



Soccer star Diego Maradona whispers something to his agent during a press conference in Buenos Aires on Sept 2. Maradona talked about his suspension by FIFA and his future as a professional. — AFP photo

Maradona says it's over

BUENOS AIRES, Sept 3: Soccer star Diego Maradona, visibly depressed, said Friday he would probably never play again and blamed FIFA for making his life miserable for reports AP.

"You never rule out anything, but I don't think I can start myself up to play again," Maradona said during a news conference at Boca Juniors Stadium where he played in the early 1980s. "My career has passed."

Maradona, dressed in black from head to toe, looked as if he had come for a funeral and spoke as if it were his own.

"They killed me," he said of FIFA. Soccer's ruling body last month suspended Maradona for 15 months for testing positive for ephedrine, a stimulant found in diet pills, at the World Cup in June.

The suspension ends on Sept 29, 1995. Maradona turns 34 next month and has had problems with his weight.

Many of Maradona's comments were nearly inaudible, coming between long and frequent sighs.

"I would only be happy again ... if they lift the

sanction," he said. "I feel empty as a man."

With Captain Maradona as their leader at this year's World Cup, Argentina won their first two games. He scored a goal, set up two others and pumped adrenaline into the team.

Without Maradona, Argentina were eliminated in the round of 16 by Romania. It was a disappointing showing for a country that had played in three of the previous four World Cup title matches.

Maradona's career has been a spectacular rollercoaster.

His professional career started when he was a 15-year-old from the Buenos Aires slums and signed a 100 dollars a week contract with local team Argentinos Juniors.

At his best in the mid-1980s, Maradona played with the ball as if it were a yo-yo attached to his foot. He froze defenders in their tracks, and the precision of his passes often surprised even his teammates.

On the biggest stage of all, the World Cup, Maradona took on an aura of invincibility, leading Argentina to the title in 1986.

In 1990, with defenders shadowing his every move,

Maradona was less effective in the World Cup. But his presence created opportunities for teammates, and Argentina finished runner-up to West Germany.

In 1991 he received a 15-month suspension for testing positive for cocaine use after a game for the Italian team Naples, where he played from 1984-91. A month later, after returning in disgrace to Buenos Aires, he was arrested for cocaine possession.

Maradona was not sentenced to jail, but ordered to undergo treatment and submit to periodic drug tests.

During his suspension, the 5-foot-5 (1.65 metre) Maradona ballooned nearly 20 pounds (9 kilograms). He repeatedly said he would never play competitive soccer again.

But he signed with the Spanish club Sevilla, where he failed to improve a mediocre team in his only season there.

Upon his return to Argentina, Maradona again said he was in retirement. But with the help of a Chinese dietitian in Uruguay, he lost about 22 pounds (10 kilograms), returned to the national team and signed with Newell's — his first stint with an Argentine league team since 1981.

Jansher, Nicol in HK final

HONG KONG, Sept 3: World champion Jansher Khan earned a chance for revenge against Peter Nicol of Scotland as both posted convincing semifinal victories in the Hong Kong Open squash tournament on Saturday, reports Reuters.

Jansher beat third seed Peter Marshall of England 15-9, 15-8, 12-15, 15-7 in 77 minutes, while 21-year-old Nicol, the seventh seed, scored a superb 15-7, 15-14, 17-15 victory over world number four Rodney Eyles of Australia in 38 minutes.

Jansher was beaten by the Scot when they last met in the second round of the Welsh Classic in Cardiff in February. It was Jansher's only defeat this year — and it still rankles.

"I was not very fit then and I remember," he said. "I was getting fat. I did not like that, or getting beaten, so I am really looking forward to playing him now I am strong."

Nicol appeared unmoved. "I am very confident," he said.

"I think Jansher is looking a wee bit flabby again, just like in Cardiff."

The Pakistani, who has won

five previous Hong Kong titles, certainly looked strong on Saturday — and he had to be against Marshall.

Although Jansher won the opening game 15-9, it took him 22 minutes of hard work in a series of long, exhausting rallies.

