



Swiss touch in Golf course design

Peter Harradine has personally designed and co-designed over 160 golf courses in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Middle East

Suchitra Steven Samuel

Peter Harradine, Senior Architect at Harradine Golf prefers to describe himself as humorous and straight forward. Born in 1945 next to the old golf course in Gärten (Berne, Switzerland), Harradine continues the family's golfing tradition. He has been living in the UAE for the past 34 years.

Playing golf was compulsory and he received his first set of clubs at the age of six. A little practice and many rounds could not improve a handicap of five.

In 1965-1966 Harradine went to the US to study the theoretical and practical aspects of landscaping and golf course design and construction. Upon returning to Europe, he built and designed many courses with his father and other prominent European Golf Course Architects of the time.

A visit to Dubai in 1976 to investigate the possibilities of a golf course led to the subsequent establishment of "Orient Irrigation Services" in 1977 and "Harradine Golf" in 1989.

Both Switzerland and the UAE have many similarities, he says. A stable government, small in area, a developed tourist industry, belief in neutrality and peace, strategically placed geographically, secure with a small crime rate, clean, excellent and efficient infrastructure with a very small percentage of land that can be exploited.

UAE is friendly and tolerant with a strong financial sector, multicultural and service oriented.

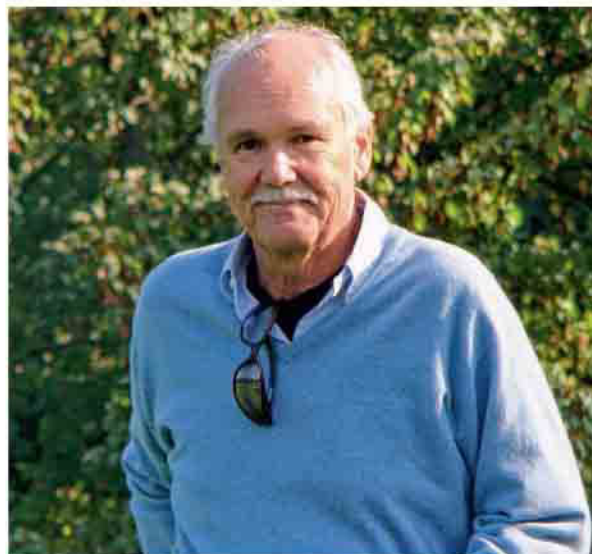
So basically there are quite a few similarities apart from the completely different culture and of course the weather.

"I come from the Italian speaking part of Switzerland, which is considered as a 'Banana Republic' by many of my compatriots. It is quite true that the southern part of Switzerland is less rigid, and severe, which makes it easier to understand and manage some of the more laid-back attitudes and procedures encountered in the UAE," he says.

Obviously the cultures are completely different, he notes, and we have to be careful not to offend the customs and traditions of the UAE. "In many ways we have more flexibility and small personal freedoms in the UAE. However, Swiss society is quite rigid and regimented (much less in the south) so you know exactly where you stand," he says.

Harradine likes the flexibility, incredible courage, amazing vision and the fact that nothing seems to be impossible in the UAE. However, the lack of clarity on certain issues and the weather in summer are what he dislikes.

According to him, the changes in the UAE are so astounding that they are difficult to describe. "Enormous areas of desert have been transformed into new cities, districts and neighbourhoods, which is unparalleled anywhere in the world when one considers the size of this country. Such



Peter Harradine

growth has obviously eroded the more intimate atmosphere and relationships experienced previously," he stresses.

Harradine likes the fact that he can operate from a truly international hub, which allows him to communicate and jump on a plane at any time of the day or night and will take him to most parts of the world within hours. "I often visit various countries and experience different cultures within days and we never talk about politics but only about the great game of golf and designing golf courses. Golf is a universal language and I am sure that there would be quite a few less conflicts if more people played golf," he observes.

Harradine has personally designed and co-designed over 160 golf courses in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The courses were situated in every type of terrain: from arid, rocky, dry, hot and saline deserts, to wet, humid, temperate and cold grasslands, mountains, waste tips, agricultural fields, sea-sides, and even at altitudes of 1,850 metres!

The constant and very frequent travelling is what he does not like about his job.

Harradine dreamt of becoming a pilot, which he could not achieve because of a medical condition. "I am, however, extremely happy that I had to change direction as I am very satisfied and fulfilled with my present profession," he adds.

Harradine is happily married since 30 years and has three children, two sons and a daughter.

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SHORT TAKES

What inspires you?
My job and my family.

What would you consider your strengths?
Perseverance.

What's the best advice that you've received?
Be honest.

What are the professional rules that you follow?
To be transparent, available and accountable.