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ALL INTERNATIONAL TABLE TENNIS NEWS

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CHINA STUNNING IN DUBAI

TO WIN BOTH MEN'S AND WOMEN'S WORLD TEAM CUP TITLE

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EDITORIAL

WELCOME TO OUR OFFICIAL PING MAGAZINE, ONE WHICH VISITS THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE WORLD

Read about what happened in the table tennis world since our last issue; from the concluding tournament on the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour to the Grand Finals in Bangkok, matters concluding with a dramatic Men's Singles final between Jun Mizutani and Dima Ovtcharov.

Success for **Jun Mizutani** and one match earlier success for **Kasumi Ishikawa**, who beat Korea's **Seo Hyowon** in four straight games to claim the Women's Singles title. Certainly good news for Japan, their young players are undoubtedly worthy of being called world class.

Is a new era set to dawn or will China continue its dominance? The World Team Cup in Dubai suggests the latter!

Unquestionably Japan has a rich history in the sport of table tennis, so has Sweden.

The names of the late Hans Alser and Kjell Johansson are legendary as are those of Stellan Bengtsson, Ulf *"Tickan"* Carlsson, **Eril Lindh**, **Mikael Appelgren** and more recently **Peter Karlsson**, **Jörgen Persson** and the one and only **Jan-Ove Waldner**.

Illustrious names and once again those who have given crowds around the world such memorable moments to savour will once again be in international action next year. The ITTF Legends Tour is planned to commence next March.

A first year for this publication now completed; my thanks to all who have made it possible, enjoy reading.

Happy New Year.

Philippe Saive

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SUMMARY

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The winner four years earlier in the Korean capital city of Seoul, once again the top step of the medal podium belonged to Japan's **Jun Mizutani**. The winner four years earlier in the Korean capital city of Seoul, once again the top step of the medal podium belonged to Japan's **Jun Mizutani**.

SWEDISH OPEN 2014

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Winner earlier in the year in Kuwait, China's **Fan Zhendong** won the Men's Singles title at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Swedish Open Stockholm on the afternoon of Sunday 16th November.

RUSSIAN OPEN

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Crowned World Junior champion in Bahrain in November 2011 but never previously progressing to an ITTF World Tour Men's Singles final, Japan's **Koki Niwa** laid the ghosts to rest on the afternoon of Sunday 9th November.

2014 XXII CENTRAL AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN SPORTS GAMES

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Cuba's **Andy Pereira** and the host nation's Yadira Silva won the respective Men's Singles and Women's Singles titles at the Central American and Caribbean Games in the Mexican town of Xalapa on Thursday 20th November, to bring to a conclusion six days of...

WORLD JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP

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Winner of the Men's Singles title earlier in the year at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Japan Open, China's **Yu Ziyang** secured Boys' Singles gold in the Minhang Gymnasium on the evening of Sunday 7th December, to close the curtain on the Wisdom 2014 World Junior Championships in Shanghai.

WORLD TEAM CUP

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Top seeds and clear favourites for the title, China justified their exalted status by winning the Men's event at the 2015 World Team Cup in Dubai on the early evening of Sunday 11th January.

ITTF STAR AWARDS

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Quarter-finalist at the Liebherr Men's World Cup less than three months ago in the German city of Düsseldorf, when on the first two days of play he stole the show, once again Nigeria's **Quadri Aruna** hit in the limelight on the evening of Wednesday 7th January.

MAN OF THE MOMENT: QUADRI ARUNA

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Winner of the Africa Cup in 2009 in Rabat was the first major international title in the career of **Quadri Aruna**; it meant he qualified for the Liebherr Men's World Cup in Moscow later in the year. He finished in second place in the Intercontinental Cup behind Brazil's **Cazuo Matsumoto**.

ITTF LEGENDS TAKE THE CENTER STAGE IN HALMSTAD, SWEDEN P.60

WORLD RANKING LIST MEN & WOMEN P.62>65

FULL FRAME

A SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM THE 2014 ITTF MALE

The Star Quadri Aruna to all of YOU:

"I am using this opportunity to dedicate the award to all my fans around the world for taking their time to vote for me and I really appreciate them."

GAC GROUP 2014 ITTF WORLD TOUR GRAND FINALS

TITLE REGAINED, JUN MIZUTANI SUCCEEDS IN DRAMATIC FINAL

The winner four years earlier in the Korean capital city of Seoul, once again the top step of the medal podium belonged to Japan's **Jun Mizutani**. The winner four years earlier in the Korean capital city of Seoul, once again the top step of the medal podium belonged to Japan's **Jun Mizutani**.

On the evening of Sunday 14th December, he won the Men's Singles title at the US$ 1,000,000 GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Grand Finals in Bangkok, Thailand.

In a final, where the momentum ebbed and flowed, keeping the enthusiastic crowd glued to the action; **Jun Mizutani**, the top seed, beat Germany's **Dimitrij Ovtcharov**, the second seed, in a gripping full distance seven games contest (14-12, 12-10, 8-11, 11-3, 6-11, 12-14, 11-6).

NO STRANGERS

Jun Mizutani and **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** are no strangers to each other on the international scene; both being from the same generation. **Jun Mizutani** is 25 years old; **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** is one year older. **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** prevailed in their very first meeting; he beat **Jun Mizutani** in the Under 21 Men's Singles event in 2005 at the Croatian Open.

However, the next seven meetings all went the way of **Jun Mizutani**, before at the Liebherr 2012 World Team Championships, **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** stemmed the tide; two further wins

were then recorded by **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** prior to their most recent meeting. In the Men's event at the ZEN-NOH 2014 World Team Championships in Tokyo earlier this year, the verdict went in favour of **Jun Mizutani**. Overall prior to swords being crossed in Bangkok, **Jun Mizutani** held an eight wins to four advantage.

BETTER START

It was **Jun Mizutani** who made the better start, he won the first two games, both settled by the minimal margin.

However, in the third game, the advantage swung in favour of **Dimitrij Ovtcharov**. He went ahead 7-1 before **Jun Mizutani** staged a recovery to reduce the deficit to three points at 9-6.

GAC GROUP 2014 ITTF WORLD TOUR GRAND FINALS

RESPONSES

Jörg Rosskopf, the German National Men's Team coach, fearing a momentum change, called *"Time Out"*. It proved a wise move; **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** remained firm to win the game and reduced the deficit to one.

Immediately, **Jun Mizutani** responded to secure the fourth game. A comfortable fourth game win for **Jun Mizutani**; it was an equally decisive fifth game success for **Dimitrij Ovtcharov**.

SIXTH GAME

It was to be much different in the sixth game. **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** went ahead 8-6; **Jun Mizutani** levelled at 9-all and the saved game point on three occasions to stand level at 12-all. He called *"Time Out"*; a break, it worked but it worked for **Dimitrij Ovtcharov**.

He won the next two points, a deciding seventh game beckoned. A blow for **Jun Mizutani** but to his credit he re-grouped.

DECIDER

In the decisive seventh game he led 5-4 when the players changed ends and at 10-5 held five match points; the first was saved not the second.

Jun Mizutani sank to the floor, the mission had been accomplished; the only Japanese player ever to have won the title, had won it on two occasions.

"The first two games were very close, I was totally focused", said **Jun Mizutani**. *"Losing the six game after taking the 'Time Out' was a blow, it was very difficult to recover mentally."*

Jun Mizutani, to his great credit, recovered.

ALWAYS CLOSE

*"It's always close between **Dimitrij** and myself"*, continued **Jun Mizutani**. *"I won four years ago in Seoul but I think winning here has been a greater achievement; also it's much more money!"*

Jun Mizutani collects US$ 100,000 for his efforts; **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** departs with US$ 60,000.

HISTORY PREVAILS, PENULTIMATE ROUND EXITS FOR MARCOS FREITAS AND TANG PENG

Japan's **Jun Mizutani** and Germany's **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** duly emerged successful at the semi-final stage of the Men's Singles event at the US$ 1,000,000 GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Grand Finals in Bangkok, Thailand on the afternoon of Sunday 14th December.

Jun Mizutani, the top seed, accounted for Portugal's **Marcos Freitas**, the no.5 seed (11-9, 11-7, 11-6, 4-11, 11-9), before **Dimitrij Ovtcharov**, the no.2 seed, followed suit.

Impressively, he accounted for Hong Kong's **Tang Peng**, the no.11 seed, in four straight games (11-6, 11-8, 11-6, 11-7).

ODDS STACKED HEAVILY

Status suggested that **Jun Mizutani** and **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** would emerge successful; history predicted the same.

Undoubtedly the odds in the first Men's Singles semi-final were stacked heavily in favour of **Jun Mizutani**; the two had met on four previous occasions in World ranking events; **Jun Mizutani** had won all four contests.

A decade ago they met in Kobe in the group stage of the Boys' Singles event at the 2004 World Junior Championships; one year later they crossed swords in the same event on the ITTF Junior Circuit in Sweden.

Both verdicts went in favour of **Jun Mizutani**. More recently at senior level, the outcome was the same but close calls; in the second round of the Men's Singles event at the Liebherr 2010 Austrian Open, **Jun Mizutani** prevailed in six games, whilst earlier this year the closest duel was recorded. In the first stage of the Men's event at the ZEN-NOH 2014 World Team Championships in Tokyo, **Jun Mizutani** succeeded in a full distance five games duel.

ONLY ONE THE FIRST

Meanwhile in the instance of **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** and **Tang Peng**, in six previous meetings, only one had gone the way of the Hong Kong man and that was eight years ago, when **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** was only 17 years old.

At the 2006 Kuwait Open, **Tang Peng** had beaten **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** in six games. Otherwise, since that date the verdict has always been in favour of **Dimitrij Ovtcharov**.

In 2010 **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** won at the Liebherr Men's World Cup and then the following year at the Liebherr World Team Cup. Later at the 2012 London Olympic Games he emerged successful in the Men's Team bronze medal contest, before in 2013 being successful in the Men's Singles event at the Liebherr World Championships in Paris and the Liebherr Men's World Cup in Verviers.

ESTABLISHED AUTHORITY

A narrow win for **Marcos Freitas** in Tokyo, in Bangkok it was a narrow margin in the first game but not in the next as **Jun Mizutani** asserted himself on proceedings.

He dominated the second and third games, before **Marcos Freitas** responded to capture the fourth. In the fifth game the Portuguese star established an early lead but ahead 8-7 the margin was down to one point. He called *"Time Out"*.

Immediately **Jun Mizutani** levelled matters and from that point onwards was never in arrears. The one hundred percent record against **Marcos Freitas** was maintained.

PROBLEMS RETURNING SERVICE

"In the first game I had problems reading his serves; he served well and I couldn't return the services", said **Jun Mizutani**. *"It was the reason I lost the fourth game; I couldn't read his services."*

Perhaps **Jun Mizutani** was being a little harsh on himself; he did recover to win the fifth game and the match.

"I was not that happy with my play today, it wasn't my best performance in the tournament", smiled **Jun Mizutani**. *"That will be in my next match!"*

EQUALLY IMPRESSIVE

An impressive performance by **Jun Mizutani**, it was even more impressive from the racket of **Dimitrij Ovtcharov**; he assumed control from start to finish against **Tang Peng**.

*"**Dimitrij** has a good record against Tang Peng, he entered the match with a great deal of confidence"*, said **Jörg Rosskopf**, the German Men's Team National Coach. *"It helped that **Dimitrij** made a good start; that is important when you play someone against whom you have a winning record."*

The German star was focused and in the zone from the very first point.

MOVED WELL

*"Today **Dimitrij** moved well, he was tactically good"*, concluded **Jörg Rosskopf**. *"In my view the best two players in the tournament have reached the final; I think it will be a great final."*

We wait to see; evidence suggests the **Jörg Rosskopf** summary is correct.

LUCKY SEVEN, AT LAST DIMITRIJ OVTCHAROV NEGOTIATES OPENING HURDLE

Six attempts, a debut at the ITTF World Tour Grand Finals in Beijing in 2007 but always a first round Men's Singles exit; at the seventh time of asking it was eventual success for Germany's **Dimitrij Ovtcharov**.

On the evening of Friday 12th December, in the opening round of the Men's Singles event at US$ 1,000,000 GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Grand Finals in Bangkok, Thailand; **Dimitrij Ovtcharov**, the no.2 seed, beat Japan's **Yuto Muramatsu**, the no.9 seed, to end the long agonising wait for a victory.

Furthermore, he won in style; he recorded a most impressive straight games success (11-1, 11-9, 11-6, 11-4).

RELIEF

"Yes, it is a relief, in the practice hall the players were all reminding me of my record; I've lost to some good players over the years, no disgrace but here I feel in good shape", said **Dimitrij Ovtcharov**. *"I had problems with my teeth earlier this year and I had an injury but now all is well."*

Certainly, **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** looked in good shape as he posted a four-nil win over the Japanese defender.

"I am used to playing against defenders, I have practised time and again with Ruwen Filus so for me I'm used to the style", added **Dimitrij Ovtcharov**. *"**Yuto** is only 18 years old, he is good but he is learning ands improving; in two or three years' time he'll be some player."*

GAC GROUP 2014 ITTF WORLD TOUR GRAND FINALS

PRESENT IN TIANJIN, VLADIMIR SAMSONOV ON DUTY ONCE AGAIN

The winner of the Men's Singles title on the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour in both Belarus and Belgium, once again the name of Vladimir Samsonov of Belarus appears on the entry list for the end of year gathering.

> ***"In table tennis, everything is more or less the same..."***

He will compete in the US$ 1,000,000 GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Grand Finals which start in Bangkok, Thailand on Thursday 11th December. Furthermore, he is the one player on duty who was there in the very first; he was on duty in 1996 when the inaugural tournament was staged in the Chinese city of Tianjin.

RUNNER UP

A rising star, 20 years old at the time, he reached the final of both the Men's Singles and Men's Doubles events; in both disciplines he finished in runners up spot.

In the final of the Men's Singles event, he experienced defeat at the hands of the host nation's **Kong Linghui**; in the Men's Doubles competition in partnership with Germany's **Jörg Rosskopf** the duo suffered defeat against a partnership that can lay claim to being one of the greatest ever.

NOTABLE PARTNERSHIPS

They were beaten by China's **Wang Liqin** and Yan Sen, the pairing that was to win Men's Doubles gold at both the Olympic Games and at the World Championships.

Defeat against **Wang Liqin** and Yan Sen but en route to that final **Jörg Rosskopf** and **Vladimir Samsonov** had beaten two pairs who had been crowned both Olympic and World Men's Doubles champions.

They beat **Lu Lin** and **Wang Tao** in addition to **Kong Linghui** and **Liu Guoliang**; the result in the final underlines the pedigree of **Wang Liqin** and **Yan Sen**.

Jörg Rosskopf and **Vladimir Samsonov** formed a most daunting partnership.

SUCCESS IN HONG KONG

Defeat for **Vladimir Samsonov** in the final in 1996 but one year later in Hong Kong it was victory and perhaps a slight air of revenge, he beat **Wang Liqin** to win the Men's Singles title.

"I remember that I was in fantastic shape and that before the final I already knew that I would finish the year as the World no.1", said **Vladimir Samsonov**. *"I remember that I took the Time Out at two-one and 20-17 in the final; earlier I had beaten **Ma Lin**, **Liu Guoliang** and **Zoran Primorac**."*

FIRST TOURNAMENT FOR TIME OUT

It was the first ever tournament when the *"Time Out"* was used and of course in those days matches in the Grand Finals were best of five games, Each game was played to 21 points with the sequence being five services before changing.

MOST SUCCESSFUL

Now since that time **Vladimir Samsonov** has set standards on the ITTF World Tour which no player can match; he has won a total of 25 Men's Singles titles, no-one has won more.

"In table tennis, everything is more or less the same, I still enjoy playing and want to win", said **Vladimir Samsonov**. *"In general, I am much happier now, I have the best family in the world."*

Life has changed for **Vladimir Samsonov** but rest assured in Bangkok the player who always seems to have more time to play than most will be as competitive as ever and as always a joy to watch.

HISTORY WRITTEN IN BANGKOK, YOUNGEST EVER GRAND FINALS WINNERS

Winners earlier in the year of the Women's Doubles event at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour German Open in Magdeburg; Japan's **Miu Hirano** and Mima Ito repeated that success on the evening of Saturday 13th December at the US$ 1,000,000 GAC Group Grand Finals in Bangkok, Thailand.

Furthermore, they beat the pair they had overcome in Magdeburg to secure the US$ 40,000 first prize.

In the German city they accounted for Poland's **Katarzyna Grzybowska** and **Natalia Partyka** in three straight games in the final (11-9, 11-7, 11-7); likewise in Bangkok they succeeded without surrendering a single game (11-7, 11-6, 11-4, 11-5).

Gold for **Miu Hirano** and **Mima Ito**, the result somewhat overshadowed the efforts of Korea's **Cho Eonrae** and **Seo Hyundeok**, the no.3 seeds. They beat **Miu Hirano** and **Mima Ito**'s colleagues, Kenta Matsudaira and **Koki Niwa** by the narrowest of margins in a seven games duel to arrest the title (11-8, 10-12, 5-11, 12-10, 6-11, 11-6, 11-9).

OVERCOME RECORD OF GUO YUE

Success and a success of note for **Miu Hirano** and **Mima Ito**; each 14 years old, they become the youngest ever winners at an ITTF World Tour Grand Finals and surpass the record of China's **Guo Yue**.

She was 15 years old when she won in partnership with colleague **Niu Jianfeng** in Guangzhou in 2003.

STAY CLOSE

Following the policy that has brought success after success, staying close to the table and attacking quickly, **Miu Hirano** and **Mima Ito**, the top seeds, won the first two games against **Katarzyna Grzybowska** and **Natalia Partyka** the no.5 seeds.

