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Official Magazine of the English Table Tennis Association

Zhuang Zedong

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WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE



A finger-biting event: The Cheltenham Cotswold, Cadet and Junior 4 Star Tournament

Results and reviews on page 32

04 Straight Talk
Alex Murdoch brings you up to date with the latest developments in the ETTA

06 News Update
Catch up on all the latest news snippets

10 Coaching
Ken Muhr provides you with his thoughts on coaching

12 Drilling home a behavioural change
Take your game to the next level

14 New Update
Baggaley: Don't write me off, plus more

16 National Cadet and Junior Championships
Catch up with our young stars' performances

18 International Review
Top showing from the top youth

20 Zhuang Zedong
Trials and tribulations of possibly the most tempestuous life of all time

26 County Championships
A review of the latest action from the county championships

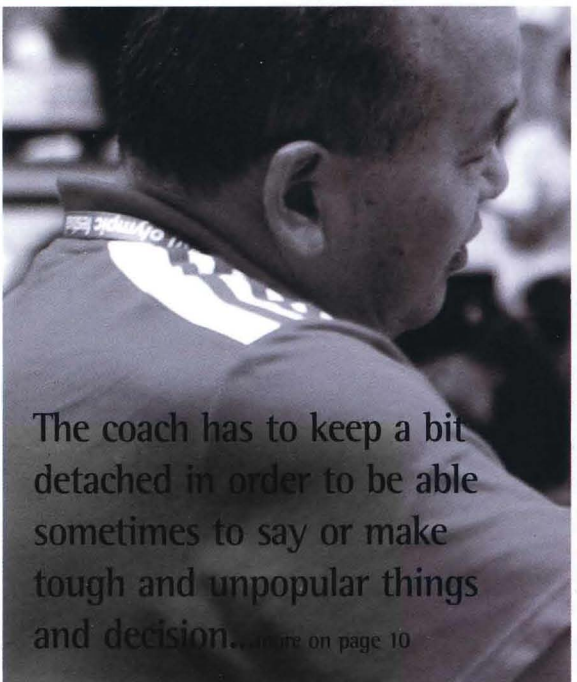
29 British League
Steve Kerns round-up

32 Tournament Review
Reports, results from Cheltenham 4 Star, Butterfly GP and the Jersey Open.

36 County Round-up
News from around the country

43 Rankings
The top players in order, plus news on Mathew Ware

44 Event Listings
Guide to May's TT events



The coach has to keep a bit detached in order to be able sometimes to say or make tough and unpopular things and decision... more on page 10

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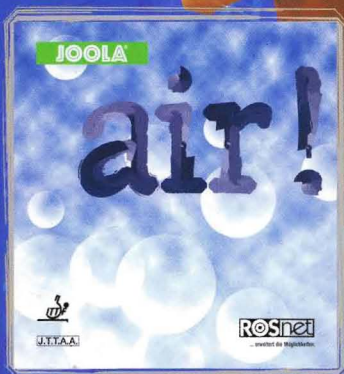
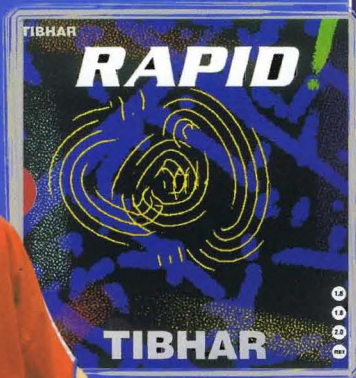
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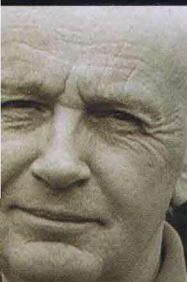
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from the editor



RICHARD PETTIT, EDITOR



GEOFF WARE

Geoff has been involved in table tennis for 20 years and he is a self confessed fanatic. His combination blades can now be witnessed first hand in the Bourneouth Premier Division.



MATTHEW SYED

Matthew is former English number one. He has a defensive style with the bat yet quite the opposite with the pen. Currently a Times columnist, TV sports commentator and media pundit.



JEREMY WILSON

Jeremy is a sports journalist who writes regularly for both The Guardian and The Sunday Times. He has also played senior and junior county table tennis for Hampshire.



STEVE KERNS

After 15 years as Chelmsford League Press Officer, Steve is concentrating on his duties as British League Press Officer and Essex County Press Officer. Steve has also been a regular member of the Essex Veterans third team.

ff

The season, as many of us know it, has either drawn to a close or is in its final chapter. As you collect your thoughts one of three famous catch phrases will probably be running through your mind.

"I love it when a plan comes together".

"It's good but it's not right".

"Better get back to the drawing board...."

Unfortunately for me the latter is echoing loud and clear. Like so many I started this season with a glimmer of hope, bags of enthusiasm, but a foolish lack of table time. Not to worry I thought to myself, Hastings Division III will surely be a gentle welcome back after a prolonged period of absence? Who was I kiddingalthough my first opponent appeared gentle, reaching the later years and perhaps a touch overweight, behind the façade lurked an experienced trickster who could conjure up cunning angles at the flick of the wrist, torture me with the continuity of a probing chop and, worst of all, produce an unplayable forehand at will. Needless to say I was on the wrong end of a drubbing, an outcome which lasted the thick end of the season.

Anyway with my initiation well and truly finished improvement is the only way forward. With this in mind I am reaching for the drawing board and going back to basics, drills and plenty of them, so why not join me? Flick to page 12 and get going.

In addition to drills there have been a few thrills and spills on the tournament circuit to be caught up on, plus Steve Kerns delves into the progress of Jason Sugrue (Page 29), and Matthew Syed captures the mastery and mystery of one of table tennis's most infamous characters (Page 20).

Richard Pettit

"ITS ONE OF THE GREATEST GAMES EVER" KEVIN SPACEY PAGE 9 "VALUE PUPILS FOR THEMSELVES, WHAT EVER THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS, AND ENJOY THE HERE-AND-NOW OF COACHING THEM" KEN MUHR PAGE 10 "THE GREATEST SPORTSMAN IN CHINA'S HISTORY WAS CAST INTO A CRAMPED ROOM CONTAINING A SINGLE BED AND SMALL READING LAMP" MATTHEW SYED PAGE 20 "JASON SUGRUE EPITOMISES THE SPIRIT OF DHS LONDON PROGRESS CLUB MORE THAN ANY OTHER PLAYER" STEVE KERNS PAGE 29

April Summary

I cannot believe that the summer months are nearly upon us, my local league season has finished albeit that the local tournament and Summer League which we organise have just started.

Our League has made it a mandatory requirement over the last two years for all registered players to complete an Individual Registration Form before they can play. This has not impacted upon our team affiliations which have remained at 40 and we have over 195 registered players.

The database which Individual Registration (IR) has provided has helped communications to our players in particular by e-mail. This has resulted in increased entries to our tournament, and our Summer League has grown to a maximum of 22 two person teams plus additional attendance at our AGM. We ran for the eighth year our Satellite Grand Prix and as a result of these various events we have raised over £1,800 this year in support of the League and to invest in coaching for young people.

I am not saying that we are unique across the country but I believe that insisting upon our members completing a small IR form has benefited our League and has not been detrimental. I am more than happy to discuss this with other league officials and attend AGMs to discuss our sport.

FUNDING

I have recently announced significant new funding for the ETTA from our partners Sport England to cover a Club and Coach Development Programme. This will mean that the ETTA will have two full-time staff members in each Region covering development, coaching and club accreditation.

We shall also be putting into place a number of changes in the support functions from Head Office and realigning some of the various departmental responsibilities. This will be only part of a longer term vision and strategy for our sport over the coming years to move Table Tennis up the ladder in terms of participation, performance and corporate governance, making us a sport for and of the 21st century.

In our Treasurer's first year in office (2003/4) our income from all sources was £1.3M; for the next financial year (2007/8) the income will be nearly £3M to support our sport.

COACHING

Significant progress has been made in regard to qualification and endorsement of the UKCC levels and following various discussions the ETTA has agreed to endorse the UK Coaching Framework as a reference point for our policies and strategies in coaching up to 2016.

The Butterfly Skills Award is nearing its completion and we anticipate it being in operation from the start of the season in September.

MAJOR EVENTS

Agreement has been reached with ETTU to stage the first combined European Junior and Cadet Top 10, in January 2008, to be known as the European Youth Top 10.

ETTU Elected Officials and Committee Members

During the ETTU Congress and Executive Board meetings the following nominations from England were elected and appointed.

Martin Clark - Financial Expert Official.

Malcolm Macfarlane - Ranking Committee Member.

Tony Chatwin - Technical Committee Member.

Mick Strode - Umpires and Referees Committee Member.

Martin Clark - Veterans Committee Member.

Congratulations.

FUTURE FUNDING STREAMS

Over the last 60 days there have been many reports both in the press, website and in communications with Sport England on two very significant factors which will impact the way all NGBs operate and in a potential reduction in the funds available for both community sports and participation in sports in general. They are:

A: Sport England has announced changes in the way it will fund sport through NGBs.

B: A reduction of Lottery funding to Sport England.

Let me outline the situation in terms of B first:

It was announced that Sport England would receive a reduction in its Lottery allocation by £55.9M for the period 2009 to 2012. This may therefore affect the funding allocated to Table Tennis during that period. Concerns have been raised across the board in regard to this decision by the Government and we have been part of this process. The new Chairman of Sport England has put forward some ideas in regard to raising additional capital via the private sector. It is also quite clear though, that we need to stimulate our efforts in ways to increase our own funding income and continue with our prudent financial management in regard to expenditure. Our present four year Whole Sport Plan funding is not inflation linked and our costs rise annually. Serious consideration must therefore continue to be made in regard to the overall income we receive as a sport from our members and other sources.

LET ME NOW UPDATE YOU IN REGARD TO ITEM A:

This will make a more significant impact upon us, as for our next planning cycle with Sport England from 2009 its strategy by them is to put more emphasis and funding to the Regional Sports Boards (RSB) rather than to the NGBs.

This new strategy will mean that a significant proportion of direct funding to the NGBs will be allocated sport by sport to the Regional Sports Boards. The NGBs will have to agree an individual regional plan with the nine regions as part of their overall plan for the sport. It appears that the funding will be paid to the NGBs but any of it which is identified for a region will have to be "ring-fenced" to them.

I shall be given more details in regard to this over the coming weeks but we will be expected to put together a plan by November 2007 to cover the needs of our sport both nationally and regionally for a period of four years starting from March 2009.

Are there some issues you would like answered within this section? If the answer is yes simply e-mail them to richard.pettit@etta.co.uk



Straight Talk

by Alex Murdoch
ETTA Chairman

There is also a change in the way results will be monitored both within the regions and the sports. It will be based upon the "Activity Survey" which was first published by Sport England in December 2006 and will be repeated annually. This survey was based upon regular, at least once a month, participation for over 16s only. Table Tennis was in 26th place in this survey out of the 200 or so activities which were included. If you look at "sports" and not just "recreational activities" Table Tennis was in 15th place. For your information the top six activities were recreational walking, all swimming, gym, jogging, football and recreational cycling.

Irrespective of this and the many other sports' concerns that those under 16 were not included, we have to ensure that our numbers increase not decline, and back up any data that they have with our own factual numbers of our membership via the Local Leagues and PremierClubs with Individual Registration Forms. Each region will be reported on in total and sport-by-sport to ensure that their funding is not impacted.

Obviously the Plan by November is essential but we must at the same time, and over the next 12 months, re-visit the ways we work with the RSB, refocus and potentially restructure our regional committees where necessary, making sure our own reporting system of membership is factual and accurate (back to IR), continue with the process of changes in corporate governance, and continue to increase our own income streams. Furthermore, part of our Olympic bid was to bring sport to young people yet the survey does not include them and it would appear that new funding will only apply in real terms to those over 16 and be monitored as such. I question that the government has an issue in regard to health and crime within the under 16s yet they appear to be excluded from this new funding strategy.

We are looking at various options in regard to some changes within departments, which will be necessary with the changing emphasis in the way sport is funded, and at the same time I have asked the Chief Executive to look at the present staffing/work allocation and to submit details of ETTA needs for the next few years to meet the changing climate in terms of an overall strategy, not just to align us with the new funding strategies, but also to ensure the needs of our members and potential new members are fully encompassed.

The present structure has been in place with only limited changes made over many years. It is essential that the many changing needs of our sport are met, communications, increased use of both websites and mobile phones, how results from events are used, TV streaming, direct payments online for events and other potential online payments are all starting to make an impact across the world, and we must have the resources in place to be part of this. We have moved some way forward in this regard but a step function is critical now. Our membership now and in the future will come from young people who have been brought up in the electronic age. We must appear "cool" to them but at the same time ensure that our older membership is involved and supported.

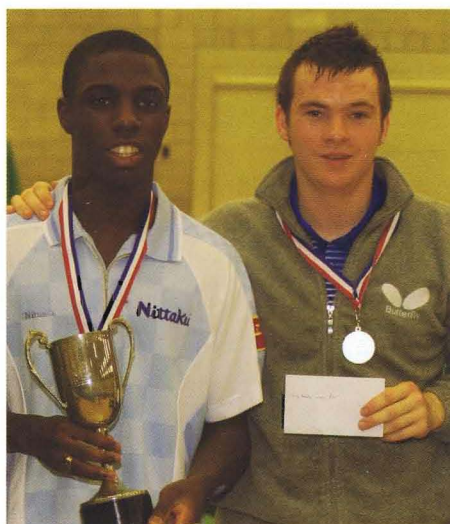
I hope this updates you. I will, of course, keep you informed as part of the process, advising you of any significant changes in all of these discussions and debates.

NEWS

English players

Stand out in the latest U18 world rankings

Paul Drinkhall and Darius Knight are the only Europeans in the top 15 places. Paul, who has had a great 12 months and is still only 17, is at 11 while Darius, the new national under 21 champion, comes in at no.15. All the rest of the places in that age group are taken up with players from the Far East. Which augers well for the future. European players tend to peak later than Eastern players so with the London Olympics still five years away, it may well be that both players will possibly be among the medals for the London Olympics but more likely at their best for the 2016 Olympics at a city yet to be named...



Top talents

What's the chances of players from the same family playing for England? Well if the Farquhar family from Reading have anything to do with it, they have a very good. chance. Melanie, ranked no. 4 in the junior listings, received national recognition when she recently won the National Junior Championships by beating England no. 2 Emma Vickers. But now coming through the system is her younger sister Rachel who recently pulled off an impressive win in the National Trials U15 tournament. That win above all impressed England Performance Manager Steen Hansen who pushed her into the England training squad leaving father Robin as pleased as punch. " Within the next twelve months there is every chance that both will be playing for England".

Olympic Games 2012

Sebastian Coe has outlined how the London 2012 Olympics will use the explosion of the internet and new media to drive kids off the sofa and into playing sport. Although the growth of the web and the development of video games are often blamed for helping to fuel Britain's obesity crisis among the young, the London 2012 chairman will told the Sportaccord conference that sport risks losing young people forever unless they start engaging through media they understand.

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Ormesby continue to impress with another new initiative

Following a recent Disability Awareness Day held at Ormesby Table Tennis Club attended by Mark Palmer, Great Britain number one Wheelchair Table Tennis Player, Ormesby Table Tennis Club are pleased to announce the launch of a dedicated disabled table tennis session at our Cargo Fleet Lane, Middlesbrough, headquarters. In partnership with Tees Valley Sport and the English Federation of Disability Sport, the Club will be holding a weekly session on a Wednesday evening from 7.30 pm until 9.30 pm. This session is open to anyone with any form of disability to come and play table tennis under

the guidance of experienced and disabled players / coaches. The first session starts on Wednesday 16th May 2007 at 7.30 pm. All equipment will be provided. There will be a small charge of £2.50 per person, per session. The emphasis of the sessions is on both fun and regular exercise along with an opportunity for both players and carers to meet socially in a dedicated venue. It will include the use of Polybat as well as conventional table tennis. The facilities at Ormesby Table Tennis Club are excellent and purpose built, including disabled toilets, ramp into building, dedicated disabled car

parking spaces, changing facilities and café and lounge for use by all. Alan Ransome, Chairman of the Ormesby Club which was founded in 1958, said of the new disabled session, "Although the Ormesby Club is recognized mainly for its high level players and performances, the club ethos is one of table tennis for all members of the community, and this programme for players with a disability gives us the opportunity to widen the scope and meet these objectives. We are very grateful for the support from Tees Valley Sport and the English Federation of Disability Sport, and hope that this project will establish a section within our club which will provide the opportunity for players with a disability to enjoy the sport for many years into the future."

Patrick Bonner from the English Federation of Disability Sport said of the new partnership, "It's a great pleasure for me to see a club that is committed to providing sporting opportunities for disabled people within the north east. The facilities at Ormesby Table Tennis Club make it very easy for disabled people to access the sport, but the thing that really stands out when visiting the club is the all inclusive attitude of the members right throughout the club." The Ormesby Table Tennis Club will also be able to offer other times for play during the week on request for disabled groups interested in bringing along people in their care to come and try table tennis. If this is of interest all details can be found at www.ormesbytabletennisclub.org.uk

Emily Bates Crowned

The 11-year-old was part of an England team that recently played Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Guernsey and the Isle of Man.

Emily took the singles title which helped lead England to team victory. She did this without losing a single match in either the singles or doubles in the team event and breezed into the individual final against team-mate Vicki Smith. Emily won the final 3-0 (11-9, 11-6, 11-5).



New table tennis tournament in memory of founder

Players from Mursley, Swanbourne & Little Horwood (Bucks) and Elstow (Bedford) Table Tennis Clubs took part in a special tournament in remembrance of a founder from each Club who had died during the course of the season.

Chiu Ng had helped form MSLH in 2001 and Keith

Pearson was the founder of Elstow in 1981. Both continued to be influential officers of their respective clubs right up until their untimely deaths.

12 players from each club took part in the competition for the Keith Pearson Memorial Trophy which was donated and presented by Mrs

Jan Pearson in memory of her husband who was Bedford's 'Citizen of the Year' in 2002 for his services to table tennis, cubs, scouts and other community organisations. The new table tennis trophy, which will be competed for annually, was won on this occasion by MSLH.

Emily Bates, just was part of an England team that recently played Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Guernsey and the Isle of Man



Cheeky Chopping

Still in the first flush of romance after meeting each other last October, LibDem MP Lembit Opik, and Cheeky Girls singer, Gabriela Irimia, enjoyed a knock together on their recent quick break in the sun. Despite Gabriela's slightly unorthodox footwear it appears that she still had a good eye for the ball.

Does this mean we will see Sir Ming Campbell teaming up with Monica the cheeky sister in a Liberal Democrat inter party play-off?

JUST LIKE TIGER WOODS, Paul Casey is another top golfer fond of TT. He regularly relaxes away from the pressures of the international green by replacing his irons for a table tennis bat. On the Pro tour Casey is always surrounded by a large entourage of friends and family who provide his opposition across the table.

Spacey in a spin



Celebrities are well known for their outrageous requests while out on the road, but Kevin Spacey wouldn't automatically spring to mind as the world's most demanding actor.

But while some opt for all-white dressing rooms or particular brands of beer, the 47-year-old actor has revealed he always includes a bizarre item on his rider - a table tennis table.

The artistic director of London's Old Vic Theatre, who won Oscars for his performances in *American Beauty* and *The Usual Suspects*, thinks table tennis "is one of the greatest games ever". And rather than just being a form of relaxation, enigmatic Kevin also admitted indulging in a little competitive play. He said: "I'm a table tennis nut. I play constantly. I have a table in my apartment in London and I even have tournaments.

