

Westchester Cup

1902

It wasn't until 1902 when a challenge was made to win back the Westchester Cup, though the sentiment was heavily in favor of a quicker response. Newell Bent writes that "In 1900 four of our players, Mr. W. McCreery, Mr. F. J. Mackey, Mr. Foxhall P. Keene, and Mr. L. McCreery, played a more or less informal match against the Hurlingham team of Captain Hon. J. E. Beresford, Mr. F. M. Freake, Mr. W. S. Buckmaster, and Mr. John Watson, and were beaten 8-2, but the event has never been recognized as an international match for the cup. It was not until 1902 that a challenge was sent to England and Mr. Foxhall P. Keene, captain and No. 3, together with Mr. J. E. Cowdin, Mr. J. M. Waterbury, Jr., Mr. L. Waterbury, and Mr. R. L. Agassiz went over, a team developed really at the Rockaway Club, with Mr. Agassiz from the Myopia Club near Boston." This second series was comprised of games of six ten-minute periods. The opening game resulted in a surprisingly narrow 2-1 victory by the United States, the first American victory in the cup's short history. Coverage of the match reported that there seemed to be no difference between the mounts of the two teams and noted that the British executed poorly around the American goal.

Heavy rains delayed the second game by a couple of days, and it seemed that was all the British needed to regroup. The first match had caused a great deal of excitement and concern in that the Americans had managed to hold the British four to a single goal. A reshuffled lineup seemed to be the cure as England bounced back to score consecutive 6-1 and 7-1 wins.

After the return of the US team, John Cowdin wrote an article in *Outing* magazine in which he described the superiority of the British horses. He also conceded that when the British players got away with the ball, they were much faster than the American mounts. "So much faster," he conceded, "that we could never catch up."

Although Cowdin pointed out that the American horses turned quicker, the hard ride-offs by the British proved to be a very important part of their play. He also stressed the "invariable and consummate position play" of the British team.

The British won again, but the Americans had learned the importance of horses, knowledge of the game and team play.

1909

The emergence of Harry Payne Whitney on the American polo scene cannot be underestimated. It was his understanding of the strengths of the British and the weaknesses of the American team that sent him on his mission to reclaim the Westchester Cup. In 1905 Whitney began purchasing the top polo mounts that could be found, regardless of price. Not only was he assembling horses in the United States, but in England as well. In fact, so thorough was his assembling of this top team of horses that top English internationalists Buckmaster and Freake couldn't resist the money being offered for their top mounts, and in selling them to Whitney's agents, found themselves short of horses to defend the international cup.

The Americans arrived in England months in advance and began playing and practicing. The reputation of the horses gathered by Whitney had already alarmed those in charge of defending the challenge, but no little notice was made of the American's advancement in the area of team play, a fact that was evident from the very first minute of play. The *New York Times* headline read "Visitors' Superiority Overwhelmed English Cup Defenders After Milburn's First Goal", and so went the series.

It was the British back, John Watson, who schooled the Americans on the backhander and team play, but America's Devereux Milburn virtually reinvented the position of back. Operating in a team-oriented attack that allowed for the back to carry the ball through the lineup and score, the Americans had turned the tables on the British. Just as Watson had caused confusion with his backhander in the 1886 match, Milburn introduced the British to the nearside backhand shot, much to their consternation.

The back position had traditionally been one of positioning in the area of one's own goal, but the play of Milburn turned the defense into offense, and seemingly brought another offensive weapon onto the field.

The team handily defeated the Brits in straight matches, 9-5 and 8-2 and returned the Westchester Cup to America for the first time in twenty-three years. More importantly, the Americans had wrested world polo supremacy from the British while unveiling the first international appearance of a United States team who would come to be known as the "Big Four".

