

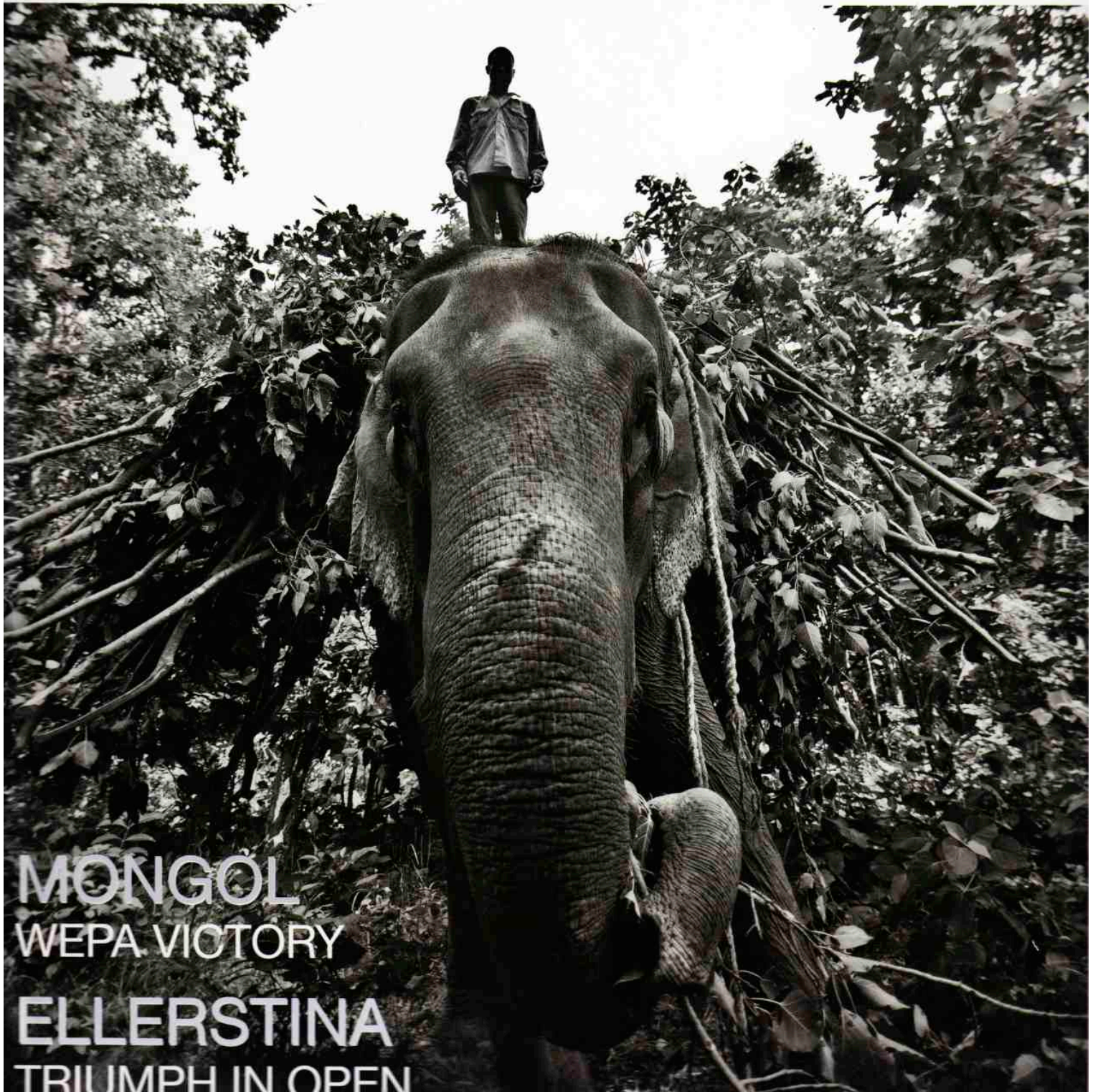
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# EQUESTRIO

