

Another worry Andrew

Cricket

AFP, London

England all-rounder Andrew Flintoff has admitted that he is unable to run three weeks before the start of the Ashes series in Australia.

Flintoff is currently trying to regain fitness following a double hernia operation and is due to fly out with the rest of the England squad on Thursday.

He hopes to be fit for the first Test at Brisbane's Gabba ground on November 7 but Flintoff told



ANDREW FLINTOFF

Wednesday's edition of the Sun newspaper: "There's no question that my recovery is taking longer than I had expected. I was hoping to be able to bowl flat out as soon as the team arrived in Australia."

"As it is, the operation was more than six weeks ago and I'm not yet able to run. The pounding of running would be too much at this stage."

Destination

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by amending NSC Act," said Rahman.

While talking with the Star Sport on Monday, Asghar also did not rule out the option of amending the Act and going with the democratic process.

"I have formed a constitution amendment committee. Let's see what they recommend. If the recommendation is for the Board of Director formation, we might request the NSC to amend the Act," he said.

Though both Rahman and Asghar appeared to be open for an amended, but many directors remained highly sceptic about their intention.

"I don't believe that they would retain the Board of Directors. If they wanted to do so, they would have not gone to the Court at the first place," said Board Director and former national cricketer Tanjeeb Ahsan Saad.

India seek

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The West Indies were thrashed 2-0 by Pakistan at Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates and 3-0 in Sri Lanka last year before losing the last Test against India.

TEAMS

INDIA (from): Saurav Ganguly (captain), Virender Sehwag, Sanjay Bangar, Rahul Dravid, Sachin Tendulkar, Venkatesh Laxman, Parthiv Patel, Anil Kumble, Harbhajan Singh, Ravagali Srinath, Zaheer Khan, Shiv Das, Ashish Nehra, Amit Mishra.

WEST INDIES (from): Carl Hooper (captain), Chris Gayle, Wavell Hinds, Ramnaresh Sarwan, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Darren Ganga, Ryan Hinds, Ridley Jacobs, Mahendra Nagamootoo, Pedro Collins, Mervyn Dillon, Cameron Cuffly, Jermaine Lawson, Marlon Samuels, Gareth Brees, Darren Powell.

Umpires: David Shepherd (England) and Asoka de Silva (Sri Lanka).

"I can row, cycle and swim, as well as do weights, and I've been working very hard on those things in the gym."

Flintoff is well aware of the problems of coming back too soon.

He said: "As a lad, I used to dream about playing in an Ashes series and the World Cup. We have both of them in the space of a few months - it is a massive winter."

"If I rush back, it could put me out for the whole Ashes series or even the World Cup."

"So I don't intend taking any risks. If necessary, I will aim to be fit for the second Test in Adelaide on November 21."

Flintoff played most of last season in growing pain from his hernia, with captain Nasser Hussain admitting England's use of the all-rounder while less than fully fit was "unprofessional".

Flintoff finally had an operation at the end of August following England's third Test defeat at Headingley where he collected a pair.

England's plan was that Flintoff would be fully recovered by the time the team flew out to Australia.

As it is he has added to England's list of injury concerns. Fast bowler Darren Gough (knee) has said that he might not be fit until the third Test while fellow quick Simon Jones has been suffering from a side strain since July.

And another of England's pacemen, Andrew Caddick, has suffered with knee trouble.

Top order batsmen Michael Vaughan and Mark Butcher have both been struggling with knee injuries although they are expected to be fit from the start of the tour.

Gujarat goes

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trained for event control were being brought in from Bombay, reinforcing 800 local police and commandos.

All cricket fans will go through metal detectors and screening machines and dogs will sniff for bombs, he said.

"We will not be allowing anyone to carry water, lunch boxes, radios or anything else into the stadium," Amin said, meaning hungry spectators will have to go to concession stalls. Water will be free.

Amin noted the security success of a recent nine-day Hindu festival in the state.

"More than 50,000 people came out to dance until midnight and it passed off peacefully, so why shouldn't we have cricket matches in the state?" he said.

India afraid

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of controversy. We have had it, so have the others."

Pakistan's celebrations were almost marred by the dramatic resignation of cricket board chief, General Tauqir Zia, earlier this week after Pakistan slumped to record lows of 59 and 53 to lose the second Test to Australia here inside two days.

