



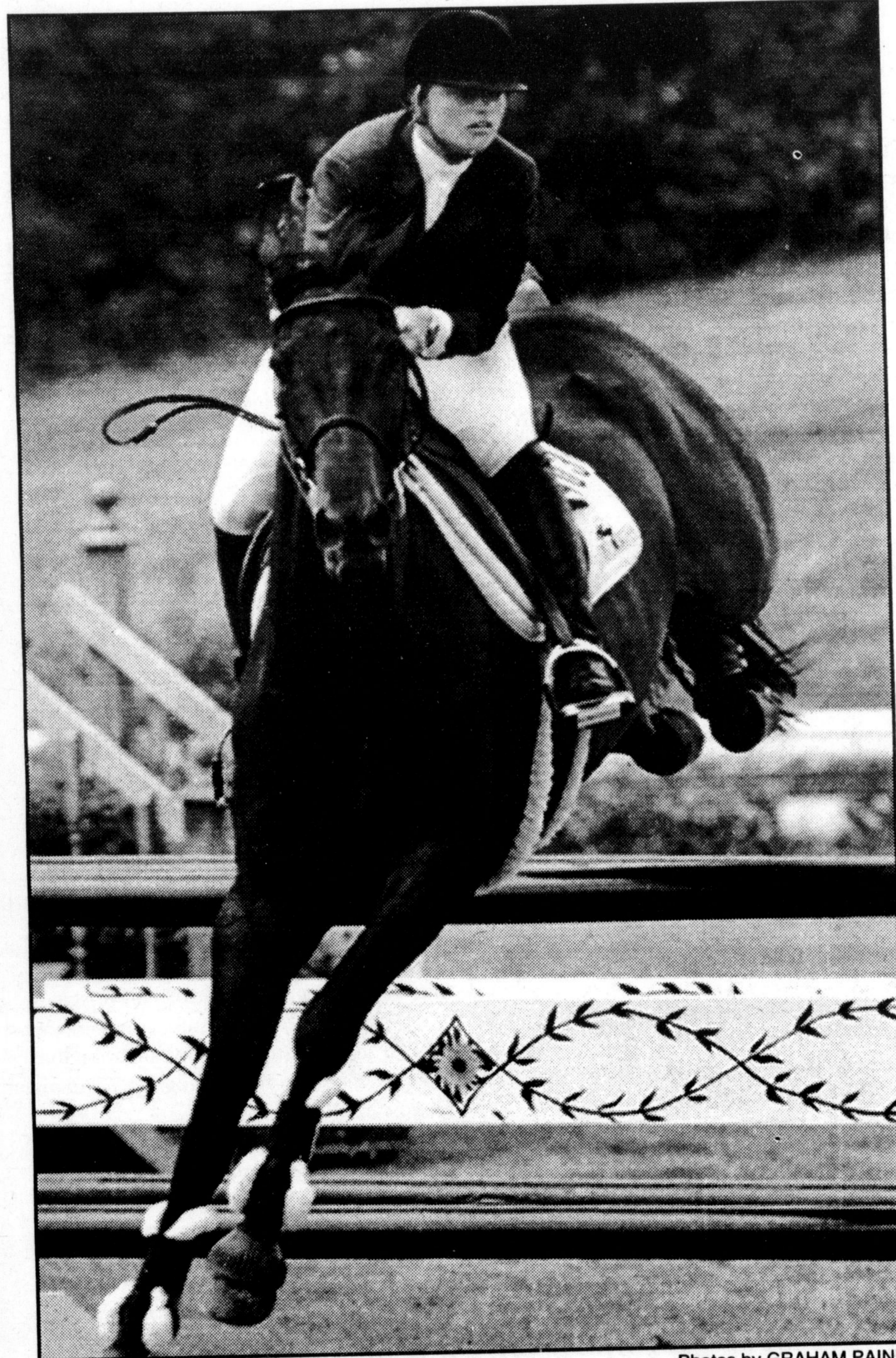
SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

FRIDAY, JULY 31, 1998

Samuel wins equestrian classic, Ballard second

Hometown riders steal the show



Photos by GRAHAM PAINE

Hornby's Erynn Ballard and Raphaella clear one of the jumps in last weekend's Halton Valley Mid-Summer Classic at Hendervale. The pair took second in the grand prix event.

