

# Butterfly®

## NEWS

2009 01



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### In the media:

**Timo Boll:**  
The successes of the world star also attracted a lot of media attention. Here: "Sportjournalist" (left, December 2008), "Sport-Bild" (right 44/08).



# www.butterfly-world.com

## Europe Top 12 - 2009 - Düsseldorf

Europe's aces must enter the „cave of the lion“



During the first weekend in February the best European players must enter the cave of the lion to fight for the titles at the European Top 12. For the first time the German Table Tennis Association is hosting the prestigious traditional tournament in the Burg Waechter Castello of Duesseldorf, the living room of Europe's number one Timo Boll. The top player of Butterfly partner Borussia Duesseldorf is the favourite and is highly motivated for this difficult ranking tournament. The triple winner from 2002, 2003 and 2006 is determined to make up for his fans

for the early drop out last year when he for the first time in his career was without a win in the preliminary round because of his ligament inflammation in his knee. Boll: "That is not going to happen again. I will start well prepared and healthy in Duesseldorf and try to win the fourth Europe Top 12 title."

Boll is especially after his successes in autumn 2008 where he won five successive single titles in a row, reached the semi finale in the World Cup and regained number four position on the World Ranking List from his strongest European rival Vladimir Samsonov (White Russia), the top favourite in Duesseldorf. Apart from Boll there are three further Butterfly stars among the elite players in the men's event, two of them who are always good enough for a place on the podium. Kalin Kreanga's form is difficult to estimate because he didn't take part in most of the tournaments, whereas Austrian's winner of the previous year, Werner Schlager, travels to Duesseldorf to win his third title after 2000 and 2007. Michael

**09. January - 11. January 2009**  
**Tournament of Champions,**  
**Changcha (China)**

**13. January - 17. January 2009**  
**Pro Tour: Slovenia Open, Velenje**

**21. January - 25. January 2009**  
**Pro Tour: Danish Open,**  
**Frederikshavn**

**07. February - 08. February 2009**  
**LIEBHERR Europe Top 12,**  
**Düsseldorf**

Our Photo-Partners



Manfred Schillings

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**All prices are recommended retail prices.**

Maze has the same ambitions: the Dane wants to climb highest on the podium for the second time after 2004 in Frankfurt. On top of those Schlager's national team colleague, Robert Gardos, the third of the EC in St. Peterburg and Olympic Quarterfinalist Zoran Primorac are always good enough for a positive surprise.

The chances for a Butterfly representative for winning a gold medal in the men's event are very high but this will be a lot more difficult for the women. The Tamasu partner Krisztina Toth (Hungary), Tamara Boros (Croatia), Daniela Dodean (Romania) and Viktoria Pavlovic are at the moment ranked five, six, eight and nine on the European Ranking which is lead by Austrian's EC finalist Liu Jia and defending champion Li Jiao (Netherlands). Tamara Boros is dreaming of returning to the medal ranks and that not unjustly. Europe's top player of the first half of the century presented herself a step closer to her old top form in autumn after her long period of sickness. Boros: "I work hard to achieve a big victory again. I know that I must be patient but I feel that I am getting better step by step. In difficult times like this it is good to have a faithful and reliable partner like Butterfly by your side."



## The participants of the Europe Top 12

(Butterfly players printed bold)

### Men

**BOLL Timo GER**  
SAMSONOV Vladimir BLR  
**SCHLAGER Werner AUT**  
**KREANGA Kalinikos GRE**  
OVTCHAROV Dimitrij GER  
**MAZE Michael DEN**  
PERSSON Jörgen SWE  
CHEN Weixing AUT  
**PRIMORAC Zoran HRV**  
CRISAN Adrian ROU  
**GARDOS Robert AUT**  
TAN Ruiwu HRV

### Women

LIU Jia AUT  
LI Jiao NED  
LI Qian POL  
WU Jiaduo GER  
**TOTH Krisztina HUN**  
**BOROS Tamara HRV**  
LI Jie NED  
**DODEAN Daniela ROU**  
  
**PAVLOVICH Viktoria BLR**  
SHEN Yanfei ESP  
SAMARA Elizabeta ROU  
TAN MONFARDINI Wenling ITA

## Pro Tour Grand Finals in Macao

### Again Silver for Guo Yue, but Gold for Taiwan's talent Chiang



Successful with Butterfly:  
Chiang Hung-Chieh

**Macao.** One Gold, twice Silver and four times Bronze – that is the result of the Butterfly players of the Pro Tour Grand Finals with prize money of 315.000 dollars. The Gold medal didn't go to one of the stars this time but stayed in the U21 event with Taiwan's talent Chiang Hung-Chieh.

