

Johnson equals fastest 400m time

DURHAM, North Carolina, Aug 14: World champion Michael Johnson clocked 44.32 seconds to equal the fastest 400-metre time in the world this year as he tuned up for a return to the European circuit with a victory at the Pan Africa-USA international meeting on Saturday, reports Reuters.

"It will be pretty tough for someone to beat me right now," said Johnson, who won his 35th consecutive 400-metre final with a five-metre victory over 1991 world champion Antonio Pettigrew.

Johnson will run the 200 metres in Zurich on Wednesday, then run several 400 metres in Europe in a bid to be ranked number one in the world in both events this year.

US sprinters Dennis Mitchell and Gwen Torrence also prepared for Zurich with fast times in the men's and women's 100 metres.

Mitchell ran the men's race in 9.94 seconds to edge fellow American John Drummond, who finished in 9.99 seconds.

Torrence clocked 10.87 seconds to complete an impressive sprint double. She won the women's 200 metre on Friday in 21.85 seconds, fastest time in the world this year.

The United States scored 147 points to Africa's 115 to win the two-day meeting. The US men edged the Africans 79.69 and the US women defeated the Africans 68.46.

The US victories were aided, in part, by two surprising finishes in the middle distance races. Mark Everett upset 1992 Olympic men's 800-metre champion William Tanui of Kenya in 1:44.86, an American Regina Jacobs outran 1992 Olympic women's 1,500-metre gold medalist Hassiba Boulmerka of Algeria to win in four minutes 10.24 seconds.

Jackie Joyner-Kersey withdrew from the women's long jump competition suffering from a ligament injury in her right knee incurred in Friday's 100-metre hurdles victory.

Her status for Zurich is day-to-day, husband and coach Bob Kersey said. But Joyner-Kersey will make the trip, and she is expected to at least long jump.



The blunder that blew out Britain's chances of winning the men's 4x100 metres relay at the Helsinki European Athletics Championships on Saturday. Darren Braithwaite (L) and Tony Jarrett fluffed the second changeover which led to Britain's disqualification and subsequently shattered Linford Christie's dreams of a record seventh European title.

— AFP photo

Messy changeover, stars' bane

HELSINKI, Aug 14: The European Championships were enlivened on Saturday after a predictable week by upsets, and mistakes which left Linford Christie and Eduard Hamalainen the day's biggest losers, reports Reuters.

Christie was denied the chance of winning more medals than any other athlete in the history of these championships when, two of his teammates dropped the baton in the sprint relay semifinal while Hamalainen blew the chance of certain gold in the decathlon by a mistake in the 110 metres hurdles.

There was also a surprise in the women's sprint relay final with Germany winning the gold to deny Irina Privalova her third gold following her 100 and 200 metres individual titles.

Russia were beaten into second place after a poor baton exchange involving Marina Trandenkova and anchorwoman Privalova.

Germany's women still had to withstand a superb final leg from Privalova to win their first sprint title since the traumas surrounding the suspension of Katrin Krabbe for doping.

"I don't blame anyone. The last change was bad, I almost had to stop. I couldn't reach the German in the end. I missed her by a metre," said Privalova who had a chance of winning an unprecedented haul of four golds at one championship.

"I'm not going to run the 4x400. I think I've done enough."

The dramas in the Olympic Stadium also produced unexpected gold medal joy for veteran Alain Blondel of France in the decathlon, and the French sprint relay team who retained their title in the men's 4x100m relay in the absence of Britain, the hot pre-competition favourites and the highly fancied Russians who were disqualified for two false starts in the final.

It was also a day to remember for Portugal who scored a convincing one-two in the women's 10,000 final with Fernanda Rebeiro taking the gold medal and Conceicao Ferreira the silver.

There was no surprise in the men's shot put final with Aleksander Klimenko leading a Ukrainian clean sweep of the medals, the first of the competition.

Two Frenchmen who ended with silver medals also had contrasting fortunes. Serge Helan was denied the triple jump gold by Russian Denis Kapustin who beat him on his final attempt.

