

Sunday 19th July 2009

OK - I'm back!

I flew back home last night on the midnight horror flight, so I'm still a bit fuzzy around the edges at the moment. I've got a local tournament this afternoon - and I must admit right at the moment I'm not all that fired up to compete! Oh well, I'm sure I'll be OK once I get started.

I've done a cursory scan of my Inbox, and hopefully I've taken care of anything urgent. I'll have another look tomorrow when my brain has come up to speed. Anyway, this week will probably be spent catching up on the videos for my online coaching course, and also sorting through the 30 hours or so of footage from this years Aussie Open. Then I'll start putting together the 2009 Aussie Open Finals Box set. There were some great matches (especially the Simon Gerada vs Justin Han semifinal - what a cracker!), so it should be a pretty good collection of top Australian table tennis talent by the time I'm finished.

OK - that's it for now - I really need another coffee (yawn!), so I'm off. I'll probably start putting up videos again as of tomorrow, so stay tuned.

Friday 10th July 2009

I'm sitting here up in the stands at the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre (MSAC), watching the days events wind towards a close. At the moment it's the Women's quarterfinals, with the Men's quarterfinals to come. With a bit of spare time to relax and reflect, now is as good a time as any to begin to get some perspective on how I've been doing at the Aussie Open.

My quality of play hasn't been too bad overall, but there have been some ups and downs that have a definite pattern to them. Against top players with good serves, I'm struggling to get into the game - as shown by my results against Ho Nam Oh, John Tawadrous, Justin Han, Simon Gerada and others. Against top players who don't have lethal serves, I'm able to get into the rally and hold my own to a fair extent. Against less strong players with good serves and who have some understanding of playing against chop, I'm finding it pretty tough, to be honest.

Physically, after 6 days of table tennis, I'm pretty shattered. I've had a cold all week which hasn't helped, but it's the aches and pains that I'm really struggling with at the moment. Aerobically,

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I'm fine - I can play all day without a problem. But my muscles and joints (especially my knees and back) are in a lot of pain by now, and it's difficult to do enough warming up to get on the table warm and ready to go.

Technically, I've been chopping quite well, with certain exceptions. My long range chopping with the long pips on both forehand and backhand has been excellent, and my float with the inverted has also been working well on both wings. I'm still not up to speed with my heavy backspin from long range with my inverted side, which is to be expected since in hindsight I didn't put enough work into it. Serving - adequate but not great - reasonably tight most of the time, but with occasional lapses, and no real weapons in serving. Return of serve - not really good enough against good servers. Forehand and backhand looping - barely up to scratch really, even considering I'm generally using them for a counterattack. My pick hit with the backhand after a long chop rally has been a bit substandard this year, I must admit.

So where does that leave me now? Well, if I was going to have another go for next year, I'd need to find a way to drastically improve my return of serve against good servers. Then I'd have to work on chopping with good backspin with my inverted side, and also developing a forehand put away loop against loose balls. If I could do that then maybe I could give the top boys a bit of a run, since I would guess they don't play many good choppers. The problem is that I'm not sure I'm going to be able to improve my return of serve back in WA, since we don't have a lot of great servers. Ditto for the chopping with heavy spin against power loops, since we don't have any power loopers either really. So I'd have to spend a significant amount of time over in the Eastern states, and I'm not sure if I'm willing and able to do that.

Anyway, enough about me for the moment. What else has been happening at the Aussie Open?

Well, William Henzell looks the goods as usual, although Simon Gerada sounded a warning by defeating Justin Han in the group match between NSW and Victoria. Justin got his revenge the next day, helping New South Wales defeat Victoria to take the Men's Team title for the first time in I don't know how many years. Congrats NSW. Kyle Davis is out with injury, David Powell hurt his shoulder during the teams competition, and Robbie Frank is up there but went down to Justin 4-0 in the second round - he was unlucky to meet Justin so early, but Justin was unseeded since the seeds were determined by world rankings.. Eric Tan had a great 4-3 win over Ho Nam Oh in the second round, but other than that I don't think there have been any major surprises so far.

