



2008 10

European Championships in St. Petersburg

Chase for medals

Get used to the new season: St. Petersburg will host the tournament in autumn, not as traditionally in the spring, from October 4th to October 12th. Set to launch an annual cycle (at least temporarily) excitement for this date is rather limited. Yet, athletes are eagerly preparing for the medal chase in Russia's model city. Especially those representing Butterfly, having scored five of seven possible medal wins in Belgrade in 2007 and in Aarhus in 2005.

More about on the next page!

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European Championships in St. Petersburg

Butterfly players chase European Championship medals for the first time in autumn.

This time it should not be different. Shortly after the Olympic Games the European Championships still mean a lot to the athletes. „Winning a European Championship title is one of the most traditional and important titles out there.“, says Timo Boll, speaking for the European elite. He knows from experience. Boll is a five-time European Championship gold medalist (Singles 2002 and 2007, Doubles 2002 and 2007, Team 2007).



Boll

The 27-year old lefty is once again among the top favorites in 2008. Butterfly's most famous European player focuses primarily on the team competition („I really want to win gold with the team.“). Still, he looks beyond its finals on October 7th. Boll: „You can't count on a win. Singles match-ups are drawn on site. If all goes well, a medal should be in sight. Which color it will be depends on my daily condition.“ As usual, rival Vladimir Samsonov (Belarus) is challenging the two-time World Cup winner. So is Dimitrij Ovtcharov (20), one of the few

Europeans that ever beat him. Together, they play for Butterfly's Borussia Düsseldorf and Germany's national team.

Playing in Butterfly's jerseys are ex-world champion Werner Schlager and Greek topspin and footwork wonder Kalinikos Kreanga. Along with Boll, Danish World Championship bronze medalist Michael Maze and Croatian Zoran Primorac also wear the Butterfly logo. Primorac got very close to playing in the semi-finals in the Olympic Games.

Winning the Women's Singles competition is going to be a lot tougher for the female Butterfly players. Tamara Boros (Croatia) is still struggling hard to find herself a European top player. And it will probably not cease after St. Petersburg. Hungarian Krisztina Toth, Belarus' two-time European champion Vikto-

04. October - 12. October 2008
**European Championships Women/
Men , St. Petersburg (RUS)**

22. October - 26. October 2008
**Pro Tour: Serbian Open,
Belgrad**

29. October - 2. November 2008
Pro Tour: Indian Open

29. October - 2. November 2008
**Pro Tour: Austrian Open,
Salzburg**

Our Photo-Partners



Manfred Schillings

Impressum:

Editor + Kontakt

Yuki Kamizuru, 02841/90532-0

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All prices are recommended retail prices.

03 Preview European Championships

ria Pavlovich, and perhaps even the Romanian talent Daniela Dodean could find themselves on the podium. It depends on the drawing of the match-ups. However, one of the gold candidates is defending champion Li Jiao. She plays for the Butterfly sponsored Netherlands. The last three of the European top events (Europe Top 12 2007, European Championships 2007, Europe Top 12 2008) were won by her.

Germany's Men's team, led by defending champion Timo Boll and Bastian Steger, is dreaming of repeating last year's success. Their assumingly biggest competitors are Croatia (with Zoran Primorac), Poland, and Romania. However, it is Austria (with Werner Schlager and Robert Gardos) and Russia with its homefield advantage, who are possible winning candidates. Contrary to its three predecessors the European Championship team events will be held in group games. The European champion will then be determined in a k.o.-system starting at the quarter-finals.

Women's team competitions, rather than men's, show a lack of predetermined top favorites. Defending champion Hungary, led by experienced player Krisztina Toth, is once again a medal candidate. Group leaders Germany, Italy and their host Russia have high hopes for the finals. But they are not the only ones. Following the quartet are the Netherlands, Croatia, Austria, Belarus and, finally, Romania's youngsters. All seem strong enough to be leading the draw ad absurdum. One thing is clear though: Almost every women's team can become European champion. Plenty of excitement is guaranteed in St. Petersburg...



