

FITT Fun Tournament Wrap Up

Athletes from Fairbanks and Anchorage competed in 97 matches in five divisions as the Fairbanks Interior Table Tennis Club hosted the FITT Fall Fun Open Table Tennis Tournament at the Patty Gym last weekend. Titles were awarded in Men's Open, Women's Open, Open Consolation, Hardbat, and Random Doubles. The event attracted players of all skill levels and ages from 11 to 78, suggesting the broad appeal of modern table tennis. The USATT Sanctioned Tournament afforded new players the opportunity to obtain a numerical rating and established players to raise their current rating.

Men's Open Singles competition began on Saturday the 12th with round robin pool play. The two top finishers in each pool advanced to single elimination bracket on Sunday afternoon. Men not advancing from pool play joined the consolation division on Sunday. The Women's Open Singles was decided in round robin play and the women were also eligible for consolation play on Sunday.

Highly rated Mark Wade, 1749, of Anchorage and unrated Bill Chen of Fairbanks battled in the men's semi-finals. The match pitted Chen's smooth paddle rubber against Wade's long pips—a style of rubber designed to seriously mess with an opponent's spin—yet, Chen upset the top seed 11-7, 11-6, 12-10 to move into the finals. In the other semi-final match, Albert Parrish took the first game against Alan Hoover, 12-10. However, Hoover refocused his strategy and took the next three games 11-4, 11-6, 11-6 to advance to the finals.

Chen, a UAF engineering graduate student from China, entertained the spectators with his quick footwork, precise placement, and smooth strokes as he upended Fairbanks highest rated player, Alan Hoover. The final match saw long rallies and Chen solidifying first place 11-6, 11-8, 11-7. Third place was won by Mark Wade 11-6, 11-7, 11-6 over Albert Parrish.

On the women's side, Diann Darnall took the Open Women's crown in round robin play. Jane Parrish earned second after narrowly prevailing in very tight 5 game matches against Andrea Gelvin 11-6, 7-11, 10-12, 12-10, 11-6 and Carol Johnson 11-6, 7-11, 10-12, 12-10, 11-6, . In yet another tight match, Gelvin bested Johnson in five games 6-11, 11-7, 6-11, 11-5, 11-7 for third place. Darnall, president of FITT was pleased with the continued improvement of the Fairbanks women players: "Overall, this was the most competitive women's tournament we have ever had. It is great for our club and our community to have so many talented ladies in the draw."

The Consolation Division afforded continuing play for participants of all skill levels. Chris Silks worked his way past Doug Smith, Jane Parish and Percy Bullchild to earn the Open Consolation Title. Bullchild ended up in second place by defeating Maksat Omarov and Anton Kulchitsky. Kulchitsky slipped passed Jane Parrish to capture third place honors.

The Hardbat competition requires play that most people think of as a good old fashioned ping pong paddle—short pips rubber, without sponge backing, on a wood blade. Rallies in Hardbat competition involve less spin on the ball, shifting emphasis from speed and spin to patience and placement. One highlight of Saturday's Hardbat play was a surprisingly competitive effort by 18 year-old Percy Bullchild of Fairbanks against the experienced and nationally respected play of Anchorage's Mark Wade. Bullchild took more points off of Wade than any other player in the tournament. Wade had to scratch Sunday's finals due to a change in travel plans. The championship went to Alan Hoover, who survived a strong performance by relative newcomer Chris Silks. After the first two games each player had tallied a victory by the same margin, 21-17. In the third and determining game, the players were staying close with long rallies, until Hoover unleashed his attack game overpowering Silks 21-15. Third place was captured by Percy Bullchild over Vikas Sonwalker in the tightest match of the tournament 21-18, 17-21, and 22-20.

To achieve more parity in doubles play on Sunday, teams were randomly drawn from groups of names based on skill level. As the Tournament Manager, Jamo Parrish explained: "In random doubles, one has no choice of who their partner will be. But, this test of strategy and team movement is a favorite among players. It's a great opportunity to have fun with friends old and new." The excellent performance of 11 year-old Simeon Ng with his partner, Alan Hoover, earned the doubles title against Doug Smith and Ling Wu, a UAF student from China. Meanwhile, Bill Chen and Mary Tony took third place against Vikas Sonwalker and Manohar Singh, a visitor from India,

As the event concluded, Mary Tony was selected as the recipient of the *Jerry Smith Spirit of the Game Award*, presented by Janet and Doug Smith. This award recognizes players who, like Jerry, demonstrate sportsmanship, fair play, and love of table tennis.