

Polo, a premier dating opportunity

» **TIM BARLASS**

THERE'S a tradition at the polo called stomping of the divots.

Between chukkas - and glasses of champagne - the spectators take to the field and literally stomp back in the divots of turf displaced by the hooves of the polo ponies.

More importantly for some, rumour has it that for young women followers of the sport, it is also a good way to meet a future husband.

So it was for some yesterday in the sunshine at the elite international test match between Australia and South Africa at the Windsor Polo Club.

I think I've added more divots than I've fixed.' Anya Collingwood

Given an interlude in the play, there was what could only be likened to a pitch invasion from wannabe brides anxious to help out.

The secretary of the Australian Polo Council, Amanda Jansen, said: "You get out there on the ground, and get to meet everyone - it's a prime husband hunting opportunity."

Anya Collingwood, 31, from Bondi, watching an earlier under-21 match said: "I was hoping to find one of the players but they all seem to be about 16 in this match - but I haven't met them all yet."

Flat or wedge-heeled shoes that do not sink into the turf are recommended. Wearing stilletoes, Ms Collingwood said: "I think I've added more divots than I've fixed."

Some of the polo ponies for the visitors yesterday were provided by



Best foot forward ... Anya Collingwood engages in a fine polo tradition as, below, Premier Barry O'Farrell watches on. Photos: Adam Hollingworth

James Packer, and one spectator arrived by helicopter. Among those there for the first time was the NSW, Premier Barry O'Farrell, who went in a private capacity.

"I'm here as a guest of friends, I have never seen a polo match in my life before," Mr O'Farrell said.

"What do we call the field? It's not a

pitch and I know it's not a court."

Casually dressed in a check shirt, he added: "I am incredibly impressed, I thought people at the races dressed up but over there it's like a fashion show. I felt very uncomfortable."

Perhaps the Premier will start a polo-watching trend. At \$20 admission, many would not consider it expensive.



Age linked with length of labour

» **NICHOLAS BAKALAR**

WOMEN spend much longer in labour than they did 50 years ago, according to a US study that suggests the causes might include increasing maternal age, weight and changing obstetric practices.

Scientists at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development compared 39,491 births from 1959 to 1966 with 98,359 births from 2002 to 2008.

All the women initially went into labour without complications.

On average, women in the recent group were 2.5 years older than those in the first. Women giving birth in the 2002-08 group had an average body mass index of 29.9, putting them close to the obese range, compared with 26.3 in the earlier group.

Only 4 per cent of women in the 1959-66 group received epidural anaesthesia, compared with 55 per cent in the recent group. About 12 per cent of the women in the first group received oxytocin to induce labour, compared with 31 per cent in the 2002 group.

A team from the University of Sydney found that epidural analgesia use increased from 17.2 per cent in 1992 to 26.5 per cent in 2003. In 1979, 75 per cent of births were to women under the age of 30. By 1999, births to women younger than 30 had dropped to 52 per cent and by 2009 to 46 per cent, according to figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

The New York Times