

'Royal' debut a memorable one for young equestrian

12-year-old shows strong in pony hunter ranks

By Steve LeBlanc
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Call it a success-spawned surprise.

Believing her debut at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair was finished Saturday afternoon, Jenny Mattell settled in to a spectator role with her friends — intent to soak in her impressive efforts and simply enjoy the rest of the day.

That's when one final memorable — and somewhat chaotic — chapter to 2010 presented itself.

Unbeknownst to the 12-year-old Milton equestrian, her weekend efforts in the Small Pony Hunter A circuit — highlighted by a second-place finish in the \$1,000 stake class just a few hours earlier — had earned her a berth into the evening's Horse Sport Pony Winners' Stake.

While more than welcome, that opportunity made for a few anxious moments, since Jenny's coach, Pam Sinclair, had, already gone home and her parents were only just heading back to Ricoh Coliseum after attending their son's school soccer championship across town.

Furthermore, her pony, 10-year-old chestnut gelding Shrunken in the

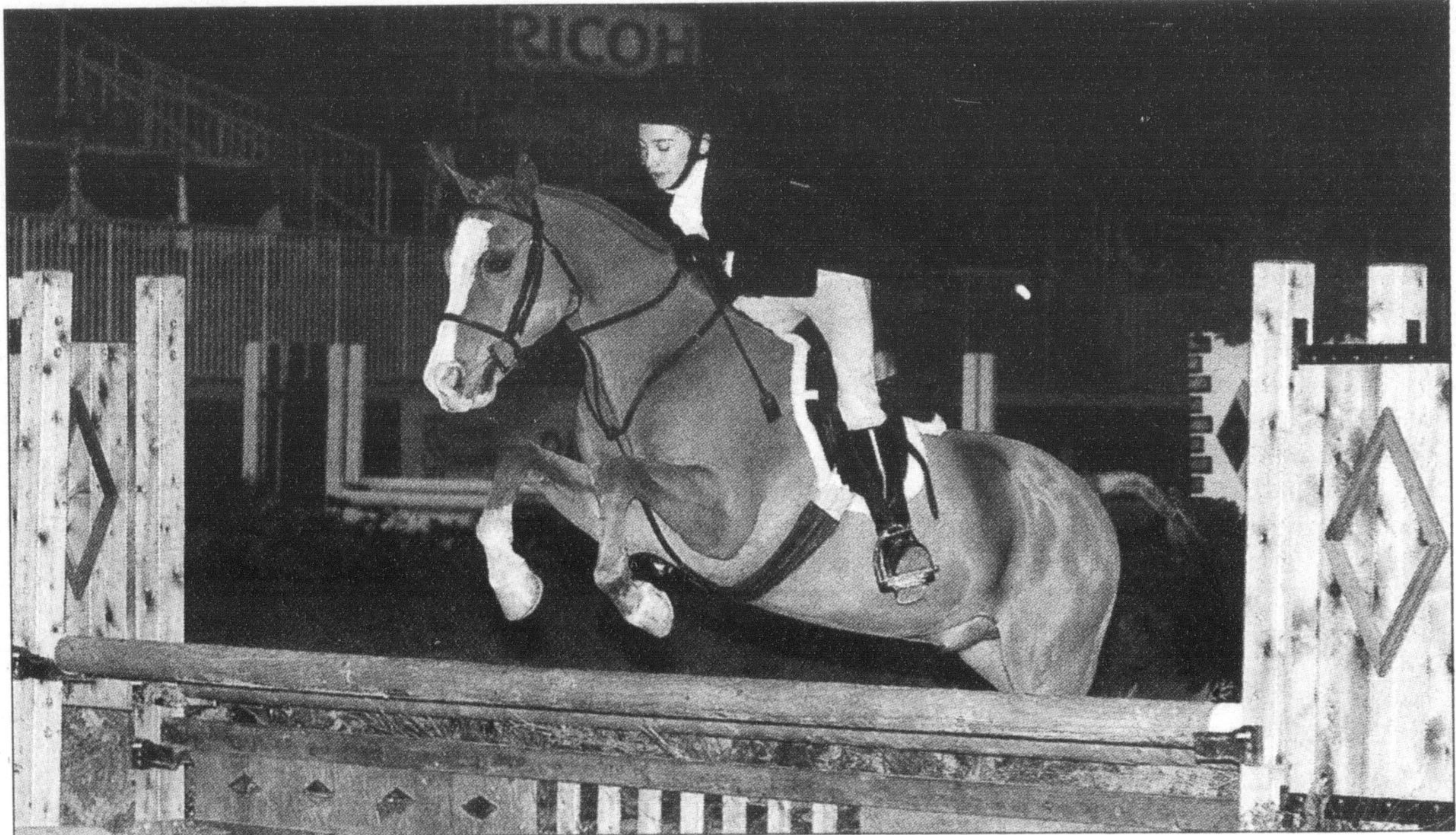
Wash, was now unbraided — an absolute no-no for competition.

