

After a word from Christopher Martin-Jenkins, it's over to Michael Atherton

England's cricketers have paid tribute to Christopher Martin-Jenkins, The London Times's Chief Cricket Correspondent, who just finished covering his last Test match in his present role.

The man known throughout the game as "CMJ" was presented with a commemorative bat by Michael Vaughan, the England captain, at McLean Park, Napier, in honour of his remarkable journalistic career; the past nine years of which have been spent at The Times.

On May 1, he will hand over the reins to Mike Atherton, the former England captain, who has carved out a successful career in writing and broadcasting. CMJ will continue to write about cricket for The Times on a regular basis, bringing his unrivalled experience and passion for the



Michael Atherton will take over from Christopher Martin Jenkins as the Chief Cricket Correspondent of London Times on 1st of May 2008.

game to bear in the corridors of power, the Test-match arena and county grounds.



A former Editor of The Cricketer magazine and Cricket Correspondent of the BBC, he has

been a stalwart of radio's Test Match Special team and is the author of numerous books. He has been a perennial winner of the annual readers' poll in Wisden Cricket Monthly (now The Wisden Cricketer) for best cricket writer.

CMJ also hailed the great sporting deeds of Sri Lanka. He covered Sri Lanka's first Test Match in 1982 at the Colombo Oval and was a vivid fan of the Royal-S. Thomas' big match. His efforts helped to popularize the annual encounter in Britain. When Sri Lanka beat England for the first time in England in 1998 in a Test Match, the host country's coach David Lloyd had questioned Muttiah Muralitharan's bowling action and CMJ drove home the point that the English coach should be gracious in defeat.

It will be a real shame to no longer have CMJ's excellent report on the days played during England Tests to read. He is a cut above when it comes to cricket journalism and a lot of today's sports journalists could learn a thing or two from him (especially in Australia where sports reporting is of an appalling level).

All the best CMJ, thanks for all the great work!

Bangladesh won't be a breeze – Afridi

Pakistan all-rounder Shahid Afridi has warned his team-mates not to underestimate Bangladesh in the five-match one-day series which begins in Lahore on Tuesday.

Bangladesh filled the void left by Australia, who cancelled their tour of Pakistan because of security concerns, at short notice and on paper pose a much lesser threat than Ricky Ponting's side.

However, Afridi believes it would be risky to discount their Asian rivals. "Bangladesh are a very good side and any kind of complacency against them could be dangerous," he said.

"They are a very talented one-day side and are developing into a strong unit.

"Look at their past track record. They have beaten teams like world champions Australia along with other fancied teams."

Pakistan have been dogged by controversy in recent weeks, beginning with Australia's decision to boycott the tour because of the ongoing problems and violence following the death of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto in December.

Last week fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar was banned from international and domestic cricket for five years after he criticised the Pakistan Cricket Board for not awarding him a central contract. The decision effectively ends the 32-year-old's career but he has publicly stated his intention to appeal.

Despite the distractions, Pakistan captain Shoaib Malik insists the team have stayed focused on their preparations for the ODI series.

"It is a matter which is between the board and the player," Malik said.

"We are professional players and we must concentrate on our jobs which is playing cricket and doing well for our country."

"The ongoing domestic one-day tournament has helped us get into shape for the series against Bangladesh. We are looking forward to the series and are keen to do well in it."

Malik echoed Afridi's warning not to be complacent against a team ranked ninth in the one-day standings.

"We are not going to underestimate the Bangladesh side as they are a good one-day squad who have caused many upsets in the past," he warned. "You can't take them lightly."

FC Barcelona, Manchester United favored to meet in Champions League semifinal

LONDON (AP) - It looks like it will be FC Barcelona against Manchester United in one of the Champions League semifinals. The other is too close to call.

Barcelona goes into Wednesday's quarterfinal second leg with a 1-0 lead over Germany's Schalke and home advantage. United is in an even better position, 2-0 ahead against AS Roma and playing at Old Trafford.

The two games in the other half of the draw could go either way.

Fenerbahce holds a 2-1 lead over Chelsea but the English club could advance with a 1-0 victory at Stamford Bridge and guarantee a semifinal match of two English Premier League clubs. That's because Liverpool and Arsenal are 1-1 going to Anfield on Tuesday.

The Gunners and Liverpool also played out another 1-1 draw on Saturday - their third such result this season - which means, by Tuesday night they will have played each other three times in a week.

