

# THE FINEST GOLF

SENSATIONAL  
**SEBONACK**

GOLFING IN  
**BERMUDA**

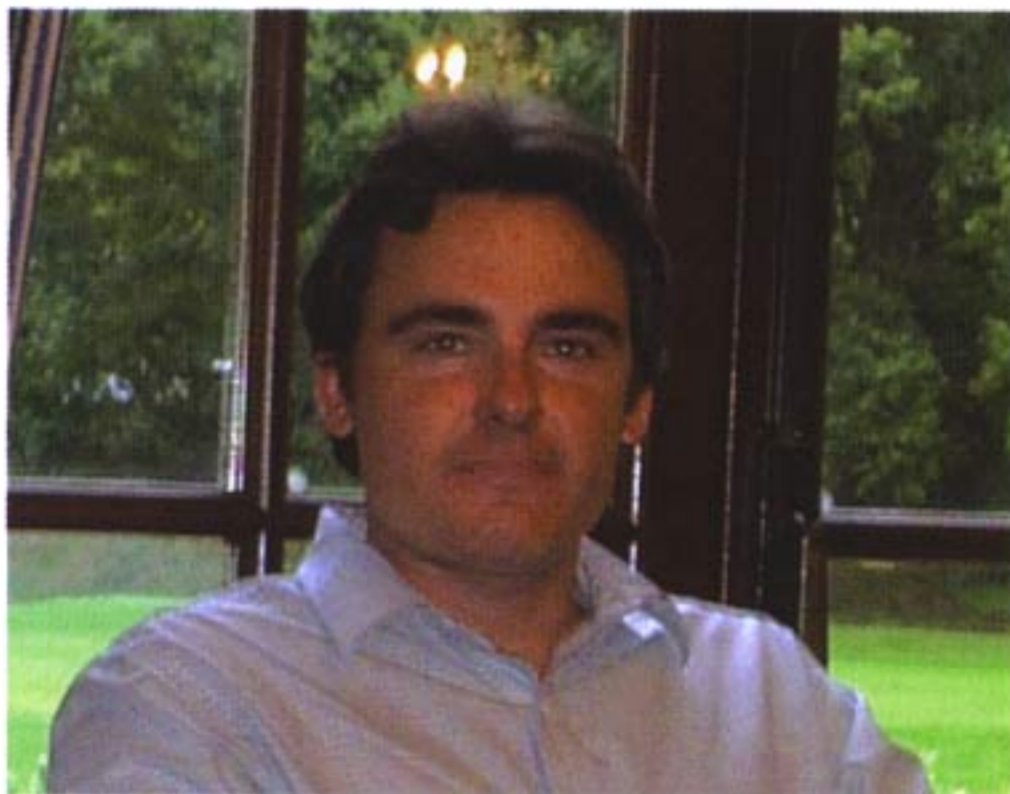
SIZZLING  
**SOTOGRADE**

UNYIELDING  
**CARNOUSTIE**

**HURDZAN  
AND FRY**

ENVIRONMENTAL GOLF DESIGN





# FROM THE EDITOR

Luxury is now more attainable than ever before. Five star resorts that were once the haunt of the international glitterati now advertise cheap deals on UpToTheVeryLastSecond.com, supposedly ultra-exclusive hideaways open their doors to anyone who can flash the cash, and these days you'll find anyone from third-rate footballers to pretentious money brokers travelling by private jet to their fractionally owned second or third homes in the sun. Finding an experience that is truly unique and exclusive – words that are seriously over-used these days – is now about as easy as sucking an oyster through a straw.

Finest Golf is committed to providing insight into experiences and destinations that truly are worth your time and money, and I'm glad to say that after putting together this issue my personal wish list now includes a visit to a wonderful new course on Long Island called Sebonack, a short stay at a stunningly refurbished castle called Pittormie near St Andrews, and a vacation at the classic but rejuvenated resort of Sotogrande in southern Spain.

Sebonack Golf Club is the brainchild of Michael Pascucci, who somehow managed to persuade Jack Nicklaus to collaborate with Tom Doak on reshaping a couple of hundred acres he must have bribed God to find. It's literally right beside the historic National Golf Links America and just a stone's throw from Shinnecock Hills Golf Course in the stylish Hamptons. The membership is to be capped at 200 individuals and it costs a reported \$650,000 to join. If I had the money I wouldn't give it a second thought. Pittormie meanwhile, is offering the kind of luxury not seen in the UK for generations at nothing like that sort of price – and it's situated in a beautiful spot very close to the Home of Golf itself.

Unlike many other new upscale projects in this area, members of Pittormie really do get to experience the very best this historic region has to offer, golfing and otherwise. And talking of classic locations, Sotogrande now offers something unique too. While the rest of the Costa Del Sol continues to be dogged by a reputation for poor value, the input of Jaime Ortiz Patino, owner of Valderrama and NH Hotels among others, have ensured that this special enclave has become a golfing nirvana for the privileged few. Mmm... could I suffer five days playing Valderrama, Almenara, La Canada, Real Sotogrande and La Reserva? I think so.

I hope you enjoy the read

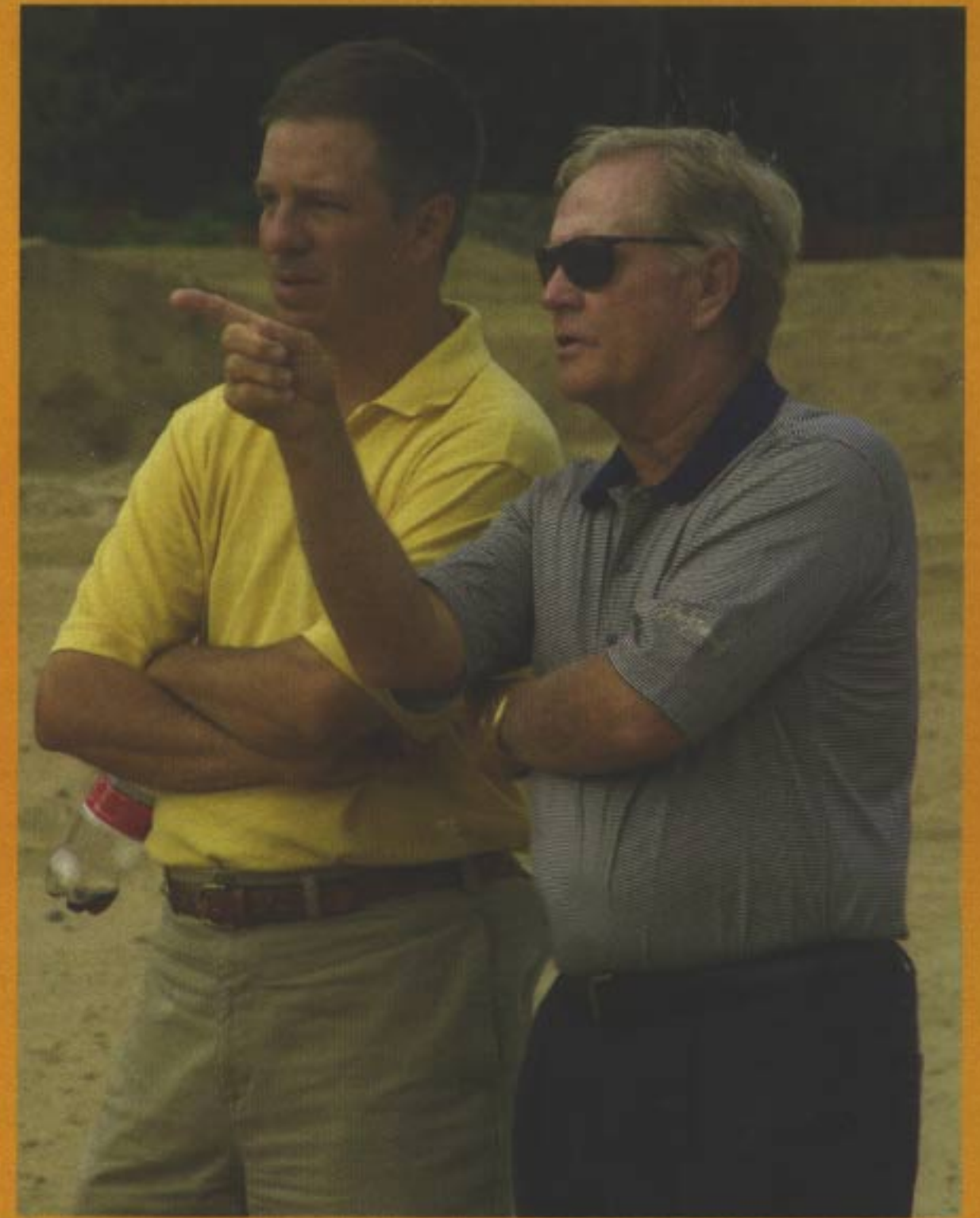


# LIVING THE DREAM



**Main picture:** Sebonack is set to be a modern classic  
**Opposite page:** Designers Tom Doak and Jack Nicklaus





**Scott Kauffman** meets the man who achieved his ambition of getting Jack Nicklaus and Tom Doak to collaborate on a single design project – Sebonack Golf Club, the illustrious new neighbour to Shinnecock Hills and National Golf Links America

Michael Pascucci is good friends with Jack Nicklaus and even lives next door to the Golden Bear during the winter months in Florida. Pascucci also owns the celebrated Sebonack Golf Club in Southampton, New York, the new ultra exclusive club featuring the rare collaborative design work of Nicklaus and Tom Doak. So there's not much that can impress Pascucci when it comes to golf. Unless the Golden Bear invites you on a personal golf getaway to Augusta National. Indeed, Pascucci has played with numerous touring pros in his day, and the Long Island native has even played Augusta for that matter, but playing with



**Picture:** The 18th hole at Sebonack, subject of a big debate between Pascucci and his two designers



Nicklaus this past November at historic Augusta National was a moment to cherish. Actually, Pascucci stayed overnight in one of the club cottages with Nicklaus, dined with the six-time Masters champion and toured the storied clubhouse as Nicklaus played host to a gaggle of guests.

“Going through the clubhouse with Jack and all the traditions there – that was really special,” says Pascucci, 69. “I’ve played with a lot of touring pros. I’ve played with Jack many times. But to play with him at Augusta was pretty amazing. What a great treat that was.”

Pascucci says what probably stood out the most about the whole Augusta experience was having dinner with Nicklaus as he held court for some 40 other awestruck overnight guests.

“People were coming over and talking to him, and asking him a question, and then Jack, as gracious as he is, probably spent an hour after dinner talking to everybody,” Pascucci adds. “He just walked around with them throughout the clubhouse, through the Champions locker room, explaining everything.”

Perhaps the most interesting exchange was seeing the little room where

Nicklaus stayed in 1959 as an amateur. As the story goes, it cost Nicklaus a dollar to sleep in a tiny little bed in an attic, and an extra dollar each for breakfast and lunch. It was two dollars for a steak dinner. “He was the Bear so he ate two steaks,” Pascucci says with a smile. “The second night they said if you’re going to keep eating two steaks we’re going to charge you another two dollars. Jack said, ‘OK,’ I’ll go for the other two dollars!”

“What stands out most about Augusta with Nicklaus was being able to see Jack play the strategy of Augusta and talk about the new big, big boy tees that are so deep, and the other thing was to observe all of the people in awe of Jack. It’s something I’ll never forget.”

That same sentiment is what people are saying about Sebonack, Pascucci’s dream golf club that opened last August in the stylish Hamptons. Even in this golf-rich area, where beach homes rent for as much as \$600,000 for the summer and memberships at new private golf clubs range between \$250,000 and \$500,000-plus, Sebonack is setting a whole new standard in more ways than one.



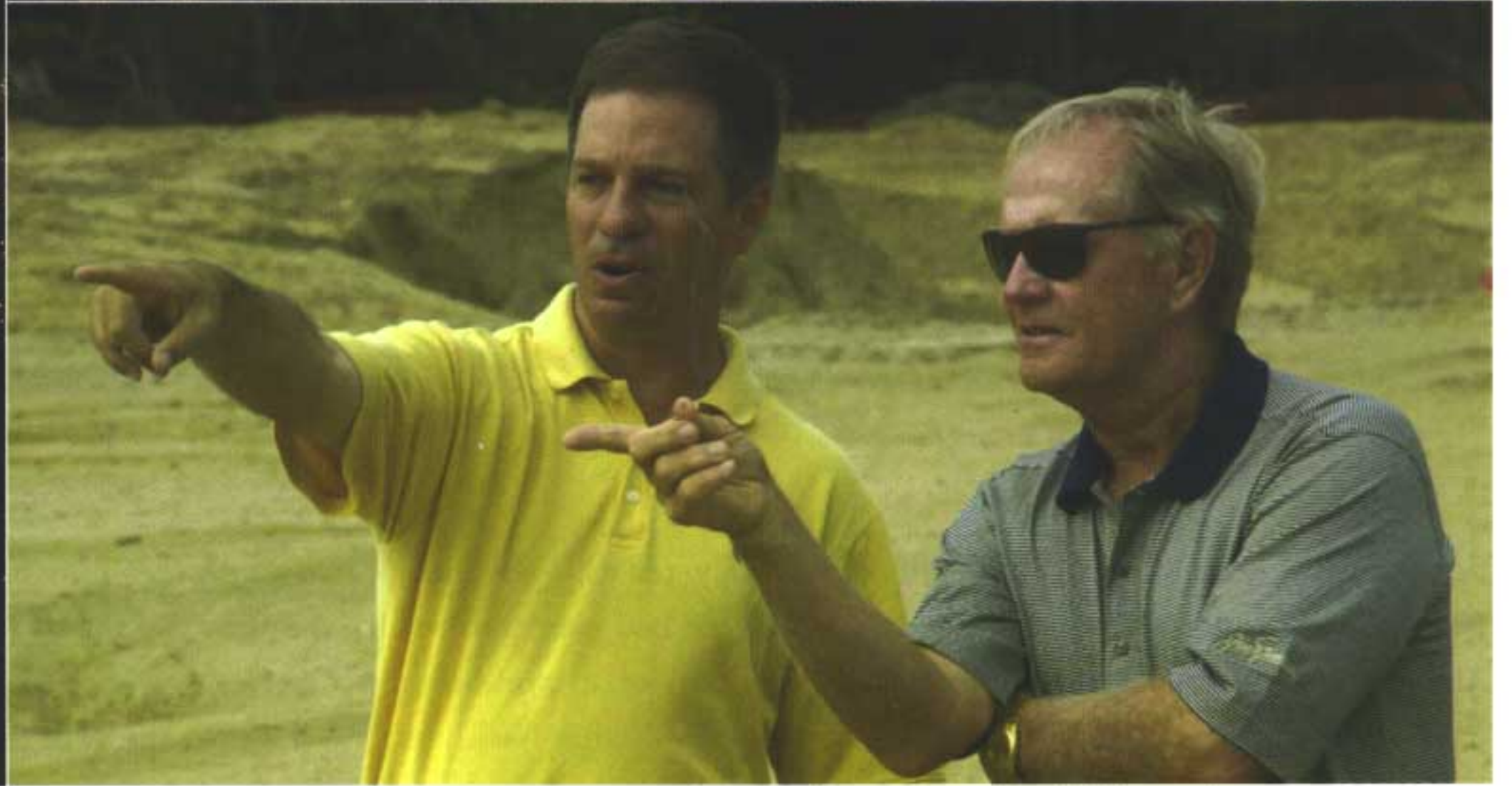


**Above left:** Playing Sebonack is all about strategy  
**Centre:** The testing 17th  
**Top right:** The 11th's dramatic sea front situation  
**Below right:** Doak and Nicklaus debate the detail

For starters, there's Sebonack's fabulous 300-acre waterfront setting, located adjacent to historic National Golf Links America and just a stone's throw from Shinnecock Hills Golf Course. After looking all over Long Island for the perfect piece of land, Pascucci settled on the Sebonack property, which offers sweeping panoramic views of Long Island's Great Peconic Bay and Cold Spring Pond. Not only is Sebonack a sizeable property, it's much more rugged and breathtaking than its famous golf neighbours, thanks in part to its prime mile of beachfront that figures in many of Sebonack's holes. By contrast, National plays along the water for only a very short stretch, and Shinnecock not at all.

"I must say that when I first walked Sebonack, I was shocked that such a piece of beautiful waterfront property still existed on Long Island today, forget about the fact that your next door neighbours are Shinnecock and National," says Pascucci, who belongs to esteemed clubs such as Muirfield Village in Ohio, Deepdale in Long Island, The Bear's Club in Jupiter, Florida, and Lost Tree, where Nicklaus and Pascucci live in nearby North Palm Beach. "Price, quite honestly, was secondary given my passion for golf and desire to create something unique in the golf world that would be enjoyed over generations." So the man who made a fortune in the car-leasing business (Pascucci





sold Oxford Resources Corporation in 1997 to Barnett Banks for \$700 million in stock), treated himself in 2001 to his one self-described indulgence: a dream golf property that cost \$46 million in a take-it-or-leave-it cash offer. Buying this pricey and precious piece in the Hamptons was the easy part, though. Convincing Nicklaus and Doak – two strong-willed and disparate architects – to collaborate as a once-in-a-lifetime design dream team, called for more crafty negotiations on Pascucci’s part.

