

Golf Digest

The #1 Golf Publication

Middle East Edition

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BRITISH
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P.45

FIND
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WHY
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A Motivate Publication

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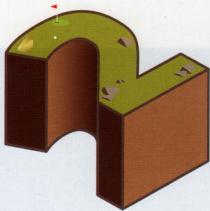


GOLF COURSES

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



SINCE 1966, GOLF DIGEST HAS BEEN COMPILING THE OLDEST, MOST COMPREHENSIVE AND MOST RESPECTED COURSE RANKING GUIDES IN THE WORLD. NOW, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE BRIEF BUT ALREADY EVENTFUL GOLFING HISTORY OF THE MIDDLE EAST, WE BRING YOU A DEFINITIVE LIST OF THE BEST TO GOLF COURSES IN THE REGION. WITH THREE HIGH PROFILE COURSES JUST MONTHS AWAY FROM COMPLETION, WE ALSO LOOK AT SOME POSSIBLE NEW ENTRIES FOR WHEN WE PUBLISH THE NEXT RANKINGS GUIDE IN JULY 2010. →



DOHA GOLF CLUB

PETER HARRADINE (1997)

Doha Golf Club's brilliant use of some dramatic natural rock features just gives it the edge over the National course in our ranking, creeping past Peter Harradine's other Middle East masterpiece by a slender 0.8 pts. "Maybe it's because I had a site there [in Qatar], whereas in Abu Dhabi I didn't, but even though the National course is often voted the best, I prefer Doha," says Harradine. "Nobody interfered there at all. I remember the guy

from the municipality saying to me: 'Peter, I don't even know what a golf ball looks like, just make me look good!' And that was it, I was left to my own devices."

The large clumps of natural rock formations gave Harradine his starting point, and he was able to resist advice urging him to blast through the rock to create some of the most visually striking holes in the region. Perhaps the most dramatic of these is the short par 4 16th, where the drivable green is protected by an enormous limestone outcrop capable of sending a wayward drive careering into the unlikeliest of places. "My supervisor told me I was mad to leave the rock there on 16, but to me, that makes the hole. You've got to use natural features and make them fit, because you can never compete with what nature gives you," adds Harradine.

The 16th isn't the only hole to make use of the native rock. The 390-yard 12th is protected by limestone quarries positioned front right of the green, while a large boulder guards the right side of the fairway on the

long, downhill 15th. Doha Golf Club has hosted the Qatar Masters since 1998 and has a reputation for being the most challenging course of the three venues on the Desert Swing. It also has a habit of producing winners of the highest pedigree, led by the likes of Ernie Els, Henrik Stenson and Adam Scott.

DOHA'S NATURAL ROCK FORMATIONS WERE AN INSPIRATION TO HARRADINE

This year's event saw the course reach its best condition ever and produce a dynamic winner in big hitting Spaniard Alvaro Quiros. Doha Golf Club also holds the distinction of being the only standalone golf course in the Middle East.

TOTAL SCORE: 59.0

PAR 72 / 7,388 YARDS

TEL: +974 496 0777

www.dohagolfclub.com



Tour pros rate Doha GC
as one of the best tracks
they play all season.





Abu Dhabi's National course has hosted the European Tour since January 2006.



ABU DHABI GOLF CLUB (NATIONAL)
PETER HARRADINE (2000)

Cast your eye over the tranquil beauty of the National course today and it's hard to believe architect Peter Harradine's assertion that the original site was 'one of the worst I've ever been given to work on'. Indeed when constructing the course (built on featureless hardpan salt flats) Harradine had nothing

to work with besides his imagination. The end result was a course that has hosted the European Tour's Abu Dhabi Golf Championship since 2006, won unanimous praise from tour professionals and collected numerous international and local accolades.

The first refreshing aspect about the club is its sheltered location. The course unfolds spacioisly into a secluded oasis, away from the cranes, the traffic and the half-finished skyscrapers that intrude upon many of the other courses in the region.

Since catapulting into the spotlight when it joined the European Tour circuit three-and-a-half years ago, Abu Dhabi Golf Club's National course has undergone some changes and seen high profile operator Troon Golf take charge. Its renowned conditioning has continued to improve and there are few courses better presented than the National in January's championship week.

The firm, slick greens are not as drastically sloping as others in the Middle East (Harradine never designs what he refers to as

'rollercoaster greens') but a strong grain and the subtle undulations make them difficult to read. The layout itself is well-balanced, with challenging stretches between holes five to nine and holes 14-17 interspersed with more realistic birdie chances. In terms of length and difficulty, the finishing three holes are

**THE NATIONAL'S RENOWNED
CONDITIONING HAS
CONTINUED TO IMPROVE**

particularly formidable. Sixteen requires a big drive just to reach the corner of the dogleg, while the tee shot on 17 is a daunting carry over water. As with all great closing holes, the par 5 18th can spell disaster, or offer up a birdie if you're able to hit three good shots.

TOTAL SCORE: 58.2

PAR 72 / 7,510 YARDS
TEL: +971 2 558 8990
www.adgolfclub.com



JEBEL ALI GOLF RESORT & SPA

PETER HARRADINE (1998)

The first of golf architect Peter Harradine's fine Middle East collection when he began work almost 15 years ago, Jebel Ali remains one of the most welcoming, fun places to play in the UAE. And what it lacks in length, this extremely pretty nine hole layout more than makes up for with charm and trickery.

Large clusters of bougainvillea flowers and strutting peacocks garnish the course with a dazzling array of colours, while the multitude of dense vegetation makes for a precise challenge from tee to green. Nowhere is this better illustrated than on the 311-yard par 4 fifth, a drivable hole partially blocked out by a cluster of trees and further protected



The par 3 eighth hole on Jebel Ali's resort course can be difficult to judge into the wind.

by a long front bunker. Unlike some of the more generous courses here, club selection off the tee at Jebel Ali is always an important consideration, while small, slick greens ensure that par is never a pushover.

TOTAL SCORE: 48.3
PAR 36 / 3,299 YARDS
TEL: +971 4 883 6000
www.jebelali-international.com