

MDTTC News

**Capital Area
Super League!**
(We want you)

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Archive of Past MDTTC Newsletters

Welcome to the 33rd issue of the MDTTC News. As usual, there's lots of news to report and new and ongoing programs, and we hope to see you at some of them. As usual a special thanks to MDTTC sponsors [Butterfly](#) and [Go Table Tennis](#). Make sure to read my [daily table tennis blog](#) - I often write about MDTTC happenings there. And if you have a nice picture taken at MDTTC, email it to me and it might make the newsletter!

-Editor and Coach [Larry Hodges](#)

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- New! Capital Area Super League (deadline Feb. 20)
- MDTTC Happenings: Recent Awards & Accomplishments
- Upcoming Events
 - New! Tuesday Lunch Break Class (starts Feb. 10: 1-2 pm)
 - Thursday Junior Beginners/Adv. Beginners Class (starts Feb. 19: 6-7pm)
 - Sunday Adult Beginning/Intermediate Class (starts Feb. 15: 6:30-8 pm)
 - 2015 Butterfly MDTTC Open (March 14)
 - Saturday Junior Beginners/Adv. Beginners Class (starts March 28: 10:30 -12)
 - Spring Break Camp (April 6-10)
- Ongoing Programs: Afterschool / Junior & Adult Classes/ Private Coaching/Leagues
- MDTTC Birthday Parties & Rental Space for Corporate and Private Events
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New! Capital Area Super Team League

Don't forget to sign up for the [Capital Area Super League](#). This is a team league *for all levels* - yes, that means you! In Europe, some countries have memberships in the hundreds of thousands, all because of such team leagues. (Germany has over 600,000.) Players from Europe talk about how much we're missing without such leagues, where players get to play on a TEAM,

surrounded by friends cheering you on. So we hope you'll sign up and share their experience. (The deadline has been extended to February 20.)

The league was initiated by Michael Levene and Stefano Ratti, who played in the English and Italian leagues and missed the camaraderie of such team leagues. (Larry Hodges and John Olsen are also members of the organizing committee.) This is your chance to join with us. All money going to the league stays in the league - it is run completely by unpaid volunteers. No payments are due until March 15.

If you want to play but don't have a team - or have a team that needs more players - there's a "Looking for a Team" section on the web site, or you can contact the organizers, who may be aware of other players in a similar situation. If you are concerned about having a home venue, or are concerned about the type of commitment, again contact us at Michael@smashtt.com or rattigno@yahoo.com.

There will likely be several divisions in the league. A number of teams (8) have already signed up, with 3 teams likely candidates for top division (level 2150-2400), 3-4 for division 2 (1700-2100), and 1-2 for division 3 (below 1700). But we would like 4 or 5 teams of similar strength per division. Get your friends and practice partners together, and come [join us!](#)

MDTTC Happenings

This has been another great month for MDTTC. Here's a quick rundown:

- Coach Jack Huang was named [USATT Developmental Coach of the Year](#). (The news release didn't say anything about the coaches or why they were selected, but in Jack's case it was for his coaching of elite juniors, such as Crystal Wang and Tiffany Ke.) Jack was also USATT Coach of the Year in 1998. This is a great honor for MDTTC!
- Coach Larry Hodges was elected to the Board of Directors for USA Table Tennis as an At-Large Director, getting 84% of the vote against the incumbent. Here's his [election page](#).
- Coach and Player Alex Ruichao Chen won four straight tournaments: the four-star Westchester December Open, Lily Yip TTC January Open, the four-star 2015 Butterfly Aurora Cup ([here's the article](#) by Barbara Wei, and [another feature](#) on him also by Barbara), and the four-star Triangle Winter Team Tournament in Cary, NC (with Nathan Hsu), going 23-0 while improving his rating to 2674. Nathan's not doing so bad either, with his rating climbing to 2520 after defeating 2729-rated Zhao Gaoxiang at the Lily Yip Open to make the Open semifinals, where he would lose to Alex.
- There's a new [highlights video](#) of Crystal Wang, the youngest member of the USA Team in history at age 12, and also the youngest ever to make the final of Women's Singles or win Under 22 Women at the USA Nationals. There was also a [Baltimore Sun article](#) on her.
- At the [Westchester January 24-25 Open](#) Toby Kutler won Under 2200 and made the semifinals of Under 2350. Crystal Wang made the quarterfinals of Open Singles and semifinals of Under 2500.
- Here's the [2015 MDTTC Team](#).
- There were several new articles and videos on Parkinson's player Navin Kumar, who also has a mostly mechanical heart. Here's a listing of recent ones:
 - ["The Bionic Man"](#) (Feb. 2, 2015), a USATT video.
 - ["Table Tennis: It Might Be Time to Take It Up Again,"](#) Washington Post (Dec. 2, 2014).

