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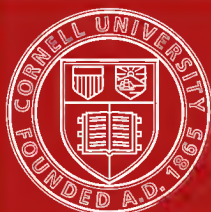
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As to polo.



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AS TO POLO

By

WILLIAM CAMERON FORBES



FOURTH EDITION

DEDHAM COUNTRY AND POLO CLUB

MANILA POLO CLUB

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NOTE TO THE FOURTH EDITION.

This little book was first written in very busy days in the Philippine Islands and sent out with a good deal of hesitation, as the author was in doubt as to the correctness of many of his conclusions and as to the reception that such a book would receive. It has been received so cordially that this fourth edition is now complete and is offered to polo players.

The first edition contained many errors and was shortly replaced by a second, the supply of which was exhausted late in 1918. During the war no effort was made to print a third edition and a few remaining copies of the first were used to supply the unexpected large demand this winter and spring. The third edition contains a small amount of new matter, numerous corrections, some additional comment, and one additional diagram. The chapter on rules is mostly new. Although out of date for this edition, the introduction has been left, except for certain verbal changes, as written for the earlier editions.

The author thought at first of calling the book *A Polo Primer*, as an indication that it was intended only for beginners, but it seems to have met a fairly general demand and is, I believe, in use by army players and members of several of the newer polo clubs. Commendations have come from various

directions and sometimes rather distant sources. For example, Dillingham writes:

“Your little book gives a prospective player more information that he ought to know than any book I have ever read. In Hawaii, as a measure of safety, we make all beginners read your book before they are permitted to play in a practice game. I believe that the mutual understanding of the players on our best teams has been largely brought about through the study of your outline on combination play.”

The author has asked and received searching criticism from many players and invites further criticism of the book. Some of the earlier critical comments are noted in the text; others are left out, as sharp differences of opinion have developed among players of great skill in regard to many fundamental elements of play.

Copies of this edition, which is privately printed, may be obtained by communicating with J. M. Forbes & Company, Sears Building, Boston, Massachusetts.

W. C. F.

BOSTON, August 2, 1920.

INTRODUCTION

In fourteen years' experience as a polo player I have seen many players of several years' experience who had elementary faults that ought to have been eliminated in the first few weeks of their instruction. This has impelled me to write down some points on polo drawn from observation and from the instruction I have been privileged to receive. It is hoped that these may prove useful to others.

I began polo under exceptionally favorable auspices in a growing club, the first team of which played few outside matches and devoted its principal energies to the home practice games, so that polo was nearly continuous and the practice little broken up by match playing.

The first team was not composed of brilliant players and had depended for its success upon skill and team play. The four members had played several years together and each one used his head, thought out beforehand the proper strategy of each play, and kept winning matches because the handicap committee could not bring itself, in view of the fact that the merits of the individual players were by no means superlative, to give them greater handicaps than were carried by their more brilliant brethren who had lost to them through lack of coördination of the team parts.

In my second year of polo the No. 2 on this team stopped playing for a while, and in my third year

I made his position on the team and, as a result, got into many matches and had the advantage of having three trained men, who had played together for years, holding their posts and keeping me to mine. Credit for this good team play and consequent success was wholly due to the admirable captaincy of that noble sportsman, Samuel Dennis Warren, of Boston.

It is much easier to start right than to unlearn a fault to which one has become habituated. If before beginning to play, the player learns to start the stroke from the perpendicular, for example, and to bring his mallet up to the perpendicular again, making one complete circle, he will avoid an error most pernicious in its results, which mars the play of a number of players—that is, carrying the stick at any angle or starting the stroke with the head of the mallet near the ground which, while not always fatal, is inimical to good hitting. It seems a pity that any player should ever begin polo without learning how to hold his mallet.

These notes have been very hastily thrown together, without much regard for form, and I have purposely left many repetitions in the text. The same thing will be found to be said over and over again, sometimes under one head and sometimes under another. This has been done with a view to emphasizing the more important things and showing that they are important, not only as a matter of individual play, if found under that heading, but also as a matter of team play, if found there, or as a detail in the matter of hitting or horsemanship, if found under the chapters dealing with those subjects.

Many of the suggestions herein contained are

things which I have personally found useful, but I can not tell whether or not they are accepted by the best players. Where these things are matters of personal development, and such as not learned from masters of polo or found in their books, I have adopted the device of saying "I am accustomed" to do this or that. I do this to avoid laying down the law or using the didactic form of saying that these things should be done thus or so. It is possible that some players who have had difficulties may find that some of these methods will help them. If I am wrong, and if players know better ways of accomplishing these things, I present my apologies.

I am not in any way offering this book as a guide to players who have already achieved high rank, because I have never myself held a high rating as a polo player, nor could I hold my own in really fast play. I believe, however, that these suggestions will enable beginners and players who have not had the opportunity of playing on or against very well-trained teams to avoid many of the faults to which beginners are liable and to put themselves in position so that when they have passed the earlier stages they will have less to unlearn and be in position to advance very much more rapidly under worthier instructors.

This book is written in the hope that it will prove useful to polo.

W. C. F.

AS TO POLO

CHAPTER I

THE GAME

Polo is a most difficult game to learn. There are three cardinal things, each of which must be so learned as to be nearly habitual before the player can hope for excellence. The first of these is horsemanship; the second, hitting; the third, the strategy of team play. There are many variables that come into the game: there is the personal equation of the men; and there are the characteristics of the different sorts of horses belonging to the different players, each horse having its direct effect upon the play. The attention of the player must sometimes be directed to his horse, sometimes to his individual play, and sometimes to the team work. He should strive to make a reasonable excellence in all three of these so nearly habitual as to be able to direct his attention upon one which is presenting unusual difficulties without letting the others go entirely by the board.

Three cardinal elements of polo.

Where ten or eleven men are banded together to play polo on certain afternoons of the week it is necessary for everyone to be present in order to make up a game. Polo enthusiasts should refuse to allow their business or pleasure to interfere with polo afternoons. They should make these sacred

Regularity of attendance of all players essential.

to polo. It is not fair to the other players who are maintaining ponies and expecting a game to have them lose their day of sport because one of the number happens to want to do something else for the afternoon.

The saddling and getting ready the horses, the fixed day, the fact that polo is in the neighborhood, and that people will drive for long distances to see the practice in the afternoon make polo practice such an event as is the practice of no other game. The assurance of regularity in taking exercise is very advantageous to busy men whose work may be so absorbing and the demands on whose time may be so exacting as to cause them continually to neglect to fulfill engagements for other games more easily put off, as golf, tennis, or other sports, where it is more easy to fill up numbers in case of delinquencies. For a busy man, directing large enterprises, I recommend polo as the surest way of keeping in trim.

Polo
recommended
for busy people.

Danger of polo.



It is true that polo is a dangerous game. It is, however, much more dangerous for beginners than for experts, and I see no necessity for players doing reckless riding, nor is there any possible excuse for foul riding. The first care of every player should be to make the game absolutely safe by avoiding committing fouls, which are usually, *per se*, dangerous riding.

Avoiding
danger.

After watching a number of inexperienced men trying to play polo, I prepared a number of suggestions—or one might almost say axioms—for polo, which I wish that every beginner could be compelled to commit to memory before he took his place on the polo field.

These are as follows:

It is bad polo—

1. To take the ball round the field except when saving goal.
2. To knock out or over.
3. To hit long strokes toward the sides in the offensive half of the field or hit into the offensive corners.
4. To try for goal from too great a distance or from too sharp an angle. Play approach shots.
5. For two of one side to ride for the ball at the same time. This is an inexcusable blunder.
6. For two of one side to ride out the same opponent.
7. For two of one side to gallop parallel to each other. Either one or both are inexcusably out of place.
8. For any player to keep his pony galloping parallel to the ball.
9. To support your own man from too close.
10. To let your corresponding opponent, when  Fig. 25. in position, ride clear.
11. To carry your stick anywhere but in the perpendicular.
12. To back the ball into a rush of oncoming ponies.
13. To hit the ball across when a back shot will do.
14. To call "Go on" when you mean "Leave it."
15. To ride across the line of play too close to oncoming opponents.
16. To knock in directly in front of goal.
17. To play for your opponent's misses.
18. To leave an opponent whom you have covered to get to the ball when it was last hit by one of your side who is clear behind you.  Fig. 11.

- Fig. 14. 19. To hit to an opponent who is clear.
 Figs. 1, 2. 20. To play in circles. Play up and down.
 21. To try to do the work for another player of your side who is in position, in the belief that you can do it better.

It is good polo—

- Fig. 5. 1. To turn your horse to the new direction before reaching the ball if it is going slow or standing still, and if you have time.
 Fig. 12. 2. To call "Turn" or some equivalent if you back the ball or miss it and it changes direction.
 Fig. 9. 3. To call "Go on" if you take the ball along.
 4. To hustle your corresponding opponent even if you can't reach him.
 5. To reach out and try to crook your opponent's mallet when he is hitting, even if it looks as though you couldn't reach it.
 6. When on the right of way and headed to goal, to put on the greatest possible speed at the earliest possible moment.
 7. To know where your corresponding opponent is all the time, and play so as to cover him.
 Figs. 16, 18. 8. To hit short strokes and play for a second chance when there is an opponent in front who is clear.
 9. To maneuver to place yourself on the mallet or right side of your corresponding opponent.
 10. To say the same thing always in the same way in calling to your side.
 11. To make the line of play straight up and down the field except when defending goal.
 12. To use your voice constantly to tell your own side what is going on.
 Figs. 15, 16. 13. To look where you are sending the ball be-

fore hitting and avoid putting it within reach of an uncovered opponent.

14. Always to wear a helmet to protect the head and face from getting hit by mallet and ball.

15. Not to leave your position except when taking out an opponent.

16. To let the ball roll over your back line, if it will, when hit by an opponent.

17. To watch the eyes of your corresponding opponent and maneuver to cover or leave him when he is watching the ball.

It is bad horsemanship—

1. To jerk your pony's mouth at the moment of hitting.

2. To stop the pony by turning him. Pull him up and turn him afterwards, otherwise you ruin your play and his legs. Fig. 21.

3. To hit the pony with the mallet.

4. To gallop when a chance comes to pull up and wait.

5. To use a sharper bit or more harness than a horse absolutely needs.

6. To hold yourself in the saddle with the reins.

7. To ride into the line of play at a dangerous angle. Fig. 2.

8. To turn to get into the line of play from too close to a pony that is riding straight. The ponies may trip.

It is good horsemanship—

1. To use the voice before the rein, and both sparingly.

2. To sit well back in the saddle and let the horse do the hustling.

3. To bring the horse up almost to a standstill before turning him when the direction of the play is reversed.

4. To save your pony's head from being struck by opponent's stick by fending with your mallet.

5. To save your pony in every possible way. Don't gallop an unnecessary inch.

6. To stop your horse by the alternating system of pull and let go, never by steady pulling.

Pertinent generalities:

1. An opponent's stroke spoiled is as good as a stroke made.

2. Match play is the best school for polo.

3. In case of doubt—

No. 1 should ride to his man.

No. 2 should ride for the ball.

No. 4 should ride for the goal he is defending.

4. If you find yourself with nothing to do, maneuver to cover your corresponding opponent.

5. Anticipation of the movement of the play is the essence of success in polo.

6. Maneuver so as to keep the ball in sight at the moment it is struck.

7. Begin the stroke at the perpendicular and complete the full circle with one even swing.

8. In every play know where the corresponding opponent is, and remember that if you are not together, either one or both of you are out of place. In case of doubt, assume it is yourself.

Fig. 6.

Fig. 24.

9. To find position, count the men ahead of you.

If there are two more opponents than of your side, ride hard to catch up with the further one.

If there is one more opponent, ride to him.

If there are equal numbers, ride the man beside or behind.

If there are more of your side, pull up and let one or two opponents, as the case may be, pass you.

These rules do not apply if you are on the ball or if the others are far out of position.

10. Don't lean out of the saddle when anyone whose mallet may reach you is swinging at the ball in your neighborhood. The mallet usually swings up and down. If you sit straight the pony will protect you from below, the helmet from above.

11. Don't ride fast toward the side and go over the boards at speed; pull up if possible.

12. Use the mallet and arm to fend against the possible blow of an opponent's stick whipping in from the side.

13. Whether in position or not, the man nearest the ball must take it rather than let it go to the other side.

14. In first-rate polo the ball will be traveling up and down the field at a maximum and around and across the field at a minimum.

15. Remember that opponents may easily be near enough to crook a forward stroke, when a back stroke can be made without interference. The back stroke is the safest for defense.

16. Watch and make sure that you always strike the ball with the center of the mallet head.

17. The secret of hitting far is beginning the stroke soon enough on the forward strokes and late enough on the back strokes. Added distance will be given in all strokes by sharp use of the wrist.

18. The secret of team play is to cover your own position so thoroughly that any adversity will be the fault of the other man.

19. Good players will try to hit always to one of their own side, not to themselves.

20. In good teams no one cares who hits the goals.

21. Read the rules at least once a year.

CHAPTER II

THE POLO CLUB

The polo club has to conform to local conditions, and it is impossible to lay down any rule as to general characteristics, as in some places the club is a country club in which polo is an incident, interesting only to a comparatively small portion of its members; in others, the polo feature is the whole thing. I shall, however, outline what I consider the ideal combination. This is a small club, organized principally for the purposes of polo, with a rambling and rustic clubhouse, situated in the country within easy reach of a number of men, owners of large estates in the neighborhood, who have clubbed together for their polo and other sports. There should be just enough members from some neighboring city who are in the habit of coming out and living at the club during parts of the summer months to give a homelike feeling to the club and a club population, which it would not get were it to depend on people having neighboring estates and living when in the country at home. People from the city could thus keep their ponies at the club, which should have large stables. There should also be facilities for such other seasonable sports as the country affords. The Meadow Brook Club in Long Island, the Myopia and the Dedham Country and Polo Clubs of Massachusetts are clubs that answer more or less accurately to this description.

Use for two
fields.

It would be well for the club to have two fields, and I have always fancied the idea of having polo every day. Three days a week could be given to the men with more than three ponies and the desire for fast and furious play, and three days to one and two pony men, to encourage beginners and players of small means, or men who like exercise and do not care for the strenuous work that comes from the fast play in anticipation of matches, thus encouraging polo from the cradle to the grave. In this way, when the first team was off playing matches, all players would be able, by coming on the odd days, to get polo; also if a man happened to be away on one of his regular polo days he could make up by coming out with the other set of players and thus get his chance to play and not lose a day of exercise and sport.

Hitting device.

Every club should have a wooden horse set in the middle of a room, with sides that slope in such a way that a ball thrown in will roll toward the horse and come to a stop within hitting reach of the mallet. These walls slope up on the sides and end in a net which catches the ball and throws it back upon the sloping floor. A man by sitting on this wooden horse can concentrate his attention upon the stroke, the direction, the swing and speed of hitting, and the part of the mallet head on which the ball strikes, without having to think of a lot of other matters which tend to distract the attention. In the Philippines those teams that used the wooden horse regularly came out much the best in the tournaments.

The club should have a comfortable series of rooms in which the members could dress, each with a big roomy wardrobe where he could keep his polo clothes.

An important feature of a successful club is, Club steward. however, the right sort of steward. Each man's property should be known by the steward, who will take personal interest in seeing that everything is in place. When players arrive to dress for polo each man's outfit should be laid out, his boots properly cleaned and properly treed, spurs neatly cleaned and laid by the boots, white trousers, shirt, belt, underclothes, and whip, gloves, wrist straps, helmet, etc., and a selection of mallets on the rack belonging to him. Those mallets which have twisted or weakened heads or are damaged in any other way should be laid on the floor below or stuck in a separate corner, so that by no chance will he be misled, in his hurry, to take one of them. I recommend that each polo player have a blanket ulster made with which Polo ulster. to cover himself after play and on the way to his bath. At the Dedham Club each player had part of a large chest of drawers, which are best made with traveling slides at the side, as are the drawers in card-catalogue cases, so that the drawer can be pulled out its full length without dropping down. This enables one to use the full depth of the drawer conveniently.

On the players' return from play the steward Polo drinks. should have ready for each one his favorite drink, as they will have a raging thirst; and no drink is more grateful than that which first quenches the thirst that one gets on the polo field. I have found the most satisfactory of all drinks to be a "shandy gaff," made of one part ale and two parts ginger ale. Most of the players that I played with used to take ginger ale, flavored with a whole lemon peel cut spirally from the lemon, a drink which is usually known as a "horse's neck."

I consider it highly inadvisable to take strong drinks to quench the thirst, as one needs a lot of liquid. And if it is mixed with whiskey or other intoxicants, before quenching the natural polo thirst one gets a good deal of alcohol into the system.

Baths after
play.

There should be tubs for those who like to soak after polo; there should also be a room with a number of showers, so that men need not be kept waiting for their baths. These showers should have both hot and cold water. I strongly advise taking a hot bath after polo. Personally, I like to soak for a few moments in a tub of very hot water until I get the stiffness out and get supple after playing, cooling off then with a cold shower or a plunge in a cold tub or pool.

In arranging for the bath there should be laid beside the chair or bed on which each player's clothes are laid a bath towel, and each man's clothes should be laid out ready for use.

I used to have men trained so that everything prepared for polo was just as a matter of course and without orders. All ponies fit for play were brought to the field, with their respective saddles and bridles. They arrived with the bunch of fifty or sixty ponies composing the strings of all the players, either just before or just after the drag containing the players themselves.

After polo we all sat down and had a polo dinner, which was not the least enjoyable part of the afternoon, the crowd breaking up early or late, as they liked.

Rest before
eating.

After the bath or after dressing for dinner, I think it especially desirable to rest for a few minutes, lying down flat on a bed or couch and staying very quiet for at least fifteen minutes before eating.

I also advise against drinking cocktails between the play and dinner. The system does not need excitement or stimulant; it needs rest. While I doubt if one cocktail does any harm, to take several or more than one I believe to be injurious to polo men who want to be in condition to play matches and have their nerve and eye in the best possible shape for the game.

I think, whatever the club may be, there should be a committee to care for the interests of polo, to be known as the Polo Committee.

This committee would determine such matters as the date of beginning games and opening the season and closing it, and such other matters as they may not have delegated to the captain. While the Polo Committee would make ground rules, fix the hours of play, the terms upon which the field could be used, hours in which it could be practiced upon other than the hours of play, and all matters connected with polo memberships, it should in no way undertake to interfere with the captain in such matters as the selection of the team or the conduct of the play of the team in matches, or of any member in play, except in so far as the general rules of the club are concerned.

Under certain circumstances it may be desirable to have a polo membership to carry with it the privileges of the club during the polo season only, and it should not be perhaps so costly as a regular membership with polo privileges. The polo privileges, however, whether to polo or to regular members, should carry with them a charge, as each player should pay something for the upkeep of the field and the expense of maintaining the games. As a rule it is not customary to charge admission to polo games, hence the

Polo
Committee.

Duties.

Relation of
Polo Committee
to captain.

Polo
memberships.

only source of revenue for maintaining the field comes from the general revenues of the club or from the pockets of the polo players. The expense would vary somewhat with the number of players, which either makes two fields necessary or increases correspondingly the cost of maintaining one. It is doubtful if a polo field can be maintained without a very substantial call upon the pockets of all the players, except in the instance of a very large country club near some important city where the membership is so large that the proportionate part paid by each member for such a thing as maintaining a polo field is inconsiderable.

CHAPTER III

FIELD, PONIES AND EQUIPMENT

The field should be 300 by 150 or 160 yards, and the immediate surface is the most important part. While it is preferable to have the field absolutely level, different parts of the field may be at different levels, or the field may slope slightly from side to side, or from end to end, or from the center toward the ends, or *vice versa*, without spoiling the play, provided that the ball rolls comparatively true. By this I mean that the surface of the field should be smooth enough so that the ball will roll on smoothly and not with a series of bounces up and down. This can be accomplished only by having the right kind of turf and by constant care in putting back the torn pieces of turf, and by fairly constant rolling.

Field: Its size.

Levels.

Surface.

The side boards should be of three-quarters or inch board, 10 inches high, supported by posts set into the ground on the outside of the field. Great care should be taken that these posts have beveled edges and no nails standing out which could catch a horse's leg and tear the skin as he goes against them.

Boards.

Although not contained in the ordinary book on polo, I consider it eminently desirable that the side board should curve in toward the goal post at the ends. A plan which I have adopted in laying out polo fields is to cut off 75 feet from each side on the ends, beginning the curve 150 feet from the ends and

Curved ends
of field.

curving in on an easy curve to the goal line. This makes the field 300 feet wide on the goal line, instead of 450. The space saved cheapens the cost of construction and maintenance of the field without in any way hurting the game.

Distance back
of goals.

There should be at least 80 feet clear back of the goal posts, and a back board 18 inches high, painted dark, so that balls may be easily recovered when knocked over the back line. This back board should overlap the side boards a few feet, and the ends might very properly be curved a little toward the field so as to stop balls sent through at an angle.

Goal posts.

The goal posts should be skeletons, made light so as not to damage a horse by reason of impact; papier-mâché or some wickerwork covered with canvas is good. The bottom of the post should be a circle of board, which should stand upon a base of the same diameter, set into the ground 18 to 24 inches, the top of the base being immediately level with the surface of the ground; in this a hole should be bored. The goal post is held in place by means of a wooden pin, which sets into the sunken post and also into the circle of board which forms the bottom of the goal post. This pin holds the goal post in place and prevents its falling over when touched or when blown by the wind, but the impact of a horse breaks the pin and the goal post falls down. It can be set in place again by the insertion of a new pin. A supply of pins should always be on hand at the goal post for such contingencies.

Markings.

It is well to have flags placed at the sides of the field fifty feet from the goal line so that the player or referee can inform himself by sighting as to the limit of closeness the ball may be approached on the knock in.

A white line should be placed across the center of the field but need not reach from side to side. The man in charge of practice should see that the teams line up for the throw in at different times in different parts of the center line, otherwise one place will be unduly torn up. In fact, before matches it is well to have the ball thrown in for practice to one side of the center line, in order to leave the center line untorn for the time of need. It is also well to move the goal posts from time to time, setting them at different places, especially for the limbering-up practice before polo, as they receive the hardest wear and tear when everybody is trying to make goals. Players are apt to be very inconsiderate, and, having struck a goal, immediately endeavor to round it out by brilliantly pulling up their horses or vent their displeasure at having missed a goal by jerking them up almost directly in front of the post. Pulling the horse up in this way invariably tears up the field and players should make a rule to let the horses gallop in practice until over the back line, where they can pull up without damaging anything. Captains and officers in charge of the play should call the attention of the players to the occasional necessity of saving the field in this way.

Saving the center line.

Saving the turf about the goal posts.

The field should be subdrained and watered, and the best results are obtained if a gang of men are ready after each day's practice to come immediately out on the field and repair the most noticeable scars where ponies have cut the turf.

Drainage.

On practice days the players themselves can help out, after goals, turning over with their mallets pieces of sod which have been torn up and pushing them back into place as they ride back to the center

of the field. The longer roots are exposed to the air the less likely they are to take vigorous hold on being replaced.

Ponies.

I shall not undertake^{*} to go into the question of the selection of ponies at great length. I like to see ponies that are well coupled and keep their feet well under them, and personally I sacrifice speed to handiness, although I know some players who sacrifice everything to speed. I never begin on a pony that is hard-mouthed. I do not advise beginners to try to teach themselves and the pony to play the game at the same time. They can do much better if they take a trained pony and concentrate their attention on themselves. I know experienced players who have ruined a pony or two every year through inability to handle them properly, usually on account of hard hands. With these players polo ponies habitually go wrong, as only an occasional horse is found that they can manage. Careful players with light hands can get along with almost any horse.

Beginners should not train their ponies.

Docking.

I consider the practice of docking horses to be brutal and disgusting in the extreme. The only good excuse which I have ever known for this practice is an argument good only in regard to polo ponies—that is, that the tail occasionally gets in the way of a stroke; and there is no doubt that it does where one is taking a full stroke and turning on the ball at the same time. This can be obviated by taking a half stroke when turning on the ball, so that there is no need of ever letting the tail get in the way of a stroke.

Bandages or boots on forelegs.

The pony should never be played without bandages or some sort of boots on the forelegs. In Dedham we always played in bandages, and so

skillful were the grooms that almost never did a bandage become loose. With less skill in placing the bandages they are apt to become a menace, as a bandage unrolling can throw a pony in such a way as to make it very dangerous. The referee should always stop the play instantly when he sees a bandage beginning to become unrolled.

The danger of too much pressure on the tendons, by reason of straps around felt boots, can be obviated by having elastics on the straps so that the straps will yield to the movement of the leg and not bind. Playing without stout felt boots or plenty of thickness of bandage over the tendons invites disaster. Sooner or later the mallet or ball will hit these tender parts in a way that will ruin the horse.

I always make a point of getting my ponies of the same height. I do not believe in changing heights. I think it hurts hitting. If one changes the length of the stick it changes the distance of the hand from the ground, which is unfortunate, as the eye becomes accustomed to a certain distance and a man hits better with the fewest possible variables. In purchasing a string of mounts I should therefore, wherever possible, select ponies of even height.

Ponies should be of even height.

Equipment.—The English saddle is the best for polo. I do not believe in either the Whitman or the Mexican saddle, or in fact in any saddle where the feet are kept under one. One sits too low in the saddle and lacks the rise which one gets from the English saddle in order to turn and to get the nigh-side forward stroke.

English saddle the best.

It is advisable to buy a complete new set of girths, stirrup leathers, and bandages every year. Do not trust to old ones. Also the saddles should be thoroughly overhauled each year to make sure

New girths and stirrup leathers each year.

the padding has not got packed down and that the girth straps have not got old and untrustworthy. Polo is dangerous enough anyway without taking chances, and the wetting and drying of perspiration from horse and man which the saddle gets three times a week in polo season is enough to rot the strongest sewing. The breaking of a girth or stirrup leather may mean a loss of life, and it is an unjustifiable risk to take.

Bits.

I use many varieties of bits of different grades, from a rubber snaffle, which always has a steel chain through the rubber, to the Hanoverian Pelham, with the long bars for curb, which is the sharpest bit that I use. I never attempt to use a Mexican bit with a high port, but will discuss the use of bits under the title of "Horsemanship." A horse should have the easiest bit that he will play well under, and as soon as a horse plays perfectly under a sharp bit he should be given one less sharp. The usual bit that the average horse comes to is a Straight Bar Pelham, with short curb bars, the bit itself being round and smooth and of steel. This can be eased, in cases of sore mouth, by a leather cover, and, if the lips chafe, by leather discs set next to the lips.

Crane believes that most ponies play much better with a port varying from one-half inch to two inches in height. I have never used ports.

Martingale.

Until the pony is entirely handy he should have a martingale. I have no use for a running martingale, as it disarranges the curb and snaffle in the hand, bringing the snaffle the lower of the two where it does not properly belong; and I have never seen that it helped. The standing martingale answers every purpose, and I believe it to be the best.

As the pony improves in play the martingale should be lengthened gradually, and finally done away with entirely, on a good many horses, on the general rule that the less harness a horse is encumbered with the better.

Some horses have to have shoulder straps to hold the saddle forward, the peculiar shape of their barrel making it impossible to tighten the girths so that in the course of play the saddle won't slip back.

The personal polo outfit.—The breeches should be white and made of twilett, which lasts well, holds its shape, and gives excellent protection to the legs. The boots should be tan, and made stiff all the way down, so as to protect the ankles from blows. Black boots should not be used, as they soil the clothes of everybody who comes in contact with them.

I never use a glove on my right or mallet hand, believing that I have better control of the stick with the bare hand.

Crane says that a soft glove and tape on the handle save tired forearm and prevent cramps. I have never used either, but have been troubled from time to time with cramps, and should recommend such equipment for those who need it.

On the left hand I wear a glove until the fingers are tough enough not to be blistered by action of the reins. Soft chamois gloves are the best. Some prefer white cloth gloves, and these are probably better in rainy weather, although as a rule one does not play polo when it rains. All players should make a rule to have one glove always at the field. By turning a glove inside out it can be used on the other hand.

Players should always wear polo helmets. To play without one is to play in immediate danger

of loss of life or of an eye, and is an unjustifiable risk. These helmets should be made so that they protect face and eyes from blows in front and against chance blows from the side.

Carry whip
and spur.

I always carry both whip and spur on all ponies. I use spurs that stand out not more than a half inch or three-quarters of an inch from the heel, so that I have to reach for the pony in order to spur him. I recommend this for all but extremely tall players, as a precaution against spurring the horse unintentionally. If there are rowels, they should be filed and blunted so as not to cut or tear him when striking.

Whip.

I have found the most satisfactory whip to be a whip about $3\frac{1}{2}$ or 4 feet long, a sharp cutting whip made very limber, with a horn button about two inches wide, flat on the side toward the hand. An ordinary driving whip, cut off the proper length and fitted with a button, answers the purpose admirably. This whip, carried between the reins and the left hand, will almost never get away and does not need to be strapped to the hand. I drop one barely once a year. The length of the whip gives the advantage of being able to hit the pony without losing hold on the reins, as the turn of the wrist while the hand is well forward will still reach his quarters.

Polo mallet.

The polo mallet can be conveniently described as being composed of three parts—the head, the handle, and the stick, the stick being that part to which the handle and the head are attached.

Selection.

Sticks should be very carefully selected and carefully used. The principal thing to avoid is buying sticks which are whippy toward the handle. This is a most common defect, and I find it ruins any stick for me. Personally, I always use a good stiff

stick, the whole weight of the mallet being from 15 ounces to 1 pound; however, the weight of the mallet is a good deal a matter of preference. In general I believe the back should have a heavy stick for distance, and No. 2 a light one for quickness. In purchasing mallets, care should be taken to get absolutely straight sticks and to see that the angle of the head to the stick is always the same. To measure this, a model angle can be marked somewhere on the wall and every stick verified so as to preclude the possibility of variation in this important particular.

Angle of head
to stick.

It has been my experience that flat sides to the handle are far preferable to round handles. Flat sides parallel to the head enable one to tell by the feel of the handle when the mallet is swinging true, a distinct advantage, as the eyes are needed for watching the ball.

When a stick is secured that suits perfectly, it is a good plan to weigh it carefully and register the weight, and then balance it and register the point at which it balances. If in selecting new sticks care be used to approximate as nearly as possible the weight and balance of the stick that has proved to be the best, one variable element will be eliminated, or at least reduced to a minimum.

The place where a mallet begins to weaken first is usually that part of the stick just above where it is inserted into the head. The reason that the stick goes out at this point is that the ball when struck is likely either to be bouncing up so as to hit the stick just above the head, or perhaps the mallet is swinging a little bit low, bringing the round of the ball against the stick. These sticks are of malacca or bamboo, and have an outer shell

Reinforce
the winding.

which cracks in perpendicular slits. Once the shell has cracked the stick loses its strength and the head begins to twist. There are two ways of reinforcing the winding. The first one, and one which all players should insist on, is by reinforcing the stick at the point just above the head with a little strip of metal, preferably steel, curved so as to fit the curve of the stick and placed under the winding, which is also used for the same purpose, namely, protection of the stick at that point. Two such metal strips should be provided for each stick, one to catch the front strokes and the other to catch the back strokes. The strips should go about one-fourth around the stick and should extend about 3 inches above the head. The other way of protecting the stick is to wind it with rubber bands; in fact, some players have rubber bands made for the purpose—small circles of round rubber, of which they place from three to six at intervals around the stick over the winding and immediately above the head to catch the impact of the ball. Many players use both of these devices.

CHAPTER IV

RULES

The rules that govern polo are simple and, except for some very few but important aspects, not difficult to understand and master. All players should master the rules when they first learn to play and should read them carefully once a year in order to keep them fresh in the memory. It would be wise for the captain of a team to read over the rules with his team before all important matches.

Read the rules once each year.

The most important rules are those which relate to dangerous riding. As careful observance of these rules is likely to be a matter of life and death to players at any minute, and may also change the result of a match by directly affecting the score, the supreme necessity of absolute clearness in the presentation and general understanding of the rules need not be further argued. The point at which the greatest danger is likely to occur is when two men are riding for the ball. It is the very essence of polo that such men should strike each other only at such an angle as would not cause danger of knocking either pony down; in other words, at a safe angle. Practice only will tell players just what angle is safe. If either pony goes down it is of course certain that the angle was not a safe one. In case, however, there is a collision between players, without the ponies falling, it doesn't necessarily follow that the angle was a safe one. It might be that the ponies were not going at high speed or that they kept their feet by chance. It is well to err on the safe side and endeavor to get the pony going as nearly parallel as possible to your opponent at the time the impact takes place.