In the main event of the women singles the best placement was the Silver medal for Guo Yue in the showdown of the best of the year. The World Champion from China lost like in the year before in the final and could comfort herself with a check of 19.000 dollars for the second best whereas the winner got twice as much and additionally a special prize from the main sponsor a Volkswagen. Altogether the athletes from Asia were dominating the Grand finals and expectedly both singles finals were in the hands of the Asian player paradise the table tennis super power China. The men's title went to Ma Long who beat Wang Hao in the final.

„I don't know why I couldn't win the final for the second time in a row“, said Guo Yue with disappointment written all over her face. The left handed player had full control during the whole tournament but in the final she had a black out just like a year ago against Li Xiaoxia. Guo admitted that after starting well she got nervous:“ After winning the first set I lost my rhythm and remembered last year. At the time everybody expected me to win in Peking and in the end it was only Silver. But I must say that Guo Yan played fantastic today and she deserved to win. We know each other very well and on our level the form of the day is deciding.“

The main competitions were finished earlier for many Butterfly partners than they liked it. The difficult cup system from the round of the last sixteen onwards meant defeats straight in the first game for Hong Kong's stars Tie Yana and Cheung Yuk, but also for Denmark's former WC Bronze medalist Michael Maze and for the WC finalist from Paris the defending expert Joo Se Hyuk from South Korea. Joo defended himself well but in vain against Olympic Champion Ma Lin. Cheung Yuk congratulated the World Champion Wang Liqin and Maze had to acknowledge the supremacy of World Cup Winner Wang Hao. Tie Yana had to play against the only other Tamasu player in the women's event and lost to Guo Yue.

Only Chuan Chih-Yuan, Taiwan's speedy number one went to the round of the best eight by beating Leong Kin Wa (Macao). Chuan who won the Grand Final 2002 in Stockholm forced Wang Hao to play at his best but the Chinese was never close to losing the match. Instead Chuan won a Silver medal by the side of Wu Chih-Chi in the doubles. They only lost to Gao Ning/Yang Zi (Singapore) in the final. Chuan said during the following press conference after the match:“ I am very happy about the medal but I would have liked to make things a bit more difficult for Wang Hao in the singles. But he was in good form.“ Further Bronze medals went to Tie Yana (with Jiang) in the women doubles and in the men doubles to the Frenchman Adrien Mettenet (with Lebesson).

There were three more medals for players with the Butterfly on their shirt. In the U21 competition three talents won one Gold - and two Bronze medals: Taiwan's speedy Chiang Hung-Chieh dominated the final against Marcos Freitas (Portugal) and beat the other Tamasu player Adrien Mettenet. In the women's event the Russian Yulia Prokhorova gained surprisingly place three and lost very close in the seventh set to the final winner Yuka Ishigaki from Japan.



# 05 Review Grand Finals/WRL

## The Results of the Finals und Semifinals

(Names of Butterfly-players in bold)

### Women Singles

#### Final

Guo Yan CHN - **Guo Yue** CHN 4:2 (11,-9,13,5,-12,8)

#### Semi - Final

Wang Yue Gu SIN - Guo Yan CHN 0:4 (-8,-10,10,-8,-8)

Feng Tianwei SIN - **Guo Yue** CHN 1:4 (-8,-4,-6,10,-9)

### Men Singles

#### Final

Ma Long CHN - Wang Hao CHN 4:0 (11,9,9,5)

#### Semi - Final

Ma Lin CHN - Ma Long CHN 1:4 (13,-3,-7,-5,-10)

Vladimir Samsonov BLR - Wang Hao CHN 0:4 (-9,-6,-8,-6)

### Women Doubles

#### Final

Li Jia Wei/Sun Bei Bei SIN - Kim Kyung Ah/Park Mi Young KOR 4:1 (5,-6,9,8,4)

#### Semi - Final

Li Jia Wei/Sun Bei Bei SIN - **Daniela Dodean**/Elizabeta Samara ROU 4:2 (9,-12,-7,7,5)

Kim Kyung Ah/Park Mi Young KOR - Jiang Huajun/**Tie Yana** HKG 4:3 (9,9,-8,-5,-13,9,13)

### Men Doubles

#### Final

Gao Ning/Yang Zi SIN - **Chuang Chih-Yuan**/Wu Chih-Chi TPE 4:2 (2,-9,-15,1,12,7)

