

Jeff Lumby's view from the country

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Cheers

Every week Canadian sports fans encounter some form of disappointment regarding our athletes. If it isn't, so and so missed the cut of a golf tourney, it's this team or another failed to qualify for a world-class event or our lone hope kicked over a hurdle at the Olympics. But there are two things we Canadians are good at all the time. Curling and drinking. And it's no coincidence both often happen at the same time.

It's also no surprise that Stats Can recently announced that for the first time, Canada has topped the \$8 billion mark in yearly beer sales. That's about \$315.00, or 9-24's, worth of beer for each man, woman and teen over 15 years old every year. 1.) That's a lot of belching. And 2.) I didn't know 15 year olds were supposed to be drinking. Beer sales account for 8 out of every 10 litres of booze sold. It seems more and more Canadians are adopting comedian Stephen Wright's astute assessment of the beer case. "24 hours in a day, 24 beers in a case. Coincidence? I think not."

The study, which was taken for the fiscal year ending March 04, saw overall liquor sales in Canada rise 4.9% to just over \$16 billion. In a province-to-province breakdown, it appears that the Territories mop up in alcohol sales per capita (adult consumption) at over \$1000.00. Newfoundland/Labrador, Quebec and B.C. round out the top 5. Ontario residents are below average drinkers by Canadian standards at only \$600.00 per person, which means.....hey, we've got a lot of catching up to do.

There are two explanations as to why Ontarians are considered moderate drinkers. Either we all imbibe in a more controlled manner than everyone else or we're a province of teetotalers. I don't suppose there's anything wrong with abstaining from alcohol. Although, some people are nervous around non-drinkers. A friend of mine actually mistrusts them. Frank Sinatra put it best. "I feel sorry for people who don't drink. When they wake up in the morning, that's as good as they're going to feel all day." And if you were to ask columnist Dave Barry about beer...."Without question, the greatest invention in the history of mankind is beer. Oh, I grant you that the wheel was also a fine invention, but the wheel does not go nearly as well with pizza."

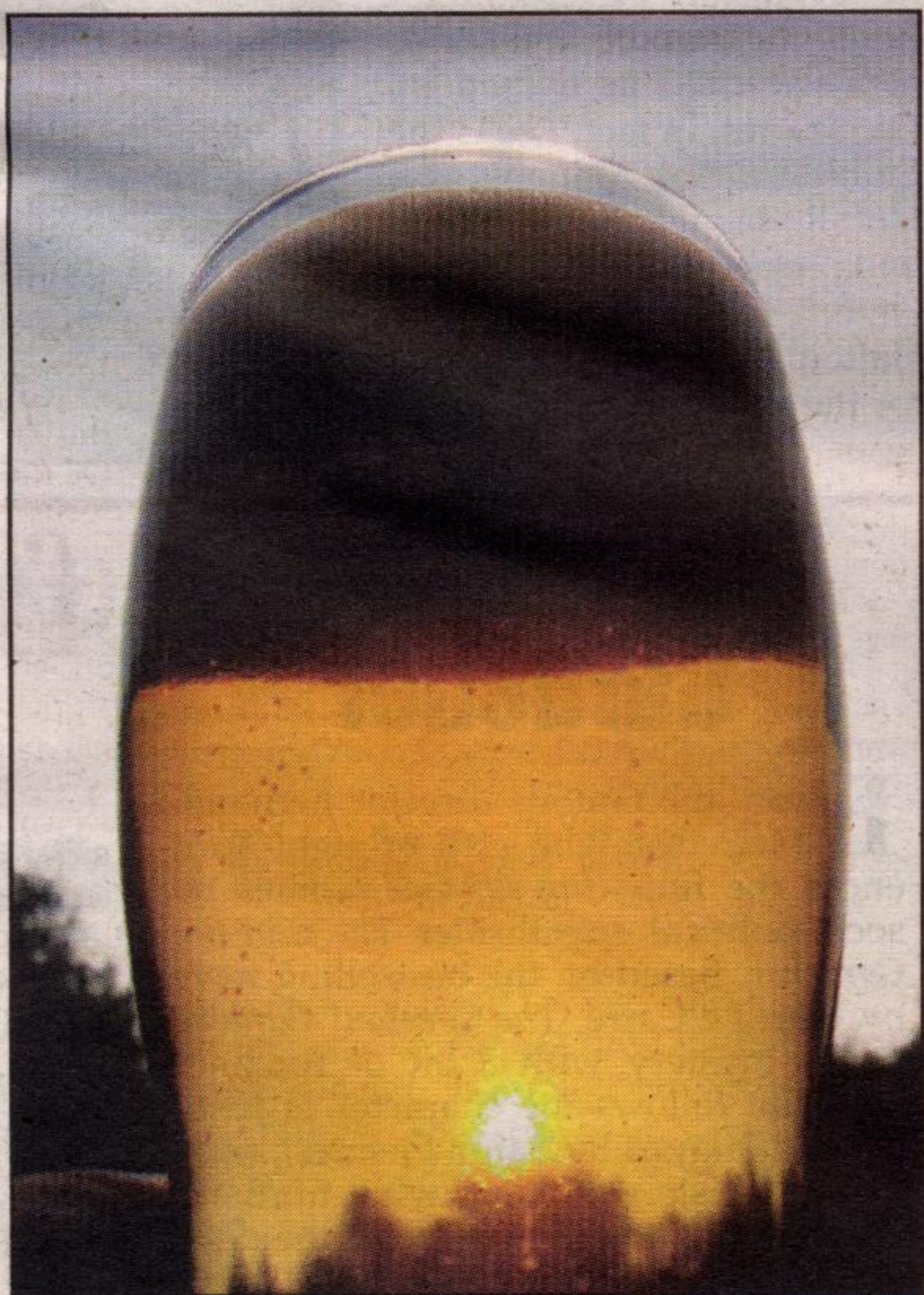
The only down note to the survey was the loss of market share our domestic brands seem to be suffering. While local beers rose in overall beer sales by 2.7%, imports grew 13.5%. The top three foreign beers to top Canadian sales charts

