

# **Forged in Competition, Proven on the World Stage: Dark Side Water Polo Masters – Partnering for Global Success in Singapore 2025**

## **1. Introduction: Dark Side Water Polo - San Diego's Masters Powerhouse**

Emerging from the highly competitive water polo environment of San Diego, California, Dark Side stands as a premier Masters water polo program, distinguished by its consistent high-level performance and the unwavering dedication of its athletes.<sup>1</sup> This report specifically illuminates the remarkable journey and achievements of the club's Men's 50+ and 55+ divisions, teams that exemplify skill, strategy, and resilience in the demanding world of Masters water polo.

The primary objective of this document is to present a comprehensive overview of the Dark Side 50+ and 55+ teams' exceptional track record over the past five competitive years (2019-2024). By detailing their successes, showcasing the caliber of their athletes, and illustrating their commitment to excellence, this report aims to attract vital sponsorship support for their upcoming campaign at the prestigious World Aquatics Masters Championships. This pinnacle event is scheduled to take place in Singapore from July 26 to August 22, 2025.

The narrative that follows chronicles a period of significant accomplishment. Dark Side has not only asserted its dominance on the national stage, securing multiple USA Water Polo Masters National Championship titles, but has also achieved the highest honor in international Masters competition: a World Aquatics Masters Championship gold medal.<sup>3</sup> The teams boast rosters featuring highly decorated athletes, including numerous USA Water Polo All-Americans and players with prior international accolades.<sup>1</sup> This consistent success elevates Dark Side beyond the status of a local club, positioning it as a national and international force in Masters water polo.

The upcoming World Aquatics Masters Championships in Singapore represents the next chapter in this compelling story of sustained excellence. It offers a unique opportunity for partners to align their brand with a proven winner on a global platform, supporting a team that embodies dedication, high performance, and the enduring spirit of competition. This report serves as an invitation to join Dark Side in their pursuit of continued global success.

## **2. A Tradition of Tenacity: Club History and Ethos**

While specific founding dates remain outside the scope of the available information, Dark Side has carved out a formidable reputation within the vibrant San Diego Masters water polo community, often mentioned alongside other established clubs like Sunset Masters.<sup>2</sup> The club appears to draw athletes from areas including La Jolla, a known hub for aquatic sports.<sup>2</sup> Its consistent presence and competitive results over many years point towards a well-established program built on a foundation of experience and commitment.

The ethos of Dark Side is clearly reflected in its competitive achievements. The relentless pursuit of victory is evident in their multiple national and world championship titles. Yet, this drive exists within the characteristic framework of Masters sports, which fosters deep camaraderie and mutual respect among competitors. Player commentary, such as that from Dark Side athlete Zack Rogers following a hard-fought 2022 National Championship victory, speaks to this unique blend: acknowledging the scrappy, intense nature of the game while emphasizing the long-standing relationships and post-game sportsmanship that define the Masters community.<sup>12</sup> This combination of fierce competitiveness and enduring fellowship forms the cultural bedrock of the club.

Further testament to the club's strength and stability is its ability to consistently field competitive teams across multiple Masters age divisions. Over the past five years, Dark Side has not only excelled in the 50+ and 55+ brackets but has also achieved podium finishes and fielded teams in the 40+ and 60+ divisions at national championships.<sup>3</sup> This breadth indicates a robust organizational structure and a deep, committed pool of athletes capable of sustaining success across the age spectrum. Such longevity and program depth signal reliability and a well-managed organization, qualities attractive to potential partners seeking stable, long-term associations. The consistent use of the "Darkside" name across these teams and years further reinforces a strong brand identity within the water polo world [numerous snippets].

## **3. National Dominance: USA Water Polo Masters National Championships (2019-2024)**

The USA Water Polo Masters National Championships serve as the premier domestic competition for Masters athletes, and Dark Side's 50+ and 55+ teams have established themselves as perennial contenders and frequent champions over the past five competitive seasons. Their performance trajectory demonstrates not only

sustained excellence but also recent dominance in these highly competitive age brackets. (It is worth noting that the 2020 Masters National Championships likely faced cancellation or significant disruption due to the global pandemic, as no results for that year were found in the reviewed materials).

