

VIRGINIA POLO

65th Anniversary

2018 - 2019



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Articles

It goes without saying that without the support of our alumni, families, and the numerous sponsors of Virginia Polo, that our club would not stand as tall as it does today. The beautiful facilities, world-class intercollegiate horses, and welcoming environment would not be possible without the support showcased in these pages.

For the 2018 edition of the Virginia Polo Magazine, we have chosen to highlight the global connectivity of polo. Part of what makes this sport so incredible is the way in which it draws together players from all around the world. At Virginia Polo alone, we have students from the west coast and south-eastern United States, from Uruguay and Portugal, from Spain and the United Kingdom. As a club, we practice constantly to push ourselves to be the best players and representatives of Virginia Polo that we can be, no matter where in the world we might find ourselves.

As we celebrate the 65th year of Virginia Polo, we look back on all those who helped grow this club from a dream into such a monumental reality. We would like to extend a thank you to Kathy Rhoad, Franziska Matiuk, Nancy Schlichting, Lou Lopez, Jessica Schmitt, and Trina Nesterowich at Toof Printing for making this magazine possible.

Jessica Riemann, Editor & Treasurer, 2019

Demitra Hajimihalís, President, 2020

A Special Thank You To Those Who Support The Virginia Polo Team

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Joel Gibbons

Memphis Polo Club
Taylor's Auto Body
Lara Morabito Gardens

THE COACHES

LOUIS LOPEZ JR.

Head Coach & General Manager

Lou's first exposure to polo came as a high school sophomore when he attended a clinic sponsored by the Meadowbrook Pony Club at Yale University. To continue learning he played bicycle polo with Boxwood Bike Polo Club and worked for polo players throughout the summers. Lou attended Colorado State University where he started the club by recruiting members and registering it as a student organization. After graduation, Lou went on to teach high school in Connecticut. He leased horses from Yale to play polo with Farmington Polo Club. Lou left teaching to become coach and general manager of the Yale Polo and Equestrian Center. After winning a national championship against UVA in 1986, Lou spent the next 20 years earning his living managing clubs, training and selling polo ponies, and competing both in the arena as well as outdoors. Lou Lopez is in his 15th year as head coach. Under his leadership, Virginia has won 6 Women's and 4 Men's national titles.



JESSICA SCHMITT

Barn Manager & Assistant Coach

Jessica Schmitt graduated from UVA last year and has taken a role as the barn manager and coach of the VA Juniors and the club team. She has been with the VA Polo program for 9 years, starting on the high school team and eventually being a part of the Intercollegiate National Team in 2017 and the runners up in 2018. She wrapped up her intercollegiate polo career as the 2018 Daniel J. Wallace, Jr. Intercollegiate Female Player of the year. She hopes to give back to VA Polo for all that it has done for her and is looking forward to a successful year!

RECENT EVENTS

Having a facility such as ours that has the ability to offer polo rain or shine has allowed us to make the best of a very rainy summer.

A lot has happened since the last Magazine. Here is a summary of those activities that make Virginia Polo so special.

USPA Instructor Certification

We hosted a 2 day certification with 8 participants. The second phase to be held at Virginia Polo at a date still to be determined.

Summer Clinics

We held 2 clinics this past summer. Our July clinic had 16 participants, and our August clinic had 26 participants. These clinics are 3-day events with mounted and unmounted sessions. Each day consists of 3 mounted instructional sessions along with as many classroom sessions. The day ends with participants being able to apply what they have learned in a competitive tournament.



Summer Day Camp

We held one week of day camp this year for 10-14-year-olds with riding experience. They received two mounted sessions per day with a polo match for the parents to see their progress on the final day. The idea here is to develop future high school players from this effort.

National Women's Arena Open and Handicap

We once again hosted these two women's events. There were 2 teams in the open division, and 4 teams in the handicap. Our Woman's Varsity Team made it to the finals this year in the handicap and are very competitive.



Virginia Polo 65th Reunion

This year marked Virginia Polo's 65th anniversary. Dan Colhoun, and Don Hanna represented our founders and both gave very inspirational speeches. Alumni, board members, parents, and current students spent an evening under the tent at the Beh house. Alumni chukkers were enjoyed by many.



Virginia Polo Fall Invitational

8 teams participated in our highly competitive Fall Invitational. 4 men's teams: UVA, Western Ontario, UK, and Cornell. 4 women's teams: UVA, UK, Texas A&M, and Cornell. Our Men came in first and our Women made it to the finals, coming in second.

