



### FOREWORD

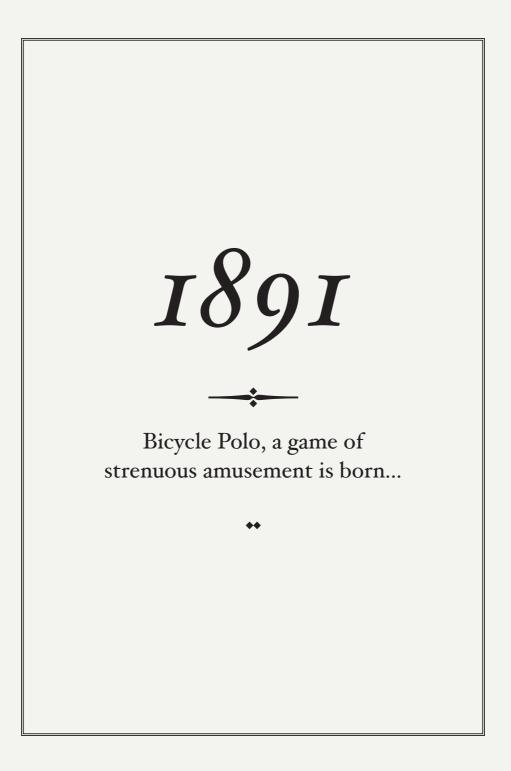
The game of bicycle polo was conceived in 1891 and is a direct descendant of the very ancient game of horse polo which dates back to 600 BC, and the modern game of hardcourt bike polo - one of the world's fastest growing urban sports is considered the edgier first cousin of the 19th century grass version.

From its genesis in late 19th century Ireland through to its modern day incarnation, this book unravels the history of this fascinating and misunderstood sport. It charts key moments, explores the games pioneers and gets under the skin of some of today's star exponents. And there are some surprises along the way...

Before Hoy, Pendleton, Farah and Ennis cast a golden glow over London 2012, 104 years earlier, bike polo pedalled into the 1908 London Olympics as an exhibition sport. And it may surprise you to know that Princes; Phillip, Wills and Harry have all be known to ditch the horse in favour of the bike...

This is the compelling and eventful story of the history of bike polo.

Enjoy the journey...



n 1891, having retired from racing – 'ordinary' and tricycle – the Irish cycling enthusiast Richard J McCready (hereafter referred to as 'RJ') set about inventing a game that would provide 'strenuous amusement' and a welcome diversion from editing his beloved Irish Cyclist.

His invention? 'Polo on Wheels'. Following the inaugural game at the Scalp in Co. Wicklow,



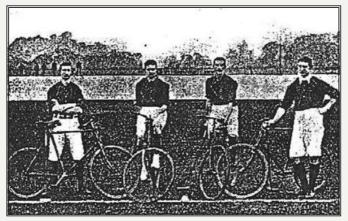
Richard J McCready

Cycling magazine observed the following: The game of cycling polo promises to be immensely popular...and not at all so dangerous as would appear from the title.  $\Box$ Quick to show his hand was the mysterious Cosmo-Cyclo who wrote an enthusiastic letter published in Cycling stating that since the introduction of pneumatic tyres Tycle polo is not only possible but exciting and enjoyable too!  $\Box$ 

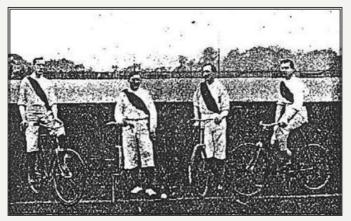
In Ireland, the sport rapidly gained momentum, with the wider racing fraternity quickly picking up on the benefits of a game that would efficiently hone "..the hands, the head and the eye.." of the racing man.



1st Bicycle Polo game, Wicklow, Ireland, 1891 The first Bicycle Polo international Crystal Palace, September 28th, 1901



Ireland



England



# A Word for the Polo-ists.

Bicycle Polo is not a mere trick riding performance and will most efficiently train the hands, head and eye of the racing man.



