

MDTTC News

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Welcome to the fourth 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.

-Editor and Coach Larry Hodges

Content in this issue:

- Ongoing Programs
- MDTTC Tournaments
- MDTTC a National Center of Excellence
- MDTTC Web and Facebook Pages
- Southern Open and Junior Olympics
- United States Nationwide Table Tennis League
- Media Links
- Tip of the Month: Ready Position

Ongoing Programs

- **Beginning Junior Class.** This is for beginning juniors ages 6-13, with Coach Larry Hodges, and are held Saturdays 10:30AM-Noon and Sundays 4:30-6:00 PM. See the [Junior 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 [Junior Group Training page](#).
- **Private Coaching**, by Coaches Cheng Yinghua, Jack Huang, Jeffrey Zeng Xun, or Larry Hodges. (Jeffrey is currently in China, so no new lessons from him for now.) Coaching is also available from Wang Qing Liang, Chen Bo Wen, and Raghu Nadmichettu. See [Private Coaching page](#).
- **Leagues.** MDTTC runs four different leagues. Take your pick! They are the [Tuesday and Friday Leagues](#) (for all ages and levels); the [Corporate League](#); and the [Elite League](#).

MDTTC Tournaments

We have two tournaments scheduled this fall, on Sept. 22-23 and Oct. 20-21. See the [MDTTC Tournament page](#). Note the increases in prize money! Larry Hodges, who ran all the MDTTC tournaments in the 1990s and has run over 150 USATT tournaments in all, will be taking over as Tournament Director. Special thanks go to Lixin Lang who has been running MDTTC tournaments for the past decade.

MDTTC a National Center of Excellence

USATT has named MDTTC a [National Center of Excellence](#), along with six other clubs. This qualifies us for possible future USATT training camps, plus we get the nice banner that they sent us.

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.

2012 Southern Open and Junior Olympics

The Southern Open and the Junior Olympics were held back-to-back from July 28 - Aug. 1, in Houston. Nine players from the Maryland Table Tennis Center medalled at the Junior Olympics. In addition, Nathan Hsu, 16, of Rockville, MD, teamed up with Yahao Zhang, 20, of Texas to pull off three upsets in a row to win Open Doubles at the Southern Open. Here's a listing of MDTTC results:

- Amy Lu, 11, Germantown, MD - Gold in Under 12 Girls' Singles and Under 16 Girls' Doubles and Teams
- Lilly Lin, 15, Clarksburg, MD - Bronze in Under 16 Girls' Singles, Gold in Under 16 Girls' Doubles and Teams
- Lisa Lin, 8, Clarksburg, MD - Bronze in Under 10 Girls' Singles, Silver in Under 10 Girls' Doubles, and Gold in Under 16 Girls' Teams
- John Hsu, 18, Rockville, MD - Silver in Under 22 Men's Singles, Doubles, and Teams
- Nathan Hsu, 16, Rockville, MD - Bronze in Under 18 Boys' Singles, Silver in Under 22 Men's Doubles and Teams, Runner-up in Division A, and Southern Open Doubles Champion
- Jackson Liang, 17, Potomac, MD - Silver in Under 18 Boys' Doubles and Under 22 Men's Teams
- George Nie, 16, North Potomac - Silver in Under 18 Boys' Doubles and Under 22 Men's Teams
- Kyle Wang, 13, Herndon, VA - Bronze in Under 14 Boys' Teams
- Wesley Duan, 12, Fairfax, VA - Bronze in Under 14 Boys' Teams

United States Nationwide Table Tennis League

This is a new nationwide league that is being set up all over the country, with \$100,000 in prize money. [See their webpage](#) for info. (Larry Hodges is on their [Advisory Board](#).)

MDTTC Media Coverage

MDTTC has had a lot of media coverage recently. Here's a listing for this year (so far - there are at least two more coming up). The Washington Post article and video were the feature items on the USATT web page for several days last week.

