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ALL INTERNATIONAL  
TABLE TENNIS NEWS

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# FAN ZHENDONG

A PORTENT FOR RIO 2016?  
IN THE PLAYING ARENA AT THE  
NANJING 2014 YOUTH OLYMPIC GAMES,  
FAN ZHENDONG WAS AWESOME.  
P.06

THOMAS WEIKERT  
7<sup>TH</sup> ITTF PRESIDENT.  
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## A NEW ERA DAWNS

Dear Table Tennis Lovers,

Welcome to our new magazine, one which visits the four corners of the world.

Read about what happened in the table tennis world since our first issue but also read about the new era which begins. A new name the helm of the International Table Tennis Federation, **Thomas Weikert** will be the eighth ITTF President, he follows in illustrious shoes; succeeding the charismatic and forward thinking **Adham Sharara** is a daunting task.

**Adham Sharara**, himself will not depart the scene. He assumes the role of ITTF Chair; this will afford him the opportunity to continue to promote the sport.

It is also a new era also with the new plastic ball, which will be used at every international event and gradually everywhere in the world.

Change always causes concern but after a few months, it seems the change has been accepted universally. Immediate reaction suggests the new ball will not cause any major change, just minor adjustments. We must look to the positives, look to the future, the sport of table tennis will continue and will continue to grow from strength to strength. The risks of celluloid are now resigned to history.

Meanwhile, at very heart of the matter in the playing arena in recent months was the Nanjing 2014 Youth Olympic Games, the Men's Singles winner was China's **Fan Zhendong**, his power was awesome; a portent for Rio 2016?

Philippe Saive

# SUMMARY



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Winner of the Men's Singles event earlier in the year in February at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Kuwait Open, China's **Fan Zhendong** won the Men's Singles title at the Nanjing 2014 Youth Olympic Games on the early afternoon of Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> August.

However, any suggestions from some quarters that all he needed to do was arrive in the Wutaishan Gymnasium, smile, pick up his racket and the gold medal would be automatically awarded was not the situation.

Japan's **Yuto Muramatsu**, the second seed, gave the top seed, a torrid time.



## CHINA OPEN: MA LONG WINS IN CHENGDU, ONCE AGAIN DISPLAYS LIKING FOR HOME SOIL

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## JAPAN OPEN: YOUNGER AND YOUNGER NOW YU ZIYANG IS THE YOUNGEST EVER

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One year ago the host nation's **Masato Shiono** emerged as the sensational winner of the Men's Singles event in Yokohama; not seeded, he negotiated the qualification stage of proceedings before causing a string of upsets to secure gold.



## KOREA OPEN: HISTORY CREATED BUT TITLE RETENTION IMPORTANT TO XU XIN FOR DIFFERENT REASON

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Precedence prevailed in the city of Incheon on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> June; **Xu Xin** won the Men's Singles title at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Korea Open beating compatriot, **Fang Bo** at the final hurdle.



## A NEW ERA BEGINS

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Today I welcome **Thomas Weikert** as the 7<sup>th</sup> ITTF President. The official transfer of responsibility of president is today and on behalf of all the ITTF family I wish **Thomas** all the best in his new position. I also congratulate Mr. **Khalil Al-Mohannadi** as the new ITTF Deputy President, and I welcome Mr. **Bruce Burton** as the new Executive Vice-President.

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## THE INSPIRATION VIDEO «NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE» IBRAHIM HAMATO HAS REACHED 2 MILLION YOUTUBE VIEWS

The video shows armless table tennis player **Ibrahim Hamato**, who holds the racket in his mouth, playing against top international players at the ZEN-NOH 2014 World Table Tennis Championships. The Egyptian who shot to international stardom expressed on his achievement:

*"First, I would like to thank all those who helped me to reach this goal of 2 million views, mainly the President of the African Table Tennis Federation and former International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) President **Adham Sharara**. I would like to express my gratitude and thanks to all who watched my video over the past few months. I am overjoyed with people's encouraging comments, which have motivated me to achieve more and more in my life.*

*At the beginning, I was not concerned about the number of viewers as my goal was to send a message to the world that 'Nothing Is Impossible' as long as you work hard.*

*Now, I feel pride and honor after exceeding more than 2 million viewers, which means my goal of showing the world that 'Nothing is Impossible' has succeeded."*

Not only did **Hamato** touch millions of people through YouTube, but he also touched millions more through other mediums, as he was seen throughout the world on some of the biggest networks, such as BBC, ESPN, CNN, Fox Sports, as well as a live appearance on Spain's biggest TV show *El Hormiguero*.

The ITTF would like to thank **Hamato** for letting us tell his inspiration story, and we look forward to continuing the story of Hamato in the future.



# J.O. NANJING: GOLD FOR FAN ZHENDONG, YUTO MURAMATSU PROVES WORTHY OPPONENT, PROVES POINT

Winner of the Men's Singles event earlier in the year in February at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Kuwait Open, China's **Fan Zhendong** won the Men's Singles title at the **Nanjing 2014 Youth Olympic Games** on the early afternoon of Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> August.

However, any suggestions from some quarters that all he needed to do was arrive in the Wutaishan Gymnasium, smile, pick up his racket and the gold medal would be automatically awarded was not the situation.

Japan's **Yuto Muramatsu**, the second seed, gave the top seed, a torrid time.

## ESTABLISHED LEAD

The Japanese teenager was not playing for second place; at one stage he established a two games to one lead.

Unquestionably **Fan Zhendong** was under pressure; to his great credit he responded; from two-one down he won three games in a row to clinch the title (11-8, 9-11, 9-11, 11-8, 11-5, 11-4).



## MEMORIES OF ZAGREB

**Fan Zhendong** is 17 years old and my mind went back seven years when I watched a player of the same age experience problems not too dissimilar.

At the 2007 World Championships in Zagreb, **Ma Long**, 17 years old at the time, like **Fan Zhendong**, tried to bulldoze Korea's **Joo Saehyuk** into submission. He suffered defeat.

Was **Fan Zhendong** going to suffer the same fate by trying to release a series of hammer blows and knock **Yuto Muramatsu** into oblivion?

## TACTICAL CHANGE

It was not to happen; **Yan Sen**, the Chinese National Team Coach, changed matters, **Fan Zhendong** obeyed.

*"The backhand defence of Yuto Muramatsu was very strong, the tactic was to direct the first attack to the middle and then to the backhand", explained Yan Sen. "I must admit that Yuto Muramatsu proved a better player than I originally thought, I was surprised; at the end of the third game when Fan Zhendong was losing two-one, I told him to attack the middle, as before, but then attack the forehand."*

Wise words, the change of tactic brought success and **Yan Sen** could be pleased with his player's efforts.

## FOUND RHYTHM

*"Technically, Fan Zhendong played very well; he had a great desire to win and eventually he found a good rhythm to his play", added Yan Sen, who was equally positive about the concept of the Youth Olympic Games.*

"It's a very exciting tournament and a really good platform for these young players", stressed **Yan Sen**. "It's a chance for them to show their passion for the sport; tremendous match experience."

## BIG CHALLENGE

A positive view from the coach and it was the very same from the player. "Here it has been a big challenge for me; it's a once in a lifetime opportunity and I'm the only player representing China", said **Fan Zhendong**. "It is such a great honour; I'm very grateful to everyone concerned for giving me this opportunity."

## DIFFICULT MATCH

Furthermore, **Fan Zhendong** underlined the fact that he had faced a most worthy opponent in the final.

"The match was not easy, not easy at all", added **Fan Zhendong**. "The final was a very hard match but I reached my goal; I made some mistakes at the beginning but my coach



gave me good advice how to change and in the fifth and six games I moved much better."

## NEXT GOAL

Success in Nanjing, now **Fan Zhendong** has another goal.

"My aim is to play in the Rio 2016 Olympic Games", concluded **Fan Zhendong**. "Winning today has given me confidence in achieving that goal."

So, if **Fan Zhendong** plays and there are three players in a team; who are you going to leave out? On the current World ranking it would be **Zhang Jike**, Olympic and World champion!

## DEFENDER CAN SUCCEED

Gold for **Fan Zhendong** and a very worthy silver for **Yuto Muramatsu**, who is the only defender, male or female in the whole tournament!

It seems, especially for the men, there are fewer and fewer defenders on view; equally in Nanjing there is not one single pen-hold grip player in action.

Likewise at the Liebherr 2013 Men's World Cup in Belgium, there was only one pen-holder, **Xu Xin** and he won the tournament! In Nanjing the one defender was the runner up and frankly only **Fan Zhendong** was able to cope with his style.

## A DYING ART

Success for two styles that appear dying arts; is it time for coaches to broaden their minds?

Sport needs variety; the player in Nanjing who was different ended matters with a silver medal!

**Yuto Muramatsu** was a worthy runner up; **Fan Zhendong** a worthy champion, gold medallist Men's Singles Nanjing 2014 Youth Olympic Games, another title to a rapidly growing collection.

## SILVER MEDALLIST IN RABAT, GOLD MEDALLIST IN NANJING; LIU GAOYANG SHEER CLASS

Runner up in the Girls' Singles event at the 2013 World Junior Championships in the Moroccan city of Rabat, beaten by Chinese National Team colleague, **Gu Yuting** in the final; on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> August at the Nanjing 2014 Youth Olympic Games it was one step higher for **Liu Gaoyang**.

She followed in the footsteps of her nemesis, **Gu Yuting** who had won the Women's Singles title four years earlier at the inaugural Youth Olympic Games in Singapore.

Imperiously she claimed the top step of the podium to receive the precious gold medal.





## TRADITIONALLY STRONG AREA

At the final hurdle, **Liu Gaoyang**, the no.2 seed, beat Hong Kong's **Doo Hoi Kem**, the no.1 seed, in five games (11-6, 11-5, 6-11, 11-1, 11-3).

It was a most impressive performance from the 18 year old who hails from Shandong Province in the north of China, the same area of China as the two most recent Olympic Games Men's Singles gold medalists, **Ma Lin** and **Zhang Jike**.

## SMOOTH STYLE

Left handed, her play as smooth as silk she moved through the gears like a top of the range Rolls Royce easing its way down the motorway to its ultimate destination.

The backhand block was safe secure, creating angles, making **Doo Hoi Kem** move and forcing errors; equally the velvet exquisitely timed forehand, wide to the Hong Kong teenager's forehand reaped dividends.

## PLAYED BETTER

"I played much better than yesterday", said **Liu Gaoyang** who at the quarter-final stage had been extended to six games by Chinese Taipei's **Chiu Ssu-Hua**.

"Today, I had a good feeling for the ball from the very start of the match; I was soon into a rhythm", said **Liu Gaoyang**. "I lost the third game because I hurried, I rushed; I calmed down and played better."

## TECHNICAL LEVEL

It was a display of high quality and it paid tribute to the Chinese coaching system; if perfection can be achieved in sport **Liu Gaoyang** came very near.

"I think maybe my technical level is slightly better than that of **Doo Hoi Kem**", added **Liu Gaoyang**, a most polite and courteous young lady was arguably giving very modest response; her technical level is better than any other player in the whole tournament!

## UNDER PRESSURE

However, technique is only one aspect; ask any great champion and they will tell you that the mental ingredient is just if not more important.

"I've been under so much pressure here", concluded **Liu Gaoyang**. "I'm homesick, I want to go home."

Home but that must wait; there is the Team event and there is reasonable chance she may add to her medal haul, she partners a certain **Fan Zhendong**.

## PLAYED EXCEPTIONALLY WELL

**Liu Gaoyang** responded in every respect and her efforts gained the approval of **Yan Sen**, the Chinese National Coach, who had guided her fortunes.

"Undoubtedly **Liu Gaoyang** was under pressure but so was **Doo Hoi Kem**; I think the two players are of a very similar level but today **Liu Gaoyang** played exceptionally well", said **Yan Sen**. "I think she played at 80 per cent or even at 90 per cent of her practice level."

Considering the importance of the contest that was an extremely high percentage.

## CHANGES

"**Doo Hoi Kem** only made small changes to her play, **Liu Gaoyang** made many more", added **Yan Sen**. "I don't think **Doo Hoi Kem** was in good shape today; she didn't play to her potential, **Liu Gaoyang** was relaxed and played well."

**Liu Gaoyang** certainly played well, a fact **Zhang Rui**, the coach of **Doo Hoi Kem**, recognised.

"Today **Liu Gaoyang** was full of energy, she was too strong", said **Zhang Rui**. "There was a lot of pressure today, Olympic Games produces a very special atmosphere."

## SPECIAL PERFORMANCE

A special atmosphere and from **Liu Gaoyang**, it was a special performance, the Women's Singles title secured in style; great style and have we seen a future Olympic Games gold medallist? **Liu Gaoyang** in Tokyo in 2020?

## RIO DE JANEIRO CELEBRATES, BRAZIL REJOICES, BRONZE FOR HUGO CALDERANO

Now less than two years hence, Rio de Janeiro will celebrate the staging of the Olympic Games; on the morning of Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> August at the Nanjing 2014 Youth Olympic Games, the metropolis had further reason to celebrate.

