



# COMMUNITY

## Adventurous teen 'seas' the world in style

*Class Afloat program leaves lasting mark*

By Stephanie Thiessen  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

When you've had a whirlwind 12 months sailing around the world, it's not easy nailing down the most memorable moment.

Just ask Kiersten Corradetti, 18, who seemed almost at a loss for words as she recounted for The Champion some of her adventures at sea over the past year.

Swimming with dolphins in French Polynesia was amazing, but coming head to head with the moai statues on Easter Island wasn't bad, either. From hiking in Trinidad to braving the jungle, from hobnobbing with sharks to surviving in Marquesas, Kiersten, it seems, has done it all.

And she'll be the first person to say her enrollment in the Class Afloat program has left her a changed person. "Different things are important now," Kiersten said.

Class Afloat enables students to earn their grade 12 credits while sailing to 25 ports of call around the world on a tall ship — not your average school year.

Kiersten, who attended Bishop Reding Secondary School last year, got a crash course in world history and geography better than anything she could've learned in a classroom. North America, Europe, Africa and South America — these are the continents Kiersten sailed to aboard the 57-metre, 15-sail Concordia.

How many teens can say they've sailed 23,000 nautical miles?

Barely two weeks back home, Kiersten said now that the excitement has died down over seeing her family and old friends again, she's feeling rather down.

"It's weird to be homesick when I'm home," she said. "I feel sad. I miss those people so much."

