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Keeping it **OLD SCHOOL**

Analog entertainment in our digital world

BY JENNIFER HANAUER PAGE 18



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We are plugged in. We have traded our books for Nooks, handwritten letters for thumb-typed text messages, and hefty family photo albums for the ease and tagability of Facebook pics. News and events are constantly streaming at us from multiple technologies with such mind-bending velocity I daresay some of us knew of Osama bin Laden's demise before his dialysis machine was shut off. We are in the digital age.

But in all of this technological advancement, have we lost something of our corporeal existence? We are mammals, humans no less, and need interaction with other living things in order to sustain a full and healthy life. So where can we get this face time, this physical interface that is so vital to our being?

Analog hobbies and entertainment are not yet lost on our gem of a city. Even with the development and proliferation of digital amusements such as OnDemand television and Wii gaming consoles, a stroll outside during any pleasant day will reveal Daytonians engaging each other in recreation without the aid of a power source.

Dayton is distinctive in the Midwest for playing host to groups and clubs that operate with a desire for promoting neighborly interaction and friendly competition. The seasoned reputation of the Dayton Table Tennis Club, operating since the 1930s, brings participants from across the region for its bi-annual tournaments. The Italian-Americans of Dayton boast the largest lodge in the state and attract teams internationally for their yearly Bocce Classic. And the Dayton Chess Club claims the respect of being the only stand-alone chess club in the region, drawing competitors from across the nation for its tournaments.

Turn off the television, set down the cell phone. Unplug your life for a few moments and find out more about what these clubs have to offer Dayton and its populace. That is, unless you're reading this online. In that case, thank you. Carry on.

TABLE TENNIS

The Dayton Table Tennis Club (DTTC) has been in Dayton since 1932, when it began meeting at the YMCA. The club, run by Don Hamilton, Chung Hong and John Dichiaro, now meets at South Metro Sports near the Wright Brothers Airport off I-75. It is a USA Table Tennis (USATT) affiliated club and hosts two of their sanctioned tournaments each year.

Dichiaro, president of the DTTC, has been playing in the club since he came into town in the late 1960s. The retired industrial chemist, now teaching at the University of Dayton, began playing as a graduate student at the University of Arizona, where the student union, across from the chemistry department, had a table.

Dichiaro, who started as one of the youngest and is now one of the oldest in the club, considers table tennis an enduring hobby.

"It's a good lifetime sport," said Dichiaro.

One of the club's youngest members, Ben Hadden, has been playing since he was 13 after seeing the film *Balls of Fury* (2007) three years ago. In addition to being enjoyable and improving his hand-eye coordination, playing table tennis has inspired Hadden to work on his fitness to improve his game.

"I'm body-building and running. I'm already starting to see a difference in how I'm playing," said Hadden.



A member of the Dayton Table Tennis Club during a match.

"He's improved pretty rapidly in the couple of years since he's been here," said Dichiaro. Hamilton began playing table tennis as a child 25 years ago, tagging along with his

"Obviously someone can't be an Olympic level athlete at a certain age, but as far as playing out here, there are things you can do to adapt so you can continue to play ..."

father who was in the Air Force and played on base. He now rates in the top three table tennis players in the state of Ohio.

Hamilton owns a Wii video game system and has the table tennis game that was, in part, developed by professional table tennis player Mark Hazinski, but Hamilton says he does not play it often.

"It's hard to tell where to swing," said Hamilton. "You can serve short, you can hit long, you can hit with power, but unless you time it exactly right, you end up missing the ball. It's really hard. Or maybe I'm just not good at it."

On the cross-generational appeal of the DTTC, Hamilton said, "There's a wide range of ages here. You've got the little kids who start playing when they're five or six, but then you have people 85 years old that are playing."

Hamilton notes that not many sports allow participants in that wide an age-range.

"We can adjust as we deteriorate physically. There're things you can do, by how you play, that you can adjust for some of that." Hamilton continued, "Obviously someone can't be an Olympic-level athlete past a certain age, but as far as playing out here, there are things you can do to adapt so you can continue to play, whereas I think a lot of other sports you become much more limited if things start falling apart. You almost get to



The Dayton Table Tennis Club meets at South Metro Sports in Centerville.

a place where you can't continue to play, or it's very difficult. With the different styles in table tennis, you can play however you want."

