

India name side for Lanka ODIs

AFP, Mumbai

India's cricket selectors on Thursday decided to test in-form paceman Ishant Sharma for the five one-day internationals against Sri Lanka beginning later this month.

Sharma, who played a key role in shaping India's 170-run series-equalling victory in Galle, was replaced by Munaf Patel in keeping with the cricket board's new rotation policy.

The selectors also decided to include uncapped middle-order batsman Virat Kohli, in place of a struggling Robin Uthappa, in the 16-member squad.

Mahendra Singh Dhoni, who opted out of the Test series citing fatigue, returned to lead the side, while Sachin Tendulkar also made a comeback to one-day action after missing the team's previous two assignments.

Wicketkeeper Parthiv Patel, who was recalled for the Sri Lanka Tests after almost four years in the wilderness, was retained for the one-dayers beginning August 18.

ODISQUAD

Mahendra Singh Dhoni (captain), Sachin Tendulkar, Gautam Gambhir, Virender Sehwag, Yuvraj Singh, Rohit Sharma, Suresh Raina, Virat Kohli, Parthiv Patel, Irfan Pathan, Praveen Kumar, Harbhajan Singh, Zaheer Khan, Rudra Pratap Singh, Munaf Patel, Pragyan Ojha.

Mallik's death anniversary today

SPORTS REPORTER

Today is the seventh death anniversary of Aftab Haq Mallik, renowned sports commentator and a recipient of the National Sports Award.

He was also a sports reporter, cricket umpire and an international football referee.

Mallik died in a road mishap on this day in 2001. His younger brother and former general secretary of Bangladesh Sports Writers Association (BSWA) Aminul Haq Mallik and other family members have requested everyone to pray for the peace of the departed soul.

Steve befriends Aussie athletes

AFP, Beijing

Former Test cricket great Steve Waugh is working with the Australian athletes at the Beijing Olympics offering advice and acting as a sounding board.

The former Australian cricket captain is here in a mentoring capacity and his experience dealing with the pressures of elite sport is helping to prepare Australia's large team of athletes ahead of the start of Olympics competition on Saturday.

Waugh, 43, was lending some practical advice and encouragement to Australia's female beach volleyballers at the Chaoyang Park beach volleyball venue Thursday and revelling in the atmosphere of an Olympic Games.

"It's sensational, it's a real privilege to be here," Waugh said. "To get up close and personal with so many sports and training venues and to see what they have put into their sports, I feel really honoured to be here."

Waugh, who is one of three athlete liaison staff working with the Australian athletes, believes he can offer the athletes some inside knowledge when it comes to dealing with pressures on the international stage.

"I've met most of the teams over the last six to nine months, and I just try and build up a relationship and if any of the athletes need some words from any of us, then I guess our role is to pass on our own experiences in sport," he said.

"A lot of the same issues pop up no matter what sports you play, dealing with pressure, expectations, getting through injuries and just other little things."

Messi lights up

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"When I was a child, I always dreamed about the Olympics. Now I have scored a goal and no words can explain my happiness," said the delighted Hernanes.

The Brazilians made the most of Vincent Kompany being sent off with 20 minutes left for a second yellow card, piling on the pressure to finally prise open the resilient Belgium defence.

Belgium were reduced to nine men with three minutes remaining when Marouane Fellaini joined his teammate for an early shower.

Brazil captured the Olympic silver medal in 1984 and 1988 and the bronze medal in the 1996 Games, but have yet to strike gold, and the team knows expectations in their football-obsessed homeland are high.

In other matches, Nigeria drew 0-0 against Holland while USA beat Japan 1-0.

Italy were the biggest winners on their day with a 3-0 triumph over Honduras. Rivals Australia and Serbia drew 1-1 earlier on Wednesday.



Brazilian players fall over themselves to celebrate their winning goal against Belgium during their Olympic opener at the Shenyang Olympic Stadium yesterday.

We are ready: China

AFP, Beijing

China declared Thursday it was ready to stage one of the greatest Olympics ever, even as pollution concerns and human rights controversies hung over the final day of preparations for the opening ceremony.

As the world's best athletes poured into Beijing and the Olympic flame passed over the Great Wall, Games organisers sought to shift global attention on to what they promised would be a spectacular celebration of sport.

"We have prepared for the Beijing Olympics for seven years and now we are ready... we are very confident indeed that we will stage a successful Olympics," organising committee spokesman Sun Weide told AFP.

