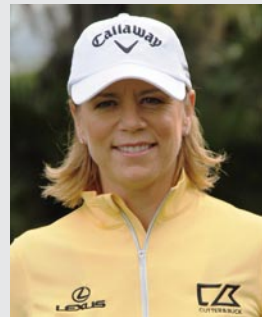


Ms. 59 CELEBRATES THE TIME OF HER LIFE

Annika Sorenstam reflects on her transition from the LPGA to family life.

By Mark Pazdur, Publisher

ORLANDO, FLORIDA: During Annika Sorenstam's 15-year Hall of Fame career, she rewrote the LPGA's record book, won countless awards, and changed the way women's golf was played and covered on television. She amassed 89 worldwide victories, including 72 on the LPGA, 10 of which are Major Championships. Her record-breaking achievements include eight Rolex Player of the Year awards and she is the only female to break 60 in an official event, earning her the nickname "Ms. 59."



Annika Sorenstam

To this day, she tops the LPGA's career money list with earnings of over \$22 million—over \$3 million ahead of her nearest rival.

At the end of the 2008 season, still in the prime of her golf career, she retired from competitive golf. To many in the industry, it was a sudden, unexpected decision.

MOM AT HEART

There is a disarming charm about Annika. You gravitate to her. A lot has changed in her life since our last interview eight years ago. She married her business manager, Mike McGee, and they have two children, Ava (6) and Will (4).

"I was 37 when I stepped away from competition," said Annika. "Mike and I were engaged and we were eager to start a family. The effort to play my best required tradeoffs, between personal and work commitments, that I didn't want to make.

"Unless you have children, it is hard to explain the love you have for your kids," continued Annika. "I cherish those everyday snapshot moments. It's fun to watch them develop into little people. Mike and I share responsibilities and we don't keep a scorecard on who changed more diapers."

Three years ago, Ava realized Annika was no ordinary mom. "I played in the Kraft Nabisco Championship Pro-Am and met the kids for lunch afterwards. Ava tugged at my shirt and whispered to me, 'Mommy, why is everyone staring at you?'"

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THE THRILL OF WINNING AN LPGA TOURNAMENT is undeniable. Winning a major can be overwhelming, particularly in the minutes after holing-out on the 72nd hole. After winning the 2006 U.S. Women's Open at Newport Country Club in Rhode Island, Annika was overcome with emotion. During the commotion after signing her score card, she prepared for television interviews and trophy shots. "I quickly freshened up and realized my Rolex was still in my bag and my caddie had taken it to the clubhouse," said Annika. "As I prepared to 'stand on the national stage,' I quickly whispered to Mike, please hand me your Rolex. One of my signature photos of my career actually features me with his borrowed timepiece."



MELDING OF INFLUENCES

Annika was born in Bro, Sweden, just outside of Stockholm. Her parents could see early on that she had a gift and a taste for athletics.

"I liked most sports including Ping-Pong, soccer, tennis, and golf," said Annika. "I was a good snow skier and was approached by Sweden's national ski coach to hone my skills."

Instead, tennis, which is perhaps Sweden's most prominent sport, was her steadier pursuit. Bjorn Borg was the national hero during Annika's formative years, which helped to make tennis a national passion. ➤

ANNIKA COMPETED IN THE 2003 Bank of America Colonial Open in Texas. She was the first woman to play in a PGA TOUR event since Babe Zaharias in 1945.



The Annika Clinic Presented by Rolex at the ANNIKA Invitational at Reunion Resort.

“IN THE EARLY 1990s, I was playing in the Evian Masters in France. Women in the gallery walked around in high heels and men were sipping espresso. Not what you would typically expect. Then, there was Scotland. I was on a course with a sign warning: No dogs or women allowed.”— ANNIKA SORENSTAM

“Both practical and personal reasons influenced my decision to commit myself to golf,” explained Annika. “Although I was a good tennis player with potential, our town had *many* other great tennis players. I was second fiddle. But, on the golf scene, I stood out.”

By the time Annika was 12, she was moving toward golf. She received her first set of clubs and split them with her younger sister, Charlotta. Annika took the odd-numbered irons and Charlotta the even.

Annika traveled to the United States in 1990 to attend the University of Arizona, bringing with her two suitcases, a set of golf clubs, and an appetite for adventure that matched her love for competitive golf.

“I did have a bit of culture shock,” said Annika. “It took time to adjust to the change in scenery. I went from lush pine and birch trees in Sweden to cactus-covered hillsides in Arizona.”

In 1993, she received exemptions to play in three LPGA events, finishing twice in the top 10, and earning

more than \$47,000. “I officially turned professional in 1992,” said Annika. “My goal was to earn \$30,000 in prize money. Hitting my goal early eased, but it didn’t eliminate, my financial burden.”

The following year, Annika was named Rolex Rookie of the Year.

“When I signed with Rolex, I really felt I had made it,” recalled Annika. “I was humbled they wanted to be



Annika at the Evian Championship holding the Rolex ANNIKA Major Award. Rolex has been a committed partner of golf for nearly half a century. It sponsors events for the LPGA, USGA, The R&A, AJGA, PGA TOUR, European Tour, and Asian Tour.

“THERE ARE NO SHORTCUTS to success. I pushed myself to be the best I could be. I didn’t worry about what other people were doing, and I didn’t think about what I couldn’t control.” — ANNIKA SORENSTAM



Mike and Annika with their children, Will and Ava, at their home in Lake Tahoe.

A Favorite Attribute Of My Spouse

“MIKE is a good Karaoke singer. He has an incredible memory for lyrics and will often make up his own words to pop songs that are slapstick funny.” — ANNIKA

“ANNIKA has a gift of patience. She can sit for hours, working with our kids on the littlest skills.” — MIKE

associated with me. They are known for partnering with only the best of the best. To me, Rolex isn’t just a quality timepiece, it is luxury jewelry.

“Rolex has been one of my longest partners. My relationship has matured into a friendship over the past two decades. I hope to be with them another 20 years. They are a big supporter of my ANNIKA Invitational AJGA Tournament in Orlando and together we created the Rolex ANNIKA Major Award on the LPGA.

“Rolex emphasizes the development of golf at all levels, not only the professional level, all around the world. Rolex is a part of the very fabric of golf,” said Annika.

Annika pictured with playing partner, Steph Curry, at the American Century Celebrity Championship event last summer at Edgewood Golf Club in South Lake Tahoe.



MERGING GOLF AND FITNESS

Annika’s mantra “Share My Passion” is focused on fitness. Here, ANNIKA Foundation teaches children the importance of a healthy, active lifestyle through fitness and nutrition, and offers aspiring junior golfers opportunities to pursue their dreams.

“Being active makes you feel good,” said Annika. “Our society has become sedate. Generations of American’s face the threat of a life with diabetes. Obesity is on track to become the No.1 killer and it is *preventable!* Although my exercise routine may not be as militant as during my years on the LPGA, it’s still an important part of my life.

“I like to give back to the game,” said Annika. “I want to share my passion and knowledge, especially with youngsters. They are golf’s biggest potential for growth.

“My foundation has four global junior tournaments and a college tournament, presented by 3M. We want our events to be ‘more than golf’ and teach the girls about life lessons that include fitness and nutrition, what to expect in college golf, media training, etc. Golf is often perceived as a game predominately for men, but this perception is slowly changing. My hope is the sport will be embraced by the whole family in the future.” ■