

A daring new historical record

Rowing 53.4 nautical miles in just 12 hours

Organised in aid of the Dar tal-Providenza and the Dominican Mission in Albania, the charity Crossing had one particular novelty - crossing over from Pozzallo in Sicily to Malta on a 'Dghajsa'.

And 'Tereza', 16.46, traditional Maltese 'dghajsa tal-pass', already famous on home waters, added further glory to its club by eventually covering the Pozzallo-Malta channel in 12 hours 5 minutes.

Originally it was envisaged to cover the 53.4 nautical miles crossing in 17-18 hours. But, being the first such experience and with a minimal period of preparation it was rather a matter of giving an opinion than a calculated forecast. A team of ten, an enthusiastic combination of prime and upcoming oarsmen of the Marsa Regatta Club, faced this daring challenge.

In fact, the first four who set sail from Pozzallo were the same who have rowed the 'Tereza' on the club's victories in the September 8 Regatta 2001 and the March 31 National Day Regatta 2002. There were Gerald Camilleri, Martin Mifsud, George Zammit and Ronald Zammit.

The other six were Clifton Camilleri, Carl Redeemer Rapa, Clinton Sammut, Adrian Schembri, Redeemer Zammit and Sam Zammit.

A pre-set two hour rowing roster was worked out but this was another of the scheduled arrangements that was not followed.

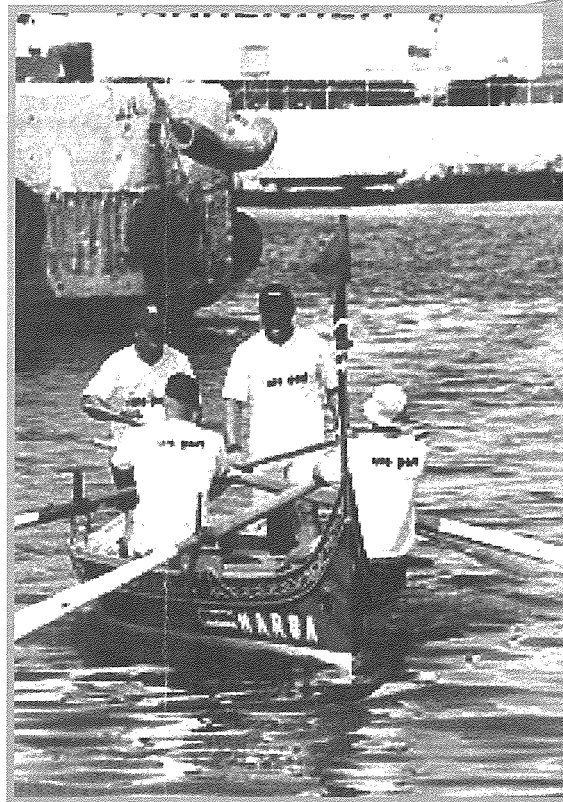
For two oarsmen, 48-year-old Gerald Camilleri and Martin Mifsud, 25, appealed with the organisers to give them the opportunity to keep on rowing until they themselves asked to be replaced. Such a request was never made and the two stayed on as part of the four-man team for the whole duration of the crossing.

The responsibility of lead vessel was carried out by m.v. 'Maria C', made available by Messrs A & J Company Ltd., while yachts 'Titania' and 'Solymar' supported the escort operations. Agenzia Marittima e Spedizioni GILMAR Shipping of Pozzallo assisted with the various port and customs formalities at the Sicilian end. Tug Malta, Virtu Ferries, Gatorade, Eurosprt and the Marsa Local Council extended other support towards this crossing, duly regarded as 'a first historic event'.

The co-ordinator of the event was Wilfred Sultana while Dr. George Attard was medical officer.

The Comune di Pozzallo has enthusiastically welcomed this event and on the eve of the crossing the Maltese group were officially greeted in a public reception in front of the city hall.

On the occasion Joe Mifsud, Marsa Regatta Club president, presented Dott. Roberto Ammatuna, Mayor of Pozzallo, with a 24-inch wooden replica of the Maltese 'Dghajsa' as a gesture of appreciation for the co-operation, support and friendship extended by one and all at Pozzallo to the Maltese contingent.



The Marsa Regatta Club rowers in harbour after their daring feat

Enthusiasm in Pozzallo

Other souvenirs were presented to the Pozzallo Mayor by Sultana, on behalf of the Marsa Local Council, and by Ivan Bartolo on behalf of the Moviment Kerygma.

The enthusiasm of the 'Pozzallese' was further intensified by having a Maltese 'Dghajsa' on display all day on Friday, the eve of the event, in the square in front of the Comune di Pozzallo offices.

"The beauty of this crossing was the feeling of uneasiness experienced on every novelty adventure. A sensation felt in different degrees by all involved - the organisers, the promoters, the skippers of the supporting fleet, and all the other helpers."

"But definitely the athletes themselves experienced the biggest strain of all, both physically and mentally. Twelve hours on foot or sitting down in a restricted space, barely changing one's position, simply rowing forward under the hot sun is definately tough going."

"However, it is under such conditions that real champions are identified", said Sultana in a follow-up report by Santo Vanasia published in the Giornale di Sicilia.

Mifsud also expressed a great sense of satisfaction.

"Apart from possessing a fervent winning spirit on competitive level, our club also believes in being in the foreground to promote and participate in philanthropic initiatives. We feel proud of being part of this successful event".

A rousing welcome was given to the tired, but proud, athletes on the evening of the event when, as was originally announced, they rowed tiredly home to the cheers of a good-sized crowd.

Fr Charles Fenech OP, on behalf of the Kerygma Movement, expressed the last words on this novelty adventure. He thanked all those who contributed and announced that a sum of Lm1,750 was raised.

"This was a typical example of solidarity where the muscles of the strong could touch on the weaker", he said.

Kerygma's Volleyball Marathom is currently underway to Naxxar.

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