



## Baby girl, burgeoning brand keep Annika Sorenstam busy



Though she no longer plays competitive golf on the LPGA Tour, Annika Sorenstam stays busy building her golf and lifestyle brand, aptly named 'Annika,' that includes but is not limited to golf course design, a clothing line, wine and a golf academy.

Courtesy of Mike McGee



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"Before my life was about three-putts and winning a tournament," Annika Sorenstam said. "Life is now such a bigger picture. If you have a long day in the office, you go home and she doesn't care she wants to play."

By [Steve DiMeglio](#), USA TODAY

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Time flies when you're having fun — and staying busy.

So says Annika Sorenstam, who, much to her surprise, already is two years removed from playing her last LPGA tour event. Mindful not to use the "R" word when she announced in 2008 that she was stepping away from competitive golf, Sorenstam has hardly retired from golf or work after playing the 2008 season-ending ADT Championship.

"If there's a day that ends in a "Y" I'm onto something," Sorenstam said with a laugh over the phone near her home in Orlando.

She is not kidding. While she turned 40 earlier this year, there was no midlife crisis to contemplate. Instead, after a 15-year Hall of Fame career in which she set the gold standard in women's golf by winning 10 major championships and nearly 90 tournaments worldwide while inspiring her vanquished foes to adopt physical fitness into their preparation, Sorenstam has seamlessly moved on to a new chapter in her life.

Where once her focal point in life was playing competitive golf, the epicenter of her second act in life is a small, 14-month-old bundle of joy named Ava — Sorenstam's and husband Mike McGee's first child. Hitting thousands of golf balls on the practice range and lifting thousands of pounds in the weight room once absorbed the vast majority of her life in a tunnel-vision journey toward the winner's circle. Now Ava does.

"I love waking up and seeing her smile and seeing her grow," she says. "I'm fortunate to know that I had a career and now I'm in a motherhood role. She's my grand slam and she's my life right now.

"Before my life was about three-putts and winning a tournament. Life is now such a bigger picture. If you have a long day in the office, you go home and she doesn't care — she wants to play. And she learns something new every day and seeing that is great and that is my life now."

She has another "baby" to attend to — one much, much larger. Now channeling her acclaimed focus on the golf course in the business world, Sorenstam and her team have built up, despite difficult economic times, a burgeoning golf and lifestyle brand that sports a name that is as direct and precise as her game once was — Annika.

With 15 full-time staff members and a 3,000-square-foot office outside the gates of Lake Nona Country Club, Sorenstam is working at least 60-hour weeks on a collection of business interests that includes her charitable foundation (nearly \$600,000 in grants have been committed to numerous organizations), golf course design (eight courses are

under contract or finished and two others are on hold), wine (her 2006 Syrah and 2008 Chardonnay have been released), a clothing line, perfume, headwear, a cookbook, a boutique, and a golf academy modeled after the programs that led her to eight years as the No. 1 player in the world.

Obviously, a couch potato she is not.

The winner of a career Grand Slam and the only LPGA player to shoot 59 also still counts Callaway, Lexus, Cutter & Buck, Oakley and Golf Digest among her sponsors, and is in partnership with Wente Vineyards and the Ritz-Carlton Destination Club. Further, the winner of a record eight Player of the Year awards and a record-tying eight money-list titles is the Honorary Chair for the 2011 U.S. Women's Open, is a vice-captain for the 2011 European Solheim Cup team, an advisor to the LPGA Board of Directors, and is only the second ambassador for the United States Golf Association (the first was Arnold Palmer).

She also was an ambassador for the International Golf Federation which earned golf a return to the Olympics, and, among other awards she's garnered since leaving competitive golf, she received the 15th Francis Ouimet Award for Lifelong Contributions to Golf.

The painfully shy kid in Sweden who deliberately missed shots down the stretch of golf tournaments to avoid giving a victory speech is now fully engaged in hundreds of relationships.

"Gone is the stoic Swede, if you will, the one who wore her Oakley's and showed no emotion as she won so many tournaments," says her husband, who also puts in 60-hour weeks. "She is outgoing and passionate about her brand. And just like in her playing days; everything she does involves working hard, goal setting, strategy, and execution.

"She leads by example and sets the bar high."