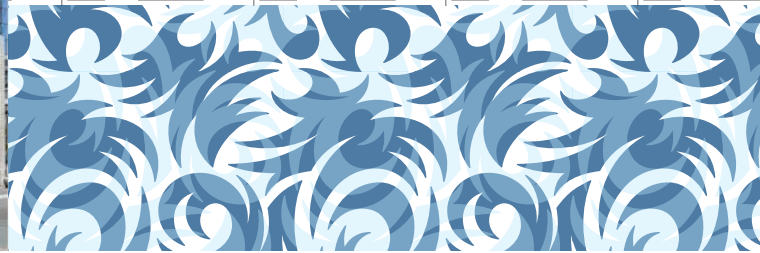
Virginia Polo Collegiate Season

Our Men's team, currently ranked #1 has had an incredible season. They are undefeated winning all games at home and away by large margins. Our Women's team, currently ranked #2 in the country has lost only to the current #1 seed. Our Club team is undefeated this season.





Good Luck to the
Mens and Womens
University of
Virginia Polo Teams
for the 2018-2019
Season



WE KEEP YOU

IN THE GAME



CAPTAIN'S LETTERS

Women's Varsity

As the summer comes to an end and the fall season gets underway, students return to Virginia Polo with the excitement of reuniting with fellow teammates and favored ponies. With great anticipation of another exciting year, we gather to discuss exciting new ways to progress as a team and hope to follow the path that others worked hard to lay before us. Reminiscing on previous years brings back fond memories of experiences had with each other and past teammates, and we look to keep this great atmosphere as we welcome new players into the program. We are thankful for all of the support we receive from alumni, friends, family, teammates, and our coach Lou Lopez in order to make our program like no other.

This year we are fortunate enough to have six returning players with the addition of two new players to our Varsity team. Despite all efforts to come out on top in the 2018 National Intercollegiate Tournament, we fell to Texas A&M in the final match. We are very fortunate to have a team consisting of competitive players that drive each other to work hard and improve on a daily basis. With this work ethic, we are hopeful that we will be able to have a successful year and come out on top. We are also so thankful to have quality horses and we will continue to give them the best care possible.

As a fourth year at the University of Virginia, I am honored to be the captain of such a dedicated and passionate team and I can only hope that we will leave a good impression on the Virginia Polo program.

Sadie Bryant, 2019



Men's Varsity

Virginia Polo offers UVA students the opportunity to practice, play, and compete at one of the most pristine facilities in the nation under a program dedicated to intercollegiate polo. My teammates and I look forward to having the opportunity for daily stick and ball as well as weekly practices on our impeccable horses.

It is an honor to be captaining a team of talented and hard-working players, and I have no doubt that we will make substantial collective growth this year. Like my fellow first years on the team, we are hungry for intercollegiate domination and will accept nothing less. We are thrilled to be competing for our university in tournaments throughout the fall and hope to bring home a national championship title in the spring.

I cannot thank the Virginia Polo Board as well as coach Lou Lopez & assistant coach Jessica Schmitt enough for the tireless effort they put in to maintaining and growing the Virginia Polo program. Without them, we would not have all the incredible opportunities on the farm and abroad that we are so blessed to have.

Jack McLean, 2022



WOMEN'S VARSITY



Sadie Bryant is a fourth year majoring in psychology. She has been playing polo for 9 years and is captain of the women's varsity polo team. She started playing polo in 8th grade with the Virginia Juniors Team and looks forward to ending her college career with Virginia Polo as well. She also looks forward to another fun and successful year with her teammates.

Demitra Hajimihalis is a third year and is the President of Virginia Polo Club. She is majoring in Music with a minor in Philosophy. She is a member of the Women's Varsity team. She began polo at Garrison Forest, and prior to Polo, was in the hunter-jumper world. Her favorite Virginia Polo Ponies are Whiskey, Allie, and Magnolia. She is looking forward to a great



Meghan Milligan is a third year on the Women's Varsity team, majoring in Cognitive Science/Neuroscience. She started playing polo 5 years ago with the University of Virginia high school program, but has been riding since she was 6; competing in 3 day eventing prior to making the switch to polo. LJ and Lou Lopez saw her pick up a mallet for the first time 5 years ago and are the only coaches she has ever had. Meghan is super excited about the team this year and for the upcoming season(s)!