With the victory of the Americans, so the game changed again. The back lost its designation as a mere defensive position, and the introduction of the nearside backhand shot armed players with yet another weapon on the field. The intermeshing of players on the field was also accented by the offensive play of the No. 1. No longer thought of as a player whose only job it was to clear the way for trailing teammates, the No. 1 was expected to not only provide interference, but to having the option of carrying the ball and scoring as well. A new attack, a revolutionary back, and the game continued to get faster and more fluid.

1911

The British waited less than a year before challenging for the cup again. Unfortunate delays caused plans for a 1910 series to be cancelled, but no little effort went in to preparing for the 1911 crusade.

In preparation for the series, the British had suspended the offside rule (the challenging team had to play under the rules of the defenders) for some time to prepare for the Americans, and in so doing, found the game greatly improved and never reinstated it again. For the first time, the international matches were played in eight periods of seven and one-half minutes each, and the Big Four were faced with a formidable foe. Under the leadership of Captain J. Hardress Lloyd, six players were sent to America with thirty-five top polo mounts. Joining Lloyd on the field for the games would be Captain L. St. C. Cheape at No. 1; Captain A. Noel Edwards at No. 2; and Captain Herbert H. Wilson at back.

Early practice games did not go well for the British, and the Big Four remained intact and were playing better than ever.

The opening match saw a radical change in performances as it was the British who seemed to be pressing the attack in an effort to win and the American four fought to hold on to the small lead they had gathered. America managed to defend the cup successfully but the narrow margins of victory, $4\frac{1}{2}$ - $2\frac{3}{4}$ and $4\frac{1}{2}$ to $3\frac{1}{2}$ were hardly the scores expected from the Big Four.

A greatly improved British team gathered momentum in every chukker, and despite the losses, they found the Americans to be vulnerable.

1913

Much encouraged by the showing of her team in 1911, England returned two years later, through the efforts of the Duke of Westminster. The Duke took no half measures in procuring forty-two of the finest ponies available, and failing the services of Walter Buckmaster (suffered a bad fall in the spring), recruited Captain R. G. Ritson to lead the team of Captain L. St. C. Cheape, Captain A. N. Edwards, Captain Vivian Lockett and F. M. Freake.

The Big Four, the team that had never been beaten in international competition, was prepared to defend the trophy, but had been playing badly together, and Whitney resigned the American captaincy. With him went the Waterbury brothers and another team had to be assembled. Under the leadership of Foxhall Keene, a team that included Malcolm Stevenson, Louis Stoddard and Devereux Milburn was preparing to play. Four days before the first game, however, Keene took a fall and broke his collarbone, and the Big Four were called upon one more time.

The success of the team was again credited to Harry Payne Whitney and his leadership on the field. Milburn's play was again, outstanding.

The series was the closest ever played, with America scoring wins of 5½-3 and 4½-4¼. In spite of their success, this would be the last time the Big Four would play together. Before the end of the first game, Monte Waterbury suffered a broken finger and was replaced by Louis Stoddard. The Big Four won the series and retired undefeated.

1914

Following two of the closest contests in recent Westchester Cup history, the British were eager to have another go at it, but were having trouble getting a competitive team together. Lord Wimborne made an initial bid to put a team together, but the team proved to be too weak. Subsequently, both Lord Wodehouse and Captain Cheape were invited to play on the team, but both declined. Major C. F. Hunter took his name off the list when his ailing wife required his presence in England, making him unavailable to travel. The Polo Association in America offered to delay the matches by two weeks in an effort to give the Brits more time to assemble a team when Sir Douglas Haig stepped forward. Through his influence, he convinced Cheape to join the cause. Captain H. A. Tomkinson was also acquired. When another prospect, Captain Bingham dropped out, Capt. Vivian Lockett and John A. Traill joined the effort, and Great Britain finally felt it had a competitive team.

Things weren't particularly rosy on this side of the Atlantic either. The retirement of Harry Payne

Whitney left a large hole in the polo leadership, as it, in effect, broke up the Big Four.

