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**With Three Gold Medals and One Bronze Medal
UNICEF Team Canada Triumphs
At the 2008 International Tent Pegging Championships**

*Canada's entry dominates at the international championships
of one of the world's oldest equestrian sports*

Toronto, Ontario – 20 February 2008

"Having snatched victory from the jaws of rationality, our sense of dazed disbelief is unlikely ever to leave any of us," said team captain Akaash Maharaj.

"I am delighted to announce that UNICEF Team Canada has triumphed at the 2008 International Tent Pegging Championships held in India, winning an unprecedented three gold medals and one bronze medal out of the four team disciplines," said the Hon Hal Jackman, team equerry.

"It was only in 2007 that our captain, Akaash Maharaj, became the first Canadian to compete at the world championships of this most ancient of equestrian sports. Less than a year later, UNICEF Team Canada has become a giant killer of international equestrianism, displacing the sport's Old World superpowers for dominance of team tent pegging."

Tent pegging has been practised for 2 500 years and is one of only ten recognised disciplines of the Fédération internationale équestre, the global governing body for Olympic and international equestrian sport. Galloping riders use sword and lance to spear targets. The term "tent pegging" descends from the historical use of tent stakes as targets during exercises held in cavalry encampments.

"No one is more astonished by the results than we are," said Maharaj. "My hope for the International Championships had been to represent Canada with honour, and to serve the cause of the world's most vulnerable children. Having snatched victory from the jaws of rationality, our sense of dazed disbelief is unlikely ever to leave any of us."

As the sole Canadian invited to compete at the 2008 International Championships, Maharaj assembled a multinational composite team to compete as part of UNICEF Team Canada: Akaash Maharaj; Bimol Singh; Jeetender Singh; and Talwinder Singh.

Maharaj has donated three of his four medals to UNICEF Canada, which plans to auction them in support of the *Unite for Children, Unite Against AIDS* campaign, at a campaign event in Toronto this summer. Additional joint events will be held throughout the year.

There are 2.5 million people living with HIV and AIDS in India. Fifty per cent of new infections are in young people between 15 and 24 years old. Women account for 38 per cent of new infections, a trend with serious implications as more HIV-positive mothers may unknowingly pass the virus on to their children.

“We are thrilled that UNICEF Team Canada has been so successful in competition,” said Campaign Chair Aditya Jha. “Through supporters such as UNICEF Team Canada, we will be able to make a real difference in the fight against HIV and AIDS.”

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Editors' Notes

- See www.unicef.ca for additional information on UNICEF Canada
- See www.uniteforchildren.ca for additional information on UNICEF Canada's campaign against childhood HIV-AIDS.
- See www.tentpegging.org for additional information on the members of UNICEF Team Canada and the sport of tent pegging.
- See www.tentpegging.ca for Akaash Maharaj's daily account of the 2008 International Tent Pegging Championships, photographs from the competition, and additional resources.

