

Nedbank International Polo returns with the #NewNobility initiative



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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Following a two-year break due to the global Covid-19 pandemic, one of South Africa's most prestigious equestrian fixtures on the annual sporting and social calendar, the Nedbank International Polo event returns to Inanda Polo Club in Sandton, Johannesburg on Saturday, 22 April 2023.

Moving into its fourth instalment of this distinguished event building on the successful partnership born in 2018, Nedbank and the South African Polo Association has teamed up again to produce a multi-layered experience in what is considered possibly the oldest team sport.

"Our return has not hindered our ability to ensure that the heritage and magnificent offering of the polo is brought to life through this partnership," says Khensani Nobanda, Nedbank group executive of marketing and corporate affairs.

The highly anticipated sporting fixture has been a long running polo test match with a history spanning over 30 years.



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For the greater good

"It's not only winning on the polo field that counts, as success off the field plays an integral part to each year's event where we bring to life New Nobility, which was launched in 2019 as a mechanism to borrow the polo social influence to benefit deserving individuals," notes Nobanda.

Nedbank has been the proud sponsor of the event since 2018 and believes that the sophistication of the sport, combined with the thrill it provides, perfectly promotes the firm's purpose to 'see money differently', which is in line with their brand ethos to do good in the societies in which they operate.

Although Nedbank is a well-known and established bank, they also like to take risks and encourage clients to be bold in their financial choices. The aspect of nobility that comes with the sport fits in well with the messaging of also using one's influence to positively uplift local communities.

While continuing to build on the successful partnership with the SA Polo Association, Nedbank has seen several small businesses getting a leg up as Nedbank International Polo has been used as a platform to showcase emerging entrepreneurs and support them by inviting the public to invest in their businesses or purchase their products.

Says Nobanda, "This year, our focus shifts away slightly from entrepreneurs and onto our affinities. In 2022, Arts Affinity beneficiaries were commissioned to create unique pieces of art inspired by #NewNobility, which were then displayed at the Nedbank marquee. Guests in attendance had the opportunity to either win the original art piece or purchase one of 10 prints with all the proceeds going back to the artists."

For generations, polo has been viewed as the sport of kings – exclusively for high society or society's nobility. For Nedbank, the sponsorship enables the banking institution to engage intimately with high-net-worth individuals – the traditional polo audience.



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"We live in volatile economic conditions, which is why this year we set out to see the polo differently – to look at how we can use the sport of kings to live up to our purpose. We wanted to find a way to enable our guests to use what they have to uplift communities," comments Nobanda.

The event not only gives Nedbank the opportunity to engage high-net-worth targets, which is standard in the sponsorship landscape among all their competitors, but also to help polo attendees use their immense stature to build the stature of others – something not often seen in leveraging this category of sponsorship.

#NewNobility explained

The #NewNobility initiative, launched in 2019, aims to challenge attendees of the Nedbank International Polo event to use their influence to lift our communities. To view themselves as noble not by rank or title, but as a virtue, thus redefining their role in society.

"We thus set out to create a new view of what it means to be a part of the upper echelons of South African society – championing a 'New Nobility' that places an emphasis on nobility as a virtue rather than a title," notes Nobanda.

The Nedbank International Polo event is about more than providing an unparalleled experience. It is also about creating a shared understanding of what it means to be a part of the new nobility, which is about playing your part to uplift those around you. Nedbank believes that being a new noble is about using what you have to create a better society.

From an organisational point of view, executing a top-tier event such as this takes months of planning. The planning is done with various agency partners, and involves a stringent decision-making process with the various stakeholders that often determines the campaign theme and the year's beneficiaries, and sets precedence for all that needs to be achieved.

The embodiment of being a new noble

An event that is focused on elegance, sophistication and entertainment takes a lot of hard work to put together annually. Being a sporting event, it is essential to ensure that all the necessary facilities are provided: the lawns are kept and maintained; and the sportsmen are supported in any way needed. Although this event incorporates glitz and glam with sports, Nedbank ensures that the messaging is clear throughout the event.



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This year's dress theme, 'Bold with a touch of green', celebrates green, a colour that symbolises giving and harmony and the boldness of using what you have to lift those around you – the embodiment of what it means to be a new noble.

What to expect

"There is a lot on the cards for this year's Nedbank International Polo event, most notably the return of India to our shores to battle it out on horseback against South Africa. For a country where the national polo association was founded in 1892, the Indian polo team will bring with it a deep and intrinsic knowledge of the game, which should set the scene for a fantastic encounter," says Nobanda.

Beyond the sport, this year's event will be used as a platform to showcase the Nedbank Affinity Programme and its various beneficiaries, who will showcase their work at the event. Public and those in attendance are invited to support and empower beneficiaries financially.

Beneficiaries include The Sports Trust, the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, Arts & Culture Trust, and the WWF Nedbank Green Trust. Each affinity will be exhibited to all attendees at the Nedbank marquee and its story told through capturing imagery and insightful content.

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