

Agassi waits for Sampras



ANDRE AGASSI

MELBOURNE, Jan 27: Andre Agassi reached the Australian Open final on Friday when Aaron Krickstein defaulted with a groin injury moments before ankle surgery.

"Once the water gets under a surface like that, when it dries out, the court will bubble. We've already seen it happen in various places including Key Biscayne."

Tournament officials, however, were confident the both men's and women's finals will be played as scheduled.

"Our experience indicates that the court will be absolutely fine," said Tennis Australia president Geoff Pollard. "We do not anticipate any problem with the court surface."

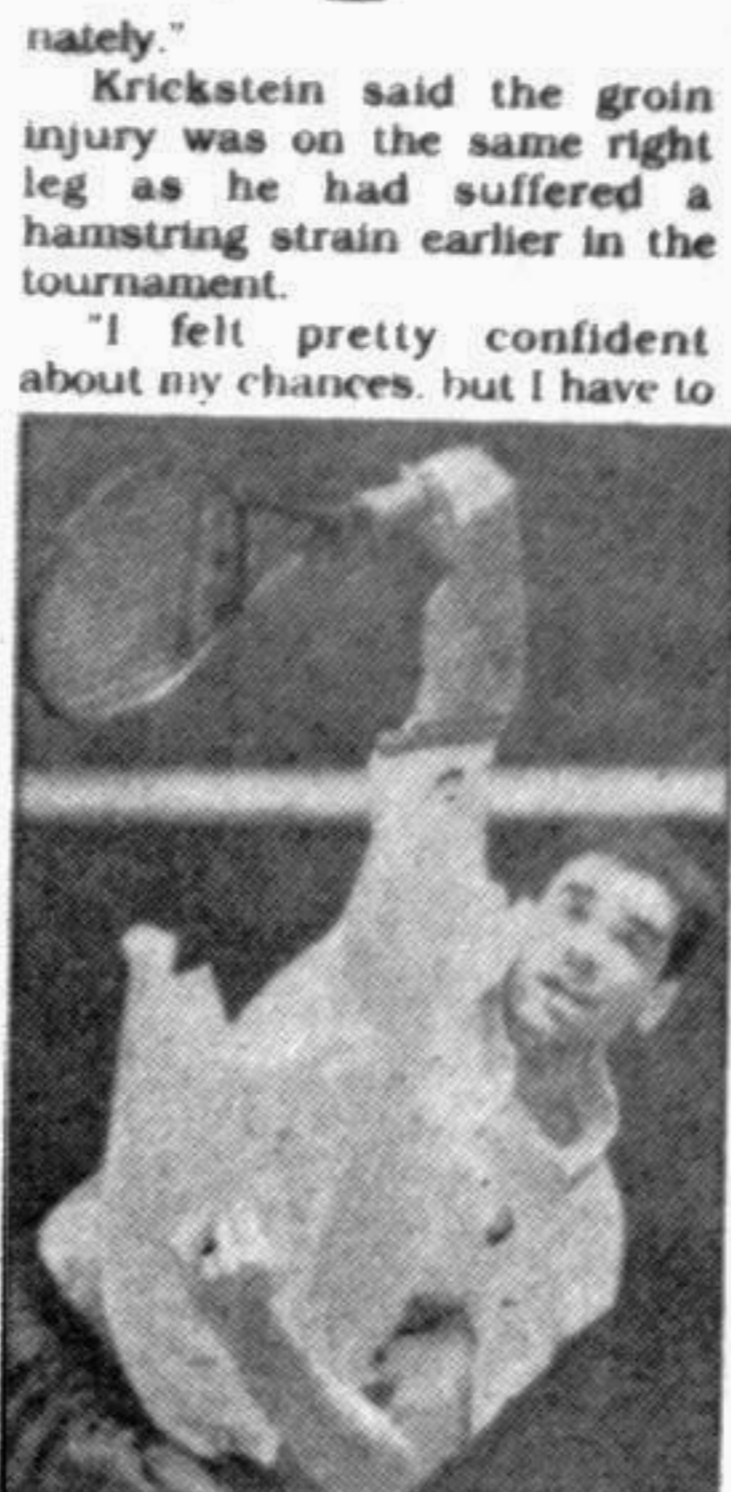
Agassi joked: "You kind of think that when you've got a stadium with a roof you've got all the angles covered."

Agassi, the US Open champion, has won all six of his matches at the National Tennis Centre in straight sets.

