

# Federer plays mind game

Tennis

AFP, Melbourne

Reigning champion Roger Federer Saturday piled pressure on Rafael Nadal by calling him "favourite" for the Australian Open, where the Spaniard is gunning for his fourth major title in a row.

Federer said he was sure the world number one would be untroubled by his recent illness as he bids to unite all four Grand Slams for the first time since 1969.

"He's been the one dominating the Slams," Federer said. "Had hardly any tough matches in the last three Slams. That makes him favourite. I don't have any problems not being favourite, really."

Defeat here would leave Federer without a Grand Slam title in his locker for the first time since 2003, when he began his world record run of 16 major titles with his maiden Wimbledon win.

Nadal is bidding to emulate Federer's idol Rod Laver by adding the Australian title to his French Open, Wimbledon and US Open crowns, which would put him on 10 Grand Slam wins.

But the 24-year-old Spaniard, who is trying to shake off a fever which saw him heavily beaten in the Qatar Open semis, denied he was favourite and said Federer was a better bet for the Australian title.

"If I play at my best level, I can have a chance to be in the second week, and there we will see what happens," Nadal said. "Every match will be really difficult, so I have to be ready for everything."

"But I for sure am feeling less favourite than [Federer] and not more favourite than [Novak] Djokovic, [Andy] Murray, [Robin] Soderling."

Nadal retired hurt from last year's Australian Open quarterfinals with a knee injury which kept him sidelined for nearly two months, before returning to capture three Grand Slam trophies in a run which Federer called "unbelievable".

"He's been playing incredible," Federer said. "[He had] an incredible run through the French [Open], Wimbledon, US Open. It was incredible to see."



PHOTO: INTERNET

New Zealand batsman Ross Taylor lashes one through the covers during his fighting innings of 78 against Pakistan on the first day of the second Test at the Basin Reserve in Wellington yesterday.

# Pak domination

Cricket

AFP, Wellington

Pakistan again exposed the brittleness of the New Zealand batting line up when they reduced the Black Caps to 246 for six at stumps on the first day of the second Test on Saturday.

In what has become a familiar pattern in recent Tests, the New Zealand lower-order was asked to prop up the innings after the top-order had largely failed.

Apart from a stubborn 78 by Ross Taylor there was little of substance in the face of a bowling attack which toiled away on a pitch that held few demons.

Taylor reached 78, his 11th Test half-century, while the next highest score was captain Daniel Vettori, the number eight batsman, who was unbeaten on 38 at stumps.

Vettori and Reece Young (28 not out) have put on 66 for the seventh wicket, closing in on the highest partnership of 68 by Taylor and James Franklin for the fifth wicket.

But around them there was carnage as Umar Gul snapped up two for 53, Tanvir Ahmed two for 63 and Abdur Rehman one for 53 while five of the dismissals were caught behind by wicketkeeper Adnan Akmal.

After New Zealand's humiliating loss inside three days in the first Test coach John Wright and captain Vettori stressed the need for the batsmen to show perseverance and patience.

But, after winning the toss and opting to

bat first, the game plan of dogged resistance was immediately abandoned with senior batsman Brendon McCullum out for two, leg before wicket to Gul, on the last ball of the first over.

Gul also claimed the wicket of Kane Williamson for 21 and was unlucky not to get Martin Guptill, on five, when the ball was edged to Akmal but in the strong wind umpire Daryl Harper did not hear the nick and gave Guptill not out.

It was a short-lived reprieve as Guptill reached 29 before Tanvir Ahmed broke through just after lunch, removing the opener and Jesse Ryder in successive balls, both caught behind as New Zealand slumped to 98 for four.

James Franklin joined Taylor at the crease and they launched a rescue mission which took New Zealand to 166 before Franklin attempted to turn left-arm spinner Abdur Rehman down the leg side and Akmal snapped up a smart catch.

New Zealand only added 14 more runs before Taylor edged the first ball of a new spell by Wahab Riaz and his long stand was over leaving the tail exposed.

