

# HURLINGHAM

POLO



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SCONE POLO TRIUMPHS AT THE QUEEN'S CUP

# THRILLS AND SPILLS

Sam Coates and Victor Chua of the HPA Safety Advisory Committee report on the findings of a survey conducted to investigate the rate of injuries in polo

Winston Churchill once famously said: 'There is nothing better for the inside of a man than the outside of a horse.' And, while this may be true for the inside, our four-legged friends have also proven to be quite damaging for the outside, especially in the polo world.

We have long been dissatisfied with the quality of injury statistics in our largely volunteer-run sport. Unlike sports such as racing, where race medics collate statistics on fallers and fractures, our sport relies on volunteers at all but the biggest clubs to collect data, and at

the end of the year many clubs claim that no injuries occurred.

To get a better idea of our injury rate, and how we compare to other horse sports, we surveyed members in 2019 on HPA sign-up, asking about injuries they suffered in 2018. Around 439 submissions later, a 20% response rate, we found the most commonly injured area was the head and face, and the most common type of injury was a fracture.

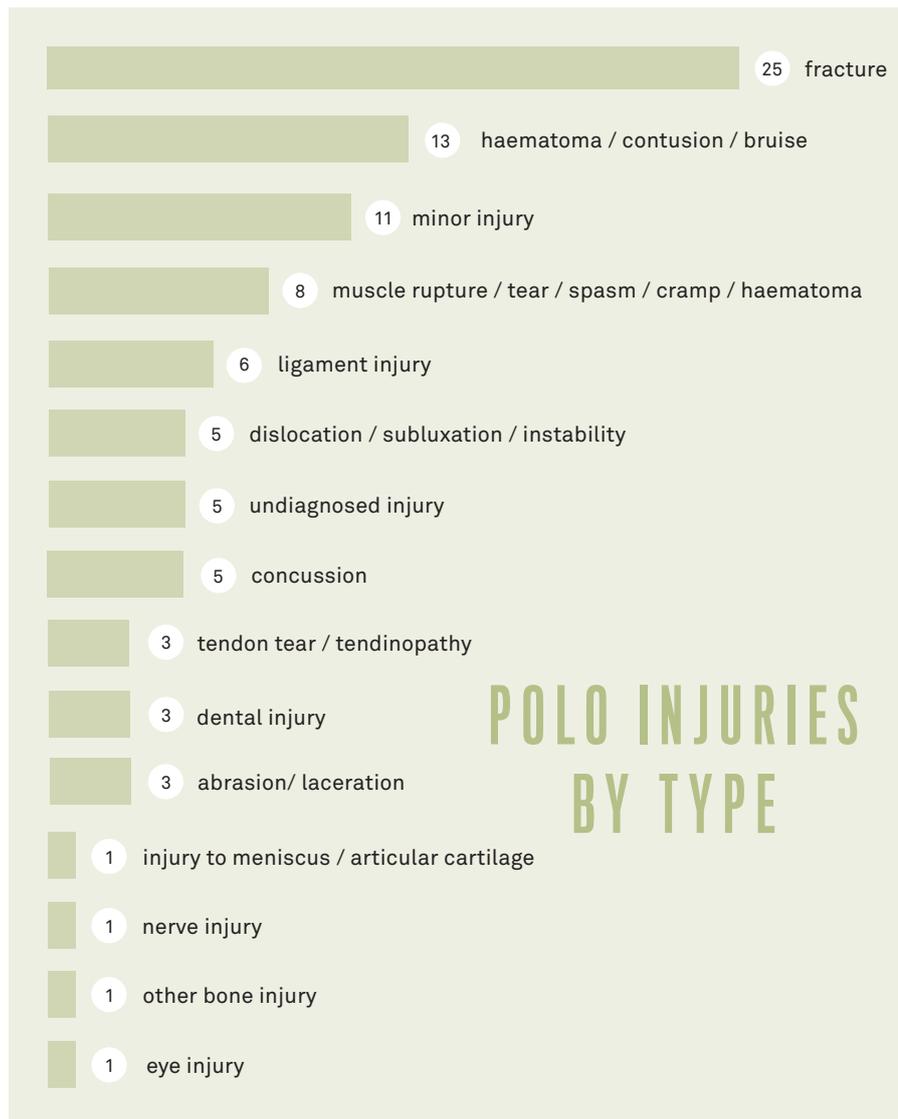
While 439 responses is not bad, we are hoping an increased response rate in the future will help us to get a more accurate view of injuries, especially since people who were injured may be overrepresented in the responses. This survey also assumes that players in the 2018 season return for the 2019 season but does not take into account those who sustained injuries so serious that they have had to hang up their boots during or after the season. We are aware of a handful of such cases. Thankfully, there were no deaths during polo in 2018.

As for the results, the most common type of injury sustained last year was a fracture, with 25 respondents having sustained one. Another common type of injury was a muscle rupture or ligament injury, with 14 reported. Five players reported concussion, and a further five experienced dislocations. It is important to bear in mind that these numbers should be multiplied by five, in order to get the overall rate of injury.

Interestingly, despite the amount of injuries reported, polo has a very low rate of injury per chukka, of 0.12%. This is the same as Irish flat racing, which has a 0.12% injury rate per race start. Irish Point to Point has 0.89%, and Irish National Hunt has the highest of them all, at 1.07%.

Alongside injuries, the results of the distributed survey also show us the average number of chukkas played per club. However,

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Above: Victor Chua on the field

the results may be skewed due to a very small number of respondents in some clubs. Disregarding some obvious anomalies, the club with the highest average number of chukkas played was Great Trippetts, with 250 chukkas. Following Great Trippetts is Holyport with 240, Twyford with 225, Guards with 209, Cambridge County with 193 and the Beaufort with 188, respectively.

Furthermore, the survey results show us the average number of chukkas per age group, and the age group with the largest average number of chukkas is the 51-60 group, with an average of 136 chukkas. The 31-40 group follows, with 130 chukkas, then 41-50 with 121, 21-30 with 115, 61+ with 104, and interestingly 20 and lower, with an average of 98 chukkas.

Management guru Peter Drucker said: "You can't manage what you don't measure." We hope that more players will take part in next year's survey.

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