Ping Pong Time!

Ricky played ping pong. It was his favorite sport. Ping Pong was also known as Table Tennis, because it was a lot like regular tennis. It was a lot of fun to play with friends or to play competitively.

Ping Pong requires a table, a net, two paddles, and a ball. To play, you hold the 6x6 inch paddle in your hand and use it to hit the ball back and forth. The object of the game is to not let the ball bounce on your side of the table more than once. You must hit the ball, having it bounce and touch your side of the table only once, go over the net, and hit the other side of the table at least once. If it hits either side of the table more than once, a point is scored. You don’t want it to bounce twice on your side or you give up a point! The same thing happens if you hit the ball, it bounces once on the opponent’s side, and they can’t return the ball. That is another way to score. Sometimes you hit it just right so they can’t hit it back, and, like in tennis, you get a point.

Ping Pong is a very fast sport usually played one-on-one, but also played in teams of two. The paddles in table tennis actually have been recorded to move at faster speeds than regular tennis! There are tricks to hitting the ball to give it spin, which makes it move less predictably, making it harder for the opponent to return the ball to your side of the table. Each side of the paddle might have a different kind of rubber on it, allowing you to hit with or without spin. The paddle itself is much smaller than tennis or badminton rackets, and it’s about the size of a spread adult hand with a handle only a few inches long. The ping pong ball is very light, probably the lightest ball used in any sport. It is smaller than a golf ball, too. It is about the size of one of those big gumballs.

Games are played up to the score of 11, and you have to win by at least 2 points. Every two serves, the serve changes, up until 10 points have been scored by at least one player, at which point the serve changes with every point. Unlike regular tennis, you can score a point even if you’re not serving. Whoever wins the rally, the back-and-forth returns of the ping pong ball, gets the point. Players usually play sets of matches, as many as 7. The winner is the one who wins the most of the matches out of the set, like 4 out of 7, or 3 out of 5.
Ricky loved ping pong. He practiced all the time. He liked to flip up half of the table, since it folded in the middle, and practice returning the ball against himself, since it bounced right back at him. He could get going really fast! He played everyone he knew: his father, his mother, his brother, and his friends.

Ricky wished everyone loved his sport as much as he did. Seeing the tiny white ball whiz back and forth and bounce off the dark green table was a lot of fun for him. Even the sound it made as it bounced was fun. In his mind, everyone should play some table tennis now and then. It was even an Olympic sport, and man could they play!

How about you? Are you going to try to watch or play ping pong?
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Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What sport does Tara play?
   A. Pickle ball
   B. Tennis
   C. Badminton
   D. Ping Pong

2. What do you have to score to win a game of ping pong?
   A. 11
   B. 12
   C. 21
   D. 25

3. About how big is the ping pong paddle?
   A. Like a tennis racket
   B. Like a badminton racket
   C. Like an adult’s hand
   D. Like a golf ball

4. TRUE OR FALSE: Ping pong balls are larger than in most sports.
   A. True
   B. False

5. TRUE OR FALSE: According to the story, ping pong is a very slow game for older people to play.
   A. True
   B. False

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