

Terence Lent

Vital Stats at a Glance:

Age: 12

Handicap: - 1

Eye Colour: Green

Best Polo Achievement: Winning Most Promising Under-14-years Player this year at Cowdray and being picked to play for Young England select.

Terence Lent is fortunate in that his backyard is Sussex Polo Club; he's lucky that his mum, Sallie Anne is the Club's owner; Lady Luck also smiled at him when his polo 'teachers' were his father and the pros that played at the Club. All of these things contributed to Terence's appearance on the future polo stars radar – these and a healthy dollop of talent. After catching the eye of David Woodd and the polo chieftains at the Pony Club Championships this year, Terence received the award for Most Promising Under 14 Player – hopefully this is the first of many polo accolades to line the mantelpiece in the future. Terence talks to *The Polo Magazine* about starting out and the shape of things to come.



Starting Out

"I always used to hang around at my parent's polo Club when I was very young, using a short stick as a hammer, but it wasn't until I was six-years-old that my parents bought me my first pony. Things did not go well – it tanked off with me across our old arena one day, in front of my friends and I very unceremoniously fell off. Needless to say, I was not that impressed and stayed off ponies for a while after that. My dad still laughs about seeing me flying through the air like Superman screaming and won't let me forget it so I'm looking forward to the day when I can chose his old people's home!

"By the next summer my mum had arranged for the Old Surrey and Burstow Pony Club polo team to be based at the Club. Viv Good – the mum of Jonny Good and Tarquin Southwell – persuaded me get on a horse called Wispy who gave me confidence and so I found out that not only was polo fun, but that it came naturally. After the first season, my parents tried again and bought me a small 13.2h pony called Pepsi. Dear Pepsi was very old but a real schoolmistress – she taught me a lot and I played the Jorrocks section for Northern Ireland and Cowdray and won the best Sportsman Trophy at the Championships.

"As I got more and more into polo, mum kept on finding me better and better horses until she found Nacho who was a real gypsy-esque, painted cob type but who turned out to be a great platform to hit from – he was a cool pony and we won Jorrocks together in 2008. By the following year, mum had lined up three more ponies for me, but this is not high goal and of course, I had to choose just the one! I picked Gadwall who has more than proven herself in the couple of years we've had her – she won the Best Playing Pony prize at Cowdray when we won the Handley Cross last year so she was a great find. Thanks mum!

"I've been taught by lots of people since I started playing including David Morley – a great teacher – and Harry Tucker, who used to be based with us at Sussex, and who was very patient, explained things simply and always made the lessons fun. Now Jimmy Mulligan who is one of our resident Club professionals and Memo Raschia help me, but also my dad, teaches me a lot – I don't find it difficult having dad giving me pointers as he is a qualified instructor and I trust him, but I know some friends don't like their parents coaching them which is fair enough, each to their own. As a family, we also go to El Casal in 25 de Mayo in Argentina every winter to ride and play polo with Memo – often there are lots of friends out there too so its great fun and I don't miss too much school! Like anybody who goes to play in Argentina, the standard is great, so when I'm there, I get to play 4 to 6 goal chukkas most days with only a little help from the pros.

"I first started playing 'adult' polo two years ago in the -2 tournaments at our Club and now play in the 0 and 2 goal matches. My parents supported my playing very much at first as they said it was cheaper than a baby sitter, but I'm not so sure anymore! I used to steal my mum's ponies but they are not fast enough now so I have my eye on a few of my dad's. I like playing polo with them sometimes – especially as now I can hook my mum easily and sometimes beat dad to the ball."



Terence is very lucky to be living in a polo environment with professional grooms and players around him. His devoted parents have given him great opportunities and back up to bring out his potential.



Polo in the Present

"I have made great friends through Pony Club and it has helped to improve my polo – if you're enjoying yourself, you're always going to be that more committed aren't you? I'm also rarely without my short stick – even in the downpour, I'll be knocking about with my favourite blue Ona stick – so I think that helps with improvement and obviously I'm lucky to play Club games and tournaments with my family and the pros at the Club. Naturally, playing with better players in Argentina and in England has helped me improve and having more and better horses to play is almost as important as my hand stick! I'm very fortunate.

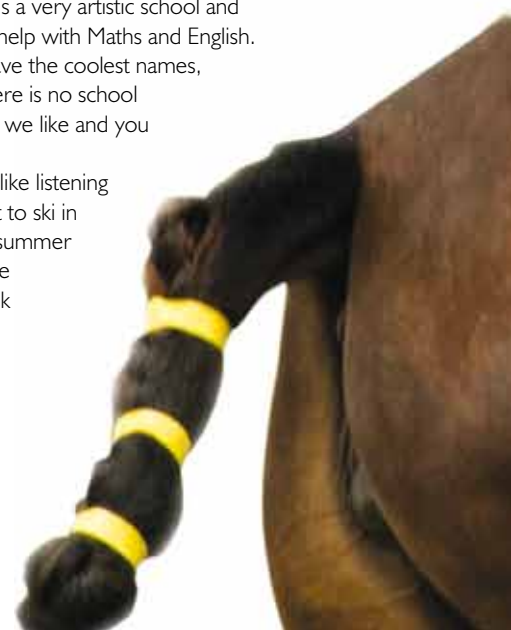
"Pony Club this year was fun with my friends, but the polo was a bit slow and way too many fouls. We managed to be first or second most of the time in Surtees One during the qualifiers but were beaten at Cowdray. When we were all at the prize giving, I remember thinking that for the first time in three years I would not win anything and was not really paying full attention – obviously I was pleased for everyone else, but...! I then heard David Woodd announce that the Most Promising Under 14-year-old player was ME! I was shocked and didn't get up at first, but then everyone started cheering. My teammates were happy for me I think and I remembered all the times that they tried to mark people away from me so that I could score some goals to help us to win games. But it was not until I woke up the next morning and saw the trophy in my room that it really sank in – it's definitely my proudest moment to date.

"My parents have just built a polo arena at home and so we are going to play and practice this winter – it's so exciting to have these facilities on my doorstep and I can't wait to get practicing over the winter months. My dad is finally going to let me play some of his horses, so wish me luck. But it won't all be polo in the drizzle in the arena – we'll probably go to Memo's in Argentina again this February."

Outside of Polo

"I used to go to Ardingly College but recently changed to Michael Hall School near home in Sussex, they are very good at being flexible with my polo requirements as they know I take it seriously. It's a very artistic school and because I am dyslexic I get extra help with Maths and English. I really like my classmates they have the coolest names, like Phoenix and Zophani and there is no school uniform, so we get to wear what we like and you can see us coming for miles!

"When I'm not on a horse, I like listening to music and water skiing; I learnt to ski in Barbados last year, but since the summer is all polo, polo, polo and now we have the winter arena I don't think I will have time for many other hobbies – although I'm learning to play electric guitar.



I get to go to London with my dad sometimes to do some fun things and catch a movie or a show – I loved Spamalot. I like lots of different kinds of music – mum used to sing in a band so she plays all her favourite 70's and 80's stuff on the drive to school so I can appreciate a wider range of music – especially David Bowie, although I still want to find out what a Jean Jeanie is and why he lives on his back?

"My idea of a perfect day would be to short stick and ball before playing polo with a couple of 10 goalers in the afternoon – who wouldn't? Then go out for curry at the Blue India and a film with my family and friends from the Club. Because I don't have any brothers or sisters I don't have to fight for the best horses or for the last popadom!"

Polo Influences

"My mum and dad for sure have obviously been a major influence for me, but my groom Pascual also and Viv Young and Chris Eaton from OS&B Pony Club have helped me loads. Viv and Chris encouraged me to play before my parents took over and started finding good horses for me. Having the Pony Club based at home with groups of kids coming round a couple of times a week like this has been incredible – that, and the opportunity to play with higher handicapped players or with a good group of friends has meant I have been able to get better.