### BICYCLE POLO CROSSES THE IRISH SEA

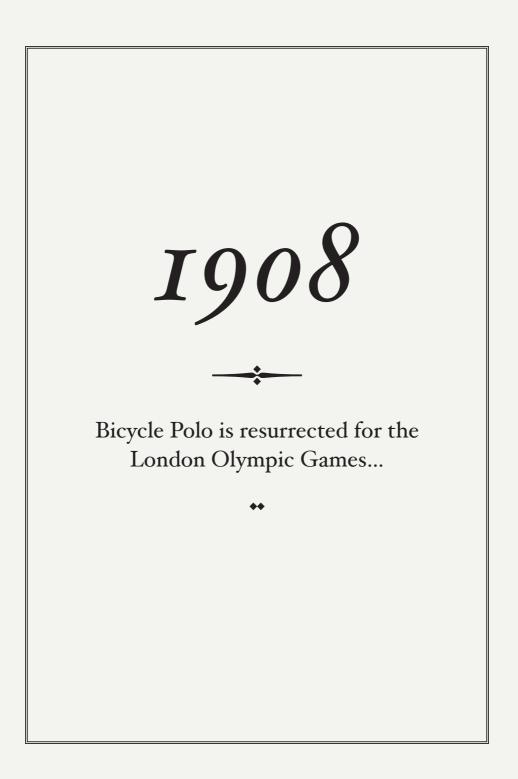


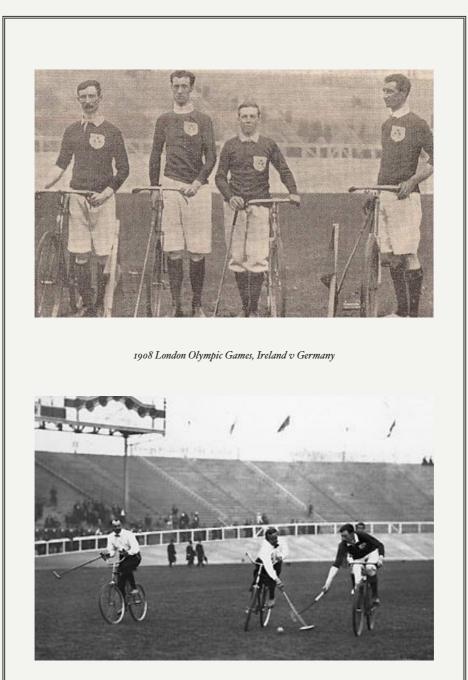
he English, however, took a little longer to catch on (1895) but when they did, clubs began to crop up throughout the UK. Northampton was one of the first, swiftly followed by Newcastle, Coventry and Melton Mowbray. In Birmingham, the captain of the Bicycle Polo Club – Mr A. C. Hills – was the first man to build a bespoke polo bicycle and in 1897 at Sheen House Club, West London, the first bicycle polo association was formed. And whilst the society at Sheen House was smart, the play was, well, rough – a 'style' that caught the attention of London's Morning Post: "Irish polo you play on your own machine. Sheen House polo you play on that of a confiding friend".

So, in 1898, RJ brought over two teams to Catford, London to demonstrate the superiority of the Irish game. He also played an unprecedented trump card by including a woman–Miss Wheeler. After her team won, it was reported that her presence 'unmistakably proved the safety of the game'. And whilst it was an audacious move by RJ it also demonstrated the growing popularity of the game amongst women in Ireland with Dublin boasting an all-ladies team. Two years later, the first international match was played at Crystal Palace with Ireland beating England 10-5. The game, one might have assumed, had taken a grip, was gaining momentum and building in popularity.

The reality, as it turned out, was the complete opposite.









### THE REPRISE

yril S Scott (hereafter referred to as 'Scottie') is the 'father' of the modern day game of bike polo. What RJ started, Scottie took and, well, cycled with.

In 1929, following a fairly successful career on road and track, Scottie, a member of the Highbury C.C., was looking for a focus, an outlet for his energy. For a man who had never heard of bike polo, how he came to the game makes for an interesting story...

Scottie was a good all-round sportsman – a one-time hockey player he had also played water polo and was familiar with the equine version. In the winter of 1929-30 he often rode with the Corrance C.C. who would take a football on rides for an informal 'kick-about'. And whilst Scottie joined in, as a cycling man through and through he felt it was somewhat contrary to the ideals of a true cycling clubman. So one day, Scottie and his colleague George Bell began trying to move the ball about with adhoc sticks and branches. As other intrigued cyclists joined in and temporary goal posts were sited and teams chosen – bike polo was re-born.

Mallets were soon assembled but after several games it was clear that rules were needed and so Scottie amalgamated the Hurlingham rules of pony polo with the rules of the Kent Hockey Association to the ratio 20:80. Armed with the tools and the rules, the next step was to put the game on a proper footing. Having assembled various interested parties at his house – on February 1st 1930 the Bicycle Polo Association was formed and six weeks later on March 13th a handbook with rules was issued. By May the association numbered 12 (with two honorary members) and in June the minutes reveal the first mention of a league.

They were men on a mission and by anyone's standards – it was quick work. And with Scottie donning the PR cap – interest quickly grew.

The first public match arranged by the association was played at Herne Hillon September 27th, 1930. In November, it was noted by the Hon. Secretary that the city of Oxford was showing considerable interest in the game and in February 1931 the committee decided to rent Mitcham football ground for a summer league competition. There was a concerted effort amongst the association to affiliate established cycling clubs and amongst others, they picked up Epsom C.C. and The Norwood Paragon C.C. in March 1931 – the latter of which turned out to be of particular importance as the history of the game reveals.

Having helped to establish the game, in the second year, the private members' teams were disbanded and Scottie established the London Bicycle Club – which operated for a couple of seasons.