Dangerous riding.

Right of way
after hitting
ball.

The man who last hit the ball loses the possession "if he shall have deviated from pursuing the exact course of the ball"; that is to say, that a man carrying the ball must follow the course of the ball or lose his right of way. If he turns and comes at it at an angle, he must be prepared to give way to a player following nearer than he the direction from which the ball was last hit.

At the time this chapter is being rewritten the polo authorities of the United States and Great Britain are making an earnest effort to agree upon a universal set of rules, uniform in all countries. This desirable object is in process of consummation and until such time as the work of the Committee shall have been completed it is too early to endeavor to speak with any finality about rules. I am, however, giving some of the rules adopted by the Philippine Islands Polo Association, which were carefully worked out after studying the rules used in England, India and the United States, and present my ideas as to some of the best features to be found in all three of these. In these rules, fouls are classified as dangerous or otherwise and lesser offenses are called infractions of rules and not classed as fouls. In case of a foul which in the opinion of the referee is deliberate and dangerous, the player *must* be suspended, a penalty of *one goal* assessed, and, if in the opinion of the referee the play was affected disadvantageously to the side fouled, the referee must stop the play and throw in the ball in addition to the other two penalties. This takes away from a player any inducement deliberately to ride down a man who is just going to make a goal in order to save the game at the last minute of play by accept-

Infliction of
penalty should
be made
mandatory.

ing a half goal penalty in place of the goal which he knew would have been made. I believe the best interests of the game are served by expressing the referee's duty more vigorously. The matter is not made optional with him; he is obliged to do it. Most rules empower the referee.

I give the Philippine Islands rules on these points in their entirety.

The rules and diagrams concerning right of way and defining dangerous riding are modeled closely on the rules of the Indian Polo Association, and in some cases taken verbatim.

FOULS

16. A foul is any violation of Field Rules No. 18 (defining dangerous riding), 19 (in regard to right of way), 20 (in regard to players meeting), or 21 (illegal use of mallet). Except in extra periods played on account of a tie fouls will be penalized as follows:

Philippine Islands rules about fouls.

(a) If the foul is of such nature as, in the opinion of the referee, to be dangerous to the life of man or horse, the referee shall impose a penalty of one goal. If the foul is not of such nature as, in the opinion of the referee, to be dangerous to the life of man or horse, the referee shall impose a penalty of one half goal.

Fouls involving danger.

(b) If, in the opinion of the referee, a foul involving danger was deliberate, he shall suspend the player committing the foul for the match, or if, in his opinion, any player for any reason shows himself incapable of playing safely, he may suspend him; or in cases of repeated commission of fouls not involving danger or of repeated violation of rules after attention has been called to them, the referee may suspend the player for the match.

Deliberate fouling.

(c) If, in the opinion of the referee, a foul shall have affected the play disadvantageously to the side fouled, he shall in addition to other penalties stop the play by sounding a whistle and shall throw the ball in at the point where it was when the foul was made.

Stopping the play.

(d) If, in the opinion of the referee, a foul has not affected the play disadvantageously to the side fouled, he shall permit the game to continue and declare the penalty to the offending player, if practicable, and, at the end of the period, to the scorer.

INFRACTIONS OF RULES

17. Infractions of General Rules 3 (specification of balls and mallets) and 4 (qualifications of ponies) and of Field Rule No. 22 (covering use of elbow or hand in riding off, assistance coming on to field, etc.) do not constitute fouls but may be penalized as follows:

(a) The referee is authorized to give the offending player one warning before assessing any penalty.

Repeated or deliberate infractions of rules.

(b) If, however, the offense seems to be deliberate or aggravated or is repeated, the referee will, in his discretion either (1) assess a penalty of one half goal, or (2) in case the infraction of the rules shall have, in the opinion of the referee, affected the play disadvantageously to the side fouled, the referee may stop the play and throw in the ball. But in cases covered by this rule the referee shall not, however, both stop the play and assess the penalty of one half goal. In extra periods played on account of a tie, as provided for by Field Rule No. 10, a deliberate, aggravated or repeated infraction of rules will be penalized as provided for fouls in Field Rule No. 10.

(c) In case of failure to appear at the proper time or of infraction of General Rule No. 9 (uniform and hat) or of Field Rule No. 6 (keeping field clear), which infraction shall not have affected the play, the referee may impose a fine of ten pesos on offending player or players.

Refusal to play.

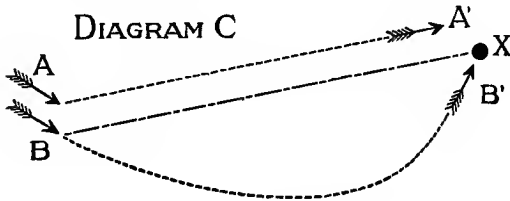
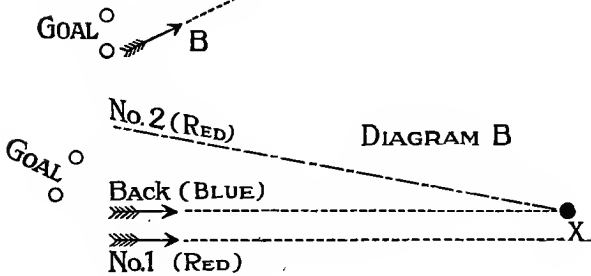
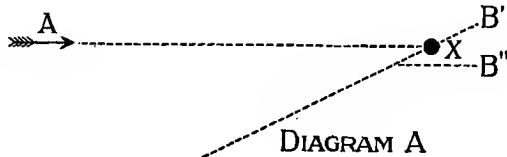
(d) In case of refusal of either team to play after having been ordered to by the referee, the referee shall after a reasonable time, declare the game forfeited and award it to the opponents.

DANGEROUS RIDING

18. Careless or dangerous horsemanship or lack of consideration for the safety of others is forbidden.

The following are examples of riding prohibited under this rule:

- (a) Bumping at an angle dangerous to a player or his pony.
- (b) Zig-zagging in front of another player riding at a gallop.
- (c) Pulling across or over a pony's forelegs in such a manner as to risk tripping the pony.



RIGHT OF WAY

19. (A) A player may ride out an antagonist, or interpose his pony before his antagonist, so as to prevent the latter reaching the ball, but he may not cross another player in possession of the ball, except at such a distance

that the said player shall not be compelled to check his pony to avoid a collision.

(Example.)

A hits the ball to X.

If B can unquestionably reach the ball at X, without causing A to check to avoid a collision, then B is entitled to possession, and can take an off-side backhander at B¹.

But if there is reasonable doubt, then it is B's duty to swerve towards B¹ (the line of the ball), and take a near-side backhander, and if, in taking that backhander, or afterwards, his pony in the slightest degree crosses the line of the ball, a "foul" should be given against him.

(B) If two players are riding from different directions to hit the ball, and a collision appears probable, then the player in possession of the ball (that is, who last hit the ball, or if neither have hit the ball, the player who is coming from the direction from which the ball was last hit) must be given way to.

(Example.)

No. 2 (red), in possession of the ball, hits to X.

All three players ride for the ball, No. 1 (red), riding off the back (blue) all the way, and a collision between the three is imminent at X.

No. 2 (red) is entitled to possession.

A dangerous foul should be given against No. 1 (red) either if:

(1)—No. 2 has to check to avoid collision with the back (blue), caused by the latter being forced into the position shown, by the riding off of No. 1 (red); or, (2)—Back (blue) has to check to avoid accident, from being shut in between No. 2 (red), and No. 1 (red).

(C) Any player who follows the exact line of the ball from the direction from which it has been last hit, is in possession of the ball rather than any player coming from any other direction.

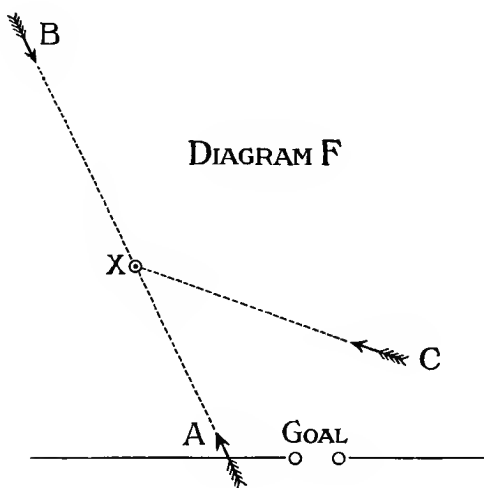
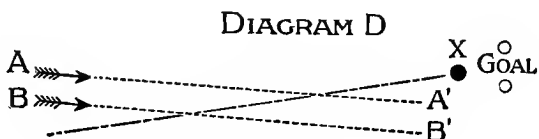
(Example.)

B, on the ball, hits to X, and, being on a fast tearing pony, swings round in a semi-circle. A, on a good polo pony, is following the line of the ball.

At A¹ B¹ a collision is imminent.

Although B hit the ball last, he loses possession, because A has ridden on a line closer and more nearly parallel to the line on which the ball has been traveling.

A is entitled to possession of the ball, and must be given way to.



(D) The last hitter is in possession; provided that no other player can, without causing the hitter to check his pony to avoid a collision, get on the line of the ball in front of him. Under these circumstances the last hitter may not ride into the adversary from behind, but must, if necessary, take the ball on the near side of his own pony.

B hits the ball to X.

A rides him off at A¹ B¹.

A is entitled to possession.

(E) No player shall be deemed to be in possession of the ball by reason of his being the last hitter if he shall have deviated from pursuing the exact course of the ball.

(F) Any player who rides to meet the ball on the exact line of its course is in possession rather than any other player riding at an angle from any direction.

(Example.)

A hits the ball out from behind to X.

B rides to meet it, and C to take it on.

A collision is imminent between B and C at X.

B must be given way to, because he is on the line on which the ball traveled, even though coming in an opposite direction, whereas C would cross that line.

(G) Any player riding from the direction from which the ball has been last hit, at an angle to its course, has possession rather than any player riding at an angle in the opposite direction.

(H) If two players are riding from the same direction, that player is in possession whose course is at the smallest angle to the line of the ball.

(I) The line of the ball is the line of its course, or that line produced at the moment any question arises.

Note: The Right of Way, as defined in the previous rules, shall not be entered upon until players coming down a previous right of way have had a chance to check or turn.

Note: Where the ball hits the side boards or a pony, the direction in which the ball was last hit will be assumed to be the course of the ball.

PLAYERS MEETING

20. Whenever two players are riding in opposite for the ball, each shall take or leave the ball on his off side.

If a single player on the right of way meets two or more players coming down the right of way in the opposite direction trying to ride one another off, the single player must give way, even though one or more of the others is forced across the line so that the ball is on his left side.

21. (a) A player shall not intentionally strike an adversary or an adversary's pony with his hands, whip or mallet, nor strike the ball when dismounted, nor hit intentionally with his mallet the pony he is riding.

(b) A player shall not crook his adversary's mallet, unless he is on the same side of his adversary's pony as the ball, or in direct line behind, and his mallet is neither over nor in under his adversary's pony. The mallet may not be crooked unless his adversary is in act of striking at the ball.

(c) A player shall not put his mallet over or under his adversary's pony either in front or behind, or across the pony's fore legs for purpose of striking at the ball, or of crooking an adversary's mallet. A player, however, who rides in from behind on an adversary who is in the act of striking at the ball does so at his own risk and may not claim a foul if the adversary hits across or in front of his pony.

As regards infractions of rules, in which class are put the lesser offenses, such as pushing with the hand, head, or elbow, it is especially provided for the referee in his discretion to give warning before assessing a penalty. He can stop the play and throw the ball in if he thinks the game has been affected unfavorably to the side offended, but he cannot do that and give a half goal penalty as well, as he must do in cases of fouls. This seems to be a fairer way of making the penalty less severe for minor offenses. No referee not a martinet or one looking to throw the game to one side or the other, would think of giving a half goal because a groom put his foot over the side boards in passing a mallet to a player. It is a good working policy to make the penalties reasonable and proportionate to the seriousness of the offenses.

Referee may warn.

Inadvisability of too severe penalty.

Fines.

Other infractions of rules not affecting the result of the game are usually penalized by fines, such as failure to play in uniform, to turn up on time, or playing without a safety helmet. Repeated infractions of rules can be handled by the referee either by suspending the player or by imposition of a fine.

Minor defect of rules regarding right of way.

There are certain other niceties which no rules quite cover, as, for example, how quickly the right of way is established along a new line of play. Let us say the ball is going across field and followed closely by the red back. Yellow 2 crosses directly in front of him so close that the back has to check his pony to avoid a collision, but yellow hits the ball before the back checks his pony. If he had missed the ball, it would clearly be a foul because the right of way would then be along the old line. If, however, he has hit the ball, the ball taking a new direction has established a new right of way which he is occupying. The red back then is fouling if he doesn't check his pony and avoid the collision. It is obvious that the new right of way is not established instantly because the red back must have time to clear. In other words, the yellow player has got to cross far enough in front so that red can clear him after he hits the ball. But there is nothing in the rules that prevents the curious anomaly that a man may cross another so close that with a technical interpretation of the rules he commits a foul if he misses the ball, and yet doesn't commit a foul if he hits it, owing to the creation of the new right of way by virtue of having hit the ball. I think this should not be. It would make for safer play if such crossing were not allowed and the rules definitely prohibited it. And I think most referees would so interpret the present rules. I should.

Another ambiguity in the American rules as they stand to-day is where two or three players are coming together down an old line of play and the ball changes direction, being backed or cut across. Intelligent self-interest will keep most players from getting in front of a group of onrushing ponies as it is often physically impossible for them to slow up or change and a man might perfectly well be ridden into a technical foul in spite of his best efforts to avoid it. There should be a distinct provision in the rules qualifying the technical right of way by inserting a clause similar to that provided in the rule of the Philippine Islands Polo Association quoted in full above. (See first note at end of Rule 19, P. I. P. A., p. 32.)

Several players charging down old right of way.

Nothing is said in English, American, or Indian rules about curving the field. A field that is curved in at the ends so as to cut off 75 feet on each side, or 150 feet or one-third of the total length at the end of the field, is a much faster field to play on, the dead territory is reduced in an important measure, the cost of the field to build and to maintain is lessened, and the play improved. In describing the field, therefore, it seems as though these advantages might be indicated by including some provision for curving in the ends when giving the dimensions of the field.

Curving ends of field.

In order to make an absolutely uniform and clear system of signals, it is suggested that four bells be sounded five minutes before the beginning of the game; three bells sounded two minutes before the beginning of each period, excepting the intermission, at which time three minutes are allowed; two bells sounded thirty seconds before the beginning of each period; and one bell when the ball is put into

Official signals.

play. This leaves room for no doubt on the part of anyone as to which signal is being rung.

Duties of
referee should
be assembled.

It seems as though rules would be more convenient if the duties of the referee are set forth clearly in one paragraph. A referee thus can run his eye down the line of duties and not have to read the rules through in order to pick out those things which pertain to his job. This was accomplished in the Philippines by the following rule:

It shall be the duty of the referee:

A. To order the sounding of the preliminary signal of four bells five minutes before beginning of the game.

B. Before the beginning of the game to toss up a coin in the presence of the field captains or representatives of both teams for choice of sides.

C. To throw in the ball at the beginning of the game, at the beginning of each period, whenever the ball goes out of bounds, and after time has been called for any purpose.

D. To carry a whistle which he will blow to indicate cessation of play, either by reason of the end of a period, or because of a foul, or for other reasons, and at the beginning of play when necessary to inform the time-keeper.

E. To decide at what point the ball shall have gone out or over and to see that the ball goes in at the proper point, and to decide whether or not goals or safeties have been made.

F. To enforce rules and to exact penalties for infraction of rules and for fouls as provided for in Field Rules Nos. 16 and 17.

G. To see and award fouls; and, in case fouls are claimed, to judge whether or not they have been committed. For this and for any other purpose the referee is authorized to take evidence from the players, the goal-judges, the timer or scorer, and from such other persons as he may see fit.

Widening goal
in case of tie.

The rules of the Indian Polo Association have a good provision calculated to save the strain on men and ponies of a protracted play overtime in case of

a tie, that after the first extra period the goal posts shall be placed 48 feet apart instead of 24, thus making it much easier to score. With the same object in view, the Philippine Islands Polo Association adopted the following rule:

9. At the end of six minutes of play the timer's signal shall be sounded and play shall cease unless the ball is within fifty feet of either back line, in which case play shall continue until the ball goes out of bounds by being knocked over the back line or over the side boards, or until it is knocked over the fifty-foot line toward the center of the field, or until a goal is made. Device to reduce overtime play.

If a period ends by a ball being knocked over the fifty-foot line toward the center of the field . . . play will be resumed at the beginning of the next period by the ball being thrown in towards the side boards at the fifty-foot line.

Players should study so as to understand the limitations in regard to crooking mallets. New players find difficulty in doing this scientifically, and I have seen players who felt that they could not crook on the nigh side of their pony because it was putting their mallet across a pony. The rule is that the mallet shall not be placed across an *opponent's* pony to crook the stick when the ball is on the other side of the opponent's pony from the player; in fact, the player must be either on the same side of the pony of the opponent whose mallet he is crooking, as the ball, or in a direct line before or behind him. Crooking.

One of the rules most frequently violated is that which prohibits the use of the elbow in riding out. Many beginners, particularly if they have been football men in the past, and a good many older players who should know better, keep jabbing with the elbow. The rule provides that riding off shall be Use of elbow.

done only with the arm kept close at the side and that the pushing be done entirely with the shoulder and the outside of the arm, and not with the point of the elbow. Referees should be very particular to warn players against this practice and should not hesitate to award the penalty provided in the rules.

CHAPTER V

HORSEMANSHIP

The management of the horse is a most important element in polo. A good horseman does not necessarily make a good player, but a man who is not a good horseman is very seriously handicapped in his effort to become a good polo player, very much as is a lame man in the matter of running races. The first thing to get is a seat. When I was a boy I made a point of coming in from my ride every day with my gripping muscles tired to the point of aching, and I recommend this practice to every horseman. It gives one an unconscious seat. When I began riding, I was told by my preceptor that a man should always turn his toes in so as never to give the appearance of riding with his toes pointed diagonally away from the horse. I gradually came to acquire this way of riding, and it was not to be accomplished by bending the ankles in such way as to make the toes point forward, but it lay in the position of the muscles of the thigh. When a man takes a seat in the saddle he should move himself just a little forward so as to throw the fleshy muscles of the thigh outward and backward and place in direct contact with the saddle the inside of the leg from the knee bones up. Having placed himself thus, he will find that automatically his feet now hang so as to throw them directly forward, and that in order to get them out of this position it is necessary to turn the ankles

Gripping
muscles.

Seat.

Position of
feet.

in an awkward position outward or to let the upper part of his leg assume a different position in connection with the saddle and ride gripping with the back of the leg rather than the inside of it.

Stirrups,
length of.

Having set himself in his seat, the player should next look to his stirrups, which, in my judgment, should be of medium length, short enough so that he can stand up entirely clear of the saddle and turn around, so that in making the nigh-side forward stroke his right shoulder may be about over the ball on the left-hand side of his horse.

Do not lean.

He should endeavor to acquire a position sitting quietly, well back in the saddle, with the feet well forward, and letting the horse do the speeding. He should not habitually stand up or lean forward, but by sitting right down in the saddle eliminate the greatest number of possible variations in the distance from the hand to the ground when hitting.

My cousin, Allan Forbes, is of the opinion that men should hit leaning forward, as he considers that in this way they get better direction and more distance to the stroke. There is no question but that when it is desired to hit the ball across in front of the pony it is necessary to lean forward; but I am a firm believer in having the seat pushed well back toward the after end of the saddle, and not varying the distance to the ground, as is done by leaning forward or standing up in the stirrups in making a stroke, excepting always for the nigh-side work, when it is necessary.

Avoid, as much as possible, hitting under the pony's belly, as the stick or the ball is too likely to hit the pony's legs, and either of them may damage the pony.

The following remarks apply only to horses which

have been thoroughly trained to the saddle and are well bitted. I do not undertake to give directions for the earlier instruction of a horse that has never learned the use of the bit. I have found that some men who understand the training of horses have differed with my theories on the ground that beginning a horse with a sharp bit makes him afraid of it and that the best authorities recommend a light bit at first. To these I answer that I begin where they leave off; that my work is training a pony for polo, and that I assume that he is already bridle-wise.

In training ponies, the most important thing is to get them interested in the game first and afterwards develop their speed. In training a pony I never let him get to speed until I have got him so much the master of the game that the desire for racing will not exclude the interest in the play.

Training ponies.

The most important thing in handling a horse is the use of the reins. Many riders indulge in the practice, so pernicious in its results as to be almost wicked, of holding themselves in the seat with the reins. They seem to think that reins were given to them by a Divine Providence to steady themselves on the horse. When one considers that the mouth is one of the most tender parts of the horse's anatomy, and with well-trained horses the least touch can produce the desired result, it is nothing short of brutal to blunt this fine sense of the horse by misuse. New players should get horses to learn on that have extremely tender mouths and so little desire to run that they can be played with an absolutely loose rein. If they can not get such a horse I should recommend putting on an extremely sharp bit, at least sharp enough so that the horse will not

Pulling.

press against it and will stop instantly if the pressure is put on too sharply.

Having thus got a horse which can be ridden with a loose rein or by a series of the lightest kind of touches, they should then acquire their seat without ever holding on or assisting themselves in the seat by pressure on the reins. It is my positive belief that more good horses and more good polo ponies are ruined by this fearful habit of pulling than by all the rest of the causes put together. It takes two to pull, the rider and the horse. If the man won't pull, the horse can't. I have known superb saddle horses that were almost unmanageable by men and which were mild as kittens with women. The reason was that they could not endure the hard hand of a man on the bit. Had they had a rider with sufficient skill to indicate to them by light touches, such as a woman must give owing to the lack of physical strength necessary to hurt the mouth, they would have been as docile as they were with women.

Suggestions
to prevent
pulling.

I have sometimes thought that an excellent way to learn how to press lightly on the rein would be to have the snaffle rein cut and tied together on each side by bits of string, which would break as soon as the pressure exceeded a certain reasonable amount, like a lightning arrester which fuses as soon as the current gets too strong. This would automatically prevent a man from falling into the crazy habit of wrecking his horse's mouth, and yet this is what at least one-half of the players do when beginning, and a good many of them do through life. I have known players with whom all good polo ponies became pullers, and at the end of each year they found it necessary to buy new ones in order

to keep themselves mounted. I attributed this tendency, in many instances, to the player's poor seat.

I have sometimes wondered why a little machine has not been invented for registering the pressure on the mouth of the horse by different men. It surely would not be a difficult device to have the two parts of the rein entering a machine, connected by means of a spring to a dial which would register the exact maximum pressure exerted by the rider. If the cold, hard fact that such-and-such a horseman managed his horse with a pressure indicated by the number 3 was presented to another horseman who habitually came in with a registration of 7 or 9, he would begin to study the causes for this phenomenon and perhaps correct the worst fault which a horseman can have. To polo men especially would I recommend the study of this very vital part of horsemanship. I have never heard of any such device as this having been attempted, so that it is merely a suggestion and might prove in practice to have none of the value that I imagine it would.

Suggestion of machine to register pressure on reins.

The function of a rein is not physically to stop a horse, but to telegraph to him the desire of the rider. Horses should be trained so that the least touch will indicate to them what is wanted and to obey this least indication as soon as they receive it. That the rein is a physical means of stopping the horse is about as much of a fallacy as that the bootstraps are an excellent way of raising oneself from the ground. One might as well adopt the equal and opposite fallacy that the stirrups were an advantageous means for pushing the horse ahead, as all force used in pulling on the reins is derived from pressure on the legs and feet in the saddle and

Use of reins.

stirrups, so that by completing the vicious circle you are exerting your force to push the horse ahead in order to stop him. The fact is, of course, that the horse wants an indication of the desire of the rider, and as the inertia of going is something which he does not like to change, particularly if there is another horse going pretty fast right alongside of him, the signal to stop must sometimes be fairly forceful to make the horse obey it.

Position of
reins in hand.

I hold my reins with the snaffle on either side of the little finger and the curb on either side of the middle finger, thus having one rein outside of the little finger and one rein in between each of the four fingers. As the hand is held thumb down, it results that the two upper reins are the snaffle and the two lower reins the curb. In order to hold them at the same tension I can place my thumb over the reins and by pressing and gripping the reins with the hands I get a good grip. With this arrangement one can very easily adjust the reins by gripping the four reins with the right hand, and by slipping the whole left hand forward one gets a closer grip near the neck. By catching the upper part of the reins the snaffle is shortened, by catching the lower as it hangs the curb is shortened. The snaffle should always have a buckle and the curb never, so that in reaching for the snaffle if you feel for the buckle or look down and pick it out and slip one finger of the right hand through that you can be sure of shortening the snaffle. If you look for the sewed end and slip a finger through that or catch it with the hand to pull on, you can be sure you are shortening the curb.

I have adopted the following general methods of signaling my horse which have served my purpose:

For ordinary play the hand is held low and about over the pommel of the saddle. The pony understands that riding with the hand low indicates slight changes of direction rather than a sharp turn or turn about. When I want speed I throw my hand forward, giving loose rein and touching the pony on the neck low down. The whip, which is always carried in the left hand, as I have explained elsewhere, is about four feet long and limber. I use it on the shoulder for starting the pony and on the quarters for extending him. I use the spur for steadying him as he approaches the ball and for making him press over to ride against another pony and for getting him away from the pony when he is pressed up against him. I also use it to start a pony quickly. I never use the spur for speed. To stop the pony, instead of taking hold of the curb rein, I find it infinitely more effective to raise the hand. This changes the angle of pull. A pull on the snaffle, which should always be a light one, is merely to steady the horse at the speed at which he is going and to hold him on the ball.

The advantage of lifting the hand is that the pony can instantly see and he instantly knows that it is desired to change the play and stop. Before putting any pressure on the curb the voice should always be used, but its effect should not be spoiled by an agonized "Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!" such as you often hear players galloping down the field addressing their ponies, who are not paying the slightest attention to it. Give one good sharp "Whoa!" and then a sharp lift on the curb, the body being thrown well back on the back part of the saddle, so as to put the weight on the quarters, not on the forelegs, and then loosen the rein up instantly in order to

Position of hand.

Polo whip.

Use of spur.

Use of curb.

Lifting the hand.

Speak to the pony.

let the pony get his head free and stop if he will. If he fails to stop, a second sharp pull on the curb, loosening the rein immediately, should bring him to hand. The moment he has stopped the reins should be thrown immediately loose and the hand lowered.

Don't turn
round at
speed.

Fig. 21.

There is nothing more wicked and pernicious in polo than turning in circles at speed, and yet how many players will do it! Ponies should be turned always by stopping them in their tracks and then starting them again on the new course. There are occasions in polo when the exigencies of the game require turning at speed, as in following the ball around, but these are so few, compared to the cases when ponies should stop and turn, and are more apt to occur in playing against poor players than against good, that all players should first train their ponies to stop and turn and afterwards use them for whatever turning in circles may be necessary, because the ability to stop and turn does not preclude the other, whereas a habit of turning around at speed will prevent a horse from being of any use for really good polo.

To turn
rapidly.

In turning the pony, when it is my desire that he turn very rapidly and fast, I always lay the rein on the upper part of the neck, so as to get it in an unaccustomed place. The rein is pressed against the lower part of the neck more or less continually, so that there is nothing particularly new to the horse in the feel of the rein at that point. It almost never touches the upper part of the neck, near the ears, and I have found that a pony will jump around, when he feels the rein up there, infinitely faster than he will when the rein is pressed at the base of the neck; in fact, it makes the signal for

quick turning a distinct one, as opposed to a shifting of direction. I am able to turn my best polo ponies almost on a loose rein, touching the mouth very, very lightly, and by shifting the rein on the neck they know instantly whether I am attempting to shift the direction slightly so as to get nearer the play or whether I want to bring them around to place them in position to go in an opposite direction.

A most important thing in polo is the care and saving of the horse. I have spoken elsewhere of using the mallet to protect the horse from getting hit by opponents. I should only, under the most important circumstances, hit the ball through under the pony's belly when going fast, for fear of hitting the horse's legs either with the stick or the ball.

Save the pony.

A horse may be greatly saved by resting him in play. A great many players, particularly beginners, feel that they have to gallop all the time, that they are not playing if they are not galloping, and when the opportunity comes for a moment's rest, when the horse can stand still or be galloping slowly, they are still galloping madly about and getting themselves out of position. To save a horse properly, it is necessary to know exactly how to play to an opponent. If you place your pony in such relation to that of your corresponding opponent that he can not get at the ball without passing you, and you are vigilant about watching him, you can very often save your pony and hold him with very little exertion on the part of man and horse so as absolutely to cover your opponent. Thus if a ball comes back you may be able to meet it or if it passes you will be ready to turn and, by crooking or hard riding, prevent your corresponding opponent

Fig. 24.

from getting the ball, and thus entirely cover your position. The polo player should make a rule never to gallop one unnecessary foot.

The line of
play.

The best players get in the line of the play, which is the line the ball is traveling, and, always watching where the corresponding opponent is, hold themselves ready to pick up the play with a rush when the time comes. As soon as it is necessary, in order to prevent the opposing player from getting by or getting the ball, they should get up speed and hold it while the rush lasts. If a chance comes to hit the ball the player should then put his pony at top speed and come right along the right of way, going at such speed that nobody will risk coming into it at any angle but a safe one.

Time to speed.

Needless
galloping.

Ponies that are saved in this way get to know when speed is wanted of them and will respond to the master's signal in a way which ponies that are needlessly galloped about by their masters never do. A pony that is needlessly galloped is always looking for a chance to save himself, as otherwise if he goes constantly at top speed he will soon be played out. The pony that is saved by his master is fresh and eager for a rush and all the time waiting for a signal to move.

Bitting.

In speaking of equipment, I mentioned the matter of bits, which is one of the most important elements of horsemanship, and one that seems to be least studied and understood by men who are accustomed to use horses. I know in my own case, although I had ridden from the age of four, I knew practically nothing about bits or the science of bitting when at the age of twenty-four I took up polo. I grade my bits as follows :

1. Rubber snaffle that has served me for but one of the very many ponies I have played.

2. Steel snaffle, broken. I have always preferred this with large and flat rings.

3. Straight-bar Pelham. This bit I find most of my ponies come to play. I have them with four different lengths of the curb bars giving different degrees of leverage on the curb chain. Ponies with very light mouths can be helped by covering the bit with leather.

4. Bit and bridoon. I use these with two different lengths of curb bars, medium and long. Some ponies have to be used permanently with a bit of this severity, but I try to work the ponies gradually to an easier bit.

5. Gag snaffle without curb.

6. Gag snaffle with curb.

7. Hanoverian Pelham, with and without steel rings which revolve on the bit and prevent the horse from getting a grip on it with his teeth. This is the severest bit I have ever used.

I am not sure but that a horse might be broken of a desire to pull by the use of the Mexican high port, but I advise against the use of a bit like that for playing.

When first putting ponies into polo I test them until I find a bit they are afraid of and that they won't under any circumstances take hold of. Playing them then with a very light rein and an easy pull, I get them to obey the voice and the indication of raising the hand which presages a pull on the curb. At the start I usually have the curb chain very tight, so that the pressure on the jaw comes very quickly. In his first stages of development I usually have the pony's head tied down fairly low with the standing martingale. As soon as the horse has responded to this bit in such a way as to make me feel confident that he understands the signals and will obey them without the neces-

Sharp bit and light hand at first.

Easing the bit.

sity for punishment, I immediately make the bit easier. The first step in this process is loosening the links on the curb chain so the curb will not begin to press until it is pulled a little farther back and lengthening the martingale to give the head more freedom. The next process is to move up into the next easiest bit in the way I have mentioned, sometimes skipping one or two. Sometimes I pass from Hanoverian Pelham clear to the straight-bar Pelham with the long bar on the curb, sometimes merely to the bit and bridoon, and this process continues as long as the horse is naturally at home and going satisfactorily with the easier bit. As the horse gets more and more perfect in the game, the standing martingale may be lengthened until finally, in some good horses, it can be taken off.

Martingale done away with.

Crane has found that the position of the bit in the mouth makes a great difference with his ponies; some play better if the bit is not too high. I play all of my ponies with the bit just easily reaching the corner of the mouth without pressing.

