

Flower stands by Pietersen

CRICINFO, undated

Andy Flower, the England coach, has defended Kevin Pietersen for his shot selection in Cardiff, and insisted the batsman would review his own performance and learn from the experience. Flower's defence came after Geoff Boycott had accused Pietersen of acting like a "spoilt child" for giving away his innings with an over-ambitious paddle-sweep when well set on 69 in the first innings.

"Pietersen is like a spoilt child, the family favourite who can get away with anything because he is the golden boy," Boycott wrote in the Daily Telegraph. "Until someone takes the trouble to discipline him he will keep making the same stupid mistakes over and over again."

"I don't think you can just isolate him, even though he's the most high-profile guy," Flower said. "He, like any batsman, will review his game and the decisions he made, and he'll regret that he got out. He's playing for England, he's very proud to play for England, and he's trying to do his best and win games for us."

"He'll review that like any other sensible man would. The bottom line is you've got to make good decisions as batters. At the end of your career, season, or series, the sum of your results will be from the decisions you make. But Kevin must have made some good decisions, because he made 69 in the first dig."

Boycott, however, was not confident that Flower and England's captain Andrew Strauss were capable of reprimanding Pietersen. "My concern is that there is no one in the England set up who will go up to Pietersen and tell him that this is not good enough," he said. "Andrew Strauss and Andy Flower are both quiet men and frankly I do not think they have got the courage."

England held on to a draw in the Test after the last-wicket pair of James Anderson and Monty Panesar batted out close to 12 overs to save the game. Boycott questioned England's ability to adapt to different match situations. "The trouble with England's batsmen is that they are one-dimensional. They only want to play with an attacking mentality, and when they are presented with a situation that demands a different approach, they cannot adapt."

Flower, however, believed the fight England showed on the final day of that contest was evidence they had changed their mindsets mid-match. "It was a relief, they outplayed us, but in saying that I thought we did brilliantly to hang on," he said. "To only lose seven wickets on that fifth-day pitch was a great effort. We'll take a bit of confidence from the fight we showed."

"We obviously talk about, and review, games, that's standard practice, and there are all sorts of areas we could improve on," he said. "Certainly, batting-wise, didn't cash in when we had the opportunities, and bowling-wise we weren't accurate enough to put them under pressure. But it was a flat deck and they all batted superbly."

Flintoff

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"I think with Fred [Flintoff] and his injury record we are always concerned to be honest, because his body is in that sort of state at this time in his career when he seems vulnerable a lot of the time."

"We can't get away from that. But he is a hell of a player and want him in our side when he's fit."

"Looking ahead, he said: 'We've got to talk through the options and we've done that already. Frustrating or not, that's how it is. There's no point getting too het up about it.'

England have added fast bowler Stephen Harmison to their squad, ostensibly as cover for Flintoff, although Ian Bell could come in it is the batting that the selectors decide needs strengthening.

