



DESPERATE TO BE BACK: Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (L) sprints with other members of the national team during a practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. Out of the national team for the last five months due to knee injury, Mashrafe is trying hard to pass a fitness test for next month's tri-series against India and Sri Lanka.

Div I chess

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Biman, Titas Club and 12 Soft Solution Limited share the lead in the points table with 14 points after the end of the ninth round of the Dutch-Bangla Bank 1st Division Chess League-2009. The games of the ninth round were held yesterday Thursday at the Chess Federation hall-room. In the ninth round matches: Biman beat Pradip Sangah Mahakhali by 4-0 points. Titas Club beat Sultana Kamal Smirity Pathagar by 4-0 points. 12 Soft Solution drew with Basir Memorial Chess Club 2-2. Dhaka Metropolitan Chess Club beat Farashgonjs Sporting Club by 2.5-1.5 points and Sonali Bank beat Jobs Vander Dot Com by 3.5-5 points.

Vital Super

FROM PAGE 17 will be seeking a big innings from the big spending Shakib Al Hasan, who was not at his best in the previous couple of matches.

In the day's other match, Biman take on Victoria at BKSP. It was learnt that Mohammadmedan is trying to bring an all-rounder from India before their final clash against Abahani on December 21.



Did U Know?

Thierry Henry is the only player to score 100 Premiership goals at Arsenal's Highbury ground.



Virender Sehwag

(India's star opener) "I was actually supporting Sri Lanka. My superstition is that whenever I support India, they lose. So I was supporting Sri Lanka." His shrewd play that made Sri Lanka lose the plot and fall three short of India's 414 in Rajkot on Tuesday.

'England first'

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Andrew Flintoff may have turned down a central contract but insists that England remain his top priority, ahead of several domestic Twenty20 deals.

Flintoff retired from Tests after the successful Ashes campaign and had rejected an ECB incremental contract soon after. There was speculation that he would become a Twenty20 freelancer, playing full-time in various domestic leagues around the world. He is already the IPL's most expensive player -- along with Kevin Pietersen -- after signing an annual 1.55-million-dollar deal with the Chennai Super Kings earlier this year.

Twenty20 may be more lucrative but England comes first, he told Wisden Cricketer. "I would never turn down England," he said. "I have shown more than enough passion over the years, and that's not something you lose because I don't have a contract."

"If I didn't think I was going to play for England again, I would not have had this latest operation, no way. It is all about playing for England. My intentions are to play every one-

day and Twenty20 game for England. It is never going to be a case of picking and choosing."

A series of injuries were one of the reasons behind ending his Test career. He is currently recovering from a post-Ashes knee surgery, which forced him to be on crutches for nearly 12 weeks. Flintoff is still in doubt for England's tour of Bangladesh in February, but was hopeful his best years in limited-overs cricket were still ahead of him.

"I'm not sure I have even played my best yet, especially in one-day cricket -- so now I am having this break I think I have got the chance to get better as a player. I am not going to just get by. I genuinely think I can now play my best ever cricket."

After turning down the England contract, Flintoff was linked with domestic Twenty20 deals in Australia and South Africa, sparking concerns that more players may decide to put cash before country. "I don't think other players will follow what I've done," he said. "There is a real misconception at the moment -- people go on about the riches involved in Twenty20 cricket -- but you earn your reputation playing Test cricket."

"Everyone wants to play that, and then maybe later on in your career some players will have a choice -- especially bowlers, who can't play everything forever."

Hurricane Gayle

FROM PAGE 17 returned after tea to be swatted down the ground and lifted for a six to long-on. Gayle barely followed through and with his score on 79 from 46 balls there was a chance he could tackle Viv Richards' record of 56 deliveries. It didn't happen but, like Adam Gilchrist's 57-ball effort in Perth during the 2006-07 Ashes, it didn't matter.

Strokes that would usually wedge in the mind were replaced at the speed of a wedding ceremony slideshow. When Gayle flicked Doug Bollinger over square leg to bring up his half-century from his 34th ball it seemed like the shot of the series. An effortless swing cleared the fence on one of the world's biggest grounds and the batsman's heart-rate would not have fluttered. More grunt followed the grace.

The Australians were in shock and awe, especially Hauritz, who will do well not to have nightmares of Gayle's right leg stepping down at him. Ricky Ponting kept Hauritz on hoping for a mis-hit, and there was an edge on 81 that was split by Michael Clarke at first slip. If Gayle missed a century it would have been a bigger crime than the physical confrontation of Bann and Johnson.

