

Harendra wins Players' Championship golf title

Harendra Gupta delighted the home crowd when he defeated Mukesh Kumar and Ashok Kumar in a play-off to win the Players Championship golf title at Chandigarh Golf Club here Saturday.

The trio were locked at eleven under 277 after the end of fourth round forcing the championship to be decided in a play-off. Gupta went on to win on the third playoff hole as Mukesh dropped out after making a bogey on the first and then Ashok bogeyed the third. The playoff was played on the 18th hole.

Gupta (70, 69, 71, 67) was placed sixth after round three but made an incredible charge on the final day with a five under 67, the best score of the final round along with Gurbaaz Mann and Gaganjeet Bhullar, to win his first professional title in two years.

The soft-spoken golfer gradually made his way up the leaderboard in round four with birdies on the second, sixth, ninth, 11th and an eagle on the 13th. He was in the sole lead after the 13th but then slipped back into the joint lead along with Mukesh and Ashok due to a bogey on the 15th.

'When I sank an eagle on the par five 13th with the help of an 18 feet putt, I felt I had a very good opportunity to win even though I did not know that I had taken the lead at that point. In the playoff, I decided to play safe and not attack too much. This move paid off as I made pars all the way till the third playoff hole even as Mukesh and Ashok dropped bogeys on the first and third respectively,' said an ecstatic Harendra.

Ashok (70, 67, 71, 69), who finished tied second, looked like a man on a mission when he teed-off Saturday. He headed into the playoff after sinking birdies on the second, seventh, 11th, 13th, 16th and dropping bogeys on the fourth and 15th for a three under 69. But nerves got the better of the Delhi golfer on the third playoff hole when he missed a three feet putt for par that handed Gupta the title.

Mukesh (69, 66, 72, 70) also joined Ashok in tied second place. Mukesh's campaign ended when his approach shot on the first playoff hole landed in the water hazard. However, his runner-up finish helped him climb to first position on the Order of Merit.

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