

The Crypto Cryptic

A WHILE BACK, A FRIEND OF MINE INSPIRED FOMO (“FEAR OF MISSING OUT”) in me as she described the high returns she had achieved with her investments in crypto currency. I didn’t really understand crypto, so I asked her to explain it. I wish I had recorded her answer. It would be the very definition of word salad.

The main thing I gleaned is that decentralization is a key element of crypto currency. In this puzzle, fifteen entries have been decentralized. That is, the clues lead to words that are shorter than the encrypted thing that needs to go in the diagram. The solver will have to supply some extra letters in the center of each of these answers before entry.

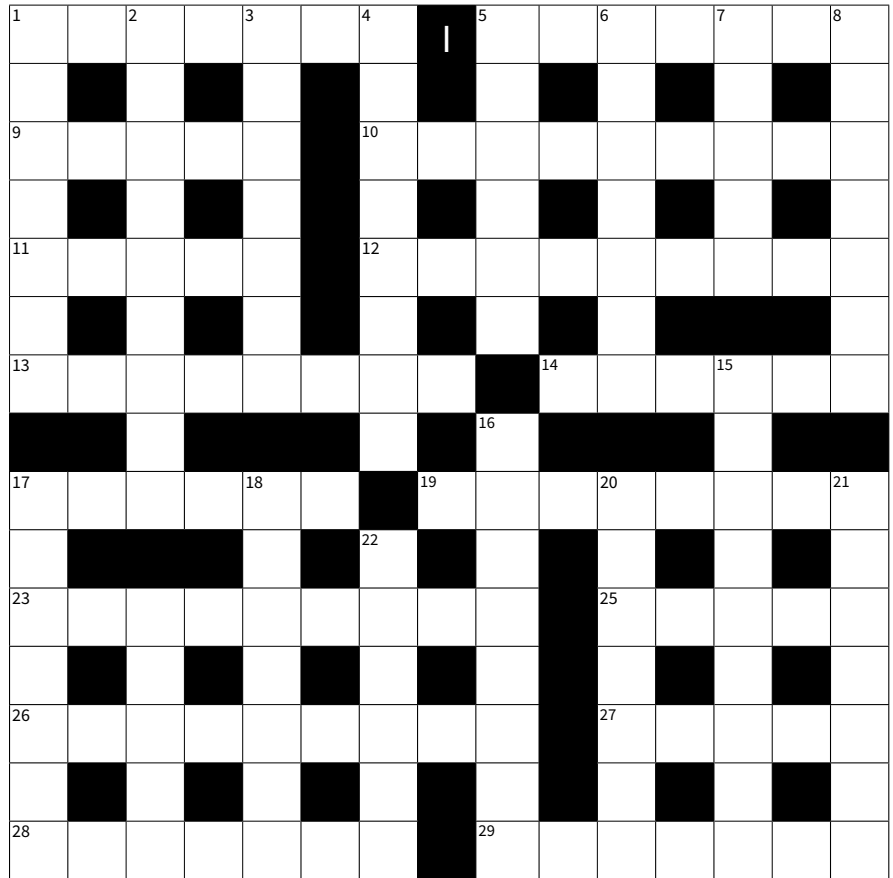
There is one instance of a square being filled by both a decentralized across entry and a decentralized down entry. There are forty letters decentralized from the clues, from thirty-nine squares in the grid.

The forty decentralized letters come from this group:

- CULPABLE
- PLUNDER
- FACING
- TRICK
- SYSTEMIC
- ERRORS

Everything to be entered in the diagram is playable in Scrabble except one two-word answer, four proper nouns, and a hyphenated term. The fifteen shorter words clued are similarly playable in Scrabble, except for one proper noun. Ignore punctuation, which is intended to deceive.

The only early adapting I’ve ever done in my life was to get COVID in March of 2020. I worried that my usual investing strategy of buy high, sell low might be disastrous with crypto,



especially since I didn’t (and still don’t) understand it. So I steered clear. I haven’t checked back with my friend lately. I need to do that.

Thanks to Bob Fink, Eric Klis, and Jerry Miccolis for test-solving and editorial suggestions.

Across clues

1. Contract after Edict of Worms, perhaps
5. Medical treatment by mouth
9. Accuser making gutter pronouncements
10. Translate steamiest of statements
11. Little picture of Frankenstein
12. Mo notices funny little faces online
13. Debase and criticize Estragon
14. It may be good going both ways
17. Look carefully at each juror
19. Left in the lurch by Saint Paul, for one, Freddy divulged

TOM TOCE is an FCAS and a senior manager at EY. He is a member of the Jeopardy Hall of Fame. Solutions may be emailed to ttoce@nyc.rr.com. In order to make the solver list, you should send him your solutions by June 1, 2023.

