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SPECIAL EDITION ITTF JUNIOR CIRCUIT FINALS • CADET CHALLENGE • TOKYO 2009



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KOKI NIWA

Reaching out for Olympic honours



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Welcome to Tokyo and ITTF WJCC/CC

It is my great pleasure to have this grand event, the 2009 ITTF Cadet Challenge & Junior Circuit Finals held in Tokyo. On behalf of the citizens of Tokyo, I would like to extend a hearty welcome to all the players and executives who have gathered here from around the world.

I understand that this competition, which aims to advance and increase the popularity of table tennis among young people from middle school to high school age worldwide, has been held every year since the first event in Hungary in 2002. The Cadet Challenge, in which selected athletes under 15-years-old from regions across the globe form teams for competition between continents, will provide a prime opportunity for international exchange among the young players.

I AM ALSO EXTREMELY HAPPY to see that the Junior Circuit Finals will also be held at the same time for competition among players ages 18 and under. I am sure that this will present a highly significant platform for mutual growth among middle and high school students who are striving to be the top players of

the next generation. I look forward to seeing all the players put on their best performance through aggressive plays, using all of the skills they have acquired through arduous practice.

THE PROGRAM FOR the players has also scheduled time for sightseeing in Tokyo including the Tokyo Metropolitan Government building. I hope that this will not only allow friendship that knows no national borders to flourish, but will also cultivate fans of Tokyo by providing an opportunity to see and feel the diverse attractions Tokyo has to offer.

In closing, may I express my most sincere appreciation to everyone who has contributed their efforts to make this event possible and extend my very best wishes for the tournament's success.



Mr. Shintaro Ishihara,
Governor of Tokyo.

On behalf of Japan Table Tennis Association, it is my great pleasure to welcome all players and officials for the 2009 ITTF Cadet Challenge & Junior Circuit Finals in Tokyo.

We are so proud of having cadet and junior players joining this final tournament by winning at high level continental qualification tournaments and events on the ITTF Junior Circuit. I hope every player can reach new heights and achieve distinguished results with spectators in the venue of Tokyo.

THIS EVENT IS A PLEASANT OCCASION for young people to enjoy staying in Tokyo, make new overseas friends and share a memorable experience. I wish everyone will gain valuable experience in this event, and become better prepared for future

international competitions.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to express my sincere thanks to International Table Tennis Federation, Tokyo Metropolitan Sports & Culture Project, Tokyo Table Tennis Federation, The Tokyo Club, Joola, Butterfly, Stag, various sponsors and all staff for their support and assistance with hoping fruitful success of this event.



Mr. Takeo Obayashi,
President of Japan
Table Tennis Association.

I would like to extend a hearty welcome to all the top young players, coaches and officials who have come from all different continents of the world to the capital city Tokyo.

It is a great honour for us to host the prestigious events "2009 ITTF Cadet Challenge & ITTF Junior Circuit Finals in Tokyo" at Tokyo Gymnasium as Mecca of Table Tennis with many excellent young players who are promising and specially selected.

WE HAVE HELD THE World Table Tennis Championships twice in Tokyo, 1956 and 1983. By making use this experience, we would like to make this tournament the big stage for young players taking off for the brilliant future.

I place all my expectations on players who I know will make excellent trained "power", "speed", and "technique" in order to

capture the heart of many table tennis fans. It is important that all involved such as competitors and spectators unite during this intense moment to share equally in the excitement, emotion and challenges of the games.

Finally, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude for the guidance and support of the Japan Table Tennis Association, Tokyo Metropolitan Sports & Culture Project and the sponsors.



Mr. Susumu Michigami,
President, Tokyo
Table Tennis Federation.

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Tony Yue, ITTF Junior Commission Chairman Welcome to the beautiful city of Tokyo

The ITTF Cadet Challenge and Junior Circuit Finals are returning to Asia and this time, the beautiful city of Tokyo will play host to these two wonderful events. On this occasion, it is my honor as Chairman of the Junior Commission, to extend my warm and sincere welcome to all of you attending these events.

2009 CADET CHALLENGE will not only feature the best under-15 players from each Continent but it will also be the first qualifying event of the 2010 Youth Olympic Games. This will guarantee top level of play and excitement. This year, our Junior Circuit has had the most events since its inception by holding more than 20 events around the world. The future stars of table tennis are here to be discovered.

Japan Table Tennis Association has always been a good host organizing many



Tony Yue, Chairman of the ITTF Junior Commission, during the draw at this year's Hong Kong Junior Open. Photo: Kevin Lee.

international table tennis events. I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude and appreciation to the Organizing Committee and the many

volunteers who have contributed to the successful holding of the event. Let the games begin!

Petra Sörling, ITTF Executive Vice-President So much more than an ordinary Table Tennis tournament

In 2007 I had the privilege, to go to Cape Town, South Africa, for the ITTF Cadet Challenge and Junior Circuit Finals. From the first training camp until the last final I followed the European team and together with the kids I really got the feeling that this was much more than an ordinary table tennis tournament.

The year after, 2008, I saw the competition from the organizer's point of view, hosting the tournament in Helsingborg,

Sweden. It is a big event, young people and lots of volunteers make this special atmosphere. The Cadet Challenge was introduced already in 2002 with this special "continental" concept and this year in Tokyo will be the 8th edition. It is also the first qualification tournament for Youth Olympics 2010. In Tokyo Gymnasium this year our youngsters might play in the same venue as where they might dream of playing during the Olympic Games 2016.



Petra Sörling, ITTF Ex. Vice-President.



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Reaching out for OLYMPIC honours

Koki Niwa won last year's Junior Circuit Finals in outstanding manner. At the age of 14, he was the youngest ever winner of this event for players under 18 by far. Although dominating the older opponents, the promising left hander makes a step back for this year's event in Tokyo. He will play in the Cadet events again, the age group where he still belongs to. While the decision may seem bizarre at first sight, it is not with regard to a big event in 2010.

TEXT: MARIUS WIDMER, PHOTO: REMY GROS

The first Olympic Games for under 16's will be staged in 2010. In the blooming metropolis Singapore, table tennis players born in 1994 and 1995 and from all continents are given the chance to receive Olympic honours at a very young age already. The Boys' and Girls' Singles events at the ITTF Cadet Challenge 2009 in Tokyo acts as the first qualification tournament for the Youth Olympic Games. In other words the 2002 inaugurated Cadet Challenge has become even more important than before, and with that in mind, Koki Niwa's "downgrade", from Junior Circuit Finals winner to Cadet Challenge contender is not a clumsy faux pas but a reasonable decision by the officials of the Japanese Table Tennis Association.

Expectations and pressure raise Niwa, one of the biggest prodigies in the table tennis world, has ambitious expectations. "Of course I would like to win, nothing else!" This goal is realistic because Koki Niwa has shown his talent already

on several occasions at international table tennis events. At the H.I.S. 2009 World Championships on home soil, the teenager reached the second round of the main draw and was only stopped by Germany's Dimitrij Ovtcharov. "I am very happy and satisfied with what I did in Yokohama", he says about the World Championships. "I have won some matches which gave me confidence."

The good results at the World Championships in Yokohama 2009 and Helsingborg, Sweden 2008 on the occasion of the Junior Circuit Finals had one thing in common; Koki Niwa played against older opponents and he was the surprising youngster fooling his adversaries for the amazement and enchantment of an astonished audience. This time in Tokyo, everything is different. Koki Niwa is the star. The people expect him to reach at least the semi-finals, synonymous with the early qualification for the 2010 Youth Olympic Games in Singapore. His opponents will be of the same age and he will not play as an underdog but as the favou-

rite. The difference of a champion and a talent is the way they play under pressure. Therefore table tennis experts will have a close eye on Koki Niwa to see how strong he mentally is.

