

Tournament formats for large groups

It's great that contacts and friendships formed through table tennis last so long. Here, two former teammates have reconnected despite the distance between them (Beijing, China and Münster, Germany). The occasion is two tournament formats that happened to be the subject of one of the many conversations between the two authors.

What is it about? This tournament proposal, which can be used for tournaments and events such as club championships, came from China, of course. The problem with team competitions is always the even distribution of strength. So far, so good. This can be regulated, for example, by the total TTR values (German Table Tennis Rating for teamplayers) per team. But what if you also want to achieve a certain 'mix' in terms of age and allow families and amateur players without a TTR value to participate? This is where the tournament formats we are about to present come into play.

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■ TOURNAMENT FORMAT 1: 'Zhaotong Mixed Groups'

First, all participants in the tournament are divided into three playing classes (A, B and C levels). If TTR values are available, certain ranges can be assigned to the levels, while others are assessed accordingly (by the organising team). The names are written on lots and sorted into pots A, B and C. Three players from pots A, B and C are put together to form teams. If there are a large number of players from different age groups, the pots ABC could also be subdivided into U20 (under 20 years of age) and O20 (over 20 years of age), in order to try to achieve a certain balance in terms of age.

What happens next?

The appeal here is, of course, that you may not know the team members and will have to become a real team as the tournament progresses. Depending on the number of teams formed, they will be divided into groups. Let's assume we have 16 teams, which will now play in 4 groups.

Within the group, every Team plays against everyone else. The teams are free to choose their line-up order (in advance): Team 1 (players A, B, C) and Team 2 (players X, Y and Z). The order of the individual matches is now

- A-X
- B-Y
- Doubles BC-XZ
- A-Y
- C-Z

The system is, if you will, a clever combination of the Corbillon Cup and Swaythling systems. The top two teams in each group play in the quarter finals as can be seen in figure 1 (the third and fourth-placed teams could also compete for places).

The rest of the tournament will then proceed as follows in a knockout (sudden death) system.

All individual matches are played in a best-of-3 sets system, while the group match itself is played in a best-of-5 system (i.e. the match is over when the third match is won). Depending on the time frame or other circumstances and restrictions, adjustments can of course be made here, for example with regard to the number of sets in the singles matches (e.g. only 1 set each) or the mode of the sets (e.g. each set starts at 7:5 for the server, only a possible 3rd set starts at 0:0) or any other variations.

And finally, we show a picture of the group that competed in Zhaotong, China (here an avatar from the original photo) and specifically of 'Team WANG' as it was drawn at the beginning (finishing in 5th place 😊).



QUARTER FINAL			SEMI FINAL		FINAL
MATCH 1	1. Group 1		Winner MATCH 1	Semifinal 1	Winner Semifinal 1
	2. Group 4				
MATCH 2	1. Group 2		Winner MATCH 2		
	2. Group 3				
MATCH 3	1. Group 3		Winner MATCH 3	Semifinal 2	Winner Semifinal 2
	2. Group 2				
MATCH 4	1. Group 4		Winner MATCH 4		
	2. Group 1				
					Champion

Figure 1: Tournament schedule (sudden death round after the group matches)

Our second tournament format is also suitable for large groups, but especially for situations where only a few tables are available at the same time. Here, the group matches consist exclusively of singles matches.

■ TOURNAMENT FORMAT 2: ‘Beijing Mixed Singles’

First, we will outline the game plan, as this will make the sequence and mode easier to understand and follow. Both competing teams consist of three players each.

Game plan (Team A vs. Team B)

TEAM A		TEAM B	
A1		B1	
A2		B2	
A3		B3	

	Score at start	Score at end
A1 : B1	0 : 0	11 : 8
A1 : B2	0 : 8	5 : 11
B2 : A2	0 : 5	__ : __
	__ : __	__ : __
	__ : __	__ : __
	__ : __	__ : __
	__ : __	__ : __
	__ : __	__ : __
	__ : __	__ : __
WINNER	TEAM:	BIG POINTS:

Figure 2: Tournament schedule for the ‚Beijing Mixed Singles‘ (team A versus team B)

Rules of the game: If A1 beats B1, for example 11:8, the winner (i.e. A1) plays against B2, but B2 takes over the points that B1 ‘took’ in the first set and starts with an 8:0 lead.

If B2 then wins against A1, e.g. 11:5, B2 plays against A2. A2 then starts with a 5:0 lead. Depending on the winner of the match, either A3 or B3 will then play. Finally, the winner of the last match (A3:B3) is also the winner of the game and the team receives **1 BIGPOINT**.

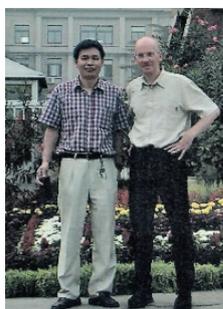
If (for example) A3 is no longer used during the course of the game, Team A receives **2 BIGPOINTS** as the winner. If neither A2 nor A3 are used (which would be the case if A1 defeats all three players of Team B), Team A receives **3 BIGPOINTS**.

The tournament could, of course, be held in a team mode like the Zhaotong tournament. In each mode, the most BIGPOINTS achieved always count.

However, the tournament can also be ended when a team reaches a specified number of BIGPOINTS. And since you can play

a lot of team matches of this kind in a short period of time despite having fewer tables (6 players occupy only one table), it doesn’t matter if one or even two players from a team don’t actually play in a match. You just change the order of the line-up for the next match 😊

Note: The publication appeared in the German magazine “Tischtennislehre” (Table Tennis Teaching). Both language versions (German and English) are available for download on the website of the Association of German Table Tennis Coaches www.vdtt.de



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The photo was taken several years ago during a visit to Beijing, which was about science, but also about table tennis. The two are connected by a long history of playing together as teammates and doubles partners.