

# Defining Meaningful Competition for Table Tennis at Canada Games

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## In-depth Analysis of the Table Tennis Events at Canada Winter Games 2019 Red Deer

The purpose of the analysis of the competition format and results of the last Canada Winter Games is to provide the CWG Council, TTCan and S4L with the reality of the Table Tennis events, using the definition of a meaningful competition to generate a recommendation of steps for improvement for future events.

Members of Sport For Life Projects and Tasks Collaborators: Thorsten Gohl (TTCan), Marles Martins (TTCan), Kali MacAdam (CWG Council), Carolyn Trono (S4L), André Lachance (S4L)

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## Project Overview

Review includes:

- Defining Meaningful Competition in Table Tennis
- Define criteria to determine a Meaningful Competition (to assess Canada Games competition format and system)
- Review the 2019 Technical Package
- Create a CWG Athlete Development Pathway document
- Collect Statistics from 2019 CWG Table Tennis Events
- Updated schedules of NCCP Deliveries for Competition Development
- Conclusion/Recommendation



- Figure 1. Red Deer action by Thorsten Gohl

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## Introduction

Besides defining meaningful competitions in Table Tennis at the CWG, this project is an opportunity to have an introspective analysis of the CWG impact on TTCan's entire competition structure. The extent of this impact can be seen in how much importance our NSO and our PTSOs places on preparing teams and participating in the CWG. It is clear that the Games helps the development programs of the smaller PTSOs and supports the high performance programs of the stronger PTSOs, even supporting TTCan's Podium Pathway. CWG provides a unique opportunity for both High Performance and Development streams to experience a Multi-Sport games environment that otherwise would only be reachable just for a few of top athletes.

It is interesting to notice that 80-90% of the athletes that participate on the CWG are active on National Level, taking part of the Junior National Championships for a few years prior and after the Games. The majority of athletes that had a podium performance at the CWG made their way to the Junior and Senior National Teams representing Canada in Major World Competitions (High Performance Programs). More specifically, a small number of male athletes that participated in CWG in the past made their way to Olympic Games. A bigger number of both female and males athletes got Canada medals in Pan American Games and Commonwealth Games. But the majority of athletes stay integrated and active in the national competition system until they reach University/College ages (Development Programs).

At this point, there is a lack of retention of athletes on both spectrums, the High Performance and the Development Programs. Due to the competition system and the High Performance Structure existing in our country, the Canadian athletes on a Podium Pathway reaching 18 years old (or earlier) make an option to move to Europe to play in the professional league system and to have access to high performance training partners. In the other hand, the Development Programs athletes make other option: dedication to studies and professional secular carrier.

It is our hope that by defining a meaningful competition in Table Tennis at CWG and analyzing the data we can successfully improve our competition system. Our competition system needs to be

meaningful to impact positively the athlete overall development and to provide some necessary life experiences to form a human being well integrated in society.

After the first meeting with Carolyn Trono (Director of Quality Sport Development – S4L) in early March 2020, Andre Lachance (S4L LTD Consultant) was assigned to form a group with task collaborators including representatives from S4L, CWG Council and TTCan.

The final group was composed of:

Thorsten Gohl – Table Tennis Canada

Marles Martins – Table Tennis Canada

Kali MacAdam – Coordinator, Sport Services – CWG Council

Carolyn Trono - Director of Quality Sport Development – S4L

Andre Lachance - S4L LTD Consultant

After the initial meeting in mid March 2020, a project overview was created and all the tasks were updated in the online task management platform Asana. Deadlines were assigned for each of the tasks. Reporting was done in Asana and by email as per request. The majority of the communications were made between Andre Lachance and Marles Martins.

At this point the project is 80% completed with a couple of tasks needing to be re-scheduled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All data gathering is complete and analyzed. The recommendations and findings of this report will be presented to the stakeholders for comment, approval and implementation.

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## Task 1: Defining Meaningful Competition in Table Tennis

Status: Submitted draft April 07, 2020. Completed Jun 18, 2020.

A meaningful competition in Table Tennis is a number of matches (teams, singles or doubles) played in a given event (or series of events) over a period of time decided taking in consideration the relative objective and level of the event according to parameters given by the organizing sports body, with the appropriate volume (length, duration and intensity) and rules tailor-made to match the participants' LTD developmental stage, where development can be measured by the optimal execution of technical, tactical and mental skills of the participant in the majority of the matches; performance can be measured by the challenge and level of engagement that the matches represent overall; and inclusion can be measured by the overall number of different athletes played. The expected outcome is a meaningful learning experience where the competition is athlete-centred, coach-led and system-supported.

In other words, a meaningful competition in Table Tennis needs to:

- be fun;
- have a developmental/learning outcome;
- be age appropriate - aligned with TTCan's LTD framework and stage recommendations, having the right amounts of matches, length and specific rules;
- needs to be engaging as much as possible, where participants can apply what they have been developing technically, tactically and mentally during training;
- be inclusive, allowing all participants to have close to equal number of matches, despite the final positions at the end;
- be based on ratings, so the participants will have a chance to play challenging matches and perform at their potential for a majority of the matches (avoiding blow-out scenarios)
- be athlete-centred, coach-led and system-supported.
- be safe;

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## Task 2: Define criteria to determine a Meaningful Competition

Status: Started March 26, 2020. Completed March 31, 2020.

Criteria:

1. A meaningful set would be when the result has 4 points of difference or less (11-7, 11-8, etc.)
2. A meaningful match would be any match result ending 3-2 (best of 5) regardless of set scores or;
3. Any match results (best of 5) ending 3-0 or 3-1 with a 4 points difference or less at each set.
4. A blow-out would be any match ending in 3 sets with all sets ending with 7 points difference or more (11-4, 11-3, 11-2, 11-1 and 11-0)

Assessment:

- A. Highly Meaningful Matches: are composed by the average in scores in sets higher or between 11-9, 11-8 and 11-7; and any matches resulting in 3-2 (best of 5) regardless of set score.
- B. Average Meaningful Matches: are composed by the average in scores in sets equal 11-6 or 11-5.
- C. Non-Meaningful Matches: are composed by the average in scores in sets equal or less 11-4.

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## Task 3: Review the 2019 Technical Package

Status: Started March 27, 2020. Completed April 10, 2020.

On March 27, 2020 TTCan received from CWG Council: the Canada Games Table Tennis Technical Package and the results from the Table Tennis Events in Red Deer 2019.

Primary Findings:

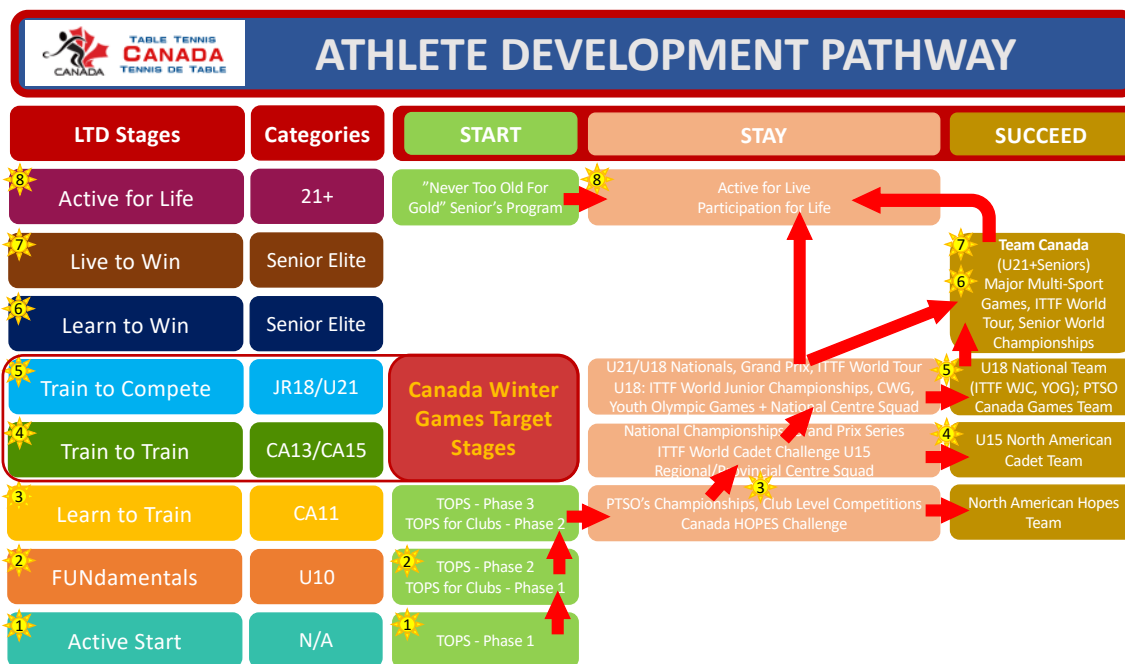
- Technical Package has some flaws - it can easily be fixed. Most flaws are related with syntax and some misunderstanding in some of the information displayed.
- The Train to Train and Train to Compete LTD Stages need to align with CWG focus group: athletes belonging to Cadet 15 and Junior Under 18 as per TTCan categories. That would be fixed with the creation of the CWG Athlete Development Pathway document.
- The Competition system favours the strong team. Since the pool of athletes participating in CWG is not composed from TTCan National Team, it should be clearly focused on development as well.



