Win akin to Ashes: **Fletcher**

BBC ONLINE, undated

England coach Duncan Fletcher believes tying a Test series in India with five first-choice players missing is almost as big as winning the Ashes.

"It's a huge, huge achievement. It's close to that Ashes win," he said.

"To draw 1-1 with India on any occasion would have been great. To have won in India would have been as good as beating Australia in England.

"But it's right up there. With four, five of six guys missing it's a tremendous

Captain Andrew Flintoff hit two fifties and took four wickets to be named man of the match and also took the man of the series award.

"To come to India and draw 1-1 with such a formidable side was a great effort for our lads," he said.

"Early on in the tour things were quite tough. The lads who came in and made debuts, with not much experience, have taken the bull by the

Flintoff revealed that a blast of country music during the lunch break was behind England's inspired display of seven wickets for 25 runs.

"We went in the dressing-room had our lunch then played a bit of

Johnny Cash, Ring of Fire," he said. "It got the lads going and we came out afterwards with a spring in our

England's victory kept them just above India in second place in the ICC world rankings behind Australia, who they visit next November.

Twenty20 World C'ship on the way

AFP, undated

Cricket is set to have a new global tournament with the creation of a Twenty20 "World Championship."

At a board meeting of the International Cricket Council (ICC) at the governing body's Dubai headquarters, officials agreed to the creation of an "invitational" Twenty20 World Championship in 2007 with an event in 2009 where "participation will be mandatory", according to an ICC statement.

Explaining the two-stage introduction, the ICC said: "Several members are strongly in favour of including a Twenty20 World Championship in the next round of ICC events while other members are not as enthusiastic.'

Pioneered three years ago in the professional game at county level in England, Twenty20 - whose name derives from the fact that a match is made up of just 20 overs per side has drawn large crowds around the

But concerns have been expressed that an expansion of Twenty20 could threaten the standing of the World Cup, cricket's leading one-day international tournament, which is currently staged once every four years and whose next edition is set to take place in the

Indo-Pak series

FROM PAGE 12

Pakistani Kashmir and adioining North West Frontier Province in October, killing more than 73,000 and leaving an estimated three million homeless.

Shaharyar Khan, chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), and his Indian counterpart Sharad Pawar announced the two boards had decided in principle to begin a programme of cricket activities between the two countries on foreign shores. "The Abu Dhabi Friendship Cup

will be the start of a long-term plan, the details of which will be discussed by the two boards soon," Khan told reporters on Wednesday.

The two ICC-recognised matches will be played in the UAE capital on April 18 and 19. Pakistan last faced India in the Middle East at the Sharjah Cup in March 2000.

India's board decided against participating in subsequent Sharjah tournaments after match-fixing allegations emerged following the team's Champions Trophy victory in October 2000.

Indian board president Pawar did not rule out the possibility of returning to Sharjah, but said no specific proposals had been received by the

board. "We will definitely look into any proposal we get regarding playing in

Sharjah, but so far we have not received anything," he said. Both India and Pakistan boards

promised to send full-strength national teams for the Cup, which is expected to become an annual fixture for the two teams.

Rahul bemoans

England captain Andrew Flintoff, named man of the match and the series, credited the victory to the bowlers who he said helped in

gaining a sizeable first innings lead. "The toss was a bit of a bonus. Andrew Strauss gave us a good start. Posting 400 in the first innings and especially the way we bowled to restrict India was the key," the visiting captain said.

The two teams will now play in a seven-match one-day series beginning with the first in Delhi on March



Barcelona forward Samuel Eto'o (L), followed by Ronaldinho, celebrates his 100th Primera Liga goal during his side's clash against Getafe at the Nou Camp on Tuesday.

PRIMERA LIGA

Barca edge towards glory

Football

Barcelona had to come from behind after an early goal by Getafe but the Spanish league leaders eventually got into their stride to triumph 3-1 over their visitors from Madrid on

Two second-half goals from the Snanish first division's top scorer Samuel Eto'o secured the three points after a shaky start.

