

Sexiest Sport Alive hits the Beach

*"Let other people play at other things ---
the King of Games is still the Game of Kings"*

Tito Gaudenzi



It was just a matter of time for the oldest and sexiest sport on the planet to hit the sandy shores of sensuous **SOUTH BEACH**. It landed in the form of the **MIAMI BEACH POLO CUP**, (MiamiPolo.com). As 21 year old **Tito Gaudenzi**, both a player and organizer of this unique polo event said, "They were meant for each other." Both are sexy and attractive so it was natural for polo and South Beach to meet, he explained. But like his 54 year old father, **Reto Gaudenzi**, also a player and innovator in the world of polo said, "It's like the first man on the moon. A lot of people talk about it, but we actually did it." This Swiss father/son team took that leap of faith and brought the top players and ponies together, to the American Riviera for a romp on the sands of South Beach.



1



3

Miami Beach Polo Cup Spectators

1. Polo babe // 2. Hope & German spectators // 3. Little Bode boy



TOP: Father and Son Team - Tito & Reto Gaudenzi
BOTTOM: Polo Parade, South Beach



After all, **Reto Gaudenzi** is a man who knows what he's doing when it comes to polo. He has been playing polo for almost 30 years. The sport has given him access to people, places and pleasure worldwide. He was the first to bring polo to the snow in **ST. MORITZ** in 1985. Today that tournament is still going strong and offshoots have sprung up in winter resorts around the world. Next, **Gaudenzi** experimented with polo on sand in the desert of **DUBAI**.

Fast forward to 2005, where **Reto Gaudenzi** has been transplanted from **Switzerland** (formerly with **St. Moritz' Badrutt's Palace Hotel**) to Miami to transform the Versace Mansion into a private club, **Casa Casuarina**. One day, sitting in his office across from the beach with the founder of ACT Productions, **Bruce Orosz**, they mutually and instantaneously decided to bring polo to South Beach. Together, they formed **Polo Lifestyle LLC** and are rapidly making the distinguished sport a new Miami tradition. In April 2006, they hosted the **II Miami Beach Polo Cup**. "We created one of the greatest Easter holiday weekends in South Beach combining sexy, sunny sands with a spontaneous polo match! What could be better?" concluded **Bruce Orosz**.

"Polo has always been seen as a wealthy sport and not accessible. Our concept was to reverse the whole process and bring polo to the people. Let people wake up one day and see horses and a polo match on the beach while sunbathing...how cool is that?" exclaims **Tito Gaudenzi**. "We brought a smile to the locals and tourists alike" says **Tito**.



Guests at Circa Polo Party @ Raleigh Hotel

1. Polo player, Nacho Figueras & wife Delfina Blaquier // 2. Donna Karan & Kelly Klein // 3. Uli Petzold & wife Kirsten // 4. German gals, Tanja, Kirsten & Hope // 5. Circa CEO Chris Del Gatto with Fabiola Beracasa & Anouk Lepere



II MIAMI BEACH POLO CUP

The second annual **Miami Beach Polo Cup** weekend kicked off with a polo parade on the beach, followed by three days of matches in the sand complimented by evenings with South Beach sizzle. Thursday was a kickoff 'meet the players' press reception at the **Setai Hotel**. Friday, was the black-tie Polo Ball at the **International Polo Club Palm Beach** where boots and hats accompanied tuxes and gowns. Saturday, Circa CEO, **Chris Del Gatto** hosted Polo Night at the **Raleigh Hotel** with a spicy Latin flair. It included an intimate fiesta around a bonfire with background tango music. Special guests, **Donna Karan**, **Kelly Klein** and **Romero Britto** were spotted as well as the gorgeous, top ranked Argentine polo player/Polo model, **Nacho Figueras**. Sunday a beach party toasted Team Audi's win of the **La Martina Cup** to wrap up the weekend.

This is the only event of its kind in the United States. Six teams (**Audi**, **Circa**, **Klosters**, **Kreon**, **Outback**, **Smith & Wesson**) with players from **Switzerland**, **Germany**, **Italy**, **Argentina**, **Australia**, **Mexico**, **Brazil**, **Canada** and the **U.S.** along with 80 Argentine polo

ponies participated in the sports extravaganza. It was held on the sands between 20th and 22nd Streets on the beach fronting the **Setai Hotel South Beach**. Here, scenesters and socialites sipped champagne together between puffs of **Davidoff** cigars or licks of gelato...while watching and mingling with polo players and patrons in the VIP tent overlooking the beach and ocean yonder.

It was a surreal setting with a yacht parked out at sea, a colorful parachute floating through the crystal clear blue Miami ski above the polo arena filled with ponies galloping across the sand. Wardrobes ranged from bikinis to polo gear mixed with a splash of colorful **Cavalli** designer duds. Even the conservative Palm Beach crowd that ventured from their **Wellington** domain, loosened their polo collars and let down their hair as the DJ pumped music through the air.