Born and bred in the city overlooked by Christ the Redeemer, on the morning of Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> August, Brazil's **Hugo Calderano** secured the bronze medal in the Men's Singles event at the Nanjing 2014 Youth Olympic Games.

He overcame Chinese Taipei's **Yang Heng-Wei** in a tense six games encounter (11-9, 11-8, 11-9, 9-11, 9-11, 12-10) that enthralled the 4,000 plus spectators in the Wutaishan Gymnasium.

## KEEP ACTIVE

"I tried to keep to my tactics, to remain active, to be positive and to keep him under pressure", said **Hugo Calderano**. "The problem playing **Yang Heng-Wei** was that he is very consistent from the backhand and powerful from the forehand."

However, the young man from Chinese Taipei was no stranger to **Hugo Calderano**; they had met twice on the ITTF Junior Circuit in 2013.



## DUELS IN 2013 IN ITTF JUNIOR CIRCUIT

In June, **Hugo Calderano** suffered defeat in Egypt but that match took place when the Brazilian had only just returned to international action. He had missed the first four months of the year undergoing a leg operation and the fulfilling the necessary rehabilitation process.

The second occasion was much different; in the final of the Junior Boys' Singles event at the Brazil Junior and Cadet Open in September in his native Rio de Janeiro. **Hugo Calderano** won in four straight games.

### A NEW MATCH

*"I played really badly in Egypt", reflected Hugo Calderano. "I watched the videos of the match from Rio but I knew today would be different; I had to be prepared to keep the ball on the table; not play too hard".*

A crucial stage of the contest came in the third game; **Hugo Calderano** led 10-9. **Francisco Arado**, the Brazilian National Coach sitting courtside, called "Time Out"; he realised it was a pivotal moment. He was clearly of the belief that three-nil was much different to a two games to one lead in an Olympic bronze medal match.

### MAGIC MOMENT

**Hugo Calderano** served, **Yang Heng-Wei** returned to the Brazilian's forehand, the ball was returned short; **Hugo Calderano** ran around his forehand, executed the modern day backhand technique of forearm vertical, wrist relaxed and produced an outright winner wide to **Yang Heng-Wei** forehand.

**Yang Heng-Wei** was stunned; **Francisco Arado** was ecstatic.

*"No it was not something we discussed in the 'Time Out'; I think the backhand is one of my*

*strengths so I saw the chance", explained Hugo Calderano. "It wasn't planned."*

### SUCCESS ON THIRD MATCH POINT

Success for **Hugo Calderano** but then he lost the next two games as the ice cool **Yang Heng-Wei** recovered.

In the sixth game, **Yang Heng-Wei** made the better start but at 10-8 it was two match points to **Hugo Calderano**; both were saved but when at 11-10 there was third chance, it was converted.

**Hugo Calderano** threw his racket in the air in jubilation, **Francisco Arado**, jumped higher than his compatriot **Javier Sotomayor**, the 1996 Olympic high jump gold medallist, it was mission accomplished.

### ALIVE

*"I'm alive, I think, my heart."*

smiled **Francisco Arado**, a coach who has been made to suffer more than most.

In the first round and in the quarter-finals, **Hugo Calderano** emerged successful in full distance seven games duels; in the former in opposition to Thailand's **Padasak Tanviriyavechakul**, in the latter when facing Poland's **Patryk Zatowka**.

### SO CLOSE

*"It was so close, Hugo won the first three games but they were all very close", added Francisco Arado. "It was a mental battle and Yang Heng-Wei was so consistent with his play, he was never up, never down, always the same; Hugo had to take some risks."*

Success for **Hugo Calderano** and for **Francisco Arado** who played many times for Cuba; he was a member of their gold medal winning team at the Latin American Championships in Havana in 1992, he played in the Men's World Cup in the French city of Nîmes in 1995 and he is an Olympian. He competed in the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games.

### TODAY THE BEST

*"Nothing compares with today, nothing at all", he added with an air of great pride. "This is the best, the very, very best!"*

It was the same reaction from **Hugo Calderano**.

*"I came here to win a medal, I achieved my goal; it's a special moment", said Hugo Calderano. "I know my family was watching; thanks to everyone who has supported me."*

Now for **Hugo Calderano** another goal awaits.

*"My target now is the 2016 Olympic Games; to represent Brazil in Rio", he concluded. "For now, a medal it's an amazing sensation!"*

### PAN AMERICA A RISING FORCE

One match earlier, the continent of North America had celebrated with **Lily Zhang** of the United States securing bronze; now in the guise of **Hugo Calderano** it was the turn of Latin America to celebrate.

Both finals were all-Asian affairs; the traditional rival to Asia has for the past 60 years has been Europe; there was not a player from the old continent in sight.

It is not a criticism of Europe, it is a mark of progress being made in Pan America; in the words of **Bob Dylan**: the times they are a changin.





## MISSION ACCOMPLISHED, FAN ZHENDONG AND LIU GAOYANG WIN TEAM GOLD

Top seeds and favourites for gold, the Chinese partnership of **Fan Zhendong** and **Liu Gaoyang** won the Team event at the Nanjing 2014 Youth Olympic Games.

On the evening of Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> August in the Wutaishan Gymnasium, they beat the second seeded Japanese pairing of **Yuto Muramatsu** and **Miyu Kato** by two matches to nil.

Thus it was mission accomplished. **Fan Zhendong** and **Liu Gaoyang** added the Team title to the respective Men's Singles and Women's Singles crowns donned three days earlier. Furthermore, never at any stage did they lose a single match.

At the final hurdle **Liu Gaoyang** beat **Miyu Kato** (11-3, 11-9, 11-9); **Fan Zhendong** overcame **Yuto Muramatsu** (10-12, 14-12, 11-5, 11-5).

### ASSERTED AUTHORITY

**Liu Gaoyang** stamped her authority on proceedings from the very start; she won the first game against **Miyu Kato** comfortably. In the second the Japanese teenager, to her credit, responded but at the crucial stages the fluent style of the Chinese starlet prevailed.

"I'm pleased with my performance today; this morning I played positively from my backhand and I maintained that policy in the final", said **Liu Gaoyang**. "I felt confident before the match, I wasn't nervous and now I'm really happy, I've achieved my goals."

Undoubtedly **Miyu Kato** played at a much higher level than early in the day when comfortably beaten by Hong Kong's **Doo Hoi Kem**; notably she played strongly from the backhand.

### PLAY STRONGER

Success for **Liu Gaoyang** was followed with success for **Fan Zhendong** but it was hard fought success; the crowd willed their hero to victory.

The standard cries of "**Fan Zhendong Jia You**, **Fan Zhendong Jia You**" rang around the Wutaishan Gymnasium "**Fan Zhendong Play Stronger**, **Fan Zhendong Play Stronger**"; when he won a point the reaction was a chorus of acclamation in unison.

### TENSE MOMENTS

However, there were some tense moments.

**Yuto Muramatsu** won the first game; then led 7-5 in the second. **Yan Sen**, the Chinese National Team coach sitting courtside called "*Time Out*" but at 10-7 **Fan Zhendong** faced three game points.

History shows that **Fan Zhendong** proceeded to save those two crucial points and then took control. It was a pressure situation; great credit must go to **Fan Zhendong** for the way he controlled his emotions; there was no hint of panic.

Clearly the advice from **Yan Sen** was to focus his ferocious forehand attacks towards the backhand of **Yuto Muramatsu**, the side of the racket on which he uses long pimples; thus making it more difficult for **Yuto Muramatsu** to change the degrees of spin on the ball.



## WORRIED ABOUT SCORE

"He's very hard to play against", said **Fan Zhendong**. "I was worried about the score not about my play, I'm pleased with my level throughout the tournament and when we changed the tactics to concentrate on attacking his backhand, I felt comfortable".

The contest was very much a repeat of the Men's Singles final earlier in the tournament; close at first, then **Fan Zhendong** assumed control and once a three point lead was established, he relaxed and there was no stopping the juggernaut from nearby Guangdong Province.

## MIYU KATO ALL SMILES

Two silver medals for **Yuto Muramatsu**; for **Miyu Kato** it was a happy ending to the tournament.

Three days previously she had left the arena distraught, on the concluding day she left full of smiles; she owned a precious gold medal.

## A STEP AHEAD

However, nothing could detract from the superb performance afforded by **Fan Zhendong** and **Liu Gaoyang**; they were a class apart.

Youth Olympic Games gold medallists but how long before we see them on the medal podium at an Olympic Games? Not long!

## THOMAS BACH PLAYS LEGEND, MAKES VOW TO NEW STAR, TABLE TENNIS TOPS BILL IN NANJING

A welcome visitor to the Wutaishan Gymnasium on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> August for the Nanjing 2014 Youth Olympic Games was **Thomas Bach**, the recently elected President of the International Olympic Committee.

The focus of attention; he played Sweden's **Jörgen Persson**, seven times Olympian and former World Champion, before meeting China's **Fan Zhendong** and **Liu Gaoyang** to congratulate them on their gold medal success in the respective Men's Singles and Women's Singles events earlier in the proceedings.

Currently listed at no.3 on the Men's World Rankings, **Fan Zhendong** impressed **Thomas Bach** with the high level of his play.

Such was the impact on the President of the International Olympic Committee that he promised to personally award the Chinese teenager the gold medal should he win the Men's Singles title at the forthcoming Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

## MEETING WITH ADHAM SHARARA

"It was a great pleasure to meet President **Bach** during the table tennis competition", said **Adham Sharara**, ITTF President. "It was also exciting to see the President play our World Champion and Olympian, **Jörgen Persson**, as well as interact with some of the Youth Olympians; a lot of fun was had by all!"

Furthermore, the meeting afforded **Adham Sharara** the occasion to explain the forthcoming changes within the International Table Tennis Federation.

"I also had the opportunity to explain the new ITTF structure and the smooth transition into the Presidency of **Thomas Weikert** and my new position of Chairman, effective from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014", added **Adham Sharara**.

## MET OUTSTANDING PERFORMERS

In addition **Thomas Bach** met **Lily Zhang** of the United States and Brazil's **Hugo Calderano**, the respective bronze medallists in the Men's Singles and Women's Singles events.

Both had provided outstanding performances, gaining their continent's first ever Olympic table tennis medals. Never previously has an athlete from North America or Latin America gained a medal in the table tennis events at either the Olympic Games or Youth Olympic Games.





**Thomas Bach** recognised the achievements of the two teenagers and also met two further aspiring young players who had impressed in the Wutaishan Gymnasium; Puerto Rico's **Brian Afanador** and Thailand's **Tamolwan Khetkhuam**.

## MOST VIEWS

Impressively, a total of 35,457 spectators watched table tennis competition in the Wutaishan Gymnasium and over 100,000 tuned into the International Olympic Committee's YouTube channel; the most of any sport at the Youth Olympic Games!

## INSIDE THE GAMES

Furthermore, "Inside the Games", a website which focuses on the work of the International Olympic Committee, featured table tennis prominently with Mixed Doubles attracting the attention.

At the recent Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games, the husband and wife partnership of **Paul** and **Joanna Drinkhall** secured gold and with all three medals being secured by England in the Scottish city, the event stole the show.

Even the Scots applauded the English!

Additionally in Nanjing, Mixed Doubles being the deciding match in the Team event, the mixed combination assumed a high priority.



## J.O. NANJING ?

Table Tennis underlined is status as one of the top sports in the Olympic Movement by obtaining the second most views on the YouTube channel of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) during the 2014 Nanjing Youth Olympic Games.

Staged in the Wutaishan Gymnasium from Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> August, the Table Tennis competition attracted huge attention.

Impressively, the event was watched by over 135,000 enthusiasts, an average of 4,500 views per video.

## TOP FIVE IN ALL ASPECTS

*"It seems that since we adopted the mindset to be in the top five in all we do, we are breaking into the top five in many aspects",* said **Adham Sharara**, President of the International Table Tennis Federation. *"I am extremely proud to learn that the table tennis competition at the Nanjing Youth Olympic Games was second in the number of views on the IOC's own YouTube Channel."*

Furthermore, the numbers are even more impressive when the situation in China is considered; the country that adopts Table Tennis as its national sport.

*"We must also note that YouTube is not available in China to the general public; this makes this achievement even more impressive and confirms the fact that our website is consistently in the top top three amongst all International Federations in terms of the number of visitors",* added **Adham Sharara**. *"I look forward to the ITTF breaking into the top five in many more categories over the years to come."*

## ATTENDANCE NUMBERS HIGH

Additionally large crowds were present in the Wutaishan Sports Gymnasium, the total attendance approaching 40,000.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Furthermore, the Facebook page of the International Table Tennis Federation proved that this was "The Social Games" with the page recording 165,429 engaged fans, a total reach of 1,175,075 and a staggering 5,071,119 impressions for the week of competition.

