

Back in sync

Smith thrilled to be back on competitive skating scene with powerhouse NEXXICE

By Steve LeBlanc
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

It was her first season removed from the competitive synchronized skating scene, and Victoria Smith was definitely feeling a void.

With her recently revamped Montreal club no longer offering a senior team, the 20-year-old Miltonian was suddenly on the sidelines — and at a crossroads.

"It was the hardest decision of my life and I wrestled with it for a long time," admitted Smith, who's been involved in synchronized skating for the past decade and has made two trips to the world championships as a junior with Brampton's Gold Ice. "I'd worked so hard to get into McGill (University). But I'd come there to skate and now I wasn't... that was a problem."

The prospect of transferring schools to resume her skating made for several months of soul-searching and more than a little anxiety, until a spring phone call provided an undeniable revelation of just how



Synchronized skater Victoria Smith (centre) and her NEXXICE teammates skate to bronze at the recent Mozart Cup in Austria. Photo courtesy of synchrophoto.eu

Filion defends Standardbred Canada Driver of Year title



Sylvain Filion (centre) accepts the O'Brien Award from Standardbred Canada Director Bill O'Donnell as wife Dominic looks on. Gail MacDonald / Special to the Champion

Sylvain Filion secured one last victory before closing the books on his 2013 campaign. And boy was it a big one.

In Charlottetown, PEI Saturday night the veteran reinsman successfully defended his O'Brien Award as Standardbred Canada's Driver of the Year — getting the nod over first-time nominee Doug McNair of Guelph.

"You know, the first year was great, but the second year is sweeter," said the two-time O'Brien Award winner.

The 44-year-old Miltonian led all drivers in the country for purse earnings — as his mounts banked just over \$6.1M — and he finished as the leading money winner on the Woodbine Enter-

tainment Group circuit with over \$5M to his credit between Mohawk and Woodbine.

A Lampman Cup winner for the second straight year, topping the Ontario Sires Stakes standings for drivers, Filion amassed 294 wins in 2013. The biggest of those came with Boomboom Ballykeel, whom he steered to a 10-1 upset victory in the \$683,000 Metro Pace at Mohawk.

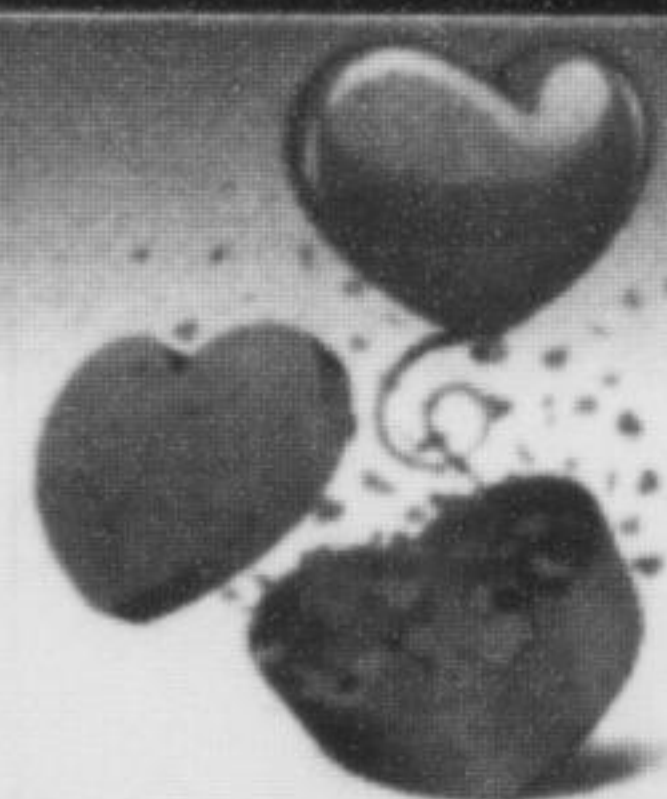
He was also the regular driver for Intimidate, who was the runner-up for Older Trotting Horse of the Year.

Meanwhile, Little Brown Jug winner Vegas Vacation — co-owned by Milton's Adriana Sorello — was named Three-Year-Old Pacing Colt of the Year.

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