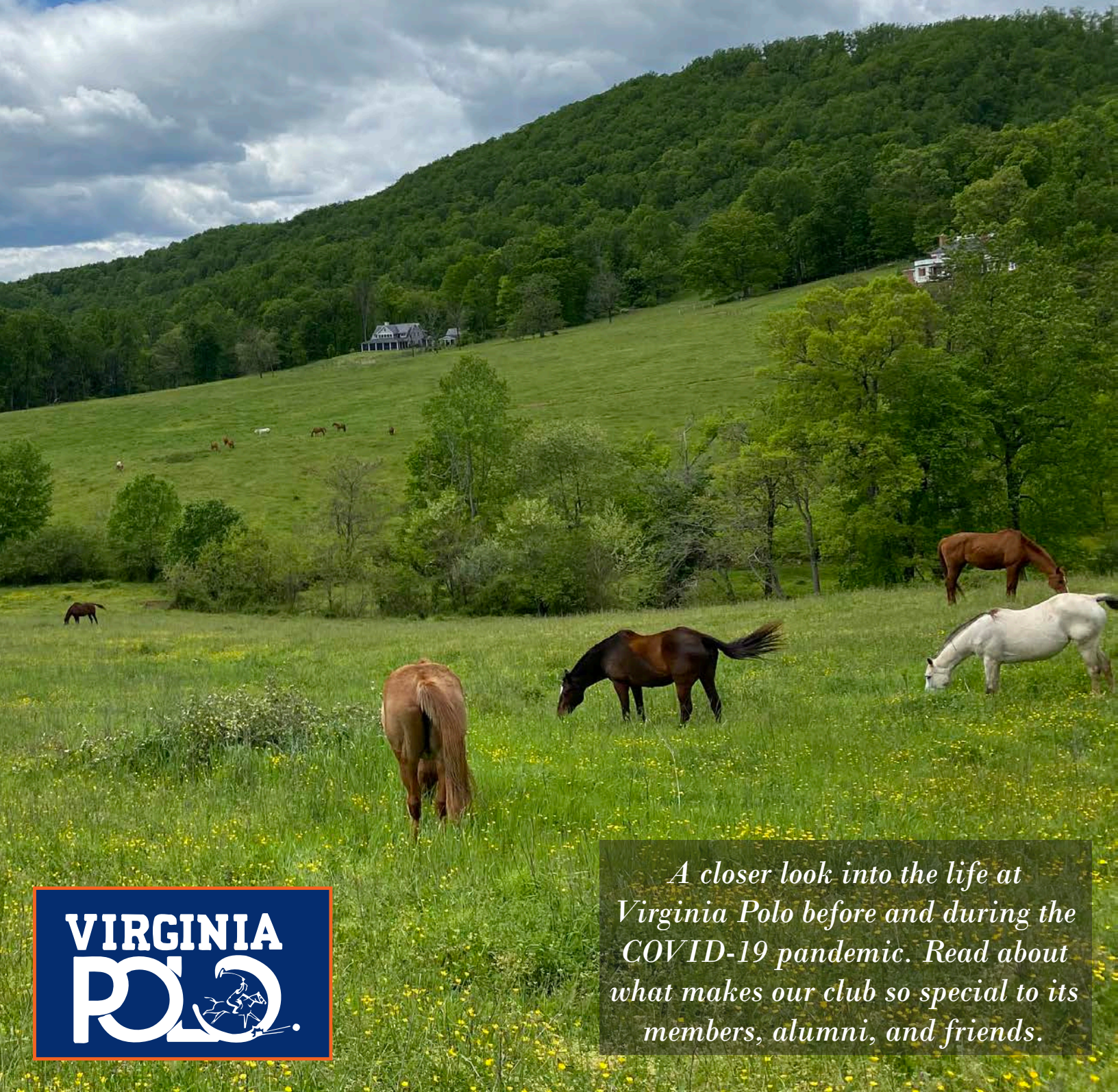


VIRGINIA POLO

2020 - 2021



A closer look into the life at Virginia Polo before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Read about what makes our club so special to its members, alumni, and friends.

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Editor's Note

While the Virginia Polo 2019-2020 season may not have gone as planned, the ongoing commitment from our players in light of the restrictions to our program reminded us all just how important Virginia Polo is to the students, the board, and all of our alumni. The unfortunate reality was that club sports were at risk to be disallowed due to COVID-19 restrictions. With that possibility in mind, I believe it is fair to say that every member of the team discovered a new found appreciation for everything that Virginia Polo has to offer. As a result of the efforts from the board and students, we were able to host what turned out to be a great year. The team is extremely thankful for everything our supporters and board of directors did to make this year possible.



Since having this realization that Virginia Polo is more than just polo, I felt that it was time for the world to get a closer look not only into the life of a Virginia polo player, but also into why the farm remains so special to all of us. This year's magazine will showcase our current teams, last year's successes, and our response to the global pandemic while allowing perspective members, family, and friends to see what really goes on behind the gate on Forest Lodge Lane.

As we reflect on this year's season, we would be remiss not to give thanks to a few special people that make the world go 'round at Virginia Polo and helped to create this year's magazine. Thank you to Lou Lopez, Jessica Schmitt, Chairman Kris Wooten, Graphic Designer Sarah Miller, Trina Nesterowich and Stilly McFadden at Toof American Digital Printing, and especially all of our generous donors listed below.

Parker Pearce, Editor, 2020-2021

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COACH'S LETTERS

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 Polo Club at Yale University. To continue learning, he played bicycle polo with Boxwood Bike Polo Club and worked for polo players through the summers. Lou attended Colorado State University, where he started a polo 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 twenty years earning his living managing clubs, training and selling polo ponies, and competing in the arena as well as outdoors. Lou is in his seventeenth year as head coach. Under his leadership, Virginia has won six Women's and four Men's national titles.



JESSICA SCHMITT

Barn Manager & Assistant Coach

Jessica graduated from UVA in 2018. She has been a part of the VA Polo program for 11 years. She started on the High School team and eventually became 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. This is her third year as barn manager and coach of the Virginia Juniors. She hopes to continue giving back to Virginia Polo for everything that it has done for her and is looking forward to a successful year!



