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## Local rider ranked first in "Best Ever" ratings

By DENISE McDONALD

**STOUFFVILLE** — While many riders can only dream of competing at the Olympics as a member of the Canadian Equestrian Team, 20-year-old Ginny Gayford may possibly do just that.

During the first week of June, the R.R. 4, Stouffville resident began her first season competing on the Grand Prix jumper circuit and is presently ranked first among all equestrians vying for the coveted Best Ever young riders title.

A rider since she was too small to remember, Ginny says she owes much of her present-day success to father and coach Tom Gayford who has been Chef E'quipe for the Canadian Equestrian Team since 1977.

"Dad competed on the Canadian Olympic team that won the team gold at Mexico in 1968 and led them to the alternate gold at the Olympics in Rotterdam in 1980," says Ginny.

"I can't really say when I started riding but I've seen pictures of him holding me, and my sisters on horses while he was practising."

While admitting her father's involvement has made riding more accessible to her and her family, Ginny claims her love for horses was an ingrained sentiment regardless.

### JUMPER AT 15

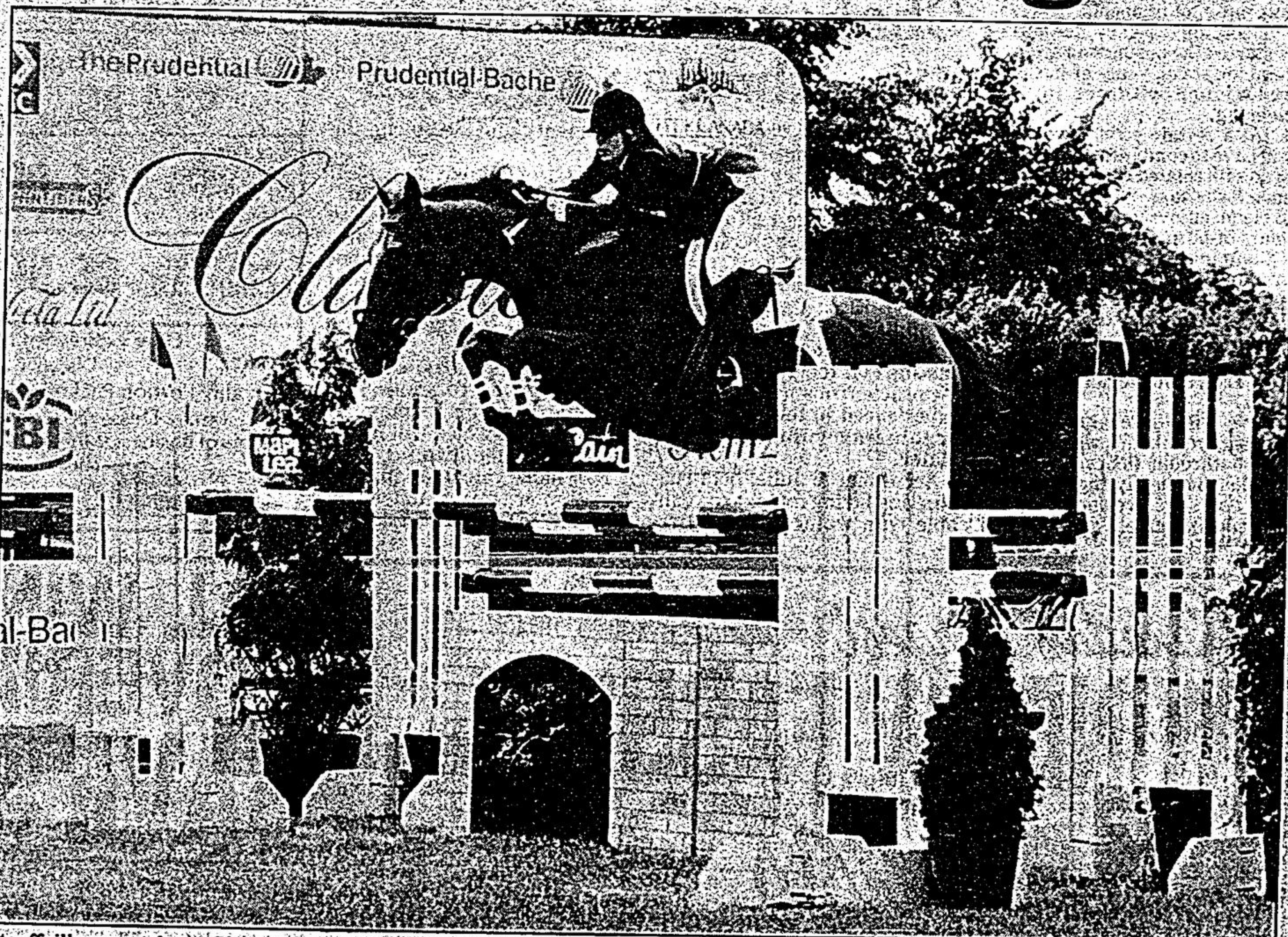
"I started out showing hunter ponies and gradually progressed upwards into horses," she says.

