



BHULLAR WARMS UP WITH PRO-AM WIN

Young golfers Varun Parikh, Kairav Shah & Anshul Patel share limelight with international star, who praises their skills

DNA Correspondent • AHMEDABAD

Former champion Gaganjeet Bhullar warmed up for the big weekend by emerging winner in the pro ranks at the Gujarat Kensville Challenge (GKC) here on Wednesday. Bhullar led his team of young local golfers, Varun Parikh, Kairav Shah and Anshul Patel to a fine win in the pro-am held to kick-start the week's golfing activities.

Giving them a run for their money was the team led by Spanish professional Carlos Aguilar, who had Manhar Gohil, Pranay Parikh and Manish Choksi as his amateur teammates.

"I had an excellent round, but the credit also goes to the youngsters, who played so well. They have been really impressive on the greens. Sometimes when Anshul drove the ball, he seemed to be doing so like the famous Canadian major champion, Mike Weir, who is a left-hander. Anshul is also a left-hander. Varun and Kairav were also excellent to play and sank some great birdies," said Bhullar.

Talking about the tournament, he



added, "I am feeling great after this round. I think I must have sunk some eight or nine birdies, but the real contest begins tomorrow."

In the special skills category, Sameer Sinha won the 'closest to the pin', while the 'longest drive' fell on expected lines as Parthiv Mehta walked away with the award.

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National, int'l golfers to tee off in city today

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A host of national and international champion golfers, including the winner of a golf major, will exhibit their art as the new European Challenge Tour season in India commences with the third edition of Gujarat Kensville Challenge (GKC) here at picturesque Kensville Golf and Country Club on Thursday. Although Germany's Maximilian Kiefler will not be in the running to defend his title, last year's runner-up Rishi Gangjee, along with the winner of the challenge's inaugural edition, Gaganjeet Bhullar will fancy their chances. Kiefler is not a part of the European Tour event.

Also making the \$200,000-prize money competition exciting will be 2002 USPGA champion, Rich Beem.

Gangjee looks to be great shape, especially after an outstanding show at Thailand. He scored four birdies in the last five holes to finish at five-under in the final stage of the Asian Tour Qualifying School to earn his Asian Tour card.

"I want to start afresh. I have good memories, but I would like to keep my emotions at bay. No highs, no lows, just playing from scratch. I will play the first round well, and the rest will follow," said Gangjee, who had faced the prospect of having no International Tour card to play with, had the Thailand trip been unfruitful.

Gangjee also praised the greens at Kensville. "The greens are holding better, and it will be a good weekend," said the confident-looking golfer.

Besides Gangjee, Bhullar will also vie for top spot on the leaderboard. In fact, the Kapurthala lad looked confident and was hitting the ball well during the Pro-Am event on Wednesday. Moreover, international golfers from India, Shiv Kapur, Himmatrai and Chiragh Kumar would also play to make their presence felt on the Jeev Milkha Singh signature golf course. Rich Beem, the US golfer, will be looking to take inspiration from and emulate Dhabi HSBC Golf Championship winner, Jamie Donaldson.

Donaldson claimed that the Challenge Tour helped him immensely, when he returned from injury in 2007. Victory in Abu Dhabi has helped the Welshman jump up the rankings, standing 29th in the world. Donaldson's compatriot, Rhys Davies will be another golfer aiming for a big weekend in Ahmedabad.

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The Gujarat Kensville Challenge kicked off with a pro-am event on Wednesday in the city. Action from the greens. Pic: Prayash Patel/DNA