Jilly Cooper is a journalist, writer and media superstar. The author of many number one bestselling novels, including *Riders*, *Rivals*, *Polo*, *The Man Who Made Husbands Jealous*, *Appassionata*, *Score!*, *Pandora* and *Wicked!*, she lives in Gloucestershire with her husband, Leo, her rescue greyhound, Feather, and five cats. She was appointed OBE in the 2004 Queen's Birthday Honours List for her contribution to literature.

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By Jilly Cooper

FICTION	Wicked! Pandora <i>The Rutshire Chronicles:</i> Riders Rivals Polo The Man Who Made Husbands Jealous Appassionata Score!
NON-FICTION	Animals in War Class How to Survive Christmas Hotfoot to Zabriskie Point (with Patrick Lichfield) Intelligent and Loyal Jolly Marsupial Jolly Super Jolly Super Too Super Cooper Super Cooper Super Jilly Super Men and Super Women The Common Years Turn Right at the Spotted Dog Work and Wedlock Angels Rush In Araminta's Wedding
CHILDREN'S BOOKS	Little Mabel Little Mabel's Great Escape Little Mabel Saves the Day Little Mabel Wins
ROMANCE	Bella Emily Harriet Imogen Lisa & Co Octavia Prudence
ANTHOLOGIES	The British in Love Violets and Vinegar



A LEGEND OF FAIR WOMEN AND BRAVE MEN



To Felix with all love

AUTHOR'S NOTE

To avoid confusion, I should point out that although *Polo* brings back many of the characters from my earlier books *Riders* and *Rivals*, it is not, in the strictly chronological sense, a sequel. The story begins in the very early 1980s, a year after *Riders* ended and Rupert Campbell-Black split up from his wife Helen. It finishes in the late 80s, two years after the end of *Rivals*.

A word of explanation is in order about the handicapping system in polo which is at least as complicated as A level maths.

A full game of polo consists of six chukkas of approximately seven minutes each. There are four players in each team: a forward at No. 1, two midfield players at Nos. 2 and 3 and a back at No. 4. Every player has a rating known as a 'handicap', which is reassessed by the polo authorities twice a year. These handicaps reflect individual ability and range from minus two for an absolute beginner up to a maximum of ten for the very best players. No Englishman has been rated at ten since the Second World War.

The term 'high-goal polo' in England means that the aggregate handicap of a team entered for a particular tournament must be between 17 and 22. A 22-goal team, for example, could be composed of a forward with a handicap of two, two midfield players, each on eight, and a back on four. In Palm Beach, where the standard is higher, the ceiling for a high-goal side is 26, and in Argentina as high as the ultimate 40, with each of the members of the team on ten. No player can take part in high-goal polo unless he has at least a handicap of one.

In medium-goal matches the aggregate handicap of the team is normally between 16 and 12 and in low goal between 8 and 0.

Most tournaments are based on handicap. Thus the team with the higher aggregate concedes goals at the start of a match to the other side.

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Many other people helped me. Like those referred to above, they are all skilled in their own fields, but, as I was writing fiction, I only heeded their advice in so far as it fitted my story. The accuracy of the book in no way reflects their expertise or their views. They include:

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Although I enjoyed hospitality in polo clubs internationally, I am especially privileged to live near one of the loveliest polo clubs in the world, Cirencester Park. I would therefore like to thank the Earl and Countess Bathurst, The Hon. Mark and Rosie Vestey and, particularly, Douglas and Sally Brown, Ronnie and Diana Scott, Alison Roeves, Eika Clark, Claire Millington, Sarah Ridley, Ted Allen and all the other staff and members of the club for all their tolerance, friendliness and co-operation.

I must also stress that *Polo* is a work of fiction, and none of the characters is based on anyone, except when they are so famous or so central to the polo world – as Ronald Ferguson or Terry Hanlon are – that they appear as themselves. Any resemblance to any living persons or organizations is purely coincidental and wholly unintentional. The polo world, however, is full of legends and wonderful anecdotes, and if an incident or a line of dialogue is attributed to a character in the book, this character is on no way intended to portray the original subject of the anecdote or the speaker of the line of dialogue.

