

# Region gets its own Crime Stoppers program

BY ROGER VARLEY  
Staff Writer

You can still call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS. But if the tipster lives in York Region, the call now will go directly to York Regional Police headquarters in Newmarket.

Crime Stoppers of York Region was officially launched yesterday although the autonomous program has been in operation since July 10, when York separated from the program run by Toronto police.

"We are our own police department, we should look after our own stuff," said Det. Const. Kim Killby, coordinator of Crime Stoppers of York Region. "It's time for autonomy of our own program."

York Regional Police Chief Robert Middaugh agreed.

"There are times when it is right to be part of a shared resource," he said. "Now is the right time for York to be an independent entity."

Middaugh said Crime Stoppers is a good example of community-based policing, noting there are crimes police have a pretty slim chance of solving

without the tips.

Also among those on hand for the launch were York Region chairperson Bill Fisch, Police Services Board chairperson Margaret Black and Markham MPP David Tsubouchi, former solicitor general.

"This is one of my favourite programs," said Tsubouchi. "I live here in York Region and I want to make sure it's a safe community."



DAVE TSUBOUCHI: "This is one of my favourite programs," says MPP.

Prior to July, York was part of the Toronto and Region Crime Stoppers organization. Because calls went to Toronto, tips for York Regional Police were sometimes delayed, Killby admitted.

"It's not a perfect world," she said, quickly adding "tips" needing immediate attention (by the York force) got it.

Although the call-in number remains the same, Bell Canada routes any calls originating in York Region to the Newmarket office.

Killby said the 1-800 line is the only additional cost to the police force for having its own Crime Stoppers.

"We're not in a position to have a local number because it would be long

distance to many residents of the region," she said.

The tip line will be staffed by either police or civilian employees of the force.

The Crime Stoppers program originated in New Mexico in 1976 and now has more than 1,000 chapters around the world.

The Toronto and Region program started in 1984 with Toronto, York, Durham and Peel as partners. Durham Region went on its own in 1988 and Peel followed suit in 1998.

Although all four municipalities originally shared in the program, each had its own board of directors, made up of volunteers responsible for raising funds to pay the rewards offered by Crime

Stoppers and for determining the amount of the rewards.

Tara MacLeod, a member of the York board, said the rewards depend on the severity of the case and the number of cases solved.

Anonymity is assured, even when it comes to collecting rewards. Each tipster is provided with a number. If the tip leads to an arrest, the caller goes to a branch of the TD Bank, provides the tip number and picks up the cash.

Last year, 453 tips were received for York Region, resulting in 108 arrests, recovery of about \$120,000 in property, seizure of more than \$5.5 million in drugs and payment of more than \$15,000 in rewards.

