

Ice-fit Flintoff

Cricket

AFP, Manchester

Ice-baths are among the treatments England all-rounder Andrew Flintoff is using in order to maintain his fitness and ensure he remains a regular member of the side.

Lancashire pace bowler and hard-hitting batsman Flintoff has been identified as England's number five for one-day matches and played in that pivotal position during the two-wicket defeat by Pakistan at Old Trafford, his home ground, in the day-night opening match of a three-game series here Tuesday.

Encouragingly for England the 25-year-old also completed his full quota of 10 overs after a shoulder injury, which prevented him from bowling, saw him miss both Tests in the 2-0 series victory over Zimbabwe earlier this month.

Unlike Lancashire, who played him as a batsman only in county matches, England were unwilling to have Flintoff in their side unless he could bowl.

But having turned his arm over in a domestic trophy one-day quarter-final win over Middlesex, as well as England's one-day warm-up victory

over Wales, he was included at Old Trafford.

And Flintoff repaid the selectors' faith with an economical 10 over spell, which cost just 23 runs.

He was also England's top scorer with 39 and showed plenty of discipline with the bat before his lone rash stroke brought about his



ANDREW FLINTOFF

dismissal.

Afterwards Flintoff, who has been working with England fitness advisor Nigel Stockhill, admitted his bowling stint had taken a lot out of him.

"I was very tired after the

Pakistan game," he said.

"It's the first time I've really given it a good crack, I really ran in well and I felt physically and mentally tired - it was a very tough day."

"I'm going to have to bowl again in another three days and it's quite a demanding schedule and you do have to look after your body at times like this."

"We have Nigel with us to make sure we're doing the right things and we have ice baths after every game."

"We do that after every game now and we also have pool sessions to loosen off and maintenance stuff just to keep us going during busy periods like this."

"It's a lot of cricket, but there is time for rest in-between and time to get right for the next game."

England's one-day series against Pakistan continues at The Oval on Friday and concludes at Lord's on Sunday.

They are then involved in a triangular one-day series with South Africa and Zimbabwe which could see them playing as many as seven matches if they reach next month's Lord's final.

After that England take on South Africa in a five Test series before their domestic season finishes in September.

cricket chiefs would treat the county sympathetically.

"I don't think the other night will affect our status as an international venue," said Cumbe on Thursday. "We've worked hard on the way we organise our matches and believe we have made progress in that."

The series concludes at Lord's on Sunday.

Less tours

FROM PAGE 13

Bangladesh, is also facing a challenging time. The performance of Bangladesh at the international level has been disappointing."

Mani, in a speech to an ICC forum, said the world governing body would help with new training and development programmes in Bangladesh but added: "Over the next two years there may be a reduction in the amount of international cricket Bangladesh is playing, particularly outside Bangladesh."

Bangladesh have yet to win a Test and have not won a match of any kind against top-flight opposition since the 1999 World Cup, losing to Canada at this year's tournament in South Africa.

Akhtar wary

FROM PAGE 13

arose they all enjoyed it."

Bui Vaughan admitted his team faced a tough challenge in squaring the series.

"They have got a few exciting batters and in Shoaib Malik, an off-spinner who can turn it the other way. They have always got unorthodox talents."

"But we put them under huge pressure and they nearly faltered."

Pitches at The Oval tend to favour fast bowlers and Vaughan said Durham quick Stephen Harrison, who was not in the team at Old Trafford, could play on Friday.

"The pitches here tend to have a bit more bounce and that helps the fast bowlers. But top-class batsmen like it when the ball is coming on to them."

"The pitch at Old Trafford suited their style of bowling. Steve will definitely come to it here. We have not decided our team yet, but it's good to have the choice."

Asked if Tuesday night's narrow defeat, which saw jubilant Pakistan fans stage a mass pitch invasion, at the close, had been a good experience for his new-look side, Vaughan replied: "It would have been if we had won."

Colombia themselves seemed more interested in hacking down their opponents and their sole effort which came near to getting them on the scoresheet was a header from France skipper Desailly which sailed just over the bar - but as with the penalty the hosts got the referee's approval and no corner was given.

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Penalty relief for hosts

FROM PAGE 13

Pires for Olivier Kapo to add some much-needed flair up front on the hour mark.

Pires was seen to good effect almost immediately as he made a slide rule pass into the area for Wiltord, but his Arsenal team-mate was too slow to react and allowed Nantes defender Mario Yepes to tackle him and put it away for a corner.

However the rest of the team failed to raise themselves and Wiltord was booted by the frustrated crowd as he yet again failed to produce the killer pass for Henry - who flapped his hands in disgust.

Djibril Cisse rarely showed promise and was replaced with 15 minutes remaining by local hero Sidney Govou.

Coupet saved Lizarazu's blushes with seven minutes remaining as he blocked Becerra's scintillating run into the area.

Becerra exposed Lizarazu again a minute later as he tore him apart and his cross from the far side of the penalty area was barely headed away to safety by Lilian Thuram.

It was all Colombia and Gerardo Bedoya's excellent long pass found Desailly wanting again as Aristizabal

latched onto it but his shot took a deflection off Coupet's hand and away from the goal.

With two minutes remaining Velazquez again exposed Lizarazu sneaking in behind but his shot hit the bar and rebounded to safety while Coupet then produced another fine save to deny another Colombian attack.

The first half had been a turgid affair with France creating only one worthwhile chance on target in time added on as former Leeds midfielder Dacour's fierce shot from inside the penalty area hit the post and cannoned away to safety.

Both Cisse and Henry should have done better with free headers, Cisse in particular did not look a ready-made replacement for England striker Emile Heskey at Liverpool as unmarked and five yards out he put his effort well over the bar.

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