

Will Head U. S. Team in London

Tibor Hazi Returning to Scene Of Painful Table Tennis Loss

By Rod Thomas

The crowd of 20,000 sat in perplexed silence as Tibor Hazi, the Hungarian table tennis player, lay sprawled on the floor of the Empire Sports Arena in London. In a semifinal match of the 1938 world championships, Hazi lunged for the pellet hit by a fellow countryman, Richard Bergman, and lost his footing.

Somehow, both ankles were injured. The arena physician bandaged them, and Hazi resumed his place at the table. He was leading, two games to one. Two days before, he had beaten Bergman. On several other occasions he had vanquished Bergman. Now he seemed a cinch, but for the mishap.

It would be pleasing to report that Hazi limped on to victory. Instead, he made only token resistance. He stood there and "took it," as we say over here, rather than permit a semifinal match in so important a tournament to go by default. It was a sporting gesture typical of Hazi, we've learned. Bergman went on to the title.

Now an American.

Today, at 42, Tibor Hazi, a clean-cut man who is a little on the stocky side, is an American with a well-earned citizenship. He is an accountant for the I. S. Turover lumber concern, with headquarters at 4725 Bethesda avenue, Bethesda, Md.

Next month Hazi will return to the Empire Sports Arena. At this late date he is not in quest of the world singles championship. As it turned out, he lost his best chance for the big title on that memorable night in 1938. But he's won an estimated 500 tournaments.

Only last week end Hazi teamed with Bernard Bukiet of Chicago to win the national doubles in Cleveland. He won the senior singles, was a semifinalist in the open singles and, with Mrs. Leah Neuberger of New York, placed third in mixed doubles. Not long before, Hazi teamed with Sol Schiff of New York to win the Eastern men's doubles and with Mrs. Neuberger to prevail in the mixed doubles. He won the senior singles and was third in the open.

Captains U. S. Team.

This time Hazi goes to London for the world championships as playing captain of the United States team, which will compete April 6-14 against 37 other countries for the Lady



TIBOR HAZI.

Swaythling Cup, comparable to the Davis Cup in lawn tennis.

On the United States squad besides Hazi are Dick Miles and John Somael of New York City, Bukiet, Mrs. Neuberger and Pauline Robinson of New York City, and Mildred Shahian of Chicago.

Seven times the name of Tibor Hazi appears on the Swaythling Cup as a member of the Hungarian team. If the United States, which is a dark horse, triumphs this time, he will become the only player ever to gain the distinction as a citizen of two countries.

Hazi came to the United States in 1939 for a six-month tour at the behest of Morris Bassford of Washington. Bassford was then president of the United States Table Tennis Association. Tibor and his wife, Magda, also a world-famous table tennis performer, came over on a year's visa. Magda, by the way, was Hungary's lawn tennis champion.

Trouble Getting Visa

To obtain the visa, Hazi stood in line at Budapest every day for a week. Trouble was brewing in Europe, with thousands of Hungarians attempting to cross the seas. A member of the United States consulate staff plucked him out of the line.

Came the war and Hazi was stranded, if that's the word, in this country. Hazi spent three years, 1943 to 1946, in the Army, mostly in the China-Burma-India theater as an Air Force sergeant.

In an exhibition match in Washington, Hazi teamed with another Hungarian, Laszlo Bel-

THE EVENING STAR

Washington, D. C.

FRIDAY, MARCH 26, 1954

lak, against the American pair of Schiff and Izzy Bellis. On this occasion Tibor's personality as well as playing ability attracted Col. George H. Foster, an Army officer who headed the District Table Tennis Association. Col. Foster persuaded the young man to establish himself here. During off hours while working as an accountant for the Charles H. Tompkins Co., builders, he directed a table tennis establishment which Beryl English ran in conjunction with the Columbia Bowling Alleys. In 1949 Hazi, now Tibor Hoffman, was employed by Turover.

Very Happy Here.

In 15 years as residents of Washington, Tibor and Mrs. Hoffman have been "very, very happy."

In the play room of their well-appointed home at 8417 Farrell drive, Chevy Chase, is a table tennis court. Mrs. Hoffman, who retired from competition in 1943—she gave many exhibitions at Walter Reed Hospital during the war—furnishes Tibor with his only practice opposition.

Together they possess hundreds of trophies. In one room, where many of the trophies are grouped, I asked Tibor:

"What in this room do you most prize?"

With an infectious grin, he produced his Army discharge.

