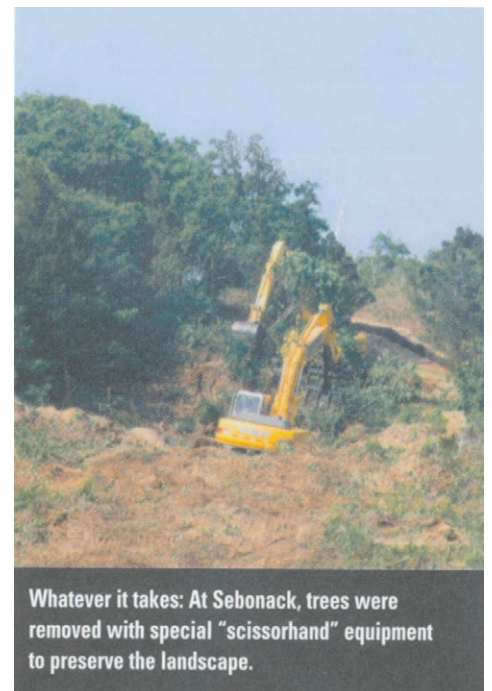# Passion Plays

Golf is, of course, about business, but often, there's love behind the economics. Take **Michael Pascucci** whose story includes blocking for Jim Brown (they still golf together) in high school, founding Long Island's WLNY-TV Channel 55, and teaming up with Jack Nicklaus and Ritz-Carlton to create gated golf communities around the U.S. He also had designs on creating a waterfront golf course in his native Long Island, and after a six-year search, took note of a 300-acre parcel in Southampton remarkably situated between two all-world courses, Shinnecock Hills and National Golf Links of America. "The zoning process was sufficiently prohibitive," he recounts, "that the highest bidder dropped out at auction. Hanging in was a big bet, make no mistake, but as I told my kids, after working all my life, I wanted something for fun. I wanted to create a pure golf experience."

The result is **Sebonack Golf Club**, hailed by myriad golf fans at its August 2006 opening as "one of the most innovative course designs in years." That's little wonder; considering the architects—Jack Nicklaus (his 300th course) and Tom Doak—and their masterful minimalist design strategy. "I wanted the best 18 holes possible," says Pascucci, and they delivered. There were no bulldozers. Every nook and cranny was preserved, and that meant pulling trees out with special 'scissorhand' equipment. Even with Tom's ingenious routing of all holes towards the water; the course is as nature intended." General manager Karen Ruggles, veteran of Long Island's elite Maidstone and Atlantic clubs, says the spectacular high-riding course "looks like it's been here for a hundred years."

Pascucci is also taking his time building the membership, already distinguished by some famous international faces and even existing members of Shinnecock and National. "We could fill up this week, he says, "but the plan is for five to seven years. Glitz is not part of the program. Our focus is diversity by age, geography and industry, and above all, the pure love of the game."

Michael Pascucci had designs on LI's waterfront.

Whatever it takes: At Sebonack, trees were removed with special "scissorhand" equipment to preserve the landscape.