- [Olympic hopefuls training at Maryland Table Tennis Center in Gaithersburg](#)
Washington Post, Aug. 15, 2012
- [Ping pong center in Maryland trains junior Olympians](#)
Washington Post Video, Aug. 13, 2012
- [Timmy La Trains At The Maryland Table Tennis Center For The 2016 Paralympics](#)
Channel 9 News Now/WUSA, Aug. 10, 2012
- [Maryland Table Tennis Center](#)
Asian Fortune, Aug. 4, 2012 (print edition Aug. 12)
- [Montgomery County is a hotbed for table tennis](#)
Montgomery Gazette, Aug. 1, 2012

- [11-year-old from Md. is among best table tennis players in U.S. for his age group](#)
Here's the [Print version](#)
Baltimore Sun, July 28, 2012
- [Gaithersburg-trained table tennis players make national marks](#)
Montgomery Gazette, July 25, 2012
- [Young Athletes Take Ping Pong Seriously with Olympic Dreams in Mind](#)
CCTV America, July 18, 2012
- [Pingpong Center Hopes to Cash In on Sport's Growth](#)
Montgomery Gazette, May 15, 2012
- [Han Xiao hoping to grab a U.S. place at the pingpong table](#)
Washington Times, Jan. 31, 2012
- [Table tennis: Gong makes second straight national team](#)
Howard Country Times, Jan. 17, 2012
- [Gong is Pingping Prodigy](#)
Baltimore Sun, Jan. 13, 2012

Tip of the Month: Ready Position

By Larry Hodges

What is the proper ready position? It's the position that'll allow you to react most rapidly to the opponent's next shot. It's extremely important in a sport as fast as table tennis. And yet many players have very poor ready positions. They stand up too straight, their feet are too close together, their weight isn't on the balls of their feet, and their non-playing arm hangs loosely at their side like a dead snake.

You want your feet somewhat wide (at least shoulder width apart or more), at least slightly bent, and either parallel to the table or with the right foot (for right-handers) slightly back. The latter puts you in a slight forehand position, but many players actually play their backhands from that position. If you play a flatter, steadier backhand (i.e. blocking and countering), then you don't need to be in a backhand stance to play backhands. The more aggressive you play the backhand (hitting or looping) the more you'll need to be in a ready position that allows you to quickly move into a backhand stance, and so you would want the feet more parallel to the table. Experiment and find what's comfortable for you.

Some players stand in a very backhand stance and greatly favor their stronger backhands. This may work for them somewhat, but it further weakens their already weak forehands. They would probably do better to adopt a more neutral stance.

The racket should normally point at the opponent, or more specifically, where the opponent would hit the ball. This allows you to move to forehand or backhand equally well. Some players tend to hold their playing arm out to the side too much, and so are more ready for forehands than backhands. Try holding the racket more in front of you, even if it means bringing the playing elbow more out in front.

Some players, including me, prefer to hold the racket in a slight backhand position (so the backhand side is partially pointed toward the far side). Conventionally, the backhand is hit quicker off the bounce than the forehand. This means you have less time to hit the backhand. In many cases, this doesn't matter since the stroke is shorter. I find the backhand rushed and awkward when starting from a truly neutral position, while the forehand, where you have plenty of time to get the paddle into position as you turn sideways, is much easier. So years ago I

adjusted my ready position so that the racket is in that slight backhand position. This gives you a head start on backhands, while I still have plenty of time to move the racket over for the forehand. I don't normally coach this, but I have advised some players who feel rushed on the backhand to experiment with this.

Weight should be equally distributed between your legs, with your weight centered and balanced, with weight toward the inside balls of your feet. The feet should point slightly outwards, allowing quick sideways movement. Lean slightly forward at the waist. The non-playing arm should be raised as a counter-balance to your playing arm, with the hand at least as high as the elbow.

Want to see examples of good ready positions? Google "table tennis ready position pictures," and dozens of great examples will come up. Pick what looks right for you.

You also want good playing shoes. (A good ready position with bad shoes is like running in dress shoes; not a good idea.) Ideally, get table tennis shoes, which are *made* for table tennis. They range from what are essentially socks with rubber soles (i.e. highly flexible but little support) to ones with great support. If you have foot problems, are overweight, or play mostly on cement, you probably need extra support. Don't use running shoes, which are designed for running forward, not quick side-to-side movements.

Here's an easy way to find a good ready position. Imagine you are covering someone in basketball. Notice how you automatically spread your legs and bend your knees? This lowering of your center of gravity puts you in the proper ready position, allowing you to move quickly either way. (The only catch - lower your arms, since you don't have to cover someone trying to shoot a basketball over your head!) You can use similar examples for a shortstop in baseball or a goalie in soccer.