

A Glimpse Of The Mansfie

By PAUL L. WHITE

Most Mansfielders today agree that this area offers a great variety of sports and sporting events. However, to many people who lived here during the 1930s there is one "lively" sport featured then which is missing from the present menu; Polo.

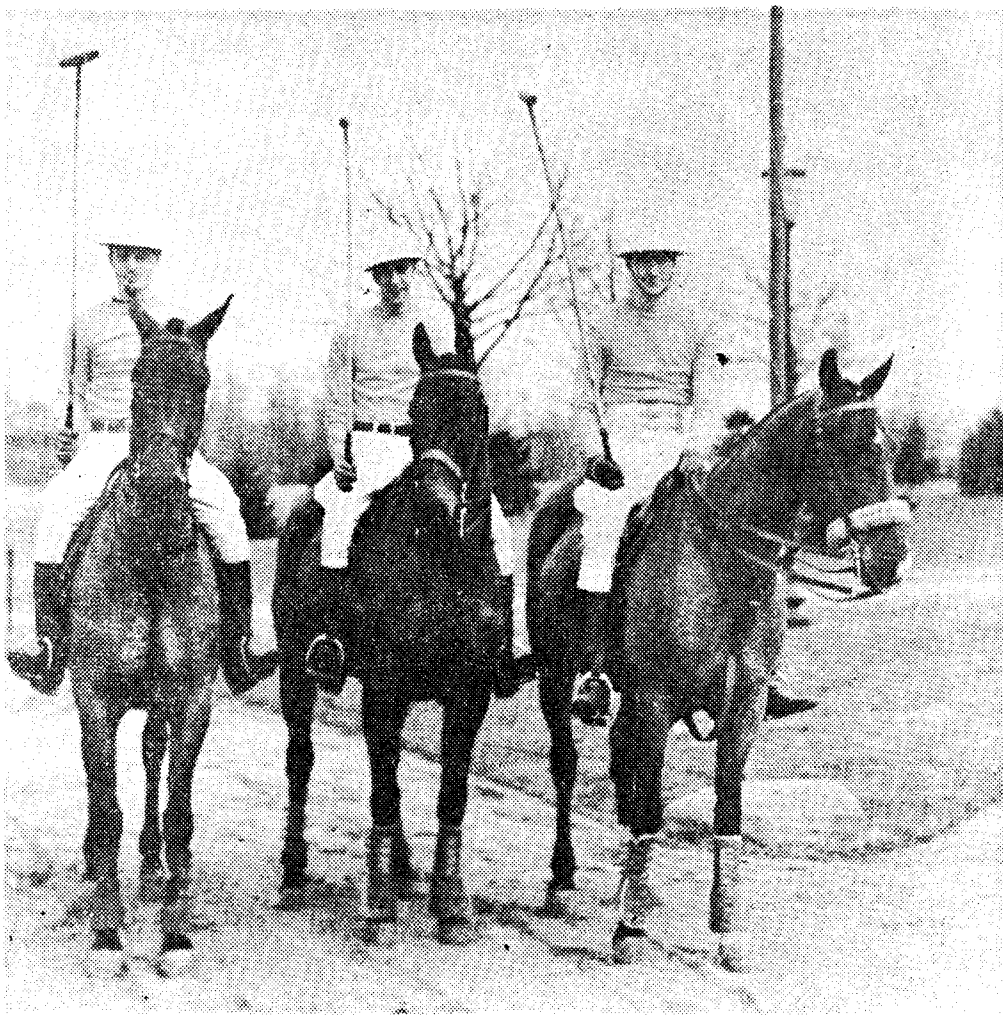
The home grounds of the Mansfield polo team was at Raemelon Riding Academy located on the Frank Black Estates on Marion Ave. Actually the Raemelon Polo team had a decided advantage over many others for it had a total of three fields including the heated inside arena of the academy available for play. Polo in Mansfield was a year round sport.

One of the outdoor polo grounds was located just east of South Trimble Rd. and south of Millsboro Rd. on Frank Black's farm. The other outdoor field was located on Harry Black's Ballylin Farms near the west side of South Trimble Rd. and north of Millsboro Rd.

