

Zenith Parietal

Zenith Parietal FC is a professional football club from Parietal, Diacria, Pharos. They played their home games in Malbran Stadium, one of the oldest stadiums in Pharos, before building a new venue, the BTB Arena in 2008. They are nicknamed 'The Sharks' or 'The Z's'.



History

Formative years

Zenith was formed in Parietal's Malbran Lane, a Pharonian-football field, built on a road named after the Malbran family of file and graver manufacturers. The Malbrans owned The Old White House, on the corner of Malbran Lane and Cherry Street, and the Sheaf House, now a pub, that still stands at the top of the new BTB Arena. On 22 March 1889, at the suggestion of Arlo Klegg, president of Zenith Pharonian Football Club, a Soccer branch was created, so the stadium could have revenue during the winter months that the Pharonian Football events did not take place.



Malbran Lane, 1900's

The club applied for membership in the Diacrian Football Association and was admitted in the 2nd division. Zenith made waves straight away, securing promotion to the first division in 1892-93, after finishing second to Standard Nacken.

The glory years

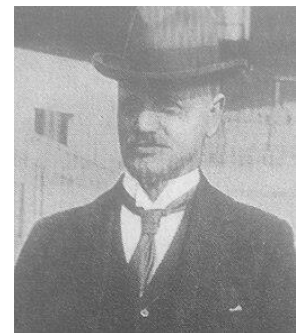


Zenith Parietal 1896

Zenith won their first title in 1896, when they beat Diacrian champions Dynamo Lys 3-1 in the Diacrian Cup final. Jan Olson was the club's secretary, as the club did not employ a 'manager' but Olson undertook many of the duties currently associated with a modern-day football manager. He would

remain with the club for more than 30 years.

Zenith would win their first Diacrian Championship in 1902 and they repeated their triumph the next season. They also became



Jan Olson



Zenith Parietal, 1902 Diacrian Champions

Diacria's most successful club, winning the Diacrian Cup 4 years-in-a-row, from 1902 to 1905. The team featured players like goalkeeper Vil Foulk (nicknamed Fatty), right back Harl Thickitt, center half Ton Morren, left half Ernes Needham, who was the team's captain and forwards Jan Almon and Fran Prest.

In 1919 Zenith, always under the guidance of Jan Olson, would win another Diacrian Championship title. This time they would compete in the National Championship that had formed in 1917. They finished in 8th position, with 33-year-old Linge Veir scoring 14 goals, the top scorer of the National League that year. They would win another championship 3 years later, in 1922. This time they finished in 6th position in the Nationals.



Zenith Parietal 1919 Diacria's Champions

Back row: Jan Olson (secretary-manager), Huber Tilker, Erden Velner, Lepold Manl, Marian Schleh. Front row (sitting): Einmar Kalin, Iro Namas, Jan Nout, Gebor Dibl, Alan Klimm. On the ground: Linge Veir, Lovell Staff.

Zenith would win 2 more Diacrian titles in 1927 and 1928, breaking Chiftelov Sport's domination (the Satemberg club won the title from 1923 to 1926 and then from 1929 to 1937). These titles were the last ones with Jan Olson as manager, who retired to become the club's president. There were also the last ones for the club for a period that would last more than 40 years.

Disappointment and relegation (late 1930s)

After several close shaves – including the 1928 title defence, 1934–35, when they won just 6 matches, and 1935–36, when a 5–1 win at Satemberg vs Sliema Foy on the final day pulled them out of the bottom spot – they finished bottom of the Diacrian First Division in 1937 and were relegated for the first time.



Jari Birtus

A contributing factor to relegation was the decision to sell centre forward Jari Birtus, who scored over 140 goals for the club in just six seasons, to Progres Parva early in the 1933–34 season. Birtus scored over 30 top division goals in each of 3 consecutive seasons between 1930–31 and 1932–33, a feat which remains the club record.

They fell just short in promotion battles in 1936 and 1938 – finishing third in the Second Division on each occasion – but it was third time lucky when they pipped local rivals Diacria Parietal FC for second spot in 1939, winning their last game 6–1 against Ritma Artena. They started the 1939–40 season brightly before World War II curtailed the campaign.

Post-war (1940s–1950s)

During the WWII years, Zenith barely made the position above the relegation line in the 1st division, with the exception of a 6th place in 1944–45, combined with reaching the Diacrian Cup Quarter-finals.

This good form was not to last, as the club were relegated again in 1948–49, and suffered the agony of missing out on an instant promotion the following season when Diacria Parietal FC, their town rivals, gained revenge for 1939 and pipped them for second place and promotion on goal average with a 0–0 draw at home to Chiftelov Sport when a scoring draw or defeat would have sent The Sharks up instead.

