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2009 College Table Tennis National Championships

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

****NEWS RELEASE****

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VETERANS AND NEWBIES IN THE MEN'S, WOMEN'S and MIXED DOUBLES COMPETITION

The Championships have arrived in Rochester, Minnesota this weekend and while veterans of the college table tennis have come again to reclaim past glories, some new faces appear to make things interesting.

One such new face, David Llona, Central Florida, matched up against Carlos Chiu, number two player from perennial table tennis powerhouse, Texas Wesleyan University. Llona, who hails from Tampa, Florida, comes to the championships with a very unique racket grip of his own invention. An internet personality with a plethora of Facebook followers has developed a real life following here at the Championships with spectators marveling at his passion and style of play. Llona pushed Chiu, a senior from Mexico, to the brink of elimination, before succumbing to Chiu's experience in the final game. "Let me at him again," said a determined Llona after the grueling dogfight.

Much of the day was spent in doubles competition as 39 colleges and universities battled looked for Championship titles in Men's, Women's, and Mixed Doubles. Mixed Doubles featured a mixture of returning veterans and new faces and names to remember for years to come. The Mixed Doubles final featured the Columbia University dynamic duo of Shih and Alvarado against Mark Hazinski and Ines Perhoc, Texas Wesleyan. Columbia coach Richard Wagner suggests that Shih and Alvarado can match up will with the Texas Wesleyan team and "can't be intimidated by the aura of Texas Wesleyan Table Tennis". Since 2002, Texas Wesleyan has won more national titles than any other school. Shih and Alvarado put up a solid effort with their lightning fast retrievals and quick piercing shots, but in the end Hazinski and Perhoc were more stable winning the Mixed Doubles Championships, 3-2.

The Women's Doubles final saw a rematch of last year's event with Jasna Reed and Ines Perhoc from Texas Wesleyan taking on Judy Hugh from Rutgers and Barbara Wei from Pennsylvania. Different year, same result as Hugh/Wei take the first game at 4, but Reed/Perhoc prove too strong, winning the next 3 games.

Many of the same players that had advanced to late stages of Mixed Doubles, figured prominently in the Men's Doubles competition as well. Mark Hazinski and Carlos Chiu (Texas Wesleyan) entered as the top seeds and advanced to the final without much fanfare. Second seeded Tahl Leibovitz (Queens College) and Carlos Alvarado (Columbia), had similar success in advancing to the final. Both Leibovitz and Chiu competed in last year's Men's Doubles final, but with different partners. Leibovitz teamed with Adam Hugh of Princeton in 2008 (out this year due to injury), to take the Men's Doubles title over Chiu and Ludovic Gombos (Texas

Wesleyan). Being from different schools, Leibovitz and Alvarado don't normally train together as doubles team, while the Texas Wesleyan duo practice together week-in and week-out. The match went the full five games, with Lebovitz/Alvarado prevailing at deuce in the fifth. Ultimately the match was evidence that power isn't always the deciding factor in table tennis, with Leibovitz and Alvarado using deft touch shots to take the doubles title at the 2009 College Table Tennis National Championships.