

FOCUS ON THE FIRST MEETING ON THE STAYSURE TOUR

THE COURSE

Sharjah Golf and Shooting Club

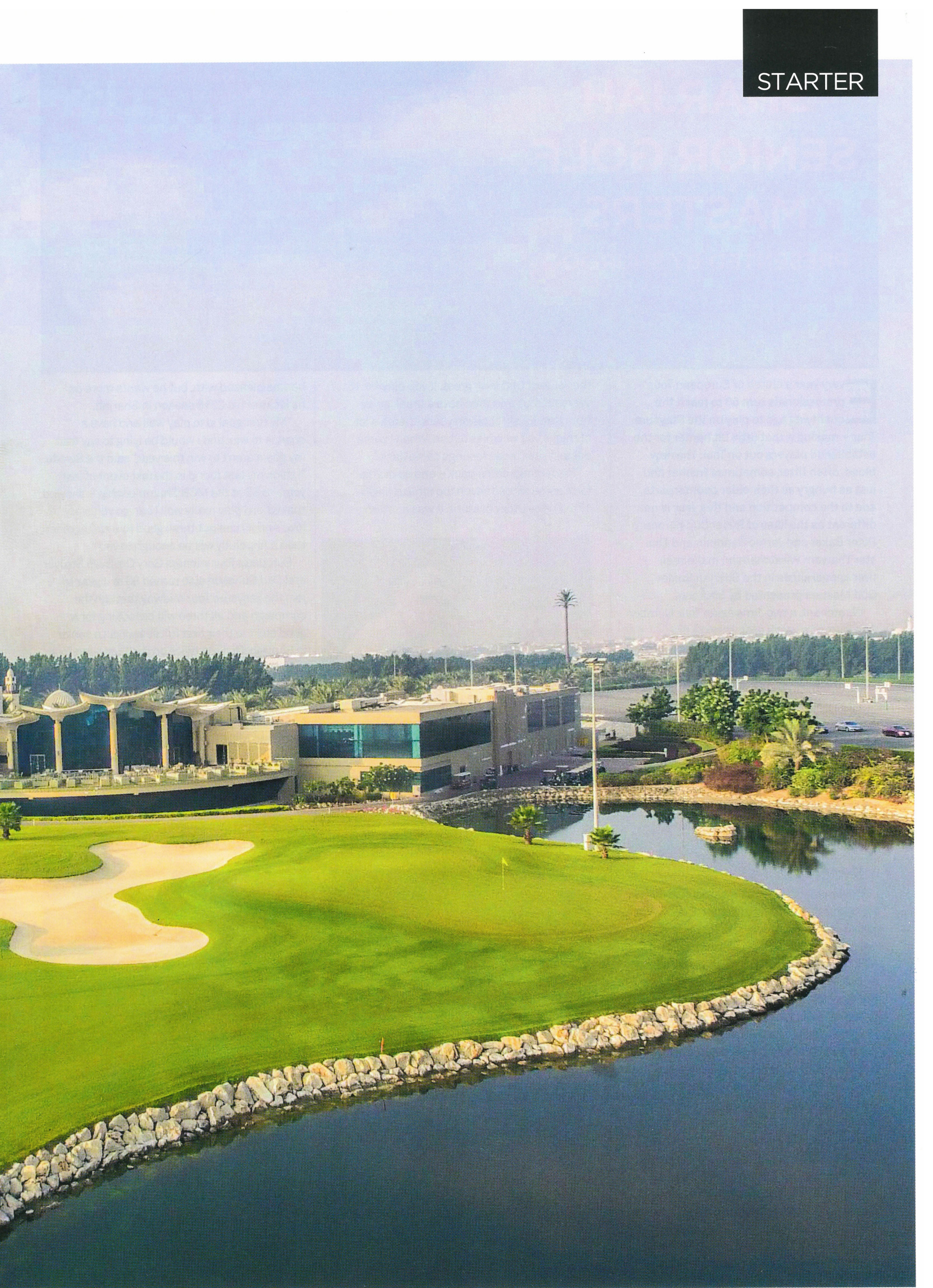
After making history as the first professional tournament to be held on a nine-hole course, the Staysure Tour returns to Sharjah to begin the 2018 season at the Sharjah Senior Golf Masters presented by Shurooq.

