

Windsor unveils festive program to benefit Alzheimer's and Parkinson's causes

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WORTHY GOAL



# Worthy Goal

WINDSOR UNVEILS A FESTIVE PROGRAM ON ITS FAMED POLO FIELDS TO BENEFIT ALZHEIMER'S AND PARKINSON'S CAUSES

WRITTEN BY JULIA DOUGLAS

**P**olo, an ancient and revered equestrian team sport, continues to reach new heights in Vero Beach. On Feb. 17, international players and locals will gather to see and hear exquisite polo horses and their riders thunder up and down the polo field at Windsor's fourth biennial Charity Polo Cup.

Though arguably the oldest recorded team sport in history, scholars differ on the date of the game. While some place it as far back as the Achaemenid Empire of Persia in the sixth century B.C., others trace it to the first century A.D.

Many historians believe the first known public match was held in 600 B.C., when the Turkomans defeated the Persians. The ancient polo players practiced war maneuvers on horseback; teams of dozens of men competed in violent bloody battles. For thousands of years polo thrived in the Middle East and Asia, played by Sultans, Kings, Emperors, Caliphs and Khans who ruled over Chinese, Persians, Monguls and Mughals. Thus polo earned its designation as the "game of kings." Noted as a dangerous game, many royal players, such as Byzantine Emperor Alexander III, John I of Trebizond and Sultan Albak of Delhi were fatally wounded during play.



The 2018 Windsor commemorative poster was created by Susan Easton Burns.





High-goal polo player Kris Kampsen of Wellington poses with polo pony Fiddle in Windsor's allée. Kampsen is one of several professionals who will compete in Windsor's Charity Polo Cup.





British polo player Max Secunda is director of equestrian operations at Windsor and match director of the 2018 Windsor Charity Polo Cup.

From Persia, polo spread to Asia and the subcontinent of India via the Mongols. After the Mughal Sultan Babur conquered India in the 16th century A.D., he refined his play of polo and patronized the sport.

Eventually, polo became the national sport of the northeastern Indian state of Manipur. In the 19th century, British officers stationed there were fascinated by the fast-paced game. Gradually they began to play a version of it. The name polo was an anglicized form of the Tibetan word “pulu,” meaning “ball.” In 1862, the British established the first formal polo club, the Calcutta Club. Soon after, the game migrated to England, becoming a key element in cavalry officers’ training. In 1874 its rules were formally drawn up.

Sir Winston Churchill loved the sport, dubbing it “The Emperor of Games.” In 1895, as a young cavalry officer with the 4th Hussar Regiment, he took to polo with a vengeance, playing the game with dedication and ferocity. He wrote to his mother begging for money to buy ponies: “I cannot go on without any for more than a few days unless I give up the game, which would be dreadful.” In spite of a permanently injured shoulder, Churchill played polo until he was 52.

To quote from Author Carlo D’Este’s book “Churchill and Polo,” “For men like Churchill, polo was war; it was like a miniature battlefield. Bloodshed and injury to horse and rider was common and the faint of heart need not apply. Courage and audacity on the polo field translate into savvy and audacity on the battlefield.”

Modern polo is played with a team of four riders and their polo ponies on a grass field measuring 300 by 160 yards. The object of the game is to score goals by using a long-handled wooden mallet to drive the small hard white ball into the 8-yard area between the opposing goal posts.

The players’ mounts, known as polo ponies, are in actuality full-sized horses, chosen for their agility, quickness, calm temperament and the ability to stop on a dime. Most players ride several ponies per match, often switching after each period, or chukka. The training of the ponies starts at the age of 3 years; ponies do not play in the polo games until they are 6 or 7.

The match is divided into six chukkas lasting seven and a half minutes each. Between chukkas, there is a four-minute lull to allow riders to switch horses. If the goals are equal at the end of the final chukka, riders and horses will play a sudden-death overtime.

