



U21 upcoming tour!

MEET OUR U21 TEAM



JOSHUA LE ROUX
HILTON CLUB, KZN



CHELSEA McDONALD
KARGS POST CLUB, KZN



CHAD VON BENECKE
SHONGWENI CLUB, KZN



COURTNEY ODELL
HILTON CLUB, KZN



KENAN CLASSEN
PADDOCK CLUB, KZN



BRIAN COOPER
PE CLUB, EC



TAYLA MANSFIELD
PE CLUB, EC



PAULA MacLARTY
NYATI CLUB, KZN



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GOOD LUCK!



TO OUR U21 TEAM

Reserves –

Tara Rutherford

Jens Bunge

A horse can lend its rider the speed and strength that the rider lacks.....

But the rider who is wise remembers it is no more than a loan.
Pam Brown

FURTHER INFORMATION ON UPCOMING TOURS

U14/16 – An unofficial Barbarian Tour has been arranged for these age groups to be played on the 17th – 19th August at the Shongweni Tournament.

U19 – An unofficial tour has been arranged with the UK to be played in July at IPT (Moor River)

OPEN – An unofficial tour has been arranged with Ireland to be played at the Paddock Tournament in August.

THE SELECTION TOURNAMENTS AND DETAILS OF THE JUNIOR TOURS HAVE BEEN SENT OUT BY THE JUNIOR PRESIDENT, KAREN COCKER, SO IF YOU ARE INTERESTED, PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU READ THE DETAILS.

Our Season has started!! Please could all Provinces follow up with their clubs and get their affiliations in ASAP!!



. **POLO WARRIOR** – Bay Gelding, 8 year old Thoroughbred (Born 26 October 2009). By Albert Hall (GB) out of Bound For Glory. Been off track for 3 years. Approximately 15.2/15.3 hh. Has had 6 months of polocrosse schooling. Just started playing chukkas and showing awesome potential.

First tournament: George 2018. Looking for a polocrosse home for this horse – will go to top with the right owner! Contact Chris Newton (0846580373 / izindaba@hotmail.com) for price & details.

From: - THE UNIVERSITY OF LIFE....

INTRODUCTION

It has always been a horrific experience for any horse lover to endure the loss of a horse due to a broken leg, bone or heart disease and it is human nature to shift the blame to neutral space where you can safely satisfy your own conscience. I have sat in on many meetings where the blame is placed solely on the condition of the field. Yes the condition of the surface is a contributing factor but in most cases only counts for a small portion of a much larger problem.

In all humility I am not a Veterinarian or an expert in any equine husbandry. I can only claim to have played polocrosse from the age of 6 years to my retirement from the game at the age of 58 years old, during which time, I represented and captained my country from 1973 to 2001. I continued coaching the national side to 2008 and then took over the Director of Coaching portfolio. I have played top "A" division on 99% of the grounds in South Africa for the last 40 years and have never had the misfortune of breaking a horse's leg - ever. Some say that I am lucky, but I would like to share the bigger picture and common sense that I believe has been responsible for my "luck". I would also point out that by addressing this issue, all equine disciplines are faced with, does not imply that the problem is more prevalent in polocrosse than any other equine sport but simply to be pro-active and draw attention to ways we could reduce or eliminate the breakdown of horses in our sport. Stand back and observe the great herds of wild horses that roam the outback of Australia, the prairies of America, the steppes of Asia and other parts of the world. These horses do not run on prepared surfaces and yet very seldom break legs. The major difference is that they have evolved physically to adapt to their environment and of course they do not have the burden of a rider on their backs.

1 HORSE TYPE AND BREEDING

Traditional equine codes in South Africa have been blessed with an abundance of Thoroughbred horses that have been retired or discarded from the race track. These horses have been highly bred and hybridised to achieve two purposes i.e. speed and endurance. They are inherently light boned and trained and muscled accordingly for sprint or long distance. They are bred and trained to run on a specially prepared track and do not run laterally or stop and change direction. The Thoroughbred is fed high protein food from an early age to encourage early growth and muscle development. In simple terms we have a Formula-1 car that we put on a Rally track.

