

Ping pong in a rage

By KWAME LAURENCE

A TWO-TIME national junior table tennis champion and currently ranked seventh among the men in Trinidad and Tobago. That's Terry Corbin!

At just 19, this Solo Crusaders player is certainly one of the country's brightest green table prospects. But there is so much more to the young man. In fact, table tennis is the least of his concerns...particularly at this time of the year.

Corbin modestly describes himself as an upcoming young player with Phase II Pan Groove. But others are able to be more objective and think of him as nothing less than a crackshot tenor player.

In 1990, the multi-talented teenager started learning the art on a friend's instrument. In 1993, he made his Panorama debut with Humming Bird Pan Groove. The following year, he went to Phase II with arranger Ray Holman. And within two years, he has worked his way to the stage side.

The return of ace arranger and idol Len "Boogsie" Sharpe to the Woodbrook band means the world to Corbin. In an effort to help Phase II to another national title, he promised to be at his entertaining best in the frontline at Saturday's finals.

"I'll turn my pan upside down, put it over my head, kneel down, roll on the ground and do whatever else I feel to on the day," he excitedly explained.

Going into the finals, he was confident that his band would dethrone Amoco Renegades.

"We have the better music and are holding back something special, so right now I'm looking forward to my first Panorama victory. But win, lose or draw, the crowd will love what they hear and will be thoroughly entertained. Until Saturday night, though, we're just minding our business."

It is now history that Renegades beat Phase II into second spot in the finals.

But with that business now behind him, Corbin can focus on another pressing matter—next month's Silver Bowl Table Tennis Tournament.

In 1987, while at Richmond Street Boys, he was introduced to the sport by big brother Anthony, a former national player. At Mucurapo Junior Secondary and then at Belmont Boys Secondary, his game developed from strength to strength until he became the top Under-17 player in the country.

However, at Belmont he discovered that he was very talented in yet another field—dancing.

Corbin first took to the stage in 1991, at a concert at St Martin's Girls High School, as a member of the hip-hop group Twisted Ego. In 1993, he was not only dancing but was choreographing as well. The group reached the semi-finals of *Party Time* that year. In 1994, he was the choreographer for Raw Power. Working on dance ideas with the group's executive director Donovan Smart, he came up with a routine that was again good enough for a *Party Time* semi-final spot.

Rasta Phil, a Trinidadian artiste who lived in the United States for a number of years, saw his work on *Party Time* and was impressed. Phil approached Corbin and Raw Power to choreograph and dance for him. However, it was a challenge since reggae dance and not hip-hop was what was required. He successfully took it up and as a result the group got valuable exposure on TTT's *Dateline* programme and performed at venues throughout T&T last year.

Unfortunately, the man behind the fine work was not around to witness the fruits of his labour. Or should I say fortunately?

At the time, Corbin was on a six-week tour to Japan with Trinidad and Tobago Showboat, an African Dance Company. He had joined the group a mere two months before they left for the Far East.

From Japan, Showboat moved onto Florida, USA, where they spent two weeks performing at Disney World's Epcot Centre.

"The response in Japan and Florida was tremendous. Even my colleagues were surprised. African dance was new to me, so to see me do all those difficult things so easily shocked them somewhat. There I was, limboing low and that sort of thing. But as a true entertainer, once you put your mind to it, anything is possible."

Of course, talent helps as well. And Corbin is certainly not short on this crucial ingredient.

When it comes to pan, table tennis, dancing and acting as well, he's got the goods.

On his return from the two-month Japan/Florida tour, he and Keisha Stewart worked on producing a pantomime routine for Raw Power. They performed at the Upper Level Club and the Queen's Park Savannah Flea Market. Of course, choreographer Corbin was also up on stage, playing his part in the dramatised dance routine.

So, where does the youngster find the time to do it all?

"I have to time-table my life and stick to it! Every season has a reason. Carnival is for pan. Afterwards, I'll concentrate on dancing and acting. As for the table tennis, whenever a tournament is coming up I take a knock and then go out there and give of my best."

Corbin's talent does not quite earn him a living. Some money, yes, but not enough. So, he is in search of a job. Though being employed would allow him even less time to do all that he does, he insists that he would not have to drop any of his pursuits.

"It's just a matter of organising your time."

If he is to realise his many ambitions and emulate his



ENTERTAINER EXTRAORDINAIRE

TERRY CORBIN (left) gives his all, and then some, for Phase II Pan Groove at Saturday's Panorama

to be a pro actor making his indelible mark on the Hollywood scene.

Corbin is also hoping that some day his name would mean as much to the pan-loving world as "Boogsie"...as both player and arranger.

On the green table, he admires reigning Olympic champion Jan-Ove Waldner the most. However, gold at Atlanta '96 or Sydney 2000 are not among his ambitions.

"I just want to play, enjoy myself and entertain the people."

And what an entertainer he is! And he knows it.

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finals at the Queen's Park Savannah.

Photo: **ROBERT CODALLO**

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"I just went for all my shots, shocking Darceuil and everyone else."

And then, playing for Crusaders at the National Championships, in a team match against Arima Hawks at the Jean Pierre Sports Complex last year, he was engaged in a thriller with Wendell King. He went after everything. The result, a crucial win that helped his team to the semi-final round...and a hip injury that came at the end of an amazing rally during which Corbin, many metres off the

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If he is to realise his many ambitions and emulate his many idols, he has his work cut out. The big Michael Jackson fan wants to be a professional hip-hop dancer and choreographer. He wants to create dances, originating from hip-hop, but yet still original Terry Corbin creations...dances with the TC stamp, dances that the world will see on BET someday.

Like Bruce Willis, he wants

to be a pro actor making his indelible mark on the Hollywood scene.

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"On the table, I have one thing to do. I don't think I must win or I can't handle losing. I simply say to myself 'Terry, you must flash'. I want to make the sport more interesting for spectators. I have a part to play in bringing the crowds back to table tennis. If I lose and the crowd is happy, I am happy. They may say 'tough luck Terry, better luck next time'. My response would be 'don't worry about me, I'm just pleased to entertain you'."

Twice, Corbin gave table tennis fans much more than they had bar-

gained for and they loved it. At just 15, he battled tooth and nail with two-time Caribbean Men's Singles champion Lionel Darceuil in a singles tournament at the Rienzi Complex in Couva, eventually losing the decisive third game 21-19.

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"Had it not been for that hip injury I would have won the singles. I was training hard and was stinging.

But at least I entertained the crowd immensely against King."

Do not think, though, that he will always be just an entertaining "also-ran". He says that he "will be working very hard" at becoming the national champion in 1996.

But before that, he has next month's Silver Bowl to think about. His pick for that tournament is clubmate Anthony Brown, the newly-crowned National "A1" Champion.

"Tony's a great player and now that he has the added confidence of the 'A1' crown he's virtually unbeatable."

However, he quickly added that there was one player who could stop Brown's march to the Silver Bowl title, and that he was one of the parties in this dialogue. Without hesitation, I eliminated myself and solved the riddle.

I don't know about you, but I'm not about to doubt this extraordinarily talented entertainer.