

Improvement satisfactory for Ferguson

SPORTS REPORTER

British football coach Anthony Ferguson was hopeful about the future of the youth football camp in Bangladesh, which is run by local experts under the auspices of Canary Wharf with support from Emirates.

Ferguson, who spent over a week with the 32 young prospects at BKSP, told yesterday before his departure to the UK that he was impressed by the improvement of the players at the start of the second year's camp.

The boys, trained by a panel of local coaches under head coach Ghulam Sarwar Tipu, had been handpicked from 150 players of the first-phase camp, who were selected from 4,500 youngsters who joined trials across the country.

"We picked up where had left off. The boys have made excellent progress, which has exceeded our expectations. Some of them have matured in football terms. Their ball skills have improved and they can now communicate among themselves effectively and the commitment is 100 per cent," told Ferguson, who was accompanied by assistant coach Barry Todd.

"We just want the local coaches to spend more time with them. This will speed up their development process even further," said Ferguson adding that he was satisfied with the physical improvement of the players too.

"We believe these boys have splendid future and will grow into good footballers. We feel very confident of inviting some of them to the United Kingdom to train at the Canary Wharf Academy. We'll take them to watch training sessions at Arsenal and matches between famous clubs, hopefully in August."



Young footballers of the Canary Wharf Bangladesh Youth Football Camp pose with their British coach Anthony Ferguson (C) after a training sessions at BKSP last week.

'It's Freddie's fault'



CRICINFO, undated

Andrew Flintoff's drunken escapade after England's first World Cup match at St Lucia destroyed the team's morale and set them up for failure, according to Michael Vaughan.

Six members of the squad were caught drinking into the early hours after their loss to New Zealand in March, including Flintoff, who capsized a pedalo and was subsequently stripped of the vice-captaincy.

"We arrived at the World Cup in a positive frame of mind," Vaughan told The Guardian. "But unfortunately incidents happened which affected the team. You have to be honest; the 'Fredalo' incident did affect the team. It did affect morale. Suddenly you've got players who have no freedom left. I like to see players enjoy themselves but no one would dare go out after that incident -- and you can't create any spirit then."

Vaughan said it was unfortunate that the late-night episode translated into disappointing performances on the field. "That incident changed the whole atmosphere in the camp," he said. "We went into the New Zealand game with a really good attitude but we didn't play well and after 'Fredalo' we just started taking it all too seriously. That might sound silly but everyone was too tense and desperate. There was no escape -- and even on the field you have to be pretty free, especially in one-day cricket."

However, he did not absolve himself of blame in the Caribbean, where England made the Super Eights but failed to progress to the semi-finals after losses to Sri Lanka, South Africa and Australia. "I was more tense than I've ever been as a captain," Vaughan said. "Duncan Fletcher was more tense than he'd ever been as a coach. And sometimes the captain and coach have to look at the way they're acting because the team follows."

"I didn't captain as well as I should've done because of the pressure I put myself under. I'd admit that. But I couldn't switch off because away from the field there was so much going on -- with Bob Woolmer and 'Fredalo'."

In a wide-ranging interview, Vaughan also said he was unlikely to play at the next World Cup in 2011 and he was "baffled" by his own lack of form in one-day cricket. He believes there is nothing wrong with his limited-over skills and cannot understand why big scores elude him.

"I always feel form is not down to technique," he said. "It's all about where you are mentally. And there must be something holding me back in one-day cricket. I'm baffled by it. So I'm going to sit down with Peter Moores and come up with what we feel is the best one-day formula because we haven't been successful for a long time."

Liverpool blame

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At that game, fans without tickets or with fakes were able to gain access to the stadium at the expense of genuine ticket-holders and Greek police had to use tear gas in a bid to quell the chaos.

Hicks though says that it was UEFA that was to blame for the problems.

"UEFA did not handle this right at all. To give 17,000 tickets to the two teams, particularly knowing Liverpool are going to bring 40,000 fans, is insane," the American said.

"It's a classic case of a bureaucrat trying to take the pressure off himself. They didn't handle it right, they didn't have proper ticketing procedures and unfortunately there were counterfeit tickets."

"There were fans who paid their hard-earned money to get their tickets and they get to the stadium and are told there is no more room. Are they (the fans) mad? Sure they're mad."

Thaksin mum

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"I think when the deal is concluded, we will have a press conference here," he said without elaborating further.

