

Nixon stands by Flintoff

BBC ONLINE, undated

All-rounder Andrew Flintoff does not have a drink problem, says former England teammate Paul Nixon.

"I don't think (Flintoff's) got a drink problem," the wicketkeeper told BBC Radio 5 Live yesterday.

"I think the pressure of the Australia series -- Freddie's such a competitive guy and a passionate guy, he wants to win every game ferociously for England."

"I think that the hiding they got in the Ashes really affected him more than people realise."

And of the ex-England coach, Nixon added: "Duncan is a fair man, a very proud man."

"He's seen very differently with the press to how he is in the dressing room. Duncan takes things very, very personally because he's got his own standards."

Former England captain Graham Gooch told 5 Live: "Duncan Fletcher has written a book, and obviously it helps book sales, but when you're made captain of England and you have the highest honour in the game, you have to set the leadership standards."

Mamun lifts JPC TT singles title

SPORTS REPORTER

Syed Mamun of BSS clinched his maiden table tennis singles title in the Jatiya Press Club sports when he defeated Asif Iqbal of Janakathu in yesterday's final in straight sets.

Uttam Chakrabarty of Janakathu defeated Abdullah Al Faruq of Samakal also 3-0 to win the third place.

The doubles title went to Faisal Mokammel and Kazi Rawnak Hossain who beat Syed Mamun and Lutfar Rahman Binu 3-1 in the final.

The spade trump competition will begin today at 10.30am.

Siddons sees

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use him to the best of our abilities to improve our standard. The main objective is to see our team play better cricket," said a delighted Jamali.

Siddons was already prey to the huge interest cricket generates in the country as he faced reporters in his first visit at the board's management office.

And the smiling and energetic Australian did not disappoint, despite being afflicted with jet-leg.

Siddons seemed quite aware of the pressures of coaching in the sub-continent from his experience with the Australia team during their recent visit to India.

The weight of expectations from adoring fans and the huge media pressure left the Australian unflustered.

"Yeah I am quite aware about the keen interest people take in the game and it's really fantastic," he said.

Equaliser

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never gives up but also has fantastic quality."

The point was enough to send Arsenal back above Manchester United at the top of the table courtesy of their superior scoring record.

But Fabregas insisted they deserved more from the match after hitting the post twice in the second half.

"I'm disappointed because I hit the post and we go home disappointed because we deserved to get the three points," the Spanish midfielder said. "The good thing is we came back and showed character and played good football."

FIFA abandons

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South America, they all stood squarely behind Brazil and that was the only candidate put forward.

"I think there's a concern that when you do that you don't get the best possible outcome because you don't have candidates competing against one another."

With four continental bodies able to bid for 2018 (Asia, Oceania, Concacaf and Europe) Farquhar believes there will be a 2018 bid from Australia and is also anticipating one from England.

"Who knows, there is the prospect of the US or even Canada, Jamaica or Mexico coming forward from Concacaf," he said.

Poyet returns

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player after three years at White Hart Lane in 2004, has been an integral part of Leeds' unbeaten start to the season as the Yorkshire club look to challenge for promotion despite being hit by a 15-point deduction for financial irregularities.

Ramos will make his first public appearance since quitting Sevilla to take over from the sacked Martin Jol at a press conference on Tuesday.

Ramos had only a few words to say to his new players after he saw Blackburn come from behind to win 2-1 at White Hart Lane on Sunday, telling them: "The hard work starts tomorrow (Monday)."



SOME SHOPPING TOO: A Bangladesh under-17 team footballer walks past the Security Pass Section of the Zia International Airport yesterday. The youth team had a mixed bag in the AFC Championship qualifiers in the UAE, although they lost four of their five games.

Drink-practising

Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

Former England coach Duncan Fletcher has said a training session was cancelled because Andrew Flintoff was under the influence of alcohol.

The incident happened during last winter's Ashes tour to Australia where Flintoff was captain.

Fletcher told the Daily Mail: "You know the players do not let you down. Sadly Flintoff did."

"We arranged a fielding practice in Sydney. He turned up still under the influence of alcohol."

Flintoff's agent Neil Fairbrother refused to comment on the revelations and the 29-year-old England star has gone to the USA before starting his rehabilitation from an ankle operation in Holland earlier this month.

Fletcher added: "Flintoff was in such a state he could not throw properly. He had to pass the ball to the bloke next to him to do so."

"When it came to trying to catch the ball I honestly thought I was going to hurt him, so uncoordinated he was."

"I was fuming and stopped the practice early. Remember this was the England captain in this state. I had to calm down and think what to do."

Fletcher revealed he seriously considered dropping Flintoff but

eventually decided against it to avoid negative publicity.

But he said that Flintoff disappointed him with his World Cup drinking antics.

Flintoff fell off a pedalo and was one of six England players fined following a drinking session after England's defeat to New Zealand in St. Lucia.

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R's propel Real

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Xisco both having opportunities early in the second half.

However, the introduction of the inspirational Raul after 65 minutes galvanised Real.

Mid-week two-goal hero Robino hit the crossbar with 20 minutes to go before Raul finally gave the reigning Spanish champions the lead after 78 minutes, latching on to an inch-perfect pass by Jose Maria Gutierrez.

Deportivo endured further misery two minutes later when Sergio was sent off for his second yellow card and Robinho then got his first goal this season in the league right at the end of regulation time.

Barcelona kept up the pressure on Real with a 2-0 win over Almeria on Sunday to move up to second place, two points behind their bitter rivals.

Thierry Henry opened the scoring after 37 minutes but can consider himself little lucky to

have got his fourth goal of season.

Giovanni Dos Santos took the ball into the Almeria area only for their goalkeeper David Cobeno to smother the Mexican teenager's shot, but the ball spun loose to the feet of Henry who was presented with an open goal.

