



No i in team

Be a good teammate and opponent

By Pedro Marcos Bignoli

As a professional umpire I get a front row seat to a lot of polo. Some of the bigger, high-goal organizations are spending millions of dollars and take their polo more seriously than ever before. The players are fitter and utilize massage therapists, kinesiologists and personal trainers. They also spend

One of the most important aspects of good polo is horsemanship, however many players don't take the time to really learn how to ride. Horsemanship is not just about balancing on top of a horse. Communication with your horse is crucial but players often don't know how to ask their horse to do something correctly, or they don't understand when a horse is trying to tell them something. Not knowing how to ask leaves the horse confused and the player frustrated when the horse doesn't respond. If your horse is not stopping, shaking its head, hesitant to turn or is leaping, for instance, it may be trying to tell you it is hurting somewhere.

Spending time learning how to listen as well as ask the right way will lead to a better partnership with your horse and will make your time with that horse more enjoyable. Try setting aside one day a week or even one day a month to work on nothing but improving your riding. If you can take a riding lesson with a pro or even a trainer in a different discipline, such as equitation, even better. Any time spent learning how to ride better will never be wasted.

Back at the barn, take good care of your horses. Keep them on regular vaccination, deworming and trimming and shoeing schedules. I see players trying to save money by playing horses without shoes or waiting too long in-between shoeings. This might save you a little bit of money in the short run but might cripple your horse in the long run. And if the horse slips on a wet field or trips because its feet are too long, you and the horse might get hurt.

It is also important not to overwork your horses. Don't stick and ball for 20 minutes in the heat and then play the same horse two chukkers. If you are playing two chukkers, just give the horse a quick warm up and make sure it has plenty of rest in-between chukkers. Once on the field, know your horses' capabilities and don't ask or expect them to do things they are not capable of.

Be organized and get to the field with plenty of time to get your horses tacked up and warmed up. Have all your equipment, including jerseys, boots, goggles, etc. ready. I see too many people show up in

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Polo is a team sport. Pass to your teammates, be humble and be open to learn.

a lot of time and effort to breed the finest horses, often using embryo transfer or even cloning. Fields are much better now allowing for better performance by horses and players.

On the other end of the spectrum are the weekend warriors, playing low-level club polo. Some come to the field unorganized, often running late. They and their horses are disheveled. They run out on the field without a plan and without knowing where to line up for plays. They lack focus. In my experience, everyone wants to play well but some are more willing to work for it than others.

Polo is a chess game, a thinking game. It is not always about who has the fastest horses or is the strongest player. Natural talent isn't always needed either. It is more about attitude. If you are willing to learn, take time to prepare and are organized, you can be a better player than someone with more natural talent and better horses who is not willing to put the work in.



SMILEPEACELOVE PHOTOGRAPHY

undergraduate degree and go to law school.

I didn't start playing polo until my late 20s when my friends Bruce Hundley, Billy Hilliard, and Hilary Boone persuaded me to come out and play with them. I played at the Kentucky Horse Park with the Lexington Polo Club for eight or nine years. I had to give up polo when I went to the racetrack and while I was starting my law career, but I started playing again around 2000 at Mashomack Polo Club [Pine Plains, New York]. I used to see polo trailers drive by my house every Sunday morning on their way to Mashomack and I couldn't bear not to follow them. After trying a few different clubs in New York, I finally settled at Giant Valley Polo Club in Hamden, Connecticut, where I've been playing outdoors for the last eight to 10 years. During that same period of time, I've been playing in the arena at Gardnertown

Polo Club [Newburgh, New York]. Gardnertown and Giant Valley are my polo homes.

What are the most important initiatives you want to focus on as incoming COO?

