

Pine Valley neighbor to sport Fazio-designed, daily-fee counterpart

By MARK LESLIE

PINE HILL, N.J. — Operating on the premise that “golf is a passion,” entrepreneur Eric Bergstol is about to build a golf course in a borough neighboring the world’s acknowledged best course, Pine Valley. And it will be designed by the man many consider the best mod-

ern-day architect, Tom Fazio.

“Pine Valley is unique to anyplace in the world,” said Bergstol, whose Bergstol Enterprises has built a number of residential and commercial projects and began building golf



Tom Fazio

courses in the 1980s. “It’s spectacular. We hope that because of Tom Fazio we can have a spectacular public course — something that will interest people and give those who can’t play Pine Valley, the feeling of it.”

Of the new course, Pine Hill, Fazio said, “The object is to build a course as good as anything there is — a modern-day Pine Valley for modern golfers.”

Pine Hill, Bergstol said, “is different but the same” from its famous neighbor less than a mile away.

“One thing that’s spectacular

on this property,” he said, “is that from its highest point you can see right into Philadelphia. Pine Valley is on the other side of the hill, in the lower end... Pine Valley is considered one of the toughest courses in the world. We can’t do that with a public course. You can create similar features, but you’re going after public golfers. Tom does this better than anybody in the world. He makes it look difficult but play fair, giving you beauty and aesthetics but not killing you. That’s Tom Fazio’s gift to golf.”

“Because the environment is the same,” Fazio said, “Pine Hill has sandy ridge property and has the same type of trees, same sand, same percentages of elevation changes. So you look at the playability characteristics, how you fit them for public course players as well as being concerned about operations, number of rounds of play, hazard placement and degree of difficulty.”

“One thing not many people consider when they think about Pine Valley is contour of the greens. They are very strong. And we won’t have penal bunkers and unraked bunkers like Pine Valley’s.”

While Pine Valley has one set of tee markers, Pine Hill will probably have five, Fazio said.

Bergstol, whose company was part of the development team at the Fazio-designed Hudson National, built and owns New Jersey National adjacent to the U.S. Golf Association’s Golf House headquarters. He first built Minisceongo Golf Club, a private facility in Pomona, N.Y., 10 years ago.

“Golf is a passion,” Bergstol said. “If you’re a developer and building roads and buildings and blacktop — and everything’s straight and flat — and you have the opportunity to build a golf course and use a bulldozer, it’s like you’re painting with a dozer. I take a lot of pride in it.”

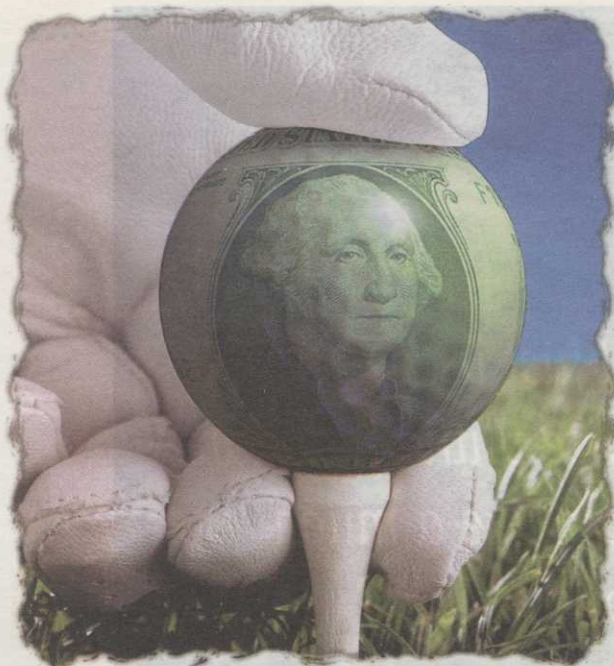
“I love nature and golf courses that are natural, beautiful and challenging. I’m a one-handicapper and I like being involved in all aspects of it.”

The Pine Hill property was once an amusement park and ski area sporting a 100-foot drop, Bergstol said, adding the property will be “all-golf” using all the 270 acres.

The developer is in the midst of the permitting process and expects to begin construction in a year. He is staying busy in New Jersey, building Pine Barrens golf course in Lakewood.

Meanwhile, the only other New Jersey project on Fazio’s resume is the acclaimed Galloway National and his designers are jockeying for position to get involved in Pine Valley’s neighbor.

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