

The Audi Polo Awards 2009



Now in its fourth year, the 'Oscars' of the polo world attracted polo's great and good to prize off their dirty whites to arrive suitably well turned-out at the Hilton on Park Lane for the Audi Polo Awards.

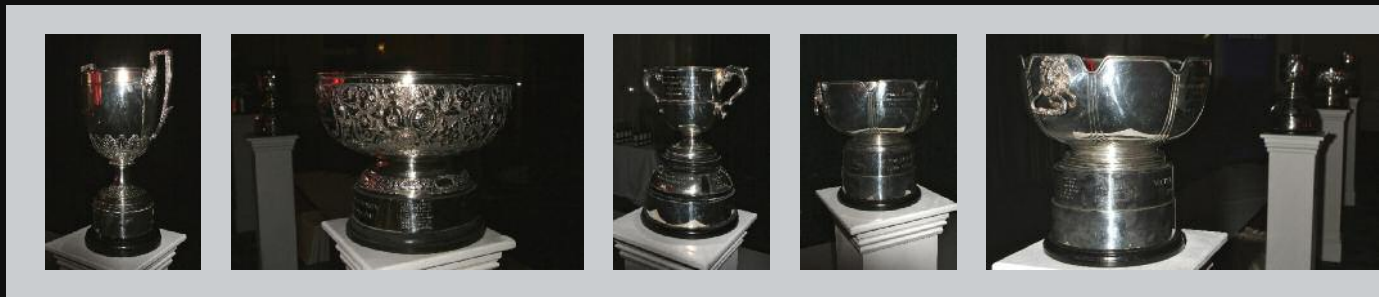
Many guests had already stopped off *en route* at the annual PJ's start of season party in Fulham before taxiing through Knightsbridge to attend the Awards. A Pommery Champagne reception greeted the 400 or so guests – the assembled throng looked something out of polo's Who's Who. From patrons to pros, from proud parents to protégés it was wall-to-wall polo.

As guests were called in to enjoy the sumptuous four-course supper, this year's line-up was as impressive as it was illustrious, the Committee and voters would have had a tough job choosing the deserving.

The ceremony followed a similar format to those adopted for the glittering Academy Awards, so 'the gongs' were punctuated with fabulous footage projected onto huge screens either side of the lit stage. As if you required more entertainment between the polo stargazing and the excuse to chatter away to all your friends you hadn't seen since last season, humorous compering from Rory Bremner, meant there was never a dull moment.

There were few surprise winners of the evening as everyone agreed who had been playing and performing well last season. This year's dream team had changed slightly from the 2008 line-up with Gonzalito Pieres and David Stirling being substituted by Miguel Novillo Astrada and Pablo MacDonough – the audience really having to deliberate in light of some of the fantastic performances shown by so many players over the year. For the second year running Alfio Marchini won Most Outstanding Patron whilst James Beim once again took Most Outstanding British Professional and *The Polo Magazine's* Most Outstanding Medium Handicapped Player – let's hope they give others a chance next year!

“ From patrons to pros, from proud parents to protégés it was wall-to-wall polo. ”



Pommery Most Outstanding Lady Player: **Tamara Vestey**

El Remanso Most Outstanding Arena Player: **Ryan Pemble**

Longdole Most Outstanding Arena Team: **Tchogan**

Reschke Most Outstanding Low Handicapped Player: **Max Routledge**

The Julius Baer Victor Ludorum 18 goal: **Enigma**

The Julius Baer Victor Ludorum 15 goal: **Emlor**

The Julius Baer Victor Ludorum 12 goal: **Foxy Ladies Catering**

The Julius Baer Victor Ludorum 8 goal: **Carrisbrook**

The Kerry Packer Most Outstanding High Goal Pony: **Noche**

The Polo Magazine Most Outstanding Medium Handicapped Player (3 – 7): **James Beim**

Audi Most Outstanding British Professional: **James Beim**

Caballus Lifetime Achievement Awards: **HRH Prince Philip, Arnaud Bamberger and the Hon Mark Vestey**

Turtle Island Most Outstanding High Goal Team: **Ellerston**

Cartier Most Outstanding High Goal Patron: **Alfio Marchini**

Polistas Most Outstanding High Handicapped Player (8 – 10): **Gonzalito Pieres**

Thai Polo Dream Team: **Facundo Pieres, Miguel Novillo Astrada, Pablo MacDonough and Juan Martin Nero**



John Tinsley of the Voting Committee and ex-HPA Chairman and David Woodd, Chief Executive of the HPA, describe the process behind choosing the cream of the crop:



John Tinsley



The panel this year was made up of myself, Mark Vestey, Andrew Hine, Malcolm Borwick, Robert Graham and Jose Donoso, but we don't collectively meet as a committee. We are sent the relevant documents and then put forward our own individual nominations – sometimes it is an obvious choice. This year James Beim had to have been in everybody's top two or three – he's been very successful and is one of the best-mounted English players. As for voting for the best teams, I go for the well-managed organistaions. It is one thing to put four top players and their ponies together but quite a different thing to manage a team – in particular for the high goal sides, but also for the medium goal to a certain extent.

