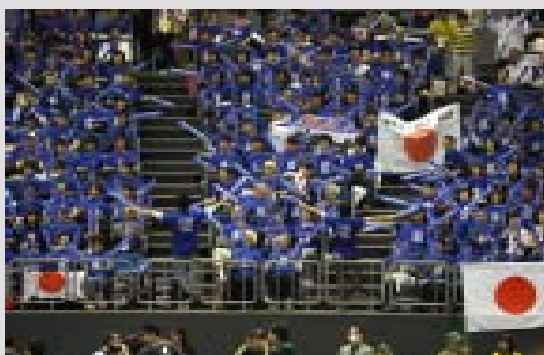


WC in Japan (April 28th – May 5th)
Zhang Yining once more World Champion /
Butterfly players collect two gold, one silver and two bronze medals

Mizutani/Kishikawa's game encourages the fight against a superb Middle Kingdom

Yokohama. There were several high lights during the 50th Individual World Championships in Yokohama. An organization worth gold, record breaking results for China, winning five gold, five silver and seven bronze medals, excellent feedback from the spectators throughout the whole event as well

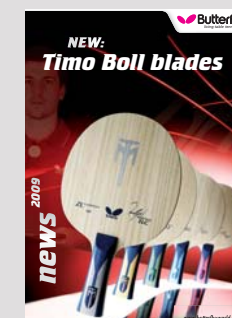


as surprising sports moments – both positive and negative – in which Butterfly athletes took part.



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WC in Japan (April 28th – May 5th)

Zhang Yining once more World Champion /

Butterfly players collect two gold, one silver and two bronze medals

Mizutani/Kishikawa's game encourages the fight against a superb Middle Kingdom

On May 5th, the World Championships in Yokohama ended with a special record for China. In five competitions, 17 out of 20 possible medals went to their players. An impressive result, leaving the competitors deflated. It was the



Successful Butterfly:
Zhang Yining

young Japanese generation which encouraged future medal fights against the stars of the Middle Kingdom. Butterfly aces Jun Mizutani and Seiya Kishikawa, as the only non-Chinese players, were able to put a hole through the Great Wall securing the bronze medal in the Doubles event. Female Butterfly athletes were present on all three steps of the podium: In the well organized tournament superstar Zhang Yining won her second gold medal since 2005 in the Singles winning the final match against defending champion Guo Yue, who for the first time became World Doubles Champion with Li Xiaoxia.

On top of that, Hong Kong's ace Tie Yana secured a bronze medal in the Doubles along with Jiang Huajun. Overall, the Tamasu Butterfly team collected five pieces of the precious metal, even though Europe went away empty-handed, in absence of the injured bearer of hope Timo Boll.

Zhang Yining was very satisfied after her success over Butterfly colleague Guo Yue in the finals. In a repetition of Belgrade's semi-final match in 2007, this time the Olympic champion prevailed and won the Singles title, just like in Shanghai in 2005. During the press conference the likable Beijing local analyzed her accomplishment. „I played very well in my active and passive game and I'm very satisfied,“ the 27 year old number one of the world ranking list stated. „After losing the second set and falling behind 0:2, I stayed calm. I didn't think about each point but instead about the WC and my own performance.“ Guo Yue's powerful game faded during the second set due to Zhang's increasingly precise play. „Today, I was in a good form mentally and physically, but I got too passive in the third set so that Zhang Yining was able to force me away from the table,“ the seven years younger left-handed player said. „Furthermore, I was too hasty during the long top spin rallies.“

In the women's event, another surprise happened in which others Butterfly athletes participated. Arguably the greatest fame went to Tie Yana, who gambled away the highest lead in Yokohama. Hong Kong's Butterfly led 3:0 in sets and 9:3 in points against 16 year old Kasumi Ishikawa in the round of the last 64 in the Singles, when the Japanese whirlwind scored one point after another captivating the hearts of the spectators and securing her a spot in the



European Junior Champion:
Iveta Vacenovska

quarter-finals with a 4:3 success. Europe's best female player was to no one's surprise Iveta Vacenovska (Czech Republic), European Youth champion in 2003. She profited from the downfall of the favorites Eva Odorova (against Japan's Sayaka Hirano) and Renata Strbikova (against Singapore's Wang Yue Gu), winning against both the Slovenian and her Czech team mate, until she was defeated by the Chinese Liu Shiwen after a big fight in the round of the last eight. In Japan, the most consistent European player was Odorova, who, after a good

performance in the Singles, reached the round of the last 16 in the Doubles too, and got even close to winning a medal against the Chinese Zhang Chao and Yao Yan in the Mixed quarter-finals.