Figure 2. Red Deer action by Thorsten Gohl

# Task 4: Create a CWG Athlete Development Pathway document

Status: Started March 27, 2020. Completed April 10, 2020





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## Task 5: Collect Statistics from 2019 CWG Table Tennis Events

Status: Started March 27, 2020. Completed June 18, 2020

### Obstacles

Due to the system used by TTCan at the time of the Canada Games tournament, all the data was not readily available. CWG Council had the results, but not the seeding lists, or the draws for first and second stages. Although CWG Council requested the data from TTCan, it was never provided. TTCan did not have those results as well due to internal issues. The whole event needed to be created again match by match, data by data from the first day to the last day – athlete by athlete. This process was very slow because the data could not be copied and pasted in Excel sheets – needless to say that all the data was entered manually.

### Action items:

- 1- Research the last Canada Games scores and take the percentage based on criteria
- 2- Compare Men vs Women events
- 3- Compare round robin games vs knockout phase
- 4- Compare single, double and team events (by gender)

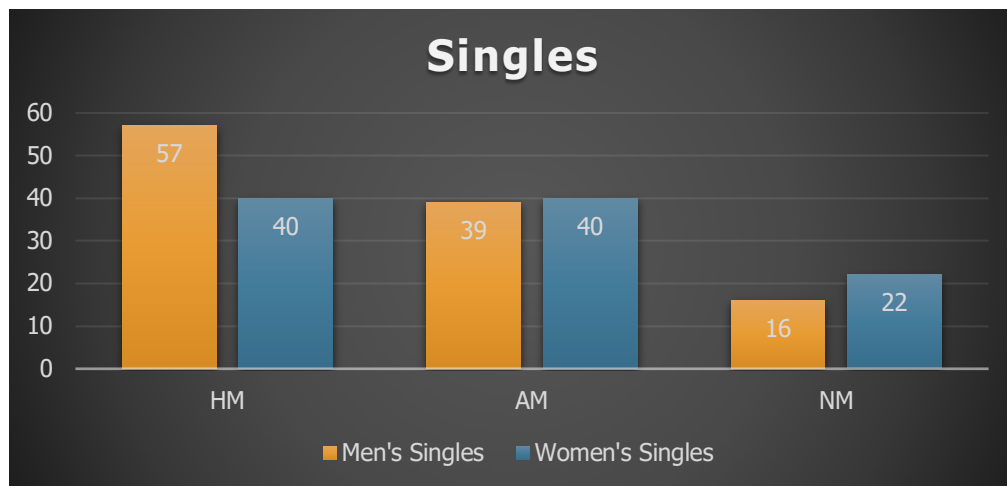
### Note:

The file with all the research data collected will be attached to this report and submitted at the same time.

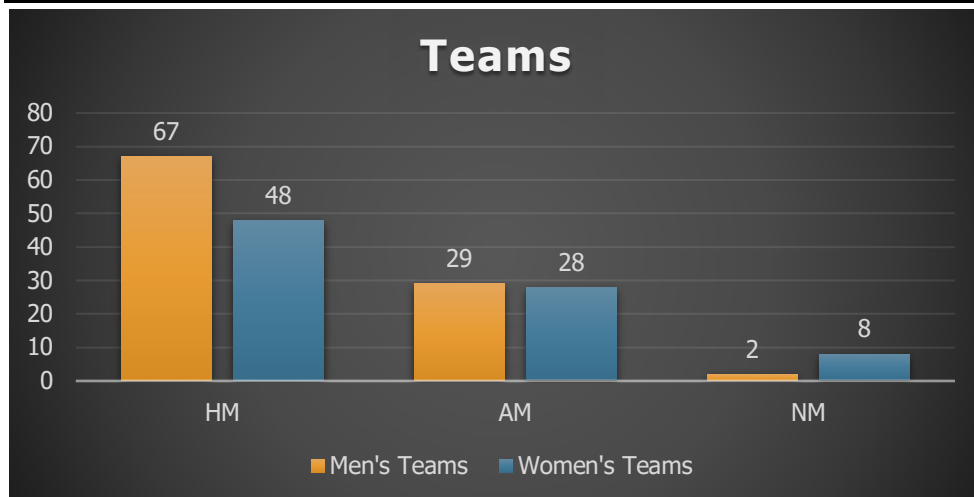
Legend: HM – Highly Meaningful; AM – Average Meaningful; NM – Non-Meaningful

