



WHILE MY QATAR GENTLY WEEPS (WITH JOY!)

The 2011 Qatar Masters will be high-profile following the region's 2022 World Cup triumph

Tears of joy were wept (by the bucket-load) when Qatar won the 2022 World Cup and that shock victory will, no doubt, add extra interest, spice and emotion to January's \$2.5m Qatar Masters – the first major tournament in the region since November's extraordinary coup.

Expect droves of cynical international press (especially bitter Aussies) keen to pick flaws in the way Qatar hosts a flagship event. Yet, however hard they try, they won't find any at

Doha Golf Club. The brilliant Qatar Masters is held in incredibly high-esteem by the golfing community, so anyone wishing to have a dig should, to stick with the Beatles theme, 'ride their bicycle' out of town!

Like 2010, another mouth-watering field will be on show in Doha. It includes world No.1 Lee Westwood and defending champion Robert Karlsson – but they'll be no Tiger Woods, despite widespread rumours he was offered a staggering AED 25m to appear! "Tiger is absolutely not playing in Qatar and I have never had any discussions about it" clarified Mark Steinburg, Managing Director of IMG.

In-form Westwood inevitably starts as favourite and will be itching to improve on his third place finish last year. The BBC Sports Personality of the Year nominee called the Peter Harradine-designed Championship course a hidden gem on the European Tour. "There is only one course in Doha but even if they built 100 I still think I'd want to play on this one" said Westwood, who chose Qatar over Bahrain. "The course is in mint condition and never gets any complaints because it is designed with one simple philosophy – to reward

good golf."

Swede Karlsson is also a big fan. Last year he stormed to a four shot victory (-15) over Alvaro Quiros, just days after returning from a retina problem that sidelined him for almost six months. "It was a real fairytale!" said the 41-year-old. "I expected to be pretty rusty in Qatar but ended up playing some of the best golf of my life!"

"The end of 2009 was obviously very frustrating because I couldn't practice that much due to quite severely blurred vision, so to come back and immediately claim a trophy was both memorable and moral-boosting and, after victory at the Dubai World Championship in November, I am really confident of defending it. The Championship course just seems to suit me, along with other big hitters like Westwood, Quiros and Els - so don't be surprised to see those guys somewhere near the top of the

QATAR MASTERS

When? February 3-6, 2011
Where? Doha Golf Club, PO Box 13530
Telephone: +974 4496 0777
Website: www.qatar-masters.com
Tickets: Free!
Factoid: The course record is 61 (-11) set by Adam Scott in 2008

