

Choosing Between Two Sports

Pebble Beach golf resort was the perfect backdrop for the story of Austin Preiss. Earlier this year, Austin and his father Scott performed a table tennis exhibition for a corporate group at the Pebble Beach Resort. Behind glass, overlooking the final hole of one of the most famous golf courses in America, the father and son team wowed the crowd with trick shots that included serving the ball from 40 feet away from the table, behind the back shots, and playing with three balls at one time.

Austin (age 13) is in the top 10 in his age group in table tennis. He is a veteran exhibition player having performed more than 100 shows with his father (His father, Scott Preiss, is a professional table tennis player, coach, and motivational speaker). At this young age, Austin already has four national titles under his belt.

Austin is also an accomplished golfer. He sports a 12-14 handicap and trains and competes in that sport as well. Like many of our top athletes, Austin may eventually have to choose between sports. And, unfortunately, like many other sports, golf offers more high school programs, thousands of scholarships for college programs, and a thriving professional circuit supporting many professional players with lucrative careers. Austin has played on the junior high school golf team for a few years and competes in tournaments most of the summer when not training in table tennis overseas. During the summer he competes in golf with children 15 and under, he will try out for the high school golf team next fall.

Austin has some real advantages in table tennis. He has been raised in the sport with access to great instruction and training and competition opportunities. His coaches— Coach Li Zhenshi, Zhang Li, and also Emilia Georghe— have stressed the importance of technique first, worrying about results later.

Austin's parents feel that table tennis and golf are great cross training for each other. Each requires one to control your emotions, figure out a variety of actions that occur quite fast, and have a wide knowledge of a series of shots. Although one little white ball travels at 75 miles per hour and the other white ball is still, both require concentration and mental control. Scott Preiss hopes that Austin continues playing both golf and table tennis equally for the next few years. When Austin reaches his fifteenth birthday, it is likely that he will have a sense of where he needs to pick up the pace to do what he has to do. (Though college and scholarships are at the top of the list for Austin's parents.)

One day, Austin may play leave the eighteenth hole on Pebble Beach as a professional golfer and walk up the scenic path past the clubhouse and into the resort. On this day, however, table tennis was his primary concern, and Austin was the star of the show.

Austin and Scott Preiss are sponsored by Stiga and Escalade Sports and by Newgy Industries. These sponsors have been instrumental in supporting Austin's trips to China for training as well as creating table tennis appearances. Without great sponsors, it is difficult to attain a world level in table tennis.



Austin Preiss



More information about the Preiss' can be found at <http://pingpongman.com> or through Sports Unlimited at http://sportsu.com/services/demos/freestyle_table_tennis.php