

'Three o'clock had struck,' said *The New York Times*, 'and the Guards Band moving as one man marched to the centre of the ground, and whirling round, faced the royal box. The shrill cheer of the children sounded from the road outside and the royal procession arrived... as the Royal Standard was hoisted and the bands played British and American national anthems while the spectators stood. Both teams were presented to the King and Queen.'

Hurlingham was awash with royalty and the social elite. The next two British monarchs were in the royal box, the Prince of Wales and Duke of York, joined by polo aficionado King Alfonso of Spain, Queen Mother Alexandra and dignitaries including Winston and Mrs Churchill. The American ambassador was their guest. It was a sight to behold.

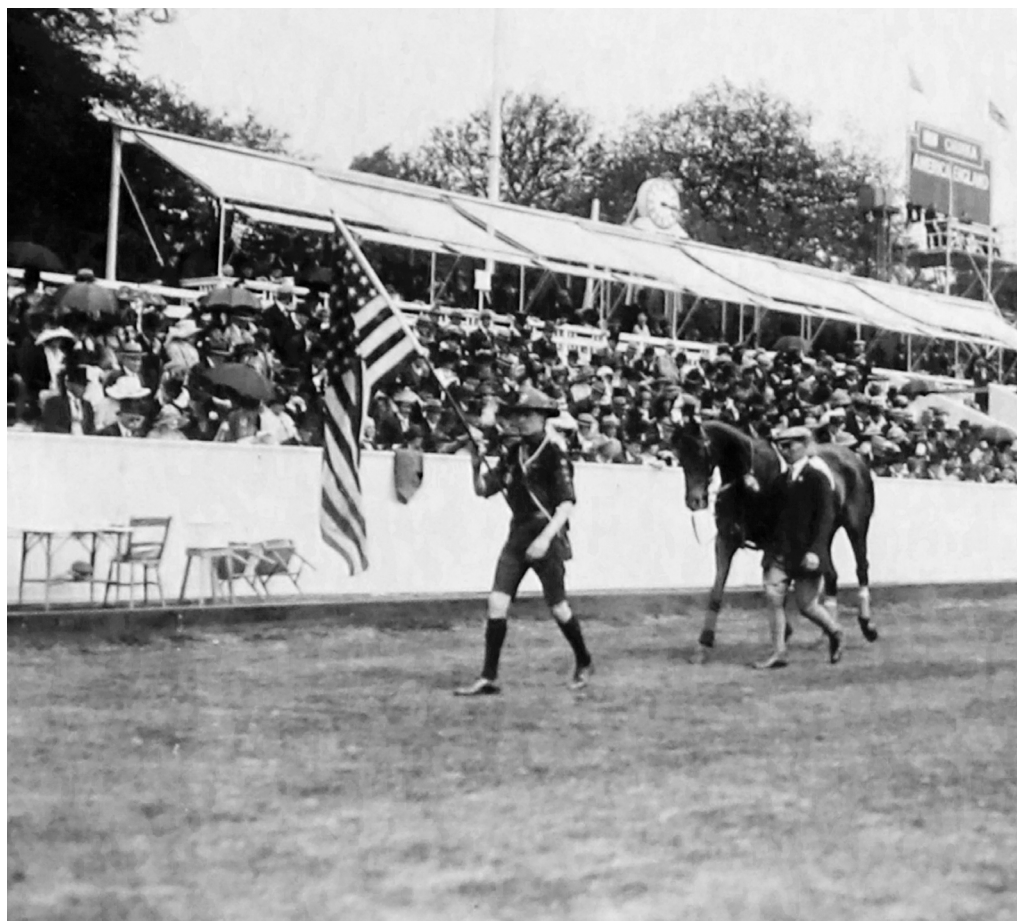
Two Union Jacks and two Star-Spangled Banners danced in the wind as the band, dressed to the nines in the pre-war uniforms, sent the crowd aroar. The first chukka had yet to commence, but triumph was in the air at Hurlingham.

The match was one of the great internationals in history. The play was frantic – the Americans dictated the pace, using speed to outgun the Brits' more genteel style of play. With Milburn far from peak form, Webb played the best game of his life. He was the best player on the field that day by all accounts, stymying the great tactician Lord Wodehouse at every turn and led the American attack with five goals.

In a cartoon, the *Daily Mail* quipped: 'Webb, the American giant who scored five goals and accidentally started the Cup rocking on our sideboard.'

This also marked the debut of the great Hitchcock, who was playing in his first international and had returned to Europe on the polo pitch after leaving school at 17 to fly with the famed Lafayette Escadrille during the war. Riding number two, he scored four times, marking the beginning of possibly the greatest run of high-goal polo ever.

Said Pulitzer's *New York World* European edition after the first match: 'Eleven to Four. This tells the tale. Before one of the most distinguished galleries that ever witnessed a sporting event, the Americans made sporting history... before two kings and two



THE 1921 INTERNATIONAL CUP CHALLENGE USHERED IN A GOLDEN AGE

queens and about a dozen princes and princesses and all the world's great horseman raised the Star-Spangled Banner in the greatest triumph polo has ever seen.'

The second match was closer, but Britain never held a lead. The States jumped out to a 2-0 lead after the first chukka. Despite a valiant effort by the British to get within one goal, Watson, Webb and Hitchcock scored goals in the final chukka to put the match away. This time Stoddard, the future USPA president who was on the last winning team with Milburn in 1913, led the way with four goals while playing in his last international, with Webb adding three.

The Americans had captured the coveted Westchester Cup.

The 1921 International Cup Challenge ushered in another golden age of polo on both sides of the pond, with matches routinely drawing upwards of 30,000 fans. Lord Wodehouse, who wrote the foreword to the Earl Mountbatten's book, *Introduction to Polo*, was tasked with trying to form a foursome who could compete with the American four. Though the British were noble adversaries, America would hold onto the illustrious Westchester Trophy until the tradition of the International Cup Challenge fell victim to another world war