

Sports

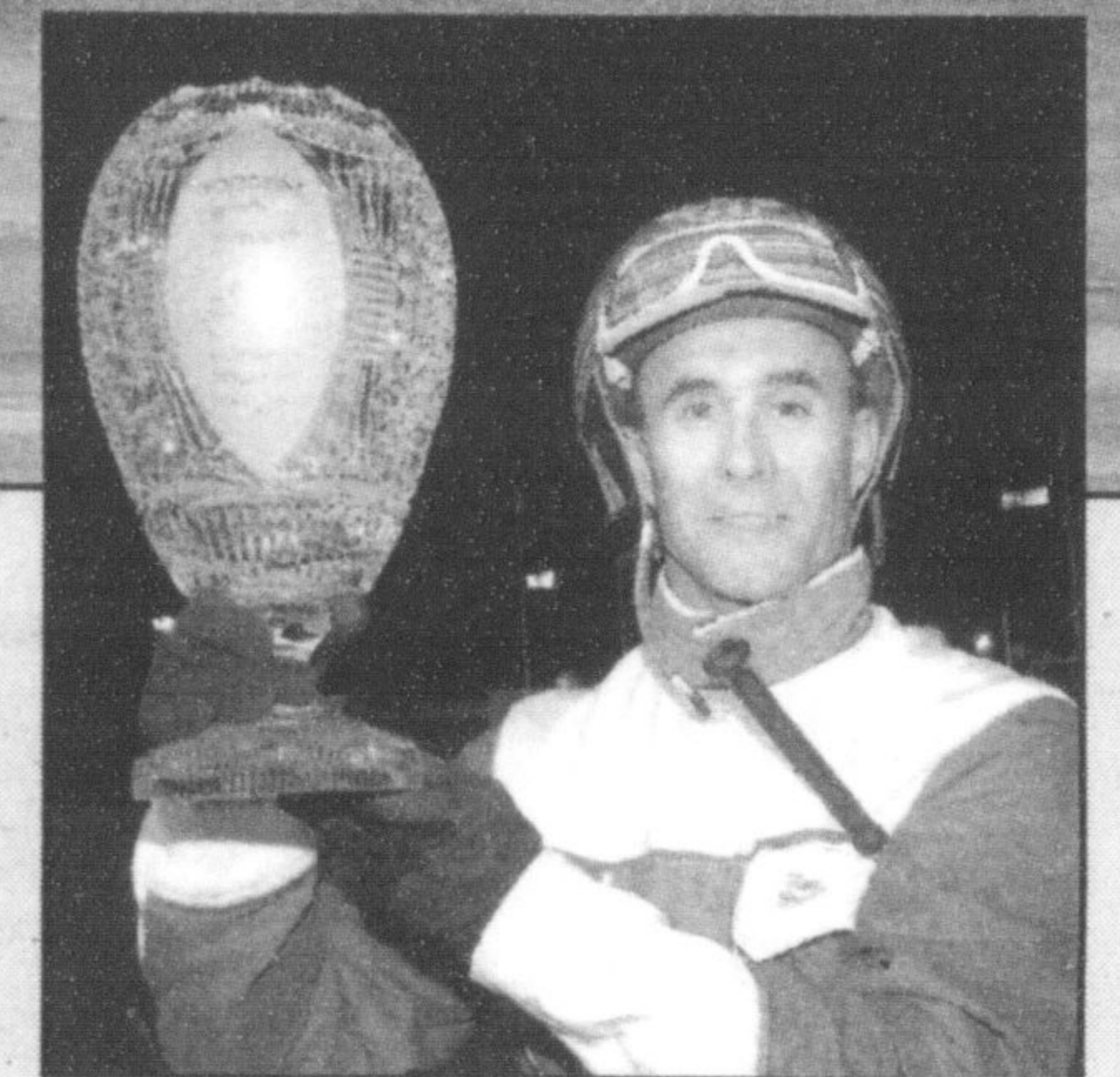
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A classic victory

Driver Ron Pierce guides Classic Photo across the finish line to capture the \$1-million Canadian Trotting Classic for three-year-olds in 1:52.3 at Mohawk Saturday night. At right, Pierce proudly displays the championship trophy.

Photos by GRAHAM PAINE



Whitlock caps 'challenge' sweep in T.O.

But seasoned marathoner not quite able to stay under three-hour mark this time

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

Ed Whitlock may not have beaten the three-hour barrier this time around, but he's still the one to beat among senior marathoners.

Weathering an unseasonably warm morning Sunday, the 74-year-old Miltonian delivered a 3:02.37 performance in the Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon — which was good enough for 58th place overall, and better than any competitor 55 years or older.

Among that older crowd was 72-year-old Dutchman Joop Ruter, who first challenged Whitlock on his own turf in Rotterdam, Netherlands April 10 — and was bested by near-

ly 14 minutes.

Their rematch proved to be far less dramatic, as the Milton marathoner completed the sweep with a margin of victory just shy of 43 minutes.

"We were together for about the first 16 kilometres or so and I thought my life was going to be difficult today," explained Whitlock, Sunday's oldest marathon participant. "But then he started cramping up pretty badly and slowed up significantly."

While expecting a more competitive challenge from Ruter, the local racer said he wasn't upset by the less-than-suspenseful showdown.

"I'll take an easy win. I don't need difficulties in my life," he quipped.

