



MANIPUR CELEBRATES WOMEN'S POLO

A Commemorative Journal



Publisher
Manipur Tourism

Editor
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Polo Yatra by Huntre! Equine

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THE TEAMS

TEAM AUSTRALIA

Polo is played throughout Australia; there are approximately 50 Clubs and State Associations in NSW, Victoria, Queensland, WA and South Australia. The Australian Polo Federation (APF) is the governing body for all forms of polo in Australia, from juniors through to high performance for regular field polo and variants including arena, beach & snow polo. Its members are the 5 State Polo Associations. Its objectives are to promote the playing and interest in polo; to co-ordinate international teams and matches; to set rules, policies and guidelines; and to supervise handicapping of all Australian players.



Alessia Russo has been playing polo for the last 9 years as a member of the South-East Queensland Polo Club. A constant highlight for her is playing alongside her father in various tournaments throughout QLD and NSW. A particular tournament highlight playing alongside her father was placing in the top four teams in the Ellerston Autumn 8 Goal Tournament this year. A ladies'

tournament highlight was representing QLD and winning the "State of Origin" at Ellerston at the beginning of 2017. She grew up in Brisbane but now lives in Sydney.



Billie Mascart has been playing polo for the last 10 years and is a member of Windsor Polo Club in Richmond, NSW. She has played across Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Argentina in tournaments ranging from 0 to 14 goals. Her polo highlights have been winning the Riverlands Ladies tournament in 2010 alongside Nina Clarkin, winning the

Ellerston Women's Circuit 2016 for NSW as well as the Malaysian Ladies Championship in Oct 2016 against Sunny Hale. Billie is looking forward to travelling to India, Manipur and captaining her country in such a tournament as well as discovering the heritage and history of the birth place of polo!



Chloe Warren grew up with horses and has been riding since the age of 5. A family interest in polo and love of horses contributed to a natural progression into the sport. She has been lucky enough to play, train and work with horses throughout Australia and around the world. She looks forward to travelling to India for the first time and representing

Australia.



Indiana Benneto has been chasing the polo dream and summer in both the northern and Southern Hemisphere since she left school, now 23 she spends half her time in Australia and New Zealand. Hailing from Gundy, NSW where she has been involved in polo all her life, however played from the past 5 years. Indiana is super excited to travel to India and play along side

and against world class players in such a historic polo country.



Whitney Warren, from South Australia grew up playing polo in small country clubs with close friends and family. Through polo she has met some amazing people and has been able to travel Australia and the world playing, grooming and training horses. A lot of these experiences have been shared with her younger sister Chloe, together they have had a blast! She is excited to head to

Manipur and participate in the Women's Polo Tournament.

TEAM INDIAN POLO ASSOCIATION

The Indian Polo Association was formed in 1892. Some of the prominent teams at that time were Alwar, Bhopal, Bikaner, Jaipur, Hyderabad, Patiala, Jodhpur, Kishengarh and Kashmir. Majority of the Cavalry regiments of the British and the British Indian Army also fielded teams.

The Calcutta Polo Club which is the oldest polo club in the world, was the first club to start holding tournaments again post-independence. Jaipur, Delhi, Bombay and Hyderabad also now hold regular tournaments. In the year 1992 the IPA completed 100 years and since then polo is on an upward trend in the country. Today IPA has 33 registered Polo Clubs.



Abigail Slater is a 0 goal open handicap, Ladies 3 goal. Abigail is Vice President, Commercial Servicing Network at American Express and is currently based in Gurgaon. Abigail moved to India six months ago with her job (and horses!) and is thoroughly enjoying life in India and the polo scene. From the UK originally, she started playing polo six years ago at

Singapore Polo Club. She loves to travel and India is the fifth country she's been based.



Ameera Pasrich started riding at the age of 3. She mainly does Dressage but when given the opportunity she also plays polo, jumps and does a bit of tent pegging. She was the junior national champion 2016-17 and was given the best rider trophy as well. She has also been in the winning team of the 40km National Endurance race in Jodhpur and played the junior IPA. She

hopes to win laurels for the country in the near future.



