

## Of Romario

BARCELONA, Dec. 30: Romario's reported move to either Italy or Brazil has caused a wave of Romariomania here, according to sports daily Sport on Thursday, reports AFP.

Barcelona striker Romario, currently in Brazil on holiday, has however scotched talk of a move to Italy. "I will only go to eat pizzas and pasta. The day I leave Barcelona, I will go back to Brazil," Romario said.

Barcelona fans are almost desperate for the club to hold on to him. Sport further reported.

Romario, one of the stars in Brazil's fourth World Cup triumph in July, was set to meet the Flamengo Club president on Thursday.

But the approximate 12 millions dollars Flamengo would need to buy Romario, under contract at Barcelona till July 1996, could be a major stumbling block.

According to Sport, Massimo Moratti, who is about to take the reins of Inter Milan, said he was ready to buy Romario or Bulgarian teammate Hristo Stoichkov.

Moratti would be ready to let go of Dutch international Dennis Bergkamp, who interests Barcelona coach Johan Cruyff, for five million dollars. Moratti also suggested he would pay Romario a two-million-dollar annual salary, still according to Sport.

Romario has not lived up to his reputation following World Cup victory. Apart from a lower standard on the field, Romario also angered Barcelona officials after returning 23 days late for training at the start of the season. Cruyff then fined him 2,700 dollars.

## Zoff still rates Gascoigne highly

ROME, Dec. 30: Lazio president Dino Zoff hopes that Englishman Paul Gascoigne can put his injury problems behind him in 1995 and finally prove himself in Italian soccer, reports Reuter.

"We're waiting for him, basically he's our (Roberto) Baggio," Zoff said in an interview with the Daily Corriere Dello Sport published on Thursday.

Gascoigne, who has not played since breaking his leg in a training accident last April, has suggested he would like to return to England at the end of the season but Zoff said that he still has a role to play at Lazio.

"Paul is an extraordinary talent, the best in the world if he's fit and in the mood," Zoff added.

Gascoigne, 27, has made just 39 league appearances since joining Lazio from Tottenham Hotspur more than two years ago.

The injury-plagued Englishman is hoping to return to action in March.

## HK's fate in C'wealth Games Fed hands

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec. 30: It is for the Commonwealth Games Federation to decide whether Hong Kong can participate in the 1998 Games even though it will no longer be a British colony, an official said Friday, reports AP.

Hong Kong will be handed over to China in 1997, effectively disqualifying it from the Games, which bring together Britain and its past and present colonies, known as the Commonwealth. The Games are held once in four years.

The federation, whose officials are drawn from member countries, could give Hong Kong observer status or accept it as a full participating state, said Hashim Ali, the executive chairman of Sukom Ninety Eight Ltd, a company formed by the government to organize the 1998 Games in Malaysia.

Hashim was talking to reporters after accepting Telekom Malaysia Ltd as one of the official sponsors for the Games, which he said will cost 150 million ringgit (dhs 58.6 million) to 170 million ringgit (dhs 66.4 million) to organize. Sukom has so far received sponsorship pledges worth 43 million ringgit (dhs 16.8 million), he said.

He said all 67 member nations are expected to take part in the games, drawing a record 6,000 participants.

## Huistra leaves Rangers

GLASGOW, Dec. 30: Rangers winger Pieter Huistra is leaving the club to sign for Japanese side Hiroshima in a 350,000-pound (\$525,000-dollar) deal, reports AFP.

The Dutch international was put on the Ibrox transfer list earlier this season because of the UEFA rule that restricts clubs to playing three foreigners in European competitions.

Ironically the move comes just as Huistra is enjoying an outstanding spell. "Rangers have been good to me but I am now looking forward to this fresh challenge," he said.



The Duchess of York shares a private moment with her daughters, Princesses Beatrice (L) and Eugenie, as they prepare for skiing session in Klosters, Czech Republic on Dec. 29. The Duchess arrived on Dec. 28 for her annual winter break with her children. — AFP photo

## Kim, Samaranch's successor?

SEOUL, Dec. 30: The man tipped to become the next president of the International Olympic Committee is a hero in his native South Korea for pushing the national martial art of taekwondo into the world arena almost single-handed, reports Reuter.

Kim Un-Yong, now IOC vice president, is credited with what many sports officials here see as the biggest achievement of Korean sports history — getting taekwondo accepted as a competitive Olympic Games sport.

The IOC at its 103rd meeting in Paris in September, adopted the martial art as a fully-fledged event for the 2000 Sydney Games. It was first introduced at the Olympics in Seoul in 1988 as a demonstration event only.

