

GOLF: SOUTH AFRICAN OPEN

# Diksha Dagar becomes youngest Indian woman to win on LET tour

Coached by her father, she overcame a hearing impairment to excel at the sport

V KRISHNASWAMY

March 17  
Diksha Dagar's story is unlike any other. A wisp of a girl with a shy smile, she is a profile in courage. And, a good portion of that has been acquired from her tenacious father, Col Narinder Dagar, who has not wavered from the belief that his daughter, born deaf, is world-class in sport.

On Saturday in far-off Cape Town, South Africa, with her father being her caddie, Diksha wrote her own piece of history by becoming the youngest Indian woman to win on the Ladies European Tour (LET).

"I just went out today trying to play my normal game," said Dagar, who plays with a cochlear implant that helps her to hear at close-to-normal levels. "I really didn't expect to win, but it happened and I am very happy. I got two lucky breaks towards the end, with a long birdie putt on 15 and then the chip-in on 16. Normally I would just try to chip it close and make the par putt, but this time I had a feeling I could do it and it went in."

**Top amateur**

In 2016, while still being an amateur, Diksha was given a place to play at India's biggest women's pro event, the Hero Women's Indian Open. It was her first appearance on the LET and the then 15-year-old from Haryana

made the cut and finished as the top amateur.

Aditi Ashok, who became the first Indian to win a LET title, had won the event. At that time, Diksha said, "It's great to see Aditi win and very nice that she's the first Indian to win the tournament. I will take a lot of motivation from this and her performance on the LET. This year has instilled a lot of confidence in all Indian players."

On Saturday, as Diksha emerged triumphant in Investec Women's South African Open in Capetown, Aditi congratulated Diksha on Twitter. Diksha thanked her for showing the way.

Col Dagar had then observed, "I'm convinced that Diksha has a lot of raw talent as she is effectively self-taught. She's also a leftie, so she's more crafty. She is fearless in her shot making. She has great ball striking but will need technical support."

**Dad doubles up as coach**

Col Dagar, whose life in the Army had given him access to golf, played at almost scratch handicap at one time.

He brought a semblance of normalcy in his daughter's life with cochlear implants and then began coaching her at age six.

Diksha, recalling those early days, said, "I have been learning golf since the age of six. I love to play the sport, but no one was ready to provide coaching. So, my dad



Diksha Dagar started playing golf when she was just six. It helped that her father was in the Army, giving her access to golf courses

became my coach." "Despite his job, he coached me and my brother, who also had hearing problems like me. I could not have played alone, so he coached my brother (Yogesh Dagar), too. I hardly had any friends. Besides my family, golf is my life." In 2017, she represented India at the Deaflympics in Turkey and took a silver medal. She dominated the junior circuit and the Ladies circuit. She won a Women's Golf Association of India pro event while being an amateur.

She represented India at the Queen Sirikit Cup team event and in 2018 won the Singapore Open. She wore India colours at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta. Her father confided that by year-end he was planning to turn his daughter professional.

She played the Ladies European Tour Qualifying School in Morocco and finished T-21 to get a status. Weeks later, she gained status

on Australian Ladies Pro Tour's Qualification. Diksha began her career Down Under and played six events, including the Vic Open co-sanctioned with the US LPGA, but missed the cut. Of the rest, three events were co-sanctioned with the LET. The last one was NSW Open last week and she logged her first top-5 by finishing fifth.

**Bright future**

From Australia she flew to Capetown for the Women's South African Open. A tired Diksha double bogeyed the first and third holes to be four-over after three. Then, she shifted gears and dropped just one more bogey in the next 51 holes. Her last 42 holes were bogey free.

Diksha's win can change her life and open new doors. The Olympics is still some distance away, but who knows Diksha and Aditi together could be doing National duty at Tokyo in 2020.

LOOT FROM THE PAST

# 'Raj era theft scandal hushed up in the UK'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, March 17  
Britain's then Prime Minister Clement Attlee, with the chiefs of M16 security service and Buckingham Palace aides, conspired to cover up one of the last scandals of the British Empire involving the theft of charity funds by one of its governors posted in India, papers in the UK's National Archives have revealed.

Sir Arthur Hope, who served as the Governor of Madras Presidency between 1940 and 1946,

had been entrusted with donations to the Indian Red Cross. But in 1944, the British establishment became aware of his mounting gambling debts which led him to also misappropriate the funds intended for the charity, *The Times* reported. The money he was thought to have siphoned off to settle his debts added up to £40,000 at the time.

According to the correspondence documents unearthed in the archives, when word reached Lord Wavell, the

Viceroy of India at the time, that some of Hope's creditors in India wanted their money back, the British decided that the governor must be quietly removed from office.

A doctor's note was produced claiming that Sir Arthur, who was then 48, had "tropical neurasthenia", a diagnosis commonly given to white Europeans who disliked the colonial climate and wanted to go home. However, it was feared if he stepped down while still in India, he could be sued and ar-

rested over his debts before boarding a ship for England. The UK government was unable to sue him without exposing "the delinquencies of the King's representative", noted Sir David Monteath, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for India and Burma.

In 1947, the year India gained its independence, Attlee approved a donation to the Indian Red Cross using British taxpayers' money, leaving people unaware it came from the government in London.

WHEN TECH STINGS

# New Zealand wants social media majors to explain how attack was livestreamed

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Wellington, March 17  
New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern on Sunday said she seeks answers from Facebook and other social media firms about how an attack that killed 50 Muslims in a mass shooting was livestreamed on their platforms.

Saying there were "further questions to be answered" by the tech giants, Ardern said that Facebook's Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg had been in contact and "acknowledged what has occurred here in New Zealand".

A video shot by the terrorist who carried out the mosque massacre was livestreamed on Facebook before being removed by the company. But the 17-minute



New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern

stream was shared repeatedly on YouTube and Twitter, and internet platforms were scrambling to remove the reposted videos.

"We did as much as we could to remove, or seek to have removed, some of the footage that was being circulated in the aftermath of this terrorist attack," said Ardern.

"But ultimately it has been up to those platforms to fa-

cilitate their removal." In a statement on Sunday, Mia Garlick of Facebook New Zealand vowed to "work round-the-clock to remove violating content".

"In the first 24 hours, we removed 1.5 million videos of the attack globally, of which over 1.2 million were blocked at upload," the company said. Ardern was joined by Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison in expressing doubts that current rules go far enough.

"The capacity to actually assist fully is very limited on the technology side." He said, "assurances were given" that a regime would make sure the videos were not reposted.

"Clearly it hasn't (happened)."

THUMBS DOWN

# AirAsia CEO Fernandes quits FB, says it should have done more

BLOOMBERG

March 17  
AirAsia Group Bhd Chief Executive Officer Tony Fernandes closed his Facebook account, saying the live streaming of the mass shooting in New Zealand on the platform was too much for him.

In a series of tweets on Sunday, Fernandes said Facebook Inc could have done more and that his Facebook account had 6,70,000 followers. He said earlier he may shut his Twitter page, citing hate being transmitted on social media. Fernandes is the co-owner of English soccer club Queens Park Rangers and is among business executives well known for an active social media presence.

# 'US pulled back India, Pak from brink of war'

REUTERS

New Delhi/Islamabad, March 17  
The sparring between India and Pakistan last month threatened to spiral out of control and conflicts were resolved only after interventions by US officials, including National Security Advisor John Bolton, said sources familiar with the events.

At one stage, India threatened to fire at least six missiles at Pakistan, and Islamabad said it will respond with its own missile strikes "three times over", according to Western diplomats and government sources in New Delhi, Islamabad and Washington.

The way in which tensions escalated and threatened to trigger a war between the nuclear-armed nations shows how the Kashmir region, which both claim and is at the core of their enmity, remains one of the world's most dangerous flashpoints.

The exchanges did not get beyond threats, and there was no suggestion that the missiles

involved were anything more than conventional weapons, but they created consternation in official circles in Washington, Beijing and London.

Indian National Security Adviser Ajit Doval spoke to the head of Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), Asim Munir, and informed him that India was not going to back off its new campaign of "counter terrorism", an Indian government source and a Western diplomat with knowledge of the conversations told *Reuters* in New Delhi.

Doval told Munir that India's fight was with the militant groups that freely operated from Pakistani soil and it was prepared to escalate, said the government source.

US security advisor Bolton had spoken with Doval on the night of February 27 itself, until dawn, in an attempt to defuse the situation, said the Western diplomat in New Delhi and the Indian official.

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