

## Guide to Short Pimples

Learn all about short pimples in table tennis. Discover how to play against short pips, whether you should be using short pips, what type of short pimples to use, and how to use them successfully.

### Short pimped rubber

By [Greg Letts](#)

**Definition:** There is no technical definition of short pimped rubber, since the [ITTF](#) considers that any rubber whose aspect ratio (= pimple height / pimple diameter) is smaller than 0.9 is simply [pimples out rubber](#), and any rubber with an aspect ratio of greater than 0.9 is [long pimped rubber](#).

Among table tennis players, short pimped rubber is considered to be pimples out rubber, with or without [sponge](#), that displays none of the characteristics of long pimped rubber. These long pimped effects are considered to be the ability to reverse the spin on the ball (to give the opponent his own spin back), and the ability to 'wobble' the [ball](#) (make the ball move unpredictably in the air).

**Also Known As:** short pips

# How to Use Short Pips Table Tennis Rubber Successfully

## Size Isn't Everything...

By [Greg Letts](#)



TSP Spectol Short Pips Table Tennis Rubber

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*Guest author Ray Arditi shares what he has learned about how to use short pips table tennis rubber successfully.*

Dear Greg,

I'm a table tennis coach, and I use [short-pips](#) (Spectol) on my backhand and [inverted](#) on my forehand. I was fortunate to train with Lily Yip, USA Team Leader, and Mr. Kim of the Sky TTC in Yongin City, S.Korea. They taught me many things about using short-pips.

1. **A more aggressive mind-set:** There is a difference in the mind-set. If you are a short-pips attacker you must be very aggressive and you must have fast hands; otherwise, the short-pips won't be suitable. Basically, you must attack close to the table because if you move away from the table your inverted opponent will overwhelm you with spin. Furthermore, you should be super-aggressive and keep [pushing](#) to a minimum. The strategy is to attack first; otherwise, your opponent will have too strong an advantage if you let him spin the first ball.
2. **"Cat and mouse" tactics:** Very effective. Usually I try to drive my opponents away from the table with penetrating backhand [drives](#). Then when they fade off the table in hopes of delivering ferocious mid-distance [loops](#), I change up with soft-blocks (similar to a [drop shot](#)) to draw them into the table. Then if they come into the table, I drive strongly to push them off the table once again.
3. **The importance of hitting, not spinning:** The first skill to learn is to hit through the ball. I snap my wrist back for power and then go straight through the ball following through with my wrist and rackethead. This produces a relatively spinless, direct kind of dead ball (that inverted players don't enjoy). Also, these shots have a low trajectory and tend to skim off the table very flatly.
4. **Importance of solid blocking skills:** I spend a lot of time practicing my basic backhand [block](#), so I'm able to block consecutive loops (also hopefully a decent percentage of smashes.) Then later you can learn the more advanced: a soft-block, knuckle ball block, punch-block, side-spin block, and chop-blocks. The short-pips chop-block is a deadly and wonderful weapon to use against mid-distance loopers.
5. **Spinning is possible, too:** A backhand loop can be produced against [underspin](#), but it's not as spinny as an inverted loop so it must be placed strategically, or it may get wiped out. Ha! Most pips-out players use the backhand loop just as an opening shot which they will follow up with powerful, spinny forehand loops.
6. **Good for serving:** Greg, I play in Korea and most of the inverted players ([penholders](#)) don't like receiving short-pips serves. The lack of spin and slower bounce, especially when kept low, seem to bother them. Many of the serves are misjudged. The high toss short-pips serves seem to get good results, especially short serves, close to the net.

7. **Excellent for hitting and smashing loops:** However, the different short-pips rubbers have different characteristics, so my experience is mainly with Spectol. Yes, Spectol in the hands of a skilled player is a loop killer.

Hope that's helpful. Keep up the good work. I enjoy your website.

Best Regards,

Ray Ardit

Sky TTC, Yong-in City, S. Korea

## Should You Play With Short Pips?

### They May be Small, But They're Dynamite!

By [Greg Letts](#)

*Forum member **Andrew Gooding** shares his thoughts on what it takes to successfully use short pimples in table tennis.*

A lot of people wonder if they should play with [short pips](#). Before I discuss this question, let me give a little background on myself. I began playing as a [shakehand](#), but soon switched to penhold style, initially as a single-sided [Japanese/Korean-style](#) player with [inverted](#) and more recently as a Chinese style penholder with short pips on the forehand and inverted on the backhand (the [RPB grip](#)). Since I switched to short pips my consistency has gone up and the quicker style and shorter stroke feels more natural, but they aren't for everyone. Keep in mind that I switched from inverted rubber and someone who is going from [long/medium pips](#) to short pips may need other adjustments.

