

# Strauss or Flintoff?

**Cricket**

BBC ONLINE, undated

Andrew Strauss is confident he could have done no more to convince the selectors he is the man to captain England in this winter's Ashes series.

With Michael Vaughan injured, either Strauss or Andrew Flintoff will be named skipper on Tuesday when the touring squad is announced.

"I've been captaining the side since June time so they've got a fair idea about what sort of captain I am.

"I'd love to do the job in Australia but it's for other people to decide."

The squads for the Ashes and October's one-day ICC Champions Trophy will be announced on Tuesday at The Oval, where England completed their 2-1 Ashes series triumph a year ago.

Strauss' stock has risen after he oversaw a convincing Test series triumph and turned around England's one-day form to tie the series with Pakistan.

All-rounder Flintoff, who has

been out of action since June with an ankle injury, is expected to return to fitness by mid-October.

He is expected to also be named in the Champions Trophy squad, with their first game in Jaipur on 15 October.

But with the first Test against Australia beginning on 23 November, England would have to be certain of Flintoff's fitness for the entire five-match series to name him as captain.

Coach Duncan Fletcher suggested he and fellow selectors David Graveney and Geoff Miller had initially disagreed on who should take the job.

"You would like it to be unanimous but that's why you have selectors," he told BBC Radio Five Live.

Flintoff was just one of a group of half-fit players taken on the last Ashes tour of 2002-03 but went home without having played a match.

England are expected to name a 16-man squad with five further players placed on standby, based at Hampshire coach Paul Terry's cricket academy in Perth.

Fitness tests take place for the entire squad at the ECB Academy in Loughborough on Monday.

Seamers James Anderson (back) and Liam Plunkett (side), as well as spinner Ashley Giles (groin) will all be keen to prove their recovery from injury.

If Giles is unavailable, the tourists appear short of a second spinner to back up Monty Panesar.

Otherwise, pace bowler Stuart Broad, who made his one-day international debut in the series against Pakistan could be the only player without a Test cap included.

"We know really who's fit and who's unfit at the moment," said Fletcher.

"Anderson, Giles, Plunkett and Flintoff have all shown good recovery and they seem very happy with the way they're going at this stage.

"It always boils down to one or two positions and we've got to debate that rather than rushing in and making a decision we regret later."

# SL cricketers get pay hike

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's domestic cricketers will get a handsome raise in match fees for the coming season in a bid to make local competition more professional, a top official announced here on Sunday.

"We have a 300 percent pay hike earmarked for players in a new domestic competition for the 2006-07 season," K. Mathivanan, secretary of the Sri Lanka Cricket interim committee, told AFP.

He said each player competing in the new super premier league three-day matches would be paid 3,000 rupees (30 US dollars) per day. "Each player will end up receiving around 1,400 dollars per season, up from around 400 to 500 dollars now," Mathivanan said.

He said the aim was to make first-class tournaments more competitive and professional so as to help domestic players prepare for international matches.

# Shane Warne— beyond the cricketer

ABDUL EKRAM

He is Australia's most controversial sportsman but he's also a marketer's dream; he appears to be doing nothing wrong both on and off the field. In November 2005, the living legend Shane Warne was signed as the name behind the company, 'Messages on Hold'. Who better than Shane Warne with his modern day reputation as a sex-talking nymphomaniac to be the face of Messages on Hold?

In one example recently, which Warne himself outlined to the media, he thought his message had read, "I am not interested. I am a happily married man" whereas he says predictive text had changed the message to "I am naked in my room. Please come and smear linseed oil over my body".

When quizzed by journalists over the vast differences between the messages, Warne said he didn't realize the messages were different and had sent the message without first checking the screen.

"I have been very stupid," said Shane Warne. "I should have checked the phone first to see if it contained predictive text."

Having been deemed too fat to play AFL Footy (an Australian form of Rugby) for his beloved St. Kilda Club after a season at the youth level, he chose the noble game of cricket to show off his wares.

From the wrong side of the tracks in cricket aristocracy terms, he is a beer-swilling, pie-eating enigma that has had the sporting and publicity world at his feet.

The current Test world-record wicket-taker is the man responsible for single-handedly resurrecting the dying art of leg-spin bowling.

