

VIRGINIA POLO



2021-2022

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CONTENTS

Editor's Statement	1
Sponsorship List; Coach's Biography	2
Women's Varsity Team	3
Men's Varsity Team	4
Club Team	5
Virginia Juniors	7
Behind the Barn Doors	8
Bootcamp	9
Pony Yearbook	10
Polo in Paradise	12
Intercollegiate National Championship Recap	14
Cavman: A Legacy	16
Captains' Letters	18
Polo Goes Global	20
Lou's Illustrious Coaching Legacy	22
Kezletown Polo Club	24
2021-2022 Virginia Polo Donors	27
Future Goals; Contact Us	28

EDITOR'S STATEMENT

Distance makes the heart grow fonder, and I know that after last year, Virginia Polo's love for the sport and our horses has only proven that saying true. Mallet in hand, back in the saddle, and riding our incredible horses, we welcomed a new season of polo filled with chukkers, challenges, and champions. Our teams played incredibly well at Regionals and Nationals. We will be especially sad to lose our fourth years as they graduate. Their impact on the team and passion for polo is outstanding, and we are grateful that they chose to spend their time on the team. The continued efforts of team members, coaches, barn staff, board of directors, and heaven-sent supporters and alumni, empower us to play progressively better polo seasons with each coming year. This gratefulness drives every word within the pages of the 2021-2022 Virginia Polo magazine this year. The life lessons, sportsmanship, and connection to your peers and adults who all love one thing are both magical and a hallmark of every members' experience at Virginia Polo. As I reflect on thankfulness and what Virginia Polo has done for every one of us, I am also grateful for the way that Virginia Polo has challenged us to be better players and individuals. When our gator breaks down, when a pony turns up lame, or when a visiting team forgets equipment at home, Virginia Polo rises to the challenge. When your breath fogs and your nose turns red as you feed in the chilly early mornings or when you are at the barn on a late-night, mucking, with only your speaker and some pesky flies to keep you company, we learn discipline, commitment, and what it means to care. This year's magazine will showcase our current teams, polo inside and outside the barn, and the future of our sport at UVA and globally. We thank family, friends, and community leaders for their support and invite you to experience the true essence of Virginia Polo and the experience it provides for everyone.

President: Grace Burgert **Vice President:** Parker Pearce **Editor:** Sophia Wilbourn
Treasurer: Griffen Keffer **Social Chair:** Calista Rieken



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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COACH'S CORNER



Coach Lou Lopez

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. 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 eighteenth year as head coach. Under his leadership, Virginia has won seven Women's and five Men's national titles.

2021-2022 VARSITY WOMEN



**Grace Burgert,
Co-Captain**

Grace Burgert is a fourth-year from Houston, Texas. She grew up showing American saddlebreds, but switched to polo in high school and played on the Houston ERG Girls team. At UVA, Grace is majoring in History and Politics, with a minor in Middle Eastern Studies. She is currently writing a Politics DMP thesis on "The Peasant Question" in communist Russia and China. She serves as Senior Support Officer with UVA Honor, but her absolute favorite thing to do is hang out at the barn with her teammates and ponies. It's impossible for her to pick a favorite, but if she had to, it would be Bumbai because of her spunky attitude, powerful bump, and quick turns. Grace is also very partial to Baby, because her general demeanor and unhorselike behavior makes her laugh every day.



**Maddie Grant,
Co-Captain**

Maddie Grant is a fourth-year from Phoenix, Maryland majoring in Biology on the pre-med track. She grew up riding hunter jumpers and switched to polo when she was ten. Maddie played for the Maryland Girls team, where she won four national championships with her two younger sisters. She has spent her summers playing in Maryland, Wyoming, and Virginia. Maddie's favorite horse at the barn is Mosenita. She is extremely powerful, quick, and fast; Maddie instantly gains more confidence when she's on her.



Liz Owens

Liz Owens is a third-year from Boston, MA, majoring in Philosophy and minoring in Psychology. She has ridden most of her life and been playing polo for the past nine years. In high school, she played on the Boston Polo Club Interscholastic Team. Liz's favorite horses on the women's string are Mosenita and Federico. She is looking forward to the rest of the year at Virginia Polo and is especially excited to join the women's team, representing UVA, in Scotland for a tournament later this Spring.



Katie Define

Katie Define is a third-year from Charlottesville, Virginia. She is majoring in Computer Science with a minor in Technology Entrepreneurship. Even though Katie has ridden horses her whole life, she had never played polo before coming to UVA. Needless to say, the club and team have consistently been the best part of her college experience. Katie's favorite pony is, of course, Galleta (Yeti or Cookie for short) because she's got a powerful bump, unbeatable speed, and the cutest face—especially when she is clipped.



Alana Benz

Alana Benz is a first-year student currently undecided on her major. She is from Hawaii where she grew up surfing, paddling, and riding horses. Alana started playing polo in high school and played for the Maui Polo Club's interscholastic team. She spent the last summer playing at Hawaii Polo Club, where she was able to play fast and fun polo right on the beach. Alana's favorite horse here is the precious perfect baby Bella because she is not only very cute, but she also has an amazing personality and demeanor and is incredibly handy and quick in the arena. Alana has loved every minute here at Virginia Polo!

2021-2022 VARSITY MEN



**Jack McLean,
Captain**

Jack McLean is a fourth-year pursuing a B.A. in Economics and Spanish. He is the captain of the Men's Varsity team and has played polo since the age of 11. Originally from Pittsburgh, Jack got his start in polo at Powers Polo School in East Palestine, Ohio. As one of very few players from western Pennsylvania, Jack traveled to many places outside his hometown for the chance to compete. He attended dozens of PTF clinics and youth tournaments across the country and was fortunate enough to have gone on two exchange trips with the PTF—one to New Zealand when he was 13 and one to England when he was 15. Jack currently serves on the National Junior Board of the PTF working to grow these same programs that were a tremendous aid to his development as a player. A two-time Open National Interscholastic champion, Jack has also won many NYTS all-star as well as sportsmanship awards and has been a certified umpire since the age of 15. His favorite horses at Virginia Polo are Mango, Dumtruck, Sorpresa, and Quavo.



Parker Pearce

Parker Pearce is a third-year in the McIntire School of Commerce studying Management and Entrepreneurship. He is from Monkton, Maryland where he started riding as a young child and competed in show jumping and eventing for many years. After discovering polo, he never looked back and is fortunate enough to play at the University with two longtime teammates from high school as well as many other great friends. His favorite horse in the men's string is Nemo because of his kind demeanor and ease in the arena. Parker spends his summers playing at the Maryland Polo Club and will be interning at Sagamore Spirit this summer. Go Hoos!