2 HORSE AND RIDER TRAINING

If we study a wild horse or indeed a domestic horse running free, you will notice it has a choice and is in control of where it moves and where it places its legs and hooves. It also regulates its gait to match its speed and changes its lateral lead naturally. However, by placing a rider on the horse's back, the rider should now be in control of the above. The confusion arises when there are no clear aids being given by the rider or the horse does not understand them and neither rider nor horse is in control of these movements. When a squad of soldiers is being drilled on a parade ground, the officer that is issuing the commands to turn left and right, will give warning to his charges before a turn so that everyone can act in unison. In our game the ball or direction of play changes continuously. The horse has no idea of this and so does not know what lateral, speed or direction it should follow in order to place its legs correctly. If you watch a good show jumper you will see him/her constantly lengthening and shortening the horses stride to set the horse correctly for the next jump. You will also note the rider change the horses lateral or lead when changing direction. There is a fundamental common language that has been spoken between horse and rider for centuries and it is of paramount importance that both horse and rider are well instructed in basic dressage. A horse is an animal of flight and will move away from pressure and will respond to release of pressure and reward. In an

over simplification, novice dressage encapsulates this principle by teaching the horse and rider to react through the pressure and release thereof applied by the riders legs, hands and body position. Once the basics have been established the training begins. Horse and rider training is an ongoing lesson and one never stops learning. The better understanding you and your horse have the better you both become. In our game we incorporate all these movements in super quick succession and at speed. It therefore stands to reason that we should aspire to improve our riding ability throughout one's Polocrosse career. My point is (parents please don't shoot the messenger) that it is common practice for a parent, who has a child that is showing talent, to get the cheque book out, buy a top playing pony and then throw the child and the horse into the deep end and in some cases disastrous consequences result. A more intelligent approach would be to take the child and the horse to a good riding instructor until the riding instructor is confident that both player and horse are in unison. The same is true with a top player who starts a young horse. The young horse will get years of education before it will play top polocrosse. Why do we not spend more time educating our horses and riders? A common practice is to get the groom to ride and exercise the horse during the week where the groom "speaks" Zulu to the horse and then the owner "speaks" English to the horse on the week end.

3 HORSE PHYSICAL PREPERATION AND EXCERCISE

All horse sporting codes are unique in the demand of physical exertion and so should differ in their exercise and preparation fitness programs. Polocrosse because it is essentially a "one horse sport" can be compared to a marathon that lasts over two or three days. Not only must the horse be trained in endurance, it must also be able to sprint for short distances as well. Polo on the other hand is different in that the pony is essentially a long sprinter for six minutes (or less) a day, for two or three days. If I generalise, the major difference in appearances of the ponies in these two codes is that the Polocrosse horse is more muscled than the Polo pony that in turn is more athletic and lighter. I have noticed that horses that break down (in Polocrosse) tend to do so at the end of a game and this would indicate that fitness and fatigue is a problem and exercise programs need attention. It is obvious that a horse that has been exercised for Polo (or other sporting codes) should not play Polocrosse until its fitness regime is changed. I asked Leigh Higgs to give us a few tips on muscles and tendons.

Leigh writes:

As in any athlete, stress and fatigue is a natural process that takes place. How to manage that is often the difference between a horse being able to last or maintain its level of performance throughout a tournament. To start at the beginning, warming up the horse is of utmost importance. You don't ever see Usain Bolt just walk on to the track and then run his race? How can your horse? The horse's lower leg has only tendon and no muscles. Tendons have an elastic component and for them to function at optimal capacity, they need to be slowly warmed up otherwise they could rupture or snap. Muscles consist of contractile units that shorten to produce movement; these too, will break down if not warmed up. Because of how the game works (6 minutes on 6 minutes off), it is tough to draw the line between keeping the muscles and tendons functional (warm) and cooling the horse down enough to recover. Taking the saddle off, rinsing down and then walking your horse in between chukkas is the best way we can maintain a happy medium between the two. Taking the saddle off, means the horse doesn't use energy to carry it and can then expend it during the game. The area under the saddle then becomes exposed to air, which cools the horse down faster. It also makes it easier for the horse to expand its lungs which aids in recovery. Rinsing your horse and then immediately scraping of the water will help cool down blood that is circulating close to the surface, which will in turn, be pumped to internal organs and will help cool the entire horse. Most people will take a bucket of cold water and throw it over the horse's back; this causes the muscle of the back to suddenly contract and the back goes into extension, which is opposite to how we want our horses to work. I would suggest rinsing the horse but not the back or using