Some of the team patrons/players included father/son team, **Tim & Chris Gannon** of **Outback** and husband/wife **Marc & Melissa Ganzi** on competing teams of **Audi** and **Kreon** plus **Chris Del Gatto** for **Circa**. Top ranked players included **Juan Bollini**, **Jack Bailieu**, **Lucas Labat**, **Andres Weisz** and members of the **Laplacette** polo dynasty.



Origins of Polo

POLO HISTORY

Most of us sip the champagne, chat and cheer without really knowing about the origin or etiquette of the game. The history is quite fascinating and helps explain how this elite sport evolved into what it is today.

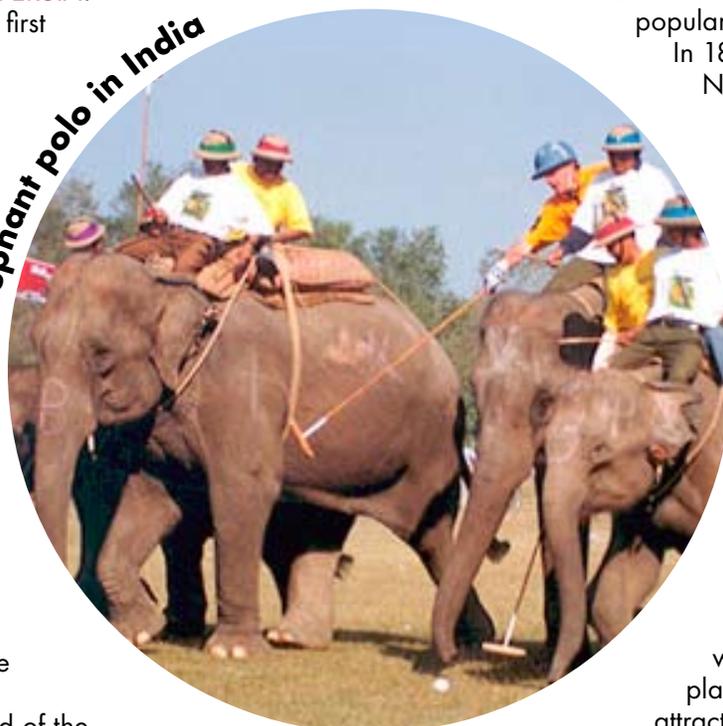
Polo is the oldest team sport played and it is one of the largest fields (ten times the size of a football field). The exact origin is unknown, but records date back about 2500 years ago to PERSIA. With the horse being one of the first domesticated animals, warriors played the game as a training cavalry. As Persia expanded its empire across Asia, into China, Japan and Tibet, polo followed. It became a royal pastime for many centuries. Kings, Emperors, Shahs, Sultans, Khans and Caliphs took to the sport. That is how it became known as "the game of kings".

Polo came to the West via MANIPUR, a northeastern state in India where it is traced back as far as 3100 B.C. Some even call Manipur the birthplace of polo. The name 'polo' is derived from the Indian word 'pulu' from which the wood of the ball is made. The word 'chukka' comes from the Indian word for circle or round and is

the name given to the different periods of play in a polo match.

British tea planters first spotted the game in India in the early 1800's and in the 1850's the British cavalry started to play polo after an officer read about it in a sports journal. Then, in 1874 the first set of rules were created by London's Hurlingham Club, many of which are still followed today. The sport spread in popularity amongst European royalty. In 1876, polo was brought to New York by a noted publisher, James Gordon Bennett.

Elephant polo in India



Next, British cattlemen brought the game to ARGENTINA. Today, Argentina reins as the world's mecca for polo. The Argentine Open, the world's most prestigious event, draws a crowd of about 30,000 fans each December. The Argentines dominate the sport. Argentina has been the world champion since 1949. Today, most of the world's top ranked, 10 goal players are from Argentina. The attractive Argentine polo player, Adolfo Cambiasso is the leading goal scorer on the World Polo Tour. And



Miami Beach Polo Club

Argentina's [Heguy](#) family has been a polo dynasty for over 110 years. The vast availability of land for raising horses and sprawling estancias have helped turn Argentina into the world center for polo.

Additionally, Argentina is the source of the top breed polo ponies, [Raza Polo Argentino](#). The name 'pony' stuck from the early days when the game was played on small Manipuri ponies even though today bigger horses play polo. The horse is a significant part of the game. Most players say the horse is even more important than the player. A symbiotic relationship must exist between both. And both the winning team and best horse are recognized after each match.

