

Barcelona, Bremen in fine fettle

BARCELONA, Mar 9: Spanish champions Barcelona and Werder Bremen of Germany light out the second, decisive leg of the European "Super Cup" at Camp Nou Stadium on Wednesday with the score level and both sides in peak form, reports Reuter.

Since last month's 1-1 first leg draw, Barcelona have gone top of the Spanish league with a run of impressive victories while Bremen underlined their well-being with a 3-0 win over Karlsruhe last week which put them second in the Bundesliga.

While both teams' minds are very much on their league prospects, they are also determined to take the trophy which pits the European Cup holders against the Cup Winners' Cup winners.

"The Supercup brings prestige to a club and its players. We want to win it as this one is missing from our museum," said Barcelona striker Aitor Beguiristain, who has hit scoring form recently and netted both goals in Sunday's 2-0 win at Albacete.

Midfield dynamo Jose Bakero acknowledged that Bremen were in fine fettle. "We want to show that they can be beaten," he said.

Confidence is high in the German camp, although Bre-



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"We don't have too many options after the first leg draw, but naturally we will give it all we have got," he said.

Austrian midfielder Andreas Herzog was upbeat. "We are playing against one of the best teams in the world but we have a real chance. We are flying to Barcelona to get the Cup," he told reporters before the squad left for Spain.

Both sides have some injury worries.

Barcelona are sure to be without Dutch midfielder Richard Witschge, who had to quit the Albacete game with a

recurring leg muscle injury.

Danish Maestro Michael Laudrup is nursing a bruised left knee after Sunday's league match but coach Johan Cruyff hopes he will play. Bulgarian striker Hristo Stoichkov has recovered from flu and will be in the line-up.

Cruyff will have his fingers crossed that his squad emerge unscathed from Wednesday's battle as they prepare for a crucial top-of-the-table home league clash with Deportivo Coruna this weekend.

Bremen's problems centre on experienced forward Frank Neubarth, who has an Achilles tendon injury, and midfielder Mirko Votava, who has a cold and a fever. Midfielder Thomas Wolter is also doubtful because of flu.

"Neubarth is definitely out but we will have to wait and see about Thomas Wolter," Rehhagel told reporters.

Teams (probable):

Barcelona — Andoni Zubizarreta, Albert Ferrer, Ronald Koeman, Pablo Alfaro; Eusebio Sacristan, Jose Bakero, Guillermo Amor, Josep Guardiola, Aitor Beguiristain, Michael Laudrup, Hristo Stoichkov.

Werder Bremen — Oliver Reck, Runc Braeseth, Dietmar Beiersdorfer, Ulrich Borowka, Andreas Herzog, Thomas Wolter, Dieter Ellis, Thorsten Legat, Marco Bode, Bernd Hobsch, Wynnton Ruffer.

Atlanta mayor pledges help to bring Games to SA

JOHANNESBURG, Mar 9: Mayor Andrew Young of Atlanta, the US city hosting the 1996 Summer Olympics, pledged on Tuesday to help bring the 2004 Games to South Africa, reports Reuter.

"It is an incredible amount of optimism to shoot for the Olympic Games in the year 2004," he told officials of South Africa's Olympic Committee.

