

## Developmental Coach of the Year

By MEENU GUPTA  
PHOTO COURTESY OF  
RAJUL SHETH

**M**ilpitas India Community Center (ICC) coach Rajul Sheth has been selected by USA Table Tennis (USATT), the official body of table tennis in the USA, as the Developmental Coach of the Year 2008. "Only one table tennis coach in the whole country is honored this way and I feel very proud and humbled," said Sheth.

For 2008, the USATT Coach of the Year Selection Committee included the Chairman of the USATT Board of Directors, John Allen, the then Chairman of the Coaching Committee, Ashu Jain, USATT's Athlete Representative to the USOC Athlete's Advisory Council, Whitney Ping, USATT's Alternate Athlete Representative to the USOC Athlete's Advisory Council, Peter Scudner, Chairman of the USATT Board and Michael D. Cavanaugh, USATT CEO.

"As background, we try to be transparent in the nomination and selection process. By that I mean that we publish a call for nominations to our affiliated clubs and we name the members of the Selection Committee," said Cavanaugh.

In 2008 six nominations were received for the Developmental Coach of the Year. All of them had significant merit, experience and achievement. "Rajul was selected as the 2008 Development Coach of the Year because of his large outreach and focus on youth, his close association and contact with elite players, his efforts to involve top level coaches in his programs and his tireless efforts to maintain leagues in his region and club" Cavanaugh said.

As Head Coach Rajul has developed the largest junior training program in the USA with over 100 kids training regularly, and developed the largest training camp program in the USA with more than 500 kids attending ICC's spring break, summer, Thanksgiving and winter camps.

"We are the only full time center that has table tennis (TT) tables and floor which is used for international tournaments. TT robots and machines to feed the balls are used to do advanced drills. We follow the latest techniques of drilling used by current top players of world. We have more than 15 trained coaches to follow that. For beginner and new students we make sure that they are having fun playing table tennis. Once we realize that they are engaged with this

sport we start serious techniques with them. I think this concept is different than other coaches or clubs" said Sheth.

More than 500 players have already competed in ICC's table tennis league. Sheth has gradually developed the largest USATT singles' league in the USA with more than 120 players playing more than 200 matches every week. "We are very proud of what Rajul has and is accomplishing within his programs. He is a visionary who is dedicated to the sport, his programs and his athletes," said Cavanaugh.

Rajul has set an example by starting with a few kids and tables on a small, carpeted floor in 2006, and now managing the ICC's 10,500-square-foot full-time table tennis club, the largest in Northern America.

Some of the top students trained at ICC in 2008 are Ariel Hsing: 2008 US Nationals Women's Singles finalist, 2009 US Women's, Junior Girls' and Cadet Girls' National teams; Lily Zhang: 2009 US Girls' Junior and Cadet Girls' Champion and member of U.S Women's National team; Sylvan Guo: 2009 US Girls' junior team; Krishnateja Avvari, Champion 2008 U.S. Open, Diane Jiang: U.S. National rank No. 1 U 10 girls and finalist 2008 US Nationals Girls' Elementary School U10.

"We are working hard to make sure all these young ICC students make it to the 2012 Olympics and of course a

medal in 2016. We are also working hard on another, younger group including Krish Avvari, Diane Jiang and few more kids below the age of 10 in preparation for the 2016 Olympics," said Sheth.

This summer Sheth and ICC Table Tennis center has planned 10 weeks of full day camps from June 15 to August 28 in which former World champions and International coaches with top players will come to the United States for the camp.

To get more information on the camp please visit [www.indiacc.org/tabletennis](http://www.indiacc.org/tabletennis)

"USATT is proud to recognize Rajul for his outstanding coaching efforts and results for 2008. Rajul was selected as Developmental Coach of the Year because he has quickly established his club and program at the ICC as among the very best in the country, and his students have excelled in both national and international competitions," said Whitney Ping, an Olympian from the Bay Area.



Rajul Sheth, center, Developmental Coach of the Year award winner, with two of the top students trained at ICC in 2008, Ariel Hsing, left, and Lily Zhang.