

Texas Arena League's Armadillo Division Bands Together for Second Successful Year of Arena Polo Competition

Texas Arena League continues to host "Armadillo Division" at Legends Polo Club with high demand from players and teams

DALLAS, TX, UNITED STATES, May 28, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Deep in the heart of Texas, [arena polo](#) continues to make a splash and foster new players all across the Lone Star State. Since its inception in 2018, the [Texas Arena League](#) (TAL) has seen incredible growth and witnessed staggering numbers in both attendance and participants. In addition to adding new locations and players to the roster, the Texas Arena League has served as an intro-to-polo for anyone interested in the sport. Due to its welcoming atmosphere and exciting play, TAL continues to gain a larger following each year.

Arena polo, sometimes known as hockey on horseback, is a ball and mallet sport played via horseback. Arena polo is played in an enclosed arena with two goal mouths set into either end of the 300 by 150-foot dirt arena. The game is played with teams of three players each mounted on horseback. All players are equipped with bamboo cane mallets and attempt to move the ball into their respective goals to rack up points. Periods of play last for 7.5 minutes and are known as "chukkers". At the end of a four chukker game, the team that has the highest number of goals wins. Teams must abide by all rules to ensure the safety of players and horses. Arena polo is a unique sport because men and women and players of all ages compete on the same teams and on the same field of play. With highly trained, athletic horses as the most important teammates, the action is fast and reaction times are quick. The arena aspect brings the action up close to spectators who can feel the thunder of hooves and hear the players communicate with their



PTF Most Improved Player Birdie Brush gets a fist bump from teammate Megan Flynn (Aubone Best Offensive Player winner) during Texas Arena League Armadillo Division at Legends Polo Club - photo by Murrell Photography

teammates.

The Armadillo Division was created in 2023 to accommodate the number of teams at the C-Flight and 0-3 goal level that sought to play in the Texas Arena League. Previously, the Texas Arena League maintained a Classic Division consisting of 4 flights: C-Flight, 0-3 goal, 3-6 goal, and 6-9 goal. With many players looking to improve their skills and taking advantage of the cooler weather, the C-flight and 0-3 goal flight grew at such a rate that a second division was created. The formation of the Armadillo Division established more opportunities for play and expanded the pre-existing roster.



Valeria Navidad (winner of Casablanca Best Defenseman award) reaches to hook James Glew in Armadillo Division arena polo finals during Texas Arena League at Legends Polo Club photo by Murrell Photography

“It is great to have an option to play polo in the winter months. The C flight was a great way to get started in tournament polo.” - Jason Lowry

“

I’ve had the opportunity to grow as a player, as an umpire, and as a person with this group of talented players who truly enjoy seeing the improvement of individuals and of the sport.”

John Hand, Best Team Player and U.S. Polo Assn. Players' Choice Competitor

In the 2024 season, 9 teams competed in the newly formed Armadillo Division. This division accommodated 4 games over two weekends of play, February 2nd -4th and March 1st -3rd, at [Legends Polo Club](#) in Kaufman, Texas, just southeast of Dallas. The United States Polo Association (USPA) General Puller military tournament was held throughout the duration of the Armadillo Division season.

The Texas Arena League, though still growing, continues to keep its roots in values of sportsmanship and camaraderie. As such, the TAL hosts several military tournaments annually to celebrate both previous and current service members. General Lewis B. Puller, Admiral Chester Nimitz, and General George S. Patton are just a few who have

USPA sanctioned tournaments held in their namesake during the TAL season.

The Armadillo Division 0-3 goal saw a packed roster made up of 9 teams including: Grand Central Polo (Kim Vaughan, Jair de la Pena, Gracie Brush); Legends (Nacho Estrada, Megan Flynn, Birdie Brush); Hopward (Joss Leufrancois, Fabian Osses, Stephen Stout); Tana Polo (Justin Norris, Luciano Retana, Sofia Garvin); JD Polo (Valeria Navidad, Jose Velez, Javier Insua); Stifel Investment

Services (Ardo Fuentes, Valeria Greco, James Glew); Los Polo Hermanos (Jordan Upchurch, Michael Farah, Nick Lahutsky); H2P (Sydney Morris, Sami Leach, Brooke Burke); Interim Physician (John Hand, Dallas Taylor, Matthew Schloemer).

The Finals of the USPA Southwestern Circuit General Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller tournament took place between Stifel Investment Services (Ardo Fuentes, Valeria Greco, James Glew) and JD Polo (Valeria Navidad, Jose Velez, Javier Insua). The finals kicked off to a powerful beginning with JD Polo starting off with a one-point handicap. The first chukker volleyed back and forth with both teams scoring in the first few minutes of the game. The second chukker saw a tight end with JD Polo holding a single point lead over Stifel Investment Services to end the first half of the game.

