

Garcia's team wins Challenge Match

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FROM LEFT: Keith Waters, CEO and Director of International Policy for The European Tour, Fahad Nasser Al Nuaimi, General Secretary, Qatar Golf Association (QGA), Hassan Al Nuaimi, President, QGA, world number six Sergio Garcia, Abdulla Saleh Al Raisi, CEO, Commercial Bank, Mohammed Faisal Al Nuaimi, Head of Media, CBQM and Chris Myers, Tournament Manager and General Manager, at Doha Golf Club, yesterday.

DOHA: World number six Sergio Garcia won the Commercial Bank Qatar Masters Challenge Match for the second straight year, as his four-man team beat sides led by World No. 2 Henrik Stenson and World No. 5 Justin Rose.

'Team Garcia' recorded a score of 25.4 in a Texas Scramble format, beating 'Team Rose' (27.4) and 'Team Stenson' (29.2). Each Challenge Match team featured one pro and three Qatari juniors.

Garcia, 35, was reunited with Sami Qush, who was part of the Spaniard's winning team last year, while the winning side also featured Abdullah Khamis, 16, and Ahmed Al Mutawa, 13.

"We had a lot of fun again and the players did really well. It's nice to win, but it's more important to see that the young guys have been taught good basics and are enjoying the game," said Garcia, who is the defending champion at this week's Commercial Bank Qatar Masters.

"I remember Sami well from last year and he's made some nice improvement.

"All the guys played well today and it's great that the Qatar Golf Association has a growing youth programme."

Qush, 16, said he had improved a lot in the past 12 months – and said Garcia had also played better than last year.

“This is my second year winning the trophy. Sergio is one of the best players in the world and one of my favourite golfers. He gave me some tips, so that will be useful for me,” the youngster said.

“I feel like I played much better than last year and Sergio also played much better than last year, so hopefully he wins the Qatar Masters again this year.”

Rose was participating for the first time in the Challenge Match, which was inaugurated last year, and was full of praise for his team, which featured Saoud Al Muhanadi, Arnab Jain and Sheik Abdulrahman Al Thani.

“It was great fun. It was great to get out there with the juniors. They’re very keen on their golf and they play it in exactly the right way,” said Rose, the 2013 US Open champion.

“You can tell they’ve been brought up really well with the etiquette and traditions of the game, and they’re playing exactly as they should. They were a lot of fun to be around and they holed a lot of good putts, which saved me a lot of grey hair today!

“They know the greens really well and I was learning some of the lines from them. We had a really good time and everybody played their part. Everybody contributed a nice shot or two and made a nice difference to our score.”

Team Stenson featured Abdulrahman Al Naimi, Abdulrahman Al Dahaimi and Nada Mir. Stenson, Rose and Garcia are the top-ranked players at this week’s Commercial Bank Qatar Masters, which tees off tomorrow at Doha Golf Club.

Four-time Major winner Ernie Els and 2011 Masters champion Charl Schwartzel are among the other big names in the tournament’s 18th edition, while Gary Stal will also be in the spotlight after his sensational come-from-behind victory in Abu Dhabi, where the young Frenchman beat Rory McIlroy and Martin Kaymer.

Commercial Bank Qatar Masters tickets are available to purchase now at Virgin Megastores (in stores in Doha and online), Doha Golf Club, and the Doha Rugby FC.

Each ticket purchased entitles the holder to one free return drive to the event at Doha Golf Club by event partner UBER. Commercial Bank Qatar Masters tickets for adults are priced as follows:

Since 1998 the prestigious Qatar Masters golf tournament has been hosted by Doha Golf Club.

The annual tournament is sponsored by Commercial Bank of Qatar and is held at the beginning of each year as part of The European Tour.

Many of the world’s top golfers compete on Doha Golf Club’s unique and challenging desert-type Championship Course, which has proven to be one of the longest par 72 courses on the tour.

Designed by **Peter Harradine** and unveiled in 1997, the 7,374-yard Championship Course features eight strategically positioned lakes, 65 giant cacti, numerous imposing limestone rock formations and an abundance of lush and lengthy green fairways, presenting a startling contrast to the desert that lies beyond.