

Ferrari's Limited Edition Segway PT i2 carries a warning: 'life on an i2 is highly addictive.' Indeed, since the arrival of the Segway PT (personal transporter) in 2001, technology whizz-kids, army generals, security guards and pro-golfers alike have been sailing along sidewalks smiling the smiles of people who are, without doubt, onto a good thing. And today, the two-wheeler's popularity is fuelling a new sport: Segway polo.

Segway polo players scoot about a field on their eco-friendly battery-powered platforms whacking a ball into a goal, just like in horse polo. The innovative game was dreamt up by Silicon Valley-based Segway-owners, Jonathan Van Clute and Alex Ko, who enjoyed horsing around on their Segways so much, they decided to put together a polo team and drew up a rule book. That was in 2004, and since then the game has spread through

Silicon Valley and out across the world like a computer virus.

In Indianapolis this August, SegwayFest, a gathering of like-minded 'gliders' - or as the chairman of the event likes to call it: 'a three-day party on two self-balancing wheels' - will play host to the Woz Challenge Cup, Segway polo's official tournament. The Cup, now in its third year, is named after technology-guru Steve 'Woz' Wozniak, co-founder of Apple and Segway polo's biggest advocate. His team, the Silicon Valley Altershocks, won the cup last year and will be defending their title against arch-rivals the New Zealand Pole Blacks, as well as newcomers, the Funky-Move Turtles from Cologne, the Vandoeuvres from Geneva, the Dubai Falcons, and the Oakland Junkyard Dogs.

Wozniak practises with his team every other week in Sunnyvale, California, and is the proud owner of ten Segways. He sticks to the earlier models, the i180s, because they are more precise and can do quicker turns. Segways move in the direction your body tells them to, so if you lean left, they go left; and if you lean forward, you go forwards. 'Some people find them tricky at first, but once you get the hang of them, it's like you and your Segway are dancing partners, and it feels great,' enthuses Wozniak.

Polo is a natural fit for the Segway because it only requires one hand to play. The rules are quite similar to those of conventional polo, although players use shorter mallets and mini soccer balls and matches consist of just four

chukkas. However, unlike the snorting, galloping high pace of horse polo, Segway polo has an electronic-whirring 12.5mph speed limit. 'It's a great leveller,' says Woz. 'It's not like someone has a better horse than everyone else, so they can chase after the ball faster. Anyone can play and do well.'

Segway polo may not have the adrenalin or the glamour of horse polo, but you should see what happens when someone hits a bump on a Segway. The clever self-balancing machine will attempt to right itself, sending its owner into a spin before crashing them to the turf. Now that's got to be worth a day out.

