

USATT National Club of the Month
Green Mountain Table Tennis Club
Rutland, Vermont
www.gmttc.com
2010 Marks Our 28th Year of Continuous Activity
by Ronald Lewis



The Green Mountain Table Tennis Club (GMTTC) has a long and proud history here in the beautiful Green Mountains of Vermont. The genesis of the club dates back to 1983, as an organization that had a great place to play, but as any club can tell you when starting out, poor equipment. We even came back after our summer break to begin our 2nd season, only to find that the school janitors had used one of our tables for lumber, sawing each half in halves again, thinking it was spare plywood!

I founded the club after learning the game with fellow students at San Francisco State College in the early 70's. Then again, some 10 years later, while being under the employ of Vermont Law School as their accountant, I played with the students during lunch hours. During this time, I got the "bug" to start a club at a new elementary school in my little New England town. A few years down the road, 1 of 3 existing Vermont table tennis clubs dissolved, leaving us their equipment, which included some tournament-quality tables and a ball machine.

After a considerable amount of hard work, accompanied by a certain amount of risk and indebtedness (as my irritated wife can tell you), we have emerged as a viable, revitalized, optimistic, nearly debt-free, USATT affiliated, competitive club. Thanks must go to the club leaders who have put in countless hours of their time and effort, the Champlain Valley Table Tennis Club and players throughout Vermont and surrounding states who have helped make the GMTTC a huge success and one of the strongest clubs in New England.

The GMTTC currently owns 6 Butterfly Europas with Butterfly National League net sets, 2 Butterfly Centerfold Rollaways with Butterfly Europa net sets, 2 Newgy Robo-Pong ball machines, several rolls and over 65 flat cardboard barriers, score keepers, and lots of extra supplies and equipment. We now have our own club shirts, designed by a club member, and we think they are one of the most unique and best-looking table tennis shirts available.

Like many USATT clubs, the GMTTC has played at many locations over the years of their existence. Currently the club plays at a recently renovated high school-sized gymnasium that is leased by the local Boys & Girls Club from the Knights of Columbus. In fact, the renovation work was spearheaded by myself, along with the Executive Director of the Boys & Girls Club when I worked as their Accountant/Development & Marketing Coordinator a few years ago – small world! Amenities include hardwood flooring, perfect lighting, high ceilings, dark-colored walls, bench seating, locked equipment storage area, lots of available parking, and no set closing time. In addition, we have a small "pro shop" for equipment sales, excellent tournament software, and we have a member-developed (Dale Christie) state-of-the-art web site, considered by many table tennis enthusiasts as the best table tennis site on the internet.

Club membership varies from year to year and ranges in age from as young as 10 years of age to as mature as 70 years plus. Skill levels range from beginner to the best in the state. Club members enjoy the

services of dedicated and talented coaching by some of the most talented players in Vermont. The club averages between 30-35 members per season; approximately 16-18 players are in attendance at each practice, even though some of them drive a substantial distance to play. Club members meet on Wednesday evenings from 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. or later; memberships are only \$30/yr.

Beginning with this season, we have partnered with the local Boys & Girls Club. Having the teens from their Teen Center come and play with us has been a perfect marriage between 2 long-standing organizations in this rural community located in central Vermont. For these teenagers, who play at no cost, our club has provided a collective social power that seems to be helping to guide them away from many of today's unhealthy influences.

In our previous 27 years of activity, we have had a total of 44 tournaments; participation has been as high as 75 players, who have come from 5 of the northeastern states. We have locally promoted our events through pre and post-event publicity in newspapers, radio and television, and by email – this has produced several new members. To provide added competition for our players, we have a Challenge Board in play at all our practices that allows for singles and doubles competition.

We invite new and visiting players to join our fellowship, whether they want to play for recreational, athletic or competitive reasons. Our club's stated purposes are: A) to promote and further the sport of table tennis throughout our area of influence; B) to provide an athletic and recreational activity for club members; C) to help develop sportsmanship and responsibility; D) to provide table tennis instruction to club members; and E) to provide the opportunity for tournament level competition.

Our future plans are to provide clinics, camps and private lessons, and add to our growing library of instructional books and video tapes on the subject of table tennis techniques and strategies. In addition, we want to make every attempt to initiate table tennis activities within the local school systems. We are also thinking seriously about holding USATT-sanctioned tournaments.

If you find yourself on the way to any number of jewels this state has to offer, whether it be Killington for skiing, to see the state's famous fall foliage, to walk the forested paths that Robert Frost frequented, to visit the headquarters of Orvis, or the American Museum of Fly Fishing, or drop in to Ben & Jerry's to enjoy a double scoop of Chunky Monkey or Cherry Garcia, plan to stop by Rutland to visit our club. Great tables, great people, great competition, even great back-slapping laughs between backhand smashes and high-toss serves; what more could you ask for in a club? For more information, contact Ron Lewis at vtpoet@gmail.com or go to our great web site at www.gmttc.com. Clean strokes!