"It's exciting to come down here for the first time and make the final," Agassi said.

But he expressed sympathy for Krickstein's sudden injury in his first Grand Slam semifinal since 1989.

"Aaron worked so hard to get this far, he deserved to be out there and be healthy," Agassi said. "He hurt his groin in the first game of the match. I kind of sensed he wasn't at his best, so I pulled off a lot of my shots. I made some errors because of lack of concentration on what I was doing. I was more concerned with the other side of the net, unfortu-



PETE SAMPRAS

ately."

Krickstein said the groin injury was on the same right leg as he had suffered a hamstring strain earlier in the tournament.

"I felt pretty confident about my chances, but I have to be 100 per cent to beat him," Krickstein said. "I would have quit (earlier) at any other tournament."

Agassi said he wasn't concerned about going into the final without a tough match under his belt.

"The dynamics of the match on Sunday will bring out the best in me regardless of what happened today," he said.

Arantxa, Novotna take doubles title

MELBOURNE, Jan 27: Arantxa Sanchez Vicario gained a timely boost to her bid to secure a first Australian Open singles crown when she teamed with Czech Jana Novotna to win the women's doubles crown Friday, reports AP.

Sanchez Vicario, who faces France's Mary Pierce in Saturday's women's final, and Novotna beat defending champions and top seeds Gigi Fernandez and Natasha Zvereva 6-3, 6-7 (3-7), 6-4 in a rain-interrupted final.

The win give Sanchez Vicario and Novotna their second straight Grand Slam doubles title. They teamed to win the US Open final last September. That win stopped Fernandez and Zvereva from completing a Grand Slam of doubles titles. They had won the Wimbledon, Australian and US Open crowns earlier in 1994.

Sanchez Vicario and Novotna took Friday's final when the Spaniard whipped a high backhand volley past the world No. 1 pairing on their second championship point — after dropping one in the second set.

"It's always nice to come and play in two Grand Slam finals," said Sanchez Vicario of making both the singles and doubles deciders. "I'm very happy, and now I will be able to rest and be ready for the next one. It's very exciting."

Sanchez Vicario and Novotna had their first match point on their opponents' serve at 5-6 in the second set, but an overhead by Zvereva saved it and the titleholders went on to clinch the tiebreaker and level the match.

Play was halted for 40 minutes when rain led officials to close the retractable roof at the National Tennis Centre with the match locked at 4-4 and deuce on Fernandez's serve in the third set.

When play resumed, Sanchez Vicario and Novotna took charge, broke for 5-4 and then Sanchez Vicario served it out.

"I think it (the rain delay) helped us a lot to sit down and relax and to come back stronger and finish them off," said the Spaniard, who was not troubled by the tendinitis in her right arm.

Novotna said they had altered their tactics after their past defeats by the top seeds, but refused to be more specific.

"We've lost to them many times and had to do something different, and that's what we did," Novotna said.

Sanchez Vicario and Novotna shared US \$150,000 for the win. Fernandez and Zvereva split US \$175,000.



Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario of Spain (left) and Czech Jana Novotna display the Australian Open women's doubles trophy on Jan 27. In the final, Sanchez-Vicario and Novotna beat American Gigi Fernandez and Natasha Zvereva of Belarus 6-3, 6-7(3/7), 6-4. — AFP photo

Pierce in Sanchez's way

MELBOURNE, Jan 27: Spain's Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario, so long the courtier to the queen of the courts, Steffi Graf, can at last wrest the number one crown from the injured German if she wins Saturday's Australian Open title, reports agencies.

But standing in her way as a new pretender to the throne is France's Mary Pierce, only 20 and in irresistible form in her progress to the year's first Grand Slam final.

Neither the fourth-seeded Pierce nor top-seed and world number two Sanchez Vicario has dropped a set in six matches at this tournament, though the Spaniard has yet to play a seed.

The 23-year-old winner of three Grand Slams, two of them last year, does not regard the unprecedented ease of her passage to a Grand Slam final as giving her opponent any advantage.

"It puts even more pressure on you because, even though the seeded players are not there, these (unseeded) players are playing well and make it tough," said Sanchez Vicario.

The tenacious Spaniard, whose fighting spirit has made her a favourite among the fans, was hammered 6-0, 6-2 by Graf in last year's final but much has happened in the women's game since then.

