

Jurus fosters winning attitude at Reding

By STEVE LeBLANC
The Champion

Joe Jurus has been a mighty positive influence at Bishop Reding Secondary School by being — well — positive.

That may be oversimplifying things just a bit, but it's no doubt at the forefront of what makes BR's football and baseball coach so effective.

"I know it's a cliché, but Joe's always an upbeat guy," said Dwight Jonker, who's known Jurus for many years and worked with him on the gridiron for the past four. "Even when things are going bad, he'll try to turn it around and make something good of it."

October's Champion Coach of the Month — nominated by senior football captain Mike Rego and varsity baseball captain Sean Mathé — has certainly done his share of good for Reding athletics.

A fixture at the school since 1999, Jurus led BR to its first senior football championship in 2000 — with a 7-0 shutout over Loyola securing Halton's Division 1 title — and helped fashion a mini dynasty for the baseball Royals, who were regional champions in 2003 and reached the all-Ontario Prentice Cup semifinals at SkyDome the following spring.

"I'm a better athlete because of him (coach Jurus)," stressed Mathé, an intrigal part of the baseball team's success. "He makes you want to work hard and play the best you can."

But as Rego's quick to point out, the BR athletic director never asks more from his players than he does of himself.

"The main thing about coach Jurus is he's so dedicated. He's the first one here every morning and the last one to leave."

Jonker heartily agrees. "With our starting quarterback going down recently, Joe spent much of last weekend coming up with new plays for our two other guys to try to help them. Things like that are why we're back at Division 1. And he's so altruistic. He's always worried more about the players experiencing success than about his own personal record."

Jurus was a starting quarterback at Nova Scotia's St. Francis Xavier University through the late '80s, but learned what it

takes to win playing COBA Senior baseball in Etobicoke — which he did up until the birth of his third daughter four years ago.

So what are the keys to success, Joe? "Attention to detail and a positive attitude, both of which can be a challenge because detail often becomes monotonous and it's usually easier to criticize than compliment," he explained. "But being upbeat and just believing has certainly helped us over the years. We've won plenty of games where it looked like we had no hope."

Well known around all BR sports circles, Jurus has an uncanny knack for keeping things light-hearted and lively through his always vocal demeanour and colourful sayings — one of which struck a particularly meaningful chord with the 2003 baseball team during their run to Halton and GHAC glory.

"We ain't no joke shop" comes from Etobicoke baseball," he fondly recalled. "It's just an amusing twist on the idea that we're going to be serious and do things properly."

For Jurus, that means fostering an environment of respect — for opponents and

teammates alike. "That's something I don't tolerate — talk against other teams."

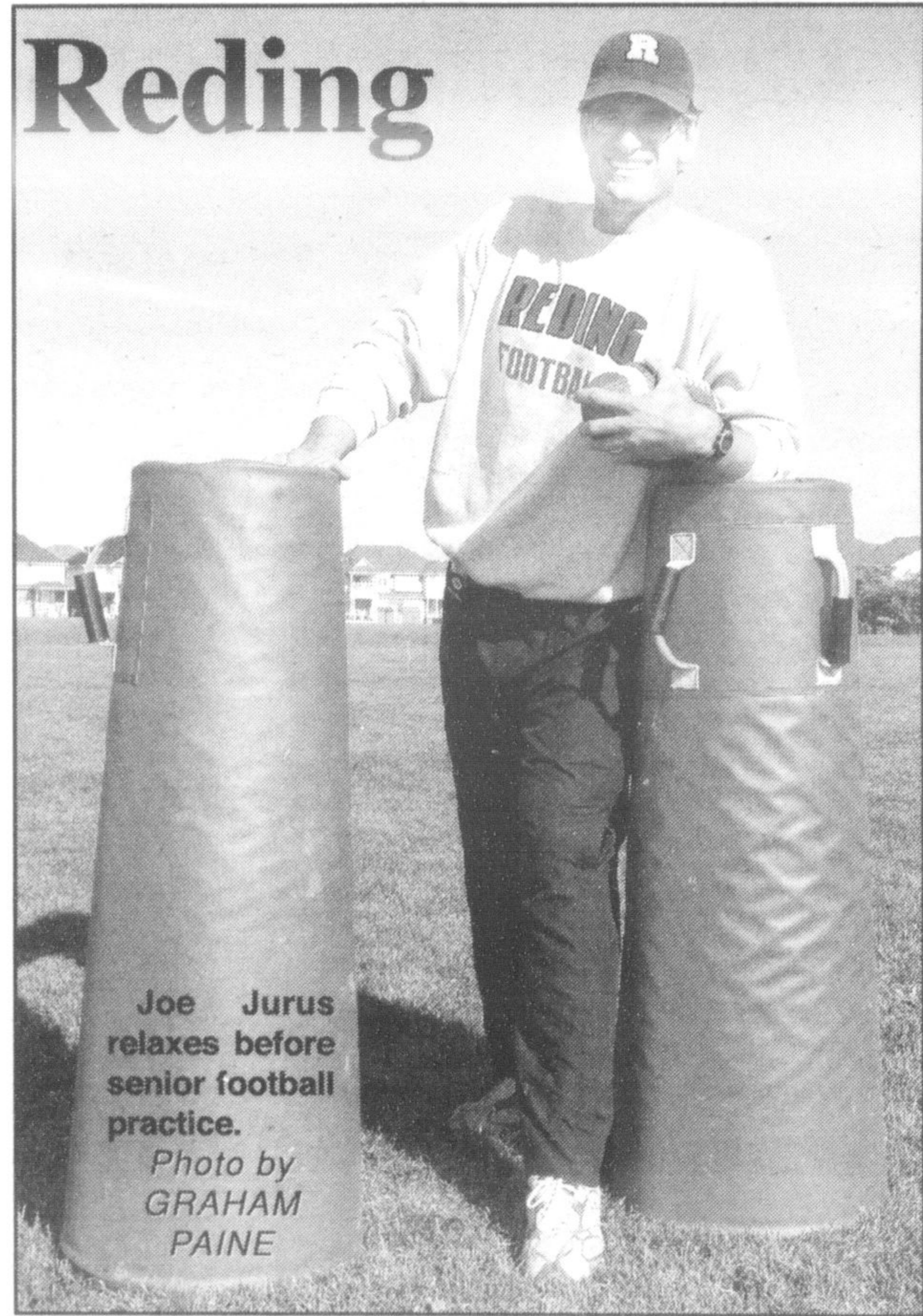
Reding's two-sport skipper admits he can be enthusiastic to a fault at times, but you won't hear his players complaining. Remarkd Mathé, "I'd say we definitely feed off his energy."

