



UNDERWATER HOCKEY SWITZERLAND ANNUAL REPORT, 2016



Report by Martin Reed
National Representative, UWH



Thanks to Maciej Bernady and Guillaume Tizon for the Geneva part of this report, to Silvania Avelar and to the UWH group leaders for all of their hard work during the course of the year, and for the translations to

- DE: Jan Maisenbacher (SLRG Lucerne Underwater Rugby) + Eveline Keller
- FR: Frédéric Ruiz (UWH Basel / Plongée des Trois Frontières) + Cyril Cholley (Regional Representative, Romandie)
- IT : Guido Sartoris (USZ-Zürich Underwater Hockey)

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2016 was the year in which Underwater Hockey Switzerland took another step closer to the big time, with first-ever appearances – with both men’s and women’s teams – at the European Club Championships in Coimbra, Portugal, in May, and at the long-running high-level Argonauta tournament in Breda, Netherlands, in September.



The first ever Swiss men's team at Euroclubs

Both teams finished in last place in both tournaments, but it was great experience for the teams, and especially for the newer players in the teams.



The first ever Swiss women's team at Euroclubs

However, there was better news, at the top end of the rankings table, where we followed up our first ever tournament victory, at the Mulhouse tournament in May 2015, by again taking first place at the same tournament in May 2016. A month later, we followed this up with a further victory at the Munich tournament, improving by two places upon our previous best in Munich – third in 2013.



Winners of the Mulhouse Tournament, May 2016



Winners of the Munich Tournament, June 2016

We also kept the existence of Underwater Hockey in Switzerland very much in the public eye around the rest of Europe, by maintaining our 100% attendance record at the Winter tournament in Grenoble, France, a repeat appearance at the long-running Memorial Mesareca tournament in Kranj, Slovenia, and a first appearance at the inaugural Budapest International tournament in Hungary.



4th place in Grenoble, France



10th place in Kranj, Slovenia



8th place in Budapest, Hungary



2nd place in Turin, Italy

We closed the year with a visit to the third “Il Gianduiotto” tournament in Turin, Italy. We lost our first game to H.S. Ducale from Parma, the eventual winners of the tournament, but rallied well to win all of our remaining games, including a hard-fought match against Munich, to finish second out of eight teams.

March 2016 saw the 19th edition of the highest level of Underwater Hockey: the World Championships in Stellenbosch, South Africa. The players that would make up the Switzerland men’s and women’s national teams felt themselves not yet ready to compete at this highest level, but Martin Reed, who introduced Underwater Hockey to Switzerland in 2007, was asked to participate as a referee, representing Canada. Also present at the Championships were two stalwarts of early Underwater Hockey Switzerland teams, Leigh and Dave McGaughey, representing respectively the South African Women’s Masters and Canadian Men’s Masters.



World Championships 2016: Team Suisse Reunion



Leigh (second from left): silver in the Women's Masters

It was a nice Team Suisse reunion and Leigh celebrated the occasion by winning a silver medal in her division.

On the domestic front, we continued our efforts of trying to expand the sport by holding demonstrations around the country. Sadly, the Reusschwimmen annual river swim, at which we had participated in previous years, came to an end, in what would have been its 35th consecutive year, due to a lack of volunteers to keep it going. However, with every door that closes, another door opens, and further westwards, in Canton Vaud, we were invited to take part in "*La Suisse Bouge*", the town of Nyon's annual "Get Switzerland Moving" day of activity.

The demonstration was led by Canton Geneva Underwater Hockey Representative, Maciej Bernady, and Romandie Regional Underwater Hockey Representative, Cyril Cholley. Most of the participants on the day were under 1m40 tall, but everyone had fun, we got our name a little better known in Romandie, and – most importantly for future developments – we are now on the "guest list" for future *Ville de Nyon* events.



Presenting UWH at "*La Suisse Bouge*", Nyon (VD)



Cyril Cholley presenting UWH at "*Festisub*", Neuchâtel

Cyril Cholley also presented the existence of Underwater Hockey at "*Festisub*", the celebration of underwater photo and video, held in Neuchâtel (NE). A potential collaboration with one of the television broadcasters of Lausanne is looking quite promising. Watch this space!

We held more demonstrations to the SLRG lifesaving club in Bellinzona (TI), and also presented Underwater Hockey to the apnea group of the TSGB dive club in Bern (BE).



Demonstrating UWH to the lifesaving club in Bellinzona (TI)



Demonstrating UWH to the apnea group of TSGB, Bern (BE)

The end of August once again saw an Underwater Hockey Switzerland training camp in Tenero (TI), which was attended by more than 25 players, from all across Switzerland, with visiting participants from Germany and a guest trainer from France.



Krishna learns a new skill



Practicing the new skills



The end of a successful weekend

For the third year in a row, we presented Underwater Hockey at the “*Sportissima*” day of sports in Canton Ticino in mid-September. Sylvania Avelar, Cyril Cholley and Martin Reed were joined by Carola Vitali from the new Underwater Hockey group that is starting to come into existence within the Salvataggio Bellinzona lifesaving club in Bellinzona (TI).