### Why Are You Thinking About Using Short Pips?

I see people who are considering switching to short pips as falling into one of two camps. The first camp are those who are trying to cover up a weakness in [reading spin](#) and think short pips is an easy way to return serve. For this first group I don't think short pips are a very good option as short pips still react to spin and misreading say [topspin](#) to [underspin](#) will still lead to a [pop up](#) and easy [kill](#). Short pips take a good deal of concerted effort to play well and shouldn't be seen as an easy way out. They have strengths, but also some weaknesses.

The second group of those thinking of switching to short pips are those who [smash](#) rather than [loop](#) to finish the point and base their game on quickness rather than on spin. They will generally [block](#) in defense rather than backing away from the table and topspinning the ball. They will look for opportunities to add to their opponent's spin, rather than simply cancelling it. [Hitters](#), quick close to the table players and [hardbat](#) players are good candidates for short pips.

### Short Pips. Whoa! What Are They Good For?

The number one thing short pips are good at is **hitting through spin**. Take advantage of this by setting up and preparing for high balls which you should hit straight through with only enough topspin to keep them on the table. Always be ready for the high ball and keep in mind that with good timing and footwork as the ball doesn't have to be that high for a winning shot.

The second thing short pips are good at is **blocking** as they are less affected by incoming spin. If you block with short pips you'll need to open your bat (compared with inverted) and push forward. The ball will come back very flat and you can vary spin as well, putting [sidespin](#) or underspin as well as topspin. The best two

blockers in the U.S. both use short pips, [David Zhuang](#) many-time U.S. champion and Gao Jun #11 in the world. He Zhi Wen, a 43 year old short pips penhold blocker eliminated defending World Champion Werner Schlager in 2005.

A third thing short pips are good at is **serve return**. However, if you try to use short pips like either long pips or inverted you'll be disappointed. Short pips are affected by incoming spin, so you can't just stick your paddle out there (as with some long pips) to return the ball. You'll need to be more active. Conversely if you try to cancel the incoming spin (pushing a [push](#) as with inverted) that will give your opponent a relatively spinless ball that may be easy pickings.

With this in mind, what short pips are good at is **adding to spin**, so you should use this ability in your service return. Instead of pushing underspin, try [flipping](#) it. If the serve is long enough you can loop the ball by combining your stroke with the incoming underspin resulting in a surprisingly spinny ball. With sidespin, instead of simply canceling the spin, try adding to it and send back the spin for your opponent to then try to deal with.

So to sum up what short pips are good at: Hitting through spin, blocking and adding to spin. What short pips aren't so good at are generating spin, so you'll need to change your strokes and your position from the table to minimize this weakness. Strokes should use a more open racket face and be more forward. Instead of looping low balls you'll need to roll them over the net with an open racket face, so it's better to catch balls at the top of the bounce and smash them. So you can't be lazy with your feet at getting into the right position.

### **Practice With the Pips**

Serves will take some time compared with inverted, but with practice you can generate lots of spin with short pips. Just watch the former World Champion Liu Guoliang who many have called the best server ever. Keep in mind though that variation will get you more points than heavy spin alone and your goal should be to force a weak ball to follow up on versus an error.

### **Which Short Pips To Use?**

Different types of short pips will be better and worse at generating spin. Very spinny pips, like Joola Tango Ultra, Friendship 802-40, Globe 889-2, Butterfly Raystorm, Stiga Clippa and Nittaku Hammond FA act almost like inverted, particularly when they are [speedglued](#). A special category of these are what I call "sticky pips" which can provide a great deal of spin over the table, including Andro Revolution COR, Stiga Radical and Dawei 388. However these will also react more to spin.

Other short pips like Friendship 799, Butterfly Speedy P.O. and TSP Spectol have smaller pips optimized for hitting through spin, blocking and adding to spin and will be less forgiving of "inverted-type" strokes. They do give a flatter ball and more spin variation than the first group. Some short pips are narrow, hard and stiff, and act almost like [medium pips](#), with some spin returning properties like Double Happiness 651, Spintech Stealth and Andro Logo.