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WOMEN'S VARSITY



Elizabeth Owens is a second-year student from Boston, MA. She has ridden most of her life and has been playing polo for the past eight years. During high school, she played at Boston Polo Club where her team competed in the 2019 Girl's National Interscholastic Championship and she won an All-Star award. She spent this past summer working and playing for Virginia Polo's summer program and is looking forward to the rest of the year!

Grace Burgert is a third-year majoring in History and Politics in the College of Arts and Sciences. She has played polo for seven years with her family's team, Listo Polo, in Houston, TX. When she's not playing polo, she is vivaciously cheering on the Houston Rockets. Her favorite horses at Virginia Polo are Cracker, Cloro, and Bumbai, and she is looking forward to another year of exciting polo!



Katie Define is a second-year from Charlottesville, Virginia looking to major in Computer Science. Katie has ridden horses since she was three and showed primarily as a hunter-jumper before taking up polo last year. This past summer she not only had the opportunity to play polo here in Charlottesville, but she also had the chance to travel outside the state. Her favorite ponies at Virginia Polo are Terri and Lolita. She is excited to learn more about polo from her peers, and is looking forward to hopefully having the season resume in the Spring!

Maddie Grant is a third-year Biology major from Phoenix, Maryland. She has been playing polo for 10 years and is the captain of the Women's Varsity Polo Team. Her favorite horses to play from UVA are Gaucha, Tapa, and Petunia. Maddie was the captain of the Maryland Girls Varsity Team for three years in high school, where she won four National Interscholastic Championships in five years. Maddie is looking forward to a fun and exciting year of polo at UVA and has her sights set on a National Championship victory!



MEN'S VARSITY

Brennan Wells is a 3rd year studying statistics. He grew up on Marlan Farm in Freeland, MD, where he learned how to ride and play polo. He's been playing polo for 14 years and has won two national interscholastic titles. Brennan is super excited to start his third year and is hopeful that the team will be able to compete in the future.



Nathan Church is a second year at Piedmont planning on getting an engineering associate degree before transferring to UVA. He has been playing for eight years and is a member of the Men's Varsity Team. He played for Virginia polo his senior year of high school and is looking forward to continuing to play here.

Jack McLean is a third-year from Pittsburgh, PA majoring in Economics with a minor in Spanish. A two-time National Interscholastic champion, Jack has had the honor of playing across the United States as well in New Zealand, Guatemala, Canada, and England. His favorite ponies are Quavo and Sorpresa, two of Virginia Polo's many "machines" which he has had the privilege of playing since his first year. Jack is looking forward to a fun and successful season.



Jim Deal is a student at Piedmont Virginia Community College with intention of transferring to UVA as a third-year student. Jim grew up on a hunter-jumper farm and began playing polo at age eleven. His favorite horse is Sorpresa. Jim is looking forward to a fun season.

Parker Pearce grew up in Monkton, MD, where he foxhunted with EHHHC, evented, and showed jumpers. He played Interscholastic Polo for the Maryland Boys, coached by Kelly Wells, winning two National Championships. However, his polo roots go back to his great grandfather, A. Parker Hall, captain of the Princeton Polo Team in 1922, who led the Tigers to victory in the first Arena Polo Intercollegiate National Men's Championship. Parker is a second-year at UVA where and intends to study Business, shoots for the Trap and Skeet Team, and plays on the Men's Varsity Polo Team. When not playing polo, he can be found outdoors hunting, playing golf, or painting landscapes.



CLUB TEAM 2019-2020



Calista Rieken is a third-year majoring in biology and minoring in studio art. She is the social chair and captain of the club team at Virginia Polo. She started riding hunter-jumper when she was 5, and was hooked on polo from day one of bootcamp. Her favorite horses at the barn are Rebel and Fiesta. When not at the barn, she likes painting and cooking for her friends, and she hopes to attend medical school in the future. She's excited for another great year!

From The Plains, Virginia, **Griffin Keffer** is a third-year in the College studying Economics and History. Having grown up fox hunting, Griffin discovered polo in his second year and quickly fell in love with the game. For Griffin, the teamwork, challenge, and thrill of polo have made joining the team a highlight of his UVA experience. In the coming year, Griffin hopes to improve his own game and introduce more UVA students to the excitement of polo.



Mead Robertson is a second-year student studying Kinesiology from Montgomery, Alabama. She took riding lessons when she was young, but never continued riding. During her first year at UVA, she decided to try polo through the Bootcamp Program and loved it. She has since joined the Club Team and enjoys learning from and playing with more experienced players each week!

Connor Finemore is a third-year student studying Mathematics and Economics. He started playing polo in upstate New York during the summers and began playing four years ago. He is excited to see what the abbreviated season holds and is excited to improve this year.





Brendan Walsh is taking grad school courses through the University's Community Scholars program. An equestrian and polo fan since his teenage years, he has been lucky enough to play in Argentina, Colombia, and Mexico and is a member of the Roseland Polo Club in Crozet, VA. When not playing, he enjoys running his two businesses, digital marketing agency Mole Street and music booking company Mole Street Artists.

Santiago Villa (Santi) is an alumni of the UVA polo program who found time to come back and enjoy playing with the team when working online and away from New York became a reality in these unprecedented times. Santi works in investment banking at Credit Suisse focusing on leveraged finance origination & restructuring.



Ethan Schmidt is a 4th year student from Warrenton, Va studying Economics and History. He has spent the last year working at Brave Virtual Worlds - a UVA student startup developing telehealth platforms for physical therapy clinics affected by Covid. Upon graduation, Ethan will be pursuing a career in healthcare and strategy. Ethan's favorite pony, through thick and thin, will always be Pantera. Of the many great memories, Ethan has made with Virginia Polo, he will miss feeding the ponies on peaceful early mornings the most. Ethan plans to stay in touch and hopes that polo will continue to play a role in his life.