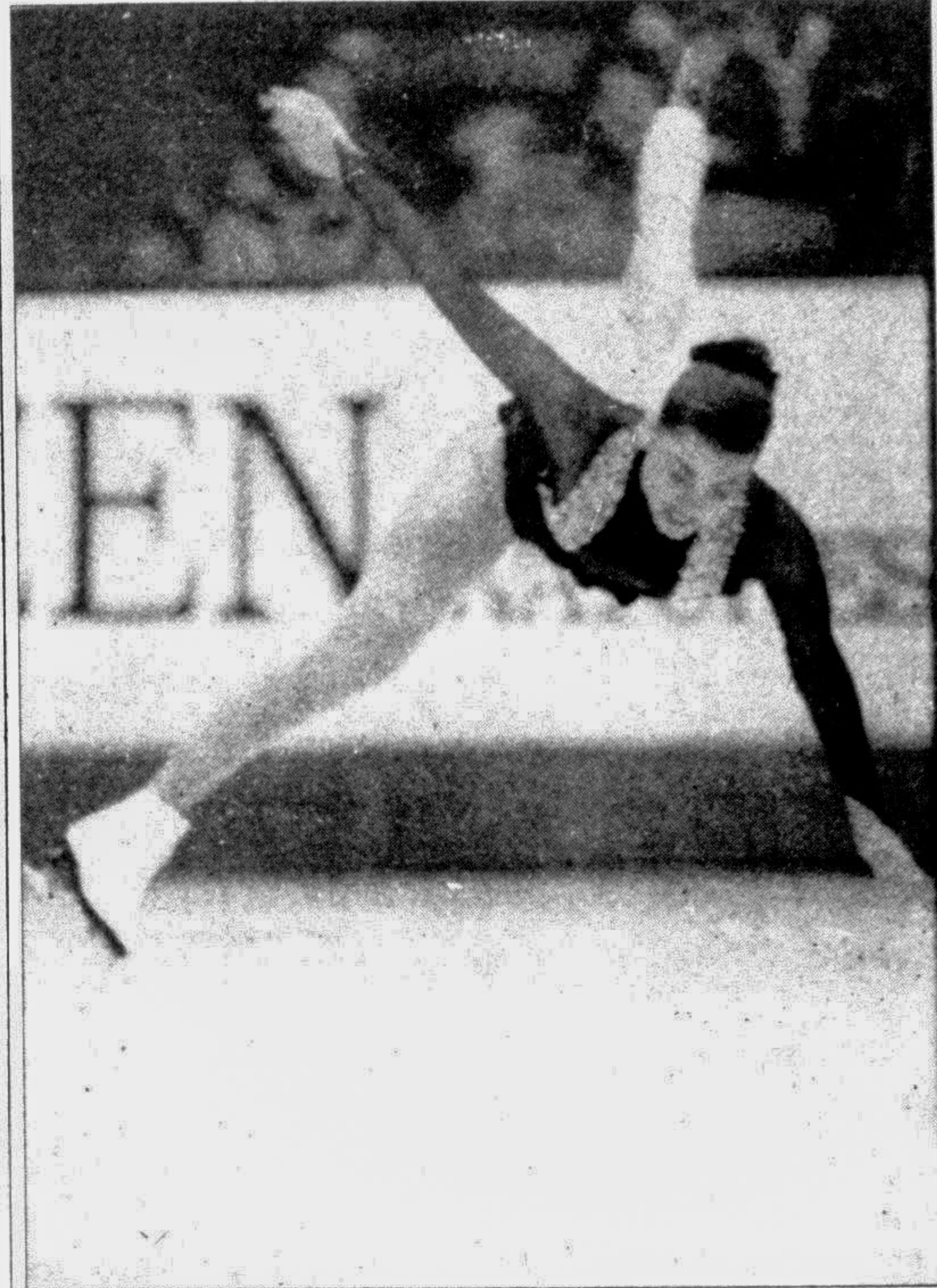
"That says that all of your political problems will be solved, that your economy will be on an even keel by 1998 when you have to make the bid," the black mayor said.

"You have my support and prayers to make that dream come true ... We owe you one and we'll pay you back."

Young handed over the Olympic flag of Atlanta to South African Olympic Committee chairman Sam Ramsamy.

The Atlanta mayor said he believed one of the reasons the International Olympic Committee chose his city for the 1996 Games was its ethnic and racial diversity.

"In many ways we have been through some of the democratic struggle that you're in the midst of, and I think the Olympics helped us a great deal to focus our attention, to realise diversity is a strength and that the only way to move forward is in peace."



American Nancy Kerrigan performs during the qualifying round at the figure skating world championships in Prague on March 8. Kerrigan, who placed second at the last World Championships, fell during the round.

