



THE MIDDLE EAST'S MOST ACCOMPLISHED AND OUTSPOKEN GOLF COURSE DESIGNER HAS THE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE TO PASS JUDGEMENT ON WHAT'S RIGHT AND WHAT'S WRONG WITH GOLF IN THE REGION.

GOLF'S GUNSLINGER

MY first epic encounter with Peter Harradine almost ended in tears. That was back in 2000 at the Abu Dhabi Seniors Tour Championship, played on one of Peter's standout courses. Since then our exchanges have normally ended in tears of laughter and I've come to respect and admire one of the most accomplished golf course designers in the business. He might be guilty of overstating his case occasionally but it's difficult to disagree with his pronouncements on the state of the game. It's always a pleasure swapping insults with one of the most engaging characters in the golf industry. *Mike Gallemore*

WHEN Peter Harradine says that things are beginning to change for the better, you've got to sit up and take notice. As a third generation golf course designer with a lifetime's experience in the business, he should know.

"We're suddenly coming out of a two year drought," says Peter. "We went from 47 signed golf course design projects to 14 but now it's all happening again. We're currently working on developments in Dubai, Oman, Switzerland, Sudan, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Poland, Brazil, Germany, Italy, Bulgaria, Russia and the Ukraine.

"I think the recession caused people to panic and now they're starting to come to terms with it and getting back to business. It was difficult for our company and it came as quite a shock to have to lose good staff. But now we're looking to get people back again."

I met Peter at Meydan Racecourse recently where he is redesigning the old Nad Al Sheba golf course into a nine-hole layout which is due to open for play next year. As always, we got into a deep discussion about what was right and what

WE SHOULD OPEN GOLF UP TO THE SCHOOLS AND PUT THE SPORT ON THE CURRICULUM. THE USE OF CADDIES HAS VIRTUALLY DISAPPEARED, WHICH WAS A TRADITIONAL ROUTE INTO THE GAME. MANY GOLFERS OF MY GENERATION STARTED TO PLAY GOLF THROUGH WORKING AS A CADDIE.

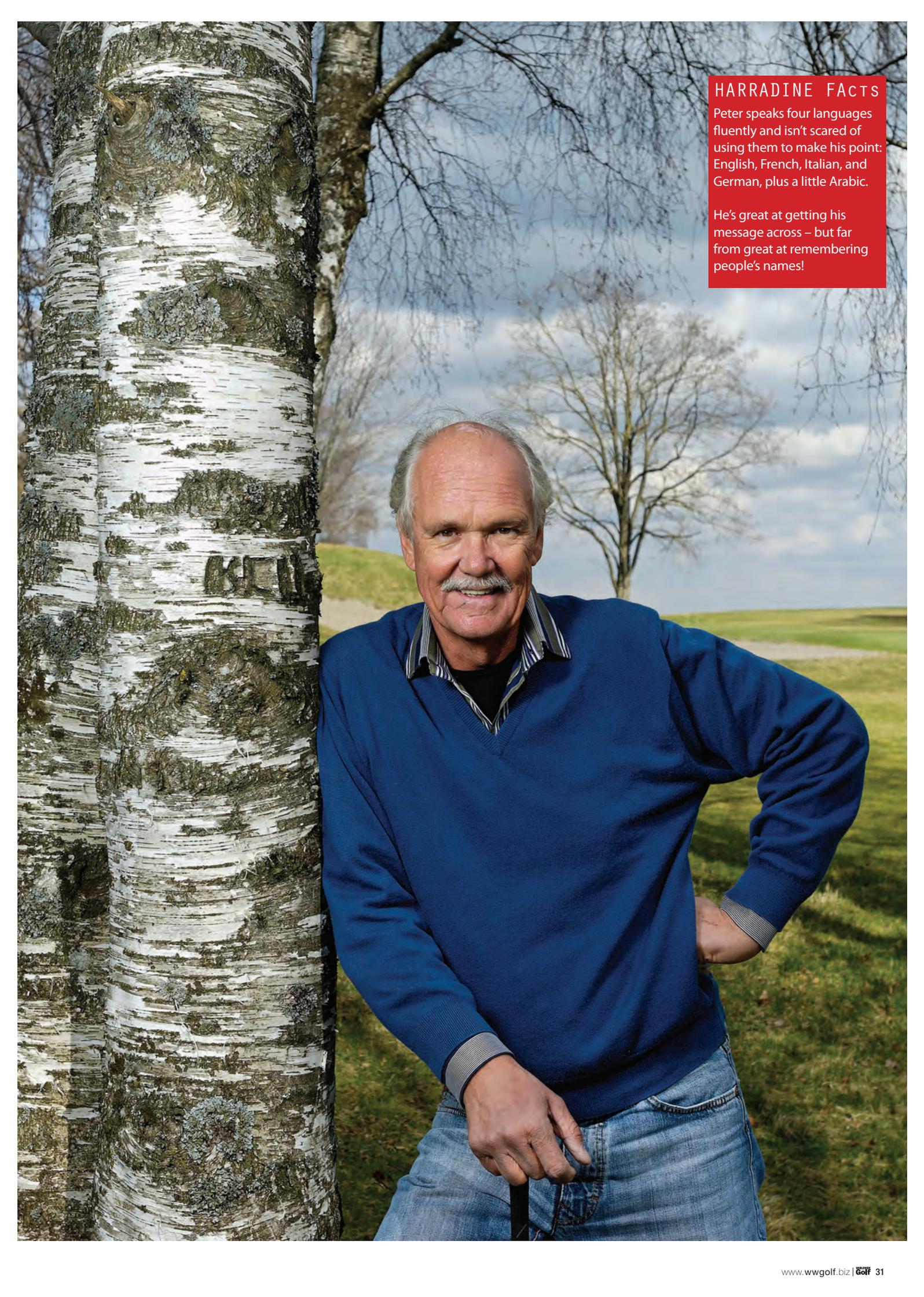
was wrong with golf in the Middle East. Peter describes himself as having been "born with a golf ball in my mouth," which is pretty accurate.