### **Be a Sig Softie (When it Comes to Choosing Sponge)**

Whichever pips you choose, keep in mind Wang Tao's suggestion to get the softest [sponge](#) possible. It will ease the transition from inverted rubber greatly. 1.5-1.8mm are standard sponge thicknesses for short pips, anything more than 2.0mm is overkill and will hinder your blocking more than help your spin and speed. [Blade](#) speed plays a bigger role than sponge thickness with short pips. Most players will use a harder and faster blades, either a 7 ply wood or a [carbon blade](#).

### **Conclusion**

If you live to loop winners 10 feet behind the table and bend them around the net with vicious sidespin, don't even bother with short pips as you'll never be able to do this effectively. Likewise if you want vicious spin on your serves and pushes, short pips aren't the way to go. Of course if you play short pips on one side you'll retain those options on the other one. If you like the speed, rather than the spin game short pips are worth a try. They will take some time and effort to play with effectively, so don't look at them as a quick fix but for me they've made my game both more effective and more fun to play. And in the end, that's what counts, isn't it?

# How to Play With Short Pimples

**It's not the size, it's what you do with them that counts ...**

By [Greg Letts](#)

I've been asked a few times now to write down some tactics and suggestions for those of you out there who use [short pimped rubbers](#) when playing table tennis.

Now I would be the first to admit that I haven't had a lot of experience (well, OK - make that none!) playing competitively with short pimped rubber. [Normal rubber](#), [speed glue](#), [long](#) and [medium pips](#), and even [antispin](#) - been there and done that. But short pips - nope. I've never played a style that required the use of those little short and stubby protrusions.

Now I cannot hope to give suggestions for every single type of short pips out there, and I'm not going to try. So what I am going to do is talk about the average short pips rubber in use (quite fast, 1.5 to 2.0mm [sponge](#), with a little grip, but nothing near as spinny as an ordinary inverted rubber), and you can adjust my suggestions a little depending on how different your particular sheet of short pips is from my assumptions.

So without further ado, here are my own suggestions on how to get more out of your short pips. Short pip veterans, please feel free to [email me](#) any suggestions of your own.

## **Suggestion #1: Get a Grip**

The first thing you had better know as a short pips user is the strengths and weaknesses of the particular type of short pips that you are using. Just like inverted rubbers, there is a whole range of different types out there, ranging from very fast to very slow, and from fairly spinny (although not as spinny as most normal inverted rubbers) to virtually spinless.

If you've got a spinless type of short pips, you can pretty much forget about trying to [topspin](#) balls from below table height over the net and into your opponent's [court](#) - it just isn't going to happen in your lifetime. And if you are using something like the old Butterfly OX no sponge short pips, you are probably not going to be able to [loop](#) and hit as fast as someone with a glued up Bryce rubber.

You need to get a handle on what your own pips are capable of doing easily (your standard shots), what they can do if your technique is almost perfect (when you have more time to get ready or are in a desperate situation), and what they simply cannot do. And here's a special tip - every now and again you will hit an amazing shot with the short pips - something extra special. Don't make the mistake of thinking it is something that you should be able to do all the time, and start trying to do it in matches. Just be thankful it went on, and get back to doing what you know you can do.

## **Suggestion #2: Be On Time**

Can you remember when your mother used to tell you to get to your appointments early just in case? Well, that is pretty good advice when using short pips as well. Most of the better short pip players that I have seen hit mainly on the rise or at the top of the bounce.

Why is this the case? It's because the nature of short pips works well with this early timing.

- Short pips don't spin the ball as much as inverted rubbers, so you don't want to take the ball from a long distance away from the table when the ball has gone below net height. The only thing that will be bringing the ball down is gravity, so this will limit how hard you can hit the ball.
- Because short pips are less affected by the opponent's spin, you can safely hit through balls that would be jumping and kicking off the inverted rubber user's racket.
- Thirdly, the short pips are still pretty quick, but generally not quite as quick as inverted - so taking the ball early or at the top of the bounce gives your opponent less time to react.
- Finally, hitting at the top of the bounce allows the short pips player to get the most advantageous return angle, where he can pretty much hit directly onto the opponent's side of the table, so the net becomes less of a factor. (Note: some pips players don't hit at the top of the bounce - they hit at the same height above the net wherever possible - usually on the way up. They don't want to wait until

the ball reaches it's peak because it gives the opponent more time. This is an advanced but effective technique.)