Most useful bit.

The straight-bar Pelham with $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 inch curb bars I consider one which is usually the most satisfactory; most ponies will come to play well with it.

The first three bits on the list can be used only on ponies with the most delicate and tender mouths and unusually responsive to the bit. In my experience only one out of four or five good ponies have such mouths, and there is no need of paralyzing the pony's mouth even if you have a sharp bit. If the policy which I recommend is adopted, the indications may be given with a very light touch, and horses will get along perfectly well even with the

sharpest and most cruel bits. I play with very loose rein and pull on the bit the least possible amount.

After the earlier stages of training and testing are past, it is inadvisable, however, to play a pony under a very sharp bit, relying upon a light hand not to use it. The pony with a light mouth will be afraid of a sharp bit the minute it is in his mouth, and many ponies refuse to gallop against a bit which they are afraid of. If a man wants to get speed out of a pony with a light mouth, he should put on the lightest bit with which he can stop him, because in this way only can he get his highest efficiency. The gentle handling of a pony in stopping has a great deal to do with the speed which can be gotten out of him, and light-handed players are apt to be the fastest. As speed is the essential requisite for really first-class polo—enough said.

Easy bit adds to speed.

The ponies also get to understand the feel of the legs in the saddle and will respond to them in turning, but I will leave to the expert horse trainers the various uses of the legs, to indicate to the horse the desire to turn, changing leads, etc. I have never made much of a study of this, and have let my horse learn about the pressure of the leg more unconsciously than otherwise. Of course, he does learn it, because a man shifts his position in the saddle in order to bring his horse around.

Use of legs in guiding ponies.

When a pony that has been playing steadily well begins either to pull or to have some trick, it indicates that something is the matter, and instead of putting on a sharper bit the player should find out the reason for this change. Nine times out of ten he will find that the pony's legs are beginning to go, or that he has trouble with his teeth, which

When ponies acquire faults.

Weakening of
fore tendons.

is most likely to be the case if the pony holds his head to one side. The first indications I have of a pony weakening in his forelegs is the fact that he begins to take hold of the bit when he has not done so before. This means that the pony doesn't want to stop and that he is afraid of it. The cure is to lay the pony up and either "blister" or "fire" him, or if these measures are not necessary give him a good rest. If the groom is careless and does not tell the player that the legs are beginning to bother or swell and show signs of weakness in the tendons, by sharpening the bit and keeping on playing, it is possible to ruin a first-rate pony that otherwise, by immediate care, would be played for years. I have played some of my ponies seven years, and Allan Forbes played one of his ponies in all of his matches for a period of ten years. He played the position of No. 1 and often played only two ponies in his very important matches. He was active and light and knew the art of saving his ponies.

Practice the
pony on the
boards.

There are a number of niceties about polo which it is well for players to learn. In the first place, almost all ponies, when beginning, are awkward about taking the boards. Players should have their ponies trained to run along the boards and jump them at speed, going over them at angles without swerving, which they very readily learn to do. If the ponies are not specially trained to this they are apt to trip on the boards some time and go down or shy at them and possibly shy into another pony going at speed, which might make a foul which would be perfectly avoidable by a little foresight.

Do not jerk
when hitting.

In coming up on the ball before hitting, the hand should be held low and exerting a slight pressure

on the pony's mouth, enough to steady him and show him that the rider is alert. The greatest care should be taken to give no jerk whatever nor any very great change of the hands or legs at the moment of hitting. A jerk on the rein or a jab of the spur will surely result in the horse giving some little check as the stroke is made which will be most disastrous to the accuracy of the stroke. Ponies are often spoiled in this way, and it is a fault which takes a long time to cure. The best way I have found to cure ponies of a defect of this kind is to get them out where there are a number of balls lying around and to swing all the time so that the mallet is continually moving. If one ball is passed over without hitting because the pony tried to shy, the next ball may be taken, but in any case the utmost care should be taken not to catch the pony either on the bit or with the spur or whip when the stroke is made.

If the pony has a practice of shying from the ball occasionally, it is well to touch him with the spur before he reaches it, making the stroke without any touch either of the curb or spur; but if he shies at the time of hitting, punish him afterwards by giving him a sharp dig with the spur, possibly a sharp stroke of the whip, and accompanied by a good active reminder on the curb, all as in the nature of punishment. The pony should be then set at the ball again and reminded once again with the spur before the time comes to hit, not as the stroke is made. If he still persists in shying, he should be carefully drilled to eliminate it, but I recommend strongly against digging with the spur at the moment the stroke is made.

It is well to hang a polo mallet in the stall with a new pony in order to accustom him to the sight and nearness of it.

Training
exercises.

I shall not make any extended comment on the subject of training horses. Anybody who wants to train his pony had better read that which has been written on the subject by masters of polo. There are a great many exercises at which ponies should be put, such as bending between posts, riding past other ponies going at speed, pushing against other ponies, and turning and following the ball, etc. I have little time to do it, and do not feel expert at it. What little training of ponies I have accomplished has been done by taking a mallet and going out and hitting a ball around until I could get the pony into the game and then playing him until he became good, only staying by those which showed sufficient aptitude for the game to play after this imperfect and casual method of development.

Be quiet with
your horse.

The only suggestions I should make are that the rider should always try to be quiet with the horse and very firm with him. If he develops any particular trait, such as shying, checking, or objecting to nigh-side work, throwing his head when the ball is struck, swerving over the ball or on back strokes turning before the ball is struck, practically the whole time should be devoted to curing such defect or defects until they are eradicated. It is most important that the horse should feel that the game is a matter of course, that it is the easy and natural thing, and that there is nothing unusually exciting or strange about it.

CHAPTER VI

USE OF THE MALLET

In treating this subject, "Use of the mallet," I shall take up first the subject of hitting and then the manner of carrying the stick and its uses in crooking.

Strokes may be divided into the following general classes : Classification of strokes.

1. The full stroke forward (on the off side), which can be subdivided into—

(a) The straight stroke, or one which follows the line of the ball to send the ball straight ahead.

(b) The cross stroke, which swings across the line of the ball; and

(c) The cut stroke, or stroke in which the head of the mallet is held at an angle to the direction of the stroke, with the object of deflecting the ball.

2. The back stroke (on the off side), with the same subdivisions as in the full stroke forward.

3. The nigh-side stroke forward.

4. The nigh-side stroke backward.

5. The half stroke forward, which also is divisible into the general subdivisions (a), (b), and (c).

Three-fourths of the game lies in the ability to play the full stroke, forward and back, on the off or right-hand side of the horse; one-fourth lies in the ability to hit in all other ways, as nigh-side strokes, cut strokes, turning the ball, etc. Value of full strokes.

The player should concentrate, therefore, on learning the full stroke well, in the belief that with the full stroke well learned he can become a first-rate player. Without the full stroke properly learned he can never amount to anything as a polo player. His excellence in all other strokes will in no way compensate for the failure to know the full stroke thoroughly.

Full stroke.

1. *The full stroke.*—(a) The full stroke is started with the mallet in the right hand, with the upper and outer part of the head pointed back, the hand somewhat advanced but not raised. The stroke is made by drawing the hand back without raising it, well behind, and then swinging the stick with an easy full sweep, the hand passing way to the full reach forward, carrying the stroke through and bringing the mallet to the perpendicular, where it is again stopped and held. The head of the mallet thus describes an elliptical circle. The hand does not change its level, except on the down swing, but passes from well forward to well back and forward again. This movement of the hand covers a distance of about three feet each way, so that the head of the mallet will travel along the ground, if the horse is standing still, a distance of about three feet, and the ball will be hit if it is anywhere in that distance. In the first of these three feet the mallet will be descending, and if the ball is encountered there the descending stroke will tend to drive it into the ground and no distance in the movement of the ball will result. In the second foot the mallet will be traveling absolutely true along the ground, but with a slight upward tendency toward the end, and here the maximum efficiency of the stroke is obtained. In the third foot the mallet will be rising

Maximum
efficiency.

and will tend to lift the ball and send it into the air. This is sometimes a desirable thing, but usually it is not. The player should usually calculate to hit the ball in the last six inches of the second foot, above referred to, when the mallet is nearly parallel to the ground, with a slight tendency upward. Beginners almost always hit too late and thus hit the ball, if at all, in the first section and get no distance. There is no necessity for any very great strength in the blow. The weight of the mallet head carried with the movement of the swing, plus any movement that the horse may have, is sufficient to send the ball a normal distance. Greater distance may be obtained by making a swifter swing, and sometimes it is well, by a quick twist of the wrist, to send the ball an unusual distance. The player should always remember, however, that the most important thing in hitting is to start the stroke *soon enough*, so that the mallet will not have any downward tendency when it reaches the ball. Many players begin their stroke at the ground, having to describe a full swing of the mallet before hitting the ball, the strain on the arm in raising the mallet to the perpendicular being a wholly unnecessary one which takes as much muscle as the whole stroke does. The absurdity of hitting this way is too obvious for argument. It necessitates a very much nicer calculation as to the time when the swing should begin. If the pony is going at full speed and the ball is standing still, for a proper full stroke the player should begin his swing when about twenty feet away from the ball, if he has his mallet up; if he has it down, he has to begin just twice as far away, or perhaps a little farther, as to lift the mallet is a slower affair than to swing down. The practice

Hitting too late.

Strength of stroke.

Start the stroke soon enough.

Begin the stroke from the perpendicular.

of beginning the stroke with the mallet in any other position than the perpendicular has not one intelligent argument to commend it. It is contrary to all rules of good sense and practice, and should be eliminated at the very beginning.

Keep the eye
on the ball.

The player should keep his eye on the ball, as in all other games, until the stroke is complete. If he takes his eye off the ball, it is his own fault if he misses it. He should also make sure on what part of the mallet head he is hitting. He should always hit it on the exact point of the mallet where the stick passes through. If he hits constantly to the right or to the left of the place where the stick enters the head, he will hit constantly inaccurately, as the mallet tends to turn in the hand with the pressure of a stroke anywhere on the mallet head but the center, and such turning will tend to send the ball either to the right or to the left, according to the side of the center on which the stroke is made. So that players who want to get accurate hitting should see that they are hitting the center of the ball with the center of their stick. This can only be accomplished by concentrating attention on it and watching vigilantly and keeping at it until hitting accurately becomes habitual.

Hit with the
center of the
mallet.

When the ball
has stopped.

In calculating the time to hit, one has to take into consideration that there are two kinds of strokes—one when the ball is standing still and the other when the ball is moving. When the ball is standing still, the only calculation needed is the speed of the pony, which one can regulate and which in good play should be made as fast as possible. If the speed is increasing, one has to calculate the acceleration. When the ball is moving, one has to calculate the movement of the ball and the move-

When the ball
is moving.

ment of the horse. If the ball is traveling in the same direction as the horse, and in the direction it is desired to send it, the matter becomes an extremely simple one, and it is hard to make a poor stroke unless the ball bounces. Where the ball is traveling very fast and the pony traveling equally fast alongside of it, it does not matter much when you begin your stroke. If the ball bounces, the player is entirely excusable if he misses it entirely. If the bounce is not too high and the player has swung accurately, the ball may be caught on the bounce by the stick; but, even so, he probably will not hit the center of the ball, even though the stroke were accurate, and thus the ball will be deflected to one side.

When the ball bounces.

Crane comments that "players should watch the bounce and try to hit the ball as it strikes the ground, although the best men take it in the air when they have to."

Some players are quick and adroit enough to bend the elbow suddenly as the ball bounces up, thus catching it. This is a very brilliant play, but steadiness is what counts, and a man can feel satisfied if he always gets his stroke except when the ball bounces, and a player should not feel bad at missing it when he struck at the strategic and proper moment.

(b) and (c) I now come to the question of hitting the ball at an angle to the course in which it is traveling. There are two ways of changing the course of the ball—the cut stroke, made by swinging in the line the ball is traveling but with the mallet head held at an angle so as to turn the ball when it strikes, and the cross stroke, made by swinging across the line that the ball is taking.

Cut stroke.

Cross stroke.

Values
compared.

The merit of a cut stroke, as compared with that of a cross stroke, varies directly with the rapidity of the movement of the ball past the pony. If the ball is going past rapidly, the cut stroke is much safer; if going past very slowly or moving at the same rate, the cross stroke is better. The cut stroke is necessary when turning the ball away from the pony; turning toward the pony the cross stroke sometimes has advantages. The cut stroke requires the mallet to be centered more accurately on the ball because the angle at which the head is held presents a narrower surface with which to make the stroke than if the head were held square, as it is in the cross stroke. The difficulty of timing the cross stroke when the ball is moving rapidly past the pony is so much greater than the cut stroke that it much more than balances the disadvantage of the narrower surface of the mallet head in the former and renders the cross stroke so much more difficult to accomplish that the chances are all in favor of the cut stroke. It is probable that most players use a combination of the two, swinging somewhat across the line and giving an additional deflection to the ball by holding the mallet head at an angle. I believe this to be advisable and perhaps necessary when the ball is to be cut well across.

Accuracy of
different
strokes
compared.

The experiments I have made indicate that the effective distance that the mallet passes along the ground—about two feet—is increased by about a foot by the movement of the pony when going at speed. In the back stroke the effective distance of the stroke is reduced by about six inches by the adverse movement of the pony. The accuracy necessary to place the mallet in contact with the ball throughout the distance of two feet, as in the cut

stroke, is very much less than that necessary to hit the ball where the distance of possible contact is a matter of a few inches, as in the cross stroke. This difference is accentuated when the ball is moving toward the player, when the chance of hitting it squarely when the mallet is traveling along the line of the ball is in the ratio of something like ten to one over the chance of hitting it with a cross stroke. The cut stroke also has an advantage where the ball is being turned across the pony, in that the mallet is not so likely to hit him as it is when swinging toward him.

Another point to be noted is that the cross stroke will send the ball a very much greater distance than the cut stroke. It is obvious that if the mallet head is held square, perpendicular to the direction that it is intended to send the ball, a much greater distance will ensue than if the ball encounters only that resistance which comes from a slanting or glancing blow with the mallet head held obliquely to the direction of the stroke. This, however, is not necessarily an argument in favor of the cross stroke, as direction is often infinitely more important than distance, and especially in turning the ball a short stroke is usually more to be desired than a long one.

Summing up, then, where the ball is passing the pony in either direction and it is desired to turn the ball away from the pony, the cut stroke is usually the only possible one; and when it is desired to turn the ball across the pony, it is much the safer stroke to try, as the cross stroke has to be calculated with great nicety, judging the speed of the horse, the speed of the ball, and the angle at which it will strike—all of which make a great many variables to be discounted. In the cut stroke, where the

mallet is sent along the line in which the ball is traveling, the variables are reduced to a minimum, and there remains only the question of getting the proper angle and centering the stick so that the mallet will meet the ball. The various ways of hitting, however, are subject to so many variations of circumstances that it is almost impossible to lay down rules. If the ball is traveling in the same direction as the pony, and at the same speed, it is very easy to hit it at any angle, for one can make the same stroke as one can with the horse and ball standing still.

When it is desired to turn the ball across under the pony's neck it is well to ride a little closer to the ball and lean forward, hitting the ball before you get to it. The more you wish to turn the ball the closer you will ride to it and the farther forward you will lean. Until at right angles the pony should be turned directly toward the ball and the stroke should be made under his neck. In this case, however, care should be taken not to swing too fiercely, as, with a reasonably whippy stick, the head may come right around and strike the player in the face, particularly if the ball is missed. Sometimes, when the angle is not too great, the ball can be made to clear the pony by bringing the pony up very wide, say, three or four feet, from the ball, leaning well out of the saddle and turning the ball across in front of the pony. In any case care should be taken not to hit the pony with the stick or the ball, a thing undesirable both from the point of view of possible injury to the pony and of spoiling the stroke.

Chopping the ball.

Sometimes, where it is necessary to cut the ball across and no great distance is needed, it is well to chop at the ball, hitting in such a way that the mal-

let head will stop on the ground. This prevents tangling the stick with the pony's legs and often serves the necessary end.

In turning the ball away from the pony it will be found effective also to bring him up well to the side of the ball and then to hit a half stroke rather late. If a full stroke is attempted under these circumstances the mallet will often catch in the pony's tail, as he will have it swung, rudder like, toward the side he is turning, and to get the stroke away one swings across from behind the horse. A half stroke will send the ball a nice distance to turn and reach.

Turning the ball.

2. *The back stroke.*—In making the back stroke on the off or right side, which is the second most important stroke in the game of polo, I always put my thumb down the center of the flat part of the handle and swing with much more rapidity than I do on the fore stroke, for the reason that the momentum of the horse is against the stroke, instead of being with it, and therefore much more force is needed to get distance.

Back stroke.

In the forward stroke most beginners hit too late. In the back stroke they are almost certain to hit too soon. Never hit the ball until you have passed it unless you are compelled to do so for one of two reasons, either because somebody is coming up to interfere with the stroke by riding or crooking, or because it is crossing the goal and it is necessary to hit it before it reaches there, in which case distance is not the thing sought for but stopping the ball somehow. In these cases I swing with the hand held forward, making entirely a wrist stroke so as not to jab the ball down into the ground with a descending blow.

Don't hit too soon.

Don't hit
toward
oncoming
players.

In making the back stroke, particularly on the part of No. 4, care should be taken to hit the ball at some angle from the line of play in such a way that the stroke will not be blocked and spoiled by hitting oncoming horses. One well-known back, whom I knew, consistently drew the ball across behind his pony's quarters, hitting always toward his left, a policy which usually worked well.

The whole rush of ponies of both teams is following in the line the ball is coming, and if the stroke goes directly back there is a probability of hitting the feet or legs of one of the ponies or of the ball getting hit by the mallet of some alert opponent, whereas if the ball is drawn or cut by No. 4, when he backs it, so that it moves somewhat away from the line the crowd is following, there is every chance that it will not be blocked. Knowing this practice on the part of the player of whom I speak, I always threw my pony across to my left in order to intercept the ball, but rarely succeeded in blocking the back stroke, as I was across the new line the ball was traveling and the chance of blocking it was infinitely less than if I had been traveling along the line of the ball. The best players, however, look to see where they are hitting to and strive to hit either to the right or to the left, according as they are hitting away from the goal they are defending, away from players of the opposing side, or toward players of their own side. Sometimes, perhaps, all three considerations may enter into the thing, sometimes one and sometimes another being a controlling reason for the direction and distance of the stroke. When the ball is to be drawn across behind your own pony's quarters, it is well to ride fairly close to the ball, hitting a little

Look where to
send the ball.

Drawing the
back stroke
across.

later than you otherwise would, leaning back in the saddle and swinging well across behind the pony. The amount of the angle of swing to the line of the ball should be determined by the distance across it is desired to send the ball. If it is desired to send it well across, I should combine the cut or turned mallet head with the cross swing.

3. *The nigh-side stroke forward.*—To make my nigh-side forward stroke, I stand up in the saddle. For this purpose I have my stirrups fairly short and turn so that my shoulders are parallel to the direction the horse is going. I then lean forward just enough to get my shoulder fairly well over the ball I am trying to hit and make what is really a back stroke forward. In other words, I use the same strength, muscle, and stroke, with my thumb down the center of the stick, as though I were hitting a back stroke on the off side, and in this way I get a lot of force in the nigh-side forward stroke. The swing is exactly the same as for the off-side back stroke, except that there is no occasion to put so much speed in the swing, as the momentum is now all in favor of the stroke. In order to get this position one has to make movements of the legs which, until the pony understands what is wanted, are likely to make him think he is wanted to turn; and, as a matter of fact, I have often seen ponies turn over the ball in response to the movement of the legs in making this stroke. This tendency may be balanced by a counter pressure of the rein, but a thoroughly trained pony, the moment he sees your hand swing across, will know that it means he is expected to stay straight and bring you up true on the ball, in spite of the fact that you have turned and changed the position of your legs in the saddle.

Nigh-side
forward
stroke.

As it were a
back stroke
forward.

Tendency to
hit late.

I always move my mallet over to the nigh side as soon as I have decided to make the nigh-side stroke, so as to give my pony notice of what I expect of him. The tendency to hit late on the nigh side is even more pronounced than it is on the other side, owing to the length of time it takes to get placed and the increased difficulty in the stroke, and the fact that one does not get the speed in the swing that is usual on the off side. Beginners should try to discount this by beginning their strokes a little sooner than it looks as though they ought to.

Nigh-side
back stroke.

4. *The nigh-side stroke backward.* — The back stroke on the nigh side is almost the most powerful stroke a player can make. It gets all the muscular force of a forward stroke on the off side. The only difficulty is that of gauging the distance from the ground. The swing, augmented by the turn of the body, gives an opportunity for immense force to the stroke. Here again caution is given in regard to hitting too soon. The same tendency that shows itself in hitting too late on the forward strokes leads a great many players to make the very serious error of hitting too soon on the back stroke. In all these strokes the mallet should make one complete circle. The stroke should always be carried through until the mallet is in the perpendicular.

Carry the
stroke
through.

Practice
meeting the
ball.

To get practice in meeting coming balls, I recommend the exercise of having balls thrown toward oncoming players, in order that they may meet them. Here, more than in any other stroke, the difficulty lies in hitting soon enough. If the player can place himself so that he is traveling in the line in which the ball is coming, he is certain to hit it, provided he can get his mallet off soon enough, swings true, and the ball does not bounce. Players

should begin this exercise with the pony at a standstill, so as to see at what distance from the ball it is necessary to begin swinging so as to get the mallet down at the right time. They should also study to get a little adroitness in moving the pony into a position that will bring the swing along the line in which the ball is coming rather than across it. When the eye is trained and enough experience has been gained to meet the ball regularly with the pony standing still, the next development is meeting a thrown ball by riding toward it, gradually increasing the speed. When the pony is moving fast, the difficulty in meeting is not much greater than if the pony is standing still or if the ball is standing still, provided always that the ball does not bounce. As explained elsewhere, it is much more difficult to meet the ball successfully with a cross stroke than with a stroke that follows the line in which the ball is coming, as it takes a much nicer calculation.

When the ball is standing still or moving very slowly and it is desired to change the direction of play or to hit it in a direction other than that in which the pony has been going, it is well to turn the pony and get started on the new line it is proposed to establish before hitting the ball. This should always be done if the ball is stationary, unless the player is being hurried by one of the other side and has to ride straight at the ball in order to maintain his right of way. In other words, if by turning before reaching the ball he loses his right of way and possibly his chance to hit, he should hit the ball while turning, or, if he can not do that without fouling, ride straight at it and hit it and turn to follow it afterwards. When the ball is

Hitting when
turning.

Fig. 5.

standing still, or nearly so, turning before reaching it has the following advantages: First, the stroke is truer because you are hitting in the direction you are going and do not have to send the ball at an angle to the natural swing of the mallet. Second, it is easier to hit the ball because the horse, when turning, is leaning and therefore brings you nearer to the ground on one side or farther on the other, which makes necessary an adjustment of the length of the stick. Third, one of the most important things of polo is maintaining the right of way once on it. If the pony is headed in the right direction when the ball is hit, there is no necessity of further turning, which usually means some delay in getting adjusted to the new direction. Thus, if all of these preliminaries can be attended to before the rush is started when the ball is once hit, the pony can go along with accelerated speed and make the advance very much more formidable than it will be if there are preliminaries to be attended to after hitting and before the right of way can be entered upon and maintained at speed. In this connection, when there is plenty of time and it is desired to change the direction of the play directly back instead of turning directly over the ball, the player should ride past it about ten or fifteen feet, turn his pony, and come back at it, so that when he finally hits the ball he is traveling along the line of the new right of way and is all ready to continue the rush.

Fig. 2.

Passing the ball before turning.

The half stroke.

5. *The half stroke.*—The half stroke is made by dropping the mallet until it is perpendicular to the ground, swinging it slowly backward and then swinging it along the ground slowly forward, being careful to hit the ball after the mallet has passed the perpendicular and the head of the mallet is on

the upward swing. In case the exigencies of the stroke are such as to necessitate hitting the ball back of the saddle, the same result^o can be accomplished by leaning away back, holding the arm back behind the saddle, and swinging from there without the usual forward movement of the hand and arm, taking the ball only with a swing of the wrist. A little practice will show what distance can be secured with half strokes, and, in case the ball is not driven far enough to allow time to make the second a full stroke, it is easy to make a second half stroke. In other words, if there is not time before reaching the ball again to make a complete swing, or if there is not enough room for such swing, owing to the propinquity of other players, the half stroke may be repeated.

The half stroke is useful, first, where a short distance is desired, and second, where there is not room for the full stroke. The short distance is usually desired, first, when hitting strokes that cut the lines of play and that do not parallel them, as shown in Fig. 1—in other words, when taking the ball around; second, in hitting where there is an opponent clear in front to whom you do not want to hit and who may be avoided by hitting short, so that he can not get near the ball without stopping or perhaps turning his horse, in which case you have a good chance to rush past him with your second stroke; third, hitting when it is desired to hit to some player of your side who can be reached by a short stroke but not by a long one; and fourth, in playing approach shots to goal. I am personally much opposed to taking long shots at goal. I believe in approaching and then sending the ball over from near to. I personally never try to hit a goal from a

Uses of
half strokes.

Don't try long
shots at goal.

And why.

greater distance than sixty yards, even though directly in front and with a clear field. I always try an approach shot instead and then endeavor to drive the ball over, with my last stroke, close to. The reason for this is that hitting from over sixty yards requires such accuracy and precision of stroke that a player of no greater accuracy of stroke than I will probably knock the ball out; and I believe that team will win in the long run which plays always for approach to the goal, with the idea of hitting the ball through from fairly close to the goal line. The distance from which a goal may be safely tried varies with the angle. At a sharp angle one should not try the goal at a greater distance than thirty yards; at a very sharp angle it does not pay to try to hit the goal at all. I hit to have the ball stop out in front of the posts, depending upon a second stroke to carry it through.

Angle goals.

There are certain niceties of play one sees in very expert players. One is dropping the mallet in the way of the ball so as to stop a long pass from one of your side from passing up to an opponent who is clear, thus preventing its return and placing it in position for some one of your side to take along. Another play is deliberately to dribble the ball toward your own goal so as to elude the rush of an oncoming opponent, and then to turn on it, passing it or backing it as the case may be. There are times when both these devices are extremely effective.

Lifting the ball.

To lift the ball one leans so as to swing the mallet head nearer the ground and hits a little bit sooner on the forward stroke and later on the back stroke. I have also found that a slight cut helps me to raise the ball; why, I don't know. I am not a believer, however, in hitting into the air. Where one

is aiming for the goal and there are players interposing, a small mathematical calculation will show that the chance of having a ball blocked at the height of the horse's body is many times greater than along the ground, where only the legs and feet of the ponies are in the way.

Greater distance may be obtained by raising the ball, thereby lessening friction, but when the ball falls it bounces so that it is more difficult for a rider in front to pick it up. A great distance is useful only when the ball is hit up by the backs, either on forward or back strokes. A back who raises the ball slightly gets the greatest distance; and the back who places it so as to be avoided by oncoming players is of greatest use to his side.

One often sees players who habitually miss their last stroke for goal after carrying the ball successfully for several strokes. This is usually due to their taking the eye off the ball to sight for the posts and not getting it back to the ball in time. Care should be taken to remedy this defect where it develops.

I consider it to be bad polo to knock the ball over the back line anywhere outside the posts.

Knocking out
is bad polo.

I always carry the loop of the mallet over the wrist—never over the thumb. When placed over the wrist the mallet may be spun around a few times to twist the loop so it will not fall down over the hand when the hand is held down; but it should not be twisted enough to bind on the wrist.

When not hitting, the mallet should always be carried perpendicularly, and with the head up except when it is pretty certain that a half stroke will be needed shortly. A moment's thought will disclose the necessity of this, from the point of view

Carry the
mallet in
perpendicular.

of saving the muscles of the hand and arm, for, no matter how easy the play, it is a strain to hold the stick throughout the hour of play. The stick should be perpendicular because that is the easiest way to hold it. It takes almost no muscle to balance it, and it takes muscle to hold it in any other way except with the head directly down; but when held in this position the mallet is of no use when the time comes to hit a full stroke, as it has to be raised to the perpendicular before the stroke.

Crooking.

Especial care should be taken to learn how to crook an opponent's mallet successfully. Players should remember that a stroke spoiled is equal in value, although opposite in effect, to a stroke made. The clever use of the stick to spoil one's opponent's strokes is an asset easy to obtain, and it is a part of the necessary equipment of a first-class polo player.

I have found that to crook successfully it is wise to hold the mallet with the outer end of the head up in order that the opponent's mallet striking the slope of the head may be brought into the stick and thus caught. Wherever possible the mallet should be crooked either at the beginning of the stroke or before the head has swung below the horizontal, as, if caught at the point where the mallet strikes the ball, the impact is apt to ruin both sticks.

Riding is better
than crooking.

There are so many chances in crooking that as a general rule of play I should personally recommend no player to crook the opponent's mallet in preference to riding his man if he is in position to do so.

Use of mallet
to protect one's
head and pony.

In playing, remember that ponies are apt to get discouraged by being hurt by a stroke of the stick, particularly at the beginning of their play. The player should so use his stick as to defend his head as well as his pony. He should so hold it as to catch

any stroke liable to land on the pony's head, and also to fend off strokes liable to get by and strike him in the nose, and, when necessary, the legs, although the legs are ordinarily protected by the boots—and strokes on the feet do not matter. It is the whip at the end of the stroke that ordinarily does the damage both to the man and beast, and it is always well to remember this and try to protect the face and eye by holding the stick conveniently. I never use the mallet for defense, however, when it may be needed for strokes.

While great strength is not necessary for polo, as some slight men of no great physical strength are among the best players, at the same time it can be readily understood that strength of the hand is of the utmost importance. Players who have not strong hands should take regular exercises calculated to strengthen the grip of the hand, wrist, and forearm. There are machines for this purpose, to be found in well-appointed gymnasiums, and I believe devices can be purchased by which the grip of the hand is worked against a spring. Regular exercise of this kind will undoubtedly help. People do not often realize that the body can be developed to almost any degree by concentrating attention upon the desired point, and a strong grip and strong forearm will be of inestimable value to players.

Strengthening
the hand and
wrist.

CHAPTER VII

TEAM PLAY

Cosmos of the
play.

The cosmos of polo is difficult to understand because of the kaleidoscopic nature of the game and the fact that with each changing stroke the whole order of the game may be changed. This is inherent in the nature of the game, owing to the rapidity of the movement of the ball and of the players. It is none the less true that there is a very definite cosmos, and the fact that it is difficult to grasp makes it more subtle, more intricate, and perhaps all the more important.

Fig. 1.

To determine the lines of greatest efficiency in playing, draw the polo field with lines radiating from the center of the offensive goal line and running straight till they have reached the sides, drawing no lines, however, that reach the side lines nearer the nearest corner of the field than is the line from the center of the goal line to the corner. If the field were straight-sided this would leave a right-angled triangle, which should be shaded or touched to a different color to indicate that it is what is known as dead territory. In Fig. 1 this section is shown in red, so called because it is out of the direct line of attack toward the goals, and it is very bad polo for an attacking team to send the ball into it except for special cause, as shown elsewhere.

The lines immediately in front of the defensive goal should go directly toward the sides, but the

farther they get from the goal line the more they should slant forward until at about sixty yards they should go directly up the field and toward the offensive goal. These lines to the sides should curve toward the offensive goal as they approach the side lines until they merge with the direct lines radiating out from the goal. The field will now be covered with a series of lines taking a general pear shape.

These lines indicate the correct line of travel for the ball. With a few exceptions, to be noted later, all strokes that cut these lines are bad polo; all strokes that parallel these lines are good polo.

There are three factors which control the position of the players. The first is the direction of the play, which in turn is controlled by the position and movement of the ball. The second is the spacing or position of the players on their own side. The third is the position of the opponents, particularly the corresponding one.

Position of
players.

Fig. 24.

To make myself entirely clear, I will state that the corresponding opponent of No. 1 is No. 4; the corresponding opponent of No. 2 is No. 3; of No. 3, No. 2; and of No. 4, No. 1, and should be so understood wherever reference is made to a corresponding opponent. It does not always follow that the corresponding opponent will be the man who ought to be at that position. I am talking now always of the man who is in that position; for instance, if in the exigencies of play the opposing No. 1 and No. 3 change places, No. 2's position will then be to play against the opposing No. 1.

Definition of
term
"corresponding
opponents."

Taking these three controlling factors up in order, the player should figure in his mind's eye the definite location of a "right of way" which extends

Right of way.

