

# SPORTS



Mitchell Brown

Been There, Done That

## This was a less than beautiful game

George Babiolakis was just named favourite coach of the year by the Ontario Soccer Association.

Sure, he has the right mix of know-how and patience to coach under-14 girls, but now he faces his ultimate test: a reporter completely out of shape, hopelessly unco-ordinated, fearful of any and all types of pain — and who hasn't played soccer since those oh-so-suppressed high school gym classes of long ago.

Pro that he is, the Unionville coach explains to me the reason soccer is so immensely popular is because anyone can play and have fun.

"Soccer is the most popular game in the world because it's the simplest game in the world," he tells me during a break from our one-on-one session at Ashton Meadows.

"If you're overweight, or flat-footed, or the greatest athlete in the world, you can still play the game."

Although I do my best to prove him wrong, it took less than an hour of coaching for him to make his point:

See WATER, page 19.

## Escape civilization with nature trails

BY ANDREW HIND  
Special

Hiking goes beyond exercise, though it is that, too, to be sure. It brings us into harmony with nature and allows us to bask in a beauty impossible to experience from a speeding vehicle.

Nature, as witnessed by foot, is therapy for the rigours of a bustling urban lifestyle.

Thankfully, York Region has, for the most part, staved off the relentless impetus of urban encroachment to preserve a host of spectacular green spaces.

These areas form a network of walking trails unrivaled almost anywhere in southern Ontario for diversity and beauty: peaceful woods and rolling farmlands, the Holland River watershed and the wetlands of Lake Simcoe's southern shore and the rugged, ridged 300-metre high and 160-kilometre long greenland that is the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Many of these trails are located in conservation areas managed by either the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority or Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority. Others are in local parks or on private but publicly accessible lands.

Residents of Newmarket can choose from two excellent sites that demon-

strate the diversity of York Region terrain. Thornton Bales is a thickly wooded park on the moraine.

Located off Mulock Sideroad west of Bathurst Street, the trails are suitable for beginners and form a two-kilometre loop. The view of the surrounding hills from the famous 99-Steps at the trailhead, which leads down into the conservation area, can be quite beautiful.

By contrast, Rogers Reservoir features a peaceful marsh and trails that stretch along the wildflower-lined Holland River. An eight-metre bird watching observation tower offers a spectacular view, provided you're not afraid of heights.

The trails are of compacted gravel, suitable even for strollers, and are about two km, making them perfect for casual walkers and families.

The best part is the prize that awaits you at the end: a massive historic stone lock, originally built in the early 1900s to facilitate shipping between Newmarket and Lake Simcoe but never used.

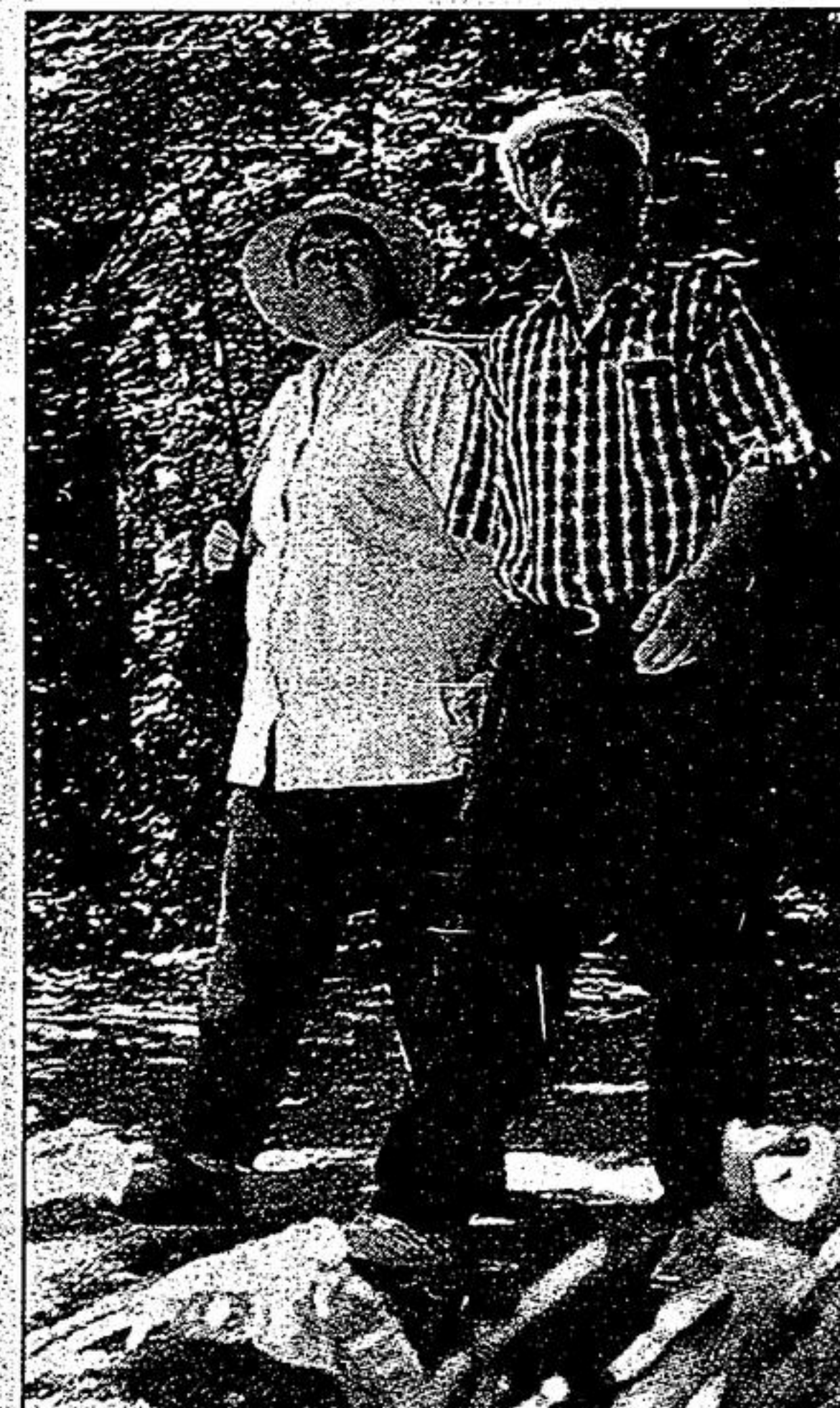
Located off the 2nd Concession just north of Green Lane, Rogers Reservoir is an oasis and welcome refuge from the bustle of urban life.

Don't overlook Sheppard's Bush, located in the heart of Aurora off

See NOT ALL, page 19.



STAFF PHOTOS/SJOERD WITTEVEEN



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Sandi and Avi Weisberg (left) walk the trails at the Kortright Centre for Conservation in Vaughan. Nicholas, 10 (below, from left), Chris, 11, and Alex Linhares, 9, cycle at Rogers Reservoir north of Newmarket with their grandfather, Bill Oxtoby. Flora abounds at the Whitchurch Conservation Area (at bottom) in Whitchurch-Stouffville.



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