Since Windsor’s inception in 1989, polo has been a key element in its culture. Windsor’s co-founder, Galen Weston, who was an avid and skilled polo



World-famous Argentine player and Ralph Lauren model Ignacio “Nacho” Figueras will play in the Windsor Charity Polo Cup.

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Famed polo player Salvatore Ferragamo and the Honorable Hilary Weston, co-founder of Windsor, are co-chairs of the Charity Polo Cup.

player in England, enjoyed the glamour and speed of the game. Prince Charles was a player on Weston's winning high-goal team, the Maple Leafs. Early on, Windsor's polo matches featured a host of elite high-goal players. In 2003, Windsor built an elaborate equestrian center with 22 stables, a unique amenity on the barrier island.

Windsor held its first Charity Polo Cup benefiting local and national charities in 2012. The beneficiaries of this year's cup are the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson Research, a national organization, and the Alzheimer & Parkinson Association of Indian River County. Hilary Weston and famed polo player Salvatore Ferragamo are the honorary co-chairs of the event.

Ferragamo says, "I feel privileged and honored to support Mrs. Weston as co-chair for this event. Through the polo match and my good friend John Walsh, and thanks to the high-goal players, we hope to have a great game and generate support to the charity and its good causes."

Co-chair Hilary Weston says, "Mr. Weston and I founded Windsor, our 'village by the sea,' with a focus on polo and equestrian pursuits. We take great satisfaction that

this cup has continued to grow and how the equestrian program at Windsor is flourishing. Polo is a passion of ours and this event reignites memories of Mr. Weston's Maple Leafs Team in England. Windsor and Vero Beach are very special places for our family and I am honored to play a part in the event and contribute to the community that has provided so much to us."

Max Secunda, director of equestrian operations at Windsor and a talented British polo player, is match director of the 2018 Windsor Charity Polo Cup. His stepfather, Julian Hipwood, a famed polo player, team captain and elite coach, played on Galen Weston's polo team and was a close friend of his growing up. Secunda says, "With my own personal connections to Windsor, I am fully committed to the Westons' charitable cup. My goal for this event is to raise money for our beneficiaries and to showcase the best polo players." Asked about qualities that make a great polo player, Max says, "Risk, skill, calmness."

Renowned international Polo player Ignacio "Nacho" Figueras is part of a team playing at the Windsor 2018 Cup. Hailing from Argentina, Figueras is captain of the





Tailgating is one of the oldest and most traditional ways to view a polo match.

distinguished Black Watch Polo Team. He says “I am very excited to be playing in the 2018 Windsor Charity Cup. This is the perfect opportunity to bring awareness to two of my passions in life: bringing polo to the world and supporting important charitable causes.”

Betsy Hanley, president of Torwest Inc. at Windsor, is on the steering committee of the Windsor Charity Polo Cup. The committee’s goal is to raise more money this year for the beneficiaries and give a memorable day to the Windsor club members and to the greater Vero Beach community. Betsy says, “We want to build on the momentum of the 2016 event and elevate it as a premier sporting event and the Windsor Charitable Foundation’s flagship fundraiser. At Windsor, we have set a goal of 100 percent participation from within our membership and to make a meaningful financial contribution to our local and national beneficiaries.”

Windsor resident Maria Whittle has been a vital supporter of the Windsor Charity Polo Cup since its inaugural event in 2012. Each year she has headed up the sponsorship committee. Whittle says, “Working with Rett syndrome

research, Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s research made such an impression on me that I have not found it difficult to do whatever I can. It feels truly wonderful to work with such a committed group at Windsor, its staff and other residents to raise funds for critically important national and local charities by way of a polo match.”

When Christian Hammarskjöld and his wife, Christine, drove down the allée of oak trees at Windsor in 2015, they knew it was the place for them. Subsequently they purchased a lot and recently moved into their completed house. Christian Hammarskjöld says, “All the stars are aligned. We feel at home here at Windsor, blessed to be part of this special place, and grateful for the Westons’ vision. Christine and I attended the 2016 polo benefit. We wanted to give something back and I was happy to serve on the 2018 polo benefit steering committee. Having been involved in finance in my former career, I thought I could help with the budget for the event using all available data and algorithms. Here’s a saying I like: ‘Work that gets measured gets done.’”

