



Michael Chang of the US whacks a double-fisted backhand return against Bernd Karbacher to post his first win against the German. The tenacious American entered the third round of the US Open quite effortlessly with his September 4 win, at the Flushing Meadow, New York. — AFP photo

Sampras, Chang spark in sprinkle

NEW YORK, Sept 5: Pete Sampras ruled the stadium court, Michael Chang the grandstand, and side by side Saturday night they avoided this year's US Open jinx to move a match away from a quarterfinal showdown, reports AP.

Ill-timed sprinkles wrecked most of the day matches as the week that wasn't at the Open disappeared in the mist.

A record crowd of 22,495 in the afternoon turned the Open into little more than a shopping mall. Players killed time huddled over backgammon boards and games of hearts.

The scheduled switches fit right in with the tenor of this tournament, plagued by injuries, illness, heat, mugginess, rain and a record number of upsets — including seven seeded men falling in the first two rounds.

But when Sampras and Chang finally got on the courts, another crowd of 20,829 packing the stands, they skirted the pitfalls that caught so many others.

Sampras, No. 2 overpowered Arnaud Boetsch 6-4, 6-3, 6-1 moments after the indefatigable Chang, No. 7, wore down Bernd Karbacher 4-6, 6-4, 6-3, 6-4.

No big surprise there. But there was out on Court 21, where Maria Jose Gaidano, the "lucky loser" from qualifying who replaced ailing Mary Joe Fernandez at the last moment,

reached the round of 16 by beating Jenny Byrne.

"This has been one of the biggest emotions I've ever felt and one of the most beautiful," said Gaidano, a 20-year-old Argentinian making her first trip to New York.

Sampras threw a scare into Boetsch in the first game of their match. The Frenchman survived seven break points and managed to hold serve after 10 minutes, but it was obvious then that it was just a matter of time before he yielded.

Sampras didn't have his usual high number of aces — none in the first set and only six in the match — but his serves of up to 126 mph (202 kph) produced plenty of service winners and soft returns.

"I didn't do much all day," Sampras said. "I got here at 10, figuring I'd play at 2. There's not much you can do. It's a little uncomfortable in the players' lounge. There are times you want to be left alone and not bothered. It's tough to get privacy."

The switch from day to night did not disturb him, though the court wasn't as dry as he'd like.

"It was a cool night and the court played a bit slick," he said. "I thought I served a little up and down. There was one streak where I couldn't buy a first serve, but I'm pretty pleased."

Chang had lost all three times he played the tall, powerful Karbacher, but hardly needed that for incentive in a

Grand Slam event. Still he welcomed the victory over the German.

"It's a real big deal," Chang said. "Down a set and down a break. I was fortunate to squeak out the second set. You can't be content to just get the ball back against him. He raps the next one for a clean winner. He goes for broke."

"I try as much as I can always to look forward, regardless of past matches. You can get in a negative frame of mind. I was taught to press ahead. Do your best to run for the prize. Keep your focus and not worry about the past, even the good things like winning the French Open in '89. I want bigger and better things."

In the only afternoon match in the stadium, slipped in between the raindrops, Patrick McEnroe played and lost. Not in the dramatic fashion of his five-setter two years ago against Jimmy Connors, but in a routine upset at the hands of No. 12 Thomas Muster, 6-4, 6-4, 6-4.

The playing time was only two hours, but it took more than seven hours to complete with a 3 1/2-hour drizzle delay in the first set and then another 1-hour delay during the second set. No sooner would the court be mopped up than another light shower would soak it again and again.

"It was difficult for everyone," McEnroe said. "We're used to it. It's part of the job. I don't think (the delays) affected the match."

We played well when we came back from the breaks. What can you do?"

He couldn't do much with Muster's punishing shots into the corners and angled volleys.

Over on the grandstand court, Natalia Zvereva ousted No. 16 Zina Garrison-Jackson 6-4, 6-3. Zvereva complained more about the humidity than the shower.

"This is the most humid Grand Slam ever," Zvereva said. "It can get hot at the French or Wimbledon. The Australian is hot but dry. I felt after the first set I was a little sluggish, and that worried me throughout the whole second set."

Besides the weather, Zvereva didn't much like the "hamburger courts" she's played on earlier "that didn't smell very nice."

The whole day was sort of stinky.

Sampras' match being moved from day to night caused the postponement to Sunday of the match between Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario, the women's No. 2, and 17-year-old Chanda Rubin. Also pushed back a day was No. 3 Martina Navratilova against Barbara Rittner.