#### Semi - Final

Gao Ning/Yang Zi SIN - Alexei Liventsov/Igor Rubtsov RUS 4:2 (-5,8,9,-6,9,8)

Emmanuel Lebesson/**Adrien Mattenet** FRA - **Chuang Chih-Yuan**/Wu Chih-Chi TPE 2:4 (8,9,-6,-6,-8,-7)

### U21 Women

#### Final

Yuka Ishigaki JPN - Yu Meng Yu SIN 4:0 (10,3,3,3)

#### Semi - Final

Zhenqi Barthel GER - Yu Meng Yu SIN 0:4 (-2,-9,-6,-8)

Yuka Ishigaki JPN - **Yulia Prokhorova** RUS 4:3 (6,9,-9,-9,-6,10,9)

### U21 Men

#### Final

**Chiang Hung-Chieh** TPE - Marcos Freitas POR 4:2 (-4,-10,10,7,8,8)

#### Semi - Final

**Chiang Hung-Chieh** TPE - **Adrien Mattenet** FRA 4:3 (-5,6,-7,7,-3,4,5)

Kiril Skachkov RUS - Marcos Freitas POR, 2:4 (-11,-6,-8,10,7,-2)

## ITTF World Ranking, Mens (11/2008)



1	WANG Hao CHN	16	CHEUNGYuk HKG
2	MA Lin CHN	17	OVTCHAROV Dimitrij GER
3	MA Long CHN	18	<b>MAZE Michael</b> DEN
4	<b>BOLL Timo</b> GER	19	GAO Ning SIN
5	WANG Liqin CHN	20	KAN Yo JPN
6	SAMSONOV Vladimir BLR	21	JIANG Tianji HKG
7	Chen Qi CHN	22	PERSSON Jörgen SWE
8	RYU Seung Min KOR	23	CHEN Weixing AUT
9	HAO Shuai CHN	24	<b>PRIMORAC Zoran</b> CRO
10	<b>JOO Se Hyuk</b> KOR	24	KO Lai Chak HKG
11	<b>CHUAN Chih-Yuan</b> TPE	26	HOU Yingchao CHN
12	<b>OH Sang Eun</b> KOR	27	CRISAN Adrian ROU
13	<b>SCHLAGER Werner</b> AUT	28	YOON Jae Young KOR
14	<b>KREANGA Kalinikos</b> GRE	29	<b>MITZUTANI Jun</b> JPN
15	LI Ching HKG	30	LEE Jung Woo KOR

(Butterfly-players are marked!)

## ITTF World Ranking, Women (11/2008)



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

Butterfly NEWS

2009 01

## World Champion Werner Schlager Part 21: Psychology in Table Tennis Part II

In 2003 Werner Schlager became sensationally World Champion in the Men Singles in Paris and was the number 1 in June on the World Ranking List. In the current ranking he climbed up to number 13. In September he won a bronze medal in the singles and a Silver medal in the doubles with the Dutch Trinko Keen at the European Championships in St. Petersburg. The 35 year old Austrian lives and lived table tennis like nobody else. Since years he trusts Butterfly Material and is an excellent counsellor of the company. In his book: „Matchball – Dreams and Triumphs“, which was published in 2006, he describes his career, his successes and disappointments, his opinions about table tennis and his very personal quite philosophical thoughts about life. A very good book, not only for table tennis players. In the new Butterfly series „Tips & Tricks from the World champion“ he answers many questions concerning all areas of competition and training. The Butterfly team and Werner Schlager wish you, dear reader, good entertainment and joy.

An exceptional player differs from an average player by special abilities. The ability to concentrate plays an important role in this. How important is total concentration for you and how do you achieve that before a game?

**A „condition of total concentration“ is an optimal condition which I don't always achieve. In such a phase I don't feel so much as an acting person but more like an observer and am happy about my moves.**

Sometimes you can watch games and you think that somebody is playing like in trance. Everything works without thinking and effort. Are you familiar with this condition and have you experienced it?

**That is the described optimal condition and I manage to achieve that more and more often.**

You can read all the time that you have lost already if you start thinking during a match about the score for example (8:4 – now I only need three points, if I lose

Previous articles: push, counter hit, forehand – topspin, backhand topspin, flip, smash, balloon defence, backspin defence, block, service return, technical training, playing systems, endurance 1, endurance 2, strength, power, coordination, doubles, psychology I.



this set I don't have a chance any more and so on). What do you think about in a game, only about the next point or also further ahead?

