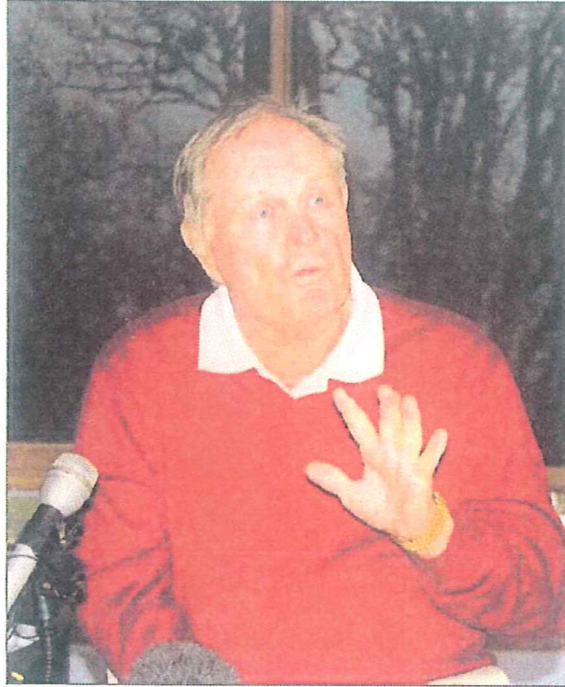


News

The Golden Bear in Horseshoe Bay
Jack Nicklaus Design Reaches the Summit



Jack Nicklaus, in Horseshoe Bay to discuss his Summit Rock course, also said he played golf recently with past and present quarterbacks, Dan Marino and Drew Brees. He said they outthit him by a hundred yards. Wouldn't have happened if they'd been able to tee it up in the 1960s, '70s, or '80s.

By Art Dlugach
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He may not be winning any longer at Augusta or Pebble Beach or St. Andrews, but he's designing courses in South Korea and Thailand, in Mexico and Moscow, and also a pretty fair layout in Horseshoe Bay: Summit Rock. Good name. Jack Nicklaus knows something about the summit in his sport, and he knows plenty about golf courses.

"We're seeing progress made," Nicklaus told a crowd of media and other guests, March 5, at Skywater Over Horseshoe Bay. That's a planned residential community of more than 1,600 acres near highway 2147. New owners got Skywater soaring again last summer when its future appeared under water.

"Summit Rock is alive and well," Nicklaus insisted. "Golf course construction is slow nationwide, but this is one of a few places doing well."

The 18 holes may cover as much as 7,250-7,500 yards from the back tees, 6,500 for the person who can't hit the ball 290. A tour was given of the layout, and there is no question work is being done. You can see greens and fairways. Well, where they'll reside in the future—ready for play in a year or so.

The Golden Bear turned 70 in January. His remarkable career is by the numbers: Six Masters titles, five PGA Championships, four U.S. Opens, three British Opens, and two U.S. Amateur crowns. His last major was at Augusta in 1986—he rallied to win by making a birdie on the ninth hole of the final round, and then he shot 30 on the back nine.

Back at Summit Rock, "There will be eight holes or so we call the lower holes," Nicklaus explained. "They are one, two and 13-18. Those that sit high will be three through 12. You get a different feel from one to the other.

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"The weather is good here; it's a beautiful area with the lakes and recreation. The Hill Country is a place a lot of golf is played, and people want to come here." He emphasized there would be some dramatic views as the golfer reaches the higher elevation of the course.

We interrupt this program to bring you the latest news on Tiger Woods. "Well, that only took about 15 minutes," Nicklaus joked after the question was posed. More of a plea for a comment than a question. "I think he'll come back sooner than later, and I think he'll be back for the Masters," maybe the best-ever said about another "maybe the best ever." The Masters begins April 8. "He's a golfer, has been a golfer all his life, and Augusta is somewhere he wants to play.

"Golf has survived the retirements of Jones, Hogan and Snead, of Nelson and Palmer and myself. It can survive the absence of Tiger.

"His troubles are none of my business, but he has issues he has to resolve, and I hope he resolves them."

How might Woods handle Summit Rock? "We want to give someone like Tom Kite or Ben Crenshaw," Nicklaus stated, "to mention a couple of Texans, a challenge, because the members want their course tough for the pros, but we don't want to run people off, the average players.

"The equipment and balls have resulted in 340-yard drives, and we design courses differently. We want to design this around the members' tees (making for 18 holes that can be found within 6,500 yards). We want it to be a nice challenge for those who play it 99% of the time."

However: "Golfers are masochists; they want to be punished at times, so there's more pride when they do well. They want some 'spice' in the course, some mystery, to keep their juices flowing."

However: "It's supposed to be a fun experience, not have forced carries, and we'd like people, when they finish a round, not to just say they'd like to come back, but they'd like to come back tomorrow."

There wasn't a lot of discussion concerning Nicklaus' past, but I asked him during a press conference in 1994, "Why were you so successful?" His response: "I won at an early age, and that gave me confidence. When you know you can do something well, it can really boost a belief in yourself." Nicklaus won his first U.S. Amateur championship at 19. He was the Open winner at 22.

I saw an amateur match in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1961, which would be the last amateur match he ever lost. He was beaten 1-up in 19 holes by Bobby Greenwood, and I was impressed how Nicklaus, still a very young man, graciously put his arm around Greenwood to congratulate him.

"My dad taught me that. You want to win badly, but when you lose, you put a smile on your face and shake hands with the man who beat you."

They call Summit Rock a Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf Course. Signature signifies it's a bigger deal than maybe some other courses with which he's involved. It probably doesn't matter what term it gets to the owners of Skywater, to future members, to residents of the area. A legend some of us have admired for half a century is playing a major role in a course in our backyard. We may never tee it up there, but we'll proudly proclaim one of the greatest athletes of the 20th century chose our neighborhood to leave behind his name and a lasting landscape for his legacy.