

### Boro bemoan Argentine FA's inaction

MIDDLESBROUGH, England, Oct 22: Middlesbrough manager Bryan Robson has protested to the Argentine FA over delays holding up the transfer of teenage striker Carlos Marínelli from Boca Juniors, reports Reuters.

The English premier league club announced last month that they had signed the "new Maradona" for 1.5 million pounds (2.4 million dollars).

But Marínelli has still not received the necessary international clearance and cannot even play for Boro's reserve team as a result.

"We have sent a strong protest. It is not fair on a young player who is in limbo," said Robson.

The Argentine FA should release the papers but we think the problem lies with Boca Juniors.

Middlesbrough claim Boca have not paid the necessary tax on the transfer, part of which should go to the Argentine FA.

The matter is out of our hands unfortunately, all we can do is be patient at present," said a club spokesman.

Marínelli had to sit out a reserve game on Wednesday night against Sheffield Wednesday, in which Paul Gascoigne made a comeback after a two-match suspension.

### Blazevic steps down as Croatia coach

ZAGREB, Oct 22: Croatian coach Miroslav Blazevic has quit his job, national television reported here on Thursday, reports AFP.

Blazevic put his decision down to Croatia's elimination from the Euro 2000 qualifier at the hands of Yugoslavia and persistent media criticism.

The recent tactical history of the two countries had made the match a highly-charged fixture which Croatia needed to win to take first place in group eight.

However, Croatia finished in third place in group eight after being held to a 2-2 draw by Yugoslavia, who qualified automatically coming top of the group.

Following criticism Blazevic said: "I don't try to justify myself, but without players like Boban, Stimac, Simic... it's difficult."

Blazevic led Croatia to third place in last year's World Cup.

### Top guns come face to face

PARIS, Oct 22: Champions League participants Bordeaux and Marseille, last season's champions and runners-up, top the bill in the French league Saturday when they clash head on at Bordeaux's Stade Maceo.

Marseille, buoyed by their success in midweek over Manchester United which left the French outfit top of their group and destined for the next phase, will not have forgotten their last trip to Bordeaux - it ended in a 4-1 thrashing late last season.

That proved a big psychological blow to the 1993 European champions and while they finished the season wounded a resurgent Bordeaux took heart to go on and lift the title for the first time since 1987.

Bordeaux are fourth in the table after a slow start with five points to make up on leaders Auxerre, while Marseille, who likewise took a long time to get out of the blocks, are sixth a point further back.

Crucial to Bordeaux's recent renaissance has been the improved form of striker Sylvain Wilford and his link with Lilian Laslandes, with the pair scoring 11 out of the club's last 12 goals.

Wilford crucially headed the winner at Spartak Moscow on Wednesday night.

Saturday's other match sees Rennes, who have clawed their way out of trouble in the past few weeks, host ten-time champions Saint Etienne, riding high in seventh spot on the back of seven goals by Brazilian discovery Alex.

Sunday sees another appetising clash as Auxerre travel to Monaco, currently third in the table.

Auxerre almost went down last season - but wily coach Guy Roux, in his 39th season at the club, has coaxed a revival out of a side which has welcomed back prodigal son Stephane Guivarch after his unsuccessful 'sabbatical' in Britain.

Since his return Guivarch has hit eight goals in 11 matches and is just one off the leading total of nine by Monaco's David Trezeguet.

Auxerre will hope to profit from the absence of Monaco keeper Fabien Barthez, who is injured and replaced by inexperienced Tony da Silva.

Monaco, despite their talismanic skipper's absence, will not lack motivation as they can go top themselves with a win.

Second-placed Lyon, two points adrift and buoyed by last week's win at Marseille, should get three more points on the board as Bernard Lacombe's side host strugglers Nancy at the Stade Gerland.

Paris Saint Germain have lodged themselves in fifth place, level on points with Bordeaux despite their hopeless inconsistency which saw the club from the capital sandwiched between home defeats by Marseille and Monaco with a brilliant four-goal display at Nantes.

PSG host promoted Sedan on Sunday knowing their opponents have adjusted well to the top flight with five wins in their 11 games to date.

In other action, Montpellier host Bastia, Strasbourg face Nantes, Metz welcome talleiders Le Havre and Troyes meet Lens in a clash of bottom four clubs.



Newcastle's Alan Shearer (L) scores his team's second goal against FC Zurich. — AFP photo

### Blair greets FIFA inspectors

LONDON, Oct 22: British Prime Minister Tony Blair on Thursday threw his weight behind England's bid to host the 2006 World Cup as he welcomed a team of inspectors from world body FIFA to Downing Street, reports AFP.