### MEN VS WOMAN COMPARISON

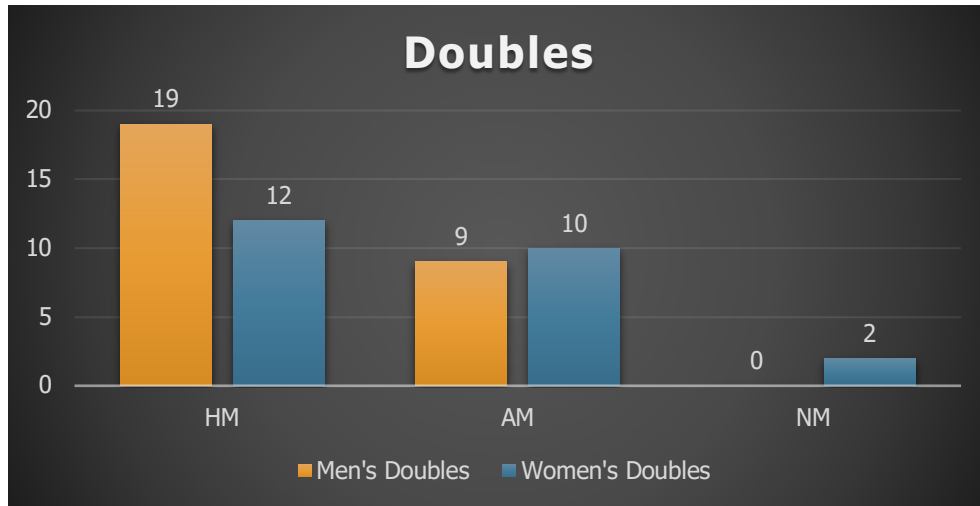
	HM	AM	NM	Matches Played
<b>Men's Singles</b>	57	39	16	112
<b>Women's Singles</b>	40	40	22	102



	HM	AM	NM	Matches Played
<b>Men's Teams</b>	67	29	2	98
<b>Women's Teams</b>	48	28	8	84