"Whenever I am, that's the one thing I always want - a table tennis table."

the coach

His role should be a more paternal one, firm but fair, with the sensitivity to create a family atmosphere – Ken Muhr reflects on his own experiences.

When coaching table tennis is going well, which is most of the time, it is one of the most enjoyable and fulfilling pursuits I have experienced. It is my way of relating with young people – the future of humanity – and offering them something I believe is really worthwhile. My aim is helping them achieve their potential in table tennis, if they want to. In other words, my focus is on the high level. However, there have been occasions over the last nearly 40 years – such as having hassle with difficult parents or families, or ‘star’ or promising pupils giving up (in unfortunate or poorly managed circumstances) or treating me with disdain, or because of my failure to recruit or retain enthusiastic beginners – when I have felt like giving up. There can be dynamics that are outside of the coach’s influence, responsibility or even knowledge, but I also fear that I am sometimes partly/mainly to blame. Confession and catharsis are supposedly good for the soul, so periodically I share my thoughts with the TTN readership and hope that it may at least help fellow coaches reflect on their own practice. Rugby of course is a tough, physical-contact, team game, but there is much applicable-to-table tennis good-sense in what Rob Andrew, Former England star and now England’s Rugby Football Union Elite Rugby Director, wrote regarding (adult?) coaching in his autobiography, ‘A Game and a Half’ (1994): that it is ‘both the responsibility and the duty of the coach...to ensure that their players are willingly driven in the right direction’. The coach, ‘cannot – must not – be one of the lads for the very good reason that he will have hard and unpleasant decisions to make. Over-familiarity can also cloud a coach’s judgement. His role should be a more paternal one, firm but fair, with the sensitivity to create a family atmosphere.’

Players willingly driven in the right direction. Willingly driven. Right direction. The lesson for the table tennis coach then is to clarify with players and their parents what they want and what that takes (because many have little idea). Sometimes I have failed to do this. Part of the ‘fun’ for players can paradoxically be that the

coach is a hard but enthusiastic task-master, provided that they (and their parents) buy into what the coach wants for them (a high level of attainment), have a common goal and understand and accept the implications. You have to work and be pushed very hard and sacrifice so much if you want to be very good. But if you don’t enjoy the here-and-now of hard playing/training and don’t have the ambition for yourself to be very good but are on a roller-coaster you cannot get off, it must be hell! Giving up may be only way out. Players should be playing because they really want to and not (only) for the pleasure, reflected glory or projected aspirations of the coach (or parent). At the other end of the spectrum, it is no good encouraging players, if parents believe you are putting wrong, unrealistic or dangerous notions in their heads. Of course choosing not to play table tennis, or choosing not to play too much or too seriously, can be perfectly reasonable: there is a whole world of (other) opportunities out there.

The coach being firm but fair, with the sensitivity to create a family atmosphere.

The coach sometimes has to be tough but he – I use the male gender for convenience – should also be reasonable, consistent, firm but fair, and not show obvious favouritism. Not always being over-critical or serious, but also being positive and having a sense of humour. Sessions should be at once hard/demanding, creative and enjoyable, to produce the right training and learning environment: the coach having a basic decency and integrity and never being a bully. Players may be slightly nervous, but should not be scared of him. They might not necessarily like him much, but they must trust and respect him, and feel they are in a safe and secure environment in which he cares about them.

Although there is always in the coach-child relationship the potential for abuse, it is (in my experience) much more likely to be psychological than overtly physical, and the coach may not even be aware of it. I was very hurt a few months ago when one youngster on the point of giving up playing was fearful of facing me, because it demonstrated a

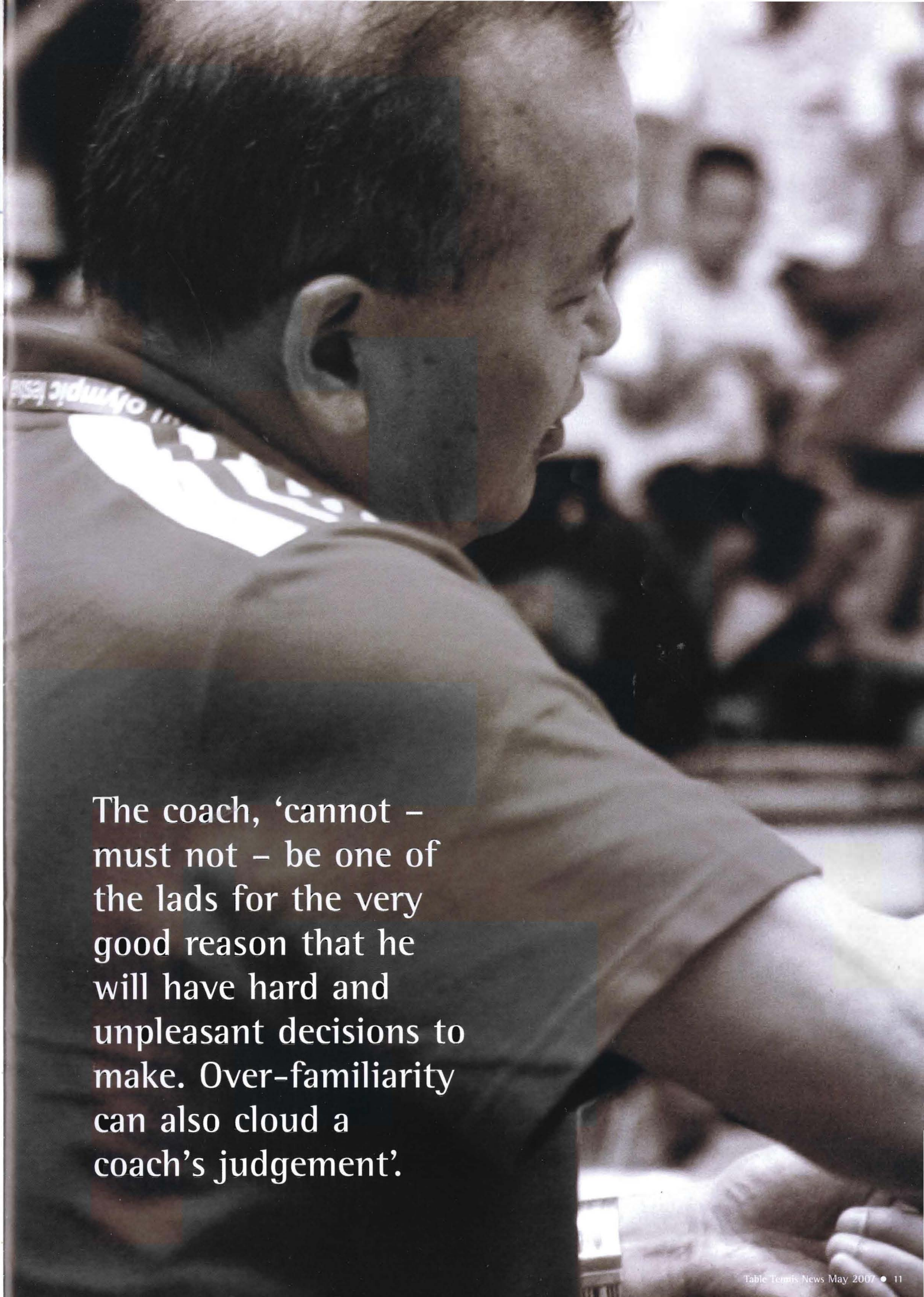
breakdown of trust – I absolutely did not come into coaching table tennis (intentionally) to terrify kids. Although I do not see myself as a scary figure or tyrant and believe my ‘bark is worse than my bite’, there must be something in my persona or expectations that occasionally frightens (some) youngsters. Maybe it demonstrates an insensitivity or lack of perception: very good technically but psychologically flawed in not being able always to relate to children at their own level.

The coach not being one of the lads, over-familiarity clouding his judgement.

This is closely related to being firm but fair, and maintaining the right balance between distance/detachment and familiarity/friendship. The coach has to keep a bit detached in order to be able sometimes to say or make tough and unpopular things and decisions, such as on discipline, selection, time keeping, commitment, the type of training etc. Because I sometimes got too emotionally involved when advising my great hopes in competition, or too pally with them or their parents (and thereby losing their respect), I many years ago decided to keep deadpan detached, but this has possibly resulted in me coming over as too cold and unconcerned. There is the opposite danger in forming too close an emotional bond with particular players, especially if they have great talent, character and/or personal problems, which can, if not carefully handled, lead to all sorts of bias, embarrassment, disappointment and upset.

My overall message to coaches is not to apply too much emotional pressure on players to succeed.

There is already too much pressure to achieve in education which can take away much of the joy of childhood. Value pupils for themselves, whatever their achievement, and enjoy the here-and-now of coaching them, whatever your ambitions, because all coaching relationships must ultimately end. Do not feel that all difficulties that arise are your own fault. But it is not always easy!



The coach, ‘cannot – must not – be one of the lads for the very good reason that he will have hard and unpleasant decisions to make. Over-familiarity can also cloud a coach’s judgement’.

Drilling home a behavioural change

Taking your game to the next level can be a difficult and frustrating experience. No matter how hard you train, and how well it goes in training, putting it together in a match can sometimes prove just too big a hurdle as your opponent crushes your best forehand topspin with effortless ease.

STOP, that's where drills and most importantly match specific drills, can help by building a solid foundation of skills, that without which you would undoubtedly struggle within match play. As with everything practice makes perfect so over these two pages we have pulled together 15 drills to help you on your way.

WHY DOES PRACTICE MAKE PERFECT – THE SCIENCE

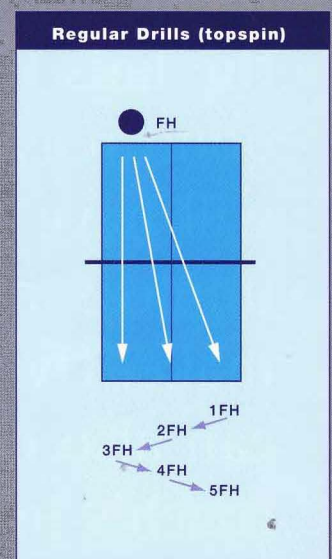
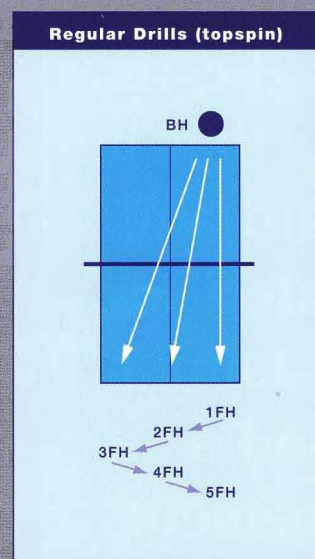
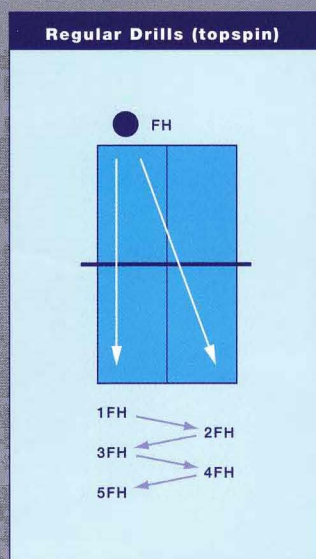
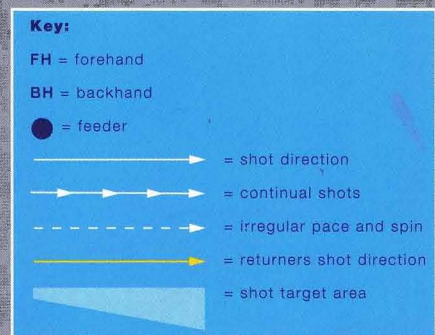
Moving from unconscious incompetence to unconscious competence is physiologist terminology for the age old saying, and is precisely what regular rehearsal of a combination of drills will provide. Giving you that all

important physiological edge when it really matters

- **Unconscious incompetence** - You're unaware that there is a skill to be learned, and that you don't have mastery of it.
- **Conscious incompetence** - You're aware that there is a skill to be learned, and that you currently don't have mastery of it. You realise you have to improve and have some idea of how far you've got to go.
- **Conscious competence** - Through practice, you've become competent at the skill, but you have to think about it to make it happen.
- **Unconscious competence** - You've practiced so much that your competence has become unconscious, the skill is an instinctive reaction to the circumstance and you've completely internalised the skill.

So get to the table and practice

...that's where drills and most importantly match specific drills, can help by building a solid foundation of skills...



Irregular Drills

BH various ●

FH all the time

Irregular Drills

BH various ●

FH all the time

Irregular Drills

FH ●

1BH → 2+FH
all to forehand quarter

Irregular Drills

BH various -
when feeder decides 2 blocks to FH

BH all the time → 2 FH shots to BH

Regular - Irregular - Freeplay

BH -
all to BH, then one irregular to FH

FH all the time → FH across court then freeplay

Regular - Irregular - Freeplay

FH -
all to BH, then one irregular to FH, then another to FH

FH all the time → FH across court
→ FH down the line then freeplay

Regular - Irregular - Freeplay

BH -
all forced to BH to prevent FH

1BH
↓
2+FH
↓
5+FH down the line then freeplay

Regular - Irregular - Freeplay

BH -
all to mid table

1BH
↓
2+FH
↓
5+FH to FH then freeplay

Irregular Drills

BH -
to BH then alternate even shots to either middle or wide FH

1BH → 2FH
3BH → 4FH
5BH → continue

Irregular Drills

FH -
to BH then alternate even shots to either middle or wide FH

1BH → 2FH
3BH → 4FH
5BH → continue

Irregular Drills

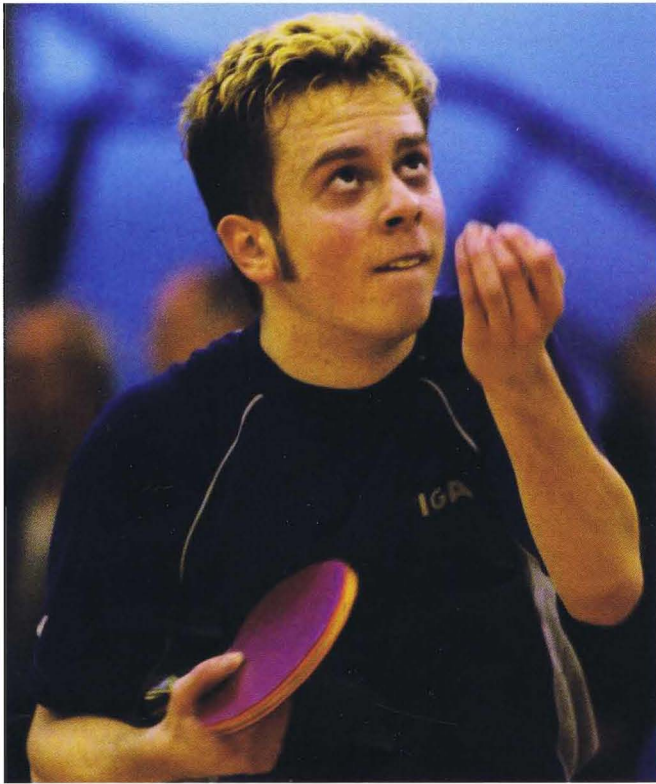
BH -
to BH then alternate even shots to either middle or wide FH, play 2 to BH to stop early movement

1BH → 2FH
3BH → 4BH → 5FH continue

Irregular Drills

FH -
to BH then alternate even shots to either middle or wide FH, play 2 to BH to stop early movement

1BH → 2FH
3BH → 4BH → 5FH continue



Baggaley: Don't write me off yet

"Write me off at your peril."

Despite some recent setbacks, the Milton Keynes top table tennis player has fired off this message to his London 2012 rivals: "Write me off at your peril."

Andrew Baggaley, aged 24, has been suffering from a

The additional fact that he plays his league matches in Spain has meant he has slipped off the radar in this country

severe ear infection which forced him to withdraw from several major tournaments. The additional fact that he plays his league matches in Spain has meant he has slipped off the radar in this country, especially given the emergence of some talented youngsters, none more so than 17-year-old prodigy Paul Drinkhall who recently stormed to the national title. But the former England number one is still amongst the best senior players in the country and his past record speaks for itself.

In 2002, aged 19, Baggaley became English National Champion and followed that up by claiming two gold medals at the Commonwealth Games in Manchester the same year, both in the team event as well as winning the men's doubles title with Gareth Herbert.

Then in 2006 he made history as he claimed yet another Commonwealth medal in Melbourne, when he and Andrew Rushton took silver in the men's doubles, making him the highest ever medallist for a British table tennis player in Commonwealth Games history.

His brother Stephen, who also acts as his agent, coach and mentor, feels that although

the London Olympics are still some five years away, Andrew is developing perfectly and his determination alone will make him a serious medal contender in 2012.

"No doubt about it, the big goal is London 2012. It is the goal for any sportsman and I believe he'll be at his peak in five years and will be a serious medal contender. Absolutely no question," said Stephen. "We are focused as a family to get Andrew right to the top. He's in the best form of his life right now, he's matured a lot and moved up another level recently, and the fact that he will still improve is a scary but exciting thought."

Stephen feels that the fact Andrew plays in the Spanish league is the reason he has slipped somewhat off the radar, but says he is confident that will not work against him in the build-up to 2012. "For the past two years he has been playing in the top division in Spain, which is one of the strongest leagues in Europe now, and has also played in Sweden and Germany, and has been mixing with and beating some of the top players in Europe. That can only be a positive thing."



Surprise event stole the show literally

Imagine Events Manager Harvey Webb's feelings when after returning to his car he found it had been stolen – including all the gear that he had to set up at the National Junior and Cadet Championships in Doncaster. "It was a complete nightmare," said Harvey. "I couldn't believe it; I thought

I must have parked it somewhere else." But whilst the car was eventually recovered, minus all the gear, help from the Doncaster Dome and local volunteers saw the event go ahead on time and from what I gather not many players or spectators noticed any difference.

“...the big goal is London 2012. It is the goal for any sportsman and I believe he'll be at his peak in five years...”

Raid on lottery

Costs good causes £2.2bn. The arts, heritage – and sport – among the losers as soaring cost of staging games sours mood

Tim Lamb, chief executive of the Central Council for Physical Recreation, one of the groups asking MPs to force a debate, said: “It is probably already a done deal, but a debate on the floor of the house would be a sign of the strength of feeling across the voluntary and sports sector.” He said there was no strategy, nor resources, for increasing participation in sport, one of the cornerstones of London's bid. “There is no evidence that where an Olympics has been held in the past it has led to more people participating in sport. It needs more than the gold dust of the Olympics being sprinkled over the sports sector.”

worldwide publicity

Table tennis has been getting a lot of publicity lately – for the wrong reasons. The recent capture of 15 sailors and marines by Iran got massive worldwide coverage but out of the stories that made the headlines came some publicity for our sport. Many of the 15 were captured on Iranian TV playing table tennis in their spare time.



Guernsey Triumphant

Guernsey is to host a training camp for the top European junior players early next year.

It is a major coup for the island and will take place at the Guernsey Bowls Stadium.

“It puts us on the map as far as table tennis is concerned and will help us with our long term plans to stage a major tournament in the not too distant future,” said the island's vice president Phil Hunkin.

The island is also planning to send a boys' and girls' team to the 50th European Table Tennis Championships in Bratislava later this year.

