

BLACKMORE VALE TABLE TENNIS LEAGUE

Newsletter – October 2007

Dear B.V.T.T.L members,

The third committee meeting of the year took place at the Saxon Inn on Tuesday 16th October, three weeks into the new playing season. Most matches have been played as scheduled and the results sent to Malcolm who has had the early ones published in the newspaper as is customary.

SAS 'B' and Chalke Valley 'A' failed to play their 1st division match on 9th October and were unable to reschedule within the seven day period allowed. Following receipt of a written request from the latter, the committee awarded 22 points to Chalke Valley 'A' based on calculations from previous encounters.

Shaftesbury 'B' felt unable to play Sturminster Newton juniors on 21.10.07 owing to difficulties raising a complete team on a Sunday. The matter of any problems associated with Sunday fixtures will be considered further in due course.

The committee wishes to remind teams that they should turn out with 2 players to fulfil fixtures where necessary rather than attempt to postpone when such a postponement will lead to non-completion of the match. (See handbook – rule 4.1).

Club captains and organisers are further reminded to submit any outstanding fees immediately. In addition, it is now time to wrap up the matter of the E.T.T.A survey questionnaires. To date, only Silton's forms (and one or two others) have been returned. Please could organisers arrange for their return to David as a matter of urgency.

The Dorset 100 Club is pressing ahead with its objective of acquiring a full tally of 100 members in the near future. Anyone interested in joining the 100 Club can photocopy the application form found in the handbook which should then be forwarded to Miranda Edwardes in Bridport.

The E.T.T.A is re-launching the National Team Championships known as the English Leagues Cup Competitions. For 2007/2008 there will be mens', womens', junior boys' and junior girls' events and the competition will be held on a zoned basis on 17th and 25th November 2007. The finals will be on 14th June 2008.

Tournament week commences Monday 26th November with arrangements already in place for the Vets and Super Vets events to be held at Child Okeford Village Hall on Friday 30th November at 7.30 pm. If you wish to enter either of these, please contact Peter Rolfe, Steve Ible or Les Whittaker as soon as possible or give your name to any member of the committee who will be glad to pass it on to the appropriate organiser. If possible, the next newsletter will post details of any other tournaments arranged for that week.

The BBC is screening a series of programmes on ONE (12th – 16th November 2007 at 9.15 am about various sports competitors' preparations for the 2012 Olympic Games. Programmes 3, 4 and 5 (Wed': Thurs': Fri') feature Britain's table tennis hopefuls, including Paul Drinkhall and Darius Knight.

Several B.V.T.T.L members have arranged to spectate at the prestigious London Masters tournament in March 2008. If anyone else is interested, please contact David or any other member of the committee.

David Chalk (of Chalke Valley) is doing a 3k-sponsored walk on 4th November 2007 in aid of charity and is looking for sponsorship from as many B.V.T.T.L members as possible. If you would like to support him, please contact David direct (see handbook) or any other member of the committee.

Recently, there have been a number of Blackmore Vale players who have been rather more under-the-weather than is perhaps usual. You will recall that Steve Ible underwent a prostate operation a while ago but is now recovering very well. David Turner suffered rather a protracted problem with his heel and was unable to play for quite some time. We are glad to report that he too is now back in the fray, playing once more.

More recently, Stuart Spetch was admitted to hospital for an operation under local anaesthetic which brought him some considerable discomfort in ensuing days. We look forward to his return to the table in a few weeks time. Chairman Les Whittaker also found himself hospitalised recently having some keyhole surgery undertaken on his knee. A mishap with an artery cropped up during the process which led to a complication and has delayed his return to the game. Again, we look forward to Les getting back into the swing of things in a few weeks' time. Gary Gray has felt somewhat poorly over quite a period, though everyone knows he's the type to soldier on uncomplainingly. He also attended hospital in mid October for a test, but is still able to play table tennis with his fellow team members.

Sec's Sagacity

As a game, table tennis is very involved with a great number of rules dictating how play should take place. A raft of laws that are quite difficult to adjudicate in many instances surrounds the service alone. As the rules developed over the years, there emerged the ever-present question of how clinically they should be observed and at what level. Should it only be at national and international level that the microscope of observation is taken from its box and put fastidiously to use? Or should it be that ALL players at ALL times must strive to abide by *every* rule and be picked up immediately if one is transgressed? At local club level, maybe it would be best to highlight any obvious breaches but ignore the more complex and hard to define areas. As with most other things in life, opinion will inevitably be divided, but before any of us come to unshakable conclusions, we might take a look at the large number of rules in table tennis that relate to potential foul serving alone.

www.ittf.com/Committees/Umpires_Referees/Video/training/index.html

Common ones are:- hitting the ball out of the hand: tossing the ball from the fingers: not throwing the ball up near vertically or to a minimum height of 16 cm: hitting the ball over the table. Besides the service there are many other rules in table tennis that can be easily breached. Just a few examples are: Bouncing the ball on the floor before service: Bouncing the ball on the table before service: Throwing the bat about: Verbal indiscretions: Player touches or hits the umpire in anger or with malice. Needless to say, the final three of these are unacceptable, but so too are the first two if they occur repeatedly. They are therefore all subject to umpire intervention.

