



Underwater Hockey Switzerland
Annual Report, 2015



Report by Martin Reed



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- DE: Daniel Hupp (USZ-Zürich UWH) & Karin Reichardt (UWH Basel / SUSV Dive Commission)
- FR: Thomas Lapointe & Frédéric Ruiz (UWH Basel / Plongée des Trois Frontières)
- IT: Guido Sartoris (USZ-Zürich UWH)

2015 was the year in which all of the hard work of the previous years of building Underwater Hockey in Switzerland really started to pay off.

On the international scene, the existence of Underwater Hockey in Switzerland was kept very much in the public eye, with first-time attendances by the Wahoo Zürich team at tournaments in Turin, Italy; the long-running Memorial Mesareca tournament in Kranj, Slovenia and the gruelling 24-hour Oporto Open in Portugal.



Turin, Italy



Oporto, Portugal



Kranj, Slovenia

The next tournament, the Bud Pig Cup, in Ceske Budejovice, Czech Republic, could be termed “a tale of three firsts and three eighths”:

- Eighth year of the Bud Pig Cup tournament
- First ever appearance of a Swiss team at the Bud Pig Cup
- First ever appearance of a Swiss women’s team
- First time that a Swiss team managed to qualify through to the top division of a multi-division tournament
- ... with the men’s team finishing in eighth place out of fifteen teams in the men’s

division

- and the ladies team, despite being without their most experienced player, Silvana Avelar, still managing a victory to finish in eighth place out of nine in the ladies division



The first ever Swiss Ladies team



The first Swiss team ever to qualify for the top division of a multi-division tournament

The next tournament, in Mulhouse, France, brought the moment that we had been building towards for the last seven years: our first tournament victory! With 64 goals scored and zero against, in five games, it was an impressive performance. And once again we were able to field a women's team, which although it finished in last place, was the only women's team in the tournament, and still managed to score two goals against the Mulhouse Men's team, which finished in second place overall.



The Wahoo Men's and Women's teams at the Mulhouse tournament, Illzach, France. Our first tournament victory!

The end of May saw the provision once again of Swiss players to the “Munich” team at the 15th European Club Championships in London, and 2016 will see another major step forward in the growth of Underwater Hockey in Switzerland, when both men’s and women’s Swiss teams will make their first ever appearances at this tournament.

Two further major tournaments followed over the summer: the Munich Beer n’ Brez’n tournament in Peissenberg, Germany, and the Parmacup in Parma, Italy. For both of these tournaments we fielded two teams, which in Munich came 6th and 11th of 12, and in Parma the men’s team came 17th of 20 and the women’s team came 6th of 7.



Wahoos in Munich

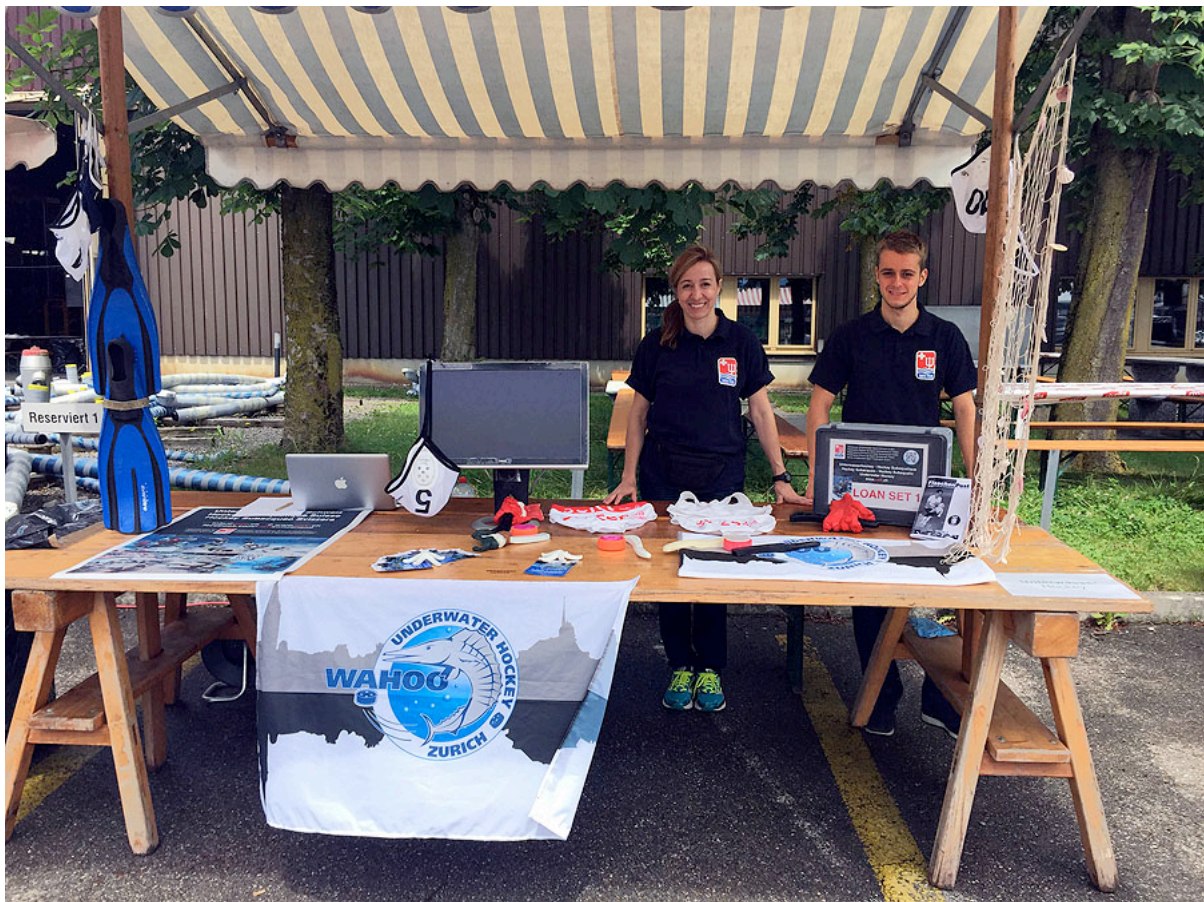


The Wahoo Men’s team in Parma



The Wahoo Women’s team in Parma

On the domestic front, we continued our efforts of trying to expand the sport by holding demonstrations around the country. We once again set up a stand at the Reussschwimmen annual river swim and handed out lots of flyers.



Silvania Avelar and Robin Schwarber presenting Underwater Hockey at the 2015 Reussschwimmen river swim

We also held demonstrations at Wallisellen School in Canton Zürich and to the SLRG lifesaving club in Bellinzona. The response from the Bellinzona group was especially encouraging, and they have already requested four more demonstrations in the early part of 2016.



Demo to Wallisellen School, Zürich



Demo to Bellinzona lifesaving club

August saw Underwater Hockey Switzerland's first ever coverage on national television, with a visit in June of the primary national TV channel SRF1 to Hallenbad Oerlikon, home of Wahoo Underwater Hockey Zürich. Seeming initially quite daunted, the moderator, Annina Frey, soon dived in headfirst (literally) and took to the sport very quickly. She even scored a goal almost at the end of the session, but her camerawoman missed it, so the goal had to be restaged for the camera.



Annina Frey from SRF1 tries UWH



Robin Schwarber teaches the basics



Annina scores a goal!

The end of August once again saw an Underwater Hockey Switzerland training camp in Tenero, Ticino, which was attended by more than 25 players, from the whole of Switzerland, with visiting participants from Germany and a guest trainer from Colombia.

The 2016 camp has already been scheduled for the weekend of 28th-30th August, also in Tenero, and all are welcome.

USZ-Zürich participated in the toasted.ch Sport Schnupper Weekend in June and presented Underwater Hockey and Underwater Rugby. It also made a presentation at the first day of the new year at the ETH and UZH universities in Zürich.



Sara Bäniziger, Warren Cabral and Sylvania Avelar attracting the interest of ETH and UZH students

We once again took part in the Sportissima day of sports in Canton Ticino in mid-September, and despite a day of non-stop rain, we still managed to interest a group of children from the Bellinzona swimming club in braving the elements in order to try something new.



Michele Palmieri (Lugano UWH) with Martin Reed, Daniel Hupp and Sylvania Avelar of USZ Zürich UWH demonstrating Underwater Hockey at the "Sportissima" Day of Sports in Bellinzona

At the end of November, at the first “Canton Bern Sport Forum”, we also presented Underwater Hockey to more than 200 delegates from organisational and sporting bodies across the whole of Canton Bern.

The fledgling team in Basel – a collaboration with the dive club Plongée des Trois Frontières in Huningue, France – experienced steady growth during 2015, expanding from a frequent 2 vs 2 at the beginning of the year to a regular 4 vs 4 and even one 5 vs 5 towards the end of the year. The future looks bright for Underwater Hockey in Basel in 2016, and I would personally like to thank Thomas Lapointe and Frédéric Ruiz for their unwavering support of this joint venture.



UWH Basel demonstrating Underwater Hockey to the Plongée des Trois Frontières finswimming group

The Geneva team, a part of the Exocet Lemane dive club from Annemasse, France, experienced rapid growth, and grew from just a few people at the beginning of the year to fourteen players by the close. Its players come from France, Switzerland, Portugal, South Africa and Poland, so the club is multicultural and multinational, with an age range from 15 to 40 years.



The Geneva / Annemasse group is growing!



The Geneva / Annemasse “Ladies” in Le Puy

The highlight of the year for the team was the participation in its first serious tournament in Le Puy en Velay in October. The level was very high, and the team finished in last place, despite winning two games. However, to have won two games was a very good result, especially considering that the team played with only seven players (six ladies and one man) and was playing together as a team for the first time in competition.

Nevertheless, aspirations are running high, and the ladies have formed a joint team with the ladies team from Grenoble for the 2016 French National Championships. The men's team is also providing players to the men's first and second teams of Grenoble. The Grenoble first team plays in Division 3 of the French Championship.

On an organisational level, Underwater Hockey Switzerland established a number of new contacts, from SwimSports, the driving force promoting swimming in schools, to Swiss Olympic, the highest governing body of sport in Switzerland. We look forward to working with these groups in order to develop Underwater Hockey on a number of levels in 2016.

As always, we are willing to come anywhere to demonstrate Underwater Hockey and to work with you to get an Underwater Hockey group started in your club. Adding Underwater Hockey to your sport portfolio WILL make your club grow, as has been shown in USZ-Zürich and is already becoming evident in Geneva and Basel. Please contact martin.reed@susv.ch for more information.

Martin Reed

Representative, Underwater Hockey
Swiss Underwater Sports Federation