



# Riding High

He's an icon of style, one of the most photographed men in the world and now a romance novelist. But, Nacho Figueras tells Matthew Myers, his greatest passion is still polo.

**DNA: Polo has been your life since the age of nine. What is it about the sport that you love so much?**

**Nacho Figueras:** When I was young I started loving the game, but as I matured I started to love and appreciate the horses more than the game itself. Of course, I still love the game, but the horses are really my passion.

**You've taken on the new challenge of romance writer. Has that always been an ambition?**

No, a friend in New York who is a book publisher and agent came to me with the idea. She knows my passion of making polo more mainstream and thought it would be good for

bringing polo into more people's lives. So it was more about using the fiction and romance to educate people about the life of a polo player.

**What do you use as inspiration for these stories?**

In my case, the romantic stories are an extension of how much we care for the horses and how we spend our days with them in the stables. It's about how much dedication there is behind the scenes with polo, not just when we play, but in the months of preparation we take for a tournament.

**There's no doubt that a man riding a horse is sexy. Why do you think that is?**

[Laughing] Well, I'm the one riding the horse so

that should be answered by other people! I think a man and a horse look good together. There's a cool factor but I can't explain it.

**For the past 16 years you've been the face of Ralph Lauren Polo. How has that affected your life?**

In every way! Ralph Lauren is a very big worldwide brand, and that association has given me a lot of recognition and the chance to talk about polo – the sport that I love. I think what has been so good about this relationship is that it makes sense for them and also for me – a polo player that represents a brand whose logo is a polo player, and I identify with the brand. It's



been a real honour and I hope to continue for 16 more years.

**Polo hasn't been an Olympic sport since the 1936 Berlin Games. Do you think it could make a comeback?**

The polo community is working on it. Logistically, polo is very complicated and requires lots of horses. That has been the hurdle. We are trying to bring it back. It's a dream. I don't believe there'd be anything more fantastic for the Olympics than polo!

**You're an ambassador for Sentebale, the charity set up by Prince Harry and Prince Seiso to help the children of Lesotho. How did that come about?**

I've been playing with Harry for over ten years now and around five years ago he invited me to come to Lesotho. I fell in love with the country and their mission to change the lives of the children. It's such a small and beautiful country, and one where you can really make a difference. They offered me the chance to be an ambassador of the charity, which I was very honoured to accept. Prince Harry's commitment is so real and pure. It's inspiring to help him.

**Equestrian sports are popular with gay men. Do you have any gay friends in the sport?**

Many. Polo is a big community and very inviting and in the United States there is the Gay Polo League, which is great and growing! They do an event in Wellington, Florida every year and I have friends who have played there. I think it's great.

**Do you ever go out with friends to gay clubs?**

Yes, I think gay clubs are a lot of fun. Gay people know how to have fun. That's for sure! [Laughing]

**Do you get up on the dance floor?**


I'm not much of a dancer. When I do go out it's usually with my wife Delfina and I try to keep up with her. But I don't really dance. It would take a drink or two to get me up!

**When it comes to music, who is your diva?**

Madonna. I've met her a few times and she's a great woman. She's very charitable and philanthropic, and she rides horses! She's wonderful. My favourite Madonna song is *Celebration*.

**WHO DO YOU THINK IS THE MOST HANDSOME MAN IN THE WORLD?**

"I believe in the whole package. Cool guys, to me, are Frank Sinatra and Clark Gable. It's the way they look and the way they go about it."



**In 2009 Vanity Fair readers voted you the second Most Handsome Man In The World between Brad Pitt and Robert Pattinson! How does that feel?**

I don't pay attention to those things. They don't change anything. Attractiveness is not important and it's not what really matters or lasts. If someone calls me a good guy, I'll like that. That's what makes me feel good.

**Working with Ralph Lauren you get to wear great clothes and have terrific personal style. What's your best fashion advice?**

I believe the most important thing is to feel comfortable within yourself. I don't believe there is a way of dressing that is better than that. Frank Sinatra looked great in a suit and a hat, and Mick

Jagger looks great in skinny jeans and a T-shirt. I believe that dressing is an extension of who you are and whatever makes you feel your best.

**This month is our underwear edition. What's your favourite style?**

I go commando!

**Even when riding a horse?**

Yes, I do! [Laughing]

**What about at the beach?**

In Argentina we don't wear speedos. In Brazil they do, but here we don't. I was brought up wearing shorts.

**Who has been the greatest influence on your career?**

Gonzalo Pieres. He is one of the biggest and most influential polo players. He helped me a lot as a young player. He played polo most of his life with Kerry Packer and together they did so much for polo. In the 1990s they changed the way we look at the horses, the teams and the playing field. My father has also been very supportive and a big reason why I play polo. And, of course, there is Ralph Lauren who inspires me. I admire him greatly.

**You once said that playing a particular sport comes down to where you're born: Hawaii for surfing, Austria for skiing, Argentina for polo. What sport do you associate with Australia?**

I think of you guys as rugby and surfing and of great swimmers and tennis players. Am I right? And Australian Rules Football; I love that, too. I think it's great.

**When will we see you return to Australia?**

I'd love to come to the Melbourne Cup but it's in November, which is the middle of my polo season. But I'm getting older and I'll start to eventually retire so when I'm not playing so seriously I'll come to the Melbourne Cup. ★

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