

“I TELL IT LIKE I SEE IT”

Juli Inkster, Hall of Famer and two-time Solheim Cup captain, reveals who is doing an A+ job in the industry, why golf is the best sport in the world, and her unusual marriage proposal.

By Mark Pazdur, Publisher

FRENCH LICK, INDIANA: An ultimatum had been handed down to Juli Inkster by her parents: It was time to get a job!

“I was 15 years old and our family was living at Pasatiempo Golf Club in Northern California, but I wasn’t a golfer,” recalled Inkster, 31-time winner on the LPGA Tour and two-time Solheim Cup captain. “My brothers and I were always outdoors and used the fairways as a football field for flashlight tag at dusk.

I applied for a summer job in the golf shop and discovered how much I loved the game. I had always been athletic and golf allowed me to play a sport wherein I wasn’t constantly competing against my brothers.”

The boys’ high school golf coach asked Juli to try out for the team.

“There wasn’t a girls golf team at my school,” explained Inkster. “My teammates were great. It was the opponents who could get a little gruff. In hindsight, I don’t think they liked getting beat by a girl!”



Juli Inkster

DINNER IS ON ME

Juli received a partial scholarship to San Jose State; then a full-ride after being honored all-American in her freshman year.

“Looking back, I took up the game late in life. I was well into my teenage years and never aspired to become a golf professional,” said Inkster.

Her college career proved to be fruitful, named a three-time all-American and winning the Women’s U.S. Amateur. “My achievements at San Jose State opened doors to the LPGA,” said Inkster. “I had no idea of my forthcoming success. Everything was fresh and new so the pressure really didn’t affect me.”

It didn’t take long for Juli’s name to appear atop the leaderboard with a win at her fifth tournament as an LPGA professional. “It was pretty special,” gushed Inkster. “My parents were

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“BEFORE COMPETING IN THE LEGENDS TOUR EVENT at French Lick, the only thing I knew about the resort was NBA player Larry Bird came from the area. Wow, was I impressed when I got there. It’s a great resort and everything from the rooms to the food impressed me. Amenities extend far beyond golf. It’s almost a city within a resort. When you tee up on the Pete Dye Course, you’ll need your ‘A Game’ and come to play. Plan to use every club in your bag—a straight driver and solid iron shots are a must. – JULI INKSTER



Ten dump trucks, running 12 hours per day for 18 months, were needed to grade the land for the Pete Dye golf course. The result is a sculpted course with narrow fairway corridors, changing bunker formations, and 40 mile panoramic views of the countryside.

there to see the win. That night, at a celebratory dinner, I did something every young adult aspires to do. When the check came, I said, ‘Mom and Dad, I got it.’”

THE GOLF SHOP PROPOSAL

With a golf career about to skyrocket, Julie married at the young age of 20. “Brian was an assistant pro at Pasatiempo when we met. He is a good guy, caring, and has been supportive of me throughout my career. He shuns the limelight and is my rock of stability when my schedule becomes harried. I know I am lucky to have two wonderful daughters and a husband who are there for me.” ➤

FRENCH LICK RESORT first welcomed guests in 1845, the same year Texas became the 28th state in America. Its buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the resort is recognized as one of the Historic Hotels of America by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Brian's marriage proposal was unorthodox. "We were hanging out in the golf shop on a slow day when, out-of-the-blue, he asked me if I wanted to go look at rings," grinned Inkster. "A little shocked by the question I responded, 'Are you asking me to marry you?'" I guess in some ways, I popped the question."

A REAL GRINDER

Juli has enjoyed immense success on the golf course. She has won three consecutive U.S. Women's Amateur Championships from 1980-1982 and was named the 1984 LPGA Rookie of the Year. As a professional, she has won seven major championships, including two U.S. Women's Opens, in 1999 and 2002.

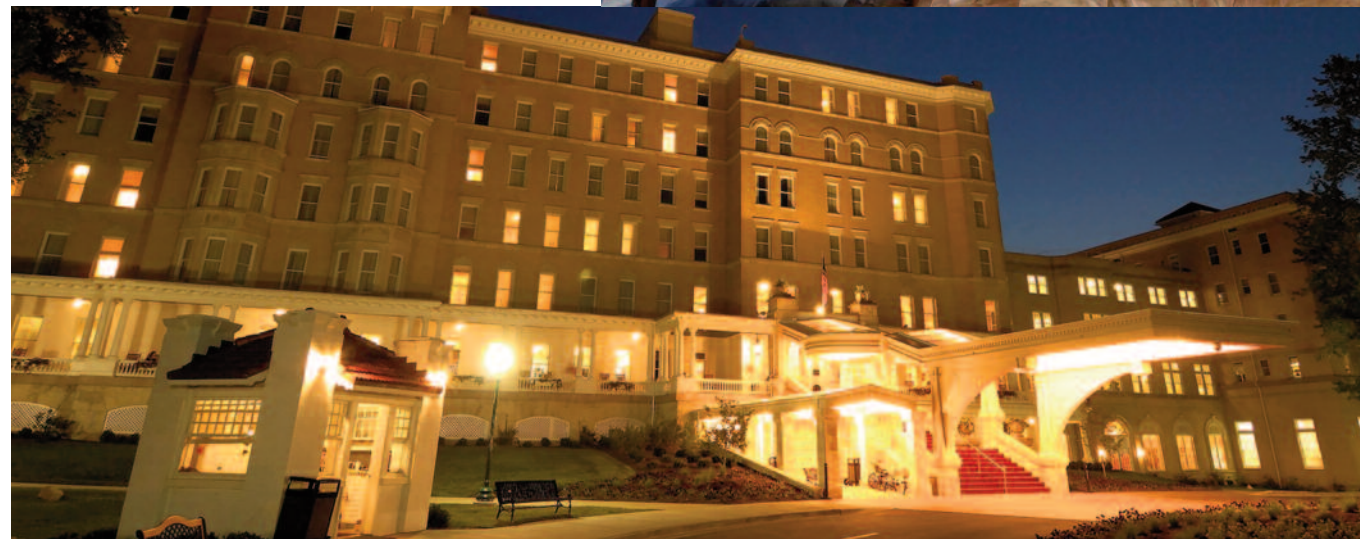
"My peers describe me as a grinder on the course. I may not have the prettiest golf swing, but I get the ball in the hole," commented Inkster.