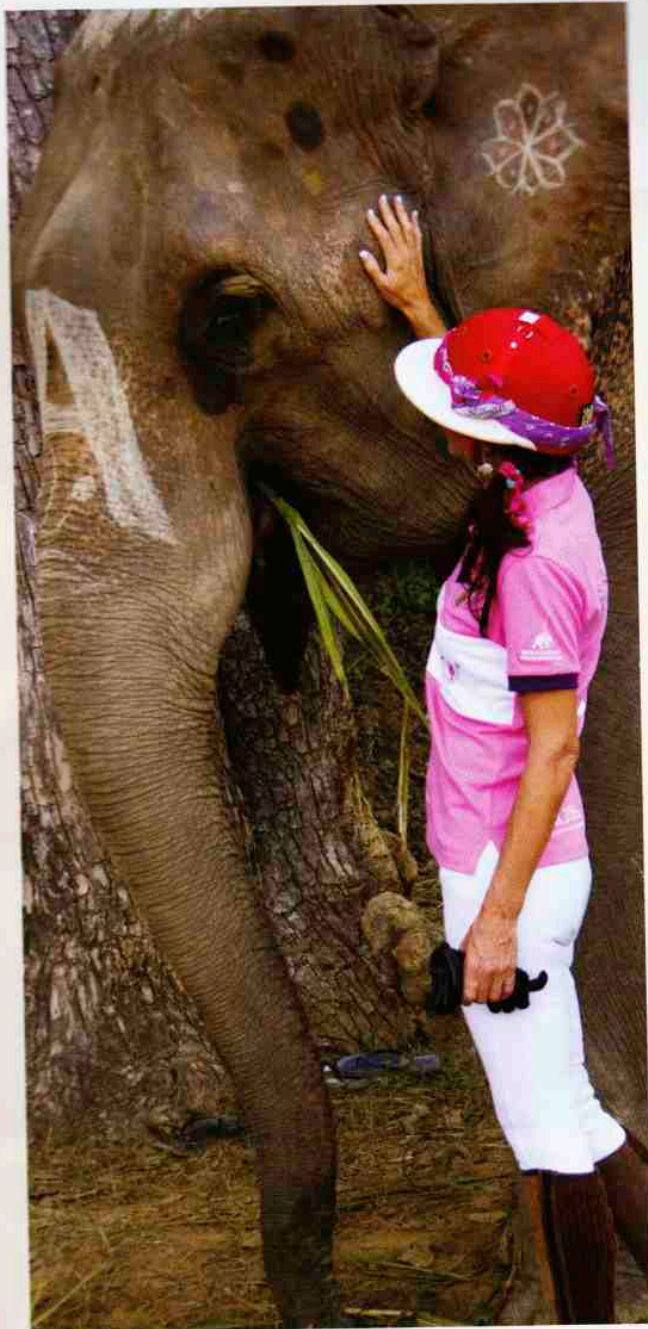
P O L O R A C I N G L I F E S T Y L E



MONGOL  
WEPA VICTORY  
ELLERSTINA  
TRIUMPH IN OPEN



# from the editor



Lucy Monro with Ras Kall at WEPA 2012.

Happy New Year and welcome to an elephantine issue. Traditionally the January issue of *Equestrio* celebrates pachyderm power and magnificence with coverage of the biggest of all polo tournaments, the World Elephant Polo Championships in Nepal. This year is no exception, but is particularly special as *Equestrio* was privileged to play an almost winning role in the tournament. *Equestrio* joined forces with EFG International to support the first ladies elephant polo team to emerge as serious contenders for the world title. Tigresses Polo stormed their way through the tournament dispatching all in their path with the exception, for the second year running, of only the ultimate winners. This year it was the truly mighty Ghengis Khan Polo Club quartet that dashed Tigress dreams in a thriller of a final, but the girls fought to the end improving their 2011 Bronze to Silver and have already confirmed their bid for ultimate glory in 2013. Their preparation for WEPA 2013 can be followed on Twitter on **@TigressesPolo**.

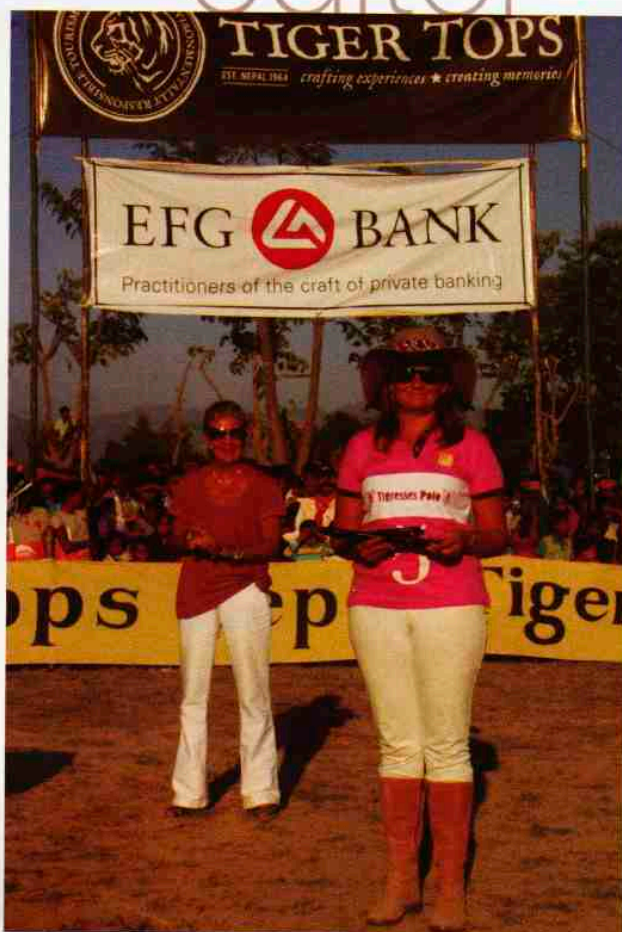
The Tigresses are not the only ladies to shine on the elephant polo field. This year's WEPA saw women playing key roles, as patrons and players, in two other teams. Within our extensive report from Nepal Imogen Lillywhite looks at the rise of women in the sport and asks the ladies why it appeals to them and what the keys to success are.

Staying with the biggest and the best theme we report in this issue from the greatest polo tournament of them all, the Argentine Open, and take a look back at the 2012 Triple Crown in which Ellerstina and La Dolfina played cat and mouse with each other over the course of three months. Cambiaso's squad dominated for much of the Triple Crown and indeed, up until the very last chukka of the Open, appeared able to thwart Ellerstina's ambitions. But it was not to be and, as proof once again that nothing is ever certain in polo until the final whistle has blown, the win was to slip from La Dolfina's grasp. When two such great teams meet the result is almost subsidiary to the action and the fact that polo's maestro teams remain so well matched can only bode well for the future of the sport. We look forward to 2013.

Closer to home the last months of 2012 saw the UAE polo season get underway with two completely new and very different tournaments, Polo at the Palace at Emirates Palace in Abu Dhabi and the National Day Polo Tournament at the newly founded Saif Polo Club in Al Khawaneej, Dubai. Polo at the Palace is a spin-off from the London-based Polo in the Park three-a-side arena-based concept that aims to provide 'entertainment polo' ►



from the  
editor



Equestrio's Imogen Lillywhite receives a 'kukri' as an award for media services (left) and Lucy Monro rides out for the Tigresses.

to a wider audience. The National Day celebration showcased the more conventional form of the game with an 8-goal week-long event that saw some of the Emirates' best known patrons and players in the saddle. We bring the best of the action from both events to you in these pages.

