

It was the practice round of the esteemed 2005 Barclays Singapore Open event at Sentosa's highly-acclaimed Serapong course.

England's much-celebrated golfer Lee Westwood, who rose to fame by being Europe's No. 1 player for a long spell in the 1990s and 2000s, changed his shirt yet again as he ambled on to the second nine of the challenging par-71 layout.

But if you thought that he dreaded the heat, you are mistaken. For he seems to enjoy the humidity and being refreshed by the occasional waft of cool breeze around the idyllic island, his beaming smiles and shoulder shrugs indicating expressions of joy.

A popular golfer in this part of the world, especially in Singapore and Indonesia, which seems to be his favourite hunting ground that provided him several titles, Westwood, with his easy gait and confident air of authority always woos the fans.

The affable Westwood once said: "The Singapore Open is the flagship event of the Asian Tour, it is a massive event and it is being played in a great place. I love coming here and it is good to be back."

The runner-up to Australian Adam Scott in the year when the Singapore Open was resurrected by Barclays Bank after a three-year hiatus from 2002 to 2004 is a tough man to beat on any course, be it in the United States, Europe or Asia.

And with his most recent triumph in the Race to Dubai European Tour event at the age of 47, he showed that age is only a number when he overcame a bunch of young upstarts in the popular tournament.

After a nail-biting finish to the event in Dubai

BY GODFREY ROBERT

# WESTWOOD, A DESERVING WINNER OF RACE TO DUBAI TITLE

RUNNER-UP SPOT IN DP EVENT ENOUGH FOR ENGLISHMAN TO CLAIM EUROPE'S NO. 1 SPOT

last Sunday with England's Matt Fitzpatrick ending tops in the DP World Tour Championship, Westwood was content with the runner-up spot that propelled him to the summit of the Race to Dubai standings.

His second-place finish on 14-under par after a four-under 68 on the final day ensured that he claimed the biggest prize after a series of meltdowns by his rivals at the Jumeirah Golf Estates.

US Masters winner in 2018, Patrick Reed, seeking to become the first American to be Europe's top player, bogeyed Nos. 16 and 17 to drop out of contention for the Race to Dubai title. Then Laurie Canter double-bogeyed No. 17 and could only par the last, leaving Westwood alone in second.

Fitzpatrick's par at No. 18 secured him a one-shot victory to win the Tour's season-ending event for the second time, after 2016, but

Westwood was already celebrating a bigger prize after watching the final holes in the scoring hut with his girlfriend, who caddied for him as well.

"It was a great finish," Westwood said after making five birdies and one bogey. "I sat there watching it – it's always exciting this tournament, coming down the stretch and there's always thrills and spills.

"There was the Race to Dubai up for the grabs, the tournament. It was an exciting end to the year. It's hard to quantify."

Westwood, who won US\$2 million for finishing at the top, added: "It was a bizarre season. The European Tour have done an incredible job to pick the season up again from July and have tournaments every week."

Westwood, who supports Nottingham Forest in the English league, won what was formerly known

as the Order of Merit title for the first time 20 years ago at Valderrama, and again in 2009 in Dubai.

A top-ranked player, Westwood is renowned for being one of the greatest golfers never to win a Major (he finished runner-up three times), but there's no doubting his status as an elder statesman on the European Tour.

And he staked strong claims to be a shoo-in for a place in the European team for next year's postponed Ryder Cup at Whistling Straits. It would be his 11th appearance in golf's biggest team event.

"The Ryder Cup would be great if I got in again," Westwood said, before hesitating. "I would love to play again but at some point I'm hoping the captaincy will be offered to me. I would love to do that.

"At certain times, you've got to move into different chapters of your life. It's

nice to watch these young kids play, they tear it up out there. I enjoyed the Ryder Cup last time out when I was vice-captain. It's a lot less pressure than having to hit the greens and hole the putts yourself."

Fitzpatrick, 26, praised Westwood, saying: "Lee is just the definition of the Tour, isn't he? Just a phenomenal player, and has been for so long now. I can't speak highly enough of him."

Noted for his consistency, Westwood is one of the few players who has won tournaments on five continents – Europe, America, Asia, Africa and Oceania – including victories on the European Tour and the US PGA Tour.

He became the world's No. 1 player in October, 2010, ending the reign of Tiger Woods and becoming the first British player since Nick Faldo in 1994 to hold the esteemed position.