A few frantic calls and some heavy-duty scrambling later, the hunter duo was once again ready for the ring.

"I guess our rookie status came into play, because we didn't know anything about this (winners' stake), so it was pretty crazy," said mom Julie, whose daughter qualified for the 'Royal' with a fifth-place finish in the season series and placed fourth overall in her division in Toronto — having taken eighth in one over-fence class Friday and just missed a ribbon in the other.

Facing off against the top small, medium and large ponies in the winners' stakes, Jenny and Shrunken in the Wash performed first and placed 12th out of the overall 54 weekend entries from Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes.

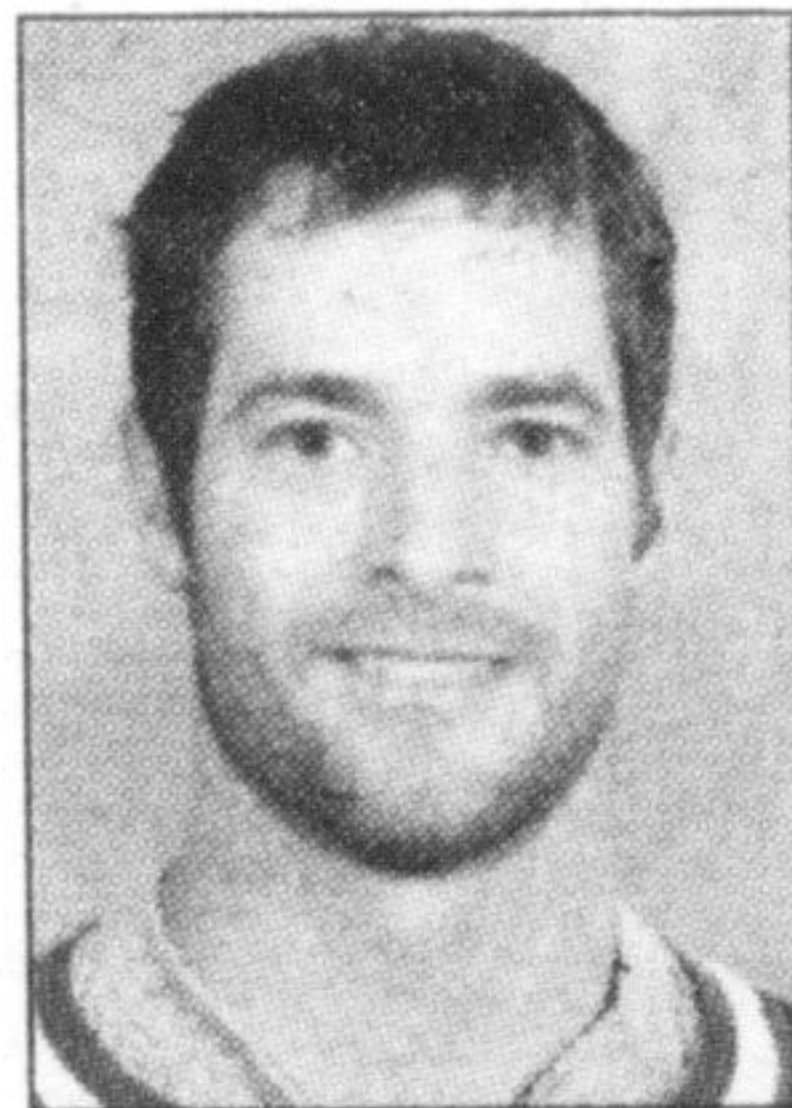
"The 'Royal' was a truly amazing experience," said a jubilant Jenny, who rides out of Milton's Savannah Ridge Stables, just a couple of miles from her escarpment home. "I enjoyed every second of it, and I think Shrunken in the Wash did too. I'm really proud of him and how we did."



UP AND OVER: Jenny Mattell and Shrunken in the Wash clear a jump in their small pony division at the Winter Fair.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CEALY TETLEY

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Darren Haydar

Haydar turns trick against old 'mates

Long-time American Hockey League (AHL) star Darren Haydar stuck it to his former Lake Erie Monsters Friday — delivering a natural hat-trick to lead his Chicago Wolves to a huge 6-5 road win.

One of the most prolific AHL scorers in league history, 31-year-old Haydar netted

second and third-period goals to force overtime, and then struck midway through sudden death — on the powerplay — to complete the comeback.

The five-foot-nine-inch, 170-pound right winger leads the Wolves with seven goals and seven assists.

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