- ["The Bionic Man, Ping Pong's Ultimate Inspiration,"](#) MH Table Tennis (Jan. 16, 2015).
- Three USATT news items:
 - ["Navin Kumar Plays Table Tennis for Life"](#) (Jan. 15, 2015).
 - ["Kumar Eligible to Participate in Para Table Tennis"](#) (Jan. 9, 2015).
 - ["Navin Kumar: A Passion for Life"](#) (Sept. 16, 2014).
- ["Forehand Breakthrough,"](#) video of Navin at MDTTC (Jan. 18, 2015).
- [Table Tennis vs. Parkinson's Disease,](#) MDTTC video (Jan. 23, 2015)

Upcoming Events

- New! [Tuesday Lunch Break Special](#) Every Tuesdays with [Coach Jeffrey Zeng](#), starting February 10, 1 – 2 pm. This class is intended for adult players who would like to improve their table tennis skills while getting great physical and mental exercises. All levels are welcome. Ball Robots will be used as a part of this year round program.
- [Beginning/Intermediate Table Tennis Class](#), for players from complete beginners to about 1500, starting Feb. 15, on Sundays 6:30-8:00 PM for ten weeks. This will be taught by Coach Larry Hodges, who has taught this class about twenty times in the past. He will have several assistants, based on turnout - 13 have already signed up.
- [2015 Butterfly MDTTC Open](#) (March 14, 2015)
- [Spring Break Camp](#) (April 6-10, 2015)

Ongoing Programs

- **Beginning Junior Classes.** This is for beginners to advanced beginners, ages 6-14, with Coach Larry (with John Hsu and Jeffrey Zeng), and are held Sundays 4:30-6:00 PM, and Thursdays from 6-7PM. The new sessions began early January though you can still join in. the next Thursday session begins Feb. 19. For more info, see the [Junior Group Training Page](#).
- **Afterschool Program.** The MDTTC Afterschool program continues this year. The program combines table tennis and schoolwork, with courtesy pickups at schools or houses. MDTTC coaches and staff will pick up students after school (from selected areas), and bring them to the club where they will have a one-hour table tennis session, practice time, and do homework with our resident tutors. [Here's the info flyer.](#)
- **Group Sessions.** While this is primarily for juniors, all ages are welcome - it's about 1/3 adults. They meet on Saturdays, 4:30-6:30. The first 30 minutes is practice/warm-up, then 90 minutes of matches. See the [Group Training page](#).
- **Private Coaching**, by Coaches Cheng Yinghua, Jack Huang, Larry Hodges, Jeffrey Zeng, Qing Liang Wang, Alex Ruichao Chen, Bowen Chen, Jason Jianhao Sun, John Hsu, and Raghu Nadmichettu. See [Private Coaching page](#).
- **Leagues.** MDTTC runs three different leagues. Take your pick! They are the [Tuesday and Friday Leagues](#) (for all ages and levels), and the [Elite League](#).

MDTTC Birthday Parties & Rental Space for Corporate and Private Events

Want to have a table tennis birthday party? [Here's info!](#) Parties include one hour of coaching and games led by an MDTTC coach, usually Coach Larry. MDTTC offers space rental for special corporate and private events. Here is [Facility Rental Information](#).

MDTTC Web and Facebook Pages

Don't forget to see the regularly updated [MDTTC Facebook page](#), and make sure to "like" it! Stop by and see all the photos, read the latest news, or post your own comments. Also see the [MDTTC web page](#) for regularly updated info.

TIP OF THE MONTH:

Brick-Wall Blocking Defense

By Larry Hodges

Ever play one of those players who can seemingly block *everything* back? How do they do that? It's almost as if they are playing the video game Pong - they just don't miss. You can do the same thing. Here are three keys.

First, get your racket behind the ball. This may sound simple, but it's key. If you get the racket behind the ball, then all you have to do is have the right racket angle, and the ball goes back! But how do you get the racket behind the ball? That involves proper ready stance, a clear mind, and moving your feet.

A proper ready stance means you are equally ready to move either direction. This usually means the racket tip is pointing directly at the opponent's contact point. (Some players who contact the ball quicker on the backhand hold the racket slightly turned to the backhand, since they have less time to react on that side. If they do, they often compensate by having their feet in a slight forehand stance.)

A clear mind means you are ready to react to the ball rather than trying to anticipate. Just watch the opponent as he hits the ball and react. Don't think or guess; just react. The only time you anticipate is when you have popped the ball up so weakly that guessing where the ball is going the only way you can react to the next shot. However, if you can read where your opponent is going early in his stroke, that's not anticipation - that's reacting, and you should react. Never react so early as to let the opponent see this early enough that he can change directions.

Moving your feet means exactly that - step to the ball rather than just reach. Some do get away with mostly reaching, but that limits your range and hurts your control.

Second, good contact. This means blocking firmly against heavy topspin. If you just hold the racket out, the spin will take on your racket and shoot up. So put a bit of firmness into the shot. Learn to use the same contact every time so you can develop your timing and precision - and then learn to change speeds.

Third, practice. Lots and lots of practice. There are plenty of players looking to work on their attack, so oblige them. The more you practice your blocking the more you'll become one of those players who seemingly block *everything* back.