warmer water. Walking the horse keeps muscles and tendons warm. A sweat rug should be used on colder days. If the horse gets too cold a second warm up should be done. Recovery is achieved when the horse's heart rate and breathing rate have returned to normal. Both heart rate and breathing rate return to normal and remain there, when the horse is walked. To end with, cooling down the horse properly will help delay any muscle soreness after exercise. It allows blood circulation and contracting muscle to remove any excess build-up of lactic acid. It is very important to remove bandages as soon as the game is over. This helps cool the tendons and prevents a heat build-up which leads to tendon damage and eventually failure. The warm-up, in-between chukka care, cool- down and then icing legs at the end of the day will help your horse through a tournament and maintain its competitive career for longer.

4 FEEDING AND NUTRITION

This is a hugely diverse science and as I have said before I am no authority and rely on a qualified nutritionist to guide me. By all accounts we generally do not supplement enough calcium. Most of us run our horses on pastures that lack calcium (especially Kikuyu) and although we feed balanced grain rations, this probably doesn't mitigate for the lack of calcium. When the horse's body does not have enough calcium to function normally, it will start to extract it from its bones. It is important to seek expert advice on what mixture of grains to feed and at what quantity to achieve the right muscle and fat development. There are a few reputable feed companies who will gladly advise you. I asked Debbie Odell to give me an article on this subject and this was her response:

Supplementing the Performance Horse
Debbie Odell MSc Agric Pr. Sci. Nat
Consultant Nutritionist – Bovasol cc

Forage or roughage should form the basis of the diet of all horses, with the obvious exception of the very young. Often horses can survive and thrive on forage alone, but as we demand more of our horses in terms of performance, forage alone will no longer be adequate to supply all the nutrients required and supplementation will become necessary. Critically, horses need about 1.5% of their body weight in dry matter from roughage. A mixture of pasture hay (e.g. Eragrostis) and legume hay (e.g. lucerne) is recommended, as the contribution of essential amino acids by the legume hay is significant. Providing this quantity of roughage will assist in maintaining the health of the hind gut micro biome. The roughage component will also significantly contribute to the energy needs of the horse, as well as some of the vitamin needs. Roughage will also assist the horse with thermoregulation in cold weather, but the contribution of roughage to the total energy mix may need to be varied in very hot climates. Your nutritionist will be able to assist with this. As mentioned, performance horses require nutrient supplementation to maintain their expected workload. Conveniently, there are many commercial concentrate feeds purpose-formulated for the performance horse. The decision to supplement with commercial feeds is often made on a visual basis, meaning that if one perceives the horse to be losing condition, the concentrates offered will be increased, and if the horse appears to be gaining condition the concentrates offered will be reduced. Horses may gain or lose condition for a number of reasons, and the challenge for the commercial nutritionist is to provide sufficient nutrients in the supplemental feed to provide for the full requirements of all horses. Practically, the best that can be done is to supply sufficient nutrients for the "average" horse. Let us assume that the "average" horse will require 3 kg of concentrates per day. Horses that require more than this to maintain body condition (energy) will probably receive more of the other nutrients (protein, vitamins & minerals) than they potentially need. In most cases this is not a concern as excess nutrients could be excreted or

stored for later use. The challenge is to provide sufficient nutrients for the horse in good condition that receives very little concentrate.

Although supposedly receiving sufficient energy to maintain body condition, these horses could be being undersupplied in other critical nutrients necessary for top performance.

The extra nutrients required by performance horses include quality proteins, fats, vitamins and minerals. Since each horse is an individual, some horses may benefit from higher levels of supplementation of these nutrients than the feed can supply. Some of the most common supplemental nutrients that provide considerable benefit are supplemental proteins (with the focus on supplying a balanced amino acid profile, rather than just increasing the overall protein level), B-vitamins like biotin, vitamin E organic minerals and additional fats (with a focus on supplying essential fatty acids).

