PULLING FOR THE HOME TEAM

By Tim McKay
SPORTS EDITOR

Oxford-Zorra squad practising in old warehouses and horse barns

Photo by Elliot Ferguson

Carla Toohey, 18, shows the effort of practise as the Oxford-Zorra tug of war team prepares for its upcoming trip to Taiwan. For full story, see page 8 *2001*

WOODSTOCK – Strange sounds have been emanating from the old Firestone building at Ingersoll and Oxford Streets of late.

If you live in the area, don't worry. The bizarre roars are the war cries of the Oxford-Zorra girls tug of war team which is using the building to prepare for the second annual Mackay Memorial Tug of War Championship in Taiwan, March 12-14.

The 13-member team is reciprocating a July 1, 2000 visit by two Tamsui, Taiwan high school teams to the Embro-Zorra Highland Games. The two communities were officially twinned last year, but a rivalry was also formed.

In the tug of war competition, the visiting Taiwanese team was forced to settle for second behind an Oxford County squad. Now, it wants a chance to avenge the loss on its own soil.

The Oxford-Zorra team will arrive in Taiwan March 7 and will go up against the six top teams of a huge tug of war competition between 70-80 Taiwanese teams. This seems a daunting task, but coaches Cheryl Patience and Anita Fraser are whipping their girls into shape through gruelling workouts.

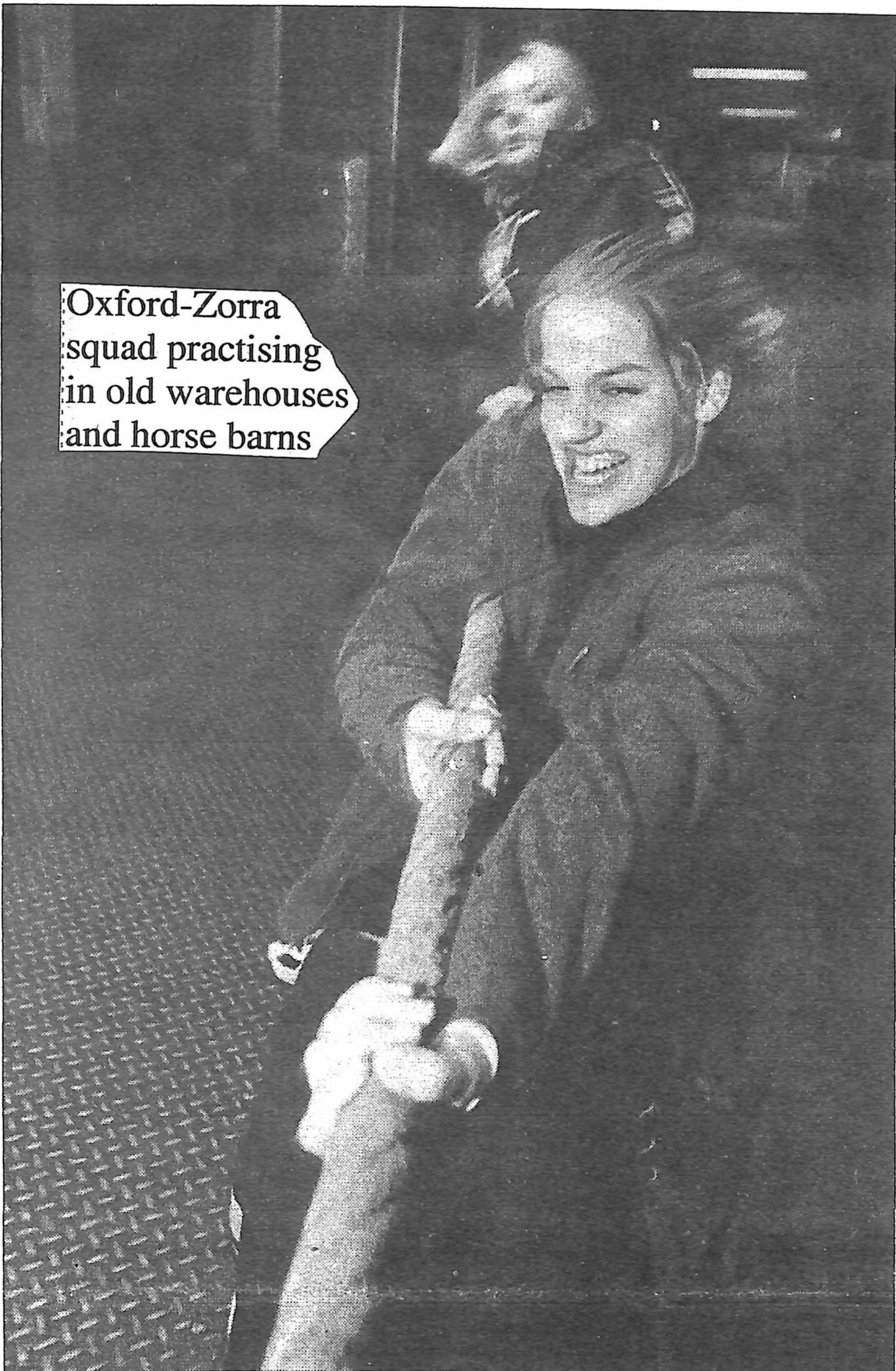The team has been practising for the March competition in the unheated old warehouse since being formed about seven weeks ago. And, because the competition will feature both indoors and outdoors pulling, the girls, aged 16-19, have had to find something that is similar to a dirt and grass base to practise on.

"We started last week (practising) in a horse barn," said Patience. "We were looking for dirt because that's what we're used to pulling on, so the horse barn was the closest thing."

The Oxford-Zorra girls team is made up of members from the Woodstock Collegiate Institute and Huron Park high school teams that competed in last summer's Highland Games. It has members from the Zorra area, Woodstock, Beachville, Drumbo and Hickson areas.

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