

England Summer 2014 Exchange

Reported by Michael Harrison Azzaro

The Polo Training Foundation sponsored a polo exchange trip to England July 19-28. The players Harrison Azzaro, Cipi Echezarreta, Rachel Kelly and Christian Weisz were selected from a pool of twelve applicants who had participated in PTF clinics and tournaments. The PTF is extremely grateful to Oliver Hughes and his staff at the Hurlingham Polo Association; Andy and Sharon Cork our main hosts and the families that hosted us: Chris and Rebecca Townsend, Nick and Anna Wiles, Stuart and Debs Lodge, and Stewart and Samantha Coid; the clubs that invited us to play on their fields, The Norfolk Polo Club, The Beaufort Polo Club, Longdole Polo Club, and Silver Leys Polo Club. In addition the PTF and the players appreciated all the wonderful horses loaned to us throughout our trip. One of our student players, Harrison Azzaro wrote the following essay about the trip.



Cipriano Echezarreta, Harrison Azzaro, Christian Weisz and Rachel Kelly.

My Polo Training Foundation sponsored polo trip to England was a whole lot of fun! My dad and sister took me to the airport in Houston. Saying goodbye to them was sad but exciting at the same time. When I landed in Miami I had only about five minutes to get to the gate before it closed. Mr. Scheraga was waiting for me when I came out of the airplane. On the flight from Miami to England I was seated on the aisle seat. My teammates Cipi Echezarreta and Christian Weisz were in the middle with Rachel Kelly on the outside seat. I watched several movies and talked a lot with Cipi. Finally after eight hours we got to England and our main host Andy Cork was waiting for us with his son Marcus. After we got the rental car we rode in two separate cars to the Gold Cup final at Cowdray Park. At the finals I got to see my uncle, Bill Cox, and players Adolfo Cambiaso and Facundo Pieres. When the game was over we had a picnic by the field. That night we stayed with the Corks.

On Monday we went to Charlie Townsend's family farm, the Norfolk Polo club to stick-n-ball. There we met his parents, our hosts, Chris and Rebecca and his brother Tom. That night we stayed at cottages on the Townsend farm.

The next day was our first game. We played against Charlie and Tom Townsend, Paul Newman and Charlie Tighe. In the last chukker it was tied up 3-3. On one play I was going to make a near side neck shot and lost my stirrups, I gripped the horse even tighter with my legs but when I went for the shot I got bumped hard and the bump knocked me off my horse. Luckily I was okay and got back on. We ended up losing that game 4-3, but all that mattered was that we had fun so we were all right and we had really begun to develop as a team.

On Wednesday we went to watch a kid's game at a club called Dubai. The game was quite good. After the game we were introduced to our new host families. We were all split up except for me and Christian. We stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Scheraga at Nick and Anna Wiles house. Cipi went with Stuart and Debs Lodge and Rachel stayed with Stewart and Samantha Coid.



Longdole Polo Club: Team PTF with Tom severn, Thomas Coid, Mimi Severn, and Arthur Luard, and sitting K/R Parmar, Adel Delaye, Tomas Schwenke and Felix Dupont.

Thursday came and we had a late afternoon game at The Beaufort Polo Club against Ed Walker, Freddie Younger, Felix Dupont and Tomas Schwenke. That game wasn't the hardest game because our opponents were younger than us. We ended up winning 7-0. After the game Claire Tomlinson presented the trophies and recommended that whenever we travel and borrow horses, we should call the owners the next day to make sure their horses had come out okay. We then had a BBQ and a futbol (soccer) game. That night, Christian and I were pretty tired, we fell asleep very fast. Friday came and we had another game at Longdole Polo Club courtesy of Will and Zahra Lucas. It was a round robin. The first team that we played we beat 3-1. The second team was ahead 2-0 with 1:30 on the clock. Then I told Christian: "let's score two goals fast" and we ended up scoring the two goals with our determination. One goal by me and one goal by Christian, with passing help from Cipi and Rachel. In England there is no 30 second overtime during the last period of our round robin game so we came in second place because the team we tied with had a higher score against the team we beat. After the game there was a dinner party at the Lodge's house.



Silver Leys Polo Club: Marcus, Ollie and Jason Cork and Henry Sharp with Danny Scheraga and Team PTF.

The next day we went to the Coronation Cup which Adolfo and Facundo played together. My uncle was the physio-therapist for the Argentine team. I was able to sit with them in the player's tent. That was the last time that I saw my uncle Bill on the trip. On Sunday we had our last game at the Silver Leys Polo Club which we tied 7-7. We all had amazing horses that game. Christian had to ride one that was 16 hands. He had never been on one that big before. There was a BBQ after the game and we had prizes. Cipi was named MVP. That night we stayed at the Corks. Then Monday came, the day of departure. It was a sad feeling but at the same time a good feeling to leave the UK to go home. It was an amazing trip to me, I am grateful to the PTF, the Scheragas and all the host families, my amazing uncle Bill, my family and the owners of all the horses I used. I hope to go back soon.

Thank you for the amazing, once in a life time trip.

Sincerely,
Michael Harrison Azzaro.