



Lefties unite! Rules state that southpaws – like Prince William (above, with mom Diana and top right, with brother Prince Harry) and his son, George (below, with mom Kate) – have to learn how to play right-handed for safety reasons.



## 'SPORT OF KINGS' ROYALS AND POLO

WHY IT'S A FAMILY TRADITION FOR WILLIAM AND HARRY



If you're a royal, polo and family go hand in, er, hoof. With polo season firmly under way, Prince William and Prince Harry both jumped back in the saddle for a charity match at Billingbear Polo Club in Wokingham, Berkshire (see previous story). It's a sport the competitive brothers have been tackling since they were boys, whether as teammates or opponents – and with completely different styles. "Polo is often a reflection of your personality," international polo champion Malcolm Borwick has said in describing his two friends. "Prince Harry is by nature very optimistic as a person and always pushing



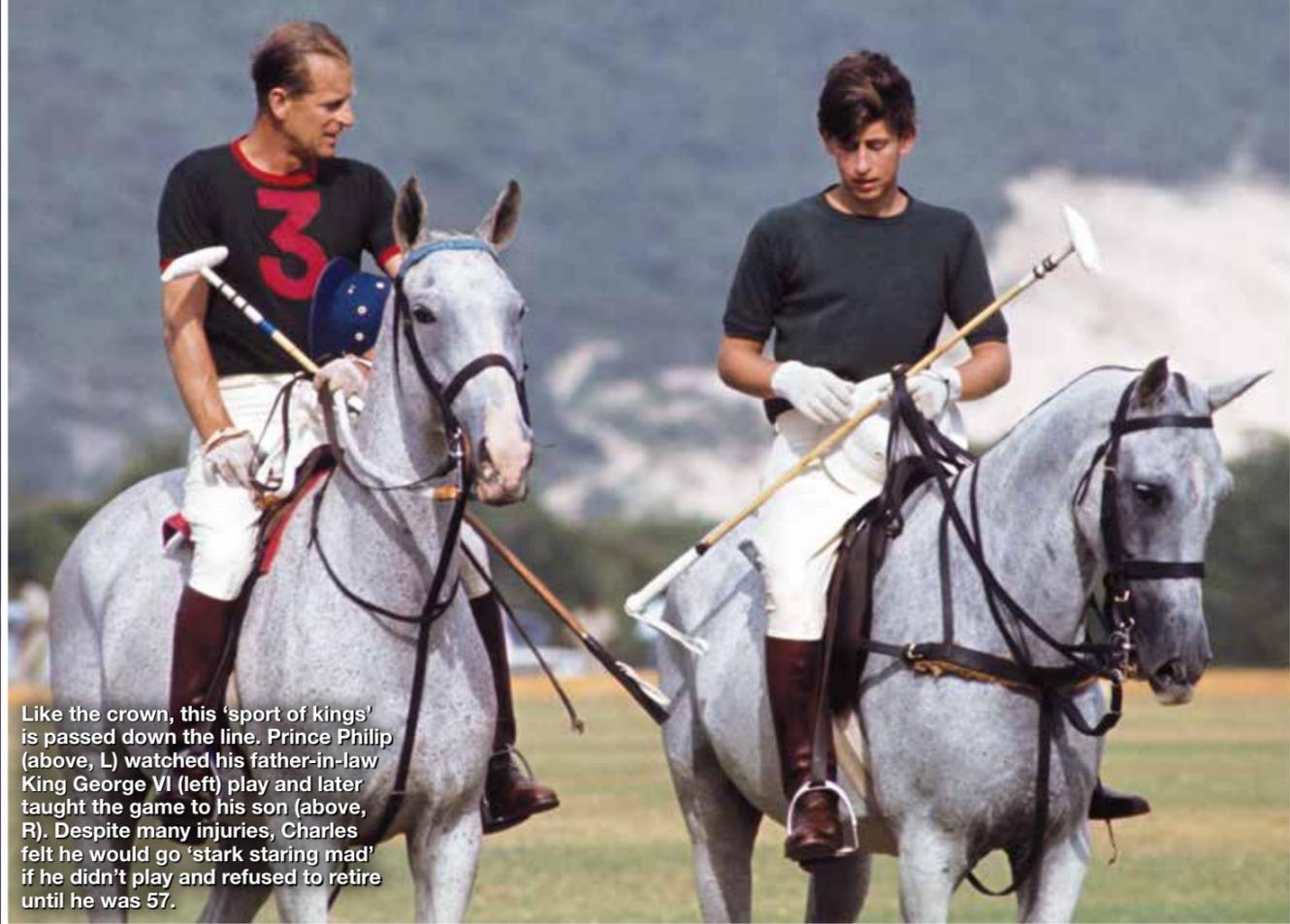
'Prince Harry is always pushing boundaries, always challenging people, and that's how he plays polo'

boundaries, always challenging people, and that's how he plays polo. Prince William is a defensive player. He's very controlled and plays really well in his role in the back." Judging by their bright smiles after their Wokingham match, it's clear that the brothers have inherited their ancestors' zeal for a game dubbed the "sport of kings." The men of the British Royal Family live up to polo's colloquial moniker, with William and Harry the latest in a long line of Mountbatten-Windsors who, from an early age, gravitated to a sport that originated in Persia and reached the British Empire via India in the 19th century. The princes both saddled up as children and inherited a passion for polo from their dad, Prince Charles, who learned it from his father, Prince Philip, who watched his father-in-law, King George VI, play, and so on. According to Josh Roberts, editor-in-chief of *PoloWeekly.com*, Prince Philip took to the sport while stationed in Malta following the