Among all hosts for the best World Championships of all times so far, Yokohama, Japan certainly is one of them featuring a well organized event with love to details, full time professional and voluntary staff, short ways, filled spectator stands and, with the Yokohama Arena, a great location for table tennis. During qualifications and the first main draw matches, the Japanese crowd gathered in a great numbers. The last three days of the finals alone drew almost 35000 spectators. „You rarely see such an intense atmosphere,“ Danish star Michael Maze said. Along with Butterfly players Kaii Yoshida (Japan) and Joo Se Hyuk (South Korea), the third placed of the 2005 World Championships reached the round of the last eight when China’s superiority stopped their winning streak. Maze could not take advantage of his potential against Grand Final winner Ma Long („If you don’t take the small chances against the Chinese, you can’t win these kind of matches.“). Joo engaged in a tough yet unsuccessful fight over six sets against Olympic Champion Ma Lin and Yoshida lost 1:4 against the future World Champion and world’s top ranked player Wang Hao.

The atmosphere in the arena reached its boiling point every time the young Japanese generation entered the stage. The performance of Jun Mizutani in the Singles and in the Doubles with Seiya Kishikawa was especially celebrated by an enthusiastic crowd. In the Singles, Chen Qi showed Mizutani his limits and made clear that his play lacks strength and power to win a medal. However in the Doubles along with Kishikawa, the Japanese player impressively demonstrated why he is among the top Doubles players in the world. Even legendary director Alfred Hitchcock could not have staged the medal win against Gao Ning and Yang Zi any better. Trailing 2:3 in sets and 8:9 in points the referees failed to acknowledge an obvious edge ball, which would have tied

the set, giving the point to Singapore thus provoking minute long arguments. Even the super slow motion replay on the video screen could not change the referees’ or the opponents’s mind. Instead of a mental breakdown, the Japanese players decided to fight back and claimed the win of the set. Kishikawa defended Singapore’s first matchball by returning a seemingly unreachable net ball thus securing a 3:3 tie. In the end justice prevailed, and by winning the last set 13:11 the Japanese duo earned their first medal in a World Championship.



„Home game“ for Jun Mizutani

Jun Mizutani after the match: „It wasn’t an easy situation, there was a lot of excitement. But: Whatever the referee decides, in the end it’s law. There is no way around it. When the 8:10 decision was made, we were finished mentally. But we were eager to win the two points,

and with the great support of the crowd we just could not give up. It was an incredible feeling to win the set and ultimately the medal. It will not be forgotten and this experience takes us another step forward, even though we lost the semi-final against Ma Long and Xu Xin.“

Interview with Jun Mizutani and Seiya Kishikawa

„An unbelievable feeling to win a WC Medal“



At the World Championships 2009 in Yokohama Jun Mizutani and Seiya Kishikawa were the only ones in the men's event who were not from China. After the tournament the Japanese stars talked about their impressions and perspectives:

Butterfly: „It is almost impossible to win a Bronze Medal in the doubles in a more dramatic way. With 3:2 in sets and being down 8:9 in the sixth set against Gao Ning/ Yang Zi the umpire made a wrong decision

against you and in favour of Singapore. Discussions which lasted for minutes and clear evidence in super slow motion and the video screen in the hall could bring neither the umpire nor your opponents to correct the score. Then you turned an 8:10 into a 13:11 and the nearly 13.000 spectators celebrated your Bronze Medal...“

Mizutani: „That was not an easy situation there was a lot of excitement. But: The umpire has the final last word. There is no way around it. When the decision remained 8:10 we were mentally completely down. But we really wanted these two points and were not allowed to give up after the tremendous support of the audience. It was an unbelievable feeling when we won the set and with that also the Bronze Medal.“

Butterfly: „What is important in such a dramatic situation?“

Mizutani and Kishikawa: „It is important to stay calm and keep your head clear despite all the inner tension. But the most important thing is that you

can rely 100% on your material because each touch with the ball is deciding about victory and defeat. We are happy that we never have to worry about the quality of our material.“

