

Imperial College Union
ACC Riding and Polo Contingency Request
*A Note by Jon Matthews, Polo Captain and
Sam Furse, Riding and Polo Club Chair and ACC Chair-Elect*

This year has been an exceptionally difficult although highly successful one for ACC Riding and Polo with membership increasing dramatically (43% up on last year, 150% up on two years ago) and the first proper season of polo as an activity after it was adopted part way through last year (February).

At the start of this year, polo training was moved from FHM Polo to the Royal County of Berkshire Polo Club under Brett Polo, the company run by former England Captain and 8-goal player Henry Brett (the best polo player England has produced since the 'golden age' of polo in the 1930s – 1940s). Despite this, costs for each session were kept much the same thanks to some keen negotiating. Since January when the first session took place, nine sessions have taken place including a five hour long clinic with club members contributing a total of £4,950 (up to £460 per head). This leaves members contributing 84% of the cost of the activity and making a significant personal financial contribution to what is, despite the best efforts of the Captain in negotiating extremely competitive rates, an expensive sport to run.

The standard of training provided has been unparalleled in University Polo with sessions led by Henry Brett (8 goals, former England Captain, best English player in the modern game and B grade umpire), Roddy Williams (6 goals, current England squad member and sometimes captain, holder of second highest possible coaching qualification and A grade umpire), Ed Judge (3 goals, HPA qualified coach and B grade umpire) and Tim Bown (6 goals, England squad member and P grade umpire).

This unprecedented level of training and a great deal of hard work by the club has brought the club to a position where we have been invited to compete in the Universities National Polo Championships held between the 13th and 15th June, something that was unthinkable at the start of the year let alone last year when the budget was being prepared.

Costs for entering two teams to the nationals are as follows:

Item	Cost	Total
Entry Fee	£135 per team	£270
Pony Hire	£60 per pony per chukka	£1,440
Transport	£500 (Union minibus + fuel)	£500
Accommodation	£Free (camping)	£Free
HPA Membership	£35 per person	£420
		£2,630

These costs do not include training costs. Training is now weekly in preparation for the nationals with members contributing £50 per session as the club no longer has budget to subsidize the sessions. This will mean that players in the nationals will have contributed up to £810 per person (95% of the total cost) before bearing any costs of the nationals themselves (up to £220 per head meaning a total contribution of £1,030).

External funding is desperately being sought and work so far has secured funding from Sport Imperial for team playing shirts for the nationals but owing to the time of year sponsorship is very hard to come by. Sport Imperial may fund the entry fee for one or possibly both of the teams but this is yet to be confirmed. An application was been made to SUPA (the Schools and Universities Polo Association) for funding but unfortunately was unsuccessful this year owing to a small amount of funding (£200) having been provided last year (this funding was entirely swallowed up by the cost of training). The level of external support available is extremely limited and the SUPA grant awarded last year amounts to less than 4% of the amount contributed by members so far this year and 3% of the total costs this year.

Whilst it is entirely expected for competitors to pay for their own membership of the HPA and to cover the cost of transport, asking members to pay £60 per chukka¹ (with the championships being played over four chukkas per team) is prohibitive and will damage Imperial's chances of entering a competitive team to the nationals.

Riding and Polo are requesting contingency directly from CSB as the ACC contingency pot currently stands at only £741.62 and so any claim by Riding and Polo would necessarily be bumped up to CSB. As the deadline for team entries to the Nationals is the 7th June and fewer and fewer ponies are available as more teams book them, there is not enough time for this claim to be considered by a later meeting of CSB than this one.

We would like to request £1,440 contingency from CSB to cover the cost of pony hire (this covers transport and stabling of ponies as well as groom services), all other costs will be borne by the members or funds sourced externally.

Decision Required

To allocate £1,440 contingency funding to ACC Riding and Polo Club.

JM – 16/05/08

¹ A chukka is a period of play in polo. The nationals are played over four chukkas (the standard length of a low goal match with three players per team (reduced from the usual four). Places on teams will be shared between more than one person per position meaning the total squad will be about six people per team rather than just three thus the total Imperial squad is expected to be at least 12 people.