By STEVE LeBLANC

The Champion

It doesn't get any closer than this. Three-tenths of a second is all that separated Hornby's Erynn Ballard from victory at Hendervale Equestrian Complex Sunday.

The rising star was eclipsed by one of her longtime rivals — Mark Samuel of Milton's Sam-Son Farms — in the grand prix event of the second annual Halton Valley Mid-Summer Classic.

A slight hesitation on the final fence by Ballard and mount Raphaella proved to be the deciding factor, and what led to Samuel's first-ever grand prix triumph.

"It was a tremendous feeling," said the 35-year-old, who banked \$2,500 for his 39.1 second championship effort. "Erynn came up with a tough time to beat, but (his horse) Indiana Jones jumped like a veteran.

"Erynn's father Dave Ballard coached me many years ago and she and I are no strangers on the circuit. I'm thrilled to see how successful she's become."

He and Ballard beat out a number of professional level competitors, including highly accomplished Mac Cone and Hugh Graham, with their one-two finish.

They were among just a handful of riders who cleanly negotiated the 14-jump ring in both the preliminary round and jump off.

The seventeen-year-old Ballard, who two months ago won her first grand prix in Saratoga, New York, was extremely pleased with her showing.

Said the Milton District High School graduate, "You always go in with the idea that you can win, but I was very happy with my second-place finish.

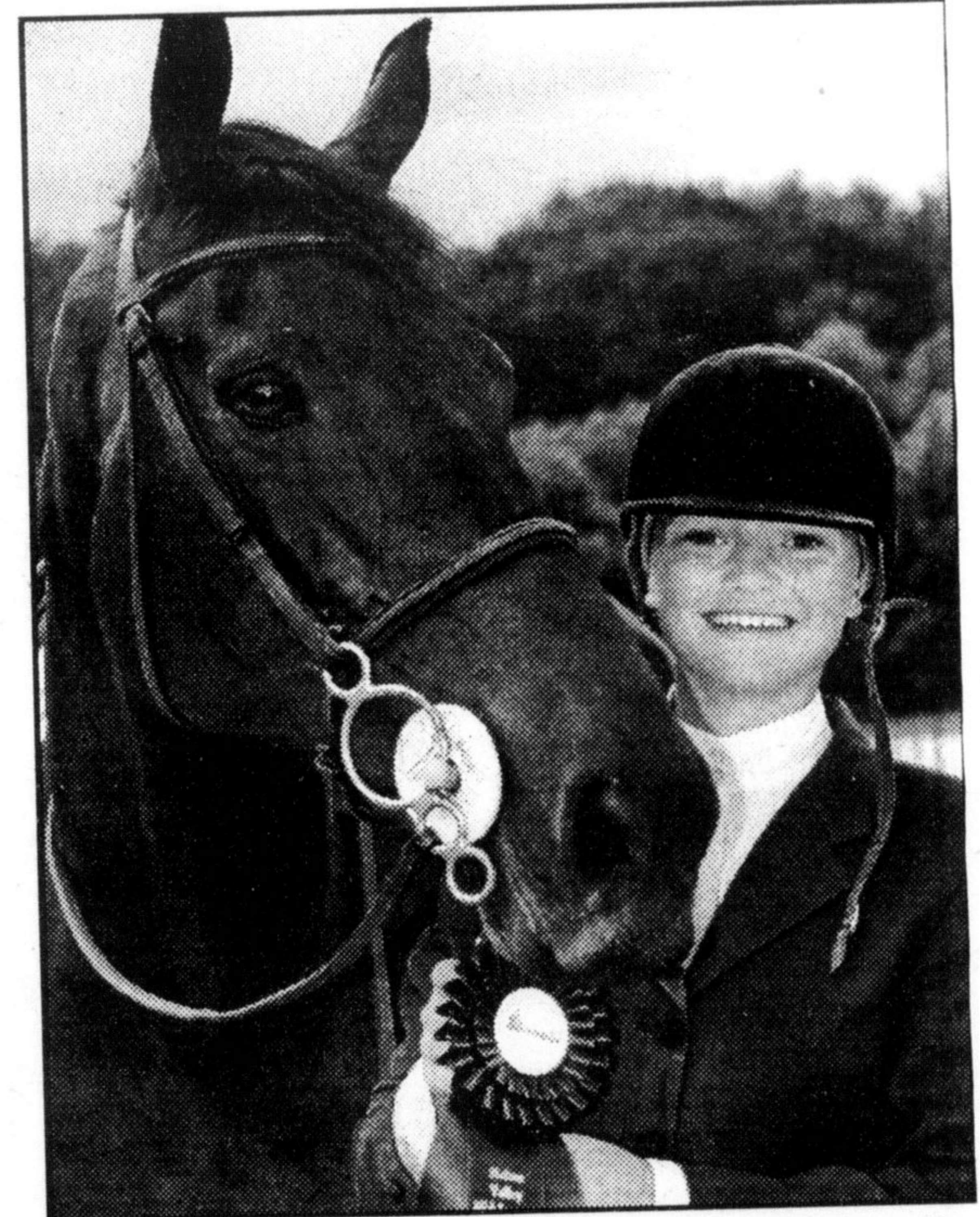
"Raphaella did a great job and didn't get nervous at the water jumps like some horses do."