Butterfly: „Did you expect to win this medal for Japan?“

Kishikawa: „You cannot plan to win a medal 100%. But playing at home it was our target to win a medal for Japan. That is the reason why we took part.“

Mizutani (adding): „Two years ago we were already in the quarterfinals in Zagreb in the doubles. Then we lost and such defeats make you more mature. We profited from that during this WC.“

Butterfly: „How do you evaluate the results of this WC where China was supreme?“

Mizutani: „We won a medal but the gap to China is still too big. We have to work hard on this. But we have a young team and are all able to develop further.“

Butterfly: „What does the future for Japanese table tennis look like?“

Kishikawa: „We must continue on our path consequently. I think we became very mature by living and training in Germany for some years. Jun has also been in Germany until one year ago and played for my next club, the Butterfly Team Borussia Duesseldorf.“

Mizutani: „I will stay in Japan where we will follow a training programme especially for me and other good players. Altogether we are a young ambitious team, which will hopefully play for a lot more medals in the future.“

Interview with the World Champion Zhang Yining and the WC second Guo Yue

Gold and Silver in the women single went to two players who play with Tamasu Butterfly material and dominate the world table tennis scene of the women. World Champion Zhang Yining simultaneously Olympic champion and permanent number one of the World Ranking List and the defending Champion Guo Yue found some time for a short interview after a brilliant final.



Butterfly: „Zhang Yining, after an interruption two years ago you now took back the title from Guo Yue. How

does it feel to become World Champion for the second time?“

Zhang Yining: „Even if you won the title before it does still feel good to win an important Championship. The final was very even on a high level and Gue has also played very well.“

Butterfly: „What was the difference between two nearly equally strong players this time?“

Zhang Yining: „I was very satisfied concerning my active and passive way of playing in the final. I have tried to play close to the table and place the balls very precisely. When I had the opportunity I tried to counter loop hard with my forehand. On top of that I tried to use my kickblock on the backhand side to increase the speed and put my opponent under pressure.“

Guo Yue: „Today I was in good form mentally and physically but too passive from the third set onwards so that Zhang Yining could press me away from the table. Apart from that I was too hasty during the rallies afterwards.“

Butterfly: „Zhang Yining, haven't you been under a lot of pressure when you were 2:0 down in the final?“

Zhang Yining: „Even when I lost the second set I stayed calm. I didn't think about single points but only about the WC and my performance here. I trusted my own strengths.“

Butterfly: „You are both members of the Butterfly Team, you are both national team colleagues and



won numerous titles for China, you train together many weeks and months during the year. How big is the rivalry when you meet each other?“

Guo Yue: „We all get along very well with each other in the national team. Naturally you want to win the final. China has a very even matched national team and there is no guarantee for a victory over a team mate.“

Zhang Yining: „All our players can win the title. The most important thing is that China wins the title.“

Butterfly: „After the Olympic Games nine month ago the gluing was banned. Did this bring about changes for you?“

Zhang Yining and Guo Yue: „We both didn't have any problems right from the start and the result of this WC is proof of that. Our good material provided us with nearly the same possibilities; control of the ball has even increased.“

News-----News-----News-----News-----News-----News-----News-----News

Short interview with Butterfly Europe chief Hideyuki Kamizuru:

How important are these World Championships for you? **For us this is something very special. Butterfly has a great tradition not only in Japan but all over the world. It is a bit special that we can present ourselves to the table tennis world for once from our home country.**

What involvement can we expect from Butterfly in the future? **This was the first World Championship in the history of the Butterflies that we sponsored a WC. We concentrated on the sponsoring of the balls. Concerning table tennis balls we started a bit slow but our main focus during the future will be there.**



**Ball and Table
at the focus of
interest!**

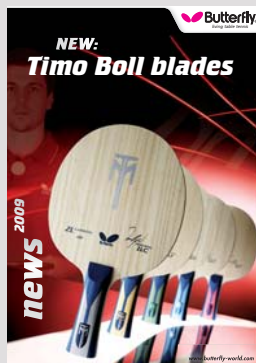


Termine

27. Mai - 31. May 2009
Pro Tour: Belarus Open, Minsk

03. June - 07. June 2009
Pro Tour: China Open

11. June - 14. June 2009
Japan Open, Wakayama



Our Photo-Partners



Manfred Schillings

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All prices are recommended retail prices.



