

South Bay Polo's Annual Jared Sheldon Interscholastic Arena Clinic at Eldorado Polo Club

Every December it begins the same, the sweet desert air mixed in with the voices of a group of interscholastic athletes, ready with excitement. South Bay Polo's Annual Jared Sheldon Interscholastic Arena Clinic is no joke. This year players from South Bay and Lakeside Interscholastic teams participated. Spanning three days with each day split into two parts. The first day during the first half, Jared sets up drills, first focusing on the horse before ball control. Jared shows us how we can utilize the horse while being gentle and considerate. He shows us how to better communicate with our mounts, even demonstrated on one of his tournament horses.

Guiding us through exercises from switching leads to stopping and turning, Jared gets a good gauge at the skill level of each player before he moves onto ball control exercises. He coaches firmly yet kindly, making sure that the learning process is valuable and memorable. After the morning lesson, there is a group lunch where we are able to connect with each other, also getting to know Jared better. The rest of the afternoon is for practice chukkers. Jared splits all the players up into different teams, evening out skill level. With Kathy Linfoot videoing every chukkar and while Jared umpires and coaches the games under an ever scrutinizing eye. He stops the game occasionally to point out areas that one needs to improve upon, or uses mistakes as learning opportunities for the entire group. Jared's feedback is directed to individual players as he amazingly remembers their similar mistakes earlier that morning.

The next morning, giving the horses a break, we review the chukkars from the day before. Laughing at the silly plays we made, Jared not only points out mistakes, but stops to talk about how we could have *improved* our play. Even weeks after the clinic, my team and I joke that we can practically hear Jared guiding us through his set plays. He has a way of making the clinic not only enjoyable but memorable. Although I have attended the clinic for three years, each year I am able to build upon the last, increasing my knowledge and ability in a very short timeframe. As Jared has known me and most of the players from South Bay well, he builds upon our skills rather than repeating what we learned the previous year. For the rest of the two days Jared increases the difficulty, honing in on skills specific to each individual. I have always been amazed at how Jared can divide his attention among each player of varying skill in order to make the clinic valuable for each player. Jared cultivates cohesion among the players, reminding them every year that, "your only friends while in the arena are your two other teammates."

The last chukkars of the clinic are always sentimental as we are all bummed it has come to an end. Chasing each other around the arena and making the final goals, we each played as better teammates and riders. We are all looking forward to not only the upcoming season, but more importantly the next year's clinic.

Huge Thank you to United States Polo Association, Polo Training Foundation, South Bay Polo's Francesca Finato and, of course, Jared Sheldon for making this possible.

By Helena Bache, South Bay Polo Varsity Open Team



HELENA

MENLO PARK, CA

**"A HUGE PART OF OUR
SUCCESS LAST YEAR
WAS OUR FRIENDSHIP
IN AND OUT OF THE
ARENA. THIS
PROGRAM IS
SUPPORTIVE AND
PROVIDES
OPPORTUNITY FOR
GROWTH."**

SOUTH BAY POLO