But looking at the service issues alone (certainly from the web site given above) some people may be a little surprised at how much control can enter into just this one aspect of the game. After watching the video clips, make a silent observation of your fellow players when next you get the chance and see if you are even more surprised by how many people consistently commit service fouls. America's Marty Reisman, at the U.S hardbat championship of 2005 said, "I believe 90% of the players in the tournament were making illegal serves if the rules were strictly enforced by umpires."

The question continues to hover. At basic club level and during knock-about activity, should we ignore most of this (excepting a few very bad and obvious cases such as hitting out of one's hand and hitting over the table) or should we pick up each transgression [service or otherwise] and make an issue of it EVERY time it occurs? It is almost certain there will never be a clear, definitive answer – rather, controversy will always come to the fore. As a closing thought, contrast this with the game of tennis where the concept of foul play seldom crops up and players invariably complete a match without so much as even thinking about whether an opponent has committed a breach of the rules. No bias is intended – the two games are just different in this respect and that in itself is both interesting and fascinating considering that one developed from the other.

Last month's mystery player is Sanya Clements. Sanya (pronounced Sanja) hails from near Zagreb, Croatia, but has been in the UK for about 20 years. She came here to study, got married and remained. Sanya recently moved to the North Western area of Dorset and is now playing her league table tennis in Bournemouth. She is a penholder with a very distinctive style and an equally distinctive bat that is narrow, rectangular and is surfaced on one side only. The rear side has a plain sheet of black rubber in place, merely to provide the typical black/red combination, but the black side is never used to strike the ball. Sanya is not a member of the B.V.T.T.L but she attends the Sturminster Leisure Centre every few weeks for a knock up with some of the local players there. She is currently ranked 9th amongst England's lady players and was recently runner-up in the prestigious Clare Pengelly grand prix tournament held in Devon. Well done Sanya.

Some facts and curiosities:

The 1928 World Champion, Zoltan Mechiovits, was a penhold player and it is believed that subsequent Asian players modelled their style on his. More amazingly, in Gerald Gurney's book 'Table Tennis – The Early Years' there are pictures on pages 12 and 17 of players using the penhold style in 1902 and 1904. In both cases the players are female, so perhaps it was considered more lady-like than the hammer-grip used by men – the table tennis equivalent of riding side saddle.

Hiroji Satoh used sponge in the 1952 Bombay World Championships, which allegedly upset opponents because of the lack of sound made when the ball struck the racquet. It was suggested that players who did not rely on sound would be less affected but when Satoh played Michel Lanskoj, a French player who was profoundly deaf, he was just as successful, so this theory was dismissed.

Colin Clemett has a lifetime record of input into the game of table tennis that is second to none. You will perhaps be familiar with his articles for the E.T.T.A. The American, Marty Reisman was a table tennis hustler of the 40s and 50s who has written an autobiography called 'The Money Player.' When the two met in Las Vegas on December 18th 1998, Reisman signed a copy of his book for Colin and added the typical hand written comment – "To Colin Clemett – 15 points, anytime, anywhere. You name the stakes! Marty Reisman."

The finals of the first All-England Championship for eighteen years were played on 22 April 1922. Percy Bromfield reached the semi-final but lost to Andrew Donaldson, a school master from Sunderland whose opponent in the final was Austen Carris. The mens' final was marked by a certain amount of gamesmanship. Donaldson's only departure from his everyday dress had been to remove his tie and the detachable collar of his shirt, and Carris complained that he was distracted by the heavy stamping noise of Donaldson's boots as he moved around. In turn, Donaldson objected to the flashing light reflected from the diamond studs in the front of Carris's dress shirt, but he managed to win the match 4 : 2.

A few ponderous questions:

In 1936, the Polish player Alex Ehrlich was involved in an extraordinary situation in a table tennis match. What was it?

The Hungarian Victor Barna won the world mens' singles table tennis championships 5 times. They were nearly all consecutive, but not quite. Who stopped him achieving this? Clue – he was another Hungarian. In fact Hungarians won eight of the first nine world table tennis championships. Who stopped them getting a straight nine?

The term 'Ping-Pong' is perhaps best known because of the drum-like sound made by early bats which used vellum stretched over a hollow frame. But it came to mean more than this. Why was this so?

When was the first open table tennis tournament held in England?

Who was Sol Schiff and what was he well known for in regard to the game of table tennis?

David Hughes

We are six weeks into the winter playing season. Some teams are flying and some are frying – well, getting fried in any case. No matter try a little harder. But win or lose, keep enjoying it.

The Committee