

Table Tennis was if not the first, at least one of the first sports to start with qualification events for the YOG. By last count more than eighty countries (NOC's) tried to qualify athletes in at least one of the many different events systematically laid out over a six month period by the ITTF Competition Department. We were successful in creating activity among our membership. Resources were generated and funding spent on young promising players.



Marcelo Aguirre, setting new standards in Paraguay.

FUTURE SUCCESS AND DEVELOPMENT will come down to proper adjustments and overall strategies. We (the ITTF) need to focus hard on development and to level the playing field in Table Tennis. The Youth Olympic Games can play a huge role in this important process, although we from a result point of view - the very first time likely will see traditional forces in play when the medals are about to be distributed.

Energy, quality thinking, creative minds and funding should be directed towards:

Talent Identification Projects with KEYWORDS such as Global Reach, Untapped Markets, Early Detection, Quality Guidance and Proper Management of talented athletes.

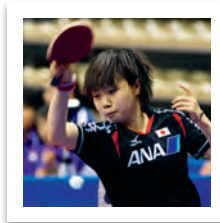
International Training Centres: Hot Spots training environments featuring quality coaching secured for young talents from all over the globe. Encourage and motivate. Reach Out and Attract.

The ITTF Global Junior Programme: Re-visit the Vision, the Event Ideas and the Methods. Good can become better.

Freedom of speech and print brought you this column. Visionary thoughts and ideas from a certain Pierre de Coubertin once brought us the Olympic Games idea.

He said: "The important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle, the essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well."

Let's take on the interesting challenge to make the Youth Olympic Games - not a smaller version carbon copy of the actual Games - but instead a unique sporting event ready to find its form and shape in the best interest of Sports - a gracefully powerful tool for world peace and harmony. ▲



Misaki Morizono continuing the trend of Asian female excellence.

| ABOUT THE AUTHOR

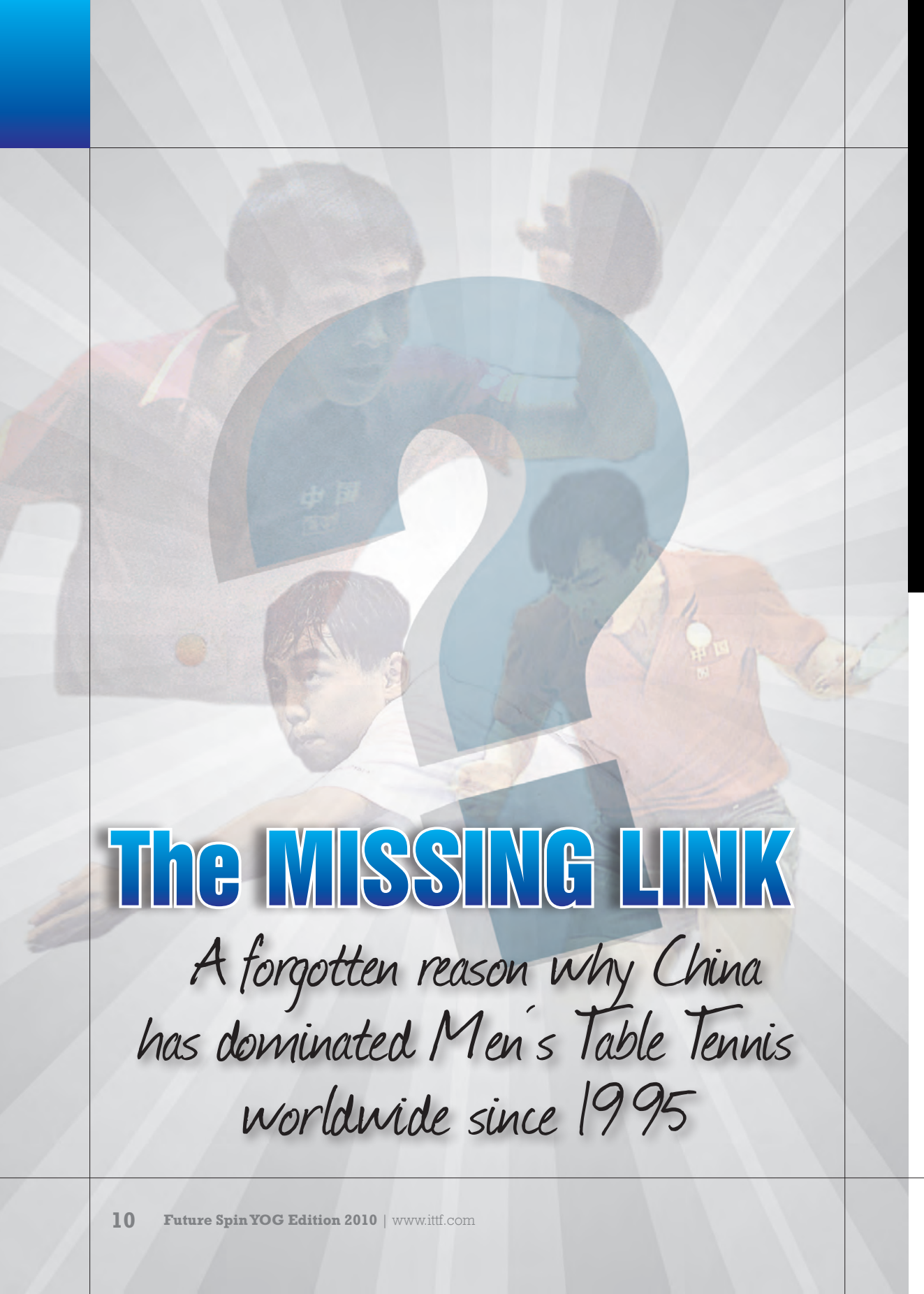
NAME: Mikael Andersson

DOES: ITTF Executive Director
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FAMILY: Madelaine 49 and three children;
Robin 21, Andrea 19 and Douglas 15.

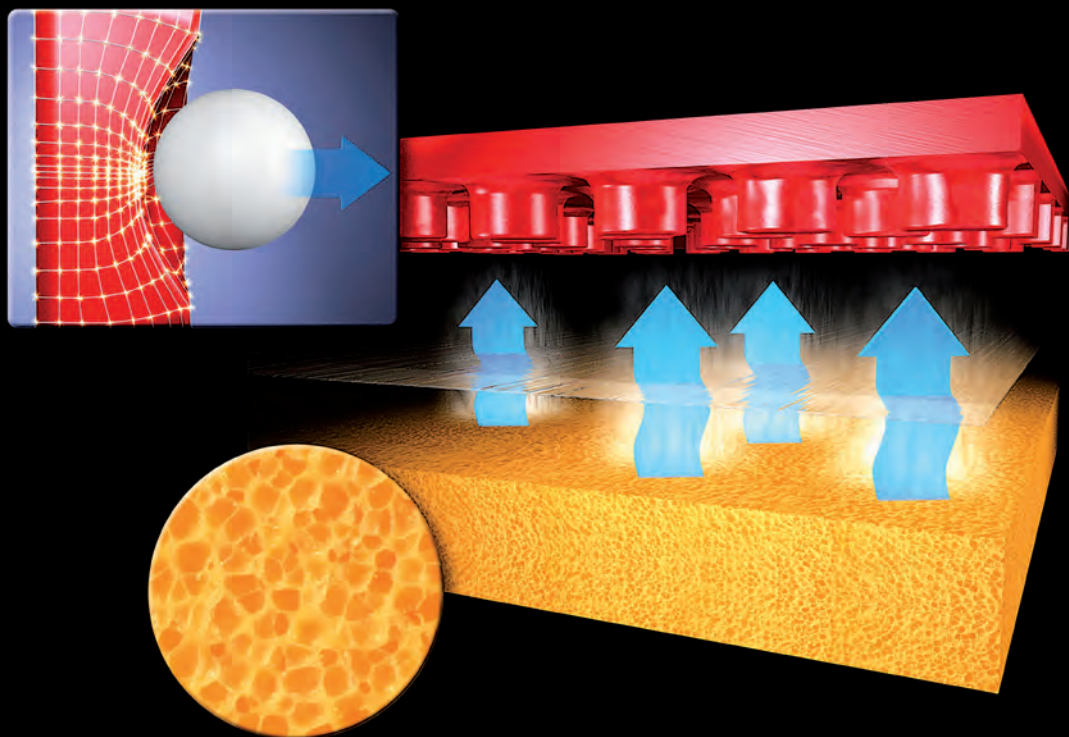


ALL TIME OLYMPIC FAVOURITE: Must be something from the Montreal 1976 Games. Berndt Johansson from Sweden winning the road race in cycling and or Anders Gärderud's gold in the 3000 m steeplechase.



The MISSING LINK

*A forgotten reason why China
has dominated Men's Table Tennis
worldwide since 1995*



BY JENS FELLKE | PHOTO & ILLUSTRATION ITTF, ESN | COLLAGE THOMAS BUZA

The current Chinese period of dominance in male table tennis is the longest ever. A decisive reason behind the outstanding results is a very smart and creative approach in the communication between players, coaches and equipment. This claims Doktor Georg Nicklas, CEO and main owner of the European rubber producers ESN - German Table Tennis Technology.

