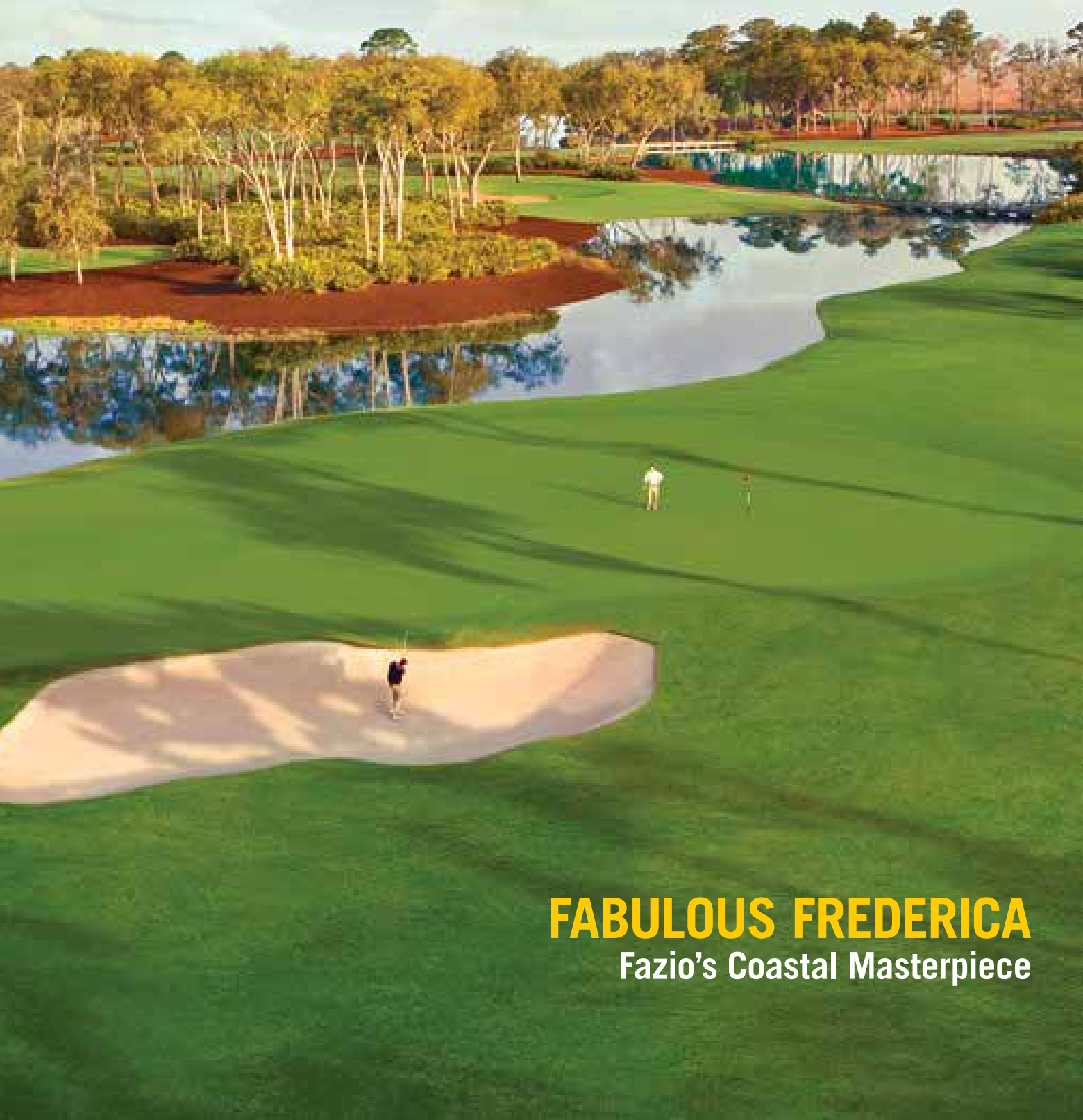


GOLF GEORGIA

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FABULOUS FREDERICA
Fazio's Coastal Masterpiece



BY DEREK DUNCAN

FAZIO TRANSFORMS GRASSY EVERGLADES INTO UNFORGETTABLE PARADISE ON THE GOLDEN ISLES

BUILD IT AND THEY WILL COME

FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, Sea Island Company began construction of one of the most ambitious residential and golf club developments on the East Coast. Spanning more than 3,000 acres on the marshy banks of St. Simons Island several miles north of historic Fort Frederica, the Frederica master plan included a private **Tom Fazio**-designed golf course, an exquisite Spanish Colonial-themed clubhouse, a tabby and timber-framed boathouse, outdoor pool and tennis courts and several hundred low-density luxury home sites.

The size and scope of the project was already significant given how much the property would have to be transformed — once away from the grassy everglades of the Frederica River the dense maritime forest, thick underbrush and flat topography offered little in the way of cooperation or interest. But the plan also included the engineering of a sprawling 450-acre freshwater lake system winding throughout the development, around which neighborhoods of homes would someday be situated.

