

History of Table Tennis

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Table Tennis, although it is not clear, probably evolved in England descending, along with tennis and badminton, from the ancient medieval game of tennis. During the second half of the nineteenth century it was played using the names of Gossima, patented in 1891 by John Jacques and Son, and Whiff-Whaff, patented by Slazengers. The name of Ping Pong was derived as a result of the imitation of the sound made by the ball striking the table and the vellum bats that were in use. By the 1880s the game had become fashionable amongst the upper classes being played on the dining room table and in the 1890s several patents with simple rules were being registered.

By the early 1900s Ping Pong had already acquired some of its present day complexities, though it was still seen as mainly an after dinner amusement rather than a sporting activity. In an account published in 1903 participants were warned against wearing a dress suit and stiff collar for the men, and a white satin gown for the ladies – it then went on to give detailed technical advice about pimped rubber, the penholder grip and tactics.

In England two rival organisations were set up 'The Table Tennis Association' being formed on 12th December 1901 and 4 days later 'The Ping Pong Association'. The two then amalgamated as 'The United Table Tennis and Ping Pong Association' on 1st May 1903 later reverting back to the title 'The Table Tennis Association'. Unfortunately the merger came too late to prevent the decline and near extinction of the game in England with the Association ceasing to exist during 1904 with only a few organised 'outposts' in Sunderland, Manchester, Plymouth and Bristol.

The game, however, gained in popularity in central Europe between 1905 and 1910. Before this a modified version had been introduced in Japan, later spreading to China and Korea .

In the early 1920s the game began its revival in England and Europe . In England this was mainly due to the efforts of the Hon. Ivor Montagu, academics at Cambridge University and a number of stalwarts from the earlier years of the sport who had set up a club at St Bride's Institute in London . The name of Ping Pong had been registered as a trademark so the Table Tennis Association was reconstituted in 1922 with the prefix 'English' being added in 1927.

The International Table Tennis Federation was formed in 1926 with the first World Championships being held in London that year. These were later held in Budapest in 1929 and were won by Fred Perry of tennis fame. More national associations were formed and a standardisation of the rules began in both Europe and the Far East .

Over the next 60 years the sport continued to develop world wide practised by as many as 30 million competitive players and millions who play less seriously.

The basics of the game have not changed in essence over the years although the ITTF have always tried to ensure the game remains a contest of human skills rather than reliant on new technological developments. Some of the major changes are:

- The lowering of the net
- Service rules
- Ball size

Changes to the rules of the sport can only be made at the ITTF's Biennial General Meeting subject to the agreement of a substantial majority of the 186+ member associations all of whom have an equal vote.

In 1988 the sport became part of the Olympics and in 2002 joined the Commonwealth Games.

In March 2013 the ETTA followed advice and guidance from Sport England to relocate their office from Hastings to

Milton Keynes and restructure the workings of the organisation and staff structure. Alongside the move and restructure, the company was rebranded to **Table Tennis England**.

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