

**THE INTERNATIONAL TABLE TENNIS FEDERATION**



**ITTF Event**

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## **Youth Olympic Games - Table Tennis Championship Press Kit**

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## 1. The ITTF in Brief

The International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) is the governing body of 210 member associations. The ITTF was initiated in Berlin, Germany in 1926. Table tennis became an Olympic discipline at the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympic Games. President of the ITTF is the Canadian Mr. Adham Sharara, who was elected in 1999.

Find here a short biography of the president: [http://www.ittf.com/stories/Adham\\_Sharara\\_Biography.html](http://www.ittf.com/stories/Adham_Sharara_Biography.html)

## 2. The ITTF Website – Your Tool for the YOG in Singapore

You find all information about the Olympic table tennis competition on [www.ittf.com](http://www.ittf.com). There results, regular updated stories from the beginning of the tournament, a daily photo gallery, Mikael Andersson Blog “Eleven Points”, ITTF Education & Training on <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=123500624352772>, daily press releases as well as all technical information about the event in Singapore at one mouse click!

And enjoy many games, live streaming, on <http://www.youtholympicgames.org/>

Pictures can be provided and used on the web (with the specific mention: “With ITTF Courtesy”): please send your request to [hubertgueriau@wanadoo.fr](mailto:hubertgueriau@wanadoo.fr)

### 3. Short history and Olympic history

#### Table Tennis Key Dates

- 1880s Adaption of lawn tennis to the dining table with improvised equipment
- 1900 Introduction of celluloid balls to replace rubber and cork ones. The celluloid ball had the perfect bounce, and the game became a huge success
- 1901 The game is introduced in China via western settlements
- 1926 International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) initiated in Berlin
- First World Championships held in London, England. ITTF Constitution adopted, along with first set of standardized Laws

#### 1920s – 50s Classic Hard Bat Era (European Dominance)

- 1926 – 31 **Maria Mednyanszky** (HUN) wins the world championships five times consecutively. **Mednyansky** wins 18 gold medals over-all
- 1930 – 35 **Victor Barna** (HUN) becomes five times world champion and is runner-up 1931 losing the final against his compatriot **Miklos Szabados**. **Barna** wins a record 22 gold medals at world championships during his career, 40 medals overall
- 1950 – 55 **Angelica Rozeanu-Adelstein** (ROU) wins the World Championships six times in a row and is the last non Asian to win the female singles title until today

#### 1950s – 80s Age of Sponge Bat and Technology (Beginning of Asian Dominance)

- 1952 **Hiroji Satoh** (JPN) became the first player to win a world championship when using a racket covered with thick sponge and is the first non-European winner
- 1953 China entered the Championships for the first time
- 1954 **Ichiro Ogimura** (JPN) is the epitome of Japanese dominance with technological development and physical training
- 1957 World Championship changes to a two-year cycle
- 1959 **Rong Guotuan** (CHN) is the first Chinese world champion in any sport
- 1967 **Ivor Montagu** retired as President of the ITTF after forty years in office
- 1971 Ping Pong Diplomacy: table tennis played an important role in international diplomacy when several teams were invited to China for a series of friendship matches after the 1971 World Championships. Chinese Premier **Zhou Enlai**: “Your visit to China has opened the door for people-to-people exchanges between China and the USA.”
- 1971 **Stellan Bengtsson** (SWE) wins the men’s singles title and heralds the start of three decades of Swedish influence, with top players such as **Kjell Johansson, Mikael Appelgren, Erik Lindh, Jan-Ove Waldner, Jörgen Persson**, and **Peter Karlsson**
- 1977 ITTF received formal declaration of its recognition by the International Olympic Committee (IOC)
- 1981 World Championships held in Nova Sad, Yugoslavia. Total triumph for China, whose athletes win all of the seven gold medals.
- Table tennis admitted to the Olympic programme (84th session IOC)

#### Modern Olympics Era (Chinese Reign with few exceptions)

1988	For the very first time, table tennis was featured in the Olympic Games that were held in Seoul, South Korea
1996	Beginning of the ITTF Pro Tour, with events taking place all around the world
2000	After the Olympics in Sydney, the <u>ball size is increased to 40mm</u> for improved television viewing
2001	<u>Game score changed from 21 to 11 points</u>
2002	Implementation of the ITTF World Junior Circuit (U18) and World Cadet Challenge (U15 continental team competition)
2003	First ITTF World Junior Championships in Santiago, Chile
2007	World Championships held in Zagreb, Croatia. Total triumph number five for China, winning all of the five gold medals  First appearance of table tennis as a compulsory sport at the Universiade in Bangkok, Thailand
2010	Table tennis is part of the first Youth Olympic Games. First World Championship organised in Russia

## Olympic History

It will surprise most of you that the ITTF actually decided to join the Olympic Games in 1937! The minutes of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) held at the 1937 World Championships in Baden, Austria, summarize the resolution and vote in just two sentences:

**"It was decided to instruct the Advisory Committee to get in touch with the Preparatory Commission for the forthcoming Olympiad at Tokyo with a view to the inclusion of Table Tennis in that Olympiad. All countries in favor excepted England who were against."**

Even more surprising is that after this near unanimous vote, the issue of Table Tennis becoming an Olympic sport was never again mentioned in the AGM until some 40 years later!

One has to wonder why. About a year later, while installing documents in the Archives website, I discovered the answer, in some detailed minutes of the 1946 London Conference, hosted by Montagu to revive the ITTF after the war. When directly asked for his position, Montagu replied:

**"I am opposed to the inclusion of Table Tennis in the Olympic Games. ... Firstly, I think the Olympic Games should be restricted to Athletics and similar events, where athletes vie with each other, not extend to sports of Football or Lawn Tennis type. Second, I think sports that do not have their own world title competitions need the Olympic Games. We, and similarly Lawn Tennis with the Davis Cup, do not need the Olympics. For us they are a duplication. Lawn Tennis dropped out of the Olympics after, I think, 1924. Third, it is not certain that if we applied we would be successful. If we were refused it would be a rebuff and a humiliation to the game."**

**"I am opposed to the inclusion of Table Tennis in the Olympic Games."**

**London Conference  
1946**



Montagu's reasoning requires some analysis. Table Tennis is indeed a sport where athletes vie with each other, though back in the 1940s most players were hardly the well-conditioned superb athletes of Olympic standards.

Regarding his second point, Lawn Tennis did in fact withdraw from the Olympic community, shortly before the 1928 Games began in Amsterdam, and did not reappear until 1988. Lawn Tennis leaders felt that the Olympics would become an unwanted rival to Wimbledon. However, it is difficult to accept this argument given the 4-year Olympic cycle, and the participants would certainly gain national and worldwide recognition, as well as an experience of a lifetime. Mr. Ollen of Sweden cited the benefits of receiving a share of funds for training Olympic athletes.

Montagu's third point was certainly a legitimate concern, though A.K.Vint noted the potential prestige of acceptance. A vote was then taken: Yes: Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands, Jersey. No: Czechoslovakia. Undecided: England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland and France. Montagu then proposed that each member nation's Olympic Committee should be approached for their opinions, and the results referred to the Advisory Committee for a decision.

Some member nations had concerns about Table Tennis joining the Olympics because of the amateur issue, since the ITTF distinction between amateur and professional was eliminated in 1935. Montagu was rightly proud of this even though it could cause a conflict with Olympic requirement but he dismissed the issue at the 1946 London Conference:

**"On the amateur question, we can easily comply with Olympic requirements in this respect by simply meeting and agreeing by Federation decision that no players shall be included who have been paid for playing."**

When Montagu retired and H.Roy Evans of Wales became ITTF President in 1967, he set a goal for Table Tennis to become part of the Olympic sport community. We next see a mention in the AGM minutes of the Olympics in 1977. The ITTF Constitution had to be amended to comply with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) requirements. The amendment proposal passed by a vote of 65-12, clearing the way for recognition of Table Tennis by the IOC.

The 84th session of the IOC was held in Baden, 1981, and Table Tennis was admitted to the summer Olympics program, beginning with the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul, South Korea.

Since then Table Tennis has distinguished itself in the Olympic Games in Barcelona 1992, Atlanta 1996, Sydney 2000, and Athens in 2004, with ever increasing worldwide television viewing audiences. Table Tennis ranked number 5 in all sports at the Athens Olympic Games!

Beginning in Beijing 2008, the format of the Table Tennis competition will change. The Doubles events will be replaced by a Team event, similar to the Davis Cup format in Tennis: 2 Singles, 1 Doubles and then 2 Singles, where a single player can only play in two of the contests. But for YOG, the format team event is different with a mixed event played by 2 players: 1 boy single, 1 girl single and a mixed double.

#### 4. Stats

##### Youth Olympic Games in numbers

- 208 Single matches will be played, 104 by the boys and 104 by the girls
- 64 Players participate to the table tennis event in Singapore
- 45 Countries represented
- 32 Boys and Women players
- 21 Points were needed to win a set until 2001. Since then sets in table tennis have been played to 11
- 6 Training sessions during the first ITTF YOG training Camp
- 4 Sets of medals will be awarded in Singapore
- 2 Players for the team event: 1 boy and 1 girl
- 2 Olympic medals for Jean-Philippe Gatien, athlete model for YOG, designed by IOC
- 1 It is the first time for the YOG, for Table Tennis, for Singapore to welcome...