ITTF World Ranking

Mens - April 2009

1	WANG Hao CHN	16	CHEUNG Yuk HKG
2	MA Lin CHN	17	OVTCHAROV Dimitrij GER
3	MA Long CHN	18	MAZE Michael DEN
4	BOLL Timo GER	19	PERSSON Jörgen, SWE
5	WANG Liqin CHN	20	JIANG Tianyi HKG
6	SAMSONOV Vladimir BLR	21	PRIMORAC Zoran, HRV
7	Chen Qi CHN	22	MITZUTANI Jun JPN
8	HAO Shuai CHN	23	KAN Yo JPN
9	JOO Se Hyuk KOR	24	YOON Jae Young KOR
10	CHUAN Chih-Yuan TPE	25	GAO Ning SIN
11	RYU Seung Min KOR	26	CHEN Weixing, AUT
12	OH Sang Eun KOR	27	SÜSS Christian GER
13	KREANGA Kalinikos GRE	28	HOU Yingchao CHN
14	SCHLAGER Werner AUT	29	KO Lai Chak HKG
15	LI Ching HKG	30	GARDOS Robert Aut
		30	TANG Peng HKG



ITTF World Ranking

Women - April 2009

1	ZHANG Yining CHN	16	DING Ning CHN
2	GUO Yue CHN	17	GAO Jun USA
3	LI Xiaoxia CHN	18	Li Jiao NED
4	GUO Yan CHN	19	HIRANO Sayaka JPN
5	WANG Nan CHN	20	PARK Mi Young KOR
6	FENG Tianwei SIN	21	LI Qian POL
7	Li Jia Wei SIN	22	YAO Yan CHN
8	KIM Kyung Ah KOR	23	WANG Chen USA
9	WANG Yue Gu SIN	24	DANG Ye Soo KOR
10	TIE Yana HKG	25	DANG Ye Seo KOR
11	JIANG Huajun HKG	26	LI Jie NED
12	LIU Shiwen CHN	27	TOTH Krisztina HUN
13	LIU Jia AUT	28	WU Jiaduo GER
14	CAO Chen CHN	29	LIN Ling HKG
15	FAN Ying CHN	30	SUN Bei Bei SIN

Dortmund WC host for the third time



The conformation was only a formality after the withdrawal of Serbia which left the DTTB with Dortmund as the only applicant for the WC in three years time. The presentation of the „Westfalahallen“ and the city made a strong impression on the 200 delegates of the AGM, there were no critical questions asked, because

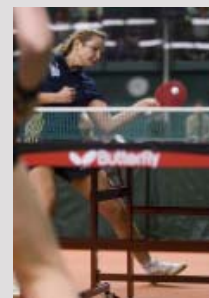
the City in Westphalia was the host of table tennis World Championships twice before: 1959 and 1989 when Rosskopf and Fetzner won the first and up to now only title for the German men during the 83 year old history of the WC and they were celebrated by 11.000 fans in a sold out Final arena of the Westfalahallen Complex. The date for the 51st World Title Fights in Dortmund is the 25th of March until the 1st of April 2012.

Butterfly with a WC report for the first time

The Contenthouse media agency was in charge of transmitting news, facts and background information which could not be seen anywhere else with their new and up to date player. The president of Butterfly Europe, Hideyuki Kamizuru, was pleased with the results of this experiment: „We were very satisfied with the resonance and are contemplating to continue this cooperation at the WC in Moscow 2010.“



Butterfly Baltic Cup 2009



The main highlight of the tournament was the multitime Latin-American champion and former Chinese youth champion Liu Song (ARG), world rated nr 71, and it was mostly to his participation that brought a lot of spectators to enjoy table tennis over the weekend. In the semi-finals Song beat last year's winner Alexander Stetsenko (RUS) 4-1 and in the finals he triumphed over Vitaly Nekhevodich (BLR), team silver medallist at 2008 European Championships, also by 4-1. Third place in Men Singles was taken by Stetsenko's convincing victory 3-0 over his fellow compatriot Sergei