Zia was, however, reinstated by Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf on Tuesday, a move that brought immense relief to the cricketers here.

"It's a great relief that General Zia is back," manager Nasir said.

"He is a man of great honour and accepted responsibility for the defeat, deflecting criticism from the young team onto himself."

"It is now time for the boys to prove their worth on the field. We are going to fight in the final Test which starts on Saturday."

"It (the heavy defeat in the second Test) has happened once, it will not happen again."



STEP ASIDE CINDY CRAWFORD, HERE COMES THE WILLIAMS! US tennis superstars Serena (L) and Venus Williams pose for photographers at Radio City Music Hall in New York on October 15. The sisters came to attend the 2002 VH1/Vogue Fashion Awards.

Fritz draws level

Chess

AFP, Manama

Deep Fritz, billed as the most powerful chess computer, beat world champion Vladimir Kramnik of Russia Tuesday to draw level in a million-dollar challenge here with just two games to go, organizers said.

Kramnik conceded he had been entirely outclassed by the "beautiful" play of his mechanical opponent in their sixth game.

"I am not so depressed -- the result is not positive, but the game was a pleasure," the world champion told a post-game press conference.

"There were some beautiful moves. I do not think that I made any real mistakes. I did the right thing from a human point of view. I enjoyed the game, it was so beautiful."

The Deep Fritz team said they felt vindicated by the result but had never doubted the strength of the programme they had created.

"Some people wrote Deep Fritz off after the first three games," said team member Frans Morsch.

"But we have learned by the first few games and found a way to really challenge Kramnik. We have always had confidence in our creation."

Glenn bowls

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very hard on those things in the gym."

With just three weeks to go until the first Test, Flintoff is aiming to make his comeback against Queensland on November 2 but he is conscious of the dangers of pushing too hard.

"As a lad I used to dream about playing in an Ashes series and the World Cup. We have both of them in the space of a few months," he said.

"If I rush back, it could put me out of the Ashes or even the World Cup. So I don't intend on taking any risks. If necessary, I'll aim to be fit for the second Test in Adelaide on November 21."

Hussain will be hoping that Flintoff can recover in time to be part of the first Test as fitness doubts remain over the side's leading fast bowler Darren Gough and pace prospect Simon Jones.

Barmy Army will be there

Chess

AFP, Sydney

Organisers of the Barmy Army, following England to Australia, are estimating 8,000 fans will back Nasser Hussain's team in January's fifth and final Ashes Test in Sydney.

Paul Burnham, who was there when the Barmy Army began in 1994/95 and now helps coordinate the movement, says it's the dream that England will one day win back the Ashes that drives English cricket supporters to make the long and expensive trip to Australia.

"The loyal fans dare not miss a trip Down Under in case the one time they stay at home is when England finally win the Ashes on Australian soil," Burnham said here on Wednesday.

"People are going on their second or third Ashes tour with the Barmy Army because, although they know we are massive underdogs, they want to be there just in case it is the one where we win."

"England will win in our lifetime and once you've been once and sat through five days of cricket and spent all that money, you want to be there for the good times."

Mike Gatting's 1986-87 tourists last won the Ashes in Australia. Burnham will spend more than 11,000 dollars (6,000 US) on his trip, but most fans will travel over for the two back-to-back legs of the tour, Adelaide-Perth and Melbourne-Sydney.

"It is a great way to get away for the winter and particularly after the Olympics people saw what a beautiful place Australia is, so people genuinely want to go over there," he said.

Johnson puts SA in control

AFP, Adelaide

An unbroken 241-run second wicket stand between Ben Johnson and Greg Blewett put South Australia in control in their Sheffield Shield cricket match against Victoria at Adelaide Oval on Wednesday.

SA held an overall lead of 264 runs with nine second innings wickets in hand and two days remaining to press for an outright win.

Victoria gained first innings points when they pushed their 94 for seven at the start of the day to overtake SA's first innings of 149 with 153.

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Safin shocked

Tennis

REUTERS, Madrid

Russian number three seed Marat Safin slumped to a 7-6, 7-6 second round defeat to Argentina's Agustín Calleri at the end of an eventful second day at the Madrid Masters on Tuesday.

