

Of course, it's course talks again

Players Excited About The Softer Conditions But Challenges Await

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Gurugram: "The drivers will out," was the chorus of approval as the European favourites sized up the conditions at the DLF Golf & Country Club course.

Battered by unseasonal rains, the course had undergone a swift 'refurbishment' in the past two weeks amidst doubts that it won't be presented in its full glory at this October reprise of the Hero Women's Indian Open.

HERO WOMEN'S INDIAN OPEN

Cue, happy faces this week and pleasant thoughts.

"It was so dry last year," said the 2024 Order of Merit winner Chiara Tamburlini.

The Swiss missed the cut in a year she notched up three wins. "Interesting this week, good shots will be close to the pin because of the soft greens, and there's really fresh air compared to last year so I'm glad about that," added the 25-year-old from nature's hub of St Gallen.



Tristan Jones / LET

Mimi Rhodes, the current Ladies European Tour Order of Merit leader, starts as favourite at this year's Hero Women's Indian Open

This year's Merit leader Mimi Rhodes had followed suit, picking up a treble of titles. The Taunton girl, who made a Sotogrande turn and grew up idolising Seve Ballesteros, is making her first foray into this part of Asia. "The LET takes us to different countries. It's exciting to experience something out of my comfort zone but I still have to take the same preparation and make sure that I'm focused and not spending too much time in Delhi adventuring around."

She decided to skip Wednesday's Pro-Am for a taste of local culture.

While for newbie Mimi, it's a clean slate, No. 2 Shannon Tan missed the title by one stroke last year. The 21-

year-old battled fears of burnout after playing 24 events but has trimmed down her schedule. Singapore's first Olympic golfer hit the nail on the head: "The course is different, but it's still challenging. With the rough the way it is, you've got to be on the fairways and with the greens being softer you can go at the pins a bit more now, but you still have to be cautious with your misses."

So, accuracy matters, and the man at the course's control station says the most consistent golfer will walk off the brutal final three holes on Sunday with the trophy. Listen to defending champion Liz Young, who almost slipped on the 18th last year. "On the last hole I put it

FAST FACTS

- Dates: Oct 9-12
- Number of players: 110
- Players from India: 29
- Nationalities: 31
- Edition: 17th
- Prize Purse: \$500,000
- Winner's prize: \$75,000
- Defending champion: Liz Young, 286 (-2)
- 2025 LET Winners (4): Alice Hewson, Sara Kousskova, Mimi Rhodes, Shannon Tan
- Indians in top-60: Diksha Dagar (21), Avani Prasanth (50), Pranavi Urs (58)
- Past champions (2): Camille Chevalier (2017), Liz Young (2024)

in the water, but I managed to get it up-and-down from 90 yards, so that got me the trophy. It was a bit of a nerve-wracking finish."

Could it be Diksha Dagar's turn? Europe's No. 21 did not betray any plans or emotion but having come close in 2023 and delivering five top-10 finishes this year, she seemed the best bet to break the nine-year home drought. Rookie Avani Prasanth (50) and Pranavi Urs (58) are the other locals in the top-60. Meanwhile, former India No. 1 Gaurika Bishnoi will have husband Aaron Rai, World No. 29, on the bag this week.