In the third game, **Miu Hirano** and **Mima Ito** went ahead 6-2, **Michal Dziubanski**, the Polish coach sitting courtside, called *"Time Out"*. It was to no great avail, the teenagers were in total harmony; confidence was growing in the minds of **Miu Hirano** and

Mima Ito, it was ebbing away in the hearts of **Katarzyna Grzybowska**.

AT A GLANCE: JAPANESE TEENAGERS CREATE HISTORY IN BANGKOK

It was another day packed with exciting rallies, tough battles and new champions crowned at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Grand Finals in Bangkok on Saturday 13th December.

Gold medallists in the Men's and Women's Doubles events were decided.

Japan's 14 year old sensations **Miu Hirano** and **Mima Ito** overcame the more experienced Singaporean partnership **Feng Tianwei** and **Yu Mengyu** in the penultimate round, before clinching the title at the final expense of Poland's **Katarzyna Grzybowska** and **Natalia Partyka**.

« I really cannot identify any real reason why we won. »

TOP DUO PREVAILS BUT THIRD SEEDS FALL TO POLISH INSPIRATION

First place in end of year Standings, the Japanese duo of **Miu Hirano** and **Mima Ito** duly booked their place in the final of the Women's Doubles event at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Grand Finals in Bangkok, Thailand, by emerging successful in the penultimate round on the morning of Saturday 13th December.

The top seeds, they accounted for the Singaporean partnership of **Feng Tianwei** and **Yu Mengyu**, the no.4 seeds, in a six games encounter (5-11,11-8, 11-6, 11-4, 9-11,11-8).

Success for the 14 year old duo as seeding predicted; in the counterpart Women's Doubles semi-final, there was an upset.

Hong Kong's **Lee Ho Ching** and **Ng Wing Nam**, the no.3 seeds, suffered defeat against the Polish partnership of **Katarzyna Grzybowska** and **Natalia Partyka**, the no.5 seeds (5-11, 11-5, 8-11, 11-9, 11-9, 12-10)

STAY CLOSE

Stay close and give your opponents minimal time to react was very much the policy of **Miu Hirano** and **Mima Ito** against **Feng Tianwei** and **Yu Mengyu**.

Miu Hirano and **Mima Ito** established a three games to one lead being able to nullify the stronger top spin play of their adversaries. In the fifth game, they went ahead 7-6 forcing the Singaporean duo to call *"Time Out"*.

Feng Tianwei and **Yu Mengyu** moved ahead 9-8, the stage at which there was an enforced break in play with a medical pause being needed owing to **Miu Hirano** sustaining a nose bleed.

TIME OUT CALLS

Matters resumed, the Singaporean clinched the game by the minimal margin but in the sixth game. However, in the sixth game the Japanese duo made the better start but at 7-6 the margin was down to one point. **Miu Hirano** and **Mima Ito** called *"Time Out"*.

The Singaporeans levelled but never gained a lead, **Miu Hirano** and **Mima Ito** secured the game, celebrated, a place in the main draw was confirmed.

TEAM WORK

"I think the reason we won was because we have good teamwork, a good understanding; I must admit that when we were losing we had some doubts, we became little nervous", said **Mima Ito** who continually held a rapidly thawing ice pack to her face.

"I am fine", she smiled, the nose bleed having subsided. *"It's just it is so hot in here!"*

HOT WORK

Hot work most certainly and in the second semi-final it was hot work for **Katarzyna Grrzybowska** and **Natalia Partyka**.

TIME OUT CALLS

The first two games being shared before in the third after establishing a commanding lead, the Hong Kong pair found themselves only two points ahead at 9-7. **Zhang Rui**, the Hong Kong coach on duty prudently called *"Time Out"*; a shrewd move, her students secured the game and thus held a one game advantage.

A *"Time Out"* to the benefit of Hong Kong, in the fourth game it was to prove a *"Time Out"* in favour of Poland. **Katarzyna Grzybowska** and **Natalia Partyka** led 10-9;

Michal Dziubanski, the Polish National Women's Team coach, sitting courtside called for the break; just as one game earlier it have proved for Hong Kong, so one game later it proved the same for Poland.

TWICE RECOVERED

Matters level, the advantage appeared to swing in favour of Hong Kong, in the fifth game **Lee Ho Ching** and **Ng Wing Nam** went ahead 9-6.

They lost the next five points; then incredibly in the sixth game, the Hong Kong duo again led 9-6; they won only one more point, the **Katarzyna Grzybowska** and **Natalia Partyka** won six!

Poland rejoiced!

LESS PRESSURE WHEN LOSING

"The match was close from the very start; when we were losing 6-9 we knew we still had a chance", said **Natalia Partyka**. *"When you are losing, it's easier than when you are leading, the pressure is much less."*

A delighted **Natalia Partyka**, understandably it was the same reaction from **Katarzyna Grzybowska**.

"I really cannot identify any real reason why we won", she said. *"We have been partnering each other for three or four years now, maybe more; we have a good understanding and away from table tennis we are good friends, always together."*

Always together, in Bangkok, **Katarzyna Grzybowska** were very much together.

CONFIDENCE BOOST

A four games to nil win was the end result in faour of **Miu Hirano** and **Mima Ito**; the final in Magdeburg had been re-enacted.

"We beat them in Germany so we knew we could beat them but of course this was a new match and it was a very special match", smiled **Mima Ito**. *"We knew it would be hard to win today."*

Katarzyna Grzybowska and **Natalia Partyka** form a most creditable combination but against **Miu Hirano** and **Mima Ito** they never really threatened to beat the top seeds.

"We have both practised such a great deal", said **Miu Hirano**. *"So I think we have a very good level of technical skills."*

COSTLY TIME OUT DECISION

A straight games win for **Miu Hirano** and **Mima Ito**, it was very different for **Cho Eonrae** and **Seo Hyundeok**; tension filled the air.

In the vital seventh game **Kenta Matsudaira** and **Koki Niwa** led 5-4 when the players changed ends; they won the next point to move ahead 6-4. The Koreans extended the lead to 8-5, the Japanese pair called *"Time Out"*.

It was to prove a costly decision, **Cho Eonrae** and **Seo Hyundeok** won the next four points; **Kenta Matsudaira** and **Koki Niwa** saved one match point but not a second.

KOREA REJOICED!

"At the "Time Out" calls, our coach told us that we must really focus on our services and play fast from the backhand", said **Cho Eonrae**. *"On those last two points we were both a little tense but the top spin from the backhand by **Seo Hyundeok** made all the difference."*

SECOND TIME AND FIRST TIME

It is the second time a Korea pairing has won the Men's Doubles title at an ITTF World Tour Grand Finals; in 2001 Kim Taeksoo and Oh Sangeun won in Hainan, they beat Hong Kong's Cheung Yuk and Leung Chu Yan in the final.

Miu Hirano and **Mima Ito** are the first ever players from Japan to win the Women's Doubles title at an ITTF World Tour Grand Finals. Yet another record for the 14 year olds.

IMPRESSIVE FORM MAINTAINED, KASUMI ISHIKAWA CROWNED WOMEN'S SINGLES CHAMPION

Outstanding en route to the final, Japan's **Kasumi Ishikawa** maintained the form shown in the earlier rounds, to win the Women's Singles title at the US$ 1,000,000 GAC Group ITTF World Tour Grand Finals in Bangkok on the evening of Sunday 14th December.

At the final hurdle, she beat Korea's **Seo Hyowon**, the ninth seed, in four straight games (11-7, 11-7, 11-3, 11-9) to arrest the title.

It was another stunning display from the 21 year old who surrendered just one individual game on her journey to the top step of the medal podium.

She lost her very first game in the whole tournament when facing colleague **Yuka Ishigaki**, before winning 16 in a row!

CLOSE CONTESTS

Close contests had been the order of the day in previous meetings between **Seo Hyowon** and **Kasumi Ishikawa**.

In World ranking events they had met on five previous occasions. **Kasumi Ishikawa** had emerged successful at the Times Property 2013 Real Estate Classic in Guangzhou and at the quarter-final stage of the Women's Singles event at the South East Asian Games later in the year.

Two wins for **Kasumi Ishikawa**, it was three for **Seo Hyowon**, with two coming on the ITTF World Tour in Korea. In 2011 **Seo Hyowon** emerged successful when the pair met in the second round of the Women's Singles event and two years' later in a classic seven games final.

PERTINENT RESULT

However, arguably the most pertinent result was the one recorded at the recent 2014 Asian Games in Incheon. In the group stage of the Women's Team event **Seo Hyowon** won in three straight games.

Notably the three wins for **Seo Hyowon** had all come on Korean soil; Bangkok was foreign territory, **Seo Hyowon** was not at home.

INCREDIBLE SEQUENCE

Seo Hyowon made the better start in the opening game, she went ahead 7-2 as **Kasumi Ishikawa** made a sequence of errors; however, from that moment forward she made no further errors. Nine points in a row, the first game was secured.

Clearly boosted by the success, **Kasumi Ishikawa** won the first four points of the second send to make the sequence 13 successes in a row. **Seo Hyowon** recovered somewhat but the gap was too great. **Kasumi Ishikawa** held a two games to nil lead.

DIRECTED TO FOREHAND

Directing her attacking strokes principally towards the forehand of the Korean, **Kasumi Ishikawa** was enjoying success after success.

GAC GROUP 2014 ITTF WORLD TOUR GRAND FINALS

The success continued in the third, before in the fourth game, **Seo Hyowon** made the better start, only for the advantage to be reduced to one point when leading 5-4. She elected for *"Time Out"*.

COLLECTED THOUGHTS

Equally, the break was an opportunity for **Kasumi Ishikawa** to collect her thoughts; the thoughts were collected. At 10-7 she held three match points; the next two points went to **Seo Hyowon**. **Kasumi Ishikawa** called *"Time Out"*.

Once again the thoughts were collected, once again the **Kasumi Ishikawa** mind was clear; she played patiently, she won the point. She celebrated.

KEPT CALM

"I am very happy with the win; when I was losing in the first game 2-7 I tried to keep calm", said **Kasumi Ishikawa**. *"I tried to treat the match as a challenge; I think this win will have given me more confidence."*

A delighted **Kasumi Ishikawa** and it was not a too downhearted **Seo Hyowon**.

*"**Kasumi**'s attacking play was very good strong today"*, said **Seo Hyowon**. *"I lost but I'm pleased I reached the final."*

FIRST JAPANESE

Success for **Kasumi Ishikawa** meant she became the first Japanese player to secure the title and only the third not to be representing China.

In 1999 Chen Jing in action for Chinese Taipei had succeeded; more recently, on duty for Singapore, **Feng Tianwei** had prevailed in 2010.

Furthermore, it was the first ever ITTF World Tour Women's Singles Grand Final that had not been contested by players born in China.

Chen Jing and **Feng Tianwei** were both born in China as were Korea's **Seok Hajung** and Hong Kong's **Lin Ling**. **Seok Hajung** was the runner up in 2010; Lin Ling was the silver medallist in 1998 and at the time represented China.

EXQUISITE DEFENCE AND ELECTRIC ATTACK SIGNAL JOURNEY'S END

Delighting the every growing crowd in the Indoor Stadium in Thailand's capital city of Bangkok; Korea's **Seo Hyowon** followed by Japan's **Kasumi Ishikawa** emerged successful at the quarter-final stage of the Women's Singles event at the US$ 1,000,000 GAC Group ITTF World Tour Grand Finals on the afternoon of Sunday 14th December.

Seo Hyowon, the dancing queen from Seoul and no.9 seed, accounted for Singapore's **Yu Mengyu**, the no.13 seed, (4-11, 11-5, 11-6, 11-8, 8-11, 11-9).

Immediately following, **Kasumi Ishikawa**, the no.2 seed, ended the hopes of **Georgina Pota**, the no.10 seed (11-6, 11-3, 11-7, 11-5).

PREVIOUS DUELS

Previous meetings very much favoured **Yu Mengyu**, even though she has experienced problems in the past against those of the backspin ilk. They had met on two previous occasions earlier in the year; on both meetings **Yu Mengyu** had won without needing a deciding game.

At the ZEN-NOH 2014 World Championships in the first stage of the Women's Team event **Yu Mengyu** beat **Seo Hyowon** in four games; at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour China Open, in the third round of the Women's Singles event, she won in six games.

GOOD START FOR YU MENGYU

In Bangkok, previous results clearly had a relevance; **Yu Mengyu** made a lightning start, she was positive and clearly full of self-belief.

However, **Seo Hyowon** was quick to respond; she won the next two games and held a 6-3 lead in the fourth; **Jing Jun Hong**, the Singaporean coach, called *"Time Out"*. The break had an effect, **Yu Mengyu** reduced the deficit to 9-8; **Seo Hyowon** called *"Time Out"*. Again the break worked only this time for Korea.

TECHNICALLY CORRECT

Yu Mengyu recovered to win the fifth game but at 10-8 in the sixth, **Seo Hyowon** held two match points, the first was saved but then a weak forehand return emanated from the racket of **Yu Mengyu**.

The technically correct defender became the technically correct attacker; a forehand kill left **Yu Mengyu** gasping for air. **Seo Hyowon** was in the final.

CLEAR HEAD

"I think today the most important factor was that my head was very clear; mentally I felt really good today", said **Seo Hyowon**. *"Also as in previous matches in this tournament, if I timed the ball relatively early I did well, if I left it late then I lost; I think also today when I had the chance to attack with my forehand I didn't make any mistakes."*

Success for **Seo Hyowon** was followed with success for **Kasumi Ishikawa**.

DEVASTATING FORM

Against colleague **Ai Fukuhara** one round earlier, **Kasumi Ishikawa** had been in devastating form; one round later in opposition to **Georgina Pota** it was exactly the same as the previous evening.

Kasumi Ishikawa won the first two game in impressive fashion but the trailed at the start of the third before recovering to established a 7-6 lead. Peter Teglas, the Hungarian coach sitting courtside, called *"Time Out"*.

However, the pause was not to spark a Hungarian recovery. **Kasumi Ishikawa** was incisive, quick to attack giving her adversary minimal time to respond. A straight games win was posted.

LINZ FORM REPEATED, GEORGINA POTA ONCE AGAIN EXCEL TO REACH LAST FOUR

Semi-finalist in the Women's World Cup in the Austrian city of Linz earlier this year, Hungary's Georgina Pota was once again in outstanding form on the evening of Saturday 13th December.

At the quarter-final stage of the Women's Singles event at the US$ 1,000,000 GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Grand Finals in Bangkok, Thailand; she booked her place in the penultimate round to match the achievement of some two months earlier. Occupying the no.10 seeded position in the competition, **Georgina Pota** beat Portugal's Yu Fu, the no.15 seed, in five games (12-10, 7-11, 11-7, 11-5, 11-9).

STUNNING FORM

An outstanding performance; equally Japan's **Kasumi Ishikawa** was in stunning form. The no.2 seed, she accounted for compatriot **Ai Fukuhara** in four straight games (11-6, 11-6, 13-11, 11-9).

FIRST WIN

Success for **Georgina Pota** against **Yu Fu** was somewhat against expectations, even though the Hungarian was the higher seeded player. The seeding is based on the position in which the players finished on the end of year ITTF World Tour Standings, not on World Ranking.

In their one previous meeting in a World Ranking event, the first round of the Women's Singles event at the Liebherr 2013 European Championships; **Georgina Pota** had suffered a straight games defeat. The win in Bangkok was very much a reversal of fortunes.

LOST IN EUROPEAN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

*"Yes I lost at the European Championships but I had an injury, I turned my ankle and I wasn't fully fit; I didn't want to play but I had entered the doubles with **Szandra Pergel** and so I played"*, explained **Georgina Pota**. *"However, I've never previously beaten **Yu Fu**; we've played twice in the European Champions League and I lost both times!"* History was not repeated in Bangkok; the close first game success giving **Georgina Pota** an undoubted boost.

PROBLEM RETURNING SERVICES

"I was leading 8-4 and then I was down 8-9 before winning the game; winning the first game is always important but even more important when you hold a lead and you lose that lead", added **Georgina Pota**. *"When I've played her before and it was very much the same today I had real problems receiving her service; once in the rallies I felt confident."*

DIFFERENT CONTEST

A performance full of self-belief, it was the same from **Kasumi Ishikawa** against **Ai Fukuhara** and very different to the clash the previous month at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Airports of Regions Russian Open. On that occasion **Kasumi Ishikawa** had won by the very minimal margin in a full distance seven games contest (11-8, 9-11, 5-11, 7-11, 11-3, 11-7, 15-13).

"In Russia I was not that happy with my performance; today I played much better", said **Kasumi Ishikawa**. *"I feel that I served well, I was able to attack quickly after the service and throughout the match I was able to stay calm."*

SEMI-FINA

At the semi-final stage **Kasumi Ishikawa** meets **Georgina Pota**, in the opposite half of the draw Korea's **Seo Hyowon** confronts Singapore's **Yu Mengyu**.

Play concludes on Sunday 14th December.

CLOSE IN LINZ, INCISIVE IN BANGKOK

In prior contests between **Kasumi Ishikawa** and **Georgina Pota** on the international scene, **Georgina Pota** won when they met at the Polish Open in 2011 but more significantly, two months ago in the bronze medal match at the Women's World Cup in Linz, **Kasumi Ishikawa** won in seven games.

The duel in Linz had been a full distance seven games duel, in Bangkok it was a much different affair; **Kasumi Ishikawa** won in four straight games.