However, on a placid wicket and with the Pakistani bowlers tiring in the blustery conditions Vettori and Young were able to negotiate their way to stumps and in the process they saw off the first eight overs with the new ball.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

NEW ZEALAND: First innings 246 for 6 (Taylor 78, Vettori 38 not out, Franklin 33, Guptill 29, Young 28 not out; Gul 2-53, Tanvir 2-63, Riaz 1-46, Rehman 1-53)

# Hewitt readies for record

Tennis

AFP, Melbourne

Lleyton Hewitt will enter the record books as he embarks on a 15th Australian Open campaign, a feat made even sweeter by his 7-5, 6-3 defeat of Gael Monfils to win the Kooyong Classic on Saturday.

While Hewitt, 29, is a seasoned veteran at the Grand Slam venue of Melbourne Park, where he reached the 2005 final against Marat Safin, he was a newcomer to the Kooyong club, having not previously played the Open warm-up.

Hewitt had never ventured onto the storied courts

of the Kooyong club, the home of the Open until just over two decades ago.

But he skipped ATP events this month, counting instead on three guaranteed matches at both the Hopman Cup in Perth and Kooyong as his warmup for the Australian Open.

"I didn't know I'll be setting a record [15 Opens in a row]. But it's kind of amazing when you think about it," Hewitt said.

"I've only had one Open [2002 after chicken pox] when I feel I shouldn't have played. But you would cut off your leg rather than not play at Melbourne Park."

"This is about as good a

preparation as I could have done," said Hewitt, who started pre-season training 10 weeks ago with coach Tony Roche after recovering from a wrist injury.

"My game is right where I want it to be. I feel good. Ten weeks ago Roche and I sat down and decided what we wanted to work on, where we wanted my game to be."

"I've done the best preparation possible. I respect Roche and I'm happy to have him in my corner."

Monfils was troubled in the second set by a muscle problem in his lower back which he hopes will not affect his Australian Open.

"I'm tired, I'd say," said the Frenchman. "I played two big matches here. Today it was tough against Lleyton. I felt the problem when I was up a break, then I felt it a bit more later."

"I hope it's not major. I still have to see my physio. I would say that I played with less conviction in the second set, some of the time I was trying to test my back."

He said he hoped a day off on Sunday would help him reach full fitness for the start of the Open, where he is 12th seed and will begin his campaign against Dutchman Thiemo de Bakker.



PHOTO: AFP

Australian tennis star Lleyton Hewitt poses with the trophy after defeating Frenchman Gael Monfils in the final of the Kooyong Classic in Melbourne yesterday.

# Abahani have

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the crown. "Definitely we are confident of winning the match," said Mahmud.

It was Shakib who captained Abahani in the December 22, 2009 clash where Khaled Mashud hit the winning boundary off Mohammad Rafique but the world's No. 1 all-rounder is confident that the Motijheel outfit are in good shape.

"I'll try to play my best and make sure my team wins," said Shakib, adding, "I haven't watched any of Abahani's matches yet, but I think their bowling side is strong. But if our batsman can play their game it'll be easy for us."

"Hope it will be a good match and at the end of the day we come out winners," he added.

Shakib's confidence stems from his in-form batsmen that include himself, Tamim Iqbal, Shamsur Rahman and Faisal Hossain.

The Abahani-Mohammedan matches have always produced a different dimension and always ensure an electrifying atmosphere but Shakib's response would surprise many. "I have always heard that Abahani-Mohammedan matches create excitement but I never felt it," he said.

# Mash just

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record and experience of the tournament. "I don't think anyone can replace him, the way he's been bowling in the last ten years. He's the only pace bowler to have played the World Cup from the ones we have to consider now."

"He is the most experienced bowler as well and probably our best bowler when he is fit," said the head coach.

There is a school of thought that Mashrafe is actually rushing his return in a desperate bid to play in the tournament, but the player himself and the coach did not quite agree. "I don't think he is rushing because his knee can play tricks on him. It can happen after 12 months or in the World Cup. If it was anyone else, he wouldn't be picked in this situation," said Siddons.