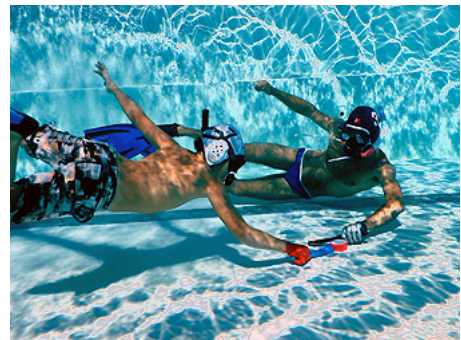
After a rain-drenched day in 2015, we were happy to have a return to “normal” Ticino weather, and more of the blazing sun and clear blue skies that we had experienced in 2014.



Open for business!



Carola explains the basics



Cyril teaches puck skills



UWH on Zürich Radio 24

In July, the Zürich Underwater Hockey group, a part of the *Underwater Sport Centre Zürich* dive club (USZ), received a visit from Tanja Fetz, aka “*Frau Dr Sommer*”, of the Zürich radio station, Radio 24. Tanja seemed to enjoy her visit, and her two-part interview with Robin Schwarber of the USZ-Underwater-Hockey-Zürich group can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

The team in Basel – a collaboration with the dive club *Plongée des Trois Frontières* (P3F) in Huningue, France – had a year mostly of consolidation, not really experiencing growth, but retaining a core group of players, from which to build for the future. Group leader Frédéric Ruiz is very enthusiastic about his plans for building upon this base in 2017, and we look forward to developments.



Making our own UWH gloves



Frédéric Ruiz shoots for goal



Basel Underwater Hockey Group club nights : it's all action!

The Geneva team, a part of the *Exocet Lemans* dive club from Annemasse, France, experienced a year of change, with five players leaving, but six new players joining. The new joiners were as a result of an enthusiastic recruitment programme, in which the group presented Underwater Hockey to the participants of the World Finswimming Championships that took place in Geneva at the beginning of June, held a public demonstration in Annemasse towards the end of July, and also presented Underwater Hockey at the Annemasse Sport Associations Day in mid-September. The team coach, Guillaume Tizon, also presented Underwater Hockey on the Lausanne Tele2 “*On en parle*” radio show.



UWH at the Annemasse “Sport Associations Day”

On the tournament front, the team competed in the two-day Grenoble tournament in January, where it played for the first time against the team from Zürich. A 2-2 draw against Zürich on the first day and a 2-3 loss on the second day shows how evenly matched the two teams were, and we look forward to continuing this friendly rivalry in 2017. Another friendly rivalry established in 2016 was a “local derby” with the team from Morzines, and we had a most enjoyable training session in their outdoor pool, with a beautiful view of the Alps.



Demonstrating UWH in Annemasse in July



The "local derby" with Morzines

At national level, three of the Annemasse-Geneva ladies joined forces with the ladies team from Lyon, and qualified for the second division of the French national championships, where they finished fourth out of twelve teams. Four of the Annemasse-Geneva men joined forces with the second team of Grenoble, but were not successful in qualifying for the French championships. Nevertheless, aspirations are running high, and the team is looking forward to the challenges of 2017.

On an organisational level, Underwater Hockey Switzerland continued to build upon the connections established in previous years, and also to forge new ones.



The collaboration project with SwimSports, the Swiss governing body of swimming in schools, bore its first fruit, with the publication of an introduction to Underwater Hockey and the other SUSV sports (Apnea, Finswimming and Underwater Rugby) in SwimSports' annual news bulletin, followed by a week-long demonstration of the sports at a schools training camp at the "Sport and Holiday" sports centre in Fiesch (VS) in October.

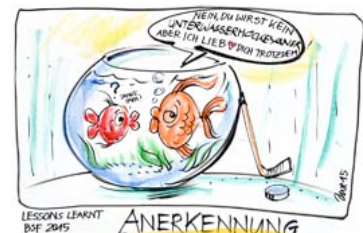


Schools demo set



Vereinigung Bernischer Sportverbände
Association des sociétés bernoises de sport

Martin Reed's presentation of Underwater Hockey at the first Canton Bern Sport Forum ("BSF") in November 2015 led to the initiation of a collaboration project with Bernsport, the governing body of sport in Canton Bern, in order to introduce and promote Underwater Hockey as an official member of Bernsport's roster of sports.



BSF's cartoonist's view of UWH



We were also invited to participate in and provide input to the design of a new national sports complex – "Campus Sursee" – in Sursee, near Luzern, in order to make it "underwater sport friendly".



The planned 50m pool at Sursee



Underwater Hockey Switzerland was also invited to join a committee to define the new "grass-roots" ("Breitensport") sports concept of Swiss Olympic.

Finally, we were invited to participate in a photoshoot at the Zürich Hallenstadion at the beginning of November to commemorate the official launch of the Swiss Olympic "Spirit of Sport" Ethics Charter.



Silvania Avelar of Underwater Hockey Switzerland (enlarged, right) taking part in the promotion of the Swiss Olympic "Spirit of Sport" Ethics campaign

We look forward to continuing the collaborations with SwimSports, Bernsport, Campus Sursee and Swiss Olympic in the years to come.

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 also becoming evident in Basel, Bellinzona & Geneva. Please contact martin.reed@susv.ch for more information.

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