

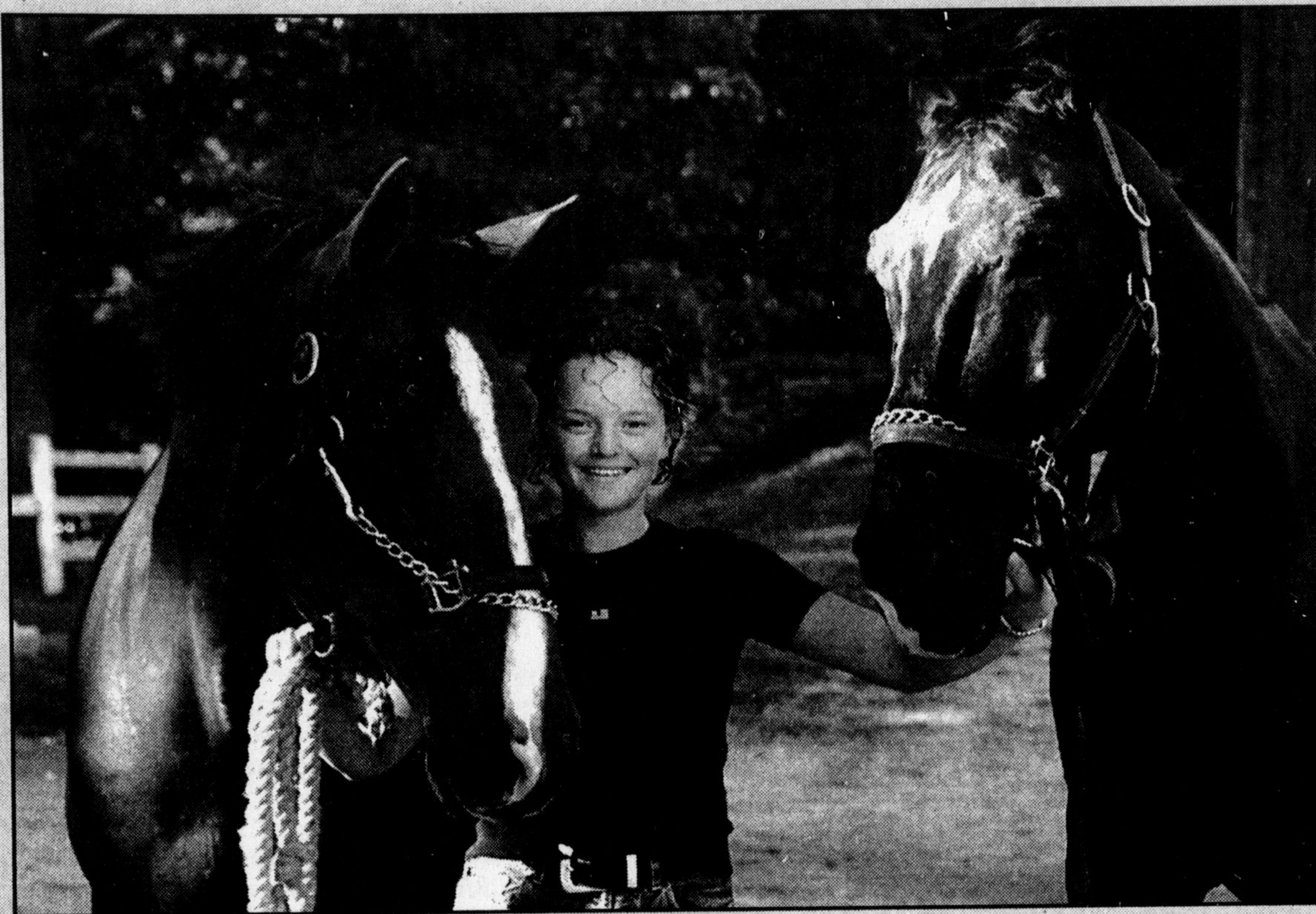


SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION



TUESDAY JULY 4, 2000



Hornby equestrian Erynn Ballard shows off Leacock (left) and prospective stable addition Kiss The Sky.