Today polo is played in [77 countries](#). There are about [1000 polo clubs](#) worldwide and growing. The oldest polo club still in existence is the [Calcutta Polo Club](#) founded in 1862. The highest polo ground in the world is on [Shandur Pass](#) at 12,000 feet. Miami Beach is soon to have its own polo club thanks to the influence of Reto Gaudenzi.

POLO ETIQUETTE

Polo is a unique sport where amateurs (often the team patron) play alongside professionals. And there is no age, gender, weight, race or royalty discrimination or preferential treatment. It is about a player's passion and playability that determines his or her rank in the field. "It is about your state of mind, not age, weight, gender or socio-economic rank," remarks Tito Gaudenzi. Men, women, young, old, Black, White, Asian, Hispanic, Indian, civilian and royalty all become equal when they mount the saddle of their horse and enter the field.

Once off the field, competitors become compatriots partying together. According to Tito Gaudenzi, "The sport makes you a gentleman. You learn social graces. The polo environment is polite. One minute you can be on the field competing against best friends, family members and royalty and after the match, you can all relax and enjoy each other's company." Reto Gaudenzi epitomizes this après game feeling with an anecdote, "During the Brussels finals, the [King of Belgium](#) flew in to hand out the Winner's Cup. The King made a mistake and handed it to my team because we seemed so happy, but we lost."



POLO RULES

This is a fiercely competitive game and participants play to win. However, due to the extreme danger of the game, rules are respected for a matter of life or death. An opponent, ball, mallet or horse can kill a player, so foul play is rejected. Rules revolve around safety. Just imagine a ½ ton horse traveling over 30mph in one direction and another traveling in the opposite direction towards it at the same speed and a ball traveling at around 180mph and a mallet that can crack a skull open and you have plenty of ingredients for danger.

Tito Gaudenzi tells me, "It is the most addictive thing I have ever encountered in my life. It is the only sport where I forget everything." At the young age of 21, Tito has already broken the majority of bones in his body: 4 ribs, 4 teeth, nose twice, cracked skull, 2 fingers, toes and vertebrae. But he still gets back on the horse soon after an injury. Tito reminisces about the semi-final match of the German Championship, 2001 in Berlin like it was yesterday, "I hit a backshot and looked back and the ball comes into my mouth. I lost all of my teeth, drank water, rinsed my mouth, got back on my horse and won the game without any teeth in my mouth."

The rules especially protect the horse. Tito tells me that if the horse is injured, the game is stopped immediately. If a human falls off a horse, the play continues. Without horses, you cannot play the game. In fact, they are changed after every chukker or round. **Reto Gaudenzi** mentioned that he fell off his horse six times during one chukker, one game. Another time, Reto was sidelined for 6 months and the doctor said he would never play again. The following year he was back playing polo and has not missed a match since.

Danger is perhaps part of the allure and sex appeal of the game of polo. Tito tells me, "Men get an adrenaline rush and female spectators seem attracted to fearless men. Race car driving has a similar sensual attraction because of the danger." And Reto says his wife thinks that polo players are sexier and more attractive in their white pants, riding boots, polo shirts and caps. After all, she found him through the sport.

**Miami Beach
Polo Club**





Miami Beach Polo Club

POLO FUTURE

Polo has become a lifestyle. The polo community is a diverse group sharing a passion for the sport and the horses. Due to the expenses associated with the sport, it generally has an exclusive following. It is the goal of **Polo Lifestyle LLC** to make the sport more accessible to both spectators and players. They have made the game free to spectators in South Beach. The Polo Lifestyle dream team consists of Reto & Tito Gaudenzi (passionate polo players and organizers), Bruce Orosz (Miami Beach event producer extraordinaire) and a silent Swiss partner (logistics master who also oversees Art Basel Miami Beach). It is their aim to share their polo passion and lifestyle with a broader audience. Future plans include bringing polo to a public venue in **NYC** like Central Park with a parade down Fifth Avenue. After that, be prepared for the stomping of the grapes to replace the tradition of stomping the divots. This team plans to take polo to the vineyards of **Napa Valley** and **Tuscany**. So in the future, beware of grape stains on those lovely white polo pants!

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POLO GAME

Polo is played by two teams mounted on horseback hitting a ball through their opponent's goal with a mallet attached to a 4 ¼ foot stick. Regular outdoor field polo is played on a field 300 yards long and 160 yards wide with four players per team. **Arena polo** is played on a smaller field and has three players each. The game consists of 7 ½ minute rounds called chukkas (4-6 chukkas; 4 for arena polo and 6 for field polo). Players have handicaps ranging from -2 to 10 with 10 being the best.

Besides polo being played on different surfaces like grass, snow or sand...it is played with other animals like elephants (**elephant polo**) or things like bicycles (**cycle polo**), canoes (**canoe polo**) and scooters (**Segway scooter polo**).

