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Inter-war Crazes and Sport Diffusion: The Case of French Ping-Pong, 1932-1939

Kilian Mousset^{a*}, Jean-Nicolas Renaud^b and Christian Vivier^c

^aL-VIS, Univ Lyon, University of Claude Bernard Lyon 1, F-69622, Villeurbanne, France;

^bVIPS2, Univ Rennes, University of Rennes 2, F-35000, Rennes, France; ^cC3S, University of Bourgogne Franche-Comté, FR-25000, Besançon, France.

ABSTRACT:

Although the 1929 economic crisis affected France from 1931 onwards, the sport system continued its ascent during the 1930s. Some sports, such as ping-pong, also called table-tennis for questions of legal risk between the federations and the ping-pong brand, took advantage of this context of crisis to develop. A fashionable sport in 1932 and 1933, this new practice developed in drinking establishments where the sporting culture was already well established since bars often served as the head offices of many clubs. However, once the craze had subsided ping-pong struggled to evolve in a spatial and economic environment that was less favorable to its expansion.

KEYWORDS: fashion, France, table tennis, ping-pong, bars.

Much academic research in sport history in France has focused on the emergence and evolution of organized sports using political, social or cultural approaches.¹ Between 1980 and 1990, these studies first dealt with the pioneering development of soccer, forms of swimming, French boxing between 1797 and 1967 or rowing; and more recently on disciplines which evolved later on, such as the history of badminton in France starting at the end of the nineteenth century to 1979, or the introduction and diffusion of handball from 1922

to 2004.² While the notion of diffusion is not always the focus of such studies, this element is certainly mentioned in the development of these sports. The phenomena of institutionalization, regulation of practice, exhibition or professionalization of such activities have also been extensively studied. After the demise of the Union of French Societies for Athletic Sports (USFSA 1889-1920), the movement of sport federations towards autonomy, clearly more evident since the end of the First World War, continued to develop and is well established today.

However, few studies have described the sudden dynamics of sport crazes, which may relate to phenomena of ‘fashion’, in the historiography of sport in France.³ Some monographs on the departments, referring to administrative areas, situate these fluctuations within the associative system from the end of the nineteenth century to the end of the 1930s.⁴ The social and spatial dynamics of sport crazes during the inter-war period, when French sport attracted new practitioners and interested even more readers, listeners and spectators, deserve to be analyzed in terms of their associational trajectory.⁵ The ping-pong craze in France in 1932 is interesting because this cultural phenomenon was born during the economic crisis of 1929, on the one hand, and a few years after its structuring in the French Table Tennis Federation (FFTT) in 1927 and the international federation (ITTF) in 1926, on the other.⁶ The terms ‘ping-pong’ or ‘table tennis’ are used indiscriminately here. If ‘ping-pong’ also referred to the parlor game, it was however the term most used at the time to denominate its sporting practice in France during the 1930s. In order not to have a problem with the registered trademark, ping-pong, the FFTT and ITTF chose ‘table tennis’.

From institutional history to social history, and in a context of an economic crisis that strongly affected France in the 1930s, the ping-pong craze developed during 1932 and 1933 by taking advantage of the space that bar owners offered for playing. Café owners thus supported its development by offering a place for a table or by setting up a table themselves.

In this environment, male sociability strongly marked the diffusion of table tennis with clubs and their head offices very often in the back room of the cafés. Thus, the clubs suddenly multiplied and joined together within single-sport and multi-sport federations. However, from 1934 onwards, this vogue was no longer attractive and reflected the image of a ‘minor’ sport. Membership was stagnating and then declining in most federations, due to waning popularity together with the disappearance of the tax advantages that the game had brought to the bar owners which had made table tennis more profitable than other café games like billiards, for example.

Nevertheless, table tennis remained an urban and peri-urban sport for the intermediate classes during the 1930s. In spite of the craze that evolved in 1932 and 1933, it remained a less practiced sport with regard to the sport federations compared to the major sports in France such as soccer or athletics during the 1930s. It was indeed its inexpensive character, in a context of crisis, which explained this sudden and collective craze. The trajectory of ping-pong in France offers an unprecedented example of a brief and sudden diffusion which relied on the network of cafés, but which then had difficulty to develop further. Ping-pong in France remained strongly attached to the image of an entertaining game played outside of sport institutions. The term diffusion qualifies the quantitative development of ping-pong, and the term democratization to describe the spread of the practice to the more popular classes.

The Spread of Sport Clubs: A Local Ping-Pong Mania (1932-1933)

Even if ping-pong was not a major sport in France in the 1930s, it became popular and fashionable in 1932. The clubs multiplied and joined the federations. This sporting craze spread in the regions and it became a local sport ‘par excellence’. These competitions, organized in the urban and peri-urban areas between local clubs, only reflected the timid development of the practice of sport in rural areas in France.

Although ping-pong survived in the FFTT until 1931, it was about to celebrate its sporting conversion. According to the sport weekly *Match:l'Intran*, a ping-pong mania had raged in France since the beginning of 1932.⁷ The use of the neologism ping-pong mania is not devoid of meaning. The numbers of followers grew daily. It was becoming a 'fashionable sporting game', and the newspaper exclaimed that 'more than one hundred thousand Frenchmen (would thus) ... undertake to break their ... rackets in favor of table tennis'.⁸ Although the number may have been imaginary, this new sport was certainly undergoing unprecedented development. Indeed, the number of associations – which were created and registered for the practice of ping-pong in the *Official Journal of the French Republic*, evidences a sudden boom: two new associations received mention in 1931, 67 in 1932 and 276 in 1933 (Figure 1). Between 1932 and 1933, ping-pong was very much in vogue. Indeed, enthusiasts were working to develop independent table tennis sections or clubs to provide a framework for this new sporting fad.⁹ The craze also concerned the FFTT. This sudden change in the number of affiliated clubs was revealed in *L'Intransigeant* by the Federation's president: 28 clubs existed in May 1932, 300 in May 1933, reaching 420 on October 1 of the same year. The official statistics in the *Federal Yearbook of 1950* point in this same direction, and they correspond approximately to the club counts identified in the FFTT minutes: 20 clubs in 1931, 148 in 1932, reaching 377 on July 27, 1933.¹⁰ However, they do not take into account the clubs that did not renew their membership, nor the cessation of activities.¹¹

This spectacular growth within the FFTT was a sign of a sudden sporting infatuation; the craze for ping-pong was not the result of spontaneous gatherings like the still-popular ping-pong parlor game.¹² These entertaining games still existed, but it was the sporting dimension that was 'in fashion'. The names ping-pong and table tennis did not mark this difference. In fact, the majority of new sport associations were table tennis associations.¹³ Players met in clubs to compete under the auspices of the FFTT. Like the few bourgeois

canoeists who turned to the more competitive aspect of rowing between 1865 and 1930, sporting sociability in the clubs overtook pre-existing bourgeois sociability.¹⁴

The patronage of the Gymnastics and Sport Federation of French Sponsorship (FGSPF) confirmed this adherence. This Catholic group used sports to develop Catholic values among young people following the suppression of ethics and religious symbols in schools in 1882 and the separation of Church and State in France in 1905. By offering ‘new’ sport competitions, the FGSPF brought athletes together in a religious institution. Indeed, the Catholic magazine *Les Jeunes* mentioned 865 players taking part in official table tennis events during the 1932/1933 season.¹⁵ However, this sport craze remained a minor activity compared to the 137,000 licensed players in association soccer in 1932. Similarly, basketball and association soccer within the FGSPF itself had ten times as many players in their ranks.¹⁶ In the end, the specific ping-pong boom was evident in the spectacular increase in its numbers when other sports were growing to a far lesser extent, and the fact that the members were initially so few, made the growth even more spectacular.