Monica Saxena is the only mother of two playing competitive Polo in India. A member of the Army Polo and Riding Club, New Delhi, Monica is a tough rider and has been playing competitive Polo since 2010. She regularly participates in Delhi Polo season each year. She was winner of DGRVS Cup (2012) and has been runners' up in several 2/4 goal tournaments.



Rajvi Rao is from Hyderabad. She's been riding for about three and a half years. She's always had an affinity for horses which led to my looking up a local riding club for lessons. She's grateful for the chance to be a part of International Women's Polo 2 years in a row and an opportunity to learn from amazing ladies in polo from the world over.



Sanya Suhag: My grandfather played the game when he was in the NDA as a cadet. He instantly liked the game and later went on to play for the country a few times and captained the ASC team in the army. Having seen polo in his childhood my father, Samir Suhag also took up the game once he grew up. He was one of the 1st professional polo players this country has seen. Having such a background it was inevitable for me to take up the game. I started riding a few years ago but unfortunately had a bad injury after falling off the horse. That did stop me to take up riding again but since my love for animals and horses is so strong it was just a matter of time that I got back on the horse. I took this game on earlier this year and have been fortunate enough to play some tournaments in Delhi and a couple of Ladies international tournaments In Jodhpur. I am 19 and currently pursuing my studies in law and I do intend to play polo for as long as I can.

TEAM KENYA

Our Kenyan ladies team are all members of the KPA (Kenya polo association) and members of 3 different polo clubs scattered across Kenya. North Kenya Polo club situated at the foothills of Mount Kenya 5 hours north of Nairobi where polo is played at one of the highest altitudes in the world at around 8000 feet. Manyatta polo club situated near Gilgil town 2.5 hours North of Nairobi near Lake Nakuru and Naivasha in the Rift Valley famous for their millions of flamingoes. And Nairobi Polo Club which is over 100 years old and hosts the Kenya Polo Open every September with players from all over the world still at an altitude of around 6000 feet.



Imogen Voorspuy: I was born and brought up in Kenya. My family operate riding safaris accross kenya so I have ridden all my life and horses have always played a big role in my up bringing. I have been very lucky to be able to ride accross the Masai Mara with the wildlife and am currently working on the safaris now that I have finished university. My family also play polo so I began when I was about 12 years old and have enjoyed playing in Kenya ever since. I am looking forward to the opportunity to visit India for the first time and to experience playing different ponies as well as playing in the tournament to promote women's polo.



Kaila Millar: Born and growing up in beautiful Kenya, into a dedicated polo playing family, I had the privilege of riding and of course playing polo from a very young age. I learnt everything I know from my father and brother and was pretty soon playing and loving polo competitively. Returning from education in the UK, I am now a teacher in Nairobi, Kenya. This will be my first time representing my country and indeed touring abroad for polo, I am both hugely honoured and excited.



Nicola Barlow: Nikki, aged 38 started playing polo in her early 20's in Kenya. She has represented Kenya twice playing against Zambia ladies. She studied textile & interior design and runs her own interior design business based in Nairobi. Her passions are horses, travel, art, exercise and health.



Tiva Gross: I am 24 years old and I was born and brought up in Kenya. I have ridden horses since I can remember and played my first polo tournament at the age 10. I have been lucky enough to play in some amazing countries with ladies polo which include; Zambia, Zimbabwe, South-Africa, Singapore, Thailand, Florida, Australia, UK and Barbados. I am really looking forward to playing polo in India for the first time.



Rowena Stichbury: I started playing polo after my eldest son was born 17 years ago and subsequently have had another 4 children. Polo has become a family passion with 5 out of the 7 of us now playing. I run a small polo yard at home and school our horses throughout the year. I am the Nairobi Polo Club vice captain. We moved to Kenya 20 years ago prior to which I was a horse safari guide in Botswana in the Okavango Delta. Riding in the wild is so exhilarating that only polo has managed to get my adrenaline pumping as much. The joy of polo in Kenya is that we have many lady and children players all competing on equal footing with all the men. Our oldest active player is 78 years old and our youngest 12. There is no other sport like it!

