

The background features a faint, semi-transparent image of a hand holding a table tennis paddle, centered behind the text. The entire slide has a blue gradient background.

*The Resurgence of Philippine
'Liha' Table Tennis: the
Pedagogic Experience that
America Forgot*

*Applications for Personal Healthy
Lifestyles As Well As For Potential
Olympic Attainment and Achievement*

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Everyone Loves Table Tennis...!



Left to right: US Pres. Obama and British Prime Minister David Cameron; Actor Arnold Schwarzenegger; American Rapper 50 cents (or, using his new Philippine name - '20 Peso's!')



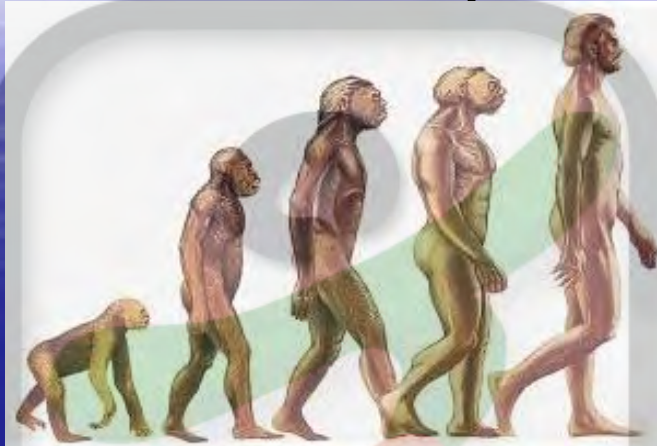
Left to right: Famous American Actor Adonis Maropis (who is a very good Liha player); Basketball sensation Yao Ming; and Financial Giants Bill Gates and Warren Buffett

Why am I Here?

- To tell you about something very special which is unique to the Philippines, and which could lead towards attainment of Philippine Olympic medals as well as improved health and lifetime exercise benefits for people of all ages.
- I have traveled here almost 9,000 miles from my home, at my own expense to tell you about this - which I believe emphatically and without a doubt, is the best kept sport secret in the Philippines!
- *But first* – lets examine the history...

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Key Evolutionary Events of Global Table Tennis Development



Historical Milestones in Table Tennis

Milestone

Year Introduced

- British Introduced table tennis to the world 1890's
- Battledores were introduced (calf skin rackets on a long stick) 1898
- Sandpaper rackets introduced worldwide 1899
- American GI's bring sandpaper rackets into the Philippines 1899
- Cork rackets introduced worldwide 1900
- Pimped rubber rackets (Hardbat's) introduced worldwide 1920
- Rubber racket w/ sponge (aka rubber rackets) introduced at World Championships by Japanese (Sato) 1952
- Most countries switched to 'modern' (sponge) rubber rackets 1959
- America switched to 'modern' (sponge) rubber rackets circa 1965

Sequence of Historical Events

US Army Soldiers Assembling in Luzon, 1899

In 1899 American GI's (and later in 1901, early educators called (Thomasites) introduced table tennis (using sandpaper rackets) to locals in the Philippines during the colonization period.

After the American GI's left, table tennis remained as a primary form of inexpensive recreation in the Philippines. Because these early rackets were made of sandpaper surfaces by the Parker Brothers company in the USA, it became known as "liha" in Tagalog from that point onward.



