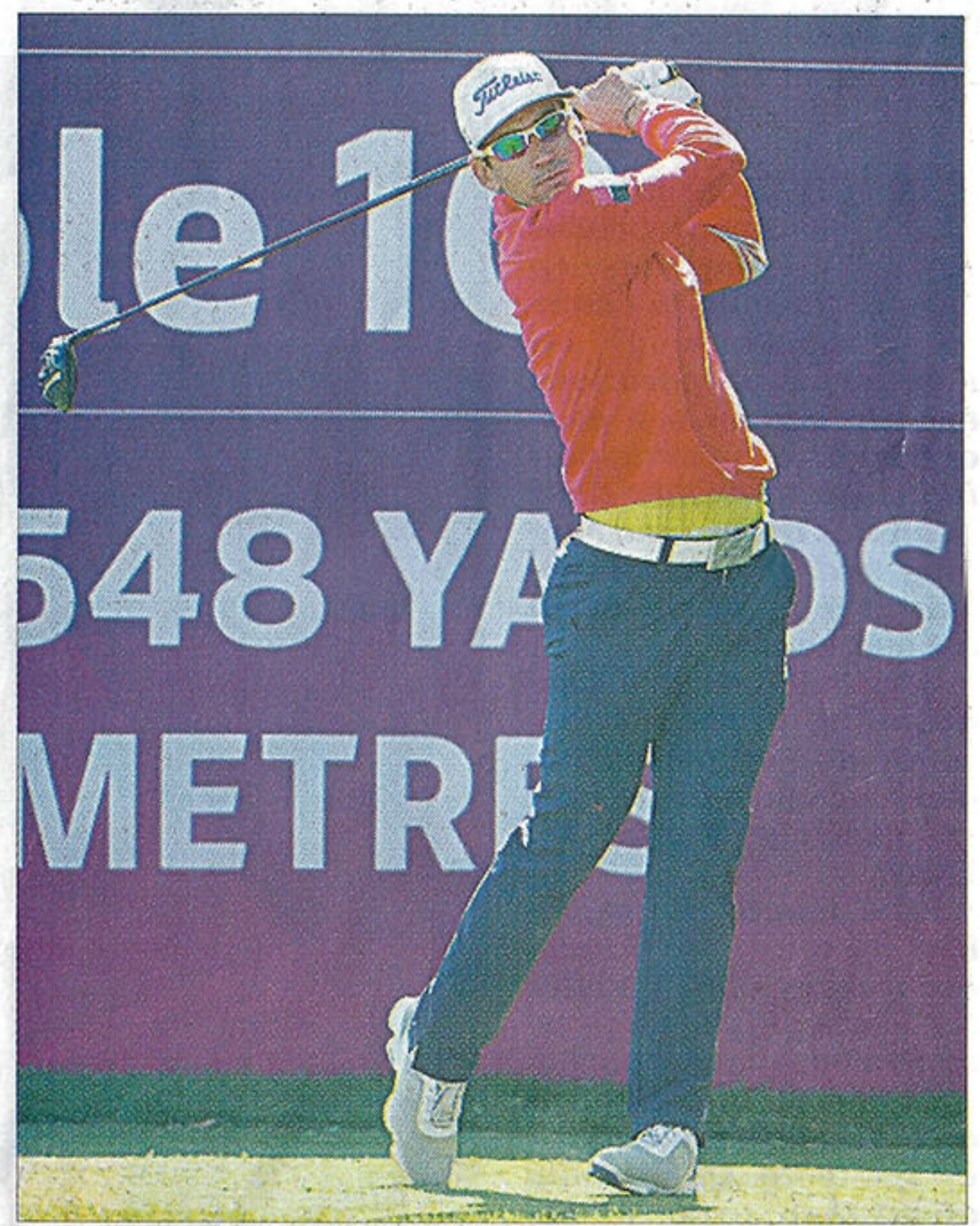


Grace grabs 'historic' title

South African becomes the first to defend CBQM crown in 19 years; Cabrera-Bello & Olesen joint second



'PEARL' MOMENT: Commercial Bank Qatar Masters champion Branden Grace with his girlfriend Nieke Coetzee after receiving the trophy at the Doha Golf Club on Saturday. The South African became the first player to win the title back-to-back in Qatar. (PHOTOGRAPHS: HANSON K JOSEPH)



Rafa Cabrera-Bello (top) and Thorbjorn Olesen shared the second place with two under 276 on Saturday.