The past services of Devereux Milburn were noted, referring to his ability to change places with Whitney at a moment's notice on the attack. It was decided to move him to the No. 3 position. Rene LaMontagne assumed the No. 1 position. Monte Waterbury took the No.2 position and brother Lawrence Waterbury played back. The experiment didn't work. The British won the first game 8½ -3.

The Americans attempted to rectify their mistake by moving Milburn to his familiar back position and moving Lawrence Waterbury to No.3, with little more success. The Brits scored a 4-2¾ win. The cup returned to England, and with the coming war, it would be seven years before the international series continued.

1921

It wasn't until 1921 that the Hurlingham accepted the challenge by the Polo Association, and went about assembling a veteran team of Lt. Col. H. A. Tomkinson, Maj. F. W. Barrett, Lord Wodehouse and Maj. Vivian Lockett.

The United States finally settled on veterans Louis Stoddard at No. 1 and Devereux Milburn at back. Tommy Hitchcock, Jr. and J. Watson Webb took the No. 2 and No. 3 positions respectively.

The Americans cruised to 11-4 and 10-6 victories, dashing the high hopes of the British and returning the Westchester Cup to the United States.

The British were stunned by the long hitting from both Milburn and Hitchcock, while the accurate hitting of Stoddard and Webb made the Americans attack a constant threat.

1924

The Polo Association received a challenge from the British in 1924, and a group of players and horses under the sponsorship of Lord Wimborne arrived in the summer for September cup play.

F. Gray Griswold recalls in his book *The International Polo Cup* (Duttons, New York, 1928) that the British brought too much talent with them and had difficulty sorting it out. The final lineup included Major T. W. Kirkwood, Major F. B. Hurndall, Major E. G. Atkinson and Captain Lewis Lacey (whose Canadian birth and citizenship qualified him for the team). Although he tore a ligament in his shoulder in their first practice in America, Lacey proved to be the strength of the British team.

The American combination of J. Watson Webb, Tommy Hitchcock, Jr., Malcolm Stevenson and Devereux Milburn, however, proved to be too much for the Brits. The Americans took the first match in a convincing 16-5 rout of the visitors, with Lacey scoring four of the British goals from his back position. A fall and injury to Stevenson brought Robert E. Strawbridge into the last chukker of the first game, but the US players never missed a beat. The stickwork of Webb and Hitchcock at the front end of the lineup and the interchanging play of Milburn and Stevenson/Strawbridge overwhelmed their opponents as the United States swept the series with a 14-5 win in the second game. Stevenson was commended for his play. Webb and Hitchcock continued to impress their opponents with their long and accurate hitting, and Milburn continued to command the team through his actions and directions on the field. Newell Bent noted that "Our 1924 team was one of the greatest ever seen on any field".

1927

Another challenge was extended to the Polo Association by Hurlingham in 1927, but due to the pressure brought upon it by the Army in India Association, the whole matter of collecting funds, gathering the horses and organizing the team was left to them. The level of polo in India was considered to be the best in the British Empire, and with the financial support of the Maharajah of Jodpur and the Maharajah of Ratlam, all of the necessary pieces were drawn together.

For the second consecutive time, however, it was felt that the British effort had gathered too much talent, as they had a hard time assessing it and selecting the final team. The final lineup was settled at Captain Claude E. Pert, Major Austin H. Williams, Captain C. T. I. Roark and Major E. G. Atkinson at back.

After an attempt to rebuild a competitive US team, it was finally decided to return the successful team of 1924 to the field, and it was to their credit they did.

The attack of Webb and Hitchcock was at its acme, and the interchanging of positions by Milburn and Stevenson was as smooth as silk. America jumped out to an early 3-0 lead and never looked back. The final score was United States 13, Great Britain 3, and the opponent was severely shaken.

In an effort to regroup, the British replaced Captain Pert and Major Williams with Captain George and Captain Denning. The combination performed much better, but in the end it would be America scoring an 8-5 win and securing the Westchester Cup for the third consecutive time.