Jessica Riemann is a fourth year majoring in English Literature. She is the Treasurer of the Virginia Polo Club. She has been playing polo for 12 years and is looking forward to her final year at UVA and another great season with her teammates!



2018-2019



Grace Burgert is a first year in the College of Arts and Sciences with plans of majoring in History. She has been playing polo for 5 years — primarily with her family’s team, Listo Polo — and her high school interscholastic team, Houston Girls’ ERG. She is excited to begin her intercollegiate polo career and looks forward to competing against teams from across the country this coming year.

Connell Erb is a fourth year majoring in history and minoring in religious studies. She began playing polo at a young age with her family in Memphis, TN, and competed in USPA interscholastic tournaments throughout high school. Connell has loved her time at UVA polo and is excited for the year to come!



Mia Sweeney is a second year at UVA from Santa Barbara California. She has been playing polo for 4 years and is very happy to be a part of the Virginia Polo women’s varsity team where she can continue to develop her polo skills. Mia hopes to focus on cinematography and art history studies while pursuing polo. She can’t wait to play polo in the upcoming years and to meet the inspiring people involved in it.

Maddie Grant is a first year at Piedmont Virginia Community College with the intention of transferring to UVA next year. She has been playing polo for eight years and is a member of the women’s varsity polo team. Maddie has won four Girls National Interscholastic Championships with the Maryland Varsity Girls Team and has played in the last five consecutive finals. Maddie is looking forward to her first year of Virginia Polo!



MEN'S VARSITY



Jack McLean is a first year from Pittsburgh, PA and has been playing polo for seven years. His favorite horses at the Virginia Polo Center are Kodak and Tapa. He is a frequent player in the Polo Training Foundation (PTF) and USPA National Youth Tournaments. Jack has represented US Junior Polo in New Zealand, Guatemala and England. Along with teammate Brennan Wells, he helped lead the Maryland Boys Team to two National Interscholastic Championship titles in 2017 & 2018. Jack is looking forward to a successful year of polo at UVA.

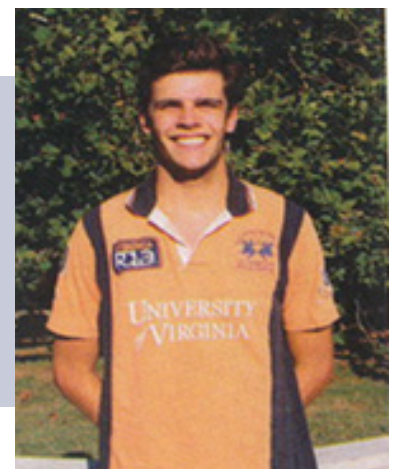
Ignacio (Nachi) Viana is a first year in the College of Arts and Sciences. He has been playing polo for 14 years. One of his most memorable career highlights is playing in the FIP qualifications for the World Cup for Uruguay. He spent the summer playing in California in the Pacific Coast Open for Farmers & Merchants Bank. Ignacio is excited for his first year at UVA and hopes to have a successful year.



Brennan Wells is a first year studying economics. He grew up on Marlan Farm in Maryland where he learned how to play polo and has been playing for about 12 years. One of his proudest accomplishments is winning the Interscholastic Open National Championship two years (2017 & 2018) in a row. Brennan was named interscholastic player of the year for the year of 2018. Brennan is super excited to start his first year at UVA and is striving to win a collegiate championship.



Antonio Mendes de Almeida is a Portuguese third year majoring in Systems Engineering and Economics. He has been playing polo for 10 years and is a member of the men's varsity polo team. Aside from Polo, Antonio is interested in Rugby, Mountain Climbing and Freshwater Fishkeeping. He is excited to start another year of polo at UVA and hopes to have a successful year.



2018-2019



Simon Colloredo-Mansfeld is a fourth year History major. He has been a member of the Men's Varsity team for four years. He is pumped for a great season!



CLUB TEAM 2018-2019



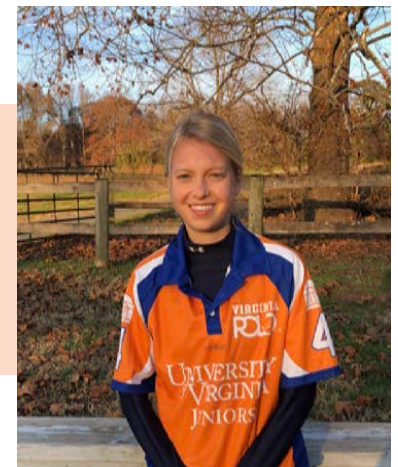
Lowry Neil is a fourth year majoring in Foreign Affairs and minoring in Slavic Studies. She began playing polo as a Bootcamper here at Virginia Polo and got hooked! (Pun intended.) Lowry's favorite horses are Pitufa and Lilly, and she looks forward to scheduling more challenging games for the club team this year. She is currently one of the Club Team Co-Captains and hopes to continue playing after she graduates.

