

Published Date:	Friday 4th October, 2019	Publication:	The Times of India [Mumbai]
Journalist:	Moushumi Bora	Page No:	23
MAV/CCM:	901,842/41.18	Circulation:	830,000

MacLaren and Hillier in lead after Round 1

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Gurugram: Every golfer has a story, but this one delivers her own stories quite eloquently.

"Golf is beautiful in its brutality. And that's worth watching," **Meghan MacLaren** writes in her blog. There was

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nothing brutal in how she conducted herself on the DLF G&CC course on Day 1 of the \$500,000 Hero Women's Indian Open, but it was beautiful how she tamed the beast of the back nine to share a one-stroke lead with Aussie Whitney Hillier.

The 25-year-old English-woman cannot escape the en-



gine analogies and she definitely revved it up before the turn as she finished with a 5-under 67. The 'Quarry Nine' was the morning vision as she started from the tenth hole. "Waking up at 4am is not a nice thing but the first hour you have an empty course in front of you and really pure greens so that was good."

The No. 6 on the Ladies European Tour Order of Merit scripted her first birdie on the par-3 12th, and more followed on the 14th, 16th and the dangerous 17th. And yes, it did turn brutal. As the mercury rose, "it got really bad, burning hot, It just kept

getting stickier and stickier out there."

Little did Meghan know after two more birdies on the first and second which took the score to six-under; that she was up for a fight on the front nine. Three-putt on the 4th; birdie on the fifth; another three-putt on the 6th; another birdie on the 7th; missed green on the 9th.

Every day on the course is a journey, and an opportunity to express. "I was getting edgy, butterflies in the stomach, but I've missed that feeling. When you're in that situation, it's where you want to be. The alternative is that you are not playing for anything anymore, and it's hard to bring out your best golf. I think it pushes you on and re-

minds you of why you do it."

Bring on those nervous jitters again if it means sharing the lead. Meghan, you hear, considered applying for Oxford or Cambridge but the game was more enticing. While such a degree could have sent her on a different path, the Northants native uses the web world to combine her passion for sport and love for writing. "Sport waits for no one... but Stokes," was her take on Big Ben's Ashes tale.

First round scores: 67 (5-under)-Meghan MacLaren (Eng), Whitney Hillier (Aus); 68-Marianne Skarpnord (Nor), Liz Young (Eng); 69-Linda Wessberg (Swe); Selected: 70-Catriona Matthew, 77-Becky Morgan; **Top Indians:** 71-Pranavi Urs (am); 72-Amandeep Drall, Diksha Dagar, Tvesa Malik; 73-Gaurika Bishnoi, Neha Tripathi, Jyotsana Singh, Astha Madan.