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APRIL 1998

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Passionate Player

Bobby Genovese didn't know anything about polo three years ago. Now, his newly created Vancouver International Polo Team has become one to watch. Last season, his team made such an impressive debut in Boca Raton, Fla., against some of the world's best high-goal players, that it became the talk of the horse set.

"We played well in the 22-goal Sunshine League and the 14-goal Hartman League—two of the most respected and competitive tournaments," says the 34-year-old Genovese, who made his millions by attracting investors to undervalued companies.

The high school dropout cum venture capitalist first encountered the sport several years ago. Smitten with its speed and excitement, he became convinced that he could play like a pro.

"I hadn't ridden horses since I was a 17-year-old farm boy living in northern Ontario," laughs Genovese, "but I wondered, how hard could it be to ride a horse and hit a ball?"

After taking several lessons at Boca Raton's Royal Palm Polo Sports Club with Marcos Bignoli, an Argentinian six-goaler (polo's highest rank), he found out. A few painful joints and a shattered thumb couldn't deflate his passion. Within a few months, he was riding high,

believing he had a knack for the sport. He flew to Argentina with \$800,000 to buy 30 trained horses, creating the Vancouver International Polo Team with Bignoli.

Genovese quickly became a one-goal player, a rating that takes most enthusiasts many years to reach. The rating didn't come easily—or cheaply. This natural athlete is so passionate about becoming a three- or four-goal player that he spends from \$1 million to \$3 million a year in his efforts to master the sport. He works with the best trainers and the best ponies.

This summer, the team is scheduled to play in the United Kingdom, the Canadian Open, and the Pacific Coast Open in Santa Barbara, California.

When Genovese is not atop a horse, he is involved in another risky venture—gambling on the Internet. He believes that Gaming Lottery, a project of his BG Capital Group in Nassau, is the wave of the future. "Now people can gamble at home on their own personal computers," he says. They can hook up to real casinos via the Internet and gamble on screen.

Why does Genovese love polo and gambling on risky business ventures? "Both of my passions have a great deal in common," he says. "They are competitive, time-consuming, and offer big rewards. I need this level of competition because I love to win."

—Linda Marx

