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CHAMPS: Mithun Perera (left), Shankar Das (centre) and Anura Rohana of team Ahmedabad savour their triumph in Bengaluru

Lankan duo powers Ahmedabad home

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Bengaluru: Powered by a brilliant back-nine charge by the Sri Lankan duo of Mithun Perera and Anura Rohana on the final day, holders Navratna Ahmedabad scored a sensational victory to retain the Louis Philippe Cup at the KGA course here on Saturday.

Five shots behind pacesetters TAKE Chennai at the start of the day, the diminutive Perera shot a five-under 67, including five birdies on the back-nine, while Rohana returned a card of 71 with two birdies in the second-half, including a nervy 10-footer birdie putt on the closing hole to go ahead for the first time in the Rs 1.2 crore event.

GOLF

Although homeboy Khalin Joshi birdied the final hole, he could only help Chennai draw level with Ahmedabad. The latter, by virtue of their better final-round score of six-under 138, edged out Chennai (143) and walked away with the winners' prize amount of Rs 36 lakh with a three-day tally of 13-under 419. It was Ahmedabad's third victory in four editions.

With both SSP Chawrasia and S Chikkarangappa failing to fire on the final day, Khalin's heroic effort of 12-under 204 went in vain for Chennai. Despite finishing on 419, the team had to settle for the runners-up purse of Rs 24 lakh. The consolation for Chennai, who did all the running on the first two days, was the individual honours for the in-form Khalin, who was one of the two golfers to shoot sub-par rounds on all three

days. The other was second-placed Om Prakash Chouhan (209). While Khalin took home Rs 7 lakh for his efforts, Chouhan was richer by Rs 4 lakh.

While most golfers struggled on a windswept day, the 29-year-old Perera, the only player to have stayed with the Ahmedabad team since its inception, made the difference with his brilliant iron-play. He kept attacking the flag regularly, and barring the final hole, where he sank a 15-footer, rest of the four birdies on the back nine were in the two-to four-foot region. "It feels great to retain the title," Perera said. "It was a brilliant team effort and we knew we could bridge the five-shot deficit if we played to our potential. We (Anura Rohana and Shankar Das) combined well as a team," he added.

Khalin struggled on the day but managed to submit a two-under 70 card. If not for the lip outs on the 13th and 14th holes, the script would have been totally different. "It's disappointing not to be able to close out," said Khalin. "Hats off to Ahmedabad for a fine comeback victory."

Final scores: Team (only final round individual scores): 419: Navratna Ahmedabad (143, 138, 138 – Mithun Perera 67; Anura Rohana 71); TAKE Chennai (140, 136, 143 – Khalin Joshi 70; S Chikkarangappa 73). Ahmedabad lift title by virtue of better final-round score; **421:** Dev-Ellora Pune (143, 141, 137 – Sanjay Kumar 68; Om Prakash Chouhan 69); **422:** Zion Hills Bengaluru (143, 139, 140 – Rahul Gangjee 69; C Muniyappa 71); **425:** Jaypee Greens Greater Noida (142, 143, 140 – Mukesh Kumar 71; Jyoti Randhawa 72); **431:** DLF The Crest (143, 145, 143 – Shubhankar Sharma 71, Abhinav Lohan 72).

Individual: 204: Khalin Joshi (69, 65, 70); **209:** Om Prakash Chouhan (71, 69, 69); **210:** Jyoti Randhawa (69, 69, 72); **211:** Mithun Perera (74, 70, 67).