

PUBLICATION : DECCAN HERALD (DH)
EDITION : NEW DELHI
DATE : 6TH DECEMBER 2014, PAGE NO. : 16

Nocera hangs onto the lead

NEW DELHI, PTI: Gwladys Nocera missed a close putt on the final hole to return with a one-under 72 for a two-round total of 136 and saw the lead cut down to only two against Indian sensation Vaishavi Sinha in the second round of the Women's Indian Open, here on Friday.

Sinha, who is closing on the French golfer after she trailed by three strokes in the first round, awaits her 24th birthday on the final day of the tournament on Saturday.

The par-73 course looked different as many players did not record good scores.

Nocera was not happy with her game and she said that her games on the greens were not below expectations.

"I should have birdied the final hole as it was close to the cup. It just went off the line. I was uncomfortable on the green. Thirty-three putts don't speak well. Hope to improve in the final round," she said adding that there would be no change in her game plan.

Sinha shot a two-under 71 for a total of 138.

Sharmila Nicolett in joint fourth place with a score of 142 together with Belgium's Leurquin Chloe, England's Clyburn Holly and Burke Hannah.

Nocera in lead, Indians in hot pursuit

Kaushik Chatterji

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NEW DELHI: Back when it was first co-sanctioned by the Ladies European Tour (LET) only three Indians made the cut at the Women's Indian Open, two of whom were amateurs. Cut to four years later, and one of those two amateurs, now in her rookie year as a professional, is vying with a former LET Order of Merit winner for the top honours.

In its eighth year now, the women's national Open is yet to see an Indian golfer lift the trophy. Scratch the surface, though, and there's plenty of promise — the number of Indians who have made the cut has increased progressively since the tournament's inclusion in LET's schedule in 2010. That 10 Indians will play on Saturday, nine of them for money, becomes more impressive when one takes into account the tough conditions at the Delhi Golf Club on Friday.

After an opening round that saw low scores across the board — including a course record nine-under-par 63 by Gwladys



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Nocera — the second day was a reality check. Nocera is still out in front, but the lead is down to two strokes. While one of the reasons for a sedate sophomore of one-under 72 was that her "putts didn't drop", she also pointed out that the pin positions were much tougher on Friday.

Sharmila Nicollet concurred with the Frenchwoman. The only Indian to have made the cut in all

five editions of the Open as an LET-sanctioned event, Nicollet felt that the conditions were far easier on Thursday. But she was up for the challenge, reaching the green in two strokes on the par-five eighth hole before sinking the eagle putt from about four feet. However, a poor tee shot in fading light on the final hole — "the only drive I've missed over the last two days" — left her six

off the pace in tied fourth.

Still the Indian best placed to win it, then, is Vaishavi Sinha. The best amateur in 2010, Sinha, who shot a two-under 71 on Friday, blamed her poor start on the early morning chill. On Saturday, the lead pack of Nocera, Sinha and holder Thidapa Suwannapura tee off at quarter to 10. Should be toasty enough by then.

LEADERBOARD

- 136: Gwladys Nocera (64, 72); 138: Vaishavi Sinha (67, 71); 141: Thidapa Suwannapura (70, 71); 142: Chloe Leurquin (69, 73); Sharmila Nicollet (71, 71); Hannah Burke (71, 71); Holly Clyburn (67, 75).

☼ Cut applied at six-over 152

- Other Indians who have made the cut: Vani Kapoor, Gursimar Badwal, Aditi Ashok (am), Gauri Monga, Smriti Mehra, Rhea Nair, Shweta Galande, Saaniya Sharma

PUBLICATION : HT EDGE (HTE)

EDITION : NEW DELHI

DATE : 6TH DECEMBER 2014, PAGE NO. :14

**VAISHAVI SECOND,
NOCERA IN LEAD**

NEW DELHI: Vaishavi Sinha retained her second position despite a subdued two-under 71 after the second round of the \$300,000 Hero Women's Indian Open as overnight leader Gwladys Nocera remained in the lead. Vaishavi took her total to eight-under 138 that leaves her two strokes adrift of Nocera going into the final round on Saturday. IANS

Nocera has 2-shot lead over Vaishavi

By **Shaghil Bilal**
in New Delhi

FRENCHWOMAN Gwladys Nocera looked a pale shadow of the golfer who shot a course record nine-under in the first round, but was content to remain in sole lead after scoring one-under 72 in the second round at the Hero Women's Indian Open here on Friday.