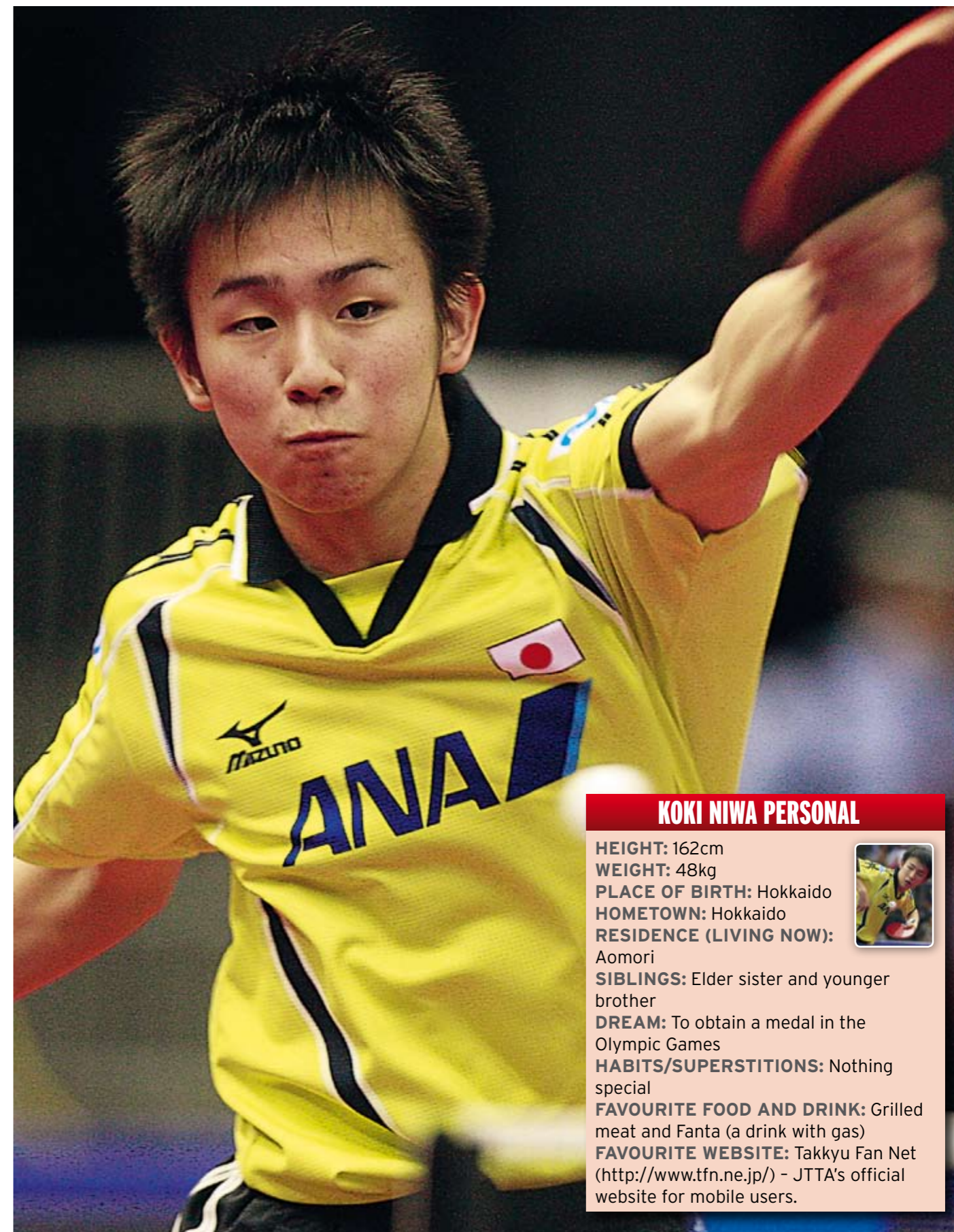
Seven years and seven hours

Asked about his recent improvements, Koki Niwa answers briefly: "Service and backhand". The 14 year old, who enjoys games on his mobile phone occasionally, started to play seven years ago. "My father was playing table tennis and took me to the practice when I was seven years old." Today he is almost a table tennis professional. On a normal day, there are practice sessions from 08:30 to 11:30 and from 14:30 to 18:30, seven hours thus. In the evening Niwa can go practicing too, but this is voluntary. "I enjoy matches extremely, on the other hand I do not enjoy physical training such as running so much", he confesses. Other educations are only second priority. Asked about how good it works to link school and training, Koki Niwa answered: "So so, whenever I can go to school I will have private lessons."

Big names on the roll of honour

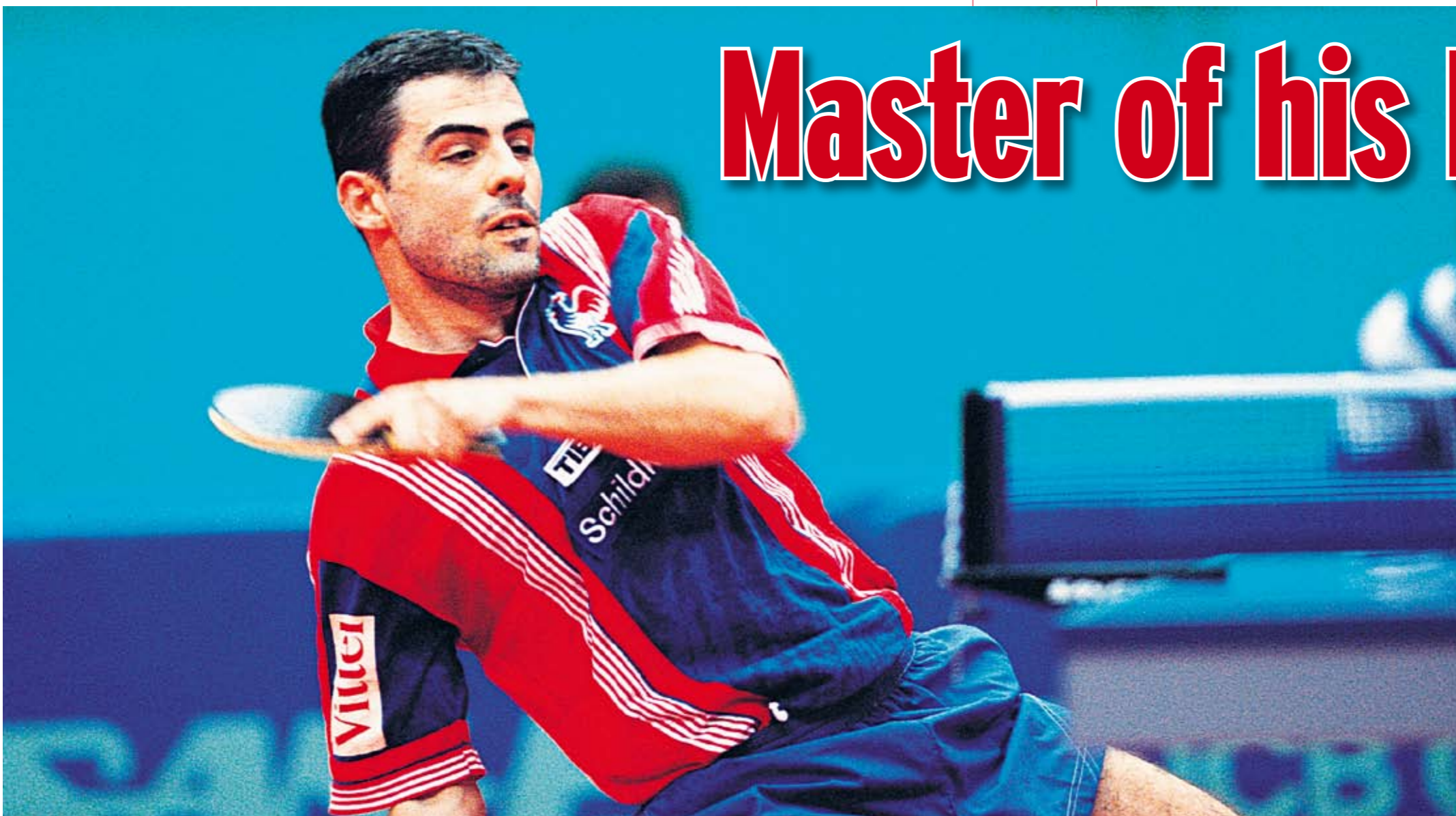
If Koki Niwa prevails in the Cadet Boys' Singles in the Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium, he would be the first player in the history of the ITTF Junior Programme who wins both, the Cadet Challenge and the Junior Circuit Finals. Being on the list of the Cadet winners is almost a guarantee for a bright future in the table tennis world. China's Xu Xin and Zhang Jike have won this tournament as well as current world number two Ma Long. The only Japanese winner of the event played since 2002 was Kenta Matsudaira in 2005, another promising player from the Land of the Rising Sun. On the roll of honour of the Junior Circuit Finals one finds the names of Qiu Yike, Seiya Kishikawa and Jun Mizutani. Will Niwa also win the Cadet Challenge? Will the youngest ever Junior Circuit Finals winner write a new chapter in the table tennis history books? For sure he is capable of doing it but the other associations will line up their very best players too in order to grab a spot in the illustrious starting field of the first Youth Olympic Games. □

"I am very happy and satisfied with what I did in Yokohama; I did win some matches matches which gave me confidence."



KOKI NIWA PERSONAL

HEIGHT: 162cm
WEIGHT: 48kg
PLACE OF BIRTH: Hokkaido
HOMETOWN: Hokkaido
RESIDENCE (LIVING NOW): Aomori
SIBLINGS: Elder sister and younger brother
DREAM: To obtain a medal in the Olympic Games
HABITS/SUPERSTITIONS: Nothing special
FAVOURITE FOOD AND DRINK: Grilled meat and Fanta (a drink with gas)
FAVOURITE WEBSITE: Takkyu Fan Net (<http://www.tfn.ne.jp/>) - JTJA's official website for mobile users.



Master of his Domain

We are in the French town of Schiltigheim. It is late August, a bright and sunny day that signals yet another summer slowly sliding away.

It is here in Schiltigheim, part of the greater Strasbourg area, that the increasingly popular Euro Mini-Championships event has found a home since the official start in 2005. Most hopefuls of European table tennis pass through this competition and results are showing that if you do well here, the chances are high that you will continue to do so, at least for another four to five years.

TEXT: MIKAEL ANDERSSON, PHOTO: D.R. AND NOBORU KONNO

that is the beauty with a coach's mind that still can remember crucial moments from the battle fields as though it happened yesterday.

It was at the European Youth Championships in Louvain Le Neuve, Belgium. The year was 1986 and competition among European players and active high profile coaches was at an all time high. This was the start of what was to be a golden era for male European table tennis. Jean-Michel Saive, the home favourite was backed by legendary coach Milan Stencel, Jean-Philippe Gatien had trusted his coaching advice in Michel Gadal.