However, this situation was also due to other more contextual factors. *L’Intransigeant* reported at the beginning of 1933 its belief that ice skating and its derivative ice hockey was ‘one of the few sports, along with basketball and ping-pong, which have gained in membership, because the financial crisis has had a clear impact on the number of players in all clubs’.¹⁷ During a financial crisis where unemployment in French industry soared between 1932 and 1933, ping-pong was clearly characterized by a sudden craze to practice it which took shape in clubs and single-sport or affinity federations.¹⁸ The diffusion of physical activities in the geographical area of Seine-et-Oise, for instance, shows a decline in the annual rate of creation of ping-pong clubs in 1932, suggesting the sport reached a threshold of maturity.¹⁹ Despite the regional particularities of sporting clubs, their number then met the needs of the population despite the economic situation.²⁰ Finally, the ping-pong craze bears

the mark of a new sport which contributed, on a minor scale because of the small number of clubs, to the progression of sport associationism in France in the inter-war period. It also signals the implication of social legislation, following the law of 1901 which facilitated in particular, the creation of clubs and the holding of gatherings without prior authorization. Sport developed easier by bringing players together in clubs.

The geographical spread of clubs expanded the sport beyond Paris so that the fashion capital was no longer the only place involved in this sporting craze. This sport, moreover, went well beyond the few big Parisian clubs present within the FFTT since 1931.²¹ In fact, the movement of clubs towards the provinces was clearly visible by 1932. The registration document of the associations reveals table tennis had reached most of France's major developed cities.²² In 1932, only four associations out of the 67 listed in the *Official Journal of the French Republic* were located in Paris, and the ratio was 12 Parisian clubs out of the 276 associations registered in 1933.²³ The same was true in the ranks of the FFTT with a spill-over effect in geographical areas outside the city of Paris from September 1932.²⁴ Finally, this craze went beyond the Parisian area and could be conceived as a provincial territorialization of leisure activities for a middle class, present in the villages around the large cities. Established at the beginning of the twentieth century in the capital and in the fashionable holiday resorts, this new craze was therefore one of the markers of a rapid implantation of sporting fads in places that were, until then, less affected by the trends of the day.

This sporting spill-over also spread beyond the major urban areas. The sport newspaper *l'Intransigeant* reported that in the Normandy region, 'in imitation of the big cities, the smallest villages now have their halls and even their clubs'.²⁵ Indeed, some Norman towns close to the Rouen urban area were affected by the spread of this sport, as were towns even farther from the big cities.²⁶ This dynamic of establishing clubs shows that the ping-pong craze was spreading to the peripheries of large urban areas and even to some towns

further in the countryside. However, the establishment of ping-pong in the countryside and especially in villages with a population of less than 3,000 remained of minor importance, as Jean-Claude Gaugain illustrates in the Var department.²⁷ The same situation was also evident in Seine-et-Oise.²⁸ Indeed, ping-pong constituted a local sport which could be practiced easily within the same city where it could even accommodate different social activities, thanks to the lightness of the equipment, an asset to sport events when travel was expensive.²⁹

The competitive spirit that governed this craze is revealed by the sudden multiplication of clubs or sections within the same city. In Rouen alone, more than 12 clubs played table tennis according to *L'Intransigeant*.³⁰ Indeed, the popularity of ping-pong in the city of Rouen was so strong that seven clubs joined the FFTT between 1932 and 1933.³¹ Competitions among local clubs within the same city were characteristic of this new craze, and the press announced no less than 10 new clubs between August and November 1932 in Roubaix.³² An increase in the number of specific ping-pong clubs was also evident from 1932 in Seine-et-Oise.³³

As with the development of other sports in France, the ping-pong craze was based on visible enthusiasm mainly in the developed towns in provincial France. This sporting fad, which motivated the establishment of clubs, spread to the various districts of provincial towns further away from the major cities between 1932 and 1933. Its trajectory offers an unprecedented example of a brief and sudden development. Although this increase was in absolute terms small in relation to the number of licensees, ping-pong was the new phenomenon of sports fashion.

From Socially Accessible Fashion to a Pretext to Male Sociability in the Café

A distinguished activity since 1931 as practiced in the bourgeois clubs of the FFTT, this craze gradually took hold in the middle and working classes, and undoubtedly constituted

a means of social ascension in this general movement of appropriation of activities.³⁴ The ping-pong craze took its place in the back rooms of cafés and integrated the workers' federations, becoming a cheap sport. The bar gambling tax system and the context of the economic crisis created a favourable situation for its development. However, male sociability, of which the bar was an example, had a profound effect on the sport. Ping-pong was marked by men's practice and café habits around lemonade and aperitifs.

Indeed, from 1932 and 1933, the sport body of the French Section of the Workers' International (SFIO) showed an increase in the number of competitions and specific sections within the Workers' Union of Sports and Gymnastics Societies (USSGT).³⁵ The newspaper *Le Populaire* commented in January 1932: 'for some years now, table tennis or Ping-Pong has enjoyed remarkable success and growing popularity which is perfectly justified'.³⁶ Its place became indisputable from April 1932 when it qualified as a 'fashionable sport', as the number of teams had increased 'significantly', from 29 to 62 by the end of 1933 within the Regional Union of the Seine alone.³⁷ Popularity meant that this craze no longer belonged only to the wealthy classes as had the fashion of the parlor game at the beginning of the twentieth century. By offering favorite trendy sports, the USSGT gave workers the opportunity to take part in competitions outside the so-called 'bourgeois' sport federations. *L'Humanité* also reported its development in the ranks of the Labor Sport Federation (FST), which emerged from the French section of the Communist International (SFIC).³⁸ Although a sport commission incorporated ping-pong, at least as early as 1930, it was not until 1932 that it became more widespread through the formation of sections and the organization of 'friendly matches'.³⁹ Although the workers practiced it, the sections within the clubs were not yet sufficiently numerous, according to the editor, and sporting events were still rare. In spite of

this, the ping-pong craze indeed marked the democratization of sport among the workers in the FST clubs.

This sport was undoubtedly a 'popular' fashion in France during the years 1932 and 1933. According to the *Revue du tennis et du ping-pong*, 'table tennis is and should be a popular sport because it is not expensive to play'.⁴⁰ Although table tennis had been an accessible sport to workers and employees since 1932, the cost of a table and the renting of a room sometimes proved to be an obstacle for regular practice. Indeed, the middle and working classes continued to be constrained by the considerable cost of joining certain clubs. For example, a subscription to the *Ping-Pong Club Versaillais* cost 12 francs per month, and members of the *Ping Pong Club de France* had to pay 50 francs per month and an entry fee of 100 francs.⁴¹ By way of comparison, a basic necessity for men at the time, a packet of 'blue Gauloises' cigarettes, cost 2.5 francs in 1930.⁴² Affected by the partial unemployment, an subscription in a club proved to be a real choice. With membership fees ranging from the cheapest rate to double, or even five times the cost, the social origin of the players depended to a great extent on prices and whether or not there was any sponsorship. Enthusiasts were increasing but the groups remained socially distinct.

