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# A&M Polo Club riding high in intercollegiate division

By Andria P. Goldwire  
Reporter

On a pleasant Sunday afternoon, several young men and women race up and down the Texas A&M polo field, swinging mallets and urging fatigued horses to run faster.

The riders are members of the Texas A&M Polo Club, one of 28 collegiate polo clubs in the nation.

On Feb. 8, the men's team was declared the Southern Intercollegiate Champions. The team is ranked second in the intercollegiate division.

The southern playoffs were held at the Rose Palace Arena in Leon Springs, Texas, about 10 miles north of San Antonio. Both the A&M men's and women's teams competed.

The women's team, consisting of Patty Scott, Donna Shifflett, Jenny Sharrock and alternate Susan House, defeated the University of Texas before losing to Texas Tech University. In the consolation match, the A&M women's team lost to Southern Methodist University.

The men's team, consisting of Michael Garrett, Lance Royalty, Vincent Borrero and alternate Tom Bacus, defeated former champion Texas Tech in the semi-finals before competing against the hard-hitting Colorado State University team. The A&M team held on to a slim two-point lead during the first chukker (time period) before going on to defeat Colorado State 20-11.

Garrett, the men's team captain, said he is happy about the team's performance at the southern playoffs, and he is positive about the upcoming national competition at Valley Forge Academy in Valley Forge, Penn., April 18 and 19.

"We have started training again (since spring break) and we are looking pretty good," he said.

"I feel good about the upcoming national competition," he added. "The only disadvantage we have is that the University of Virginia, which is ranked No. 1, will have some of their horses to ride and we will not. It isn't feasible for us to carry horses to Pennsylvania."

Horses are provided for teams which travel long distances or do not have an adequate supply of horses.

Since intercollegiate competition is played indoors only, there is no formal outdoor competition. The team competes against other universities and club teams in friendly matches of outdoor polo.

"Most of our outdoor games are against other alumni club teams because tournament intercollegiate polo competition is indoor only," Garrett said.

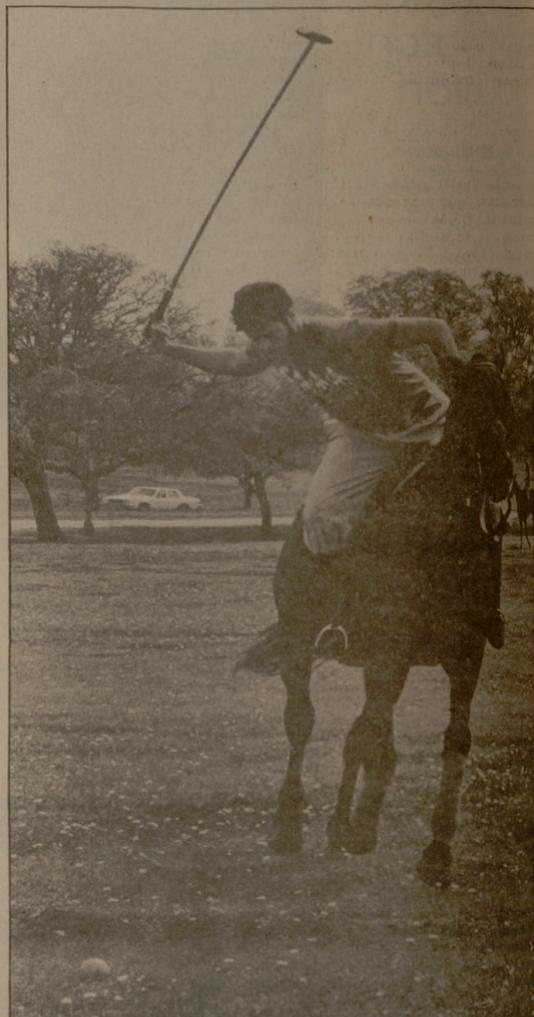
Polo is a growing college sport, although the National Collegiate Athletic Association does not recognize it as a varsity sport.

Guy Henry, president of the club, said because people think polo is a sport for the wealthy, they are not interested in playing.

Polo, which originated in Asia, was introduced to the United States in 1875.

"Few people take the opportunity to find out about polo," Henry said.

"It takes time, energy and sacrifice. It's a lot of work and little



A Texas A&M Polo Club member swings his mallet during practice on the A&M polo field. The club is one of 28 in the nation.

play. We're 90 percent work and 10 percent play."

Polo is a rugged sport that emphasizes stick-handling, horsemanship and team work.

For outdoor polo, there are four players to a side, and the object of the game is to score more

*"Few people take the opportunity to find out about polo. It takes time, energy and sacrifice. It's a lot of work and little play. We're 90 percent work and 10 percent play."*

Guy Henry

goals than your opponent during a match of six to eight chukkers, which last for 7½ minutes each.

For indoor polo, there are three players to a side and four chukkers to a game.

The A&M club, which started

in 1962, has about 30 members, consists of affiliated members who are A&M students and faculty (including dependants) and non-affiliated members, who do not have any formal connection with A&M.

During the spring and fall semester, twice-weekly lessons are given at various levels under the supervision of the coach, Mike McCleary. Clinics are organized with outside guest players as lead by United States Polo Association trainers.

Henry, a Ph.D. candidate, wants to enhance the club's image and attract more members. Because the club isn't just for professionals, Henry encourages students not to be put off by polo's "rich" image.

He said he would like students who have an interest in horses to consider playing polo.

"Next year, we want to be more competitive. Hopefully, we can get more people interested and continue to do well in competition," he said.

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