The Germans with Steffen Fetzner and all time hero Jörg Roskopf were at the start of splendid careers as were Zoran Primorac, Ilja Lupulesku and the Swedes with the brilliant lefthander Thomas Von Scheele at the helm.

Selected by the head coach for the Swedish Junior Team, Anders Thunström, I was assistant coach responsible for the Swedish Junior Girls' team and had little to do with anything concerning the boys.

HOWEVER, WITH A SHORTAGE of coaches to cover a successful boys' singles run, I was thrown into the heat for the round of 16 battle between Peter Karlsson and Jean-Philippe Gatien. And what a match that was!

Intense, close and played to a high level. Karlsson, who had experienced very little if any playing time in the team event, did what he has always done in his career; he fought for every single point over the five games, just to come up short by two points after letting a late fifth game lead slip away to the favoured Gatien.

Disappointment of course from a young Swedish coach and his player but at the same time respect for a player that had something extra; that always played to his strength, mastered his domain better than most of his competitors. It was weapons like a lightning fast footwork, innovative service schemes and a relentless forehand attack that paved the way for his success on the international scene.

Little did we know at the time in 1986 what was to become of this young man? But now we know; he was "French Table Tennis" for a period of al-



The athletes buzzing in all courts are born in 1998 and 1997. Close to forty countries and a number of French regions have sent players to compete over three intense days.

It's Sunday and the staged quarter-finals are about to begin. Some 300 eager young boys and girls are, after numerous group stages and matches, reduced to the final eight in each category.

"Can we hold on with the interview for a while? I just want to see these matches. The level is pretty high I think", says my neighbour in the stands; the now 40 year old, four time Olympian and Olympic silver medallist, Men's Singles World champion in 1993 and probably the best ever French table tennis player, Monsieur Jean-Philippe Gatien.

He starts watching and I am thinking, trying to sort of rewind the tape to the time when I first saw him play. In fact it doesn't take long at all and



Jean-Philippe Gatien anno 2009. Still active in table tennis, now engaged by the french manufacturer Cornilleau working with talent detection.

well, maximum concentration comes along so easy.”

Table tennis came into the Olympics 1988 in Seoul, Korea. It would however take another four years for the top players at the time to realize the true power of the Olympic rings. In Barcelona things were different and much sharper from all minds and hands involved. It was full steam ahead to win the Olympic title.

Jean-Philippe Gatien remembers: “Oh yes, I participated in Seoul and it was a great experience and all that. But it didn’t take long for all of us to realize 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. I think we all realized that the Olympic Games was and of course still is, such a huge scene to the outside sporting world.”

THE OLYMPIC PARTICIPATION count for Gatien stopped at four Games and the medal count at two; silver in Barcelona and bronze in the Men’s Doubles in Sydney 2000 together with Patrick Chila.

“I was hoping to play in Athens 2004 but it was never to be. Trouble started when I broke my foot in 2002 and a complicated recovery from that injury. I tried to come back but other injuries slowed me down; that was that, my back didn’t feel good for a long time and when the fire was not there anymore it was time to retire from international play.”

Following international retirement, club duties for Levallois in the French League and on the European club scene were kept alive for another season or two. Today, the playing career is history but table tennis still comes around in his professional life on a daily basis.

“I have been engaged by the French manufacturing company Cornilleau since 2004, working in the fields of international development and talent detection. We are selling to some fifty countries for the moment and would like to have a larger piece of the market pie. On top of that I am also trying to scout for young promising players for us to support. Cornilleau recently signed two young

most 15 years from the early 90s to the beginning of the 21st century. Jean-Philippe Gatien almost single handed carried the Tricolor, always scoring crucial points, winning matches and leading his French team into battle. Individual success came in the shape of a memorable Olympic Singles final in Barcelona 1992 and a gold medal at the World Championships in Gothenburg 1993 only six months later.

The arena settles down a bit. Things are getting less noisy and we can start the interview. I ask about memories from those events, the moments of glory in 1992 and 1993.

“Well, in Barcelona there was not much disappointment, really. Still remember that I thought long and hard over a couple of game points that slipped away – but all in all Jan-Ove Waldner was the best player in that tournament. He was simply playing magnificent”, Gatien recalls.

“In the 1993 World Championships things just clicked for me. I was in the zone feeling confident with my style and my abilities all the way through. I don’t remember much else really but I think that is the case sometimes when you are playing really

“In the 1993 World Championships things just clicked for me. I was in the zone feeling confident with my style and my abilities all the way through.”



French players to sponsorship contracts; Thomas Le Breton and Romain Lorentz. We have the ambition to build a strong support model for all our players under contract moving forward, not only sign them to an agreement and that’s it.

Charity work is also on the agenda for Jean-Philippe who has both the personality and the manners to deal with the corporate and let’s say world reality. Together with long time friend and his former coach Michel Gadat he holds his hand under the more and more popular Ping Attitude charity.

“We are working to introduce table tennis to certain groups in the society. Some of the activities are targeting social aspects which may include exhibition and promotional matches in troubled neighbourhoods. We are also visiting schools to introduce table tennis; that is the educational angle. Thirdly we cover the health aspect by making appearances at mainly children’s hospitals. The schedule is fairly tight. In the beginning I was doing all these activities myself but as we are growing, we try to involve more people. It is a rewarding but for sure a mentally challenging assignment”, Gatien explains.

THE INTERVIEW rolls on and so does the time. Play is taking a rare break and it is time to reflect on the French table tennis of today; the future challenges that lay ahead for a leading table tennis country in Europe. Any chance you can upset the ever so predictable world order of table tennis and remove a few Chinese male players from the throne?

“Its looking good for French table tennis for the moment I have to say. We have many young play-

ers emerging and that will spark internal competition which I personally think is important. The challenge is now to keep the good spirit growing among coaches and young players but at the same time improve the individual support packages made available to each of the talents. I am positive that we can find new and improved models to support the development of top players in French table tennis. Not only do we have the momentum right now but it also seems like the directions and the message from the top of the pyramid is getting through to coaches on youth talent level. Michel Gadat, our Technical Director, seems to have success getting his philosophy through for the moment which is all good I think.”

Simon Gauzy is a name that will not go away when you are speaking about future French players for the international scene.

“Simon is undoubtedly very good for his age. He seems to like the competitive elements of table tennis and has the ability to step up his game in important situations. Sure I like him as do many other coaches and supporters in France”, said Gatien.

EUROPEAN TABLE TENNIS IN GENERAL is a popular topic of discussion. It seems almost impossible to find a quick cure to recover ground from the Asians dominating both male and female world table tennis. On the other hand, looking at the talent level on display just in front of us, should at least generate some hope for an improved level down the road. At the same time we also share a common fear that steadily shrinking resources are made available for national associations →

Top left: Classic Gatien style, chasing over the whole table with his trademark; the forehand. Top right: From the Olympic Games in Sydney 2000, where Jean-Philippe Gatien won a bronze medal together with Patrick Chila in the Men’s Doubles.

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

Jean-Philippe Gatien won the World Championships in Gothenburg 1993. In the final he beat Jean-Michel Saive from Belgium.



to run the player development show alone. New models must be tested and private investments encouraged at all stages.

It is a statement that Gatien is ready to back up any day of the week;

"Absolutely we must find ways to explore the existing market place and attract sponsorship and outside investments into our sport. In fact this is one of the more important aspects that could make a difference for many European players. We need to open up and reach out to private interest and corporate support in order to drive the players forward. We cannot rely only on funding from government and sport authorities. The associations alone cannot do all the work anymore. This is something to think about for sure, especially when externally funded training centres now are starting to appear in Europe."

What about the Chinese world dominance? Any change coming up anytime soon?

"Hard to say what is going to happen; the female dominance seems to be very tough to handle. On the male side of things the Chinese players are very strong now and tremendously dominant. But still I am more optimistic than pessimistic. It was really special to see Kenta Matsudaira from Japan threatening Ma Lin in Yokohoma. I thought he played a very good match and maybe more performances like that will show the way for other young players. Kenta is after all only 18 years old and acting in such a confident way. Confidence in itself is such a key I believe. You have to have a very strong understanding on how to act and what to do at the table when playing Chinese players."

Time is up; the train back to the ITTF Headqu-

arters is leaving from the busy Strasbourg railway station within an hour. While we are wrapping up the talk and the planning for Jean-Philippe Gatien to become the ITTF former athlete of choice to make an appearance at the Youth Olympic Games next year we come back to the matches just played.

Try to recall your own playing level at the age of twelve then I ask. Would a mini Gatien stand a chance against these young players?

"Don't think so!" he says. On the other hand I don't remember really how I played when I was twelve years old but hardly as good as these guys.

A player that we noticed, both of us, not only on the final day but also during the complete event was a certain left handed young American from Houston, Texas competing for the newly formed ITTF World Hopes Team. His name is Charles Deng, twelve years old and such a treat to watch.

"Yes I did see him – surely an interesting young player", said Gatien

A trained eye may have made his pick right in that moment. It is not surprising. Young Mr. Deng from Houston, Texas in the United States of America at the mere age of twelve has the attributes that made Jean-Philippe Gatien a champion; lightning fast footwork, fast surprising service and a relentless forehand attack.

