



Press Release - January 10th, 2022

U.S. POLO ASSN. WINS ITALIA POLO CHALLENGE CORTINA 2022

The U.S. Polo Assn. Team dominated the final of the **2022 Italia Polo Challenge Cortina**, played on Saturday, January 8th, against the Goldspan Polo Team (14-11.5) in a floodlit arena with footing unanimously judged as perfect.

Polo on snow has a long tradition in Cortina d'Ampezzo (first played there in 1989) and the tournament, which ended after three exciting days with four teams playing, attracted a large number of enthusiastic spectators who braved the harsh weather (-7/- 8 degrees) and enjoyed high-level sport.



From left: Simone Perillo (FISE General Secretary), Clement Delfosse, Daniel Deistler, Patrick Maleitzke, Gianpietro Ghedina (Major of Cortina d'Ampezzo), Alessandro Giachetti (FISE Polo Department) - Photo IPC/Diego Bandion ©

The winning team, which fielded France's **Clement Delfosse** (hp 5), Germany's **Patrick Maleitzke** (hp 5) and **Daniel Deistler** (hp 0), won the day 14 to 11.5 against **Goldspan**, which instead fielded the Argentinean players **Valentin Novillo Astrada** (hp 6) and **Pablo Guinazù** (hp 3) as well as Luxemburg's **Bert Poeckes** (hp 0).

The match was really only balanced during the first chukker, which Goldspan won 3.5 to 2 thanks to a hat-trick scored by Guinazù. After the second chukker it was practically all over. Delfosse and Maleitzke put on a real show, and goal after goal created an unbeatable gap with their opponents, 9 to 4.5 at the end of the second chukker and then 12 to 5.5 after the third.



U.S. Polo Assn. Vs Goldspan - Photo IPC/Diego Bandion ©

The final chukker started with the most spectacular goal of the entire tournament; Maleitzke rode at least two-thirds of the arena keeping control of the ball to then hit it through the goal posts while an enthusiastic crowd cheered him on. In the final minutes of play the Goldspan team tried to reduce the distance but could do no better than finish on 14 to 11.5.

The final for third place was won by Team **Battistoni**, fielding Argentina's **Patricio Rattagan** (hp 4), Germany's **Alexander Hauptmann** (hp 2) and Italy's **Stefano Giansanti** (hp 1), beating 8-6 the **Hotel de la Poste**, with players **Felix Beguerie** (hp 5), **Therence Cusmano** (hp 1) and Slovakia's **Martin Magal** (hp 0). Battistoni's top scorer was Rattagan with five goals out of the team's eight.

THE LASTING BOND BETWEEN CORTINA AND 'POLO ON SNOW'

Polo on snow made its debut in Cortina in **1989**, following the example set by a similar event organised in St. Moritz in 1985. It was organised by three Roman friends with a passion for polo - Italo **Focacci**, Fabrizio **Bogiankino** and Corrado **Pantarella** – joined by Renato **Manaigo**, the well-known and respected owner of Cortina's **Hotel de la Poste**, always in search of innovation and elegance.



Photo Equi-Equipe Archive ©

The first location chosen was the frozen lake of **Landro**, between Cortina and Dobbiaco, where four teams challenged each other in a tournament played in front of spectators that consisted mainly of the players' families and friends as well as polo fans. Teams from **Italy, England, Holland and Belgium** played in what was then called the '**Presidential Cup**'.

Two years later a decision was made to create a polo field on **Lake Misurina**, in a magnificent open and sunny position at the feet of mountains rising to an altitude of three thousand metres. It was certainly the best playing field one could imagine!

The year 2002 marked the beginning of a totally new series called the '**Cortina Winter Polo Gold Cup**' which was a great success.

In 2013 and 2014, due to the lack of ice formed over Lake Misurina, polo on snow matches were played at the Antonella De Rigo Sports Centre in **Fiames**, bordering on the Alemagna Road.

In **2020** Cortina d'Ampezzo hosted the debut of the **Italia Polo Challenge** with the first ever **polo on snow match played under floodlights**, using the **Arena Polo** format with teams consisting of three players and played in a smaller field. Another test event was organised in 2021 before at last inaugurating the 2022 four team tournament.

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Italia The Italia Polo Challenge is a series currently involving three immensely enchanting locations, Cortina d'Ampezzo, Rome's Piazza di Siena and Porto Cervo. This challenge was an idea presented by the Argentinean player Patricio Rattagan, who has become the event manager in cooperation with the Italian Equestrian Sport's Federations Polo Department. Italia Polo Challenge was officially inaugurated in May 2019 in Roma, with a quadrangular tournament greeted with great success by spectators at the Villa Borghese Galoppatoio during the Piazza di Siena international horse show. In 2020 the same success greeted the Italia Polo Challenge's debut on snow in Cortina d'Ampezzo. Unfortunately this was the only event held that year due to the spreading of Covid. In 2021 instead the Italia Polo Challenge at last kicked into gear with three tournaments organised in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Rome and Porto Cervo. Cortina 2022 was therefore the sixth event in this adventurous Italia Polo Challenge.

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