Taekwondo, a form of self-defence with similarities to karate and kung fu, dates back 1,500 years but has grown in popularity over the last 20 years or so and is now taught in 140 countries.

Seoul sports officials say Kim's international status is such that he appears assured of succeeding IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch, who is expected to resign in 1997.

"Kim is an unusually talented sports figure," says an official at the Culture and Sports Ministry. "His personal influence in the world sporting community played a vital role in the acceptance of taekwondo as an official Olympic sport. We are proud of him."

Kim, who once dreamed of becoming a career diplomat, says he still hasn't decided whether or not to bid for the IOC presidency. "But I believe it is about time for the end of the western world's hegemony of the IOC," he adds.

Kim, who speaks six languages, is credited with uniting some 30 divisive taekwondo factions into a national organisation. In 1973, he set up the World Taekwondo Federation.

"Now the taekwondo population has risen to 30 million worldwide," Kim says.

There have been changes, simplifying some traditional "mystical" practices and introducing protective gear. "It is important to maintain tradition in martial arts. But as a sport, it must be dynamic and popular," says Kim.

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"By the time Sydney comes around, taekwondo will be even more dynamic," he adds, citing a new scoring system rewarding technique and lighter protection gear aiding flexibility.

Rival Asian nations were not ecstatic about taekwondo's inclusion on the Olympic roster.

South Korean sports officials say Japan and China, making separate bids for their own martial arts of karate and wushu, tried their hardest to block the South Koreans.

And North Korea, resenting the international adoption of the South's version of the rules, also tried to stifle Kim and his supporters with the help of the rival International Taekwondo Federation, based in Vienna.

South Koreans, meanwhile, are sure that Kim will take up the top job at the IOC.

"His name itself is a good visa," says taekwondo master Kim Boo-Haeng. "He has been well accepted in the international sports community. If he can keep that up, we South Koreans will be proud of ourselves again and be able to celebrate his inauguration as IOC president."

## Another 48-hrs for Autissier

SYDNEY, Dec. 30: French sailor Isabelle Autissier may face two more days adrift in her stricken vessel before rescuers can reach her, organizers of the BOC Round the World Challenge yacht race said Friday, reports AP.

A search plane Thursday located Autissier alive and well off the south coast of Australia.

Autissier, 38, was found on board her dismasted yacht Ecuireuil Poitou-Charentes II in mountainous seas by an Australian Air Force Hercules aircraft 18 hours after she set off distress beacons, the Australian Maritime Safety

Authority (AMSA) said in a statement.

Autissier was located between 850 to 870 nautical miles (1,400 kilometers) southwest of Hobart, the area where her beacons were activated.

Autissier stood up and waved to the Hercules, which dropped a sea rescue kit including a radio, life raft and provisions, but by Friday morning she had not looked inside the kit and is apparently unaware it contains a radio.

"We've tried every method we can think of to try to get a message to her," said an AMSA

spokesman, who did not identify himself. "We don't know how she's thinking, but there is a means of communication there."

"We've even tried dropping her a note, but she didn't try to retrieve that."

Autissier will be kept under surveillance by maritime aircraft until the Royal Australian Navy frigate HMAS Darwin reaches her late on Saturday or early Sunday.

The ship, which has a Seahawk helicopter aboard, left Perth on Thursday.



An AFP file photo dated Sept. 16, 1994 of Frenchwoman Isabelle Autissier on board her boat, Ecuireuil Poitou-Charentes 2 before the start of the BOC Challenge in Charleston, South Carolina. Autissier has reportedly sent an emergency distress signal on Dec. 28 from a position 920 nautical miles south of Adelaide.

## Bizzare!

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec. 30: A plan by sports officials to take a pleasure cruise to ponder the future of Malaysian athletics has been shot down by authorities, a news report said Thursday, reports AFP.

Officials from the Malaysian Amateur Athletic Union (MAAU) asked the National Sports Council (NSC) to pay for 32 of them to sail from northern Penang state to Singapore and back. But the NSC expressed shock at the request.

"We are surprised that the officials could think of such an outlandish idea which seems to us like a sheer waste of money," NSC director-general Mazlan Ahmad told the New Straits Times daily.

The MAAU asked for 31,000 ringgit (12,400 dollars) to hold the seminar on the Star cruise in January.

They said the atmosphere would allow "an uninhibited exchange of views with no external disruptions" on Malaysian athletics, including preparations for hosting the Commonwealth Games in 1998, the report said.

Brochures for the cruise advertise "non-stop partying and duty-free shopping in Singapore," said the report.

