Pornanong rekindles India love affair

GURUGRAM, PTI

Thailand golfer Pornanong Phatlum lifted the Hero Women's Indian Open trophy for the fourth time after overcoming a spirited fight from India's Vani Kapoor here on Sunday.

The seasoned LPGA player's wins at the DLF Golf and Country Club in 2008, 2009 and 2012 had come at the adjoining Arnold Palmer Course, and Pornanong completed the sequence by conquering the Gary Player Course with a four-day score of 11-under 277.

After posting rounds of 72, 71, 69, Pornanong left the best for the last by carding a flawless bogey-free 7-under 65 under pressure.

Barring the start to the final day, when Asian Games gold medallist Pranavi Urs seemed to mount a charge, it was mainly a two-player contest between Pornanong and Vani Kapoor, who finished at 7-under 281 (73, 69, 69, 70).



Thailand's Pornanong Phatlum poses with the Hero Women's Indian Open trophy on Sunday. LET

In a bid to protect a sore wrist, defending champion Shannon Tan at 4-under 284 (68, 77, 67, 72) played far below her potential and finished sole third. She was followed by Czechia's Sara Kouskova at 3-under 285 (69, 72, 73, 71) along with Pranavi (70, 70, 73, 72) at T-4.

There were three Indians in the top-10 on the leaderboard with Tvesa Malik finishing tied-7th at 1-under 287 with scores of 71, 73, 71, 72. Vani registered her best result on the Ladies European Tour (LET) with her sole second finish. Going into the final day with a slender one-shot lead, it could well have been a breakthrough win on the LET for Vani.

She got off to a whirlwind start with four birdies in five holes, but missing the short birdie putt on the 9th appeared to upset her rhythm.

Pornanong ticked a few boxes herself after arriving in India as one of the invitees this week.

"India is like home, and I feel I can settle down here. My fourth win here is the most special as I didn't think I was going to win again. It seems like a dream," Pornanong said.

Leading scores (after 72 holes):
277: Pornanong Phatlum (72, 71, 69, 65); **281:** Vani Kapoor (73, 69, 69, 70); **284:** Shannon Tan (68, 77, 67, 72); **285:** Sara Kouskova (69, 72, 73, 71); Pranavi Urs (70, 70, 73, 72).