One thoroughbred that did just that was Unic, Samuel's first entry in the grand prix event. This led to four different faults in the first round and an eventual sixth-place standing.

"After that Erynn ran a crisp, clean performance with Raphaella and I knew it was going to take something special to beat her," said Samuel, one of the more accomplished amateur riders in southern Ontario.

"I just nudged her out of first by a hair."

While Samuel won the big-money event, Ballard's consistency made her the most decorated rider at



Erynn Ballard displays just a few of the ribbons she won during a stellar weekend at Hendervale Equestrian Complex.

Hendervale's five-day competition.

She rode Moment In Time, Raphaella and Utopia to first, second and third place honours in Saturday's strategy pace and won the junior amateur medium-low jumper class with Utopia Friday.

In the hunter class, she was crowned both grand champion and reserve champion Thursday with Southern Cross and Savanha respectively.

In total she showed in 38 different events and pocketed a few thousand dollars for her efforts.

"I had an amazing week at Hendervale. I don't think I've ever had this kind of overall success at one competition," remarked Ballard, an 11-year amateur who plans to turn pro next year.

"Overall this has been a great season for me. I've showed strongly at competitions in Palgrave, Ottawa, New York and Florida."

Ballard and Samuel will be back to defend their top placings when Hendervale hosts the Halton Valley Summer Classic August 21 to 23.

"There's going to be a lot of top riders from all over North America at that one. Repeating as champion will be tough," said Samuel.