On the art front, as we so often do at this time of year, we take the opportunity to showcase a body of work that celebrates the elephant. Tuberculosis in elephants is a relatively recent, but worryingly increasing, problem in Nepal and India that has far reaching implications and dangers for both elephants and the people with whom they interact (from whom they have caught the disease and can pass it onto). The Nepal government is working with a number of charities, including the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and The National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) to implement the Nepal Elephant Tuberculosis Control and Management Action Plan (NETCMAP) to eradicate TB in elephants in Nepal by 2013. Remarkably one of the elephants playing happily and successfully in this year's World Elephant Polo Championship is an elephant who has been successfully treated for TB and who has made a full recovery. But many are not so lucky and the issue is a serious one. We are therefore proud to

showcase a body of work in our Portfolio section from which images were auctioned in aid of the NETCMAP at this year's World Championship. The arresting image on our cover showing the elephant Ram Kali collecting her food for the day numbers among this important series of photographs taken by film maker and photographer James Dartnall as three elephants journeyed across Nepal on their way to the 2013 World Championship. More information on that journey and details of the forthcoming film planned for release later in the year can be found on: <http://www.facebook.com/thegreatelephantwalk>

On the racecourse life has been similarly thrilling. Laura King reports from the Hong Kong International Races at Sha Tin, from Flemington as the Melbourne Cup 'stopped a nation' for yet another day and looks ahead to what the Dubai World Cup carnival may have in store for us.

For the next few months the eyes of the equestrian world will be trained on the Emirates. As Meydan welcomes some of the best racehorses on the planet for the 2013 renewal of the Carnival and we prepare for the UAE's showcase polo tournament, the UAE Nations Cup, we can be certain that sport in the Emirates is in fine form. We wish you every success and we will see you there...

Lucy

Publisher and Editor in Chief



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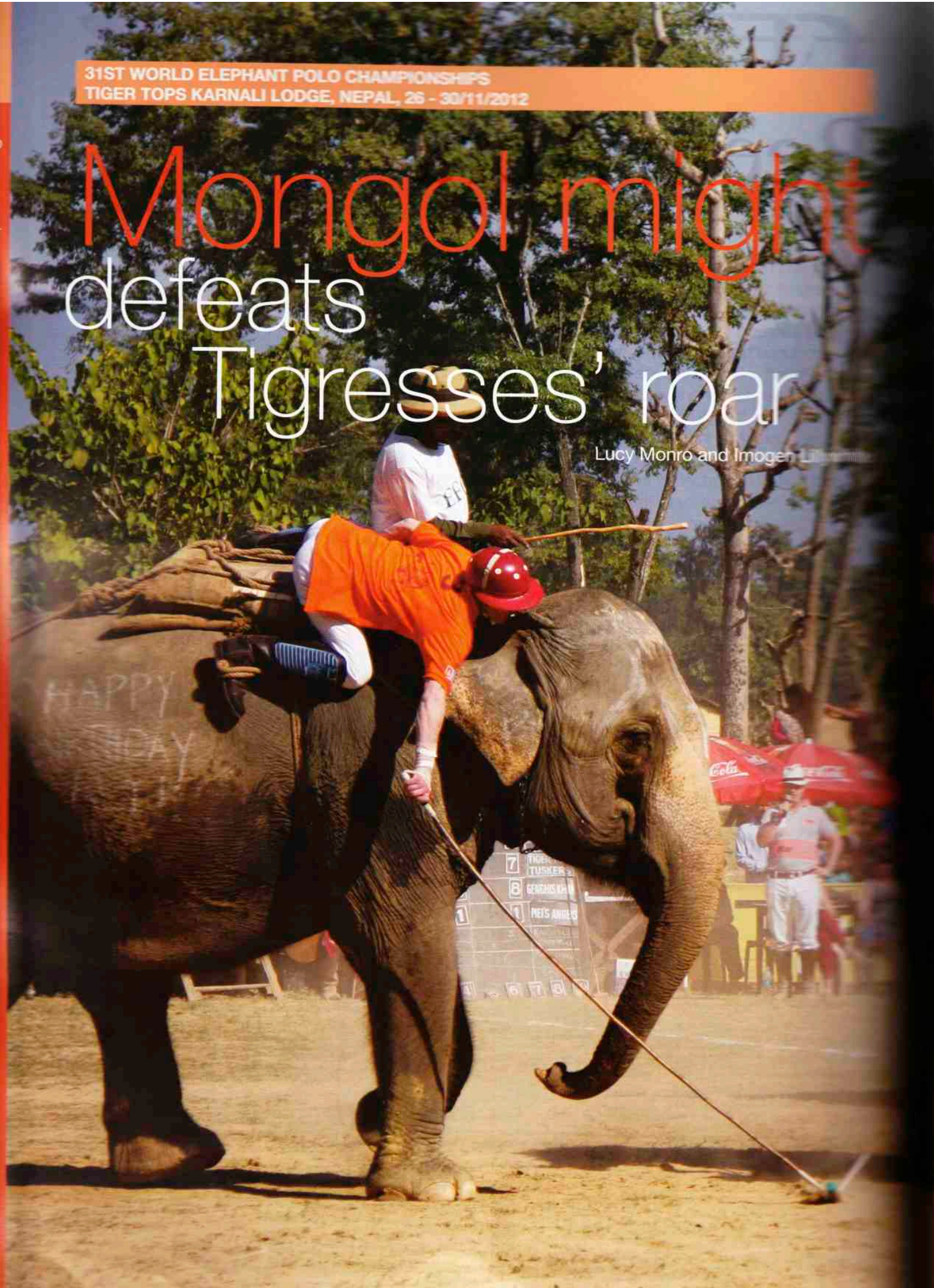




