



The Spin Lob

The Boys Water Polo Blog for Cincinnati, Ohio

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[Link to New Years Edition](#)

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February 2018 For the Love of Polo Edition

Water polo is not just for younger generation here in Cincinnati. In fact one of the longest continually running club teams in Cincinnati isn't for high schoolers at all. What better way to celebrate the month of love, than talking with people who love water polo well beyond high school and college- The Ohio Squirrels. Besides just practicing, The Ohio Squirrels just hosted a tournament at the University of Cincinnati that saw 4 Cincinnati based teams compete. That story is after we catch up with the Ohio Squirrels Water Polo club. This club is an 11 year old masters program for beginners to top National players that compete internationally. We got a chance to practice with the Squirrels the weekend before their big Nutty Invite tournament and in between shooting drills and scrimmaging, we were able to get the story of the Squirrels from Coach Michael Jones.



Cincinnati WP: Mike, while I try to catch my breath and float on this ball, can you give us your foundation story for Squirrels.

Mike: The Squirrels started in 2007 by myself and Nick Long. We had both just recently graduated from college where I played water polo for Ohio University and Nick played for the University of Dayton (Not to be confused with Coach Nicholas Hellwig with Sycamore and the Marlins who also graduated from Dayton). We wanted to continue to play water polo and we felt there was a need for a masters team in Cincinnati. At the very beginning, we did not have a large group of players in Cincinnati so we branched out to other cities and pulled in players from

Columbus, Dayton, Cleveland and Toledo. Eventually and thanks to our website and Facebook, we began to attract Cincinnati players to join. We began our practices at Milford High School and from there we have had practices at Xavier University, University of Cincinnati, Evendale Recreation Center, Powel Crosley and St. Xavier High School.

From what I know, I believe we are the first masters program. I do not recall one growing up and from speaking to others who have been around this sport much longer than me, I do not believe one exists. We have a strong

leadership group that does the coaching, budget, safety, website and social aspects of our organization so that makes this entire organization built and maintained by many people....not just one.

Cincinnati WP: So is this home, Powel Crosley Y, now?

Mike: Our home pool is St. Xavier High School but when the pool is not available, we practice at Powel Crosley YMCA and University of Cincinnati. In the summer, we mainly practice outdoors at Evendale Recreation Center and Powel Crosley YMCA. All of them have fantastic management and staff and they have helped us grow as a club by giving us access to their pool space.

Cincinnati WP: I think most people want to know why Ohio Squirrels?

Mike: In the early years of our club, we were recruiting players from different cities around Ohio to build a roster for an upcoming tournament. This made us look like we were bouncing from city to city to recruit or from tree to tree. Also, the name Squirrels is just unique so when an opposing team sees us on their tournament schedule, they likely get a laugh. We are friendly with all clubs we compete against and I think that makes us a great team to play against. We threw around many other names in the building process but this one seemed to stick the best. Also, all of our t-shirts, marketing has a "Go Nuts" kind of a phrase on them and this makes us different!.

Cincinnati WP: As I look around the pool, I see all sorts of players, both guys and girls. So is this club open to anyone? Who can play for squirrels?

Mike: Any player over the age of 18 can play for us but we have allowed high school kids to practice with us to gain an extra opportunity to play water polo. Our ages range from 18 years old to 56 years old. We recruit all skill levels from non-water polo players to elite water polo players. We help develop players skill set and take the time to morph them into stronger participants. The players on our team are driven to grow the sport so when we attract new players that have never played before, it is exciting to see how our players come together to improve each other.



Cincinnati WP: So far today, I have seen different players run conditioning, and drills and then referee. Who are your coaches?

Mike: I love our coaches. They are so giving and the players really look up to them.

Chris Mathers is a Xavier University graduate who is in charge conditioning logistics. You want to get in shape he will get you there. Plus if you want to see some great perimeter defense, just watch him play.

Then there is Johann Perera. He coached with Coach Hellwig of the Marlins and at Mason and used to play for the United States Army. He is in charge of

practice/strategy logistics. If you have heard the Army Strong Commercials, then you know how solid he is in the pool.