FOUR STEPS OF RUBBER DEVELOPMENT have had more impact on the way of playing table tennis than others:

- 1959 when ITTF, The International Table Tennis Association, decided that a sheet of rubber could not be thicker than 4 mm.
- 1970 when Sriver and Mark V entered the market. The two were the first sheets that were a mixture between natural and synthetic rubber, which gave the ball a much higher speed and much more spin compared to earlier sheets, which all had been made only by natural rubber.
- 1978 when Tibor Klampar invented the speed glue. The Hungarian fresh glued his rubber sheets before every match and every training, which after some time became the trend among all players. The reason was that the players felt it like if Harry Potter would have started to get involved in table tennis. The poisoned and therefore health dangerous glue solvents went through the sponge

POWER. Energy transferred through an elastic sponge and top sheet. The duration of the time when ball meets sponge in play is almost 1/1000 second, and the spin is up to 10,000 rotations/minute. It is estimated that 90 per cent of the energy created, reacts when impact is made with the ball.



THE TT-DOCTOR.

Dr Georg Nicklas, Doctor in Physics, former Bundesliga player, creator of DONIC (DOctor NICKlas) - and since the beginning of the 1990s the creator and owner of ESN - Deutsche Tischtennis Technologie GmbH, a German company that make rubbers for competition level.



» sheet and on it's way it made the sponge softer. Therefore the feeling for the ball increased dramatically.

At the same time the backside topsheet was stretched, which created more spin and more speed when hitting the ball. So by speed gluing the player got more speed and more spin and more feeling, everything at the same time!

- 2008 when the ITTF banned the speed glue.

Equipment laps behind WC titles

Looking closer on the developing of rubber and it's consequences and the influence on the result at the table is quite amazing, according to Dr Georg Nicklas:

- The smart way of using the new faster Mark V rubber was one reason why the Swede Stellan Bengtsson became Singels world champion 1971. The new speed gluing was as important when the Hungarians beat China easily and became world champions in team 1979.

- At that time China came back fast and took back the crown two years later, beating Hungary in the finals, Dr Nicklas continues.

1989 when Sweden, with all players speedgluing, beat China, with none of the players speedgluing, it was six years of Swedish and

“ - It is often said that one rubber is better than the other, but that is a matter of which shot one is talking about. **GEORG NICKLAS**

European dominance before China took back the title 1995.

- The Swedes had adopted their complete playing style to the speed glue and were brought up with it from early ages. On the contrary to the Hungarians who got the speed glue late in their careers, which made it difficult for them to change techniques.

So 1989 the Chinese had a longer way to go to win back the initiative at the table compared to 1979. But both times they used the same tools: a combination of developing styles and new material.

When they took back the title 1981 it was done by a player with traditional Chinese penholder style (Xie Saike), but who managed to hit the ball earlier after the bounce to turn the increased spin from the Hungarians into speed against them. This way the Hungarians did not get enough time to continue their long movement attacks. A total new material playing style with a “dead” anti topspin sheet on the backhand and a furious forehand top spin looping attack on the forehand (Cai Zhenhua) did make an important contribute to the Chinese gold, recapturing the table tennis throne for almost the whole 1980ties.

Two rubber strategy

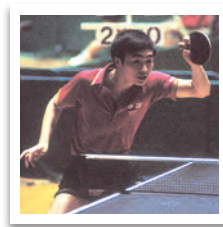
When the Chinese came back 1995 they had adopted the speed glue, but that was not the main point.

- Most important was that they introduced something totally new: the two rubber strategy. The best players like handshake style Kong Linghui used one Chinese sticky backside rubber on the forehand side and a fast Japanese backside rubber on the backhand. And Liu Guoliang was the first penholder having a rubber sheet on other side of the racket, which was also different (backside) from the one he used the most during play (pimples out). This backside rubber he used in services and attacks, to a big surprise for the opponent.

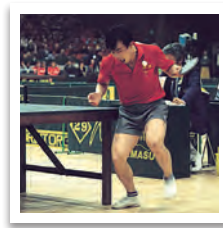
In Europe the development of playing styles has not taking any influence from the Chinese success, which is one important reason why Europe is more and more left behind, means Dr Nicklas.

Differences and advantages

What is the advantage that the Chinese get from using a Chinese backside rubber on forehand and one Japanese or German made rubber on the backhand?



XIE SAIKE. Traditional penholder and a tremendously fast player who helped China to reclaim the World Champions team title.



CAI ZHENHUA. Introduced a total new material playing style at the World Championships 1981.



| EQUIPMENT DATA

Speed of the ball in play: Up to 150 km/hour

Spin of the ball in play: Up to 10.000 rotations/minute

Duration of the time when ball meet sponge: 1/1000 second

Percentage of energy that the rubber transforms back into the ball during hitting: 90%

» - It is often said that one rubber is better than the other, but that is a matter of which shots one is talking about. The Chinese made top sheet rubbers are stickier on the surface and elastic in the base. They also have extremely hard sponge under the top sheet of the rubber. This sorts of rackets are better for shots where the speed is slow: especially at services and receives, where the control is extremely good.

From the Japanese/German made rubbers the ball rotates more forward. They have only one, very elastic character.

- Which means they are better for shots where the speed is high: especially attacks and the playing far from the table.

How do the Chinese compensate the lack of power on the fore-hand side?

- By being much better physically prepared than the Europeans, and by being skillful of turning this physical power in their hitting techniques. By this smart two rubber strategy the Chinese can control the ball over the table better than players with two Japanese or German rubbers on their rackets.

Impressive Chinese knowledge

Mr Dr Nicklas is convinced that the cooperation between player and coach and equipment is much more developed in China than in the rest of the world.

- The Chinese do not use the two rubber strategy by random. Of course they have a deep knowledge about the functions and advantages of two different rubbers. And I am sure they have very elaborated answers on questions like: What is the connection between rubbers and playing strategy? What are the consequences for the players?

- It is a lot of discussions about boosting and cheating at the moment. I am convinced that this is wrong focus. The best way of challenging China is to become as skillful as they in the developing the close linked triangle between players, coaches and equipment.

- The rest of the world must be as creative as the Chinese when it comes to equipment. We need to restore the missing link. ▲

A photograph of Mr. Adham Sharara, the ITTF President, smiling warmly and embracing a young boy. Mr. Sharara is wearing glasses and a checkered shirt. The boy is also smiling and wearing a dark blue shirt. A name tag is visible on the boy's shirt, which reads "ITTF PRESIDENT SHARARA 7001".

**FOR ALL THE
RIGHT REASONS**

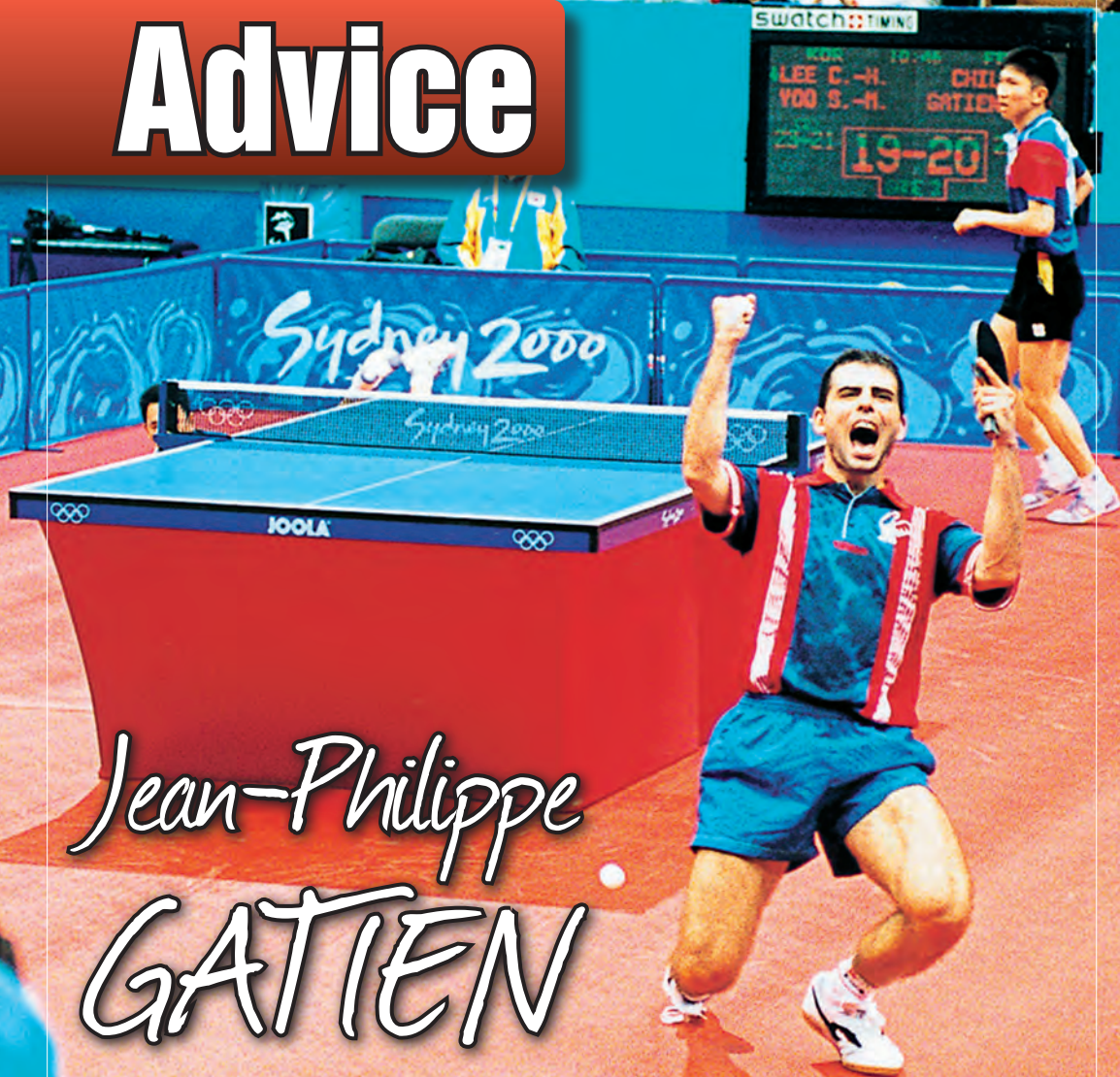
Mr. Adham Sharara from Ottawa, Canada was elected as the ITTF President in Eindhoven 1999. During his eleven year tenure, the sport of Table Tennis has experienced tremendous growth in all areas; Marketing - International recognition - Development and Youth and Junior events. The fifty seven year old ITTF President always stays in close contact with his sport and is involved for all the right reasons along side with a self motivated group of staff. ▲