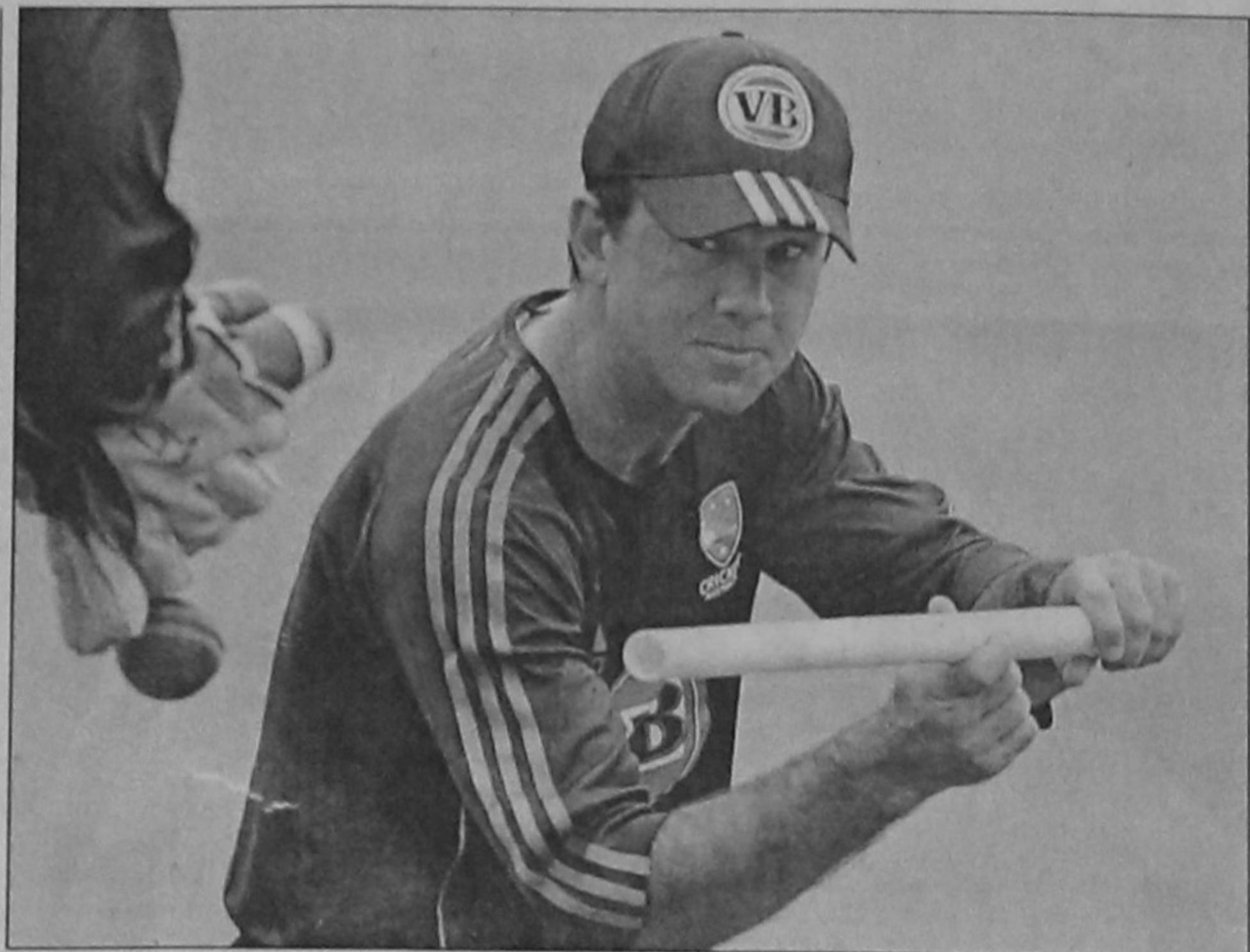
Whatever line-up England do settle on, history is against them. Australia have not lost a Test at Lord's since 1934.

Becks makes

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"Obviously Milan expressed that they want me to go back so I don't see any reason why that would change," Beckham said. "We'll have to wait and see. I hope to be going back there."

The Galaxy, on a three-match win streak, has a record of 5-3 with nine drawn for fifth in the Western Conference and hope that Beckham's return can help the team reach the playoffs after missing out the past three seasons.



Australia captain Ricky Ponting plays a shot using a wicket during a training session at Lord's yesterday, ahead of the second Ashes Test against England starting tomorrow.

Nasser didn't like it too

Cricket

AFP, London

Former England captain Nasser Hussain on Tuesday attacked the team's time wasting tactics during the first Ashes Test against Australia as "amateur and embarrassing to watch".

Hussain said he supported subtle attempts at time wasting in order to win, but the blatant tactics used by Andrew Strauss's team bordered on the ridiculous and were bad for the sport.

"It wasn't a street wise move at all, it was village green stuff. It was amateur and embarrassing to watch," Hussain said, in his column in London's Daily Mail newspaper.

"And it was bad for the game -- more like diving to win a penalty than delaying a throw in," he continued.

Australia captain Ricky Ponting slammed England for a lack of sportsmanship after the controversial conclusion in Cardiff to the dramatic drawn first Test.

Ashes-holders Australia were poised to go 1-0 up in the five-Test series before England's last-wicket duo of James Anderson and Monty

Panesar held out for the final 40 minutes to salvage an unlikely draw.

But twice during the 10th wicket pair's 69-ball stand, England's 12th man ran onto the field to offer Anderson batting gloves while a physio was eventually ordered off by the umpires after making it to the middle on the second occasion.

Hussain, England captain between 1999 and 2003, said time wasting was an "everyday fact of life" and he supported "whatever it takes to win or save a high-stakes match".

But he said the England team needed to smarten up and not use tactics "that makes them or their sport look silly."

"Watching the 12th man run on with gloves, followed by a physio who wasn't needed because no-one was injured, looked terrible and it didn't even waste much time," he said.

"It didn't spoil a classic Test match but it did lead to a slightly farcical finish, which was a shame."

