

Women's WC cricket Trans-Tasman confrontation

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand, Dec 20: New Zealand defeated India by nine wickets Wednesday to advance to the final of the Women's Cricket World Cup, reports AFP.

After dismissing India for a modest 117, New Zealand needed just 26.5 overs to achieve victory and qualify for the final against reigning champions Australia on Saturday.

Rajshahi cricket

From Our Correspondent RAJSHAHI, Dec 20: Amra Baish Friends Circle Cricket Club (Red) and Sardah Cricket Club won their respective matches of the sixth Bir Sreslthya Captain Shaheed Muboluddin Jahangir Smith Gold Cup cricket tournament today at the AHM Qamruzzaman Divisional Stadium.

In the first match, Amra Baish Friends defeated Jamalpur Cricket Club by 148 runs. Winning the toss, Amra Baish collected 237 runs losing seven wickets in the stipulated 25 overs.

In reply, Jamalpur went all out making only 89 runs in 21.3 overs. In the second match, Sardah Cricket Club beat Hijmi Club by 52 runs.

Sardah won the toss and decided to bat first. They made 122 runs for all in 24.1 overs. In reply, Hijmi were shot out for 70 runs in 17.5 overs.

Meanwhile, Mohammadpur Tarun Sangha and Friends Ideal Club (A) recorded their wins of the Shaheed Zia Smriti cricket tournament today at the Rajshahi Govt College playground.

Mohammadpur defeated Muktiyoddha Babu Smriti Sangha by 79 runs. Friends Ideal (A) beat Kishore Club by 18 runs in the second match.

RU CRICKET Applied Physics & Electronics and Islamic History won their respective matches of the Rajshahi University inter-department cricket tournament yesterday at RU Stadium.

In the first match, Applied Physics & Electronics defeated Botany by three wickets. Islamic History defeated Statistics by three wickets in the second match.

2004 Olympics Taekwondo to be included SEOUL, Dec 20: The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has decided to confirm taekwondo, South Korea's native fighting sport, as an official Olympic event in 2004, sports officials said today, reports AFP.

The decision came in a letter from IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch to South Korea's IOC executive board member Kim Un-Yong, Kim's office said.

No more fixing From page 13 "I don't regard myself as a natural opener, although it has helped me to tighten my technique. I have tried to bide my time in the opening position. Until recently it has been the only spot available in the top six."

Natural position or not, Gibbs looked extremely good on Saturday, belting a century in a Standard Bank League encounter with Gauteng. But he knows that to make amends for some poor form earlier in the season, he must press on.

Kanu blasts Gunners

LAGOS, Dec 20: Nigerian international striker Nwankwo Kanu, dropped for a crucial qualifying match this month, has said his English club Arsenal forced him to miss the Olympics in September, reports AFP.

Kanu was dropped earlier this month from a squad list prepared by team coach Jo Bonfrere at the insistence of Sports Minister Danisbi Sango.

The minister was angered by his no-show at the games, where the 1996 gold medalists did badly.

In a letter to Sango, a copy of which was shown to AFP Wednesday, Kanu said it was the fault of the English Premiership side that he had missed the Olympics.

"I negotiated the best I could with my club to attend the Sydney Olympics but they would not allow me to leave. I was forbidden to leave the country unless it was to play for my club," Kanu said.

The matter was well and truly out of my hands. I had no powers (to decide) even though I practically moved between heaven and earth to get my release," he claimed.

"If this had not happened, I would have been at Sydney, proud to represent my country as I always am. I assure you that I will always try my hardest in future to be present for such occasions for my country," he added.

On Tuesday, NFA Secretary General Tijani Yusuf absolved his association from Kanu's exclusion.

"The issue of Kanu's invitation or non-invitation to the Super Eagles is beyond the NFA. There's absolutely nothing we can do about it. It's out of our hands," Yusuf said.

Bonfrere has spoken out about the decision to revise his squad for the Zambia match.

"I'm against the decision to review my list... It was a big and unpleasant surprise. The present squad is too small because we have to allow for injuries among other things," Bonfrere said.

Nigeria named a revised squad of 18 foreign-based professionals and four players from the domestic league for encounter against Zambia down from 24 overseas players, with Kanu the top name dropped.

The Super Eagles, beaten in the 2000 Nations Cup final by Cameroon in February, top their qualifying group with four points from two matches.

The other teams in their group are Madagascar, Namibia and Zambia.



