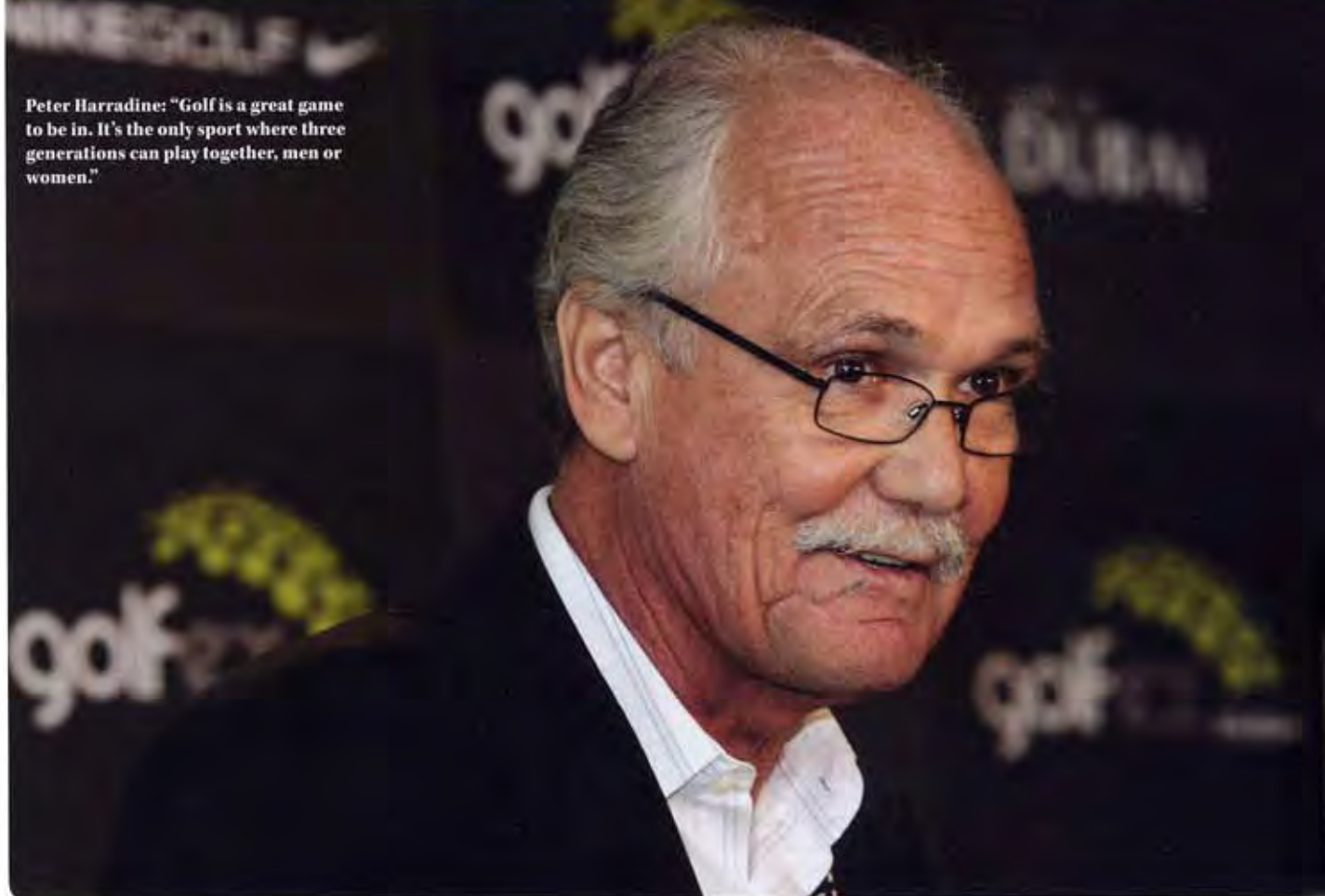


Peter Harradine: "Golf is a great game to be in. It's the only sport where three generations can play together, men or women."



Peter Harradine

Mike Gallemore talks to Peter Harradine, one of the golf industry's greatest characters and one of the most notable and prolific course designers in the business

PETER HARRADINE is not only one of the world's most accomplished golf course designers, he's also one of the industry's greatest characters. The quality of the courses he has created speak volumes for the personality of the man, who continues to produce the goods against a mistaken belief that to be a great golf course designer you have to be a great golfer.

While Signature Courses continue to spring up in the name of legends like Jack Nicklaus, Greg Norman, Arnold Palmer, Gary Player and current leading players like Ernie Els and Colin Montgomerie, Harradine goes about his business producing his own brand of excellence.

Designing golf courses is in the blood of the Harradine family. Peter's step-grandfather, Albert Hockey, designed his first course

in 1920, and also manufactured his own golf clubs under the name of 'Hockey.'

Don Harradine, Peter's father, established Harradine Golf in 1929, building his first course in Switzerland. Peter was born in Berne, Switzerland, in 1945. Don and Peter have been involved in the creation of more than 200 golf courses in Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East – and now India. Every conceivable landscape has been tamed from mountains to deserts. Peter went to the United States in 1966 to study the theoretical and practical aspects of landscaping and golf design and construction, joined the family business – and hasn't looked back since.