For their efforts, the British were credited with bringing one of the most competitive teams in years to play for the cup, but the results were the same.

1930

"The International matches of 1930, between the United States and Great Britain, provided the greatest crowds ever to watch polo with two thrilling and spectacular games. On September 6 and 10, two amazing crowds traveled to Meadow Brook-by plane, train, motor, foot; to the first game 45,000, and to the second nearly as many, 40,000" wrote Peter Visher of POLO magazine.

The United States selected Californian Eric Pedley to play the No.1 position. Earl Hopping settled in at the No. 2 spot with team captain Tommy Hitchcock residing in his familiar No. 3 slot. The hard-hitting Winston Guest anchored the team at back, but he would prove to be nothing like Great Britain's idea of a defensive back. Harry Payne Whitney had reinvented the back position, and Guest, a natural No. 2 would make full use of that makeover. The offensive-minded Americans were all attack oriented, and lengthy practices at speed had both the players and their horses ready to play.

The shortcoming of the British team, in retrospect, the fact that they only had one true offensive-minded player on the team in Gerald Balding, and he rarely got the ball. The brilliant Lewis Lacey played back at an international level, but was asked to play No. 2. with Captain C. T. I. Roark (another back by disposition) played No. 3. Occasional runs from the back position by Humphrey Guinness were the only sparks of offense that seemed to give the Brits a glimmer of hope as they fell in straight games 10-5 and 14-9. Pedley played brilliantly for the United States, scoring five goals in the first game and nine goals in the second, converting on half of his shots on goal in the process.

Lewis Lacey was the bright spot for the British, in spite of playing out of position. He accounted for half of the team's total goals in the series while making impressive plays on both offense and defense.

1936

This 1936 series marked the first time the cup would be played for under the new regulation governing these matches, calling for "play in alternate countries regardless of which happens to be holding the trophy at the time of challenge." Great Britain challenged and the US accepted, agreeing to go to England for the June games.

The British fielded the competitive team of Hesketh Hughes, Gerald Balding, Eric Tyrell-Martin and Captain H. P. Guinness, losing the valued services of top Indian player Hanut Singh to a shoulder injury in an accident before the cup competition. Their hopes were high, with the return of three experienced international players, and Hughes was thought to be a good choice at the front end of the lineup.

For the Americans, 10-goaler Tommy Hitchcock, Jr. was unable to arrange his schedule to allow him to go, and a team of Eric Pedley, Michael Phipps, Stewart Iglehart and Winston Guest were selected to play.

The matches consisted of seven chukkers of play, as dictated by the host country, and the Westchester Cup remained secure in the hands of the Americans once again. In both contests the Americans took early leads, and despite the persistence of the British players, were able to hold on for the wins.

The first match was tied no less than three times as Great Britain fought to stay in the game, but the Americans never gave up the lead. In the second game Great Britain fell behind early, but rallied to stay in the game, trailing 7-6 after the sixth chukker. The Americans were a decided favorite, but their combined margin of victory was a scant three goals (10-9 and 8-6).

1939

While the British were trying to sort out their lineup in practice matches in California, Captain C. T. I. Roark was fatally injured during a practice game. A veteran player and a veteran of the American game, both his playing talents and his veteran experience were lost. Shortly thereafter, Major N. W. Leaf, a veteran player who had been in charge of the ponies died. Balding was forced to assume the positions of both the team captain and seeing to the horses.

The British finally settled on a lineup of Robert Skene at No. 1, Aiden Roark at No. 2, Gerald Balding at No. 3 and Eric Tyrell-Martin at back. The team arrived with a cumulative handicap of 30-goals, and had a Herculean task ahead of it. The Americans had been organizing for the International series for months. The prospects of fielding the first 40-goal team in polo history in the form of the Dream Team was shattered, however, when Cecil Smith was injured just weeks before the competition. Hitchcock, Iglehart and Phipps quickly brought 9-goaler Winston Guest into the lineup. The opening game was played on heavy grounds as threatening rainstorms cleared for the afternoon match. The US scored early and save for a 3-3 tie in the third chukker, held the lead throughout the day.