THE nine hole course at Sharjah Golf & Shooting Club will take centre stage again this month as the great and the good from the world of senior golf descend on the UAE to compete in the Sharjah Senior Golf Masters presented by Shurooq.

Designed by [Peter Harradine](#), the layout sees each hole feature at least five different teeing options to maximise variation between the hole played on the front nine and the back nine. For example, during last year's tournament, the par-3 third/12th holes were played from tee boxes 80 yards apart, meaning players had to factor in a different angle to the pin each time. Also the teeing position on the par-5 sixth/15th was brought forward when played as the 15th to encourage players to go for the green in two.

Vast water features come into play on most holes but wide fairways and large green complexes allow players to feel confident over their shots. However, huge bunkers defend the landing areas to make the course a fair but firm test of golf. The course was a hit with the players last year and another strong field will be in Sharjah hoping to etch their name into the history books as winners on this stunning nine-hole golf course.





SHARJAH SENIOR GOLF MASTERS PRESENTED BY SHUROOQ

THE stars of the senior circuit are back in Sharjah this month as the 2018 Staysure Tour gets underway at the second instalment of the Sharjah Senior Golf Masters presented by Shurooq. Last year's Order of Merit winner Clark Dennis headlines a star-studded field along with defending champion Chris Williams. Former Ryder Cup stars Peter Baker, Jarmo Sandelin and Thai star Thaworn Wiratchant make their debuts in the event after joining the tour midway through last season, and they will be joined by past Ryder Cup players Des Smyth, Ronan Rafferty, Costantino Rocca, Gordon Brand Jnr, Barry Lane, Phillip Price, Jarmo Sandelin, Miguel Angel Martin, José Rivero, Philip Walton and Steven Richardson. Also confirmed are two-time Senior Major Champion Roger Chapman, who became the first European to win both the KitchenAid Senior PGA Championship and U.S. Senior Open in the same season in 2012, and 2016 Senior Tour Rookie of the Year Magnus P Atlevi, who secured his maiden Senior Tour title at Le Golf National, host venue of The 2018 Ryder Cup, at the Paris Legends Championship.

Every year a clutch of European Tour professionals turn 50 to reach the qualifying age to play on the Staysure Tour – making it that little bit harder for the established players out on Tour. The new blood, often fitter, sometimes fresher and just as hungry as their older counterparts, add to the competition and this year is no different as the likes of Ryder Cup heroes Peter Baker and Jarmo Sandelin and Thai star Thaworn Wiratchant all make their first appearances in the Sharjah Senior Golf Masters presented by Shurooq.

Wiratchant, a two-time Asian Tour Number One, earned a year's exemption to the Staysure Tour after turning 50 at the end of 2016, due to his victory at the 2005 Enjoy Jakarta Standard Chartered Indonesia Open. He became the second Thai winner on the European Tour, after Thongchai Jaidee, and in 2005 he became the first player to win more than \$500,000 in a single Asian Tour season.

Wiratchant made his Staysure Tour debut at the Swiss Seniors Open in July last year and clinched the season-ending MCB Tour Championship in Mauritius with a huge eight-stroke victory.

Ryder Cup

Baker, star of the 1993 Ryder Cup for Team Europe with three points from four matches, joined the Staysure Tour late last year and made two starts. He was anxious about his lack of match practise but a share of seventh on his first start at the Farmfoods European Seniors Masters was just the tonic, and Baker is hoping it will be a springboard for success in 2018. "I know about 90 per cent of the guys out here," said Baker. "It's very competitive but I'm looking forward to locking horns again and hopefully I can have a good year."

