

BLACKMORE VALE TABLE TENNIS LEAGUE

Newsletter – December 2007

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

The fifth committee meeting at the Saxon Inn took place on Tuesday December 4th with only one week's fixture remaining prior to Christmas. That week (10th December) soon passed, concluding the first part of the playing season, and so too the week of 17th December which saw some re-arranged tournaments staged.

The Veterans singles and Veterans handicap singles tournaments had been set for 30th November but a hall booking error resulted in some frantic ringing around and therefore an eleventh hour postponement. There had been a notably large entry received for these two events and the tournament committee regrets that it proved impossible to run them as planned but would like to make known that the problem lay solely with the bookings secretary of the Child Okeford hall who had inadvertently omitted the booking from her diary. As a consequence, at the intended time of the setting up of the tables, short-mat bowls activity was well underway which had been booked into the slot that had been proposed for the table tennis tournaments.

The tournament committee hopes to re-arrange the two events for the evening of Friday 25th January 2008 at Child Okeford, providing that slot is available, and will inform members once this has been confirmed. On Friday 21st December, the super-veterans singles tournament was held but the date was close to Christmas and was accompanied by some very foggy weather conditions which perhaps resulted in a limited turn out. Winner this year was Clive Cornford with Steve Ible coming runner-up. Well done to them. Two days earlier, on Wednesday 19th December, a very successful pair of doubles events was held with eight pairs attending to compete in both the open and handicap table tennis doubles. Such a turn out is quite impressive and is probably near the maximum that could be accommodated at Child Okeford when two events are held on one evening. In fact, proceedings ran quite late into the evening and it proved possible to stage only one of the two finals on the night – i.e. the doubles handicap tournament. Congratulations to Clive Cornford and Andy Doggerel who were victorious over runners-up, Mark Orton and Rod Fry. The same two pairs will meet again in the final of the open doubles at a mutually convenient time and the result will be given in the January Newsletter.

Last month's newsletter asked any teams who did not wish to participate in the team handicap tournament to let Malcolm know. In the event, he received no notifications so a draw was made on Tuesday December 4th which includes all 27 Blackmore Vale teams:

Group 1: Child Okeford E: SAS A: Child Okeford D: Shaftesbury B:

Group 2: Compton B: Shaftesbury A: Compton D: Chalke Valley A:

Group 3: Compton C: Silton: Mere: Child Okeford A:

Group 4: Chalke Valley F: Sturminster Newton: Just Georges: Chalke Valley C

Group 5: Chalke Valley G: Stalbridge: Compton A: SAS B:

Group 6: Chalke Valley D: Ashmore: Chalke Valley E: Child Okeford B:

Group 7: Chalke Valley B: Child Okeford C: Compton E:

Full details of this team handicap event have been sent to everyone who receives Malcolm's e mails, via four Excel spreadsheet attachments. (Sent 22nd December, 2007). Hard copy details have also been sent to those captains who do not receive E-mail. Please contact Malcolm if you have not received these details or are unsure of how to interpret them.

The committee wishes to remind all league players that exemplary playing etiquette should be observed at all times. Table tennis is of course a sport so it is widely acknowledged that a sporting approach should be made toward it on each and every occasion by everyone who participates. Members' attention is drawn to the B.V.T.T.L Equity Policy Statement as it appears in the handbook:

1.1 The Blackmore Vale Table Tennis League is committed to ensuring that equity is incorporated across all aspects of its development. In doing so, the League acknowledges and adopts the following Sport England definition of sports equality.

Sports equity is about fairness in sport, equality of access, recognising inequalities and taking steps to address them. It is about changing the culture and structure of sport to ensure it becomes equally accessible to everyone in society.

1.2 The League respects the rights, dignity and worth of every person and will treat everyone equally within the context of their sport, regardless of age, ability, gender, race, ethnicity, religious belief, sexuality or social and economic status.

1.3 The League is also committed to everyone having the right to enjoy their sport in an environment free from the threat of intimidation, harassment and abuse.

1.4 All League clubs, teams and individual members have a responsibility to oppose discriminatory behaviour, promote equality of opportunity and to promote the League as a 'friendly league.'

1.5 The League will deal with any incidence of discriminatory behaviour seriously and in accordance with the League disciplinary procedures.

