

Ten Years

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Abstract

Where the rules of Kimwipe table tennis stand after ten years, and what the journal expects of the next ten.

1 Ten years

With this issue *Scientific Sports* completes its first decade. Volume 1, Number 1 appeared on 12 September 2016; the number you are reading carries the same date ten years on. It is a fitting moment to say where the field stands and where this journal expects it to go.

2 What we set out to do

The founding Preface made a claim that has aged well. Rules for a scientific sport, it said, “must be reasonable”; they are not to be handed down by an authority such as this association, but arrived at by “the consent of scientific communities”. The journal was established as the place where that consent could be worked out in print, with the apparatus of review and citation that lets a proposal be examined, answered and built upon.

The first article published under that programme (Iwatsuki, 2016) was deliberately a framework rather than a rulebook. It fixed what seemed distinctive — the instrument, the playing surface, the condition on the ball — and left the rest open, ending with the frank statement that methods for evaluating players “still remain to be discussed”. That remains the position. Nothing published since has closed the question.

3 Where the rules stand

They stand where a young scientific sport's rules ought to stand: in the experimental stage.

Over the past decade Kimwipe table tennis has been played in a number of forms. It has been played across a laboratory bench with a box for a racket and a second box for a net, with the stated purpose of keeping a rally going while the players talk. It has been played on regulation tables under the ordinary rules of table tennis, with the box the only variation. It has been played as a knockout tournament to eleven points with the wiper itself as the racket. Each of these is a reasonable experiment. None of them has yet been argued for in print, with the reasoning behind it set out and the alternatives weighed, and so none of them can yet be called a proposal in the sense the Preface intended.

That is not a criticism of anyone. It is a description of a field that has been busy playing and has not yet

begun writing. The review that follows this editorial sets the experiments side by side so that the writing can start from a clear view of what has been tried.

4 What has changed

What has changed in ten years is that the sport now has a base of experience to draw on.

The University of Tokyo club was already active when this journal began, and it has since been joined by clubs and groups at other universities, at technical colleges and at secondary schools. Between them they have held regular meetings, exhibited at their festivals, and run a national championship under written requirements. The sport is played in more places, by more people, and in more forms than it was in 2016. That means something specific for this journal: there are now people who have played enough Kimwipe table tennis, under enough different arrangements, to have opinions about which arrangements work and why.

5 The next ten years

The journal's expectation for its second decade follows directly. The first decade accumulated experience; the second should see that experience turned into proposals.

We expect rule proposals grounded in actual play — an argument that eleven points is the right length of a game, or that it is not; a case for the box against the wiper itself, or the reverse; a treatment of what a net is for when the ball barely bounces. We expect measurements: restitution against real tables, the useful life of a box, the effect of a lecture hall's air conditioning on a rally. We expect meeting reports, because a tournament that is not written up leaves nothing for the next organiser to learn from. And we expect the question the first article left open to be taken up at last: how, from a finite number of rallies, the stronger player is to be identified.

All of this is invited. Articles, technical notes, meeting reports and letters are all welcome, from any club and any country, and the terms are set out on the For Authors page. The editorial address is ss@iktta.org.

6 This issue and this site

The journal's website has been rebuilt for the anniversary. Every article is now available as a typeset PDF as well as in HTML, carrying the bibliographic metadata that indexing services read. The two articles from 2016 and 2017 have been recovered in their original typeset form. A preface from Volume 1, Number 1 that was lost when the journal changed publishing systems has been restored to the record where it belongs.

The tenth-anniversary issue carries, besides this editorial, a review of the rules under which the sport has actually been played over the decade. It is published as a starting point for the discussion the next ten years are meant to hold.

References

- International Kimwipe Table Tennis Association. (2016). Preface. *Scientific Sports*, 1(1).
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