Erynn Ballard hopes to add Kiss The Sky to her stable

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

With a prospective partner named Kiss The Sky, Hornby's Erynn Ballard has to be wondering if her equestrian career is about to take flight.

Not that she hasn't stood above the crowd at times already, but with an internationally seasoned show jumper now in her stable — at least on a trial basis — there's just no telling how high the professional teenage rider could go.

Having enjoyed substantial success over the last two years with nine-year-old warmblood gelding Leacock, Ballard had recently turned her attention to looking for a second horse that could help take her to that all-important next level.

By all accounts — tentatively speaking, of course — the search appears to be over.

Acquired on a trade three weeks ago with the assistance of Campbellville's Mike Grinyer, Kiss The Sky is everything a young competitor could possibly want in a riding partner — especially when it comes to experience.

"He's been to both the Olympics and the World Cup finals," explained Ballard of the 15-year-old European warmblood. "Leacock is my best friend and will always be my favourite, but it's really nice to have a horse who's been there and done that."

Considerably larger than Leacock, Kiss The Sky had been idle for a while before coming into the services of Ballard.

As a result, he was somewhat rusty during the duo's debut performance two weeks ago in Palgrave. But just a few short days later at the L'International Bromont, Ballard's new partner showed signs of his true worth — taking second in the national talent class and sixth in the modified division.

"I like him, he's a great older horse that really covers the ground without a lot of effort," said the young rider, who as a junior won the two most prestigious events in North America — the National McLay Finals in 1998 and the Young Rider Championship last August.

Having at least a couple of horses to ride is essential to any equestrian looking to make an impact on the national or international circuit, stressed Ballard. "It's not fair to just one horse and you can't expect them to do well all the time."

The local teen has other horses besides Leacock, but none with a track record that comes anywhere near that of Kiss The Sky.

Now the challenge will be to organize a financial syndicate to help her buy the highly accomplished show jumper.

In the meantime, Team Ballard will compete in Barrie and Vermont before returning home for the Halton Valley Mid-Summer Classic July 19 to 23 at nearby Hendervale Equestrian Complex.

Barnes takes top marks at Guelph meet

When it comes to high endurance competition, less has been more for Harry Barnes.

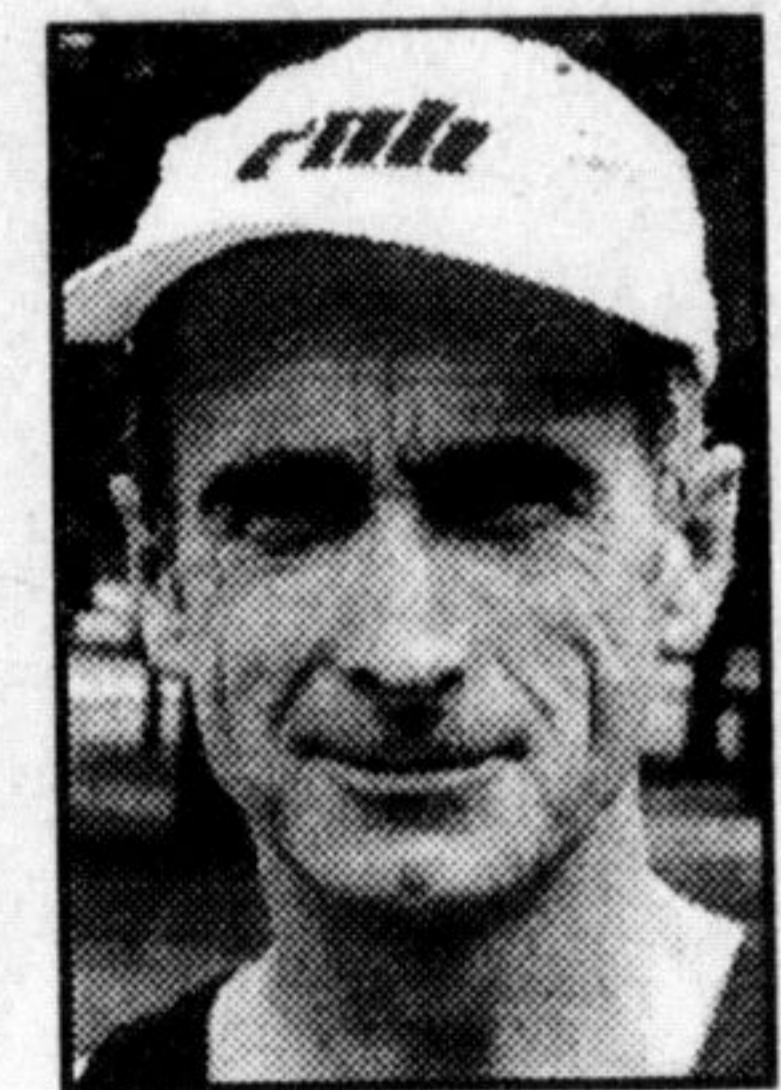
Campbellville's 53-year-old triathlete has been downsizing his racing schedule this year — and that's translated into faster finishes for the timeless wonder.