Notably ITTF social media success was not limited to western social media, as ITTF Sina and Tencent Weibo accounts received over 1.8 million impressions during the table tennis event, and the total fan base grew to over 700,000.



## CHINA OPEN: MA LONG WINS IN CHENGDU, ONCE AGAIN DISPLAYS LIKING FOR HOME SOIL

The winner one year ago in Changchun and Suzhou, once again, on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> June, **Ma Long** showed his liking for ITTF World Tour tournaments staged in his native China.

Occupying the no.2 seeded position in the draw, he beat **Xu Xin**, the no.1 seed, in all Chinese Men's Singles final at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour China Open in Chengdu, to secure his first such title of the year.

He secured victory in five games (11-7, 11-9, 8-11, 11-7, 11-4) and thus reversed the decision of some five months earlier, when he had been beaten by **Xu Xin** in seven games in the final of the Men's Singles event at the GAC Group 2013 ITTF World Tour Grand Finals in Dubai.

### GOOD SUPPORT

*"The fans in Chengdu were very good, they really supported me a lot, so I would like to thank them for that", said **Ma Long**. "I won two gold medals in the two events I entered, so I am very happy; it was a perfect event and I did my job here."*

Earlier **Ma Long** had partnered **Fan Zhendong** to Men's Doubles success beating **Xu Xin** and **Zhang Jike** in the final.

*"Even though my condition here was nearly perfect, I just played one game at a time and hoped that I would win the gold", added **Ma Long**. "I am very happy to win my 17<sup>th</sup> World Tour title, this means a lot; however I still have quite a few wins left if I am going to catch up to **Samsonov's** record of 23 titles."*

### FOURTH PLACE

**Ma Long** is now in fourth place on the all-time list.

He is one win behind Germany's **Timo Boll** who has won on 18 occasions, three behind compatriot **Ma Lin** who has 20 ITTF World Tour Men's Singles crowns in his possession and four in arrears of another Chinese player, the three times World champion **Wang Liqin**. He is in second place with 21 victories.

### FIFTH IN CHINA

In Chengdu it was a 17<sup>th</sup> win for **Ma Long** in 26 ITTF World Tour Men's Singles final appearances; his fifth in China.

Additional to his two successes in 2013, he won in Suzhou in both 2009 and 2011.

## AMAZING PLAYER

Defeat for **Xu Xin** who was not able to reach the heights scaled in Dubai.

*"I felt that I had too much to do here and I could not focus, which is why I think I lost both finals", reflected Xu Xin. "In saying that it is usual to lose against Ma Long, he is an amazing player."*

It was for **Xu Xin** his 12<sup>th</sup> appearance in an ITTF World Tour Men's Singles final; of those appearances it was only his fourth defeat.

## DUBAI DECISION REVERSED, DING NING OVERCOMES LIU SHIWEN TO WIN GOLD

Beaten in the final of the Women's Singles event at the US\$1,000,000 GAC Group 2013 ITTF World Tour Grand Finals in Dubai earlier this year in January by her Chinese National Team compatriot, **Liu Shiwen**; on the afternoon of Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> June, **Ding Ning** extracted a degree of revenge in the city of Chengdu.

She overcame **Liu Shiwen** in the final of the Women's Singles event at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour China Open to collect her first such title of the year.

In a full distance seven games encounter the no.2 seed succeeded against the no.1 seed, to secure the top step of the medal podium (11-6, 5-11, 11-8, 11-7, 4-11, 2-11, 11-2).

## THREE DEFEATS

Not only was the defeat retribution for the reverse suffered in Dubai; it was retribution for the defeats experienced in the three most recent ITTF World Tour Grand Finals.

In addition to the January reverse, **Ding Ning** was beaten by **Liu Shiwen** in the final in London in November 2011 and one year later by her nemesis in December 2012 in Hangzhou.

## SATISFIED WITH PERFORMANCE

Success for **Liu Shiwen** in London, Hangzhou and Dubai but in Chengdu she had to settle for silver.

*"I am satisfied with my performance here in Chengdu; however I feel very tired and my back is very sore which affected by performance but I tried my best", reflected Liu Shiwen. "In the final game of the match, I simply could not match Ding Ning's power."*

## SUPPORT APPRECIATED

A not too disappointed **Liu Shiwen** but understandably it was a delighted **Ding Ning**.

*"The fans were really good; they have supported me in every match and every situation", smiled Ding Ning. "I am satisfied with my performance here in Chengdu, I used this event as a chance to vary my game and test all my skills which was good."*

## REALISATION OF ACHIEVEMENT

**Ding Ning** passed the test and perhaps it was to her advantage that there was one item of which she was not aware.

*"There are many world tour events", she explained. "I did not actually realize it was the first time I had won the China Open; now I know this I am very happy."*

## ELEVENTH ATTEMPT

In fact it was her eleventh attempt to win the title and only the second time she has ever reached the final at an ITTF World Tour tournament in China; in 2011 in Suzhou she was beaten by colleague **Guo Yan** in the final.

Meanwhile, the previous best was a semi-final, the stage she reached in Shanghai in 2008 and 2012, as well as in Suzhou in 2010; whilst also in Suzhou in 2009 she was a quarter-finalist as she had been in Nanjing in 2007.

On debut in Shenzhen in 2005 she departed in the second round as she did in Tianjin in 2009; whilst in Changchun in 2008 it a first round exit.

Overall, in what is now 16 appearances in an ITTF World Women's Singles final, it was her tenth win.





## JAPAN OPEN: YOUNGER AND YOUNGER NOW **YU ZIYANG** IS THE YOUNGEST EVER

One year ago the host nation's **Masato Shiono** emerged as the sensational winner of the Men's Singles event in Yokohama; not seeded, he negotiated the qualification stage of proceedings before causing a string of upsets to secure gold.

Now one year later at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Japan Open, in the very same venue as one year earlier, there was an even greater sensation.

China's **Yu Ziyang**, like **Masato Shiono** not seeded and required to negotiate the preliminary stage, won the Men's Singles title and he

did not have home support; in fact quite the reverse, he beat the host nation's **Jun Mizutani**, the second seed, at the final hurdle.

### TEENAGE CHAMPIONS

**Yu Ziyang** won in six games (8-11, 11-4, 11-8, 6-11, 11-4, 11-8) and in so doing becomes the youngest ever player to win a Men's Singles title on the ITTF World Tour.

On Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> August at the GAC Group 2013 ITTF World Tour Brazil Open in Santos, the host nation's **Hugo Calderano** won the Men's Singles title; at the time he was 17 years and 54 days old.

He now stands fourth in line; the throne was passed to China's **Fan Zhendong** some three months later when he won the Men's Singles event at the GAC Group 2013 ITTF World Tour Polish Open in Spala. He was 16 years and 292 days old when he achieved the success.

**Fan Zhendong** held the accolade for five months before earlier this year on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> April, Japan's **Kohei Sambe** won in Santiago at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Chile Open when 16 years and 284 days old.

Now the mantle rests on the shoulders of **Yu Ziyang**; born on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1998, he was 16 years and 30 days old when succeeding in Yokohama.



## RECORD STANDS

However, the overall ITTF World Tour record still stands.

The youngest ever is still China's **Guo Yue** and like **Yu Ziyang**, she set the record in Japan; when she won in Kobe at the Volkswagen Open Japan on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2003, she was 15 years and 66 days old.

## NERVOUS

*"I was nervous as this was my first Men's Singles final at a World Tour event but I had confidence in myself."*

said **Yu Ziyang**. "I reached the quarter-finals in Korea last week; that helped me in this tournament."

At the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Korea Open in Incheon, **Yu Ziyang** was beaten by his compatriot, **Xu Xin**, the champion elect.

"Before coming to the Japan Open, my goal set was to reach the quarter or semi-finals", added **Yu Ziyang**. "Of course I thought of winning the title but I was really playing match by match, trying to do my best for each and not thinking too much."

The approach most certainly worked and he beat a most worthy adversary, the winner of the Men's Singles title in 2012.

"I respect **Jun**", concluded **Yu Ziyang**. "He is the no.1 player in Japan, one of the top ranked in the world."

## DISAPPOINTED

Meanwhile for **Jun Mizutani** he was down-hearted at not being able to repeat the achievement of two years earlier

"I am disappointed with myself after losing the match; I had chance to win but missed it", he said. "Playing three matches in a day was tiring but I was still able to keep my calm and stay focused."

In addition the semi-final and final of the Men's Singles event, **Jun Mizutani** had won the Men's Doubles competition earlier in the day with **Seiya Kishikawa**.

## TWO TOURNAMENTS, TWO TITLES

Meanwhile for **Yu Ziyang** it would seem he is determined to emulate the success achieved on the ITTF Junior Circuit.

He has played in three ITTF Junior Circuit tournaments and in all three he has won the Junior Boys' Single event. He won in Chengdu in 2011 and in Hong Kong in both 2012 and 2013.

Now in two consecutive appearances on the ITTF World Tour he has two titles; one week ago in Korea he won the Men's Doubles with colleague Zhou Kai; quite incredible.

Note the name, it is **Yu Ziyang** and maybe he has a liking for Japan and will no return maybe in six years time if not before? Tokyo hosts the Olympic Games in 2020!



## GOLD FOR FENG TIANWEI, THIRD WOMEN'S SINGLES TITLE OF THE YEAR

The winner in Kobe in 2011, when beating **Ai Fukuhara** in the final, once again the top step of the podium in Japan belonged to Singapore's **Feng Tianwei** and once again the player who had to settle for the second step was from the host nation.

At the final hurdle of the Women's Singles event at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Japan Open in Yokohama on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> June, **Feng Tianwei**, the top seed, overcame **Kasumi Ishikawa**, the second seed, to clinch the title.

**Feng Tianwei** won in six games (12-10, 9-11, 3-11, 11-3, 11-5, 13-11) to collect her third ITTF World Tour title of the year and the seventh of her career in what is now 13 finals.

### TOUGH AND EXCITING

*"I would say it was a tough and exciting match against **Kasumi Ishikawa**", said **Feng Tianwei**. "We have met several times before in international tournaments, and we both had wins and losses."*

They have now met on 12 occasions in World ranking events with **Feng Tianwei** very much having the upper hand; she has now won nine of the encounters but when considering past results age must be taken into account.

There is a six year age gap, **Feng Tianwei** is now 27 years old, **Kasumi Ishikawa** is 21 years of age; the gap may not be relevant now but when they first met seven years ago in 2007 at the quarter-final stage of the Under 21 Women's Singles event at the Volkswagen Open China and **Feng Tianwei** won in four straight games, **Kasumi Ishikawa** was only 14 years old.

### RECENT ENCOUNTER

However, in the most recent encounters there has been little to choose.

Last year **Feng Tianwei** won at the GAC Group 2013 ITTF World Tour Kuwait Open and at the Starts Women's World Cup but when they met in both the first and second stages of the GAC Group Asian Cup, it was **Kasumi Ishikawa** who prevailed in both contests.

Two wins apiece in 2013, the balance has now swung in favour of **Feng Tianwei**; earlier this year she beat **Kasumi Ishikawa** in the first stage of the Asian Cup.

### GOOD SHAPE

*"I think both of us gave our best efforts to perform well in the final match and we both did well; I am in good shape today and I am very happy with my win", added **Feng Tianwei**. "I am looking for the upcoming Asian Games."*

### STRONG OPPONENT

Disappointed but **Kasumi Ishikawa** was realistic.

*"It was a very difficult match with **Feng Tianwei**; during the final when I was trailing, the cheers from the home crowd helped a lot in motivating me to push on", she said. "She is world ranked no.5 right now and is a very strong opponent."*

A strong opponent and no doubt following her successes this year on the GAC Group ITTF World Tour, **Feng Tianwei** was increasingly confident.

*"As compared to our previous matches against each other, I think I have improved and I did better", added **Kasumi Ishikawa**. "When I played **Feng Tianwei** in the Asia Cup I didn't win any games, so this time round, I played more aggressively and tried to attack more."*

### FOURTH FINAL

It was for **Kasumi Ishikawa** her fourth appearance in an ITTF World Tour Women's Singles final; previously she won in Morocco in 2010 and in Chile in 2013 whilst last year being the runner up in Korea.

In Yokohama it was the Korean experience revisited, the champion was **Feng Tianwei**.



## KOREA OPEN: HISTORY CREATED BUT TITLE RETENTION IMPORTANT TO XU XIN FOR DIFFERENT REASON

Precedence prevailed in the city of Incheon on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> June; **Xu Xin** won the Men's Singles title at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Korea Open beating compatriot, **Fang Bo** at the final hurdle.

Occupying the no.1 seeded position, **Xu Xin** succeeded in five games (11-8, 11-6, 7-11, 11-9, 12-10) against an opponent, who owing to a lack of international exposure, no longer appears on the Men's World Ranking list and thus had to start proceedings four days earlier in the qualification stage.

Success and a small niche in the history books, the win meant **Xu Xin** became the only player to successfully defend the title.

