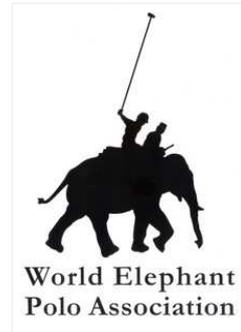


James Manclark, joint founder and honorary life President of WEPA

In 1982 I met the colorful A.V. Jim Edwards at a dinner that he was hosting in Saint Moritz during the Cresta season. On the night we met, Jim told me that he owned a place called 'Tiger Tops' in Nepal and that he owned a number of elephants for taking tourists on safari to spot tigers, rhinos & wildlife in the famous Royal Chitwan National Park. As I played a lot of horse polo I told Jim that his elephants should learn to play polo. He thought it was an interesting idea, and invited me any time to come to visit him in Nepal. I then sent him a telegram on 1st April 1982 while playing polo in Jaipur saying "Have long sticks. Get elephants ready".



I arrived in Nepal with three other polo players, long polo sticks two small footballs and luckily six regular horse polo balls. Jim got a the surprise of his life as he thought the telegram was an April Fool's prank!

However, unperturbed we all went down to Tiger Tops, measured out a full size polo pitch, and got cracking. Unfortunately the elephant seemed to like stamping on the footballs, and they all soon blew out, necessitating a swift move to regular polo balls. As such we have played with horse polo balls ever since - much to the surprise many people who did not think it was possible to hit such a small ball with a stick of up to 110 inches! After the first game Jim was thrilled by the idea and suggested that he and I should form the World Elephant Polo Association.

In 1983 we fielded four teams. I wrote out the rules and Jim did all the other work to host and make it a very successful annual tournament. Every year since then we have had eight teams competing for the World Championships, frequently hosting some famous celebrities along the way. The WEPA Committee has improved the rules over time, speeding up the game in the process and making it extremely fast & exciting when played well.

In the meantime we still have a very enjoyable and entertaining time while playing, as it's a terrific melting pot of international people who come to support the elephants and play elephant polo. Jim always wanted it to be fun and played in a convivial & sporting spirit, and that's the way it's always been. I was WEPA Chairman for twenty five years (1982-2007) until and passing over the Chair to Jim.

Unfortunately Jim died too young just two years later after a remarkably colorful & pioneering life. We miss Jim hugely, but the good news is that his family led by Kristjan Edwards has now taken on the mantle of running the polo at Tiger Tops hence forth, and the sport is going from strength to strength for both players and elephants.

Elephant polo is now also played under WEPA auspices in Thailand and with the help of the Thai Elephant Polo Association, Anantara and numerous high profile sponsors, has successfully raised a large sum of money for Elephants and local charities of over USD 600,000 in the process - something we are all very proud of and remain committed to at WEPA.

I'd like to thank all those special people and enlightened generous sponsors who have supported and played elephant polo over the years, making it such an established and happy sport - and especially my dear friend A.V. Jim Edwards, without whom the sport could never have been revived.