US Military Troops circa 1899

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Thomasites,
circa 1901 -->



Sequence of Historical Events

(Continued)

- By 1920 Americans and most of the rest of the world ceased using sandpaper rackets and opted for pimpled hard rubber rackets (called hardbats in America) instead.
- By 1959 use of pimpled rubber rackets were discontinued by athletes at elite level international competitions
- As a result, the ITTF banned sandpaper rackets from their rule structure which instantly resulted in the termination of use of sandpaper rackets at all international competitions, and in national level competitions in most countries.
- America and the rest of the world forgot about Sandpaper TT at Elite Competitions for over 90-years! (1920 - 2010)

Result? The Sport 'Changed'

Worldwide

- Instead of sandpaper or hard rubber rackets the use of modern 'smooth' rubber rackets with sponge prevailed – up through today.
- For the **AVERAGE** recreational player, the technology of the modern rubber racket makes the sport less challenging, and less aerobic (*blocks vs strokes*)
- Also, the modern rubber racket makes the sport less desirable to watch from the 'eyes' of a spectator. What used to be a long rally that spectators enjoyed to watch, has been reduced to a 'three or five ball' rally designed to quickly end the point.

More on the 'Changes'...

- For the ELITE level smooth rubber racket athlete, the goal is to end the rally as quickly as possible. The long, strategic rallies characteristic of a sandpaper match which demonstrated grace, art, and cunning between two opponents are now all gone – replaced only by whoever has the strongest, fastest, and spiniest topspin with a sole desire to finish the point instantly.
- While top conditioned elite level athletes can adapt to the physical demands of endless topspin looping, the average player can not adapt whereas it impacts joints, mobility, and causes rapid (*non-aerobic*) exhaustion. Topspin 'looping' is a task designed for a young, top-conditioned body for an athlete that can afford expensive hi-tech equipment.

So What Happened to Sandpaper Rackets Worldwide?

- They were (*and are*) – still used in recreational applications worldwide, but, not in elite level competitions.
- Unfortunately, today's elite level players from all countries have either forgot how to use sandpaper rackets...or, (more likely) never learned how to use one to start with – especially at a high level of skill!
- ***Except...in the Philippines!*** (more to follow)

Today's Recreational Players Use These Recreational Rackets

- Sandpaper (Liha) Rackets
- Pimped Rubber rackets (*Hardbats*)
- Cost? ~ \$2 -\$5 USD (*on average*) (85 – 200 PHP)
- 20 million players in the USA; 100 million worldwide use these for 'basement style', recreational use!



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Today's Elite Athletes Use High-tech Smooth Sponge Rubber Bats

Modern day, smooth sponge rubber rackets

Carbon blades and hi-tech polymer rubber sheets

COST: Blade \$279 USD; Rubber \$80 USD per sheet = \$440 USD (18,256 PHP)

All of these rackets are imported and are not made in the Philippines!



Modern Sport of Smooth Sponge Rubber Rackets/Bats

- Imparts substantial spin on the ball – moreso than with any other type of racket covering
- Is the standard of the sport since approximately 1959 at worldwide, international competitions
- Current competition grade racket sales exceed \$440 USD/racket ! (18,256 PHP)

Facts on the Modern Sport

- Modern 40mm Table Tennis balls travel on average over 70mph; (*older 38mm balls were faster still - exceeded 100mph*)
- Spin on the ball imparts 3,000 rpm rotational velocity (*twice as fast as a Major League Fastball in Baseball*)
- Ball travels over a 9' table < 11 hundredths of a sec (*<0.11/sec*)
- 0.11/sec is three times faster than the blink of an eye
- Top athletes today are prime specimens of physical conditioning and athleticism

