



WHY IS TABLE TENNIS OFTEN CALLED PING PONG?

Bonjour. My name is Pierre. Pierre Baron de Coubertin and I know everything about the Olympics... Really. For example: Do you know why Table Tennis is often called Ping Pong? I do.

Is it because the game sounds like Ping Pong? Yes! But we do not call rowing Splash – Woosh. Or horse running Kataklop, Kataklop. Or Formula One Vroom – Vroom. So why do we say Ping Pong, and nobody thinks that is crazy?

To understand this, we go to the 1880's. To the Victorians. These were people that liked to drink, eat and play Tennis. They lived in England, and like today it almost always rained... So one day one of these guys said: Let's clear the dinnertable, get a line of books as a net and some cigarbox lids as paddles. And so they played indoor tennis or... table tennis...

But they did not call it Table Tennis. They called it Whiff – Whaff after the sound it made. **Whiff – Whaff.** Strange, but initially the game was often played with rounded Champagne Corks, so it is not unthinkable that Whiff Whaff was the result of an intoxicated Victorian brain. In 1901, mr. James Gibb, - a very fanatic Whiff - Whaff player – returned from the US of A with a celluloid ball. The sound of the game instantly changed and so did the nickname. **Ping Pong was born.** Some companies saw the commercial possibilities. They trademarked the name and started selling exclusive equipment packs...

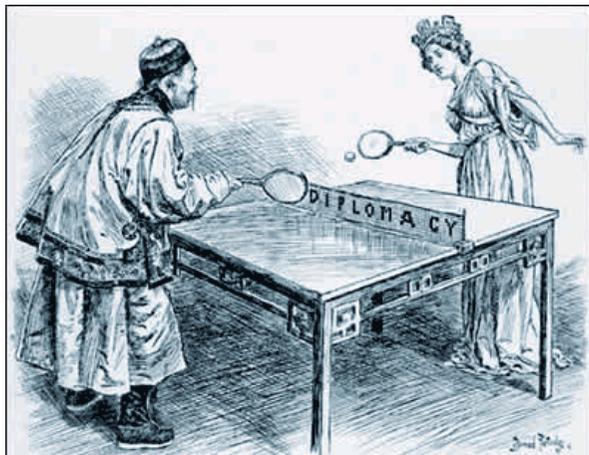
Ping Pong became very sexy.

It was the perfect polite after dinner game in which smashing was considered unsportsmanlike. And the term Table Tennis became very, very rare. After World War I people got really fanatic about Ping Pong. In Berlin an international federation was formed. They wanted to name it the International Ping Pong Federation, but they could not do that because of the trademark. So they called it the International Table Tennis Federation. This marked the separation between Ping Pong the commercial game and Table Tennis the Sport, which became very popular. Everybody played TableTennis. In 1960 there were more than 40 million registered table tennis players. But everytime something really important happened, who got al the credits?

Right, Ping Pong!



Continue reading on page 2 ->



For example the first commercial videogame was based on Table Tennis, but it was called **Pong**. Or the groundbreaking meetings between Nixon and Mao. A game of very serious table tennis was played and the event was called. Right. **Ping Pong Diplomacy**. Or What about the Enrique Iglesias song? Nevertheless serious Table Tennis Players don't like their sport being called Ping Pong. They think it is degrading.... But what about the Chinese...??

Well they got acquainted with table tennis around the start of the 20th century. Remember, this was a time that everybody still called the game Ping Pong. That does sound very Chinese, but strangely the Chinese did not have a character for Pong, so they improvised and called the game Ping Pang.

Or to be precise, Ping Pang Qiu, which literally means Ping Pong with ball. Which was a bit overdone because there are no recollections of Ping Pong without a ball.. So it isn't called Ping **Pang** because the Chinese hit the ball harder.... or better... or because of onomatopoeic differences. Like some people think a cow says Boo and other people think it says Moo. Even though it is the same cow. No it is called Ping *Pang* because they did not have a character that sounded like Pong.

So let's look at this again.

If their hadn't been a trademark there would have been an international Ping Pong Federation and the Olympic Sport would now have been called Ping Pong. Therefore if someone calls table tennis Ping Pong it is not an insult. It is a compliment. A tribute to the original name.

So, table tennis player shouldn't be offended. And, more important, the Chinese don't mind, they still call it Ping Pang and they are way better at it...

So, if you can not beat them, join them. During the Beijing closing ceremony Boris Johnson Mayor of London already did, saying "Ping Pong is coming home!"

Really!