Milan makes up its mind

MILAN, Mar 9: Milan is expected to announce on Wednesday the withdrawal of its bid to host the 2000 Olympic Games, reports AP.

The decision is expected to be finalized at a meeting of the bid committee Tuesday night, officials said.

The withdrawal has been confirmed by Massimo Moratti, the former bid committee president who resigned after the city government gave only narrow support to the project in January.

Moratti said the political and economic crisis in Italy's financial capital "made the decision to withdraw the candidacy a necessary choice."

"It was also a question of good taste," Moratti said. "Going around presenting Milan with a smile on the lips doesn't seem right to me. It also risks compromising the image of the city for its future."

Moratti said the withdrawal may give the city more of a chance to put together a successful bid for the 2004 Olympics.

Political instability and scandals which are rocking Milan and the entire country were cited as factors undermining Milan's chances of winning the 2000 bid.

Milan is presently without a government following the resignation of mayor Giampiero Borghini, who had supported the city candidacy.

Meanwhile, scores of political and business leaders are being investigated — and many have been arrested — in a spreading scandal of public works kickbacks.

Milan's likely decision to drop the bid will be formally submitted to the International Olympic Committee executive board, which meets in Atlanta next week.

Still in the race are Beijing, Berlin, Brasilia, Istanbul, Manchester and Sydney. The IOC will select the host city at its session in Monte Carlo on Sept. 23.

World Youth Championship Defending champs out of contention

SYDNEY, Mar 9: Speedy attacker Fabian O'Neil scored a goal in each half as Uruguay stunned defending champion Portugal 2-1 Tuesday night in soccer's World Youth Championship, reports AP.

The loss in Brisbane eliminated winless Portugal, winner of the tournament in both 1989 and 1991, from quarterfinal contention.

Uruguay now are locked in a three-way struggle with Germany and Ghana for the two quarterfinal places from Group B of the 16-nation championship.

Uruguay and Germany each have three points after two games, while Ghana have two points.

O'Neil was on target in the ninth and 88th minutes, while Portugal's goal came from Boavista striker Bambo in the 34th minute.

"A game lasts for 90 minutes, not 89," said angry Portuguese coach Agostinho Oliveira. "There is no reason to lose a game in the last couple of minutes."

Germany needed a spectacular 81st minute overhead kick from striker Carsten Jancker to clinch a 2-2 draw with African champion Ghana for them."

In the other Group C match, South Korea and Turkey drew 1-1. Cho Jin-ho shot South Korea ahead in the 49th minute and Serkan Reber equalised in the 85th.

Turkish coach Hamid Serpil Tuzun was highly critical of his team's lack of direction.

"My team played like a group of unidentifiable moving objects, completely lacking in intelligence," said Tuzun.

Brazil relied on penalties by playmaker Adriano and Gian to beat Mexico 2-1 in Adelaide, but showed glimpses of top form. Vicente Nieto scored a consolation goal for Mexico.

"The best aspect of our game tonight was our movement," said Brazilian coach Julio Leal. "I feel we are now on our way to the next stage."

The Brazilians will advance unless they suffer a heavy loss to Norway in their remaining first-round game on Thursday.

"Brazil were just too good," said Mexican coach Juan de Dios Castillo.

In Group D in Adelaide, Saudi Arabia had their second successive 0-0 draw — and had star player Fahad Al Oshesheyan sent off in the second half for a wild tackle.

"Norway are good team, but we were just a little too anxious," said Saudi coach Carlos Roberto Cabral, who disputed the dismissal of Fahad. "He was dealt with harshly all game," he said.

Norway dominated possession, but could not break through.

"It was not our lucky day, but we have a longstanding problem scoring goals," said Norwegian coach Bjorn Hansen.

Uruguay coach Angel Castelnoble, meanwhile, said he was not surprised his team beat Portugal.

"It's no surprise how well we have done in the tournament so far," he said. "People who know the Uruguay team know that it is a good team."

Australia already has qualified for the quarterfinals from Group A, while Cameroon has been eliminated from contention. Russia and Colombia will contest the remaining qualification spot from Group A.