Jansher's accuracy and his ability to turn the screw in the crucial points tipped the balance. It was a similar story in a 19 minute second game, with Marshall contesting every point.

When Jansher led 10-5 in the third he looked home and dry. He thought so too and started to relax. Marshall seized his chance to peg back the lead, helped by a couple of bad Jansher mistakes which were so out of character that the audience gasped in astonishment.

Marshall reached the game points at 14-12 and punched the air as another Jansher mistake put him back in the match.

Marshall fiercely contested the early points of the fourth game, but Jansher had got his

act together again. From 3-3, two stinging and inch-perfect cross-court drives put the Englishman in his place and from then it was plain sailing for the world number one.

"I was silly. I thought I had won at 10-5 in the third game and just lost my concentration. He took his chance well then, but I knew it would be all right in the end," said Jansher.

In the other semifinal, Nicol, who had knocked out defending champion Brett Martin of Australia in the previous round, started like a train against Eyles before the Australian could find his bearings.

But in the second Eyles fought fire with fire in a match played at tremendous pace with short, quick-fire rallies.

Eyles had a chance to level the match at 14-13. He missed it and then lost out when he elected a sudden-death finish to the game sportingly calling his own shot down.

Eyles then saved two match points in the third, but was unable to save a third as Nicol reached his first major final.



Italy's Andrea Gaudenzi exults after ousting former world number one Jim Courier of the United States in the second round of the US Open on Sept 2. Gaudenzi won 7-5, 6-2, 3-6, 6-3.

Computer mates Nikolic

LONDON, Sept 3: The chess computer that defeated champion Garri Kasparov vanquished Bosnian Grandmaster Predrag Nikolic on Friday at the Intel World Chess Grand Prix, reports AP.

Premium Chess Genius 2 progressed to the next round with a 2-0 victory over Nikolic, who had beaten Nigel Short in the first round.

Nikolic had a clear advantage in the first game at the Sedgwick conference centre in West London, but was confused by the computer's accurate defence in the final stages of the game. With many at this stage expecting a draw, Nikolic ambitiously played for a win, but was outplayed.

In the second game, Nikolic again held a clear advantage throughout the game but the computer's stubborn defence again forced the Grandmaster to overreach and he resigned on move 71.

The computer has so far amassed 15,000 dollars and will play either Indian Grandmaster Viswanathan Anand or Viktor Korchnoi in the semifinal stages of the chess challenge. All prize money will be donated to a charity.

Fantastic Fu

ROME, Sept 3: China's defending titlist and Olympic champion Fu Mingxia produced a stunning final dive to snatch the gold medal from countrywoman Chi Bin at the World Swimming Championships Saturday, reports AP.

Needing to score over 62 points on her final dive in the 10 metre highboard, Fu brought gasps of admiration from the crowd with an inward 3 1/2 somersault.

It earned her scores of 8.5 and four 8.00s to collect 75.48, easily the highest of the competition, as she became the first woman to win back-to-back highboard world titles.

Fu totalled 434.04 points to take first place. Chi collected



FU MINGXIA

silver with a score of 420.24 and Maria Jose Alcala became the first Mexican woman to win a World Championship medal by placing third with 396.48.

"I'm not really satisfied with my scores," Fu said. "I didn't get as good a score as I did at the Olympic Games."

Fu also won the title in Perth, Australia in 1991 when she was 12.

"Three years ago I was rather small," she said. "Now I have grown up and I think I am more sophisticated."

The American challenge faded although Eileen Richey placed fourth with 395.88 after a poor start to the eight dive final.

Going into the competition, which was suspended Friday by a thunderstorm, the Americans were second and third behind Fu and ahead of Chi.

Qatar's appeal

DOHA, Sept 3: Qatar has urged Gulf states to welcome Iraq back to the Gulf Cup football tournament in the United Arab Emirates in November, reports AFP.

Qatar Football Federation president Mohammad Ben Hamman said Qatar would support any effort to bring Iraq back to the tournament.

Gulf states froze all sporting ties with Iraq in 1990 when Baghdad invaded Kuwait in August and launched the Gulf War.