Moreover, although the craze was 'popular', ping-pong continued to be an activity prized in the bourgeois clubs.⁴³ According to historian Tony Froissart, the intermediate socio-professional classes held the positions of office manager in the ping-pong clubs in the Seine-et-Oise department.⁴⁴ These board members included entrepreneurs, insurance, stock exchange or office employees, draftsmen, accountants, students and tenant farmers.⁴⁵ For example, the *Ping-Pong Club Versaillais* in 1932 mentions '(one) President: Student; (one) Vice-President: Quantity Surveyor; (one) Secretary: Business Agent; (one) Assistant Secretary: Business Agent; (and one) Assistant Treasurer: Student'.⁴⁶ The presence of

students and administrative staff among the board members thus suggests that the ping-pong craze belonged to the petty bourgeoisie and middle class who came together to form clubs.

These men of these social standings probably desired to rise in society, and they aspired to imitating the upper and middle classes. It is difficult then to know the real motivations of these new players. They may have wanted to practice this new sport for its low cost because they did not have a lawn-tennis court, or they viewed it a way to differentiate themselves in a new sport with little competition, because it was eminently 'modern'. In the Var department for example, the bourgeoisie played ping-pong on the Provencal coast in the south of France, a holiday resort for the wealthy classes.⁴⁷ A popular practice of this sport was located inland, in the Centre-War, a less elegant area.⁴⁸

However, the social status of administrative members probably did not represent all players in the club. It is also highly probable that the positions of leaders within the associations were still only of interest to the upper and intermediate classes, those individuals most familiar with administrative procedures.⁴⁹ Indeed, the development of this sport in the FST and the USSGT clearly showed that workers were taking up this activity. Nevertheless, in this general inter-war movement of sport democratization, total or partial unemployment following the economic crisis of the 1930s affected many workers.⁵⁰ This sport became accessible but probably remained the privilege of the middle and upper classes. Although the average worker's wage was 7,828 francs per year in 1933 did not allow frequent rental of a table by several people, the weeks of unemployment during the economic crisis paradoxically offered an unprecedented temporary opportunity to practice the fashionable sport in the places they usually frequented.⁵¹

The support of many cafés, restaurants and hotels during the 1930s contributed to the success of this craze.⁵² The head offices of associations recorded in the *Official Journal of the French Republic* shows cafés accounted for 43% and 34% of club creations in 1932 and 1933

respectively (Table 1). More generally, drinking places accounted for 54% of the head offices in 1932 and 52% in 1933, providing privileged places for the development of the sporting craze. Similar confirmation is found in the announcement of a big popular tournament organized by *L'Intransigeant* at the beginning of 1933. Indeed, out of the 104 Parisian establishments, 26 were cafés or bars, 11 restaurants or breweries, and two hotels.⁵³ The enrolment fees set at three francs and the imposition of regulation tables did not discourage the owners of drinking places and in fact shows that some drinking places had special tables on their premises.⁵⁴

Moreover, as a substitute for billiards - which the sport did not really replace - the ping-pong fashion was less expensive, since in 1933 a Russian billiard table cost more than 2,000 francs compared with a minimum of 250 francs for a competition plywood ping-pong table, which could be dismantled.⁵⁵ Taxed only on revenue at a rate of 5% in drinking places, ping-pong benefited from a lighter tax than billiards in the early 1930s.⁵⁶ Conversely, public or private billiard halls, for example, had a heavier tax burden since both indirect (State) and municipal taxes applied.⁵⁷ 'The pleasure of playing' thus constituted a financial resource for the French State, established by the law of September 16, 1871, to help lower the deficit generated by the War of 1870 between France and Prussia.⁵⁸ Thus, the success of the ping-pong craze in cafés was the result of its special place in these drinking establishments and the tax advantage that made it economically viable.

Advertisements in *L'Intransigeant* show that the sale of ping-pong tables to bars was a booming economic market between 1932 and 1933. A manufacturer like Siegel was looking for 'salespeople working (in) Paris, (or in) the provinces, to sell ping-pong tables to cafés, shops, brewery, hotels'.⁵⁹ This example reveals an emerging economic market for ping-pong, reflected in the search for salespeople capable of selling tables directly to the owners of drinking places. Sport victories were not the only reason for its sudden development in cafés;

games were also an opportunity to talk and have an aperitif. Hourly rentals, which sometimes cost between five and six francs, attracted and retained more customers.⁶⁰ Ping-pong was essentially a sporting entertainment that complemented the usual range of café games with less physical involvement, such as card games and dominoes. Moreover, players could sometimes play for free on the sole condition of consuming (lemonade, alcohol, or other beverages).

As a way of betting on a drink, this sporting game had certain features that marked the sociability of the cafés. Indeed, the saloon was a place for socializing. Men met after work with the excuse of having a lemonade or an aperitif, to talk, play cards and sometimes engage in betting to make the games more interesting. According to Luc Bihl-Willette, although the period between the two World Wars constituted ‘a true civilization of bistros’ or an ‘apogee of the bistro’ according to Thierry Fillaut, the café remained a male stronghold and the ping-pong craze in the cafés bears its marks.⁶¹ It was in no way the place for women who remained confined to the home with domestic tasks or worked outside of the house.⁶² Moreover, the scant presence of women licensees within the FFTT confirms this still limited gender equality during the 1930s. For example, five to six times more men's teams than women's teams existed during the 1933-1934 table tennis championships.⁶³ Women played ping-pong, but their participation in the sport was likely just primarily within the sport clubs.

Finally, the development of ping-pong revealed the dominant presence of men and habits linked to male sociability in cafés. An illustration published in the *Revue du tennis et du ping-pong* in 1933 shows how this sporting game was played by men in the café.⁶⁴ Alcoholic drinks were part of the landscape as shown by the presence of a pint and bottles during ‘furiously competitive’ games. By entering the cafés ping-pong became subject to the same customary habits that marked their existence, a cigarette hanging from their mouths, the players competed or played a few balls.⁶⁵ Evenings spent in smoke-filled rooms were

common, and like the use of card games in workers' novels from the inter-war period, ping-pong was just another excuse for talking and drinking.⁶⁶ The many advertising campaigns of the alcohol brands developed new habits around the aperitif, especially after the effort during the 1930s, undoubtedly only reinforcing the usefulness of games to bet a drink after a well-deserved effort, just as a refreshment.⁶⁷ In this way, advertisers avoided the pitfall of encouraging festive drinking, a stepping-stone to blacklisted alcoholism. The ping-pong craze was deeply marked by these characteristics of approval, specific to men and the café.

It was also a booming market for establishments that were open to the public, and some large spaces and garages gradually installed ping-pong tables. Newspaper advertisements in *L'Intransigeant* mention these establishments. Located in the 11th arrondissement, a garage at 148 rue Oberkampf was looking for a manager to run the ping-pong games room.⁶⁸ Tables were also present in the large garage La Motte-Picquet, located at 8, Cavalerie street in the 15th arrondissement in Paris.⁶⁹ Games rooms also took advantage of this fervor. The announcement of the sale of an establishment in 1933 attested to the presence of ping-pong tables: 'Games room (billiards, table tennis) management for sale, ... 16, r. Maître-Jacques, 56, av. de la Reine, Boulogne-s-Seine'.⁷⁰ The end of the craze of miniature golf, whose current image is that of a game for children when compared to golf, motivated certain establishment directors to shift their interest to this growing fashion and set up table tennis tables instead.⁷¹ The example of the basement of the Marbeuf garage near the Champs Élysées and its 25 tables is therefore not unique.⁷² The ping-pong sport craze was a way to attract a new clientele.

