

Doha debut one to remember

FOLLOWING the lead of the Desert Classic, the Qatar Masters became the second European Tour event held in the Middle East in March 1998, and a formidable cast of stars assembled at Doha Golf Club to contest for honours.

The field included Lee Westwood, Darren Clarke, Ian Woosnam, Padraig Harrington, José Maria Olazábal, Seve Ballesteros, Sam Torrance and future winners Retief Goosen, Thomas Bjørn, Robert Karlsson and Paul Lawrie, but it was Andrew Coltart who clinched the title – his first on Tour – with a superb final round 67

to win by two strokes. Victory for the Scot, who had been a Tour member for five years, came on the same day he learned he had topped the Australasian Order of Merit and the following year he went on to make his Ryder Cup debut.

Nowadays the Desert Swing of Abu Dhabi, Qatar and Dubai are in a far more prominent position on the schedule at the start of the calendar year and Coltart can be found prowling the fairways of Tour events as part of the commentary team for Sky Sports.



Nick Tarratt, Director, European Tour, Dubai Office:

"In 1998 the Qatar Masters saw The Desert Swing become a two-event series and in 2006 it became a three-event Desert Swing with the addition of Abu Dhabi. The three events are ideal for preparation for the players in the run-up for their year ahead. Qatar now fits nicely in the middle of the series. It has a quality field who say that the Qatar Masters stands out due to the excellence of the Peter Harradine-designed golf course, quality facilities, good weather and Doha and Qatar hospitality. The challenge that any Tour faces is not one-off events. It's to get a flow of events for players and the officials, and that is ideal for the European Tour. We have three tournaments on The Desert Swing, Abu Dhabi, Qatar and Dubai. It's perfect for the players: very little travel required, great weather and great facilities. So it's a great kick-off for the season."