### THREE CONSECUTIVE FINALS

One year ago he beat **Ma Long** in the final, having in 2012 suffered defeat at the hands of **Zhang Jike** in what was to be the start of three consecutive all-Chinese finals in Incheon.

Furthermore, he becomes only the second player to win the title twice, the other being the host nation's Oh Sangeun who succeeded in Suncheon in 2005 and in Seongnam in 2007.

Also, he is the fifth Chinese player to don the crown. In addition to **Zhang Jike**, **Ma Lin** won in Jeju-Si in 2003, the following year **Wang Liqin** succeeded in Pyeonchang; whilst in 2008, **Ma Long** was anointed champion in Daejeon in 2008.

### DEDICATED WIN

*"Although I made history by being the first player to successfully defend the title at the Korea Open, the title itself is not especially significant to me", said Xu Xin. "What made this title special is that today is Father's Day and I would like to dedicate this title to him."*

Father's Day, is celebrated in many countries of the World on the third Sunday in June.

*"It is difficult to play against team mates as they know me very well; all of the Chinese team players have relatively equal high standards and it is equally difficult to play against them", added Xu Xin. "However, we can also take more risks in our play; maybe I have more international experience and that helped me achieve this win."*

## INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Certainly of the two players **Xu Xin** has the greater international experience but when **Fang Bo** beat compatriot **Yan An** in the final of the Boys' Singles event at the Volkswagen 2009 World Junior Championships in the magnificent Colombian city of Cartagena de Indias, the name of **Xu Xin** was just starting to emerge in international Chinese circles.

**Xu Xin** had appeared in seven ITTF World Tour tournaments, his best being the runners up spot in Belarus on debut in 2008 when beaten by the host nation's **Vladimir Samsonov**.

However, there were signs six years ago of the young man's potential; notably prior to the Men's Singles event in Belarus, he had partnered Hou Yingchao to victory in the Men's Team event, overcoming **Vladimir Samsonov** in the final.

Later in 2009 he reached the Men's Singles semi-finals in China, Slovenia and England but with **Fang Bo** winning in Colombia, there was not a great deal to choose between the two rising stars.

## APPEARANCES

However, for whatever reasons, **Xu Xin** has forced his way into the Chinese Men's Team for major events.

Now 24 years of age, two years older than **Fang Bo**, he is a seasoned campaigner. Incheon was his 14<sup>th</sup> appearance in an ITTF World Tour Men's Singles final, it was his tenth win; for **Fang Bo**, who in 2013 had won in Austria it was only his second.

At the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Korea Open, international experience told, once again the name of the champion was the player with "X Factor", the name was **Xu Xin**.

## HAN YING UPSETS SEEDING, BEATS TOP SEED TO WIN CAREER FIRST WORLD TOUR TITLE

Never previously on duty in an ITTF World Tour final, Germany's **Han Ying** upset the status quo by winning the Women's Singles event at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Korea Open in Incheon on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> June.

Occupying the no.7 seeded position in the draw she caused a major upset by beating Singapore's **Feng Tianwei**, the no.1 seed, who was appearing in her third ITTF World Tour Women's Singles final of the year, having emerged successful in May in both the Philippines and in Australia.

Furthermore, **Han Ying** won in a most impressive manner; her defensive skills proving too secure for the title favourite. She won in four straight games (11-6, 11-7, 11-5, 11-7).

## A MAJOR UPSET

A major upset; that is a questionable. The two had met once before. They clashed in the first round of the Women's Singles at the GAC Group 2012 ITTF World Tour Qatar Open.

On that occasion **Han Ying** did what she did in Incheon; she won, succeeding in six games, she caused a major upset.

## NO EXPECTATIONS

*"I've played in many world tours this year and each time I will aim to play my best", said **Han Ying**. "I certainly didn't expect to win here in Korea and I'm feeling very happy about it; I still need to make improvements to my game and I hope to keep doing well on the international scene."*

It is **Han Ying's** fifth appearance of the year on the ITTF World Tour but only the eleventh of her career; her previous best performances both coming on home soil. In 2013 she reached the semi-final stage of the Women's Singles event in Berlin, losing to **Ai Fukuhara**; whilst earlier this year she progressed to the same round in Magdeburg where adventures were halted by colleague **Shan Xiaona**.

## WORTHY ADVERSARIES

A semi-final place her best prior to the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Korea Open but throughout 2014 **Han Ying** has proved a most worthy adversary and the players against whom she had experienced defeat have been most creditable opponents.

In Kuwait was beaten in round three by Korea's **Seo Hyowon**, in Qatar one round earlier by China's **Liu Fei**; whilst in China in the same round as in Qatar it was farewell, a certain **Ding Ning** halted progress.

## HARD FOUGHT WINS

*"None of the matches in this tournament was easy and the final against **Feng Tianwei** was no different", added **Han Ying**. "I played quite well this morning in the semi-finals against **Yang Haeun**; in the final I was able to execute my techniques smoothly."*

Success for **Han Ying** means she becomes the sixth player from the German Table Tennis Association to win an ITTF World Tour Women's Singles title and fourth who is a defender.

## GERMAN SUCCESS

The most successful is **Jing Tian-Zörner** who won four ITTF World Tour Women's Singles titles. In 1997 she succeeded in Austria and Poland, in 1998 in Croatia and in 1999 in Doha. Next on the list in Qiaohong Gotsch who claimed gold in Sweden in 1998 and in Austria in 1999; whilst also in 1999, **Jie Schöpp**, the current national coach, won in England.

All three were predominantly backspin players.

Meanwhile more recently it has been the lot of the attacker; in September 2013, **Sabine Winner** won in Belarus, whilst earlier this year, **Shan Xiaona** succeeded in Germany.

Now in June 2014, the German player to shine is **Han Ying**, the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Korea Open Women's Singles champion.



# WORLD RANKING LIST - MEN (TOP 50)



**XU Xin** (CHN) • No. 1



**FAN Zhendong** (CHN) • No. 2



**MA Long** (CHN) • No. 3

- Top 3
- Player was active in the previous month
- Player had no activity in the previous month
- No activity within the last 4 months
- The first list where their Starting Points have become final, having attained 5 Significant Wins
- ^ Indicates the player is not eligible to represent the Association in World Title events
- ^^ Indicates the player is not eligible to represent the Association in World Title, Continental Title and International Team events.

RANKING	PREVIOUS	NAME	ASSOC	RANKING PTS.
1	1	<b>XU Xin</b>	CHN	3063
2	3	<b>FAN Zhendong</b>	CHN	3003
3	2	<b>MA Long</b>	CHN	2983
4	5	ZHANG Jike	CHN	2769
5	4	OVTCHAROV Dimitrij	GER	2755
6	6	WANG Hao	CHN	2712
7	8	MIZUTANI Jun	JPN	2700
8	7	CHUANG Chih-Yuan	TPE	2685
9	10	BOLL Timo	GER	2610
10	9	YAN An	CHN	2605
11	11	SAMSONOV Vladimir	BLR	2554
12	13	FREITAS Marcos	POR	2539
13	12	GAO Ning	SIN	2504
		ZHOU Yu	CHN	2452
14	17	BAUM Patrick	GER	2440
15	15	NIWA Koki	JPN	2431
16	14	TANG Peng	HKG	2416
17	16	JOO Saehyuk	KOR	2387
18	19	STEGER Bastian	GER	2344
19	18	KIM Minseok	KOR	2330
20	23	APOLONIA Tiago	POR	2329
21	22	GIONIS Panagiotis	GRE	2325
22	21	CHEN Chien-An	TPE	2315
23	20	CHO Eonrae	KOR	2314
24	26	CRISAN Adrian	ROU	2308
25	27	FANG Bo	CHN	2297
26	24	ZHAN Jian ^	SIN	2294
27	25	MATSUDAIRA Kenta	JPN	2283
28	29	MAZE Michael	DEN	2280
29	44	MURAMATSU Yuto	JPN	2277
29	30	GACINA Andrej	CRO	2277
31	31	GARDOS Robert	AUT	2265
32	28	SHIONO Masato	JPN	2263
33	33	JUNG Youngsik	KOR	2250
34	32	KISHIKAWA Seiya	JPN	2248
35	35	LEE Jungwoo	KOR	2246
36	40	MENGEL Steffen	GER	2245
37	34	JIANG Tianyi	HKG	2242
38	37	YOSHIDA Kaii	JPN	2240
39	36	TSUBOI Gustavo	BRA	2229
40	41	FRANZISKA Patrick	GER	2220
41	38	TAKAKIWA Taku	JPN	2216
41	46	MORIZONO Masataka	JPN	2216
43	49	GERELL Par	SWE	2215
		OH Sangeun	KOR	2214
44	39	SHIBAEV Alexander	RUS	2208
45	43	YU Ziyang	CHN	2204
46	45	PITCHFORD Liam	ENG	2196
46	42	ACHANTA Sharath Kamal	IND	2196
48	46	JEONG Sangeun	KOR	2187
49	48	WONG Chun Ting	HKG	2185
50	49	TOKIC Bojan	SLO	2172

# WORLD RANKING LIST - WOMEN (TOP 50)



**LIU Shiwen (CHN) • No. 1**



**DING Ning (CHN) • No. 2**



**LI Xiaoxia (CHN) • No. 3**

- Top 3
- Player was active in the previous month
- Player had no activity in the previous month
- No activity within the last 4 months
- The first list where their Starting Points have become final, having attained 5 Significant Wins
- ^ Indicates the player is not eligible to represent the Association in World Title events
- ^^ Indicates the player is not eligible to represent the Association in World Title, Continental Title and International Team events.

RANKING	PREVIOUS	NAME	ASSOC	RANKING PTS.
1	1	<b>LIU Shiwen</b>	CHN	3170
2	2	<b>DING Ning</b>	CHN	3167
3	3	<b>LI Xiaoxia</b>	CHN	3070
4	4	FENG Tianwei	SIN	3034
5	5	WU Yang	CHN	2904
6	7	ZHU Yuling	CHN	2870
7	6	CHEN Meng	CHN	2868
8	9	ISHIKAWA Kasumi	JPN	2814
9	8	HAN Ying ^	GER	2787
10	10	YU Mengyu	SIN	2754
11	11	SEO Hyowon	KOR	2750
12	12	LIU Jia	AUT	2715
13	22	SAMARA Elizabeta	ROU	2706
14	14	FUKUHARA Ai	JPN	2701
15	13	LI Fen ^	SWE	2696
16	15	LEE Ho Ching	HKG	2681
17	18	HIRANO Sayaka	JPN	2662
18	19	YU Fu ^	POR	2619
19	16	LI Jiao	NED	2617
20	17	YANG Haeun	KOR	2614
21	27	DOO Hoi Kem	HKG	2602
22	20	PAVLOVICH Viktoria	BLR	2600
		HU Limei	CHN	2594
23	26	ISHIGAKI Yuka	JPN	2590
24	21	SHAN Xiaona ^	GER	2576
25	32	MORIZONO Misaki	JPN	2575
		LIU Fei	CHN	2562
26	23	JEON Jihee ^	KOR	2560
27	24	RI Myong Sun	PRK	2557
28	42	LIU Gaoyang	CHN	2556
29	25	JIANG Huajun	HKG	2542
30	45	WU Jiaduo	GER	2539
31	36	POLCANOVA Sofia ^	AUT	2522
32	28	NG Wing Nam	HKG	2518
33	40	LI Jie	NED	2517
34	31	HU Melek	TUR	2510
35	29	WAKAMIYA Misako	JPN	2496
36	34	LIN Ye ^	SIN	2495
37	30	CHENG I-Ching	TPE	2484
38	48	SOLJA Petrisa	GER	2482
38	46	POTA Georgina	HUN	2482
38	35	LEE I-Chen	TPE	2482
41	39	SEOK Hajung	KOR	2477
41	37	CHEN Szu-Yu	TPE	2477
43	43	PESOTSKA Margaryta	UKR	2476
44	38	IVANCAN Irene	GER	2474
		ZHAO Yan	CHN	2467
45	33	HIRANO Miu	JPN	2466
46	41	LI Xue ^	FRA	2461
47	44	MONTEIRO DODEAN Daniela	ROU	2453
48	55	ITO Mima	JPN	2444
49	47	VACENOVSKA Iveta	CZE	2432
50	59	SOLJA Amelie ^	AUT	2416



## A NEW ERA BEGINS

Today I welcome **Thomas Weikert** as the 7<sup>th</sup> ITTF President. The official transfer of responsibility of president is today and on behalf of all the ITTF family I wish Thomas all the best in his new position. I also congratulate Mr. **Khalil Al-Mohannadi** as the new ITTF Deputy President, and I welcome Mr. **Bruce Burton** as the new Executive Vice-President.

Also today, I assume the new position of ITTF Chair, and since I am a man, and not to offend any women, as "Chairman", I am taking this new role very seriously and will do my best to meet all expectations.