DEVASTATING

"After our match in Linzl studied videos of Georgina", said **Kasumi Ishikawa**. *"Today, she had some problems returning my services and I was strong today with my first three attacking strokes."*

Strong most certainly, **Kasumi Ishikawa** was simply devastating.

AT A GLANCE: UNDER 21 CHAMPIONS DECIDED IN BANGKOK

A busy first day in Bangkok, the review of the second day of action at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Grand Finals reflected another day of intensity. It was a day when the first titles were decided.

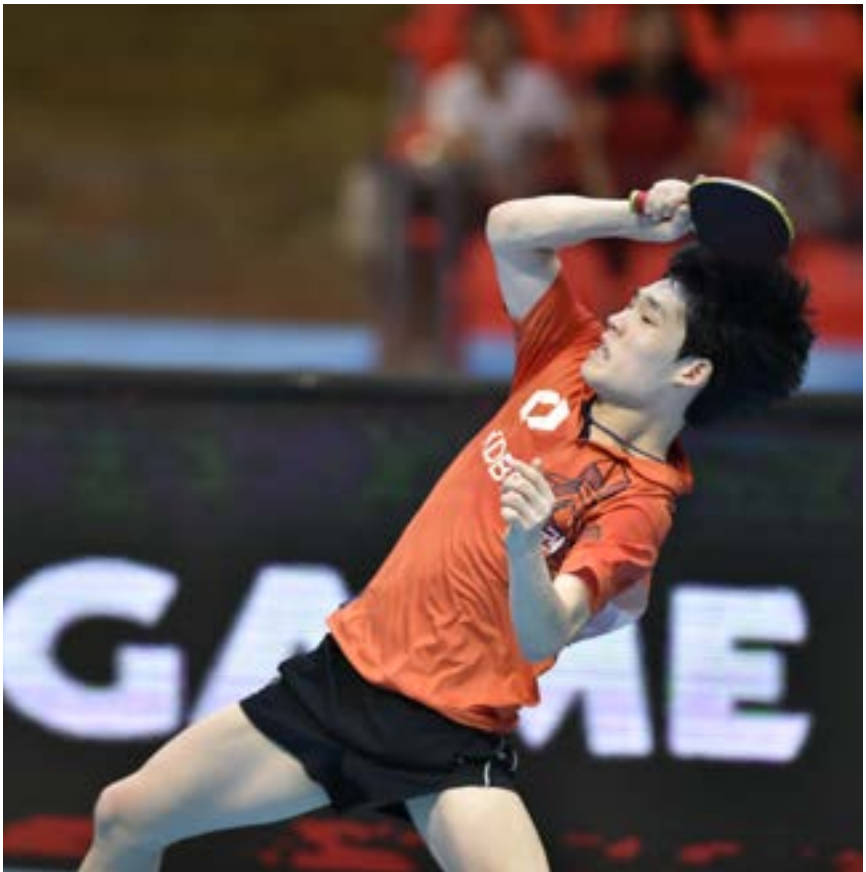
Japan's **Asuka Machi** won the Under 21 Men's Singles event beating Korea's **Jang Woojin** to claim the top prize; the win being very much a repeat of one day earlier. In the group phase **Asuka Machi** had beaten **Jang Woojin** in four straight games.

SEMI-FINALS

Earlier, at the semi-final stage **Asuka Machi** had overcome colleague and top seed **Asuka Sakai**, whilst **Jang Woojin** had ended Brazilian dreams by beating **Hugo Calderano**.

DRAMA

However, the drama came in the Under 21 Women's Singles final; after overcoming Japan's **Mima Ito** in the semi-finals, Chinese Taipei's **Chen Szu-Yu** saved four match points



GAC GROUP 2014 ITTF WORLD TOUR GRAND FINALS

RESULTS MEN SINGLES

Men's Singles | Round 3

✓ **Mizutani Jun** (JPN)						4-3	
✕ **Morizono Masataka** (JPN)							
7-11	7-11	8-11	11-3	11-7	11-6	11-8	

✓ **Tang Peng** (HKG)						4-2	
✕ **Paul Drinkhall** (ENG)							
8-11	11-5	9-11	13-11	11-8	11-8	/	

✓ **Steffen Mengel** (GER)						4-0	
✕ **Max Poungsri** (THA)							
11-4	11-6	11-5	11-7	/	/	/	

✓ **Vladimir Samsonov** (BLR)						4-2	
✕ **Sambe Kohei** (JPN)							
11-5	6-11	12-10	8-11	11-5	11-7	/	

✓ **Marcos Freitas** (POR)						4-0	
✕ **Wong Chun Ting** (HKG)							
12-10	14-12	11-8	11-6	/	/	/	

✓ **Chuang Chih-Yuan** (TPE)						4-0	
✕ **Tiago Apolonia** (POR)							
11-7	11-5	11-8	11-2	/	/	/	

✓ **Niwa Koki** (JPN)						4-2	
✕ **Cho Eonrae** (KOR)							
7-11	14-12	10-12	11-7	11-6	11-7	/	

✓ **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** (GER)						4-0	
✕ **Muramatsu Yuto** (JPN)							
11-1	11-9	11-6	11-4	/	/	/	

Men's Singles | Quarter-finals

✓ **Mizutani Jun** (JPN)						4-1	
✕ **Steffen Mengel** (GER)							
11-6	9-11	11-5	11-9	11-3	/	/	

✓ **Tang Peng** (HKG)						4-1	
✕ **Vladimir Samsonov** (BLR)							
11-9	11-6	11-9	9-11	11-8	/	/	

✓ **Marcos Freitas** (POR)						4-2	
✕ **Niwa Koki** (JPN)							
11-8	11-8	7-11	11-13	11-9	11-9	/	

✓ **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** (GER)						4-3	
✕ **Chuang Chih-Yuan** (TPE)							
11-8	7-11	9-11	11-5	7-11	11-7	11-9	

Men's Singles | Semi-finals

✓ **Mizutani Jun** (JPN)						4-1	
✕ **Marcos Freitas** (POR)							
11-9	11-7	11-6	4-11	11-9	/	/	

✓ **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** (GER)						4-0	
✕ **Tang Peng** (HKG)							
11-6	11-8	11-6	11-7	/	/	/	

Men's Singles | Final

✓ **Mizutani Jun** (JPN)						4-3	
✕ **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** (GER)							
14-12	12-10	8-11	11-3	6-11	12-14	11-6	

RESULTS MEN DOUBLES

Men's Doubles | Quarter-finals

✓ **Tang Peng** / **Wong Chun Ting** (HKG)						4-1	
✕ **Fedor Kuzmin** / **Grigory Vlasov** (RUS)							
11-7	9-11	11-3	11-8	11-4	/	/	

✓ **Matsudaira Kenta** / **Niwa Koki** (JPN)						4-0	
✕ **Chen Chien-An** / **Chuang Chih-Yuan** (TPE)							
11-6	11-3	11-3	11-5	/	/	/	

✓ **Cho Eonrae KOR** / **Seo Hyundeok** (KOR)						4-1	
✕ **Morizono Masataka** / **Sambe Kohei** (JPN)							
11-6	9-11	11-9	11-4	13-11	/	/	

✓ **Alexey Liventsov** / **Mikhail Paikov** (RUS)						4-2	
✕ **Chiang Hung-Chieh** / **Huang Sheng-Sheng** (TPE)							
14-12	11-13	5-11	11-8	11-5	11-9	/	

Men's Doubles | Semi-finals

✓ **Matsudaira Kenta** / **Niwa Koki** (JPN)						4-1	
✕ **Tang Peng** / **Wong Chun Ting** (HKG)							
10-12	11-9	17-15	11-6	11-7	/	/	

✓ **Cho Eonrae KOR** / **Seo Hyundeok** (KOR)						4-1	
✕ **Alexey Liventsov** / **Mikhail Paikov** (RUS)							
11-8	7-11	11-9	11-2	14-12	/	/	

Men's Doubles | Final

✓ **Cho Eonrae KOR** / **Seo Hyundeok** (KOR)						4-3	
✕ **Matsudaira Kenta** / **Niwa Koki** (JPN)							
8-11	12-10	11-5	10-12	11-6	6-11	11-9	

RESULTS WOMEN SINGLES

Women's Singles | Round 3

✓ **Feng Tianwei** (SIN)							4-1
✗ **Komwong Nanthana**(THA)							
15-13	11-7	7-11	11-8	11-9	/	/	

✓ **Yu Fu** (POR)							4-3
✗ **Shan Xiaona** (GER)							
10-12	11-9	11-9	5-11	11-6	7-11	11-5	

✓ **Seo Hyowon** (KOR)							4-2
✗ **Liu Jia** (AUT)							
8-11	11-7	11-7	9-11	11-8	11-2	/	

✓ **Georgina Pota** (HUN)							4-2
✗ **Elizabeta Samara** (ROU)							
11-6	11-8	10-12	6-11	12-10	11-9	/	

✓ **Hirano Sayaka** (JPN)							4-0
✗ **Li Fen** (SWE)							
11-7	11-2	11-9	11-5	/	/	/	

✓ **Fukuhara Ai** (JPN)							4-3
✗ **Morizono Misaki** (JPN)							
7-11	11-5	7-11	11-7	11-7	8-11	14-12	

✓ **Yu Mengyu** (SIN)							4-2
✗ **Han Ying** (GER)							
11-9	13-11	5-11	11-6	4-11	11-7	/	

✓ **Ishikawa Kasumi** (JPN)							4-1
✗ **Ishigaki Yuka** (JPN)							
7-11	11-7	12-10	11-6	11-8	/	/	

Women's Singles | Quarter-finals

✓ **Seo Hyowon** (KOR)							4-1
✗ **Feng Tianwei** (SIN)							
13-11	11-3	11-8	6-11	11-8	/	/	

✓ **Georgina Pota** (HUN)							4-1
✗ **Yu Fu** (POR)							
12-10	7-11	11-7	11-5	11-9	/	/	

✓ **Yu Mengyu** (SIN)							4-1
✗ **Hirano Sayaka** (JPN)							
11-5	5-11	11-6	11-7	11-8	/	/	

✓ **Ishikawa Kasumi** (JPN)							4-0
✗ **Fukuhara Ai** (JPN)							
11-6	11-6	13-11	11-6	/	/	/	

Women's Singles | Semi-finals

✓ **Seo Hyowon** (KOR)							4-2
✗ **Yu Mengyu** (SIN)							
4-11	11-5	11-6	11-8	8-11	11-9	/	

✓ **Ishikawa Kasumi** (JPN)							4-0
✗ **Georgina Pota** (HUN)							
11-6	11-3	11-7	11-5	/	/	/	

Women's Singles | Final

✓ **Ishikawa Kasumi** (JPN)							4-0
✗ **Seo Hyowon** (KOR)							
11-7	11-7	11-3	11-9	/	/	/	

RESULTS WOMEN DOUBLES

Women's Doubles | Quarter-finals

✓ **HIRANO Miu JPN / ITO Mima** (JPN)							4-3
✗ **SHAN Xiaona / SOLJA Petrissa** (GER)							
6-11	7-11	11-5	11-9	8-11	11-6	11-7	

✓ **FENG Tianwei / YU Mengyu** (SIN)							4-3
✗ **CHENG I-Ching / HUANG Yi-Hua** (TPE)							
11-8	11-8	5-11	7-11	11-9	5-11	11-5	

✓ **LEE Ho Ching / NG Wing Nam** (HKG)							4-1
✗ **KOMWONG Nanthana / SAWETTABUT Suthasini** (THA)							
10-12	11-6	11-8	11-2	11-4	/	/	

✓ **GRZYBOWSKA Katarzyna / PARTYKA Natalia** (POL)							4-2
✗ **FUKUHARA Ai / WAKAMIYA Misako** (JPN)							
12-10	3-11	10-12	11-7	13-11	11-6	/	

Women's Doubles | Semi-finals

✓ **HIRANO Miu JPN / ITO Mima** (JPN)							4-2
✗ **FENG Tianwei / YU Mengyu** (SIN)							
5-11	11-8	11-6	11-4	9-11	/	/	

✓ **GRZYBOWSKA Katarzyna / PARTYKA Natalia** (POL)							4-2
✗ **LEE Ho Ching / NG Wing Nam** (HKG)							
5-11	11-5	8-11	11-9	11-9	12-10	/	

Women's Doubles | Final

✓ **HIRANO Miu JPN / ITO Mima** (JPN)							4-0
✗ **GRZYBOWSKA Katarzyna / PARTYKA Natalia** (POL)							
11-7	11-6	11-4	11-5	/	/	/	

SWEDISH OPEN 2014

SWEDISH OPEN 2014

RECOVERY WITHSTOOD, FAN ZHENDONG WINS SWEDISH MEN'S SINGLES TITLE

Winner earlier in the year in Kuwait, China's **Fan Zhendong** won the Men's Singles title at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Swedish Open Stockholm on the afternoon of Sunday 16th November.

The no.2 seed, at the final hurdle he accounted for Chinese National Team compatriot, **Fang Bo**, the no.13 seed, to arrest the title. **Fan Zhendong** after winning the first two games had to withstand a spirited recovery from **Fang Bo**, who levelled matters in the fourth game, before emerging successful in six games (14-12, 18-16, 6-11, 5-11, 11-8, 11-5).

ASTOUNDING RECORD

Once again **Fan Zhendong** continues to astound. Only 17 years old, in what was only his tenth appearance on the ITTF World Tour, he has reached the Men's Singles final on five occasions; of those five duels, only once has he not secured gold and that occasion has a special significance. One year ago in Stockholm he was beaten by **Yan An** in the Men's Singles final; in 2013 it was the second step of the podium, in 2014 the top step.

PREVIOUS YEAR

In addition to his efforts earlier in the year in Kuwait, in 2013 he won consecutive titles, succeeding in Poland and Germany. In the former in Spala, he overcame colleague **Zhou Yu** in the final, one week later in Berlin he claimed the top prize at the expense of the host nation's **Dimitrij Ovtcharov**.

World Junior champion in December 2012 but back-to-back wins on the ITTF World Tour by a 16 year old ignited the **Fan Zhendong** career.

BOOST TO CAREER

Meanwhile, for **Fang Bo**, having been anointed World Junior champion, three years prior the **Fan Zhendong**, the rise to glory has not been at the same pace as he colleague.

However, the runners up spot in Stockholm is a boost to the career of a young man who plays in the style of **Ma Long**.

THIRD FINAL

In only nine appearances on the ITTF World Tour, he has now reached the Men's Singles final on three occasions.

The record now reads two silver medals, one gold; in January 2013, he won in Austria, earlier this year he was the runner up in Korea, beaten by colleague **Xu Xin**.

Now in Stockholm, he is the runner up once again. It was the first time the two had met in a World ranking event.

WORLD JUNIOR CHAMPIONS REACH FINAL, SEMI-FINAL EXITS FOR XU XIN AND WANG HAO

Former World Junior champions, **Fang Bo** in 2009 and **Fan Zhendong** in 2012, emerged successful in the penultimate round of the Men's Singles event at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Swedish Open in Stockholm on Sunday 16th November.

In all Chinese contests, **Fang Bo**, the no.13 seed, upset the pecking order by beating **Xu Xin**, the top seed in six games (12-10, 11-9, 4-11, 3-11, 11-6, 11-4), before in a most impressive manner, **Fan Zhendong**, the no.2 seed, halted the aspirations of **Wang Hao**, the no.4 seed.

Fan Zhendong beat **Wang Hao** in four straight games (11-8, 11-9, 11-2, 11-9).

SURPRISE RESULT

Accepted the duels were between players from the same national association, players who know each other well and practise together, the win recorded by **Fang Bo** was a surprise. The two had met twice previously in World ranking events and on both occasions **Xu Xin** had won comfortably.

At the semi-final stage of the Men's Singles event at the GAC Group 2012 ITTF World Tour Koltsovo Russian Open, **Xu Xin** had prevailed in four straight games (11-7, 11-7, 11-8, 11-5). Similarly earlier this year, **Xu Xin** had recorded an emphatic victory; in June when the pair met in the final of the Men's Singles event at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Korea Open, success had come the way of **Xin Xin** in five games (11-8, 11-6, 7-11, 11-9, 12-10).

HISTORY REPEATED

Conversely, even though there is a vast gap in experience; **Fan Zhendong** is 17 years old as opposed to **Wang Hao** who next month will celebrate his 32nd birthday, the verdict when the pair have met on the international scene had always gone to the teenager.

Similar to **Fang Bo** and **Xu Xin**, they had met twice; both occasions being earlier this year, both at the quarter-final stages.

In January at the GAC Group 2013 ITTF World Tour Grand Finals, **Fan Zhendong** prevailed in five games (11-9, 10-12, 11-5, 11-3, 11-9), in June he succeeded by the same margin at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour China Open in Chengdu (11-7, 11-13, 11-6, 11-8, 12-10).

RELATIVE NEWCOMERS

Success for **Fang Bo** and **Fan Zhendong**, they are relatively newcomers to the ITTF World Tour; especially when compared with **Wang Hao**.

Fang Bo made his debut in Poland in 2009, one year after **Xu Xin** had appeared in Belarus in 2008; as for **Fan Zhendong**, he is only in his second full year on the ITTF World Tour, he made his first appearance in Qatar in 2013.

Wang Hao, by comparison is from a totally different era. He made his debut in 1999 in Australia.

SEMI-FINALS

The GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Swedish Open is only the ninth time that **Fang Bo** has appeared on the ITTF World Tour, one less than **Fan Zhendong**. He has now made played in four Men's Singles semi-finals and has won three times; for **Fan Zhendong** it was his seventh penultimate round adventure, his fifth win.

