

WIRATCHANT PREVAILS UNDER THE LIGHTS IN SHARJAH

AFTER what was a truly captivating final day a winner finally emerged at the Sharjah Senior Golf Masters presented by Shurooq in the shape of Thailand's Thaworn Wiratchant, who edged out first Australia's Peter Fowler and then America's Clark Dennis in a dramatic sudden death play-off lasting four holes, as the newly renamed Staysure Tour began an exciting new era in the northern emirate last month.

"It was really difficult out there today to get the win so I'm so pleased I managed to get over the line and secure the opening event of the Staysure Tour season," said Wiratchant.

"The pin positions were really difficult today compared to the first two days so it was a real challenge out there. I had to be patient in the play-off as we were all hitting good shots every time we played the hole so I needed to keep my focus and wait for my chance. I just knew I had to get the win."

WINNER

Fowler, Wiratchant and Dennis were all locked together at 12 under par at the end of regulation play so a trip back up the 18th hole was required to find a winner. Fowler, who had looked solid all day until making his first bogey since the ninth hole of Thursday's opening round at the 17th, dropped out first after leaving his par putt short.

Two more trips down the **Peter Harradine**-designed nine-hole course's closing hole saw pars apiece for Dennis and Wiratchant. It was fortunate that the well-loved Sharjah Golf & Shooting Club course features floodlights as they were essential as the light faded with still no champion decided. The fourth playing of the 18th saw Dennis overshoot the green with his approach while Wiratchant found the centre, still some 10 feet from the hole.

CLOSE CALL

Dennis undercooked his chip back onto the green with the ball coming to a stop on the fringe, while Wiratchant lagged his put to within inches and it looked to all be over. There was almost one final moment of drama when Dennis nearly chipped in for par, sending a gasp around the watching crowd,



بطولة
الشارقة
للمسابقة
الجولف
SHARJAH
SENIOR
GOLF MASTERS



but it wasn't to be and last year's Order of Merit winner was left to accept the runner-up spot as Wiratchant tapped home to claim the \$63,750 winner's cheque in the \$425,000 event, making it two in a row for the 51 year old, who also won the final event of the 2017 season in Mauritius.

"I have never played under floodlights before so that was a new challenge for me," said the former Asian Tour player. "Hopefully, I can kick on from here and really concentrate on the year ahead. I'd like to thank all the sponsors and organisers behind the Sharjah Senior Golf Masters presented by Shurooq.

"Special thanks to the Sharjah Golf & Shooting Club Golf Course Superintendent Marty Brown and the Orient Irrigation Services team for delivering a superbly conditioned golf course for this week for all the players.

"I look forward to returning to Sharjah next year to defend my title. This is a great start to my season on the 2018 Staysure Tour."

TOP TIER

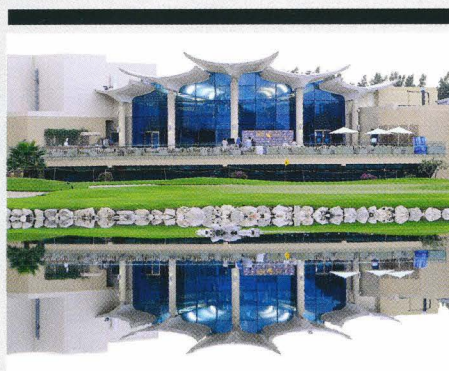
His Excellency Marwan bin Jassim Al Sarkal, CEO of the Sharjah Investment and Development Authority (Shurooq), said: "The Sharjah Senior Golf Masters has become a symbolic sports event which is increasingly attracting some of the most prominent players in international golf.

"Adding to the emirate's historic reputation for being one of the leading sports destinations in MENA in the global sport of cricket, we celebrate the first Staysure Tour event of 2018 for strengthening Sharjah's position as one of the top tier global

destinations for the sport of golf, and for global golfers."

He added: "Shurooq will continue in its development of this sport to ensure that Sharjah addresses the needs and demands behind the industry, whether it is through sports, tourism or business investments."

South Africa's James Kingston finished fourth at eight under while Scotland's Gary Orr and Argentina's Mauricio Molina finished tied fifth two shots further back.



GLOBAL PLATFORM

The event proved to be an ideal showcase for not only the immaculate Sharjah Golf & Shooting Club course but also for the emirate as a whole. As well as the impressive international print and online coverage there were a total of 51 hours of TV highlights broadcast to a global household reach of 170 million while UAE based broadcasters Sharjah TV, Dubai TV and OSN all covered the tournament.

CLASSIC MEMORIES

As an interesting side-note to the action at Sharjah Golf & Shooting Club, Emirates Golf Club celebrated its 30th anniversary with a lavish party attended by around 800 guests on the Thursday evening following the first round of the tournament. No fewer than 15 of the players taking part in the Sharjah Senior Golf Masters had competed in the first ever Dubai Desert Classic, way back in 1989 just one year after Emirates Golf Club opened its doors. The players who attended included:

- Ronan Rafferty (Northern Ireland)
- Magnus Atlevi (formerly Magnus Persson) (Sweden)
- Barry Lane (England)
- Roger Chapman (England)
- Gordon Brand Jnr (Scotland)
- Peter Baker (England)
- Des Smyth (Ireland)
- Steen Tinning (Denmark)
- Mark Moulard (Wales)
- Marc Farry (France)
- Philip Walton (Ireland)
- Malcom Mackenzie (England)
- Gordon J. Brand (England)
- Ross Drummond (Scotland)
- Andrew Sherborne (England)