"You can play in age categories in tournaments," explained Dichiaro of the possibility of competing at any age. "In the biggest tournaments they'll have over 80s. Normally, over 75s is the last one you would see. Under 10 to over 75."

As a player progresses in his skill-level, he will notice a desire for equipment more specific to his playing style.

"After playing for awhile you may start to think, 'Wow, this is kind of slow, I want something more dynamic,'" said Hamilton.

Table tennis equipment has improved in direct correlation with heightened international interest in the sport over the last century. Where once swung pimple-covered paddles of wood or several layers of wood laminates glued together, now swing blades with the smooth side out, inter-layered with sponge and carbon fiber, allowing for tremendous friction and modified moves. It may look like everyone is playing with the same equipment, but actually the equipment is all slightly different, making a big difference in styles of play.

Of the many options table tennis players have to modify their equipment, Dichiaro said, "All of them give different characteristics: speed, control, fixed weak spot." Dichiaro paused. "Big price," he added with a chuckle.

While difficult to make aims at being a professional table tennis player if you live in the U.S., there is still money to be made. Bud Light recently sponsored a tournament that flew in winners of regionals all over the country to Las Vegas to compete in their final for \$100,000.

BOCCE

Every summer, the John Pirelli Lodge #1633 of the Order of Sons of Italy in America, in Kettering, hosts a Bocce Classic. Bocce, developed in Italy, is similar to lawn bowling and is typically played on a sand or clay court. The governing organization is the Unione Federazione Italiana Bocce. The first world championships were held in Genoa, Italy in 1951.



Game On, if Dayton leads region in anal

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The annual Bocce Classic began in 1995 by bocce enthusiasts from the John Pirelli Lodge, a fraternal organization for Italian-Americans living in Dayton. Kevin Sorice, Bocce Classic chairman since 2007, and his fellow fraternal members hope to introduce and develop the joy of the game of bocce. Early years of the event were sparsely attended, but recent years have had attendance in the thousands for the weekend event.

"The Bocce Classic is one of the premier events in Ohio and the Midwest," said Sorice. "We have teams from Canada, Michigan, Illinois, Tennessee, Kentucky and Ohio play in the event."

The John Pirelli Lodge, member of the United States Bocce Federation, has 17 men's teams and 11 women's teams that participate in league play throughout the year.

Sorice has played bocce for as long as he can remember. A second-generation Italian whose grandfather settled in Ashtabula, Ohio, was moved to Dayton in the 1950s by his father who worked in the Dayton Public School System as a music teacher and counselor.

The Italian-American community in Dayton is strong and thriving. "We're really blessed," said Sorice. While members of the John Pirelli Lodge must be of Italian heritage, anyone can play in the Bocce Classic.

"Bocce is a game that any one at any age can play competitively," said Sorice. "Some of the best players are 'seasoned' players."

Members of the John Pirelli Lodge believe in giving back to their community. A significant portion of the net proceeds from the tournament goes to local charities chosen by the Bocce Classic committee.

"We look for local causes that we can help or that have an Italian heritage tie-in," explained Sorice.

This year's beneficiaries include Relay for Life and the John Pirelli/WSU Italian American Scholarship.



Participants in the Bocce Classic XVI held at the John Pirelli Lodge in Kettering.



Players, young and old, flock to the Dayton Chess Club on Fifth Street in downtown Dayton.

Riley and Sharon Driver, a solid husband and wife team, acquired the building at 18 W. Fifth St. in Dayton from the Society of St. Vincent De Paul. Not wanting to consign the Chess Club to a specific neighborhood in Dayton, the Drivers pointedly chose a building in the City of Dayton. Behind this resolute decision to make the Chess Club a club that all Daytonians could lay claim to, was Riley.

"He was very sure on that fact," said Sharon. "He said, 'It is not the Kettering Chess Club. It is not the Oakwood Chess Club. It is the Dayton Chess Club.'"

