

Abu Dhabi HSBC Golf Championship: Martin Kaymer pleased with changes made to The National course

Double major champion and three-time winner of the Abu Dhabi HSBC Golf Championship, Martin Kaymer has applauded the challenging changes to The National Course designed by **Peter Harradine** for the 12th edition of the event.



Minor changes

Kaymer, the tournament course record-holder, believes that minor golf course changes throw up the most effective test — something he feels the tournament has achieved well.

"A few changes have been made over the last two or three years and I think it's one of those golf courses where you see that those were good changes," the German said. "Sometimes these days, they change golf courses just to make them longer, but longer doesn't always mean better or more difficult."

Strong field

Kaymer and 125 of the world's leading golfers, including defending champion Rickie Fowler, world No 2 Rory McIlroy, US Open champion Dustin Johnson and British Open champion Henrik Stenson, will face a tweaked course when they tee it up in Abu Dhabi from January 19-22.

Alterations

Clinton Southorn, a director at Abu Dhabi Golf Club said: "The changes we have made have been more refinements rather than major alterations. Green extensions on holes seven and nine are the most notable changes — the seventh green has been extended increasing the putting surface. The ninth green has also been extended, again providing the opportunity for more challenging pin positions bringing the large greenside bunker into play."

Go fourth

Another small but notable amendment for 2017 is on the picturesque par-three fourth hole, where a small change in the green contours adds to the degree of difficulty. Now a ball landing to the right of the pin risks feeding off the green and down the tightly mowed fringe to find the water hazard.

18th intact

Kaymer will be pleased no changes have been made to the 18th. "It's my favourite," he said. "I think it is one of the best par-fives that we play, especially for my type of game."