

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 Janakatha in yesterday's final in straight sets.

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

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

The spade trump competition will begin today at 10.30am.

Siddons sees

FROM PAGE 17 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 its really fantastic," he said.

Equaliser

FROM PAGE 20 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

FROM PAGE 20 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.

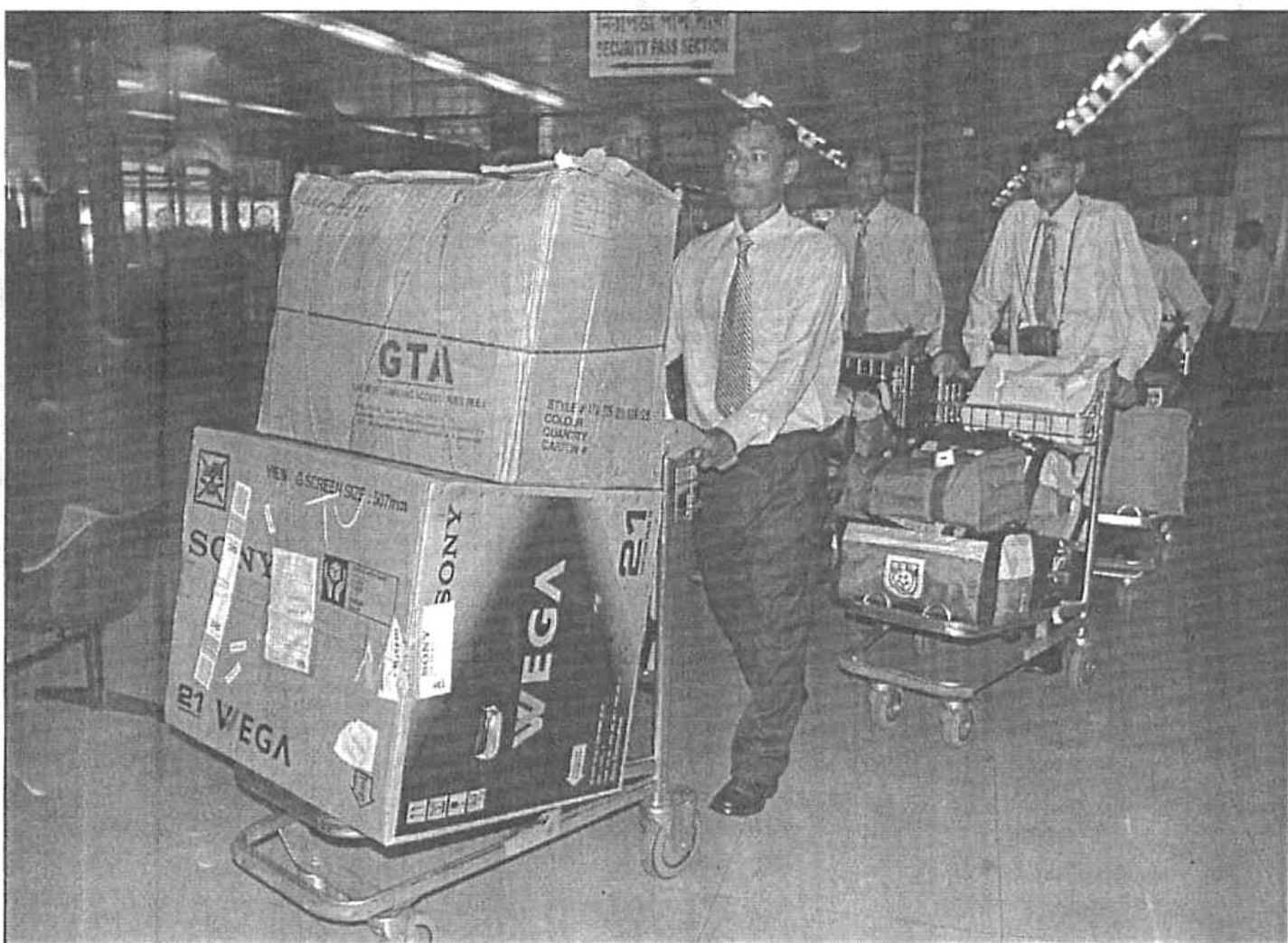
"Who knows, there is the prospect of the US or even Canada, Jamaica or Mexico coming forward from Concacaf," he said.

