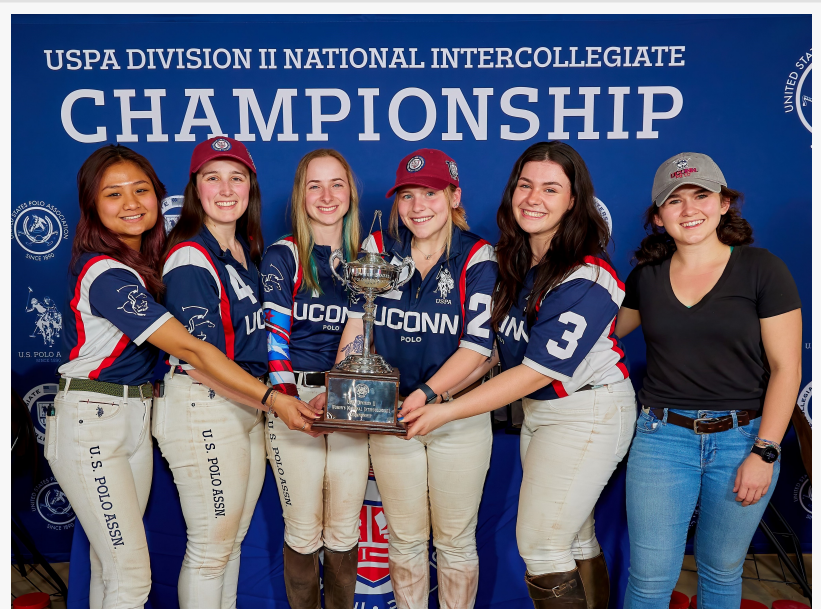


# University Of Connecticut Huskies Emerge Top Dogs In Inaugural Division II Women's National Intercollegiate Championship

*Arena Polo Tournament Final Pits UCONN vs. Texas Tech University for the United States Polo Association's National Title*

STORRS, CONNECTICUT, USA, May 6, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On Sunday, March 27, the first-ever [United States Polo Association](#) Division II Women's National Intercollegiate Championship took place at Legends Polo Club in Kaufman, Texas. Vying for the title, the final saw the University of Connecticut Huskies (Kylie Dalton, Rylyn Koger, Elizabeth Leudesdorff, Madison Robicheau, Toni Moore) fiercely battle the Texas Tech University Red Raiders (Lexie Harlan, Brianna Wolkober, Mary Kate Ratliff, Jordyn Rizzuto, Tatijana Mirski) in a groundbreaking game for intercollegiate polo.



2022 Division II Women's National Intercollegiate Championship Champions UCONN- Toni Moore, Madison Robicheau, Kylie Dalton, Elizabeth Leudesdorff, Coach Anders Carlton. ©David Murrell (1)

Both teams receiving a bye in the first round of play, UCONN edged out UC Davis in a narrow 8-7 semifinal win, while Texas Tech defeated Michigan State 12-9 to nab their spot in the championship final. A high scoring, back-and-forth first half, led to a Huskies takeover in the remaining two chukkers to secure the 15-11 win and the inaugural championship title for UCONN.

Leading scorer Leudesdorff shared UCONN's game plan going into the finals, "Our strategy for the game was to stay composed and take each play as it came. Our main goal was to communicate and work together as a team. We wanted to stay collected and not let the score, whether it was in our favor or not, affect our playing."

Making careful and conscious efforts to control the throw-ins while simultaneously igniting their

offense from the start, UCONN's Dalton, Koger and Leudesdorff combined forces for five unanswered goals in the first chukker to deny the home-turf Texans any scoring opportunities.

Dalton, who began playing five years ago at UCONN, discussed her team's strong start, saying, "The first chukker's success came from our team's emphasis on having a good, strong start before the first whistle blew [...] we made sure to come out aggressive in the first lineup and win that right off the bat. We knew we had the strong side of our string of horses and wanted to capitalize off of that."



