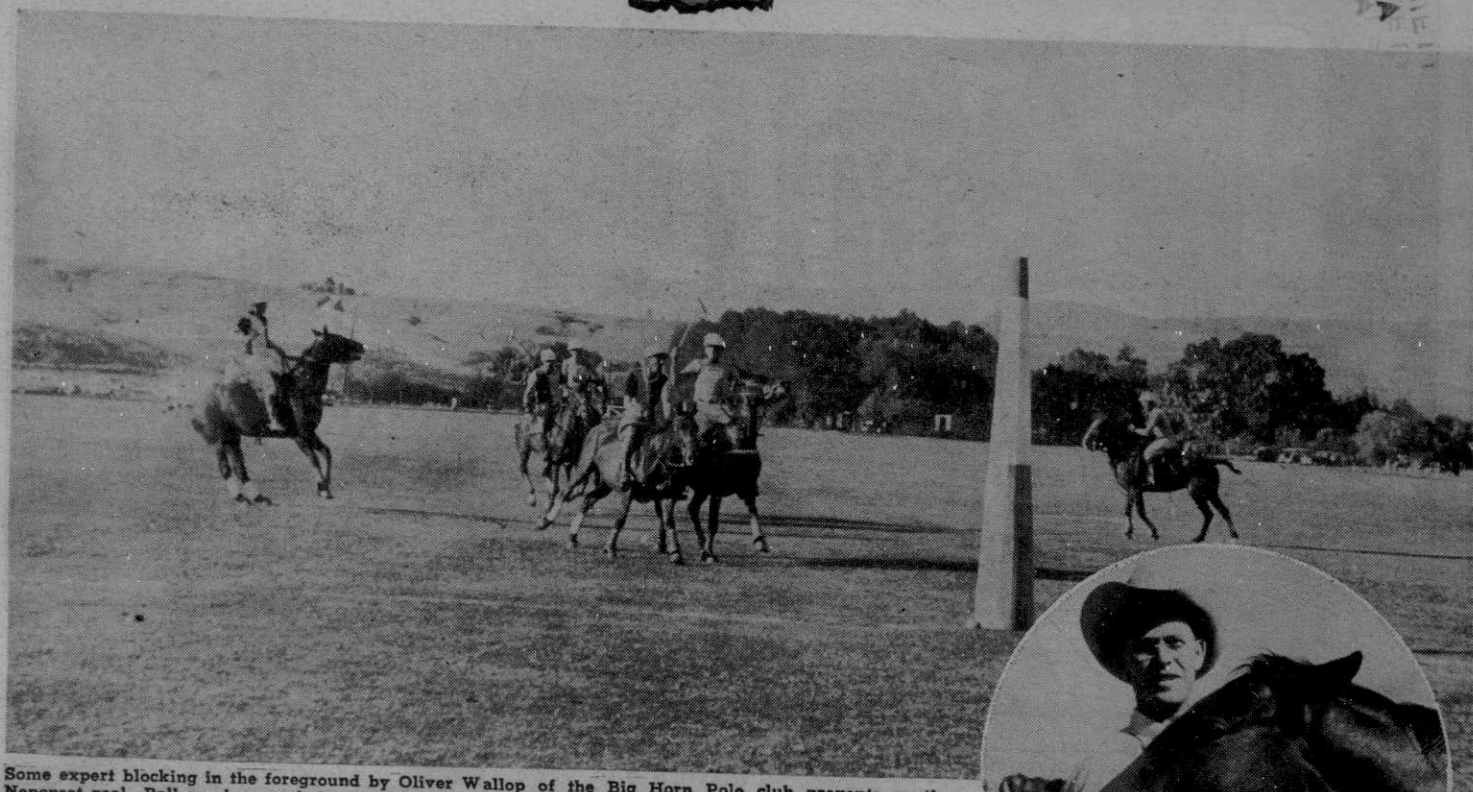


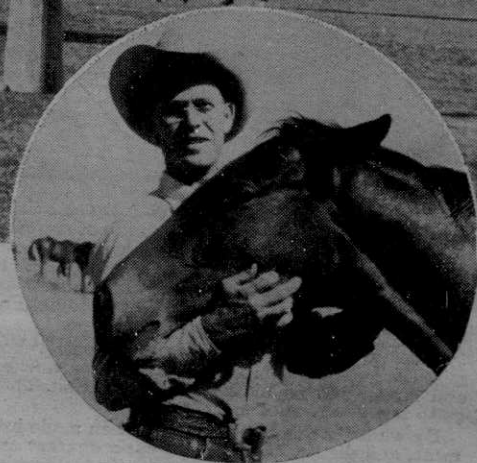
MONTANA Farmer-Stockman

Oct. 1, 1950

HISTORICAL
OF MONTANA
AND
NORTHWESTERN
WYOMING



Some expert blocking in the foreground by Oliver Wallop of the Big Horn Polo club prevents another Neponset goal. Ball can be seen between front legs of nearest horse.



It's a Natural . . .

Cowpokes Go for Polo

By JERRY LESTER

HORSES ARE MAGNIFICENT—whether they're tossing riders about in a rodeo or straining down the home stretch in a race—but for my money, I'll go for the game that shows off perfect training and even temper in horseflesh better than any other exhibition—polo.

And at this point you might smile and say, "That's fine for eastern playboys but no good out here in the wide open spaces." And so I thought until I saw some real polo played by real westerners on western bred and trained thoroughbreds down near Sheridan, Wyo.

Whether you're an old cowpuncher, stockman, or just a horse lover, the sight of eight perfectly trained horses and riders streaking down the green turf of the polo field with mallets flashing and the ball bouncing through the goal posts—well, it's one sight you shouldn't miss. The way the ponies stop, wheel around and block off an opposing rider at the touch of the rein would delight any oldtimer and compares well with the work of top cowhands and their best roping ponies at roundup time.

Thoroughbred Farm

To get the story of polo in the Sheridan country of Wyoming we went to see Bill Gardner, manager of the Neponset stud farm. The Neponset farm is the only exclusively Thoroughbred farm in the area and specializes in training polo ponies. W. Cameron Forbes, former governor-general of the Philippines, started sending his old polo mares to Sheridan in 1926 to the Beckton stock farm. In 1936 he and his niece, Amelie

Forbes, established the present Neponset stud farm, capable of carrying some 25 brood mares plus young stock on about 1,100 acres.

But the game itself came to the Sheridan area shortly after the turn of the century with the first Thoroughbred importations from England by Malcolm Moncreiffe and Oliver Wallop. And speaking of the game itself, you might not know that polo is said to be the most ancient game played with stick and ball. It was played in Persia in the 16th century with a large ball and hooked mallet by players mounted on what appear to be Shetland ponies.

Neponset Polo Club

So much for polo history. Bill Gardner, manager of the stud farm, came into his job in 1936 with a background of cow punching, rodeo riding and horse breaking—a horse history that started at the age of 10. Bill started playing polo in 1938. His own playing ability plus good polo pony training is



Some of the young thoroughbreds on the range at the Neponset stud farm, Sheridan county, Wyoming. Bill Gardner (in circle), manager at Neponset, gets a friendly nuzzle from one of the promising polo prospects at the ranch.

evident in the fact that the Neponset Polo club won the northwestern championship at the national tournament at Colorado Springs in 1949. The club also beat their neighboring team, the Big Horn Polo club that year to win the Malcolm Moncreiffe Memorial Challenge trophy.

Let's take a look now at the operation of the ranch, polo pony training and the game itself, with Bill Gardner's help.

All horses on the ranch are Thoroughbreds (Please turn to page 15)

COVERS MONTANA AND NORTHERN WYOMING