were Budweiser from the states, followed by Heineken (the Netherlands) and Corona from Mexico. It's not that our beer is inferior, quite the opposite. It's that there's just so much beer in the world to try and only so many years to try it. If someone could figure out a way of eliminating the need to go to the men's room so often, not only would we solve the problem, but we'd have another nominee for the Order of Canada.

I'm not saying that beer is the answer to all our problems. On the plus side, it helped me finish this article. There are also documented health benefits to enjoying beer in moderation. And most importantly, beer can make people look better. But let's not forget that it was beer that was ultimately responsible for the invention of lederhosen. Even most Bavarians would probably admit that tall socks, leather shorts with suspenders and a feathered cap loaded with metal logos is a tough look to pull off at the best of times. I guess that's where the beer comes in.

Personally, I'm glad Canada is known for beers called Moosehead, Kokeny and Creemore. And for anyone named John, especially if their last name is Molson, Labatt or Sleeman. And when I go to the States and no one can name our Prime Minister but they all know who Bob and Doug MacKenzie are, that's ok. Cause I AM.....ya ya.

I think some dude named William Sands put it best. "Here's to a long life and a merry one. A fair love and a true one. A quick death and an easy one. A cold beer and another one."



The glass is more than half full... but not for long

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Jack the Lab Milton dog earns retrieving certificate