TEAM MANIPUR MARJING

The Manipuri women's teams are named after two guardian deities who played Polo according to the court chronicle of Manipur.

According to the mythology of the Meiteis, Lord Marjing, in whose honour Team Manipur Marjing is named, is also the god of polo. Team Manipur Thangjing is named after another of the four guardian deities. It is written that both played in the first game of polo held in honour of the wedding of Lord Pakhangba, deity king of Manipur.



Asem Romabati hails from Ithai Wapokp Mayai Leikai, Thoubal. She overcame initial objections from her family and started playing Polo since 1993. In the early 1990s, she played for three consecutive years as players of Kumbi Polo Club. Presently she played for Thangmeiband Youth Polo Club.



Soibam Langlen Devi hails from Ithai Wapokpi Mayai Leikai, Thoubal. She overcame initial objections from her family and started playing polo since 1993. She played for Thangmeiband Youth Polo Club.



Ningthoujam Ashakiran has been playing polo since 1991. Hailing from NambolLourembam, Bishnupur, she started her polo career from the Kumbi Polo Club. Presently she played for K & M Memorial Rising School, Singjamei.



Victoria Oinam from Langol Housing Complex type II, Imphal West started Playing Polo in 2017. She has taken part in many state level polo tournaments. She played for Thangmeiband Youth Polo Club.



Irom Sangeeta picked up the art of playing polo at the age of around 15 years. She hails from Sagolband Tera Amudon Leikai, Imphal. She played for K & M Memorial Rising School, Singjamei.



Salam Sumita Devi Hails from Keirak Makha Leikai, Thoubal. Apart from polo, she also engages with other non-horse related sports events (2nd place at the 5 km. race in the 1996 National Level Meet). Presently, she played for Thangmeiband Youth Polo Club.

TEAM MANIPUR THANGJING



Khungdongbam Habe Devi is the sister of Deventy. She started playing polo since 1993 as a player of the Kumbi Polo Club. Currently, she plays for Thangmeiband Youth Polo Club.



Khungdongbam Deventy hails from Porompat Thawwan Thabal Leikai of Imphal East District. She started playing polo since 2004. She played for Thangmeiband Youth Polo Club



Laishram Thadoi Chanu comes from a polo loving family and picked up the game in 1997. Currently, she plays for Thangmeiband Youth Polo Club.



Neelu RK hails from Sagolband Tera Amudon Akham Leikai, Imphal and started her polo career from RKSSS polo club, Imphal in 2011. She played for K & M Memorial Rising School, Singjamei.



ThoudamTanna Devi hails from Kongpal Kshetri Leikai, Imphal. She started playing polo in 2011. She has taken part in major polo tournaments. Apart from polo, she also takes keen interest equestrian events. She played for K & M Memorial Rising School, Singjamei.



Jetholia Thongbam was introduced to the game of polo by her uncle. She hails from ThangmeibandYumnamLeikai and started playing in 2012. She played for K & M Memorial Rising School, Singjamei.

TEAM USA

The USA team was assembled by Edward Armstrong, Adviser Partner of Huntre! Equine and Secretary-Treasurer of the American International Polo Foundation. A social enterprise of equestrian activities, Huntre! Equine has linked American Polo to Manipur since 2013.

"With USPA endorsement", says Armstrong, "the participation of the US team continues a long tradition of international polo. As an approximately forty percent of USPA membership, women are an important and growing segment on the international scene. AIPF was formed to support US teams in international competition and the third annual Statehood Day tournament embodies that mission." That mission, branded as Polo Yatra, an international and national journey of women's polo, works to support, develop, and promote women's polo in India. "The inspiration of this initiative", adds Roopa Barua, Huntre! Equine partner from Mumbai, "is the woman polo player of Manipur. She has enabled us to build the American partnership that today brings you Team USA."