Jim Deal

Jim Deal is a fourth year transfer student from the University of South Carolina, Aiken. He grew up on Grovespring Farm in Culpeper, Virginia, showjumping and foxhunting until the age of twelve when he began polo at Natania Farm in Warrenton, Virginia. He went on to play up and down the east coast, competing in NYTS and winning many all-star awards. In high school he competed for the UVA junior team, playing against the Maryland interscholastic national championship team that he now has the honor of playing with as a student at UVA. For his first two years of college he competed for the USCA intercollegiate team as well as many local 2-12 goal tournaments. He is currently majoring in English and is thrilled to be a part of the Virginia Polo community. His favorite horses are Sorpresa, Sapa and Nemo.



**Vlad
Tarashansky**

Vlad Tarashansky is a first-year studying Computer Science in the School of Engineering and Sciences. He is from Lloyd Harbor, New York and began jumping horses at the age of 6. Two years later, he discovered polo at Country Farms Polo Club and never looked back. Over the summers, he played around the northeast and in many youth polo tournaments including PTF and NYTS tournaments. Vlad is a member of the National Junior PTF Board to help grow youth polo, which has been a driving force in his personal polo experience. The PTF generously took him on an exchange trip to Jamaica in 2019. During the school years, he played interscholastic polo, winning the Open National Interscholastic Championship last year with Gardnertown Polo. Vlad's favorite horse at Virginia Polo is Sorpresa because she is a machine on the field and has a quirky personality on the ground.



Brennan Wells

Brennan Wells is a fourth-year studying Statistics with a concentration in Econometrics. He grew up on Marlan Farm in Freeland, Maryland, where he first started playing polo at the age of 6. He's been playing polo ever since and has had the honor of competing in many youth polo tournaments across the country. He's been fortunate enough to travel internationally and play polo in countries such as Zimbabwe, Argentina, and India where he represented the U.S. in the 2017 Manipur International Invitational. Brennan was the recipient of the 2018 Russel A. Sheldon Interscholastic Male Player of the Year award and a two-time Interscholastic National Champion alongside his teammates, Jack and Parker, who he has now been playing polo with for 10 years and 7 years, respectively. He's super excited for what the Men's Varsity team will accomplish and has already accomplished this polo season at Virginia Polo. Although there are so many amazing horses to choose from, his favorite horses at Virginia Polo are undoubtedly Bonita, Minnie Pearl, and Viuda.



**Connor
Finemore**

Connor Finemore is a fourth-year student studying Mathematics and Economics, he is originally from Australia but grew up in upstate New York, where he was introduced to polo. Connor began playing a year before he came to UVA and was originally a club member before moving up to Varsity. His favorite horse is Hennessy because she has a wonderful personality and is the alpha of the chute paddock at the farm.

2021-2022 CLUB TEAM



**Calista Rieken,
Captain**

Calista Rieken is a fourth-year majoring in Biology and minoring in Studio Art. She grew up showing hunter/jumpers, but switched to polo when she took Bootcamp in Fall 2018. Calista was hooked from day one, and can't wait to keep playing polo after graduation. Her favorite horse at the barn is Fiesta for her agility, love of the game, and absolutely no-patience attitude. Without a doubt, the team here at UVA has been a highlight of Calista's college experience. When not at the barn, she likes painting and reading, and she hopes to attend medical school in the future. Calista is so excited for her last season, and is grateful for all her memories at Virginia Polo!



Sophia Wilbourn

Sophia Wilbourn is a second-year Russian major from Mississippi. After being bitten by the horse bug at a young age, she doomed her parents to a lifetime of horse-themed birthday gifts and constant requests for a pony for Christmas. In high school, she competed in Intermediate Hunter Jumper Fences in the Interscholastic Equestrian Association. Since learning polo in last year's spring Bootcamp, Sophia has enjoyed playing on the team this year. Her favorite horse in the barn is Jaws, and she is looking forward to another beautiful polo season!



Mead Robertson

Mead Robertson is a third-year Kinesiology major from Montgomery, AL. She took riding lessons when she was really young but never competed. When Mead got to UVA, she decided to try polo. Mead participated in the bootcamp program her first year and has been a member of the club team since! It is hard for Mead to pick a favorite horse in the barn, but she always enjoys playing Juan!



Scout Bale

Scout Bale is a first-year Civil Engineering student from Central Oregon. She grew up riding on trails and got into showing during middle school through 4H. Scout joined the bootcamp program in the fall to learn how to play polo and is now on the club team. She absolutely loves being a part of this amazing group and being able to hang out with the ponies almost every day!



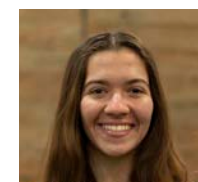
Megan Maleno

Megan Maleno is from Long Island, NY. She is a second-year studying Computer Science. Megan grew up riding and competing in the hunters, and was introduced to polo last spring when she did Bootcamp. Learning how to play polo from the varsity players was the highlight of her first year. Megan loves being a member of Virginia Polo and being able to ride such talented ponies!



Katy Owens

Katy Owens is a third-year from Harrisonburg, VA. She is a Civil Engineering major with a concentration in Construction Engineering and Management. Prior to coming to UVA, she took lessons at a hunter-jumper barn for 12 years. Katy learned to play polo during Bootcamp this past Fall and is excited to be a part of the Club Team this semester and to learn more about the game.



Julia Hersh

Julia Hersh is a second-year student from New Jersey. Although undecided, she is a possible Biology or Cognitive Science major with a Studio Art minor. Julia has always been a farm girl, showing goats and riding horses, so she knew she had to make this part of her life when coming to UVA. Julia started playing at Bootcamp her first semester of her first year and has been obsessed since. When not playing polo at UVA, she does dressage at home. Julia is so happy to have found all of these amazing people at VA Polo and cannot wait to improve even more in the coming semesters.



Emmye Mullins

Emmye Mullins is a fourth-year studying Statistics and Data Science. She grew up taking riding lessons in Columbia, South Carolina, but couldn't find a way to continue in high school. After working on a ranch in Colorado for two summers, she became eager to be around horses again and was so excited when she discovered the UVA polo bootcamp in her third year. It has been such an amazing experience! Her favorite ponies are Rocket and Snickers because they are both so sweet and consistent. Emmye feels so lucky to be a part of the Virginia Polo program.



Olivia Beam

Olivia Beam is a second-year from Arlington, Virginia, studying Public Policy and Economics. She rode a lot without competing as a kid, with a bit of a hiatus during high school. Upon entering college, Olivia wanted to find a way to combine her love of riding with her main sport of field hockey, and she is so lucky to have stumbled upon the bootcamp program fall of 2021! Olivia loves every second she spends at the barn, and she cannot wait to be a part of this program for the next two years. It's a hard decision, but Olivia's favorite pony would have to be Pantera!



