

Pacific Coast Arena League (PCAL) Hosts Season Opener at OC Polo Club

The Longest Running Arena Polo League Kicks Off Its 2025 Season in Souther California

ORANGE COUNTY, CA, UNITED STATES, July 8, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The 2025 Pacific Coast Arena League ([PCAL](#)) kicked off its season at the scenic Orange County Polo Club in Silverado, California May 2nd-4th. This highly-anticipated [arena polo](#) tournament drew competitors from across the western United States for a full weekend of fun and fast-paced arena polo. With four competitive flights and an expanded tournament structure, this year's league promises boundless opportunities for both budding and seasoned players alike.

Despite a promising start on Friday, a slow drizzle Saturday evening escalated into steady overnight rain, forcing the postponement of Sunday matches. These affected games will now be played during the PCAL make-up weekend to be held later this summer. However, the weather delays could not extinguish the blazing spirits of participants. With a brand-new lineup of competitors filling the roster, teams and their pony companions are eager to hit the arena.

"PCAL was an unforgettable experience. The sense of community, the intensity of play, and the support from everyone made it truly special. [My girlfriend] Zinta, who has mostly played in grass tournaments, fell in love with the atmosphere. The arena setting brought everyone closer, and she enjoyed being on the sidelines, coaching, entertaining guests, and being part of the action in a different way. But more importantly, I saw something shift in her. She caught the bug. She's now more fired up than ever to compete again. Just the other day during club chukkers, she was riding harder and faster than I've ever seen her. It lit a fire in both of us. Thanks to PCAL, we're now looking to expand our string and prepare for more tournaments. We're really hoping there's a way to be included in the June event. It would be so meaningful to share that



Cassidy Kelly's horse Boonie wins Best Playing Pony award during PCAL at OC Polo Club

experience, this time, on the same team. Thanks again for creating this opportunity. It's had a huge impact on us both, and I'm incredibly grateful to be part of the PCAL family."-Will Wattanawongkiri, California Polo Club

A major highlight new to the 2025 season is a slight change of C Flight, this year's entire division comprised of -1 goal players. This initiative underscores PCAL's commitment to growing the sport of polo from the ground-up. With support from Polo Training Foundation (PTF), the C Flight division provides a welcoming yet competitive environment for polo's next generation to hone their skills.



WR Teknica versus First Rodeo in Action during Pacific Coast Arena League at OC Polo Club

"I was so excited to finally play in PCAL! Especially because I got to play at my home club, OC Polo! And my horse Boonie won BPP!"
-Cassidy Kelly, [OC Polo Club](#).

“

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Will Wattanawongkiri, WR Teknica Polo Team

In addition to the C flight, this year's 0-2 goal B Flight will be played under the illustrious banner of the USPA General George S. Patton Jr. Cup. The USPA General Patton Tournament is proudly sponsored by Patton Legacy Sports, an organization dedicated to honoring the leadership and legacy of General George S. Patton through athletic excellence. Eight teams will battle it out in a cross-bracket competition, encouraging competitive spirit while paying homage to the tournament's rich military heritage.

In the A Flight, teams with a 3-6 goal handicap made for some of the most exciting matches of the weekend. At this level, spectators can see some of the most technically sophisticated polo with athletes exhibiting advanced skills in horsemanship and ball control. Saturday morning's featured match was between Mallet Masters (Ethan Bankhead, Luca Abboud, Avalene Abboud) and Sermus (Garrett Bankhead, Faris Hanna, Woody Dunham). Both teams showed incredible resilience in the arena with Sermus securing the first win of the day with a final score of 18-13.

"OC was my first ever PCAL. I played in the thrilling and fast A flight and a fun and challenging B

flight. I had a great experience. I met a lot of supportive people who pushed me in new ways. I can't wait for the next PCAL at Lakeside." -Woody Dunham, South Bay Polo Club

For the elite players of the 7-10 goal division, competition was fierce and deliberate. These athletes, some of the top players in the country, defined what it means to perform at their best. Friday featured a showdown between Sermus (Garrett Bankhead, Ethan Bankhead, Faris Hanna) and La Luna (Charles Stanislawski, Oscar Chacon Hidalgo, Jared Sheldon). Play progressed intensively with sharp shooters on each team making miraculous goals that had the crowd on the edge of their seats. La Luna took the win with a final score of 22-12, making it clear that this flight will be one to watch for the 2025 season.