What we need to know now is if future champions could be born from moments and statements like this? Maybe not but who knows? At least we have this very thought in print forever and think about it for a moment. A future World champion from the USA would not be particularly bad for the sport of table tennis, would it? Not bad at all! □



The Road to SINGAPORE

In my mind it is the "Perfect Fit". The introduction of the Youth Olympic Games, for the first time in Singapore 2010, is the best thing that could happen to youth sport in general and for our sport specifically.

Not only is table tennis a well established youth sport with an already recognized world event structure, the International Table Tennis Federation is most active, staging many of the most comprehensive junior and development programmes available in the world of amateur sports.

TEXT: MIKAEL ANDERSSON,
PHOTO: AN SUNG HO

The ITTF Global Junior Programme was introduced on a trial basis in the year 2002. We started with a four event ITTF Junior Circuit featuring tournaments in Spain, China, USA and Peru before holding a final staged, as a small sideshow at the ITTF Pro Tour finals in Sweden. I still remember those early years of daily scrambling and constant pushing for what we believed was simply a good idea.

Over time we have been proved right many times as the ITTF Global Junior Programme itself has matured into one of the finest youth sport programmes carried by any international sporting federation. With the latest addition, a series of ITTF Hopes activities targeting young talents 12 to 13 years old, we have been able to string together a complete set of opportunities covering a five year age span that will see, if things go according to plans, a young talented child grow into the shoes of a high potential professional junior prospect.

But then, things don't always go according to ambitious sporting plans, do





A well-known face in international table tennis: Asian Cadet champion Yang Ha Eun of Korea Republic.

they? Decisions are made, the talent level might not hold up the way we thought, sparring partners lacking and in the end of course funding issues might be too difficult to overcome. In those situations our offering as an international federation, deeply involved in building the values of our sport, will be tested, especially from a global perspective. We need to have a broad range of training and competition opportunities reaching out to all corners of the world.

AND IN THAT PHRASE of a thought – call it Global Reach if you like, is where the Olympic Movement and the ITTF Global Junior Programme will meet in what I believe will be a very strong showing in Singapore 2010. Each of the sixty four table tennis athletes who eventually will march into the arena of the Games,

will one by one reflect work well done by our membership, as well as the involved National Olympic Committees; many of them already partnering the International Table Tennis Federation in specifically designed talent development projects, targeting growth as well as identified high performance aspects.

IT WILL PROBABLY TAKE a complete Olympic cycle of four years before the International Olympic Committee machinery and all the involved National Olympic Committees will operate on full speed when it comes to the Youth Olympic Games. Having said that, it is such a refreshing thought that National Olympic Committees now will have to widen their stance and take a good look at developing programmes for young athletes. In that sense the International Table Tennis Fe-

deration will continue in the role of being the perfect partner.

We have, after all, a very solid grip on talent identification as well as a full scale development programme sweeping through all the six continents each year.

Table tennis in Singapore 2010 will be one of the main attractions – take that as a promise from a man who for many years now has seen table tennis athletes born in 1994 and 1995 steadily raise their skill level to nothing short of amazing.

NAMING NAMES MIGHT not be of great importance right now – but I have to say that the likes of 15 year old Koki Niwa from Japan and the Korean poster girl Yang Ha Eun, surely will present our sport in a way that will make the Olympic rings shine clear and bright.

I am also confident that years of hardno-

"I am also confident that years of hardnosed work in the fields of athlete's development will bear fruit at the first Youth Olympic Games."



sed work in the fields of athlete's development will bear fruit at the first Youth Olympic Games. Since the year 2002 the International Table Tennis Federation has, in perfect partnership with the Olympic Solidarity programmes of the International Olympic Committee, invested in total, close to US\$800,000 to support talented players from non traditional but emerging table tennis countries.

SEVERAL YOUNG players from the African continent have step by step matured into full fledged youth prospects, nowadays drawing respect and attention wherever they appear. The Egyptian left-hander Dina Meshref, born in 1994 is for sure one to keep an eye on, the skilled young Tunisian Adem Hmam is another good player that might be ready to establish himself come August next year.

General interest for table tennis is soaring in several very interesting markets in the large Americas – both north and south continent. In fact the time is now to start looking at support models and strategies that could make a huge difference down the road for gigantic, still untapped markets like the USA, Argentina and Brazil, just to mention a few that

will have competitive table tennis athletes in Singapore.

The "Road to Singapore" for young ambitious table tennis players will start with the ITTF Cadet Challenge event in Tokyo and end at various stops all around the world sometime in May 2010. We have chosen a dynamic, multi opportunity, qualification system that will play to the strength of our Global Junior Programme. All six continents will have athletes in action come August next year. The International Table Tennis Federation should also be proud that both the angles of pure playing strength as well as global development aspects will be covered on our final selection.

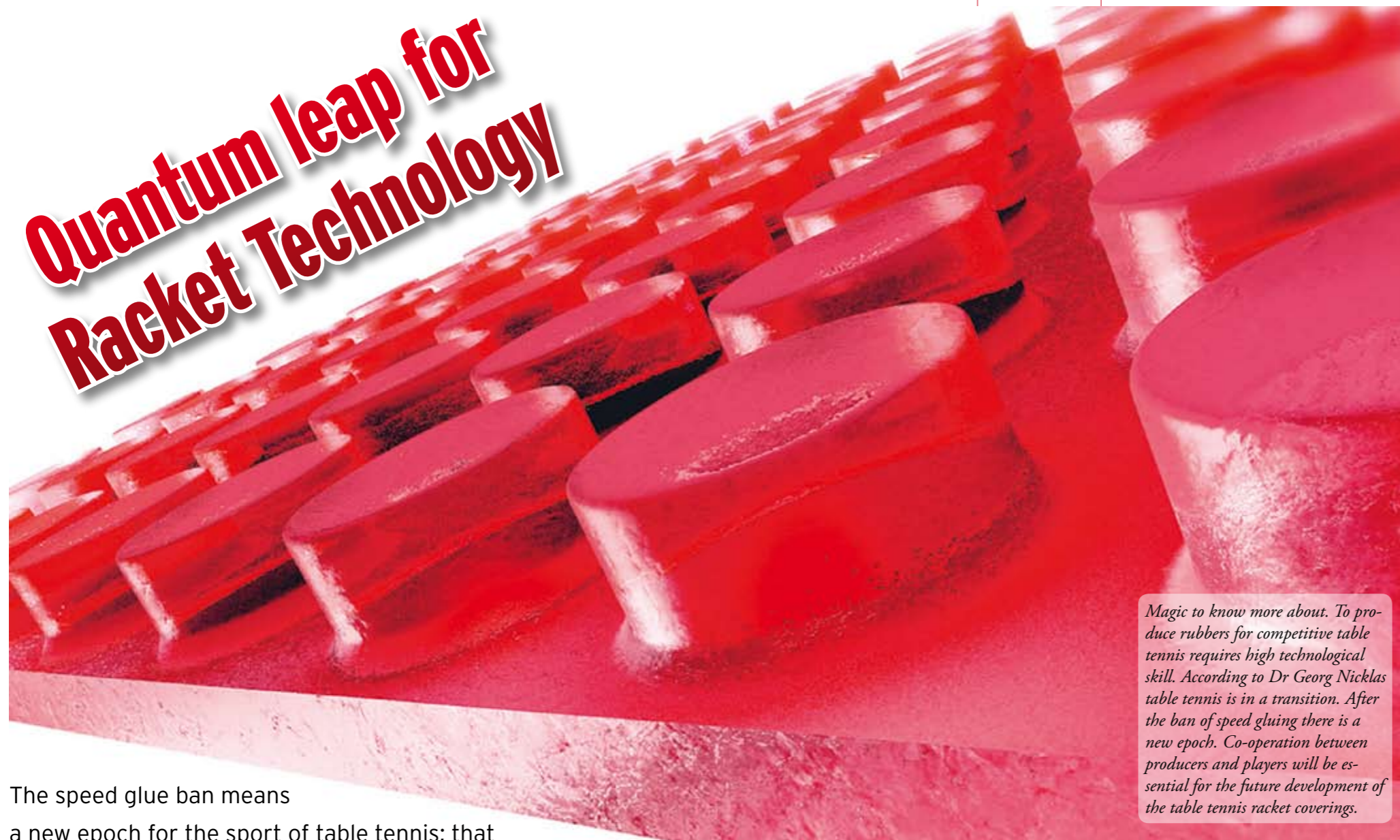
The International Olympic Committee is working hard to promote the educational aspects of the Youth Olympic Games. It is quite clear that the ambitious Culture & Education Programme (CEP) mastered by the local organizing committee will play a central role in the overall set up of the Games. More than 3.600 athletes and some 1.600 officials are expected to remain in the Olympic village for the full length of twelve days, with CEP activities more or less scheduled from the start until the end.

From nearly all angles it will be extremely interesting to follow the outcome of the first Youth Olympic Games and the direction for the future. No doubt in my mind that the Youth Olympic Games in itself will set up for an even closer contact between the International Olympic Committee and the Olympic Movement and the International Sporting Federations. Contact, discussions and planning procedures previously rotating on a four year cycle will now come every second year. Scholarship and support models for athlete's development will also be subject for a more intense ongoing evaluation process in order to calibrate efforts and to set new goals.

FOR THOSE ATHLETES and officials included, who are lucky enough to hit the road to Singapore, the Youth Olympic Games concept will come across as one of these major game changes in global sport development. The International Table Tennis Federation is ready to race – ready for that change. We are ready to pursue opportunities and more importantly we will be ready to present our sport as one of the top attractions in Singapore 2010.

