Abu Dhabi HSBC Championship

Fergus Bisset, January 15, 2019 8:59 am

It's the first Rolex Series event of the year this week on the European Tour. Tommy Fleetwood looks to make it three wins in a row in the Abu Dhabi HSBC Championship.

Tommy Fleetwood targets three wins in a row in Abu Dhabi, Credit: Getty Images

Designed by renowned desert course architect Peter Harradine, the course at Abu Dhabi Golf Club is long and challenging with plenty of water hazards to negotiate. Stretched now to almost 7,600 yards, it's a venue that suits the power hitters.

There's a star-studded line-up for this, the 14th running of the Abu Dhabi HSBC Championship presented by EGA. The World's second and third ranked players Brooks Koepka and Dustin Johnson both start, as does 2017 and 2018 champion Tommy Fleetwood.

As the first Rolex Series event of the year, this tournament has attracted many of the European Tour's top players. Aside from defending champ Fleetwood, Tyrrell Hatton, Henrik Stenson, Rafa Cabrera Bello, Eddie Pepperell and Lee Westwood are all on the start list.

First contested in 2006, this is an event that was dominated by two players in the tournament's early years – Martin Kaymer and Paul Casey. The Englishman won in 2007 and 2009 while the German has been the champion three times – 2008, 2010 and 2011.

Rickie Fowler triumphed in 2016 and Tommy Fleetwood took the title in both 2017 and 2018. Last year, the Englishman carded a final round 65 to finish two clear of his countryman Ross Fisher.

Now a Rolex Series event, the prize money for this tournament has been significantly increased. There's now a purse of $7,000,000 making it richer, by over $1 million, than this week's PGA Tour event at La Quinta.

The tournament is being played from Wednesday to Saturday this year rather than Thursday to Sunday in order to accommodate football's Asian Cup.

Abu Dhabi GC's iconic falcon-shaped clubhouse

The weather forecast is good for the first two days of the event but it could be overcast on Friday and Saturday.