31ST WORLD ELEPHANT POLO CHAMPIONSHIPS  
TIGER TOPS KARNALI LODGE, NEPAL, 26 - 30/11/2012

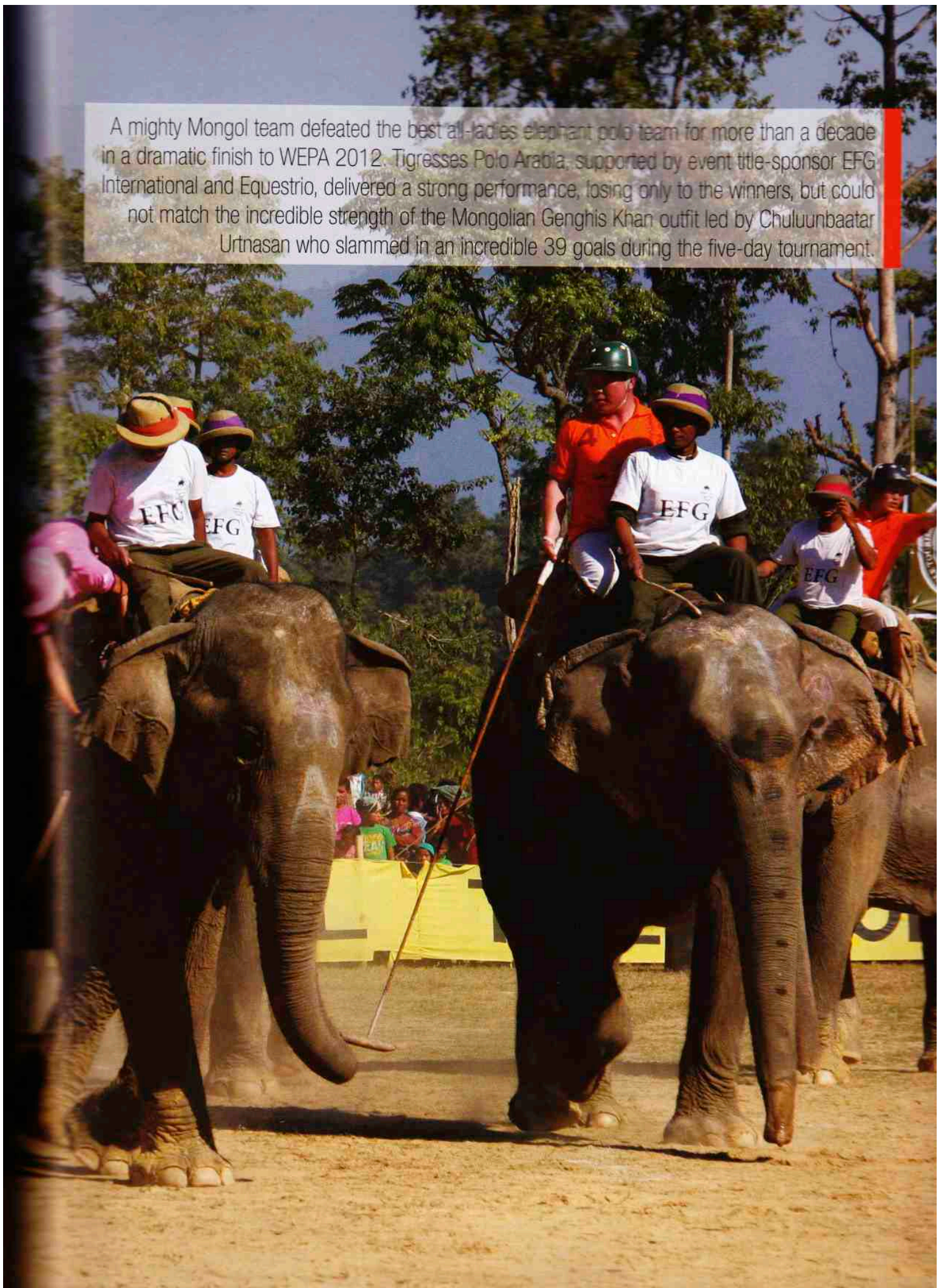
# Mongol might defeats Tigresses' roar

Lucy Monro and Imogen L...





A mighty Mongol team defeated the best all-ladies elephant polo team for more than a decade in a dramatic finish to WEPA 2012. Tigresses Polo Arabia, supported by event title-sponsor EFG International and Equestrio, delivered a strong performance, losing only to the winners, but could not match the incredible strength of the Mongolian Genghis Khan outfit led by Chuluunbaatar Urtnasan who slammed in an incredible 39 goals during the five-day tournament.





**C**huluunbaatar Urtnasan, known as Chuuka, teamed with Dovchin Tseveldorj, Battur Tseveldorj and Endkhdul Jumdaan, was far and away the tournament's highest scorer, followed by Tigresses Polo's Samantha Prentice who knocked in 19 goals thanks to her superior tackling and hitting skills, and tournament patron Kristjan Edwards who scored 13 goals for the Tiger Tops Tuskers.

