

## 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 or six guys missing it's a tremendous achievement."

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 horns."

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 step."

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 world.

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 Caribbean in 2007.

## Indo-Pak series

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Pakistani Kashmir and adjoining 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

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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 28.



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

AFP, Madrid

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 Tuesday.

Two second-half goals from the Spanish 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 Rijkaard.

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 Cotelero 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 stand-

ing less than a metre out of the goal, on 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 left-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 out-standing Giuly had provided the service.

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.

## Ballack longing for Premiership

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 he wants to play in England, where he believes the league is tailor-made 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 29-year-old Ballack the world's highest-paid 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 replacement.

## Scolari denies England talks

AFP, London

Portugal coach Luiz Felipe Scolari 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 I 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. I 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

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their best in the series and I hope they will do that tomorrow," said the former West Indies off-spinner.

## TEAMS

**Bangladesh (from):** Habibur Bashar (captain), Khaled Mashud (vice-captain), Javed Omar, Shahriar Nafees, Aftab Ahmed, Mohammad Ashraf, Alok Kapali, Mohammad Rafique, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Abdur Razzak, Syed Rassel, Shahadat Hossain and Manzurul Islam.

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

## England

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afterwards, trapped leg-before by Flintoff.

## 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, Harbhajan 3-89)

**INDIA:** First innings 279 (Dhoni 64, David 52; Anderson 4-40)

**ENGLAND:** Second innings 191 (Flintoff 50; Kumble 4-49)

**INDIA:** Second innings (overnight 18-1)

Jaffer lbw b Flintoff	10
Pathan b Anderson	6
Kumble lbw b Hoggard	8
Dravid c Jones b Flintoff	9
Tendulkar c Bell b Udal	34
Yuvraj c Collingwood b Flintoff	12
Sehwag lbw b Anderson	0
Dhoni c Panesar b Udal	5
Harbhajan c Hoggard b Udal	6
Sreesanth not out	0
Patel c Hoggard b Udal	1
Extras: (b-1, lb-4, nb-3, w-1)	9
Total: (All out in 48.2 overs)	100
Fall of wickets: 1-6, 2-21, 3-33, 4-75, 5-76, 6-77, 7-92, 8-92, 9-99.	

<b>Bowler</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>W</b>
Hoggard	12	6	13	1
Anderson	12	2	39	2
Panesar	4	1	15	0
Flintoff	11	4	14	3
Udal	9.2	3	14	4

**Result: England won by 212 runs to level three-match series 1-1.**

**Toss: India**  
**Umpires: Darrell Hair (AUS) and Simon Taufel (AUS)**

# Sledging all part of 'man's game'

## Football

AFP, Glasgow

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 final success.

"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 common denominator in there."

"We were laughing at that because that's what men do."

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

"If you start the verbal and your opponent gets the last word in then you'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 me'. Sort it out yourself. Be a man

about it. "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 kids."

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."

## A lucrative 6-yr package

FROM PAGE 12  
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-

Asia Cup. We will visit Zimbabwe 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 added.

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 and 105 to 140 one-day internationals.

## Real land mystery man?

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 players Bernd Schuster and Hugo Sanchez and departing England manager Sven-Goran Eriksson as the favourites for the job.

## Udinese sack Sensini

AFP, Udine

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

Sensini, who took over from Serie 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

FROM PAGE 12  
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 because the whole team has done well. Afridi and Abdul Razzak gave very useful all-round efforts in the series," said Inzamam.

## SCOREBOARD

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

**SRI LANKA**  
Tharanga c Akmal b Razaq 23  
Kapugedera run out 50  
Sangakkara c Akmal b Afridi 22  
Jayawardene run out 31  
Lokurachchi c Yousuf b Afridi 13  
Arnold c Akmal b Afridi 0  
Dilshan b Malik 44  
Maharroof c Farhat b Asif 19

**PAKISTAN**  
Malik c Kapugedera b Muralidaran 46  
Farhat st Sangakkara b Dilshan 46  
Younis st Sangakkara b Muralidaran 25  
Yousuf lbw Maharroof 53  
Inzamam b Muralidaran 12  
Razaq not out 23  
Afridi c Muralidaran b Lokurachchi 1  
Lokurachchi 9  
Akmal not out 9  
Extras: (b-4, w-9, nb-1) 14  
Total: (For six wickets in 45.2 overs) 229  
Fall of wickets: 1-61, 2-117, 3-137, 4-177, 5-207, 6-210

<b>Bowler</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>W</b>
Malinga	7	0	34	0
Maharroof	7.2	1	33	1
Prasad	5	1	33	0
Muralidaran	10	0	58	3

Prasad b Naved	8
Muralidaran c Iftikhar b Naved	2
Malinga not out	12
Extras: (b-2, lb-5, w-4, nb-1)	0
Total: (All out in 49.4 overs)	224
Fall of wickets: 1-57, 2-93, 3-105, 4-131, 5-133, 6-156, 7-193, 8-216, 9-224.	

<b>Bowler</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>W</b>
Naved	7.4	0	40	2
Asif	10	0	48	1
Iftikhar	9	0	40	0
Razaq	10	1	35	1
Afridi	10	0	37	3
Malik	3	0	17	1

**PAKISTAN**  
Malik c Kapugedera b Muralidaran 46  
Farhat st Sangakkara b Dilshan 46  
Younis st Sangakkara b Muralidaran 25  
Yousuf lbw Maharroof 53  
Inzamam b Muralidaran 12  
Razaq not out 23  
Afridi c Muralidaran b Lokurachchi 1  
Lokurachchi 9  
Akmal not out 9  
Extras: (b-4, w-9, nb-1) 14  
Total: (For six wickets in 45.2 overs) 229  
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Malinga	7	0	34	0
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Prasad	5	1	33	0
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**Result: Pakistan won by four wickets and clinched the three-match series 2-0.**  
**Man-of-the-match: Shahid Afridi**  
**Man-of-the-series: Abdul Razaq**  
**Toss: Pakistan**  
**Umpires: Steve Davis (AUS) and Asoka de Silva (SRI)**

Lokurachchi	10	1	47	1
Dilshan	6	0	20	1

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## Mahbub passes away

SPORTS REPORTER

Veteran chess player and writer Kazi Mahbub Hossain breathed his last at a local hospital yesterday (Inna Lilahi Wa Inna Laihi Razeun). He was suffering with lung cancer.

He was the son of Kazi Motahar Hossain, litterateur and founder of Bangladesh Chess Federation.

Chess officials, players and organisers expressed their deep shock at the death of the former chess player. They also conveyed their heartfelt condolences to his bereaved family.

# History beckons 'Goldfinger'

AFP, Melbourne



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 13-year-old diver Melissa Wu to their hearts after the youngster picked up a silver medal.

While the night's athletics gods 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 Games.

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

field hockey tournament with rivals Pakistan delivering the fatal blow.

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

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