NWANKWO KANU

World Chess finals on

TEHRAN, Dec 20: Indian Grand Master Vishwanathan Anand and Spaniard Alexei Shirov began their FIDE World Chess Championship showdown Wednesday in Iran, where the game was banned after the Islamic revolution, reports AFP.

The contest is a revival to the FIDE World Chess Championship held in London recently, where Vladimir Kramnik bested former undisputed world champion and his one-time mentor Garry Kasparov.

Anand and the Russian-born Shirov are fighting for the FIDE title in a nation that has produced world-class chessmasters but banned the game for a while after the 1979 revolution.

The founder of Islamic Iran, the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, said the game was "pernicious" played by "bad" men, and violated Islamic law, but it was again permitted in the following years.

This is the first time since the revolution that Iran is hosting a chess competition of such international stature.



Spanish Grand Master Alexi Shirov (L) moves a piece as his Indian counterpart Vishwanathan Anand watches during their first round game of the World Chess Championship finals in Tehran yesterday.

Jayawardene shines for SL

DURBAN, South Africa, Dec 20: Mahela Jayawardene made an impressive 86 as Sri Lanka scored a comfortable 55-run win over KwaZulu-Natal in a one-day match at the Chatsworth Oval here on Tuesday, reports AFP.

Jayawardene made the major contribution to Sri Lanka's total of 266 for eight in 50 overs. He shared stands of 65 for the fourth wicket with Kumar Sangakkara and 71 for the fifth wicket with Russel Arnold.

KwaZulu-Natal quickly fell behind the required run rate. Fast bowler Dilharo Fernando took two early wickets and the home side slumped to 120 for seven before a late flurry led by all-rounder Goolam Bodi took them to 211 all out.

Sri Lanka start a three-day match against KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg Thursday in their final match before the Test. Both Sri Lanka and KwaZulu-Natal rested several leading players Tuesday.

Jayawardene was in top form as he hit seven fours and six in an 88-ball innings. Sri Lanka suffered a setback when both Jayawardene and Arnold were dismissed within two balls of each other in the 40th over.

But Chaminda Vaas thrashed an unbeaten 52 off 41 balls to ensure the momentum was not lost.

KwaZulu-Natal slumped to 120 for seven despite a patient 42 by captain Doug Watson. But the left-handed Bodi and tallener Gary Gilder hit out to put on 72 off 65 balls for the eighth wicket. Bodi went on to make 53 off 54 balls.

SCORES IN BRIEF

Final scoreboard in the limited-overs tour match between KwaZulu-Natal and Sri Lanka at Chatsworth Oval, Durban, on Tuesday: SRI LANKA: 266 for eight in 50 overs (M Jayawardene 86, C Vaas 52, K Sangakkara 28, G Gilder 4/43, K Bender 2/34)

KWAZULU-NATAL: 211 all out in 44.4 overs (G Bodi 53, D Watson 42, G Gilder 28, J Kent: K Weeraratne 3/37, C Vaas 2/35, R Pushpakumara 2/38, D Fernando 2/39)

Result: Sri Lanka won by 55 runs. Man-of-the-match: Mahela Jayawardene.

Gamez defends his title Mar 11

TOKYO, Dec 20: World Boxing Association (WBA) super-flyweight champion Leo Gamez of Venezuela will fight Japanese challenger Shoji "Cecles" Kobayashi in Yokohama, Japan, on March 11, match organisers said Thursday, reports AFP.

The 37-year-old Gamez won his fourth world title in October when he knocked out Japanese Hideki Todaka in the seventh round in the central Japan city of Nagoya.

Kobayashi, a former national flyweight champion, failed in his first crack at a world title when he was outpointed by World Boxing Council flyweight champion Malcolm Tunacao of the Philippines in August.

Gamez has 33 wins, 25 of them by knockout, against seven losses and one draw -- against Kobayashi's 22 (13 KOs)-4-3.

The Venezuelan clinched his first world title by becoming the minimumweight champion in January 1988, then scored a technical knockout to win the light flyweight title in October 1993. He became the flyweight champion in March last year.

Asia Cup tennis results

NEW DELHI, Dec 20 (AFP): Results from the Asia Cup tennis tournament here on Wednesday: Men's round-robin South Korea bt India 3-0 Yoon Yong-II (Kor) bt Mahesh Bhupathy (Ind) 6-3, 6-4.

