

HEALTH & WELLNESS

WHAT'S YOUR WORKOUT?

When Time Allows, Taking a Whack at a Sport

By GILLIAN TAN

What's a man to do after selling his companies for more than \$100 million?

For Santinder Garcha, the answer was polo.

Mr. Garcha, 41 years old, is an amateur player and polo patron who travels at least three months a year to countries including Argentina, England and his birthplace, India.

He moved to Singapore from San Francisco in 2002, after selling a company he founded, People.com Consulting Inc., to TMP Worldwide Inc.

It was in Singapore that he says he became "madly hooked" on the sport, training almost full time before launching a property-development company, Elevation Developments, in 2004.

Mr. Garcha's interest in polo was sparked by his father, Kuldeep Singh Garcha, who was the captain of India's polo team.

"Because of my father's involvement in the sport, it was always in the back of my mind that I'd one day start playing, if time and money permitted," he says.

"Patrons," as they're called, pay to play high-level polo and hire professional players as teammates, the total cost of which can range from \$50,000 to \$1 million per tournament. "I've had some big names in the polo world play for me at various times in England, Argentina and Spain," he says, including Argentine former world No. 1 Bautista Heguy.

Mr. Garcha, who is married and has an 11-year-old daughter and 5-year-old twins, takes meetings, goes on site visits and discusses projects with architects early in the day, so



Alice Gippis (3)

Santinder Garcha, above, in the team tent at the Copa Presidente tournament in Pilar, Argentina, in 2012. Mr. Garcha, in white, during the tournament final.

that he can head to his polo club around 4 p.m.

His polo team is named Team Elevation, after his property-development firm. It won the Indian Open in 2007. (It made it to the Indian Open finals this year, which was rained out.) The team reached the semifinals at the Ellerstina Gold Cup in Pilar, Argentina, two years ago.

A highlight for Mr. Garcha was in Bangkok in 2007, when he was captain of the Singapore team at the Southeast Asian Games, an Olympics-committee-supervised event.

"My silver medal is in my living



room and my wife gets tired of me showing it to everyone who visits," he jokes.

Mr. Garcha has a two-goal handicap, considered high for a polo patron. In higher-rated tournaments, he plays the first position; in lower-rated ones, he plays in positions two or three.

He keeps polo ponies around the globe in places where he competes: six in England, eight in Singapore, 18 in Argentina and 32 in India.

The Workout

Mr. Garcha works out at the gym for 50 minutes, three mornings a week. During tournaments, he'll drop down to two sessions. "I do lots of core work, as polo is about being able to balance and twist your upper body while your horse gallops at 40 miles an hour," he says. "You're also using your body to control your horse while hitting a ball, so there's a lot of intrinsic muscle use."

At the gym, he rotates between

three routines every two weeks, altering them slightly with the help of a personal trainer. "It's about regularly shocking the body so you don't plateau," Mr. Garcha says.

One routine targets all muscle groups by lifting heavy weights through movements like squats, bench presses, bicep curls, tricep extensions, calf lifts and lateral pull-downs. A second focuses on functional training, often with movements similar to the first but with more repetitions and using lighter weights or body weight.

The third involves three sets of 12 movements using cable weights. These movements can include amended trunk twists, wood chops, rows and chest presses, often without a break to increase the intensity.

He trains his riding muscles—predominantly his inner thighs—by "schooling" his ponies twice a week. "You're not just riding in a straight line, but [doing] figures of eight, quick turns and stops as well as sprints," Mr. Garcha explains.

The Diet

Mr. Garcha, who is 6 feet tall and weighs 175 pounds, maintains a simple diet influenced by Argentine polo teammates.

Breakfast is a coffee with a pastry, while lunch is plain pasta, sometimes drizzled in olive oil, and a salad. He'll also eat a piece of fish at lunch on occasion. Dinner involves a large steak or even a whole chicken, with vegetables. "When you're playing hard, the body craves protein, so I eat meat every night," he says.

Once a week, with his personal trainer's blessing, he gets his cravings "out of the way," eating anything from a burger to pizza to chocolate. He refrains from alcohol for at least two days before a big game. "But polo being such a social game by nature makes it pretty hard," he says.

The Gear

He wears Casablanca white technical polo jeans, which retail for \$145 and are water repellent. He'll wear a Nike polo shirt, which sells for \$50. Elbow pads are \$175; knee guards, \$240; gloves, \$70; and compression polo socks, \$35. Leather whips start at \$50. A basic helmet is \$350. He gets Casablanca riding boots each year. Custom-made pairs sell for \$1,800. Mr. Garcha has around 14 Zappala polo mallets, which break easily during play. They cost \$120.

Polo Primer: Following the Action on the Field

Polo matches range between four to eight chukkers, or periods, depending on the level of play. One chukker lasts 7½, though the clock is stopped each time the ball rolls out of bounds, so a period can take around 15 minutes.

Players usually compete with between six to eight horses per match and can rotate through them as quickly as every 3½ minutes.

There are four positions on a polo team, with players assigned numbers worn on their shirts. No. 1 is the at-

tacker while No. 4 is a defender. Positions Nos. 2 and 3 are involved in both offense and defense, with 3 usually the team member with the highest handicap.

Scoring in polo isn't entirely based on actual goals on the turf, but also involves a team's handicap, which is a total of each player's handicap, or ranking. Players' handicaps are based on a scale of minus-2 to 10, with 10 the best.

At a high level, a team's maximum handicap often lies between 17 and 22

goals.

After a goal, play resumes from the middle. Teams switch sides so no advantage is gained from weather conditions, or issues with the turf.

Possession of the ball is determined by getting the "line of the ball," or path as it travels on the field, on a player's right. Unlike most sports, left-handed players are rare in polo because only the right hand is allowed to hold the mallet.

—Gillian Tan



Santinder Garcha, with mallet on the right.

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