

LOCAL SCENE



Michael Harradine chats to Worldwide Golf Playing Editor Joel Neale on looking ahead, being attacked by 'killer' crows and shooting 7-under round the Faldo Course!

WWG: You're having a good run this season as the Order of Merit leader – do you put this down to any special routine?

MH: No, I don't think it is down to any special routine because I don't have one. I would like to think, however, that I have improved my short game, especially my putting. I know that people keep drumming on about the short game and how important it is but it was only until I played on the MENA Tour with players above our local amateur level that I actually saw what a few extra up and downs and a few extra holed putts can actually do for your score. As obvious as that sounds, it made a difference actually seeing it.

WWG: How do you prepare for a tournament?

MH: I try to get a decent night's sleep and always try to get a practice round in the day before if possible, especially if I don't know the course very well.

WWG: I understand that you went back during the summer (2011) to try to get into the Swiss national team? How did that go?

MH: Yes, it was a goal of mine to get onto the Swiss National team last year. It didn't go very well at all as I didn't make it. Because I live here and not in Switzerland I could only travel back for a certain number of events, and when the first few didn't go as well as I had hoped I started getting frustrated with myself and this frustration continued into the rest of the tournaments. Like most other people I play my best golf when I'm relaxed and feeling confident. I was so concerned about getting good results that I was in completely the wrong mind set.

WWG: When did you first take up the sport and where?

MH: I always played a little golf when I was younger. Golf has always been in the family so I was almost obliged to take part in the weekly junior golf lessons at the Emirates Golf Club. My sport was tennis, though, and when I'd had enough of that at the age of 16 I decided to take up golf more seriously. Looking back, I am now grateful that I was 'obliged' to take up golf.

WWG: As your father, Peter, is a world renowned golf course designer (having designed the Abu Dhabi National Course, home to the HSBC Golf Championship) do you think he has influenced your decision to get involved in the sport?



Lowest round of golf, when and where?

My lowest round was on the Faldo course during the Club Championship last month when I shot 7 under. Everything clicked. I still think that I left a few shots out there but that's any golfer's story after any round. If only...

What's the weirdest thing to have happened to you on the course?

A lot of funny stuff has happened on course but being 'attacked' by crows down the left hand side of the first hole on the Majlis course was pretty weird. I had been dive bombed by birds before but this time one of them actually struck me on the head which I really wasn't expecting. Almost felt like I was appearing in Alfred Hitchcock's film, 'The Birds'.

MH: Definitely, my grandfather was a golf course architect as well and also a very good golfer. My grandmother used to play, too, so golf has always been in the family. My dad grew up playing golf and when I was younger it was only normal for me to get involved along with everyone else in the family, even if it wasn't my main sporting interest as a kid.

WWG: As you are part of 'Harradine Golf' – designing courses – does this influence the way you play the game?

MH: No, I don't think so. Playing and designing golf courses are two very different things. If anything, it is the other way around. When you are playing different courses, you can see features which you might think work well or don't work at all from a golf course design perspective so you can integrate them or avoid them the next time you are designing a hole or a course.

WWG: What has been your most difficult challenge with course design?

MH: Probably contouring. Contour plans are one of the most important, if not the most important, plans on a Project as it gives shape to a golf course. It is quite simple to imagine how you want a hole to look but transferring that image onto a plan is a lot harder than I thought it would be. It sounds quite easy but you can get stuck on a contour plan and struggle to find a solution.

Q&A

MICHAEL HARRADINE

WWG: Have you ever had a hole in one?

Yes, only one, though. It was on the 15th hole at Al Hamra Golf Club during a tournament so I was quite happy with that. I was complaining to my playing partners on the 15th tee that I had never got a hole in one and then ended up getting one a few moments later. I was understandably heckled for the rest of the round after that but after an ace like that I didn't really mind.

WWG: I understand you were thinking of trying to qualify for the Asian Tour recently, what are your aspirations?

MH: I would love to play professional golf on The European or US PGA Tour but who wouldn't? I am lucky enough to be able to play a lot of golf and I just want to keep improving. If I have a good season here this year I would like to go the Asian Q-school next January.

WWG: What event do you look forward to most and why?

MH: The two bigger Amateur tournaments, the Sheikh Rashid Trophy and the Emirates Amateur Open, are always good tournaments to play as they have the strongest fields of the year, but I am looking forward to the MENA Tour when it starts up again later on in the year. I think that for any local amateur here it's great to play in because it's at a much higher standard of golf than any of the amateur tournaments. I know it's still in its infancy but it has a lot of potential.

WWG: Where would you say your strengths and weaknesses are?

MH: Strengths are probably that I am quite a laid back person so I think that that helps me relax on a golf course which, for me, is essential to play well and weaknesses, I probably give myself too hard a time if I don't play as well as I think I should. Golf is an up and down game, I just have to realise that you can't totally avoid bad rounds, it's part of golf.

WWG: What's your favourite golf course? – one of your own designs if you like!

MH: Without being accused of favouritism in the Middle East it would have to be Doha, with the Abu Dhabi National and Yas links coming in a close second. I haven't actually played that many courses anywhere else as I had stopped playing when I was back in Switzerland while I was studying so I'm afraid I can only choose from a limited number.

WWG: Who inspires you most?

I don't think that it is so much one particular person but different moments that can be inspiring. A great comeback in a sporting event, seeing someone hold their nerve when they are under immense pressure or someone battling through adversity is very inspiring. I can think of more than one person who has done a number of the above things but if I start naming one or two the list could go on for a while.

WWG: Other than golf what are your other hobbies/interests?

I still enjoy a good game of tennis and I enjoy speed, so I'm quite happy when I'm on or in anything that has an engine.



LOCAL GAME WITH MICHAEL HARRADINE

STUART FEES, JEBEL ALI GOLF RESORT & SPA TEACHING PROFESSIONAL, AND COACH TO MICHAEL, TAKES A LOOK AT ONE OF THE BEST SWINGS IN THE LOCAL AMATEUR GAME.



1



Michael has hugely improved in his address position over the past 12 months. From being rather hunched over the ball he now adopts a lovely athletic position with excellent spine and leg angles.

Michael makes a good transition from the top of his backswing into his downswing. The shaft is perfectly on plane pointing towards the ball halfway down and is an excellent recovery from what we see in picture 4.

2



Good initial move away from the ball, keeping the clubhead wide and low to the ground with the club in front of the arms and body.

Through the ball Michael mimics the position of all good players, great extension of his arms and the club down the target line.

3



This clearly shows one of the areas Michael needs to improve. The club gets too far behind him and too parallel to the ground. Ideally, the angle of the shaft should be similar to where you see it in picture 7.

As he continues through the ball the club exits through his left shoulder – a position I really like to see.

7



8



9



Michael has improved immensely over the past 2 years - From a talented tennis player he has now turned his attention to golf and is quickly establishing himself as one of, if not the best amateur player in the UAE . His major assets of great rhythm, timing and balance combined with his ever improving technique and self determination mean there is plenty of scope for him to continue to develop his game to a very high level and fulfill his undoubted potential.



Illustrate his lovely full shoulder . The 'flattish' angle of the shaft seen in pictures 3 & 4 causes him to point the club slightly right of target at the top of his backswing and, combined with a slightly closed clubface (i.e. pointing skywards) hit right to left shots with his longer clubs.

A great finish - In perfect balance with weight in left side and his chest pointing slightly left of target.