India's Vaishavi Sinha raised hopes of becoming the first Indian Open winner from the country, as she shot a two-under 71 to aggregate eight-under 138 and stay two strokes behind the leader in second position after the penultimate round.

While defending champion Thidapa Suwannapura of Thailand is in sole third position after a two-under 71, local star Sharmila Nicolle jumped to tied fourth with a similar score. She shares the spot with England's Holly Clyburn (75) and Hannah Burke (71) and Belgium's Chloe Leurquin (73), four strokes behind Vaishavi.

Vaishavi and Sharmila look primed to overcome two marks in the final round on Saturday — become the first Indian

**Sharmila is tied
fourth after Rd 2
of Indian Open**

champion or to improve the best performance by an Indian, a tied fourth finish by Irina Brar and Meghna Bal in 2007.

A total of 66 players, including 10 Indians, made the cut at the par-73 Delhi Golf Club, and Nocera held on to the lead despite her putting being off the mark in unfriendly conditions. She set up two birdies and dropped a bogey on the front nine and parred all the holes on the back nine. "I didn't putt well today. I took 33 putts against 26 yesterday, and that made all the difference. My driving and iron shots were good in today's round," said Nocera, who will be gunning for her 13th title on the Ladies European Tour on Saturday.

Vaishavi will celebrate her birthday on Saturday and wants it to coincide with a title. However, while Nocera's game lacked good putting, the Indian was unhappy with her ball striking. "Yesterday I hit 12 greens and today just 10," Vaishavi said. "My hitting was a lot worse today and it was quite frustrating because I didn't miss greens just on the edge. But my short game was really good today."



Indian Press Clearing

PUBLICATION : **MILLENNIUM POST (MP)**

EDITION : **NEW DELHI**

DATE : **6TH DECEMBER 2014, PAGE NO. : 14**

FRENCH GOLFER NOCERA LEADS BY TWO, INDIAN PLAYERS HOT ON TRAIL

NEW DELHI: Gwladys Nocera missed a close putt on the final hole to return with a one-under 72 for a two-round total of 136 and saw the lead cut down to only two against Indian sensation Vaishavi Sinha in the second round of the women's Indian Open on Friday. Sinha, who is closing on the French golfer after she trailed by three strokes in the first round, awaits her 24th birthday on the final day of the tournament on Saturday. The par-73 course looked different as many players did not record good scores. Nocera was not happy with her game and she conceded her game on the greens was not below expectations. "I should have birdied the final hole as it was close to the cup. It just went off the line. I was uncomfortable on the green. Thirty-three putts don't speech well," she said. AGENCIES

PUBLICATION : **NAVBHARAT TIMES (NBT)**
EDITION : **NEW DELHI**
DATE : **6TH DECEMBER 2014, PAGE NO. : 10**

नोसेरा को बढ़त

■ नई दिल्ली : फ्रांस की जी नोसेरा ने महिला इंडियन ओपन गोल्फ के दूसरे दौर में एक अंडर 72 के स्कोर के साथ बढ़त बना ली। भारत की वैष्णवी सिन्हा पहले दौर के बाद तीन स्ट्रोक पीछे थी। अब वह दो स्ट्रोक पीछे है। शर्मिला निकोलेट संयुक्त चौथे स्थान पर है।

PUBLICATION : THE ASIAN AGE (AA)

EDITION : NEW DELHI

DATE : 6TH DECEMBER 2014, PAGE NO. : 19



Franc's Gwladys Nocera in action on the second day of the Hero Women's Indian Open tournament at the Delhi Golf Club on Friday.