PHOTO: REMY GROSS



Trusted

Advice



Jean-Philippe
GATTIEN

BY MIKAEL ANDERSSON | PHOTO ITTF

The Table Tennis Youth Olympic Games role model of choice for Singapore - Jean Philippe Gatien from France is looking forward to dive headlong into another Olympic Games.

- Overall Atmosphere he says is important for the athletes; you can clearly notice if there is a special Olympic vibe or not, I hope it all will click in Singapore as well."

As an athlete he made his Olympic debut when Table Tennis, was introduced as an Olympic Sport in Seoul 1988. Like most of the top players - little did he understand at the time about the window of opportunity just opened for our sport? Changes were however in the makings and things looked different leading up to Barcelona 1992.

- I think we quickly kind of realized the importance of the Olympic Games. Everything was affected, the players' as well as the coaches' attitude was about to change. Suddenly the true importance of long and short term preparation came into the picture. We started to establish long term goals, really working to be in prime shape when the Olympics came around.

The classy and calm French lefthander had a great ten months, starting with his Olympic Silver Medal in Barcelona 1992 and finishing with the World Championships title in Gothenburg in May 1993.

Jean Philippe Gatien would stay in the top of the Table Tennis world for another eight years and topped up a splendid career with another Olympic medal in doubles in Sydney 2000.

However, the injury bug hit the French champion in 2002. A broken foot followed by a nasty back injury severely slowed down the career and eventually forced the best French Table Tennis Player in the modern

era - into early retirement.

- I was hoping to play in Athens 2004 but it was never to be.

The Power of the Rings according to Jean Philippe Gatien;

• The Best Olympic Experience

- Barcelona 1992. Not only because I had some individual success but more due to a fantastic Olympic spirit - in the whole city and also in the Table Tennis venue. The atmosphere was great - everybody was enjoying themselves. Sydney also had some of that special feeling as well. It was great to be an athlete at both occasions.

• The Worst Olympic Experience

- I learned a hard lesson in Atlanta 1996. My preparation had been great and very detailed. You can almost say that I was even better prepared than for Barcelona 1992. We tried to cover all the important areas - physical - technical - tactical and mental preparation, even the nutritional part we covered. But sport is sport and I lost to Petr Korbel from the Czech Republic. He ended up in fourth place - so it was not that bad after all. But clearly at the time very disappointing.

And... The Important stuff

• The importance of confidence and style of play

- It's true that my style of play was to attack at every opportunity given. I tried to remain aggressive in the court - striving to reach many opening attacks with my forehand. To have a style of play that you believe in is important - it should give you confidence knowing what to do. Service is also a key element in creating a winning style. As for myself I often used fast long service to set the tone for a fast - third ball as well.



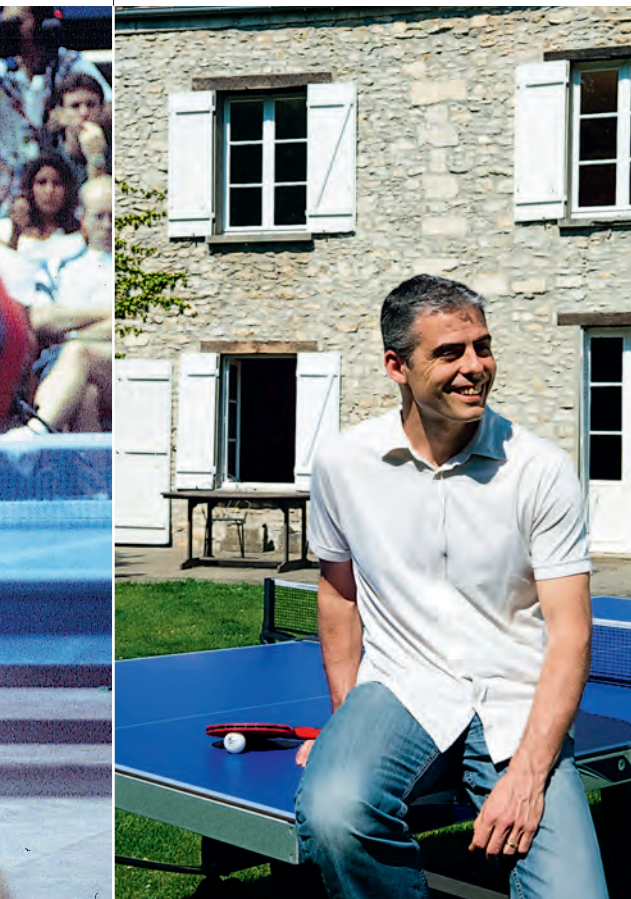


In trademark style Jean-Philippe Gatien moves to execute his favoured forehand at the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games

» • **The Mental Balancing Act**

My personality was very different from my style of play. I never used too much energy - instead I tried to relax between rallies instead of stirring things up. Many people told me that you need to hate your opponent as well. I never found that to be true. It is much better to concentrate on your own game and to play one ball at the time. Even if the score is close it's just another point to play and you need to do

the right thing in order to win. Table Tennis is all about small margins. You need to remain focused and accept to lose points. Regardless of how well you execute your shots your opponent might win the point on an edge ball or net touch. Top players are good at quickly moving on to the next point and play to their maximum on the next point, instead of dropping in energy or confidence.



• The Supporters

When I look back on my career now I realize how much support from family, friends, sponsors and supporters meant to me. My coach, Michel Gadai, was also part of that support group that made me feel a specially successful athlete. The atmosphere of support - the crowd being involved was a wonderful feeling that surely lifted my game and gave me confidence. I felt at the time that it was such a positive factor for my performance. You could feel the positive vibes inside at times - it gave me energy and confidence. Something to think about for sure for

“ **Top players are good at quickly moving on to the next point and play to their maximum on the next point, instead of dropping in energy or confidence.** JEAN-PHILIPPE GATIEN

national associations that are trying to move young players to the next level.

• Coaching

I was lucky to have great relations with the coaches I worked with. Michel Gadai gave me a solid start of my career and our relationship is still close and very much alive. To me coaching or more specifically the relation between coach and athlete is a dynamic process that will change over time. In the beginning of your career when your style of play is formed and you are growing up to become a professional athlete the coach must be allowed to dominate more with clear technical and tactical instructions. As you move along in your career the coach player relation will change. You still need support and insight - but less instructions. It is - I feel important for coaches to understand that they also need to change, especially if they work for many years with the same player - only then can they provide long lasting support for the athlete . After all it is the responsibility of the player to call his shots at the table - to make the decision.

• Final word of advice

I am looking forward to coming to Singapore and the Youth Olympic Games. I will do my best to provide support and insight to all the athletes I meet over there. See you at the training camp! ▲



The Glorious Revolution Set to Continue

BY IAN MARSHALL | PHOTO REMY GROSS

It has been the Glorious Revolution, no not the events of 1688 when King James II of England was overthrown by William of Orange, who ascended to the throne as William III; it is efforts of a decade of the ITTF Development Programme.

In a period of less than 12 years, Australia's Glenn Tepper, together with his Development staff and Continental Development Officers has directed his army of trusted coaches and experts to the four corners of the world to dig roots for the sport of table tennis to grow; from a small acorn a giant oak tree has grown.

In 1998 there was no money in the account, now there is a million dollar budget, six full-time, 50 part-time staff, over 100 courses annually, a plethora of equipment packages and strong humanitarian leaning.

Teacher

A Physical Education, Outdoor Education and Science teacher by profession, graduating at Victoria University in Melbourne in 1982, Glenn Tepper was a regular member of the Australian National team for many years, whilst also competing in the Swedish League from 1989 to 1991.

A player of stature (that is his ability with a table tennis racket, not necessarily the fact that the tall Australian in built like a fast bowler ready to inflict pain into the hearts of English cricketers) but that was not his true vocation, it lay elsewhere.