At this juncture, it is interesting to observe the differences between the Irish game as established by RJ and Scottie's incarnation. The Irish rules explain an offside rule: if two opposing players are approaching the ball from the same direction – both must 'curve' so as to keep the ball on the right side. If the ball was played on the left then that player would be deemed to be offside. More significantly however was the team sizes – the Irish rules played four to a team whereas the English (initially) played eight.



The English game was experiencing a boom – with the provinces adopting bike polo with great enthusiasm. Towards the end of 1936, Birmingham came on board and quickly became the strongest centre outside London. The rapid success was due, in no small part, to the missionary zeal of a certain George Blake who took a team of Wrens to Birmingham where the first match was played. And at this game a Mr Albert Lusty was taken by the intrinsic merits of the game and with his support the Birmingham League was formed in 1937.

By 1938, 100 clubs were affiliated to the BPA (Bicycle Polo Association), representing 170 teams.

It was a meteoric rise. From twigs and a football to a national association and more than 1000 players in just eight years.





# PLAYING BY THE RULES (CIRCA 1930)



A player <u>IS</u> allowed to do the following:

- Crook an opponent's stick
- Play over an opponent's cycle
- Ride off an opponent who is in possession of the ball
- Charge or lean on an opponent when both are riding for the ball
- Defend his own goal by placing himself across his goal posts, players attacking him must avoid him

A player is <u>NOT</u> allowed to do the following:

- Play under an opponent's cycle
- Ride or play dangerously
- Hold an opponent
- Carry the ball lodged on his cycle or person
- Interfere with the game whilst dismounted (one foot touching the ground shall be deemed dismounted)

In the event of player and/or his cycle being disabled by a foul, the referee shall order the offending player off the field until the disabled player returns.

Referees are expressly authorised to order any player off the field who does so challenge any decision or attempt to influence him in a decision which he is about to make.



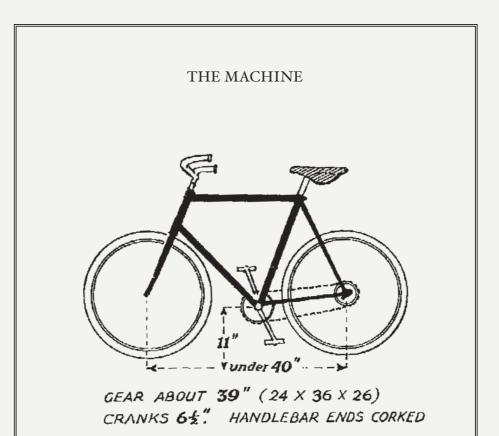
# A WORD TO THE NOVICE (CIRCA 1930)



The following pointers were considered invaluable for a novice player keen to take up the game:

- A specially built polo cycle will suit the discriminating player
- Expect to pay in the region of £4 15s
- Choose a machine with a wheelbase under  $40\Box$
- Do not buy a machine with a low bottom bracket
- Flats or upturned handlebars are preferable
- When playing on hard ground wear two shirts (with long sleeves, not rolled up) and two pairs of shorts as "an unlucky tumble will not see you with too large a graze to nurse.
- Bicycle polo is not expensive: a complete set of new equipment can be obtained for less than £6. For example:
  - Cycle £4 15s
  - Shorts 2s 6d
  - Shirts 4s 6d
  - Socks 2s 6d
  - Shin pads IS
  - Knee pads is
  - Batting gloves 3s 6d
  - Crash hat 6s 6d

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The diagram gives a general idea of the dimensions and position of the machine commonly used in the 1930's. Adjustments are of course necessary to suit the individual. A slightly higher gear up to 46" is occasionally used on fast grounds, but difficulty in pulling up to make fast turns is the chief factor against a high gear. When playing Bicycle Polo on hard ground wear two shirts and two pairs of shorts as an unlucky tumble will not see you with too large a graze to nurse... (circa 1930)



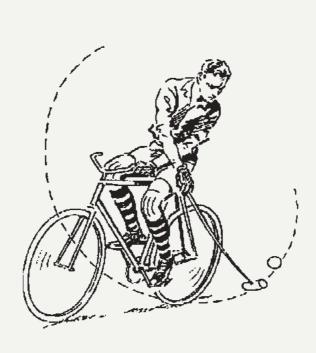


Fig. 1

Fig. I shows the method of striking the ball backwards from the left of the machine while holding an opponent off on the right. This is a defensive stroke and is seldom used when the player is crowded as he is off his balance at the time of making contact with the ball. It is, however, worth practising as it is a very useful way of clearing the ball from a dangerous position when there is not time to turn.

