

FASHION & LUXURY LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

# DOLCE

VITA

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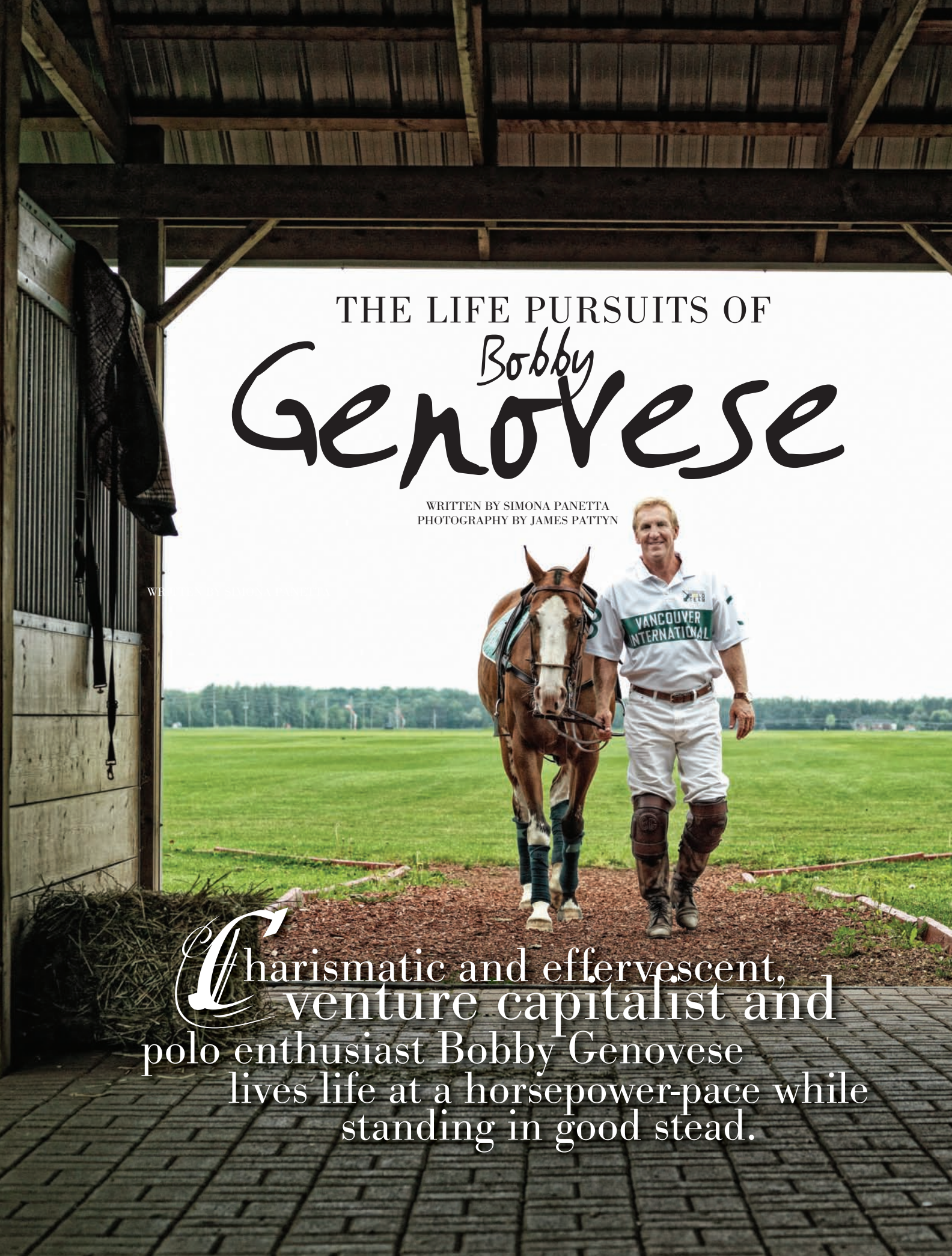
YOU  
WILL  
FIND

BOBBY

GENOVESE

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A man in polo attire, including a white polo shirt with "VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL" and "Polo" logos, white breeches, and brown knee caps, is walking a brown horse with a white blaze down a stable aisle. The aisle is paved with dark bricks and has a pile of hay on the left. The background shows a green field and trees under a bright sky.

# THE LIFE PURSUITS OF *Bobby* Genovese

WRITTEN BY SIMONA PANETTA  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES PATTYN

WE

*C*harismatic and effervescent, venture capitalist and polo enthusiast Bobby Genovese lives life at a horsepower-pace while standing in good stead.



Introducing himself facetiously as Brad Pitt, debutant Bobby Genovese is blond and blue-eyed and living the American Dream.

He travels to worldwide meetings on his private Learjet. He indulges in chocolate chip cookies, Krieger and Cartier. He floats on glamorous Aspen powder and dives off his multi-million-dollar yacht as it skims the froth of Florida's South Beach. "It's such a big world with so much to do and I haven't even started. Do up your seat belt and hang on," he says with a grand smile.

Within minutes he has me beaming – no different from what he does to his competitors and counterparts on the American reality show *Bobby G: Adventure Capitalist* – his booming laughter and welcoming personality making me feel right at home. "We're going riding after this," he says determinedly. After many attempts at persuading me to saddle up, the BG Capital Group founder brushes off my "I'm wearing high-heels" excuse with: "Oh, I have flip-flops for you."


Sitting in a drawing room fringed with French Country trimmings, Genovese is clad in his typical attire of casual jeans and a white dress shirt ("I'm not a suit-and-tie guy, this is it") – all from Ralph Lauren, his favourite. "I don't like change, everything I own is 99 per cent Lauren – the other per cent is something someone gave me that didn't know about that," laughs the multiple polo champion, founder of Vancouver International Polo and major shareholder of Upper Canada Polo Fields in southern Ontario's Cookstown. "My father and my grandfather were both champions at golf – I found it a rather slow sport," explains Genovese, who adopted their competitive, winning spirit.

Soon enough, Genovese's charismatic air fills the preserved farmhouse, the stage of his many childhood memories, set in the rural rolling hills of King City, just north of Toronto. "Where else in the world would I rather be," says Genovese, who had his mother's 1930s, three-bedroom, 4,000 sq.ft. farmhouse, which sits on 30 acres of land, restored. "I wanted to keep it almost exactly the way it was so that my children could understand what their grandmother was all about," says Genovese, who left the family portraits, delicate antiques, quant furniture and creaking floorboards untouched. He and his two brothers (Rick and Jeff), were raised by their mother on her service-sector salary in Cookstown. "My mom loved this piece of property, but unfortunately, she didn't have the means to do what I've done – I was able to buy it, and buy out our three neighbours!"

As the sun backstrokes through floor-to-ceiling windows, plush lawns and centuries-old trees frame the fit, tanned 47-year-old, a small-town boy gone big.

He left the farm when he was 16 and taught riding at the now-defunct Eglinton Equestrian Club in Toronto. With only a Grade 9 education, a twenty-something Genovese eased into entrepreneurship. "I quickly realized that when I was working at the stable that the people that had the money were the ones who had the horses, and the people working at the stable – were the ones without the money. I was on the wrong side of the horse, so I thought to myself: 'I gotta figure this out.'"

He bounded for Vancouver, at the time the venture capital of the world, and founded Investor Relations Group. Approaching the boardroom



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– Bobby Genovese

the way he would a field, Genovese rode his way up to the top. “You put your plan together, you go out and you keep the play,” he says. He sold his IRG interest and in 1996 established BG Capital Group, a merchant banking and asset consolidator firm. BG Capital impresses with a portfolio of diverse companies, from North America’s largest cremation enterprise, Neptune Society (“my best move – a homerun beyond anybody’s dreams”), to Clearly Canadian Beverage Corporation, the dying bottled water brand that finally broke even this year under Genovese’s leadership.

“You take a struggling company and all of those people in the company that are down and out and don’t know what to do and you come in and turn it around and fix it and make it work – why wouldn’t I want to do that? I want everybody to do well and the better they do the better everybody does!” says the self-declared people-lover. His greatest strength, say those close to him, is to create personal, warm relationships. “I really enjoy people. I love uncovering what makes them tick, and I love understanding where they came from,” says the accomplished equestrian, who is often spotted at polo charity matches, his game perfected under



Known for supporting a good cause, Bobby Genovese's Clearly Canadian Beverage Corporation sponsored this year's Polo for Heart event.



Bobby Genovese shares a laugh with Muskoka neighbour and actress Goldie Hawn at a fundraising event.



## Bobby Genovese Favourites

**Maxim:** "Who has more fun than us?"

**Movie:** "It's a toss-up between *Forrest Gump* and *Snow White*

**Dish:** Sushi

**Car model:** The new \$2.2 million Bugatti

**Day of the year:** April Fool's Day

**City:** New York

*I*'m always battling my inner soul on that kind of stuff; that's why I don't drive up in a Ferrari."

the tutelage and partnership of world-class polo veteran Marcos Bignoli. He is a strong supporter of Vancouver-based Face the World Foundation, and launched Chukkers for Children's Charities, a non-profit agency that supports various youth organizations.

Today, while BG Capital Group is based in Barbados and Genovese is an official Bahamian resident, he and wife, Karen, and their two children, Bobby Jr., 7, and Gigi Genovese, 5, enjoy spending time in south Florida where the children attend private school. "I'm very much a realist," says Genovese. "If my mom were alive today and found out that I bought my own private jet and it was costing \$14,000 from my place to Florida, she would roll in her grave. So I'm always battling my inner soul on that kind of stuff; that's why I don't drive up in a Ferrari."

He owns a fleet of antique speedboats and 11 lavish properties across the world, including manors in Argentina, Aspen, Colo., Whistler, B.C., and a sprawling summer retreat at Muskoka's elite Lake Rosseau, with Goldie Hawn and Kurt Russell as neighbours. After years of renovation, the estate astounds with a dramatic waterfall and massive waterslide – a playground where his children can create cherished memories. "I really hope they enjoy life – I love living my life through them and with them. I'm doing it – this is it. This is pretty hard to beat."

Trying his best not to spoil them with the things he only dreamed of as a child, Genovese rewards them with marbles when they complete their

Venture capitalist Bobby Genovese takes a quick call before jet-setting from his home in the Bahamas to the BG Capital Group headquarters in Florida.



chores. "It's a money system, so they can learn the value of earning. When you come from Cookstown and you're baling hay for most of your teenage life for five bucks an hour, you never forget the value of a dollar," says Genovese, as BG Capital's estimated net worth rises well above \$200 million. "It's not that I don't relish or appreciate the fact that I can buy the jet, the yacht, the buildings. I just never look at it in a materialistic way – it's just another avenue to have fun."

Slipping his cracked leather riding boots over his jodhpurs, Genovese squeezes the life out of me with a goodbye embrace before exclaiming: "Who has more fun than us?"

[www.bobbygenovese.com](http://www.bobbygenovese.com), [www.bgcapitalgroup.com](http://www.bgcapitalgroup.com)