

## Slots going in at track, Chudleigh is taking a wait-and-see approach

By IRENE GENTLE

Special to the Champion

The race for your gaming buck is off and running courtesy of a Queen's Park decision to allow slot machines in area horse racing tracks.

At least 6,600 slot machines have been approved to be distributed throughout the province's 18 horse race tracks, including Mohawk Raceway in Campbellville. The approval comes on the heels of a provincial decision to stop expansion of commercial and charity casinos in Ontario until the year 2000.

That decision effectively kiboshed plans to open a 22,000 square foot casino at Mohawk Raceway in December.

Supporters of race track slot machines hope they will prove to be the key to stopping declining race attendance in its tracks.

Since the early 1990's, horse race track attendance is down by 50 per cent. The racing season has also been shortened from 140 days to 100 days.

### In decline

"In terms of revenue and attendance, Mohawk Raceway has been on a serious decline since the early 1990's," said Nick Eaves, director of gaming operations for the Ontario Jockey Club. "Since then there have been four commercial casinos opened. There's a proliferation of off-track betting. We recognize we have to compete."

The installation of slot machines in horse racing tracks is seen to benefit the industry in two ways. First, it's hoped that slot machines will give live horse racing a shot in the arm by introducing new people to the sport.

"It's difficult to get people to a live horse race but once we get them there we can expose them to it," said Mr. Eaves.

Additionally, 10 per cent of the revenues from the slots are slated to go directly to the horse purse. That means bigger race payoffs, which in turn encourages

better quality races.

"When you have more competitive races it's a real benefit for live horse racing, and that has always been our objective," said Mr. Eaves.

While the slots are not expected to create jobs at Mohawk Raceway, they are likely to at least secure the jobs already there, said Mr. Eaves. At present, the Guelph Line race track employs 500 people directly.

A rejuvenated raceway could benefit others not directly employed by Mohawk, said Mr. Eaves.

"In Milton and Campbellville, countless horse farms rely heavily on live horse racing at Mohawk," he noted.

### Just at track alright

Halton North MPP Ted Chudleigh says he is more concerned with the proliferation of illegal slot machines in the province than in approved slots at Mohawk Raceway.

"As long as they're restricted to race tracks I think the impact on Milton will be minimal," said Mr. Chudleigh. "It's an added form of entertainment there, but I wouldn't want to see it extended."

Mr. Chudleigh says he is taking a wait-and-see approach to the idea that slot machines will help create a new breed of race fans for the industry.

"I don't think you're appealing to the same type of people. People go to the track not just to gamble but for the excitement of the sport," said Mr. Chudleigh. "There's not a lot of sport involved in a one-arm bandit."

While the details have yet to be hammered out, it's likely the slot machines will be available to the public even when the track itself closes for the season.

The number of slots to be given to Mohawk and their estimated revenue for the raceway has yet to be determined.

Overall, it's estimated the race track slots will generate an annual take of \$235 million for the province. The horse racing industry will receive an estimated \$72 million split between the cost of new development and profit.