"Getafe's goal served to wake us up. In this respect, the team know how to suffer in order to win, reflected Barcelona coach Frank

Barca move one step closer to their second successive Primera Liga title, and their 18th in total, with

a 14-point advantage over their nearest rivals Real Madrid ahead of the rest of the midweek matches.

Barca's fans, packing the Nou Camp close to its 98,000 capacity, clearly believe the title is already in their grasp and spent the last 20 minutes noisily chanting, "Campeones, campeones,"

Barcelona had to bounce back from an early shock when Nano Macedo latched onto a cross by Mario Cotelo and headed the visitors ahead from the edge of the six yard box after just four minutes.

Barca nearly equalised four minutes later when Ludovic Giuly hit the post. The hosts finally got on level terms after 21 minutes thanks to an own goal from Getafe defender Anibal Matellan.

A point-blank Giuly header hit the luckless Argentine, who was standon the chest and the ball edged past the outstretched arm of Getafe goalkeeper Luis Garcia. Getafe could have easily come

back into the game on the half hour but Barca got a lucky let-off when Nano found the net again but was questionably ruled offside.

Samuel Eto'o put the hosts ahead just six minutes after half time, sending a right foot shot home from 10 metres out after the outstanding Giuly had provided the

Eto'o then added his second of the night, 22nd of the season and 100th of his first division career, 21 minutes from time after Ronaldinho provided a defence-splitting pass to the African Player of the Year.

FA Cup

L'pool demolish Birmingham



REUTERS, London

Liverpool scored twice in the opening five minutes on the way to a club record 7-0 rout of Birmingham City in an embarrassingly one-sided FA Cup quarterfinal at St Andrew's on

Lanky England striker Peter Crouch netted twice for six-times winners Liverpool, who joined West Ham United in the last four after the London club beat Manchester City 2-1 on Monday.

It was Liverpool's biggest away win in the FA Cup and equal second biggest at any ground after their 8-0 home victory over Swansea in January 1990.

Tuesday's match had barely started when Steven Gerrard floated in a free-kick from the left, Mohamed Sissoko nodded the ball on and unmarked defender Sami Hyypia headed home for the visi-

midfielder Sissoko was making his first appearance, wearing protective glasses, since an injury to his right eye exactly a month ago that had initially threatened to end his career. Crouch made it 2-0 when his

Mali

header from Gerrard's right-wing cross was parried by Maik Taylor but the keeper could not prevent the ball from crossing the line

The 25-year-old Crouch notched his fourth goal in three games seven minutes before the interval when he steered the ball past Taylor after

Luis Garcia had slipped a perfect pass into his path.

Fernando Morientes, who came on for Crouch in the 56th minute added the fourth following a dummy

Left back John Arne Riise struck a blistering fifth 20 minutes from time after running on to a neat flick from Gerrard.

Seven minutes later, City substitute Olivier Tebily tried to block Harry Kewell's low cross but only succeeded in turning the ball into his

One minute from time, Taylor let a shot from the right by substitute Djibril Cisse slip under his body for the seventh, rounding off a nightmare evening for the home side who are also fighting for survival in the Premier League.

History beckons 'Goldfinger

AFP, Melbourne



Australia uncovered a new track and field poster boy on Wednesday as Indian shooter Samaresh Jung edged closer to a sevengold Commonwealth Games record.

John Steffensen, the son of South African parents but a proud, swaggering Aussie fuelled on the confidence of being taught by legendary American coach John Smith, took

gold in the men's 400m. Australia also took pint-sized 13vear-old diver Melissa Wu to their hearts after the youngster picked up a

silver medal. While the night's athletics golds were shared out, Jung was continuing to threaten a monopoly on the shooting ranges where he picked up a fifth gold medal to leave him two short of a record seven at one

India also celebrated a third gold medal in weightlifting but their day at the Games ended on a low note when their men's team bowed out of the

Residential Model College ground on Wednesday.

field hockey tournament with rivals Pakistan delivering the fatal blow.