I ask of all national associations, continental federations, and elected volunteers within the ITTF, and all ITTF professional staff, to continue their support to the new Executive team, and to continue to develop our sport nationally and internationally with more fervour and passion in order to reach our overall goal of being Top-5 in the world.

I take this opportunity to thank all those that have worked with me and helped me over the last 23 years; 15 years as president, 4 years as Deputy and 4 years as Continental VP. I hope you will continue to help me in my new function.

To conclude, here is the official ITTF Press Release of today, which clearly explains the changes:

Today is a historic day in the history of the International Table Tennis, with the current President **Adham Sharara** (CAN) moving into his new role as ITTF Chairman and current Deputy President **Thomas Weikert** (GER) becoming the 7<sup>th</sup> ITTF President.

**Adham Sharara** who has been the ITTF President since 1999 stated: "I am very happy that the ITTF will now step into a new phase of its development. I hand over the ITTF reigns to **Thomas Weikert** today and provide him my full support. **Thomas** is the head of a large and important national association and his experience in that capacity will be very important for the further development of the ITTF and its members associations. **Thomas** has the necessary energy and motivation to take the ITTF to the next level and we will all support his efforts as an ITTF family."

### Today Mr Weikert becomes the 7<sup>th</sup> President of the ITTF since its creation in 1926.

The current German Table Tennis Association President follows **Ivor Montagu** of England (Chairman 1926-1937, President 1937-1967); **H. Roy Evans** of Wales (1967-1987); **Ichiro Ogimura** of Japan (1987-1994), **Lollo Hammarlund** of Sweden (1994-1995), **Xu Yinsheng** of China (1995-1999) and **Adham Sharara** of Canada (1999-2014).

On succeeding Mr **Sharara**, the new ITTF President stated: "Firstly, I would like to give a huge thank you to **Adham Sharara**. During his 15 years as ITTF President, he has taken the sport forward in leaps and bounds and everyone involved in table tennis will forever be in his debt."



**Adham Sharara** - *"During my time as ITTF President, I would like to continue the growth of the sport and fulfill the ITTF's goal of becoming a top 5 sport. I am hoping for a big support from the ITTF family to achieve this goal."*

**"Although I am German, I am no German President, but a President for everyone."**

Even though he represents one of the bigger associations, he does also stand for the small ones.

*"Development of smaller associations is a matter that is near to my heart. One of my aims is to expand the already well-functioning ITTF Development Programme. I want our sport to be played in as many countries by as many people as possible. Table Tennis should not only serve as a form for physical and mental training, but also be a unifying element."*

**Adham Sharara** will still be deeply involved in the ITTF in the position of the ITTF Chairman. This position was created at the 2014 ITTF AGM and is an independent and non-political position without any voting or decision-making power. The ITTF Chairman's main function is to chair the ITTF AGM each year, as well as specific projects assigned by the ITTF Executive Board which are:

- Review the Constitution
- Present and propose the new P5 long-term plan to the EC
- Focus on Marketing

To fill the vacated position of Mr **Sharara** on the Executive Committee, the Board of Directors elected Mr **Bruce Burton** [CAN] as Executive Vice president effective 1 September 2014. Therefore, the complete 9-member EC, until the next elections in 2017, is now: **Thomas Weikert** (President), **Khalid AL-Mohannadi** (Deputy President) and **Bruce Burton, Cherif Hajem, Patrick**

**Gillmann, Masahiro Maehara, Melecio Rivera, Shi Zhihao and Petra Sörling**, as Executive Vice Presidents.

During Mr **Sharara's** 15 years as ITTF President, he has overseen major changes designed to make the ITTF more commercially viable and attractive to TV audiences.

This included changing the games from "first to 21 points" to "first to 11 points", and increasing the size of the ball from 38mm to 40mm, just to name a few.

Mr **Sharara** is leaving the ITTF in good health, after being in charge since 1999. The ITTF's growth under Mr **Sharara** includes:

- ITTF moving up the Olympic funding table after London 2012.
- ITTF's major events being broadcasted live in 110 countries.
- ITTF having the third highest number of social media followers among all Olympic international federations.
- ITTF currently holding over 75 events a year in all corners of the globe.

ITTF having 220 National Associations, which is the equal highest of any International Federation second highest of any sport on the planet.





**“THE GOAL IS TO HAVE TABLE TENNIS PLAYED IN AS MANY COUNTRIES AS POSSIBLE BY AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE.”**

**Journalist** - “Congratulations, **Thomas**, on becoming the ITTF’s 7<sup>th</sup> President!”

Let’s briefly go back one year. You and **Adham Sharara**, and the rest of the current ITTF EC, had an ‘interesting’ election in 2013. You had to face a very negative and aggressive campaign from your opponents. The overwhelming victory the AGM delivered to **Adham** and

his slate must have been a great confirmation for the team. How did you feel after this win, then being named Deputy President by **Adham**, and then, of course, being asked to serve as ITTF President?”

**Thomas Weikert** - “I thank you and many friends from all parts of the world who also expressed their best wishes to me today for this new position, effective September 1. I fully appreciate the great responsibility that comes with this office.

As Executive Committee members, whether as Deputy President or as Executive Vice-Presidents, we as a team had assumed and were accustomed to taking on considerable responsibility. That is why I can certainly say on behalf of my EC colleagues, we were very pleased that the quality of our work and the direction of our policy was affirmed by the AGM in 2013 with such an overwhelming vote of confidence.”

**Journalist** - “It’s clear for all to see that you and **Adham** respect each other. **Adham** has said that he will never interfere in ITTF business when he is not president. He will fulfill his role as Chair and remain available for advice when needed. How do you see your relationship with **Adham** evolving in the future?”

**Thomas Weikert** - “In **Adham**’s new position as Chairman, he will drive major projects together with, and on behalf of, the ITTF’s Executive Committee. That will require significant and continuous communication.

Over the past five years together in the Executive Committee we got to know and appreciate each other. In key questions of sport policies we often pursue the same direction. He is a competent partner, and I am, therefore, delighted that **Adham** will remain in the ITTF with his knowledge, his experience and his diplomatic skills.”

**Journalist** - "The ITTF has made a lot of progress over the years, and the new goal is to be in the TOP 5 IN ALL WE DO. **Adham** will present the P5 plan, but he has indicated that it will be up to the EC and the staff to decide what parts to implement, and also what to add or delete. Do you believe Table Tennis will eventually reach Top-5 status and what are your priorities for the future?"

**Thomas Weikert** - "Of course I believe that it is possible. The plan is for Table Tennis to become one of the top five sports in the world regarding marketing, services and international development. This is a Herculean task.

There were over 1,000 proposals received from around the world suggesting ways we can improve. The Executive Committee has given **Adham** the task to develop the ITTF's P5 plan. For the implementation of this plan, I myself will be very involved. Nobody can tackle this alone.

I think it is very important to make Table Tennis more attractive to both the public and the media. We are done with revolutionary changes in our sport for now, but I am open to new ideas. Further small changes may be possible. Perhaps we may even introduce a two-colored ball. That was tested in August in the semi-finals and the final of the Chinese Super League. Such measures may reduce errors and make our sport more understandable and attractive to a wider public.

If new features are proposed for implementation, it would only be very gently and with long lead times. I think it is also conceivable that we may use something like the two-color ball only at the professional level.

It is important for me as the new president, to first have a detailed inventory of projects in order of priority."

**Journalist** - "On Day 90, you said, 'Development of smaller associations is a matter that is near to my heart.' That quote shows complete alignment with **Glenn Tepper's** presentation to the AGM when he said that the ITTF will re-tool and begin teaching associations 'how to fish,' instead of, 'to carry on the saying, 'just giving fish.' I've heard some vague references to the new "DNA" concept: developing national associations. Will that be an initiative that we can look forward to during the **Weikert Administration?**"

**Thomas Weikert** - "The ITTF is a world governing body for all associations. Development, and the 'small' national associations, is in fact a very important priority to me. At the centre of my thinking is Solidarity for those nations that are not at the top as far as results are concerned. No one must be left

behind. All must be strongly encouraged. The goal is to have Table Tennis played in as many countries as possible by as many people as possible."

**Journalist** - "Along those lines, the DTTB (German TTA) has supported many developing associations with equipment in the past. This has helped them immensely. You also personally initiated the Congo-Burundi development program and hosted some of the kids in Dortmund. On Day 69 you said, 'When you become personally involved, it is easier to identify yourself with other people.' Does that indicate that you intend to continue this type of development activity?"

**Thomas Weikert** - "But of course! Expansion of the ITTF development program was and is close to my heart. Table Tennis is not only about physical and mental training. As we have seen, it also has great potential to unite nations, generations, genders and social classes as a unifying element. This includes, of course, the participation of players with disabilities as equals."

**Journalist** - "We all know that China dominates results in table tennis. This is a huge challenge to overcome. What are your ideas about how the rest of the world, and in particular Europe, could rise to the occasion to make more countries viable contenders at the top level?"

**Thomas Weikert** - "First of all I would like to congratulate China for its unique consistency in that regard. China has lifted our sport to a whole new level. The other associations should not complain about the exceptional results achieved by China, but instead try to be inspired by them.

If China wins all the time, that is not good for the game, nor for the media, nor even for China. However, China's cooperation across borders and assistance to the national and continental federations optimizes the advancement of technical concepts and systems in our sport.

Competition is good for business, and China must know that. Therefore, there are many examples of how the Chinese have already taken on certain initiatives. They have recently established an academy in Luxembourg where they will deliver courses. They will also send coaches to Africa. At some international tournaments they pair with players from other associations in doubles. And it has become easier to have training camps in China."

**Journalist** - "**Werner Schlager** is the last World Champion from Europe. That was 11 years ago in Paris. **Dimitri Ovtcharov** (Dima) won a Bronze medal at the London Olympic

Games. He is the current European Champion and he is the only non-Chinese ranked in the top 5 in the World. Do you think he is the next European hope to become World Champion?"

**Thomas Weikert** - "Amongst the Europeans, Dima is currently the player that has the most possibility. With his class, his winning mentality and his professional attitude, he brings the necessary ingredients that a champion needs to win a gold medal at the most important tournaments in the world. The surprising victory of **Werner** eleven years ago shows that in Table Tennis, on the right day, anything is possible."

**Journalist** - "**Adham** said many times, in anticipation of the day he retired, that he wanted the next ITTF President to inherit a solid and efficient professional structure. He worked hard with **Neil Harwood** and **Petra Sörling** to establish a progressive and efficient work force under the leadership of **Judit Farago** as CEO and **Glenn Tepper** as Deputy CEO. There were criticisms along the way about some changes in the staff structure, but everyone in the Countdown praised the current professional staff structure. What do you think of this professional team and what is your relationship with **Judit** and **Glenn?**"

**Thomas Weikert** - "Criticism is nothing unusual. It must always be taken seriously and analyzed on a case-by-case basis. But criticism should not be overestimated. From my recent personal experience as Deputy President, which included daily ITTF business, I can only highlight the legacy that **Adham** has indeed left us with: a professional staff and a well-established team, led by **Judit** and **Glenn**. Thanks to their professional work and our pleasant lines of communication, I am confident that we will continue to make a good team, as was the case before."

**Journalist** - "Are there any other points we haven't covered today that you would like the table tennis family to know?"

**Thomas Weikert** - "I have great respect for my new function and the task which I regard as a great challenge. I have been involved in the ITTF as Deputy President for a year, and also as Executive Vice-President for a term. I assume, however, that there is still much for me to learn. It is certainly an exciting and interesting time. There is one thing I would like to emphasize: Although I am German, I am not a 'German president.' As the new ITTF President, I am here for everyone."

**Journalist** - "Thank you, **Thomas**, for embarking on this new role. I am confident that I speak for many people in wishing you great success as the ITTF's 7th President!"





# PARA WORLD CHAMP

The local Beijing crowd had much to cheer for today as hosts China took home six gold medals during the team finals of the 2014 ITTF Para World Table Tennis Championships.

China won the Class 1-3, Class 5, Class 6-8 and Class 9-10 women's team events, defeating Turkey, Sweden, Germany and Poland in the process. But despite the strong performance, Chinese player **Bian Zhang** says there remains room for improvement. "We just partnered in the team event for about one year," **Zhang** said after her team's 3-1 win over Sweden in the class 5 women's team final. "We will practice more after this championship so we can win 3-0 straight the next time."

But despite winning both the Class 5 and 8 men's team finals, the Chinese men's team was unable to match the dominance of their female counterparts. Local hopes at the National Para Training Center were dashed by Poland and Germany, who defeated the hosts in the Class 9-10 and Class 3 men's team finals respectively. "Our team believed we could win against China," said Poland's **Patryk Chojnowski** after his team's 3-1 victory. "We played against them in three finals in this competition, so we had to win at least one - and this was it. Everybody played good."

"One of our players didn't feel so good and was injured, so we had to change a little bit," added Polish coach **Elzbieta Madejska**. "They couldn't play very strong so it was a surprise for the Chinese players. They expected very strong and tough fighting but it was often a very slow ball. They were waiting for the ball and it didn't come, so it was very good for us."