In addition, the basements and open spaces of the garages facilitated the development of table tennis. This urban diffusion showed that the ping-pong practiced in those places was an informal version of the institutionalized establishments. A social parlor game at the beginning of the twentieth century, ping-pong became a sport that was developing in places

open to the public. This change of the space for practice marked its transformation and novelty at the dawn of the year 1932, also revealing a transformation in the lifestyles of the upper classes during the roaring twenties when their leisure activities moved more frequently from the parlor to public outings.⁷³ Although table-tennis had already trickled down to the middle classes, it always attracted a bourgeoisie in search of novelty.

This sport craze therefore had the support of the bars. Favourable gambling taxes and the economic crisis made it easier to set up tables in the back rooms of cafés and to create clubs. Coffee mode and sports mode, ping-pong is practiced in competition but is also subject to male coffee habits around alcohol and tobacco consumption. This popular sport was an opportunity for employees and some workers to practice a cheap sport in workers' federations.

After the Craze: The Difficulties of a Minor Sport (1934-1939)

The enthusiasm for ping-pong had diminished by the end of the 1930s. After the sudden increases in the number of licensees within the federations, this sport suddenly stopped attracting new licensees. 'Playing ping-pong' was not the best way to show that an individual was practicing or interested by sport. Ping-pong became old-fashioned and a 'minor sport' compared to 'real sport' like football, but it continued to exist.

In a sport landscape where federations saw their membership grow, like soccer with its 188,664 players in 1938-1939, basketball in which competitive licenses rose from 9,526 to 23,158 (471 clubs) between 1930 and 1939 or athletics with 31,952 (1938) compared to 24,914 sport licensees in 1929, a slowdown was seen in the structuring of ping-pong, first of all by a reduction in the stream of new clubs or sections created from 1934 on, and then by a decrease in players affiliated to single-sport and affinity federations up to 1939 (Figure 2).⁷⁴ Licensing figures and media hype converged around the idea that the collective craze was no longer as strong as it had been when ping-pong was the craze in 1932 and 1933.

Indeed, the figures from the various institutions responsible for the sport demonstrate the number of clubs was reaching its limit. The number of clubs was large enough to meet the needs and desires of the enthusiasts. Within the FFTT, the number of registered clubs increased by only 42 in the 1934/1935 season, compared with 278 between 1932/1933 and 1933/1934.⁷⁵ Subsequently, the FFTT began to lose clubs as early as in the 1935/1936 season with a decrease of 14 groups (601 clubs), to reach 549 in 1937/1938 despite a sport policy during the Popular Front (1936-1938).⁷⁶ From the point of view of licensees, 5,841 members were registered in the 1934/1935 season, 4,984 in 1935/1936 and 4,946 in 1938/1939. The development of ping-pong within the FGSPF came to an abrupt halt. While the Catholic association and other sport sections continued to progress, like basketball or soccer, the number of ping-pong players decreased.⁷⁷ Indeed, a slight reduction in players taking part in official events had been noticeable after the 1934/1935 season with 1,088 players compared to 1,143 in 1933/1934.⁷⁸ The number then decreased yearly to just 349 players during the 1937/1938 season, a drop of about 70% in three years.⁷⁹ The end of the ping-pong craze thus had an impact on the number of players from the 1934/1935 season onwards. The many social measures taken for the benefit of workers, such as the 40-hour week or the 7-15% wage increase under the Popular Front, met the needs for daily expenses, but the nascent development of leisure activities did not benefit ping-pong as a sport.⁸⁰ Unemployment, despite decreasing, remained very high and undoubtedly still limited this democratization. In addition, inflation prevented wages from keeping up with the rise in the cost of living from the summer of 1936.⁸¹

Moreover, if pleasure was found in sport, ping-pong was not the first choice. It was not considered a major sporting activity. By losing its status as a fashionable sport, ping-pong became less attractive, less noble for players, spectators, or even managers who were nevertheless a great help in the economic life of the clubs, such as those for example who lent

their cars for long trips.⁸² To quote the newspaper *L'Alerte*, 'Ping-pong is a sport, a "minor sport", if we do not want to offend the purists.'⁸³ Although the FFTT with its 615 clubs in 1934 occupied the tenth place in the sport federations between the swimming federation with its 522 clubs, and the French Lawn Tennis Federation with 754 clubs, it was not recognized as a leading federation by the National Sport Committee (CNS) until 1938.⁸⁴

The ping-pong craze was an easy-to-practice local sport. Once the sport declined in attractiveness and interest, though, it no longer invited readers and sportsmen to push open the door of the clubs to get together. The attractions of other activities considered major sports seduced new and old ping-pong enthusiasts alike. After the spotlight faded, table tennis became a minor sport in the 1930s.

The Café: Brake and Motor of its Development

If the coffee makers facilitated the ping-pong craze by offering a back room for the players, they also later limited its expansion. As a sport practiced in cafés, ping-pong encountered obstacles to its development. The restricted practice areas in the back rooms limited the sports meetings. Moreover, the end of the ping-pong craze also attracted fewer players to the table tennis rental tables, making them less attractive financially. The evolution of taxes on café games hindered the installation or maintenance of tables in drinking establishments.

As early as 1934, the increase in taxes on ping-pong tables reduced their introduction into new cafés. According to the Rights of the Poor Department of Public Instruction at Paris Hospitals, the 5% gaming tax had been raised to 10% on August 1, 1934 for stakes higher than one franc.⁸⁵ Ping-pong was hit hard. Russian billiards, no subject to the Rights of the poor tax, fixed at the rate of 9.09%, became more economically profitable for the café owners than renting a table tennis table. The same was true for taxes on billiards since the reform on

indirect taxes repealed the state tax on private or public billiards after January 1, 1935.⁸⁶ As a result, this change in taxation probably did not facilitate the installation of ping-pong tables as it made the activity less attractive economically. As proof, the percentage of head offices located in cafés decreased (44% in 1934 and 32% in 1935) in relation to the number of new associations.⁸⁷ Their number fell drastically between 1933 and 1935, from 95 to 23.⁸⁸

Although cafés had facilitated very rapid development by offering space to set up a table, they then became a real obstacle to its diffusion and success in 1934 and 1935. In the Var department, for example, the sport ‘has allowed itself to become a passing fad in the restricted space of the café, hotel lounges, theatres and even private apartments’.⁸⁹ The lack of space in the cafés also explains why most of the clubs that operated in them only had one or two tables. Out of 172 associations affiliated to the FFTT between 1932 and 1933, 101 had one table, 56 had two and only 15 had more than three tables.⁹⁰ As a result, there was a tendency towards a sort of stability in the number of clubs, as if the spaces intended to accommodate this new activity gradually became sufficient. Indeed, while there were 276 new associations in 1933 according to the *Official Journal of the French Republic*, this figure dropped to 173 in 1934, 37 in 1936, and ended up at six in 1939 (Figure 2). The total number of registered clubs only grew minimally, not from a loss of clubs but from a major slowdown of new registrations. Thus, the low creation of clubs marked the end of the ping-pong craze in 1930s France.