He didn't and after such carnage his dismissal was as weak as the winds in the eye of a storm, a limp waft at a short ball floating to Shane Watson at point. Bollinger was the bowler but the noise that followed was for Gayle's innings of 72 deliveries, which also had nine forgotten fours. As he exited to the first ball of the 24th over he had all but 34 off his side's 136.

Travis Dowlin was the

almost silent partner but his 55 was hugely valuable until he scooped a catch to gully off Johnson. By stumps the tourists had Ramnaresh Sarwan on 42 and Ramnarsingh Deonarine on 10, while Johnson, McKay and Hauritz were left to tend their bruises.

It was a day for runs, none of which went to Ponting. He did not bat due to his injured left elbow, but closed the innings midway through the second session after Haddin had built on the work of Watson, Simon Katich, Michael Hussey and Marcus North. On another day Haddin's 88 from 91 balls would have been the most memorable and North's confident 68 would have been discussed with appreciative nods. Sorry, but Gayle's special circumstances relegated them to small mentions.

Australia resumed the second day at 3 for 339 and quickly lost Hussey for 82, with Haddin soon doing his best to impersonate Gilchrist. Gayle did a better job, but Haddin's collection was important in inflating Australia's total, which is still intimidating despite West Indies' forceful reply.

Haddin threatened to become the first Australian of the series to score a hundred, but instead became the 15th local to reach a half-century during a purposeful innings that gained intensity with his elongated debate with Bann. The complicated exchange inadvertently brought in Johnson when the bowler pointed at Haddin and accidentally brushed his partner's shoulder.

It had all begun when Haddin took offence at Bann and Johnson running into each other when the bowler was fielding in his follow-

through. The ultimately harmless episode was an unnecessary and ugly period that showed both teams have some fight left after three weeks of play. It didn't help Bann though, as he returned 1 for 87 off 28 overs, but added to the excitement of a breathless day.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the second day of the third Test between Australia and West Indies at the WACA on Thursday:

AUSTRALIA: First innings (overnight 339-3) Watson c Ramdin b Roach 89 Katich c Roach b Bann 99 Ponting retired hurt 23 Hussey c Ramdin b Rampaul 82 Clarke c Gayle b Deonarine 11 North c and b Deonarine 68 Haddin c Ramdin b Roach 88 Johnson c Bann b Bravo 35 Hauritz not out 2 Extras: (b-4, lb-2, w-1, nb-16) 52 Total: (For 7 wickets in 130.4 overs) 520 Did not bat: Bollinger, McKay Fall of wickets: 1-132, 1-175, 2-260, 3-277, 4-355, 5-444, 6-510, 7-520

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Roach	22	2	104	2
Rampaul	22	6	85	1
Tonge	18	1	85	0
Bravo	17.4	1	79	1
Benn	28	4	87	1
Deonarine	23	4	74	2

WEST INDIES: First innings Gayle c Watson b Bollinger 102 Dowlin c Hussey b Johnson 55 Sarwan not out 42 Deonarine not out 10 Extras: (lb-1, nb-4) 5 Total: (For 2 wickets in 46 overs) 214 To bat: Nash, Bravo, Ramdin, Benn, Rampaul, Tonge, Roach Fall of wickets: 1-136, 2-175

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Bollinger	11	2	41	1
Johnson	11	1	68	1
McKay	8	1	31	0
Hauritz	10	1	49	0
Watson	6	0	24	0

Proteas tail wags

Cricket

AFP, Centurion

South Africa's lower order batsmen frustrated England as the host nation crawled past 400 on the second day of the first Test at SuperSport Park here on Thursday.

South Africa were 401 for eight at tea after England's bowlers toiled under a hot sun for the second successive day.

Paul Collingwood equalled the England record of four catches in an innings by a fielder as South Africa were made to battle for runs on a slow pitch, adding only 139 runs in 57 overs on the day.

Jacques Kallis added only

eight runs to his overnight score of 112 before he edged James Anderson to second slip where Collingwood held his third catch of the innings.

JP Duminy made 56 before he presented Collingwood with a fourth catch when he edged off-spinner Graeme Swann low to the fielder at a solitary slip.

Collingwood equalled a feat which had been achieved 19 times previously.

He claimed a fifth catch when an attempted sweep by Mark Boucher, on 29, against Swann looped off the batsman's boot to slip. The on-field umpires asked for a review by television umpire Amish Saheba and slow motion replays showed the

ball had hit the ground as well as the boot.

Boucher, who did not add to his score before lunch, was dropped on 25 when he hooked Stuart Broad to Graham Onions on the fine leg boundary.