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Louis J. Ott, one of the most enthusiastic players on the Raemelon team, recalls that horse fancier Frank Black started polo here with his purchase of a polo pony. George L. Draffan was probably one of the first in Mansfield to acquire a mallet and hit a polo ball around the riding hall arena.

Several more of the horsemen at Raemelon became interested in playing polo and Frank Black purchased more ponies to build up the team's string. The fledgling players purchased their polo togs and gear and started to whip a team into shape. They soon were playing "intra m u r a l"



Raemelon three-man indoor (four outdoor) polo team, left to right, W. M. Weldon Jr., Donald S. Black, and Louis J. Ott.

games every Saturday and Sunday.

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When the players felt they were ready to schedule out-of-town competition they had to look to teams such as Kenyon College, the Cavalry troops in Cleveland and a Firestone team from Akron. The games with the cavalry were usually played during winter because the troops also had indoor facilities. Kenyon's polo program complimented the college's

flying program. Kenyon had a polo field and a flying field on campus. The "in" Kenyon students during those days brought their polo ponies and — or aircraft along with books to college.

Some of the Raemelon players who made up a successful team were Louis J. Ott, George L. Draffan, Spencer Draffan, J. T. Lusignan, Dr. Paul Stoodt, Don S. Black, and Don MacLean. J. A. Gilchrist and horse trainer Jim Har-

din would also fill in on the team.

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Lusingnan amusingly recalls how Frank Black would go on a buying expedition for gaited riding horses but somehow would usually end up with some polo ponies which happened to get mixed up in the deal. He would also do a little impromptu scheduling of polo games and surprise the team by suddenly announcing they had better "bear down" in their prac-

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tice sessions because they had a game coming up.

Mrs. Donald Black tells how the wives worried about injuries to the players. "We didn't know which was the worse to endure — worrying at home or going to the game and watching the players "ride off" the opposing players at a breakneck speed."

Polo is a rough sport requiring perfect coordination between man and his mount. Louis Ott recalls one of the embarrassing things about the first few polo games played here was the newspaper was determined to print the report of the game on the society pages because that is where the regular horse shows at Raemelton were reported.

The players objected strenuously to the newspaper for treating polo as equal to a flower show or a tea party. They soon made their point the hard way by pointing to Lusignan's broken leg and a number of lumpy pates as evidence to the virile nature of the sport.

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The reports of the games between the Raemelton polo team and opponents are interesting to read. In a game with Kenyon College Jun 17, 1935, the newspaper headlined, "Ott leads local poloists to 3 to 2 victory over Kenyon College." The story also pointed out, "This has been the best performance of the Raemelton team so far this year." The story then describes the scoring by chukkers (periods of play). Ott scored all three of Raemelton's points and the sports reporter praised Don Black's expertly - executed pass to off for the third chukker score as outstanding play.

One of the winter games played in the Raemelton Riding Academy was on Feb. 10, 1936, in which the Raemelton team d o w n e d the Cavalry Troop A from Cleveland 15½ to 9½. The newspaper referred to the large turnout for the game in the heated riding hall at the Frank Black farm.

Ott again led, scoring six goals. Bill Weldon and Lusignan scored five goals each. The troopers had a hot-shot player by the name of Brown who gave the Raemelton malleters a hard time during one chukker. The game was fast and hard time during one chukker. The game was fast and hard fought with Raemelton being penalized three times. Each penalty reduces the polo score by ½ point. Raemelton polo ponies were credited with one pony goal (when the ball is kicked through the goal by the pony) and the Cleveland ponies scored two goals.

Mrs. Donald Black remembers how some of the expert horsewomen at Raemelton Riding Club would "steal" a ride on the polo ponies (one in particular named "Easy") and enjoyed the ponies agility maneuverability and response to the rein for which they were bred and trained.

There are probably a number of Mansfielders who, as they drive by the sites of the old polo fields along Trimble Rd. and glance at the Raemelton Riding Hall on the Frank Black estate, would like to turn back the time 30 years and once again witness an exciting game of polo as played by the Mansfield Raemelton team.

(Photos loaned by L. J. Ott to the Richland County Historical Society.)