Meanwhile, for **Xu Xin**, on his 37th ITTF World Tour appearance, he was competing in his 27th Men's Singles semi-final, it was his 13th defeat at that stage; for **Wang Hao** on his 81st excursion, it was his 46th Men's Singles semi-final, his 17th defeat in the penultimate round.

REVERSAL OF FORTUNES FOR YAN AN, MEN'S DOUBLES TITLE SECURED WITH WANG HAO

Defeat one year ago in the Men's Doubles final but success in the ensuing Men's Singles gold medal contest; one year later at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Swedish

Open in Stockholm, for **Yan An** it was somewhat a reversal of fortunes.

On the penultimate day of play he had suffered a quarter-final Men's Singles defeat at the hands of compatriot **Fan Zhendong**; one day later on Sunday 16th November there was a degree of compensation.

Partnering **Wang Hao**, the duo accounted for **Fan Zhendong** and **Xu Xin** to capture the Men's Doubles crown; they won in five games (11-3, 4-11, 11-5, 9-11, 11-6).

WINNER ONE YEAR AGO

A reversal of fortunes for **Yan An**, it was also a reversal of fortunes for **Xu Xin**; at the GAC Group 2013 ITTF World Tour Swedish Open, **Xu Xin** in partnership with **Jens Lundquist** had beaten Pär Gerell and **Yan An** to secure the title.

INCREDIBLE RECORD

Success for **Wang Hao**, it was no less than his 26th ITTF World Tour Men's Doubles title.

He won his first in 2001 in Yokohama in partnership with **Ma Lin**; now in 2014 in harness with **Yan An**, he has won with his tenth partner.

Conversely for **Yan An** it is his fourth ITTF World Tour Men's Doubles title but in common with **Wang Hao** it is the second time he has won in Stockholm.

WINNERS IN STOCKHOLM

In 2011 he won with **Wang Liqin**, the pair overcoming Hong Kong's **Tang Peng** and **Jian Tianyi** in the final; in 2007 **Wang Hao** succeeded in partnership with **Ma Long**, the pair overcoming Singapore's **Gao Ning** and **Yang Zi** in the final.

Furthermore, it is the second occasion that **Wang Hao** and **Yan An** have joined forces to emerge victorious on the ITTF World Tour; in 2013 they won in Qatar beating **Ma Long** and **Zhang Jike** in the final.

MORE CREDITABLE

An outstanding performance in Qatar but was the victory over **Fan Zhendong** and **Xu Xin** even more creditable?

Left handed, pen-hold grip, **Xu Xin** is the perfect foil for the right handed shake-hands grip play; one who exudes power, a point he proved when partnering **Ma Long** to become World champions in Rotterdam in 2011.

Now, **Fan Zhendong** is not too dissimilar when the word *"power"* is in question. They are currently listed at no.1 and no.3 on the Men's World Rankings and surely technically they are the ideal combination.

I wonder if the micro-chip had never been invented would they have been the top seeds?

ZHU YULING DEFIES SEEDING, CAPTURES STOCKHOLM CROWN IN COMMANDING FASHION

On a day when former World Junior champions were to the fore with **Fan Zhendong** and **Fang Bo** progressing to the final of the Men's Singles event; in the counterpart Women's Singles competition, another player to have claimed that honour was very much in the limelight.

Zhu Yuling, the winner in a snowbound Bratislava in 2010, won the Women's Singles title at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Swedish Open in Stockholm on the afternoon of Sunday 16th November.

The no.2 seed, she accounted for compatriot, **Liu Shiwen**, the no.1 seed, in an all Chinese final; the result being an upset for several reasons.

EXPERIENCE GAP

Accepted the duo are colleagues, they practise together, they know each other inside out.

However, **Liu Shiwen** is the more experienced being 23 years old as opposed to **Zhu Yuling** who is 19 years of age.

required to play in the preliminary stage of proceedings.

Earlier in the day the attacking top spin skills had overcome the backspin art when, at the semi-final stage of the Women's Singles event, **Liu Shiwen** had beaten **Wu Yang** and **Zhu Yuling** had overcome Germany's **Han Ying**.

WORLD RANKINGS

Furthermore, **Liu Shiwen** started the tournament as the top seed, a position to which she is no stranger. During her career on 22 occasions when the monthly World Rankings have been issued, she has been listed at no.1.

Although highly creditable, the highest ever achieved by **Zhu Yuling** in no.5; the position she holds at the moment.

FIRST WIN

The evidence adds up to the fact that the win recorded by **Zhu Yuling** was an upset of note; it is even more endorsed by the fact that in World ranking events, **Zhu Yuling** had never previously beaten **Liu Shiwen**.

In fact in six encounters, her very best was six games defeat.

At the GAC Group 2013 ITTF World Tour Qatar Open, **Zhu Yuling** had extracted two games in their Women's Singles semi-final encounter as she had earlier this year in their quarter-final meeting at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour China Open.

Otherwise **Liu Shiwen** had dominated from matters from the very start to the very end.

APPEARANCES

Defeat for **Liu Shiwen** in her 23 appearance in an ITTF World Tour Women's Singles final; it is the 12th time she has had to settle for the second step of the medal podium.

Success for **Zhu Yuling** in her third career ITTF World Tour Women's Singles final. In 2010 she was beaten in the final in Japan by Singapore's **Wang Yuegu**; earlier this year she won in Kuwait overcoming colleague **Chen Meng** in the final.

However, Kuwait in the Women's Doubles event, partnering **Chen Meng**, the duo had suffered a semi-final defeat against **Liu Shiwen** and **Mu Zi**.

MOST SUCCESSFUL PLAYER

Earlier in the day in Stockholm, **Zhu Yuling** had partnered **Liu Shiwen** to Women's Doubles gold; she left the Swedish capital city, the most successful player on view, her best ever on the ITTF World Tour.

AGAIN ATTACK PREVAILS, LIU SHIWEN AND ZHU YULING SECURE WOMEN'S DOUBLES TITLE

Occupying the fourth seeded position in the draw, **Liu Shiwen** and **Zhu Yuling** won the Women's Doubles title at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Swedish Open in Stockholm on Sunday 16th November.

In an all-Chinese affair, at the final hurdle they overcame **Hu Limei** and **Wu Yang**, a pairing who had been seeded and had been

SAME EFFICIENCY

Both had shown more than competence against the defensive art when alone; together it was no different.

Liu Shiwen and **Zhu Yuling** posted a straight games win (11-3, 12-10, 12-10).

FIRST SUCCESS

It was for **Liu Shiwen** and **Zhu Yuling** their first ever success as a partnership on the ITTF World Tour, although apart both had enjoyed standing on the top step of the medal podium. Notably **Liu Shiwen** had won on three occasions with **Guo Yue** and seven times in partnership with **Ding Ning**.

In harness with **Guo Yue** she won in 2008 in Korea, in 2011 in China and more recently in 2013 in China when Changchun host the tournament; the venue in 2011 had been Shenzhen.

PARTNERING DING NING

Meanwhile partnering **Ding Ning**, **Liu Shiwen** had won in 2009 in Denmark and China, the ensuing year in Qatar, in 2012 in Hungary and Korea; before more recently succeeding in Russia in 2013 and earlier this year in China.

The total for **Liu Shiwen** is now 11 ITTF World Tour Women's Doubles titles; for **Zhu Yuling** the number is four but the first not in partnership with **Chen Meng**.

CHEN MENG AND ZHU YULING

Chen Meng and **Zhu Yuling** won in Kuwait and in 2012 and also in Suzhou the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Harmony Open; in 2013 they retained the Suzhou title.

Clearly in harmony in Suzhou, in Stockholm in harmony with **Liu Shiwen**, the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Swedish Open Women's Doubles champions.

KISS THE TROPHY, HOLD IT ALOFT BUT DON'T TAKE IT HOME! PLEASE TELL THE WINNER!

Australia beat England by five matches to nil; yet the trophy for which they play, they cannot hold.

The six inch high terracotta urn which dates back to 1882 and holds burnt remains of a cricket bail is the *"Ashes"*; it is so precious that it never leaves the Museum at Lord's Cricket Ground in London. Yes, you see it held aloft by the winning team but it's not the real thing that captures the camera lens, it is a replica.

It is exactly the same with the trophy that will be awarded to the winner of the Men's Singles event at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Swedish Open. The player who holds the cherished trophy aloft on Sunday 16th November cannot take it home.

BEIJING BOUND

Just one problem; one year ago nobody told China's **Yan An**!

After beating colleague, **Fan Zhendong** in the Men's Singles final on Sunday 1st December 2013, **Yan An** packed the trophy in his bag, boarded the flight to Beijing and proudly took the valued prize home.

RELIEVED ORGANISING COMMITTEE

It was a relieved Organising Committee of the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Swedish Open, who received a securely sealed package on the morning of Thursday 13th November from the Chinese Table Tennis Association.

Carefully, the package was opened and to the relief of all, the Men's Singles Trophy was found in pristine condition; **Yan An** had cherished the prize.

FIRST WON BY ZARKO DOLINAR

The trophy may not be as old as the Ashes but it dates back 60 years to 1954 when it was won by **Zarko Dolinar**, representing the country in those days known as Yugoslavia. It is revered. It is one of the artefacts of table tennis.

Following the success of **Zarko Dolinar**, Hungary's **Kalman Szepesi** won in 1955 before the next edition in 1957 also saw success for Hungary; **Zoltan Berczik** struck gold. In 1958 the title was secured by **Zarko Dolinar**'s colleague, **Vojislav Markovic**, before in 1959 there was the first Chinese winner.

FIRST CHINESE WINNER

Zhuang Zedong emerged victorious to become the first, of what is now with the victory of **Yan An** in 2013, a total of 15 successes for the People's Republic of China.

The most successful of all is **Wang Liqin**. He won in 1999, 2001 and 2003; he is the only player to have won the Men's Singles crown at the Swedish Open on three occasions.

TWICE CHAMPIONS

Six players have won twice. **Hans Alser** became the first Swede, he won in 1963 and later in 1970; colleague **Kjell Johansson** succeeded in 1971 and 1972; whilst in 1975 and 1979, the first ever Swedish World champion, **Stellan Bengtsson**, struck gold.

Also twice winners; **Dragutin Surbek**, at the time on duty for Yugoslavia, succeeded in 1972 and 1974, Poland's **Andrej Grubba** won in 1985 and 1993; in the more recent era, **Vladimir Samsonsov** of Belarus was crowned champion in 1995 and 1997.

CHINESE CHAMPIONS

Meanwhile, the Chinese player to follow in the footsteps of **Zhuang Zedong** was **Yang Ruihua** in 1960. Next came **Wang Jiasheng** in 1965 with **Guo Yue**hua being anointed champion in 1976. One year later the title was claimed by **Lu Qiwei** who was immediately succeeded in 1978 by **Li Zhenzhi**.

UNIQUE WINNERS

Jiang Jialiang won in 1981; in 1987 it was **Chen Zhibin** with 1994 witnessing a unique achievement in open international tournaments. **Ding Song** won the Men's Singles title, compatriot **Wang Nan** secured the counterpart Women's Singles crown; both started their journeys in the qualification stage of proceedings.

TAKE CARE

Success for **Ding Song**, in 2000 the name on the trophy was that of **Liu Guozheng**, in 2007 it was **Wang Hao**, in 2011 **Ma Long** with the latest being **Yan An**.

Now in 2014 it is; well whoever it is, don't take it with you please. We don't want it returned in ashes.

SWEDISH OPEN 2014

RÉSULTATS | HOMMES

Huitièmes de finale

✓ **Xu Xin** (CHN)						4-3	
✕ **Kristian Karlsson** (SWE)							
11-8	11-1	3-11	11-8	9-11	9-11	11-7	

✓ **Simon Gauzy** (FRA)						4-3	
✕ **Kenta Matsudaira** (JPN)							
6-11	13-11	9-11	11-7	9-11	11-7	11-8	

✓ **Tang Peng** (HKG)						4-2	
✕ **Liang Jingkun** (CHN)							
11-8	11-8	11-3	12-14	5-11	11-7	/	

✓ **Fang Bo** (CHN)						4-2	
✕ **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** (GER)							
4-11	11-4	11-8	11-13	11-5	11-6	/	

✓ **Wang Hao** (CHN)						4-2	
✕ **Robert Gardos** (AUT)							
11-13	11-9	11-9	8-11	13-11	11-8	/	

✓ **Marcos Freitas** (POR)						4-2	
✕ **Mihai Bobocica** (IT)							
12-14	5-11	11-9	11-7	11-4	11-2	/	

✓ **Yan An** (CHN)						4-0	
✕ **Grigory Vlasov** (RUS)							
12-10	11-5	11-8	11-3	/	/	/	

✓ **Fan Zhendong** (CHN)						4-3	
✕ **Steffen Mengel** (GER)							
8-11	12-10	8-11	11-4	11-6	8-11	11-7	

Quarts de finale

✓ **Xu Xin** (CHN)						4-1	
✕ **Simon Gauzy** (FRA)							
11-7	11-5	11-7	4-11	11-7	/	/	

✓ **Fang Bo** (CHN)						4-2	
✕ **Tang Peng** (HKG)							
11-7	10-12	5-11	11-3	11-9	13-11	/	

✓ **Wang Hao** (CHN)						4-2	
✕ **Marcos Freitas** (POR)							
3-11	11-8	6-11	11-8	13-11	11-5	/	

✓ **Fan Zhendong** (CHN)						4-2	
✕ **Yan An** (CHN)							
11-5	11-13	11-5	11-13	11-8	11-9	/	

Demi-finales

✓ **Fang Bo** (CHN)						4-2	
✕ **Xu Xin** (CHN)							
12-10	11-9	4-11	3-11	11-6	11-4	/	

✓ **Fan Zhendong** (CHN)						4-0	
✕ **Wang Hao** (CHN)							
11-8	11-9	11-2	11-9	/	/	/	

Finale

✓ **Fan Zhendong** (CHN)						4-2	
✕ **Fang Bo** (CHN)							
14-12	18-16	6-11	5-11	11-8	11-5	/	

RÉSULTATS | FEMMES

Quarts de finale

✓ **Liu Shiwen** (CHN)						4-1	
✕ **Kristin Silbereisen** (GER)							
11-9	11-9	10-12	14-12	11-7	/	/	

✓ **Wu Yang** (CHN)						4-2	
✕ **Fukuhara Ai** (JPN)							
5-11	8-11	11-3	11-6	11-6	11-7	/	

✓ **Han Ying** (GER)						4-0	
✕ **Liu Jia** (AUT)							
11-9	11-5	11-4	11-4	/	/	/	

✓ **Zhu Yuling** (CHN)						4-3	
✕ **Ishikawa Kasumi** (CHN)							
11-4	8-11	11-9	10-12	11-5	6-11	11-8	

Demi-finales

✓ **Liu Shiwen** (CHN)						4-3	
✕ **Wu Yang** (CHN)							
11-8	11-4	7-11	8-11	11-9	9-11	15-13	

✓ **Zhu Yuling** (CHN)						4-0	
✕ **Han Ying** (GER)							
11-5	11-4	11-6	11-9	/	/	/	

Finale

✓ **Zhu Yuling** (CHN)						4-0	
✕ **Liu Shiwen** (CHN)							
11-3	11-4	11-8	11-7	/	/	/	

RUSSIAN OPEN

FIRST FINAL, FIRST TITLE, MILESTONE FOR KOKI NIWA; FLYING HIGH IN EKATERINBURG

Crowned World Junior champion in Bahrain in November 2011 but never previously progressing to an ITTF World Tour Men's Singles final, Japan's **Koki Niwa** laid the ghosts to rest on the afternoon of Sunday 9th November.

The no.4 seed and currently listed at no.14 on the Men's World Rankings, the 20 year old won the Men's Singles title at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Airports of Regions Russian Open in Ekaterinburg.

At the final hurdle, he beat England's **Paul Drinkhall**, the no.26 seed and presently named at no.87 in the global order to arrest the title.

REPEAT PERFORMANCE

Impressively and in typical fashion, displaying the minimal emotion, **Koki Niwa** recovered from an opening game deficit to record a five games success (12-14, 11-8, 11-5, 11-7, 11-7).

Thus he repeated the success of the only previous occasion when the pair have met on the international stage.

Two years ago in the opening round of the Men's Singles event at the GAC Group 2012 ITTF World Tour German Open in Bremen, **Koki Niwa** had beaten **Paul Drinkhall** in four straight games (11-8, 11-8, 11-8, 11-5).

WATERSHED YEAR FOR PAUL DRINKHALL

A milestone for **Koki Niwa** and to date, the year 2014 has proved very much the same for **Paul Drinkhall**.

Earlier he won the Men's Singles title at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Spanish Open, his only other appearance in an ITTF World Tour Men's Singles final. Also, in Tokyo at the ZEN-NOH World Team Championships, he was instrumental in guiding England to the Second Division title and a place in the Championship Division in 2016.

Furthermore, you can add to the list. He won Mixed Doubles gold at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow with wife, Joanna, as well as a silver medal in the Men's Team event.

NEW ERA

England yearns for the days to return when the likes of Desmond Douglas, Alan Cooke and Carl Prean enabled the country, where the sport was born, to compete with the best in the world.

Maybe with **Paul Drinkhall**, clearly in 2014 having moved up a step, alongside Liam Pitchford; also now a major force on the international scene, days of yesteryear may be set to return. Add an impressive 19 year old in the guise of Sam Walker and Mr Reliable; Danny Reed life is looking better for a proud nation.

RACE TO BANGKOK

Defeat for **Paul Drinkhall** in Ekaterinburg but by appearing in the Russian city it meant that he has now competed in four ITTF World Tour tournaments this year. Notably, his name appears on the entry list for next week's Swedish Open and thus he will meet the minimum five tournament criteria to compete in the forthcoming US$ 1,000,000 GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Grand Finals next month in Bangkok.

