

The big names of polo start chukking their weight around



Game for anything : Britain's team line up

REPORT

HOWARD FOSTER

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TED BLACKBROW

IF elephants never forget let's hope they haven't forgotten how to play polo.

They once performed enthusiastically before the crowds of the British Raj but in those days they were at home and yesterday they were away, here in England.

Lumbering through Chukkas in Cambridgehire, Dum-Dum and two other Jumbos from the Big Top were learning tricks they'd never pick up in the circus. Their riders, more accustomed to galloping thoroughbreds across South's Lawns, were in training as Britain's team for the first World Elephant Polo Championships.

Led by the intrepid Bruce Green, they have, before heading for Nepal, just three weeks to grow accustomed to their new mounts and get the feel of their strange looking sticks, normally 4ft long, now an unwieldy 8ft.

Balls have changed, too. Dum-Dum might remember when the small, wooden ones were so hard to hit from the top of an elephant

that they were replaced by a big inflatable variety," said Bruce Green, "the elephants discovered that the inflatables made a nice bursting sound when trodden on so they charged around stamping on them." Today's ball is also large but solid and wouldn't come to any harm if Dum-Dum sat on it. He might, though.

Well-heeled

When Mr Green, a 35-year-old businessman, competes against America, Australia, New Zealand and India, he will have on his side old Etonian George Cloves, back-gammon player Robert Hutchinson, and art gallery director Edward Horswell.

Mr Cloves said: "I know it sounds as if we are a pretty well-heeled bunch looking for something to do, but we are genuinely interested in the sport."

So is Davina Kazan, Bruce Green's fiancée, who is hoping to take a women's team to Nepal. She sat on Dum-Dum, waving her polo stick, for 20 minutes to show what a good sport she is.



An elephantine chuck under the chin between chukkas