And dreams big. One of her top goals is to emulate Palmer and Jack Nicklaus by hosting an official LPGA tour event — or for that matter, a PGA Tour event — on a golf course her foundation owns, with proceeds going to build a state-of-the-art Annika Children's Wellness Center. She already has one tournament bearing her name — the Annika Invitational at Mission Hills will debut in 2011 on the Annika Course at Mission Hills Resort in China, a world-class golf destination that features 12 courses designed by some of the game's greatest players, including Greg Norman, Pete Dye, Nick Faldo and Ernie Els.

"I wanted to do something else and I'm not the type of person who can sit still. The different businesses certainly keep me on my toes," she says. "My competitiveness hasn't changed. I'm a goal-driven type of person. I certainly have visions in my mind of where I want the brand to go. I don't consider it work. I love what I do and results are what drive me. I want everything I'm involved in to be the best. It needs to be right. It needs to be perfect.

"It has my name on it."

As for her golf game, Sorenstam says it has considerably moved down the list of her priorities. The door to return to competitive golf is still ajar, she says, but it's closing ever more with every passing month.

"Nothing has changed in my thinking," she says. "I'm not thinking about it."

Playing golf, however, is not completely off her radar. She has played in various charitable tournaments this season and keeps her game reasonably sharp to fulfill her obligations to sponsors and her academy.

And she is teaching her daughter to play.

"She has a club. She has golf balls, golf shoes, a golf bag. I teach her the grip but it goes from two hands to one hand pretty quickly," Sorenstam says. "She has fun and I have fun playing with her."

Beginning Thursday, Sorenstam is playing in the Callaway Golf Pebble Beach Invitational, which attracts some of the game's best players from the Nationwide, Champions, PGA and LPGA tours. She says the competitive juices start flowing when she reaches the first tee, but the days of grinding to victory no longer consume her.

"It's a little bit up and down," Sorenstam says of her current form. "I haven't played. It's not my priority. It doesn't define me anymore. I don't play to take care of a competitive fix or anything like that.

"I have other things in my life I want to do right now. I would love to have one more child, if possible. I want to inspire kids and people to follow their dreams. Right now, I'm finding areas and channels that allow me to do that."

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**LPGA tour:** With her runner-up finish to In-Kyung Kim last week in the Lorena Ochoa Invitational, Suzann Pettersen rose to No. 2 in the Rolex Women's World Golf Rankings. How fitting.

Pettersen, trailing Jiyai Shin by a mere 0.49 points in the world rankings, is taking the status of bridesmaid a bit far this year with six second-place finishes. Pettersen, who has 14 runner-up finishes in her career and 11 top-5 finishes this season without a victory, opened her season by shooting 20-under par in the Honda PTT LPGA Thailand — only to lose by one stroke when Ai Miyazato closed with a 9-under-par 63. And last week, Pettersen was the 54-hole leader and shot 4-under 68 in the final round — only to be lapped by Kim's 8-under-par 64.

"I must say that second place sucks big time," Pettersen tweeted after the round. "But IK played really good today! Just wait ... My revenge will be sweet."

Pettersen, who last won in the 2009 CN Canadian Women's Open, will look to win her first tournament this year the first week of December in the LPGA tour's season-ending LPGA Tour Championship at Grand Cypress Golf Club in Orlando. The tournament will decide who finishes the season as the No. 1 player in the world. Also up for grabs: the Rolex Player of the Year award, the Vare Trophy for lowest scoring average and the LPGA money title.

**Chip-ins:** • The PGA Tour and Puerto Rico Tourism Company announced a two-year tournament extension that continues the island's Tour tournament in March through 2012. In conjunction with the agreement, the tournament will be renamed the Puerto Rico Open presented by seepuertorico.com. Introduced in 2008 at Trump International Golf Club, the Puerto Rico Open presented by seepuertorico.com will be held the same week as the World Golf Championships event at the TPC Blue Course in Miami. ...

• The USGA appointed Thomas C. Pagel as Director, Rules of Golf. Pagel's primary responsibility will be to coordinate the Rules-writing efforts of the USGA Rules of Golf Committee. His appointment is effective January 1, 2011. Pagel joins the USGA from the Utah Golf Association, where he served as executive director for the past two years, overseeing all aspects of membership and championship administration.