Primorac

Defending champions Belgrade 2007 (Butterfly winners in bold)

Women's Single

1. Li Jiao NED

Men's Single

1. **Timo Boll** GER

Men's Double

1. **Timo Boll/Christian Süß** GER

Women's Double

1. **Viktoria Pavlovich** BLR / **Svetlana Ganina** RUS

Mixed Double

1. Aleksandar Karakasevic SRB/Ruta Pasauskiene LTU

Men's Team

1. Germany (with **Timo Boll** and **Bastian Steger**)

Women's Team

1. Hungary (with **Krisztina Toth**)

Additional information regarding this tournament, see website of its host
<http://www.ettc08.ru>

Text to present picture series, analysis and practical help Table Tennis 3

The main topic of the third publication are picture series with own serves and the following opening of the game. After a short theoretical introduction the basic tactic of Seiya Kishikawa to open the game with the first loop is demonstrated with pictures. Additionally there are many exercises which can be trained to learn these rallies. For practicing these stroke series many combined and irregular exercises follow and end in free play.



The second part deals shortly with the return situation. The main stress is on tactical solutions. You can find exemplary pages and the content on the homepage:

www.luno-tt.de

Pro Tour in Berlin

For the first time the German capital is the host of the international Pro-Tour Series. 300 players from 40 Nations are expected at the Velodrome in Berlin among those the top stars from the world.

TV-Spot with Timo Boll

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www.butterfly-world.com

TV-Spot Timo Boll. Enjoy viewing!



ITTF World Ranking, Mens (09/2008)



1	WANG Hao CHN	16	SCHLAGER Werner AUT
2	MA Long CHN	17	KAN Yo JPN
3	MA Lin CHN	18	KREANGA Kalinikos GRE
4	WANG Liqin CHN	19	PERSSON Jörgen, SWE
5	SAMSONOV Vladimir BLR	20	HAO Shuai CHN
6	Chen Qi CHN	21	KO Lai Chak, HKG
7	BOLL Timo GER	22	MITZUTANI Jun JPN
8	RYU Seung Min KOR	23	MAZE Michael DEN
9	JOO Se Hyuk KOR	24	CRISAN Adrian ROU
10	OH Sang Eun KOR	25	PRIMORAC Zoran, HRV
11	LI Ching HKG	26	CHEN Weixing, AUT
12	GAO Ning SIN	27	HOU Yingchao CHN
13	CHUAN Chih-Yuan TPE	28	YOON Jae Young KOR
14	OVTCHAROV Dimitrij GER	29	YANG Zi, SIN
15	CHEUNG Yuk HKG	30	CHIANG Peng-Lung TPE

ITTF World Ranking, Women (09/2008)



1	ZHANG Yining CHN	16	Li Jiao NED
2	GUO Yue CHN	17	GAO Jun USA
3	LI Xiaoxia CHN	18	NIU Jianfeng CHN
4	WANG Nan CHN	19	DANG Ye Seo KOR
5	GUO Yan CHN	20	HIRANO Sayaka JPN
6	Li Jia Wei SIN	21	LIU Jia AUT
7	WANG Yue Gu SIN	22	PARK Mi Young KOR
8	JIANG Huajun HKG	23	FAN Ying CHN
9	FENG Tianwei SIN	24	LIU Shiwen CHN
10	TIE Yana HKG	25	SUN Bei Bei SIN
11	KIM Kyung Ah KOR	26	WU Jiaduo GER
12	FUKUHARA Ai JAP	27	BOROS Tamara HRV
13	LIN Ling HKG	28	Yao Yan, CHN
14	CAO Chen CHN	29	FUKUOKA Haruna JPN
15	WANG Chen USA	30	SHEN Yanfei, ESP

(Butterfly-players are marked!)

World Champion Werner Schlager - part 19: Coordination

In 2003 Werner Schlager became sensationally World Champion in the Men Singles in Paris and was the number 1 in June on the World Ranking List. Momentarily he is ranked number 16. In the beginning of February he was in top form and won the EUROPE TOP 12 in Frankfurt. The 35 year old Austrian lives and lived table tennis like nobody else. Since years he trusts Butterfly Material and is an excellent counsellor of the company. In his book: „Matchball – Dreams and Triumphs“, which was published in 2006, he describes his career, his successes and disappointments, his opinions about table tennis and his very personal quite philosophical thoughts about life. A very good book, not only for table tennis players. In the new Butterfly series „Tips & Tricks from the World champion“ he answers many questions concerning all areas of competition and training. The Butterfly team and Werner Schlager wish you, dear reader, good entertainment and joy.