Hyung Taik-Lee (Kor) bt Sved Fazaluddin (Ind) 6-3, 6-3. Hyung Taik-Lee/Yoon Yong-II (Kor) bt Nitin Kirtane/Syed Fazaluddin (Ind) 3-6, 6-1, 6-2.

Women's round-robin China bt India 3-0 Tian Sun (Chn) bt Shruti Dhawan (Ind) 6-2, 6-4. Li Na (Chn) bt Sat Jayalakshmi (Ind) 6-2, 7-5.

Li Na/Li Ting (Chn) bt Manisha Malhotra/Rashmi Chakravarti (Ind) 7-6 (7/4), 6-1.

Gilchrist makes C-mark

ADELAIDE, Dec 20: Adam Gilchrist savoured the taste of captaincy in his one-off assignment for Australia, leaving no doubt Wednesday he would like the job permanently when Steve Waugh hangs up his whites, reports AFP.

By leading Australia to a hard-earned 13th successive Test win in the third Test against the West Indies in Adelaide, Gilchrist has become the hot favourite for the biggest job in cricket.

Gilchrist will step down for the next Test, starting in Melbourne on December 26, provided Waugh is deemed to have recovered from an injury which has sidelined him since the second Test in Perth more than two weeks ago.

But it could only be a matter of time before Waugh's ageing body -- he is only half a year short of 36 -- opens the door for a full-time replacement leader.

Gilchrist has been under the microscope as cricket followers consider whether he has the maturity to handle the dual roles of captaincy and wicket-keeping, a massive double burden in the modern game in which off-field demands are as onerous as those on it.

The 29-year-old became the first Australian Test wicket-keeper-captain since Barry Jarman 32 years ago.

Jarman, while admiring Gilchrist, has expressed doubts about whether one man can do justice to both jobs in the long term.

Gilchrist declared that while it was difficult for anyone to make a judgment on one Test, he would certainly not reject an invitation to lead his country full-time.

"It's been a huge honour and a big thrill. I've learned a great deal and if I'm ever called upon again, I'll be able to look back on this Test, particularly because it was so tough, and draw from that."

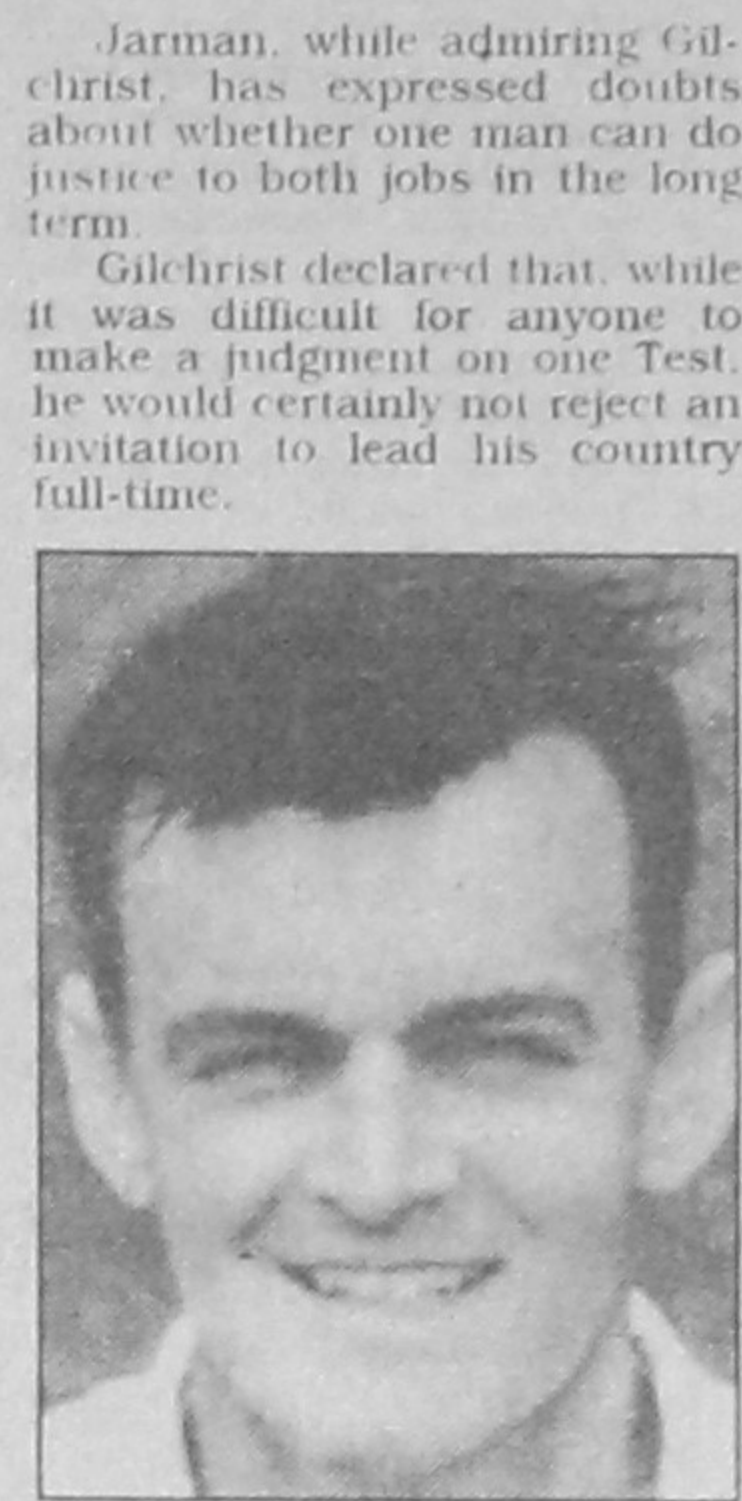
Gilchrist is not only an astute leader; he cuts an impressive figure in public with his relaxed, measured style.