No matches are scheduled Wednesday, but all 16 teams will be in action on Thursday in the concluding series of first-round matches.

The top two teams from each of four groups will advance to the quarterfinals of the under-20 championships for the Coca-Cola Cup, which continue through March 20.

Supplicants await gods' nod

BEIJING, Mar 9: Hailed as "gods" by their eager-to-please hosts, a team of Olympic inspectors on Tuesday left Beijing, a city so desperate for the torch of the 2000 Games that it ordered homes to douse their coal stoves to cut the smog level, reports Reuter.

To the political hardliners who control the lives of 1.2 billion Chinese, the Olympics are a chance to redeem their image stained with blood after the 1989 massacre of pro-democracy demonstrators around Tiananmen Square.

There are plenty of other cities keen to hold the Games — Sydney, Manchester, Berlin, Brasilia, and Istanbul are all bidding and Milan was too until crumpled by political scandals — but the inspectors will find it hard to resist Beijing.

Sometime in the first few decades of the next century China will become the world's largest economy, overtaking America. Sometime after that, its economy will grow bigger than all the other countries of the industrial world combined.

Perhaps by the end of this century China will be the world's most formidable sporting nation.

Its 2000 Olympians are now just toddlers, but they are already in hard training on "athletics farms," where their bones are X-rayed and their muscles tested to select the right physiques for the right sports.

Nothing has been too much trouble for Beijing in its effort to dazzle the 12 Olympic city selection inspectors on a tour of possible sites.

Factory canteens have been serving cold food for days and city residents have developed coughs and sniffles — just so the inspectors could breathe clean air.

Soft coal cakes used for cooking and to warm draughty homes send up plumes of sulphurous smog, so orders went out to extinguish all fires. For the first time in recent memory Beijing had blue skies in winter.

"We regard the International Olympic Committee as god, and what it says is a command to us," Beijing's Communist Party head Chen Xitong said before the team arrived.

Swallowing their pride, China's communist leaders have thrown the destiny of the nation into the laps of the committee which will decide on the host city on September 23 during a meeting in Monte Carlo.

Conventional wisdom has Beijing and Sydney locked into a struggle for the Games, with Manchester trying gamely to enter the fray.

With its sun and surf, its sports-crazy population and first world facilities, Australia would seem to have it all.

Melbourne thought it had done enough to get the 1996 Games, then saw them snatched away by Atlanta in the United States.

From Prime Minister Li Peng down, the message was hammered home to the inspectors that the government has staked its prestige on getting the Games.

Official propaganda has convinced most Chinese that the Games are Beijing's for the asking. A rebuff from the Olympic committee would be a national humiliation.

Inspectors were given the soft touch — attractive female companions at their beck and call — and the hard sell. Li told them: "The Chinese government will give full guarantees to the Games in terms of funds, materials and manpower if Beijing wins the bid," Xinhua news agency reported on Tuesday.

Both China and Australia are nations in search of a new identity. Australia is striving to find its place in Asia in the Pacific age. China is throwing off four decades of socialism and as many centuries of isolation.

Hosting the first Olympics of the 21st century would be a defining event for both.

Each candidate city has its unique selling point — Berlin as symbol of the new, united Europe, Istanbul the bridge between Europe and Asia. Beijing is grey, dusty and nondescript. It has a glorious past, however, and its future glitters in the distance.

But sentiment had no place in the minds of the Olympic inspectors, who made it clear they were interested only in looking at the city's transport systems, sports infrastructure and security arrangements.

Traffic in Beijing has been snarled for months by bulldozers and cranes working feverishly to widen roads and build new spurs to the subway to impress the inspectors.

The city plans seven new stadiums and gymnasiums and estimates the Games will cost a billion dollars.

Accolade for Bonnie Blair

INDIANAPOLIS, Mar 9: Bonnie Blair, who captured two gold medals in speed skating at the Albertville Olympics, Monday night won the Sullivan-Award as the nations' top amateur athlete last year, reports AP.