But there was a reprieve for Frenchman Thierry Tountain who almost lost his silver

medal 200 metres from the end of the 50 kilometres walk when he slowed his pace and began waving at the crowd in the stadium without noticing third-placed Italian Giovanni Ferricelli rapidly gaining on him.

With Ferricelli just 10 metres behind him, Tountain realised the danger and like a character in a television cartoon he suddenly stopped waving, started walking quickly again and eventually saved himself from what have been an embarrassing loss by just three seconds. Russian Valery Spitsyn won the gold.

While Tountain managed to redeem himself, there was no chance of salvation for either Christie or Hamalainen.

Christie's chance of winning his seventh European medal ended when his British teammates Tony Jarrett and Darren Braithwaite dropped the baton on the second changeover in

the relay. Christie, running the anchor leg, could only watch helplessly as his chance of further glory disappeared with him powerless to do anything about it.

He ripped off the top of his running suit, ripped off his track lane numbers and stood with his hands on his hips in amazement before walking bare-chested the 100 or so metres down the track to the finish line. He refused to talk to reporters afterwards but Jarrett was more forthcoming. "I just want to go home," he said.

Britain were favourites to win the gold in the final but a medal of any kind would have given Christie one more than the record of six shared by Italian Pietro Mennea and German Harald Schmid.

Hamalainen from Belarus was looking for his first and seemed odds-on certainty

to win it after starting the final day of the two-day event, by far his strongest. 161 points ahead of the field.

No one in the world has run a faster decathlon hurdles than Hamalainen, but he appeared to leap out of the blocks in the day's first event too quickly for his own good.

He chopped his stride to ensure he got over the first hurdle cleanly, but instead clattered into it and spun round and down onto the track holding his head in his hands in despair and took no further part in the competition.

In his absence a fascinating duel developed between Hanrik Dagard, bidding to become the first Swedish man to win a gold medal for 32 years, and the 31-year-old Blondel who finished fifth in the World Championship last year.

With nine events completed the two went into the 1,500 metres with Blondel assured of the gold if he beat Dagard by six seconds. He quickly opened up a sizeable lead on the Swede and was 40 seconds ahead at the bell. Dagard made a desperate bid to close the gap in the final lap but failed comprehensively, with Blondel crossing the line 20 seconds ahead of him to secure the title.

"I knew it was going to be my day when Hamalainen fell," Blondel said with a smile afterwards.

Blondel's final tally was 8,453 points with Dagard on 8,362.

France had been denied a second gold just minutes before when former European junior champion Kapustin unleashed the biggest leap of his life with 17.55 metres on his final attempt to take the triple jump title.

MEDALS TABLE

Medals table after the seventh day of the European Athletics Championships on Saturday (tabulated — gold, silver, bronze):

Russia	9	5	5
Britain	5	3	2
Germany	4	4	3
Ukraine	3	6	3
France	3	2	2
Norway	3	1	1
Spain	2	1	1
Portugal	2	1	0
Bulgaria	2	0	3
Italy	1	3	3
Finland	1	1	0
Ireland	1	0	0
Belarus	0	4	0
Sweden	0	2	0
Belgium	0	1	2
Poland	0	1	1
Czech Republic	0	1	1
Hungary	0	1	0
Romania	0	0	3
Switzerland	0	0	2
Croatia	0	0	1
Greece	0	0	1
Latvia	0	0	1

Note: Two silver medals awarded in the men's high jump.



FANTASTIC FLIGHT... an airborne Denis Kapustin of Russia on his way to winning the men's triple jump gold at the European Championships in Helsinki on Saturday. Kapustin's 17.62-metre effort was enough to beat off the challenge of Frenchman Serge Helan and Latvian Maris Bruziks.

— AFP photo

Spanish sweep

HELSINKI, Aug 14: Martin Fiz broke away with a few kilometres left and led Spain to a medal sweep in the men's marathon Sunday at the European Athletics Championships, reports AP.

Six more medal sets were being awarded later in the day as the championship wound up.

Fiz, who made his marathon debut in the Finnish capital only last year, covered the 42-kilometre race in 2 hours, 10 minutes, 31 seconds. It was just 10 seconds off his personal best, set in this year's Boston Marathon.

Diego Garcia finished 15 seconds behind an Alberto Juzgado completed the Spanish sweep in 2:11.18.

Fiz, 31, became the first Spanish marathon winner in the championship's history.

"All the preparations were made for this race last year," Fiz said. "I ran the Helsinki City marathon just to get used to the weather and the conditions."

"At the beginning it was difficult, because the Portuguese were setting the pace. Then Garcia, who is a better pace setter, took charge and we broke away."

Garcia's previous best finish in a major marathon was a ninth in the 1992 Barcelona Olympics.

The Spanish team trained very hard for this race for three months, he said. "We knew we would be tough, but did not expect three medals."

On Saturday, Alexander Klimenko led an Ukrainian 1-2-3 finish in the men's shot put.

Fjellerup beats age, opponents

SHEFFIELD, England, Aug 14: Eva Fjellerup made light of her 32 years by retaining the women's title at the world modern pentathlon championships on Saturday, reports Reuters.

It was the Dane's fourth win in five years and her total of 5,590 points beat her record score of 5,543 last year.

Second was Zhana Shubyonok of Belarus with 5,392 and third Emese Kobló of Hungary on 5,355. The threat to Fjellerup from Poland's former champions Iwona Kowalewska and Dorota Idzi, second and third last year, vanished after poor shooting by both.

Fjellerup, who contested the first women's World Championship in 1981, moved smoothly through the day's five disciplines. The Poles shot poorly. Kowalewska, world champion in 1992, scoring only 170 from a possible 200. And Idzi, titleholder in 1988, did even worse, finishing last with 153.

In contrast, Fjellerup collected 176 target points and then went on to win the fencing. Her 23 wins in 31 fights contrasted to Idzi's 21 and Kowalewska's 17. The Poles were now out of the individual contest and concentrating on winning the team title they had captured five times in six years.

Fjellerup's solo swim took her into a 150-point lead over the two Hungarians. Eszter Hortobagyi with Kobló 10 points further back after a fine two minutes 19.87 seconds swim, the third fastest.

The Dane consolidated her lead by winning the 15-obstacle ride and began the running cross-country with a staggered start and a 38-second advantage on Kobló.

World Basketball Championship

US, Russia move into final

TORONTO, Aug 14: Sergei Bazarevich scored 12 of his team-high 16 points in the second half as Russia held off a late rally by Croatia for a stunning 66-64 semifinal victory at the World Championship of basketball on Saturday, reports Reuters.

The result spoiled the anticipated final on Sunday between Olympic finalists Croatia and the United States, which advanced earlier in the evening by beating Greece 97-58.

"We were the only people who sincerely believed we could be in the finals of a World Championship," said Russian coach Sergei Belov, whose team lost to the United States 111-94 on Friday.

"It took a lot of convincing in three months of coaching this team to take it to the championship game."

Bazarevich scored all seven of Russia's points and made two important steals to blunt a comeback by the Croats during a key four-minute stretch in which they whittled Russia's lead, once 14 points at 39-25, down to one at 60-59 with three minutes to play.

Arjan Komazec scored 22 points including the last five points of the game to lead Croatia, which received sub-par showings from their stars Dino Radja and Toni Kukoc, both current National Basketball Association players.

Radja scored 16 points and added a game-high 14 rebounds before fouling out with two minutes to play.

But in the first half, Croatia's leading scorer shot just 1-of-10 from the floor and 4-of-10 from the free-throw line, as no Croatian player made more than one field goal and the team shot just 25 per cent (7-point range 11-of-43).

Kukoc, three times voted Europe's outstanding player, scored five points on 2-of-8 shooting and added just four rebounds and two assists.

