

TRAINING OVERSEAS

By Mark Smythe – June 2010

A question often asked is: Is it worth going overseas specifically for training and if so, how beneficial can it be, and, how long should I go for?

My answer; if any player is seriously interested about improving their level, and, when basic skills are developed to a certain level – the coach should have good idea of the right time – they should go overseas as many times as possible and for as long as possible.

Training overseas generally fast tracks development of most skills because the amount of hours training (on table & physical) is usually much greater compared to normal weekly program when living at home.

An example is Joshua Cheung. Josh is the most recent player I coach who has been overseas for training, going to China from March 21 – April 24 this year. Below is a comparison of his usual weekly timetable's in China and when living at home.

CHINA

Monday – Friday

9 – 11:30 Training (2hrs multi-ball, 30mins serves)

12:00 Lunch

1 – 2 Sleeping

2:30 – 5:30 Training (2.5hrs on table, 30mins physical)

6:00 Dinner

6:30 – 8:30 Training (2hrs multi-ball)

10:00 Sleeping

Saturday

9 – 11:30 Training (matches)

12:00 Lunch

1 – 2 Sleeping

2:30 – 5 Training (matches)

6:00 Dinner

7 – 8:30 Training (multi-ball)

10:00 Sleeping

Sunday

Rest day (Church and sight seeing)

HOME (Feb – March)

Monday

4:30 – 5:30 Homework/Study

6:30 – 9 Bible Study Fellowship

9:30 – 11, Homework/Study

Tuesday

4:30 – 5:30 Homework/Study

6 – 8 Group Training

9 – 11 Homework/Study

Wednesday

5 – 6 English Tutor

7:30 Pennant

10:30 – 11:30 Homework/Study

Thursday

4:30 – 5:30 Individual Coaching

7:30 Pennant

11 – 12 Homework/Study

Friday

4:30 – 6, Homework/Study

8 – 9 Practise with dad

9:30 – 11, Homework/Study

Saturday

9:30 – 11:30 Group Training

11:30 – 12:15 Practise another player

1:15 – 3 Maths Tutor

4-5 & 9-11 Homework/Study

Sunday

10 – 12:30 Church

1:15 – 4 Chinese School

8 – 11, Homework/Study

Total = 44 hours TT per week

Total = 11 hours TT per week

Note: My training stints in China were 30-35hrs per week.



I estimate the hours Josh played in China would be equivalent to approx. 6 months compared to when living at home. This is due to the major focus for 6 days a week is TT, plus the quality of training partners and playing the same amount in a shorter time, far out ways the calculation of difference of hours. Josh has continued playing 10-12hrs per week since the trip therefore continuing to improve his standard/skills for the short term.

Players need to be physically & mentally ready for such a heavy workload, 25+ hrs per week. If not, there's a higher chance of injuries occurring and/or losing interest in the sport by realising it's all too hard. When 15 years old, I was offered by my Pennant teammate (Horst Frohlich) to go to Germany for training and stay with his brother. I rejected this due to not being mentally ready to live away from home for a period of time.

My first trip overseas was in Jan. 1992 (18 yrs old) going to China for one month and made 10 more trips (training & competing for Aust.) between Sept. 1992 – August 1996 with the longest stint being 6 months from Sept. 95 – Feb. 96. I made most of my improvement from 1991-1996 due to training 25+ hrs per week plus all the overseas trips.

William Henzell, Jian Fang Lay and Miao Miao are the best examples of Aust. Senior players that show how training overseas can assist your improvement. They have been the dominate Senior Players for last 10-15 yrs and have spent extensive time overseas. In fact, they all gained most of their skills from training overseas. William lived in Sweden (10 yrs) then Germany (2 yrs) aged 14-26, while Jian was a full-time (30+ hrs per week) player in China for 10 years (professional – wage/salary - for most years) before moving to Aust. in 1993, and Miao played full time for 5-6 yrs in China & Poland before moving to Aust. in 1996. Miao also played 20+ hours per week for at least 4 years from 1996. Anyone playing 10-15hrs per week would need to do it for 25+ years to achieve the same amount of hours as Jian played in China for those 10 years. Jian has the modern day record of highest World Senior Ranking for an Aust. player being ranked 47 in Jan. 1996.

The best example of current Aust. Junior's is Anna Du. When Anna was 11 (2005) she was a good average player in Vic. for her age group, then went to China for 2 yrs of training and comfortably won Aust. U13 & U15 Singles Titles in 2007 beating Lily Phan in both finals. I estimate Anna improved her standard by 6-7 yrs compared to if she lived at home for those 2 yrs. Anna went back to China for another 6 months in Feb. 2008 and was R-up to Lily in Aust. U15 Singles final that year.

Training overseas will help a player's development if they are ready for the hard work.