

2015 again saw our usual big junior events be played out, these being the Australian Junior Polocrosse Classic, Barastoc Interstate series and the Coonabarabran All Schools expo. This year there were a number of additional events on our calendar purely for juniors, which is something that excites me immensely. We had 2 juniors head off to New Zealand at the start of the year for 3 weeks, in which I have had some fantastic feedback, they learnt a lot by getting to stay and play with some of the best families in NZ polocrosse. In March, Moorooduc held the Junior and Intermediate challenge which is a PAA initiative aimed at developing the youth of our sport, by exposing them to high level coaching, and competition.

Narrabri held the Narrabri Junior Challenge in July, which saw teams combine from all over the east coast to play in some exceptional junior mixed competition. Play was held in conjunction with the Narrabri carnival, and was run under a similar format to the Silver Stirrup, where by kids would nominate their preferred team, and the NSW junior selectors would mix and shuffle to ensure a strong even competition, which from all reports they did so successfully.

In July we also sent a NSW junior team to America, from reports, it was an incredible experience for our juniors. They played on strange horses in a different playing environment which is imperative to continue to develop players at an international level, as well as being a great live experience.

The fourth solely junior event for the year was to be held at Morgan Park Warwick, which saw a PAA Gold, PAA Green, NSW and QLD all battle it out over the 3 days. NSW sent a mixed team, and had a number of players in both the PAA gold and green teams. NSW ended up beating QLD in their final.

Another fantastic program being run to develop our young polocrosse females is that of the NEGS Polocrosse Academy, which is showing results under head coach Hayden Turnbull. I believe it would be interesting to try and use a similar concept (not school based) in southern NSW. Something for future thought.

As this year has been quite disjointed for me, having missed a chunk of it being in South Africa, I wasn't able to attend as many events as I would have liked. Therefore during this off season I am planning a number of things leading into the Nationals, and our general season next year, to

- a) target our players preparing for Nationals, and then
- b) move on to developing our younger, grass roots, beginner kids.

Ways in which I am looking at doing this is by planning an online Blog or Website, that I would run, where we interview players about their horses, preparation, ideas, thoughts and everything in-between. These interviews, or tips would be uploaded regularly, with how-to's (ie, drills for ball skills), what to look for in a buying a horse, how to prepare your horse, help on feeding (I am a Barastoc sponsored rider for 2015/2016, and they had some fantastic tools to access some of the best equine nutritionist to find out if you are feeding/supplementing your horse correctly) so I would be looking at using these online tools to give younger kids who may not know about horse nutrition a better knowledge base. They would also include bio's on some of our best seniors players and some up and coming stars, as well as some important fitness information for both horse and rider. I plan to expand on these ideas, as they develop.

Leading into the Nationals I am going to interview various senior players and families and put together a guide to preparing for the Nationals. I would ideally like to have this out by Christmas, to ensure that the horse fitness and lead up information could be used effectively. This guide would encompass everything that goes into planning, from the first stages of getting your horse in, to the lead up before the game. I plan to chat to the likes of Deb and Greg Davidge about the preparation of their horses before a season and an event, Farran Mathie on her mental preparation, Jim Grills on his fitness attributes, Sandra and Will Weston on anything and everything, Chris Anderson on Pre game routine, and Lindsay Doolan and Joe Wamsley on their most recent experiences as juniors at National Level.

One thing that I have noticed over the past 8 months is that notification by NSWPA and the PAA of what events and ideas that are going on has been pretty poor. There was a forum for Junior Development held by the PAA, that I was only notified by Carolyn Garland.

I think we need a dedicated page on our website for Junior Development, where anything and everything Junior and in Junior Development is posted.

In April this year the JDO's met at Albury to discuss and float ideas about the new Area Zones for wider youth development across the country, something that as NSW JDO, we are working to ensure that as many kids as possible, get the opportunity to benefit from these experiences.

As you can see a lot has happened over this season, but a lot more will happen over the off season, and hopefully come early next year, we will see the implementation of this web blog, and guide to, up and running.

Kind Regards,
Lucy Grills
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