The Russians played most of the game without Andrei Fetisov, their starting power forward who rejured the right leg he hurt in Friday's loss to the United States.

Fetisov started the game but did not score and left the court 3:32 into the contest. Coach Belov said he hoped Fetisov would be available today.

Vasili Karasev came off the bench to score all 11 of his points in the first half, leading Russia to a 31-22 edge at the break.

But the second half belonged to Bazarevich.

On consecutive possessions, the 29-year-old point guard sliced between Croatian defenders for the layup, spun off Radja, who was playing with four fouls, for a second layup and sank two free throws.

After Croatia pulled within 60-59, Sergei Babkov hit an off-balance runner from the baseline to increase the margin to three — Kisourin then sank three of four free throws and Bazarevich converted one of two to make it 66-59.

Croatia tried to climb back

as Komazec dropped in a layup and hit a 30-footer at the buzzer but it was not enough.

"I am happy because our team showed we have guts," Bazarevich said. "When the Croats were closing the gap, there was a period when they were throwing in the 3-pointers. We could have panicked, but we didn't. This is something characteristic of a team with class."

The Russians, fourth at the 1992 Olympics, were silver medalists at the 1990 championships, where Croats contributed largely to Yugoslavia's gold medal.

"We always have this problem with the Russian team," said Croatian head coach Giuseppe Gergia, whose team lost to the United States 117-85 in the Olympic final.

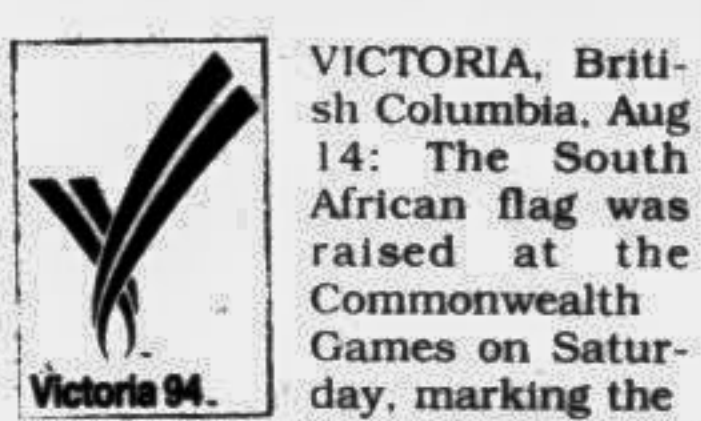
"We will have to come back and win for our fans so we can go home with a bronze medal."

In the earlier semi, six United States players scored in double figures and Shaquille O'Neal pulled down 16 rebounds in 18 minutes as the American Dream Team II erupted in the decisive second half.

Reggie Miller scored a game-high 14 points for the United States, who has beaten their seven opponents by an average of 36.6 points.

Efthimis Bakatsias scored 12 to pace Greece. O'Neal said who had four steals and three blocks. "We had better not struggle (in Sunday's final) like we did offensively tonight and expect to come back."

Great moment for SA roamers



VICTORIA, British Columbia, Aug 14: The South African flag was raised at the Commonwealth Games on Saturday, marking the country's return to the event for the first time in 36 years, reports Reuters.

An honour guard of military cadets raised the flag over the Athletes' Village as South African team members and Games officials watched and the country's two anthems were played.

"It's a great moment. It means the beginning of a new era and is something we should all be proud of," said South African delegation head Mthubi Tyamzashane.

"It is an honour to welcome you back into the Commonwealth, our family," said Games official Diane Clement. "For you athletes who have spent these many years dreaming... your dreams have come true today."

Historic all-race elections in April paved the way for South Africa's return to the Commonwealth in June. The republic has not competed in the Games since Cardiff in 1958 because of sporting isolation over its apartheid policies.

During the flag-raising ceremony ahead of the August 18-28 multi-sport competition, there was confusion among some team members over whether they were supposed to sing the anthems and the result was a chaotic chorus.

"We weren't instructed to sing and we were trying to be on our best behaviour. We weren't sure what to do," confessed one South African official who asked not to be identified.