I view the USPA in much the same way as Chairman Stewart Armstrong—it's a board-driven, staff-executed organization. As such I think the officers, Executive Committee and the board should determine the association's vision and set its priorities and then it's the responsibility of the staff to execute that vision. My role is to help the staff execute on the vision of the volunteer leadership. I am very much a process person by virtue of being a lawyer and slightly OCD, so I want to make sure the USPA has the

Chris Green with grandson Max; youngest daughter Phoebe; middle daughter Chloë; wife Susan, holding granddaughter River Rose; granddaughter Desi; and oldest daughter Ashby

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the lineup without goggles on or knee guards or wearing the wrong color jersey. Showing up late or disorganized and making your teammates and opponents wait for you is disrespectful. If you are rushing to get on the field, you are more likely to forget something, whether it is a tack adjustment or player equipment, and may put you at risk of getting hurt.

Don't be stick and balling while the other seven players are lined up and the umpire is ready to bowl the ball in. When the ball goes over the back line or there is a penalty called, quickly get into position. If you are defending, quickly get 30 yards from the ball.

Learn all the shots. Most players are not as comfortable making nearside shots or even back shots, so they avoid them. Set aside some time to work on your weakest shots until you master them. This will give you more tools in your toolbox. I see some talented up-and-coming players that cannot make a back shot.

Have a goal and do the work to achieve that goal. Treat practices as just that, to practice plays. Don't just float around because it is a practice. If you are practicing with players you normally don't play with, get organized before the ball is thrown in. Good players not only know their teammates, but their opponents as well. Decide who will play what position.

If someone on the team can hit a big ball, the offensive players should go up and look for the pass. If no one on the team can hit far, the teammates should stay closer together and circle back if the ball is missed. Talk to your teammates and don't try to do everything yourself.

Polo is a team sport, with four players against four players. Back the ball instead of turning it and trying to keep it to yourself. That gets boring for everyone. Use all your teammates. If you can hit a big ball, be strategic where you place it. Hitting to the other team is not a good idea. Always have a plan, whether you are knocking it or are at the 80-yard line heading to goal. Be aware of what is going on around you and concentrate on what you are doing.

Be humble and open to learning. Every player can improve. I reached 6 goals as a professional player. I still considered it an honor when another player offered me constructive criticism. I learned some great tips from Alberto Pedro Heguy and was fortunate he cared enough to share them with me. I'll share some of the things he shared with me.

When you are shooting to goal, if you see the mallet between the goal posts at the end of your swing and follow through, the ball will likely go through the goal. Additionally, the mallet head will be parallel to the end line.

Know your leads. Most often, you hit from the right side so when knocking in or taking a free hit, always circle to the right with the horse on its right lead. Hit the ball at about the same time the horse's right foot is on the ground. Start your swing when the ball is by the horse's nose.

If you miss a goal, or miss-hit a ball, let it go and move on to the next play. Even the best players in the world miss on occasion. If you can't let it go, you will likely be rattled and will continue to make mistakes. If you stay focused and do everything right, but still lose it, it's OK.

If you miss a play, never punish your horse for it. And don't stop after a missed ball. Instead, keep moving forward as there may be other players running up behind you. If your teammates are in position, one of them may have an opportunity to hit the ball back up to you.

Nine out of 10 players don't ever read the rule book but still think they know the rules better than anyone else. Don't appeal for a foul or argue with the umpires. It will only reflect poorly on you.

With professional umpires, if you pay attention, you will learn what the umpires call and what they don't. When I was playing professionally, I knew what fouls certain umpires called and what they didn't and adjusted my game accordingly.

Don't complain and always shake hands with your teammates and opponents after playing.

Be safe, have fun, be competitive and learn as much as you can.



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2021 Fall Polo Schedule

USPA Northrup Knox Cup R 12 Goal
September 10-19

Copa de Plata 8 Goal
September 15 - October 3

New Bridge Ladies Invitational 14 Goal
September 20-October 1

USPA National Copper Cup R 12 Goal
September 22 - October 10

USPA National President's Cup 8 Goal
October 6 - 24

USPA Association Cup 8 Goal
Single Elimination
October 27 - November 7

USPA Bronze Trophy R 12 Goal
October 13-31



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Goals given

Number of chukkers helps determine handicap awarded

By Dana Fortugno

Each year, there seems to be a lot of confusion when teams try to determine how much of a handicap should be awarded to a lesser-rated team. There is a quick and easy way to figure it out, but first let me give you some background.