Fig. 2.

along a line drawn through the center of the ball, and, following the direction it is going, reaches from ten to forty feet in front of the ball, according to the speed of the play, and trails along behind it an indefinite distance. This right of way is four or five feet wide, or the amount of room taken up by the pony and a man with a clear swing of the mallet about one foot to the side of the ball.

The secret of team play is for a team to get quickly into this right of way the moment it is made possible by the movement of the ball and then come along with such speed as to maintain it, each player covering that section of the right of way which pertains to his position, and at the same time preventing his corresponding opponent from getting the ball.

Maintaining
right of way.

The best way to teach players to respect the right of way is to let them understand that the man who has it will come down it at railroad speed, that it is as disastrous to cross it as it is to cross a railroad track with an express train coming. With the coming of automobiles, the process of natural selection will eliminate those hens that try to rush across the road, and the same fate awaits the man who does not respect the right of way in good polo, as he will get killed or cursed off the field before he has been at it many hours. All players who are outside of the line of play, except when they have moved out to cover an opponent so as to keep him out of it, are out of place and of no use to their team. This, however, does not apply to players who, under signal or preconcerted arrangement, are placing themselves for a diagonal pass. Any player who gallops parallel to another man of his own side is absolutely worthless to his team, as

under no usual combination of circumstances can the ball be expected to pass sideways from the line which it is traveling; and anyone finding himself riding in this way should immediately either pull up or call to the other man to do so.

Players should never carry the ball around the field, except to defend goal or to avoid hitting it to one of the opponents who is clear and not covered by one of his own side. In the latter case the ball should be dribbled around with short strokes, preferably not more than fifteen or twenty feet to a stroke. Hitting long strokes around the fields has many disadvantages, but only one possible advantage. The possible advantage comes in the case of a very brilliant hitter who has a pony so very much faster than any pony on the field that he can, by hitting it far, get clear for the second stroke, being hard pressed at the time he first hits the ball. This condition is so infrequent that it may be disregarded. The disadvantages are, first, that the play does not bring one any nearer to the goal which is sought; secondly, that the second stroke is at a difficult angle and must be taken either by turning the pony and hitting across the line of the ball or by hitting the ball at a sharp angle. The same is true of the third stroke, and, when the ball is afterwards brought around, the goal often has to be made at a difficult angle. Besides the difficulty of completing the play, it is one which is so easy to stop that an experienced player is seldom guilty of attempting it. A trained opponent will characterize it as "fruit," and, sizing up the fact that he has an inexperienced man to deal with, will start across the field to intercept the next stroke before the man who made the stroke gets there. The opponent

Don't carry
the ball
around.

can usually start across first because the man who takes the ball around has to complete his stroke before he can turn his pony, whereas the opponent can start as soon as he sees where it is intended to send the ball, and, judging the relative speed of the ponies, he can so direct his course as to intercept the ball at any point in the circle which he feels he can reach. By getting there well ahead of the man who hit the ball across, he can break up the whole play and very likely get the ball and turn it to his own advantage. Other things being equal, if I see any of my opponents in a match develop the practice of taking the ball around, I know that they are certainly doomed to defeat.

Spacing.

No two
players of one
side to be
together.

Exception.

In regard to spacing, this most important item of polo seems to be very difficult to impress upon beginners. A fundamental rule of team play is that no two players of the same side should be near or on the ball at the same time. The only exception to this rule is in case of a man riding up to keep an opponent whom he is covering from getting the ball, in which case he is covering his man and not riding for the ball. Even when covering an opposing player, if the ball is standing still and the players in front are standing over it and jabbing at it, he had much better let his corresponding player ride in and have a whack at it than to go in himself and join the mess. If a player lets the opponents bunch and then pulls up and takes his position, when the ball is hit out, the side which is spaced has three men that may get it, whereas the side which is not spaced has two. If two of these three players were covering their men as they ought to be doing, it means that the player who is free will get the ball and have a clear run of it.

Players should understand that they cannot help one of their own side who is on the ball except by doing one of three things—by putting themselves in the place to which the next stroke will send the ball; by coming right behind to take it in case it is missed, always being careful to stay far enough back to cover the corresponding opponent; or by riding an opponent and keeping him out of the play.

Three ways
of helping
one's side.

The distance the players should space from each other varies greatly with conditions. It depends upon the length of stroke of the man with whom you are playing, upon the speed of play, and upon the position occupied by the opponents. The exact point where the man should leave his opponent and ride back or forward to get his spacing is a thing which is very hard to determine by rule and must depend upon the player's judgment, and his decision will differ according to the speed, skill, and mounts of himself and opponents, and to the style of play of the particular man from whom he is spacing, the distance of his strokes, etc. It also depends very largely upon the other players of the same side. For instance, if No. 2 has an extremely active and alert No. 1, who is quite likely to turn and get the ball first in case the opposing back and he ride over it and he finds that No. 3 on the other side likes to ride close up, supporting his man from too close a distance, No. 2 may elect to ride in with the opposing No. 3 and break up his support of his team, confident that, if No. 4 or No. 3 of his own side get the ball back, his No. 1 will turn it to offensive account. The merit of this play also depends upon the part of the field in which it occurs. Where his goal is threatened, No. 2 should always ride in and

Spacing
distance.

Fig. 24.

block the opposing No. 3. If, however, the goal is not threatened and the play is well up in the field, and he thinks No. 3 is riding up too close, No. 2 may lurk the proper distance back to receive the ball.

Fig. 6.

One team that I have seen play, which has excellent team work, always has No. 2 lurk away back on the defense, counting on No. 3 and No. 4 getting the ball back to him. This, however, is counting on erroneous play on the part of the opposing No. 3, who, if he knows his business, will pull up and instead of following close to his No. 2, will support him from a space of, say, five yards or so in front of his lurking opponent, whose offensive value will thus be nullified. No. 3, so playing, would be pretty sure to get the ball in case the opposing No. 4 sends it well back, and he still would be in position to come through on it in case the two pairs in front ride over it.

Don't support
your side from
too close.

Supporting one's own players by following too close is also dangerous. Many runs are spoiled by the ball bouncing in the air. If the ball bounces and hits the stick it is pretty sure to go sideways. If a player is following the man in front too closely and the ball hits the stick and goes a little to one side or hits the pony's feet and stops or bounces back (as it is very apt to do when two players are riding each other over it), the checked movement of the ball will throw a closely pursuing player entirely out. If the corresponding opponent, riding farther back, is not covered, he will come along and get the ball. Thus, No. 2, for example, trailing along, expecting his No. 3 or his No. 4 to send the ball back or ride over it and leave it for him to take, should ride with his eye alternately watch-

Trailing.

ing the players in front and the opposing No. 3, who should be beside or behind him. He should pull up and so space himself as not to be thrown entirely out by a sideways movement or check of the ball. At the same time, if the ball is sent well back, he will cover the opposing No. 3 and not leave him riding clear so that he can get the ball. In other words, the spacing in a case like that is controlled almost entirely by the position of the corresponding player on the other side, unless he is so ridiculously far back as to be out of place.

Fig. 24.

In play of average speed, 30 to 35 yards is fair spacing. Players should always begin to get nervous the minute they begin to get within 15 yards of any of their side. The secret of effective team work in any game is so to direct your play that the fault will be less with you than with any other player; in other words, be sure to do your part.

Secret of team play.

Make it the other fellow's fault.

Many players, particularly those who have recently begun the game, get what is known as "ball crazy." They have one idea fixed in their heads, and that is the ball; they must be on it all the time. They can not realize that a man can be of any use to his team unless he is hitting the ball. One of the commonest manifestations of this mania is the practice of backing the ball when the opponents have hit it so that it is about to roll over the back line. Good players always let it roll over. It means that the whole team will get their ponies turned and get ready for the offensive rush before the ball is hit rather than afterwards. The knock in is almost certain to be a better stroke than a back stroke when the ball is moving with the uncertainty of bouncing, etc. All the arguments are in favor of letting the ball go out. Also the opponent's safety

Ball crazy.

should be allowed to go over except in the exceptional circumstance of a good shot at goal as it rolls or in the event of the last few minutes of a game where a goal is needed to win and the ball can be placed where a probable goal will result.

A stroke spoiled is a stroke made.

It is axiomatic that a stroke spoiled is equal to a stroke made. The man who can not hit the ball well himself may very easily be of equal use to his side by preventing the opponents from hitting it. It should be the ambition of each player, however, to do a little bit more than his share, to be a little bit better than the corresponding player on the other side. A player should not be satisfied to be an entirely negative quantity neutralizing the work of some man of the other side; he should also be a positive force. In calculating the merit of a player, however, one must always remember that no amount of brilliant work will compensate for failure to cover properly the corresponding opponent. Thus the man playing No. 2 should know instinctively every minute of the time just where the opposing No. 3 is. By opposing No. 3 I mean, as I have said before, the man playing No. 3's position. He should have an uncomfortable feeling that it is his fault every time the opposing No. 3 hits the ball. If he is supporting his own man, the distance he follows him up must be controlled by the position the opposing No. 3 is playing.

Know where your corresponding opponent is.

Fig. 24.

Riding off.

There are two ways of riding off. One is to watch the corresponding opponent and play your pony so as to cover his every movement. The other is to play for the ball and, having first placed yourself where you can reach it before your opponent, get there first when the time comes, watching his every movement and making sure that you are constantly

holding your pony in such a position as to cover the point from which the corresponding opponent can be harmful to your side. When the time for the rush comes, however, you should play directly for the ball, thus putting your opponent on the defensive and making him ride you instead of your riding him, but guiding yourself by covering the point at which he can be harmful to your side. Both methods must be used from time to time, but of the two the latter is very much the more scientific and effective. It really compels your opponent to ride you instead of your riding him. It puts the burden of effort on him. It is the old story that strong offense is the strongest defense. I use both methods. If I have nothing better to do and my opposing No. 3 is not looking, I am very apt to place my pony across his or place myself in such a position against his pony that my knee is in front of his knee. This is the best way to ride off. You want so to arrange that the pressure of all four legs of your pony is against the forelegs of the opponent's pony. This makes a pressure of four against two and means that you can push him off provided your pony is any good at pushing. The player so covered will undoubtedly try to extricate himself. Sometimes it is well to let him, having delayed him for some time, in order to give him another similar scrap when he again tries to pass. Sometimes it is better to stay by him, all depending upon circumstances. If he is so far out of position as to limit his usefulness, it is not worth while to stay with him at the expense of leaving a gap in your own position. If, however, he is in his position, then your proper play is a series of maneuvers and jockeying, just as important and delicate as the jockeying of race horses at the start of a

race or the maneuvering for position at the start of a yacht race.

Each player should try to be a little in front of the corresponding opponent, whichever way the ball is going. If he does this successfully, it involves quick work when the ball is backed and the direction of play turns from toward one goal to the other, for the man who was ahead must do some sharp riding to pass his man as he turns, and, after turning, to get once more to his coign of vantage.

Nearest man
to take ball.

When playing, however, the rules as to position have to give way to immediate need. The man who is nearest the ball must get to it, even though out of position, rather than let one of the other side get it, in which case it is usually necessary for the man who should have been at that position to pass and take up the place left by the man who rides to the ball. This, however, is qualified by the necessity of observing whether the man who is in place is in position to get the ball. For instance, suppose two players of one side both can reach the ball before one of the opponents, it is clearly the duty of one or the other to take the ball, and the one who does not take it should pull up or ride on and take his position, regardless of the fact that he may be able to get the ball first, unless the advantage to be gained is so manifest as to justify changing positions and the change is called and accepted.

Exception.

A player, however, should always stay by any opponent whom he has covered, if such opponent is in position to be in immediate danger to the play.

The throw in.

On the throw in No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3 should be on their side of the line with their ponies facing diagonally toward the line, generally toward the

Fig. 3.

referee; No. 4 should take up a place ready for an offensive or defensive rush half way between No. 2 and No. 3, and from ten to fifteen yards away from the line, ready to gallop directly back in case any of the front players of the opposing side get the ball, and he should rush for it himself in case the ball rolls past No. 3. No. 3 in this case should follow defensively in case his No. 4 gets it, holding himself ready to ride back in case the rush should be unsuccessful and leave the ball exposed to any of the opponents. When the ball is thrown in, the player should drive his pony fiercely at it as though the whole game depended on it, trying to push his pony across the line. I have often swung at the ball, timing my stroke to the movement of the ball, hoping to hit it as it passed under, without seeing it, and often have found the result was a good sharp stroke down the field. Don't slash recklessly with your mallet, as it is too likely to hit one of your opponents. Players should always be considerate of the chance of a mallet head reaching an opponent and try to avoid such contingencies.

Positions and
duties of
players.

Each player failing to get the ball should see that his vis-à-vis does not get it. Once the ball has passed, however, he can ride to his position, which should always be in a line up and down the field. The moment the ball has passed No. 1 he should ride instantly to the opposing back, riding fast so as to get there in case No. 2 or No. 3 should send the ball up to him.

When the ball is hit, all players should figure in their mind's eye the line of the right of way and either get into it or get parallel to and ahead of one of the opposing players, so as to be in position to neutralize his efforts.

Hitting
straight to goal
the essence of
good play.

The essence of first-rate play is hitting the ball straight down the field. In first-rate polo the ball will be traveling perpendicularly up and down the field at a maximum and across the field at a minimum. It is well for players to train themselves always to play the best polo, which means taking the ball up and down the field and backing it when it is desired to turn it rather than taking it around.

The knock in.

No. 3 or No. 4 may do the knocking in according to which is the stouter hitter. The ball should always be knocked away from the goal and toward the side boards. The rush for the attack should start from the side boards, never from the center, where any miss or block would leave the goal in danger. The balance of chance is all against the team whose goal is threatened. Hit to the sides and then start the rush for the opposing goal from the side lines or from a point near the sides where the team is in position to get a good start down the field. When No. 4 knocks in, No. 3 should place himself about ten yards in the field and between the ball and the goal posts, and let No. 4 ride through on his first stroke, No. 3 staying back to defend in case any return of the ball threatens the goal. He should follow No. 4 up in case the latter hits the second stroke, in order not to be too far out of the play. Keene, however, believes No. 3 should play well out.

Fig. 4.

No. 2 should place himself next to the boards, well back toward the goal line, and should pick up No. 4's hit as it strikes the side boards and endeavor to carry it down the field.

No. 1 should place himself alongside of the opposing No. 4 and stick to him like a leech.

Crane suggests a line-up for a knock in in which No. 3 takes up a position about half way between

the ball and No. 2. This puts the team in regular position and sends the whole team down the field on the ball. This formation has much to commend it.

The knock in may be varied by a series of plays called for by signal. One of these is to have the No. 2 take his position near the side boards and close to the back line; instead of No. 4 knocking in, No. 2 gallops very rapidly across and comes at the ball, going at full speed, and hits it across goal to No. 3, who has left his position in front of the posts and has gone out to pick it up. No. 4 follows No. 2 to carry the ball along in case No. 2 hits poorly or misses. In this case No. 3, No. 2, and No. 4 are in line on the ball, going at full speed, a combination particularly well adapted to a successful and aggressive attack. This may be varied, if the other side get rushing across the field to meet this play as soon as they see No. 2 starting to gallop, by having No. 4 wait behind the posts and No. 2 make a feint to hit the ball and pass over it while No. 4 waits until he has passed and then knocks it out toward the side boards as in the regular knock in, and follows it up to take it along down the boards. When the opponents are well under way across the field into the cross-goal territory, No. 3 and No. 2 turn to get back, if possible before the opponents, and thus support their No. 4. No. 1 in this play never starts across at all and waits to pick the ball up in case No. 4 sends it down the field successfully.

Other variations of this play may be tried successfully. One of them is for No. 4 to hit the ball along the back line and No. 2 to pass it out diagonally and cross the field where No. 3 can be waiting for it. Under no circumstances should a team make any play that does not have the resultant object of

Variations
of knock in.

starting a rush to goal from fairly close to the side lines.

Knock in by
opponents.

Where the opposing side is knocking in, No. 1 should ride in and try to meet the ball from about 30 yards out.

No. 2 should be out toward goal to take the ball if it is passed to him and also to defend in case an attempt is made to knock in across the goal.

No. 2's position will vary with the position of the ball on the back line; if it is near the boards he will take a position slightly to the side of the goal from a line through the ball and perpendicular to the back line.

No. 3 should be on the boards defending and No. 4 toward the boards but nearer the center of the field and a little farther back than No. 3.

The corners.

Fig. 22.

When the ball is knocked into the offensive corners, No. 2 is clearly the man who should ride in. No. 1 or No. 3 should never go in after it unless they happen to be next to the opponent who has the best chance to get the ball and No. 2 is not in position to do it himself. In this case, No. 1 or No. 3 should call to No. 2 that he is riding in, so that No. 2 will not do so. In the defensive corners, No. 2 must expect to go in, although it is often No. 3's duty to ride in, in which case No. 2 takes his place on the diagonal line, as shown in Fig. 22. No two players of the same side should ever ride in, either to get the ball or to impede an opponent. The rest of the team should line up on the diagonal line shown in Figs. 1 and 22 which represents the line between live and dead territory, and take position, watching for the ball to come out.

Never send
two players
against one.

No. 1's position in the offensive corners is nearest goal. In the defensive corners this position is usually

determined by the opposing back, but in general it can be said to be near the side lines on the line between dead and live territory.

The team should understand that the corners of the field are dead territory, and—unless the play is sent into the corners for the purpose of wasting time, as might be the case toward the end of a game

Corners are dead territory.

Fig. 1.

which was well in hand and in which the ponies were beginning to tire, or in case a player of your side has gone to get a new stick or mount—that hitting to the corners, in so far as its offensive value to the team is concerned, is worse than not hitting the ball at all. But many players, particularly beginners, seem to think that they must hit the ball,

Ball crazy.

even though the stroke they make is from the goal they are trying to hit, and that their part of the play is done if they hear the crack of their stick against the ball. There are many times in polo when not hitting at all is much better strategy than hitting. This is the case with a stroke that throws the player out of the effective line of play, as shown in Fig. 1, that puts the player at a point where the goal is at a difficult angle and where turning the pony to get a shot at goal makes a difficult stroke, or when to hit the ball would send it to an opponent who is clear, or when one of his own side is in a better position to take it.

Fig. 16.

One other important item of play is that which is commonly known as "hitting short." Let us say that No. 3 is away with the ball and that No. 1 and his opposing No. 4, and No. 2 and his opposing No. 3, are in front of him. No. 2 is trying to cover his corresponding opponent but is not in position to do so. No. 3 is on the ball and his corresponding opponent, we will say, is lurking behind waiting

Hitting short.

for something to happen. If No. 3 hits a long stroke, the opposing No. 3 or No. 4 will be pretty sure to send it back, but by hitting it a short stroke, just up to the tail of the nearest opposing pony, then going up on it fast, he puts the opposing player in the uncomfortable position of deciding either to pull up, in which case he will make a rush past him, or to gallop on to get the next stroke, in which case another short stroke will answer the purpose. The only way such a play can be properly stopped is for the No. 2 of the opposing side to wake up to his responsibilities and ride up and block the play from behind; in other words, to ride his man, a thing he ought to have been doing all the time. If this play is a good one when the men in front are partially covered, it is still better where a player finds himself by chance with the opposing back or the opposing No. 3 uncovered. Of course, the defense then is for the uncovered man to pull up and immediately ride the man who has made the short stroke, leaving it to the players behind to come up and get the ball, in which case he trusts to his own men to be in place and do their part, which is correct polo strategy.

Defense
against hitting
short.

Fig. 18.

One of the most important items of team play is the signaling from player to player, which it is very hard to get even experienced players to do, yet in my judgment it is one of the most necessary things for successful polo. Foxhall Keene is very emphatic in advising against much use of voice as between players and says in the best polo "the game goes on without words." He feels that much calling spoils the game. My experience, wholly in minor games, has been just the opposite.

Signaling.

I use the following general calls, and while I am

constantly calling to the players of my side, I am at the same time listening for their words.

The most important signal of all is "Leave it," which I usually repeat very loud until the player has obeyed, saying "Leave it," "Leave it," "Leave it," "Leave it." This is a direct order to the player of your side not to hit it, and should never be given because the man who calls for the other player to leave it thinks he is a better player, but only because he has a better angle on the ball and is in a better position to hit it, or because there is an opponent clear in front who will get the ball if it is not left but is hit by the forward player.

"Go on" should never be used when "Leave it" is meant, because "Go on" may mean to go on with the ball or without it. "Go on" should be used by every player who is on the ball and is coming through and who wants the other players of his side to keep on in the direction they are going. It should be used from behind by the man who is hitting the ball or by the man who fails to prevent an opponent hitting the ball. For instance, if in a defensive rush No. 1 fails to ride No. 4, he should call his side to "Go on," particularly if he sees any signs that his No. 2 is beginning to pull up, intending to turn, which will get him out of the play.

It is well to have a signal to indicate when there is plenty of time. Any word well understood by both teams will serve, such as "Plenty" or "Slowly." If the phrase "Take your time" is used, sometimes players mistake it for a call for time and stop playing. It makes a lot of difference to players to know whether they are hurried or not; whether, for example, they will have time to turn on the ball or pull up their pony, or wait until the ball has stopped

"Leave it."

When used.

Fig. 7.

Fig. 8.

"Go on."

Fig. 9.

Fig. 10.

Signal to use when there is plenty of time.

rolling or bring their stick up for a full swing, or wait until their own side has got in position before hitting.

“Ride your man.”

Fig. 11.

“Ride your man” is an encouragement to a player which ought not to be needed. Every player ought to ride anyway without orders, but it is very often needed, especially among beginners and among men who think more of the ball than they do of the team.

“Turn.”

Fig. 12.

When the ball turns, “Turn” or some signal understood by the team should be called, for the benefit of players in front who can not see or who have not seen. The player closest to the ball when it turns should immediately call to his own side to turn.

Allan Forbes suggests that another word be used as signal to tell your men to turn. This is better, as it does not inform the other side; “Look out” or “Hold them” might serve.

“I am next.”

Fig. 13.

“I am next” is a phrase which is sometimes useful. A player who is on the ball should know if one of his own side is clear and next. It may make a difference in the style of his play. For example, No. 2 is going down the side of the field and into one of the corners, and he does not know whether, if he misses it, No. 3 of his side will get it or it will go to one of the opposing side. He can not take his eye off the ball and yet his stroke will depend somewhat on whether he is supported or not. If he knows that his No. 3 is there to get the ball if he misses it, he will try a much more difficult turn stroke to get it in line toward the goal than he would undertake in case he were not sure but that the ball would go to the other side if he missed. Or he may make a turning stroke, placing the ball where he can not reach it again, and then ride on to pick up the

ball when it is sent along to him by his supporting player or to clear the way by riding out the opposing back or No. 3.

The signal "Back it" is also used under certain circumstances. "Back it."

In the Dedham team we had a practice of using a signal when we wanted the ball backed or were planning to back the ball which did not give the play away; "Easy" or "Steady" or any agreed-upon word would serve.

Do not say the same thing in different ways; say it in the same way always. Do not say "Go on" when you mean "Leave it." If you want them to go on, say "Go on." If you want them to leave it, say "Leave it." Do not give the gratuitous information "I've got it" or "I have it," which means nothing. I have noticed that players after boasting to that extent are more than likely to lose it. One of the principal uses of this business of calling to your side is to help a man who is straining his every effort to ride off an opponent. He is timing his every move to match that of the horse of the man he is riding off, who, if he plays a scientific game, is very likely to pull up suddenly and cross behind the line of play and get the ball, timing his play by watching when his opponent is looking around to see what is happening behind. To anticipate this and not be put at a disadvantage, a man has to watch every single move made by his corresponding opponent. If, at the same time, he has to turn around and keep looking backward, to find out whether the ball is still coming, he is placed at a real disadvantage. If, however, he can depend upon his own men behind him to call "Go on" with each stroke, if the movement of the play continues,

Say the same thing always the same way.

Fig. 9.

and "Turn" or its equivalent the second the direction of the play changes, he can do very much better work in riding off. This matter of keeping your men informed is one of the most important and least observed items of team play.

Fig. 12.

Fig. 9.

In a recent tournament, I saw No. 4 come through with the ball, never opening his mouth to let his team know that he had got it, and no less than five players pulled up and turned, assuming that, because No. 3 had missed, the rush had ended. Three of these players were of the attacking side, and No. 4's rush was completely nullified by the fact that he had to go through alone—all of his own players having given up—this being entirely due to the failure on his part to let them know beforehand what he himself knew and could perfectly well have told them, namely, that he was next on the ball.

Of course, it is incumbent upon players to inform themselves even when they know they can depend on their own men; they ought to look around sometimes, even going so far as to turn their ponies in default of instructions from the men behind. But this necessity for looking around, as I have pointed out, results disastrously to the best riding off, and the players, instead of keeping on confidently at speed, are holding in and expecting any minute that the time to turn will have passed without their having been looking at that particular moment.

"Take it."

In case, for any reason, you want one of your own side to take the ball, say "Take it." This is a direct sharp order to him and he should leave his man, even against his better judgment, and take the ball.

I remember that in one very difficult match I was

playing against a New York team my No. 1 had the back covered and 20 feet off to one side. I was going along smoothly with nothing to prevent my taking the ball straight to goal, which, as the score was tied—13 all—and we were playing an extra period, would have won the game. At this juncture my mallet head broke. I heard the crack as I hit the ball, and looking down, saw the jagged crack running through the head and knew it would not last another stroke. I called to my No. 1 to "Take it," and galloped hard to get in position to cover his man as he left him. A poor player at No. 1 would have been undertaking to leave his man anyway so as to get a whack at the ball—an inexcusable play. A good player, not thoroughly disciplined, would have looked around to see what the matter was and asked an explanation before leaving his position, but this man happened to be properly trained and instantly rode in and took the ball, without asking for an explanation, the result preventing what otherwise would have been disastrous.

Fig. 11.

In a scrimmage, when one or more ponies are standing, players on the outside should make a point of telling their man nearest the ball where it is, as "To your right," "Left," "Ahead of you," "Under you," etc. Often a man a little way off can see when the other can not. It is well, whenever the ball has struck a pony's legs or made an unexpected movement, to assume that your man has not seen it, and to tell him, as sometimes an opportunity is lost by reason of a ball perfectly within reach not being seen. In such circumstances also the voice of the player gives the direction and lets his man know his whereabouts. In fact, it often

pays to use some word or call when you are in position to receive a pass to help the player who is making the stroke, as he may not have time to look around to see where you are.

In order to assure certainty as to coöperation, a player, in passing out of his position to take that of another, should speak. For instance, No. 1 when riding past No. 2 should say "I am 2." Having said so, he should hold that position and assume its responsibilities and be ready to pass with No. 3 and not go back to his position without passing the word again to No. 2 and saying "I am 1." No. 2 should then accept the responsibility by replying. When No. 1 says "I am 2," No. 2 should hold No. 1's position until a favorable opportunity comes to pass, at which time he should respond to No. 1's calling "I am 1" by replying "I am 2." In other words, it should be understood and expected between players, after a change of position has been made, that each should assume the responsibility of the position until an opportunity comes to change back, when the fact of changing back and the reversal of responsibility has passed by word of mouth between the two. Similarly with No. 3 and No. 4 or with No. 2 and No. 3, in fact, similarly with the whole team. It is unusual for this practice to prevail in great changes of players. For instance, it is too upsetting to the team to have No. 1 as far out of place as at back, which probably means that every man is out of his place. No. 1 probably can not do back's business for him safely. Unless goal is threatened or he is the next man to the ball, or keeping the threatening player of the other side off the ball, he should go right back to place, passing the word as he goes back. The best chance to change back to

The team
mustn't get
too far out of
place.

Time to
change.

position comes when the ball goes out or over the boards, or when it is backed or taken around the field.

Every stroke should be made with a definite object. The player should get it into his head that there are two points of equal importance to the stroke. One is the point of beginning and the other is the point of ending, and he should not hit the first without having a very definite idea as to the second. My experience has led me to believe only one in about five strokes can be made at full speed the full distance of the stroke. This conclusion, however, is contested by men whose rating and experience qualify them to speak as masters of the game. They assure me that in the fastest polo full strokes are the rule and hitting short is usually impracticable. The player should always know before hitting where he is hitting to, where the players of his own side are, and how to hit so that one of them can advantageously get to it, and, of course, so that the opposing side can not reach it so easily.

In placing the ball so that it can be best reached by members of your team, there are some nice problems in angle hitting which players will do well to study most carefully. Here also are opportunities for exceptions to the rules laid down in connection with Figure 1, as it may very well be that hitting straight to goal will place the ball in such a way that the opposing back is sure to get it, whereas hitting fairly well to the right or left may put it easily within reach of your own covering player. A study of the diagram of Figure 25 will show how it is perfectly possible so to place the ball at an angle to the straight line to the goal as to give your own man in front of you a chance

Every stroke
with an object.

Know where
you are hitting.

Angle hitting.

Fig. 25.

to reach the ball first, even though his opposing player is ahead of him. We'll say No. 2 has the ball. The opposing back is four to eight feet ahead of No. 1 and it is obvious No. 1 cannot catch up to cover him. If the ball is hit straight and far, there is no power that can prevent the opposing back from getting to the ball first and returning it. The opposing No. 3 is well mounted, and No. 2 knows that his chance of following the ball up and getting it again if he hits short is small. By hitting the ball at an angle to its course and to the side of the opposing back upon which his No. 1 has taken his position, be it right or left, if No. 1 is riding a little wide of his back, it can be easily brought about, as shown in the figure, that when both players in front are turned to reach the ball, No. 1 is nearer to it and can take the ball along, having the opposing back at a disadvantage.

Fig. 16.

If No. 2 sees that No. 1 is between him and the opposing No. 4, it is proper to hit short to let No. 1 get up and ride his man out; or in case the opposing back is incautious and plays too close, No. 1 can pass him and take the pass from his No. 2, who will send a long stroke up to him. But under such circumstances it never pays to try to make a long stroke for goal. Other details of this play will be given in the chapters on the various positions.

Fig. 15.

Players should
know all
positions.

In order properly to comprehend the duties of each position, each player should learn the duties of all positions and play in each for a while. He should consider that each man's part in the team is just as important and just as distinct as are the various parts of a clock. The mechanism is just as nice and just as well adjusted. The limits of plays where one man's work can be effective are not

hard and fast, as they vary with various conditions, yet with each condition his play is absolutely clearly marked.

In the first part of this chapter, I have indicated regular play. There are lines of attack other than regular straight up-and-down play which it sometimes pays to use.

One is a sudden shifting of the line of attack, when by either chance or design the ball is taken and turned toward the side lines. To carry it around is the obvious and usual way. To back it toward the center and somewhat toward the goal you are trying to defend, under a preconceived understanding with your men, establishing a new line of attack, is a very effective offensive movement. It takes the other side completely by surprise, unless they are looking for it, and is sure to succeed, given average execution, unless each man of the opposing side instead of playing only for the ball is religiously covering his man, which is the only defense against this play. If a player sees his corresponding opponent siding off to another part of the field from that to which the ball would naturally go, he should take up a coign of vantage from which he can get to him, if necessary, before the ball does.

Backing as
an offensive
measure.

Fig. 23.

I have sometimes thought of working up an entirely new style of play with two lines of attack, by which the ball would be passed from one line to another by means of back strokes, or cross strokes, one of these parallel lines to be formed by No. 1 and No. 3 and the other by No. 2 and No. 4, each to be ready to rush, if occasion arose, or to pass the ball across. This passing across, however, presents difficulties. In the main, the simplest way of working this bit of strategy would be for some

one player, where the ball is in the opponent's half of the field, deliberately to hit toward the boards. If the opposing players rush to block him when he reaches the ball, instead of taking it round at a difficult angle, at which he is pretty sure to give it to one of the other side before he gets it round, he should make a short stroke back somewhat toward the center of the field where his other players, knowing beforehand what is going to happen, are waiting for it. By hitting the ball once and establishing a new right of way toward the goal and holding it with a rush, they would have a very difficult style of play to meet and cope with, particularly if it has caught the opponents in such a position that they would have to get into the line of play at a sharp angle, a thing which it is difficult for anyone to do without fouling or losing a good deal of distance in turning, before getting where he can hit or interfere with an opponent. As I have said before, the only successful defense would be for each man to cover his opponent and not get led away in the wild delirium of a chase after the ball.

Don't knock
over or out.

It is very bad polo to knock over the side line or over the back line except for a purpose.

