

The Legend Grows

The longest running secret in Middle East golf is finally taking shape in the Al Barari residential development

The cliché promises good things for those who wait and it couldn't ring truer than for the team behind Living Legends. Fifteen years after the nine-hole layout was first commissioned and five years after ground was originally broken on the project, Dubai's newest old course is now, finally, full-steam ahead.

The full-length driving range (with views to the Burj Khalifa) has been grassed and the already shaped holes of the Harradine Golf-design will quickly follow suit. Given the stuttering progress to date, pinning an opening date on principal architect Peter Harradine or builders Orient Irrigation Services is a trifle unfair, although play is likely within a year and

possibly well before next spring. The wait will indeed be worth it as *Golf Digest Middle East's* exclusive tour of the course, the centerpiece of real estate developer Tanmiyat's extensive Al Barari residential development off Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Road (the 311), illustrated.

Harradine is noted for creating layouts that are the antithesis to the monster "championship" courses that predominate the region's modern golf landscape and Living Legends is no different.

The routing was largely dictated by the available corridors within this portion of the 500 villa-12 apartment block development, essentially two horse shoes that snake around four man-made, saltwater lakes. It hasn't stopped Harradine



MICHAEL (LEFT) AND PETER HARRADINE

sculpting a collection of holes offering strategic challenges from tee to green with ample, eye-catching elevation changes.

The landing areas for tee shots looked tight in their nude state during our inspection but this is apparently some sort of optical, pre-grass illusion - they are in fact a generous 40-55 yards wide in most instances. All will be revealed once the wall-to-wall Paspalum Platinum T3 grass grows apparently and with just one fairway bunker, to the right of the 4th fairway, the course appears imminently playable in trademark Harradine style. There are also five tee options on each hole - spanning 3248 yards from the tips to 2543 yards from the forward-most red markers - to cater for all ability levels.

The lakes, all on the left of the holes they hug, will give right handers with a hook and lefties with a slice pause for thought on four of the nine holes. Harradine also promises plenty of trees to separate adjacent fairways, offer protection to home owners where necessary and no doubt frustrate those trying to stay out of the wet stuff. Otherwise the stiffest challenge will come on and around the sizeable greens that are to be well protected with a combined 11 large, deep bunkers.

Without grass and the benefit of a loop or three with clubs in hand, it's hard to single out the best holes although the par-3 4th and par-5 next look like a beauty and beast back-to-back and the 7th will be another stern test with all that water. The two pars 3s also shape as thoroughly memorable, both played to downhill greens that are blessedly only 180 and 153 yards from the tips (Memo to contemporary architects: 200-yard plus par-3s are no fun for club golfers).

Living Legends takes some finding off the 311 but once discovered, it shapes as a fun-friendly beacon for residents and guests alike, especially as the layout is to be fully floodlit. It joins Abu Dhabi G.C., Doha, Al Hamra, Mirage City (Egypt), plus four other nine holers at Jebel Ali, The Track, Sharjah and Jebel Sifah (Oman) in Harradine Golf's Middle East portfolio. It might be the latest addition, but on first evidence we trust it won't be the last. The game here is fortunate to have an architect with an everyday golfer (read common sense) touch to modern day design.

- KENT GRAY