In the women's side, Miao Miao, Jian Fang Lay and Stephanie Sang are still leading the way, and it's hard to see anybody else taking the Women's Singles title at the moment. Peri Campbell-Innes is out with the flu - bad luck Peri - get well soon!

Saturday will show who has the form at the right time, and maybe a bit of luck as well. I'm kind of thankful my tournament is over - and I'm looking forward to a good sleep tonight and just being able to sit back and enjoy the play tomorrow!

Monday 6th July 2009

Goodness, it's been a couple of months since my last update - and here I am in the middle of the 2009 Australian Open! If you want to find out how things are going for me and my Western Australian teammates, then read on...

Day 2 of the Australian Open has wrapped up for the day, and I'm now sitting back relaxing in my apartment after a hard day. It's been a mixed bag of results so far for me and my Western Australian teammates, but we managed to win the match we really needed to win this afternoon.

There are 10 teams battling it out in the Men's Team competition, so the teams have been broken into 2 groups of 5 teams. Me and my WA teammates are in a group with Victoria, New South Wales, New Zealand, and the President's team. We started on Sunday afternoon at 1.30pm with a first round match against Victoria, the no 1 seeds. It proved to be tough going as expected, but we all had competitive patches, with Craig Campbell having close matches against Chamara Fernando and David Powell (losing 3-1 to both), while Gio took a game off Simon Gerada - but unfortunately neither could snag a win.

My own efforts went from the ridiculous to the sublime, with my first game against Simon Gerada also being the first rubber of the overall match. It was a nightmare start, with Simon winning the first 16 points in a row - that's right, I was down 0-11, 0-5 before I could win a point! I finally managed to scrape up around 6 points in the second game, before turning things around to win the third, and then Simon got back into gear to comfortably win the fourth.

My next match against David Powell was a real barn-burner, with me running out a 3-2 winner around 15-13 in the fifth, coming back from 8-10 down in the fifth to sneak the win. It was a tough match to play, since David has greatly improved since last year, and I played some of my best ever table tennis to scrape home. I've hopefully got the match on video, provided no technical hitches have occurred. There were some great loop vs chop rallies going on between us, and it was great to just be a part of this match, win or lose. David took the loss on the chin and with a lot of class, and I take my hat off to him for his attitude in what must have been a tough defeat to take.

My last match for the day was against Chamara Fernando, and my luck ran out as Chamara got me 3-0, taking the first 14-12 or so, then keeping in front in the second and third against my best efforts. Well done Chamara.

This morning our match against New South Wales was a match best forgot (by me at least), apart from a 11-7, 12-10, 12-10 loss to Kiet Tran. First of all Ho Nam Oh cleaned me up well and truly (I don't think I got more than 5 points in a game), and I learned all too well that in the cold conditions in Melbourne I had better not allow even 5 minutes to pass between my warm

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up and stepping onto the court, or I can go cold and stiff. Ho was just too good for me to not go on court fully warmed up. Then I learnt my lesson and stepped on court nice and warm against Kiet, but found his serves to hard to handle, and finally Justin Han made amends for allowing me to steal a couple of games against him last year (I lost 3-2 back then), blowing me away 3-0 in effortless fashion. Oh well.

Craig Campbell was the pick of my teammates, taking a game off Kiet Tran and Justin Han, and playing some good table tennis along the way. Russell Stein tried hard but it's a tough ask to play your first match of the championships against these guys, but he was by no means disgraced against the tough NSW team.

After some debating, the WA team decided to play Gio, Craig and me against the President's team this afternoon. We needed to win this one to give us a chance to go into the playoffs for positions 5-8. A loss would mean we would probably be playing for positions 9-10. Fortunately, we all stepped up and played hard under pressure, with a 7-2 result in our favour. Gio won 2, Craig won 2, and I had a little luck along the way to get 3 wins against Craig Carter, Daniel Phan, and Justin Huang. Well done guys!

