

Vikrant Chopra puts Navratna Ahmedabad into final

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Mumbai: Vikrant Chopra pulled a rabbit out of the hat to help Navratna Ahmedabad edge out Krrish Colombo 2-1 in a nail-biting semi-final contest of the 3rd Louis Philippe Cup at the par-70 Bombay Presidency Golf Club, Chembur on Friday.

In Saturday's final, Navratna will take on Puravankara Bangalore, who comfortably defeated AVT Kolkata 3-0 in the other semi-final.

The second semi-final, between Ahmedabad and Colombo, boiled down to an edge-of-the-seat affair as the scores were level at 1-all and the third singles tantalisingly poised as Sri Lankan golfer K. Prabakaran, who trailed by two shots going into the final hole, fired an eagle to bridge the gap to put pressure on Chopra. However, the 34-year-old Chopra showed nerves of steel as he responded with a timely birdie to clinch the issue 71-72 in favour of the Ahmedabad team and give them another shot at the title. Ahmedabad had beaten Bangalore 3-0 in the final of the inaugural edition at Bangalore in 2012.

Chopra, ranked 27 on the PGTI Tour, did not have a great round. He had four bogeys on the front nine, and doubled bogeyed the 12th, but made up with five birdies, including the crucial one on the final hole.

Navratna's Vinod Kumar starting the round was unable to match the efforts of Himmat Rai and lost the tie. Rai had a score of 2-under 68 as compared to Kumar's score of 2-over 72. But Sri Lanka's Mithun Perera played steadily to finish with a score of 1-over 71 to win the second singles against N. Thangaraja who had a card of 2-over 72, and put Ahmedabad on level terms.

A relieved Chopra was thrilled after snatching the close win. "It's excellent to pull a win on the final hole. He (Prabakaran) made an eagle with a good second shot. But I was fortunate to make a birdie with a slick 25-foot putt to win," he said with a huge smile on his face and clutching onto the putter. "I was a bit low on confidence as I was out of the game for quite some time due to injury. Today I managed a couple of birdies but also made some silly mistakes and hope to do better in the final," he said.

Earlier, the Bangalore team was in total control as rivals AVT Kolkata, including RahilGangjee, struggled to find their rhythm.

Puravankara Bangalore's captain Lahiri said, "From the time all three of us (me, Chikka and Dharma) got to know that we are going to play together, we knew we are going to put up a great show. Today, I wanted to be in the middle of Dharma and Chikka so that I can give them advice and it went as per the plan. We will stick to our strategy tomorrow as well and hope to win the Louis Philippe finals for the first time."

Gangjee, who set the course record of 8-under-62, went 2-over-72 and lost to M Dharma who had a card of 71. Later, seasoned golfer AnirbanLahiri (67) showed his class and put it across Chiragh Kumar (71) to widen the lead before the third member S Chikkarangappa (67) overcame Shankar Das (68) to complete a clean sweep for the Bangalore team.

Louis Philippe Cup 2014 – (semi-finals): Navratna Ahmedabad beat Krrish Colombo 2-1- Vinod Kumar (72) lost to HimmatRai (68), MithunPerera (71) beat N. Thangaraja (72), Vikrant Chopra (71) beat K. Prabakaran (72).

Puravankara Bangalore beat AVT Kolkata 3-0 – M. Dharma (71) beatRahilGangjee (72), AnirbanLahiri (67) beat Chiragh Kumar (71), S. Chikkarangappa (67) beat Shankar Das (68).