

## Tournament Report: 47<sup>th</sup> Liebherr World Table Tennis Championships

The 47<sup>th</sup> Liebherr World Table Tennis Championships (WTTC) were held May 19-25 at the Palais Omnisport Paris Bercy (POPB). 681 athletes represented one hundred-sixteen associations, and 121 Umpires worked at the event.

Umpires stayed two to a room at the Kyriad Hotel. The hotel was approximately a ten-minute walk from the hall. Rooms were much smaller than tournament hotels in America as there was about three inches between beds. Breakfast and dinner were provided for umpires from the night of May 17 until the morning of May 26. Lunch each day was available at the POPB. If officials tired of the food at either the hall or the hotel, more than ample selections of dining establishments were nearby.

There was shuttle service to and from the hotel and hall. However, due to demonstrations conducted in the area surrounding POPB, shuttle service sometimes consisted only of a run before and after the day's play. However, I did not use the shuttle to travel to and from the hall, but walked instead. Demonstrations did not hamper the umpires as much as we were within closer proximity to the hotel than some of the other delegations.

In addition to the shuttle to and from the hall, shuttle service was provided for each official to and from the airport. The shuttle made a loop around Charles de Gaulle International Airport and dropped officials and participants at their respective hotels.

The Paris Organizing Committee gave three-day shuttle passes to all tournament participants. I was able to use one of my passes to visit the Louvre and the Eiffel Tower.

An Advanced Umpire Seminar was conducted on Sunday, May 18 at the Novotel Paris Bercy for umpires who had not attended a seminar or who had not tested well previously on the written examination administered by the Umpire and Referee Committee (URC).

Referee Bernard Barbier conducted the Umpire Orientation on the evening before the tournament at the Novotel. It was conducted in French and English. Umpire schedules for Monday and Tuesday were distributed at the conclusion the meeting.

Umpires were generally assigned the same partner for each day and stayed on the same table for each session. The exception was during the first few days as umpire teams were shifted to table to officiate a match involving a French player or pair. In some instances, a non-French pair would be split to work with a French umpire serving as an assistant to officiate a match involving a French player or pair.

I worked split shifts Monday through Wednesday. Transportation was available and the conclusion of each day's play if umpires desired. I walked to ensure that I would arrive back at the Kyriad before dinner stopped being served.

Two halls were utilized the first three days of competition. Each hall had its own ball selection area in the space adjacent to it. Players could meet there or at the table.

Beginning with the third day's play, corners were used for the television courts. Play shrank to one hall on the fourth day and featured more television courts. The television courts saw the umpire table on a raised platform, enabling the official to sit for doubles.

Play was down to two tables on the fifth day. I worked as the umpire for a Mixed Doubles semifinal with Lin Ma and Nan Wang of China playing their compatriots Hao Wang and Nan Li. After this day, play was continuous on one table.

Saturday consisted of one continuous session from 10:30 to 4:30. Matches were in forty-minute intervals until the Women's Singles final. After the Men's Doubles final, medal ceremonies were held for the medal winners in Mixed Doubles, Women's Singles, and Men's Doubles. The arena was generally full and spectators were quite vocal in their support.

Forty minutes were allowed on Sunday for the semifinals of Women's Doubles and Men's Singles. This resulted in matches running over schedule, but provided for continuous play. I was selected to be the assistant umpire for the Men's Singles semifinals with Jacky Simon of France serving as the umpire. Our match featured Se Hyuk Joo of South Korea and Kalinikos Kreanga of Greece. After our match, Jacky and I had just enough time to run up to the Umpire's Rest Area and down a bottle of water before we were to serve as corners for the Women's Doubles final and the Men's Singles final.

After the Men's Singles final, medal ceremonies were held for Women's Doubles and Men's Singles. The closing ceremonies followed. Individuals had just enough time after the closing ceremonies to go back to the hotel, unload any belongings and depart for the Farewell Party at the Sofitel Hotel.

The night proved to be short, as most of the participants had to wake up early in order to catch the shuttle to go to the airport. My shuttle arrived at 7:30 a.m. for a 12:55 p.m. flight. This schedule made more sense as we stopped at hotels to pick up more individuals. Once we landed in Houston, Tawny Banh, Bill Lui, Eric Owens, Simone Yang and myself deplaned, crawled through customs and raced to make our connecting flights.

This marked my first World Championships, and the experience provided many memories that I will carry with me for a very long time. It was a wonderful experience just to be a part of that exhilarating moment and it also allowed me to see friends and make new ones as well. Also, I would like to thank the USATT Officials Committee for their generous support in assisting with my travel costs.