Helping to underwrite some of the costs of the trip will be Fly For Sport who have promised £1,500.

almost 100,000 TT web viewers

Watch that website because if you don't others are – in their thousands. Latest viewing figures showed a colossal 1.7m keyed in during March with almost 100,000 over the National Championships' weekend alone. And they came from almost every country on earth including Estonia, USA and Spain.

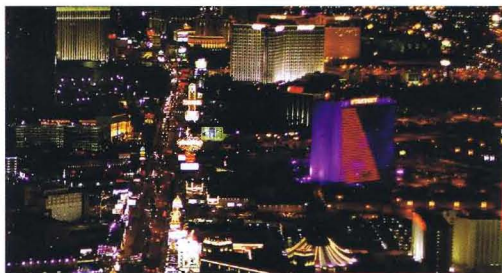
Lighting up Las Vegas

Pensioner Alan Woollven, 73, is off to America for the first time in his life and it's all down to his skill at table tennis.

Mr Woollven has been playing the game most of his life and

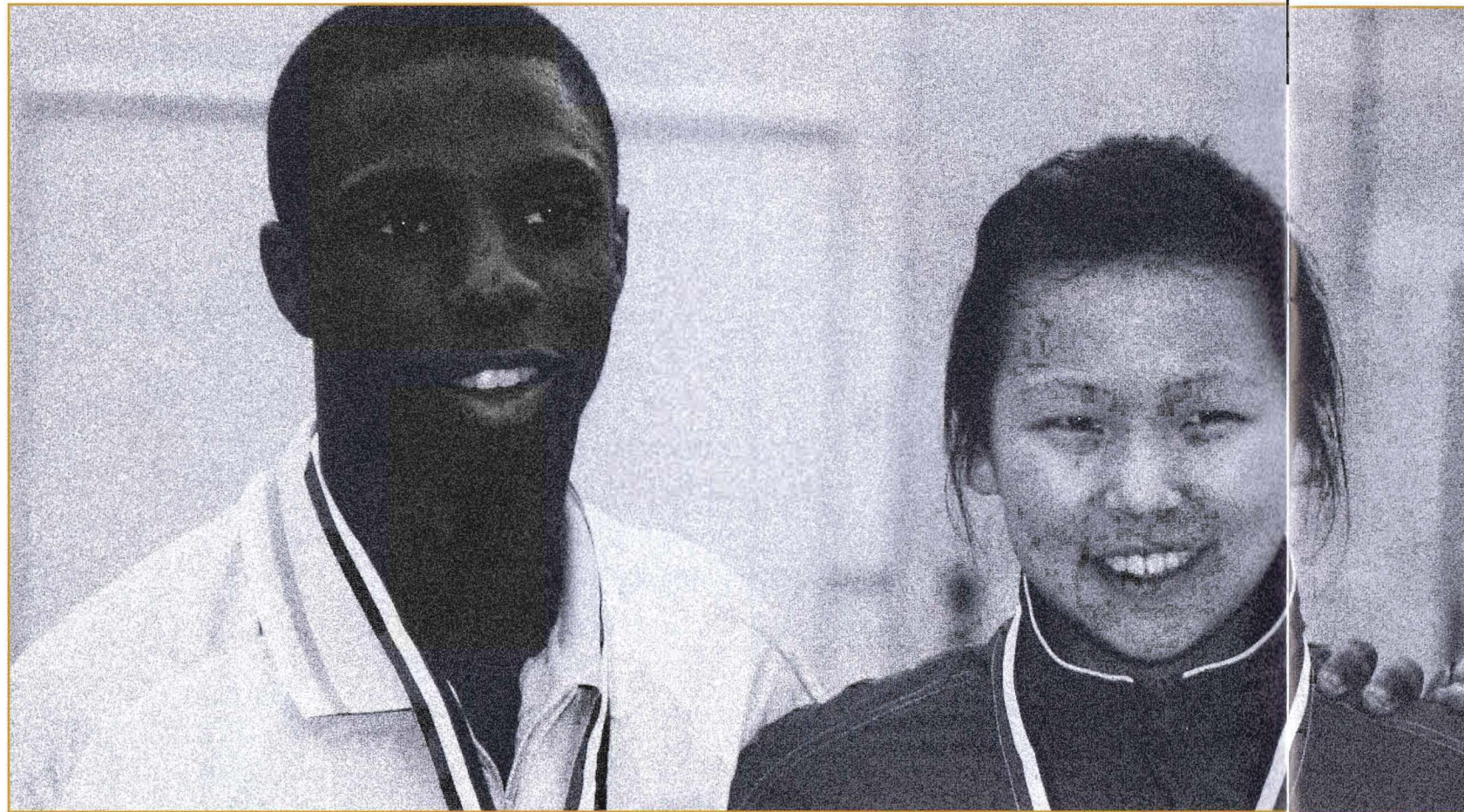
has been coaching others for the past 50 years. As a senior coach Grade 4 in the English Table Tennis Association's structure, he has reached the highest level possible, short of playing for England.

These days, Mr Woollven confines his skills to giving tips to youngsters at the Howard de



Club in River Lawn Road, Tonbridge. But when an American table tennis player, who was in Maidstone to visit relatives, asked if she could come along to the club for a game, Mr Woollven

was delighted and ended up giving Geri Grodzinsky private coaching lessons. When Mrs Grodzinsky returned to her own club in Las Vegas, Nevada, the other members were so impressed with her improved standard of play that they all clamoured to meet this table tennis maestro.



Double Golds for Wright, Evans, Drinkhall and Knight

The first day's play went true to form as the no.1 seeds in all events triumphed.

Day 1

CADET GIRLS' SINGLES - This event saw no. 1 seed Melissa Wright (South Yorkshire) reach the semi-final with ease, however once there Wright faced no. 5 seed Mary Fuller (Yorkshire) which resulted in a tense struggle between the pair, finally decided in Wright's favour 12-10 in the fifth.

Wright's opponent in the final was Karina Lefevre (Cleveland) who had two excellent wins, beating Rebekah Griffith (Lancashire) in the quarter-finals and no. 2 seed Emily Bates (Lincolnshire) in the semi-finals.

The final showed that the varied, mainly defensive, game from Wright was just too strong for the Lefevre attack, Lefevre did collect the third set, but this only managed to delay the final result by a game. Melissa Wright became National Cadet Girls Singles Champion winning 3-1.

CADET BOYS' SINGLES - Unstoppable no. 1 seed Gavin Evans (Buckinghamshire) did not drop a set on his path to the final, where he met Sean Cullen (Derbyshire). Cullen gained two especially superb results enroute, in the quarter-finals knocking out the no. 2 seed David McBeath (Hampshire) and then Derbyshire colleague Daniel Lowe 9-11, 11-9, 7-11, 11-9, 11-9 to reach the final.

The final clearly demonstrated the additional power and accuracy of the Evans' game. Cullen did manage to steal a set 13-11 in the third but this was to no avail as Evans continued to apply the pressure winning 3-1 and retaining yet another national title.

Day 2

JUNIOR MIXED DOUBLES - The second day's play provided the highlight of the tournament with a win for no. 2 seeds Darius Knight (Surrey) and Sarra Wang (Essex) over the no.1 seeds Paul Drinkhall (Cleveland) and Rachel Jamieson (Essex) in the Junior Mixed Doubles final. The match turned one way and then other. Knight and Wang took the first set 12-10 but Drinkhall and Jamieson came back taking the next two. However the second seeds recovered, taking both the fourth and fifth sets 11-9 and with that the title.

Day 3

JUNIOR BOYS' SINGLES - This title was achieved with relative ease for the dominant Drinkhall despite the tough opposition of first Bradley Evans (Buckinghamshire) then Gavin Evans in the quarter and semi-finals respectively; both were dispatched in three straight.

Knight also progressed well to the final overcoming Ben Barlow (South Yorkshire) 3-0 at the quarter-final stage and winning a tight battle against a very determined Danny Reed (Cleveland) in the second semi-final 3-1.

So to the final, would it be a repeat of the U21 Singles at the recent National Championships with Drinkhall hoping to become probably the first player to hold both the Junior and Senior Championships at the same time?

Drinkhall started like a train, a TGV in fact, as he raced through the first set 11-1. That was the end of the easy sets however,

no. 2 seeds
Darius Knight
(Surrey) and
Sarrra Wang
(Essex)

Role of Honour

Cadet Girls' Singles
Melissa Wright

Cadet Boys' Singles
Gavin Evans

Cadet Girls' Doubles
Melissa Wright/Ayonija Sundararjan

Cadet Boys' Doubles
Gavin Evans/Michael Bates

Junior Girls' Singles
Melanie Farquhar

Junior Boys' Singles
Paul Drinkhall

Junior Girls' Doubles
Emma Vickers/Caroline Hallows

Junior Boys' Doubles
Paul Drinkhall/Darius Knight

Junior Mixed Doubles
Darius Knight/Sara Wang

Knight picked up his game and took the second set 11-8, Drinkhall the third 11-9. It looked like Drinkhall was in the ascendancy but Knight had other ideas as he just managed 13-11 in the fourth to take the match to a fifth end. Drinkhall lost the first point of the final set but from there on in he established a rhythm which carried him through to take the title 3-2.

JUNIOR GIRLS SINGLES - One versus two as again as Emma Vickers (1) faced Melanie Farquhar (2). Both girls had to struggle in their semi-finals: Vickers overcame Caroline Hallows (Cheshire) 11-9 in the fifth and Farquhar got the better of Sarra Wang (Essex) 11-7 in the fifth.

In the final Farquhar took control early on winning the first end. Although Emma managed to recover with a second set deuce game, Farquhar took the two subsequent ends with relative ease and became National Junior Girls' Singles Champion.

Cadet Girls' Singles Final - Melissa Wright (Ys) bt. Karina Lefevre (Cv) 11-7, 11-6, 7-11, 11-9

Cadet Boys' Singles Final - Gavin Evans (Bu) bt. Sean Cullen (Dy) 11-8, 11-7, 11-13, 11-6

Cadet Girls' Doubles - Final Stages - M Wright (Ys)/A Sundararajan (Bk) bt. M Travis (Co)/M Fuller (Y) 11-5, 11-3, 6-11, 11-6

Cadet Boys' Doubles Final - G Evans (Bu)/M Bates (Lj) bt. L Pitchford (Dy)/D Lowe (Dy) 9-11, 11-7, 11-5, 11-9

Junior Girls' Singles Final - Melanie Farquhar (Bk) bt. Emma Vickers (Dy) 11-6, 10-12, 11-4, 11-5

Junior Boys' Singles Final - Paul Drinkhall bt. Darius Knight (Sy) 11-1, 8-11, 11-9 11-13, 11-7

Junior Girls Doubles Final Stages - E Vickers(Dy)/C Hallows (Ch) bt. M Wright (Ys)/A Sundararajan (Bk) 7-11, 8-11, 11-7, 11-3, 11-8

Junior Boys' Doubles Final Stages - P Drinkhall (Cv)/D Knight (Sy) bt. D Reed (Cv)/D Meads (Du) 11-5, 11-6, 11-9

Junior Mixed Doubles Final - D Knight (Sy)/S Wang (E) bt. P Drinkhall (Cv)/R Jamieson (E) 11-8, 10-12, 6-11, 11-9, 11-9

Although Emma managed to recover with a second set deuce game, Farquhar took the two subsequent ends with relative ease and became National Junior Girls' Singles Champion.



The **SIX** Nations Junior and Cadet Championships held in Coventry this year started out with the **TEAM** events.

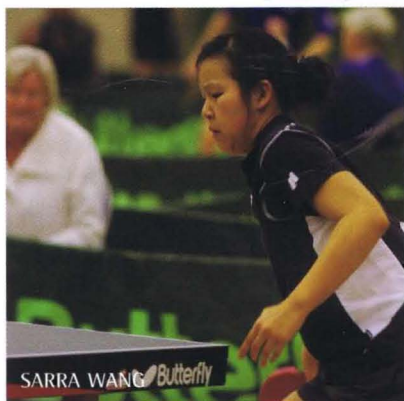
England cadet girls represented by Karina Lefevre and Melissa Wright started out with 5-0 wins over Isle of Man and Wales on the Friday night. On the Saturday they carried on their winning ways beating Guernsey 3-2 with Alice Loveridge beating both England girls. The girls then raced past Ireland 5-0 and Scotland 4-1 with Natasha Miliken getting the better of Karina Lefevre deuce in the fifth. With this undefeated run the girls duly took the title.

The cadet boys were represented by Derbyshire duo Liam Pitchford and Sean Cullen. The boys raced thought their games beating Scotland, Wales, Isle of Man, and Guernsey all 5-0. The only non 5-0 win was against Ireland, the boys winning 4-1 with Sean Cullen going down to Paul McCreery in four. Just like the girls the boys took the title. The junior girls like the cadet girls got off to a flying start by beating Wales 5-0 followed by 5-0 wins over Guernsey and Ireland. The final match (due to no Isle of Man junior girls' team) was against Scotland with England winning 3-2 Sarra Wang was unsuccessful in both her singles but Emma Vickers went through the entire team event unbeaten.

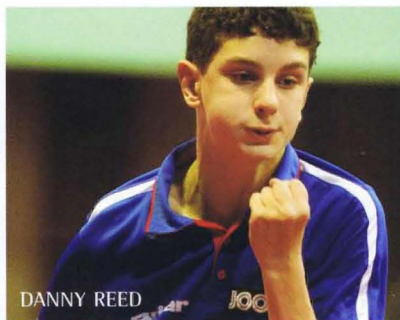
The junior boys of Bradley Evans and Damien Nicholls had 5-0 wins over Isle of Man, Wales and Guernsey, and a 4-1 victory over Ireland with Damien Nicholls going down to Gavin Maguire in four sets. The closest match for the boys was against Scotland, the England boys winning 3-2 with Craig Hardie of Scotland beating Damien and the England boys losing the doubles. With this victory the junior boys completed an England clean sweep in the team events. Along with the title Bradley Evans was also undefeated.



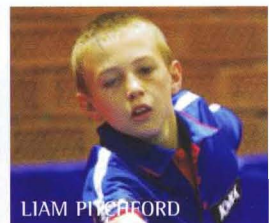
EMMA VICKERS



SARRA WANG Butterfly



DANNY REED



LIAM PITCHFORD

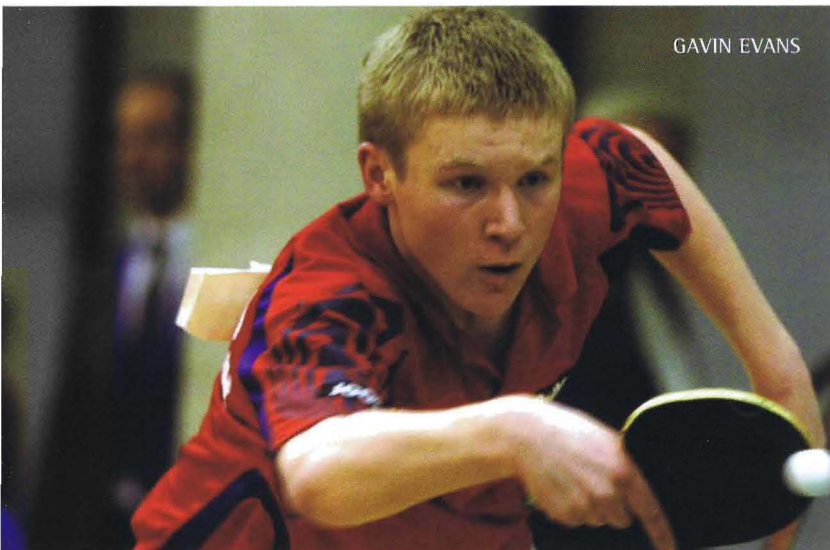
The boys raced thought their games beating Scotland, Wales, Isle of Man, and Guernsey all 5-0. The only non 5-0 win was against Ireland, the boys winning 4-1 with Sean Cullen going down to Paul McCreery in four.

SINGLES RESULTS

The cadet girls was won by number 2 seed and number 1 England cadet Melissa Wright who beat top seed Alice Loveridge and got her revenge for her only defeat in the team event. On her way to the final she beat Natasha Rees from Wales in the quarter-finals and Susan Nealon from Ireland in the semis. Karina Lefevre got to the semis before losing to Alice Loveridge.

The cadet boys again won by an English player, number 1 seed and number 3 England cadet Liam Pitchford. He beat Paul McCreery in the final. He also did not drop a set in the singles event. Liam beat Sam Hanley from Ireland in the quarters and Oliver Langlois from Guernsey in the semis. Fellow cadet Sean Cullen lost to Callum Main of Scotland in the quarter-final in four sets.

The junior girls was taken by top seed and number 1 England junior, Emma Vickers in an all England final beating Sarra Wang in four to take the title. In the semis



GAVIN EVANS

Emma beat Roxanna Milne from Scotland and Sarra beat Corinna Whitaker in five.

The junior boys' title was taken to complete an all England clean sweep by top seed Bradley Evans beating Scotland's Craig Howieson in five sets in the final. Craig had beaten Damien Nicholls in one semi and Bradley beating the other Scottish Craig, this time Hardie in the other semi. So eight out of eight golds and one silver for the England squad a very good showing by all players.

Cadet Girls

- 1st England
- 2nd Guernsey
- 3rd Ireland
- 4th Scotland
- 5th Wales
- 6th Isle of Man

Cadet Boys

- 1st England
- 2nd Ireland
- 3rd Scotland
- 4th Guernsey
- 5th Wales
- 6th Isle of Man

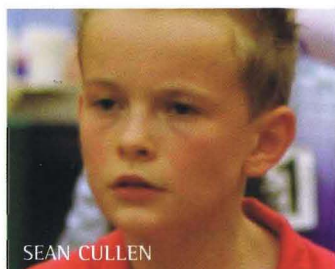
Junior Girls

- 1st England
- 2nd Ireland
- 3rd Scotland
- 4th Wales
- 5th Guernsey

Junior Boys

- 1st England
- 2nd Scotland
- 3rd Guernsey
- 4th Ireland
- 5th Wales
- 6th Isle of Man

THE cadet boys again won by an English player, no **1 SEED** and no **3** England cadet Liam Pitchford. He beat Paul **MCCREERY** in the final.



SEAN CULLEN

TRIUMPHANT TRIO CONQUER THE CANADIAN JUNIOR OPEN

As top seeds, England's trio of Paul Drinkhall, Danny Reed and Gavin Evans did not disappoint, winning a hat-trick of titles and dominating the Canadian Youth Open.

The team event as usual preceded the singles events, and provided a flavour of things to come as the bright talents of English table tennis shone through.

TEAM DOMINANCE

Despite a slightly conservative start England picked up the pace at the quarter-final stage defeating the USA without losing a single game. Reed in particular played outstandingly beating Joseph Cochran 3-0 (11-2, 11-3, 11-5).

In the semi-final the trio's opposition was Canada A, which proved trickier than England might have hoped. The Canadian Shen Qiang confidence was brimming, and with the backing of the home crowd he managed to defeat Reed, and then Drinkhall, to take the match all the way. With the match tied Reed settled the English nerves with an assured performance, defeating Ling Kun Yang 3-1 (9-11, 11-6, 13-11, 11-6) and booking England's place in the final.

The final was an all European affair with the talented Belgium squad standing in way of victory. However, following an initial deficit England stepped up a gear dismantling the Belgium resolve in convincing fashion. Drinkhall's scintillating form proved too strong as he won both his individual matches, and paired with the outstanding 13 year old, Gavin Evans, took the doubles as well to make the final result 3-1.

