

First annual ladies' polo tournament coming to Kettleby this Saturday



Just imagine playing hockey on a horse. Now that you've done that, that is what will be happening in Kettleby this Saturday, August 27.

Because at Bancroft Farm, The Toronto Polo Club will host the first annual Polo Canada Women's Invitational, featuring two action-packed games between the best players this country has to offer.

"Toronto has had a charity ladies' polo tournament for 15 years. But it raises money for breast cancer charities. This is the first year they've held a second ladies' tournament and it's held through the Canadian Polo Association," said Emily Hurst, Manager of Polo Management Services at the Toronto Polo School, and organizer of this event.

"This raises money to fund a national women's polo team. That's the ultimate goal. But it's more competition-based."

The Toronto Polo School is hosting a one-day event just for this year. Next year, they plan on hosting a multi-day event along with international players on the premises.

Hurst, who recently just returned from Germany, said women's polo is the fastest growing demographic in all of women's sports. Although this sport is co-ed, there has been a surge of women the past five or six years, registering and playing the sport.

"When you see girls playing it it's no surprise a guy can control an animal at those speeds. For the most part, it looks, exactly like you'd imagine," Hurst explained.

"When you see girls and a lot of times they're smaller; even the horses are smaller too but not proportionate to the size of the girls, it raises questions about, "this is really interesting, how do girls do this?"

Known as the "Sport of Kings," the game of polo, is played across four or six chukkers or more commonly known as periods - that are seven and a half minutes long. The team who scores the most goals by the end of the match wins.

Patrons can either purchase tickets on the Toronto Polo Club website, or they may purchase tickets right at the gate. Viewers are permitted to bring their own chairs and belongings on site.

Tickets are \$15 each and there will be an after-party barbeque held, which is an added \$15 charge per person for food.

With some great viewers, young girls who might be interested in the game and sponsorships in attendance, Hurst said the hope is to push this as a national idea.

?My hope is definitely to push the national series idea. There are women's polo tournaments all across Canada. Some of them are pretty small. They can be like the other one held in July here as an exhibition style and for charity,? Hurst said.

?So, the idea is through the Canadian Polo Association and this template, they can pick this up and have this in Montreal and in Calgary. And because it is through the association, I can go to Calgary and play it, or Calgary can come here. You get some movement and the players start to interact. At its heart, that's what polo is about. You have to have the network.?

Stemming from that, you can travel around the globe.

Hurst explained there is nothing to unify the players in the country. She hopes this event on Saturday does that.

Bancroft Farm is located at 16555 Keele Street.

The games will run from 3-5 p.m.

By Robert Belardi