Hannah Thomas

Hannah Thomas is a third-year in the McIntire School of Commerce concentrating in Accounting and Information Technology with a track in Business Analytics. She is from Charlottesville, Virginia, and has been riding and working with horses since she was 6, primarily in A-rated hunters, equitation, and foxhunting. Since being introduced to polo this past summer, Hannah has jumped at every opportunity to spend more time in the barn and has fallen deeply in love with the sport. The people and horses make this team the best thing she has been lucky enough to be a part of here at UVA; she only wishes she had joined sooner! Hannah's favorite horse rotates pretty frequently as all of our ponies are incredible, but right now she's partial to Rocket and Juan.



Antonia Masias

Antonia Masias is a second-year student from Lima, Peru, majoring in History and minoring in Entrepreneurship and Studio Art. Antonia grew up watching polo matches almost every weekend but didn't hold a mallet until she was 16 years old because there were no female polo players back home. In 2018, she got the chance to watch the Santa Barbara USPA National Intercollegiate Championship, where she realized girls play polo too. Antonia went back to Lima and became the only female polo player for over 3 years. Last year, she began playing indoor polo at UVA and couldn't be happier. Her favorite UVA Club horse is Blade because he is 10 years wiser and more experienced than any of us here at VA Polo.



Lucas Daugherty

Lucas Daugherty is a fourth-year Mechanical Engineering major. He began playing polo last summer through the Roseland Polo School at King Family Vineyards. Immediately, he was hooked. While there, he met several members of the UVA varsity and club teams, all of whom encouraged him to join the club the following fall. It was one of the best decisions he ever made and his only regret is that he didn't join the club before his last year at UVA. From what Lucas has learned about polo in the last year, opportunities to play the amount of polo that we get at UVA are rare. Lucas has been spending as much time as possible in the barn improving his polo skills and making some great new friends before he graduates. After graduating, Lucas will be living in Charlottesville and will definitely continue to play polo for as long as he can.



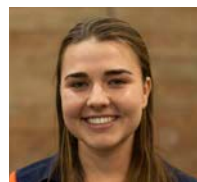
Griffin Keffer

Griffin Keffer is a 4th year from The Plains, Virginia, majoring in Economics. Griffin grew up riding, mostly foxhunting, but took a break from horses during middle and high school. As a second year Griffin joined the polo team following in the footsteps of his sister 4 years prior. At UVA his favorite horse is Rocket as she has a big personality and a bigger bump. After graduating Griffin will move to New York City and hopes to continue playing whenever he can!



Claire Akard

Claire Akard is a third year pre-med student double majoring in French and Classics. She fell in love with riding at a summer camp in elementary school and continued to ride up to the 10th grade when she lived in Amman, Jordan. She took a break when she moved to Belgium, but upon arriving at UVA was very eager to reconnect with horses. Claire was on the equitation team her first year, but joined boot camp the fall of her second year and has been in love with polo ever since! She got to work at the barn this past summer and loved every minute of it. Her favorite horse is Lucas because he's so reliable and he reminds her of Woody's horse from Toy Story!



Caroline Bunch

Caroline Bunch is a fourth-year from Columbia, South Carolina, studying Arabic and Global Studies. She grew up foxhunting and show jumping/eventing and joined Bootcamp during the Fall of 2020. Her favorite horse changes almost every practice, but she always loves Macchiata. Polo has been one of the best parts of her time at UVA!

2021-2022 VIRGINIA JUNIORS



Hanan Fadil is an incoming junior at the Miller School. Before polo she took riding lessons with Hazel. She started polo lessons at Roseland Polo and then joined the high school team at UVA. Hanan's favorite thing about being on the team is getting to learn from so many talented players and playing with the high school team. Her favorite ponies are Cloro and Juanito and Chunky. Cloro and Juanito are both super fast and handy. In Hanan's opinion, Chunky has such an amazing bump she could beat anyone on the field.



Hazel Conklin is a freshman at Charlottesville High School. Before discovering polo, Hazel had been taking riding lessons since the second grade. She loves being on the high school team and being able to practice with the Club team. Hazel believes it is a great experience to play with so many different people and to ride so many different horses. She is looking forward to more games with the high school team and then, hopefully, to going to UVA where she can continue to be a part of Virginia Polo!



Victoria Lawrence is a senior in high school in her second year of playing polo. The first time she played polo was last fall. She took a bootcamp course and after that decided that she wanted to play polo at UVA. Victoria has really enjoyed being a part of the high school team and being able to play in games. Some of her favorite horses are Jaws, Chunky, and Raga. Raga is one of Victoria's favorites because he reminds her a lot of her own horse, and he is super fast (when he wants to be). She is very excited for the rest of the polo season and can not wait to play in more games!



Abigail (Abby) Lawrence is a senior in high school this year. This is her fifth year of playing polo and she hopes to play for years to come. Abby has worked with horses for a very long time, but she took her first polo lessons out in Virginia Beach five years ago. At the suggestion from her coach, she came to a clinic at Virginia Polo and fell in love with the program. She loves working out here and always has so much fun playing or hanging out around the farm as there's always something interesting happening. Some of her favorite horses here are Chunky and Jaws. Chunky is an absolute beast and is always her go-to pony, while Jaws is super fast and Abby always has a great chukker on her.



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BEHIND THE BARN DOORS

Written by Hannah Thomas

It is no secret that Virginia Polo runs on the hard work and sweat equity of its student members. Every member of the club shares the responsibility of making sure our horses are well looked after and the barn is tidied up at the end of the day. However, as much as many of us would love to spend all of our days at the barn, there are classes to attend and exams to study for, and we can't be there all the time. So, who manages the barn in our absence?

**Meet our hardworking barn manager:
Natalia Hernandez**



Originally hailing from Raleigh, North Carolina, Natalia was first introduced to horses at a young age at her family's farm in Mexico. She started off with barrel racing and then picked up polo seven years ago at the Triangle Area Polo Club in North Carolina. She played polo throughout high school, transferring over to our very own Virginia Juniors Team for her senior year. Her favorite horse in the barn is July, whom she affectionately refers to as "Bug."

Natalia shoulders the responsibility of overseeing the 50+ horses that call Virginia Polo home. She is responsible for knowing their unique personalities and quirks, as well as overseeing horse care for all three of our strings.

A typical day for Natalia:

Natalia arrives at the barn between 8-8:30 AM to supervise club members feeding and bringing in the horses for the day. As the

horses come into the barn, she meticulously checks for injuries and monitors the overall health of each horse. While the club members feed the outside horses, Natalia administers any necessary medications and tends to any injured horses.

During the day, Natalia throws hay, feeds lunch, and tackles endless laundry (each horse used in practice wears four polo wraps, and with around 14 horses playing in a practice, the used wraps pile up quickly)! On practice days, Natalia helps ensure everything runs smoothly for both the varsity and club teams. She is always there to close a gate, manage the timer, and essentially be watching and at the ready for anything that comes up. She also makes special cameos in our club practices as both a player and an umpire!