In this context, the decline of table tennis in the federations was not altered by the creation in November 1934 of the Workers’ Sports and Gymnastics Federation (FSGT) following the merger of the FST and the USSGT.⁹¹ In order to face ‘fascist threats’ in Europe but also to offer an alternative to the single-sport, so-called ‘bourgeois’ federations, this worker’s union gathered these forces to attract sports-loving workers in France.⁹² To this end, the FSGT sent a national team to the 3rd Workers’ Olympiad in Antwerp in 1937 under

the supervision of the Socialist Workers' Sport International.⁹³ FSGT organized French championships in Alfortville in 1937 and 1938, then in Limoges in 1939.⁹⁴ However, the dynamism of the Parisian committee contrasted with the activity in the provinces where ping-pong was almost never mentioned in the sport results of *L'Humanité* or *Le Populaire*.⁹⁵ For example, during the 1937 French championships, only two cities and one provincial department from outside the Paris region were represented: Roanne, Limoges and l'Aube.⁹⁶ Moreover, these championships in ping-pong were only for men.

This low visibility confirms the idea that players' enthusiasm for ping-pong competitions decreased from 1936 within the FSGT. This situation was in contrast to the growth in its membership. At the beginning of 1936, the federation had 40,000 members, increasing to 103,420 by the summer of 1939.⁹⁷ Although some sports were developing, fewer ping-pong players affiliated to the FSGT. The decline in numbers can also be observed in the French Union of Secular Works of Physical Education (UFOLEP), a sport institution affiliated with the popular secular education movement of the Teaching League (Ligue d'Enseignement) since 1928. For the 1936-1937 season, the report of the General Commissioner of this institution mentioned a 'very noticeable progression in the commitments for the National Ping-Pong Competitions'.⁹⁸ Seventeen departments enrolled, a slight increase compared to the fifteen departments which took part in the competition the previous season.⁹⁹ However, the craze of ping-pong within UFOLEP declined from 1937/1938 as in the FFTT and the FSGT; at least a quarter of 16 departments dropped out, and only ten departments took part in the 1939 edition.¹⁰⁰ UFOLEP was gradually losing ping-pong competitors, and the waning enthusiasm in 1935 augured a real drop in membership by 1939. Although these institutions made it possible to preserve and maintain the enthusiasm at the height of the craze, they did not prevent the disaffiliations caused by its decline.

Ultimately, the changes in the tax on ping-pong tables, the less enthusiastic involvement of the café owners, or the sufficient playing space available to accommodate practitioners, some of whom did not need to join a club to practice it as a leisure activity, hindered the further development of the sport. If café spaces catalyzed the expansion of ping-pong, the conditions of practice, the uses of male sociability of coffee house, the lower profitability of this sport for café owners compared to other games, as well as the inconvenience and roughness caused, have certainly limited its competitive development within the clubs.

An Urban ‘Minor and Local Sport’ for the Intermediate Classes

The trajectory of ping-pong is proof that not all sports developed uniformly in the 1930s despite the vision of a fairly general growth in sport societies. The support of the bars, aiming to maintain or increase their profits in a period of economic crisis and favorable taxation, contributed significantly to its development. Ping-pong thus boomed because it represented a ‘local sport’ par excellence, as Tony Froissart calls it, combining sporting sociability and male socializing in cafés.¹⁰¹ Sport institutions such as the FFTT, the FGSPF, the FST or the USSGT were able to take advantage of this craze to increase their membership.

Even if democratization remained limited, this fad timidly became accessible to workers within the FST or the USSGT. Ping-pong remained above all an urban or peri-urban sport for the intermediate classes. However after 1933 it ‘allowed itself to become a passing fad in the restricted space of the café’.¹⁰² The lack of space in the café, often limiting practice to a single table, and the changes in taxation making other café games more profitable, contributed to the deceleration of ping-pong’s rapid growth after 1934. The end of the ping-pong craze did not make it an obsolete sport since the federations managed to anchor the enthusiasm of a few diehards with their sporting calendars.

The second cycle of the craze in 1932 and 1933 was in this sense a real recognition of its sporting transformation, not to say the moment of its metamorphosis, five years after its institutionalization in 1927. The recognition of the FFTT by the National Sport Committee in 1938 and its approval by the State a year later ratified this recognition, even if table tennis was still a ‘minor sport’ in the 1930s.¹⁰³ The successive waves of sport crazes demonstrates the importance of the sport system in the inter-war period and finally questions the pace, frequency and intensity shown by each new craze beyond the logical progression of sport structuring. On a more theoretical level, the development of table tennis in France in the 1930s was therefore quite characteristic in that it was very clearly based on a typology of clubs already presented by Wray Vamplew: clubs whose places of practice were strongly supported by the alcohol trade.¹⁰⁴ Some clubs were also based in the workplace or associated with religious or political organizations, but it is clear that French ping-pong often developed in the back rooms, unlike other sports such as basketball or soccer, which these movements and companies supported instead.

Notes

¹ Richard Holt, *Sport and Society in Modern France* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, The Shoestring Press, 1981).

² Alfred Wahl, *Les archives du football, Sport et société en France, 1880-1980* (Paris: Gallimard/Julliard, 1989); Thierry Terret, ‘Les défis du bain. Formes de pratiques, modèles et résistances dans les processus de diffusion de la natation sportive’ (PhD diss., Sciences et Techniques des Activités Physiques et Sportives (STAPS), Université de Lyon 1, 1992); Jean-François Loudcher, ‘Histoire de la savate, du chausson et de la boxe française: de ses origines populaires à sa pratique sportive (1797-1967)’ (PhD diss., Sciences biologiques et médicales. STAPS, Université Bordeaux 2, 1996); Christian Vivier, ‘L’aventure canotière. Du canotage à l’aviron. Histoire de la nautique Bisontine (1865-1930)’ (PhD diss., STAPS, Université de Lyon 1, 1994); Julie Grall, ‘Histoire du badminton en France (fin 19^e siècle – 1979): pratiques et représentations’ (PhD diss., Sciences du sport, Université de Rennes 2, 2018); Lise Cardin, ‘Introduction et diffusion du handball en France: des origines étrangères à l’affirmation nationale française (1922-2004)’ (PhD diss., STAPS, Université de Strasbourg, 2019).

³ As a cultural construct, a sport is said to be ‘fashionable’ from the moment when the words of the written press, shopkeepers and actors at a given time qualify it as such.

⁴ Jean-Claude Gauguain, *Jeux, gymnastique et sport dans le Var, 1860-1940* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2000); Tony Froissart, *L’impasse du sport rural. La Seine-et-Oise de 1881 à 1939* (Besançon: Presse universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2006); Tony Froissart, ‘sport populaire’ de Seine-et-Oise, 1880-1939 (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2003), 46.

⁵ Jacques Defrance, ‘Le sport français dans l’entre-deux-guerres’, in *Histoire du sport en France. Du second Empire au Régime de Vichy*, ed. Philippe Tétart (Paris: Vuibert, 2007), 79.

⁶ Coming from England and the United States, table tennis was already a salon fashion among the French bourgeoisie between 1902 and 1903. Kilian Mousset, Jean-Nicolas Renaud, and Christian Vivier, 'La mode du ping-pong en France en 1902 : une autre façon de questionner les classiques transferts culturels dans le domaine du sport', *Modern & Contemporary France* 26, no. 4 (2018): 413–42. This research follows on from a doctoral study on this question. Mousset Kilian, 'La mode du ping-pong de 1901 à 1939 : d'un jeu de salon mondain à un sport moderne' (PhD diss., Sciences du sport, Université de Rennes 2, 2017).