It was not in playing table tennis ad infinitum like Spain's He Zhiwen or Belgium's Jean-Michel Saive, for whom competition is like a drug. The forte of Glenn Tepper was in his teaching skills; just as Jean-Michel Saive is motivated by scampering around the court like a buzzing bee, delighted in winning a point after knocking over ten

surrounds, so Glenn Tepper is motivated by the face of a five year old child who hits the ball over the net for the first time.

Prestigious Recognition

Now, just over a decade since the first steps were made, the ITTF Development Programme leads the way; a fact acknowledged by the International Olympic Committee. The International Table Tennis Federation also received the "Best Peace Project by an International Sports Federation" award at the prestigious Peace and Sports Awards.

Assisted by his Lieutenant-in-Chief, Leandro Olvech and encouraged by the Commander-in-Chief, ITTF President Adham Sharara, Glenn Tepper has been able to put his ideas into practice; brave decisions have been made and without doubt the William Wallace "Braveheart" philosophy has borne riches.

The riches are not measured in financial terms, they are more important riches, seeing people enjoying the delights of playing sport, enjoying recreation and creating a spirit of friendship and well being.

Close Co-operation

It is that sense of friendship and co-operation that has been at the heart of the success story; within the International Table Tennis Federation structure, there has continually been a close working relationship with the ITTF Global Junior Programme and the Education and Training Department.

A message for all has been sent; talk to each other and you make progress, talk about each other and it is disaster; the former has been the policy of all involved.

Looking Ahead

Unbridled success but of course Glenn Tep-

per is not resting on his laurels.

- Until now, the major focus has been on coach education, player opportunities, women's development and umpires and referees courses, explained Glenn Tepper. The next steps are administration, and marketing courses; the latter has already been address in Africa, Latin America and Oceania whilst continuing with the philosophy of Sport for All.

It is with regards to "Sport for All" that Leandro Olvech has a role to play; he is currently completing a thesis on the topic, a work that will leave a lasting legacy for table tennis.

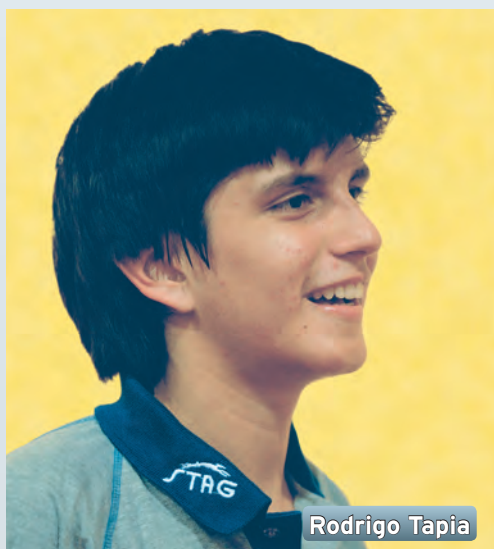
- Equally, it is planned to increase the number of ITTF Social Responsibility Programmes, explained Glenn Tepper. I envisage this aspect being one person's full time job in the future."

Projects in such countries as the earthquake devastated Haiti have proved invaluable as have those concerned with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Peace and Sport, Generations for Peace alongside earlier projects such as Tsunami Rebuilding, Ishraq Women's project in rural Egypt, Goodwill Fund Projects in Peru, Uganda, Jamaica, Balkans, Congo Democratic, Iraq and Kenya.

It has been twelve years of incredible growth; now the task is to market, to sell the ITTF Development Programme to the four corners of the world, to maintain the progress and to put table tennis at the top of the oak tree.

William of Orange brought great change; when the ITTF Development Programme started the mobile telephone company with the same name as the future English king's heritage used the phrase "The future's bright, the future's Orange."

Now, the "The future's Bright, the future's Table Tennis!" ▲



Rodrigo Tapia

The OLYMPIC Effect

BY IAN MARSHALL

There was a buzz in the air; it was the Olympic effect, the effect of a 15 year old from a small South American country qualifying for the Youth Olympic Games.

It was the efforts of Rodrigo Tapia that caused the buzz, a young man from Ecuador; a third world country with a struggling economy but a nation that opens its heart to visitors and offers a quite incredible diversity of breathtaking beauty in a small geographical area.

There is the Coastal area providing a surfer's paradise; the Sierra a geologist's dream, with the symmetrical Cotapaxi volcano being one of the highest in the world. In addition, Amazonos is the jungle, the rain forest with breathtaking scenery for those who adore wildlife, whilst a short flight takes you to Galapagos, a protected world heritage site.

High Performance Training Centre

Rodrigo Tapia is from the coastal area, from country's most populated city, Guayaquil.

It is the city where following the insistence of Jeanine Cuadros, the President of the Ecuador Table Tennis Federation, the National Olympic Committee build a High Performance Training Centre, exclusively for table tennis with the full range of dormitory and ancillary facilities.

They constructed the building over where once stood a tennis court; a quite remarkable achievement in itself. Danilo Carrera, President of Ecuador's National Olympic Committee who approved the project, was the captain of the Ecuador Tennis Team that beat America in the 1967 Davis Cup!

It was in that Centre on the evening of Tuesday 2nd February 2010 that the buzz occurred.

Singapore Bound

Freddy Almendariz, the youngest Blue Badge Umpire in the world, who will be on duty officiating at the Youth Olympic Games in Singapore, works for the Ecuador Table Tennis Federation in a variety of roles; his office being at the National Training Centre.

Late in the afternoon, as players were arriving for the daily three hour training session, news came through that Rodrigo was

in the semi-finals; the atmosphere was one of delight mixed with apprehension. Reaching the penultimate stage was a fine achievement but could he really go one or two steps further?

In order to qualify for Singapore, he had to win the tournament.

The training session underway, a beaming Freddy Almandariz was full of smiles; Freddy always smiles, always friendly, not an angry bone in his body.

"Rodrigo's in the final", he shouted. Everyone stopped, unsure, had Freddy made a mistake? There was no mistake.

Training recommenced; at every opportunity players, coaches, players kept asking "How's Rodrigo doing, any news?" There was tension in the air; then Freddy walked to the door leading from his office to the training hall.

The Ecuador National Coach at the far end of the room looked at Freddy.

"Did he lose?" he feared the worse, he was frightened to build up his hopes; he was prepared for negative news, a great effort but had Rodrigo just fallen short.

There was a pause, Freddy braced himself, he prolonged the agony but then he could hold back the smile no more.

"No!" yelled Freddy. "He won, he qualified; he won!"

"Are you sure? Really! Fantastic! Unbelievable!" were the responses, the effect on the group was immediate.

Everybody was delighted for Rodrigo. One year earlier he had lost every match in which he played at the South American Junior and Cadet Championships; he had returned to the High Performance Training Centre more determined than ever. He lives for table tennis, he worked hard, incredibly hard, he had been rewarded.

The last 30 minutes of the coaching ses-

sion saw the most motivated group of players on planet earth suddenly play at a new level, there was belief, a belief that whatever the past, whoever the opposition, if you train hard, adopt a professional approach, you can win. They had a role model.

Had the group been asked to stay and practise until 3.00am the following morning none would have objected, such was the euphoria - the buzz.

National Olympic Committee

The following day the elections for the Executive Committee of the Ecuador National Olympic Committee were held followed by a Presentation Evening.

Both events started with the same comment, the same address by Danilo Carrera, who was delighted to announce that Ecuador would be represented in the first ever Youth Olympic Games. He congratulated the President of the Ecuador Table Tennis Federation and extended his congratulations to Rodrigo Tapia.

He is the only athlete in any discipline to have qualified for the inaugural Youth Olympic Games.

At both the formal elections and at the social gathering that followed, there was a buzz; table tennis was the sport on everyone's lips, vigorous handshaking and congratulations, that caused the buzz.

Rodrigo Tapia was the new star, the local media clamoured for interviews, humbly the young man responded and the decision to replace a tennis court with a dedicated High Performance Training Centre solely for table tennis had been justified, more than justified.

Thanks to the spirit of Rodrigo Tapia and the foresight of Jeanine Cuadros table tennis was hot property in Ecuador; it was the focus of attention, it was the buzz. ▲

A Touch of...

...MAGYAR

MAGIC

Krisztina Toth

BY MIKAEL ANDERSSON | PHOTO © MARIANN DOMONKOS

At the tender age of thirty-six, the Hungarian lefthander Krisztina "Kriszti" Toth still is one of the good girls in female table tennis. An athlete well worth the admission at any major event; she's has the touch, always has, and also a well rounded game where shot making from behind is a well known "Toth - signature".

However, even better, she has an unconditional love for the game of table tennis. "You have to like to play and practice" Kriszti says. "Only then can you improve and progress as an athlete "

She would know, wouldn't she? After all,

Krisztina Toth has been a dominating force in European Table Tennis the last twenty years. Seven times European champion in team and in doubles. Twice European silver medalist in singles. On the world stage, counting major events, it has however been a tougher ride, due to the Asian, more specifically, the Chinese dominance of female table tennis.

The slick playing Hungarian made her first Olympics in Atlanta 1996 and will ,if no major injuries put a stop to the dream , make her fifth Olympic start in London 2012. "I hope to qualify by world ranking", she says.

