

# Bhullar writes golf history in A'bad

## Starts 2011 Season With A Bang, Wins First-Ever European Challenge Tour Event In India

Ajit Bezbaruah | TNN

**Ahmedabad:** Few things are destined, like Gaganjeet Bhullar's triumph at the Euro 200,000 Gujarat Kensville Challenge 2011 here on Sunday. This is the first ever European Challenge Tour event in India and Bhullar wrote a beautiful chapter in India's golfing history by winning a hard-fought final round by a stroke at the Kensville Golf and Country Club

### EUROPEAN CHALLENGE GOLF

course in front of a partisan Sunday crowd which gathered to witness the historic moment.

The moment came when Bhullar fired a par on the 18th hole to finish the final round with a score of 3-over 75 and a total score of 5-under 283 and edge late contenders Matt Ford and Jamie Moul of England, who finished with a total score of 4-under 284 and 3-under 285. Bhullar took the winner's purse of Euro 32,000, while Ford and Moul got 22,000 and 14,000 Euros respectively. Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi gave away the prizes to the winners.

The 22-year-old Kapurthala pro, who won the season-opener Asian Tour International title in Bangkok last year, kick-started his 2011 season with his maiden European international title here in Ahmedabad. Bhullar went into the final day with a four stroke lead but started both nine with bogeys. Another bogey on the 17th made Bhullar's position look shaky.

"Today was the toughest of all days," said Bhullar of the wind and the pin positions on Sunday where everybody struggled.

Such was the demanding nature of the course and conditions at the Jeev Milkha Singh-signature course that only six players finished under par. Matthew Baldwin of England took the fourth place at 2-under 286. The only other players to finish below par were Bangladesh's Siddikur Rahman (73) and Denmark's Mads Vibe-Hastrup (72),



who shared fifth place at 1-under par 287.

Moul and Ford, who were

tied eighth and fourth respectively on Saturday, came from behind to be 4-under with four

holes to go. With Bhullar showing indifferent form, a play-off was looming on the horizon.



Gaganjeet Bhullar signals his triumph after a tight finish on the 18th green and (above) poses with the winner's trophy

But Moul failed a birdie putt on the 17th and Ford, who needed a birdie on the 18th to force a play-off, managed a par and Bhullar's four-shot cushion saw him through.

Elated over his maiden international victory, Bhullar said: "I'm very pleased to begin the season with a victory. Last year too, I began the season with a victory on the Asian Tour, but I cherish this moment as this is my first international victory in India. It was my father's birthday on January 14, so I dedicate this win to him. I hope that this season brings me more success, and I'm now looking forward to stepping up to The European Tour".

"I am happy to join the European international title winners club but before I came here, I was not sure what to expect. It was really great to see such a beautiful and challenging golf course in this part of the country," said Bhullar, who now qualifies to play in the European Challenge Tour.

"I will have to discuss with my parents before coming to a decision but I might play on the European Challenge Tour and try to qualify for the main European Tour," said Bhullar, an Asian Tour regular.

Ford, who was naturally disappointed to have missed out on

his maiden Challenge Tour title, said: "Obviously it's very disappointing to have lost by a stroke. On the last hole, when I heard that Bhullar had made a bogey on the 17th, I tried to make a birdie to force a play-off. But I hit my approach a bit short, and failed to make the putt. But credit to Bhullar, he deserved to win."

### TOP SCORES (AFTER 72 HOLES)

1. 283 Gaganjeet Bhullar (IND) (70, 70, 68, 75) Euros 32,000; 2. 284 Matt Ford (ENG) (74, 68, 72, 70) 22,000; 3. 285 Jamie Moul (ENG) (72, 73, 71, 69) 14,000; 4. 286 Matthew Baldwin (ENG) (72, 70, 70, 74) 12,000; T-5. 287 Md Siddikur Rahman (BAN) (67, 74, 73, 73) 9,000; 287 Mads Vibe-Hastrup (DEN) (70, 76, 69, 72) 9,000; 7. 288 Klas Eriksen (SWE) (70, 74, 72, 72) 6,400; 8. 289 Florian Praegant (AUT) (69, 71, 73, 76) 5,600; T-9. 291 Ricardo Santos (POR) (69, 78, 69, 75) 4,600; Tommy Fleetwood (ENG) (74, 71, 74, 72) 4,600; 11. 292 Callum Macaulay (SCO) (72, 73, 75, 72) 3,900; 292 Charlie Ford (ENG) (73, 74, 75, 70) 3,900.

### OTHER TOP THREE INDIANS

T-16. 294 Raju Ali (75, 72, 72, 75) 2,900; T-18. 295 Manav Jaini (71, 74, 73, 77) 2,252; T-23. 296 Ashok Kumar (75, 71, 73, 77) 1,800.

(Read under as Position, Aggregate, Name, Country, Day-scores & Prize money).

Pics Kevin Antao