

NewSod by Tony Marr

Sebonac has all the makings of a masterpiece

The Old Sod is closer than you think—much closer. Work with me here. According to Alfred Wegner, the father of continental drift theory, two hundred and fifty million years ago Earth was comprised of one giant landmass surrounded by ocean. Wegner called the super-continent Pangaea.

One hundred and twenty-five million years ago, Pangaea began to fracture and then migrate. What would later become the Americas headed west, while the future Africa, Asia and Europe went east.

Four hundred years ago Scottish shepherds tending their flocks in grassy lands that linked the seashore with the mainland passed endless northern summer nights by swinging staffs and swatting rocks toward animals burrowing holes.

Forty-three years ago Jack Nicklaus graduated from Ohio State, stuffed his blonde crew cut under a bucket hat, and began lapping the field in every tournament anyone ever thought to arrange.

Thirty-two years ago Michael Pascucci, making a fortune in the car leasing business, contracted a nasty and seemingly incurable case of golf fever.

Twenty-six years ago a kid barely out of Cornell named Tom Doak designed a golf course in Michigan.

So what the hell does any of this

have to do with sporting life in the Hamptons you might understandably inquire? It's simple. Put all these ingredients in a large pot and turn up the heat. If you pay attention and watch closely, a masterpiece is hatching right under your nose.

Like a nearly finished jigsaw puzzle, the Sebonac Golf Club is nearing completion. When it's finished it may well be the best course on Long Island, and one of the truly great golf courses in all the world—as if the puzzle maker was revealed to be Leonardo Da Vinci.

To create a truly spectacular golf course, you need three things:

- A great piece of land
 - A great design
 - A great deal of money
- Sebonac's got all of that. And then some.

The reason we have so many world-class golf courses here on the East End—Shinnecock, National, Maidstone, Atlantic, Montauk Downs—is due to the fact that our terrain is so similar to Scotland, birthplace of the game. The reason it's so similar is because the East End actually used to be the West Side. Of Scotland. Two hundred and fifty million years ago. When it was north central Pangaea.

With two hundred designs to his credit, Nicklaus is now regarded as more than simply a glamour hire. Tom Doak is a wunderkind—a latter day



Alistar Mackenzie, whose designs are both simple and breathtaking. From their collaboration one hopes what will emerge is a course that combines Nicklaus' usual demanding route with Doak's natural, environmental whimsy.

Mr. Pascucci sold his car leasing business for \$660 million and decided he wanted to own a golf club. He bought Bayberry, 300 acres surrounded on three sides by water, for \$40 million and is spending another \$45 million to build the course. Memberships will be sold for somewhere around half a million dollars each. And they'll go fast.

Twenty years ago I was walking a fairway in Pebble Beach when the learned man I was playing with told me that the world would never see another course as great as Pebble Beach. The reasons, he said, were real estate and economics. There are very few places as beautiful as the Monterey Peninsula, and any developer would certainly place homes on that sort of coveted waterfront.

Sebonac may just prove my old man wrong. *

***What does a masterpiece look like when it's half finished?
When It's a Golf Course, it looks like the pictures of Sebonac here;
a little frightening, a little familiar and a lot of potential.***

