

An Exercise in Futility

Three stages of an exercise in futility are represented in the grid. In eight clues, wordplay ignores one letter of the solution (Stage 1; the red squares are supportive upon arrival) and the definition is for the entered answer (Stage 2, upon return). The answers to ten other clues are too short for their grid entries, a situation solvers must rectify to represent Stage 3. The figure responsible for the exercise is represented by (i) the unclued answers; (ii) the blue cell; and (iii) the letters in the grey squares.

Across

- 9 Music events sharing company and crew reversed street disturbances (15)
- 10 Out of line, crossword compiler's obscene fill (5)
- 11 Smooth surface racecourse centrally expanded (5,4)
- 13 A not *completely* prostrate stage (5)
- 15 Plodder's step backward (4)
- 17 Months behind on account of order (4)
- 18 Short of things even in cloister, get uncommonly comfy? (7)
- 20 Caging lion, perhaps, can it cause injury to Ed? (6)
- 22 A pain in the neck on cycling strips (6)
- 26 Recipient of belt once all but loses it (7)
- 28 Would Napoleon have articulated this reason for not committing to paper? (4)
- 29 Sceptre of gold from the East (4)
- 30 Gutted of course to be eclipsed by heavyweight boxer (5)
- 32 Particulars unfortunately not put out for runners on track (9)
- 36 Hanging back as arranged? Not entirely (5)
- 37 Gel put on cranium - unusual preparation for this! (6,9)

Down

- 1 Northbound writer is stowed away by fat acting officer (7)
- 2 Very good place for a pint - one pre-eminent feature on map! (6)
- 3 Very intricate token left to give to Romeo's bit on the side? (4-4)
- 4 Newspaper chief from *The Scotsman* expressed disbelief more than once? (4)
- 5 Killer using motorcade for cover (4)
- 6 Surrounded by the morning papers? (4)
- 7 Source of lighting in O2 Centre for cinema confrontation (3-2-3)
- 8 One of the dangers to the coast of North America it's imperative for me to round up (7)
- 12 Close to which endlessly nestles e.g. cat? (6)
- 14 Native of Peru content in pub? (3)
- 15 Bone up well (5)
- 16 Commercial feature of snooker table overlooked by amateur (5)
- 19 Nepalese furnisher packing cases? (6)
- 21 Part for bass fiddle lifting one (8)
- 23 Jazz pianist done after knocking lowers head (3,5)
- 24 Regularly travel over strand (3)
- 25 Trebles concession - supported by one in service (7)
- 27 A fox and a Roman say I'll show up because of a variety of gins (3,4)
- 31 Return trip resulting in drunken riots (6)
- 33 Spies see you! (4)
- 34 Man from Mexico, maybe, three-quarters full (4)
- 35 Total sport (4)

