

Polo – Edinburgh University field a team in charity match



St Andrews University Charity Polo Tournament, 29 April 2012

This years event was held in aid of 'Help for Heroes', the charity which helps to support our wounded servicemen and women. The tournament was held on the Strathtyrum Estate near St. Andrews and included a number of novice teams, supported by several local businesses, from the University as well as a match against Edinburgh University involving some of St. Andrews' more experienced players. The afternoon was rounded off with an exhibition match between Scotland and England. This match was contested by some of the best players Scotland and... eh, 'England' had to offer.

First up were the novices, with six teams playing in three pairs of matches in brilliant sunshine – tempered by a bitter wind. These games were played with a great deal of enthusiasm between teams of players who were, mostly, in their first year of Polo, and while the end result mattered little, they still competed well and appeared to enjoy the whole experience. Novice polo always looks a bit congested and slow, but when the difficulties of playing are taken into consideration i.e. hitting a moving ball from the back of a moving 'platform' – with a mind of it's own – using a four-and-a-half foot long 'stick', then just being able to contact the ball should be applauded. There were a few skilful riders playing and once they can marry the two skills together, then their Polo playing abilities should ramp up considerably.

The 'Varsity' match was next up, with St. Andrews and

Edinburgh facing off for the honour of being top 'Uni' dogs on the day. Edinburgh were given a half-goal start on handicap, but, with the highly skilled Alex Lindsay (pictured) playing for the home side, they were on a sticky wicket from the start. And so it proved, with five of St. Andrews six goals, Alex was awarded Most Valued Player at the end of the day. Edinburgh were played off the park and barely saw the ball for large periods of the game, St. Andrews dominating the possession and territory and never looking particularly under pressure. George Mackintosh – allegedly, from St. Andrews – scored Edinburgh's sole goal in the second chukka of three to give a final result of 6-1 1/2 to St. Andrews.

The final match-up of the day was the Scotland v 'England' exhibition. The players competing in this match were among the best players North and 'South' (?) of the Border (maybe just South of St. Andrews in all honesty) and they showed what the game is all about. Both teams were fairly evenly matched, with just a half-goal in Scotland's favour. The first chukka ended with 'England' just in the lead with a single goal, but Scotland came close and gave as good as they got. They pulled a goal back in the second chukka to lead 1 1/2 to 1, a lead they held onto during the third chukka. The fourth and final chukka was where the match was to be decided, a draw being off the cards. With both teams scoring twice during a very exciting, end-to-end period of play, Scotland ran out eventual winners 3 1/2 goals to three. This was Scottish Polo at it's best and gave an indication to the novices how far they could progress given time.

Mention should also be made of the three commentators, who braved the biting wind to provide an endless stream of, mostly, accurate and highly entertaining commentary for the enjoyment of all present, as well as the Tayforth Universities OTC Pipes and Drums and 'The Other Guys' who both provided the day's live entertainment.

Other than the freezing wind, the day was a great success for St. Andrews Polo Club, raising a fair amount for their

chosen charity and generally giving players and spectators a fine day out. Awfy cold, though...!

Report and Photo – John Preece

Web – <http://www.photoboxgallery.com/jlp-photographytoo>