Polo took a long time to write. I am therefore deeply grateful to my publishers at Transworld: Paul Scherer, Mark Barty-King, Patrick Janson-Smith, and all their staff for their kindness and encouragement. I also had marvellous editorial help from Diane Pearson, Broo Doherty and Tom Hartman.

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Polo is a very big book and consequently I owe a vast debt of gratitude to Annette Xuereb-Brennan, Annalise Dobson and Anna Gibbs-Kennet, who bravely deciphered my ghastly handwriting and typed great chunks of the manuscript; and also to Beryl Hill, Diane Peter, Jane Brooks, Chris Ingersent, Verity Tilling and Catherine Parkin, who all typed individual chapters. Thanks should also go to Tony Hoskins and Diane Stevens for driving me to numerous polo matches.

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It is not easy living with a writer, who is totally absorbed when a book is going well and suicidal when it is going badly. Therefore the lion's share of my gratitude must go to my family, including my mongrel Barbara and her agent Gypsy (who met a very nice class of dog at polo matches) for their endless understanding and good cheer.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to all the gallant ponies who take part in the game and to the grooms who spend such long hours looking after them.

CHARACTERS

BART ALDERTON

GRACE ALDERTON LUKE ALDERTON

RED ALDERTON

BIBI ALDERTON

THE HONOURABLE BASIL BADDINGHAM PHILIP BAGLEY DREW BENEDICT

SUKEY BENEDICT

JAMES BENSON MRS BODKIN

MARGIE BRIDGWATER JAIME CALAVESSI RUPERT CAMPBELL-BLACK

TABITHA CAMPBELL-BLACK BRIGADIER CANFORD

DOMMIE AND SEB CARLISLE WINSTON CHALMERS LUCY CHALMERS

DORIS CHOW

An American airplane billionaire. Polo patron of the Alderton Flyers. His second wife. Bart's son by his first wife. A professional polo player. Bart's and Grace's son. An unprofessional polo player. Bart's and Grace's daughter - a poor little rich girl. English polo player, jack of all trades. A vet. English polo player and a dashing Captain in the Welsh Guards. His wife. An English heiress and jolly good sort. A smooth private doctor. Rupert Campbell-Black's housekeeper. An American lawyer. An Argentine polo player. Show-jumping ace, later MP for Chalford and Bisley and Minister for Sport. His daughter.

Chairman of the Pony Club and later of the British Polo Association. English polo players -- known as the Heavenly Twins. A shit-hot American lawyer. His ravishing much younger wife. A Chinese hooker.

KEVIN COLEY ENID COLEY TRACE COLEY CONCHITA CAMERON COOK	A petfood billionaire and polo patron of Doggie Dins. His awful wife. His daughter. Bart Alderton's maid. Director of Programmes at Corinium Television.
JACKIE COSGRAVE	Hippy painter and art lecturer. Also proficient in the art of lechery.
BRAD DILLON	Team manager of the American polo team.
RICKY FRANCE-LYNCH	A nine-goal English polo player, nicknamed <i>El</i> <i>Orgulloso</i> – the proud one – by the other players.
CHESSIE FRANCE-LYNCH	His bored, but exquisitely beautiful, wife.
WILLIAM FRANCE-LYNCH HERBERT FRANCE- LYNCH FRANCES	Their three-year-old son. Ricky's father. A tartar and former nine-goal polo player. Ricky France-Lynch's head
DINO FERRANTI	groom. American show-jumper. Sales Director of Ferranti's Inc.
BOBBY FERRARO COMMANDER 'FATTY'	An American polo player. Club Secretary of Rutshire
HARRIS	Polo Club.
SIMPSON HASTINGS PAUL HEDLEY	A lethal American journalist. A member of the crack South Sussex Pony Club team.
BRIGADIER HUGHIE	Chairman of Rutshire Polo Club and the club bore.
MRS HUGHIE INOCENTA	His wife. A misnamed Argentine
JESUS	beauty. A nine-goal Chilean polo player given to telephonitis
JOEL	and treble-dating patrons. Ricky France-Lynch's farm manager.