She went on to win her first Grand Slam of the year by beating Pierce 6-4, 6-4 at the French Open in early June then followed that up with victory over the formidable Graf at the US Open.

But her second title was against a Graf who, seriously affected by a back injury, let slip a 6-1, 3-2 lead to lose in three sets.

Graf's subsequent struggle to regain fitness has given the resilient Sanchez Vicario, so long in the shadow of Graf and the absent Monica Seles, the opportunity to grab the top ranking for the first time.

To hear her speak over the past week, however, Saturday's match, her seventh Grand Slam final, is just another game and she will not be thinking about the dream of ending Graf's 19-month reign as number one.

"It would be great if I do it but it's not on my mind. I will just try to go and play my best and see what happens," she said after beating 47th-ranked American Marianne Werdel-Witmeier in a one-sided semifinal.

She has also rejected any psychological advantage from her defeat of the Canadian.

first player to drop only 10 games on her way to the final.

"It's a different surface here. I think whoever is tougher, more aggressive and stronger will be the one who will win the match," said Sanchez Vicario.

She is confident of handling the firepower of Pierce.

"I've played against Mary six or seven times," Sanchez-Vicario said. "She hits the ball hard, but I can tell you that Werdel-Witmeier hits the ball harder than she does. That's what made the match perfect preparation for the final."

Pierce, born in Montreal to an American father and French mother, has long been regarded as one of the most promising younger players. Now she aims to fulfill that promise on the rubberised Rebound Ace surface, where the high bounce and slower pace suits her game.

Pierce, who is bidding to become the first Frenchwoman since 1967 to win a Grand Slam, believes she can improve on her form.

"Winning the Australian Open would mean a lot," said Pierce, who appears to have put the controversies surrounding her father behind her. "I've worked hard this winter, physically. It would give me a lot of satisfaction."

Pierce will be playing her first major tournament without the presence of her mother, Yannick, who has stayed at their Florida home to be with her brother.

Also absent is American coaching guru, Nick Bollettieri, who left after her quarterfinal win over Natasha Zvereva because of prior commitments.

But she insists the nerves that hit her in Paris will not reappear.

"Before the final at Roland Garros I had problems getting to sleep," Pierce said. "I know that won't happen here. I'm much more relaxed. There was more pressure at Roland Garros. When I played Arantxa I was nervous. I was thinking about a lot of different things at once."

Both Pierce and Sanchez-Vicario go into the final with niggling injuries but they are unlikely to affect their performance.



MARY PIERCE

born Pierce in Paris after her opponent had made French Open history by becoming the

Hira Lal's Jabbar memorial tennis crown

National champion, Hira Lal clinched the men's singles title of the Jabbar memorial tennis tournament defeating Jhelan 6-1, 6-2, in the final played at the Engineers' Club court yesterday, reports UNB.

Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman attended the closing function as the chief guest and gave away the prizes.

Hira Lal received Tk seven thousand as prize money while runner-up Jhelan Tk four thousand.

AUSSIE OPEN NOTEBOOK

MELBOURNE, Jan 27 (AP): Mary Pierce heads into Saturday's Australian Open final against Arantxa Sanchez Vicario with an unenviable record in title matches.

The French fourth seed contested five tournament finals in 1994 — including the French Open — and was unable to come up with a win. But WTA Tour veteran Pam Shriver is among those who think it's only a matter of time.

"Mary can do it," Shriver said. "But she has not shown great form in finals. She is going to win a Grand Slam at some point and it could very be on Saturday."

Shriver described the final as "extremely hard to call."

"Arantxa's more consistent. She's won three Grand Slams before, but on form its close to a toss up. It's an interesting matchup. They're the two players, who've shown the best form."

Canada ride on Bunbury

TORONTO, Jan 27: Alex Buftbury scored in the 8th minute Thursday night, lifting Canada to a 1-1 draw with Portugal in the SkyDome Cup exhibition soccer tournament, reports AP.

Bunbury, a Montreal native who plays for Maritime of Portugal's First Division, scored off a header from a Geoff Auger free kick to give Canada their first goal of the three-game tournament.

"I feel great for Canada," said Bunbury. "They deserve the equalizer."

In the final game Sunday, Portugal play Denmark, who beat Canada 1-0 Tuesday. A tie or win against Portugal will give Denmark the inaugural SkyDome Cup.

"Technically, I have to compliment both teams," said Bunbury resting legs sore from pounding the artificial turf pitch.

"Technically you have to be so alert, because at any moment they can zip by you."

