

CURRENT ISSUES IN AMERICAN POLO

4:45 p.m. Charles Muldoon



Charles Muldoon, a 5-goal polo player, has played the sport at the highest levels, both nationally and internationally. Notably, he is also the captain for the U.S. Polo Team and was elected Governor at Large of the US Polo Association in 2011.

DISCUSSION PANEL

5:15 p.m.

RECEPTION AND VIEWING OF *CHUKKERS: THE SPORT OF POLO IN ART*

6:00 p.m.

Museum, Galleries 1 & 2

LIMITED SEATING

This educational public symposium is free of charge, however seating must be reserved. RSVP to 540-687-6542, ext. 10 or jsheehan@nsl.org

POLO MATCH & LUNCHEON

Sunday, September 23, 2012



photo by Douglas Lee

A Benefit for the NSLM
at the Virginia International Polo Club
in Upperville, Virginia

For information on the match and luncheon:
540-687-6542 ext. 26 or www.nsl.org



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and culture of equestrian and field sports*



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POLO!

presented by the

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EXHIBIT

July 12 - September 30, 2012

CHUKKERS:
THE SPORT OF POLO IN ART
*Paintings and Sculpture
from the 1880s to the present*

SYMPOSIUM

Saturday, September 22, 2012

THE EVOLUTION OF POLO IN AMERICA
*History, Art, Women's Teams, and Current Issues
Followed by Reception & Viewing of Chukkers*

POLO MATCH & LUNCHEON

Sunday, September 23, 2012

*A Benefit for the NSLM
in Upperville, Virginia*

SYMPOSIUM

Saturday, September 22, 2012
3:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

THE EVOLUTION OF POLO IN AMERICA

Founders' Room, Library
Moderator: F. Turner Reuter, Jr.

A JOURNEY OF POLO IN AMERICA: 1876 - 2012

3:00 p.m. H. A. Laffaye



Horace A. Laffaye, M.D. a 2009 - 2010 NSLM John H. Daniels Fellow, is a former polo player and an authority on international polo and its history. He has authored several books, including *The Evolution of Polo* and *Polo in the United States*. Dr. Laffaye is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Museum of Polo and Chairman of the Hall of Fame Nominating Committee.

POLO IN AMERICAN ART

3:30 p.m. Michael H. S. Finney



Michael H. S. Finney is a Maryland racing historian and sporting art dealer specializing in equine art. He began his polo career at the Bostwick's Village Farms Club in New York and went on to reside with Hector Barrantes in Argentina before playing for White Birch Farm. Finney has also served as an instructor, announcer and referee at the Myopia Polo Club in Boston and as a consultant on polo art for *Polo Magazine*.

4:00 p.m. Break

WOMEN'S POLO IN AMERICA: A HISTORICAL VIEW & RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

4:15 p.m. Dennis J. Amato



Dennis J. Amato, Ph.D. a noted polo historian, has amassed one of the world's largest collections of printed materials and ephemera on the sport. He has contributed to several books and written almost forty articles including *Long Island Polo: Past & Present*, *Theodore Roosevelt and Oyster Bay Polo*, *Early California Polo* and *Artist & Poloist: Charles Cary Rumsey*. Amato also served as the Meadow Brook Club's historian in 1994 and 1995.



with research by 2009 - 2010 John H. Daniels Fellow, H. A. Laffaye and loans from the Museum of Polo and Hall of Fame, Wellington, Florida

The Emergence of a Team Sport

While the game of polo has been played in many variations for centuries throughout the Middle and Far East, the organized team sport as it is played today and represented in art took shape in the latter half of the 19th century in India. By the 1850's the ancient folk game had lost popularity in much of the region, but in Manipur a version with seven players was still being played. Lieutenant Joseph Sherer, a British soldier stationed in India during the British occupation, first witnessed the unruly game by locals on horseback. By 1859 Sherer, who would later be known as the "Father of English Polo," formed the first British polo club along with other British officers and tea planters and in 1863 drafted the first set of written rules.



Polo Scene, 1899
by Edward Matthew Hale
British cavalry is depicted playing a station game of polo, likely in an Indian military camp.

The popularity of "hockey on ponies," as it was first called, spread quickly through the cavalry in India. Beginning in the 1870's as a result of inter-regimental competitions, international media coverage, and military reassignments, clubs were founded in Ireland, England, Scotland, America, and Australia, and camp polo began to be played in Argentina. Among the early clubs were: Hurlingham (1874), Rugby (1891), and Cirencester (1894), all in England; as well as Westchester (1876) and Meadow Brook (1881) in America. Rules were codified with some variations from one association to the other, creating a foundation for the emerging sport into the 20th century. This set the stage

for international competition among teams with the first match between the American Westchester Polo Club and the English Hurlingham Club played in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1886. Later named the Westchester Cup, the world-class competition between the U.S. and England would continue until 2009.



