



From left, golfers Vidhatri Urs, Hitaashee Bakshi, Vani Kapoor, Jasmine Shekar with the Women's Indian Open trophy. HT

Women's Indian Open from Oct 22

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NEW DELHI: India's women golfers get a huge opportunity to make a statement this week when Aditi Ashok, Diksha Dagar and Pranavi Urs tee off in the Asian Games on Wednesday. They can make an impact as a larger group if an Indian winner emerges at the Hero Women's Indian Open, to be played at the DLF Golf and Country Club from October 22-25.

The \$500,000 Ladies European Tour event, in its 18th edition, last saw a home winner in 2016—Aditi Ashok—who is now striving to make a mark on the LPGA Tour.

While three of the last four winners—Shannon Tan of Singapore (2025), England's Liz Young (2024) and Germany's Olivia Cowan (2022)—will be in the field, Indian players will feel they are not too far away from crowning themselves.

Last year, Hitaashee Bakshi was third, Pranavi fourth and Avani Prashanth tied fifth. At a media conference on Tuesday to launch the event, Hitaashee spoke about the heartbreak and how her mother handed a poster of the trophy when she returned home to motivate her. "I gave 100%, yet I wasn't happy. My mother said

whatever you feel now, next year you must bring the trophy. This time I will win!"

However, the DLF course is likely to be set up as one of the toughest on the tour, as has been the norm. Women's Golf Association of India (WGAI) president, Kavita Singh, appealed: "Maybe on behalf of the players, make it a bit kinder."

She said Indian players are not far away in terms of skills, but "we've to work on our mental strength. Beyond a point the game, technical abilities are all the same."

The field includes past LET Order of Merit winners: Tan, Switzerland's Chiara Tamburlini and Thailand's Trichat Cheenglab.

WGAI secretary-general, Champika Sayal said while Indian women golfers are steadily improving it was important to do well on the international tours to get a ranking boost, which is key to be in contention for the 2028 LA Olympics. Currently five Indians hold full playing rights on LET (Aditi, Diksha, Pranavi, Avani and Hitaashee) while Vani Kapoor, who has two wins on the domestic tour this season and heads the Order of Merit, has a conditional card.