Poyet returns

FROM PAGE 20 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

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 just hope 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 was he."

"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.



ANDREW FLINTOFF

The all-rounder had also been warned as to his future conduct during the Ashes defeat when he was England captain.

"I supported Andrew but he let me down in an area that he had real control over," he said.

He was sacked as England vice-captain at the World Cup and banned for a game after the pedalo incident following the six-wicket defeat to

New Zealand.

England then failed to progress beyond the Super Eights stage at the World Cup in the West Indies, prompting Fletcher to resign.

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

The Zimbabwe-born coach is also hoping for a return to county cricket, having been at 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."

Captain Tikolo takes Kenya home

APP, Nairobi

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

The veteran skipper held the side together and helped Kenya to win by one wicket after the Bermudian bowlers Rodney Trott and Dwayne Leverock had threatened to take the game away.

The two bowlers tore through the Kenyan middle order that had triggered a major collapse with the 20-year-old Trott helping himself to four wickets for 46.

Despite the little support from his partners, Tikolo who has struggled with the bat since early 2006, played with determination for his 81-ball knock which included seven fours and a six.

Earlier Bermuda had made a brisk start after winning the toss with openers Jekon Edness and Azzem 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 over spell.

Murali shines

FROM PAGE 17 15 and Michael Vandort pushed a return catch for 14.

The Sri Lankans next play Queensland in a three-day game in Brisbane starting on Friday.

BRIEFSCORES

SRI LANKA: First innings 368 for 6 declared (Jayasuriya 154, Samaraweera 71, Atapattu 56, Vandort 55; Heal 3-50, Bollinger 3-68) and second innings 125 for 3 (Jayawardene 52, Samaraweera 41; Lewis 2-17)

CHAMPA: First innings 409 all out (Plant 124, Mash 95, Heal 58, Hughes 49; Muralidaran 4-122, Fernando 2-71, Maharoof 2-98) Result: Match drawn.

Hard work

FROM PAGE 20 with a reflex tip over of Dimitar Berbatov's close-range header after Keane had picked out his strike partner and the American had to be brave to collect the ball at the Irishman's feet when he raced after another through-ball.

A draw seemed inevitable until Samba, the giant centre back, let fly after Santa Cruz had laid the ball back to him on the edge of the box. His aim was true and it flew past the startled Radek Cerny to win the game for Mark Hughes's side.

Hughes was delighted as his side tasted victory for the sixth time in a row and for the fourth successive Premier League game.

He said: "It's the first time I have beaten Tottenham in my time as manager. We are really positive about the form we are in at the moment."

Allen may have stepped down as caretaker manager but the former Spurs striker hopes to remain part of the new regime.

He said: "I will report for work in the morning. I am passionate about the work I am doing and obviously I want to go forward with the football club."

Yet Jayawardene happy

Cricket

CRICINFO, Adelaide

Sri Lanka arrived in Adelaide less than a week ago promising aggression and focus as they bid for their first Test win on Australian soil. On the day they landed, their captain Mahela Jayawardene made it clear that to compete against Australia in any form they must be on the ball for at least four days of the five.

In the first warm-up match against the Chairman's XI in Adelaide, they could not even concentrate for four sessions as their fielding fell apart over the last two of the three days. Five catches were dropped, with Jayawardene culpable in two instances -- missing sitters at second and leg slip. He admitted that it was a "bad habit" the players must shake off, but was keen to downplay the fielding and happy to put it behind them.

"It was just a lack of concentration," Jayawardene said after the game ended in a draw. "We've had a long chat about it yesterday and today as well. The guys concentrate a lot on the batting and the bowling

but it's just on the field it seems to not have the same kind of concentration which is a bad habit obviously. We just need to make sure we don't get into these kind of things, especially when playing Australia."

He was candid, too, about his batting performance which involved a first-innings duck and a fair fifty, with both innings ending in the softest of dismissals, popping up on the off side. "The first innings was a shambles the way I got out. I just wanted to spend some time out there in the middle. The way I was hitting the ball, that was pretty good, but towards the end I was just trying to do a few too many things."

