

Interview with Nenad Bach (1): “Someone has to open the box”

“Parkinson Disease” and “Table Tennis” ... There is a movement surrounding these two.

It was over a year ago, during the Liebherr 2018 World Table Tennis Championships in Halmstad, that Nenad Bach, who was suffered from Parkinson’s disease but has recovered dramatically by playing table tennis, strummed a guitar in front of the officials of the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF). After a while, ITTF decided to support his activities named “Ping Pong Parkinson” through the ITTF Foundation. They also decided to hold the first ever ITTF Parkinson’s World Table Tennis Championships.

The inaugural edition of the ITTF Parkinson’s World Table Tennis Championships will be held in New York from October 11th to 13th this year. Nenad Bach has received numerous inquiries after the prospectus was published at the end of May.

“I am surprised with the reactions. I have received many more inquiries than I expected,” said Nenad Bach on June 14th at a personal interview.

Denmark approached him with the possible participation of a group of 12 players; he also received many inquiries from Sweden, Japan, Brazil, Croatia, England and China.

“There are two ways to apply for the event; one is through the ITTF and the other is to contact directly to Ping Pong Parkinson. I do not grasp the exact number of registrations, but I expect more than 100. We have to prepare for the situation if 200 players register as we cannot accommodate all of them,” said Bach.

At the Championships there will be men’s singles, women’s singles, men’s doubles and women’s doubles. In the singles events, the participants will be divided into the classes 1 to 3 or more according to the level of symptoms. Also, according to Bach, they are discussing about dividing the players according to the level of play in addition to the level of symptoms. There must be a huge gap between the playing levels of the players who had played table tennis before and those who started table tennis after being suffered from Parkinson’s.

This will be the inaugural edition of the Parkinson’s World Table Tennis Championships, so the division of classes, organisation of the levels of play and everything is the first

experience for them. Nenad Bach talked about his challenges for the ground breaking event, the ITTF Parkinson's World Table Tennis Championships.

“The patients suffering from Parkinson's cannot participate in Paralympics. In other words, there are many people who cannot participate in any event in any category. I want everybody to know the fact. I am not sure if it is reasonable to make the event lead to the Paralympics in the future. However, we have to succeed in holding the Parkinson's World Table Tennis Championships and have the event be evaluated. Someone has to open the box.”

Bach used the word “box”; the expression created the biggest impression to me. What is inside the box? Will something come out or not? Nothing can be seen until the box is open. Nenad Bach found the box, Parkinson's World Table Tennis Championships, laid his hands on the box and is going to open the box in October this year.

Sentence and photo by Ayako Kawai

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