That's what happened early in the match when Antonio Folha jumped into a pass from Agostinho Caetano during a scramble around the net, faked defender Rudy Doliscat and dropped a soft shot past keeper Pat Onstad.

Half the crowd of 13,000 cheered and waved Portuguese flags.

FAM gets tough

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 27: The Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) said on Thursday it would suspend indefinitely soccer players suspected of taking bribes, reports Reuters.

It also hit out at Singapore, accusing the football authorities there of not doing enough to stamp out match fixing.

FAM deputy president Tengku Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, said the suspensions would be lifted only if police cleared the players or there was insufficient evidence to prosecute them.

He also accused Singapore of a lack of cooperation with Malaysian police in investigations into soccer corruption which began late last year.

Police so far have summationed 112 players to help in the investigations some 71 were detained for various periods but most have since been released.

Tengku Abdullah said the players to be suspended would be from among those who were detained previously, but that he expected the list to be very much less than 71.

Two coaches and six bookmakers have also been detained.



NOT A POOL, BELIEVE IT OR NOT... a security guard surveys the damage after a heavy downpour flooded the Centre Court at the Australian Open yesterday. A power failure caused the water pump to malfunction. — AFP photo

Titas sports

The annual sports competition of Titas Gas Company was held at the Rajarbagh Police Line ground here yesterday, reports BSS.

Finance division became champions while administration division became runners-up.

Energy and Mineral Resources Secretary M Faizur Razzak witnessed the meet as the chief guest and distributed the prizes.

McCall sued

MIAMI, Jan 27: A Fort Lauderdale woman sued WBC heavyweight champion Oliver McCall on Thursday, claiming he pushed her down and seriously injured her knee after she rebuffed his attempts to kiss her, reports AP.

Lisa Roberts, 34, accuses McCall of battery and negligence in the incident that she said occurred Dec 26 at a surprise birthday party for her in her cousin's plantation home.

"The message that we want to convey to McCall is that he ought to pick on somebody his own size and gender," said attorney Ellis Rubin at a news conference attended by Brazil, who wore a heavy brace on her left knee and walked with a limp.

Rubin said his client suffered "permanent" ligament damage that will require surgery.

Rubin also said Brazil, a nurse, has been unable to work since the incident and that her suit filed in Broward County Circuit Court seeks more than \$15,000 for bodily injury, suffering, mental anguish, medical costs and loss of earnings.

Brazil said she met McCall, 29, two weeks before the party and called him the "kissing bandit" for his constant attempts to date and kiss her. She rejected his advances because he was married and she wasn't interested in dating him, she said.

Brazil said that at the party, McCall came up behind her, grabbed her waist and tried to kiss her. She claims that when she pushed him away, he picked her up, set her down and then threw her on the ground. Her knee crumpled beneath her, she said.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 The Merry Widow composer