The club consistently measures itself against the best Masters programs in the country, frequently battling formidable opponents such as The Olympic Club, Bruin Masters, Bay Area Masters, and fellow San Diego club Sunset Masters.<sup>3</sup> Dark Side's ability to consistently emerge victorious or achieve podium finishes against such strong competition underscores their elite status within the national Masters water polo landscape.

A year-by-year summary highlights their remarkable consistency and recent peak:

- **2024 (Walnut, CA):** This year marked a pinnacle of national success for Dark Side. The club achieved an extraordinary double, capturing the **GOLD** medal in both the Men's 50+ and Men's 55+ divisions. In the 50+ final, they overcame Bruin 50s (Silver) and Bay Area Masters (Bronze). The 55+ team secured their title against The Olympic Club (Silver) and Denver Olds (Bronze).<sup>3</sup> Adding to the club's impressive showing, the 40+ and 60+ teams both earned Bronze medals, showcasing the program's overall depth.<sup>3</sup>
- **2023 (Tri-Valley, CA):** The Men's 50+ team continued their strong run, earning the **SILVER** medal after a close 5-3 loss to Santa Cruz Waxem in the championship match.<sup>13</sup> The Men's 55+ team did not place in the top three this year.<sup>13</sup> The 40+ team secured a Bronze medal.<sup>13</sup>
- **2022 (Irvine, CA):** Dark Side claimed the **GOLD** medal in the Men's 50+ division, showcasing their resilience with a thrilling 6-5 comeback victory over Bruin in the final.<sup>5</sup> The 55+ team did not reach the podium.<sup>5</sup>
- **2021 (Dallas, TX):** Competing in the first Masters Nationals held in Texas, Dark Side again triumphed in the Men's 50+ division, winning **GOLD** against Sunset (Silver) and Bruin (Bronze).<sup>6</sup> The club also demonstrated strength in adjacent age groups, winning Gold in the Men's 45+ division.<sup>6</sup> The 55+ team did not place among the top finishers.<sup>6</sup>
- **2019 (Location TBD, likely CA):** The Men's 50+ team secured the **SILVER** medal, finishing second to The Olympic Club.<sup>15</sup> Dark Side demonstrated significant depth this year, winning **GOLD** in both the Men's 40+ and Men's 45+ divisions.<sup>15</sup> The 55+ team did not place in the top three.<sup>15</sup> The club's women's teams also medaled, earning Bronze in the 19+ and 30+ divisions.<sup>15</sup>

This consistent pattern of high achievement is striking. The 50+ team has been on the national podium every year they competed between 2019 and 2024, collecting three Gold medals and two Silver medals. The emergence of the 55+ team, culminating in their 2024 Gold medal since the 55+ team was newly formed and non-existent prior to 2024<sup>3</sup>, signifies a powerful progression and suggests a strong internal pipeline as athletes transition between age groups. This sustained success at the highest national level provides a compelling foundation for their international aspirations.

**Table 1: Dark Side Men's 50+ & 55+ USA Water Polo Masters National Championship Results (2019-2024)**

Year	Division	Medal/Rank	Key Opponents (Final/Placing)	Source Snippet(s)
2024	Men 50+	GOLD	2nd: Bruin 50s, 3rd: Bay Area Masters	<sup>3</sup>
2024	Men 55+	GOLD	2nd: The Olympic Club, 3rd: Denver Olds	<sup>3</sup>
2023	Men 50+	SILVER	1st: Santa Cruz Waxem (Lost Final 5-3), 3rd: Denver Water Polo	<sup>13</sup>
2023	Men 55+	Team did not exist		
2022	Men 50+	GOLD	2nd: Bruin (Won Final 6-5), 3rd: Bay Area Masters	<sup>5</sup>

2021	Men 50+	GOLD	2nd: Sunset, 3rd: Bruin	6
2019	Men 50+	SILVER	1st: The Olympic Club, 3rd: Blue Thunder	15

## 4. Global Contenders: World Aquatics (FINA) Masters Championships Performance

Building upon their national success, Dark Side has represented the United States with distinction on the international stage at the World Aquatics (formerly FINA) Masters Championships. Participation in this event represents the zenith of Masters water polo competition, bringing together the best club teams from around the globe. Dark Side's performances in the two most recent championships demonstrate their capability to compete and succeed against elite international opponents.

