

Markus makes light of East London winds

Markus Brier made light of 40-kilometre-an-hour winds at the €1-million Africa Open to fire a seven-under-par 66 and move into an early share of the second round lead at East London Golf Club.

The Austrian made eight birdies and an eagle in his round over the 6,104-metre (6,674-yard) par-73 layout, and, with three bogeys on his card, he could point to the influence the wind had on his play.

“It’s really windy out there,” he said, “and except for those three bad drives, the rest was good as I converted pretty much all of my birdie chances.”

He shared the lead with South Africa’s Branden Grace, the 22-year-old who won his maiden professional title in November last year on the Sunshine Tour.

Grace’s four-under-par 69 started on the ninth, and he reached 18 with two bogeys and two birdies on his card.

“The wind was stronger than yesterday,” he said. “It was much gustier and made it easy to slip your concentration and that’s what happened to me in the middle of the round.”

But he got it back convincingly on his way in, with four birdies in his final eight holes. “I just thought that there are a really a couple of holes where you can pick up some strokes and I managed to do that,” he said.

Brier and Grace led by two from Scot Elliot Saltman, who stumbled with successive bogeys on 17 and 18 on his way in, after having moved to 10-under himself with five birdies and a bogey till that point.

Defending champion Charl Schwartzel carded a three-under 70, calling it “one of my better three-unders”.

He dropped three times in his opening 10 holes without picking up a stroke, but roared home with four birdies and an eagle in his final eight holes to be lurking well-placed at three off the pace.

He shared that position with Sweden’s Fredrik Ohlsson, one ahead of Zimbabwe Open champion Jbe’ Kruger and Spaniard Carlos Del Moral.