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Early birdies getting jump on season

BY MICHAEL HAYAKAWA
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Spring certainly came early this year.

In fact, during the seven years Roy Chan has been the head professional at the Maples of Ballantrae Golf Club, he couldn't recall the tulips coming into bloom and grass turning green as early as this year.

For Mr. Chan and others involved in the local golfing industry, not to mention those who like to take their swings on the fairways, spring's early arrival has been most welcomed.

Especially since it has enabled public golf courses in Whitchurch Stouffville to open their front gates a little earlier than normal.

At the Maples of Ballantrae, which hosts an 18-hole, 6,625-yard championship course and a nine-hole executive facility, the first rounds of golf were played April 2.

"It's definitely been the earliest opening since I've been here," Mr. Chan said.

While this year's opening at Maples of Ballantrae was a little ahead of the norm, he was quick to note it's not the earliest on the club's record.

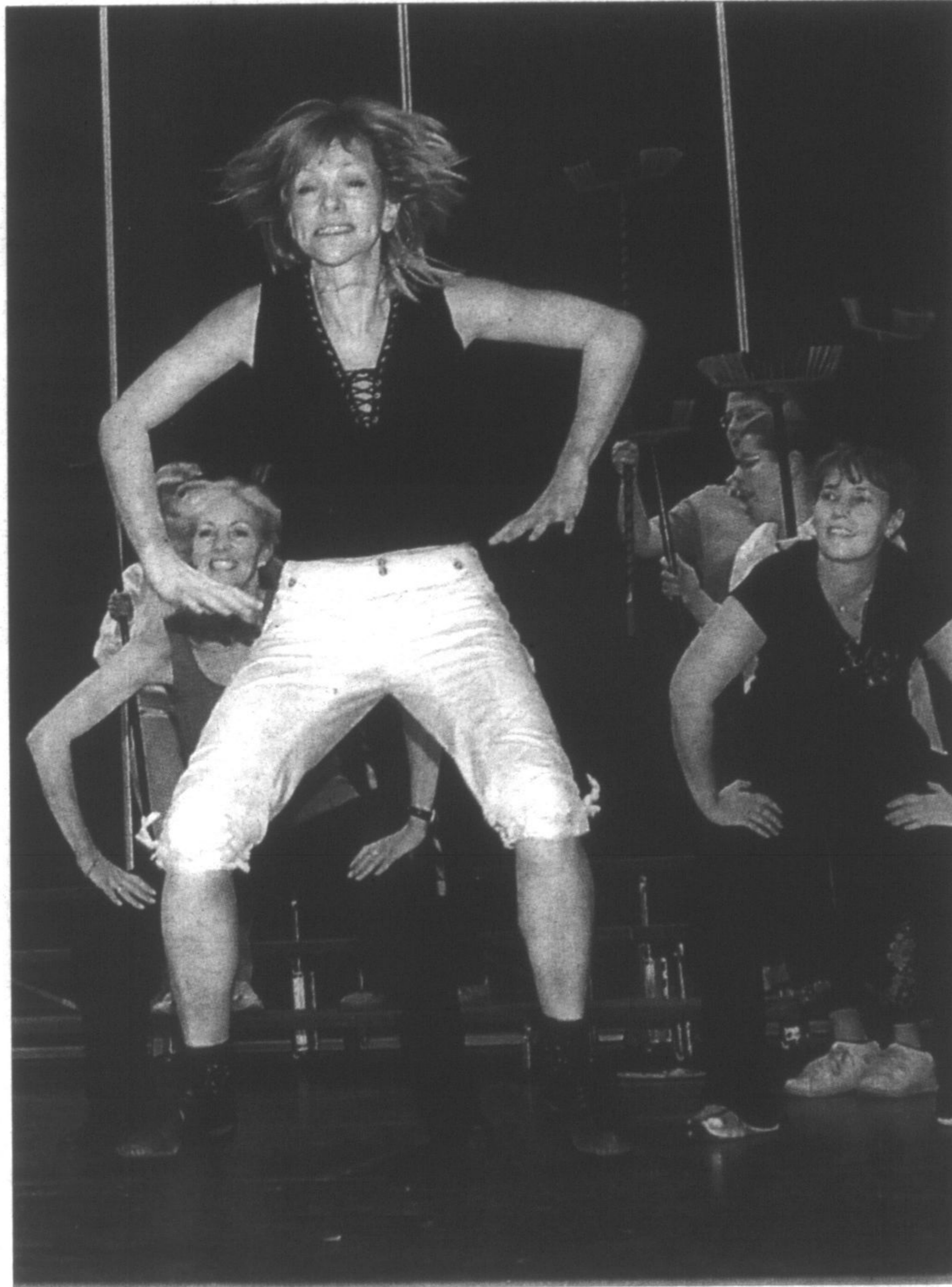
In conferring with cohort Tom Aird, a 27-year veteran of the course who is involved with tournaments and other events at the club, Mr. Chan said they've had openings as early as March.

But in opening that early when the weather can be unpredictable

See **BUSINESS**, page 11.

COMING UP

Music Mania welcomes back alumni for 50th variety show



STAFF PHOTO/SUSIE KOCKERSCHIEDT

Dancer Sandra Remme catches some air Sunday rehearsing *Step in Time* for the 50th edition of *Music Mania* at Stouffville District Secondary School. Tickets are now on sale.

Solid gold

BY SANDRA BOLAN
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During the 1950s and '60s, minstrel shows, in which white actors, dancers and singers wore stylized blackface makeup and performed stereotyped imitations of African Americans, were common.

In 1959, a group of people from the Stouffville United Church Couples Club was itching for a creative outlet and decided to stage a minstrel show, with the first production hitting the stage on April 29, 1960. It was called *Minstrel Mania 60*.

Segments of humour and dancing separated the solo and group musical numbers.

Minstrel 61 and *62* were also staged for large audiences, before the curtain closed on them.

Minstrel shows were no longer acceptable forms of performance, however, the local thespians knew there was something special about a show that utilized humour, music and dance in a unique way.

After a year away from the stage, the people who helmed the local minstrel shows came back with a new production concept, one the whole family could enjoy, and called it *Music Mania*.

The group is celebrating its 50th show later this month with a retrospective entitled *Solid Gold*.

"It's a big thing for this community and it's a big achievement for its participants because it's

See **SHOW**, page 24.

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