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WORLD No. 11 Branden Grace, blazing a hot trail of five top-10 finishes on the Tour this season, accomplished the distinction of being the first player to defend the Commercial Bank Qatar Masters title.

At the Doha Golf Club on Saturday, South African Grace, who is second in the Road To Dubai race, finished on the top of the roller-coaster fourth round with an impressive 69 to secure a two-stroke win over Dane Thorbjorn Olesen and Spaniard Rafa Cabrera-Bello. His aggregate was 14 under 274.

At the closing ceremony, watched by a large crowd, Commercial Bank CEO Abdullah Saleh al Raisi and QGA President Hassan al Nuami presented Grace with the Mother of Pearl Trophy. The seventh title was worth 381,459 euros for the champion/

Welsh Bradley Dredge, tied for the 10th place with five others after three rounds, had a few ups and downs today. But he redeemed himself with a late charge. He leapfrogged with four birdies on the final four holes to share the fourth place with English duo Andrew Johnston and Lee Slattery with three shots off the winner.

Three shots further down, six players were locked for the seventh spot, including 2010 Open champion Louis Oosthuizen. The South African, who had two second-place finishes in the US Open and Open last year, carded one under 71 to share the spot with 2014 champion and world No. 12 Sergio Garcia (70), Portuguese Ricardo Gouveia (70), compatriot George Coetzee (70), English pair Richard Bland (67) and Tommy Fleetwood (74).

The winds were much stronger today compared to Friday. Added to the elements was low day temperature, which made the life of the players on the **Peter Harradine**-designed course miserable to a large extent. There were plenty of birdie putt opportunities for the players on the top towards the end but the hard breeze seemed to have affected their shot play.

Grace, who defended a title for the first time in his career, commented after his superb victory, "It's great. I'm pretty much at a loss for words. It's a big thing to come to a week defending. You've got a lot more pressure and a lot more things going on that week.

Talking about his frame of mind, he said, "I just told myself, if I playing the same type of golf that I played yesterday, I should be there or thereabouts. It's brutal conditions out there. You can't really force things to happen. You just need to stay patient and let it happen. I did



that really well yesterday and it worked to my advantage and did the same today.

"I think maybe it went my way a little bit, as well. If Thorbjorn had made birdie on 16, then it's a different story again. And then you're going down the last with a one-shot lead, and you know anything can happen on 18, especially with that pin position. You get the guy going for it and make eagle. It's happened before with Chris Wood (2013).

"It's one of those holes where you can't really just get too comfortable that you've done it. But I thought I gave myself a good chance when I hit the green in two, and I knew pretty much, this is done for," added Grace, who is fourth South African to win in Doha. Darren Fichardt (2003), four-time Major winner Ernie Els (2005) and twice US Open winner Retief Goosen (2007) have been other champions.

Grace also said about the hot form he carried to the 19th edition here, "I've played some really good golf. Everything has just happened. The patience wasn't there the last couple of

"But to get the first proper defence under the belt is something great, and something I've been dreaming of. There's no better place to do it than Qatar. This is really one of my biggest wins to date. I think this is just going to push it up even higher."
- Branden Grace

weeks. I really started pushing, like I wanted to win the SA Open, which maybe wasn't the best of ideas coming off of a holiday. I really didn't do anything over the break and it was a big ask to have won the SA Open.

"But I felt things progressed well in the right direction last week (Abu Dhabi), and I thought I had a good chance, and pushed a little bit too hard. I went after a couple of shots I shouldn't have and those things cost me two bogeys on the back nine on Sunday.

"This week, I think it played a little bit into my hands with the weather. I enjoy tough con-

ditions. I'm a grinder, and you know, the patience was a big key. I really had to grind it out and let it happen, and when I had the opportunity of making a birdie, I had to take it. That was the big key today," said Grace with a big grin.

Grace and Olesen were two shots off overnight leader and double champion Paul Lawrie, who was also chasing a bigger piece of history - to be the first player with a treble in Qatar - when final day action began on Saturday. Barring Lawrie, only Australian Adam Scott (2002 and 2008) has won the crown twice here.

