

# WILLY LEPARULO

NCTTA Member of the Month

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*By Nathan Reilly*

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Willy Leparulo's contribution to college table tennis echoes the contributions that Pele made to international soccer and James Watson made to the discovery of the human DNA structure. He is the leader that keeps this truly remarkable organization going and there are few individuals as important to their sport as Leparulo is to college table tennis. "Willy has endured and sacrificed a lot for college table tennis, to the point where some people just shake their heads," said Joseph Wells, Vice President of the National Collegiate Table Tennis Association.

Willy's involvement in college table tennis began ten years ago when Leparulo was playing with fellow table tennis friend Lewis Shi from Harvard University. Shi was a player on Harvard's table tennis team and was an officer in the League of Northeast Intercollegiate Table Tennis (LNITT). Willy became extremely interested in the league and contacted group organizers who said that Leparulo would need to recruit four to five schools near his home school of Florida State University to join the league. Willy with the help of a few others recruited fifteen schools and the LNITT became known today as the National Collegiate Table Tennis Association (NCTTA). Ever

since then, the NCTTA has seen exponential growth and now exceeds 120 schools. For his continuous accomplishments and true love and passion for college table tennis, Willy Leparulo is the NCTTA member of the month for July. In response to Leparulo's recent reelection as the NCTTA president, Wells gave due praise, "College table tennis has the right man for the job."

With Leparulo at the focal point of the NCTTA's future, he hopes to continue the success from the past years and expand upon it. "What I hope to see the NCTTA accomplish in my next term would be about getting our school table tennis clubs the respect they deserve," said Leparulo. "It is also important to note that we have to take baby steps to that goal and one of the first steps is to gain understanding and respect from respective schools about the sport. It is a long road to NCAA recognition but I think my part in this process is to help make the road less traveled and the goal easier to reach for those in the future."

Although Willy Leparulo has given so much to make the NCTTA what it is today, the organization has given back both personally and professionally to Willy as well. "It is core to who I am and what I believe in for the sport, for College Table Tennis. I have given up a lot to promote College TT, but looking back I don't regret anything as it has given me the opportunity to meet so many great people and has filled my life with innumerable laughs and good times," said Leparulo in his July interview.

With Leparulo's schedule looking as monumental as a presidential candidate, he still finds time to get out and play. "It would be nice to be able to hit 2000 [USATT rating: 1953 as of 7/18/08] again and keep it for more than just a week."

As I personally have gotten to know Willy in the past few months, I've met someone who not only is passionate about the organization or the sport, but passionate about the people involved in it. Without volunteers, the NCTTA is nothing, and Willy truly reaches out to people on a personal level. He still is heavily involved with his alma mater, Florida State, where he was still advisor of *the table tennis club* from his graduation in 2002 until 2007. "I keep in touch with many of the players that have come through the Florida State Table Tennis program as we do travel to many tournaments in the southeast," added Leparulo. "Lastly, I am proud of the relationships and the people I have met along the way in this quest to make College Table Tennis better. We have faced great opposition, but the board members, division directors, committee chairs, board of advisors, players and general supporters of College Table Tennis have made the difficult times much easier to endure. It is always great to see one's passions matched by others and despite all of the hard work it is to work for NCTTA it has been a distinct pleasure to have been able to work with and continue to work with so many talented individuals that share the same enthusiasm for College Table Tennis."

*If you would like to nominate people who you feel have made a difference in the NCTTA for future "Member of the Month" features, please email: reillyn@fsuimail.ferris.edu*