The British closed to within a goal at halftime, 6-5, but were shut out for the next three chukkers as the Americans built up a 10-5 lead. Balding converted a penalty shot in the eighth chukker, his third of the day, followed by a goal from Roark, but the day was over. Phipps scored on a pass from Hitchcock to give the United States an opening 11-7 victory.

The second match saw a similar pattern of play as the better conditioned American players and horses held the lead and then rode off with the win in the last few chukkers. Observers noted that the British looked all in after the sixth chukker while the Americans, working under the command of Hitchcock, were fresh and ready to play.

The British trailed 4-2 at halftime, but found themselves behind 9-3 at the end of the seventh chukker. A final goal from Tyrell-Martin ended the game with Great Britain on the short end of the 9-4 score.

1992

The revival of the Westchester Cup in 1992 was a welcome addition to the international calendar, and in spite of its one-game format, proved to be the closest, most exciting Westchester game since Harry Payne Whitney and the Big Four invaded England in 1909 to reclaim the trophy.

John Gobin, Adam Snow, Owen Rinehart and Rob Walton represented the United States, while the British called upon New Zealand 8-goaler Cody Forsyth to bolster a team that included William Lucas, Alan Kent and the powerful Howard Hipwood. Opening play was tenuous, but by the end of the third chukker all 25,000 in attendance at Windsor Park that day were adding to the growing tension as horses and riders raced up and down the field.

Great Britain led 5-4 at the end of the first half with Hipwood's powerful backhand shots keeping the pressure on the American defense and turning aside a number of US drives. Lucas and Snow exchanged goals in the opening minutes of the fourth chukker when Hipwood's horse Baston suffered a fall. A five-minute delay allowed for the exhausted horse to regain itself and leave the field.

The United States managed to tie the game at 6-6 on a goal from John Gobin off of the backline, and the chukker ended.

"There's something about playing for your country that raises your abilities to their peak," said Gobin. "This was the real deal," he added, "it doesn't get any better than this." After getting pushed around in the first half by Britain's Howard Hipwood, Gobin fought back. ""He is the toughest player I have ever played against," said Gobin. "He rode me off so hard my teeth rattled."

But Gobin had now become the aggressor, and Hipwood's substantial contributions to the British side were being limited.

Owen Rinehart scored the only goal of the fifth chukker on a pass from Walton, and the United States led 7-6 as time expired.

The teams played evenly into the sixth chukker when Hipwood took advantage of a point-of-the-foul free hit from an extreme angle some 90 yards from goal. A well-placed ball was scooped up by Alan Kent, and with three minutes to play, the score was all even at 7-7.

A scoreless overtime was followed by another overtime when Rinehart drove the ball toward the British goal. His shot at goal was drifting wide when a galloping John Gobin showed up to take an offside backhand, putting the ball through the goal and securing the Westchester Cup for the United States once again.

"It just kept getting louder and louder as the game went on," said Gobin in retrospect, "you really don't need any more motivation than that to play at your best."

1997

After 76 years of frustration, Great Britain finally regained possession of the Westchester Cup in a one game, 12-9 win over the United States that would end a losing streak that dated back to 1921.

Early money was on the Americans who featured 10-goalers Mike Azzaro and the legendary Memo Gracida in its lineup. Isla Carroll patron John Goodman and young 7-goaler Julio Arellano rounded out the team, but the horses ended up being the issue. Gracida and Goodman had just won the Queens Cup and lost in the finals of the British Open. A tired string of American horses arrived at the field for the match.

American coach Joe Barry was quick to tell anyone who would listen that "as great as our ponies are, there is a limit as to how long they can remain in peak condition."