Tomorrow we have a bye in the morning, so we will all have a welcome rest, and then in the afternoon we'll take on the New Zealand team, who look pretty tough from what I've seen of them so far. But we've got nothing to lose and we'll go out and give it our best!

Meanwhile, tomorrow will also see the top teams in each group meet up in the afternoon, with Victoria playing NSW in our group, and South Australia meeting Victoria B (I think). There should be some great matches on display, so if you are in Melbourne and can get away from work for a while, why not come down and check it out? The afternoon matches start at 2pm at the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre (MSAC).

Sunday 3rd May 2009

Once again, the last fortnight has gone in a flash - and it's time to put fingers to keyboard yet again to chat about what's been happening in my neck of the woods. Since my last update, I've played in another tournament, started our main pennant season, finally got back into my weights training, and made another discovery about my physical training limitations. Yep, it's been a busy couple of weeks!

Physical Fitness

Last Thursday was the day I finally bit the bullet and stepped back into my home gym for a workout. After doing an hour on the stationary bike and another hour of walking aerobics, I figured I would be nice and warmed up to tackle the weights. I started with squats, and when my stabilizer muscles in my legs went all wobbly after the warm up set I knew it was going to be a tough day! I managed to get through it, but I was not looking forward to the soreness I knew I

would have on Friday! Ouch!

As predicted, I was pretty sore the next day, and still a bit stiff on Saturday, but not so bad that I couldn't do the other half of my whole body workout (I basically work half the body in each workout). And today I'm feeling much better - most of the soreness has gone, so I should be good to go from here on in.

Another thing I have found is that when I do too much impact aerobic work (either using the robot or just bouncing around aerobic style) - I start to get shin splints (pain along the front of my shins). I had hoped to do a lot more work on the robot, as well as plenty of footwork exercises leading up to the Aussie Open in July, but it looks like that isn't going to be an option for me. One of the joys of getting older I guess! So instead I'm going back to plenty of cycling, walking aerobics and limited robot/footwork training. I'm going to pick up some of those small glove-style hand weights to increase the aerobic effect of my walking aerobics, and I'll see how that goes. Since I've cut back down on the impact aerobic work my legs feel much fresher and without the soreness, so I think this is the way to go for me - I'll just have to make every minute of my robot training count.

On-Table Training

My on-table training has been a bit interrupted of late, with one of my training partners unavailable due to work commitments for the last two weeks, and another having a wedding to attend. So instead I've had to make the most of our local pennant competition and the recent tournament.

Competition

The recent Scarborough tournament was fun and a good test of how things are going. I went down 1-4 (something like 11-7, 9-11, 14-16, 9-11, 9-11) in the semifinals to Gio Cnapich. It was a pretty good match that could have gone either way, so I wasn't too unhappy with my performance. Although I realized afterwards that I didn't do enough backhand brush loop return of serves with my long pips, or even a backhand topspin roll return of serve, which forces Gio to hit his forehand against a faster return than when I push the ball back. Although I should have remembered to do this, it was made abundantly clear that I had forgotten to do so when Craig Campbell used this backhand topspin roll tactic with great effect in the final, winning 4-1 against Gio. It's something I'll have to remember if I play Gio in round 4 of the local Grand Prix coming up this Friday night.

General GTTP Stuff

Due to various things that have been happening of late, I've fallen a bit behind in producing videos for my online coaching course. But I'm pretty sure I've finally got everything sorted out

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(fingers crossed), so I'll be able to put a lot more time and focus into that now. I'm still doing the occasional YouTube video, and About.com still haven't found a new Guide yet, so nothing new happening there!

So that's about it for the last couple of weeks. Life is good, I've adjusted my training a bit to avoid getting sore legs, I've finally restarted my weight training, I'm competing OK and my website and online coaching group are ticking along nicely. No complaints here!

Saturday 18th April 2009

Another two weeks have flown by - here's the latest of what's happening with me and GTTP. I'm maintaining my training, still experimenting with a new long pip technique, winning the odd tournament (yay!), meeting up with Internet table tennis friends, and producing more videos for my online coaching group members.