23. Play from a score audibly with oboe or clarinet
25. Rumors of Eliot drinking beer
26. Inference is, I counted badly
27. Jane is coming back after being delayed in a Tuscan town
28. Stormy starred in *Wall Street*
29. Treason unleashed on a member of Congress

Down clues

1. Wild bats on hemp
2. During feedback, Bill's partner offers something unexpectedly brilliant
3. Young Lynn or Martin, made famous by the Beatles
4. Roth's questionable comic character
5. Lot's mood turned right around
6. Rod's partner is a former pitcher for the Yankees and Mets
7. Roast prepared for Nolan Ryan, once

8. Failed to appreciate film's narrative
15. Mark is extremely indifferent
16. Calls a halt to showoff's maneuvers
17. Confined for fifty days after Easter Sun.
18. Marginally enclosing Soave region
20. Skilled worker NRA takes on as it grows
21. Dirty diapers lead to hopelessness
22. Steps on goggles, screaming
24. Aural disturbance as she split up Hillary and Michelle

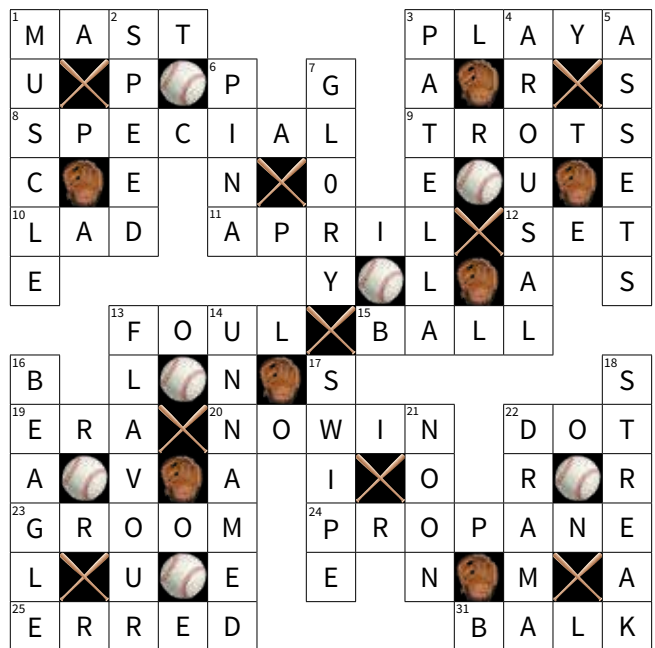
Solution to Previous Issue's Puzzle—Out of Play

Across clues

1. BALLAST—B (AL) LAST and (M)AST (pennant-holder)
3. PLAY BALL—(PAL BY ALL) anagram and PLAY(A) (a Baja beach)
8. SPECIAL—(PLACES I) anagram
9. TROTS—T(a)ROTS [a deletion]
10. BALLAD—BAL (LA) D and (L)AD (boy)
11. APRIL—"ape" homonym + "rill" homonym
12. BALLET—(BASiLLE - is) anagram and (S)ET (group)
19. ERA—double definition
20. NO-WIN—(e)NOs + tWINs
22. BALLOT—BALtic + LOT and (D)OT (spot)
23. BALLROOM—(ROB A MOLL) anagram and (G)ROOM (prepare)
24. PROFANE—PRO (P -> F) ANE
25. ERRED—openER REDs (hidden)
26. BALK—BoardwALK (hidden)

Down clues

1. MUSCLE—MUL (SC) E
2. SPEED—S + PEED (deep reversal)
3. PATELLA—PA (T) ELLA
4. AROUSAL—(ALAS OUR) anagram
5. ASSETS—pASSE TSar (hidden)
6. PINBALL—(PILL BAN) anagram and PIN(A) (Puerto Rican Pineapple)
7. GLOBALLY—GLOB + ALLY and GLO(R)Y (fame)
13. FLAVOUR—F + L + A + V + O + U + R (hidden first letters)
14. UNNAMED—U + N (NAM) ED (complete reversal)
16. BEAGLE—B + EAGLE
17. SWIPE—I SPEW) anagram
18. STREAK—ST (R) EAK
21. BALLOON—B (ALL) OON and (N)OON (at the highest point)
22. DRAMA—DR + AMA



In the nine special clues, the letters BALL are “out of play” and substituted with nine letters which, when anagrammed, spell out GRAND SLAM

Solvers: Steve Alpert, Dean Apps, Jack Brauner, Bob Campbell, Lois Cappellano, Laura Cremerius, Jared Dashoff, Todd Dashoff, Christopher Dickens, Mick Diede, Dave Dougherty, Deb Edwards, Pete Hepokoski, Catharine Hornby and Bruce Harvey, Max Jackson, Ruth Johnson, Eric Klis, Paul Kolell, Mike Kosciuk, Ken Kudrak, Ben Lynch, Mathew Marchione and Marika Brown, Dave McGarry, Jon Michelson, Jim Muza, David and Corinne Promislow, Jay Ripps, Bill Scott, Jon Shiley, Sally Smith, Zig Swistunowicz, T. O. C. E. (Josh DenHartog and Sean Donohoe), Betsy and James Uzzell