And while Jurus is as emotional about sports as any coach out there, his passion doesn't come at the expense of academics.

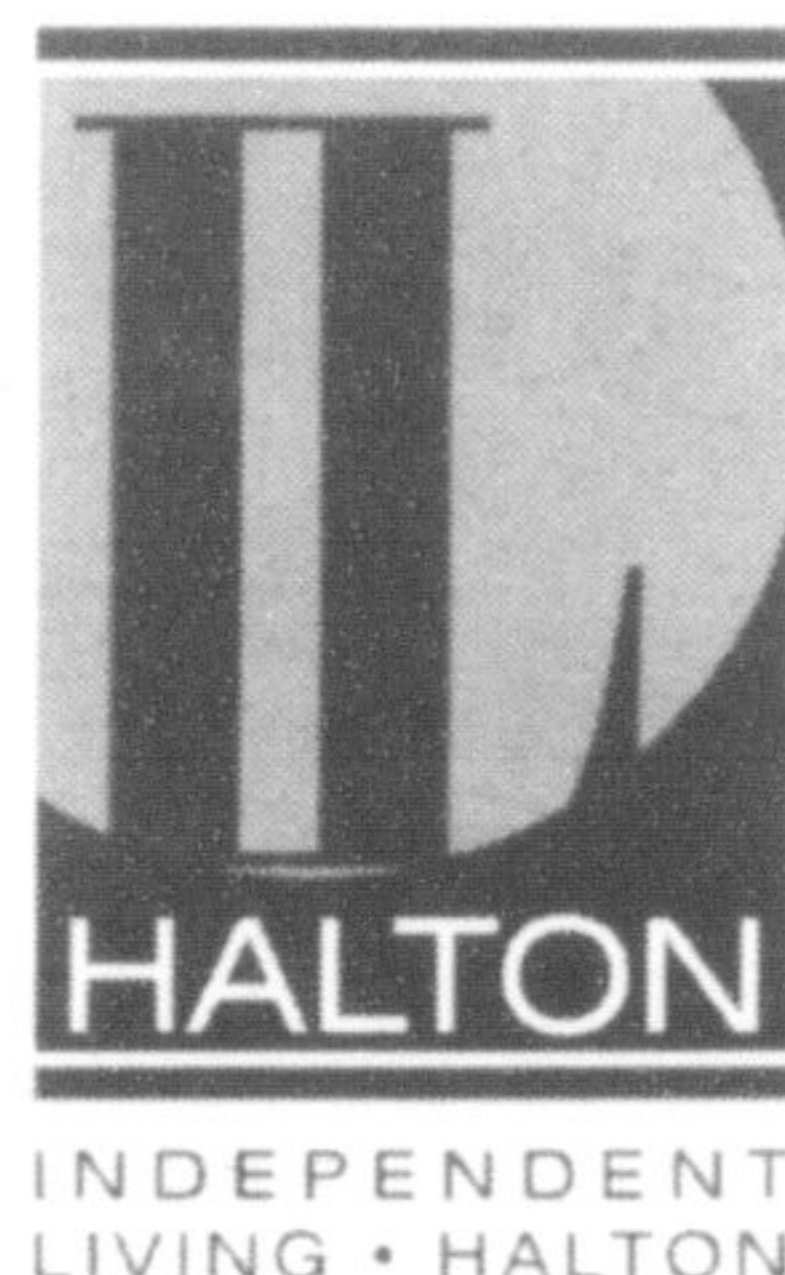
Just last spring he instituted a lunch-hour homework program to help the baseball team catch up on the period four and five classes they missed and said he'd like to see more of this type of support in the coming years.

