



The winning foursome, Piramal, with the Mount Shivalik Polo Challenge Cup: (l-r) Vishal Singh, Angad Kalaan, Ransher Singh and Harsh Piramal

Five 60-yarders and an under-the-neck

Polo has made a triumphant return to Jaipur, says **Gaurav Chand**, and the crowds were treated to a scintillating showdown on finals day

Horses have started recovering from the outbreak of equine influenza in India, which has seriously affected the 08/09 season, and in January everyone was looking forward to a month of action in the Pink City of Jaipur. Several tournaments, ranging from six to 14 goals, were scheduled at the prestigious Rambagh Polo Ground, organised by the Rajasthan Polo Club.

The action certainly didn't disappoint the crowds who turned out at the city-centre ground. The 12-goal Mount Shivalik Polo Challenge Cup had four teams participating, with many of India's star four- and five-goalers taking part – including Dhruvpal Godara, Angad and Uday Kalaan, Lokendra Singh, Samir Suhag, Vishal Singh and Manupal Godara.

In the opening game Piramal defeated Samode, with local star Vishal Singh contributing six goals. The second match was between Cavalry and Thunderbolt in which Cavalry prevailed 8–6½. Samir Suhag led the scoring, with six goals for Cavalry while Dhruvpal Godara, a new father and just back from Australia, knocked in five goals in vain for Thunderbolt. In the next game Piramal defeated Thunderbolt 7–4½ to advance to the

final, with patron Harsh Piramal from Mumbai scoring twice.

In the contest to confirm the second finalist, Samode led Cavalry by half a goal just before the last bugle. However, Samir Suhag spoilt their fun by scoring the winning goal for Cavalry as the bugle sounded. Cavalry advanced to the final, with Samir having scored all six goals.

The final was expected to be an exciting game, with both teams fielding leading four- and five-goal players. The stands were packed to capacity, as were the sidelines and the entire area along the right-side goal.

In the first chukka Vishal Singh and Angad gave a 3–1 lead to Piramal. However, Cavalry came back strong with all four players scoring a goal each, and took the lead 5–4. The third chukka went in favour of Piramal, who snatched the lead back from Cavalry and led 7–6 with goals scored by Angad, Harsh and Ransher. The crowd was eagerly applauding both sides.

In the fourth, Samir Suhag started the scoring with a 60-yard penalty. Then Angad converted a 60-yarder for Piramal. A minute later Samir again knocked in a 60. Angad was not to be left out and returned with another 60

for Piramal. Half a minute later Samir once again put in a 60 for Cavalry. The score in this last chukka had advanced solely due to 60-yarders, and with a little over two minutes remaining, it was 9–9. Everyone who had managed to get a seat was on their edge of it, or had joined the standing population.

With less than 30 seconds to go, Angad carried a bouncing ball and scored with a magnificent under-the-neck shot at a challenging angle, taking Piramal to a 10–9 victory, and giving the crowd a finish to remember. ✕

Mount Shivalik Polo Challenge Cup; 14-18 January; Rajasthan Polo Club, Jaipur
Principal sponsor: Mount Shivalik
Handicap level: 12 goal
Number of team entries: four
Result: Piramal beat Cavalry
Chukka scores (Piramal): 3-1; 4-5; 7-6; 10-9

Final teams:

Piramal (12): Harsh Piramal 1, Ransher Singh 2, Vishal Singh 4, Angad Kalaan 5

Cavalry (12): Maj Saurabh Saharan 1, Capt Vishal Chouhan 2, Lokendra Singh 4, Samir Suhag 5