

Flintoff was no 'mistake'

AFP, Sydney

Andrew Flintoff was the right man to lead England in the failed Ashes series against Australia, chief selector David Graveney said here Sunday.

England were thrashed 5-0 by the Australians in the first Ashes whitewash in 86 years in the final Sydney Test last Friday.

Graveney said he had no regrets about making Flintoff captain as he confirmed Michael Vaughan would take over the captaincy for this month's triangular one-day series against Australia and New Zealand.

Coach Duncan Fletcher conceded Saturday that he had concerns before the series about the extra workload on England's star all-rounder.

"There's nothing that has happened in the last six weeks that would make me personally change my mind," Graveney told a press conference here Sunday.

"We've made a lot of mistakes, a lot of errors, but the appointment of the captain is not one of them."

"I take my hat off to him because it was a very difficult job for him to do, and he's done it as well as he possibly can."

Flintoff appeared burdened by the added responsibility, averaging 28 with the bat and taking 11 wickets at almost 44 runs apiece.

Flintoff was also criticised for his over-defensive field settings during the five-match series.

Although he said he wanted to carry on as captain, he has now been replaced by Vaughan, who returns to international cricket after a gap of more than a year following knee surgery.

Graveney said Flintoff had not been sacked and understood that he had merely "been keeping the seat warm" until Vaughan returned.

"He was fine because he understood that he was doing the job in Michael's absence. It was not a question of being sacked," Graveney said.

"He will be the same as everybody else, supporting the team. He's hurting the same way as everybody else is."

"Now we're looking forward to a fresh start."

England play Australia in a Twenty20 match here on Tuesday ahead of the opening match in the tri-series against the Australians in Melbourne next Friday.

Lloyd supports WC organisers

CRICINFO, undated

West Indies legend Clive Lloyd believes the Caribbean can host a successful World Cup given the organisers execute their plans effectively. Currently chairman of the West Indies Cricket Board's cricket committee and an ICC match referee, Lloyd summarised a six-part list of activities for the World Cup's think-tank.

"It was quite a proud moment for me when the International Cricket Council awarded the 2007 World Cup to the West Indies," Lloyd, 62, wrote in a guest article for the Economist.

"It is undoubtedly the biggest single event ever hosted in the Caribbean and, in my view, it is the best thing to have happened to the Caribbean community in general, and to West Indies cricket in particular."

"We (West Indies) will never get a second chance to make a first impression," he added.

"The journey to 2007 is well under way. It is extremely challenging, but it must be pursued purposefully and with all the creative energy. Failure is not an option for the West Indies in this exciting venture."

Among Lloyd's six-part agenda were high-tech stadiums, enough fully equipped hotel rooms, sufficient modes of transportation for tourists, top-class security, good medical facilities and a smooth customs and immigration process.

"The stakes are high," Lloyd said. "The short-term gain for a successful 2007 Cricket World Cup will be a massive financial windfall for the Caribbean. The long-term benefits for the region and for West Indies cricket are even greater."

The organisers have already faced a flap over a visa row regarding the introduction of special visa requirements between January and May. The World Cup kicks off on March 13 at Kingston.

Lampard treble

FROM PAGE 17

they allowed Lampard to gallop forward and crack a skidding shot into the bottom corner.

That restored order, and just after half-time Macclesfield's fading hopes were blown apart. Wright-Phillips set clear Shevchenko with a cute pass but the sprawling Lee, who was shown the inevitable red card by referee Lee Mason.

Paul Ince, the Macclesfield manager, had dangerously opted against naming a reserve goal-keeper among his substitutes, so it was left to Dave Morley, the captain, to don the green jersey. He was powerless to prevent Lampard completing his hat-trick from the penalty spot and Chelsea duly turned the screw.

Wright-Phillips clipped in Lampard's precise cross in the 66th minute, John Obi Mikel crunched in his first Chelsea goal with a glorious half-volley from the edge of the penalty area and finally Carvalho drilled in a deflected shot to leave Macclesfield beaten but not bowed.