"Of course we hope that these will be a great Games, even the greatest."

For China, the Games are an opportunity to show the world how far it has come since the communists came to power in 1949 following a brutal civil war, and particularly the past three decades of phenomenal economic development.

The Olympics offer a promise of becoming a historic moment showing China's social as well as economic transformation, similar to the 1964 Games for Japan and the 1988 event for South Korea.

"China is a nation in transition, with a great future, tremendous potential and some challenges," International Olympic Committee president Jacques Rogge said after arriving in Beijing.

"I believe history will view the 2008 Olympics as a significant milestone in China's remarkable transformation."

Crucial Test starts today

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his spinners for keeping India's formidable middle-order batsmen under control in the two matches. Unorthodox spinner Ajantha Mendis has grabbed 18 wickets and Muttiah Muralidaran 16.

Venkatesh Laxman is the only Indian middle-order batsman to have made a half-century in four innings, while Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid and Sourav Ganguly have yet to perform up to their potential.

"The credit should go to our bowlers as we kept a lot of pressure on them (middle-order batsmen). They had starts, but we still managed to get those wickets," said Jayawardene.

"The important thing is we kept pressure on the Indian batsmen. The thought of losing a home series has not gone through our minds."

"We played really good cricket in the first Test and fought well in Galle. We are now looking forward to this one and have to be positive with our approach. It is going to be an interesting one."

Sri Lanka will make one change from the team that played in Galle

Nevertheless, the vast array of controversies that have swirled around the Olympics this year continued Thursday to bedevil the Chinese leadership, from the smog that has stubbornly hung over Beijing to human rights storms.

A mixture of pollution and fog again cut visibility across Beijing to a few hundred metres (yards) despite much publicised emergency measures to improve air quality.

The pollution issue has been particularly embarrassing for China because it has highlighted to the world one of the worst side-effects of its historic modernisation drive -- massive environmental degradation.

Meanwhile, China's human rights record remained under a fierce Olympic spotlight with over 40 athletes who are due to compete in Beijing sending a letter to Chinese President Hu Jintao expressing their concern over the issue.

US President George W. Bush was also due to arrive in Beijing on Thursday evening after delivering a speech in which he raised "deep concerns" about China's respect for human rights.

"The United States believes the fundamental liberty that is the natural right of all human beings," Bush said in Thailand, triggering a familiarly indignant response from Beijing.

"We firmly oppose any words and deeds that use human rights and religion to interfere in other countries' internal affairs," foreign ministry spokesman Qin Gang said.

More than 100 heads of state and other senior national leaders are expected to attend the Games, ensuring a current of political tensions will flow through the event despite China's leaders repeated efforts to dam the issue.

However that is all expected to be at least briefly swept aside during the

much anticipated opening ceremony that will kick off on Friday, August 8 at 8:00pm (12:00 GMT).

The date and time of the ceremony is no coincidence as, for many Chinese, the number eight is particularly auspicious because it represents prosperity.

And sporting glory will undoubtedly be the main focus for the 10,000 athletes, with US basketball star Kobe Bryant reflecting those passions as he declared that winning gold in Beijing was more important than an NBA title.

"You're playing for your country, there's more at stake," he said as the "Redeem Team" prepared in Shanghai this week.

Equally, enthusiasm for the Games among China's more than 1.3 billion people has been so strong that tickets have sold out for the first time in Olympic history.

"The Olympic Games is the most important sporting event in the world," said Hu Xiang, 35, who travelled from his home in central China's Hunan province after securing soccer and volleyball tickets.

The suffocating security precautions China has employed for the Olympics has dampened some of the excitement in the lead-up, with a few critics already dubbing the event the "No-Fun Games."

More than 100,000 security personnel are patrolling Beijing, anti-missile barriers have been set up near the "Bird's Nest" stadium, and the military and police are on guard around the country for any signs of trouble.

China has made no apologies for its crackdown, warning that terrorists from home and abroad are posing a massive threat to the Games.

But critics have accused Chinese authorities of exaggerating or fabricating threats so they have an excuse to silence their many critics.