"Jimmy Mulligan has helped me with my ball skills during games – we would make plays where I would try to steal the ball or stop him stealing it from me. I watch lots of top Argentine players like Piki Alberdi, Juan Martin Nero – I would like to play with either of them one day – Cambiaso, the Pieres brothers and Eduardo Novilla Astrada. I also watch Nick Clague, Jimmy and Memo at our Club but I have not played with any big polo stars yet – I'm waiting for the big high goal call up! I hope that I'll be able to play with more pros next year – I think that is the way of improving, you have to play with people better than you so you learn and push yourself.



Young Player Profile



He's been to Argentina and watched good polo and he's very good at going back to the farm to put what he sees into practice. He's ahead of the game for a home-grown player – he must keep working at it to stay ahead – but he's growing from a gifted little individual into a team player.



David Morley

Big Cheese Title: A grade Umpire & professional player



I also really admire Max Routledge – he has played at my parent's Club and I remember he could hit the ball from one end of the pitch to the other and now he's in high goal! I also like Tom Morley who has also played and taught at Sussex – he is always so nice to me.

"My dad coaches me and has helped me to learn the rules and be organised when I play and of course will start giving me his ponies soon... well I can hope! I would really like to have lessons from as many good teachers as I can – I think that way you have a rounded idea of different types of play. I've had lessons with Hugh Dawnay and Roddy Williams and we had an Argentine 7 goaler called Justo Del Caril at the Club who I would like to see again – I think I got a little bit from all of them. More than anything I would like a mentor, an older higher goal player to talk to and learn from over the next few seasons."

Ponies

"Everyone tells me that horses are the most important part of polo and I have some good ones for the level and the age I am at now. In the Pony Club some kids have to make do with a horse that is difficult to play on and so I have been very lucky. My grey mare Gadwall helped me to score lots of goals but mum has now sold her to help pay for more horses for me for next year. I have a chestnut called Beta who is awesome and another easy horse called Pagani. I also get to use my Uncle Jason's favourite horse Daytona sometimes – she's a machine!

"My dad has promised me his grey gelding, Jerba for the next season if I can ride him well in the arena over the winter. He is so fast and has a good mouth and stops and turns quick, so I'm holding out for him! I hope to play in more Young England HPA matches next season, hopefully with three other players who have good horses and are better than me so I can learn from them and improve. I like horses that run flat and stop and turn fast and I know I will need horses that ride off well to help me to fight off defenders when I am running and hitting and to help me stop older and bigger players in defence. Mum has a great eye and has got most of my horses for me since I've been playing, and we've got some on Memo's farm in Argentina that might come over one day but for now we have lots of horses here. Mum says it's hard to keep up with me as I'm outgrowing ponies every six months!

"We have some young horses being trained by our grooms and Jimmy at the moment and so I'm looking forward to trying them out soon – I think the plan is for me to start riding some of our four-year-olds in the arena this winter. I'm really interested in learning how to school horses – it's so important to be able to do this."

Like many young players enjoying the first flushes of success on the polo field, Terence has the dream of playing polo professionally when he grows up – he has aspirations on trouncing the Tomlinson brothers to be the highest handicapped English player – now that is aiming high! Undoubtedly, as have many polo parents before them, Duane and Sallie Anne may have something to say about having a back up plan. "I'm sure my parents will insist that I have another string to my bow," says Terence. "Possibly photography or another career with horses like equine dentistry – or maybe mum should watch out and I'll take over the Club!"

Showing such confidence and ambition at such a young age, combined with such facilities and support on his doorstep should result in a definite 'One to Watch' over the next few years. Remember – you saw Terence Lent here in print first.

Loose in the Lorry ~ Quick Fire Round:

Nickname: Mr T or Sapito

Blondes or Brunettes? Chestnut, bay or brunette!

What's on your iPod? Led Zeppelin, Bowie, Gorillaz, Muse, The Beatles, T-Rex, Gym Class Heroes

Would you let your mum see your Facebook? Nooooooo

Do you Twitter? Only if I have too much sugar

Party Trick? Dancing with the older girls/ladies at parties

Asado or MacDonald's? Asado everytime

Best Mounted Player? Bautista Heguy

Favourite Ground? Ground One at Sussex Polo Club

In ten years' time... I would like to be at least 6 goals