"Of course it is a massive game. Who would say that the quarterfinal of the Champions League is not?" said Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger. "It is very important for us and for them."

The problem for Wenger is that his team has drawn seven and lost two of its last 11 games. That means only two

victories, which means falling six points behind Manchester United in the Premier League title race and three behind second-place Chelsea.

But those two wins include an impressive 2-0 victory at AC Milan to put the holder out of the competition and Wenger wants the same sort of performance.

"We will play our own game on Tuesday night and try to win, give absolutely everything," Wenger said. "Now we need to recover physically and mentally because the players gave everything against Liverpool on Saturday. However, we have enough resources to qualify on Tuesday night."

Wenger left five of his regulars off the starting lineup for Saturday's game, suggesting he may already have given up on the English race. Liverpool coach Rafa Benitez has virtually no chance of the title and did the same.

"Arsene Wenger was trying to keep some players for the second leg, and we were trying to do the same," said the Spaniard.

Benitez has inspired his side for European games and led Liverpool to the 2005 Champions Cup title as well as last season's final.

"You could see that some of the players were tired," he said. "But they will play the next game with a lot of passion and I don't think they will be tired."



Kumiko Ogura, left, and Reiko Shiota pose for photo after winning their women's doubles badminton match in Osaka, Japan, Sunday, April 6, 2008. The popular female Japanese duo are putting a little glamour into badminton as they carry the hopes of Japan's first Olympic shuttling medal. (AP Photo/Kyodo News)

Percy's best sister-in-law no more

Sri Lanka cheer-leader Percy Abeysekera lost his loving sister-in-law, Aurelia 'Nee' Preston, last week.

Aureliya, elder sister of Percy's wife Melanie, was on a short visit to Sri Lanka with her husband David, an Englishman to whom she has been married for 38 years. She has succumbed to her illness at a private hospital in Colombo after suffering from a brief illness.

According to Percy, Aurelia is said to be the first Asian to be a bank manageress at the West



Aureliya (L) with her daughter Michelle and husband Davis. (Files)

Minster Bank where she has been employed. She leaves her daughter Michelle, brother Michael in USA, sisters Romaine of England and Aliya and

Anoma in Sri Lanka. Aurelia has been the person who has looked after Percy during all his visits to England including his first trip there for the ICC Cricket World Cup in 1975.

A 'cheerless' Percy said yesterday that his loving sister-in-law brought him Andrew Flintoff's new book "My Story So Far" when she came to Sri Lanka this time.

The funeral will be held on Wed. (9) at A.F. Raymonds Funeral Parlour. The cremation will be at Borella Kanatta at 5 pm.

Popular Japanese pair give badminton a fresh look

OSAKA, Japan (AP) - Kumiko Ogura and Reiko Shiota are putting a little glamour into badminton as they carry the hopes of Japan's first Olympic shuttling medal.

The popular female Japanese duo were featured in a photo album released last year, have their own Web site and

even appeared as characters in the appropriately-named manga comic book "Smash."

They rallied from a set down Sunday to win the Osaka International Challenge with a 20-22, 21-8, 21-13 win over South Koreans Ha Jung-eun and Kim Min-jung.

Ogura and Shiota have creat-

ed a stir in Japanese badminton and are hoping a medal at Beijing will result in a boom in the sport.

"Winning a medal in the Olympics has a huge influence on people," said Shiota. "Minor sports become more popular when an athlete wins on the world stage."

Reports of rift are false – Tendulkar

India batsman Sachin Tendulkar has dismissed talk of a rift between the older and younger players in the national squad.

The 34-year-old, who missed the comprehensive second Test defeat to South Africa with a groin injury and will again sit out the third Test which begins on Friday, reckons the media

news channel IBN Lokmat. "In the team, seniors and juniors respect each other, and we all realise the importance of playing for the country."

"The media is damaging its credibility by giving stories without authentic information."

The 'Little Master', meanwhile, has revealed he would

dream and I would love to play in it," he said.

For now, though, he is focusing only on the present.

"I am enjoying my cricket at the moment, but don't want to think too much into the future," he said.

"I have been playing almost non-stop for 20 years and want to focus only on the present."



Mr. Luxman de Alwis



Mr. K. A. Karunaratne

The President and Members of the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka Salute their Colleagues Who gave their lives In the cause of Sports