### 2023 World Aquatics Masters Championships (Kyushu, Japan):

- **Men's 50+:** Competing in Kumamoto, Japan, the Dark Side Men's 50+ team reached the pinnacle of their sport, capturing the **GOLD** medal and the title of World Champions.<sup>7</sup> Their victory occurred in an all-American final, highlighting the strength of USA Masters water polo and cementing Dark Side's position at its forefront.<sup>7</sup> This achievement, following their 2022 National Championship, clearly illustrates the team's ability to translate domestic dominance into international triumph, performing under the immense pressure of a world championship final.

### 2019 FINA World Masters Championships (Gwangju, South Korea):

- **Men's 50+:** Dark Side mounted a strong campaign in Gwangju, advancing through the preliminary rounds and reaching the medal stage. They engaged in tough preliminary matches, including a narrow 10-9 victory over UWA City Beach (Australia) and losses to eventual finalists The Olympic Club (USA, 5-3) and St-Petersburg Masters (Russia, 13-9).<sup>23</sup> In the semi-finals, they faced St-Petersburg Masters again, falling short in a 10-7 contest.<sup>25</sup> This placed them in the Bronze medal match against UWA City Beach, where they ultimately placed 3rd place winning the Bronze medal.

The progression from a competitive 3rd place finish in 2019 to securing the World Championship Gold in 2023 is a significant indicator of the 50+ team's development, resilience, and ability to adapt to the unique challenges of international play. This upward trajectory on the world stage, culminating in the 2023 title, provides strong validation of their capabilities and potential for continued success in Singapore 2025.

**Table 2: Dark Side Men's 50+ & 55+ World Aquatics Masters Championship Results (2019 & 2023)**

Year	Location	Division	Medal/Rank	Key Match Results (if available)	Source Snippet(s)
2023	Kyushu, Japan	Men 50+	GOLD	Won Gold Medal match (opponent details limited, likely all-American final)	7
2019	Gwangju, S. Korea	Men 50+	BRONZE	Won Bronze Medal Match	23

**5. The Athletes: Key Players and Proven Talent**

The remarkable success of the Dark Side 50+ and 55+ teams is fundamentally driven by the skill, experience, and dedication of their athletes. The rosters consistently feature players who have achieved national recognition through selection as USA Water Polo Masters Nationals All-Americans, signifying their status among the elite competitors in their age groups.

Analysis of All-American selections from the past three years (2022-2024) reveals a core group of highly talented individuals who have been instrumental in the teams' championship runs:

- **2024 All-Americans (National Championships):** Following their dominant double-gold performance, Dark Side placed numerous athletes on the All-

American lists <sup>8</sup>:

- *Men's 50+ (Gold Medal Team)*: Dan Della Maggiora, Matt Olyphant, Maarten Kraaijvanger, Jeff Andrews, Miguel Franco, Jason Bois.
- *Men's 55+ (Gold Medal Team)*: Lafond Gerard, Zack Rogers, Mark Stevenson, Steve Granick, Jeff Lewis, Jason Likins.
- **2023 All-Americans (National Championships)**: Representing the Silver medal-winning 50+ team <sup>13</sup>:
  - *Men's 50+ (Silver Medal Team)*: Doug Munz, Rick Freyre, Jim Hassett, Paul Kraaijvanger.
- **2022 All-Americans (National Championships)**: From the Gold medal-winning 50+ squad <sup>9</sup>:
  - *Men's 50+ (Gold Medal Team)*: Uzi Hadar, Paul Kraaijvanger, Dan Della Maggiora, Zack Rogers, Mark Stevenson, Maarten Kraaijvanger.