Almost 98 per cent of the cricketers to have entered the Commonwealth Bank Cricket Academy, formerly of Adelaide, has donned the national colour in both form of the game. Yet, Shane Warne is still the only player having left the Academy abruptly, triggered this greatness into reality and for that we are all eternally grateful.

His legendary status propels him to new levels in sports and sports marketing. With Warne reeling under a spate of celebrated yet spurious sex scandals, the Australian spinner was further implicated with the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) blaming Warne for an impending interest rate rise. While Warne's indiscretions have become a national soap opera, it is for the first time that his philandering has affected the national political scene and specifically the Australian economy.

RBA released a document to the press recently indicating that an interest rate rise was imminent in the third quarter of this calendar year. In the true RBA fashion, no detailed breakdown of the reasons for the rate rise was given, simply citing global economic downturn, high unemployment and Shane Warne!

Cricket Australia at the time and

Warne's team of lawyers was quick to respond to the allegation. Greg Chapell, former Australian cricket captain and current Indian coach and legend stating "Warne has been implicated in this scandal with no basis of proof and its quite obvious that the RBA are using Warne as a scapegoat at the moment as any allegation made against him would generally be accepted by the public as ... and I'm being fair to Shane here, the man has the social graces of a haemorrhoid."

While the RBA have yet to expand on its allegation, perhaps believing the Australian public will accept it piecemeal the trend has been set, with several other shocking, seemingly faceless but scarily enough believable stories about Shane Warne becoming apparent.

The most damaging of which has arisen in the USA, where shamed company directors of ENRON have blamed Warne for its bankruptcy and even more damaging, Israeli Prime minister is indicting Warne for several suicide bombings in Hebron and the West bank earlier this year. Bill Clinton is urging the Americans to follow the Australians and to forget and forgive him for his Monica scandal.

Of course, much of this would be brushed off if he was 22, even 26, just another beach bum with ungodly skills, and we would have put it down to youthful indiscretion.

Boys will be boys! But eventually men must be men and Warne, close to running 38, has yet to figure that out. Wife Simone has also lapped up the publicity and recently found herself alongside some Australia's finest showbiz and sporting celebrities.

But Warne of all players should by now know the script that its written for the famous, if not by someone telling himself, then by simple trial and error. He has seen the media response and public reaction, to his argument with a 15-year-old who photographed him smoking, to his taking money from a bookie, to his swallowing of a diuretic, and the ignorance defence just does not work anymore. A massive sponsorship with "Quit Smoking" did not necessarily guarantee him success in the endeavours to quit. Do as I say not as I do. With recent public awareness of drugs in sports was the diuretic a masking agent for a banned substance or was a mistake. In 2003 Shane Warne claims

the tablet was taken to reduce his fluid levels and ultimately his appearance on his mother's suggestion. Hansie Cronje obviously wasn't as thick skinned as Shane Warne particularly after all were implicated in assisting bookmakers in pitch and weather reports.

Warne and his agent (his brother) obviously apply the theory that any press is good press! Despite all of the negatives it has detracted from massive public support he receives, Australians can relate with Shane Warne.

Warne has often been portrayed as lovable rogue, the blonde surfer turned colourful cricketer, and there is charm to this flawed, anti-establishment figure, but now it is running thin.

There is much to Warne, in his strength of character to keep fighting on after his shoulder operations, his admirable work with children and charities, his disciplined performances (except bowling his most expensive Test overs to get a wicket against Bangladesh) on the field. But goodness has been overshadowed by recklessness.

Nurse-gate and his off-field antics has engrossed a tabloid mad Great Britain then and to this day although Warne claims the Australian press is much more judgmental and moralistic the English press.

The failed channel Nine World Cup Footy show saw Shane Warne working in the UK as special guest in Germany. The invitation came despite Shane losing his contract with Nine for his indiscretions.

Everytime he appeared or his name was mentioned precious time was wasted as football (footy) mad Australians in the audience belted out his name for extensive periods.

Australians are a unique breed, as we all know! In essence you are Labor or Liberal voter, a Ford or Holden fan or you dislike Shane Warne. Shane Warne is quite a one-person enterprise and an attention-getting sporting star who laughs his way all the way to the bank these days as a highly marketable commodity.