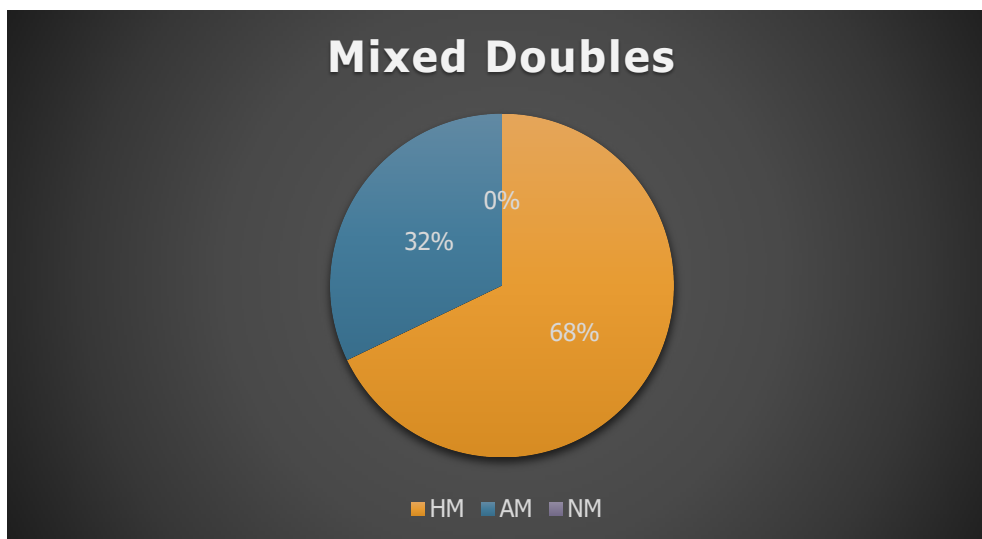


	HM	AM	NM	Matches Played
Men's Doubles	19	9	0	28
Women's Doubles	12	10	2	24



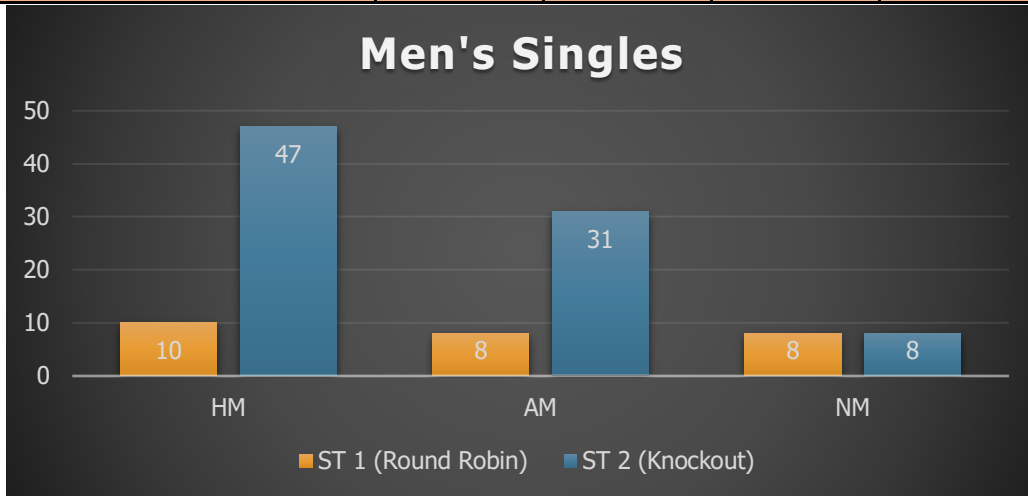
### MIXED DOUBLES OVERVIEW

	HM	AM	NM	Matches Played
Mixed Doubles	19	9	0	28

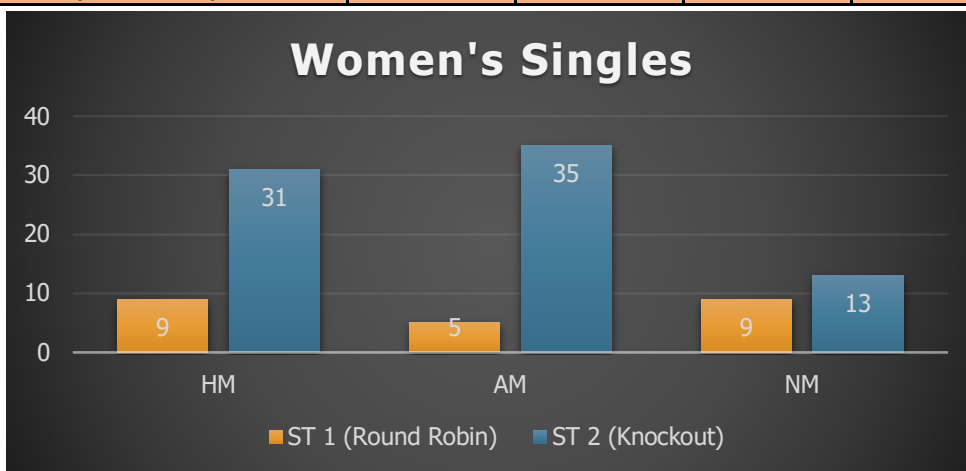


## COMPARISON BETWEEN ROUND ROBIN VS PROGRESSIVE KNOCKOUT PHASE

Men's Singles	HM	AM	NM	Matches Played
ST 1 (Round Robin)	10	8	8	26
ST 2 (Knockout)	47	31	8	86

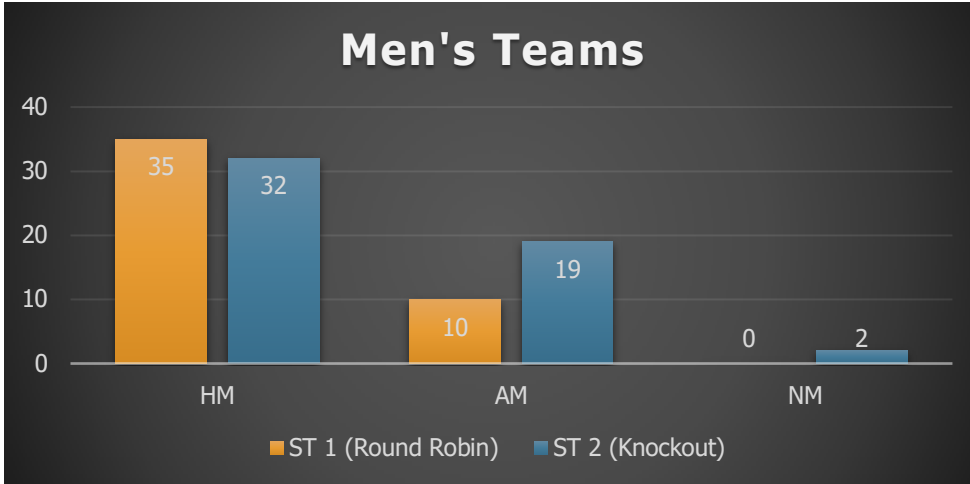


Women's Singles	HM	AM	NM	Matches Played
ST 1 (Round Robin)	9	5	9	23
ST 2 (Knockout)	31	35	13	79