Boucher was caught at short leg off Swann for 49 but tailender Paul Harris prodded and occasionally hit his way to 33 not out by the interval.

Swann had figures of four for 103 off 42 overs.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at tea on the second day of the first Test between South Africa and England at SuperSport Park in Centurion on Thursday:

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings (overnight 262-4)

Smith c Prior b Broad	0			
Prince c Collingwood b Swann	45			
Amila c Collingwood b Onions	19			
Kallis c Collingwood b Anderson	120			
De Villiers c Cook b Swann	32			
Duminy c Collingwood b Swann	56			
Boucher c Cook b Swann	49			
Morkel c Prior b Onions	13			
Harris not out	33			
De Wet not out	12			
Extras: (b-1, lb-16, w-5)	22			
Total: (For 8 wks in 147 overs)	401			
Fall of wickets: 1-1, 2-51, 3-93, 4-159, 5-283, 6-316, 7-341, 8- 377				
To bat: Ntini				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Anderson	37	9	104	1
Broad	32	7	74	1
Onions	27	5	76	2
Swann	42	9	103	4
Collingwood	7	1	18	0
Trott	2	0	9	0

Yet another belter?

FROM PAGE 17

his next-highest score is 33 and three times he's been dismissed without scoring. The law of averages says it's about time for a century, but it will be against a side off which he has only one hundred in 55 innings. To do so, Jayawardene will need to get over his struggles against India's spinners, who have now dismissed him five times -- six if you count the run out in Rajkot during a Ravindra Jadeja over -- from his seven ODI innings against them in 2009.

Opener Gautam Gambhir has been India's most consistent Test batsman this year but his figures aren't so hot in ODIs. His only century came against Sri Lanka in the first week of February and since then Gambhir has managed four half-centuries. For a determined player, who has made a superb effort to convert fifties into centuries in Tests, changing a habit that hampered him for some time, doing the same in ODIs must be a goal. Given the nature of the Nagpur track -- India eased past 350 runs when they played Australia here in October -- it is tough to visualise one of the top three not getting a big score. Gambhir has been able to bat at the top in only ten of 20 innings in 2009; if he gets the chance to

bat at No. 3 today, count on a significant innings.

Yuvraj Singh is almost ruled out -- he has the flu, in addition to his finger injury and missed practice on Thursday -- but Sehwag has been cleared to play after picking up a knee injury in Nagpur. The batting will remain the same as the first ODI, though Sudeep Tyagi may just fancy a debut ahead of Praveen Kumar.

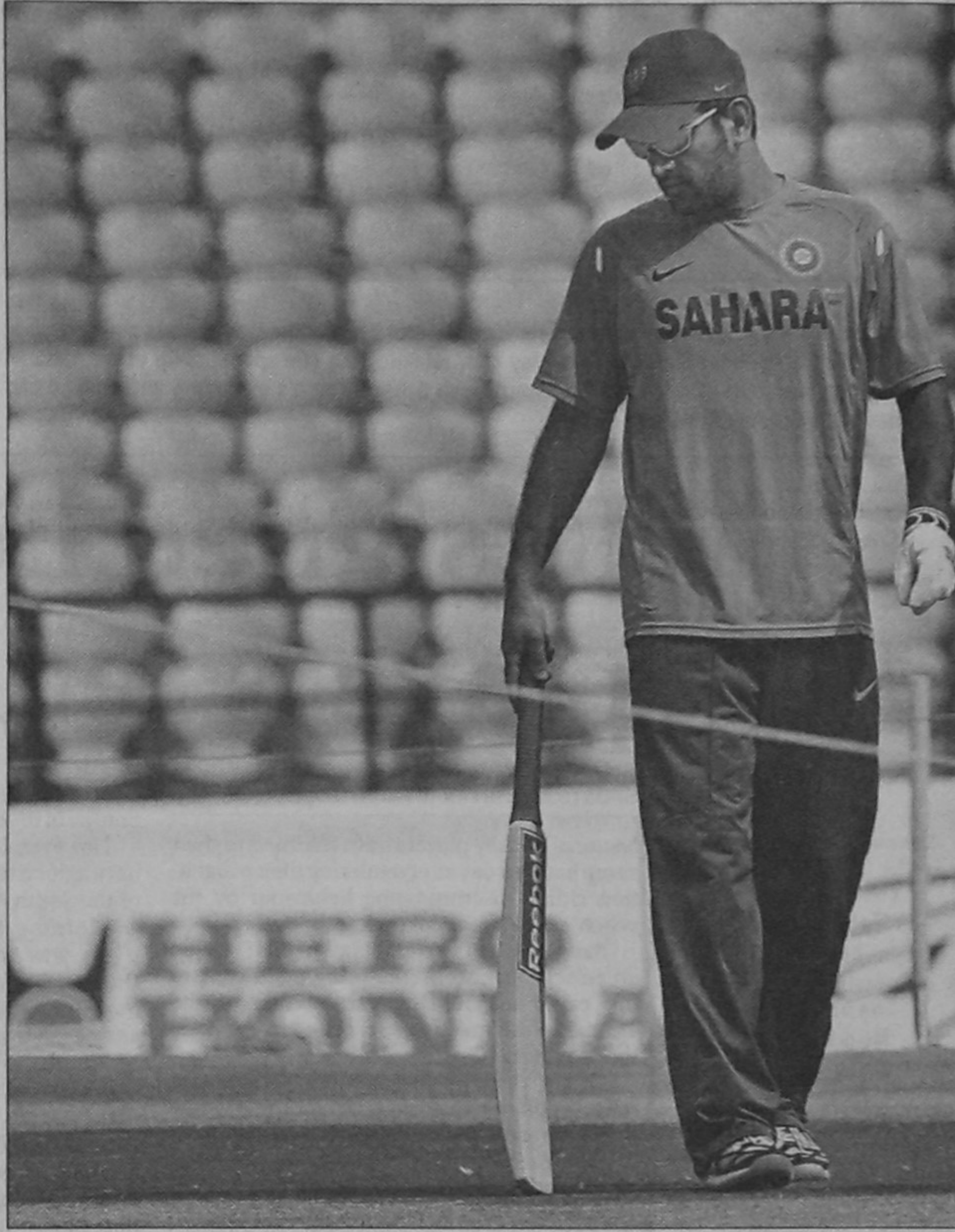
Apart from the injuries to Muralidaran and Fernando, Sri Lanka also had to sweat on Lasith Malinga's fitness. He

