



Jack Nicklaus has returned to the gorgeous Baja peninsula in western Mexico, which he first visited in the 1960s. He recently hit the opening tee shot at Quivira Golf Club, his sixth course in the region.



**J**ack Nicklaus is here again. On a fairway carved out of a mountainside at the tip of the Baja peninsula of Mexico, Nicklaus stands in the rapturously warm air above the Pacific Ocean as he makes a final site visit to his sixth golf course in the Los Cabos region, a place where his name and his artistry have transformed the tourist landscape going back nearly 30 years.

Here at the Quivira Golf Club, at the center of a new residential and hotel development at Cabo San Lucas, the most decorated and heralded golfer of all time is again making his mark, as he has done at nearly 380 golf courses around the world. The Golden Bear is leaving another set of paw prints along a prodigious journey that will not end soon.

And it wouldn't be Jack Nicklaus without another set of small alterations on this final visit, each one directed at the playability of the course for the average player. The man of 18 major championships has become the champion of the man with the 18 handicap. And here on Quivira's spectacular short par 4 fifth hole that perches on the edge of the Pacific, that's what he's talking about.

# The Golden Age Of Nicklaus

Jack Nicklaus, the greatest golfer in history, is paying attention to the average man as he expands his global brand

BY JEFF WILLIAMS



Nicklaus feels at home in Cabo, where he now has six courses, including Cabo del Sol (top). At Quivira, Nicklaus disagreed with changes made by his designer Chris Cochran (left) on the par 4 fifth hole, and the Golden Bear instructed Cochran to make the hole easier for the average golfer.

“Chris, what are these mounds here on the slope? Those weren’t on the drawing,” says Nicklaus, a man of an elephantine mind, to his design assistant Chris Cochran. Nicklaus has designed this short par 4, driveable by big hitters who can blast a ball about 270 directly to the green, to be reachable by the little guy who hits a career shot that sails maybe 240 down the fairway with the ball spilling over the edge and rolling down the steep slope all the way to the green. But as he plays the hole in his mind’s eye, he’s noticed a problem—the mounds get in the way.

“It’s what I designed and what you changed,” says Nicklaus, a hint of irritation in his voice. “Let the ball roll all the way down the slope to the green. We’ll have to keep a rough cut in front of the green to slow the ball down or it will roll over. I want the average guy to have the excitement ‘I just drove the par 4 at Quivira.’”

Nicklaus has never been and will never be the average guy. He has accomplished so much, made such an impact on the game and all that surrounds it to ever be considered an Average Jack. Average Jacks don’t receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom (2005) and the Congressional

Gold Medal (2014), two of the myriad awards that have been bestowed on him.

But as he turned 75 this year, Nicklaus remains remarkably busy, remarkably vital and remarkably focused in pursuit of things that interest the common man. For 60 years he has built a legend. For the last 10 or so he has built a brand.

Sure, the golf courses he has designed are largely high end, be they private or public. And when he first started building them, he was following developers’ wishes that the word “championship” could be attached to them. “Jack Nicklaus” and “championship” went together perfectly for the marketing of courses across the United States and around the globe, courses where there was high-priced real estate to sell. And make no mistake, his name and his designs sold a lot of real estate.

The developers of Quivira are betting again that Nicklaus’ name and reputation for the highest quality courses will sell their real estate, but Nicklaus isn’t talking “championship” when he talks about this course, he’s talking playability, fun and excitement for all the Average Jacks who will flock to it.

Typical of Nicklaus’ overall design philosophy, Quivira is rife with aesthetics—beautiful backdrops that frame the holes, providing dramatics and excitement. The fairways are wide, the bunkers not excessively deep, the greens contoured and tiered though for the most part not overly demanding. It plays through and around a massive dune slope. Quivira pushes back to more than 7,000 yards, a sort of magic number for golf course developers, but Nicklaus says length isn’t a big concern.

“It’s designed for people who live here to enjoy it and play golf, the hotel and so forth,” says

Nicklaus after a long day of traveling from Florida, doing the final run through with the developers and builders, hitting the ceremonial first tee shot and addressing the adoring crowd. “That’s what it’s for. Host a tournament? Yeah, you can have a tournament,” he says. “But do you need a tournament? No.”

