

I spent my summer over 350 km south east of Beijing, at the Chinese National Training Centre in Zheng ding. It has become the epicentre of TT development in China for both senior national teams and hundreds of aspiring younger players who board there. So the training centre hosts the closed training camps of the Chinese national team preparing for major events such as Olympics. There are 4 Olympic standard halls, a gym and a track and field arena as well as athletes apartments and a dining hall.

Once there, the program in the sweltering 40°C heat is simple, the groups of tables are allocated according to level, with the better players assigned to group 1 and so on down. Each day consisting of a minimum of 6 hours practice divide into a morning session (single ball practice) and an afternoon one (multiball practice), which is then followed up with another 1 and a half hour session of serve receive practice before bed every other day. The training itself is very intense and highly disciplined. While training in 40°C for 7 hours a day isn't everyone's idea of a good summer, this was a great experience for me as it allowed me to train a lot at a very high level in the country that through its methods has dominated the sport of table tennis over the past 50 years, with most Olympic and world champions coming from China.

I'm fortunate to have the structure of the Ad Astra Academy throughout the academic year as it allows me to travel abroad to tournaments and trainings camps without worrying about missing college, or the costs of the trips as the academy's financial support is very helpful. The academy's support over the past 2 years has been great and I am very happy to be a part of such a professional organisation.



(main hall where the Chinese national team have their closed training camps in the lead up to major events)

(view from just outside the centre)

