

No OUA sweep for Porenta

But seasoned U of T swimmer gives fairly impressive effort despite an ill-stricken winter

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Jen Porenta came away from last weekend's Ontario University Association (OUA) championships with mixed emotions — and for good reason.

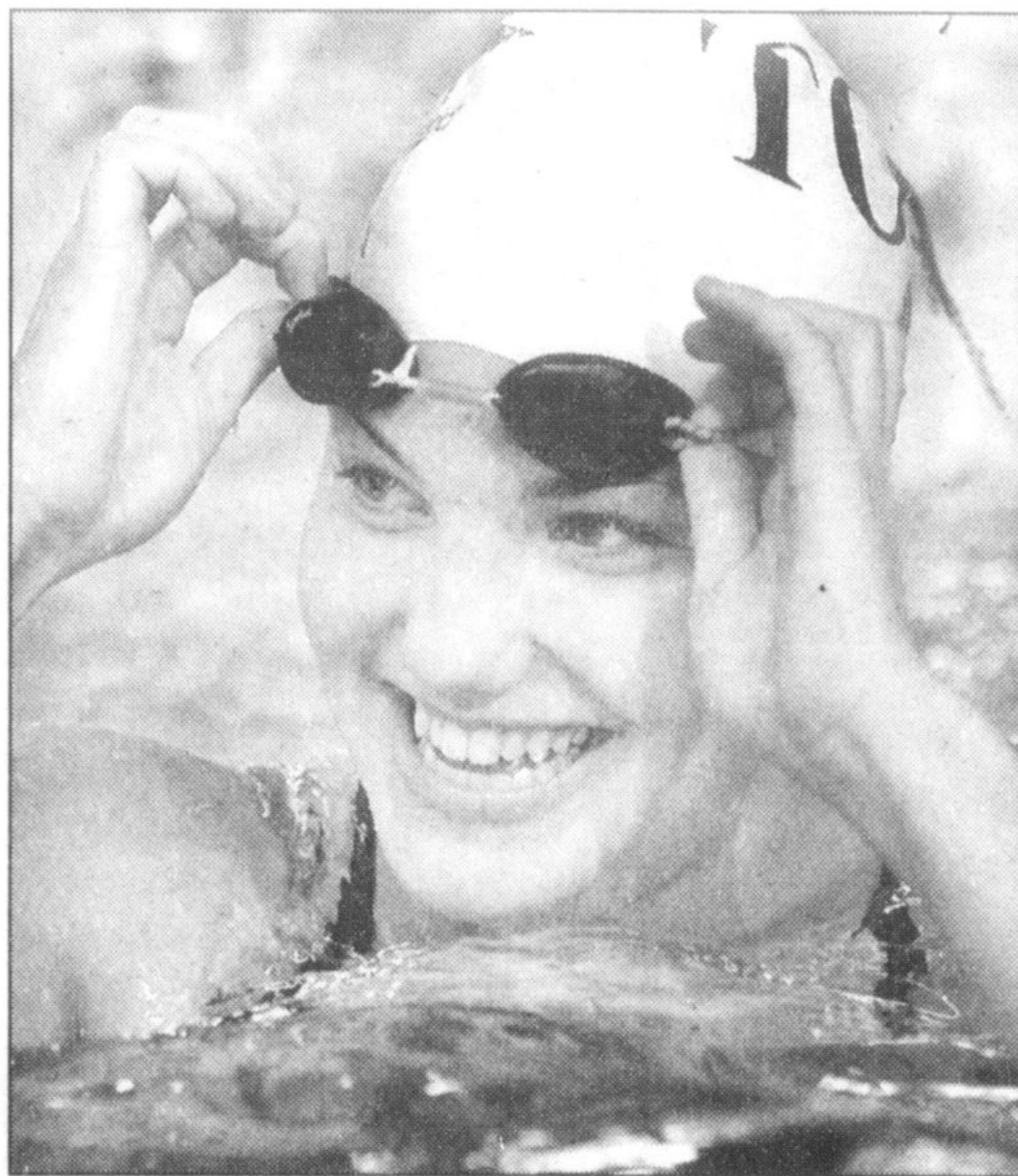
On the one hand, the 20-year-old University of Toronto swimmer had delivered gold-medal sweeps the previous two seasons — and wasn't exactly ecstatic about failing to do so this time around at Sudbury's Laurentian University.

However, her overall performance was far from disappointing, and could be considered quite impressive given the circumstances.

"Recently I had an inner ear and sinus infection, plus I had a stomach thing before that — basically a little bit of everything," explained Porenta. "This really cut into my training. I had to take two weeks off last month and missed a meet in Switzerland. Yeah, I didn't go into provincials in peak shape this year."

Nevertheless, the third-year university competitor played a significant role in the U of T Blues securing their sixth straight provincial women's title — collecting half-a-dozen medals over the three-day meet. Two of those came in relay competition, in which Porenta helped establish two new OUA records — with a big anchor-leg swim in the 4x50-metre freestyle and a strong opening split in the 4x200m freestyle.

Fellow Miltonian Kristen McIlroy was part of the shorter distance relay victory, while U of T broke its own provincial standards in both races.



Jen Porenta

In individual competition, Porenta's best efforts were reserved for the 50m butterfly, which she won in 28.85 seconds. She struck silver in her three other races — the 100m butterfly (1:03.11), 50m freestyle (26.89s) and 100m freestyle (57.54s).

"I didn't do the 200m free this time because I just wasn't in shape for it, and my 50m free wasn't exactly great. But considering how much training I'd missed, I swam a little faster than expected," she said. "Basically it was just a good tune-up for the nationals in Lavell (Feb. 24 to 26)."

McIlroy claimed bronze in the 50m freestyle — finishing behind Porenta and U of T teammate Sasha Theron — while fellow Miltonian Kayla Augustine was also part of the Blues' championship contingent.

OHF appeal still pending

The IceHawks remain in a wait-and-see mode when it comes to the return of their head coach.

Suspended December 1 for what the Ontario Hockey Association deemed as the paying of two players in contravention to their status as amateurs, Milton bench boss and general manager George Dupont is still awaiting word on when an appeal will be heard by the Ontario Hockey Federation.

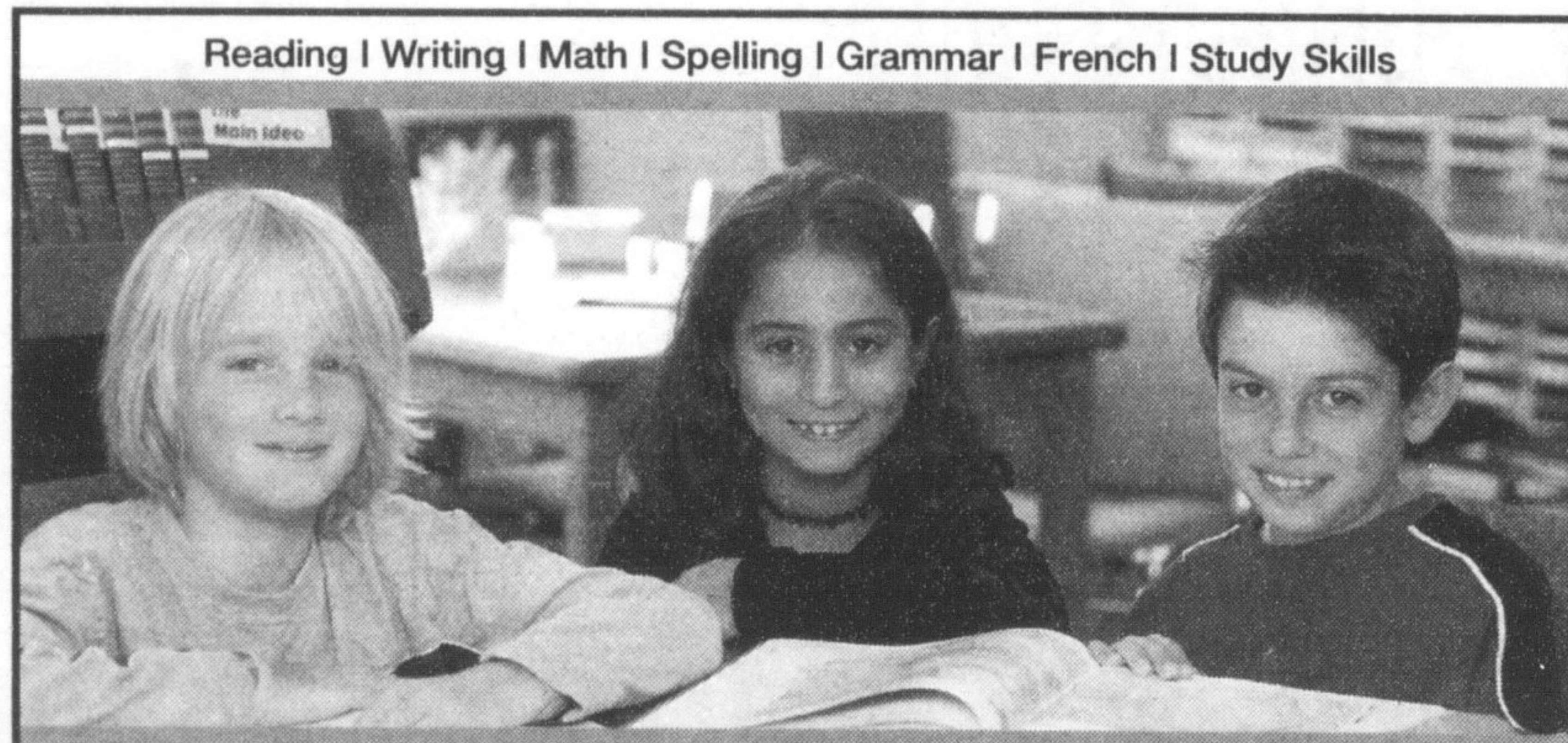
Speaking on behalf of an incommunicado Dupont Wednesday morning, team owner Mario Forgione said he feels it's highly unlikely his head coach will be back with the Tier 2 Jr. A club this season, especially since the OHA upheld its original ruling after an initial appeal last month.