References Cited: ESPN Sport Science Video Library: July 2012



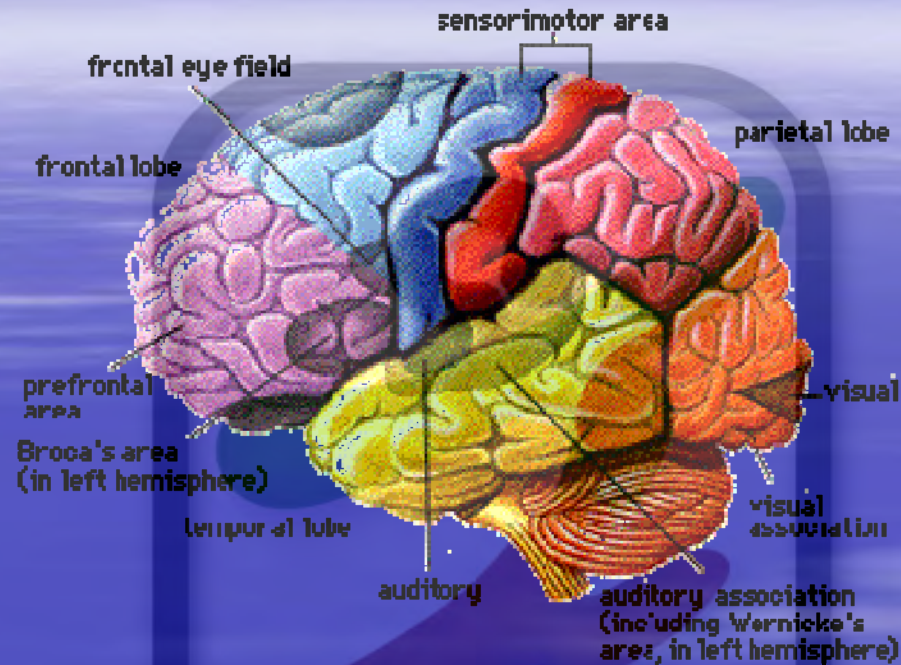
Facts on the Modern Sport (Continued)

- Elite level athletes can not read spin too well solely with their eyes, so they rely upon the sound of the racket impacting the ball.
- Brushing sound = very spinny ball
- Flat 'thud' sound = flat contact w/o much spin
- Auditory stimulation reaches the brain in three hundredths of a sec (*0.03 seconds*) faster than visual recognition.

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References Cited: ESPN Sport Science Video Library: July 2012

Table Tennis is the #1 Brain Sport



What does table tennis do for the Brain?

Enhances motor functions; enhances strategy functions; and, enhances long-term memory function; specifically...

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Reference Cited: Dr. Wendy Suzuki, Professor of Neuroscience and Psychology at New York University

The Three Cerebral Enhancements

- **Primary Motor Cortex Enhancement:** This occurs as a result of required hand/eye coordination and coordinated arm/hand movements even at the basic beginner level of skill as well as through elite levels of training. At elite training levels, hand/eye and arm/hand coordination is still very applicable as is footwork skills, and, power transfer through the hips for weight displacement transfer;
- **Prefrontal Cortex Enhancement:** Occurs by mental/visual anticipation of an opponents shots;
- **Hippocampus Enhancement:** Occurs through the transfer of aerobic energy expended from physical activity. This in turn, promotes long-term memory retention.

Reference Cited: Dr. Wendy Suzuki, Professor of Neuroscience and Psychology at New York University



Characteristics of Today's Olympic Table Tennis Athlete

- Young: 15 - 22 years of age on average;
- Top Physical Conditioning;
- 4 - 8 hours a day of training/ 6-days a week;
- Top Coaching;
- Top Training Aids and Video Assessments;
- Global Competition Experience;
- Healthy Diet and Lifestyles;
- Passion, Desire to Excel, and generally Obsessive/Compulsive in their training and passion for the sport.

*Medical Science Has Recently
Determined Why The Elite TT Athlete
Is So Obsessive And Compulsive...*



Now that Modern Table Tennis has been explained... Lets Look at the Evolution of Liha

- *So what is 'Liha' Table Tennis?*
- Simply put – its table tennis using a sandpaper surface racket.

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'Liha' Table Tennis – (Continued)

- Despite the changes over time, sandpaper rackets remain as the recreational 'standard' and as the 'rights of passage' for many developing athletes in their younger years in the Philippines. Today 'liha' also serves to promote physical fitness with seniors and with the obese segment of the population.
- As Philippine table tennis athletes slowly gravitated towards use of modern rubber rackets, those indoctrinated with 'Liha' early-on in their training retained a baseline of experience and familiarity that 'carried them through' traditional modern day training with hi-tech smooth rubber rackets (*example: Recent Liha Champion Richard Gonzales*).
- This fact is still largely true to this day, especially in the Philippines.

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The Culture of Liha...

- In the Philippines, Liha table tennis is played in low income areas, in basements, back alleys, and other questionable areas – often times for money bets. Similar in some respects to the evolution of the sport of billiards. This is due largely because it is not recognized by the sporting governing body of table tennis or by the Philippine OC, or the IOC.
- As such, it is frowned upon by many in traditional ‘modern rubber racket’ table tennis clubs and even by many elite players in the national table tennis association. This is true because Liha is not an extreme ‘spin-oriented’ sport covered by the International governing body for table tennis, thus it is no longer recognized.
- However,...everywhere else in the world (*thanks to Youtube*) foreign table tennis athletes and fans have been ‘struck with awe and utter amazement’ over the prowess and elite level of skills which these Philippine ‘lihadors’ demonstrate. Foreign observers simply can not believe what these players can do with a sandpaper surface racket that has virtually no coefficient of friction (*i.e., no spin*)!

What Exactly is Liha - and What are its Benefits?

Two Key Benefits:

Aerobic and Competitive

1) AEROBIC Benefit

- Promotes Health and Well Being through Aerobic exercise – ideal for all ages including seniors;
- People 50+ years old can not reap the same degree of aerobic value and benefit using modern rubber rackets as compared to using sandpaper rackets, Why?...

Effective Aerobic Exercise for Seniors

- Older bodies can not withstand the stress of forehand (*topspin*) 'looping' because they tire after ~3 minutes.
- In contrast, sandpaper racket play allows a 20-30 minute aerobic workout that is more forgiving on an older body, and, which provides high therapeutic value and cardiovascular benefit enabling the body to sweat properly.



Excellent concept to market to Senior Centers and programs for Seniors as well as 'Basement Players' of any age! Mr. Mang Iking 93 Year old Lihador from Cavite (near American Naval base).

National Pride and Elite Level Prowess

2) **COMPETITIVE** Benefit

This sport while not widely known outside the Philippines has the best chance of Olympic and International success moreso than any other “colonial inherited” sports played in the Philippines.

- Lets look at the proof!
- a) Liha is already is a major part of key National Competitions. Decades of underground betting in the Philippines have made this part of the sporting culture; and,
- b) Now liha is rapidly emerging at major International competitions including a **\$100,000 USD** prize money “International Sandpaper racket tournament in Las Vegas — first year in 2011!

Major Liha/ Sandpaper Tournaments

(Example: at the Philippine National TT Championship)



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Current Southeast Asia Champion Richard Gonzales (center) winning the "Liha" sandpaper Men's Singles event during the 1st Philippine National Table Tennis Championships (October 27-31, 2008)

US Open Championship

Largest Table Tennis Tournament in America

- In 2010 USA Table Tennis created two 'new' events for the US Open: One was a 'Liha' event using the Philippine service rule, the other was an 'International Liha' event using modern service rules of the sport.
- These two events complimented other classic table tennis events exclusively designed for alternative racket coverings (*i.e.*, *pimped rubber* or what Americans call '*hardbats*').
- The US Open is the largest organized table tennis competition in the USA – over 1,000 athletes from 25 countries attended in 2012;

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In 2010 the Philippine Lihadors Were Invited to Attend the US Open held in Grand Rapids, Michigan!

- USA Table Tennis arranged for a SPECIAL formal processional with the Philippine Flag flying, the Philippine National Anthem being sung, and a distinguished group of 'Balikbayans' attending to a packed stadium audience.
- Unfortunately, Due to lack of self funding and visa glitches, only the "Class 'C' team" of lihadors were able to travel to America to represent the Philippines.