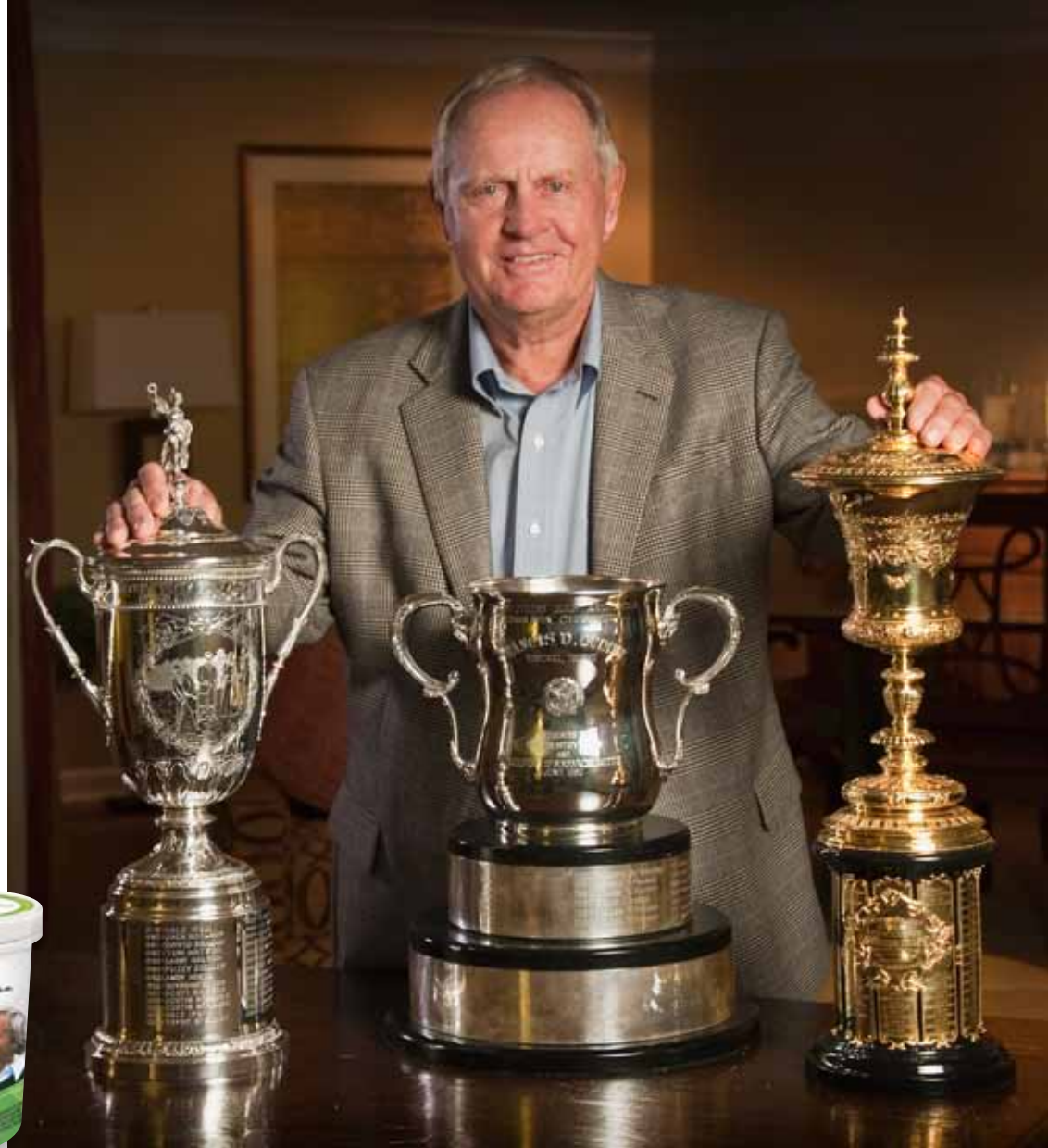
Here’s the thing about Nicklaus. He’s a man who demanded the most of himself as a player, who set the bar for all generations of players. He also demonstrated the highest standards of family life, of business integrity, of charitable giving. But he decided back before the economic downturn in 2008 (yes, it even impacted him—some) that he needed to do something that went beyond golf and build a broader base for his family. He decided to play yet another superb club in his bag—the branding iron.

