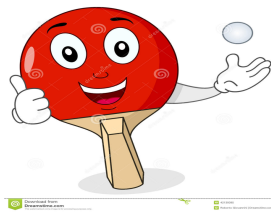


TABLE TENNIS GROUP - Report by Peter Singer



If you wish to see table tennis played with panache, aplomb, skill and style, it's probably best not to come along to one of our sessions at Teesdale Leisure Centre on a Friday afternoon. On the other hand, you would certainly find endeavour, creative (sometimes magical) shot-making, laughter and (mostly) good-natured banter, as we indulge in our own, particular version of the game. The standard of play has undoubtedly improved over the years we have been toiling away. We all, in our own way, play to win and, at the end of a session, the general feeling is one of having enjoyed some robust and competitive encounters. Recently, we have had a dozen or so members at each session, so have been able to play two tables of doubles, with the chance for four of us to have a welcome rest between games. The modern game is quite quick, being won by the first team to eleven points, with a margin of two points. As it happens, many of our games are quite close, so scores of 12-10 or even 17-15 are not unusual, but even so, sitting out never lasts very long. As convenor, I can attest that it can be difficult to keep changing the combinations of players so as to ensure that everyone plays with and against everyone else, but we usually manage somehow or other (or else no-one knows quite what's going on and we carry on regardless).



In terms of technique, some of us have been trying to master the backhand drive – one of the four basic strokes and a very effective but devilishly difficult shot to play. Coach Ben Larcombe of Expert Table Tennis (no, don't know him either) advises not playing it off a short or backspin ball and the key points are to take the ball at the top of the bounce, hitting from around your waist, using your elbow and forearm, with the bat angle closed (downwards facing) and hitting over the ball to create some topspin. Easy as that! Happy backhand driving.

If you would like to join our group to learn the game, improve your skills or just enjoy playing and socialising, 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.