

Setting the course on fire

Anirban Lahiri set the tone on the opening day of PGTI Ahmedabad Masters with a course record

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There is something serenely virgin about Kalhaar Blues and Greens. The Nicklaus Design-curated 18-hole course has been a regular feature in the nascent golf scene of the city. But as it prepared to host the city's first Professional Golf Tour of India event – the season opener PGTI Ahmedabad Masters presented by Kalhaar Blues and Greens – there is something refreshingly new with the feel.

Familiarity is what Anirban Lahiri also lacked. "I played the course for the first time during my practice round yesterday. I was a little confused about some holes as I had to rush through my 15 holes since it was getting dark," said the Bangalore-based golfer who was playing in the city for the first time.

But unfamiliarity seemed to hardly matter on Wednesday as India's highest ranked golfer set the course on fire with a new course record of eight-under to lead the leaderboard on the opening day of the tournament.

The 26-year-old appeared to have picked up from where he left, after an impressive last season, as he went on a birdie spree between fifth and 15th hole – nine birdies in 11 holes.

Anirban set the tone with a 10-foot birdie in the fifth hole before sinking five footers in eighth and 10th and 15 feet birdies in ninth and 11th. He



Anirban Lahiri is leading the field

BAPTISM BY FIRE FOR VARUN, ANSHUL

Local amateurs Varun Parikh and Anshul Patel got a feel of the professional golf in their maiden PGTI tournament. Staring from the first hole, Varun shot suffered double bogeys at par 4 sixth and ninth hole. He then shot a bogey in the part three 11th hole.

The youngster then picked it up with birdies in 12th, 15th and 17th holes but ended with a bogey in the par 4 18th hole that saw him finishing tied 48th with three over for the day.

Anshul, meanwhile, is in danger of missing the cut with four over for the day. The teenager started with a bogey in the par 5 first hole, but picked up with birdies in the third and fifth holes.

However, the double bogey in the par 3 seventh hole pegged him back. The back nine failed to lift his game as Anshul shot bogeys in par 4 10th, 13th and 15th holes to finish tied 61st.

topped that with two more birdies in the 14th and 15th.

"It was a phenomenally good round as I was on a roll after the birdie on the fifth hole. I think nine birdies in 11 holes is my personal best also," Anirban said.

Though Anirban had told Mirror before that he would start with a clean slate, it is clear that the youngster is taking a lot from his previous season when he came close to break into top 100.

"I've taken a lot of confidence from my performances last year as I not only recorded my best season on the Asian Tour but also won the last three tournaments that I played on the PGTI," said the golfer who finished third in the Asian Tour Order of Merit last season.

The only blemish for Anirban came in the 18th hole, where his tee

shot landed into the bunker and rolled into the water and he carded a bogey.

"Honestly, I didn't expect to fire such a low number. But I did miss few putts that I should have made," Anirban assessed his game. "I felt I was a little lucky as there was hardly any wind today. It could've been a different story had the wind been in play," he said, adding "I think the pins were too set for a high scoring today."

Anirban, however, remained guarded. "Things could be different tomorrow as they'll toughen up the course. Also the stretch from the 13th to the 16th can be very challenging if the wind is up.

LEADERBOARD 1. Anirban Lahiri (8-under 64), 2. Angad Cheema (6-under 66), 3. Kanishk Madan, Arjun Singh & Om Prakash Chouhan (5-under 67).