



CONTACT: Mike Meier
PHONE: 214-907-9221
EMAIL: mikesmeier@yahoo.com

2008 College Table Tennis National Championships

April 11-13 in Rochester, Minnesota

WEBSITE: <http://www.nctta.org/champs/2008/index.html>

****NEWS RELEASE****

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GOLDEN GOPHERS EARN BID TO A "BIG DANCE" OF A DIFFERENT SORT

Although hockey and basketball are arguably the most prominent sports at the University of Minnesota, they will soon be taking a back seat. The Golden Gopher table tennis squad, ranked fifth in the nation, is vying for a national title at the 2008 College Table Tennis National Championships next week in Rochester.

Table tennis is not an intercollegiate sport at Minnesota, or even a club sport for that matter. But five area students have rigorously defended their school this season. The team, coached by alumnus Thor Truelson, is comprised of Yuejian Cao, Ming Curran, and Anders Truelson of Minneapolis, Shiwei Zhu of Cottage Grove, and Anh Ngo of Eagan. The Gophers are members of the NCTTA Minnesota Division and went 6-0 during the 2007-08 campaign, sweeping Iowa State, Carleton College in Northfield, and Northwestern College in Roseville. They did not give up an individual match and lost a mere two games the entire season.

"The kids play in tournaments all over the place," said Thor Truelson, Head Coach. "It's a fun thing for them to do."

Coach Truelson is one of the top-ranked players in the state of Minnesota, with Curran and his son Anders following close behind. But unfortunately, the University of Minnesota does not have the zeal and passion about table tennis that Truelson takes with him.

"The U of M wasn't interested as all," Truelson said. "They threw road blocks up all over the place. It would have been nice if we weren't stymied by every turn."

The Gophers rank ahead of such nationally renowned schools as Rutgers, Virginia Tech, and Stanford. But Truelson believes his team can take it to teams ranked ahead of his.

"Our goal is to get to the semifinals. We think we're unrated. We could be rated as high as third," said Truelson.

Along with the team competition, Anders Truelson and Ming Curran will contend also for men's singles and doubles titles. Hopefully bringing home some hardware will bring the table tennis program some well-deserved respect.

"We didn't get as much as a shirt from the school. We're representing them, but kind of on a sour note," Truelson said.

"The University of Minnesota team is not well known on their campus, but good results and media coverage will hopefully bring some notoriety to the program," said Willy Leparulo, NCTTA President. "They have some good players, so it should be interesting to see if they can pull something off at the Championships."