DEATTIE IOUNICON	A adjustive upprincipled
BEATTIE JOHNSON	A seductive, unprincipled,
IOSÉ	Fleet Street columnist.
JOSÉ	A glamorous Mexican ringer.
VICTOR KAPUTNIK	A Hungarian pharmaceutical
	billionaire, patron of the
	Kaputnik Tigers.
SHARON KAPUTNIK	A nymphomaniac
	night-club hostess later
	married to Victor.
MARMADUKE KEMPTON	A tobacco baron.
AURIEL KINGHAM	A very famous American
	film star.
MISS LEDITSKY	Bart Alderton's secretary.
BILLY LLOYD-FOXE	Ex-England show-jumper
	and BBC Sports Presenter.
JANEY LLOYD-FOXE	A national newspaper
-	columnist.
MISS LODSWORTH	Commissioner for
	Rutshire Girl Guides,
	hoary polo groupie
	and a rip-roaring
	busybody.
JUSTIN AND PATRICK	
LOMBARD	Brothers and members of
	Rutshire Pony Club polo
	team.
LOUISA	One of Ricky France-Lynch's
2001011	grooms.
HAMISH MACLEOD	A television producer.
DAISY MACLEOD	His wife, a painter.
PERDITA MACLEOD	Daisy's daughter.
VIOLET MACLEOD	Hamish's and Daisy's
	daughter.
EDDIE MACLEOD	Hamish's and Daisy's son.
BRIDGET MACLEOD	Hamish's mother, an
DRIDGET MITCHEOD	absolute bitch.
'DANCER' MAITLAND	A cockney rock star. Lead
DAILCER MAILEAND	singer of Apocalypse.
LIONEL MANNERING	A goaty psychiatrist.
PHILIPPA MANNERING	His man-eating wife.
MANUEL	Bart Alderton's groom.
LANDO MEDICI	
LANDU MEDICI	A bent polo patron.

ALEJANDRO MENDOZA	A ten-goal Argentine polo player, the greatest back
	in the world.
CLAUDIA MENDOZA	His wife.
LORENZO, LUIS AND	This wife.
PATRICIO MENDOZA	Alejandro's elder sons.
I A I KICIO MENDOZA	All polo players.
CASSANDRA MURDOCH	Luke Alderton's girlfriend.
BEN AND CHARLES	
BEN AND CHARLES NAPIER	Eight-goal English polo players and brothers known
NAPIEK	
	as the Unheavenly Twins.
SHARK NELLIGAN	A nine-goal American polo
	player.
SETH NEWCOMBE	An ace American bone
	surgeon.
JUAN O'BRIEN	A ten-goal Argentine polo
	player. David Waterlane's
	hired assassin.
MIGUEL O'BRIEN	Juan's elder brother.
	Another ten-goal polo player
	and David Waterlane's
	second hired assassin.
TINY O'BRIEN	Juan's wife known
	variously as Sitting Bully
	and the Policia.
ROSIE O'GRADY	A comely nurse.
DECLAN O'HARA	An Irish television megastar.
MAUD O'HARA	His actress wife.
PATRICK O'HARA	His son.
TAGGIE O'HARA	His elder daughter. An angel.
CAITLIN O'HARA	His younger daughter.
MRS PAGET	A committee member of a
	London Adoption Society.
HAL PETERS	An American automobile
	billionaire and
	born-again Christian.
	Polo patron of
	Peters' Cheetahs.
MYRTLE PETERS	His wife.
RAIMUNDO	Alejandro's <i>peticero</i> and
MINUNDO	Master of the Horse.
	master of the morse.