We also need to acknowledge that Warne is also a very generous man who along the way has established The Shane Warne Foundation.

The web pages privacy statement sets out important information about privacy protections the Foundation extends to personal information. The statement relates to personal information that you provide to the company. It is sad and unfortunate that the same privacy has not been afforded to one of the Australia's greatest!



SHANE WARNE

# Aragones

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been considering his position following the disastrous loss in Belfast.

Aragones had previously said before the World Cup second phase loss to France he would step down unless the Spanish at least reached the semifinals, but then said he would stay on if the Federation so wished.

# Zola Unicef

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made an honorary member of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) and received his award at a special ceremony in Rome.

He spent his last playing days in Serie A with Cagliari from his native Sardinia and retired shortly before the start of the 2005-06 season.

Zola scored eight goals in 35 appearances for Italy.

Unicef, the United Nations International Children's Emergency fund, provides aid to children and mothers in developing countries.

# Akhtar backs

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climax to the fourth Test at The Oval where the tourists became the first side in history to forfeit a Test when they stayed off the field in protest at being earlier penalised five runs for ball-tampering.

Inzamam is due to answer charges, as captain, of ball-tampering and bringing cricket into disrepute arising out of that match at a hearing in London on September 27 and 28.

The first of a five-Test Ashes series starts at Brisbane's Gabba ground on November 23.

# League

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has been followed by more positive results.

Eto'o, last season's top scorer in the Spanish first division, got two goals within half an hour as the reigning Spanish champions romped to a 3-0 win over Osasuna on Saturday.

World Player of the Year Ronaldinho was instrumental in the first goal, and showed encouraging signs of recovering from an indifferent World Cup as well as recent thigh and back problems which have meant he has only trained four times in the last month.

# Australia

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Germany defeated England 2-1 and South Korea stumbled to a 2-2 draw with South Africa to put them joint top on seven points.

Christopher Zeller converted a penalty corner and a penalty stroke for Germany.

Simon Mantell scored from a penalty stroke for England at the end of the first half.

"Germany was better than us but with a little bit of luck we might have gotten something out of the match," said Jason Lee, England's coach.

"England played well and has improved a lot since the last European Cup," said Bernhard Peters, Germany's coach.

South Korea was expected to beat South Africa having beaten the Netherlands 3-2 and England 1-0 while South Africa lost 2-0 to Netherlands and drew 1-1 with India.

Jong Hyun Jung scored from South Korea's second penalty corner and Lungile Tsolekile equalised with deflection off a free hit from outside the circle.

Hyo Sik You scored an individual break away goal two minutes later and Wayne Madsen put South Africa back in the game at 2-2 with a diving push into goal.

"We are happy with the draw but there is some frustration that we are a couple of points behind where we would like to be," said Paul Revington, South Africa's coach.

# Urn touring down under

**Cricket**

AFP, Birmingham

The Ashes urn is to form the centrepiece of a 94-day Ashes Exhibition tour around Australia, it was announced Monday.

It will be only the third time in history that the urn, owned by the Marylebone Cricket Club, has left the MCC Museum at London's Lord's Cricket Ground and the first time it has toured Australia.

The Ashes Exhibition in association with Traveler has been designed to coincide with the England cricket team's tour of Australia as they bid to retain the Ashes for the first time since 1986/87.

Crickets fans in Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Melbourne will all get the chance to see the urn, which will be in the personal care of MCC curator Adam Chadwick.

Mike Gatting, the last England captain to retain the Ashes in Australia, said: "The Ashes Exhibition is a fantastic idea. There is no greater contest in sport than the Ashes and to be able to see the actual Ashes Urn and so many other priceless artefacts up this close is a once in a lifetime opportunity.

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nity. "I hope that it will inspire the England team to repeat the feat of our team 20 years ago by retaining the Ashes 'down under'."

Meanwhile current Australia wicketkeeper Adam Gilchrist added: "I hope thousands of Australians take up the chance to see the Ashes Exhibition whilst it is here.

"To me, this is the history of cricket and to be able to see it this close is a very special moment indeed."

The urn has been displayed in Australia on only one previous occasion -- in 1988 to help celebrate the bicentenary of European settlement.

An exhibition that had been planned for 2002-03 had to be cancelled when X-rays revealed serious cracks in the urn's shoulders and stem.

