

Cabrera stretches lead, but Clarke pursues at Africa Open

The 20-metre putt that ran slowly down the 18th green into the hole just put the icing on a workmanlike second round for Angel Cabrera as the Argentinean took a two-shot lead to the halfway mark of the Africa Open at East London Golf Club.

He shot a four-under-par 68 to move to 14-under for the tournament, with Ulsterman Darren Clarke breathing down his neck after his seven-under 65 in the second round. "I finished with a smile with that putt, but I was playing okay before that," said Cabrera. "I was three-under for the round already," he pointed out.

He was happy with the lead: "It's very nice to be leading. If I keep playing as I am, everything should be okay," he said.

However, Clarke's round must have been cause for some concern: He had four birdies on the front nine, and four on the back nine, and he got his round in before the late afternoon weather became breezier and drizzly.

"I got a huge break obviously with the weather," said Clarke. "We get good draws and we get bad draws, and I've been very fortunate so far this week to get a good draw and I was able to make the most of it this morning."

Key to Clarke's round was his accuracy: "I think I hit 15 greens, 16 greens, so I had a lot of chances today and I holed a few" he said, even though he didn't think he putted particularly well.

He bogeyed just one hole, when he tried to punch a six-iron off the tee. "It was the only bad shot I hit all day," he said. "I pushed it a little bit and it came right under the lip of the bunker and I had no shot. I got it out to about 15 feet and the putt just missed." But he got the dropped shot right back:

"It was good to make a birdie straight after dropping a shot because the four holes prior to the second, I had good birdie chances on all of them and missed," he said.

The South African trio of Darren Fichardt, Alex Haindl and James Kingston share third, with Marc Cayeux of Zimbabwe and South Africa's Warren Abery in sixth and seventh respectively. Cayeux shot 66 with seven birdies and a single dropped shot, while Abery's up and down 68 featured seven birdies and three bogeys.

Stuart Clark of Wales, who had to qualify, equalled Clarke's 65 as the best round of the day to move to eight-under for the tournament and a share of eighth with five other players. Among them was Retief Goosen (70) who went two-under in his second round.

Further down the field, Richard Sterne came to life with a five-under 67 to share 25th place nine off the pace, and Cabrera's son Federico finished at two-under at halfway to make the cut.