Handicaps are dealt with partially in Rule 19 but there are some misconceptions and things you should know if you play polo. This article is based on Rule 19, Rule 16, Arena Rule 5 and the USPA Handicap Policy starting on page 273 under Policies in the 2021 rulebook (bet you didn't know it was there). I am going to tell you everything I know

about handicaps, just so you know. I promise to keep it simple.

A handicap or rating in polo is how good you are, sort of. There are many factors that go into your polo rating like how skilled you are, how much game sense you have, your horse string, the team you are playing on and so forth. As you know, our rating system is a simple -1 to 10, with the higher the number, the better the player. To establish your rating, you are compared to other players of similar rating. For example, if you are 3 goals and you play about the same as other 3-goalers, you will likely stay at a 3 rating. A 3-goaler will play four goals sometimes and two goals other times but on a seasonal average, he or she will play 3 goals. That is a 3-goaler. It's the same for all other ratings as well.

Of course, the rating and handicap system was designed to make polo more competitive. By having teams of similar ratings play each other, the game should be balanced and make for a good, close game. It also makes for some flexibility in making teams for tournaments because there is usually a spread for the tournament handicap, like 10 to 12 goals or 6 to 8 goals. This means the teams that enter the tournament must fall between the lower and upper limits of the tournament rating. For example, in the 6- to 8-goal tournament, each team's rating must be 6, 7 or 8 goals. As you probably know, a team's rating is the sum of its players' ratings.

If a 6-goal team plays an 8-goal team, the 6-goal team will get two points for free. We say the handicap is 2 to the 6-goal team. This allows more teams to enter the tournament and provides a way to balance out the team ratings and make for good close games—competitive games. Goals awarded by handicap count the same as goals scored on the field. Just remember, a goal is a goal is a goal.

Players rated between -1 and 2, playing in 6-goal polo and less, can have half goals too. This means a player under 2 goals may have a half goal in their rating. For example, a player might have a 1½-goal rating. We use half goals in polo 6-goals and under.

Arena Handicap Matrix				
		Number of Periods		
		2	3 (5 minutes each)	4
Net Difference in Team Handicaps	1	0.5	0.5	1.0
	2	1.0	1.0	2.0
	3	1.5	1.5	3.0
	4	2.0	2.0	4.0
	5	2.5	2.5	5.0
	6	3.0	3.0	6.0

Why? It's simple, it helps the lower-level games to have more options with players under 2 goals. For example, a player rated 1 that will likely stay at 1 is different than a player that is 1 and on the way to 2 (a 1½ is a better rating for that up-and-coming player than just 1). It seems to work, and at least it doesn't hurt to try and be as accurate as possible.

Men and women are rated on the same scale across the board. Women also have a rating system for women only. It is identical to the universal system but you must be a woman to have a woman's rating (and they start at 0 not -1). Why? Is the men's system not good enough for them? Are they special? The answer is yes and yes.

Women's polo has a unique issue that is solved by having their own rating system. Most women are 2 goals or less. Go ahead get mad at me for saying that but I said "most" not "all," and truth is a complete defense to defamation (I speak the truth). Back to woman under 2 goals. Many of these women players rated between -1 and 2 are more than just a couple goals apart, especially when playing in women-only polo. As you can guess, in order to make women's polo more competitive, we need to get a more accurate read on each player's true ability when playing in women-only polo. Yes, most 5-goal women are 10 in women's polo but it's not just a simple conversion. They are compared to each other and rated independently from their universal rating.

There is a simple conversion chart on page 281 of the 2021 rulebook for the first time a woman is rated on the women-only system, but once she plays in a women's game, she will be compared to the others for her true rating. So, two women may each have a universal rating of 2 but one may have a women's rating of 5 and the other a 7. That makes a big difference in points awarded by handicap. All this is true for both arena polo and outdoor polo.

