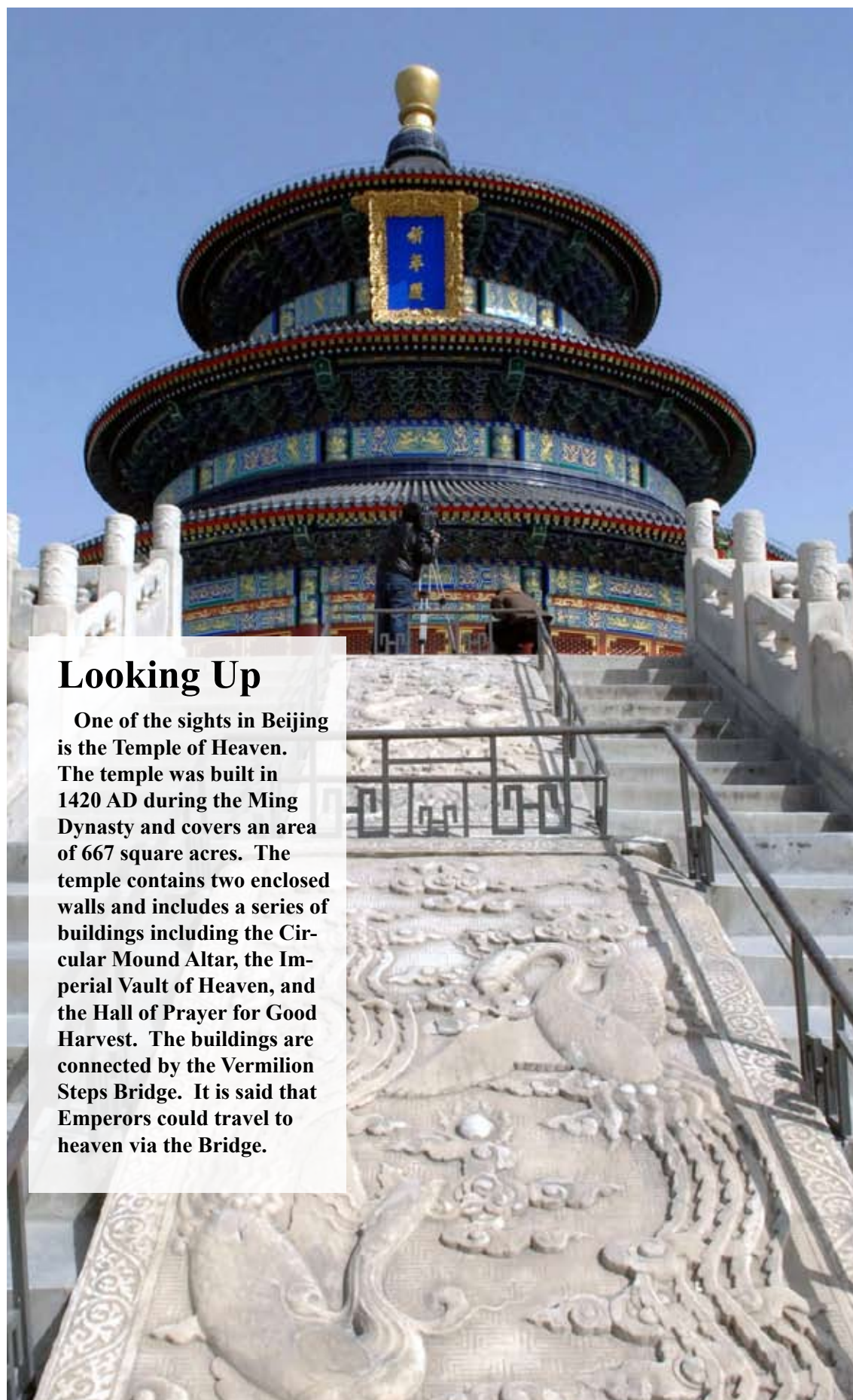




The People's Republic of China will serve as the host of the XXIX Olympic Games. China is one of the world's most ancient civilized nations and cultures (Chinese culture goes back more than 5,000 years). China has eclipsed 1.3 billion in population. Chinese is the national official language (and one of the six working languages) of the United Nations. The legal currency is the Renminbi, and the official standard time is the eighth Time Zone East ("Beijing Time") which is 8 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time and 12 hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Time.

Beijing is the host city of the games. Beijing also has a long history, more than 3,000 years in existence. It has served as a capital city for over 850 years. In more recent years it has become a fast growing, rapid paced, modern city. Beijing is the political and cultural center of China and serves 15 million residents. Visitors will be able to enjoy 7,309 sites of historical and cultural interest including the Temple of Heaven, the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace, and the Great Wall.



Looking Up

One of the sights in Beijing is the Temple of Heaven. The temple was built in 1420 AD during the Ming Dynasty and covers an area of 667 square acres. The temple contains two enclosed walls and includes a series of buildings including the Circular Mound Altar, the Imperial Vault of Heaven, and the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvest. The buildings are connected by the Vermilion Steps Bridge. It is said that Emperors could travel to heaven via the Bridge.

Olympic Events and Venues

In this year's Olympic games, 10,500 athletes will compete in 28 sports. All but two of the sports (sailing and football) will be centered in the 31 competition venues within Beijing.