Cultural and Historical Ties between USA and Philippines Revealed at 2010 US Open

- Purpose was to enlighten the Americans on the classic form of table tennis that they had forgotten – which the Americans originally introduced, but which the Filipino people *preserved* – but most importantly, perfected decades later at an elite level.
- Results were...the 'Class 'C' team' came back with several US Open medals in 2010!

2010 Liha
Delegation to US
Open Championship
in Grand Rapids,
Michigan led by Liha
Ambassador Peter
Cua.



2011 US Open Championship Milwaukee, Wisconsin

- The following year (in 2011) the Philippine Liha team was again invited to the US Open. For this event, thanks to private funding by Mr. Cua, some of the best Philippine 'lihadors' were finally able to attend.
- Results were astonishing! The Philippine Liha Team captured a rich 'medal harvest' of 9-medals; including the gold medals for all of the classic events!
- This feat was significant not only because of the teams success in beating out dozens of other countries along the way to the medal sweep, – but also because...



2011 US Open Significance

- ***This US Open celebrated the 40th anniversary reunion of the US/Chinese Ping Pong Diplomacy Era with Philippine delegation.***



The Philippine delegation was an integral part of that ceremony citing the good ties between the Filipino and Chinese people. But also, the good ties of friendship between the Philippines and America. Truly this was a very special occasion for all. *Photo Left:* Liha Ambassador Cua; USATT Board Director Dr. Mike Babuin; and Former World Champion finalist and current Chinese VP of the Chinese TTA Mr. Lu Yuansheng.



Photo Right: US/Chinese Delegation – among others, World Champion Liang Geliang and World/Olympic Champion Zhang Yining.

2011 US Open Results – Top Performance and Diplomatic Success!



Large “Medal Harvest” by
the Philippine Liha
Delegation

Diplomacy Opportunity for Philippine
delegation side-by-side with American
and Chinese diplomacy representatives.
Philippine athletes and Liha Ambassador
Cua alongside Olympic and World
Champion Yining Zhang.



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So Where Does That Leave Liha Table Tennis Today?

- Unfortunately, as of 2012 internationally Liha is a somewhat forgotten form of classic table tennis that is not regulated by the current International governing body of the sport (*International Table Tennis Federation aka the ITTF*).
 - The current ITTF rule structure does not accommodate or otherwise make reference to sandpaper rackets. Thus, it is a sport that exists without an international governing body, and, without a National Governing Body in the Philippines (*since the Philippine rules of the sport also do not reference or allow sandpaper rackets*).
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- *Until Now...*Introducing the International Classic Federation (ICF).

The International Classic Federation (ICF)

- Designed to promote the 'classic sport'™ that is not otherwise recognized, or regulated, by existing International Governing Bodies.
- Serves as an educational platform for promotion of holistic fitness, health and well being through safe, aerobic competitive classic sporting activities and events.
- Liha, hardbat, and cork racket coverings all are welcome to the ICF!



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Role of the ICF

- The ICF exists to temporarily lead the efforts of liha and sandpaper play in the absence of any other current international governing body (IGB) doing so. Therefore, if the IOC and ITTF one day opt to embrace sandpaper and liha play, the ICF would gladly yield all authorities to them for the better good and promotion of the sport worldwide.
- The ICF is composed of a group of international leaders, organizers, and private investors dedicated to promotion, governance, and education of classic table tennis that is not otherwise currently recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and other member Olympic Committees, national associations, and International Federations.

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The Irony of Liha

- Despite these ‘basement’ and back alley liha players achieving an ultra-high elite level of skill and competence which is believed to be unparalleled anywhere else in the world using sandpaper rackets, they are frequently not taken seriously (*or known about*) by the national table tennis association in the Philippines, or by the International Olympic Committee.
- Truthfully, no other country in the world outside of the Philippines could be equally competitive for at least a decade or more against these Lihadors -- when both parties would use a sandpaper racket for the match.
- Not even China (*the undeniably clear and dominant global leader of table tennis*) would be able to match the skill of these ‘lihadors’ if they had to play against each other using only a classic sandpaper racket. It would take *years (if not decades)* for other teams to perfect these same skills honed for over 100-years.
- Liha is NOT proposed to replace modern table tennis – but rather, to augment it and to be considered a sub-discipline of Olympic table tennis.