William and Harry (top, getting a winning kiss from new wife Meghan last summer) try to stay fit for the gruelling game. It takes 'a very strong core and a great sense of balance,' says their polo-champion pal Malcolm Borwick. 'The force used when hitting the ball is where your conditioning work comes in.'

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JULIAN PARKER/GETTY IMAGES; TIM GRAHAM/GETTY IMAGES; KARWAL TANG/GETTY IMAGES; STEVE PARSONS/GETTY IMAGES; MARK CUTHBERT/GETTY IMAGES; ANWAR HUSSEIN/GETTY IMAGES



Like the crown, this 'sport of kings' is passed down the line. Prince Phillip (above, L) watched his father-in-law King George VI (left) play and later taught the game to his son (above, R). Despite many injuries, Charles felt he would go 'stark staring mad' if he didn't play and refused to retire until he was 57.



## Polo raises millions for charity, proving it's not just fun and games

Zara Tindall is one of the few female royals to pick up a mallet. Always passionate about horses (above, watching a polo match with her granny the Queen, in 1984), she went on to become an Olympic equestrian.

Second World War. His uncle, Earl Mountbatten of Burma, taught him how to play and even authored one of the game's earliest books, *An Introduction to Polo*, under the pun-intended pen name of Marco.

"By the end of the war, Philip was set in his ways to bring the sport back to England, where he formed the Windsor Park team and eventually Guards Polo Club," says Josh of the now-98-year-old duke. "He continued playing until the age of 50, when arthritis took over and he had to retire from the game. But the love of sport never left his side and from there he took on competitive four-in-hand carriage driving, which he continues to compete in today."

Philip's oldest son, Charles, received his first mallet when he was 15 – from his dad, of course – along with a polo pony named San Quinina, and began competing a few years later. Along with hunting, it was one of his



favourite pastimes despite many injuries suffered on the field. His then-wife Diana, Princess of Wales, delighted in cheering him on and planting a kiss on his cheek as she presented his team with their hard-earned trophies. Their daughter-in-law, Meghan, did the same last year when Harry's team won a Sentebale polo match in Windsor.

### LOVE MATCH

Interestingly, it was polo that revived the romance of Charles and Camilla. In 1975, Britain's most eligible royal heir stumbled upon Camilla Shand, a lively socialite he had dated a few years earlier, at a match in Cirencester Park Polo Club. They were both 23. That chance encounter – to be recreated on the upcoming season of *The Crown* – initiated an on-off romance that spanned decades. The two finally married in 2005 and now sit side-by-side whenever they take in polo with their children and grandchildren.

Social activists William and Harry used to suit up for polo half a dozen times a year. But lately, they've been forced to pull back on the reins as they've expanded their families and taken on additional duties on behalf of their grandmother the Queen. They now play just a few times a year – and only to raise funds for worthy causes. They've raised millions through polo (like their father did in his polo heyday), with this year's goal set at £1 million per match. Harry achieved that a few days

after baby Archie was born, taking a quick trip to Rome to compete in the annual Sentebale Polo Cup to raise money for HIV-afflicted children in Africa.

Getting enough practice isn't always easy given the royals' busy calendars. As game day approaches, the princes have been known to nip to Cirencester Park, Beaufort Polo Club, Cowdray Park Polo Club and others near their homes to boost their physical strength. William, like his dad, has the disadvantage of being left-handed. The sport's official rules state that all players must play right-handed for safety reasons so he had to switch it up when he started competing as a child.

While William has spoken of trying to get his children into soccer and tennis, it's too early to know whether his or Harry's offspring will inherit their dads' polo prowess. Still, George did receive his first polo mallet at age one (a birthday present from then-U.S. president Barack Obama). And at William's most recent match, the rambunctious young royal had a blast swinging a mallet around – with his left hand! – while patient Kate tried her best to settle him.

As a future monarch, the "sport of kings" is clearly within George's reach. **H**

REPORT: SUZANNE WINTROB



The Queen proudly presents her beaming husband with a trophy in 1957. Right, top: Princess Margaret and the Queen Mother cheer. Right: Prince Charles and his then-ex-girlfriend, Camilla, reconnect at a match in 1975.



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