Sandelin, who earned his spurs to represent Europe at the 1999 Ryder Cup at Brookline, had been kicking his heels a little bit as he began to approach the age of 50, after losing his European Tour card in 2011. "It was a great feeling to be back out there again and get back all those memories and feelings from tournament play," said Sandelin, in reference to joining the Staysure Tour last year. "I can't really put it into words how much it meant to me to be back playing because

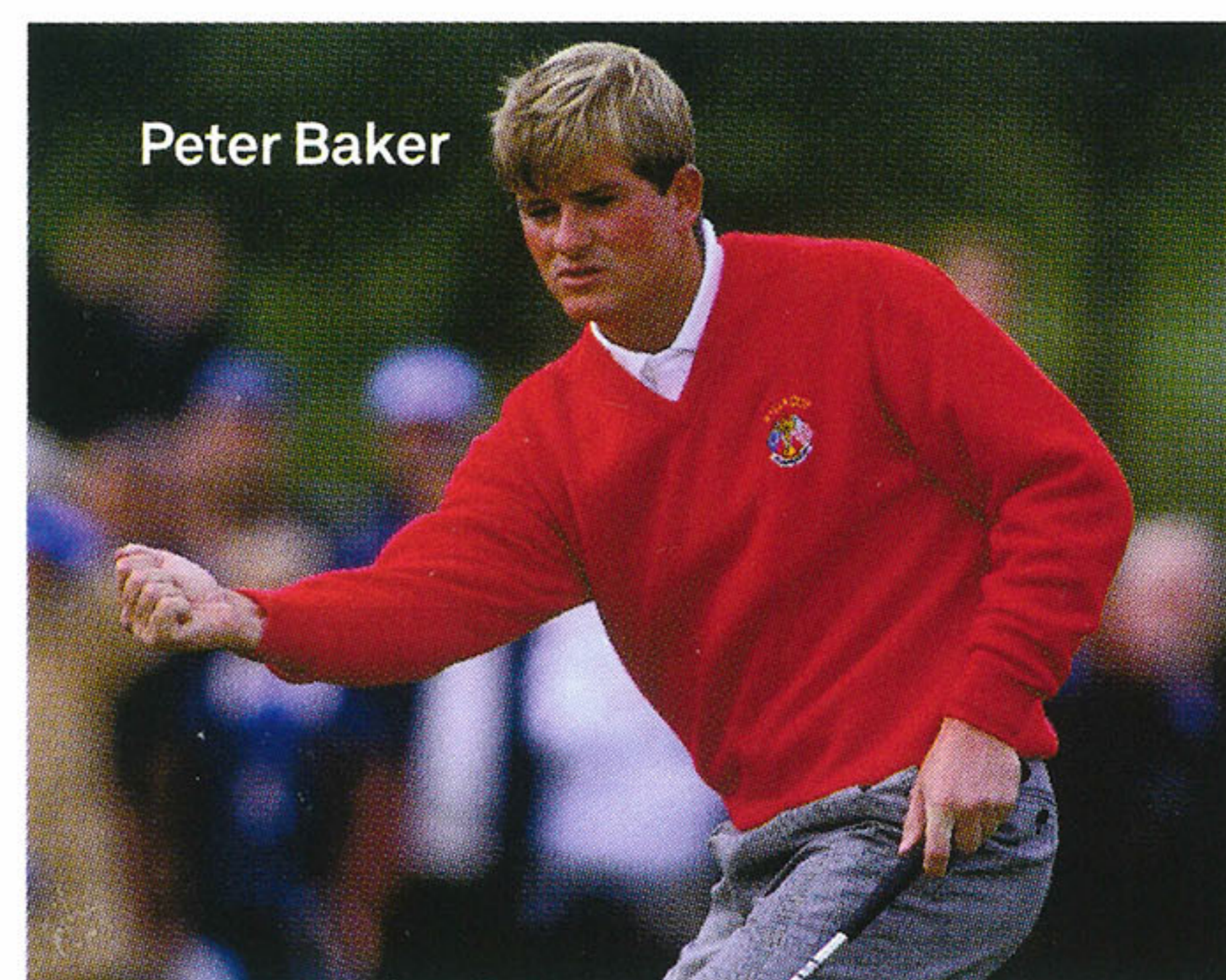
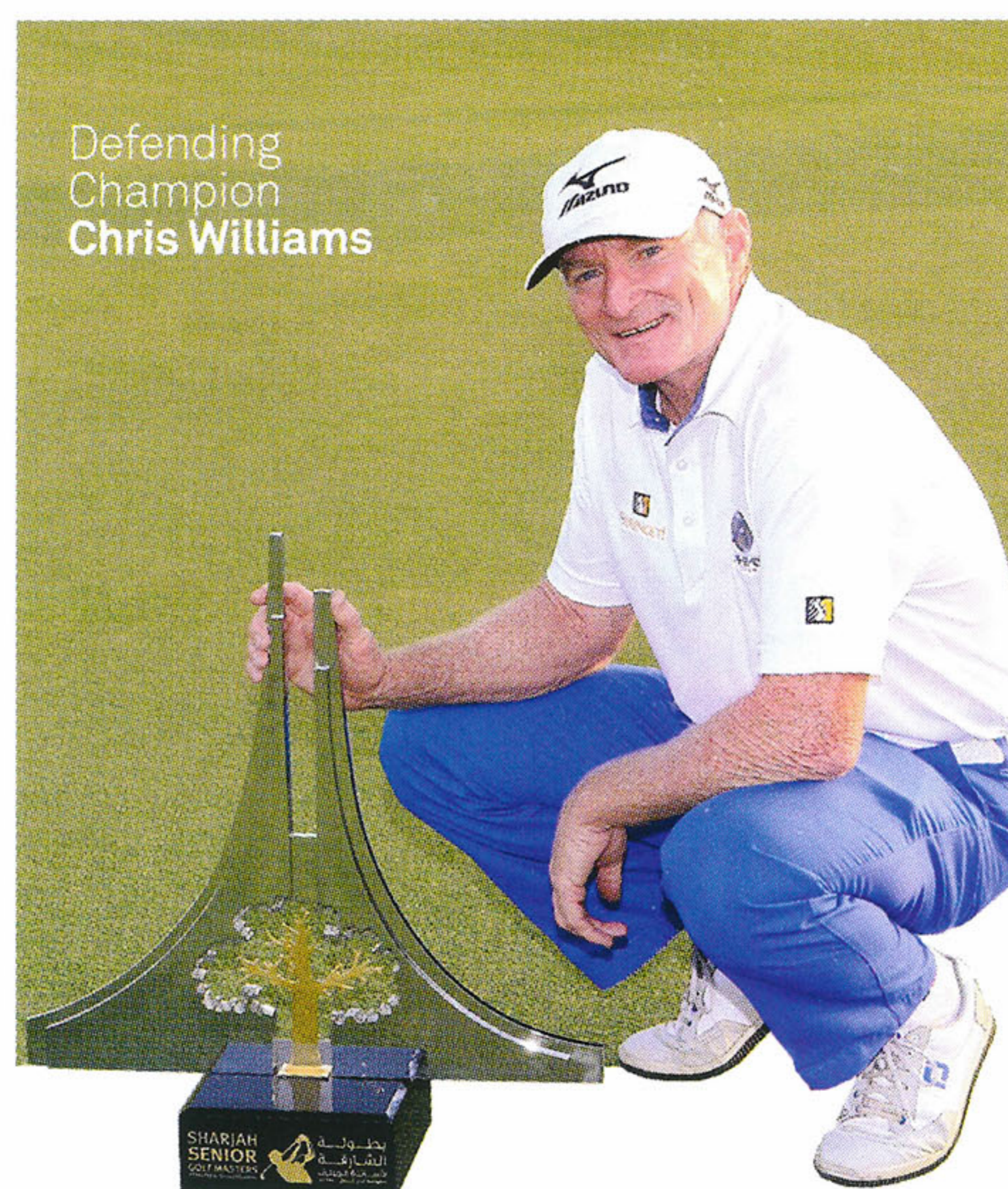
the value of that is so great. If you play for 15 years on Tour, and then have a break away from that for six or seven years, there's a lot of things you will miss out on. When I came out last year those feelings came back."