What about that for a good start?! □

Quantum leap for Racket Technology



Magic to know more about. To produce rubbers for competitive table tennis requires high technological skill. According to Dr Georg Nicklas table tennis is in a transition. After the ban of speed gluing there is a new epoch. Co-operation between producers and players will be essential for the future development of the table tennis racket coverings.

The speed glue ban means a new epoch for the sport of table tennis; that is the claim of Dr Georg Nicklas, the founder of the Donic brand and today owner of ESN, a German company that produces racket coverings for competitive table tennis.

Previously, all players could control the material by individual ways of gluing. Now and in the future the qualities of the rubber will be decided inside the factory; those players who work closely with the producers will have a big advantage compared to those who does not engage themselves in the manufacturing process.

TEXT & PHOTO: JENS FELLKE

Dr Georg Nicklas knows what he is talking about. Most of his working life he has been highly involved in table tennis. In the 1970s he was player in the German Bundesliga, during the 1980s, first as development manager for Stiga and then as the boss for Donic, the brand that he founded and that carries his name.

At the end of the 1980s, Nicklas sold Donic and started a new company – ESN – where he has put all his efforts and energy into making racket coverings for competitive table tennis. A hopeless mission, everybody thought when ESN started, it

would be impossible to catch up with the Japanese manufacturers who were forty years ahead. However, Dr Georg Nicklas and his crew continued stubbornly and after setbacks they have enjoyed successes; today the company employs some 120 people and is one of the largest producers of table tennis rubber in the world.

SO IT IS WITH GREAT experience and much success that Dr Georg Nicklas claims table tennis is ready for a break in tradition, a change that radically affects the conditions for players, coaches and manufacturers.

The speed glue ban from autumn 2008 →

The History of Racket Coverings in Table Tennis

1951. The Austrian, Waldemar Fritsch, finds a three millimetre thick black and rubber-like sheet in his cellar. He glues it on to his bat and when he hits the ball an astonishing catapult effect is produced. The same year, Fritsch is a sensation at the World Championships, he is undefeated in the team competition.

1952. The Japanese, Satoh wins the Men's Singles at the World Championships with a more developed sponge on his racket. Sponge rubber has come to stay and propels the table tennis sport into a new time zone. The speed and the spin of the ball is enormously increased and the new material makes it much easier to play attacking shots. Modern table tennis has begun.

1950s. Chaos when it comes to rackets. Some have a rubber layer of a couple of centimetres. Other manufacturers present thinner pimples out where a thinner sheet, with the pimples out, was glued on a thin sponge plate. Next came the pimple side inwards which enabled a great deal of friction to be effected when hitting the ball, it opened up totally new possibilities to spin the ball. Towards the end of the 1950s came standardization. The ITTF decided in 1959 that a rubber could not exceed 4 mm. The manufacturer produced the first so called "all round rubbers" with sponge and a topsheet on top, a standard that has been used ever since; following the introduction of the "all round-rubbers" and pimples in, the loop developed, the greatest stroke innovation in the whole history of table tennis.

1970. Mark V and Srivier appeared on the market. Much faster rubbers because for the first time there was a mix between natural rubber and synthetic rubber used in making the top sheets. The synthetic rubbers were more elastic and gave the ball a much stronger catapult effect than before. This rubber innovation was an important factor for Stellan Bengtsson of Sweden when he captured the Men's Singles Title at the World Championships in Nagoya 1971. He used a Stiga Mark V racket.

1978. The Hungarian Tibor Klampar invents speed gluing, the gluing of the rubber sheets immediately before a match. The solvents of the glue had a magic effect on the character of the rubber sheet; when the solvents seeped through the sponge to the top sheet, the sponge become softer which gave a better feeling for the ball. The solvents stretched the molecules of the rubber, which gave both more speed and better spin on the ball when attacking. Speed gluing had a great impact on the result when Hungary beat China and became World Team Champions 1979 in Pyongyang, the Chinese did not speedglue.

1995. The German company ESN and the Japanese company Butterfly becomes first – independent of each other – to invent a technology where a reduced effect of gluing is built into the racket covering during production.

2008. The International Table Tennis Federation bans speed gluing for health reasons in an aim to present a clean image for the sport.

"The stars of the future must know how the sheets are made and participate actively in product development."



Testing. Jörgen Persson tests rubbers for the future.

was the turning point. Before the glue ban, the players decided the playing character of the rubber through gluing. Now and in the future the possibility to influence the racket covering is minimal. Therefore, both the producers and the players will become more dependent upon a much more intense co-operation than before.

ACCORDING TO NICKLAS, the relation between players and rubber producers will influence everything that is important for table tennis in the future. The co-operation will have a great impact on what will be produced, which direction the development takes and the nature of the racket coverings.

The whole field of developing racket coverings is open following the glue ban. – I think it is extremely exciting to see in which direction it will go. Probably will we see a greater variation of quality in rackets in the future. Maybe it will be possible to make sheets that suit a certain

player or a certain playing style and perhaps the player may use different materials depending on the opponent. –If one is dependent on a great deal of spin from the forehand; then choose rubber X. If it is more important that one can block well and have a good controlled game and safe counter topspins, then choose racket Y and so on.

HOWEVER, ONE FACT IS CLEAR; players must learn much more about the process of making racket coverings and how they can influence the production and the development.

The generation of the glue era never needed to understand the details of the production process since they decided the final result themselves by using speed glue; for the stars of the future it will be different. For them knowledge about racket coverings and how they are manufactured will be as important as having right techniques and the right patterns of movement at the table. □



Perfect match. Dr Georg Nicklas, owner of the German company ESN, one of the world's biggest manufacturers of table tennis rubber (right) and Jörgen Persson, former World Champion and table tennis legend, during a test for the new generation of racket coverings.

Time Schedule

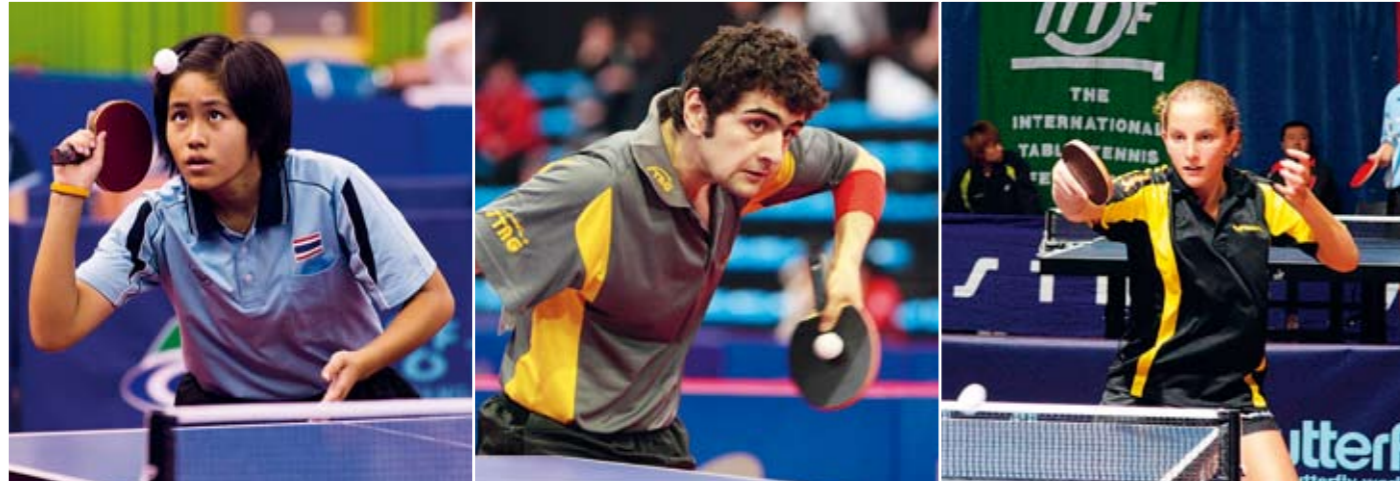
Cadet Challenge & Junior Circuit Finals

19 OCT	ACTIVITIES
11h30	Lunch at National Training Centre
12h30	Transfer from NTC to Tokyo Gymnasium
13h45	Free practice at Tokyo Gymnasium
14h00	JURY MEETING
16h00	Departure to Shinjuku Washington Hotel
16h30	Departure to the Opening Ceremony
18h00	OPENING CEREMONY
20 OCT	COMPETITION
09h30	CTG 1, CTB 1 (Playing all 5 matches)
LUNCH BREAK	
14h30	CTG 2, CTB 2 (Playing all 5 matches)
17h00	CTG 3, CTB 3 (Playing all 5 matches)
21 OCT	COMPETITION
09h30	CTG 2vs3, CTB 2vs3 (Until 3 victories)
11h30	CTG SF, CTB SF, CTG 5-6, CTB 5-6 (Until 3 victories)
LUNCH BREAK	
16h00	CTG 3-4, CTB 3-4
18h00	CTG Final, CTB Final
22 OCT	ACTIVITIES
09h30	Sightseeing bus tour visiting traditional places in Tokyo
18h00	Draws for the Cadet Challenge Individual Events
19h00	Jury meeting and draws for the ITTF Junior Circuit Finals
23 OCT	COMPETITION
09h30	CGS 1
09h55	CGS 1, CBS 1
10h20	CBS 1
10h45	JG 1
11h25	JB 1
12h05	CGS 2
12h30	CGS 2, CBS 2
12h55	CBS 2
LUNCH BREAK	
14h30	JG 2
15h10	JB 2
15h50	CGS 3
16h15	CGS 3, CBS 3