Number of Athletes	Competition			Competition City & Sports	Competition Venues		Training Venues
	Sports	Disciplines	Events		Beijing	Outside Beijing	
10,500	28	38	302	Beijing: 26 sports	31	6	87
				*HK SAR: Equestrian			
				Qingdao: Sailing			
Co-host cities for football competitions: Tianjin, Shanghai, Qinhuangdao							

The 28 sports in the 2008 Summer Olympics are as follows: Aquatics (diving, swimming, synchronized swimming, water polo), Archery, Athletics (track and field), Badminton, Baseball, Basketball, Boxing, Canoeing (canoe / kayak flatwater racing and canoe / kayak slalom racing), Cycling, Equestrian, Fencing, Gymnastics (rhythmic, artistic and trampolines), Handball, Hockey, Judo, Modern Pentathlon (shooting, fencing, swimming, riding, cross-country running), Rowing, Sailing, Shooting, Soccer, Softball, Table Tennis, Taekwondo, Tennis, Triathlon, Volleyball, Weightlifting, and Wrestling.

Qualifying for Olympic Table Tennis

The main draw for singles includes 64 men and 64 women. The top 20 (for both the men and women events) were qualified by ITTF World Ranking with a maximum of two players per country. The next forty players qualified by a Continental qualification system and the remaining four players qualified as follows: one appointment from host nation, one Tripartite Commission Invitation place, and two from the Final World Qualification Event. There is a maximum of three players from the same country (3 men and 3 women).

	Men	Women
ITTF World Ranking, with a maximum of two (2) players per NOC	20	20
Continental qualification system	40	40
Tripartite Commission Invitation place	1	1
Host nation direct entry	1	1
Final World Qualification Event	2	2
	64	64

The continental qualification system allowed for six players from Africa, eleven from Asia, eleven from Europe, six from Latin America, three from North America, and three from Oceania. Each Continental Federation was responsible for holding its own qualification events. In the USA, the Olympic Trials were held in Philadelphia after which, the top four men and top four women then participated in the North American Olympic Trials in Capilano, Canada. Americans Gao Jun and Wang Chen qualified via ITTF World Ranking. Americans Crystal Huang and David Zhuang each qualified by winning events at the Capilano Trials.

The qualification process for the team events is somewhat different. Sixteen men's and 16 women's teams will compete. The top 6 teams from each Continent, 1 direct entry from the Host nation, and the 9 remaining teams are selected via World Rankings. For each continent, the highest ranked team with three players from the singles event qualification process listed above shall qualify. If no country has three qualified players for singles, then the country with the highest ranked two players will be allowed to select a third player to supplement the team (and if no country on the continent has more than one qualified player, then the country with the highest ranked qualifier may select two additional players to supplement the team). Other teams will be selected by World Rankings via the same process without regard to Continent.

The US qualified a women's team (Gao Jun, Wang Chen, and Crystal Huang), but did not qualify to compete in the men's team event.

Table Tennis Olympic Events

The Beijing Olympic table tennis competition will be held from August 13 to August 23, (days 5-15) at the Peking University Gymnasium. One hundred and seventy two athletes will compete including 86 men and 86 women. The competition will include four events: men's singles, women's singles, men's teams and women's teams.

Table Tennis Venue

The table tennis competition will be held at the Peking University gymnasium. It is a multi-purpose facility, but it was designed specifically with table tennis in mind. (Even the roof line features a smooth sphere with two ridges extending outward alluding to a rotation of the sphere). The facility contains 8,000 seats and will hold eight tables, enclosed within 16 meter by 8 meter surrounds.

Shown below: interior and exterior drawings of the gymnasium highlighting the unique roof. Photos courtesy of the USOC.





The Table Tennis Events begin on Wednesday, August 13 and conclude on Saturday, August 23.

Olympic Day	Day	Start	End	Event	Table			
Olympic Day 5	Wednesday, 13 August 2008	TT Day 1		Session TT01	Start: 10:00 End: 13:00	TABLE		
		10:00-13:00	Women's Team Group 1st rd Contest 1-4	1-8				
		10:00-13:00	Men's Team Group 1st rd Contest 1-4	1-8				
		Session TT02		Start: 14:30 End: 17:30	**			
		14:30-17:30	Women's Team Group 1st rd Contest 5-8	1-8				
		14:30-17:30	Men's Team Group 1st rd Contest 5-8	1-8				
		Session TT03		Start: 19:30 End: 22:30	**			
		19:30-22:30	Women's Team Group 2nd rd Contest 1-4	1-8				
		19:30-22:30	Men's Team Group 2nd rd Contest 1-4	1-8				
		Olympic Day 6	Thursday, 14 August 2008	TT Day 2		Session TT04	Start: 10:00 End: 13:00	TABLE
10:00-13:00	Women's Team Group 2nd rd Contest 5-8			1-8				
10:00-13:00	Men's Team Group 2nd rd Contest 5-8			1-8				
Session TT05				Start: 14:30 End: 17:30	**			
14:30-17:30	Women's Team Group 3rd rd Contest 1-4			1-8				
14:30-17:30	Men's Team Group 3rd rd Contest 1-4			1-8				
Session TT06				Start: 19:30 End: 22:30	**			
19:30-22:30	Women's Team Group 3rd rd Contest 5-8			1-8				
19:30-22:30	Men's Team Group 3rd rd Contest 5-8			1-8				
Olympic Day 7	Friday, 15 August 2008			TT Day 3		Session TT07	Start: 09:00 End: 12:00	TABLE
		09:00-12:00	Women's team Bronze play-off. First round Contest1-2	1-4				
		09:00-12:00	Men's team Bronze play-off. First round Contest1-2	1-4				
		Session TT08		Start: 14:30 End: 17:30	**			
		14:30-17:30	Women's Team 1/2 Final Contest 1	1				
		Session TT09		Start: 19:30 End: 22:30	**			
		19:30-22:30	Women's Team 1/2 Final Contest 2	1				
		Olympic Day 8	Saturday, 16 August 2008	TT Day 4		Session TT10	Start: 10:00 End: 13:00	TABLE
				10:00-13:00	Women's team Bronze play-off. Second round Contest1-2	1-2		
				Session TT11		Start: 14:30 End: 17:30	**	
14:30-17:30	men's Team 1/2 Final Contest 1			1				
Session TT12				Start: 19:30 End: 22:30	**			
19:30-22:30	men's Team 1/2 Final Contest 2			1				
Olympic Day 9	Sunday, 17 August 2008			TT Day 5		Session TT13	Start: 10:00 End: 13:00	TABLE
				10:00-13:00	men's team Bronze play-off. Second round Contest1-2	1-2		
				Session TT14		Start: 14:30 End: 17:30	**	
				14:30-17:30	Women's team Bronze Medal	1		
		Session TT15		Start: 19:30 End: 22:30	**			
		19:30-22:30	Women's team Final	1				
		**	Women's Team Medal Ceremony	**				
		Olympic Day 10	Monday, 18 August 2008	TT Day 6		Session TT16	Start: 09:00 End: 12:45	TABLE
				09:00-09:45	Women's Singles Preliminary rd Match 1-4	1-4		
				09:45-10:30	Women's Singles Preliminary rd Match 5-8	1-4		
10:30-11:15	Women's Singles Preliminary rd Match 9-12			1-4				
11:15-12:00	Women's Singles Preliminary rd Match 13-16			1-4				
12:00-12:45	Women's Singles Preliminary rd Match 17-20			1-4				
Session TT17				Start: 14:30 End: 17:30	**			
14:30-17:30	Men's Team Bronze Medal			1				
Session TT18				Start: 19:30 End: 22:30	**			
19:30-22:30	Men's Team Final			1				
**	Men's Team Medal Ceremony	**						