CADET SINGLES

Gavin Evans continues to prove just what a talent he is: with two years left at this level the youngster from Newark is simply remarkable and becoming an indispensable asset for England at all levels. He breezed through to the final with ease and became Cadet Boys' Singles Champion by defeating India's Soumyajit Ghosh 3-1 (12-10, 11-6, 9-11, 11-7).

JUNIOR SINGLES

Drinkhall proved devastating again, further enhancing his global reputation after taking the final 4-3 (11-8, 8-11, 11-9, 4-11, 11-6, 10-12, 11-9) in another showdown with the impressive Belgian, Benjamin Rogiers.

Reed also put in an inspired display battling hard to gain a place in the semi-final by defeating the top talent from India, Raja Rajasekaran in the quarter-final 4-3 (6-11, 13-11, 7-11, 11-8, 11-7, 11-13, 11-5). However, he was unfortunate to be on the same side of the draw as team-mate Drinkhall, losing out 4-1 (7-11, 11-9, 4-11, 7-11, 8-11). With Evans also making the quarter-final England's Performance Director Steen Hansen was suitably pleased. He said "It was a great day, our quality improved and this was demonstrated with the right results".

JUNIOR BOYS' DOUBLES

The doubles reflected the pattern of the tournament as England again lined up against Belgium with Evans and Drinkhall facing Rogiers and Jean in a repeat of the team final. Despite the best efforts of the Belgian pairing, England again proved too strong winning 3-1 (9-11, 11-5, 11-9, 11-6). This tournament outlines further the brilliance and potential of the young English table tennis squad.

A true asset to English sport.



villain

cultural • revolution

or



victim

Matthew Syed meets the former world table tennis champion who was fêted before being driven to the point of suicide

In October 1976, one month after the death of Chairman Mao, Zhuang Zedong was seized from his home and escorted by armed guards to an anonymous building in rural China. There the greatest sportsman in China's history was cast into a cramped room containing a single bed and a small reading lamp. For the next four years his only contact with the outside world would be at the hands of his interrogators from the Communist Party.

Such was the speed and secrecy of Zhuang's arrest that to this day he does not know the location of the building or whether it still exists. He was confined to his room except for hour-long bouts of regimented exercise and had no contact with other "residents". For more than two

years his wife and two young children, who suffered terrible persecution because of their association with him, lived in the belief that he had been executed.

The only nod the party gave to Zhuang's illustrious sporting past was the privilege of being able to read books, which he devoured like a starving man. He credits Alexandre Dumas's *The Count of Monte Cristo* as having sustained his sanity and his life. "It is a beautiful book," he told me. "Incarceration coupled with interrogation can play cruel tricks on the mind and many are driven to suicide. The book taught me to hope when I was living at my mental limits."

How had it come to this? Just 11 years earlier, Zhuang had won an unprecedented third successive table tennis

world singles title, establishing his reputation as the most successful player in the sport's history. He had been eulogised by the political elite, revered by the masses and held up as an icon of revolutionary virtue by Mao Zedong.

The rollercoaster ride of the next decade, culminating in detention and exile, symbolises the brutal capriciousness of the Cultural Revolution. But was Zhuang just another innocent victim of that perplexing era, or a political criminal who got the punishment he deserved? Opinion in China, drawn from the labyrinth of rumour and innuendo constructed around its infamous past, is sharply divided. Here his extraordinary story is revealed in full:

I met Zhuang in a café at the Poly Plaza Hotel in an eastern suburb of Beijing and was immediately struck by

his youthfulness. His boyish face and muscular upper body belied his 66 years and provided no visible manifestation of the incalculable trauma he has endured. His animated body language and ferocious assertiveness commanded attention, but his words would have enraptured an audience had they been spoken in a whisper.

"Everything changed in the spring of 1966 [the year after he had won his third world title] when we heard the shocking news," he said. "One day we were training at the national team headquarters without a care in the world, the next we received a letter from the Ministry telling us that sporting institutions were a bastion of antiMaoist revisionism and were to be dismantled. China did not take part in international table tennis for the next five years."

ZHUANG ZEDONG

CHRONOLOGY

- 1940 Zhuang Zedong born in Jiangsu
- 1959 Rong Guotuan becomes first Chinese athlete to win a world title in any sport (the men's singles in table tennis in Germany)
- 1961-1965 Zhuang wins an unprecedented three successive world singles titles
- 1966 Cultural Revolution begins. Sports competitions cease, the training system is dismantled and Chinese teams are stopped from competing abroad. Many athletes condemned as sons and daughters of the bourgeoisie
- 1968 Rong Guotuan, Fu Qifang and Jiang Yongning (three of the national table tennis team) commit suicide after sustained periods of detention and torture
- 1971 China re-emerges on the international stage to win men's team event at the World Championships in Nagoya, Japan. Zhuang befriends Glenn Cowan, an American player, triggering an invitation for the United States team to tour China
- 1972 Richard Nixon visits Mao, leading to a realignment of global politics
- 1972 America issues return invitation and Zhuang leads delegation to the White House
- 1973 Zhuang given the job of sports minister and elevated on to the Central Committee of the Communist Party
- 1973-1976 Zhuang aligns himself with the Gang of Four. Rumours surface of affair with Jiang Qing (Mao's third wife). Zhuang involved in organising public denunciations and beatings
- 1976 Mao dies and Gang of Four (who had been carrying out Mao's instructions) arrested by the new leadership. Zhuang sent to detention camp for four years
- 1980 Zhuang released from detention and exiled to Shanxi
- 1984 Zhuang readmitted to Beijing
- 1985-2007 Zhuang earns a living as a table tennis coach in Beijing. The slow process of rehabilitation is given impetus when he is invited to a party in 2006 marking the 35th anniversary of "ping-pong diplomacy"

The madness had started.

The official justification for the Cultural Revolution was to re-radicalise a society that was slipping into old capitalist habits. In reality, it was a naked attempt by Mao to eliminate all threats to his unbridled power. It began with a propaganda programme designed to create mass paranoia – pupils were incited to denounce their teachers and officials to condemn their superiors. It unleashed an epidemic of mutual suspicion that quickly gave way to a nationwide orgy of unspeakable brutality.

In the previously benign world of table tennis, the terror was just beginning. As rival groups vied for supremacy, Fu Qifang, Zhuang's coach, and Jiang Yongning, another member of the national team, were placed under house arrest by Red Guards, a radical student group. They were soon joined by Rong Guotuan, the first Chinese to win a world title in any sport – at the World Table Tennis Championships in 1959 – and one of the country's most celebrated figures.


They were each condemned on trumped-up charges of

“There is no such thing as a perfect man, but there are great men”.

spying and subjected to torture and public humiliation. Thrown into solitary confinement, they were forced to confess to imaginary crimes and to reeducate themselves by studying the supposedly infallible teachings of Mao. Slowly but surely, they began to lose their minds. In what is regarded as the greatest sporting tragedy of the Cultural Revolution, Fu hanged himself on April 16, 1968; Jiang took the same dreadful step one month later.

Rong, who had followed his distinguished playing career with an inspirational period as team leader and coach, was the last to break. A gentle and deeply principled man who had been revered by teammates and officials, he hanged himself on June 20. In his final letter he wrote: “I am not a spy. Please do not suspect me. I am sorry to you all. I love my honour more than my life.” Although there is no evidence to suggest that Zhuang was implicated in the violence against his teammates, his attitude provides a vivid insight into the mind control exerted by Mao's propaganda.

“At the time I felt miserable because I was close friends with those who were tortured to death,” he said. “But on the other hand I had complete trust in Chairman Mao. It was him who started this campaign and I feel my belief in Chairman Mao is bigger than my feeling towards my



His boyish face and muscular upper body belied his 66 years

friends. I still believe that Chairman Mao had the interests of China at heart."

Zhuang has a habit of placing his hand on one's upper arm when he is saying something of deep meaning.

His enduring faith in the wisdom of Mao is absolute, conveyed as much by the childlike appeal in his eyes as his words. When I confronted him with Mao's atrocities, his response was instant. "There is no such thing as a perfect man, but there are great men," he said. The former chairman could not have scripted it any better.

Zhuang's spectacular promotion after his seminal role in the "ping-pong diplomacy" in 1971 took him into even closer proximity with his beloved leader. He retired from table tennis after being made sports minister and gaining elevation to the Central Committee, the innermost sanctum of the Communist Party and the font of political power in China. It set the stage for arguably the most catastrophic fall from grace in sporting history.

"It was a huge honour to be a member of the Central Committee, but it carried huge risks," Zhuang said. "It was like being taken to the top of a mountain only to find a steep precipice at your feet [I later discovered that his wife had begged him not to take the position]. If one was going to survive, one had to form an alliance that would please the Chairman and offer oneself protection."

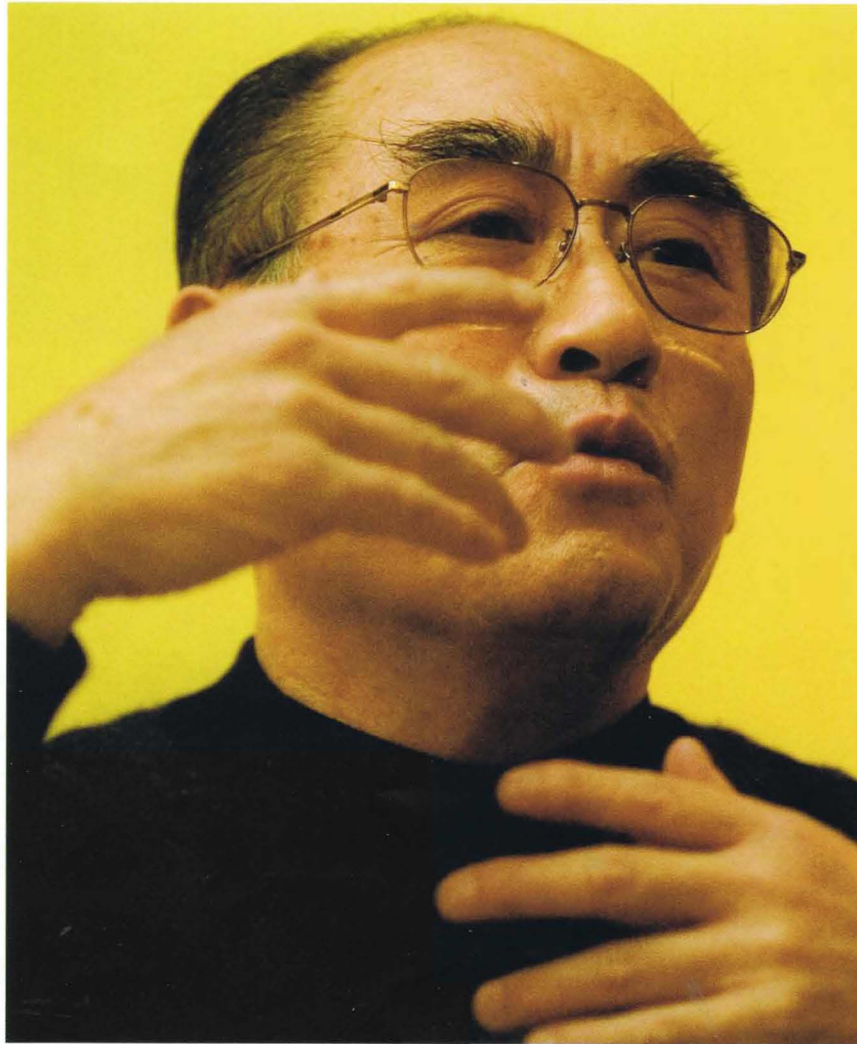
Given Zhuang's impeccable Maoist credentials it was, perhaps, inevitable that he would gravitate towards the Gang of Four, the fanatical grouping led by Jiang Qing (Mao's third wife), who had been masterminding the Cultural Revolution on the Chairman's behalf. By giving them public and political support, Zhuang implicated himself in some of the worst excesses of the era.

Such was the closeness of his relationship with Jiang that rumours soon began to surface of an affair. Although Zhuang admitted to having been granted dozens of private audiences with Mao's wife, he denied that their relationship was anything more than political. "She was like a mother to me," he said. "She lived a clean and elegant life and has been unfairly scapegoated for her role in the Cultural Revolution."

But Zhuang was more than a mere cheerleader for his political overlords. He soon set about organising mass-denunciation meetings in which perceived political opponents were beaten around the head, forced to utter self-criticisms and had their hair shaved off. He also ruthlessly disposed of opponents within the table tennis community. Xu Yinsheng, the man with whom he had won the world doubles title in 1965, was publicly humiliated and exiled from Beijing.

Zhuang repeatedly refused to talk in detail about his crimes. His former assertiveness was replaced by lengthy pauses as his eyes drifted into the middle distance. For the first time, the years seemed to lie heavily on his powerful shoulders. "I was on the wrong side," he said at last, his face registering the kind of bewilderment only seen on fanatics coming to terms with their errors. "I did many dreadful things that I now regret." But his reign of terror was not to last.

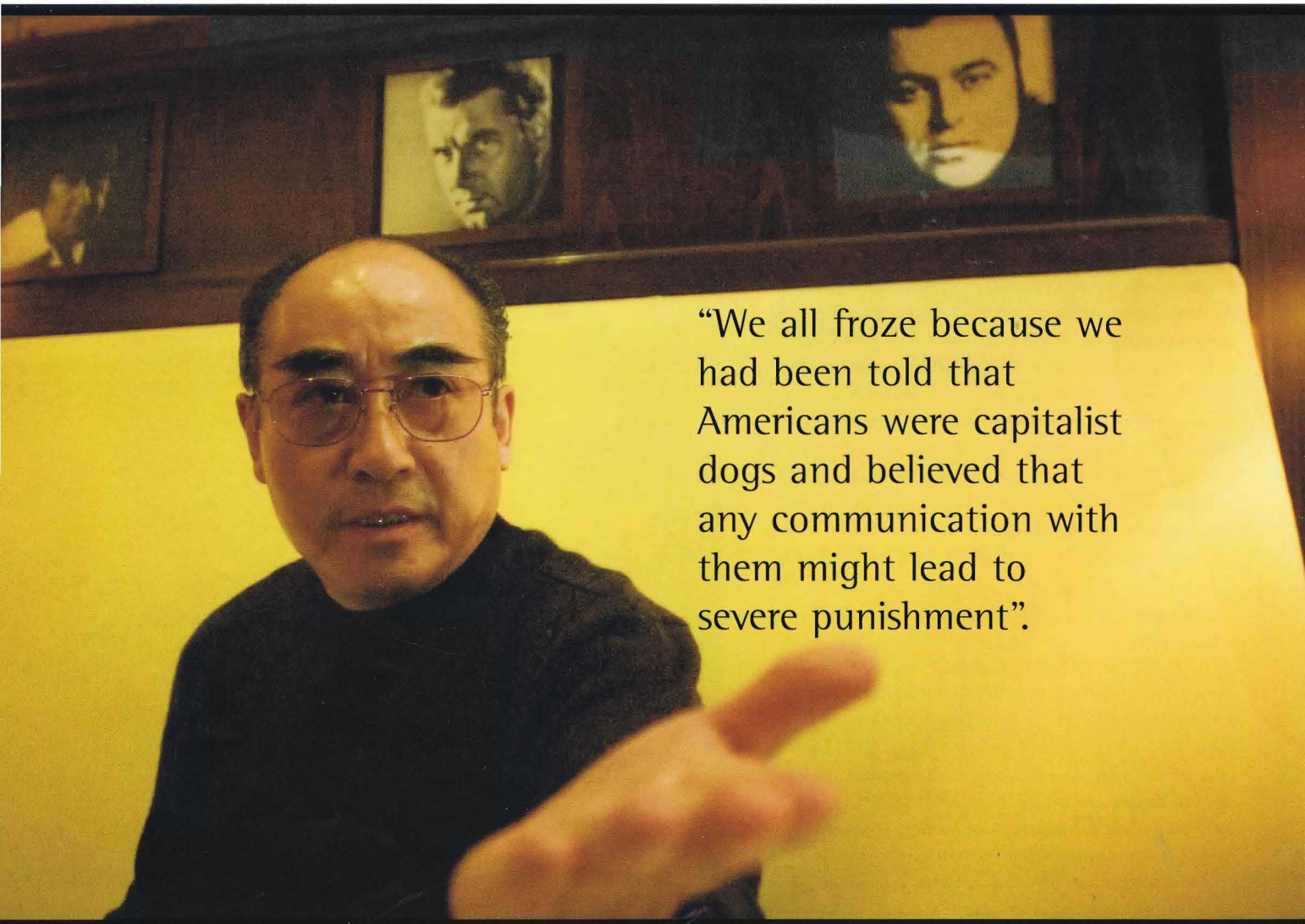
In the power struggle that followed Mao's death in



1976, the Gang of Four was arrested and Zhuang soon felt the dread hand of the state investigators on his shoulder. Of his four years in captivity, he said simply: "I understand why they wanted to ask me questions. I had been a top political figure so I was a good source of information for the Government." His equanimity was shocking but sincere; he was thinking of the interests of the party even as he was being persecuted by it.

In the 27 years since his release, Zhuang has endured the ignominy of being implicated in one of the most infamous atrocities of modern times. His name and reputation are familiar to virtually every citizen in the People's Republic. He spent the first few years after his release in exile in Shanxi province but for the past two decades he has been in Beijing, involved in low-key table tennis coaching. Only in the past few years has he received official invitations to sporting events, including the 35-year anniversary of "ping-pong diplomacy" in 2006. It is unlikely that he will be fully rehabilitated in his lifetime.

But how will he be judged by history? The more one immerses oneself in the moral confusion of the Cultural Revolution, the less one is inclined to issue absolute judgments. Villain or victim? The answer is strange but simple and applies to many of those who put their faith in the monster that was Mao Zedong. He was both.



“We all froze because we had been told that Americans were capitalist dogs and believed that any communication with them might lead to severe punishment”.

THE POLITICAL GAMBLE

The Chinese table tennis team emerged from the chaos of the Cultural Revolution at the World Championships in Nagoya in 1971. But despite their heroics on the table with a cruelly depleted team, in which Zhuang Zedong led them to team gold, the championship will forever be remembered for Zhuang's audacious decision to befriend Glenn Cowan, an American player. It paved the way for détente between China and the United States and an enduring re-alignment in global politics.

“Cowan accidentally got on the China team bus after a training session,” Zhuang said. “We all froze because we had been told that Americans were capitalist dogs and believed that any communication with them might lead to severe punishment. But I remembered that Mao had met Edgar Snow (an American journalist) on Tiananmen and told him: ‘China should place its hope with the Americans.’”

“Despite the nervous protestations of my team-mates I walked to the front of the bus and offered him a gift. By the time the bus arrived at its destination a huge group of photographers had gathered to capture our meeting and the photos made the front of all the Japanese newspapers.” It was the biggest political gamble of Zhuang's life.

Back in Beijing Mao read a summary of the Japanese newspaper reports on page 78 of his internal documentation. “Chairman Mao had just taken his sleeping pills,” Zhuang, who learned the inside story from conversations with Zhang Yufeng (Mao's secretary and mistress), said. “But he had not yet fallen asleep. He shouted ‘my grandpa Zhuang!’ (an indication of his admiration for what Zhuang had done) and told his assistants to accept a request from the American table tennis team to visit China.”