The 28-year-old from Champaign, Ill., finally prevailed in her fourth time as a finalist. Blair is only the third Winter Olympic athlete to win in the award's 63-year history. The others were figure skater Dick Button (1949) and speed skater Eric Heiden (1980).

Blair, winner of the 500 and 1,000 meter events in Albertville, was unable to attend the awards presentation because she is in Europe preparing for the World Cup.

Some 2,500 voters participated in the national balloting, including past winners, journalists, the US Olympic Committee executive board and members of the Amateur Athletic Union board.

The voters had to choose among 10 Olympic gold medalists. The AAU which has presented the award since 1930 in honor of its past president and co-founder, does not announce a runner-up or vote totals.

The finalists had been selected from a list of 44 nominees made by the various national governing bodies of amateur sports. The group included Mike Barrowman, who lowered the world record in the 200-meter breaststroke for the sixth time while winning an Olympic gold medal. He was a finalist for the third consecutive year.

Baumgartner, the first US wrestler to win three Olympic medals, was the oldest finalist at 32. The super-heavyweight (286 pounds), who coaches at Edinboro University, was a finalist in 1986. An athlete may win the award only once.

The other finalists:

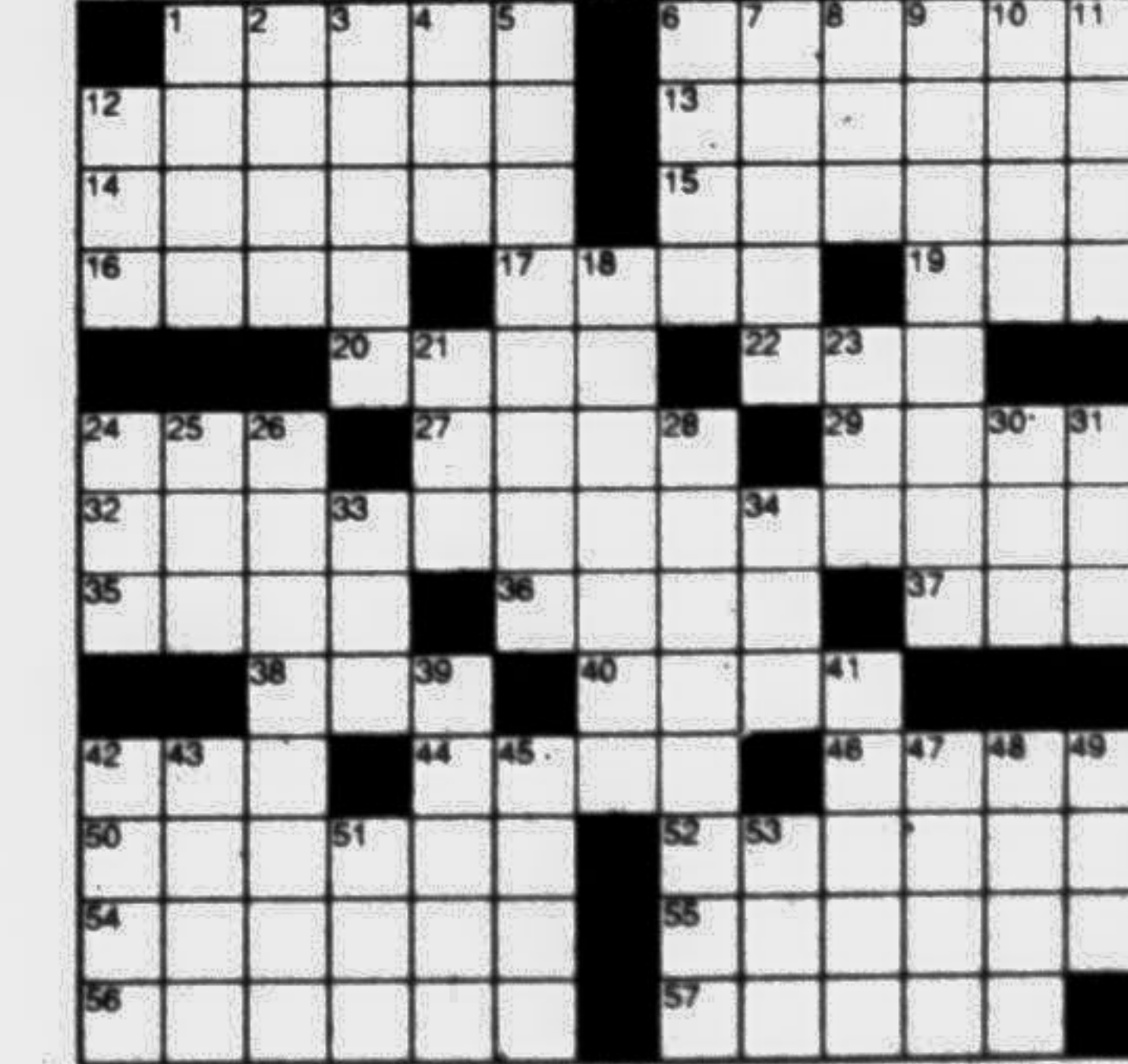
- Gail Devers, who won Olympic gold in Barcelona in the 100-metre race and was leading the 100-metre hurdles when she tripped over the last hurdle in the final.
- Oscar De La Hoya, who won Olympic gold as a lightweight boxer and is now competing professionally.
- Mark Lenzi the former high school wrestler who later turned to diving and became a six-time national champion on the springboard. He had 10 first-place finishes last year including the Olympics.
- Kevin Young, who knocked nearly a half-second off the world record in winning the Olympic gold medal at 400 metres, finishing in 46.78.



