

Sport

The most representative Games ever

BERCELONA BRIEFS

Shaven ravers
ARCELONA, July 23 (Agencies): Two German boxers shaved their heads to celebrate their inclusion in the Olympic team.

Samba comes to town
BRAZILIAN fans wearing green and yellow wigs and thumping samba drums took over a traffic island at the entrance of the Athletes' Village to welcome their team to the Olympic Games.

When good food is bad
FORGET about wind, currents and racing conditions - Canada's Olympic yachting team chief is more worried his squad's performance will suffer because of overeating.

Nothing to hide
AN exhibitionist stripped off and bared all on Wednesday as crowds in Valencia welcomed the Olympic torch on its way to the Barcelona Games.

Everything but a dip
AUSTRALIA'S fond image as nation of beach-loving surfers has suffered a dent in Barcelona where its athletes have been barred from sunbathing in the sea next to the Olympic Village.

Rainy unrecognized
WORLD 500c motorcycle champion Wayne Rainey arrived in bike-crazy Barcelona on Tuesday and found himself crowded out by Olympic athletes, reports Reuter.

Boxers have been training in Germany and the baseball team have been practising in Italy for their first Games since Moscow in 1980.

Spain urged to stop bullfights
BARCELONA, July 23: Anti-bullfighting activists from around the world on Wednesday urged Spain to halt its bloody, trademark sport, reports Reuter.

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BARCELONA, July 23: Cuban flair, Ethiopian endurance and the raw latent talent of a South African team return to the Olympics this week in the first fully representative Games for 32 years, reports Reuter.

The radical reshaping of the political map since the Seoul Olympics four years ago has led to the return of Cuba, Ethiopia and South Africa.

In addition, the former Soviet Union will compete for the last time as a United Team while Germany field a combined squad for the first time since the 1964 Tokyo Olympics.

Cuba, who boycotted the two Olympics, bring a unique brand of Caribbean excitement to the boxing competition, headed by their dynamic heavyweight Felix Savon.

Savon is the latest in a stream of distinguished Cuban champions who have dominated world and Olympic competition, combining matinee idol looks with a dynamic right hand.

Cubans won 11 of the 12 titles at stake in last year's Pan American Games and they are set to dominate the Olympic tournament here with their

Barcelona wins gold in noise

BARCELONA, July 23: The slogans on the sheets hanging out of windows near the Olympic boxing venue show what some local residents think of the Summer Games, reports Reuter.

"Welcome to the noisy city", "Gold medal in noise" and "Everybody has a right to sleep" say some.

Residents near the Olympic venue in the nondescript working-class suburb of Badalona say they are being driven crazy by the din caused by recently-installed generators.

The venue and media centre officially opens on Saturday



ABEBE BIKILA

blend of artistry and sheer ferocity. The Cuban preparation has been typically thorough. The

when the boxers weigh in and the draw is made.

Paco Julia, the director of the venue, said on Wednesday the noise problem would be sorted out by the weekend and soundproofing was being fitted around the offending generators.

But the residents remained in militant mood. "I'm going to carry on putting out banners until they resolve the problem," said one angry man.

"It's been going about a month," said Marta, standing in the hall of her apartment block next to the Juventud Badalona basketball club which is being used for the boxing.

"It's the other face of the

boxers have been training in Germany and the baseball team have been practising in Italy for their first Games since Moscow in 1980.

One of the enduring memories of the 1960s Games is the vision of Abebe Bikila padding barefoot through ancient Roman streets to win the marathon by almost 200 metres.

Bikila, a member of the Ethiopian imperial bodyguard, was the first black African to win an Olympic marathon. He repeated his triumph four years later to confirm that new and formidable nation had emerged on the distant running scene.

Ethiopia, who also boycotted the last two games, field Abebe Mekonnen in the men's marathon and African champion Addis Gazzehne in the women's race. Both are gold medal chances in an event where tenacity and the ability to tolerate heat and humidity will be essential.