If he won the nod for his Test captaincy one-off only marginally from several other strong claimants, he is certainly now strongly entrenched as the heir-apparent.

One of those in his camp is former West Indies fast bowler Colin Croft, following the tour as a media man.

"Gilchrist has my vote when Waugh is done," Croft said. "The guy knows his stuff, despite a few stutters. He did very well for his first outing."

Gilchrist has had a golden run since he made his Test debut only 13 months ago. He has played in 12 Tests -- and Australia have won them all. Not least because of his 55 dismissals behind the stumps and an aggregate of 746 runs at an average of 53.28 with his sledghammer bat.



ADAM GILCHRIST

Martyn, older and wiser

ADELAIDE, Dec 20: Damien Martyn, an Australian hero in his 13th successive Test win here, was philosophical Wednesday about his near-certain omission in the clash against West Indies in Melbourne, reports AFP.

Martyn, who made crucial scores of 46 not out and 34 not out as Australia beat the West Indies by five wickets here in the third Test, must drop out of the all-conquering side if regular captain Steve Waugh is ruled fit to play in the fourth from December 26.

Martyn was given his chance after Waugh was sidelined with a buttock strain in the second Test in Perth just over two weeks ago.

"At a time when Australian cricket is so strong, I just have to accept that I must wait to get a regular place in the team," Martyn said.

"The truth of the matter is that the Adelaide Test was a bonus for me. I know I'm the next cab off the rank as a batsman when a chance comes up. That's simply my role at the moment."

"I have to make sure I remain number one replacement by scoring lots and lots of runs in the Sheffield Shield competition."

Martin, 29, was a boy-wonder who was good enough to score two centuries in separate games on the same day in his teens.

before being axed six years ago after making an indiscreet shot in Australia's five-run loss to South Africa in Sydney.

He has admitted often that his banishment from elite ranks was hurtful and confusing.