Lionel Messi then got Barca's second from the penalty spot nine minutes from time after Bruno Salter was controversially adjudged to have fouled Dos Santos.

"We created a lot of chances but we didn't finish them off well," reflected Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard. Real Zaragoza inflicted a 4-1 thrashing on Villarreal, who slipped back to third place.

Brazilian striker Ricardo Forlani opened the scoring after his fifth goal of the season after 36 minutes when he headed home an Alberto Zapater cross.

Oscar Serrano, Diego Milito and Sergio Garcia then put Zaragoza further ahead in the second half.

Despite leading the league, Inter coach Roberto Mancini is feeling the strain of an injury crisis and a loaded fixture calendar.

Having already lost Patrick Vieira in midweek they lost Dejan Stankovic against Palermo.

"This is getting to be a problem. We have too many games in quick succession and it is not easy when you only have a limited selection of players," said Mancini.

The win moved Roma up to second in the table, three points behind Inter, who were held to a 0-0 draw at Palermo, and one point above Juventus, who controversially lost 3-1 at Napoli on Saturday.

Parma eased the pressure on their boss Dominico Di Carlo with a thrilling 3-2 success over rock-bottom visitors Livorno, who finished the game with 10-men.

On Saturday, Juventus's flying start to the season came to a shuddering halt as two dubious second

before Robert Pires got a consolation goal for Villarreal nine minutes from time.

Sevilla showed that the sudden departure of Juanma Ramos, who resigned on Friday to take over at Premiership side Tottenham Hotspur, wasn't too much of a distraction as they beat Valencia 3-0.

Fredi Kanoute took advantage of some shocking defending to open the scoring after 10 minutes and further goals came late in the second half from Christian Poulsen, who had earlier had a goal disallowed for marginally being offside, and Luis Fabiano. Atletico Madrid beat winless bottom club Levante 1-0 to move up to fifth place.

Diego Forlani put Atletico ahead after 36 minutes but he will be thanking his team mate Kun Aguero for exquisite service after the Argentine striker chested down a long Ze Castro pass before cleverly laying the ball off for Forlani.

Elsewhere Lazio's poor form continued with a 1-0 defeat against Udinese, who move up to fifth while their hosts drop to 14th.

Parma eased the pressure on their boss Dominico Di Carlo with a thrilling 3-2 success over rock-bottom visitors Livorno, who finished the game with 10-men.

Juve were left fuming by the two spot-kicks that cost them a point.

First Giorgio Chiellini was adjudged to have brought down Ezequiel Lavezzi when his tackle looked clean and then Gianluigi Buffon was punished for bringing down Marcelo Zalayeta, who appeared to have dived.

Both times Domizzi sent Buffon the wrong way from 12 yards. Juve were outraged with David Trezeguet saying: "When these things happen, it is quite simply a scandal."

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Captain Tikolo takes Kenya home

APP, Nairobi

Captain Steve Tikolo's innings of 89 helped Kenya to stave off defeat in the third and final one-day international against Bermuda at the Nairobi Gymkhana club on Sunday.

"I've supported a lot of players but Andrew drank again at the World Cup after what had happened in Australia while I was taking a pasting," Fletcher continued.

"I don't regret making him captain."

"The problem was, in the absence of Michael Vaughan, there were so many unknowns."

"It's fascinating to wonder how good (Andrew) Strauss might have been as captain."

"But an inconsiderable is, how bad might Fred (Flintoff) have been with the whole drinking thing if he hadn't had the responsibility of the captaincy? And would he have taken Steve Harmison with him?"

The Zimbabwe-born coach is also hoping for a return to county cricket, having been in Glamorgan before taking up his post with England.

"I spent two years in county cricket and I'd like to do that again," he said.

"I think I have become a hell of a better coach since my time at Glamorgan and I know how to handle situations better."

"Having gained the experience I gained with England, it would be nice to go back and put into practice what I perceive to be missing in county cricket."

Earlier Bermuda had made a brisk start after winning the toss with openers Jekon Edness and Azrem Pitcher putting a 58-run partnership for the first wicket but fast-medium Kenyan pacer Alfred Luseno had other ideas.

Luseno put a stop to their acceleration when he removed four quick wickets including skipper Irving Romaine for a duck.

Left arm spinner Hiren Varaiya also weighed in with three wickets in his mean four overs.

Yousuf, who had scores of 53, 117, 58 and five in the series, soon followed as he edged Jean-Paul Duminy to wicketkeeper Mark Boucher. He hit five boundaries during his 88-ball knock.

With Younis and Yousuf gone in the space of four overs, the tourists sensed victory but captain Shoair Malik (23) and Misbahul Haq (19) took the total to 199 before Albie Morkel removed both to bring the tourists back into contention.

With just 35 runs needed in the last 10 overs Pakistan panicked, with Morkel removing Malik, while Ntini dismissed Haq to expose the tail.

Ntini also removed the dangerous Shahid Afridi (nine), out to an excellent catch at deep by AB de Villiers. Morkel then dismissed Sohail Tanveer, Rao Iftikhar and Shoair Akhtar -- all without scoring -- to win the match.

Pakistan captain Malik deplored the batting collapse.

"We could not finish the match which we dominated and it all boiled down to poor batting. A win would have been good for the Indian tour," said Malik of the forthcoming tour starting later this week.

Earlier, Akhtar, whose last one-day international was against England in September 2006, was

dismissed by Ntini for 14.

Scoreboard: (For nine wickets in 50 overs) 233

Total: (All out in 46.3 overs) 219

Fall of wickets: 1-22, 2-23, 3-149, 4-160, 5-199, 6-209, 7-209, 8-219, 9-219.

Bowler O M R W