South Africa field a team half the size of the all-white contingent who competed in Rome with the emphasis on potential rather than performance.

The years of international ostracism have left their mark on South Africa, a nation where climate, tradition and

Olympics. It goes on 24 hours a day. We spoke to them and they told us we had to put up with it," she said.

Marta, who declined to give her surname, said some residents were taking legal action. Others had gone away on holiday.

Marta said the organising committee, COOB, 92, had asked residents to take down the banners. "They are more worried about appearances than our health."

But she and others remain undeterred. "Tonight I will put out another banner," said Marta. "I am going to say 'For rent. Noisy flats.'"

pure talent have produced some celebrated sportsmen. Controversy continues to dog the South Africans with rows raging over the participation of American-born javelin thrower Tom Petronoff and the non-appearance of Zola Pieterse in the main Olympic party on Tuesday.

Pieterse, who competed for Britain under her maiden name of Budd, is not a serious title contender these days and South Africa's main track hopes rest with the graceful 10,000 metres women's runner Elana Meyer.

The CIS team are expected to dominate the gymnastics competition, play a prominent part in the swimming and in Ukrainian pole vaulter Sergei Bubka they possess one of the world's great sportsmen.

A number of former East Germans will figure strongly in the United German team.

Spain urged to stop bullfights

BARCELONA, July 23: Anti-bullfighting activists from around the world on Wednesday urged Spain to halt its bloody, trademark sport, reports Reuter.

The World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) collected 2.5 million signatures in 68 countries for a petition handed in to Barcelona's Socialist Mayor Pascual Maragall.

WSPA spokesman Wim J. de Kok said: "Spain is making every use of the Olympics to promote a good image of itself abroad and yet millions of people watching the event around the world will not forget the suffering of animals in the country's bullfights."

"We hope the government will listen to international opinion and end this gruesome spectacle. Such a measure would help end Spain's reputation of having the worst record of animal cruelty in Europe."

"She'll just go and go and go until she gets done what she wants to get done."

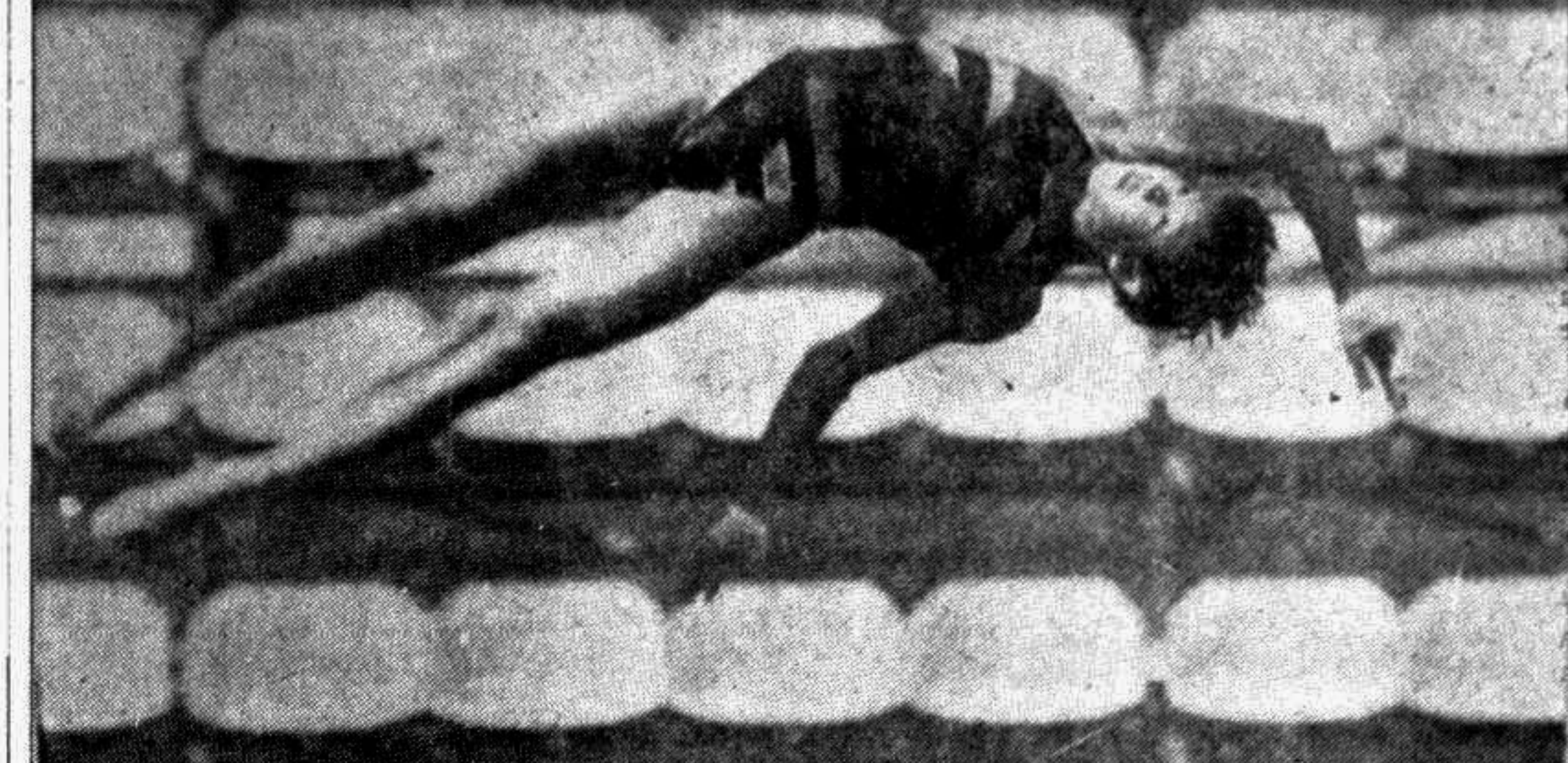
Clark has learned to accept the fact that she's downright geriatric in a sport that's getting increasingly younger. "Let's face it, I've been called the veteran. I used to think that was negative term," she said.

"It was like, 'You're so old. Gosh, when are you going to walk in with a cane and a wheelchair?' But now I take it as a positive term - that I'm experienced and mature."

Knowing this is the only Olympics she'll ever have Clark is ready to enjoy every bit of it. "Just making this team is a gold medal for me," she said. "I'm just going to soak it up."

Clark said she and 29-year-old Ellen Owen, the top platform finisher in the Olympic trials, will use their age as a weapon against Fu and her 15-year-old teammate Zhu Jinhong.

"We're going to use our maturity," said Louganis did in '88," she said.



Fu Mingxia of China practises from the 3m platform during a training session in Barcelona Wednesday. Fu is the current world champion platform diver. -AFP photo

One last Cold War battle still remains to be fought

BARCELONA, July 23: The Cold War may be over but try telling that to Kim Zmeskal or Svetlana Boginskaya, reports Reuter.

The American and the elegant star of what used to be the Soviet Union plan to fight it out one last time in the gymnastics arena here.

The Soviet women's team won nine of the last 10 Olympic titles, missing only 1984 in Los Angeles because of a boycott.

But winning one more, as the Commonwealth to Independent States, could prove much harder for the products of the old Soviet system in what should be the closest Olympic competition in decades.

Faced with the break-up of the Soviet sports infrastructure and money worries, the CIS team no longer has the depth of talent its predecessor could boast.

Boginskaya is still the most beautifully elegant gymnast to watch but, at 19—when most women have retired from a sport dominated by under 16s—when most women have retired from a sport dominated by under 16s—few would put their money on her this time.

Olympic vault champion in Seoul, Boginskaya was stunned to lose her world all-around title to the muscular Zmeskal last year.

"I think Kim's win in Indianapolis gave the Russians and Romanians a big shock," said Zmeskal's trainer Bela Karolyi, who coached Nadia Comaneci to Olympic success in 1976 before defecting from Romania.

Karolyi, who also coached 1984 Olympic champion Mary Lou Retton of the US, enjoys waving American triumph in the faces of the eastern Europeans and believes Zmeskal will help him to do it again in Barcelona.

"Of all the girls I have coached, Kim is the most intelligent," he said. "She is one of the few who has the u... as well as the body, of a true champion."

Zmeskal followed up her Indianapolis triumph by winning two golds at the World

Apparatus Championships in Paris in April but lost out to Shannon Miller at the US Olympic trials last month, handicapped by a complex scoring system.

With Betty Okino, the world asymmetric bars silver medalist, also on board, the Americans have every chance of beating the CIS in the team event starting on Sunday.

Hungary's Henrietta Onodi, world vault champion, and Romanian Lavinia Milosovic, who won on the asymmetric bars, could take some individual events. CIS head coach Leonid Arkayev tips his Tatiana Gutsu, 15, to do well even though she left Paris empty-handed.

"She only has to show what she is capable of doing," Arkayev said. "If she can produce it here then her chances will be better than her opponents."

The effects of the Soviet disintegration have been far

less marked on the men's team which still boasts a strength unmatched elsewhere.

Soviet men won the team event, all-round and five apparatus golds in Seoul and are quite capable of reproducing that in Barcelona.

"All of them are in very good form," said Arkayev. Grigory Misutin, world high bar champion, Igor Korobchinsky, the floor winner, Vitaliy Scherbo, who took rings and pommel horse gold, and Alexei Voropayev, who shared in the parallel bars title, make up an impressive team.

But there are those who hope to upset the CIS in the individual events.

China's Li Jing, joint world champion on the parallel bars and pommel horse, could win again while South Korea's You-ak Youl will be vault favourite, having won in Paris.



Betty Okino(L) and Zmeskal on Karolyi's shoulders

Former gymnastics queen now just another face

BARCELONA, July 22: The most prolific medal-winner in Olympic history will be just a face in the crowd in Barcelona - and for gymnastics queen Larissa Latynina, the experience will be bitter-sweet, reports Reuter.

Latynina, who won 18 medals between 1956 and 1964, will relish every minute of next week's showdown between CIS gymnasts Svetlana Boginskaya and Tatyana Gutsu and their American arch-rival Kim Zmeskal.

But the pleasure will be tinged with pain as the United Team of 12 former Soviet republics performs together for the last time.

"I represented the Soviet Union for 13 years. We invested so much effort in creating a strong, United Team, now this team is breaking up and personally I'm very sad," said Latynina, who arrived in Spain on Wednesday to watch the games as a tourist.

Looking far younger than her 57 years, she recalls the halcyon days of Soviet sports with a mixture of pride and regret.

"We all loved our country and our sports. Money and personal well-being were the last thing we thought about. We believed all that would come automatically, with time. But it turned out it didn't come, and

we were left with nothing."

Latynina, a Ukrainian, was all-round gymnastics champion in Melbourne in 1956 and Rome in 1960, and took second place in Tokyo at her final appearance in 1964. Nine of her 18 medals were golds.

Now she worries about the future of sport in the former Soviet Union as political and financial problems take their toll.

"I'm very afraid, there's such great uncertainty, everything is falling apart, the trainers are heading off to all countries of the world and children's sporting schools are closing down.

"To destroy is very easy. To build it up again will take years and years. Many of our people don't understand this."

Latynina believes the women's gymnastics in Barcelona is too close to call, but makes clear her own preference for 19-year-old Belarussian Boginskaya.

"Boginskaya demonstrates the kind of gymnastics I like most - femininity, artistry and beauty," she said.