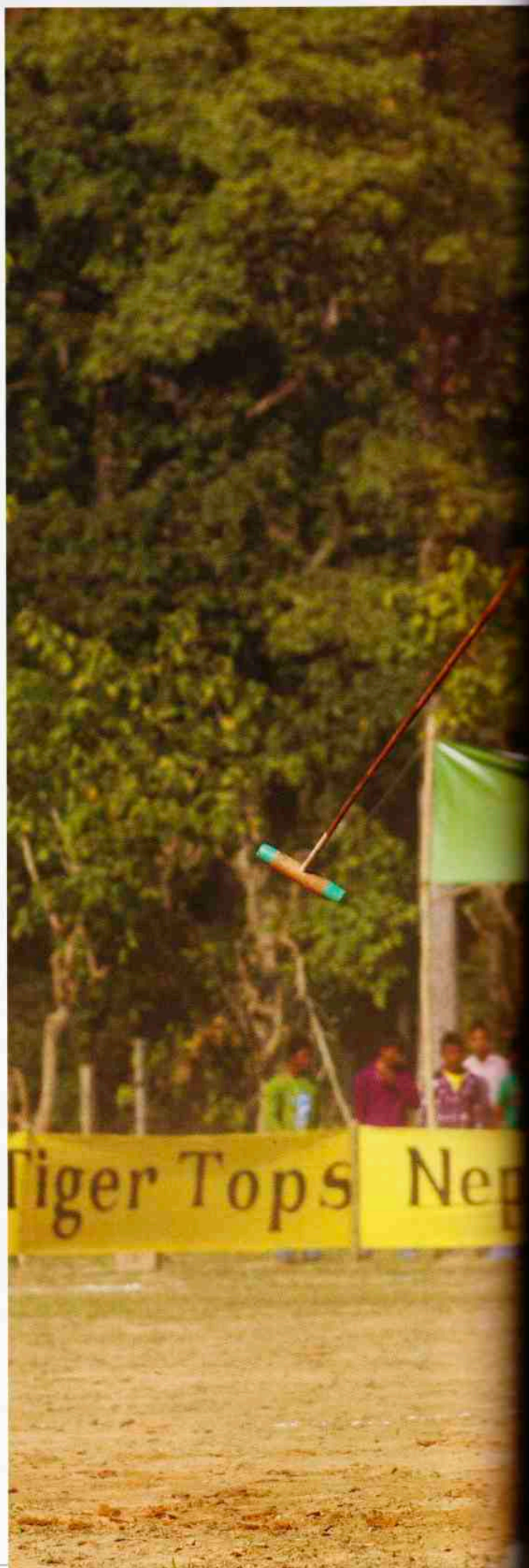
The Mongolian, a regular player of conventional polo supported by Ghengis Khan patron Christopher Giercke, was a shoe-in for the EFG International Most Valuable Player as there was certainly no one from the eight teams that made the trip to Karnali, Western Nepal, this year to rival his strength and agility on the pitch.

#### MONGOLS AND TUSKERS TOP LEAGUES

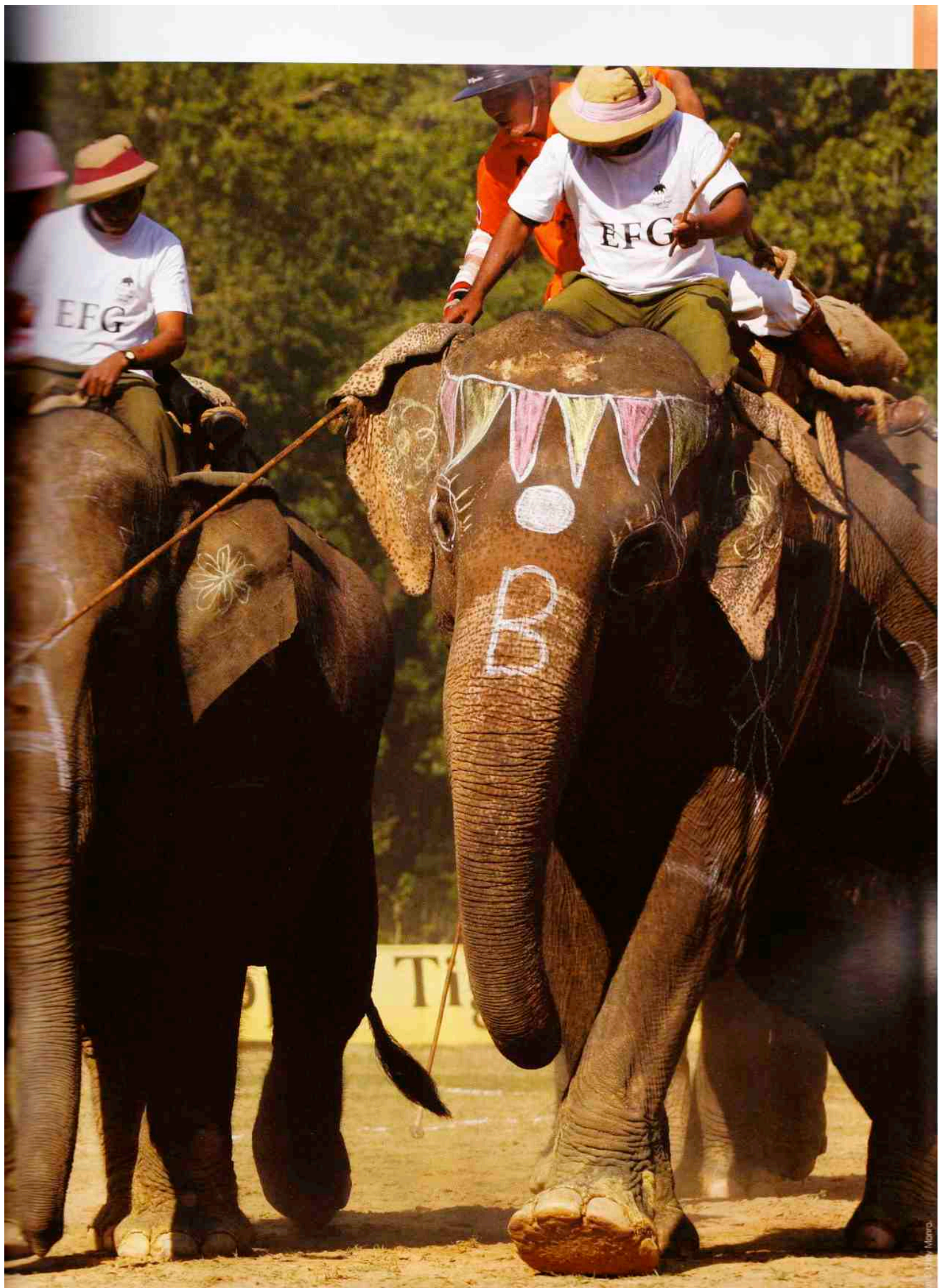
Genghis Khan made their intentions clear from day one when they took apart the defence of the ex-Gurkha outfit, the Rusty Kukris with a 14-6 win, although the Kukris' Chris Darby and Tristan Forster set about securing their spots in the tournament's top ten scorers slotting in goals either side of the break between chukkas. The scene was set for the Mongolian onslaught when Chuuka fought fiercely against a spirited defence by Forster to take his 12th and final goal of the match in the dying seconds.

