

Polo

Polo is regarded by some as the second fastest ball sport after ice hockey. There are four players on a team and riders score by driving a ball into the opposing team's goal using a long-handled mallet. It is a discipline similar to many team sports with the main difference being that players play on horseback. Polo features successive playing periods called 'chukkas'.

Players concede that the pony accounts for up to 80% of their game. Consequently the pony must be fast, agile, flexible, have wind and stamina and with a temperament that is amenable to the rigours of the game. There is no height limit for the ponies, although most are between 15 and 15.3 hands.

The Australian Stock Horse is an ideal polo pony, particularly when crossed with the Thoroughbred. Polo, in its Australian infancy, was played on Australian Stock Horses. Their durability and versatility became famous worldwide. Thousands of horses were exported during the 1800s and early 1900s to supply cavalry and mounted infantry units serving the British Empire - from India to South Africa. In the First World War 160,000 were exported to mounted units of 20 nations. These horses were also used for Polo during recreation times for soldiers and officers.

Over the years, the Walers, as they were known, were crossed with the sturdy and nimble Timor Pony, as well as athletic, stock minded Thoroughbreds. The better types and better performed horses of this cross breeding were the Foundation Horses of The Australian Stock Horse Society.

For further information contact the Australian Polo Council.