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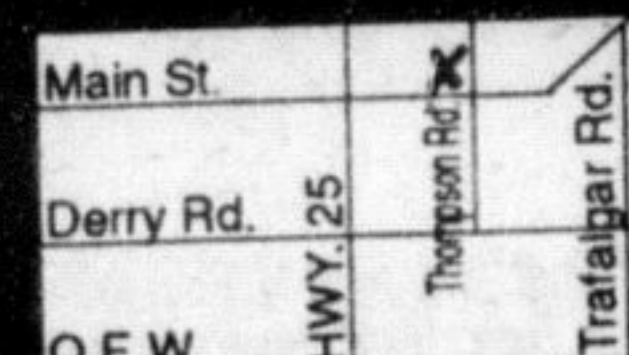
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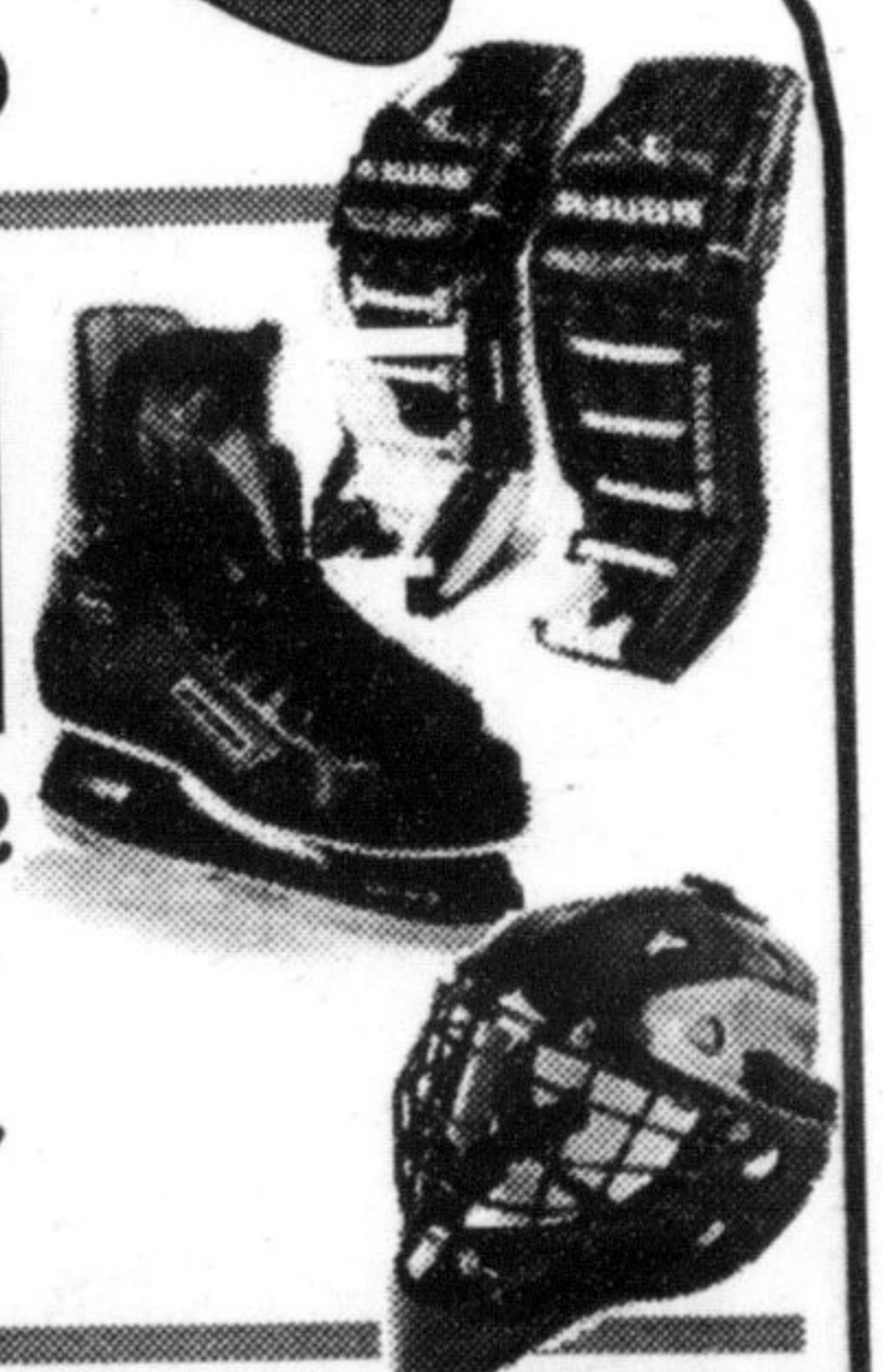


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