SAMANTHA	Shark Nelligan's glamorous
	groom.
RANDY SHERWOOD	A Pony Club Adonis,
	member of the crack South
	Sussex polo team.
MERLIN SHERWOOD	Randy's younger brother,
MEREIN SHERWOOD	another Adonis, playing for
	South Sussex.
MRS SHERWOOD	Their glamorous mother.
ANGEL SOLIS DE	An Argentine polo player
GONZALES	and Falklands war pilot,
	whose brother Pedro was
	shot down and killed.
BETTY SOLIS DE	Angel's aunt.
GONZALES	0
UMBERTO	Alejandro's groom.
HELMET WALLSTEIN	Chief Executive,
	Euro-Electronics.
GISELA WALLSTEIN	His wife.
	THS whe.
SIR DAVID	
WATERLANE, BART	Owner of Rutminster
	Hall, patron of Rutshire
	Hall polo team.
CLEMENCY WATERLANE	His wandering wife.
MIKE WATERLANE	His son, also a polo player.
WENDY	Hamish Macleod's PA.

Queen Augusta's Boarding School for Girls has a splendid academic reputation, but on a sweltering afternoon in June one of its pupils was not paying attention to her English exam. While her classmates scribbled away, Perdita Macleod was drawing a polo pony. Outside, the scent of honeysuckle drifted in through the french windows, the cuckoo called from an acid-green poplar copse at the end of the lawn. Perdita, gazing out, thought longingly of the big tournament at Rutshire Polo Club where the semi-finals of the Rutshire Cup were being played. All her heroes were taking part: Ricky France-Lynch, Drew Benedict, Seb and Dommie Carlisle, the mighty Argentines, Miguel and Juan O'Brien, and, to crown it, the Prince of Wales.

Fretfully, Perdita glanced at her exam paper which began with a poem by Newbolt:

'And it's not for the sake of a ribboned coat,' she read, 'Or the selfish hope of a season's fame, But his Captain's hand on his shoulder smote – Play up! Play up! and play the game!'

'Are Newbolt's views of team spirit outdated?' asked the first question. Perdita took a fresh sheet of paper and wrote 'Yes' in her disdainful blue scrawl, 'the schoolboy in the poem must be an utter jerk and a poofter to boot to prefer his captain's hand on his shoulder to a season's fame and a ribboned coat.'

She put down her pen and thought how much she'd like a ribboned coat, one of those powder-blue blazers, braided with jade-green silk. Hamish, her ghastly stepfather, never gave her nearly a large enough allowance. Then she thought of fame. Perdita wanted to be a famous polo player more than anything else in the world. Being at a boarding school, she could not play in the termtime and had so far only achieved the first team of a suburban pony club of hopelessly low standard. When her family moved to their splendid new house in Rutshire in the autumn, however, she'd be able to have a pony and join a good club like Rutshire or Cirencester just over the border.

God, she was bored with this exam. She lit a cigarette, hoping it would encourage her form-mistress, who was adjudicating, to expel her. But, despite the furious wavings of paper by the swot on her right, her form-mistress didn't react. She was far too engrossed in Perdita's Jackie Collins, which she'd confiscated the day before and round which she'd now wrapped the dust jacket of Hilary Spurling's biography of Ivy Compton-Burnett.

Perdita took another drag and glanced at the next question: 'Do you find the poems of Thomas Hardy unduly preoccupied with death?'

It wasn't an afternoon for death. Perdita slid through the french windows across the sunlit lawn. Once out into Rutminster High Street, she tugged out the tails and undid the top buttons of her shirt, hitched up her navy-blue skirt a few inches and wrinkled her navy-blue socks. Conscious that men fancied schoolgirls, she left on her black and pink striped tie, but loosened her hair from its tortoiseshell clasp so it cascaded white-blond down her back, eliciting wolf-whistles from two workmen mending the road.