missed the first match and the management will be hopeful of his return to replace Fernando. If not, it could mean a debut for rookie fast bowler Suranga Lakmal, who teamed up with the squad today, or a spinner coming in. If it is the latter, Ajantha Mendis remains the safe bet but one of Muthumudalige Pushpakumara or Suraj Randiv could debut.

TEAMS

INDIA (likely): Virender Sehwag, Sachin Tendulkar, Gautam Gambhir, Mahendra

Singh Dhoni (captain), Suresh Raina, Virat Kohli, Ravindra Jadeja, Harbhajan Singh, Praveen Kumar/Sudeep Tyagi, Zaheer Khan, Ashish Nehra. SRI LANKA (probable): Upul Tharanga, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Kumar Sangakkara (captain), Mahela Jayawardene, Sanath Jayasuriya, Thilan Samaraweera, Thilina Kandamby, Angelo Mathews, Nuwan Kulasekara, Chanaka Welegedara/Ajantha Mendis/Muthumudalige Pushpakumara, Lasith Malinga/Suranga Lakmal.



WILL IT BE A CRACKER LIKE RAJKOT? India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni takes a close look of the wicket of Vidarbha Cricket Association Ground in Nagpur yesterday, ahead of the second one-day international against Sri Lanka today. India won the high-scoring first one-dayer in Rajkot by three runs.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Brownish songbird

5 Tiny

8 Large (Pref.)

12 God-parents, e.g.

14 "Once a time"