Ironically, the former champion's main worry is getting tickets to watch the events.

"Marathon Mary" banks on maturity

BARCELONA, July 23: During training, US platform diver Mary Ellen Clark gets notes from her father that say, "dear Mary Ellen, Are you having fun? Love, D."

That's Gene Clark's way of making sure his 29-year-old daughter keeps her sport in perspective.

In age and circumstance, Clark couldn't be more different than the Olympic gold-medal favourite, 13-year-old Fu Mingxia of China.

Clark is the oldest diver in the competition; Fu is the youngest.

Clark, the youngest of seven children, draws her strength and support from her family; Fu was plucked from her home and leads an isolated life in one of China's elite diving factories.

"My parents always said if you're not having fun, it's time to get out," said Clark, who has been diving 22 years. "It's still a blast."

Clark's father, a diver for the University of Pennsylvania, had open heart surgery July 8, and she still doesn't know if he and her mother will be able to make it to Barcelona for the first and last Olympics in her career.

"I want them here," she said. "They'll be here in spirit."

Clark considers the Olympics her gift to her parents, a payback for all those phone calls to Newtown Square, Pa., to ask for money so she could pursue her Olympic dream. They always came through.

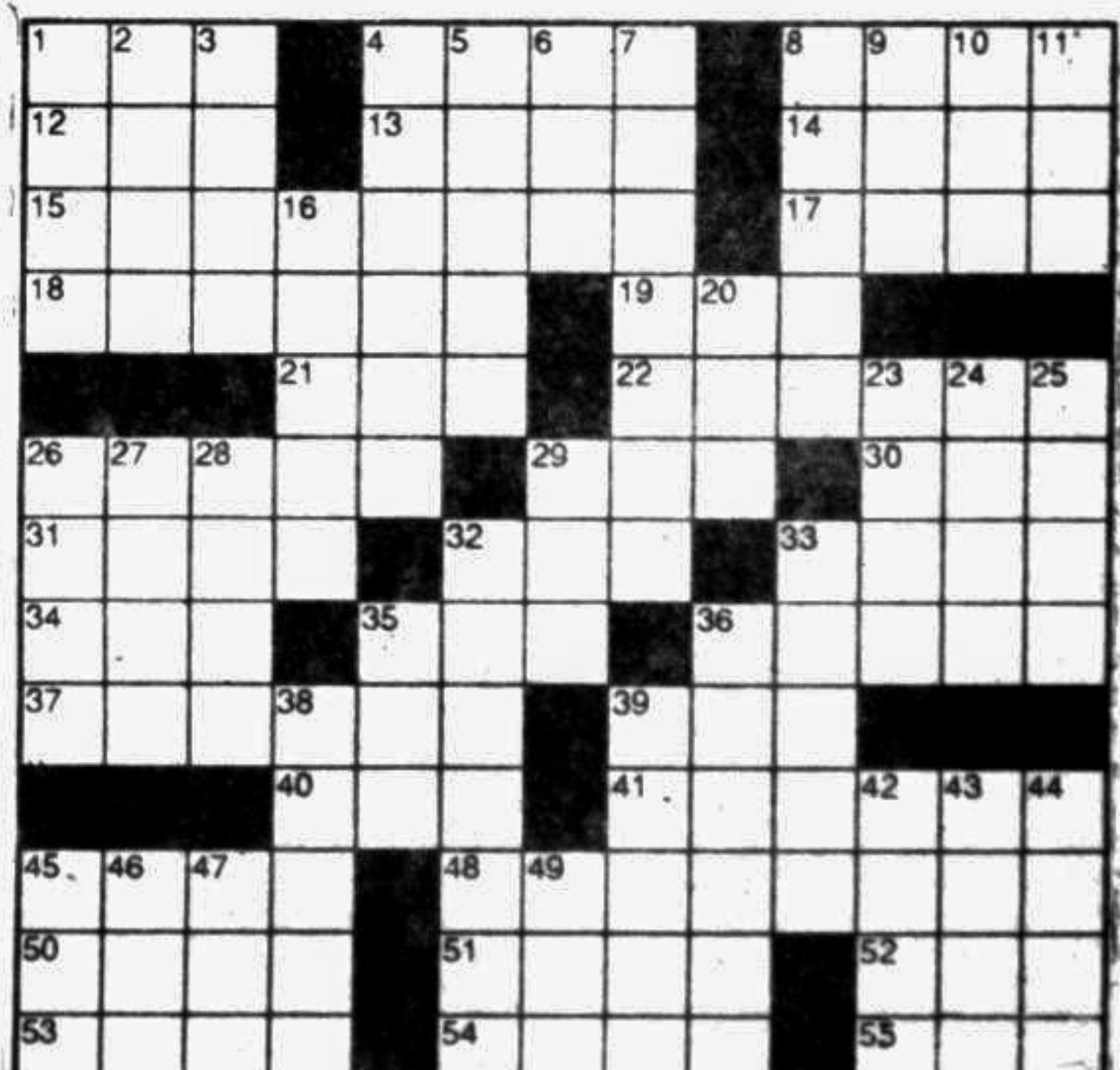
Clark gets no funding from the US Olympic Committee or diving's national governing body and was compelled to sell knives door-to-door to make ends meet. Now she has a public relations job with McDonald's as part of the USOC's Olympic Jobs Opportunity programme.

Fu burst onto the international scene in 1990 when she took first place at the Goodwill Games. At age 12 she won the 1991 world championship, but a rule change barred her from competing with senior divers the rest of that year.

In the 10 years she's been competing on the national level, Clark has won just one national title, in 1987. She hasn't made a ripple in international competition and was 12th in springboard and seventh in platform at the 1988 Olympic trials. Doggedly, she kept training. "We call her Marathon Mary," said Ron O'Brien, who coached Greg Louganis and has been working with Clark in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. for the past two years.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS
1 Suffer recession?
4 Burn a bit
8 Gumbo base
12 Postal Creed word
13 Re planes and such
14 Anthropologist Margaret
15 Sleds
17 Montreal athlete
18 Impressed deeply
19 Future flamingo
21 Choice words?
22 Is rod-montade
26 One's performances
29 Nave
30 Raw rock
31 Jot
32 Disen-cumber
33 Origin
34 Football fill
35 Prized posses-sion
36 Small change
37 Raises glasses
39 "Eureka!"
40 Noted West Point expellee
41 "L.A. Law" co-creator
45 Siamese
48 Some poultry
50 Frog-kisser's reward
51 Clamp
52 Group of atoms: abbr.
53 "Hear ye!"
54 Flawless locale
55 - Jima
DOWN
1 Noun suffix
2 Wellington, for one
3 Bric-a-
4 Brings the food
5 Pays attention
6 Timetable abbr.
7 Kane's sled
8 The end
9 Dry, hollow stalk
10 Knock
11 Bother-ation
16 Photo session
20 Sailor
23 Any minute now
24 Equine gait
25 Hardens
26 Bat a gnat
27 Colum-bus' place
28 Bit of Italian bread?
29 Yon bloke
32 Put aside
33 Do a double-take
35 Ronny and the Daytonas, hit
36 Selected
38 Olympic swimmer
39 Humiliate
42 Half: prefix
43 Brag
44 European capital
45 Love seat capacity
46 Trigger treat?
47 "We - not amused"
49 Resem-bling: suffix



CRYPTOQUIP
Y J L T R A Z G X R H L R M Y O G Y
F J V H R O A Y L Z V P Y Z V V M G
R Y T P A X J G V V A Z M L F
R X M V F Z
Today's Cryptoquip clue: J equals H
The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.



LARISSA LATYNINA ... 18 Olympic medals