



We must provide adequate opportunities for our most talented Pony Clubbers

As I write early in August, polo at the higher level in the UK already seems like a distant memory, but it continues strongly at lower levels, as it used to in days gone by when everyone disappeared to the grouse moors.

Although the destination of the great and the good may now be different, the effect is the same. It opens up the better fields to all and brings back an element of fun into the polo being played.

The debate on the nurturing of the home-grown player, to use the now accepted term, has intensified. While we seem to be no nearer to finding a solution, one thing is for sure and is demonstrated by the recent Pony Club Polo Championships – there is plenty of talent out there.

The trick now is to provide opportunities and experience for those who aspire to making polo their career.

Programme praised

There is no room for complacency but it would seem, judging by the relatively small number of complaints, that the professional umpiring programme has gone well this season.

Another welcome indicator has been that our top umpires are being invited to other countries.

Photograph by Georgie May



The Pony Club Polo Championships showed there is plenty of young talent around

Notably this season three of the team are adjudicating in Sotogrande, hitherto the province of our Argentine friends.

The A Group umpires have also been playing their part and have, under the management of Roddy Matthews, at last

The home-grown player debate roars on, but it is clear there is plenty of talent out there

achieved coherence and a growing reputation. The key to their success is mastering the following: knowing the rules and when to

blow for a foul and when not; reading the game; managing the players and maintaining a smart appearance with a cheerful, but determined, disposition.

A positive turn

In the last edition of *Polo Times*, the debate on the new interpretation of the turning across rule had a good airing. In general, those who play and watch polo are in favour of the increased use of the backhand rather than constantly turning on the ball, which so often led to a melee.

Yes, it can be argued that ponies are being hit more often by the ball, but on the flip side they are not now involved so often in ugly scrums, where so much dangerous and damaging play can occur.

Yes, the super talented player who relied on his skill at close play to win matches is no longer as dominant, but was this skill so wonderful to watch in contrast to the fast open game? I think not.

In the Gold Cup this year it was the well drilled team of four lesser goal players who were able to see off the teams with the power concentrated in the hands of one or two and we saw the lower goal patrons being able to play a significant part in their team's success. Surely all this is positive leading to the enjoyment of all.

It's not cricket

Every now and then sport throws up a point of interest. Thus, during cricket's second Test between England and India, we had the case of the batsman (Ian Bell) who was run out, but was sportingly given a reprieve by the opposition.

As a starting point you have to say a rule is a rule and, if broken, however inadvertently, then the due punishment must follow.

Of course a captain may make a sporting gesture, but truthfully this should be ignored by the umpires and the referee who must ultimately take responsibility for making the right decision. ❌

► Read more from Arthur at www.poloimes.co.uk



Play goes on until the whistle blows...

This month's puzzle

Name all of the occasions during a match when ends are changed.

Last month's solution

Jot down the occasions when the umpire throws in the ball.

There are quite a lot! At the start of a match and after each interval; after a break in play if a penalty has not been awarded; after the ball has been out of play; after a goal has been scored, after any forced stoppage such as an accident; after the award of a Penalty 7 (for breach of the no contact rule); if the whistle blows but the referee signals "no foul"; if the ball has been trodden in or carried unintentionally and, finally, to restart after a Penalty One.