But restoration work has since taken place and MCC now believe the urn, although still fragile, can be flown from England to Australia.

Last year England regained the Ashes with a thrilling 2-1 home series win.

The term "Ashes" was coined after England lost a Test to Australia for the first time on home soil at The Oval on August 29, 1882.

A day later, The Sporting Times carried a mock obituary of English cricket which concluded: "The body will be cremated and the ashes taken to Australia."

The Ashes urn was subsequently presented to Ivo Bligh (later Lord Darnley), who captained the next English team to tour Australia.

He subsequently took the urn back to England, where it was kept at his family home in the southeast county of Kent. On his death, in 1927, his widow bequeathed the urn to MCC.

It has long annoyed Australian fans that the Ashes always stay at Lord's regardless of which team has won the series.

MCC tried to tackle this issue by commissioning a crystal Ashes Trophy.

This was first presented at the end of the 1998-99 series to then-Australia captain Mark Taylor but is now currently in England's possession.

One reason why the Ashes have not been taken to Australia more often is that MCC have argued they were a private gift not a sporting trophy.

England are due to name their Ashes squad on Tuesday and the first Ashes Test is set to start in Brisbane on November 23.

# 'I'm shocked myself'

**US OPEN**

AFP, New York

Roger Federer freely admits that he even shocks himself at times.

Speaking after winning the US Open and three Grand Slam events in the same year for the second time in three years, the Swiss star says he never expected to achieve so much.

"I always knew I was talented, I had potential and everything," said Federer, who earned 1.2 million US dollars in prize money.

"But it's just in a different league now -- winning so many.

"I'm shocked myself how well it's been going in the last three, four years, because being not only compared to former great tennis players, but now especially also to other great athletes all over sports."

Federer said that at the start of the year he had tuned over in his mind the possibility of becoming the first man since Australian legend Rod Laver in 1969 to carry off the fabled Grand Slam of tennis -- the Australian, French, US Opens and Wimbledon.

He struggled at times in Melbourne in January and was left in tears of relief after finally battling through a tough four setter against Cypriot upstart Marcos Baghdatis in the final.

On to Paris in May and the one Grand Slam title he has yet to win.

Federer reached the final for the

first time and briefly looked to be on his way to topping claycourt king Rafael Nadal.

But the Spaniard's heavy top-spin and relentless defence eventually wore him down and he lost in four sets. Dreams of a Grand Slam were over for another year and Nadal was firmly entrenched as the main challenger to Federer's world crown.

And after cruising into the Wimbledon final in early July, it was Nadal once again who was on the other side of the net.

Federer looked to be heading for an easy win after pocketing the first set 6-0, but Nadal put up a surprisingly gritty challenge before the man from Basel made it four Wimbledon crowns in a row.

With Nadal going into the fourth round in New York, it was all about defeating American favourites James Blake and Andy Roddick in front of the noisiest and, at times, most partisan crowd in tennis.

Federer achieved that in both cases in four sets and one of the greatest years in the history of tennis was complete.

"I got so close to the Grand Slam -- but it's still fantastic," he said of his year.

"I'm happy the Slams are over because it's hard work. There is a lot of pressure.

"I'm happy to sit back a bit and relax. I'm not thinking of any rival at the moment, it's just really the wins, the great season I've had so far.

"Four Slams are over and I played fantastic in all of them, so it's all good."

The problem for Federer as always is how does he maintain the excellence and how does he go that one step further and also win the French Open on the slow claycourts of Paris.

Despite the fact that Nadal at just 20 likely has his best years ahead of him and there will be the usual armada of clay specialists from Spain and South America, he feels that he is getting closer.

"This time around, I really believed I could win there (in Paris) too," he said.

"Whereas before, I thought it's too tough, too long, too hard. I doubted myself from the early rounds on."

"But now being so dominant in all the other Slams, I know I can win the French. Nadal there or not. I know I can beat him too because I was so close."

There will be no rest for Federer who is one of the busiest players on the ATP Tour.

He returns to Davis Cup action for Switzerland later this month in a World Group playoff tie against Serbia.

He also plans to play in tournaments in Tokyo, Madrid, his hometown of Basel, Paris and the season-ending Masters in Shanghai.

