

A Historical Study on the Doubles Games in Table Tennis as Introduced by Dr. Yasumasa Nagayama in the Early 1930s : His Contributions and the First Step towards the Internationalization of Table Tennis in Japan

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Abstract:

The late Dr. Yasumasa Nagayama (1893-1986) was a famous psychiatrist. After World War II, he contributed to theoretical studies regarding local medical care and practice in the Osaka area. Prior to this from 1929 to 1930, he had been to Germany to conduct a rigorous study on the medical services available there. Later on the 4th World Table Tennis Championships were held in Berlin in 1930. On this occasion, Dr. Nagayama contributed valuable insight into European table tennis. He observed the knowledge and expertise that were displayed at the European table tennis competition, including the practice of the doubles games and its conformance to the international rules that prevailed at the time. Dr. Nagayama was introduced as the Japanese media's table tennis correspondent. He observed the conditions of table tennis in Europe (Germany and Switzerland) and he reported them in detail. After his return to Japan, Dr. Nagayama became Medical Director of Osaka Prefectural Empress Hospital (psychiatry, community medicine). In addition, he contributed to table tennis technical periodicals to enlighten readers about the doubles games competition method and its proliferation in table tennis. He offered guidance and advice at various classes and seminars on the doubles games competition method. In 1932, Dr. Nagayama was invited to a national doubles competition which was sponsored by the Japan Table Tennis Company. Subsequently, the competition was known by the title of Dr. Nagayama Cup of Table Tennis Doubles games. Records show that it was announced in a class held in May 1932 that it was Dr. Nagayama who had introduced the international style of the doubles games competition method. Dr. Nagayama undoubtedly had made a great contribution to the table tennis doubles games in Japan before World War II. These facts were largely unknown until now. The international competition method of the doubles games has made a stronghold in Japan today, and this is due to the introduction by Dr. Nagayama. It is essential to engrave this fact in the history of Japanese table tennis.

Keywords: table tennis, sport history, doubles games , international rules

Preface

The purpose of this study is to clarify the introduction of the doubles games in table tennis by Dr. Yasumasa Nagayama in the early 1930s, referencing his contributions and the first steps towards the internationalization of table tennis in Japan. According to historical materials, Dr. Nagayama contributed valuable insight into European table tennis competitions and introduced the international style of the doubles games competition method into Japan. We clarified the historical process and facts in the following order: 1. Table tennis competitions in Japan during the 1920s; 2. Rule changes that accompanied the competitive style of table tennis during the late 1920s in Japan; and 3. Dr. Yasumasa Nagayama introduces the doubles games in table tennis based on the international style of play in the early 1930s.

1. Table tennis competitions in Japan during the 1920s

Previously in Japan, there were many organizations formed as volunteer efforts that presided over table tennis competitions; the Japan Table Tennis Association in Prewar (*dai-nippon takkyu kyokai*) was one of these early table tennis associations that subsequently became the umbrella organization for all others. Fittingly, there were many table tennis championship games at the

national level during this period of time in the 1920s. Hence, on 2 October 1921 in Japan, the general rules titled "the All Japan Table Tennis Association Table Tennis Rules(*dai Nippon takkyu kyokai kyougi kisoku*)" were established. The rules consisted of 34 articles. Mr Kido Hisao, the so-called pioneer of table tennis competitions in Japan, made remarks in the periodical titled *Journal of Table Tennis (takkyu)* published by the Japan Table Tennis Company (*Nippon Takkyu Sha*), during the period of time in which the Japanese rules for table tennis competitions were being established. Mr Hisao Kido, who was the chairperson, compared the Japanese to the foreign table tennis competitions, which deserved consideration.

Japanese table tennis rules (*dai-nippon takkyu kyokai seitei kisoku*) are the most progressive in the world. The Japanese should be confident in this fact. Last summer, we ordered an English table tennis rulebook from a bookstore located in London. The rulebook was in the form of a small pamphlet, which indicated that there were currently no set of unified rules in England, and two or three sentences were generally provided for the existing rules. Further, a rule of lawn tennis seems to have been applied to an actual match(May, 1926). The rules for the United States, France, Portugal and China did not provide detailed descriptions.

