

GOLF

OLYMPIC CHAMP PARK IN-BEE SEIZES SINGAPORE LEAD

SINGAPORE: Olympic champion Park In-Bee recovered from a rare double bogey to grab the outright lead after the second round of the HSBC Women's Champions tournament in Singapore yesterday. Playing just her second tournament after a six-month break to recover from a thumb injury, the South Korean shot a second straight five-under-par 67 at Sentosa Golf Club to lead by a single stroke at 10-under 134. Three players-American Michelle Wie (69), South Korean Hur Mi-Jung (67) and Thailand's Ariya Jutanugarn (68) - were locked in a three-way tie for second at nine-under.

Norway's Suzann Pettersen (67) and South Korean Park Sung-Hyun (68) were a further shot back on a packed leaderboard. Park had gone 29 holes without dropping a shot at the par-72 New Tanjong course when she missed the green with her approach on the 12th hole and then fluffed her chip, taking a double bogey six. But she recovered from her mistake with a birdie at the 14th, and then calmly drained a five-foot putt at the final hole for her seventh birdie of the day to seize the halfway lead. "It was just really unlucky. I had a really good drive down the middle and I had mud on the ball," Park said. "I was on the right side and I knew it was going to go left, and I aimed right but it went 30 yards left. I hit a good shot but it's that unlucky bounce. Making double-bogey was a mistake. I didn't want to ruin the day with one bad hole with an unlucky shot. I think it's just trying to keep

the calm emotions going. Obviously there was a few birdie holes coming in, so I was trying to get a couple from there."

Ko's 'shot of the day'

Wie, who led overnight after firing a course record 66 in her opening round, did

not make a single bogey in her second round and briefly regained the lead when she made her fourth birdie of the day at the 13th, a sweeping par-five dogleg. But the American, who has struggled with injuries and a loss of form since winning the US Open in 2014, was unable to pick up any more shots on the run back to the clubhouse with the ball narrowly trickling past the cup several times. "I definitely just kept very patient out there," Wie said. "It got really frustrating at times just seeing those putts just slip out. I just kept it steady, and made a good up-and-down on the last hole which I'm really proud of."

Pettersen also briefly found herself in front after making seven birdies, including three in a row from the 10th, only to drop two shots in her last four holes. "I played really good golf today but I had two lousy bogeys coming in," she said. New Zealand's world number one Lydia Ko ominously charged up the leaderboard with a 68 to finish tied for seventh with five others, including the defending champion Jang Ha-Na, at seven-under. Ko, who has gone 11 events without winning, her longest drought in four years, capped her round with three successive birdies after making a spectacular eagle on the par-five fifth when she smashed a five-wood to within a foot of making an albatross. "I will definitely take that shot," she said. "That was the shot of the day I think." — AFP



SINGAPORE: Park In-Bee of South Korea tees off on the 3rd hole during the HSBC Women's Champions golf tournament held at Sentosa Golf Club's Tanjong course yesterday. — AP

IOC GETS TOUGH WITH 2020 TOKYO GAMES GOLF VENUE

TOKYO: The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has issued a sharp warning to the private club set to host golf at the 2020 Tokyo Games: admit women or you're out. On a visit to Tokyo to check on the city's Olympic preparations, IOC vice president John Coates said the Kasumigaseki Country Club in Saitama prefecture was running out of time to change its policy of refusing to grant full membership to women. "Our principles are based on non-discrimination, that's the position we've made quite clear," Coates, chairman of the coordination commission which oversees preparations for the Olympics, told reporters.

"There has been progress-as recently as this week there have been more discussions with the club (to suggest) it's heading in the right direction for them to have a non-discriminatory membership procedure," he added, flagging the end of June as a possible time frame to resolve the awkward standoff. Earlier this month, the club's chairman told local media he was "flummoxed" by the row, prompting further criticism of its policies.

Coates insisted, however, that if the current impasse dragged on beyond June, the IOC would be forced to look for alternative venues. "At some point there has to be a cut-off," said the Australian, adding that there was still plenty of time to find another golf club. "We've got to be very careful because we are going there by their grace. I respect that it's a private club but our position is clear. We will only go to a club that has non-discrimination."