Bratchenko. Champion Liu Song said the first set of the semi-finals was the most difficult moment for him. „I started the semi-finals a little nervous after some easier matches from the start of the tournament. But after I had found my rhythm in the second set, the rest of it was not difficult for me – until the final match,“ Liu Song commented. In Women's Singles, the gold medal belonged to Ljudmilla Kiritsa (RUS), who managed to win the defensive player Zoja Novikova (RUS) in a close match by 4-3. Photo (by Joosep Martinson): Ljudmila Kiritsa

Weikert elected as ITTF Vice-President



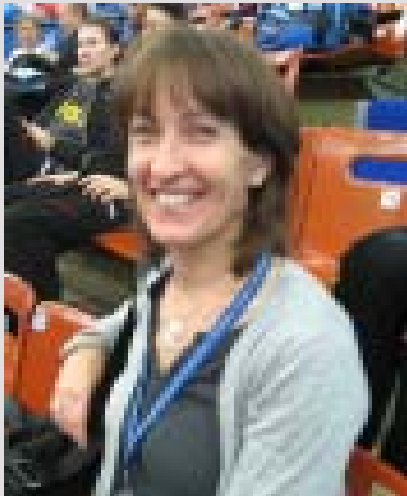
At the annual meeting of the world federation ITTF, Thomas Weikert, the DTTB President was elected Vice – President of the ITTF during the World Championships in Yokohama. The 47 year old lawyer with his own office in Limburg was elected with 134 votes of 153. Among others Thomas Weikert's target is a further improvement of the professional structures in the World Federation and the marketing

of top events. „Apart from that I would like to assist with the improvement of the presentation of our sport on different levels,“ said Weikert, „among others in the media especially TV.“ At the same time he wants to make it easier for the smaller table tennis nations to be involved in the ITTF.

This position in the ITTF is also desirable from the German point of view. „Sometimes decisions are made here which have consequences right down to the lowest leagues“, explained Thomas Weikert and hints at the rule changes. „In the executive committee I can actively influence the development of our sport. With all our intentions for reforms we have to take care that the basis doesn't lose out.“

Sonja Grefberg, Finland

„We need a star!“



Since the 1st of October 2008 the Finnish Table Tennis Association is sponsored by Butterfly. Sonja Grefberg is a member of the Finnish Board and responsible for marketing and the promotion of top sport. She is very happy to work together with Butterfly. Sonja is full heartedly and optimistic that table tennis is growing in Finland. The former number one of Finland is also working in the hall as a co trainer and looks after the junior players.

Mrs Grefberg, it is surely interesting for our Butterfly News readers to get some information about table tennis in Finland. How would you describe the situation of table tennis in Finland and how many active players does Finland have?

At the moment we have about one thousand players with a license, who play in leagues and tournaments. We are determined to increase this number because table tennis is quite popular in Finland as a spare time activity. A lot of table tennis takes place in schools and we want to

profit from this situation. In the future we will try to win more young players for our organized sport so that they become players with a license. We have already prepared some concepts for that.

That sounds very optimistically.

Without any doubt. I believe we will experience better table tennis times in Finland.

What do you expect from the partnership with Butterfly?

We hope that the best players will be equipped with the best material. Since February 2008 we have signed on one full time coach, Johan Kraft from Sweden. With him we are trying to develop top table tennis further. For that we need optimal equipment which Butterfly is offering us.

What does your top sport promotion look like?

We have a training center in Helsinki because most of the players live in or around Helsinki. Eight players are going to the sport gymnasium, a sports school with a connected boarding school where all the best Finnish juniors from all sports are represented. There they can train 2-3 times a day. The other players are the so called externals who only attend our coaching sessions at the training center. Our Swedish coach looks after the players there.

Ice-hockey is the most popular sport in Finland, followed by football and other winter sports. Table tennis is not especially noticed there and we try to improve that.

For that you need also noticeable successes.

Of course. We need a star, which makes table tennis interesting for the Finnish media so that young players become excited about the sport which again will result in more support for our sport from the state. We can manage that.

What exactly is your function in the Finnish Association?

I am a member of the board and work actively with table tennis. Once a week I am leading the training together with our head coach at the national training center and I am always involved with national training camps as an assistant coach. Many others are helping our head coach voluntarily. He is the only one who gets paid for his work. During the last European Championships I also coached players.

You certainly have got enough experience; you were the number one of Finland for years.

Yes, I played for Finland from 1975 to 1989 internationally. After the WC in Dortmund in 1989 I finished my career as an active player. My best positions on the ranking lists were number 36 in the world and number 17 in Europe. 1980 I was the only Finnish player ever to win a Gold Medal for Finland at the European Junior Championships and that was in the doubles.

When did you come back to table tennis after your maternity break?

That was about seven years ago. At first I only helped a little with training and organization. Now I am responsible for marketing and the promotion of top sport at junior level as a member of the board. Apart from that I am a member of the ranking committee of the ETTU.

What did change in women table tennis since your time?

Because of the improved material the women are also playing with a lot more spin. Formerly there was a lot more counter hitting close to the table. From that point of view women table tennis is getting closer to that of the men.

What are your wishes for the future of table tennis in Finland?

I hope that our young players will continue to progress. During the last European Junior Championships we had some surprisingly good results already. But there is still along way to go.



Fedor Kuzmin, Russia

„The top 10 are my target“



Fedor Kuzmin is the top player of the Russian national team. The offensive player is ranked 49 on the World Ranking List but has been number 30 already three years ago. Injuries caused him problems again and again but a very good year 2008 made the 26 year old stronger and more optimistic again to aim for higher targets. The sympathetic Butterfly player doesn't lack self-confidence. He has moved around as a professional and is looking critically at certain structures in table tennis. Therefore he is asking for a union of players.

Fedor, how did your career start?

When I was five years old I made my first experiences in nursery school and continued without interruptions at school. I practiced three times a week. After a while I had my first successes and worked my way up to the Russian junior national team. In 1996 I took part in the European Junior Championships as a 13 year old. We won the team event with the cadets and I became surprisingly second in the singles. I also won the European Junior top 12 once.

That looked very promising for good results on senior level as well. How did it go on?

When I was 16 I made an important decision and went to Germany. I trained in Wuerzburg and played in the third division in Rosenheim. One year later I played in the second division in Adelsried. Then I went back to the third division in Eilenburg for two years which was followed by a year in France until I finally managed to play in the Bundesliga. I played two years for TTF Liebherr Ochsenhausen. After that I decided to go back to Russia. Now I play for Oranienburg in the Superdivision. I am living again in Germany in Ochsenhausen and only fly to the matches for my club.

Has the Russian league become that strong that also a few foreign players are playing there?

Yes, all the Russian national players are here and some foreign stars. The money is right and that attracts professionals. The playing conditions have also improved. Next season the league is reduced from fourteen teams to eight teams.

Fourteen teams, that is a lot.

Yes, that is why it is going to be reduced. We are playing in a tournament system otherwise that would not be possible. On seven long weekends each team has to play six matches on three days. That is hard. In the end a play-off round decides over the final placement. Nothing of what you have achieved before counts. Once we became Vice-Champion and lost only one game and that was the final. This system has now been changed.

What are the training conditions like in Russia?

That is something we have to work with. I once tried to stay in Moscow. But Moscow is simply too big with all its traffic jams. It is simply impossible to go to the training centre twice a day if you don't live near by.

Is that the reason why you went back to Germany?

Yes, the training conditions are simply better here.

When you are 26 years old you still have dreams as a table tennis professional. At the moment you are number 49 on the World Ranking List. You have been number 30 three years ago. What is your target?

Clearly, to get into the top 10. I think I can manage that. Since 2008 everything went quite well, good training and most importantly no injuries. That can really throw you back. I was really pleased that I qualified for the Olympic Games last year.

If you want to get into the top ten you surely know what you have to improve on. What is it?

I must improve on my returns and on the speed of my footwork. If I become faster I get more chances to win the point directly.

Let's have a look at Russian table tennis. How is table tennis represented in the media?

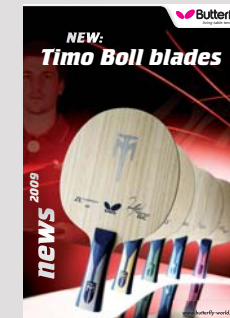
Not much. In the sports papers there is nearly nothing at all. On TV there has been a little bit recently. The sports channel shows some pictures every now and again. It is better than before but there is still

a lot missing. There are no professionals who are trying to bring table tennis forward. I am thinking of marketing and promotion.

Fedor, you are a professional and are looking at the table tennis sport as a working arena from a different point of view than an amateur. What would you wish for if you could change or improve on something?

I am missing a union for players. The players need to have more influence on the sport.