But his aides did not move. “Chairman Mao had issued an earlier instruction that any orders issued after taking sleeping pills were to be ignored,” Zhuang said. “The Chairman had to shout to get his assistants to act upon his new instructions. He said: ‘Do it quickly or it will be too late.’ He managed to stay awake until he had it confirmed that the invitation had been issued.”

There is no doubt that the seven-day tour, the first by any American delegation for 22 years, marked a watershed in 20th century history. Nixon, who was astounded at how quickly the story moved from the back to the front pages, called it: “the week that changed the world”. Less than a year later he became the first American President to visit China since the communist revolution.

2006/07

County Championships

SENIOR PREMIER DIVISION

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sussex	5	2	0	44	26	12
Derbyshire	5	1	1	45	25	11
Middlesex	5	1	1	44	26	11
Devonshire	5	0	2	43	27	10
Berkshire	3	0	4	32	38	6
Essex	1	1	5	28	42	3
Lancashire	0	2	5	24	46	2
Yorkshire	0	1	6	20	50	1

VETERAN PREMIER DIVISION

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Leicestershire	7	0	0	46	24	14
Yorkshire	6	0	1	48	22	12
Kent	3	2	2	39	31	8
Devon	3	1	3	36	34	7
Surrey	3	1	3	35	35	7
Lancashire	1	2	4	31	39	4
Cheshire	1	1	5	25	45	3
Essex	0	1	6	20	50	1



The County Championship
Official Ball

Worcestershire Retain Title

The play-off for the over 60s county championships proved to be a thrilling affair with three counties being involved in the event played at St Neots TTC, Cambridgeshire.

The winners and runners-up of Divisions 1A and 1B were invited to participate in the play-off event but due to unavailability Sussex, runners-up in division 1B, were unable to raise a team thus giving Worcestershire a bye through to the final where they would meet the winners of Kent and Yorkshire.

Kent blasted off into a 3-0 lead with Tom Adams beating Brian Allison 11-9 11-8 15-13 followed by a hard fought three game victory by Dave Kellard 14-12 14-12 13-11 over Geoff Brook, and when Keith Clark came from two games down to beat Keith Powell 5-11 9-11 11-9 15-13 11-5, the south east county had established a commanding lead.

However, Yorkshire were not going to give up without a fight as to the astonishment of all present they rattled off the next four sets to take the lead, as firstly Allison partnered Carol Judson to a mixed doubles win against Adams and Pam Butcher 10-12 11-13 11-4 11-6 13-11, which was followed by a comfortable win for Allison over Dave Kellard. Judson brought the sides level as she just scraped home against Butcher in the women singles 9-11 11-8 11-6 9-11 11-9, and it was the men's doubles pairing of Powell and Brook who gave Yorkshire the lead as they just beat Clark and Kellard 11-6 6-11 9-11 13-11 14-12.

Kent hit back in the next set to draw level as Clark easily beat Brook in three 11-7 11-7 11-3, and in the penultimate set of the match Adams beat Powell in four 11-5 11-8 9-11 11-6. In the final set Powell and Judson beat Clark and Butcher 11-6 11-9 4-11 11-2 to complete the match in a 5-5 draw. The result then went to countback of games and it was Kent who progressed through to the final by virtue of a superior games advantage of 22-18.

The final saw Kent take an opening set advantage as Adams beat Ray Dixon 11-6 8-11 9-11 11-3 11-8 only to see his side amazingly drop the next five sets as Worcestershire raced to a 5-1 lead.

Mike Meredith came from behind to beat Kellard 11-13 12-10 11-5 14-12 to level the match which was followed by another four game victory by Worcestershire as Roy Norton beat Clark 6-11 11-6 12-10 11-6. Then Dixon and Margaret Dignum increased Worcestershire's lead as they took a three game mixed doubles victory over Adams and Butcher.

Dixon beat Kellard in the next set 13-11 11-6 11-7 to give Worcestershire a 4-1 lead and a women's singles win by Dignum 11-4 9-11 11-9 11-4 saw Worcestershire establish a 5-1 lead, one set from victory.

Adams and Clark pulled a set

County Championships

back for Kent with a last gasp victory over Meredith and Norton 11-5 8-11 3-11 13-11 9-11 and it was Clark who pulled another set back as he just edged out Meredith in an astonishing five game victory which saw all 5 games end in 13-11 victories, and importantly for Kent it was Clark who took the fifth and brought the match score to 5-3.

The penultimate set saw Adams bring the sides to within a set as he eased past Norton 11-3 11-4 11-6, and in the final set it was Kent who drew first blood as Kellard and Butcher took the opening game 11-9 against Norton and Dignum. Worcestershire hit back with an 11-6 victory only for the Kent pair to follow suit, a feat repeated by Norton and Dignum and so a deciding game was required. This went the way of Worcestershire 11-9 and with it a 6-4 victory to retain the title they won last season.

By Barry Snowden

Youth excel for Hampshire

Hampshire table tennis is celebrating its greatest achievement after their junior team were crowned champions of England.

Southampton's David McBeath, Winchester's Garth Kinlocke, Bournemouth's Mathew Ware, Southampton's Becky House and Andover's Hannah Hicks were undefeated against counties from across the country to win the title for the first ever time. Their achievement was also unprecedented in that they became the first team to win

CADET PREMIER DIVISION						
	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sussex	6	1	0	53	17	13
Yorks	5	0	2	41	29	10
Lincs.	4	1	2	37	33	9
Middlesex	4	0	3	37	33	8
Warwickshire	2	1	4	31	39	5
Cleveland	2	1	4	31	39	5
Gwent	1	1	5	26	44	3
Surrey	0	3	4	24	46	3

CADET DIVISION 1B						
	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sussex 2	7	0	0	53	17	14
Bucks	5	0	2	46	24	10
Surrey 2	4	1	2	42	28	9
Glamorgan	3	2	2	41	29	8
Wiltshire	3	1	3	39	31	7
Somerset	2	2	3	36	34	6
Sussex 3	1	0	6	11	59	2
Gloucestershire	0	0	7	12	58	0

JUNIOR DIVISION 1A						
	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hertford	5	2	0	44	26	12
Cleveland	5	1	1	41	29	11
Cheshire	3	3	1	40	30	9
Durham	3	3	1	39	30	9
Suffolk	2	2	3	35	35	6
Warwick	2	1	4	31	39	5
Essex 2nd	1	1	5	28	41	3
Lancashire	0	1	6	21	49	1

SENIOR DIVISION 1A						
	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Leicestershire	5	1	1	41	29	11
Notts	3	3	1	40	30	9
North'land	3	3	1	37	33	9
Cleveland	3	2	2	43	27	8
Lincolnshire	3	2	2	36	34	8
Durham	1	4	2	34	36	6
Worcestershire	1	1	5	25	45	3
Norfolk	1	0	6	24	46	2

VETERAN DIVISION 1A						
	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Middlesex	5	2	0	49	21	12
Cheshire 2	4	2	1	41	29	10
Essex 2	3	3	1	39	31	9
Worcester	2	4	1	33	37	8
Northumber	2	2	3	34	36	6
Herts	2	1	4	33	37	5
Oxfordshire	0	3	4	26	44	3
Norfolk	1	1	5	25	45	3

OVER 60S DIVISION 1A						
	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Worcester	5	0	0	39	11	10
Yorkshire	4	0	1	38	12	8
Warwick	2	1	2	27	23	5
Cheshire 1	2	1	2	23	27	5
Cheshire 2	1	0	4	9	41	2
Lancs	0	0	5	14	36	0

CADET DIVISION 1A						
	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
S Yorkshire	5	1	0	43	17	11
Notts	5	0	1	41	19	10
Worcestershire	4	0	2	39	21	8
Cheshire	3	1	2	39	21	7
Lancashire	2	0	4	32	28	4
Shropshire	1	0	5	8	52	2
Leicestershire	0	0	6	8	52	0

JUNIOR PREMIER DIVISION						
	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hampshire	7	0	0	56	14	14
Lincoln	5	1	1	37	33	11
Derbyshire	4	2	1	43	27	10
Yorkshire	2	2	3	31	39	6
Devon	2	1	4	29	41	5
Essex	1	3	3	29	41	5
S Yorkshire	2	0	5	31	39	4
Bucks	0	1	6	24	46	1

JUNIOR DIVISION 1B						
	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sussex	6	0	1	42	28	12
Cornwall 1	5	1	1	52	18	11
Gloucestershire	3	3	1	43	27	9
Glamorgan	4	1	2	42	28	9
Middlesex 1	3	1	3	37	33	7
Surrey	1	1	5	26	44	3
Somerset	1	1	5	26	44	3
Kent	1	0	6	12	58	2

SENIOR DIVISION 1B						
	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gloucestershire	6	1	0	47	23	13
Surrey	4	1	2	45	25	9
Middlesex 2	3	1	3	35	35	7
Wiltshire	3	1	3	33	37	7
Glamorgan	2	2	3	34	36	6
Bucks	2	2	3	30	40	6
Devon 2	2	0	5	29	41	4
Dorset	1	2	4	27	43	4

VETERAN DIVISION 1A						
	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sussex	7	0	0	60	10	14
Kent 2	5	0	2	43	27	10
Surrey 2	4	1	2	38	32	9
Wiltshire	4	0	3	37	33	8
Dorset 1	3	1	3	33	37	7
Berkshire	2	1	4	30	40	5
Essex 3	1	0	6	22	48	2
Dorset 2	0	1	6	17	53	1

OVER 60S DIVISION 1B						
	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kent 1	5	1	0	41	19	11
Sussex	4	2	0	39	21	10
Essex	3	0	3	36	24	6
Berkshire	3	0	3	29	31	6
Middlesex	2	1	3	32	28	5
Hertford	1	1	4	18	42	3
Kent 2	0	1	5	15	45	1

Division Two, Division One and the Premier Division in successive seasons. Most exciting of all is that the core of Hampshire's young team still have at least another two seasons in the junior age group.

Hicks was particularly outstanding during the final round of matches, with victories including a superb fight-back from 2-0 down to defeat the England number two junior Emma Vickers 9-11, 9-11, 11-8, 11-9, 11-6 in the crucial match against Derbyshire.

Earlier in the weekend, Hampshire had built on their excellent work in the first round of matches by easing to an 8-2 victory against the defending champions Buckinghamshire. McBeath, Hicks and House were all unbeaten in this match, although Ware performed extremely well in only losing 14-12 in the deciding fifth leg against Gavin Evans, who is rated number eight in the England men's ranking list.

Hampshire's biggest test, though, was against Derbyshire, but they came through with a 6-4 win despite trailing 3-2 and 4-3 at different stages of the match. Ware and Hicks were both undefeated, with Ware, who is ranked number 12 in England, producing a particularly vital win against Liam Pitchford to square the match at 4-4.

Kinlocke was then left with the job of sealing victory by beating Sean Cullen 11-8, 8-11, 11-4, 11-3. On the final day,

Hampshire held their nerve to defeat Devonshire 8-2 and then South Yorkshire 7-3 to retain their 100% record and clinch the title.

Hicks completed a great personal weekend by beating Melissa Wright 3-11, 9-11, 11-7, 11-8, 11-5 to go through the entire round of matches undefeated.

She then also followed up her success in the team championships by winning the national schools under-16 individual championships. To win that title she defeated Fiona Dennett 11-8 in the deciding fifth game after coming through an even closer semi-final against Karina Lefevre. The 15-year-old Hicks is now rated number 11 in the junior rankings. Hicks and Ware, who both train at the Bournemouth Sports Club, were also recently selected to represent England in the junior open tournament in the Czech Republic.

House also completed an amazing clean sweep of SIX major titles at the recent Southampton table tennis championships.

The Southampton West player won every event that she entered to lift the cadet, junior and women's singles crowns to add to an unprecedented hat-trick of victories in the doubles events.

In the women's singles, House defeated Katie Bradford 3-0 in the final, before teaming up with Sarah Warwick to defeat Anne Longland and Nicola Dunkason in the

doubles event. In the mixed doubles, she was partnered by the brilliant national wheelchair finalist Shaun Newcombe to defeat Trung Tran and Warwick. In a repeat of the women's final, House beat Bradford in the junior event and Stephanie Wells in the cadet singles. She also teamed up with Lewis Creighton to win the under 15 open doubles event.

In the men's tournament, Alpha's Alex Rorke became the new Southampton singles champion after winning a thrilling final against the Vietnamese student Trong Tran. It was the first Southampton title for Rorke, who came through a tense semi-final against his team-mate Rod McMullan. Tran had earlier disposed of the defending champion Mike Rhodes in the semi-final, but could not overcome Rorke's excellent defence in the final. Despite losing the first leg, Rorke ran out a 3-1 winner.

In the men's doubles, the Generation pairing of Rhodes and Ashley Willets proved just too strong for McMullan and his partner Stuart Williams. McMullan, though, made up for losing that final by defeating the former multi-Southampton and Hampshire champion Chris Shetler in a high quality veterans' final.

Southampton West's Ruihao Zhang was victorious in the junior singles, while the cadet singles was won by Jason Lam.

By Jeremy Wilson





JASON SUGRUE

a player's player - British League

Former England and current Irish Senior international Jason Sugrue epitomises the spirit of the DHS London Progress Club more than any other player, and as the only player to have played in all nine of their Premier Division Championship winning teams his opinions are well worth seeking out.

Jason has seen numerous top class players pass through the Club's ranks in the last nine years, amongst them - Gareth Herbert, Andrew Eden, Cris Sladden, Tomasz Gretschesell, Marco Essomba, Tajudeen Agunbiade, Christian Hundhausen, Colin Wilson, Daniel Feschatsion, Carl Morgan, Anthony Corbin, Eli Baraty and Errol Skeete, but having played in all nine of their title winning sides Jason may well have set a record that only he will ever be able to beat. In addition, Jason was in the first-ever Progress Championships winning side, who were the proud winners of Division Three (South) back in 1994. His team-mates that year were Anthony Corbin, Errol Skeete and Kevin Pickles. Not surprisingly Jason says that Progress's first Premier Division Championship success was the "special one" and few people will disagree that the winning team that season - Marco

Essomba, Darren Blake, Gareth Herbert and Jason Sugrue was a very special side indeed.

With 19 wins out of 22 singles this season Jason will also be a strong contender for the British League's Overall Player of the Season Award, and if anything his enthusiasm for the game has increased. He puts that down to working for TTK/Greenhouse - "Since I started working for TTK I have had to take a greater interest in the sport. The more you know about it the better a coach you are. It's as simple as that".

Sugrue makes strong points about the much discussed fourteen Sundays versus four weekends British League argument. He agrees that there is no doubt that the majority of players prefer the four weekend format, but, for an ambitious club trying to promote the sport the absence of local matches is a disaster, particularly at Premier Division level - "It is only by holding top-class action in the community that sponsors can be retained, that a club can create a sense of togetherness and that club members can feel they are part of their club's success" he adds matter-of-factly. In view of the fact that the Progress Club attract by far the most spectators to their

matches his comments are clearly worthy of the utmost respect.

Sugrue puts a lot of Progress's success down to the sense of "togetherness the club has", something that club supremo Jon Kaufman is famous for promoting. Even though none of the current regular Progress first team are as ambitious as they once were, it is clear that Jason, Terry Young, Darren Blake, and Colum Slevin all get on well. They don't practice as hard as they once did but make no mistake about it, in the build up to a Premier Division weekend you will find them slaving away, putting the hours in at the practice table. At one stage this season it looked as if the brilliant Oxford Fireplace Centre side which featured Chinese superstars Sun Jin, Wu Yue Jiao and Zhao Jing Wei might take the title but Sugrue's determination never wavered. "I always believed we could win it!" he says. You believe him as well. Sure enough, when the Oxford side faltered and their top players became unavailable, Progress made no mistake and by taking seven points from the last weekend they ran out as comfortable winners. Sugrue, with eight wins out of eight, was their talisman as he has been on so many occasions in the past.

This campaign also produced arguably the finest British League match seen for many a year when the DHS London Progress team played the Oxford side at Blackpool in November. A truly magnificent match finished all square with the 2000 Sydney Ladies Doubles Olympic Silver Medallist Sun Jin winning her two singles for Oxford and Swede Sebastian Andersson following suit for Progress. A match people will be talking about for many years to come.

Obviously, a time will come when someone does take the Premier Division title away from the London Progress Club, but, Sugrue remains upbeat - "I worked my way up from Division Three (South) to the Premier Division. What I would like to see is another group of Progress players do the same thing. That really would be marvellous!".

And who knows, perhaps in ten years' time it will be Sugrue managing the British League Premier Division Champions (with Jon Kaufman in a Director of Table Tennis role!), and perhaps the star players will have played their first loops at one of the TTK sponsored schools?.

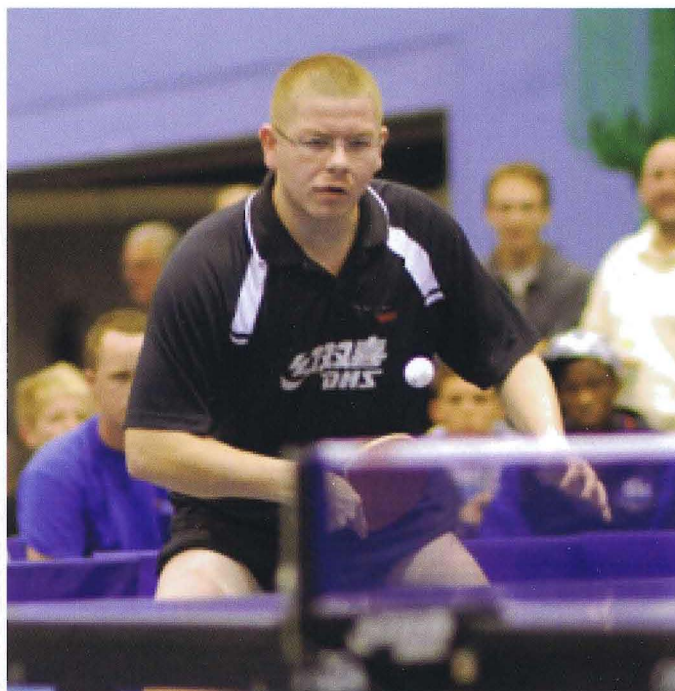
By Steve Kerns

2006/07

British League

PREMIER DIVISION

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
DHS London Progress 1	11	2	1	88	24	24
Oxford Fireplace Centre 1	10	1	3	78	34	21
Ormesby 1	7	2	5	63	49	16
Sycamore	6	3	5	51	61	15
BATTS Team Peniel 1	6	2	6	59	53	14
Ellenborough 1	6	0	8	50	62	12
Harvey Barnets 1	3	0	11	30	82	6
DML Woolwell 1	2	0	12	29	83	4



Champions for the ninth successive time

DHS London Progress 1 made no mistake in beating Harvey Barnets 1 6-2 to capture the British League Premier Division title for the ninth year on the trot, a record that must surely hold up well anywhere in top-class sport.

Fittingly it was the team's talisman Jason Sugrue, a member of the title winning side in all nine campaigns who took the Player of the Match Award, courtesy of his 3-0 wins over William Maybanks and Costas Papanтониou. Colum Slevin and Terry Young were also undefeated whilst Barnett's Alim Hirji's "star" continued his rise to prominence as he downed Darren Blake 11-9, 11-5, 11-7.