Blair met a delegation led by Alan Rothenberg in the Cabinet Room of Number 10 and made a personal plea to capture the biggest prize in sport.

The premier told the five-strong delegation that England had the experience and facilities to do justice to the tournament which would build on the success of Euro 96, which it also hosted.

"I think the whole of the country is really excited about it," Blair said.

"We have put all this effort and energy into this because we feel we can offer something to the whole world."

Football's best minds have put together the package with "a great deal of care and consideration," he said.

"Our stadiums now are in really good shape so we are proud with what we have done and we think we can do it," he added.

England's 1966 World Cup hero Sir Bobby Charlton was among those present at the meeting, along with Sports Minister Kate Hoey and Tony Banks, the Prime Minister's special envoy charged with capturing the tournament for England.

English Football Association officials, who had earlier given the FIFA delegation an official presentation of the bid at their Lancaster Gate headquarters, were also taking part in the meeting.

Rothenberg, from the Confederation of North, Central America and Caribbean Football, was the man who masterminded the World Cup USA '94 tournament.

Over the next six days he will meet with officials and inspect stadiums along with fellow delegates Walter Sieber from Canada, Jilong Zhang from China, Yousaf Yauqoub Al-Serki from the United Arab Emirates, Richard Read from Australia and Urs Kneubuhler from Switzerland.

Their tour will begin at Wembley on Friday.

On the steps of Number 10 Rothenberg said Blair's appeal had been a very personal one.

"I have had the pleasure of meeting him previously and know what a tremendous football fan he is, so he expressed his enthusiasm and how important he feels it is (for the tournament to come to Britain)."

Rothenberg said the final decision was not up to the five-strong delegation, but their findings would be crucial in deciding where the 2006 World Cup would be played.

Documents drawn up in advance of the visit detailing Britain's bid had been so comprehensive the delegates were left with few questions, "he added.



TONY BLAIR

### Asian Super Cup

### Jubilo eye first blood

WATATA, Japan, Oct 22: Asian club champions Jubilo Iwata will be looking to put a bad run of form behind them this weekend as they aim to gain a first-leg advantage over Saudi Arabian side Al-Ittihad in the Asian Super Cup final, reports Reuters.

The match, played between the Asian Champions and Asian Cup Winners Cup winners will see a determined Jubilo bidding to recapture the kind of form that saw them lift the Asian title in Tehran earlier this year and the first stage title in the J-League.

Whoever wins this cup will also represent Asian in the 2001 World Cup Championship - if it actually goes ahead. Al-nasser of Saudi Arabia are representing the continent in the inaugural competition in Brazil in January. The future of the competition is not yet guaranteed.

Jubilo's form has slipped since the loss of midfielder Hiroshi Nanami, who has joined Italian side Venezia. Their last 10 league matches have produced just two wins.

Things have gone better for Jubilo at Asian level, however, with the 1997 J-League champions qualifying for the quarter-finals of this year's Asian Club Championship after an 8-0 thumping of Indian side Mohan Bagan.

Not that things have fared much better on the domestic front for their Saudi opponents.