Nocera leads, Vaishavi stays in title contention

PRIYANKA SHARMA
NEW DELHI, DEC. 5

France's Gwladys Nocera continued to stay on top of the leaderboard, though her lead was cut down to two strokes, on the penultimate day of the \$300,000 Hero Women's Indian Open golf tournament here on Friday.

On a day when most of the golfers struggled on the greens of the par-73 Delhi Golf Course, Nocera followed up her opening round's 64 with a decent one-under 72 even as Noida golfer Vaishavi Sinha stayed in contention with a two-under 71. After 36 holes, Vaishavi has a total of eight-under 138, two shots behind Nocera.

The cut fell at six-over 152, with 66 pros — including 10 Indians — making the money round.

Unlike her opening day fireworks, Nocera found

● **Nocera follows up her opening round's 64 with a one-under 72. Vaishavi is placed second with a two-under 71 on Day 2**

just two birdies against a bogey on the day, and was disappointed to miss a close putt on the closing 18th hole. "I should have birdied the final hole as it was close to the cup. It just went off the line. I was uncomfortable on the green. Thirty-three putts don't speak well. Hope to redeem in the final round tomorrow," said the 39-year-old, eyeing a second Ladies European Tour title on the Indian soil after her Indian Masters triumph in 2007.

Vaishavi, meanwhile, is looking forward to give herself a birthday present as she turns 24 on

Saturday. But she is aware of the challenges on the final day.

Should Vaishavi win, she would become the first Indian winner on the Ladies European Tour.

Defending champion Thidapa Suwannapura of Thailand, tied fifth overnight, grabbed the third place after carding two-under 71 for a total of five-under 141.

Meanwhile, top golfer Sharmila Nicolle made a move on the leaderboard — from a tied 10th to the joint fourth place — thanks to her eagle on the par-5 eighth hole. Sharmila's card of two-under 70 also had four birdies against four bogeys. Debutant Gauri Monga was off colour as she managed a three-over 76 to share the 14th spot.

Among Indians who missed the cut were Neha Tripathi, Ankita Tiwana, Pallavi Jain to name a few.

GOLF

Vaishnavi inches closer to Gwladys

Uthra Ganesan

NEW DELHI: A day after setting a new course record, Gwladys Nocera had a reality check on day two of the Hero Women's Indian Open here on Friday, struggling to find her lines and barely managing to stay ahead.

With a one-under 72 score for the day, Gwladys now has a two-day total of 10-under 136, just two strokes ahead of Indian youngster Vaishnavi Sinha. Defending champion Thidapa Suwannapura of Thailand was a further three shots behind, but is still in with a chance to win the title on the final day.

After the cut was applied at 60, eight Indians made it to the final round. Three of them — Vaishnavi, Sharmila Nicolle and Gursimar Badhwal — have kept themselves in the hunt to become the first Indian winner in the event's eighth edition.

Gwladys, who started the day with a bogey on the fourth hole, birdied the next. But, the conditions on the front-nine — she birdied the ninth for her only other under-par hole — convinced her to play conservatively. She parred the entire back-nine, including a long putt on the 16th, to save the round.

"My driving was good but I didn't putt well. The pin positions were a lot tougher as it's a tough course. I am not thinking of my score at the moment, I will just go out and play my game tomorrow (Saturday) and hope for the best," said Gwladys later. Vaishnavi, on the other



ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT: Though Vaishnavi Sinha moved to two strokes behind the leader, she felt she had to work on her swing to perform better.

hand, was disappointed with her performance. The Noida girl, who turns 24 on Saturday, is hoping to improve and gift herself a first professional title, but admitted that she had to work on her swing.

With two birdies to start the day, Vaishnavi would have hoped to repeat her first day's performance. But, two consecutive bogeys on the third and fourth wiped out the advantage. She repeatedly went off the fairways and had to fall back on her chipping and putting to get back into the game.

Sharmila, on the other hand, was left rueing another bad ending to a great day. The Bangalore golfer has been working on hitting the ball straighter, and it has worked for her here. However, inconsistency has let her down. She eagled the eighth

hole to go two-under on the front-nine, but a birdie-bogey finish dashed her hopes.