Protein & amino acids

There are 10 amino acids that are considered to be essential to the horse, lysine being the first limiting of these, followed by threonine, methionine and probably tryptophan. Proteins are made up of amino acids and the essential amino acids must be supplied in the diet. If any of the essential amino acids are in short supply, protein synthesis in the body will be suboptimal, and performance may suffer. Since lysine is usually the first limiting amino acid, supplementation may be useful, particularly in young horses with growth requirements. Lucerne is a particularly good source of essential amino acids for horses.

Vitamins & minerals

Biotin and other B vitamins are usually included in commercial diets; however supplemental biotin might be indicated if the hoof growth is of poor quality. Additionally, organic sources of zinc may also assist in the growth of healthy hooves. Vitamin E is a nutrient that tends to be undersupplied in general in commercial horse feeds. It is abundant in fresh pasture, and lucerne, but is low in stored hay and forages. Due to its antioxidant function, and depending on the total diet composition, supplemental vitamin E during the sporting season may be beneficial.

Fats

The two primary essential fatty acids are linoleic acid (omega-6) and alpha-linolenic acid (omega 3), but the long chain omega 3 fatty acids EPA and DHA have also been shown of particular value, especially in reduction of inflammatory responses to exercise.

Electrolytes

Performance horses will need supplementation with electrolytes to replace those lost in sweat. Electrolytes are defined as minerals or their salts that are capable of ionizing in solution and can then conduct electrical impulses in the body. Electrolyte supplementation may be accomplished by simply providing a free choice salt block, or by supplementing with a specialized electrolyte product that contains sodium, chloride, potassium and preferably magnesium and calcium. Fresh water should always be freely available to horses supplemented with salt or electrolytes.

Joint & gut health

Each horse is an individual and other supplements may be required by particular horses. Joint supplements are among these, as well as supplements fortify gut health, including buffers and other products which may assist in the prevention of ulcers and maintain a healthy pH in the hind gut

Horses at grass

It is important to consider the off season diet as well. In the South African hot summer season, performance horses are often given a well-deserved break at pasture. Body condition will generally

improve on good summer pastures, so concentrate feeds are decreased or in some cases are not given at all.

Care must still be taken to supplement the macro minerals, especially when the summer pastures of choice are oxalate accumulator species (kikuyu, setaria, panic, guinea, buffel, pangola, and signal). Oxalates are capable of binding calcium in the grass rendering it unavailable to the horse. Balancing of the calcium: phosphorus ratio is particularly important on kikuyu pastures as not only is kikuyu an oxalate accumulator plant, but it also naturally has an inverse Ca:P ratio. Prolonged grazing without supplementation will result in bone demineralization and reduction of connective tissue integrity and strength over time. This may result in bone fractures or ruptured tendons when the horse resumes the stress of high performance. Horses grazing kikuyu pastures over the summer months must have their diet balanced for calcium and phosphorus. For horses kept extensively in the off season, a specially formulated lick block can be provided to correct the Ca:P ratio, and provide sufficient salt and trace minerals. Consultation with a registered nutritionist is recommended to assist with dietary requirements

5 FARRIERING AND SHOEING

Generally speaking Polocrosse horses are shod with Polo Plates every four to six weeks. This is a job for a professional who will manicure the hoof to match the conformation, shape of the horses leg and hoof as well as the extension of the gait. A variance of any of the above will force undue pressure on bone, tendons and muscles and will most certainly result in break down.