The next day, it was the turn of the Tigresses, who had enjoyed a 17-2 win in their tournament opener, to take on the Mongols and although the match ended in defeat for the ladies team, they showed themselves a force to be reckoned with a respectable 9-5 score. The ladies conceded seven goals to the Mongolians but fought back with a goal from Sam Prentice and efficient defence by Carolyn Syangbo causing Chuuka to hit wide on one occasion.

RIGHT: Sam Prentice battles Mongol might.









## The Mongolians also demonstrated themselves to be impressive in defence as well as in attack.

The Mongolians also demonstrated themselves to be impressive in defence as well as in attack with Dovchin Tseveldorj deflecting big hits and skillful dribbling from Prentice and Tigresses captain Stine Edwards.

On the third day, the Afghaniphants, very much the outsiders at the start of the tournament, proved they were no pushover and despite defeat, thanks once again to the hitting power of Chuuka, who scored five goals in the first chukka, they rode off the field with their heads held high with a score of 8-5.

Although the first chukka was the familiar story of goals rapidly scored, Afghaniphants' Ryan Scott put up a fight in defence before Chuuka's fourth goal flew past the line. A half-time strategy discussion must have been one of the most empowering in elephant polo history as the Afghans' steady improvement gathered pace and they launched an aggressive assault on their opponents which was marked by captain Rebekah Bell breaking her stick within ten seconds of the bully-off.

From then on, it was all about Bell as she defended against the Mongols, snatching the ball from within inches of the goal mouth only for Chuuka to slice it past her to score from an acute angle on the edge of the D.

The ball was soon back in the Afghaniphants' half after bully-off but a staggering 40m clearance by Bell sent the ball into the path of newcomer Simon Chatterton who scored his first and only goal of the tournament to huge cheers from the crowd. "That made the tournament for me", he said afterwards. "Without doubt, that alone has made the trip worth it."

### TIGRESSES TRUMP TUSKERS AS MONGOL MIGHT POWERS ON

Semi-finals day dawned with the Tigresses preparing for something of a domestic showdown with Sam and Peter Prentice and Stine and Kristjan Edwards pitted against each other as the ladies took on the Tuskers. The first chukka saw the teams fairly evenly matched with the Tigresses hinting at having the upper hand. When play resumed the ladies lost no time proving that they were indeed the dominant force, storming ahead to book their place in the final with a convincing 9-6 win over their adversaries.

RIGHT: EFG's Robert Mehm does his best to keep possession.

BELOW: Tiger Tops Tuskers battle with Mel's Angels; The Pukka Chukkas take on the Afghaniphants.

### DRESSED TO IMPRESS

The Rusty Kukris, a former Gurkha team with players from the UK who have a natural affinity for Nepal having served in the country during their military careers, were awarded the best dressed prize this year. The team's placed last in both years that they have played the tournament, but their strip drew many compliments, particularly their solar topee helmets with specially commissioned cap badges.







Photo: © Lucy Marino



Photo: © Lucy Marino

Photo: © Lucy Marino

#### MONGOL MIGHT

Genghis Khan Mongolia was certainly the most feared team of the 2012 tournament with everyone keen to avoid meeting them as they dispatched all in their path including two-time winners EFG in their semi-final. Chuuka, Dovchin and Batur are experienced players of polo on horses, travelling the world promoting their country's growing enthusiasm and ability in the game. Trained by polo legend Col. Raj Kalaan, elephant polo many-time world champion and captain of the Indian national polo team for 20 years, the Mongol squad boasted depth and skill.

They are also a fascinating cultural addition to the elephant polo community, entertaining players and spectators alike with their moving Mongolian folk singing around the golgar fire in the evenings. In 2011 Dovchin and Chuuka were in the line-up that won the Olympic Quaich but it was a new line-up with the addition of a third experienced polo player that took to the field in 2012. This year's combination of the high scoring Chuuka and the strength of Dovchin backed up by Battur Tsevelдорж, also from the Orkhon Valley on the Mongolian Steppe, with Endkhdul Jumdaan the only inexperienced player in the team was literally unbeatable and was a great source of pride for patron Christopher Giercke who has been the driving force behind the development of polo in Mongolia since the 1980s.





## ACUMEN ENERGY BICYCLE POLO CUP



In a typically exuberant tournament, sponsored by Pukka Chukkas team member Tom Fontaine's Acumen Energy, teams pedalled to the start line, and, predictably, ran off nursing bruises and carrying bicycles bent into elaborate shapes after spectacular collisions.

On finals day, 'Rinchen' Choegyal (brother Sangjay taking his absent brother's name because he was playing for the opposition!) scored the winning goal that sealed a Pukka Chukka victory over EFG Tiger Tops 4-3, after Tom Fontaine had earlier scored a spectacular goal from the half-way line. The Equestrio Fillies failed to score during the tournament but came close thanks to the efforts of Hattie Griffiths, who also rode out for the Rusty Kukris bike polo team. Griffiths had an open goal but unfortunately joined the ranks of the injured when her bike let her down with a snapped gear cable causing her to crash as she lifted her mallet. It was widely agreed that the girls made up for their lack of scoring ability in the style stakes in their stylish candy pink Equestrio shirts.

Alex Hamilton displays Pukka form.





With the World Cup decided, it was the turn of the Olympic Quaich finalists to take to the field with the returning Afghaniphants, who made their WEPA debut in 2010, and the newly minted Mel's Angels each determined to make their mark on elephant polo history.



**ABOVE:** Robert Mehm displays some strong defence for EFG.

**TOP LEFT:** The semi-final showdown between the Tuskers and the Tigresses pitted two married couples against each other as the Edwards and Prentices faced each other.

#### RESULTS

##### WEPA World Championship

**Gold:** Genghis Khan Mongolia  
**Silver:** Tigresses Polo Arabia  
**Bronze:** Tiger Tops Tuskers Nepal  
**Fourth:** EFG Switzerland

##### WEPA Olympic Quaich

**Gold:** Afghaniphants Afghanistan  
**Silver:** Mel's Angels UK  
**Bronze:** Pukka Chukkas UK  
**Fourth:** Rusty Kukris UK

Next up EFG, champions in both 2010 and 2011, faced the Mongols. The Swiss team played a determined match but saw their hopes of a World Cup hat-trick dashed. Sheer nerves at the intimidating strength of the Mongol team seemed to be present in EFG from the start as Sangjay Choegyal missed an early open goal and then missed again after a hit in.

It fell to EFG captain James Manclark to open the scoring for his team after the Mongol team's only inexperienced player, Enkdhul Jumdaan, found it impossible to defend against the sport's co-founder's skill. There was a stark inevitability about what followed as Chuuka scored his fourth goal of the match within 15 seconds of bully-off but Choegyal managed to close the gap with a goal at the close of the chukka taking it to 9-6 in favour of the Mongols.

Ghengis Khan toyed with EFG in the second chukka, allowing Nigel Lea to tap in two goals, the first after dribbling from a bully-off, but a further three goals from Chuuka and one from Dovchin sealed the fate of the defending champions.

The two-time world champions' confidence appeared severely dented after a 6-6 draw against newcomers Mel's





Photo: © Lucy Morro



Photo: © Lucy Morro

TOP: The Ghengis Khan Polo Club celebrate Mongol triumph.

ABOVE: Afghaniphant captain Rebekah Bell receives the WEPA Quach.

**The Angels scored again but it was a fitting close to a tournament in which women players showed their true mettle.**

Angels at the group stages, and they finished the tournament placed fourth overall after being defeated by the Tiger Tops Tuskers 7-5 in the play-off on finals day.

#### MONGOL GLORY

Finals day was a tense affair with an understandably nervous Tigresses team making careful preparations with muscle stretches and stick selection. The ladies appeared determined to show that if they were going to go down, they would do so fighting with Prentice making her intentions clear from the start with agile tackling of Chuuka, forcing him to hit the ball wide when he looked certain to score after the first bully-off.





Photo: © Lucy Monroe

## TOP SCORERS

## Top 10 scorers

1	'Chuuka'	(Ghengis Khan)	39
2	Sam Prentice	(Tigresses)	19
3	Kristjan Edwards	(Tuskers)	13
4	Sangjay Choegyal	(EFG)	12
5	Michael Eaton	(Pukkas)	11
6	Tristan Forster	(Kukris)	9
7	Stine Edwards	(Tigresses)	8
8	Nigel Lea	(EFG)	8
9	Rebekah Bell	(Afghaniphants)	6
10	Chris Darby	(Kukris)	6

## Teams' goal totals (actual goals scored, not including handicaps)

1.	Ghengis Khan	40
2.	Tigresses	30
3.	EFG	22
4.	Tuskers	21
5.	Pukka Chukkas	15
6.	Rusty Kukris	15
7.	Afghaniphants	12
8.	Mel's Angels	9

Despite her efforts, Chuuka eventually made it past Sam to score not once but twice in quick succession. The Tigresses then seized possession and Chuuka found his defence thwarted when, tackling Lucy Monroe who was in the Mongol 12 and headed for goal, he fouled by hooking, giving Prentice the opportunity to score from the resulting penalty and inch her team ahead with a score of 5-4.

Syangbo then took up a staunch defensive position against the Mongol big hitter firing the ball up the pitch from the 12, but he was soon back to level the score at 5-5 and then outran Prentice not long afterwards to take it to 6-5 in his team's favour.

Rivalries between the Tigresses and the Tuskers, the team of Prentice's husband Peter, were forgotten as the chukka drew to a close when the WEPA chairman gave vocal support to the ladies from the sidelines and then a motivational talk at half-time.

A foul was again called against Chuuka for hooking but the relentless Mongol force battled on to slot in two more goals sealing the win for himself and his comrades. The Tigresses rode off exhausted but proud of a performance which saw captain Edwards take a stick on the shoulder from Dovchin but play on undeterred, and concede just six goals (scored as opposed to



handicap) against a team whose victory margins had previously run into double figures.