British team captain Howard Hipwood, assembled New Zealand 8-goaler Cody Forsyth and six-goalers William Lucas and Andrew Hine for the British side. Lucas and Forsyth had played with Hipwood in the hotly contested 1992 Westchester Cup match, and Hipwood felt the team chemistry and availability of horses (up to a day before the match the British team was receiving the offer of horses from a dozen top strings) might give them a chance.

Over 25,000 spectators were on hand for Cartier International Day at the Guards Polo Club, and it didn't start out well for the home team. Although Will Lucas scored the first goal of the game, three goals from Gracida had the United States up 3-1 at the end of the first chukker, with many of the

spectators seeing a repeat of the 1992 results. Great Britain rallied in the second period, however, with two goals from Cody Forsyth on penalty shots and another goal from Lucas. Two chukkers were down and the American play was ragged and inconsistent as they trailed 4-3.

The superiority of the British horses in the third chukker was the telling difference as the American string was slow and sluggish. The fresh and rested British string gave them a distinct advantage as they outscored the United States 5-0 for a commanding 9-3 lead at the end of the first half.

US coach Joe Barry moved Azzaro to Back and Goodman to Number 1 in an effort to shake up the lineup, but in spite of an early goal by Azzaro, the chukker ended with the British holding a 10-4 advantage.

Gracida converted a penalty shot that was countered by another goal from Lucas. Gracida scored another from the field, and Azzaro added his second of the game, but Great Britain held a comfortable 11-7 lead.

Forsyth scored his fourth goal of the game early in the final chukker to ice the game. Gracida converted two penalty shots for the final 12-9 score, and Great Britain had scored its first Westchester Cup victory since 1914.

2009

A backhander by Luke Tomlinson ended up being the game winner with James Beim's mallet swishing over the top of the ball as it carried through the goalposts. Initially believed to be Beim's goals, the pockets of British spectators broke out in wild cheering when England went up 10-9 with less than three minutes left to play. "I'd like to take credit for it," said Beim after the game, "but I believe it was Luke's goal."

"I actually believe that the English were better mounted," said Julian Hipwood, the veteran former English captain who was charged with arranging for horses for the visitors.

Built around nearly three dozen horses to them by Wellington resident polo player Melissa Ganzi, the English string took shape slowly. Astrada had a string of his own in residence at the Las Monjitas stables so it was up to Hipwood and company to find enough additional horses to make the English competitive.

A series of "practices" were arranged so that Beim and the Tomlinson brothers could get some sense of what they might have available to them, and in the end, they turned to polo legend Memo Gracida from whom a lease was arranged for an additional 11 horses. In spite of the inroads made in the horse acquisition circle, the odds were definitely against the visiting Brits. That was until Thursday afternoon, February 19 when during a 20-goal tournament game America's highest rated player, 9-goaler Mike Azzaro, was involved in a violent crash on the field. Azzaro suffered a broken collarbone that eliminated him from the US team just 48 hours before game time.

With no time to practice with the team, 8-goaler Jeff Hall took to the field with the Americans, and England's chances changed dramatically.

"We couldn't beat them with Mike (Azzaro)," said England's coach Javier Astrada. "I was just hoping that we could keep it close. There was no way we could beat them if Mike were playing."

The United States took the field with a 30-goal team instead of the planned 31-goal alignment that it had planned, but it was radically different in composition than the one it had previously assembled.

England received one goal by handicap and was the benefactor of a penalty conversion by Mark Tomlinson and a goal from the field from Beim, but appeared much quicker than the Americans. The United States got a single penalty goal to end the period trailing 3-1.

Aggressive play in the defensive end of the field resulted in fouls by the English. Roldan converted two attempts to penalty shots to tie the game at 3-3. Moments later, Mark Tomlinson scored his first goal from the field to take back the lead, and brother Luke scored on a Penalty 2 to end the chukker with a 5-3 lead.

Luke Tomlinson connected on a Penalty 3 shot in the third chukker for a three goal, 6-3 advantage before Hall scored his first goal of the game.

The US team limped off the field trailing 6-4 and the English were elated.

When the Americans returned to the field they had moved Hall to the Number 2 position. "We needed someone who was going to be more aggressive up front," said Rinehart. "I initially had Jeff (Hall) at Number 2, but changed the lineup just before the game." And the lineup change was a boon to the Americans.

Goals from Blake and Hall tied the game at 6-6. A score from Mark Tomlinson gave the lead back to England, with Roldan scoring the final goal of the chukker to knot it up at 7-7. Blake opened the fifth chukker with a go-ahead goal for the United States but Luke Tomlinson answered with a goal a moment later. Roldan put the US up once again with his fifth goal of the match, but Mark Tomlinson answered with a penalty goal to end the chukker in a 9-9 tie.

Both defenses tightened in the final chukker. A rush in one direction, a clearing defensive shot and then a rush in the other direction. Both teams struggled, scrapped and fought for each and every possession. With less than three minutes left to play, Luke Tomlinson refused to be denied and managed to drive the ball through the goal posts on a well-placed backhand. England took a precarious one goal lead, 10-9.

England took possession following the ensuing throw-in, and drove toward the US goal. The Americans broke the ball loose, however, and began a drive toward the English end of the field, but the sound of the bell saved them from any further damage. The English had managed to travel thousands of miles, organize a make-shift string of high-goal ponies and beat the Americans in their own backyard.

The international series had been re-ignited with a vengeance, and there was a great deal of enthusiasm to keep the series going.

The Hurlingham Polo Association and the USPA found a common ground with the success of the match and players on both sides gave a sigh of relief when the final bell sounded. The English had won, but the 123-year-old series was far from over. Before the trophy was re-crated (a function that was done by the players themselves) to be shipped back to England, plans were being made to play it again. The rotation agreed to by both national ruling bodies had agreed that the countries would take turns hosting it. Now if Azzaro is healthy when the Americans travel to England for the next Westchester Cup, will . . .

2013

England downed the USA 12-11 to take the Hurlingham Polo Association (HPA)'s flagship event, the Westchester Cup in July, it was the fourth time in a row that an all-pro England side had defeated a pro-am USA team in international competition.

This year, when the USPA challenged the HPA, holders of the Westchester Cup, the HPA specified that teams must be rated between 26 and 29 goals. The Americans have higher handicapped professionals than England and could field a 32- or 33-goal side if they selected their top players. So a 29-goal USA team for the Westchester Cup seemed within easy reach.

Instead, the USPA International Committee authorised Ganzi to put together the USA team. Again he picked himself, at 1 goal, with pros Polito Pieres, 9, and 8-goalers Nic Roldan and Mike Azzaro – a pro-am team of 26 goals.

The HPA selected an all-pro Audi England team of Luke Tomlinson and James Beim, both 7; Mark Tomlinson, 6; and John Paul Clarkin, 8. New Zealander Clarkin, as a Commonwealth player, was allowed to play for England under Westchester Cup rules.

With England at 28 goals and the USA at 26, the visitors had two handicap points on the board before the match began on the Queen's Ground at Guards Polo Club. But it was England's Mark Tomlinson who scored the game's first field goal, two minutes into the opening chukka. After Azzaro took a pass from Pieres to find the posts for the US and England's Beim scored at the bell, the first chukka ended with USA 3-2 ahead.

Halfway through the second period, Beim backed the ball through the posts to tie the match, before Mark Tomlinson got away from midfield and raced to goal to give England the lead for the first time. However, the US hit back seconds before the bell: Pieres scoring to tie the game again, at 4-4. And the same player reclaimed America's lead in the third period with a field goal by Pieres, strengthened by further goals from Roldan and Azzaro: 7-4.