Maria Curtichs Blasco is a third year student double majoring in Commerce and Psychology. She started riding at the age of three and was a show-jumper until she got to UVA and discovered polo! She realized polo was a lot more fun and never show jumped again. This year she is the co-captain of the Club Team.



Madeline Briggs is a third year studying Media Studies and Architecture. She has been playing polo for 5 years and is a member of the Club Team. Madeline is excited for another year of polo and hopes to have success in the games over the year. She also is looking forward to playing during the summer in New York after the school year ends.

Rosalie Hunter is a fourth year studying Computer Science. She started polo with UVA's Boot Camp Program in her first year and has been playing ever since. Her favorite barn chore is throwing hay off the Gator. She looks forward to playing yet another year of Virginia Polo.





Glenn Catlett is a third year student studying Economics and Spanish from Boyce, Virginia. He participated in Pony Club and competed in eventing before joining the polo team his second year. As an avid equestrian, Glenn has found the polo barn to be the perfect break from grounds.

Ethan Schmidt is a second year pre-comm student from Warrenton, Va. Ethan only recently started polo after years in the sleepy hunter ring. His favorite horse is pitufa and Ethan hopes to see UVA basketball redeem themselves with a deep tourney run.



Jack Dunlap is a third year in the College majoring in Foreign Affairs. He started playing polo here at UVA one year ago and now plays on the Club Team. Jack hopes to continue to improve his polo career throughout his time at UVA and possibility after, conditions permitting.

Connor Finemore is a first year pre-comm student from Sydney, Australia. Connor started playing polo after much encouragement from his father who has played for many years prior. His favorite horses are Bacardi and Salmon.



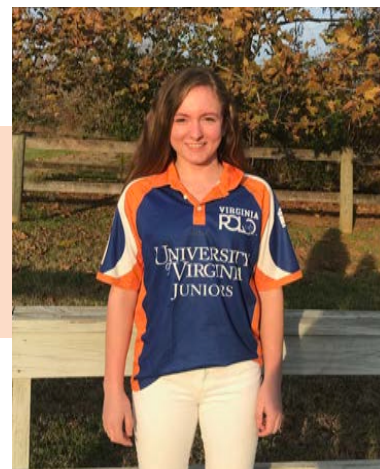
Madeleine Wallach is a third year studio art major concentrating in photography. She has been playing polo for three years and is a member of the Club Team. She works as a polo groom in Middleburg, Virginia during the summer and is very excited for another year of polo at UVA.

JUNIORS TEAM 2018-2019



Emmie Golkosky, 17 years old, is a senior at Brentsville High School in Nokesville, VA. She has been riding for 9 years and playing polo competitively for 7 years. She hopes to continue her polo career throughout college.

Lauren Rapp, 16 years old, is a junior at Woodgrove High School. She has been playing polo for five years and has been riding since the age of seven. Her favorite pony at Virginia Polo is Snickers.



Coco de Vink, 14 years old, is a freshman at St. Annes Belfield School. She has been playing polo for a year, but has been riding for her whole life. Her favorite pony at Virginia Polo is Teddy. Outside of polo, she plays Lacrosse for STAB.



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Polo in...

Portugal

By Antonio Mendes de Almeida



At a very young age I began spending most of my weekends with my cousins at my farm learning how to ride. When I was around twelve years old my cousins became fascinated with polo, losing their past previous passion for show-jumping. The minute I picked up a mallet I was hooked. My weekends now revolved around scoring goals rather than jumping over obstacles. The more people we introduced to polo, to more the sport grew in Portugal. Aficionados started planning trips to Sotogrande to watch high-goal games, and the first polo club was founded in the city with two polo fields. It seemed like more and more companies wanted to back the events surrounding polo, and as a result the sport continued to grow. As my uncle and cousins played more, their appreciation for the sport rose so rapidly they decided to build a polo field on our farm.