You also have Jeff Clemens, a fellow Ohio University graduate just like myself who also works with practice/strategy logistics and our NCAA division 1 graduate Alexis Nordrum who played at Brown University. Together we make a strong coaching group. All of our coaches collaborate very well and take feedback and ideas from the team. These are also volunteer coaches so this is a passion they have always had.

Cincinnati WP: Holy Cow! That was some shot. Who was that? You have some great players.

Mike: That was Dan Lebling. He played at Michigan State University and is our Utility player. That guy in the cage that just made your shot look silly was Steve Coupland. He played for Fresno State University and still plays for the



National over 50 team and competes internationally. We have a lot of great players who help us compete at all of these tournaments we play.

There are a lot of great stories that have gone through the organization and it all of practice to tell them to you with this group. I think one overarching story is the fact that we are a great network of business professionals and families. We have helped each other find job opportunities simply by passing resumes around or make referral introductions. On the family side, we have had social events and kid play dates. We are more than just water polo club, we are a large family happens to play water polo.

Cincinnati WP: I can assume all of this intensity is gearing you up towards the tournament coming up next weekend. Can you tell us about the Nutty Invite?

Mike: We are approaching the 10th Annual Nutty Invitational. We have had teams from all over the Midwest, Southeast and even East Coast. We actually had the Navy Midshipmen attend one year which was great. They could not be stopped. Recently, we had a club from South Florida attend and of course it is always special to have all the Ohio teams come in from some cross-state competitive games.

Cincinnati WP: We will post the schedule and teams. But it looks like you have a couple of other Cincinnati Teams. You have your team obviously as well as the University of Cincinnati which is where the games are taking place. Then Moose and Cincinnati Marlins Water Polo.

Cincinnati WP: It looks like the scrimmage is about the start so any last things to add about the program?

Mike: This club is a fun competitive atmosphere but we are much bigger than this. We are always helpful in growing the sport by coaching other clubs in the city, running clinics, attending camps and more. The greatest attribute of this club is the willing to step up and help each other both in and out of the pool. It should not go unknown that the heart of this club resides in the fact that we are a fun-loving team that plays hard but puts their teammates first in any situation.



Cincinnati WP: Thanks Mike. Enjoy the scrimmage. I am going to go sit and attempt to regain feeling in my legs. While all of this happens, everyone can check out more about the Ohio Squirrels through their media.

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Twitter: @ohiosquirrels

Instagram @ohiosquirrels

LinkedIn: Ohio Squirrels Water Polo Club

ACORN BRACKET	TREE BRACKET
OHIO SQUIRRELS BLUE – 4-0	CLEVELAND WATER POLO CLUB – 4-0
OHIO STATE BUCKEYES – 3-1	OHIO SQUIRRELS GREY – 3-1
MOOSE WATER POLO CLUB – 2-2	MOTOR CITY WATER POLO – 2-2
WOLVERINE WATER POLO CLUB - 1-3	UNIV. OF DAYTON FLYERS – 1-3
UNIV. OF CINCINNATI BEARCATS – 0-4	MARLINS WATER POLO – 0-4

The Nutty Invite

If you didn't get a chance to get down to the University of Cincinnati, you missed so great water polo. 4 Cincinnati teams competed (5 if you count the 2 Squirrels teams). Four teams from Cincinnati got a chance to compete this weekend, Ohio Squirrels, the University of Cincinnati, The Cincinnati Marlins and The Moose WPC. The Ohio Squirrels were able to stay 4-0 after beating a very tough OSU squad and the Moose Team in their final games. Moose was able to defeat the University of Cincinnati and the Wolverine squad from Michigan. On the other side, a second Ohio Squirrels team was able to take out everyone expect the tournament champions Cleveland WP. This annual tournament is a lot of fun for local Cincinnati players to get a chance to play for their colleges or their club programs.



With the high school club season coming up soon, we will tread into the club scene here in Cincinnati by talking with the head of the Cincinnati Marlins Water Polo team and the head of Moose Water Polo as well as the head of Queen City Water Polo. Club season did not just start with these programs so we will delve into the history of club water polo in Cincinnati with the history of the River City team and get some info out on the newest Cincinnati team the Cincinnati Summer Water Polo club.

If there are topics you want to see passed around, let us know. Cincinnatiwaterpolo@gmail.com