Olympic Day	Day	Start	End	Event	Table	
Olympic Day 11	Tuesday, 19 August 2008	TT Day 7		Session TT19	Start: 10:00 End: 16:00	TABLE
		10:00-10:45	Men's Singles Preliminary rd Match 1-4	1-4		
		10:45-11:30	Men's Singles Preliminary rd Match 5-8	1-4		
		11:30-12:15	Men's Singles Preliminary rd Match 9-12	1-4		
		12:15-13:00	Men's Singles Preliminary rd Match 13-16	1-4		
		13:00-13:45	Women's Singles 1st rd Match 1-4	1-4		
		13:45-14:30	Men's Singles 1st rd Match 1-4	1-4		
		14:30-15:15	Women's Singles 1st rd Match 5-8	1-4		
		15:15-16:00	Men's Singles 1st rd Match 5-8	1-4		
		Session TT20		Start: 18:00 End: 22:00	TABLE	
18:00-18:45	Women's Singles 1st rd Match 9-12	1-4				
18:45-19:30	Men's Singles 1st rd Match 9-12	1-4				
19:30-20:15	Women's Singles 1st rd Match 13-16	1-4				
20:15-21:00	Men's Singles 1st rd Match 13-16	1-4				
21:00-22:00	Women's Singles 2nd rd Match 1-4	1-4				
Olympic Day 12	Wednesday, 20 August 2008	TT Day 8		Session TT21	Start: 10:00 End: 16:00	TABLE
		10:00-11:00	Women's Singles 2nd rd Match 5-8	1-4		
		11:00-12:00	Men's Singles 2nd rd Match 1-4	1-4		
		12:00-13:00	Women's Singles 2nd rd Match 9-12	1-4		
		13:00-14:00	Women's Singles 2nd rd Match 13-16	1-4		
		14:00-15:00	Men's Singles 2nd rd Match 5-8	1-4		
		15:00-16:00	Women's Singles 3rd rd Match 1-4	1-4		
		Session TT22		Start: 18:00 End: 23:00	TABLE	
		18:00-19:00	Women's Singles 3rd rd Match 5-8	1-4		
		19:00-20:00	Men's Singles 2nd rd Match 9-12	1-4		
20:00-21:00	Women's Singles 3rd rd Match 9-12	1-4				
21:00-22:00	Women's Singles 3rd rd Match 13-16	1-4				
22:00-23:00	Men's Singles 2nd rd Match 13-16	1-4				
Olympic Day 13	Thursday, 21 August 2008	TT Day 9		Session TT23	Start: 10:00 End: 16:00	TABLE
		10:00-11:00	Women's Singles 4th rd Match 1-4	1-4		
		11:00-12:00	Women's Singles 4th rd Match 5-8	1-4		
		12:00-13:00	Men's Singles 3rd rd Match 1-4	1-4		
		13:00-14:00	Men's Singles 3rd rd Match 5-8	1-4		
		14:00-15:00	Men's Singles 3rd rd Match 9-12	1-4		
		15:00-16:00	Men's Singles 3rd rd Match 13-16	1-4		
		Session TT24		Start: 18:00 End: 22:00	TABLE	
		18:00-19:00	Women's Singles QF Match 1-2	1-2		
		19:00-20:00	Women's Singles QF Match 3-4	1-2		
20:00-21:00	Men's Singles 4th rd Match 1-4	1-4				
21:00-22:00	Men's Singles 4th rd Match 5-8	1-4				
Olympic Day 14	Friday, 22 August 2008	TT Day 10		Session TT25	Start: 10:00 End: 12:00	TABLE
		10:00-11:00	Women's Singles SF Match 1	1		
		11:00-12:00	Women's Singles SF Match 2	1		
		Session TT26		Start: 13:30 End: 17:30	**	
		13:30-14:30	Men's Singles QF Match 1	1		
		14:30-15:30	Men's Singles QF Match 2	1		
		15:30-16:30	Men's Singles QF Match 3	1		
		16:30-17:30	Men's Singles QF Match 4	1		
		Session TT27		Start: 19:30 End: 21:30	**	
		19:30-20:30	Women's Singles Bronze Medal	1		
20:30-21:30	Women's Singles Final	1				
**	Women's Singles Medal Ceremony	**				
Olympic Day 15	Saturday, 23 August 2008	TT Day 11		Session TT28	Start: 10:00 End: 12:00	TABLE
		10:00-11:00	Men's Singles SF Match 1	1		
		11:00-12:00	Men's Singles SF Match 2	1		
		Session TT29		Start: 19:30 End: 21:30	**	
		19:30-20:30	Men's Singles Bronze Medal	1		
		20:30-21:30	Men's Singles Final	1		
		**	Men's Singles Medal Ceremony	**		

Event Format

Singles

Singles events will be played in knock-out and play-off.