Participation and a good performance at the Games is still the number one goal. The same goes for basically all athletes in Hungary - a country that like no others embraces the importance of the Olympic Games.

The Power of the Rings according to Krisztina Toth

• Best Olympic Experience:

I have to say Sydney. I reached the last sixteen in the singles and played very well also in the doubles with Csilla Batorfi. We had a great chance to win a medal but lost both in the semi-finals three-one against a Chinese pair and then later in a very tough bronze medal match against the Koreans, two points in the fifth game. I still remember some of the points clearly; at least two of them were very controversial and important for the outcome.

• The Worst Olympic Experience

It is hard to find a negative Olympic experience. The match in Sydney was a tough loss and very disappointing for us, especially the way it happened. One of the Korean girls came with a present after the match. I said thanks, but told her: "You should have given away the two controversial points that were ours instead". Maybe Athens wasn't the best Olympic Games. Neither the Olympic village, our Table Tennis venue, nor my own performance is worth mentioning.

And the Importance stuff...

• Goal -setting and facing the Chinese dominance in female Table Tennis:

"It's really hard to imagine yourself on the podium at for example the Olympic Games in singles - mainly because of the Chinese players. I wish I had played and practised more with them in a young age - maybe then I could have taken the final step and challenged them harder. It is much better for the young players growing up in our sport now - there are so many more opportunities available for them."

• The very first Olympic Games:

"In Atlanta 1996, it was a great experience at the time. The feeling just to walk in at the opening ceremony is something that will stay with you all your life. I always try to participate in the Opening Ceremony even if I have to play the day after. It gives you a great feeling of pride."

• National Pride:

"The Olympic Games has a special importance in Hungarian Sports. It is the big thing. Hungary always seems to do well in the Olympics and the government sees that as a very important goal for all sports. Sometimes it feels like nothing else counts but sure we have a good time and the spirit and determination is great - all sports are shown live on TV which gives you a bit of recognition. As an Olympic athlete you are treated well and we do get good support for preparations as well."

• The Importance of Coaching and a potential coaching career:

I find it very important for young players to have a coach nearby. There are so many stressful situations to sort out when you are a young player. You need to have a reliable coach that can explain and teach the game especially concerning psychological and technical issues. Sure I can imagine myself going into coaching later on. I want to remain involved in Table Tennis also beyond my playing career.

• Final word of advice:

I love the Olympics - always have; just to be a sportsman or sportswomen - to compete well and do your best and at the same time enjoy the moment. It will be great I think. ▲



Special Agent

BY MIKAEL ANDERSSON
PHOTO © MARIANN DOMONKOS

Four times Olympian and the Swedish Table Tennis Icon, 25 year touring pro, former world champion Jörgen Persson will travel to Singapore on a special assignment issued by the Swedish Olympic Committee.

“My role is to support all the Swedish athletes taking part in the Games and try to give them a good boost of self-confidence. I will make visits to training and competition venues and share my Olympic experiences as much as possible”, Persson explains over the phone from Halmstad, Sweden.

With the carrier slowly winding down, the 44 year old Swede is still getting excited when the Olympic Rings are flashed in front of his eyes. Participation in London 2012 is a distant goal, described as; “Something good to have in the back of your mind when you get up



Jörgen Persson

SO NEAR YET SO FAR.
A prized Olympic medal has always eluded Jörgen Persson; fourth place in both Sydney and Beijing.

in the morning and prepare for practice”.

Playing the sport of his choice is still fun for Persson, who recently signed a two year contract with Halmstad BTK in Sweden, meaning that he will represent his parent club for the first time since the mid eighties.

The Power of the Rings according to Persson;

• Best Olympic Experience?

Beijing is the most recent one and it was a very special moment to compete in China - a country that like no other can really celebrate our sport. I travelled there as a fifteen year old for the first time and to return in 2008 and play well was a great experience for me..

• The Worst Olympic Experience?

Atlanta 1996 - no doubt, I came in as one of the higher seeds and had won the European Championships earlier in that year. Couldn't get anything going and fell already in the group stage after taking an opening loss against Hugo Hoyama from Brazil. When I look back at Atlanta it was clear that I made some mistakes in my planning. I trained really hard for almost three months - but played very few competitions leading up; that made me unsecure on the state of my game.

• The Importance for Table Tennis

The Olympic Games is a great window of opportunity for our sport. The media attention is clearly more intense and as an athlete you are more in focus. Of course as it comes around only every fourth year it becomes such a clear, shining target. The Olympic Year is special and the preparation stage so much more important for all the top players.

• Olympic Year Planning

Basically what you are doing is to try to prepare and really peak your form. At the same time that's what all your opponents are doing as well. My thought process was always to control my own planning the best way I could and at the same time keep reminding myself that my opponents were doing their best as well. That helped me to remain sharp and focused throughout the preparation leading up to the competition.

• The final steps of preparations

Attention to detail is important. I learned over the years the importance of playing a lot of matches or match like exercises in the final period leading up to the start of the event. As a player you want to >>



“ Basically what you are doing is trying to prepare and really peak your form. At the same time, that's what all your opponents are doing as well.

JÖRGEN PERSSON

» test your skills in competition in order to find out how you stand. It helped me to play a few test tournaments before Beijing. I got the perfect feedback and my confidence grew. I think it's a great move by the ITTF to organize a training camp prior to the YOG. All the youngsters should take the opportunity to test their skills against various opponents in matches as well as in training.

• Self-Confidence and Expectations

I think you need to set your goals relatively high. Kindly ask for perfection from yourself and never worry really about your opponents other than to expect that they will be sharp and ready to go. See that as a positive challenge instead of worrying about losing. Confidence is very important. Top players are good at blocking out



A SPECIAL MOMENT.

Jörgen Persson beats Zoran Primorac in the quarter finals in Beijing 2008 and consider these Olympic Games his "best Olympic experience". So far...

negative thoughts and to be ready to perform regardless of your opponent. Time spent in the practice hall a few days prior to the start of the tournament is all about focus and perfecting your skills. Never worry about what your opponents are doing.

• **The Olympic Village**

It can be really hard to manage your time well and to stay sharp during the Olympic Games. The actual experience just to stay in the village together with so many good athletes can simply be overwhelming. Just try to find your balance and to create good training and preparation routines. Concentrate on your own stuff 100 % - easier said than done - but still crucial I find.

• **The final word of advice.**

Can I play - please?! No - well just to enjoy a unique experience that comes around only every fourth year. I find it a great goal to have, to work hard for. Good thing for the young players is that they have plenty of time to come back with new and improved efforts if Singapore doesn't turn out they way they expected. ▲

Schedule of Play

21st August

10:00 Women's Singles Preliminary Groups - Round One
10:30 Women's Singles Preliminary Groups - Round One
11:00 Men's Singles Preliminary Groups - Round One
11:30 Men's Singles Preliminary Groups - Round One
12:00 Women's Singles Preliminary Groups - Round Two
12:30 Women's Singles Preliminary Groups - Round Two
13:00 Men's Singles Preliminary Groups - Round Two
13:30 Men's Singles Preliminary Groups - Round Two
14:00 Women's Singles Preliminary Groups - Round Three
14:30 Women's Singles Preliminary Groups - Round Three
15:00 Men's Singles Preliminary Groups - Round Three
15:30 Men's Singles Preliminary Groups - Round Three
18:00 Women's Singles Second Stage Groups - Round One
18:30 Women's Singles Second Stage Groups (Consolation) - Round One
19:00 Men's Singles Second Stage Groups - Round One
19:30 Men's Singles Second Stage Groups (Consolation) - Round One

22nd August

10:00 Women's Singles Second Stage Groups - Round Two
10:30 Women's Singles Second Stage Groups (consolation) - Round Two
11:00 Men's Singles Second Stage Groups - Round Two
11:30 Men's singles Second Stage Groups (Consolation) - Round Two
12:00 Women's Singles Second Stage Groups - Round Three
12:30 Women's Singles Second Stage Groups (Consolation) - Round Three
13:00 Men's Singles Second Stage Groups - Round Three
13:30 Men's Singles Second Stage Groups (Consolation) - Round Three
17:00 Women's Singles Quarter-Finals
17:45 Women's Singles Quarter-Finals
18:30 Men's Singles Quarter-Finals
19:15 Men's Singles Quarter-Finals

23rd August

10:00 Women's Singles Semi-Final 1
10:45 Women's Singles Semi-Final 2
11:30 Men's Singles Semi-Final 1
12:15 Men's Singles Semi-Final 2
17:00 Women's Singles Bronze Medal Match
17:45 Men's Singles Bronze Medal Match
18:30 Women's Singles Final
19:15 Men's Singles Final

24th August

10:00 Team Event Preliminary Groups - Round One
11:30 Team Event Preliminary Groups - Round One
15:00 Team Event Preliminary Groups - Round Two
16:30 Team Event Preliminary Groups - Round Two
18:00 Team Event Preliminary Groups - Round Three
19:30 Team Event Preliminary Groups - Round Three

25th August

10:00 Team Event - Positions 17 to 32 - Round One
11:30 Team Event Main Draw Round One
15:00 Team Event Quarter-Finals
16:30 Team Event Positions 17 to 24
18:30 Team Event Semi-Final 1
20:00 Team Event Semi-Final 2

