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2009 College Table Tennis National Championships

April 3-5, 2009 in Rochester, Minnesota

WEBSITE: <http://www.nctta.org/champs/2009>

****NEWS RELEASE****

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FIRST TIME SCHOOLS LOOK TO MAKE A SPLASH AT NATIONALS

While four of the top five seeds at the 2009 College Table Tennis National Championships are returning from previous Championships appearances, Lindenwood University, seeded 5th overall, will be making their Championships debut. They'll be in good company, with several of the 39 schools represented at the Championships, April 3-5 in Rochester, MN, advancing to the big stage for the first time this year, including Michigan State, Wichita State, and Texas.

The top three finishers from 2008, Texas Wesleyan, Princeton, and Puerto Rico return as the top 3 seeds in the 2009 event, but it's Lindenwood, who didn't even have a college table tennis program to speak of a year ago that's the real surprise. Co-head coach, Randy Kendle speaks about their enthusiasm in qualifying as a wildcard team, "Lindenwood University is excited to be a part of the 2009 National Collegiate Table Tennis Championships. Our current national ranking of #5 in the country is a great start for our first year."

Lindenwood joins other successful scholarship programs at Texas Wesleyan University, University of Puerto Rico and Darton College and hopes to spur even more table tennis scholarship opportunities. "We hope the success that Lindenwood has had to date will encourage other universities to branch out and support varsity-level table tennis athlete," Kendle says. "The collegiate level of competition needs to form stronger ties with area high schools to build [an athlete] pipeline."

While Lindenwood looks to establish themselves as a college table tennis powerhouse, other schools are looking for success despite entering as more of the underdogs. "Our goal is to fight all the way to be one of the top three finishers of the championship," says a determinedly optimistic, Huanyuan Chen, Texas (Austin) team captain. It's not easy to qualify from the Texas Division, where Texas Wesleyan has won every year of its existence, but Chen thinks that leaves his team tested and ready. "I am sure that the UT team will show teams around the US just what the Texas Division is made of."

In terms of sheer joy to be participating in college table tennis' marquee event, it's tough to top, David Switzer, Michigan State team captain. "I literally fell off my bed in excitement [upon learning that we had qualified] and proceeded to call all the members of our team to tell them the good news." Their 'new kids on the block' status did little to diminish their Championships hopes, however. "Our team is very excited for the National Championships and we are out to show the country that Michigan State is a new force to be reckoned with."

Expectations on the Wichita State table tennis team, however, are more modest. "Our team is very young and most of the players have less than a year of playing experience. The student athletes and I are here to compete and enjoy a weekend full of table tennis," remarks coach/captain PJ Phachantry on the relative newness of their program.

Players and spectators alike can enjoy a weekend full of table tennis at the 2009 College Table Tennis Championships which starts Friday April 3rd and continues to Sunday April 5th at the Regional Recreation Sports Center in Rochester, Minnesota.

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