



At 19, Isabella Wolf is a rising polo star. "She has the ability to be the next American top woman player," says a trainer.

On Top of Her Game

In the male-dominated sport of polo, Isabella Wolf plays like one of the boys—rough

At 18 months old, Isabella Wolf was put on a pony. "Every time we tried to take her down, she would scream," says her father, Bill Wolf. "Nothing much has changed."

Now 19, Issy Wolf is a top amateur in the male-dominated world of polo. As a child growing up in Middleburg, she show-jumped and fox-hunted, starting polo at age nine. When she was 13, her mother, Francesca, a top jumper, took her for a few weeks to polo-besotted Argentina, where many top players are trained from a young age.

"It's the only sport that's a contact sport, a team sport, a coed sport, and a horse sport. I want to play forever," says Wolf, who was

drafted at age 16 for a high-school team at the University of Virginia, designed to support and scout young talent. Now enrolled at UVa., she plays varsity as well as national tournaments. "I want to play professionally. Dad wants me to get my degree."

To achieve both, she spends at least four hours a day, six days a week, at the barn in addition to doing her college coursework. Wolf trained in Argentina over Christmas and took nine of her 15 polo ponies to Florida in May to train. In the summer, it's back to Virginia to play in matches at Great Meadow Polo Club and Foxlease Farm.

"She has the ability to be the next American top woman polo player," says John Gobin, polo manager at Great Meadow, who first

trained Wolf at 13. "She rides like an Indian. She's rough and tough and she's polite. No one comes off the field and doesn't like her."

In the by-invitation world of polo, where hooves thunder and mallets crash, poise is key. At home, Wolf is relaxed and direct, with ocean-blue eyes and dark hair streaming down her back. But on the field, she "plays more like a man than a girl," says Gobin, who recently played against her at Miami Polo Cup, where Wolf was the MVP. "I threw her an elbow thinking it was one of the boys."

Says Wolf: "You can't just tell these guys you can play. You have to show them."

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