After the raw emotions of the swimming pool, it was left to 23-yearold Steffensen and 13-year-old Wu to inherit the affection of the home

The flamboyant runner's 400m victory was a first track gold for Australia since Darren Clarke won the same event in 1990 Steffensen smashed his personal

best in a time of 44.73 seconds to beat two-time world indoor champion Alleyne Francique of Grenada while Jermaine Gonzales of Jamaica took

"Did I walk the walk, or what?" asked Steffensen, who won silver in the 2004 Athens Olympics as part of Australia's 4x400m relay team.

"I'm in a world of pain. Hopefully all of Australia will be celebrating

toniaht." Other track and field golds went to Dorcus Inzukuri of Uganda in the women's steeplechase, Ghana's Ignisious Gaisah won the men's long jump while England's Kelly Sotherton clinched heptathlon gold.

Mark Boswell of Canada retained the men's high jump while Valerie Vili of New Zealand took the women's shot.

Samaresh Jung moved closer to a

record seven gold medals with victory in the men's 10m Air Pistol individual

The New Delhi-based federal security officer will create history if he wins the 25m Centre Fire Pistol event on Friday and the Standard Pistol title on Saturday.

Australian swimmers Ian Thorpe and Susie O'Neill hold the record of six gold medals each at a Commonwealth Games.

Jung, nicknamed Goldfinger by volunteers at the Melbourne International Shooting Club, played down the significance of the record.

"I am not interested in the record or gold medal," he said. "If I am shooting well then I will be happy."

Wales' David Phelps won the men's 50m Rifle Prone, Sheena Sharp of Scotland took the women's 50m Rifle Prone while Graeme Ede of New Zealand claimed gold in the men's Trap.

Wu teamed up with Alex Croak to claim silver in the women's 10 metre synchro platform diving behind compatriots Chantelle Newbury and Loudy Tourkey.

The 28 kilo (62 pound), 135 centimetre (4 foot 4 inch) diver became the darling of the crowd as she showed no nerves in her performance.



Triumphant Grameen Phone team members pose with the trophy of the Corporate Challenge Cricket at the

AFP, London

Michael Ballack has his heart set on a move to the Premiership -- and reckons he can emulate Patrick Vieira and Roy Keane.

The 29-year-old Bayern Munich midfielder will be a free agent in the summer is being strongly linked with a move to Chelsea, although Real Madrid are also believed to be interested.

But Ballack has made it clear that ne wants to play in England, where he believes the league is tailormade for his style.

"For me it is the Premiership rather than La Liga," Ballack told the Daily Express. "I am a very physical player and in England the pace is fast and the tackles are hard.

"If you look at the players that have become legends in England, like Patrick Vieira and Roy Keane, I see a lot of myself in players like that."

Chelsea, bankrolled by billionaire Russian owner Roman Abramovich. are reportedly ready to make the 29year-old Ballack the world's highestpaid player with a weekly salary of 121,000 pounds (177,600 euros, 210,900 dollars).

Ballack turned down a four-year contract at Bayern in January and the German champions have targeted Barcelona's Dutch international Mark van Bommel as a

Scolari denies **England talks**

Portugal coach Luiz Felipe Scolar has denied holding talks with the Football Association (FA) for the England manager's job.

Scolari was widely reported to have been approached by FA officials last weekend after taking part in a conference in London.

But the 57-year-old Brazilian -who guided his homeland to success in the 2002 World Cup -- has denied any talks have taken place. "If I had to deny everything that had been written about my future

wouldn't be doing anything else in

the next few months," Scolari said. "I was in London on Friday for a conference with Bobby Robson. arrived at 11 in the morning, I went to the meeting site, we had a meeting with business people and it was all

over by five in the afternoon. "I got another taxi to the airport to go back to Lisbon. It is foolishness and makes sense only if the FA chief executive was the taxi driver."

