

# POLO TO THE PEOPLE

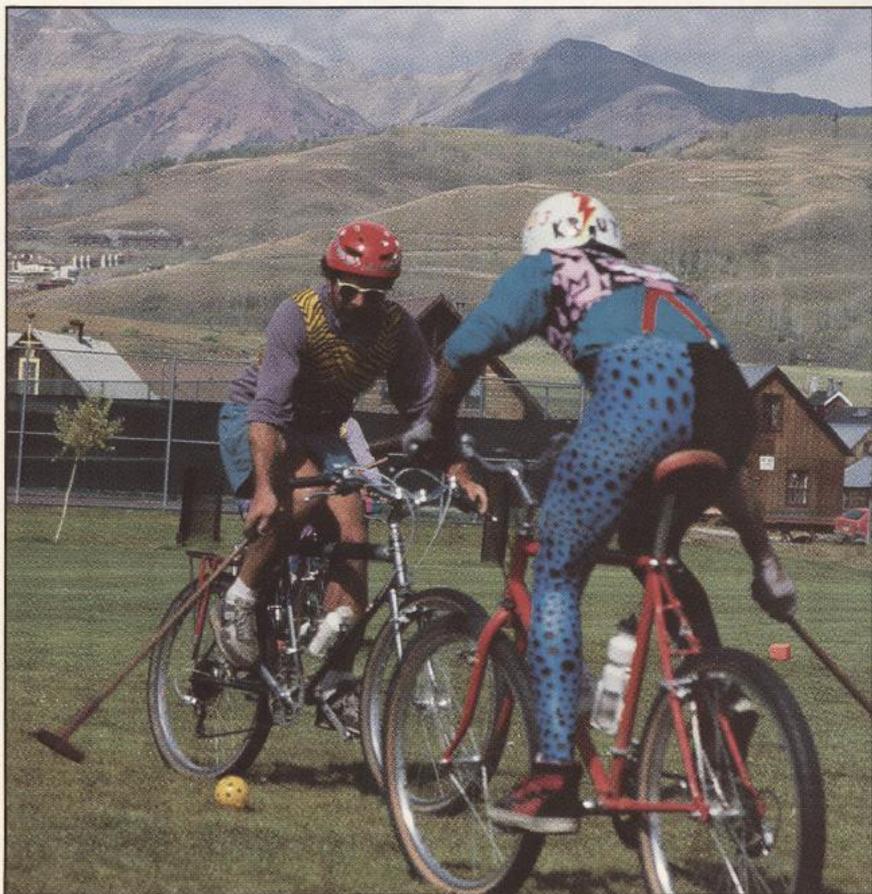
GARY SPRUNG

*'Let other people play at other things. The King of Games is still the game of kings.'*

THOSE WORDS IN SANSKRIT appear on a stone tablet in Gilit, India, where a famous polo field has hosted games for 10 centuries. Equestrian polo, played for 25 centuries, is the oldest team sport. It was invented by the Persians and spread to the cavalries of India, China, and Malaysia.

But by the 1800s when Britain was building its empire, the game had almost died out. The British learned the sport in Gilit, adopted it for their upper class, and formalized the rules.

Polo today requires a playing surface the size of 8 football fields, a stable of 8 ponies at \$50,000 each, plus the money



The fast-paced action of the first organized Official Bicycle Polo match in the U.S. The game was formally introduced this fall in Crested Butte, Colorado.



Lou Gonzalez signaling beginning of the Chukker.

to transport, groom, and feed them. The dollars spent on this sport is testimony to its excitement, though it's never taken hold in the U.S.

That could change. Playing polo today requires nothing more than fat-tire bikes, helmets, mallets, and a 90x160-foot field. The game of kings has been brought to the people!

While bicycle polo is new to the U.S., it's been played in Europe for years. Participants ride funny bikes with small front wheels and the handlebar positioned under the seat. This version even maintains equestrian polo's body contact and danger. A wooden polo ball flying at 60 mph can kill, and so can a mechanical "horse" rolling over its rider.