And he took away some positives -- "The way Sanath (Jayasuriya) played and the way we handled the conditions. A bit of a tough start, losing a bowler (Chanaka Welegedera) early wasn't the best thing because we didn't want to tax a lot of guys as well, we just wanted to get them into a rhythm."

The biggest plus was Muttiah Muralidaran who took four wickets. Jayawardene confirmed Murali was "100 per cent" and would be

rested for the warm-up. Mahela Bandara will come in to replace him for the tour match in Queensland. "He bowled pretty well, I was very happy with that -- all in all it was a good outing for us."

That may be, but Kumar Sangakkara was injured in the process -- tearing his left hamstring while batting. Chanaka Welegedera also tore his right quadriceps muscle and will have a replacement -- Sujeewa de Silva -- flown in for him, hopefully in time for the next tour match which begins on Friday.

De Silva, who played in the last Test series against Bangladesh in July, is currently in Zimbabwe with the Ashes.

Mahela Jayawardene, Sri Lanka's captain, said: "We are trying to fly out another quickie. If he (de Silva) arrives in time he will probably play in that (the warm-up game). He's been playing some good cricket."

Prasanna Jayawardene will come in to deputise for Sangakkara with the gloves. Jayawardene kept well in Sangakkara's absence in Adelaide, with a few tidy catches, but did not bat.

I am surprised: Rajput

Dravid won't comment on omission

Cricket

PTI, undated

Rahul Dravid's omission from the Indian squad for the first two one-dayers against Pakistan in the forthcoming five-match rubber has come as a surprise to the team's cricket manager Lalchand Rajput.

"Let's put it this way. I am surprised at his omission. He's such a class player, a virtual wall against the opposition. We will definitely miss him," Rajput told PTI on Monday.

Rajput was non-committal when asked whether he would have opposed the five-man selection panel's decision to drop the former Indian captain from the team for the ODIs at Guwahati (November 5) and Mohali (November 8).

"I was not invited for the meeting of the selection committee and I can't comment on it," he pointed out.

Rajput, who was named cricket

manager for the team by the Board of Control for Cricket in India after the selection of the squad for the first two ODIs, was present at Ahmedabad as coach of the Indian Reds outfit when the selectors met there on October 27.

The former India and Mumbai opener said he had not had a chance to talk to the selectors after the team had been picked.

"I haven't had a chance to talk to them. Let's see," he said.

Rajput was en route to Delhi to attend the felicitation function for the victorious World Twenty20 Championship winning team by President Pratibha Patil today.

He was the team's cricket manager when it beat the odds and emerged triumphant in the inaugural edition of the event in South Africa last month.

And after being dropped from the team, Dravid on Sunday declined to make any comment on his omission.

"It's a long season ahead of us," was Dravid's reaction while leaving the city after flagging off the

Delhi Half Marathon here.

Dravid, who was the centre of attention at the marathon here, tried his best to avoid the mediagen as he did not want to speak anything on his much talked-about axing from the national squad.

The 34-year-old flagged off the Great Delhi Run and cheered nearly 20,000 participants by waving at them. His presence ended up creating a halt as the participants stopped to have a look at the revered cricketer. Ultimately the organisers stepped in and urged the runners to start the race.

The former skipper, however, was in no mood to entertain the waiting media and successfully managed to keep the hacks at bay, on one occasion by literally sprinting off the flag-off of the Wheelchair Run.

The waiting scribes, clamouring to get a bite or two on Dravid's ouster from the Indian ODI team, had to beat a retreat as the former captain chose to keep mum.

SA win as Pakistan choke

FROM PAGE 17 having Nazir caught behind in the fourth over before bowling Akmal in the eighth.

Younis hit seven boundaries during his 65-ball knock before holing out to deep square-leg off Shaun Pollock.

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 Shoaib 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 Shoaib 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

ably supported by fellow paceman Rao Iftikhar (3-45) in South Africa's innings.

Jacques Kallis topscored with 86, with Herschelle Gibbs (54) and Duminy (44) also chipping in with useful contributions.