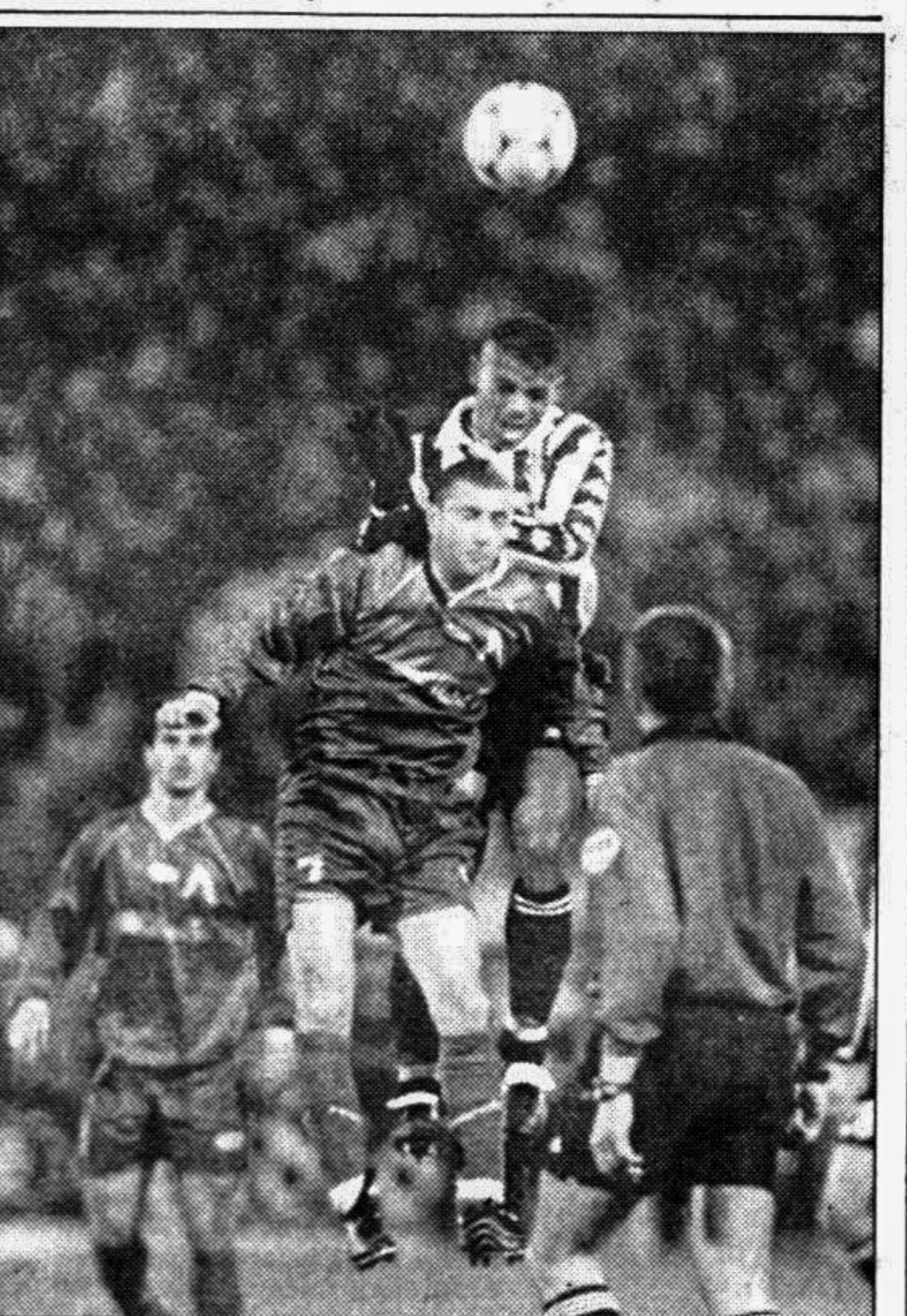
Al-Ittihad won the Asian Cup Winners' Cup with a victory in sudden-death extra-time over Chunnam Dragons of South Korea in mid-April but since then the club have experienced a major face-lift and are still adjusting to the changes.

After clinching their second Saudi title in three seasons, Yugoslav coach Dimitrije Davidovic left after refusing to sign a new contract. He went to work in the United Arab Emirates with the Al-Wahda club.

Another who headed off to the Emirates was former Moroccan international Ahmad Bahja, who scored the winning goal in the Cup Winner's Cup final, while Englishman Dalian Atkinson has also left the Jeddah-based club.

The club can boast as many as six former or current Saudi internationals but with the league championship having only just started in the gulf nation, match-sharpness is likely to be lacking, giving Jubilo the first leg advantage.

The second leg will be played in Jeddah on November 18.



Juventus' Nigerian international Sunday Oliseh (Top) locked in an aerial tussle with a Levski Sofia defender during their UEFA Cup second round first leg encounter at Sofia on October 21. Juve won 3-1. — AFP photo

### Jamaican misfit!

GLASGOW, Oct 22: Ipswich Town's Jamaican-born striker David Johnson pleaded his international future to Scotland on Thursday to the disappointment of Wales, reports Reuters.

The decision meant the player, courted by manager Craig Brown in a move that has sparked controversy in Scotland because Johnson has no family ties with the country, will become the first black player to wear the dark blue shirt.

Johnson has turned out in the past for Jamaica's senior team, but not in competitive internationals. He has been in the England under-21 and B squads and was called up by Wales for their last Euro 2000 qualifier, but did not play.

Northern Ireland had also expressed an interest.

Welsh Football Association (FA) secretary general David Collins told BBC radio he was disappointed.

"Until the player has undertaken a championship game for Wales obviously he's still at liberty to make a choice and he has exercised that choice," he said.

