

Otters Aquatic Sports Club - History

The history of a club is the history of its ups and downs, of its successes and failures. Everyone likes to relive the magic moments of success; the time when dame luck seems to smile unembarrassed upon his club. But one must not forget the moments of frustration and failure; the time when everything seems to go wrong. It is with these memories in mind that one has to look upon the thirty years plus of Otters A.S.C.

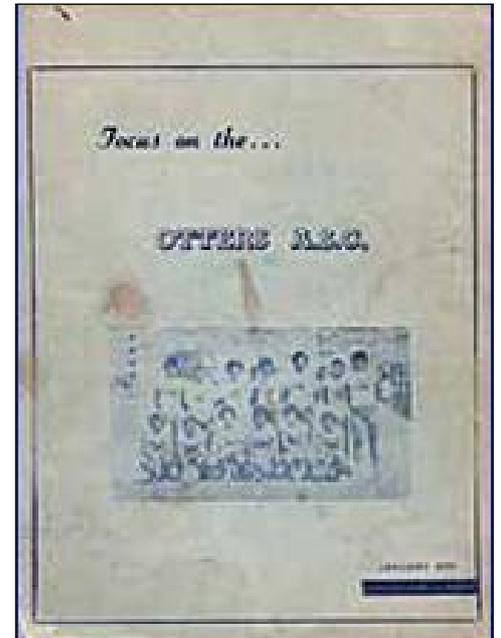


LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

It is difficult to trace the actual date when the team was formed. However, the first players who joined the club were registered with the Gozo Aquatic Association on the 28th July, 1971 and thus this date is normally considered by club members as the date on which the club was formed. The founder members of the team itself included Anton Refalo, Victor Grech, George Calleja, Carmel Debattista and Frank Masini.

The history of the club started humbly with the team having to participate in the Second Division of the Gozitan Waterpolo League along with other teams which nowadays are defunct such as Ghajsielem, Sea Urchins and Blue Sharks. The first year was a promising one with Otters A.S.C. being promoted to First Division. The following years, Otters A.S.C. also had the chance to play against other Gozitan teams such as Dolphins, Whales and Penguins, teams that have all been dismantled as time went by. In 1973, Otters A.S.C. started competing in the Minor League, which was being organised by the GAA for the first time.

Over the past years, Otters A.S.C. consolidated itself as a true team with its ups and down, good seasons as opposed to bad ones. Otters A.S.C. managed to win various honours organised over the years by the GAA with the introduction of new talented players who over the years managed to win a reputation for the team.



1979 publication



1982 publication

PLAYING IN MALTA

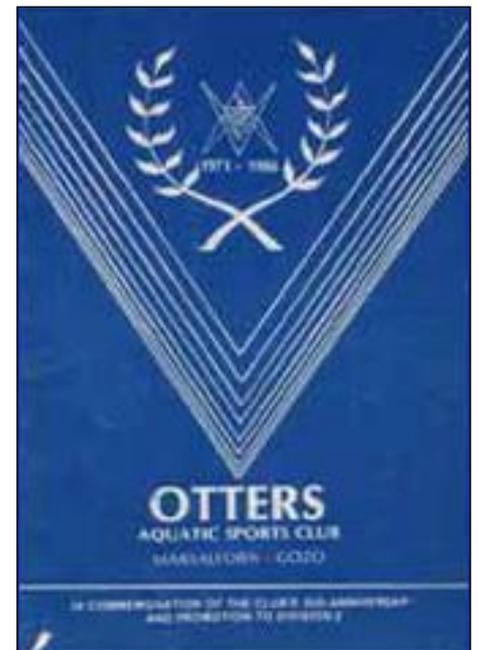
Otters A.S.C. started participating in the league organised by A.S.A. cautiously by fielding an under-18 team in 1977. The team obtained decent results when one takes into consideration the great difficulties and hardships that the team had to face. The first team to participate in Malta was composed of Mario Calleja, Raymond Grech, Franz Refalo, Joseph Grech Hili, Ino Mario Busuttil, Joseph Busuttil, Raymond Calleja, Ivan Refalo, Joseph Sammut Alessi and Victor Camilleri.

But it was not until 1980 that Otters A.S.C. once again participated in Malta in the Second Division Reserves' League and the Second Division Knockout. At the same time, however, Otters A.S.C. was proving too tough a competition for the other Gozitan teams and indeed in 1979 the club won all the honours that were at stake in Gozo.

