

South Bend Memories from former Junior Team Member, Allen Levin

Growing up in South Bend Indiana had some perks. Notre Dame was very close. The college football hall of fame opened in my teen years. The absolute best thing the local area had to offer for me was the South Bend Table Tennis Club. This club had a feeling of true history. Past national champions had been painted on the walls. The training center at the old Torrington Factory was beautiful. The floor was hard and the game was fast! For a while I served as captain of the new South Bend Junior team. At that time (1992 - 95), Mark Hasinski was under 5 feet tall, and also under 1200!

Many of the junior players trained hard under Victor Tolkachev and Danny Seemiller. Danny Seemiller may not know it, but he remains one of the most positive influences on my life, still today, far away, as I strive to make it in the entertainment business in Los Angeles. He was a great influence and a true hero to me. The program has come a long way over the years. Now, as I understand it, some of the same junior players that could just see over their side of the table and grip a paddle are the top players in the country for their age groups including and up to adult groupings.

Playing table tennis did plenty for me as a teenager. It gave me a focus, a team, and a dream. I was able to associate with very good people. Table Tennis people are the best people in the world. I learned that if I train hard at any one thing, I can rise through the ranks and find my talent. I learned that hard work is rewarded with real progress. Hard work is always worth the effort.

A memory I enjoy from my teenager years was helping to paint and create what I think of as my home, the South Bend Table Tennis Club. The dust in what turned out to be our robot area, was so thick we had to chisel it out. Paul George's art was displayed and BEAUTIFUL. We turned a lump of coal into a diamond. I greatly miss that establishment.

I am very thankful to have had the South Bend Table Tennis club available to me as a young adult.

Brad Balmer, Phil Shmucker, Paul George, Danny Seemiller, Jim Lynch, Jerry Goeller, and so many others played a role in helping me grow up. It was my favorite community. In my mind, it hasn't changed a bit. You can still here Lloyd Troyer grunting as he takes a stroke. You can still feel the sting of Dana Yoder's ridiculously accurate backhand, that "swinging barn door" stroke. You can still see Victor annihilate someone 21-0 and that person quickly taking a large break from table tennis, to cool down. You can watch Nathan Troyer and Randy Hewitt rising through the ranks, hot on my heels to pass me up. You can see Mark Hazinski smile or even lose his temper every now and again. You can watch my dad, Mike Levin, hack his way to a victory without so much as one topspin stroke, despite Victor and Danny putting in entirely way too much effort to help him with this simple feat. You can watch matches from early to late hours and marvel at the beautiful sport of Table Tennis. Allen Levin

Allen playing at the St. Joseph Valley Open Where it began, S.B. Club 92' Allen (front/right)

