

MDTTC News



Orioles shortstop J.J. Hardy, Coach Larry, and Orioles former center fielder and current VP Brady Anderson at MDTTC on May 13.

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Archive of past MDTTC Newsletters

Welcome to the latest issue of the MDTTC News. As usual, there's lots of news to report and new and ongoing programs, and we hope to see you at some of them. As usual a special thanks to MDTTC sponsors [Butterfly](#), [Go Table Tennis](#), and [James Wu/Llewellyn realtor](#). Make sure to read my [daily table tennis blog](#) - I often write about MDTTC happenings there. And if you have a nice picture taken at MDTTC, email it to me and it might make the newsletter!

-Editor and Coach [Larry Hodges](#)

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Ongoing Programs

- **Junior Class.** This is for beginning and intermediate juniors ages 6-13, with Coach Larry Hodges (with John Hsu and Raghu Nadmichettu assisting), and are held Saturdays 10:30AM-Noon and Sundays 4:30-6:00 PM. See the [Group Training page](#).
- **Group Sessions.** While this is primarily for juniors, all ages are welcome - it's about 1/3 adults. They meet on Sat & Sun, 4:30-6:30. The first 30 minutes is practice/warm-up, then 90 minutes of matches. See the [Group Training page](#).
- **Private Coaching,** by Coaches Cheng Yinghua, Jack Huang, Larry Hodges, Wang Qing Liang ("Leon"), Chen Bo Wen ("Bowen"), Chen Jie ("James"), and Raghu Nadmichettu. See [Private Coaching page](#).
- **Leagues.** MDTTC runs three different leagues. Take your pick! They are the [Tuesday and Friday Leagues](#) (for all ages and levels), and the [Elite League](#).

Summer Camps

Start making your summer plans! MDTTC will hold ten consecutive weeks of summer camps, each Mon-Fri, from June 17 to Aug. 23. (Which is good timing - the next MDTTC tournament is Aug. 24-25.) This will be our 22nd consecutive year of MDTTC summer camps. See our [Training Camps](#) page.

ITTF Coaching Seminars

Larry Hodges ran an ITTF Coaching Seminar at MDTTC in 2011. He's thinking of running another. They are four days long, six hours per day. If interested, [contact him](#). He'll run it if there are eight or more interested. (He's also running one in South Bend, Indiana, Oct. 2-5. Contact if you are interested in that one.)

Crystal Wang on NBC 4

Here's the video (4:34) from April 24, 2013, [Meet Md.'s Youngest Ping Pong Champion](#). Crystal will be attending the ITTF Hopes Camp at the Werner Schlager Academy in Austria, June 9-17.

New MDTTC Shirts

New MDTTC Team Shirts ([Butterfly Pelluci](#)) are now available @ \$29.99! (Retail is \$49.99.) To personalize with your name costs only \$5.99 extra. Color options: lime green, black, or red. Limited sizes and quantity. To order yours contact [Wen Hsu](#).

Have a Used Table?

A local school is looking for a used table tennis table. They will pick up. If you have a table to donate, please contact [Wen Hsu](#).

Rental Space for Corporate and Private Events

MDTTC offers space rental for special corporate and private events. Here is [Facility Rental Information](#), and here is info on [Birthday Party Packages](#).

MDTTC Web and Facebook Pages

Don't forget to see the regularly updated [MDTTC Facebook page](#), and make sure to "like" it! Stop by and see all the photos, read the latest news, or post your own comments. Also see the [MDTTC web page](#) for regularly updated info.

MDTTC World-Ranked Players

You probably didn't realize that a number of MDTTC players have world rankings! Below is a listing! (I'm including Peter Li and Pamela Xiyao Song since they are MDTTC players, just off to college.)