Perdita stuck her nose in the air; her sights were set higher than roadmenders. She was a big girl for fourteen, tall and broad in the shoulder, with pale, luminous skin and a full, sulky mouth. A long Greek nose and large, very wide-apart eyes, as dark as elderberries, gave her the look of a creature of fable, a unicorn that might vanish at any moment.

The main gates of Rutshire Polo Club were swarming with police because of the Prince's visit. Taking a short cut, Perdita clambered over a wall to the right, fighting her way through the undergrowth, scratching her legs on brambles and stinging nettles, until she reached the outskirts of the club. A vast emerald-green ground stretched ahead of her. On the right were the pony lines, where incredibly polished ponies, tied to iron rails in the shade of a row of horse chestnuts, were stamping, nudging, flattening ears at each other and aiming kicks at any fly eating their bellies. God, they were beautiful, thought Perdita longingly, and curiously naked and vulnerable with their hogged manes and bound-up tails.

Beyond the pony lines stood the little clubhouse with its British, American and Argentine flags. Beyond that reared the stands and the pink-and-white tent for the sponsors' lunch before Sunday's final. Cars for today's semi-final already lined both sides of the field. Polo fever had reached an all-time high this season due to the Prince's impending wedding to Lady Diana Spencer.

Ringing Ground One and Ground Two behind the clubhouse were massive ancient trees, their wonderful variety of green occasionally interrupted by the rhubarb-pink of a copper beech. With their lower branches nibbled level by itinerant cows, they looked like an army of dowagers in midi-dresses. To the north, through this splendidly impressive backdrop, could be glimpsed the rose-pink roof of Rutminster Hall, a charming Queen Anne manor house, home of Sir David Waterlane, a polo fanatic who owned the surrounding nine hundred acres.

Perdita scratched her nettle stings. The moment she was famous, she decided darkly, as an orange and black striped helicopter landed on the greensward behind the clubhouse, she would go everywhere by air. Envy turned to excitement as the helicopter doors burst open and two young players, both in evening shirts and dinner jacket trousers, jumped out. Instantly Perdita recognized Seb and Dommie Carlisle, otherwise known as the Heavenly Twins. Vastly brave, blond and stocky like two golden bear cubs, it was said that any girl in the twins' lives, and there were legions, had to play second fiddle to polo and the other twin.

Next moment a small, fat, bald man with the tiny mean eyes and wide jaw of a bilious hippo, who was wearing an orange-and-black polo shirt and straining white breeches, charged up bellowing, 'For Christ's sake, hurry up. The umpires are waiting to go on. We should have started five minutes ago. Why are you so late?'

'We started late,' said Seb Carlisle, putting his arm round the fat man's shoulders. 'Dommie had this terrific redhead.' 'No, Seb had this terrific brunette,' came the muffled tones of Dommie Carlisle. Having whipped his shirt over his head to reveal a bronzed and incredibly muscular back, he nearly collided with the little fence round the clubhouse as he desperately tried to undo his cufflinks from the outside.

'Well, if I can be on time, I can't see why you bloody can't,' shouted the fat man, whom Perdita now identified as Victor Kaputnik. Originally Hungarian, Victor was a pharmaceutical billionaire and famous polo patron who employed the twins as professionals and whose helicopter and fuel had just transported them from London.

Polo players are rated by handicap, which ranges from minus two goals, which means an absolute beginner, to ten goals for the very top-class player. This has nothing to do with the number of goals they may score, but is an indication of their ability. Although only twenty, the twins already had four-goal handicaps. Much of their energy was spent ripping off Victor Kaputnik. Longingly, Perdita watched them sprint into the clubhouse.

