

News

News in brief

▶ **RUTLAND POLO CLUB**, one of the oldest clubs in the UK, has formed an association with new fully-affiliated HPA polo club, Ranksboro. The two clubs, which despite their new alliance are entirely separate, sit some 400 yards apart in the UK's smallest county, Rutland.

"Rather than cannibalise each other," said Rutland's Henry Browne, "we have decided to work together to form a whole package for those wanting to play and learn polo in the area."

Henry is a committee member at Rutland Polo Club and is on the management team at Ranksboro. By teaming up, he says, the clubs have ensured that their fixture lists won't clash as the season unfolds. The clubs are also designing a new programme of lessons and instructional chukkas which will support each other.

▶ **HENRY BRETT** is launching a new breaking-in service for young horses at the family farm in Oxfordshire. Javier Quintana, who has been training Brett's youngsters for four years, and is based at the farm, near Witney, will be starting the horses. Facilities at the farm include stabling, a round pen, a large arena and all-weather exercise track.

"More people are breeding their own horses now, as bloodlines are becoming more important in polo, but very few places offer a breaking-in service in the UK," says Brett. "After a month's work, we aim to return the horse to the owner calm and confident but responsive."

Two horses owned and made by Brett recently played in the Argentine Open, ridden, no less, by Adolfo Cambiasso and Lolo Castagnola. For more details, call Henry Brett on 07970 029927 or email henry@brettpolo.com

▶ **THIS MONTH'S BARBADOS OPEN** is to welcome Veuve Clicquot as its new principal sponsor after the tournament's usual backer, Colombian Emeralds, pulled its sponsorship in the light of the global economic crisis.

Polo-playing schoolboy, 17, excels in engineering contest

A YOUNG POLO PLAYER has reached the national finals of a prestigious engineering competition with his design for a tack trolley devised to make players' and grooms' lives easier at matches and chukkas. Robin Spicer, from Northamptonshire, will present the two-wheeled carrier, several of which he has already sold to players, at Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Hall in Westminster on 4 March, in the Young Engineer for Britain competition.

The 17-year-old first designed the trolley for a GCSE project, chiefly for his mother, who helps him with his horses at games, and used it throughout last summer. "In our lorry there are saddle racks and bridle hooks, but they're high up, and getting them on and off causes back problems," says Robin.

"Tack is awkward to carry, especially when you have four horses to get ready, and the aim of the trolley is to make it easier and quicker to load a horsebox initially, and to speed up the tacking-up process. You can wheel the loaded rack up and down the ramp easily, and store it safely for travelling between the partitions."

Robin, a zero-goaler who plays at Rugby, Dallas Burston and Cirencester Park, designed the



Robin Spicer, a 0-goal player, with his two-wheeled invention

device on a computer before building his first prototype. His teachers at Bloxham School, Banbury, judged the design good enough to enter into the Young Engineer for Britain regionals.

'Tack is awkward to carry when you have four horses to prepare'

As *Polo Times* went to press, he was putting the finishing touches to another trolley built for his visit to Westminster. He was also working on several trolleys for customers –

including Malcolm Borwick, who admired the trolley last summer.

"I was tacking up for the 21 Cup at Cowdray, when Malcolm asked me where I'd got the rack. I told him I'd made it – and he said he'd like me to make him some." In the end the six-goaler ordered four – at £195 each – and Robin is making them at school, for delivery to Cowdray by the start of the season.

Coincidentally, Robin, whose elder brothers Tim and Charles also play, took his first swings as a six-year-old on a hill near Daventry under the tutelage of Malcolm Borwick, who was playing

Gannon at the time. This year, Robin will play in a Gannon team in Junior HPA competition with Howard Hodges, Ed Winterton and Tom Meacher.

Spicer adds that he likes making things that are functional, and has recently designed a polo stick holder on which you can hang sticks indoors "in a nice, tidy way". He hopes to study industrial design at university – after he finishes school in summer 2010. The Spicers run the Daventry equestrian supplies shop, Norman & Spicer.

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