"I'm sure the team manager will be speaking with him ... there must be great disappointment throughout the principality that he's made this choice."

Johnson, who was at Bury after an apprenticeship at Manchester United, joined Ipswich in November 1997 for 800,000 pounds (\$1.34 million) as their record signing.

He was able to choose his country because he holds a British passport and reached his decision after watching Rangers beat PSV Eindhoven 4-1 in the Champions League on Wednesday.

He is eligible for Scotland's Euro 2000 play-offs against England but Brown was quoted on Monday as saying Johnson would not be thrown straight into the side.

Brown said Johnson would strengthen the squad but regular strikers such as Billy Dodds, Kevin Gallacher and Mark Burchill were "ahead of Johnson in the queue."

### Brilliant Rangers taking a break

GLASGOW, Oct 22: Unlike their counterparts south of the border, Scotland's Champions League contenders Rangers can rest weary limbs this weekend in preparation for their vital clash with Valencia next Tuesday, reports AFP.

Dick Advocaat's side, who thumped PSV Eindhoven 4-1 on Wednesday to go top of their group, are the beneficiaries of some generosity by Saturday's scheduled opponents Hearts, who have agreed to postpone their Premier League fixture.

So impressive has Rangers' start to the season been, though, that even without playing they know they cannot be knocked off the top of the table.

Celtic, though, can move to within a point of their city rivals if they win at St Johnstone on Sunday.

John Barnes' side whacked seven past Aberdeen last week and they received another boost this week when Australian striker Mark Viduka quashed suggestions he was ready to quit the club.

Anything could happen at Pittodrie when Aberdeen, still rubbing their eyes in disbelief following their extraordinary 6-5 midweek win at Motherwell, tackle Kilmarnock.

Else, Skovdahl's side quadrupled their goal tally but still had to sweat to chalk up their first win of the season.

The Dane was highly amused to see Motherwell's Andy Goram and his own keeper Jim Leighton, both experienced former Scotland internationals, submerged in the goal flood.

"It was all so funny to see the two big-time keepers at both ends, who both lost a lot of goals," he said.

**Fixtures (kick-offs 1400 GMT unless stated):**  
**Saturday:** Aberdeen v Kilmarnock, Dundee Utd v Motherwell, Hibernian v Dundee  
**Sunday:** St Johnstone v Celtic (1705 GMT)

### Van Roost pulls thru'

MOSCOW, Oct 22: Fifth-seeded Dominique Van Roost was just a game away from losing to 15-year-old Russian Lina Krasnorutskaya, before coming back from 5-1 down in the final set to win their Kremlin Cup clash on Thursday, reports Reuters.

Van Roost, ranked 12th in the world, won six games in a row to record a hard-fought 6-2, 2-6, 7-5 victory in the second round of the 1,000,000 dollars event.

Krasnorutskaya, who was given a wild card entry by the organisers after winning the US Open junior title last month, said: "I probably should have played more aggressively to get that one more game instead of just waiting for her to make a mistake."

American Lisa Raymond dismissed Russian qualifier Nadejda Petrova 6-2, 6-2. In the next round she will take on Japan's Ai Sugiyama, who on Wednesday knocked out top seed and defending champion Mary Pierce of France.

Earlier, fourth seed Nathalie Tauziat of France outlasted another Russian, Tatiana Panova, 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 to set up a quarter-final duel with Germany's Anke Huber, a 6-3, 4-6, 6-3 winner over Romanian Ruxandra Dragomir.

Italian Silvia Farina, who upset seventh seeded Sandrine Testud of France in the first round, eliminated another Frenchwoman Sarah Pitkowski in straight sets 6-3, 6-1 and will now meet second seed Barbara Schett of Austria.



LOOK WHO'S TALKING: Former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson (R) faces opponent Orlin Norris during a press briefing at the MGM Grand Hotel in Nevada on October 20. — AFP photo

### Norris still feels the same

LAS VEGAS, Oct 22 (AP): Orlin Norris finally is getting a fight he wanted a decade ago.

"I felt like I could beat him 10 years ago," said Norris, who will fight Mike Tyson on Saturday night. "Nothing has changed."

Norris' attitude might remain the same, but a lot has changed in 10 years for the two fighters, especially for Tyson.

In 1989, Tyson was the fearsome undisputed heavyweight champion. Now he is 33 and making yet another comeback. He is a fighter who maintains the power of his glory years, but whose fast hands and quick feet have been slowed by time and inactivity.

