

# TALKING TACK

If you are new to polo, then the kit that players and ponies wear can be pretty baffling. To those who are used to other equine disciplines, the amount and type of tack that is used can seem unfamiliar and alien. As you will have witnessed, polo is a fast and potentially dangerous contact sport – often referred to as “rugby on horseback” – so the kit is strong, durable and is there to protect both the horse and rider. Unlike racing, weight is not so much of a consideration and the overall weight of polo kit can be remarkably heavy, but on the plus side it is also very strong.

## LONG SLEEVED SHIRTS

Usual polo shirts have short sleeves, but to increase player warmth all of the La Martina team shirts for snow polo have long sleeves.

**WHIP** This is held in the player's left hand along with their reins, the whip cannot be longer than 48 inches and isn't allowed to be broken.

**SADDLE** A saddle is put on the horse's back. In polo the saddle doesn't have knee rolls and the pommel is lower to allow the rider to position themselves forward on the horse.

**KNEEPADS** Players have to wear these during matches to protect their knees from being damaged during ride-offs. Recently some players are opting to wear elbow pads as well.

**TAILS** The ponies' tails are plaited and tied up with tape, this is to prevent them from getting caught around the sticks – it is compulsory for a polo pony to have their tail tied up.

**BOOTS** Polo players' boots are brown or black, made of leather and must be worn during matches.

**STIRRUPS** These are similar to those used in other equine disciplines, although polo stirrups tend to be heavier and wider to allow for a more stable hitting platform, as the players stand up in their stirrups to take shots.

**SHOES** To avoid the snow balling up on the ponies' shoes they are fitted with snow shoes which have a special rubber tubing to funnel the snow out of the back of the shoe.

**BREECHES** Players must wear white breeches or jeans when playing matches.

**STUDS** Two studs are fitted to both front and rear shoes to add traction. This is different to outdoor polo, where a single stud is fixed to the outer side of the rear shoes.



Photography by Tony Ramirez/www.imagesofpolo.com