Previous articles: push, counter hit, forehand – topspin, backhand topspin, flip, smash, balloon defence, backspin defence, block, service return, technical training, playing systems, endurance 1, endurance 2, strength, power.

Were you one of the best in your P.E. lessons at school? Which activities did you like and which activities were not exactly your favourites?

I always liked P.E. After primary school I went to a sports school where we had a lot of P.E. of course. The main sports at school were football, orienteering and climbing which only partially satisfied my need for activity. Therefore I really enjoyed the daily table tennis sessions. Each activity involving coordination was worth a try. Orienteering wasn't really my kettle of fish.

Which activities do you think are good in combination with table tennis? Which ones do you do?

I doubt that there are other sports which go particularly well with table tennis. It all depends on your personal preferences which sport you choose for compensation. Personally I don't do any other sports for compensation. Of course I go running regularly and do other compensating strength exercises.



Sport scientists maintain that children with good coordination are suited better for top sports later on. Therefore it is very important to promote a lot of different activities during early and late childhood. Did you do this sort of training when you were small? What is your opinion about this?

I never did training like that. Naturally a broad physical education is an advantage but from my point of view not a condition. Children are by nature always looking for new incentives. Top sports might therefore lose its attraction very quickly with children. Interesting and differentiated training for one sporting activity is probably the best way.

If you have a child which is interested in sports when would you start to practice specific techniques? When did your father start with you?

As soon as a child is interested in it. I started to be interested when I was six years old. My father noticed my interest and took me to the training sessions. If a child doesn't show this particular interest you should accept it.

Table tennis is a sport with high demands on coordination. Situations have to be guessed and anticipated in a split of a second. They have to be recognized, analysed and then must be transformed into correct answers (movements). Naturally players develop more and more automatic reactions and reflexes because of their growing game and practicing experience otherwise a game on a fast level would not be possible. Still there are always new and difficult situations which demand decisions. What is particularly difficult in table tennis concerning this coordination?

The most difficult area is to find your own balance, the balance between automatic reactions and control. This balance also decides whether I am in top-or poor form. You are always looking for the important optimal relationship between conscious and unconscious actions. If there is too much unconscious action, consistency and tactical decisions are suffering. Too much conscious actions slow down the flow of the game and the quality of the played ball is poorer.

Some coaches say that a really top class player differs from a good player because his anticipation is better. Do you agree?

Partially. No doubt that good anticipation makes it easier to become a top player. But you can compensate poor anticipation with a lot of effort and physical fitness. The best example for that is surely Wang Liqin.

How do you judge your own anticipation?

No idea? Others may judge about that. I am satisfied with my own anticipation.

Which player is excellent concerning anticipation from your point of view?

For me the champion in anticipation is Vladimir Samsonov. You never get the feeling that you might catch him wrong footed.

Can you improve anticipation through particular exercises?

Every irregular exercise improves anticipation.

Can you improve your reflexes with particular drills? Do you know some exercises?

I don't know if you can train your reflexes. What you can practice is your attention (ability to concentrate) and your eye – hand – coordination. There are many well known exercises for that.

Concerning the aspect of coordination the service is the only movement which can be executed without the influence of an opponent. The player doesn't need to react on the return of the opponent but can concentrate completely on the movement of the service. The service can be easily improved if the player has been coached well. Why is the service only trained so intensely at top level and often completely neglected with amateurs?

During the service different movements must be coordinated perfectly. Precise throwing up of the ball is just as important for the quality of the service as the movement of the hand or the twist of the body. There are no borderlines for creativity. It is a natural phenomenon to spend more time with those things which demand more progress at little expense. Therefore you learn the less complex movements like the standard techniques and a simple serve first. Later on you progress only slowly and you invest more hours in finer details. The service training is part of that, a prime example for the optimizing of movements.