15 Barack Obama, e.g.

16 Exploit

17 Stocking stuffer?

18 Soft and weak

20 Actor Benjamin

23 Sandwich shop

24 Depend (on)

25 Insists on

28 Yoko of music

29 Break a Commandment

30 Discoverer's cry

32 One bordering on divine

34 Witticism

35 Soon, in

36 Rotates verse

37 Sound system

40 Kin of 30-Across

41 Cabbie

42 Raze

47 Liniment target

48 Eternally

49 Disposition

50 Operated stake

51 Break suddenly

DOWN

1 1960s hallucinogen

2 Gorilla

3 Computer acronym

4 Seemingly unsolvable

5 Had on time

6 Historic

7 Regarded

8 Drury Lane purchase

9 Duel tool

10 Capricorn

11 Initial

12 Stake

13 Edinburgh resident

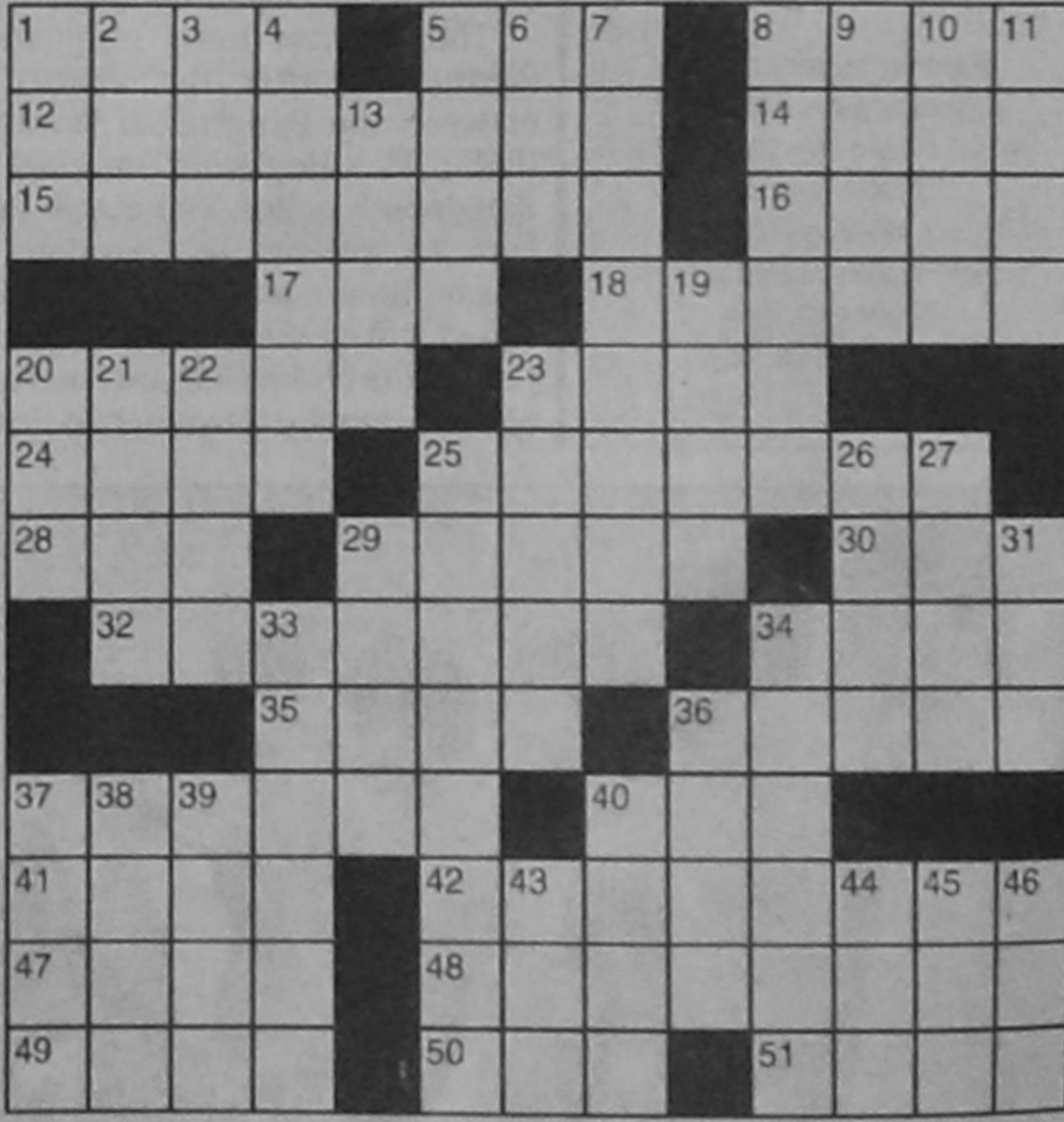
19 Level

20 Sis' sib

21 Tear to bits

Solution time: 24 mins.

GRUB	GLEN	ADD
AONE	RENO	LEI
PITT	EATS	OUR
SLOT	ERR	BEST
END	APU	
AFRAY	PATINA	
TAHO	STABS	
MADAME	STENCH	
LID	EAR	
LOAF	DAN	BAAL
ARC	LIST	ARMY
UGH	YEAR	LEER
OYE	ESPY	LANE



CRYPTOQUIP

JINN-LDCJD LUKR' OCCL
RIZUIR GOCWQ G KIIB
SGDHCD QXGQ'R XUTXNH
BISWNUGZ: "SWZUCWR TCZTI."

Saturday's Cryptoquip: IF YOU'RE STUDYING HOW PEOPLE RIDE TO AND FROM WORK EACH DAY, ARE YOU TAKING COMMUTER SCIENCE? Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Q equals T