

## Southport's Tommy Fleetwood makes promising start on European Tour in Austria

TOMMY FLEETWOOD'S spectacular waltz up the leaderboard in Austria was brought to a shuddering halt.

But the Southport player could still draw comfort from a promising start to the European Tour event at the Diamond Club in Atzenbrugg.

The Formby Hall golfer was heading for a top ten spot after the opening round of the Austrian GolfOpen presented by Lyoness after he moved to two under par.

Birdies on the 14th and 15th holes had left the European Challenge Tour order of merit leader handily placed, only for successive bogeys at the last two holes to undermine his efforts.

Fleetwood signed for a level par round to leave himself in 29th place after a battling performance.

Two birdies on the front nine had been cancelled out by a double bogey at the par three 184 yard ninth. He immediately picked up a shot at the 506 yard par five 10th, only to drop it again on the next hole.

While Fleetwood was building towards ensuring he makes the halfway cut, both his clubmate Lee Slattery and Liverpool's Nick Dougherty are facing a battle to make the weekend.

Slattery, who needs a high finished to force himself back inside the top 115 in the rankings who automatically keep their tour card for next year, was down in 98th on four over par. He, too, dropped shots at the last two holes to scupper a spirited fightback.

After a birdie on the first hole, a disastrous run saw the Southport player drop six shots in eight holes, including a double bogey on the 582 yards par five sixth. But he strung together three successive birdies from the 11th before his late lapse.

Dougherty matched that score as he looked to make just his second halfway cut of the season and launch a late bid to avoid a trip to the end of season qualifying school. But it could have been worse as he reached the 11th hole of his round six over par, before he picked up two birdies on the run home.

Welshman Liam Bond was the surprise leader after the first round as professional debutants Tom Lewis and Paul Cutler both found the going tough.

Lewis and Cutler were part of the European Walker Cup team who beat their American rivals earlier this month. Lewis ended his round with a two-over total of 74 while Northern Irishman Cutler fared even worse at five over par.

That Bond, who shot a six under par 66, is playing on the European Tour at all is a testament to his persistence. The 41-year-old finally came through qualifying school last year at the 16th attempt.

ROYAL Birkdale's Ben Parker leads the chasing pack on the European Challenge Tour after Frenchman Christophe Brazillier shot a remarkable 62 to lead the Allianz Golf Open Grand Toulouse.

Germany-based Parker is in a share of second after seven birdies and just one dropped shot in his 66.

Warrington's Phil Archer is 25th after a 69, as he looks to regain his European Tour card, alongside Royal Birkdale's Matthew Baldwin. James Robinson (Southport and Ainsdale) is a further shot behind.