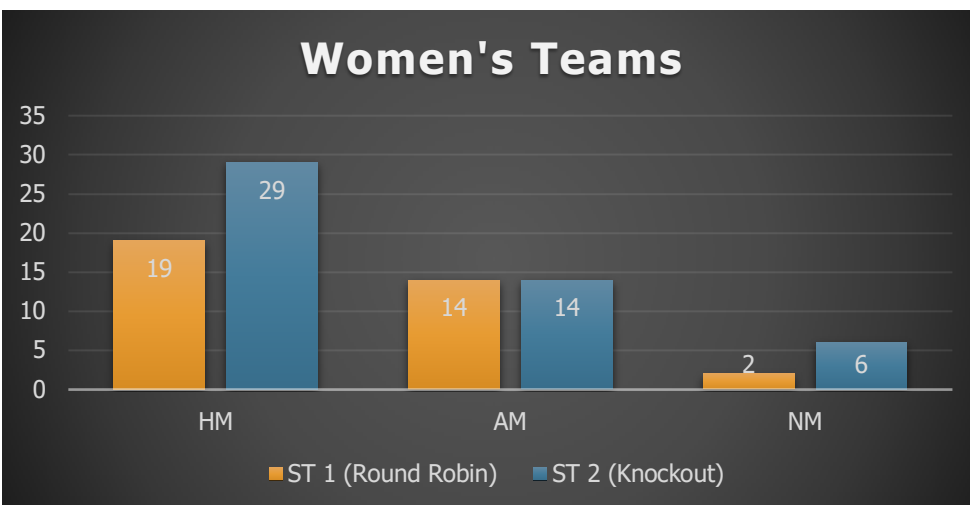
Men's Teams

	HM	AM	NM	Matches Played
<b>ST 1 (Round Robin)</b>	35	10	0	45
<b>ST 2 (Knockout)</b>	32	19	2	53



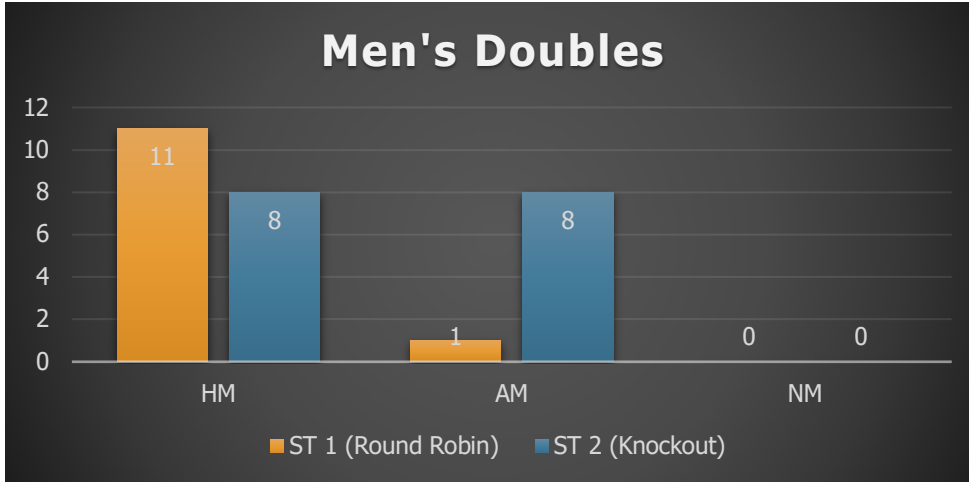
Women's Teams

	HM	AM	NM	Matches Played
<b>ST 1 (Round Robin)</b>	19	14	2	35
<b>ST 2 (Knockout)</b>	29	14	6	49



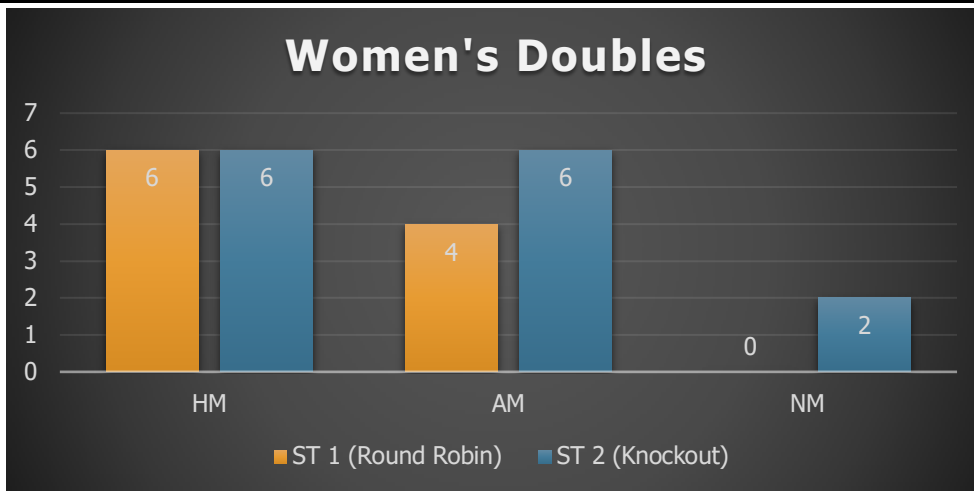
Men's Doubles

	HM	AM	NM	Matches Played
<b>ST 1 (Round Robin)</b>	11	1	0	12
<b>ST 2 (Knockout)</b>	8	8	0	16



