

Cole Rothenberger Earns First National Para Table Tennis Title in Comeback Victory

GEWO USA athlete Cole Rothenberger, 18, wins his first national para table tennis title after a dramatic comeback, marking a milestone on his path to LA28.

NACOGDOCHES, TX, UNITED STATES, July 4, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Eighteen-year-old U.S. para table tennis athlete Cole Rothenberger has officially made his mark on the national stage, winning his first-ever national title at the 2025 U.S. Nationals in Ontario, California. Rothenberger, partnered with Paralympic gold medalist Tahl Leibovitz, pulled off a thrilling comeback from a 0-2 deficit to win the Class 18 Para Doubles 3-2, showcasing exceptional grit and resilience under pressure.



Cole Rothenberger executes a backhand return during competition at the 2025 Westchester Open. Photo by Rich London.

It was an intense battle, especially as it marked the first time Rothenberger and Leibovitz had ever played together. With minimal opportunity to build team chemistry, the early sets were marked by miscommunication. “Winning my first national title was unforgettable,” said Rothenberger. “Battling back from 0-2 with a legend showed me I belong on the path to LA28.”

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The victory was made even more meaningful by the support of table tennis legend Patty Martinez, who sponsored the para events in a demonstration of her growing commitment to para sport. Rothenberger also captured silver in the Para Class 6-8 Singles division—another event proudly backed by Martinez.

His performance at Nationals crowns a breakout year on the international circuit. Earlier in 2025,

he and doubles partner Sam Altshuler (Maryland) climbed to #2 in the world for U23 Class 14 Doubles and now sit at #3 globally.

A sponsored athlete of [GEWO USA](#), Rothenberger represents one of the world's premier table tennis brands for high-performance gear. His achievements also earned him an invitation to train in Slovakia this summer as he prepares for the 2025 U.S. Open and the Para Pan American Games and Junior Para Pan Ams later this year in South America.

Rothenberger has also delivered standout performances internationally, including a viral moment during a 2024 tournament in Brazil where he landed a highlight-reel shot that caught global attention. [See clip below]

Born with Arthrogryposis affecting his lower extremities, Rothenberger never saw himself as limited. "I never knew I was supposed to be 'disabled,'" he says. "I just did whatever my older brother did." Growing up in a small East Texas neighborhood surrounded by forest, he and his brother spent hours creating trails and exploring outdoors. One day, a search for a houseplant led the brothers to bonsai—and a shared passion was born.

Within a year, they had launched [Bonsais by SnC](#), turning their hobby into a business. Their work even supported the Ronald McDonald House of Delaware, where the family spent many months during Cole's treatment. "The bonsai business taught me responsibility and that hard work pays off," he says.

Rothenberger's rise has been marked by opportunity and determination. Within a month of his first international tournament, he was selected to attend a high-performance training camp in Slovenia—an opportunity made possible through travel support from [Toyota](#). That experience became a defining moment in his journey toward LA28.

"Winning was an amazing moment—but I know there's still a lot of work and growth ahead as I chase LA28," he added.

Rothenberger trains five days a week, including two days of physical conditioning, and often logs two sessions per day. A core part of his training includes Egoscue therapy. "I do Egoscue every day before training or competition," he says. "It's what allows me to move pain-free."

When home, Rothenberger trains under former Nigerian Junior Olympian Ojo Onaolapo, whose adaptive coaching methods have helped him optimize his power and overall game. "Ojo has a gift for showing me what I need to do differently from abled-bodied players to achieve the same result, in a way that works for my body," Rothenberger explains.

"Cole is one of the most determined and disciplined young players I've ever coached," said Onaolapo. "He doesn't see limits—he just puts in the work. If he keeps this up, I have no doubt we'll see him on the podium in 2028."

Looking ahead, Rothenberger hopes to mentor and perhaps coach professionally. While college is not currently part of his plan, he values a mentorship-based approach to learning and developing his craft.

From a rainy spring day that pushed him off the tennis courts to standing atop the national podium, Cole Rothenberger's story is one of resilience, purpose, and relentless belief—proof that with the right mindset, there truly are no boundaries.

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