

## Carroll admits club assault

Newcastle United striker Andy Carroll was fined 1,000 pounds on Monday after admitting he had assaulted a man in a nightclub. The 21-year-old pleaded guilty to common assault over the incident at the Blu Bambu club in Newcastle city centre in December last year which left the victim with a head injury which required hospital treatment. Carroll had denied assault occasioning actual bodily harm, a more serious charge that was dropped after his guilty plea. However he was ordered to pay the victim 2,500 pounds compensation during the hearing at Newcastle Crown Court, the Press Association reported.



## Abahani in final

SPORTS REPORTER



Abahani reached the final of the season's curtain-raising tournament for a record 15th time when they handed a solitary-goal defeat to Brothers Union in the first semifinal of the Grameenphone Federation Cup at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Promising midfielder Imtiaz Sultan Jitu separated both sides in the 45th minute to help Sky Blues surpass ten-time Federation Cup champions Mohammedan's 14 final berths as well as buried a spirited Brothers Union's hopes of moving to the final after two seasons.

Three-time Bangladesh League champions Abahani will take on the winners of the second semifinal between Sheikh Russel KC and Muktijoddha Sangsad which will be held today.

Brazilian playmaker Everton, who almost took Brothers single-handedly to the semifinals with his dazzling performances, failed to spark in the crucial match amid close marking from the opponents. On the other hand, superior ball possession proved the key to Abahani's success in the entertaining semi.

Both sides made a cautious start before Brothers came close to an opener with winger Faisal Mahmud running down the left to whip in a well-judged cross for Cameroon striker Bitcha Richards, whose flick at the near post went inches wide, to the relief of goalkeeper Ziaur Rahman.

The return of Ghanaian defender Samad Youssif strengthened Abahani's backline, however the defender had very little to do when Ghanaian striker Enock Bentil rattled the wood-work

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Abahani winger Imtiaz Sultan Jitu (R) is in a dual with Brothers Union midfielder Faisal Mahmud (C) during their semifinal of the Grameenphone Federation Cup at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

## Selectors call 20 for Zim series

SPORTS REPORTER

The national selectors announced a 20-member preliminary squad on Monday for the one-day series against Zimbabwe in December this year.

Chief selector Rafiqul Alam said that they picked the squad keeping the World Cup in mind.

Former national skipper Mohammad Ashraful, who was dropped for the recently concluded one-day series against New Zealand, has been drafted into the side while top-order batsman Shuvagato Hom was the only uncapped player in the list.

"We chose the players not only keeping the Zimbabwe tour but also the World Cup in mind. We didn't make any major changes as we focused on the players who were in our consideration for the last two years," said Rafiqul.

The training camp for the ODI series, which will kick off on December 1 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, will start on October 31 and the selected players will not be available for their

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## Fit-again India trio back for NZ Tests



AFP, New Delhi

India were on Monday boosted by the return of three key players for the three-Test home series against New Zealand starting next month.

Opener Gautam Gambhir, veteran batsman Venkatsai Laxman and seamer Ishant Sharma, who all missed the second Test against Australia in Bangalore due to injuries, were included in the 15-man squad.

Gambhir and Sharma suffered knee injuries, while Laxman was troubled by back spasms which he picked up during a match-winning 73 not out in the first Test in Mohali.

India enhanced their reputation as the world's top-ranked Test team by winning the first match by one wicket and the second by seven wickets to sweep the short series 2-0.

The return of Gambhir and Laxman creates

a selection headache -- albeit a nice one -- for the hosts ahead of the first Test against the Black Caps in Ahmedabad from November 4.

Opener Murali Vijay, who came in for Gambhir, hit a maiden Test century (139) in Bangalore, while Cheteshwar Pujara marked his debut as Laxman's replacement with a fluent 72 in the same match.

The second Test will be played in Hyderabad from November 12 and the third in Nagpur from November 20.