November's newsletter mentioned the matter of some players taking a minute's break between legs and receiving coaching during that minute. Both issues are legitimate but previously there may have been a question mark about the length of time being taken. Aside from the matter of coaching itself, overly long breaks could certainly

result in a serious breach of concentration for the opponent. But after some awareness being brought to this matter, a few casually timed breaks that were taking place very recently, resulted in gaps of around 45 – 50 seconds only. Regardless of whatever may or may not have happened in the past, proceedings now seem to be functioning within the rules allowed which of course legitimises things for future encounters, providing no time deviation subsequently occurs.

FEES: There are still sixteen teams who have not paid their league fees. Please could these be settled as a matter of extreme urgency since it should in no way occur that fees remain outstanding into the second half of the playing season.

E.T.T.A Registration/Survey Forms: No further ETTA registration forms have been received and it would now seem that the E.T.T.A will have to be informed that the sixty it has already received is all it's going to get from the Blackmore Vale League – which is rather disappointing.

Between 17th and 21st of December, the BBC screened five programmes entitled Olympic Dreams which charted the aspirations and early preparations of Britain's young sporting hopefuls for the 2012 Olympic Games. Wednesday, Thursday and Friday's programmes followed the aims and hopes of Paul Drinkhall and Darius Knight, the UK's best players at both junior and senior levels. This was an interesting and fascinating series of programmes which highlighted many shortcomings from the two English internationals who currently still fail to make the top 250 in the world. However, there is still a very long way to go to the London 2012 Games and the boys' Chinese coach, Jia Yi Liu, is hopeful that much progress is yet to be made in the coming years. Despite underlining concentration and ranking problems, Friday's episode finished on a high note with the English troop lifting the under 18 team trophy at the European junior championships in Bratislava back in the summer.

Stuart Spetch has undergone two sessions of chemotherapy since the time of November's newsletter and whilst he says it's not to be recommended, he is standing up to it with great fortitude. Our very best wishes continue to go out to Stuart and Jenny over this festive period, and we very much hope the New Year will bring a complete and greatly desired recovery for a fine league member, much valued team player and a real gentleman.

Sec's Sagacity

It's not uncommon for senior players to wax lyrical about the 'golden era' of the game when Victor Barna, Richard Bergmann, Ferenc Sido and Bohumil Vana ruled supreme and rallies continued whilst you ate your sandwiches. There is no denying they were indeed amazing times, but it is over fifty years since all that came to an end. Modern table tennis is a very different concept from the 'tame' mainly defensive creature of that so called classical 'never-to-be-surpassed' period. It's fast and furious, spongy and tacky, high tech' and glue-smearred, aggressive and attack orientated – and it's Chinese. Well, not completely of course but there is no doubt

that China is the dominant force in the game today and has been for the last fifty years.

Over that period, Chinese men have won 14 of the 26 World Championships (the Worlds are held every two years) with Japan winning 5 and Sweden, 4. Just for the record, the other three went to Austria, France and Hungary. The womens' game is even more remarkable with Chinese ladies winning 17 out of 26, Japan 6 and Korea, 3. So what should the rest of us do about that – Brits in particular? Stay in the house perhaps and let all those Asian masters get on with it?

There's quite a lot of criticism being levelled presently at the state of open standard table tennis in the UK owing to the fact that players are unequivocally failing to compete against the best European opponents let alone against the thoroughly impressive and world dominant Chinese. Another example of this was at the inaugural *World V China* team event three years ago in Changsha, central China when the brilliant Chinese easily overcame the rest of the world to notch up an 8 : 2 victory.

The *World* team comprised some fine players indeed – Jan-Ove Waldner (world champion 1989 and 1997) Olympic champion Ryu Seung Min, world champion Werner Schlager and top European players Timo Boll and Vladimir Samsonov. (Not a Brit in sight needless to say). But even these great players were no match for the mighty Chinese – Kong Linghui, Wang Hao, Wang Liqin, Ma Lin and Chen Qi.

Many people might argue that lack of British success is solely down to a superficial approach to young people in the game, to poor facilities and tuition, drive and general enthusiasm. This may well be true to an extent since there is little doubt that western nations are unable to even half match the popularity of the game in China or the way the Chinese tackle it in respect of its young players and the demanding regime that's set up for them. But it may not be the whole story.

