

UK ARMED FORCES POLO ASSOCIATION REPORT 2019

The UK AFPA has seen considerable change in 2019. After a very long time as Director of UKAFPA and its predecessor the Combined Services Polo Association, Maj (Retd) Mark Cann has decided to step down and is in the process of handing over a very healthy organisation to a new administration. The UKAFPA records enormous gratitude to Mark for his quite outstanding contribution to Service polo.

The new Director UKAFPA will be Air Cdre (Retd) Tim Brown who alongside Col Nick Cowley (Chairman) and Lt Col Simon Dinsmore RN will be a Trustee. An independent treasurer Capt Arnie Lustmann RN (Retd) has been appointed and is currently liaising with Mark to produce 2019 accounts and formally take over the financial reins. We hope this process will be complete early in 2020. Capt Jess Wood has been appointed as Executive Officer. The Chairmen of each of the 3 individual Service polo associations will act as important advisors in the UKAFPA management structure.

The intent for UKAFPA in 2020 is to allow a period of consolidation, ongoing simplification of structures and procedures and to work closely and transparently with the single services to support military polo. To that end no UKAFPA tour is planned for 2020 and retired military polo players will be invited to form the opposition to UKAFPA teams in the annual Chapple Cup series. Focus will be on helping the single Service polo associations to introduce new players to the game and develop their existing ones. The longstanding Inter Regimental and Captains and Subalterns tournaments will go ahead as will the Inter Services matches including the RN led Rundle Cup. The extensive single Service programmes of training and matches will go ahead as they direct.

Financing Service polo relies firstly on significant individual contributions. All 3 Services and the UKAFPA seek to subsidise individual training and playing costs as much as they are able. Income to facilitate this relies heavily on the valuable and greatly appreciated HPA grant. In addition, the Services may apply to their individual Sports boards but monies from these sources can never be taken for granted. Sponsorship is continually sought with variable success making the HPA grant even more important. Each individual Service seeks to introduce new players to the game through subsidised taster and training events. Players can then progress via developmental squads and matches to selection for their full Service teams. These squads and matches are subsidised to the extent finances allow. Service polo tours overseas for matches and training provides additional incentive to progress. Thereafter selection for the UKAFPA team represents the pinnacle of Service polo and again matches and tours are subsidised where possible.

In 2019 Royal Navy polo received £4000 of the HPA grant from the UKAFPA. £3000 of this was used to subsidise their development scheme matches and training sessions. A further £1000 was used to subsidise individual player training programmes and to subsidise players to play in higher goal club matches to help them improve. The UKAFPA hopes to be able to provide a further £1200 to support an RN tour early next year.

In 2019 Army polo received £4200 of the HPA grant £1600 of which was used to subsidise a Royal Artillery overseas tour undertaken by 8 players. £1500 was used as subsidies for teams

taking part in the Inter Regimental tournament and £800 was used to pay ground fees for the semi-finals of the same tournament. £200 went to paying umpire fees.

In 2019 Royal Air Force polo received £4800 of the HPA grant. £800 was used to support overseas training in South Africa for 6 players which greatly improved their standards of play. The remaining £4000 was used to support the very successful annual RAF Cranwell tournament, pay tournament entry fees, subsidise practise chukkas for RAF players at Tidworth polo club and to subsidise matches for developmental and senior teams.

In 2019 the UKAFPA made a one off payment of £40,000 to Tidworth Polo Club with direct benefit to the many Service players who play at "The home of Service polo". The payment also played a significant part in ensuring the survival and future health of one of the UKs leading low goal clubs. The UKAFPA subsidised Service players representing the UKAFPA in the Chapple Cup series of 3 games (£800 per game) as well as paying for pony hire for the invitational visiting opposition (£2000 per game). Other costs for administration, engraving etc were also incurred. The remainder of the HPA grant provided considerable help in meeting this expenditure.

The UKAFPA is enormously grateful to the HPA for its ongoing generous financial support to Service polo. It provides invaluable assistance to make polo accessible to as many Service men and women as possible. It allows new players to try the game every year and really does encourage the expansion of "grass roots" polo.

Tim Brown
Director UKAFPA