

Course changes for Abu Dhabi 10th anniversary

Jeremy Ellwood takes a look at some of the main course changes for the 10th Abu Dhabi HSBC Golf Championship with Troon Golf group general manager, Chris Card



The Abu Dhabi courses has undergone a number of changes for this year's event

The 600-yard par-5 2nd

“After listening to the membership, listening to our international visitors and listening to the tour players, we’ve softened the flashing on the greenside bunkers on the right which has allowed us to push over and enlarge the green by 15-20%. We got **Peter Harradine**, the original architect with whom we have a fantastic relationship, involved again. Peter came up with some ideas and we implemented them. Miss it right and balls will now run right down into the water. A pin placement here on Saturday or Sunday is going to dictate how you play your drive and your second shot – are you going to go for it knowing that the pin’s down here?”



Checking out the changes to the 2nd green with Troon Golf's Chris Card

The 174-yard par-3 4th

“We always felt we had an opportunity to utilise the water a little more on the 4th, where there are much more significant changes. We’ve increased the green size by almost 50% here with a new bottom tier, and there’s no doubt we’ll be using the lower tier closer to the water once or twice during the event. It’s a great addition. From the bunker almost all the way over to the right is all new green. In certain winds, players will have to start it close to a tree and bring it in over the water, which was the whole idea. If you miss it long you’re probably okay, but pin-high to the right and it will be in the hazard. It’s been in play for the members since last summer and we’ve had a very good reaction.”



The 4th green has been significantly extended to the right

The 475-yard par-4 16th

“Here, we’ve essentially redone the bunkering on the left side, creating four kind of pot bunkers. By moving the fairway slightly to the right, taking away the bunker on the right to allow space, we’ve given the hole a little more character. Again we listened to feedback from the members, the Abu Dhabi Tourism people and the players. That was always the hole that players told us was their least favourite, and it’s something that’s been tinkered with and thought about by the tour and IMG for years. Again, **Peter Harradine** came in and gave us some options, and that’s what we went with.”

“We don’t make changes just for the sake of making changes – that’s the worst thing you can do. We want the golf course to evolve and for the changes to be meaningful because the event is just one week. For the rest of the year, we want our membership and international guests to say, ‘Wow! That’s a nice addition.’ That’s what we’ve heard so far, so we’ve been very happy with the changes.”