

# Polo Ponies - Ninety Percent of the Game



## Andrea

15.2 hh 7 year old bay mare.  
From Andrew Willan in Argentina.

## Pirelli

15 hh 8 year old gelding dark bay home bred from Argentina.

The ponies are photographed with Bautista

## Bautista Heguy

talks about Andrea and Pirelli to Alice Gipps and Sarah Wiseman

### Do you home breed in Argentina?

I have a large breeding programme with 500 horses. We used to use all thoroughbred stallions but now I have stallions which are 5 or 6 years old out of the mares I play in the Open.

### When did you bring these ponies to England?

Andrea arrived here two years ago and played in a tournament and broke her pedal bone. Last year she didn't play at all and I didn't know until now that she was one of my best! She'll stay in England for the moment. I may take her to Argentina but it's very expensive. Pirelli played in the final of the Open 2001, then I took him to Palm Beach and after that I brought him to England.

### Of all the horses you play around the world are these your best?

My best three horses I play in the Open in Argentina and then Pirelli and Andrea come next.

### Do you or your grooms school your ponies?

I schooled Pirelli when he was young but he was so talented that after that he just needs exercise. At this level they know everything so there's no need for schooling.

### Do you think geldings can be better than mares?

There is a higher percentage of good mares because they are intelligent but when you have a good gelding it's better because they are more consistent. Mares are sometimes more temperamental.

### Do geldings take longer to make than mares?

Yes, I think they take one more year at least.

### Why are these your best, what qualities do they have in a chukka?

Pirelli has everything really, he's a horse anyone can play because he can

play anything from the Open to two goal. He can go really really fast and stop at the end of the field quickly. He has a nice temperament and performs the same in every chukka. Andrea is a more powerful horse, she never seems to get tired.

### Is there a particular build or type you like?

Yes, small ones. It's not easy to breed them because of the genetics and finding small stallions and mares. I like to have a string of horses the same height as it's much easier for me to hit the ball and I'm more confident. I can play a bigger horse but I don't feel as comfortable.

### So are your horses in Argentina small?

Yes, smaller than here. My best three horses are smaller than Pirelli. It's a joke but they are really good.

### What do you feed them to perform to the highest standard?

Oats, Polo Mix and for the ones who are a bit too much, nuts. All horses are different. You need to find the food that makes each individual go well.

### Will you take Andrea back to Argentina for breeding?

For sure she is coming back to Argentina. Also if something happened to one of the horses in Argentina then I'll take her back to play. She is only seven so she has at least another five years.

### What age do you retire your ponies?

It depends on the horse, the horse normally retires itself when it cannot take polo anymore. Mares are taken for breeding but geldings are finished. Some horses can play to 20 years old.

### Do you ever sell them for low goal?

No, the ones I like go straight to breeding. Nobody touches them!