Building Frederica Lake was an enormous task that required the clearing of thousands of trees and excavating between four and five million cubic yards of earth. The Fazio golf course, meanwhile, was sited for what the architect calls the “worst part of the site,” a sparsely wooded parcel to the north that had

previously been used for harvesting stick pine. The availability of such massive quantities of lake fill, however, presented him an opportunity to enhance an otherwise ordinary land template.

“When you dig a hole in the ground you get a bunch of dirt that you have to get rid of,” Fazio told *Golf Georgia*. “So when you dig out a whole lake you have all this dirt, and we had to put it someplace. And we were able to move it to what was literally 200 acres of flat, boring land.”

After clearing much of the old pine nursery, the excavated earth was distributed across the core of the golf site and used to

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create 20- to 40-foot elevation changes. Furthermore, as the lakes were being dredged, crews identified over 900 specimen tree species — including Live Oaks, Eastern Red Cedars, Southern Magnolias and others — that were initially scheduled for removal because they were within the boundaries of the designed lakes. Instead of cutting them down, the Frederica project embarked on what is believed to be the most comprehensive tree transplantation project in the world.

Using the largest tree spade and equipment in existence, each tree was carefully unearthed and relocated via sliding platforms



to strategic locations throughout the golf course as well as around amenity buildings and private lots. Today, over 90 percent of the originally transported trees have survived.

These stately trees provide beautiful frames to the golf holes and provide a sense of maturity. Combined with the uncommon rise and fall of the land (the 17th tee is the highest point on St. Simons Island) and holes that are cut edge-to-edge at fairway height and bordered by mottled sand and grass buffers, Frederica, which opened for play in 2005, has the aura of belonging somewhere else, perhaps somewhere on eastern Long Island.

Fazio says that, for him, designing width in golf holes is more important than building length, and the robust Frederica site offered him the chance to implement that philosophy. The fairways are indeed prodigious and forgiving, but the width also allows for internal micro-targets and multiple angles of attack. This is critical because the greens at Frederica are unbelievably spacious and dazzlingly contoured: with so much area available only monumental, thunderous greens would suffice, Fazio says, and approaching them from the appropriate side and location is essential for scoring well.

They average over 9,000 square feet in size with some topping 12,000 square feet. Members and good players know that the best approach shot is often played to a point well away from the flag so the ball can release and roll toward the hole. When these greens are missed, the evocative laser-cut bunkers, wild surface undulations and shaved chipping areas make the short game shots as entertaining as it gets.



Many members and guests believe the most memorable part of the course is the serene stretch of holes from No. 12–14 that runs along the northern rim of the property before the open marshes of Mackay River and Buttermilk Sound. Yet it's the golf at the center of the property that is entirely original for this part of the Atlantic Coast. After the first two holes curve around a portion of Frederica Lake, the par-4 third turns back into a kind of rambling outback region defined by sand, specimen trees, vegetation and voluptuous ground movement. The short par-4 sixth hole rises toward a central ridge created by the lake fill, and the next three holes play back and forth off different exposures of it.

The same high point is the setting for Frederica's strongest hole, the 462-yard uphill par-4 16th, which can brutalize scores if the afternoon wind is up. Playing toward an angled green sitting atop an exposed sandy crest and guarded on the inside by a



In 2010, Huizenga Holdings purchased Frederica, and the ownership has continued to invest in lifestyle improvements, service and amenities for residents and members. Only 13 homes had been built at the time of the transition of ownership; today there are more than 70, and sales continue to gain momentum going into 2017.

From North Carolina to Florida, luxury homebuyers and prospective club members have no shortage of prestigious golf communities to consider when shopping for real estate. Frederica stands out among them in any comparison, but the community has another one-of-a-kind advantage that further complements the great golf and location: the lake, which is the most unique amenity. There's no other place within close proximity that offers a 450-acre freshwater body of water at the doorstep of its residents. While Frederica property, like many Lowcountry destinations, provides stirring marsh views, the lake offers a second beautiful vista as well as the chance to cast a line (it's stocked with trophy bass and hybrid stripers) from a private dock or to launch a canoe into the water.


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deep bunker, it's a hole that would be at home at a place like Shinnecock Hills, or even Royal Melbourne.

The 17th, playing downhill through pickets of sentinel oaks past another inside bunker to a protected bowl-shaped green, is in the same class as the 16th.

This unexpected topography and the width of the holes, along with the marsh views, the isolation and the gorgeous contouring makes Frederica one of the most fun golf experiences in the Southeast. In fact, Frederica has exuded a certain gravitational pull in the golf world, drawing to it members and property owners from the highest levels of the game including more than a dozen PGA TOUR professionals who are members at Frederica Golf Club because of the atmosphere and practice facilities. The endorsement couldn't be louder.

It's staggering to think that just 15 years ago this place was an environmental wilderness of forest, thicket, brush and animals hardly suited for a small cabin much less a world class golf club, luxury homes and a pristine recreational lake.

"If I were to tell you that we didn't move any earth at Frederica, that the lake and the ridge was always there, you'd almost believe it because it looks natural," Fazio says. "But every contour out there is manmade, every part of the property has been graded. It shows you what can be done." 

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