Lawrie, Grace and Olesen were all placed in the top group. Lawrie and Grace stepped up the pace opening the day with a birdie each. But off the next hole, Lawrie's lead was cut to one shot as the 47-year-old suffered a bogey.

Some drama followed after Olesen, with three Tour wins under the belt, gained a shot on the fourth hole and both Lawrie and Grace dropped a stroke off the next one. While Lawrie was joined at the top by Olesen, Grace fell behind.

But the South African made it three-way tie by recovering a birdie on the sixth and started to pile pressure on the rivals with par rounds. Just before the turn, Olesen again lost the contact with the two on the eighth hole and Lawrie's nightmarish time began with a poor tee shot off the ninth.

Lawrie then double-bogeyed the hole, suffered two more bogeys and a double bogey. This cut down his lead to minus six before he made a gain on the penultimate hole to finish with seven under 281. The Scot has had an impressive record for the final day. On six out of seven previous occasions when he had the lead on the final, he won a title. But today was not supposed to be his day.

On the other hand, Grace and Olesen, though the Dane missed a birdie chance on 16th, completed the day with a birdie each. Grace, with a simple tap-in, got three under 69 and Olesen, with one under 71, was tied for the runner-up spot with Cabrera-Bello, who uncorked three back-to-back birdies for a closing two under 70.

Lawrie shared the 13th place with Bernd Weiesberger (Austria), Pablo Larrazabal (Spain), Joost Luiten (Netherlands), Mikko Ilonen (Finland) Johan Carlsson (Sweden) and Grégory Bourdy (France), who had the lone ace of the tournament on the eighth hole on the second day.

Olesen said, "If you take it the start of the week, tied second is pretty good. Obviously, I had a lot of chances today but nothing really went in. I missed that short putt on 10 which hurt a lot. I never really got the pace on the greens. (I) Had a few good lines but then they were short.

"I've tried to change my mental side a little bit, and I've really enjoyed this week from the start. Even though I hit a few bad shots, I was still very good mentally. That's a good sign and that's what I have to keep working on.

It's obviously a good start. (I) Didn't play that well last week but this is a very good start and am looking forward to next week in Dubai. Hopefully we can make some good shots there," added the Dane.

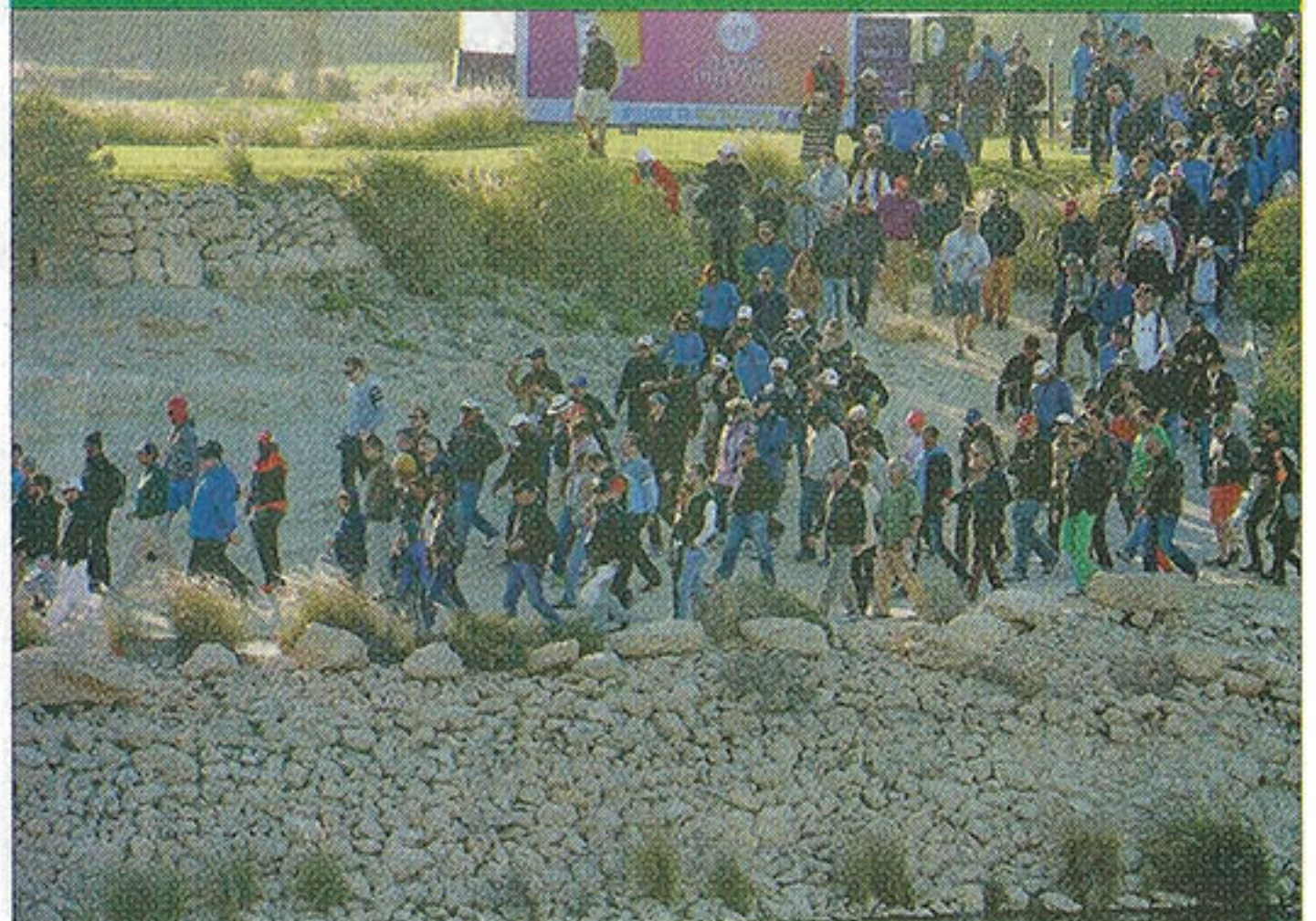
Cabrera-Bello was delighted with his exciting finish. He said, "I started good today but made a bad mistake on eighth, and then it was hard to get birdies. I had a very strong finish and obviously very pleased with the result.