"My career is filled with highs and lows. One of my biggest disappointments was in 1992 when I lost a Monday, 18-hole playoff to Patty Sheehan at the U.S. Women's Open at Oakmont in Pennsylvania.

"One of my biggest highs occurred in 1999 with my win in Portland that qualified me for



The West Baden Springs Spa



French Lick Resort recently completed a \$581 million restoration and development project with both of its hotels: West Baden Springs and French Lick Springs. Combined, they offers 686 guest rooms and suites; the largest resort meeting space in the Midwest; a 51,000 square-foot casino; 63-holes of golf, including the Donald Ross Course and the Pete Dye Course; and two full-service spas. For more information on 2016 golf packages at French Lick Resort, please visit FrenchLick.com or call (888) 936-9360.



The West Baden Springs Hotel at French Lick Resort offers European luxury fashioned after the mineral spa of Baden-Baden in the Black Forest of Germany. Its 200-foot diameter atrium, referred to as the 8th wonder of the world, is a popular gathering spot for photo opportunities.



“JULI IS OUR LEADER, MENTOR, CONSCIENCE, AND OUR FRIEND. She truly cares about the people on this tour, and always seems to care more about your day than hers. Personally, Juli inspires me to want to do better in this position and enhance the lives of LPGA members in any way I can.” – MIKE WHAN, COMMISSIONER, LPGA



the World Hall of Fame. My daughters were five and nine at the time and just old enough to understand how important the moment was to Mom. In a private moment with my kids, they sang out in chorus, ‘winner, winner, chicken dinner,’” beamed Inkster.

TWO TIMES THE THRILL

When LPGA Commissioner Mike Whan phoned three years ago, Juli wasn’t surprised. “Mike has done an A+ job for us. He has an open door policy and is accessible,” praised Inkster.

“I need to ask a *big* favor,” asked Whan. “I need you to bring home the Solheim Cup in 2015 from Europe. Are you up for the task?”

Without hesitation, Inkster responded, “I’m all in.”

Juli’s no-nonsense coaching style was questioned at first. “I am a fierce competitor and I want to win,” declared Inkster. “By toning down distractions during tournament week, I think we were more focused as a team.”

The Americans staged a strong rally in Germany, winning eight and one-half out of 12 points in singles matches to reclaim the cup.

“I’ve had a lot of exciting highlights on Tour, but leading that team of 12 women was one of the biggest thrills of my career,” said Inkster. “When they asked me to do it again for the 2017 Solheim Cup, I jumped at the opportunity.”

I TELL IT LIKE I SEE IT

This year, Juli will play in 10 golf events and broadcast eight tournaments for *Fox Sports*. “For women’s tournaments I’m in the broadcast booth, and for men’s tournaments, I’m roving the course,” explained Inkster.

Juli’s stature as a leading golf broadcaster is growing with her frank commentary and insight. “I think folks appreciate honest answers and I like to tell it like I see it.”

Between her television and Solheim commitments, Juli still enjoys competition.

“I am a big proponent of The Legends Tour,” said Inkster, “and not just because I won the Tour’s event at French Lick Resort. The Legends Tour allows LPGA greats to have a schedule of tournaments to play. I can’t overstate how much these ladies mean to me. Their trail-blazing sacrifice and effort created a viable LPGA platform that sponsors and spectators support.

“The Legends Tour is competitive, but with a laid-back attitude. At French Lick Resort, it was common for us to finish the day with a nice glass of Chardonnay.

“I hope to continue to give back to the game that has been such a big part of me. Golf teaches all aspects of life and allows us to meet interesting people. Some of the greatest athletes in the world become avid golfers. Look at Michael Jordan and Wayne Gretsky. Golf is their recreational sport and best of all, you don’t have to retire from the game at age thirty.” ■

A HISTORY OF PROFESSIONAL GOLF AT FRENCH LICK

“Of 156 individuals inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame, only five are golf course architects: Charles Blair Macdonald, Alister MacKenzie, Donald Ross, Robert Trent Jones Sr., and Pete Dye. French Lick is the only resort in the country to feature Donald Ross and Pete Dye courses. We have a rich history with the LPGA and women’s golf dating back more than 50 years. Our commitment to the Tours doesn’t stop with the LPGA. We hosted the 76th annual Senior PGA Championship in 2014, the PGA Professional National Championship in 2010, and numerous USGA amateur competitions.”

– DAVE HARNER, DIRECTOR OF GOLF OPERATIONS, FRENCH LICK RESORT