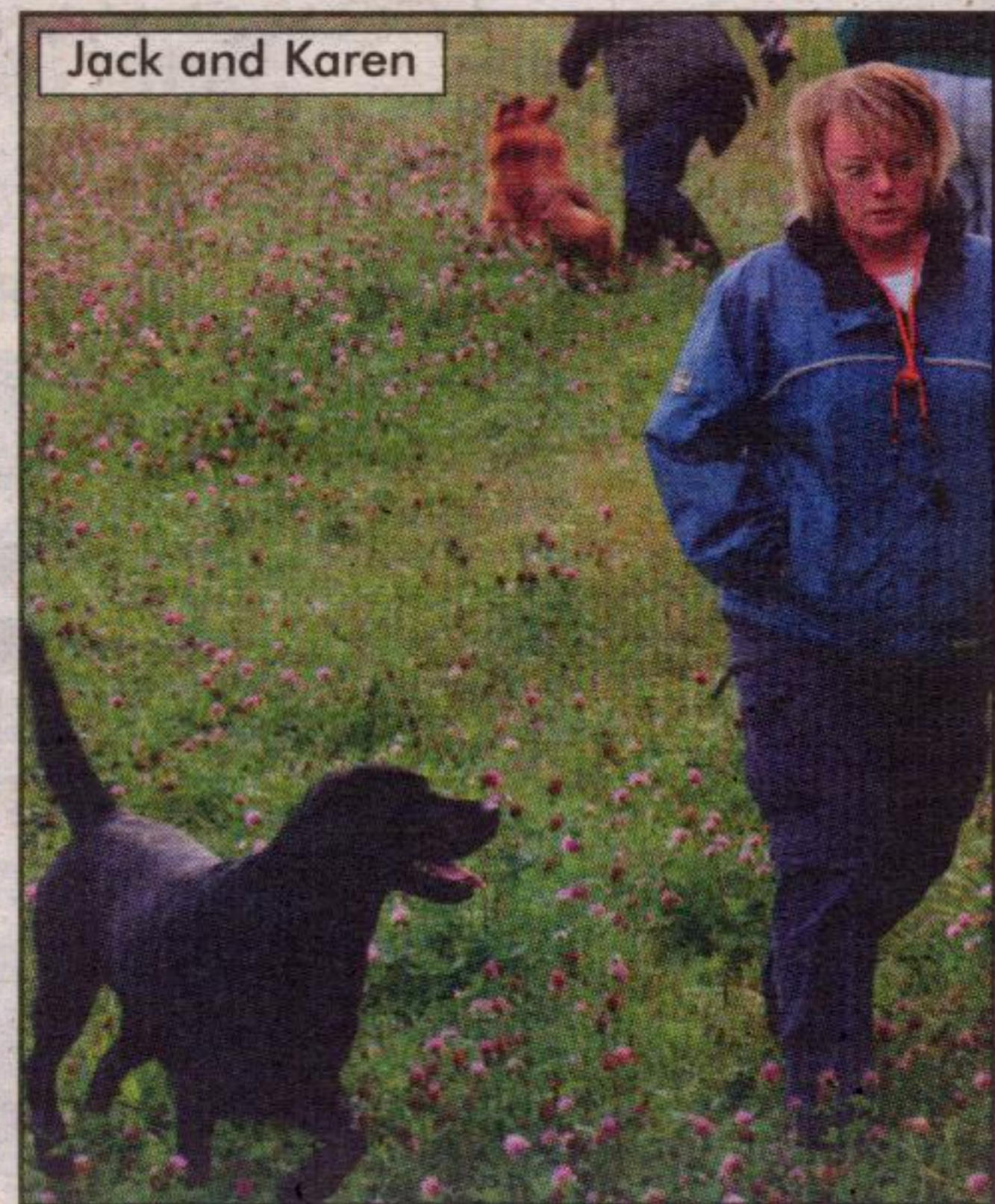
When Milton resident Jack the Labrador Retriever sees his owner, Karen Kawdek, packing his dishes and food, he knows they're off for a weekend of doing what he loves best - competing in retrieving events. From May to October, retriever tests are held at many venues throughout Ontario but the recent long weekend saw Jack and Karen driving 1400km to Thunder Bay. Jack took the two day journey in his stride, snoozing most of the way.

Karen takes Jack training twice a week year round. Their dedication paid off when Jack, (aka Otterhill Jumpin Jack Flash), who already had his Junior Hunter title and Working Certificate, earned his Working Certificate Intermediate in Thunder Bay at an event hosted by the Labrador Retriever Club of North-Western Ontario.

Actually, neither Karen nor Jack thinks of training or competing as work. Karen bought Jack to be her pet. It was only when Jack's breeder, Andrea Steele of Guelph suggested it as a way to have fun with her pet that Karen got involved. "And it is fun", says Karen. "It keeps both of us active in the outdoors and we've both learned a lot. We've made many new friends and we all support one another. The dogs aren't competing against each other so it's a friendly and positive environment".

While it's always good to return home from an event with a rosette, Karen says that 50% of the dog's performance is dependent on the competence of his handler. "I assume my dog has infinite potential and it is up to me to help him realise that potential. If Jack or I make a mistake, the judges are helpful and will give advice on how to correct the fault".

Retriever Hunt Tests are open to all retrieving breeds including Irish Water



Spaniels and Standard Poodles. The purpose of these events is to test the dog's ability to work with the handler and retrieve pheasants, ducks, pigeons or other game birds in conditions that simulate actual hunting situations. Three passes are required to obtain the Junior Hunter (JH) title. The requirements for the Senior Hunter (SH) and Master Hunter (MH) titles are respectively more difficult.

Also open to these breeds is the Working Certificate test, again with three levels: Working Certificate (WC), Working Certificate Intermediate (WCI) and Working Certificate Excellent (WCX). These tests are designed to measure a dog's natural abilities, memory and intelligence. Birds must be retrieved both from land and water and delivered to the handler. In all retriever events the dogs must not chew or play with the birds. One pass at a test means the dog is awarded that title.

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