Now, the real reason I wrote this article: all arena polo ratings are based on four periods of play. Both, universal ratings and women's ratings in the arena are based on four periods of play. If the game is less

Outdoor Handicap Matrix						
		Number of Periods				
		2	3	4	5	6
Net Difference in Team Handicaps	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
	1.0	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	1.0
	1.5	0.5	0.5	1.0	1.5	1.5
	2.0	0.5	1.0	1.5	1.5	2.0
	2.5	0.5	1.5	1.5	2.5	2.5
	3.0	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0
	3.5	1.5	1.5	2.5	2.5	3.5
	4.0	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.5	4.0

than four periods, you must use the arena matrix to determine the handicap for the amount of periods being played. Arena Rule 4 says "a regulation game shall be four periods ..."

All outdoor polo ratings are based on six periods of play. Both universal ratings and women's ratings are based on six periods of play. Outdoor Rule 16 says, in part, "a game shall be a maximum of 6 regular periods ..." This seems to confuse many players, and that's why I am writing about it. Last week alone I received three calls about women's handicapping. All the callers were certain that women's polo is based on four periods.

Why would a player think that? It's because most women's games are four periods. There are many reasons why women's games are four periods; for example, the availability of horses. Anyway, it doesn't matter how many periods they actually play, it matters what their rating is based on. Since all outdoor polo is based on six periods, if you are

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Cellulitis in horses

Swelling of a limb is often associated with bacterial infection

By Heather Smith Thomas

Cellulitis is an inflammatory process of the skin and deeper tissues, and is commonly associated with bacterial infection. In horses, cellulitis is not very common, but it usually appears as a severely swollen limb. It typically involves only one limb, most often a hind limb. This and the fact that the leg is usually painful, makes it different from typical "stocking up" of the hind limbs.

Callie Fogle, DVM, North Carolina State University, says that cellulitis on a horse with a severely swollen limb can be a diagnostic and therapeutic dilemma for veterinarians since it can be challenging to figure out the cause.

"A puncture, a tendon or ligament trauma, or an infected joint can be masked by a very swollen, lame leg," she says. "It can also be difficult to isolate the type of bacteria causing the cellulitis, and even with appropriate, aggressive therapy, the infection sometimes does not respond quickly, or the swelling may not resolve."

Signs of cellulitis and importance of diagnosis

"Often these horses have acute, severe swelling usually affecting the entire limb. However, there are some other things that could present this way, or problems that could be masked by the severe swelling. When a horse owner notices acute, severe swelling, it is important to have a veterinarian examine the horse and look for other possible problems," she says.

"Radiographs and ultrasound are commonly performed to rule out a fracture and to look for sepsis or infection in a joint. It would be important to rule those things out before beginning treatment for a cellulitis," she explains.

"Imaging would also help us look for an abscess that might result from the bacterial infection. Another useful diagnostic test might be a culture of the serum that is oozing from the skin, or to culture a subcutaneous biopsy of deeper tissues," she says.

"The infection in deeper tissues of the limb can result in major tissue damage, so cellulitis is not necessarily a less severe disease, but the treatment would be different from some of the other



possibilities, like fractures or soft tissue trauma. It is important that the cause of swelling is recognized early, and treated properly," she says.

Cellulitis is most common in a hind limb, but can also occur in a front leg. "The classic form of cellulitis is unilateral, affecting just one limb, but it can affect multiple limbs. The horse may have a fever and increased heart rate. Often the swelling is firm and hard, and the leg is hot. It is usually very painful to touch. There may be breaks in the skin that ooze serum. These breaks can be caused by a precipitating trauma or from just the stretching of the skin due to the severe swelling," explains Fogle.

"These horses are generally very lame, but often the pain occurs when advancing the limb rather than from standing on that leg; it's difficult or painful to move the limb. Generally the horse will bear reasonable weight on the affected limb, when not being asked to move, compared to a non-weight-bearing lameness that is commonly seen with a fracture or a joint infection," she says.

