

Momentum stays with Anirban

Lahiri started the new season from where he left off last; bags PGTI season opener with a six-stroke win at KGB



Anirban Lahiri (2nd right) receiving the glittering trophy and cheque from chairman of Navratna group Dinesh Shah, joint managing directors Devang and Pranav Shah and PGTI director Uttam Singh Mundy

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It takes time to love this city. But once you are here for three months, you would never like to leave this place," quipped someone in audience while describing the aura that defines Ahmedabad.

Anirban Lahiri might not have the luxury or the time to explore the beauty of this city, but India's highest ranked golfer will surely remember his maiden visit to the expansive Kalhaar Blues and Greens golf course after he won the Professional Golf Tour of India's newest tournament and the season opener – PGTI Ahmedabad Masters presented by Kalhaar Blues and Greens.

Anirban, who had a splendid last season when he finished third in the Asian Tour Order of Merit and almost broke into top 100, appeared to have started off from where he left – as his six-stroke win in first of PGTI's seven-event Super Series is testament of that.

REALITY BEHIND NUMBERS

The soft-spoken golfer, however, knows the reality behind the numbers.

"Someone told me I shot 33 putts today. That shows how poorly I played. But luckily, my hitting has been good," Anirban said.

"I think the first day won me the tournament," Anirban said of the opening round where he shot 8-under, adding "conditions were easier and I played my best game on that day."

SHIFTING MOMENTUM

At the end of the third day, where he shot one-under, Anirban spoke about 'momentum' being not with him. And on the final day, the Bangalore-based professional admitted that it swung like a pendulum.

Anirban, who led overnight by four shots, faced stiff resistance from SSP Chowrasia, who birdied the first two holes to reduce the former's lead to two shots, early on.

Anirban, however, sank a 15-foot birdie putt on the third to regain a four-shot lead as Chowrasia dropped bogey. There was no looking back for Anirban from there on. He maintained his four-shot lead till the 11th despite two bogeys and another birdie.

JOY ON PAR-5S

The three-time winner on the Asian Tour then drove home the advantage by finding the green in two shots on the par-5 12th and 14th holes to earn birdies. He closed the tournament with another 15-foot birdie conversion on the 18th hole to round up an impressive win.

"Apart from the first day, I haven't had the momentum

this whole week and SSP came firing up. But I seized the momentum with the 15-foot birdie in the third hole," Anirban said, adding "but there had been a constant shift."

"I knew the stretch from 12th to 16th (holes) will be crucial and you can win or lose the match here. I was aware of the situation and my experience in playing under such situations helped me," he added.

"When he (SSP) shot the bogey at the 14th, where I shot a birdie, I knew I had the momentum and I just needed to hold on to it. I did exactly that," Anirban summed up his final round.

SURPRISING WIN

Looking back at his day, Anirban said, "The two bogeys are what I am happy about. Even when not at my best I was able to hit better."

"But I am surprised. I don't think I had expected this but I am happy with the win as I have set higher goals for myself this year," said the golfer who earned 900 Super Series points and the winner's cheque of Rs 8,08,250.

LEADERBOARD: 1. Anirban Lahiri (14-under) 2. Rahul Gangjee (8-under) 3. Abhinav Lohan (6-under) 4. SSP Chowrasia (5-under) 5. Shankar Das (3-under) 6. Sujjan Singh (2-under) 7. Angad Cheema (1-under) 8. Chiragh Kumar (par) 9. Shubhankar Sharma (1-over)