16h40	CBS 3
17h05	CGS 4
17h30	JG 3
18h10	JB 3
18h50	CGS 5
19h20	CGD 1/8, CBD 1/8
24 OCT	COMPETITION
09h30	CGS 1/8, 16-21
10h10	CBS 1/8, 16-20
10h50	CGD Quarter Finals, CBD Quarter Finals
11h20	CGS 9-15, CBS 9-15, CGS 16-21
11h50	JG QF, JG 9-16
12h20	JB QF, JB 9-16
LUNCH BREAK	
14h00	CGS 9-12, CBS 9-12, CGS 16-19, CBS 16-19
14h30	CGD Semi Final, CBD SF, CGD 5-8, CBD 5-8
15h00	CGS 13-14, CBS 13-14, CGS 16-17, 18-19, CBS 16-17, 18-19
15h30	CGS Quarter Final
16h10	CGS Quarter Final
16h50	CBS Quarter Final
17h30	CBS Quarter Final
18h10	JG Semi Final, 5-8, 9-12, 13-16
18h50	JB Semi Final, 5-8, 9-12, 13-16
19h30	CGS 5-8, 9-10, 11-12, CBS 5-8, 9-10, 11-12
25 OCT	COMPETITION
09h30	CGS 7-8, CBS 7-8, CGS 5-6, CBS 5-6
10h00	JG 9-10, JB 9-10, JG 13-14, JB 13-14
10h40	CGS Semi Final
11h20	CBS Semi Final
12h00	JG 5-6, JB 5-6
12h40	CBS 3-4, CGS 3-4
LUNCH BREAK	
15h00	CGD Final
15h30	CBD Final
16h00	CGS Final
16h40	CBS Final
17h20	JG Final
18h00	JB Final
18h45	CLOSING CEREMONY

CTG=Cadet Girls' Team, CTB=Cadet Boys' Team
 CGS=Cadet Girls' Singles, CBS=Cadet Boys' Singles
 CGD=Cadet Girls' Doubles, CBD=Cadet Boys' Doubles
 JG=Junior Girls' Singles, JB=Junior Boys' Singles
 SF=Semi Final

Participants ITTF Cadet Challenge and ITTF Junior Circuit Finals



PHOTOS PAGE 22-23: © ITTF

ITTF Cadet Challenge 2009

AFRICA Team Manager: Mr. EL-SALHY Khaled (EGY)

No.	Name	Assoc.	Dob	No.	Name	Assoc.	Dob
Boys' Team				Girls' Team			
301	BEDAIR Omar	EGY	14-04-94	401	MESHREF Dina	EGY	10-03-94
302	HMAM Adem	TUN	11-11-94	402	GUKHOOL Widad	MRI	02-01-94
303	ONALAPO Ojo	NGR	07-11-94	403	HASSAN Oluwafunke	NGR	03-11-94
304	AKAYADE Samuel	GHA	25-04-94	404	LAID Islam	ALG	23-02-95
COACH: RABIE Youssef (EGY)				COACH: KAFFO Bosse (NGR)			

ASIA Team Manager: Ms. LIU Yi (CHN)

No.	Name	Assoc.	Dob	No.	Name	Assoc.	Dob
Boys' Team				Girls' Team			
305	YIN Hang	CHN	20-05-95	405	YANG Ha Eun	KOR	25-02-94
306	CHIU Chung Hei	HKG	10-03-94	406	SWETTABUT Suthasini	THA	09-12-94
307	KIM Dong Hyun	KOR	10-11-94	407	BHANDARKAR Mallika	IND	16-03-95
308	LU Po Hsien	TPE	06-03-94	408	TSUI Pao Wen	TPE	16-01-95
COACH: KIM In Soon (KOR)				COACH: YEY Chun Liang (TPE)			

EUROPE Team Manager: Ms. CEHOVIN SUSIN Polona (SVN)

No.	Name	Assoc.	Dob	No.	Name	Assoc.	Dob
Boys' Team				Girls' Team			
309	GAUZY Simon	FRA	25-10-94	409	SOLJA Petrissa	GER	11-03-94
310	SODERLUND Hampus	SWE	14-01-94	410	NOSKOVA Yana	RUS	02-02-94
311	KUIMIOV Philipp	RUS	12-07-94	411	SZOCS Bernadette Cynthia	ROU	05-03-95
312	VANROSOMME Emilien	BEL	27-02-94	412	EERLAND Adriana	NED	22-02-94
COACH: KOLODZIEJCZYK Jarek (POL)				COACH: WEBER Dana (GER)			

OCEANIA Team Manager: Mr. HOUSTON Scott (AUS)

No.	Name	Assoc.	Dob	No.	Name	Assoc.	Dob
Boys' Team				Girls' Team			
313	HU Heming	AUS	21-03-94	413	PHAN Lily	AUS	11-03-95
314	WU Kevin	NZL	07-11-94	414	WU Julia	NZL	10-10-95
315	LAI VAN Fabien	NCL	04-07-95	415	LI Xuan Carolyn	FIJ	28-03-94
316	GEORGE Jamaneter	COK	12-10-96	416	QWEA Stephanie	VAN	16-04-94
COACH: GEAR Wayne (NZL)				COACH: CAMPBELL-INNES Peri (AUS)			

PAN AM Team Manager: Mr. PAPIC Dejan (CAN)

No.	Name	Assoc.	Dob	No.	Name	Assoc.	Dob
Boys' Team				Girls' Team			
317	SARAGOVI Pablo	ARG	09-12-94	417	HSING Ariel	USA	29-11-95
318	GAVILAN Axel	PAR	22-10-94	418	KUMAHARA Caroline	BRA	27-07-95
319	TAPIA Rodrigo	ECU	29-07-94	419	MENES Cristal	CHI	16-09-94
320	YAO Alexander Shing	USA	02-10-95	420	SOTO Maria	PER	20-08-94
COACH: Gustavo Levisman (ARG)				COACH: GEORGHE Emilia (USA)			

JAPAN Team Manager: WATANABE Takashi (JPN)

No.	Name	Assoc.	Dob	No.	Name	Assoc.	Dob
Boys' Team				Girls' Team			
321	NIWA Koki	JPN	10-10-94	421	TANIOKA Ayuka	JPN	23-06-94
322	MACHI Asuka	JPN	20-05-94	422	SUZUKI Rika	JPN	08-11-94
323	YOSHIDA Masaki	JPN	30-09-94	423	SATO Yui	JPN	26-05-94
324	MURAMATSU Yuto	JPN	14-10-96	424	MAEDA Miyu	JPN	12-07-96
COACH: KAWANO Masakazu (JPN)				COACH: ARISAWA Kazuhiro (JPN)			

ITTF Junior Circuit 2009 - Point-standing (24 oct.)

JUNIOR BOYS*

No.	Name	Assoc.	Points
01	ASSAR Omar	EGY	1258
02	FRANZISKA Patrick	GER	882
03	UEDA Jin	JPN	732
04	ALAMIYAN Noshad	IRI	672
05	AGUIRRE Marcelo	PAR	628
06	MORIMOTO Kohei	JPN	564
07	LORENTZ Romain	FRA	556
08	ROBLES Alvaro	ESP	542
09	KOSIBA Daniel	HUN	520
10	JEAN Lauric	BEL	506
11	BRUGADA Ferran	ESP	498
12	ASSAR Khalid	EGY	482
13	SIRUCEK Pavel	CZE	480
14	NOVOTA Samuel	SVK	452
15	GAUZY Simon	FRA	452
16	FLORITZ Philipp	GER	444

JUNIOR GIRLS*

No.	Name	Assoc.	Points
01	YANG Ha Eun	KOR	1050
02	LI Isabelle Siyun	SIN	900
03	HIRICI Cristina	ROU	812
04	MORIZONO Masaki	JPN	760
05	POSTOACA Camelia	ROU	702
06	NOSKOVA Yana	RUS	672
07	SZCZERKOWSKA Magdalena	POL	660
08	SAWETTABUT Suthasini	THA	538
09	SZOCS Bernadette	ROU	496
10	SEBE Anamaria	ROU	490
11	MADARASZ Dora	HUN	480
12	GAVILAN Sandy	PAR	470
13	MUHLBACH Kathrin	GER	428
14	DAUBNEROVA Andrea	SVK	424
15	BALAZOVA Barbora	SVK	382
16	MESHREF Dina	EGY	338

*) The final participation list will be complete after the editorial deadline of this issue of Future Spin.





Small in stature, big in ambition

Misaki Morizono was one of the superior Japanese team members that dominated the Junior Circuit Finals and Cadet Challenge last year in Helsingborg. The small right hander, however, is still waiting for a big international title. The next chance is on home soil at the 2009 Junior Circuit Finals. In her hometown Tokyo, the 17 year old has only one goal: winning the gold medal.

TEXT: MARIUS WIDMER, PHOTO: AN SUNG HO

When it comes to table tennis, the polite Japanese behaviour comes to an end. The players from the Land of the Rising Sun normally show no mercy with their opponents. The recent successes of the new generation

have given them a lot of self-confidence. "I would like to win this time as I was a runner-up last time", Morizono defines her goal for this year's Junior Circuit Finals. The 1.50m (4ft 11) short Japanese emerged as winner at the Junior Opens in

Sweden and Hungary and was runner-up at the Korea Junior and Cadet Open in the Girls' Singles event.

