

Media Release

7th September 2011
For immediate release.



Polo stars battle the elements in beach spectacular

An estimated 2,500 spectators braved strong winds to watch some of England's leading players put on a blistering display of beach polo at Cornwall's Watergate Bay last night.

The fifth edition of Veuve Clicquot Polo on the Beach saw the First Great Western team - led by an inspirational performance from England squad star James Harper - clinch victory over their rivals Joules in a closely-contested match.

Starting with a half goal handicap advantage, First Great Western trailed the Joules players for the first half of the match, before fighting back in the third and fourth chukkas to earn a deserved victory by 8 1/2 goals to 7.

First Great Western team captain Andy Burgess said: "It was a really tough, open flowing match, no holds barred stuff. We always say to each other, 'Play it nicely, it's a demonstration match'. But as soon as the ball goes in that's it, all hell breaks loose.

"We were really pleased, every single player played to their handicap and above. It wasn't easy, but in the end we were lucky with the weather - it was so bad in the morning we thought we would never be able to play at all, and we ended up with an amazing sunset for the trophy presentation. And the fact that we won was a bonus."

The Joules team - Tim Vaux, England squad player Jamie Le Hardy and Richard Blake Thomas - dominated in the first two chukkas, despite their opponents opening the scoring through a goal from James Harper. Tim Vaux and Richard Blake Thomas both scored a brace of goals as Joules took firm control of the match to lead by 4 goals to 1 1/2 at the end of the first period of play.

James Harper and Andrew Blake Thomas reduced the deficit for First Great Western, each scoring in the second chukka, with Blake Thomas cutting in a fine goal from a tight angle. Joules edged further ahead through a solo effort from Jamie Le Hardy, who brought the ball up the left hand side of the pitch towards the Hotel, guiding it calmly between the posts to keep his team ahead at half time by 5 goals to 3 1/2.

In one of polo's traditions, spectators poured on to the beach during the interval to tread in the playing surface, while the players changed ponies and caught their breath.

The third chukka was end to end stuff from the outset. Some valiant defending by Jamie Le Hardy couldn't prevent an overpowering performance from First Great Western, as first James Harper and then Andy Burgess took their team into the lead for the first time since the first chukka. And as the hooter sounded to indicate the final 30 seconds of play, Burgess scored again from long range to make it Joules 5, First Great Western 6 1/2 going into the final chukka.

With both teams sensing victory, it was First Great Western who took the initiative, scoring from the first move of the chukka. Joules then scored twice with both goals from Richard Blake Thomas to bring the scores to Joules 7, First Great Western 7 1/2. Richard Blake Thomas then lost his mallet, and while he dismounted to retrieve it James Harper was given space to take the ball all the way up the field and score an uncontested goal moments before the hooter sounded for the end of the match.

Commentator Caspar West said: "It was an end to end battle in that final chukka, great work from both teams. Poor Richard Blake Thomas losing his stick at one point didn't help Joules, but it was an absolutely fantastic effort from both teams, a real gladiatorial battle. I think the combination by First Great Western and their team play was the thing that managed to pull them through so all credit to them. An absolutely brilliant spectacle from everybody, great polo all round."

Continues . . .



First Great Western



Joules

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As the players moved up on to The Hotel's balcony for the trophy presentation, Rebecca Combes from Smith & Williamson presented a horse blanket for the Best Playing Pony to "Panina", ridden by Andrew Blake Thomas, owned by Jemima and Rob Brockett of Lytchet Farm Polo Club who supplied the majority of the horses for the match.

Chris Jones from sponsors HSBC presented the trophy for the Most Valuable Player to James Harper, who also received a kit bag from Tony Ramirez of Images of Polo in recognition of his outstanding performance.

All that remained was for the First Great Western team to receive the Watergate Bay Trophy presented by Cloudy Bay from Romain Herbelot of Moët Hennessey, with James Harper lifting the cup to show the gathered spectators on the beach.

Speaking of his team-mate's performance, Andy Burgess was full of praise for Harper: "James played an absolutely amazing game of polo. He's been on fire all season, one of his best seasons ever and he really showed his handicap off on the beach today. He played some amazing shots in the wind, keeping the ball low. Just his control of the ball was amazing, really good."

Veuve Clicquot Polo on the Beach will return to Watergate Bay in September 2012. For more information about the event go to [facebook.com/poloonthebeach](https://www.facebook.com/poloonthebeach) or www.watergatebay.co.uk/polo.

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Images

High resolution print-ready images can be downloaded from our online [Media Centre](#) (click for direct link).

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Notes to Editors

Founded in 1772, **Veuve Clicquot** has an established history of innovation and creativity. Madame Clicquot was the first woman to run her own champagne house when she took over the business in 1805. She revolutionised the way champagne was made by putting holes in her kitchen table and "riddling" the bottles to clarify the wines. Similarly, Veuve Clicquot's innovative, daring approach is evident when in 1877 they became the first company to register their unique iconic yellow which is still apparent with Veuve Clicquot Yellow Label today. <http://experience.veuve-clicquot.com/>

Born in the British countryside, inspired by a love of equestrianism and crafted with true British style and eccentricity **Joules** designs upbeat, contemporary, colourful clothing for women, men and children who love the outdoors and live life to the full. Joules are welcoming the season ahead with a collection that will stand the test of time. Designed with all the unique trims and details that Joules is known and loved for, the range is sure to delight all who wear it. Mixing classical shapes and styles with bright and breezy colours will ensure you stand out from the crowd, in effortless style. To find your nearest Joules shop or stockist and to see the full collection, www.joules.com

First Great Western runs 9,079 services every week, calling at 276 stations. Their trains cover a total 70 million miles and carry 90 million passengers every year, providing high speed, commuter, regional and branch line trains and a sleeper service between London and Penzance. On board chefs serve over 10,000 freshly cooked meals every week on Travelling Chef and dining car services, and every high speed service offers an entertainment carriage screening films and television programmes. For details of services, best fares and advice on journeys visit www.firstgreatwestern.co.uk



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Set on its own spectacular surfing beach on the north Cornwall coast, **The Hotel & Extreme Academy, Watergate Bay** has earned a reputation as one of the 'must visit' coastal destinations in the UK. Experience laid-back living, beautifully designed bedrooms and beach-chic décor. Overseen by new executive chef Neil Haydock, you can enjoy superb locally sourced and seasonal food in The Hotel's Brasserie or the Living Space Bar with its relaxed ambiance and sun drenched decking. Combine all this with amazing views over the north Atlantic and exhilarating beach sports and you simply won't want to leave. No wonder it was voted as one of the '30 new trips for 2010' by The Observer's, Escape Guide. www.watergatebay.co.uk

The **Extreme Academy, Watergate Bay** is one of Britain's leading venues for beach sports and events. Founded in 1999, the Extreme Academy comprises specialist schools for surfing, kitesurfing, waveski and stand-up paddlesurf (SUP); technical equipment hire; and the Shop on the Beach, stocking a wide range of clothing and technical equipment.