Two or three managers from the professional sport must work in this union and really work for the interests of the player. For example it is a real scandal that the associations decide which players are taking part in the Pro Tour tournaments. The associations, not all of them, are in comparison to the players too powerful.



4th International Butterfly Table Tennis Summercamp of the Hessian Tabletennis Association

TRAIN LIKE THE PROS

2009 – A STORY OF SUCCESS WILL BE CONTINUED

29TH OF JULY TO 5TH OF AUGUST 2009

SPORT SCHOOL OF LSB IN FRANKFURT/M.

After the great success in the previous years, the Hessian Table Tennis Federation with its partner Tamasu Butterfly offer in 2009 any Table Tennis player the opportunity to train under **HTTV-head coach Helmut Hampf** (Coach of TTV Gönner) and his team professionally.

Costs and Logis in EUR	Full board 3-bedded room	Full board 2-bedded room	Full board Single room	Training only
29 th of July to 5 th of August 2009 7 Overnight Stays	620,-	670,-	740,-	350,-

Program: Arrival at Wednesday 29th of July 2009 until 14:00 h. Departure on Wednesday 5th of August 2008, from 14:00 h. Daily 2 trainings units of 2 to 2-1/2 hours and on the day of departure 1 unit are scheduled. From Thursday to Tuesday evening physical training or swimming and sauna are possible.

- Training groups for all ages and levels
- Video-Analysis
- Many-Balls Training
- Material Consultation
- Service Schooling
- And much, much more ...

Registration latest until 1st of May 2009 at the main office of the HTTV. The registration is only confirmed after the fee has been transferred to the HTTV-account. The number of participants is limited to 40.



Information and Registration at the Hessian Table Tennis Federation, Post Box 1140,
35411 Pohlheim, Germany, e-mail: geschaeftsstelle@httv.de or at www.httv.de



Block variations part II: The passive forehand block

In the last Butterfly News we had a look at the passive backhand block of the Japanese Kenji Matsudaira. We described not only the tactical meaning of this block variety but also its necessity as one of the basic techniques. The passive block demands an enormous amount of feeling and anticipation and is no technique for beginners. Right the opposite, even in top table tennis it is used in special game situations. In this newsletter we are dealing with the passive forehand block. Again the Japanese national player, Kenji Matsudaira, the number 114 of the WRL is going to be our teacher.

The classic block can not be divided into three phases so that we concentrate fully on the movement when contact with the ball is made. The pictures 1a – 4a (front view) and 1b – 4b (from the side) show Kenji's passive forehand block.

On pictures 1a and 1b we see Kenji expecting the ball. He is in the typical basic low position: feet parallel and a little bit more than shoulder wide apart with the usual angles at his feet, knee and hip joints. By this he achieves perfect balance and can move his upper body forwards to get above the ball without falling backwards. The shoulder of his playing arm is slightly opened towards the forehand side.



14 Technique tips

Kenji is watching the approaching loop precisely and adjusts the angle of his bat according to the anticipated spin of the ball. Simultaneously he turns his upper body slightly towards the forehand side so that his playing arm can be moved easily to meet the rising ball at the sideways in front of his body (picture 2a). The view from the side of his body (picture 2b) shows additionally that Kenji is lowering his body weight slightly towards the point of contact with the ball.



Especially important is the timing with the passive block (Pictures 3a and 3b). On the one hand the ball must not be taken too early – directly after bouncing – (danger of blocking the ball into the net), on the other hand it must not be taken too late because it is difficult to control it. The perfect place to receive the ball should be just like with the other forehand strokes at the side of the body when the ball is rising which means in the extension of the right knee/leg (dotted red line picture 3a). The elbow of the playing arm is at a right angle. The wrist is slightly bent downwards (picture 3b, red line) so that that the head of the bat is pointing to the side and not to the top. That way the angle of the bat may be adjusted perfectly.



15 Technique tips

If we now compare the pictures 3a with 4a and 3b with 4b it becomes clear that there is no actual stroke movement at the moment of making contact with the ball but that the speed and rotation of the coming ball is used for the return.

The pictures 5 and 6 show a typical game situation for the use of the passive block. The opponent loops with his forehand from the far backhand side and his whole forehand side is wide open. Why should the returning player now take the risk of smashing or counter looping the ball if the return is just as effective when it is blocked precisely diagonally to the far forehand side. Kenji recognizes the situation reacts speedily with a wide step to the anticipated place where the ball is going to bounce and blocks the ball safely back. At this point it becomes clear that the word „passive“ is not meant tactically but from the point of movement.