Physical Fitness

I'm still maintaining my training, but I haven't yet upped my training back to the 3+ hours a day that I was doing previously. I'll make a real effort to start lifting my game training wise next week.

And no, I haven't restarted my weight training either (oh, the shame!). So that's definitely on the agenda for next week, after the tournament this weekend.

On-Table Training

My on-table training is going fine, although I've missed the odd session due to the Easter break and other issues. Unfortunately, I think it might be doing my training partners more good than it does me! Colin is now pretty much back to his old level, and I'm struggling to keep up. Fortunately there aren't too many defenders with great serves and nasty forehand attacks playing at the Aussie Open. At any rate, having Colin punish any bad shots I make certainly makes me concentrate harder, and exposes any tendencies I have to play silly shots at crucial times, which is a good thing for me.

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I'm still working at blending in my new long pip technique of brush looping with the long pips while close to the table. It's a matter of finding the right usage of this tactic - I don't want to overuse it or try to use it at the wrong time. But when used correctly it's proving quite effective. I've put up a few videos demonstrating the technique and my initial thoughts about its use for my [Online Long Pips/Antispin Coaching Group](#) .

Competition

In my last blog update, I mentioned I had a Grand Prix competition that night, and I was looking forward to testing out my tactical adjustments. As it turned out, they were quite successful, with the result that I won this round of the Grand Prix, defeating several good players along the way, including Chris Hibbert and Richard Ajayi in the early rounds - I had to come from 0-2 down against Chris, but I eventually managed to scrape through in a very tough match. Then I got past Adam Cockfield and Richard Mann in the second grouping (each 3-0), before defeating old foes Craig Campbell in the semi (3-1) and Jeff Drew in the final (3-0).

So does this mean that I'm now expecting to win every tournament? No way. I need to be playing well and using the right tactics in my matches to give me my best chance to win, but if I come up against any of these guys when they are playing well and using their best tactics then it's just as possible that they will win - there's not much difference between us all in terms of our technique level, even though we all have differing styles. Nobody is that far ahead of the pack at the moment.

At any rate, we have another tournament this weekend at the Scarborough club (which is a great location to play at - plenty of room for us defenders!), so I'll have another crack at using my adjusted tactics then. I'm sure that Craig, Jeff and co will have adjusted their games and strategies to try to come out on top too!

Visit From Yomango

I had the pleasure of meeting one of my old About.com forum members in person yesterday (Friday). Yomango had to go to Jakarta from New York, and managed to make a looong side trip to make it to Perth. We had a good training hit, and he'll be playing in the tournament on the weekend as well, so I'm hoping to get a bit of video of him playing against the locals - but hopefully not me - who wants to play against another long pip defender? Not me!

General GTTP Stuff

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Nothing radical to report regarding the GTTP website of late. I'm working on videos for my coaching group members, and I've been putting up a few more YouTube videos as well. About.com still haven't pulled their fingers out and started the prep process to find a new Guide yet, so I'm still waiting to see when and if I can move my old content to GTTP. So it's just the same old routine at the moment.

Friday 3rd April 2009

It's been two weeks since my last blog update, so it's time to put fingers to keyboard and chat about what's been happening lately with my table tennis and the GTTP site. It's been an interesting couple of weeks overall, in which I've started to experiment with a new long pip technique, got back into training with my training partners, and found a new source of revenue for my table tennis site!

Physical Fitness

I haven't been breaking any records on the training front of late, but I haven't been letting things slide either. I'm still slowly upping my time on the robot, and I've started training with my regular training partners as well, so things are going fine. Next week I'm looking to restart my weights training which I've sadly neglected over the last year or so. I only need a couple of brief workouts per week, but I always find getting started to be the hard part - I never look forward to the soreness you always feel when you start lifting again. But next week is going to be the week I get back into it!