The Maleva trio was happy, though. Magdalena Maleeva, No. 10, beat Kimberley Po 2-6, 6-3, 6-4, and advanced along with sister Katerina, a 6-1, 6-1 victory over Gigi Fernandez. Eldest sister Manuela already had reached the fourth round making this the first time in Grand Slam history three sisters have gotten so far in a tournament.

Nigerian booters herald new dawn

LAGOS, Nigeria, Sept 5: The last time Nigeria's young soccer team won a World Cup championship was just before the dictator took over in 1985. Just weeks after he stepped down, they won another one. Coincidence? reports AP.

"Everyone's saying our bad luck has ended because the dictatorship's over," said businessman Olujimi King.

Nigeria's Under-17 squad took the Junior World Cup on Saturday when they beat Ghana 2-1 at a final played in Tokyo.

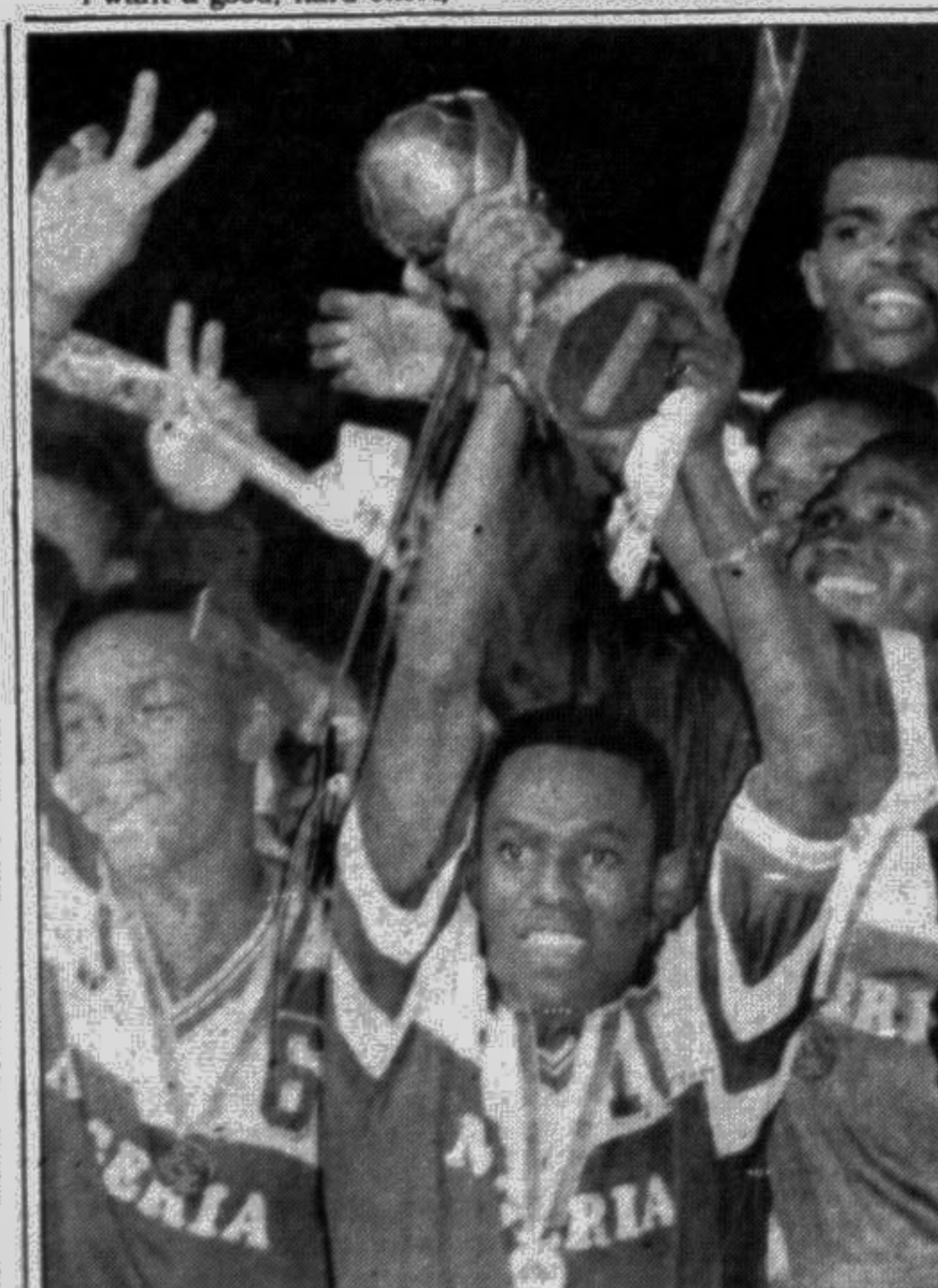
Soccer-crazy Nigerians flooded the city's outdoor bars and restaurants on Sunday, downing beers and cokes, and taking time out from the political crisis Gen Ibrahim Babangida left behind when he retired under pressure on Aug 26.

