



BATTLING HEND PULLS TWO SHOTS CLEAR OF LAHIRI AT VENETIAN MACAU OPEN

Macau, October 25: Defending champion Scott Hend of Australia raced two shots clear of India's Anirban Lahiri after battling to a four-under-par 67 in the third round of the Venetian Macau Open on Saturday.

Despite feeling "flat", the in-form Hend dug deep into his reserves to produce three birdies over his closing six holes at the Macau Golf and Country Club to give himself a shot at winning a second straight title following his triumph at the Hong Kong Open last week.

Lahiri, who finished runner-up to Hend in Macau last season, carded a solid bogey-free 67 for second place while Thailand's Prom Meesawat fired the day's best of 64 to lie three behind the leader in the US\$900,000 Asian Tour event.

"It was good, I feel about 65% and I felt average. Hopefully I can come back tomorrow and feel a little more energy and concentrate better. I'm just feeling flat, extremely flat. I was waiting for it to come after last week and it's arrived. Hopefully the storm has past," said the 41-year-old Aussie, who leads on 14-under-par 199.

The long-hitting Hend, chasing a seventh Asian Tour victory, came out of the blocks in stunning style when he nailed four successive birdies from the second hole which included a chip-in on the fifth. But he stuttered with three bogeys over a five-hole stretch in mid-round before regaining his advantage with birdies on 13, 15 and 18.

"I just lost my concentration. I said to myself I was still in a good position and it didn't matter if I had finished one or two shots behind. I think I could still come from anywhere to lift the trophy again. We're in position. Now, the race begins," said Hend, who will be hoping to become only the second player after China's Zhang Lian-wei to successfully defend the Venetian Macau Open title.

"There's no pressure. The pressure will be on the guys chasing. I'm the guy who won last week, I'm the one who's got the title. I've been there and done that. It'll be nice to lift another one but guess what, my name is on that trophy. Who knows ... the stars might align and I might get it and I'm going to try my hardest. I'm not going to give up. Whoever wins, we'll have a duke out."

Lahiri reaped the rewards of spending extra time at the practice green after Friday's lackluster 73 as he rolled in birdies on one, six, nine and 17. The 27-year-old Indian, currently second on the Order of Merit, will be hoping to reproduce his opening round's 61 or last year's final round of 62 here in Macau to upstage Hend.

“When I left the range this morning, he (Hend) said he wanted to play with me and I’m looking forward to it,” smiled Lahiri, who is chasing his fifth Asian Tour title.

“I just told myself to come out more positively. Yesterday, I wasn’t in a good frame of mind but I just enjoyed my round today, something Thaworn (Wiratchant) said “I’m an old man and I enjoy my golf”.

“There’s certainly a lot to play for, a lot at stake, a lot of goals and targets. Sometimes, you just have to remember to enjoy yourself which is what I did.”

Burly Prom, who ended an eight-year winless run in Taipei last month, was in sparkling form as he fired seven birdies and kept the bogeys off his card for the second straight day. “I hit it very good and put myself in with a good chance,” said the Thai.

“Every time I play this course, it’s always tough. You have to be patient and set your mind very strong. When your thinking is good, your mind is good, you can swing the way you want. You’re just focused on the target. That’s all I’m trying to think.”

Thaworn Wiratchant of Thailand (67), winner here in 2009, Chinese Taipei’s Chan Shih-chang (70), and co-overnight leader Adam Groom of Australia (72) are tied fourth, five back on 204 while South African star Ernie Els shot a 69 to lie in tied 22nd position on 211.

The Venetian Macau Open is jointly organised by Macau Sport Development Board of Macau SAR Government (MSDB) and Golf Association of Macau. It is sanctioned by both the Asian Tour and the Golf Association of Macau, and promoted by IMG. The Venetian Macao® is the title sponsor of the event for a third successive year.

Sponsors joining The Venetian Macao in support of the tournament include Rolex, Air Macau, Blue Girl, Lamborghini and Hong Kong Descente, which carries both the Le Coq Sportif Golf Collection, Twinwoods Wine and Munsingwear.

For more details on the Venetian Macau Open, please visit www.thevenetianmacauopen.com.

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Rights-free Photo

Photo 1: Defending Champion Scott Hend held his position at the top of the leaderboard after a round of 67, or 4-under-par. He now has a two stroke lead going into the final day.

Photo 2: India’s No.1 Anirban Lahiri returned to form in round 3 and finished in 2nd place with a round of 67.

Photo 3: “Big Dolphin” Prom Meesawat scored a round of 64, the lowest round of the day, and lies 3 strokes behind the leader in 3rd place.

About Macau Sport Development Board of the Macau Special Administrative Region Government

Macau Sport Development Board, under the capacity of the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture of the Macau SAR Government, is a public organization of administration autonomy. The organization is responsible for the implementation of sport strategy and policy formulated by the Macau SAR Government. Its objective is to stimulate, encourage, and promote all kind of sports in Macau, also to create an essential condition for sport development.

For the development of competitive sports and 'Sport for all', the Macau Sport Development Board organizes various high level international sport competitions as well as recreational classes and thematic 'Sport for all' activities each year, in an endeavor to promote the international status of Macau, reinforce communication and co-operation with other countries and cites, enhance citizens' quality of life and arouse their interest in sport, so as to accelerate and facilitate the enhancement of the level of sport in Macau.

For more information, please visit www.sport.gov.mo.

About Golf Association of Macau

Founded in 2000, the Golf Association of Macau is a non-profit organization, with the mission to promote, support and ensure the quality, traditions and development of the game of golf in Macau.

With the mission to encourage and promote golf in Macau, it provides coaching, training and selection of the Macau teams for participation in international events at all levels, and promotes and runs appropriate international and domestic golfing events in Macau, which helps to represent Macau in the golfing world and be a member of appropriate regional and world governing bodies.

About The Venetian[®] Macao-Resort-Hotel

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For more information, please visit www.venetianmacao.com.

About Cotai Strip Resorts Macao – Macao's Integrated Resort City

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About the Asian Tour

As the official sanctioning body for professional golf in Asia, the Asian Tour leads the development of golf across the region, enhancing the careers of its members while maintaining a commitment to the integrity of the game. The Asian Tour, through its membership of the International Federation of PGA Tours, is the only recognised pan-Asian professional golf tour in Asia. This unique feature positions the Asian Tour at the pinnacle of professional golf in Asia; providing its events with Official World Ranking status. Tour Partners include Abacus (Official Apparel Partner), Inetol Headwear (Official Headwear Sponsor), Oakley (Official Eyewear and Footwear Sponsor), PRG (Official Accessories Supplier), Saxo Capital Markets (Official Statistics Partner), Singha Beer (Official Beer), Srixon (Official Ball), Titleist (Official Web Partner) and Rolex (Official Timekeeper). The Asian Tour has offices in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore. Also, visit us at www.asiantour.com, www.facebook.com/asiantourgolf, www.twitter.com/asiantourgolf, www.youtube.com/theasiantour and www.weibo.com/asiantourgolf.

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