After that a short break to draw breath and on to Australia and the start of what he hopes will be another historic year.

# Moni upsets Rani Hamid

SPORTS REPORTER

The Begum Laila Alam Women's FIDE Rating chess tournament got underway at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall-room yesterday.

Eleven players, Nazrana Khan Eva, Tanima Parveen, Shamima Akhter Liza, Zakia Sultana, Sharmin Sultana Shirin, Farzana Hossain Ana, Shamima Sharmin Shimmi, Sathi Majumder, Mahmuda Haq Chowdhury, Arifa Khatun Moni and Parveen won their first round boards to share the lead.

In the day's matches, Arifa Khatun Moni upset IWM Rani Hamid, Eva beat Mimi, Tanima defeated Titi, Zakia beat Tanu, Shirin beat Sahana, Anne beat Champa, Shimmi beat Nazma, Sathi beat Samaha and Moly beat Shilpi.

A total of 24 players, including one from Kolkata, are taking part in the seven-round Swiss League system competition.

# KL meet

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stick to a core group of players and not do too much chopping and changing.

The tournament, which also features India, will see the teams play each other twice before a final on 24 September. All seven games will be day-night affairs at the Kinrara Oval.

TEAMS

**AUSTRALIA (from):** Ricky Ponting (captain), Phil Jaques, Matthew Hayden, Simon Katich, Michael Hussey, Damien Martyn, Michael Clarke, Mark Cosgrove, Andrew Symonds, Shane Watson, Brad Haddin, Brett Lee, Brad Hogg, Daniel Cullen, Nathan Bracken, Stuart Clark, Glenn McGrath, Mitchell Johnson.

**WEST INDIES (from):** Brian Lara (captain), Ramnaresh Sarwan, Chris Gayle, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Runak Morton, Dwane Bravo, Dwayne Smith, Carlton Baugh, Corey Collymore, Fidel Edwards, Ian Bradshaw, Jerome Taylor, Marlon Samuels, Wavell Hinds.

# Tyson's perfect finish

**Athletics**

AFP, Stuttgart

American Tyson Gay made the most of the best conditions to put up the third best performance of all time in the men's 200m at the world athletics final here Sunday.

The 24-year-old clocked 19.68sec to place him behind world record holder Michael Johnson's 19.32 benchmark set at the Atlanta Olympics in 1996 and the 19.63 run by Xavier Carter in Lausanne in July.

"This was my last 200m of the season, what a superb way to finish," said the Kentucky-born Gay.

Namibian Frankie Fredericks, who took the title here in 1993 in the same time as Gay, was at the Gottlieb-Daimler stadium to witness the American match his time.

# Fabulous Federer

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"Roger is at the top," Roddick said. "He's the only person at the top regardless of how much people want to make rivalry comparisons. He's the best player in the game. There is no question in my mind or if you ask any player about that."

The Swiss giant ripped returns on serves and laced passing shots, forcing Roddick to make 23 unforced errors. He hammered 69 winners and was successful on 84 percent of his first serves.

Federer made it look easy in the opening set and appeared to be heading for another rout by jumping out to a 5-0 lead. He then lost two games before breaking Roddick for the third time in the set to win 6-2.

One of the keys for Federer was being able to blunt Roddick's normally overpowering serve.

Despite leading the tournament with aces, Roddick totalled just seven on Sunday, well below his average. He did not strike his second ace until the final game of the second set.

Roddick gets full marks for

"To run that time in front of Frankie is a privilege," said Gay. "He's someone I admire a great deal both as an athlete and as a man."

Gay's compatriot, Michelle Parry, took the women's 100m hurdles in 12.52 ahead of another American, Damu Cherry.

Sanya Richards, second in the 400m on Saturday, went one better to lift the 400m title in 49.25, more than a second clear of runner-up Novlene Williams of Jamaica.

"I'm really happy with my season in terms of the consistent results," she said.

Jamaican Sherone Simpson dominated the 100m in 10.89 and Russian Tatyana Lebedeva added the triple jump to the long jump title captured on Saturday.

Her fellow Russian Yelena Isinbayeva justified her favourite's tag in the pole vault but her winning

effort of 4.75m was a long way short of her world record jump of 5.