As I grew older it seemed like polo had a future in Portugal. High-goal tournaments began to attract talented Argentine players, elevating the status of Portuguese polo. Following the success of the Sotogrande Club in the previous decades, investors began developing real estate. Unfortunately, due to the housing bubble of 2008, the meteoric rise of polo seemed to reach its end.

*“The minute
I picked up a
mallet I was
hooked.”*

The Sotogrande Club declared bankruptcy, and many players opted out of the costly sport. With the closing of Portugal’s only and largest club, tournaments ceased, and players stopped investing in the sport.

Today, the polo field on my family’s farm is the only playable field in Portugal. A small group of around ten players still make weekend appearances during the summer season to show their love and support for the sport. As the Portuguese economy continues to improve with the rise of tourism, polo will hopefully grow to what it once was in my country. The potential for polo in Portugal has not been forgotten by those of us who are truly passionate about the sport. As anyone who’s ever picked up a mallet knows, giving up on polo is not an option. As the cost to play increases in the rest of Europe and Portugal’s real estate market recovers, it’s only a matter of time until polo players and investors return to sunny Portugal. When that happens, I’ll be there waiting on the sidelines with my horses, ready to play.



*“As anyone who’s ever picked up a
mallet knows, giving up on polo is
not an option.”*

First-Year Brennan Wells

By Brennan Wells, 2020

Represents the United States in ...

India

In November of 2017, I was chosen to represent the USA in the 11th Manipur Polo International Invitational in Imphal, India. This international tournament was spearheaded by the Manipur Horse Riding & Polo Association (MHRPA) and the American International Polo Foundation who collectively aimed to bring awareness to the endangered Manipuri pony. I was graciously given this opportunity by Ed Armstrong, the coach of the USA team and main representative of the American International Polo Foundation. My mother, Kelly Wells, accompanied me during the 2-week long trip.

Teams from India, Argentina, USA, England, and Morocco all competed within this tournament. The tournament was played on the traditional Manipuri ponies: sturdy, endangered mountain ponies. The goal of the tournament was to “Save Manipur Pony; The Original Polo Pony.” The field we played on is said to be the ‘oldest living polo ground in the world.’ It was considerably smaller than a typical grass polo field; the ponies were built to match, sizing in at about 13 to 14 hands. The ponies were so small that we had to use 44 to 46 inch mallets. They weren’t very fast and their handling was unlike any typical American polo pony, which



changed how we had to play. A polo game on Manipuri ponies was more like soccer since passing and having one defensive player not go past half-field were key strategies. The ponies were quite slow which made dribbling and running with the ball more difficult. The matches were very competitive. As the tournament's opener, USA faced off against India A. We came out on top 3-2. I was the high scorer for the team with 2 goals. We then tied Argentina, 4-4. In the semi-final we faced off against the very strong home team. Sadly, we came up short, and the home team advanced to the finals to beat Argentina. The tournament was a big event in Imphal. The games were televised on local television and articles were written about each game in multiple local newspapers.

The experience I had in India was truly the experience of a lifetime. Not only was I able to meet people from all over the world but I was exposed to a very diverse culture. The MHRPA's representatives were very hospitable by accommodating us in a nice hotel and providing us many opportunities to tour Imphal. We were able to visit the shrine of Marjing, the “polo god,” where I gave away a pack of smarties as an offering for good fortune. We enjoyed the 2017 Manipur Sangai Festival and were able to boat



If you caught it, you were able to carry it and run down field. To score, you had to hit the ball over the line marking the end of the field. This was such an amazing experience for me, in particular, because I was one of the few people to catch the ball from the throw in and run with it. Having the ball in your hand and knowing that 10 opposing players are chasing after you with the intent of taking you out to steal the ball creates a sensational feeling. Did I forget to mention that there are no rules? Anything goes. All in all, it was such a unique game that I was honored and glad to have been given the opportunity to experience.

across Loktak lake, Moirang. The highlight of the trip for me was when I got to participate in a traditional match of sagol kangjei. We were dressed in traditional garbs and were given wooden sticks similar to polo mallets. There were 10 players per side. To start the match, the ball was thrown straight up in the air. Players would hold their mallet with their left hand and try and catch the ball with their right hand.

“Not only was I able to meet people from all over the world but I was exposed to a very diverse culture.”



Listo Polo

By Grace Burgert



Listo Polo/Kanthanka (L to R): Sylvia Kampshoff, Grace Burgert, Maddie Grant, and Izzy Parsons. Pictured with HPC Delegate Steven Armour and Nene Soumare from David Yurman.

