

SA set sights on Polocrosse WC in 2007



With just months to go, preparations are in full swing for next year's Polocrosse World Cup in Australia starting on 23 April 2007.

Expected to be the most prestigious international polocrosse event ever staged, the World Cup will be held on the polocrosse facility, Morgan Park, in the city of Warwick on Queensland's Southern Downs.

The event has secured the world's top eight polocrosse competitive nations - Australia, New Zealand, Canada, USA, England, Ireland, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Aside from these eligible eight, others are declaring their interest to participate outside the main competition, including Zambia and France.

The Australians won the inaugural World Cup final in 2004 with a 32-13 over the New Zealanders. South Africa placed third and this time, after having learned lessons, are going there to win.

"We didn't like losing last time, so we are putting in a lot of planning and training to go there and take the World

Cup," says assistant coach, Bruce MacLarty. "We're not going to Australia to play, we're going there to win."

Some 40 000 spectators are expected to attend next year's championship, building on the 25 000 people who turned out to watch the World Cup in 2003 at the same Morgan Park facility.

As the name implies, polocrosse is a combination of polo and lacrosse. A fast-paced, skilful and exciting game played on horseback, each rider uses a cane stick, which has a squash racquet type head with a loose twisted-thread net in which the ball is carried.

For more information

World Cup 2007 web site: www.polocrosse.com.au/worldcup/

Package tours: www.gulliverssportstravel.com

Where to stay/what to do: www.southerndownsholidays.com.au

If you want to volunteer and work for nothing:

www.polocrosse.com.au/worldcup/about_volunteers.htm

far left

Captain Brent von
Benecke passes

left

Beth Maclarty
attacks the ball

right

Beth Maclarty looks
for support

The team that will take us there

Tony Higgs – Coach

Tony started playing polocrosse at the age of eight and earned senior Springbok colours when he was 16 years old. In 2001 he represented SA against Zimbabwe and is now the oldest player to have played for South Africa in a senior side. Tony is a versatile player and has achieved his colours in all three positions. Tony has turned to coaching and his first big challenge was taking South Africa to the World Cup, where we achieved third place. He is now looking ahead to the next World Cup in 2007, where he expects to coach South Africa into the number one slot.

Bruce MacLarty – Assistant Coach

Bruce is married to Beth and has three children - Graham, Natalie and Paula. Bruce is a beef farmer in the Ladysmith district. He has represented SA at senior level and although he doesn't play much anymore he is actively involved in coaching. Bruce coached the u16 SA team that won the Quadrangular series in Australia.

Charl du Plessis (9)

Charl, 33, works in the textile industry. He started playing at the age of nine and is one of the few players in the country who has achieved a 10 handicap. Charl has represented South Africa against Zimbabwe, New Zealand and Australia and also played in the Quadrangular series. In summer, Charl plays polo in the Cape

Gavin Cocker (8)

Gavin is married to Karen. They have five children. Gavin has represented Zimbabwe on numerous occasions, including at the World Cup in Australia. Gavin and Karen have now moved to South Africa and are farming in the Richmond area of Natal

Gordon Shaw (8)

Gordon, is married to Jackie and they have two sons Callum and Jake. Gordon manages his family business, Allison's Saddlery. Gordon played for South Africa against Zimbabwe in 1998 and 2001. In 2000 he played against New Zealand and got "Player of the Series." The highlight of Gordon's polocrosse career was playing at the World Cup in 2003.

The Game of Polocrosse

Polocrosse sticks may be of any length, usually from 102 to 116cm overall. The ball is made of thick-skinned sponge rubber, about 31cm in circumference.

Each player is permitted only one pony in each match or tournament, except in the case of injury when a substitute pony can be played. Although there is no restriction on the height of ponies used, it is generally accepted that the ideal height should not be more than 15.2 hands.

Players:

A team consists of six players, divided into two sections of three, who play alternate chukkas of eight minutes each, of which six chukkas comprise a full match. The three players in each section consist of a No.1 "attack," a No.2 "centre" and a No.3 "defence" player. The total aggregate of goals scored by the two sections in each team constitutes the final score.

Field of Play:

The field is 146.5 meters long and 55 meters wide, with goal posts 2.5 meters apart inside measurement and not more than 5 meters high. Infield, 27.5 meters from each end and there is a line extending the width of the field, called the penalty line. This line encloses what is known as the goal scoring area, in which only the No.1 of the attacking team and the No.3 of the defending team are allowed to play.

Directly in front of each goal, there is a 10 meter semi-circle and the ball must be thrown at goal from outside the semi-circle and within the goal scoring area. The No.1 is the only player who can score a goal for his team and he can only do so while in the "goal scoring area." The No.2, usually the pivot of the team, can only play in the centre area. No.3 is the only player who can defend the goal for his side.