WOMEN

657 SONG Pamela Xiyao

835 LIU Charlene Xiaoying

842 WANG Crystal

MEN

393 WANG Qing Liang ("Leon")

701 LI Peter

1089 CHEN Bo Wen ("Bowen")

1287 HSU Nathan

1448 GONG Tong Tong

UNDER 21 GIRLS

389 SONG Pamela Xiyao

553 WANG Crystal

UNDER 21 BOYS

103 WANG Qing Liang ("Leon")

288 LI Peter

604 CHEN Bo Wen ("Bowen")

788 HSU Nathan

943 GONG Tong Tong

UNDER 18 GIRLS

345 WANG Crystal

UNDER 18 BOYS

40 WANG Qing Liang ("Leon")

347 CHEN Bo Wen ("Bowen")

498 HSU Nathan

635 GONG Tong Tong

UNDER 15 GIRLS

84 WANG Crystal

UNDER 15 BOYS

66 CHEN Bo Wen

TIP OF THE MONTH: Beat Unorthodox Players with Fundamentals

By Larry Hodges

How often have you played somebody with, for lack of a better word, weird shots? Perhaps they hit shots with a floppy wrist (so you could never tell where the shot was going), or with sidespin on shots that normally don't have sidespin, or perhaps they just used a non-inverted surface that you weren't used to seeing. There are infinite possibilities. The problem was that you found these "weird" shots difficult to play against with your more fundamental game. Why does one with sounder fundamentals have problems with weirder games, and how can you overcome that?

There's nothing wrong with having a little weird in your game to throw opponents off. But there's a reason why certain shots, mostly done with inverted rubber, are done by the top players, and are considered orthodox play. Learn these fundamentals, and you'll have an advantage over those who have not mastered these fundamentals. This doesn't mean you'll win, but a player with weaker fundamentals will have to essentially play at a higher level just to match you. For example, to use the floppy wrist example mentioned above, the timing needed for such shots is much higher than for more orthodox technique, and so that player will always be handicapped by this. But this is often offset by the inherent "weirdness" of the shot, since you aren't used to it. How do you overcome this?

The keys are depth and consistency. Against any type of weird shot, if you keep the ball deep on the table, you'll have more time to react to the less orthodox shots coming back at you. Given time, your better technique should beat the weaker technique, unless the other player is simply better. Given the time needed, your more orthodox shots should be more consistent at any given pace than the less orthodox version.

It's not always this simple. For example, depth may give you more time to react to the opponent's shot, but it also gives him time to attack, especially by looping. So against a looping opponent with unorthodox technique, you might start by going short, or perhaps long to a spot where he can't loop (often deep to wide backhand), or simply find ways to attack first (deep on the table), and then turn it into a more even battle of good versus "bad" technique. Or against a non-inverted surface, where it's the surface that's "weird," not the technique, you would need to understand the properties of that surface so you can play against it properly - but again, depth will give you more time to react to it.

There has always been age-old battle of standard versus non-standard technique. Sometimes the non-standard technique becomes standard, such as reverse penhold backhand, the banana flip and other backhand flips (often done against balls that are short to the forehand, once considered a no-no), or even looping itself (which was a "weird" shot until it became more common in the 1960s). And sometimes a player with "good" technique has something different to throw at opponents, such as the grip change to a very forehand grip Timo Boll often does when looping to get an extreme and "weird" inside-out forehand loop.

But good technique (i.e. sound fundamentals) almost always wins out against the less sound ones, so you should master these fundamentals. It's often after players have mastered these fundamentals that they experiment with other ways, and sometimes find something to do that is "different." (Here's a related article I wrote on this, "[Develop the Fundamentals: Strokes and Footwork.](#)")

J.J. Hardy and Brady Anderson at MDTTC

By Larry Hodges

J.J. Hardy is the star shortstop for the Baltimore Orioles. (He's the reigning gold glove winner with 52 homers the last two seasons and a former All-Star.) Brady Anderson was the Orioles star center fielder for 13 of his 15 major league seasons, where he was a 3-time all-star, and once hit 50 homers in a season. They are true baseball stars.

