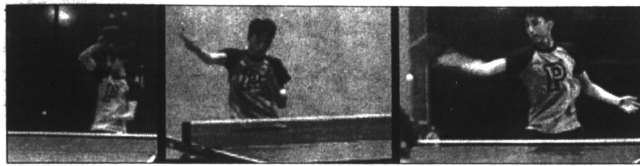




Ping Pong



Photos courtesy of the Ping Pong Posse

USC's table tennis club, the 'Ping Pong Posse,' brings together 60 students with a wide range of passion and skill levels.

By **ASHLEY ZELDIN**
Staff Writer

Jing Cui, a freshman majoring in biology, is known for her powerful forehand. Yet, she is neither a member of the varsity tennis team nor the recreation sports tennis club. And she uses what those unfamiliar to her game would label a paddle, not a racquet. For the record, the so-called "paddles" are indeed racquets.

Cui is a member of the USC recreational sports department's Ping Pong Posse, a collective of about 60 students who meet up to three times a week in the North Gym and 12 of whom comprise one varsity and two junior varsity teams.

The Posse plays table tennis, and club president Jason Sun admits that there is a "fine line" separating table tennis from its more casual counterpart and club misnomer, ping pong.

Once you start using the high-friction, high-performance racquets that cost anywhere from \$60 to \$200, then you could probably say you're playing table tennis," Sun said. The friction on the racquets causes the balls to fly at 7,000 rpm "with a lot of arc, a lot of deception (and) a lot of speed," Sun said.

The Posse arose last year under the leadership of then-senior Adam Bobrow and current junior Angad Singh, a social sciences major with an emphasis on economics. "Bobrow and Singh) played table tennis recreationally around the L.A. area," Sun said. "They just couldn't find players their level at school to play with, and they decided to start a club."

The club had "very humble beginnings," Sun said. "Our first meeting, we had like 30 people and two tables. Now, a year and a half later, we have five tables — professional-grade tables, I might add — gym space, barriers, a full-on club and a college team. This is the first year we have a college team."

USC's league also consists of teams from UCLA, Cal Tech and Pepperdine. Cui, one of only a handful of girls in this male-dominated club, is one of the less-experienced members of the club.

"Competitively, I only just started (playing) this semester," she said. "I started playing when I was about 10 years old just for fun every once in a while," she added. The Canton, China-born Cui competed against her sister in Australia, where the Cui family resided for six years.

Her family moved to Chicago, and



Courtesy of the Ping Pong Posse

The Posse. The USC Ping Pong Posse, a USC recreational club composed of table tennis enthusiasts, meets three times a week at the North Gym.

during high school, Cui focused on volleyball. When she relocated to USC, she joined the Posse.

"This is a sport I'm really passionate about," Cui said. "It's just fun smacking the ball, really killing it."

On Feb. 21, Cui qualified for the Association of College Unions International's national competition, to take place Friday and Saturday at Stanford.

The ACUI governs competitions for pool, bowling and sports "that students play at college unions," Sun said.

Sun, a business major who has only been playing table tennis seriously for about a year and a half, and his former doubles partner, Victor Cheng, placed second in regional play last year.

"After I qualified for the nationals, I started thinking about it a lot more seriously," Cui said. She solicited her varsity-level teammates to train her during the normal practices, and they have obliged. The Posse does not have a coach, and Sun coaches beginners.

"My teammates are easy to get along with," Cui said. "They're willing to help me (make) improvements."

Cui said that her weakness is her backhand. Her racquet grip prevents her from giving her backhand shots a lot of force.

"I'm a penholder, so it's easy for me to loop, which is the forehand hit," she said. "I have a really consistent forehand hit, and it's very easy for me to divert (the ball) to anywhere on the table."

Most people find difficulty in hitting forehand shots to the right side, she said. "I'm able to angle my paddle

so that it can go anywhere on the table."

She also said that she needs to work on receiving balls with spin.

"I'm getting better at chopping the ball when it comes at an under-spin," she said, adding that still needs to work on returning balls with top-spin and sidespin.

Sun agrees that Cui's ability at controlling balls with spin has developed.

"She's really improved a lot," Sun said of Cui. "She's now gotten a much broader skill set, her tactics are a lot better, her footwork is getting a little bit better."

Sun said that Cui's USA Table Tennis rating, out of 3,000, is around 1,200 or 1,300. The average recreational player, Sun said, is ranked at about 500 to 1,000.

However, Cui's overall consistency wavers.

"Because I haven't played competitively for all that long, I tend to imitate my opponent's actions," Cui said. "If my opponent is a penholder and they're very consistent with shots, it really helps me improve because I start doing the exact same motions that they do. But I have to work on my consistency because that isn't always a good thing."

But keeping Cui's experience, or lack thereof, in mind, she has come a long way. Cui doesn't plan to play table tennis professionally, or even to compete after college.

"I think I'll probably always play table tennis for fun," she said. "Once you start playing you get very addicted to it and you just want to play every day."

ADVERTISE (213) 740-2707 OR STU404

Replace Stress with Success

- Organize, prioritize, and manage your workload
- Focus but still have fun
- Create healthy habits now



Elizabeth Topp
Development Coach

Get help developing personalized and realistic time management strategies for the rest of your semester.

Call Elizabeth Topp at (213) 210-8799
www.elizabethtopp.com

Looking for safe and affordable abortion services provided by USC Gynecologists?

Contact the Pregnancy Options Clinic at Women's and Children's Hospital
323-226-3768

Hot Nights. Cool Trips. Advisors with Piercings.

Why Grandpa doesn't book his Summer Trip with us.

Paris	\$467
London	\$426
Madrid	\$602
Fiji	\$765

Air, hotel & transfers:

HAWAII
5 night accomm.
From \$454

LOS CABOS
4 night accomm.
From \$464

Fare is round trip from LAX and prices are per person. Subject to change and availability. Tax not included. Restrictions and limitations apply. Fees are valid for students. Family and youth rates.

One stop. No hassles.

We've got everything you need for your next trip.

STA TRAVEL

www.statravel.com

USC
3317 South Hoover St.
(213) 743.4782

STUDENT TRAVEL & BEYOND

ONLINE • ON THE PHONE • ON CAMPUS • ON THE STREET

International Student Identity Card



save hundreds at home & abroad

Savings On:

- Airfare
 - Accommodations
 - Transportation
 - Attractions
- trains, car rentals, buses, tours, airport shuttles
• theme parks, museums, clubs, etc.

Travel Safety Benefits:

- Free int'l travel insurance
- Free worldwide help-line
- ISICConnect calling card

For more info... visit an STA Travel branch near you

1.800.474.8214
www.isicus.com