As the day winds to a close, Natalia helps oversee the process of getting all of the horses cooled down and turned out. She also sets up any injured horses for the night out in the blue barn, prepping their stalls and seeing to any special care they might need.

Meet Hank and River, Natalia's four-legged coworkers!



Hank is a hound mix that has been a member of Natalia's family for eight years. He's notorious for running through the drainage pipes, going on gator rides, and shamelessly seeking attention from anyone and everyone on the farm. Natalia adopted her Bluetick hound River in 2020. You'll hear River before you see him; he's famous for his loud baying, his overly large ears, and his sweet personality.

Natalia's favorite part of her job is getting to work behind the scenes in her favorite sport. She credits Virginia Polo for granting her more experience in managing a large herd of horses as well as learning how to care for different types of injuries. The whole team at Virginia Polo is eternally grateful to Natalia for all the dedication and hard work she puts into taking care of our incredible string of ponies!



BOOT CAMP



Each semester, the Polo club invites UVa students who have riding experience, but have never played polo before, to learn the sport through Bootcamp. Over the course of ten weeks, students are taught how to tack up their ponies, hit, ride for polo, and learn the basic rules of the game. Most bootcampers have never touched a polo mallet prior to their first lesson, but, after the ten week program, all are playing slow chukkers and invited to join the club team the following semester. Most Saturday mornings at Virginia Polo, you will find Bootcampers learning to play, while club members are around to help tack up ponies and assist with the teaching of the lessons. Below, some of our current Virginia Polo members and Bootcamp participants have shared their experiences with the Bootcamp program:

"Bootcamp was a great introduction to the sport of polo for me. Everyone was so inclusive and helpful, which is part of what made me want to join the club (besides the ponies)."

- Scout Bale, Club Team member, completed Bootcamp in Fall 2021

"Bootcamp was consistently the highlight of my week and I've never met a more friendly and welcoming group than the polo team. It was a great way to get involved with and introduced to the sport and I now couldn't imagine a college experience without Virginia Polo!"

- Olivia Beam, Club Team member, completed Bootcamp in Fall 2021

"Lou seems to be very informative and very caring with respect to how he's engaging the students, so it has been a pleasant experience so far. Also, the helpers have been very generous with their time and instruction, and very willing to help the students."

-Daron Dabney, Father of current Bootcamp participant Noah

"Teaching Bootcamp has been such a fun and rewarding part of my experience with Virginia Polo. My favorite part has been being able to watch players who I worked with all through Bootcamp join the Club team, become a part of the club environment, and play chukkers with everyone! Bootcamp is a great opportunity for us to share our love of polo with new people and is a part of what makes Virginia Polo such a great community by introducing new players to the sport!"

-Grace Burgert, Varsity Team member

"Going from taking Bootcamp my first year to teaching it in my third and fourth years has been a really rewarding experience. I love being able to pay forward all of the help I received my first year and bring so many people into the sport of polo. I had such a great group of people teach me when I started, and I was so instantly welcomed which really helped me feel at home in my new sport. I can only try to make our newest members feel the same way."

-Calista Rieken, Club Team member, completed Bootcamp in Fall 2018

PONY YEARBOOK



BABY

Team: Women's Varsity
Fun Fact: This 5 year old was raised and trained here at Virginia Polo Center!
Known for: being the sassiest mare in the barn.



BELLA

Team: Women's Varsity
Known for: being a mush on the ground and giving the best cuddles.



BETTY

Team: Club
Fun Fact: new to Virginia Polo 2021
Known for: being called "Ugly Betty" because of her adorable crooked face.



GALLETA "YETI"

Team: Women's Varsity
Known for: being a furry beast.



MOSENITA "MOSE"

Team: Women's Varsity
Known for: being the powerhouse of the women's string and having an amazing bump.



NEMO

Team: Men's Varsity
Known for: being the most fun to ride.



BLADE

Team: Club
Fun Fact: he is officially retired.
Known for: leading the herd in for breakfast every morning.



BUMBAI

Team: Women's Varsity
Known for: her ability to find the fastest way out of any halter.



CHUNKY

Team: Club
Fun Fact: named Best Playing Pony at the Girls IC Nationals 2021
Known for: her 'mare stare' and being very responsive undersaddle.



PANTERA "PANTS"

Team: Club
Known for: being the best pony teacher in bootcamp.



SORPRESA "SORP"

Team: Men's Varsity
Fun Fact: played 26 goal polo.
Known for: being sensitive and handy in the ring every chukker.



VIUDA

Team: Men's Varsity
Fun Fact: named Best Playing Pony at the 2022 D1 East IC Men's Regionals.
Known for: being the most agile on the field.



DUMP TRUCK "DT"

Team: Men's Varsity
Known for: having no chill and being the most powerful on the team.



FIESTA

Team: Club
Fun Fact: shortest pony on club.
Known for: putting 110% effort into every chukker.



MINNIE

Team: Men's Varsity
Known for: moving with grace and having a quick halt.

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POLO IN PARADISE

Written by Caroline Bunch

Alana Benz grew up on the island of Oahu, Hawaii, and she spent her childhood enjoying the beach, nature, spending time with her friends, and soaking in the warm weather year-round. She began riding horses at the age of ten, first learning to jump and showing in hunter-jumpers.

The trajectory of her riding career was forever changed when she spontaneously took a polo lesson with her friends at the age of fourteen. Alana was hooked immediately. After a year of lessons, she was introduced to interscholastic polo and grew as a player on Maui's interscholastic polo team playing with girls her own age. She describes the polo scene in Hawaii as laid-back, fun, and fast. She primarily played on the grass during the year, and other practices were held in Maui Polo Club's indoor arena or in rodeo arenas a month in advance of interscholastic tournaments.

The teamwork aspect of polo makes it so different from other equestrian disciplines, and it is that communication and bonding on the team that made interscholastic polo so memorable for Alana. But, above all, her favorite time playing was spent on the Hawaii Polo Club's field right on the beach. After practices on Sundays and in her free time, Alana took her horses swimming in the ocean to relax and recover.

As a junior in high school, she visited the Virginia Polo Center, where she got to meet Coach Lou Lopez, tour the facilities, and fell in love with UVA. She ultimately chose UVA because she knew that she wanted to play polo in college, and UVA not only has the best polo program but is also known for its academics. She says, "My favorite thing about the UVA Polo Program is, hands down, the amazing horses we have! They are all so fun to play and ride and they all have their own unique personalities." Alana is looking forward to the rest of her collegiate polo career at UVA!



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TEAM CAPTAINS TAP-IN

Women's Team Co-Captains:
**Maddie Grant and
Grace Burgert**



"We are honored to be leading a team of great players and individuals. The Women's Varsity team has tons of talent and is a fun, competitive, and driven group. We are blessed to have such incredible horses on our string and work together to provide the best care possible for them. Our weekly practices are characterized by fast, aggressive polo and laughter, and we are lucky to have such an incredible team dynamic with each player bringing something different. We're so excited to have finished our season strong by bringing home the National Championship! Thank you to Lou Lopez, our horse donors, and the Virginia Polo Board for making all of this possible!"