The winner of each match will advance to the next round and the loser will be eliminated. The winners of the two semifinal matches will advance to the gold medal match; the winner of this match will receive the gold medal and the loser will receive the silver medal. The losers of the two semifinal matches will compete for the bronze medal.

All matches shall be the best of seven games, each game with 11 points. A game shall be won by the player first scoring 11 points unless both players score 10 points, when the game shall be won by the first player subsequently gaining a lead of 2 points. There is an interval of up to one minute between successive games of an individual match; a player may claim one time-out period of up to one minute during an individual match. Players may receive advice from a coach during the intervals between games or during other authorized suspension of play.

Teams

The teams competition will be held in two stages. The first stage is group round robin; the second stage is knock-out.

In the first stage, the 16 participating teams will be divided into four groups of four teams (Groups A-D). The four highest ranked teams will go to Group A to D respectively. The remaining teams will be drawn in ranking order, two at a time into Groups A, B, C and D. The group round robin system will be used to decide the places in each group.

In the second stage, the winning teams of each group shall play-off, in a knockout semifinal format for the Gold and Silver Medals. The second placed teams of each group and the semifinal contest losers shall play-off for the Bronze medal.

A team match at the Olympic competition is called a *contest*. Each contest consists of four Singles matches and one Doubles match. All Singles matches and Doubles match in a contest are the best of five.

Two teams in a contest play in the following order:

(Order Type ABC team XYZ team)

1 Singles: A v. X

2 Singles: B v. Y

Captain Chooses Doubles Pair During a Five

Minute Break

3 Doubles: C and A (or B) v. Z and X (or Y)

Five Minute Break

4 Singles: A or B (whichever did not play Doubles) v. Z

5 Singles: C v. X or Y (whichever did not play

Doubles)

Team USA and the Road to Qualification by Doru Gheorghe

Men and Women Singles:

ITTF World Ranking: The first criteria to qualify to the Olympic Games is through the ITTF World Ranking. The top 20 in the ITTF World Ranking List as of January 1, 2008 (but not more than two players per country) qualify for the '08 Olympics. (For example, if China has eight players in the top 20, only two of them can directly qualify to Olympics through this criteria.) Based on this, Gao Jun and Wang Chen qualified directly to the Olympic Games.

By an agreement between Pan Americas and the ITTF: The winner of the Pan Am Games in Men's and Women's Singles automatically qualifies to the Olympic Games. This is a specific rule set by an agreement between Pan Americas and the ITTF.

Continental Qualification: Another way to qualify to the Olympics is through the Continental Qualification. Each continent has been allocated a certain number of spots for the Men and Women's singles and in the U.S., the first step of that qualification process required that a USATT member try out and finish in the top four (per gender) at the US Trials. The eight US players who qualified to advance to the North American Trials were: (Women) Crystal Huang, Nan Li, Jackie Lee, and Whitney Ping and (Men) David Zhuang, Han Xiao, Eric Owens, and Cheng Yinghua.

Gao Jun, as the winner of the 2007 Pan Am Games, was a direct qualifier to the '08 Summer Games, but because she also qualified through her World Ranking (above), the North American Continent still had the opportunity to qualify another woman, to make the total three. The North American Olympic Trials were held in Vancouver, Canada on April 4-6. Eight athletes competed (four USA and four Canadian players per each gender) playing for the three spots/ gender in order to qualify. Since the U.S. women's

team had already qualified two athletes through the ITTF World Rankings, only one spot was available for the Continent. Crystal Huang won the Women's singles in the first day and qualified for the singles and team events of the Olympics.

On Men's side, the first two days went to Canada but the third day was a USA final between David Zhuang and Han Xiao. David won and qualified as the only U.S. male athlete to play in Olympics in Men's Singles event.

Final World Qualification Tournament: The last opportunity to qualify to the Olympics; countries not having qualified three players/ gender had the opportunity to send their player(s) (pending the number of qualified players from that country) to try and qualify for the remaining spots available/gender.

Team Event:

The qualification criteria for the team event is based on the number of players qualified in singles and the place of the team in the team World Rankings. Obviously, the more players you have qualified through the first two criteria and the higher a team is ranked in the Team WR, the greater the chances are that a country will have a team qualified for the Olympics. Each continent had one team allocated, the host country one team, and nine additional teams based on the World Team Ranking, to make the 16 teams total for the team events.

Since USA qualified three athletes in singles and Canada only two athletes, the Continental quota for the Women's Team went to USA. On the men side, Canada qualified two and USA only one, so Canada received the Continental quota and will have a men's team at the Olympics.



Gao Jun

Height: 5' 6"

Weight: 150 lbs.