Several individuals stand out for their consistent high-level play and recognition:

- **Jason Bois**: A cornerstone of the 50+ team, Bois brings a wealth of experience and a championship pedigree. Residing in San Diego, he continues to compete actively for Darkside.<sup>1</sup> His resume includes being named a Masters All-American seven times and winning two Master National Championships. Crucially, he also possesses significant international experience, having earned Bronze medals at the 2010 and 2012 World Master Championships.<sup>1</sup> His presence adds undeniable prestige and proven performance capability to the roster.<sup>1</sup>
- **Dan Della Maggiora**: The team's standout goalie, Della Maggiora has been a consistent All-American selection for the 50+ team and a critical factor in their defensive success.<sup>8</sup> Game footage and recaps frequently highlight his crucial saves in championship moments, underpinning the team's ability to win tight contests.<sup>12</sup> His performance in the 2019 World Masters Championships semi-final and preliminary rounds further attests to his capabilities against international competition.<sup>30</sup>
- **Zack Rogers**: Rogers exemplifies the versatile talent within Dark Side, earning All-American honors in both the 50+ and 55+ divisions in recent years.<sup>8</sup> He contributes offensively, scoring key goals like a crucial 5-meter shot in the 2023 National final <sup>18</sup>, and embodies the team's spirit, as evidenced by his post-game comments following the 2022 National title.<sup>12</sup>
- **Consistent Contributors**: The repeated appearance of names like **Maarten Kraaijvanger** <sup>8</sup>, **Paul Kraaijvanger** <sup>9</sup>, **Mark Stevenson** <sup>8</sup>, **Jeff Lewis** <sup>8</sup>, and **Steve Granick** <sup>8</sup> on All-American lists across multiple years points to a stable, highly

skilled core group. This consistency provides a reliable foundation for the team's success, demonstrating that their performance is built on established talent and teamwork rather than fluctuating rosters.

The slight variations in All-American lists from year to year (e.g., 2023 vs. 2024 50+ lists <sup>8)</sup>) also suggest valuable roster depth. The club demonstrates an ability to integrate players effectively and adapt as individuals transition between age divisions (e.g., Rogers, Stevenson, Lewis, Granick, Peterson recognized in both 50+ and 55+ categories over time). This adaptability ensures the program remains competitive even with natural roster evolution.

**Table 3: Dark Side Men's 50+ & 55+ Key Players & Recent All-Americans (2022-2024)**

Player Name	Primary Division(s)	All-American Years (2022-24)	Notable Achievements/ Roles	Source Snippet(s)
Jason Bois	50+	2024	7x Masters All-American, 2x Nat Champ, 2x World Masters Bronze (2010, 2012), Key Player	1
Dan Della Maggiora	50+	2024, 2022	Elite Goalie, Key Saves in Championships, 2019 Worlds Player	8
Zack Rogers	50+, 55+	2024 (55+), 2022 (50+)	Key Goal Scorer, Team Spokesperson, 2023 50+ Finalist Player	8



Maarten Kraaijvanger	50+	2024, 2022	Consistent All-American	8
Paul Kraaijvanger	50+	2023, 2022	Consistent All-American, 2019 Worlds Player	9
Mark Stevenson	50+, 55+	2024 (55+), 2022 (50+)	Consistent All-American	8
Jeff Lewis	55+	2024	Consistent All-American, 2019 Worlds Player	8
Steve Granick	55+	2024	Consistent All-American	8
Matt Olyphant	50+	2024	2024 All-American (Gold Medal Team)	8
Jeff Andrews	50+	2024	2024 All-American (Gold Medal Team)	8
Miguel Franco	50+	2024	2024 All-American (Gold Medal Team)	8
Lafond Gerard	55+	2024	2024 All-American (Gold Medal Team)	8
Jason Likins	55+	2024	2024 All-American (Gold Medal Team)	8

Doug Munz	50+	2023	2023 All-American (Silver Medal Team)	13
Rick Freyre	50+	2023	2023 All-American (Silver Medal Team), 2019 Worlds Player	13
Jim Hassett	50+	2023	2023 All-American (Silver Medal Team)	13
Uzi Hadar	50+	2022	2022 All-American (Gold Medal Team)	9

## 6. Capturing Success: Team Photos and Notable Moments

Visual evidence plays a crucial role in conveying the success, professionalism, and competitive spirit of the Dark Side Masters teams. Fortunately, photographic documentation of their recent triumphs exists and serves as a powerful asset for engaging potential sponsors.

