

Arena Polo Players from Around the U.S. Converge on Texas for National Arena Amateur Cup

Coveted United States Polo Association Arena Tournament Draws Top Amateur Players to Legends Polo Club Near Dallas

DALLAS, TEXAS, USA, January 3, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Uniting talented and committed amateur players from across the country, the [United States Polo Association](#) (USPA) National Arena Amateur Cup (NAAC) assembled for a third consecutive year of competition at [Legends Polo Club](#) in Kaufman, Texas - just Southeast of Dallas. NAAC played in its fourth year under the points format – something new and unusual in the sport of polo.

Showcasing players who have earned points in the NAAC system competing in USPA circuit, sanctioned and national tournaments throughout the year, a field of six teams with arena polo players from California to Maryland narrowed to a showdown between Blazing Saddles (Mark Osburn, Sydney Morris, Marcus Murphy) and The Trifecta (Megan Rahlfs, Rehan Kumble, Amanda Osburn).

“

I love arena polo, it's like my home. It's what I grew up playing and what I started playing, so it's always a treat whenever I get the opportunity to play.”

Rehan Kumble

The NAAC invite is highly coveted amongst USPA arena polo players. Likened to “hockey on horseback”, arena polo is fast-paced game with highly trained, bold horses completing teams of three human players. The NAAC leaderboard is posted on the USPA website and players refer to it throughout the year to see if they are in the top percentage to make the trip to Nationals.



Arena Polo players Sydney Morris and Megan Rahlfs go head-to-head in National Arena Amateur Cup
©David Murrell

Assigned teams in the NAAC format, Sydney Morris shared how Blazing Saddles united in their

short time together, "I had not met either of my teammates. I was excited and a little nervous. It's hard when you don't know your team, but Mark was really nice and made a group chat [and that] was super beneficial. We were able to get to know each other and discuss some different play ideas before we met in person at the tournament." Mark Osburn added, "I knew Marcus from the [Texas Arena League](#) and had seen him playing well at the end of the TAL season, so I figured I had a good running and gunning number one—he lived up to and exceeded my expectations." Mark Osburn continued, "I had not met Sydney yet, but I'll never forget her, she's a strong, selfless player and is always locking down opponents to let her teammates score."

Blazing Saddles made it to the finals by defeating Proton Partners (Javier Insua, Lindsay Bellack, Victoria McGraw) and KaBoom! (Brady Williams, Kimberly Vaughn, Mila Slutzky) in bracket play. The Trifecta earned their spot also undefeated in bracket play against Los Polos Locos (Nacho Estrada, Mike Farah, Cort Rowley) and D2J (Don English, Don Gruntmeir, Jose Velez)

Earning their entry to the final with a 2-0 record, Mark Osburn explained the challenges his team was up against taking on The Trifecta, facing-off against his wife, Amanda. "It's a little bittersweet playing against my wife in the final, she's always in the right spot to disrupt any offense we were trying to put together, so being disciplined and sticking to the man was first with our plan against them."

Awarding The Trifecta one goal on handicap at the onset of the game, Murphy quickly responded for Blazing Saddles, but three goals from Kumble and one from Rahlfs gave The Trifecta an early 5-2 advantage. Rebounding in the second, Murphy ignited a four-goal run for Blazing Saddles that included contributions from Morris and Mark Osburn. Holding their opponents to just one



Arena polo player Marcus Murphy reaches for the ball in front of Rehan Kumble ©David Murrell



2022 National Arena Amateur Cup (NAAC) Champions- Mark Osburn, Sydney Morris, Marcus Murphy. Presented by Arena Polo Legend Tom Goodspeed and USPA Governor-at-Large Robin Sanchez. ©David Murrell

goal each from Rahlfs and Kumble before the half, Blazing Saddles' reenergized offensive and defensive play allowed them to pull even 7-all at the horn.

Crediting the competition, Morris added, "There were so many amazing players at the NAAC and one of the strengths we saw throughout the tournament was their ability to have an accurate long shot. They can get the ball into the goal from anywhere, so we had to really pressure them and send one of our players to pick up the rebound." Competing in his second NAAC Murphy added, "One thing that helped us play so well was the communication we had on the field. We weren't afraid to change our plan mid-game or switch spots in the arena. Our number one rule was to have fun, enjoy ourselves and back each other up."

A back-and-forth third chukker, all three of Blazing Saddles' teammates managed to find the scoreboard, as Kumble contributed another four goals for The Trifecta to keep the match deadlocked 11-all entering the final frame. Applying pressure to open the fourth, Murphy once again served as Blazing Saddle's offensive catalyst, spurring Morris to hit the goal on three consecutive drives. Leading by four, Rehan battled to keep The Trifecta within reach, but one last effort from Osburn sealed the win for Blazing Saddles 16-12.

In recognition of his leadership and contributions on both sides of the ball, Mark Osburn was named Most Valuable Player. "I have to give credit to Marcus and Sydney for helping me so much," he noted. Also, the horses played great—never a bad chukker!"

Maggie, a 13-year-old mare owned by Sydney Morris was awarded Best Playing Pony. "It was so awesome to have Maggie win Best Playing Pony, she is always Best Playing Pony in my heart, and it was cool to have other people notice her," shared Morris. "She's an off-the-track thoroughbred originally from Jared Sheldon, I've owned her for around four or five years now. Maggie has too many amazing qualities to count. She's my go-to anytime I know that I need a good horse in a chukker. My favorite quality is her heart and grit—every time, she gives me 110%."

Megan Rahlfs won the Sportsmanship award for the finals while Cort Rowley received the Overall Sportsmanship Award, "This is my first time playing the NAAC and I absolutely loved it," said Rowley, "It was a great opportunity, and I was really glad I was able to be a part of it. I'm the current captain on Cal Poly's men's polo team and I've been welcomed with open arms by everyone in the polo world. It was an honor and a privilege to be able to come here and compete in Texas."

Don English and Rehan Kumble shared the spotlight and trophy buckles for NAAC High-Point individual with 18 points each on the leaderboard.

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