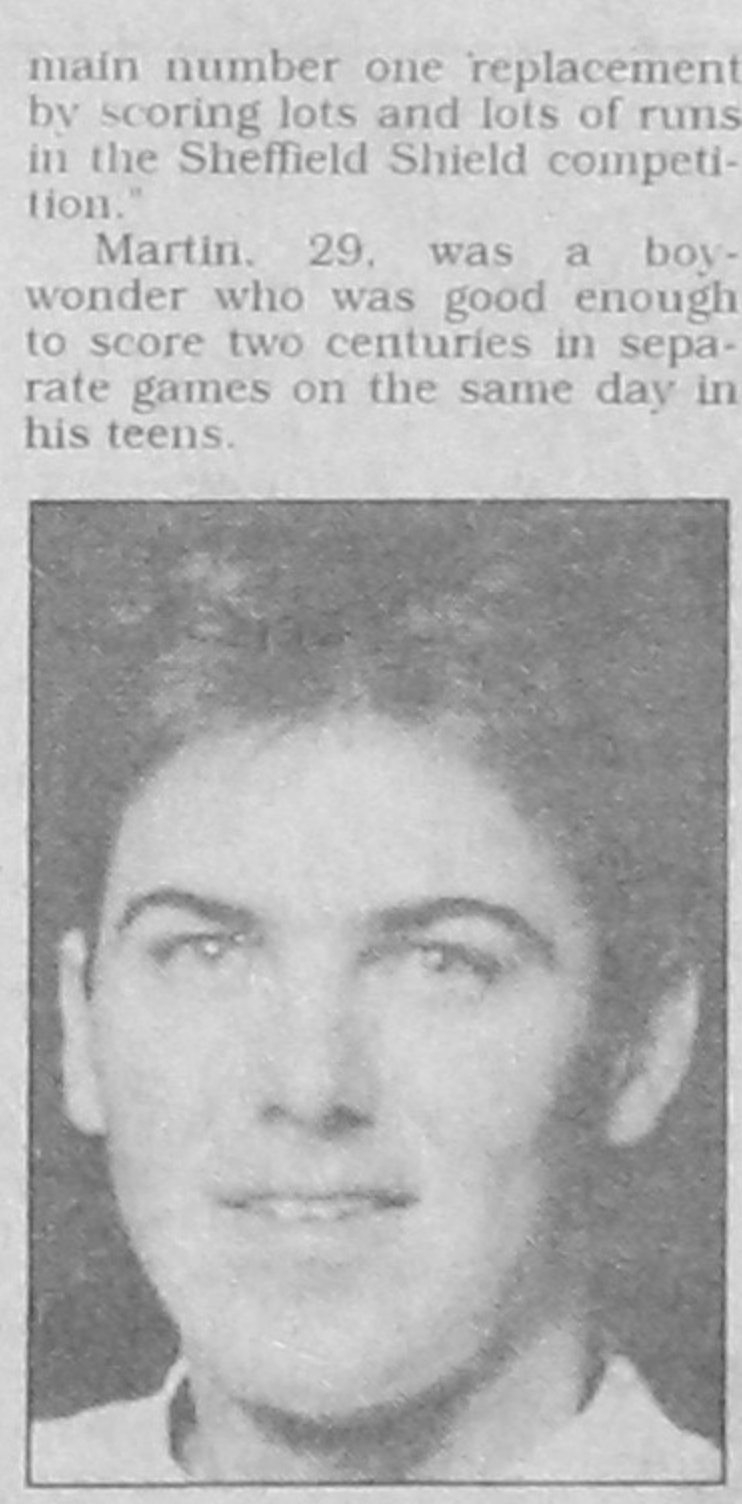
It coincided with major problems in his personal life and was compounded by the loss of the Western Australian captaincy which had been handed to him years before he was ready for the job.

Martyn served a fearfully long penance, not being recalled to Australian Test ranks until last year when he went to New Zealand -- as a replacement for the injured Ricky Ponting -- for the three-Test tour.

Martyn seized the opportunity, hammering 241 runs at an average of 60.25.

Even that effort was not enough to keep him in the Test side once Ponting had recovered, and he was forced to be a spectator again during the first two Tests against the West Indies this southern summer.