UCONN's Kylie Dalton reaches to tap the ball forward with Texas Tech's Mary Kate Ratliff defending at her hip. ©David Murrell

Hungry to get on the board, Texas Tech's Mirsky and Harlan were able to re-energize the Red Raiders in the second chukker, with Mirsky scoring three from the field and Harlan scoring one from the field. Also ramping up their defensive strategy, the Red Raiders were able to keep the Huskies off the board entirely to bring Texas Tech within one goal of UCONN at halftime.

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We each practice very hard, put a lot of time and effort into this sport, and this weekend, it all paid off. Every late night at the barn practicing, every past loss made us better.”

*Rylyn Koger, UCONN Women's Polo Team*

Koger spoke about UCONN's second chukker troubles, explaining, "We realized we were not working as a team and and getting frustrated with one another. We needed to talk more, play off of each other, and communicate in order to come back and stay on top. We had to remember that we came here to win, we worked hard to be the best, and this was our chance to prove that. We could not let

one scoreless chukker rattle us and keep us away from reaching our goals.”

Agreeing with Koger, Dalton added, "We went into halftime with a fresh mentality, the score was 0-0, everything started from scratch.”

Clearly recognizing a need for change if they wanted to win, UCONN completely revamped their game going into the second half. With a total of seven goals from the field off of Leudesdorff's mallet, a stunning two-pointer from Koger, and the help of a pony goal, the Huskies were able to put an impressive 10 goals on the board between the third and fourth chukkers.

The Red Raiders attempted to keep pace, with Mirsky finding the goal three times, Ratliff adding to the board with two of her own, a Penalty 1 conversion and pony goal, but ultimately it wasn't enough to overcome UCONN's offensive prowess. As the final horn sounded, the Huskies led 15-11 over the Red Raiders to capture the very first Division II Women's National Intercollegiate Championship title.

For many players like Texas Tech's Harlan, this tournament, along with the creation of Division II polo, was one of the first opportunities to play at both an equally matched and competitive level. Harlan took time to note her gratitude for making it this far and being able to participate in the tournament. "I didn't start playing until spring of 2020," Harlan said. . "I played one chukker at a prelim — This is the first time I've ever been able to compete! So I got to finish out my last season and it's been amazing."

All-Stars in the Division II Women's National Intercollegiate Championship included: Elizabeth Leudesdorff (UCONN), Grace Grotnik (Southern Methodist University), Mary Kate Ratliff (Texas Tech) and Liliana Gonzalez (UC Davis). The Sportsmanship Award was presented to Jessica Liu (Michigan State), while Freida Witmer (Skidmore) was awarded the Horsemanship Award. Best Playing String was presented to Southern Methodist University while Bil and Will Walton's Katniss took home Best Playing Pony honors. Adding another BPP blanket to her growing collection, Katniss also recently won the award in the 2021 Southwestern Circuit Sportsmanship Cup, Texas Arena League (2021 and 2022) and competed in the 2021 U.S. Open [Arena Polo Championship](#)® for the winning team Dallas Polo. Many players were quick to praise Katniss, with Leudesdorff noting her "incredible bump" and ability to "turn on a dime." UC Davis' Liliana Gonzalez also appreciated Katniss' knowledge of the sport and willingness to play, sharing, "I didn't have to think about the horse, the horse took me everywhere."

All Intercollegiate and Interscholastic competition is played as arena polo. Games can be seen on-demand on [Global Polo TV](#).

About the United States Polo Association®

The USPA was organized and exists for the purposes of promoting the game of polo, coordinating the activities of its Member Clubs and Registered Players, arranging and



Texas Tech's Lexie Harlan taps the ball along the boards ahead of UCONN's Elizabeth Leudesdorff during arena polo Collegiate Championship©David Murrell



supervising polo tournaments, competitions and games, and providing rules, handicaps, and conditions for those tournaments, competitions, and games including the safety and welfare of participants and mounts. Founded in 1890, the USPA is the national governing body for the sport of polo. The USPA is currently comprised of more than 200 member clubs with thousands of individual members and oversees 40 national tournaments. For more information, please visit [uspolo.org](http://uspolo.org).

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