

# Thrice as nice

As the Indian polo circuit turns from Jaipur to Delhi, **Gaurav Chand** reports on a resounding third victory for Elevation in his final report of the season



Winners, Elevation (kneeling, l-r: Gerardo Mazzini; Sameer Choudhary; Angad Singh; Bhawani Kalvi), with their entourage. Elevation's Satinder Garcha (white shirt) holds the Maharaja Jiwaji Rao Scindia Gold Cup. Garcha was sidelined before the final in a fall, replaced by Sameer Chaudhary. His father, Col Garcha, is on the far right

Polo in India, after its bout of equine influenza, is struggling through the worldwide economic recession and trying to make do with whatever sponsorship it can muster.

Nevertheless, the Delhi spring 2009 polo season was a busy one: helped by unseasonably pleasant February weather, it featured an international Test Match against Italy and numerous fixtures and tournaments between the 8-goal and 14-goal level. Of the three 12-goal tournaments held, the Maharaja Jiwaji Rao Scindia Gold Cup is traditionally the most prestigious. Played for between 25 February and 1 March at the Jaipur Polo Ground in New Delhi, this year it attracted six team entries.

Himalayan Horse, whom regular readers of this column will remember marching to victory in the Indian Open in December (as reported in the January/February issue), advanced to the final once again, this time to face Elevation polo team. Their team was much changed from the side that tasted victory in the Open, but Abhimanyu Pathak led the line once again, helping the side reach the decisive

showdown for the trophy by beating Jindal/Sahgal and Cavalry (Black) on route to finals day.

Their opponents, two-time defending champions Elevation, had beaten Horse & Wagon into submission, 14-6½, in the opening game of the competition but lost patron Satinder Garcha in the final few minutes of their victory over Cavalry (Red). Garcha and his horse took a nasty fall at full speed and, after a long delay, he was replaced by Sameer Chaudhary for the remainder of the game.

Garcha didn't recover in time for the final, though he was well enough to support the team, so Chaudhary took his place again. The game was going to be difficult to call as, even with Argentine seven-goaler Gerardo Mazzini on board, Elevation's new team dynamic was a relative unknown. However, if they could recreate their incisive clinical polo from the early stages of the tournament, then even the excellent form of Himalayan Horse's Pathak and his new teammate Manupal Godara would surely not be enough to stop them.

Spectators packed the stands for the final on a sunny Sunday afternoon and witnessed an

imperial display from Mazzini that gave Himalayan Horse no chance. He was on fire. Elevation received half-a-goal on handicap and extended their lead early on, a lead which they never relinquished, eventually winning their third consecutive Gold Cup title in four chukkas, 5½-3. ☒

**Maharaja Jiwaji Rao Scindia Gold Cup; 25 February-1 March 2009; Army Polo & Riding Club, New Delhi**

**Result:** Elevation beat Himalayan Horse, 5½-3

**Principal sponsors:** Toyota and Air France

**Handicap level:** 12-goal

**Number of team entries:** six

**Chukker scores (Elevation):** 3½-0; 3½-0; 5½-1; 5½-3

**Final teams**

**Elevation (10/11):** Satinder Garcha 2 / Capt Sameer Chaudhary 1; Angad Singh 0; Bhawani Kalvi 2; Gerardo Mazzini 7

**Himalayan Horse (11):** Bhupendra Singh 1; Abhimanyu Pathak 2; Manupal Godara 4; Lokendra Singh 4