



Middle School Table Tennis League Championships
PS 126 (MAT)
80 Catherine Street, New York, NY 10038.

Tournament Report: Inside MAT's recently transformed school cafeteria sat seven tournament table tennis tables. It is 10:10 am Saturday morning March 5th and the microphone blared. Eagerly listening were 106 middle school table tennis players and their coaches. The Middle School Table Tennis League Championships, a culmination of 12 weeks of table tennis practice, play and interscholastic matches for 13 New York City Public Schools, had officially started.

As the school team matches rolled out and play settled in, our coaches began to see a common theme - planned tactics and game play strategies deployed by all participants. Accompanying the tactics were loops, backhand counters, long push rallies, sidespin serves, expert ball placement, and agile footwork. It was a pleasing sight to see!

After four hours of frenzied round robin team play, four school teams remained. These were:

- **Nest + M:** Nest + M was last year's defending Champion. This Lower East Side School is led by teacher-coach Greg Farrell.
- **Cunningham:** Cunningham is a fast improving team with a deep roster of 25 students. This school, which is located in the Midwood section of Brooklyn, is led by teacher-coach Sue Fattah.
- **MAT:** MAT, the school with the home court advantage, was last year's runner up. The team had gone undefeated in league play during the past 12 weeks. Led by Athletic Director John De Matteo this school is located in the cross section of the Lower East Side and Chinatown.
- **Shuang Wen Academy:** Shuang Wen is a newcomer to the league, but a feared opponent because of their strong table tennis afterschool program. This Lower East Side School is led by player – coach Ludovic Lee-Freithofnig, who possesses a national junior ranking.

Results

Semi-finals: In an exciting well played match, MAT defeated Shuang Wen 4 matches to 1. The balanced play from MAT led to the win. The other semi-final match between Nest +M and Cunningham featured some of the most enjoyable and intense play of the tournament! Nest + M won 3 matches to 2 with the outcome in the balance up right up until the end.

Finals: The finals pitted NEST + M against MAT in a rematch of last year's final. Playing on home court and with extra intensity and poise, the consistent play from MAT was too much for Nest +M to overcome. Final match count 4 to 1.

The real purpose of the event was to provide a venue for each participant to showcase their skills, try new tactics and to meet fellow students. This was accomplished! Congratulations to all who participated! In closing, we wish to THANK all the teacher-coaches and League Commissioner Mr. John De Matteo, for without you all this event would not have occurred.

This article was written by Ben Nisbet, Director of AYTTO.