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RAMS TABLE TENNIS WINS THREE TITLES IN SEASON OPENER

Competing in its first tournament of the 2005-2006 season, the Texas Wesleyan table tennis team won three events at the Newgy Robo-Pong Open, Sept. 17-18, in Tennessee.

Playing together for the first time, senior Eric Owens and freshman Ludovic Gombos won the open doubles title 4-1 over Sean O'Neill and Tahl Leibovitz, who previously placed third at the 2004 U.S. Olympic Trials and sixth at the North America Olympic Trials.

"Ludovic and Eric had never competed together, but their combination of styles made them a very strong team," said head coach Christian Lillieroos. "Defeating the third-ranked doubles team in the country shows great promise for the future."

In open singles Owens advanced to the quarterfinals and led 2-1 over German Stefan Feth. Ranked #140 in the world, Feth went on to win the next three games to prevail 4-2. Feth later took the title match 4-1 over four-time U.S. national champion David Zhuang. "Eric was able to put pressure on Stefan like no other player in the tournament. Next time they meet, Eric will be better prepared," Lillieroos said.

Lillieroos said it is very uncharacteristic for his team to play such a high-profile tournament this early in the season. However, Newgy, the title sponsor of the event, has been such an active promoter of college table tennis that Texas Wesleyan felt inclined to compete.

Sophomore Aldis Presley won two titles at the Newgy Robo-Pong Open. The Atlanta-native swept the under 22-year-old final 4-0, and also won under 2150 rated event 4-3. In that match he defeated Larry Thoman, the 10-time defending Tennessee state men's champion.

"Aldis trained hard over the summer and has definitely matured as a player. After the results of this tournament, he's getting closer to earning a varsity team spot," Lillieroos said.

Ludovic Gombos, a recent transplant from Romania, participated in his first competition as a Texas Wesleyan player. Gombos lost 4-2 in a close preliminary match to the eventual runner-up and two-time Olympian, David Zhuang, after leading 2-0.

"When Ludovic faced David, he performed the best two games I've ever seen from him," Lillieroos said. "In the games following, many long interruptions and disturbances involving the officials occurred, which kept both athletes from adequately focusing. After the dust cleared, Zhuang defeated a very disappointed Ludovic 4-2."

The team's next competition is Oct. 1 at the Arkansas Open in Little Rock.