On-Table Training

Now that I'm back training with my partners on a regular basis, I feel it doing me (and my game) a lot of good. I definitely need the extra table work, and it's starting to sharpen me up again. Training with Frank is good for me, since as an experienced coach Frank is able to watch my technique and pick up my faults, and I can bounce ideas off him and get his thoughts. Training with Colin (who I mainly play games against) and Russell (where we both do drills) is good for different reasons, but since they are both high level players it certainly helps me get more quality table time.

I've also started experimenting with a new long pip technique that I've never used before - that of using a brush loop with the long pips to return long difficult serves to my backhand, and to

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sometimes open an attack, and more importantly to maintain pressure on my opponent when I'm attacking. So far this experiment has proven to be quite promising, and I'll be sharing my progress with this technique with my [Online Coaching Group](#) members - which reminds me, I've got to put up a video of my initial attempts with this technique for them when I finish writing here!

Competition

I've got another Grand Prix competition tonight, so I'm hoping to do well of course. I'll be using my adjusted tactics and I'll see how they go (I wrote about my tactical changes in my last blog update). I've also got a tough pennant match on Monday night against Craig Campbell and Chris Hibbert, so I'll have the chance to see how things work in real competition pretty soon. Plus we have another local tournament coming up in mid-April, which will be fun. I'm expecting to meet one of my readers at the tournament, he's flying over from America to holiday, and he'll be in Perth at the right time to play in the competition and meet up!

General GTTP Stuff

Hmmm, what's been happening at GTTP in the last couple of weeks? First of all, my members list should hit 300 members tomorrow, which is great. I'd like to think that everybody wants to read my newsletters, but I suspect the free videos for members might have something to do with it! 🍷

I'll be removing the passwords for the December, January and February free videos on Monday, and putting up a PayPal button to allow people to buy access to these videos. I'll continue to put up free videos just like I'm doing now, but every so often I'll take the older months and try to make them pay for their server space.

Oh yeah, and I found out this week that my YouTube videos (my username on YouTube is G309) are actually earning me some money! Woo hoo! I was invited to become a YouTube partner a few months back, so I thought "what the hell" and accepted, and allowed ads to be shown on my YouTube videos. I didn't think any more about it until my partner asked me to check something about AdSense for her, and while I was in my AdSense account I noticed some decent money coming in from "AdSense for Content Host" - which turns out to be the ads on my YouTube videos. Very nice! So I might have to put up a few more highlight videos on YouTube in the weeks to come! 🍷

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And finally, I'm still waiting for About.com to pick a new Guide. I don't think they have even started the process of putting 3-5 applicants through the prep stages yet, so I've still got at least another month to wait before I find out about whether I get my About.com content to use on this site. Sigh.

OK - that's about it for the moment. See you all in a couple of weeks!

Friday 20th March 2009

I figured it was time to pick up my blog again now that things have settled down a bit. I'll still be writing about my table tennis progress, but I thought I'd also include some ramblings from time to time about what I'm doing with GTTP in general, and any future plans. So let's get to it!

Physical Fitness

I had some problems with my health a couple of weeks ago, which kind of disrupted my training schedule. I've been working my way back up to full training since then, and I've started reducing my stationary biking and increasing my time on the robot instead. So things have been steady over the last few weeks - no gain in weight, so at least I can be happy with that!

On-Table Training

This week I finally got around to calling up my training partners and arranging training sessions again. I've been a bit lax in getting around to this, but it's the sort of thing you really shouldn't be putting off. So I'll be adding another 3 hours of on-table training to my week, which is a good thing.

I'm also looking at adjusting my training schedule to include more aggressive play, for reasons I'll discuss in the competition section below.

Mental Training

I'm continuing as normal - using my Directive Affirmations and visualizations. I've also been thinking a fair bit about my tactics of late, and what I need to adjust.

Competition

I'm doing OK in competition, but I'm not dominating the local scene or anything. I'm firmly entrenched in the top 4 players, but with only one tournament win I've still got some work to do.

