

# A Game That Requires "Horse Sense"

By Grace E. Ray

**Y**OU may lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink."

You may ride a pony across the field, but you can't play polo unless your horse wants to play.

A good polo player consists of 25 per cent trained man and 75 per cent trained horse, experts agree. It is logical to speak of Betty, Glen, Lady and Chuckles, and other horses as "members" of the Sooner polo team, and it is acceptable polo English to ask, "Who are you riding?"

When properly trained, ponies like the game, and enter into the spirit of it. The spirit is important, for the horse, like his rider, must be brave and bold. The horse must be able to take it like a box fighter, and must be fearless in a melee of flying sticks and racing ponies. He must be swift and sure; just one mistake might be too many.

Capt. J. P. Holland's first job as coach of the Sooner polo team is to coach the horses, or to coach the men on how to teach the ponies. Each Varsity man is assigned a string consisting of two experienced horses and one green one to be trained. Ponies for use in polo are bought at remount stations and brought to the University only half-broken. During the past year Captain Holland has made a polo player out of his 4-year-old three-quarters thoroughbred colt, Mister X.

Knowledge of horse personality guides Captain Holland as coach of the Sooner squad, which won the Big Six championship last year and has bright prospects in this spring's 13-game schedule.

Games scheduled in May include:

May 5 and 7, New Mexico Military Institute at Norman.

May 11 and 12, University of Illinois at Champaign.

May 14, University of Missouri at Columbia.

The University will hold its second annual tournament at Norman May 18 and 22, with the following teams competing: Oklahoma Military Academy, Schaefer's Cowboys of Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Anadarko, Duncan, and the Sooners. Schaefer's team won the 1937 tournament.

"Oklahoma people are becoming more polo minded," says Captain Holland, who is in his second year as coach. An average of 2,000 spectators watch each game. Polo as a Varsity sport was begun at Oklahoma in 1925. The Sooner team is one of the most consistent winners in the Southwest, and the only reason it has not played in the National Intercollegiates in

New York is that the expense of transporting men and horses is too great.

Training a polo pony is much like training a cow pony, and this is a handy arrangement for the Sooners, because most of them come from ranches. Hester is such a confirmed cowboy that he will not post; he just lets out the stirrups of his flat saddle and absorbs the jolt somehow. A cutting horse must be trained to follow a steer, and a polo pony must follow a ball. Each must have quick getaway, and power to stop, pivot and turn with speed and surefootedness. The horse in each case must respond to the slightest pressure on the reins. The best polo ponies and cattle broncs pursue the pill or dogie without guidance, leaving the rider free to wield the lariat or mallet. A period of from six months to a year is required to train a polo pony.

"We have the best polo ponies, on the whole, of any institution we play," says Coach Holland. "We can mount two teams better than New Mexico Military Institute."

The Sooner team is composed of Jim Hester, Norman; Alex Cheek, Oklahoma City; Ronald Hermes, Anadarko; and Ger-

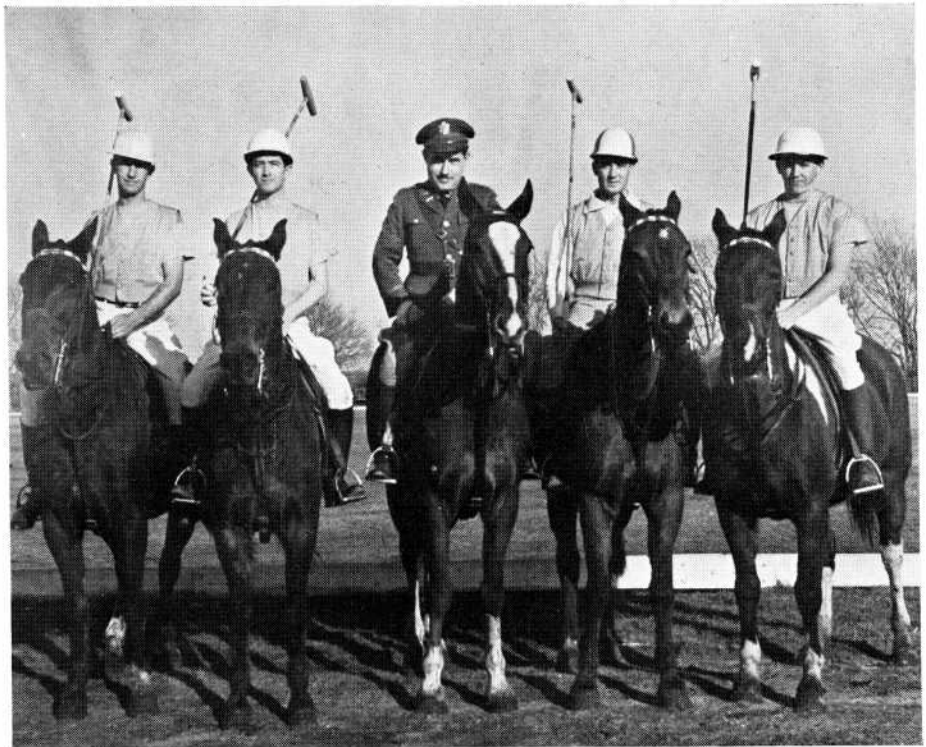
ald Galbreath, Tulsa. Substitutes are Bill Aycock, Oklahoma City, Josh Evans, Rush Springs; and Jess Watts, Oklahoma City.

As to the personnel of the better half of the team—the horses—a swarthy steed named Escoba is the fastest and boldest. He is so fast and bold that he is no good except for polo. On a country canter he is wild and stubborn, and when a rash youth rides him with a date on Sunday morning, the sergeant warns the rider:

"Look out, Escoba will dump you!"

Redbird, a burnished chestnut, pitches in rebellion if called upon to take a low hurdle, but he is a bright angel on four feet when the gong rings for the first chukker. Dr. Pepper, animated namesake of the 10-2-and-4 drink, is a handsome black demon who is poison to the ladies' class. He also frightens the freshmen, but is a fine polo pony.

Old Grads returning for matches are greeted with familiar faces of such veterans as Salem, spirited roan mare; Old Gold, a creamy buckskin who rears and turns in spectacular style; and Lady, demure with sweeping tail, who has won more show ribbons than any horse in the stables.



*The Sooner polo team. Left to right, Jim Hester, Alex Cheek, Coach J. P. Holland, Ronald Hermes and Gerald Galbreath*