Undoubtedly, **Paul Drinkhall** will receive an invitation to compete in the Men's Singles event, so now will **Koki Niwa**; both are Bangkok bound. In Ekaterinburg it was mission accomplished.

Success for the top two seeds at the semi-final stage of the Women's Singles event at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Airports of Regions Russian Open in Ekaterinburg on the morning of Saturday 9th November; the Japanese duo of **Kasumi Ishikawa** and **Ai Fukuhara** both emerged victorious

Conversely, in the ensuing matches at the same stage of the Men's Singles event it was quite the opposite; the top two seeds both suffered defeats.

TOP TWO SEEDS FALL, PAUL DRINKHALL AND KOKI NIWA CAUSE SEMI-FINAL UPSETS

Germany's **Dimitrij Ovtcharov**, the no.1 seed, was beaten in seven games by England's **Paul Drinkhall**, the no.26 seed (6-11, 11-9, 12-14, 11-3, 11-8, 5-11, 11-13); whilst in the all-Japanese duel, **Jun Mizutani**, the no.2 seed, experienced defeat at the hands of colleague, **Koki Niwa**, the no.4 seed (11-6, 11-4, 11-9, 11-8).

TOTAL REVERSAL

Winner earlier in the year of the Men's Singles title at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Spanish Open in Almeria, **Paul Drinkhall** continued his amazing run of form and totally reversed the decision of his one previous meeting against **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** in World ranking events.

The two met in the third round of the Men's Singles event at the London 2012 Olympic Games; on that occasion **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** won in four straight games (11-8, 11-5, 11-9, 11-4).

APPEARANCES

Defeat for **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** in his 15 ITTF World Tour Men's Singles semi-final in now 63 appearances; he has now suffered defeat in seven of those encounters; for **Paul Drinkhall**, on his 28th ITTF World Tour entry, it was his second Men's Singles semi-final and his second success, Spain earlier this year being the one other occasion.

FIRST MEETING

Meanwhile, for **Jun Mizutani** and **Koki Niwa**, no strangers to each other, it was their first ever confrontation in a World ranking event.

Furthermore, in what was his 43rd appearance, it was the first time on the ITTF World Tour, that **Koki Niwa** has emerged successful at the semi-final stage.

BEATEN BY WINNER

He had reached the penultimate round on three previous occasions; each time suffering defeat against the eventual winner.

In 2011 on home soil in Kobe he lost to colleague, Seiya Kishikawa. Two years later in Suzhou at the GAC Group 2013 ITTF World Tour Harmony Open he was beaten by China's **Ma Long**.

More recently, just over two months ago in the Czech Republic he suffered heartaches. He experienced defeat at the hands of Portugal's **Marcos Freitas**, having at one stage held a three games to nil lead.

At the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Airports of Regions Russian Open, **Koki Niwa** did not let the advantage slip, for the sixth time in his career in 14 ITTF World Tour Men's Singles semi-finals, out of an overall total of 63 times appearing on the entry list, it was defeat for **Jun Mizutani**.

LEADS RACE

The one consolation for **Jun Mizutani** is that he has now competed in five ITTF World Tour Men's Singles events and of the players who have also fulfilled that criteria, he leads the Race for Bangkok, the Race to the US$ 1,000,000 GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Grand Finals.

TANG PENG AND WONG CHUN TING STRIKE GOLD, LEAD RACE TO BANGKOK

Crowned champions earlier in the year in Spain and Australia, Hong Kong's **Tang Peng** and **Wong Chun Ting** won the Men's Doubles title at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Airports of Regions Russian Open in Ekaterinburg on Sunday 9th November.

Not only did they strike gold in the city that borders Europe and Asia; their win means they lead the Race for Bangkok.

They now leapfrog the Chinese Taipei partnership of **Chiang Hung-Chieh** and **Huang Sheng-Sheng** and head the Men's Doubles Standings; they are assured of an invitation to the prestigious US$ 1,000,000 Grand Finals in December.

SURPRISE FINALISTS

The top seeds, at the final hurdle, they accounted for surprise finalists, the host nation's **Fedor Kuzmin** and **Grigori Vlasov** (7-11, 11-6, 11-5, 13-11). Not seeded the Russians had been required to compete in the preliminary rounds of the event and were very much treading in unchartered waters.

Although **Fedor Kuzmin** had won the Men's Singles title at the Slovenian Open in 2005, neither had ever reached an ITTF World Tour Men's Doubles final.

THIRD FINAL OF YEAR

Conversely, **Tang Peng** and **Wong Chung Ting** were competing in their third final of the year and completed their third win.

In Spain they had beaten **Chiang Hung-Chieh** and **Huang Sheng-Sheng** in the final; whilst in Australia their victims in the gold medal contest had been Singapore's **Yang Zi** and **Zhan Jian**.

DIFFERENT STYLES

Three titles, the evidence is clear that the partnership works. **Tang Peng** now 33 years old, a right handed shake-hands grip player who uses short pimpled rubber on the backhand, is unquestionably the team captain.

Conversely, **Wong Chun Ting**, also right handed but a pen-hold grip player in the

modern mode, using reverse smooth rubber on both sides of the racket is ten years the junior of **Tang Peng**, he is the apprentice.

SUCCESS WITH JIANG TIANYI

A successful combination but both have proved themselves masters of the art of doubles; both have also won ITTF World Tour titles with colleague, **Jiang Tianyi**.

Wong Chun Ting partnered **Jiang Tianyi**, a left handed shake-hands grip player, to success in Germany in 2012; whilst in 2010 **Tang Peng** joined forces not only to win in Austria but also in Korea.

CHANCE TO REPEAT SUCCESS

Notably in Korea, the pair won the Men's Doubles title at the KAL Cup ITTF World Tour Grand Finals.

Four years later for **Tang Peng**, now in harness with **Wong Chun Ting**, another chance beckons, in Bangkok the chance to repeat the success of Seoul.

SAFE LANDING FOR KASUMI ISHIKAWA, BEATS AI FUKUHARA IN DRAMATIC FINAL

Top seed, **Kasumi Ishikawa** won the Women's Singles title at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Airports of Regions Russian Open in Ekaterinburg on Sunday 9th November, in what proved to be one of the most closely contested finals, since the concept was launched in the English market town of Kettering in 1996.

Kasumi Ishikawa accounted for colleague and second seed, **Ai Fukuhara**, by the very narrowest of margins in a tension packed contest.

She won in seven games (11-8, 9-11, 5-11, 11-7, 11-3, 11-7, 15-13) to become the most successful player in the whole tournament by capturing her second title of the day.

Earlier in the afternoon she had partnered compatriot, **Sayaka Hirano**, to Women's Doubles gold.

THIRD GOLD

It was for **Kasumi Ishikawa** her fifth appearance in an ITTF World Tour Women's Singles final and her third success; her two previous wins being in 2010 when she won in Morocco and Egypt.

In the latter she accounted for Turkey's **Hu Melek** in the final, in the former staged in Rabat, she overcame a fellow Japanese player as in Ekaterinburg, she beat **Reiko Hiura**.

The two defeats had come earlier this year on home soil in Yokohama when beaten by Singapore's **Feng Tianwei** and just over 18 months ago when experiencing defeat in the final at the GAC Group 2013 ITTF World Tour Korea Open.

SWEETER TASTE

On that occasion, in Incheon, she had been beaten by the minimal two point margin in the deciding game by the host nation's **Seo Hyowon** (11-8, 5-11, 11-7, 9-11, 12-10, 5-11, 11-9); the close defeat was a bitter pill to swallow.

In Ekaterinburg it was the opposite emotion, it was the sweet taste of honey.

SIXTH SILVER

A third career ITTF World Tour Women's Singles title for **Kasumi Ishikawa**; for **Ai Fukuhara** in what is now eight gold medal contests, it was her six silver medal.

Earlier this year in the Czech Republic, she had been beaten in the final by Romania's **Elizabeta Samara**; whilst one year ago in Germany she had suffered defeat at the final hurdle against China's **Wen Jia**.

Previously in 2011 she had lost in the final in Japan to Singapore's **Feng Tianwei**, in 2010 in Kobe to China's **Liu Shiwen** and in 2007 in Brazil to Hong Kong's **Tie Yana**.

SUCCESSES

Meanwhile, the two wins have both been against Koreans.

In 2009 in Morocco she beat **Seok Hajung** in the final and more recently in Japan, she overcame Moon Hyunjung to strike gold.

RESULT REVERSED

Success for **Kasumi Ishikawa** with the result being very different to the one previous meeting on the ITTF World Tour; they met in 2011 at the semi-final stage of the Women's Singles event at the Japan Open.

On that occasion **Ai Fukuhara** won in four straight games (13-11, 11-9, 16-14, 11-6).

BANGKOK BOUND

Defeat for **Ai Fukuhara** but a degree of consolation, competing in Ekaterinburg means she has completed the five tournament criteria to compete in the forthcoming US$ 1,000,000 GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Grand Finals.

She will undoubtedly finish among the eligible names to gain an invitation; for **Kasumi Ishikawa**, an invitation card is assured.

RÉSULTATS | HOMMES

Quarts de finale

✓ **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** (GER)					4-1	
✕ **Matsudaira Kenta** (JPN)						
11-8	12-10	11-6	9-11	11-9	/	/

✓ **Paul Drinkhall** (ENG)					4-2	
✕ **Marcos Freitas** (POR)						
3-11	4-11	13-11	11-7	14-12	12-10	/

✓ **Koki Niwa** (JPN)					4-1	
✕ **Tiago Apolonia** (POR)						
11-8	11-7	8-11	11-8	11-7	/	/

✓ **Mizutani Jun** (JPN)					4-2	
✕ **Yoshimura Maharu** (JPN)						
11-9	4-11	11-6	9-11	14-12	11-7	/

Demi-finales

✓ **Paul Drinkhall** (ENG)					4-3	
✕ **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** (GER)						
6-11	11-9	12-14	11-3	11-8	5-11	11-2

✓ **Koki Niwa** (JPN)					4-0	
✕ **Mizutani Jun** (JPN)						
11-6	11-4	11-9	11-8	/	/	/

Finale

✓ **Koki Niwa** (JPN)					4-1	
✕ **Paul Drinkhall** (ENG)						
12-14	11-8	11-5	11-7	11-7	/	/

RÉSULTATS | FEMMES

Demi-finales

✓ **Ishikawa Kasumi** (JPN)					4-0	
✕ **Hina Hayata** (JPN)						
11-4	11-7	11-5	11-4	/	/	/

✓ **Fukuhara Ai** (JPN)					4-2	
✕ **Xiaona Shan** (GER)						
11-6	11-8	11-8	7-11	9-11	11-4	/

Finale

✓ **Ishikawa Kasumi** (JPN)					4-3	
✕ **Fukuhara Ai** (JPN)						
11-8	9-11	5-11	7-11	11-3	11-7	15-13

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2014 XXII CENTRAL AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN SPORTS GAMES

ANDY PEREIRA AND YADIRA SILVA CROWNED CHAMPIONS ON FINAL DAY IN XALAPA

Cuba's **Andy Pereira** and the host nation's **Yadira Silva** won the respective Men's Singles and Women's Singles titles at the Central American and Caribbean Games in the Mexican town of Xalapa on Thursday 20th November, to bring to a conclusion six days of action in the Omega Stadium.

Not seeded owing to an absence from international competition, **Andy Pereira** ended Puerto Rican hopes.

At the semi-final stage he accounted for **Daniel Gonzalez**, the no.2 seed (11-4, 11-3, 11-5, 11-7), before in the final overcoming **Brian Afanador**, the no.4 seed (11-5, 11-4, 9-11, 12-10, 5-11, 13-11).

SOUGHT REVENGE

In the opposite half of the draw it was disappointment for Mexico.

Marcos Madrid, the top seed, was beaten by **Brian Afanador** (7-11, 9-11, 11-9, 11-9, 11-9, 11-6), the result being a reversal of their earlier meeting in the tournament when in the Men's Team event, **Marcos Madrid** had beaten **Brian Afanador** in three straight games.

*"My aim now is to beat **Marcos Madrid**"*, said **Brian Afanador** following his Men's Singles quarter-final success against Cuba's **Yohan Mora** (11-5, 11-6, 11-6, 11-5) earlier in the day.

ONLY DEFEATS

"He's the only play I've lost against", added the teenage Puerto Rican. He was true to his word but in the final against **Andy Pereira** it was the reverse scenario.

In the Men's Team final in the open match of the contest, **Brian Afanador** had overcome **Andy Pereira** in four games (12-10, 11-8, 8-11, 11-6).

The Men's Team defeat was to prove the only reverse in the whole tournament in singles matches for **Andy Pereira**; whilst for **Marcos Madrid**, his only loss came on the concluding day.

DELIGHT FOR MEXICO

Disappointment for Mexico, with **Marcos Madrid** having won four years earlier when the tournament had been staged in Mayaguez West in Puerto Rico; however, in the Women's Singles event it was joy.

Yadira Silva justified her top seeded position in the draw to win the Women's Singles title.

At the semi-final stage she beat Colombia's **Paula Medina**, the no.3 seed (11-7, 11-6, 11-5, 11-8), before clinching gold at the expense of Venezuela's **Gremlis Arvelo**, the no.4 seed (11-7, 11-6, 11-13, 11-9, 9-11, 9-11, 11-6).

GREMLIS ARVELO

Defeat for **Gremlis Arvelo** but it was one round further than her seeding predicted and at the semi-final stage, she had caused an upset. She ended the progress of Puerto Rico's **Adriana Diaz**, the no.2 seed (5-11, 11-9, 11-9, 11-8, 11-5).

MEDAL IN EVERY EVENT

Disappointment for **Adriana Diaz** but we must keep matters in perspective. She is only 14 years old and in every event for which she was eligible she won a medal.

She led Puerto Rico to gold in the Women's Team event with elder sister **Melanie** and **Carelyn Cordero** in support, she won a second gold with **Brian Afanador** in the Mixed Doubles; whilst with **Melanie Diaz** secured Women's Doubles silver.

A bronze to end a gruelling six day was no mean performance; she can look back on a a highly successful venture and can return home to Puerto Rico head held high.

LEADING LADY

However, let us not detract from the **Yadira Silva**; she was the player under pressure, the top seed playing on home soil.

She went through the whole tournament unbeaten, an outstanding performance; the pride of Mexico, the leading lady in Xalapa.

WORLD JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIPS

WORLD JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIPS

YU ZIYANG SECURES BOYS' SINGLES TITLE, SILVER FOR YUTO MURAMATSU

Winner of the Men's Singles title earlier in the year at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Japan Open, China's **Yu Ziyang** secured Boys' Singles gold in the Minhang Gymnasium on the evening of Sunday 7th December, to close the curtain on the Wisdom 2014 World Junior Championships in Shanghai.

The second seed, at the final hurdle he overcame Japan's **Yuto Muramatsu**, the top seed, to reserve the top step of the medal podium.

Unrelenting, **Yu Ziyang** won in four straight games (11-9, 11-7, 11-9, 11-9); thus for the second time in a major global tournament it was the second step of the podium for the gallant **Yuto Muramatsu**.

Earlier in the year he had been the runner up in the Men's Singles event at the Nanjing 2014 Youth Olympic Games; on that occasion beaten by **Yu Ziyang**'s colleague, **Fan Zhendong**.

PRESSURE

Unquestionably pressure was heaped on the young shoulders of **Yu Ziyang**. It was a pressure match in more ways than one.

Chinese players are expected to win; simply the record that goes before the young players in action in the Minhang Gymasium puts them on a different pedestal to the rest of mankind. A Chinese players loses it is news.

ELUSIVE TITLE IN RABAT

Furthermore, one year ago in Rabat, it was the one title that China did not win; the score needed to be settled.

Added to the equation was the fact that every title contested to date in Shanghai had finished with the gold medal being draped around the neck of a player from the host nation.

TEST OF MENTAL CAPABILITIES

Yu Ziyang was under pressure, the task was to respond to the pressure; it was a test of the mental capabilities of the 16 year old.

However, if you are to be a great player, it is in those situations that you must respond. Great credit to **Yu Ziyang**, he responded.

TIRADE OF FOREHANDS

Determined, motivated and vocal, **Yu Ziyang** responded. A tirade of vicious forehand top spin strokes, the natural diagonal from the left hander's forehand into the backhand of the right handed defender kept **Yuto Muramatsu** pinned to the court surrounds.

Add to the occasion, equally severe forehand top spins arrowed with pin point accuracy to the so-called indecision point, where the opponent has to decide between backhand and forehand, saw **Yu Ziyang** seize control.

Close hard fought games but the first two went in the same direction, both to **Yu Ziyang**.

TIME OUT

In the third game **Yu Ziyang** established a 5-2 lead; Kunihito Taaei, the Japanese coach, called *"Time Out"*.

Yuto Muramatsu kept fighting, thrilling the crowd with his dazzling defence. He reduced the arrerars to 8-9; **Liu Guozheng**, the Chinese Boys' Team National Coach, sitting courtside, called *"Time Out"*.

Three hard fought points ensued; two of them went to **Yu Ziyang**. He led by three games to nil.

KEPT NERVE

Hard fought and the fourth was just as hard fought but at the crucial stages **Yu Ziyang** kept his nerve, maintained his focus.

At 10-9 in the fourth game he held match point; he converted at the first opportunity, he sank to his knees as emotion gushed from his body. The name on the role of honour was that of **Yu Ziyang**.

FELT PRESSURE

"I did feel the pressure before the match and I did feel nervous; the problem is that is you are Chinese you are expected to win; if you lose then it's big news", said **Yu Ziyang**. *"However, one the match started, I felt fine."*

Yu Ziyang was positive from the very start, the first attack always fearsome.