England are looking for a new manager after Sven-Goran Eriksson's decision to step down after the World Cup.

Tigers eye

their best in the series and I hope they will do that tomorrow," said the

TEAMS

Bangladesh (from): Habibul Bashar (captain), Khaled Mashud (vice-captain), Javed Omar, Shahriar Nafees, Aftab Ahmed, Mohammad Ashraful, Alok Kapali, Mohammad Rafique, Mashrafee Bin Mortuza, Abdur Razzak, Syed Rasel, Shahadat Hossain and Manzarul Islam.

Kenya (from): Steve Tikolo (captain), Thomas Odoyo (vice-captain), Jimmy Kamande, Alfred Luseno, Tanmay Mishra, Hitesh Modi, Collins Obuva, David Obuva, Peter Ongondo, Kennedy Otieno, Maurice Ouma, Kalpesh Patel, Martin Suji and Tony Suj.

Eng land

FROM PAGE 12 afterwards, trapped leg-before by

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard on the fifth and final day of the third and final Test between India and England at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Wednesday: ENGLAND: First innings 400 (Strauss 128, Shah 88, Flintoff 50; Sreesanth 4-70. Harbhaian 3-89) INDIA: First innings 279 (Dhoni 64 Dravid 52: Anderson 4-40) ENGLAND: Second innings 191

(Flintoff 50; Kumble 4-49) INDIA: Second innings (overnight 18-1) Jaffer Ibw b Flintoff 10 Pathan b Anderson

Kumble Ibw b Hoggard

Dravid c Jones b Flintoff

Tendulkar c Bell b Udal Yuvraj c Collingwood b Flintoff Sehwag Ibw b Anderson Dhoni c Panesar b Udal Harbhajan c Hoggard b Udal Sreesanth not out Patel c Hoggard b Udal Extras: (b-1, lb-4, nb-3, w-1) Total: (All out in 48.2 overs) Fall of wkts: 1-6, 2-21, 3-33, 4-75, 5-76, 6-77, 7-92, 8-92, 9-99. **Bowler** 0 M R

12

6 13

Anderson 12 2 39 Panesar 4 15 Flintoff 14 9.2 Result: England won by 212 runs to level three-match series 1-1. Toss: India Umpires: Darrell Hair (AUS) and

Hoggard

Simon Taufel (AUS)

Ballack longing for Premiership Sledging all part of 'man's game'

Football

Celtic boss Gordon Strachan has insisted sledging is just as much a part of a "man's game" like football as it is in cricket following accusations of verbal abuse during his team's recent Scottish League Cup

"Any team sport -- including cricket sledging, and (in) rugby union -- there is abuse or winding people up," said Strachan, who made his name as a player at Aberdeen and Manchester United.

"The funny thing is it goes on and I used to have it with (Celtic's) Roy Aitken, Danny McGrain and Tommy Burns. You notice I am the commor denominator in there "We were laughing at that

Strachan said that any player involved in a game of verbal tennis while on the pitch should simply accept what they give out.

because that's what men do."

opponent gets the last word in then vou've lost. "But if you have lost please do not go crying away to the headmaster about it. Don't go crying, 'he started the fight and he battered

"If you start the verbal and your

"If you want to start it, accept it. That's what we did when we were players. Some of the things that were said were nasty, but if someone wants to start a verbal in any walk of life, they have to accept it.

