

Branden Grace successfully defends his Qatar Masters title by two shots



Branden Grace and his girlfriend, Nieke Coetzee, pose with the Qatar Masters trophy. Photograph: STR/AFP/Getty Images

Branden Grace successfully defended his Qatar Masters title on Saturday, becoming the first player to do so since the tournament began in 1998.

The South African shot a three-under-par 69 on another windswept day at the **Peter Harradine** designed Doha Golf Club to win the second leg of the European Tour's so-called "Desert Swing" by two shots over Spain's Rafael Cabrera-Bello (70) and Denmark's Thorbjorn Olesen (71). Grace shot an overall 14-under 274 for his seventh European Tour title.

Scotland's Paul Lawrie, the overnight leader by two shots, faded away with a 78 and finished tied for 13th at 281, while Spain's Sergio García (70) shared seventh alongside South Africa's Louis Oosthuizen (71) at eight-under 280.

Grace made the turn at one under with a lone bogey on the 5th after starting with a birdie and adding another on the 6th. The turning point came on the par-5 9th, where Lawrie pulled his tee shot way left and finished with a double bogey to hand over the outright lead to Grace.

Grace is a traditionally strong finisher on the tough back nine here and the highlight on Saturday came when he smashed his tee shot 327 yards on the par-5 18th, followed by an iron to 30ft away and two-putting for a birdie. "To win is tough but to defend is even tougher," Grace said. "It's brutal conditions out there."

Cabrera-Bello had one birdie and one double bogey in his first 15 holes, but finished in better weather with three straight birdies. "It's just a tough day, it was common to make mistakes," he said.