

THE INTERVIEW

Peter Harradine

The new golf course at the Jebel Sifah development, near Oman's capital city Muscat, was designed to be enjoyable for the average golfer. GCA spoke with golf course architect Peter Harradine to find out more

How did you approach creating a course for the average golfer?

The common answer to making a course easier is by staggering the tees. But what about the second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth shot? What happens after that small advantage in length given by an advanced tee has been used? All too often, you still have all the other fearsome obstacles, such as enormous bunkers, narrow fairways, and tough roughs with high native grasses.

We created a course with wide fairways and no fairway bunkers, and relied on the natural topography to create interest. The obligatory bunkers around the greens are not deep and allow for the setting of easy and tough pin positions. It is obvious that the easy pin positions will be used most of the time. Contrary to those spectacular tour players that recover from seemingly impossible situations, the average golfer cannot recuperate easily from difficult playing positions. We therefore ensure that the course does not invite unnecessary trouble so that the player will almost always find a playable lie.

You might think that such a design would be boring, but Jebel Sifah is blessed with a beautiful, rugged and majestic environment that ensures a very enjoyable game.

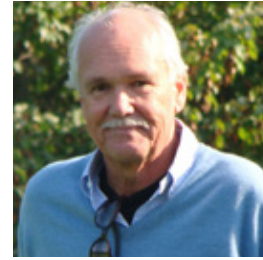
What characterises the course from an aesthetic perspective?

The course is locked between majestic mountains and the sea as it meanders along, across and around wadis which are filled with torrential water during rainfalls.

Unlike many other real estate projects, the stylish houses are unobtrusive and the short distances between the greens and the next tees will encourage the players to walk. One par three hole plays towards the Gulf of Oman, whereas the next hole runs parallel to the sea with a natural and beautiful sand dune separating the green and the nearby shoreline.

What would you describe as the course's highlight and signature hole?

I think that the highlights of the course are the two holes by the sea. I personally hate the word signature, and prefer the word favourite. My favourite hole is definitely the par three twelfth hole, which plays directly towards the sea. The green is big enough to allow multiple pin positions and even a fluky top could allow you to reach the green and end up with a par, as the green is not defended by frontal bunkers. The constant breeze however, ensures interesting and varied club selections off the tees. I must admit that this hole is also rather special for me as this layout is the first course I've designed next to the sea.



Jebel Sifah sits on the shores of the Gulf of Oman



Photos: Kevin Murray