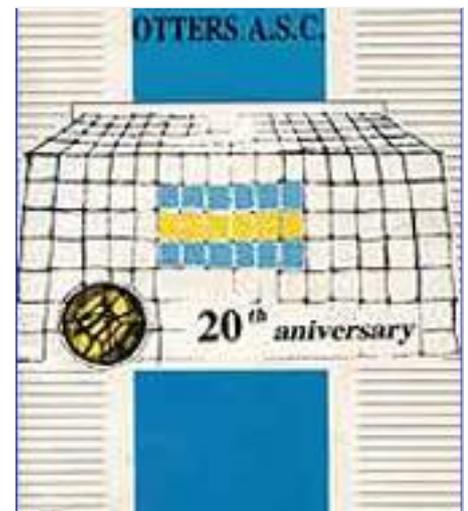
Efforts by the GAA to restrain the utter dominance of our team still proved futile and Otters managed to surpass all the difficulties and unfair treatment reserved to them.

It was in 1982 that Otters A.S.C. took the plunge and decided to compete in the competition organised by A.S.A. in Malta and participate in the Second Division League. Though the results were not very encouraging, new blood and talent in the names of Dennis Attard, Paul Dimech, Anton Tabone, Patrick Sciberras, Robert Xerri and David Pace was introduced and this proved to be very beneficial for the team in the following years.

In fact, just three years after namely 1985, Otters A.S.C. managed to clinch victory in the Third Division League. This was the first time that Otters managed to win a major honour in the A.S.A.'s competitions. Though winning promotion to the Second Division again in 1987, A.S.A. re-organised its league structure and eliminated the Third Division. By this time, players such as Marc Tabone and Kristen Dimech were rendering their services to the senior team. One has also to comment on the fact that in the meanwhile the waterpolo scenario in Gozo was becoming very bleak, participation was dwindling and in fact only Otters A.S.C. managed to survive within the Gozitan waterpolo scenario. All the other teams, for different reasons were slowly dismantled until Otters A.S.C. had no choice but to compete in Malta in order to play any competitive matches.



1986 publication



1991 publication



1978/1

THE 1990's

By this time, many of the founder members were now occupying posts within the Otters A.S.C. committee. Their job was no easier today than it was at the very beginning. With the advent of a more professional structure in Maltese sports, the club officials started putting pressure for an equal treatment to Maltese teams in order that a proper club premises was provided for Otters A.S.C. Needless to say, this proved to be a tortuous and extremely complicated issue which however, with a lot of perseverance finally resulted in acquiring a decent and modern premises for the club in 1995. This permitted the club to offer a decent structure to the players and youngsters who through a lot of sacrifice and goodwill showed a genuine interest in playing the game.

The 90's also saw the introduction for the first time in Maltese waterpolo history of a foreign player. Otters A.S.C. had three foreign players who all gave their services to the club: Sacho Popovski who played for two years for the club (1993-1994), Radu Georgescu who rendered his services for just one year (1995) and Fabio Valenti who also played for two years namely 1996 and 1997 until A.S.A. decided to forbid the use of a foreign player in the Maltese league. It was also at this time that Otters A.S.C. started making use of various Maltese players.

Over these years, Otters also had the occasion of using the services of various coaches who all gave their unconditioned help and support to the club. Miro Caruana had a three year spell with the club where the team, with the introduction of some youngsters such as Jo-Etienne Abela, Kevin Galea, Joseph Grech and later on also Reuben Grech and Stephan Grech also managed to achieve good results in the Second Division League in Malta.

However, the major successes were registered with the minors' teams, where extremely good results were registered both on home and away matches.



1978/2



1978/3



Marsalforn 1983



Marsascala pool 1987



Acireale 1990

RECENT YEARS

Otters A.S.C. felt the need to invest heavily on youngsters in order to ensure the survival of the club itself. Alfred Cachia was chosen as the ideal person to set up a professional swimming school since he had vast experience within this field. With the help of various committee members, the swimming school was successfully launched and nowadays is an integral part of the club. It was also at this time that players such as George Louis Zammit , Kevin Mizzi and later other youngsters, were introduced to the senior squad and in this way the dependence on Maltese players was to a certain extent diminished.

Over the past five years the team also had the chance to go abroad to train and play. The visits, besides providing ripe ground to enhance team spirit always proved to be a good opportunity for hard training and some fun for all the players.



Wessel 1992

QUO VADIS?

The future depends on those who make up the team structure nowadays, the committee who together with all local water polo lovers and within the various restrictions that exist have to model and shape out the future of water polo in Gozo. It is no secret that all contributors to the game in the past and nowadays wish to see an Olympic swimming pool being constructed on our island and a real Gozitan team which is made up of Gozitan players with perhaps only the inclusion of only one or two outstanding Maltese players, compete for honours in the national league. Thus proving wrong all the critics who over the years have been so cynical in our regards and so discriminatory in the way they treated the Gozitan outfit.



Berlin 2001



Otters pitch