

# Hitaashee jumps into lead as 12 Indians make the cut

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**GURUGRAM:** Local girl Hitaashee Bakshi produced a bogey free round to jump to sole lead on the second day of the Hero Women's Indian Open (HWIO) on Friday as 12 Indians made the cut going into the money rounds of \$500,000 Ladies' European Tour (LET) event. The 21-year-old Hitaashee carded 5-under 67 for a cumulative 7-under.

Teeing off from the front nine in the morning, Hitaashee scored birdies on par-5 fourth, par-4 seventh and par-5 eighth to get off to a strong start. She was equally consistent on the back nine, making birdies on the 12th and 13th holes and paring the rest. The tricky home stretch of the DLF — holes 16, 17, and 18 — were negotiated with caution.

"I am feeling good, this is my home course. My expectations are where it should be and I'm really happy with that," she said. This is the first time Hitaashee has led in a LET event. "Today, I teed off at 6:40am and that is exactly the time I usually play here at this course. So, it just felt so normal to me that even if the course was wet, I was like, I have played it so many times, that's just a normal round of golf for me," Hit-



**Hitaashee Bakshi.**

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aashee, the WGAI Order of Merit winner of 2024, said.

Amateur Zara Anand held on to her tied-second spot, carding 2-under for a total of 6-under at halfway stage. Zara shared the spot with German Verena Gimmy, who also held on to her overnight position with a 2-under.

Zara's five birdies were interspersed with bogeys on the third and seventh and a double bogey on the 17th. "I don't really think there is a code to DLF, every day is different, every hole is different, but the more I play here, the more comfortable I get on the greens and on the shots so I think that's good and I'm

just looking forward to the weekend," she said.

"Quite a roller coaster finish for me. I had a great putt on 16 and I think I got a little bit unlucky on 17 and then again another great putt and a great shot on 18. So, that was great. Got my heart rate up a little bit. On 17th, my tee shot went through the fairway into the rough and then my second shot landed on top and rolled all the way back down and then again it landed on top and came back down onto the green and I had a 3-putt after that."

"I'm just enjoying every shot and every moment out there and just taking it as it comes. I'm just looking forward to the weekend and just grateful to be here," Zara explained.

Pranavi Urs, coming back from a wrist injury and a top-five finish in France, equalled this week's best of 67 — shot by Vani Kapoor on Day 1 and by Hitaashee in the morning — to jump 42 places at the tied-fourth position with Swiss Chiara Tamburlini. Pranavi's only bogey came on the second, when she went into the rough.

**Day 2 Leaderboard (top 5 only):** 1 Hitaashee Bakshi (Ind) -7 (70, 67); 2 Veren Gimmy (Ger) -6 (68, 70); 2 Zara Anand (Ind) -6 (68, 70); 4 Chiara Tamburlini (Sui) -5 (71, 68); 4 Pranavi Urs (Ind) -5 (72, 67)