Safin, still with work to do to qualify for the season-ending Masters Cup in Shanghai, lost the first set 8-6 on the decider but then

mounted a comeback in the second, moving a break ahead at 3-0.

Calleri, however, refused to buckle and broke back with a stunning backhand down the line to force a second tie-break.

He took that 7-5 as Safin, who broke his racket in frustration at one point in the second set, put a backhand long, bringing an end to the match in two hours seven minutes.

"I was playing well in the second set and I think I could have won it in a third but my chance went," Safin said.

"It's very disappointing."

Carlos Moya and Juan Carlos Ferrero had also been in trouble in their second-round matches but the

former world number one was hustled out 6-4, 6-4 by Thailand's Paradorn Srichaphan, who pinned the Brazilian back with his fizzing serve and accurate groundstrokes.

Kuerten, who underwent hip surgery earlier in the season, was playing the event on a wildcard after reaching the final in Lyon last week, but his comeback was stopped in its tracks by a sharper Paradorn.

"Kuerten was a bit slow moving around court but that may have been because I was moving him around a lot," said Paradorn, who goes on to face British number one Tim Henman in the second round.

"I should have won in that second set," Ferrero said. "The third set was hard but I never thought it was lost."

While Moya and Ferrero both needed every ounce of their strength and experience, Sebastian Grosjean was granted an easier passage through to the third round.

The Frenchman was leading Xavier Malisse 5-1 on number one court when the Belgian was forced to retire because of injury.

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Border whacks

Athletics

REUTERS, London

Runner Paula Radcliffe has been named one of Britain's women-of-the-year -- a day after she produced one of the greatest athletics feats of all time to smash the women's world marathon record.

Radcliffe was honoured at a lunch on Monday at London's Savoy Hotel in recognition of her consistent success throughout the year.

She ran a sensational London marathon in April, clocking the second fastest time ever, and then won the Commonwealth 5,000 metres title in Manchester and the European 10,000 metres in Munich this summer.

On Sunday she crowned her achievements by winning the Chicago marathon in a remarkable two hours, 17 minutes and 18 seconds, chopping one minute and 29 seconds off the previous world record.

"I feel tired physically," she said. "But the goal for this year was to qualify for the Masters, which is quite sure now, and to reach the top 10, so I have done that."

"I am still going very well mentally, so I am riding on a good trip right now and I hope for it to continue."

The 19-year-old reached the final of the grand prix in Filderstadt last Sunday, where she was defeated in three sets by Belgian Kim Clijsters.

But she displayed more of the skill and confidence that last week helped her move to a WTA ranking of nine as she coped with the slow Zurich courts to cruise past Husarova 7-6, 6-1.

Russian Anastasia Myskina also moved into the second round after a 6-4, 4-6, 6-2 battle with wildcard American Lisa Raymond.

Raymond's compatriot, qualifier Alexandra Stevenson, fared better when she cruised past Japanese Ai Sugiyama 6-3, 6-4 to set up a meeting with fifth seed Jelena Dokic.

"I have tried to forget about qualifying for the Masters and I feel that takes a lot of pressure off my shoulders," said Schnyder, who now has only a slim chance of making it into the high-profile competition.

"I am just trying to have fun and enjoy myself in front of the home crowd. I like to play here and if I play well the crowd helps me a lot."

Watched by Swiss favourite Martina Hingis, who was forced to pull out of the tournament last week through injury, Schnyder made full use of her range and power to overcome Chladkova.

She joins compatriot Marie Gaiane Mikaelian in the second round, where she will play third seed Amelie Mauresmo, who made it through on a bye.

Daniela Hantuchova, seventh seed for the tournament, beat qualifier Janette Husarova earlier in the day in an all-Slovakian first-round tie. Hantuchova has already qualified for the Masters.

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Schnyder sails

Tennis

REUTERS, Zurich

Patty Schnyder has overcome spirited Czech Denisa Chladkova 6-3, 6-2 to carry the home flag into the second round of the Swisscom challenge.

But after an impressive performance against the 23-year-old qualifier, Schnyder, 19th in the world, dismissed her chances of making it into the season-ending WTA Masters this year.

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