Women's Indian Open: Kapoor takes one shot lead into final day

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NEW DELHI: Home fans will have an Indian leader to root for in the final round of the $500,000 Hero Women's Indian Open at the DLF Golf and Country Club in Gurugram. It is not the newly crowned Asian Games champion Pranavi Urs but the seasoned Vani Kapoor.

On another day of struggle on one of the most difficult courses in the Ladies European Tour (LET) — only eight players are sub-par in the tournament after three rounds — Vani shot a second consecutive 3-under 69 in the third round to take a one-shot lead.

The 32-year-old though will have two strong contenders breathing down her neck. One shot behind at tied second are Singapore's defending champion Shannon Tan and Thai Pornanong Phatlum, winner of the event in 2008, 2009 and 2012.

Shannon, 22, the 2025 LET Order of Merit winner and three-time winner on the tour, shook off her 77 on Friday by carding a brilliant five-under 67 on Saturday. The Asian Games bronze medallist played aggressively to bounce back and it paid off.

Putting superbly, she reeled off five birdies in her first six holes on the front nine. However, a persistent wrist problem, which needed taping and attributed to "wear and tear", flared up midway. That meant her game slipped on the back nine, which saw three birdies cancelled out by three bogeys. Shannon left for an appointment with the physio to be ready for Sunday.



Vani Kapoor shot a fine 3-under 69 in the third round. HT

Pornanong, 36, twice winner on LET, was also on 4-under for the tournament after she shot 69, three birdies on the back nine lifting her after being par on the front nine.

Tied fourth with Argentina's Magdalena Simmermacher, Pranavi was far from her usual composed self. Battling a stomach bug this week which has left her drained, the 23-year-old from Mysore chasing her first win on LET did not have enough strength to keep her game together.

The result was an error-strewn round of 1-over par 73, which included a double bogey on the par-4 14th hole, besides two other bogeys. Three birdies helped Pranavi stay only two shots off the lead. Tvesa Malik was the other Indian to be sub-par, a one-under 71 placing her eighth.

Vani, who found momentum in the second round by holing out for an eagle, had four birdies in her first 11 holes in the third round, although the last four holes saw two bogeys besides a birdie. "It was one the most fun rounds that I've ever had. Of course, it was a little up and down towards the end, but I'm glad that I kept it together," she said. "(Sunday) It's just another day for me to be honest, not that I've ever led an LET event, but I'm pretty calm and I just hope I stay this way."

Pranavi was even struggling to breathe after her round. "I'm exhausted. I think my body actually gave up in the back nine. It's been a grind the last few days...I haven't had a meal since the Pro-Am day. "I had like a couple of bad putts and bad shots, I just couldn't focus because my body gave up. I was sitting after every shot, which is very unlike me."

It was a day when only 11 players played under-par on the Gary Player-designed course. On such a layout where golf can often feel like an ordeal with every error penalised, it is likely to be an open race on Sunday.