

*For immediate release
Thursday 16 May*

OGO buys Zorb – now rolling as one

The Zorb journey has come full circle with the inventor buying back the company launched 25 years ago, amalgamating the OGO business to offer the world's premier ball rolling park.

The agreement between Zorb and the inventor of downhill ball rolling Andrew Akers and his brother David Akers of OGO, went unconditional on Tuesday 14 May. As of this Friday, the Zorb Rotorua site will be closed with all pre-paid Zorb tickets able to be redeemed at OGO.

Akers says he's excited about the fact he and David will be reunited with the brand they created.

"It's a little unreal at this stage and it may take a few months to sink in.

"In a strange way, the Zorb brand has always remained with me and despite being in competition since we left the business and launched OGO, I've always been attached to what we created all those years ago."

The original idea for the invention by Akers and Dwane van der Sluis came from wanting to walk on water. The double skinned inflatable sphere was created with no previous experience or knowledge - they used plastic and glue, starting from scratch to continually improve the ball. However, the problem was the finished sphere couldn't be controlled on water, so they started rolling people down hills instead.

The sphere was initially called The Orb, then NZorb, finally settling on "Zorb", with trading beginning in December 1995. Bringing on board two investors, Zorb Limited was created, and the team commercialised downhill ball rolling, later setting up their own franchise network around the globe.

Unhappy with the direction of the company once professional investors became involved, Andrew and David left Zorb in April 2006.

Fast-forward to 2010, the brothers set up their OGO (Outdoor Gravity Orb) downhill ball rolling operation in Rotorua on the 17-acre original ball rolling site owned by local iwi Ngati Whakaue.

Akers says in the last five years he has been talking with Zorb's current owners about potentially purchasing the business. An agreement was finally reached this year.

"We have purchased the entirety of the Zorb group of companies including all patents, international trademarks, assets and opportunities."

He explains the addition of Zorb to OGO will allow the business to reinvest further in the infrastructure of the OGO site, enhance the customer experience and cement the site as the premier ball-rolling park in the world.

As for the brand name moving forward, Akers says they'll run the brands side by side, while a decision is made for the future.

"We're looking forward to clearing up any confusion in the marketplace."

Akers says the journey with his invention has taught some life lessons.

"Have passion for what you do, enjoy every element of what you do, make your job into the most fun thing you can do and have the courage of your convictions."

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The full history of Zorb & OGO (<https://ogo.co.nz/>)

Downhill ball rolling in a giant inflatable sphere can be experienced all over the world thanks to two Kiwi blokes, Andrew Akers and Dwane van der Sluis, who invented the craze in 1994. Now OGO is manufactured and operated by Andrew and his brother David in Rotorua, New Zealand and exported around the world.

The original idea came from wanting to walk on water. One of the initial ideas was to build some big inflatable shoes, however, the problem was that if you fell over in the water, the shoes would still float, but you wouldn't, leaving you upside down in the water with no way to get upright again. So then the pair thought... what if the shoes went right around you?

That's where the concept of building a big sphere with two skins came from (so you didn't have to inflate and deflate the ball every time you got in or out of it). The problem was, the ball couldn't be controlled, and the inventors were worried you'd end up floating off to South America...so they started rolling people down hills instead.

Constructed in Andrew's garage, after he'd finished studying design, philosophy and linguistics and while Dwane worked as a software engineer, the double skinned inflatable sphere invention was created with no previous experience or knowledge. The pair used plastic and glue, starting from scratch to continually improve the ball.

Andrew has always loved creating something that no-one else has considered. For example, he and his brother David developed a range of games including one picked up by Hasbro USA which featured on the Ellen DeGeneres show.

The double skinned inflatable sphere was initially called The Orb, then NZ Orb, finally settling on "Zorb", with trading beginning in December 1995. A temporary site was set up in Auckland until the first permanent site was established in 1997 in Rotorua, where Andrew's brother, David, joined the business to help run operations.

Bringing on board two investors, Zorb Limited was created, and the team commercialised downhill ball rolling, later setting up their own franchise network around the globe.

Zorbing entered the Concise Oxford English Dictionary in 2001 where it was defined as: a sport in which a participant is secured inside an inner capsule in a large, transparent ball which is then rolled along the ground or down hills.

In 1999, Dwane left the company to return to his career as a software engineer, while Andrew continued to run the company as CEO. Unhappy with the direction of the company, once professional investors became involved, Andrew and David left ZORB in April 2006.

Fast-forward to 2010, the brothers set up their OGO (Outdoor Gravity Orb) downhill ball rolling operation in Rotorua on the 17-acre original ball rolling site owned by local iwi.

This was an opportunity to follow their vision and passion without the constraints of shareholders or external business partners that may not share the same view.

Locally owned and operated, OGO is the world's largest downhill ball rolling park and is situated overlooking Lake Rotorua and Mokoia Island. It is a slice of Kiwi ingenuity that has been recognised throughout New Zealand and the world.

David and Andrew are onsite at OGO every day and visitors can wander up to the factory and ask them questions about how they make the balls. The staff often joke with the customers saying 'see that dude mowing the lawns?' He's the inventor... oddly enough, Andrew normally is mowing the lawns!

OGOs are completely designed and made in a purpose built factory on-site in Rotorua. There is a constant research and development programme that OGO undertakes to continually improve the balls and to develop new products (e.g. the DRYGO).

OGO now has four different track options for customers, an automated return system for the balls (the TOWGO) as well hot tubs and barista coffee for customers.

In May 2019, the Zorb journey came full circle with Andrew and David buying back the original business launched 25 years ago, amalgamating the OGO business. The addition of Zorb to OGO will allow the business to reinvest further in the infrastructure of the OGO site, enhancing the customer experience and cementing the site as the premiere ball-rolling park in the world.

About OGO:

Superman dive into a giant inflatable ball and roll down Mt Ngongotaha with OGO where the fun will have you laughing uncontrollably. Owned and operated by the Kiwi inventor, discover the world's longest zig-zag Sidewinder course at 350m and the straight 250m double track to race friends with or without water. The H2OGO option will have you slipping

and sliding all over the show in a moving waterslide experience, with 40 litres of water (warm/cold – your choice). In winter, you'll never get cold with hot spas to keep toasty in between rides, an outdoor fire pumping serious warmth, heated changing rooms for afterwards and delicious barista made coffee on-site too. www.ogo.co.nz