**Optimally I think only about the „here and now“. It is true that thinking about the past and the future is only of little help.**

Table tennis on top level is known to be very fair. That looks sometimes completely different in the lower classes where you can find some sort of a psycho war and you try to put off the opponent all the time. What psychological tricks do you consider as being unfair?

**I learnt not to judge „psycho tricks“. I just don't take any notice of methods like that.**

The famous „fist“ as an expression of willpower and strength is generally common. You are using it as well but only in special situations. When do you use it, what do you achieve with it and when do you think it is unfair from the opponent?

**For me it is a measurement of emotions. I don't consider it unfair if my opponent uses it.**

„Look into my eyes“, says Humphrey Bogart in his famous film classic Casablanca from 1942. Are you looking your opponent into the eyes or are you looking for eye contact to show him who is in charge?

**I don't make eye contact very often, only when I want to evaluate his emotional condition.**

You are born to be a champion. As the World Champion of 2003 you also belong to this group. What is special about a champion from a psychological point of view?

**You become a champion through hard work. Mental strength must also be trained. Talent alone hasn't been enough for a long time to get right to the top.**

Body language – mimic, gestures and posture – tells you a lot about the personality and the current psychological state. Can you see on your opponent if he is afraid or sure of victory?

**Normally, yes but there are some players who don't give away much about their psychological condition. Then it is difficult to evaluate.**

How do you see your own body language? You are known to be very quiet and withdrawn and analysing. Sorry, but I called you once the table tennis playing chess player.

**Depending on the form of the day I am sometimes more and sometimes less satisfied with the control over my body language. Naturally I am aiming for total control during the course of a tournament. I am working on it.**

During so called application training courses the meaning of shaking hands is always pointed out. Do you draw any conclusions from the hand shake of your opponent?

**No. Conclusions about the psychological condition are only momentarily and don't apply for a long period of time.**

The 1 minute „Time Out“ has different meanings from the psychological point of view. Sometimes the players themselves take it usually it is the coach. How do you deal with the Time-Out?

**I take a Time-Out when I lose control completely. That happens very rarely. The observing coach reacts often much earlier because of his different view.**

Sometimes I have seen you talking to yourself in between the rallies. How important is that to you and what are you saying?

**Talking to me is very important. The result of the immediate analysis after a rally is put into mental or loud orders. These orders cover all areas of the game. For example:“ Place the first ball to the middle“ or „Stay calm and concentrated“.**

Do you have special rituals before the game because you don't feel well otherwise?

**No.**

Quite a few top sportsmen are superstitious and perform certain rituals which an outsider can't understand. Do you have rituals like that?

**No.**

After long competitions for example the Europeans relaxation of body and brain is very important. The schedule for the professionals in Europe is very tight so that optimal relaxation loses out. What about your relaxation?

**The physical and mental relaxation is very important for the achievements of sportsmen. They should be trained individually. I have only got some problems with physical relaxation because of my age.**

From the psychological point of view you must differentiate between the singles-, the doubles- and the team event In the singles you are on your own, in the doubles you have a partner and in the team the whole team. Where is the pressure highest, in the singles, the doubles or the team?

**It is easiest in the singles because you alone have the responsibility for the result. In the doubles your partner too is affected by your achievements. In the team event the hope of the whole team rests on your shoulders.**

There are typical singles-, doubles-and team players. Which category do you belong to?

**None. I enjoy playing everything.**

When I play for the team, I feel the responsibility.

Relaxation after the game is very important to me.

When I take a Time-Out it is „5 to 12“.

If my coach takes a Time-Out he thinks that it is necessary.

I don't like it when my opponent gives away anything.

## „Full Program for Holger Nikelis

The week of Sports for the Disabled at the Sports University of Cologne, the visit to a Gymnasium in Porz-Zuendorf and now a workshop at a school in Cologne – Muengersdorf have kept Holger Nikelis very busy. He has drastically intensified the cooperation with schools during the past weeks. „The contact to young people is very important to me. I can tell them a lot about disabilities and I can motivate disabled youngsters“, says the 30 year old sportsman from Cologne.



„That is great, the children are really enjoying themselves“, says Inga Jerchel, a probationary teacher from the special school in Muengersdorf. Together with another colleague she is in charge of physically handicapped children on that day. As a welcome gift everyone receives a T-Shirt with the print „Together we rock – workshop with Holger Nikelis“ and they put it on at once.

