

Amazing Grace Makes History in Qatar

Branden Grace held his nerve in a closing 69 to become the first man to successfully defend the Commercial Bank Qatar Masters title at the **Peter Harradine** designed Doha Golf Club.

The South African came into the final round two shots behind two-time champion Paul Lawrie and, while the Scot slipped to a 78 on a day when there were just four rounds under 70, Grace held off the chasing pack to get to 14 under and win a seventh European Tour title by two shots from Rafa Cabrera-Bello and Thorbjørn Olesen.

The Spaniard closed with three birdies to finish in the top three for the third time in six years here, while a 15-ft birdie putt on the last moved Olesen into a share of second.

Bradley Dredge finished with four birdies to vault himself to 11 under alongside English duo Andrew Johnston and Lee Slattery.

World Number 11 Grace spoke before the tournament of his desire to break into the top ten in the Official World Golf Ranking, and that cannot be far away if he keeps up his current form, with top ten finishes in each of his first five events of the season.

"It's great," he said. "I'm pretty much at a loss for words.

"It's a big thing to come to a week defending. You've got a lot more pressure and a lot more things going on that week.

To get the first proper defence under the belt is something great, and something I've been dreaming of - Branden Grace

"There's no better place to do it than Qatar. This was really one of my biggest wins to date last year, and I think this is just going to push it up even higher.

"It's all a big learning curve as your career goes on. I've learned a lot this week, learned patience, and I've learned what it takes now to defend a title.

"And not just that; to win a title again. It happened last year, but it feels long gone. So it's great to be in the winner's circle again."

Grace and Lawrie both birdied the first but as Lawrie then dropped four shots to turn in 39, Grace recovered from a bogey on the fifth with a further gain on the sixth.

A brilliant approach shot on the tenth moved the 27 year old two shots clear and a late surge from the chasing pack proved too little, too late as he repeated the trick on the last to seal victory.

Olesen had held a share of the lead after Grace and Lawrie both dropped shots on the fifth but a bogey on the eighth and a run of nine straight pars ended his chances.

Cabrera-Bello, meanwhile, had been one over par for the day as he stood on the 16th tee after a double bogey on the eighth but a brilliant finish maintained the 2012 Omega Dubai Desert Classic winner's impressive record in the Gulf states.