

# A bright future for Tin-Tin

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London 2012 may have come too soon for Tin-Tin Ho, but that's not stopping her from sending shockwaves through the world of table tennis after beating the cadet world number 1 en route to winning the cadet singles at the French Open.



Thirteen-year-old Tin-Tin, also a winner of the Portuguese Youth Open in December, has Olympic ambitions reaching beyond this summer.

She said: "I'm not playing in 2012 but hopefully in 2016. My aim is to play at the Youth Olympics in 2014 so I will have to see how it goes.

I really want to win the European Youth Championships [July 13-22<sup>nd</sup>, Schwechat] this year. I was thinking of winning it next year but after the French Open I've got much more confidence of winning it in Austria in July."

A National Champion at every age group up to under-15 level, Tin-Tin's passion for the game came at an early age from watching her father and brother play the game at their home in Paddington.

Her father, Charles, in his own right a former player and coach from Hong Kong, and her brother Ping, a top 30 junior boy in England, were the inspiration for her early experiences of the game.

She recalled: "My dad taught my brother and he started teaching me when I was quite young. I wanted to have a go and I really liked it so I continued.

I think I developed over time. I was too small to reach the table so I had to stand on a chair because I was too short! I wouldn't have known anything about the sport without my family."

From those humble beginnings her career continued apace as she started playing competitively, and eventually, at an international level. She even became the youngest ever female player on the ITTF Pro Tour circuit when she competed at the English Open in January 2011.

She said: "I didn't like it that much at the start but then I started really enjoying it and winning lots of tournaments. I played my first international when I was eight or nine in France and I didn't realise how intense it was until I went there. I really wanted to get as good as everyone there."



A nine-year-old Tin-Tin at the European Youth Championships (Henk Hommes)

It was her return to France this April that really caught the eye of the International Table Tennis Federation as she hit the front page with her victories over the cadet world's number 1, 12, 23, and 24 as she took the title home to London.

The result though, came somewhat as a shock to the new cadet world number 18.

Tin-Tin exclaimed: "I never expected to win it at all. The one before I didn't play very well so I thought I have to do well at this one. " She added: "I didn't know she was number 1 when I beat her, I only found out afterwards when my brother told me."

Her victory over Yui Hamamoto (JPN) in the semi-final in Metz set up her triumph for the final match against the host-nation's Audrey Zarif, who was no comparison to the contest Tin-Tin faced in the last four against the world number 1.

She said: "I just played how I played the Japanese girl before who was her teammate. Because I beat the one before I had more confidence.

She was more powerful and had more spin and was more clever so I had to make sure I kept it tighter and played with more power."

Her success was echoed in the latest world rankings where the number 1 English junior and cadet girl suddenly found herself as the third highest ranked English women in the world.



This year Tin-Tin has hit the international headlines

However, Tin-Tin acknowledges her jump from 670<sup>th</sup> to 457<sup>th</sup> in the world is partly due to her young age: "I didn't expect it at all. It's probably because I'm a cadet and I'm younger so it's harder for them but I'll take it as it is."

This week she competes at the Polish Open in the search of another title and it would take a severe critic to play down her chances of success once more.

Although she will have to watch from the stands at London 2012, you wouldn't be against Rio 2016 being the next adventure for Tin-Tin.

By Russell Moore

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