The individual game of the round (and arguably the clash of the whole weekend) - one that held the attention of the entire hall took place in the Oxford Fireplace Centre 1 versus Ormesby 1 clash. And what a game it was..... Few people would have given Vytas Rybakas much chance against the smooth-flowing Zheng Wang (Johnson) but the sometimes languid Lithuanian lad clearly wasn't one of them. He

Top individual player averages in the Premier Division

Player	Team	P	W	L	Average
Sebastian Anderson	DHS London Progress 1	6	6	0	100.00
Zheng Wang	Ormesby 1	12	12	0	100.00
Zhao Jing Wei	Oxford Fireplace Centre 1	20	18	2	90.00
Colum Slevin	DHS London Progress 1	26	23	3	88.46
Sun Jin	Oxford Fireplace Centre 1	8	7	1	87.50
Wu Yue Jiao	Oxford Fireplace Centre 1	8	7	1	87.50
Jason Sugrue	DHS London Progress 1	22	19	3	86.36
Kalle Ralfson	DHS London Progress 1	6	5	1	83.33
Gavin Rumgay	Oxford Fireplace Centre 1	20	16	4	80.00
Stewart Crawford	Oxford Fireplace Centre 1	20	16	4	80.00



The British League
Official Ball

matched his opponent's electric forehand with his own deft touches and some superb backhand counter-hitting. The cruellest of nets at 10-9 in the fifth end enabled Zheng to level the scores and Zheng finally edged home 9-11, 11-7, 11-13, 11-7, 14-12. A truly breathtaking encounter. With Vyatas beating Martyn Clarke 9-11, 11-6, 11-6, 7-11, 11-6 in his second singles and Owen Clutterbuck and Ian Packford both getting the better of Andy Wilson, Ormesby were relieved to have led 5-1 before finally winning 5-3.

Sycamore produced another strong display to beat Ellenborough 5-3, with the inform Shaun Marples leading the way by beating Lorestas Trumpauskas 12-10, 8-11, 11-8, 11-5 and Gary Tendler 6-11, 12-10, 11-5, 11-4. A battling Jason Ramage was equally impressive and he scored a superb win over Gary Tendler by a 15-13, 11-9, 12-10 margin and a second victory with an equally hard-fought 11-7, 12-14, 11-9, 11-9 win over Hoxley Baron. John Nilsson continues to impress at this level, and he again managed to contain two seemingly harder hitting opponents. Nilsson beat Michael Marsden 12-10, 11-6, 11-8 and Adam Frost 12-10, 11-8, 11-8. Very economical indeed!

BATTS' 6-2 victory over DML Woolwell 1 looks quite comfortable on paper, in reality it was anything but. Ritchie Venner needed five ends before he saw off Chris Brown 11-5, 11-4, 8-11, 8-11, 11-8, whilst Clive Carthy had to save four match points before he finally edged out Marketa Myskova 9-11, 11-5, 8-11, 12-10, 17-15. Neil Charles was well beaten 4-11, 9-11, 6-11 by Richard Marshall and in his second singles he had to come back from 7-4 down in the fifth end before he finally saw off the hopes of Harry Cutler 11-13, 8-11, 11-6, 12-10, 11-6.

British League Tables

PREMIER DIVISION

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
DHS London Progress 1	11	2	1	88	24	24
Oxford Fireplace Centre 1	10	1	3	78	34	21
Ormesby 1	7	2	5	63	49	16
Sycamore	6	3	5	51	61	15
BATTS Team Peniel 1	6	2	6	59	53	14
Ellenborough 1	6	0	8	50	62	12
Harvey Barnets 1	3	0	11	30	82	6
DML Woolwell 1	2	0	12	29	83	4

DIVISION 1 SOUTH

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
DHS London Progress 2	11	2	1	77	35	24
Harvey Barnets 2	9	2	3	70	42	20
Cippenham 1	9	1	4	66	46	19
York Gardens 1	7	4	3	64	48	18
Fusion 1	4	4	6	56	56	12
Byng Hall 1	5	2	7	48	64	12
Brighton 1	2	2	10	42	70	6
Horsham 1	0	1	13	25	87	1

DIVISION 2 NORTH

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chesterfield 1	12	2	0	93	19	26
Halton Croda 1	9	4	1	76	36	22
Northfield	6	6	2	61	51	18
Sheffield	7	2	5	58	54	16
Fastbats	3	3	8	46	66	9
Grimsby	1	6	7	40	72	8
Ormesby 3	3	2	9	39	73	8
Woodfield	1	3	10	35	77	5

DIVISION 2 SOUTH AND MIDLANDS

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guinness Polska 1	14	0	0	98	14	28
Ashford 1	9	2	3	65	47	20
Guernsey	8	1	5	70	42	17
Kingshurst Bribar	7	3	4	62	50	17
Bedford Modern 2	6	2	6	53	59	14
London Sharks	4	0	10	40	72	8
De Vere Netts	2	1	11	32	80	5
EBS-Orange Westfield 2	1	1	12	28	84	3

DIVISION 3 SOUTH

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brighton 2	10	2	2	68	44	22
Eastbourne	8	4	2	66	46	20
TTK Greenhouse 2	8	3	3	67	45	19
Ellenborough 2	6	3	5	58	54	15
Cippenham 3	6	2	6	56	56	14
Hastings	2	4	8	50	62	8
Horsham 3	3	2	9	43	69	8
Southampton West	2	2	10	40	72	6

DIVISION 4 NORTH

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hartlepool Brierton	11	3	0	85	27	25
Drumchapel Glasgow 2	11	1	2	77	35	23
Pudsey	6	4	4	61	51	16
Barn Green	6	4	4	59	53	16
Chesterfield 2	4	6	4	54	58	14
Elgre Nottingham 4	4	3	7	46	66	10
Rotherham Scorpions 2	2	2	10	39	73	6
Isle of Man	1	0	13	27	85	2

DIVISION 1 NORTH

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Drumchapel Glasgow 1	13	1	0	94	18	27
Derwent 1	10	3	1	69	43	23
Elgre Nottingham 1	8	1	5	67	45	17
Grantham	6	3	5	58	54	15
Ormesby 2	4	2	8	47	65	10
McClymont National	3	3	8	38	74	9
Rotherham Scorpions 1	3	0	11	38	74	6
Seasiders	1	3	10	37	75	5

DIVISION 1 SOUTH AND MIDLANDS

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
TTK Greenhouse 1	12	2	0	91	21	26
OLOP Impact 1	9	3	2	77	35	21
DHS London Progress 3	8	3	3	67	45	19
EBS-Orange Westfield 1	5	3	6	55	57	13
Oxford Fireplace Centre 2	6	1	7	49	62	13
Bedford Modern 1	6	1	7	49	63	13
Cippenham 2	3	1	10	36	75	7
Elgre Nottingham 2	0	0	14	23	89	0

DIVISION 2 SOUTH

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Generation 2	11	0	3	72	40	22
Mossford	5	6	3	56	56	16
DHS London Progress 4	7	1	6	58	54	15
Club Cornwall	6	3	5	57	55	15
Fusion 2	5	4	5	58	54	14
Horsham 2	5	4	5	58	54	14
BATTS Team Peniel 2	5	2	7	53	59	12
OLOP Impact 2	1	2	11	36	76	4

DIVISION 3 NORTH

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barrow	9	4	1	76	36	22
Derwent 2	7	4	3	67	45	18
Elgre Nottingham 3	5	5	4	58	54	15
Uxbridge Burton	5	3	6	59	53	13
Halton Croda 2	5	3	6	52	60	13
Murrayfield	5	3	6	45	67	13
Formby	3	5	6	50	62	11
St Mary's Hull	2	3	9	41	71	7

DIVISION 3 SOUTH AND WEST

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kingfisher Reading	13	0	1	80	32	26
Ashford 2	11	2	1	74	38	24
V.I.P. Entertainments	6	0	8	54	58	12
Fusion 3	6	0	8	53	59	12
Waterside	4	3	7	49	63	11
DML Woolwell 2	3	3	8	49	63	9
NWF	3	3	8	48	64	9
Oxford Fireplace Centre 3	4	1	9	41	71	9

DIVISION 4 SOUTH

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
York Gardens 2	9	2	3	73	39	20
Brighton 3	10	0	4	70	42	20
SEH-Britannia Ipswich	9	1	4	70	42	19
DHS London Progress 5	8	2	4	66	46	18
TTK Greenhouse 3	5	4	5	55	57	14
Guinness Polska 2	5	3	6	51	61	13
Stepney Green	3	2	9	46	66	8
Byng Hall 2	0	0	14	17	95	0

Picture the scene: I am relaxing amidst manicured lawns, watching a ladies doubles tennis match, tucking into salmon and cucumber sandwiches, the sun burning down in sweltering 25 degree heat, with a lovely lady sitting next to me, but this is not Wimbledon! We are in the immaculate grounds of the Cheltenham College, enjoying a snack, and a chat, due to a short break during the Table Tennis two-day event. I must admit it is one of my favourite venues in the junior-playing calendar. Nice people down here, the tournament is extremely well run, a great venue, player friendly, and the catering is second to none, what more can you ask for?

The 40th Cheltenham Cotswold Cadet and Junior Open certainly lived up to its four star status, attracting many of the top young players in England. Many memorable and entertaining matches to savour, in the 20-table arena, none more so than the final of the blue ribbon event, the Junior Boys Open. However, it was the drama that unfolded on the way!

One by one, all of the top players fell by the wayside, and a whole packet of seeds were scattered.....Could I be watching an episode of Gardeners World? Apart from maybe the top six in the England junior boys, anyone from 20 players on their day could take a 4 star title, and so it turned out to be!

Step in Will Maybanks, the Hertfordshire Gigolo, and Garth Kinlocke (maybe the new Des Douglas?) from Hampshire, who were doing most of the damage. Maybanks defeated Matt Ware in the quarters and then raised his game another notch, to outwit the hot favourite and top seed, Zeng Wang in a five set belter, for a place in the final. Meanwhile Kinlocke, fresh from his triumphs in the Junior County Premier Division, and an excellent showing in the Junior Nationals, too, was playing out of his skin, brushing aside the likes of Richard Marshall, Ashley Stokes then Alim Hirji, to also reach the final, and take on Maybanks.

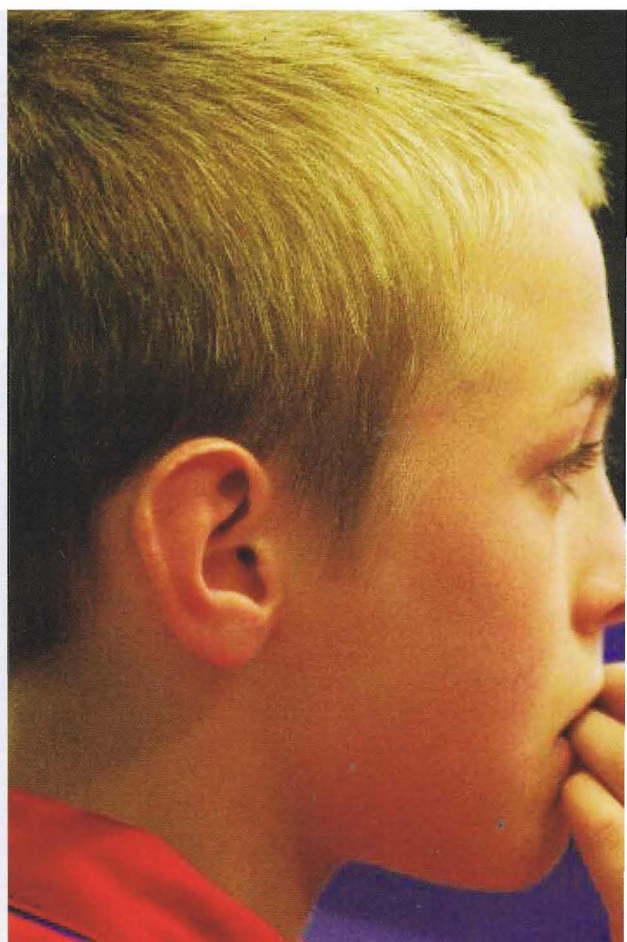
The staged final was a cracker, and had the capacity crowd in awe of the long rallies and tense drama. Often Kinlocke had his opponent tight on the ropes, with his pinpoint accuracy of hard topspin loops to all areas

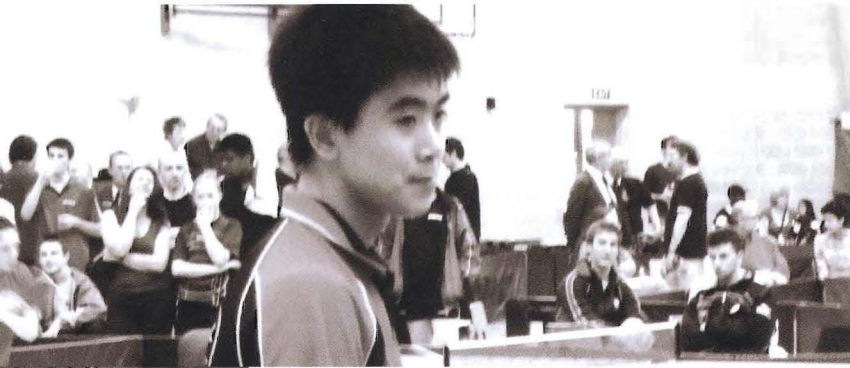
The 40th Cheltenham Cotswold Cadet and Junior Open certainly lived up to its **four star** status, attracting many of the top young players in England.

of the table, and then out of the blue, Maybanks would conjure up a miracle shot to win the point. Whatever was thrown at him, Will responded with brilliance, and at times had more tricks up his sleeve than Paul Daniels. The choos and chows rang out loud, with punching in the air in abundance. It was in the forth set that Maybanks finally wore down the determined challenge from Kinlocke to take the junior boy's title. A great match, lads!

The junior girls' final took place at the same time, just a

In the top half of the draw, David McBeath from Hampshire was also easing his way to the final, after three close games with Oscar Selfridge in the other semi. Cadet internationals, Liam Pitchford and David McBeath, fought out the final with Pitchford taking the title in straight sets.





few yards away, but was overshadowed by the boys' final. Top seeded Liu Meihan, from Cleveland, ran out a comfortable winner, dropping only one game throughout the tournament, and that was to her spirited finalist, Melissa Wright. A mixture of heavy chopped balls and lightning smashes from Meihan was just too much for Melissa to handle.

Earlier, the under 13s and cadets had their events with some exciting prospects coming to the fore, none more so than the "pocket rocket", Liam Pitchford from Derbyshire. This young man is sensational, with his power packed backhand shots, and cracking all round game, making table tennis look so easy. He cruised his way to the semi-final meeting another future star, Richard Andrews from Berkshire. In a close four setter, Pitchford took his place in the final.

In the top half of the draw, David McBeath from Hampshire was also easing his way to the final, after three close games with Oscar Selfridge in the other semi. Cadet internationals, Liam Pitchford and David McBeath, fought out the final with Pitchford taking the title in straight sets. South Yorkshire's Melissa Wright won the cadet girls event, against Cornwall's Martha Travis in the final.

Nice to see young Sarah Russo back in action after an injury, reaching the quarters. Another new name appeared in the latter stages, that of 12 year old Sushmita Limbu, from Middlesex, one of Gareth Herbert's rising stars from TTK.

The under 13s boys' winner was another young man making headlines recently, Joseph Thursby from Nottingham. He had a tough five setter in the semi-final against Buckinghamshire's Eddie Mitchell to reach the final. Kent player, Ross Wilson, met him in the final, after having hard fought victories against Jonathan Evans and Ping Ho, both going the full distance. Thursby took the title in straight sets from Wilson.

Rachel Trevorrow from Cornwall and Chloe Thomas from Wales had a titanic match in the final of the under 13 girls, with Trevorrow coming out on top in a five set marathon. Winners of the junior banded events were Richard Andrews from Berkshire and Joy Whitehorn from Dorset, and the cadet's equivalent went to Alistair Smith (Cornwall) and Sushmita Limbu (Middlesex).

It was a pleasure to witness such fine table tennis from so many young future stars. The event was run ahead of schedule which is a rarity these days, due to the excellent team of officials, including Les and Gill Smith, with tireless backup from Ken Bridle, not forgetting those hard worked stalwarts, the ETTA umpires.

Great also to report the popularity in our sport was reflected in the 40% increase in competitors at the Cheltenham College venue this year, and surely a positive step forward for the future.

Next up for our 'man on the spot' is the Essex 4 Star, where a new concept in junior table tennis will be tested, called the Elite singles, designed for the top 16 seeded junior boys and top 8 girls', find out how this and the rest on the tournament pans out in our next issue.

Earlier, the under 13s and cadets had their events with some exciting prospects coming to the fore, none more so than the

“pocket rocket”

Liam Pitchford from Derbyshire.

The seaside town of **Blackpool** was the latest setting for the Butterfly **Grand Prix** circuit, and the Saturday day **opened up** with the banded events.

The women's Band 2 and 3 finals produced the same result with Sally Clark beating Zoe Fisher; in Band 2 Sally beat top seed Reena Ardesana in her group. You may remember Sally Clark as Sally Marling, a former junior number 1.

In the women's Band 1 final Lisa Radford beat the top seed and England number 5 junior girl Caroline Hallows.

In the men's Band 6 Neil Snodgrass continued his good run of results beating Maciej Nakielski in the final 3-0.

Band 5 was won by Radek Mlvnarczyk beating fourth seed Garry Usher in four games, after Gary had beaten the top seed in the quarter-finals.

Band 4 was won by Steve Lyons beating Wahab Adam in three games; Steve beat second seed Tom Murray in the quarters.

Band 3 was won by Oscar Selfridge beating second seed Paul Savins in the final. Paul in his semi had an epic five set battle with Jack Grant.

Band 2 won by Yorkshire's Simon Pugh beating number two cadet David McBeath in the final.

Band 1 was taken by Kevin Dolder beating Steven Denny in three games after Kevin had beaten top seed Abdul Wuraola in the semis.

Sunday and the turn of the open events. The first upset of the day again was Sally Clark beating newly crowned schools champion Hannah Hicks in the group before beating Maria Meihan in four games. This meant that either Hannah or Maria would not progress into the main draw and on this occasion Maria beat Hannah in the fifth end. The other

surprise in the women's singles was Emma Vickers losing to Rachel Jamison and Rachel Baker in the group. In the first round a few more good results for lower ranked players: Lindsey Armstrong beat Caroline Hallows and Fiona Dennett came from two games down to take Maria Meihan to five before losing game 9. Sally Clark continued her winning ways and got to the semis before losing to second seed Abigail Embling. In the other semi Katie Shuying beat top seed Egle Adomelyte and Maria Meihan in the quarters. Katie took the title beating Abigail 3-0.

In the men's not quite so many early upsets with all the seeds progressing, then the shock results started. Darren McVitie beat seventh seed Bradley Evans in four and Steven Denny beat number three seed David Meads in five. Kevin Dolder continued his good form beating sixth seed Dale Barham, Jonathan Taylor beat Steven Gersten, Steven Denny also beat Eric Amoah and Darren McVitie also beat Sam Perry.

In the quarter-finals Kevin Dolder beat Steven Denny, Gavin Evans beat Damien Nicholls, Gavin Rumgay after an epic

In the men's not quite so many early upsets with all the seeds progressing, then the shock results started.

battle beat Darren McVitie in the fifth set after being 2-0 down, and Johnny Zheng beat Steven Jenkins. The semi-finals were Johnny Zheng vs. Gavin Evans and Gavin Rungay vs. Kevin Dolder. Both were very exciting matches with Johnny beating Gavin in four and Gavin Rungay having to come from 2-1 down and match point in the fourth down to beat Kevin Dolder. The final went all the way to the wire with Gavin Rungay being 2-0 up before Johnny Zheng took the third and fourth games to take it to five where Gavin stepped up a gear to take the title.