Specifically, team photos from the highly successful **2024 USA Water Polo Masters National Championships** are available. These images, published in the Summer 2024 issue of USA Water Polo's *Skip Shot* magazine, depict both the Men's 50+ and Men's 55+ teams celebrating their Gold medal victories.<sup>4</sup> The visuals show the teams arranged together, proudly displaying their championship medals – a compelling image of success and teamwork.<sup>4</sup>

Regarding international competition, **World Aquatics** maintains official photo galleries from its championship events, including the Masters Championships.<sup>22</sup> While the provided snippets do not contain direct links to specific Dark Side photos from the 2023 Kyushu event, the existence of official event photography (credited to photographers like Hiroyuki Nakamura<sup>34</sup>) makes it highly probable that images capturing the Men's 50+ team's Gold medal celebration exist. Sourcing these official images would provide invaluable visual documentation of their world championship

achievement.

Furthermore, historical context can be added through archived photos and video. USA Water Polo often maintains photo galleries from past Masters Nationals <sup>16</sup>, potentially offering images from the 2019, 2018, or 2016 events where Dark Side teams medaled.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, video footage exists from several key championship games, including the 2023 Men's 50+ National Final <sup>18</sup>, the 2022 Men's 50+ National Final <sup>12</sup>, and even older matches like the 2014 Men's 40+ National Final.<sup>10</sup> These videos can be leveraged for dynamic action stills or highlight reels, further illustrating the team's skill and the excitement of the competition.

Integrating these visuals – particularly the recent championship team photos showcasing medals <sup>4</sup> and potential action shots from national and world events – into sponsorship proposals and presentations is essential. They offer immediate, impactful proof of the team's elite status and achievements, resonating more powerfully than text alone and effectively capturing the essence of their success.

## **7. Partnership for Victory: Sponsoring Dark Side's Road to Singapore 2025**

The evidence presented paints a clear picture of the Dark Side Men's 50+ and 55+ water polo teams: they are a dominant force nationally, proven champions on the world stage, and comprised of highly skilled, decorated, and dedicated athletes operating within a stable and enduring program. Their consistent podium finishes at the USA Water Polo Masters National Championships, highlighted by multiple Gold medals including the 50+/55+ sweep in 2024 <sup>3</sup>, and their crowning achievement of winning the 50+ World Aquatics Masters Championship in 2023 <sup>7</sup>, demonstrate an unwavering commitment to excellence.

The **2025 World Aquatics Masters Championships in Singapore** [User Query] represents the next major objective for these accomplished teams. This prestigious event offers significant global visibility and presents a prime opportunity for sponsors to align with a team poised for continued international success. Competing at this level requires substantial resources, and partnership is crucial to enabling these athletes to focus on defending their world title and pursuing further glory.

A partnership with Dark Side Masters Water Polo offers compelling benefits:

- **Brand Alignment:** Associate your brand with the positive attributes embodied by this team – victory, perseverance, teamwork, dedication, high performance, and

the promotion of a healthy, active lifestyle sustained over decades. Aligning with national and world champions offers inherent prestige.

- **Visibility:** Gain exposure within the passionate and engaged water polo community, both locally in San Diego <sup>1</sup> and nationally/internationally through team apparel, potential event recognition (subject to regulations), and media surrounding the team's participation and success at a major global event like the World Masters Championships.
- **Compelling Narrative:** Become an integral part of the inspiring story of experienced athletes defying age barriers to compete at the highest level of their sport. Supporting their journey to Singapore allows sponsors to share in the narrative of dedication, ambition, and potential triumph on an international platform.

Dark Side Masters Water Polo has proven its ability to compete and win against the best in the world. Their track record speaks for itself. We invite forward-thinking organizations to partner with the Dark Side 50+ and 55+ teams on their journey to the World Aquatics Masters Championships in Singapore 2025. An investment in Dark Side is an investment in proven success, dedication, and the pursuit of excellence on a global stage. Join us in fueling the next chapter of their championship legacy.

*(For sponsorship inquiries, please contact our Sponsorship Coordinator via email [info@darksidewaterpolo.org](mailto:info@darksidewaterpolo.org))*

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