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Trio share LPGA top spot

KINGS ISLAND, Ohio (UPI) — Nancy Lopez-Melton struggled to an even-par 72 in a wind-swept second round Friday to slip into a three-way tie for first place with Jane Blalock and Sally Little in the \$150,000 LPGA championship.

Blalock fired a 3-under-par 69 while Little, from South Africa, carded a 70 to remain one stroke ahead of Cathy Mant, who matched Blalock's 69. Barbara Moxness stood at 3-under 141.

A strong, swirling wind whipped the par-72, 6,313-yard Jack Nicklaus Sports Center Course and many of the touring pros who were in contention after the opening round saw their scores skyrocket.

Blalock, who recorded five birdies on the first 13 holes, bogeyed two of the last five, while Little shot a 3-under-par 33 on the back nine to move into the tie for the lead.

Lopez-Melton, who lives just off the Nicklaus-designed course, double-bogeyed the par-5 fourth hole en route to a front side 38. But she recovered by birdieing the 12th and 17th for a 34 on the last nine and her 72 coupled with her opening day 67 allowed her to share the lead.

Mant, whose best finish ever in the LPGA event was a tie for 10th, birdied five of last 11 holes. Tied in fourth place at 2-under par 142, just three shots back, were Janet Coles and Beth Daniel, who won last week's tour event in New Rochelle, N.Y.

Defending champion Donna Caponi Young was at 145, one over par, after shooting a 73 to go with her first-round 72.

Blalock, who has never won this prestigious event, credited her fine round to excellent putting and an ability to handle the wind.

"I would like to see the wind blow," she said. "I think I'm capable of handling it. I can play a lot of shots in the wind. Conditions like this make it more of a shotmaker's course."

Lopez-Melton, who noted that "Janie had a super round for the way the wind was blowing," said she started out poorly because she let the wind affect her game.

"I was fighting the wind. I started to swing harder, which is the worst thing you can do, and when I hit my ball out of bounds on No. 4, I

realized what I was doing," she said.

Lopez-Melton, who has won 17 titles in just two years, including this event in 1978 on the same course, said she is confident her game is coming back.

"I recovered from the rather poor start, that helps my attitude," she said.

Little says she has "some momentum going" and is also confident she can put together two more solid rounds.

"I feel comfortable," she said. "I know it's always tough to win. It never gets easy. But I played a solid round and I hit the ball well."

Following Friday's round the field was cut to the low 70 golfers. The final two rounds are to be nationally televised.