Van Basten undergoes surgery

BRUSSELS, Sept 3: AC Milan's Dutch striker Marco Van Basten has undergone yet another operation on the ankle which has kept him out of football for 18 months, it was reported here Friday, reports AFP.

Basten, once rated the best footballer in the world, was operated on by professor Marc Martens in Antwerp on Thursday. La Dernière Heure said.

A day for lesser stars



NEW YORK, Sep 3: There was Jim Courier getting clobbered in the stadium, Andrei Medvedev crum-

pling in the grandstand, Wimbledon champ Conchita Martinez and Mary Joe Fernandez reeling on Court 16.

It was a Friday afternoon of sunshine and sucker punches at the US Open with players hardly anyone ever heard of sneaking up and knocking out four big names, reports AP.

Defending champion and top seed Pete Sampras had no such problems at night, serving 17 aces and neatly dismissing a potential threat in Daniel Vacek, 6-3, 6-4, 6-3 in just over an hour and a half — slightly longer than his opening match two days earlier.

Sampras, whose injured left ankle sidelined him for six weeks before the tournament, looked much more impressive in his second match against a player ranked No 54 than in his first against a less challenging qualifier. This time, Sampras raised the level of his play, serving and volleying with authority and chasing down baseline shots as if he'd never been hurt. At this point in the tournament, no one is playing better.

"My ankle feels great," Sampras said.

Courier's lassitude caught up to him against a fiery, fist-pumping young Italian, 21-year-old Andrea Gaudenzi, who took out the No 11 seed 7-5, 6-2, 3-6, 6-3 in the second round — the same round Courier lost in at Wimbledon.

A couple of weeks ago, Courier spoke of bagging his rackets, maybe the sport, if he couldn't recover his desire. He almost stayed away from the Open, and perhaps now wishes he did.

This performance, while not as utterly indifferent as some of the ones he's put on in the past year, lacked passion for the first two sets and revealed again why he has fallen so precipitously from the top of tennis.

Courier plays at two paces, hard and harder. When those aren't enough, when his timing or accuracy are a tad off, he doesn't adjust to the conditions or his opponents.

He might have thrown Gaudenzi off by coming to the net more, mixing up strokes, doing anything different. It took an hour and a half for Courier to try a drop shot, and though it worked he never tried it again. Instead, he slugged and slugged until he was slugged out, dumping the last ball into the net.

After losing in his 22nd straight tournament, Courier was asked how he might get back to the level he played at when he won two Australian Opens and two French Opens.

"Do you want to tell me?" he responded. "It is a process. You have to work through it."

Gaudenzi couldn't have been more surprised at himself, the way he played and the way he reined in a temper that has cost him many other matches.

"I didn't expect to play this good on this surface," he said.

Karel Novacek played one of the best matches of his life to beat Medvedev 6-3, 6-3, 6-2, then pronounced, to no one's surprise, "I feel fantastic. I played like, no mistakes."

Medvedev seemed slow on the court, stuck at times, unsure whether to come in or stay back. Novacek was playing as if in a dream, as Medvedev had no idea what to do.

Feeling pretty fantastic, too, were Californian Ginger Helgeson, who toppled women's No 3 Martinez 3-6, 6-4, 6-1, and Ohio native Ann Grossman, who upset No 9 Fernandez 6-4, 6-4.

Not all the seeded players fell. No 4 Michael Stich looked strong and quick in a 6-1, 6-4, 6-2 victory over Steve Bryan, and No 5 Stefan Edberg looked even tougher in a 6-2, 6-3, 6-2 victory over Jeff Tarango.

Three women's seeds cruised comfortably. No 2 Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario beat Sandra Cecchini 6-2, 6-1; No 5,

Kimiko Date beat Lisa Raymond 6-4, 6-2 and No 8 Gabriela Sabatini beat Isabelle Demongeot 6-0, 6-2.

Helgeson, who turns 26 three days after the Open ends, lost to Martinez a few weeks ago in San Diego.

