

## **Oosthuizen hunting another Open**

On a day when the wind rattled everything from the players' concentration to the Africa Open leaderboard, Louis Oosthuizen had the smile of a man who loves a challenge.

It was a day for holding on to something, and Oosthuizen may well have done just that by taking a firm grip on this tournament.

With a 67 that started with an eagle at the par-five first and, remarkably, included only one bogey, Oosthuizen heads into the weekend one shot off a three-way tie for the lead.

South Africa's Branden Grace, Austria's Markus Brier and England's Miles Tunnickliff head the field on 10 under, with Oosthuizen, Jaco van Zyl and Ross McGowan their nearest challengers.

Defending champion Charl Schwartzel is also well placed at seven under. He was as much as five shots off the halfway lead last year before going on to win.

But on a day when Darren Clarke signed for a 75 and dropped to two under, Retief Goosen missed the halfway cut by two strokes with a 73, and overnight leader Brandon Pieters dropped to three under with a start of nine on the par-five first and seven on the par-five third, Oosthuizen moved firmly into contention.

"It's a good leaderboard out there and it's going to be an interesting weekend," he said. "Hopefully the wind will keep blowing because I think that's the way this golf course should be played."

The conditions did indeed test the creative depth of the players.

"There was a lot of shot-making, which I like," said Oosthuizen. "From 100 metres away, you take seven iron. I like that. It was tough."

But it looked far from tough for Tunnickliff, who started his round with five consecutive birdies.

"I wasn't quite expecting that because it was actually very tough out there," said the two-time winner on the European Tour, who took the sole lead on 11 under with a long birdie putt on the 12th. But back-to-back bogeys on holes 15 and 16 dropped him to one off the pace again.

"The back nine was extremely difficult. The wind was getting up on every hole, and I just tried to survive out there. In that wind the swing is bound to slip."

He recovered with a chip-in for birdie on the 18th to share the lead again with a 69. Grace also rose to the challenge and decided to play more aggressively in the testing conditions for a solid 69 of his own.

"It was rough out there. The wind was very gusting and you could lose your concentration easily. But I've been hitting the ball really good and feel my form is there. I played aggressively and that helped."

However, the wind did get the better of him on the 18th.

“A gust threw me off balance on the second shot and I hit it in the left greenside bunker and made bogey from there. The wind itself is not the problem, just the gusts all the time make you struggle over the ball.”