"We are disappointed it has come to this. If you don't want to play a man's game then go play with

Questioning an opponent's status as a man, as Strachan did Tuesday with Shields, is just about the greatest insult in the macho cultures that pervade most sports and certainly within British football where phrases such as "he tackled like a girl" have yet to be eradicated. 'Sledging' is a term for the way in

which cricketers, initially members of the Australian Test side, verbally abused opponents. Although derogatory, such comments could have their lighter

moments. During an Ashes Test, England batsman Robin Smith was informed in no uncertain terms about his

ability by paceman Merv Hughes. But after striking the Australian for a boundary, Smith reportedly said: "We make a right f.....g pair. I can't f.....g bat and you can't f.....g bowl."

me'. Sort it out yourself. Be a man A lucrative 6-yr package

first away series in India. The Tigers failed to complete their home and away basis tour circle in the last FTP as India showed considerable reluctance twice in hosting the newest Test playing nation.

"India acknowledged their failure of hosting Bangladesh but the two board officials will meet again in the next two months to settle the issue,' said Mahbub. He also confirmed that

Bangladesh will take a long break

from Test cricket after hosting Australia in April. They are expected to play their next home series against India in May next year, after the World Cup. "We are expected to play 18 to 20

ODI matches in that time including

ICC Champions Trophy and Afro-

next July to play five one-day matches and two four-dayers and then host them in November-December," said Mahbub. "The matches against Zimbabwe

is an additional arrangement for us. After fulfilling the FTP's minimum requirements and playing the ICC events any country can increase the number of Test and one-day matches in bilateral negotiation and we will definitely try to do that," he Mahbub also hinted that they are

trying to arrange some three-match Test and five-match one-day home series during that period. In the six-year plan Bangladesh is expected to play 41 to 42 Tests

Muralidaran c Ifthikar b Naved

Fall of wkts: 1-57, 2-93, 3-105, 4-

131, 5-133, 6-156, 7-193, 8-216, 9-

0

0

48

14

7.4 10

10

3

Extras: (b-2. lb-5. w-4. nb-1)

Total: (All out in 49.4 overs)

and 105 to 140 one-day internation-

mystery man?

Real land

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid president Fernando Martin has decided who will take charge of the first team next season but says he will not be revealing the new man's identity just yet.

'I know who will be the new coach and I'm not going to name any names, Martin told Spanish daily El Mundo in an interview published on Wednesday.

Martin, who took over as president last month following the resignation of Florentino Perez, did, however, make it clear that the new boss would exercise greater power than he did under his predecessor.

'I've scoured the globe to glean information on all the possible candidates and I've got one thing completely clear. The new coach will be more powerful and will play a fundamental role in the construction of the squad.'he said.

'It shouldn't be the case that the coach pulls in one direction and the club in another...he should have a lot of weight and there should not be too many people in his way.'

Leading candidates for the post of Real coach such as AC Milan boss Carlo Ancelotti. Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger and Liverpool's Rafa Benitez have all ruled themselves out of the job.

Juventus coach Fabio Capello, who led Real to the league title in 1997, has hinted he will remain with the Serie A club, leaving former coach Vicente del Bosque, ex-Real Madrid plavers Bernd Schuster and Hugo Sanchez and departing England manager Sven-Goran Eriksson as the favour-

Udinese sack Sensini

Udinese coach Nestor Sensini has been sacked because of poor results, the Italian first division club said on Tuesday.

Sensini, who took over from Serse Cosmi in January, lost his post after five consecutive defeats which left them in the relegation zone in 17th spot.

The club have already named a replacement in 64-year-old Giovanni Galeone, an experienced, out-of-contract coach

Pakistan clinch series

Malinga not out

Bowler

Naved

Razzag

Prasad

Muralidaran

24 "---

25 '70s

network

musical

about

Noah

27 Wahine's

center

30 Archery-

bow

32 Undoes

34 Envoy's

SSW

39 Legume

42 Van

44 Where

45 Author

50 Tender-

foot

holders

Cleef's

partner

the action

Sheehy

37 Away

workplace

wood

29 Simile

bestowa

favor,

PAKISTAN

Malik

another fighting 46-ball knock in which he hit four boundaries. Pakistan's reply started vigorously with Malik smashing nine fours off 38 balls and Farhat eight off 52.