07 Tips and Tricks

Do you know some special coordination exercises which improve the coordination of the playing arm (upper arm-forearm- hand)? Example: a player know very well that he must close the bat more when blocking the ball but his playing arm does not transform this message. A player knows very well that the coming ball has a lot of backspin but the topspin movement is too slow or too flat.

Often there is a mistake with the self perception of the player. He thinks that he has already opened or closed his bat far enough. In reality he has only come half the way of the possible movement. Only the learning of self perception leads to the top.

Some coaches make their players play with their weaker arm so that a left handed player plays with his right arm. What do you think about that?

I don't think that makes a lot of sense. Obviously it is a much favoured way of increasing motivation. It is fun to compete this way. If this has automatically an improvement of coordination in the stronger arm as a consequence is doubtful. Only very intensive training of the weaker arm would improve the self perception so much that also the stronger side would profit. From my point of view that is a waste of time.

Can you explain why the number of left - hand players is increasing above proportion the higher the playing level?

According to the current world ranking list there are about ten left – handed players among the top 50. I don't think that is a higher proportion.

Thinking about tennis. Do you think it is advisable to play tennis and table tennis simultaneously at a certain age? Does the tennis game influence the table tennis technique?

In my own experience playing tennis and table tennis at the same time is not advisable. The necessary finer movements in table tennis are being negatively influenced.

Do you like playing tennis every now and again?

Rarely. My parents are regularly playing tennis for many years including tournaments. Sometimes my father is asking me for a match. Up to now he hasn't beaten me yet. The last match was a few years ago though. He is getting better every year so the next match could be interesting.

Imagine that you had invited 10 children (absolute new beginners) for a trial for 30 minutes. What would you do in these 30 minutes to find out if they were talented to play table tennis?

I can see within a few minutes if they have got a feeling for the ball or not. You don't need any special exercises for that. It is enough if they just play table tennis with each other. The feeling for the ball is only one of many factors. But it is also possible to see their intensity, creativity and ability to concentrate.

If I hit the ball with the edge of the bat, I should work harder on my coordination.

Without coordination you can't move for many balls.

Coordination for me is like the daily bread.

If I react with my reflexes I am often surprised by the result myself.

It is possible to train the ability to anticipate.



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Dirk Huber, Germany, Part 2

„Handle table tennis with intelligence!“



In the September issue we presented the first part of the interview with Dirk Huber the regional coach of the West German Table Tennis Association with 100.000 members. For 30 years the 59 year old has been a professional coach. He is known as an expert concerning the coaching of youngsters. The former Bundesliga and national coach of Switzerland has opinions which make people think and are not always shared with all his colleagues. But see for yourself, you might find some inspiring ideas for your own training in this interview.

The DTTB is the biggest Table Tennis Association in Europe and one of the biggest in the world. The cooperation between the regions and the national association is therefore very important. How does this cooperation work?

It is certainly worth improving. I very often get the feeling that the regional coaches are not being taken serious enough by the national coaches. In my opinion the most important coach is the one who works in the clubs with new beginners. If they don't exist you will not have any young players. The second important coach is the one leading the children to top sports, usually the regional coaches. Number three in this hierarchy are the national coaches. I have got the feeling that the national coaches look at this hierarchy exactly the other way round.

How is the cooperation concerning the concepts of planning training periods?

The regional coaches meet the national coaches once a year. Then the main coaching points are commonly discussed for the coming season. That actually works very well. Here in the WTTV we stick closely to those training recommendations.

The WTTV is training together with Borussia Duesseldorf and the German Table Tennis Association at the German National Training Centre in Duesseldorf. How does that work?

We are training there with our coaches altogether four times a week with 40 young players. Duesseldorf is our main centre of excellence. Apart from that we have three further centres of excellence in North-Rhine-Westphalia with three sessions each a week. Considering our training structure we are doing well in the WTTV.

Up to which age is the WTTV supporting the young players?

Officially up to the age of 18. But I usually invite them further on to camps or training sessions. I realized though that most of the players don't use this offer because usually the interests vary a lot: A-Levels, job education, University and spare-time.

Mr Huber, you have been working now for more than 20 years with the youngsters. How do you see if a child is particularly talented in table tennis?

