

World Champion Grace Wong inspires teens and tweens at Aurora Youth Week Table Tennis workshop



Aurora Sports Hall of Famer and World Champion Grace Wong led a group of aspiring table tennis players through skills-building activities at The Loft in the Aurora Family Leisure Complex last Tuesday afternoon.

The Aurora Youth Week Table Tennis Workshop also celebrated the 100th anniversary of the sport.

ASHoF volunteers Kristin Fawcett Dajia and Karen Merk engaged the teens and tweens through a series of trivia questions about table tennis and led the attendees in a sports-specific dynamic warmup to get them primed for dribbling, serving, volleying, and smashing.

After serving and volleying techniques were taught by Wong, the competitive juices were stoked, teams were selected, and games were played up to 11.

Resplendent in her red ASHoF golf shirt and clearly in tip-top shape for the upcoming Masters World Championships in South Korea, Wong's presence as a global champion was evident in her spontaneous coaching moments and demonstrations of skill during the workshop.

She positively reinforced the youthful players' forehand motions and paddle strokes, making them comfortable in a supportive yet competitive setting.

In the hotly-contested matches that ensued, the youngsters demonstrated their quick learning and athleticism in spirited rallies and quick twitch returns.

Wong said she was impressed with the entry level players' improvement over the course of the session.

The best part of the workshop was to see them go from not knowing how to play to enjoying the games as well as going from being scared-looking to smiling. I felt happy for them. It was great to see how quickly they learned and how interested they were to learn. At the end, they wanted to beat their opponent; their determination was very encouraging.

The 2024 Aurora Sports Hall of Fame Inductee also took time during a workshop water break to delineate her plans to compete in an upcoming global championship tournament.

She'll be travelling to the 2026 World Masters Table Tennis Championships in Seoul, South Korea in June and competing in three divisions: Women's Singles, Women's Doubles, and Mixed Doubles. I went to Montreal last month to play for the first time with my new left-handed Mixed Doubles partner. We were able to get some court time together and work out how we fit together on the

court. He's an Iranian-Canadian and we're looking forward to competing together in South Korea.?

Wong added that ?my new Women's Doubles partner is 35-years-old? and the soon-to-be 60-year-old declared herself ?ready? to take on the world from June 7-12.

?I'm leaving on June 4for Seoul to get myself prepared for Singles. It was fun that we wrapped up today's workshop with the kids challenging me. They were filled with curiosity and enthusiasm for the sport and fueled my desire to compete next month.?

As noted in the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame's Facebook post about the Wong's Table Tennis workshop, ?Moments like these help inspire the next generation of athletes and leaders in our community.?

By Jim StewartLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter