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Co-designers Jack Nicklaus and Tom Doak take in one of the many scenic vistas at Sebonack Golf Club in Southampton.

## Nicklaus, Doak polish a gem

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This is what Jack Nicklaus thinks about the concept of signature holes.

"I always like to tell this story," Nicklaus said Tuesday after giving a tour, with co-designer Tom Doak, of Sebonack Golf Club in Southampton. "After we opened Muirfield Village [a Nicklaus course near Columbus, Ohio] we did a poll of members asking what their favorite hole was. They came back with 14 different holes."

Nicklaus then added dryly, "That told me I had four holes I had to work on."

Nicklaus and Doak hope a poll of Sebonack members a couple of years down the road yields similarly diverse results.

Said Doak: "If one hole stands out, then you haven't done a good job with the golf course."

A walk on the soon-to-be completed course, with views on almost every hole of the Great Peconic Bay, indicates Doak and Nicklaus did a good job. The layout — 7,225 yards from the back tees — is at most points spectacular, breathtaking at others. The first, 11th and 18th holes run along the bluff overlooking the deep blue Peconic. The 12th hole, a 155-yard par-3, was inspired, Nicklaus said, by Royal Troon's eighth hole, known as the Postage Stamp.

Sebonack, scheduled to open next spring, is picturesque to be sure. What it is not, Nicklaus and Doak said, is a replication of nearby Shinnecock Hills or National Links of America.

The course's primary grasses are colonial bentgrass and fescue but the long, wavy, penalizing fescue of Shinnecock or Garden City Golf Club will not be part of Sebonack.

"I don't build narrow courses and Jack hasn't, either," Doak said. "I think you have to give members a chance to hit the ball off the tee and be able to find it."

It is a links course with rolling hills and undulating greens. The natural dunes gives Sebonack a look similar to some Irish golf courses, although Nicklaus stayed away from comparisons.

"I don't think this looks like anything but Sebonack," said Nicklaus, who has designed 241 courses worldwide. "Each property has its own personality."

Owner Michael Pascucci paid \$46 million for the 300-acre property in July 2001. He tabbed Nicklaus, a neighbor of his in North Palm Beach, Fla., to design Sebonack but added Doak to the mix after playing Doak's highly regarded Pacific Dunes in Bandon, Ore.

"My motive was to get the best 18 holes I could out of this property," Pascucci said.

Nicklaus and Doak typically work alone but said their disagreements were minimal at Sebonack. Doak's impact can be seen on some holes; Nicklaus' on others.

"The bottom line is this is better than if Tom had done it by himself and better than if I had done it myself," Nicklaus said.

Exactly the signature both designers were looking for.