

# Lee Westwood has Mark Roe to thank

By Lewine Mair and Art Spander

Eye on the ball: Lee Westwood has upped his game

When Lee Westwood fell from No 1 on the money-list in 2000 to 75th two years later, there was the fear that he might settle for the comfortable living he had already secured for himself. Instead, he has turned himself into a souped-up version of the old Westwood, [with his share of second place in Abu Dhabi](#) on Sunday his 10th top-10 finish in 11 starts.

Westwood's competitiveness has never gone away, while his swing has benefited from 12 months of "specific" fitness training. Muscles, mind and clubs are obviously working in league.

Although Westwood, 34, won the Andalucian Open last May, he was not convinced he was back until last year's US PGA Championship in Tulsa, where his improving fitness registered as he posted a last-round 68 in the grilling heat. He finished just outside the top 30 but won the Quinn Direct British Masters at the Belfry the next month, thanks to a flawless last-round 65.

By then, there was another factor at work. During the Open at Carnoustie Westwood's friend, Mark Roe, had said that he could see "a few glaring faults" in his chipping. Westwood asked Roe to help him sort them out and, gradually, the two have worked through the errors.

On Sunday, when Westwood had the most delicate of 15-foot chips from the edge of the 17th, he all but holed it. "I'm using a less wristy stroke than I was and, at the same time, I'm getting more spin on the ball," he said.

Summing up his game overall, Westwood says he has far more shots up his sleeve than when he ended Colin Montgomerie's seven-year reign over the Order of Merit. At the same time, he understands his swing better than he did then.

Even in his best early years, Westwood was a slow starter, but here he is at the top of his form in January. He is on duty in Qatar this week and Dubai next, and cannot wait to try his hand in the States, where he feels his stronger short game will come into its own in the run-up to the Masters.

Meanwhile, though the Great Britain and Ireland Curtis Cup side for St Andrews in May is still to be selected, Galway girl Alison Walshe has secured her place.

However, Walshe - born in Ireland of Irish parents - will not be playing under Ireland's Mary McKenna for the home team. Instead, she has she been named in the American eight. Her family moved from Galway to Boston when Walshe was 12. Since then, she has starred on the American college circuit and is No 1 for the University of Arizona Wildcats.

Last year she took the North and South Championship and this season has won the Harder Hall, the first tournament on Florida's Orange Blossom circuit.

The US Golf Association felt free to select Walshe now that she now has an American passport, and she raised no objections.

The Bob Hope Chrysler Classic at Palm Desert, California, saw Justin Leonard throw victory away, and DJ Trahan, who could not believe his good fortune or putting touch, take full advantage.

Trahan, 27, gained seven strokes on Leonard, to win with a 90-hole score of 334, or 26 under par, while Leonard, who won the Open in 1997, was second with a 23-under-par 337.

Trahan, ranked 217th in the world, was four strokes off the pace going into the final round but never looked back after taking the lead with a birdie at the 14th.