„The hard rock café supported us as well as the table tennis company Butterfly“, said Nikelis. Butterfly sponsored the material inclusively bats and balls.

The main target of the school is the physical development. „After Holger's explanations the children were virtually storming towards the table tennis bats“, says a laughing Inga Jerchel.

The 14 year old Chris says:“ Holger showed us how to hold the bat properly and now we were allowed to try ourselves. Really cool“, says a student from year 8. He likes to play table tennis during the school breaks and to get some advice from a professional is something special. „Holger told us a lot about himself and his sport, which was really interesting“, says Chris.

The positive feedback encourages Holger Nikelis to continue the contact to the schools. „The experiences are always the same: The students listen and watch intensely, ask a lot of questions and enjoy becoming active themselves“, says the Paralympics winner from Athens 2004, who thinks that you can't start early enough with that kind of work.



## TENERGY 64

*Fast attacking version of the TENERGY family*

**TENERGY 64** is the fast attacking rubber of the TENERGY family; no.64 is the development code of the pimples used in producing this reversed rubber. The pimples have a thinner diameter than the pimples of TENERGY 05; they provide a softer feeling and more control on the ball, especially effective from mid distance.

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**SPRING SPONGE** enables a player to „grip“ the ball and „catapult“ the return back at high speed and with heavy spin. TENERGY 05 is recommended for playing close to the table; TENERGY 64 is for the attacker who plays for the offensive play in a middle distance.

1.7, 1.9, 2.1 red und black

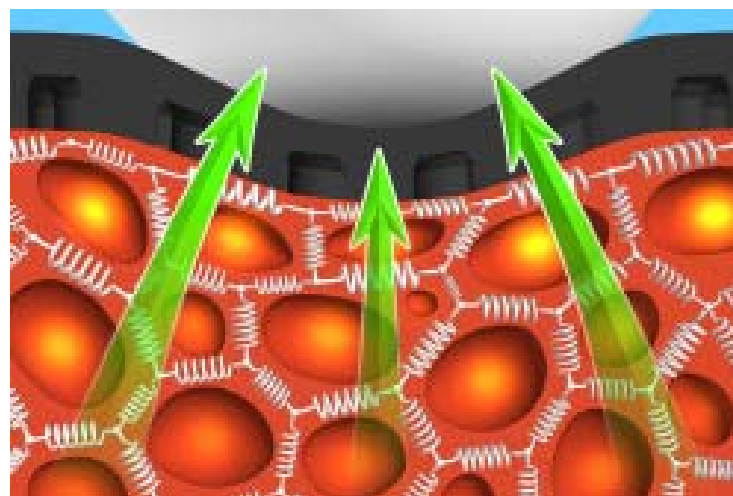
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**SPRING SPONGE** is a totally new sponge created by BUTTERFLY, being very different to existing rubbers.

