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Press Release

For Immediate Publication

Marcel Siem Leads Avantha Masters, Rahil Gangjee Best Indian at Third

Gurgaon, India, February 11: Germany's Marcel Siem took the opening honours at the at the €1.5 million (approximately US\$2.1 million) tri-sanctioned event between the Asian Tour, European Tour and Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI) by posting an eight-under-par 64 for a single shot lead over Chinese Taipei's Chan Yih-shin on Thursday.

Rahil Gangjee was the best Indian in the field in tied third with a birdie-birdie finish that saw him card a 67 for the day along with six others.

"I also feel I am getting my game back," said Gangjee. "The plan is to play one shot a time and to stay in the present. I don't want to get ahead of myself. Last week (in Asian Tour International) I was rusty. I actually planned to start with an Indian Tour event in Dhaka, but I fell ill and began last week in Bangkok. Now I am feeling fine and the rust is going."

The 29-year-old German looking for his second career win on the European Tour gave the 16-year-old Indian ladies No. 1 Vani Kapoor, the credit for his flawless eight-under 64 to take the lead at the end of the first round.

Siem gave young Indian lady amateur, Vani Kapoor, a 16-year-old, who played with him in the Pro-Am, a lot of credit for his play. "The greens are a bit grainy, but I got a good lesson from Vani Kapoor, probably one of the best young female players in India. She was so aggressive on the greens and she showed me the way. I have to say that she was my putting inspiration." Vani is the top Indian Ladies amateur.

Gaganjeet Bhullar and C Muniyappa came next best with 69 each in tied 19th.

The big three of Indian golf, Jeev Milkha Singh, Arjun Atwal and Jyoti Randhawa all came in with an even par 72. Two-time Asian Tour number one, Jeev Milkha Singh posted a 72 to take a share of 56th place. "I missed a number of putts and I did not do anything exceptional today. However I know that a really good round tomorrow could very quickly change the scenario for me," said Singh.

Gurki Shergill and Ashok Kumar shot 70 each, while Anirban Lahiri was one-under. Shiv Kapur went to four-over 76 despite two birdies in his last four holes.

Chan eagled his closing par-five ninth at the DLF Golf and Country Club to sign for a 65 while Singapore's Lam Chih Bing and Thailand's Thaworn Wiratchant took a share of third place. Thailand's Chapchai Nirat carded a 68 to be among the mix of nine players in 10th place that included Malaysia's Ben Leong, Australia's Rick Kulacz and Terry Pilkadaris, Chinese Taipei's Lin Wen-hong and Thailand's Kwanchai Tannin.

Siem who is seeking his second professional win, marked his card with three birdies on the 12th, 17th and 18th in his opening back-nine to reach the turn in 33.

The German continued to enjoy another blemish free run in his homeward nine by carding another three birdies followed by a closing eagle.

"I can't remember the last time that I shot 64. It must be at least three years ago so I'm pretty happy with that. It's definitely my best round for a few years," said a delighted Siem.



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Meanwhile Lam surprised even himself with his opening start after recovering from a severe bout of food poisoning. "I'm quite surprised with how I played today because I almost couldn't walk on the course yesterday," said Lam.

Chapchai Nirat continued his Indian sojourn spectacularly when he returned with a blemish-free card that was marked with two birdies and an eagle. The big-hitting Thai set a new world record when he shot a stunning 32-under-par 256 total en route to victory at the SAIL Open in India last season. Despite nursing a back injury, he is showing early signs of enjoying another memorable run in India again.

Northern Ireland's Darren Clarke signed for a 71 to take a share of 36th place.

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