

ALL PICS KALPESH BHATT

Tournament loses its biggest star

Jeev Milkha Singh pulls out of the Kensville Gujarat Challenge 2011 being held at his home golf course due to back injury

PRASANTH MENON

A game on home turf always remains close to a player's heart. More so, if it is your first game on home soil. The Kensville Gujarat Challenge 2011 made Jeev Milkha Singh the first Indian golfer to host an event at his signatory course.

But unfortunately, the 'host' will not be part of the European Challenge Tour that tees off at the Kensville golf course on Thursday morning. On Wednesday evening, India's most celebrated golfer, Jeev Milkha Singh, decided to withdraw from the event due to a back injury.

The pull out came as a big blow to the organisers as Kensville Gujarat Challenge 2011 lost some of its sheen as the tournament has lost its

biggest star.

Jeev had participated in the pro-am event on Wednesday that acted as a prelude to the European Challenge. The golfer didn't show any injury signs while playing the pro-am along with his father, legendary Indian athlete Milkha Singh.

INJURY RESURFACES

BUT AS soon as the pro-am was over, he decided to withdraw from the event. Jeev was troubled by injury all through 2010. He couldn't play in the season ending tournaments last year due to injury. He made a comeback only last week by playing in the Royal Cup for Asia against Europe.

But just before teeing off in the European Challenge Tour, the old injury has returned to haunt the Indian golfer. Despite withdrawing from the event,

Jeev feels the tournament will offer a perfect platform for Indian players as they get an opportunity to play with some of the top golfers in Europe.

"If we had so many world-class tournaments in India during my early career, India would have had a major champion by now. But that day is not far away. This event will undoubtedly play a great role in enhancing the popularity of the game and our golfers are going to benefit greatly. Kensville is just the kind of course young Indian golfers need to get used to if they hope to do well at the highest level," Jeev said.

Now it will up to the likes of Gaganjeet Bhullar, Ashok Kumar and Mukesh Kumar to overcome the challenge from the visitors to win the maiden Kensville Gujarat Challenge 2011 title.

The real game begins

114 golfers to vie for top honours in the Kensville Gujarat Challenge 2011



Alessandro Tadini the top ranked golfer in Gujarat Kensville Challenge 2011

PRASANTH MENON

After the star-studded Pro-Am and the grand inauguration of the Kensville Gujarat Challenge 2011 on Wednesday, the tournament will get down to business from today.

One hundred and fourteen golfers will tee off for the maiden European Challenge tournament in India at the sprawling Kensville golf course.

Fifty four golfers from India and 60 from abroad will vie for the top honours in the 200,000 euros worth Gujarat Kensville Challenge for the next four days.

But the tournament lost some of its lustre when India's star golfer Jeev Milkha Singh pulled out of the tournament due to a back injury.

In Jeev's absence, the Indian challenge will be spearheaded by Ashok Kumar, who topped the Order of Merit in India last year, Gaganjeet Bhullar, who finished fourth in Brunei Open, six-time India number one Mukesh Kumar and Indian Open winner Vijay Kumar.

The Indians will face tough challenge from the European golfers. Alessandro Tadini, who narrowly missed the cut for the European Tour last year is the number one ranked player at Kensville.

But the Italian golfer is a bit short on practice and thinks the Kensville golf course will present a real challenge to the golfers. "The greens are hard. The ball will travel quickly. There are some very good golfers playing in this tournament. And it could well go down to the last three or four holes," Tadini said.

The other top golfers from Europe are 2007 European Challenge Tour winner Michael Lorenzo Vera from France and Charlie Ford from England.

With very little to choose from the top golfers playing in the tournament, the inaugural Kensville Gujarat Challenge 2011 is set to go down to the wire.

Dream day for Gujarat golfers

Seventy two local golfers rub shoulders with 24 professionals in the pro-am event on Wednesday

AHMEDABAD MIRROR BUREAU

It was a dream day for Amdavadi golfers as they got an opportunity to play with some top international golfers in the pro-am event of Kensville Gujarat Challenge 2011 on Thursday.

Seventy two amateurs and 24 professionals played in the pro-am event that saw one international player playing with three locals.

The likes of Alpesh Parikh, Nirav Parikh and Devang Shah played with Kensville 2011's top ranked golfer Alessandro Tadini from Italy.

"I am nervous. To play with a top ranked player in the tournament is a privilege," said Alpesh just before he teed off.

But after a few rounds, the Italian seemed to be impressed with the skills of his team members. "They are playing well. These people seem to be regulars at the golf course. I was surprised with some of their shots," said Alessandro.

The pro-am event was won by Spaniard Jorge Campillo's team. Campillo's team which finished with a score of 54, comprising amateurs Pravit Parikh, Nunjal Jaykr-



Alpesh Parikh, Nirav Parikh and Devang Shah with Alessandro Tadini

ishna and Tejas Amin.

Meanwhile, superstar Amitabh Bachchan inaugurated the Kensville

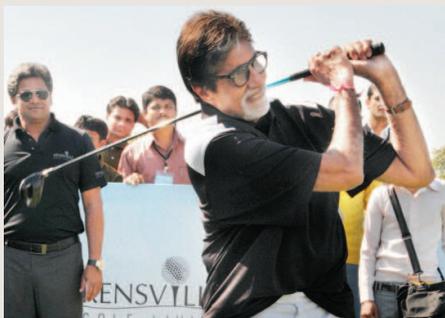
Gujarat 2011 with a tee shot that impressed the professionals.

"There are a lot of talented golfers in the country. They need facilities like these to train and improve their skills. I am happy with the initiative Kensville has taken," said the Bollywood legend.

Kensville MD Sameer Sinha also announced the launch of the three-tier driving range at Kensville.

"The driving range should be operational in a month. It will be fully lit and will offer an excellent opportunity to youngsters interested in golf," Sinha said.

GET, SET, GO ON THE GREENS



I AM AS GOOD AS ANY: Amitabh Bachchan tees off at Kensville



HERE'S HOW IT LOOKS: Bachchan explores facilities at the course on a golf cart



SPICING IT UP: A musical performance at the opening of Kensville Gujarat Challenge 2011