"Definitely winning that close first game was really most important; that gave me confidence", added **Yu Ziyang**. *"He return the ball with very heavy backspin but I felt comfortable, especially when playing towards his backhand."*

Yuto Muramatsu uses the long pimpled rubber of the backhand; therefore, the more top spin imparted on the ball, a heavy backspin return was oftern the norm.

"I know Yuto but perhaps he knows more about me than I know about him", concluded **Yu Ziyang**. *"I'm pleased I won but I was expected to win so now it's a great feeling of relief!"* Success for **Yu Ziyang**, success for China, the clean sweep completed.

FAIR PLAY AWARDS

Meanwhile, the awards for Fair Play, kindly presented by the Swaythling Club International were awarded to Kazakhstan's **Kirill Gerassimenko** and Thailand's **Tamolwan Khethuan**.

Both players had conducted themselves admirably throughout the whole tournament.

TWO STEPS HIGHER, WANG MANYU SECURES GIRLS' SINGLES CROWN

Bronze medallist one year ago in the Moroccan city of Rabat, China's **Wang Manyu** climbed two steps higher up the medal podium one year later.

On the afternoon of Sunday 7th December she won the Girls' Singles title at the Wisdom 2014 World Junior Championships on home soil in the Chinese city of Shanghai. Occupying the no.5 seeded position in the competition, she accounted for compatriot **Zhu Chaohui**, the no.9 seed, to arrest the title (12-10, 11-6, 14-12, 6-11, 12-10).

CLOSE OPENING GAME

A close opening game; undoubtedly that settled the nerves of **Wang Manyu**; the second game was won with a degree of ease.

No doubt winning the early points in the second game added to the confidence of the player who earlier in the day had been required to settle for the silver medal in the Mixed Doubles event.

GOOD START

Again in the third game she made a good start, she went ahead 7-2 but this time she did not capitalise on the advantage. **Zhu Chaohui** recovered to level at 8-all before at 10-9 holding game point.

Wang Manyu saved the game point before on her third attempt she won the game and moved into a three games to nil lead.

POINT OF NO RETURN

Facing the point of no return, **Zhu Chaohui** established a 4-1 lead in the fourth game.

Wang Manyu responded to level at 6-all but then lost the next five points. The match deficit was reduced to two games.

> ***"I am World champion!"***

FIFTH GAME

Wang Manyu won the first three points of the fifth game. Danger signals looming, **Zhu Chaohui** called *"Time Out"*. Resolute **Wang Manyu** gradually increased the advantage, in rallies she was the favourite against a more powerful adversary but **Zhu Chaohui** fought, she levelled at 7-all and at 10-8 held two game points.

Both were saved before at 11-10, **Wang Manyu** held match point; one chance, it was taken. **Wang Manyu** celebrated and let out of shriek of delight.

GREATEST DAY

The reaction underlined the importance of the occasion. **Wang Manyu** is the quietest young lady in China. *"It's the greatest day of my life"*, smiled **Wang Manyu**. *"I am World champion!"*

The celebration at the end was a release of emotion.

CONTROLLED EMOTIONS

"During the match I tried to keep control of my emotions, I tried to keep calm; if I started yelling and screaming I'd lose concentration", added **Wang Manyu**. *"Since last year when I lost in the semi-final I have played in many international tournaments, so now I have much more experience."*

More experience and in Shanghai an experience she will never forget, the Girls' Singles gold medallist at the Wisdom 2014 World Junior Championships.

WORLD JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIPS

AUTHORITY ASSERTED, CHINA CLINCHES MEN'S TEAM TITLE IN DUBAI

Top seeds and clear favourites for the title, China justified their exalted status by winning the Men's event at the 2015 World Team Cup in Dubai on the early evening of Sunday 11th January.

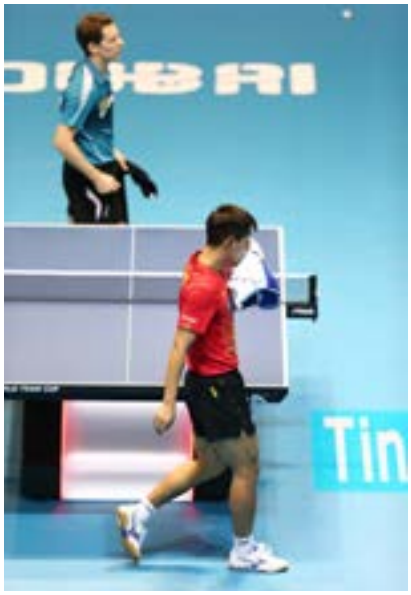
In the first stage of the competition they had recorded three-nil wins on both visits to the table; in the last eight and the penultimate round it had been the same verdict.

At the final hurdle, there was no break with tradition, a three matches to nil win was recorded against Austria, the seventh seeds.

NERVES SETTLED

Fan Zhendong settled any Chinese nerves by beating **Daniel Habesohn** in the opening exchange (11-3, 11-5, 11-8), before **Zhang Jike** extended the advantage. He overcame **Robert Gardos** (11-7, 12-10, 12-10).

Proceedings came to a conclusion with the doubles combination of **Xu Xin** and **Zhang Jike** accounting for **Stefan Fegerl** and **Daniel Habesohn** (11-3, 11-7, 11-9).



MATCH POINTS IN TOKYO

"We met in the group stage and in the final", said **Robert Gardos** when reflecting on his contest against **Zhang Jike**. *"He's really very strong, I played well but he just played better; it was almost like the situation during the Tokyo World Championships, there I had match points against him but somehow he just came back to win the match."*

At the ZEN-NOH 2014 World Team Championships, in the their quarter-final duel, **Robert Gardos** held match points in the fourth game before eventually experiencing defeat (11-5, 10-12, 8-11, 14-12, 11-5).

MOST SATISFACTORY FINISH

Defeat in the final but runners up spot was a most satisfactory finish for the Austrians.

They are only the third European country ever to reach the Men's Team final. Sweden won in 1990 when the tournament was first staged, whilst being the runners up in 1991 and 1994. In 1995 Germany finished in the silver medal position.

Notably since 2007 when the tournament returned to the international calendar, no European team has reached the final.

"We are happy; this is the best result that we ever had in the World Team Cup", added **Daniel Habesohn**. *"We are growing as a team but China is definitely too strong for us at the moment."*

FAMILIAR FOES

An improving team, it was a fact which **Zhang Jike** acknowledged.

"Austria played well and they managed to make us struggle, I am sure they will get stronger in the future and make us struggle more", said the reigning Olympic and World champion. *"It was good to play a different team in the final; we are good friends with the Austrians, so it is always nice to play against them."*

Good friends, certainly they are no strangers to each other; they met in both stages of the ZEN-NOH 2014 World Team Championships and in both stages of the 2015 World Team Cup.

RIO DE JANEIRO IN MIND

Maybe they might meet again in Rio de Janeiro in 2016? The South American city is very much in the mind of **Xu Xin**.

"The World Team Cup is similar to the Olympic Games in terms of the playing system and this will probably be the last World Team Cup before the Olympics; hence this was a very valuable opportunity for us", he explained. *"This victory means one more major world title for us and of course means a lot to our team."*

NO COMPLACENCY

One more gold medal to add to those already won at the World Team Cup; for **Fan Zhendong** it was his first in the competition.

"We played well here in Dubai, and our results prove that our hard work and efforts have paid off well", he said. *"However, we still can't let our guard down as the competition is getting tougher internationally; other national teams are also training hard and getting stronger, so it's important for us to train even harder to maintain our edge over the rest."*

FOURTH TIME

Success for **Xu Xin** and **Zhang Jike** meant it was the fourth time that the both players had been members of the gold medal winning Chinese team at a World Team Cup; the same number as **Ma Long**.

He had been in action en route to the concluding contest but in the final was re-signed to support duty.

Ma Long, **Xu Xin** and **Zhang Jike** all made their debut appearances in Linz in 2009

and have been present in the World Team Cup ever since that date. The following year they appeared in Dubai, before in 2013 being present in Guangzhou and now once again in the United Arab Emirates.

SAME NAME, DIFFERENT PLAYER

They are the most successful male players in the history of the competition; they are only players to have succeeded four times even though **Wang Hao** has won on five occasions!

Wang Hao, a right handed defender, who was born in 1966 and created his own niche in sporting history by being the first Chinese player to leave for foreign shores and then return to national team ranks, struck gold at the World Team Cup in 1991 and 1994.

Somewhat later, arguably the more well-known **Wang Hao**, the right handed pen-holder born in 1983, who recently announced his retirement from the Chinese National Team, was a member of the winning outfit on three occasions. He stood on the top step of the medal podium in 2007, 2010 and most recently in 2013.

MISSING NAME

Success for **Wang Hao** in the World Team Cup and the likes of the modern day legends such as **Liu Guoliang**, **Ma Lin** and **Wang Liqin** have all struck gold but there is one celebrated Chinese name who never enjoyed success as a player at the World Team Cup.

Kong Linghui, Olympic and World champion plus the owner of all other major individual titles in his career, played just once. He was a member of the squad in 1995 in Atlanta alongside **Ding Song**, **Liu Guoliang**, **Wang Tao** and **Xiong Ke**. They finished in fifth place.

SEVENTH TIME

Gold for China in Dubai, it was the seventh time they have clinched the title and the fifth in succession.

Meanwhile, for Austria it was their first appearance in the final.

CHINA – GOLD MEDALLISTS IN MEN'S TEAM CUP

Four Wins

Ma Long (2009, 2010, 2013, 2015)
Xu Xin (2009, 2010, 2013, 2015)
Zhang Jike (2009, 2010, 2013, 2015)

Three Wins

Wang Hao (2007, 2010, 2013)

Two Wins

Wang Hao (1991, 1994)
Wang Liqin (2007, 2013)

One Win

Chen Qi (2007)
Ding Song (1994)
Fang Bo (2015)
Fan Zhendong (2015)
Hao Shuai (2010)
Lin Zhigang (1994)
Liu Guoliang (1994)
Ma Lin (2007)
Ma Wenge (1991)
Qiu Yike (2009)
Wang Tao (1991)
Xie Chaojie (1991)
Zhang Lei (1991)

Lisbon Repeated, Austria Beats Portugal to Reach Men's Team Final

Victory against Portugal in their concluding group contest at the TMS 2014 European Team Championships in Lisbon; however, match ratio meant no place in the main draw for Austria.

Just over four months later, in the Men's event, at the 2015 World Team Cup, once again it was success for Austria against Portugal, only on this occasion, the effect of the win was much different.

A three matches to nil success on the evening of Saturday 10th January, in their penultimate round engagement, meant a place in the final.

CHANGING PLACES

Furthermore, the success was not too dissimilar to the result in Lisbon; the first two contests were to some extent a reverse of the events in the Portuguese capital city.

At the TMS 2014 European Team Championships, **Robert Gardos** had beaten **Marcos Freitas** in the opening contest (11-6, 11-7, 10-12, 11-6), before **Daniel Habesohn** had extended the lead by overcoming **Tiago Apolonia** (11-9, 6-11, 8-11, 11-8, 11-7).

In Dubai it was changing places. **Robert Gardos** overcame **Tiago Apolonia** in the opening duel (10-12, 12-10, 11-7, 13-11) before **Daniel Habesohn** doubled the lead by overcoming **Marcos Freitas** (10-12, 12-10, 11-6, 11-9).

DIFFERENT SYSTEM

A different system in Lisbon, adopting the World Championships format, it was defeat for **Chen Weixing** against **João Monteiro** (8-11, 11-9, 11-4, 9-11, 11-4); in Dubai it was a much different conclusion.

Stefan Fegerl and **Daniel Habesohn** combined to win the doubles accounting for **Tiago Apolonia** and **João Monteiro** (11-7, 11-7, 5-11, 5-11, 11-8) to secure victory.

LOOKING AHEAD

*"Very happy, a very good match against **Freitas** and in the doubles I played well"*, said **Daniel Habesohn** who certainly sees a bright future for the trio who accounted for the European champions.

"This is the team that we will have in the Olympics, the same as Portugal, so this is a good test for us, especially against the European teams", added **Daniel Habesohn** who was perhaps somewhat surprised by the order selected by **Pedro Rufino**, the Portuguese coach.

*"I played as number one in the Europeans and I beat **Apolonia**, so we thought I could*

do it again today", continued **Daniel Habesohn**. *"However they changed their order, so I ended up playing **Freitas**; we practise a lot together, so I know his game very well, which helped me beat him today, plus I played very well."*

Success against the European champion, now the World champions await.

"Playing against China in the final will be difficult", sighed **Daniel Habesohn**. *"This is basically impossible but we will try our best to win."*

FIRST TIME

It is the first time that Portugal has ever competed in the World Team Cup, as for Austria they have only missed one of the now nine editions of the tournament.

They were not present at the inaugural meeting in 1990 in Hokkaido.The penultimate round win means that they have now gained a podium finish on three occasions but it is the first time they have reached the final.

BRONZE MEDALLISTS

They were bronze medallists in 2007 in Magdeburg (Chen Weixing, **Robert Gardos**, Bernard Presslmayer, Werner Schlager) and the same three years later in Dubai (Chen Weixing, Stefan Fegerl, **Robert Gardos**, **Daniel Habesohn**, Werner Schlager).

CHINA RETAINS WOMEN'S TEAM TITLE, TOP STEP OF PODIUM FOR EIGHTH TIME

Defending champions, China won the Women's title at the 2015 World Team Cup in Dubai on Sunday 11th January, beating DPR Korea by three matches to nil at the final hurdle.

It was the same margin of victory as had been recorded in the engagements en route to the gold medal contest but it was by a considerable margin the most testing encounter for the top seeds and pre-tournament favourites.

Unquestionably the score-line did not reflect the effort made by DPR Korea in what was a closely contested final.

FULL DISTANCE DUEL

The opening two encounters were both decided in full distance five games duels.

Liu Shiwen staved off a brave recovery by **Ri Mi Gyong** to emerge successful by the very narrowest of margins (11-7, 11-4, 10-12, 9-11, 11-9), before **Zhu Yuling** had to dig deep into her mental reserves to overcome the defensive skills of **Ri Myong Sun** (7-11, 11-6, 9-11, 14-12, 11-5).

Time and again the ability of **Ri Myong Sun** to turn defence into attack, a readiness to become embroiled in counter top spin rallies and on occasions block from the backhand, the side with long pimpled rubber, made life difficult for **Zhu Yuling** as she fought to establish a rhythm to her play.

Ding Ning and **Liu Shiwen** in Harmony

Two close matches, the doubles was less tense; **Ding Ning** entered the fray to partner **Liu Shiwen**, the duo quickly established a harmony to their play. A straight games win over **Kim Hye Song** and **Ri Mi Gyong** was the end result (11-2, 12-10, 11-9).

CREDITABLE FINISH

Disappointment for **Ri Mi Gyong** but having started the tournament as the sixth seeds, runners up spot was a most creditable finish.

"Thank you to the ITTF and UAETT for organising this great event; we leave with great memories, we battled hard in the final", she said. *"We had chances but we could not quite do it; we will take inspiration from this event and use it as motivation to take our team forward in the future."*

BIG BATTLE

Opportunities did arise and the Chinese trio was well aware they had survived a stern examination.

"My match was a big battle, I had to keep patient and take my chances, I was surprised at her level", said **Zhu Yuling**. *"They are now strong challengers to China, I am very happy that I have won my first World Team Cup and I look forward to many more titles in the future."*

A first for **Zhu Yuling** and one day after her 20th birthday she emerged successful in what was a hard fought encounter, a fact **Ding Ning** acknowledged.

PROUD OF COLLEAGUES

"It was a tough match, tougher than we expected; I have to congratulate my team mates for winning their crucial matches to give us a two-nil lead before I played doubles", said **Ding Ning**. *"It was not easy for them, so I am proud of them; this event was a good chance to give our younger players such as **Zhu Yuling** a chance to play on the biggest stage and they did very well, this title means a lot to us."*

Pleased to have won, it was the same for **Liu Shiwen** who like her colleagues had added another World title to add to her collection.

"We are all thrilled to have won this title; it is even more special that is it in Dubai who are our sponsors", she explained. *"Since we have now played here so many times, it feels like we are playing at home; we had a lot of support here which helped a lot."*

MOST DECORATED PLAYER

A place in the final selection for **Ding Ning**, **Liu Shiwen** and **Zhu Yuling** but there was no place for **Li Xiaoxia**, she did not compete in any of the fixtures en route to the title; a recent knee injury being a cause for concern.

However, she cements her position as the most successful woman in the history of the tournament. She has been a member of the Chinese outfit on every occasion since the event returned to the international calendar in 2007; a total of five consecutive appearances and on each occasion China has struck gold. It is a record no player can match.

Following 2007 in Magdeburg, the tournament was staged in Linz in 2009, one year later in Dubai and then in 2013 in Guangzhou before once again returning to the Dubai for the current edition.

ONLY ONCE

Notably in 2007, **Li Xiaoxia** teamed with **Wang Nan** and **Zhang Yining**, arguably the two greatest players of the modern era; perhaps somewhat surprisingly it was the

only time the two legends ever competed in the event.

Next in line to **Li Xiaoxia** comes **Ding Ning** and **Liu Shiwen**; they have been ever present since 2009 in Linz and like **Li Xiaoxia** have always been in the winning team. They have now played on four consecutive occasions.

YET AGAIN

Success for China and success yet again; in nine editions of the tournament, they have now won on eight occasions.