The scores:

136: Gwladys Nocera (Fra) (64, 72); 138: Vaishavi Sinha (Ind) (67, 71); 141: Thidapa Suwannapura (Tha) (70, 71); 142: Chloe Leurquin (Bel) (69, 73), Holly Clyburn (Eng) (67, 75), Hannah Burke (Eng) (71, 71), Sharmila Nicolle (Ind) (71, 71); 144: Fabienne In-Albon (Sui) (71, 73), Sally Watson (Sco) (73, 71), Klara Spilkova (Cze) (74, 70), Hyeon Seo Kang (Kor) (72, 72); 145: Titiya Plucksataporn (Tha) (71, 74), Gursimar Badhwal (Ind) (70, 75); 146: Wannasiri Sirisampanit (Tha) (75, 71), Sophie Walker (Eng) (74, 72), Pungpaka Phuntumabamung (Tha) (75, 71), Nina Holleder (Ger) (73, 73), Tiffany Tavee (USA) (76, 70), Ye Seul Lee ((Kor) (73, 73), Janya Morakiphon (Tha) (75, 71), Gauri Monga (Ind) (70, 76), Beth Allen (USA) (73, 73), and Bo-Mi Suh (Kor) (71, 75).

Nocera in lead, Indians in hot pursuit

Kaushik Chatterji

■ sportsdesk@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Back when it was first co-sanctioned by the Ladies European Tour (LET) only three Indians made the cut at the Women's Indian Open, two of whom were amateurs. Cut to four years later, and one of those two amateurs, now in her rookie year as a professional, is vying with a former LET Order of Merit winner for the top honours.

In its eighth year now, the women's national Open is yet to see an Indian golfer lift the trophy. Scratch the surface, though, and there's plenty of promise — the number of Indians who have made the cut has increased progressively since the tournament's inclusion in LET's schedule in 2010. That 10 Indians will play on Saturday, nine of them for money, becomes more impressive when one takes into account the tough conditions at the Delhi Golf Club on Friday.

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Nocera — the second day was a reality check. Nocera is still out in front, but the lead is down to two strokes. While one of the reasons for a sedate sophomore of one-under 72 was that her “putts didn't drop”, she also pointed out that the pin positions were much tougher on Friday.

Sharmila Nicollet concurred with the Frenchwoman. The only Indian to have made the cut in all

five editions of the Open as an LET-sanctioned event, Nicollet felt that the conditions were far easier on Thursday. But she was up for the challenge, reaching the green in two strokes on the par-five eighth hole before sinking the eagle putt from about four feet. However, a poor tee shot in fading light on the final hole — “the only drive I've missed over the last two days” — left her six

off the pace in tied fourth.

Still the Indian best placed to win it, then, is Vaishavi Sinha. The best amateur in 2010, Sinha, who shot a two-under 71 on Friday, blamed her poor start on the early morning chill. On Saturday, the lead pack of Nocera, Sinha and holder Thidapa Suwannapura tee off at quarter to 10. Should be toasty enough by then.

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- * Cut applied at six-over 152

- Other Indians who have made the cut: Vani Kapoor, Gursimar Badwal, Aditi Ashok (am), Gauri Monga, Smriti Mehra, Rhea Nair, Shweta Galande, Saaniya Sharma

PUBLICATION : **THE PIONEER (PIO)**
EDITION : **NEW DELHI**
DATE : **6TH DECEMBER 2014, PAGE NO. : 16**

NOCERA RETAINS LEAD

NEW DELHI: Indian woman golfer Vaishavi Sinha retained her second position despite a subdued two-under 71 after the second round of the \$300,000 Hero Women's Indian Open as overnight leader Gwladys Nocera remained in the lead here. Vaishavi, who created a sensation with her stunning performance in the first round by carding a six-under 67 took her total to eight-under 138 that leaves her two strokes adrift of Nocera going into the third and final round Saturday at the Delhi Golf Club (DGC). The biggest gainer on the day was India's Sharmila Nicollet, the lanky Indian golfer moved into tied fourth with a card of two-under.