“The brand is basically my legacy,” says Nicklaus. “I didn’t worry too much about brand when I was playing golf, then I realized in the last seven or eight years, what I need to do is to create a legacy for my kids, the company, allow it to move forward without me. That’s kind of important to get that done for them.”

To do that, he feels strongly that in golf and everything he associates himself with he needs to reach out to the Average Jack. “I don’t want to be branded up here where everybody can’t reach it,” he says, his hands moving for emphasis and his eyes sharply focused on his questioner. “I want it to be something that people can reach and afford and be part of. Good quality, good value.”

“I don’t associate ‘expensive’ with Jack,” says his friend Mike Pascucci, a Long Island businessman for whom Nicklaus (along with Tom Doak) designed the Sebonack Golf Club in Southampton, New York. “I associate Jack with quality. He is savvy enough never to put his name on anything that would embarrass him in terms of quality, forget the price. It’s going to be value from Jack. If it’s going to be a high-end thing, it’s a going to be a valuable high-end thing. If it is going to be moderately priced, it will be good value for that price. You can be safely satisfied that Jack will provide you with value with anything he puts his name on.”

So while the golf design business has been and will always be the center of his empire (his fee ranges up to \$2 million for his signature courses and *Forbes* estimates his net worth at \$280 million), there are so many more things now that enable people to reach out and touch the Golden Bear. There’s a line of clothing through Perry Ellis International, wine produced through Terlato Wines, shoes from



With a record 18 major championships, Nicklaus is the most decorated golfer in history, and has no shortage of trophies (top). His days of swinging the clubs competitively are over, but he competes in the global market with golf shoes, fine wines, golf balls and (soon) ice cream bearing his famous name.

Allen Edmonds, sunglasses from PeakVision, hats from Ahead, water from Aquahydrate and Golden Bear Lemonade from Arizona, an elegant pen from Curtis. He is an endorser of Rolex watches.

And this year he is launching, through The Schwan Food Co., a line of ice cream, the testing of which he blames for his little paunch. “I must have gained five pounds testing ice cream,” he says with a little twinkle and a tinge of guilt.

The ice cream, like anything that Nicklaus is involved with, is not just a case of licensing a product by putting his name and his Golden Bear

logo on it. Every product he endorses is something that he has personally tried, tested and approved.

“We tasted 13 flavors. Jack and Barbara were both there and involved in the product, the package,” says Bruce Saugstad, senior vice president of Schwan’s ice cream division. “He was very genuine. Very passionate about the work he is doing, this project as well as the other projects. Very family orientated. We had a very nice lunch with his team and some family members. I was very impressed with him as not only leader of this project but as a person.”



The Bear's Club in Jupiter, Florida (above) is Nicklaus' home course. Inside the club, Nicklaus shares his wealth of knowledge with the a group of amateur golfers from the Florida State Golf Association.

"We all know his creativity as far as golf course design," says Pascucci. "But in business he will come up with something out of the box you'd never think of. He's had a ton of ideas in creating the Nicklaus Children's Health Care Foundation. He was a guy who is a professional athlete coming up with all sorts of great ways of integrating doctors, diseases and children's treatment. That's reach from what he does."

In 2007 Howard Milstein, chief executive officer of the New York Private Bank & Trust, having heard that an investment in Nicklaus' companies might be available, made a pitch that landed him as Nicklaus' business partner and cochairman of the companies. His brief from Nicklaus was to expand the brand.

"He's the greatest golfer of all time. He doesn't think of himself as the greatest businessman of all time," says Milstein, who is constantly looking at how a potential product can enhance the Nicklaus name while said product can also be enhanced in return.

"I felt that the brand was underutilized. This is one of the greatest brands in the world," says Milstein. "There has been additional branding

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in the past, but we're now expanding it quite considerably."