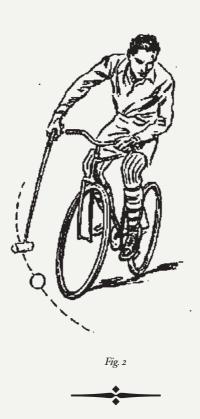
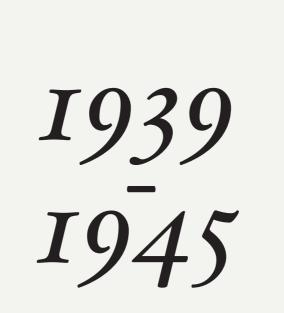


Fig. 2 shows a cross shot from the right of the machine, made when it is necessary to bring the ball across the field at or near a right angle and a bracket shot is impracticable. The front wheel is turned away from the path of the ball at the moment of impact by the mallet. This shot needs a great deal of practice to time properly and it is a very effective and useful stroke when mastered.





World War II stops Bicycle Polo matches

+4





## EARLY HISTORY OF BIKE POLO IN FRANCE

#### 1898

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Bicycle polo is played for the first time in France as a demonstration took place in Moulin Rouge with Captain Wood's team.

#### 1925

Polo-Velo-Club Francais and Polo-Club de Paris are formed.

#### 1928

The first Bicycle Polo Championships in France took place, featuring teams from within and around the Paris area.

#### 1934

France play the United Kingdom in their 1st international match in Buffalo, France, playing with French rules, winning 9-2.

#### 1939

France and United Kingdom have a re-match in Paris, again using French rules, the game ends in a 6-6 draw, Later on in the year they play each other again in England using British rules with the United Kingdom coming out 6-1 winners.

#### 1939-1945

World War II stops bike polo matches.

#### 1946

Bike polo re-starts after the war and has a new start in Aquitaine, Paris, Normandy and The Pyrenees.

#### 1949

The 1st Bike Polo Championships since World War II take place, with U.S. Pessac being crowned champions.

#### 1959

12 teams compete in the regional Aquitaine Championships.

#### 1960

Bike polo continues to grow as the first teams from the Orleans area are formed.

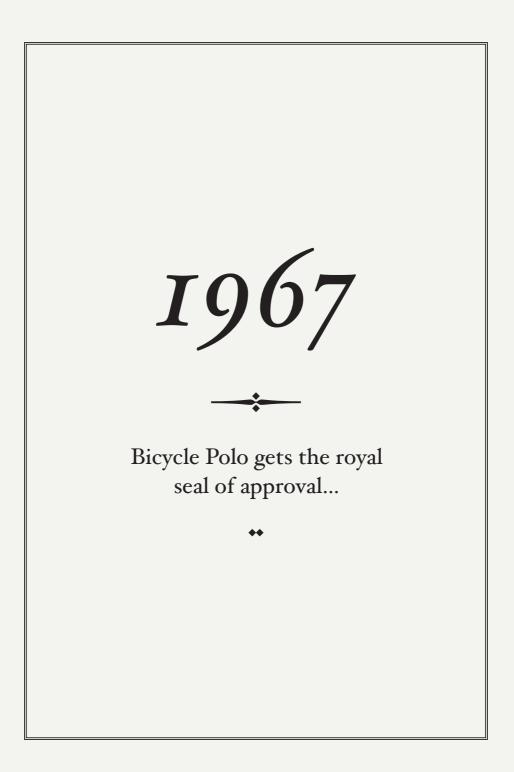








Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh plays Bike Polo

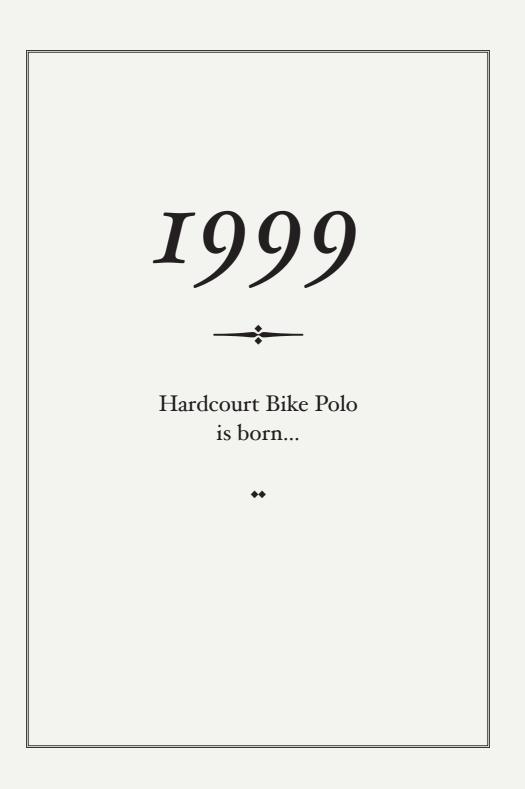


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# INTRODUCTION TO HARDCOURT BIKE POLO...

S ince the sports inception in 1891, bike polo has been re-invented several times but in Seattle during the late 1990's, something very special was taking shape.

