

Top four in the last four again

MELBOURNE, Jan 27: Monica Seles, Steffi Graf and Arantxa Sanchez Vicario are the top four in the last four again at the Australian Open.

They took 12 of the 16 semifinal spots at the top four events last year, and they will be facing off again Thursday at the Australian Open, where they're the top four seeds.

Monica Seles, the top seed and defending champion, will put her 19-match Australian winning streak on the line against third-seeded Gabriela Sabatini of Argentina, while No 2 Steffi Graf of Germany tries to use her forehand power to beat speedy Arantxa Sanchez Vicario of Spain, the fourth seed.

All four had tough times in their quarterfinal matches Tuesday.

The graceful Sabatini had to fight off three match points to down 10th seeded Mary Pierce of France in a three-set match that lasted nearly three hours and didn't end until 1:45 am.

A hoarse Sabatini called her comeback one of the best of her career. But while Pierce certainly had sting in her shots, Sabatini knows that Seles' two-fisted blasts and ability to concentrate will be even tougher.

"I'm really looking forward to this match," Sabatini said. "I feel I'm ready to play against Monica. I'm going to have to be pretty aggressive and just try to fight each point because that's how she plays."

Seles leads 8-3 in their head-to-head meetings and has won the last three straight, although she needed three sets in one match and a tiebreaker in another.

The Yugoslav-born Florida resident surpassed \$7 million in career earnings with her three-set victory over unseeded Julie Halard of France in the quarterfinals, a match that showed an attacking style can pressure Seles.

But the ability to raise her game when necessary, demonstrated by her remarkable seven straight final appearances in Grand Slams, is the intangible that has taken Seles to the top and kept her there.

Although the odds makers have installed her as the strong favorite here, she says the players ranked below her are improving and providing constant pressure.

"I can't go on winning every tournament," Seles said. "I don't want that pressure on myself. If I do win it, that's great. If I don't, that's great, too, as long as I play something that I'd be happy with."

Graf wore down seventh-seeded Jennifer Capriati in the quarterfinals with a barrage of groundstrokes that had the 16-year-old American running from side to side. She can't be sure that will happen against Sanchez Vicario, who seems



Gabriela Sabatini of Argentina shows her strength during her match against Mary Pierce of France at the Australian Open in Melbourne yesterday. Sabatini won 4-6, 7-6 (14-12), 6-0.

particularly Sweden's Lars Wahlgren, has prepared her for the female heavy hitters.

"I have been practising in the last few weeks with some guys who were hitting the ball very hard," she said.

Sanchez Vicario, who like Graf had to come back from down a service break in both sets against fifth-seeded Mary

happens. I am not going to change anything," she said of her match against Graf. "I know the way she plays, and she knows me very well. I don't have anything to lose."

While she's not the media darling that Seles, Graf and Sabatini are, Sanchez Vicario figures that if she just keeps doing her thing her way and keeps on winning, the spot-

light eventually will come.

"It's not the first time they don't pay attention to me, but I know that I am there, so that's the most important thing," she said. "I think everything will change and people will realise that I am there, too."



MONICA SELES

Graf, who hasn't lost a set in her five matches and has reached at least the quarterfinals of 26 consecutive Grand Slam tournaments, says a little help from some male friends,



STEFFI GRAF

"I am just going to play my own game and let's see what



ARANTXA SANCHEZ

light eventually will come.

Rajshahi Div I cricket on

Sports Reporter

Bandhan Krira Chakra made a good start in the 1993 Bhorer Kagaj First Division cricket league by recording a massive 101-run victory against Willow Krira Chakra in the inaugural match at the Rajshahi Stadium yesterday, according to a message received in Dhaka.

Electing to bat Bandhan Krira Chakra amassed 183 losing six wickets in the stipulated 35 overs with Lito top-scoring with 43 and Tapash, Tuhin, Manzoor and Mithu making 42, 31, 27 and 11 respectively.

Badal took two wickets for 29.

Willow Krira Chakra were skittled out for a paltry 82 in 30.4 overs with Badal, Manzoor and Arman scoring 18, 12 and 10 respectively.

Moti took three wickets for 14 while Sabu and Shankar claimed two Willow KC scalps each.

Earlier, Deputy Commissioner of Rajshahi Saifuzzaman inaugurated the meet as chief guest.

TODAY'S MATCH
Friends SC vs Cricket Clinic Club



Saifuzzaman, Deputy Commissioner of Rajshahi, being introduced to the players prior to the inaugural tie of the Bhorer Kagaj Rajshahi First Division cricket league at the Rajshahi Stadium yesterday.