Men's Team Captain:
Jack McLean

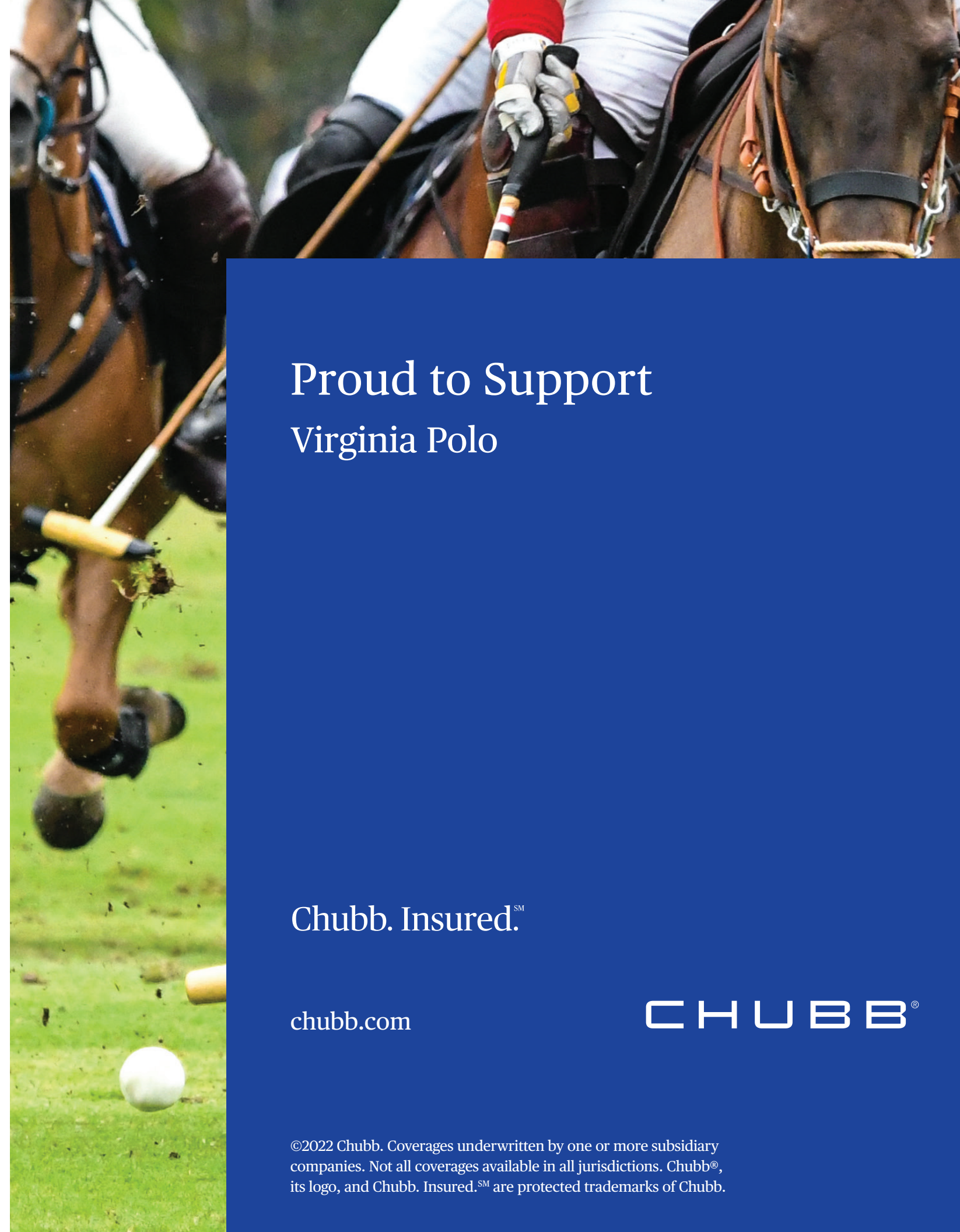


"The Men's Varsity team was once again loaded with tremendous talent which we demonstrated in every game this season. This year, we were more determined than ever to bring the glory of a national title back to Virginia. My teammates and I consider ourselves extremely lucky to be practicing and competing at a place as special as Virginia Polo. Between our amazing horses and facility, no other program in the nation is more dedicated to intercollegiate play. For this, we extend our sincere gratitude to the fantastic horse donors, the Virginia Polo Board, and our coach, Lou Lopez."

Club Team Captain:
Calista Rieken



"The club team has been fortunate this season with so many talented players, and I am honored to call these people my teammates and friends. We have had full bootcamp classes this year with everyone eager to learn polo, and our team roster has recently seen many wonderful additions. Every player brings great horsemanship and excitement for the game. Many of these players have become my closest friends, and I believe I speak for all of us when I say this experience has been a highlight of our college years. We are so grateful for the opportunity to use the beautiful facilities and incredible horses here at Virginia Polo, and we want to thank our coach, Lou Lopez, and the Virginia Polo Board for everything they have done for our program."



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CAVMAN: A LEGACY

Written by Sophia Wilbourn

Catchy, techno music echoes across the stands as speakers blast Sandstorm by Darude into the stadium. The marching band lines the field along the white yard markers. Cheerleaders and dancers execute slick choreographed routines, and orange and blue pom-poms fly overhead. The crowd roars in appreciation as smoke pours from the tunnel. Just beyond that smoke stands Kim Kirschnick and Sabre. Dressed in orange and blue, a feathered hat, and matching polo wraps, the pair is dressed to impress. The tension in the tunnel is palpable. Just behind Kim stands the entire UVA Football team, gearing up to run into the stadium. Kim takes a look at his watch, mounts, and adjusts his reins and sword. Sabre flicks his ears back in anticipation, legs quivering for what comes next.



Kim's staff turns around, mouthing the countdown as the deafening roar of the fans reaches peak intensity. "3... 2... 1..." Kim digs his spurs into Sabre's sides and the pair rush out of the tunnel and into the stadium. The crowd's cheering envelopes them as they round out the field. Kim spies a sign out in the crowd written in glitter, "Cavman, will you marry me?"

It's game night. Such was Kim Kirschnick's experience every Saturday night for twenty football seasons. But the glitz and glam of his job as UVA's longest-serving Cavman is surface level. Kim fights hard for his team, his fans, and the tradition that is Cavman every day of the week, not just Saturdays.

"What most people don't realize is all of the preparation that goes into being Cavman," remarks Kim. In reality, Kim's preparation and experience with horses started long before UVA asked him to be Cavman.

Kim's love for horses began years ago, playing polo. An avid and athletic player, Kim had been playing for years, and his passion and reputation as an excellent horseman spread throughout the community. In 1994, Kim posed for a photographer on his horse. Andrew Rader, the then Promotions Director of UVA, spotted Kim and thought he might have the "right look" for the job.