The under 21 women's final was an all Chinese affair with Katie Shuying beating Maria Meihan. Katie beat Reena Ardehana in one semi and Maria beat Rachel Jamison who had again beaten Emma Vickers in the quarter-finals.

The under 21 men's final was between two of the Evans brothers, Gavin and Bradley, but due to an injury Gavin had to concede the final. Bradley had beaten David McBeath in his semi and Gavin had an epic match with Damien Nicholl's in the quarters: Damien went one up before pulling it back to two all before Gavin won 12-10 in the fifth. Then Gavin beat Jonathan Taylor in the semi-final.

The veteran men's title was won by top seed Abdul Wuraola beating Ivan Lewis in the final. Ivan had beaten second seed Mark Simon in the semis.

The restricted men's event was won by Darren McVitie beating top seed Darius Zurowski in the final.

SHAUN MARPLES



NATWEST JERSEY OPEN TABLE TENNIS TOURNAMENT - BY CHRIS BAND

The Champion of the 1st Natwest Jersey Open Table Tennis Tournament was recently crowned at the Geoff Reed Centre. The number 1 seed and top 30 ranked England player Shaun Marples saw off a very strong challenge from Matthew Dodds, finally taking the title after an electrifying final and deciding fifth game to win the match 3-2.

In the semi-finals Dodds defeated Craig Gascoyne 3-2 in another thrilling match which was littered with huge powerful loops and smashes from the back court bringing much applause from a large and appreciative audience. Fortunately for Marples he drew the slightly easier semi final as he overpowered Guernsey's Scott Romeril by 3-1.

In the earlier rounds Jersey's Josh Band almost caused the upset of the tournament by taking Dodds to five games having also been 2-1 up! Dodds eventually took the match 3-2, 11-8 in the fifth. Jersey seniors Paul Marshall and the ever youthful Dave Cronin both played superbly to reach the quarter-finals but were both eliminated by the two respective finalists.

The Women's Open singles was won by Rachel Pilgrim from Warwickshire who beat Josie Bruce from Scotland 3-1. The initial two games were real nail biters with Bruce taking the first 12-10 and Pilgrim taking the second 13-11.

Earlier on in the day Pilgrim had also won the Girls U21 title beating Corrina Bebbington from Cheshire 3 -1 in an entertaining final. Jersey's talented eleven year old Helen Liron played extremely well and gained valuable experience in her matches against both the finalists.

In the U21 Boys tournament Jersey's top juniors Josh Band and Chris Corfield played superbly to both reach the quarter-finals. Corfield eventually lost to the mercurial Matthew Dodds. Band met the experienced Liam Tildsey from Cheshire and finally overcame his opponent after a gruelling five games to reach the semi-finals. Band's opponent here was Shaun Marples whose vast experience was too much for the 13 year old who bowed out in straight games. The final was contested between Marples and Dodds with the former stamping his authority on the match from the start and finally running out the winner 3-0.

Results

- Men's Singles
Gavin Rungay (Sco) beat Johnny Zheng (Cv)
- Women's Singles
Katie Shuying (Cv) beat Abigail Embling (E)
- Under 21 Men's
Bradley Evans (Bk) beat Gavin Evans (Bk)
- Under 21 Women's
Katie Shuying (Cv) beat Maria Meihan (Cv)
- Veterans Men's
Abdul Wuraola (Sy) beat Ivan Lewis (Y)
- Restricted Men's
Darren McVitie (Cv) beat Darius Zurowski (Mi)
- Women's Band 1
Lisa Radford (Dv) beat Caroline Hallows (Ch)
- Women's Band 2
Sally Clark (Y) beat Zoe Fisher (Y)
- Women's Band 3
Sally Clark (Y) beat Zoe Fisher (Y)
- Men's Band 1
Kevin Dolder (La) beat Steven Denny (Y)
- Men's Band 2
Simon Pugh (Y) beat David McBeath (Dv)
- Men's Band 3
Oscar Selfridge (E) beat Paul Savins (Wa)
- Men's Band 4
Steve Lyons (Ch) beat Wahab Adam (Sy)
- Men's Band 5
Radek Mlvnarczyk (St) beat Garry Usher (Y)
- Men's Band 6
Neil Snodgrass (Y) beat Maciej Nakielski (E)

ROUND-UP

COUNTY



SIMON NOUTCH

Cheshire by Alan Blears

After her disappointment in the Greater Manchester Schools tournament, Caroline Hallows had an excellent weekend at the National Championships. She reached the last 16 of the Women's Singles, losing to Helen Lower, and lost to Abigail Embling in the last eight of the U21s, but the best results came in the doubles. With Danny Reed in the Mixed, she reached the quarters, going down to the not unknown pairing of Darius Knight and Kelly Sibley; and in the Ladies, paired with Emma Vickers, she reached the semis, losing 3-1 to Kelly again and Joanna Parker.

Cheshire schools individuals:- The biggest entry for years almost had organiser Ian Willsdon sending out for tranquillisers. There were 69 entries, 29 of them in the boys U16 section, the event which produced the best final. Rick Hague, an underrated player I feel, squeezed home at deuce in the fifth game against county cadet player Chris Pattison.

U13 winner Matthew McCormick has been voted Halton and District Young Sports Personality of the Year. Well done, young man!

Girls U11:- Danni Eaden r/u Daisy Hogarth Boys U11:- Daniel Weardon r/u Simon Riley Girls U13:- Corinna Bebington r/u Janey Gibson Boys U13:- Matthew McCormick r/u Stephen Jackson

Girls U16:- Fionna Dennett r/u Lindsay Hardy Boys U16:- Richard Hague r/u Chris Pattison Girls U19:- Amy Walker r/u Melanie Parkinson Boys U19 David Billington r/u Andrew Huddart N.J.L. - North West - Division 2B West - Despite a final day 4-2 win by Halton 'A' against St Helens 'B', it wasn't enough to prevent the Lancashire side from finishing runners-up to their 'A' team, who took the title by a massive 27 points. Halton's Michael Kwan was unbeaten in 18 sets, but the fast improving Luke Joseph won 40 out of 42. Luke, along with several other St Helens' players, is actually registered with Cheshire.

Stockport Junior Tournament:- With only Phil Barratt still involved in schools coaching around Stockport, the entry was predictably smaller than in recent years. However, with all the area's strong cadet boys' squad competing it was a case of quality not quantity. Triple title-holder MATTHEW WEATHERBY had opted to play in the Accrington Junior. Grand Prix, leaving the U-15, U-18 and U21 titles all up for grabs, and there were some excellent matches. JORDAN POTTS took over from MATTHEW as triple winner, but only after two tremendous five game finals against DAN BROWN, who was four times a runner-up. Spare a thought also for NATALIE DODD who played out of her skin but went

home empty-handed after losing two five game semi-finals to Jordan.

Boys U12: - Charlie Kilbride r/u Daniel Clarke Girls U12:- Nicole Dodd r/u Jenny Szakal Boys U12 Drawn Doubles:- Guy Colledge/Nicloe Dodd r/u Vinay Maudagere/Ben Nevin Cadets:- Jordan Potts r/u Dan Brown Juniors Jordan Potts r/u DAN BROWN Junior Drawn Doubles:- Nabil Hudda/Dan Bailey r/u Dan Brown/James Gledhill U21 Youth Cup Jordan Potts r/u Dan Brown U21 Consolation:- Jenny Szakal r/u Ben Nevin.

Cleveland by Alan Ransome

Gold Medal Haul

Five players from the county enjoyed receiving a string of gold medals when representing England in national competitions or in National Championships over the past few weeks. Paul Drinkhall won two gold medals in the English Junior Championships in the Boys Singles and Doubles with Darius Knight. In addition, Paul made history by becoming the first player to win the English Senior and Junior Championships in the same year as well as matching Carl Preat's record of winning the English Junior Championships in three successive years in the early 1980s. Paul won three more gold medals in the Canadian Junior Championships in Montreal when he won the

Paul won three more gold medals in the Canadian Junior Championships in Montreal when he won the Boys' Singles

Boys' Singles, defeating Belgium's Benjamin Rogier in a close final, and the doubles with Gavin Evans. Paul's third gold medal came in the team event with Evans and another Cleveland player, Danny Reed. Danny won the bronze in the Boys' Singles, losing to Paul in the semis.

Karina Lefevre won a gold medal when representing England in the 6 Nations Junior Championship at Warwick University where she partnered Melissa Wright to take the team event. Chloe Whyte won gold in the International Under 13 Championship in Cardiff when she partnered Yolanda King from Sussex to take gold in the team event, and 11 year old Jessica Dawson struck gold in the 6 Nations Primary Schools Championships at Cork in Ireland, winning the team event with Emily Bates from Lincolnshire and Vicky Smith from Sussex.

Derbyshire by Neil Houghton

Missed finals at Senior Nationals as coaching Keith Bird in Burton-upon-Trent Closed Championships. Strange day to have town events and Derby had theirs same day, as apparently did Preston. Keith did win Men's (first time as Burton strong at times) but he may consider this minor compared with hearing of success in his Master's Degree shortly before! One Derby junior who wasn't at Nationals or Derby was Abi Millwain as she chose Burton and was highest girl and I think woman as well!

James Ward won the Junior title as expected, beating Abi - it does irritate me when events run mixed Juniors/U12s etc when they don't get enough girls (and some even when they do get enough?!) but my argument is how can they expect more girls in future if they see that they have to play boys! Towns still mixing and some counties. Certainly it tells anybody who reads results that numbers are low and/or not encouraging to girls so not good equality/advert. for the sport.

Just heard Matlock had town championships recently with Ben Goodwin winning several events; suppose Emma Coles figured well in that. These two were at Bristol National Ranking Trials. I went down for four days as did some visiting/coaching at Bristol Academy before coaching an Under 11 at ranking trials on the Sunday. Met Isabel Hampson from Wingerworth playing next court - she did well first time there with close third in group. Some decent players

including Lucy Davidson reaching semi-finals of Under 15s (age-group up) and Emma same position in U13s meeting Abi again; going all that way for two Derby players to clash in quarters! Saw Ben play to his ranking fourth in U13s group.

Apparently Emma Vickers won everything in Cadet Home International, beating Sara Wang in singles final while Liam Pitchford also won everything; team event with Sean Cullen. Found out via dedicated informant Mike Payne. Well done!

Stop press is Derby Juniors third in County Premier and only just pipped for runners-up after some dramatic play, including Lucy Davidson top girls' scorer with 4 from 6, literally giant killing to win against junior no.1, Lauren Springthorpe! Sean Cullen did a good job at no.3 spot winning 5 from 6 with no.1 Liam Pitchford on 6/8. The other side of Grantham hall our seniors played well to climb into runners-up position.

Cippenham reminds me of Hamlet because of signs for Burnham. Anyway, a wicked (adjective dedicated to Liam and Sean plus Derby junior lads!) piece of info. - a young Derby player is a relative of William Shakespeare so if you see certain reddish haired U13 girl muttering things like "When Burnham Common comes to Cippenham" or "Yon hitter hath a lean and hungerly look... I come to bury my opponent, not to praise her!" etc. then have a subtle idea you have found out who it is! Above girl got talent from somewhere so is it likely Will himself actually played T.T. ? It could be thought possible as it has been said there is a little known parchment claimed to be in his hand and, significantly, found in Ann Hathaway's cottage including words - "Thou hearest nought fayrer in olde English hall, than sounde of pymplde bat on ball". Reverse came later of course. Interesting!

Devon by John Smith

Devon's Veteran, Senior and Junior teams have all retained their Premier Division status for another season but the Senior and Junior teams experienced some remarkable turnarounds in the final set of matches at Grantham.

Sterling senior performances, particularly from top two men Craig Bryant and Chris Brown, led to three excellent victories, including 6-4 in the penultimate round against former leaders

Middlesex. This saw the seniors in top place going into the final round against Sussex.

Remarkably, the first five sets went to five games but with Sussex taking four of them, Devon were ruing missed chances and finally defeated 3-7. The closeness of the overall competition left them demoted to a final fourth place.

The juniors' story was even more astonishing. Despite a 100% record from top boy Richard Marshall, the young and inexperienced team were always fighting for their top division lives. The final round saw them needing a draw for survival against Yorkshire with every set critical. Responsibility for the vital fifth point was left with 14 year old Laura McLeod, the least experienced team member, part of the youngest girls' pairing in the division, and without a win all weekend. Playing Rebecca George, 23 places higher in the junior rankings, her chance appeared to have gone when Rebecca saved four match points from 10-6 down in the fourth, to take her own 10-6 lead in the final game. An amazing final twist saw Laura clinch an unlikely victory and condemn South Yorkshire to relegation.

Two members of the senior team took the singles titles at the Devon Closed Championships at Okehampton. The South West's new Regional Development Officer, Chris Brown, retained his men's crown, although the absence of Paul Whiting, on coaching duty with England's juniors in the Czech Republic, prevented a repeat of last year's final. Sally Smith was playing in Denmark, so unable to defend her ladies championship, but Liz May still had to overcome an excellent entry to take victory.

The Junior Closed Championships are to be held at the exciting new venue of Exmouth Pavilion on the busy seafront and it is hoped to attract a large number of inquisitive tourists to view the event!

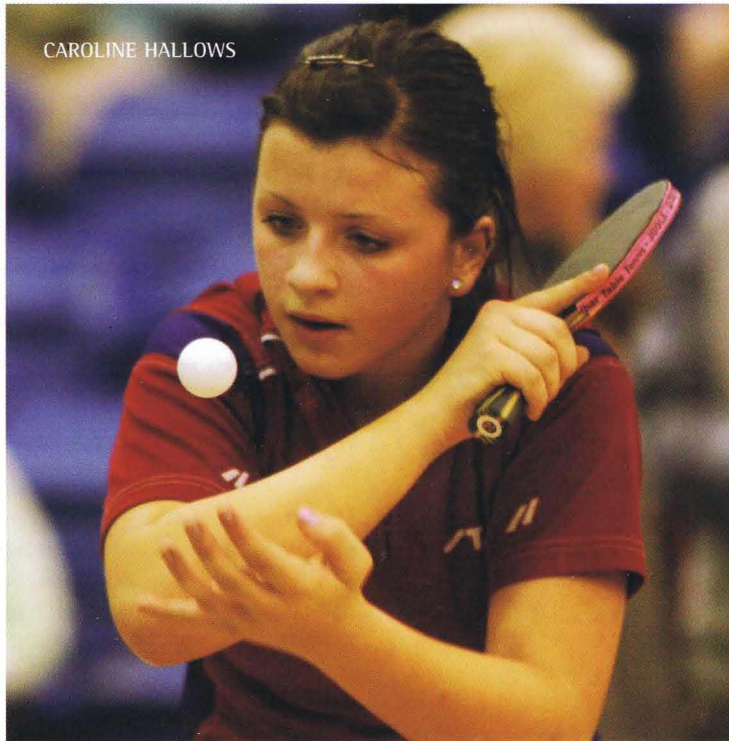
Essex by Steve Kerns

Ilford Closed - The 2007 Ilford Closed tournament comprising seven events was held over a three-week period, culminating with the Men's Singles which was played at St Andrew's Church Hall in Ilford.

There were early shocks for the top two seeds - Euan Liddle and Gary Tendler, who were both beaten in their groups. Tendler lost in three straight sets to Keith Lesser while Liddle lost in four sets to John Tendler. As the top two from

ROUND-UP

COUNTY



CAROLINE HALLOWS

each group progressed to the quarter-finals, all four players still qualified comfortably. The shocks continued in the quarter-finals, when surprise packet Ray Brown defeated John Tendler 11-6, 11-5, 11-3. Gary Tendler was leading 6-1 in the fifth set only for Matt Spero to recover to 8-8. However, Matt will rue the poor start he made as Gary finally won 11-9. Euan Liddle eventually overcame a gallant Peter Radford 11-6 in the fifth end after four very close sets. The semi-finals produced contrasting matches: Gary Tendler was always in control as he beat Ray Brown 11-5, 11-8, 11-7, but Keith Lesser had to fight back from two sets down to beat Euan Liddle 11-9 in the fifth end, a very good win indeed. The final was a repeat of the opening group match. This time we saw a determined Gary Tendler take a 2-0 lead only for Keith Lesser to pull a set back. However, it was too little too late as Gary went on to win 11-8, 14-12, 7-11, 11-6 and take the Ilford Men's Singles crown for the first time. Other results: Men's Doubles: Euan Liddle & Matthew Spero beat Gareth Williams & Tony Cantale 12-10, 11-6, 11-7 Veterans' Singles: Peter Radford beat Martyn Ball 11-7, 9-11, 11-8, 11-8 Veterans

Doubles:- Ray Brown & Fred Alldritt beat Alan Rosenfeld & David Evans 11-9, 11-5, 4-11, 11-9 Handicap Singles: Tom Griffiths beat Andy Patmore 3-1 Division 2 Singles: Gareth Williams beat Colin Green 11-8, 11-7, 11-6 Division 3 Singles: Andy Patmore beat Luxman Sriranjana 11-5, 11-4, 4-11, 11-8.

Hertfordshire by Ann Fereday

Congratulations to Hertfordshire's senior team (Glen Wilkes, William Maybanks, Chris Marlow, Emma Rose & Captain Janice Laing) who have won Division 2C in the County Championships. The whole division played each other over one weekend. Hertfordshire's first match was against Essex II which they won 6 - 4. Next came Northamptonshire, this time the win was 7 - 3. It was the same result against Cambridgeshire. The last match was against Bedfordshire, this finished in a 5 - 5 draw. The final table shows Hertfordshire 1 point and set ahead of Essex II so it was their first match that was all important. Janice says that everyone played really well. William Maybanks put on some fantastic performances, losing only one game all weekend. On a personal note Janice beat her sister Sandy Harper. Well done to all the team! Veteran Matches - Hertfordshire I went to

Harlow for their second weekend of matches - unfortunately against three of the top four teams. They lost 8 - 2 to Northumberland, 7 - 3 to Essex II and 6 - 4 to Cheshire II. The last result could have been a draw, a mixed was lost 17 - 15 in the fifth. Best player was Glen Wilkes who won 4 of his 6 matches. The team finished sixth out of eight. Team II had a home match against Kent IV. This time they had their first choice team out so the result was a resounding 8 - 2 victory. Team IV lost away to Warwickshire but got no match when Shropshire 1 withdrew. Team V drew at home 5 - 5 with Worcester 3. They lost two weeks later to Gloucestershire but that is to be expected when a county's first team is playing our fifth. Team VI beat Wiltshire IV at home 6 - 4. The wins were from Jackie Channell who won her ladies singles in three straight games then both mixed and the teams captain David Wilson who won both his singles and men's doubles with Brian Gale. Watford Closed:- There was quite an age gap in the Men's Singles final which proved an excellent game but young William Maybanks beat veteran Stuart Seaholme. In the Ladies Singles final Sally Bax beat Jeanette Maybanks. For the Men's Doubles William partnered Max Bonyadi to beat Antony Budden and Ken Stonebridge. The Mixed was a family affair. William played with his mum Jeanette to beat husband and wife Geof and Sally Bax. In the Veterans final Dennis Robinson defeated Max Bonyadi. Hardly surprising that William Maybanks also won the Junior title beating Paul Erdunast. Over 60s:- As usual, the Over 60s outing was to Ashford to play three matches over one weekend starting with a 7 - 3 win against Kent II, followed by a very creditable draw with Middlesex, then finished with a 1 - 9 loss to Essex. As Kent 2 had only managed one draw which is one point and Hertfordshire now had three points, we were able to finish safely in sixth place. The main players who got us those points were Larry Gregory for the men & Sally Bax for the ladies. Larry won 5 of his 6 singles! In the Middlesex match Geof Bax accidentally smashed his bat during a rally. He tried to play with Sally's but could not get the ball over the net. Some kind soul from another county gave him a blade to transfer his rubbers onto so he

Joanna Parker reached the third round of the singles event and the second round of the doubles event...

could continue.

