

## Cotogni Sport: Where Passion is a Family Affair

*The management of the sports shop specialising in tennis and skiing is passed on from father Paul to his daughters Annalisa and Valeria. A long history of nearly 50 years, made up of expertise and customer focus.*



Activities, companies, businesses – everything can be sold and exchanged from one set of hands to the other; just go to a notary and register the transaction. However, passion for work cannot just be transmitted through a formal act. It is necessary that there is the same spirit, the same care and attention to detail on both sides. This is exactly what happened to the Cotogni sports store in Terni.

Opened by papà Paolo nearly 50 years ago, today it is managed by Annalise and Valeria. They like to think of themselves as consultants before they are shopkeepers. To cross the threshold of the shop is to enter into a world where the customer is advised and guided step by step in his choices and in which, together with the items, they sell expertise and experience.

“It is exactly this that we offer that goes beyond what the large retailers provide,” Valeria explains. “People buy the products that they understand. Otherwise there’s a risk of associating the price with the brand and not with the quality of the item”.

It is for this reason that whole generations of sportsmen and sportswomen have trusted them when making their purchases. Cotogni Sport has become a point of reference for those practising tennis, skiing, trekking and other outdoor disciplines, gaining a reputation of trustworthiness and competence that nowadays, after many years, is its primary distinguishing feature. All of this is thanks to the vast assortment of the best brands on the market: Australian, Dainese, Wilson and Asics, amongst others, guaranteeing top performance.

From technical gear to snowshoes, boots, overalls and shoes, the shop provides the best products for its customers who are demanding, who want the best of what the market has to offer and who know where to find it when they enter the store on Via Pacinotti.

“We got the sports gene from our father,” says Valeria. “We grew up around sports and we ourselves practised various disciplines, just like him”. It is sporting family that brought the experience and accumulated expertise to the shop in Terni, and, it is appropriate to say, in the field. It all started with the career of Paolo Cotogni who, in the early 1960s at only 19 years old, became a tennis master before turning to the Italian courts (mostly clay) to teach the sports’ techniques. After a few years, he thought to open a business that would provide customers with the tools needed to practice the discipline and the expertise to help them choose the best equipment. In addition to tennis, Paolo immediately added ski essentials to his stock and other sports considered ‘niche’ and requiring very particular instrumentation.

After the first years in Narni (from 1970 to 1975), the shop moved to one of the principle streets in Terni, a stone’s throw away from Piazza Tacito. The reason for Cotogni Sport’s success and longevity do not only lie in the fact that it has quality products for sale but also in the type of service that clients can rely on in the shop: smiles, courtesy and availability. “At our shop, there’s always time for chit-chat, to exchange opinions and to feel at home,” Annalisa explains. “For us, selling has never meant just giving the client a pair of shoes or a racket, but also making him or her feel right at home”.

There’s time to talk and to explain the key features of the item being purchased, adds Paolo. “One ski boot, for instance, is a very particular product. You need to understand not only what fits best, but also what is more suitable for the kind of sport you’re taking on board. There are many factors at play, starting from experience in practising the discipline. This might take more than an hour and the price also includes the necessary technical advice provided by our experience in the industry.” The same goes for tennis (“It makes no sense that a person who has just started playing buys a hyper-technological racket and it’s up to us to direct him or her towards what they really need”) and for other sports.

Seriousness and competence is what Cotogni Sport has to offer, and quality that has always been recognised by many loyal customers, “nearly 80% of all those who come to us,” explains Valeria. Their attachment has resisted even the arrival of the great sports apparel chains that are able to offer products at very low prices. Other stores similar to the Cotogni family have felt the blow and lost customers and turnover. Others, on the contrary, continued to do their work while maintaining the high quality of what they had to offer by continuing to rely on the best brands in the industry: “those who we know and trust”.

It's a "challenge" with the large retailers who seem to have won, explains Annalisa: "It seems paradoxical, but somehow this sports shops boom has given us a hand because customers have begun to notice the difference in the quality of our brands and to understand that if they come to us then, they'll notice a positive difference in how they play or when they're skiing". Almost 50 years of experience that makes all the difference and guarantees that clients will leave the store with a very high quality produce.