Some MAAU officials said the association, had organised similar pleasure trips in the past, citing 1992 national championships when they said key officials spent a day out at sea partying.

## Seattle coach sacked

SEATTLE, Dec. 30: Tom Flores, who won only 14 games in three seasons at Seattle, was fired as coach of the Seahawks on Thursday, reports AP.

The firing, confirmed Thursday by Flores, had been expected ever since the Seahawks finished their second straight American National Football League season with a 6-10 record.

Flores also said all 12 of his assistants were told they won't be back next season.

The 57-year-old Flores was 14-34 in three seasons in Seattle, with the team finishing last in the AFC West all three years. His record against AFC West Division clubs was 4-20.

In 12 seasons as an NFL coach, Flores had an overall record of 105-90, including Super Bowl victories over Philadelphia in 1981 and Washington in 1984 when he was coach of the Raiders. His regular-season record was 97-87.

Flores, who replaced Chuck Knox as coach of the Seahawks in 1992, went 2-14 in his first season in Seattle. In 1993, after Seattle made Rick Mirer their No. 1 draft choice, the Seahawks improved to 6-10.

But this season, the Seahawks were hit with injuries, including one to Mirer, and had to endure a late-season tragedy that left defensive tackle Mike Frier paralyzed after a car crash.

Ken Behring, the Seahawks' principal owner since August 1988, made Flores the team's president and general manager in February 1989 after Mike McCormack's contract was not renewed.

Flores became coach of the Seahawks after the '91 season when Behring and Knox parted ways. Knox coached the Seahawks for nine seasons, taking them to the playoffs the only four times they have made it. The Seahawks have not won a playoff game since 1984.

## Hopman Cup to see a new Becker

PERTH, Dec. 30: Tennis makes another foray into the electronic age as the Hopman Cup starting on Saturday with organisers banking on a trio of Wimbledon champions to assure the event's future, reports Reuter.

Boris Becker, Pat Cash and Conchita Martinez have all been persuaded to represent their respective countries in the annual mixed team competition, still the only tournament in the world to rely on computerised line calling.

But the withdrawal of a major commercial television sponsor cast a shadow over the six-year old brainchild of new Australian Open tournament director Paul McNamee, who admitted today it had been "a tough year."

Rugby League and Australian Rules Football have granted franchises to two more Perth based sides from 1995, spreading the sponsorship dollar even thinner in a city that also has significant cricket, baseball and basketball support.

McNamee and former Australian Davis Cup captain Neale Fraser insist, however, the Hopman Cup format represents more than just a refreshing break from the familiar tournament treadmill for the world's top male and female players.

"For the future of tennis, it's necessary for these tournaments to survive," argued Fraser.

"We have all these one million dollar tournaments and no one knows the winner of them the following week. They may not always say it, but team events are what the players look forward to."

Australia's climate at this

time of year may also have something to do with it, but three of the world's top six women players — Martinez, Jana Novotna and Lindsay Davenport — will be present inside the Burswood Dome over the next week.

The Czech Republic, again represented by the formidable pairing of Novotna and Petr Korda, are favourites to retain the title they won last year, just ahead of the German combination of Becker and Anke Huber.



BORIS BECKER

Becker, whose form in the later months of 1994 has put him firmly in contention for a second Australian Open title in January, partnered Steffi Graf in his only previous appearance three years ago.

They reached the semifinals before illness to Graf cut short any ambitions of lifting the impressive trophy.

The progress of 1987 Wimbledon champion Cash will also be watched with interest as he begins the latest in a succession of comebacks from injury.

Now 29, he has been playing on the Challenger Circuit in Europe after undergoing back surgery earlier in the year and now has a totally remodelled serve.

But he is adamant he is fit enough to climb back up the rankings and has promised reporters they "will run out of ink" before his tennis obituary is finally penned.

Croat Goran Ivanisevic was due to have competed, before news reached organisers of his eight week suspension for accumulated fines on the ATP Tour.

Spain, in the shape of Martinez and Alberto Costa, were belatedly drafted in as third seeds, although Ivanisevic has still travelled to Perth and is scheduled to play an exhibition against Briton Mark Petchey in aid of the city's homeless.

The developers of the electronic line system, deemed a success a year ago despite problems when Frenchman Cedric Pioline's old style racket confused the machine, are also hoping for some encouragement.

"I'm surprised we're the second tournament to use it, as well as the first," admitted McNamee. "We've no hesitation in using it again, but I'm sure they'll be hoping for more penetration on the world tour in the coming year."

First round matches (prefix number denotes seeding):

Dec 31 — 8 Austria v Argentina

Jan 1 — 7 South Africa v Australia

Jan 2 — 5 Ukraine v Sweden, 6 France v Netherlands (respective winners to play 2 Germany, 1 Czech Republic, 4 United States and 3 Spain in quarterfinals).

## Anything but swimming

PARIS, Dec. 30: A French adventurer trying to swim across the Atlantic has overcome severe seasickness nearly two weeks into his journey, organizers said Thursday, but it seemed tougher to gain respect at home.

Guy Delage, accompanied by a raft of supplies, says he's doing very well, he has no more seasickness and the weather's good, said Matteo Mazzeri, a member of the Paris support team.

"But he said the monotony was starting to set in," Mazzeri said in a telephone interview.

As of Wednesday night, when Mazzeri was last in contact via satellite, Delage was 870 kms (520 miles) southwest of Cap Verde, where he left Dec. 16.

Wearing a wetsuit, mask and specially designed oversized flippers, Delage, 42, said he expected to take up to three months, swimming, 10 hours a day, to the West Indies.

Delage swims holding onto an 80-centimetre (31-inch) float which contains a survival mini-raft, a desalination device, a distress beacon, a compass and a special underwater rifle to ward off sharks. Delage also can repel sharks and highly poisonous jellyfish with a system that sends out electric shocks.

Although France has a tradition of endurance-testing solo adventures, many of his countrymen are not impressed.

"No, Delage is Not Swimming," read a large headline in the top French sports daily

L'Equipe. "At best, to be nice to our hero... he undergoes each day a few hours of a refreshing — albeit dangerous — swim while his platform wanders in the Atlantic," the paper said.

L'Equipe called it "a human adventure like others... but don't call it swimming" and quoted leading swimmers and sailors who agreed, calling it "an insult to intelligence" and "nearly ridiculous."

The day Delage began his journey, the newspaper Le Monde said Delage's undertaking "will put him in that book of records, in between the world accordion champion and the person who can eat the

most snails.

"There's no argument. We never said it was a sports event, but a scientific endeavor," Mazzeri said.

"I want to know the sensation of absolute solitude being 2,000 kilometers (1,200 miles) from the nearest coast," Delage told the newspaper InfoMatin before he set out. "Better to die in the jaws of a shark than in bed."

He had a scare last week. "I saw three cylindrical bodies four meters (12 feet) long approaching. I thought they were sharks, but they were only dolphins," Delage told Franceinfo radio last Thursday.

Delage left the shore of the island Sao Vincente, off the western coast of Africa, at 1:30 pm (1430 GMT) on Dec. 16. He plans to rest 10 minutes every two hours, and a half-day each week as he covers the 3,900-kilometer (2,440-mile) route. He sleeps under a tent aboard the 4.5-metre (15-foot) raft, which has its own guidance and propulsion system.

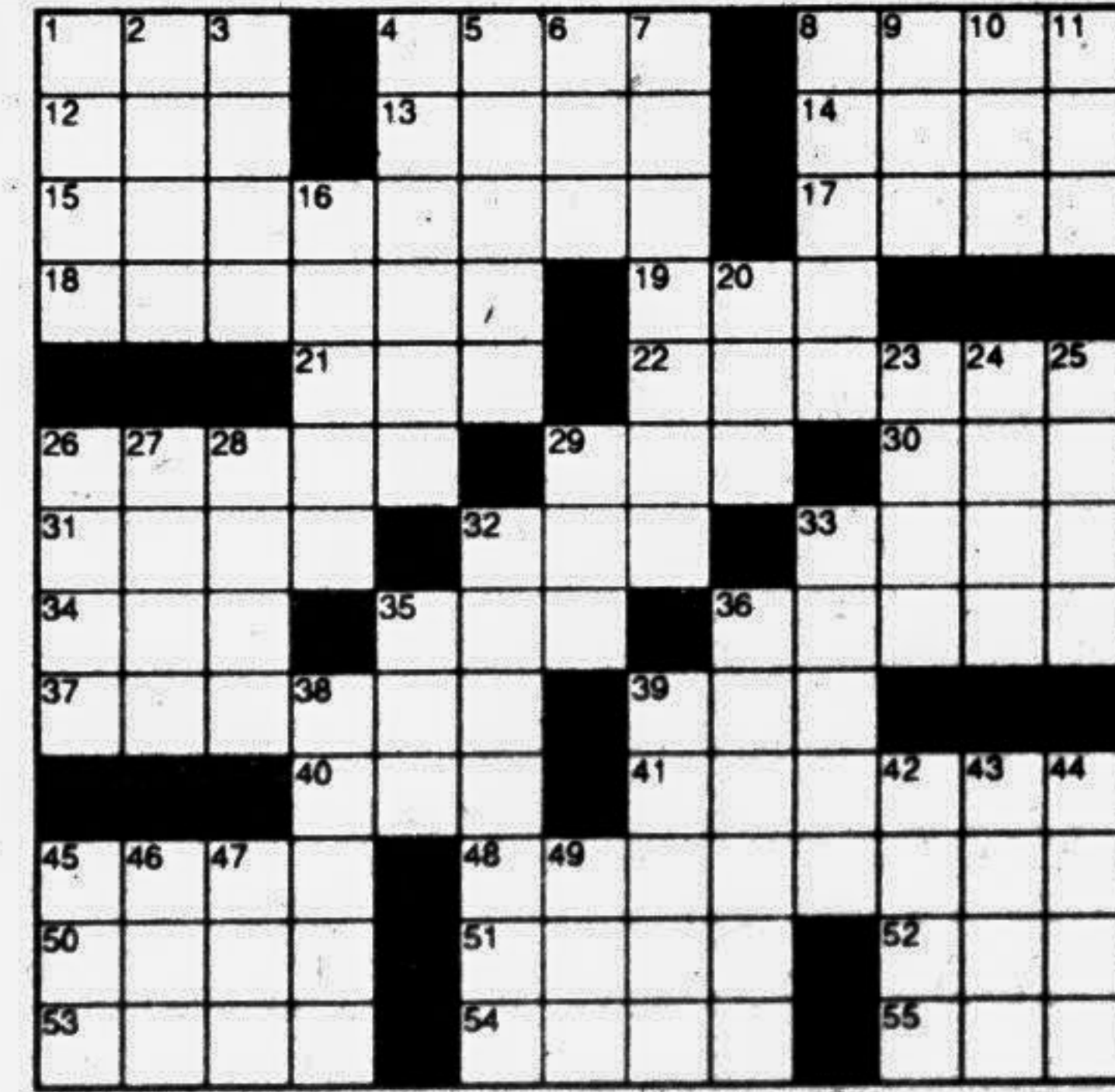
Delage has been preparing the attempt for more than two years, working with some 200 scientists, doctors, technicians, sports trainers and communications specialists.

A pilot by training, Delage has already crossed the Atlantic by ultralight aircraft. In 1991, he flew solo from Cape Verde to Brazil. That trip, however, only took him 26 hours.

In 1991, France's Gerard d'Aboville completed a 10,130-kilometer (6,300-mile) trip across the Pacific Ocean in a rowboat.

## CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

- |                         |                         |                               |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>ACROSS</b>           | <b>DOWN</b>             | <b>choice</b>                 |
| 1 Organized crime group | 1 Isinglass             | 24 Hum-dinger                 |
| 4 Rad. x 2              | 2 Elliptical            | 25 Lecherous look             |
| 8 "Dancing Queen"       | 3 Whom                  | 26 Drag                       |
| 12 "Gotta Be Me"        | 4 Ate                   | 27 Aware of the top           |
| 13 Garfield's pal       | 5 That is, in Latin     | 28 From the top               |
| 14 Authentic            | 6 Have a bug            | 32 Waist-length jackets       |
| 15 N.J. town            | 7 Ripens                | 33 Unworthy of remark         |
| 17 Harvest              | 8 Pointer               | 35 Thickness                  |
| 18 "Alley" of old radio | 9 Spelldown             | 36 Casually changeable        |
| 19 Dr.                  | 10 Sheepish             | 38 Made a boo-boo             |
| 21 Stake                | 11 Height for Heidi     | 39 Robertson of basketball    |
| 22 "Animal Farm" author | 16 Actress Winger       | 42 Ohio nine a/k/a            |
| 26 Stock a bomb shelter | 20 Sea bird             | 44 Dis-patched                |
| 29 Possess              | 23 Cheese-tray          | 45 Fit, to Bart Simpson       |
| 30 About to show up     | Solution time: 28 mins. | 46 Wildlife conservation park |
| 31 Teacher in Siam      |                         | 47 Nitrogenic                 |
| 32 Kramden's office     |                         | 49 Tulsa sch.                 |
| 33 Bound bundle         |                         |                               |
| 34 Plains Indian        |                         |                               |



## CRYPTOQUIP

D I E P I F G E F W M K L N  
S W H C X T W E A W N S X N  
A X G K W H C K X P S D  
T S X F C L K H

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I GUESS IT'S APT THAT THE GRAMMARIAN IS FOND OF PERIOD FURNITURE.

Today's Cryptoquip clue: A 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.