England responded with a spot penalty by skipper Tomlinson, 7-5. Then Beim got away from a throw-in and raced straight to goal – 7-6 – before Luke Tomlinson equalised for England. But another American score right on the bell, this time by Roldan, gave the USA an 8-7 lead.

The fourth period, however, belonged to England. They kept the USA scoreless, while a goal from Beim and two from Luke Tomlinson, who converted a 60-yarder, gave England a 10-8 lead.

Both teams tightened their defences in the fifth chukka, each scored only a single goal to go 11-9. England failed to score in the sixth and final chukka of regulation time. Late in the period, the USA's Roldan scored and, in the final minute, Azzaro found the posts to tie the match and push it into extra time.

Two minutes into the seventh chukka, a pass from Tomlinson went astray. Nonetheless, John Paul Clarkin was able to pick up the loose ball and bang it through the posts for the golden goal that gave Audi England their third Westchester Cup victory in a row.

The Prince of Wales, once one of England's leading players before his retirement from the sport in 2005, was on hand to present the Westchester Cup to Audi England skipper Luke Tomlinson. England's James Beim was named Most Valuable Player and Polito Pieres's eight-year-old Argentine mare Rolinga was judged Best Playing Pony.

2018

The Westchester Cup unites everything polo represents: history, international tradition and fierce competition. The trophy, played for by teams representing the United States and United Kingdom, has been highly regarded since the end of the 19th century. Last played in 2013, the event underwent a major renaissance, resurfacing at the Royal County of Berkshire Polo Club on a windswept Saturday in July. The United States Polo Association (USPA) presented a 28-goal team, captained by Nic Roldan, while the Hurlingham Polo Association (HPA) selected James Beim to lead their 25-goal national team. England were sponsored by Flannels and outfitted in Hurlingham 1875, both on and off the field, while USA team members donned US Polo Association apparel.

The competition has varied in length over the years, from a single game to the best of three. Although America had lost the last three encounters (1997, 2009, 2013), they still lead the series overall, with 10 wins to England's seven. This year's Westchester Cup marked the 18th clash between the two superpowers, and both national teams were as hungry as ever to prove their superiority. Roldan recruited Jeff Hall, Julio Arellano, and youngster Peke Gonzalez, and the USPA worked hard to secure the best horses on offer. England not only had the advantage of playing on home soil, but of harbouring a type of familiarity that is rare in international polo. Fresh from their Gold Cup win with El Remanso, champions James Beim, Ollie Cudmore and James Harper certainly benefitted from playing the high goal together over the last three years. Twenty-two year old Tommy Beresford was chosen to complete the line-up, becoming the second Beresford to play the Westchester Cup (the first was Capt. Hon. John Beresford, who won the trophy in 1900).

The event was spectacularly British, with sporting fans flying in from around the world to watch the contest. An intensely competitive match was anticipated as eight world-class players rode onto the field. Due to the handicap difference, England started with a goal on the board before the USA equalised with a goal straight from the throw to draw level at 1-1. But the USA's high was short lived. Cudmore scored a hat-trick before the end of the first and set the tone for chukkas to come. The game started unravelling for USA all too soon. By the second half, Roldan and his men were trailing by five. While the fourth was the USA's best chukka of the match, England were merciless, maintaining an admirable discipline throughout. They took a comfortable 12-6 win to keep the Cup on home turf. 'This is massive for us,' shared Beim, who received the MVP award and BPP prize for his mare Salsita. 'The Cup has been going for more than 100 years so there is a huge amount of history behind it.' After the game, Roldan was realistic about what lies ahead for the American squad: 'I think we have a lot of work to do building up the international team and finding time for us to play together.' Arellano agrees: 'They beat us forward and backwards. I knew it was going to be really tough and it didn't work out for us today. I will be remembering this one and thinking about challenging them next time.' Despite the loss, Arellano shared his joy at having represented his country alongside his daughter, Hope, who won the Junior Westchester Cup the day before in an electrifying final.