It is most important that the parents are prepared to drive their children to the training sessions and the camps. Secondly it is important that they are doing well in school because otherwise the parents are not supportive. The third factor is the absolute will to work hard and the pleasure to achieve something. You see that very soon in their facial expressions and their eyes. The least important factor for me is the so called „hand“ or the physical presupposition which was so important in old times. You can always practice these things.

Also a good „hand“?

Yes, I think so.

What is your understanding of a „hand“?

Obviously it is not the hand but the coordination of the senses and movement. Some have got a natural ability in how quickly they can do this. But you can also learn this.

When must a child start to make it to the top of the world?

With eight, nine, ten the latest. It depends if they are coached well right from the beginning. Even a twelve-year-old may get very far if everything is optimal.

With 12 years to the top of the world?

Perhaps not but I wouldn't exclude it completely if it is a universal sports talent.

How often should a fourteen-year-old who is one of the best in the region and ambitious to get to the top on national level practice?

Every day.

How many hours a day?

You can't say that in general because it is depending on the quality of the sessions. If you are training intensively and intellectually demanding 70 to 80 minutes might be enough. That is definitely better than practicing for three hours and half of the time is spent just playing around. I am a big supporter of efficient training. In our training group we follow the slogan: „Handle table tennis with intelligence!“ We try to do that in every training session.

Can you give us an example?

With pleasure. At the moment we have one main topic for the next four weeks. We are practicing with less speed but consciously technique orientated and always with irregular exercises. The one who plays the topspin loops the ball either to the middle of the table or the backhand side. The blocking player must always watch what is happening. The topspin player is for example only looping with his forehand but must move to each ball. When we see that despite the irregularity the rallies become longer we hope that also the speed increases. Formerly we always played with a lot of speed and were surprised that the technique was so poor. The second topic is the forehand flip. When we see that a player has progressed we pick the next topic. If a player is in command of all these bricks after two weeks already he will continue with the next topic whereas another player continues with the same because he hasn't come quite so far. I always try to work individually and not to demand too much or too little.

If I understand you correctly you are against stupid, long and boring training sessions. Are we still making these mistakes?

May be. Many decades we made the mistake that we didn't demand enough of the children. We practiced those movements the kids could easily do over and over again. Nobody can progress from that.

So you are pleading for more conscious playing and training. Every ball has to be played consciously regarding spin, placement, speed and height.

Exactly.

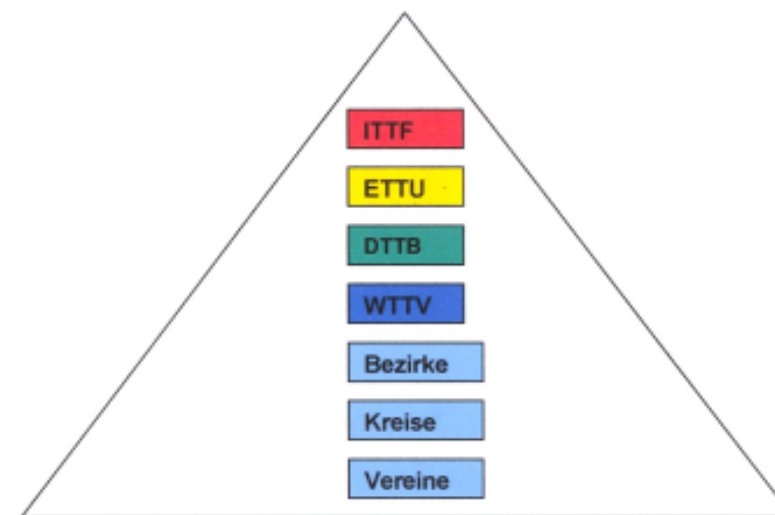
(to be continued)

The West-German Table Tennis Association (WTTV) in one view

The West-German (North-Rhine-Westphalia) Table Tennis Association (www.wttv.de) was founded in 1931 is one of the 20 regions of the German Table Tennis Association (DTTB), the third biggest association with most active players, nearly 95.000 licensed players. With that the WTTV is the fourth biggest table tennis association in Europe after Germany, Russia and France. 1359 table tennis clubs in North-Rhine-Westphalia belong to the WTTV. These 1356 clubs are organized in 35 towns and 5 counties of different sizes; they represent with 186 (Muenster) up to 342 (Duesseldorf) a lot more clubs than other regions of the DTTB.