Germany's **Thomas Schmidberger** was in similar high spirits after his team defeated a Chinese squad that included world number one **Panfeng Feng** in their ranks. "It is difficult against the Chinese players," said **Schmidberger** after his team's 3-2 win. "But everything is possible. We had to play our best table tennis to beat them and take the title today. It was really brilliant to have a German crowd here supporting us in Beijing with the German flag, celebrating when we are making good points," added **Roger Schmidbe**, referring to a vocal group of German supporters living in Beijing, who were present to cheer their team on.

Korea and France were the other big winners on finals day. Korea took home gold in the Class 1, Class 4 and 11 men's team events, while France were crowned men's Class 2 champions. This brings France's total gold medal haul at the ITTF Para World Table Tennis Championships to three, an improvement from their performance at the 2012 London Paralympics. "It was a great moment to win here at the World Championships for the French team!", said France's **Stephane Molliens**. "It is a great moment for my partner (**Fabian Lamirault**) to win both the singles and the team events."

In other results, Spain defeated Ukraine 3-2 to become Class 6-7 men's team champions, Serbia beat 3-0 Chinese Taipei in the Class 4 women's team final, and Japan took home gold in the Class 11 women's event after their 3-1 victory over Poland.

## NEWLY CROWNED PARA WORLD CHAMPIONS

Women's Teams	Class 1-3	China
Women's Teams	Class 4	Serbia
Women's Teams	Class 5	China
Women's Teams	Class 6-8	China
Women's Teams	Class 9-10	China
Women's Teams	Class 11	Japan
Men's Teams	Class 1	Korea
Men's Teams	Class 2	France
Men's Teams	Class 3	Germany
Men's Teams	Class 4	Korea
Men's Teams	Class 5	China
Men's Teams	Class 6-7	Spain
Men's Team	Class 8	China
Men's Team	Class 9-10	Poland
Men's Team	Class 11	Korea

# INSPIRATIONAL VIDEO REACHES TWO MILLION YOUTUBE VIEWS

«Nothing is Impossible» an inspirational video which features Ibrahim Hamato has reached now two million YouTube views.

The video shows table tennis player Ibrahim Hamato, who holds the racket in his mouth, following an accident which resulted in the loss of both arms, playing against top international players at the ZEN-NOH 2014 World Table Tennis Championships staged in Tokyo from Monday 28th April to Monday 5th May

Undoubtedly, the Egyptian has shot to international stardom expressed on his achievement.

## GRATEFUL FOR SUPPORT

«First, I would like to thank all those who helped me to reach this goal of two million views, mainly the President of the African Table Tennis Federation and former International Table Tennis Federation President Adham Sharara”, said Ibrahim Hamato.

«I would like to express my gratitude and thanks to all who watched my video over the past few months; I am overjoyed with people’s encouraging comments, which have motivated me to achieve more and more in my life.”

## ORIGINAL GOAL

«At the beginning, I was not concerned about the number of viewers as my goal was to send a message to the world that «Nothing Is Impossible» as long as you work hard.

«Now, I feel pride and honour after exceeding more than two million viewers, which means my goal of showing the world that «Nothing is Impossible» has succeeded.»

## EXTENSIVE COVERAGE

Not only did Hamato touch millions of people through YouTube, but he also touched millions more through other mediums, as he was seen throughout the world on some of the biggest networks, such as BBC, ESPN, CNN, Fox Sports, as well as a live appearance on Spain’s biggest TV show EL Hormiguero.

The ITTF would like to thank Hamato for letting us tell his inspiration story, and we look forward to continuing the story of Hamato in the future.





# BELARUS OPEN: HOME FAVOURITE SECURES TITLE, VLADIMIR SAMSONOV EXTENDS LEAD AT TOP OF ALL TIME LIST

Top seed and crowd favourite, in fact a favourite wherever he plays, the host nation's **Vladimir Samsonov** won the Men's Singles title at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Belarus Open on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> August.

Playing in Minsk where he honed his skills as a teenager, **Vladimir Samsonov** accounted for Poland's **Wang Zengyi**, the no.4 seed, to secure the top step of the medal podium.

Extolling his classic control over a table tennis ball to great effect; he withstood the fast close to the table barrage of attacking options from the Polish pen-holder to record a five games win (11-6, 11-4, 8-11, 11-3, 11-6).

## NEW EXPERIENCE

It was for **Wang Zengyi** a totally new experience; a debut on the ITTF World Tour in Warsaw at the Polish Open in 2004, when beaten in the opening round; it was the first time that **Wang Zengyi** had ever progressed to an ITTF World Tour Men's Singles final.

## OUTSTANDING RECORD

Conversely, **Vladimir Samsonov** was playing in no less than his 34<sup>th</sup> ITTF World Tour Men's Singles final.

It was the 24<sup>th</sup> time that he had emerged successful since making his debut in the very first year of the ITTF World Tour in 1996, when he appeared in Bolzano at the Italian Open. Notably on that occasion he won as well!

## EXTENDS ADVANTAGE

The success means that he extends his lead over his nearest rival in terms of ITTF World Tour Men's Singles titles; his nearest competitor is the now retired from international duty, China's **Wang Liqin**.

During his illustrious career in 31 appearances in an ITTF World Tour Men's Singles final, he won 21 times.

## ENDED BARREN SPELL

One more title to the **Vladimir Samsonov** collection and the win ends a somewhat barren spell.

Prior to today's win; his most recent ITTF World Tour Men's Singles was in July 2011 in Morocco.

## SECOND MEETING

It was the second occasion that **Vladimir Samsonov** and **Wang Zengyi** had met in World ranking events.

The previous meeting was in Dortmund at the Liebherr 2012 World Team Championships when in the first stage of proceedings; **Vladimir Samsonov** had won in four games.

In Minsk, **Vladimir Samsonov** won again; the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Belarus Open Men's Singles champion, royal words for the home crowd in the Palace of Sport.

## SHEER DRAMA, SAYAKA HIRANO STAVES OFF RECOVERY; THEN RECOVERS TO WIN BELARUS TITLE

A vital member of Japan's silver medal winning outfit at both the London 2012 Olympic Games and the more recent ZEN-NOH 2014 World Team Championships, **Sayaka Hirano** won the Women's Singles title in a dramatic fashion at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Belarus Open in Minsk on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> August.

The no.2 seed, she resisted a spirited fight-back from her compatriot, **Misaki Morizono**, the no.5 seed, before being required to perform a recovery of her very own.

A contest to remember; it was a duel that appeared to be destined in one direction before making an about turn and then turning once again.

## HELD MATCH POINTS IN FOURTH GAME

**Sayaka Hirano** won the first three games, she led 10-8 in the fourth; two match points.

Incredibly **Misaki Morizono** won the next four points and then with increasing self-belief secured the next two games to force a decider

In the vital seventh game, at the change of ends, **Misaki Morizono** led 5-1; then lost the next six points to trail 5-7!

The momentum of the contest had swung inexorably; **Sayaka Hirano** established a 10-7 lead, **Misaki Morizono** then mounted yet another recovery. She saved two match points but she could not save a third.

Eventually, **Sayaka Hirano** won in seven games (11-9, 11-6, 11-9, 10-12, 5-11, 6-11, 11-9).

## DIFFERENT TO PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENT

A close contest and much different to their one previous meeting on the ITTF World Tour; in 2011 they had met in the second round of the Women's Singles event at the Harmony China Open in Suzhou.

On that occasion, **Sayaka Hirano** won in four straight games.

## AGAIN THE BRIDESMAID

Once again, as earlier in the year in May, when beaten by Singapore's **Feng Tianwei** in the final in Australia, **Misaki Morizono** had to settle for the silver medal; two career ITTF World Tour Women's Singles finals, two defeats.

They say third time lucky. Look ahead **Misaki Morizono**.

## FIFTH TITLE

Meanwhile, for **Sayaka Hirano** it was her eighth ITTF World Tour Women's Singles final and her fifth success.

She was the runner up in Chile in 2007, on home soil in Japan two years later and in 2011 in Morocco.

However, in Serbia in 2006 followed by Germany in 2009; then India in 2010 and Spain in 2011, it was success.

## MOST MEMORABLE

One again in 2014 in Minsk it was the top step of the podium for **Sayaka Hirano** but the climb to the highest position has never been so torturous.

Ask her in the years to come of all her ITTF World Tour Women's Singles titles which is the one she remembers the most, she will give one answer – Belarus 2014; sheer drama.





## CZECH OPEN: LIVING LIFE ON THE KNIFE EDGE YET AGAIN, MARCOS FREITAS WINS IN OLOMOUC

Winner of the DHS Europe Cup in February, Portugal's **Marcos Freitas** repeated the form shown earlier in the year in the Swiss city of Lausanne to win the Men's Singles title at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Czech Open in Olomouc on Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> August.

Living on a knife edge, en route to the final four his five matches had resulted in full distance narrow margin seven games victories; the only exception was in the third round, when he beat Germany's **Ricardo Walther** in four straight games.

The third round was the exception to the rule, the final against **Patrick Baum**, like **Ricardo Walther** from Germany, was no exception.

### RECOVERED FROM DEFICIT

**Marcos Freitas** recovered from a three games to two deficit to emerge victorious in the decisive seventh game, by the very narrowest of margins (11-5, 10-12, 13-11, 10-12, 9-11, 11-9, 12-10).

Victory for the man from the Atlantic island of Madeira; a result that seeding predicted. **Marcos Freitas** was the no.2 seed, **Patrick Baum** was the no.4 seed.

### PAST RESULTS FAVOURED PATRICK BAUM

However, the result was not as history advised.

The pair had met on four previous occasions in World ranking events and on each occasion, **Patrick Baum** had won the battle of the two left handed attacking top spin player; both arguably preferring to play at the so-called half distance, a little away from the table.

### MET AT INAUGURAL WORLD JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIPS

They first met over a decade ago on the international scene at the first ever World Junior Championships staged in Chile in 2003; the clash of the then teenagers in the Boys' Team event saw success for **Patrick Baum** in full distance five games contest.

Three years later in the Under 21 Men's Singles final at the Polish Open, **Patrick Baum** won in six games, before in 2010, once again prevailing in Poland; this time in seven games in the third round of the Men's Singles event.

## STRAIGHT GAMES WIN

Three hard fought closely contested matches but the most recent encounter prior to the duel in Olomouc was more one sided.

In the clash between Germany and Portugal in the Men's Team event at the Intersport 2011 European Championships, **Patrick Baum** had won in three straight games.

At the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Czech Open it was a different story for the two young men from the same generation; **Patrick Baum** is 27 years old, **Marcos Freitas** at 26 years of age is one year younger.

## SECOND FINAL

Furthermore, for both players it was their second ever appearance in an ITTF World Tour Men's Singles final.

Equally on the previous occasion for each it had been defeat. In 2009 **Patrick Baum** was beaten in the Men's Singles final in Japan by Korea's **Oh Sangeun**; two years later in Brazil, Germany's **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** ended the dreams of Marcos Freitas.

## NEW NAME ON ROLL OF HONOUR

In Olomouc, once again by the very narrowest of excruciating margins it was runners up spot for **Patrick Baum**; for his adversary the dream came true.

A new name was inscribed on the ITTF World Tour roll of honour; the name of the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Czech Open Men's Singles champion, the name is **Marcos Freitas**.

## ADAPTING QUICKLY, ELIZABETA SAMARA UPSETS ODDS TO WIN CZECH WOMEN'S SINGLES TITLE

Somewhat unsure about how she might perform in a tournament that used the new plastic ball but when matters concluded very sure indeed; Romania's **Elizabeta Samara** won the Women's Singles title at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Czech Open in Olomouc on Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> August.

Occupying the no.8 seeded position in the competition, against the odds she beat Japan's **Ai Fukuhara**, the no.4 seed, to reserve the top step of the medal podium.

In a tournament that has witnessed a series of dramatic contests, the Women's Singles

final maintained the tradition established; **Elizabeta Samara** won by the narrowest of margins in the deciding seventh game (7-11, 11-8, 11-9, 12-10, 6-11, 11-13, 12-10).

## ONE YEAR LATER

Success in Olomouc comes just over one year since **Elizabeta Samara** won her first and only previous ITTF World Tour Women's Singles crown.

On Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> August at the GAC Group 2013 ITTF World Tour Brazil Open in Santos, she beat India's **Ankita Das** in the final to create a watershed moment in her career.

## THREE TIMES RUNNER UP

Previously she had come close, being the runner up on three occasions.

In 2010 she was beaten in the Women's Singles final in Hungary by Hong Kong's **Tie Yana**. Two years later in Poznan at the GAC Group 2012 ITTF World Tour Polish Open, she gave China's **Ding Ning** a torrid time in the early part of the final before suffering defeat.

Meanwhile, more recently in Las Vegas at the GAC Group 2013 ITTF World Tour United States Open, she was beaten in the final by Japan's **Megumi Abe**, a player she overcame on her road to gold in Olomouc.

