



Mike Hung enjoys a game of ping pong at UNCW's Sharkey's Game Room.

Nolan Dean | THE SEAHAWK

ARE YOU READY FOR SOME... Pingpong?

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Sports fans were truly able to sit back and enjoy this past weekend. There were great baseball games, the US Open tennis tournament, WNBA playoffs, the NASCAR final regular season race and of course, the kickoff to the NFL season.

One sport was a bit overshadowed during this truly unique and exciting sports weekend: ping-pong.

Sharkey's Game Room in association with Theta Chi Fraternity held the first inaugural Open Invitational pingpong tournament

this past Sunday at the Warwick Center Ball Room. With over 80 applicants, this shaped up to be a tournament to remember.

The tournament started at 7 p.m. and pitted friend against friend, and experts and non-experts alike, in search of a true pingpong champion.

Zane Whitner, a junior in Theta Chi Fraternity, was the creator of this inaugural tournament, and felt a competition of this sort was needed at UNCW.

"There isn't much love for the pingpong athlete," Whitner said. "We're hoping to have some fun, see great pingpong, and enjoy the sport for what it is. I think we succeeded."

Opponents squared off in a best-of-three, single-elimination format on one of the three tables to determine who moved on. After nearly three-and-a-half hours it was down to the final two, Bart Wilson, a junior from Evans, Ga. and Brian Ford, a freshman from Greensboro, N.C.

Much trash talking and good-hearted fun ensued between these two competitors, as they were clearly the best of the tournament. In the best-of-seven final, Ford emerged victorious, four games to two. The series was tied two games apiece when Ford won games five and six each by a two-point margin.

"The finals could have gone either way," Ford said. "It was a

really good competition and a really good tournament. I'm going to try to win this thing all four years."

The real winner was the sport of table tennis. Many people have tables in their homes, or enjoy playing when they get the chance, but there are few opportunities to play in a tournament or competition of this sort. Players are hoping that the game will catch on, and more people can get a chance to play.

"We are going to have this tournament years and semesters down the road," Whitner said. "There are more pingpong players out there than you think, hopefully events like this will get even more people interested."