Women's Doubles

	HM	AM	NM	Matches Played
<b>ST 1 (Round Robin)</b>	6	4	0	10
<b>ST 2 (Knockout)</b>	6	6	2	14



Mixed Doubles	HM	AM	NM	Matches Played
ST 1 (Round Robin)	8	1	1	10
ST 2 (Knockout)	9	3	2	14

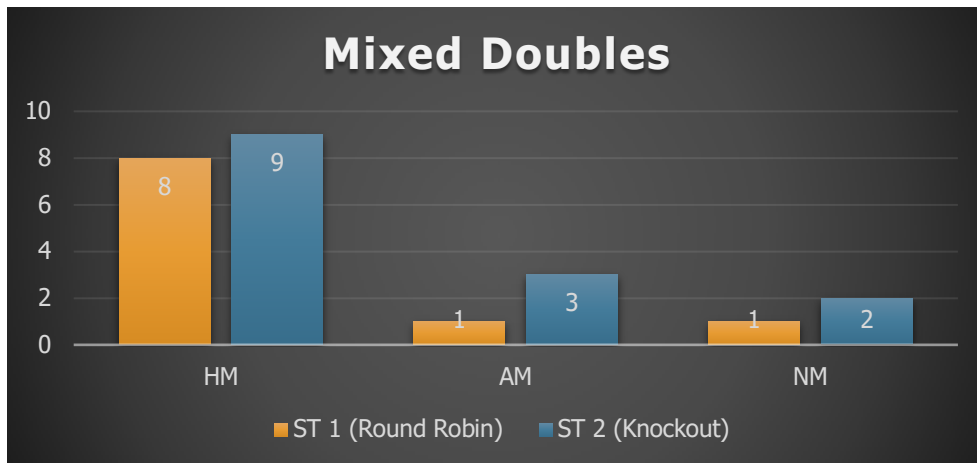


Figure 3. Red Deer action shot by Thorsten Gohl

**COMPARISON BETWEEN SINGLES, DOUBLES AND TEAM EVENTS BY GENDER**

Matches Played - Stage 1								
Events		St 1	HM		AM		NM	
1	Men's Singles	26	10	38%	8	31%	8	31%
2	Women's Singles	23	9	39%	5	22%	9	39%
3	Men's Teams	45	35	78%	10	22%	0	0%
4	Women's Teams	35	19	54%	14	40%	2	6%
4	Men's Doubles	12	11	92%	1	8%	0	0%
6	Women's Doubles	10	6	60%	4	40%	0	0%
7	Mixed Doubles	10	8	80%	1	10%	1	10%
<b>Totals</b>		<b>161</b>	<b>98</b>	61%	<b>43</b>	27%	<b>20</b>	12%

Matches Played - Stage 2								
Events		St 2	HM		AM		NM	
1	Men's Singles	86	47	55%	31	36%	8	9%
2	Women's Singles	79	31	39%	35	44%	13	16%
3	Men's Teams	53	32	60%	19	36%	2	4%
4	Women's Teams	49	29	59%	14	29%	6	12%
4	Men's Doubles	16	8	50%	8	50%	0	0%
6	Women's Doubles	14	6	43%	6	43%	2	14%
7	Mixed Doubles	14	9	64%	3	21%	2	14%
<b>Totals</b>		<b>311</b>	<b>162</b>	52%	<b>116</b>	37%	<b>33</b>	11%

Total Matches Played								
Events		Total	HM		AM		NM	
1	Men's Singles	112	57	51%	39	35%	16	14%
2	Women's Singles	102	40	39%	40	39%	22	22%
3	Men's Teams	98	67	68%	29	30%	2	2%
4	Women's Teams	84	48	57%	28	33%	8	10%
4	Men's Doubles	28	19	68%	9	32%	0	0%
6	Women's Doubles	24	12	50%	10	42%	2	8%
7	Mixed Doubles	24	17	71%	4	17%	3	13%
<b>Totals</b>		<b>472</b>	<b>260</b>	55%	<b>159</b>	34%	<b>53</b>	11%



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## Task 6: Updated schedules of NCCP Deliveries for Competition Development

Canada Games Council requires coach training and certification for Canada Games. Often these workshops and training are not available. TTCan is providing a plan to ensure all provinces/territories have access to NCCP TTCan training to ensure that CWG athletes are well prepared for Canada Games.