Last month Noppadon confirmed Thaksin had submitted his bid to buy Manchester City. The takeover deal is estimated at around 100 million pounds (197 million dollars).

Thaksin, 57, is considered the front-runner in the Manchester City takeover. He was ousted by a military coup in September last year and currently lives in London.

Last week Thailand's Constitutional Tribunal disbanded Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party and barred him and 110 senior party leaders from politics for five years due to election law violations.

In 2004 Thaksin, an avid football fan, led a Thai consortium that tried to buy a 30 percent stake in Liverpool, angering fans who wanted to keep the team in British hands.

The bid eventually fell through, though Liverpool now has American owners.

Veteran Roux

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who resigned last week after a poor end to the season which saw Lens blow their chances of playing in next season's Champions League.

"I am joining a friendly, united club," Roux said of his new two-year contract with the side from north-eastern France.

"Lens is already a good side and it won't be necessary to change too much. Just a few touches here and there."

Roux said that he had been in talks with several clubs but that in the end it had come down to a choice between Lens and Bordeaux, two of the mainstays of the French top flight.

Objections to his appointment, however, may come from the national union of football coaches who have pointed out that league rules bar anyone over the age of 65 working as a full-time coach.

Roux, however, said he hoped that an arrangement could be made in his case as had happened with his last contract at Auxerre.

Moore for matches



INTERNET, undated

Next Thursday morning, barring injury, illness or accident to the chosen ones during the course of the previous 12 hours or so, James Anderson will pack his overnight bag, leave the team hotel in Manchester and head back over to Pennines en route to Chester-le-Street, where Lancashire will resume the second day of their championship match against Durham.

Anderson will only have arrived in Manchester the previous evening in any case, so his will be a fleeting visit, strictly a precaution. But woe betide the England team if it is a batsman who slips in the shower on the morning of the match.

Already this summer, though, Peter Moores has given the clearest indication that he advocates, certainly at this stage of the season, that players take as much opportunity to play cricket as is feasible, contrary to his predecessor's apparent belief that it was possible to rest players from work they had yet to do -- though rather like trying to force a second pint into a pot before the first is finished, it soon became evident

that once fully rested you cannot put extra in for a rainy day.

Thus, at a stroke, has been erased what had become one of the great traditions in which, after any official pre-match duties, warm-ups, toss and what-have-you, there took place a much-loved ceremonial, missing only as a prologue an announcement in mellifluous tones that James Anderson Will Now Bowl At A Single Stump. As a preliminary to a day's Test cricket it knocked Jerusalem and its rabble-rousing big-screen footage into a cocked hat.

Indeed, the days of the multi-tasking professional 12th man, the bloke who always seemed to be knocking on the door of the Test side, who got within the very precincts of the dressing room with the smell of liniment (actually it's fragrances by Hugo Boss now) only to be stymied again and again as fitness tests were passed, and potentially troublesome pitches reassessed on match morning as benign. Duncan Fletcher enjoyed inviting people to his party, the more the merrier, and if it meant they were unable to pursue their chosen career beyond bowling between motorway cones and mixing isotonic drinks, then so be it.

There will be times, as a strenuous summer progresses, that Moores will recognise the need for his players to have rest -- active or otherwise -- but for now, miles in the legs and rhythm is all important. And if it is hard to assess the benefits to Matthew Hoggard and Steve Harmison of spending the spring bowling for their respective counties rather than spending interminable hours trundling away in Caribbean nets, then the manner in which Ryan Sidebottom slotted into the side at a moment's notice and out-bowled everyone else shows the efficacy of the substance of practical playing over the theory of nets. All he did was what he had been doing.

Now he will get another chance, for the England selectors yesterday took the rare step of announcing not their squad but their XI for the third Test, which is due to start at Old Trafford on Thursday, a win in which will give England an unassailable 2-0 lead in the series. There would have been little cause for debate, however. The injury to the adductor muscle in Hoggard's right leg, something that in the stretch of a pace bowler's delivery takes a terrific strain, has not healed sufficiently for him to be considered, although he is making confident noises that he will be fit enough to pose a conundrum for the final Test should Sidebottom prosper once more against dismal opposition and not succumb to the knowledge that on this particular ground he has a record that is no less grim.

However, Ian Bell's stiff back has recovered (he was asked to demonstrate as much for Warwickshire yesterday).