The Houston Polo Club is the largest polo club in the United States, with more playing members than any club in the country. It hosts numerous tournaments throughout the year, ranging from weekends dedicated to middle schoolers battling it out in the arena to nationally regarded twelve and fourteen goal tournaments taking place on Farish Field. For the past seven years, Houston has been home to the U.S. Open Women's Polo Championship, and for the past four years to the U.S. Open Women's Handicap. The "Women's" as it is commonly referred to, drew record numbers this year with nine teams in the Handicap and four in the Open.

After it was decided earlier this year that the tournament would be moved to Florida beginning in 2019, local Houston women and women from around the world came together to make this last Houston Women's week the best one yet. I was fortunate enough to play in the Handicap for the first time last year, and I got the opportunity to play again this year when a friend of mine reached out wondering if I might be interested. Additionally, this year I got the chance to play with one of my teammates from Virginia, Maddie Grant. Our team was ultimately composed of: Sylvie Kampshoff (2), myself - Grace Burgert (2), Maddie Grant (4), and Izzy Parsons (6).

We met as a team for the first time the Tuesday before the tournament began, and we put together strategies for the different, but all strong, teams that we would be facing. We felt confident in our plans and horse lineups, but quickly discovered that even the best-laid plans go awry when Houston does what it does best: rain. Houston had a historically wet fall season, with countless games being cancelled; a trend that continued through Women's week. It rained throughout the tournament, forcing the Handicap to be moved to the arena.

While upset at first, my team quickly regrouped and formed a new game plan. We had to struggle with the same issue as most every other team: two of our players, including our pro, had never played a proper game in an arena before. In fact, our pro had never played in arena at all. Tuesday night and Wednesday morning were thus filled with arena game tape review and a crash course in arena strategy. Maddie led the way, explaining the ins and outs to Izzy, our 6-goaler. Izzy, a Brit currently living in Kenya, learned quickly and was able to pick it up quite well.

According to the draw, our first game was a round robin. We won the first round of two chukkers 5 to 2.5 against W-S Horse Farm, but lost to Woody's Furs with a score of 3.5 to 2 in the final two chukkers. Not to be held down, we came back following the defeat to win our next two games: 13 to 4 against Icon Global and 11 to 7 against Texas Monthly, and ended in third place. We learned to play as a team, and our non-arena players, Sylvie and Izzy, grew remarkably as indoor players throughout the week. More important

“In fact, our pro had never played in arena at all.”

than the scores or final placement though, was the experience overall.

The Women's has always been an incredible opportunity to meet and compete against players from all over the world, and this year was no different. Maddie and I got the chance to learn from Izzy as well as all of the other female pros in town for the tournament. We played against Tiva Gross, Sheila Lequerica, Lia Salvo, and Sarah Wiseman to name a few; and we had the chance to sit and chat during the weeks' many games with other incredible female players. Maddie even got the chance to coach one of the best women in the world, Hazel Jackson, as it was Hazel's first time playing in the arena as well.

It was an incredible week, filled with incredible people, horses, and polo. I would like to thank my parents, Amy and Kelly Plato, the whole Listo Polo crew, Scott Wood and Martin Munoz for selflessly sharing the Brookshire Polo Club arena, and especially my team for making it the best Women's Tournament yet. Although the Open is moving to Florida, we hope to see the Handicap remain in Houston, and I hope to have a chance at redemption next year – whether it be on the grass or in the arena!



Listo Polo/Kanthaka (L to R) Sylvia Kamphsoff, Grace Burgert, Maddie Grant, and Izzy Parsons. Pictured with Amy and Kelly Plato.

2015 PTF

By Jack McLean

England Exchange



In July of 2015, I had the incredible opportunity to travel with the Junior USA Team to England thanks to the Polo Training Foundation (PTF) and The Hurlingham Polo Association (HPA). It was an unforgettable experience of playing polo, living with host families, exploring England, and making friends on & off the field.

Upon arrival at Heathrow International Airport, we embarked on our journey through customs and proceeded to rent a mini-van. We then set off for Cowdray Polo Park to catch the finals of the British Gold Cup. I was amazed by the beauty of the Cowdray: the fields, and the neighboring stone castle giving the club an other-worldly atmosphere.

After the match, I met with my hosts, the Beim family, and departed on the nearly two-hour journey to their farm.

