

## Chinese TT Technical Chief Life

YANGZHOU, China, Sept. 19 (Xinhua) -- Dr. Zhang Xiaopeng, a leading researcher in world table tennis and deputy general secretary of the Chinese Table Tennis Association, explains the sport's playing styles during the ongoing Asian championships.

When people talk about the playing styles, it is recommended to first of all categorize the types of players, and then study and understand their playing techniques. This suggests that there are many different playing techniques for both choppers and attackers (offensive players). Zhang summarizes those as follows:

### Choppers

Chopping was the mainstream technique from 1920-1950. Players dominantly used it to compete in international table tennis tournaments. During the 1960s, choppers started to develop the technique of "wide-angle long chop followed by counter attacks" in addition to straight defensive chops.

Zoltan Berczik of Hungary was a master chopper who produced extreme backspin on his shots; Chinese players even exaggerated that they would need a crane to lift the balls over the net. Ferenc Sido of Hungary, former men's singles world champion, was the prototype of the attacker after a long, wide-angle chop.

During the 1970s, players developed variations of chopping with spin and no spin. Players even used rubber sheets with different characteristics on the other side of their racket and flipped racket sides as they played to induce errors from opponents who were unable to make proper adjustments to return the shots. Most Chinese choppers were playing with this style.

During the 1980s, choppers further added the techniques of attacking after serves, topspin loops, and counter-attacks that augmented the chopping game. Chen Xinhua is a typical example.

During the 1990s, we saw the new attack-chopping style requiring choppers to attack more to win points, as opposed to relying on straight defense. Ding Song, for example, had a scoring ratio of attacking after serves that frequently exceeded that of some offensive players. He was able to counter-attack and counter-loop with good power, in addition to chopping with great variations. Liang Geliang is an outstanding example.

### Penhold Attacker

During the 1950s, the Japanese represented the backcourt topspin playing technique that was then the mainstream style.

During the 1960s, Chinese players developed close-to-table offensive techniques: 1) Attack from both sides (backhand and forehand), and 2) backhand block/forehand attack. This type of players ruled the world; Zhuang Zedong was the master of the first method and Ron Guotuan, Xu Yinsheng, and Li Furong brilliantly performed the second method. Meanwhile, mid-court attacking from both sides and backcourt forehand topspin styles still remained popular and effective; Wang Chuanyao played with the former style, and most Japanese players performed the latter style.

Chinese players needed to enhance their counter abilities against topspin loops in the 1970s. The backhand block/forehand attack style for pimple-out penholders became the mainstream style. Typical examples were Xu Shaofa, Li Jingguang, and Li Zhenshi.

However, as Chinese produced fewer elite players who attacked from both sides, the Japanese stayed with this technique and produced Mitsuru Kohno, who won the men's singles title at the 34th World Championships in 1977.

Meanwhile, penholders with inverted rubber also performed well, as demonstrated by Xi Enting of China and Seiji Ono of Japan, who won the world singles championship in 1973 and 1979, respectively.

During the 1980s, pimples-out penholders further improved their skills against topspin loops, i.e. forehand counter smashing and backhand blocking. Xie Saike, Jiang Jialiang, and Chen Longcan were masters. Inverted rubber penholders, such as Guo Yuehua and Cao Yanhua, were also pretty dominant and the best in the world.

In the 1990s, penholder close-to-table attackers had revolutionary improvements:

1) Pimples-out attackers maintained the traditional excellent forehand attacks, were capable of performing step-around forehand attacks, and had high-quality attacks from serves;

2) Players were capable of blocking topspin loops, looping with inverted rubber on the backhand side, and improved offensive abilities;

3) Players became good at flipping their racket after they served, and looped or attacked. A typical example was Liu Guoliang.

There were more great inverted rubber penholders whose forehand topspin loops were excellent and powerful, were very capable of backhand looping from the backside of their rackets, and blocking topspins, such as Ma Lin and Yan Sen etc..

Another type of penholder, such as Wang Hao, did not use blocking techniques on the backhand side, but looped with the backside of his racket.

On the other hand, South Korean penholders had playing styles that were very different from the Chinese. They had very powerful forehand strokes but did not adopt the same backhand looping techniques.

Instead, they strengthened the traditional backhand blocks and smash attacks to solidify the backhand side, but ultimately relied on their powerful forehand strokes for winning shots. They proved that this style was equally effective. The elites of this type are Kim Taek Soo and Ryu Seung Min.

#### Shakehand Offensive Style

The shakehand offensive style consists of 1) Looping - Fast Attack, and 2) Fast Attack - looping.

Looping - Fast Attack

This playing style was commonly used in the 1960s in particular in European countries. During the 1970s Istavan Jonyer of Hungary, Anton Stipencic and Drugutin Surbek of former Yugoslavia were the masters; Andrzej Grubba of Poland and Mikael Appelgren of Sweden were examples of the 1980s. This technique, however, became dated, but we still see Zoran Primorac playing with it competitively.

#### Fast Attack - Looping

This style is the most popular in modern table tennis. The first time we saw this was in the early 1970s, performed by Swede Stellan Bengtsson and Czech Milan Orlovski, and then Jan-Ove Waldner, Erik Lindh, and Jorgen Persson of Sweden in the 1980s.

In the 1990s, this playing style was further developed: 1) Techniques focused on faster and more powerful games, e.g.: Jean-Philippe Gatién of France, Jorg Roskopf of Germany, Jean Michel Saive of Belgium, and Wang Tao of China, and 2) Techniques focused on an all-around game, e.g.: Jan-Ove Waldner of Sweden, Kong Linghui of China, and Vladimir Samsonov of Belarus. It is also notable that in the 1980s some players who utilized different characteristic rubber sheets (i.e.: long-pips or anti) on their backhands were troublesome to most elite players and won world championships; these players included Liang Geliang, Cai Zhenhua, and Deng Yaping of China.

Since we moved to 40mm balls in 2001, these two styles have been mixed together. Players focus more on the quality and strength of each stroke in order to be dominant in the early stages of the game to win points effectively. Players tend to be fierce in attacking (as long as they have position) in order to have a powerful game. This trend can be seen in the games of Wang Liqin and Liu Guozheng of China, and Werner Schlager of Austria.