Daniel Vettori's New Zealand are also due to play five one-day internationals from November 28 to December 10.

**SQUAD**  
Mahendra Singh Dhoni (captain), Virender Sehwag, Gautam Gambhir, Murali Vijay, Rahul Dravid, Sachin Tendulkar, Venkatsai Laxman, Suresh Raina, Cheteshwar Pujara, Harbhajan Singh, Pragyan Ojha, Amit Mishra, Zaheer Khan, Ishant Sharma, Shanthakumar Sreesanth.

## Bhaji praises Tigers

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India off-spinner Harbhajan Singh said yesterday that Bangladesh's victory over New Zealand in the recent ODI series shows other teams would have to be very careful of Bangladesh which can be a very dangerous side.

Terming the Bangladesh-New Zealand series result "shocking", Harbhajan said, "I did not watch the series but it was a little shocking. Teams should now be very careful of Bangladesh. They can be a really dangerous side."

"It shows the quality of cricket in Bangladesh has improved. They are playing better cricket now," he said.

Harbhajan, who was talking to reporters in Kolkata, said Bangladesh had put their minnows status behind and improved tremendously in recent years.

However, he said that India should not take the Kiwis lightly in the upcoming 3-Test and five-match ODI series after their loss to Bangladesh.

"We should not think that we can beat New Zealand easily just because they have lost 4-0 to Bangladesh. We have to stay focused," he said.

Harbhajan said India were a really confident bunch after their Test and ODI series wins over world champions Australia. "We are very high on confidence. We have done very well against the Aussies. We are really looking forward to the New Zealanders' challenge. If we play to our potential we can win the (three-Test and five-ODI) series against New Zealand," he said.

## Roger a la Pete



AFP, Stockholm

Roger Federer won the 64th trophy of his glittering career Sunday, levelling with Pete Sampras in the title pantheon after a 6-4, 6-3 victory over Florian Mayer at the Stockholm Open.

The victory in 63 minutes was particularly pleasing for the Swiss world number two, who now has a few days off before tackling the outside duties which come with his position as top seed from November 1 at his home Swiss Indoors in Basel.

"It feels great winning any event, but it's especially nice to do it where I've never had a chance before," said Federer, whose only other Stockholm visit was a decade ago.

"There is such a great tennis heritage here with all the greats. I knew I'd have a chance here, this was a good week for me. I'm happy to have played well."

There is little time for reflection for Federer, 52-12 this season, who bounced back with style from his Shanghai finals loss seven days previously against Andy Murray.

The 16-time Grand Slam champion faces yet more uphill climb as he takes aim at the next step on the title ladder, the 77 trophies of John McEnroe.

American Jimmy Connors with 109 heads the all-time list, with Ivan Lendl (94) standing second and McEnroe third.

"You want to savour every

victory -- you never know which one will be the last," said the Swiss. "Things move really fast. This was only a 250 event but the victory is very special. This is maybe one tournament to remember more than some others."

Federer's trophy was his third of 2010 after the Australian Open and Cincinnati prior to the US Open.

He stand 3-4 in 2010 finals

from 15 events played.

But the Stockholm success a decade after he last played the event will stand the 29-year-old in good stead for the last three tournaments of his season after he vowed to try and add to his victory total in the run-up to the eight-man World Tour Finals in London from November 21.

"I came up with some good tennis. I was down a break had

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Swiss star Roger Federer celebrates after beating German Florian Mayer in the Stockholm Open final on Sunday. Federer won 6-4, 6-3.

## Sachin in all-time World XI



CRICINFO

Sachin Tendulkar is the only current player in ESPNcricinfo's all-time Test World XI, which is dominated by Australians and West Indians, reflecting their pre-eminence in Test cricket over the years.

Shane Warne, Adam Gilchrist and Wasim Akram were the other players from the last two decades to make it to the XI, which featured seven players who made their debuts after 1970.

