

# Weekend devoted to table tennis

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If you stopped by the gym from Nov. 17-18, you'd think it had been sponsored by Joola because of all the banners and tables with its name plastered on them. But if the clattering of paddles and pings met with pongs didn't clue you in enough, then that weekend was reserved for two consecutive table tennis tournaments.

The first night, Nov. 17, was for Del Mar. Any student, so long as the \$10 entry fee was paid, was allowed to participate regardless of skill level. On top of that, there was a little money at stake as well: first ended up winning \$100, while second won \$50. The top four finishers also won a wooden trophy, courtesy of the Intramurals program's Yetta Williams.

One of the participants, engineering major Abed Lopez, signed up after checking his email.

"Someone just sent it to me," Lopez said. "So I just came."

Lopez admitted to having minimal experience with the sport.

"I played a bit," Lopez said. "We had one at my high school. It was a ping pong table, and we all just kinda played."

Another participant, liberal arts major Andres Garcia, had a bit more experience.

"I used to play in a league back in Harlingen," Garcia said. "I didn't take it too seriously, it was just for fun."

"Just for fun" perfectly summarizes the tournament's goal, and that's exactly what the participants got. Lopez noted having a positive experience.

"I feel pretty good," Lopez said.

Garcia felt the same way.

"I think it's going good," Garcia said.

"There was a lot of learning, definitely a lot of learning."



Briggs Wilborn and Hayford Osei face off in the dying minutes of the Nov. 18 tournament's second round. Neither placed in their division.

He had also mentioned joining again, provided the opportunity ever arose.

"I'd absolutely come out here and play with the guys," Garcia said.

All in all, good times were had, balls were hit, and the awards and prize money were doled out according to plan. Now that Friday was over, it was time to rest and wait for the big kahuna: Saturday's tournament.

The second night, Nov. 18, was for the public. Joola was yet again plastered everywhere the eye could see as 25 players, which included several members of the Corpus Christi Table Tennis Association and Del Mar's own Santiago Le Gall, took to the gym and went for the trophy and some money as well.

And took to the gym they did, taking seven hours to resolve two rounds of play. If that seems long, it was originally supposed to be nine hours and require three rounds of play to determine the winners.

Though he didn't win, the timing seemed

to have been just right for participant Mark Arnold.

"I'm a full time RV-er so I don't live here permanently," Arnold said. "Almost every time they have tournament here, if I'm in the area, I play."

On top of that, he has a long history with table tennis.

"I think like a lot of kids, I had a local recreation center," Arnold said. "I played a little bit with sandpaper paddles when I was 8 to 10."

He even has a previous connection to Del Mar College.

"We had a program running here when I was here before," Arnold said. "I helped coach some students and it kind of went away."

This history didn't seem to affect his hubris, however.

"I'm far from the top player here," Arnold said. "With the people that I think I know are here, I probably don't expect to finish in the money. I got maybe an outside shot at second."

His hopes at success may not have been high, but his spirits were far higher.

"The program has been revived and that excites me," Arnold said. "They'll have another place to play in town, to expose the game to more people."

Even if the victory wasn't the first thing on Arnold's mind, it was clear that the exposure was more than enough for him.

"I like to see new people get introduced to the sport," Arnold said. "I think it's such a great sport, and you can play from when you're young to when you're quite old."

The tournament was fundamentally an afternoon devoted to playing table tennis for hours on end, but there was more to it. It was a marriage of the old and new, a combination of seasoned veterans and novices joining for a leisurely game, all with some prizes tied to it as well.

And it was all presented under the Viking banner.

"Having it back at Del Mar is just wonderful to see," Arnold said.

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