Why Include Sandpaper Table Tennis in the Olympics?

- Current continental structures for the sport of table tennis at the Olympics allow a maximum of ONLY four potential medal opportunities for the Philippines:
 - Mens Singles Event
 - Women's Singles event
 - Men's Team Event
 - Women's Team Event
- In contrast, other Olympic Sports like Track and Field and Swimming have 32 and 28 medal opportunities (i.e., events) to compete in. In other words – a large disparity exists between one sport versus another.
- By introducing sandpaper tt as a discipline of modern (Olympic) table tennis, these four categories would DOUBLE the chances of winning medals to eight opportunities. If hardbat (pimpled rubber) was also added, another four opportunities would exist as well !

Why Include Sandpaper Table Tennis in the Olympics (Continued)

- Clearly, eight (or 12) medal opportunities are better than four opportunities. Statistically it doubles (*or triples*) the chances for Philippine medal opportunities.
- In table tennis (*unlike other sports*) there is a 30-year dominance by one country (China). By introducing liha into the Olympics, the 'doors of opportunity' are opened up for the rest of the world whereas the component of spin associated with the modern sport is removed – enabling the playing field to become markedly more level.
- This is good news for the rest of the world – and especially for the Philippines due to their elite level prowess in Liha.



Next Steps for the Philippines?

- **STEP 1:** Make the Philippine Olympic Committee (POC); Philippine Sports Commission (PSC); and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) aware of Liha table tennis – and the high likelihood of Olympic medal attainment if it were accepted as an Olympic Sport.
- **STEP 2:** Nurture recognition, awareness, and promotion within the Philippines of the ‘hidden jewel’ of all sports for the Philippines - Liha table tennis.
- **STEP 3:** Take substantial measures, for as long as it takes, to lobby for getting Liha included as a discipline of table tennis which is recognized by the IOC. *This is the single most important step.*

Next Steps (Continued)

- **STEP 4:** Solicit recognition, acceptance and embracement by the Table Tennis Association of the Philippines (TATAP) that liha table tennis is a discipline of modern day table tennis and should be nurtured. Encourage TATAP to develop a separate set of official 'rules of play' which will set the stage for more National competitions, and, more International competitions. Perhaps establish a Task force to look into this.
- **STEP 5:** Encourage the ITTF to also embrace Liha table tennis as a separate discipline of the modern sport. Encourage them to also develop a separate set of rules of play that will enable and promote international liha competitions throughout worldwide member associations. ITTF can work jointly in conjunction with the ICF to achieve these objectives. Some preliminary discussions at an extremely high level have already transpired.

Next Steps (Continued)

- **STEP 6:** Find corporate sponsors who are willing, able, and interested to become a part of this incredibly exciting mission to launch Philippine Liha into the global spotlight for the rest of the world to see.
- This includes promotion and attendance at national and international events as well as media coverage and discussions with nationwide sporting associations, commissions, and the Olympic movement for the purposes of education and eventual consideration as a recognized, Olympic Sport. And finally,...
- **STEP 7:** Allow your friends (USA and others) to help make this a reality!

Summary

- Along with Dragon Boat, Liha table tennis represents a clear and undeniable pathway to national pride and elite level global dominance in a sport embedded into the culture of the Philippines for over 100 years that has cultural and historic ties with America.
- Philippine 'Lihadors' are the single most skilled 'artisans of their trade' globally and this unique, hidden, and often misunderstood classic sport deserves the serious and immediate attention of those who can reach out and make a difference.

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be the
change
you wish
to see in the
world...
-gandhi