



It's a very special time for Marrakech Polo Club, located only 20 minutes outside Marrakech, Morocco. The club took on its current role in October 2015; prior to that, the club only hosted one event per year, for British Polo Day. But then Pablo Casero arrived and began work as Polo Manager, and the place came to life, hosting practices, schools, and tournaments. PoloLine met with Caseros to learn more about the current happenings of the exotic club.

What role does Marrakech Polo Club have in the community?

It is the only polo club in Morocco. There are actually only two more places where polo is played, but one belongs to the military and the other to Patrick Hermes, which focuses on polo holidays. Our club aims to promote polo in the region, make the sport part of the local culture, and attract international players to come over and play in Marrakech.

Do you have regular members or can anybody go and play chukkas/matches/tournaments?

We have seven members at the moment; they started playing with me in 2015. But there are many more people who are becoming interested in the sport. We also have a school that teaches local kids to play polo and work with horses, so that in the future they can have more opportunities. We teach them English and French, as well.

The club's patron is Ammar Abdelhadi, who is from Saudi Arabia. His family were invited to intervene in Morocco in 1994, and having many friends in polo (like Rashid Al Habtoor and Amr Zedan), Ammar saw the potential the sport had in Marrakech: it is close to Europe and has good weather conditions during the winter. Ammar is a horse lover and is learning to play polo.

What installations does the club have?

The installations are under construction. We hope to have the following up and running in two years: Two polo fields, a stick and ball ground, stables fit for 120 horses, tack rooms, apartments for grooms, a Ritz-Carlton hotel, a club house with an Argentine Grill, an exercise track, and an equestrian center for show jumping and dressage. At the moment we have a main field, wooden stables for 32 horses, dressing rooms, tack rooms, bathrooms, and a temporary club house which is also a cafeteria.

How is your calendar set up?

Every December we invite Morocco's Royal Guard to stay the whole month at the club; we mix them with our players and play good polo. We also plan the "Marrakech Polo Patrons Tour" in mid-March. That serves as a sort of pre-season for teams that play the European summer season. We are also looking to add a Beach Polo tournament in October and the second edition of the "Moroccan Polo Open" as our end of season tournament in May. It depends on the number of players interested and whether our season clashes with tournaments in Rabat or at Patrick Hermes' place. The season runs from October 1 to June 1, the opposite of the European season.

Where is the club located?

Twenty kilometres from the city of Marrakech, on the way to the Atlas Mountains. The general project is called "The Ritz Carlton Residences Marrakech." Our club, Marrakech Polo Club, is within that. The project will include 85 villas, the hotel, the club house, and everything polo related.

What are the club's objectives in terms of polo growth development?

The idea is to go step by step, building solid foundations. In my opinion, it is crucial to get good horses and have a good field, trying to exceed the levels that many European countries have. This way we will be able to give a good service. We also want our members to learn to play well quickly. As well as working on the development of the club, we are also working to promote polo in Morocco, bringing together players and former players who want to share their ideas and previous experience. I think that everyone will benefit if this place become an outstanding polo destination. We are lucky to be so close to Europe and have great weather conditions, and to have the magical city of Marrakech so close. The night life is as entertaining as it is diverse.

Can you tell us about the history of the club?

The field which we play on was built by the same people who developed Santa Maria Polo Club in Sotogrande. They helped us a lot. Patrick Hermes is one of the founders – he is the Honorary President of the club – and he has also been an instrumental part of the process. Richard Branson's mother, Eve Branson, is also an Honorary President of the club. She has a special bond with Ammar and the city of Marrakech.

We hosted the first edition of the "Marrakech Polo Patrons Tour." Players of the Moroccan Royal Guard played alongside Argentine professionals and patrons from Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Italy and France. The three day event had more than polo to it; patrons could discover the city, see the sights, and savour traditional Moroccan food. It was a complete success!