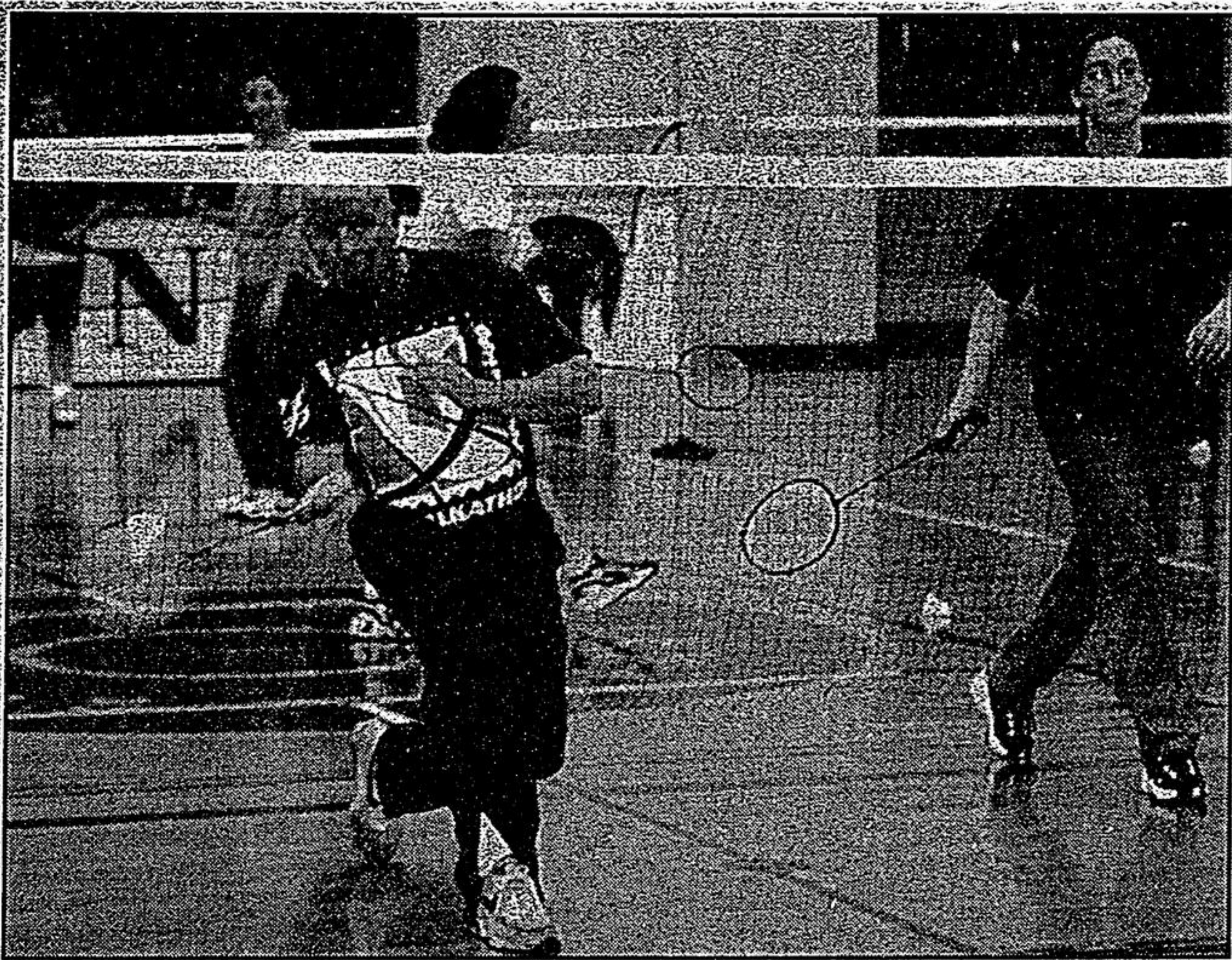


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WATCH THE BIRDIE: Stouffville District Secondary School teacher Ken Coulter (left) attempts to return the birdie while his partner, Lillian Boyd, looks on during action in Thursday's Stouffville District Secondary School Lunchtime Badminton competition. The pair took on the team of teacher Elaine Alexiou and student Chris Weatherill.