With the World Cup decided, it was the turn of the Olympic QuaiCh finalists to take to the field with the returning Afghaniphants, who made their WEPA debut in 2010, and the newly minted Mel's Angels each determined to make their mark on elephant polo history.

The first chukka was all about the girls with Angels captain Gwenni Barrett defending staunchly against Afghan captain Bell who eventually defeated her to take the score to 2-1 and then 3-1.

Bell repeated her performance of riding back on with renewed vigour in the second half and scored within 34 seconds of the start of the second chukka with Tom Tuke-Hastings answering for the Angels shortly afterwards taking it to score 4-2.

The Angels scored again but it was a fitting close to a tournament in which women players showed their true mettle that the final goal of the tournament was from the Afghaniphants' Amy Woodrow who beat the Angels' star defender Tony Papalia to take the score to 5-3 and seal an unexpected but deserved victory for her team.

EFG International's Keith Gapp presents the EFG Most Valuable Player Award to Chuuka.

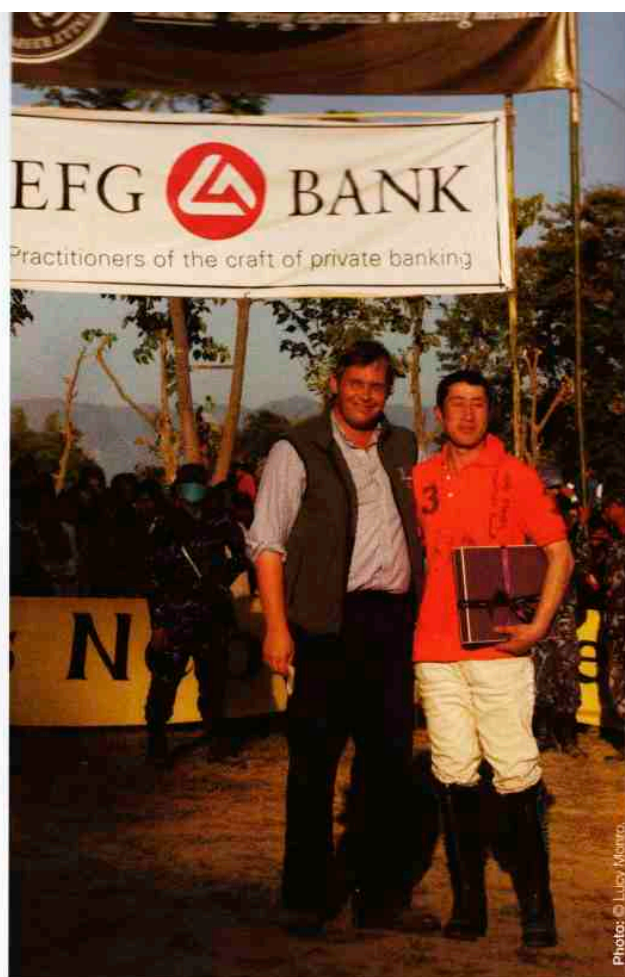


Photo: © Lucy Monro

#### EQUESTRIO BEST PLAYING ELEPHANT

The Equestrio Best Playing Elephant Award was inaugurated in 2011 to reward the elephant and mahout combination who combine to become a 'game changing' influence upon the tournament.

Typically a 'game changing elephant' will be a small, fast elephant playing in the centre but with larger elephants than usual participating in WEPA 2012 there were uncharacteristically tall elephants among those considered for the sought after accolade. Notably Ram Kali, driven by Khullu, Ras Kali driven by Som Bahadur Kumal who despite her massive size was the elephant from whom Tigresses' Lucy Monro scored three times, Champa Kali who despite her size stepped up to the mark and demonstrated flair for polo under the direction of Sani Chara, and Chan Chun Kali who had recovered just a few years ago from TB and made a remarkable return to full match fitness under the supervision of Ramesh, were all candidates for the award and worthy of special mention. But the elephant judged to be the absolute 'game changer'

was the plucky young 18 year old Saraswati Kali. Born in Assam, Saraswati has been with Tiger Tops for 12 years with mahout Ram Charan. In 2009 she was among the elephants who walked across Nepal from Tiger Tops in Chitwan to Karnali when the tournament was held in Bardia for the first

time. Liking Bardia she refused point blank to load onto the truck that was to take her back to Chitwan and so stayed in Karnali where she made herself pretty unpopular with resident matriarchs who took umbridge at her flair and enthusiasm for polo. Hit a ball into space and Saraswati will chase it as fast as her solid legs will carry her. Her joyful determination to be the first elephant to reach the ball knows no bounds and it was a team's tactical use of this remarkable elephant that determined their success or

failure. Saraswati may be considered something of an upstart by the elephant matriarchs who live with her, but she is considered a heroine by those who play polo on her. Congratulations to Saraswati Kali and her mahout Ram Charan.

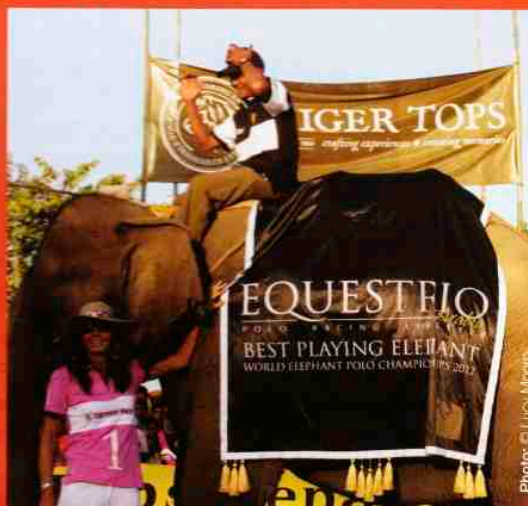


Photo: © Lucy Monro