The other players who contributed over both weekends were Ken Stonebridge and Ron Wilde for the men and Jackie Channel and Ann Fereday for the ladies.

Hertfordshire Friendly Teams:- The best juniors and cadets play as the county teams. The next best play what are called friendly matches against other counties. Some of these friendly matches took place at BATTs (Harlow).

Both our junior and cadet teams were to play Essex and Norfolk. The juniors started first. The opposition was strong but Phil Evans and Katie Brill played so well they beat Essex and Norfolk Cadet teams 5 - 4 & 7 - 3 respectively. They followed this with a draw 5 - 5 against Norfolk Juniors, then finished by beating Essex Juniors 6 - 4.

The Cadet team was confident it could do just as well. Here are their results - Essex Juniors won 6 - 4, Norfolk Juniors won 7 - 3, Essex Cadets won 6 - 4 Norfolk Cadets won 9 - 1 Jordan Harvey was the star of the show, he finished the day on 87.5%, only losing one set to an Essex player. Well done Jordan! Another player who contributed to the cadets winning all their matches was Ross McNiven.

It's good to see Hertfordshire has so many good young players.

Northumberland by Pauline Long

Both the Senior and Veteran county teams finished as runners-up in their final series of Division 1A matches at Nottingham and Harlow respectively. The Senior team of Eddie Smith, Andrew Wilkinson, Dave Godbold, Caron Guthrie and Karen Henry drew 5-5 with Notts, and lost 3-7 to eventual winners Leics. The Veteran team of Dave, Geoff Salter, "Benny" Robertson, Caron and Christine Burke drew 5-5 with Worcs and beat Herts and Cheshire II 8-2 and 7-3 respectively.

Congratulations are also extended to Dave for his performance in reaching the final of the veteran event in the National Championships, defeating new veteran Eddie in the semi-final. At the Northern Masters tournament in Blackpool, Eddie narrowly lost in a thrilling over 40s semi-final to Steve Hall, while Benny was also defeated at the same stage in the over 50s by Dave Harding, despite taking the first game. Pauline Long was runner-up in the over 60s plate and also reached the semi-finals of both the over 40s and over 50s plates, beating three

higher-ranked players on the way.

The Thompson Insurance A team of Eddie, Dave, Tony Gelder and Joe Kennedy clinched the Veterans' British League Premier Division title for the second time in three years by two points from Potters Leisure Resort. Well done to all players.

At the other end of the age scale, four junior boys attended a tournament at Billingham, and Ryan Richardson did very well to reach the semi-finals of the under 13s event.

Current Northumbria League Division leaders are: Premier Division: Washington A Division 1: Old England Jacks Division 2: Cramlington Casuals Division 3: Old England FATTs Division 4: North Shields YMCA F

Surrey by Chris Andrews

At the European Championships in Belgrade, Joanna Parker reached the third round of the singles event and the second round of the doubles event with her partner Kelly Sibley. Darius Knight reached the third round of the doubles with Paul Drinkhall and the second round of the mixed doubles with Kelly Sibley. The top Surrey player in the Veterans' British League was Henry Medellin playing for Holme Park Developments Ltd. Graham Spicer 1 were the top Surrey side in the Veterans' British League coming second in Division 2. However, both Mellow and Graham Spicer Magpies came bottom of Divisions 3 and 5 respectively. Abdul Wuraola won three events at the North Hertfordshire 2 star tournament: the Open Singles, the Band 1 and the Veterans' events. The Derby Junior 4 star Open under 18s event was won by Chris Lewis.

At the Guildford Table Tennis League's tournament Adam Laws beat Robert Lemon in the main event. Maria Taylor-Woodward beat Fei Fei Pei in the women's event and Ross Saxby beat Fei Fei Pei in the junior event.

In the Thames Valley Table Tennis League tournament Richard Tanner beat Vidal Graham 11-9 in the fifth in the Open Singles event. The Open Doubles saw Kwang-ho Shin and Vidal Graham beat Richard Tanner and Patrick Beckley. Keith Mellor won the Veterans' event beating Ron Stracey. The Handicap Singles event went to James Kirk after he beat Keith Mellor, and the Restricted Singles went to Kevin Allen when he beat Brian Jones.

Yorkshire by Barry Snowden

Dewsbury take senior club thriller:- Dewsbury Table Tennis Centre were the winners of this season's Yorkshire clubs' senior event when they took full advantage when playing this season's finals night at their own venue.

Dewsbury recorded a thrilling 5-4 victory against the all county representative Pudsey TTC in a match of shocks which went all the way to a final set decider.

English top 10 veteran player Mick Stead gave Dewsbury an opening set lead when he beat county senior first team skipper Richard Smith 11-7 11-5 5-11 11-9, and it was Richard Lightowler who doubled Dewsbury's lead with another four game victory against late replacement, county junior Chris Parker 11-7 11-3 7-11 11-5.

Yorkshire no.1 senior Simon Nouch opened Pudsey's account when he just beat Mark Land in a five game thriller 11-2 7-11 7-11 11-3 11-9 as Dewsbury's lead was halved, and in the next set Smith levelled the match score when he beat Lightowler 11-7 17-15 11-5. Then Nouch gave Pudsey the lead for the first time in the match when he beat Stead in four thrilling games 9-11 11-9 12-10 11-9.

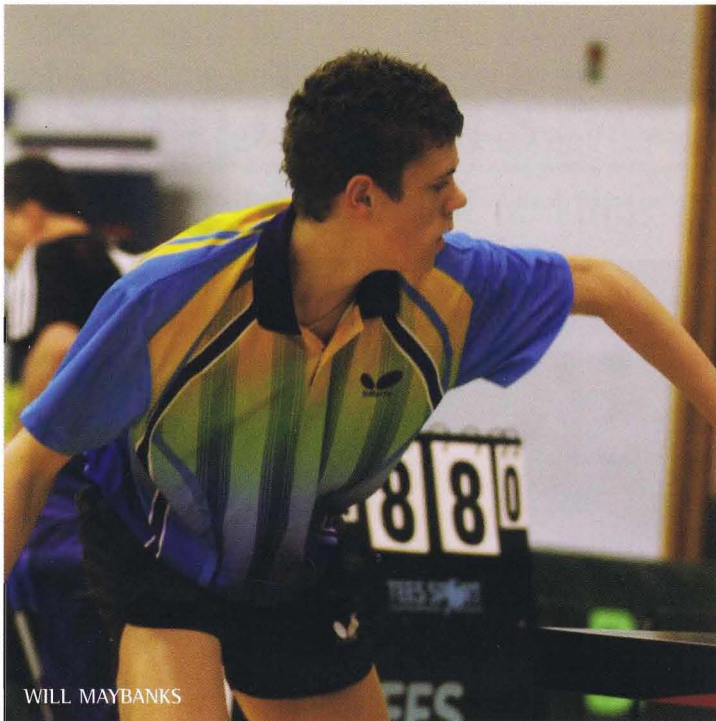
Land levelled for Dewsbury in the next set with a four game win over Parker 11-8 11-9 12-14 11-7, and in what proved to be the pivotal set of the match Lightowler produced a display of the season when he beat Nouch 11-6 11-6 9-11 8-11 14-12, so Dewsbury now led 4-3.

Smith beat Land in five games with an 11-9 9-11 12-10 6-11 11-5 victory to bring the sides level with one set outstanding, but Stead was not in the mood to allow young Parker an inch as he overwhelmed the county junior 11-3 11-2 11-4 and with it a 5-4 victory to retain the title they won last year.

Dewsbury were also involved in the veterans' event as Stead was joined by Tony Bottomley and Darren Page in what proved to be a one sided affair despite their opponents, Ripley All Stars, fielding two county first team players in Richard Whiteley and Steve Cooper and second team skipper Nigel Pennock. Cooper won his opening set with a fine three game victory over Page but did not receive any support from either of his team-mates, and was himself overwhelmed by Stead who comfortably beat his county colleague in three games as Dewsbury ran out comfortable 5-1 victors.

ROUND-UP

COUNTY



WILL MAYBANKS

5th Halifax Veterans Open

This season's Halifax Summer Veterans Open will take place at Halifax TTC over the weekend 12th/13th August 2007. The format is the same as the four previous seasons when competitors will be hoping to add their name to the list of former winners: Keith Williams, John Hilton, Dave Godbold and last year's winner, Dave Harding. Further details can be obtained from organiser Bary Snowden 01132 363537 or 0774 5018836 barysnowden@hotmail.co.uk. Entry forms can be obtained from the VETTS website or YTTA website ytta.co.uk.

South Yorkshire by Robert Loxley

Stocksbridge Rugby Club A have secured their sixth consecutive Sheffield Table Tennis League Division One title having beaten Vulcan A 9-1 and Wadsley A 8-2. This remarkable achievement places Stocksbridge second in the all time list of most titles won by one team with an astonishing nine victories, one behind Albion Corinthians who reigned supreme in the 60s and early 70s. The 1999/2000 Sheffield men's singles champion Andrew Horsfield (46/56), who ranks fourth in the leading scorers' list, has a remarkable record with 16 personal triumphs at this level, including four for Wadsley Bridge and three with Vulcan. Reigning men's singles champion Stephen Horsfield (49/53) ends the season at third place

in the scorers' list, with veterans Trevor Williams (37/50) and Barnsley's Richard Shirt (37/54) ranked eighth and ninth respectively.

2005 European gold medallists, Arnie Chan, James Rawson and Stefan Trofan representing Sheffield Wheelchairs A, are now champions of Division Two and will make their debut in the top flight next season following a recent victory over Don Valley C. Chan (58/69) currently heads the leading scorers' list, with Rawson in second place (56/69) and Trofan making the top 30 with 27/63. Joining them will be Abbeydale B's Tim Wright, Glyn Hawley and Steve Howard who narrowly took the runners-up spot from Wadsley Bridge B.

Meanwhile in Barnsley, a mix of youth and experience was on display at the Closed Championship finals held recently at the Trades Club.

Charlotte Dixon and Matthew Hirst opened proceedings in the Cadet Singles, with Charlotte justifying her cadet ranking taking the title in three comfortable games.

Next on court were seasoned campaigners Wendy Sylvester and Darren Lindley versus Debbie Firth and Ray Hurst in the Mixed Doubles. In a match littered with nets and edges, the steadier play of Firth and Hurst secured a victory in four close games.

Charlotte Dixon returned to the table with

cultured shots to dominate a below form Daniel Powell and take the Junior Singles in straight games.

The Veterans Handicap was contested by Stuart Sykes and Lorraine Swift, the latter receiving a six point advantage, however Sykes' stronger attack overcame the handicap to win 33-30. Duncan Abbott and Ray Hurst provided exhibition standard table tennis in the Veterans Singles with Abbott defending in depth against Hurst's all round attacking game. Hurst's consistency won through 11-8, 12-10, 9-11, 11-6. A finely balanced Handicap Singles provided Charlotte Dixon with her third title with victory over Wendy Sylvester. Dixon received a six point advantage over three games and finished with a score line of 33-30.

Both Stuart Sykes and Duncan Abbott attempted to play an open game in the Hard Bat final, Sykes handling the racket more consistently to take the match 11-9 in the third game.

In the Ladies Doubles, Charlotte Dixon's all round attacking game coupled with Debbie Firth's steadiness provided a fourth title for Dixon and a second trophy for Firth beating Lorraine Swift and Wendy Sylvester 12-10, 12-10, 11-6.

Lorraine Swift dominated the first two games of the Ladies Singles against Debbie Firth but the third game proved to be a "nail biter" with the advantage fluctuating throughout the game. A nery Swift held on to take the game and the title 15-13.

The Men's Singles final matched Duncan Abbott against defending champion Darren Lindley and despite hard defensive work by Abbott, he failed to break down the powerful and well placed attacking shots of the champion who claimed his fifth consecutive men's title 11-3, 11-8, 11-6. Earlier, Ian Hepworth claimed the Consolation Singles in four games from Stuart Sykes, whilst Duncan Abbott and Brian Isam came back from a two game deficit to take the Men's Doubles against Ray Hurst and Ian Hepworth.



JOANNA PARKER

D.O.B: 10/06/1987

Style of play: Defensive

Sponsor: Tees Sport Butterfly

Equipment: Forehand: Butterfly Raystorm Red 1.7
 Backhand: Butterfly Tackiness C Black 1.9
 Blade: Butterfly Matsushita Pro Defence
 Shoes: Butterfly Radial TB

When and how did you start to play table tennis?

I was 7 and at primary school. I was really active and played any sport I could. I saw a leaflet for table tennis I didn't know what it was, I went along, loved it, and here I am playing professionally.

Average training time per week: 20 hours

Personality on the court: Relaxed in control and exceptionally competitive

England Debut junior: U12 French Junior Open (age 10)

England Debut senior: European League (age 15)

Current club: 3B Berlin Germany

Most wants to beat: Victoria Palovich

Proudest Moment: Finishing in 6th place at the European Junior top 12 tournament in Italy

PLAYER RANKINGS 2006/2007

TOP 25 SENIOR MEN

Ranking	Player
1	DRINKHALL, Paul (CV)
2	PERRY, Alex (DV)
3	COOKE, Alan (DY)
4	KNIGHT, Darius (SY)
5	RUSHTON, Andrew (LA)
6	BAGGALEY, Andrew (BU)
7	HERBERT, Gareth (BK)
8	EVANS, Gavin (BU)
9	YOUNG, Terry (BK)
10	YARNALL, Tim (NP)
11	MEADS, David (DU)
12	TRUMPAUSKAS, Lawrence (E)
13	REED, Daniel (CV)
14	BRYANT, Craig (DV)
15	HOLLAND, John J (Dy) (E)
16	NOAH, Hubert (E)
17	MARSDEN, Michael (DU)
18	CUTLER, Tom (MI)
19	EVANS, Bradley (BU)
20	WURAOLA, Abdul (SY)
21	ESSOMBA, Marco (SY)
22	MARPLES, Shaun (DY)
23	VENNER, Ritchie (SX)
24	HILTON, John (CH)
25	DOLDER, Kevin (LA)

TOP 5 JUNIOR BOYS

Ranking	Player
1	DRINKHALL, Paul (CV)
2	KNIGHT, Darius (SY)
3	EVANS, Gavin (BU)
4	REED, Daniel (CV)
5	MEADS, David (DU)

TOP 5 CADET BOYS

Ranking	Player
1	EVANS, Gavin (BU)
2	PITCHFORD, Liam (DY)
3	MCBEATH, David (HA)
4	CULLEN, Sean (DY)
5	DAYBELL, Kim (YS)

TOP 5 UNDER 13 BOYS

Ranking	Player
1	MITCHELL, Edward (BU)
2	GRAY, Lewis (K)
3	THURSBY, Joseph (NG)
4	HO, Ping (MI)
5	TAN, Reece (E)

TOP 5 VETERAN MEN

Ranking	Player
1	WURAOLA, Abdul (SY)
2	KENNEDY, Joe (K) (E)
3	VENNER, Ritchie (SX)
4	ECKERSLEY, Nigel (SX)
5	STEAD, Michael (Y)

TOP 25 SENIOR WOMEN

Ranking	Player
1	SIBLEY, Kelly (WA)
2	LOWER, Helen (ST)
3	PARKER, Joanna (SY)
4	BAWDEN, Natalie (E)
5	ADOMELYTE, Egle (MI)
6	EMBLING, Abigail (E)
7	SPINK, Lauren (NK)
8	VICKERS, Emma (DY)
9	ROBERTS, Joanna (Y)
10	KEAST, Lesley (LI)
11	SHEPHERD, Karen (CH)
12	WANG, Sarra (E)
13	SMITH, Karen (LE)
14	WILSON, Naomi (SO)
15	RAINTON, Rosemary (SX)
16	HALLOWES, Caroline (CH)
17	COHEN, Michele (WI)
18	SMITH, Sally (DV)
19	UZAL, Shelley (E)
20	VICKERS, Jane (DY)
21	BALDI, Andrea (Ys) (Y)
22	WHITE, Nicola (Y)
23	BONGERS, Jose (LE)
24	CHAPMAN, Gemma (BK)
25	FARQUHAR, Melanie (BK)

TOP 5 JUNIOR GIRLS

Ranking	Player
1	SPRINGTHORPE, Lauren (LI)
2	VICKERS, Emma (DY)
3	WANG, Sarra (E)
4	FARQUHAR, Melanie (BK)
5	HALLOWES, Caroline (CH)

TOP 5 CADET GIRLS

Ranking	Player
1	WRIGHT, Melissa (YS)
2	BATES, Emily (LI)
3	LEFEVRE, Karina (CV)
4	SUNDARARAJAN, Ayonija (BK)
5	TRAVIS, Martha (CO)

TOP 5 UNDER 13 GIRLS

Ranking	Player
1	BATES, Emily (LI)
2	DAVIDSON, Lucy (DY)
3	KING, Yolanda (SX)
4	WHYTE, Chloe (CV)
5	TREVORROW, Rachel (CO)

TOP 5 VETERAN WOMEN

Ranking	Player
1	HUANG, Shu (K)
2	SMITH, Karen (LE)
3	JOHNS, Jan (CH)
4	HARPER, Sandra (BD)
5	SHORT, Elaine (DV)



For the full list of player rankings go to our website

www.etta.co.uk



DATES

for your diary

Table Tennis events
for May 2007



Saturday 19th:

- Cadet: Youth Development Squad (Day 1)

Sunday 20th:

- Cadet: Regional Training
- Cadet: Youth Development Squad (Day 2)
- Junior: Regional Training
- Junior: Stiga 3 Star G.P.

Saturday 26th:

- Cadet: Cornwall 1 Star
- Cadet: U12 Training Squad
- Senior: Wolverhampton Open - Butterfly Grand Prix
- Junior: Cornwall 1 Star

Sunday 27th:

- Cadet: U12 Training Squad
- Senior: Wolverhampton Open - Butterfly Grand Prix

Week-long events:

Monday 7th - Friday 11th:

- European Police Championships, Norfolk

Monday 21st - Sunday 27th:

- World Championships in Zagreb

Saturday 5th:

- Cadet: Hollington 1 Star
- Cadet: Cadet Masters (Day 1)
- Junior: Hollington 1 Star
- Junior: Stiga 3 Star G.P.
- Other: British League Conference

Sunday 6th:

- Cadet: Cadet Masters (Day 2)
- Senior: Hollington 1 Star

Saturday 12th:

- Cadet: Chandlers Farm Equip. 1 Star
- Junior: Chandlers Farm Equip. 1 Star
- Junior: Junior Masters (Day 1)
- Veteran: VETTS National Masters (Day 1)

Sunday 13th:

- Junior: Junior Masters (Day 2)
- Veteran: VETTS National Masters (Day 2)

2007 COPY
DATES

July Edition
1st June

The Association would like to thank all of the following for their support during the season 2006/07

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