

POLO *pitch* PERFECT

International polo champion Nacho Figueras and wife Delfina Blaquier celebrate 11 years of polo in New York City with the Veuve Clicquot Polo Classic

photography by Philippe Reynaud art direction by Marina Barlagé by Kaitlin Clark

ON NACHO:
Pullover, Ermenegildo Zegna.
Pants, Ralph Lauren Purple Label.
Boots, Giuseppe Zanotti.

ON DELFINA:
Dress, Salvatore Ferragamo.
Boots, Giuseppe Zanotti.
Belt, Acheval Pampa By Delfina Blaquier.
Earrings and rings, Jane Kaye Jewelry.

Blanket, pillow, and linens, Stella (TriBeCa)
Flowers by Flowers by Yasmine

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EVEN AFTER ELEVEN YEARS, Nacho Figueras still gets nervous. The gnawing pit in the stomach of the polo world's most visible—and definitely most passionate—ambassador doesn't subside until every last ticket to New York City's Veuve Clicquot Polo Classic at Liberty State Park is sold. Meaning, the panic Figueras feels only lasts about 60 seconds.

"Every year I still get nervous that people aren't going to show up, that this is the year everyone will say 'Ah, that's enough.' But this year, tickets sold out in 60 seconds. That's faster than the Rolling Stones, I think," says Figueras with a cheeky grin.

Indeed, what was meant to be a one-off special event has snowballed into a mega party, oozing with glamour, celebrities and an easy, unparalleled joie de vivre, not to mention earning a reputation as one of New York's must-attend summer events.

Figueras, along with his beautiful wife Delfina, has hosted and competed in the Classic since day one, and helped catapult the event from 150 attendees on a rainy afternoon on Governor's Island in 2007, to what it is today.

On a bright day in June, on the eve of the 11th annual Veuve Clicquot Polo Classic, Figueras and Delfina are at Liberty State Park, looking over the last minute preparations for the match, and reflecting on how far they've come—personally, and professionally.

WHEN YOU WERE APPROACHED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE INAUGURAL YEAR, WHAT MADE THIS MATCH DIFFERENT?

NACHO FIGUERAS: How crazy is it that it's been 11 years? In my mind, what really happened is 11 years ago, I had the dream of bringing polo to New York City. We were playing polo in the Hamptons and in Greenwich, CT, and all these great places around New York City, but we were not playing in the city. When Veuve Clicquot and I teamed up, we learned that polo was played on Governor's Island decades ago.

Governor's Island was a military base and if you look at the history of polo, it was invented as a war game so that the military could train their soldiers for war on horses and make them into great horsemen. So, we held the match in Governor's Island for the first four years [to honor that history].

WHAT WAS THE FIRST EVENT LIKE?

NF: It was a very small event, around 150 people. It poured rain the whole time, I remember. But the spirit and the idea really worked. It really clicked with New Yorkers. It was a magical day, even though it was moist. Then we said, "Let's make this bigger and better," so in 2009 and 2010, we got Prince Harry to come.

I BET AFTER THAT, THE EVENT REALLY TOOK A TURN.

NF: It completely exploded when he played. It went from 150

people to 6,000 people. Then year 3, it went to 12,000 people. Then in year 4, Harry says "I can't come." And I said, "OK, that was fun, but now we're done." I really thought back then that he was the big, big draw. But then we got 19,000 people on year 4, without him.

WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT THAT POLO WOULD BE SO POPULAR WITH URBANITES?

NF: Polo really hit it off with New Yorkers. The idea of bringing polo back to the NYC like it was in the 1900s really sparked, and people had a great time. We had to move from Governors Island and we found this location [Liberty State Park] which actually is even more spectacular. I play polo all around the world and people ask me "What's the most amazing venue that you play?" and this is really hard to beat because when you're playing polo, you're looking at the ball, you're paying attention to the game and all of a sudden, you raise your eyes and you see the city skyline like that, so close, and the Statue [of Liberty] right next to you and it's really a magical thing.

IN ARGENTINA YOU BREED POLO PONIES THAT FETCH TOP DOLLAR. IS THIS WHAT YOU PLAN TO DO WHEN YOU RETIRE?

NF: I have around 300 horses in Argentina now. I used to have a lot more, but I scaled it down. Every year, we have about 25 new babies.

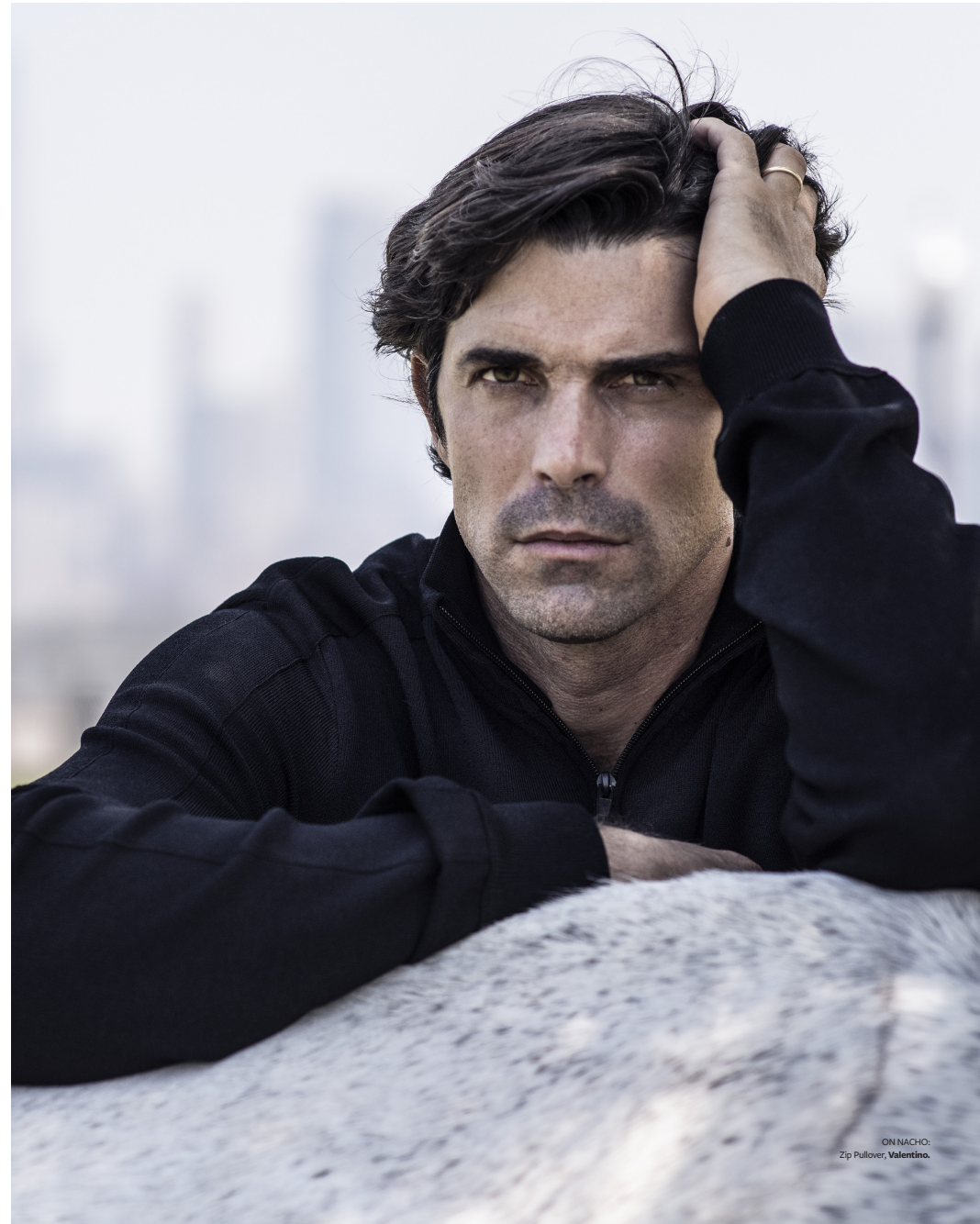
My polo career is still very strong and vivid so I have some more years playing polo. The breeding is something that I do with passion, and that we love to do as a family, so that's a big part of our life and something that will continue to happen for a long, long time. But I am always a polo player first—that's the spinal cord of everything. Polo and the love of horses, everything else that I do kind of like is a deviation from that.

HOW DO YOU BALANCE IT ALL?

NF: I do what I love. My spare time is obviously spending a lot of time with my family, which is a big priority, too. I happen to spend a lot of time with them because they travel around the world with me, we all play polo, and we all love horses. Work, although its work, doesn't really feel like work. Breeding is work but it's also something that I love.

YOUR FAMILY IS LIKE A LITTLE POLO CARAVAN GOING ON ADVENTURES ALL OVER THE WORLD.

NF: I could not do it without them traveling with me. That's a priority. Wherever I go, the kids have to come, unless there's a short trip here or there where I travel with my wife. If they can't come with me, it doesn't work.



ON NACHO:
Zip Pullover, Valentino.



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ON NACHO:
Veste Clouet yellow polo shirt,
white pants, riding boots, Nacho's own.

"MY FATHER WAS A POLO PLAYER
AND I WAS ALWAYS INVOLVED WITH
HORSES, SO I KNEW THAT I WANTED
A LIFE THAT WAS CONNECTED TO
HORSES." —DELFINA BLAQUIER



ON DELFINA:
Red gown, thigh-high leather boots: Dennis Basso.
Earrings and rings: Jane Kaye Jewelry.
Bracelet: Delfina's own.