Making sure that TTCan can offer NCCP Competition Development Workshops is of paramount importance. Here are a few reasons why:

- According to the Technical Package of the Canada Winter Games – Table Tennis, the minimum requirement for a coach to be allowed to participate in the Games is to be certified as Competition Development Coach. This is to guarantee that high quality training and programs are in place and benefiting the targeted athletes leading to the Games.
- In TTCan’s Coaching Education System, Community Sport Initiation and Introduction to Competition workshops are coordinated by the PTSOs. Competition Development workshops are handled by the national office. This is a strong reason to have a MCDs certified and ready to certify coaches, LFs and MCDs – all to ensure that the PTSOs will have their targeted coaches with right knowledge and tools to help their athletes to perform at their best at the Games.
- In our LTD Athlete Development Matrix, the stages that are impacted directly by the Canada Winter Games are Train to Train and Learn to Compete. With that in mind, TTCan is supporting the coaches that work with athletes on those stages to have the highest qualification possible. This system alignment goes hand in hand with the CAC NCCP Support the Competitive Experience Criteria.

Status: Started March 27, 2020. Ongoing – open date due to COVID-19 pandemic

1. Complete Master Coach Development Training for 2 in-training MCDs for Table Tennis. Deadline Oct 30, 2020.

Due to the pandemic, the missing NCCP Core Trainings for the Master Coach Developers is on hold. However, CAC is trying to have some of the Core Trainings delivered online starting by August 2020. TTCan MCDs will then have a chance to catch up and complete their certifications.

At this point, TTCan has 2 Master Coach Developers: Dejan Papic (NCCP# 797810) is facilitator and evaluator in the Competition Development stream. He will still need to be evaluated to receive his certification. Marles Martins (NCCP# 1050134) is facilitator in the Competition Development stream. He will still need to do his core training. The core training was scheduled for February 26th, 2020 but cancelled because of a snow storm that hit Toronto. It was rescheduled, but then cancelled because of COVID-19 on March 11th, 2020. We are now waiting for the next available training. Both MCDs will finish their pathways as soon as an opportunity arrives.

## 2. Conduct Comp-Dev Training Session in July 2020.

The deadline for this subtask was July 31, 2020. Due to the unprecedented situation caused by the pandemic, this deadline is not feasible. The situation caused the cancellation of the Canadian Championships in Burnaby, July 2020, and the implication that COVID-19 brings, we will have to postpone this workshop until further notice.

TTCan is in the process of adapting the Competition Development Workshop Base and Advanced modules to an online environment when appropriate. A blended system is being developed where all the sport specific theory modules are being adjusted to be e-learning modules and webinars. The practical modules will be delivered when the local governmental authorities allow these specific gatherings.

## 3. Conduct Comp-Dev Training Session in December 2020.

The deadline for this subtask is December 31, 2020 but it may not be feasible. If borders in the provinces and territories will be open, the workshop will happen without problems. If the borders remain closed due to the pandemic, TTCan will try to run the workshop with a remote MCD online with the Learning Facilitator in the head office and a local Learning Facilitator co-delivery. Details will be completed as the restrictions, due to the pandemic, unfold.

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## Conclusion/Recommendations

Status: Started June 18, 2020. Ongoing – open date due to COVID-19 pandemic.

### Conclusion

Since the onset of this project, the overall feeling was that Table Tennis had a pretty good system in place. This hypothesis was confirmed after in-depth analysis.

The Table Tennis events at CWG Red Deer were composed of meaningful competitions. The format of the competition allows the athletes to perform in stages against players with the rating levels in an initial stage promoting the best rates of meaningful competitions according to the adopted criteria. It allows movement up and down the stages of competitive tiers allowing teams with lower rating points to play against teams with higher rating points progressively. Although at this stage the rates of a meaningful competition decrease a bit, it's still important for the developmental aspects for the teams with lower rating points. And there is also the fact that some athletes (even if they are not the best) want to compete against the best athletes (establishing a benchmark) to compare themselves and see how they can improve.

But there is room for improvement for further editions by making sure that the developmental aspect of the games will be the motivating factor to change the composition of teams to equalize the level between the top 3-4 seeded teams in relation to the next tier. This can be done by adopting a cap system where the top ranked teams can send just one player with a certain allocated number of rating points, forcing the rest of the team to be composed by developing athletes.

### Recommendations

1. Suggest to TTCan to use this system for more competitions nationwide, like the Canadian Junior Championships.
2. Suggest to TTCan to insert in their competition software the suggested criteria to collect athlete performance data and analyse if the competitions are being meaningful.

3. Generate a Calendar of NCCP Competition Development Blended Workshops (e-learning, webinar and onsite practical modules) to represent the current and post pandemic situation.

**Prepared by TTCan's Marles Martins on August 5, 2020**