

USA vs India International Arena Polo Challenge Announces 2024 Teams

Meet the Players for the Buddy Combs and International Military Test Match in Southern California

SAN DIEGO, CA, UNITED STATES, October 1, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The second-annual Buddy Combs International [Arena Polo](#) Challenge will gallop to the West Coast for the first time as USA faces India in an electrifying showcase of skill, speed, and sportsmanship. [Lakeside Polo Club](#) is the proud host of the renowned polo tournament and will be the place to catch the action October 4 & 5. The tournament is named in honor of Dr. Clarence C. "Buddy" Combs Jr., an American polo player and Hall of Famer. Inheriting his love of horses and polo from his father, he honed his polo skills at Pennsylvania Military Academy before earning his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. While at Cornell, Combs led his teammates to win the university's first Intercollegiate Championship in 1937.



David Brooks with the ball in the air. Brooks will be the captain of the USA team in the Buddy Combs International Arena Polo Challenge at Lakeside Polo Club

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Arena polo is a truly exhilarating sport—fast-paced and incredibly up close, offering spectators an unparalleled view of the action.”

*Ed Armstrong, President
American International Polo
Federation*

A truly unique sport, arena polo, sometimes referred to as hockey on horseback, is a ball and mallet sport played on horseback in an enclosed arena. The game is played with teams of three players, of all ages and genders, all mounted on horseback. 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 game, consisting of four chukkers, the team that has the highest number of goals wins. With highly trained, athletic

horses as the most important teammates, the action is fast, and reaction times are quick.

The Buddy Combs International Arena Polo Challenge will be played Friday, October 4 with gates opening at 4:30 PM. The evening kicks off with a thrilling warm-up match at 5:30pm, leading up to the main event at 6:30PM - USA vs. India. Feel the thunder of hooves and witness the intense action up close as the teams battle it out on the field. Tickets are available now at Humanitix

<https://events.humanitix.com/international-arena-polo-challenge-usa-vs-india>.

Tickets are \$10 for online pre-purchase and \$15 at the gate. Military and children under 12 get in free! (Free tickets must be reserved at Humanitix)

Representing team USA is David Brooks, Robert "Robby" Pizzaro, and Nicole Bankhead.

David Brooks hails from North Carolina where he and his wife own and operate the Triangle Area Polo Club in Hurdle Mills. He trains polo ponies and runs a polo school. David plays in arena polo events across the Mid-Atlantic and has competed twice in the National Arena Amateur Cup making it to the finals in 2023. He is rated 3 in the arena.

"It is a privilege to play polo and represent my country. The USA! I'm looking forward to seeing places I've never seen, meeting and visiting with new people from all over the world! International competition is a top step of the ladder. It's a destination achievement that goes along with playing a National Tournament. It gives



Indian polo player Chaitania Kumar will be playing in the Buddy Combs International Arena Polo Challenge



Playing on the US Military team - Army Major Mark Liarikos

players who are starting out at the bottom levels of Arena Polo a goal to reach for to continue their path of becoming better arena polo players.”
-David Brooks

Robert “Robby” Pizarro began riding and playing polo on his family's farm at a young age, developing a lifelong passion for the sport. As a member of the St. Croix Interscholastic polo team, he played a pivotal role in their journey to the 2024 National Interscholastic Championship finals. He has also represented the Central Region in the NYTS Championship.

“I feel honored to be chosen to play for Team USA and represent my country. I’m looking forward to the opportunity to meet new people. International arena polo is very important because it opens up doors for so many players, including interscholastic and intercollegiate players.” -Robby Pizarro

Nicole Bankhead’s polo adventure started in 2014 when her family purchased Lakeside Polo Club in Lakeside, California.

“My husband, Darin, and I manage and operate the club alongside our two sons, Garrett and Ethan. Having ridden, owned and shown horses all my life, it was a natural transition to polo combining a love of horses and competition to a sport that we can do together as a family! We also started a youth polo program and Intercollegiate/Interscholastic teams and I help coach along with Darin and our boys.” -Nicole Bankhead

Representing team India is Chaitania Kumar, Lt Col Prithvi Rathore, and Mohammed Arsalan Khan.



Arsalan Khan will be representing India in the Buddy Combs International Arena Polo Challenge



Nicole Bankhead represents team USA for the International Arena Polo Challenge at Lakeside Polo Club. SHE will be the only woman in the competition.

Chaitania Kumar is the Founder-President of the [Hyderabad Polo & Riding Club](#) (HPRC) and the visionary behind the International Arena Polo Championship at HPRC. He began his polo career with intercollegiate Arena Polo in 1995 at Purdue University and later achieved a major victory in outdoor polo by winning the Indian Open in 2012 in New Delhi. Now an amateur Arena Polo player, he continues to play at the HPRC. In addition to his polo pursuits, Chaitania is the founder of Inhabit, a company specializing in bespoke furniture design and custom home interiors in India.

Lt Col Prithvi Rathore is an experienced officer in the Indian Army Service Corps and a well-regarded polo player. Known for his skill and precision, he has been involved in the sport for over a decade, playing up to a 2-goal handicap. Earlier in his career, he also earned international medals in show jumping and dressage. Currently serving as the Team Captain of the Indian polo team, he brings exceptional horsemanship and strategic expertise to the field while encouraging young players and promoting polo within the Indian Army.

In addition to his accomplishments in polo and the Indian Army, Lt Col Prithvi Rathore is also the owner of Mango Herbs, a company specializing in pure Ayurvedic products. His entrepreneurial efforts in the wellness sector complement his dedication to health and holistic living, further showcasing his diverse skills and interests.