Most recently he delivered a season-best performance of 2:11.09 to take the men's 50-54 division during the Guelph Lakes 1 Triathlon June 25.

"I started strong last year but got slower and slower as the season wore on," said the rural racer. "Now I'm holding my own and actually getting better."

Trimming nearly half-a-minute off his showing at Florida's St. Anthony Triathlon Meet April 30, Barnes had uncharacteristically stiff opposition within his age class in Guelph.

Rockwood's John Fisher — who's been making significant improvement over the past few months — pushed him for much of the 1.5 kilometre swim, 40 kilometre bike, 10 kilometre run course before placing second in 2:12.47.



Harry Barnes

Barnes almost always wins his age loop by three to four minutes — and often by even wider margins.

A 23:57 opening leg swim — among his best ever — helped him prevail this time around, during a rainy morning event that was particularly ill-suited to an athlete with such little body fat.

"It's great for the bigger guys, not me," he explained.

Barnes will be hoping for warmer weather in three weeks time, when he vies for top honours at the national championships in Cornerbrook, Newfoundland.

And with an especially unforgiving course to tackle out east, the local triathlete will need all the heat and humidity he can get. "It's one of the toughest courses in North America," Barnes said. "It's up and down the whole way."

Bahen gets drafted

Former Merchant Chris Bahen must be feeling quite popular these days especially after being picked up by the Colorado Avalanche during the recent 2000 NHL Entry Draft.

The 19-year-old defenceman — who helped the local juniors reach the league finals two seasons back — was taken in the sixth round, 189th overall.

A six-foot-one, 190-pound native of Markham, Bahen made a successful jump to the NCAA Division 1 ranks this past year — where with

ECAC's Clarkson Golden Knights he was named the team's top freshman and was also selected to the all-rookie team for the entire conference.

The highly mobile blueliner is the second ex-Merchant in as many years to be drafted into the NHL.

Miltonian Darren (Mini) Haydar — currently skating with the Hockey East New Hampshire Wildcats — was acquired in the ninth round by the Nashville Predators in 1999.



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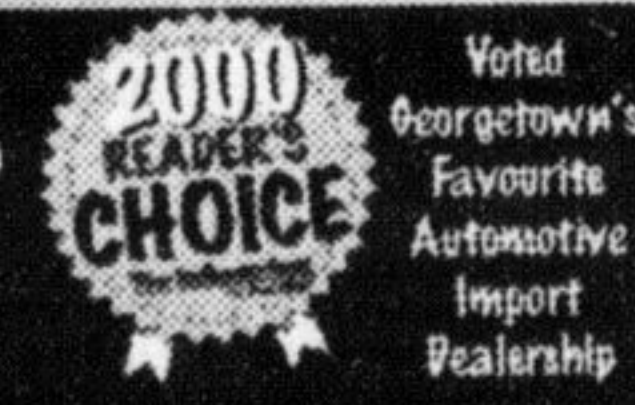
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