6 GAMESMANSHIP AND TACTICAL HORSEPOWER MANAGEMENT

This is properly the biggest reason for the fatigue of horses at a competition. The desire to win at all costs is instilled in most top players. If you could imagine that the game is like a chuck wagon race and each wagon is been pulled by a team of three horses. It makes no sense to have one horse do all the work and the others coast. Soon that one horse will fatigue and will be taken over by the teams who are working together. How often do you see a top player who is doing all the work have to replace his/her horse because of fatigue. In my opinion this is bad tactical planning, more use of his team mates (to carry the ball) and making the ball work over ground, should be implemented. When a horse is replaced in one team it gives that team a huge advantage with a fresh set of legs and immediately ups the tempo of the game, this in turn, unfairly fatigues the opposing team's horses that are now competing against four horses. The knock on effect could be disastrous and is no fault of the team who has only three horses. Captains and coaches should be completely aware of not only the player's prowess but the horse's as well. No game planning will lead to unnecessary horse fatigue. Umpires and officials should also be aware of this problem and must take action to mitigate. I am of the strong opinion that when a horse fatigues during a game there should be an investigation into all of the above reasons so that a breakdown of that horse could be averted. This would include a vet check prior to bringing the horse back into the game.

CONCLUSION

I have endeavoured to point out at least six reasons (besides an uneven playing surface) that could contribute to the breakdown of a horse. My aim is not to apportion blame on any particular point or person but to create awareness of other contributing factors so that we are pro-active in eliminating break downs in our sport.

GIRL POWER by Ashleigh Shaw – Natal ladies co-ordinator

A coaching clinic, exclusively for the ladies, was recently held at the Bishopstowe club.

The turnout was fantastic, with 19 ladies attending all eager to pick up a tip or two, highlighting the ladies hunger and need for a more personal approach to coaching.

The coaching clinic was opened with a talk from our Director of Coaching, Tony Higgs, on horsemanship, the importance of pressure and release when schooling and preparation of horses for a tournament. This gave the ladies a great opportunity to ask questions on any problems they might be having – a very informative hour of interactive communication between Tony and the ladies. Everyone was asked to tack up and meet Tony on the field for a quick lesson on collection and positioning of your seat, and how to do some basic movements on your horse, commencing at the walk then moving to the trot.

You can imagine the ladies response when Tony asked everyone to collect their horses up and proceed into a sitting trot. With much giggling and ‘o my goodness’ everyone managed to get their horses and themselves into the correct position. We were then told to keep our horses at the same pace and do a 10m circle inwards and then carry on in the outer circle. We’ll let that conversation stay right there. With a few minor almost crashes and stops and very wobbly circles everyone managed to get the idea right.

Thereafter we broke for lunch, which was a bring-and-share event. So we all topped up on the energy used for the sitting trot with lots of scrumptious goodies.

Then our coach arrived – Gavin Cocker. Together with Gordon Shaw they split the ladies into chukkas. But first we had a very inspiring talk from Gavin, encouraging the ladies to believe in themselves and their ability and to give everything a go, even when we thought we might fail. ‘Try and try again’.

Saturday afternoon saw the ladies in their chukkas, in different positions, with Gavin very close by instructing what they should and shouldn't do and many other possible options of carrying out a task. With many of the ladies still quite unfit and the particularly sunny day, there was a lot of gasping and giggling, and communication amongst the players - between the gasping and giggling, that is.

At the end of Saturday, everyone packed their horses away, looking forward to Sunday's session.



On Sunday morning we kicked off with an interactive discussion with Kirsten Van Heerden, the sports psychologist that works with our World Cup team. Her topic was 'Women in Sport' and the obstacles that we, as women, face in sport, as opposed to our male counterparts. Again the ladies were very involved and gained a lot from what Kirsten had to say and her advice on how to change our perceptions about

ourselves, each other and certain situations. In my opinion, I think the ladies walked away with a very positive attitude and a better mind-set.

Once again, chukkas commenced with the players being shifted around from their teams from the Saturday, and deciding for themselves which positions they were going to play in each chukka. It was fantastic and encouraging to see ladies play positions they had never attempted before; I think the relaxed atmosphere and the feeling of renewed confidence had a part to play in Sunday's chukkas.

The day's activities were ended with a quick summary from Gavin and all the ladies walked away with tired bodies and big smiles.

A special thank you to Tony Higgs, Gavin Cocker, Gordon Shaw and Kirsten Van Heerden for your valuable time and knowledge. It is greatly appreciated.

And to the ladies that attended, thank you for your support, and continue to believe in yourselves and who you are!!



That's all folks!