

# Worthy Contenders

## Wang Xinyue and Wu Yue: From Beijing to New York

by Stephanie Shih

Wang Xinyue (Taylor) and Wu Yue (Jennifer) arrived in New York at Wang Chen's Table Tennis Club. They have made quite a splash, playing in nearly every local tournament since their arrival in November and enjoying significant success. Competition among New York players has always been notoriously fierce, but these girls have established themselves as more-than-worthy contenders. They turn heads whenever they play, not only because of their talent, but also because it has been a long time since US table tennis has seen female players give normally dominant men a run for their money. Both Wang, age 18, and Wu, age 19, have extensive backgrounds in table tennis. In Beijing, their home city, they played for the Beijing Women's Team from 2001 to 2008. Highlights for Wang were the 2008 China Nationals, where she won the bronze in the Women's Teams event for Division C, and the 2006 Chinese National Invitational, where she won the silver in the Women's Teams event. Highlights for Wu were the 2007 ITTF WJC Taiyuan Junior Open, where she won the Junior Girls' Singles and Teams events, and the 2005 Chinese National Invitational, where she won the Women's Singles event. Wu is most proud of her performance in Taiyuan, because it is the only ITTF tournament she has been given the opportunity to play in, and because taking the gold for both Junior Girls' events exceeded even her own expectations. Additional highlights for Wu include serving as a personal practice partner for some of the world's top women players, including Zhang Yining and Guo Yan, as well as for the 2008 Austrian Women's Olympic team.

Their success has not stopped there; since coming to the United States, Wang (rated 2513) and Wu (rated 2592) have caused quite a stir, starting at the 2008 JOOLA North American Teams Championships. This was their first major tournament in the US, where they recorded their most noteworthy wins with victories over Gao Jun (who represented the U.S. in the Olympics later that year) and He Zhi Wen (currently ranked the number 48 male player in the world). Their team went on to place first in the Women's Division and third in the Elite Division. Since then, they have wreaked havoc at tournaments in the tri-state area: both have dominated the women's events, and Wu has finished in the top three in tournament after tournament. At the 2009 Eastern Open, they took first and second place in both the Women's Singles and U22 events, and Wu finished second in the Open Singles event. Both Wang and Wu have enjoyed their experience in the US, mostly

because they have much more independence here than in Beijing. Training is significantly less strenuous and regimented, but since there no longer are coaches hounding them from all sides, they must not only rely on themselves to stay in top condition, but also constantly push themselves. One source of motivation for them is the fact that they must compete against men in US tournaments; never before did they have to deal with shots that simply get muscled past them (i.e. guys stepping around and counter-ripping shots all over the table). While playing against men has been challenging and sometimes frustrating, it has made them realize what elements of their games need improvement. Wu admits, "Since men's shots have more spin and power than women's shots, I have to work on refining my game by adding variety and making it multi-dimensional."

The presence of a large cheering section has

become commonplace whenever these two play. The U.S. Open was no exception. Wu and Wang teamed to play Women's Double — advancing to the finals where they lost to Romanians Samara and Dodean (seasoned partners with World Rankings of No. 36 and No. 33 respectively).

Two people who are always by their side are Wang Chen and Jerry Wartski, sponsor of WCTTC. For Wang and Wu, big stages like the Open and supporters like Chen and Jerry have been invaluable: "We want to give a huge thank-you to Wang Chen and Jerry for all of their support, as well as to everyone at WCTTC for always making us feel welcome."

Well, welcome to the US, girls—good luck to you two and to anyone who has to take you on!



Womens Doubles Finalists Wang Xinyue and Wu Yue photo by Bruce Liu