⁷ Kilian Mousset, 'La Fédération française de tennis de table (FFTT) et ses clubs affiliés à l'épreuve du pouvoir (1927-1932): de l'entre-soi à l'encadrement d'un succès sportif', *Sciences sociales et sport* 13, no. 1 (2019): 7–27; *Match: l'intran*, no. 283, February 9, 1932, 3, NUMP-3825, Bibliothèque Nationale de France archives (hereafter BnF), Paris, France.

⁸ *Match: l'intran*, no. 331, January 10, 1933, 2, BnF.

⁹ It was not possible to identify the multi-sport clubs with table tennis sections in the Official Journal of the French Republic.

¹⁰ They mention 49 clubs for the 1931/1932 sport season, 295 for 1932/1933, and 573 for 1933/1934. *Annuaire de la FFTT*, 1950, 11, FFTT.ANN.50, FFTT archives (hereafter FFTT), Paris, France; Reconstitution of the number of clubs affiliated to the FFTT on the basis of the annual evolution of the total number of clubs having obtained an affiliation number from the FFTT in its minutes. *PV de la FFTT*, unquoted, FFTT.

¹¹ After July 27, 1933, the minutes of the FFTT no longer mention new affiliations. Moreover, it was impossible to recover the exact number of affiliated associations. These figures were based on the membership numbers presented in the minutes. Some may have become disaffiliated. Moreover, statistics on the number of sportsmen and women at the end of the 1930s are still very often vague and remain uncertain. Defrance, 'Le sport français dans l'entre-deux-guerres', 80.

¹² The large Parisian catalogues also showed the difference between the parlor game and the practice of sports, as the accessories for the latter were found on the sporting goods page. *Catalogue Au Printemps, Jouets*, Paris, 1933, C.77.6.1, Musée du Jouet à Poissy archives, Poissy, France.

¹³ For example: Ping-Pong Club de Marseille, *JORF*, no. 265, November 12 and 13, 1932, 11911, BnF; Ping-Pong Club de Montpellier, *JORF*, no. 85, April 10, 1932, 3936, BnF; Toulouse Ping-Pong Club, *JORF*, no. 76, March 30, 1933, 3228, BnF.

¹⁴ Vivier, 'L'aventure canotière'.

¹⁵ *Les Jeunes*, no. 616, December 3, 1933, 691, 2007 068 306, Nationales du Monde du Travail archives (hereafter ANMT), Roubaix, France.

¹⁶ Figures from *l'Encyclopédie générale des Sports*, 1946 cited by Théodore Zeldin, *Histoire des passions françaises, Goût et corruption*, vol. 3 (Paris: Encres/Recherches, 1979), 382; 10,111 and 10,158 players for basketball and soccer respectively. *Les Jeunes*, no. 616, December 3, 1933, 691, 2007 068 306, ANMT.

¹⁷ *L'Intransigeant*, no. 19426, January 2, 1933, 4, NUMP-5357, BnF.

¹⁸ Paul Bairoch, *Victoires et déboires, Histoire économique et sociale du monde du XVI^e siècle à nos jours*, vol. 3 (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 59.

¹⁹ Froissart, *L'impasse du sport rural. La Seine-et-Oise de 1881 à 1939*, 40.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Vincent Bouvet and Gérard Durozoi, *Paris. 1919-1939. Arts, vie et culture* (Paris: Hazan, 2009); Mousset, 'La Fédération française de tennis de table (FFTT) et ses clubs affiliés à l'épreuve du pouvoir (1927-1932)'.

²² Ping-Pong Club Rennais, *Journal officiel de la République française. Lois et décrets (JORF)*, no. 15, January 18 and 19, 1932, 688, NUMP-5314, BnF; Ping-Pong Club Lavallois, *JORF*, no. 31, February 5, 1933, 1288, BnF; Ping-Pong Club Amiénois, *JORF*, no. 34, February 10, 1932, 1536, BnF; International Ping-Pong Club de Lille, *JORF*, no. 250, October 25, 1933, 10932, BnF; Ping-Pong Club de Reims, *JORF*, no. 83, April 7, 1933, 3636, BnF; Ping-Pong Club Bisontin, *JORF*, no. 101, April 29, 1933, 4515, BnF; Ping-Pong Club Clermontois, *JORF*, no. 232, October 3 and 4, 1932, 10759, BnF; Ping-Pong Croix-Roussien à Lyon, *JORF*, no. 48, February 25, 1933, 1902, BnF; Ping-Pong Club Chambérien, *JORF*, no. 29, February 3, 1933, 1215, BnF; Ping-Pong Club de Nice, *JORF*, no. 287, December 9, 1932, 12712, BnF; Ping-Pong Club de Marseille, *JORF*, no. 265, November 12 and 13, 1932, 11911, BnF; Ping-Pong Club de Montpellier, *JORF*, no. 85, April 10, 1932, 3936, BnF; Toulouse Ping-Pong Club, *JORF*, no. 76, March 30, 1933, 3228, BnF; Bacalan Ping-Pong Club, *JORF*, no. 182, August 5, 1932, 8615, BnF; Ping-Pong Club Rochelais, *JORF*, no. 215, September 14, 1932, 10095, BnF.

²³ Mousset, 'La mode du ping-pong de 1901 à 1939' (See Table no. 14 in the appendix, 57).

²⁴ Jean-Marc Silvain, 'Le développement du sport féminin en France dans l'entre-deux-guerres : l'exemple du tennis de table (1927-1939)', in *Histoire du sport féminin : histoire et identité*, eds., Pierre Arnaud and Thierry Terret, vol. 1 (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996), 187.

²⁵ *L'Intransigeant*, no. 19500, January 7, 1933, 4, BnF.

²⁶ Ping-Pong Club Quevillais, *JORF*, no. 51, March 1, 1933, 2071, BnF; La Pédale de Grand-Quevilly, *PV de la FFTT*, March 21, 1933 meeting, FFTT; Ping-Pong Club Dévillois, *JORF*, no. 51, March 1, 1933, 2071, BnF;

Ping-Pong Club Barentinois, *PV de la FFTT*, February 18, 1933 meeting, FFTT; Ping-Pong Club Elbeuviers, *PV de la FFTT*, March 14, 1933 meeting, FFTT; Ping-Pong Club Bernayen, *Ibid.*

²⁷ Gaugain, *Jeux, gymnastique et sport dans le Var*, 273.

²⁸ Froissart, *L'impasse du sport rural*, 101.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *L'Intransigeant*, no. 19408, December 15, 1932, 4, BnF.

³¹ They are the Racing Club de Rouen, the Rouen Étudiants Club, the Football Club Rouennais, the Ping-Pong Rouennais, the Club Nautique et Athlétique de Rouen, the Raquette Rouennaise and the Sporting Club Rouennais. *PV de la FFTT*, October 7, 1932 meeting; *PV de la FFTT*, October 19, 1932 meeting; *PV de la FFTT*, October 22, 1932 meeting; *PV de la FFTT*, November 7, 1932 meeting; probably from Rouen insofar as the Club Nautique et Athlétique de R. is mentioned by the Normandy committee. *PV de la FFTT*, November 28, 1932 meeting; *PV de la FFTT*, April 22, 1933 meeting, FFTT; *Ping-Pong de Saint-Sever*, *JORF*, no. 240, October 13, 1933, 10556, BnF; *Raquette Saint-Sever*, *JORF*, no. 299, December 19, 1933, 1273, BnF.

³² Jean-Marc Silvain, 'Naissance et diffusion du tennis de table dans le département du nord : Itinéraires d'une contagion (1932-1939)', in *Le sport et ses espaces, XIX^e - XX^e siècles*, eds., Pierre Arnaud and Thierry Terret (Paris: Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 1998), 159.