BONNIE BLAIR

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| ACROSS | DOWN |
| 1 Bactrian, e.g. | 1 N. Eng. state |
| 6 Loving touch | 2 Saharan Legerdemain |
| 12 Esprit de corps | 4 Stately tree |
| 13 Mother of the Waltons | 5 "Clue" weapon |
| 14 Riddle | 6 Part of a Batman costume |
| 15 Using a paper towel | 7 Breathing apparatus |
| 16 The King's followers? | 8 Sartorial woe |
| 17 CXXXI | 9 Bad news from the landlord |
| 19 Consonant | 10 Trig function |
| 20 Nightclub name, for short | 11 Wise |
| 22 Consume | 12 — culpa |
| 24 "Night Court" role | 18 Heat unit |
| 27 Painter's medium | |
| 29 Nuclear reactor | |
| 32 They make good bakers | |
| 35 A "Golden Girl" | |
| 36 History chapters | |
| 37 "Wayne's World" expletive | |
- Solution time: 24 mins.**
- ACROSS**
- 1 BACTRIAN
6 LOVE
12 ESPRIT
13 MOTHER
14 RIDDLE
15 TOWEL
16 KING
17 CXXXI
19 CONSONANT
20 NIGHTCLUB
22 CONSUME
24 NIGHT COURT
27 PAINTER
29 NUCLEAR
32 BAKERS
35 GOLDEN GIRL
36 HISTORY
37 WAYNE'S
- DOWN**
- 1 NEW ENGLAND
2 SAHARA
3 LEGERDEMAIN
4 STAG
5 CLUE
6 BATMAN
7 SCUBA
8 SARTORIAL
9 BAD NEWS
10 TRIG
11 WISE
12 CULPA
18 HEAT UNIT
- CRYPTOQUIP**
- F O F B M U T M , L R F A T W
- IRS UFGXOFBFU ZXBZCGTBN
- A T U F R X N B S C W U N .
- Yesterday's Cryptoquip: MICHAEL HAD A SKEL-ETON IN HIS CLOSET, AND HE MAKES NO BONES ABOUT IT.
- Today's Cryptoquip clue: Z 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.



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Cranney's lame luck

SYDNEY, Mar 9: Australian midfielder Sean Cranney is likely to miss the rest of the World Youth Championship with a serious knee injury, team officials said Tuesday.