Kim thought so too. Originally clad in a frilly shirt and breeches when he accepted the position in 2000, his wardrobe changed into the modern orange and blue thanks to a team of professional New York-based designers.

But before he could don the feathered hat and sword, he had to find the perfect horse. Already equipped with a string of polo ponies, Kim had seven mounts to choose from. I asked Kim what the key to Cavman was, and without hesitation, he answered, "A great horse... Temperament is key. A good horse is one that is able to stay calm despite the crowd's noise." In a stadium full of screaming fans, bright television screens, smoke machines, a loud band, twirling flags, and football players running all over the field, how a horse keeps its cool determines the whole show.

A lot of work goes into preparing the horse for the run out. The finished product is what we see on Saturday, but on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday of the preceding week are filled with trips to the field, band practices, and making sure that every detail is ready for the big day. Kim has worked closely with the band's directors for years, and trailers his horse from the barn to the band's practice field where the pair acclimate to the band's new movements and music. Kim also uses this time to check out if there are any changes in the stadium. Something as simple as a new sign could startle a horse, so it's important that the pair see the stadium as it will be on Saturday.

Finally, game day is here. Kim arrives at the barn early in the morning where he feeds his horses and bathes and blow-dries Sabre. Then, they trailer to the parking lot, tack up, and make their way to the stadium around 4 pm., allowing for the occasional photo op

along the way for their adoring fans. However, Kim is adamant about staying focused on the job, "I am always, always, always, watching the time so that we're not late." Once at the stadium, Kim, Sabre, and his staff walk into a maintenance room where they double check all the equipment and get ready to head into the tunnel. From there, Kim mounts with exactly three minutes left on the clock. But, the infrastructure of the stadium presents its own challenges. In order to run out of the tunnel on Sabre, Kim has to duck since the ceiling in both the tunnel and maintenance room is too low for him to sit up straight. It sounds like a lot to remember, and it is, "it's just all the little things that can happen leading up," Kim comments.

There are a lot of things that can go wrong, and in his twenty years as Cavman, Kim remembers only one scary experience. "Not just any horse can be Sabre," says Kim. At one point, he was training a new horse for the upcoming season. While practice and preparation had gone well, things went south in the tunnel before the run out. Kim's mount refused to place even a hoof out onto the field. Kim recalls the stressful situation, "They were telling me it was time to go, but I couldn't move." Finally, he gritted his teeth, urging the horse forward as the football team pushed from behind. Kim's horse sprang up toward the ceiling and forward, unseating Kim, and running loose onto the field. Immediately worried for his horse's safety, Kim shouted to catch it, which the staff was able to do. "It's a horse- you never



Photo Credit: Cav Daily

know what's going to happen, and there are no guarantees of anything." Kim notes.

While that scary moment would be easy to dwell on for some, the most memorable part of the job for Kim is the joy he brought to fans, young and old. As one of the few mounted mascots in the nation, seeing a horse and rider in real life, even more so at a sporting event, is a treat for the fans. "They feel so connected, and their support makes Cavman a reality... All the doubts go away once you realize how much it means to the little six-year-old kids and to the students and to the recent graduate and to the forty-year-old professional who brings their family and even to the eighty-year-old who has season tickets." When remembering a bowl game played at Navy Field in Maryland, Kim laughs, "It must have been -3 degrees that night with the wind picking up the water from the marina. My toes in my boots froze! But it was all worth it. The fans were so happy to see us because it's a big deal for them, and they were so tickled at the horse and wanted to help continue making it possible for Cavman to come to these kinds of events... If there's one thing you remember from this experience, it's the excitement you bring to people." remarks Kim.

But with such an important role as Cavman, Kim stresses that while the key to the performance is a calm horse, the key to Cavman is humility and gratefulness. He makes his priorities as UVA mascot clear: "It would be so easy for someone to go out here and think that the crowd is here to see



Photo Credit: Cav Daily

them. It would be so easy to act arrogantly, but that's not right. Cavman represents everyone, and this job is an honor and a privilege- one that I take very seriously... With every year, I remember that Cavman serves the fans, and no other purpose." The spotlight can get to anyone's head, but in such a high-stakes situation, Kim knows exactly the responsibility he carries as Cavman. Cavman is not a celebrity, but a representative of tradition and team spirit for every UVA fan.

After twenty years as UVA's Cavman, Kim leaves behind some big boots to fill. I asked him what he wishes for Cavman in the future, "I hope that UVA continues the tradition. They need to understand how much this affects the fans and how important it is to them and to the community." In regards to what UVA has planned, Kim stresses that plans, if any, are not concrete. For the upcoming 2022 football season, UVA has hired a new head coach, Tony Elliot. "With every new administration comes a new way of doing things, and they have a lot of say in Cavman's game day performance." Kim says that he is attending meetings in March where UVA will discuss possibilities for Cavman's succession.

Whatever UVA decides to do, the bottom line is understanding how much Cavman and Sabre mean to fans. I spoke with second-year student and Football Manager, Evan Bray, who summed up the community's thoughts perfectly: "Cavman and Sabre, the band, and the cheerleaders- these all



Photo Credit: Cav Daily

contribute to the atmosphere and tradition that make college football special. When Cavman, Sabre, and the team run out onto the field, there is so much energy! I remember going to my first game as a student, hearing the crowd cheer. This year, hearing the crowd cheer as Cavman and the team ran onto the field was special because it marked the return of fans at Scott Stadium." It's clear to see that fans and Cavman make each others' game day.

As for retirement, that word means nothing to Kim. This is just the next chapter. After two decades as Cavman, he and the most recent Sabre, who really goes by "Big Daddy" at the barn, will tune into the upcoming football season. Kim will be in the stands like every other fan, cheering with the same fanbase that made his role as Cavman worth it. "There is so much more to college football than the team and the coaches. Fans, school, and community support are vital for an energized and successful gameday." notes Evan. We, as UVA fans, echo his words, and thank Kim Kirschnick for the joy he brought, the legacy he established, and the tradition we hope will continue.

POLO GOES GLOBAL

Meet Maddie Grant - Women's Varsity



"After quarantine started to lift, my dad and I drove four of our horses to Sheridan, Wyoming, where I worked to play for Steve Krueger for two months. It was one of the best summers of my life. I worked on my riding and horsemanship and this is where I fell in love with riding green horses, now something I have a strong passion for.

From there, I drove back to Charlottesville for the end of the fall season and played at King Family Vineyards until the season began in Aiken, South Carolina. From Aiken to Houston, and Houston to Sarasota. In Sarasota, I played with Tito's team, which I connected with through mutual contacts I made in Wyoming the previous summer. We were undefeated in the first round of the first tournament but lost in overtime in the semis. That motivated us even more in the second tournament, where we went undefeated the entire competition. This team was one of my favorite teams that I've ever had the pleasure of playing on and was a highlight of my polo career.