Mohammed Arsalan Khan is a distinguished polo player whose lineage is deeply connected with the rich history of the sport in India. Hailing from a family of avid polo enthusiasts, his passion for the game was ignited by his grandfather, who played for the British India Army in 1926. This familial legacy laid a strong foundation for Mohammed, fostering a deep-seated love and respect for polo from an early age.

As the Honorary Polo Secretary of The Hyderabad Polo & Riding Club, Arsalan has played a pivotal role in the club's development since its inception. His leadership has been instrumental in promoting polo within the region, fostering a community that values sportsmanship, teamwork, and strategic prowess. Under his guidance, the club has become a nurturing ground for aspiring players.

The action will continue through the weekend into Saturday, October 5 for the USA vs. India International Military Arena Polo Test Match, starting at 5:30 PM with gates open at 4:30 PM. This is a unique opportunity to see elite polo players in action, showcasing their talent and competitive spirit while also serving their countries. Tickets are available now at <https://events.humanitix.com/usa-vs-india-international-military-arena-polo-challenge> Tickets are \$10 for online pre-purchase and \$15 at the gate. Military and children under 12 get in free! (Free tickets must be reserved at Humanitix)

The USA Military Team will be made up of Mark Liarikos, Daniel Jones, and James "Jim" Deal.

Mark Liarikos is a Massachusetts native and currently a US Army Major on active duty as a Civil Affairs officer. He is currently assigned as a Recruiting Battalion Executive Officer in Phoenix,

Arizona. Mark started riding jumper horses as an adult and began to play polo three years ago. He plays year-round in Arizona and has played polo in Colombia, Argentina and Mexico, plus various states in the US.

Daniel Jones is a veteran of the US Coast Guard and was assigned to small boat stations on the West Coast. He started polo seven years ago at Lakeside Polo Club in San Diego, California. Daniel is also a pilot with extensive experience flying missions for the military in Southwest Asia. When not on horseback engaging in fierce "Battle in the Saddle" (also known as polo!), he enjoys hiking, playing guitar and sailing his Hunter 44 Sailboat.

Jim Deal is a recent graduate of the University of Virginia who has joined the US Marine Corps and is on his way to Officer Candidate School at Marine Corps Base Quantico in Virginia. He started playing polo in Warrenton, Virginia, and has since competed in tournaments up and down the east coast, as well as on the polo team at the University of Virginia. He currently plays at Roseland Polo Club in Crozet, Virginia, and looks forward to continuing his passion for horses while in the military and beyond.

The India Military Team will be made up of Lt Col RK Gautam, Lt Col Yatinder Kumar, Maj Mrityunjay Singh Chouhan, and Lt Col Prithvi Singh.

Lt Col RK Gautam has been playing polo in India for the last seven years. He has been a member of the Artillery Polo Club and prefers to play as pivot. He is keen to push limits and elevate his game at crunch moments.

Lt Col Yatinder Kumar is an Indian Army polo player currently playing at +1 handicap and he has been playing polo since 2014. He likes playing at forward position and represented his country both in India and abroad. Yatinder plays for the Army Service Corps Polo Club in India and has won more than 50 tournaments in his career. He has been part of Indian Army Polo Team and played in countries like Nigeria and Argentina.

Maj Mrityunjay Singh Chouhan is from the 61st Cavalry Regiment in Jaipur and has been playing polo for the last 6 years. He has been an integral part of the army team as well as the regimental team. No 3 is his favorite position to play as it gives him the opportunity to make space for his team and implement the plan and strategies.

Lt Col Prithvi Singh has been playing polo since 2011 and has played up to a handicap of +2 goals. He is the Captain of the Indian Army Polo team. He was also into show jumping before and has international medals in show jumping and dressage.

Arena entrance is located at 13800 El Monte Rd, Lakeside, CA. Concessions available. Attendees are encouraged to dress for an outdoor, evening sporting event.

Clarence C. "Buddy" Combs Jr. inherited his interest in horses and polo from his father. He

developed his skills at the Pennsylvania Military Academy and won the Intercollegiate Championship at Cornell in 1937 while he attended its veterinary school. He became, in 1951, the second of only two players in the first 75 years of indoor (now referred to as arena) polo records to be rated at 10-goals.

During his arena career, he won the Senior Championship seven times and the Twelve Goal (Junior) on three occasions. Outdoors, "Buddy" won the U.S. Open Championship in 1947 and '56, the Monty Waterbury Cup twice, the Twelve Goal once. He was a very intense, skillful and hard-riding player. Buddy Combs was even inducted into the Polo Hall of Fame in 1992.

About the United States Polo Association® :

The United States Polo Association 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 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.

About Lakeside Polo Club :

Since its inception in 1956 by the visionary Eugene "Doc" Hering, Lakeside Polo Club has been a beacon of memorable moments, enduring camaraderie, and exhilarating polo excellence. In 2017, a new full-sized lighted polo arena was added, expanding opportunities for polo enthusiasts. The arena hosts numerous tournaments, youth programs, interscholastic teams, and an intercollegiate team. Players and spectators can now enjoy weekday night polo matches thanks to the arena's lighting.

"We are honored to host the Buddy Combs International Arena Polo Challenge at Lakeside Polo Club. This event is not only a testament to our club's commitment to the sport of polo but also an opportunity to showcase the local polo community in Southern California. For our club, it's a chance to bring together talented players from around the world, enhancing the level of play and creating a connection with the global polo community while inspiring local players. For Southern California, it highlights the region as a destination for polo, blending the sport's rich traditions with our unique West Coast style. The challenge also provides an opportunity to introduce new audiences to the excitement of arena polo, further growing the sport locally and ensuring its continued success by making it more accessible and engaging for new fans and future players alike." -Darin & Nicole Bankhead, Lakeside Polo Club.

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