

Staff Spotlight

Justin Powers Executive Director of Polo Development LLC

I live in East Palestine, Ohio, a typical rust-belt town with roughly the same population as USPA membership. Growing up, I played baseball, basketball, football, golf, soccer and obviously, polo, but I was the only kid within a two-hour drive that played, so I had to grow up quickly on the polo field!

I attended Robert Morris University on scholarship to study sport management. During college, I worked for the YMCA and still worked for my dad at the racetrack. I also had an internship with the Pittsburgh Pirates and became very involved in the Special Olympics of Western Pennsylvania as their bowling tournament director.

I obtained a master's degree in Public Administration from the University of Pittsburgh. During grad school, I started working for a boutique consulting and lobbying firm in Pittsburgh. I worked on their congressional outreach, appropriations and economic development teams. This led me to work for a veterans organization in D.C. where I did congressional outreach and ran their programming for "Operation Caring Classroom."

From Capitol Hill, I had a brief pit stop as a Landman for Chesapeake Energy before being recruited to join the USPA in 2011.

I work in the Polo Development department where we focus on the development of the sport within the following areas: strengthening our member clubs through PDI grant support; guiding member clubs on club consulting and regional cooperation; promoting



and facilitating youth polo and tournaments for young players on the grass and in the arena from middle school through college via the NYTS and I/I programs; and supporting the development of young American polo players through the Team USPA and YPO grant programs.

I still ride and play. My father was a professional player, farrier and horse racing and green horse trainer in the Midstates Circuit. I was introduced to polo through my paternal grandfather. He was introduced to the sport in high school at the now infamous Darlington Polo Club (Darlington, Pennsylvania), home to the oldest lit polo field in the world—a "skin" field built in 1937.

My dad retired from playing competitively, but I still carry on the family tradition with my sister, Juliette. Green horse polo has been a staple of the Powers Polo Farm over the past 40 years. My dad and grandfather both trained horses at Mountaineer Racetrack in Newell, West Virginia, so we have had an endless pipeline to green horse prospects for three generations.

Green horse and farm polo is my favorite polo to play. Riding young horses and seeing them progress is very rewarding and simple, and in a lot of ways very humbling.

Outside of work, my interests include playing golf, Steelers football, Pirates baseball, horse racing, and spending time with my wife Krystin and our 1-year-old son Aidan, a travel champ! My wife and I went to kindergarten together and were very close friends before dating.

I lost my older sister in 2016 to colon cancer. She was one of my best friends and someone I always looked up to. Her passing really changed my life on two fronts:

First, I worry a lot less about the little things and enjoy making memories with friends, family and even strangers a lot more. Second, we shared a passion for education and the opportunities presented to young people when they harness the power of being a lifelong learner. I want to somehow make a difference in our education system. I would also like to leave a mark on my communities, including the polo community.