Polo Player, 1882
by Walter Roche



Before the Game, c. 1910
by Gilbert Holiday

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A Visual Record

With the establishing of polo clubs came a shift from primarily military involvement to a rise in popularity of polo among elite society and aristocracy. As an equine activity, polo was a natural fit for enthusiasts of the turf and field sports who already pursued foxhunting, flat racing, and steeplechasing. Many of those who took up polo were also patrons of the arts, and as such began to commission polo-specific works. Prior to this, books and periodicals covered the rules of the game with diagrams of play, photographs, and some illustrations, but little in the way was being produced as a result of artistic expression. In 1882 the first known bronze sculpture of a polo player and pony depicting the game as it is played today garnered attention at the Royal Academy; "A little bronze of "Polo", by Mr. Walter Roche, is clever and compact; the subject is excellently suited for a statuette."¹ Sculpture as a three-dimensional medium was ideal in conveying motion and capturing the dynamic energy of the game. Henry Lucas-Lucas was among the first painters who became recognized for his polo scenes with his portrayals of the Rugby Club in the 1890s. Gilbert Holiday's society paintings spoke to the glamour and mark of social status that watching and playing polo at the highest levels would embody. The proliferation of polo artwork from this time forward built a visual record with paintings, watercolors, drawings, prints, and sculptures depicting the top polo clubs, matches, players and their ponies.

dominated the sport until 1909 when the American team comprised of members of the Meadow Brook Club known as "The Big Four" won the International Westchester Cup. Harry Payne Whitney, the captain of the Meadow Brook, recognized that the fast-paced game would benefit from a succession of fresh polo ponies that met the demands of continual bursts of speed and rapid turns of play. The combination of the team's four 10-goal players, indomitable polo ponies, innovative tactics, and training forever changed the pace and character of the game.

The Big Four would win again in 1911 and 1913 against formidable English opponents; Leslie Cheape, also a 10-goal player, was on the English team in both years. Later, Captain Charles T. I. (Pat) Roark, considered the best British player in the inter-war period, would also attain the coveted 10-goal rating and play in the 1927 and 1930 Westchester Cup.



A Saddled Polo Pony with Stable Beyond, c.1890
by William Woodhouse



Polo at Rugby, 1893
by Henry Lucas-Lucas



Ralla, modeled 1910
by Herbert Haseltine
The polo pony known for her irritable disposition was one of Harry Payne Whitney's favorites.

Legends

By the turn of the century, polo had hit its stride as a competitive endeavor, and champions were born, both equine and human. The renowned Walter Buckmaster, an English stockbroker, became the first British 10-goal player and continued to compete at the highest levels for thirty years, including in the 1900 and 1902 Westchester Cups and two Olympic Games. The English

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These legends were all portrayed by the leading animal and sporting artists of the day. While many other artists began to explore modern and abstract art, those who depicted sporting activities remained champions of naturalism and realism. Whitney commissioned Herbert Haseltine to model several important sculptures from the time period including his favorite polo pony in the 1909 Westchester Cup, *Ralla*. Franklin Brooke

Voss was sought after for several portraits of players and ponies including a painting of Big Four team member Devereux Milburn and Jacob, one of his mounts. Other prominent polo artists in the early to mid-1900's were George Denholm Armour, Cecil Aldin, Paul Brown, and Kenneth MacIntire. Women artists too were gaining more recognition and began to explore polo art, among them Renée Sintenis and Diana Thorne.

After World War II, polo art continued to reflect the game's favor in England and among English nobility as exemplified by the paintings of polo at Windsor by Lionel Edwards and Joan Wanklyn. Prince Philip was an enthusiastic player and Prince Charles would play for over forty years. Painters such as Thomas LaFontaine and Sam Savitt and sculptors including Gill Parker and Amy Oxenbould continued in the tradition of the genre in the U.S. and England.

Champions of a Legacy



Devereux Milburn on Jacob, 1910
by Franklin Brooke Voss
Milburn played the #4 position for the Big Four in 1909.



Untitled, c. 1990
by Enrique Castro

Beginning in the 1950's, however, Argentina began to produce most of the highest level players in the modern game. Having always had a strong tradition of competitive polo, both nationally and internationally, including the prestigious Argentine Open first played in 1905, Argentina moved to the forefront of international competition, taking the reins as a dominating force in polo to this day. The works of Argentine artist Enrique Castro capture the heady excitement, fast pace, and action of chukkers.

The word chukker, the modern term for the periods of play in polo derived from the Hindi word for "wheel," serves as a reminder of the game's Indian origin. While contemporary artwork is a far cry from that of the 19th century, it still carries the same energy of the unruly game as it was played and first witnessed by Lieutenant Sherer in the 1850's.

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¹ "Sculpture in 1882." *The Saturday Review* (vol. 53, no. 1389), 731.