Birthdate: January 25, 1969

Birthplace: Baoding, Hebei, China

Hometown: Gaithersburg, Md

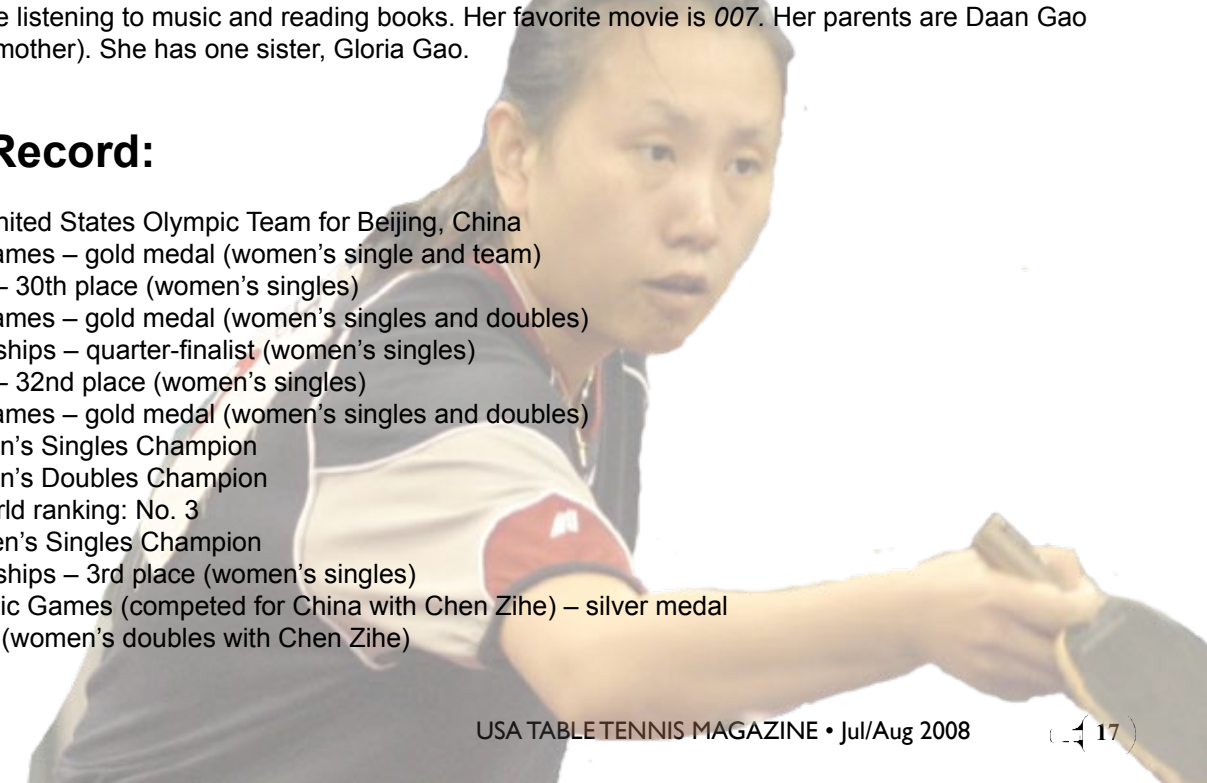
Coach: Teodor "Doru" Gheorghe

Personal:

Gao started playing table tennis when she was five. Her father, Daan Gao, was a table tennis fan, so he sent her to one of the best athletic schools in China. She thanks her father for this, saying, without him she wouldn't have her table tennis career. In China, athletic schools are special schools for training future professional athletes. Students in Gao's school majored in different fields, including table tennis, gymnastics, and martial arts. Her school was a boarding school. Every day, after academic classes, she would train for several hours. Her first lesson in table tennis was to learn how to use a paddle to bounce the ball against the wall without letting the ball drop. It was a great exercise for steadiness and control. After that, she went on to tables to play, and older students would practice with younger students. Later on, she began competing with other athletic schools in the same province. After winning a silver medal in the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games for her native country China, Gao has since become a U.S. citizen. Gao graduated from East China University of Science and Technology in Shanghai, China, with a degree in economic trade. She is fluent in Chinese. Hobbies include listening to music and reading books. Her favorite movie is *007*. Her parents are Daan Gao (father) and Jinfang Yu (mother). She has one sister, Gloria Gao.

Competition Record:

- 2008 – Member of the United States Olympic Team for Beijing, China
- 2007 – Pan American Games – gold medal (women's single and team)
- 2004 – Olympic Games – 30th place (women's singles)
- 2003 – Pan American Games – gold medal (women's singles and doubles)
- 2003 – World Championships – quarter-finalist (women's singles)
- 2000 – Olympic Games – 32nd place (women's singles)
- 1999 – Pan American Games – gold medal (women's singles and doubles)
- 1996-2001 – U.S. Women's Singles Champion
- 1996-2001 – U.S. Women's Doubles Champion
- 1994-1995 – Highest world ranking: No. 3
- 1994 – U.S. Open Women's Singles Champion
- 1993 – World Championships – 3rd place (women's singles)
- 1992 – Barcelona Olympic Games (competed for China with Chen Zihe) – silver medal
- 1991 – World Champion (women's doubles with Chen Zihe)



Photos (left) USOC, (right) by Diego Schaaf, Artwork by Steve Reiling



Wang Chen

Height: 5' 10"

Weight: 140 lbs.

Birthdate: January 17, 1974

Birthplace: Beijing, China

Hometown: New York, N.Y.

Coach: Teodor "Doru" Gheorghe

Personal:

Wang currently works as a table tennis club manager. Hobbies including reading and swimming. She has both English and Chinese songs on her I-Pod. Her favorite movie is *Forrest Gump*, and favorite television show is NBC's classic, *Friends*. Wang says her personality makes her a special person. Her parents are Tongsheng Wong (father) and Huakai Li (mother). She has one sister, Sari Wong. Her husband is Yue Zhou.

