



THE MALTA OLYMPIC COMMITTEE

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Lord Plumer, who was Governor of the Maltese Islands from 1919-1924 and a great supporter and admirer of Maltese waterpolo teams who, at that time took on powerful services teams mostly from the fleet anchored in our harbours, first thought of the idea of sending a Maltese waterpolo team to the Games of the XVIII Olympiad in Paris, in 1924.

Unfortunately however, because his term of office was nearly over, there was no time to make the necessary arrangements for Malta's participation.

After Lord Plumer's departure, one of his staff mentioned the Governor's idea of Malta being represented at the Olympic Games, and soon one of Malta's most prominent waterpolo players of the time, Carmel "Meme" Busietta, started the ball rolling for Malta's participation in the Games of the IXth Olympiad, in Amsterdam in 1928.

The prospect of the Island being represented along with the other nations in the international arena in competitions of such magnitude caught the imagination of all the waterpolo enthusiasts and soon the *Amateur Swimming Association of Malta* came into being, holding its first meeting in January 1925.

Immediately after being accepted as a member of the *Fédération Internationale de Natation Amateur (FINA)*, Malta applied for participation in the Olympic Games in Amsterdam.

But, to everyone's dismay, this application was refused by the Netherlands Olympic Organizing Committee on the grounds that Malta could not participate as a nation, because it was a Colony of Great Britain.

The Maltese, through the excellent relations with Mr. Hern, at the same time secretary of the *Amateur Swimming Association (ASA)* of Great Britain and also of the FINA, sought the help of the world's swimming body, who in turn asked a legal adviser to take up Malta's case.

After a prolonged legal battle, Malta's participation as a nation was accepted. However, as all dealings with the international authorities were being conducted by the ASA of Malta, and as the official invitation was to be sent to "the official committee representing all sports of Malta", a Malta Olympic Committee had to be formed.

This was soon set up, and the Malta Olympic Committee held its first meeting on the fifth of June 1928, at 153 Strada Zecca, Valletta. Things had to move very fast, but Malta did finally make

it to the Games of the IXth Olympiad, in Amsterdam, in 1928, being represented by its waterpolo team.

Malta could not have had a more auspicious baptism of fire, for they beat Luxembourg in their first ever international match 3-1.

However, they suffered heavy defeats in their two subsequent encounters, going down to France (the eventual bronze medallists) 16-0, and the United States 8-0.

Since then a lot of water has run under the bridge, and Malta has taken part in the following Olympic Games:

- 1936: Berlin: Waterpolo and Athletics
- 1948: London: Athletics (one athlete)
- 1960: Rome: Cycling, Swimming, Shooting, Sailing (in Naples)
- 1968: Mexico City: Shooting (one athlete)
- 1972: Munich: Cycling, Shooting
- 1980: Moscow: Cycling, Shooting, Archery
- 1984: Los Angeles: Athletics, Boardsailing, Wrestling, Shooting, Archery
- 1988: Seoul: Boardsailing, Archery, Judo, Wrestling
- 1992: Barcelona: Athletics, Boardsailing, Judo, Shooting
- 1996: Atlanta: Athletics, Boardsailing, Swimming, Sailing, Judo, Shooting.

The best results obtained:

- Lawrence Vella: Moscow 1980, Shooting (Olympic Trap): 11th out of 34 shooters;
- Peter Bonello: Los Angeles 1984, Boardsailing, 9th out of 39 competitors;
- Frans Pace: Atlanta 1996, Shooting (Olympic Trap), 119/125 (95,2 %), 19th out of 52 shooters.