³³ Froissart, 'sport populaire' de Seine-et-Oise, 46.

³⁴ Mousset, 'La Fédération française de tennis de table (FFTT) et ses clubs affiliés à l'épreuve du pouvoir (1927-1932)'; Christian Pociello, 'Nouvelles approches', in *Sports et Société. Approche socio-culturelle des pratiques*, ed. Christian Pociello (Paris: Vigot, 1981), 13.

³⁵ *Le Populaire*, no. 3264, January 15, 1932, 3, BnF; *Le Populaire*, no. 3551, October 28, 1932, 3, BnF; *Le Populaire*, no. 3570, November 16, 1932, 5, BnF; *Le Populaire*, no. 3683, March 9, 1933, 5, BnF.

³⁶ *Le Populaire*, no. 3267, January 18, 1932, 1, BnF.

³⁷ *Le Populaire*, no. 3358, April 18, 1932, 4, BnF; *Le Populaire*, no. 3957, December 8, 1933, 5, BnF.

³⁸ *L'Humanité*, no. 11648, November 4, 1930, 6, BnF.

³⁹ *L'Humanité*, no. 12432, December 27, 1932, 4, BnF.

⁴⁰ *Revue du tennis et du ping-pong*, *Organe officiel de la Fédération française de tennis de table*, no. 62, February 15, 1932, 24, JO.02.32, Musée Tennis Fédération Française de Tennis archives (hereafter MTFFT), Paris, France.

⁴¹ *Revue du tennis et du ping-pong*, *Organe officiel de la Fédération française de tennis de table*, no. 83, March 1, 1933, 26, JO.02.33, MTFFT; The club was not supposed to be open year-round. An extract from article 9 of the statutes deposited at the Prefecture of Police under n°169.143 of the Ping Pong Club de France, 34 rue Marbeuf, Paris, undated, date estimated in the year 1932 from the attached letter from the service for the rights of the poor of the general administration of the Assistance publique de Paris. 762 Foss 15, Pochette 1001 à 1030, Pochette 1013 Ping Pong Club de France. Assistance Publique – Hôpitaux de Paris (hereafter AP-HP), Paris, France.

⁴² Marc Alfred, *L'évolution des prix depuis cent ans* (Paris: PUF, 1966), 126.

⁴³ Bourgeois clubs such as the Stade Français, the Racing Club de France or the Société Athlétique de la Villa Primrose de Bordeaux, all affiliated to the FFTT. *Revue du tennis et du ping-pong*, *Organe officiel de la Fédération française de lawn-tennis et de la Fédération française de tennis de table*, no. 88, May 15, 1933, 33, JO.02.33, MTFFT.

⁴⁴ Froissart, 'sport populaire' de Seine-et-Oise, 46.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Declaration of Ping-Pong Club Versaillais, October 27, 1932, 6M 45 Versailles, P à St, Feuillet Associations Sportives, Ping-Pong Club Versaillais, Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines departmental archives (hereafter SQEYDA), France.

⁴⁷ Gaugain, *Jeux, gymnastique et sport dans le Var*, 285.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ 'Article 7', *Déclaration des statuts du Ping-Pong Club Versaillais*, October 27, 1932, 6M 45 Versailles, P à St, Feuillet Associations Sportives, Ping-Pong Club Versaillais, SQEYDA.

⁵⁰ Claude Willard, 'Les couches populaires urbaines (1914-1950)', in *Histoire économique et sociale de la France, 1914-1950*, eds., Braudel Fernand and Labrousse Ernest, series 4, vol. 2 (Paris: PUF, 1980), 913.

⁵¹ Thomas Piketty, *Les hauts revenus en France au XX^e siècle, inégalités et redistributions, 1901-1998* (Paris: Grasset et Fasquelle, 2001), 679; Froissart, 'sport populaire' de Seine-et-Oise, 173; Autobiography of Alexandre Agopoff, *Souvenirs*, 1997, AGO. AGO. 97, FFTT.

⁵² Julien Sorez, 'Du terrain à la buvette : diffusion du football et contrôle social en région parisienne durant l'entre-deux-guerres', *Le Mouvement Social* 238, no. 1 (2012): 67.

⁵³ *L'Intransigeant*, no. 19469, February 15, 1933, 5, BnF; *L'Intransigeant*, no. 19453, January 30, 1933, 7, BnF. The Ping-Pong Club de Paris was recorded twice in *L'Intransigeant* list. So, it was decided to remove it. The

cafes/restaurants have been included in the restaurant group. The other establishments most likely refer to sports associations.

⁵⁴ *L'Intransigeant*, no. 19430, January 6, 1933, 4, BnF; *L'Intransigeant*, no. 19434, January 11, 1933, 5, BnF.

⁵⁵ *L'Intransigeant*, no. 19473, February 19, 1933, 9, BnF; *L'Intransigeant*, no. 19561, May 18, 1933, 4, BnF.

⁵⁶ '4141', Journal officiel de la République française, Débats parlementaires, Chambre des députés, 2nd session of June 22, 1933, 3031, NUMP-10144, BnF.

⁵⁷ 'Chapitre VI, Billards publics ou privés, Article 108', *JORF*, no. 2, January 2, 3 and 4, 1927, 167, BnF.

⁵⁸ Emmanuelle Burgaud, 'La taxation du plaisir comme impôt d'après-guerre : la taxe sur les billards', *Revue historique de droit français et étranger* 84, no. 1 (2006) : 87-102.

⁵⁹ *L'Intransigeant*, no. 19354, October 22, 1932, 11, BnF.

⁶⁰ Revue du tennis et du ping-pong, Organe officiel de la Fédération française de lawn-tennis et de la Fédération française de tennis de table, no. 97, October 1, 1933, 22, JO.02.33, MTFFT; Revue du tennis et du ping-pong, Organe officiel de la Fédération française de lawn-tennis et de la Fédération française de tennis de table, no. 94, August 15, 1933, 28, JO.02.33, MTFFT.

⁶¹ Luc Bihl-Willette, *Des tavernes aux bistrots, Une histoire des cafés* (Lausanne : L'Âge d'Homme, 1997), 180; Thierry Fillaut, *Les Bretons et l'alcool (XIX^e-XX^e siècle)* (Rennes: École Nationale de la Santé Publique, 1991), 210.

⁶² Anne-Marie Sohn, 'Entre deux Guerres, Les rôles féminins en France et en Angleterre', in *Histoire des femmes en Occident*, ed. Françoise Thébaud (Paris: Perrin, 2002), 170.

⁶³ Jean-Marc Silvain, 'Le développement du sport féminin en France dans l'entre-deux-guerres: l'exemple du tennis de table (1927-1939)', in *Histoire du sport féminin : histoire et identité*, eds., Pierre Arnaud and Thierry Terret, vol. 1 (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996), 185-98.

⁶⁴ Illustration of Tich-tennis, Revue du tennis et du ping-pong, Organe officiel de la Fédération française de lawn-tennis et de la Fédération française de tennis de table, no. 89, June 1, 1933, 29, JO.02.33, MTFFT.

⁶⁵ *L'Intransigeant*, no. 19469, February 15, 1933, 5, BnF.

⁶⁶ Sarah Howard, *Les images de l'alcool en France, 1915-1942* (Paris : CNRS, 2006), 92.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁶⁸ *L'Intransigeant*, no. 19674, September 9, 1933, 10, BnF.