"The family has even got a unique claim," says Peter. "My step-grandfather, Albert Hockey, remodelled a course in Bad Ragaz in Switzerland, my father added 18 holes some years later, and I put

The distinctive Falcon Clubhouse looks out over the Abu Dhabi Golf Course, created by Peter Harradine in 2000 – which hosts the Abu Dhabi Golf Championship on The European Tour.



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nine more holes in a few years ago. Three generations working in the same place over a period of 84 years shows great continuity!"

Peter is also hoping that his eldest son, Michael, another accomplished golfer like his father (Peter once got his handicap down to five), will join him at Harradine Golf.

"Golf is a great game to be in," says Peter. "It's the only sport in the world where three generations can play together, men or women. I've always said that the best way to tell a man's character is to play golf with him."

As many people know only too well, Peter has strong views on golf course designers. "There is a misplaced belief in the industry that great golfers are automatically great golf course designers," says Peter. "In a few cases this is true. But it doesn't necessarily follow. Certain customers want signature golf courses

The spectacular Montechiarelo, Reggio Calabria Course in Italy, where the clubhouse overlooks the straits of Messina, Sicily and Mount Etna.



**Peter
Harradine**



Aerial views of the Al Hamra Golf Course at Ras Al Khaimah, plus the floodlit section at night – another course close to completion by Harradine Golf.

these days. The bigger the name, the better the golf course, is the expectation. Almost every leading player is now trying to get into the design business. It used to be the case that when great players put their clubs in the attic they'd turn to the design business. Nowadays even current players call themselves designers.

"I don't blame the players. If someone asks them to design a golf course when they've never designed a golf course before, and they'll pay them big bucks for doing it, they'd be foolish to turn the offer down.

"Take Tiger Woods, who's doing his first ever course in Dubai at Al Ruwya. He's the greatest golfer we've ever seen but will he be the greatest golf course designer we've ever seen. He might be – but it's not a gimme.

Opportunities

"The expectations on Tiger are enormous. The belief is that he must produce an incredible monument with incredible playing features otherwise the press and the marketing machine will be disappointed and the client will think, 'all that money for a normal course.'"

Peter's logic is sound enough but he could give the impression that the profusion of big name players becoming designers is denying the opportunities to those tried and tested designers who have a track record in the business. Nothing could be further from the truth. He's as busy as ever – if not more so. Among his current projects are courses in India,



Africa, Central and Eastern Europe and the UAE. He has recently completed the spectacular course at Montechiarelo in Reggio Calabria in Italy, nine holes of the 27-hole layout in Kazan in Russia, and the 18-hole Boulder Hills Course in Hyderabad, India.

The Boulder Hills Course is a perfect example of Peter Harradine's philosophy of golf course design. "The natural terrain decides the style of the layout," says Peter. "At Boulder Hills the huge rock formations become the feature of the course. The knack is to produce a real challenge to the good golfer but allow an alternative for the average golfer to get round. The worse thing you can do is create a course that is so intimidating that high handicappers can't cope and they drop out of the game."

Peter Harradine



The universally acclaimed Doha Golf Club, which hosts the prestigious Commercialbank Qatar Masters on The European Tour, completed by Harradine Golf in 1998.



"THE ONE I'VE JUST STARTED AND THE ONE I'VE JUST FINISHED. TO BE HONEST I FIND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO COMPARE GOLF COURSES I HAVE DESIGNED. THEY'RE ALL DIFFERENT AND THEY ALL HAVE THEIR OWN CHARACTER." – PETER HARRADINE.

altogether. It's a compromise but you've got to get the balance right. "The other important factor is the greenkeeper. He's the guy who's going to make it a consistently good course to play. So you've got to make it as easy to maintain as you can for him."

Peter, who is a former President of the European Institute of Golf Course Architects and the European Society of Golf Course Architects has a pedigree of outstanding golf courses, including those he has created in the Gulf. Jebel Ali Golf Resort and Spa has long been regarded as a fun nine holes. It hosted the Dubai Desert Classic Challenge for a number of years where some of the greatest names paired up in a relaxed format.

Abu Dhabi's National Course has been widely acclaimed as a top-class Championship layout. The National course stages the Abu Dhabi Golf Championship on The European Tour – so has the outstanding Doha Golf Club, which hosts the Commercialbank Qatar Masters on the Tour.

Accolades

The new 18-hole Al Hamra course at Ras Al Khaimah is gaining more and more accolades as the new road attracts more golfers from Dubai. Peter has also recently completed the nine-holes Sharjah Golf and Shooting Club course.

In addition, he is working on the Legends course at Dubailand, the Bawadi course and the Mudon course in Dubai, plus courses at Fujairah and Abu Dhabi.

"I enjoy designing desert courses," says Peter, "and I particularly like creating courses in this region. Dubai is a phenomenon.

Things happen here that simply couldn't happen anywhere else in the world. You can get things done here quicker than anywhere."

Asked what he believes is the greatest course he has created Peter, for once in his life, is somewhat evasive: "The one I've just started and the one I've just finished. To be honest, I find it impossible to compare golf courses I have designed. They're all different and they all have their own character."

Peter Harradine certainly has his own character and will undoubtedly remain one of the most prolific golf course designers in the Gulf, and elsewhere in the world, in the years to come. ■

The spectacular Boulder Hills Golf Course at Hyderabad, India, which features huge and fascinating rock formations, is one of the latest additions to the portfolio of world-class Harradine Golf course creations.

