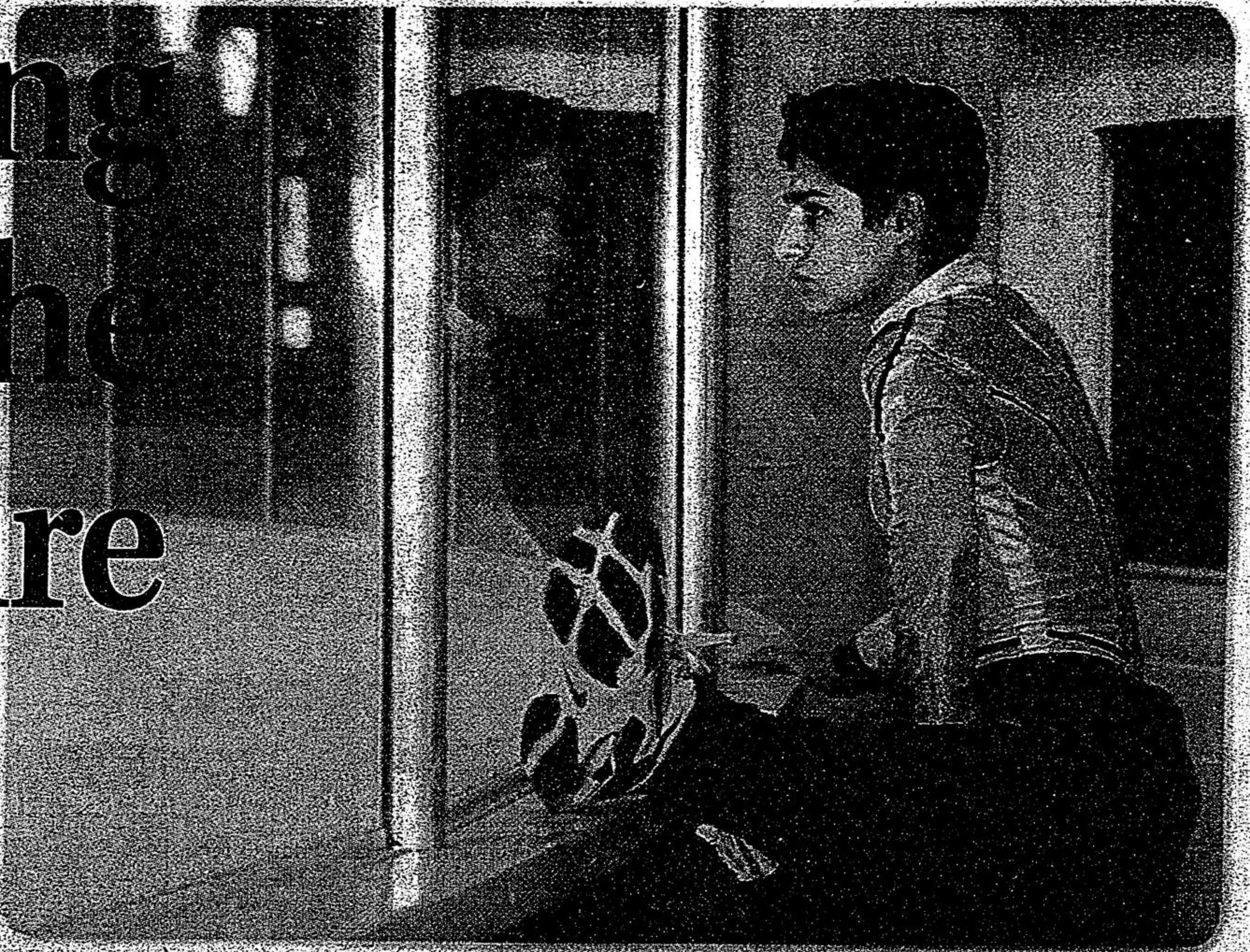


LIVING

Reflecting on the future

*He's matured, he's still as committed to success ...
Richmond Hill's Emanuel Sandhu plans a bright career on blades*



STAFF PHOTOS/STEVE SOMERVILLE

BY PATRICK CASEY
STAFF WRITER

Appearances are often deceiving. Just two inches under the six-foot mark, Emanuel Sandhu appears taller on the ice, as his skates combine with his lengthy, slender limbs to give the impression of a much bigger stature.

As he glides across the surface at Richmond Hill's Ed Sackville Arena during a 45-minute practice recently, Sandhu's grace and skill are evident among the other five skaters, who take a peek from time to time to watch the 18-year-old easily nail a series of triple-jump combinations.

A scattering of onlookers keep watch close by, waiting patiently for the young man dressed in a green and black body suit to leave the ice.

As the Zamboni enters from the far doors, Sandhu falls to the ice for the first time, but pops back up and lands one more spectacular jump before the machine completes its first lap around the Olympic-sized pad.

It has been a year of growth for the emerging young star — who splashed on to the senior mens figure skating scene with a brilliant silver-medal performance at the 1998 national finals.

Now firmly entrenched in the national spotlight as he attempts to turn silver into gold as the 1999 Canadian championships

continue in Ottawa, (he is ranked number one as he heads into the free skate today) Sandhu is remarkably candid about the role figure skating plays in the game of life.

"I have a lot of thought sessions — or meditation or pondering if you want to call it that — where I ask myself how I have grown up and how I want to keep a level head," explains the Richmond Hill resident during a lengthy interview.

"It's all a matter of knowing yourself and putting yourself in the grand scheme of things. Skating is my life but it is not life for everybody. I mean, I wouldn't put homeless people on the street ahead of entertainment because that's something that's really important. I just count my blessings for being so fortunate."

