

# QATAR MASTER

GIFTED, CHARMING AND SCARILY LONG OFF THE TEE, SPANISH 26-YEAR-OLD ALVARO QUIROS IS GOING PLACES, STARTING WITH THE MASTERS IN APRIL

BY ROBBIE GREENFIELD

Rory McIlroy wasn't the only young player with a huge future ahead of him to win during this year's Desert Swing. The teenager's rise to stardom is currently garnering all the plaudits, but the ascent of Alvaro Quiros has been no less impressive in its own right.

As he showed once again in Qatar on the way to collecting his third European Tour title (in only his second full season on tour) the 26-year-old Spaniard has got serious game. He also possesses the kind of natural star quality that can pull big crowds.

Quirky, flamboyant and prodigiously long off the tee, Quiros marks his ball with a lucky casino chip and eschews the ubiquitous baseball cap for a straw panama hat. He psyches himself up for tournaments by watching endless James Bond movies and jokingly claims to be more suited to the role of 007 than Daniel Craig.

But it is the Spaniard's licence to kill off the tee that is more immediately striking. He registered a 309-yard into-the-breeze carry with a driver on the pinpoint accurate Trackman launch monitor at the Dubai Creek Golf Club in January and hits his 3-wood 10 yards past most of his rivals' drivers.

Phenomenal clubhead speed rather than brute force is the secret behind the tall and sinewy Quiros' power, which will be a tremendous advantage when he heads to the US for the big-money events that his new world ranking of No.26 now qualifies him to take part in. But there is more to the Spaniard's

amour than raw power. As he so ably demonstrated on Peter Harradine's demanding Doha course, Quiros has no shortage of nerve and touch to go with his monster length.

With former winner Henrik Stenson just one shot adrift, Quiros looked to be in trouble when his approach from the rough on 15 found the water in front of the green and he could only pitch onto the fringe. Undaunted, he recovered to hole a wonderful breaking putt of 25-feet and limit the damage to a bogey, before making back-to-back birdies on the driveable 16th and par three 17th with more nerveless putting.

By climbing into the world's top 50 (like McIlroy) the rising European Tour star has now booked his debut at top tier events in America, culminating

in his first trip to Augusta in April. But the Spaniard is determined to maintain a sense of perspective. "It is a surprise - to win a tournament is not something you do every day," he said after holding up the trophy in Qatar. "For players like Sergio and Stenson it is easy but for me it is very special. I am going to go to the Masters and just enjoy that experience."

Despite his modesty, wins are not so fleeting for Quiros as he would have you believe. Considering that much of his 2008 season was dogged by a wrist injury, he has in fact amassed three victories in a little under 18 months and been fully fit for only 12 of them. In golfing terms, that borders on prolific. And on current form, he is likely to add to that tally this season. ■



Alvaro Quiros marches to victory in Doha.