AB de Villiers held the South African innings together in the tea run-in, before falling lbw to Panesar. Morne Morkel was not out seven at the break with Paul Harris the next man in.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at tea on the first day of the fourth and final Test between England and South Africa at The Oval in London on Thursday: SOUTH AFRICA: First Innings Smith c Anderson b Harmison 46 McKenzie c Cook b Flintoff 17 Amla b Harmison 36 Kallis lbw b Anderson 2 Prince c Bell b Anderson 4 De Villiers lbw b Panesar 39 Boucher c Ambrose b Anderson 3 Morkel not out 7 Extras: (b-1, lb-1, nb-2) 4 Total: (For 7 wickets in 49.3 overs) 158 Fall of wickets: 1-56, 2-103, 3-103, 4-105, 5-118, 6-132, 7-158 To bat: Harris, Nel, Ntini

Bowler O M R W Harmison 14 5 40 2 Anderson 13 1 36 3 Flintoff 13 2 33 1 Broad 9 2 46 0 Panesar 0.3 0 1 1

ENGLAND: Pietersen, Strauss, Cook, Bell, Collingwood, Flintoff, Ambrose, Broad, Anderson, Harmison, Panesar. Toss: South Africa. Umpires: Aleem Dar and Steve Davis.

CHAMPIONS TROPHY Kohli new face on India squad

AFP, Mumbai

Uncapped middle-order batsman Virat Kohli was on Thursday included in a 15-member Indian squad for next month's Champions Trophy in Pakistan.

Kohli, 19, was the only newcomer in the squad with the national selectors deciding to field a full-strength side for the tournament, plagued by threats of boycott by some of the world's leading teams owing to security fears.

Pace sensation Ishant Sharma, who was rested Thursday for a five-match one-day international series against Sri Lanka, was included, as was fit-again Sachin Tendulkar.

Fast bowler Shanthakumaran Sreesanth however failed to make the cut with doubts persisting over his fitness.

Pakistan hosts the biennial Champions Trophy from September 11-28.

SQUAD

Mahendra Singh Dhoni (captain), Sachin Tendulkar, Gautam Gambhir, Virender Sehwag, Yuvraj Singh, Rohit Sharma, Suresh Raina, Virat Kohli, Irfan Pathan, Praveen Kumar, Harbhajan Singh, Zaheer Khan, Rudra Pratap Singh, Ishant Sharma, Pragyan Ojha.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

FROM PAGE 17 women's team, boys' team (under-18), men's singles, women's singles and boys' singles (under 16) and boys' singles (under-18) -- have been included in the four-day meet.

Eight top clubs of the men's, women's and boys' team events of the AB Bank 29th National Table Tennis Championship will be eligible to participate in the tournament.

Ansar & VDP, Bangladesh Biman, Feni, Pabna, Dinajpur, Narail, Bagerhat and Gaibandha are taking part in the men's and women's team events.

In the boys' team event, Biman, Chittagong, Dhaka, Narail, Gaibandha, Khulna, Rangpur and Dinajpur are taking part.

Participating teams have been asked to send their entries by August 20 to the tournament committee secretary of Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation.

DHAKA OPEN TENNIS

Amal and Ranjan emerged champions in the men's doubles of the Dhaka Open Tennis competition beating Niranjan-Mahmudul pair 6-2, 7-6 in the final at the National Tennis Complex yesterday.

In the boy's under-14 singles, Biplob clinched the title defeating Sajib 6-3, 7-5.

Meanwhile, the final matches of the men's and women's singles will be held today.

After the finals, Bangladesh Tennis Federation president AMM Nasiruddin will distribute prizes among the winners as chief guest.

Ashrafal

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Bangladesh will play the first four practice matches against the Australian Institute of Sports on August 18, 20, 23 and 25 and then the last practice game against Northern Territory Chief Minister's XI on August 27. All matches will take place at the Garden's Oval in Darwin.

After a two-day break, the ODI series would begin on August 30 and then play two more on September 3 and 6 at the TIO Stadium in Darwin.

England

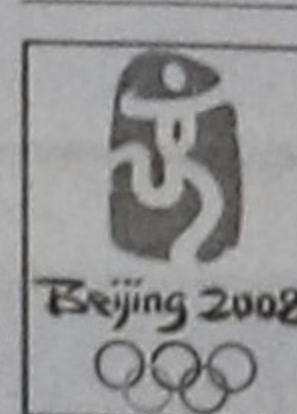
FROM PAGE 17

wicketkeeper edged to his counterpart Tim Ambrose behind the stumps.

