

Ylvisaker Cup opens with a bang!

By Alex Webbe

There's no more exciting way to open a tournament than to have the Number 1 and the Number 2 ranked players in the world playing on opening day, and that's what took place at the International Polo Club Thursday afternoon on the opening day of the 2016 Ylvisaker Cup.

In the 1pm contest polo's Number 2 rated player, Argentine 10-goaler Facundo Pieres, scored eleven goals in leading Orchard Hill (Steve Van Andel, Facundo Pieres, Peke Gonzalez and Lucas Criado) to a fast-paced 13-9 win over Tonkawa (Jeff Hildebrand, Gonzalo Deltour, Sebastian Merlos and Mason Wroe). In the following game it was the world's Number 1 rated player, Argentine 10-goaler Adolfo Cambiaso, who scored eight times in powering Valiente (Bob Jornayvaz, Roberto Zedda, Santi Torres and Santi Chavanne) to a hotly contested 14-13 victory over Coca-Cola (Gillian Johnston, Sugar Erskine, Julio Arellano and Steve Krueger).

Facundo Pieres wasted little in making his presence known, scoring the first goal of the match on a 40-yard penalty shot at the 6:04 mark, 1-0. Gonzalo Deltour countered with a 60-yard penalty conversion a minute later, 1-1. An aggressive Orchard Hill attack resulted in a number of Tonkawa penalties that Pieres made good on, converting from the 30-yard line and the 40-yard mark before closing out the chukker with an impressive 90-yard shot from the field for a 4-1 lead.

Tonkawa settled into the game in the second period, with 9-goaler Sebastian Merlos scoring in the opening 12 seconds of play to make it 4-2. Pieres and Merlos traded goals to make it 5-3, with Pieres adding the final score of the chukker to keep Orchard Hill in front by three goals, 6-3.

Both defenses were at their best in third chukker play with shots being blocked and players being ridden-off of plays. Lucas Criado scored the only goal of the chukker on a pass from Cambiaso five minutes into the period. The teams rode off the field with Orchard Hill leading by four goals at the end of the first half, 7-3.

Sixteen-year-old Peke Gonzalez opened the second half with a goal from the field in the opening 30-seconds of the fourth chukker, 8-3, when Tonkawa came alive. Back-to-back penalty conversions from Deltour and a goal from the field from Merlos cut the Orchard Hill lead to two goals, 8-6.

Pieres and the Orchard Hill defense owned the fifth chukker. After a scoreless opening five minutes of play, Pieres scored three times (twice on penalty shots). The Orchard

Hill defense held Tonkawa without a goal and rode off the field at the end of the chukker with an 11-6 advantage over a stunned Tonkawa foursome.

There was no give-up from the Tonkawa lineup as they fought to get back into the game in the final chukker. Merlos scored the first goal of the period, 11-7, with Pieres countering with his tenth goal of the game, 12-7. Consecutive goals from Deltour and Merlos brought Tonkawa to within three goals of the lead, but the clock was working against them. Pieres scored the final goal of the game with 45 seconds left in regulation play and then ran out the clock as Tonkawa was trying to rally for one more goal in the 13-9 loss.

Pieres scored six of his game-high eleven goals from the field. Criado and Gonzalez added single goals and Orchard Hill received one goal on a Penalty 1. Merlos scored all five of his goals from the field for Tonkawa. Deltour converted three penalty shots for goals and added another from the field in the loss.

Valiente 14, Coca-Cola 13

It was a knock-down, drag-out fight later in the afternoon between Valiente (Bob Jornayvaz, Tommy Beresford, Felipe Viana and Adolfo Cambiaso) and Coca-Cola (Gillian Johnston, Sugar Erskine, Julio Arellano and Steve Krueger) in Adolfo Cambiaso's 2016 debut at the International Polo Club. The Number 1 ranked 10-goaler was coming off of a record setting season in which he led his 40-goal La Dolfina team to an unprecedented third consecutive Triple Crown of Polo in Argentina with wins in the Tortugas Open, the Hurlingham Open and the Argentine Open.

Felipe Viana scored the first goal of the game from the field for the early 1-0 lead. Julio Arellano responded with a 40-yard penalty conversion to tie it at 1-1. Tommy Beresford gave the lead back to Valiente with his first goal of the day, 2-1, but it was Arellano to the rescue for Coca-Cola again with his second goal of the game and a 2-2 deadlock. With 1:40 on the clock, Adolfo Cambiaso scored his first goal of the season and allowed Valiente to ride off the field with a 3-2 advantage.

Arellano leveled the score once again just 31 seconds into the second chukker, 3-3. Cambiaso scored on a 40-yard penalty conversion for a 4-3 Valiente lead. Sugar Erskine scored consecutive goals from the field to give Coca-Cola their first lead of the game, 5-4. A goal by Beresford tied the game at 5-5 with nine seconds on the clock.

Beresford got the lead back for Valiente with a goal in the opening minute of the third chukker, 6-5. Arellano tied it at 6-6 with his fourth goal of the day. Cambiaso scored the final goal of the period to give Valiente a delicate 7-6 edge at the end of the first half.

Cambiaso scored twice in the opening two minutes of the fourth chukker for a 9-6 lead, but Coca-Cola fought back. Erskine scored on a pass from teammate Steve Krueger from the throw-in and added another midway through the period, 9-8. Coca-Cola team captain Gillian Johnston tied the game with her first goal of the day, and Erskine's third goal of chukker came with 59 seconds left in the period and put his team on top, 10-9.

Valiente went to work from the opening throw-in of the fifth chukker and almost immediately drew a Penalty 1 against Coca-Cola, awarding them a goal for a 10-10 tie. Steve Krueger scored for the first time on the day as Coca-Cola took the lead back again, 11-10. Goals from Beresford and Cambiaso (60-yard penalty conversion) had Valiente leading, 12-11. Arellano leveled the score with 2:27 on the clock and Coca-Cola still pressing. A final goal from Arellano had the score all even at 12-12 with one chukker left to play.

Arellano scored the opening goal of the sixth chukker on a 30-yard penalty shot, 13-12, as the battle waged on. Cambiaso leveled it once again at 13-13 with a goal from the field, and secured the win with his eighth goal of the game on a 60-yard penalty conversion in a 14-13 Valiente victory.

Cambiaso led the field with eight goals (three on penalty conversions). Beresford added three goals; Jornayvaz and Viana scored single goals and the team received a goal on a Penalty 1. Arellano scored six goals for Coca-Cola (two on penalty shots). Erskine scored all five of his goals from the field with Johnston and Krueger adding single goals in a losing effort.

Ylvisaker Cup play will continue on Saturday, January 6th with an 11am game between Audi/Millarville (Grant Ganzi, Nic Roldan, Julian Mannix and Freddie Mannix) and White Birch (Tomas Alberdi, Ezequiel Ferrario, Mariano Aguerre and Peter Brant). The match marks the first return to Florida high-goal polo by Peter Brant's White Birch team since 2009. The drama surrounding the game is the fact that their last meeting was in the final of the East Coast Open at Brant's Greenwich Polo Club where Audi won in overtime, 14-13.