



And that's how it's done: Cork Polocrosse Club instructor Pdraig Edwards scoops up the ball off the ground. Pictures: Jan Janssen

# All you need to play are a horse and racket

by Mareike Graepel

"GET down on it! Be sure of it!" Pdraig Edwards' voice echoes under the high ceiling of the riding arena — he has to shout, so his instructions don't go by unheard among the squeaking, screaming and swearing of the players. "That's the stuff," he praises, as Vicky Murphy, on a black pony called Magpie, manages to scoop the ball off the ground, into the net at the end of her racket.

Welcome to a training session of Cork's first polocrosse club. During the lesson, six people on six horses with six rackets go after just one ball.

Divided into attackers, midfielders and defenders, the players try to pass the ball by throwing it with their rackets, catching it from a teammate and attempting eventually to score a goal between two posts.

"It is exciting," says Shauna Sheehan, after her first polocrosse session. "I didn't think I'd like it so much, but wow, it's incredible."

What started as just the odd get-together of polocrosse beginners rapidly turned into regular sessions on Saturday mornings, with ten or more people showing up.

"After a while, we noticed there was more interest, and, to suit people's schedules, we added a Wednesday evening session, as well," says instructor Edwards, who is also a member of the Limerick polocrosse club, whose A grade team just won the national finals.

"Picking up the ball takes a bit of getting used to. But, if you played hurling, camogie or lacrosse before you'll figure it out quickly. And, even if you didn't, you'll manage easily."

The trick is to ride towards the ball without slowing down, picking it up with one



Cork Polocrosse Club members Richie Crockett on Sparks and Jean Morris on Dellboy are going for the ball.

quick, fluid motion and trotting or cantering to get away from the attackers, who will inevitably try to take the ball off you again.

"This is not just for very experienced riders. Everybody can play polocrosse, as long as they are able to stay on a horse in walk, trot and canter.

"Polocrosse is even said to be improving

your riding skills, because you stop wondering what you're doing right or wrong — you're just going after the ball."

With the youngest Cork player, Eoin Clarke, just 13, there's no real age restriction, either. "Obviously, you should be able to ride for an hour without being too exhausted, it is a fast game."

The horses also seem to enjoy the playing; they go after the ball as if they understand what it is all about.

"Of course, not every horse is suitable for polocrosse," says Edwards. "They shouldn't be too tall or too fragile. Ponies or cobs that are easy to turn and show no fear of the racket and the ball are ideal. We are very lucky that we're allowed to play with the horses in Hop Island."

The four-legged sports stars in the Rochestown Equestrian Centre are true all-rounders — used for riding school lessons, hunts, beach rides and now polocrosse.

"Without the riding arena and the great help and support of the staff, and of course the owner of the centre, Liam O'Driscoll, all this wouldn't be possible."

With six other polocrosse clubs in Ireland, it is quite a new, but fast-growing sport. Cork Polocrosse Club is hopefully one of the first of many more.

■ The Cork Polocrosse Club is looking for members. For more information call 086-3499514, or email [info@corkpolocrosse.com](mailto:info@corkpolocrosse.com). You can also check [www.corkpolocrosse.com](http://www.corkpolocrosse.com). Training sessions are every Wednesday at 8pm and every Saturday at 10am in Hop Island Equestrian Centre, Rochestown, Cork, [www.hopisland.com](http://www.hopisland.com).

## Clubhouse for Youghal P&P club

by Christy Parker

YOUGHAL Pitch and Putt club looks set to acquire its first proper clubhouse after Youghal Town Council sanctioned the development at its September meeting.

The proposed facility, which is now subject to public consultation, would be a significant boost, not just to the club, but to Youghal's sport and tourism sector in general.

The club, which was formed in 1985, currently avails of a basic but inadequate portocabin at its council-owned Claycastle site.

The new facility will include a reception area, changing rooms, kitchenette, member lounge/meeting room, toilets (including wheelchair access) and an external store.

Youghal Pitch and Putt club is a hugely popular attraction across a wide spectrum of participation and has over 100 members.

While assisting Youghal's chances of hosting prestigious competitions, the excellent course is also a very popular part of Youghal's tourist attractions, with green fees accepted.

The new facility would be expected to bring the club to a new level, attracting more competitive fixtures and also new members.

Plans are on display for public consultation at the Mall House from 9.30 am to 4.30 pm, Monday to Friday. Submissions or objections in writing until October 31, Town Hall

## Cork-Cobh road race on Sunday

by John Walsh

THE premier promotion of the Cork Business Houses Athletic Association, the An Post/Cork to Cobh 15-mile road race, takes place on Sunday next.

Now the only race at this distance in the country, the 'Cork to Cobh' has a chequered past, and on a number of occasions (when under the auspices of Ballymore-Cobh AC) acted as the National BLE 15-mile championship.

Starting time is 9.30am, sharp, outside St Patrick's church and the course follows a scenic route to Cobh, to finish alongside the Cobh Heritage Centre. Entries will be taken on the morning of the race in the Garda Club on Penrose Wharf, at €20, and it is essential that intending competitors arrive in plenty of time.

Any help would be greatly appreciated and anyone willing to assist can contact Tim Murray (021-4506186), or any committee member, as soon as possible.

**Schools cross-country**  
East Cork schools cross-country fixture takes place today at the Athletics Grounds, Tower Park, in Youghal.

Organised by the East Cork Board of AAI, the first race gets underway at 11am and the programme should be concluded by 12.45pm.

Further details from Tim Twomey (024-93078) or Ger Flanagan (024-93015).

**East Cork AGM**  
THE AGM of East Cork Athletic Club takes place tomorrow (Wednesday) night at Wallis' Bar, Main Street, Middleton, commencing at 8.30pm.

All club members, and anyone interested in joining the club for the coming year, are requested to attend.

Among the items for discussion will be the popular 'Winter '3K' series, which is due to start in late October.