The country's 112-strong

team contains only eight blacks but officials said this number is sure to grow in the years ahead. South African medal chances are rated strongest in boxing and the marathon.

"I'm very, very excited," said black boxer Masibulele Makepele.

"I had tears in my eyes. It was wonderful to see the flag raised," said swimmer Marianne Kriel, whose grandfather won an athletics gold medal in the then Empire Games during the 1930s.

Kriel said participating in the Commonwealth Games was

more meaningful than taking part in the 1992 Barcelona Olympics because of the strides South Africa has taken towards unity since then.

"In Barcelona we didn't feel we represented the whole country. Now we feel we have the support of everyone," she said.

South Africa are hoping for at least 10 medals as they seek to make an impression after a 36-year absence.

"Realistically we should win at least 10 medals but obviously we'll be hoping for a lot more," said Sam Ramsamy, Chairman of the South African Commonwealth Games Association.

The country will be participating in 12 sports but expect to have most success in the athletics.

The team's top name is long-distance runner Elana Meyer, who won a silver medal in the 10,000 metres at the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona. But her preparation in Europe has been plagued by a month-long battle with influenza and she still has to confirm her appearance in Victoria.

But South Africa also has some youngsters ready to take the spotlight.

Riaan Dempers, 17, emerged from nowhere to win the men's 400 metres at the South African Championships earlier this year and is hoping for a place in the final at the Commonwealth Games.

Schoolboy Hezekiel Sepeng, fifth in the 800 metres at the World Championships in Stuttgart last year, is aiming a little higher, despite considerable opposition from Kenyan runners.

"I've done some good training in Europe this year so I feel ready for the competition," said Sepeng.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 A long way off

4 Integrated circuit

8 Masticate

12 Eventual

13 Cod's cousin

14 Pearl Harbor city

15 Charles Dutton sitcom

16 With style

18 Live

20 One of those tabloids

21 Sends out invitations

24 "M*A*S*H" setting

28 At the hour

32 — me tangere

33 Party bowlful

34 Vanna's wares?

36 Chap

37 Gray (Fr.)

39 He may turn his nose up at you

41 Heming-

way's

Pilar, e.g.

43 Perry's creator

44 Unaus' kin

46 Horrible

50 Height

55 Mimic

56 Used a loom

57 Quite eager

58 Heyerdahl's "— Tiki"

59 Spuds' buds

60 Some toothpaste

61 Close

DOWN

1 Jesse James' assassin

2 Acknowledge

3 Contest

4 Socks' mistress

5 "2001" computer

6 White House nickname

7 Cribbage

8 It's full of big shots

9 No. 1 song

10 Moray, e.g.

11 Method

17 Diving bird

19 Restroom, for short

22 Bender?

23 Steps over a fence

25 "Arrive-derci, —"

26 Panache

27 "— Mis-behavin"

28 Nervous

29 Coin of 25

30 It's a long story

31 Farmer, needs

35 Higher ground

38 Tonsorial tasks

40 Chop down

42 Acapulco aunt

45 Men-only

47 Counterfeit

48 Second word of "The Raven"

49 Impart for a time

50 Farm female

51 Powell costar

52 The mother of all?

53 "— Got a Secret"

54 Paint medium

TEEM ICES SKA

ALEE FOLK HID

MILKSHAKE AND

APEX WAKES

PASTY TELE

ACHE CARRIAGE

IMA GALES LOW

REKINDLE BENE

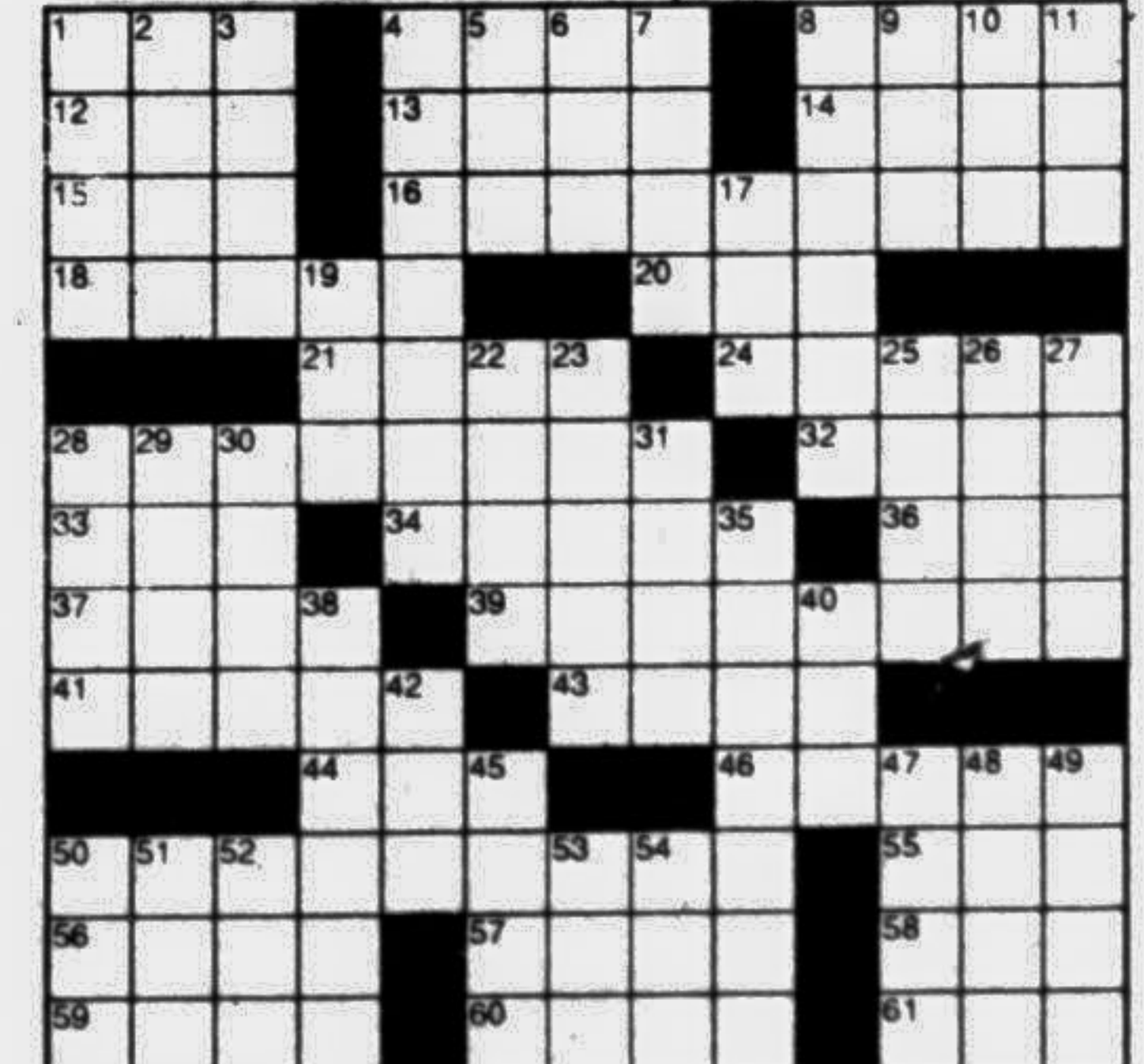
ETAS AUGER

ARRAS KISS

MAI HANDSHAKE

OKS EDIE ELIA

REM DOTS LENT



CRYPTOQUIP

LPWU GFY SWGF MPDYK
 MG MEY GMEYK
 KNFFWR PDGA: "SYM'L
 RYM KGPWFR UKNFA"
 Yesterday's Cryptoquip: GARDENERS AT BIG NAVAL BASE HAD NOTHING TO DO WHEN ALL LEAVES WERE CANCELLED.

Today's Cryptoquip clue: F equals N

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.