Pingpong in Full Swing

By Wayne Paxton
Contributing Writer

Forrest Gump, eat your heart out. The EMU table tennis club is led by outdoor Renaissance man Lester Zook (professor of Physical Education) and attended by anyone who wishes to test their paddle prowess. It features both ends of the sport’s skill spectrum, as occasional base- ment dinkers and proficient artists of the game meet under one roof.

Zook, also the head men’s cross country coach and teacher of rock climbing, has been involved in pingpong since he was ten.

“I used to play my dad regularly as a kid, but didn’t get back into the game until five or six years ago,” he said. In those five years the sport has grown from a few casual weekend players to club status, with about 12 attendees per gathering. The club is in no way exclusive; anyone who wants to come to the Sunday night open play meeting is welcome.

“When you see true masters of the game like Sean, you realize that the levels of skill involved have no boundaries,” Zook said.

“People should know that ping pong is not limited to casual dinking; this is an Olympic competition.”

The game on the tournament level has many technical implications and rules that must be followed. For example, one side of a tournament paddle must be red, the other black. “This allows the players to read the other’s paddle and maintains the fairness of the match,” Zook said.

Other measures have been taken to make the game more spectator friendly, such as an increase in ball size and shortening of a game to 11 from the previous 21. In the end, though, the balls will continue zinging even if no one is there to watch, according to Zook.

“Like cross country, table tennis is not the best spectator sport. Also like cross country, a large crowd is not essential to good competition. We will play if no one comes to see. Pingpong is not about large crowds and screaming fans. It’s about enjoying yourself no matter what level of athlete you are.”

No fans, no problem. It’s all about the fun and competition.

That sounds like something they would say. So seniors, don’t be mad if you get beat by a bunch of freshmen. And freshmen, it’s not necessary to try to make a point and show up the seniors. The faculty on the other hand - that’s a different story. Go all out, show’em up, even though it seems to never happen.

The intramural sport that started up this past Monday was volleyball. This great sport consists of a simple strategy: bump, set and spike. It really is a simple concept, but if only it was so easy to execute. Sure maybe if you go to the A-league games you’ll see the teams consistently executing the concept of bump, set and spike. If that’s the entertainment you are craving, then sure, go see A-league and their fancy (aka correct) way of playing. But if you want to be entertained by a game that usually consists of bump, bump, someone running frantically after the ball, and then launching it back over the net to the other side; then B-league is the spectacle for you. I’m not trying to put down B-league teams, or even say that all B-league teams couldn’t compete in the A-league. For example, I hear that team “Holla!” is supposed to be quite the threat. But I also remember from watching games played last year’s–just say it can be quite humorous.

Once all is said and done, though it still comes down to the fact that intramural sports really are the most important sports in college. If you are good at a sport, you can go try out and play for the varsity of EMU. You have to practice hard in pre-season, then you have to practice hard during the season, you have traveled long distances for games, and it takes up a lot of your time. But for those of us who don’t have the talent to make the varsity sport that we want to play, which is probably about 85 percent of us, this is the time to show off what small amount of skill we do have.

Weekly Wrap Up

Friday, Jan. 17
(M) Volleyball vs. Philadelphia Biblical Institute, W 3 - 2
(M) Basketball vs. Guildford, L 75 - 85

Saturday, Jan. 18
(M) Volleyball vs. Baptist Bible, W 3 - 0
(M) Volleyball vs. Lancaster Bible, W 3 - 0
(M) Basketball vs. Guildford, L 72 - 80
(W) Basketball vs. Emory & Henry, L 56 - 64

Sunday, Jan. 19
(M) Basketball vs. Emory & Henry, L 73 - 94

Wednesday, Jan. 22
(W) Basketball vs. Lynchburg, W 76 - 52

EMU Lady Royals defeated Lynchburg at home on Wednesday, Jan. 22 with a score of 76-52.