After a couple of middling seasons, featuring many goals (including 7–3 and 3–1 wins against the Ravens of Diacria Parietal in the Town Derby 1951–52), but inconsistent results, Telos Davins, who had succeeded Jan Olson as manager, ended his 20-year managerial career at the Lane. He was replaced by Ral Freeman, who guided the Sharks to the Second Division Championship in 1952–53. Two seasons of struggle,



Ral Freeman

but survival, in the First Division followed before Freeman died suddenly in the summer of 1955. His replacement, Yol Mercen, was unable to stave off relegation in 1956.

Revival (1960's-mid 70's)

Mercen left the club in 1958 and was replaced by Yord Sirel. Sirel led the team back to the Diacrian 1st division in 1960 using some players from the youth squad, such as midfielder Han Niemi, defenders Bel



Yol van Baal



Roman Sis

Etnig and Marlon Keys and the twin brothers Eugen and Lewis



Yord Sirel

Valner in attack. He also brought to Parietal midfielders Yol van Baal (who had just returned to Pharos after a 5-year spell with the Dutch team Feyenoord) and Roman Sis from Dynamo Lys.

The team of youngsters continued the good form, finishing at the top 6 positions of the Diacrian League from 1965 to 1970, with their best run, a 3rd place in 1969. In 1971 their time had come; they won the Diacrian Championship, 43 years after their last one in 1928 and played in the National Championship, finishing in 8th place.



Malbran Lane South Stand 1975

The remarkable success in the early 1970s brought to a head the long-standing argument about the ground and a decision was taken to build a new stand to provide a fourth side to what was essentially a three-sided stadium. This stand (originally known as 'The South Stand') with a seating capacity of 4,746 people, was opened in 1975.

Relegation from PSL and 18 titles in 21 years

When the PSL was formed in 1981, Zenith Parietal was awarded a spot in the 2nd division, alongside Chiftelov Sport (only Atlantic Union represented Diacria in PSL A division). After a 13th place finish in the inaugural season, the Parietal side was relegated to the local league in 1982-83.

They would win 18 Diacrian titles from 1983 to 2004, missing only 3 (to Metalx Sacralia in 1994 and 1995 and to De Graaf Lamina in 2000). They would also win the PSC National title in 1989, 1993 and 2003.

New owner, new stadium and the PSL era

With the expansion of PSL in 2004, Zenith played in PSL B, finishing in 7th position in 2004-05 under manager Yol Daluben.



Ion Felp

By 2002, millionaire Ion Felp, founder of Resilience Capital Partners, an equity investment group, made an offer to buy the club. The board agreed to the transfer of the shares and so Felp became Zenith's new owner and president.

One of the first tasks undertaken by Felp, was to make plans for a new, modern stadium. Designed by the famous KSS Group office, Parietal's new football stadium was put forward immediately. The old stadium had to be demolished by the end of the 2006 season and construction took only 18 months. The stadium, with a capacity of just over 18,000, had 6 VIP quadrants and 14 individual sky-boxes. The natural pitch does not have any analogues in PSL. The BTB Arena is the only stadium in Pharus using SGL technology and PROZONE system. Naming rights were awarded to BTB Shipping Company, one of Felp's companies, for a period of 15 years.



BTB Arena, Zenith's new stadium

Zenith would struggle in PSL B, usually finishing at the bottom half of the table, with the exception of 2009-10, when they finished in 6th position under manager Dokor Sis, who left at the end of the season to become National Team manager. Kleon Ursel and Valter Sanders



Helnus Felp

succeeded Sis as manager the next seasons, with no significant results.

In 2014 Ion Felp made his son Helnus president of the club, giving him the management. Zenith would avoid relegation that year by winning the play-out game against Kar Runui, but could not avoid it in 2017, when the club finished in 17th place under new manager Jan Nolan, who was fired by Felp at the end of the season.

Albi Molin, who had worked with the club in 2009 came back and Zenith was back to PSL B next season, only to be relegated again in 2018-19 and Molin was let go. Kleon Ursel, who had worked as manager in Parietal twice in the past (2010-12 and 2014-16) was hired for a third time.

Ursel took an aging team and completely restructured it, giving the chance to many players from the youth squad to show their talent. With an average age of less than 23 years and amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, Zenith youth finished on top of the

PSC A league in 2020-21 and came back to PSL. Ursel's young Zenith team went a step further, as they finished in 7th position in 2021-22, featuring players like midfielder Linge Ays (who was sold to Zaria) and winger Marlon Seni (who was sold to Belgian side Standard Liege).

In 2023 Ursel left for Atlantic Union, with Helnus De Brul replacing him. He was let go after a disappointing 14th place and Yol van der Ven took his place, leading Zenith to 7th place in 2024-25.



Kleon Ursel