Tyson, however, remains an attraction, a man held in the harsh glare of a celebrity built on his boxing achievement and his out-of-ring problems.

"People love Mike Tyson," said Dan Goossen, president of promoter America presents. "They love to see him win. They love to see him lose."

"He has done so much for the game, and I think he deserves a lot of the attention he gets," said the 34-year-old Norris.

Tyson was a 12-1 favourite to win the 10-round match in the MGM Grand Garden.

A decade ago the odds against Norris would have been similar to the 42-1 odds that

favoured Tyson against James "Buster" Douglas on February 11, 1990.

Douglas, who knocked out Tyson in the 10th round in perhaps boxing's greatest upset, was the first choice for the bout. Tyson is fighting for the first time since he knocked out Francois Botha Jan. 16 and served 3 1-2 months in a Maryland jail for assaulting two motorists after a minor accident.

Douglas, however, was rejected because of his poor physical condition. The attraction of Douglas to the people who guide and sell Tyson's career was his chin, which had grown increasingly fragile.

The attraction of Norris is that he does not pack a big wallop. Most of the 27 knockouts on his 55-5 record came through attrition.

Another factor that probably helped Norris get the fight is his size. He's built like Tyson, who could use a dominating performance at this point of his career. Norris is 1.78 meters (5-foot-10), while Tyson is listed at 1.82 meters (5-11, 1-2), but appears shorter.

Tyson weigh-in officially Thursday at 100 kilograms (223 pounds), which is what he weighed for the Botha fight. Norris weighed 98 kilograms (218 pounds), just under his weight when he stopped Pete Reid June 26 in his only fight in 12-12 months.

Norris has a crafty style, one that can frustrate an opponent and also bore a crowd.

In October 1989, Norris had a 22-1 record, but because of his style he was not in the heavyweight championship mix. He won eight of his next 10 fights, outpointing former heavyweight champion Greg Page in 1989 and future champ Oliver McCall in 1990 and losing a decision to former champ Tony Tucker in 1991.

In 1991 he shed more than 9 kilograms (20 pounds) to enter the 85.5-kilogram (190-pound) cruiserweight class. He won the WBA in 1993 and lost on an eight-round knockout by Nate Niller in 1995.

For much of his career, Norris has boxed in the shadow of younger brother Terry, who was a flashy junior middleweight champion.

Norris will try to frustrate Tyson for 10 rounds. Botha did it for most of five rounds, winning all of the first four on two cards and three of the four on the third card. Then the South African got a little too cocky late in the fifth, dropped his guard and was knocked out by a right to the jaw.

"Botha fought Tyson the right way," Norris said. "Botha did a lot of things right. He impressed me, more or less, as a boxer. He didn't stay in front of Tyson until the last round. Botha used the jab, he used his right hand and speed. My job is not to get hit with the big shot."

### Bright a trusted name

LAS VEGAS, Oct 22: (Reuters): The boxing people hoping for one final financial fling with Mike Tyson ironically have brought back the one man in the former champion's life who seems not to have been all that fixated on Tyson's money in the first place.

Not that Jay Bright hasn't become financially comfortable working with Tyson on and off over the years since they lived in the old fighter trainer Cus D'Amato's house in upstate New York.

But Bright, college educated, apparently fiscally conservative and certainly not drawn to the neon lights of boxing, is back mostly to try to provide some stability to the former undisputed heavyweight champion's chaotic life.

Of course, it could be argued that trying to bring stability to Tyson's previous camp counselors, including promoter Don King, whom, along with others, Tyson is suing, alleging the theft of millions of dollars.

"This is a kinder, gentler Team Tyson," Bright said with a smile and only half joking as he walked into the ring and Tyson's professional life from which he was unceremoniously jettisoned after Evander Holyfield thoroughly beat Tyson in their first fight in 1996 with Bright in Tyson's corner.

Forever the friend, he insists, "I wasn't hurt. Mike told me it was just a business decision. I just figured people were whispering in his ear."

Bright adds that for the rematch, Tyson "wanted to go in and pretend the first fight never happened" and not learn from his mistakes. But Bright says he insisted on Tyson remembering the first fight and soon became weary "of being the lone voice in the wilderness."

The decision to bring Bright back again was motivated by a bid to protect the large investments many people have in Tyson, including 13 million dollars he owes the Showtime cable television company.

Bright's comeback was approved by Shelley Finkel, Tyson's de-facto manager, with a nod from Tyson's wife, Monica, and, of course, Tyson himself.

