

# SARATOGA POLO CLUB

## Jim Rossi - Owner

**Success Magazine: Jim, what does success mean to you?**

Jim Rossi: Success is having a vision and delivering on it.

**SM: Why did you and your partner decide to purchase Saratoga Polo Club?**

JR: There were many deciding factors, but first and foremost was the beauty of the setting. Secondly, we saw an opportunity to develop the hospitality aspect of our business in the region. Saratoga is a destination place. People visit here year after year, and the Polo Club is a wonderful venue for corporate hospitality. Mike had his corporation in Syracuse, but was entertaining his corporate clients in Saratoga. Meanwhile, my marketing firm worked with many major attractions such as the Olympics and Disney World, so I had the opportunity to work with a lot of hospitality firms. When we came back into the area we saw that there was a lot of visitation but recognized the gaps in the hospitality aspect of the region.

**SM: What have you done to change the image of polo from just a rich man's sport to one that all can enjoy? How are you going to incorporate the hospitality aspect into the Polo Club?**

JR: The great thing about polo, is that there is something for everyone. Historically, there has been that stigma that it was primarily for the elite and that you would need to belong to the club to come to the match. Since taking over the club, we have been assertive about marketing ourselves as an attraction for everyone. We have strived to become much more family oriented, as well as providing the hospitality for corporate events. A polo match is a great value for a family—a carload costs only \$25 and you can bring your own refreshments and food (no alcohol). It is less expensive than going to a drive-in movie. The match starts at 5:30 and is usually over by 7:30 which works out well for young families who need to get their kids to bed. We also provide food, and we offer a tapas cocktail hour that everyone can enjoy for only an additional \$25 per person. Everything is value priced: we have delectable

treats, \$10 bottles of wine, Budweiser and other beverages at a reasonable cost. It really is an ideal way to spend a night out on a beautiful summer evening. We get a wonderful blend of people all enjoying the excitement of a match. Then we also have the corporate functions. Some people do get dressed up, depending on the event, and who is hosting the party. We have an air-conditioned clubhouse and a full bar. At the end of the match we all get together for the trophy presentation, which is a nice tradition.

**SM: Obviously you are looking to promote a profitable venture. What is working and what is not?**

JR: I really do believe that our experience is working very well. Some of our drawbacks are:

1. The sport is weather dependent. Safety is our utmost concern—for our riders and our horses. They are cutting in close quarters, and we have to make sure they are safe.
2. We compete for people who want to play polo. It is a very expensive sport, and our players have to allocate time and money. Sponsors are needed for each team to provide the equipment and horses for the players. Typically, the owner of the team also plays on the team, and they provide for the grooms, accommodations, and greens fees.

**SM: What have you done to enhance the operations and marketing of Saratoga Polo Club?**

JR: We have just had our first very successful women's tournament, called The Women's Challenge. We have more than doubled the size of that tournament this year and David Yurman has co-sponsored this year's event with Frank Adams Jewelers. This new event has put Saratoga Polo back on the map. Now, this is a destination on the women's tournament calendar. We have a great legacy and when you go to the National Polo Hall of Fame in Wellington, Florida, we are one of the four oldest polo clubs in the United States, starting in 1898. Many legendary games from the heyday of polo have been played here



on this field. It is hallowed ground. We have the Whitney Cup each year, and we honor that legacy. This club plays a major role in the history of polo, and we intend to rekindle that tradition and keep it alive for many years to come.

**SM: You sound very enthusiastic about what you are doing. In choosing this as your showcase to promote your hospitality skills, what future plans do you have to expand?**

JR: Having worked with major corporations including the Olympics, NASCAR and NASA, one of the issues commonly faced was providing value for a sponsor. One of the gaps that we saw in hospitality in this region was the lodging, and we have worked for several years on the design and approval of a destination private residence club. This is a level of hospitality, which is not currently served in Saratoga. We worked very hard to design a private residence club with polo as the focal point. This was approved in 2008, and now we will be moving forward with new financial backers. Our forty-five acre site will be the only private residence club of its kind in Saratoga. We will be the place for investors and visitors to purchase residences and experience the beauty of the area. From Thoroughbred racing and polo, to the Adirondacks, Saratoga is the focal point of the region. We have the sponsorship of a luxury brand that will soon be announced. Our project will be an amplifier of this area. We will be a destination spa with luxurious accommodations on a nightly basis year-round. That is why we called it the Saratoga Polo Retreat. The business to business opportunities as well as wedding planning site will be geared toward the future of our region. We have big plans, and are excited to see them come to fruition.



**SM: Mike, what does success mean to you?**

Mike Bucci: Success is creating a vision that is mutually beneficial for the community, for yourself, and for your company. Saratoga Polo Club marries the beauty and heritage of Saratoga Polo with our vision for the future.

# SARATOGA POLO CLUB

## Mike Bucci - Owner

**SM: What effect does the addition of GLOBALFOUNDRIES to our region have on your planning process?**

MB: GLOBALFOUNDRIES will undoubtedly bring many clients to our new destination resort. The influx of international corporations and new local businesses will bring a need for the high-end hospitality options our resort will provide.

**SM: What is your business background and how did that help you in your acquisition and management of the Saratoga Polo Club?**

MB: I am a Siena graduate, from this region. I began a company called Armored Motor Service of America, in Rochester, New York in 1977 with one truck and four employees. The company was a secure transportation company, for moving valuables. Over the years the company grew to be quite successful. We had contracts with Walmart, Kmart, Sears, Bank of America, SBC, and Citizens Bank. I sold the business in 2003, but worked for them under contract until 2008. I gained valuable experience in sales, marketing, and promotion, which has helped me develop this concept of a destination resort here in Saratoga. Jim and I are developing a strong team approach to working, promoting, and marketing our vision to the region.

**SM: What is your greatest challenge in developing this vision of a resort into a reality?**

MB: Learning what I do not know. Jim and I had to learn the world of developing. There have been a lot of distinct challenges that we aren't familiar with. We attempted to partner with a developer, but we had to change our direction and surround ourselves with knowledgeable people, who can guide us through the long learning

curve. We are now perfectly positioned for the future. With a stronger economy, the advent of GLOBALFOUNDRIES and the surrounding businesses coming into our region, we believe that our project will get underway very shortly. We have great investor confidence. The real estate market in the area has not fluctuated like the rest of the country has. We have not seen the downturn that many other regions have experienced. There is no roller coaster in our region. We have an excellent opportunity to work with our energized economy and provide the best experience for new home buyers and corporations coming into our area.

**SM: What is the status of your project?**

MB: Several developers and funding sources have recently submitted proposals. We expect to begin within the next year and have the project completed within two to three years.

**SM: Describe yourself in one word.**

MB: Driven.

**SM: Why did you choose to invest in the Saratoga Polo Club?**

MB: Saratoga is a destination, which is underserved in this venue. The Grand Union Hotel was the last destination resort of its kind in the region. When I was visiting the area and entertaining my clients from Rochester, we soon discovered the area fell short of being able to properly host our guests. Saratoga is in three-hour driving distance from the major cities in the area—New York, Boston, Montréal, and Central New York as well. Saratoga Polo creates an environment that is unique, and keeps with Saratoga's motto of "Health, History, Horses." It is an ideal location to build on our future.

**SARATOGA POLO CLUB**  
**SPA** SINCE 1898  
**ASSOCIATION**

Every Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday through Labor Day  
 The excitement begins at 5:30 PM

518-584-8108  
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