Don't play for
your opponent's
misses.

Never make the practice of playing for your opponent's misses. That merely means that you may be temporarily successful against unskillful players, but it does not teach you good polo. Play as though your opponent were a good player. After the player has learned good polo, taking the easier and lazier course of playing to an opponent's blunders is done with the eyes open and knowing that it is incorrect polo—there is then not so much harm in it. But if a man learns to play for misses instead of riding his man, he will get into bad habits, which will be very

disastrous to him in case of running up against the real thing.

In good polo, playing against good players, do not pull up and wait for the stroke of the man you are supposed to cover, but crowd him even though you are hopelessly behind. No man hits so well when hard pressed as he does when he has plenty of time, and the fact that you are crowding in will prevent his turning on it or taking time for his team to organize. Crowd your man.

To all players: Ride! Ride! and 'again, Ride your man!

CHAPTER VIII

DUTIES OF No. 1

Difficult to play.

No. 1 is the most difficult position on the field to play well, and a team that can afford to put a really first-class player at No. 1 is the most formidable team to meet. It is a position of tremendous possibilities. It follows that it requires superlative horsemanship, great devotion to the job of putting the opposing back out of play, and an utter unselfishness in the matter of leaving the ball for others behind to bring along. An excellent horseman, well mounted, not necessarily very experienced in the matter of hitting the ball, can be of the greatest use to the team by neutralizing the superior hitting qualities of the opposing back. By a curious contradiction, No. 1 is usually the place selected for putting the poorest player. This is because that is the place where he can do the least harm. He is less needed on the defense, and he can be extremely useful to his team if he rides well and hard and uses his position to interfere with the opposing backs, not necessarily hitting the ball himself.

Good horseman necessary.

Keep the opposing back out.

No. 1's principal duty is to keep the opposing back out of the play. To accomplish this there are two methods of riding, which are explained in Chapter VII, "Team Play," page 82 hereof, and which I shall not repeat, except to indicate that one of them is by getting into and holding a strategic position and then riding for the ball. This I consider the most effective method of play and therefore

most dangerous to the good work of the opponents, but one which is usually more applicable to the play of No. 2 and No. 3. The other is to ride the corresponding opponent direct. No. 1 can cover his position and save his ponies more than any other player. Allan Forbes played one pony ten years exclusively in that position, and often used only two ponies for his important matches. These important matches included matches for the championship of the United States and a great many other games against first-class players. No. 1 should dispossess his soul of the idea that he has to be hustling all the time. He can pull up and wait when the ball is going around or turning, and should always take care to maneuver so as to be in position on the right or mallet side of the opposing back, so as to force him to take a high-side stroke if he wants to get the ball without getting crooked, and then wait, keeping an eye all the time on the movements of the opposing back and at the same time watching the ball.

Can save
his ponies.

Play for the
mallet side of
the opponent.

The strategic place for No. 1 to lie in is a comfortable berth a few yards off the off fore shoulder of the pony of the opposing back, always being a little ahead of him in the direction the ball is going. If he sees the back galloping forward, he can be sure that he should immediately gallop with him in order to block him all he can. In case of doubt, stick by your man.

Fig. 5.

Strategic
position.

Keep a little
ahead of your
men.

On the throw in, No. 1 should place himself pretty well back from the referee and endeavor to get there before the No. 1 of the opposing side lines up. He should not move forward until about the time the ball is to be thrown, which he can guess pretty closely by counting slowly after the thirty second whistle is blown. About five seconds before the ball

Throw in.

Fig. 3.

is thrown, he should get in place, with his pony a little nearer the referee than the other pony, if possible. As the ball is thrown, he should drive his pony heavily across the line, leaning pretty strongly against his opponent if he is in position to interfere, and endeavor to get the ball as it passes under. If he misses it and the other No. 1 gets it, he stays by him and rides him just as though he were the back until he has spoiled the rush. After the rush is spoiled he turns to see whether he can get to the ball quicker than any other player on his side. If he can not, his job is to ride immediately to his position. If, on the other hand, on the throw in, the ball passes by, No. 1 should immediately extricate himself from the opposing No. 1 and start to gallop fast toward the goal he is trying to make until he gets to an advantageous position near the opposing back, where he should stop and wait unless the movement of the ball or of the opposing back indicates that movement is necessary. If No. 2 comes along with the ball and drives it up past, while No. 1 has the opposing back well covered, No. 1 should assume that No. 2 is in position to take it again and should stay by his back unless he hears a call from his own man to take it, or unless, looking around, he sees that No. 2 has been passed by one of the opponents who will get the ball, in which case he is free to ride for the ball, but in such case No. 2 should have directed him to "Take it." If No. 1 has got his opposing back covered and crowded out of the line of play, unless thoroughly drilled and conversant with his duty, he will have an almost irresistible impulse to leave the man he has so nicely covered and turn and go to the ball as it comes up past him. To do this when No. 2 has hit

Ride fast to position.

Stay by your man.

Fig. 11.

it last and is clear behind, is nothing short of criminal, the penalty for which should be at least six years at hard labor in the penitentiary. No. 1, if he has his opposing No. 4 covered, is doing everything that could be expected of him. If No. 2 hit it last, the presumption is that he is in position to hit it again, as, given equal ponies and equal horsemanship, No. 3 of the other side can not catch up to interfere. If, however, he does, there is always the fair chance that his No. 3 will be following and able to take the ball along. If No. 1 turns and leaves his man to get the ball, his opponent will do one of two things: He can either turn and crook No. 1's stick and then take the ball himself, or, as No. 1 turns to get into the line of the play, he can gallop hard and get past No. 1 and back the ball on the next stroke. Moreover, it is somewhat difficult to extricate your pony from riding off another, as a pony, when leaning well over and well braced against another pony, usually objects a little to changing and resists for a moment the effort of his rider to make him leave an opposing pony, a tendency which does credit to his intelligence as a strategist and one from which an open-minded No. 1, not swelling with the conceit that he is superior to brute creation, might draw some valuable points on how to play his position. In fact, it is usually necessary to spur a pony away in order to make him leave another that he is leaning against, which takes a little time. Having got away from the man he is riding, No. 1 then has to turn to get to the ball and turn again to get along the line of play. All of these processes usually result in No. 1's freeing the back, as before explained, and reaching the ball just in time to make a poor stroke and to

interfere with his own No. 2 who is riding free along the line of play and could have hit it without any of the maneuvers which have spoiled No. 1's direction and without the added disadvantage of leaving the opposing back clear ahead and in position to spoil the whole play.

Defensive
play.

On the defense, No. 1 should stay by back, gauging his distance and position by that of his opponent, and always ride through with him in case he rushes forward, provided that he can interfere with his play and that his opponent is on the ball as he goes through. If the opposing back is riding up on some mistaken theory that he had better get in and help somebody, No. 1 should stay back and hold his place, spacing himself on No. 2. Unless he has a chance to prevent his opposing No. 4 making a stroke, he should never ride in with him past the opposing No. 3.

Fig. 9 shows
the effect of
No. 1 (Blue)
not covering
his man.

When
opponents
change.

Where the opposing No. 3 and No. 4 change places, No. 1 and No. 2 should change with their men if by doing so they can prevent one of them making a stroke, otherwise they had better hold their places and let No. 1 take the opposing No. 3 and No. 2 take the opposing No. 4. In other words, there is no sense in changing positions unless there is something to be gained by doing so, and the only thing to be gained is to spoil the stroke or rush of the opposing side. There are times when the whole two teams could change ends, such as where the ball is brought by one side down the side of the field and, when hit across toward goal, picked up by the back of the other side and carried ahead around the field, and down the other side. In that case, if each man should ride his man, both teams would find themselves changed end for end, but as a matter of fact this practically never occurs, as No. 4, the moment

he sees the opposing No. 4 hitting around, will always cut across to defend goal instead of following the circle, in which case No. 1 has to watch his chance and cut back. Probably he will find that the opposing No. 4, as soon as the rush is checked, has turned to get back too, for all good No. 4's have an anxious feeling about the goal they are defending and won't stay up in the game long.

Fig. 20 represents a case where the three opposing players have ridden over the ball. No. 1 finds himself, as he should be, a little ahead of the opposing back, who, seeing that he can not get to the ball first, instead of riding in pulls up and waits for No. 1's stroke. Under no circumstances should No. 1 hit the ball to the waiting back. He has two or three courses open, all depending on circumstances. The first and the most usual one is to stop and stand over the ball with his pony facing across the field, always being sure that there is no possibility that No. 4 will rush in and make him commit a foul by so doing. No. 2 and No. 3 of his side will turn and get to him just as quickly as possible. The first one of these to get around should be No. 2, who, seeing him standing this way, should pass him at a little distance and receive the ball by a light tap across the field, the ball slanting, however, toward the goal to be made, but not slanting enough so that the opposing back will have any chance for it. No. 1 could then follow No. 2, and, in case the opposing back has by that time got so that he could reach the ball as it comes from the next stroke of No. 2, No. 1 could call upon No. 2 to leave it and take the back, and No. 1 come along on the ball, playing No. 2.

Fig. 20.

Don't hit to
a waiting back
who is clear.

Another play that No. 1 may make under the

circumstances indicated above is to turn on the ball and take it himself. In this case, if No. 4 stays quite a distance back, No. 1 should ride past the ball, all the time watching to make sure No. 4 doesn't ride up and steal the ball, and then turn and advance back on it, getting the pony well under way before he reaches the ball. He is now in position to vary his play according to circumstances. He can hit it just short of the back and follow it up by another stroke, or, if his No. 2 gets around in time, he can hit it a short stroke and then ride over it, going up to his position and letting No. 2 come up and take the ball along. What I have said elsewhere about following up other players too close applies with equal force to No. 1. When on the defensive, he should never follow up the players in front so close as to let the opposing No. 4 trail and thus stand any chance of the ball being deflected so that he will ride over it and leave it to the opposing back; in fact, he should always stay back and cover the opposing back, provided the opposing back is not lurking more than the fair distance of a full stroke away.

Don't follow
too close when
supporting.

There is a good deal to be said in favor of No. 1 not riding up on the ball at all when it has been ridden over but staying back with his man. But when he does this there is always the chance that the opposing No. 4 will slip past him and steal a march, or that one of the other side will turn first and get to the ball when No. 1 could have been standing over it and kept it away from the first opponent round by passing it conveniently to one of his own side, as before explained. No. 1 has to be guided by circumstances in such cases. If he sees that his No. 2 is going to get round first, his

position is back alongside of his man to clear the way for the rush to goal.

Crane says the back should never let his No. 1 come in alone and steal the ball from his No. 3.

From time to time it is well for men who are going to play No. 2 and No. 1 to change places in practice, No. 1 to play No. 2 and No. 2 to play No. 1, for a week or two. Thus each may see the difficulties of the other man's position, and No. 1 can get a much better idea of what No. 2 is calling for and why. "As others see us" is a pretty good point of view.

Apropos of all No. 1's knowing how to play No. 2, Allan Forbes says: "No. 2's should know how to play No. 1 and be willing to do so; most No. 2's play one and a half." This means that No. 2 too often hangs back and plays about half way between his own position and that of No. 1; in other words, he doesn't stay by the opposing back.

On the knock in by his own side, No. 1's duty is to place himself advantageously near the opposing back and keep him out of the play. Without unduly giving the play away, he should be ready to put himself on that side of the opposing back to which the ball is to be hit and then bother him. I have sometimes placed my pony directly across in front of back and let him extricate himself when the time came to move.

Allan Forbes says that it is often better for the No. 1 to place himself a little off to one side, counting on his man to pass the ball to him, in this way forcing the back to play to cover him.

When the opposing team is knocking in, No. 1 should place himself about thirty yards out, directly in front of the place where experience has shown him that the opposing No. 4 usually hits. If he

No. 1 should know how to play No. 2.

Fig. 4.
When his side knocks in.

Fig. 4.
When opponents knock in.

usually hits to the side, No. 1 should stand on the line from the ball to the side lines; if to the center, he should place himself in front of it, toward the center; if at a diagonal, he should place himself diagonally in; but in every case he should ride in to endeavor to meet the ball as it is knocked in. It is his fault if the ball is dribbled and the opposing back comes up and hits it a second time.

Pony should be ready to rush.

No. 1's great chance for a brilliant play is to get away with the ball before the opposing back is ready. His pony should be trained to start instantly to rush at speed on seeing a clear field, for speed is the essence of good polo. No. 1 should realize that the time spent in waiting is just what is needed to save the pony so that he will be fresh when the time has come that speed is needed.

CHAPTER IX

DUTIES OF No. 2

No. 2's primary duties are to keep himself, as nearly as possible, immediately on or over the ball when on the offensive. He alone of his side should follow the ball into the offensive corners; he must be the fastest and most accurate hitting man on the team. He must not let the opposing No. 3 carry the ball on the defense, and he must not let the opposing No. 3 back it on the offense. Of course, the best way to prevent this is so to place himself in regard to the opposing No. 3 as to get to it first on the offense or the defense. There are few chances for No. 2 to save his ponies. He ordinarily must have more ponies than any other man on the team. If No. 3 needs five, No. 2 needs six ponies for his matches. Back can get along very easily with four, No. 1 won't unnecessarily strain three. Of course, these figures vary with different players and their manner of playing. I have always thought that No. 2 and No. 3 ought to have particularly handy ponies; that handiness in the center was very important; and if in any given period of a match one of the two gets up on a fast pony that is not handy, the other should be careful to compensate by selecting a handy pony. Of course, with a fast game a slow pony in the center is perfectly hopeless, and it is assumed that No. 2 and No. 3 in important matches are well mounted and all their ponies are at least of average speed and not outclassed by the run of ponies playing.

Can't save his ponies much.

Handiness of ponies of No. 2 and No. 3.

Really slow pony fatal.

Throw in.

Fig. 3.

On the throw in, No. 2 should make a special effort to get the ball, being particular at the same time that No. 2 of the opposing side does not get it. Whoever does get the ball, it is No. 2's business immediately to follow up the play. If the opposing No. 3 gets it, it will be No. 3's business to stay with him, No. 2 probably trailing. If his No. 3 gets the ball on the throw in, it is probable that his opposing No. 3 will stay by him, taking temporarily No. 2's place, so that, unless No. 2 has been very quick in starting off ahead, the two No. 2's will be correspondingly placed and will fight it out for the position of supporting.

Fig. 6.

Cover your man.

What is said about supporting from too close under the head of "Duties of No. 1," applies also to No. 2, who must never under any circumstances ride too near to the couples in front of him, as No. 3 is shown to be doing in Fig. 6. If the ball is ridden over and No. 2 is riding fast and too close, he also will ride over it; and if he is riding ahead of his opposing No. 3, whom he has left riding clear, he is committing an unpardonable crime against proper polo. He should always stay back far enough to cover his man. It is his fault if the opposing No. 3 gets the ball. It is his business to see that No. 3 does not get it, and to get it himself. Of course, with two perfect players, which one gets the ball will depend just on how it happens to be hit away or the way the ball is left, whether to one side or the other. But every player should aim to be a player superior to the man opposite him, and he should devote his energies to outmaneuvering his man if he can, placing himself on his mallet side and a little in advance of his pony in the direction in which the ball and the player are moving. Then

Take a position a little ahead of your man.

he has got what in yachting is called a "weather berth" and is in position to put his opponent out of the play and get the ball himself.

Crane says: "No. 2 should take every chance on the offense and No. 3 should take practically no chance except one stroke from opponents' goal.

No. 2 should, by following the No. 1 and No. 4 at speed, force his opposing No. 3 to play closer to that pair than he otherwise would and thus nullify No. 3's defense. No. 3 can not afford to let his opposing No. 2 play clear in front even if he is too close to No. 1 and No. 4, for the penalty is too great if No. 2 does not bring off a lucky one."

What I have stated in regard to hitting the ball back to a waiting opponent, under the head of "Duties of No. 1," applies with equal force to No. 2. When, on the defensive, No. 3 and No. 4 may have ridden over the ball and No. 2 rides down on it and finds the opposing No. 3 has pulled back to get his back stroke, No. 2 should never hit it to him. His choice lies, as indicated in the chapter on the duties of No. 1 and shown for him in Fig. 20, between riding past the ball when it has ceased to move, turning and coming back on it, or stopping over it and waiting. If the opposing No. 3 has pulled up, there is no danger from infringement on right of way in doing this, but No. 2 must be very careful that he is not rushed and led into fouling by reason of standing over the ball. No. 2 can then take his time in regard to his measure, either dribbling the ball along slowly—following it up until his No. 3 is in position, then passing it to him—or hitting it short until he can ride over it and leave it for his No. 3 to come along; or, if the worst comes to worst, hitting it as far down as he can, on the chance that

Fig. 14.

his No. 1 will be in position to take it along, rather than giving it up to a player of the opposing side. I used to play a short cross-field stroke to the side on which my No. 1 or No. 3 was riding past; in the latter case No. 3 went up to No. 2's position and received the ball on the pass. This gave us a favorable chance for a run down the field, and we usually so arranged it that the opposing No. 3, who had been waiting for such a move, would have to get into the line of play at an angle which put him at a disadvantage and made it possible for my No. 3, now taking the position of No. 2, to get a good run. I, having passed it out to him, would take up the position next to him and ahead of any possible opponent, making sure that in case of my man missing the ball the opposing No. 2 would not get it.

Call "Turn"
when backing
the ball.

Fig. 12.

Where No. 2 backs the ball, he must be especially careful to call "Turn," or its equivalent, because his men ahead can not be looking over their shoulders all the time to see and can do better work if they can count on hearing.

Play approach
to goal.

I have always believed that No. 1 is the man to make goals, and when playing No. 2 I do not try for goals unless I am pretty sure of them. I never try a long shot or a difficult angle shot at goal, and such difficult goals as I may have made have been chance rather than design. When the play is at a difficult angle, I try to put it out directly in front of the posts. When it is a long way out I play an approach shot. It takes four times as much skill to hit a goal from 100 yards as it does at 50 yards, and four times as much skill from 50 yards as it does from 25 yards. See Figs. 5, 7, and 8 when No. 2 should try an approach shot first.

I consider it to be a great disadvantage to knock

over the back line, and I am always playing to put the ball close in front of the goal posts where another stroke will send it over, rather than relying on any particularly brilliant stroke from a distance.

On the knock in, No. 2 should be at the boards. I like to have it arranged so that when the back knocks the ball in it shall strike the boards, No. 2 placing himself in such a way that he can come down the boards at the point the ball hits and start the rush for the goal at the extreme side of the field, where the danger to one's own goal is at a minimum. By placing himself near the boards, No. 2 will have his opponents lined up for the defense in the field, and if the ball hits the boards it gives a clear shot between the pony and the boards for No. 2 to start his rush. If No. 2 sees a chance, I see no objection to his cutting or turning the ball out into the field and directly across the line of most of the players who come galloping toward the boards with the ball. This gives him the right of way to himself and often will enable him to come out clear into the field, particularly if No. 1 sees his chance and gets a position between the opposing back and the center of the field. However, I think it safest to bring the ball right along down the side lines, the idea being to get the goal out of danger first. From the side lines there is less chance of a successful rush toward the defensive goal, if the ball is turned, than from the center. The distance is so great from the goal you are trying to make that the angle is not a sharp one if you straighten it for goal before getting past the middle of the field.

I consider it the acme of bad polo to send the ball toward the boards at all in the offensive half of the field, unless it is done purposely, as, for ex-

When your side knocks in.

Fig. 4.

When not to hit toward the boards.

ample, for the purpose of gaining time, or, as is explained under "Team play," as a part of a strategic move to change the line of play.

Correct line
of play.

Fig. 1.

No. 2 should always bear in mind that the correct line of play is from the center of the ball to the center of the goal line he is trying to make, and every stroke that parallels that line of play establishes a right of way in the direction which is most direct to the opponent's goal and therefore most advantageous. It is his particular job to establish a right of way along that line, but a potential right of way is only good if it is maintained, and the way to do that is to get on it and hold it at speed.

Hit straight
to goal.

Exception.

To hit straight to goal all the time is a very good rule, care being taken to avoid hitting to opponents who are clear and that can be avoided by the simple device of hitting short, the direction still, if possible, being right straight to goal. An exception to this rule is to be found on page 97, where the advantages of angle hitting are explained at length. (See Figure 25.)

When the
opponents
knock in.

Fig. 4.

When the opponents are knocking in, No. 2 should place himself directly in front of the posts. Or, if the ball has gone out well over toward the side, he can take his place a few feet toward the goal from somewhere between the ball and the goal posts and far enough out to stand a chance of intercepting the first stroke. It is No. 2's business to block any attempt to carry the ball round the field or across goal. He waits to get a pass in case the ball is blocked and hit to him by one of his own men, but he must take his position to cover his man the minute the ball is hit. His man in this case may be the opposing back if he is riding

through, or it may be No. 3, who is probably stationed somewhere near him defending goal. No. 2 should be in position to receive the knock in by riding with the ball. He should be ready, however, to turn immediately in case of a very short stroke on the part of the man who is knocking in. If the ball passes near him it always pays to have a swing at it, but in cross-goal plays he should be very careful in so doing not to lose his position for the defense and let the man who knocked it in get by him and go down the field clear, as his team is depending upon him to prevent that.

To No. 2, as to all other players, I will repeat the admonition that they must ride rapidly until they are in position, after the ball goes outside or at any time, and, once solidly in position, take all the leisure they can. Get your place quickly.

No. 2 should remember, as should all other players, that the strongest defense is a strong offense—that if he rides his man religiously and conscientiously, keeping in front of the opposing No. 3, whichever way the play is going, playing for the ball when the opportunity arrives, so as to put the other man in the position of doing the riding off, he can really be the mainstay of the team. No. 2 wants to remember that the essence of all polo is hitting straight and true on the off side. If he is really on his job, the play will be fast; if he is not on his job, the play will be slow. In other words, No. 2 is the man on whom the team usually depends for making the game fast. No. 2 makes the speed of the team.

Where a particularly good chance comes, it is justifiable for No. 2 to cut across the line of the ball and take it around instead of backing it. Provided that his first stroke toward the center will No. 2 can play a cross stroke.

Fig. 19.

leave him in position to get an easy angle for his second stroke to the goal, this is often preferable to backing it toward the side. That the stroke is more difficult is compensated for by the improved opportunity it offers to carry the ball, and by the fact that the defensive line is intact with his No. 3 and No. 4 in position to defend in case of a miss on his part. No. 2 is, however, more justified in doing it near the opponent's goal than he is near his own goal, where the defense is more important and he should make the surer stroke and where the fact that he is taking it toward the boards is an advantage rather than otherwise.

CHAPTER X

DUTIES OF No. 3

No. 3 ought to keep over the ball all the time on the defense. He is the first line of defense. If No. 2 is the most aggressive and active player on the field, No. 3 should be the most careful and the most skillful. He should be eternally vigilant. He should combine readiness for whirlwind riding any minute with a feeling that he must be ready to defend goal and play the safe, conservative game of back. He must remember that the strongest defense is a strong offense; that a goal can never be properly defended if the team is not ready to take the offensive on the first move; that he can not help his back by galloping down on him; that he must never come back and do the back's work for him unless he has first passed the word to the back that he has taken his place and back has accepted the change and gone up to take the place of No. 3.

First duty.

Vigilance.

Don't gallop down on the back.

Fig. 17.

A defensive stroke is practically worthless unless it is followed up by turning it to an offensive movement. There is nothing more hopeless for a team than to have the back strokes constantly met as they are sent down by opponents who are riding clear, particularly when they should be covered. Thus No. 3's business is not only to defend the goal but he has to keep the opposing No. 2 out of the play. He must be careful not to leave him as shown in Fig. 6. The opposing No. 2 is apt to be formidable.

Cover the opposing No. 2.

Fig. 6.

able, the most aggressive, fastest, hardest hitting, and most effective player on the opposing team.

If No. 3 gets it into his head that it is his job to ride back and hit splendid back strokes, regardless of whom he is sending them to or where the opposing No. 2 is, he will often play as freely into the hands of the opposing side as though he were actually trying to do so.

At the risk of repetition, then, No. 3's work is not only to support his back, not only to prevent the play from passing him, but so to place himself in relation to the opposing No. 2 that he covers him in so doing. Of course, if No. 2 is playing too far back and pulls up whenever the couple in front have ridden each other over the ball, No. 3 will do what any good player should and what has been indicated to the other players—either stop over the ball or turn on it.

Fig. 3.
On the throw
in.

On the throw in, No. 3 has the simplest business of anyone, as well as the most obvious. He rides for the ball, stays with his opposing No. 3 if he gets it, and in so doing he holds his own position. If the ball rolls through and No. 4 gets it, No. 3 follows him up immediately, ready to take the position of No. 4 in case the rush is blocked. If, on the throw in, he gets the ball himself, he of course follows it right through and may by so doing get into No. 2's position, in which case he should say to his No. 2 "I am 2," to which No. 2 replies "I am 3." They continue holding these positions until a good chance comes to change.

When positions
change.

Fig. 6.
Mustn't
support from
too close.

In following up a stroke, No. 3 should always lay himself far enough back so that a disarrangement of the play by the ball having hit the stick of his No. 2 or a pony's foot will not cause him to ride over it.

His distance back, however, should be regulated by the distance of the opposing No. 2. If he has No. 2 covered so that he can not get the ball, No. 3's duty is done, and no kick can come if he doesn't get the ball himself. Then if the ball is moving in the offensive direction, it is up to No. 4 to be ahead of his man and come through and take it. Similarly, if, on the defensive, No. 3 and his corresponding opponent ride over the ball, it is up to No. 2 to be ahead of his man and get the ball. In any case No. 3 has done his first duty when he has covered his man. Fig. 24.

When his side is knocking in, No. 3 should take his place about ten yards out and somewhere between the ball and the goal posts. No. 4 hits the ball and follows it through, thus temporarily passing No. 3, unless the team shall prefer to have No. 3 knock in, an equally advantageous play, in my judgment. If there is any check, No. 3 and No. 4 can find their places, passing the word as they pass. No. 3's business is to see that the ball is not met by the opposing No. 1 or some other player and sent through the goal posts. He should take up a position about ten yards in the field and between the point where the ball is placed and the goal post. If the ball went out from near the post he should be directly in front of the goal, and in any case he should place himself in position so as to save goal in case the ball is met or returned before he and No. 4 have resumed places. No. 3 may also line up advantageously between No. 4 and No. 2 as suggested by Crane. (See p. 86.) When his side knocks in.
Fig. 4.

When the opponents are knocking in, No. 3's business is near the boards to stop No. 2 getting the ball and carrying it down. When the opponents knock in.

What I have said in other places in regard to the carrying of the ball round has particular force in its application to the position of No. 3. No. 3 should hit to his own players, not to himself.

Back the ball straight.

He should back the ball in the line it is traveling and send it almost directly back, selecting such little deflection to the side as he can safely make, so as to hit it clear of the nearest opposing player and his pony or toward where one of his own side is waiting.

Don't take it round.

Although it is particularly vicious for No. 3 to take the ball around, there is always the exception if the ball is traveling at an angle with the goal line he is defending and he gets a particularly good chance at turning on it, and, in turning it, he is hitting in a general direction toward the goal he is trying to make, not leaving for himself a difficult angle on his next stroke or riding in a great circle which the opponents can cut across to block him at any point, it is sometimes justifiable for him to turn the ball. This is only justifiable as an offense play when near the opponents' goal or in defending when the cross-field stroke will send the ball clearly ahead and well across the field. It should never be played at the risk of making a safety.

Exception.

Crossing in front of goal.

No. 3 should always remember that players following can spoil a forward stroke by crooking when a back stroke can be safely got off. He should be absolutely sure he is taking no chance of getting caught this way if he tries to carry it ahead.

Long strokes desirable, especially back strokes.

No. 3 and No. 4 are two men on the team who can hit long strokes with impunity, and No. 3 should make a particular effort to get his back strokes long. There is nothing that reflects itself quicker on the change from offense to defense than a long back

stroke. Players of the same side get to expect it and turn it rapidly to account. In the desire to secure distance, the greatest care should be taken not to sacrifice the certainty of hitting, as that is one of the most important parts of No. 3's play and one of the things most to be taken into account in selecting a player for the position. Must be sure
hitter.

Crane adds: "Protect your back at all costs and feed the ball up to your No. 1 and No. 2. Change with your back often to throw opposing No. 1 out and to equalize more the physical strain. Always change with No. 2 where time can be saved. If back is turned upon your back stroke, don't turn until you are sure the ball has started up, then play conservatively back to give your No. 4 confidence to change places with you."

In summing up my directions to No. 3, I should say, "Be vigilant! vigilant! vigilant!"

CHAPTER XI

DUTIES OF No. 4

First duty
defending
goal.

No. 4 or back is the defensive man on the team and the court of last resort. He should learn to have a timidity in regard to his goal line that renders him apprehensive of every possible move against it. He should be cautious about playing close up to the line.

Crane remarks: "It is safer to be close up as long as back has the opposing No. 1 securely covered than to be back a part of a stroke." He makes the general comment that a back should stay as close in as is safe and be alert to turn either way.

Don't play
too close.

By playing deeper he can usually accomplish more than he can by riding in and toying with fire. When I say playing deeper, I do not mean from more than thirty or forty yards away, according to the speed of the play. These distances may be shortened somewhat as the opponent's goal is neared, in order that he may be in position to rush through and make a goal, but No. 4 must remember that, however brilliant his rushes may be, however strong he may be in getting through on the offensive occasionally, his job is to defend the goal, and his stunt is turning the ball back whenever it gets started toward his goal and passes No. 3. More backs make mistakes by playing close up to their lines and coming in to charge than by staying far back. In the main, the back must remember that

if he has played his defense well he has played his game well.

No. 4 should be a successful maneuverer, who ought to be watching all the time to see how the opposing No. 1 is stacking up—what sort of position he is making for himself. No. 4 should be very adroit at getting the opposing No. 1 started fast and then pulling up and clearing him. He should be watching all the time to keep the opposing No. 1, if possible, on the nigh side so as to have his own mallet side clear. It is occasionally justifiable for No. 4 to meet the ball where he is perfectly sure he is going to hit it, or where he sees that No. 3 is in a favorable position to get it in case he misses it, in which case No. 4 should pass the word to No. 3 to take the defensive position. Under the head of "Match playing" I have discussed the strategy of changing the whole style of playing the last few moments of a match when the game is otherwise hopelessly lost.

Outmaneuver
the opposing
No. 1.

Keep horse
on the nigh
side.

When to
meet the ball.

On the throw in, No. 4 should line up a few yards off half way between the positions of No. 2 and No. 3. As the ball rolls back and looks as though it were going to pass through the opposing couples, he should swing his pony gradually until the ball passes the last couple, when he should dash in and try to get the ball for a rush to goal. If the opposing No. 4 is similarly alert in making the rush, they will have to guard mutually against collision, but it is No. 4's job either to get it or to prevent the other No. 4 from getting it. If, on the throw in, any of the opponents get the ball, No. 4 should immediately start back to defend.

Fig. 3.

On the
throw in.

The essence of No. 4's job is to back the ball, as is carefully explained in the chapter on "Use of the ball.

Backing
the ball.

Clear the
oncoming rush
of ponies.

the mallet," swinging his mallet along the line the ball is traveling for certainty in hitting, and always taking care to see where the rush of oncoming ponies is and to send the ball where it will not be hit by ponies or players as they come. It is easier to hit to the left than to the right, as it is easier to draw the stroke across behind the pony than to make the cut stroke to deflect it. When he has time No. 4 should wait until he is well past the ball before hitting it so as to get the full force of the swing and not to knock it into the ground. But he must take due care not to pass too far so as to send the ball too high in air, as that is more likely to be stopped and, besides, loses distance.

Don't hit
high in air.

Never cut
across the line
of the ball.

No. 4 should never cut across the line of the ball in trying to save goal, unless the ball has stopped moving. In this case he has an equally good chance for any direction if he can cross the line the ball has been traveling without fouling, and, in case of a forward stroke, be sure of not being crooked. He should remember that, more than anything else, his job is to hit the ball and hit it true. More depends upon his stroke than upon that of any other player, and he must not try fancy strokes when a plain one will do the work as well or better. His job is not a spectacular one—it is a safe one.

Fig. 4.

No. 4 should
knock in.

On the knock in, No. 4 usually hits the first stroke. He is relied upon to hit a long stroke, and he should try to have the ball strike the boards every time. If he feels he can not send it to the boards, either because the ball is too near the goal posts or because he is not a strong enough or sure enough hitter, he should hit the ball as near along the back line as he can, following it fast and hitting the second stroke to the boards.