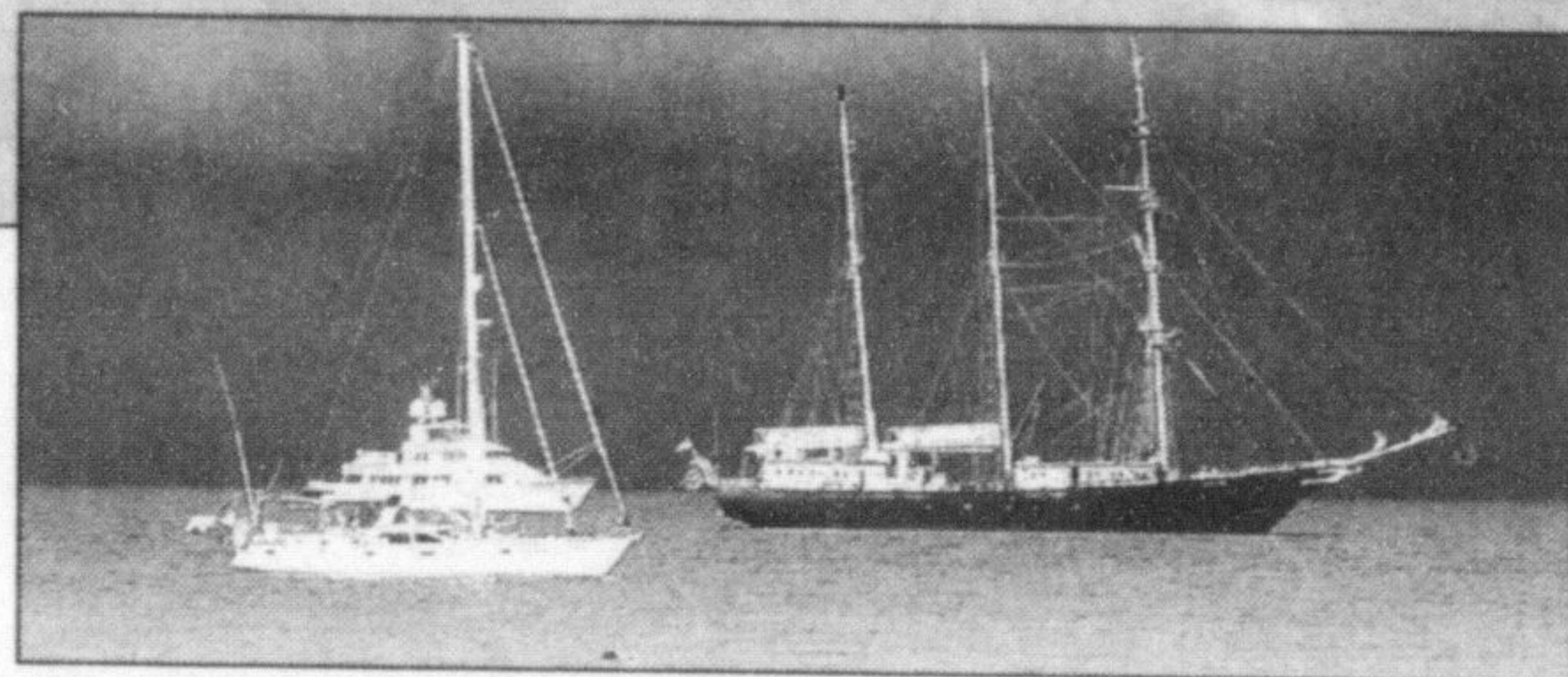
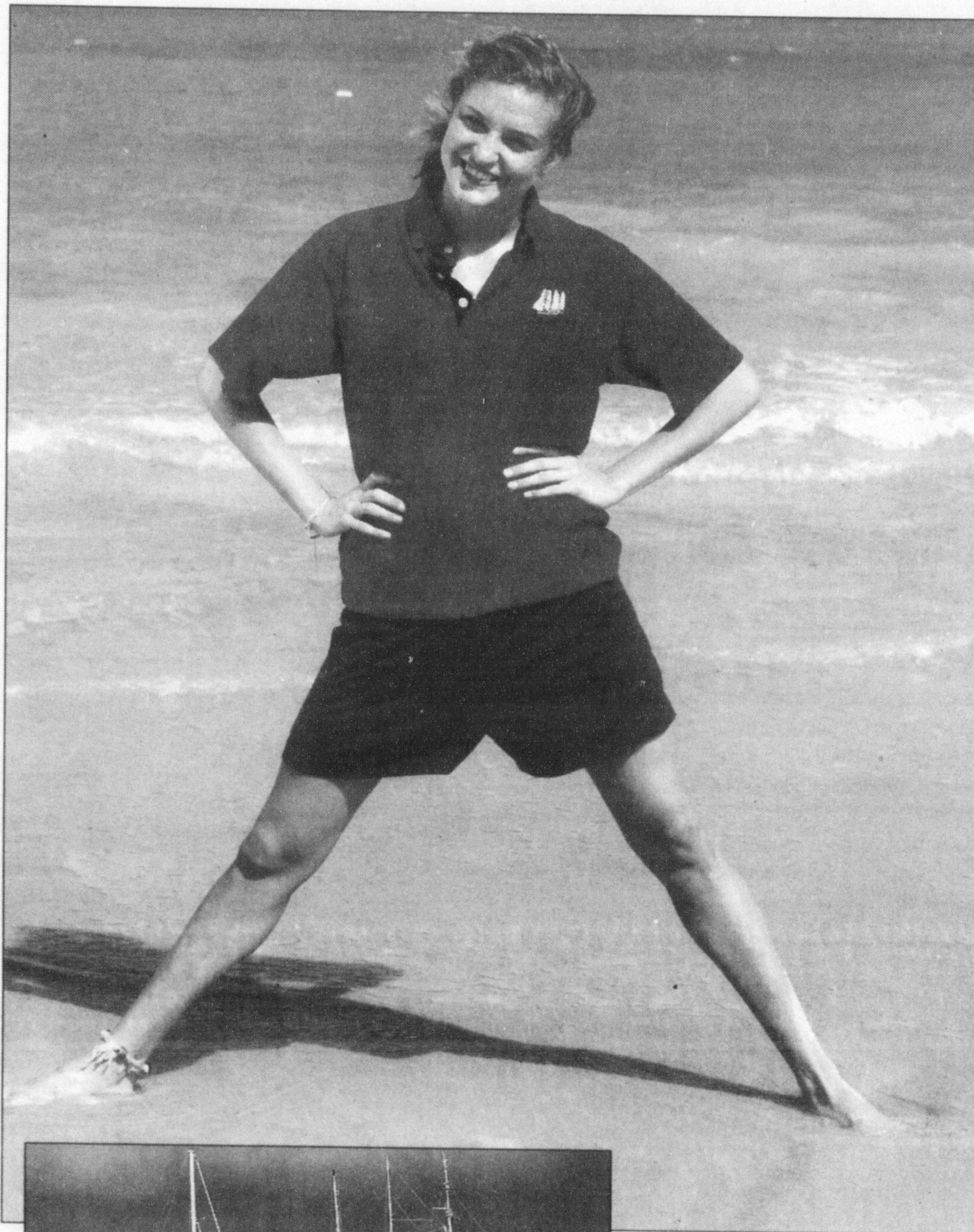
It wasn't easy, she admitted, to be thrown together with a group of people who — it seemed at first — had nothing in common.