One of those brand expansions is with a golf ball—Nicklaus Blue, Nicklaus Black and Nicklaus White—The balls, which debuted in 2013, are at the forefront of the Nicklaus' philanthropical initiatives to raise money for the Nicklaus Children's Health Care Foundation. Nearly every product that carries the Nicklaus name helps fund his philanthropy.

Milstein says the golf balls are emblematic of what he describes as the DNA of the Nicklaus companies.

"As Jack would say, the essence of the game is that you call the fouls on yourself. It's a game of honor. Jack says when you watch basketball there are as many officials on the court as players. In golf, it's played over hundreds of acres and maybe three officials. It's a game where you enforce the rules on yourself. This is something that is needed in our world. This sport, you are not going to see some of the bad behavior you see in other sports, not that you don't see great behaviors in other sports. But the minimum level of performance in golf is higher. Everybody has to live to a certain standard. If you don't live to that standard, if people think you should have called a shot on yourself and you don't, there is a huge price to pay.

"The DNA is excellence in golf, its charity, its family values, it being a role model," says Milstein. "We make a charitable donation for every dozen balls sold, and that says a lot about that DNA."

The Nicklaus DNA did a lot for Lyle Anderson, the Scottsdale, Arizona, developer who did much to transform the area's landscape with Nicklaus as his golf course designer right in the middle of it.

"When I decided to do my first golf course here in Scottsdale, I



Most Nicklaus products help fund philanthropy. In 2012, Nicklaus and his wife Barbara opened the Nicklaus Outpatient Center. In 2005, Nicklaus was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. “In every aspect of his life,” said President George W. Bush, “Jack holds himself to a high standard.”



contacted Jack’s office. I thought he would be real good for me getting started in the business. His office arranged a meeting in 1980 in Dallas where he was playing in a tournament. Our business and friendship relationships started right then. He designed Desert Highlands and we opened it in 1984. I immediately went from there to Desert Mountain. The first course there was Renegade. By that time I had cemented not only my business but personal relationship with Jack. We went on from there and did a total of 12 courses.

“I didn’t know him as a designer when I started. I knew him as a name. So I was very attracted to having that name associated with my projects. As I worked with Jack over the years, I can tell you he is as talented a landscape architect, artist as there is in the business. I think it’s proven by his designs, the number of tournaments they’ve had on his courses, the beauty of the designs, the success of the real estate projects associated with them. A little known fact about Jack is that it’s a really well-known name but people don’t realize how talented he is as an architect, I mean really talented. Visualization, artistic qualities, flow of land. He’s got an amazing memory for every detail and he’s really amazing as an artist.”

For Anderson, the success from the get-go was a factor of the Nicklaus golf brand. “Jack has been phenomenal in helping me get my projects started because people who bought early had to buy on faith and Jack Nicklaus doing the golf course and being part of the project made a heck of a difference to me in helping me get my projects off the ground,” he says. “From a branding standpoint, Jack Nicklaus was priceless to me.”

And the Nicklaus brand, if not priceless, has attracted interest from all over the world. He has logged countless millions of miles (he can’t remember how many trips he’s made to China alone) not only designing courses but bringing the gospel of golf to countries without a golf culture.

“I love to meet people,” says Nicklaus. “I love that part of my job. When Iron Curtain went down, I wanted to be there. When apartheid ended in South Africa, I wanted to be there. When China opened up, I wanted to be there. I wanted to help bring golf to the rest of world.”

One of many projects in the works is in a very unlikely place.

“The latest is Turkmenistan, about nine miles from the Iranian

border,” he says using his arms to describe the geography. “Tehran sits here, Kabul sits here and the capital of Turkmenistan [Ashgabat] sits here. It’s a neutral country. They are having the Asian Games in Turkmenistan in 2017. There isn’t a whole lot to do there. The president, he’s a dentist by trade, nice guy. He thinks golf should be part of the thing and he knows zero about it. What we’ll do is design the golf course, maintain the golf course, design the clubhouse for large functions. Do a totally turnkey business. We’ve done that in China, we’ve done that in Russia, big commitment, a lot of money involved in that. That will be kind of fun, fun for me to go to all these countries and meet all these interesting people, heads of state, pretty flattering to be included.”