26th August

10:00 Team Event - Bronze Medal Match
11:30 Team Event - Final



Participants YOG

FAMILY NAME	FIRST NAME	ITTF CODE	DOB
SARAGOVI	Pablo	ARG	09-Dec-94
LEITGEB	Stefan	AUT	03-May-94
VANROSSOMME	Emilien	BEL	27-Feb-94
JOUTI	Eric	BRA	26-Apr-94
YIN	Hang	CHN	20-May-95
FUCEC	Luka	CRO	04-Feb-94
BAJGER	Ondrej	CZE	20-Feb-94
TAPIA	Rodrigo	ECU	29-Jul-94
BEDAIR	Omar	EGY	14-Apr-94
MEJIA	Luis	ESA	04-Jan-94
GAUZY	Simon	FRA	25-Oct-94
WAGNER	Florian	GER	12-Feb-94
CHIU	Chung Hei	HKG	10-Mar-94
LAKATOS	Tamas	HUN	12-Aug-95
DAS	Avik	IND	11-Feb-94
MUTTI	Leonardo	ITA	20-Jul-95
NIWA	Koki	JPN	10-Oct-94
KIM	Dong Hyun	KOR	10-Nov-94
MASSAH	Patrick	MAW	01-Feb-94
LI KAM WA	Warren	MRI	30-May-95
HAGERAATS	Koen	NED	05-May-95
ONAOLAPO	Ojo	NGR	07-Nov-94
WU	Kevin	NZL	07-Nov-94
GAVILAN	Axel	PAR	22-Oct-94
KULPA	Konrad	POL	02-Dec-94
KIM	Kwang Song	PRK	07-Jan-95
CHEW	Zhe Yu Clarence	SIN	27-Dec-95
ARSA MARAKKALA	Hasintha	SRI	18-Apr-94
SODERLUND	Hampus	SWE	14-Jan-94
SANTIWATTANATARM	Tanapol	THA	15-Jan-94
HUNG	Tzu-Hsiang	TPE	27-Jan-94
HOLIKOV	Elmurod	UZB	12-Dec-94

FAMILY NAME	FIRST NAME	ITTF CODE	DOB
LAI	Islem	ALG	23-Feb-95
PHAN	Lily	AUS	11-Mar-95
BARAVOK	Katsiaryna	BLR	23-Jan-95
KUMAHARA	Caroline	BRA	27-Jul-95
MAFUTA IVOSO	Jolie	CGO	18-Oct-94
GU	Yuting	CHN	14-Jan-95
JEGER	Mateja	CRO	13-Jan-95
MESHREF	Dina	EGY	10-Mar-94
PANG	Celine	FRA	15-Mar-95
LOVERIDGE	Alice	GBR	06-Jul-94
SOLJA	Petrissa	GER	11-Mar-94
ROSHEUVEL	Adielle	GUY	21-Dec-94
NG	Ka Yee	HKG	16-Mar-95
NAGYVARADI	Mercedes	HUN	18-May-94
BHANDARKAR	Mallika	IND	16-Mar-95
TANIOKA	Ayuka	JPN	23-Jun-94
YANG	Ha Eun	KOR	25-Feb-94
BLIZNET	Olga	MDA	17-Nov-95
EERLAND	Britt	NED	22-Feb-94
WU	Julia	NZL	10-Oct-94
XIAO	Maria	POR	19-May-94
KIM	Song I	PRK	10-Aug-94
CORDERO	Carelyn	PUR	01-Feb-94
SZOCS	Bernadette	ROU	05-Mar-95
NOSKOVA	Yana	RUS	02-Feb-94
LI	Isabelle Siyun	SIN	28-Aug-94
GALIC	Alex	SLO	29-Jul-94
GIARDI	Letizia	SMR	18-Nov-94
G. VITHANAGE	Nuwani	SRI	25-Oct-95
SAWETTABUT	Suthasini	THA	09-Dec-94
HUANG	Hsin	TPE	28-Dec-95
HSING	Ariel	USA	29-Nov-95



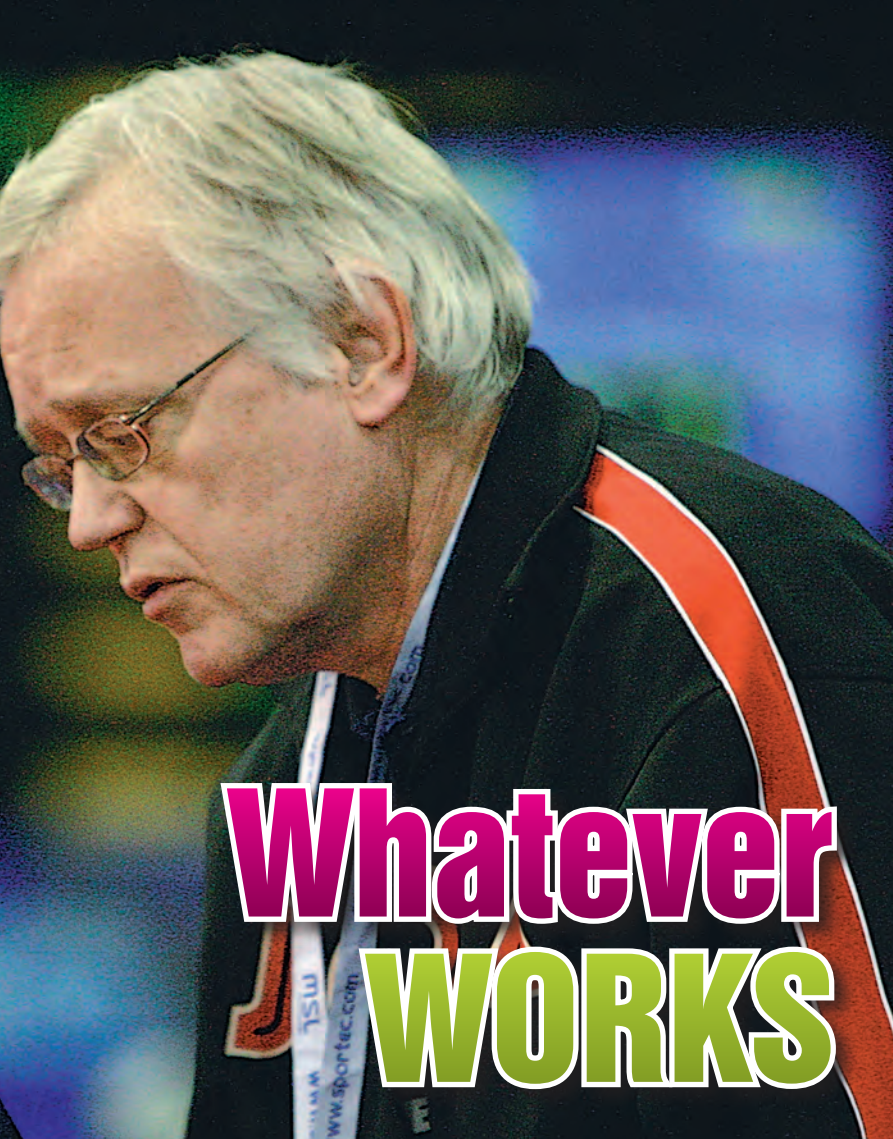


BY MIKAEL ANDERSSON
PHOTO ITTF, REMY GROSS,
RAUL CALIN & AN SUNG HO

The noble art of coaching in Table Tennis; welcome to a world of long hours - a special blend of brilliance and madness and a balancing survival style of act , financially as well as emotionally.

What was it world champion Stellan Bengtsson from Sweden - once said " In order to become a successful table tennis player you have to be a bit of an idiot" If that's true - which I sense - where does it leave us - the coaches ?

I did my coaching dues during a seven year stint as the General and Front-soldier (some called it national coach) in Danish Table Tennis 1987 to 1995. Worked hard at it; career savvy as I was; travelled well, pushed players young and older with authority. Took a couple of yearly swings at national officials that never seemed to make the proper moves and of course willingly joined the group of complaining coaches concerned about the lack of professional



**Steen Kyst Hansen
always cool, calm
and collected deli-
vering well thought
out advice.**

Whatever WORKS

drive in our sport.

So here I am. By luck and I hope helped with a little bit of skill in a new position overlooking the World of Table Tennis; the ITTF Education and Training Director. Oops... forgot the Executive abbreviation that so often will make completely sure that time is spent in the meeting rooms or in front of your computer rather than on the field of play - close to players and coaches.

The interesting part of my new job is perhaps the freedom to do less dwelling about the past - but instead allow you to look at future aspects of our sport - often in relation and harmony to a growing international sporting community - very much led by the IOC.

There is no doubt in my mind that sport is attracting more and more stake holders looking for involvement and recognition. Sponsorship and marketing aspects set aside - sport is an evolving business and the executive style of educational initiatives offered are





Europe clinches gold in the Boys' Team event at the 2008 ITTF Cadet Challenge.

» clearly growing. In all this and in all that, I fear for a profession that made my fortune - a very small person in the bigger picture; the Table Tennis Coach. What about the future for the profession and is the ITTF working actively to secure, protect and promote professional table tennis coaching.

Think about this for a second and join me in awareness or fear. Some facts completely out of our control. Others we can surely work with.

