



The 15th hole is the hardest par 3 on the course, playing nearly 220 yards from the back tee.

GOLF CLUB FOCUS

Al Hamra coming into its own

Peter Harradine's intricate design has become one of the best-conditioned courses in the UAE. *Golf Digest* caught up with club manager, **Simon Mees**, to find out more

As regular visitors will testify, there is no better time in its four-year history to play a round of golf at Al Hamra Golf Resort. While UAE courses using the favoured Bermuda grass go through their summer transition, the Paspallum playing surfaces of Ras Al Khaimah's Banyan Tree managed resort stretch out like a velvet carpet in multiple shades of green.

It has been quite a transformation for a club that used to be known for its hard, fast, and often slightly bare conditions. And this year, **Peter Harradine's** engaging layout has truly come into its own. "I think it's just a case of the course maturing, and the fact that we've only recently had access to enough water," explains club manager, Simon Mees. "Last summer we really focused on getting the fairways as good as

possible, almost with that effect you get in places like Arizona, where the rough becomes very scratchy. And that's paid dividends this year. The playing surfaces are as good as they've ever been and we're getting a lot of positive feedback."

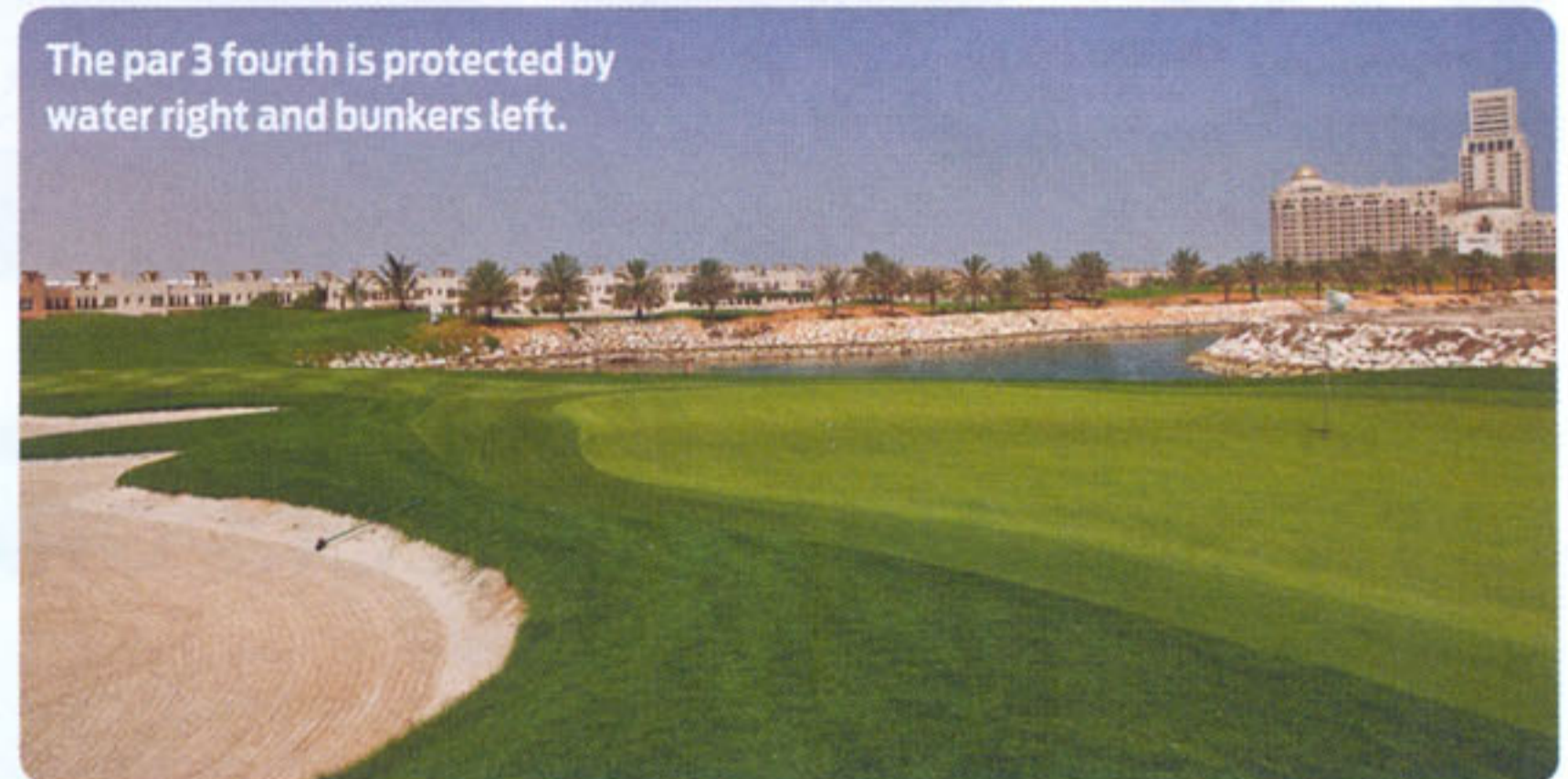
Originally marketed as a 'taste of links golf', Mees explains how that slogan has been abandoned in favour of a lush, more manicured layout in keeping with Harradine's original design. "The only similarity that we have with a links course is that we're near the sea. As far as the layout goes, that's not what we're trying to be."

That being said, Al Hamra is no pushover. The first six holes are a fairly gentle introduction to the round, but from the eighth onwards, a stretch of tough holes present a stern test for top players from the back

The second hole is a dogleg right par 4, framed by the massive Al Hamra Palace Hotel.



The par 3 fourth is protected by water right and bunkers left.



tees. "We've got a good mix of challenges here that appeals to every standard. When we hold Opens the scores are always fairly high. I think perhaps people underestimate the course. Certainly with the last few holes playing into a prevailing wind, it's

a demanding finish."

With improving service levels under the helm of Banyan Tree, the club appears set to continue to go from strength to strength.

For more information, visit alhamragolf.com