After playing in the local Grand Prix on Friday 13th March, I was down 2-0 and 6-2 to Craig Campbell in the semifinal when I decided a change of tactics was needed. So I got more aggressive, and turned the match around, winning the next 2 games and losing the 5th 14-16 (with a little bit of luck against me. Not complaining, I've had my share of luck over the years!).

But that got me to thinking about why my current extremely defensive set of tactics weren't working quite as well as I hoped. Then the blindingly obvious hit me - the more defensive tactics I have been using are suited against players who are very aggressive, looking to attack almost everything they can, which is most players at the Nationals (which is what I'm mainly focusing on). These players take a lot of chances with their attacks against tight balls, not giving me a lot of opportunities to attack, and making a tight defensive game a good strategy for me.

But our top local players don't play as aggressively as that - they choose their attacks more - often pushing or counterhitting balls that the top Australian players would be looping hard. My extremely defensive tactics against these players are not such a good idea, since I'm letting opportunities to attack go by that I used to take. This is giving my local opposition more time to wait for a good ball to attack than I want to give them, and reducing the pressure that I'm trying to put on them.

Plus my forehand looping technique has improved greatly, so it makes sense to take advantage of any openings to attack myself and win some points by mixing up my game. I'm also much faster, so getting around the court to maintain an attack is easier too. Actually, the extra speed I have is a bit of a problem at the moment, since I currently have a tendency to overrun the ball when moving to my forehand loop, and I'm jamming myself up!

So I've decided to shift my overall tactics a bit again, and move back to a mindset where I will take any good opportunities to attack, and be defensive when the chances aren't there. This means that I need to increase my table time a lot, since I don't want to reduce my defensive training at all. This is why I'm now cutting down on the stationary biking and upping my time on the robot instead, as well as getting back into training with my regular training partners. I've got

new training goals to shoot for in addition to my ongoing defensive plans, these being:

1. Practice opening up with forehand and backhand using the inverted side, then maintaining my attack against a block, using both my inverted and long pips. I don't have to do anything radical with the pips, just use the change of pace and spin to keep the pressure on while I look for another chance to loop with my inverted.
2. Practice return of serve using topspin a little more. I've been trying to push everything, which is fine for Joo but not so good for me. When I started to flick, counterhit and loop some of the topspin/sidespin serves back, I started getting better results.
3. Work on moving to the correct location when attacking - I'm moving too far when I go from my backhand side to my forehand side, and it's cramping my stroke.
4. Work on staying low, leaning forward a little with a wide stance - I'm still getting a little too upright and narrow when putting my attacks together.

Anyway, those are my plans for the moment in regards to my table tennis game. It may take a while for the training to show up in my results, but I think I'm adjusting in the right direction.

General GTTP Stuff

While I'm sitting down and writing, I thought I might share what's going on with GTTP at the moment, and what I'm planning to do in the future, for those of you who are interested.

First of all, I'm happy to say welcome to so many GTTP members! I was a bit unsure about starting up my own membership list, but it's proving to be quite popular, with over 250 people signing on since December. Very cool, and it's nice to hear from my members from time to time too! 🍷

Secondly, I'll continue putting up more [free videos](#) , although I'm planning to move some of the older months to paid versions, to help pay for my hosting costs. I'll have the most recent 2-3 months available for free to GTTP members, and then have all the older stuff available for a small fee of \$3-5 Aus for any particular month's downloads.

Thirdly, I'm having a lot of fun putting together my [online coaching course](#) , and discussing long pips and antispin play with my group members. But I'd love to have a few more people to chat with and help out, so if you are a long pip or antispin user, what are you waiting for? I've already

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got over 8 hours of video up for the first month - not bad value for \$25 Aus!

Fourthly, I'm eagerly waiting for About.com to hurry up and appoint a new Guide. Once the new Guide comes on board, there's a pretty good chance I'll get permission to put my old content from About.com up over here at GTTP, which would make this site one of the largest (and hopefully best) table tennis sites around! Fingers crossed on this one!

Well, that's about it for the moment. It's time for me to head downstairs and fire up the robot for today's training. I'll be back with another update in a couple of weeks, so stay tuned!