"It was common to make mistakes. Many of the guys out there were also making mistakes, so I just told myself that there was still a lot to play for and still a lot of golf to play. I just stayed patient, waited for my chances and they came in the end," said the Spaniard.



Grace is presented with winner's cheque by Commercial Bank CEO Abdullah Saleh al Raisi at the Doha Golf Club on Saturday.

DGC SNAPSHOTS



Fans follow the golfers during the fourth and final day's play at the Doha Golf Club on Saturday.



An artist works on a canvas mounted on a golf cart to paint a live picture at the Doha Golf Club during the Commercial Bank Qatar Masters.

CBQM FINAL SCORES

Pos	Player	Country	AFTER FOUR ROUNDS (PAR 72)				Total	Par	PM	US\$
			R1	R2	R3	R4				
1	Branden GRACE	RSA	70	67	68	69	274	-14	416,660	
2	Thorbjorn OLESEN	DEN	67	69	69	71	276	-12	217,135	
	Rafa CABRERA-BELLO	ESP	67	68	71	70	276	-12	217,135	
4	Lee SLATTERY	ENG	69	69	69	70	277	-11	106,167	
	Bradley DREDGE	WAL	71	67	70	69	277	-11	106,167	
	Andrew JOHNSTON	ENG	66	69	72	70	277	-11	106,167	
7	George COETZEE	RSA	67	70	73	70	280	-8	55,417	
	Richard BLAND	ENG	72	69	67	72	280	-8	55,417	
	Louis OOSTHUIZEN	RSA	65	73	71	71	280	-8	55,417	
	Ricardo GOUVEIA	POR	67	71	70	72	280	-8	55,417	
	Sergio GARCIA	ESP	70	66	74	70	280	-8	55,417	
	Tommy FLEETWOOD	ENG	67	69	70	74	280	-8	55,417	
13	Bernd WIESEBERGER	AUT	68	70	70	73	281	-7	35,357	
	Paul LAWRIE	SCO	67	66	70	78	281	-7	35,357	
	Pablo LARRAZABAL	ESP	65	72	72	72	281	-7	35,357	
	Joost LUITEN	NED	70	67	74	70	281	-7	35,357	
	Mikko ILONEN	FIN	71	68	71	71	281	-7	35,357	
	Johan CARLSSON	SWE	69	67	72	73	281	-7	35,357	
	Grégory BOURDY	FRA	67	68	72	74	281	-7	35,357	