## PREVIOUS DEFEATS

Success for **Elizabeta Samara** against seeding predictions; it was also a win contrary to history.

The pair had met on two previous occasions in World ranking events; on both occasions **Ai Fukuhara** had won. In 2010 at the Liebherr World Team Championships in Moscow when Japan had confronted Ro-

mania in the first phase of proceedings, **Ai Fukuhara** had won in three straight games.

However when they met on the next occasion at the quarter-final stage of the Women's Singles event at the GAC Group 2013 ITTF World Tour Polish Open, it was a must closer affair. **Ai Fukuhara** won in seven games and by the minimal two point margin in the deciding seventh game (12-10, 10-12, 11-9, 12-10, 1-11, 10-12, 11-9); in Olomouc, **Elizabeta Samara** turned the tables.

## FIFTH RUNNER UP FINISH

Meanwhile for **Ai Fukuhara** it was her fifth defeat in seven ITTF World Tour Women's Singles final.

Both wins have come against Koreans; in 2009 in Morocco she beat Seok Hajung in the final, three years later on home soil in Yokohama, she defeat **Moon Hyunjung**.

Alas for **Ai Fukuhara**, the eventual outcome in the other four previous finals has been the second step of the medal podium.

In 2007, in Brazil, she was beaten by Hong Kong's **Tie Yana**; three years later in Kuwait after overcoming China's **Guo Yan**, she experienced defeat in a full distance seven games final against the latter's compatriot, **Liu Shiwen**.

Defeats against most worthy opponents, it was the same in Korea in 2011 and in Germany in 2013; in Korea she lost to Singapore's **Feng Tianwei**, in Germany her nemesis was China's **Wen Jian**.

## THE CHAMPION

Again for **Ai Fukuhara** in Olomouc the silver medal was the prize; gold belonged to **Elizabeta Samara**, the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Czech Open Women's Singles champion.





## NIGERIA: WINNER ONE YEAR AGO, **OMAR ASSAR** REPEATS SUCCESS, THE CHAMPION IN LAGOS

Crowned champion at the Lagos International Classic just under one year ago, **Omar Assar** won the Men's Singles title at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Nigeria Open on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> June.

Occupying the top seeded position in the competition and playing in the same venue as in 2013, **Omar Assar**, the no.1 seed beat compatriot, **El-Sayed Lashin**, the no.2 seed, at the final hurdle to arrest the title.

**Omar Assar** secured victory in five games (11-5, 13-11, 2-11, 11-6, 11-8).

### SEMI-FINALS

A five games win in the final for **Omar Assar**, it was the same for both finalists in the penultimate round.

Impressive, **Omar Assar** ended Nigerian hopes by beating **Quadri Aruna**, the no.4 seed (11-9, 9-11, 12-10, 11-5, 11-9); **El-Sayed Lashin** halted the progress of colleague **Mohamed El-Beiali**, the no.5 seed (11-5, 11-8, 6-11, 12-10, 11-6),

### ITTF-AFRICA CUP BECKONS

"*El-Sayed played, it was a tough match.*", said **Omar Assar**. "*Now the task is to concentrate on tomorrow.*"

The ITTF-Africa Cup which comprises 16 men and 16 women commences on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> June and concludes one day later on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> June.



## SEASONED CAMPAIGNER

Defeat for **El-Sayed Lashin**, who is now a most seasoned campaigner, was well aware that losing is all part of sport.

*"I played well but things change in a match and he played very well",* said **El-Sayed Lashin**. *"We are both good players, anything can happen; I hope to do better tomorrow, there is a bigger tournament to follow."*

The winner of the Men's Singles and Women's Singles events at the ITTF-Africa Cup qualify for the Men's World Cup and Women's World Cup respectively; both tournaments to be held later this year in October.

## FIRST ITTF WORLD TOUR MEN'S SINGLES FINAL

In Lagos it was for both **Omar Assar** and **El-Sayed Lashin** their first ever appearance in an ITTF World Tour Men's Singles final.

Both had previously reached semi-finals. **Omar Assar** had progressed to the penultimate round in Cairo in 2013 when beaten by **Abdel-Kader Salifou**; whilst **El-Sayed Lashin** had reached the last four in Rabat in 2010 and the following year in both Cairo and Rabat.

In 2009 in the Moroccan city he had been beaten by Spain's **Carlos Machado**, two years later his nemesis was Belgium's **Jean-Michel Saive**; whilst on home soil in 2010, Hong Kong's **Li Ching** had halted aspirations.

## QUARTER-FINALIST

Meanwhile for **Quadri Aruna** it was his first venture into the latter stages; whilst for **Mohamed El-Beiali**, his previous best was the last eight. In Rabat in 2009 **Vladimir Samsonov** of Belarus ended progress, in 2012 in Cairo it was his colleague **Ahmed Al Saleh**.

At the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Nigeria Open it was to be an exit one round later; the third step of the medal podium was his lot, the top step of the medal podium belonged to **Omar Assar**.

## UNUSUAL ACHIEVEMENT

A first for **Omar Assar**, a first for Egypt and also quite unusual occurrence; in the preceding contest **Nadine El-Dawlatly** had won the Women's Singles event. It is not unusual for two players from the same country to secure the title.

However, how often has it ever happened that both champions are from the same club? Both are members of **El-Ahly**.

## EGYPTIAN ADDS TO GOLD MEDAL HAUL, NADINE EL-DAWLATLY WIN WOMEN'S SINGLES TITLE

Present in the colours of Egypt at the London 2012 Olympic Games, **Nadine El-Dawlatly** emerged as the somewhat surprise winner of the Women's Singles event at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Nigeria Open in Lagos on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> June.

Not seeded, she accounted for compatriot and second seed, **Dina Meshref** at the semi-final stage (8-11, 7-11, 11-5, 11-8, 11-7, 11-8), before securing the title at the final expense of Congo Brazzaville's **Han Xing**, the no.3 seed (11-8, 11-5, 13-15, 11-9, 12-10).

In the counterpart semi-final **Han Xing** had overcome Luxembourg's **Ni Xialian**, the no.1 seed (5-11, 11-7, 14-12, 11-8, 4-11, 9-11, 11-7).





## BELATED BIRTHDAY PRESENT

Success for **Nadine El-Dawlatly** and it was a belated birthday present and not just the win on the concluding day of action; one day earlier she had beaten **Dina Meshref** (13-11, 4-11, 11-7, 11-13, 5-11, 11-5, 11-9) to secure the Under 21 Women's Singles.

She celebrated her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday four days earlier on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> June and by securing both the Under 21 Women's Singles and Women's Singles titles, she matched the efforts of China's **Feng Yalan**.

In March 2010, **Feng Yalan** won the Under 21 Women's Singles title on the ITTF World Tour at the German Open beating colleague **Wu Yang** in the final; one day later she secured the Women's Singles title at the expense of the player, who one year later was to be crowned World champion, she beat her team mate **Ding Ning**.

Notably **Feng Yalan** was not seeded in either event; a similar situation for **Dina Meshref** in the Women's Singles competition in Lagos but not in the Under 21 event where she was the second seed.

## TOTALLY FOCUSED

*"I kept playing without becoming distracted and I am happy with the outcome of this match",* said **Nadine El-Dawlatly**. *"I was not thinking about winning but just remaining focus."*

A most admirable approach but easier said than done; to win on the GAC Group World Tour, a sound mental attitude is vital, **Nadine El-Dawlatly** was sound in mind and body.

## DISAPPOINTMENT

Delight for **Nadine El-Dawlatly**; disappointment for **Han Xing**.

*"She is very fast and I was slow in the match",* said **Han Xing**. *"I made a lot of mistakes and*

*I hope playing against her next time I will play well since I now know her tactics."*

## NEW EXPERIENCE

Defeat for **Han Xing** but it was the first time she had ever progressed beyond the first round of a Women's Singles event on the ITTF World Tour; whilst for **Nadine El-Dawlatly** her previous best was a quarter-final exit on home soil in Cairo in 2012 when beaten by India's **Poulomi Ghatak**.

Meanwhile, for **Dina Meshref** it was a her second appearance in an ITTF World Tour Women's Singles semi-final; the one previous occasion being one year ago in Egypt when losing to **Maria Dolgikh**.

## FIRST OF THE CENTURY.

However, for **Ni Xialian**, she was making her seventh ITTF World Tour Women's Singles semi-final, her first this century and her fifth defeat in the penultimate round.

She made her first such appearance in 1996 in Serbia; her most recent prior to Lagos was in the Australian city of Melbourne in 1999.

The first, in fact the only ITTF World Tour Women's Singles title for **Ni Xialian** came in the United States in 1998; for **Nadine El-Dawlatly** it came 16 years later, it came in Lagos, it came at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Nigeria Open.



# ARGENTINA: NEW WORLD TOUR CHAMPIONS CROWNED, ZHU CHENG AND HE ZHUOJIA STRIKE GOLD

Chinese teenagers, 17 year old **Zhu Cheng** and 15 year old **He Zhuojia** won the respective Men's Singles and Women's Singles titles at GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Argentina Open in Buenos Aires on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September.

In all-Chinese duels; in the final of the Men's Singles event, **Zhu Cheng**, the no.4 seed, accounted for **Xue Fei**, the no.6 seed (11-7, 11-9, 11-3, 9-11, 7-11, 11-8), after **He Zhuojia**, the no.3 seed, had clinched the counterpart Women's Singles title by beating **Fan Siqi**, the no.4 seed (8-11, 11-3, 7-11, 11-5, 11-8, 11-9).

It was for all four, their first venture on the ITTF World Tour and for **Zhu Cheng**, a most successful visit.

One day earlier, he had won the Under 21 Men's Singles title; he departed Buenos Aires with an unblemished record, the only player to remain unbeaten throughout the whole four days of play.

## AMAZING FEELING

"It is amazing to be the champion here", said **He Zhuojia**. "Words cannot explain how happy I am; it was tough to play against my friend in the final but there was not too much pressure, as whoever won, China won the gold which is good for us."

The success recorded by **He Zhoujia**, who had won the Girls' Singles title at the 2012 ITTF Cadet Challenge in Guam when beating Japan's **Mima Ito** in the final, was a victory against a player, who earlier this year had shown outstanding form.

**Fan Siqi** won the Girls' Singles title at ITTF Junior Circuit tournaments in both Taicang and Chengdu.

## AMBITIOUS YOUNG LADY

"This is my first World Tour victory; my highest goal is to be World Champion but one step at a time", added an ambitious **He Zhuojia**. "As much as I want to be a champion again in Brazil next week, I do not always get what I want, so let's see; it will not be easy."

All members of the Chinese Team who competed in Buenos Aires will be on duty in Santos for the forthcoming GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Brazil Open which starts on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> September.

## WITHSTOOD SPIRITED RECOVERY

Gold for **He Zhuojia**, later in the afternoon it was the same colour medal for **Zhu Cheng**, who had to withstand a spirited recovery by **Xue Fei** to secure victory.

"It is not easy to win a World Tour title, so this is amazing; my opponent was very strong and it was not an easy match", said **Zhu Cheng**, who has enjoyed notable success on the ITTF Junior Circuit.

In 2013 he won the Junior Boys' Singles title in Taicang; whilst earlier this year he also reached the final in Taicang. He lost to compatriot **Zhang Bohan**, before emerging successful at the Nikon Hong Kong Junior and Cadet Open.

"I never thought it would be easy; when I was up three-nil, I was prepared for my opponent to come back", said **Zhu Cheng**. "I was nervous when it was three-two as my opponent changed his serve which I struggled against but since I was mentally prepared for a tough match I was able to fight back and win."

Another title for **Zhu Cheng** and another silver medal for **Xue Fei**, who notably keeps the pen-hold grip style of play alive.

## AGAIN SILVER

Earlier this year on the ITTF Junior Circuit, he was the Boys' Singles runner up in Chengdu; he was beaten in the final by colleague **Liu Dingshuo**, the player he overcame in the penultimate round in Buenos Aires.

He turned the tables on **Liu Dingshuo** in Argentina. Should an opportunity arise in Brazil can he reverse the decision against **Zhu Cheng**? Santos awaits.



## FLANDERS: A FIRST FOR **GEORGINA POTA**, FOR **VLADIMIR SAMSONOV** YET ANOTHER, CHAMPIONS IN DE HAAN

**Vladimir Samsonov** of Belarus and Hungary's **Georgina Pota** won the respective Men's Singles and Women's Singles titles at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Belgium Open in de Haan on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> September.

Occupying the no.2 seeded position in the competition, **Valadimir Samsonov** accounted for surprise finalist, Sweden's **Simon Arvidsson**, the no.25 seed (8-11, 11-5, 11-9, 11-9, 11-8) after **Georgina Pota**, the no.4 seed, had secured the Women's Singles title at the final expense of Japan's **Megumi Abe**.

In a similar manner to **Vladimir Samsonov**, **Georgina Pota** won in four games (11-8, 7-11, 11-8, 11-8, 11-9).

