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THE TRIBUNE

# Sports & Leisure

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## York Equestrian Centre is alive and doing well



### Sports Notes

Marissa Stapley

For an aspiring young equestrienne, horseback riding at the Eglinton Equestrian Centre in Cedar Valley was the stuff of dreams.

With its opulent facilities and show rings which, each summer, housed riding greats such as Beth Underhill and Monopoly, Jay Hayes and the bucking Zucarlos and Ian Miller and his stellar mount Big Ben, young horse enthusiasts could ask for no more.

As a pre-adolescent, I was nothing short of horse crazy. My bewildered parents often wondered how it was that I would refuse to clean my own room, but had no qualms about grabbing a shovel and mucking out stalls for an entire afternoon.

My folks kindly offered to drive me to my weekly lesson and were soon conned into chauffeuring me to weekly Prince Philip Games practices, various day-long horse shows, and to the stable any other time I had the urge for quadruped companionship.

#### GOOD TIMES AT EGLINTON

My best friend Amanda McIninch's mother happened to be Michele Leroux, general manager of the riding club at the time, and most weekends I took advantage of her family's generous hospitality.

Her house was right next door to Eglinton, however, and her parents only glimpses of the two of us occurred when we stopped by the house to raid the cupboards for sugar cubes and carrots.

Together, Amanda and I ate, slept and breathed horses. We would work ourselves into hysterical states the evening before horse shows, and be at the barn by four in the morning, cleaning our tack and grooming our mounts again.

The two of us would ride anything with a mane and tail, including a rather corpulent pony called Clyde, who had been raised in a cattle field and rescued by the Eglinton Pony Club just in time for a lifesaving crash diet.

Every day, we would walk through the Dressage Barn, which was home to horses owned by former Olympic Dressage team members, mother and daughter Eva Maria and Martina Pracht, dreaming of one day becoming world class riders.

It seemed that the ghost of Hans Pracht, who was one of the founders of the club, still wandered those illustrious aisles.

When Eglinton was forced to close

its doors in December, 1992, we were heartbroken.

Economic times were tough, and a riding club of such size and stature inevitably racked up bills it simply could not foot.

For a few years, the club sat practically empty, housing only the Toronto Polo Club and the Governor General's Horse Guards.

Amanda and I sought other alternatives, and were fortunate enough to find people who would allow us to ride their horses at no charge, in exchange for some basic training.

However, it just wasn't the same for us anymore.

Eglinton had closed, taking with it a little of the glitter and a lot of our dreams.

Now, the York Equestrian Centre has decided to try its hand where the Eglinton Equestrian Club failed.

#### CENTRE IS REVITALIZED

Speaking with Suzanne Philip, who now runs the centre jointly with her husband Kim, it seemed abundantly clear that the centre is flourishing, and experiencing none of the financial problems of days gone by.

The riding school is run by John Skee, who leases about 50 stalls from the Philips.

Skee has established an impressive school, reminiscent of and even surpassing Eglinton's success, opening a summer day camp which has attracted 175 students.

The facility has hosted several dressage clinics and horse shows this summer, including three Trillium shows, several "A" shows and a number of dressage meets.

Just recently, York played host to the Kedora Summer Classic Dressage Show, and this fall, will be looking ahead to yet another Trillium show and the Fall Classic "A" Show.

Suzanne said the centre has experienced a tremendous rejuvenation.

"The facility has been pulled out of the ashes," she said.

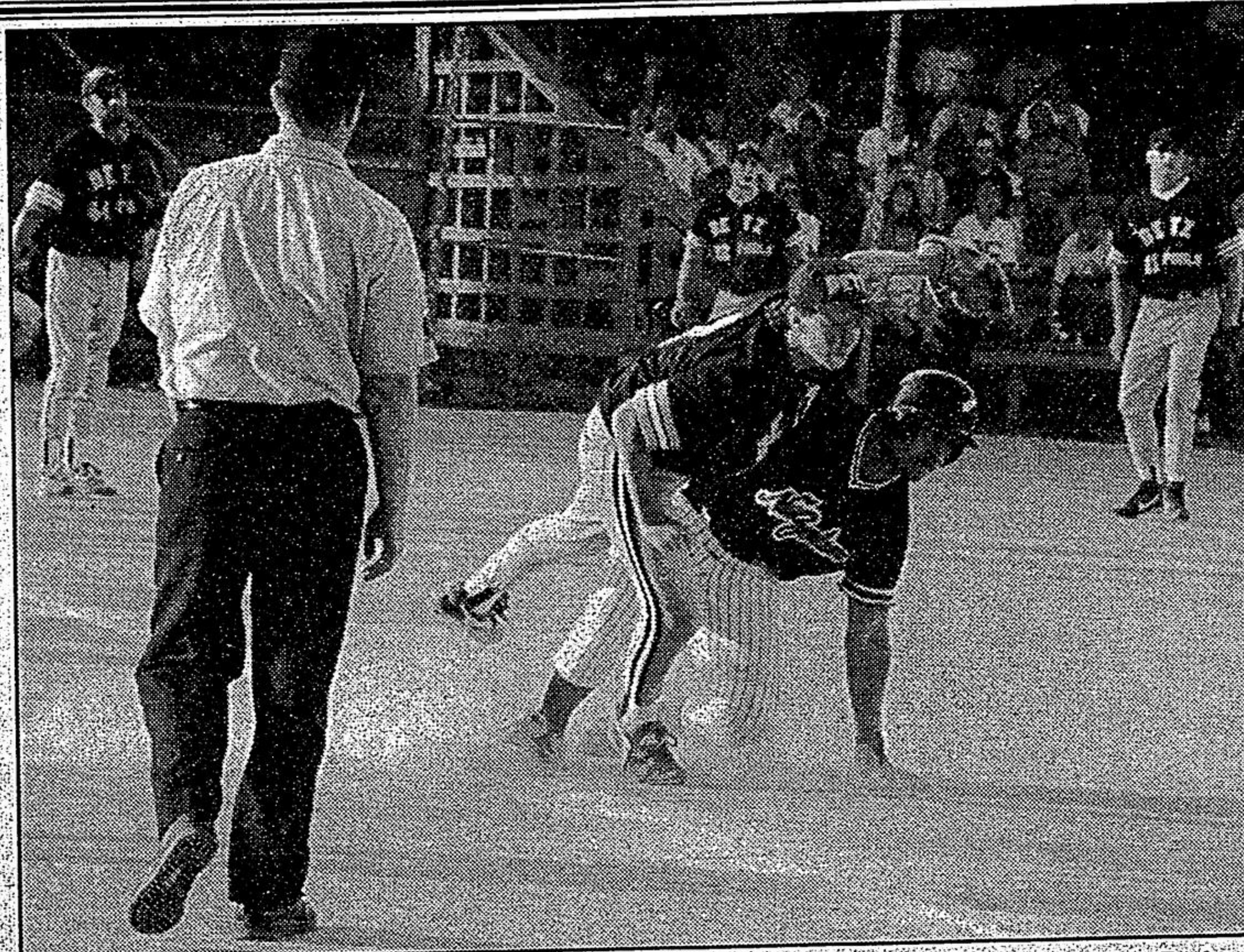
The entire facility, including three arenas, one of which is one of the largest in Canada, outdoor dressage and showjumping rings, and two clubhouses, plus acres of picturesque land, are being put to good use once again.