Stifel Investment Services was quick to answer leading into the third chukker as the advantage flipped, this time with JD Polo one point ahead. The final chukker of the finals saw JD Polo emerge victorious over Stifel Investment Services with a final score of 20-16. The JD Polo team was awarded hand-crafted tournament champion belt buckles. JD Polo team member Valeria Navidad even took home the Casablanca Best Defensive Player Award gift bag. Another member of JD Polo, Javier Insua, was declared most valuable player and was awarded a duffle bag sponsored by Galvin Agency. Nutrena Best Playing Pony was awarded to "Macaroni", owned by James Glew of Stifel Investment Services.



JD Polo winners of the Armadillo Division of Texas Arena League - Javier Insua, Valeria Navidad, Jose Velez photo by Murrell Photography



John Hand - voted Players' Choice Competitor for Texas Arena League Armadillo Division - receives a gear bag from U.S. Polo Assn. photo by Murrell Photography

In addition to the first-place awards, many players also received prizes for outstanding performance in areas such as horsemanship, sportsmanship, and overall improvement. John Hand of the Interim Physician team was awarded the best team player award; a cooler backpack generously provided by Royal B Threads.

“To say I am touched would be the biggest understatement I can think of. I’ve had the opportunity to grow as a player, as an umpire, and as a person with this group of talented players who truly enjoy seeing the improvement of individuals and of the sport. I can’t wait

to see everyone in the arena next season and welcome the new faces that are sure to come!--- The crew at Legends provided us with great footing, a third man observation deck, large grandstands for friends and family, ample trailer parking, and of course—the greatest patio for us to gather as friends at the conclusion of the league.” -John Hand

Additionally, Legends team member Megan Flynn was announced best offensive player and received a brand-new mallet courtesy of Aubone Polo Mallets.

“The Armadillo gave me the opportunity to play against different players and I went from being the most experienced player in the C-flight to the most inexperienced player in the 0-3. I’m thankful for Meghan Flynn and Nacho Estrada for taking a chance and playing with me and being called most improved overall is an amazing privilege.”-Birdie Brush

In addition to the 0-3 goal teams, 5 teams competed in the Armadillo C-Flight sponsored by Polo Training Foundation. Since 1967, the Polo Training Foundation (PTF) has been committed to excellence in the great sport of polo. The PTF supports polo training at all levels by providing funds for the development of current and future generations of players and umpires.

The 5 teams that took part in the C-Flight include: Polo Training Foundation (Birdie Brush, Wanda Means, Lindsey Miller); GCS Polo School (Evie Lowry, Jason Lowry, Amy Lowry); Stampede (Ardo Fuentes, Megan Newman, Lisa Davis); Grand Central Polo (Mikayla Dilks, Hudson Long, Jim Dilks); Chic Chukkers (Birdie Brush, Mariel McKnight, Lindsey Miller).

“I am very honored to have the chance to experience the Armadillo Division of Texas Arena League. As some of my first polo games away from my club, Grand Central Polo, I couldn’t have asked for a better first experience! The League not only helped me with my horsemanship but



Evie Lowry, playing for Grand Central Stables, hits the ball into the air during Texas Arena League C Flight at Legends Polo Club photo by Murrell Photography

also communication, teamwork and leadership skills. I couldn't have asked for a better few weekends with my team. I'm forever thankful for this opportunity!" - Hudson Long

Participants in these games were able to take an active part in multiple chukkers of rigorous play and were able to learn under the supervision of certified USPA umpires. GCS Polo School (Jim Dilks, Hudson Long, Makayla Dilks) came out as the champions of the C-flight and received brand new saddle pads. Kim Vaughan's horse "Sonita", played by Jim Dilks, took home the Nutrena best playing pony award for the C-flight Armadillo Division.

"I looked forward to playing this year in Texas Arena League. It was going to be a real challenge, however, to play on four teams (3 Polo InterActive and 1 JD Polo) in two different divisions (Classic and Armadillo) in three different handicap levels (B Flight, 0-3 and 3-6) but I was game. All four teams advanced to championship finals and we won three out of the four finals. Credit goes to Robin Sanchez, every volunteer, and all of the sponsors for making the tournament possible." -Jose Velez

Here are the results and End of League award winners in TAL Armadillo Division:

Winning team - JD Polo

2nd place team - Hopward

3rd place team - Stifel Investment

4th place team - H2P

Galvin Agency MVP - Javier Insua

JD Polo / Cavalor Sportsmanship - Fabian Osses

Aubone Mallets Best Offensive Player - Megan Flynn

Casablanca Best Defenseman - Valeria Navidad

Royal B Threads Best Team Player - John Hand

I/I Alumni Player - Dallas Taylor

Jackrabbit Tack Horsemanship Award - James Glew

PTF Most Improved - Birdie Brush

US Arena Polo Sharpshooter award - Sami Leach

Nutrena Best Playing Pony - Macaroni owned and played by James Glew

The Jockey Club Thoroughbred Incentive Program Best Playing TB - Pata Blanca (JC- Sugar on the Grass) played by Megan Flynn, owned by Ricardo and Robin Sanchez

Best String - James Glew

U.S. Polo Assn. Players' Choice Competitor - John Hand

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