The maturation process for the rising star of the York

Region Skating Academy continues.

Although Sandhu says he always listens to the advice of his coach, Joanne McLeod witnesses his changes on a daily basis, remarking how her student's independence is normal of any high school teenager.

"It wasn't so much moving from the junior to senior ranks that's the difference,"

McLeod points out. "Emanuel is gaining a better understanding of his role and how the skaters at this level operate. He is in the public eye and is learning where everyone is coming from."

The addition of a personal trainer who, Sandhu jokes, would rather be called a strength and conditioning coach, a return to private training at the National Ballet School in Toronto and two new choreographers are all helping to mold a

complete competitive package.

"A year ago, it was just myself and the resource staff at the school," McLeod adds.

"We got out of that because we needed more selective and qualified people for his abilities.

"The trainer is working with power and strength to gain more benefits on the ice and the ballet is such a nice signature for him. We want to keep that area growing."

For his part, Sandhu is showing no traits of leading a pampered existence.

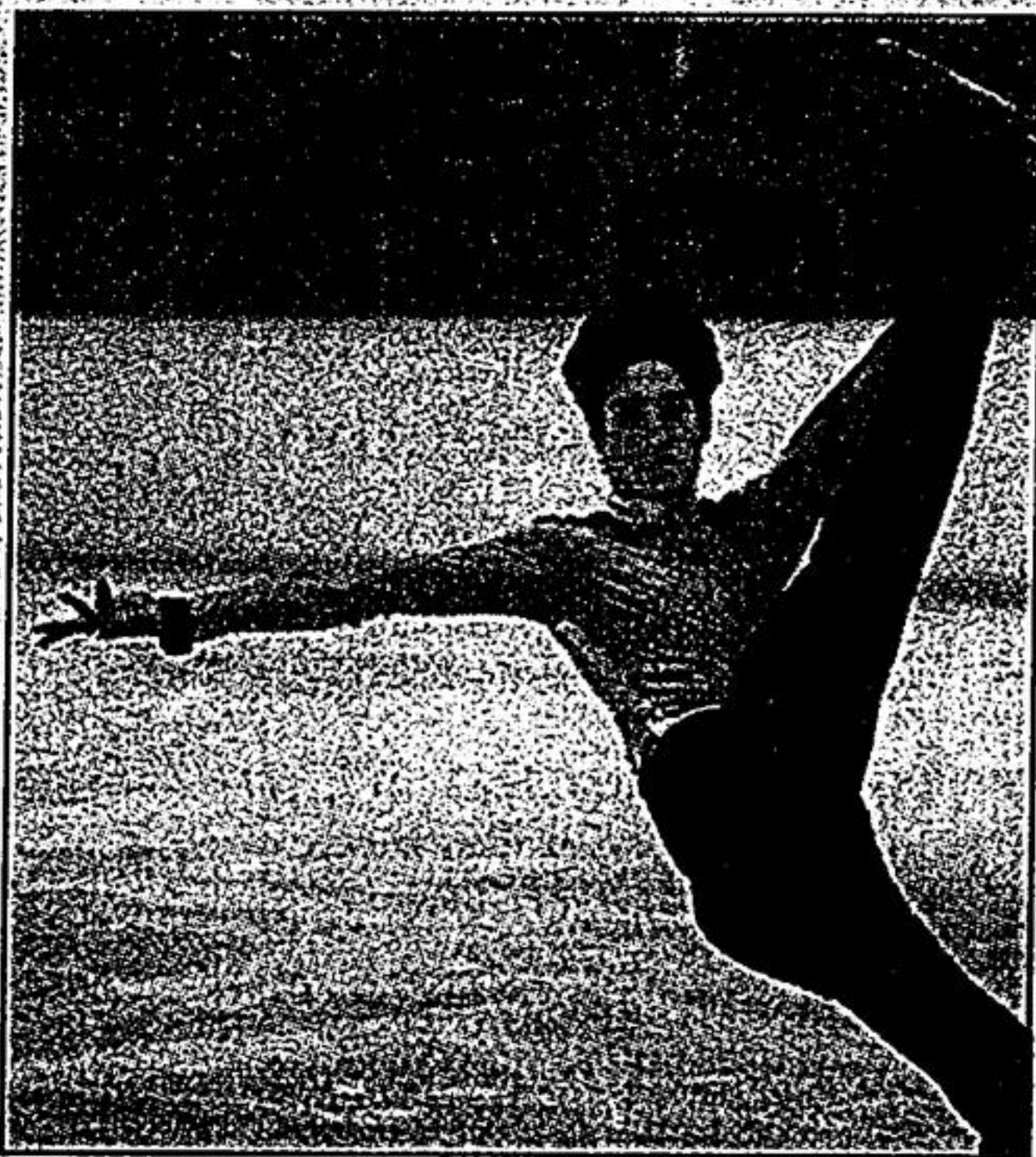
It's a stigma many skaters must carry, yet Sandhu is out of bed by 7 a.m. every morning and takes a bus to Unionville High School for OAC classes that begin 90 minutes later.

At 2 p.m., he's on another bus heading to the rink for practice before off-ice training and conditioning begins at 4 p.m. He's back on the blades after supper. It will be close to 10 p.m. before Sandhu arrives home for the night.

Part of Saturday is spent with ballet classes and Sunday afternoon, it's back on the ice before the weekly routine begins anew.

There are no taxis or chauffeured rides for the young prodigy, only public transportation.

"It's been that way all my life. A grueling



Flexibility is key to Emanuel Sandhu's grace on the ice.

See BALLETS, page 23.



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