Occasionally (more often with chronic rather than acute cellulitis) the veterinarian might use

Rule 16—GAMES

A game shall be a maximum of 6 regular periods and an unlimited number of overtime periods with intervals of three minutes after each period, except at half time in games of four or more regular periods and before the first overtime period in the event of a tie, in which cases the intervals shall be five minutes. An additional five-minute interval shall be allowed after each completion of the same number of overtime periods as the number of periods before the first five-minute interval. In games with an upper handicap limit below 8 goals, the Umpire(s) may allow more time for the foregoing intervals between periods or the interval before a shootout. In games consisting of an uneven number of regular periods, the half time shall come at the end of the middle period. Any game shall be played to its conclusion unless suspended and abandoned as provided in Rule 22.g.

Rule 19—GOALS UNDER PENALTIES AND BY HANDICAP

a. Goals awarded under penalties and by handicap shall count as goals scored. b. The team handicap is determined by totaling the individual handicaps (as assigned by the USPA) of the team members. In events with an upper handicap limit above 6 goals, individual handicaps of -0.5 goals, 0.5 goals, or 1.5 goals shall be rounded down to -1 goal, 0 goals or 1 goal respectively when calculating the team handicap. c. The number of goals awarded by handicap is determined by taking the difference between the team handicaps on one team and the team handicaps of the other team and multiplying one-sixth of that difference times the number of periods (excluding overtime periods) in the game in question. d. Unless otherwise stated in the USPA Tournament Conditions whether or not a game shall be played on a handicap basis or on the flat shall be determined by the Host Tournament Committee before the event. e. In the event of a game played on a handicap basis, any handicap fraction shall be recorded as one-half goal. The one-half goal shall be used as a tie breaker and included in any net or gross goal calculations.

Arena Rule 5—LENGTH AND NUMBER OF PERIODS

a. A regulation game shall be four periods of 7-1/2 minutes with intervals of 4 minutes after each period except the second period. There shall be a 10 minute interval after the second period ...

• Only a portion of Rule 16, 19 and 5 are listed. To read the entire rules, go to uspolo.org •

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playing in a women's tournament and the games are four periods, you must use the outdoor handicap matrix to find the proper handicap award for four periods of play. It's just that simple.

The important thing to remember is *all* outdoor polo is six periods and *all* arena polo is four periods. If you are playing less periods than that, use the matrix. *Never* mix up outdoor and arena polo in any way. They are two different games with different rules and systems that govern them. Yes, I get questions related to arena and outdoor and how they overlap. They don't! One is an apple and the other is an orange.

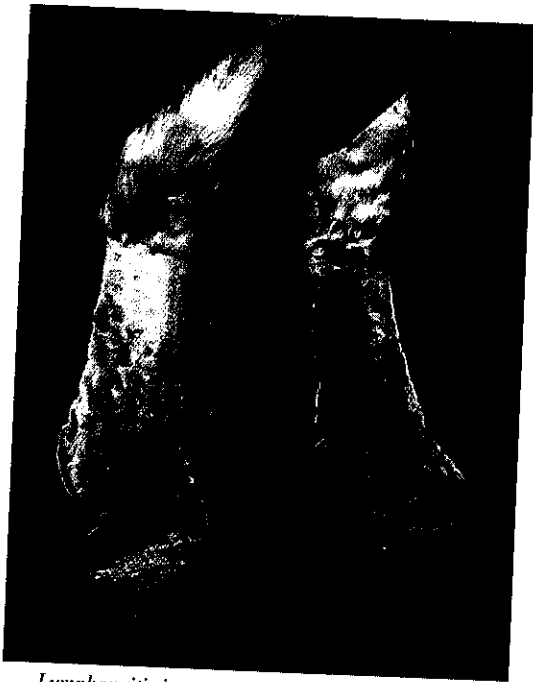
That wasn't so bad, was it? Using the matrix is easy. You take the difference in the team handicaps and you move over to the number of periods you are actually playing and use that number as the free points awarded to the lesser-rated team. Don't think, just use the matrix.