They added 61 in under nine overs. That total was overhauled with ease as Mohammad Yousuf slammed 53 after openers Shoaib Malik and Imran Farhat, who scored 46 each, had laid the foundation. Afridi returned figures of 3-37 as the Sri Lankan batsmen failed to get big scores despite starting well after being put in to bat by Inzamam ul-Haq. "I am very pleased with the series win

very useful all-round efforts in the series," said Inzamam...

Wednesday:

SRILANKA

ACROSS

one

8 Touch

book

14 Guitar's

15 Popular

1928

ancestor

song of

17 Lead-in to

"bird" or

Weapon"

21 Ultimate

noble

name

23 Suitable

wiggler

Broncos

at tenpins

quarter-

31 Partake

33 Teensy

35 Relaxa-

36 Sing à la

38 Little devil

off course

Bing

40 Go way

26 Wet

28 Star

2

0

22 Italian

"plane"

18 Spa

19 "-

12 Uris

13 Elev.

square

5 More, to

Manuel

1 From

SCOREBOARD Scoreboard of the third and final one-day international between Sri Lanka and Pakistan at the Sinhalese Sports Club ground on

Tharanga c Akmal b Razzaq Kapugedera run out Sangakkara c Akmal b Afridi Jayawardene run out

Lokuarachchi c Yousuf b Afridi Arnold st Akmal b Afridi Dilshan b Malik

41 Fide

45 Old

preceder

accessory

Faithful

51 Comedian

52 Just one

of the

crowd

Bread

"Every-

thing

rank

(Abbr.)

competi

55 Navy

56 Neet

tor

57 "Gentle-

men

Prefer

author

Blondes"

Solution time: 21 mins.

54 1972

Johnson

47 Skilled

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

43 Feathery 59 Besides

58 Nonpro-

that

1 Eastern

2 Cleo's

3 Pipe

4 Cart

5 Gospel

writer

nation

7 Fashion

8 Some-

what

9 Inciden

10 - Major

16 Art Deco

20 Language

suffix

11 Blue

hue

VIP

potentate

waterway

bends

DOWN

fessional

Maharoof c Farhat b Asif

Malik c Kapugedera b Muralidaran because the whole team has done Farhat st Sangakkara b Dilshan 46 well. Afridi and Abdul Razzaq gave Younis st Sangakkara b Muralidaran Yousuf Ibw b Maharoof Inzamam b Muralidaran Razzaq not out Afridi c Muralidaran b Lokuarachchi Akmal not out Extras: (b-4, w-9, nb-1) Total: (For six wkts in 45.2 overs) Fall of wkts: 1-61, 2-117, 3-137, 4-177, 5-207, 6-210 Bowler 0 Malinga 0 7.2 5 Maharoof 33

10

0 58 Dilshan 0 20 Result: Pakistan won by four wickets and clinched the threematch series 2-0. Man-of-the-match: Shahid Afridi Man-of-the-series: Abdul Razzaq

Toss: Pakistan Umpires: Steve Davis (AUS) and Asoka de Silva (SRI)

Mahbub passes

SPORTS REPORTER

He was suffering with lung cancer. He was the son of Kazi Motahai

Bangladesh Chess Federation. Chess officials, players and organisers expressed their deep

46 Slangy suffix RVZTC "G PUR JYUXDQ! 48 Exam Yesterday's Cryptoquip: OUR CLASSICAL DANCE STUDIO CLOSED DUE TO MONEY format 49 Sacred PROBLEMS. I WOULD SAY IT WENT BALLET UP. bird

> another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error

away

Veteran chess player and writer Kazi Mahbub Hossain breathed his last at a local hospital yesterday (Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Ilaihi Razeun).

Hossain, literateur and founder of

shock at the death of the former chess player. They also conveyed their heartfelt condolences to his bereaved family.

CRYPTOQUIP

IUGOCGOH

PDYD

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: G equals I The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for