However, Milton's ageless wonder wasn't quite so chipper about failing to secure another sub-three hour finish — although his disappoint-



Ed Whitlock

ment wasn't accompanied by surprise. "My time in a 10km run two weeks earlier was much slower than last year, so my hopes of finishing in under three hours were more modest this time," explained Whitlock, the world's only septuagenarian (70 years or older) in history to run a marathon in less than three hours — having done so three times in the past two years, with his best finish among those a 2:54.49 effort last year in Toronto.

He said the unexpected humidity wasn't really a factor and that the toe pains he'd been experiencing earlier in the week had pretty much subsided by Sunday.

"There was no real specific problems, but around the halfway mark my legs just felt heavy and weren't working as fluidly as they ought to, and I was concerned about holding it all togeth-

er. It was a struggle through the second half, but I can't blame the weather — any blame is on me."

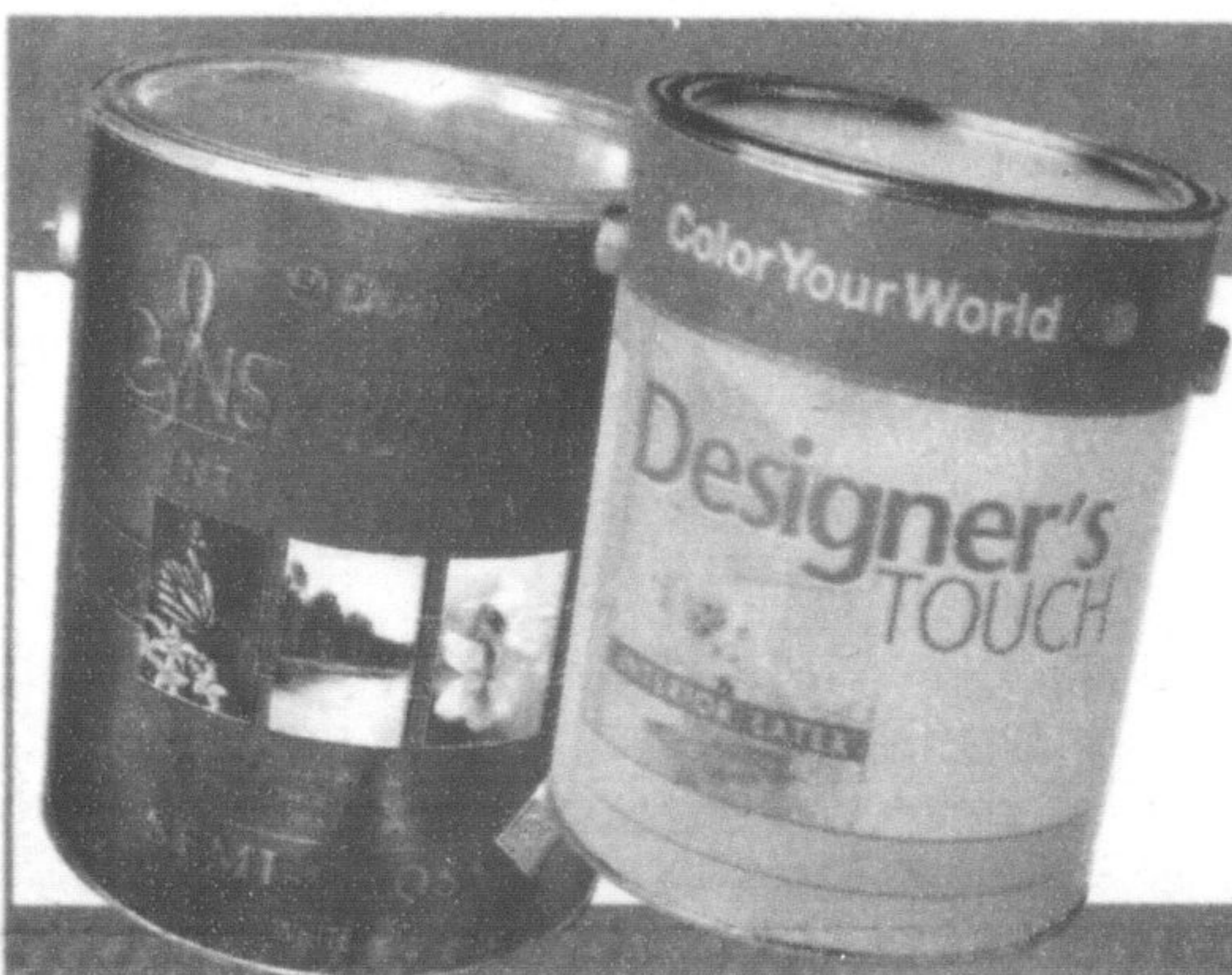
Sunday's race left Whitlock with serious doubts about his ability to dip under the three-hour mark again.

But with a jump up to the 75-79 age group next year, the chances of setting another world marathon standard appear quite good.

"As far as I recall, the record in that age class is about 3:14, which I'd say is a realistic goal right now," said Whitlock.

Eight other Miltonians finished the regular T.O. marathon this year, including Sandra Cuthbert (3:30.15), Kim Vivian (3:47.03), Michael Theodoulou (4:06.33), Arnie Parcels (4:14.30), Claire Anderson (4:27.58), John Delanty (4:30.53), Michael Suklje (4:38.35) and Laurie Lindberg (5:04.30).

Fellow Miltonians Robert Aspinall (4:48.11), Miranda Robinson (4:58.05) and Heidi Dickson (5:18.23) completed the early bird marathon.



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