Akhtar missed the earlier two Tests and first four one-dayers as part of a 13-match ban for disciplinary lapses, including hitting teammate Mohammad Asif with a bat ahead of the Twenty20 world championship last month.

He bowled South African captain Smith with the third legitimate delivery of the innings for nought and could have had Kallis for two had wicket-keeper Kamran Akmal not dropped a simple catch.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the fifth and final one-day international between Pakistan and South Africa at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on Monday:

SOUTH AFRICA
Gibbs b Iftikhar 54
Smith b Akhtar 0
Kallis c Malik b Akhtar 86
De Villiers c Nazir b Malik 17
Duminy c Akmal b Iftikhar 44
Boucher c Malik b Akhtar 5
Pollock c Tanveer b Iftikhar 2
Morkel b Akhtar 5
Botha b Tanveer 0
Nel not out 3
Ntini not out 3
Extras: (lb-4, nb-4, w-6) 14
Total: (For nine wkts in 50 overs) 233

Fall of wickets: 1-22, 2-43, 3-149, 4-160, 5-199, 6-209, 7-209, 8-219, 9-219.

Bowler O M R W
Pollock 9 0 34 1
Ntini 9 0 61 4
Nel 10 1 32 0
Morkel 8.3 0 44 4
Kallis 3 0 15 0
Botha 6 0 25 0
Duminy 1 0 6 1

Result: South Africa won by 14 runs and clinched the ODI series 3-2.

Man-of-the-match: Makhaya Ntini.

Man-of-the-ODI-Series: Mohammad Yousuf.

Man-of-the-Both-Series: Jacques Kallis.

Toss: South Africa
Umpires: Billy Bowden (NZL) and Nadeem Ghauri (PAK)

TV Umpire: Zamir Haider (PAK)
Match Referee: Alan Hurst (AUS)

Rajshahi stay atop

FROM PAGE 17 The left-hander scored an unusually potent 81 off 166 balls to repair the damage, sharing 98 runs with fellow Tiger Nazimuddin (56 off 197 balls).

Tamim was bowled by left-arm spinner and man-of-the-match Shakib Al Hasan, but Chittagong further frustrated Habibul Bashar's side when Nazimuddin and Faisal Hossain (48 off 72 balls) put on 79 runs for the fourth wicket.

At this point of the game, national pace duo Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Syed Rasel threw Khulna a lifeline, removing the two set batsmen and Dhiman Ghosh on the same score of 228.

However, skipper Ehsanul Haque (13 off 48 balls) and Ashiqur Rahman (5 not out off 50 balls) survived the next 14 overs before

Khulna struck again.

It was Mashrafe, bowling off-spinners due to inadequate light towards the flag end, who trapped Ehsanul lbw but that came too late as the home side got just four more overs to bowl without success.

SCORES IN BRIEF

RAJSHAHI: 301 and 9-2 in 2.5 overs (Jahirul 5, Rabul 1*, Rafiqul 0, Naeem 1*, Talha 1-3, Sajidul 1-4)

BARISAL: 87 and 222.

Result: Rajshahi won by 8 wickets

KHULNA: 410 and 204

CHITTAGONG: 248 and 252-7 in 103 overs (Nafees 27, Tamim 81, Salahuddin 0, Nazimuddin 56, Faisal 48, Ehsanul 13, Dhiman 0, Ashique 5*, Tareq 2*, Mashrafe 2-67, Rasel 2-59, Ziaur 2-20, Shakib 1-32).

Result: Match drawn

BFF may

FROM PAGE 17 "So it would be wise to ask him about a direction for our future course. We will take our decision in our next meeting," added Mahu.

However, one thing the BFF must sort out is how to build good relations with the Indian and the senior players as veterans Nazrul, Matlur Munna and Titu have already deserted camp under Nayeem.

When Nayeemuddin led India to regain the SAFF Championship in 2005 in Pakistan, former India legend PK Banerjee was sent as manager-cum-troubleshotter.

The Indian players also did not want to join the camps when he was coach as Nayeem used to train them like military, leading the booters to show excuses to run away from camp.

The Bangladesh team, which lost 6-1 on aggregate to Tajikistan to bow out of the 2010 World Cup pre-qualifiers, will return home today.