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uilding a golf club in the Hamptons used to require nothing more than a well-developed sense of snobbery and the ability to persuade some farmer to sell you his potato field for a pittance. But that was 100 years ago. Now that big money, more than the Social Register, rules the Hamptons, a new breed of golf course—one that costs some \$600,000 to join—has elbowed its way into the

neighborhood. The latest upstart to join the likes of Atlantic (1992) and the Bridge (2002) is the Jack Nicklaus- and Tom Doak-designed **Sebonack Club**. Situated (fortuitously or not depending, literally, on the view from your porch) between Shinnecock Hills (founded 1891; initiation fee a mere \$50,000—mere in the world of golf, that is) and National Golf Links (1904; \$75,000) in Southampton, Sebonack will be one of the most expensive courses ever built, with the cost of land and construction totaling nearly \$100 million.

The idea for Sebonack hatched, as so many do in the Hamptons, when a perfect piece of real estate came on the market. For more than 50 years, the Long Island electricians' union had owned a 300-acre parcel of land bordering Great Peconic Bay to the west and Cold Spring Pond to the south—a mouthwatering property they'd basically used for Fourth of July wienie roasts. Then, in 2000, they decided it was time to sell. (No one could afford to live nearby anymore.) The price? A nonnegotiable \$45 million.

Enter Michael Pascucci, a Long Island businessman who made a fortune in the car-leasing business. He prevailed upon his friend and Florida next-door neighbor Jack Nicklaus to help design his course. He also sought out the services of the current boy genius of golf architecture, Tom Doak. Both were initially skeptical about working together. But Pascucci's persistence and the prospect of putting their stamp on a dramatic piece of land nestled between two historic courses proved stronger than pride, and Pas-

cucci got his dream team. It still wasn't easy. There were nightmarish zoning issues, plus having to assuage the concerns of Sebonack's notoriously snooty neighbors. Then, after two years of all that, Pascucci had to get two famously single-minded men to work as one. "It's like you've got one piece of canvas and two artists and you say, Paint the Mona Lisa," Pascucci explained. "Who's doing the mouth? Who's doing the eyes?"

Doak, the designer of the already legendary Pacific Dunes on the Oregon coast, is famous for allowing the land to dictate his layouts.

Nicklaus is regarded as the game's finest strategist and brings that intelligence to his golf courses. Sebonack's holes betray the Golden Bear's touch with their generous fairways. Most give

the player the option of shooting at the fat part of the green or challeng-

ing a tough pin placement over deep bunkering. Meanwhile, the craftily contoured greens and delicate ridges will take the members years to figure out. "Everywhere I go, people ask me, 'How's it going out on Long Island?'" Doak said. "It's a great piece of land, and you get only one shot. So you don't want to mess it up." Nicklaus, praising Doak for creating "great blowouts in the bunkers," feels sure they haven't: "I think the finished product is going to be better than anything we could have done alone."

Getting a locker in Sebonack's clubhouse will be about as easy as breaking 60. "We're looking for age diversity and geographic diversity," Pascucci said of the some 250 prospective members. (Sebonack's founding members include Reichmont chairman Johann Rupert, former Soros Fund chief Stan Druckenmiller, and NetJets CEO Richard Santulli.) Basic membership starts in the half-million-dollar range and stretches to \$650,000 for use of the fifteen on-site cottages, Pascucci's nod to creating a modern-day Augusta National. As it turns out, the prohibitory fees are not the product of social snobbery but the grim economic reality of building a \$100 million course in one of the world's most expensive neighborhoods.—**WILLIAM BERLIND** *a&d* >198



AU NATUREL
Pacific Dunes, in Oregon, designed by Tom Doak, rated 19th in the world.

ON THE WATERFRONT

The par-five 18th hole at Sebonack, overlooking Great Peconic Bay.

land rush

The Golden Bear and golf's boy genius team up to build a legend in the middle of the Hamptons.