VIRGINIA JUNIORS

Coached by Jessica Schmitt

Mary Kate Santos

Hanan Fadil

Abigail Lawrence

Hazel Conklin

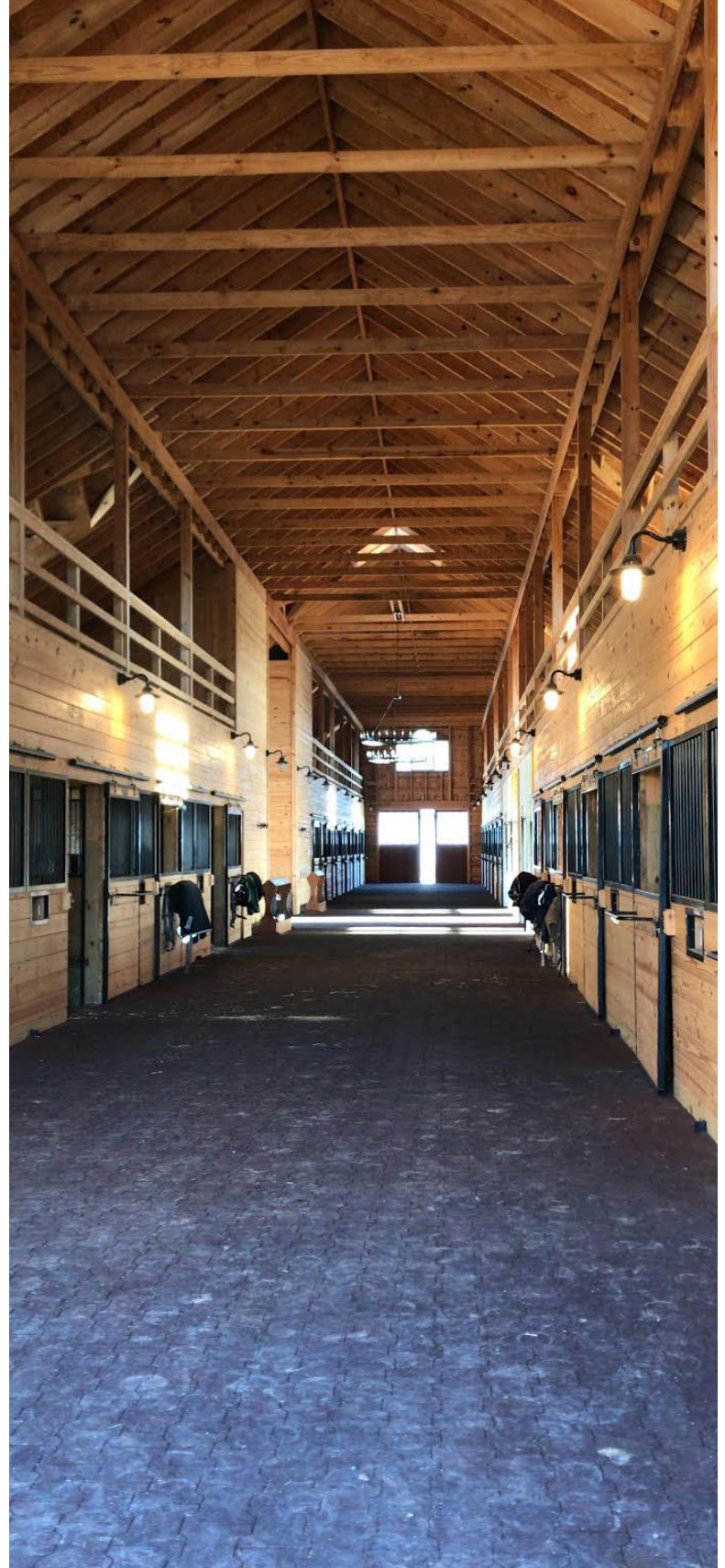
Grooming @ Woodrow

By Robin Peterson,

Foreign Affairs Major, German Minor, Class of 2022



This past summer I had the privilege of working as a groom for Woodrow Farm. Through a UVA polo graduate and close friend, Madeleine Wallach, I was introduced to the position. Having polished my skills through the polo program here at UVA, I felt confident enough to immediately start working for a high goal player. Within the position, I learned about the daily maintenance and conditioning it takes to have the polo ponies perform at their best during the high goal games. Since classes are online, I was able to continue the position into the fall semester. I am very thankful for my experience at UVA polo, and cannot wait to spend my remaining years of study honing my skills on and off the field.



Day in the Life:

UVA Polo Student Athletes

Feed Time

If it's your day, two people head out to the farm in the morning to fill food tubs for all our wonderful horses. While it may be early for a college student... the morning sunrises at the farm appear almost surreal and tend to bring a bright start to our day.

In a normal year, we then head to classes all across grounds. However, with on-line classes at the moment, some team members have made the best of it sitting on the porch of the Beh house or in the stand enjoying class from the outdoors.

Class

Lunch

On the weekends lunch tends to follow practice and usually finds the men's team on the way to Chipotle or lighting the grill for a BBQ.

Team *Off to the barn!* Other

Practice: Twice a Week

Game: Dependant on schedule (Mainly Friday, Saturday, or Sunday)

Sets: In the early season we all help out to get the horses fit.

Mucking: Don't worry it's really not all that often, but the barn has to be clean for our well deserving animals

Hear what else we do at the barn that makes it so special for each of us in this issue on page 26!

Some nights at the barn feature grand asados, others we head home to study, and in a normal year the weekends create memories of nights out with the team and opponents that are sure to last a lifetime!

Nightlife

If any of this interests you as a student, college applicant, or parent please feel free to reach out to a student representative from the "Contact Us!" list on page 29.

CAPTAINS' LETTERS

Women's Varsity

This past semester at Virginia Polo has been like no other. Whereas usually this letter would be written by the Women's Varsity Captain, reflecting upon the team's successes in tournaments across the fall season, I am instead taking this time to reflect on the optimism and tenacity shown by the women's team this past semester in a time of great uncertainty. While our captain, Maddie Grant, made use of online learning to travel the country, growing in her polo skills and network, Liz Owens, Katie Define, and myself returned to Charlottesville to make the most of every opportunity to ride and play that we could. We were able to work extensively with our wonderful new donation ponies, Machiatta and May, and we grew as individual and team players. Despite having no looming tournaments to prepare for, the Women's team showed up to each and every practice enthusiastic and grateful to play. I personally am grateful for the time I spent with the team and am looking forward to next semester and hopefully beginning game play again. Along with the rest of the Women's team, I want to express our gratitude to all Virginia Polo Club's supporters, and especially the Board, Lou, and Jessica for making it all possible. Thank you and go Hoos'! Here's to a better season in 2021 and 2022!