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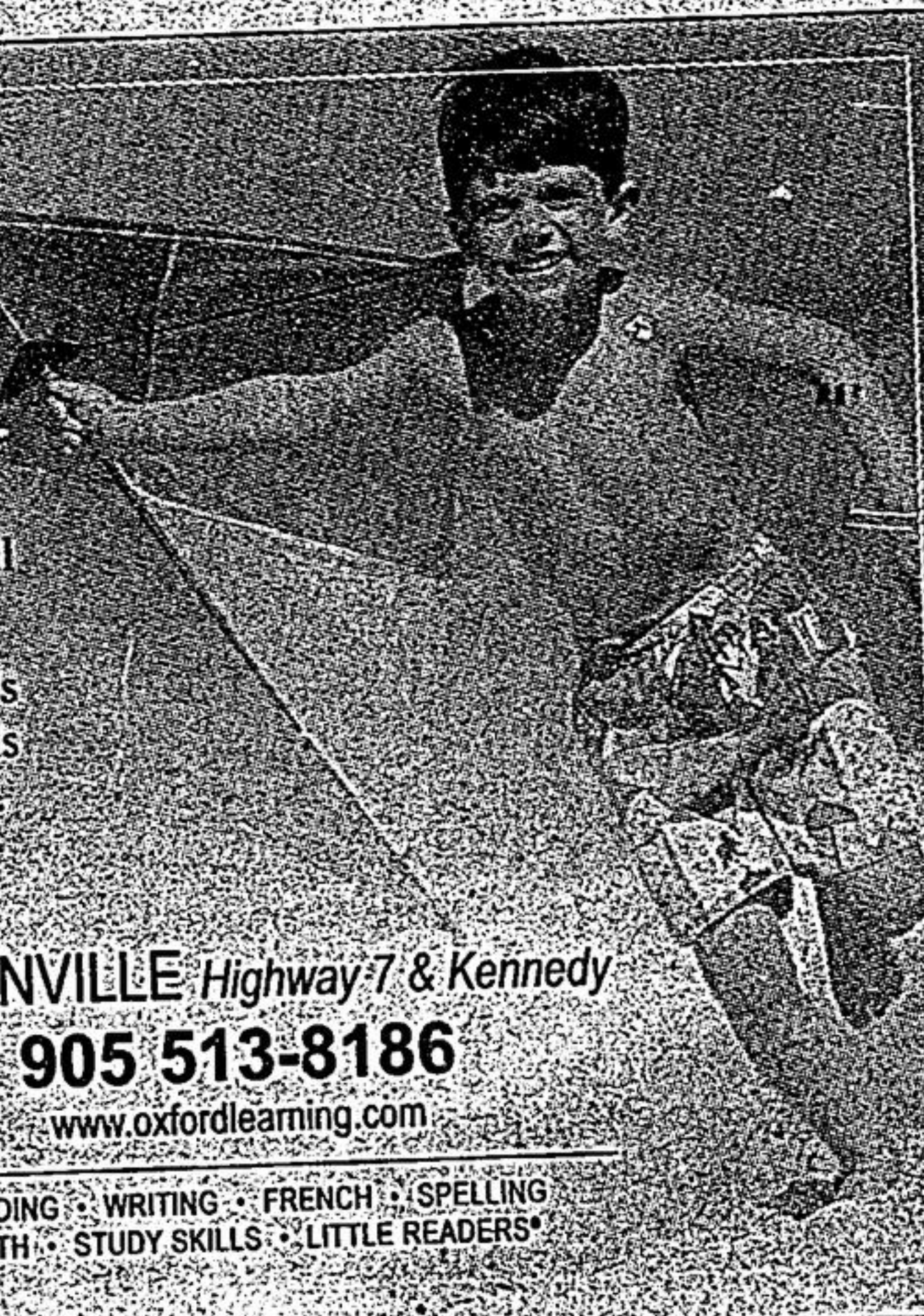
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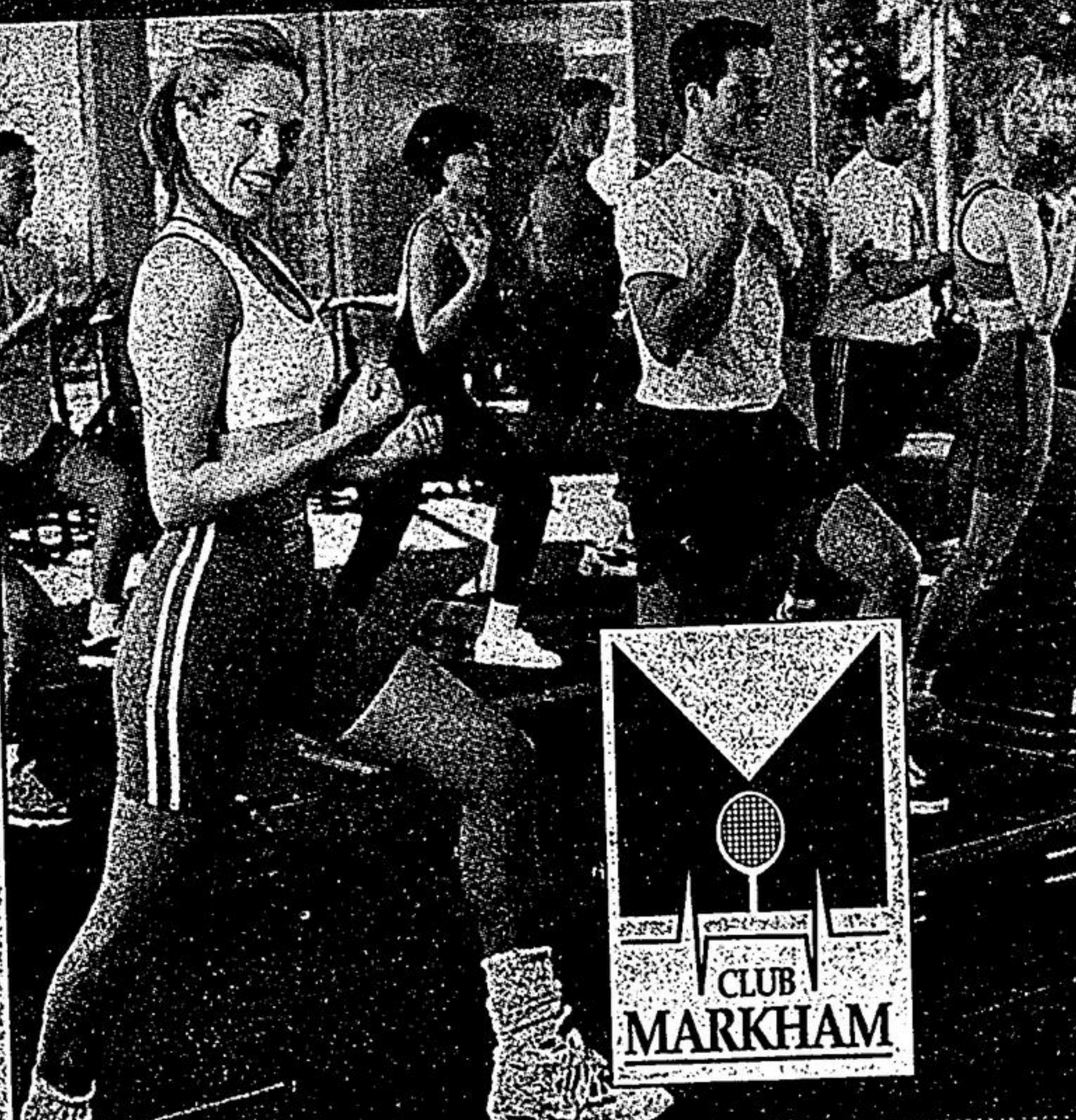