According to the recently released book, ‘Building Sebonack,’ both Nicklaus and Doak were wary of Pascucci’s plan and outlined

numerous reasons why the idea would never work. But Pascucci, determined to land this high-profile design duo, finally called for a summit meeting at Nicklaus’ office at the Bear’s Club in March 2004. Once the three sat down to eat, small talk dominated the 45-minute lunch. After the meals were done, however, it was obvious the conversation was about to turn to more serious matters: Sebonack.

At this point, according to the book, Pascucci pulled off what he considers as one of his smartest moves in the whole development of Sebonack. He got up, excused himself from the room and managed to sneak away for 15 minutes. When Pascucci got back, the two highly



Picture: Doak and Nicklaus designed the holes together but it was Doak who did more of the routing



accomplished architects were talking on friendly terms, “obviously warming to the idea of a collaboration.” The ice had been broken. And that meant one thing for Pascucci: his vision of a world-class club inspired by Doak’s creative minimalist mind and Nicklaus’ strategic genius and modern-day marvels was well on its way.

In the end, Nicklaus and Doak designed each hole together, although Doak got first crack at the overall routing. Nicklaus concedes that more of Doak’s routing ended up being used for a course that measures 7,316 yards from the back tees and 5,310 yards from the forward tees.

Of all the important decisions made by Nicklaus and Doak, there was only one hole that Pascucci didn’t approve: the par-5, 560-yard 18th that runs along the bluff of Great Peconic Bay. Originally designed to be a long par-4, Pascucci insisted on giving his fellow members a chance to score on this dramatic finishing hole.

“They fought me and for many months,” Pascucci recalls. “I related all the golf courses that they built, and other great golf courses that finished with par-5s – especially when you have a mile of beach.

So finally they gave in, and I think they just wanted to get me out of the way, give me the one thing and then tell me to shut up.

“But let’s go back to last August and the opening round played by Jack. We get to the 18th tee, and Jack kills a drive. He hits it 300 yards right down the middle. With the cameras rolling he walks up to me and he says, ‘Pascucci, I’m going to show you that this should be a par-4

“ PRICE WAS SECONDARY GIVEN MY DESIRE TO CREATE SOMETHING UNIQUE THAT WOULD BE ENJOYED OVER GENERATIONS ”

MICHAEL PASCUCCI

because I’m going to make a 4 on this hole.’ I said, ‘Jack, if you make a 4 on this hole today I will change it back to a four.’ He made 5 (Pascucci laughs).”

Another memorable hole at Sebonack, and probably the toughest, is the par-4, 454-yard 2nd. As Doak describes it: “Everything we had to work with at Sebonack is on display here: dunes, trees, the wrinkly contours





**Main:** The beautiful 5th hole

**Left:** The finishing hole is a true stunner

For further information visit [www.sebonack.com](http://www.sebonack.com)

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of the fairway, and Great Peconic Bay on the far right. The green site is tucked among the dunes – reminiscent of Ballybunion – and has a big false front to it like the 14th hole at Augusta National.”

Doak, who once said “it’s hard to imagine a project bigger than Sebonack,” will tell you he benefited from working with Nicklaus.

“The experience of the collaboration with Jack has encouraged me to be bolder in the future,” Doak stated during the grand opening. “I’d like to design a course for a professional event someday, and I think because of the Sebonack experience I understand the mindset much better after working with Jack and his team.”

Likewise, Nicklaus says he learned a lot from Doak, and adds that Pascucci “got a better product because we did work together”. Reflecting on the collaborative effort by Doak and Nicklaus, Pascucci couldn’t seem any more pleased with his club that is now in the process of building 15 member cottages and a 30,000-square-foot clubhouse.

“What I wanted to get from the two of them, we got it,” says Pascucci, whose global membership club, expected to be capped at 200

individuals, costs a reported \$650,000 to join. “We wanted the Tom Doak look. No question he’s a rising talent in the world of architecture. The other thing I bargained for from Jack was the strategy. I wanted the golf course to have really good strategy, and I tell you there’s no better person in the world who’s going to give you golf strategy than Jack Nicklaus. You don’t win 18 Major championships unless you figure out how to play a course strategically, and the strategy he created here is extraordinary.

“We’ve had touring pros over here and basically they can’t break par. It’s amazing. Jack said this golf course can host any event it wants to now. They (Doak and Nicklaus) asked me what I wanted out of the course. I said what I like is big fairways so we don’t torture any of the members, good greens and good strategy. And they have created a course that basically resists scoring but it’s a lot of fun to play. The views are also amazing – there are 13 holes on the water or with views of the water. It’s really special.”

Much like that recent getaway with Nicklaus to Augusta National.