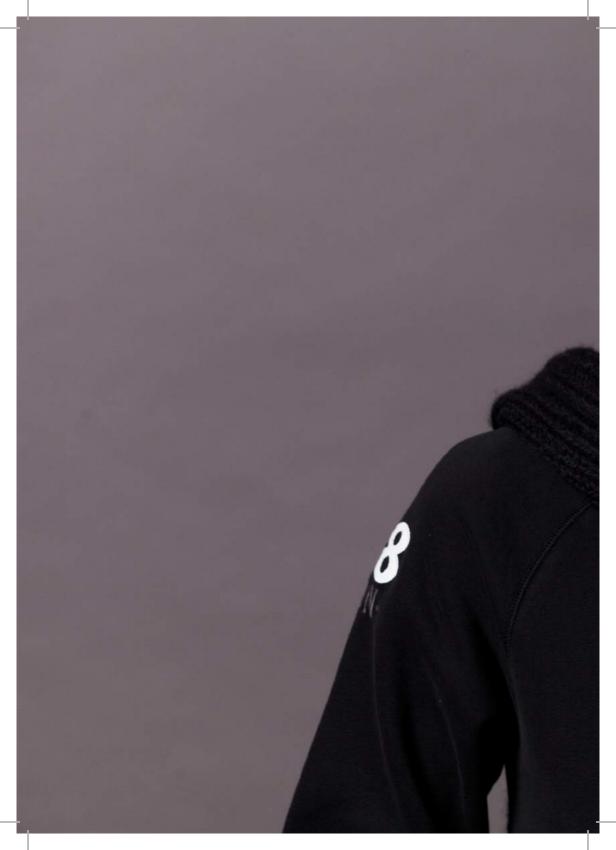
Pioneered by bike messengers who had free time between deliveries, bike polo was now being played with improvised home made mallets on concrete basketball courts and empty parking lots. This became very popular within the bike messengers scene and gradually began to spread throughout the inner city and in 1999 hardcourt bike polo was officially born. The rules of hardcourt bike polo were simple, as was the equipment: hardcourt specific mallets were made out of bamboo and a street hockey ball was used and there were 3 players to each team, like-to-like contact only (mallet to mallet, bike to bike) and no putting your feet on the ground with traffic cones commonly being used as goal posts.

At a time when single speed and fixed gear bikes were becoming extremely popular among cyclists, hardcourt bike polo began to branch out and caught on in Portland in 2002. Shortly after that, tournaments were beginning to be played throughout the West and Midwest of the United States, with the sport eventually finding its way to New York in 2004 and then London in 2006. From the parking lots of Seattle to the streets of Brick Lane in London, hardcourt bike polo had come a long way



and began to pick up even more speed. 2009 marked a milestone in the history of the urban sport as the 1st annual World Championships were held in Philadelphia while London hosted the European Championships, with teams from the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Germany, France, Spain and Switzerland competing across both tournaments respectively.

Since then, hardcourt bike polo has moved on from its grass roots and has witnessed a huge growth in both popularity and organizational structure in recent years. Now a global phenomenon, hardcourt bike polo is considered to be one of the fastest growing urban sports in the world with 400 cities now playing and an average of two cities registering a new team each week.







# IO BASIC RULES OF PLAYING HARDCOURT BIKE POLO

### The line-up...

There are 3 players to each team.

## 3,2,1, Polo...

At the start of the game, the ball is positioned in the centre of the court, once the referee counts down 3,2,1 Polo the game commences and the opposing players race to the centre of the court to win possession of the ball.

## Dab & Tap Out...

Players must keep their feet off the ground at all times, if a player's feet touches the floor he/she must exit the play and tap out on the side board at the center of the court before they can re enter play

before they can re-enter play.

## Game Over...

The game ends when one of the two teams reaches a score of 5 (if either team fails to reach 5 goals, the team with the highest score when the

time limit runs out wins).

## Out of time...

The time limit for hardcourt bike polo games are traditionally somewhere between 10-12 minutes (as above if a team reaches 5 goals they automatically win). In the case of a draw, the game will go to a golden goal or will end as a draw

depending on the event.

## The ref is always right...

The referee has the final call on all decisions and keeps official time with a stopwatch in hand. (there is usually also a score keeper who, well...keeps score)

## What a Shot...

Goals can only be scored when a player strikes the ball with the round end of the mallet (this is called a "shot"), goals scored with the broad side of the mallet head will be disallowed (this is called a "shuffle").