Photo by STEVE SOMERVILLE

Randolph rides away with title

A 13-year-old Stouffville area equestrienne came out of the shadows and into the winner's circle at last week's Quarterama '98 Quarter Horse show at the Coliseum in Toronto.

Ashley Randolph was named champion in the 13 and under Hunter Under Saddle class at the competition, the biggest Quarter Horse show in Canada.

The St. Mark's Catholic School student also had a fifth-place showing in the same category, and a fifth and a sixth in Western competing against riders from Canada and the United States.

She was a member of the Area 3 Youth Team, which came third overall in the team events.

It was Ashley's first time at Quarterama, and the first time she had ever shown her five-year-old quarter horse Ultimate Rider.

Her success elevated her to a plateau long occupied by her 17-year-old sister Lindsay, who has been posting victories at high level competitions for several years.

"Lindsay has won tons of prizes, even bigger awards than this," said Ashley's mother Linda Randolph.

"Ashley thought she could never do it. She had been under her sister's shadow."

Mrs. Randolph said Ashley's Quarterama triumph came as a result of a

week of grueling preshow training.

"Ashley spent March Break in Michigan training with friends for five hours a day. She had blisters on her blisters."

Buoyed by her big Quarterama breakthrough, Ashley will now travel to Lexington, Kentucky, to compete in a major five-day quarter horse show the week of April 6-11.

"Normally, she wouldn't have even gone to Kentucky," said Mrs. Randolph.

"But after doing so well at Quarterama, she's ready. She knows she's earned it."

The Randolphs keep five quarter horses at their Kennedy Rd./Bethesda Sdrd. Area farm.

Mrs. Randolph rode competitively up until eight years ago. She stopped so she could be of assistance to daughters Ashley, Lindsay and 11-year-old Blair, who is just starting out on the equestrian scene.

"I'm the one who holds it together. I drive them everywhere," said Mrs. Randolph. "We're kind of like weekend gypsies."

She said Ashley's new goal is to train hard all summer in preparation for the All-American Congress Quarter Horse competition in Columbus, Ohio in October.

New soccer team for girls

A veteran Whitchurch-Stouffville Soccer Club (WSSC) coach and builder is looking to bring the club in step with the rest of North America.

Alfons Rubbens has announced he will enter a Stouffville-based under-13 rep level girls' team into the Central Girls Soccer League this season.

The team, to be called the York Attack, will include Stouffville area girls as well as players from other York Region centres.

The decision by the charter WSSC president to form the girls team stems from a combination of the growing interest shown by females in soccer, and the current lack of rep level teams in the WSSC.

"There has been unbelievable growth in women's soccer across North America," said Rubbens.

"Of the 600,000 registered soccer players in Canada, 44 per cent are females. Plus I wanted to come back and reintroduce a competitive rep team to the club. There are over 750 players in the WSSC now, but we haven't had a rep team in four or five years."

Rubbens has impressive coaching credentials. He coached the Stouffville Panthers rep boys' team to York Region championships for four straight years in the 1980's. He has coached an Aurora under-14 girls' rep team the past three seasons, with the team taking the York title last year. He also coached a Stouffville men's team in the early 1990's, and teamed up with Tom Morton to coach recreational women's team in Stouffville earlier this decade.

"I live in Whitchurch-Stouffville," he said of his decision to return to and establish a WSSC girls rep

team. "I said, 'Why don't I go back to Whitchurch-Stouffville and play?'"