"Before leaving, when I first saw the ship, I was a mess," she said. "I was really nervous. I had no idea what I'd gotten myself into."

After spending five days in Louisbourg, Nova Scotia, getting acquainted and learning about ship life, the group set sail — which required quite an adjustment.

"Everyone was seasick," Kiersten said. "You were puking over the rail and the teacher was still trying to teach calculus, and you were like, 'I don't care.'"

But eventually, sometime between "port hopping" in the Mediterranean and camel



Eighteen-year-old Kiersten Corradetti relaxes on one of the many beaches she visited during her 12-month globe-trotting voyage aboard the Concordia (at left).

riding through the Sahara, she found her place and knew she was where she should be.

Granted, this was no luxury cruise. The students learned to sail the ship, but also had to maintain it, which involved painting, sanding... and a whole lot of elbow grease.

The group spent up to 22 days sailing with no stops.

"The sailing is amazing. You get so much energy from the wind and the ocean," she said.

It was during their first long sail that something special happened, Kiersten said.

"That's when I really felt the magic of

Class Afloat. You're so happy, you feel like you're on cloud nine," she said, adding, "We really came together as a team."

In between sailing, the group toured, hiked, swam and snorkeled. All the while they took classes, studied and even wrote exams.

They took turns keeping 'deck watch' throughout the night, which meant some days she'd be pretty tired, Kiersten said.

They also spent time with the villagers, which Kiersten said were some of the most valuable parts of the trip. In Senegal, they had a chance to visit an orphanage and play with the kids.

After a brief trip home for Christmas, semester two got underway.

A stop in Marquesas, where the hit show Survivor was filmed, opened their eyes to the unreality of reality TV.

"Survivor is not exactly what we all thought," she said, explaining just over the hill from where it was shot there was a town with a hotel.

Snorkeling with sharks in French Polynesia was frightening at first, "but really cool," she said.

If pressed for a favourite place, she would probably say Penrhyn (in the Cook Islands), Kiersten said.

That trip didn't start off well because students were greeted with a list of things they couldn't do since it was Sunday. They couldn't play Frisbee, and the girls had to wear long skirts despite the sweltering heat, she said.

The group visited a church wearing the requisite big hats and looking, Kiersten said, "like we were out of the 1800s."

But the moment the congregation started singing, everything else was forgotten.

"It was like nothing I'd heard before. I was in tears right away because it was so incredible."

Afterward, the minister invited the group to his house, offering them fresh fruit.

They got to know some of the locals, including some teenaged girls who made crafts in their spare time to sell in hopes of making enough money to go to school in New Zealand. "It was so interesting to connect on so many levels even though we're from different sides of the world."

Kiersten's 18th birthday was spent sailing toward Isla Margarita.

And though one might expect her to be fraught with homesickness on that special day, Kiersten said it was actually one of her best birthdays ever.

Her friend bought her a blender, she said, which they used to have "smoothie parties."

The students forged strong friendships, making it extremely hard to part, she said. Their last night at sea, some of them got up at 4 a.m. to watch the sun rise over the Rocky Mountains.

Having earned her grade 12 credits while on the boat, Kiersten graduated in a ceremony in Victoria, B.C., her family present.

All in all, it was a trip she'll never forget.

"I wish everyone could do something like this to find out so much about themselves and to have the experience of being away from technology... and to be aware of what's important in life, and what they want out of life."

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**Programming Schedule — Tuesday, July 18 - Monday, July 24, 2006**

Tuesday, July 18	Wednesday, July 19	Thursday, July 20	Friday, July 21	Saturday, July 22	Sunday, July 23	Monday, July 24
8:00am - 9:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA Halton Hills Council (cc) July 18 2006	8:00am - 1:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA Halton Hills Council (cc) July 19 2006 5:00pm - 9:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA Milton Council July 17, 2006	8:00am - 1:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA Milton Council July 17, 2006 4:00pm - 9:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA Halton Region Council (cc) July 12 2006	8:00am - 1:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA Halton Region Council July 12 2006 4:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA 9:30pm TVCogeco Star Awards 11:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA Halton Hills Council (cc) July 12 2006 9:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 1:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA Halton Hills Council (cc) July 12 2006 4:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA