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SUNDAY FOCUS

TV coverage has made old-time card game next big thing

Poker big deal in region

BY MARTIN DERBYSHIRE
Staff writer

Do you know what it's like to flop the nut flush? How about catching a set on the river or calling with a straight draw against a monster?

You can bet legions of Texas hold 'em poker fans do.

They have been flocking to online poker rooms in droves, now that the popularity of the game has reached an all-time high.

"It's a sickness," said Richmond Hill resident and admitted poker addict Stephen Smith. "I play on my laptop, whenever, wherever."

Increased TV coverage of poker tournaments featuring professional players from around the globe, including world No. 1 and proud Torontonian Daniel Negreanu, has helped make the game the next big thing.

The dot com crowd has jumped on board, setting up sites in legal jurisdictions that can be accessed from any computer capable of logging on the Internet the world over.

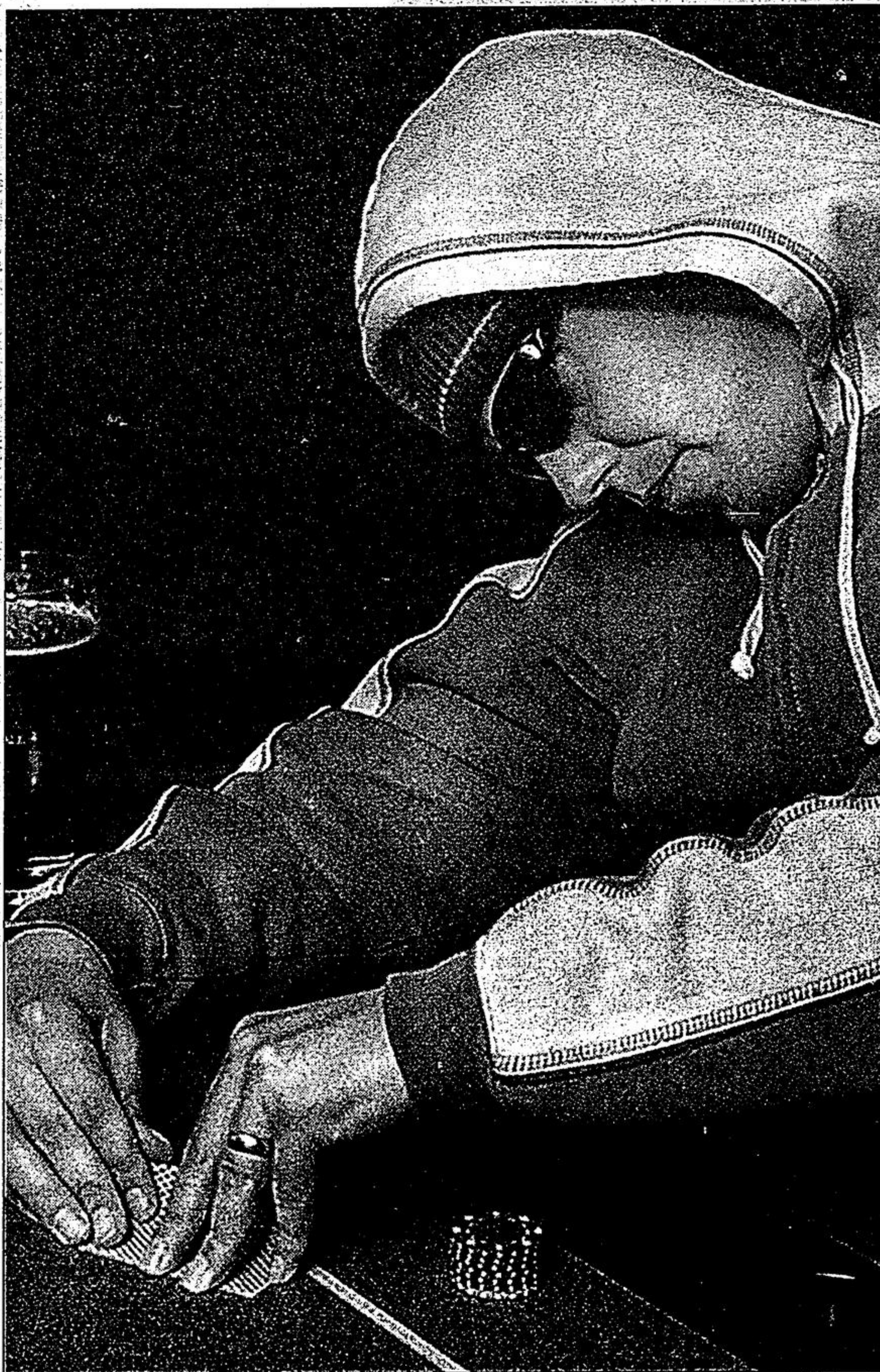
Since, by law, the only group that can run a gaming operation in Ontario is the province itself, Ab Campion, spokesperson for the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, said it is against the law to set up a poker site here.

In fact, it is also illegal for Ontario residents to play for cash, either with friends at home or on the Internet, although it's not a law authorities are enforcing.

One can still play for fun, though, a feature available on most poker sites.

Playing without risking cash can be a good way to learn the game, Mr. Smith said.

"I don't play for real money. I'm a little too responsible for that," he said.



STAFF PHOTO/TOM BARNETT

Tim Dekkema checks his hand at the World Poker Tournament at the London Pub & Grill on Yonge Street in Richmond Hill Tuesday.

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Coach charged with having child porn

'He never touched the kids,' co-worker says

BY MARTIN DERBYSHIRE
Staff Writer

The head coach of a Markham gymnastics club that employed a Richmond Hill man arrested on child pornography charges this week said there was never any indication the man was involved in porn.

"He didn't have a key (to the gym) or a (private) room. He never had private lessons. He never touched the kids," said Tatiana Zoubrilina, from the Wonderful World Of Circus & Gymnastics in Markham. "The kids liked him. He is a good coach."

Norman Howard Joseph Ingram, 64, was charged with possession of child pornography Wednesday.

Acting on a tip, York Regional Police said they found more than 100 child porn images on computer hard drives in his home.

Mr. Ingram works two or three hours a week on weekends coaching trampoline to groups of 20 to 30 children at the World Of Circus & Gymnastics and has done so for the past two years, Ms Zoubrilina said.

He is also employed by gymnastics and trampoline clubs in Vaughan and Newmarket, coaching children as young as three, police said.

Mr. Ingram has coached

'He had no money. He had an old car. He was always hungry when he would come. We would have to feed him.'

Tatiana Zoubrilina
Wonderful World Of Circus & Gymnastics

gymnastics and trampoline all his life, Ms Zoubrilina said.

Police are checking the pornographic images to see if any of his students were involved.

Mr. Ingram appeared to be down on his luck, Ms Zoubrilina said.

"He had no money. He had an old car. He was always hungry when he would come. We would have to feed him," she said. "But he never caused any trouble."

He never brought photography equipment to the gym, although Ms Zoubrilina said he would sometimes bring in personally made coaching video tapes and was always looking for young gymnasts to train for competition.

The investigation is continuing and anyone with information is asked to contact police, at 1-866-876-5423, ext. 7075, Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS, or leave an anonymous tip online at www.crimestoppersyr.ca

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