Competition Record:

- 2008 – Member of the United States Olympic Team for Beijing, China
- 2007 – Pan American Games – gold medal team, bronze medal in women's singles
- 2007 – World Championships Women's Singles – 5th place
- 2007 - North American Champion (women's singles)
- 2006 - North American Champion (women's singles)



Photos (left) USOC, (right) by Diego Schaaf, Artwork by Steve Reiling



Crystal Huang

Height: 5' 3"

Weight: 110 lbs.

Birthdate: July 8, 1979

Birthplace: Changsha, Hlinan, China

Hometown: San Gabriel, Calif.

Coach: Teodor "Doru" Gheorghe

Personal:

Huang is fluent in Chinese. Her parents are Wen Zhi Hu (father) and Ke Min Huang (mother). Huang has one brother, David Hu. She is the youngest of our three U.S. women.

Competition Record:

- 2008 – Member of the United States Olympic Team for Beijing, China
- 2008 - Top finisher at the U.S. Olympic Trials
- 2006 - Southern California Women's Singles Champion
- 2005 - U.S. Women's Doubles Champion
- 2005 - Mixed Doubles Runner-up
- 2005 - U.S. Open Under 30 Women's Champion
- 2004 - Southern California Women's Singles Champion
- 1993-98 Member of Dongguang City Team (China)
- 1990-92 Member of Hunan Province Team (China)



Photos (left) by Steve Hopkins, (right) by NewSport Photo. Artwork by Steve Reiling



David Zhuang

Height: 5' 10"
Weight: 170 lbs.
Birthdate: September 1, 1963
Birthplace: Guangzhou, China
Hometown: West Windsor, N.J.
Coach: Joannie Fu

Personal:

Zhuang graduated from Guangzhou High in 1981 where he competed in table tennis for four years, and won several province men's singles champion titles. He continued to compete in table tennis while attending Guangzhou Sports College and graduated in 1985 with a bachelor's of arts degree in physical education. He is fluent in Chinese (Cantonese). His current occupation is table tennis player and coach. His hobbies include soccer, basketball, and music. His favorite movie is *Titanic*, and favorite television show is *Seinfeld*. Zhuang's role model is Michael Jordan because of the passion and hardwork Jordan puts forth for his sports, as well as his talents and sportsmanship. Zhuang's love and dedication to the sport of table tennis (and how he always pushes himself to be the best in the hopes of fulfilling his dreams and goals) makes him unique. He applies the same principals of dedication and hardwork to the students that he coaches. His parents are Biao Ouan Zhuang (father) and Xue Fen Hua (mother). He has one brother, Hao Xiang Zhuang. He and his wife, Joannie Fu, have two children: Zoe (10 years) and Cassidy (5 years).

Competition Record:

- 2008 - Member of the U.S. Olympic Team for Beijing, China
- 2006 - U.S. Men's Singles Champion
- 2006 - U.S. Men's Doubles Champion
- 2003 - U.S. Men's Doubles Champion
- 2001 - U.S. Men's Doubles Champion
- 2000 - Member of the U.S. Olympic Team for Sydney, Australia
- 2000 - U.S. Men's Singles Champion
- 2000 - U.S. Men's Doubles Champion
- 1999 - Member of US Pan American Team – gold medal in men's singles and team
- 1999 - U.S. Men's Doubles Champion
- 1998 - U.S. Men's Singles Champion
- 1996 - Member of the U.S. Olympic Team for Atlanta
- 1995 - U.S. Men's Singles Champion
- 1994 - U.S. Men's Singles Champion
- 1994 - U.S. Men's Doubles Champion
- 1993 - U.S. Men's Doubles Champion
- 1992 - U.S. Men's Doubles Champion





CHINA

TABLE TENNIS IN TODAY'S CHINA

By Christian Lillieroos

In the year of the Olympics, when all the world's eyes are focused on China, table tennis connoisseurs will want to know if table tennis will have a focal point in the Olympic and Paralympics; and also, just how big table tennis really is in China, as it is the national sport.

I have worked in many parts of the world with Table Tennis, but the last two and a half years I took a step away from sports, working most of my time in China in a non-sport capacity. My first year I was working in to prepare a Chinese company to go public in the USA, after that my work involved going back and forth between China and the U.S. In my business dealings in China I have seen the reaction and the respect for table tennis from a more neutral point of view, compared to when I worked with table tennis professionally.

The history of table tennis in China started with Mao Zedong. At the end of the 1949 revolution, when the communist party took over the control of China, the country had several problems with opium use. Mao Zedong had the vision to use table tennis as a tool to fight the drug. The sport needed less space per court than many other sports, which worked well in highly populated China. The high level of eye-hand coordination and quickness needed to play table tennis meant that if someone used opium you could tell directly. Another benefit was the normal exercise associated with sports. At the time China was not a member of the International Olympic Committee (table tennis was not an Olympic sport anyway), but the International Table Tennis Federation accepted the Peoples Republic of China as a national member, therefore P.R.C. had international competition opportunities only with the sport of table tennis. So Mao Zedong then made the national order, "Play Table Tennis", and the Chinese said, "Yes Chairman" and that created 100-plus million active tournament players.

This trend for the sport continued until the early 1980s when China finally was accepted as a member into the International Olympic Committee. The beginning of their acceptance process started with the 1971 Pong Diplomacy between President Nixon and Chairman Mao. For ten more years China continued to use table tennis as their diplomatic and business tool with the international community. They organized several international tournaments like the Asia/Africa Championships in 1975, and others. In 1979 the USA and China opened up official diplomatic relations. In 1984 China participated in its first Olympic Games in Los Angeles. From 1975 up until 1989 the Chinese Table Tennis Team dominated the world of table tennis. They were accused of losing so called "Friendship matches" to nations in order to improve relations, and many times they did not play with their best players. It was in 1989, when Sweden embarrassed the Chinese table tennis machine by winning almost everything on the men's side, that China had to conform to normal training and selection routines like any other nation. (At that time, the Chinese team played with the outdated pips out rubber sheet and did not use re-gluing, and most of them had only good forehands and mediocre backhands and played with the traditional pen hold grip. Li Furong China's head coach said correctly that it would take five years before the Chinese team could regroup with new styles and a younger generation.)

At the World Championships in 1995 China took back the world crown by winning every one of the seven titles, and only lost one silver medal. They played with Luo (with a new reverse backhand pen hold style that they learned from a Bulgarian penholder), Kong Linghui (Waldner inspired), and Lu Chiwei (a defender with the best forehand loop against loop in the world), and Wang Tao (shake hand with pips-out on backhand with a tremendous defense close to the table). China had developed high level coaching and selected the best players and used a variety of styles and was creative to again become the best in the world. Since then China has dominated both the Men's and Women's side with a few lost titles to Sweden in the late 1990.

In the 1980s China started to change its economic policies through the initiatives of Deng Zhao ping, and by the

1990s China started to open up to the rest of the world. China was by then also affected by the marketing initiatives by the capitalistic world, therefore the competition from other sports started to have an effect on that elite pool of who played table tennis. In today's China, with internet and television a part of the day-to-day life for many Chinese, the international market has a big impact. The typical example of that is basketball. In China you see the face of Yao Ming everywhere doing commercials for everything. This year alone NBA invested \$300 million in basketball in China. They bought a big ownership stake in the China national basketball league, and every day you see NBA promotional slots on television. In today's China the youth are no longer interested in table tennis, they all want to play basketball. Basketball courts show up everywhere. Every NBA game is televised in China, and though table tennis is still shown, it is much less present than basketball and soccer. As a consequence, interest in the sport of table tennis is waning. One significant reason for it is that table tennis is not popular in the USA. Today China is dependent on U.S. popularity for something to be popular in China. After all, a huge percentage of the world's TV time is from the USA and therefore most of the sport marketing money is coming from the U.S.

In the USA, table tennis is only recognized as a sport by one entity and that is the U.S. Olympic Committee. No other organization has table tennis as an official sport like NCAA, NIRSA, and high schools sport associations, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA. The greatest recognition table tennis has gotten in this country is from the Ping Pong diplomacy with China almost forty years ago in 1971. Recently, table tennis celebrated that with a "rematch"; together with the Nixon library, and the event again created much publicity for the sport. This connection with China is one of the last hopes we have to get to Chinese business money, to help develop table tennis here in the U.S. which would trickle down to help further promote table tennis in China as well as the rest of the world.

Because of the history of the sport, all Chinese citizens over 40 know how to play table tennis. They are also the people who now have influence in the new wealthy Chinese business community. Table tennis today is like a business sport in a similar way to golf here in the United States. To play table tennis in China is very expensive. It can cost up to \$100. USD per month to play in a club with a famous player as the head pro. The purchase of table tennis equipment is also more expensive in China than in the U.S. The main reason being that China has many table tennis stores, whereas here we sell mostly mail order, often from internet sites; so we do not have the extra markup. China also needs influence from the USA in how to market the sport. To just play because your Chairman says so, is not good enough anymore. Basketball is marketed based on NBA principles and is very successful. Table tennis in China and the U.S. need each other to not lose a generation of athletes. "Table Tennis Diplomacy: the next Generation" is what we need in partnering with the Nixon library and both China's and USA's Chambers of Commerce to create politically and commercially viable benefits for both parties. As a result table tennis can flourish.





Table Tennis Olympic Memories – 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games

By: Richard McAfee, Competition Manager for Table Tennis, 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games

The Sports World's attention will soon be focused on the greatest sporting event in the world, the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. It seems just yesterday that the same focus was on the last Summer Olympic Games to be held in the United States, the 1996 Atlanta Games. What most people see while watching the games in person or on film is a well produced showcase of the world's great athletes with all the drama of the competition, the heartbreak of losing... and the joy of winning an Olympic Medal. While everyone can see and enjoy what happens on the field of play, there are many compelling stories that remain untold. I would like to share some of these behind-the-scenes stories with all of you.

I had the privilege of serving as the Competition Manager for Table Tennis during the 1996 Atlanta Games. What is a Competition Manager? Basically it is the person in charge of everything that touches the athlete or the field of play. It was my job to provide information to the twenty-seven functional departments of the organizing committee and oversee their work on the table tennis events. This included everything from venue design, to staffing the event, training the staff, designing the tournament schedule, accreditation, athlete services, transportation of the athletes, staff, and officials, awards ceremonies, event production and much more. In the end, more than 200 volunteers and 15 full-time staff worked two years getting ready for and conducting the table tennis events. Our staff actually ran three separate major events, the 2005 World Team Championship (the venue test event), the 1996 Olympic Table Tennis Events, and the 1996 Atlanta Paralympic Events.

The Olympic Venue

The 1996 Atlanta Olympic Table Tennis Events were held at the Georgia Congress Convention Center– Hall D, over a period of nine days. Some one hundred and ninety-two athletes took part. Four other sports were also going on at the same time, in separate halls within the Convention Center. Because of this, great coordination between the events was necessary regarding the flow of some thirty thousand combined spectators in and out of the Convention Center. Just the logistics of re-supplying the Convention Center each night were staggering as often 75 to 100 trucks would be lined up to make deliveries at the loading docks.

Creating a world-class table tennis venue for both the spectators and athletes is not an easy or inexpensive task. I would estimate the build-out for the table tennis venue to have cost some two million plus dollars. If you were at the competition, you would have seen a beautifully decorated venue with state of the art portable modular seating. This advanced seating construction system allowed us to change the venue design on the fly and to add overnight an additional one thousand seats when the field of play was reduced from eight tables down to four. The seating was actually rented from a company from Ireland at a cost of \$128 each seat, for a total of more than \$760,000. Spectators also enjoyed large custom scoreboards on each court as well as a large hanging scoreboard showing the results of all the matches. Speaking of results, I worked with the engineers from IBM to create a statistics capture system, on lap-top computers located courtside, that kept track of each stroke that won or lost a point. This information was available in real-time to the television announcers. Players and coaches could also access the information



at the Olympic Village to study their new opponent.

Each session of matches was professionally produced much like a stage play with every entrance and exit planned. All announcements were made in both English and French. Athletes enjoyed excellent lights 1200-plus lux, along with the extra large Olympic sized courts, 8 by 16 meters. The flooring consisted of ITTF approved court mats over especially constructed raised wooden sub-flooring. Air-flow was controlled through a series of computer controlled air-vents than allowed us to keep the spectators cool but at the same time not have any moving air over the playing area. To further control the air movement, everyone entering or leaving the venue had to go through a series of air-locks that prevented the decompression of the playing hall.

The “Back of the House”

While the venue itself was impressive, what the spectators could not see, “the back of the house”, was even more interesting. Located right behind the temporary walls and pipe and drape, but within the same hall, was a whole world of offices and support services. These included: training/warm-up area (16 tables), locker rooms, transportation services, staff offices, sports information desk, athlete lounge, medical services, language services, conference room, officials' lounge, ITTF offices, press rooms, glue room, VIP lounge, security, and a drug-testing lab.

Sports and politics

One of the unfortunate trends in the holding of any large event is that someone or some country will try to use it to send a political message. One of the main functions of a Competition Manager is to protect the ability of the athletes to give their best effort during the competition but sometimes the athletes themselves are used as tools by their own countries or even by the spectators. Here are a couple of political battles that took place within the table tennis events in Atlanta.

Keep them apart

Athletes most often arrive at the Olympic Venue several weeks before the Games begin, in order to train in the actual competition hall. Before this training phase began, I received requests in writing from several countries not to allow their athletes to come in contact with each other during training. One of the strongest letters was hand delivered by a North Korean Official demanding that the North and South Korean Teams be kept apart at all times. However, once the two teams arrived, athletes from both teams asked if we could arrange for them to be in the hall at the same time. It turned out that they were all friends, who had not seen each other for a long time and were eager to do so. In keeping with the Olympic Spirit, we allowed their request. When both teams showed up at the same time for training, the coaches turned their backs and allowed the good friends a few minutes of time to say hello.

A test of wills

We had a major problem on our first day of competition, as the athletes from one country were clearly trying to delay and disrupt the competition. They were ignoring requests to line-up for the athlete marches and even refusing to leave the field of play correctly after the match. The end result was that a couple of matches started several minutes late. This was a major problem as our many television contracts called for exact starting times. It was made very clear to our staff that the athletes were acting this way because of the current unfavorable political relations between their country and our own. As this was one of the dominant teams of our sport, the problem could have been a major one.

When the International Olympic Committee made it clear to me that they would tolerate no more late starts, I had to take some immediate action to correct the situation. I requested a private meeting with the team leaders and explained how their athlete's actions, if they were to continue, would place the whole sport of

table tennis into a bad light with the IOC. They, of course, denied their athletes had behaved in this manner. I also told them that I had taken the blame for the late start the first day and had not discussed the actions of their athletes with the IOC. I then made it very plain that if this behavior continued, I would have them discuss the issue directly with the IOC. This was a very frank exchange and I was not entirely sure what the outcome would be. Much to my relief, one of the team leaders returned to my office a short time later with a small gift from their country and I knew things would get better. From then on, there were no more problems from their athletes.

Politics and the crowd

During the Women's Singles Final, politics raised its ugly head once more. In the Final, Deng Yaping from China was playing Chen Jing from Chinese Taipei, in a great match. In attendance were many of the top officials from the Chinese Government and also Juan Antonio Samaranch, IOC President. Early on in the match, a number of spectators began waving the flag of the Republic of China, which is not allowed to be displayed in the Games and is very offensive to the Chinese government. The displaying of any flags in the stands was not allowed and the spectators involved had brought the flags in under their clothes. Our staff worked quickly to explain the rules involving flags to those involved and to collect the flags. All but two persons complied and unfortunately, they had to be forcibly removed from the venue. The whole situation was handled very quickly without disruption to the match itself.

Personal Memories

My fondest memories of the Games are of the great staff that I had to work with. We all walked together through the spotlight and pressure of having the whole world watching your every move. We proved that the United States could put on a first rate table tennis event and I believe we earned a small amount of respect from a very doubting International Table Tennis Community. There were so many people on staff that made major contributions to the success of the 1996 Atlanta Games that I could not possibly mention all of them in this article. I would like to mention just a few of the key people including: Richard Butler, Christian Lilleroos, Larry Thoman, Matt Beebe, Richard Evans, Hawley Chester, W.C. Cleveland, Fred Austin, Yvonne Kronlodge, Terri Weaver, Mike Wetzel, Ross Brown, John Allen, Diane McAfee, Pam Taylor, Tim Boggan, Sheri Pittman, and Jim McQueen, and many others. My apologies for those I am leaving out. To all of the staff that contributed to the excellence of the Atlanta Games, you were simply the best.

Every city hosting an Olympic Games looks at the Games that have gone on before and then tries to raise their own to an even higher standard. In a very short time, the Beijing Games will raise this bar of excellence to a new height and in doing so also display the unique culture that is China. Their Competition Manager will soon have his own stories to tell.

