

Saturday August 8, 2009

Golf: Sivachandhran keeps Malaysia's hopes alive

PETALING JAYA: Thai youngster Kiradech Aphibarnrat fired a two-under 69 to go two strokes clear of the chasing pack and give himself a shot at a maiden title in the Worldwide Holdings Selangor Masters at the Seri Selangor Golf Club yesterday.

The former world junior amateur champion finished with a three-day total of nine-under 204 while S. Sivachandhran raised hopes of a Malaysian triumph in the RM1mil Asian Tour event after battling to a two-under 69 to lie in second place.

Five golfers – Kodai Ichihara of Japan, Simon Griffiths of England, Malaysian Shaaban Hussin, joint overnight leader Noh Seung-yul of South Korea and South African James Kamte – are joint third on 208, four strokes off the pace.

Sivachandhran, a touring professional for Seri Selangor, is chasing his first title on the Asian Tour and will be banking on his home advantage for victory.

"There is pressure, especially playing here. But if I can pull it off, it'll be a win for everyone, especially the club. They've always wanted a local boy to win this tournament," said Sivachandhran, who posted four birdies against two bogeys yesterday.

The slightly-built Malaysian was disappointed not to end the day closer to the leader after dropping a shot on his last hole.

The 20-year-old Kiradech made a big par save from six feet on the 18th green to give himself a cushion going into today's final round.

"I do not like to play it safe ... so tomorrow (today) I am going all out and will try to do what I did in the first three rounds. The local player (Sivachandhran) knows the course better than I do and he has an advantage," said Kiradech.