Gold - Silver and Bronze at the Olympic Games

Seems like nothing else counts these days as the vast majority of National Olympic Committees and Government sport agencies completely have forgotten the words of wisdom related to partici-

“ What was it world champion Stellan Bengtsson from Sweden once said “ In order to become a successful table tennis player, you have to be a bit of an idiot” If that’s true - which I sense - where does it leave us, the coaches?

MIKAEL ANDERSSON

pation from Pierre de Coubertin. Instead the chainsaw is out gladly chopping away at any sport deemed to stand far away from even a sniff at the podium. Not a good trend for a one country dominant sport like Table Tennis. Fewer funds made available from government to governor of sport can easily mean a few less coaches getting their working papers.

The National Associations dilemma...

The ITTF is today offering a huge number of international competitions connected to the Pro Tour and the Global Junior Circuit.

Member associations are also expected to send teams to annual world championships and arrange a successful junior program so there is a good chance to qualify for the World Junior Championships. Facing perhaps a tenfold increase in the number of potential events most national associations remain in the best scenario on the same budget level as before. Although the ITTF rules are clear and should be respected when it comes to the right to enter players internationally we need to find openings for more private or commercial investment into competitive and development style programmes. I am a great advocate for training centres - competitive preregistered commercial teams to get involved internationally. That would grow the job market for coaches and bring some life into some of our events. Doesn't have to be all of them, just to keep the "traditionals" happy - but at least some flexibility will not hurt.

Team Versus Individual

WE (the ITTF) have managed to make the Pro Tour completely based on individual events.. Team events are long gone for that level. The trend is now the same for the junior events - unless smart minds can find a way to include new team related competitions with a basket of gains and benefits in play for interested national associations. This is not a hard one to change. And watching the World Team Championships in Russia recently, I almost tremble in fear looking at very few athletes understanding how to play a team





» event. Let's go for some interesting team events with good benefits to be introduced in the Global Junior Circuit.

Private Coaching Trends

Just a guess - but pretty well rounded it is. Never have parents invested so much money in private coaching as now. The going rates for an established private coach in North America is soon closing in on the 100 dollar bill for one hour of practice. Also in other markets private coaching is growing. It is interesting to see how National associations will be able to make full use of apparent qualities in the coaching ranks and involve the private forces rather than reject.

Maybe we should again look to China and how they, even among their very best, have been able to make the private coaches seen as well. To me the coaching team aspect must be in play with more serious national associations.

Female coaches - and the crises

Things are looking bleak when it comes to active female coaches taking a stab at Pro level Table Tennis coaching. I am sure that we are not the only sport in dilemma. But it is also clear that more concrete and rewarding ideas need to do the walk from idea to operation - Very soon. A yearly award - Female coach of the Year should be instituted tomorrow.

Had a good talk with Claude Bergeret from France concerning the lack of female coaches working in table tennis; she of course brings a wealth of experience to the table and is still active in the front-line coaching very young Hopes players for the French Table Tennis

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Stay cool but that's difficult in the heat of Santo Domingo.

Federation along side with her duties as the responsible staff for international relation. When I catch Claude she is days away from departing for Korea with a very young French selection. Two weeks of training and the Korean Junior Open is on the programme. An assignment and experience very much like drinking from the fountain of youth.

- Yes I enjoy very much working with such young kids. I am the coach - the mother and even the grandmother in the same person. We had a lot of fun travelling in Sweden this winter and I am looking forward to going to Korea where I spent two month training back in the seventies during my time as an active athlete, Claude says.

Any concerns related to very few female coaches working in Table Tennis?

- Yes, sure. To have more female coaches working in our sport actively is important. First of all we see things differently to men; such a fact will add one more dimension to coaching. Then you have the emotional and should I say psychological side of things to look after especially if the group consists of younger boys and girls, Claude said.

The ITTF has in the last few years tried to address gender equity when it comes to official representation. Maybe it is time for the women's working group to look at concrete projects for female coaches. At the same time Claude says "the national associations themselves needs to step up their ambition to have female coaches involved.



» - The way I see it is that many female top players are leaving the sport abruptly as soon as their playing career is over. Most of them make some kind of planned exit and have since many years back started to look after their studies. They get a job outside our sport and are gone, Claude explains.

With the men it is different. They will keep playing professionally and when they wake up from their dream and start looking at other options - coaching is sometimes the only route available.

Maybe the key is to start recruiting and train female coaches much earlier.

- Yes believe that as well. We need to encourage female players to see the opportunities available instead of all the limitations. Very few of them see a coaching career in front of their eyes in the practice hall. Very simply because of the male domination in the profession; they don't see themselves becoming professionally involved in coaching - this is something to change. We should also not forget the group support factor. One female coach in a group of fifteen men is perhaps a common ratio when a national association calls for high level coaching courses. How fun is that?

The Pro Club Fix

The trend is the same in all sports. Top athletes are better conditioned than ever and learn to keep their international skill in trim much longer than before. The European Pro market - protected by labour laws still remains more than generous in throwing good money at older semi - retired players for a few good wins in return. Hello Russia!? At the same time the ITTF ranking list remains fairly friendly when it comes to providing good resting positions with very little international playing or performance pressure involved. To summarize - top players play fewer matches per year, are active much longer - stay in reasonable shape - less depending on coaching - and do not make the transition to become coaches in a hurry. And why would they - a top level coach hardly earns as much as an average European player. Last man in - first man out on top of that.

So, what do we do as coaches in a day and age when laptop savvy and completely wired young players is growing up to become the next generation of top athletes. These are our customers, the athletes that we should work with. Rumours of concern are, by the way, reaching us from coaching colleagues in the Far East as well. The clash between coaches and young promising players blessed with talent and spoiled from the very beginning is evident.

How do we survive - how do we progress in our profession...



Well here you have the things, neatly presented in a top ten list of things you must learn to survive - successfully. See it as your survival kit for the next ten years in our sport. The only thing missing the way I see it is **HARD WORK** in bold stamped all over the list. Here we GO... By the way. If this list for some reason doesn't work down the road. No complains allowed.

1. PASSION + VISION + ACTIVITY = SUCCESS

Great formula to start with. Easy to understand. Never outdated. For the Love of our Sport.

2. DEFINE the FUTURE

Technical - Tactical - Mental and Physical skills. What qualities will the next great player build his success on? Innovations and game changing secrets around the corner. Table Tennis is becoming a game of power. Can we defeat that - find counter tactics and styles. Write down you own coaching philosophy - put it on paper. It will help you to become a better coach.

Believe in the strength that comes from within. If you help an athlete to understand his or her style - how to score points - his



EXPERIENCE COUNTS.

Claude Bergeret from France with the new French Hope - Nolan Givone, 11 years old.

Youssef Rabie makes his points clearly to Adem Hmam, Tunisia's bright hope.



» weak and strong sides you will support his development. The understanding of what shall be done and final execution will come from within.

3. EMBRACE MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Planning, structure and time management are key elements to work with. The world is keep getting smaller. Travel increases. Training groups are much more diverse. International Training Centres more in focus.

4. BRING ON THE EXPERTS 1 - Physical conditioning

The Game of Power is here and Table Tennis is still far away from the top of the sporting lists when it comes to understanding the importance of physical conditioning. In fact I would have us ranked last of all the Olympic racket sports and on the bottom half of all the Olympic Sports. Way too much Table Time without purpose for young players.

5. BRING ON THE EXPERTS 2 - Study and understand the MENTAL side of our game

Study - Study and Study. Learn to apply structured ideas on how to think and how to become a more confident player. Package 20 years of touring experience into a 40 hours course and teach your young players step by step. It works at least on the smarter players... But you better have the expert input from a good sports psychologist.

6. ONE on ONE attention

The private coaching market is on the rise in table tennis. Best

would be of course if we could take lessons learnt in the private setting and apply to the international scene. Overall we need to learn to work one on one with the athletes much more - especially important in the earlier stages of their pro carrier. The noble art of Individualization - training your athletes not as a group - but as individuals.

7. RELATIONSHIP - Coach versus Players

As coaches we need to understand that the coach vs. player relationship will change over time moving from strict one way teaching to more support and a none decision making coaching style.. A hard thing to do mind you...Maybe that's why my Swede knows best approach failed with some of my Danish players when the heat was on..?

8. FIGHT MEDIOCRACY

Push the limits. Set higher goals. Talk about the opportunities. Sport is about GOAL setting - METHODS and EVALUATION in never ending cycle. In many parts of the emerging table tennis world coaches fail already at the word GO. We are difference makers. Understand that.

9. UNDERSTAND GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

The world of Table Tennis is filled with untapped markets. Talents are everywhere. Top coaches of tomorrow - especially those drawn to the growing numbers of international training centres needs to envision top players coming from all over the world - not only from traditional strong holds like Europe and Asia. Can be a tough thinking process this one..? But the more we learn - the more we see - wisdom and smartness will prevail.