Agencies

Gwladys maintains lead but Vaishavi remains strong contender

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, 5 December

Playing steady golf Vaishavi Sinha shot 2 under 71 to stay put at the second place as overnight leader Gwladys Nocera (France) carded a flawless one under 72 and managed to remain on the top of the leaderboard with a two-day total of 10-under in the Hero Women's Indian Open here today.

Vaishavi, with a subdued 71 had a two-round score of eight-under that leaves her two strokes adrift of Nocera going into the third and final round tomorrow.

The Indian teeing off from the 10th hole, sunk three birdies on the 11th, 13th and 18th and a bogie on the 12th. On the turn she scored two more birdies on the 1st and 2nd, but two back-to-back bogies cancelled out the gains leaving her at two-under for the day, which was enough to retain sole second place on the board.

Vaishavi, who will turn 24 on Saturday, is looking forward to give herself the biggest birthday present in her golfing career. But she is aware of what lies ahead in the decider tomorrow.

"Yesterday I hit 12 greens and today I hit 10 greens. My hitting was a lot worse today and it was quite frustrating because I didn't miss greens just on the edge, I was missing way left and they were wild shots, so my short game was really good today. I hit 25 putts, which was the same as yesterday," she said.

The biggest gainer on the day, however, was Bangalore based Sharmila Nicolle. From tied 10th place after Round 1, the lanky Indian moved into tied fourth with a card of two-under. However, her scorecard doesn't reflect her aggressive play that saw her sink an eagle on the 8th. She also sunk four birdies that were unfortunately undone by four bogies spread evenly on either side of the turn.

"I started badly, the game picked up as the day progressed. My putting improved and my driving was pretty precise. But the



pin positions were tough and I played a mix of attacking and conservative game. As for tomorrow you never know, I will be going for a win," said Nicolle.

Defending champion Thidapa Suwannapura of Thailand, who was in tied fifth place overnight, moved into sole third place after carding two-under 71. In her second outing, the Thai golfer scored five birdies and three bogies.

Compared to the fireworks in Round 1 that saw Nocera return an error-free card, the French golfer had a much more subdued outing today. The former LET Order of Merit winner dug deep into her experience to score two birdies and a bogie. The highlight of her play today was her ability to extricate herself from difficult situations, especially on hole nos. 14 and 16.

"I think I did reasonably well given that I didn't putt too well. I took 33 putts. Today, the pin positions were tough and pretty tricky. It was easy to make mistakes. Thankfully, my driving and iron play were good," said Nocera.

The 12-time winner on the LET is aware of the challenge that she faces from Vaishavi, going into the final round. "I am not going to think too much about tomorrow's score. I'll concentrate more on playing a good game and try to eliminate the mistakes that I made today," she said.



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Vaishavi two off the pace: India's Vaishavi Sinha retained her second position despite a subdued two-under 71 after the second round of the \$300,000 Hero Women's Indian Open as overnight leader Gwladys Nocera (72) remained in the lead in New Delhi on Friday. Vaishavi took her total to eight-under 138. That leaves her two strokes adrift of Nocera going into the third and final round on Saturday. Defending champion Thidapa Suwannapura of Thailand, who was in tied fifth place overnight, moved into sole third place after carding two-under 71. The biggest gainer on the day was India's Sharmila Nicollet. From tied 10th place, the lanky Indian moved into tied fourth with a card of two-under. AGENCIES

French golfer Nocera leads by two

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PUBLICATION : **THE TIMES OF INDIA (TOI)**

EDITION : **NEW DELHI**

DATE : **6TH DECEMBER 2014, PAGE NO. : 29**

Vaishavi in second place

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PUBLICATION : THE TRIBUNE (TRI)

EDITION : NEW DELHI

DATE : 6TH DECEMBER 2014, PAGE NO. : 22

NEW DELHI

Vaishavi second, Gwladys leads in Indian Open

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