



## 2009 JOOLA North American Tour Finals



October 3-4, 2009  
Balboa Park Activity Center  
San Diego, CA

by Alan Williams

The 2009 North American Tour, which started with February's Western Open at UC Berkeley, reached its conclusion with the Tour Finals in San Diego's Balboa Park. The 2009 JOOLA NA Tour events in between saw a record attendance, outstanding play and plenty of bonding through athletic competition. This tournament marked the tenth full season of North American Tour events, the only professionally managed series of four-star tournaments in America. Sponsored by JOOLA, Gerflor, Senoda, and featuring the Ying-Lo Junior Competitions and the Sol Feingold Memorial Senior events, the Tour criss-crossed the country in 2009 to reach its final weekend in San Diego.

As the penultimate event of the JOOLA Tour, it was delightful to have a skilled and powerful field of competitors and several "movers and shakers" of the sport in attendance. It made a great capstone to a record-breaking year. In addition to John Miller, Alan Williams and Richard Lee at the control desk, Referee Linda Hsing and her assistant Lee Kondo oversaw play, which was conflict-free and ran smoothly.

Better than 300 spectators were in the hall to see the Championship Final, a great match that brought the season to a dramatic conclusion. Stephen Wang, Finalist from the San Diego Open in April when DJ Alto upset him

for the title, pulled out a clutch win, 16-14 in the seventh game against Thilina Piyadasa, who was appearing in his first JOOLA NA Tour Final. You couldn't have scripted a better, more *Hollywood* outcome for the tournament or the season, as the spectators watched Piyadasa come back from a three games to one deficit to tie the match. The expanded prize money at Tour Finals gave Stephen \$2500 for his win and \$1000 to Thilina for his valiant effort.

There was a lot to like on the playing floor, not all of which made it's way to the winner's list below. There was the radiant glow of victory when Larry Bavley defeated the worthy Kazuhiro Kamada in a first-time meeting. There was the exuberant joy of Adam Bobrow, the back-court lobber as he drew Table 1 assignments for two straight matches. There was the reappearance in tournament play of Sandeep Mahat ("I've been away from the game a few years and just started playing again the past couple of months"). There was newcomer Isaac Chao, all youthful enthusiasm and with a hundred questions about 'how this works' and the unflappable veteran Che-Him Leung, winner of both the Over 50 and Over 60 Sol Feingold Memorial Events, moving gracefully and with great dignity through the competition.

Alan Tanti and Theodore Tran were everywhere, going deep into the Ying-Lo Junior Competitions and managing to make matching finals for the U-1850 and U-1700 events. Spirited and inexhaustible, these "kids" have bright futures and showed great sportsmanship in always being ready to play. Likewise, it was a pleasure to have the wondrous Women's Champion, Mai Gei Jie. She has the heart of a warrior and the skills to match, reaching Open Singles semi-finals with her determined, focused play.

As the North American Tour now moves into a second decade, these are the moments we treasure and are re-

warded by, the inspiration for our efforts. Table Tennis as a sport is coming up in this country, and if the Tour has helped in some small way, we are glad of it. But it's the matches, the jokes and laughter, the flirtations and new friends, the inspired victories and the hard-fought defeats that define our tournament community as together we share our love of the game.



Photos: (top left) Gei Jie Mai, Thilina Piyadasa, Cheng Yi Du, (left) Steven Wang, (right) Thilina Piyadasa, (lower right) Olivier Madier & Robert Shahnazari, DJ Alto, and Natalie Sun Photos by Gerry Chua

Open: Steven Wang d. Thilina Piyadasa 6,9,-7,3,-11,-9,14  
Under22 Women's: Brana Vlastic d. Natalie Sun  
Under18 Boy's: Don James Alto d. Ethan Chua  
Under13 Boy's: Theodore Tran d. Alan Tanti  
Under13 Girl's: Emmy Cheng d. Hannah Tong  
Over40: Guillermo Munoz d. Rob Van Lier  
Under2500: Truong Manh Tu d. Tuan Dai Le  
Under2375: Salvador Uribe d. David Umel Jr.

Under2250: Quoc Bao Nguyen d. Gabriel Calderon  
Under2125: Jorge Navarro d. Koji Kido  
Under2000: Kyle Morgenroth d. Guido Schnabel  
Under1850: Alan Tanti d. Theodore Tran  
Under1700: Alan Tanti d. Theodore Tran  
Under1550: Brian Bradley d. Newman Cheng  
Under1400: Alejandra Cuevas d. Dai Wu  
Under1100: Hung Ju (Andrew) Lia d. Victor Nguyen  
Under950: Hung Ju (Andrew) Liao d. Howard

Tong  
Under800/Unrated: Garret Lin d. John Lin  
U4200 Doubles: Gabriel Calderon & Alejandro Rios d. Marco Sanchez Jr. & Alicia Sanchez  
U3200 Doubles: Michael Chen & Theodore Tran d. Andrew B. Kahng & Aidan H. Kahng  
Women's Singles: Gei Jie Mai, 1st; Natalie Sun 2nd  
Under22 Men's: Salvador Uribe 1st; Alejandro Rios 2nd  
Under18 Girl's: Charleen Hsieh 1st; Willa

Tammy Gu 2nd  
Under16 Boy's: Ignacio Ascencio 1st; Ethan Chua 2nd  
Under16 Girl's: Jasmine Nguyen 1st; Hannah Tong 2nd  
Over50: Che-Him Leung 1st; Kazuhiro Kamada 2nd  
Over60: Che-Him Leung 1st; Michael Bachtler 2nd  
Under1250: Michael Chen 1st; Andrew Nguyen 2nd

Open Singles  
Finals: Steven Wang d. Thilina Piyadasa 6,9,-7,3,-11,-9,14  
Semis: Thilina Piyadasa d. Gei Jie Mai -4,8,8,-5,6,12  
Semis: Steven Wang d. Cheng Yi Du 6,-4,9,9,9  
Quarters: Gei Jie Mai d. Guillermo Munoz 7,-3,-10,5,9,5  
Quarters: Thilina Piyadasa d. Don James Alto -9,6,7,-12,6,-2,5  
Quarters: Steven Wang d. Guo Hui Lu 8,8,-

7,-8,5,13  
Quarters: Cheng Yi Du d. Weijian Zhang 6,12,5,-9,-11,9