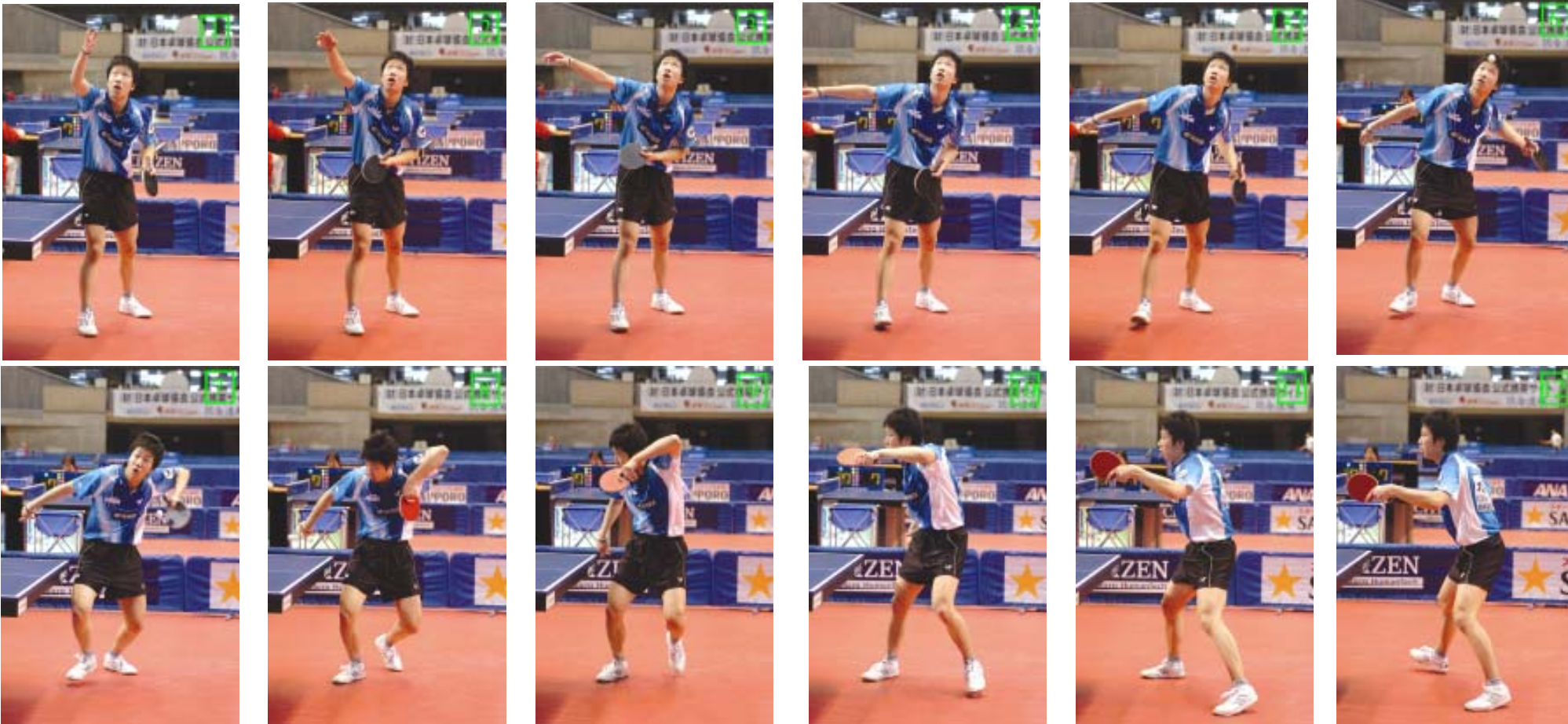
The most notable feature is a sense of being able to hold the ball on the racket; this has been made possible by the innovative composition of the material used, which produces a spring loaded effect when contact is made with the ball. The result is that a player can control spin, speed and direction as required; the sponge will make you feel you are in total control.



## Jun Mizutani's game opening on the highest level

Jun Mizutani is the shining star on the Japanese table tennis sky. The Japanese National Team managed to reach the semi-finals with him at the Olympic Games in Peking where the team of the rising sun lost closely 3:2 to Germany. The lively Japanese is 19 years old and is known as a talent for quite a while. In 2003 the left handed player became Asian Champion in the cadet class. Together with Seiyi Kishikawa he was World Junior Doubles Champion in 2004. One year later he was Vice-Junior World Champion. In the senior events he started to climb up the World Ranking List in 2007; from December 2006 to January 2008 he went from number 102 up to 29. Now the Butterfly player is targeting the top twenty. From the technical point of view Jun is a major talent who should make it to the top ten. His topspins especially with the backhand are spectacular. „Sometimes he is a bit too playful“, thinks his coach Mario Amizic, Butterfly Sport-Director and National Coach of Japan. The following picture series shows a typical backhand – forehand – topspin attack combination following his serve. The whole dynamic and brilliance of this exceptional player becomes obvious. The service is shown on small pictures because the whole picture series contains 26 pictures and we want to concentrate on the analysis of the backhand – forehand combination. The analysis of the service will follow in big pictures in the next Butterfly news.

**Pictures 1-12: Service.** Jun shows us a highly thrown up forehand service with sidespin. Jun is definitely expecting a long return of his opponent to the backhand side.





# 11 Technique Tips

**Pictures 13-19: Backhand Topspin.** His feet are in parallel position when he prepares for the backhand topspin (13). He lowers his main body weight and reaches the lowest point on picture 15. Here the bat is also at the lowest point. The wrist is bent backwards and downwards. Picture 16 shows the optimal pre tension for an aggressive backhand loop. Jun has brought forward his playing shoulder by twisting his hip. The elbow is also moved forward. The wrist is bent extremely downwards and back. A comparison to picture 15 shows that Jun establishes the maximal tension (shoulder, elbow, wrist) at the end of the starting phase. This coordination of movement has to happen with lightening speed.