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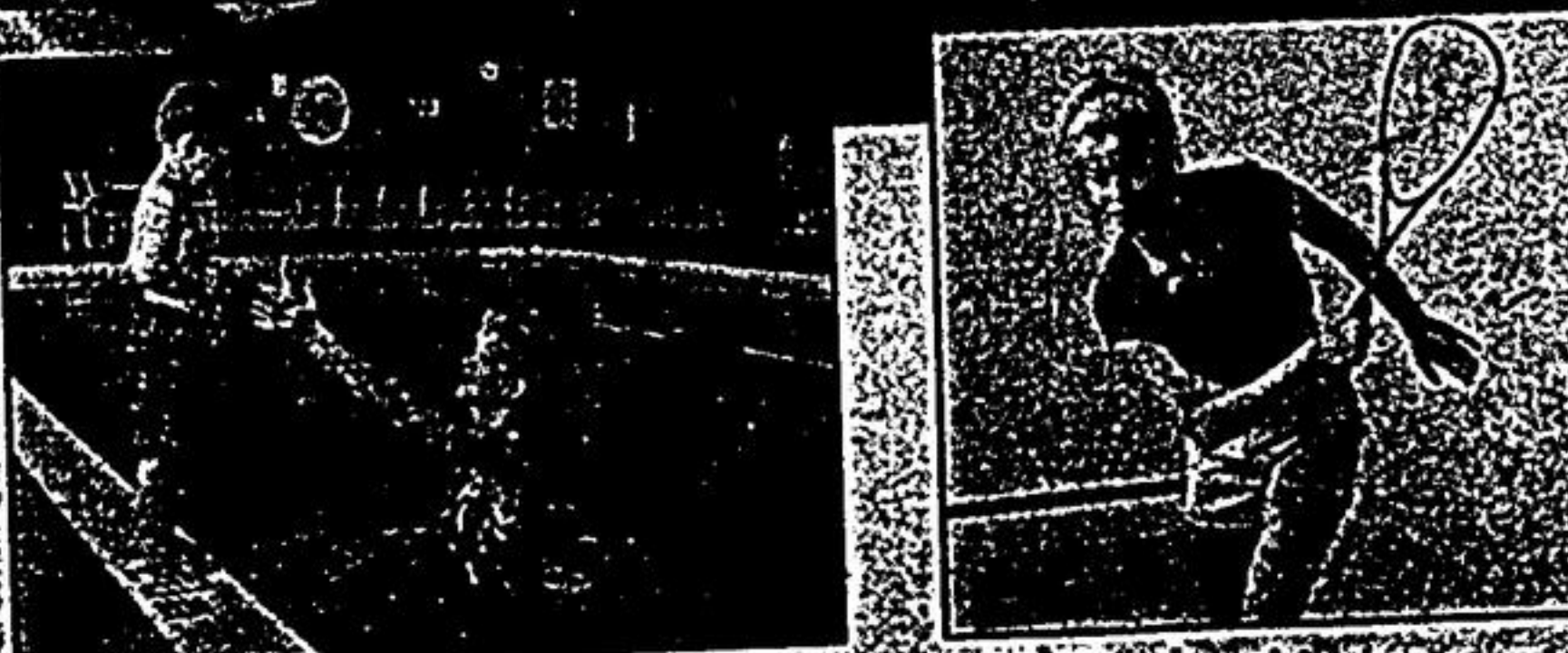
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