Over the next nine months, the Drivers, with the support of their family and their

church, renovated the building, adding the most basic of necessities such as restrooms and a heating system. What was born from their efforts is a beautiful and historically significant space in downtown's Terra Cotta District. The vast interior, bedecked



Malik Taylor, 11, and his brother Mekei, 12, play a game of chess after school.

primarily with items from John Dowling's extensive collection of chess posters, can play host to more than 175 players concurrently.

The DCC has the prestige of being the only stand-alone chess club in the Midwest.

"Your bigger cities have them - New York," said Sharon. "People come from as far as Indianapolis to play [at our club] on a regular night, from all over the U.S. for tournaments."

Like table tennis, chess is an activity that can be enjoyed from youth to the

twilight years. The DCC plays host to participants from the whole range.

"We've got young kids coming in and we've got a guy who's 80," said Sharon. "Our youngest was a four-year-old girl. She had to sit on phonebooks to see over the table. She won her first two games!" exclaimed Sharon.

When asked why people come to the DCC to play as opposed to playing online or on a video gaming system, Riley says no electronic version can emulate the energy of sitting face to face with someone across a chessboard.

"You come in, see them respond, feel them respond," said Riley. "It's brain versus brain, ego versus ego. You're going to play differently and make different choices based on their being there across from you."

Malik Taylor, 11, and his brother Mekei, 12, could not agree more. The students of Wogaman Elementary School have the option to play chess on their Xbox system at home, but prefer to come to the DCC for games.

"It's good to see who you're playing," said Malik, "and it's good to win."

Riley recalls the national interest in Bobby Fischer in his early competitive years. Riley

"Our youngest was a four-year-old girl. She had to sit on phonebooks to see over the table. She won her first two games!"

CHESS

When driving along Main Street in downtown Dayton, take a peer down Fifth Street. You can't miss the Dayton Chess Club (DCC). The club began in the summer of 1957 when Earl Boen placed an advertisement in a local newspaper looking for fellow chess players who shared his enthusiasm for the game. The club originally met in Boen's home, and for the next 50 years bounced around Dayton cafeterias and restaurants, and even met for a time at the downtown branch of the Dayton Public Library. Ten years ago, though, the DCC found a permanent home.

attributes some of Fischer's success to his presence across the chessboard.

"No one wanted to sit across from him," said Riley. "To sit across from him was like sitting across from a million volts."

In addition to the competitive advantages (or disadvantages) that come with the psychological nature of physically sitting across from a person in competition, there is also the social aspect of setting a time to meet at the DCC. It can be a person's sanctuary, according to Riley. Work and obligations are left at the door, cell phones are turned off, and the next few hours are dedicated to the game of chess.

"You play a game, you talk about past games, discuss how outcomes could have been different," Riley explained. The DCC becomes a haven for those who want to exist solely among a royal court for an evening.

Developments in the technological world have undoubtedly improved the quality of life for many. But let's not forget what it means to our quality of life to be involved with the physical world around us. Regarding pieces in the game of chess, Riley said, "Everything has its purpose and they work together for the same goal."

It would be dangerous to deny any piece in our game of life its purpose. Now, get out of my hair, kids. Go out and play!

DAYTON TABLE TENNIS CLUB

www.dttcohoio.com

LOCATION: South Metro Sports
10561 Success Lane, Centerville

HOURS: Tuesday 7:30-10:30 p.m.

COST: First-time visitors are free, pay-as-you-play weekly fee of \$7, annual rates also available

UPCOMING EVENT: Dayton Giant RR Open, November 5

BOCCE CLASSIC XVII

www.bocceclassic.com

LOCATION: John Pirelli Lodge
2625 County Line Road, Kettering

COST: \$225 per team, if paid by June 30 and \$250 after June 30

UPCOMING EVENT: July 15-17

DAYTON CHESS CLUB

www.daytonchessclub.com
937.461.6283

LOCATION: 18 W. Fifth St., Dayton

HOURS: Wednesday, 6-9 p.m.;
Thursday, 5-9 p.m.; Friday, 6:30-11:30 p.m.

COST: \$4 for adults; \$3 Wednesday and Friday, \$2 Thursday for grades K-12; monthly, annual and senior rates are available

UPCOMING EVENT: 53rd Gem City Open, June 3-5

Phone Off

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BY JENNIFER HANAUER

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