

Michael masters his dad's design for 'biggest' win

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You could say Michael Harradine started the final day of Sheikh Rashid Trophy with a huge advantage.

After all, he is the son of course designer Peter. And somewhere in the office locker are detailed contour plans of the entire Jebel Ali Golf Resort & Spa course. But the 27-year-old had more important things to do the evening before – like prepare for yesterday's round – and dad was away on work.

All he got from the man who has designed some of the finest golf courses in the region was a 'Good luck...Play well' text in the morning.



Michael Harradine lines up a chip on his way to victory

Instead, what helped immensely was his belief in his own ability and a solid round of golf – which resulted in the day's best round of one-over par 73. And a little help from his rivals – overnight joint leader Ricky Dominguez had a nightmarish start with a quadruple bogey nine on the opening par-5 hole, which gave him immediate breathing space on top of the leaderboard.

In the end, Michael was a comfortable winner of the Emirates Golf Federation-organised tournament, which marked a welcome return to the calendar after a gap of four years. With rounds of 76 at Al Badia and 75 at Els Club on Friday, the +2 handicapper aggregated eight-over 224, which gave him a four-shot win over Daniel Hendry.

"It was unfortunate what happened to Ricky on the opening hole, but if there is one thing I know about the Jebel Ali course, it is that each and every hole can be extremely tricky. The holes are short, but you can easily make bogeys and any of your rivals can make a couple of birdies and catch up with you," said Michael, who considers Jebel Ali his home course.

"I was intent on playing every hole as solidly as I could. I was aiming for pars, and if I got a birdie, that would have been a bonus. I wasn't happy with my first two rounds, but I was very proud of the final round. When it mattered the most, which would be the back nine [yesterday], I did not throw it away."

"Of course, this is easily the biggest win of my career so far. It gives me motivation to work harder on my game and I am looking forward to the next few months of the golfing season here."

When asked if being a budding golf course architect (Michael has a degree in landscaping and is helping his father on his various design projects) helps in understanding a golf course better, Michael said: *"I honestly don't think being a good course designer can make you a better player, but if you are a good player, it does help you become a better designer."*

Top Saudi golfer Othman Almulla finishing third on a gross 229, which was four shots ahead of Abdullah Al Musharrehk, who became the first UAE national to post a podium finish since the inception of the tournament in 1998. Arabian Ranches Golf Club's Douglas MacLennan took the fifth place on 234.

Hendry, who shot a 76 in the final round, had his chances, but a double-bogey on the ninth proved to be crucial in the end. *"Michael and I were eight over at that stage, but after that two dropped shots, I just couldn't match pace with him. He really played well thereafter and never gave any chances,"* said the reigning Emirates Golf Federation's Junior Order of Merit champion.

"Beating the heat was another big challenge. Anyway, I am really glad with the second-place finish. No regrets." He added. Competition was also held in the net divisions. Martin Vertigen of Emirates Golf Federation took the Division A honours with back-to-back 74s, just ahead of Hassan Musharrehk (73 and 75). Fred Watts walked away with the Division B title with rounds of 71 and 69. Adel Zarouni, secretary-general of the Emirates Golf Federation, and Saeed Malik, who represented the Jebel Ali Golf Club owning family, presented the prizes.

Zarouni said: *"The Shaikh Rashid Trophy will be much bigger and better next year. Quite a few overseas players have promised to sign up for the event next year. Even though the tournament has returned after a gap of four years, there was no death of enthusiasm. "I would like to thank all the players and sponsors for making the event a great success."*

RESULTS:

224 – Michael Harradine (Jebel Ali Golf Resort and Spa); 228 – Daniel Hendry (Emirates Golf Club); 229 – Othman Almulla (Saudi Arabia); 233 – Abdullah Al Musharrehk (Dubai Creek); 234 – Douglas MacLennan (Arabian Ranches Golf Club) Best Net Day 1 (Al Badia Golf Club): Fred Watts net 71; Best Net Day 2 (The Els Club): Fred Watts net 69; Best Gross Day 1 (Al Badia Golf Club): Othman Almulla gross 75; Best Gross Day 2 (Els Club): Brett Armstrong (Al Badia) 73 Division A (scratch to 10 handicap): Net winner: Martin Vertigen (EGF) 74-74; Net runner-up: Hassan Al Musharrehk (Dubai Creek) 73-75 Division B (11-18 handicap): Net winner: Fred Watts (Arabian Ranches); Net runner-up: John Watts (Arabian Ranches)

By Joy Chakravarty

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