

Features Chase the Wonder Dog

By LISA BOONSTOPPEL-POT
The Herald

Searching a school for criminals can take a police officer hours but for a trained police dog, it might take only minutes.

To ensure Halton's police dog maintains his speed at searching, he'll be training at Halton schools nightly.

The Halton Regional Police Department, and the two school boards, the Halton Roman Catholic School Board and the Halton Board of Education, have worked out an agreement benefiting both the schools, and Halton's police dog, 'Chase.'

Chase, a four-year-old purebred German Shepherd, and his trainer, Constable Paul Delaney, will make regular use of all the schools in Halton beginning the last week of April to train themselves for actual search missions during their night shift patrols.

"When the dog's not being used, he has to constantly practice," said Const. Delaney. "Schools are great to practice in because there are an infinite number of places where people can hide."

Const. Delaney said Chase has been trained on a reward system and his reward is finding someone.

As well, the team's presence at the schools will benefit the boards who have real problems with break and enters at some schools, said Const. Delaney.

He estimates if a suspect was hiding in Georgetown and District High School, Chase could find him/her in 15 minutes where a team of five police officers would need almost an hour to comb the building and find the person.

When Chase finds a suspect, he alerts Const. Delaney by barking and will hold the person there until he arrives. He'll only attack if the suspect is threatening him, Const. Delaney or another police officer.

Chase is trained to bite the right arm since most suspects will use their right hand to carry a weapon.

When not at the scene of a crime, Chase is an exuberant, friendly animal just waiting to lick your face. This makes him a huge attraction for children when Const. Delaney does school visits.

"He loves kids," said Const. Delaney, "he's very gentle with them."

But the 72-pound animal turns into a fearsome enforcer when he's commanded to find possible suspects. "Many suspects give themselves up before the dog reaches them because they're scared," said Const. Delaney.

Chase's tracking skills have already helped officers catch criminals since he started work-



'Chase' and Constable Paul Delaney are together 24 hours as Halton Regional Police's only man-dog team but Constable Delaney maintains a working relationship with the purebred German Shepherd. (Herald photo by Lisa Boonstoppel-Pot)

ing in July of last year. In Halton Hills alone, Chase located the persons responsible for wilfully setting fire to the 'Old Mill' at Maple and River Street. He tracked the culprits scent to nearby bushes where the suspects thought they could safely watch the blaze.

Chase also saved a woman's life in Halton Hills last summer after he found her in the bush where she had collapsed after consuming pills.

As the only officer-dog team in the region, Chase and Const. Delaney respond to all crimes in progress in the region.

Both dog and man were trained for the position and expect to work together for seven to eight years, the dog's estimated term of service with the force.

Being the dog handler is a big commitment for Const. Delaney. Not only will he be doing the same work for that time period, but being a dog handler is a 24-hour commitment. Chase resides in a kennel at Constable Delaney's Halton home and will become a family pet after Chase's service with the force is terminated.

But when Chase is off duty, the relationship between him and Const. Delaney doesn't become one of pet and master, but is maintained as a working relationship so Chase's skills at police work will not diminish.

The training in schools will help Chase keep in top form so he can continue to fight crime, canine style, in Halton Hills.



Police service dog 'Chase' and his handler, Constable Paul Delaney, will be training nightly at alternate Halton Public and Catholic Schools starting next week. (Herald photo by Lisa Boonstoppel-Pot)

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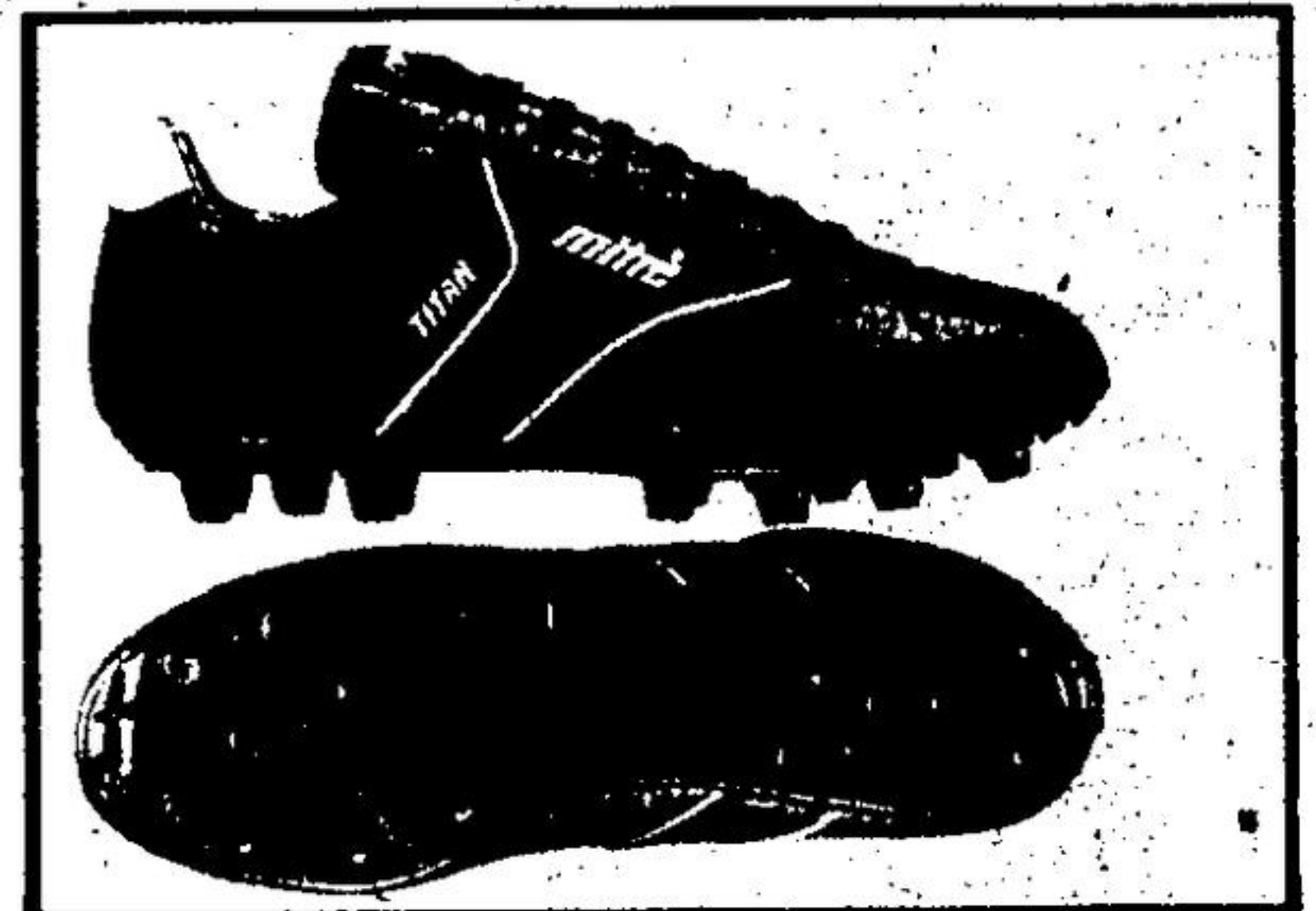
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