Four Australians, three West Indians, two Englishmen, an Indian and a Pakistani make up the XI.

Three players were unanimous choices, figuring in the first XIs of each of the 12 mem-

bers of the jury (each juror was asked to pick a first XI and a second) -- Don Bradman, Garry Sobers and Shane Warne, each of whom got the maximum points possible in the exercise, 60. Tendulkar followed with 51 points.

Perhaps the biggest surprise the XI threw up was the gap between Warne and Muttiah Muralitharan, the two leading wicket-takers in cricket history. Murali made it to ESPNcricinfo's World Second XI, tallying 34 points fewer than Warne.

The closest battles were for one of the opening spots and for No. 5. Sunil Gavaskar lost out to Jack Hobbs by one point and George Headley by two to Viv Richards.

Len Hutton (47 points) partners Hobbs at the top. They are followed by Bradman, Tendulkar, Richards and Sobers. While there was no competition to Sobers for the

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## ODI RANKINGS India retain 2nd spot

PTI, Dubai

India retained second position after their 1-0 series victory over Australia in the Reliance Mobile ICC ODI team rankings while Virat Kohli rose 11 places to career best 13th in the batsmen's chart.

India gained two rating points by winning the Visakhapatnam ODI on October 20 against Australia to take their tally to 117.

Australia, who lost an ODI series against India for the first time after 1986-87, dropped two rating points though they are still on the top of table with 130 points.

In the batsmen's chart, Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni dropped from second to fourth while Sachin

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Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi (R) holds the Twenty20 trophy with his South African counterpart Johan Botha during a ceremony in Abu Dhabi yesterday. They will play their first match today.

## 3 key SA players doubtful 1st T20 against Pakistan today

PTI, Johannesburg

Three key South African players have joined the squad for Twenty20, one-dayers and Test series against Pakistan in Dubai, but there is still doubt whether they will play early in the games.

Jacques Kallis, Morne Morkel and Dale Steyn had to miss the recent series at home against Zimbabwe as they were recovering from injuries.

"Everyone in the group is ready, but not necessarily for the first match on Tuesday," coach Corrie van Zyl told the Afrikaans daily Beeld, adding that a decision would be taken

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## Zia drops a bomb



PTI, Karachi

Pakistan cricket plunged into another match-fixing controversy with the former Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chief Tauqir Zia claiming that six national team players were suspected by the International Cricket Council (ICC) of rigging the Sydney Test early this year.

Lt general (retd) Zia said the ICC had informed the PCB in writing after the tour of Australia that it suspected six players of Pakistan team of rigging Sydney Test and they needed to be kept under a close watch.

"I know the ICC had told the PCB this year to monitor these players because they had got hold of some SMS messages these players exchanged with suspected bookmakers," Zia said.

"ICC approached the PCB after the Australian tour and warned them to keep a watch on these players as they went for the Twenty20 World Cup and Asia Cup," he said.

He said he did not know what the PCB management did after the ICC message but said he was ready to discuss anything if approached by the ICC or PCB.

Zia also made another startling claim that he was approached by suspected bookmakers in 2002 to select a "tainted" player in the national team. "Some people who I suspect were bookmakers called me up and pressured me to select a particular player in the team but I rejected them," Zia said.

Zia declined to name the player but other sources indicated that it might have been former Pakistan captain Salim Malik who was banned for life in 2000 by the board for his alleged involvement in match-fixing. The ban on Malik was lifted by the court in 2008.

Asked what he had done when he was approached by suspected bookie to select the "tainted" player, Zia said he had informed the team management and also the government.

"But we did not make a big deal out of it since that player had already been hauled up earlier," he said, making it clear that he was talking about an incident that happened in 2002 and not recently.

In August, three Pakistanis -- Salman Butt, Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Aamer -- were accused of spot-fixing by taking money from illegal bookies to bowl no balls during a Test match against England at Lord's. They were later provisionally suspended by the ICC.