

# GOH'S GIFT



**Singaporean talent crowned Malaysian Amateur Open champion in exciting, drama-filled final round**

by PATRICK HO

**It is not often** that you find golfers throwing away a four-shot lead in the final round of one of the oldest amateur opens in the world. But, it did happen on the demanding Ronald Fream-designed Nexus Golf Resort Karambunai, which had both nines switched for the occasion.

This was the 105th Malaysian Amateur Open brought to you by Transview, held for the first time in East Malaysia. It also marked the introduction of new title sponsor, Transview Golf after 11 years.

Over the four days of competition from May 17 to 20, 123 players from 18 nations grinded on the par 70, 6,112-metre course in hot, humid and windy conditions.

So hot that Canada's Chris Stewart, the North American nation's first-time entrant, suffered from dehydration. Apart from Canada, the other 'rookie' nation was South

Africa which was represented by Christopher George Joseph.

While many players tried in vain to command the course over the first three days, India's Anirban Lahiri rose above the rest by leading from day one. The Doha Games Silver medalist from Bangalore was the only person under-par with a 69 on day one.

He followed that up by scrambling to a 74 and 72 in the second and third rounds.

The confident 19-year-old, who bears a stark resemblance to Formula One world champion Fernando Alonso, seemed destined for the title with a healthy four-stroke lead going into the final round.

A wire-to-wire victory, imminent.

However, the golfing Gods had other ideas as Anirban suffered a cruel fate in East Malaysia in the final round. His putter went cold on the back nine starting with bogeys

on the 12th and 13th holes, while a drive on the 14th found the rough on the right fairway.

After Anirban's disastrous double-bogey on this hole, the championship swung in favour of his nearest challenger, Goh Kun Yang from Singapore who lead by one stroke for the first time in the championship.

Also 19, Goh was in the zone, and sealed the championship with his final birdie on the par 3, 16th for a two-shot lead. Anirban also birdied the same hole but it was all over by then, as the Singaporean from Keppel Golf Club cruised home by playing the fairways and greens.

The cool-headed Singaporean fired a sizzling last round of three-under-par 67 to lift the title with a tournament total of six-over-par 286.

Goh had four birdies on the fourth, fifth,

Ray Beauflis carried his own bag throughout the tournament



Anirban Lahiri on the 18th. The body language says it all



13th and 16th holes against a lone bogey on the 12th hole.

Anirban carded three birdies, four bogeys and the fateful double-bogey on the 14th for a three-over-par 73 round.

"I cannot describe it. I was just lucky today," said Goh, who is currently in national service. "I was putting really well today and my ball striking was good. I was just playing regulation golf today."

To maintain his lead to the 18th hole, Goh made a few changes on the remaining holes. "On the 15th I changed from a driver to a rescue club just to get it down the fairway. Just try to play to the fairways and greens," said Goh who becomes the second Singaporean to lift the title in 13 years since Mardan Mamat's triumph in 1994.

Goh added, "I was very disappointed with my second round 79 but to come back

with two sub-par rounds, and from five strokes back on the final day to win was unbelievable. The final few holes were nerve-wrecking and I only knew that it was in the bag after I put my approach on the green at the 18th."

**“I cannot describe it. I was just lucky today”**

Goh Kun Yang

It was a classic case of so near, yet so far for Anirban, who could have been the first wire-to-wire champion in Malaysian Amateur Open history.

"All credit to Goh as he played very well. His putting was fantastic, only eleven putts on the front nine, while I had the same number of putts over four holes (12th to 15th

holes)," said a dejected Anirban.

Australia's Ray Beauflis mounted a charge in the final round but the fiery Queenslander made bogey on the final hole for a two-over-par 72, he tied for third with Philippines' Jay Bayron.

Bayron, the newly-crowned Sabah Amateur Open champion before the Malaysian Amateur Open, carded even-par 70 for a tournament total 11-over-par 291.

Yet again, Malaysian golf fans were denied a local win to end the 10-year drought since R. Nachimuthu's triumph at Kelab Golf Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah.

Sarawakian Kelana Ibrahim's charge on the final day blew apart with a 10-over-par 80 round to drop into a tie for 20th position with a 20-over-par 300 total.

The best Malaysian finisher was young talent, Mohd Ilyia Mohd Jamil, whose three-

## 105TH MALAYSIAN AMATEUR OPEN FIRSTS



Hail the champ.... Goh Kun Yang proudly lifts up the Malaysian Amateur Open trophy



- First event held out of Peninsular Malaysia
- Live scoring displayed for the first time in clubhouse and hotel room TV
- Issuance of event passes
- First trophy presentation on the 18th green
- Debut appearances of Canada and South Africa

### RESULTS

286	Goh Kun Yang (SIN)	72-79-68-67
288	Anirban Lahiri (IND)	69-74-72-73
291	Jay Byron (PHI)	75-74-72-70
	Ray Beauflis (AUS)	70-76-73-72
293	Andik Mauludin (INA)	75-80-67-71
294	Michael Eric Bibat (PHI)	73-74-75-72
295	Shih Chi Chan (TWN)	76-74-72-73
	Josh Younger (AUS)	76-74-71-74
	Rudi Bezuindenhout (AUS)	76-73-72-74



The gallery with umbrellas at the 10th. The number grew to 400 by the time the championship flight reached the 18th

over-par 73 final round saw him share 10th place on 16-over-par 296.

The 105th Transview Malaysian Amateur Open ended with a colourful prize presentation ceremony on 18th at the Nexus Golf Resort Karambunai's green, graced by the Sabah Head of State, TYT Tun Datuk Seri Panglima Haji Ahmadshah Abdullah. Also present were Sabah Chief Minister, Datuk Seri Musa Haji Aman and the state Minister of Youth and Sports, Datuk Liew Yun Fah.

When, the Singapore national anthem played for the second time in the event's history, and as Goh lifted the trophy in celebration, many thoughts switched to the next venue host.

This year's Malaysian Amateur Open certainly ranks as the best ever and credit must go to all parties involved. There were no complaints about player and official transport, or about accommodation arrangements.

Together with officials of the Malaysian Golf Association (MGA), the management and staff at Nexus Golf Resort Karambunai endured sleepless nights preparing the course and sleeping an average of only four hours a night to make this the best ever.

"We hope that the organisational standard of the tournament was the best ever," said Nexus Golf Resort Karambunai COO and MGA Vice-President, Datuk Robin Loh. "All parties involved from MGA to Transview, and the team at Nexus Golf Resort Karambunai did a fantastic job. We hope the next venue in 2008 can maintain the same level of excellence."

Transview Golf, the new title sponsors also gave the event a boost by flying in a media relations consultant and a TV news crew to ensure that maximum publicity was given in the print and electronic media.

"I would think that a lot more things can be done to make the Malaysian Amateur Open more grand in future," said Willie Lim, Country Manager of Transview Golf. "Initially, we were not sure how far we could go with the first event, but after Sabah, I feel there's more we can do to elevate this event in the coming years."

Lim added, "All parties involved this year should be proud and I urge more corporate organisations to come forward to make it even better. Furthermore, with the continued support from the print and electronic media, the Malaysian Amateur Open can only grow bigger." ■



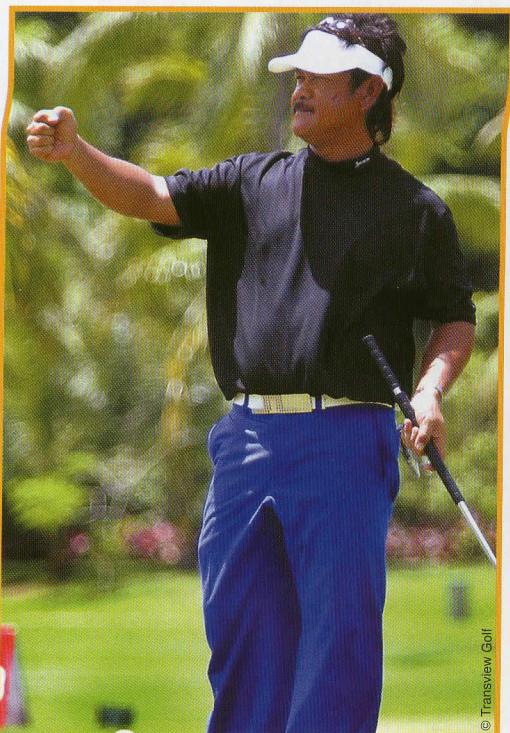
Anirban Lahiri at the 13th fairway

**“The golf course is very beautiful, while the beach is nice. It’s unbelievable”**

Anirban Lahiri (India)

**“The course and the resort is beautiful. I will come back for a holiday”**

Tseng Hua Yen (Taiwan)



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**“It was a confusing day as the winds were swirling all over the place but the fast greens were fantastic”**

Kelana Ibrahim after a horrifying 78 in round two



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**“I knew the shot was good and did not even see it land, as I turned away to pick up my putter. I only knew when the flight ahead started shouting.”**

Gene Xavier Bondoc, of the Philippines after his third round hole-in-one on the 154-metre, third hole

**WHAT THEY SAY...**