But they are also pretty good at table tennis! With the Orioles having a day off from playing, they spent four hours at the Maryland Table Tennis Center on Monday, May 13, from 4-8PM. I gave them a private coaching session the first two hours, and then they hit with our local juniors. I knew in advance that JJ was the Orioles best TT player - they have a table in their clubhouse, and NOBODY beats JJ. Brady is their #2. But how good could they be, considering they hadn't had coaching? I was expecting "basement stars," perhaps 1200 level at most. Boy was I wrong! Both came with their own sponge rackets in racket cases.

JJ's around 1850. Strengths: fast rallying and good serves, and adjusts quickly to opponents. Weaknesses: return of serve and against spin in general. He's very fast and aggressive at the table, with nice forehand and backhand hitting and blocking. He tends to hold his racket tip up on the forehand, which costs him some power, but his bang-bang rallying and reflexes allow him to rally at a 1900+ level - even better if you counter with him instead of looping. He also tends to reach for the ball instead stepping, which allows him to block but means he doesn't end the point as well as he could. He can loop against backspin from both wings, and follow with quick hitting.

He has a surprisingly good forehand pendulum serve. He doesn't change his grip for the serve, and so loses a bit of spin since his wrist is locked up, but it's very deceptive. He does the serve from the forehand side, which seemed to make the serve more effective for him since most players do this serve from the backhand side. He has two main variations, side-backspin and side-topspin, and they both look similar. His depth varies (not sure if it's intentional, need to ask him), so some are long, some are short, and some are half-long, with second bounce right around or just past the end-line.

He played a practice match with Tony Li, 11, rated an even 1800. Tony won the first two as JJ had trouble with his serves, but JJ came back to win, deuce in the fifth! You could pretty much see his mind at work as he figured out how to get Tony's various spinny serves back, and how to block his constant forehand looping. I also played JJ, and while I won easily, 11-3, 11-4, the key was that I was experienced enough to recognize how good he was at rallying, and so rarely let him get into a rally - I serve and looped everything, and looped his long serves while pushing his short ones back heavy, and looping the next ball. I wasn't going to be nice and risk losing!!!

How did he get so good without coaching or playing at a club with top players? His dad was a tennis coach and good table tennis player, and he learned from him. He picks up things very fast, as I saw both in his lesson with me and his adjustments in his match against Tony.

Brady Anderson was a level or so weaker, about 1500. He's a lefty who likes to cover almost the whole table with his forehand - he returned almost all my serves with his forehand. He has very nice footwork and range. He has a pretty good forehand, and can almost match JJ in rallies except that he has great trouble with JJ's serve. He can do a soft loop against backspin with his forehand. Brady also serves almost always from the forehand side, with a tomahawk sidespin serve, which was pretty spinny but without a heavy backspin variation, and so was easier to read than JJ's pendulum serve variations. He's very mobile, and even if you return his serve to his wide backhand, he manages to step around from where he's serving from on the forehand side to play his forehand from the backhand side.

Brady tends to hit the forehand with his arm jammed in too much, raises his elbow as he hits the ball, and often tries to muscle the ball instead of relaxing the arm and shoulder and letting the

body do the work. We worked on fixing these problems, and he was quick in making the adjustments in drills. At the start he had sort of a wristy backhand, but I quickly corrected it. While his backhand isn't as good as his forehand, it's technically sound once he made the change, though he'll need a lot of practice to ingrain the stroke. Brady has a deceptive forehand - he usually goes crosscourt, and then he'll suddenly change in mid-stroke and go inside out the other way, which was almost unreturnable, even for me.

The racket Brady was using was too slow, so I lent him my backup, which he liked. He ended up buying a racket from the club, with Coach Cheng Yinghua doing the sale and putting the racket and sponge together for him. (They were in awe of Cheng when they learned he'd been #1 in the U.S. for over ten years.)