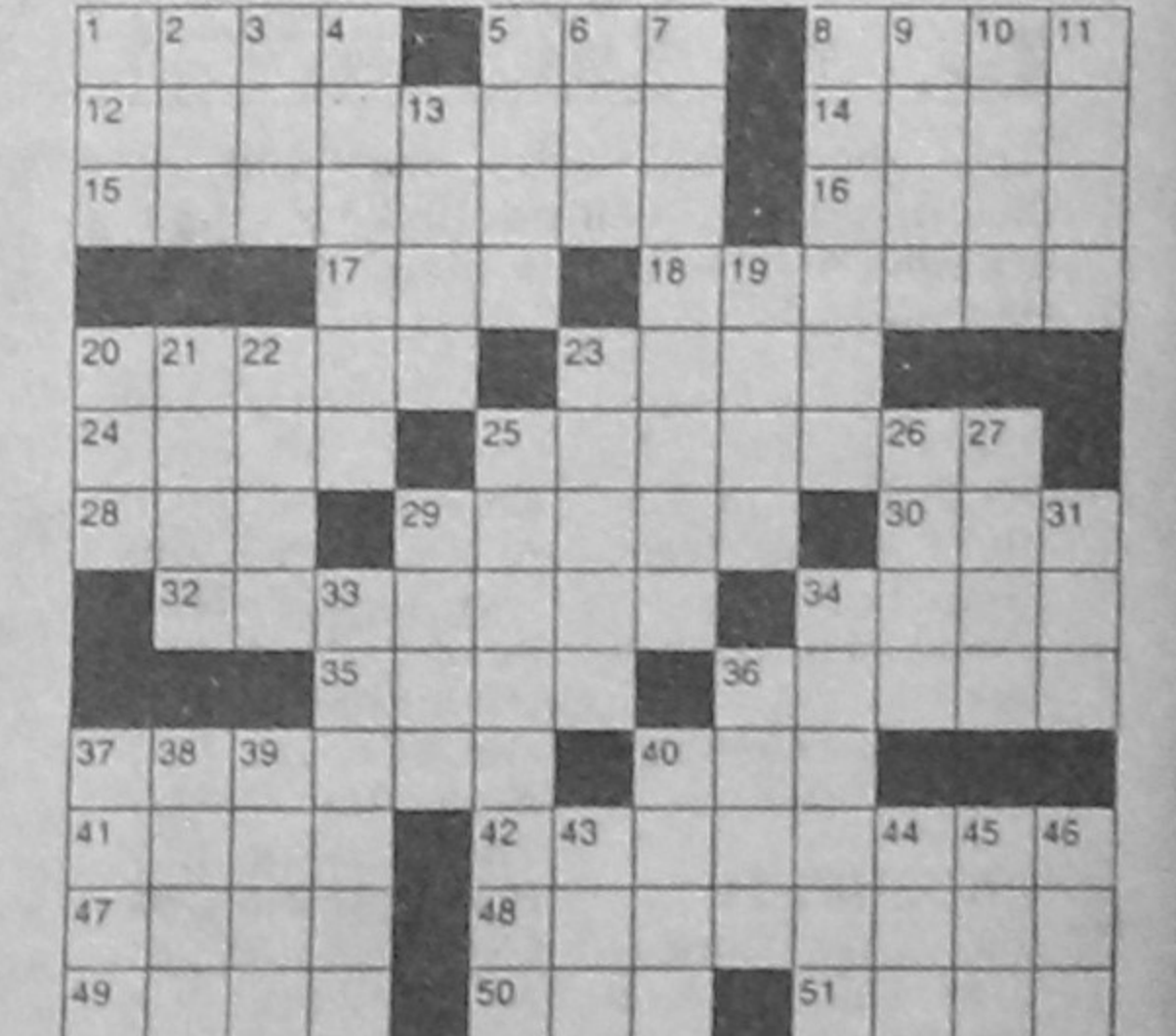
He is sustained, however, by the sure knowledge that time is on his side. He has always had the class; now there is also the maturity to match it. And patience.



DAMIEN MARTYN

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 36 Lends a hand 11 Ogling sort 5 Carpet surface 37 Gesture 3 Curved line 8 Toll road 4 Actor d' 12 Water 41 Shake-spear's 5 Fleet 21 Culture seaport 6 Took sustenance 22 Ray lypo 15 Telephone part 42 Dishonest 22 Ray lypo 16 Mysterious character 47 Astronaut's beverage? 7 Spreads completely 48 Assurance 17 Saute 49 Pub orders 8 About 3 1/4 18 Poughkeepsie school 50 Weir years 29 Gambling man of 51 Command to Fluo 9 Morning man of radio 31 Targets of "crunching" 23 Demolish 1 Round 10 Hawaiian resort 33 Activities 24 Antiquing equipment 34 Mensa Inductee 25 Takes away 36 Soundproof 28 Deserter 37 - Hari 29 Malaria symptom 38 Ellipse 30 Carte lead-in 39 Color quality 32 Aida's love 40 Con game 34 Smooth-talking 41 Molt 43 Zsa Zsa's sis 35 Examination format 42 Cistern 43 Greek letter 44 Castilian king



CRYPTOQUIP

V H J I Q C R Q W M M W R N M X I C L N X J R C L N X I J L R Q E V R M L I R W R M C V N I C L E X H C M V M C Saturday's Cryptquip: AFTER SPENDING THE DAY PLANTING SHRUBS, I REALLY FELT BUSHED.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: I equals R The Cryptquip 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.