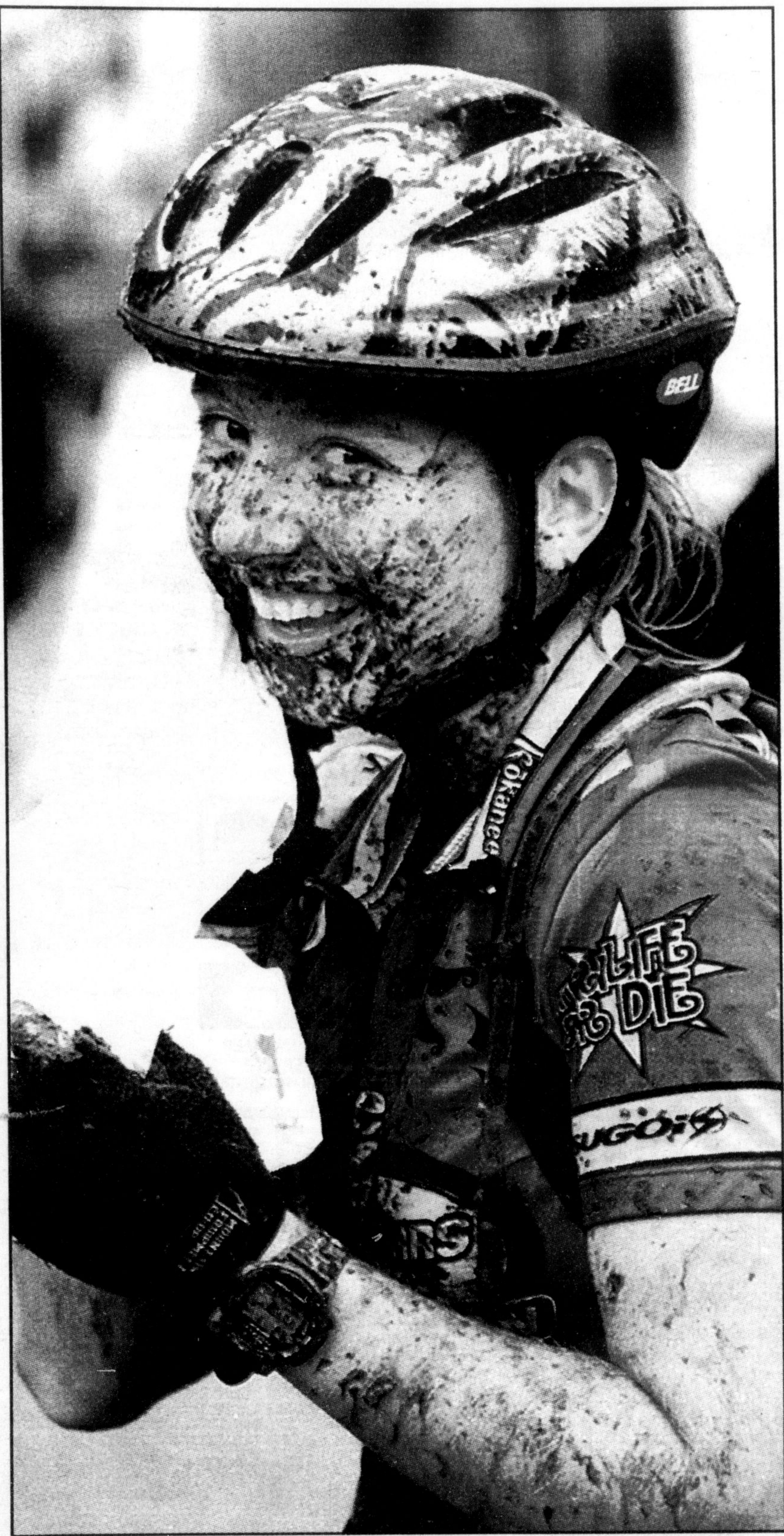


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

## It's a dirty job

Like many competitors at Kelso Saturday, Lora Woolner got a face full of mud during the Kokanee 12 Phat Hours of Adrenalin race. If this smile is any indication, the Halton Region Conservation Authority mountain bike coordinator wasn't all that bothered by muddy conditions. See page 18 for story and more photos.

### INSIDE

Emu burgers page 3

Editorial page 6

Sports pages 18-21

Classified pages 22-23

**BILL'S  
AUTO BODY SHOP**  
Working Harder  
to stay #1  
Computer Paint Matching  
Complete auto body and  
refinishing services  
155 Nipissing Rd., Milton  
(905) 878-2721



Riles Boers

Shop Milton First for...

**MILTON  
MALL**

55 ONTARIO ST. (905) 878-3900  
Mon. - Fri. 9:30-9:00., Sat. 9:30-6:00, Sun. 12-5

Summer Savings  
Selection and Service

