

Another delay for Flintoff

AFP, London

Andrew Flintoff is set to miss England's forthcoming one-day series against New Zealand as he continues his recovery from a side strain.

England will announce their squad for the series on Friday, ahead of one Twenty20 international and five one-day internationals starting at Old Trafford on June 13.

They were hoping to include the 30-year-old in their plans after he was ruled out of the Test series against New Zealand with the side strain.

But Flintoff admitted he is only halfway through a six-week recovery programme which would effectively rule him out for the whole of the one-dayers.

"I don't know the exact dates of the one-day series but I've still got a few weeks before I'm fit so I'm not sure what the chances are of me being fit for that. I saw Geoff Miller and Peter Moores last week and they're not going to rush me back," Flintoff said.

"I've not got a fixed date yet on when I can play and I think I'll know more once I start doing more running and then get back into the cricket again."

"These things have a history of taking six weeks and it will be three weeks on Thursday since I did it."

Flintoff could still be fit for the opening Test against South Africa at Lord's starting on July 11, which could be his first Test appearance for 18 months.

Mumbai end

FROM PAGE 17

MUMBAI INDIANS: 126 for 1 in 16 overs (Jayasuriya 54, Tendulkar 40 not out, Uthappa 18 not out; Steyn 1-14)

Result: Mumbai Indians won by 9 wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Dilhara Fernando.

Umpires: BF Bowden (New Zealand) and SL Shastri. **Toss:** Mumbai Indians

Rain drowns

FROM PAGE 17

Winners of 2003 and losing finalists in 1999 and 2005 SAFF Football Championship, Bangladesh are pitted in a group with Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan in the fifth edition of the June 3-14 biennial South Asian football meet.

Five finds of Indian Premier League

KUMAR SANGAKKARA

Shaun Marsh has been the most consistent batsman in the tournament; he keeps scoring runs and batting for long periods of time. There is no element of slogging in his game. He hits the ball on his merit and he hits it in areas of his strength.

I am a great believer in keeping one's shape. It's when one loses his shape that he starts slogging. Take Rohit Sharma, for example. He plays genuine cricketing shots, and Marshy is much the same, just a lot more consistent. Every single ball that is bowled at him, he treats with respect, but not too much -- just enough, and then he starts to dominate the attack.

His technique is simple and that is his greatest advantage. There is very little that can go wrong with his cricket. He plays straight, to his

Win masks problems

Cricket

MICHAEL ATHERTON

The little things that happen in the middle of a Test match are often the most telling. Two hours before the start of the third day's play at Old Trafford, Peter Moores, the head coach, held a long and animated discussion with his top six batsmen on the England team balcony. Once England had proved the validity of such a mid-innings debate by being bowled out cheaply, Daniel Vettori then had a protracted powwow with his team out in the middle, outlining the tactics for New Zealand's second innings.

There is a good chance that Vettori and Moores were asking their teams to do opposite things. We know what Vettori was saying because a roving camera microphone picked it up. But long, he emphasised, get a lead of more than 350 and England will be out of the game. We do not know what Moores said because, as yet, Big Brother does not exist in the England dressing-room. At a guess, I would say that he was discussing England's pedestrian batting on the second day and their lack of urgency in general. Vettori was asking for time and composure at the crease; Moores, in all probability, for tempo.

Up until the final day of play, when they at last found their stride, England have been outscored at every opportunity by New Zealand in this home-and-away set of matches. Even in Napier and Wellington, matches that England won in the winter, and at Lord's last week, in conditions more familiar to England, New Zealand's run-rate was comfortably superior. (At Old Trafford, in the first innings, England scored at 2.58 per over, New Zealand at 4.21.)

This presents two problems. One, it gives England less time to bowl out the opposition; two, and just as importantly, it is a good barometer of the balance of power between the teams.

England have won three games to their opponents' one in this six-match series, but much of it can be put down to New Zealand's inexperience at clutch moments. For long periods, as the run-rates suggest, they have more than matched England. Against better teams, the likes of which are shortly to arrive on these shores, such an imbalance in run-rates is a short-cut to defeat.

Whatever was said to the teams clearly had little effect. England lost six wickets for 50 before lunch, and New Zealand were routed for 114. It is not that whatever was said proved to be so ineffective, but that such lengthy discussions were deemed necessary in the first place, that is so significant. Clearly, these are two batting line-ups that are still finding their way.

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Suresh Raina of the Chennai Super Kings shows off the man-of-the-match's crest during the post-match presentation ceremony after his side's Indian Premier League encounter against Deccan Chargers at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Hyderabad on Tuesday.

Yusuf Pathan as a batsman has been a huge plus for Rajasthan. I have seen him come in to bat in difficult situations and easy ones, but the great thing is he has no fear -- he is confident enough to play his game at all times.

He is comfortable against both pace and spin, and even against the short ball. He is so quick in picking up line and length that he can exploit the pace of the bowler and use it to his advantage. I have seen him play the most amazing shots over midwicket, straight, and over cover. Like Watson, he is a versatile batsman. Like Watson, he has the ability to bat at any position, and come in and convert most situations into winning ones for his team.

Yusuf comes from a cricketing family. Irfan, his brother, plays for our side. Both of them are immensely talented: Irfan is the

'IPL must count'

CRICINFO, undated

cricket in India. The panic that ran through their batsmen as Monty Panesar found his groove was unsurprising. They are callow and inexperienced and probably need as much guidance as they can get from Vettori and John Bracewell, their coach. For England, though, this is worrying. The top six have been together for what seems like an eternity and have scored more than 60 Test hundreds between them. They are all hardened, experienced international players who should be at the peak of their powers.

Moores gave a bullish press conference on Tuesday during which he gave a powerful endorsement of Paul Collingwood, in particular, and his batting qualities. He gave the clearest indication that there would be no changes for Trent Bridge. Fair enough, England are winning and consistency breeds confidence. There is no problem with the personnel as such. They are, as they are fond of telling us, all top-class players.

If England continue to forget those static ways, Moores will find, as Steve McLaren did not so long ago with Frank Lampard and Steven Gerrard, that the best players do not always make the best.

(Former England captain Michael Atherton wrote this article for Times Online website)

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It is the right tempo, then, that England must search for as they move forward and the right balance between those who offer, as Andrew Strauss does, calm and measured play, and those who can produce something more dynamic. That they can do it was more than proved in the second innings at Old Trafford, when urgent running, allied to a change of approach from Michael Vaughan and Kevin Pietersen, brought a change in fortune.

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