



Albertse will 'just have to box clever'

Lali Stander

KWAZULU-NATAL amateur Louis Albertse laid down an early marker for a second IGT Challenge Tour title when he opened with a six-under-par 66 in the eighth event of the Race to Q-School Series on Monday.

The 20-year-old from Dundee fired seven birdies at State Mines Country Club to catch up to early pacesetter John McClean from Ireland.

The pair finished a stroke clear of Dean O'Riley. Three-time winner Tristen Strydom is two off the pace. Allister de Kock from the Gary Player Class of 2017 champions a group of six on three-under and former Big Easy Tour champion Rhys West leads a

pack of eight at two-under.

"All-in-all, 32 players broke par on the opening day.

"That means I'll just have to box clever to stay ahead of the chasing pack," said Albertse, who claimed a sensational maiden victory in just his third IGT Challenge Tour start in June.

"I had a pretty solid start and made a good up-and-down at the second. I two-putted for birdie at the third, missed some chances and then I drained a 15-footer for birdie at the eight.

"That sparked a nice little run for me."

Albertse went for the green at the ninth, but finished short of the green. "I would have been happy to walk away with

par after the first tricky chip," said the HPC Tuks Golf Academy player.

"I had very little green to work with and left it short, but I hit the next chip perfectly and it dropped in the hole for birdie."

That took him through the turn at three-under, and he moved within one of McClean in the next two holes. "I birdied the par five (10), but the birdie at 11 was a little unexpected," he said.

"I hit a poor tee shot, but I sucked it up and went for the middle of the green to try to save par. Then I boxed a 20-footer for birdie.

"Unfortunately I short-sided myself at 13 with a wedge off the tee. I got out of the trap

but I missed the par putt. I made a good up-and-down at 15 to get back to five-under and holed another great chip at 16.

"I hit seven-iron pin high left of green and I had 25 foot to carry the green and another 10 feet to the pin.

"I actually thought about that chip at the ninth and hit it perfectly."

Albertse won the Mpumalanga Open in September, but has struggled for consistency since. Three rounds of 70 and two 71s in the last two weeks on the national amateur circuit delivered a shot of confidence, though.

"Actually, that was sparked by back-to-back 69s in the Race to Q-School at Centurion," he said. -ANA