Gerrard, Carragher

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Gerrard added: "I'm really pleased too. The negotiations have gone really smoothly."

"Although they have been spoken about for a couple of weeks, I think it's happened pretty quickly. I'm just pleased to get it out of the way and we look forward to next season now."

"Hopefully over the next four years we can deliver a lot more trophies."

Liverpool recently lost the Champions League final 2-0 to AC Milan, but having beaten the Italians to lift the trophy two years ago the Reds' are now turning their attention to climb higher up the domestic pecking order.

Manchester United, Arsenal and Chelsea have been the league pacesetters in recent seasons, but Benitez and American owners George Gillett and Tom Hicks will see Gerrard and Carragher's new deals as a step towards changing that situation.

England midfielder Gerrard added: "I think these are exciting times at the football club with the takeover and the new stadium."

"I don't see why we can't go from strength to strength and win a load more trophies, not just the Premiership but more cups as well."

"Having said that, we can't get away from the fact that the Premiership is the one we want."

Klose slams Frings

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negotiating with Italian giants Juventus before extending his Bremen contract, commented last weekend that he thought it would be better for Klose to leave Bremen.

"I did not say anything when he was linked with a move to Juventus and I wish he would do to pay me the same compliment," added Klose.

The fact the pair will be playing in the same German team on Wednesday night in a Euro 2008 qualifier just adds to the drama and this is the last thing German coach Joachim Loew will want to hear on the eve of the game.

And veteran midfielder Frings stirred things up again on Tuesday when he replied to Klose's comments during a press conference before the game in Hamburg.

"A player who is not happy (in a team) helps nobody," he insisted.

"I have no problem with Miro, I don't mind what he says to the press, but his opinions and what he has to say doesn't interest me."

Klose was forced to apologise to his club and their supporters when it was revealed he had met Bayern officials to discuss a transfer and although he has pledged his future to Bremen, he is expected to join Bayern when his contract expires next year.

"The reactions (of discontent) Bremen supporters were difficult to live, but I am pro and I am going to live with it," Klose told Sueddeutsche Zeitung.

And Klose also revealed his slump in form this season had been caused by a virus which left him shaking and weak after every game.

Henin, Sharapova

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Sharapova, meanwhile, has now reached at least the semifinals of all the four Grand Slams and she did it in style on Tuesday pulling off her fourth career win over Chakvetadze.

The reigning US Open champion and former Wimbledon winner, has always been dismissed as a French Open contender with the demanding clay surface exposing her problems with movement around the court.

But at the fifth time of asking, the 20-year-old finally managed to break through into the Roland Garros last four where she will face Serbian teenager Ana Ivanovic for a place in the final.

"I wouldn't be surprised if I won the tournament," said Sharapova.

"Others might be surprised because I didn't play a lot on clay when I was younger."

"It also doesn't surprise me that I'm in the semi-finals. I am proud to have made it. In every tournament I play, I always believe in myself whether it's clay or mud. I know what I'm capable of."

The Russian second seed subdued ninth seed Chakvetadze in a far more convincing manner than she did to defeat Switzerland's Patty Schnyder in the previous round where she had to save three match points.

'Charge the police'

PTI, Karachi

Pakistani players have strongly demanded that the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) take action against the Jamaican investigators probing the death of coach Bob Woolmer, as they think the probe tarnished their image.

There is a talk of filing for damages against the Jamaican Police and pathologist Ere Seshaiha who concluded after a post mortem that Woolmer's death was due to "asphyxiation as a result of manual strangulation," a source in the PCB said.

"Some of the players remain adamant that once it is confirmed their coach died of a heart attack, the Board should do something to undo the bad name and suspicion cast on them because of Woolmer's death," he said.

A senior player, without wanting to be identified, alleged that poor handling of the case by Jamaican police resulted in him and his teammates having to face suspicious questions even as media filed speculative stories about them.

"It is their fault. How can they have blundered so badly? Our Board must do something to rectify things," he said.

Some of the senior players in the World Cup -- including captain Inzamamul Haq, Younis Khan, Mohammad Yousuf and Shahid Afridi -- accused Jamaican police of treating them like criminals and mishandling the whole investigation.

Ganga to lead

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England at Headingley last week.

Having only taken over the captaincy last month from the retired Brian Lara, he is likely to be sidelined for six weeks.

The tour vice-captain, Ganga, 28, effectively led the Windies during the second Test loss which left the tourists 1-0 down in the four-match series after Sarwan fell heavily on the first evening.

He has experience of captaincy, having impressed in charge of the West Indies' A side over the last couple of years and he was one of the candidates to succeed Lara.

Middle-order batsman Shivnarine Chanderpaul, meanwhile, is expected to be fit to play at Old Trafford on Thursday after missing the match in Leeds due to tendonitis in his knee.

Abul inspires

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margin when Tito pulled off a fine save over Ujjal from the top of the box.

TEAMS  
ABAHANI: Biplab, Siraji, Pradip, Nazrul, Wali, Joy, Ujjal, Zahed (Pranotosh), Khoubbache (Abul), Ibrahim and Tipu (Emily).  
CTG MOHAMMEDS: Tito, Israfil, Sohail, Saikat, Sanwar, Towhid, Asif, Zahid, Doe (Pavel), Momolu and Azimuddin (Dipu).  
Referee: Azad Rahman.

Platini to meet

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stop playing the blame game and stop pointing fingers at people."

Gaillard, though, defended UEFA's position: "We have never said that all Liverpool supporters were guilty. There were, however, some Liverpool supporters who stole tickets off other Liverpool supporters."

"We have to ask the questions. We have to solve the problems. We never said we want to ban Liverpool supporters. Quite the contrary. "But our primary aim is to ensure the safety and security of people who travel to games and are in the stadium."

Not quite

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Grand Slam, being up close, but never actually achieving anything," he replied.

Croatian top 10 player Ivan Ljubicic, who fled the 1990s Balkan war with his family, pondered the plight of refugees and his work to highlight present dilemmas.

"I'm not thinking about what happened to me. I'm just thinking there are people who need help, and I'm the one who maybe can help them," explained Ljubicic.

The problems of being a woman on tour have also been the focus of questioning. Anastasia Myskina, the 2004 French Open champion, was beaten in just 35 minutes here as she tries to battle a career-threatening foot injury.

"Do the other women players show sympathy for you?", she was asked.

Myskina replied: "All of them smile to me. But you never know what they say behind your back."

The Russian is a media favourite; fiery Jelena Dokic is the opposite. Five years ago, one brave soul asked her to comment on reports linking her romantically with a racing driver.

Time for big changes



INTERNET, undated

The death of Percy Sonn, premature and painful as it was, allows the International Cricket Council (ICC) to rethink the direction and style of its leadership for the immediate future. There have been dark days for a body whose mission statement is to "Promote and protect the game and its unique spirit".

ICC can pursue China all it likes, can run tournaments in Timbuktu if it chooses but unless it goes to work on the balance between bat and ball, the game has a serious problem.

When Shane Warne hung up his high tech trainers after the most recent Christmas and New Year of his life, the art and colour of cricket was immediately threatened. It was Warne, you remember, who regenerated the thrill of spin bowling and, at the same time, brought a self-styled glamour to a sport that had been increasingly marginalized by the dullards. Fifteen years on and it is compromised by overkill and declining standards of bowling which, let's face it, are not unrelated.

Asad Rauf's crusade to redress this delicate balance by raising his finger in favour of the spinner may well be another stage in the natural evolution of the game but there is more to it than a few sustained appeals.

Admirable as it is that ICC have appointed a new and modern cricket committee that met for the first time late last week -- presumably on the back of last year's brilliant MCC initiative to do the same; imitation remains the greatest flattery -- it is not much good if that committee cannot immedi-

ately identify the game's most urgent problem. The bowler needs help and the laws that pertain directly to the balance between bat and ball need review.

Since MCC are the custodians of the laws, there is an ideal opportunity here for the two bodies to start working with one another again. The new committee did examine the role of bowlers in the one-day game but, incredibly, made suggestions that were mainly for the benefit of batsmen.

Until late 1989, MCC's secretary ran ICC and the MCC president doubled up as the chairman of ICC. The first chairman after independence, so to speak, was Colin Cowdrey, who was then followed by Clyde Walcott -- two forces for good if ever there were.

It was to the game's advantage that both were eminent, if dated, former players. Though ICC board meetings were fractious even back then, these two respected and deeply knowledgeable hands on the tiller worked to the common good of the eclectic, demanding membership and the game itself.

When Jagmohan Dalmiya took over from Walcott the role was re-titled president and all bets were off -- well, you know what I mean. The ensuing mayhem led to jealousy and mistrust the world over, and from this came the selfish attitudes within the game's governance that we see today.

Dalmiya played the political game with unerring zeal and as television rights increased from relative fodder into figures of a frightening proportion, the players were treated with feudal contempt and the game they were playing was allowed to drift into unsatisfactory waters.

Sonn's replacement as president

until 2009 -- in theory, a period without any major television battles to fight -- should be a former player, someone of such indisputable stature that its board members will listen and learn about the game they purport to value but are defacing. Top of the shopping list should be Richie Benaud but given that he is unlikely to want the hassle, there are crop of younger men worthy of global respect and edgy enough to give it a crack. Imran Khan is one; Michael Holding and Mark Taylor are others.

Rameez Raja had a brief and enlightening spell as CEO of the Pakistan Board of Control so has seen the other side. Rameez would be a terrific option if only he could be convinced of it himself.

ICC's quoted vision for the game is to "Captivate and inspire people of all ages".

They will need more contributions from people closely in touch with it to do this. Though the players cannot literally run international cricket themselves, their input should plot the path forward.

It is they, along with a modernised ICC, who should be working out how best to fill the vacuum created by Warne's departure -- not to say another vacuum left by the excellent, disciplined Glenn McGrath -- and whether or not the next generation of spin bowlers should go down the same path as Muttiah Muralidaran.

Only those who have played the game at an elite level truly know.

FedExpress rolls

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ahead in the breaker and was at 5-4 when he buried an easy forehand into the net.

There was to be no way back for the 26-year-old and Nadal claimed his quarterfinal place when Hewitt again netted a dispirited forehand.

Thirty-year-old Moya, the oldest player left in the competition, played his first Roland Garros in 1996 and was champion two years later.

"I'm the oldest guy left but I still remember when I was the youngest. Time passes so quickly that you don't realise it," said Moya who booked his last eight place by beating 35-year-old Jonas Bjorkman of Sweden 7-6 (7/3), 6-2, 6-4.

In contrast to Moya, 20-year-old Djokovic is the youngest player left standing.

The sixth seed continued Serbia's surge when he defeated unseeded Verdasco 6-3, 6-3, 7-6 (7/1) to reach his second successive quarterfinal.

Djokovic will be the third Serb to feature in the last eight with compatriots Jelena Jankovic and Ana Ivanovic already in the quarterfinals of the women's singles.

Andreev reached the quarterfinals defeating Baghdatis 2-6, 6-1, 6-3, 6-4.

Ranked 125th in the world, Andreev's win made him the lowest-ranked player to reach the last eight in Paris since Marcelo Filippini in 1999.

England's acid test

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hinted their could be a change up front, with Peter Crouch replacing Alan Smith as a partner for Michael Owen.

"I said before the Brazil game that that wasn't necessarily the team for Estonia," McClaren said. "We'll have to look at certain things and digest it and maybe it will be different."

Should England win their qualification hopes could look a lot rosier come Thursday morning as Croatia and Russia play each other in Zagreb.

Points dropped by any rivals would be welcome news for McClaren.

He is not the only manager under fire, though, as Italy's Roberto Donadoni has come in for harsh criticism despite winning his last game.

His world champions beat plucky Faroe Islands only 2-1 in Rome on Saturday and they have been forced

to defend their abject performance ever since.

A tricky tie away to Lithuania in Kaunas will not help settle their nerves either.

"The bad weather did not help, but we were very poor," said Juventus goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon, whose late save denied the Islanders what would have been an historic draw.

"Whenever we play weaker teams, we lose our concentration. But maybe this will give us a wake-up call for the Lithuania match."

Italy have won four straight in group B after a desperate opening to their campaign and now sit second only to France.

France coach Raymond Domenech is determined not to let his side fall into the same trap as Italy as they host Georgia in Paris.

And he is particularly worried about players trying to sort out their club futures rather than concentrating on international duty.

Arthur backs Ford case

CRICINFO, undated

Kent County Cricket Club have given Graham Ford, currently its Director of Coaching, permission to travel to India after the former South African coach emerged as the frontrunner to take over the Indian coaching reins. Ford's contract with Kent runs till the end of the 2008 season, but Paul Millman, the county's chief executive, said: "He has been approached by the BCCI about the job with the Indian National team and we have allowed him the opportunity to travel to India to find out more about the role."

Ford himself wasn't burning any bridges just yet. "I'm really enjoying my time at Kent and particularly the team's recent success," he said. "The Indian Board has approached me in regard to their vacancy and I am grateful to the club for allowing me the chance to talk to them."

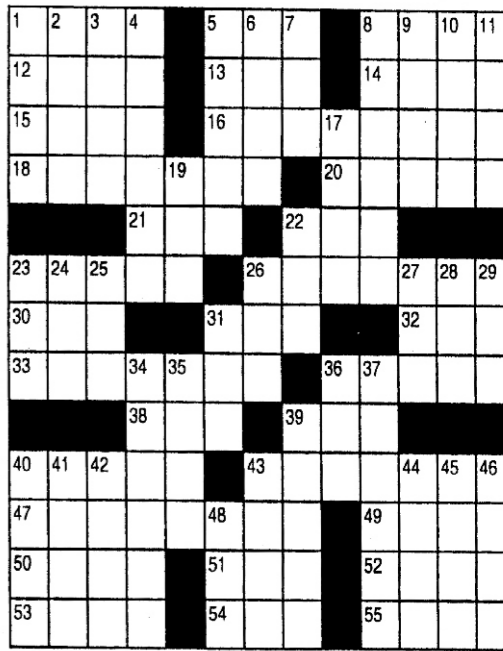
Ford's credentials have been endorsed by Mickey Arthur, one of his successors as South African coach. Arthur is in Bangalore as coach of the Africa team contesting the Afro-Asia Cup, and he said: "Graham (Ford) is the man India would need at this moment. He is very hard working and gets the best out of the players. He will do a very good job if given the chance."

"He's a fantastic man. If he does get selected he would do a fantastic job. India need a guy who can lead them and Graham will be there as the ideal back-room man."

The 46-year-old Ford, who was the South Africa coach after the late Bob Woolmer stepped down in 1999, was named one of two candidates to take over as coach of the Indian team from former Australia captain Greg Chappell by a seven-man panel which met in Bangalore on Monday night. The panel has invited Ford and a second person -- thought to be John Emburey, the former England off-spinner -- for another parley in Chennai on June 9 before making a final decision.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS  
1 Charitable donations  
5 Vaccilate  
8 Stylish  
12 Castle protection  
13 "Birds -- feather..."  
14 Car  
15 Gymnast  
16 Shirk work  
18 Greasy-spoon waitress, e.g.  
20 Travelocity mascot  
21 Buddhist sect  
22 Lennon's lady  
23 Hickory nut  
26 Playboy  
30 "That's relaxing"  
31 Hasten  
32 In older days  
33 Old washer attachment  
36 Mountaineer's spike  
38 Einstein's birthplace  
39 Bart, Homer about  
40 Remark  
42 Stylish audience  
43 Brandy cocktail  
47 TV slug-fest host  
49 Nastase of tennis  
50 Calendar abbr.  
51 Parisian pal  
52 Dweeb  
53 "Meet Me -- Louis"  
54 "Great Expectations" lad  
55 Turns right  
DOWN  
1 Andy's pal  
2 Lounge  
3 Creche  
4 Verse  
5 19th Amendment beneficiaries  
6 Somewhere out there  
7 Four qts.  
8 Big gun  
9 "Les Miserables" author  
10 Couple, in a gossip column  
11 Heart of the matter  
17 "Aqua et inter-dictus"  
19 Army rank (Abbr.)  
22 Have bills  
23 Handle roughly  
24 Listener  
25 Greek X  
26 Round Table address  
27 Roscoe  
28 Id counterpart  
29 Director Howard  
31 Height of fashion?  
34 You can't pin anything on him  
35 Singer Campbell  
36 Luau bowlful  
37 Diamond period  
39 Divest  
40 Italian wine region  
41 Twirled  
42 Enrages  
43 Big rig  
44 Merriment  
45 Green land  
46 Cincinnati team  
48 Space



CRYPTOQUIP

F N W O S M Z B A W R U W P  
J B C N J Z N C F A B D K P T S I S O D W  
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E N E K S J U F A U W P J U M M S R .  
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF YOU'RE PLANTING SOME CONIFEROUS TREES,