The administration of the WTTV can be subdivided in two areas. At the main office in Duisburg there are 5 people employed full time who are in charge of all the administrative areas. On top of that there are four further full time posts: two regional coaches one person for general sport and school sport and one person in charge of education. Several part-time workers support this system.

The main target of the WTTV is to take care of and promote table tennis on all levels. On the one hand the WTTV is top sport orientated and promotes young talents, sends its best players on to the DTTB, organizes ranking tournaments and all the different leagues within the county (altogether 10 different leagues; the 1st and 2nd Bundesliga are organized by the DTTB). On the other hand the WTTV is orientated towards table tennis as a leisure activity. It supports the clubs and schools, organizes special competitions for schools and leisure to increase membership and promotes table tennis as a healthy sport and sports for seniors and so on.



III.1 The organization of Table Tennis from the German point of view

The forhand topspin with both feet parallel to the table

During the last two decades table tennis has become much faster. Players have lesser time to prepare for their next shot. No wonder, the forehand topspin with an inclined and open leg posture as suggested by countless table tennis textbooks is seen rarely on a world class level. Chinese Butterfly player Guo Yue illustrates this in the following photo series. The very agile left-handed player has an attractive offensive technique which includes all elements of men's table tennis. She is known for her varied and sophisticated forehand topspin play. Last year's world singles champion and bronze medalist in Beijing (she won gold with the team) shows important tips on how to play the forehand topspin with both feet parallel to the table. Yue also demonstrates her perfect use of the forearm in the pictured forehand topspin-against-topspin return.

Backswing – Pictures 1-4: **Picture 1** shows Yue in the last phase of a forehand topspin follow-through. She swings back her racket **(2)** and gets ready for another forehand topspin **(3+4)**.



14 Technique Tips

Doing so, her feet clearly remain in a parallel position. Tilting the hip joint produces a left side rotation of her upper body, thus enabling forward body tension. Simultaneously, she bends her knees and slightly shifts her weight onto the left leg leaving her upper body in a straight position (without hunching of the chest vertebra). Her racket arm is almost stretched out. But not all the way (3)! The racket is angled downwards and backwards from the wrist. This might point to a strong use of the wrist at the ball's impact (3). In **Picture 4**, Yue's body has a maximum of forward tension (torso, legs, racket arm). By rotating her upper body she gains a lateral opening. This permits an ideal meeting point with the ball. Otherwise her hips would be in her way and the shot would fail to succeed.



Striking – Pictures 5+6: Yue has just exceeded the reverse point of the backswing phase (5). Her racket is significantly higher referring to the ball's impact point than it was in **picture 4**. In a straight line she pulls the closed angled racket towards the ball and hits it diagonally above her knees (see **picture A**, showing the ball's impact point from another photo series). **Picture 6** displays Yue shortly after the ball's impact. Her upper body rotation is released. The body snaps back up from its crouching position (see **pictures 5 and 6**). Both movements have to be timed exactly on the ball's impact point. Using her upper body (lateral rotation), legs (straightening up from stoop), striking arm (acceleration of forearm), and her hand (possible use of wrist) she reaches a certain acceleration of the racket. Its angle has to be adjusted accordingly to the ball's rotation. Yue makes it look very easy. Yet, she has put a minimum of 14 years worth of learning and practice into it.



Follow-through – Pictures 7-8: Yue's stroke ends ideally above her forehead. Her striking arm is bent 90 degrees. Compared to **picture 3** you can see how the use of her forearm at the ball's impact affects the acceleration of the racket. Not the striking arm by itself but bending the elbow and speeding-up the forearm movement adds to it. So does the use of the wrist, if available. In minor leagues, players commonly lack this kind of awareness and dismiss the active use of the forearm.



Conclusion: Figure Z shows the details of the complex movement. The stroke follows a straight line. Lateral rotation of the hip brings the upper body back. This enables the feet to maintain in a parallel position. Legs are bent accordingly during the backswing. An excellent hip and knee movement is crucial for a successful forehand topspin with both feet parallel to the table. This can be specifically trained.

