

Air Hockey Table

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Back in high school, I practically lived at the air hockey table down at the arcade. We would all meet down there after school and play until we used up all of our quarters, or we had to go home for dinner – whichever came first. Of course, it wasn't just about playing the air hockey table, but about hanging out with the gang. Everyone was there, Joe with his put on tough guy smile and soft inner layer, Susan with her stupid songs that she was always singing and that fantastic smile, Johnny always scheming and talking big... I could go on. Half a dozen of us, all crowded around the air hockey tables and just whacking the puck around.

Of course, the best times we had at that air hockey table were on Friday nights. This is the only vacant time we have because on weekends we still have to attend special classes on basic computer training. At the arcade, we would stage an informal competition, where everyone would compete with everyone and points would be tallied. Initially, it was just our gang at our favorite air hockey table. We were all pretty evenly matched, although everyone had different strengths. I was a pretty balanced all around player. Susan didn't have much power, but had tremendous accuracy, finessing the puck on the end of those delicate wrists. Joe could slam it straight into your goal so that you couldn't even see it on the way in. And Johnny? Well, Johnny was a streaky air hockey table player. He would sometimes play crappy for half an hour, and then have a streak of brilliance, where he would completely dominate everyone else. I swear, I could barely tell if that guy knew he was doing it. After a few weeks, crowds started to gather at the air hockey table to watch us. We were clearly the best players in the place, and it is always fun to watch a competition. Once or twice, I even saw someone place a bet on the outcome of the game. Soon other people were starting to ask to join our air hockey table competition, and of course we'd let them. Then we'd school them. Anyway, pretty soon the owner got wind of how much buzz this air hockey table was generating, and decided to do something with it. He made it an official arcade event, and set up Johnny – who was the best talker of all of us – to host it in exchange for free games. It turned us all, in a small way, into celebrities and made our Friday nights that much more fun.