Under no circumstances should No. 4 hit the ball directly out in front of the posts. If there is a signal for cross-goal hitting, No. 4 should hit well across, so that the ball will get well toward the boards of the other side; but he should never send the ball straight down the field with the expectation of hitting it a second time. The balance of chance is all against the side that makes this flash play. I have seen more goals lost by silly hitting out toward the center, when the ball could just as well have gone toward the side lines, than from any other one unnecessary and foolish misplay. Play safe, and safety demands that the ball be not knocked in front of the goal you are defending. The turf in front of the goal posts, for one thing, is cut up more than at any other part, as it gets the most wear, and the ball is less likely to travel true and is more likely to bounce here than in any other part of the territory adjacent to the end lines.

When the opposing side is knocking in, No. 4 should take his position as the second defense, expecting No. 3 to get the first stroke at the ball and send it back. No. 4 should be placed nearer the center of the field than No. 3 and not very far away, and should not meet the ball unless the ball has already stopped or his stroke is absolutely certain, or unless No. 3 has got past him and is taking his defensive position.

On the offensive, the back should place himself in such a way as to back up his No. 3 and No. 2 and to be ahead of the opposing No. 1 in a rush for the opponents' goal.

In case his No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3 ride over the ball and No. 4 is next, he, of course, comes through, calling "Go on" to his side.

When the opponents knock in.

Fig. 4.

Fig. 9.

Fig. 20.

When to call
"Turn."

If the opposing No. 1, however, has him covered so that he can not get through to hit the ball, No. 4 must then call "Turn" or its equivalent, pull up, and watch for his own side to get round. If he sees his No. 3 is well in position to defend, he can rush the opposing No. 1 to prevent his having time to turn or pass the ball, but in such case he should call to No. 3 to go back and protect goal.

Crane says that No. 4 should always rush the opposing No. 1 if his No. 3 is around first.

I have seen beginners, when told to go back, think it meant necessarily to pull up and go to some place behind them, when in reality they were heading back and all they needed was to whip up and go ahead. No. 3 and No. 4 should understand clearly what "back" means. It means to go toward the defensive goal. It means playing a deeper defensive, so if they are heading back, a signal to go back indicates that they must go ahead fast.

No. 4 should always be looking for a chance to get through with the ball. The most brilliant backs I have known have been those who, when a chance came for a rush, came crashing through at high speed, being in a better position to get up high speed because their ponies have less rushing and turning to do and are therefore fresher.

Value in
rushing
forward.

Fig. 9.

When he comes through this way, back should be particularly careful to call "Go on" to his men, as his rush is not the expected thing, his job being to play the defensive, and his own players will not necessarily expect him to come through unless they are informed that he is doing it. Having rushed up into the game, back should be very careful to pass the word to No. 3, so that No. 3 will assume his responsibilities, and No. 3 should play religiously

back, preferably fairly deep, and stay there until the opportunity comes to change to his own place. Changing. When the ball turns direction, or when it is taken round the field, there is usually a favorable opportunity to regain position.

In summing up No. 4's job, I should say "Sure, careful, deep, resourceful, and always safe, very safe."

CHAPTER XII

DUTIES OF THE CAPTAIN

The captain's work may be divided into two distinct parts, which will be treated separately. One is the work of the captain of the polo club and the other is that of the captain of a team.

Club captain.

It is the duty of the captain of the club to see that all players get their share of polo. He should be most scrupulous in encouraging the poorer players and beginners. There is always the necessity of steering between the difficulty, on the one hand, of depriving everybody of fast polo by giving the poorer players equal chance with the better ones, and, on the other hand, the difficulty of discouraging the poorer players and beginners by not giving them their money's worth and an opportunity to play often enough. The captain should be very resourceful to overcome these difficulties—for example, by getting the better players out early, so that they may have a few periods before the others come or so grouping the teams as to let the poorer players play for certain periods and the better players play in others. One thing should be borne in mind always, and that is that the strength of a polo club as a club lies not in the strength of its best three or four men, but in the strength of the average player; that if a captain builds all his hopes upon his best men and sacrifices to their development and welfare the interests of others, he is sacrificing

Encourage
poorer players.

Strength of
a club lies in
the average
strength of
players.

the interests of his club. The continued playing of any one set of players is uncertain. If the club gets dependent on them, when they go out the club is lost, whereas, if the captain adopts the policy of developing the best qualities of each new player and encouraging him by giving him every opportunity, there will be a crop of men—ready to step into the place of any man going out—who will very shortly become good players, just by reason of the fact that they are to play on the team. My experience has been that with the proper opportunity and coaching a player may be rounded out very rapidly. When I was coaching the university football team at Harvard, I almost preferred to begin a new season with new material than to have too much of the old. It never discourages me to put in a new man. Start the players right and the responsibility of playing a team game with a team that has won its spurs will prove to be an incentive to almost any player that will result in his molding himself within an almost incredibly short period of time. The fact that there are experienced men before and behind him enables him to find himself very much more rapidly than he would if left to himself, floundering about in the chaos of a beginner's polo game.

Playing on team makes good players.

Potential value of new men.

Where the polo squad is twelve or less, there should be an agreement among the men to give up all minor engagements and present themselves at the field in time to make a game so that five or six players will not be kept waiting until some belated one or two arrive. The captain should endeavor to stimulate among the players a spirit that will make them alive to their responsibilities in this respect.

Every one should come out.

Periods
allowed each
player
proportioned
to ponies.

Players should be given opportunities to play in direct proportion to the number of ponies they have. The one-pony man is entitled to one period in three; a two-pony man is expected to drop out much oftener than a three-pony man, while a man who maintains four or more ponies should play right along and get cut out of play only one or two periods in an afternoon.

Arrangement
of teams in
practice.

Where more than twelve are out, I have found that it pays to arrange three teams, each a different color—red, yellow, and blue. The Reds and Yellows play one period and then the Reds and Blues have a period; the Reds thus play twice in succession. The Red team then goes out and the Yellows and Blues have a turn. Where there are more than fifteen players, four teams can be formed and no intervals allowed, as when the first two teams to play ride off the field, two more teams ride on, and thus the maximum of playing is provided. In the case of men with only one pony, adjustments can be made by substituting the men with several in their places. Although this makes a constant shifting of the personnel of most of the teams, it is advisable except in preparing for matches. Then the players that are to be played as teams should be kept as much as possible together and the changes made in other groups of players.

Hours longer
when players
are many.

Where there are great numbers, the hours of play should be longer, so as to give everybody a chance to go in. Where the players are few, the hours of play should be shorter and the intervals longer. Where a player for any reason wants to stay out, he should give notice to the captain immediately on dismounting, not, as usually seems to be the practice, just as the teams are mounting to get into place.

I believe it advisable to have little painted tin slips, with the names of the men, which can be placed in a rack where all can see. The captain, having selected his Blue team, sets up their names and positions on the Blue rack. He should then designate the captain of the team as they go out. The Red team should be on the Red rack and the captain designated. As soon as the bell rings practice should start, and there should always be an umpire or referee—one of the players, or some person on horseback—to throw in the ball and start the play. Before any line up is called, about ten minutes should be devoted to limbering up and getting the ponies worked for a few minutes and the strokes steadied.

Always have a referee.

Ten minutes to limber up before practice.

For this warming up, it is best to have the goal posts moved fifteen or twenty yards toward the side of the field in order that the concentration of ponies at the goal may not tear up the field in the center of the goal, thus saving the turf between and about the goal posts. If this practice is pursued the goal line itself will be infinitely less cut up, as in an hour or two of actual play there will not be more than fifteen or twenty goals made—say, eight at each end. In the practice beforehand, there are likely to be forty at each end in ten minutes.

Saving the turf between the goal posts.

It is proper to let the poorer players and beginners have the less important posts in the team play in practice. A new man should go to No. 1 until he earns the right to move into the somewhat more responsible positions. Unless developing a player for some particular and immediate purpose, I put my strongest men in the positions of No. 2 and No. 3 and put the weaker players at the ends.

Poorer players put at No. 1 and No. 4.

Colors should be ready and strapped onto the players as they start to play, and an attendant

Colors for practice.

should be on hand to see that each man has his colors off before he leaves the field. If this is not done, the players will wear them away as sure as fate and often forget to bring them back, so that the club will be constantly having to supply new colors.

Team captain.

The team captain is charged with the conduct of the game and the direction of the play.

See that men
are holding
their positions.

The most important part of his duty is to make sure that his men are holding their positions. If play is going badly against his team, he should be able to size up the reason for it. More than likely it is the fault of some one player. Not long ago I was playing on a team that by all rules should have been very strong and should have easily beaten its competitors, but it didn't. I got worried and began analyzing the reason for it, watching each player with the greatest solicitude, but for some days I failed to detect the weakness till by the process of elimination it gradually came to me that the weak place was at No. 2, the position I was playing. I then got busy and began looking less for faults in others. Some men get a fancy in their heads that they can help by going back and helping another of their own side. That is most likely to be the case when the game is going against them and No. 2 or No. 3 get it into their heads that they can help No. 4 by going back and making his back strokes for him. If there is anything that kills a team, it is that. The best way they can help No. 4 is by holding their positions and making the advance effective when the time comes to take the ball ahead. The captain should see that players hold their position, even if the game is going against them, cover their man, and be sure to let the fault lie

Fig. 17.

with some other player, if fault there be, and not add to it by turning the whole game into hopeless confusion by leaving their posts to do somebody else's work. The fact is, no player can do anybody else's work, and with one position uncovered the team is crippled.

The captain should be most scrupulously careful not to blame other men for his own misplay. If he does, he will soon lose his influence with the team and the spirit of the team will go to pieces. No player finds fault with a just criticism, even when expressed in extremely forcible language. Even though sore for a few moments, when he comes to think it over and sees that he is to blame, he comes back chastened in spirit and bearing no ill feeling. Polo is not a game where you can stop and say "Please." The orders of the captain must be sharp, immediate, and peremptory, and instantly obeyed by his players.

Criticising
the team.

The captain should remember that no man can play well with constant criticism. All players must be encouraged. Anyone will go to pieces if the only words that come from the lips of a captain are those of blame. Every encouraging symptom should be noted, and praise should be given wherever praise is due and in equal measure to the blame.

Don't criticise
too much.

The captain should make sure that the men do those simple things so necessary for their proper playing which are carelessly left out by a great many players. He should tell them to feel their mallet heads before mounting for each period in a match. He should stir them up to be ready on time. He should insist upon quick lining up, each man taking his place when the ball goes out. He should train each player so that, when the ball goes

Keep an eye
on the detail.

Make the men
line up quickly.

out of bounds, he will gallop rapidly to his position as though the play were still in process and then stop and get his wind after he is in place, not before. Nearly two-thirds of the players I have seen have the fault of pulling up and taking too much time getting into position after the ball goes outside, with the result that they are reaching their position when the ball is thrown or knocked out, instead of being in it. If the referee or knocker-in is at all expeditious, a quick man can take advantage of this carelessness of his opponents to be on hand and get the ball a great many times when a little promptness on the part of the opposing players would have prevented it.

Choosing
of sides.

It is the captain's business before the game to toss up for choice of sides. In choosing sides he should take into account sun and wind. It is easier to play down the wind than against it, and if it happens that the field lies so that the sun is in the eyes, that might offset a head wind and make it wise to choose the side with the back to the sun.

No talking
back on field.

The captain should allow no talking back on the field by the players. In the main, talking on the field by the players should be confined to the words which I have indicated under the head of "Team play," which amounts to keeping your side informed as to what is going on; but the captain of the team should speak and coach the other players. A team will listen to the orders or criticisms of the captain, whose business it is to talk, but ill spirit results if all players undertake to coach or find fault with each other. I do not, however, mean to preclude old experienced players sending new men back to their places, if they come in to crowd them or get out of place. In fact, any player who gets out of

Captain only
shall criticise.

place must expect to hear of it very sharply. There is no way a man can be trained to learn his place except by a man whose territory is invaded letting him know he is out of place, and nobody can blame him if it is a fairly sharp reminder. The captain should be particularly careful never to scold the player for having done badly if his intentions were right; that is, if he misses a stroke or does not get his pony pulled up and turned fast enough to cover some other player or players, especially if called upon to ride an extremely good horseman or man on a particularly fast pony, or, in other words, where he has done practically everything that he ought but did not do it quite well enough. Vituperation in such cases will only do harm, and the player scolded will be discouraged, not helped. If he has turned in a circle instead of pulling up in his tracks and turning, that is an incorrect play; he should have known better and should be roundly brought to task. Or if he has failed to ride off or crook the other man's stick, letting him have a free swing when he could have prevented it, or if he has begun his stroke at the ground and ridden past the ball before his mallet got around, the captain should very properly call his attention sharply to his error.

When not
to blame.

When to blame.

In selecting the teams it is well to bear in mind the following facts:

Selecting of
men for
positions.

Of an average sixteen strokes,

No. 2 will hit six.

No. 3 will hit five.

No. 4 will hit three.

No. 1 will hit two.

It is No. 2's position to be on the ball all the time on the offensive, and No. 3's to be on the ball on the defensive, and, as a natural result, they get

Positions
compared.

most of the hitting. Thus, on the general theory of chance, as No. 2 is in position where most of the hitting comes naturally, the most accurate hitter should be selected for the position. I believe that, except for special circumstances, a team will be strongest if its best player is at No. 2, its next best at No. 3, its next best at No. 4, and the poorest at No. 1, which is the position in which a poor player can do the least harm. The position of No. 1 has very naturally come to be looked down upon. In view of the foregoing it is almost paradoxical to say that it is the position where the best player can do the most good, and I have been accustomed to measure the strength of strong teams by their No. 1. In the great international championship game of 1909 won by America in England, L. Waterbury, supposed to be the best player on the American team, was placed in the position of No. 1. This seems to be inconsistent with my general theory of play, but, given a team where No. 2 and No. 3 are sufficiently able to cover their positions and do it on equal terms with the No. 2 and No. 3 of the opposing side, the strength in the position of No. 1 is what a business man would call "velvet," and means goal after goal.

Crane comments that if the team is winning, No. 2 will hit oftener, but if the team is losing and generally on the defense, No. 3 will have more strokes.

I believe, however, that in average play No. 2 will get the most shots; he hits more short ones, for one thing. I advise selecting the team on the assumption that you are going to win.

Crane makes the following comment in regard to most important qualifications: "No. 1 should be deadly on goal and quick to act on his chances. No.

2 should be as sure as possible of goal and the most dashing, active man and chance taker. No. 3 should be a good strong hitter both ways on both sides and safe and sure at backing up No. 2 or at back. No. 4 should be a strong back-hand hitter on both sides and conservative. No. 2 and No. 3 should be very handy."

In preparing a team for its matches, a captain should not call on his men for supreme and unusual efforts. They are usually nervous and pitched to high tension, and need soothing and confidence rather than stimulation. Some few men are so phlegmatic that they need to be urged, but it is seldom or never that a team, as a team, needs such treatment.

Don't stir
the men up.

The first thing a team needs is confidence. Captains should try to see that the players are confident that good team play is going to win against superior individual play. I have, as captain, very often told my men that, if the score was not more than three goals against us in the first three periods, we were sure to win, doing this in the belief that brilliant playing is apt to tire itself and get worn down by coöperative play on the part of four steady and quiet players, and because the expectation on the part of one team that the other side was going to show a kind of flash in the pan tends to give them confidence against an adverse score which they would not have otherwise. I have often noticed this to be the case.

Importance
of confidence.

I also tell my men to meet a rush with a rush, and, if their side is pressed very hard, to grit their teeth and come back hard at their opponents.

CHAPTER XIII

MATCH PLAYING

Preparation for matches should be much more careful than for practice, and there are certain precautions which it pays to take.

In the first place, six, preferably ten, mallets satisfactory to the player should be secured. The player should select his best stick and then get the other ones in the order which he would prefer to use them and give his second best stick to somebody who will agree to stand right at the side lines to deliver the stick in case of necessity. Careful instructions should be given to see that the man holding the stick does not step on the field in delivering it, as that would be a foul. In very important matches, I should recommend that each team have six men stationed at various points—three on each side of the field, one at the center, and two on either side toward the ends—each with one mallet for each of the four players of the team. Thus, upon losing a stick, a player could gallop to the nearest point and not lose time. It is well to have distinguishing marks on the sticks. I always used to paint rings around the stick just next the handle. By having these colors, you can always tell your own sticks and not by any chance get anybody else's. It is always well also to ink your name on the head or end of handle.

Selection of sticks.

Extra sticks at convenient points.

Distinguishing marks on mallet.

Order of ponies.

Before mounting, the ponies should be selected and orders given as to the exact order in which

they are to be played. Upon mounting one pony, the groom should immediately have the next pony girthed up and ready to go out on a second's notice, so that in case of the breaking of a curb chain or of a stirrup, or some other accident to the pony, the next pony may be mounted without loss of time, as time is golden. Each pony to be ridden in the match should be mounted once before the play to make sure that the stirrups are just right, but it is not necessary to ride them before playing, although it improves some of them to do so. If there is any pony that is particularly fractious and high strung, it is often well to let him have several miles at slow gallop before the play to bring him within the bounds of reason. Two or three miles will steady a pony immensely and not detract from his staying power.

Have the next pony ready.

Toning down ponies that are too high strung.

I have found it useful at the beginning of play to take a sponge and moisten the breeches inside the knees and legs so as to assure the grip. By the time the trousers and saddle are sweated through, the grip will be first rate, but before that there will have to be a time when the saddle is slippery, and, particularly on nigh-side strokes, there is a little loss in efficiency.

At the beginning of each period of play, the players should be sure to test their mallet heads and make sure that the mallet has not begun to spring or the head to twist. If there is the least indication of weakness, the mallet should be changed, as, once begun, the stick gives very rapidly, and there is nothing more fatal to direction than a twist in a mallet head.

Test the mallets.

I am strongly opposed to drinking anything during practice or play. In the very hottest weather

Avoid drinking during play.

I used to take one-half tumbler of oatmeal water in the course of an afternoon of hard polo. I believe filling oneself with water makes one logy and that there is no advantage. The thirst might just as well be undergone, and I think the player is better for it. I am particularly opposed to drinking stimulants. I do not think the effect of them lasts, and the player gives out in the last period or so. I know the team on which I played, which made a rule of not drinking anything, was strongest in the last part of the play. They used to win against other teams, often in the last few minutes of play, and I noticed those other teams were apt to encourage themselves with very stiff drinks during the intermissions. In case of exhaustion it may be possible to play the last period on stimulants, but I doubt if it would be of value any longer than that.

Value of
stimulants.

Be ready
early.

The throw in.

Always mount your pony before the one-minute bell rings and be in your place waiting for the thirty second bell to ring. Never wait, before getting your position, until that bell has rung. When the thirty second bell rings, begin to count slowly so as to see if you can guess approximately when the ball will be thrown in, all the time watching carefully the hand of the referee. When you think the ball is about to be thrown in, move your pony, if possible, just a little ahead of the opposing pony, so as to get the advantage at the instant the referee puts up his hand and the ball is thrown. When the ball is thrown, you should be moving toward it.

In selecting the ponies for the match, it is well for the players to have an understanding so that they will know what ponies the other players on their side will use. If players are trying new ponies

or ponies that have particular characteristics, it is well to make the characteristics fit one into the other. For instance, if one player has a particularly handy pony and the other player has one that is fast but not handy, it is well, say, for No. 3 to arrange to ride his handy pony in the period when No. 2 is riding an unhandy pony, to offset the disadvantage. A team should be careful that they don't all get mounted on their poorest ponies at once; this might cripple their efficiency and lose the game just by reason of inability to prevent the other team scoring at will for one period. I have seen this happen more than once, and several times I have seen very bad effects from lack of coördination as to mounts.

Sometimes a team has to arrange the order of its mounts to meet peculiarities in the mounts of the opposing team, but this happens much less often than adjustments of the mounts to fit in with one's own side.

Players, before beginning a match, should go out and get their stroke true, beginning slowly, but being perfectly sure to hit with the center of the stick, and then gradually increasing the speed until the stroke comes right. There is no need of continuing after a succession of strokes has indicated that the eye and hand are true.

Preliminary
practice.

In preparing for matches, keep to the ponies that are to be played in the matches, and do not try new ponies or difficult ones that you are not going to play in the games. It unsettles the stroke and accomplishes no useful purpose.

Don't ride
strange ponies
just before
matches.

In preparing for a match, it is well to eat a hearty breakfast, indulging in the usual pursuits during the morning, take a light luncheon of some well-cooked and simple food, ending at least two hours

Preparation
beforehand.

before the game is to begin, and taking particular pains not to drink much, not more than a tumblerful of liquid at the outside.

Nervousness. Personally, I prefer to have a set of men who are nervous before important matches than men who are not; it is apt to keep them up at their best. If a man is not nervous before an important game, it is apt to be an indication that there is something the matter with him.

Delaying the game.

When, for any reason, it is desired to delay the play, my practice is to get the ball going slow along the side boards and then stop over it, in so far as can be done without violation of the rules, sending it short distances along the boards, or, if in the field, toward the side or into the corners. It never pays to try to delay the game, however, if you have a good offensive movement under way. Keep the rush going until you are apt to lose the ball, when sometimes it can be turned and sent into the far corners where there is less enthusiasm on the part of the opponents in following and where they can not do much harm whichever way they hit it. A team may want to delay the game when a player has left the team to change his mallet, or when the game is drawing toward the end and well in hand and the ponies are tiring and are needed later for further hard work. I always try to save my ponies all I can. It is not right to delay the game by not hitting in on a knock in, or by any violation of rule.

Strategy when the game seems lost.

If the game has gone against you and you have one or two goals to make, and only a little while in which to do it, the whole strategy of polo changes. Back should no longer play safe, as he has everything to lose and nothing to gain by doing it. Dif-

difficult strokes should be tried in place of easy ones, and the whole team should endeavor to meet the ball at all places and at any angle. A possible victory may be gained by unexpectedly meeting the ball, a change in policy which will surprise and perhaps demoralize the opposing team and make the difference between winning or losing the game.

CHAPTER XIV

A POSSIBLE WAY OF SUPPLYING PONIES

Present lack of method in polo pony supply.

How polo ponies are obtained.

It seems strange to me that men of as great ability in organization as some of the men now playing polo have not concentrated their attention on arranging for an intelligent and adequate supply of polo ponies. The present haphazard means of supply in the United States is somewhat as follows: A number of polo pony dealers travel in person or by means of agents over all the Western States of the Union and part of Mexico in the effort to find likely material for polo ponies. I do not suppose that these various dealers and agents have systematically quartered the field, and so there is no doubt a good deal of duplicate traveling. In the course of these journeys inspection is made of many thousand head of horses, from which certain promising ones are culled, usually of polo age—that is, more than five years old. This means that either they have not had any training or have had a training which may or may not have been calculated to develop them in the best way for polo, but on the general theory of chance they have not been so trained. These horses are brought, at considerable expense, varying according to the distance, to some central ranch, usually in Texas, but sometimes in other States, where they are trained by a number of expert men who teach them the rudiments of polo. Not more than half the ponies thus brought in, I am informed, prove to be valuable for polo. Those

which are approved are shipped in carload lots to cities in the different parts of the United States where polo is played. These ponies, again, are maintained on farms or in stables near the polo clubs until they have been sold, or it is found that they can not be sold, when they may be transferred to some other city.

The net result of all this is a very considerable expense to the polo player, as in the process he must pay for the finishing and breaking, must give the polo dealer his profit and besides reimburse him for the travels of the agents, the examinations of unfit stock, the transportation of good and bad stock to the central farm, and its support while being trained, as well as meet the loss on those animals which turn out to be no good for polo, the transportation and housing while near the polo clubs, and the loss on those of the animals which are not sold off.

It seems to me that this condition ought to be met by a combination among the polo men in the United States, who should jointly subscribe for a central polo ranch, to be situated in some place suitable for grazing horses and training them in the winter months, where a large herd of mares should be maintained and where polo ponies should be systematically raised and trained. By beginning the training at the age of one year or two, many horses could be made to play which refuse to play when work is begun on them at an older age, and much greater finish could be put on the colts as turned out.

Combination
of polo players
suggested.

I see no reason why there should not be a polo pony stud book in which good sires and dams of polo ponies should be registered and record kept of all of the stock which reaches a certain degree

Polo stud book.

of excellence in play, or in producing playing ponies. Under certain rules such playing ponies and producers of players should be classed as standard, which will give a sure value to the strain from which they are derived. In this way, by gradual process of elimination of stock that does not tend to produce good polo horses, a herd could be obtained which could be relied upon to insure a uniform product generally suited to the purposes of polo.

Gradual
formation of
polo stock.

By bringing to this farm the proved sires—that is, those that have gotten good polo ponies—and the proved mares, the dams or sisters of the best ponies, and all the polo mares which, having been good players during their working days, are retired to the stud to produce their kind, the ranch could gradually acquire a very considerable herd of horses, which are likely to produce offspring in which there is a prevalence of those characteristics that are desirable in polo. I should like to see it tried on a scale which would enable the managers of the club to go further than this. I think they might try to get an ideal stock as a sort of basic stock from which to get large numbers of future ponies. It seems to me that it ought to be feasible to buy, say, 1,000 pony mares such as are used by the North American Indians, which are small and tough, and can be had for very little money. In the countries that I have hunted over I have seen these ponies sold at from \$10 to \$30. These could be crossed with pure-blooded Arab stallions and the fillies only kept. After three years of this, enough fillies would be on hand so that the original mares could be sent away, or at least reduced by a process of elimination. These half-Arab, half-Indian fillies could be crossed with stunted English

Large scale
suggested.

Indian mares
for numbers.

First cross
with Arabs
for quality.

Second cross
with
thoroughbred
for speed.

thoroughbreds. I believe the result of this crossing would make an excellent polo pony in a good many instances. The horse should be very stout and very fine, being half thoroughbred, one-fourth Arab, and one-fourth "Cayuse." The experiment might be made of breeding the second time to Arab, so that the mares finally crossed with the thoroughbreds would be three-fourths Arab and one-fourth "Cayuse." It might be that individual cases would show the necessity for additional strength of the Arab strain.

Additional Arab strain, if necessary.

With a stock of mares, now half thoroughbred and the other half divided in varying proportions between Arab and "Cayuse," I should breed to performers or to the sires of performers, and it is my belief that at the end of ten years, by this method, we should be in position to be identifying and registering those strains that throw colts that turn readily to polo. There should be nothing haphazard about the matter. By intelligent selection and supervision in the method of breeding, by concentration at one point of all stock which had proven by experience that it bred good polo ponies, all the expense of annual travels and rounding up and testing of horses would be eliminated. There would be no transportation from the place where the pony was reared to the place where he was to be trained, and the future polo pony would be sure of an education along the most scientific lines, given at the proper age, and consistently carried through.

Third cross to performance.

An advantageous method of getting under way early would be to secure the services of one or more of the most successful and reliable existing organizations and have them purchase a suitable number of likely ponies of polo age. This could be done while

looking up and purchasing the sires and dams of good ponies then playing. These young horses could be trained at the ranch and furnish an immediate supply. This could go on from year to year until the new stock raised on the ranch came along, after which outside purchases could be gradually discontinued.

The ranch should maintain a polo club with good fields, under the charge of a pastmaster in the art of polo. Members could get some winter sport and buy their strings right there each year, so that only the ponies known to be wanted would be shipped up, which would make a very satisfactory result for the place and for the pockets of the players. It ought to reduce the cost of polo ponies very considerably and increase the number of good ones.

These suggestions are merely ideas which have been running rather loosely through my head, and I do not doubt that a person more familiar with the breeding of polo ponies will see many ways of doing better. But I feel quite confident that the fundamental plan of a systematic and organized method of supplying polo ponies is not only desirable but will some time prove to be necessary. I believe that, with such an institution started, and with polo men of means willing to see it through its first lean years, it would solve the polo pony supply problem of the United States, and later possibly of other countries. I see no reason why the numbers should be at all limited there and I do not see why the supply could not be kept right up to the annual demand.

Other sports
at the ranch.

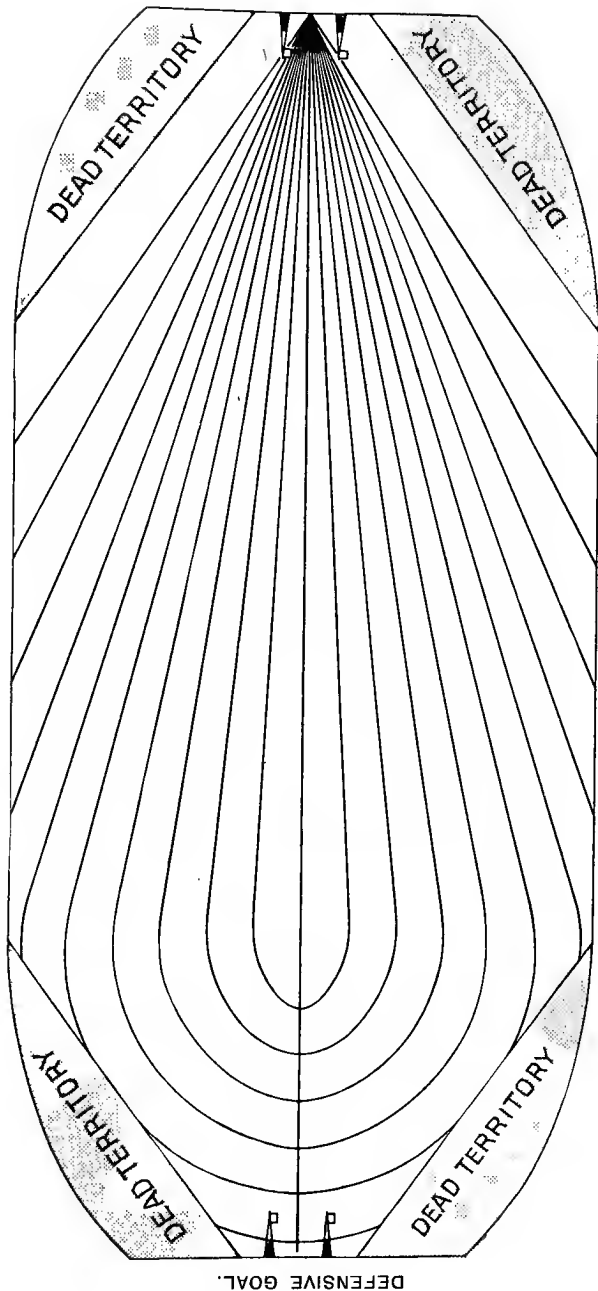
I believe a club organized on some ranch where horses could be raised in these numbers would afford many attractions to sportsmen, and there could be

many sports besides polo there, all of which would be a matter of gradual growth from year to year. As the popularity and use of the club grew, the time might easily come when this breeding ranch became a place where polo players from all over the country would gather for a few months and have polo, tennis, golf, and possibly hunting, coursing, and other sports, meet each other, and buy their annual supply of ponies. They could bring their neophytes desirous of being initiated into the mysteries of the game, who would thus begin under the favorable auspices of some trained master who would put them through those exercises which are the best preliminary instruction for polo beginners, and possibly save them from making a great many mistakes and ruining a good many ponies before learning by bitter experience things which they might have easily learned beforehand. I speak from my own experience and I do not doubt at all that many polo players have similar experience to look back upon and regret, particularly the unwise practices that resulted in losing their first polo ponies when a little knowledge would have prevented it.

Training school of players as well as of ponies.