Grace Burgert '22
Virginia Polo President



Men's Varsity

The Men's Varsity team is thankful for Virginia Polo's diligence in continuing to generously provide as much polo as it can to students despite the circumstances brought on by the pandemic. During these uncertain times, the chances to stick & ball and play chukkers are even more special to myself and my teammates. The extra time students have gained as a result of online classes has afforded us the chance to be more involved at the barn and start new green horse projects. We are extremely grateful that the Virginia Polo Board saw to it that us die-hard polo players and horsemen would still have a program this year, and we are eagerly awaiting our next chance to compete for the national championship.

Jack McLean '22
Men's Varsity Captain



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COVID-19 Ended an Otherwise Successful Season for *Virginia Polo*

By Grace Burgert

History and Politics Distinguished Major Program, Minor in Middle and Near Eastern Studies, Class of 2022



I was 13 when I saw my first collegiate polo match. I had only recently begun playing the sport and still had my reservations about a game so different from anything I had played in the past, but that match changed everything. It was the women's semi-finals — Virginia against Cornell — and I had never seen anything like it. The women scored from the middle of the arena and played with more intensity than I had ever witnessed — from that day, I was determined to play on the Virginia women's polo team.

This year, the women's team was ready to assert itself as the new powerhouse in women's collegiate polo — we were set to enter the National Intercollegiate Championships undefeated with multiple tournament titles to our name. I was fortunate enough to have spent the season playing alongside the best teammates I could have ever asked for — sophomore team captain Maddie Grant, freshman Katie Defne and senior Demitra Hajimihalis. It was a dream to be able to play with such incredible

teammates, and we all wanted to help Hajimihalis win the national title she deserved in her final season.

Hajimihalis' collegiate polo career began with UConn's women's team in 2015, though she transferred to PVCC for her sophomore year in hopes of eventually transferring to U.Va. She began playing with the Virginia women's team during practices and became a part of the community — since then, Hajimihalis has been a constant figure at Virginia Polo. She keeps an eye on all 60 horses and all 36 club members, ensuring that nothing falls through the cracks. Hajimihalis has won all-star awards, Best Playing Pony awards, regional titles and Horsemanship awards across her career. She has played in the USPA's International Intercollegiate Challenge Cup and has received recognition at the highest collegiate level for her work with the horses at Virginia Polo. The only thing missing is a national championship.

"Demi is an extremely talented and supportive teammate," Grant said. "Her passion for the horses and

optimistic perspective is something we all strive for. Her hard work and dedication is visible both in her playing and her leadership as two-term president of Virginia Polo.”

The men had a similarly spectacular season — they also went undefeated with a closest margin of victory of 10 goals. Sophomores Jack McLean, Brennan Wells and Ignacio Viana looked to redeem themselves after last year’s heartbreaking loss in the national finals to Texas A&M after an undefeated season. With the addition of freshman Parker Pearce, the men had an even more impressive season this year. In the fall, the men won the Bill Field’s Tournament against Cornell with a score of 29-10. Additionally, they beat regional competition Kentucky 35-6 in the Southeast Regional Finals.

Just before spring break, both squads played in the Southeast Regional Tournament and claimed spots as No. 1 seeds in the National Intercollegiate Championships. Virginia was to host the tournament in early April, and we had spent months preparing ourselves and our horses for the tournament. We felt confident and ready.

For a few days, even a week after the University decided to cancel classes, we remained optimistic that nationals would take place. The five-day tournament was just a few weeks away and polo is a small enough sport that we thought to ourselves, “There aren’t that many people involved, right?” However, as the country came to a halt and Charlottesville shut down around us, it was

“It was heartbreaking for everyone. For the men, it was a further deferral of their chance at redemption. For the girls, it was a further deferral of their chance at a national title together.”





no real surprise when we got the notification from the USPA that National Intercollegiate Championships were postponed until further notice.

It was heartbreaking for everyone. For the men, it was a further deferral of their chance at redemption. For the girls, it was a further deferral of their chance at a national title together.

“It was devastating for the teams to have nationals canceled,” said Jessica Schmitt, barn manager and Virginia Polo alumna. “They worked really hard all year, the horses were fit and ready and the facilities have never looked better.”

The USPA has since announced that nationals will take place at a later date. It was also announced that players who graduate or transfer next year will be able to play on the team that they had qualified for nationals with this past 2019-2020 season.

For us, that means that Hajimihalis will get a chance at her national title, despite graduating in the

spring. Luckily, Hajimihalis plans to stay in Charlottesville. After graduation, she will begin working for fellow local polo player, Andrew Baldwin, at CORE Real Estate. She will be close enough to continue practicing with us, and we could not be more ecstatic to have her around for a bit longer.

“I couldn’t have asked for a better senior year despite nationals being postponed,” Hajimihalis said. “Everyone worked so hard off and, on the field, and I look forward to being able to play nationals with my amazing teammates in the future.”

While it may have been devastating to turn out the horses for a premature vacation and leave Charlottesville behind for our respective homes so far away from our teammates — humans and horses — we all anxiously await the tournament’s rescheduling. The future remains unclear in this uncertain time, but one thing is certain — when nationals finally do come around, the men and women of Virginia Polo will be ready.

“The future remains unclear in this uncertain time, but one thing is certain — when nationals finally do come around, the men and women of Virginia Polo will be ready.”

As originally published in The Cavalier Daily on April 23, 2020.

Update: Unfortunately, at this point, 2019-2021 Intercollegiate Nationals have been indefinitely cancelled. That being said, we hope to compete in the coming semester and optimistically look towards Intercollegiate Nationals in 2022.

Ponies roster!

Who's in this season?

