

# BN

VIỆT LIFESTYLE & BUSINESS MAGAZINE

**SPORTING  
IN STYLE**

**DA VÀ  
KỸ NGHỆ  
LÀM ĐẸP**

**PING PONG  
CAN BE SEXY TOO**

**VƯỜN CHIM**

**TIPS:  
FOXY ASIAN  
WAVES\***

\*For flat hair only

**AMAZIN' WOMEN IN  
SPORTS**





pole of what's considered athletic." Ping-pong's stigma as a "wimpy sport" appears damaging to the Vietnamese American, who must deal with the nerd stereotype on a regular basis. However, players like Bee believe that such a stereotype should be met head-on.

Although not at the vanguard of American athletics, Bee quickly noted that table tennis is a legitimate sport that is played all over the world. Regarding its validity as a real sport, Bee explained, "I play softball and I don't sweat, but I play ping-pong, and I start sweating within the first couple of points. And that means your body is working. Ping-pong is the real deal." One anonymous amateur player further validated table tennis: "Of course it's a sport. It requires great skill, concentration, and athleticism. If curling is a sport, then this definitely is." Despite its effeminate media image, ping-pong is more masculine than most people realize. "Ping-pong is totally macho," Bee defended. "It gives people a venue to talk lots of trash and see if they can back it up. I can't think of a non-contact sport where you are closer to your opponent. Half of my game alone is based on pure intimidation."

Regardless of the external social and political ramifications of table tennis, at a rudimentary level, it is pure and simple fun. Sharing his love of the game, Bee professed, "There's a certain Zen-like quality to a good rally. It's the same feeling that you would find at center court at Wimbledon. All you can think about is focusing on that next shot and there's nothing else on your mind except hitting that ball at the right pace and angle. When you get in rhythm in a good ping-pong game, there is nothing better." Additionally, table tennis is a game that unites different cultures together. Bee stated, "I don't know how many times I've been out and the subject of ping-pong randomly comes up over the course of a couple of beers. Commonly, I'll hear, 'You play ping-pong? I am awesome at ping-pong. And I will kill you.' And then the smack

talking begins." There are many positives attributes associated with ping-pong. However, do these positives outweigh the negatives for the Vietnamese American?

Despite the actual athleticism and joy involved with ping-pong, the ominous nerd stereotype has yet to be eradicated from the sport. Expectedly, ping-pong revivalist Bee defended: "There are a lot of great Vietnamese ping-pong players out there. And if you're a winner, you're a winner. You have an air of self-confidence that can't help but better you in other areas of your life. Being good at ping-pong can only help the Vietnamese American." Other Vietnamese Americans I interviewed agreed. Vanessa Nguyen felt that "if Vietnamese Americans are good at table tennis, then that's just one more arena where we can make our presence known. I'd rather hear about a Vietnamese American being good at ping-pong than never hearing about any Vietnamese Americans at all."

#### OPENING SERVE

As Bee threw the ping-pong ball in the air for his serve, I realized that I had to answer the ultimate question for myself. Fearful of the nerd stereotype, I walked away from ping-pong in 1998. At the time, I was a naïve college student who resisted stereotypes at all costs. With nine years of maturity that has passed since that time, I stood across the net as a man who understood that stereotypes are erased by accepting oneself and embracing the things in one's life freely. I was good at ping-pong, and I do not need to hide from it anymore. Once Bee made his serve and the ball bounced on my side, I knew what I had to do. I returned his serve, and the rally began. **BN**

---

*David Ngo is a filmmaker who can be reached at david@doubleohthree.com. Details about the Seeley Cup can be found at <http://www.seeleycup.com>.*