Accordingly, it is believed that Japanese table tennis competitions are more advanced than those of European, American and other Asian countries. The total membership for the table tennis clubs in Japan under the supervision of the umbrella organization, the Japan Table Tennis Association, was no less than 500,000 during the 1920s. This numerical value might be considered an exaggeration. However, in 1926, Japanese table tennis competitions were included among the events of nationwide athletic tournaments. Therefore, table tennis competitions advanced in the latter 1920s in Japan.

During the 1920s, table tennis competitions developed into a domestic game in Japan. In fact, this is where its style of play was devised. Originally, the method of competition was firmly established in the European countries. This originally foreign culture was then refined by the Japanese. However, these developments to the game by the Japanese are not always well received by foreign audiences.

The table tennis style of play applied in championship tournaments during this period was popularized among the masses. Players polished their skills by participating in competitions. They invented creative table tennis plays and each table tennis club played a role in supporting such competitions. In addition, the role of the umbrella organization was important because it not only allowed player participation but the means for the latter to hone their skills through these competitions.

2. Rule changes that accompanied the competitive style of table tennis during the late 1920s in Japan

Public articles attacking any element of either the service or the return of a tennis table play in accordance with the rules established early on in Japan were prohibited.

- (1) You must not deliver a strong service.
- (2) You must not deliver an underhanded spin serve.
- (3) You must deliver the service along the centre line.
- (4) You must deliver the service from within the area reserved for the service stroke.
- (5) You must not deliver a strong return.
- (6) You must not deliver an underhanded spin return.

These rules seemed to be commonplace in the early days. However, with time, the contents of these rules have been revised to allow such plays as tosses that exceed 16 cm and made with an open palm of the non-racket hand, and the newly permissible body hide while delivering a service. The Japanese have pushed the limits of the technical allowances provided in the rules and cultivated the technique of table tennis by continuously revising the rules. This brief outline depicts the flow of table tennis from the past to the present.

Although some changes were made to the Japanese rules of competition in table tennis from 1920 to 1934, none were significant. However, a rule change circulated among the European international federation for the game and provoked prominent changes. In 1926, from December 6 to 12, the First World Table Tennis Championships were held in London, the International Table Tennis Federation was founded, and international rules were established rules that were to become

common between each European country.

3. That Dr. Yasumasa Nagayama had been introduced the doubles games in table tennis based on the international style of play in the early 1930s

An invitation, dated 8 September 1927, to participate in the world championships was dispatched by the International Table Tennis Federation to Mr Hisao Kido, who presided over Japanese table tennis at that time. Mr Hisao Kido had voluntarily been leading the efforts of the Japan Ping-Pong Cooperation (*Nippon Pin-Pong Sha*), a company dedicated to communicating information about table tennis. However, rules were already in force in Japan. Moreover, there was concern that confusion would arise by introducing the international rules established for the world championship style of playing table tennis.

The late Dr. Yasumasa Nagayama (1893-1986) was a famous psychiatrist. On 4 April 1929, Dr. Nagayama went to Germany to pursue his studies in psychiatry. During this time, he reported in detail the state of table tennis competitions in European countries such as Germany and Switzerland. Most importantly, in this information he suggests the introduction of this international, competitive style of table tennis into the Japanese doubles games. Dr. Nagayama introduced the match enforcement method of the doubles games into Japan through the European table tennis competitions that he reported on in World Ping Pong, the periodical for table tennis written in Japanese. The Fourth World Table Tennis Championships were held in Berlin in 1930, from January 22 to 27. On this occasion, Dr. Nagayama contributed valuable insight into European table tennis competitions. He observed the knowledge and expertise displayed at the European table tennis competition, including the practice sessions for the doubles games and its conformance to the prevailing international rules.