Greg praises Sourav

Graeme glad at meaningful win

Cricket

AFP/BBC ONLINE, Cape Town

India coach Greg Chappell said some senior players could be under pressure following the team's defeat in the series-deciding third and final Test against South Africa at Newlands.

South Africa completed a come-from-behind 2-1 series victory on Saturday with a five-wicket win despite rain causing a delay of three hours 45 minutes before they reached their target of 211.

Chappell said India's batting had been disappointing.

He singled out the second innings collapse to 169 all out but also said the team had failed to capitalise fully on winning the toss when they made 414 in the first innings.

The Australian said some hard choices would have to be made.

"Looking at the tour as a whole there are more questions than answers," he said.

"In the next week or so when we get to India and have a chance to digest what happened and discuss it, we'll have to make some decisions about which way to go in the future. There will be some guys under pressure without a doubt."

Asked by an Indian journalist whether he thought a key aspect of the turnaround in the series had been that South Africa's senior players performed better than India's, he said: "It's hard to escape that there are things that will have to be discussed."

"The positive side is that some of the young boys performed very well. They showed guts and skill and good temperament for international cricket."

Chappell also said the pitch had not deteriorated as much as expected.

"It offered some targets for the spin bowlers but it really wasn't a minefield," he said.

Selectors turn to Mac

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Stuart MacGill is the standout choice to succeed Shane Warne in the Australian Test team, chairman of selectors Andrew Hilditch indicated Sunday.

MacGill's international future looked uncertain when he was overlooked for the fifth Ashes Test at the spin-friendly Sydney Cricket Ground, with suggestions he could be overtaken by the young generation of Australian spinners.

The leg-spinner's volatile temperament, including the suspension served at the start of this season for a clash with an umpire in a club match, also appeared to have harmed his chances of adding to his 40 Tests.

MacGill will be nearly 37 and won't have played a Test for 19 months when Australia plays their next Test, against Sri Lanka in November. But Hilditch said

"We regard Stuart very highly and to suggest his behaviour prevented him playing, there is no substance to that whatsoever," he said.

"The reason Stuart didn't play

was because we wanted to go with the three-pronged pace attack (Glenn McGrath, Brett Lee and Stuart Clark), which was really instrumental in us regaining the Ashes."

"England has a far better batting side than they showed and that's because of our bowling."

MacGill's cause is also likely to be aided by Hilditch's view that Australia's next group of spinners -- including Dan Cullen, Cullen Bailey and Cameron White -- all need time to develop.

MacGill has taken 198 Test wickets at an average of 27.21, but has struggled to string together regular appearances because his career coincided with Test cricket's leading wicket-taker Warne.

Hilditch said Australia was likely to stick with a frontline attack of three quicks and a spinner in the future, and would call on either Andrew Symonds or Shane Watson to bowl relief and bat in the top seven.

Yousin said Younis had the

best chance of regaining the Ashes.

Yousin's resignation is the latest controversy to hit Pakistan cricket, which was plagued by a series of scandals last year.

Pakistan forfeited a Test against England at The Oval -- the first in Test cricket's history -- on charges of ball tampering.

The Proteas swept the preceding one-day series 4-0 by big margins, also taking advantage of India's faltering batting, which failed to reach a tally of more than 200 runs once.

"The board is definitely concerned by the performance, but it will not interfere," Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) secretary Niranjan Shah told Reuters. "It is up to the selection committee to review things."

"But the selection committee should not go only by the history of some players," he added. "Consistent performance is important."

Indian media and experts have

joined Younis through to the close

on an opening day which couldn't

have gone any better for Pakistan.

At some point on Monday it'll be the

turn of the bowlers to find their

match form but they'll know that

sterner tests await from Pollock,

Ntini and Steyn in a few days time.

BRIEF SCORES

PAKISTAN: 401 for 3 (Hafeez 108

retired, Farhat 106 retired, Hameed

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