

Brooky in joint second

■ GOLF

NEW ZEALAND golfer Lynnette Brooky shot a six-under-par 66 to leave her two shots behind first-round leader Laura Davies in the Evian Masters in Evian-Les-Bains, France, yesterday.

Brooky was a in three-way tie for second place with world No 1 Anika Sorenstam and Spain's Marta Prieto in the US\$2.5 million (NZ\$3.87 million) USLPGA and ELPGA tour event.

Davies, champion in 1995 and 1996, carded seven birdies and an eagle yesterday with the highlight being the eagle three at the 490-yard ninth where she hit a two iron second shot to six feet.

For Davies, 40, it was a return to the form that helped her win the women's Australian Open at the start of the year.

"I was on the course with the best players in the world last week and I saw how easy they swung it," she said. "Today I just concentrated on hitting it smoothly and it certainly worked. When you watch the best players in the world, you have to learn from them."

Sorenstam, winner in 2000 and 2002, had seven birdies, and admitted: "I'm very happy with my start. I played solid from start to finish and took advantage of the par fives."

Meanwhile, Karrie Webb headed home to Australia after making a shock withdrawal from the first round yesterday.

The former world No 1's golf clubs failed to arrive in transit from London's Heathrow airport to Geneva, but she cited "personal and family problems" as the reason for her absence.

There is now a huge question mark hanging over her entry for next week's British Women's Open at Sunningdale near London, a title she has won three times. — AAP



Lynnette Brooky:
Two shots off the pace.

Women's Golf

Sorenstam stirs mixed feelings

By Claire Middleton
at Poggio dei Medici, Italy

WHILE the male golfing fraternity appear unified in their discomfort at the thought of a woman invading their territory, Annika Sorenstam's peers were largely behind her yesterday.

Sorenstam, the world No 1, will play in the Colonial, an event on the men's professional tour, next week and while there were whispers that she could do women's golf irreparable damage, the majority of those playing at the La Perla Italian Open this week feel she is doing the right thing.

Marie-Laure de Lorenzi, the former European No 1 who played with Sorenstam in two Solheim Cup teams, said: "It is not a battle of the sexes because what do we learn if she does well? Nothing except what we know already, that she is one of those special players who comes around once in a lifetime."

"What do we learn if she does poorly? Nothing, except that in the natural order of things, men are physically stronger." But would de Lorenzi do what Sorenstam is doing? "Yes, if I were like her, committed 500 per cent to golf and seeking constantly for perfection. It is a challenge for her and a spectacle for the rest of us."

Dale Reid, twice European Solheim Cup captain, was not so sure. She said: "Personally, I don't think it's good for women's golf, but Annika has achieved most of her goals and is seeking a new one. She is our elite player and I hope she does well."

What is certain is that Sorenstam's participation has generated a flurry of attention, focusing entirely on how she plays. That is a luxury in women's sport. Here, for example, the search was on yesterday for players prepared to disrobe for a men's magazine. There was no mention of golf at all.

Sorenstam's biggest problem at the Colonial will be entering unknown territory, says Billie Jean King, who was involved in sport's most famous "battle of the sexes" 30 years ago.

"No matter how much she practises, you can't rehearse for that kind of occasion," said 59-year-old King, who racked up 20 Wimbledon tennis titles and beat Bobby Riggs, Wimbledon men's champion in 1939, in an exhibition match in 1973. "It's very difficult. But I think if she makes the cut, that would be just tremendous."

Sorenstam insists: "I'm not trying to prove anything. I just look at it as the biggest challenge I've ever had in my career."

Lunn keeps level head

By Claire Middleton

KAREN LUNN, the affable Australian who lives down the road from Laura Davies, takes a one-shot lead into the third round of the La Perla Italian Open at Poggio dei Medici today.

The Surrey resident kept her cool despite the heat, and a level head despite the hills, to shoot a 71 yesterday two under par, which left her six under overall. Behind her is Lynnette Brooky, a New Zealander out of Chalfont St Peter, Buckinghamshire, who is her room-mate here in a cabin on a nearby campsite.

"She cannot hold her drink so I shall make sure she gets her share of a bottle of wine and keep her up until the early hours," said Lunn, the 1993 British Open champion.

While Brooky is saving up for her wedding, Lunn would like to register a first victory since the 1997 French Open. "It's been a while since I've been up there, so don't know what to expect," she said.

Alison Nicholas, on two under par, is the best home-grown Briton, while Rebecca Hudson was left ruing a poor finish which left her eight over par and heading for home.

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