"THE GREAT THING ABOUT **NEW YORK CITY** IS THAT NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES YOU'VE BEEN, THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW. **ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES.**"

DELFINA BLAQUIER: It makes us feel comfortable to be all together. I ask them all the time "Would you rather not do this?" and they say, "No, I'd rather be with you mommy." And that makes me feel safe in my heart that I'm doing the right thing in keeping the family together. One day they will look back-and for sure we have done many things wrong that we could have done better-but I'm doing the best I can. I know that I'm giving 100,000% of myself. And they're allowed to say "I don't like this" or "We should do this better." They like to cooperate, they're just good kids. They're happy kids. They're easy kids. Educating them and being their mother is a blessing for me.

WHAT ABOUT SCHOOL WHEN YOU ARE ON THE ROAD?

DB: We bring a tutor with us that will follow-up with their school program in Argentina. My kids go to a regular school but it's very advanced in education using Internet platforms to upload their content in every subject, mainly in high school like my daughter Aurora does. Our son in elementary, I just bring the material and the tutor works out the content with him. In kindergarten, we keep up with letters and we buy her books to read to practice writing. Their school has a lot of art and music, and works with multiple intelligences, so it's a really awesome way that they educate kids and it works for us with all the travel.

YOU LIVE SUCH A GLAMOROUS LIFE. IT HAS TO BE WORK EVERY DAY TO JUST KEEP YOUR KIDS BALANCED.

DB: You have to work everyday, but it's made from love, so it's not hard. And knowing always that there's no way someone or a family can be perfect, so I take away that pressure of being perfect. There's no trick or no rule or no book that says how you have to do things. You kind of just let it flow.

NF: Four children will definitely ground you! I feel very blessed about the life that I have. Not everything is what you see on Instagram either. You close the door and you still have to send the kids to take a bath. You still have to clean your house. You still have to deal with problems. And I love that. I like the ups and downs of life. I'm very conscious that it takes every day work. You have to every day take care of your things, your kids, your horses, and your stuff.

[The glamorous experiences] are wonderful to have but that's not what moves my life or my world. It's about the simple things. Those are the things that I care about. It's about my children or exploring a new country or going to a new place or spending time with them and watching them learn something. That's what I really care about.

HORSES SEEM TO MEAN SO MUCH MORE TO YOUR FAMILY THAN JUST A CAREER OR HOBBY.

DB: My father was a polo player and I was always involved with horses, so I knew that I wanted a life that was connected to horses. I met Nacho when I had just turned 17. We actually met at a polo match in Argentina. He was already sitting in the stands and I was climbing up to my seat with my father and my family. We always take the same seats in the same space at the arena. When I was going up the stairs, I look up to my seat and I saw him a couple of seats away. It was right there when I knew that I had to meet him. I just knew that I had to meet him. After the game I saw him talking with a cousin of mine. And after, I went around to ask her to introduce me to him. She said that he was asking her to introduce him to me.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR YOU TWO, YOUR CAREERS AND YOUR FAMILY?

NF: I'm starting to do something called Figueras Design Group, which is me and a group of architects called Estudio Ramos, who created some stables in Argentina that has gotten a lot of attention in the design and architectural world. I started getting a lot of calls to develop equestrian properties around the world and that's something that I enjoy a lot. I love architecture and I love design so that is something that's starting to happen, and that I enjoy very much. Lots of projects. I'm always moving and I'm always trying to keep it going.

DB: I just invested in a new brand with a friend and another girl from my circle. It's a clothing brand based on the gaucho allure. It's made in the Pampas in Argentina, Uruguay, and some parts of Brazil. We just launched it in February and we're very happy.

The brand, Acheval, means "on horseback" so it really makes sense for all of us. We are three Argentine women. One lives in Paris, I'm traveling around the world with horses, and the other girl called Lucilla is based in Buenos Aires, and does all the merchandising and clothing production. I'm so thrilled about it.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE THINGS TO DO IN NEW YORK CITY?

NF: There are so many things, right? The great thing about New York City is that no matter how many times you've been, there's always something new. Endless possibilities. Yesterday, for example, I went to the Oculus. I had not been before and it's an amazing structure. I took the kids. We have a lot of friends here so I'm always looking forward to seeing my friends and spending time with the city, which is lovely and wonderful and fun. I love the restaurant scene, too. There's so much to do. **DT**



ON NACHO:
Overcoat and trousers with
studded spikes, zip pullover, **Valentino**.
Shoes, **Giuseppe Zanotti**.

ON DELFINA:
Dress, **Tadashi Shoji**.
Shoes, **Giuseppe Zanotti**.
Ear cuff, earrings, necklace,
Jane Kaye Jewelry.

Styling by **Laurean Ossorio**
Hair by **David Cotteblanche**
Makeup by **Agata Helena @agatahelena**
Styling assistance by **Daniel Flores**
Video by **Milan Odin**
Digital Technical Support by **Kirit Prajapati**
Food on set provided by
Ancolle and Senza Gluten
Beverage sponsor, **Veuve Clicquot**
Public Relations: **LaForce**
LOCATIONS:
Liberty State Park
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