He was born in Berne but grew up in Caslano in the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland, where his mother still lives in 'Via Golf' right on the golf course. He is the son of a highly respected course designer, Donald, whose step-father was also a golf course designer.

"The step-father was a club golf pro at Shooters Hill in London in the days when club pros did every job imaginable," says Peter. "My step-grandfather and father

moved to Bad Ragaz in Switzerland where they re-modelled a nine-hole course. My father designed and built the 18 hole course in 1957 and five years ago I added an executive nine hole course. Three generations worked in Bad Ragaz over a period of 84 years!

"My dad's company was basically a design and build outfit, which is nearly impossible nowadays due to modern-day diffidence, contractual procedures and overloaded paperwork. Peter, who speaks four languages fluently and a little Arabic, had his first set of golf clubs when he was six and although he later became a ▶

A photograph of Peter Harradine, an older man with a mustache, wearing a blue V-neck sweater over a striped collared shirt and blue jeans. He is leaning against the trunk of a birch tree on the left side of the frame. The background shows a golf course with green grass, a sand trap, and bare trees under a cloudy sky. A red text box is in the top right corner.

HARRADINE FACTS

Peter speaks four languages fluently and isn't scared of using them to make his point: English, French, Italian, and German, plus a little Arabic.

He's great at getting his message across – but far from great at remembering people's names!



“FORTUNATELY, THEY GAVE ME A BLANK CANVAS TO WORK ON AND DESPITE THE MANY ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS WE WERE ABLE TO CREATE THE NOW FAMOUS FALCON CLUBHOUSE. THE FALCON DESIGN WAS BASICALLY MY IDEA AND ARCHITECT SAMIR DAUD DID AN EXCELLENT JOB IN DESIGNING IT.” – PETER HARRADINE

five-handicapper he admits he wasn't cut out to be a pro golfer. "I had no natural talent and no real feeling for the ball – although I think it's the greatest game in the world," says Peter, who started working for his father on the contracting side during his school holidays. After primary and secondary school in Switzerland he was sent to continue his education in Leamington Spa in England and then went to the United States to work with golf design companies. Peter worked with his father on his first design contract at Nimes in France in 1968 and since then has never looked back. "I worked as a golf course construction contractor in the beginning and that has helped me a lot in the design work, particularly with the specifications in order to understand what can and can't be done and how to work to budget and on time."

Of all the golf courses Peter has built, he regards Doha Golf Club and Abu Dhabi Golf Club as two of his best – and Abu Dhabi the toughest challenge. "Technically, it was difficult because it was a totally flat piece of land and the water table was only two metres below the surface, and was five times more salty than the sea," he says. "Fortunately, they gave me a blank canvas to work on and despite the many administrative problems we were able to create the now famous Falcon Clubhouse. The falcon design was basically my idea and architect Samir Daoud did an excellent job in designing it."

Peter also has a soft spot for his nine-hole design at Jebel Ali, which remains one of the most popular courses in the region. "Jebel Ali was

a great job for us," he says. "We agreed the price and just got on with it."

Peter's forthright opinions on 'professional signatories' are well documented. He understandably laments the practice of importing sand from the United States to a desert country just to make the bunkers look nice.

"We're still building the wrong sort of golf courses," he says, "and we're still not doing enough to improve the image of the game. We've got to build municipal courses and pay-and-play courses to make golf more affordable and more accessible to more people."

"We don't need more over-the-top courses where one big name designer tries to outdo another. I know it's all about money but to create and run those kind of courses costs big money – and that cost has to be passed on to the golfer. It's too expensive to play golf in the UAE. It's driving golfers away from the game when we should be trying to encourage more people to play."

"We should open it up to the schools and put the sport on the curriculum. The use of caddies has virtually disappeared, which was a traditional route into the game in my youth."

"Golf doesn't make enough of the fact that playing a round with friends or family is the best quality time you can have. When I played golf with my two sons it meant that we were in each other's company for up to six hours, which was great. We can have a laugh and chat about things in an atmosphere that no other sport gives you."

I know that Peter Harradine has been trying to create a public course in Dubai for many years – without success. Maybe this will happen before too long. ■

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PETER HARRADINE



Arguably the greatest 9-hole resort course in the Middle East. Jebel Ali Golf Resort & Spa has entertained many of the world's leading players over the years, plus the regular weekend warrior and the holiday golfer.



Using the natural surroundings, Doha Golf Club has been the venue of the CommercialBank Qatar Masters for the past 12 years and became a favourite of the Tour pros that gives them the ultimate desert golf challenge.