CHINA – GOLD MEDALLISTS IN WOMEN'S TEAM CUP

Five Wins

Li Xiaoxia (2007, 2009, 2010, 2013, 2015)

Four Wins

Ding Ning (2009, 2010, 2013, 2015)
Liu Shiwen (2009, 2010, 2013, 2015)

Three Wins

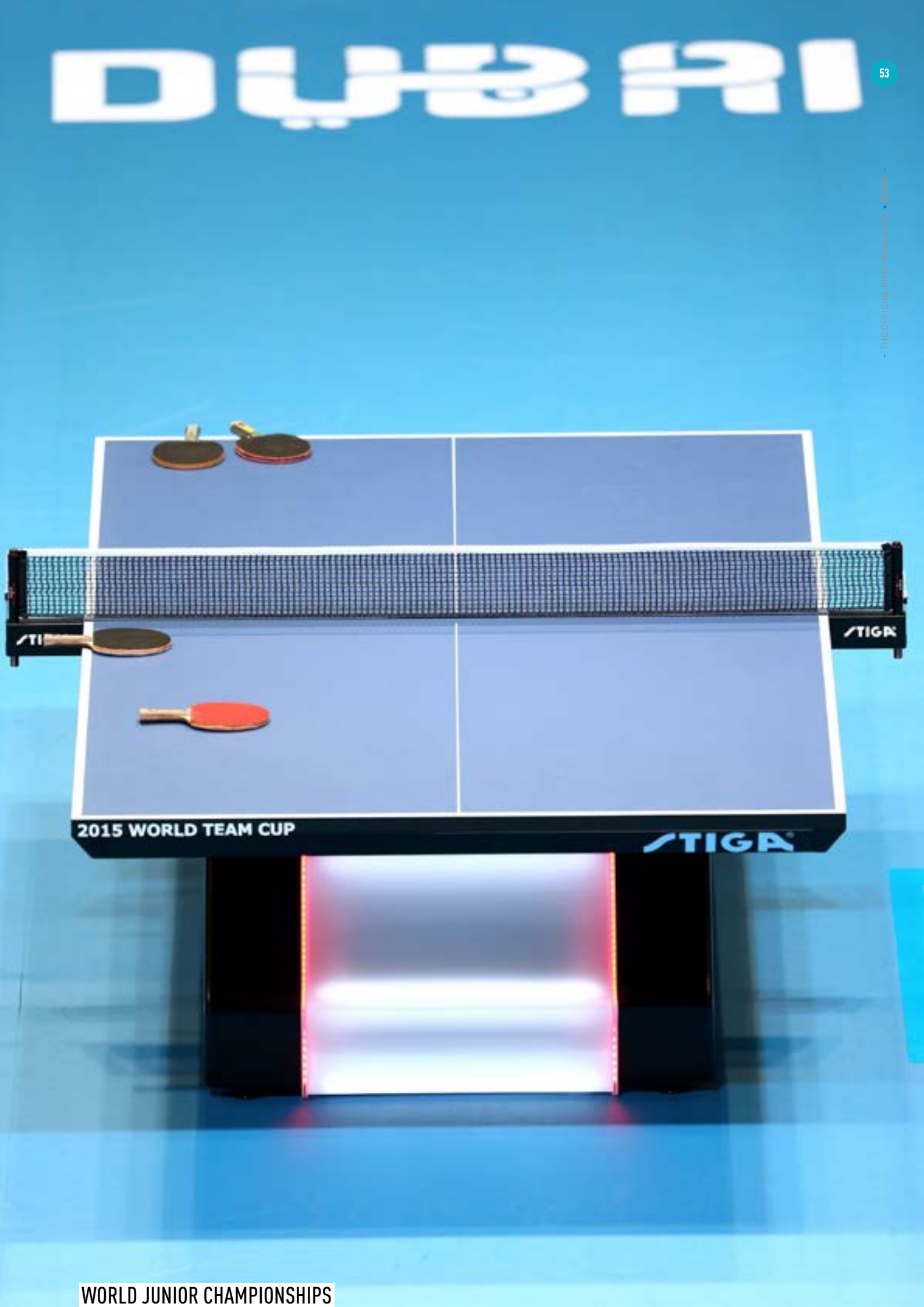
Deng Yaping (1990, 1991, 1995)
Guo Yue (2007, 2009, 2010)
Qiao Hong (1990, 1991, 1995)

Two Wins

Chen Zihe (1990, 1991)
Gao Jun (1990, 1991)
Liu Wei (1991, 1995)

One Win

Chen Meng (2015)
Guo Yan (2010)
Wang Nan (2007)
Wu Yang (2013)
Yang Ying (1995)
Zhang Yining (2007)
Zhu Yuling (2015)



WORLD JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIPS

ITTF STAR AWARDS

STEALING THE SHOW, QUADRI ARUNA CENTRE STAGE AT DUBAI 2014 ITTF STAR AWARDS EVENING

Quarter-finalist at the Liebherr Men's World Cup less than three months ago in the German city of Düsseldorf, when on the first two days of play he stole the show, once again Nigeria's **Quadri Aruna** hit in the limelight on the evening of Wednesday 7th January.

At the Dubai 2014 ITTF Star Awards Evening held at the Armanu Hotel,**Quadri Aruna** won not only the Male Table Tennis Star of the Year Award; in addition he secured the Table Tennis Star Point Award.

A never-say-die attitude, **Quadri Aruna** somehow kept the ball in play when all seemed lost in his last eight duel against China's **Zhang Jike** in Düsseldorf.

He delighted the crowd and clearly delighted of the fans.

SPIRITED COMPETITOR

Quadri Aruna attracted attention in the Men's Singles event at the London 2012 Olympic Games; wearing his heart on his sleeve, the spectators in the ExCeL Exhibition Centre warmed to his efforts.

In the Male Table Tennis Star of the Year section, he received 29 per cent of the public vote and 27 per cent of the votes from the Expert Panel. China's **Fan Zhendong** and **Xu Xin**, alongside Portugal's **Marcos Freitas** were the other nominees.

Meanwhile in the Star Point category, where there was only a public vote; the duel between **Quadri Aruna** and **Zhang Jike** secured 33.50 per cent of the total vote; the exchange in the semi-final of the Men's Singles event at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour China Open between **Ma Long** and compatriot **Fan Zhendong** finished in second place with 22.40 per cent of the votes.

AWARD FOR DING NING

An evening to remember for **Quadri Aruna**, it was the same for China's **Ding Ning**.

She won the Female Table Tennis Star of the Year Award gaining 31 per cent of the public vote and 41 per cent of the votes from the panel. Colleague **Liu Shiwen** alongside Singapore's **Feng Tianwei** and Japan's **Kasumi Ishikawa** were the other names on the short list.

PARA STARS

A combination of public and panel votes for the Male and Female Star Players; in the remaining categories, as in the Star Point section, it was the public alone who decided.

Spain's **Alvaro Valera** won the Male Para Table Tennis Star of the Year Award with the counterpart female accolade going to Croatia's **Sandra Paovic**. **Alvaro Valera** polled 42 per cent of the votes, for **Sandra Paovic** it was even higher, she secured 47 per cent.

Also nominated in the Male Para Table Tennis Star was Germany's **Holger Nikelis** and Tukey's **Nesim Turan**; in the Female Para Table Tennis Star the two other short listed names were China's **Mao Jingdian** and Australia's **Melissa Tapper**.

COACH AND FAIR PLAY

Success in the arena; in a somewhat different guise there was success outside the court for Portugal's **Pedro Rufino** and for Austria's **Liu Jia** as a result of her conduct.

Pedro Rufino won the Star Coach Award, **Liu Jia** secured the Fair Play Award; the other nominations for the Star Coach Award were China's **Kong Linghui** and Germany's **Volker Ziegler**. **Pedro Rufino** gained 42 per cent of the votes.

INTERVIEW

MAN OF THE MOMENT: QUADRI ARUNA

Winner of the Africa Cup in 2009 in Rabat was the first major international title in the career of **Quadri Aruna**; it meant he qualified for the Liebherr Men's World Cup in Moscow later in the year. He finished in second place in the Intercontinental Cup behind Brazil's **Cazuo Matsumoto**.

A worthy performance but not headline making; however when he won the title five years later in Lagos, the success provided an unprecedented springboard for a rise to stardom.

After reaching the semi-final stage of the Men's Singles event at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Lagos Open in late June, **Quadri Aruna** secured the top step of the medal podium at the ITTF-Africa Cup; it proved a watershed in his career.

In August he reached the Men's Singles quarter-final at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Czech Open, before in Düsseldorf in October progressing quite sensationally to the same round. The result was that the man who had started the year at no.231 on the Men's World Rankings, started 2015 two hundred places higher at no.30; the highest ever listing for an African player.

Outstanding performances that captured the imagination of the table tennis fan; success combined with unbridled enthusiasm saw him win the Star Point of the Year and Male Player of the Year accolades at the Dubai Star Awards in January.

STARTED IN OYO

Similar to all such stars, it has been a long journey, one which started in the ancient city of Oyo when his talent was recognised by **Oluwole Abolarin**.

"Growing up in Oyo Town was not that bad as my romance with table tennis started in 1996; when we were playing, we were just playing for fun and then my parents wanted me to go to school, other children liked playing football, I was always at the table", explained **Quadri Aruna**. *"Fortunately for me, there was a table tennis hall close to my house and I was fond of going there to play."*

The love affair with table tennis had begun.

*"I later discovered that the six tables were owned by **Oluwole Abolarin**, who took an interest in me and started to coach me"*, continued **Quadri Aruna**. *"It was under him that I started playing in a hall because I used to play outdoors; **Abolarin** used to tell me that I will rule the game in near future."*

TOURNAMENT SUCCESS

In 2000, **Quadri** played in a national tournament in Lagos being his first major competition outside his home; to the surprise of many, he stunned some of the top cadet players to win the event.

However, he returned to Oyo to continue training under the direction of **Oluwole Abolarin** and it was while with the coach that he honed his skills.

Success as a young player but his parents were not enamoured by his wish to play table tennis. However, he was not discouraged, he continued to practise.

"My parents were against my involvement in sport because they wanted me to study; I was not bothered by their indifference to my soft spot for table tennis and I continued to train, hoping that I will have another opportunity to showcase my skills", continued **Quadri Aruna**. *"I knew I had to take my education seriously because I wanted to make my parents happy as I know the importance of education."*

However, nationally, **Quadri Aruna** enjoyed more success and his parents were persuaded to support.

"...my target was to qualify from the group stage in order to make it to top 50 in the world..."

Interviews conducted by Olalekan Okusan

"I made another return to Lagos to play in another national tournament which I won and this attracted a lot of attention from the media", explained **Quadri Aruna**. *"It was this that encouraged my parents to start supporting me but they ensured that I only play after finishing my school work; I had to take study seriously."*

NATIONAL TEAM

Quadri's talents caught the eyes of national team officials led by former national coach, **Babatunde Obisanya**. He invited **Quadri** to the training camp ahead of the 2007 African Championship and this paved way for a place to be secured in the senior national team.

"I was invited to the national team in 2007 having won a series of national tournaments", continued **Quadri Aruna**. "I knew I had to make use of the chance given to me by the coaches".

From that date, **Quadri** has made his presence felt in the national team. He has featured virtually in all international tournaments since that date. He qualified for the Liebherr 2009 Men's World Cup in Moscow. He finished in runners up spot in the Intercontinental Cup, beaten by the more experienced Brazilian, **Cazuo Matsumoto**.

In a very short space of time, **Quadri** had become a vital member of the Nigerian team. He represented Nigeria in the 2009 African Championship; his efforts helping the country qualify for the 2010 World Team Cup in Dubai.

Notably, he lined up alongside **Segun Toriola**, **Monday Merotohun**, **Kazeem Nosiru** and **Lanre Jegede**, being the youngest member of the team. In Dubai he was pivotal to Nigeria's success in the Intercontinental Cup. They became the first and only African nation ever to secure the title.

PROFESSIONAL PLAYER

Success in Dubai; by that time he was a professional player. In 2009 after his appearance in Moscow, **Quadri** played for the B.I.P.C. Club in Tehran; his performances endeared him to the Iranians.

One year later he moved to Europe to represent AS Novelense in the top division of the Portuguese National League; at the same time being signed by the German manufacturer, Joola.

*"When we saw **Quadri** in 2009, we identified the talent in him and we also noticed that he was dedicated to his trade; when we decided to sign him, he was not the kind of player who just wanted to make money"*, said **Andreas Hain**, a Director of Joola. *"He just wanted to play; this for us was inspiring so we kept faith with him, we also felt that he was going to help us to promote our business in Africa based on his quality and skills."*

The faith entrusted by AS Novelense was rewarded, Quadri established himself as an instant star and for the first time, the club reached the final of the league, losing to Sporting Lisbon.

"After my brief time in Iran, I wanted a tough challenge that would bring out the best in me and fortunately for me I gained a place in a premiership team in Portugal", reminisced **Quadri Aruna**. *"In my first season with the team we narrowly lost the title to Sporting Lisbon but this feat prompted the management of the team to give me another opportunity to prove myself."*

Quadri Aruna proved himself the following year.

"I was undefeated in the second league to be named the best player in the league but another attempt at winning the league was also shattered by GD Toledos, another top club in Portugal", continued **Quadri Aruna**. *"Despite losing to Toledos, the Pico Island based team approached me to join them; for me this was another chance for me to prove myself and up till now I did not regret joining the team for the 2012-2013 season."*

He has been a member of that team ever since that date. He helped GD Toledos win two League titles; two League Cups and the Super Cup in Portugal as well as leading the team to victory in the Mediterranean Cup for the very first time."

"Since I started my professional career in 2010 but I have sacrificed a lot by sponsoring myself to tournaments every year", stressed **Quadri Aruna**. *"It was my serious approach that convinced the present President of the Nigeria Table Tennis Federation to encourage me to attend international competitions."*

ITTF WORLD TOUR

The encouragement meant that **Quadri** made his first appearance on the ITTF World Tour in 2010, when he competed in Kuwait and in Qatar. However, there was to be no instant success; he failed to progress beyond the group stage of affairs.

Nevertheless, **Quadri** was not deterred by the several setbacks he encountered; he continued spending time and resources to improve his game.

> ***"I strongly believe am still learning and I must continue playing matches every weekend."***

"After I received the opportunity to attend World Tour tournaments, I started praying to God that I will not squander the opportunity", continued **Quadri Aruna**. *"I started working harder than before from the beginning of 2014, I made a return to Kuwait and Qatar; unluckily for me I did not make it to the main draw but this did not stop me from working hard and believing in myself."*

Gaining success on the ITTF World Tour proved a tough task.

"I had another opportunity to showcase my talent at the German Open in March of this year; I once again failed to make it beyond the first round; immediately after the German Open, I started studying my mistakes by ensuring that I watch all my matches for more than three hours each day." The diligence reaped rewards.

"At the next tournament, which was the Spanish Open, I defeated some of the top rated players to make to the last 16 of the competition and this really improved my world rating to top 150 but I knew I had yet to maximize my potential, I returned to Nigeria to take part in the Lagos World Tour, where I made it to the semi-final stage", continued **Quadri Aruna**. *"At the African Top 16 Cup, I surprised everybody by beating the two top seeded players from Egypt, **Omar Assar** and **El-Sayed Lashin**, to be crowned the champion and thus claimed a place to represent Africa at the Liebherr Men's World Cup."*

A fine performance at the ITTF-Africa Cup was followed by a fine performance at the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Czech Open. He reached the quarter-final stage of the Men's Singles event; notably beating Russia's **Alexander Shibaev** and **Alexey Liventsov** before overcoming Portugal's **Tiago Apolonia**. Germany's **Patrick Baum** ended progress. The effect was that he climbed to no.73 on the World Rankings.

An injection of confidence, at the Liebherr Men's World Cup, **Quadri** stole the show on the first two days. The lowest ranked player in his group, he beat Japan's **Kenta Matsudaira**; then as in the Czech Republic, **Alexander Shibaev** before causing a major upset by overcoming Hong Kong's **Tang Peng** to reach the quarter-finals.

MAINTAINING RANKING

The overall result is that at the start of 2015, he is listed at no.30 on the Men's World Rankings.

"Making it to the top 30 in the world is like a dream comes true but at the same time I could say I deserve it because I worked hard for it; however, it was not that easy to reach top 30, it has been a lot of hard work, discipline, determination and self-belief to get there", stressed **Quadri Aruna**. *"I give God the glory for crowning my effort; most importantly I thank those who have been supporting financially on and off the table as well as those who have been supporting me with prayers, I say thank you so much."*

Thankful, **Quadri Aruna** is grateful for the help of one person in particular.

"Uncountable thanks goes to my biggest ever sponsor, the President of the Nigeria Table Tennis Federation, ***Barrister Wahid*** *Oshodi for his wonderful support."* The faith has been repaid.

"It is somehow easy to move up but maintaining the position is always the problem and I seriously believe with God on my side; I still have better days ahead and I can still do so much better than before", stressed **Quadri Aruna**. *"I think I should always be at my one hundred per cent best in all tournaments and I am seriously working hard towards this."*

Unquestionably **Quadri Aruna** is highly motivated as he sets new standards for Africa.

"I have increased my practice hours after the World Cup and my physical fitness has been monitored more than before in order to be fitter than before physically on the table", said **Quadri Aruna**. *"It is not going to be easy at all but I will keep the hard work going until I get there."*

AMBITIOUS

Ever ambitious, **Quadri Aruna**, who is a Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps Officer, is aiming for top 20 World Ranking.

