

Harradine expects tough Shaikh Rashid Trophy test

Swiss-British golfer wary of wider field and shaky summer form

By Ashley Hammond, Staff Reporter
Published: 00:00 November 15, 2011

GULF NEWS



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Left to right: David Thomson, regional general manager of Jebel Ali Hotel, Saeed Malek, representing sponsors Jebel Ali Golf Resort and Spa; Michael Harradine of the Jebel Ali Golf Resort and Spa, and Adeg Zarouni, secretary general of EGF, during the Shaikh Rashid Trophy 2010 at Jebel Ali Golf Resort and Spa.

Dubai: Michael Harradine isn't expecting an easy ride this weekend (November 17-19) as he attempts to defend his Shaikh Rashid Trophy crown.

Fresh from competing in the Mena Golf Tour where he finished tied for fourth on the amateur Order of Merit, the Swiss/British national has an uphill battle to emulate former back-to-back winners (turned professional) Ross Bain and Peter Downie.

Sponsored by Jebel Ali Golf Resort and Spa, this Emirates Golf Federation (EGF) third of 13 leg order of merit 2011/12 schedule sees leading amateurs from the UAE and overseas battle it out for honours at three different courses in Dubai.

The first round will be held at the Arabian Ranches Golf Club on Thursday, the second at The Els Club on Friday while Jebel Ali Golf Resort and Spa will host the finale on Saturday.

The tournament is a 54-hole men's Gross strokeplay event and the cut will be made after 36 holes with the top 30 and ties making it to the final round.

Harradine, aged 28, told Gulf News: "I'm quite confident with my game at the moment both off the tee and the green, my driving and putting has stabilised after a struggle over the summer. I've been playing a little better in recent weeks."

"In the Mena Tour I managed to finish fourth in the amateurs, despite not even making the cut in one event. I had a bad first three events, but by the fourth I was the best amateur — golf is up and down, you get lulls, sometimes it just doesn't go your way, but hopefully that's over."

"Last year this event made a comeback after a five-year break so there weren't quite as many in the field but this time it will be strong and difficult for me to get my back-to-back. Khalid Yousuf, Ahmad Al Musharrakh and some overseas British and Bahraini amateurs will make life tough for me as well as Dan Hendry who is on good form. This along with the Emirates Amateur Open and the National Championship [for Emiratis] is a prestigious title."

As for turning professional Harradine said: "I'm going to continue playing and see how I go, we'll leave it at that." Open to amateur golfers holding a valid handicap of 18 or below, the event has its own added incentives as it's a qualifier for the World Amateur Ranking Order of Merit and a part of the EGF Order of Merit.