16 Technique tips

Let's now have a look at possible mistakes and Kenji demonstrates them slightly exaggerated.

No1: Kenji meets the ball too upright and too late. The bat angle could be a bit more closed. A comparison to picture 3b shows the difference.

No2: Kenji is standing far too upright and is not above the ball. He hits the ball too late and much too high. He has no chance to play a block.

No3: Kenji reacts to the coming topspin ball with his arm stretched. Despite the fact that he has got time he does not move towards the ball. His position is poor and he lacks the necessary balance for a good block. It is even though possible in certain game situations to play a successful return without standing in the right position. The Chinese Ma Lin, Olympic Champion in 2008, has tried once while he was falling down to get his bat to the ball somehow and one way or the other managed to block the ball back on the table. Everybody was cheering because something like that doesn't happen every day.



17 Technique tips

No4 and No5: Kenji shows us a mistake which is quite common: A player turns his hip too much to the forehand side and is standing almost square to the table. The result is that he is hitting the ball too late and at the side of the body and has difficulties to control it.

No6: This mistake is almost a mistake made by new beginners. The player wants to block the ball with his arm stretched. Then he will get into problems with his bat angle, timing and stroke consistency. So avoid that by all means.



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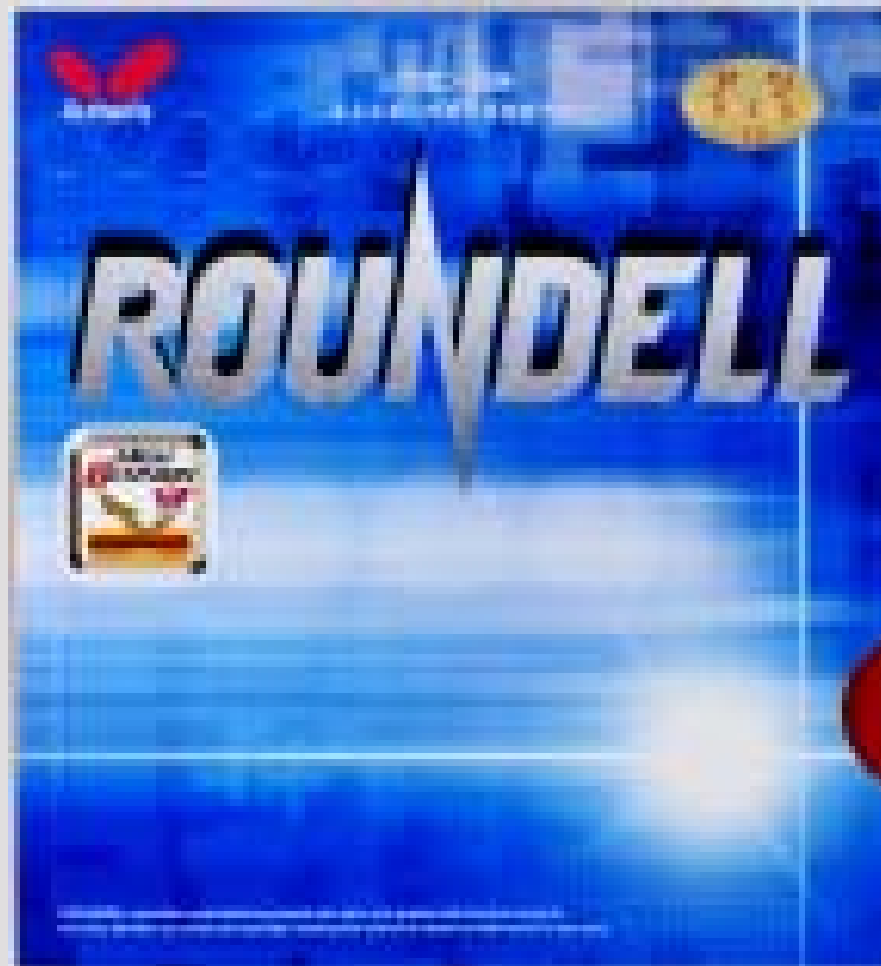
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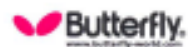
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