"I doubt George will be back anytime in the playoffs, and that's a shame because we've got the opportunity to make a real run for the Royal Bank Cup," said Forgione.

The IceHawks owner had recently indicated that another coach might be brought in for the post-season, but seemed uncertain if that was the best move when asked again this week.

"We may need some more experience behind the bench as we go further into the playoffs, but then Joe (Washkurak) and Mike (Tarantino) seem to be doing a good job and we don't want to upset things."

Dupont remains interim head coach of Forgione's East Coast Hockey League Pensacola Ice Pilots, who aren't likely to make the playoffs.

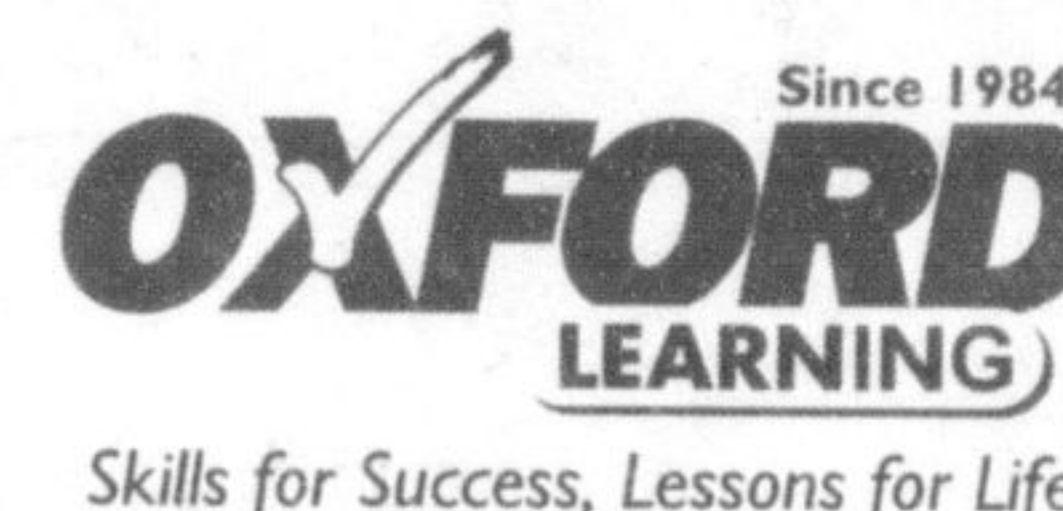


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