In fact Jurus seems to take as much satisfaction when his students do well in the classroom and take on a leadership role around the school as he does when they excel on the playing field.

As far as the Champion Coach of the Month honour, well that's been pretty satisfying too. "It's humbling. It's exciting ... just really nice," said Jurus, at a rare loss for words. "It's kind of motivation as well, something to live up to."



Joe Jurus relaxes before senior football practice. Photo by GRAHAM PAINE



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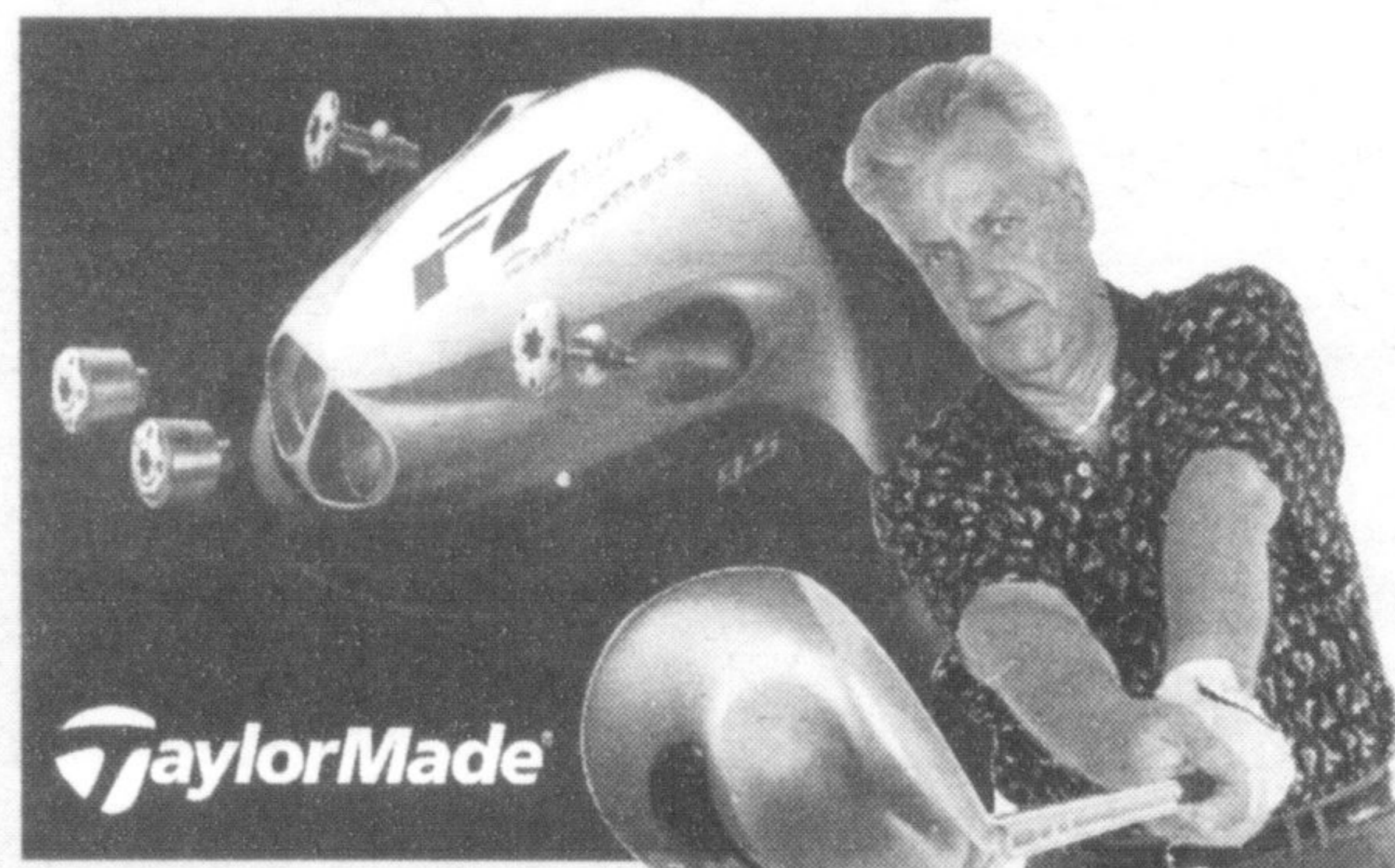
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