"There have always been goals more goals for me; I made it to the top 80 in the world, my objective at the Czech Open was to be in top 100 but surprisingly I moved faster than everyone expected to get to no.73", explained **Quadri Aruna**. *"When I got to no.73 and prior to the Liebherr Men's World Cup, my target was to qualify from the group stage in order to make it to top 50 in the world and it was amazing that against all odds I made it to no. 30 in the world."*

New horizons and most certainly **Quadri Aruna** is looking over the horizon.

"There are strong indications that I can still go further provided that I keep working hard coupled with getting more sponsors, as this will serve as support and motivation for me", he added. *"I strongly believe that my best is yet to come; one of my targets at the moment is to make top 20 in the world and I start playing in ITTF World Tour tournaments next year February."*

A higher world ranking but it is not the only target for **Quadri Aruna**.

"Another target is to get a good club to play next season in France or Germany or Poland", he explained. *"I am receiving many offers at present but I am not in hurry at all because I do not want to enter into a poor contract."*

Most certainly, **Quadri Aruna** is valuable asset to any European club.

"I would not like to join a team in Germany or France or Poland and become a bench warmer", added **Quadri Aruna**. *"I strongly believe am still learning and I must continue playing matches every weekend."*

Enthusiastic but also **Quadri Aruna** has his feet firmly on the ground and he is looking to the long term future.

He enrolled in an online school and has gained a degree in Homeland Security and Management from Atlantic International University.

ITTF LEGENDS TAKE THE CENTER STAGE IN HALMSTAD, SWEDEN

READY TO KICK OFF THE PING PONG POWER PROJECT WEDNESDAY MARCH 4 !

The Swedish west coast city Halmstad is one of these places in the world where good things kind of keep on happening. Home to ninety thousand people and some of the best beaches in Scandinavia you will find that Halmstad comes up as a typical "Swedish- good-place- to live- city". Sport plays a role of course. The soccer team is hanging in there in the Swedish top division. European Handball – Volleyball and Table Tennis does have a say as well, with clubs represented at the highest level of competition in the country.

Like many other Swedish cities – Halmstad is now turning to sport and attractions to boost living standards, community relations and in the end the local economy. To organize more and to organize well is the new motto for the very lively group of employees working for **Destination Halmstad** – the tourist-event company, mandated to do the work.

In the coming period 2015-2018 some serious investments into Table Tennis is in the pipeline, with a series of ITTF events on the schedule of attractions, starting with the **ITTF Legends Tour on Wednesday March 4 this year** and finishing with the ultimate challenge – **World Team Table Tennis championships 2018**.

Complete details are still to be worked out with various stakeholders – but already now table tennis fans can add also the Swedish **Open ITTF World Tour 2016** as well a potential Para event set to be organized the year after, in 2017.

The name of the project carrying the load and the overall investments is nothing but sweet music for Table Tennis fans; **PING PONG POWER**.

"Our ambition is quite simply to try to string together a series of Table Tennis events in the coming three years as a preparation- marketing initiative leading up to the big challenge - to organize the World Championships 2018. We want to make a

solid contribution to our community and really try to grow the fan base as well as the general interest for table tennis in the whole region. For us, working for the city, there are also other values involved such as health and the social aspects. That why we are thinking more in the line of a project investment", said **Johan F. Lundberg**, the creative CEO of Destination Halmstad.

First out and coming soon to the city are the Legends of Table Tennis. On Wednesday March 4 the players group of six men - still hungry for competition , the pride of winning and a good show - will be led into the court by the *"celebrated son of the city"* – the Five time World Champion ; **Jörgen Persson** who is born and raised in Halmstad.

*"We kind of like the fact that we got the opportunity to start the **PING PONG POWER** project with the ITTF Legends Tour, very much due to the fact that we have **Jörgen Persson** as one of our more respected and citizens. He is known, by all of us, as true friendly face and has always been a good ambassador for our city"*, **Johan F. Lundberg** commented.

Jörgen, a true celebrity and extremely respected honored citizen of Halmstad , will in this event make what could be his last competitive career appearance at home, in the Halmstad arena.

"I am looking forward to welcome this group of players to MY home city. It feels nice to be able to showcase the sport with so many true legends showing up. It is going to be a lot of fun to do this", **Jörgen** said.

ANY MESSAGE TO THE OTHER LEGENDS AT THIS POINT IN TIME

"Well, we have to tell the guys that I will be ready and prepared for this event. Planning to get going very quickly with the preparations and of course they should all know that I am going to be hard to beat playing at home. That's the way it feels right now Jörgen said with a curious smile."

However true to say that it will not be an easy ride for the hometown hero - far from. Five confirmed players will do their very best to **steal the limelight** from the tall Swede. That's the way they are born and breed. Hungry for success and glory, the likes of **Jean-Michel Saive** – **Jean Philippe Gatien** – **Jan-Ove Waldner** – **Jiang Jialiang** along with the hard-hitting newcomer **Jörg Rosskopf** makes up the field of six, all of them ready to rock in Sweden .

Stay tuned on Wednesday March 4 for the ITTF Legends Tour and some serious **PING PONG POWER** from Halmstad, Sweden – the first of plenty more events to come your way from this part of the world. That's a promise.

Add your contact first for PSM

Event host
Halmstad BTK
and Destination Halmstad
Project Manager Johnny Ewerstein
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Event organizer - Sweden
Edgeball consulting AB
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WORLD RANKING LIST - MEN

XU Xin (CHN) • No. 1

MA Long (CHN) • No. 2

FAN Zhendong (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**	**XU Xin**	CHN	3043
2	**2**	**MA Long**	CHN	3023
3	**3**	**FAN Zhendong**	CHN	2955
4	4	ZHANG Jike	CHN	2861
5	5	MIZUTANI Jun	JPN	2838
6	7	OVTCHAROV Dimitrij	GER	2746
7	6	WANG Hao	CHN	2743
8	8	CHUANG Chih-Yuan	TPE	2681
9	9	BOLL Timo	GER	2623
10	11	FREITAS Marcos	POR	2599
11	10	YAN An	CHN	2576
12	13	NIWA Koki	JPN	2529
13	12	SAMSONOV Vladimir	BLR	2517
14	17	TANG Peng	HKG	2503
15	14	GAO Ning	SIN	2477
16	15	FANG Bo	CHN	2449
17	16	JOO Saehyuk	KOR	2448
18	18	APOLONIA Tiago	POR	2446
	19	BAUM Patrick	GER	2398
19	20	CHEN Chien-An	TPE	2335
20	35	YU Ziyang	CHN	2325
21	21	GIONIS Panagiotis	GRE	2321
22	23	CHO Eonrae	KOR	2317
23	22	MATSUDAIRA Kenta	JPN	2316
24	30	MURAMATSU Yuto	JPN	2312
25	28	MENGEL Steffen	GER	2307
		KIM Minseok	KOR	2301
26	24	GACINA Andrej	CRO	2293
27	25	GARDOS Robert	AUT	2288
28	27	STEGER Bastian	GER	2284
	25	ZHAN Jian ^	SIN	2280
		MAZE Michael	DEN	2280
29	29	CRISAN Adrian	ROU	2266
30	31	ARUNA Quadri	NGR	2246
31	32	LEE Jungwoo	KOR	2237
32	33	KISHIKAWA Seiya	JPN	2235
	34	SHIONO Masato	JPN	2228
33	45	DRINKHALL Paul	ENG	2225
34	37	MORIZONO Masataka	JPN	2224
35	36	YOSHIDA Kaii	JPN	2222
36	39	JUNG Youngsik	KOR	2215
37	41	GAUZY Simon	FRA	2213
38	42	MATTENET Adrien	FRA	2212
39	39	KARLSSON Kristian	SWE	2209
40	38	TSUBOI Gustavo	BRA	2206
41	43	MONTEIRO Joao	POR	2201
42	48	LIANG Jingkun	CHN	2200
44	46	FRANZISKA Patrick	GER	2197
43	46	JIANG Tianyi	HKG	2197
45	44	GERELL Par	SWE	2196
46	49	PITCHFORD Liam	ENG	2195
47	50	JEONG Sangeun	KOR	2193
48	55	WONG Chun Ting	HKG	2192
49	52	VLASOV Grigory	RUS	2186

RANKING	PREVIOUS	NAME	ASSOC	RANKING PTS.
50	53	ACHANTA Sharath Kamal	IND	2184
	51	TAKAKIWA Taku	JPN	2174
51	57	CHEN Weixing	AUT	2169
52	58	SHIBAEV Alexander	RUS	2167
53	54	LEBESSON Emmanuel	FRA	2165
55	56	BOBOCICA Mihai	ITA	2164
55	59	WANG Zengyi	POL	2164
56	61	CALDERANO Hugo	BRA	2157
57	60	YOSHIMURA Maharu	JPN	2155
58	61	TOKIC Bojan	SLO	2151
60	63	LI Hu ^	SIN	2150
59	63	FEGERL Stefan	AUT	2150
61	65	TAN Ruiwu	CRO	2149
62	67	FILUS Ruwen	GER	2145
63	68	SKACHKOV Kirill	RUS	2144
64	68	KIM Hyok Bong	PRK	2144
	66	ASSAR Omar	EGY	2139
65	68	CHIANG Hung-Chieh	TPE	2138
	72	LEE Sangsu	KOR	2135
66	71	LUNDQVIST Jens	SWE	2131
67	74	SMIRNOV Alexey	RUS	2131
68	76	WANG Eugene ^	CAN	2128
69	73	KOU Lei	UKR	2126
	74	CHAN Kazuhiro	JPN	2125
70	78	HE Zhiwen	ESP	2117
71	77	OSHIMA Yuya	JPN	2112
72	79	WALTHER Ricardo	GER	2111
73	97	MACHI Asuka	JPN	2106
74	80	GORAK Daniel	POL	2103
75	81	WANG Yang ^	SVK	2099
		KIM Junghoon	KOR	2096
76	82	MATSUMOTO Cazuo	BRA	2094
79	85	KREANGA Kalinikos	GRE	2087
77	85	HABESOHN Daniel	AUT	2087
79	85	LIVENTSOV Alexey	RUS	2087
80	83	HUANG Sheng-Sheng	TPE	2086
81	88	PATTANTYUS Adam	HUN	2085
82	91	YOSHIDA Masaki	JPN	2080
83	84	ZHOU Qihao	CHN	2073
84	89	PROKOPCOV Dimitrij	CZE	2073
85	90	LI Ahmet ^	TUR	2069
		ZHOU Kai	CHN	2066
86	92	ELOI Damien	FRA	2063
87	107	OUAICHE Stephane	FRA	2062
88	93	JANG Woojin	KOR	2056
89	95	LASHIN El-Sayed	EGY	2055
		VANG Bora	TUR	2054
90	94	STOYANOV Niagol	ITA	2053
91	96	KOSIBA Daniel	HUN	2051
92	105	ALAMIYAN Noshad	IRI	2046
	98	UEDA Jin	JPN	2046
93	100	KIM Donghyun	KOR	2042
94	100	MACHADO Carlos	ESP	2036
95	102	CHEUNG Yuk	HKG	2035
96	103	KIM Nam Chol	PRK	2033
97	104	PRIMORAC Zoran	CRO	2032
98	105	PERSSON Jon	SWE	2022
		KANG Dongsoo	KOR	2021
99	107	CHTCHETININE Evgueni	BLR	2016
100	109	WU Zhikang ^^	SIN	2013

See all rankings

WORLD RANKING LIST - WOMEN

Ding Ning (CHN) • No. 1

Liu Shiwen (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	DING Ning	CHN	3207
2	2	LIU Shiwen	CHN	3171
3	3	LI Xiaoxia	CHN	3104
4	6	ISHIKAWA Kasumi	JPN	3035
5	4	FENG Tianwei	SIN	3018
6	5	ZHU Yuling	CHN	2980
7	7	WU Yang	CHN	2887
8	12	SEO Hyowon	KOR	2849
9	8	CHEN Meng	CHN	2839
10	9	HAN Ying ^	GER	2828
11	10	FUKUHARA Ai	JPN	2814
12	11	LIU Jia	AUT	2771
13	13	YU Mengyu	SIN	2762
14	18	POTA Georgina	HUN	2717
15	14	FENG Yalan	CHN	2696
16	16	HIRANO Sayaka	JPN	2694
17	15	LI Fen ^	SWE	2690
18	20	YU Fu ^	POR	2676
19	19	SAMARA Elizabeta	ROU	2661
20	17	LEE Ho Ching	HKG	2652
21	21	SHAN Xiaona ^	GER	2625
22	23	YANG Haeun	KOR	2605
23	25	ISHIGAKI Yuka	JPN	2595
24	27	RI Myong Sun	PRK	2583
25	29	MORIZONO Misaki	JPN	2579
26	28	HU Limei	CHN	2579
27	24	LI Jiao	NED	2575
28	26	HU Melek	TUR	2566
29	31	PAVLOVICH Viktoria	BLR	2559
30	32	JEON Jihee ^	KOR	2557
31	30	WU Jiaduo	GER	2550
32	34	LIU Gaoyang	CHN	2536
33	35	LI Jie	NED	2531
34	33	CHENG I-Ching	TPE	2527
35	36	JIANG Huajun	HKG	2526
36	56	WANG Manyu	CHN	2518
37	42	HIRANO Miu	JPN	2508
38	39	NG Wing Nam	HKG	2504
39	22	DOO Hoi Kem	HKG	2503
40	40	VACENOVSKA Iveta	CZE	2501
41	46	ITO Mima	JPN	2500
42	37	SOLJA Petrissa	GER	2498
43	38	POLCANOVA Sofia ^	AUT	2496
44	41	WAKAMIYA Misako	JPN	2491
45	49	CHEN Szu-Yu	TPE	2489
46	53	CHEN Xingtong	CHN	2477
47	44	SILBEREISEN Kristin	GER	2475
48	43	LEE I-Chen	TPE	2473
49	50	SATO Hitomi	JPN	2467
50	45	IVANCAN Irene	GER	2466

RANKING	PREVIOUS	NAME	ASSOC	RANKING PTS.
51	47	PESOTSKA Margaryta	UKR	2459
52	48	LIN Ye ^	SIN	2458
		SEOK Hajung	KOR	2457
53	52	LI Qian	POL	2446
54	55	TIE Yana	HKG	2429
56	54	LI Xue ^	FRA	2426
55	67	MAEDA Miyu	JPN	2426
57	51	GU Yuting	CHN	2423
58	59	KATO Miyu	JPN	2421
		MONTEIRO DODEAN Daniela	ROU	2417
59	57	YANG Xiaoxin ^^	MON	2412
60	58	RI Mi Gyong	PRK	2397
61	88	ZHU Chaohui	CHN	2396
62	60	ZHOU Yihan ^	SIN	2392
63	61	WINTER Sabine	GER	2385
64	63	HAYATA Hina	JPN	2381
65	62	MIKHAILOVA Polina	RUS	2375
66	66	PARTYKA Natalia	POL	2374
67	63	SOLJA Amelie ^	AUT	2369
68	69	PARK Youngsook	KOR	2366
69	65	SZOCS Bernadette	ROU	2361
70	67	EKHOLM Matilda	SWE	2357
71	97	HE Zhuojia	CHN	2356
	70	NONAKA Yuki	JPN	2353
72	71	KIM Jong	PRK	2351
73	72	SUN Yingsha ^^	CHN	2339
74	73	NI Xialian	LUX	2336
75	75	MADARASZ Dora	HUN	2329
76	73	EERLAND Britt	NED	2327
77	76	YOO Eunchong	KOR	2325
78	78	LEE Eunhee	KOR	2320
79	79	GRZYBOWSKA Katarzyna	POL	2314
80	80	BARTHEL Zhenqi	GER	2306
81	81	POSTOACA Camelia	ROU	2301
81	81	HAMAMOTO Yui	JPN	2301
83	112	CHEN Ke	CHN	2299
84	84	NOSKOVA Yana	RUS	2295
85	85	LIU Xin	CHN	2289
86	86	ABE Megumi	JPN	2286
	87	MATSUZAWA Marina	JPN	2285
88	76	MORI Sakura	JPN	2284
88	83	HUANG Yi-Hua	TPE	2284
89	89	TIAN Yuan	CRO	2283
90	96	ZHANG Lily	USA	2281
93	90	MATSUDAIRA Shiho	JPN	2279
92	90	PASKAUSKIENE Ruta	LTU	2279
91	108	MITTELHAM Nina	GER	2279
		PARK Seonghye	KOR	2272
94	92	STRBIKOVA Renata	CZE	2270
95	93	BILENKO Tetyana	UKR	2265
96	94	CHOI Moonyoung	KOR	2264
97	95	GRUNDISCH Carole	FRA	2251
98	97	LOVAS Petra	HUN	2239
99	100	TASHIRO Saki	JPN	2228
	101	ONO Shiho	JPN	2222
100	99	DOLGIKH Maria	RUS	2221

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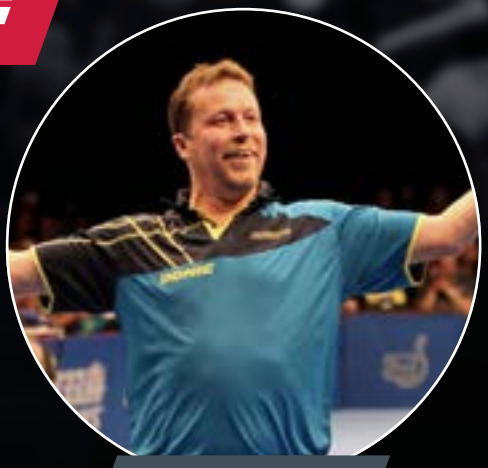

JAN-OVE WALDNER

JEAN-MICHEL SAIVE

JÖRGEN PERSSON

MIKAEL APPELGREN

JEAN-PHILIPPE GATIEN

JIANG JIALIANG