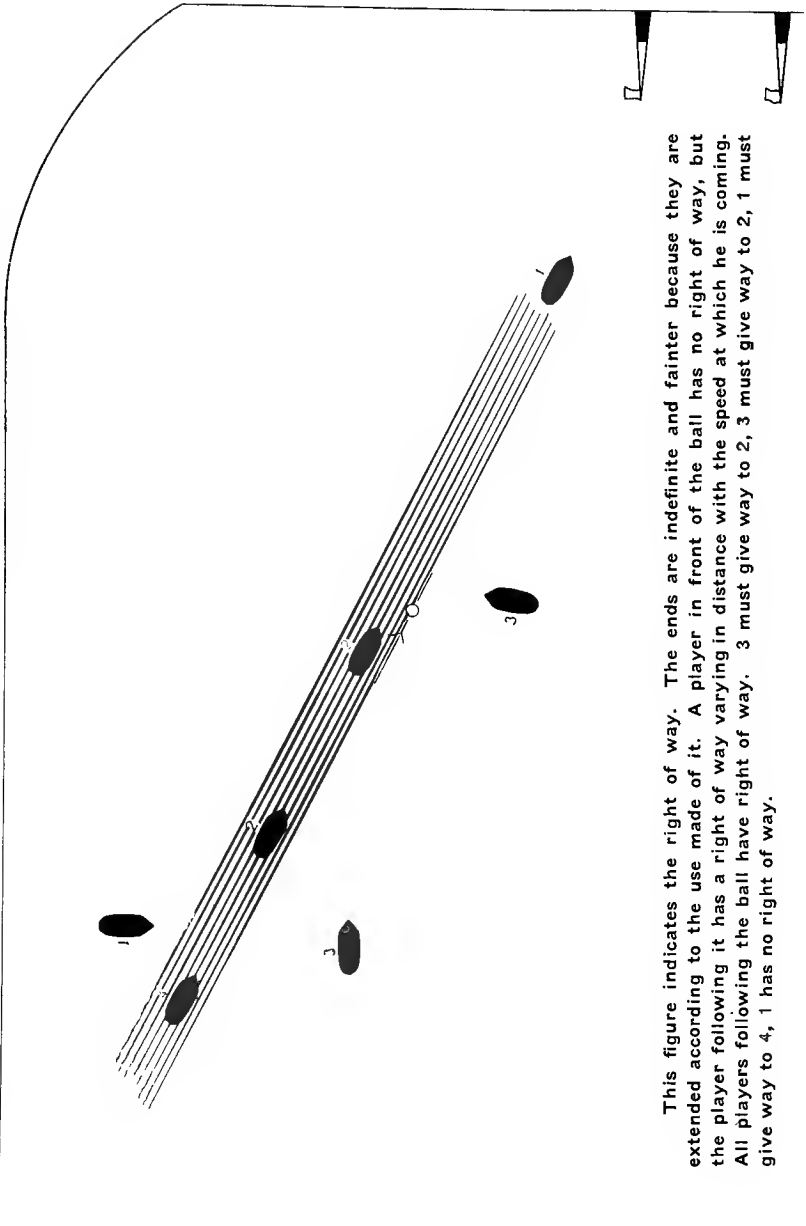


Fig. 1.
OFFENSIVE GOAL.



The lines drawn on this field represent the proper lines for the ball to travel. Any ball which cuts these lines is not effective polo. Every ball which parallels these lines is correct polo. The dead territory is that from which a ball shot at the goal has a reasonable certainty of not going through between the posts. Note: There are exceptions noted in the text when strokes cutting these lines are advantageous.

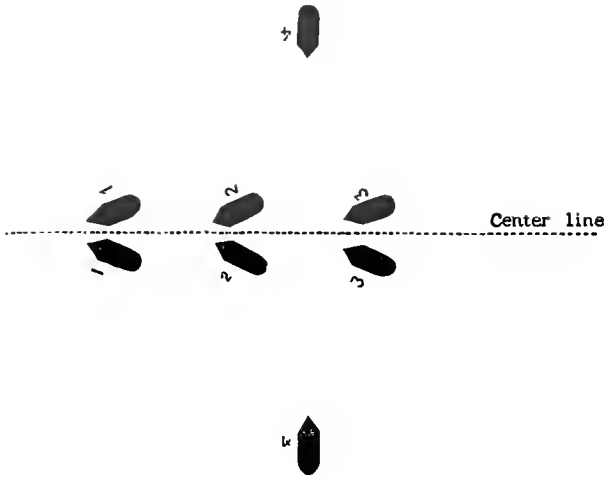
Fig. 2.



This figure indicates the right of way. The ends are indefinite and fainter because they are extended according to the use made of it. A player in front of the ball has no right of way, but the player following it has a right of way varying in distance with the speed at which he is coming. All players following the ball have right of way. 3 must give way to 2, 3 must give way to 2, 1 must give way to 4, 1 has no right of way.

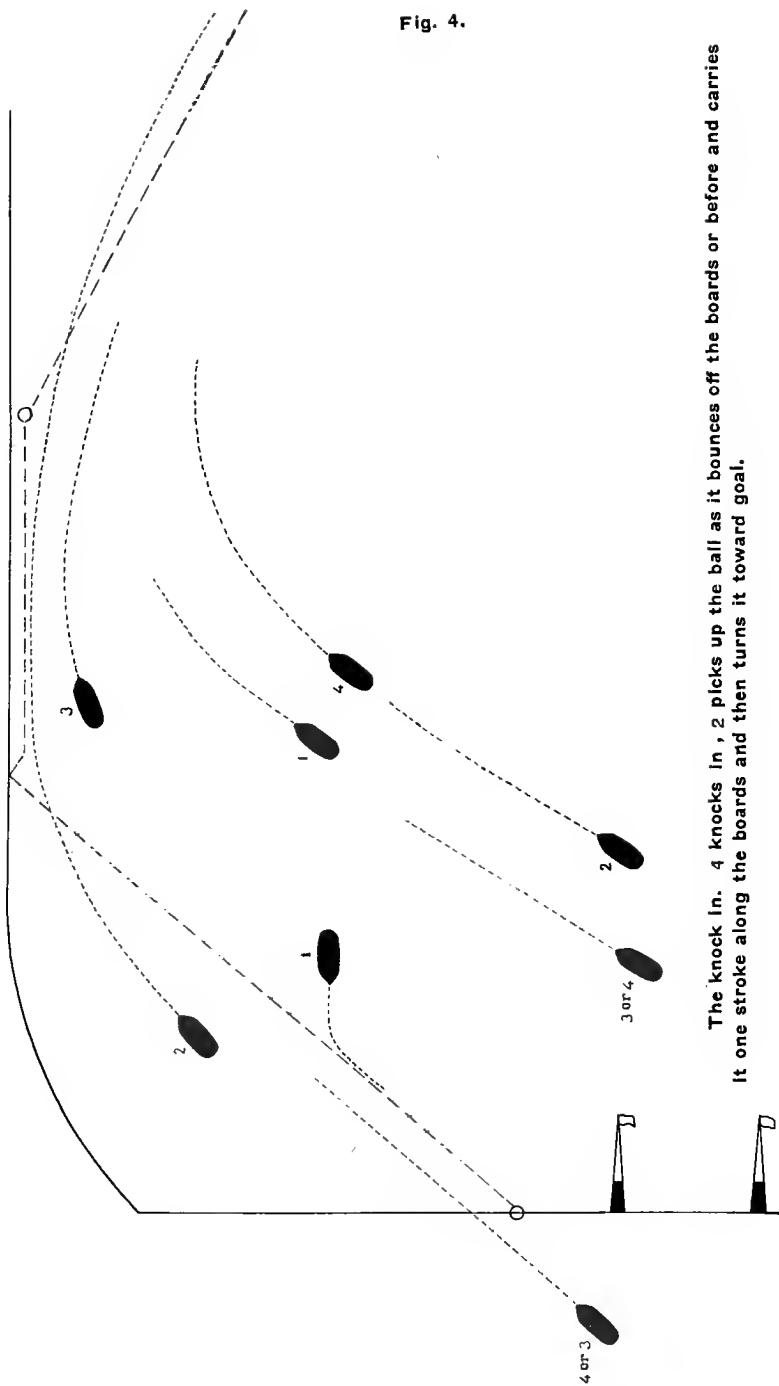
Fig. 3.

* Referee



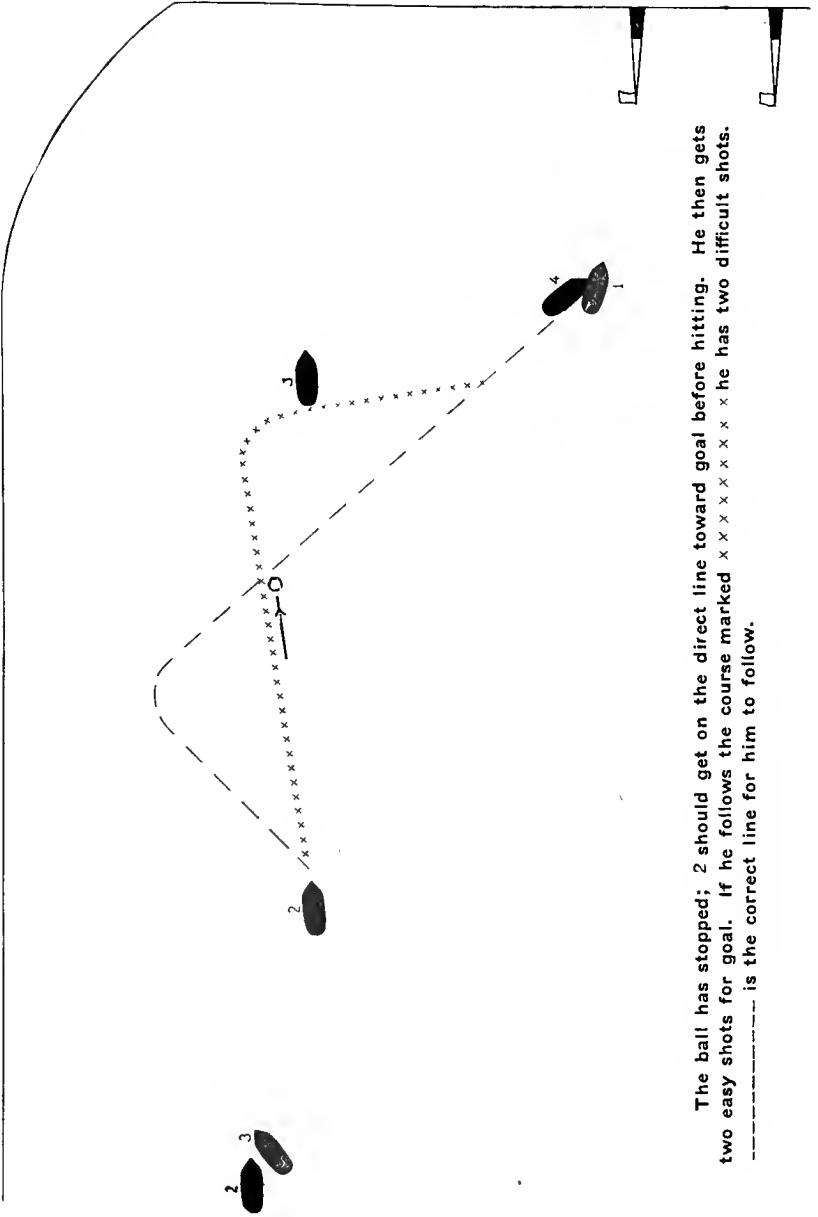
The throw in.

Fig. 4.



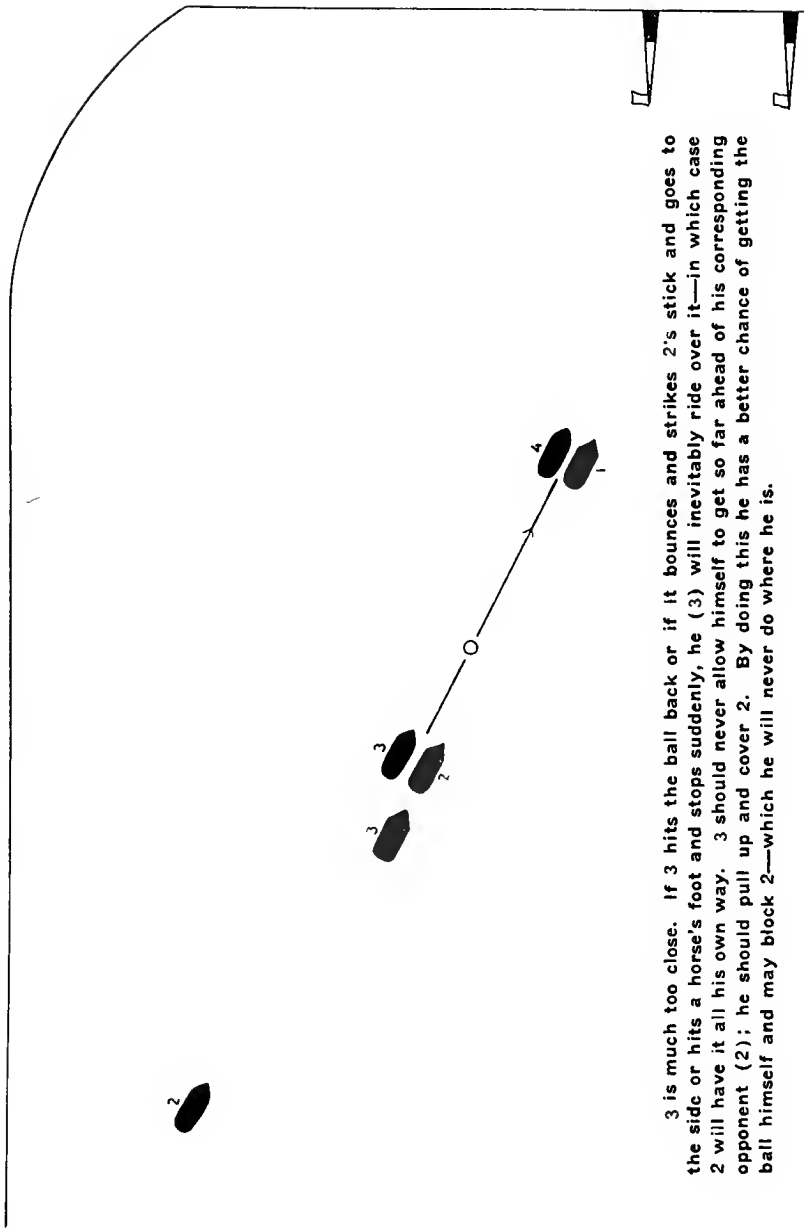
The knock in. 4 knocks in, 2 picks up the ball as it bounces off the boards or before and carries it one stroke along the boards and then turns it toward goal.

Fig. 5.



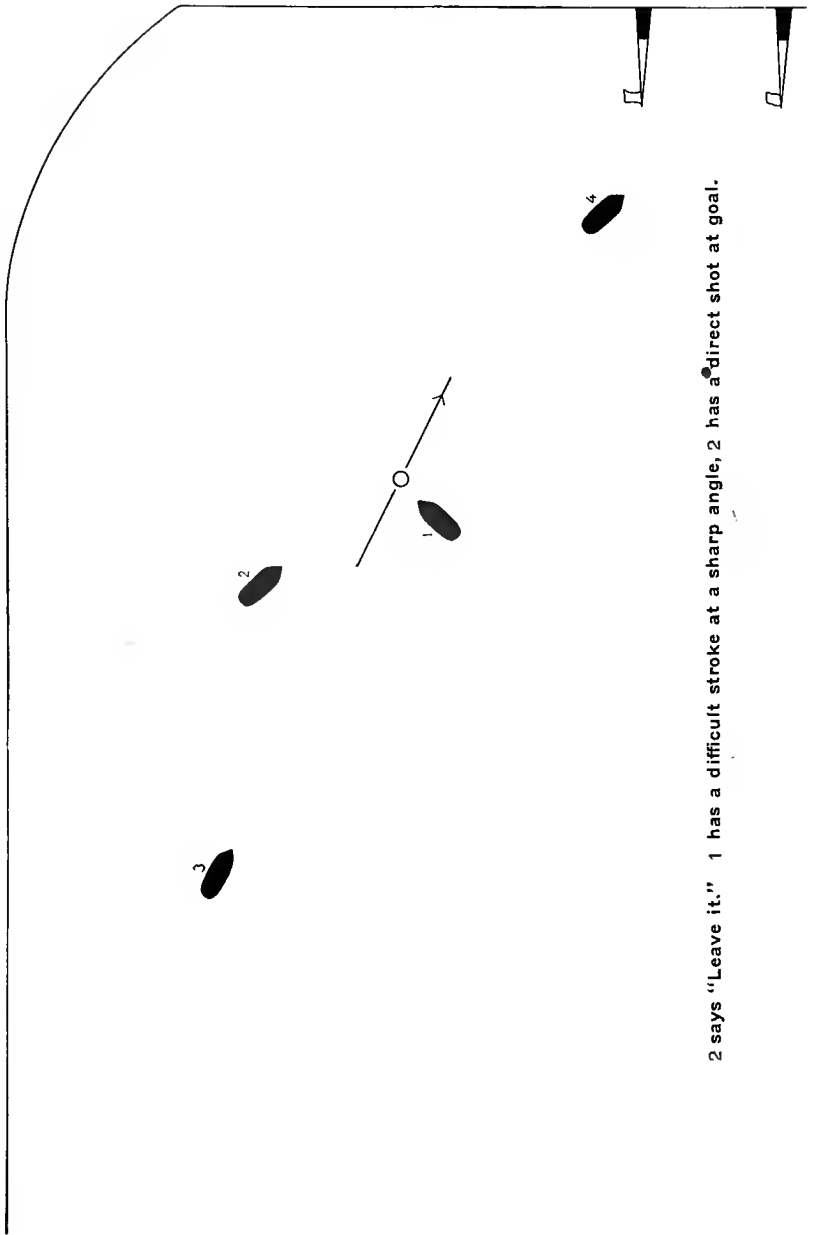
The ball has stopped; 2 should get on the direct line toward goal before hitting. He then gets two easy shots for goal. If he follows the course marked x x x x x x x x x x he has two difficult shots. ----- is the correct line for him to follow.

Fig. 6.



3 is much too close. If 3 hits the ball back or if it bounces and strikes 2's stick and goes to the side or hits a horse's foot and stops suddenly, he (3) will inevitably ride over it—in which case 2 will have it all his own way. 3 should never allow himself to get so far ahead of his corresponding opponent (2); he should pull up and cover 2. By doing this he has a better chance of getting the ball himself and may block 2—which he will never do where he is.

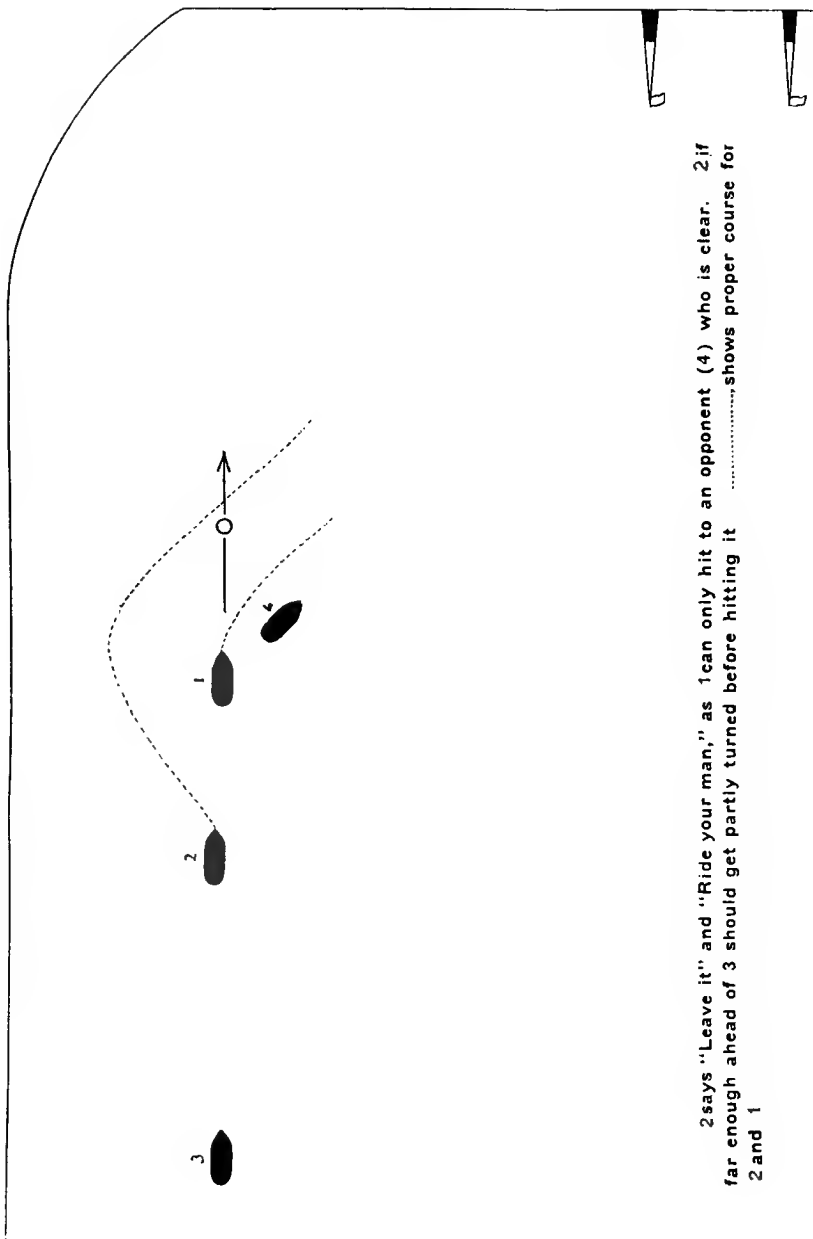
Fig. 7.



2 says "Leave it." 1 has a difficult stroke at a sharp angle, 2 has a direct shot at goal.



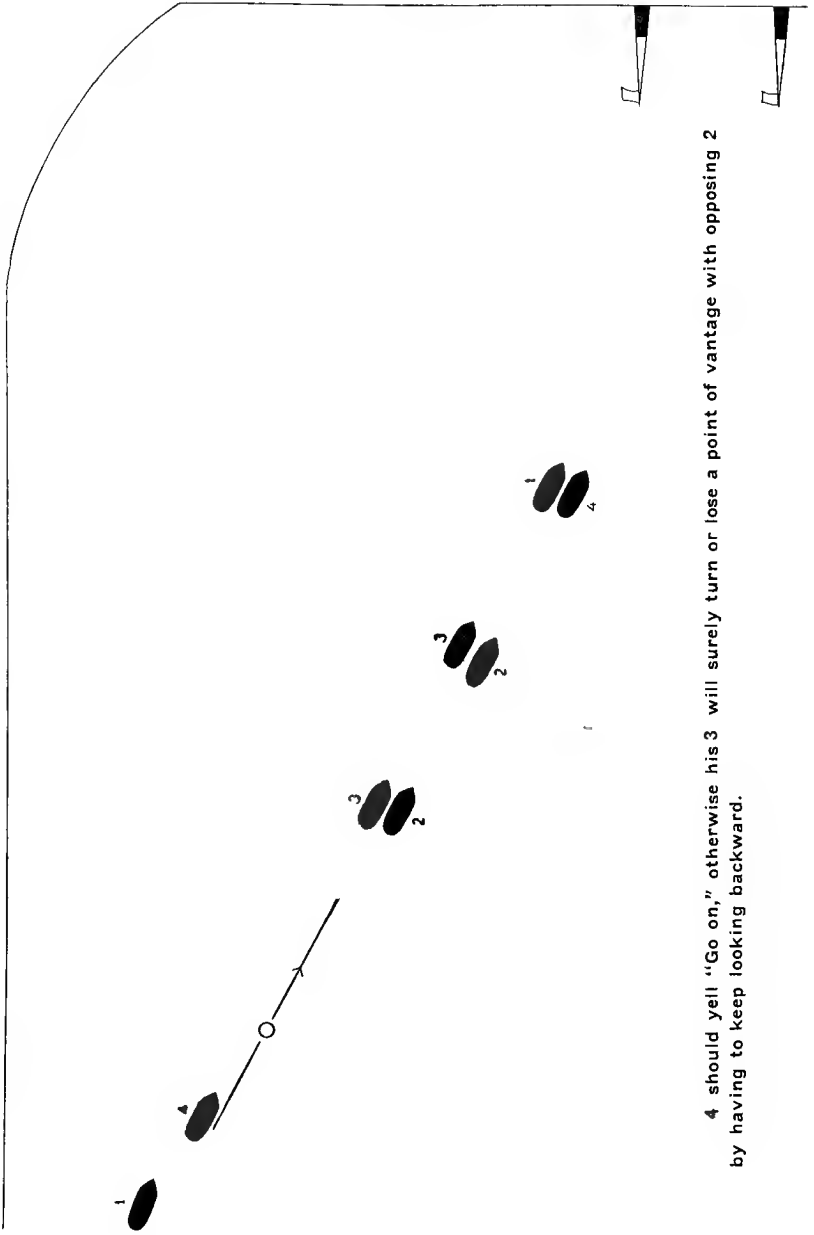
Fig. 8



2 says "Leave it" and "Ride your man," as 1 can only hit to an opponent (4) who is clear. 2 if far enough ahead of 3 should get partly turned before hitting it shows proper course for 2 and 1

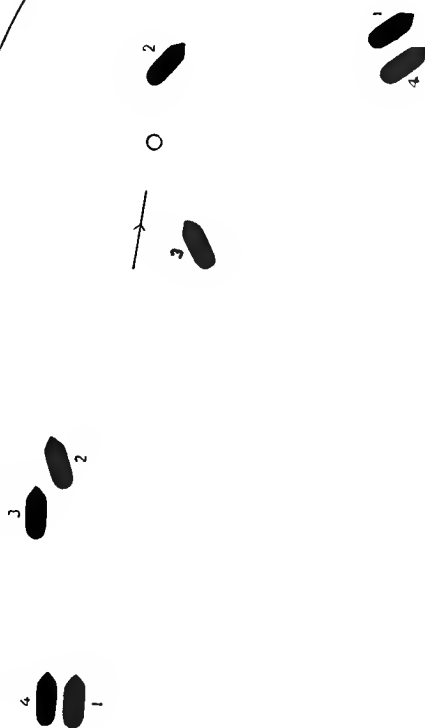


Fig. 9.



4 should yell "Go on," otherwise his 3 will surely turn or lose a point of vantage with opposing 2 by having to keep looking backward.

Fig. 10



2 has missed the ball and ridden beyond; he can't get back without turning. 3 can watch his every movement. 3 pulls up and waits; he doesn't dare to ride in and leave 2 uncovered to receive a back stroke from 3. 2 calls to 3 "Take your time," or its equivalent, which gives him his choice between riding past it and turning so as to be going in the right direction when he hits the ball, or of waiting till the ball stops so as to insure his stroke or of taking it around with short strokes.

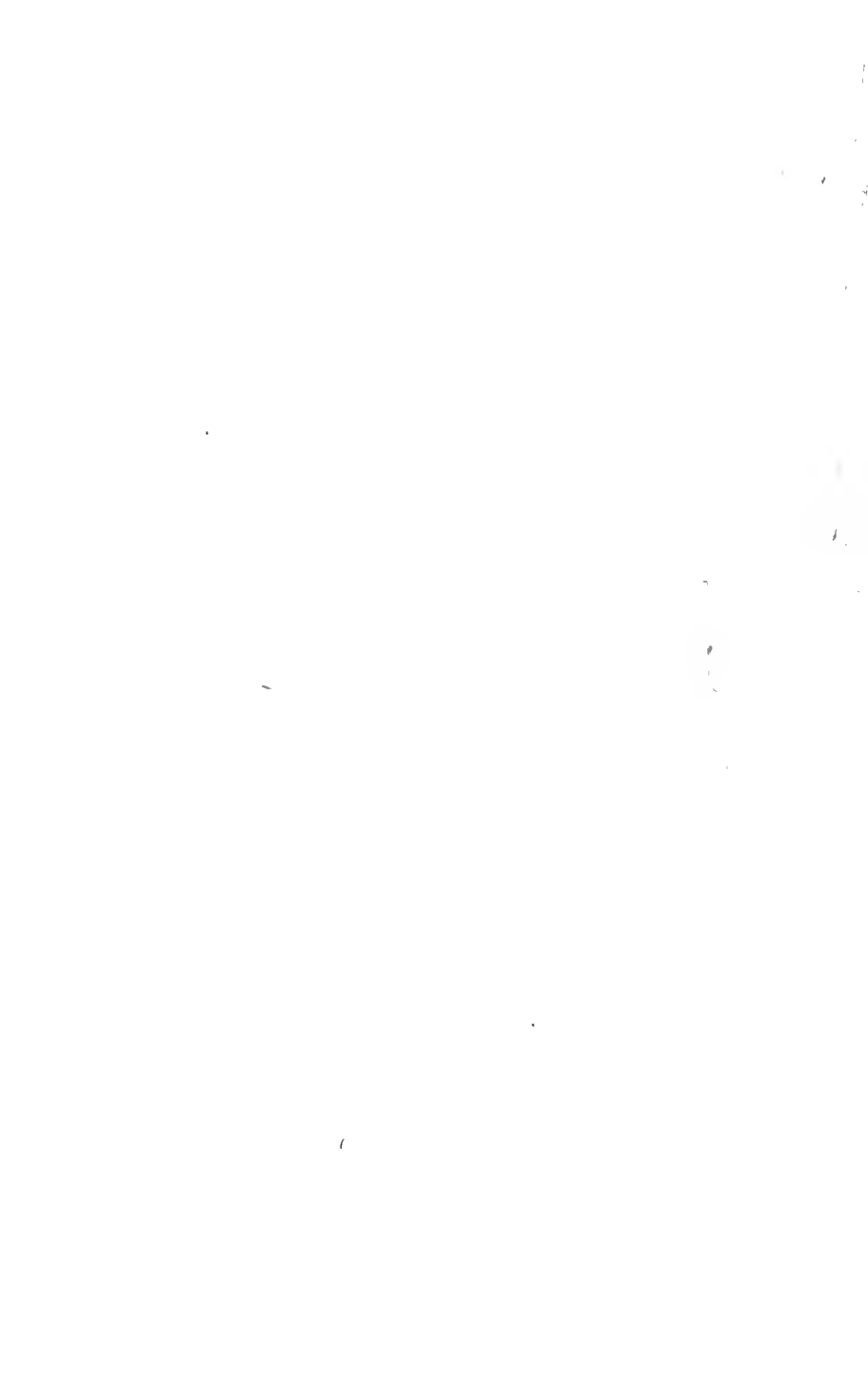
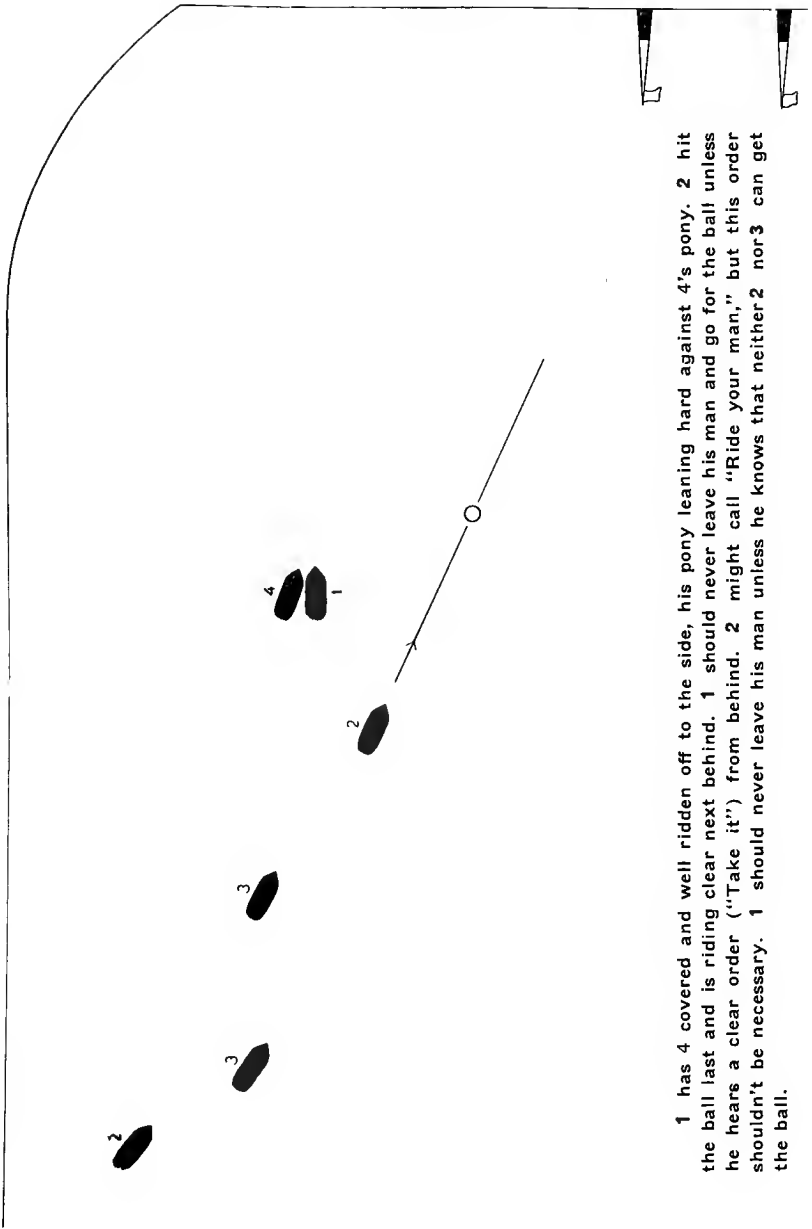
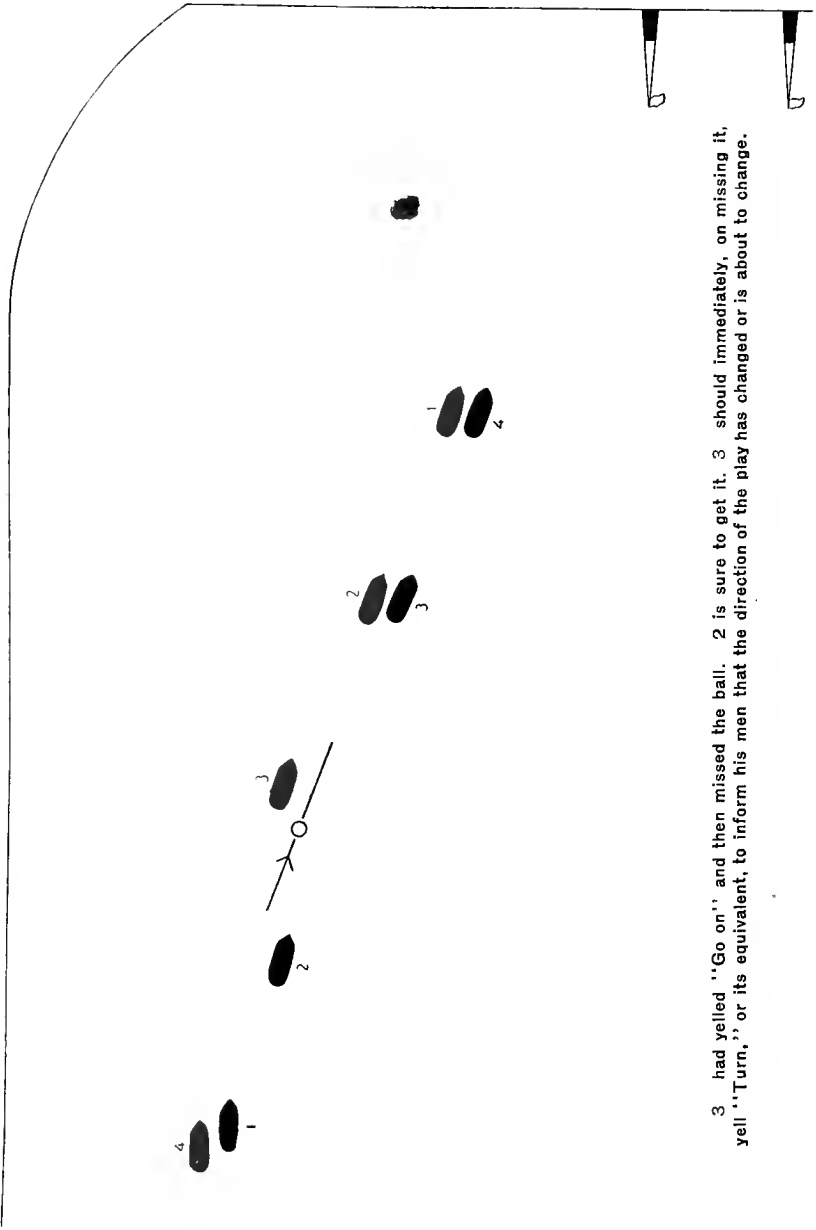


Fig. 11.