"When I was 15, I graduated into jumpers as a natural progression, coming from a jumper family. Riding hunters is like doing scales in music. You learn all the exercises and get a good solid foundation, but jumpers are so much more exciting."

While entering her first year as a competitive jumper halfway through the season, Ginny still managed to qualify for the Royal Winter Fair on Clockwork, a recently purchased horse that year.

During her last year as a junior competitor, she once again showed Clockwork and another horse Old Fashioned, passed down from her older sister Margie, and was awarded the Ontario Junior Jumper title.

"She's a wonderful horse and just like a machine if you let her do the job required," Ginny says.



Stouffville equestrienne Ginny Gayford's dream of riding in the Olympics may be closer than she thinks. Here she and new Grand Prix horse

carded athletes with the chance of winning either two gold, two silver or two bronzes. I was carded with a bronze."

During this time, she also participated in two clinics organized by Anthony D'Ambrosia and Captain of the Canadian Equestrian Team Ian Millar, this time riding her newly-acquired Grand Prix horse Lyon.

### IAN THE BEST

However, because jumpers were excluded from the event last year, Ginny chose instead to participate in a Best Ever program sponsored by the Ontario government.

"The clinics were great, you learn so much from other riders especially Ian. There is no one better than him, maybe equal, but definitely not better," Ginny says. "It was also the first time I'd ever ridden Lyon off the farm and Anthony immediately fell in

Lyon show winning form during the Loblaw's Classic held in Sunnybrook Park, Toronto, June 16 to 21.

love with him and said what a wonderful horse to learn the Grand Prix on."

Now having begun her first year on this larger, more demanding endeavor, Ginny and Lyon placed eighth in the Grand Prix of Kent School in Connecticut, participated in the American Team Trials in Detroit, came ninth in the Bolton Grand Prix and ninth at the Friendship Festival in Palgrave.

"During the team trial I was pretty nervous and had a little trouble at one jump so didn't place," she says. "But Lyon was a really good guy and I learned a lot."

Having once again qualified to be a member of the Ontario Team, she also helped secure the gold medal against eight other competing teams in Boston and came fifth in Best Ever at Barrie.

"That event not only held the most wonderful memories for me but the most embarrassing as well," says Ginny. "It was held at night where shadows are the worst. I think Lyon misjudged one of the fences and we both went for a little tumble."

### RESTING LYON

Although now resting Lyon after a summer of stress-filled com-

petitions, horse and rider hope to leave this morning to compete in the Spruce Meadows Grand Prix in Calgary, Alberta.

"A rider can never stop learning and you can always gain valuable experience in three different ways, from experimenting, your coach or by watching others," she says. "Although my best experience comes from my father, we still try to keep it on a coach/student level. Of course there is that little extra personal interest involved, but he never pressures me and if someday I ever decide I don't want to ride, it won't be a problem."

Although Ginny's future goals are to become a member of the Canadian Equestrian Team, her attention now lies in securing a Liberal Arts degree with a dual minor in Art History and Spanish at McGill University in Montreal beginning this fall. She previously attended York University.

"I just love working with horses and even if I couldn't go any further, I'd want them as part of my life," Ginny continues. "I'm also very lucky to have Lyon because he's definitely good enough to compete in whatever I may want in the future."

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