The feelings came back – and so did his form as he carded seven top tens to finish 17th on the Order of Merit. It was a return

he was pleased with, but he wants more as he kicks off his 2018 season in Sharjah.

"My first goal is to play well and have a chance to win, and I would be lying to say that my goals aren't to win this year," said the Swede. "I think my last round in the last event of last year – a 62 at the MCB Championship – showed that when I play really well I can go very, very low. And if I can put three good rounds together then it hopefully will be enough to win."

European Tour winners Gary Orr, Sven Struver and Carl Suneson also turned 50 last year to join the Staysure Tour midway through the campaign and all three will be looking for a good start to their first full season as a senior in Sharjah. Orr won twice on the European Tour in 2000 while Suneson, a six-time winner on the Challenge Tour, won once in 2007 at the Saint Omer Open. Germany's Struver won three titles between 1996 and 1998, including the European Masters in Switzerland. With a solid core of first-timers pitting their wits against the established players on the Staysure Tour, this year's Sharjah Senior Golf Masters presented by Shurooq is set to be an early contender for one of the Tour's highlights of the year. Entrance to the tournament is free all week.





Barry Lane, former Ryder Cup player with five European Tour titles and six on the Staysure Tour.

"It's a lovely golf course and the facilities are fantastic, the course itself was in great condition and it was a great week. I played OK but didn't play fantastic. I got off to a good start on the front nine on day one but gave some shots back. The scoring was good and I thoroughly enjoyed it - I thought it was good fun. I'm looking forward to coming back and hoping to play better this time around."



James Kingston - two-time European Tour winner and former Sunshine Tour Order of Merit winner.

"Everything about playing golf in the Middle East is always nice. The facilities out here are superb, the golf course last year was in pristine condition and I'm glad the Tour managed to secure an event out here and it would be nice to add one or two more because it's such a great place to come and play golf."



Jarmo Sandelin - member of the 1999 Ryder Cup side and five-time European Tour champion.

"I have very good memories from playing in Dubai in the past. I held the course record at Dubai Creek and enjoyed a few low rounds at Emirates Golf Club at the Dubai Desert Classic. I haven't played the course at Sharjah Golf & Shooting Club before, but it's always interesting to come to a new venue and with it being a nine-hole course it will be a great experience to begin the year there."

Hole 9&18
PAR 4 YDS 419 MTS 383

بطولة الشارقة
لأساتذة الجولف
مقدمة من شروق

SHARJAH SENIOR GOLF MASTERS
PRESENTED BY SHUROOQ

"It's one of those courses that you get to and you think, 'oh this is nice'. None of the players really knew what to expect with it being a nine hole course but I thought the layout was very good, the holes were great and it was a good test of golf."

Roger Chapman
Two-time Senior Major champion

"It was really interesting to begin the season playing a nine hole golf course and I think the Tour and the staff there did a fantastic job in setting it up for a tournament. It's a very good golf course with some interesting holes and I think it's a good venue. The whole week last year was great. It's a very nice clubhouse and they took care of us very well. The practice facilities were excellent and I thought it was run very well. For a first event, they did a great job and I'm looking forward to coming back. Last year I was only in the UAE for the week of the tournament but I did manage to do my fair share of sightseeing on the days I wasn't playing. I went and saw the Burj Khalifa and the whole city of Dubai is really fascinating. It's an amazing place to be built out of desert - basically. It's an amazing accomplishment. It was my first ever trip out to the Middle East and thankfully it's not my last."

Clark Dennis
2017 Staysure Tour Order of Merit winner.

Staysure TOUR