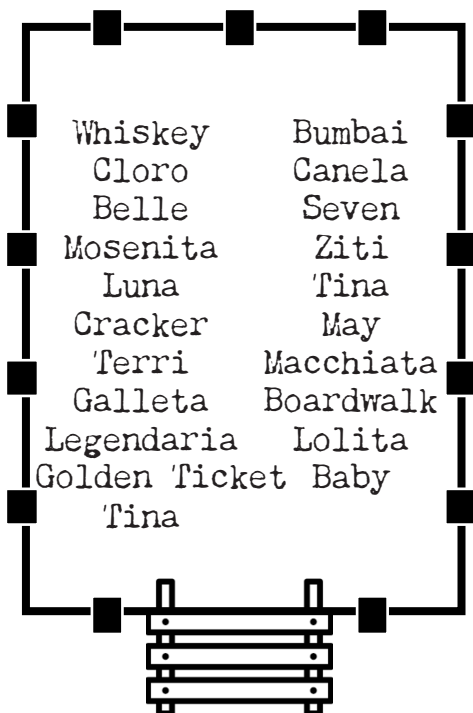
By Parker Pearce

Commerce Major, Studio Art Minor, Class of 2023

While our passion relies on the horses in our herd, they are much more than tools or vehicles. The incredible horses that we are so grateful to ride are to many our best friends. Since the beginning of time horses have helped to support the world both physically and emotionally, from the cavalry soldiers in battle to the more complex therapeutic effect these great animals possess. In my opinion, it is fair to say that the horse, our horses, are the most important part of our lives and most certainly our beloved game. As Winston Churchill, an avid polo player, once said, "There is something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man." With this importance of our horses in mind, I would like to thank all the generous donors who have contributed to our amazing strings over the years and supported the very foundation of Virginia Polo. Now take a look at the strings we played during 2020!



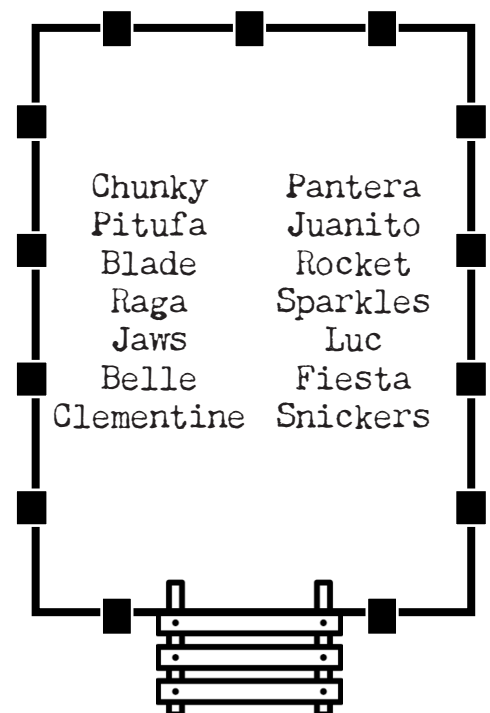
Women's String



Men's String



Club String



Green Ponies

By Parker Pearce

At the onset of our quarantine season, the team began brainstorming for ways that we could benefit our club and raise the necessary funds to maintain our facilities. Among those ideas discussed was the possibility of working with green ponies on the farm with the intent to sell some down the line. Prior to this year the team had been given entirely made horses and a couple of ones with a few quirks, but the only truly green pony on the farm was named Guadalupe, who was known as Baby by many of us on the farm. I personally began working with young horses at a young age learning from friends and family all different processes, theories, and hardened traditions that were involved in the making of polo ponies and at this point have taken it on as a passion. This love of working with untrained horses and watching them learn each step day by day, drove me to urge Lou into bringing a couple more young ones onto the farm. By the end of our season, we had acquired two more green horses, Vero and Tempranillo, who were put straight to work in green horse training with Guadalupe. We were lucky enough to receive Vero as a donation from Chris Briere and our most recent addition, Tempranillo came from Sagamore Racing farm after turning out not to have what it takes to be a racehorse.

Guadalupe on the other hand was not exactly a donation, but closer to a happy accident. After receiving a donation mare a few short years ago named Lily, it did not take long for those on the farm to realize that she was in foal, and soon came a small energetic bay foal. Lily, who is now turned out and retired, was beloved by many of the club players and in a wonderful twist of fate lives on in the program through Guadalupe. While playing for UVA in his first year and the following summer Nachi Viana took the time to break and start the training process with Guadalupe. Since that time the entire men's team has worked with, ridden, and cared for Guadalupe who was a great addition to our practice string this semester.

Vero entered our program with some substantial training under her belt, but nowhere near ready to play all out at the collegiate level. With some time working to loosen her bends, adding discipline to her lead changes, and many days of chukkers Vero has progressed to play

in even the most competitive practices we host. While she may not turn out to be a top tier horse, we hope Vero can be matched with a fitting player soon in the future.

Tempranillo is the youngest of our group, a three-year-old chestnut recently off the track and without any polo background. I was fortunate enough to find Tempranillo through a veterinary connection at Sagamore Farm. Jocelyn Brooks, Chief of Staff at Sagamore, reached out to us as they were looking to find a home for Tempranillo that was a better fit for her abilities. After a short trailer trip back to my home town, club captain Calista Rieken and I picked Tempranillo up and brought her back to Virginia polo. Since her arrival, she has had



Tempranillo

a handful of rides with most focusing on simple flatwork before we can really put her into the action. Despite the quick end to the season after Tempranillo arrived she has had lots of time to explore her new home and is beginning to learn the ways of a polo pony life. We can not wait to take advantage of the great potential she has already shown in the upcoming semester.

I have greatly enjoyed this opportunity to work with such young horses and I know many of my teammates can agree. It has always been my opinion that the bond shared between a horse you helped train is multitudes stronger than that of the easy ones who anyone can simply hop on and play. In the end, the successes that keep up your spirits and failures that bring you down along the road to training a polo pony only make the final result that much more satisfying. I hope that this new program will continue at Virginia Polo for years to come as it adds an entirely new and interesting perspective to playing polo for those that have never experienced the process of training a horse from scratch.



A Conversation With Dan Calhoun

Daniel W. Colhoun, Jr. (UVA, Class of 1958)

Beginnings

Polo has been part of me for most of my life. It all started with my father, Daniel Colhoun, Sr. After graduating from the U.S. Military Academy (West Point, Class of 1913), he went on to play polo with the U.S. Army teams at Fort Lewis, Washington; Fort Bliss, Texas; and the Armory in Pikesville, Maryland in the 1920s. My brother-in-law, General George S. Brown, (class of 1941) was the West Point polo team captain.

I first rode a pony at 7 years old in the old riding hall at West Point, NY, in 1941, and I was involved with horses from then on. My first polo experience was hot walking at the Pegasus Polo Club in Rockleigh, NJ, which was then used by the Squadron A Polo Club of New York City.