"It doesn't threaten my career. If there is ligament tearing, I would need to do grafting and I have to do the same thing as I have done before. Those who are saying risking my career, they are wrong," said Mashrafe.

# No venue worry: ICC

AFP, Melbourne



Cricket's global chief Saturday admitted some venues were not yet ready for the World Cup in South Asia but vowed there would be no repeat of chaos that marred the build-up to the Commonwealth Games.

International Cricket Council (ICC) chief executive Haroon Lorgat said four stadiums in particular were "slightly behind" in their preparations for the tournament in India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, starting next month.

He was speaking after reports of chaotic scenes at Eden Gardens in Kolkata and at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium.

"The concern with Delhi was more than a year ago with the state of the pitch but that has been sorted out," he told reporters here.

"There are certain stadia that are behind our schedule," he added, highlighting Kolkata and Mumbai.

"We would have liked them to have been completed. All of our reports do not indicate anything like what transpired during the Commonwealth Games."

"The stadiums are slightly behind, there

are four in particular I think, but they'll be done before the start of the World Cup."

Sri Lanka has pledged that two new stadiums in Kandy and Hambantota will be ready on time, while Bangladesh has promised to deliver "world-class" facilities.

"We'll ensure power supplies at the venues are uninterrupted, floodlights work and that the pitches are of the highest standard," Bangladesh Cricket Board spokesman Jalal Yunus said this month.

Shambolic preparations for New Delhi's Commonwealth Games in October caused international concern and prompted some athletes to pull out, in a deeply embarrassing incident for emerging India.

Lorgat also said he was happy with progress against spot-fixing after a tribunal last week delayed a decision over allegations against Pakistan's Salman Butt, Mohammad Asif and Mohammed Aamer.

"I am pleased with the progress we have made. It is short space of time, it is a complex matter and it is running alongside a criminal investigation," he said.

The trio faces charges of spot-fixing during Pakistan's tour of England last year in a scandal that rocked the sport.

# 'ODI Don's brainchild'

PTI, Melbourne

One-day cricket was the brainchild of Sir Donald Bradman and it was only money and nothing else which encouraged its introduction into the international arena, believes former Australian captain Bill Lawry.

The game which had been embraced by the domestic circles of England for over eight years, finally began its international journey on January 5, 1971.

Distraught at losing their annual MCG cash cow with rain forcing players to stay indoors during the third Ashes Test at Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) on the onset of 1971, there was only one man that the Australian Board looked to, Sir Donald Bradman.

"My memory is Sir Donald came up with the idea to make some money. He was good at that," Lawry quipped.

"They got around 46,000 which raised over USD 30,000, good money back then."

# One club rule again?

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they took the decision as the national players will not be available after January 20.

"If it is the case then why did they take this controversial decision just before such a big match? We hope BCB will interfere on this issue because it's setting a bad example. Let's see what happens tomorrow (Sunday) morning," he added.

Apparently CDDM took this decision to accommodate Abahani's sixth foreign recruit, Indian batsman Rajat Bhatia, for the Dhaka derby. Abahani already completed their quota by registering the Australian Lee Carseldine, Pakistan's Fawad Alam and Indians Shikhar Dehwan, Yaspal Singh and Mithun Manhas.

The question was raised whether CDDM violated the by-laws by taking this decision in the middle of the tournament. CDDM chairman GS Hasan Tamim however defended their decision by saying that it has come in a democratic way.

"We called the meeting as some clubs requested to take a decision in favour of increasing the foreign players' quota. The main thing is that only two foreign players will be able to play the match, but the club can enroll seven players instead of five. Many even requested for unlimited registration," said Tamim.

"Maximum clubs (ten) supported this decision and only two including Mohammedan Sporting Club protested it. There is nothing wrong if majority wants something," he added when asked whether they violated the bylaws.

