

CELEBRATING THE GAME

This season sees the launch of a new initiative, the Polo Ball Awards, in London

For the last seventeen years, American polo players living and long gone have been remembered in an annual awards ceremony at the Polo Museum and Hall of Fame in Lake Worth, Florida.

This year saw Raymond Guest, Bill Barry and Robert Beveridge inducted into the Hall of Fame, Tony Coppola awarded the Philip Iglehart Award and Gay Boy and *Levick* honoured as Horses to Remember.

That a similar celebration had never been held in England – from where, after all, the galloping game was taken across the Atlantic – seemed remiss; and now, at last, the situation is to be rectified.

On 30 May, the Dorchester Hotel in London will see the inaugural Polo Ball Awards, the result of several years of discussion and planning. Held in association with the Hurlingham Polo Association, the awards are a joint venture between Hine Marketing, headed by Nick Hine, and Polofix, run by Nick's brother, and former England captain, Andrew Hine.

The HPA are enthusiastic about the partnership and have welcomed this high-profile event at the start of the new British season. "The opportunity for the polo community to meet at the Dorchester, to celebrate the start of the 2006 season, and to applaud polo's high achievers from previous years, is an exciting prospect for all involved with the game," said chief executive David Woodd.

Andrew Hine said: "The awards are a salute to the great of the game, and an opportunity to present and applaud the most outstanding performing individuals, ponies, teams and patrons each year, as voted on by the HPA-approved Official Awards Voting Committee.

"The world's best players are being awarded for playing the world's best polo."

The committee has representation from the broader polo community, including umpires, administrators, officials and players. The voting system will be announced before the beginning of this season, and 2005 awards will be voted on retrospectively, under the same conditions.



David Woodd

PHOTO MIKE ROBERTS



Andrew Hine

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The Victor Ludorum 15-goal award will be going to Isabelle Hayden's Groeninghe



Altu, 12-goal award winners

The awards will be in a format providing the most comprehensive review of the past season, and a detailed preview of the year ahead. It will be the only occasion where the 2005 season will be reviewed formally through video highlights, and there will be an official preview of the new season.

Presentations will include, but not be limited to, High-Goal Player of the Year, Patron of the Year, Lady Player of the Year, Low-Goal Player of the Year, Lifetime Achievement Award and the nomination of individuals into the Hall of Fame. In addition, the annual HPA Victor Ludorum awards will be made for 2005, with the 18-goal award going to Bruce Merivale-Austin's Caballus, the 15-goal to Isabelle Haven's Groeninghe, the 12-goal to Darren Mercer's Altu and the 8-goal to Ray Fine's Estrellas.

The black tie evening begins at 7.30 for 8pm at the Dorchester, followed by an exclusive 'Official After Party' at Tramp, which will last into the early hours. During the course of the event, there will be an auction, part of the proceeds going to the Polo Charity Trust.

The cost for a table of ten is £2,250, or £2,750 per table of ten including the party at Tramp for all guests. Further information is available from Louise Richardson on 0207 384 4870, mobile 07789 758 960 or email louise@acegrp.com



Bruce Merivale-Austin of Caballus



Altu and Groeninghe in action