"If I were Ponting, I would have been angry too, and would have told the physio to get off. In those situations England have got to be smarter."

The second Test starts at Lord's on Thursday.

'Give this team time'

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Younus Khan has responded to Pakistan's first Test series defeat in Sri Lanka by pleading for more time to rebuild the team after "very little cricket over the last 18 months". Speaking after a game in which Pakistan's batting collapses tilted the balance towards Sri Lanka, Younus said he didn't want to put blame on any individual -- the team was lacking by just 20%, failing to stay focused throughout the games and while facing pressure situations.

"It's very easy right now to write this team off," he said, "But how many Tests have we played in the last 14 months? For one full year we didn't play at all. As and when we start playing more regularly, we will learn to adapt. I think it's not about the technique, not about the bowling, not about the weather."

"Give this team some time, don't point fingers too early. It will be very easy for me to blame particular players, even myself. But the reality is, we haven't been playing any Test cricket. It's very easy for me to give up, to say I can't captain this team. But somebody will have to stand up and fix the situation."

Before the start of the series, Younus had said that being undercooked should not be an excuse for international teams. But three heart-breaking collapses later, Younus said it was time to analyse the situation, and that he concluded thus not as Pakistan captain but as an analyst. "Out of the four matches we have played, one was stopped midway, one we drew, and lost two," he said. "And that too it felt like we were not beaten, we lost them ourselves. So I am not

looking for excuses but for reasons. And this is one of the major reasons."

The irony of the situation, though, is that it was not the youngsters, the debutants, who let the team down. It was the experienced pros who failed all three times to arrest the collapses. Younus saw that as one of the positives from the series. "This team is in a rebuilding phase," he said. "We had three debutants in the last match, and one in this. But if Saeed Ajmal is putting up a fight, if Abdur Rauf is putting up a fight, if Fawad Alam is putting up a fight, if Mohammad Aslam is putting up a fight, that gives me some solace. I will have to give them some time. So too the media and the fans."

Younus reiterated that the problem came from not finishing matches. "There is only 20% that we are lacking. If we play to our potential -- everybody knows about us -- we will start winning. It is all about concentration and how to adapt to conditions."

Over six and a bit days, Pakistan have had three disastrous sessions, while the other sessions have been full of heartening performances from their youngsters. Their bowling attack looks in good health, especially with an impending comeback of Mohammad Asif, and Ajmal and Danish Kaneria fighting for the spinner's slot. Yet they have lost the series, which can be a very demoralising experience.

Younus, though, wants to look ahead immediately, to the next Test. "What can I do? I can only ask them to focus for longer durations. After Tests we have to play one-dayers too. It will be very difficult if we go 2-0 down or 3-0 down. If we push more, keep pushing, we can win the last Test, which should give us a lot of motivation before the one-dayers. And if we can win both, we will get some satisfaction at least."

Historic win for Lanka

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what you can do if you have heart and are willing to bend your back."

Pakistan's Younus, whose team defeated Sri Lanka in the World Twenty20 final in England last month, lamented the frequent batting collapses in the series.

"It's happened to us three times in this series and that can't be a match," he said. "It's mainly due to the fact that we do not play enough Test cricket these days."

"But I must complement Fawad for an outstanding display. He has batted in the middle order all his life, but he did not hesitate to open the innings when I suggested that to him."

"We fought hard in both Tests but I think we fell short by 100 runs here. I am confident we will put up a good show in the third Test."

Younus himself had triggered the collapse just before lunch when he gifted his wicket, top-edging an ambitious reverse sweep off part-time spinner Tharanga Paranavitana to the wicketkeeper.

Sangakkara's gamble to hand the new ball to spinner Kulasekara, man of the match at Galle, paid off handsomely as he trapped Mohammad

Paranavitana leg-before with his second delivery.

The third and final Test starts at the Sinhalese sports club on July 20.

SCOREBOARD

Final scoreboard on the third day of the second Test between Sri Lanka and Pakistan at the P Sara Oval in Colombo on Tuesday:

PAKISTAN: First innings 90 (Malik 39 not out, Kulasekara 4-21, Mendis 3-20)

SRI LANKA: First innings 240 (Sangakkara 87; Gul 4-43, Ajmal 4-87)

PAKISTAN: Second innings (overnight 178-1)

Result: Sri Lanka won by seven wickets and lead the 3-Test series 2-0.

Toss: Pakistan.

Umpires: Simon Taufel and Daryl Harper.

Men-of-the-match: Fawad Alam and Nuwan Kulasekara.