The following day we went to the local club in Cotswolds to stick & ball some horses. Despite a constant and fairly heavy storm as we rode, we carried on—the English fields are made to be played in the rain. I had the pleasure of playing chukkers on the Beim’s wonderful horses the following three days and even got to practice with my teammates – Tato Bollini, Petra Teixeira, and Hannah Reynolds – at the same club.

The day before our big match versus the Brits, my team developed some tactics with the help of the experienced Beim family so that we would play smart and confidently. It was Team

USA versus Team England at Longdole Polo Club. The field was pristine and the temperature was perfect. We all got to wear our beautiful red, white, and blue jerseys with our last names on them, and we felt honored to represent our country. I had the pleasure of being mounted by Will Lucas, the owner of the club, who had some incredible horses.

Despite gaining a late lead in the game and feeling confident that we had it in the bag, the English team proved resilient and scored a tying goal that left the final score 4-4. The teams were well matched and the game was very fast. We all were proud of how we played and knew that we'd given our best efforts. At the trophy presentation and asado afterwards, I made new friends and enjoyed the following high goal match.

We all met up the next morning and said our goodbyes and thank you's to our host families before returning to Heathrow and heading home. I would like to thank the PTF, HPA, and our host families for an amazing trip and the opportunity to represent the US playing the sport I love.

“We all got to wear our beautiful red, white, and blue jerseys with our last names on them, and we felt honored to represent our country.”



England

By Maddie Briggs



One of the most thrilling horse-related travel experiences I've ever had was while exploring the countryside of England with my parents and sisters. A night spent in the Cotswolds resulted in a morning of archery, dabbling in falconry, and an afternoon on horseback. Unlike other experiences I'd had in the past with bomb-proof "tourist" horses, this one was high in adrenaline and didn't hold back. The usual skepticism of whether or not we were "experienced horsemen" was thrown out the window, and suddenly we on top of three-day event horses that were technically turned out for the winter. They were beautiful, athletic, and responsive. A refreshing change from the usual pinto-plodder you might get stuck with.

It became clear that we weren't going out just to see the sights.

“Unlike other experiences I'd had in the past with bomb-proof “*tourist*” horses, this one was high in adrenaline and didn't hold back.”

Our tour guide was a younger girl, not too much older than myself, who had obvious experience both in giving a tour, as well as galloping headlong into the woods. After getting acclimated to our mounts at the walk, we picked up the pace. Suddenly the woods cleared and we were in a massive field out of a movie, bordered by an ancient forest that was mature and bare from the November cold. Out of an arena, out in a field, not only was I exhilarated, but I could feel the horse underneath me almost sighing in relief. It was the same feeling as hitting a ball with a full swing to the other side of a polo field and galloping after it, except there was no need to stop at the boards.

“I think a smile was plastered to all of our faces for the entire walk back to the stables.”

After what felt like thirty-seconds, we slowed to a walk and let the horses and ourselves catch our breath. We meandered past ruins of medieval houses, churches and the remains of stone walls. In the distance, we could see some fallen trees out in a field.

The tour guide turned in her saddle and smiled before asking if we thought we could keep up. The next thing we knew, our horses were dialed into the trees ahead and over we flew. For a while after we just played around in the field, finding anything and everything that we could possibly ask our horses to jump.

I think a smile was plastered to all of our faces for the entire walk back to the stables. It could have been from the low temperatures that deemed our cheeks frozen where they were, but it was an experience I, and I’m sure the rest of my family, will never forget.



Congratulations to Maddie, Abbie, Sophie, Catie and Coach Kelly Wells, 2018 Girls I/I National Champions

Argentina

By Maddie Grant

In November 2017, I traveled to Pilar, Argentina for three weeks to play in the first ever Campeonato de Polo Femenino, a professional and international women's tournament held at the Ellerstina Polo Club. It was especially exciting to be a part of this tournament because it was the first time they have ever let women play on the fields at Ellerstina. Out of the eight highly talented teams, my team was able to fight our way into the final, falling short of the championship by only one goal.

“I got to ride amazing horses, spend time with great people, and create memories to last a lifetime.”



