Cryptic Puzzle | TOM TOCE

OK Boomer

I WAS BORN IN 1956, THE HEIGHT OF THE BABY BOOM. As such, I recently celebrated my 64th birthday, and while that event might cause some to think about the Beatles (which I do all the time anyway), someone of my bent will naturally think about chess. I went to my puzzle collection to find an idea, and the first book I consulted was *Stephen Sondheim's Crossword Puzzles*. I remembered those puzzles frequently invoking other games, and I was pretty sure there was a chess puzzle. I was right. Sondheim acknowledges Gong of The Listener, and I acknowledge them both.

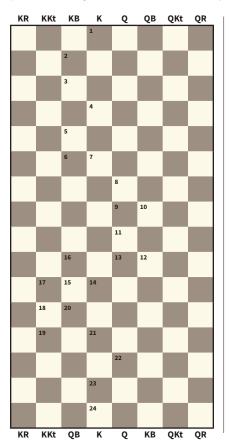
The diagram represents an elongated chessboard. Solvers should envision a top row occupied by white backrow chess pieces arranged as at the start of a game. Each piece moves as it would in chess, each move being a word. The last letter of one word will be the start of the next, until the piece reaches a corresponding position in the bottom row. The final positions will be those of a starting row of black chess pieces. Since a bishop stays on one color, the Queenside and Kingside Bishops switch sides. Knights and Rooks begin and end on the same side of the board.

Moves are clued in the correct order under their respective pieces, but lengths must be determined by the solver. Knights'

moves, of course, are all of four letters (two spaces in one direction, horizontal or vertical, and one in the other, or vice versa).

The King's journey, which follows the numbered squares in sequence, spells out the names of two famous chess players. The top and bottom rows contain two eight-letter words, clued first.

There are two proper nouns (besides the two chess players) and three foreign words. Everything else is playable in Scrabble. There are a few more answers that may be proper nouns, even as clued, but are found in the Scrabble dictionary. (For example, superman.) Ignore punctuation, which is intended to confuse. Thanks to Bob Fink, Eric Klis, and Jerry Miccolis for test-solving and editorial suggestions.



Clues

Top row

■ Steve Martin at times: bar stud

Bottom row

■ Exchange brand of sneakers at counter

KR:

- An agreement to insure oatmeal, perhaps?
- Rope off foreclosed property
- Mostly destroys tainted shellfish
- Bickering brought about last call
- Gown we expressed to Nick

TOM TOCE is a senior manager for actuarial services with Ernst & Young in New York and is a member of the Jeopardy Hall of Fame. Solutions may be emailed to him at Thomas.Toce@ey.com. In order to make the solver list, your solutions must be received by March 31, 2020.

KKt:

- Cut requested In many regions
- Platform said to be unfocused
- New oils from Hopper
- After its premiere, *Don Juan* closed
- GOP's congressional delegates
- Good deal on cruise at auction
- Governor, I'm-er-nervous
- Frost's poems often do this to the ear
- Send out intentions
- Brisk ascent offered by a few waves from Jamaica
- Wrestling with Descartes' conclusion, love
- Nemo's bizarre prophecy
- Initially, not everyone raved over *Fiddler*

KB

- Runaround Sue does not need university or any fostering agency
- Commander at Harper's Ferry returned as a slippery one
- Hideaway east of a fancy LA community

- Ken tormented Rachel after Louise's van left
- She is rather half-used

O:

- Couple flipped over an Egyptian lute
- Alias, Bambi's mother
- Darners working for commissions
- The fifth, QED
- Seduced by a kind of shiny object
- One of the seven detriments of OCD
- Quote, in one sense, reiterated
- More elbow grease around the edges

OB

- Ling leaving an impression in print
- Rex's family grates, at first
- Was given a game of strategy at tournament's opening

- Damage blubber
- Often Louis or I crashed
- Mineral found in seaweed from the east

QKt:

- Heartless snow job from overbearing person
- Appearing in Gabon once, a long time ago: Cher
- Alternatives suggested for Poles
- To say it ends at the English Channel is crazy, no?
- It was in Rome and evident in deliberations
- Nonkosher meat may be bloodless
- Around time for discharge
- Leader in liberal arts

- Unfocused anger with no name!
- Be entitled to speaker's pot
- Yoga cleansing techniques all over in *E.T.*
- Useless member of Monty Python
- Finally the bell clerk brings order

QR:

- One who sails around Kenya may be an opportunist
- Scabs play a leading role in recession
- Solo phase ends early
- Senior formerly from city in Russia
- Sperm rejected for poor grades
- Often a symptom of tin ear: every zither enchants at first

Previous Issue's Puzzle-Sometimes You Don't Have a Clue

I accepted several alternatives for 19A. "Risk load" is what I had in mind, but other things (risk bond, risk hold) fit. I didn't get any "milk good" answers, but I guess I would have accepted that, too. I'm pretty tolerant. I also didn't mark wrong SHEAR rather than SHEER for 26A. The clue was "Groom, I must say, is delicate." The cryptic logic is Synonym for "Groom" + Homophone indicator + connector (=) Synonym for "delicate." If there were no connector, then the homophone indicator could operate on either side of the clue. But as it is, the word "is" stands in the way. So SHEER for "delicate" has to be the answer and SHEAR for "groom" has to be the homophone.

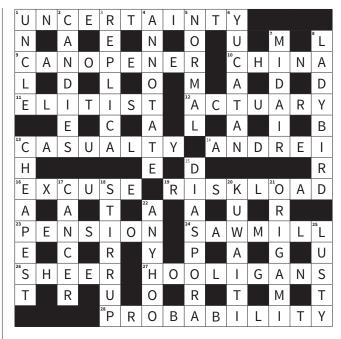
Across

- 1 UNCERTAINTY
- 9 CAN OPENER—CAN ("John") + OPEN ("Jimmy") + ER ("a medical drama")
- 10 CHINA—Double definition
- 11 ELITIST—Anagram of "title is"
- 12 ACTUARY
- 13 CASUALTY
- 14 ANDREI—Anagram of "Rained"
- 16 EXCUSE—Outside "excruciating abuse"
- 19 RISK LOAD
- 23 PENSION
- 24 SAWMILL—SAW ("didn't raise") + MILL ("\$1,000,000")
- 26 SHEER—Homophone of SHEAR ("Groom")
- 27 HOOLIGANS—Anagram of "gasohol in"
- 28 PROBABILITY

Down

- 1 UNCLE—First part of "unclear"
- 2 CANDIES—C ("around," from circa) + AND + IES (first letters of "I eat steadily")
- 3 REPLICA—Anagram of "caliper"
- 4 ANNOTATE—ANNO ("year for Italians") + TATE ("British Museum")

- 5 NORMAL—NORMA ("Bellini coloratura") + L ("liberties at the premiere")
- 6 YUCATAN—CAT ("Hipster") inside YUAN ("Chinese currency")
- 7 MIDAIR—MID from reversal of DIM("Having little prospect of a favorable outcome") + AIR ("song")
- 8 LADY BIRD—anagram of "bar Liddy"
- 13 CHEAPEST—EAP from Edgar Allan Poe ("poet's monogram") inside CHEST ("reliquary")
- 15 DIASPORA—DIAS + POR ("From Spain, days for") + A
- 17 CANCER—C ("controls from the start") + (D)ANCER ("John's tiny one losing her head")
- 18 STIRRUP—STIR ("Mix") + UP around R ("Republicans") and "guy" as in "a rope . . . used to guide"
- 20 KUWAITI—Inside "haiku waiting"
- 21 ORIGAMI—ORIG from ORIGINAL ("small-scale, authentic") + AM I
- 22 ANYHOO—Inside "Many hoofprints"
- 25 LUSTY—Anagram of (S) TYLUS ("stylus without a tip")



Solvers

Brian Klimek's name was omitted from the previous list ("Mapping Your Way" solvers). Sorry, Brian.

Team AALO (Kristen Bischoff, Danny Clark, Kristen Detwiler, Alec Pirritano), Mike and Gina Accardo, Steve Alpert, Anthony Amodeo, Dean Apps, Jack Brauner, Bob Campbell, Lois Cappellano, Todd Dashoff, Mick Diede, Bob Fink, Bruce Fuller, Phil Gollance, Pete Hepokoski, Ruth Johnson, Eric Klis, Paul Kolell, Ken Kudrak, Ben Lynch, Dave McGarry, Jerry Miccolis, Jon Michelson, Jim Muza, David and Corinne Promislow, Jay Ripps, Dan Schwallie, Bill Scott, Karen Skoglund, Zig Swistunowicz, T. O. C. E. (Josh DenHartog and Sean Donohoe), Betsy and James Uzzell