

Getting back to old self

Shiv Chowrasia cards the best score for the day, hopes to challenge runaway leader Anirban Lahiri

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The famous gait has lost its sheen – perhaps six years of toiling on European Tour has taken its toll. However, the smile remains contagious.

“I don’t think I have changed,” Shiv Shankar Prasad Chowrasia assured *Mirror*. “But yes, I have gained a lot from the experience of European Tour,” he said, adding “perhaps I am more matured now.”

The man, who trotted the greens with a spring in his stride, caught the imagination of the golf world in 2008 when he created a European Tour history by becoming the first player to win on his maiden appearance as an affiliate member. At Delhi Golf Club, SSP, as he is fondly known as, defeated an elite field that included Major winner Ernie Els, among others to win Indian Masters.

NEW HIGHS, NEW CHALLENGES

The win catapulted the reticent golfer to new highs, and new challenges, that he was not prepared for. Among many challenges that he faced was the test of his powerful short game as SSP soon realised that at the vast expanses of European Tour, he cannot rely only on his short game.

And in the battle of survival, many felt, SSP lost the edge. “When I went there (Europe), I realised that my game was nothing. I have met many golfers who possessed far better short game than I had,” he added.

“My putting has not been great for past few years. And I have been struggling with my short game,” added the



Playing on European Tour has helped him, says Shiv Shankar Prasad Chowrasia

golfer who was once known as ‘Chip-putt-sia’ for his powerful short game.

The 2011 Avantha Masters title prolonged his stay in the European greens, but while he continued to excel on the Asian Tour, European dream remained a tough cookie for him to crack.

DETERMINED TO GET BACK

Injuries also played their part as SSP lost his European Tour card, but that only made him determined to win it back. “I lost the card this year,” he said, adding “but I am determined to

get back there. I got so much to learn there.”

And SSP is already working towards his goal. “I had been working on my short game. I am glad that things are looking bright in this tournament,” said the golfer who was battling with sore shoulder and back before coming to the tournament.

It was his once-famous short game that saw him pocketing seven birdies, along with two bogeys, and carding the best round on the penultimate day of PGTI Ahmedabad Masters presented by Kalhaar

Blues and Greens on Friday.

SLOW START BEFORE FIRING UP

SSP overcame a slow start to the day, with bogeys in the second and fourth holes, to shot birdies on the fifth and sixth before roaring back on the back-nine with four straight birdies from the 12th to 15th. He went on to sink a 15-foot birdie putt on the 17th that helped him close the day on a high.

“I had my best round of the tournament today. I set up many birdie opportunities for myself. I sank two long birdie putts and just got on a roll from the 12th onwards,” he said.

ANIRBAN LEADING THE PACK

Though his efforts catapulted him to the second position in the leaderboard, SSP was still four short of Anirban Lahiri who continued to lead the field at 11-under for the day.

“I am still four behind him and he is playing extremely well at the moment,” SSP said, adding “but I hope to put up a good fight in the last round.”

Anirban carded a sedate one-under-71 in tough scoring conditions and lauded both SSP and Shankar Das, who shot four under yesterday.

“The conditions were the toughest today compared to the last two days. It was windy and the tees were back. I felt I didn’t have any momentum today,” said the golfer who shot two bogeys along with three birdies. “SSP and Shankar were outstanding today,” he added.

LEADERBOARD: 1. Anirban Lahiri (11-under) 2. SSP Chowrasia (7-under) 3. Abhinav Lohan (6-under) 4. Angad Cheema (5-under) 5. Shankar Das & Sujjan Singh (4-under)