

# PRIVATE Clubs



In May, Sorenstam unveiled both a new wine and fragrance under the "Annika" moniker.

## **Annika**

With the pro tour behind her, what's next for golf's golden girl? Turns out Sorenstam's just getting started and, boy, does she mean business.

BY EDWARD SCHMIDT JR. | PHOTOGRAPHY BY PONTUS HOOK/WIREIMAGE

What do you do for an encore after you've won 10 LPGA majors and 90 international pro tournaments, played in eight Solheim Cup matches, and been enshrined in the World Golf Hall of Fame? If you're Annika Sorenstam, you keep your eye on the prize. This time, in the global business arena, creating a worldwide brand identification on par with icons Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, and Greg Norman. Sorenstam, 38, will use her fierce determination and focused preparation skills to win in mostly male-dominated business domains.

Following her retirement last year from the LPGA Tour and her January marriage to Mike McGee, Sorenstam has booked more time in boardrooms than on fairways for the coming months and years.

The fit and fashionable Swede now turns her full-time attention to a variety of business ventures. Transitioning to an entrepreneur, she combines her passions — golf, fitness, fashion, cooking, and wine — into a slew of endeavors under the "Annika" brand. Heading her blossoming portfolio of business interests are a golf course architecture company, which already has six designs to its credit; a golf academy at Ginn Reunion Resort in Orlando; and a clothing line with Cutter & Buck.

Most recently, Sorenstam followed fellow athletes Michael Jordan, David Beckham, and Maria Sharapova with the introduction of her own fragrance, and joined Norman and PGA Tour golfers Ernie Els and David Frost in the increasingly crowded celebrity wine arena. In May, these new products hit the market: Annika, a signature fragrance; and a Central Coast Syrah wine in partnership

with Wente Vineyards in Livermore, Calif. She's in for some serious multitasking, too, with a baby girl due this fall.

*Private Clubs* caught up with Sorenstam in Orlando, where she resides, and she revealed thoughts about her business future, her golf course design, and even shared a golf tip.

### **Who are your business mentors?**

In preparation for leaving the LPGA Tour and expanding my business interests, I set up an advisory board two years ago. The board consists of people I admire and respect for their business knowledge. They include Charlie Meacham, former LPGA commissioner; my agent at IMG, Mark Steinberg; Duane Knapp, chairman of BrandStrategy Inc.; and marketing and financial expert Paula Polito.

During my playing career, I always sought out players who I believed could help me in some aspect of my game. I consulted Seve Ballesteros on shot making, Greg Norman on driving with power, and Nancy Lopez on how to handle the media and things outside of golf. It's no different in business. You find the best experts and seek their knowledge before moving forward.

### **Your business philosophy?**

My slogan is "Share My Passion," and I want all of my endeavors to reflect who I am and what I stand for. My goal is to create inspirational experiences for people, whether it's at my academy, on my golf courses, or the products that bear my name. I'm very hands-on in everything I do, and I will not put my name on something if I don't believe it's the best possible product.

### **What pro golfer's off-the-course success do you most admire?**

Greg Norman is a great example of somebody I look up to in business. His brand is respected and recognized around the world. I admire Jack Nicklaus and Arnold Palmer, as well. Unfortunately, I don't really have a female athlete to model my business career. In many ways, I'm entering uncharted territory, but that's also what excites and motivates me to be successful.

### **As a golf course designer, how will you impact this male-dominated industry?**

My goal is to shatter the stigma of a "ladies course" as being only a place for female golfers. My courses are designed so any skill-level golfer can enjoy the experience. I often hear people say, "You've got to see the great view from the back tees." I want to design courses with phenomenal views from the tees most people play. I have played from every tee, so I want to design courses where each tee is important, and not just an afterthought. Because of my playing experiences around the world, I think I can relate to all types of golfers and I bring a fresh perspective to golf course design.

### **You've played in hundreds of pro-ams. What tips can you give golfers who play in them?**

First, try to have fun. Many people make the mistake of trying to compete against the pro, and that takes them off their game. Three things I suggest are to make sure you have a smooth tempo on each swing, develop a simple routine on and around the greens, and focus as much on the speed of the putt as you do the line.

[Click here for five more questions with Annika.](#)



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