## Out of play...

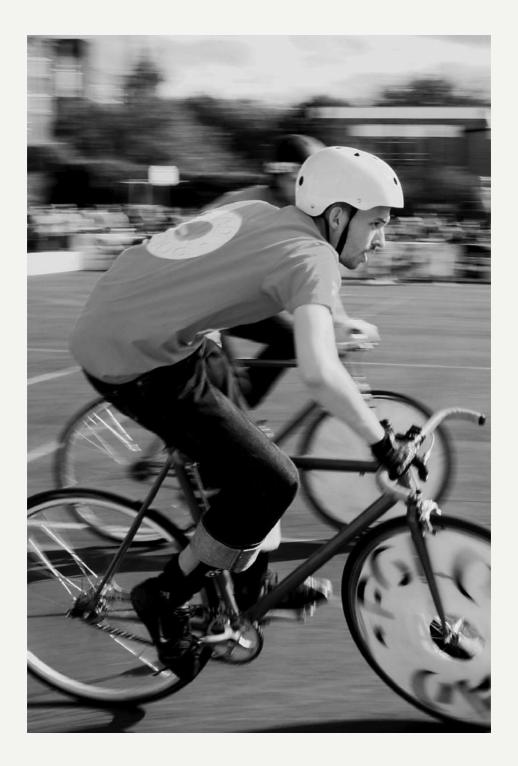
If the ball leaves the field of play, the team that touched the ball last forfeits possession.

### Contact...

Like to like contact is the only contact allowed, this includes body to body, mallet to mallet and bike to bike. Bike to bike is the most contentious of contacts and is sometimes frowned upon.

### **Obstruction...**

With exception to wheel covers (which cover the spokes of the wheel), no additions to the external frame of the bike designed to block the ball are permitted, this includes, bottle holders, racks, saddlebags or any other similar objects.





# CNK INVOLVEMENT IN HARDCOURT BIKE POLO

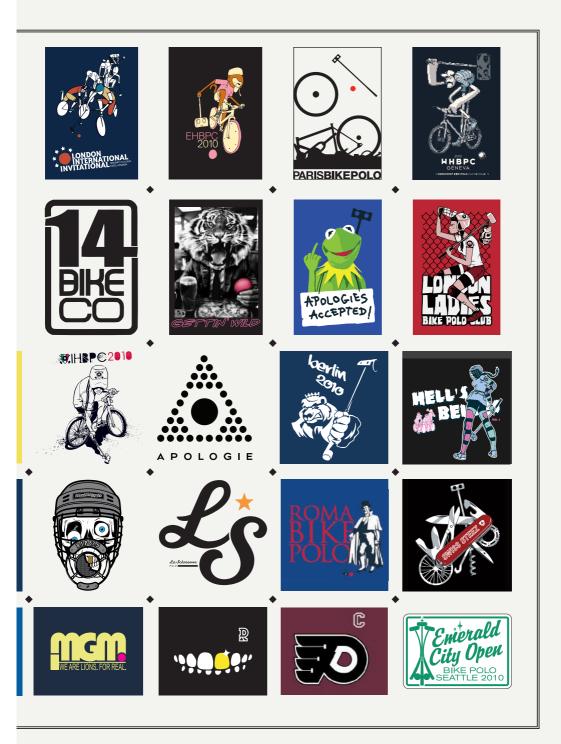
CNK, a street wear fashion label with a unique visual signature informed by bold graphics, tongue-in-cheek humour and smart design quirks, quickly garnered a loyal and enthusiastic fan-base worldwide and spawned a number of high-profile collaborations since they formed in London in 2001. It was this pedigree in street-wear culture and awareness of emerging trends that provided the perfect platform for their introduction to the world of hardcourt bike polo.

CNK's association with the fast emerging street sport hardcourt bike polo inspired a new creative phase in CNK's evolution. The early introduction to this underground sport in 2009 led to their first team kit collaboration with the Black Rebel Bike Polo Club (BRBPC), and CNK's in-house designer was also a player on that team. CNK was one of the major sponsors of the 2009 European Hardcourt Bike Polo Championships in London and the 2010 World Hardcourt Bike Polo Championships in Berlinz and has continued to support and enable major and minor bike polo events all over the world including the WHPBC Seattle 2011, the WHBPC Geneva 2012, EHBPC Krakow 2013, London Open 2013 and the WHBPC Florida 2013. CNK has sponsored and collaborated with teams and clubs from around the world including, The Guardians (Seattle) Dead Rappers & Alakazam (London) Call Me Daddy, Apologie & MGM (France) London Ladies Bike Polo, Gettin' Wild (Cambridge) Los Angeles Bike Polo Club (USA) Monkey Punch (Germany) and Roma Bike Polo (Italy).

CNK continues to provide grass-roots support to hardcourt bike polo and this level of commitment and ongoing support to this great sport has earned CNK respect from players worldwide.







## PLAYER PROFILE

Luca Semeraro, Hardcourt Bike Polo player



## Q. When did you start playing bike polo and why?

I started playing bike polo in April 2010 when I was 15 after just getting into bikes. I met a boy my age who was involved with the sport and recommended I come along. I attended my first session with him but afterwards he never came back. But that

was it, I was hooked.

### Q. You have 5 words to describe hardcourt bike polo...

Friends, Travelling, Great experiences, Laughs and Fanfreluche (A French word I picked up this year)

### Q. Tell us about your most memorable bike polo moment.

My favorite thing about bike polo is travelling to different countries with my friends and meeting new friends, it's like having multiple holidays a year. However my most memorable moment was in Geneva for the 2012 WHBPC. My team (Dead Rappers) came 4th and I won joint MVP, the next day was spent in the sun floating down the river Rhone with polo players from around the world. I'm sure some more memorable moments will come in Florida this year.