This past December, I got the honor of representing the United States in the Copa de Naciones in Buenos Aires, Argentina, alongside Hope Arellano, Dawn Jones, and UVA alum, Kylie Sheehan. I got to stay at Matias Magrini's farm in Cañuelas, Don Ercole, where we practiced every day and stick and balled as many horses as humanly possible. I initially went down as a substitute, but after a couple practices, I was in the running to play on the team. When I wasn't in the barn I was studying for my finals, which I took online in Argentina. Then, days before our first game, Meghan Gracida broke her collarbone in a practice, so I filled her spot on the team.

We played two games on Palermo field 2, first against England and then Argentina. We narrowly lost both games, which was frustrating, but getting to play at Palermo with great teammates and horses was surreal. It is every polo player's dream to play at Palermo, and I honestly never thought I would get that opportunity any time



soon. It was amazing to play.

The level of organization and skill in Argentina right now is incredible to experience. There are so many talented horses and players, with tournaments and practices going on every day. Playing that level of polo consistently makes you improve so quickly, which I felt in just the two weeks I was there. I'm very thankful to the USPA for organizing my trip to Argentina, helping raise the skill-level of women's polo in the U.S.

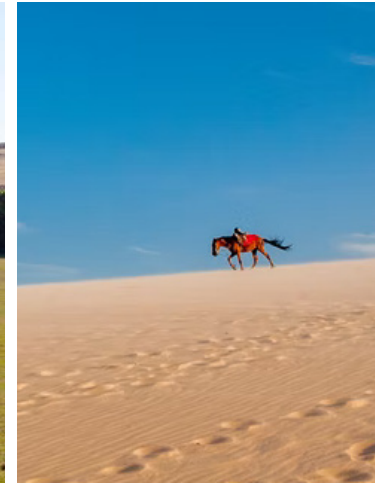
I have always loved playing polo, but until last year, I wasn't sure if that's what I wanted to do after I graduated. After these past few seasons, there is no doubt in my mind. In the next few years, I plan to travel and play as much as I can. This summer, I am directing the polo school and playing at the Roseland Polo Club, twenty minutes from the Virginia Polo Center. From there, I will ride at Aiken for the fall season and hopefully be back to Argentina and Florida!"

Meet Caroline Bunch - Club in Cairo

After starting with bootcamp and only being on the club polo team for about a year, Caroline was able to experience playing polo in Egypt this past winter break. She worked and played at a polo facility, while absorbing the culture and creating an unforgettable experience. Below, she tells a little about how she came across this opportunity and how it has affected her after coming back.

I was working in D.C. last summer and would drive to The Plains some Saturdays to play arena polo at the Great Meadow polo facilities. One day there, I met a woman, Margaret Fisher, who said that she is American but lives outside of Cairo and always needs help exercising her polo ponies there. I got her phone number and kept in touch and was able to visit her in January.

When I was there, we took sets in the desert every morning. It was so surreal because the pyramids were in the background. The strong desert winds were a little intimidating because they were always whirling while we were out with the horses in such a wide-



open space. It didn't help that the horses were always fresh, but it was still the coolest experience.

On the weekends, we played grass polo on a private field in front of a different set of pyramids. The view was incredible! I had not played grass polo more than once before, but I loved it. Everyone was so nice and supportive when I was confused, or didn't

know where to be out on the field. Overall, it was such a cool learning experience!

I'm glad to be back playing polo back at school for my last semester. Playing abroad and being able to practice at home has opened my eyes to some of the opportunities that are out there for players of all levels that I didn't know were possible.



LOU'S ILLUSTRIOUS COACHING LEGACY

Written by Parker Pierce



Early Beginning

It all began with a polo clinic at Meadowbrook Polo Club in Long Island New York, which is known to be the first official polo club established in the United States. Interestingly enough, Lou's family had no previous engagement with the polo world or horses at all for that matter. Nonetheless, it only took one clinic for the bug to bite. Following some additional clinics at Yale University, and more at the Meadowbrook Polo Club, Lou decided to join his childhood friend, Bill Matheson, at his mother's horse farm to experience horse care and training first hand. From there, Lou's passion for polo began to look a lot more like most high schoolers' in the sport: as a groom. He accepted a job grooming for Pete Bostwick at his home club in Long Island. With an entire string of polo ponies and two hunters, Lou had his hands full and quickly learned a lot about horses and the responsibility they demand.

College and Coaching Career

Determined to continue playing polo in college, Lou sought out an opportunity to start a program at Colorado State University. He founded the club alongside fifteen other members and although they were not able to compete during Lou's time with the organization, it continues today as a competitive team in the Intercollegiate program. Following college and a few interim positions, Lou took a spot as the coach of the Yale University polo team. He recounts one specifically fond memory at Yale of winning the 1986 National Championship as the four goal team defeated a twelve goal Virginia team by a margin of two

points. After some time working on the Commodities Exchange for oil and later serving as principal of a proprietary school, Lou made a return to horses and polo in 2003 to coach at the Virginia Polo Club. On top of the previously mentioned national title for Yale, Virginia teams have won six Women's titles and four Men's titles during Lou's coaching. Of course the titles are a nice bonus, but if you asked him, the real reason Lou is still here today is due to his love for the enthusiasm and competition it brings out in every student.

Words of Wisdom and Lessons Learned

Oftentimes I feel that the history of horses and polo really only exist in stories. What you read in books or watch in films never tells the truth, at least not the whole truth. But the one thing behind every story starting with, "This one horse I used to ride..." is a lesson it taught the rider. That being said, I asked Lou what he has learned throughout the years in polo and how it has held onto his attention for so long. First, Lou recounted a list of adventures he would never have taken and places he would never have seen from Florida to California, and even the Caribbean. The polo world presents an endless set of opportunities not afforded to most people, so open those doors because they might just change your life. Lastly, Lou touched on the importance of a good string. In his own words, "It doesn't matter how good you are- your horses are the make or break." Many professionals and amateurs alike would agree with that claim and for many reasons, it serves as a key driver behind the nature of what we do here at UVA and the relationship between our players and horses.