I had so much fun getting to play with and against all of the best women's players in the world. To prepare for the tournament, I was fortunate enough to play in a handful of sixteen goal practices on amazing horses; playing with and against very talented players at Centauros Club de Campo y Polo. I also traveled out into the Pampas to places such as Veinticinco de Mayo, Trenque Lauquen, and Carlos Casares to visit breeding operations and ride young horses. I also got to go to Palermo to watch some very exciting polo, most notably the quarter and semi-finals of the Open. That trip was definitely one of the best experiences of my life. I got to ride amazing horses, spend time with great people, and create memories to last a lifetime. Thank you to my parents, Lia Salvo, Lucas Criado, and Max Secunda for making this wonderful experience possible!



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From Uruguay to UVA

By Nachi Viana, 2022



The first time I rode a horse by myself I was three years old. After spending four years learning how to be independent on horseback, I started stick-and-balling, and within a year, played my first tournament in Coronel Suarez, Argentina. For years, I was the youngest player in every tournament I participated in, and by the time I had turned twelve I'd traveled all around Argentina; to Venado Tuerto, Trenque Lauquen, Coronel Suarez, Corrientes, Buenos Aires, and Cañuelas to name a few. After winning one of the best tournaments in Uruguay at thirteen-years-old (Semana Santa in Rio Negro – a 14 goal tournament), I was raised to one goal. Once again, I was the youngest player in an all-adult tournament.

“the most important tournament I had yet to participate in – the FIP World Qualifications”

Playing with older and more experienced people pushed me to grow faster as a player, and forced me to improve with every tournament. It wasn't until I turned seventeen that I was raised to two-goals, and the four years in between I spent playing in Young, Rio Negro, Uruguay with my own string of horses. Having my own horses allowed me to travel more often and participate in more prestigious tournaments even at such a young age. Any time I could, I travelled to Argentina, and even had the opportunity to travel to the U.S. to play for Travieso Polo in an eight goal.





When I turned eighteen, I had the opportunity to play in the most important tournament I had yet participated in: the FIP World Qualifications. Wearing the Uruguay jersey and representing my country was truly the experience of a lifetime. The games were played in Punta del Este, Uruguay in January of 2017. I was given the chance to compete against the Peruvian, Brazilian, and Argentine National Teams. After coming out on top in a very interesting game against Peru, we unfortunately lost our next two games to Argentina and Brazil. Argentina went on to win the 2017 World Cup. The experience and opportunity to play for and in my home country was made all the more spectacular by being the youngest member of the Uruguayan National Team.

Despite losing the FIP World Cup, my play and age allowed me to advance to a three-goal-handicap in July of 2017. In the following year I played constantly, always pursuing the next highest rating. After winning the National Uruguayan Cup I was raised to four goals effective February of 2018.

Throughout this year I've played on the winning team (GSA) in Florida in the 50K twelve-goal, as well as an eight-goal in Santa Clara with my brother, Felipe where we won. In May and June of this year I played three eight-goal tournaments in Dallas, Texas, winning two of them. Finally, I played the sixteen-goal in California in July and August. The club, polo, and experience was phenomenal, constantly pushing me to be better.

Now that I'm at the University of Virginia, I hope to continue to grow as both a polo player and as a student, always striving for the next best opportunity in all aspects. Every practice with the Men's Varsity Team we push ourselves to improve so we can bring home the National Championship in the Spring.



A Little About Club Polo

By Maria Blasco

I was lucky enough to discover the Virginia polo program during my first semester at UVA. Before I got to UVA, I was really into show-jumping, I had focused on it all throughout middle and high school, and was pretty set on continuing in college. A friend (Antonio MA), told me about the program, and so I came out to the barn to a welcome barbeque Lou Lopez had set up for everyone. After the barbeque and the first boot camp lesson, I was sold. After my first semester at boot camp, I decided to join club – which is even more fun!

This year we have ten club members. We have practices every Tuesday and Thursday and scrimmages or games on Friday. While practices happen twice a week, we can come out and stick and ball or organize chukkers as often as we want.

“After the barbeque and the first boot camp lesson, I was sold.”



This semester we’ve had a few games played against Washington and Lee and Virginia Tech, and we are working to schedule a couple more next semester. Most club members go into club with no polo experience, like me, and the amount of practice that we are able to get really helps us improve fast. We also get to play a lot of different horses since VA polo has a string that is just for club. Virginia polo also has a great community.

For a lot of us coming out to play is the perfect way to relax and disconnect from the every-day life of college and academics. Even when I have a stressful week I try to come out at once or twice and play a couple of chukkers. I can’t imagine my experience at UVA without polo!

“I can’t imagine my experience at UVA without polo!”





*Listo Polo wishes
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