

Spotted



Tennis champ Novak Djokovic visiting the Burj Al Arab. US fashion designer Donna Karan at the

opening of the JW Marriott Marquis. **UK footballers Gary McAllister, Paul Walsh, Lee Sharpe, Andy Goram and Dave Beasant escaping the winter chill by playing a round of golf at the Jebel Ali Golf Course.**

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Hot seat Jeffrey Archer

The British politician-turned-novelist, 72, gives two talks at this weekend's Emirates Airline Festival of Literature. *Rob Garratt* shared some home truths



You're in Dubai to promote the release of your latest book, *Best Kept Secret*, the third of five books chronicling the life of protagonist Harry Clifton. How much is your leading man like you?

Very much – he's from the area of the world I'm from. He's an author; I'm an author. His wife is very like my wife, my son is very like his son. You do write about people you feel.

But you don't know where the story will go?

I haven't got a clue! I'm not a writer, I'm a storyteller. I get up each morning at 5am, thinking: Where am I going to make Harry go this morning? **Aren't you scared you won't think of anything?**

I'm terrified! I fear that I'll wake up and there'll be nothing there.

We hear you work in strict two-hour blocks...

Dickens and Tolstoy did the same. You have to be disciplined – you can't be casual about it. The idea that you can have a couple

'290 million people read my books. Tell me that's little'

of [drinks] and knock it out is nonsense.

You called yourself a storyteller, not a writer. What's the difference?

Storytelling is a God-given gift. You can be a good writer if you're well read and educated, like playing the piano.

As a former politician, doesn't writing for entertainment strike you as being facile?

There's nothing facile about writing a book people enjoy reading. You think *The Count of Monte Cristo* [by Alexandre Dumas] is less well known than a mayor of Paris? Or a prime minister everyone's forgotten? Tell Dickens that.

You were a candidate for Mayor of London. Surely changing, say, transport policy in a city of 16 million has more tangible impact on people's lives than a novel.

Well, 290 million people read my books. Tell me that's little. But I brought in a bill changing the rules on royal succession [in Britain], which means if the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge have a baby girl this year, she will be first in line for the throne.

Doesn't that make you miss politics?

No, I'm loving the writing.

It was remarkable that your time in jail for perjury didn't affect your writing career.

Why do you think that is?

I was very lucky to have a talent that I could continue doing. If I had been a lawyer or a doctor, it would have been different – but they can't stop me writing a book.

From a law-and-order point of view, do you think prison works as a deterrent?

No comment.

What are your best memories of Dubai?

When I visited four years ago the Burj Khalifa was looming up in the sky, but I never saw it finished. I'm very interested to see the sense of [Dubai]. *Jeffrey Archer makes two appearances at the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature. tickets.emirateslitfest.com.*

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