

IT'S NOT POLO!



Joe Dooley, third from left, in a lineup at Nationals
photo by Cindy Hainline

By Alex Dooley

When I tell people that I play polocrosse, they always give me a hard time. They don't believe that it is an actual sport. Even after I explain to them what polocrosse is, half think that it's polo and the other half still don't know what I'm talking about. People! It's not polo; it's POLOCROSSE!; and it's played all around the world.

I don't quite know what got us pony clubbers excited about polocrosse; maybe it's the adrenalin rush you get when you're going at a full gallop down the field with a bunch of other horses chasing you, or maybe you're like me and you enjoy training and developing a relationship with your horse.

I can tell you when and where we were first exposed to this infectious game. It was 2005, and it was our first trip to US Pony Club Championships in Lexington, Kentucky. On our first day there, we were overwhelmed at how much there was to do. As horse lovers in horse heaven, we were sort of like kids in a candy store. As we read the long list of scheduled activities and competitions in our packets, we all paused when we came to 'polocrosse.' We flocked to the field to watch this seemingly exotic sport along with the other spectators. To be quite honest, I was not as taken by the sport as the rest of the group. It took time for me to grow to love the sport, but everyone else was gung ho about it. From a doctor's standpoint, this was ground zero for the polocrosse 'virus'! The love for the sport spread throughout our pony club.

Over the next three years we were extremely busy. We established our own APA (American Polocrosse Association) club, the Iowa Riot — the first in the state. We invited prominent polocrosse clinicians

"Polocrosse;" continued on page 57



“POLOCROSSE;”

continued from page 40

from all over the country, held regular practices and camps, and we also attended and held tournaments. Some of us even went the extra mile and hauled horses to Texas and North Carolina. Kallie Hainline was accepted into the APA youth development team and traveled all over the country to get ready for her tour of Australia. It was a great opportunity to hone her skills with some of the best players.

This past summer, five of our members had the honor of representing Iowa at the American Polocrosse National Championships in Loveland, Colorado. It was a phenomenal experience that I'm sure none of us will forget. We couldn't have asked for more perfect weather to play in or a more spectacular view of the Rocky Mountains. Kallie Hainline, Joe Dooley, and I rode on two different C grade teams against some very good competition. Kallie and Joe's team won C grade, earning them the coveted gold belt buckles. Natalie Eden and Paige Sumner won D grade, winning buckles as well. In addition to the placings, our club also

took home best horse, Nova, best #1 in D grade, and best # 2 in both C and D grade. It was a very respectable performance.

Our plans for this next year are bigger than ever. We hope that our club will continue to grow in number and skill. If you are interested in seeing this sport

for yourself, a standard size field has been maintained for practices at Sharon and Mike Dooley's farm off Highway 1, located between Solon and Iowa City. Come join us, if you think you've got the guts. We welcome all skill levels and styles of riding to come and play with us.