'Considerable savings'

Coates also sought to allay fears over the Games budget, which experts warn could reach an eye-watering \$25 billion, by pointing to "considerable savings" made by moving some of the venues outside of Tokyo. In its bid, Tokyo estimated the bill for the Games at a little over \$7 billion and promised 85 percent of venues would be within eight kilometers of the Olympic village, plans long since torn up due to soaring costs. "As a result of looking at existing venues outside of Tokyo, we have saved \$2.2 billion," said Coates, referring to sports such as cycling, basketball and sailing, which be hosted by cities outside of the capital. — AFP

HONG KONG'S TRAILBLAZER CHAN HOPES TO INSPIRE OTHER WOMEN

HONG KONG: Chan Yuen-ting, the first female coach to lead a men's professional soccer club to a top-flight title, hopes her success with Hong Kong's Eastern will inspire other women to follow their dreams. The 28-year-old turned a childhood crush on former England captain David Beckham into a groundbreaking career that has earned her plaudits from around the world and a place in the Guinness Book of Records. Chan is nicknamed "Beef Ball" in a play on her name and for the similarities of her personality to Chinese perceptions of the characteristics of the cow.

Among those characteristics are an appetite for hard work and determination, both of which Chan showed in spades as she shattered the glass ceiling for women coaches in football. Remaining persistent is Chan's advice to other women looking to break into environments, in sport and elsewhere, where men still dominate. "There might be many women who work in a male-dominated environment and are waiting for opportunities to rise or to break through," she said ahead of the club's Asian Champions League group match against Kawasaki Frontale this week.

"They might think, 'oh there are so few opportunities or it's super difficult'. But I keep telling them believe in it and it'll become reality. "Even though you might be ready sometimes the opportunities aren't there, but at least when the time comes you'll be ready." After gaining a masters degree in sports science, Chan got her start in soccer as a

data analyst before moving into a coaching role and then joining Eastern, where she assumed the top job after her predecessor left for a club in mainland China.

Equal status

Chan believes she was fortunate that she grew up in Hong Kong as she may not have had the same opportunities elsewhere in Asia. "I'm really lucky to be born, to live and work in Hong Kong," she said. "While I was growing up, and even now, I believe there has hardly been any discrimination against women. It's because of this, Hong Kong Football Association was able to give me a platform to develop my career. "If I was in another Asian country, where women are not of the same social status as men, I would never be able to do what I can."

Leading Eastern to the Hong Kong Premier league title last year was an achievement in itself for a relatively modest club and meant a maiden campaign in the continent's top competition, the Asian Champions League. The club's first very first group game enabled Chan to pit her coaching wits against Luiz Felipe Scolari, the Guangzhou Evergrande boss who led Brazil to their World Cup triumph of 2002.

While a 7-0 defeat starkly illustrated the huge step up in class Eastern were making, Scolari making time to come over after the match and give Chan some words of encouragement was an

experience which still brought a big smile to her face. "For me that moment was exciting. I mean aside from just competing against him, he's a former World Cup winner, I've watched him from a young age on TV," she recalled.

"So when I saw him in person, it was quite inspiring. And the things he said to me really sank in and I was very happy to be able to meet a coach of that standard." Eastern's second Champions League match in front of a packed house at Hong Kong's Mongkok Stadium on Wednesday had a better outcome with an early penalty earning Chan's side a 1-1 draw and their first point in the competition. "The (Champions League) is a competition of really high standard and we're quite lucky to be able to compete and for us, as a Hong Kong team, to be apart of it is quite groundbreaking," she said on the eve of the match.

"We all understand that the quality of football is a whole new level. For us, it's definitely a challenge." While she has no solid plans to leave Hong Kong in the near future, Chan has expressed interest in taking her career overseas in the long-term and to then bring her knowledge back to Hong Kong would be ideal. But for now, she is focusing on improving herself as a coach and continuing to build her relationship with her team. "It's nerve-racking," she said. "There's definitely more nerves than excitement, because there's never been a female coach leading an all-male team." — Reuters