Starting at a young age

With her compatriot Koki Niwa, who will play in the Cadet Boys' events in Tokyo, Misaki Morizono has several things in common. She lives in Aomori and practices every day at least seven hours. Morizono started to play at the age of seven when her father took her to a practice session. Today table tennis dominates more and more her daily life and it is not a simple task to coordinate top level sport with education. "As there are many tournaments to participate I can not attend school every day", Misaki Morizono tells about the difficulties that every talented sport child faces, "but so far I think I am doing okay with my school studies."

During the last two years Morizono

MISAKI MORIZONO PERSONAL

HEIGHT: 150 cm
WEIGHT: 45kg
PLACE OF BIRTH: Tokyo
HOMETOWN: Tokyo
RESIDENCE (LIVING NOW): Aomori
SIBLINGS: Younger brother (Masataka Morizono)
DREAM: To obtain a medal in the Olympic Games
HABITS/SUPERSTITIONS: Before the start of a match I would like to be alone and concentrate
FAVOURITE PLAYER: Jiang Huajun, Hong Kong
FAVOURITE WEBSITE: ITTF website, especially itTV



Misaki Morizono, Ayuka Tanioka and Rika Suzuki after winning the Team event at the Korea Junior Open.

thinks that she has improved especially service and receive. This brought her up to number 8 in the U18 ITTF World Ranking in July this year. But especially the service training is not what she is keen on. "I enjoy matches very much; on the other hand I do not enjoy service practice, if it lasts too long I get bored."

A long way to the top

To become a well-known table tennis player in Japan is not that easy. Although Misaki Morizono has already won more

than 400 places in the ITTF World Ranking in less than two years, she stands on no. 149 in the September world ranking, no less than 14 players from Nippon are better ranked. Ten of them are in the top 100 and many still have several good years ahead of them. Therefore the Junior Circuit Finals are the best stage for Morizono to show her skills to a wider audience and to shine in the spotlight.

Her dream is to win a medal at Olympic Games. While London 2012 might be too short dated, 2016 could be the ideal year

for Misaki Morizono, who will be 24 years old then. One of the four Candidate Cities bidding for the 2016 Games is Tokyo. Who knows, maybe Morizono can close the circle of success in her hometown Tokyo. But that's all still up in the air and before two things need to happen. Firstly the International Olympic Committee has to choose Tokyo as host of the 2016 Summer Games at its Session in Copenhagen in early October; secondly Misaki Morizono has to win the Junior Circuit Final to give her coaches good arguments to select her for important future duties.

While the first point will already be decided when this magazine is printed, Morizono's part is yet to come.

Traditional Japanese habits

In her private life, Misaki Morizono could act as a poster girl for Japanese lifestyle. She likes the pop music of her country and adores going to amusement parks with her friends such as Tokyo Disneyland. Her favourite food is Shabu-shabu, a Japanese variant of hot pot. The thinly sliced beef meat is normally served with lots of vegetables and tofu. You don't know it? Then it's highly recommended to go out and enjoy the Japanese cuisine. If she is not playing table tennis or killing time in an amusement park, you may see Misaki Morizono in the same restaurant eating Shabu-shabu. □



Focus on the ball – Misaki Morizono executing a backhand stroke.



History in the making

Study the facts and figures; it provides quite enough evidence in order to understand a very exciting challenge.

A total of 35 ITTF Member countries, 42 National Olympic Committees and an estimated number of 910 million people residing in the continent; let's throw in a qualified guess that maybe 100,000 out of those 910 million are registered table tennis players. We are talking development in the Americas or with another name, often used in sport circles, the Pan-American continent.

TEXT: MIKAEL ANDERSSON, ILLUSTRATION: SPEKULATOR/SXC.HU/THOMAS BUZA

"But now history might be in the making with elements of co-operation between North and Latin America surfacing under the umbrella of the ITTF Global Junior Programme."

Do you see the challenge? Do you see the marketing opportunities and the potential for our sport? Well at least I do. Tough work is needed requiring a detailed ITTF strategy as well as major investments in talent detection and additional educational support.

In the ITTF structure, a six continental concept slices the Americas continent in half, forming the North America Table Tennis Union (NATTU) and the Latin American counterpart (ULTM). Both associations have their own development agreements as well as an Olympic qualification concept negotiated with the ITTF. There are however traditional meeting points involved between the two; such as the Pan Am Games co-ordinated and organized by PASO/ODEPA the Pan American Olympic Body every four years.

But now history might be in the making with elements of co-operation between North and Latin America surfacing under the umbrella of the ITTF Global Junior Programme. Starting in 2010, the qualification zone for the ITTF World Junior Championships and a new concept for the ITTF Cadet Challenge, clearly calls for a more consistent Pan American approach to be constituted.

THE FUTURE CONSEQUENCES

from the operational side is still up in the air. Opinions and discussions about long term benefits and forms of co-operation are for the moment ongoing, without formal plans or procedures yet decided. There are some huge financial, cultural and organizational challenges involved. To imagine that athletes from Canada and the United States would be frequent guests at events twelve hours flight away is perhaps not realistic.

AT THE SAME TIME a couple of icebreakers, such as the Youth Olympic Games, joint qualification for the ITTF Cadet Challenge and a what appears to be a yearly Pan Am Junior Championships are good signs, not to be brushed under the carpet that easily. More officially backed junior and youth events in the continent are necessary to raise the level of play. In addition, in my mind a yearly well recognized continental youth championships would add important elements

of focus and goal-setting to the learning process for young talented players and their coaches.

One thought, and often true, is that interest in the sport of table tennis in a specific country will rise extremely quickly when a good athlete appears. So maybe our job is to find the talents early, provide extensive opportunities and just be patient?

HAVING SEEN THE FAR FUTURE

in the eyes this summer when spending time with the new ITTF World Hopes Team, a pure talent project for athletes 11-12 years old, also makes me quite optimistic. I was delighted to see the young Argentine, *Fermin Tenti*, showcase his athletic talent in the court. Here we have a multitalented child who apparently is in the top ranks in both tennis and table tennis in his home country. *Bryan Afanador* from Puerto Rico was in the same mould; a very focused young man who brought a quality approach both to the training hall and the competition venue.

To watch *Charles Deng*, the twelve year old lefthander from Houston, Texas play at the Euro Minicamps in France was another refreshing experience. Extremely dedicated, furiously fast and coachable, today he stands as maybe one of the most interesting of young players and there are many believe me. Looking at him and also some other major movements in the United States, more than ever we must think "big". Think USA and let's see what we can be done as an association to support the development of our sport.

HOWEVER, THE NEAR FUTURE

is the first ever Pan Am Cadet Challenge team composed of eight athletes, born 1994 and 1995, from seven countries travelling to Tokyo for the ITTF Cadet Challenge this year; an occasion that should be celebrated with a closer look at each individual team member.

The Pan Am Boys' Team

Pablo Saragovi, born in 1994 is from Argentina; the reigning Latin American Cadet Champion, a consistent player who has made several steps in his development this year. He puts safety first with a solid technique at the table but must become

tougher in order to challenge the very best in his age group.

Axel Gavilan born 1994 is from Paraguay; an unpredictable playing style helps this young man to be a threat. Might even be good for an upset or two should he decide to unleash his powerful forehand top spin more often instead of fishing for balls far away from the table.

Alexander Yao born 1995 from USA; The surprise singles winner of the Pan Am trial event in Montreal; a reliable technique and an overall balanced playing style are the assets but few international events under pressure potentially a problem.

Rodrigo Tapia born in 1994 from Ecuador; a hard-working, forehand attacking lefthander who earned his spot in the Pan Am team through pure willpower; few international events under his belt, may cause him problems when facing top opponents.

The Pan Am Girls' Team

Ariel Hsing born in 1995 from the USA; power girl at the table and a world class player for her age; as tough as nails when it comes to the speed game but she will have to play smarter and with more tactical sense when the pressure is on to win medals at the international level. She is a medal hope for the Youth Olympic Games in Singapore.

Caroline Kumahara born in 1994 from Brazil; very solid young player with few weaknesses in her game; a good balance and efficient stroke techniques will put this girl in the perfect position for future success.

Maria Claudia Soto born 1994 from Peru; attack first is the sign for the Peruvian number one cadet player. She will, in Tokyo, make her second consecutive start in the ITTF Cadet Challenge. She plays with poise, close to the table and scores most of her points with from a good forehand side.

Cristal Meneses born in 1994 is from Chile; a slow starter in the qualification event in Montreal. She picked up the pace and made the team in the last match of the tournament. Good feeling and touch, speed and power are areas for improvement. □

"Promptly she could explain what her strengths are and how to prepare exercises accordingly. At such a young age, this is very impressive indeed."



Lily Phan

Multi talented with great future ahead

Lily Phan is just as comfortable performing at concerts on the piano as she is competing on the international scene.



Self-confidence and mental capability are strengths of Lily Phan.

Australia's Lily Phan is certainly a high achiever both on and off the table tennis court. The 14 year old from Melbourne has proven time and again she is the leading cadet female player from Oceania having won the Oceania Cadet Challenge Qualification event in 2007, 2008, and 2009.