I attended grammar school in Gulfstream, Florida where I got to exercise ponies for Stewart Iglehart at the old Gulfstream Polo Club. We worked cattle with green polo ponies on his ranch in Okeechobee during my high school days and college breaks.

Founding the UVA Polo Club

The University of Virginia provided me an opportunity to be a founding member of the new student polo club. When I was a first year in 1954, we started the new club which was totally student-run and supported by men and women in the horse world of Charlottesville. I'm proud that this is still the case today.

In order to support our newly founded club, I went out on my own to sell advertising for the very first polo club magazine. I learned how to pitch a sale

to merchants who knew nothing about our sport and learned the art of the follow-up. It was a great business learning experience.

Our early playing grounds were no match to the top-of-the-line facilities Virginia Polo boasts now. We started the club playing on what was then a grass runway and now the Charlottesville Regional Airport. From there we played on my Engineering Professor Oglesby's dirt field by the Rivanna River. Sometime after I graduated, the polo club moved on to the Farmington Hunt Club, then finally to its present site on Old Lynchburg Road.

Combining Work and Play

My education at the University of Virginia School of Engineering gave me the opportunity to combine business with pleasure. I've planned, designed, and managed the construction of polo fields, indoor and outdoor arenas, and site facilities from Ecuador to Canada, California to Virginia.

Alongside other Virginia Polo alumni, we founded the Maryland Polo Club in the '80s. There were no other polo grounds in Northern Maryland at that time. To get them off the ground, I designed their fields and arena.

After a tour in the Marine Corps, I traveled as Coach and Sergeant Major for the U.S. Military Polo Teams to countries around the world. I've also had the opportunity to serve in many leadership positions with the United States Polo Association and the Polo Training Foundation.

Continuing the Family Tradition

In 1979, I founded the polo program at Garrison Forest School in Maryland with several surplus old ponies from the Virginia Polo Center. My two daughters were attending the school at the time, and my wife is an alumna.

My greatest thrill was to play polo with my son and both daughters in Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. The anchor of our team was Martha Colhoun, Williams, Captain of the Cavaliers Women's Team (class of '89).

Life Beyond Polo

Virginia Polo offered me, and continues to give all players, an opportunity to learn self-reliance and valuable leadership skills while participating in a student-run club. Virginia Polo has my enduring support for learning opportunities, business relationships, and lifelong friendships.



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own horses, with help as they need it. The mounted part of the lessons include all of the basic shots, drills such as relay races, walking the line of the ball, hooking, riding off, and more! The final lessons are slow chukkers, concluding with a bootcamp tournament with jerseys, teams, and a barbecue on the final day! After the tournament, the bootcampers are invited to join the club team the following semester. Aside from actual polo, the new players are able to meet the current players, hang out after their lessons to watch team practices, do homework, or practice their swings in the hitting cage. Any first-timers are able to get a front-row seat to the community of talent and sportsmanship, at all levels, at Virginia Polo.

Bootcamps

In normal semesters, we hold a “bootcamp” program for new members. The program is geared towards people who know how to ride and are comfortable at a canter, but have not yet learned how to swing a mallet or play polo. The program is 1 lesson a week for 10 weeks, typically on Saturday mornings before team practices. Everyone on the team has had a helping hand in the bootcamp program. The first lesson begins with a hands-on demonstration of how to tack a polo pony, and every lesson thereafter the bootcampers tack their

Barn Cleanup Day



As is the case for every barn, after just a few short months of practice we had stirred up mountains of dust and slowly become less and less organized throughout the barn. Unfortunately, this meant that spring cleaning must come early in order to keep our teams gear, horses, and players in the best of shape. All club members met at the barn to figure out what was in store for the day. The teams were divided and sweeping, power washing, and bucket scrubbing commenced. Our main barn was cleaned to perfection awaiting the next chance we have to bring in the entire herd for practice while countless other tasks were underway all around. After the work was done the team retreated to the Beh house for an afternoon barbeque. While it may not have been an ideal Saturday for a college student, it was extremely rewarding to see our facility at its peak condition and everyone's dedication still remaining strong despite an unusual season.



Life at Virginia Polo

Jack McLean

Economics Major, Spanish Minor, Class of 2022

As a first generation player from a place where little polo is played, I feel very lucky to be a part of the University of Virginia Polo Team. As I have yet to own a polo farm or ponies, our student-run program gives me a sense of awesome responsibility in caring for our horses. This makes practicing and playing them feel all the more rewarding. As captain of the Men's Varsity team, my top priority is ensuring that everyone puts the horses before themselves. We are incredibly lucky to have an abundance of world-class mounts for all of our players which includes the Men's Varsity, Women's Varsity and Club teams.

Sadly, however, our world has come to a grinding halt. Normally, all teams have at least three weekly practices with two or three stick & ball days in between, but it's not all just fun and games. Every player is responsible for mucking stalls and feeding horses on their designated days. Thankfully, these obligations are manageable and do not detract from our academic pursuits. Our coach, Lou Lopez, gives us the latitude to manage the facility ourselves, inspiring our highly coordinated efforts and proving our unified commitment. Practicing regularly, my teammates and I strive to improve our techniques and strategies in the hopes of bringing home a national title. I assign horses to each player every practice and try to be as fair as possible so that everyone has a balanced string.

With over 80 horses, Virginia Polo gives me the joy of riding any time throughout the day and the thrill of playing the most fun sport of all time. My appreciation

remains for all of the helpers at the barn, especially barn manager, Jessica Schmitt, and all of the family members that support us at every match. Regardless of the circumstances, this support group keeps us strong and secure.

Having fallen just short of claiming the 2019 intercollegiate title, we are more determined than ever to bring the glory back to Virginia. Our 2019-2020 season has been successful thus far as we currently hold an undefeated record of 10-0. We anxiously await the re-scheduling of the 2020 National Intercollegiate Championship for which we have already qualified. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 outbreak has put our season on pause, and the horses have all been turned out.

During the academic year, when I am not studying, chances are that I can be found at the barn singling horses, practicing, or just relaxing in the beautiful countryside. Hanging out with other players at the farm, having asados or even just visiting horses in the paddocks gives me relief from the pressures of school. After two years, this is still an indispensable part of my life as a student at UVA.