⁶⁹ *L'Intransigeant*, no. 19453, January 30, 1933, 7, BnF.

⁷⁰ *L'Intransigeant*, no. 19524, April 11, 1933, 10, BnF.

⁷¹ Raymond Verger, *Ping-Pong* (Paris: Grasset, 1932), 13, unquoted, FFFT.

⁷² *L'Auto*, no. 11774, March 11, 1933, B, NUMP-16168, BnF.

⁷³ *Le Journal des Voyages*, September, 1933, 1, NUMP-3980, BnF.

⁷⁴ Despite the methodological difficulties evoked by Jacques Defrance, it is possible to say that the 1920s and 1930s were a period of growth for sport societies. Defrance, 'Le sport français dans l'entre-deux-guerres', 86-94; Wahl, *Les archives du football*, 266.

⁷⁵ *Annuaire de la FFFT*, 1950, 11, FFFT.ANN.50, FFFT.

⁷⁶ Only the figures for the 1938/1939 season increased slightly and remained more or less the same until 1939 (594 clubs). *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Jean-Pierre Augustin, 'L'évolution géopolitique des patronages catholiques : 1898-1998', in *Sport, culture et religion. Les patronages catholiques (1898-1998)*, eds., Gérard Cholvy and Yvon Tranvouez (Brest: Centre de Recherche Bretonne et Celtique, 1999), 72.

⁷⁸ *Les Jeunes*, no. 709, December 1, 1935, 659, 2007 068 308, ANMT; *Les Jeunes*, no. 63, December 2, 1934, 675, 2007 068 307, ANMT.

⁷⁹ *Les Jeunes*, no. 843, November 27, 1938, 1, 2007 068 310, ANMT.

⁸⁰ Serge Bernstein and Pierre Milza, eds., *Histoire de la France au XX^e siècle, 1930-1958*, vol. 2 (Paris: Perrin, 2009), 177; Paul Bairoch, *Victoires et déboires, Histoire économique et sociale du monde du XVI^e siècle à nos jours*, vol. 3 (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 78.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 80; Bernstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XX^e siècle*, 178.

⁸² La Revue du Ping-Pong, Organe officiel de la Fédération française de tennis de table, no. 2, October 20, 1935, FFFT.

⁸³ *L'Alerte*, no. 4, January, 1934, Lyon, NUMP-5177, BnF.

⁸⁴ Jean-Marc Silvain, *Almanach du tennis de table* (Montrouge: FFFT, 1997), 85; There is no way to confirm its status vis-à-vis the National Sport Committee in its minutes. Only a subsequent study of the NSC minutes or their correspondence could confirm this.

⁸⁵ *Courrier de l'Administration générale de l'Assistance Publique à Paris, Service du Droit des Pauvres*, October 23, 1934, 771 Foss 2, Pochette CLO-COU, Pochette 298 Cocal, 16 rue d'Orléans, à Neuilly, AP-HP.

⁸⁶ Gaugain, *Jeux, gymnastique et sport dans le Var*, 285; *Courrier de l'Administration générale de l'Assistance Publique à Paris, Service du Droit des Pauvres*, October 23, 1934, AP-HP; 'Impôt d'État sur les billards', *JORF*, no. 173, July 25, 1934, 7505, BnF.

⁸⁷ Classification of the head offices of associations declaring the practice of ping-pong or table tennis in the registration of associations from 1933 to 1935. Dans le *JORF*, BnF.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Gaugain, *Jeux, gymnastique et sport dans le Var*, 286.

⁹⁰ These years are the only ones that exist to study the number of tables within the FFTT clubs. Some clubs may have declared only one table in order to pay as little as possible in affiliation fees which were calculated according to the number of tables; *Revue du tennis et du ping-pong, Organe officiel de la Fédération de tennis de table*, no. 80, December 15, 1932, 29, 4P°P165, Musée National du Sport archives, Nice, France; Until the *Revue du tennis et du ping-pong, Organe officiel de la Fédération française de lawn-tennis et de la Fédération de tennis de table*, no. 88, May 15, 1933, 29, JO.02.33, MTFFT.

⁹¹ However, activity within the USSGT and the FST did not decrease immediately after it became fashionable. For example, the ping-pong commission of the FST drew up a winter calendar during the winter of 1934 with an opening tournament and a regional team championship following the initiatives of the *Club Les Lilas*. *L'Humanité*, no. 13080, October 8, 1934, 6, NUMP-1120, BnF; Statutes 1934-1935, Printed version of the Constitutive Charter of the FSGT, Text adopted by the National and respective Congresses of the USSGT and the FST, November 10 and 11, 1934, unspecified date, 2009 015 001, ANMT.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ *Le Populaire*, no. 5275, July 25, 1937, 8, NUMP-6515, BnF; *L'Humanité*, no. 14007, April 23, 1937, 6, BnF.

⁹⁴ *L'Humanité*, no. 14000, April 16, 1937, 4, BnF; *L'Humanité*, no. 14348, April 1, 1938, 4, BnF; *Le Populaire*, no. 5888, April 1, 1939, 5, BnF.

⁹⁵ *Le Populaire*, no. 5161, March 30, 1937, 6, BnF; It mentions women's categories, juniors, 1st series players, 2nd series players, and probably 3rd series players. However, it is difficult to know whether all these competitions actually took place. *L'Humanité*, no. 14319, March 3, 1938, 7, BnF; *Le Populaire*, no. 5871, March 15, 1939, 7 BnF; *Le Populaire*, no. 5073, January 1, 1937, 6, BnF.

⁹⁶ *L'Humanité*, no. 14007, April 23, 1937, 6, BnF; *Le Populaire*, no. 5177, April 15, 1937, 8, BnF.

⁹⁷ Nicolas Ksis, *La FSGT, Du sport rouge au sport populaire* (Paris: la ville brûle/Sport et plein air- FSGT, 2014), 46-7.

⁹⁸ Booklet printout *L'Action Laïque*, no. 49, June-July-August, 1937, 20140057/9, Boîte 5, Feuillet Loisirs sportifs, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine national archives (ANPSSS), France.

⁹⁹ Ibid.; Ping-Pong, *Organe officiel de la Fédération française du tennis de table*, Supplément à la *Revue du Ping-Pong*, no. 5, December 5, 1935, FFTT.

¹⁰⁰ Booklet printout *L'Action Laïque*, December, 1937, 94, 20140057/34, Boîte 30, Feuillet UFOLEP, compétitions diverses 1933-1938, ANPSS; *La Revue du Ping-Pong*, no. 4, 1938, 2, FFTT; *La Revue du Ping-Pong*, no. 7, 1938, 11, FFTT; *La Revue du Ping-Pong, Organe officiel de la Fédération française de tennis de table*, no. 1, 1939, 3, FFTT.

¹⁰¹ Froissart, *L'impasse du sport rural*, 101.

¹⁰² Gaugain, *Jeux, gymnastique et sport dans le Var*, 286. This hypothesis was also proposed by Silvain, 'Naissance et diffusion du tennis de table dans le département du nord', 168.

¹⁰³ *PV de la FFTT*, June 25, 1938 board meeting; *La Revue du Ping-Pong*, no. 7, 1938, 16, FFTT; *PV de la FFTT* April 2, 1939 board meeting, FFTT.

¹⁰⁴ Wray Vamplew, 'Theories and Typologies: A Historical Exploration of the Sports Club in Britain', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 14, no. 30 (2013): 1569-1585.