

Fine horses, summer finery at Polo Classic

Fans dress up for annual 3-day charity event



Chris Schneider © The Rocky

• **By Rosa Ramirez, Rocky Mountain News**

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It's no chips-and-salsa event.

It's more like a filet mignon and fine wine gathering at the park.

Servers offered samples of shrimp salad and grilled and broiled prime meats on silver platters.

The Denver Polo Classic, a three-day fundraiser, was expected to raise more than \$300,000 for nonprofits that assist poor and underserved Denver youth.

Sunday's social gathering, which included a championship polo match, offered ample opportunity for showing off one's summer finery.

Half the fun of attending the event is dressing up for it, said Fatima Dias, 33, who was born in Lisbon but grew up in London.

"Women wear their best hats. And because the women dress up, the men have to step it up," she said.

Attendees paid \$200 to enjoy the food, the polo and the mingling.

The teams competed for the Denver Polo Cup. The competition was held at the Polo Reserve Development in Littleton.

Players use mallets whose heads are made of tipa, an Argentinian wood, and can hit balls at speeds up to 120 mph.

Larry Fanning, a 65-year-old painter from Evergreen, said he enjoys polo because "horses have a special place in my heart."

Fanning has been attending the polo championships with his wife, Wanda, for five years.

"We come both for the sport and the energy from knowing we're supporting a good cause. And it's a great place to meet people," he said.

Barbara Ritchie heads an organization, Griffith Centers for Children, that helps abused and neglected children and has received money from the event.

"It's nice to watch the game and see that a lot of young people are giving back to the community in huge ways," Ritchie said.

Polo basics

- **The field:** 300 yards by 160 yards, with goals at either end that are 8 yards wide
- **The team:** Four players and horses on each side. No substitutions unless a player or horse needs to be replaced. Each of the four players is given a zone of responsibility, from the player on offense in front to the player on defense, in the back. The numbers worn on the jerseys, the "Polo Shirts" indicate the zone - number 1 is the most forward, and number 4 the most defensive. By custom, number 3 is the on-field captain, and usually the highest-rated player on the team.
- **The object:** The winner is the team that scores the most goals in a six-period game. Each period, also known as a chukker, is seven minutes long. *Source: Fippolo.Com*

Weekend fundraiser helps kids

\$300,000 is the amount organizers of the Denver Polo Classic expect to raise over the three days of the event this year.

\$2 million has been raised over the 20 years this event has been held. 65 **nonprofit** organizations applied for grants from the Denver Active 20-30 Children's Foundation, which puts on the event. Of those, 45 were approved.

- **What are the grants for?** The money is available to nonprofits that provide services to Denver children or their families in sports, health, arts or financial aid. Past grant recipients include an organization that provides free dental services to poor children, an organization that teaches youth music in a multicultural environment and one that helps local children born without sight get the skills they need to live independently.
- **How to get a grant:** The foundation is accepting applications for 2008. The deadline is Aug. 15. Nonprofit groups must have been in business for at least three years to apply. Go to **denverpolo.org** for more information.