

Hockey That Takes Away Your Appetite!

by Rejean Tremblay, *La Presse*, Montreal, March 7, 1980

In this article, Rejean Tremblay visits the Montreal Table Hockey League. He develops a deep appreciation for the game and a healthy respect for Marinoff.



fully visible: Lou Marinoff, Mike Brossard, Sam Anoussis, Ginette Chesick, Francois Charbonneau, Ken Stuart, Gail Richardson, Alex Anoussis (kneeling) , Ron Chesick

At 2 p.m., Lou Marinoff cleans his plate; he will not eat again before 11 p.m. or midnight. Marinoff is always too nervous to eat supper before a match. Toward six-thirty, he does several warm-up exercises before driving to the "rink."

Then he puts on his table-hockey jersey and causes despair among his opponents. When one is the best in his league, when one plays big matches in Chicago, New York and Montreal, one knows that pre-game tension can be valuable, that it helps in eliciting top performance.

From the opening face-off, Marinoff's countenance changes, his eyes harden, and a ferocious determination defines his features. During the next five minutes, his center attack, his transition game, his spectacular saves evoke sighs of admiration from the spectators . . . until Marinoff's victory is sealed, his 95th win of the season.

Lou Marinoff is the ace of aces of table hockey in Quebec. He utterly dominates the Montreal Table Hockey League, with a record of 95 wins, 10 losses and 8 ties. He is classed among the top ten players in North America.

When I say that he is incapable of eating supper on Tuesdays, the evening when the league competes, I am not exaggerating. Not only does he not eat, but he plays with a controlled fury reminiscent of Guy Lafleur.

And he is not alone. There are sixteen men, average age about 25, who meet once a week at the home of a league member. They have found in table hockey an object of passion, a different kind of social contract, and for the more high-strung and explosive, a new method of blowing off steam.

They set up four "rinks," carefully wax the playing surfaces, and at 7:30 the 5-minute games begin. Each player plays seven or eight games in an evening, and eventually completes a 120-game regular season.

And one talks "system" in this group's basement just as one does in the Montreal Forum or the Quebec Coliseum. A maniac like Marinoff, who practices hours each week, has developed different strategies for each game-situation. "The most important things are to establish a good defensive system, to know how to position the players, to control the passing game, and to get the centre open: he is the main scorer," Marinoff explained. He added that concentration is also vital for becoming a good player.

During our childhoods, we have all at one time or another played games of table hockey. But those childhood games have nothing in common with the play of Marinoff, Gary Gluss, Michael Brossard and the other members of the Montreal Table Hockey League. Their hands dancing, their arms guiding the rods with lightning speed, the puck moves with an astonishing allure. Surprising, truly surprising.

But the league leaders don't stop there; they dream of creating more leagues in Montreal and throughout Quebec, leagues affiliated with Montreal and adopting the same rules, leagues that will develop players good enough to compete in tournaments.

They have decided to mark their territory this spring. The 5th and 6th of April, at the Holiday Inn Chateaubriand, Brossard and Marinoff are organizing the third Canadian open table hockey championship. Players have until March 24 to register.

I'll offer you just one piece of advice: don't come up against Lou Marinoff in the early rounds, or your week-end will be very short!