

PETER HARRADINE
IS A REFRESHING
ANTITHESIS TO MANY
CONTEMPORARY
COURSE ARCHITECTS.

BY KENT GRAY



Outstanding in his field



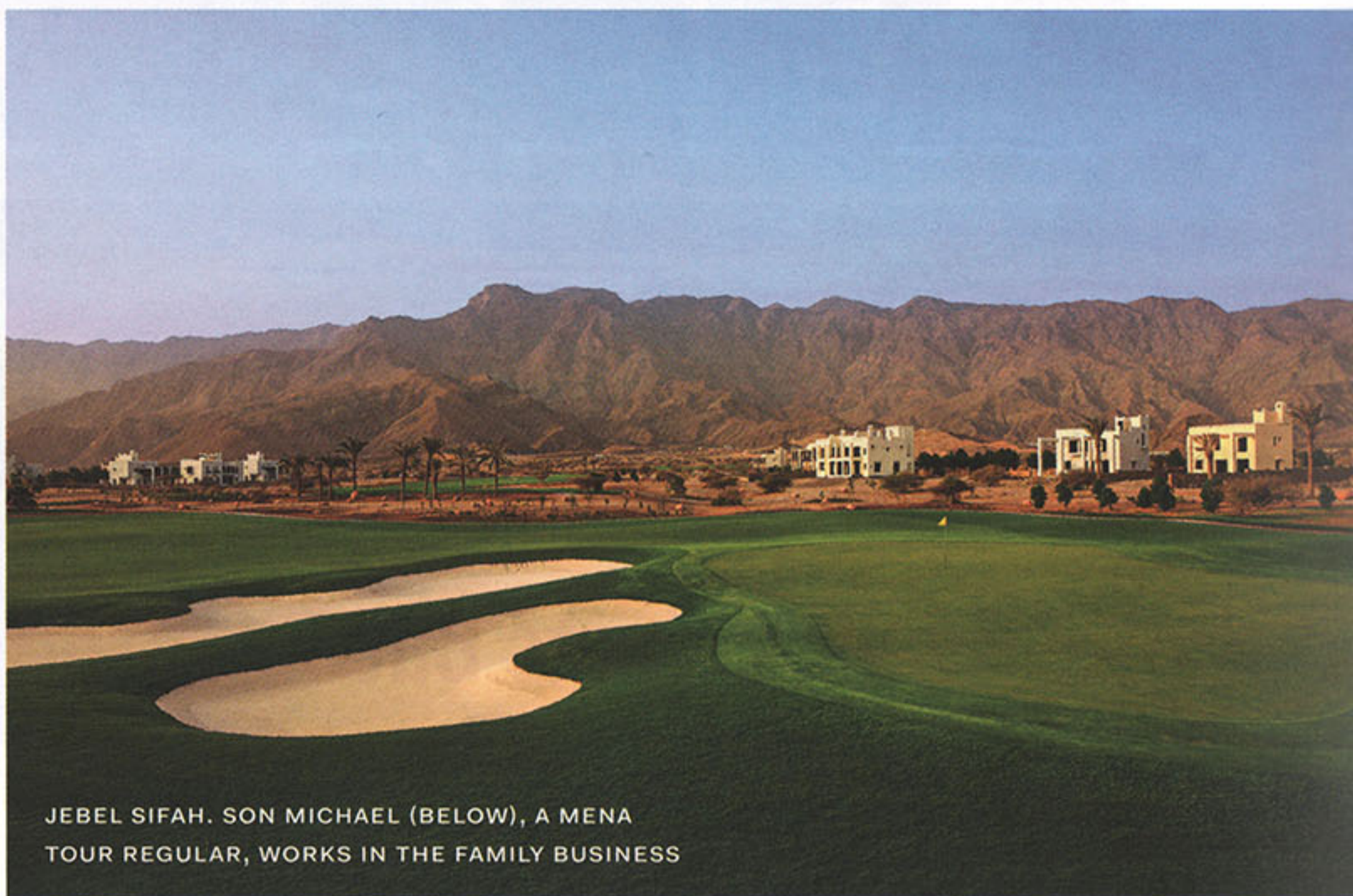
There are few more fascinating, or forthright, characters in the Middle East game than Peter Harradine. You'd have to search hard too to find someone with more professional foresight than the course architect who splits his time between the UAE and his native Switzerland.

Harradine has never been backward in coming forward with his views on the challenges facing golf, the advance of club and ball technology, slow play and the game's complex rules chief among its ills, real or perceived. He's long bemoaned the modern preoccupation with building "championship" courses which he maintains turn newcomers, and a fair share of established amateurs, off a sport that is already difficult and costly enough.

Tiger-proofing layouts, he says, ignores the other 99.9 percent of the golfing population who can't ever hope to strike a ball like the 14-time major champion in his pomp.

"I have been preaching against the so-called 'championship' courses for over 20 years now. We definitely need championship courses but not that many," says Harradine, just warming up.

"Championship" courses cost a lot more money to build, maintain etc. which is a fantastic opportunity for certain people in the industry to profit financially from that situation. Unfortunately the whole world turns around extreme, marketing, P.R. and the stupid celebrity factor so most clients were convinced by all that bull and constructed golf courses that are a big pain to most normal golfers.



JEBEL SIFAH. SON MICHAEL (BELOW), A MENA TOUR REGULAR, WORKS IN THE FAMILY BUSINESS

Maybe that is one of the reasons that there are less golfers?

"Anyway, what is a 'championship' course? Can anybody define it? I even read an ad that proudly promoted a 6-hole 'championship' course. Come on! What is that?"

We did warn you about that inbuilt frankness, a trait apparently passed down by his father and utterly refreshing in a region where minding ones Ps and Qs is the accepted norm.

"He was obviously a very big influence on my designs. He was very straightforward and would have struggled in today's world full of bull."

Harradine has long advocated a move to simpler courses, nine holers to address the needs of the time-poor player and



even pitch and putt layouts to introduce newcomers to the sport. "For a while now it seems as if suddenly everybody is convinced that this is the way to go."

Harradine went that way with his newest creation in Oman. Jebel Sifah GC is the 9-hole epicentre of a seaside and yacht-dotted residential/resort community by the same name, 65km south-east of Muscat, and is, as you'd expect, the antithesis of many of today's contemporary designs.

Wide fairways, large greens and the absence of "useless" fairway bunkers promise aesthetically pleasing, resort-style golf where the natural topography has been cleverly manipulated to offer strategic challenge. The par 36 layout, which can be stretched from its forward-most tees at 2843 yards to a championship standard 3634 yards from the tips, can be furthered toughened with greens that offer "easy, difficult and very difficult pin positions." The use of a second set of flags on each of the nine greens can also transform the course into a par 72, 18-holer. Sweeping Gulf of Oman views, natural wadis and a majestic mountain range backdrop complete the alluring

picture at Harradine Golf's first seaside offering.

Harradine is proud four of his Middle East portfolio of six courses are European Tour venues, including Sharjah Golf & Shooting Club which became the first nine-holer to host a main tour pro event in March, the Sharjah Senior Golf Masters. He points to Doha GC, the rugged desert course that hosts the Qatar Masters, as another example of where clever design conquers length.

"Many clubs have rushed to make their courses longer due to the club and ball phenomenon but holes do not have to be longer to be challenging or interesting which is proven by hole 16 in Doha."

Harradine's other Middle East designs are Abu Dhabi GC, Al Hamra GC (RAK/Challenge Tour), Jebel Ali (Dubai) and Mirage City GC in Egypt.

For one final thought, we pushed him to share his favourite Middle East designs, the kicker being he could not choose any of his own creations. "You don't have to twist my arm. My top three courses are Yas Links, Arabian Ranches and the Majilis." An interesting conversation starter, as ever. **G**