Outside, people carrying glasses of Pimm's or beer were drifting towards the stands. Perdita was dying for a Coke and a sandwich, but she hadn't brought any money. She lit another fag to take the edge off her appetite. Looking at the scoreboard, she saw that today's first semi-final was a needle match between Victor's team, the Kaputnik Tigers, who were wearing orange-and-black shirts, and the Alderton Flyers, in duck-egg blue, who were all four sitting near a Lamborghini parked under a chestnut tree, zipping up their boots. There was The Hon. Basil Baddingham, a notorious roué with patent-leather hair and a laughing, swarthy face, who gave Perdita a terrific evemeet, and Drew Benedict, a dashing blond captain in the Welsh Guards, with very regular features and eves to match his blue shirt. And there, Perdita caught her breath, was her utter, utter God: Ricky France-Lynch, grimly fastening on his kneepads and refusing to exchange banter with the others. Ricky, who had the beautiful, lean, powerful body, the coarse, black curls and the sensitive, yet virile, features of a Russian ballet dancer, was the best-looking player in England, and had a nine-goal handicap. The most talented and dedicated player, he was also the most tricky.

Not for nothing had the Argentine players nicknamed him *El Orgulloso*, the proud one.

Standing slightly apart from the other three, swinging a polo stick furiously round and round, and champing to get into the fray, was their patron, Bart Alderton. An American airplane billionaire and the owner of television stations and newspapers, Bart was a still strikingly handsome man in his late forties, with thick grey hair, tinged with red like a wolf's pelt and a belligerent suntanned face. One of the most renowned and feared predators in the world markets, where he snapped up companies before they could even blink, Bart had houses and strings of polo ponies in five countries. Known as the artful tax dodger, he seldom paid tax in any of them.

Today Bart was determined to wipe the floor with his old rival Victor Kaputnik, whom Bart had taken a girl off many years ago, and who in revenge last year had appealed to the Monopolies Commission and blocked Bart's taking over a leading British airplane manufacturer.

Victor had brought down a new bimbo who he was keen to impress and was equally anxious to win.

Bart had Drew Benedict, Basil Baddingham and Ricky France-Lynch on his team for the English season. Bart liked Drew and Bas, who were amateurs, suitably deferential and prepared to socialize with him for the sake of having all their bills picked up. Ricky, who earned a long salary playing for Bart as a professional, was an entirely different proposition. Bart resented Ricky's arrogance and detachment. He was incommunicative before matches and disappeared home like smoke afterwards. Today he'd even refused to have a team meeting, arguing that there was no point when Bart never did anything he was told.

It further irritated Bart, as the teams walked down to the stretch of green behind the back line where the grooms were warming up their ponies for the first chukka, that all the girls gazed at Ricky, not at him.

The Alderton Flyers were shortly joined on the field by the Kaputnik Tigers, who consisted of Victor Kaputnik, who'd just taken out his teeth and had a slug of brandy to steady his nerves, the Carlisle twins, who erupted on to the field as joyous as otters, and a nine-goal Chilean player called Jesus, who lived in Victor's house and coached him every day and with whom Victor had just had a blazing row, because the Chilean had run up a \pounds 5,000 telephone bill, ringing his girlfriend in Chile.

'Talk about Chile con carphone,' said Seb Carlisle, collapsing with laughter, as the two sides formed up on the halfway line.

A second later the umpire, in his striped shirt, had thrown the white ball in, sticks slashed and cracked, stirrups chinked and expletives flew as the players struggled to get it out, followed by a hailstorm of hooves on the dry ground as everyone hurtled towards goal.

Blocking a cut-shot from Jesus, Ricky took the ball back upfield, changing direction three times to fox the opposition. As he hurtled towards goal in a cloud of dust, the obvious pass was to Drew on his right. Looking towards Drew, Ricky flicked a lovely under-the-neck shot round to Bas, who slammed the ball between the posts.

'Bloody marvellous,' screamed Perdita, jumping up and down. The rest of the crowd clapped languidly.

As the Tigers edged ahead, however, it was plain to Perdita, who was watching every stroke, that Bart was a much better player than Victor, who despite the Chilean's coaching, just cantered about getting in everyone's way. Ricky, she realized, was much the best player, but his team-mate, the blue-eyed Drew Benedict, normally the most dependable of players, must have been celebrating too heavily last night. Missing pass after pass, he was having the greatest difficulty in controlling the Chilean's dazzling aggression.