Last fall, a new, safer approach arrived, called Official Bicycle Polo. It was invented by Trice Hufnagel and Lou Gonzales of Bailey, Colorado. As in the ancient Persian version, women are

equal to men. Strength has little to do with success, and skill is everything. The rules are similar to basketball's. Contact, such as crashing into competitors, isn't allowed. The mallets are also lightweight and nonthreatening, and the ball is hollow plastic.

In Official Bicycle Polo, the field is striped lengthwise. Movement is primarily bi-directional, parallel to the stripes. Riding at an angle (necessary for turning) is "veering," allowed only when not playing the ball. This is like equestrian polo where to play the ball you must ride in the direction it's traveling. Otherwise, contestants would crash into each other and the game would lose its grace.

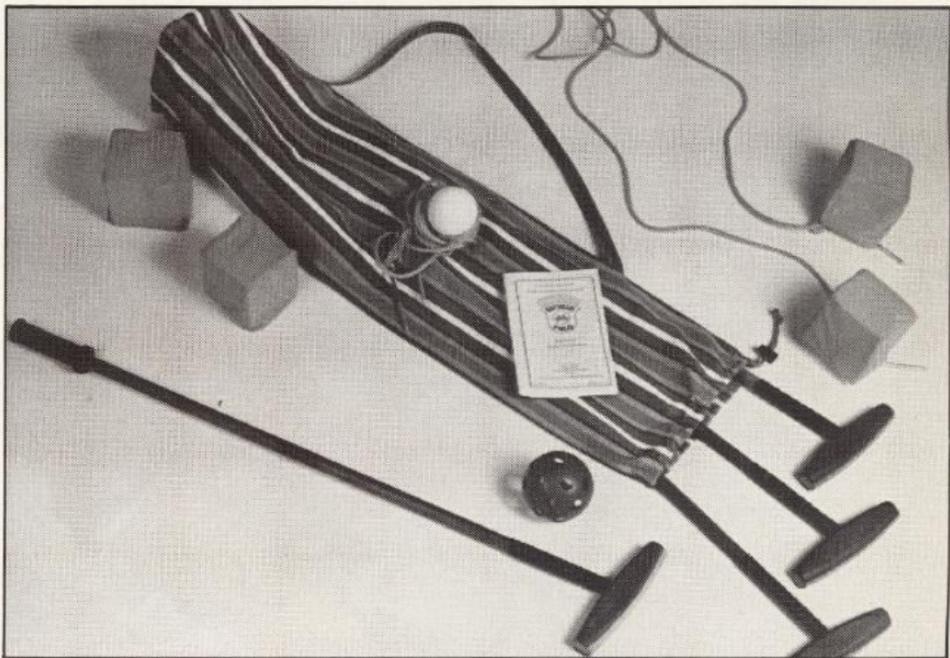
A player's right-of-way extends 7 yards to his front and a yard to each side when he's in motion. Anyone violating another's right-of-way entitles the opposing team to a free hit on the ball. Other rules also insure safety and fun.

**OFFICIAL BICYCLE POLO PREMIERED** at the Crested Butte Fat Tire Bike Week last September and was an immediate, smashing success. The game demanded superb bike handling and quick

reactions. Participants also received a good workout (one odometer showed more than 26 miles for a match). Afterward, Trice and Lou took the show on

the road to Denver city parks, the Reno Interbike trade show, and Moab, Utah's Canyonlands Fat Tire Festival.

As yet, no kings have played. ★



The Official Bicycle Polo Kit consists of 4 hardwood mallets, 2 balls, a well-written official rule book, 4 goal markers, 2 goal lines, and a lightweight bag, or quiver, to carry the gear.

**Order from:** Know Fun Club Box 1039 Bailey, CO 80421 Price: \$69.95



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