Throw-In:

The game is commenced in centre field, the players lining up side by side, one behind the other with the No.1 or "attack" in front. The ball is thrown in by the umpire well above the horses' heads. The game recommences similarly after a goal has been scored. Whenever an attempt at goal fails, the No.3 or "defence" throws the ball back into play from just behind the penalty line, at a point directly in front of the spot where the ball crossed the back line.

Fouls:

A player carrying the ball in his stick must carry it on his stick side i.e. right-handed players carry it on the off side of the pony. A player cannot carry it across his pony but he can pick up or catch the ball on the non-stick side, provided he brings the stick back to his side immediately. Left-handed players are permitted in the game of polocrosse.

Hitting at an opponent's stick, either to dislodge the ball or prevent him gaining possession of it, is allowed in an upward direction only – hitting down constitutes a foul. "Riding off" is allowed, but crossing, stopping over the ball or elbowing constitute fouls. The wedging or sandwiching of one player between two opponents "riding off" simultaneously also constitutes a foul. The penalty for such fouls is a free throw to the offended side.



top
An image of the 2003 winners the SA squad want to wipe from the collective memory bank.

right
some of the squad



Jocelyn Stafford
- experienced defender



Gary "Sipho" Spillsbury - hard, honest and aggressive link man



Assistant coach, Bruce MacLarty



Jannie Steenkamp
- versatile reserve

Horse recruitment

An historic national horse recruitment drive spanning the length and breadth of Australia is underway in preparation for the World Cup.

Heading the recruitment mission is World Cup Chief Horse Coordinator, Queenslander Kent Wells. Wells and his colleague Neville Gilpin are travelling around the country, riding and grading horses for the World Cup pool.

Working as a team, the horse selectors will be looking for a combination of each horse's agility, temperament, stamina and its understanding of the game. Wells said, "Basically we watch the horses play, and then we ride them. All up we are probably looking at an average of 45 minutes to assess each horse."

Once selected, the horses will follow an agreed preparation regime of appropriate exercise and diet. In essence, Australian horse owners will drive their beloved horse across the country and lend it to a rider they have never met! Organisers will pay owners a fee for each selected horse delivered to the World Cup venue, arrange insurance cover and offer a range of benefits.

Those benefits aside, Wells says that the main reason owners will be motivated to offer a horse is for the prestige value of having a horse selected for the World Cup. Wells adds: "It's a once in a lifetime opportunity."

Gary "Sipho" Spillsbury (7)

Gary, better known as Sipho stopped playing polocrosse at the age of eight and only recently returned to the sport after spotting Jossie on the field. He knew the only way to win her heart was to impress her on the field – which he did. Sipho has come a long way in such a short time and is one of the most promising players of the future.

Jocelyn Stafford (6)

Jocelyn works part time for her father in his transport business. Apart from working she rides and manages the horses at home. Polocrosse is her full time hobby. She represented South Africa in all ranks, except the u-19 side, due to her selection in 2003 for the senior side that played at the World Cup. She is a specialist No. 3 yet occasionally enjoys playing the other positions. Her goal is to play for SA Ladies in the next World Cup.

Dawnay Jacobs (5)

Dawnay, 15, is a scholar at Middleburg High School. She has played for Arnot for many years and currently plays for the Nyati Polocrosse Club. Dawnay is a member of the legendary Van Wyk family. She has represented SA at u-14, u-16, u-19, and senior level. She has been awarded many pony and player awards. Dawnay was awarded MVP [lady] at the junior quadrangular series in Australia in 2005. Dawnay is the youngest player to ever represent SA at the senior level. A very talented all rounder, she is tenacious, perceptive and has a natural ability to read the game.

Celicia Jacobs (5)

Celicia, 17, is a scholar at Middleburg High School where she excels at school sport. Celicia has played for Arnot for many years and now plays for the Nyati Polocrosse Club. Another member of the Van Wyk family, Celicia has represented SA at u-14, u-16, u-19 and senior level. She was a member of the SA u-16 side that won the junior Quadrangular series in Australia in 2005. Celicia is an outstanding player and her big match temperament and ability to ride any horse makes her a great asset to the World Cup squad.

Kelly Redford (5)

Kelly works in Johannesburg and plays for the Nyati Polocrosse Club. She has represented SA at u-14 and senior level. Kelly is the Shane Warne of the side and has an extraordinary God-given talent. As Tony the coach says; "Kelly has the ability to become the most devastating attack woman player the world has ever seen."

Men's Reserve (7)

Jan Albert Steenkamp

Jannie, 17, hails from Cape Town and attends Boland Agricultural College. He plays for the Cape Unicorns Polocrosse Club and is also a very keen polo player with the Cape Hunt Polo Club. Jannie has represented SA at u-14, u-16, u-19 and senior level. He has received many player and pony awards. Jannie is a dynamic, intuitive and creative player with a special ability to play any horse in any position.

Women's reserve

To be announced 🐎