In addition to the world travel, Nicklaus also seems dedicated to making the game easier. He admits that some of his early designs, those that carried the championship label, were too tough and consequently slowed the game down. “I probably contributed to the problem with some of my courses,” says Nicklaus. “I’d like to think that I’m helping to solve that problem now, to make the game faster and more enjoyable.”

Given all he has accomplished in his Hall of Fame golf career and all he has produced in his golf design business, family remains at the center of it all. His brand, after is all, is family driven.

“Jack did something that is very, very difficult to do,” says Pascucci. “He created the best golf record in terms of majors won, he is the standard of the No. 1 golfer of all time. And he managed to marry that to an equally successful family life. Wife, children, grandchildren. That’s very difficult to do. You have a lot of guys who made it in their business career, professional athletes who blew up their family life. Very few guys could you point to and say they did both extremely well. That’s what Jack did.

“You have highly successful professional athletes who are traveling all the time, working on their games all the time—I know these guys but I won’t mention names—who will tell you I blew that first marriage, I blew my relationship with my kids and that’s my fault not their fault. Jack created an equally successful family life, going to all his kid’s games, showing up at all of their events.”

All the while, Nicklaus is on the go. He has been deeply involved in expanding his wine offerings, which at the beginning were at higher price



Nicklaus has designed six courses in the Los Cabos area of Mexico, including Puerto Los Cabos (top). Even at the age of 75, the Golden Bear shows no signs of slowing, designing course after course (above) and exhibiting his natural gift for design and architecture.

points for the Napa-sourced bottlings. In keeping with his outreach to a larger customer base, he will come out with a new label this year.

“In February we are launching something called Jack’s House,” says Bill Terlato, chief executive officer of Terlato Wines. “Instead of \$60 these are going to be wines just under \$20 a bottle, a Cabernet and a Chardonnay. It’s more accessibly priced to a larger group of consumers. We’ve presented the wines to several key accounts and the response has been very good. The other element of this is that every bottle sold will fund up donations. It’s very much tied into the philanthropy they are doing. It will fund up primarily to the Nicklaus Children’s Health Care Foundation and some local charities in various markets.”

In keeping with the family way that Nicklaus does business, there will be an extra incentive for those who are selling his wine. “The top sales people, we are going to bring them to Florida, take them to play at the Bear’s Club, and Jack and Barbara are going to host a dinner at their home,” says Terlato, who is a close friend Nicklaus. “Jack likes doing business with people he knows well, who he is close to.”

“When I first came here, it was for fishing. Now my friends tell me I’m the guy who ruined Cabo. They could come here and spend a week for 20 bucks.”

Back in Mexico, Nicklaus is reminiscing about Los Cabos, the area he knows so well. He first came here in the mid-’60s to fish, flying his own airplane and touching down on land that eventually became Palmilla, his first course in the area, which opened in 1993. The Quivira project, which opened in October after Herculean efforts to restore it from the effects of the September hurricane that struck the Baja Peninsula, is his sixth course there—joining Palmilla, Cabo del Sol, Eldorado, Club Campestre and Puerto Los Cabos—and there is the potential for another course on the site.

“When I first came here, it was for fishing,” says Nicklaus. “Now my friends tell me I’m the guy who ruined Cabo. They could come here and spend a week for 20 bucks. Now I don’t think you could get out of the airport for that. But it’s been a great ride starting with the 27 holes we did at Palmilla. Golf has meant a lot to this place and I’m glad that I could be a part of that.”

Nicklaus spends very little time playing golf anymore. His family activities, his design work, his other business dealings fill up his calendar day after day. Not that he doesn’t get to have some fun on his backyard tennis court in the Lost Tree development of North Palm Beach, Florida. He might play two or three hours on Saturday and Sunday. Notables such as Pete Sampras, Jim Courier, Ivan Lendl and the Bryan brothers have been known to answer the call.

“People have said that they want to play golf the way I do,” says Nicklaus. “Well now they can. I shoot 75 on a good day, and breaking 80 is okay. You know, people retire so that they can play golf. I retired from golf so I could work. I get tremendous satisfaction out of doing what I am able to do.”

Jack Nicklaus is wielding the branding iron just like the major champion that he is. ❖

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