

ALEXANDER NOREN HEADS QATAR MASTERS FIELD

BRUCE YOUNG 2017 JAN 25

Noren - the leading ranked player in the field (Photo: Bruce Young)

The Middle East swing continues for the European Tour this week when the Commercial Bank Qatar Masters is played at its traditional home, the Peter Harradine designed Doha Golf Club in Doha in the United Arab Emirate of Qatar.



The event which was first played in 1998, as per usual, sits in the middle of the three tournament swing including last week's Abu Dhabi Classic this event and next week's Dubai Desert Classic.

The leading world ranked player in the field is one of the stars of world golf in 2016, Alexander Noren, who improved from 95th to 9th in the rankings over the year.

Noren has had one or two good finishes in this event including when 4th in 2013 and his 13th place finish in Abu Dhabi last week suggests he is ready to contend this week.

Rafael Cabrera Bello has been twice 3rd and once runner-up in Qatar and is one of the European Tour's most consistent players. The Spaniard began the year well with a 19th place in Abu Dhabi and has genuine credentials for another European Tour title.

Bernd Weisberger has played well in each of the last two years in Abu Dhabi and has recorded seven top tens in his last eight starts worldwide including six times inside the top five. There is a lot to like about his chances.

Thorbjorn Olesen finished runner-up in this event last year and it was not all that long ago that he won the Turkish Airlines Open. He also jointly won the World Cup of Golf in November and last week finished a respectable if unspectacular 29th in Abu Dhabi.

Ricardo Gouveia was a star on the Challenge Tour two years ago and although his rookie season on the European Tour was a little below what was expected he is finding his feet and played well last week. He finished 7th here on debut last year and I like his chances of a surprise win.

Jordan Smith had a brilliant season on the European Challenge Tour last year and has already finished 3rd at this higher level when doing so at the South African Open. He will win on the European Tour, maybe not yet but before long.

Australians in the field are the Hong Kong Open Champion Sam Brazel, who played well early last week before a disappointing last round, Scott Hend, who has missed the cut in his only two starts here, Jason Scrivener, who plays in Qatar for the first occasion, Nathan Holman and Wade Ormsby.