I am so grateful for the Raymond Bruce Vere Nicoll Scholarship which has allowed me to pursue my passion for polo while obtaining an amazing education. Every day I am reminded how blessed I am to be a part of this wonderful University.

I also want to thank the Virginia Polo Board, coaches, and horse donors for making this program one of the best, if not the best, in the nation.



*Listo Polo wishes
UVA a great season!
Go Hoos!*



FLASHBACK:

Valentine's Day Polo Ball

By Calista Rieken

Biology Major, Studio Art Minor, Class of 2022



In the midst of quarantining, we all want to remember and look forward to our more social times. Last spring semester, King Family Vineyards generously offered to hold a Valentine's Day "Black Tie and Boots" Ball as a fundraiser for Virginia Polo. The event was filled with UVA polo players, alumni, members of the King family, and their friends, and featured live music by the Wil Gravatt Band, hors d'oeuvres, an open bar for wine and beer, and a silent auction. Its formal yet rustic theme had guests showing up in anything from full-length dresses and suits to jeans and cowboy boots. The dance was a fun change of pace to see the people we normally see in a barn context in suits and dresses. It was held in the Carriage House of the vineyard itself, and fell on Friday, February 14th. Coincidentally, the 14th is also the birthday of one of our players, Grace Burgert, who is

now a 3rd year and President of the club. The band and the attendees sang her Happy Birthday for the occasion.

Along with the price of the tickets themselves, the silent auction was another way for the event to raise money for Virginia Polo to support its mission of "affordable polo for any student." Among the items offered were a brand-new saddle, local resort tickets, gift cards, and wine from King Family Vineyards.

When we heard about the event, the other students and I were thrilled. Virginia Polo hadn't had a formal event since the last polo ball in 20 and we were beyond excited to be able to attend one as a team and raise money for our organization at the same time. The event itself was a blast, and we are extremely grateful to the King family for planning everything and hosting.



When one door closes, another opens

Brennan Wells

Statistics Major, Class of 2022

The onset of the COVID pandemic and the resulting lockdown was an unfortunate conclusion to my UVA polo spring semester. Both varsity teams were poised to perform very well at nationals having finished the season with undefeated records.

As one can expect, I was disappointed that my team wouldn't get the chance to compete. We had trained all year in hopes of securing a national championship. However, where one door closes, another opens. I went back to my hometown of Freeland, MD, luckily being able to spend my "quarantine" on a 52-acre farm surrounded by horses. Here, I assisted my mother throughout the summer with the operations of our family farm, Marlan Farm (Horseback Riding & Polo). I spent the summer as a co-instructor

teaching private lessons to many eager students and assisting instruction during polo clinics. I was able to pass down some of the knowledge and experience I had collected over the years participating in the I/I program to the up and coming youth of my home club. Additionally, having trained all year at the Virginia Polo center in anticipation of nationals, I had entered the summer in prime arena-playing shape. I was given the opportunity to compete alongside some of my students and be their pro in multiple cash-prize arena tournaments. We were able to go undefeated throughout the summer, capturing two tournament wins at Brandywine Polo Club in the 3-Goal Eastern Circuit Constitution Cup and the 3-Goal Malvern Bank Arena Challenge Cup.

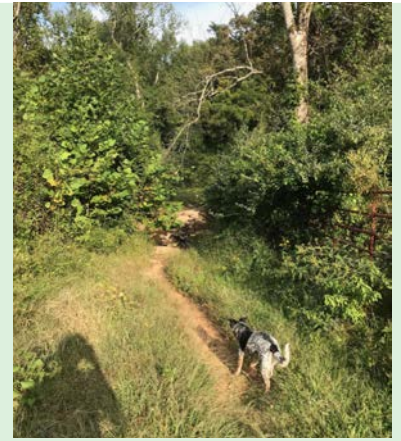
My 2020 tournament play concluded with the 6-Goal National Arena Challenge Cup at Great Meadow Polo Club where I was honored to pro alongside my mother, Kelly Wells. Together we made a strong showing only coming up short narrowly in the finals to the esteemed, former 8-goal, arena player, John Gobin. All in all, the Covid pandemic, although not anticipated, gave me the chance to return to my roots and reconnect with my family, friends, and horses. I was fortunate to have been surrounded by like-minded individuals, passionate for polo, and amazing horses throughout these unprecedented times.



What else we do on the farm...

Jim Deal

“The farm offers an escape from schoolwork and responsibilities so that I can just relax and enjoy nature, while also giving my dog Coyote free roam to get his exercise.”



Grace Burgert

“One of my favorite things about the barn apart from riding and playing there is getting the chance bring my dog out to play. She loves to run around at all hours, be that a stick and ball in the afternoon or early morning feeding Pilar prances around the property like she owns the place. She also acts as the teams’ biggest fan—she shows up to every game, practice, and everything in between!”

Nathan Church

“I love fishing at Virginia polo, the pond is virtually untouched and filled with fish. It’s a great way to unwind and enjoy nature while at the farm.”



Calista Ricken

“In addition to polo, art is also an important part of my life. The farm gives me a space to not only enjoy nature and riding, but also to create. I found myself on the Virginia Polo grounds doing many of my projects for sculpture class last semester. I’m also hoping to be able to set up an easel outside when the weather warms up.”

For many of us players at Virginia Polo, our farm is not just where we come to practice and compete, but also a home for many other activities...

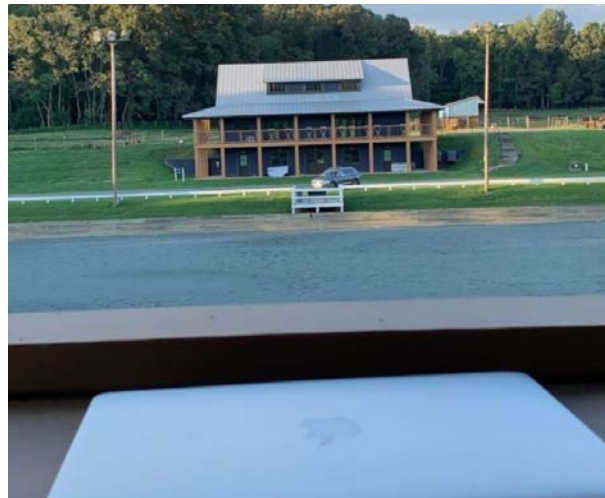


Parker Pearce

“I have always loved to cook because it brings people together. Getting to share this passion with all of my closest friends after a long tournament or game is one of my favorite things to do at Virginia Polo. Each barbeque or asado gives us a chance to relax and provides a crucial time to build friendships.”

