

King of Game on Game of Kings

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RAYMOND ON HORSES AND POLO

Welcome to the new thread on Ashva Sports, exclusively dedicated to the top leaders from various walks of life who also happen to be equine enthusiasts.

Raymond J. Rafool

In this edition we will be interacting with [Raymond J. Rafool](#), a celebrity lawyer from Miami, who specializes in **Domestic and International Family Law, Business and Commercial Litigation**. Declared **Lawyer by Martindale-Hubbell** and listed **Legal Leaders** in the Miami Herald, Raymond is an authority on the subject. He has also authored numerous publications on his area of expertise. So, without a doubt, the super lawyer has to say about horses and polo.

AS – You must have played many games, what is it about polo that you find missing in rest?

Raymond Rafool – Yeah that is true, I have played most of the games like basketball, baseball, football and softball. I still play soft ball at times. But of all these sports, polo stands out by far because of the

Firstly, polo is about a life on another life. So, unlike getting from place A to place B yourself, you have to convince an animal five times heavier than you, with a will of his own, to take you there. Take you I while you swing your mallet on your way up.

Secondly, polo is a complicated sport. From off the field knack of handling a string of six to ten horses with all the complications that come along with it, to superlative mental and athletic skills needed to play there are limitless variables in the equation. Some you can control, most you can't. Therefore, for people like me who thrive under pressure and challenges, there is no better platform that can boast of test individual and a leader both. A perfect unwind if you ask me.

Thirdly, the sport comes with an entirely different level of risk associated with it. No other game involves the possibility of getting mowed down by a five hundred kg animal at a neck breaking speed. The act this original Extreme Sport is of another level.

AS – Quite compelling reasons indeed. So, when did it all start?

Raymond Rafool – Being from Florida, horses were part of my childhood. But back then it was mostly bareback riding or western riding. And my passion for the horses was strong enough to make my father promise me a pony on my sixteenth birthday.

AS – Did he live up to his promise?

Raymond Rafool – That is an interesting story. When the time came, being a lawyer's father, he talked me out of it by offering me a choice between a horse and a car. Me, a newly turned almost adult, gave up on the horse for the sake of horsepower. The latter would open many more doors than the former, was my logic backing the decision back then.

AS – And when did the polo bug bit you?

Raymond Rafool - It happened when we went for a family vacation to Dominican Republic. As luck would have it, **polo lessons** were on offer as one of the **Things to Do**. So, there I was, forty-eight years old dressed up in my only pair of jeans and tennis shoes, all set to give polo a try. I can still recollect, the next day on my flight back home, despite all the soreness in my body, all I could think about was, "Where would I find polo in Miami?"

AS – No point for guessing that you did, didn't you?

Raymond Rafool – Oh yes. Initially I could not but then things changed when I approached [USPA](#), the official governing body of Polo in US. Soon enough I was with Ruben Gracida's son, taking a tour of the polo club and discussing my training schedule. For those who are not too familiar with the sport, Gracida family is one of the most respected families of the polo circuit, having produced many top of the league players.

There was no looking back from then on. As I got more embroiled into the game, I felt the need to buy a horse. With no car tempting me this time, I soon did.

AS – How did your wife react to you buying a horse out of nowhere?

Raymond Rafool – That is a funny story. After having bought the horse, I thought that I will break the news to my wife Vicki when the time is right. So, one fine day, when I thought that the environment is convenient mentioned it casually, and she was like, "Whattt?????" However, the "what" soon turned into, "Well, let's go and have a look see then." By the time we returned from the club, I was the owner of not one but second one being a thoroughbred, which Vicki could not resist.

AS – Wow. Has she started playing as well?



With Ray, Raegan and Rebecca at Bethpage Park, New York

Raymond Rafool – Vicki does not play herself, but other than that she is as much into the game as I am. She knows all the horses by name, which one I play in which chakkar, all the rules and jargon. Vicki actually looks forward to the polo afternoons more than me. That way polo is a fantastic way to get a family together. It has enough excitement and fun for an entire family. For example, I have two daughters and one son. And all five of us are quite strong yet different individuals. My daughter Rebecca and son Ray have just graduated and are taking the Florida Bar examination in a few weeks to become lawyers. Raegan, my other daughter, is a student at New York University and she is a singer and song writer. But different personalities, polo as a sport has plenty to make all of us look forward to the match days.

AS – It is nice to know that polo is not compromising your family time. But how does it affect you on your professional front? How do you find enough bandwidth to incorporate sport with so many high-profile cases fighting for your attention?

Raymond Rafool – I am glad that you asked this question. Polo, in fact, has improved the quality of my output, rather than affecting it adversely. The all-consuming nature of the sport translates into better output.

I also try and make the best use of technology. The two- and half-hour drive from my office to the polo club gives me perfect opportunity to continue working through my apple earbuds from the comfort of the rear seat of my car. They say that every battle is fought twice, once in mind and then on ground. This drive allows me the tranquility I need for the battles I am fighting in my mind.

Thus, polo might sound frivolous from far, but it plays quite a significant role in maintaining the **Family – Work – Play** balance which, I believe, is the ultimate aim of life.

AS – It was great talking to you Raymond. We wish you a lot of polo with your lovely family and many more glorious victories on field and in court both.