

TABLE TENNIS GROUP

Report by Peter Singer



Democracy is threatened around the world, the climate is going rapidly down the pan, the war in Ukraine grinds on and energy firms make enormous profits whilst many of us can't afford to eat or keep warm. What to do? Well, obviously, play a few games of table tennis, which we do every Friday afternoon. It's a great way to vent all that pent-up anger and frustration (imagine Trump's face as you hit a majestic forehand smash), have a chat and a laugh with friends and generally put things in perspective – all for only £2 a pop. It is also good for stretching the legs and keeping us mobile. A recent list of the top ten health benefits of playing table tennis, by Coach EmRatThich, included “a wonderful sport even when you are at the golden age” (which we are undoubtedly are) and “women can play with men” (maybe lost something in translation that one). Perhaps someone should bottle and sell it – ping pong smoothie, anyone?

Anyway, to more serious matters. Since the 1950's the game has changed dramatically as a result of the replacement of the “hardbat” with sponge-coated bats, which allow players to impart spin to the ball and this is now the dominant factor in the sport, although largely hidden from view for casual spectators. We need, therefore, to understand and be able to play with spin. Spin is imparted by brushing the bat against the ball at an angle (forward sloping over the ball for topspin and backward sloping under the ball for backspin). Returning spin is more difficult. Watching carefully the contact of the opponent's bat with the ball and the flight and bounce of the ball helps to identify what spin is being applied. Backspin causes the ball to rebound downwards, so use an open racket angle, with bat sloping backwards, to hit underneath the ball and push it upwards. Conversely, topspin causes the ball to rebound upwards, so returning requires a closed angle, with bat facing downwards, to hit over the ball and direct it downwards. Of course, practice makes perfect!

If you would like to join our group to learn the game, improve your skills or just have a bit of fun, please contact Peter Singer (pandjsinger@btinternet.com 07508 663998). All are welcome, whether you play regularly, have not played for some time or have never played before.