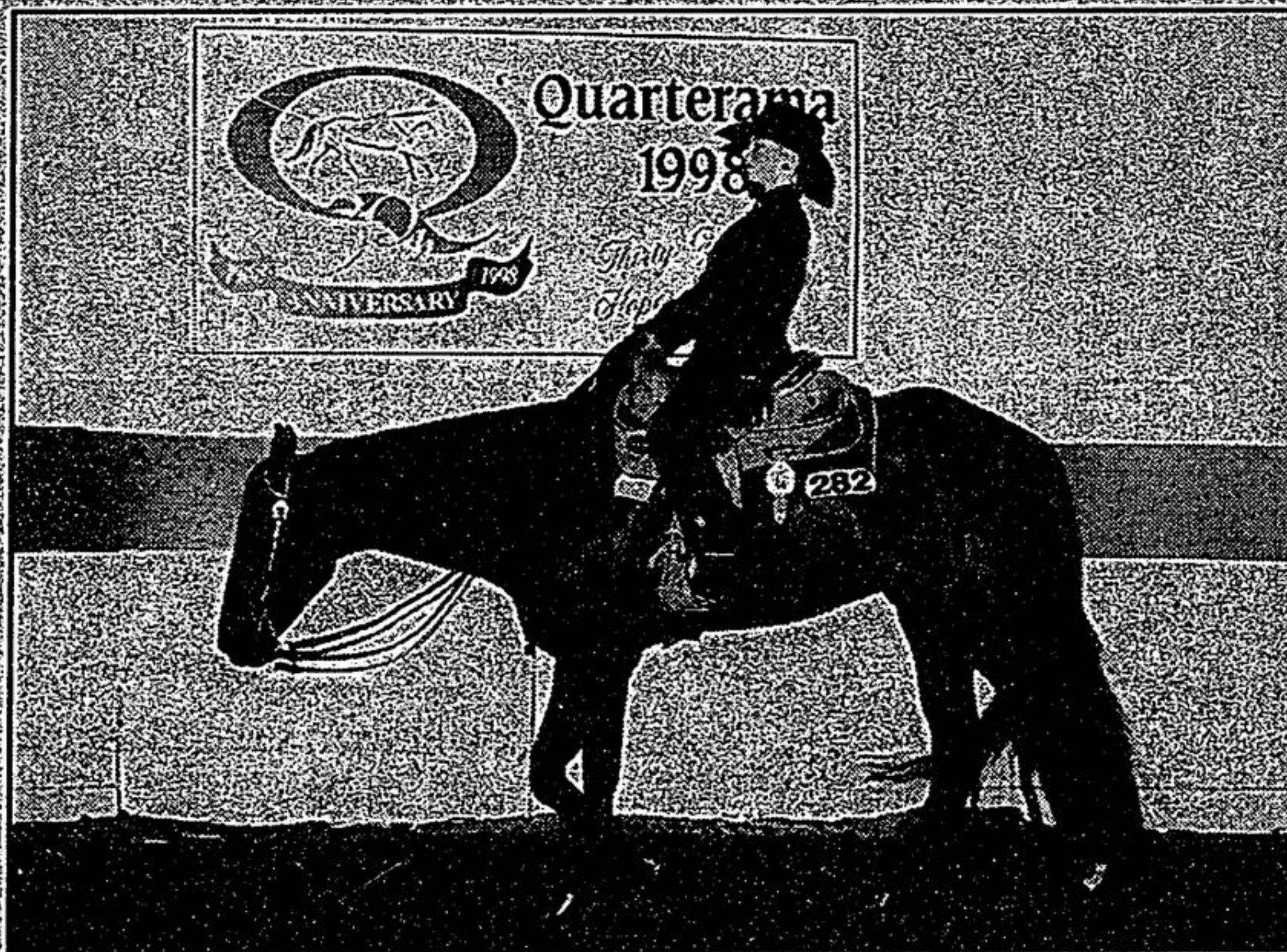
Rubbens, who publishes Inside Soccer, a soccer magazine distributed across Canada, has been tracking the rapid growth in women's soccer. He attributes the trend to the gold medal won by the United States women's soccer team in the 1996 Olympics. He predicts even greater interest when the Women's World Cup of Soccer is played in the United States next year.

While current WSSC members will be given every chance to make the new team, Rubbens thinks it would be unrealistic to think there might be enough high level local players to dominate the team in its initial stages.

"I want to give Stouffville area girls a fair chance at the tryouts, but for the first few years we'll probably have to bring in girls from other areas in order to be competitive."

He said Ballantrac residents Marlee Brooks and Julie Bagshaw, members of his title winning 1997 Aurora squad, have indicated they will join the team. He suggests it will take a season or two to develop a team capable of competing against established Central league teams such as Markham, Barrie, Peterborough, Mississauga and Etobicoke.

The Attack will play their home games Thursdays at 7 p.m. on either the Rec Centre field or on the Whitchurch-Highlands P.S. field. Players born in 1985 or before who are interested in trying out for the team should contact Rubbens at 905-8889242.



CHAMPION RIDER: Stouffville native Ashley Randolph, 13, rode off with the title in the 13 and under Hunter Under Saddle class at the recent Quarterama '98 Quarter Horse show in Toronto.

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