# 12 Technique Tips

Picture 17 shows how fast it is because the real stroke with the moment of making contact with the ball is not on it. Picture 17 actually shows where the follow through of the backhand topspin is going to end. How strong and hard this backhand topspin must be becomes clear on picture 18. The bat is on the left side far away from the body. Jun is even forced to lean backwards to compensate the power of the stroke. The final acceleration of a backhand topspin 16 shows the brilliance of backhand topspin player.

**Pictures 20-26:** Forehand topspin from the backhand side. On picture 19 you can see already from the position of the feet that Jun is going to move around to the backhand side to follow up the backhand loop with a forehand topspin. Picture 20 shows clearly how he is moving around and prepares for a forehand topspin.





# 13 Technique Tips

He has finished his move on picture 21. Jun's legs are more than shoulder wide apart. The main body weight is on the left leg. The upper body is twisted backwards at the hips. It is noticeable that Jun's playing arm is very close to the body. Picture 22 shows the end of the stroke just before turning for the next stroke. Jun creates a maximum of body tension through the muscles in his legs, body shoulder and arm like in a bow to release the arrow explosively. On picture 23 Jun pushes off with his left foot to play the topspin with even more pressure. Jun's facial expression and the whole dynamical movement underline the power of this topspin. There is no doubt about that we are dealing with a final stroke where every muscle of the player is involved to create a maximum of speed.



# 14 Technique Tips

The picture shows Jun just before he makes contact with the ball. Just how powerful Jun's topspin is can be seen on pictures 24/25. Jun has put the power of his whole body into the stroke and compensates the extreme forward directed movement with his right heavily bent leg while the left leg provides the balance. A look on the left foot also explains the extremely demanding foot work at top level. It should be obvious that a table tennis player needs special table tennis shoes which enable him to perform such foot work. You need power and agility otherwise it is impossible to recover from this situation. We can see on picture 26 that Jun is getting up again to get into the next stroke position.



Illustration 1 shows the possible rally of this game situation. In a picture series you can't see the placement and the techniques of the opponents. Likewise this opening of the game provides you with a lot of possibilities for variation of the typical opening of the game. In any case the combination „serve, backhand spin and follow up with the forehand“ is a standard repertoire of every both sided attacking player and must be practiced.

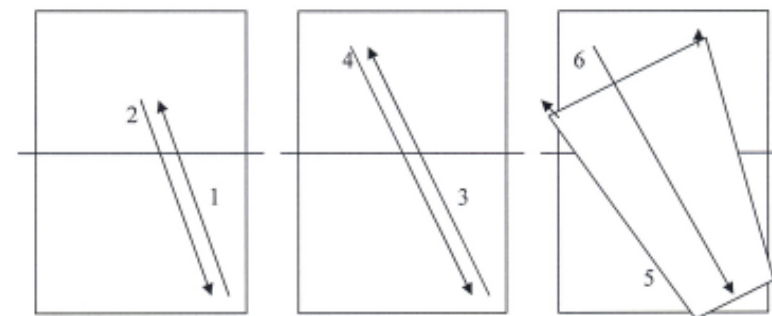


Illustration 1 The typical game situation:

- 1: A serves, for example short to the middle with sidespin.
- 2: X returns, for example with a long aggressive flip or push
- 3: A opens with a backhand topspin
- 4: X blocks or loops back
- 5: A tries to play a powerful forehand from the backhand side to win the point. The placement is free.
- 6: X tries to reach the ball

Neven Cegnar, Croatia

**During the last eight years our sport was changed completely – without the players**



Neven Cegnar is 48 years old and Croatian. He loves his hometown Zagreb, his family, who is living there and his sport table tennis. The internationally acknowledged women specialist made Tamara Boros the number 1 in Europe. Since 1996 he is the coach of the Croatian National Team. His contract lasts until the next Olympics Games in London 2012. The

Croatian has great targets for that. Not long ago the Croatian Women National Team with Tamara Boros, Sandra Paovic and Andrea Bakula won the Bronze medal in St. Petersburg which was worth just as much as a Gold medal. Why? Read for yourself and find out why Cegnar also wants to reintroduce the players' union.

How did everything start?

In 1968 when I was nine years old I started to play table tennis in a little club 80 kilometres away from Zagreb. My father was a coach there. 1975 I went back to the best club in Zagreb. The first men's team played with Surbek, Cordas and Stipancic. A great team, which played very successful for Yugoslavia. I tried to make it into the cadet and junior national team by training professionally. When I recognized 1978 that I didn't have a chance I stopped and concentrated on my education. First I went to the sports gymnasium and then I studied sports at university. In 1982 I started my career as a table tennis coach. I started in a small club who played in the 2.Division and concentrated on working with the younger players. At that time Yugoslavia was one of the top nations in Europe on a very high level. There were a lot of good players. So the results which we achieved in 1988 after many years of hard work were very valuable. We became Yugoslavian Vice Champion with the boy's team.