### SUCCESS AT LAST

It is for **Georgina Pota** success at last. Winner of the Junior Girls' Singles event at the European Youth Championships in Moscow in 2002, it was one year earlier in Zagreb, at the Croatian Open, that the now 29 year old made her debut on the ITTF World Tour.

However, it was not until earlier this year in January on home soil in Hungary that she reached the final of an ITTF World Tour Women's Singles event; in Szombathely in January, she was beaten by Austria's **Liu Jia** at the final hurdle.

Now on her 83<sup>rd</sup> attempt she had emerged successful; for **Megumi Abe** it was her second ITTF World Tour Women's Singles final and her first defeat in the gold medal match. At the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour United States Open, she won the Women's Singles title.

### EXTENDS LEAD

Meanwhile, for a spirited **Simon Arvidsson** it was totally new territory; for his conqueror, **Vladimir Samsonov** it was nothing new.

He was competing in his 35<sup>th</sup> ITTF World Tour Men's Singles final; it was his 25<sup>th</sup> success and he extends his lead over China's **Wang Liqin**; now retired from international play, **Wang Liqin** won 21 Men's Singles titles.



## BRAZIL: BUSY DAY FOR LIU DINGSHUO, GOLD AND SILVER THE WELL EARNED REWARDS IN BRAZIL

Gold and silver was the lot of China's **Liu Dingshuo**, as matters came to a close at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Brazil Open in Santos on the evening of Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September.

The young man from Jilin Province, the same province as **Wang Hao**, won the Men's Singles title beating the host nation's **Gustavo Tsuboi** in the final (13-11, 11-3, 14-16, 11-8, 13-11).

However, in the contest which terminated proceedings in the four day tournament, he experienced defeat at the hands of compatriot **Zhu Cheng** (11-8, 11-9, 3-11, 8-11, 11-6, 12-10) in the Under 21 Men's Singles final.

### SECOND TIME

It was for **Zhu Cheng** his second consecutive GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Under 21 Men's Singles title; the previous week in Argentina, he had claimed both the Men's Singles and Under 21 Men's Singles crowns.

Meanwhile for **Gustavo Tsuboi** it was his second consecutive Men's Singles silver medal in Santos.

One year ago, he was beaten in the final by colleague, **Hugo Calderano**.

### ACHIEVED GOOD LEVEL

"I'm happy with my development and performance during the competition; I achieved a very good level here", said **Gustavo Tsuboi**. "In the final, I think that I had good chances to win, especially in the fifth and sixth games; in each game I was leading 8-4."

**Gustavo Tsuboi** had his chances but great credit must go to **Liu Dingshuo**, who remained focused throughout and never wavered in his determination.

### NOT AGGRESSIVE ENOUGH

"Unfortunately when I had the four point leads I wasn't aggressive enough and failed in putting more pressure on my opponent", added **Gustavo Tsuboi**. "I'm happy about winning the silver medal but in the way that happened, I'm frustrated; to beat the Chinese you have to work a great deal on your movement at the table, you must be prepared to vary your play."

## PATRIOTIC

Prepared and certainly in the Men's Singles final, **Liu Dingshuo** was prepared; he was carrying the flag of China. He is very patriotic.

*"I think the important factor in the final against Gustavo Tsuboi is that I was mentally the stronger player; it was a really tough match, now I'm tired",* said **Liu Dingshuo**. *"Now I am a member of the Chinese National Team I believe that I cannot lose to a foreign player and if I reach the final I will always win."*

He won against **Gustavo Tsuboi** but not against the very safe and assured **Zhu Cheng**; however, both could leave South America with heads held high.

Champions in Argentina and Brazil; no doubt it the wins are the first of many.

## POETRY IN MOTION, LIU XIN COMPLETES EXQUISITE DOUBLE IN SANTOS NIGHT AIR

Stylish, elegant in her play, **Liu Xin** completed proceedings at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Brazil Open as the most successful player on duty.

On the concluding day of play, Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September, she captured both the Women's Singles and Under 21 Women's Singles title.

Furthermore, in both finals she beat her compatriot, **Zhu Chaohui**; in the Under 21 Women's Singles gold medal contest it was an imposing straight games win (11-5, 11-8, 11-6 11-9); some two hours later in a rather more testing contest, she emerged successful in six games (11-9, 7-11, 13-11, 11-6, 7-11, 11-6).

## PROFESSIONAL APPROACH

*"We are friends and today we were opponents; you go to work, you do your job",* said **Liu Xin**, who throughout the four days in Santos has displayed a most professional approach at all times.

*"Zhu Chaohui has a very strong first attack; in the first match today I was able to control her attacking strokes but in the second match it was more difficult",* added **Liu Xin**. *"The fact that I could control the early top spin attacks nullified her strength."*

## OUTSTANDING CONTROL

Control, outstanding control, is a feature of **Liu Xin's** play; left handed, creating angles from the backhand, in true **Wang Nan** style, followed by a smooth and seemingly effortless forehand is her forte.

*"I think also in the second match, maybe my return of service was not so good",* continued **Liu Xin**, who feels she is wiser for the South American experience.

*"I do think that playing in two ITTF World Tour tournaments has helped me to prepare better to receive service",* stressed **Liu Xin**. *"Both events have been of a high level, it's been a real challenge and playing against*

*foreign players you must be really strong mentally; it's not easy, it's been a really good experience."*

## GRATEFUL FOR OPPORTUNITY

Unquestionably, **Liu Xin** had acclimatised quickly on her first ITTF World Tour ventures and was grateful for having been given the chance to play in Argentina and Brazil.

*"I would like to thank China for giving me the chance to play in these two tournaments; there are so many players in China, it is really difficult to gain selection",* continued **Liu Xin**. *"I am really grateful for the support given by the players and coaches in the team and from home."*

## NOTE THE NAME

The gratitude, the humble polite approach was evident at all times and clearly she could understand a little English; a bright young lady and in Santos, she shone brightly. Note the name **Liu Xin**, the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Brazil Open Women's Singles champion.





## COMMONWEALTH: SILVER ONE AGAIN THE COLOUR FOR **GAO NING, ZHAN JIAN WINS IN GLASGOW**

Four years ago in New Delhi, **Gao Ning** was beaten in the final of the Men's Singles event by **Yang Zi**; at the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games he suffered the same fate and once again at the hands of a colleague.

On the evening of Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> August, in the contest which brought matters to a conclusion, occupying the top seeded position in the draw, he suffered defeat at the hands of **Zhan Jian**, the second seed.

**Zhan Jian** succeeded in five games (11-9, 11-2, 11-7, 6-11, 11-7).

### NO REPEAT FOR SHARATH KAMAL ACHANTA

A repeat for **Gao Ning** but that was not to be the situation for India's **Sharath Kamal Achanta**, the third seed; on home soil in New Delhi he had clinched the bronze medal by beating colleague **Subhajt Saha**.

In Glasgow in the same contest, he suffered a six games defeat against England's **Liam Pitchford**, the fourth seed (11-6, 11-8, 4-11, 11-9, 6-11, 12-10).

### ENDED ON POSITIVE NOTE

*"I wanted to end on a positive note; it's fantastic to win bronze and it's even better to be the first English person to do so", said **Liam Pitchford**. "The guys have been amazing, we've all worked really hard; to achieve five medals is a great success for English table tennis."*

It was a determined **Liam Pitchford** who entered the arena against the Melbourne 2006 Men's Singles winner.

*"I was disappointed not to get gold but I got myself together about an hour before the bronze medal match", added **Liam Pitchford**. "It's great to come away with something individually as well as being part of a team."*

### COACH DELIGHTED

A clean sweep of medals in the Mixed Doubles plus silver in both the Men's Team and Men's Singles events was a performance that delighted **Alan Cooke**, the England National Coach.

*"Obviously, I'm delighted for **Liam**, he came so close in the doubles; five medals we couldn't have hoped for more before the Games began", said **Alan Cooke**. "There were two other medals from which we were only a whisker away."*

**Paul Drinkhall** and **Liam Pitchford** suffered defeat in the Men's Doubles bronze medal match losing to Singapore's **Yang Zi** and **Zhan Jian** by the very narrowest of margins in the deciding fifth game. It was the same fate for **Joanna Drinkhall** and **Kelly Sibley** in the counterpart Women's Doubles event; defeat by the minimal margin in the concluding game against Canada's **Anqi Luo** and **Zhang Mo**.

## PORTUGAL NEXT STOP

*"Now the players will only have a short break before the European Championships in Portugal; those playing in the German Bundesliga will return to training in two weeks", continued Alan Cooke. "Also the ball now changes, the poly ball; they will have to get used to it."*

The European Team Championships will take place in Lisbon from Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> September and the poly ball will now be used throughout at international events.

## PRIDE OF PLACE

Success for England but pride of place must go to Singapore, gold in every event except to Mixed Doubles; furthermore, in the event which brought matters to a conclusion it was gold and silver.

*"It was exciting and also painful", said Zhan Jian. "It was a really stern test for us; Gao Ning is still the main man."*

## PHILOSOPHICAL RUNNER UP

An excited Zhan Jian, it was a philosophical Gao Ning.

*"Zhan Jian and myself are at the same level; as long as the medals go to Singapore, then it's fine", said Gao Ning. "Of course I wanted to win but silver is not bad."*

## TABLE TENNIS ENGLAND ARE CELEBRATING THEIR MOST SUCCESSFUL COMMONWEALTH GAMES.

The team picked up five medals in Glasgow, including a brilliant clean sweep in the mixed doubles event and a first singles medal for Liam Pitchford.

The medal-winning started with a silver in the men's team event for the squad of Pitchford, Paul Drinkhall, Andrew Baggaley, Daniel Reed and Sam Walker.

For Baggaley, it kept up his impressive record of having won a medal at every Commonwealth Games since table tennis was introduced in Manchester in 2002, and was his sixth medal in total in that time.

But it was Pitchford who was the hero in the semi-final against India when, having held a 2-0 and 10-4 lead, he saw opponent Harmeet Desai battle back to take

the match into a decider. Amid huge tension, Pitchford prevailed 17-15 to settle the match and book a final place against top seeds Singapore.

And it was Singapore who took gold, as Li Hu and Go Ning won their singles matches against Drinkhall and Pitchford respectively to put the top seeds 2-0 ahead. After Drinkhall and Baggaley had given England hope by winning the doubles, Zhan Jian beat Baggaley to seal the gold.

Pitchford and world No 12 Gao Ning met again in the singles semi-finals in what was widely regarded as the best match of the competition. Twice Gao took the lead and twice Pitchford levelled the match, and then took the fifth set to move into the lead. But Gao dug deep to win the next two sets and go through to the final.

But Pitchford bounced back to win the bronze medal match against India's SK Achanta to become England's first ever non-para singles medallist at a multi-sport event.

The mixed doubles provided England's crowning glory of the games as they took gold, silver and bronze.

It was the married couple Paul and Joanna Drinkhall who took the top step of the podium, ahead of Pitchford and 15-year-old Tin-Tin Ho. The bronze was won by Reed and Kelly Sibley – a first Commonwealth Games medal for the latter.

A memorable day was complete when the gold and silver-medal winning pairs were interviewed on BBC TV's live talk show that evening.

Many national newspapers also featured the story, giving Table Tennis England their best coverage since the London Olympics.

Their exploits in Glasgow saw Pitchford and Drinkhall leap up the world rankings to hit career highs. Pitchford broke into the top 50 for the first time, reaching No 44 and No 6 in the under-21 list.

Meanwhile, Drinkhall climbed from 85 to 74 and Reed also rose up the list, from 189 to 177.

The medals capped a fantastic season for England, particularly in the men's game, having won the Challenge Division at the World Team Championships in Tokyo to move back into the Championship Division for the first time in 17 years.

Table Tennis England's Head of Coaching and Performance, Simon Mills, said: *"It was an incredible performance all round, with Liam winning our first singles medal at a major multi-sport games, backed up by a clean sweep in the mixed doubles led by Paul and Jo. The really exciting thing is there's a lot more to come from these players. This gives us a great stepping stone towards 2016, 2018 and beyond."*



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The screenshot displays the Dandoy website interface. At the top, there is a search bar and a navigation menu with links for 'General Information', 'Contact Us', 'My Account', 'Cart Contents', and 'Checkout'. Below the search bar, a banner reads 'Welcome in the world of table tennis' and 'DANDYOY the tabletennis specialist'. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'Discounts' with price filters (200€, 150€, 100€, 50€), 'Products' with a list of items, 'Special offers' featuring a grid of discounted products like 'Andro Ala Ener Alpha Stick DM Gray' and 'Doris Bag Tennis', and 'New Products' with a grid of items like 'BASANT' and 'Doris Spin Power Allround'. A 'Free shipping' banner is also visible, stating 'Free shipping worldwide on orders above 70€'. The bottom of the page includes a 'Subscribe newsletter' section and a 'Dandoy shops' section.



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