

LOCAL SCENE



Joel Neale talks to the UAE's leading amateur, **MICHAEL HARRADINE**, on his plans for the future now that he has been selected to play for the Swiss National Team.

JN: Do you have any sort of regular practice routine that you try and follow?

MH: Not really. If there's an area of my game that needs work I try to spend time on that. I try to use 60-70 per cent of my time on my short game. My long game tends to be quite steady but I know there is always room for improvement with my iron play. It really depends on what needs work on any given day. If I'm struggling with the putter, I'll putt a lot more, if it's the driver, I'll drive a lot more. I don't really have any fixed routine I just go with what I think needs work.

JN: How do you balance your time between working for Harradine Golf and practising?

MH: Obviously, I'd like to concentrate all my time and effort on playing and practising to get my game to the highest level I can. Because I'm not spending all day, every day playing and working on the range, it's harder to get into a steady routine. I'm sure that if I had the whole day to devote to my game it would be a lot easier to plan a full routine that covers all the different elements I need to work on.

JN: You've been selected to play for the Swiss National Team. You must be thrilled to be asked.

MH: The officials from the Swiss National Team approached me last November to ask if I'd like to be considered for the Team. It was a goal of mine two years ago to get into the National Team and at that time I met up with the coach and told him I was interested. I went on to have a horrible season so last year I decided not to say anything! Fortunately, I had a good season playing on the amateur circuit in Switzerland and got some good results. They always do the selection at the end of the year and I got an e-mail from the coach saying he'd like to meet up and go through a few things. I wasn't sure at first whether he wanted to talk about the National Team but when I met with him he said, 'You're in the Team.' So I was quite happy with that!

JN: Now that you're in do you get much chance to go and play with them or is it a seasonal thing?

MH: It's seasonal. It works well with me living in Dubai because our season is in the winter and theirs is in the summer. They knew I was playing

in the Desert Classic, so they told me, 'Play in the Classic then work hard for two months and come over in April.' Fitness is a big thing for them so hopefully I'll be in good shape when I go over there next month.

JN: Do you have any aspirations to turn professional – maybe at the end of this year?

MH: I'm certainly thinking about trying for Q-School for The European Tour but that's obviously a really tough proposition. I'm definitely going to be going to Asian Tour Q-School next January. I'd love to turn professional and play on one of the major tours but there are so many talented guys out there trying to do the same thing. It's much tougher than people think.

JN: Do you think you're in a better situation being based in Dubai with the likes of the MENA Tour right on your doorstep which provides a platform for you to get invitations to play in tournaments like the Abu Dhabi HSBC Golf Championship, the Commercialbank Qatar Masters and the Omega Dubai Desert Classic?

MH: Definitely. Don't get me wrong, the UAE has always been a great place to practice. We've got beautiful courses, great facilities, the weather's perfect – but previously we had good amateur events and nothing really after that. The MENA Tour has really helped. They started with four tournaments the first year, then six and now 11 so it's certainly growing. It's been just such a fantastic experience to play six tournaments in a row of three rounds each. It gives you a great taste of what it's like for a touring pro. I was surprised how draining it is, mentally not physically. When you're actually in tournament mode for that length of time it takes it out of you more than you'd imagine. ■



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Michael Harradine is pictured with the trophy after winning the prestigious Shaikh Rashid Trophy at Jebel Ali in 2010.