TEXT: SCOTT HOUSTON PHOTO: © LOC PHAN

The International Cadet Challenge in Tokyo Japan will therefore be her third appearance for Team Oceania, surely an outstanding achievement and she is still young enough to qualify for the team again in 2010.

The right hander who uses reversed rubber on the forehand and short pimples on the backhand has gone from strength to strength over recent years, winning a host of gold medals at Australian Junior Championships and at the Oceania Championships. Earlier this year, she made a clean sweep of the cadet events at the World Junior Circuit event on the Gold Coast in Australia, winning the Girls' Cadet Singles, Girls' Cadet Doubles and Girls' Cadet Team events. At the same competition, she also was part of the Australian Junior Girls' Team that successfully qualified for this year's World Junior Championships. She has also been selected for the Australian Junior Team that will compete in Colombia. Even at her tender age she has already accumulated extensive international experience. Surely this will hold her in good stead for the International Cadet Challenge

in Tokyo where she will spearhead Team Oceania.

To say that Lily excels only at table tennis would be doing her a big injustice. Table tennis is just one string in her bow; she is also an outstanding achiever both in music and academically. She currently holds a full music scholarship and a full academic scholarship at Caulfield Grammar School, one of the finest private schools in Melbourne. These scholarships are not given out easily, only the best of the best can receive any kind of scholarship, and to hold a full scholarship in two fields is a truly exceptional achievement.

SHE BEGAN TO PLAY the piano at just 6 years old, and since then she has successfully participated and won prizes in many competitions and Eisteddfods. She has progressed to such an extent that she is now at a concert pianist level. Surely this can only help her table tennis; playing a piano in front of a large audience who are listening intently is not too different from the pressure that comes from the cauldron of competition on the international scene. She has just completed

playing in a concert in June, and last June she performed at a concert that was later released on DVD, yet another noteworthy accomplishment.

Lily is very well coached by Mark Smythe, an Olympian from Sydney 2000 and a former Australian and Oceania Men's Singles champion. He has coached the vast majority of the best Australian junior players over recent years, and it is not surprising that Lily has flourished under his tutorage. She also exudes self-confidence and is already a keen thinker in table tennis. Earlier this year at the ITTF Junior Training Camp prior to the World Junior Circuit event on the Gold Coast she certainly proved this. Head Coach on duty was Sweden's Emanuel Christiansson. When he asked the athletes to prepare their own training exercise according to their strengths some of the youngsters were left scratching their heads. He then asked Lily to give an example of an exercise she would choose; promptly she could explain what her strengths are and how to prepare exercises accordingly. At such a young age, this is very impressive indeed.

IF THE INTERNATIONAL CADET Challenge in Tokyo was a triathlon event consisting of table tennis, music, and academia surely Lily would be the red hot favourite to claim gold. As it is, she has her sights set on becoming the first medallist from Team Oceania. With two previous international Cadet Challenges under her belt and a string of victories behind her, she will surely be in the mix at the business end of the competition. □

Out of AFRICA

Consider any sport, consider young players and the word "potential" is uttered time and time again; yet if we consider geography, it is from certain parts of the world that champions tend to emerge time and time again.

The Football World Cup has been dominated by teams from South America and Europe, the United States of America seems to have an endless stream of golfers and when it comes to table tennis then China is like a production line of players who represent every possible style known to man.

TEXT: IAN MARSHALL PHOTO: © REMY GROS, COLLAGE BY THOMAS BUZA

However, in every country in the world there is talent; whatever the sport, the task is to find that talent, nurture that talent and in so doing popularise that sport in more parts of the world.

Furthermore, if a country can find a hero, then that sport flourishes; nothing replaces a champion whether it be Liu Xiang giving athletics a major boost in China or Great Britain's Steve Redgrave raising canoeing to unprecedented heights. The great champion inspires others to follow.

Is that not one reason why China flourishes in the sport of table tennis?

How do we find these champions, how

do we unearth the latent talent in parts of the world that have not had great champions?

There are two methods; one is downright good luck when a set of circumstances combine to produce a great player, the other is a constructive effort by the governing body of the sport.

Let us consider luck; for many years Desmond Douglas has been a personal friend, I have sat courtside as the coach and he's told me what I have to tell him. It should be the other way round but it never was!

Here is a man, born in Jamaica whose family moved to England in the 1950s, he went to Birmingham Young Men's



Christian Association where he tried table tennis; if there were one thousand sports from which to choose then Desmond Douglas chose the one that was right for him.

Jamaica is famed for its athletes, its cricketers, not really for its table tennis players; yet a set of circumstances combined to produce a table tennis player for whom everyone had the utmost respect and whom it would seem about five hundred people lay claim to giving him his first table tennis racket!

NOW, THERE IS THE other scenario, good organisation from the governing body of the sport and that is where the ITTF Global Junior Programme and ITTF Development Programme have set an example for other sports to follow.

Both schemes have given opportunities, opened doors that were previously closed, created new avenues.

The most developed programmes in the sport of table tennis are in Asia and Europe; of that fact there is little doubt but the rest of the world is catching up and catching up fast.

Simply look at Africa and consider two rising stars from that continent, Omar Assar and his female compatriot Dina Meshref.

Look at any entry list for an ITTF Junior Circuit event and if their names are not there then you need to double check if a mistake has not been made.

The two teenagers come from a stronghold of table tennis in Africa, both are from Egypt, a country that boasts the unique record of being the only country outside Asia and Europe to host the World Championships, they staged the event in 1939 in Cairo when the clouds of war were looming over Europe.

Egypt has always fielded strong teams

in continental tournaments but when it has come to the global scene then the consolation has been a "good result" but no medal of note. Certainly, they have fine players, powerful players who are a match for all but the elite; however, going that one step further has always proved difficult.

IT IS NO CRITICISM of any national association but very much young players in the past have had to show initiative and very much do things themselves if they are to scale the heights. Many national associations in the developing parts of the world, simply do not have the financial resources to enable their players to gain the experience, coaching and competition necessary to play at a very high level.

The result is that the potential is never realised.

Now, that scenario is increasingly

becoming resigned to history; the likes of Omar Assar and Dina Meshref have a greater chance than their predecessors to reach a high level and as programmes develop it may well be their successors of the next generation who benefit even more.

I wonder when the ITTF Junior Circuit started, who would have predicted that when 2009 came to an end, the longest reign in the top spot of the ITTF Boys' Standings would belong to an Egyptian, a young man from Cairo.

He finished 2008 in the number one spot and he started 2009 in the very same position by winning the Boys' Singles title at the Bahrain Junior Open; it is a place he has never relinquished.

Equally, at the China Junior Open, Omar Assar was the one non Chinese player in the semi-finals; would a pundit from the previous century have backed an African to finish on the top step of the medal podium against players from the superpower of table tennis?

Similarly, in Chengdu, as she had done when I first saw her play in Taiyuan in September 2008, Dina Meshref proved herself the equal of Asian adversaries. Very different in character to the ebullient, high energy Omar Assar but equally determined and progressing steadily rather than meteorically.

Both are players who have benefited from the ITTF Global Junior Programme, both are players who are setting new standards and both can have a major impact on the sport of table tennis in their part of the world.

The element of luck has been reduced, good support and good organisation spearheaded by the International Table Tennis Federation, the African Table Tennis Federation and the Egyptian Table Tennis Association is growing by the day and special players are emerging.

Omar Assar is becoming the hero, Dina Meshref is in the mode of Cleopatra, the heroine; the ingredients for success are now in place.

Now the biggest test of all awaits the two rising stars from Egypt, they have proved worthy competitors on the ITTF Junior Circuit now in the foreseeable future can they do the same on the ITTF Pro Tour.

Surely there has never been a better opportunity. □

Not Yet One Year Old and Already a Multiple World Champion!

Less than one year has elapsed since the Butterfly TENERGY® series of racket coverings was launched; the rubber, with revolutionary SPRING SPONGE® technology, has excelled all expectations. It has been a story of unparalleled success. At this year's World Championships in the Japanese city of Yokohama, four medallists used Butterfly blades with TENERGY® rubber.



Zhang Yining ▶

In the Women's Singles event, the reigning Olympic Champion endorsed the fact she is one of the all time greats of sport by regaining her title; she was absolute perfection. She used TENERGY® 05 on the forehand and TENERGY® 64 on the backhand. Zhang Yining was crowned 2009 Women's Singles World Champion.



Zhang Yining,
2009 Women's Singles
World Champion.



Guo Yue 2009
World Championships
Women's Singles Silver
Medal & Women's
Doubles Gold.

◀ Guo Yue

The decision by Guo Yue to use TENERGY® 64 was proved correct. The supremely talented world no. 2 eventually fell in the final; she won Women's Doubles gold and emphasized a golden future awaits. Guo Yue secured the 2009 Women's Singles silver medal and was anointed Women's Doubles World Champion.

Jun Mizutani & Seiya Kishikawa ▶

Total confidence in the materials they use; the Men's Doubles combination of Seiya Kishikawa and Jun Mizutani thrilled the crowds in Yokohama. Both varied the degrees of top spin on their attacking strokes by using TENERGY® 05 on forehand and TENERGY® 64 on backhand. Jun Mizutani & Seiya Kishikawa secured the Men's Doubles bronze medal at the 2009 World Championships.



2009 World Championships
Men's Doubles Bronze Medal.



◀ Research: SPRING SPONGE®

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