Lastly, a tournament can be played on the 'open'. This simply means that no free points will be given to any team, regardless of the difference in ratings. The teams must still, however, fall between the upper and lower limits of the tournament rating. Most of these tournaments have the word open in the title so you know, otherwise the Host Tournament Committee will tell you. Now, you know all you need to know about polo ratings and handicaps. ○

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cellulitis is okay, but you wouldn't want to use it very long. Steroids are not routinely part of my treatment regime for severe cellulitis," says Fogle. Long-term steroid use tends to hinder the immune system.

"Along with antibiotics and NSAIDs, we also use bandaging and supportive treatment to help reduce



Lymphangitis is different than cellulitis as it is more likely to affect two legs, or even four, and is generally in the lower portion of the limbs.

the swelling in that leg. Cold water therapy is helpful, whether it's one of the fancy boots that recirculates cold water, or just cold water from a hose. Cold saltwater therapy in the form of an equine saltwater spa can be extremely beneficial in quickly reducing the limb swelling and improving venous and lymphatic fluid return from the limb. These are all important points of treatment for cellulitis," she explains.

Aggressive, prompt treatment is important to prevent laminitis,

reduce the risk of deep tissue necrosis, and reduce the risk of developing permanent damage to the circulatory system in that leg. "The longer the leg stays swollen, the more risk for complications. Horses can develop laminitis as a secondary complication of cellulitis. It's usually a support limb laminitis (from too much weight on the normal leg) but it can also be laminitis in the affected leg," she says. Getting the horse comfortable quickly on the limb with cellulitis is crucial, through medication and supportive therapy to reduce the pain and swelling.

"Horses can have further problems if the bacterial infection does not stay confined to that limb and goes throughout the body. The horse can become very sick from systemic infection (sepsis, or bacteremia). Horses can also develop superficial and/or deep necrosis of the tissues, anywhere within the affected limb. Often this is in the fetlock or pastern area where massive amounts of tissue slough away. This problem may also accompany bone infection or tendon/ligament infection or joint

infection. These are all risks with severe cellulitis, but are more likely in cases with a delay in the start of therapy," she says.

Treatment of acute cellulitis can be frustrating for both the owners and veterinarians, particularly when the symptoms are not resolving as quickly as everyone might like. "It can be hard to choose an antibiotic before we have a culture, but we don't wait for the culture results to come back because we need to start treating quickly. Often the antibiotic we choose is something we think will work, but with cellulitis we sometimes find that our first choice may not be the right choice. We might have to change after we get the culture results back. Or, if we don't get a positive culture for bacteria and the horse is not responding as hoped, we may end up making another educated guess, using another antibiotic in an effort try to get the swelling down as fast as possible," she says.

Lymphangitis vs. Cellulitis

"Classically we think of lymphangitis as something that has a breed predisposition, commonly affecting draft horses or cold-blood breeds. It can affect horses of other breeds. Lymphangitis and cellulitis can both affect lymphatic drainage to the distal limb, particularly in chronic or recurrent cases. Lymphangitis is more likely to be bilateral, however, affecting both front legs, or both hind legs, or even all four limbs. Usually the hind limbs are worse, but we do also see cases in which the forelimbs are worse," says Fogle.

The swelling is generally in the lower portion of the limbs. "It can look a little like stocking up, because the swelling is most dramatic in the lowest part of the limb, and is not an acute process like we find in cellulitis. With cellulitis you suddenly find the horse with a huge leg, but with lymphangitis it's more insidious and gradual and is slowly progressive. The legs may have some scabs or scratches (pastern dermatitis) on the back of the fetlocks and pasterns, as well as firm, fibrous nodules. Those crusts, ulcerations and nodules may be a sign that the lymphatic drainage is not effective. Like a horse with chronic cellulitis, a horse with lymphangitis is also unable to fight infection or mount a good response against invading bacteria in the distal limbs," she explains.

"These horses tend to have low-grade infections in the skin in areas where the lymphangitis is affecting the distal limbs. The swelling doesn't go completely away with exercise, like it would in a horse that is simply stocked up (distal limb edema). Horses may stock up, especially in the hind limbs, if they are