I've been on the panel since the Awards' inception and I think the organisers have it pretty well covered. I think this current system of getting the HPA members to vote from our shortlist is a very good idea. Maybe there's more scope in the future for development of the younger players into the Awards, but I'm not aware of any changes at this time.



David Woodd



For me, what constitutes a winning player is somebody who puts the goals in under pressure, when it counts. But obviously the game is 80% the horse so they must also be well-mounted. Obviously some years it is easier to pick the winners if a particular player or team have done well or if a patron has performed consistently.

I think there is a danger of regurgitation with the Awards; despite the fact that it is a team sport there are always winners and losers and invariably it can be the same people who are successful – we have to be careful that previous winners don't keep being recognised!

I'm actually reserve on the panel – for instance, if Nina Clarkin and Tamara Vestey are up for an award then I would vote instead of Mark Vestey to avoid any possible conflict of interest – but the rest of the panel are made up of those who watch all different levels of polo and who have a real interest in the sport. Clearly most of the Awards reflect the higher goal tournaments and players, but a rounded view is taken on all players.



El Remanso Most Outstanding Arena Player: Ryan Pemble



I had a very fortunate season in general, playing for Simon Holley's Ochos Rios team meant there was a strong organisation behind us. I'm obviously very proud of winning the Arena Player Award – it's always nice to be recognised after so many years playing polo.

I think I received this award on the back of, not only our success as Ochos Rios, in particularly the Nation's Cup, but also on the strength of the International game at Hickstead. I was extremely well-mounted by John Horswell and that undoubtedly contributed to me securing the Most Valuable Player for that tough game against the Americans.



Ryan Pemble with his Award for the El Remanso Most Outstanding Arena Player



The Polo Magazine Most Outstanding Medium Handicapped Player & Audi Most Outstanding British Professional: James Beim



I was very honoured to have won these two prestigious Awards this year – it meant a lot as there were so many good players nominated, especially Hillario Ulloa, who I thought was a dead cert. I think I won because of my success in the Victor Ludorum 18 goal and The Royal Windsor that led to my handicap being raised. I would like to thank my grooms firstly, Holly and Emily, who do an amazing job and work seriously hard. Then my family for all their support, and of course Loz [James' girlfriend] who has to put up with me every day! Also all the patron's I played for throughout the season: Jerome Wirth, Martyn Ratcliffe and Lyndon Lea and the HPA, who have also supported me for many years.



Winner of both *The Polo Magazine's* Most Outstanding Medium Handicapped Player & Audi's British Professional Awards, James Beim with Audi's Head of Public Relations, Jon Zammett



Pommery Most Outstanding Lady Player: Tamara Vestey

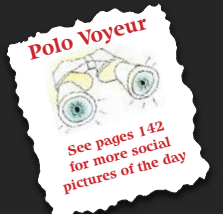


It was obviously great to win and be acknowledged for being part of teams that had had a good season. My sister, Nina, has won in previous years but other than a little friendly banter on the night, there is no real rivalry. She is still the best lady player out there and will undoubtedly be back, collecting it again next year!

I think the awards are a fantastic idea – it's great to see everyone there and a good excuse to catch up with all those people you've missed over the winter. And obviously to win something in front of your peers makes it all the more special – it's brilliant to have something to show your achievements.



Tamara Vestey with Pommery's Sarah Hicks



1. Winners of the Longdole Most Outstanding Arena Team, Tchogan: Seb Dawnay, Jamie Le Hardy & Heiko Voelker with Zahra Hanbury **2.** Winner of the Reschke Most Outstanding Low Handicapped Player, Max Routledge with Burke Reschke **3.** Winners of the Julius Baer 18 goal Victor Ludorum, Enigma: Malcolm Borwick, Jerome Wirth, Daniel Gerber of Julius Baer, Rob Archibald & James Beim **4.** Winners of the Julius Baer 15 goal Victor Ludorum, Emlor: Eden Ormerod, Winston Squires, Spencer McCarthy, Daniel Gerber, Nacho Gonzalez & Joaquin Pittaluga **5.** Winners of the Julius Baer 12 goal Victor Ludorum, Foxy Ladies Catering: Jack Richardson, David Allen, Tamara Vestey, Sam Hopkinson & Rob Archibald

6. Player of winning Kerry Packer Most Outstanding High Goal Pony, Noche, Juan Martin Nero with Ros Packer **7.** Winner of both *The Polo Magazine's* Most Outstanding Medium Handicapped Player & Audi's British Professional, James Beim with Jon Zammett **8.** Winner of one of the Caballus Lifetime Achievement Awards, Mr Arnaud Bamberger with Bruce Merivale Austin **9.** Winner of the second Caballus Lifetime Achievement Award, Mark Vestey with Bruce Merivale Austin. *The other was awarded to HRH Prince Philip* **10.** Jamie Peel, Arnaud Bamberger, Pelon Stirling & Juan Martin Nero accept the Cartier Most Outstanding High Goal Patron on behalf of Loro Piana patron, Alfio Marchini **11.** Winner of the Polistas Most Outstanding High Handicapped Player, Gonzalito Pieres with Johnny Lynn **12.** Miguel Novillo Astrada, Juan Martin Nero, Clare Milford Haven, Pablo MacDonough & Facundo Pieres – the men were voted as everyone's Thai Polo Dream Team