Jack McLean

“Studying outside when there is nice weather is the best, and nowhere do I enjoy that more than at the farm. Gazing at the horses in the distance and listening to nature while working is very peaceful. I would like to extend a special thank you to Bill Matheson for donating the announcer’s stand that I have spent hours in watching polo and studying for classes.



Elizabeth Owens

“I love going out back and seeing how happy the ponies are, roaming around with their friends and enjoying their acres of vacation space.”

It's clear even after just hearing from a few of us that when you become a part of our team there's more than just polo, it's a whole new world somehow just a few minutes from grounds.

Summer @ Virginia Polo

By Calista Rieken

The hustle and bustle of Virginia polo isn't defined by the academic year. The Virginia Polo grounds are filled with life no matter the season - in the fall, returning players come back to the University excited for another year of intercollegiate polo potential, while new players bring a different kind of excitement - hopeful and maybe a tad nervous, eager to find their place on the team. In the winter, the dropping temperatures bring snow and adorably fuzzy horses - who doesn't love those? While many students may be away from Charlottesville, Lou Lopez still takes care of the horses and throws hay every day, and welcomes those of us who stop in to say hello. In the spring, the horses come in fresh from winter vacation, and the grounds fill again with students bringing in horses, stick and balling, playing chukkers, playing with their dogs, barbecuing, or doing homework in the fresh air.

However, when summer rolls around, Virginia Polo transforms. Arena polo becomes grass polo on the regulation Bermuda grass field, weather permitting, and UVA alumni and polo-loving community members join students in the chukkers. These chukkers are separate from the regular season, and are pay-to-play. However, instead of dues, UVA students can earn their chukkers through barn work. The student "interns" can live either in Charlottesville apartments, or right on the polo grounds in the ground floor of the Beh House. Virginia Polo's beloved Beh House sports a ground floor of 4 apartments, for visiting teams and student summer interns, and an upper floor of an office, a kitchen, and a lounge area for the team

to study in, hold asados, or just hang out.

A typical week of Virginia summer polo begins on Sunday, where the morning chukkers are played in whites and jerseys. The horses are fed at 8:00, and brought in at 9, for practice at 10. After practice, the horses are washed and turned out, and the day's events are over fairly early. The students usually either unwind on the farm or travel to King Family Vineyards, a vineyard in Crozet, and help make sure their practices run smoothly as well. Mondays are the horses' and interns' day off, so all we have to do is feed at around 9, throw hay in the afternoon, and feed



again in the evening. Tuesdays are set and stick-and-ball days. The horses are fed at around 9, and then we clean tack and split up sets while we wait for them to finish. After they're brought in, the rest of the morning is spent taking sets, with a break for lunch afterwards. The students can stick-and-ball any remaining horses in the afternoon. Once all the horses have gone out, all that's left is to throw hay and feed dinner. Wednesdays and Fridays are very similar, as they are structured around evening practices at 7pm. The horses in outside paddocks are fed at around 9am, and the horses that live in the barn are fed a few hours later so they have less time to create a mess inside. Mornings are spent cleaning tack, doing barn chores, or exercising any horses who happen to need it. Like always, we throw hay in the afternoon. Then, we start bringing the horses in at 5pm, and have them ready for chukkers by 7. After practice, we turn the horses out, feed them dinner, and call it a night. Thursdays and Saturdays are very similar as well. Being the days right after normally-scheduled practices, these two days are usually just for exercising any horses who did not play in practice the day before, which is most often a set or two with optional stick-and-balling.

The summer I lived there, almost 2 years ago now, I met many of the people who are now my best friends. Some of my fondest memories were piling into a car with Jess, Emily, Coco, and Abbie, and road tripping to watch the Congressional Cup tournament at Great Meadows. It pulled a decent crowd, and most people there already knew each other so it was quite the party. Jack, Brennan and Connor played for UVA, eventually winning it all.

We also used the farm's kayaks to go fishing on the lake, went bareback riding in the pasture, played

rounds and rounds of ping-pong and foot mallet, helped teach PTF camps, and so much more. We'd make money grooming for people at Virginia Polo and King Family Vineyards, with the added bonus of being able to hang out at the vineyard all day on Sundays. I played Sunday polo at Kings' for the first time that summer.

This past summer may have been a bit smaller in scale because of Covid, but the days were just as beautiful and the polo just as fun. Socially distanced trail rides are a great way to still have fun outside, and take advantage of Virginia Polo's 75 acres. The "way back," where we turn out horses on vacation, is the perfect place for a long ride in the trees and tall grass. The hills make you feel like you're in the mountains. Some of the girls deep-cleaned and decorated the women's locker room as well, so it's had some new life this year.

While it is a lot of work, it's also extremely rewarding in that you have full polo immersion and every day is filled with opportunities to improve your skills. You're able to see, and be a part of, the behind-the-scenes of the farm we all share. Like learning a language, full immersion is an incredible way to not only practice and improve, but also to make yourself feel at home here at Virginia Polo. You'll learn to match the names and faces of all the Virginia ponies much faster than you anticipated, and, by the time you leave, you may even be able to recognize them just by their back legs. Many of the team members have spent time in this summer paradise, myself included, and came away from the experience with fond memories, honed skills, and a bunch of new friends. For the UVA player, here is no better way to get to know the sport of polo and life here on our farm than by jumping in with both feet and just moving in!

Contact Us!

Please feel free to reach out to the following contacts if you are a current UVA student or upcoming applicant to the University with an interest in joining Virginia Polo or just want to learn more about what we do here at the farm! We are happy to answer any questions and would be happy to arrange a visit once our COVID restrictions are relieved. If you have a specific question regarding the women's team please contact our club president Grace Burgert with all your questions and our vice president Parker Pearce will gladly answer questions about the men's program.

Grace Burgert: gjb9sp@virginia.edu
Parker Pearce: pcp4pau@virginia.edu
Coach Lou Lopez: llopez@vapolo.org

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