"It's a fabulous facility," said Suzanne. "Everyone is really enthusiastic about it."

The Philips currently board 42 horses, housing a predominant dressage community.

The boarding facility is filled to capacity and has a waiting list.

To someone who has always held a certain equestrian centre on Davis Drive close to her heart, it is a pleasure to see it filled once again with life and vitality.



**COLLISION AT FIRST BASE** Betz Pools second baseman Brett Boyd (centre), and a New Zealand baserunner collide after a throw to first base went astray during action in Wednesday's exhibition fast-ball game at the Town Park diamond. The touring New Zealand team won the contest 11-4.

Photo by LORI EMMERSON

## New Zealand's best down Betz midgets

BRUCE STAPLEY  
Correspondent

#### Black Soxed!

The New Zealand Black Sox Under-19 Men's fastball team headed off to Newfoundland and a date with Stouffville left handed pitcher Paul Koert after putting on a clinic at Memorial Park on Wednesday.

The New Zealanders, who will be out to reclaim their title from Canada at the World Junior Fastball Championships beginning this weekend in St. John's, closed out a nine-day Southern Ontario training tour by posting convincing victories over the Betz Pools midgets and the Uxbridge Bandits men's team.

Even 26-year-old premier pitcher Scott Evans couldn't prevent the visitors from handing the Betz crew an 11-4 defeat in the opener. The Uxbridge outfit was downed 7-4 in the night cap.

"They're a good team, they've got some good hitters who are at their prime at the age of 19," conceded Evans, who was bothered by cramps in his legs throughout the game.

Bandits player-coach Barry Ferguson agreed.

"They watch the ball well, they're patient hitters," he said. "And as soon as they hit the ball, they're gone, they don't stop for anything. They do the basics so well defensively, they just snapped up some hard shots."

The Betz team took an early 1-0 lead when Scott Assinck belted a sun-assisted home run to left field in the first inning. Dan Tardella's RBI single in the second frame evened the score at 2-2 after the visitors had taken a 2-1 lead in the top of the inning.

#### BLACK SOX RALLY

The Black Sox broke loose for nine runs the rest of the way to run off with the game. Mike McCauley had an RBI single for Betz in the fifth, with Evans scoring on an infield hit after stroking a lead off triple in the sixth.

Byron Baranieski held the Black Sox to three runs in four innings as he started on the rubber for the Bandits. Chris Burkholder belted a two-run home run for the Bandits to even the game at 2-2 in the third inning.

Lefthander Mark Goreski gave up four runs in his three-inning stint for Uxbridge. The Bandits rallied for two runs in the seventh on solo homers by Goreski and Rob Reesor.

The Black Sox preceded each game by chanting the Haka, an aboriginal tradition issuing a friendly challenge to opposing teams in sporting events.

New Zealand assistant coach Rick Earley said he was pleased with how his team, which is made up of players from various squads throughout the country, has come together.

The tour was planned as a training camp for the players, who

haven't played since the conclusion of their season in February.

"I'm happy with the improvement," said Earley. "It's surprising considering we're out of season."

Earley said his team's impressive doubleheader victory in Stouffville was a matter of mastering the fundamentals.

"We did the basics right, advancing the runner, etc. It was the first time we've done it (since beginning the tour)."

The New Zealand team won three and lost two in an exhibition series in Port Perry last weekend. They defeated the Betz team while losing to the Claremont Rebels and Port Perry Juniors.

It wasn't the first time Earley had encountered Evans. The coach was involved with the New Zealand team which defeated the Canadian outfit, which included Evans, in the gold medal game at the 1989 World Junior Championships.

"We were very pleased to do so well against Scott," said Earley. "We had heard a lot about him and we respected him."

Dave Kay, the Port Perry resident and OASA executive member, who organized the New Zealand team's tour, was also impressed with how the team had jelled in such a short time.

"The first couple of days they were just a bunch of guys from a couple of different teams," said Kay. "Now they're a unit. They're definitely better."