6 Reticent

9 Capp and Capone

12 Seek out a J.P., maybe

13 "Ulalume" poet

14 Marceau character

15 Ersatz swings

16 Testosterone, e.g.

18 De-cressed?

20 Micro-wave, e.g.

21 Wood-shaping tool

23 Patriotic org.

24 Pollster's find

25 Prop in a dog act

27 TV, radio, etc.

29 Byrd's domain

31 Small piece of hardware

35 Imitation gems

DOWN

1 Tennis interference

2 Actor

3 Where the earth meets the sky

4 Mimic

5 Fix the lawn

6 Ball

7 A "bon-net," in the States

8 End for law or saw

9 Over

10 Irish export

11 Squander

17 Swamp divisions

19 Sen.

21 Oohs! mates

22 Bambi's aunt Ena, e.g.

24 Carrere of "Wayne's World"

26 Tropical fruit

28 Reside

30 Tit for —

32 Packers star, 1957-66

33 Historic period

34 Sleep phenomenon

36 Enlisted personnel

38 Master, in old India

39 Stirred

40 Had the guts

42 Playground piece

45 Harbor structure

46 Markey or Bagnold

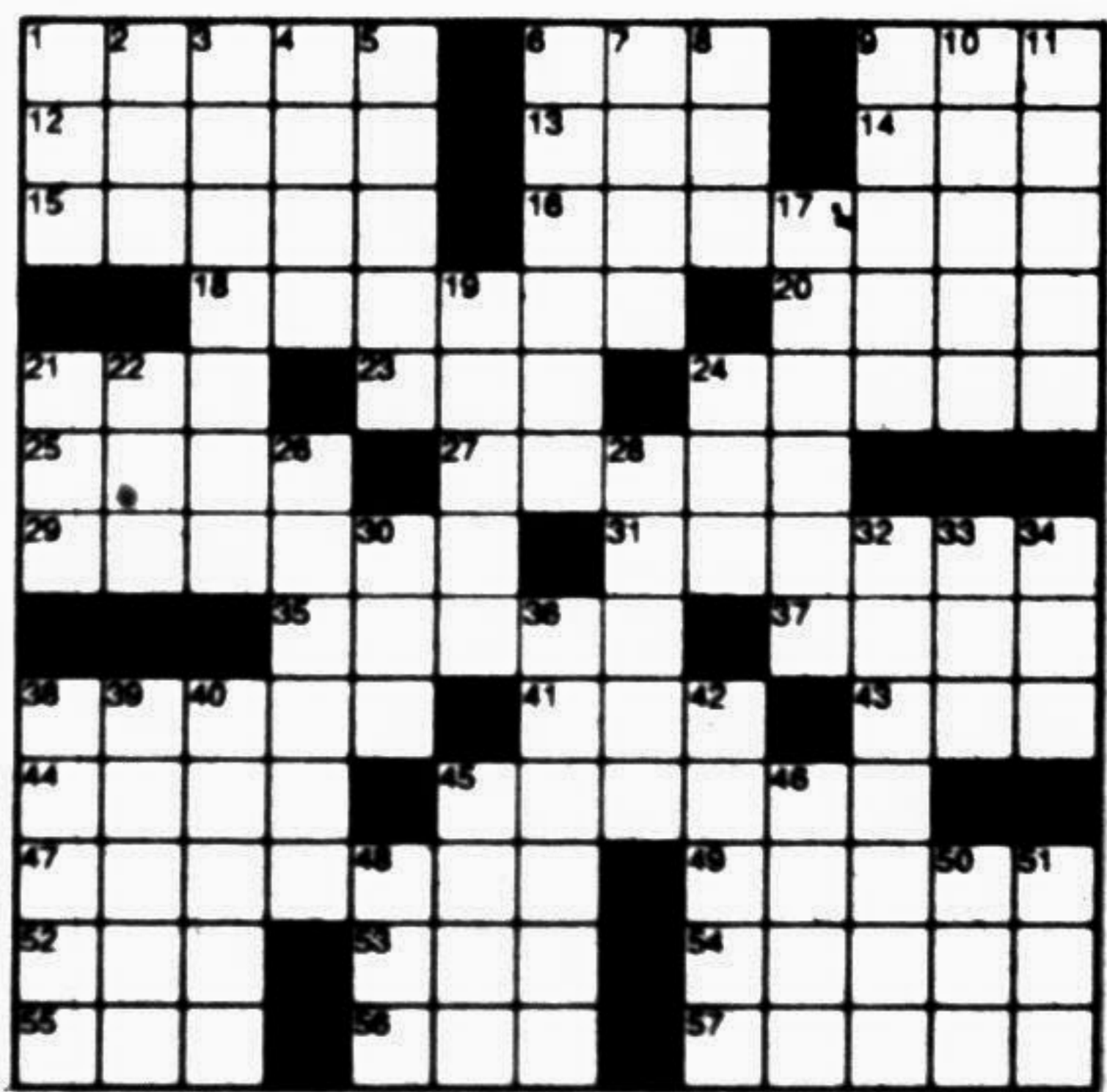
48 "Honor — father..."

50 Actress Charlotte

51 Stammering sounds

SOLUTION time: 26 mins.

GARD	SAW	RAID
ALAI	PTE	INDY
TIPPER	TIRE	PYLE
TIPPER	KIPPER	
ELI	DEL	
USBR	TAMARACK	
OOT	ETA	COT
OUNDDOG	HEWS	
MIO	AMI	
GIPPER	ZIPPER	
GAPP	ALI	PAGE
RAGE	CAN	ELAN
DOER	EWI	REDD



CRYPTOQUIP

OPDYUZD K G S L C Q D M
O S W Z E S T Q L S Z U V R C
R S T V Q B B S A E Z M K G Y
R Q P T S W Z U T

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: BEAUTY-SALON COL-ORIST COULD DEVELOP VERY HIGH BLONDE PRES-SURE.

Today's Cryptoquip clue: R equals H

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.