"He wants people around him he can trust," Bright said earlier this week, referring to Tyson's previous camp counselors, including promoter Don King, whom, along with others, Tyson is suing, alleging the theft of millions of dollars.

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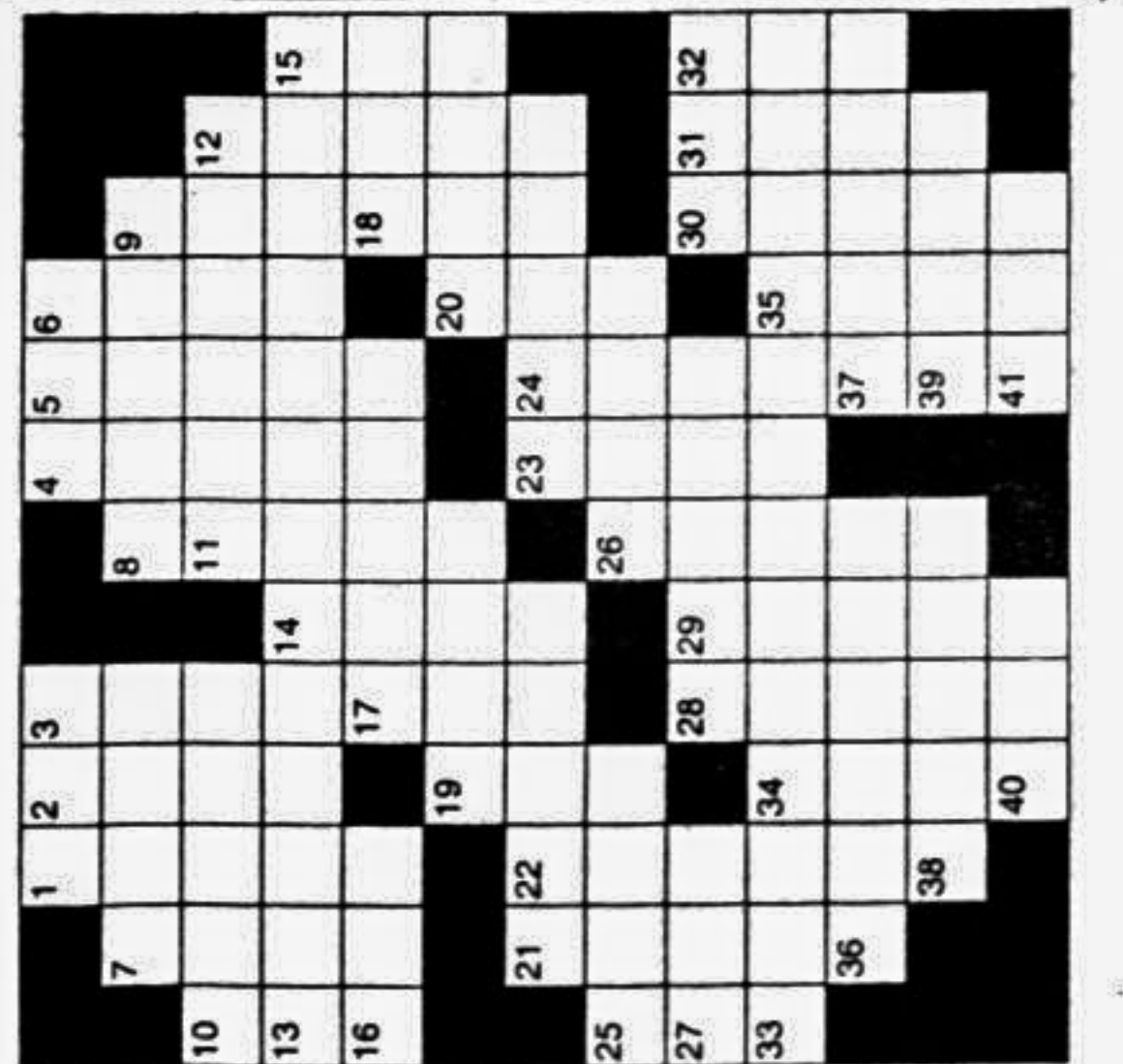
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### CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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CRYPTOQUIP

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G S S P X N U N U G N S I P  
I X S W G C ! U D H H I  
A T R Z D G C Z R C T D Y X C D Z !  
Yesterday's Cryptogram: WOULDN'T YOU INDEBITABLY DESCRIBE A RICH COBBLER AS WELL-HEELLED?  
Today's Cryptogram clue: A equals C  
The Cryptogram 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.