Timman poised to win Game 11

SAN LORENZO DE EL ESCORIAL, Spain, Jan 27: Dutchman Jan Timman fought back on Tuesday to keep his World Championship hopes alive when he adjourned in a superior position against Britain's world chess championship contender Nigel Short, reports Reuters.

The 11th game of their 200,000 dollar final eliminator match was adjourned after 60 moves - six hours' play.

The winner of the match will challenge Garri Kasparov for the World Championship later this year.

As the session ended Timman wrote down his next move and sealed it in an envelope which he handed to the referee.

It will be revealed when the game resumes at 3 pm (1400 GMT) on Wednesday. A scheduled news conference has been cancelled.

In the adjourned position Timman, playing white, stood poised to win both of Short's remaining pawns.

Victory for Timman would cut the 27-year-old British champion's lead from 6-4 to 6-5 with three games left to play in the 14-game series.

The odds were still against the Dutchman, who would still need two points from the three remaining games even if he won this one, to tie the contest and take the match into extra time.

Short needed only three draws or one win and one draw (one and a half points) for victory in the 14-game series.

Tuesday's game began with the same unadventurous ex-

change variation of the Queen's Gambit declined as in the fifth game of the series, which ended in a draw.

Timman changed course from this encounter on the sixth move, but for some time the opening play followed well-trodden paths.

The game was a replica of a clash between Kasparov and Swedish Grandmaster Ulf Andersson in 1988 until Timman varied with an aggressive rook manoeuvre on his 18th move.

After 52 moves an end game had been reached where Short, a pawn in arrears, counter-attacked strongly by advancing his king and rook into the heart of his opponent's position.

Tashkent quits Olympic bid

MOSCOW, Jan 26: Tashkent has withdrawn its upstart bid to host the Summer Olympics in the year 2000, but officials in Uzbekistan's capital said Tuesday they would keep chasing that gold medal of world sporting events, reports AP.

"We already are proposing Tashkent as the site of the next Summer Games in 2004 or 2008," said Igor Baraban, vice president of Uzbekistan's National Olympic Committee.

Speaking by telephone from Tashkent, Baraban told The Associated Press that he and his colleagues withdrew the city's candidacy in a letter sent this month to the International Olympic Committee.

Tashkent's withdrawal leaves seven cities in the running: Beijing; Sydney; Australia; Istanbul; Turkey; Manchester; England; Milan; Italy; Brasilia, Brazil; and Berlin.

Although Tashkent is a major city in Central Asia, with a population of more than 2 million people, its bid to capture the Olympics was viewed as a long shot.

Uzbekistan is one of the poorest republics in the former Soviet Union. It would have had to come up with an estimated \$5.5 billion to build the necessary Olympic stadium, airport, hotels and other facilities.

Hosting the Summer Games also would have forced the landlocked, largely desert country to dig man-made lakes.

Edberg brushes Bergstrom aside

MELBOURNE, Jan 27: Stefan Edberg accelerated past fellow Swede Christian Bergstrom in straight sets Wednesday, ignoring a lingering back injury to roar into the semifinals at the Australian Open, reports AP.

Two-time champion Edberg beat 62nd-ranked Bergstrom 6-4, 6-4, 6-1, serving solidly and dominating his compatriot with his power and pace as well as some crisp volleys.

Pete Sampras, the American No 3 seed, downed unseeded Brett Steven 6-3, 6-2, 6-3 as he too qualified for the semifinals. He will play second-seeded Edberg in a rematch of last year's US Open final, which Edberg won in four sets.

Top-seeded Jim Courier, the American defending champion, blitzed Petr Korda, the Czech weekend seed, 6-1, 6-0, 6-4 on Wednesday. He will now face No 14 Michael Stich of Germany, who rode his powerful serve to a 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 victory over nervous Guy Forget of France, the No 11 seed.

Korda made 50 unforced errors to only seven by Courier. "It's about the lowest I've ever heard of from me," Courier said. "I was really on every ball tonight."

The left-handed Korda said it may have been his worst beating.

"He didn't make any mistakes in the first two sets. I just said, 'You played too good,'" said Korda, who was beaten by Courier in last year's French Open final. "I think this is one of his best matches since Roland Garros. Maybe the best, he always produced either an ace or a winning passing shot."

"If ever I dropped the ball short, he came in and punished me for it."

"I was hoping he was going to get bored out there so I could have a chance. He stayed interested too long."

Sampras said there was no chance he would let his attention wander long.

"You really can't be bored," he said. "You just have to stay focused and play each point like it's the last one."

Sampras has been trying to improve with each match and has rarely appeared to go all out. Steven, who had a grueling 4 1/2-hour match in the last round, said the strategy could prove valuable.

"A player like Sampras who can play a little bit below par and still get through saves himself a little bit physically and mentally," said Steven, a former Southern Methodist University star playing in his first Grand Slam. "For me, every match was a final."

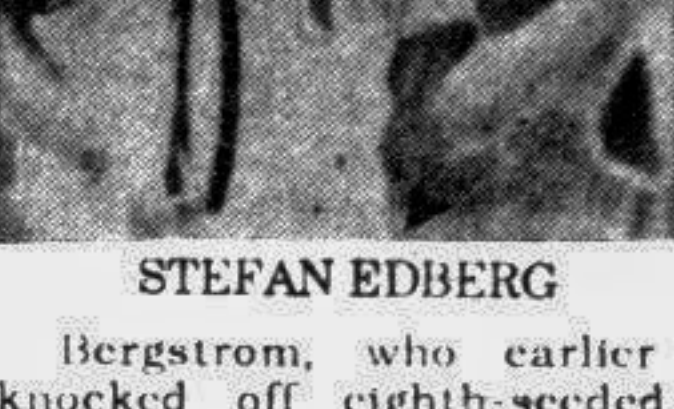
Sampras blasted 14 aces and 49 winners. The only time he had trouble was when Steven broke him early in the

third set, but Sampras bounced back immediately.

He's looking forward to playing Edberg again. "I know what he is going to do and he knows what I am going to do," Sampras said. "It's just a matter of who does it better."

Edberg again played with a brace to support his tender back, which forced him to default in the doubles Sunday. And once again he had just what he wanted - a quick match in which he only had to push hard occasionally.

The two-time champion here fought back from an early service break to run off the last four games of the first set.



STEFAN EDBERG

Bergstrom, who earlier knocked off eighth-seeded Ivan Lendl and No 10 Wayne Ferreira, broke Edberg at 3-5

in the second set. But Edberg, serving better than he did in his last match, broke back the next game. He then took the last five games of the third set.

Edberg said his court movement and serve aren't back to normal yet and that he is still receiving about four hours of treatment each day for his back injury, but that it's responding well.

"I did what I could," he said. "It took a while to find my timing. It was tough to begin with."

Stich used his blistering serves and a bit of strategy to down Forget. He won the coin toss and decided to let the French Davis Cup star serve first.

"It's always better to take a couple of groundstrokes and points before you have to serve yourself, and I thought Guy was going to very nervous," said Stich, the former Wimbledon champion who won \$2 million at the Grand Slam Cup last month. "It paid off."

He broke Forget in the first game and stayed one step ahead the rest of the way. He slammed a dozen aces and 30 other serves that never made it back in play.

"I didn't play as well as I could, but I think he was responsible for that," Forget said. "Sometimes it's kind of frustrating because I had a few chances, and every time he aces me or I couldn't get the ball back."

Sabatini pushed to limit

MELBOURNE, Jan 27: Gabriela Sabatini survived three match points to avoid a late night French mugging by 10th seed Mary Pierce and Join Monica Seles in the Australian Open Semifinals on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

The Argentine world number three was on the brink of total eclipse in an extraordinary second set tiebreak which ended 14-12, reduced a shattered Pierce to jelly and set up a 4-6, 7-6, 6-0 victory in eight minutes short of three hours.

The second set tiebreak developed into more of a soap opera than a tennis contest before Sabatini eventually capitalised on her sixth set point.

By that stage, Pierce had broken a racket string, gone in search of a bailiff to re-secure her necklace when it came loose, and forgotten to change ends at 12-12, completely disorientated by the whole experience.

She had already come running to the net convinced she had won the match with a rip-roaring forehand, only to retreat in horror when it was called wide, and her mental state going into the third set was agitated to say the least.

Sabatini, whose own frailties had been laid bare by the loss of five successive service games, managed to sneak into a 3-0 lead in the decisive set before Pierce's resistance crumbling completely, the end coming at 1:45 am local time.

Argentina's favourite sports-woman now meets world number one Seles, who earlier had her toughest match at the Australian Open for two years before beating another tough French opponent, the unseeded Julie Halard, 6-2, 6-7, 6-0.

Sabatini, who lost her voice amid all the excitement, croaked afterwards: "It could be my best comeback I fought very hard."

Morale booster for Switzerland

HONG KONG, Jan 27: Switzerland kept up their momentum towards qualifying for the 1994 World Cup by winning the Lunar New Year tournament here Tuesday, reports AP.

The World Cup aspirants defeated a Hong Kong League XI 3-2 in a physical match that came alive in the second half.

An unanswered three-goal burst in eight minutes, early in the second half, helped the Swiss to a morale-boosting win in their build-up to their European Group One World Cup qualifiers which resume on March 31 when they meet Portugal.

The Swiss, who have qualified for the World Cup since they were held in England in 1966; lead Group One with seven points from four games.

"We wanted a hard game and we got one. It was a good test of character for most of the lads and they came out

well," said satisfied Swiss coach Roy Hodgson.

After being held to a scoreless first-half by the home team, comprised mainly of expatriate players from the local league, the Swiss stepped up a gear soon after the break.

Substitute Christophe Bonvin broke the deadlock when he calmly slotted in a cross from Yvan Quentin to put his side in front in the 47th minute.

A bemused Hong Kong defence failed to shake off their lethargy as the Swiss added two more goals in the space of eight minutes through Ciri Sforza and Georges Bregy, to take an iron grip on the match.

The home team, who in the past two annual tournaments has beaten illustrious names like England's Aston Villa and Yugoslavia's Partizan Belgrade, staged a brief fightback in the dying stages.

Defender Yau Kin-Wai scored a fortunate goal when his right footed drive deflected off an opponent into the net, and then substitute Au Wai-Lun added another as Hong Kong pulled back.

But despite the partisan cheering of a capacity 8,000 strong crowd the hosts failed to pull off another shock win and keep their record in this tournament clean.

We just lost it a little bit towards the end. I was not pleased at all how we handled the best 25 minutes, but it is better to learn now so that we can put it right before the World Cup qualifiers re-start," said Englishman Hodgson.

Hodgson used this tournament to try out players who had been knocking on the doors of national representation.

The absence of three of their leading players Stephane Chapuisat (Borussia Dortmund), Adrian Knup (VFB Stuttgart) and Kubilay

Turkylmaz (Bologna), who were all unable to get leave from their clubs, gave Hodgson the opportunity to blood his younger players.

"They did very well, especially Ciri Sforza," said a pleased Hodgson. Other players representing Switzerland for the first time were defender Ramon Vega and striker Marco Grassi.

The Swiss have one more warm-up game - away to Tunisia on March 17 - before the World Cup qualifiers resume.

"This trip was very important to me as I have learnt more about the players," added Hodgson.

In addition to the experience, the Swiss were also rewarded in cash by winning the jackpot prize of 15,000 US dollars.

In the play-off for third place, Denmark's U-21 side defeated Asian champions Japan 2-1.

Tanzania pull out of '94 World Cup

ZURICH, Jan 27: Tanzania became the 11th nation to withdraw from the African qualifying rounds of the World Cup, FIFA, soccer's world governing body, said on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

Tanzania, with no chance of qualifying from Group II for the second phase, cited financial reasons for their withdrawal.

A FIFA statement said the results of the four matches Tanzania has already played against Madagascar, Zambia and Namibia would be expunged.

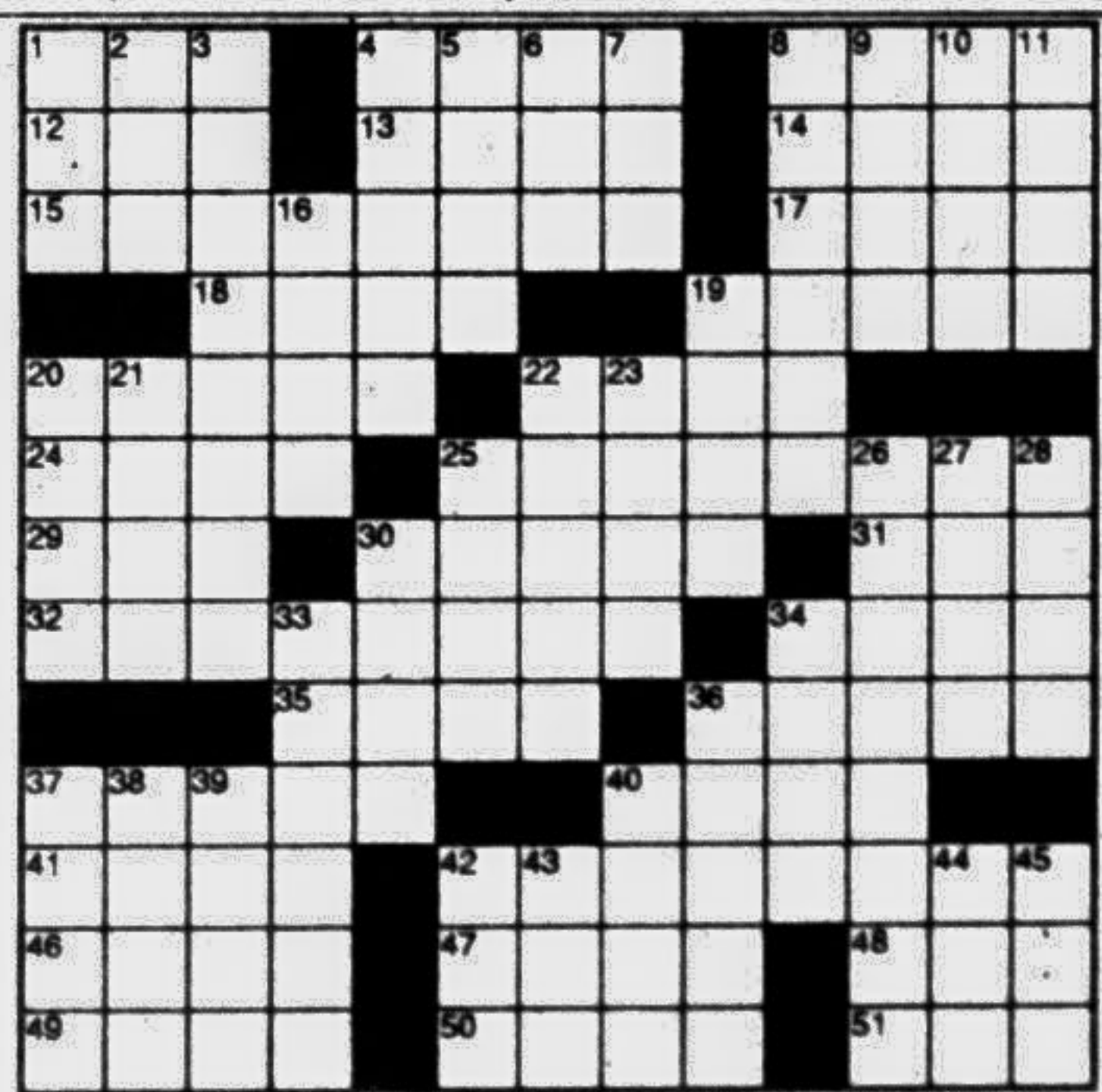
The move leaves group leaders Madagascar in a stronger position to qualify after they were held to a draw in Tanzania while closest rivals Zambia won both their matches against the Tanzanians.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	1 Opp. of neg.	4 Rue the run	8 "Novus - Seclorum"	12 Sternward	13 Tart	14 Hen pen	15 It's stuffed on Christmas Eve	17 Heavy reading?	18 Kitchen VIP	19 Amend-ment 19 beneficiaries	20 Wrote	22 Cover	24 Catcher's need	25 Personal magnetism	29 Arafat's org.	30 Twitter	31 Pull a water-skier	32 Miss, in Madrid	34 Lecturer, often	35 Ready for the																									
	36 Wore a rut in the rug	37 Young pigeon	40 Actor	41 "Family Feud"	42 Military jail	46 "Heaven's -"	47 - of lamb	48 Inexperienced	49 Bothers	50 Do what you're told	51 Turn red?	DOWN	1 - de deux	2 Fre- quently, in verse	3 California city	4 Sent out invitations	5 Hairdo	6 Attila, e.g.	7 Work unit	8 "Army" animals?	9 Leeway	10 Cupola	11 Admitting customers	16 Guitarist	19 "Enter-prise" speed factor	20 Mischief makers	21 Cleo's	22 Sajak's cohort	23 Avis adjective	25 Inte- grated circuit	26 Actress Channing	27 "Mondo Cane" theme	28 Filled with wonder	30 Nursery item	33 Speech- ies	34 Dogwood feature?	36 Apt to , argue over trifles	37 It's a long story	38 Campus area	39 "Do - others..."	40 Twelve, to Jose	42 "No seats" letters	43 Bill	44 Hudson co-star	45 She sheep

Solution time: 26 mins.

CLIP	EMU	SCOW
HERA	TUN	CODA
INON	HEM	OMEN
CANOPY	ACRE	
PALMS	SUNDAY	
GOALS	LIKE	ISA
ALLY	GAS	WAIL
NIL	PAM	MANSE
GOOD	FRIDAY	
TACT	ALLOYS	
ROTI	ERN	AREA
TIRES	ROC	ISAW
BODY	SEE	DORS



CRYPTOQUIP

O Q K S G E U - O D - S Z T Q K U

U Q D K V K U Z E Y K S T G Y

R K T G I I K V N K I I - Q K K I K V

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: SHORT ON LETTUCE FOR CHEF'S SALAD, THEY'RE PUTTING THEIR HEADS TOGETHER.

Today's Cryptoquip clue: T equals C

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.