#### Q. Is Bike Polo a dangerous sport?

For me bike polo is not dangerous, however this could be due to the fact I have been playing for a long time and have gained the balance and spatial awareness needed to refrain from being involved with any major accidents on the court. But I can see how someone who has never played bike polo could perceive the sport as dangerous. A bunch of people going real fast on bikes in a small space hitting balls at each other and crashing into one another. However if a player is padded up correctly, face cage, elbow pads, knee pads, there is little that can go wrong. But as the rules are evolving so is the game, into (in my opinion) a much safer one. Certain rules are added to ensure freak accidents don't occur, for example the recent ban on exposed freewheels.

### Q. Have you ever been injured?

Another reason I don't think bike polo is dangerous could be down to the fact I have never been seriously injured (touch wood!). I mean sure, I've had all the regular cuts and bruises that every player gains after a good tournament but nothing major. The worst thing that happened to me was in the EHBPC 2013 when I wasn't wearing a sleeve and a certain world champion checked me along the rough plywood boards.

This left a big scar on my arm. And it's not one of them cool looking scars.

### Q. Talk us through your kit.

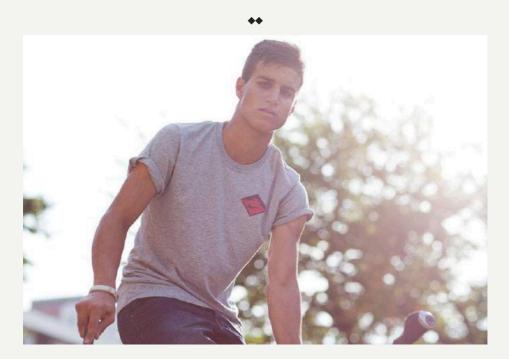
My bike: A prototype Velvet 700c frame with Velvet bike polo forks, 48h Chukker wheels with front disc brake and most importantly my stem: Victoire s-42. Victoire/ Velvet (bike polo sub-brand) is a company who build awesome bikes based in Clermont-Ferrand, France. My equipment: I use Milk mallets which are made by our friends in Geneva, they were kind enough to sponsor my team this year. I use a Nike Bauer hockey face cage along with my Nike Poohbahs. I have Franklin street hockey gloves to protect my hands.

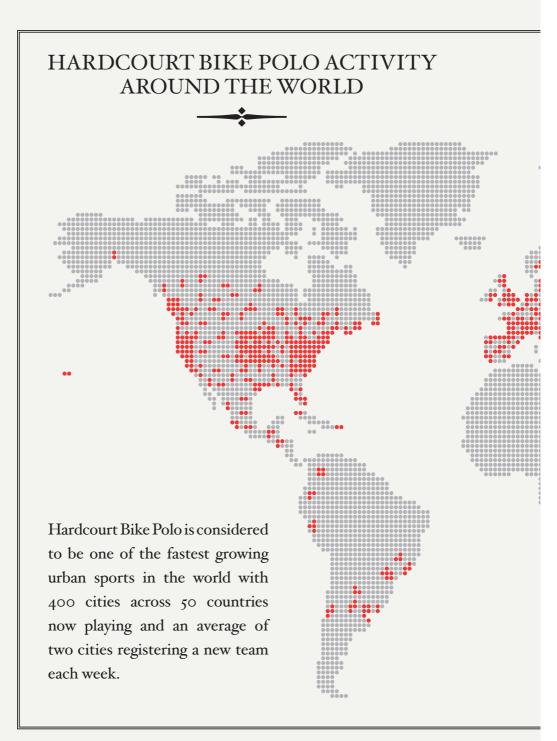
### Q. What are your hopes for the future of the sport?

I hope that the sport gains more mainstream recognition. I would love to tell my mum or dad that they could watch me on TV play in a tournament, I suppose this is something that bikepolo.tv will lead to, they are doing a great job live streaming tournaments. I would also like to see countries who the only bike polo news we see on them is from the internet holding major tournaments, I would love to travel to somewhere such as Brazil and play a tournament in Rio!

