

Players hail Sharjah course as Masters heats up

The senior stars have been unanimous in their praise of the immaculate **Peter Harradine**-designed nine-hole course at Sharjah Golf & Shooting Club as the Staysure Tour's 2018 season has got off to a perfect start at the Sharjah Senior Golf Masters.

The fully floodlit course, which was designed by the internationally acclaimed architect a decade ago, is one of the UAE's best loved courses and the Staysure Tour players have been highly impressed with the layout and conditions. Reigning champion Chris Williams said: "We were all surprised by how good this course is and how nice the greens are. To come and play at a place like this facility in Sharjah was wonderful."

South African star Williams edged Gary Marks to the inaugural title last year in a dramatic play-off and the Englishman is also delighted to return to the emirate.

"I was surprised by how enjoyable and challenging this golf course is," said Marks. "You'd struggle to find a better all-round venue on the Staysure Tour in terms of course condition, practice facilities and the weather. The players absolutely love it here and it's a highlight on the Tour which is a gem to start the season off at."

Two-time European Tour winner James Kingston was the second round leader last year but ended up finishing tied-third in the 2017 Sharjah Golf Senior Masters. He is seven under-par so far this week so it's clear that this nine-hole track brings of the best in the South African's game. "The golf course is really nice because it gives you a bit of freedom off the tee," said Kingston, who is now in his second year on the over-50's circuit. "It's in impeccable condition and the greens are superb."

"The golf course is set up to be taken apart which is something that all golfers enjoy. Most of the guys playing have come from five foot of snow so it's brilliant to be able to swing a golf club in the sunshine here."

Thailand's Thaworn Wiratchant shot a stunning 65 on Friday to share the lead with American Clark Dennis on 11-under par. They lead by two shots from Australia's Peter Fowler. Kingston is two strokes further back in fourth going into Saturday's final round.