However, Dr. Nagayama returned home on 19 December 1930 and began his efforts to promote table tennis around 1931, along with the propagandists of the international rules for table tennis in doubles games. Dr. Nagayama conducted classes and lectures to introduce the international, competition method (including its rules) of the doubles games around the Osaka area; it is certain that his efforts considerably advanced the level of competition for doubles games in this area. Despite this, there is not one reference to Dr. Nagayama's contributions to the study of sports history, namely the history of Japanese table tennis. Dr. Nagayama has instead been introduced as the Japanese media's table tennis correspondent who observed the conditions of table tennis in Europe (Germany and Switzerland) and Dr. Nagayama reported on them in detail. Table.1 (The Chronological Table) points out that some of Dr. Nagayama's reports and suggestions had preceded the internationalization of table tennis by the Japan Table Tennis Association in Prewar (Nippon Takkyu Kai).

The international rules for table tennis were introduced into Japan around October 1934, about eight years after the foundation of the International Table

Table.1 A Chronological Table of the Issues surrounding the Doubles Games in Table Tennis based on the International Rules reported and suggested by Dr Yasumasa Nagayama during the Early 1930s

1) February 1930
Anonym (1930), A Correspondent: Dr Nagayama Yasumasa participates in the Open Games at the World Championship in Berlin, Germany, from 22–27 January 1930. (World of Pingpong—Table Tennis, February 1930)
2) February 1931
Dr Nagayama Yasumasa (1931): A Report on the Situation of Table Tennis in European Countries (1). (World of Pingpong—Table Tennis, February 1931)
3) February 1931
Dr Nagayama Yasumasa (1931): The Seasons and Positions in Table Tennis in European Countries. (World of Pingpong—Table Tennis, February 1931)
4) March 1931
Dr Nagayama Yasumasa (1931): Introduction of the Table Tennis Doubles Games Championships in European Countries. (World of Pingpong—Table Tennis, March 1931)
5) March 1931
Dr Nagayama Yasumasa (1931): The First Table Tennis Doubles Games Championship in Japan (organized by Japan Ping Pong SHA). (World of Pingpong—Table Tennis, March 1931)
6) March 1931.
Dr Nagayama Yasumasa (1931): A Report on the Situation of Table Tennis in European Countries (2). (World of Pingpong—Table Tennis, March 1931)
7) April 1931
Dr Nagayama Yasumasa (1931): A Report on the Situation of Table Tennis in European Countries (3). (World of Pingpong—Table Tennis, April 1931)
8) April 1931
The Japan Table Tennis Association in Prewar (Dai-nippon Takkyu Kyokai) (1931): The Rules for the Doubles Games in Table Tennis were instituted on 10 March 1931. (World of Pingpong—Table Tennis, April 1931)
9) April 1931
Dr Nagayama Yasumasa (1931): The Racket in Table Tennis and Bylaws of the Muenchen Table Tennis Club. (World of Pingpong—Table Tennis, April 1931)
10) August 1931
Dr Nagayama Yasumasa (1931): The Service in Table Tennis in European Countries. (World of Pingpong—Table Tennis, August 1931)
11) August 1931
Dr Nagayama Yasumasa (1931): A Report on the Situation of Table Tennis in European Countries (4). (World of Pingpong—Table Tennis, August 1931)
12) March 1932
Anonym (1932): The Doubles Games Play Styles in Table Tennis in Japan in comparison with those in European Countries. (World of Pingpong—Table Tennis, March, 1932)
13) May 1932
Dr Nagayama Yasumasa (1932): A Lecture on Table Tennis and a Seminar on the Doubles Games in Table Tennis. (World of Pingpong—Table Tennis, May 1932)
14) August 1934
Dr Nagayama Yasumasa (1934): The Espoir of Constructing the New International Section of the Japan Table Tennis Association in Prewar (Nippon Takkyu Kai). (World of Pingpong—Table Tennis, August 1934)
15) October 1934
The International Rules for Table Tennis were introduced in Japan in around October 1934. (Kido, Hisao. (1934): Revision of the Table Tennis Rules in Japan; the International Rules were added to the Japanese Style Rules in December 1934, Bulletin of Table Tennis of the Japan Table Tennis Association in Prewar (Nippon Takkyu Kai hou), December 1934)
16) December 1934
Japan Table Tennis Association in Prewar: the Authorized Rules in Japan are the same as the Japanese Style Rules in Chapter 1. The International Rules follow in Chapter 2. (December 1934)

