

## Grand Champions Take It to A New Peak at Mount Sopris Charity Polo Match

By Marc Patoile, Photos by Peter Feinzig

Polo players from Aspen, Denver and Wellington, gathered on July 13–14, 2013 outside of Aspen, Colorado, to play a charity match under the shadow of Mount Sopris. These twin peaks, which loom over the Roaring Fork Valley, were named for Richard Sopris, a former mayor of Denver who was part of the first European expedition in the Roaring Fork Valley. In 2011 a resident of Littleton Colorado petitioned to rename East Sopris “Mount John Denver” after the Colorado singer. A local poll in Aspen and Carbondale determined that 74 percent of the respondents were against the proposal. So the peaks remain as Mount Sopris and they hover just above the polo fields at Sopris Mountain Ranch in a picturesque setting, where the polo field appears to be nearly on the side of the mountain face.

The charity polo event is organized by Geneve Kashnig to benefit the Rifle Animal Shelter. This year special guests



were on hand. Marc, Melissa and, their son, Grant Ganzi from Grand Champions Polo Club in Wellington happened to be available to play. Teams sponsored by the Ganzis have won every major 20- and 26-goal polo tournament, including

the U.S. Open, CV Whitney Cup and Piaget Gold Cup. Melissa Ganzi is one of the nation's top women polo players, playing professionally with and against men, and is team captain of Piaget, based at Wellington's Grand Champions Club.



Melissa and her husband, Marc, also a top amateur player, own and maintain the club year-round. She also breeds and trains polo ponies at her Santa Rita Farm in Ocala, Florida.

Melissa Ganzi is all about diversity in polo. Her vision is to promote the sport of polo among the masses including kids and juniors, women and gay polo players. She would like to see polo embraced by the general public and mainstream sports followers and bring new people to the sport. She is quite probably the most gracious and giving person you will find, as we discovered her to be both on and off the field.

Grand Champions Polo Team (Melissa Ganzi, Juan Bellini, Marc Patoile, and Rebecca Patoile) took home the first place prizes of original oil paintings by Campbell Hutchinson, outscoring the Proguard Protection Services Team (Tom Wisheart, Gene Burke, Donny Throm and Juancito Bellini) 9 to 4. The artist, Campbell Hutchinson, is a native of Louisiana who has lived and worked in New Orleans since 1960. He practiced law for more years than he would like to admit, but retired to pursue his passion of painting full time.

R&L Farms Polo (Rick Lontin, Lise Stevens, Dave Starman, Marc Dominico), were out paced by Bighorn Toyota (Marc Ganzi, Grant Ganzi, Johnny Levine, Geneve Kasnig and Wayne Ewing). All of the players and, hopefully, all of the spectators were left with the memories of a great weekend of polo under the twin peaks of Mount Sopris.



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RELAXING ENERGY BALANCE BODY  
NATURE  
MINERAL CLEAN RECREATION RELAXATION  
IDEAL LUXURY HEALTH OASIS STRENGTH REJUVENATION  
THERAPY BALANCE WELLNESS LIFE NATURE  
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