

Mou wins American Express Dirab Golf Championship



Michael Harradine, leading amateur awardee.



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RIYADH: Two months after turning pro and playing only his second event on the MENA Golf Tour, Tommy Mou claimed a first fat paycheck of a promising professional career when he won the American Express Dirab Golf Championship at the Dirab Golf & Country Club on Wednesday.

Mou of the United States took home the top prize money of \$9,000 out of the total pot of \$50,000. Not bad for a three days' work on the tree-lined layout that played longer than usual from the black tees against a field of professional and amateur players from 26 countries.

"I'm really happy right now. I just played my game and stayed focused," said the lanky Mou who will fly to Taiwan to visit his parents after a short stay

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in Dubai with friends for a few days.

The US-based Taiwanese Mou clinched the title on 11-under 205, closing with a 2-under 69 after earlier rounds of 69, 67 for a 1-shot victory over two-day leader Duncan Stewart of Scotland who courageously battled after losing his overnight lead and falling behind by one after the first two holes.

But Stewart had to settle for second place on 206 after a final round 71 to go with 66 and 69.

As the wind picked up at midday with most of the players already done, Mou and Stewart were effectively locked in match play battle as the rest in the leaderboard failed to mount a charge.

Thanks to his solid amateur background having played NCAA golf with University of Florida, Mou, 23, played with confidence even after Stewart twice tied the score, the last at the par-5 15 when the Scot chipped within inches from the left of the green for birdie and Mou missed his own attempt from three feet the ball getting in and out of the cup.

Armed with an impeccable short game, Mou had the last say in this head-to-head under the hot sun followed by a small gallery.

He stuffed his 6-iron tee shot to two feet for a tap-in birdie on the par-3 181 yards 16th hole to go 1-up, as Stewart parred the hole.

Mou and Stewart both parred 17. On the last hole Stewart had a chance to force a playoff but missed his birdie attempt from 9 feet to the right and Mou two-putted from 24 feet for par.

"I can't complain. It was a good battle," said Stewart of his second-place finish on this MENA Tour event organized by Golf in DUBAI. Last week, he also placed second in the Kazakhstan Open on the European Challenge Tour.

That Mou wound up 30th in last week's third leg, Creek Open, was now a distant memory, and his 11-under total for 54 holes was a record at Dirab, according to DGCC General Manager Bouchaib El Jadiani.

England's Zane Scotland shot 69 to be alone in third place on 7-under 209 with Ian Keenan, also from England, and Sweden's Fredrik Quicker tied on 210.

Switzerland's **Michael Harradine** was three strokes further back on 213 and he was awarded the prize for leading amateur in the tournament.

Faisal Salhab and Prince Khaled Saud Al Faisal were the two leading Saudi amateurs in the event for which they won vouchers worth SR5,000 and SR3,000 respectively courtesy of title sponsor American Express.

The prize presentation ceremony took place after Wednesday's final round. Saudi Golf Federation president and golf course owner Khaled Abunayyan attended the ceremony along with American Express (Saudi Arabia) CEO Priyan Attygalle, Golf in DUBAI Vice Chairman & CEO Mohmed Juma Buamaim, GM Adrian Flaherty and Almarai PR and Business Manager Abdulaziz Alaqueel.

Abunayyan thanked the sponsors and the player for supporting another successful MENA Tour event at Dirab.

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