1 has 4 covered and well ridden off to the side, his pony leaning hard against 4's pony. 2 hit the ball last and is riding clear next behind. 1 should never leave his man and go for the ball unless he hears a clear order ("Take it") from behind. 2 might call "Ride your man," but this order shouldn't be necessary. 1 should never leave his man unless he knows that neither 2 nor 3 can get the ball.

Fig. 12.



3 had yelled "Go on" and then missed the ball. 2 is sure to get it. 3 should immediately, on missing it, yell "Turn," or its equivalent, to inform his men that the direction of the play has changed or is about to change.

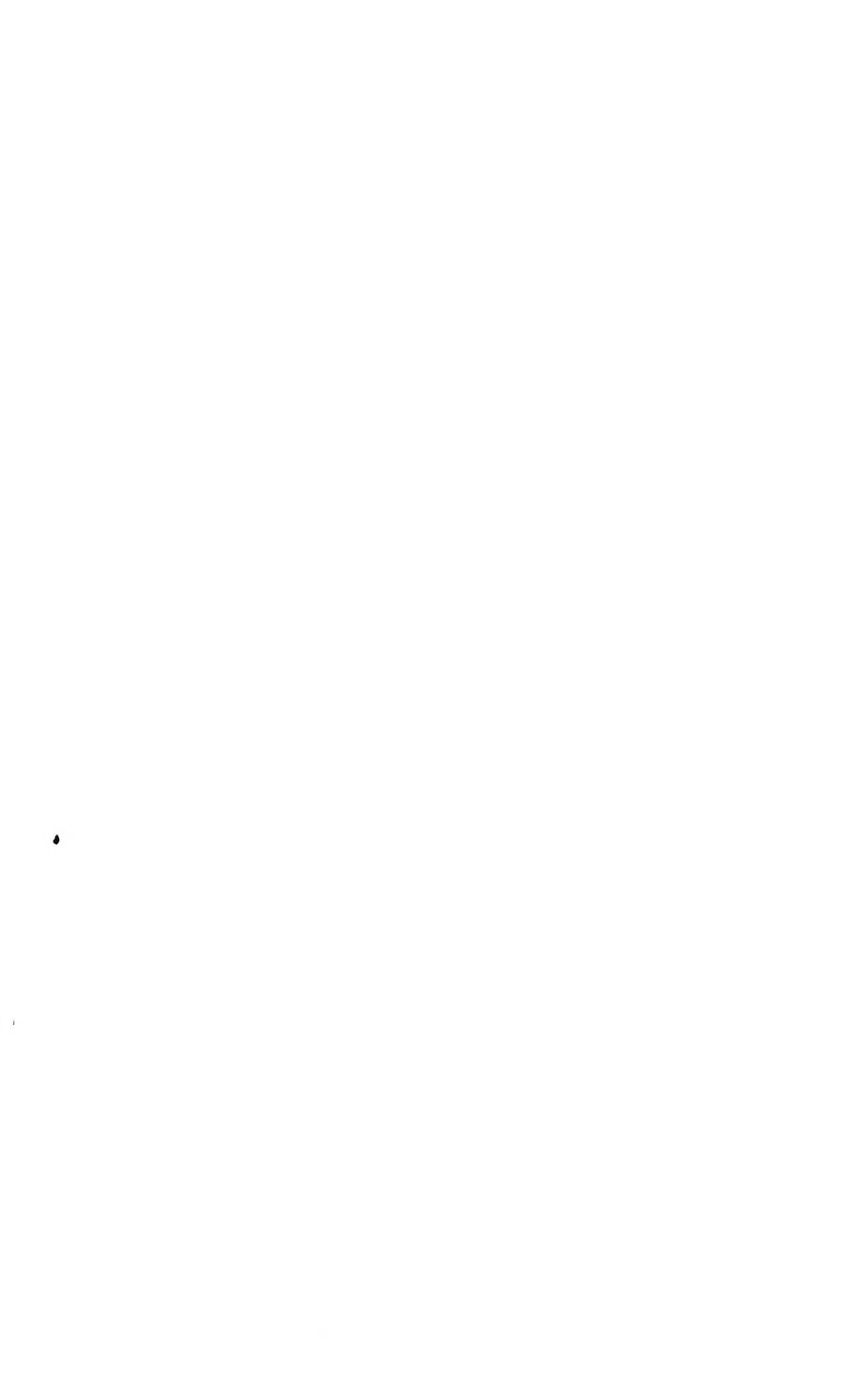
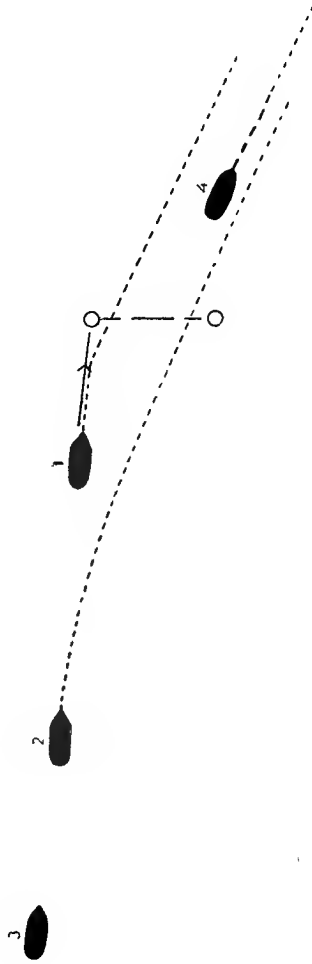
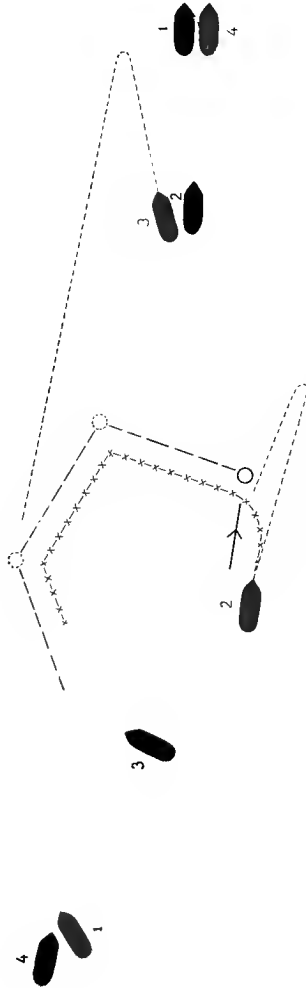


Fig. 13.



2 calls to 1 "I am next." 1 then hits a stroke to give 2 a better angle for goal without putting the ball within reach of 4 and then rides to catch and cover 4 without trying for a second shot. Had 3 been next, 1's play would have been far more difficult. Another way of taking this would be for 1 to circle his pony to get a better angle to hit toward goal. The play shown in the diagram is, however, the safest and best.

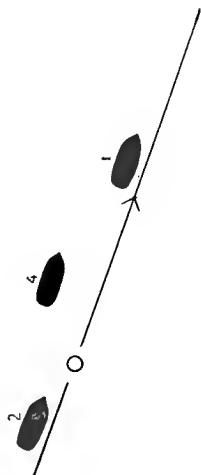
Fig. 14.



The ball has stopped. 3 has made the mistake of pulling up to get 2's back stroke instead of rushing him as he ought to have done. 2 must not hit it to him. He may ride beyond, turn and come back on it, following line take it round with short strokes following line -x-x-x-x-x-x-x- or stand over it and pass it to one of his men.

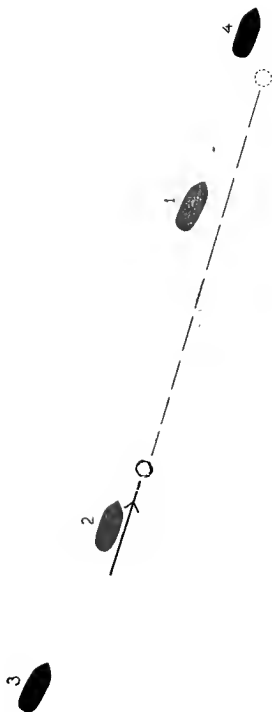


Fig. 15.



4 is not caring for 1. 2 will send a long stroke if anywhere far enough from the goal line to be sure not to knock out. 1 will pick the ball up and take it through, although there is always the option of taking 4 out, which is often the safer play, as the ball will be going slower when 2 catches up to it, which makes it easier to hit.

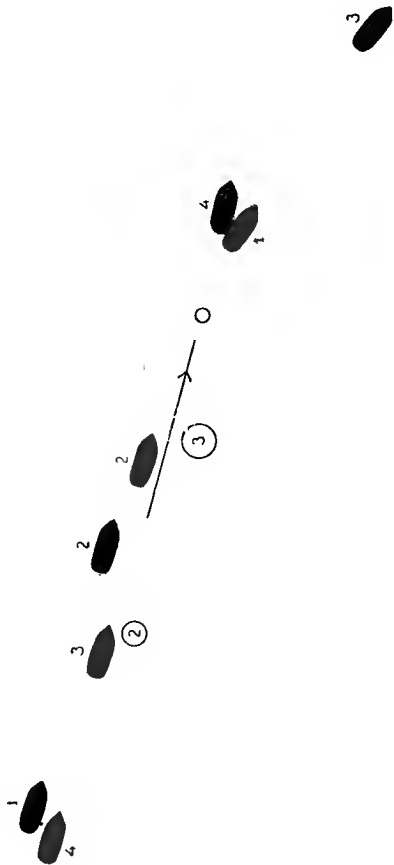
Fig. 16.



2 should hit short so as not to reach 4 and should yell to 1 "Ride your man." If 4 pulls up, 1 catches up and covers him. If 4 rides on, 2 hits short again. The only hope for 4 under these circumstances is that 3 will catch up and ride 2.



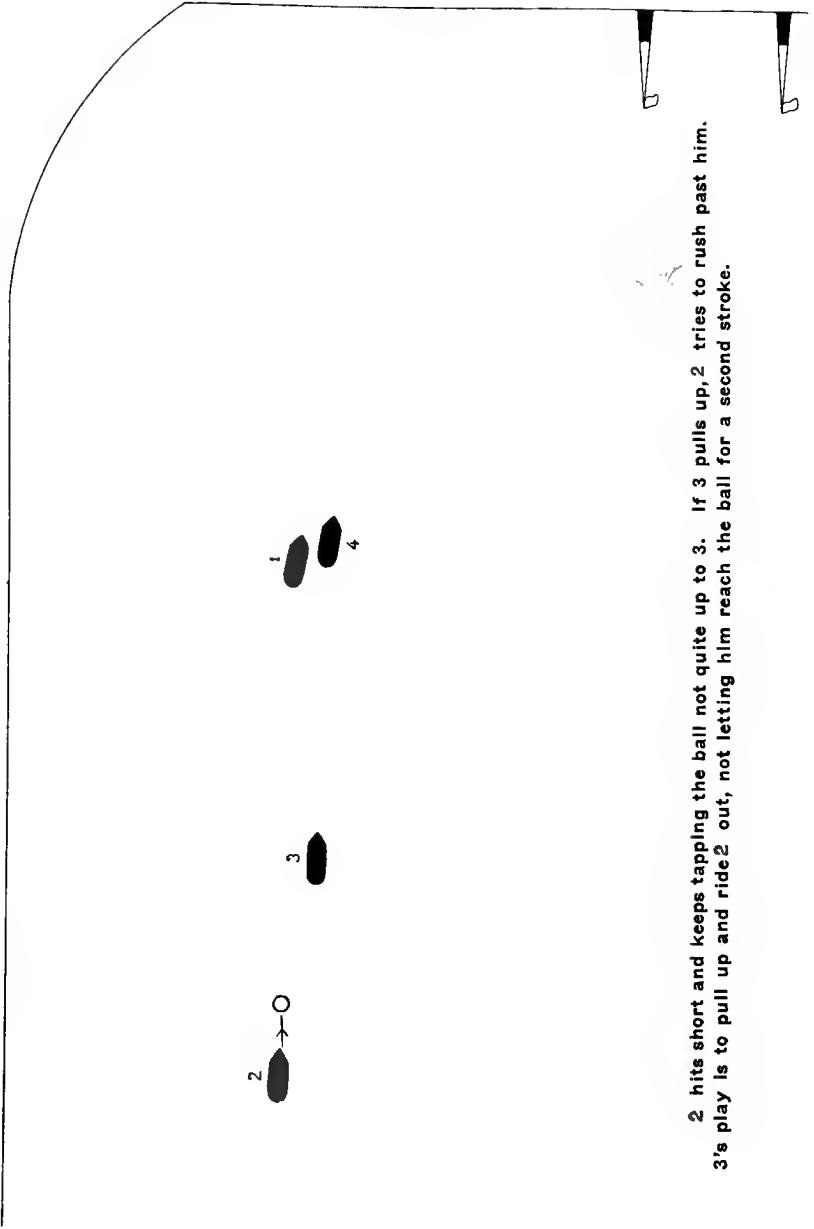
Fig. 17.



How to wreck a team.

3 thinks he can help by galloping back to do 4's work in defending goal. This leaves 2 clear and makes 2's work impossible, as he has to cope with two opponents, 2 and 3, either of whom can ride him out while the other takes the ball. Any back stroke of 3 or 4 will be inevitably returned. 3 should be in the place marked (3) and 2 in that marked (2).

Fig. 18.



2 hits short and keeps tapping the ball not quite up to 3. If 3 pulls up, 2 tries to rush past him.
3's play is to pull up and ride 2 out, not letting him reach the ball for a second stroke.

Fig. 19.

2 sees a chance to turn the ball and hit a cross stroke. He may do it here provided he can get across the right of way before 3 gets near. He can not make 3 pull up to clear him. 3 and 4 are enough to look out for the defense, and the risk of missing is worth taking.

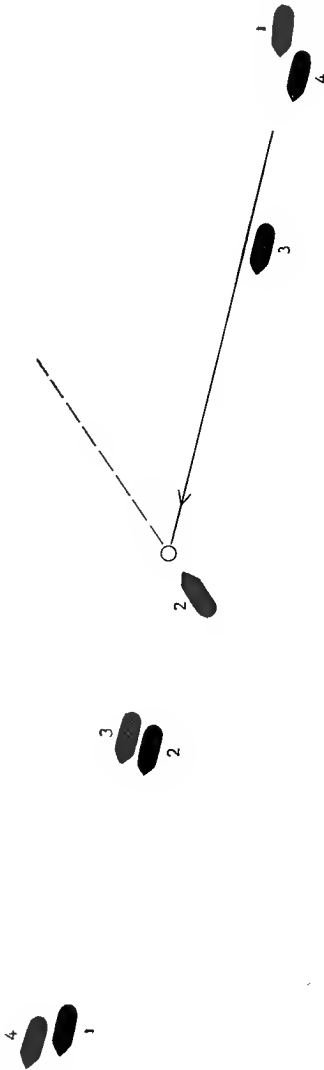
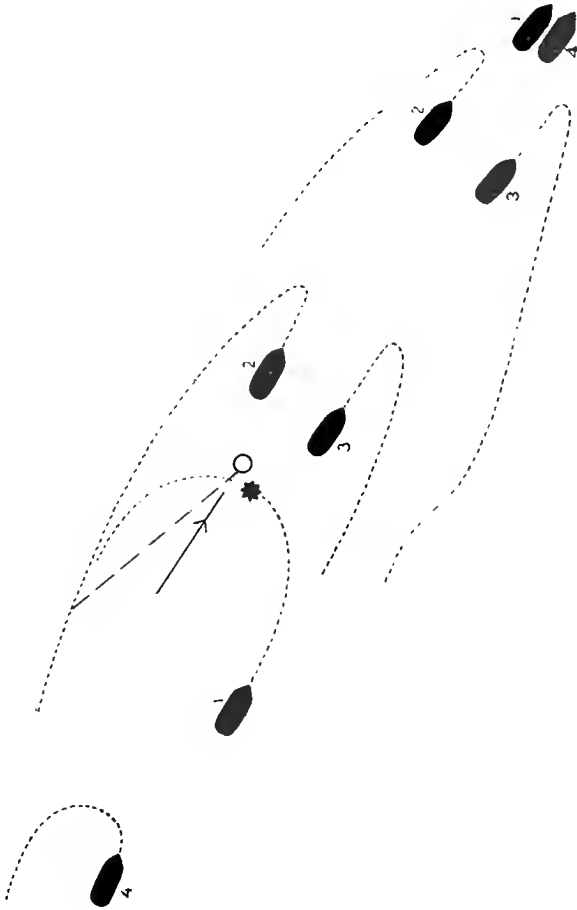
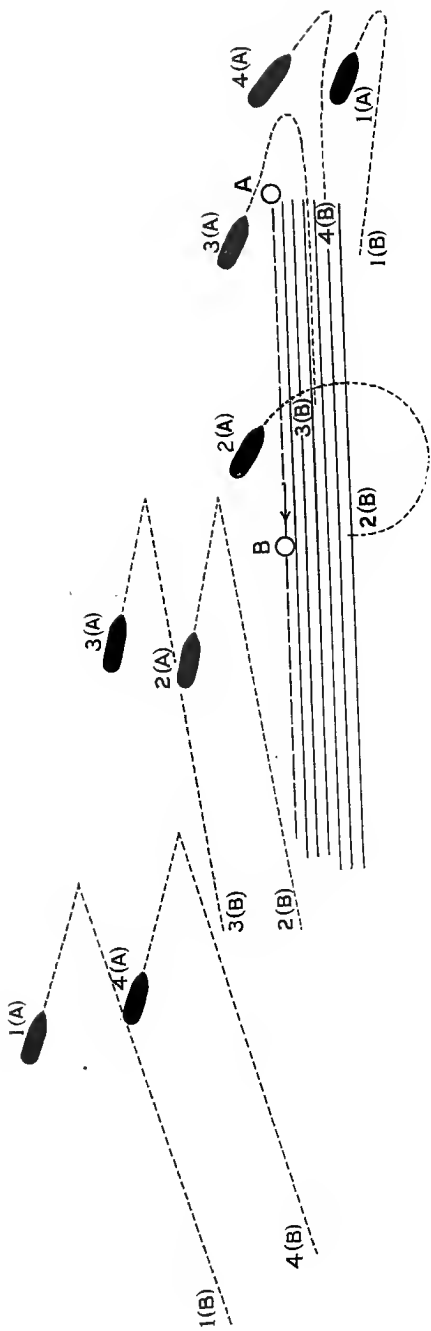


Fig. 20.



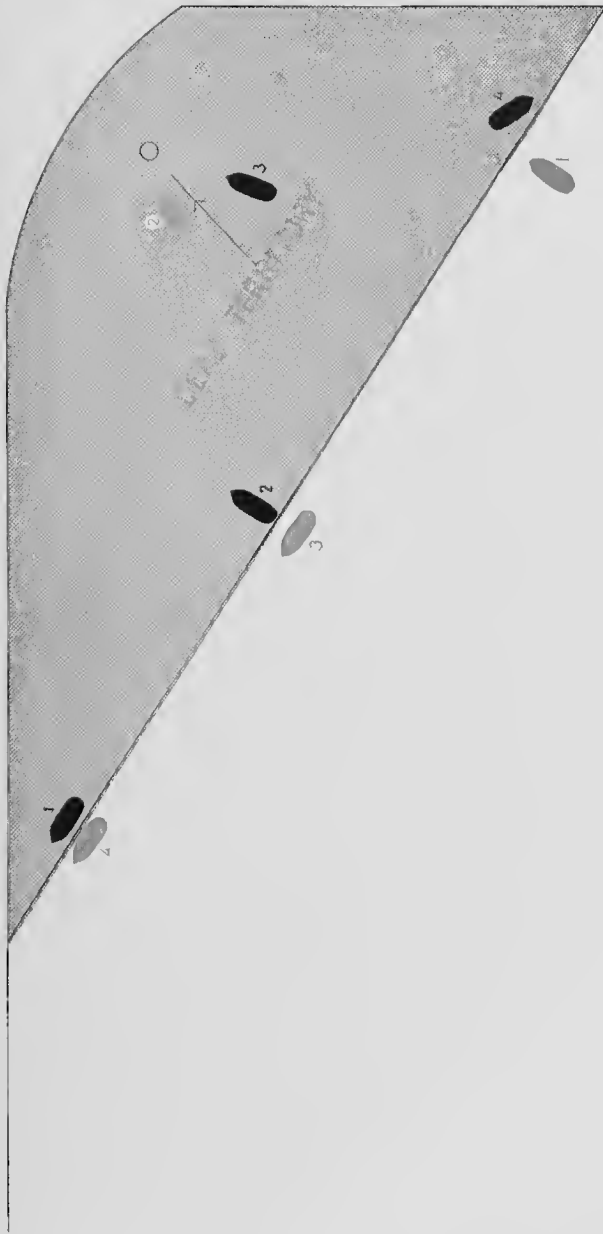
1 sees that 4 has pulled up and is waiting for his stroke. He yells "Turn," or its equivalent, immediately. Instead of hitting it to 4 he rides to * and stops, waiting to see whether 2 or 3 will get round first. It is probable that 2 will. 1 has three plays, according to circumstances: (a) To tap it to 2 as shown in diagram or to 3 if first round and clear; (b) to take it round on short strokes ready to pass it to one of his own side or leave it for them; (c) to ride past ball, turn and come back on it and take it along himself—always watching that 4 doesn't steal in and get it while he is turning.

Fig.21.



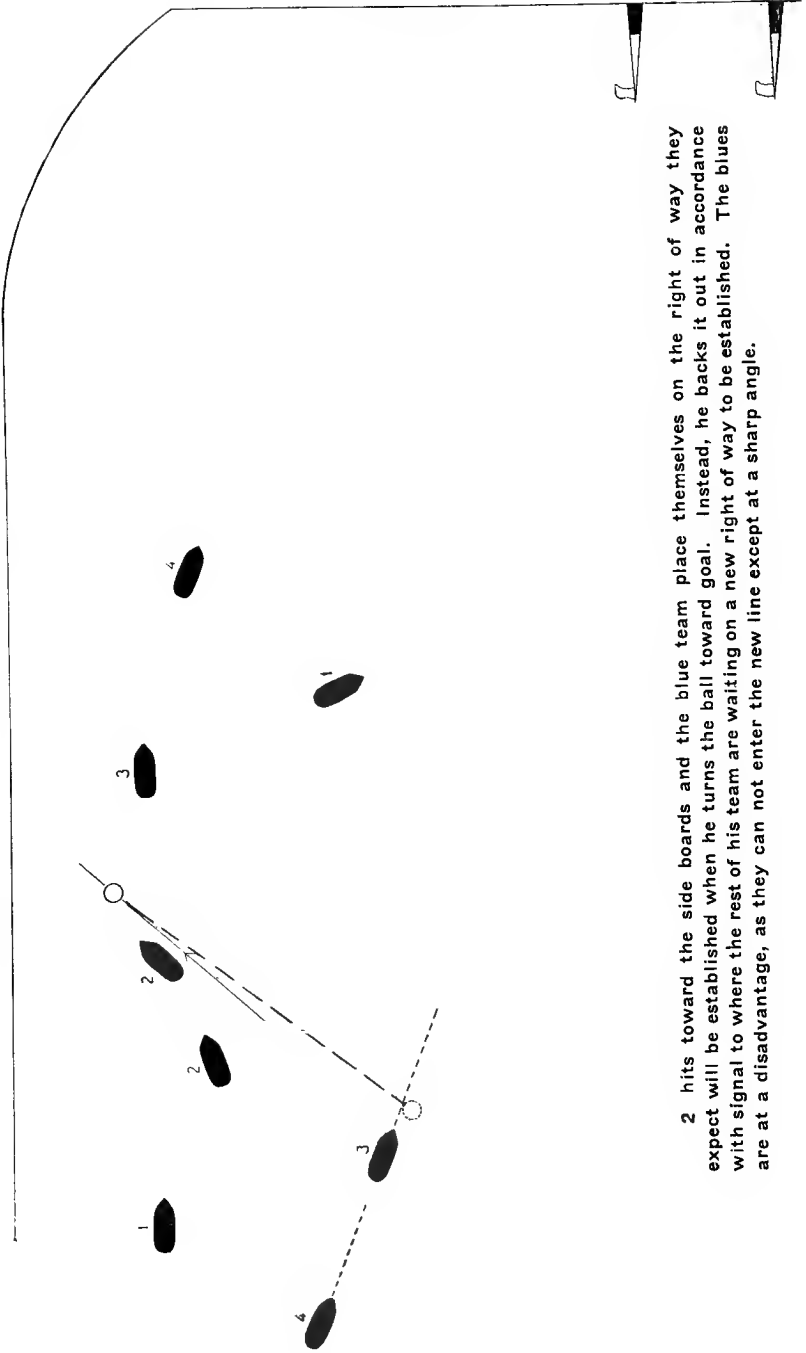
The Vicious Circle. A refers to first position of each man and of the ball. B refers to the second position of each. Refers to the new right of way. 2 turns in a circle instead of pulling up and turning directly back as do the rest of both teams; 1 and 4 are paired, as are 2 and 3. 3 backs the ball and turns properly, coming down the right of way. Had 2 turned properly he would probably have got the ball, or at least blocked 3. As it is, he is at a hopeless disadvantage and can not interfere with 3 and can barely get round and into place when 4 and 1 come along.

Fig. 22.



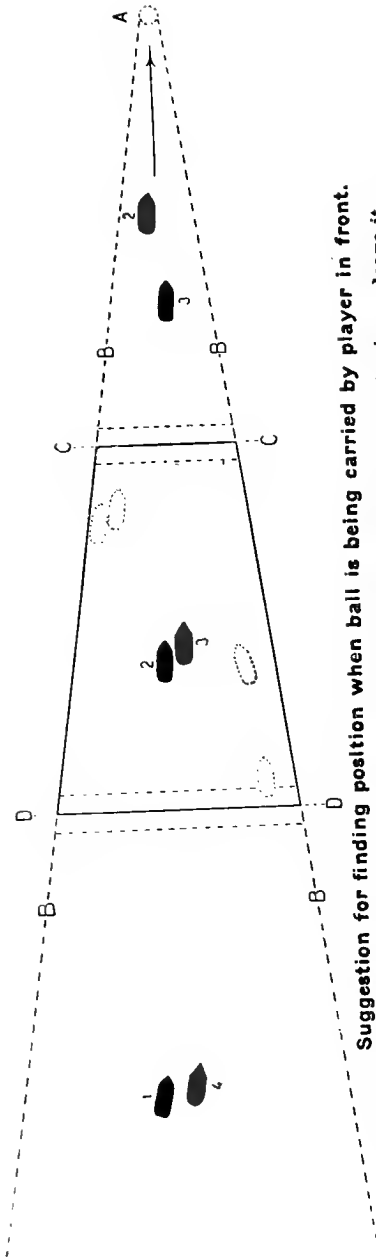
The ball is driven into an offensive corner. 2 only goes in after it. 1, 3, and 4 take up position on the edge of live territory to pick up the ball when sent out by 2. 3 rides in for the defense.

Fig. 23.



2 hits toward the side boards and the blue team place themselves on the right of way they expect will be established when he turns the ball toward goal. Instead, he backs it out in accordance with signal to where the rest of his team are waiting on a new right of way to be established. The blues are at a disadvantage, as they can not enter the new line except at a sharp angle.





Suggestion for finding position when ball is being carried by player in front.

A is the nearest point ball can be reached by 3 or 2 in case players in front miss or leave it. BB and BB are drawn at the greatest angle at which a player can ride his pony safely at speed into a pony at A which is following the line of the ball.

CC, which may also be in the positions occupied by the dotted lines on either side of it, as its position varies with varying conditions, is supposed to mark the nearest points 3 can follow 2 and properly support him. DD, also variable as above, is drawn to mark the nearest points 3 can effectively support him.

Note.—CC and DD will vary according to the speed of the play and the length of strokes of the players holding the positions of 2, 3, and 4 and somewhat by the part of the field the play is in. The area enclosed within the black lines indicates the most effective sphere of play for 3 and 2; either of these players outside of this area is out of place and can not and ordinarily will not be able to get into the play effectively. Neither player should ride out of this area unless accompanying the other, and even then it does not pay to follow an erring opponent too far. Where 2 rides right up onto 3 it is usually best for 3 to ride up with him, especially if 4 is ahead of his man.

Within this area the position to be taken by either player depends entirely upon the movements of the other. As it is only at the moment that the ball is struck at or ridden over that the player need watch the ball, it is safe to say that at least three-quarters of his time he must be watching his corresponding opponent and maneuvering to cover him, and less than one-quarter of his time should be spent watching the ball. Beginners always, and old players too often, concentrate their attention on the ball and let their opponents ride free, thus rendering their own play ineffective.

The dotted figures indicate the proper place for 3 to place himself when 2 is in other parts of the area.