Susan Easton Burns, the artist who created the 2018





GAIL DAMAN

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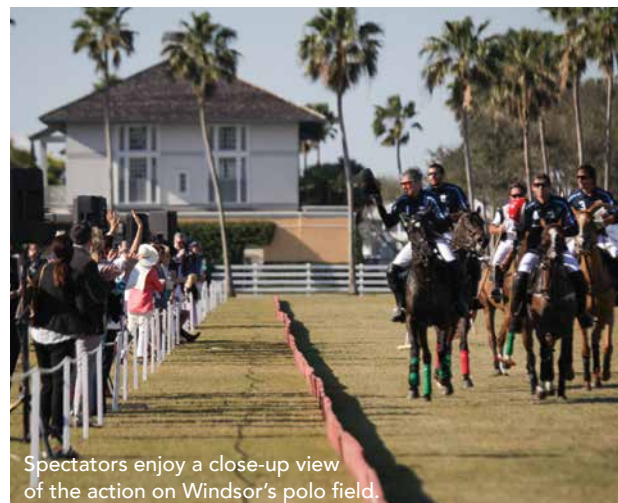
Windsor commemorative poster, has been drawing and painting her whole life. Her original oil painting will be auctioned off during the players cocktail reception on Feb. 16 and the Saturday luncheon. In 2014, the Kentucky Derby selected Burns as its official artist, an honor she had been working towards for 10 grueling years. Burns says, “As a young child, my father taught me to draw horses. I drew them over and over. I practiced wherever I was — even on the school bus. It gave me confidence. I took up painting horses again in my 30s and found artistic success. I’ve been fortunate to ride horses my whole life, and I appreciate today’s incredible polo ponies. They are of the highest caliber as opposed to 30 years ago. I’m pleased to be associated with Windsor and its most worthy causes.”

Peggy Cunningham, a spokesman for the Alzheimer & Parkinson Association of Indian River County says, “The Windsor Charity Polo Cup is an extraordinary event and we are deeply honored to be the local beneficiary of the funds it will generate. I feel there will be a straight line from the generosity of the Windsor community to the ability to strengthen the depth and reach of our programs.”

Deborah Brooks, co-founder and executive vice chairman of the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s

Research, says, “The foundation is honored to be a beneficiary of the 2018 Windsor Charity Polo Cup. Generous partnerships such as this allow us to accelerate scientific breakthroughs for the estimated five million people worldwide who live with Parkinson’s disease.”

At the event’s retail village, J. McLaughlin will host a



Spectators enjoy a close-up view of the action on Windsor’s polo field.





International polo star Malcolm Borwick, who played for the England team, will participate in the Windsor Charity Polo Cup.

“I’m attracted to the beauty and athleticism of the horses and riders. And, of course, the thrill of the horses galloping full throttle down the field just a few feet in front of you.”

branded VIP hospitality lounge and a curated pop-up shop showcasing its resort collection. In addition, CEO Mary Ellen Coyne and co-founder Jay McLaughlin will serve as judges for the tailgate contest. Winners will receive gifts donated by J. McLaughlin.

Windsor resident and horsewoman Jennifer Sims articulates her fascination with polo: “I’m attracted to the beauty and athleticism of the horses and riders. And, of course, the thrill of the horses galloping full throttle down the field just a few feet in front of you.”

Mother to three budding polo players, Windsor resident Erin Reicher knows the game inside and out. She says, “The Windsor Charity Polo Cup is such a wonderful day for the entire family. We are excited to sponsor the ‘divot stomp,’ which is one of those great polo traditions that brings everyone out onto the field during halftime. We are expecting it to be extra fun this year with additional entertainment and activities on the field.”

On an ancient road on the fabled Silk Route from China to the West lies a stone adjacent to a polo ground with this inscription: “Let other people play at other things. The king of games is still the game of kings.” ❁

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