"Playing at OC Polo is always a treat but when you add in the excitement of PCAL it really puts it over the top. It's amazing to have an opportunity for me to play in high goal games at a great facility and the same weekend have my wife competing in the C flight playing her first tournament since her intercollegiate days 17 years ago. From the organization of the event to the facilities it is always fun for players of every level which is a very unique opportunity. The cherry on top of course was my mare Etch a Sketch receiving best playing pony in the high goal game and my wife Danielle getting MVP in her game. We are extremely excited for the next PCAL event and all the excitement that comes with it." -Jared Sheldon, Eldorado and Poway Polo Clubs.

In addition to other new changes this season, players competed with the cutting-edge PoloGear USA Professional Extreme arena balls, offering enhanced control and durability. Designed for superior playability, these balls performed beautifully even in muddy conditions. The extreme arena balls allow for faster, more responsive gameplay, elevating the experience for both players and spectators.

For polo enthusiasts looking to gear up for the season, Jackson Hole Horse Emporium set up a mobile store at the event, offering a wide range of polo equipment, apparel, and accessories. The Emporium's presence was a hit, allowing players and fans to shop for the latest in polo fashion and performance gear right at the event. Their selection of top-quality products provided an excellent opportunity for polo participants to prepare for the challenges ahead.

"Playing the first leg of PCAL at OC was a success. Playing in the super-fast, competitive high goal



Erica Chapman receives her Sportsmanship prize from Shelley Geiler during PCAL at OC Polo Club

match on Friday night was a great experience. And then playing in the 3-6 was even better. This year, I'm teamed up with the Abboud siblings and we already kicked off the first game doing pretty well together as a team. I've played a lot against Luca during PCAL and occasionally against Ava so it's great to be playing with them this year. All three of us have been through the Lakeside I/I program so it's pretty neat that we are playing together. It has been a great experience so far playing with those two.

Additionally, my personal horse Polvoro, won the BPP award. I was super excited when I found that out because I just recently took him over and this was the first tournament that I have played with him. So, him winning the award is pretty special. He has been playing polo for a long time so I didn't have a doubt that he wouldn't do well. However, he just came back from an almost 2 month break from an injury so it's pretty amazing that his first tournament back he already won BPP. Although OC PCAL was an overall success, I can't wait to see what the next two tournament weekends bring."-Ethan Bankhead, Lakeside Polo Club.



Faris Hanna receives his MVP trophy buckle from Shelley Geiler at OC Polo Club PCAL event

As always, PCAL is committed to celebrating exceptional performance, sportsmanship, and horsemanship. Listed below are some of the top honors from the weekend:

The Polo Gear USA MVP award recognizes a player's skill, leadership, and impact on the game. The first MVP awards of the season have set the bar high:

Faris Hanna

Cinderella von Falkenhausen

Whitney Messens

Lillian Halushko

Oscar Chacon

Ava Abboud (x2)

Penny Steffens

Zoey Tornillo

Catherine Luong

Danielle Sheldon

Josh Hemedes

The Jackson Hole Horse Emporium Best Playing Pony award highlights the horses that play a pivotal role in the success of their riders. These animals are the true unsung heroes of polo, and

this award pays homage to the incredible athleticism and talent of the ponies that make the game possible:

"Georgia"- Fawn Rinalduzzi

"Emma"- Spencer Hurtt

"Boonie"-Cassidy Kelly

"Karma"- Katie Moore

"Etch a Sketch"- Jared Sheldon

"Polveron"- Ethan Bankhead

"Pampa"- Josie Geiler

"Sharps 2"- Woody Dunham, owned by George Dill

"Gia"- Nicole Bankhead

"Callie"- Darin Bankhead

"Manchita" - Shelby Kokjohn, owned by Poway Polo Club

"Hannah" -Cory Cochran, owned by CPC

The Polo Training Foundation (PTF) Sportsmanship Award is a celebration of the values of integrity, respect, and fairness that a polo player should possess. This award honors players who exemplify the true spirit of polo both on and off the field:

Erica Chapman

Clay Reed

Laura Hauschild

Adam McCreight

Ethan Bankhead

Garrett Bankhead

Emma Blackwood

Shira Engel

Spencer Hurtt

Denise Sturrock

Peyton Boyd

Kat Greenbaum

Although rain played a part in postponing a few games, the delays have only given players more time to gear-up for the rest of the season. Spectators are encouraged to seize this rare chance to catch the upcoming games for the PCAL make-up weekend June 27th -29th. The inaugural PCAL event at the OC Polo Club proved that the league is here to stay and polo fans won't want to miss this year's action.

Future PCAL dates include Lakeside Polo Club in the San Diego area and California Polo Club hosting PCAL at Los Angeles Equestrian Center's Equidome.

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