But most people walked to the bars because of a fuel crisis caused by striking oil workers who want to topple the civilian government of businessman Ernest Shonekan, installed by the general when he left power.

There was no fuel available at any of the capital's more than 1,000 gas stations Sunday, despite the army's weekend announcement that it was deploying soldiers to take over oil depots, pumping stations and oil tankers.

On Friday, the Nigerian Labour Congress announced they were calling off the six-day work stoppage. The 41-union congress said it had negotiated with Shonekan and he had agreed to stop plans to raise gas prices by 1,000 percent.

However, Shonekan refused the main demand of the congress: 4 million members: that he had over power to the winner the annulled June 12 elections, billionaire tycoon Moshood KO Abiola.



ANOTHER ONE: Wilson Oruma (C), the captain of the Nigerian team holds aloft the Under-17 World Football Championship trophy amidst cheers and celebrations of his peers. Nigeria beat continental neighbours Ghana in the final in Tokyo on September 4. Nigeria had won the championship earlier in 1985. — AFP photo

It's oldies' way of the world

NEW YORK, Sept 5: The early disappearing act of many of the top men players at the US Open might surprise the public, but not the tennis stars of yesterday, reports Reuter.

By the completion of the second round on Friday seven of the 16 marquee names had checked out of the final Grand Slam event of the year.

The list included third-seeded Stefan Edberg, fifth-seeded Sergi Bruguera, sixth-seeded Michael Stich, ninth-seeded Petr Korda, 11th-seeded Goran Ivanisevic, 13th-seeded Ivan Lendl and 16th-seeded Andre Agassi.

At one time this would have amazed insiders of the sport, not so today.

"It's the way the game is going to go," said Guillermo Vilas, who won the 1977 US Open, the last Open played on clay courts at the elegant West Side Tennis Club in Forest Hills.

"You are going to see a lot of players coming and going on the circuit. The deference between the players is very small in the men's game."

Vilas was actually surprised that yet another men's favorite, Boris Becker, was still alive. Vilas said he expected Becker's recent unfriendly split with manager Ion Tiriac, the man who coached and managed Vilas in his heyday, to take its toll on the German.

"I'm very surprised Becker is still in the tournament with all the problems he has with Tiriac," Vilas said. "I don't exactly know what happened with Becker and Tiriac, but I know I had a similar situation and Becker must be very hurt."

"It's sad. I guess it's always a problem with money, which is the last thing we should have problems with. What I do know is, I understand how he feels."

Former Chilean star Jaime Fillol believes the depth of competition today makes it more difficult for players to stay at the top of the game.

"I think it's harder for today's good players to dominate. If Michael Chang could get used to staying between eight and 20 in the ranking he could do that for many years. But to stay all the way at the top would be much too difficult for him."

Perez powers Real Madrid over Osasuna

PAMPLONA, Spain, Sept 5: Real Madrid striker Alfonso Perez scored twice to help his team to a 4-1 win over Osasuna in a flying start to the Spanish soccer season on Saturday, reports Reuter.

Real Madrid, First Division runners-up last season, had won only two of their previous 10 matches against Osasuna in Pamplona.

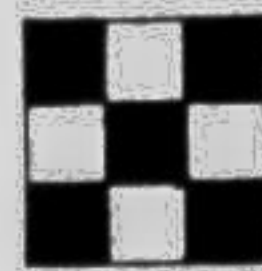
They played a fluid attacking game and did not appear to miss injured Chilean striker Ivan Zamorano.

Alfonso scored his first goal in the 44th minute and added his second, three minutes later to give Real Madrid a 2-0 lead.

Emilio Butragueno scored in the 70th minute and Michel Gonzalez hammered in a penalty in the 84th minute to out the visitors 4-0 in front.

Osasuna's Yugoslav defender Pedrag Spasic, a former Real Madrid player, gave the home team its only goal two minutes later with a long shot that beat goalkeeper Francisco Buyo.

Chess in for a second coming



LONDON, Sept 5: World chess champion Garry Kasparov and British challenger Nigel Short square off on Tuesday in the sport's most eagerly awaited contest for 20 years, reports Reuter.

The controversial clash on the stage of London's Savoy Theatre follows months of long-distance sparring and rift that rocked the foundations of organized chess.

It pits two players of sharply differing temperaments and backgrounds with little in common other than a desire to turn the game into a mass spectator sport.

Business partners in their breakaway Professional Chess Association (PCA), personal foes Kasparov and Short are facing each other to battle for a 1.7 million pound (2.5 million dollars) purse.

"There will be good moments and bad moments also. I am looking for a very tough and long adventure," Kasparov, 30, said last week.

The 24-game match over two months is the most keenly anticipated World Championship since American Bobby Fischer beat Boris Spassky of the Soviet Union in 1972 in Iceland at the height of the Cold War.

The vast media coverage of

that match — the last between a Russian and non-Russian — first attracted then six-year-old Short to the game of chess.

Now 28, Short is the first Englishman this century to challenge for the title but starts as underdog against Azeri-born Kasparov — champion since 1985 and the man with the highest ranking in the history of chess.

The mercurial millionaire who now plays for Russia is confident of emerging the winner. "I can imagine losing some games but not the whole match," Kasparov said.

Both men have spent months training in guns and swimming pools as well as hours hunched over chess computers assimilating and analysing each other's games for signs of weakness.

Short, a normally shy, bespectacled man, has also perfected a catalogue of insults against Kasparov, ranging from "thoroughly unpleasant" to "baboon". He also taunts his rival over his communist past.

Kasparov, known for his aggressive and manic play, has instead turned on the charm in public, dismissing the abuse as no more than "pre-war preparation" and declining to respond.

The match was organised by the players with the sponsor-

ship of London's Times newspaper after a dispute with chess's world governing body FIDE over money and organisation of the final.

FIDE stripped Kasparov and Short of their rankings and is holding a simultaneous rival world title contest in the Netherlands between Russian Anatoly Karpov and Dutchman Jan Timman, losing semi-finalists to Kasparov and Short before the split with FIDE. The Karpov-Timman match starts on Monday.

Short and Kasparov have sought to play down the feud with FIDE but are determined to popularise chess, using the kind of high-technology tricks that even non-players can enjoy.

"Our aims in forming the PCA are to bring chess to a wider public, to professionalise and commercialise the game in the same way as other sports like tennis and golf," said Short.

British television is devoting an unprecedented 80 hours coverage to the match and spectators in 12 countries will be able to hook up with a Rotterdam-based computer to play a new predict-a-move game while the two Grandmasters ponder their moves on the stage of the Savoy Theatre.

"I never imagined that chess would be at the centre of public attention like this. I hope this will be the greatest tournament and bring chess to every house in England and in the world," Kasparov said.

The championship starts on Tuesday and continues until October 30th with Games beginning every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at 1430 GMT.

An ordeal in wait for Argentina

BUENOS AIRES, Sept 5: The way Colombian coach Francisco Maturana sees it, Argentina are the one that have the tougher task, reports AP.

"We have come with great illusions, but also with a great respect for Argentina," Maturana said before Sunday's meeting, which will send one team to the World Cup finals next summer. "We beat them in Barranquilla, now it's their problem to beat us."

Argentina and Colombia face off Sunday before 60,000 spectators at the River Plate Stadium with the Argentines needing a victory to get to the United States. Colombia need only to draw to get their tickets.

But many are rating Colombia the underdog. Colombians have qualified for the World Cup only twice since 1958, while Argentina are two-time world champions are coming off a successful defence of their Copa America title and are playing at home on the site where they won their first World Cup title in 1978.

After five qualifying games though, Maturana feels it's just one team against another.

"If we loose, it will be simply because they played better soccer, not because of history, the climate or the crowd's pressure," he said.

Argentina have played in every World Cup since 1934, except for the period from 1938-54 when they didn't enter the tournament. A loss Sunday would likely send them into a two-leg playoff with Australia for a World Cup berth.

If they lose without scoring a goal and Paraguay beat Peru by four or more Sunday, then Argentina would be eliminated and Paraguay would play Australia.



JAN TIMMAN

is second only to Kasparov.

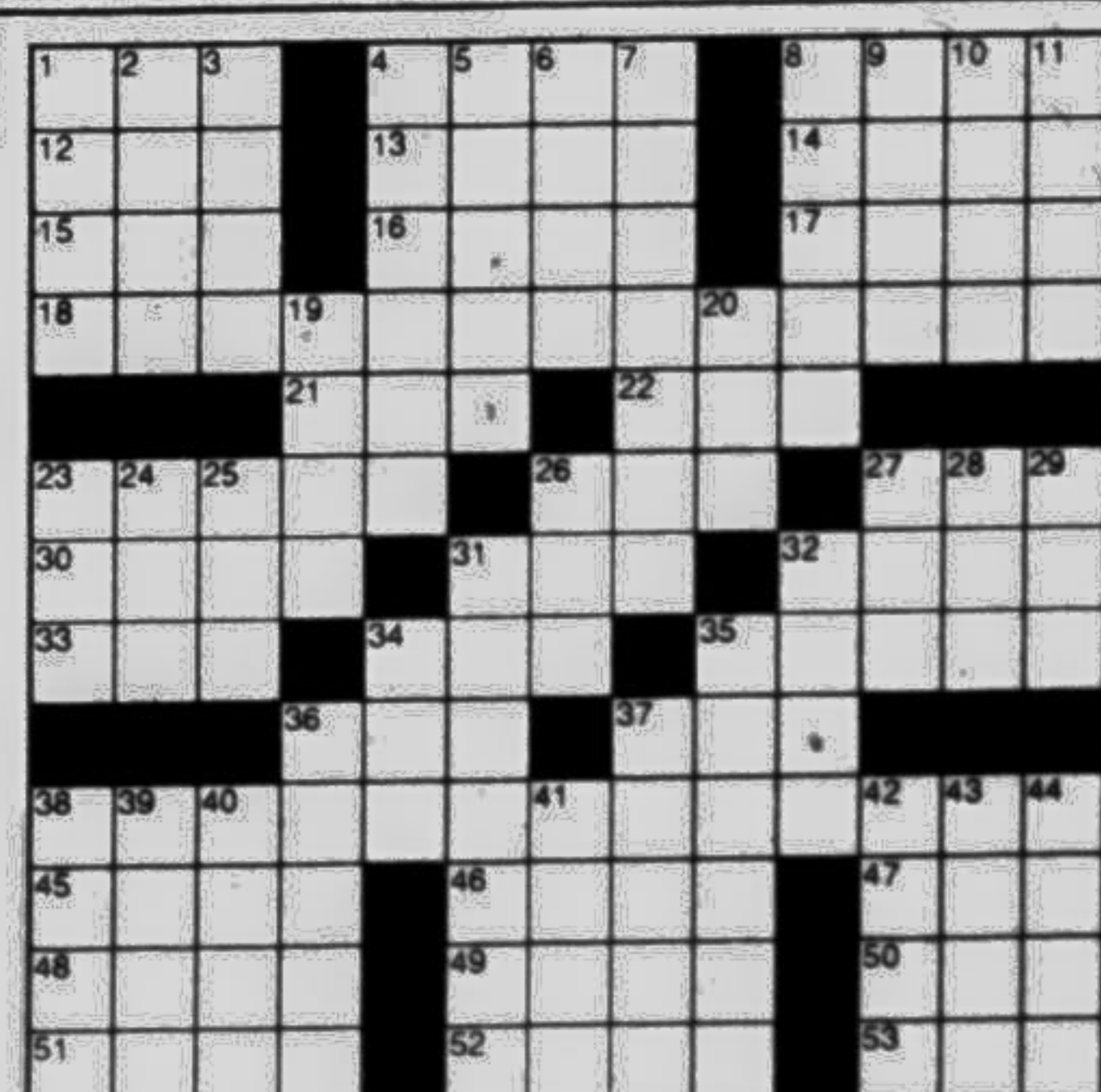
"One has to say Kasparov will win," said British chess writer Leonard Barden. "Karpov has been world champion and would certainly be regarded as being in the top three players of all time, along with Kasparov, and (Bobby) Fischer," he said.

Timman, a large and scruffy figure with a shock of curly brown hair, accepts the underdog label with a modesty uncharacteristic of top chess players.

"I'm not sure (I will win). I will try to perform as well as possible," he said. "My overall score against him (Karpov) is quite disastrous. He has a tremendous plus score, with a real impressive number of wins (against me)," he said.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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CRYPTOQUIP

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R O Y S O L G S E G Y Y F X Y
S J M D J M L R P J G Q C R H O L R
H J C X F Q Y R O Y D J P G R ?

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WE WERE FURIOUS WHEN AN ACCIDENT-PRONE MOTORIST, A FARMER, PLOWED INTO US.

Today's Cryptoquip clue: H equals W
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.