

Polo Pulling in Crowds

Twilight polo is attracting a growing audience on the East Coast.

09-22-2007

The Great Meadow Polo Club (GMPC), located in The Plains, Va., has announced that it is having a record-breaking season in attendance and new players getting involved. Polo's population in the heart of East Coast horse country doesn't seem that unusual, but apparently the increase in spectators is.

"Twilight polo is seeing its greatest public attendance since it was launched at Great Meadow 13 years ago," states John Gobin, manager of the GMPC. "We're hosting a growing number of families and young professionals at our Saturday evening matches', nearly 1,200 attend each week."

Gobin, ranked one of the top 10 American polo players in the United States, is the first top level professional polo player to head up a Virginia polo club. "We are really fortunate to be able to attract professional talent like John and believe that he is going to help take polo in the Piedmont to a whole new level," sates Dr. Phillip A. Karber, club president.

Interest in polo is growing, particularly stadium polo, which is much faster paced than grass polo. "While we play both grass and stadium polo at Great Meadow, our Saturday evening matches are in the stadium," explains Gobin. "The stadium provides a great venue for families and makes for easier evening play and viewing since it's lighted."

The event has become extremely professional with half-time entertainment. There's even a mascot, the cleverly named "Polo Bear," who greets and dances with children in the crowd and hands out T-shirts and trinkets.

GMPC wrapped up its season on Sept. 15 with a daytime match presenting the United States Polo Association and Polo Museum's "Hall of Fame Challenge Cup." Unlike Twilight Polo, which is played in the evening and in the stadium, this 12-goal match took place during the afternoon on the new world-class field at Great Meadow.

"We are delighted to host this prestigious event," says Leslie VanSant, president of the Great Meadow Foundation. "This is an opportunity to watch some of our top local players compete in a charity match to help preserve open space at Great Meadow." Proceeds benefit the Great Meadow Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to open space preservation. For more information, including ticket prices, visit www.greatmeadow.org.