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FRIDAY JULY 21, 2000

Local riders set for Olympic Trial

By STEVE LeBLANC

The Champion

Milton's Ainsley Vince has fared much better on foreign soil than home turf this year.

That's a trend the local show jumper hopes to break tomorrow afternoon — during her big homecoming for the fourth Olympic Trial qualifying event at the nearby Hendervale Equestrian Complex.

But for a truly credible performance, she and trusty mount Catch 22 — a 10-year-old Dutch Warmblood who has helped her reach the elite class of equestrian competition — may need another trend to end first.

Rain could be problem

That of the regularly rainy weekends that have plagued the area this summer.

"Competing on grass when it's been raining seems to be our weakness. We'll just have to keep our fingers crossed and pray for good weather," said Vince Wednesday afternoon.

The 23-year-old equestrian has cracked the top 10 at two of the previous three Olympic Trial events — taking fifth at Bromont, Quebec and eight at Blainville, Quebec.

And with some sensational efforts at Hendervale last summer — including an overall victory in the \$25,000 Opening Class — she's certainly got momentum working for her.

But as Vince is quick to point out time and time again, there's just too many variables to ever be certain of success.

"One day you can do well but your horse doesn't and the next it's the exact opposite," she said. "You just never know until you get out there."

Hendervale's own Heather Manbert-Serniuk will be the other local favourite competing in tomorrow's 1:30 p.m. Olympic Trial.

The 34-year-old will do so aboard nine-year-old Dutch Warmblood Just Julia.

The pair have alternated between grand prix and smaller scale events over the past two seasons but are now competing exclusively at the higher level.

Faring quite well

And for the most part holding their own.

They bested all challengers in the L'International Bromont's Welcoming Class — delivered two straight clear rounds en route to victory — and placed a respectable eighth at the Olympic Trial in Blainville.

But as much as the two have progressed nicely in recent months, Manbert-Serniuk knows there will be a lot of pressure on them as the hometown favourites tomorrow afternoon.

"And we haven't really done well in the big ring here," she added.

Manbert-Serniuk admits her prized partner tends to get a little aggressive during main event situations — and can only hope she knows when to channel that and when to hold back come show time tomorrow.

"Hopefully we'll do well, and maybe crack the top 10," Manbert-Serniuk said.

The local pair are set to face all the top riders in Canada including Ian Millar, Jay Hayes, Eric Lamaze and Beth Underhill in the \$50,000 Olympic Trial — which highlights this week's Halton Valley Mid-Summer Classic.



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Heather Manbert-Serniuk (left) and Ainsley Vince will be the hometown favourites for tomorrow afternoon's Olympic Trial at nearby Hendervale Equestrian Complex. The \$50,000 event gets going around 1:30 p.m.

Mountain biking returns to Kelso

Kelso Conservation Area is back on track after a one-year absence from the provincial mountain biking scene.

The summer recreational hotbed is set to host Kelso O-Cup 2000 next weekend — with both downhill and cross-country action to suit riders of all ages and skill levels.

Early registration closes this Monday, July 24 at 6 p.m. but those interested in

participating can sign up until next Friday.

Downhill races will be held on the Saturday (July 29) while the following day cross-country competition is set to take over.

This year's event — sponsored by Milton's Spokes 'N' Slopes — includes all new courses for both types of racing, designed by Wizard of Wheels Ltd's Mike Badyk.

Downhillers will be thrilled with the fast and gnarly drop off west of the Digger Downhill while the cross country races will feature lots of new wild single track and a unique start/finish at the top of Kelso's Summit Entrance.

Entry forms can be picked up at either Spokes 'N' Slopes or Conservation Halton — or by visiting CH's web site at www.WOWMTB.com.



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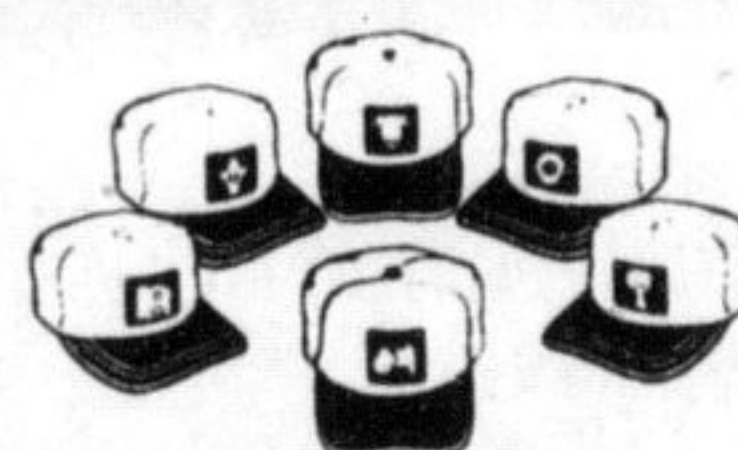
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