AB de Villiers held the South African innings together in the tea run-in, before falling lbw to Panesar. Morne Morkel was not out seven at the break with Paul Harris the next man in.

Cricket not before 2020

AFP, Beijing



As players from around the world backed former Australia wicketkeeper Adam Gilchrist's call for Twenty20 cricket to become an Olympic sport, officials said it would take another 12 years at least for it to get on the Games roster.

But a spokesman for the International Cricket Council, the global governing body, said that if cricket decided it was intent on pursuing Olympic ambitions, then "Twenty20 cricket in 2020 does have a certain ring to it".

Cricket was part of the Olympics just once, in 1900, but last year it was again recognised as an Olympic sport -- the first step towards full admission.

"Our strategic objective was to obtain IOC recognition for the benefit of our members," the ICC spokesman also told AFP.

"We achieved this at the first time of asking in December 2007. Now that we are in a position to compete for a spot on the Olympic

programme, it's only right that we now look at whether cricket and the Olympic Games would benefit from being reunited."

Gilchrist, in his column for Indian daily the Deccan Chronicle, said Monday: "It doesn't matter where the 2020 Olympic Games are held but many of us who've experienced international Twenty20 cricket and the IPL (Indian Premier League) are convinced that cricket should bid to become an Olympic sport in time for the Games."

And Gilchrist insisted that for all the prizes on offer in cricket, players would still be motivated to compete at an Olympics.

"Take it from someone who has won almost everything cricket has to offer -- the Olympics is the absolute pinnacle of sport."

"Cricketers won't care about the money. The chance to stand on top of the Olympic podium, to wear an Olympic gold medal and the pride of belting out your national anthem would be a life-changing money-can't-buy experience," he said.

Cricket is far from alone in considering becoming an Olympic sport, with golf also pondering a

place at the Games. But reigning US Masters champion Trevor Immelman said: "I don't think golf should be an Olympic sport. To me the Olympics were founded on amateur sport. Guys go in there and train for four years putting their whole lives on the line to win a gold medal."

However, his fellow South African Graeme Smith, captain of the Proteas cricket team, that has just won a Test series in England, was enthusiastic about cricket being played at the Olympics.

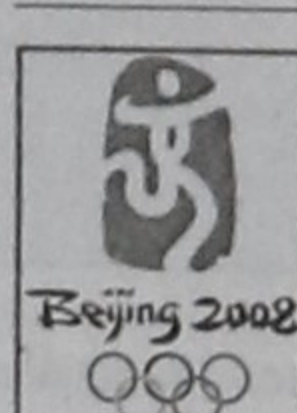
"From a player's perspective it would obviously be a fantastic thing to be part of an Olympic Games," said Smith. "We've always just watched from the side and seen how special the events are."

The programme for the 2012 London Olympics has already been determined and with a decision on the schedule for the 2016 Games expected next year, that may be too soon for cricket.

International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Jacques Rogge, who played cricket during summer vacations in England in his youth, met with ICC officials in Lausanne last year.

Time is now for Yao

AFP, Beijing



Basketball icon Yao Ming says he will have to wear ear plugs to cushion the deafening roar expected from the home crowd as he leads out China's national team at Friday's Olympic opening ceremony.

The Houston Rockets centre who was the flag bearer for China in Athens four years ago has been selected to do the honours again here and said he expected a raucous welcome at the 92,000-seater National Stadium.

"It's exciting to be the flag bearer again in the host land," said Yao.

"It will be totally different from my experience in Athens. The atmosphere will reach its hottest point -- I'm afraid I'll have to wear

ear plugs."

China is fielding its biggest ever Olympic delegation that includes 639 athletes who will be competing in all 28 sports at the Olympics for the first time in a bid to top the medals table ahead of the United States.

China finished second in Athens in the gold medal standings, just three adrift of the United States.

Publicly, China's leadership have played down the country's sporting ambitions and Cui Dalin, deputy chief of China's Olympic team, said the team had no official medal target.

But he said he hoped all athletes would perform to their highest level.

"We have never set a medal target. But we have made very serious preparations and all athletes have undergone very hard training," he said. "It is safe to say that we have made progress with regard to previous performances."

China's athletes are under

extreme pressure to perform well including Yao, the 2.26-metre (7-foot 6-inch) NBA star who is also carrying the nation's hopes for a first-ever Olympic basketball medal.

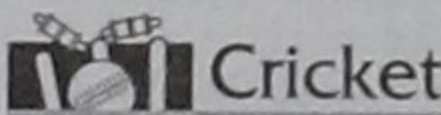
The team will play the United States in their opening game on Sunday and Yao said he was looking forward to the clash.

"There won't be many opportunities like this to play against an all-star team. I have been waiting for this moment for such a long time," he said.

The choice of Yao as flag bearer effectively rules him out as the choice to light the Olympic flame at the opening ceremony.

The identity of the individual is a closely guarded secret, but Yao's name was often cited as a candidate in the Chinese press along with other big names such as track star Liu Xiang, the Olympic 110m hurdles champion, and shooter Xu Haifeng, who won China's first ever Olympic gold in Los Angeles in 1984.

Cronje movie complete



CRICINFO, undated

The filming of Hansie, based on the life of the late South African captain, has been completed by his brother Frans Cronje, who says he went through his "own King Commission" during the "incredibly tough" year of shooting.

Frans told Cricinfo on Wednesday the movie, completed on Monday, will be released across Africa on September 24 with a possible international release to follow.

Frans said the film's DVD set will include a special documentary on Hansie and will feature interviews with his family, teammates and friends including Jonty Rhodes, Allan Donald, Shaun Pollock, Peter Pollock, Andrew Hudson, Gary Kirsten and Kevin Pietersen.

Hansie, which was shot in South Africa, England and India, traces the cricketer's "internal journey from stardom to losing everything and then the journey to rebuilding his life". Cronje was a role model and a national hero till his involvement in the match-fixing scandal was exposed eight years ago. He was banned from the game subsequently and died in a plane crash in 2002.

One of the most poignant moments during the making of the movie, Frans said, was the scene when Hansie breaks down in tears

after confessing his involvement with illegal bookmakers to the King Commission that was appointed to inquire into the match-fixing scandal of 2000.

"He was very emotional and my dad and I were crying with him," Frans said. "When we filmed this, it was like seeing the real event happen again. The acting in this scene was really magnificent. While filming, I just sat there with tears in my eyes. Fortunately, when I looked around me, I realised that everyone else on the sets were crying as well."

The other scene that will touch people's emotions is one where Peter Pollock, the former South Africa all-rounder, talks to Hansie after the King Commission. "Peter was instrumental in helping Hansie to begin the process of rebuilding his life," Frans said.

The movie has been produced by Global Creative Studios, a Cape Town-based production venture headed by Frans, who has won an Italian award for his earlier movie Faith Like Potatoes.

The filming went through a tough phase last year, he said, when an American firm that promised advance funding pulled out of the deal. "It was incredibly tough. In a sense, it felt like I went through my own 'King Commission' at a stage. Especially the last week in November last year, when we heard that the funding was not there, was difficult. Fortunately, some very capable businessmen got involved.

Without their assistance, it would have been almost impossible. The fact the movie has been successfully completed has helped a lot."

South African actor Francois Rautenbach will play Hansie in the movie. Frans said he decided not to use cricketers as actors as the "movie is primarily a drama". He was assisted in filming the cricket action by Gordon Parsons, his brother-in-law, and former county player.

"We decided to use actors to play the parts of Hansie's teammates like Allan Donald and Jonty Rhodes," Frans said. "As the movie is primarily a drama, it was important that we have experienced actors. To ensure that the cricket action was done well, we cast younger cricketers players from a few different academies in South Africa and India. I was on the sets to ensure that the cricket sequences look real."

Cricket South Africa (CSA) has given their "official endorsement and support" for the movie after Joubert Strydom, then convener of selectors, read the screenplay "to ensure that the story is told with integrity".

"The International Cricket Council (ICC) were happy for us to continue, knowing that the CSA endorsed it," Frans said. "I think they were happy to see that we did not choose to try and uncover any more match-fixing dirt. Rather, we chose to tell the story of Hansie's internal journey."

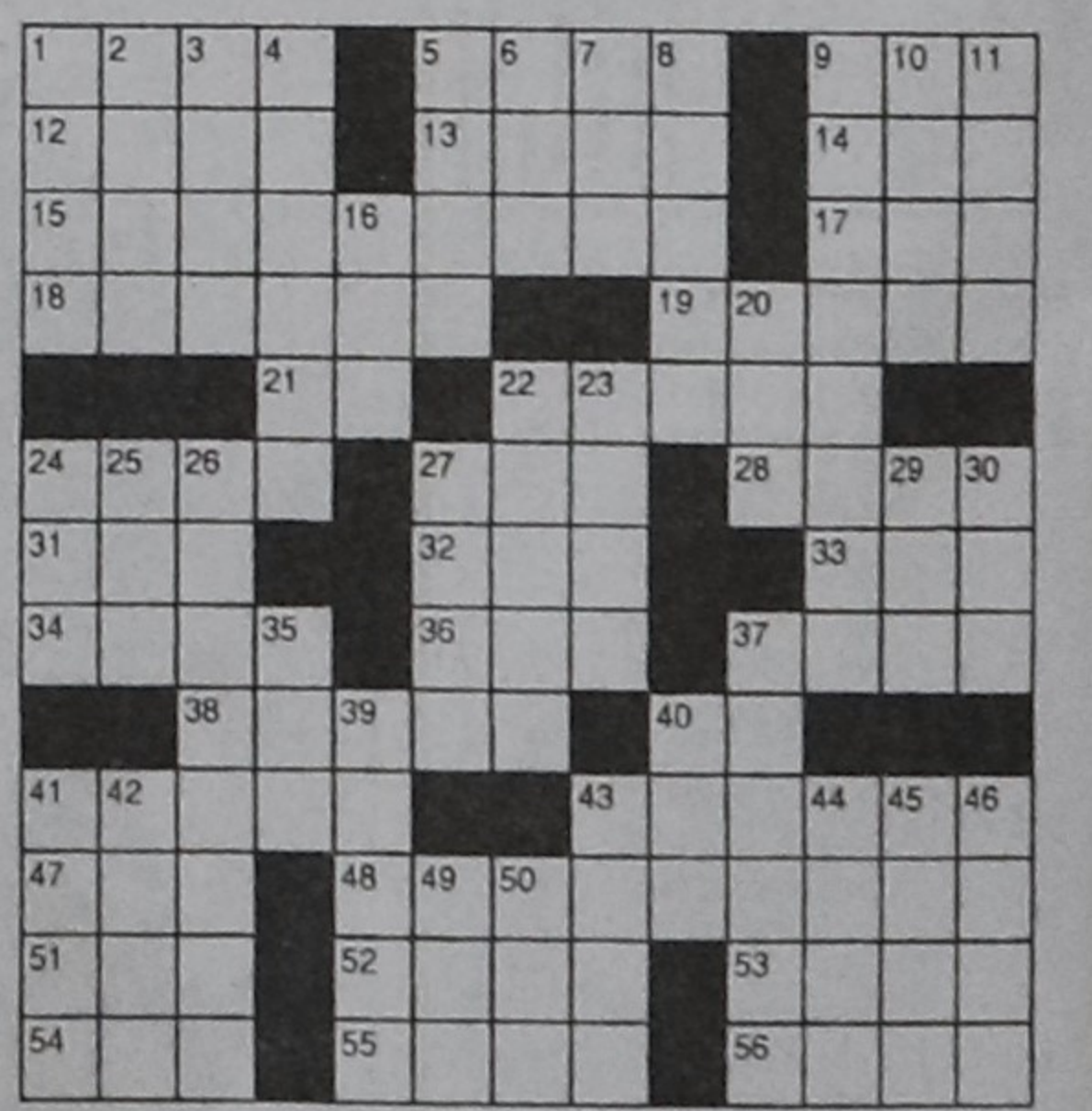
CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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DOWN 23 Pre-swan 24 Cable sta. 25 Ah's mate 26 Saskatchewan city 27 Lapdog, for short 29 Historic time 30 Firmament 35 "ramparts" 37 Boy 39 Increases the temperature 40 Mined-over matter 41 Spheres 42 Rid of rind 43 Second-hand 44 Infamous lyricist 45 Radius neighbor 46 Stalk 48 Lubricate 50 Inseparable

Solution time: 25 mins.

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CRYPTOQUIP

SAEDQ VAE JFZFJ PA PRF  
UFJHAB VAE'JF UDWVMB  
W JAE BQ AZ CADZ SMPR  
WH W U W J J M B C U W J P B F J?  
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF YOU SPOT A RABBIT, PICK IT UP, AND FLEE, IT COULD BE SAID THAT YOU TAKE THE BUNNY AND RUN.  
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: J equals R