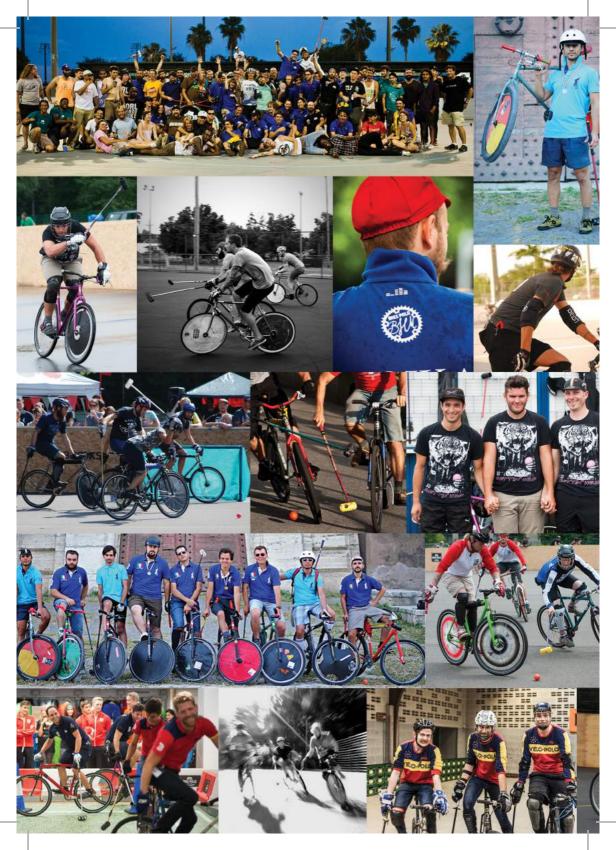
### Q. What are your personal bike polo ambitions?

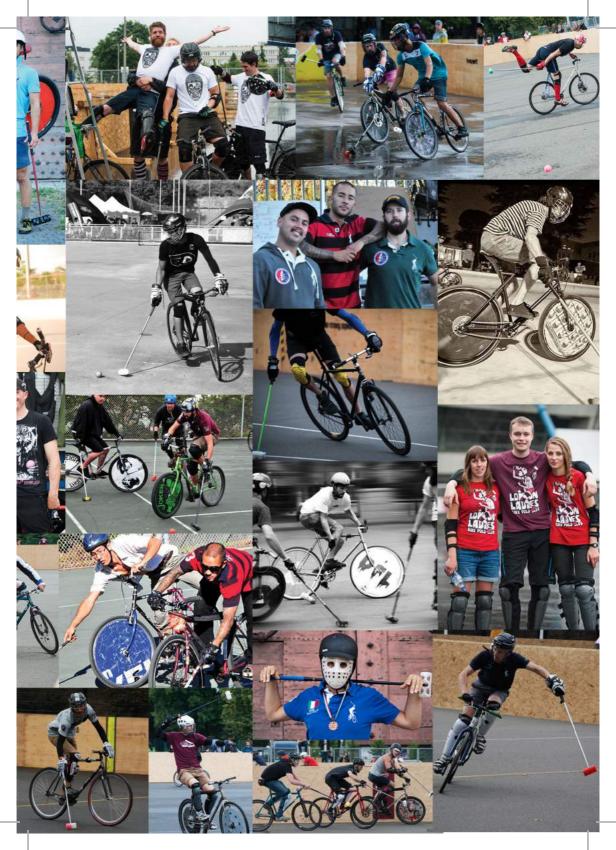
My personal bike polo ambition is to win the Worlds. That and move to a city for a while such as Seattle or Paris where there is a lot of world class polo and cool people!









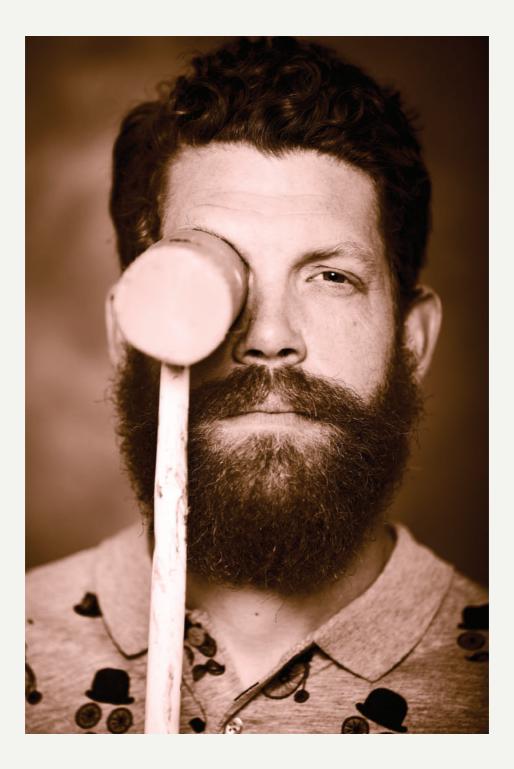


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## Acknowledgements

Ben Broomfield: www.benbroomfiled.com Cambridge Bike Polo: www.cambridgebikepolo.wordpress.com Alex Dash: www.labikepolo.org Roxy Erickson: www.roxyerickson.com League of Bike Polo: www.leagueofbikepolo.org LHBPC: www.lhbpc.org Brendan McNamee: www.bluntfilms.co.uk NAH: www.nahardcourt.com Roma Bike Polo: www.romabikepolo.org Peter Steffen: www.petersteffen.com Juan Trujillo: www.truliphoto.com Polo Velo France: www.polo-velo.net Alessandro Gonfiantini

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