When did you become a professional coach?

In 1992 I coached Mladest Iskon Zagreb, a traditional club, which is still playing in the women's Champion league. I stayed there for four years. In December 1991 I signed a contract with the new National Team of Croatia. Our first official tournament in the Croatian national shirts was the Olympic Qualification tournament in Bozen. 1996 I became officially the National Women's coach for Croatia. Since 1992 we won 24 medals at World – and European Championships with the women. Together with Romania and Hungary we belong to the most successful women table tennis nations in Europe. I was especially happy about the Bronze medal in the team event this year in St. Petersburg and the comeback of Tamara Boros who is back again after her long illness and is going to improve. Tamara's time out also had the effect that we have a young strong team again which is able to beat good opponents without Tamara.

Didn't you also get some offers from German Bundesliga clubs?

Yes, that is true, I had a few offers. But it is not surprising because we had 46 training camps together with the German National team or German Clubs and there you get to know each other. I have got very good contacts to the Sports Director of the German Table Tennis Association, Dirk Schimmelpfennig. The German Bundesliga is the next strongest League in the world after the Chinese Super League. The German Table Tennis Association and a lot of clubs have a very good infra- structure. Germany was always tempting but in the end I always said no because of my family, who lives in Zagreb and also because of my players whom I really like. I find it difficult to give up so many years of cooperation.

So your heart is very Croatian deep inside?



**Of course. I have a contract with the Croatian Association until London 2012. The coming Olympic Games are a great challenge. Every day I imagine what we can and want to achieve. Butterfly is supporting us optimally.**

What are your specific targets for the next Olympic Games?

**We definitely want to qualify with the team again. Our chances are also depending on Tami (Tamara Boros) but not only that. One or two young players will work hard to make it into the team and push the team further. If I think about the fact that strong women nations like Italy, White Russia and Hungary didn't qualify for the team event in Peking the target of qualifying for London is demanding but possible.**

What role is Tamara Boros playing in your plans?

**She is an important person for the team but the success of the team is not only depending on her. She is supposed to help the team with her attitude, her experience and her points too.**

What is so fascinating about table tennis for you?

**For me table tennis is like my private life. There are good days and bad days but I am always optimistic concerning the future. I enjoy the table tennis life. Table tennis is like a drug to me. My wife recently said to me that I am still as motivated as I was being 25 or 30 years old. She is right. I am still enthusiastic and try to get that across to my team. Always look up, forget the losses. That is my motto. I can't live without this stress of success.**

What do you think about the ITTF ban of glue and boosters?

**I think it is unbelievable that the ITTF introduces rules which can't be controlled. I estimate that about 95% of the participants used boosters or**

**even glued. I can guarantee that none of my players used boosters or glue and still we won the Bronze medal with the women team. My players all have a good character and they are not able to cheat. They rather become a bright red face or would play worse because of a bad consciousness. That is not the only reason why this medal is so important to me. We also had a lot of problems with illnesses and injuries. In this context I would like to thank especially Butterfly again who supported us brilliantly concerning the material. Playing without gluing and boosters is not only a question of the right rubber but also the right combination of rubber and blade. Making the right choice is a question of individual fine tuning.**

What do you think about the TENERGY?

**I think without exaggerating and I am not the only one the TENERGY is at the moment the best rubber in the world. In Zagreb one or two players of each team are playing with it.**

One question at the end: What would you change in table tennis if you were ITTF President?

**What I am saying now is not exactly an answer to your question because Mr Sharara would definitely not establish a players union which is stamping on his feet. In the nineties we had the CTPP (Club of Table Tennis Professionals from 1992-1999) who represented the rights of the players, tried to improve the playing conditions and the development of the game and so on. Sadly this organisation doesn't exist any more. Look what has happened since 2000 and that is no longer funny. In 2000 we got the 40-mm-ball, 2002 the shortening of the sets to 11, 2005 the service rule and now in 2008 the ban of glue and boosters. Within eight years our sport has been changed completely. Were the players included in this or did they have a chance to vote? No, they are the ones who permanently have to adapt and change. We are lacking an institution which clearly represents the interests and the rights of the players. We need a union for players again, of players for players.**