Britain's record in other racquet sports isn't any better. In tennis we had Fred Perry many years ago (and table tennis of course) but no champions of note after him. Badminton fares even worse since the number of men and ladies' champions since 1977 (16 events) amounts to Zero and Zero respectively. In squash, we had the Scot Peter Nicol winning the mens' World Championship in 1999 with fellow countryman John White coming runner up in 2002 and England's Lee Beachill likewise in 2004. Compare this with the great Australian squash players and the inimitable Jahangir and Jansher Khan (Pakistan) and it's almost a non-starter.

Could it be therefore that we Brits are simply not cut out to be world beaters in racquet sports including table tennis, or at least not cut out to take on the necessary mind-set of dedication and commitment for the modern game? It's all very well to point out that back in the mists of time, British players did *Oh so terribly well*, tippy-tapping one ball or another back and forth in their cleanly pressed white slacks or parlour dress. But when things became popular elsewhere in the world, that was largely the end of that.

So will matters ever improve for modern British players on the world stage of table tennis? Who knows! Without wishing to be remotely fatalistic, it does not seem

likely considering the UK consistently fails in the main to generate the resources and drive necessary to produce at least *some* high level results. That said, there are increasing reports of the commencement of a turn-around in the participation of competing youngsters at least and a steady improvement in their ability levels, and that's got to be encouraging.

But what about club level? Well, for now things soldier on and continue to be very enjoyable for all who participate. But here again we must not be complacent, rather, we must do all we can to encourage our own local young people to join our ranks, even if few ever make it to the greatest dizzy heights. If not, in time we could lose the game altogether.

How fast can a table tennis ball come off the bat?

Jay Turberville's extensive research concludes the speed of a hard hit table tennis ball is about 66 mph – but nowhere near the 100 mph some people claim. “Since the speed estimate for a very hard hit ball from a world class table tennis player is less than 70 mph, we can be pretty sure that any table tennis ball likely to be seen by a club player is travelling much slower. But keep in mind that at an average speed of only 25 mph, a table tennis ball will travel the length of table in about a quarter of a second – the approximate limit of human reaction time. 70, 60 and even 50 mph is extremely fast when short table tennis distances are factored in. This of course explains why players like Timo Boll are so far back and why players who play close to the table need very quick reflexes. www.jayandwanda.com/tt/speed.html

What is a double bounce serve?

It's a serve which would bounce twice on the opponent's side of the table if left alone. The first bounce lands somewhere near mid-table (perhaps inclined towards the net) and the second would fall about 3 – 6 inches from the end line.

Reasons to use it.

It is difficult to attack with a powerful return.

Because the ball is not going over the end of the table, it is hard for the opponent to use his natural loop stroke to attack.

Because most of your opponent's returns are made from over the table, the double bounce serve makes him perform it from as far away from the net as possible.

Exceptional video clips.

<http://oneofakindtrading.com.au/>

Silky smooth attack and defence from Timo Boll and Ding Song – 49 strokes.

Festive Frivolity

On the first day of Christmas Saint Nich'las gave to me
The Sec's job to do for free.
By the sixth day of Christmas he really turned the screw,
As the garbage began to accrue.
On the ninth day of Christmas he grinned a dev'lish grin,
T'was no let-up or packing it in.

By the 11th day of Christmas he'd nearly done his work,
But he pressed on, the bloomin' great burk.

On the twelfth day of Christmas he further gave to me:-
Twelve teams a playing:
Eleven umpires, baying:
Ten postponements:
Nine false atonements:
Eight rubbish players:
Seven min' delayers:
Six lousy payers:
Five packs of three: (and they weren't even Butterfly ones)
Four committee pratts
Three fat cats:
Two old bats:
And the Sec's job to do for free.

Mystery Player

This person is a player of notable experience who isn't afraid to take you on. Demonstrating an individual upright forehand style, drop your guard for a moment and you're history. Broadly speaking, he or she has chalked up an impressive raft of achievements at the table and continues to do so even now. If you ever make the mistake of thinking you can read him or her like the cover of a book, think again – for it is well known that a book cannot be judged by its cover.

David Hughes

Christmas has come and gone: the goose was nicely cooked:
Committee had a pint or six: and promptly all got booked.
Not really of course – we prefer to think of ourselves as the ten wise men - (no cracks of an even wiser nature please). We hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas with a similarly great New Year in store. Enjoy a super second half starting on the 7th January 2008 and a good team handicap event as well.

The Committee

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