Belinda Brody graduated from the University of Connecticut with a degree in Animal Science, while playing three years of Varsity Polo. She was accepted to Team USPA in 2010, and played tournament polo throughout the East Coast, Mexico and Argentine including lady's polo up to 20 goals. She is originally from Brooklyn, NY. She is an Assistant Polo Manager at Vero Beach Polo Club and is also the Polo

School Director.



Eva Crossman is a freshman at the University of Kentucky and is on the Women's varsity polo team there. Both of Eva's parents train horses in her home town and she grew up riding and training horses. She is excited to travel to Manipur with her teammates and to represent her country.



Marissa Wells: I have been riding horses all of my life. My mother taught me how to ride and play polo, which I started when I was 8 years old. Since the 7th grade I have competed on the Maryland Girl's Interscholastic Polo Team, coached by my mother. I was nominated the team captain my 8th grade year and won the 2012, 2014, and 2015 National Title, being elected to the National All Star Team

every year from 2011-2015. In 2014, I was nominated as the PTF Female Player of the Year. I currently am the captain of the Texas A&M Intercollegiate Women's Polo Team. We have been the defending Central Regional Champions for 2016 and 2017. I have been nominated to the National All Star Team for 2016 and 2017 as well. Just this past year I was selected to be apart of the Team USPA.



Olivia Stringer Berube: I grew up in Baltimore, Maryland riding show horses and started playing polo at 13 years old for the Baltimore Interscholastic team. I then captained the team at Colorado State University where we made to 3 National Championship Finals and I was a 3 time National All-Star. I've been playing and teaching polo since, and my husband Nate and I run our farm 'Berube

Polo' in Aiken, South Carolina where we train and sell horses and teach polo. We go north in the summer months to run the Maryland Polo Club where he manages the club and I run the Intermediate and Junior polo. We also compete in tournaments on the east coast and the south for our 'Berube Polo' team.



BSE CUP FOR WINNING TEAM GOES TO TEAM KENYA

Manipur Governor, Dr. Najma Heptulla (middle) hands over the BSE Cup, the 3rd Manipur Statehood Day Women's Polo Tournament trophy to the victorious Kenya women polo team at Mapal Kangjeibung Polo Ground in Imphal, Manipur.

Team Kenya came from behind to pip Team USA 5-4. The Americans led with three quick goals in the opening chukka. Handicap 3 player, Marissa Wells, notched a field goal hat-trick. In the second chukka, Team Kenya captain and handicap 2 player, Tiva Gross, slotting in a penalty to cut the deficit and followed up with a beautiful goal from the centre of the field to bring the score to 2-3 at the break.

Wells took her tally to four by scoring another field goal for Team USA but Imogen Voorspuy struck for Kenya to bring the score to 3-4. In the dramatic last chukka, Nikki Barlow made it 4-4, and with 20 seconds to go, Kaila Millar sealed Team Kenya's victory with an under-the-neck-shot.

Team Kenya was awarded the BSE Cup, a custom made trophy of bell metal based on a traditional royal wedding gift called a kaosel. Gifted by Ashish Chauhan, Managing Director and CEO of BSE, formerly the Bombay Stock Exchange, it was presented to the team by H. E. Governor, Dr. Heptulla together with a cash award of Rs 60,000. Her Excellency also presented the Runners Up trophy, also of kaosel design, to Team USPA with a cash award of Rs 40,000. Both teams donated their cash awards for the preservation of the Manipuri Pony to the Ibuthou Marjing Khubam Kanba Lup of Heingang Village, an association tasked with the preservation of the shrine and the ponies of Lord Marjing, Lord of the Manipuri Pony. A pony preserve is being built in Heingang Village dedicated this God of Polo.

★ 3rd MANIPUR STATEHOOD DAY ★



— *Women's Polo* —
TOURNAMENT

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Mapal Kangjeibung Polo Ground
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