Left: Brady and Tiffany after Tiffany's victory. Right: JJ, Tony Li, Brady.



Brady also played a practice game with the 1800 Tony Li. Tony was very nervous, and Brady led 10-8 game point, but Tony won in deuce. Later Brady played 8-year-old Tiffany Ke, the #2 ranked Under 9 girl in the U.S. with a rating of 1439. (She trains seven days a week!) Brady was using the new racket and wasn't quite used to it, and seemed mesmerized that this little girl, whose head barely stuck up over the table, was so good, and so lost 0-3. (See their picture below.) I also played Brady, and I won 11-3, 11-1 - but a lot of that was because he couldn't get my serve back, and couldn't handle my spinny loops off his serves. Most 1500 players wouldn't have high-level serves or be able to loop serves, and so they'd rally - and once he gets used to his new paddle, Brady will be in the 1500 range again.

It's tricky giving rating estimate for these two, due to their lack of experience against players with proper coaching. For example, while I estimated JJ at 1850, I'm taking into account how

fast he adjusts and learns in each match - he'd probably often lose the first game and have to come back, and might even struggle at first with 1700 players.

They hit with many of our top junior players: Nathan Hsu (16, rated 2397), Derek Nie (12, 2215), Roy Ke (13, 2229), Princess Ke (11, 1954), Tiffany Ke (8, 1439, and Tony Li (11, 1800). They were great with the kids, and posed with pictures with all of them as well as signing autographs. I think JJ and Brady were as much in awe of the kids' skills as the kids were of them. By the end of their time at the club, they and the kids were having fun and talking like old friends. These were two very nice athletes; their stardom has not gone to their heads. They were as excited about playing table tennis as a kid playing baseball. Both were interested in coming more often for lessons and regular play, but JJ can't because of the team's schedule. But Brady can, and plans to come regularly. I'm looking forward to working with him - once we've made a few adjustments on his forehand, I can already see him running around looping forehands.

One interesting tidbit - when JJ was hitting with the 2400 Nathan Hsu, Nathan of course dominated with his two-winged looping. But when they played points, Nathan actually had trouble with JJ's serve. Part of this was because he was nervous, and wasn't expecting good serves. I told him to stop thinking about it and just react, and then he began looping them in. I also missed a few of JJ's serves at first, but then stopped missing them.

The Orioles have a table at their clubhouse. Besides JJ and Brady, the other regulars are Manny Machado, Steve Pearce, and Nick Markakis. Nick plays with a hardbat and chops! They've invited us to come in and play at their clubhouse, though we haven't set a date yet. They were also interested to learn that two-time USA Cadet Team Member Tong Tong Gong lives about 15 minutes from Orioles Park, and may invite him to come in and hit with them. (Tong Tong doesn't know this yet!)

I've been an Orioles fan since 1972, when I was 12, so it was an exhilarating experience hitting with these two. They were extremely nice, and very fast learners. When I made adjustments to their strokes, both picked them up fast, though they'll need more practice to ingrain the changes. You could see how their baseball skills transferred to table tennis with their fast reflexes and ability to learn new skills quickly. Both could react to my best smashes and loop kills. They didn't most back, but they got their rackets on them over and over, and JJ made some nice blocks. Some of you may remember Brady's range as a center fielder. Well, you could see both when he ranged around playing his all-forehand game, and when I taught him how to lob. He'd never done this, but he picked it up very quickly, and with me smashing at 80% speed to his forehand he was not only lobbing ball after ball, but he began counter-smashing, making the shot over half the time.

I gave them both autographed copies of three of my books: *Table Tennis: Steps to Success*, *Table Tennis Tales and Techniques*, and *Table Tennis Tactics for Thinkers*. They gave the kids autographed copies of baseball cards, and offered free tickets to games. We'll take them up on that sometime soon.

All in all, a great day at MDTTC. The kids have a great story to tell at the school, as well as lots of pictures.