### **Suggestion #3: Drive It Home**

Since the short pips don't generally give as much spin as inverted, most good short pips players use a [drive stroke](#) more often than a loop motion. When combined with hitting on the rise or at the top of the bounce, this allows the short pips player to hit with a lot of power, since almost all his effort is going into propelling the ball forward, instead of putting spin on the ball. This flatter and quicker stroke can be very disconcerting for any player who doesn't play often against short pips, and even very good players can find it a handful.

### **Suggestion #4: Send It Back**

Not only are most short pips relatively unaffected by the spin put on the ball by an opponent, they are also quite good at sending that spin straight back at him. As part of my research for this article (yes, I do do research from time to time!), I was watching a DVD of Peter Karlsson of Sweden play He Zhi Wen of Spain in the 2005 World Championships. It was quite interesting to watch Karlsson serving the ball with heavy [sidespin](#), only to have He Zhi Wen touch the ball back without trying to spin it himself, just allowing Karlsson's spin to keep going. The ball would often bounce sideways on Karlsson's side of the table, making life difficult for the Swede. Most inverted rubber players seem to kill the spin when returning serve in contrast, or put their own spin on the ball, so the ball rarely jumps sideways like that on the return of serve. A shot that looked so simple by He Zhi Wen actually became very effective.

### **Suggestion #5: Give It Out**

When serving, remember that your short pips can still impart a meaningful amount of spin. It's the deception and placement that are more important than just the sheer spinniness of the serve. Again, going back to He Zhi Wen vs Karlsson, He Zhi Wen was giving Karlsson all sorts of trouble with his service, using a variety of long spinny serves and short angled serves to great effect.

So don't just tap the ball over the table when serving - make the most of your opening shot.

### **Suggestion #6: Fire Up the Footwork**

In order to be able to play close to the table for maximum effect, you need to have your feet firing on all four (two?) cylinders. Getting to the ball on the rise or at the top of the bounce requires fast reactions and smooth footwork, so get up on the balls of your feet and get moving. Happy feet! Happy feet!

### **Suggestion #7: What's Your Angle?**

As mentioned earlier, the short pips rubber is less likely to be affected by spin from the opponent. The flipside of this is that it is also less able to impart spin. This means that your racket angle when hitting needs to be more precise than the average inverted rubber player. So short pips will suit the player who can execute the same stroke over and over again.

Think of it this way - the inverted rubber user is more affected by spin, and will have to use a wider variety of racket angles to hit the ball on the table. But he also has the ability to put more spin on the ball himself to counteract the opponent's spin. If he can put enough spin on the ball, he can be slightly incorrect with his racket angle and still land the shot on the table, as his heavy spin will bring the ball down safely.

The short pips player, on the other hand, is less affected by his opponent's spin. He doesn't need as many racket angles as an inverted player. But he had better get that angle correct, because he cannot spin the ball heavily to make up for any errors. He has a narrower margin of error with racket angles, but he also has less angles to worry about.

### **Suggestion #8: Keep the Change**

You may want to use your short pips in tandem with an inverted rubber or long pips on the other side, to provide extra variation. Penholders may not need to bother or want the extra weight of an inverted rubber on the backside, but I would think that a long pips with no sponge would not be a bad idea for the occasional surprise.

Most good shakehander shortpips players seem to use inverted on the forehand and the short pimples on

the backhand, and don't seem to [twiddle](#) much at all, if ever. As a twiddling defender, I would think that the odd twiddle wouldn't hurt them that much, but seeing as most of the better players are attackers, perhaps they are looking to force mistakes via their power rather than their deception. One notable exception was Teng Yi of China, who would often twiddle the bat for his service - although he did use the short pips on the forehand instead!

## **Conclusion**

That's about it from me on the subject of short pimples. I hope it's helpful to those of you out there who are looking to play a bit better with those short pips you bought. And remember, if you have any suggestions to make, or know of a good article about using short pips, please [email me](#) or post in [the forum](#) and I'll add your tips or link to the page so everyone can learn from it.