10. WHATEVER WORKS - (For adults only)

A true Table Tennis coach understands the importance of winning. A slap in the face like Stellan Bengtsson used on Jörgen Persson in Chiba 1991 seemed like a panic move at the time. But hey - it worked and Jörgen managed to crawl out of his hole to later on win the gold medal in singles. I have seen a young Alexei Smirnov getting the water bottle treatment between games. As everything else in coaching - flexibility skills and the abilities to ride with the wave is what counts when the score is to be settled. But as always; important to remember that you are RIGHT and everybody else is WRONG. Why make Table Tennis coaching more complicated than that? Happy life out there in trenches! ▲

Family Matters



Yang Ha Eun

BY MIKAEL ANDERSSON
PHOTO AN SUNG HO

After many turns and twists the ITTF Cadet Challenge training camp in Cape Town, South Africa finally started. The year was 2007 and in the Asian team you could find the thirteen year old Korean cadet girl Yang Ha Eun.

If I remember correctly she travelled alone to South Africa. Have to admit that I noticed very little talent in the tiny Korean girl in the first two days of training. Basically, she went quietly to the table she was far from very stylish or flashy. Things would however quickly change. She won the practice tournament that we held on day three and later went on to have an impressive run in the singles event finishing third. And even better news was - a tremendous personality revealed once the initial anxiety went out of the window. She was even voted the best team mate in the whole competition!

It's hard to believe that this was only three years ago. Now, when I meet her again during the Korean Junior Open in Pohang, I find myself engaging an an interview with a young but determined pro-

professional on her way to some kind of stardom in our sport. There are a couple of things that makes Yang Ha Eun interesting for a wider audience of table tennis fans. Personality - skill - determination and work ethic just to mention a few; she is also a potential barrier breaker for female table tennis - simply one of the few athletes that could manage to beat a few Chinese players and win a big title or two. Because I believe she is a winner - what and where is hard to tell - but as the conversation goes on we soon found ourselves discussing the upcoming Singapore Youth Olympic Games; one of these timely opportunities that appear from time to time.

“ - First of all I need to be more aggressive and attack more. From the beginning I have always been good at keeping the ball on the table and using the mistakes from my opponent; this now has to change.

YANG HA EUN

BUT LET'S TAKE IT ALL from the very beginning and also bring in another factor that makes the 16 year old Korean fairly unique. Yang Ha Eun has by her side her mother as the coach and mentor. You would think that any teenager of the same age would rebel against such a situation - but instead it is the opposite scenario. Yang likes to have her mother courtside.

- I still listen to what she tells me and in fact I prefer to have her around. She understands my emotional needs and she knows my game, Yang explains.

The mother in question, forty-five year old Kim In Soon (Yang carries the family name of her father) never reached the Korean National Team - but it was a close call.

- I was playing some international opens for the Korean Junior National Team but was never had the opportunity to take my game one step further. I stopped my active playing career in 1988 and gave birth to my daughter 1994. When she was six years old we started to go to the primary school practice together and there is when it all started. It was kind of natural process. Yang showed at an early age that she had the skill and talent to pursue table tennis.

HOME FOR MOTHER AND HER DAUGHTER is the city of Gunpo - just outside Seoul. Mother takes care of the High school team along side her assignment as the Junior Girls' National Team Coach, whilst the daughter flip flops between rare appearances in the local club, the Korean National Team training Centre and representation for Korean Air Table Tennis club - one of five teams in the highest pro-league in Korea.





COACH AND MENTOR.

- I still listen to what she tells me and in fact I prefer to have her around. She understands my emotional needs and she knows my game, Yang says about the fact that her mother is also her coach.

» Less daily contact on the table - but still Table Tennis is on the agenda pretty much from dawn to dusk in the family.

- Well, father is the manager, the driver and we can allow him to run the video camera as well", Kim says. "However, for Table Tennis talks we have no rules at home, so there is lot of discussion about backhand and forehand around the dinner table. For the moment I am trying to tell Yang to relax more when she is playing important matches; to be cool and composed."

So is the daughter a good listener?

- Yes I think I am; she knows my game from the very beginning and can also give me the proper advice. You see many Korean coaches do not know their players emotional and psychological side. This makes our relationship special and fairly effective." Yang Ha Eun says.

AND A SPECIAL, THINK ALIKE RELATIONSHIP it is. My quick blind test, presented to my two guests, on the four parameters of Table Tennis - The Technique - The Tactical skills , Physical conditioning and the mental strength actually comes out with exactly the same score in a scale from 1 (weak side) to 5 (world junior class).

Way too many twos and threes for my taste - but still the understanding is there.

- First of all I need to be more aggressive and attack more, Yang tells us. From the beginning I have always been good at keeping the ball on table and using the mistakes from my opponent; this now has to change, she advises.

Time flies and when I turn off my Iphone recorder we have talked for more than one and half hour covering a broad number of topics. One thing is a clear; this is a focused, result oriented young girl ready to go to battle with anyone on top of the table tennis world - the Chinese team included.

- We are of course spending time watching the Chinese players. Each time we play one of them, we try to win but it is hard", says the family coach. They are so well educated technically and tactically."

Fresh from the Asian Junior Championships with a loss in the quarter-finals Yang knows that she needs to be better to have a chance in the upcoming Youth Olympics where a certain Gu Yuting will dress in the dominant red colors.

- I played her in the World versus China Challenge one month ago and lost three games to one but I also had an 8-4 lead in the fourth so it could have been closer than that.

So... do we have a "believer" with the right balance of respect and confidence? Perfect situation I say. Gu now knows that Yang can score points against her and the pressure is all on her?

Hesitation and discussion to follow but after a while we found the common ground. It's all about confidence - to believe in yourself and your capacity. Easy to say for a guy never been there - but I play my final card and ramble on about the Swedish team. I stress their ability to play the percentages at all time and that many Chinese players instantly dislike life when you challenge them mentally early in the matches. Even pulled out my famous $X+Y+Z = \text{Victory}$ formula from the coaching bag.

- This one I do not understand, Yang says slightly confused over my scribbling on a piece of paper. I will try my best to do a good result and gain confidence; the future is all about trying hard on the ITTF Pro Tour and at international events; I get tired sometimes but it is mostly fun doing this.

Well said. I am pretty confident that my point was made as well - just play your game girl and you will be more than alright. In little over a month we will know the results from the very first Youth Olympic Games.

Regardless off the outcome - I know and you know what we are looking for. The bet is on. ▲

Table Tennis – a lesson for life



| FACTS

NAME: Sandra Paovic

BORN: 15.4.1983 in
Vukovar, Croatia

FAMILY: Boyfriend
Marc, mother Marija and
father Radovan, who still
live in Vukovar.

BY IAN MARSHALL,
PHOTO: IRENEUSZ KANABRODZKI & PRIVATE

Hard work, a rich source of energy and a fighting spirit brought Sandra Paovic, the Croatian Table Tennis athlete, to the top of the Table Tennis world.

She competed in the Beijing Olympic Games and reached no.49 on the ITTF World Ranking List. Unfortunately, one morning late in January 2009, life changed in the most dramatic manner. A car accident en route to a Paris airport resulted in an injured spinal cord and forced a difficult operation followed by a lengthy rehabilitation period at a clinic in Switzerland.

Over the last sixteen months she has been a source of inspiration to many people around her - athletes, coaches and ITTF officials who had the pleasure to meet her, have been humbled. Every day has been hard work. Every day she has practised what we take for granted, she has had to learn to walk again. Every day has been an emotional roller coaster ride.

We are proud to send a message from an athlete who had her future radically changed; it is a message to young athletes with their future very much ahead. The spirit of sport - what you do - what you learn - how you play and perform - creates values in life

ADHAM SHARARA ABOUT SANDRA PAOVIC

"The table tennis community and the citizens of Croatia did what they could to help Sandra get through her recovery. This was done mostly through providing moral and financial support. But the recovery itself comes from two main sources according to me. First, from Sandra's mind, and second from Sandra's partner Marc.

All the best state-of-the-art medical facilities and medical experts are of course very necessary. Without them a chance of rehabilitation would be lost; but even with all this expertise, nothing would be possible without the inner spirit that ignites Sandra's passion for life.

But every once in a while a feeling of frustration and desperation may set in, this is where Marc comes in. He provides the necessary support and love that pulls back Sandra on the right recovery track. The

combination of this furious passion with a measured and steady support makes everything possible.

I give you two snap-shots. The first in August 2009 at the Notwill Clinic near Zurich. Sandra full of smiles talks to me about her experience and shows me that she can stand up on her own. Fast forward to the second snap-shot in December of the same year after Christmas in Zagreb. Sandra is sitting watching the benefit show in her honour, then, witnessed by the 7,000 spectators, gets up and walks to the stage, with crutches as her only support, and makes a 4 minute speech standing the entire time, then walks back to her chair. Not a dry eye in the house.

I don't know what she said, all I know is that I learnt a new lesson about passion and determination." ADHAM SHARARA



that can carry you beyond the expected.

"Table Tennis and Sport has always been my biggest Love and Priority Number One. It taught me how to fight, how to survive, how to win and how to lose. It showed me how to respect my team ma-

tes, my opponents and how to compete in a fair way. The lessons learned from Table Tennis have made me strong and face the challenges following my accident - Table Tennis was my school in life".

SANDRA PAOVIC, JULY 2010. ▲

PHOTO AN SUNG HO



**Aaron Wilson Junior - Trinidad & Tobago - Born 1998.
Dreaming about Nanjing - YOG 2014**



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