Indians chase elusive home crown

Women's Indian Open: Golden Girl Pranavi Returns To Renew Rivalry With Defending Champion Shannon

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Gurugram: Last year, the Indian girls did everything but win. Three of them were in the top 5, including Asian Games gold medallist Pranavi Urs, as the elusive Hero Women's Indian Open title remained out of reach. Posing for the customary pre-tournament photographs with her Games medals, red nail polish, and a glint of wrist bling, the 23-year-old from Mysuru cut a stylish figure.

Still not used to fame, she will be glad that the focus will be back on the game again. The draw has reunited Pranavi and defending champion Shannon Tan, the Singaporean having walked away with bronze at Kasugai CC. But the 2025 LET Order of Merit champ has the bragging rights on the DLF Golf & Country Club course. Shannon got her visa late that week but had a surprise ending in store. If not for Shannon, Pranavi would not have known when she had rolled in the winning putt in Japan. "I hope she does not have to inform me (of the win) on the 18th green this time." A slight cockiness could be detected, as the joke rolled with a hidden challenge.

LET



HOT STREAK: Pranavi Urs

It wasn't Pranavi but Hitaashee, with a smile to conquer, who swung into the fourth day with a three-stroke lead but faltered in finishing school. The Stephen King fan has now turned to the classics for inspiration, unlike Pranavi who had invoked the spirit of Rory McIlroy, during an early setback in her pursuit of gold. "I was so nervous when I met Rory (at the DGC last week). We had a good chat about golf – about how you can always come back from a bad round."

Hitaashee will need no reminding of the final round. But recounting the 'count's' tale where imprisoned Dantes reinvents himself, gives her the determination and belief that reversals of fortune are just around the corner. The Gary Player course has plenty of such stories, but with danger lurking at every turn.

The 22-year-old pointed out that some of the fairways, including the quarry 17th, have become narrower as the club has grown the rough. "They're trying to make it harder as if it wasn't tough enough already," said Pro-Am winner Sanna Nuutinen. "The only saving grace has been the greens, they're a bit softer and playing more normally."

Diksha Dagar, the top Indian in Europe, opted to play the Pro-Am despite wishing to rest her right knee till Thursday. "Compared with last year, the setup is longer in terms of yardage," she said. More trouble, but Shannon feels she can aim for aggression because of the soft conditions. "Being a good ball-striker, technically it should suit me. I've done it before means I can do it again."

The course that leaves you breathless may have a different take.