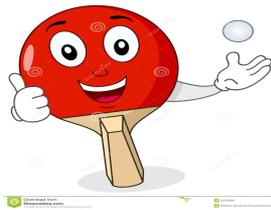


TABLE TENNIS GROUP - Report by Peter Singer



So, the anticipated tsunami of new members has not materialised to date, despite the success of Marty Supreme, although that might have changed by the time you read this, courtesy of the recent inclusion of our Forum report in The Mercury, for which many thanks. Nevertheless, our little group continues to thrive in its own small way, with 10 or more members turning up every Friday afternoon, meaning we can play doubles continuously and cover the cost of table-hire without causing too much financial anxiety. Changing the players at the end of each game may at times resemble a courtly Elizabethan dance, but we usually manage somehow to cover all possible combinations by the end of our hour of play. To make life easier, we have been thinking of the possibility of acquiring a third table, preferably without incurring great cost – does anyone have a decent table going spare?

Anyway, onto more technical matters, a member asked recently how best to return a back-spin serve, which is a commonly used service action. Back spin, not surprisingly, means that the ball spins backwards or anti-clockwise, just clearing the net and landing with a low bounce. Often, the returner finds their shot landing plumb in the middle of the net (aaargh!). According to coach Tom Lodziak, the stock response is a “touch shot”, also applying backspin, to land the ball short over the net, effectively neutralising the serve and preventing an attacking response. This requires “soft hands”, taking the ball early and opening the face of the bat to stroke down the back of and underneath the ball. The extent to which the bat is opened depends on how much backspin has been applied (the more spin, the more open the bat). There are more aggressive returns, including a “deep push shot” or a backhand or forehand, topspin “flick shot”, but these are more difficult to execute successfully and it is probably better to master the touch shot first. Lodziak also mentions the “banana” flick and the “strawberry” flick – no, me neither, but maybe we could go all-out for the full fruit salad?

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.