On condition of anonymity, a club official termed it an unfair decision although his club voted for taking the extra foreigner. "It's simply unfair. We supported it because of the reality (laugh)."

"You can't violate the bylaws in the middle of the tournament. It's setting a bad example for our domestic cricket because it has never happened previously," the official said.

# A wicket & a hat-trick

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changed, as we were not able to win matches.

DSS: Was there frustration with your performance?

EH: I was not performing up to the mark and obviously I was frustrated and depressed.

DSS: Tell us the funniest story of World Cup for you.

EH: (Laughing) Vaas's hat-trick against us was kind of funny because he was not fit and didn't want to play that match. When he played he made a world record taking up a hat-trick with the first three deliveries he bowled in the very first over of the match. I was his hat-trick wicket.

DSS: How did you feel after taking Brian Lara's wicket?

EH: I bowled regularly in the practice matches and I did well. I used to think myself as a bowler whenever I was asked to bowl.

When I got (Brian) Lara out I celebrated normally as I would get any wicket. Later on after the innings was over, I realised I got the wicket of one of the greatest batsman and felt proud of it.

DSS: Expectations of World Cup 2011?

EH: Bangladesh is playing better cricket now a days. Individual performances are great.

I believe anything can happen in the World Cup and we have the home advantage as well. If the players can continue doing what they are doing now, Bangladesh team might reach the latter of the tournament.

# Heineken Open goes to Ferrer

AP, Auckland

Top-seeded David Ferrer won his second Heineken Open title with a 6-3, 6-3 win over Argentina's David Nalbandian on Saturday.

The Spaniard, ranked No. 7 in the world, added to the title he won in 2007 when he topped the former world No. 3 Nalbandian in just 68 minutes.

Ferrer broke Nalbandian's serve in the eighth game of the first set, serving out the set at his first opportunity. He then broke in the fifth and seventh games of the second set to clinch his 10th career title.

# CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

<b>ACROSS</b>	<b>DOWN</b>	<b>ACROSS</b>	<b>DOWN</b>
1 Fizzled out	1 Platter	13 Zero	13 Moment
5 Cable channel	2 Corn Belt state	14 "Star Trek: TNG" counselor	24 Earl Grey, e.g.
8 Fax or text	3 And others (Lat.)	15 Ugly duckling, eventually	25 Right angle
12 Small amount	4 Dasher's yokemate	16 Circus organ	26 Pool stick
13 Star	5 Entire	18 Mineral in milk	27 Apiece
14 "Star Trek: TNG" counselor	6 Thailand, once	20 Beginning	28 — Lanka
15 Ugly duckling, eventually	7 Entirety	21 Dine on	29 Raw rock
16 Circus organ	8 Ofac-torily offensive	22 Wapiti	31 Repair
18 Mineral in milk	9 Cupid's alias	23 Rear of a ship	34 Atlantic and Pacific
20 Beginning	10 "Unh-unh"	26 Island music style	35 Wander
21 Dine on	11 Regimen	30 Moray, for one	36 Have a bug
22 Wapiti	17 Lounge around	31 PETA concern	37 Still existing
23 Rear of a ship	19 Author Fleming	32 Mess up	39 Corn
26 Island music style	22 Listener	33 Heat measure	40 Alkali neutralizer
30 Moray, for one			41 Mexican entree
31 PETA concern			42 Trudge (through)
32 Mess up			43 Boast
33 Heat measure			44 Basin accessory
			45 Algon-quian tribe
			46 Steven-son villain
			48 Lawyers' org.

Solution time: 21 mins.



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### CRYPTOQUIP

J P L N V C M P U A L Y U E K X L  
F C R O C K A L X Z O S L O E U L O N X U V  
V K N O S - K E - O S U - M K X F U X  
U Q J X U V V C K A V : L Y U Q C R K A .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN INMATES COME DOWN WITH A VERY COMMON VIRAL AFFLICTION, COULD YOU SAY THAT'S CON-FLU-ENCE?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals O