

Men and women play side by side in Toronto Polo Club matches

Polo one of few equal opportunity sporting events

BY LIZ SHAUGHNESSY
Special

Some ladies do lunch. Others power shop or unwind with a workout at the gym.

But for women like Elizabeth Hearn and Annabel Begg, there's nothing like pulling on their riding boots, picking up a mallet and whacking around a small ball from the back of a galloping horse.

Polo is one of the few equal opportunity sports where men and women can play side-by-side. For members of the Toronto Polo Club, it is more than a game—it's a chance to socialize with good friends several days a week and to bring along the whole family. About 15 of the Club's 50 members are female, including Oshawa veterinarian Elizabeth Hearn.

Hearn has ridden most of her life, but didn't discover polo until she made the intercollegiate



JENNIFER FENTUM: Member of the Toronto Polo Club. Polo is one of few sports that allows men and women to play side by side.

team at Cornell University in 1983.

It's a passion she shares with her husband, Patrick, her partner in Hearn Veterinary Services in Oshawa.

"The one thing that makes polo special and different from the other riding disciplines is the team aspect. The camaraderie is excellent. And if you make a mistake, you just keep going," says Hearn.

"I try to ride every day and it

keeps me fit and healthy. It's less painful than going to the gym and it's great stress relief," says Hearn.

While she was growing up in Toronto, Annabel Begg longed for riding lessons, but didn't get into the saddle until college. About the same time, she met her husband, Jeffrey, an occasional polo player, who owned a farm.

Begg went to polo camp in 1991 while she was pregnant, and started playing the following summer after her son's birth.

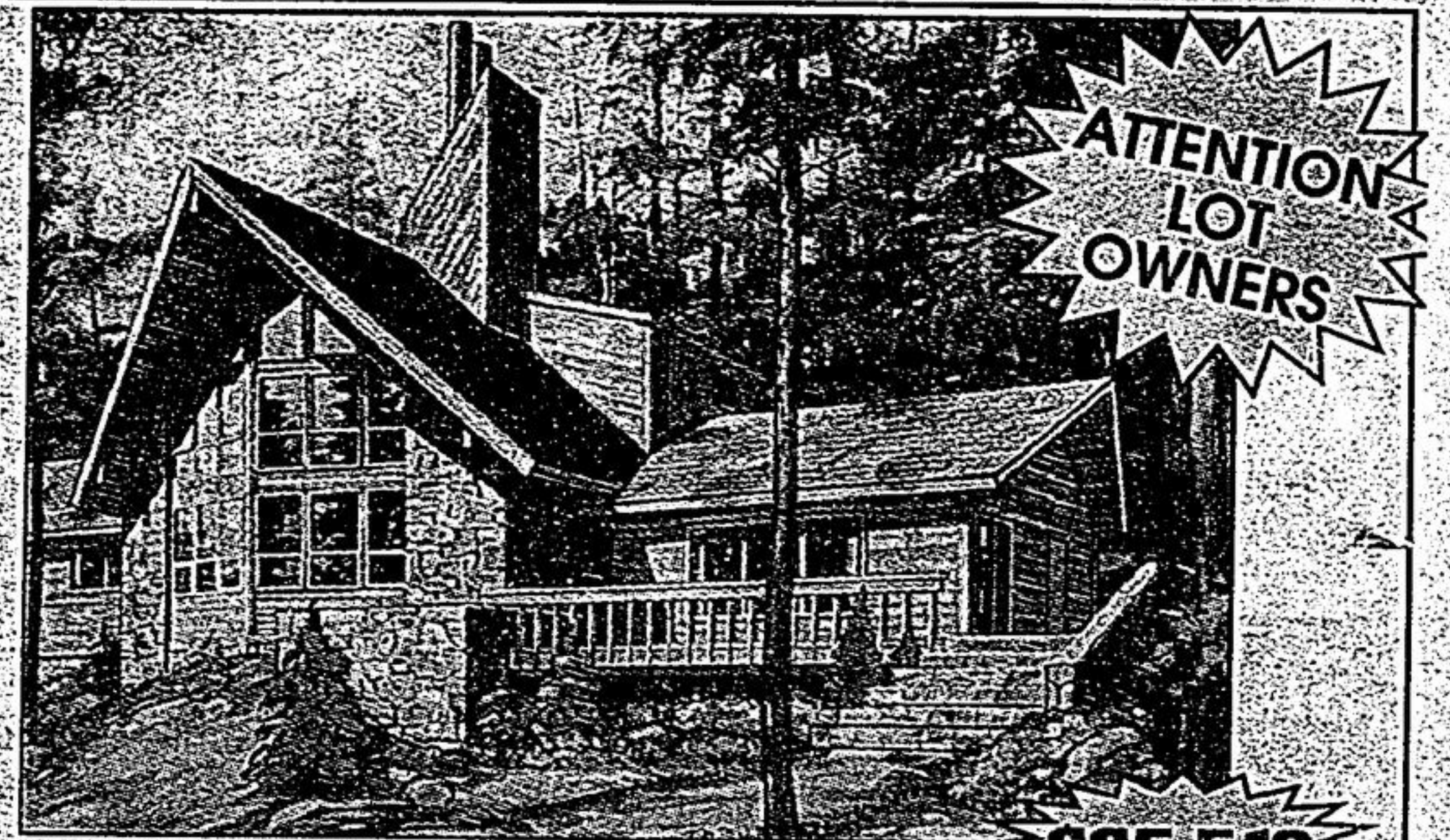
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"Polo certainly has the glamour," she says. "At a major event, like Polo for Heart, you have the top players, the picnics, the grass, the sun and spectators...lots of spectators. It's just beautiful. It definitely has its perks."



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