



HAVING A BALL OF A TIME

Imagine playing rugby in your speeds. HOOKED dived right in with CHIA HOW KHEE, the brains behind the First Asian Team Underwater Rugby (FATUWR), to find out more about the sport.

Underwater rugby was first invented in Germany in the 1960s when a group of divers became bored with swim practices in the pool. They filled the ball with water and started fighting for possession of it underwater. Since then, the sport of underwater rugby has grown worldwide with clubs sprouting all over Europe, America, Australia, and now Asia.

How it all started

As a university undergraduate about eight years ago, Chia How Khee was looking to acquire a new and interesting skill. He joined the university dive club to learn scuba diving. Underwater rugby was part of the dive club, and he decided to give the sport a go. After playing underwater rugby for four years in Australia, and half a year in Norway, Khee found himself back in Singapore unable to play the sport as it wasn't established. The solution was to start his own club so that he can continue to enjoy the game.

Khee gathered the necessary equipment—stainless steel goal baskets and underwater rugby balls from Germany—and made pool bookings. He then rounded up a few pals (mostly friends from String Underwater Hockey Club) to play the sport. In September 2014, First Asian Team Underwater Rugby (FATUWR) became officially registered under Registry of Societies and now it is part of Singapore Underwater Federation. The 29-year-old also doubles up as the team's head coach.

The future

This April, FATUWR will represent Singapore and Asia in an inaugural tournament, Pan Pacific Cup, in Brisbane. This will be followed by the next big tournament in 2015, the Champions Cup in Berlin, which FATUWR hopes to compete in.

How to play the game

As the name suggests, this sport is fully played underwater in



What you need

The basic equipment for underwater rugby is a mask, snorkel, and fins. Players also wear a blue or white water polo cap which differentiate them from the opponent's team. During practice, each player will develop skills such as dolphin kicks with fins, duck-dives and breath-holds which are essential for the game.

FATUWR plays at Queenstown Swimming Complex every Saturday morning from 8.45 to 11am. Members of the club pay \$5 for each session, while the cost for non-members is \$7. **HE**

WHAT WE LIKE ABOUT UNDERWATER RUGBY (UWR)



Amyl Tsang Jia Yu, 21

I like UWR because it's a sport that is fully three-dimensional where anyone can come at you for the ball at any angles. Since it's underwater, we cannot talk so we have to trust our teammates to be there for us.



Helena See Mei Lin, 18

I enjoy playing UWR because this is a new sport in Singapore. I play the role of a forward in the game and I have a lot of opportunities to score goals. I like that I can pass the ball up, down and sideways in the water.



Caleb Tong Hai Yong, 32

The five 3s are critical for a successful team: Speed, stamina, strength, skills and spirit. The one factor which impacts me the most is our team spirit. The strong camaraderie in FATUWR keeps me coming back for more.

a 4.5 meter deep pool. Each team has 12 players each; six in the water and six substitutes. Players are equipped with masks, snorkels, and fins, and the objective of the game is to put the saltwater filled ball into the opponent's goal basket. Players are not allowed to grab opponent's equipment, or execute any dangerous moves such as grabbing of fingers or choking. There are two underwater referees equipped with scuba tanks and one on the surface to ensure that the game is kept under control. Ladies can join in with the men too.

Who should try

As long as the person can swim, he or she can play underwater rugby. FATUWR has close to 40 players, aged 20 to 50. As the sport is played underwater, there is misconception that players need to be able to hold their breaths well. However, this sport actually focuses on the quick surface recovery, and being at the right place at the right time.