Grossman, who pulled the other big surprise among the women, also cited belief in herself as the key to victory.

"Before, I've always really been hard on myself," said the 23-year-old. "If I miss one shot, I go crazy. Everyone says I'm an angry player, and now I'm just enjoying myself."



Unseeded Ginger Helgeson of USA hits a backhand to third seed Conchita Martinez of Spain during their third round match at the US Open in New York on Friday. Helgeson upset Martinez 3-6, 6-4, 6-1. — AFP photo

US OPEN NOTEBOOK

NEW YORK, Sept 3: The ATP Tour Fan Headquarters is offering US Open spectators an opportunity to correspond with a few famous pen pals, reports AP.

Fans who stop by the ATP Tour's booth can send letters to their favourite players via a computer Think Pad Pen — an electronic device that is like a sophisticated note pad.

The booth has also had a number of players — Stefan Edberg, Todd Martin, Brad Gilbert and Richey Reneberg — stop by and answer questions in person.

One fan had a very personal question for Edberg — one President Clinton would remember well from a televised town meeting in which he was queried on the same topic.

"Do you wear boxers or briefs?" asked an inquisitive passerby.

With a wink to let everyone know he was kidding, Edberg said, "Actually, I don't wear anything."

The men's tour, which is deep into their new "fan-friendly" policy, said the letters will be delivered to the players and they will encourage the athletes to send replies.

STEFAN SEEKS SCENERY: Stefan Edberg says that after tennis his other sport of choice is golf.

That's not unusual on the tennis tour. Ivan Lendl is known to play golf after a match and Mats Wilander spent much of his two-year hiatus perfecting his swing.

Edberg, who won his second-round match over Jeff Tarango in straight sets, explained the appeal of golf.

"That's probably the sport that a lot of tennis players do," the Swedish star said. "I do it because it is not physically tiring at all. And you can go out in the nature and see some trees. It's really a great relaxation. To golf and play nine holes is two hours of fresh air, to get away from the tennis courts and buildings."

NATURE CALLING: Ginger Helgeson, who sent Wimbledon champion Conchita Martinez packing in three sets Friday, is doing quite nicely at the US Open. However, she's not about to pack up and relocate to New York.

Helgeson, who grew up in St. Cloud, Minn., now lives in Alpine, Calif.

"It's very, very peaceful and beautiful, and it's 25 miles (40 kilometres) east of San Diego," said Helgeson, who is getting married in three weeks. "It's in the mountains — up 2,000 feet — and there's a lot of land out there. The houses aren't on top of each other and you wake up to the birds."

Perkins prime for a lot more

ROME, Sept 3: Australian swimming hero Kieren Perkins hopes he has enough fuel left in the tank for a golden World Championships after his triumphant Commonwealth Games, reports Reuters.

Freestyler Perkins ended the Games by claiming two world records as he took the 1,500 metres for his fourth gold.

The 21-year-old from Brisbane smashed the 1,500 metres record in that race and took the 800 metre mark on the way through just for good measure.

But the Olympic 1,500 metre champion has had no time to rest on his laurels — having come straight from the Games in Victoria, Canada, to take on the best in the world in the Eternal City.

"At this point, I'm still recovering, I'm not 100 per cent yet but I'm already sleeping well at nights," the personable Perkins told a news conference on Friday.

"I should feel a lot better in three or four days," added the Australian, who races in the 200 metres freestyle on Monday, the opening day of swimming competition at these World Championships.

Australia dominated the swimming events at the Commonwealth Games but chief coach Don Talbot admitted that they would not have everything their own way here.

"We've travelled the world in the last few days and we're not fully rested. We like it here, we're hot weather people like the Romans but some of us are having problems with the time clock and waking at three or four in the morning," coach Talbot said.

"Maybe we rank fourth, fifth or six in the world at the moment but I'm hoping we'll have improved that by the end of this meet," he added.

A traditional powerhouse in the sport, Australia finished fifth in the overall medals table at the end of the last championships in Perth in 1991.

The thorny issue of doping was raised at the Australian news conference but Perkins said it was something he tried to put out of his mind.

"I can't do anything about it. I race people in the pool and give my all if I'm beaten and someone tests negative then the gold is theirs — fair and square," he said.

Perkins said the Australians conducted a comprehensive programme of random testing and that he had been checked three times in the past year.

"I don't think you need to worry about Australia. We have the best drug testing programme in the world," he added.

Five Finnish lifters banned

HELSINKI, Sept 3: Finland's National Weightlifting Federation has banned five Finnish weightlifters for using banned substances, news reports said Saturday, reports AP.

Petri Oravainen, Sami Vaita, Veli-Matti Parantainen, Ilkka Vepsäläinen and Jukka Laitinen each received three-year bans after testing positive in samples taken by the Finnish Anti-Doping Committee in April and June, the reports said.

The banned substances were not named in the reports by the Finnish News Agency and national radio.

Morceli pulls out

PARIS, Sept 3: Algerian Noureddine Morceli withdrew from the World Grand Prix athletics final on Saturday because of a stomach bug, reports Reuters.

"I am sick, I have been up all night, and I am not running," he told Reuters on Saturday morning just a few hours before he was due to run in the event.

An IAAF spokesman confirmed Morceli's withdrawal, adding "As late as two o'clock in the morning he only had a 50-50 per cent chance of running. He has had the bug for the last few days."

The decision not to run will cost Morceli, the men's overall points leader in the Grand Prix standings, more than 100,000 dollars in lost prize money. He was set to win 100,000 dollars as the overall prize winner and 30,000 dollars as an individual event winner but will now pick up only a fraction of that amount.

In Morceli's absence the overall title will be won by one of six men — Americans Derrick Adkins (400 metre hurdles), Mike Conley (triple jump), Dennis Mitchell (100 metres), Zambian Samuel Matete (400 metre hurdles), Cuban Javier Sotomayor (high jump) or 1500 metre runner Venuste Nyongabo of Burundi.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Handle clumsily

4 Mr. Addams, as per his signature

8 Oprah's rival

12 Literary collection

13 Corridor

14 Emanation

15 Grotesque carving

17 Coal bed

18 Show

19 "Wayne's World" word

21 Film director

22 St. George's foe

26 Japanese noodles

29 Symbol of intrigue

30 Twice XXVIII

31 Friendly person?

32 Scratch

33 Jalopy

34 Helium, for one

35 Writer

Fleming

36 Does KP work

37 The riddler?

39 White House monogram

40 Tackle moguls

41 Collar

45 Amphitheater

48 Labyrinth beast

50 Pennsylvania port

51 Off base on the q.t.

52 La-la lead-in

53 Monologue components

54 Unmatched

55 Driver's license datum

DOWN

1 Reach on a beeper

2 Have — to grind

3 "Star Trek" speed factor

4 Selected

5 Grant's successor

6 Completely

7 Thin

8 Traitoria

9 Color

10 Playwright

11 Felon's flight

16 Champion of dance?

20 Ball

23 Merriment

24 Racetrack

26 People walk all over them

27 PDQ, memo-style

28 Network

29 Ashen

32 Highest

33 Beater?

35 Cuttlefish protection

36 Hood release?

38 NYC hockey team, headline-style

39 Basic rule

42 Grub

43 Doubtless

44 TV show, "Time —"

45 Pan-handle

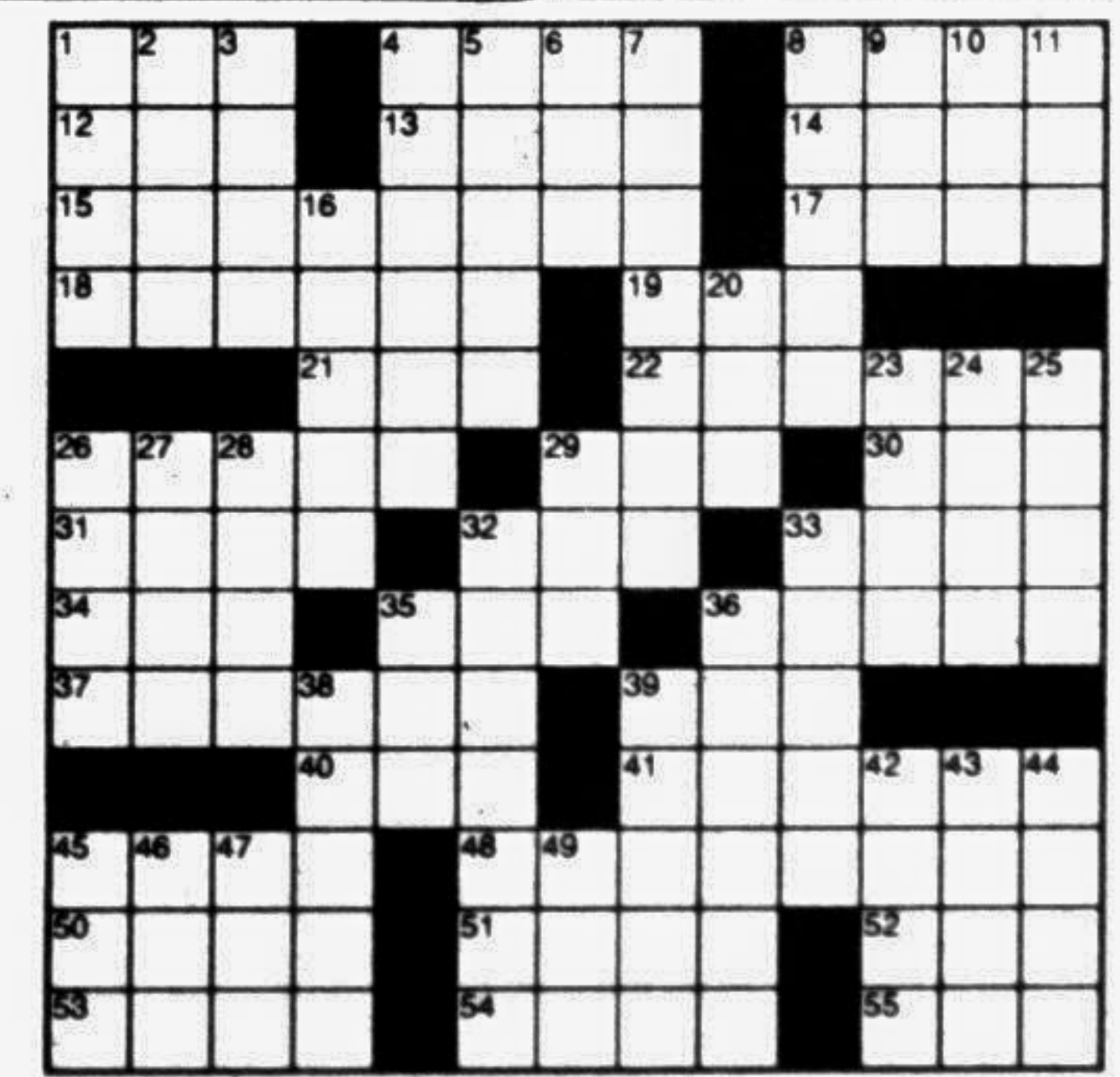
46 Man-mouse link

47 Bozo's need

49 — Jima

Solution time: 28 mins.

CALM WAIF CAB
OLIO OGRE ULU
CARDBOARD PAR
KNEELS UMBER
MY ZEPP
OAKS BID GASP
ATE EGG RHO
RAYS AGE ADAM
BERRY FL
PROXY REDSEA
AHA ALLABOARD
PER NEON UNTO
PAD SOOT SEES



CRYPTOQUIP

DNZ ZBMJ UPUFQJSF
GSPPL LXSYPQZ SY ZBM
ABI'Q XNIQ QB GU
EUDQ SI QOU ANJE
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: NO ONE BELIEVED I HAD INVENTED ELASTIC BECAUSE I STRETCHED THE TRUTH A BIT.
Today's Cryptoquip clue: D equals P
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.