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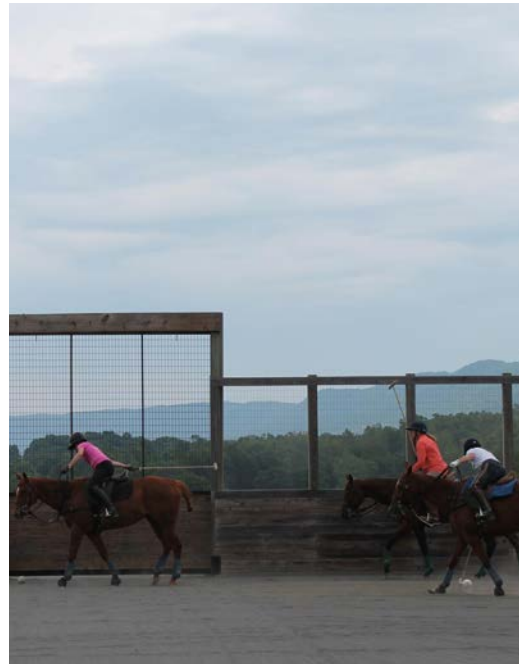
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KEEZLETOWN POLO CLUB

Written by Katy Owens



In the shadow of Massanutten mountain, about twenty minutes off of Route 33, you will find a beautiful polo arena. Set into a hillside and overlooking the Central Shenandoah Valley, this facility is owned by former Virginia Polo Club member, Christina Johnson, and is the home of the Keezletown Polo Club. Christina bought this property twelve years ago and, after many years of planning and construction, began offering polo lessons in 2019. Recently, I had the opportunity to visit Christina's facility and sit down with her for a conversation regarding her personal polo experiences, her journey to opening her own facility, and the impact her time at Virginia Polo had on all of the above.

Christina is originally from Los Angeles, CA, and grew up taking, and later teaching, hunter-jumper lessons at her cousin's ranch in Malibu, CA. She was first introduced to polo through a friend of her father's. Christina had the opportunity to watch his matches and was struck by the ponies' talent and skill. "He would let me get on [his] horses, and they were just so amazingly well trained. You get on these horses, you ask them to gallop, and they will gallop under control, and they are listening to you the whole time. [That] was probably what really got me interested, was just how well the horses were trained and all the stuff they could handle. It was so impressive," she told me.

Her early experiences with polo led her to



choose a college that had a polo team, so she could learn to play herself. Christina ultimately attended UC Davis, both because it had a polo team and a highly ranked veterinary school. During her time at UC Davis, Christina switched academic paths from pre-vet to pre-med, and ultimately attended medical school in Loma Linda, CA. So that she could continue riding while in medical school, she took a horse from her polo team at UC Davis that did not play polo with her to medical school. Following medical school, Christina matched at UVa for residency. She asked Lou if she could board her horse at Virginia Polo, and also played at Virginia Polo, mostly during the summers, throughout her residency.

Following residency, Christina and her husband moved to his hometown of Keezletown, VA and purchased the piece of property where Keezletown Polo Club now resides. I was curious about what led her to open a polo facility in Keezletown, considering there is no polo anywhere nearby. "Honestly, I looked around when I got here [and asked] is there polo here? ... Why not? ... I feel like polo is such an amazing sport that everyone should play, and most people would want to play," she told me. "So I just figured if I built it, [the students] would come... in hindsight, sometimes I [think], why did I do it like this? ... [and] then my students come out and they're like, this is so cool... That's why I'm

doing this." The process of building the facility began with the construction of the arena. In her words, "the arena [is] the most important part because in a nice arena, you can play good polo." In recent years, she has added a machine shed with an overhang for the horses, and a tack room.

She currently has five horses on the property and primarily offers lessons and slower paced chukkers to her students, most of whom have never played polo prior to beginning lessons with her. In addition to running Keezletown Polo Club, Christina is also an emergency room doctor at the local hospital, which limits the time she can spend at the facility as well as the number of horses she can keep, due to the fact that she is the primary caretaker of the animals. In the future, as her students develop more skills related to horse care and management, Christina expects she might be able to expand her string.

When asked about Virginia Polo's impact on her riding Christina stated, "I think in polo to get better you have to be riding... good horses ... and playing with players that are better than you," and described how her time at Virginia Polo provided her with these opportunities. Christina's experience at Virginia Polo has also shaped how she built

Virginia Polo has also shaped how she built and runs her own facility. The design for her arena was based on Virginia Polo's outdoor arena and she described how she "learned a lot from watching Lou and how he ran the kids [and] the adult league." While she is still in the process of developing her students' skills, she hopes in the near future that all of her students will be able to tack up independently, participate in the process of taking sets, and be more involved in horse care, in addition to their current tasks and cleaning tack.

To conclude our conversation I asked Christina, "If there is anything you could say to current Virginia players, what would it be?" "You guys are so lucky!" she quickly responded. "First of all, appreciate what you have. Second of all, put the work in because you will ...get out of it what you put in." This statement reflects one of the aspects of polo Christina most appreciates: the emphasis on hard work. Earlier in the interview, she told me, "you can beat someone else in polo [who] has spent way more money than you [if] you work harder, you go out and you ride more, [and] you put more training in on your horses... That's what's nice about it." As Christina mentioned, and is clear when you visit Virginia Polo, students have

the opportunity to develop into skilled and knowledgeable polo players, and horse people, if they put in the work. Christina's program and facility represent what is possible if they choose to do so.

Thank you to Christina Johnson of Keezletown Polo Club for her contributions to this article. If you would like to reach out to Christina regarding lessons or chukkers, she can be reached via email at keezletownpolo@gmail.com or at Keezletown Polo Club, LLC on Facebook.



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Next year will be Virginia Polo's 70th anniversary!

In 2023 we will be hosting events at the Virginia Polo Center to celebrate! Keep an eye out for information as plans come together and please plan to join in the celebration!

In honor of the anniversary, we are focusing on preserving the history of Virginia Polo. Please contact Jenny, jenny@vapolo.org, with stories and photos from your time in the club.

We invite you to celebrate!



LOOKING AHEAD

An old Chinese proverb reads, "May you live in interesting times." I think we can all agree that this phrase holds true. Lucky for us, Virginia Polo is thriving because of the support of our players, staff, and loyal supporters.

Coach Lou states, "I'm especially proud of how Virginia Polo was able to offer so many opportunities to play polo even during the pandemic and its restrictions on club sports...We're back in business!" Virginia Polo has bounced back better than ever following the pandemic with the love and dedication of every player and pony.

As we look to the future, we are excited to celebrate Virginia Polo's seventieth anniversary. Coach Lou also looks forward to improving both the facilities and the program, he envisions bringing in more guest instructors that will help players learn and execute new ideas and strategies into their playing technique and to continue maintaining and building up a top quality herd of ponies, suited for every level of play. We eagerly anticipate the hay and equipment barn that will be constructed this summer.

Whatever new improvements are made to either the program or Virginia Polo's facilities, we are most grateful for the people that make it happen. Their continuous support, whether that is sharing our social media or donating a pony, allows the players at Virginia Polo to experience the sport we love on a winning team that we love. For that, we thank you, the person reading this magazine, and hope you will continue supporting Virginia Polo and share the joy of the sport with others.

Interested in joining or supporting Virginia Polo? Have a story you would like to share? Interested in a job opportunity? Want to donate a horse? Want to arrange a visit? Have questions? Feel free to contact any of the below contacts; we'd love to talk with you!

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