No sign

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The beneficiary of the impasse has been the visiting Bangladesh side which completed a 95-run victory in the opening Test to take a 1-0 lead in a two-Test series and now harbours dreams of a maiden Test series victory entering the second Test starting on Friday in Grenada.

Teletalk cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Khagrachari

The final match of first Teletalk cricket tournament will be held at the Khagrachari government high school ground today.

Khabongpuri Samobai Samity meet Victoria Club in the final.

Local lawmaker Zatindra Lal Tripura is expected to attend the final as the chief guest.

Div III cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Taj Property Cricket Club rode on Saiful Islam's century to outclass Udayan Cricket Academy by 250 runs in a qualifying round match of the Metropolis Third Division Cricket League at the Gulshan Youth Club ground yesterday.

Taj Property piled up a mammoth 314 for 7 in 45 overs with Saiful hammering 124 runs off 73 balls with six fours and 13 sixes.

Aynal captured three wickets for 44 runs while Shaiful Islam took two wickets for nine runs.

In reply, Udayan Cricket Club was dismissed cheaply for 64 runs in just 14.0 overs.

Shoaib grabbed three wickets conceding only four runs while Kalam took two wickets for 10.

In the day's other matches, Sheikh Jamal Smriti Cricketers (163-2) notched an 8-wicket win over Alhaj Kazi Abdus Samad Smriti Sangsads (162-10) at the Dhaka University ground, Friends Social Welfare Organisation (232-10) beat East End Cricket Academy (83-10) at the City Club ground and Dhaka North (202-9) defeated Amarjyoti Club (61-10) at the Jagannath Hall ground.

School chess

SPORTS REPORTER

The Standard Chartered 11th School Chess Tournament got underway at the NSC Auditorium lounge yesterday. A total of 263 students from several schools of Dhaka city and other districts, along with four players from Nepal and 12 players from India are participating in the event.

52 players including Saif, Siam, Souvik, Debet and Rupesh won their first round games in the Class VI to X Group while 36 players including Fahad, Hritik and Abhigyan won their first round games in the KG-Class V group. In the girls' group, 34 players including Ahely, Tani, Protiva Santa Thapa, Asmita won their first round games.

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Younus, though, wants to look ahead immediately, to the next Test. "What can I do? I can only ask them to focus for longer durations. After Tests we have to play one-dayers too. It will be very difficult if we go 2-0 down or 3-0 down. If we push more, keep pushing, we can win the last Test, which should give us a lot of motivation before the one-dayers. And if we can win both, we will get some satisfaction at least."

After all

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achieve his highest Test score if not that elusive hundred. Fortunately or unfortunately Mohammed Ashraful, who has played his part in almost all the previous Bangladesh wins, did not make any noticeable contribution in the match. It was a blessing in disguise. It means that Ashraful does not necessarily need to pull the strings for the Tigers to succeed. This win should provide great self-belief to the others and much needed humility for the just past captain.

Boycott blasts KP

Cricket

AFP, London

Former England opener Geoff Boycott has blasted Kevin Pietersen for behaving like a "spoilt child" by getting himself out with an ill-judged sweep shot in the drawn opening Ashes Test.

Pietersen's offering of a gentle catch to Simon Katich off the bowling of Nathan Hauritz when on 69 infuriated Boycott, who vented his spleen in a Tuesday commentary for the Daily Telegraph.

"Pietersen is like a spoilt child, the family favourite who can get away with anything because he is the golden boy," Boycott charged. "Until someone takes the trouble to discipline him he will keep making the same stupid mistakes over and over again."

And Boycott indicated England captain Andrew Strauss and coach Andy Flower should sit down with the batsman and set him straight.

"My concern is that there is no one in the

England set up who will go up to Pietersen and tell him that this is not good enough," Boycott said.

But he added: "Andrew Strauss and Andy Flower are both quiet men and frankly I do not think they have got the courage."

Ultimately, England snatched a draw after James Anderson and Monty Panesar saw out the final 40 minutes Sunday during a 69-ball stand.

After the match, Strauss told his batsmen they must now raise their game as, Paul Collingwood aside, no England top-order batsman managed more in their second innings than Strauss's 17.

Strauss admitted that "as a batsman, to watch Nos 10 and 11 do your job is not a place you want to be."

Boycott insisted that England's batting as a whole left much to be desired.

"The trouble with England's batsmen is that they are one-dimensional. They only want to play with an attacking mentality, and when they are presented with a situation that demands a different approach, they cannot adapt," he opined.