Tennis Federation. Mr Hisao Kido publicly reported the introduction of the international rules in the periodical titled the Bulletin of Table Tennis of the Japan Ping-Pong Cooperation (*Nippon Pin-Pong Sha*) as Follows:

“Nowadays, the atmosphere surrounding table tennis in Japan is catching on worldwide. Therefore, the table tennis competitions controlled by a Japanese umbrella organization have adopted international rules. However, the Japanese style rules remain. The authorized rules in Japan remain as the Japanese style rules in Chapter 1 and the international rules follow in Chapter 2. (December, 1934)”

International style competition is considered to have begun in the latter half of the 1930s as a result of the introduction of the international style rules. Nowadays, these rules are applied to competitions throughout Japan. Table tennis competitions have grown rapidly since the adoption of the international style rules. In 1936, the first All Japan Championship based on the international rules was held. Table tennis competitions based on international rules (including doubles games) are finally the mainstream in Japan in comparison with those based on Japanese style rules that continue frugally. The Federation of Table Tennis for Collegiate Students (*Nippon Gakusei Takkyu Renmei*) converted to the international rules in 1935. It is believed that in the early days of this collegial federation, a faulty article on the prohibition on rubber-balls in table tennis was discovered in their regulations. Further, it was not until after 1936 and the adoption of the international style rules (including doubles games) that the element of technique was truly cultivated.

Dr. Nagayama became the Medical Director (psychiatry, community medicine) of Osaka Prefecture Empress Hospital upon his return to Japan. In addition, he contributed to the technical periodicals on table tennis to enlighten readers about the doubles games competition method and its proliferation in table tennis. He offered guidance and advice through numerous classes and seminars on the doubles games competition method. In 1932, Dr. Nagayama was invited to a national doubles competition, which was sponsored by the Japan Table Tennis Company (*Nippon Takkyu Sha*). Subsequently, this competition, dated 21 March 1931, was known as the Dr. Nagayama Cup of Table Tennis Doubles games. Records from 3 April 1932 indicate that this was announced in a class lectured by Dr. Nagayama, who had introduced the international style of the doubles games into Japan. Dr. Nagayama, undoubtedly, made a great contribution to the doubles games in table tennis in Japan during the 1930s.

Conclusion

The Japan Table Tennis Association (formerly the *Nippon Takkyuu Kai*, founded in 1931) was the first unified organization for table tennis competitions in Japan, which adopted international rules in 1934. This association promoted the international style of table tennis competition by organizing the All Japan

Championship table tennis competition in 1936. Prior to this, from 1929 to the early 1930s, Dr. Nagayama introduced the match enforcement method of the doubles games into Japan through his written contributions on European table tennis competitions in *World Ping Pong*, the periodical on table tennis written in Japanese. Dr. Nagayama has, undoubtedly, made a great contribution to the doubles games in table tennis in Japan during the 1930s. Subsequently, in 1934, the Japan Table Tennis Association introduced international rules. This is due to the contributions of Dr. Nagayama. It is essential to engrave this fact in the history of Japanese table tennis. The preliminary efforts were accomplished by Dr. Nagayama. In the early period that followed the introduction of the international rules, personal contributions were important since the relevant organizations were chaotic. It is concluded that Dr. Nagayama's contribution was the first step to the internationalism for table tennis play in Japan. Thus, when the doubles games for table tennis competitions were first introduced in Japan, it was a medical doctor who pioneered the internationalization of the sport, including doubles games in table tennis, as reported and suggested by Dr Yasumasa Nagayama.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank for Professor Emeritus Yasuhisa Nagayama, Osaka University, who is the 3rd son of the late Dr. Yasumasa Nagayama, for profitable suggestion to this study.

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